

New Column: Gimmicks Aren't A Bad Thing

Looking at Aron Rex and why something like Damien Sandow was the best thing that ever happened to him.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-where-gimmicks-matter/>

Monday Night Raw – May 6, 2002: Beyond Free Fall

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 6, 2002

Location: Hartford Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Maybe a new month will help things out a little bit. I know I say this every week but it almost can't get worse than last week with Undertaker very slowly beating Hulk Hogan down because Hogan can barely move at this point in his career. The pay per view really can't get here soon enough as I can't imagine they'll keep the title on Hogan any longer. Let's get to it.

Oh and as of today: it's WWE. I'll put the over/under on mentions of the new name at 5000.

We open with....gardening? An older woman chops up her bushes to get them into a perfect WWE logo, which she then lights on fire. The new tagline: Get the F Out. I actually like that as it gets straight to the point.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Jazz is defending, there are no disqualifications and Steven Richards is in the champ's corner. The fans want puppies as Jazz sends Trish into the corner to start, only to miss a splash. Richards offers a distraction though and Trish's rollup goes nowhere. JR says this is for the World Wrestling Entertainment Women's Title and I think we're all glad that name didn't last.

Jazz throws her around with some butterfly suplexes for two, followed by the double chickenwing facebuster to send Lawler into hysterics. A Chick Kick and Stratusfaction has the champ beaten but Richards makes another save by superkicking Trish down to give Jazz the pin.

Rating: D. Was there a point to this that I don't get? The No DQ stuff could have been forgotten with a simple referee distraction but to be fair I'd probably call that stupid. It might be easier to just have them do a regular match and scrap Richards as a whole but then we couldn't do the following.

Bubba Ray Dudley with a Bubba Bomb, Raven with the Raven Effect, Justin Credible with a superkick, Crash Holly with a missile dropkick, Bubba with a trashcan shot and Trish stealing the title and a blinded Bubba (fire extinguisher) powerbombing Trish through a table so Richards can steal the pin gives us six Hardcore Title changes in about two minutes because old jokes are funnier when you do them for the third time in less than two months. Bubba takes Trish to the back because that makes up for powerbombing her through a table.

Here's the NWO for a chat due to reasons of WE'RE TELLING YOU THEY WERE A GOOD IDEA AND YOU CAN JUST DEAL WITH IT! Show lets us see him turning heel and joining the team in a big moment. Two years ago, he was in the main event of Wrestlemania while Austin was hurt. Now it's 2002 and he spent Wrestlemania in a restaurant pretending to have a good time instead of being on the show. Last month he was in a preliminary match on Heat while Austin had a #1 contenders match. Show is a monster that no one can stop and now the NWO is even bigger.

This brings out Ric Flair to say he wishes he could have Big Show's

natural gifts but he's a sixteen time World Champion because he didn't whine and cry. It's really more about when Flair didn't cry but we're not quite to that point yet. Flair tells Show to deal with it and announces the NWO vs. Bradshaw/Austin/Flair, which he already announced last week. Hall promises a history changing announcement for later tonight.

European Title: William Regal vs. Spike Dudley

Spike is defending and is coming in with a bad ankle due to Regal attacking him over the weekend. He's ready to fight anyway and jumps on Regal's back, earning himself a stomp to the foot and a slam onto the ropes. A simple leglock makes Spike tap in about 35 seconds. That would be two title changes in 40 seconds combined for this belt.

Regal beats Spike up even more after the match. D'Lo Brown of all people comes out for the save.

Flair rants to Arn Anderson in a nothing segment.

Booker T. goes to 7-11 for a Slurpee and is annoyed that there's no Booker T. cup. He runs into Goldust in a Latrell Sprewell jersey with headphones around his neck. Goldust has followed him from his hotel (Booker: "YOU BEEN FOLLOWING ME???") and wants to talk strategy for their match tonight. Booker seems to agree but has to go. Goldust: "If you'll let me have a drink of your Slurpee, I'll let you have a bite of my weiner." Booker responds as you would expect anyone to if he's offered a bite of a hot dog. Funny stuff as always.

We look at Planet Stasiak costing Brock Lesnar and himself a tag match at Insurrextion over the weekend.

Flair finds an APA hat in the NWO dressing room. Bradshaw doesn't seem like one to just leave his hat laying around.

Undertaker arrives and assigns someone to watch his bike.

The NWO is standing near the entrance, seemingly waiting on somebody.

