

Impact Wrestling – September 29, 2016: So Close Now

Impact Wrestling

Date: September 29, 2016

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: D'Angelo Dinero, Josh Matthews

It's an interesting show this week for very different reasons. Above all else (at least in theory) this is the go home show for Bound For Glory. However, if the rumors are true, there's also a strong chance that this is one of the, if not the very, last episodes of the show in general. Let's get to it.

Jeremy Borash is in the ring to introduce Ethan Carter III and Lashley as the captains for tonight's Lethal Lockdown. We're going to get something like a live draft with the following teams announced:

Lashley, Drew Galloway, Mike Bennett, Maria Kanellis

Carter, Aron Rex, Moose, Gail Kim

The captains talk a lot of trash and say this is all that matters to them at the pay per view. Lashley isn't like the people Carter has beaten because he can end Ethan's career. Carter has a challenge: the two of them starting Lethal Lockdown one on one. Lashley agrees.

X-Division Title: Eddie Edwards vs. DJZ

DJZ is defending after accepting Edwards' challenge last week. They chop it out to start until DJZ gets in a hurricanrana to send Eddie outside. DJZ's flip dive doesn't work though and it's Eddie sending the champ into the barricade for a suicide dive. A sitout powerbomb gets two for Eddie but he takes too long going for the Boston Knee Party, allowing DJZ to hit a ZDT to retain at 5:34.

Rating: C. Well that happened. This was yet another match that probably should have been at Bound For Glory but instead let's throw it on here

for five minutes with no time to develop. As usual there's nothing significant going on in the X-Division and there's no title match announced three days before the biggest show of the year. I'm sure some multi-man match will be added on because that's how this division works.

Post match the Helms Dynasty comes out and beats up both guys.

Maria yells at Allie some more when Laura comes in. Allie looks like she's about to cry as Maria says this is what a woman should look like.

Mike Bennett and Moose had a sitdown interview earlier with Moose talking about how he's dealt with people like Bennett for his entire football career. Bennett says this isn't football and promises to teach Moose a lesson on Sunday. Moose says after he beats Bennett all around the ring, the fans will be chanting one name.

Madison Rayne vs. Laurel Van Ness

Laurel offers Madison a chance to kiss her hand before the match but Madison forearm her in the face. That means it's time for a trip to the floor so Allie can check Laurel's makeup. Back in and Laurel gets in a few slaps as even Josh is sounding bored with this match. Laurel hits a curb stomp for the pin at 3:56.

Rating: D. We're three days away from the biggest show of the year and TNA is showcasing a newcomer instead of building up the matches they've got coming up. It says a lot when Josh Matthews, who can get hyped over whatever latest stupid sitcom he's shilling for Pop, sounds like he'd rather be anywhere else. Laurel was watchable and the gimmick works but not the right time to debut it.

Allie announces Laurel as the winner, as per Maria's orders.

Lashley offers a title shot to anyone who takes Ethan out.

Drew Galloway is in the ring and calls out Aron Rex for a chat. Galloway talks about how he made this the place to be (for unemployment checks) so you're welcome. Rex: "First of all, get your own catchphrase." Aron promises to beat Drew up like a greasy haired loser so Drew brings up the stuntman. This Sunday there can only be one and that's going to be Drew

Galloway. Security comes out to break up the brawl but both guys get in cheap shots.

Decay promises to destroy the Hardys.

Long recap of Decay vs. House Hardy.

Reby Hardy vs. Rosemary

Reby throws her around to start but gets choked down. Some forearms to the back have Reby in trouble but she grabs a Twist of Fate, only to have Steve get on the apron for a distraction. Reby goes after Steve and it's the mist to Reby's eyes for the DQ at 3:10.

Rating: D-. Yeah this was all you could have expected. Neither of them are regular wrestlers and the "match" was your old school Divas catfight instead of anything resembling wrestling. This feud can't end quickly enough for me as I'm tired of hearing them say the same things for months on end.

Post match the big brawl breaks out and Rosemary gives Reby a Side Effect through a table.

Lashley wins the coin toss for his team.

Back from a break, Decay beats on Matt and Jeff even more. They fight to the back where Matt is electrocuted by a cable and we go to three camera shots at once with Steve shouting DECAP.

Cody Rhodes vignette.

Maria and Gail have another sitdown interview with Maria insisting on being introduced properly. They insult each other a few times and argue over whether the title or the Hall of Fame is more important.

Tyrus is talking about the Bound For Gold match when Eli Drake interrupts. A business partnership is offered but Tyrus isn't interested. Then what's the point of his character?

We run down the Bound For Glory card. The X-Division Title isn't mentioned.

Ethan gives his team a pep talk.

Team Carter vs. Team Lashley

This is Lethal Lockdown, meaning there's a cage with weapons around the ring. Two men will start for five minutes and then Lashley's team sends in a man for a 2-1 advantage for two minutes. After those two minutes are up, Team Carter sends in a second man to even things up. The teams alternate every two minutes until all eight are in. At that point the cage roof lowers and it's one fall to a finish.

Carter is in the ring to start but Lashley sends Bennett out to start instead. They slug it out to start with Carter getting the better of it, only to walk into a spinebuster. A clothesline gets Carter out of trouble and both guys are down until it's Galloway giving Lashley's team their advantage. The beating is on and we take a break.

Back with Rex coming in to even things up and the good guys take over, as is always the case in these things. Lashley gives his team another advantage as the clock is all over the place here. There's nothing to talk about here as they're just hitting each other over and over during these periods. Moose even things up and hits a spinning crossbody but everything evens out until it's Maria coming down the ramp.

Bennett tells her not to get in though so the brawling continue until Gail Kim comes out and throws Maria inside. That lasts all of ten seconds as Maria runs out with Gail chasing her up the ramp. I'm SO glad they were added here and not, say, whoever is in the X-Division Title match. Ah right, WE DON'T HAVE ONE OF THOSE FOR THE PAY PER VIEW.

Back from another break with Lashley's team in full control until Lashley has them stop for a meeting, allowing Rex to come back with a chair shot. Moose and Rex take turns beating Lashley down with various weapons. Bennett gets in a pipe shot on Rex and superkicks a chair into Moose's face.

Moose does the same thing with a dropkick but walks into the Futureshock. It's down to Carter vs. Lashley with Ethan winning a slugout and sending him head first into the cage. The TK3 is no sold so Lashley spears him

down and grabs the head and arms choke. Carter goes for the ropes but it doesn't matter inside the cage. Ethan passes out at 29:03.

Rating: C+. The women being a big waste of time aside, this was a standard Lethal Lockdown with an odd ending as Carter probably shouldn't lose to end the go home show. Lashley continues to look dominant and he probably should drop the title on Sunday. The other people were really just background noise here, which is why this was such a waste of a gimmick. Just do an eight person tag or something.

Lashley's choice for the main event: no holds barred.

Overall Rating: D+. Bound For Glory, assuming it happens, really isn't looking that hot on paper and this show didn't do it many favors. The matches have all been built up well enough but they're still not interesting. The main event being no holds barred doesn't do much for me and the X-Division still not having a match isn't much better. The company certainly isn't heading in on a high note but that's pretty standard anymore.

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New Column: Smackdown Is Better

Another column where the title should tell you everything. We're looking at a few reasons why the blue show is just flat out better.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-smackdown-is-better/>

Monday Night Raw – September 26, 2016: I Didn't Want It To Be This Way

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 26, 2016

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're past Clash of Champions and this is going to be an interesting show. The key here is Raw's competition as they're up against Monday Night Football and a Presidential debate that is likely going to break a lot of viewership records. Kevin Owens is still Raw World Champion and Roman Reigns picked up the US Title from Rusev last night it's time to start looking towards the Cell. Let's get to it.

One more note: I was in the arena for the show last night so this is my second time seeing this.

There's no intro as we're heading straight for the opening match.

Translation: PLEASE DON'T CHANGE THE CHANNEL YET! I can completely accept this.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Rematch from last night with Reigns defending. The fans want Lana as Rusev takes him down with a front facelock. That's going to keep the people from watching the debate. Reigns is cheered quite strongly as he kips out of a headscissors but gets double legged back to the mat.

Rusev gets one off a suplex and starts in on Reigns' back. The nine corner clotheslines get Reigns out of trouble but he can't lift Rusev up for the powerbomb because of the back injury. We take a break and come back with Rusev putting on a bearhug to keep up the simple psychology. A dropkick hits Reigns in the mouth and some gutwrench suplexes get two. Back to the waistlock as the match slows down again.

