

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXIII: Now That's More Like It Dead Man

Wrestlemania XXIII

Date: April 1, 2007

Location: Ford Field, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 80,103

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz, John Bradshaw Layfield, Joey Styles

To say this show was a success is an understatement. Until Rock vs. Cena, this show drew more PPV buys than any show in the history of the company, which says a lot when you consider what came before it. The main event here is Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga, which is the Battle of the Billionaires, as Donald Trump and Vince are backing the two respectively. The losing billionaire gets his head shaved. There's also Cena vs. Shawn in what should be awesome. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a montage of Wrestlemania logos which turns into your usual highlight reel.

We get a clip of the opening of Wrestlemania III before transitioning to Ford Field in the same city. Aretha Franklin is here again twenty years later to sing America the Beautiful again. That's a very nice touch, as are the clips from Tribute to the Troops.

Now we get the video for this year's show, which is the All Grown Up theme. It's a bunch of kids dressed like the stars who then turn into their adult selves.

Mr. Kennedy vs. CM Punk vs. Randy Orton vs. Finlay vs. Matt Hardy vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Edge

With this match, we start the tradition of having too many people in a single MITB match and overcrowding the thing. Everyone looks up at the

case until Kennedy goes to get a ladder. Orton heads to the floor to stop him as the big brawl begins. Finlay DIVES on everyone not named Edge, allowing the Canadian to make a climb, only to be stopped by Matt. They head to the floor, allowing Orton and Finlay to head up top for a brawl on the ladder.

They topple to the floor so it's Jeff going up, only to be shoved down by Kennedy. Booker goes to pull out a ladder but it's Horny's, meaning it's only about two feet tall. Punk takes it away and pounds on people with it, only to have Edge take over again. This is one of those matches that moves too fast to really keep track of things. Punk is bleeding from the forehead as Edge bridges a ladder between the ring and barricade.

Back inside and Booker takes over with kicks and spinebusters for everyone in sight. Before climbing though, here's a Spinarooni. The distraction lets the Hardys crush Booker with some ladders before Matt and Edge go at it a bit. The Hardys set up a ladder seesaw but Jeff is sent off the top to break up whatever they were going to do to Edge. Instead Edge suplexes Matt onto the ladder, only to be sent to the floor by Kennedy.

Kennedy pounds away on Matt but the Kenton Bomb only hits ladder. Instead it's Jeff with a Swanton to Mr. before the brothers team up to drop everyone in sight with the ladder. Both Hardys go up and start slugging it out on top of the ladder, only to be shoved into the top rope by Finlay. Edge hits the spear on Finlay and one for Orton and Booker as well. Kennedy and Matt take spears too and there's one for Jeff to nearly complete the set. Punk jumps over Edge to send him into the corner and become the only man standing.

Punk puts the ladder around his head and spins around a bit to take everyone out until Edge thinks wisely and DUCKS, allowing him to take out Punk's vulnerable ribs. Edge gets the big ladder and makes a climb, only to gets caught by Orton and shoved down to the floor. Jeff saves that though and climbs up on his own as Matt puts Edge on the ladder between the ring and the barricade. Jeff dives off the ladder THROUGH EDGE AND THROUGH THE LADDER! Needless to say, Edge and Jeff are DONE.

We're down to six people in the match now and it's Orton's turn to take over with RKOs all around. He picks up a regular sized ladder but Punk knocks him down and sets up a second ladder in the middle of the ring. Apparently Jeff is still on the floor despite Edge being taken out. Orton and Punk both climb up and it's an RKO off the top of the ladder to end Punk. Booker goes up but has to stop an RKO attempt with a Bookend off the ladder.

It's Matt vs. Booker on the ladder but Matt drops down and threatens to give Sharmell the Twist of Fate, drawing Booker down. There's the Twist to the King but Finlay (sporting a NASTY cut on the back of his head) shoves the ladder over. The Celtic Cross (White Noise) crushes Matt against the ladder but hurts Finlay's back in the process. Finlay is barely able to stand so here's Horny to climb for him.

Instead though Kennedy pops up the ladder...and gets smacked in the face by Horny. There's a fireman's carry roll off the ladder for the little guy's efforts. Finlay destroys Kennedy with the ladder but gets knocked off the ladder by Matt. Now it's Punk going up but Kennedy meets him on the ladder for a slugout. Punk shoves him off but Kennedy spears him in the ribs with another ladder, allowing Kennedy to climb up and win the case.

Rating: B. This was definitely the weakest of the matches so far as there were too many people in there and no one to have the big spots like Shelton. It's definitely good but this one lacked the pop that most of these matches had over the years. Kennedy would lose the case to Edge a few weeks later.

Video on the premiere of The Condemned so we can clear the ring out.

Kennedy warns every champion that he's coming for them and says he's Mr. Money in the Bank. Bank.

Batista is All Grown Up.

Great Khali vs. Kane

This is when Khali is still a decent monster who could move a little bit.