Planet Stasiak vs. Brock Lesnar

Brock fires off the shoulders in the corner to start as we get the GOLDBERG chants. The spinebuster looks to finish but Heyman wants an example made. An F5 and a boot on the chest is enough for the easy pin. Another squash.

Hulk Hogan has stolen Undertaker's motorcycle because Undertaker left the keys in the ignition.

GET THE F OUT! It's the same thing as earlier as the company is still WWE about an hour later.

Here's Hogan on the motorcycle to Undertaker's music. I really could have gone my whole life without seeing Hulk Hogan coming out to Limp Bizkit. Hulk gets right to the point by calling Undertaker out for a fight and threatening his motorcycle to sweeten the pot a bit. Undertaker comes out and tells Hogan not to mess with the bike. Hogan isn't impressed and swears a bit before turning the bike on. It moves a whole three feet before the engine stalls, leaving Undertaker to....stand right there and not do a thing.

Hogan finally leaves the bike on the ramp and runs (work with me here) after Undertaker as we cut to the commentators. You can hear the engine revving as Hogan is apparently still out there trying to get the thing to work. Well done by JR and King to not die of laughter here. The chase is FINALLY on with Hogan driving the bike around backstage (had to do it as the pre-tape shows him on the bike backstage). He changes pace a bit by driving around even more, all while shouting for Undertaker.

Hogan eventually parks it in front of a semi truck and gets inside as we go to a break. Back with Hogan crushing the bike. You know, a month and a half ago he used a similar truck to crush an ambulance with Rock inside so this is real progress for him. This was WAY too long and I'm amazed that both guys didn't just walk off the show when the bike stalled. What a sign indeed.

Rob Van Dam/Jeff Hardy vs. Booker T./Eddie Guerrero

Van Dam and Guerrero hit the mat to start with Rob monkey flipping him down but missing a kick to the face. Instead a faceplant out of an

electric chair sends Eddie crawling over to the corner for the tag to Booker. More kicks have Mr. T. in trouble and it's off to Jeff as things speed up again.

Booker finally gets in a shot on Hardy and it's time for a face to be in peril. An elbow to the jaw sets up the Spinarooni for two (Lawler: "Dagnabbit.") but Jeff comes back with a dropkick (totally missed) and the real hot tag brings in Van Dam. Everything breaks down again and Rolling Thunder gets two on Eddie. Cue Goldust for a failed distraction so a Swanton from Jeff and the Five Star from Rob can put Eddie away.

Rating: C+. These guys are becoming the lone bright spots on this show and it's a bit disappointing to have them all in the same match. At least it was one of the better segments so far this week with a good looking ending. You certainly can't fault Eddie for losing when he takes back to back finishers so he was even a bit protected in the loss.

Terri has challenged Molly to a swimsuit contest later tonight with a contest between pure and wholesome or what's under her robe.

Flair and Anderson think Bradshaw has joined the NWO, guaranteeing that he hasn't.

It's time for the swimsuit contest and of course Lawler is in charge. Terri comes out and Lawler is praying for a thong. Molly brings a pair of flippers for more proper swimming attire (JR: "The Hilary Clinton of the WWF."). Molly decides she's going first and, after putting on her swimming cap, reveals a conservative one piece with a skirt. It looks like a figure skating costume, meaning it looks like what a lot of run of the mill women would wear to a pool every day.

Naturally Lawler and the crowd think it's horrible and treat Molly like she's wearing a full body suit with only her ankles showing. Terri reveals exactly what you would expect and wins because fans go for the orange skin with countable ribs look. Molly lays her out with a flipper in the only heelish thing she's done in the entire segment.

Flair goes to Bradshaw's locker room (Bradshaw has his own locker room?) and finds Kane's mask, which X-Pac stole weeks ago.

After a break, Flair runs into Bradshaw and demands an explanation. Bradshaw says he'll see Flair in the ring.

Undertaker finds his bike. Where in the world has he been for the last half hour? He tries to pull the bike out from under the truck and then stomps on the bike, likely thinking that floating out of the top of a casket after cutting a promo to a camera hanging from the lid wasn't so bad after all. Undertaker leaves and Kevin Nash arrives for the surprise.

NWO vs. Ric Flair/Bradshaw/Steve Austin

Austin and X-Pac start and it's a spinebuster each for X-Pac and Hall. Steve cleans house with right hands but can't get a Stunner on Hall. Instead it's off to the Big Show for some choking in the corner and a backdrop that sends Austin flying. You don't see Austin in the air that often. Bradshaw tags himself in for the fall away slam on Hall as JR thinks there's only one Kane mask in existence. You know, because they're not sold at the merchandise stands.