Reigns fights up with more clotheslines and a big boot but the Superman Punch is countered, sending them both falling out to the floor. We come back from another break with Reigns headbutting him off the top and hitting a middle rope clothesline. Geez man enough with the Lex Luger style offense.

Reigns still can't powerbomb him so Rusev gets in a spinwheel kick. More headbutts and another kick to the head give Rusev another two. Reigns' latest comeback is stopped with a superkick and the fans are really getting into this in a way you almost never hear for a Reigns match. The Accolade is broken up but Lana offers a distraction to break up the Superman Punch. The apron kick staggers Rusev (and gets a great reaction from the crowd) and they fight into the crowd for a double countout at 25:38.

Rating: B. The match was another good outing for the two of them and the ending sets up a rematch in the Cell, which is going to receive a divided reception depending on your taste in Cell matches. Maybe it was just the Cincinnati crowd or maybe it's because he's in the midcard instead of the main event but Reigns was getting a great reaction here. This is the kind of role he's made for: an athletic freak who can take a beating and give out one of his own. Good match here.

Post match Rusev gets a chair and hits Reigns over the back. They get inside and Reigns gets in a spear to put Rusev down. Reigns sits in the chair and poses with the belt before hitting Rusev with the chair to even things up.

WWE2K17 ad with Ambrose's appearance getting a huge pop.

Here's Mick Foley for a chat about last night's Cesaro vs. Sheamus match. The thought of the series ending in a draw seemed to be a mathematical impossibility (not really) but that's what's happened. Foley brings out Sheamus and Cesaro with Sheamus almost immediately cutting him off to say this was about physical dominance.

Cesaro talks about doctors holding Sheamus back last night and an argument breaks out over who was more dominant. Foley cuts them off to say they're both right and they're both getting a championship opportunity....which they're getting together as they're fighting for the Tag Team Titles. Cesaro: "SAY WHAT???" Foley tells them to get over it and just team together because that's his decision.

I had a very bad feeling that this was where they were going and while it's not the worst idea in the world (Raw is dying for tag teams at the moment), it feels like the TNA way of getting here: a bunch of matches that did nothing but fill time until we get to the end result. Sheamus and Cesaro had some good matches (even one very good one) but they drove the feud into the ground to the point where I didn't care how good the matches were since I had absolutely no desire to watch them.

And now, none of that matters because they're basically saying the whole thing was a tie and we're just going to do something different. It comes off as lazy booking and a way to fill in time, which is one of the worst things you can do in wrestling. I'm sure they'll be a decent team but they better not cut New Day's title reign off this close to the record.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending in a rematch from last night after Xavier Woods used Francesca II. The match starts fast with Kofi having to dodge a diving Anderson. It's off to Big E. for the Unicorn Stampede with Woods blowing

the trombone in time with the stomps. Gallows, apparently not a music fan, pulls Big E. out to the floor and superkicks him in the face.

Anderson adds a running kick to the face for two and the champs are in quick trouble. Gallows gets in a chokeslam and we take a break.

Anderson's powerbomb gets two and we hear about Demolition's title reign being in reach. A kick to the head finally allows the hot tag to Big E. for the suplexes. Big E. misses a charge into the post though and a running boot to the face gets two.

That's enough of being on defense for Big E. so he spears Anderson through the ropes, setting up the Midnight Hour for two with Gallows making the save. Kofi is sent shoulder first into the steps and the Magic Killer gets a very close two on Big E. They had me on that near fall. A VERY bloody Kofi comes back in and hits Trouble in Paradise to pin Anderson and retain the titles at 11:03.

Rating: C+. They're doing really well at making me buy into the title changes here and that's hard to do when it comes to a regular TV title defense. Anderson and Gallows are done as challengers now and I'm really not sure where they go from here. Sheamus and Cesaro are fine for placeholder challengers but New Day really should break the record when they're this close. It would be a waste of time not to.

We look at Kevin Owens injuring Seth Rollins' ribs in their match at Clash of Champions. Stephanie McMahon sent a second referee down for the count, seconds after Rollins would have had the title won. After the show ended, HHH arrived and asked Stephanie how it went ("Great.").

Sheamus and Cesaro (back in his suit) are bickering when Foley comes in. Mick starts yelling about how much potential these two have together because they could shake up the tag division. He'll even give them a chance tonight in a tag match. Foley showed a lot of fire here, as is his custom. Remember that.

Bayley vs. Anna Fields

Fields chokes her on the ropes to start and we hit an early chinlock. Bayley comes back with her elbows and clotheslines, setting up a quick

Bayley to Belly for the pin at 2:04.

Post match Bayley says she's not done with Sasha and Charlotte after that triple threat because she wants to hug that Women's Title.

And now, the bad part of the show. Foley goes in to see Stephanie and asks about the referee issue in last night's main event and telling HHH it was great. Stephanie ERUPTS on Foley, talking about how it should have been his responsibility to get a new referee out there. Instead, he was probably with Sheamus and Cesaro because he thinks with his heart instead of his head. She hired him because of his mind as a businessman (Huh?) and wants him to be more like her. Instead of showing the fire he had earlier, Foley just stands there and takes this because she's Stephanie.

This is every problem with Stephanie rolled into one promo. Not only is it part of a story that is taking WAY too long to go anywhere (I'd be shocked if we get any real resolution before the Royal Rumble) but this is Mick Foley, a three time WWE World Champion and a WWE Hall of Famer. He's one of the best talkers with some of the best fire of all time but he's standing here cowering in front of Stephanie because that's what happens to people around her.

Brock Lesnar, Charlotte, Sting, Roman Reigns and now Mick Foley all have nothing to say back to her because she's Stephanie and the most intimidating presence of all time. Oh except for when she's fun Stephanie who dances with kids and is just a regular soccer mom. This has been going on for years now (keep in mind that Stephanie debuted SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO and first became an authority figure in 2000) and if we're lucky she gets one bit of comeuppance a year. Other than that it's all Stephanie browbeating everyone else and if you don't like it, deal with it because she's Stephanie.

Rich Swann/Cedric Alexander vs. Drew Gulak/Lince Dorado

Swann and Alexander get an inset promo talking about how they're here to have fun but they're not underestimating their opponents. This didn't air in the arena and it would have helped quite a bit. Gulak and Dorado get their Cruiserweight Classic videos and again they're better than nothing. We get the big handshake to start for a compliment to the purple ropes,

which take forever to set up and take down.

Dorado and Swann trade headscissors to start and nip into a stalemate. Everything breaks down and Dorado moonsaults onto all three as we take an early break. Back with Drew holding Swann in a chinlock before it's back to Dorado for some chops. The hot tag bring in Alexander for some forearms and a running kick to Gulak's head. A Lumbar Check sends Dorado to the floor and Swann sunset flips Gulak for the pin at 8:25.

Rating: C. This was the big popcorn break match of the night and it's still not hard to see why. Again, the wrestling is fine but the whole division is being wedged into a show that is already bloated. Swann and Alexander have some personality but Dorado and Gulak are just warm bodies in the eyes of the fans. It's better than last week but they still need some adjustments to make people care.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Nick Cutler/Willis Williams

Cesaro takes Cutler over with a one armed delayed vertical suplex but Sheamus drops to the floor instead of tagging in. For some reason he gets on the apron with his back to the ring so Cesaro can tag him in with a slap. The ten forearms make it even worse for Cutler and it's off to Williams, who is taken down with a hard clothesline. The jobbers actually start working on Cesaro's arm for a few seconds before Sheamus Brogue Kicks both guys. Cesaro pins the unconscious Williams at 3:33.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what it needed to be, though it's still forced and something that should have come months ago without the long feud in the first place. We haven't had a wacky partnership that went somewhere important since Kane and Daniel Bryan so this is as good as anything else they have.

Video on TJ Perkins.

TJ talks about wanting to be here for eighteen years but here's Brian Kendrick to interrupt. Kendrick says it's his title to win because Perkins owes him for his career. A brawl is teased and they'll fight at some point in the future.

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.

Rollins is on his way to the ring to interrupt the upcoming Highlight Reel but Foley cuts him off because Seth isn't medically cleared. All Rollins can hear are Stephanie's words coming out of Mick's mouth.

TJ Perkins vs. Tony Nese

Non-title with both guys being TNA castoffs because they're dumb that way. The much stronger Nese throws Perkins around to start and he cartwheels out of TJ's ankle scissors to show off. An early kneebar attempt doesn't work for TJ as Nese sends him outside for a superkick and a big dive to take us to a break. Back with Perkins grabbing a Black Widow but getting planted with a reverse gutwrench suplex.