Kane is easily shoved down to start and then shoved to the floor for good measure. Back in and Kane slugs Khali, only to be chopped right back down. Off to the nerve hold before Khali slugs away in the corner. Kane comes back with punches of his own but is easily shoved down and across the ring.

Kane fires back with a right hand and tries the top rope clothesline but it only staggers Khali. Another shot sends Khali into the ropes and Kane has his opening. Kane heads to the floor and grabs a chain with a hook on the end which he used in the horror movie he was in around this time. Khali knocks him back and rips off the turnbuckle pad to distract the referee, allowing Kane to kick him low. In one of the big spots of the show, Kane slams Khali ala Hogan slamming Andre twenty years ago. That only gets two so they both grab chokeslams, but it's Khali hitting the Punjabi Plunge for the one footed pin.

Rating: D-. The slam was cool and the rest was completely horrible. Khali was nothing good and somehow he would get even worse. Kane was in that weird period for him where he was just kind of there and doing nothing of note. By period, I mean about a five year stretch of course. Terrible match but the slam was good.

Post match Khali chokes him out with the chain and no one makes the save.

The Divas say they're All Grown Up. The idea of taking them seriously is amusing.

Cryme Tyme tries to cheer up a now bald Eugene with an Extreme Expose dance party. That would be Kelly, Layla and Brooke (now Tessmacher) as a dance troupe. Instead Moolah and Mae Young show up and Eugene wants to dance with them. Cue REVEREND SLICK of all people to show us how it's done. This brings in Dusty Rhodes who says you can't have a dance party without him. The music comes back on and here are Sgt. Slaughter, Jimmy Hart and IRS to join in. Ricky Steamboat in full karate attire shows up until we get the Ron Simmons payoff.

Some Detroit Tigers are here.

US Title: MVP vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending and MVP is pretty new here. They head to the mat to start with MVP actually in control. Off to a headlock by the challenger but he has to shove Benoit to the floor to avoid the Crossface. Back in and Benoit can't hook the Crossface as MVP keeps it on the mat with the headlocks. Back up and MVP pounds Benoit into the corner but charges into an elbow. A superplex attempt is blocked and Benoit's arm is draped across the top rope to shift momentum again.

Back in and MVP works over the bad arm with some driving shoulder blocks. He misses a spinning kick though and Benoit busts out the Rolling Germans. The Swan Dive is broken up though and MVP goes back to the arm by sending it into the post. Off to an armbar again, followed by a running clothesline for two. Out of nowhere Benoit reverses a slam into a Crossface attempt but the arm is too weak to hook the hold. This time the slam works and there's the Ballin elbow for two. MVP misses a charge into the corner and it's time to roll some Germans. After four of those, Benoit hits the Swan Dive to retain.

Rating: C. Yeah that's it. The match really never got off the ground and could have used another four minutes or so. As always the scariest part is thinking that Benoit only had about two months left so he likely wasn't sane during this match. The match itself wasn't bad but as mentioned it never got off the ground. MVP would win the title at Backlash and hold it for almost a year.

Video on Undertaker who is All Grown Up...I think.

Donald Trump is in his dressing room and complaining about the lack of food and drinks backstage. Boogeyman comes in for no apparent reason and Trump doesn't seem impressed. Trump asks him for a sandwich. This uh...happened. Yeah we'll go with that.

Hall of Fame time. Mr. Perfect was one of the headliners here and gets a pretty touching tribute. William Shatner inducted Lawler, which is kind of annoying as Lawler had wanted Lance Russell (announcer of Memphis Wrestling for like forty years) to do it but WWE said no and picked Shatner because of a forgotten segment on Raw back in like 1995. The other headliner was Dusty Rhodes who asked to be made an honorary

Horseman. That's just wrong. No presentation to the crowd here which is weird.

The attendance is over 80,000, which is of course a new record.

Here's the Fink because what would Wrestlemania be without him? Oh ok he's doing the Hall of Fame live presentation to the crowd. JR gets easily the biggest pop of the entire class.

82% of the fans think Undertaker will win the title.

We recap Undertaker vs. Batista but there isn't much to say. Taker won the Rumble and picked Batista for an awesome power match. They had to team up at No Way Out and Batista turned on him to give us a one night only heel, even though that's not really too far out of Batista's normal behavior.

Smackdown World Title: Batista vs. Undertaker

Teddy Long does the intros here for some reason. We lso get the druids and the torches, which look AWESOME in the huge stadiums like this. The bell rings and Batista spears Taker down before pounding away in the corner. Undertaker fires off right hands of his own but Batista throws him right back into the corner. The fans are totally behind Undertaker here. They head to the floor with Undertaker being sent knees first into the steps as is his custom.

Back in and Batista hits a top rope shoulder for two. If you're listening to Cole, you would think he had hit a 450. A big clothesline puts Taker down for two but Undertaker comes back with right hands and a running charge in the corner. The Snake Eyes and big boot combo puts Batista down and a legdrop gets two. Old School connects but Big Dave powers out of the chokeslam to huge booing.