Show comes back in and throws Bradshaw around "like a double cheeseburger." Who throws double cheeseburgers around? I've never been to Oklahoma but are things really that different there? The bloody (thanks to some Big Show headbutts) Bradshaw is beaten down by all three NWOites with Show headbutting him into the bad corner. A big boot finally drops X-Pac and it's Flair coming in with the chops.

Everything breaks down and Bradshaw's Clotheslines lays out X-Pac but Big Show pulls him outside for a chokeslam through the announcers' table. Austin finally goes after Show (which is the point of this whole thing) but has to Stun Hall and X-Pac at the same time. Some Big Show chops have Austin in trouble and he falls out to the floor. Austin actually goes aerial again with a middle rope Thesz press to put Show down but the Stunner is easily blocked and we get a ref bump.

A low blow sets up the Stunner but there's no referee. Of course there isn't because this hasn't gone on long enough. Flair hits Austin with a chair to go full heel and destroys the knee to make things even worse. With Austin down, Flair makes himself and Big Show vs. Austin at the pay per view. Ric grabs a Figure Four as the match is a no contest.

Rating: D-. The length here is the big problem as this went on for over fifteen minutes and set up the most obvious ending they could have gone with after eliminating every other possible option. Taking out the fact that Nash was just a decoy and what else could it have been other than Flair turning heel? It makes sense, but it was really tiresome having to sit through the APA hat/Kane mask stuff earlier. Just WAY too long here though and it really dragged things down even further than they were before.

Overall Rating: F+. Raw is now beyond free fall and has hit the ground, exploding on impact. Other than the same four midcard guys having their regularly good matches (less than six minutes this week), I can't think of a single thing on this show that isn't either too short, boring, offensive or the pit of torture that is the main event.

Raw has had six shows since the Brand Split. Here are the main event matches/segments which go along with Hogan/HHH as World Champion:

Kane vs. X-Pac/Austin contract signing

Austin vs. Hall

Austin/Bradshaw vs. NWO/Undertaker

Austin/Big Show vs. NWO

Hogan vs. Regal/Undertaker beats Hogan down

Austin/Bradshaw/Flair vs. NWO

Here's the thing: other than two major pops for Hogan, is there any reason that Austin isn't in Hogan's spot? Hogan has a long history with Hall, Nash and Flair while Austin has a long history with HHH and Undertaker. Much more importantly though, Austin may be a shell of his glory days but he's WAY ahead of Hogan at this point. Hogan's matches so far have been embarrassing while you could at least pencil in Austin for watchable at worst. Couple that with swapping the NWO out for ANYTHING else and this show is instantly better.

Raw is a disaster right now with two major angles being huge wastes of

everyone's time and it's turned into one of the biggest messes I've seen in a long time. I know people would get sick of the upcoming HHH and Shawn Michaels dominance but it puts this nonsense to shame. At least you could get a decent main event, which we haven't gotten so far in six weeks.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

NXT – October 5, 2016: I Love That Concept

NXT

Date: October 5, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's time to start a tournament as we have the first round of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic kicking off tonight. Last year's event was a lot of fun and set up the NXT Title feud for the next several Takeovers. The finals of this year's tournament will be taking place at Takeover: Toronto in November so let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the Dusty Classic returning this year.

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Bollywood Boyz vs. Authors of Pain

Harv and Gurv Shira dance a lot before the bell so Razar puts Harv on the top rope for some clubberin. Gurv comes in and gets beaten down as well, setting up the Russian legsweep and clothesline combination (now dubbed the Last Chapter) for the pin at 1:47.

Dan Matha arrives tonight.

Rich Swann vs. Patrick Clark

Clark looks like he's wearing Prince style gear. Even Swann looks confused here. Rich does some dancing punches in the corner until he gets caught in a spinebuster. The fans sing Swann's theme song and he makes a quick comeback with a running kick in the corner. A running moonsault puts Clark away at 2:58.

We look back at Cedric Alexander and Andrade Cien Almas facing off a few weeks back and joining forces in the tournament as a result.

Video of Asuka squashing Liv Morgan last week. After the match, Billie Kay and Peyton Royce laughed at Morgan's loss.

Peyton Royce vs. Danielle Kamela

Kamela starts fast with a small package and cross body for two each. Peyton sends her into the corner for some long legged choking and forearms to the chest. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Kamela fights up for handspring elbow, only to get kned in the head. A fisherman's suplex gives Peyton the pin at 3:44.