The fans chant for Harambe (the gorilla who was shot at the Cincinnati Zoo, which was a recurring trend all night long) and CM Punk as TJ fights back with uppercuts and a jumping neckbreaker out of the corner. A gutbuster looks to set up a tornado DDT but Perkins is draped over the top rope instead. TJ is right back up with the fireman's carry into an enziguri (Fans: "RANDY SAVAGE!") and the kneebar makes Nese tap at 8:50.

Rating: C+. I know the fans don't care but this was entertaining stuff, partially because we have a reason to care about Perkins. Something as simple as being the champion tells us more about him than we know about anyone else and the announcers did a good job of building Nese up as the perfect athlete who could take down the champ. Good little match here, though the fans really didn't care.

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Pedro Morales.

Sasha vs. Charlotte and Perkins vs. Kendrick for the respective titles

next week.

Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson are going to be in Los Angeles next week to take care of Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens.

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. Instead here are Enzo Amore and Big Cass to interrupt and ask Jericho how they're doing. Jericho says they're just fine but Enzo and Cass ARE ON THE LIST.

After Owens corrects Jericho's spelling, Cass accuses Jericho of being Santa Claus. Jericho: "Maybe I am Santa Claus! Maybe I'll come down there and sit on your lap!" Cass points out that people sit on Santa's lap but Jericho said he was going to punch Cass in the face. A fan poll makes Jericho even angrier but as it turns out, Foley just made a match between these four.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

Jericho and Enzo start us off but first we need to pause for the scarf removal. An armdrag has Jericho so frustrated that he crawls over for a hug from Owens. Kevin comes in and gets dropped by Cass so it's time to launch another human being over the top rope as a projectile. Sidewalk slams have the Canadians in trouble but Jericho sidesteps a charge to

send Cass outside as we take a break.

Back with Enzo pounding on Jericho in the corner and getting two off a high crossbody. Owens offers a quick distraction though and it's time for the villains to take over. Thankfully that means Owens doing Enzo's dance across the apron because he knows how to mock a crowd. Jericho and Owens take turns beating on Enzo with Owens handling the trash talking ("THAT'S THE LEAD SINGER OF FOZZY!").

Enzo blocks a superplex but dives into a dropkick, setting up Owens' backplash for two. Owens to the referee: "I'm the Universal Champion!" Referee: "It was two!" Owens: "But he shouldn't even be out of NXT yet!" Enzo finally gets in a right hand to make the tag off to Cass for the house cleaning. For some reason Jericho decides to slap Cass, earning himself a boot to the face. The two of them head outside and it's Enzo hitting his middle rope DDT for two on Owens. The powerbomb puts Amore away at 16:37.

Rating: C. Owens' trash talking aside, this was just your standard main event tag. Enzo and Cass are fine for this role and it's already more entertaining than seeing them talk about buying a timeshare in Puerto Rico. They're still making sure to protect Cass and it's way too early to even think about a split so this is about as good as it's going to get for them at the moment.

The show wraps up just after the match ends. Post show, Owens and Jericho kept beating on Enzo until Sami Zayn came out for the save. Posing ensued to close out the night.

Overall Rating: D+. This show suffered had the same problem as so many others: burnout. The first half hour was a good, hard hitting match, followed by an entertaining Tag Team Title match. Then it was Stephanie treating Foley like a dog who tracked mud into her house and a cruiserweight tag match that didn't need to be on the show.

The main event was a nice pick up but they really need something to fire the crowd up in the middle. Maybe a Sami Zayn match instead of putting him on Superstars? At the end of the day, three hours is too much on TV and it's even worse when you're watching it live. The show has good stuff

on it but that good stuff is dragged down by so many other things, the biggest of which is just time itself. It wasn't a horrible show but you could tell when the debate came on because the show just gave up.

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NXT – September 28, 2016: Dusting Off the Classic

NXT

Date: September 28, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

This is an interesting time for NXT as we're still moving closer to Toronto but it's still too early to really know a lot of the card. We do however have a new #1 contender to the Women's Title in Liv Morgan, who Asuka agreed to face without seeming that worried about it. We've also got some cruiserweights around so maybe they'll make an appearance tonight. Let's get to it.

General Manager William Regal announces the second annual Dusty Rhodes

Tag Team Classic Tournament, comprised of sixteen teams with the finals coming in Toronto. First round matches begin next week.

Opening sequence. Total time taken on Then, Now and Forever plus Regal's announcement: seventy two seconds.

Tye Dillinger vs. Angelo Dawkins

Dillinger does his cartwheel to start and says that's a ten. He mocks Dawkins' mixing bowl thing (Has that EVER been explained?) and avoids a spinning splash in the corner. A flying forearm and Russian legsweep set up the Tyebreaker for the pin on Dawkins at 2:25.

Post match here's Bobby Roode to say that was.....impressive. Roode came here to propose a tag team to enter the Dusty Classic. Dillinger shakes on it and Perfectly Glorious is formed. Graves: "HALLELUJAH!"

Connor's Cure video.

Hideo Itami is ready to face an athlete like Lince Dorado, who has the heart Austin Aries is lacking. Maybe Aries needs to be put to sleep, again.

Ealy Brothers vs. Revival

Non-title and the Ealy Brothers are identical twins named Gabriel and Uriel. Actually never mind as here's Samoa Joe to beat up the brothers. Revival slowly backs away and applauds Joe as they leave.

Joe puts this on Regal and gets in a few more shots on the twins for fun.

Dan Matha arrives next week.

Mandy Rose vs. Ember Moon

Rose actually hits a heck of a forearm to start but gets kicked in the ribs for her efforts. A springboard crossbody gets two and Mandy is already in big trouble. Something like an abdominal stretch slows Moon down and a clothesline gets two. A tilt-a-whirl into a facebuster (Dalton Castle's Bang A Rang) gives Mandy another near fall but Ember sends her into the buckle, setting up the Eclipse for the pin on Mandy at 3:09.

Rating: C-. If Rose can dye her hair red, Eva Marie is out of a job. Mandy has a comparable look and can actually wrestle a coherent match, putting her light years ahead of Eva, whose whole gimmick is that she can't even be trusted to actually, you know, wrestle. Moon is almost guaranteed to be the next big challenger to Asuka and that's just fine.

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa want to win the Dusty Classic and then get the Tag Team Titles from the Revival.

Authors of Pain vs. Jesus Yurnet/Jonathan Cruz

Yurnet is slightly better known as Mr. 450. The Authors go right after them to start and Cruz is gorilla pressed out to the floor. The Russian legsweep/clothesline wraps Cruz up at 1:10.

Post match Paul Ellering says the next chapter will bring pain and that is all we need to know.

Regal can't get hold of Shinsuke Nakamura so he can't give us an update. He can however tell us about some Dusty Classic teams, or at least he could if Blake and Murphy didn't come in and start bickering some more. Regal tells them to go argue elsewhere.

Women's Title: Asuka vs. Liv Morgan

Asuka is defending and we get dueling LET'S GO LIV/ASUKA'S GONNA KILL YOU chants. They lock up to start and Liv's dropkick has no effect as Asuka takes her down and puts on something like the Rings of Saturn for the tap out at 55 seconds. This is EXACTLY what it should have been and is probably a record of some sort.

Asuka says no one is ready for her.

Next week: Cedric Alexander/Andrade Cien Almas vs. Revival in a first round Dusty Classic match.

Lince Dorado vs. Hideo Itami

They shake hands to start. Dorado misses an early charge into the corner but backflips away from one of Hideo's kicks. A jumping knee to the back

of Hideo's neck doesn't do much good as an even harder kick to the chest drops Dorado. Lince comes right back with a dropkick to send Itami outside, setting up an Asai moonsault to drive Itami onto the ramp.

Back from a break with Itami getting kicked again, only to get in the tornado DDT neck snap across the top. Dorado's Tajiri handspring is almost countered into the GTS but Dorado reversed into a crucifix for two. Lince misses a shooting star press and that means it's time for the running kicks. The GTS puts Dorado away at 10:22.

Rating: B. This summed up so many of the problems with the cruiserweight division in a ten minute match. First of all, it wouldn't be a stretch to have Itami as a cruiserweight but because of who he generally fights, he's a heavyweight. Even though he is a heavyweight though, he had issues dealing with Dorado here.