The jumping clothesline puts Batista down again but only for two. Taker puts him on the apron for the elbow and legdrops before busting out the Taker Dive as is his custom at Wrestlemania. Taker pounds away even more but Batista counters to throw him through part of the barricade to take over. With Undertaker dazed, Batista loads up a powerslam from one

announce table through the other, which actually isn't countered.

Back in and that only gets two so the champion pounds away more for good measure. Batista loads up the Bomb but Taker plows him into the corner to counter. Dave comes right back with a belly to belly suplex for two. He pounds on Taker in the corner like a schmuck and of course there's the Last Ride for two. Taker has a breather but walks right into the spinebuster.

Batista doesn't cover though and gets caught in a chokeslam for a VERY close two. The Tombstone is countered and Batista hits the spear and Batista Bomb for an even closer two, shocking the champion. Batista loads up another Bomb but Taker backdrops out of it and avoids a spear, setting up the Tombstone for the title.

Rating: A. The idea is that these two were annoyed and decided to have an awesome match to show everyone up. These two would go on to have more great matches on shows where Batista actually had a chance to win. This was the feud of the year and it's hard to argue as they could both work the power game like few others.

Lashley is All Grown Up.

Vince is in the back looking in a mirror when Stephanie comes in with a stroller. Vince goes off on Stephanie before playing with his granddaughter. Naturally there's a camera from inside the stroller looking up at Vince. He promises to fracture Trump's skull.

Joey tries to talk about the ECW Originals vs. the New Breed but we need to get this along.

New Breed vs. ECW Originals

It's Elijah Burke/Matt Striker/Kevin Thron/Marcus Cor Van vs. Rob Van Dam/Tommy Dreamer/Sabu and for no reason whatsoever this is a regular eight man tag instead of the Extreme Rules match we would get on ECW a few days later. Striker starts with Sabu and Matt is in early trouble. It's quickly off to Sandman vs. Burke but before Sandy does much he brings in Dreamer. Cor Von hits Dreamer in the back and comes in to pound

away a bit.

It's quickly back to Burke (the New Breed's leader and more famous as D'Angelo Dinero) for the running knees to the back for two. Thorn comes in to crush Dreamer into the corner and put on a chinlock. Back up and a sitout powerbomb gets two for Thorn and here's Cor Von again. Burke comes in as well but Dreamer takes them down with a simultaneous neckbreaker/reverse DDT combo. The hot tag brings in Van Dam and there's the top rope kick to Thorn. Rolling Thunder lands on Striker as everything breaks down. With everyone else on the floor, Van Dam Five Stars Striker for the pin.

Rating: D+. Seriously, why wasn't this the Extreme Rules match? The whole point of ECW is to be extreme but we got a seven minute tag match which went nowhere at all. The theory was to finally let these guys get on Wrestlemania, but Van Dam had been on it before and won a title here. Nothing to see here at all.

Austin is All Grown Up.

Wrestlemania 24 is in Orlando.

We recap the real main event for tonight's show and the reason why this show was the highest drawing show ever for the next five years. Vince and Donald Trump both agreed to back a guy into a match and the losing billionaire would get their head shaved. This was when Trump was still a big deal and EVERYONE was backing Umaga because they wanted to see Trump bald. Oh except for Rock who actually cut a promo about wanting to see Vince bald.

Trump picked the ECW World Champion Bobby Lashley. Steve Austin was brought in to referee because this is Wrestlemania. The best part of the build was Lashley in a cage with Umaga on the floor. To escape, Lashley shoulder blocked the cage wall, knocking it down to the floor and nearly crushing Umaga in the process.

Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

The barber's chair gets its own entrance complete with some snappy music.

Oh and Umaga is IC Champion. Trump coming out to a song with the only word being MONEY is perfect. Real money rains down from the ceiling, including \$100 bills. To be fair this show brought in like 50 million dollars in PPV alone so they can afford a bit. They collide to start and slug it out with Lashley pounding him into the corner. Austin pulls Lashley off of Umaga since they're in the ropes and Umaga gets in some shots of his own. Lashley goes up to the middle rope for a shoulder for two.

Umaga's manager Armando Estrada is dragged in by Lashley and powerslammed down with ease. Lashley throws him out to the floor and low bridges Umaga to send him to the floor as well. Back in and Lashley misses a spear, sending him out to the floor this time. We head inside again and Umaga chokes away, only to be pulled off at four and a half by Austin. Austin has to do it again, this time by the hair for good measure.

A BIG clothesline puts Lashley down again and Umaga cannonballs down onto his chest for good measure. The Samoan drop puts Lashley down again as does a failed slam attempt. Vince gets up on the apron and gets dropped down by an elbow from Lashley, only to walk into a shot from Umaga to take over again. Umaga goes up and gets slammed down before being clotheslined down. Both guys down and Austin gets to nine before stopping so it doesn't end in a draw.