Rating: D+. The wrestling wasn't much but it was a good sign that they're actually trying to make some new names both in the division and in the promotion as a whole. Royce and Kay are fine as replacements for Dana Brooke and Emma as the heel team, though I can't imagine them being much

of a threat to Asuka.

Bobby Roode is way too fired up for the first round match in the Dusty Classic. He doesn't want to talk about Sanity when everyone is talking about Glorious Ten. "It will be glorious when we're victorious." Roode rushes Dillinger out before he can say anything.

Dan Matha comes out (looking like a cross between Matt Morgan and Nathan Jones) for his debut but here's Samoa Joe to beat him down instead. Joe asks Regal how many more have to suffer like this one here.

Rich Swann and No Way Jose have teamed up due to a love of dancing.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Andrade Cien Almas/Cedric Alexander vs. Revival

Non-title. Alexander and Dawson start things off with Cedric getting shouldered down. Everything breaks down and the Revival is dropkicked out to the floor and a backdrop does it all over again. A big flip dive from Cedric takes the champs down again and it's all Alexander/Almas in the first four minutes. Revival finally gets it together by suckering Almas into a blindside forearm as we take a break.

Back with Dawson getting two off a northern lights suplex as the champs start in on Almas' arm. The fans want Cedric and an enziguri from Almas gives them what they want. Everything breaks down again and Alexander gets two off a sunset flip into a bridge. Almas has knocked out to the floor though and it's the Shatter Machine to send the Revival on at 12:40.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I was expecting to as Almas is looking better while Alexander looks like one of the most natural newcomers to WWE in a very long time. Revival has to advance here and that's the only possibly outcome they could have, especially in the first round. Someone almost has to take them out though as you have Gargano/Ciampa and the Authors of Pain looming for them.

Post match, Almas beats Cedric down and sends him into the post. Almas soaks in the YOU SUCK chants to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Another fast paced show with every story hitting perfectly. Almas turning is long overdue and is another example of NXT seeing something not working and changing course as a result. That's close to blasphemy in WWE but down here, it's what you do when something isn't going right. NXT actually pays attention and fixes things because they listen to their audience. I love that concept.

Results

Authors of Pain b. Bollywood Boyz – Last Chapter to Gurv

Rich Swann b. Patrick Clark – Running moonsault

Peyton Royce b. Danielle Kamela – Fisherman's suplex

Revival b. Cedric Alexander/Andrade Cien Almas – Shatter Machine to Alexander

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Send In Your Questions For

Wrestling Wars Podcast

NorCal and I are recording tonight so send us in questions for the mailbag segment.

Wrestlingrumors.net

I've mentioned this site before but things are starting to be revamped over there and it's getting a lot better. We've got a bunch of new people covering the news (including myself for the first time ever on any site) and a lot of new content, including video news updates and a lot more opinion pieces. Check it out at the regular site and on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/wrestlingrumors>) as they're getting a lot better and it's worth spending your time on.

Read Some Wrestling Books Recently

Some are better than others.

1. *Wrestlecrap* – R. D. Reynolds. This one didn't do much for me as it can basically be summarized as "and then the WWF and Hogan did this stupid thing and this stupid thing and this stupid thing while real wrestlers like Ric Flair are the most amazing things ever." Couple that kind of narrative with a bunch of basic factual error, such as saying Greg Valentine

was a two time Intercontinental Champion. I know it's minor but they're very annoying to read and know it's wrong. This is fine for a quick read but don't expect anything great.

2.A Lion's Tale – Chris Jericho. Somehow I had never read this and it more than lived up to expectations. Jericho writes like he talks on TV and that makes for a very entertaining book. The guy has been everywhere and it's a lot of fun to hear his stories from around the world. I really don't think this needs a recommendation as I'm probably the last wrestling fan to read it.

3. Pain and Passion: The History of Stampede Wrestling – Heath McCoy. Stampede is one of the promotions I don't know a lot about and this book fixed that problem. This is one of the best put together wrestling books I've ever seen and is all the way up there with Foley's stuff. If you want to see everything there is to know about the promotion, including some amazing stories and background on the Hart Family's inner workings and the drama involved, check this out as it's a great read.