Ignoring that though, it's not a big deal for the cruiserweight to be fighting the heavyweight. Over on Raw, so far at least, it's been cruiserweights vs. cruiserweights and that's almost all it can be. Once that stops, why should a cruiserweight go after their own title if they can fight for the heavyweight title? Now that we've seen people like Daniel Bryan, CM Punk, Seth Rollins and Finn Balor win the top titles in the company, it's pretty ridiculous to have them fight over a weight class title. The match was good though as Itami has gotten a lot better since coming back.

Post match here's Austin Aries to jump Itami but has to run away when Itami gets back up. Hideo tells him to get back in here to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. As is so often the case, the wrestling wasn't the point here. They managed to fit in five matches (and introduce a sixth) while also announcing a tournament and doing a run-in after the main event in fifty two minutes, including commercials. There's something so fun about watching a show when they know exactly what they want to do and then go out and do it so well. This show is quick and easy to watch but also entertaining and well put together at the same time. You can feel the Ryan Ward effect on here and that's a good thing.

Results

Tye Dillinger b. Angelo Dawkins – Tyebreaker

Ember Moon b. Mandy Rose – Eclipse

Authors of Pain b. Jesus Yurnet/Jonathan Cruz – Russian
legsweep/clothesline combo to Cruz

Asuka b. Liv Morgan – Double armbar

Hideo Itami b. Lince Dorado – GTS

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Clash of Champions 2016: Champions Clashing At A Champion's Level

Clash of Champions 2016

Date: September 25, 2016

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the first Raw only pay per view and things are starting to get interesting around here. Tonight's main event is Seth Rollins challenging Kevin Owens for the WWE Universal Championship but the big question is what role HHH will play in the whole thing. Other than that we have Roman Reigns challenging Rusev for the US Title and New Day defending the Raw Tag Team Titles against Anderson and Gallows. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Alicia Fox vs. Nia Jax

Rematch from Raw when Jax mauled Alicia in a no contest. Fox runs right at her with a dropkick but gets rammed hard into the buckle for her efforts. Something like a half nelson chinlock keeps Fox in trouble and her kicks to the head have no effect. Back up and Nia misses a charge in the corner, allowing Fox to get in a few dropkicks to little avail. A high crossbody sets up the scissors kick for two and that's probably it for Alicia. Nia runs her over and hits her Samoan drop for the pin at 4:56.

Rating: D+. That's exactly what this should have been as Fox gave her just a little more challenge than usual but there was little doubt about what was going to happen here. Nia should be one of the next challengers to the Women's Title and it would be cool to see her against some of the top stars in the division soon. Alicia was fine here and looked as good as she always does.

The opening video focuses completely on the titles and what it means to be champion. It's exactly what you would expect here and nothing out of the box whatsoever.

Raw Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending but first they have to talk about two guys trying to split them from their titles like Brangelina. Of course, Anderson and Gallows are the kind of guys who give out raisins at Halloween and wear tube socks with flip flops. Anderson and Gallows start fast by taking out Big E. on the floor and Liger Bombing Kofi for a close two in the first thirty seconds. Even Woods takes a beating on the floor and has Francesca II thrown at his feet.

Kofi can't get a sunset flip so he dropkicks Gallows instead and makes the diving tag off to Big E. The Warrior Splash crushes Anderson but he knees Big E. in the face to block the spear through the ropes. Gallows comes in off another tag and the Boot of Doom gets two with Kofi having to dive in for a save. It's back to Kofi, who dives right into a spinebuster for two more.

Anderson and Gallows are a step ahead of them here and it's working really well. A chokeslam plants Kofi but he gets out of the Magic Killer. Big E. tags himself back in and it's Trouble in Paradise into the Big Ending but Gallows pulls Big E. out at the last second. Kofi dives onto Gallows and Woods gets in a Francesca shot, setting up the Midnight Hour to retain the titles at 6:38.

Rating: B+. Where in the world have they been hiding this? They rocked this one throughout and it's one of the fastest paced opening matches I've seen in a very long time. That win should give New Day Demolition's record (which they would get in the middle of December) and that's going to be a big deal. I'm not sure who challenges them next, unless they go with the Sheamus/Cesaro nightmare I've been thinking of for a few weeks now. I loved this though and it was giving me flashbacks to Damien Sandow vs. John Cena: not the most technically classic stuff but I was WAY into the near falls.

WWE Network ad, including Hulk Hogan.

We recap the Cruiserweight Title match which doesn't have much of a story. TJ Perkins won the title in the Cruiserweight Classic and Brian Kendrick won a four way on Monday to get the shot.

Perkins says he's nervous but knows what it takes to get here. Kendrick knows the same thing but TJ is confident he's keeping his title. WHY WAS THIS NOT ON RAW????

Cruiserweight Title: TJ Perkins vs. Brian Kendrick

Kendrick is challenging. Perkins comes out to a video game style theme as we hear about Kendrick driving Perkins to wrestling lessons because TJ didn't have a driver's license yet. They trade waistlock takedowns to

start and Kendrick slows it down with a headlock. The threat of a kneebar sends Kendrick bailing to the ropes and the floor.

TJ goes after the veteran and gets caught in a veteran move as Kendrick ties him up in the ring skirt. Back in and TJ grabs a Muta Lock but Kendrick drops him throat first across the top rope to start in on the neck. Kendrick stretches on the neck and kicks at the head, only to have TJ come back with a double chickenwing into an atomic drop.

Three Amigos look to set up something on top but Kendrick breaks it up. That's fine with TJ as he dives off the top with a hurricanrana to take Brian from the apron to the floor. Back in again and the Captain's Hook is countered into the kneebar but Brian gets out and grabs Sliced Bread #2. Perkins pops back up and hits a modified enziguri to set up the kneebar to retain at 10:32.

Rating: C+. Who is TJ Perkins, who is Brian Kendrick and why should I care? Neither guy has a character, neither guy is overly interesting and I only saw one of them on Raw. What was supposed to be interesting here and who was I even supposed to cheer for? They've got a LONG way to go with this match and letting them have a pretty standard match on pay per view with no story isn't going to get them anywhere.

Post match Perkins gets interview time but Kendrick comes in for a handshake, which turns into a headbutt to the champ.

Cesaro is ready for the final match in the best of seven series. Aren't we all.

We look back at matches 1-6.

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

It's the final match in the best of seven series and the winner gets a championship opportunity, whatever that's going to mean. Sheamus starts fast with some right hands but gets uppercut off the apron. The uppercut train makes things worse for Sheamus so he goes for the bad shoulder to take over. A top rope clothesline gets two on Cesaro but he stops a charging Sheamus by raising a boot.

Cesaro's DDT gets two and he actually follows it up with a 619 of all things. Well that's fresh. Three straight Irish Curses get two for Sheamus and we hit the Cloverleaf. The Brogue Kick is countered into the Swing which sets up the Sharpshooter to make Sheamus scream. Unfortunately it doesn't make him tap (meaning the feud would be over) so Cesaro kicks him out to the floor instead.

There's a suicide dive and both guys are down with Cesaro LANDING ON HIS HEAD. He's all shaken up (understandably so) but the Brogue Kick still only gets two. The Neutralizer gets the same so they do the big slugout with Cesaro getting the better of it, only to have Sheamus pull himself to the top.

Cesaro is right there with a dropkick and they head to the top with Cesaro falling off but catching a diving Sheamus with an uppercut. White Noise on the floor has Cesaro in even more trouble but he posts Sheamus and sends him over the barricade. Both guys are stunned and somehow this isn't a countout yet. Cesaro's arm is banged up and the match is a no contest at 16:49.

Rating: B. I WAS KIDDING ABOUT THIS THING CONTINUING!!! Geez man why can't they follow my good ideas? It was entertaining stuff for a power brawl but sweet goodness I stopped caring at least a month ago. We've seen them do this stuff so many times that it just isn't fun to watch anymore. Good match but REALLY tired story.

Sheamus has to be carried to the back as Cesaro wants to keep fighting.

Charlotte laughs at Bayley for thinking she belongs here when Bayley can't even beat Sasha.

Sami Zayn vs. Chris Jericho

Not much of a story to this one other than Sami wanting to fight Jericho, who is Owens' friend. Sami gets going a bit too fast with a right hand in the corner but gets punched in the face for his efforts. They head outside with Sami hitting the moonsault off the barricade but the referee accidentally blocks Sami from getting back in, allowing Jericho to get in the springboard dropkick.