Shane McMahon comes out to check on Vince as Umaga hits an uppercut to drop Lashley again. Austin has to pull Umaga out of the corner, earning him a Samoan Spike. Shane comes in and pounds away on Lashley until Umaga is back into things. The running hip attack crushes Bobby's face and Vince throws in some trashcans. Shane hits the Coast to Coast to drive the can into Lashley's face. A top rope splash from Umaga crushes Lashley and Shane has a referee's shirt on now.

Austin breaks up the pin and beats up Shane for good measure, only to walk into another Samoan Spike. Trump isn't sure what to do and shows off those great acting skills of his. Vince comes over to taunt him and TRUMP CLOTHESLINES VINCE! Umaga tries another Spike on Austin but gets countered into the Stunner. The spear from Lashley connects and it's time for Vince to be bald.

Rating: D. This match sucked for the most part until Austin got going. The problem at the end of the day was no one on the planet with any idea what was going on here thought Vince was going to win. It also didn't help that no one cared about Lashley because no one had ever given us a reason to. He was just kind of there for the most part and there was nothing more to him than he used to be a college wrestler and he's muscular. Seriously, that's Lashley's story almost in full.

Post match they take FOREVER to Stun Vince and cut his hair. Austin Stuns him because that's what Austin does to Vince. To their credit though, they SHAVE his head, not just trim it. Vince's face during this whole thing is great as he goes from shock to the patented Vince rage in a few seconds. This led to three months of Vince/Shane/Umaga vs. Lashley which didn't work for the most part. Austin, Lashley and Trump share beers and Trump gets Stunned. I'll give the guy this: he has a soft spot for wrestling. He hosted two Wrestlemanias, was in the crowd for two more and did this.

John Cena is All Grown Up.

For no apparent reason other than we have nothing else to talk about, we look at the dark match with Flair/Carlito vs. Gregory Helms/Chavo Guerrero in a lumberjack match.

Womens Title: Melina vs. Ashley

It's a lumberjill match and all of the other Divas are introduced. Melina is defending here because thank goodness Ashley never got the title. Ashley, who isn't a wrestler, takes Melina down and pounds away. The crowd is audibly quiet for this match and can you blame them? Ashley pounds away in the corner and does some bad choking but Melina comes back by SCREAMING. Off to a bow and arrow for a bit as I have no interest in watching this match at all. Ashley misses an elbow and thankfully Melina reverses a rollup into one of her own to retain.

Rating: M. As in Mickie James, who was on the floor during this match instead of in the ring. Point blank, Ashley cannot wrestle. She was decent looking, but other than that she had nothing going for her at all. This was a popcorn break match and thankfully it was barely three minutes

long as I couldn't sit through much longer.

Shawn Michaels is All Grown Up.

We recap Michaels vs. Cena. Shawn won a triple threat to set this up and then won the tag titles with Cena. The idea is Shawn has turned on every one of his partners in his career and he'll do it again here. No music video here for some reason.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Remember that they're tag champions here but neither guy wears the belt. I can't say I blame them of course. Cena's special entrance this year is driving a muscle car from "the parking lot" into the arena due to being in Detroit. They circle each other to start before Shawn slaps him in the face. A quick headlock doesn't do much for Shawn so he uses his speed advantage to pop John with some right hands. Back to the headlock and it works a bit better this time as Shawn takes Cena down to the mat.

Cena has had enough of this defense thing and rings Shawn's bell with a clothesline. Shawn is sent to the apron but he tosses Cena from the ring and out to the floor. A BIG chop staggers Cena but Shawn's Asai Moonsault hits mostly table and Shawn is hurt. Luckily for him though Cena is even more hurt as they head back inside. Shawn chops away in the corner before going after Cena's knee. The leg is wrapped around the post and Cena is in trouble. The referee asks Cena if he can continue and of course Cena says yes.

Shawn keeps kicking at the leg before wrapping it around the ring rope. With Cena down in the corner, Shawn stares straight at him to play even more mind games. Back up and John hits a big right hand to send Shawn flying across the ring. Shawn charges straight back at him with a shoulder into the ribs in the corner to keep control. Michaels charges again but Cena's leg gives out and Shawn goes head first into the post, busting him open.

Cena has had enough of getting beaten up so he punches Shawn down before firing off some mounted right hands. The ProtoBomb and Shuffle hit but Shawn punches his way out of the FU. Cena is sent into the corner but

manages to duck Sweet Chin Music. The referee isn't so lucky though and is knocked senseless. Cena tries the FU but is countered into a DDT to put both guys down.

With no referee in sight, Shawn rolls to the floor and hits a sick piledriver onto the steps. The THUD when Cena's head hit was a little scary. The back of Cena's head is cut open BAD on top of that. Back in and here's a second referee but the count only gets two. There are the forearm and nip-up as the blood flows down Shawn's face. The top rope elbow connects but Cena blocks Chin Music with a big clothesline to put both guys down again.