Smackdown – October 4, 2016: Where It Gets Real In A Hurry

Smackdown

Date: October 4, 2016

Location: Valley View Casino Center, San Diego, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the go home show for No Mercy because this is the new WWE where there's a go home show every two weeks. Tonight is going to focus on Dean Ambrose vs. John Cena vs. AJ Styles for Styles' Smackdown World Title in

Sunday's triple threat. Other than that we're likely getting more in the Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt feud. Let's get to it.

The opening video promises Styles, Cena and Ambrose face to face to face tonight.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

They take turns hitting each other in the face to start until Bray gets Kane down for a chinlock. A side slam and running DDT have Bray in trouble but the chokeslam is countered into a Rock Bottom. Bray does the spider walk but an upside down Randy Orton appears on the screen. This takes WAY longer than it should and the distraction lets Kane get up. Bray blocks a chokeslam but takes the countout loss at 4:15.

Rating: D. So let me get this straight: we're five days away from Wyatt's big match against Orton and Bray is taking a countout loss to Kane instead of, you know, squashing him like a bug? It's not a good sign when the best thing you can say about a match is Kane didn't win off the chokeslam.

Baron Corbin doesn't know why Jack Swagger was signed but if Jack wants to fight, Baron will drop him where he stands. Swagger comes up and a match is set up.

Post break, Bray is looking for Orton.

Alexa Bliss vs. Nikki Bella

Carmella is on commentary as Nikki gets two off a facebuster that didn't come close to making contact. Nikki takes it outside and throws Bliss into Carmella, drawing her into the ring for the DQ at 1:52.

Post match here's Becky Lynch for the save and we might as well keep the referee out here for the obvious tag match.

Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella vs. Carmella/Alexa Bliss

Joined in progress with Alexa hammering on Nikki before it's off to Carmella for some shots to the face of her own. Carmella misses a Bronco

Buster though and the hot tag brings in Becky. Everything breaks down with Nikki spearing Carmella to the floor, leaving Alexa to hit Twisted Bliss for the pin on Becky at 3:14.

Rating: C. Basic, simple ideas to set up basic, simple matches. That's the kind of wrestling that's always going to work and you can tell they're putting WAY more thought into these things than the messes over on Raw. Becky getting pinned in a tag match is fine and gives Alexa credibility heading into Sunday. Nikki and Carmella's feud is advanced at the same time and everything is accomplished. When this stuff works, it works to near perfection.

Bray goes to look for Orton again and finds the rocking chair. Orton jumps him from behind and shuts a metal door, locking Bray in what looks like a small storage unit. Of course there's a camera inside with Bray freaking out over being locked inside.

Daniel Bryan brings out some breast cancer survivors for the Susan G. Komen presentation ala Enzo and Big Cass on Raw.

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

There's still something weird about JBL being a Mojo Rawley fan. Mojo slams Gotch to start and it's Hammer Time! Cue Ascension, now with face paint, to the stage for a distraction but Ryder dropkicks English off the apron anyway. Ryder gets kneed in the back but Gotch's chinlock goes as far as a chinlock is going to take him. The hot tag brings in Mojo a few seconds later and a Hype Ryder ends English at 3:48.

Rating: C-. Not much to the match but just like the women's division and everything else around here: keep it simple but do it well. I know I harp on that a lot but Smackdown is so refreshing when you have so many wrestling shows all over the place that can't get the most basic storylines right.

The Ascension point at the Hype Bros.

It's time for MizTV with a special Dolphumentary. Ziggler comes out and the documentary is of course a career lowlight reel with stuff like

Ziggler as Kerwin White's caddy and the Spirit Squad and various out of context statements from wrestlers. This Sunday, it's the feature film the Success of a Failure. Ziggler doesn't take kindly to this and says that he loves it when a Make-A-Wish kid says he's their hero but Ziggler gets to tell them that they're his hero. That's the kind of thing that makes Ziggler know he can't walk away.

Miz laughs this off and brings out two members of the Spirit Squad (Kenny and Mikey). We get a cheer with Miz saying Ziggler can join them at their \$5 autograph signing. Ziggler goes after Miz but gets jumped from behind. Dolph easily fights them off and Miz bails from the threat of a superkick. This feud is really, really growing on me despite it being Dolph Ziggler. They're nailing every single thing about this and I want to see the match, albeit with Miz winning to finally get rid of Ziggler.

Bray is still in the storage unit and says he finally sees it.

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Roberto Clemente.

Jey Uso vs. Jason Jordan

Jey snaps Jordan's neck across the ropes to start and hammers away but a very quick rollup puts Uso away at 1:18.

The Usos send Gable into the steps and chop block Jordan for a bonus. Rhyno and Heath Slater come out to save Jordan's knee.