Another quick beating on the floor sets up a chinlock on Sami but he fights up and hits his big flip dive to the floor. Back in and a Michinoku Driver gets two for Sami, only to have Jericho score with a step up enziguri. The Lionsault hits knees so Sami sends him outside for the diving DDT. Sami misses a Helluva Kick though and has to counter the Walls into a small package. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets another near fall so Jericho grabs a Codebreaker for the quick pin at 15:19.

Rating: B-. How in the world did that go fifteen minutes? Maybe I'm still trying to get over Cesaro and Sheamus continuing but this was hard to get into. Jericho winning the first match is fine as Sami is much better when he's fighting from behind so I'm hoping this doesn't wrap up immediately.

Stephanie McMahon and Mick Foley give Owens a pep talk. Owens is going to do what matters tonight: try to impress HHH. Oh and show that Rollins is the mistake instead of the man.

We recap the Women's Title match with Charlotte defending against Bayley and Sasha Banks. Charlotte injured Sasha and took the title at Summerslam but Bayley debuted and pinned the champ. A triple threat #1 contenders match was inconclusive so here's another triple threat for the title.

Raw Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks vs. Bayley

Charlotte, with Dana Brooke in her corner, is defending and Sasha takes her straight to the floor to take over. Back in and the challengers knock Charlotte outside so it's time for a big standoff. Charlotte gets inside again and is chopped right back down, allowing Sasha to tie her in the Tree of Woe.

Some running knees to the chest have Charlotte in trouble but Bayley takes her down and drops the running knee on Charlotte's chest. Dana finally does something by pulling Bayley to the floor with Charlotte and Sasha quickly following. A hard shot to Sasha's face has Charlotte in control but Sasha comes back with a headscissors and forearms. Bayley comes back in with a crossbody and running shoulders/knees in the corner. A miss sets up Sasha's knees to both of them in the corner with Bayley getting the worst of it.

Sasha gets all serious with the forearms but takes too much time going after Dana, allowing Charlotte to hit an STO of all things. Some near falls are exchanged and all three are down despite only Charlotte taking a big shot in the form of a Bayley to Belly. Charlotte gets double teamed for a bit but is still able to slam both of them down. A great looking double moonsault gets two on each and Natural Selection has Bayley in trouble.

Banks makes the save with the Bank Statement but Dana makes the save, leaving Bayley to grab a rollup for two more. Bayley has to break up another Bank Statement on Charlotte so Sasha puts her in the same hold. This time it's Charlotte with the save and she throws Sasha into the barricade to make it worse. Back in and Charlotte kicks Bayley into Sasha, setting up a big boot to retain the title at 15:32.

Rating: B+. They're nailing the wrestling tonight and the women have another awesome match because they just can. This was all kinds of fun with Charlotte looking great (especially with that moonsault), Sasha being her usual tough self and Bayley looking more than capable of hanging with either of them. If you give these women the chance to do something special, they're going to knock it out of the park one day.

Kickoff show recap.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Rusev. Reigns started going after US Champion Rusev and even ruined his wedding celebration by shoving Lana into a cake. Now normally that would be a heel act but it's Roman Reigns so we'll go with it. The match was scheduled to take place last month but Reigns attacked Rusev before the match. Again: acts of a hero.

US Title: Rusev vs. Roman Reigns

Rusev is defending. They strike it out to start with Rusev being knocked out to the floor. Back in and Rusev gets two off a spinwheel kick as the fans go with LET'S GO RUSEV/RUSEV SUCKS. That's certainly a new one. Now they switch over to the same thing for Reigns which fits a bit better. Some kicks to the ribs have Reigns in trouble but he comes back with clotheslines like any good face would. I mean, Reigns isn't a good face but that's what they do.

Reigns goes shoulder first into the post and the fans chant for CM Punk. Oh come on. We're seven minutes in. There's no way Punk can last that long. Back in and Rusev grabs a waistlock so we get a DELETE chant. A Samoan drop puts Rusev on the floor and Reigns hammers away but realizes this has to be back inside.

Rusev kicks him in the head for two but Reigns comes right back with a Superman Punch. The spear hits so Lana pulls the referee out and gets ejected as a result. Reigns gets in some apron kicks but gets caught in the Accolade. As you might expect, Reigns powers out and hits the spear to win the title at 17:11.

Rating: C+. As usual this was good but I have no reason to cheer Roman after any of this. Reigns is still a jerk and a horrible face in the vein of Diesel (who, also like Reigns, was screwed up by poor booking). He's fine in between the bells but the setup is always lousy and I have no reason to cheer for him because he barely has a character.

Rollins tells Stephanie and Mick that he's going to prove them wrong.

We recap the main event. Owens won the vacant Universal Title and Rollins was granted a rematch by Mick Foley. The real story here though is which of these two can impress HHH as Owens wants to prove him right but Rollins wants to prove him wrong. In other words: the wrestlers are here for the sake of impressing the bosses because that's how WWE works.

Raw World Title: Seth Rollins vs. Kevin Owens

Rollins is challenging and has to go after Owens as he heads to the floor early on. The champ is dropped in a heap so Rollins throws him back inside for some chops in the corner. A Blockbuster gets two but it's too early for the Pedigree or the springboard knee. The champ gets smart by kicking Rollins in the knee and hitting a great looking spike DDT. Some kicks to the back get two more and Owens stays on the knee.

A big backdrop over the top sends Rollins down hard onto the knee and Owens follows with a Cactus Elbow. We hit the chinlock and Owens promises to make Rollins fade to black. Owens: "FADE TO BLACK! GET IT???" After some shouting about being the foundation, Owens gets turned inside out

with a clothesline. A quick backbreaker gets two for Seth and it's time for the Spanish announce table.

That's for later apparently as Rollins takes him back inside for a Pedigree attempt, only to have Kevin superkick him in the leg. Rollins hits the jumping knee to the head but gets superkicked again. Seth gets in an enziguri before going down though and both guys are stunned. The springboard knee is countered into the pumphandle backbreaker for two on Seth so Owens goes up.

A super gutbuster (ala Dean Malenko) sets up a quick frog splash for two more and both guys are down. Owens takes it back to the floor and sets up the other table. A quick SUCK IT to the referee and another to Rollins sets up a missed backsplash. Back in and Seth gets in a frog splash of his own for a near fall of his own.

Rollins throws in his own SUCK IT and the Pedigree gets two with Chris Jericho coming out to put Owens' foot on the ropes. A chase scene gives us the obvious ref bump and of course Rollins gets the Pedigree a few seconds later. Jericho interferes again but gets sent outside, allowing Seth to hit a suicide dive. Owens takes one as well but here's another referee as Owens hits the Pop Up Powerbomb to retain at 25:09.

Rating: B. They really couldn't have HHH come out there so the feud could actually go somewhere? Owens winning is the right call as it's too early for him to lose yet (you know, aside from losing to Reigns on Monday) and Rollins can claim a screwjob to keep the feud going. By feud of course I mean with HHH and Stephanie, who are the top villains on the show. Still.

Jericho: "WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS!"

Overall Rating: A-. I had a great time here and there wasn't a single bad match on the show. Unfortunately, as they ALWAYS DO, Raw went on too long and started to kill some of the mood. That would be the part that wasn't killed by Sheamus vs. Cesaro continuing for reasons far beyond the mental capabilities of normal humans. It's a really good show but trim off a match or so (and redo the Cruiserweight stuff from the start) and it's a much better show.

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Middle Kingdom Wrestling – September 18, 2016 (Season 2 Finale): A Different Kind of Upgrade

Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: September 18, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentator: Eddie Strong

It's the season finale with MKW Champion Dalton Bragg defending against the huge King Michael. This has been a rather different season as there hasn't been much of a focus aside from the stuff over the title near the beginning. I'm still liking it well enough though and there's a story to get us here, which is the most important thing. Let's get to it.

M.A. vs. King of Man

This is a bonus match and a Kung Fu Showcase. No story or anything here

and I don't know who either of them are but that's standard around here. They trade kicks and strikes to start of course with King (there probably shouldn't be two Kings on the same show) getting the better of it until he gets thrown off the top. I don't remember that in the full two Kung Fu movies I've seen.

A nice looking headscissors sends M.A. flying and a Vader Bomb elbow gets one. M.A. comes back with some running clotheslines in the corner as Strong (dang it I miss Ferguson) tells us that M.A. is the heel. See, that's something so easy that a simple statement clears up. King gets caught in a hard chokeslam for two but he comes right back with a basement dropkick for two of his own.

We hit a dragon sleeper on M.A. as Strong tells us about the horrible weather in China at the moment. A missed moonsault from King sends both guys outside and M.A. hits a Triad Kick (Mafia Kick) for two. M.A. gets a bit more creative with a chokeslam spinebuster for yet another two, only to have King throw him down and hit a spinning top rope splash for the pin.