They slug it out in the middle of the ring but the FU is countered again into a sunset flip for two. Shawn's leap frog is caught in the FU but Cena is too banged up to cover. The very delayed cover gets two and the champ is getting frustrated. With nothing else to do he tries an FU off the top, only to be shoved off by Shawn. Michaels dives at Cena but gets caught in the FU position. He counters that as well though by landing on his feet, only to miss the superkick and have Cena try for the STFU. Cena keeps trying for it but gets small packaged down for two instead.

Shawn misses an enziguri attempt and now the STFU is on. Cena cranks back on it but Shawn is only a few inches away from the rope. As Shawn starts to black out he grabs the rope and Cena has to break. He takes a bit too long though and gets in an argument with the referee, allowing Shawn to kick Cena's head off. Another delayed cover gets two and both guys are down. In a cool spot, both guys have to lean on the other to get up. The FU is countered again but Shawn can't avoid the STFU again. Cena cranks back on it and Shawn has no choice but to tap out.

Rating: A-. This was a much better match than the HHH match from the year before for a few reasons. First of all, there was a story behind the match. As simple as it was, Shawn being Cena's partner gave them a bond and seeing them fight was something interesting to see. Second, the drama was better here. Cena felt like he was in real trouble and that the title was in danger, which I never felt last year. It's a better match overall and they would have even better ones in the future.

A highlight package ends the show.

Overall Rating: B+. This is a show where the stuff that is bad is really bad but the stuff that is good is REALLY good. There are only eight matches on the card and three of them are very good to great. The best part about that though is the bad matches (other than one) were all short and pretty easy to get through. The show is completely forgettable other than Trump vs. Vince and maybe Undertaker vs. Batista, but it's worth seeing. I would however recommend fast forwarding through some of the weaker parts.

Ratings Comparison

CM Punk vs. Mr. Kennedy vs. Finlay vs. Randy Orton vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Booker T vs. Edge

Original: B+

Redo: B

Great Khali vs. Kane

Original: D

Redo: D-

Chris Benoit vs. MVP

Original: B

Redo: C

Undertaker vs. Batista

Original: B+

Redo: A

ECW Originals vs. New Breed

Original: D+

Redo: D

Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

Original: C-

Redo: D

Melina vs. Ashley

Original: F

Redo: M (for Mickie James)

John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: B+

Almost everything goes down and the rating goes up. I'm a complex guy sometimes.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/30/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-23-over-80000-people/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of the Intercontinental Title at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXII: The New Dark Days

Wrestlemania XXII

Date: April 2, 2006

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Attendance: 17,159

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz, Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

We head to the midwest here for a pretty forgotten show. The main events here are Cena defending against HHH and Angle defending against Guerrero and Orton. No that isn't a typo. The triple threat has nothing to do with Rey Mysterio but rather is there to milk every dime possible out of Eddie's corpse. Seriously, that's it. Other than that we have Shawn vs. Vince and Edge vs. Foley in a match that allegedly made Edge a bigger deal. Let's get to it.

Michelle Williams of Destiny's Child sings America the Beautiful.

The opening video is a Wrestlemania montage set to I Dare You by Shinedown. Awesome song and an awesome video.

We also get the usual kind of opening video with hype for the major matches.

Raw Tag Titles: Carlito/Chris Masters vs. Big Show/Kane

The monsters are defending here. Kane and Masters start stuff out and the 6'5 Masters looks tiny by comparison. Show headbutts him from the apron before coming in legally for some chops. A poke to Big Show's eye slows him down and here's Carlito who is immediately chopped down. Masters is slammed down as well with Show throwing Carlito over the top and out onto Chris.

Kane goes up top and dives onto both guys as the challengers are in trouble. Somewhere in between there the turnbuckle pad has been removed and Show misses a charge, going head first into said buckle. It doesn't seem to have much effect though as Show suplexes both guys down with ease. Off to Kane as everything breaks down. Kane pounds away on Carlito in the corner and hits the side slam for no cover.

The top rope clothesline misses Masters though and there's the Masterlock to Kane. Show breaks it up seconds later but there's the Backstabber to Kane. The chokeslam is broken up by Masters and Show is sent to the floor. Kane's double chokeslam attempt is broken up but after causing some heel miscommunication, a solo version to Carlito retains the titles.

Rating: C. Not bad here but this is one of the matches that probably could have been cut for the sake of trimming the show a bit. The match was a squash and not a very interesting one either. That's the problem with a pair of giants like Big Show and Kane: there's no one that can stop them and the resulting matches are dull at times. Not bad but it felt like a Raw match.

The losers argue post match.

Shawn says that when he told Vince to grow up, he was telling the truth. It's pretty funny that a year ago Shawn and Angle stole the show and a year before that he stole the show with Benoit and HHH. This year though it's going to be about violence, not the five star classic. Shawn tells Vince to pray tonight because he'll be enduring quite a bit.