Bray is now singing but stops to say he missed Abigail. She's going to take him home.

Back from a break and Orton opens the door, only to find an empty chair. There wasn't a lock on the door so this isn't exactly supernatural.

Clip of John Cena on Talking Smack last week, talking about how the Draft is a fresh opportunity for him as well. Cena's big line: "Dean Ambrose doesn't like John Cena. John Cena doesn't care about Dean Ambrose."

Curt Hawkins vignette. He's debuting at No Mercy.

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin shoulder blocks him down to start and rains down right hands to the head, sending us to an early break. Back with Swagger favoring his knee and getting caught in a chinlock. Jack fights up and elbows Corbin in the face, followed by the Patriot Lock. Corbin dives for the ropes over and over, which the referee calls a tap out at 8:25. Replays show that Corbin was reaching for the ropes as his hand is up and it's his wrist hitting the mat when he can't reach the ropes.

Rating: C-. I'm not interested in the match but that's a clever way to keep the feud going as it was close enough that you could say it was a tap and call it a mistake. It's much better than having one guy win clean and then do a bunch of rematches just because. I don't really need to see them fight again but it's nice to have a feud continue logically instead of having it forced.

Here's AJ for the big closing segment. He talks about how he'll prove himself to be the best in the world on Sunday but Ambrose comes out to cut him off. Dean is serious this week and says he had the title won last week until Cena had to get involved. Cue Cena but AJ cuts him off and begs Cena to shut up for once in his life. AJ is incensed at the thought of Cena comparing himself to Flair (here we go) and begs Cena to give one of his rah-rah speeches.

Cena is ready to do just that when Ambrose cuts him off again, saying Cena is a part timer who is dying to get out of here on a private jet and go be with his people in New York. Dean is the man who works harder around here and has wrestled more matches than anyone else in the company the last two years because he never takes days off. He'll be over here in the corner being Dean Ambrose while Cena gets to play John Cena on TV.

That's enough for Cena and the fight is on with Cena hitting an AA on Ambrose and throwing Styles outside. John holds up the title but AJ runs in and escapes an AA attempt. The Phenomenal Forearm drops Cena but Dean gives AJ Dirty Deeds onto the ramp and holds up the title to end the show. REALLY good stuff here with Dean standing up to Cena in a way no one has done since Rock. That's the kind of thing that makes him feel like a main event star, not wearing funny hats.

Overall Rating: B. The wrestling wasn't great here but that's not the point most of the time. The point here is a very well done structure as you move from story to start for most of the show with only Bray and Orton running throughout and never getting too much time at once. You can tell someone has actually put effort into setting this up and it makes the show fly by instead of making me wonder how we can only be an hour into it. No Mercy may not be the best show ever but it's been built up as well as it can be and that's what this show needed to do.

Results

Kane b. Bray Wyatt via countout

Nikki Bella b. Alexa Bliss via DQ when Carmella interfered

Alexa Bliss/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch – Twisted Bliss to Lynch

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

Jason Jordan b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Jack Swagger b. Baron Corbin – Patriot Lock

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Superstars – September 30, 2016: Now With More People You Won't See On This Show

Superstars

Date: September 30, 2016

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

I don't normally do this show but I was in the arena live for the taping so I might as well take a look at the show. This was taped before last week's Monday Night Raw and now serves as the night's dark matches. Superstars tends to be completely forgotten and there's a good chance that's justified. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence, featuring a bunch of people you won't be seeing on this show.

Sami Zayn vs. Curtis Axel

Not a bad choice to fire up the crowd. Axel takes him down by the arm to start so Sami does his big spin out to escape. Sami's reverse leapfrog sets up some armdrags into an armbar and the fans are very pleased. Some right hands and a good looking dropkick put Zayn down but Axel spends a bit too much time yelling. The exploder suplex sets up the Helluva Kick to give Sami the pin at 4:40.

Rating: C-. Not much to this one but Sami is the perfect choice to open a show and fire the fans up. There's just something so easy to cheer about Sami and it hasn't failed him yet. For the life of me I don't know why he's stuck on the midcard treadmill when Smackdown is dying for talent and Zayn can't even get on Raw most weeks.

We see a long stretch, as in the better part of five minutes, of Roman Reigns vs. Rusev from Raw.

We see Charlotte, Dana Brooke and Sasha Banks' segment from Raw. This is

much closer to being complete so here it is in full.