Rating: C+. I'm not sure where the Kung Fu part came in but this was another nice match with some time to make it work. Of course it's not exactly up to par with most stuff you'll see but it was still an entertaining match with one guy as the heel and the other as the face. A story would have been nice but at least we had something entertaining for the first half of the show.

Quick recap of King Michael vs. Dalton Bragg. Michael attacked Bragg earlier in the season and a match was made. Simple, yet effective.

Middle Kingdom Wrestling Title: Dalton Bragg vs. King Michael

Bragg is defending and this is anything goes. This is kind of an odd visual as Michael is huge and Bragg is a stick but he's still taller than Michael. I also don't buy for a second that Michael is 500lbs as he looks closer to 350. You can gimmick the weights but there's a limit. Bragg gets shouldered down and splashed for two so it's time for weapons.

Michael sets up a piece of wood over some boxes but has to shrug off some

clotheslines before easily blocking a suplex. Instead it's a chokebomb to put Bragg...onto the wood, which just kind of flew to the side instead of breaking. A World's Strongest Slam sets up some kendo stick shots but Bragg takes it away and pounds on Michael.

We hear about Bragg's deathmatch background (which was mentioned in season one) as Michael takes it outside where some of his cronies get in a few shots to Bragg's back. Another table is set up but Dalton gets in a few more kicks to stagger Michael in front of the table...for a very, VERY long time.....until a jumping kick knocks Michael onto the table (again, not through it) to retain the title.

Rating: C. This is a tricky one as the story was there but there's only so much you can do when Michael is a one dimensional monster and Bragg MIGHT weigh 140lbs if you put a half dozen bricks in his pockets. The match was watchable enough but I really could have gone with another segment between them or some promos about why these two wanted to fight.

Post match the Slam comes out for a staredown. Bragg punches him in the jaw and a really bad looking slugout wraps things up.

We get a graphic for an upcoming wrestling festival featuring the MKW roster and some other wrestlers, including the Powers of Pain. Well that's a bit of an upgrade.

Overall Rating: C+. For a stand alone show, this was fun enough but not so much as a season finale. For the last show we'll be seeing from these guys for months, your longest match probably shouldn't be between two newcomers without much of a story. That's where MKW starts to fall apart for me: they rarely have more than one or two stories going on at a time and that gives a show like this a hard time. It's still an easy sit through and that's important.

Overall season two was....odd. They set up the title match to start things off but then it was a few one off matches before we got to the six man (which is still confusing) and the season finale. It was cool to see the international talent but they all feel out of left field and therefore like filler instead of something out of MKW. I still liked it (partially due to the length of the shows and some better details in the stories we

had) but it would have been nice to have some better character development and a reason to care about these people. I'm not sure I'd call it an upgrade but it's definitely different.

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Monday Night Raw – April 29, 2002: It's Nitro

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 29, 2002

Location: HSBC Arena, Buffalo, New York

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

The question at this point is how bad can things get. The wrestling has been horrible but the stories have been some of the worst of all time with uninspired main eventers who look like they're about to collapse from old age. Maybe things can start to pick up soon because it can't get much worse. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Tonight: Hulk Hogan vs. William Regal. That's one of those matches you never expect to see as Hogan almost never worked against anyone other than a main eventer.

Intercontinental Title: Eddie Guerrero vs. Jeff Hardy

Eddie is defending and we hear about Lita breaking her neck in three places on the set of Dark Angel, which would keep her out of the ring for over a year. They start fast with Jeff grabbing an armdrag and his swinging sleeper drop for two. A quick trip to the floor lets the champ get his head together and it's time to chop away in the corner. Eddie's belly to back suplex looks to set up the slingshot hilo but Jeff is too annoyed at losing his bandana and rolls away.

Jeff scores with a superplex and starts hammering away in the corner. It's too early for the Swanton though and Jeff gets crotched. JR: "That can't feel good unless you're wearing a couple of cups." I think he means it makes it hurt less but JR often gets lost in his own talking. The Whisper in the Wind takes the referee down by mistake, allowing Eddie to get in a belt shot. The Frog Splash retains the title.

Rating: C+. Pretty good here but you could see that Jeff's head wasn't in it at this point. He was just doing his normal stuff and going through the motions while Eddie was doing whatever he could to keep the match together. The early days of his singles run weren't great but when Jeff's head was on straight, you can't deny that the talent was there.

Recap of Austin vs. Flair and Big Show joining the NWO.

Austin arrives and asks where that lying no good SOB is. Production worker: "Mr. McMahon isn't here tonight." Austin: "I don't mean that one!"

Here's Austin in the ring to call out Flair. Austin starts drinking immediately and says he has a story for us. After some Beverly Hillbillies discussion to start the WHAT chants, Austin goes through the same stuff we just saw a video on a few minutes earlier. The WHAT chants keep going until Austin says he wants Big Show but calls Flair out right now.

Flair comes to the stage and says he had nothing to do with what happened last week (which gets a mini recap because we need to fill in time). Ric apologizes and says Big Show is in India tonight so we'll get Austin/Bradshaw vs. Scott Hall/X-Pac with Flair as guest referee. The fans get where this is going immediately and seem interested, which is understandable as the promo was good but this is still leading to Austin/Bradshaw vs. the NWO. Austin promises violence if Flair tries anything.

That's where this whole story falls apart: for reasons that aren't clear, Austin is teaming up with Bradshaw to fight a bunch of washed up guys who are basically only there because WWE doesn't want to admit that they were stupid hires. Of all the people on the roster, they picked Austin to fill this role? The company is DYING for star power right now and they're using the biggest star of all time in this role? Is it any wonder why Austin was miserable around this time? It doesn't fit and I don't think anyone bought it in any form.

Booker T. is getting ready for his match when Goldust comes in. They won't be teaming together tonight and Goldust feels like the loneliest person since Macaulay Culkin in Home Alone. Goldust puts the blonde wig on Booker for luck. Booker: "If Big Bird and Spider-Man ever got busy, you would be the illegitimate lesbian." I have no idea what that means but the delivery was more than funny enough to make it work.

Booker T. vs. Rob Van Dam

Booker starts with some chops to the chest but gets kicked down for two. A quick powerbomb puts Rob in more trouble and it's off to a chinlock. Van Dam fights up and hits Rolling Thunder but here's Goldust to watch. Goldust gets on the apron for no reason other than to get us to the finish, meaning a collision with Booker. The Five Star gives Rob the easy pin.

Rating: C. This was as good as you would expect Booker T. vs. Rob Van Dam to be in about three minutes. See, that's the thing: maybe they should let these two perfectly talented wrestlers go like, seven or eight minutes? Have we gotten a reason that can't happen yet? Or maybe let one

of them fight with/against Austin to make the main event a bit more interesting? Nah, let's let them do three minute matches which do nothing for anyone.

Bradshaw says Big Show attacked him last week. Well duh.

Jazz is doing push-ups when Molly Holly comes up to ask if she's crazy. Apparently Jazz is challenging Bubba Ray Dudley for the Hardcore Title. Jazz just walks away.

Planet Stasiak is ready for Brock Lesnar. His axis is a bit out of whack and Brock has a tattoo on his back but it pales in comparison to Planet Stasiak.

Brock Lesnar vs. Shawn Stasiak

Stasiak goes right after him to start and is promptly splattered with a spinebuster. Brock posts him a few times and an overhead belly to belly makes it even worse. The F5 and helicopter bomb put Shawn away in a hurry.

Flair asks Debra to put in the good word with Austin, earning himself a slap. I forgot how worthless Debra was around this time.

Undertaker interrupts Sgt. Slaughter's phone call and wants him to deliver a message to Hulk Hogan: a call out is imminent. Didn't we just do this SAME EXACT THING about forty five minutes ago?

NWO vs. Steve Austin/Bradshaw

Flair is guest referee. Bradshaw gets chopped in the corner to start so he comes right back with chops of his own. It's off to Austin vs. Hall for the WHAT stomps and a clothesline for two. A hard whip sends X-Pac into the corner and it's back to Bradshaw as this match is already dying just a few minutes in. X-Pac dropkicks the knee out and it's time to start in on the leg.

Something like a powerbomb makes Bradshaw remember to sell the knee as the announcers debate how hard it is to be a referee. Austin gets the hot tag and the pop is so weak that I don't even notice him coming in. That

was STEVE AUSTIN getting such a weak pop. Everything breaks down and there's the Stunner to X-Pac for the pin. X-Pac's foot was on the ropes and Flair missed it again.