Shelton Benjamin vs. Finlay vs. Ric Flair vs. Rob Van Dam vs. Matt Hardy vs. Bobby Lashley

Money in the Bank here. Shelton is Intercontinental Champion and Matt is

arguably the favorite. It's a big brawl to start with Lashley cleaning house. The crowd favors RVD. Benjamin hits a BIG kick to Lashley's head to put him down as Matt tries to bring in the first ladder. Instead it's Van Dam with a baseball slide to take Matt down, followed by a big flip dive to put him down again. Shelton brings in a ladder of his own and after laying out Finlay with it, he sets the ladder up as a ramp for a springboard flip dive to take out everyone under the age of 40.

Finlay sets up a ladder but here's Flair for the save. Naitch tries to climb but Matt superplexes him off the ladder which is good enough to hurt Flair's back and knock him out of the match. As Flair is taken out, Van Dam lays out Shelton on the ladder but misses Rolling Thunder, hitting only the ladder. Lashley goes for a climb but Benjamin goes up to stop him. Shelton tries a sunset bomb over the top of the ladder but it takes Matt and Finlay helping to complete the move.

Matt gets a running start at Finlay but has a ladder pelted at him to put Hardy right back down. Finlay sets up the ladder but here's Flair hobbling down the aisle. Instead of climbing up the ladder though, Finlay goes into the aisle and gets chopped back down. Ric fights off Shelton and Hardy and goes up, getting his hand on the case. Finlay goes up the ladder though and blasts him with the club to put him back down.

Shelton and Finlay fight on top of the ladder but here's Lashley with another ladder to knock the ladder with two people on it down to the mat. Now Lashley goes up but Van Dam comes off the top rope and dropkicks a chair into Lashley's back to break up the climb. Matt, ever the bright guy, goes up top on the ladder but drops a leg instead of going for the case. Matt goes up and gets his hand on the ladder, only to have Finlay make a save. Hardy takes Finlay down with a Side Effect off the ladder to put everyone down.

Van Dam, also not the brightest guy in the world, comes off the ladder with a splash on Finlay, leaving everyone down again. In the spot of the match, Van Dam goes for a climb but Shelton springboards off the top rope and lands on the ladder to punch Rob down. That looked AWESOME but he has to stop Matt instead of getting the briefcase. Matt and Shelton's ladder fall down though and it's Van Dam pulling down the case to win the match

and the title shot.

Rating: B. Shelton's spot was INSANE but this match was a bit too short. Also the match wasn't as big with the spots as it was last year but the spots that were big certainly did look good. It's not quite as good as last year, but it still lived up to the hype. A better roster would have helped this one too, as Finlay didn't fit in a match like this and Flair didn't exactly either.

Randy Orton interrupts Gene Okerlund and insults the idea of Okerlund being inducted into the Hall of Fame. Gene isn't impressed and says he'll be in the Hall of Fame one day because of nights like tonight. Batista, still injured at this point, comes up and says he's coming for the winner of the triple threat tonight. Batista vs. Orton was the match that never got to have on the big stage they wanted to.

Here's the Hal of Fame (minus Bret because pigs haven't grown wings yet): Okerlund, Sherri Martel, Tony Atlas, Verne Gagne, William Perry (in barely fitting street clothes), The Blackjacks (with a drool inducing Maria) and the co-headliner, Eddie Guerrero (biggest ovation and accepted by Vickie).

US Title: Chris Benoit vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

JBL is challenging and takes over with a quick headlock. Benoit comes back with a drop toehold but can't get the Crossface this early. Back to the headlock by JBL but Benoit gets his back and pounds on the challenger's neck. The Sharpshooter is broken up very quickly and Jibbles heads to the floor. Back in and Benoit avoids a charge in the corner and lays out Bradshaw with the Rolling Germans. The champion loads up the Swan Dive but JBL crotches him to escape.

JBL cranks up the heel by doing Eddie's chest slap. A superplex puts Benoit down but only gets a very delayed two. There's the Eddie dance and JBL hits Three Amigos to HUGE heat. Benoit knees his way out of the third Amigo and pounds away, only to get kicked in the face for two. Off to a lame chinlock (his hands aren't even locked) by JBL but Benoit suplexes his way out. Now Chris hits Three Amigos to a solid ovation before doing the chest slap. Now the Swan Dive hits for two and Benoit counters the

Clothesline into a Crossface attempt, but JBL rolls onto his back and grabs the rope for the pin and the title.

Rating: C+. Just like the opener this was pretty meh but JBL was an awesome heel here. The part of this that sticks in my mind though is Benoit hitting that headbutt. After it hit he was grabbing his skull and was clearly in pain. Every time I see him hit something like that I cringe a little bit more and wonder if that was the point of no return.

We recap Foley vs. Edge. Edge cashed in MITB at New Year's Revolution and Mick was guest referee for the title change for no apparent reason. Foley got beaten up as Edge accused Foley of losing his edge so to speak.

Joey Styles jumps in on commentary for the next match.