Here are Charlotte and Dana Brooke for a chat. Charlotte says last night was another chance for everyone to be disappointed because that's what she does time after time. She's not the huggable Bayley or the internet darling Sasha Banks. Cue Sasha to say that's her title because Charlotte didn't beat her last night. Sasha is owed a one on one match and she wants it right now. Charlotte tells the YESing fans to be quiet so she can tell Sasha that she'll get her rematch....next week. Sasha cleans house and the villains leave.

Neville vs. Jinder Mahal

This would be another option that could have picked the crowd up during Raw but nah, we needed three minutes of Stephanie yelling at Foley instead. To no one's surprise, Mahal comes out to crickets. Neville grabs a headlock to start as we hear about Mahal talking trash about NXT stars coming up through the ranks. So yeah, this actually has a story to it. Mahal's armbars doesn't do much to shake his image of being really boring so Neville handsprings across the ring and hits something like a hurricanrana. The tease of a dive scares Mahal to the barricade and we take a break.

Back with Mahal missing a charge and falling outside again, only to have him send Neville ribs first into the apron. A basement dropkick puts Neville down and a big boot to the face gets two. Neville comes back with his series of kicks, including a big one to knock Mahal out of the air. The Red Arrow puts Mahal away at 8:55.

Rating: D. I don't know how many more ways I can say Mahal is boring but it's the biggest problem with so many wrestlers today. There's no real character there and his in ring abilities aren't enough to make me want to watch anything he does. This was longer than it needed to be with Neville doing what he could but having nothing to work with in Mahal.

Most of Kevin Owens on the Highlight Reel (minus anything with Enzo and Cass) ends the show.

It's time for the Highlight Reel. Jericho tells us to be quiet about a

dozen times because this is the most anticipated Highlight Reel in WWE history. Before Owens comes out here though, Jericho has a bone to pick with Masterson and Kutchner, who have the nerve to claim that they're better friends. Jericho: "THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!" That's so unthinkable that they're both about to make the List of Jericho.

It's almost time for Owens to come out but Jericho yells at the cameraman for shooting him from the wrong side, which means HE MADE THE LIST! Rollins is on there too because he got hurt again last night. Owens comes out and praises the Jeritron 5000 but says he's not about to wear a suit for a place like Cincinnati, Ohio. What kind of town can this be when it created Dean Ambrose? Jericho: "HE STILL OWES ME \$17,000!" Owens moves on to Rollins and says the rib injury is karma after all the people Seth injured over the last year and a half. Cue Rollins but security and Foley pull him back.

Overall Rating: D+. I see why I don't watch this show most of the time. It's basically just a long recap show with some dark matches filling in the gaps. That being said, there's a reason this is little more than D level programming to fill in time on the Network and to satisfy international commitments. It was fine enough but nothing worth going out of your way to see whatsoever.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

A Few Updates

I've gotten rid of the sub pages for On This Day, Wrestler of the Day and I Want To Talk A Little Bit About. I haven't done any of those in years and there's no real need to keep the pages there taking up space. You can still find any of them by searching for the titles.

Ring of Honor TV – September 28, 2016: The All-Star Break

Ring of Honor

Date: September 28, 2016

Location: Sam's Town Hotel and Gambling Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Steve Corino, Kevin Kelly

We're at the end of a taping cycle and it's the final show before we're off to All-Star Extravaganza this coming Friday. It's hard to say what the big story is at the moment as the main event will be ROH World Champion Adam Cole defending against Michael Elgin so odds are that gets some attention here. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Silas Young vs. Toru Yano

Young makes sure to yell at a fan holding an "it's my birthday" sign. Now that's what being a heel is all about. Yano is a comedy guy who tries to sell some DVDs before the match. Silas goes after him to start so Yano hides in the ropes before offering a handshake. It's time for a chase

around the ring and it's very clear we're in a comedy match. Perhaps one of the wrestlers being a comedy guy should have been a hint.

Back in and Yano atomic drops Young to the floor and Silas takes a breather. A low blow via a kick to the rope doesn't seem to hurt Young that badly as he hammers on Yano. Toru goes for a turnbuckle pad but Young takes him down because he doesn't understand American pads.

Back from a break with Yano throwing him outside and going back to the buckle pad, this time with wire cutters. Yano hits him with the pad and they trade forearms but Yano's second low blow is blocked. A quick cutter gets two for Silas and a suplex into a swinging neckbreaker gets the same. Yano sends him chest first into the buckle for another two, followed by a low blow for the fourth near fall in a row. Silas kicks Yano low for a change and since Americans are better at hitting people low, it puts Toru away at 10:12.