Rating: D-. This was sad. Like, actually sad. Somehow this feud has made the fans uninterested in seeing Steve Austin come into a match and clean house. If there is a single reason to have Austin wasted in this feud and not facing, I don't know, HULK HOGAN FOR THE TITLE IN AN ACTUAL DREAM MATCH, I've yet to hear it. Yeah I know about both of them wanting to protect their legacies but either could be bought for a big enough check.

The NWO complains to Flair, who didn't see the foot on the ropes again.

Here's Undertaker to call Hogan out. He remembers Hogan's first run (Wasn't that the one with Showdown At Shea?) and the fans cheering for him over and over. None of that matters though because he beat Hogan back in the day. Now, if you listen to Hogan on the Self Destruction of the Ultimate Warrior DVD, that's the biggest sin in wrestling. You know, because you're supposed to think Hogan won or something.

Undertaker takes credit for Hogan leaving the first time because Hogan was scared. Now he's so scared that Undertaker will beat him again and it's probably going to cost him the title to Chris Jericho on Smackdown. The crowd is just dying for this stuff and it's getting worse with every word. Hogan comes out and doesn't say anything as Undertaker keeps talking. Probably as bored as all of us are, Hogan punches Undertaker out to the floor to end this.

Hardcore Title: Jazz vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Bubba is defending and, in case you actually need this made clear, only his title is on the line. Before the match, Bubba basically says "yeah I'll beat her up because that's what I do to women." Jazz is the heel in this if that wasn't clear. Bubba puts her on the top rope and blows her a kiss. Then it's time for dancing together, followed by Bubba dancing alone.

Jazz gets caught up in the fake test of strength so she kicks him low. Some weapon shots to the head have Bubba in trouble so he bites her below

the belt. Bubba puts a trashcan over her head and does the Flip Flop and Fly, complete with the crotch thrusts. It's table time but here's Steven Richards with a guitar to knock Bubba out and steal the title.

Rating: F. So to recap: we had a bunch of dancing, a low blow, more dancing and then Steven Richards. So now we're supposed to be all impressed with Jazz because we don't need to actually give her a personality when we can have her kick men low. This was one of the dumbest things I've seen in a long time (or maybe since two segments ago) and you have to imagine these things are going to keep happening over and over.

Richards and Jazz run off together. JR can't believe this could happen because he doesn't remember it happening five times this month alone. After a break, Jazz and Richards escape in a car.

Regal is watching Hulk Hogan Rock N Wrestling (I knew I liked him) and is surrounded by a bunch of Hogan merchandise. He really doesn't understand this because it makes everyone look like a pillock. People should be praising him because he's someone with class. He's someone who speaks the Queen's English. He's someone who doesn't end every sentence with the word BROTHER. "Gets on my bloody nerves." Regal promises to use the power of the punch tonight.

Bradshaw and Austin are drinking beer when Flair comes in. The Texans still aren't convinced Flair is honest so next week it's the NWO vs. the three of them. WHY DOES THIS HAVE TO KEEP GOING???

European Title: Goldust vs. Spike Dudley

Spike is defending. Goldust beats the champ into the corner to start and loads up Shattered Dreams. It's fairly clear that he's waiting around on something but nothing happens, so instead it's time for more right hands. Another attempt at Shattered Dreams brings out Booker T. to attack, allowing the Dudley Dog to retain the title. Again: let this match go five minutes and maybe we can cut off some of the horrible stuff earlier in the show.

Hulk Hogan vs. William Regal

Non-title. Actually hang on because Regal would like to offer Hogan some tea. Hogan has a sip and spits it into Regal's face to start the beating. Cue Undertaker as the match is thrown out before it starts.

Undertaker very slowly beats on Hogan who just lays around. Hogan is busted open as this just keeps going because Hogan couldn't beat Regal up for a few minutes to cut down on some of this time. A chokeslam finally wraps this up to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Bring HHH back....please. He might be a longer winded talker than most of the people here but at least you might be able to get an entertaining match out of him every now and then. I still can't wrap my head around the fact that Austin is stuck in this AWFUL NWO story with freaking Bradshaw of all people because they need someone to put in there. I guess Booker T., Rob Van Dam, Eddie Guerrero, Rob Van Dam, Bubba Ray Dudley, Spike Dudley and William Regal are busy.

The first hour was much better with one of the longest matches on the show (less than seven minutes) between Hardy and Guerrero and Booker vs. Van Dam for all of three minutes but the focus shifted to the veterans and their stories to cripple the show for good. There are watchable elements on the show but they're completely bogged down by the old guys who won't go away. In other words, it's Nitro.

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Smackdown – September 27, 2016: NXT Style(s)

Smackdown

Date: September 27, 2016

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's a big night for Smackdown as we have a rare World Title match on free TV with AJ Styles defending against Dean Ambrose. We're less than two weeks away from No Mercy and it should be interesting to see where things go as we get ready for the triple threat and whatever else is announced before the show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Randy Orton to open the show. He's heard about Bray Wyatt talking about fear but thinks it's because Bray is scared himself. Bray comes on screen to talk about Hansel and Gretel. Bray has left his own trail of breadcrumbs that will lead Randy through the prison of his own mind. He holds up an hourglass and sings He's Got The Whole World In His Hands. Orton leaves to go after Bray.

Dean Ambrose says he's ready to fight AJ Styles tonight.

Usos/Ascension vs. American Alpha/Heath Slater/Rhyno

Alpha works on Jimmy's arm to start before a double monkey flip sends this Usos flying. Jey tries to go after Gable but gets pulled down into an armbar over the ropes. Jimmy offers a distraction and Jey chop blocks Gable again to take us to a break. Back with Gable still in trouble and Konor getting two. Gable tries to break free for the tag but everything breaks down and everyone not named Slater is knocked off the apron.

The hot tag brings in Heath for a big reaction, followed by some knees

and a leg lariat to the bad guys. A neckbreaker gets two on Jey with Konor diving in for the save. Jordan Cactus Clotheslines Viktor to the floor but the Usos make a blind tag, allowing Jimmy to kick Heath in the face. The jumping kick to the back of the knee sets up a Tequila Sunrise to make Heath tap at 10:00.

Rating: C. This was a fine way to set up the title match without having the champs lose in a regular tag match. I can't imagine anything other than the Usos taking the belts at No Mercy and that's all it should be. Slater and Rhyno have reached heights they have no right to be near so it's hard to call them anything other than a success. Another few weeks as champions would be fine but you have to take the belts off them and let us get to the Usos vs. Alpha for the real feud.

John Cena will be at ringside to scout the main event.

Miz has a Lebron James poster covered with one of his own.

Orton goes to what looks like the boiler room and sees an arrow left by Bray. For some reason he turns it around and goes the other way. When the camera pans back, the arrow has been turned around again and Erick Rowan is standing there in his mask.

Back from a break with Bray saying Orton might find out the meaning of the abyss tonight. The hourglass is almost out of sand.

Carmella/Natalya vs. Nikki Bella/Naomi

Naomi and Carmella get things going with the latter dangling instead of fighting. That earns her a quick spank and now it's Naomi's turn to moon walk. It's off to Nikki, who scares Carmella to the floor for a breather. Back with Naomi in trouble on the floor and Natalya putting on a chinlock. Carmella gets in a Bronco Buster, followed by Natalya's basement dropkick (which missed) for two. It was enough of a miss that the tag brings in Nikki a few seconds later and it's time for the showdown with Carmella (which seems to happen every week). Natalya offers a distraction though and Carmella gets the rollup pin on Nikki at 10:05.

Rating: D+. This small division is working at the moment, mainly because

they've split it up into two distinct stories. Unfortunately one of those is about how we're all supposed to love Nikki Bella, who still isn't all that interesting. Carmella is fine for a first victim for Nikki but hopefully it doesn't lead to yet another Nikki title reign.

Orton finds a message saying there's one way out. He opens a closet to find a cardboard cutout of himself with the eyes missing. Another message on another door asks Predator or Prey reveals....Rowan a few feet away but Orton doesn't open the door wide enough to see him. Good thing there was a camera waiting there right then.

Here are Miz and Maryse for his homecoming celebration. Maryse introduces a video package on Miz's career, including Real World clips, his time as a Tag Team and US Champion, his World Title win (still the only possible call) and capped off by the promo on Bryan from Talking Smack. Miz talks about the Cleveland Cavaliers winning the NBA Title and wonders why his celebration isn't as big. Mr. and Mrs. Miz are in the front row, as are Dolph Ziggler's parents.