Mick Foley vs. Edge

This is a hardcore match and DEAR GOODNESS I forgot how hot Lita looked in this match. Edge comes out in a vest with a ball bat but Foley comes out in....gray flannel? There's a Cactus shirt under it but I didn't come to Wrestlemania to see Foley in GRAY flannel. Edge swings with the bat but only hits buckle. Foley slams him into the mat and puts Edge upside down in the Tree of Woe for the running fist to the face.

Edge comes back with a forearm and tells Lita to send him something. We get various flat metal objects like cookie sheets and stop signs which are smashed against Foley's head. Edge loses the vest and hits the spear before falling to the side and writhing in pain. Foley opens up the flannel and reveals a ring of barbed wire wrapped around his stomach and A RED FLANNEL SHIRT! Edge's arm is hacked open so Foley whips him with the barbed wire and drives it into the arm cut.

Edge is tied up in the ropes and Foley pulls out a barbed wire ball bat. Lita tries to interfere but a Cactus Clothesline to Edge puts all three on the floor. A swinging neckbreaker on the floor gets two for Foley but as he charges at Edge he gets hiptossed into the steps, leg first. Edge whips Foley HARD into the steps, destroying the knees even further. Mick is put on a table on the floor but rolls off before Edge can dive. Edge slams Mick's head into the steel ramp for two and another sick thud.

Back inside the ring they go and Edge covers Foley with lighter fluid. Well that's certainly stepping things up. A piledriver out of nowhere gets two for Foley and he loads up the Conchairto, only to have Lita make a save. Edge hits a DDT "onto" the chair before getting the barbed wire bat for some midsection shots. There's a shot to the face for good measure and Foley is busted open. Edge gets in some psychology by ripping the barbed wire of Foley's forehead like Foley did to HHH in 2000.

Since nothing else has worked, Edge busts out the thumbtacks. Foley blocks a facial damaging bulldog with a belly to back suplex into the tacks to send Edge into shock. It's Socko time but Foley wraps it in barbed wire for good measure. Foley gets in a barbed wire bat shot to Edge's ribs and one to the head as well, cutting his head open something fierce. Now Foley gets the lighter fluid to cover the table, but Lita slows him down with a bat shot to the ribs. The table is lit and Edge SPEARS FOLEY THROUGH THE ROPES AND THE FLAMING TABLE for the pin.

Rating: A. Oh yeah this worked. This was about blood and violence which is something you never get anymore. It helped that you had Foley and Edge out there, as in guys that knew how to wrestle a match and make a wrestling crowd care. That's the difference between this and ECW: this was well built and about emotion and hatred instead of a freak show. Also it's ONCE, not every match on the card.

The look of shock on Edge's face as he goes to the back is amazing.

Booker and Sharmell want to know why Boogeyman wants them. They go to the ring for their match and see Pirate Paul Burchill practicing his sword play. Then it's DiBiase offering Eugene money for dribbling a ball 100 times in a row, only to kick it away at 99. Snitsky is licking Mae Young's foot with Moolah watching.

Goldust is dressed like Oprah (they used to be partners remember) and is apparently the leader of this group of freaks. He tells Booker to embrace his inner freak or he can't beat the Boogeyman tonight. Goldust suggests putting worms somewhere and Booker freaks out. Booker and Sharmell leave and unfortunately there's no Wrestlemania dance party.

Backlash ad. Hey I was there.

Some celebrities are here.

Booker T/Sharmell vs. Boogeyman

The idea here is that Booker and Sharmell are terrified. Booker makes Sharmell start but jumps Boogeyman to get things going. There's a bunch of smoke in the arena from Boogeyman's entrance and you can barely see anything. Boogeyman starts no selling stuff including the Book End which doesn't even get a cover. The ax kick misses and a forearm puts Booker down. Boogey eats a big handful of worms but Sharmell picks up his staff. She tries to sneak up on him but SCREAMS to make sure Boogey hears her. A wormy kiss sends Sharmell running and the chokebomb ends Booker for the pin.

Rating: F. Do I really need to explain this? Booker would somehow be world champion in four months. I don't get the idea behind Boogeyman and it never worked at all. This match didn't need to be a handicap match either as Sharmell didn't add a thing to the entire match. The stupid smoke was annoying too.

We recap Trish vs. Mickie. Mickie showed up as the psycho (and HOT) Trish stalker/lesbian luster. Trish turned her down so Mickie snapped and kicked her in the head. Mickie then kidnapped Trish's friend Ashley and laid out Trish as she tried to save Ashley. Mickie kissed the unconscious Trish, sending 12 year olds everywhere into a frenzy.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Mickie James

Mickie is challenging and has those awesome skirts that go all over the place. Trish is looking great too with the usual attire but showing her stomach as well. Trish is all aggressive here and chops Mickie down into the splits. They head to the floor but the Chick Kick hits the post. Mickie wraps the leg around the post and is still looking very psycho. Back in and a dropkick to the knee takes Trish down again, as does a dragon screw leg whip for two.