Rating: C-. Yeah it's a comedy match and that's fine. I've long since reached the point where I understand that the two promotions are co-promoting in this company and that's not going to change anytime soon. Yano is a good enough comedy act and he did fine here, though Silas winning was the important thing as it's really tiring to see the New Japan guys winning more often than not.

Silas stays on him post match but the Briscoe Brothers (Yano's six man tournament partner) comes in for the save.

Christopher Daniels gives a very serious promo about what he's willing to give up to continue being a champion in Ring of Honor. He's been a father and husband for thirteen and twenty three years each and he'd give them both up to keep his title. Wrestling and championships are his life so he's going to spit in the face of cliches. This was really good and like nothing I've heard from Daniels in years. Why can't he do this kind of thing more often?

Cheeseburger vs. Punisher Martinez

Martinez has BJ Whitmer and Kevin Sullivan with him and Sullivan gets on commentary to talk with Corino. Cheeseburger gets his head taken off with

a spinning kick to the face as Sullivan talks about Corino trying to circumvent evil. The palm strike has no effect and Punisher's sitout chokeslam finishes Cheeseburger at 1:39. This would be so much better with Sullivan as a complete non-factor. What is this supposed to lead to? More Corino and Whitmer?

The beating continues with Will Ferrara coming in and taking a beating of his own as Kevin tells Corino to embrace what he is.

Post break, Corino is looking at the golden spike that was driven into his head at Best in the World. Now Whitmer wants Corino to meet him in the desert and of course Steve will do it.

We go to the break where Whitmer called Corino Mizar and told him to accept the guidance of the father (Sullivan) and they can be each others salvation. This is still stupid.

We run down the All-Star Extravaganza card and get some promos from some people on the card.

Bobby Fish is ready for Donovan Dijak and promises that Dijak will wake up a much wiser man after All-Star Extravaganza.

Jay Lethal wants to beat Tetsuya Naito to make a statement. That statement will be LOSS because Naito is now the IWGP Intercontinental Champion so the result is almost guaranteed.

Adam Cole is going to prove that he's better than Michael Elgin, who took the title from him two years ago. Elgin held the title for a few months and then went back to Japan like a coward. Now it's time for Cole to show that he's the best in the world, just like his title proves.

Hiroshi Tanahashi/Michael Elgin vs. Adam Page/Adam Cole

Kyle O'Reilly is on commentary again. As expected the fans are behind Tanahashi because the guy not even on Friday's show is more important than this company's World Champion. Page hammers on Elgin's back to no avail so it's time for the long delayed vertical suplex. We take a break and come back with Tanahashi playing some air guitar. Cole sends him outside and Page scores with a running shooting star off the apron. When

did he start getting good?

The double teaming begins as the Adams take turns stomping away until Tanahashi finally drops Page. It's off to Elgin to clean house with a good looking falcon arrow getting two on Page. A DDT gets two on Elgin and it's off to the second break of the match. Back again with Cole's Destroyer being broken up with a Samoan drop. It's off to Tanahashi vs. Cole, which sounds like an interesting match that we're not likely to see for a variety of reasons.

They strike it out until Cole gets caught with a Sling Blade to put both guys down. Another hot tag brings Mike back in and everything breaks down. Well stays broken down but close enough. The Rite of Passage doesn't work so Elgin takes Page's head off with a clothesline for two instead. The Elgin Bomb puts Page away at 14:19.

Rating: C+. This was the only way they could have had this match end as Elgin gets a bit of a rub going into his title match. Cole vs. Tanahashi has the potential to be something good but there's no secret about the fact that Cole vs. O'Reilly is headlining Final Battle. That's not a bad thing but I'm getting a little tired of the two of them fighting with Kyle seeming pretty far beneath Page.

Cole and Elgin stare each other down to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Sullivan stuff aside (as always), this actually felt like an authentic go home show. I don't think I've ever felt that about an ROH show and it's something that they really needed to fix. The opener was fine for a one off match and the main event actually went somewhere (albeit down the dead end that Cole vs. Elgin is going to be) and that's a step up over the clip shows we've gotten before.

This was an easier sit and that's a positive sign for Ring of Honor. That and them finally saying on their website that New Japan is presenting the pay per view as well. It's been New Japan's subsidiary for months now and they'll be better off as a promotion that gives New Japan what it needs if they've given up standing on their own two feet.

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book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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