Cue Ziggler because of course it's still Ziggler to go after Miz. Ziggler doesn't like Miz talking about his parents and goes to leave almost immediately but Miz laughs at Ziggler for failing again. Dolph brings up Miz cheating, which Miz interprets as yet another excuse. Miz says Ziggler has nothing left to offer for another shot and leaves but Ziggler calls for Mike to come back. All Ziggler has left is his career so he'll put that on the line. Miz agrees and the match is made for No Mercy. Uh...yay. Like really, yay.

Bray says when one door closes, another opens but he's watching Randy wander around like a mouse in a maze.

Becky Lynch comes out for a match but Alexa Bliss attacks her from behind and takes off her belt.

Curt Hawkins says gravity has to obey his laws. He's making a big announcement next week.

Bray wants to know where Orton is. As in any horror movie, he's right behind Bray and beats the heck out of him. Wyatt runs off so Orton puts

on the sheep mask for a little singing. I think the video breaks up as the voice starts distorting and it turns into Bray. It's not clear if that was intentional.

AJ Styles recaps his rise to the championship and says he'll still have the title after tonight.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Ambrose is defending and Cena is on commentary. Dean chops away in the corner as JBL asks if Cena really is a part timer or still a full time performer. Cena says nothing as Ambrose takes AJ onto the announcers' table for some right hands to the head. Back from a break with Ambrose hitting a running clothesline to put both guys down. A backbreaker gets two on the champ and we hit a cloverleaf.

Styles gets to the ropes so Dean gets in a suicide dive because every match needs a suicide dive. Back with AJ cranking on a Calf Crusher until Dean grabs his head to slam it onto the mat for the break. They slug it out until Dean gets two off a double chickenwing facebuster for two of his own.

AJ's torture rack powerbomb gets two more and a Pele puts Dean down again. He misses the springboard 450 though as Dean rolls away (it would have missed by a mile anyway) and they head outside where AJ hits Cena in the face. The distraction makes the referee miss a rollup, meaning Dean goes outside to hit Cena as well. The distraction lets AJ grab a rollup with tights for the pin to retain at 21:17.

Rating: B. Another good match here and they did a good job of setting up the triple threat. It's fairly certain that Cena isn't getting the title this soon and since there's almost no one around to face Dean, AJ retaining makes the most sense. That's not a bad thing though and the build has been strong, which is the best thing you can ask for in this sort of feud.

Cena AA's both guys to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a very NXT style show and that's the best

thing you can say about wrestling these days. The Orton vs. Wyatt stuff was an interesting idea to tie things together, though the ending wasn't all that great. Rowan wasn't a factor and Orton just finds Wyatt to beat him up? That's it? Other than that though this was all about setting up a big match to end the show and move us closer to the pay per view in a few weeks. Just a fun wrestling show here, as Smackdown often is.

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Lucha Underground – September 28, 2016: I'll Settle For The Small Stuff

Lucha Underground

Date: September 28, 2016

Location: Lucha Underground Temple, Boyle Heights, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

This season is still off to a rocky start as we're still waiting for the big stories to really take off. There are a bunch of minor stories going on but nothing is really picking up and making me want to stick around

and watch a lot of this stuff. Then again, the Lucha Underground tradition is to make things look horrible and then turn it around in a hurry. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Rey Mysterio Jr./Dragon Azteca Jr./Chavo Guerrero Jr., the Worldwide Underground, the cops investigating Dario Cueto and Vampiro getting in Prince Puma's head.

Dario comes in to see Sexy Star and suggests that she's going to lose the Gift of the Gods Title soon. It won't be tonight though as she's teaming up with the Trios Champions against the Worldwide Underground. Cueto leaves and Johnny Mundo comes in to officially introduce himself to Star. You would think they would have met somewhere in there. He promises to take the title from her but she squeezes his hand.

Siniestro De La Muerte vs. Prince Puma

They run the ropes to start and flip over each other until a snap hurricanrana puts Muerte down. Vampiro seems VERY pleased with the more aggressive Puma, who grabs something like a suplex but kneels down and bends Muerte's leg over his head. Puma tries to run a bit too much though and gets caught in a reverse powerbomb out of the corner. A big spinning kick to the face drops Muerte again but here's Mil Muertes to distract Puma. That isn't a DQ for some reason so Puma hits a modified Michinoku Driver and a Flatliner (with a look at Muertes) for the pin at 4:51.

Rating: C. This was a good showing for the new Puma as he almost had to evolve to stay relevant in the rapidly changing Lucha Underground. It's also cool to see the promotion use somewhat big names as jobbers as Muerte hadn't been around in a while but still has enough credentials that beating him means something.

Muertes goes after Puma but Catrina drags him away.

Cortez Castro goes in to see Dario, who gets up and hugs him. Dario is going to do everything he can to bring Cisco's killer to justice. You can hear Melissa Santos introducing Castro for his match so he leaves the office as Dario sneers.

Cortez Castro vs. Pentagon Dark

Castro clearly isn't ready and didn't know he was having a match. Cortez elbows him in the mask to start but gets kicked down almost immediately. The package piledriver gives Dark the win at 1:11.

Post match, Pentagon breaks Castro's arm and says he wants to do the same to Azteca or Guerrero.

Worldwide Underground vs. Drago/Aerostar/Fenix/Sexy Star

The women start things off and run the ropes a bit before Star's hurricanrana sends Taya over for a tag. Evans comes in for a bunch of flips (literally, and with the announcers mocking him for them) before handing it off to Black. That's fine with Drago, who legsweeps Black a few times before the good guys start speeding things up. Mundo cuts that off almost immediately with a superkick to Fenix. You can't have one superkick in a row though so Fenix superkicks Mundo right back down, followed by a Helluva Kick.

Instead Fenix drops Star into a legdrop for two but it's time to start the quadruple teaming in the bad corner. Taya hits some running knees in the corner and Star is busted open. Mundo hits Star by mistake though and the hot tag brings in Drago to speed things up again. Everything breaks down and they trade strikes before it's time for Fenix to hit the dives. Star sends Taya outside (where Taya seems to injure her ankle or leg) but gets superkicked by Johnny, sending her into a backslide for the pin at 8:52.

Rating: B-. This is more like it with the fast paced people flying all over the place and looking awesome like Lucha Underground is supposed to do. Mundo is likely going to wind up as the big bad of the show, which in a way is more interesting than having some supernatural character for a change. These tag matches are one of the things Lucha Underground does best and it worked well here too.

Catrina and Muertes aren't pleased with Muerte's latest loss. His punishment: CATRINA SUCKS OUT HIS SOUL, which she blows into Mil. She wants him to do the same thing to Puma. Stand there while she spits a

soul at him?

Dragon Azteca Jr. vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Mysterio is guest referee. Feeling out process to start until Chavo shoulders him down for a headlock. A springboard into a rollup gets two for Dragon and he grabs an armbar of his own. They head outside with Striker saying this is like a professional team playing a college team. I'm assuming he means Chavo is the pro team, assuming that means he's older, slower, and less popular.

Azteca gets posted on the floor and clotheslined back inside for two before it's back to the chinlock. A half crab is broken up thanks to a rope grab but Chavo shoves Rey down for breaking the hold. The distraction lets Dragon grab a rollup out of the electric chair for the quick pin at 7:15.

Rating: C. As is so often the case around here this season, this was really just there. Chavo really isn't that interesting and his just average matches aren't going to cut it around here. Then again that's probably why he's a heel. Going somewhere with Azteca and Mysterio would help a lot but that's not seeming likely right now.

Black Lotus is praying (I think?) at a shrine (Maybe?) to her parents (In theory?) and promises to have her Triad avenge them against Pentagon Dark.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling helped here but the same problem persists: what's the point of this show right now? Dario is of course the top villain but there's no real advancement with most of his stuff. The wheel deciding challengers for Matanza doesn't really help either as it's just him beating up people that we know he can beat up without much effort. Other than that there's the Worldwide Underground which isn't exactly top level stuff after we've had Matanza and Muertes around. This show was better but they need to actually do something soon.

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Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode 48

Clash of Champions, Raw, HAHA TNA and our first Mailbag segment.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-48-an-utterly-loaded-episode-featuring-cotc-and-raw-thoughts-smackdown-mailbag-questions-and-maybeour-second-to-last-tnalol-segment/>

Remember to send in your questions for this week's show! We already answered some of the questions on this show and we'll be doing it every week going forward.