The fans chant for Mickie and I can't say I blame them. Mickie wraps the leg around the ropes before driving it down into the mat for good measure. Off to a half crab followed by a knee crank but Trish power up

and hooks a spinning headscissors to put James down. Trish comes back with the forearms and a spinebuster of all things for two. Trish's corner splash hits feet but as Mickie goes up, Stratus tries the Stratusphere but gets slammed down for a sexy two. A rana is countered into a powerbomb for two and Trish is TICKED.

Trish tries the Matrish but the knee gives out. Instead she tries Stratusfaction but Mickie gropes Trish's crotch to break it up. It's exactly what it sounds like. Mickie licks her fingers so Trish DRILLS HER with a forearm. Trish keeps firing away but the knee gives out, and then the match falls off the rails. Mickie tries the Stratusfaction but COMPLETELY misses the rope, making it almost look like a botched atomic drop by Trish. Instead Mickie hits a lame Chick Kick to end Trish's reign. JR sums it up perfectly: "The nutjob won the title!"

Rating: B-. This was one of the best Divas matches ever but the ending cripples it. The idea here was that it wasn't a women's match but rather a match featuring women in it. These two were beating each other up and Trish had real emotion out there. Mickie was PERFECT for this character and you really felt like she had a screw loose. The sexuality was there but it wasn't the focus which is nice for a change. It's nice to see a real story and a real fight between two people who happen to be gorgeous women. Good stuff here.

Vince leads his family in a prayer before his match with Shawn. Vince: "God, I don't like you and you don't like me." That's where it starts and I think you get the idea.

Undertaker vs. Mark Henry

This is a casket match and WAY before Henry got awesome. Druids bring out the casket surrounded by torches. Basically Henry has beaten up Undertaker and isn't scared of the dark. No one on the planet thought Henry had a chance here. I'd bet even his mama didn't. Henry pounds away to start and no sells a few clotheslines before running Taker over. They trade shots into the steps with Henry taking control before heading back inside. Back in and Henry chokes Undertaker down like he's not even there.

Taker fights back but has Old School broken up with ease. The casket is opened but Taker kicked his way to safety. The Dead Man gets back to his feet and manages to hit Old School this time but it doesn't drop Henry. A Downward Spiral is easily blocked and Henry controls again by choking on the ropes. Henry misses a charge though and lands in the casket, only to pull Taker down in with him.

They fight out of the casket and head back into the ring where Taker charges into the World's Strongest Slam but Henry covers on instinct instead of carrying Taker to the casket. Henry makes the incredibly stupid yet eternally made mistake of pounding down on Taker in the corner, only to be powerbombed out of the corner. Mark is knocked out to the floor where Taker hits hit HUGE Taker Dive to put Henry down again. Back in and there's the Tombstone, allowing Taker to put Henry in the casket to win.

Rating: D+. It's Mark Henry and this is long before the career resurgence he had in 2011. There was never any doubt that Taker would win his signature match against a guy who just wasn't on his level. Not a good Mania match here for Taker, but he would win the world title at the next two editions so he would be ok soon.

We recap Vince vs. Shawn. Back in December, Vince had been talking about Montreal again and Shawn finally said let it go before nearly superkicking Vince. This led to Vince basically declaring war on Shawn, eventually leading to a street fight here tonight.

Vince McMahon vs. Shawn Michaels

Oh wait actually this is no holds barred rather than a street fight because they're such different things. Before the match Vince unveils a poster version of his cover of Muscle and Fitness magazine, which is indeed pretty impressive. Shawn will have none of this though and goes after the boss, pounding away at him and throwing him over the announce table for good measure. Vince gets choked out with a cable as the commentators lose their equipment.

Shawn cracks Vince over the head with his poster and here's the Spirit Squad to try to save Vince. They're five cheerleaders (one of them being

Dolph Ziggler) who beat up Shawn with their five man lifting slam, but Kenny misses a guillotine legdrop. Shawn gets their megaphone and beats all of them up while Vince is getting a breather. The breather allows Vince to get in a clothesline and take over for a bit.

McMahon rips off his own belt to whip and choke Shawn but his attempt at Sweet Chin Music is easily blocked. The forearm puts Vince down and there's a whipping for Vince. There's the top rope elbow but as Shawn tunes up the band, here's Shane to blast him with a kendo stick. Shane pulls out handcuffs but before they tie Shawn up, Vince takes down his pants. Yeah they're doing this at Wrestlemania. Shane tries to send Shawn's face in but Michaels reverses and we get a very disturbing father/son bonding moment.

Shawn hits Vince low and handcuffs Shane to the ropes. After throwing the key into the crowd and doing Shane's dance, Shawn pounds him with the kendo stick and pulls out a chair. A BIG chair shot cracks Vince's head open even more than it already was. Instead of kicking Vince's head off though, Shawn pulls out a ladder. After ramming that into Vince's head too, Shawn pulls out some trashcans to beat on Vince with as well.

There's a table thrown in too and this can't end well. Vince is placed on the table but Shawn isn't pleased with the ladder he's got. Instead he gets the jumbo ladder and puts the trashcan over Vince's head. Shawn climbs the jumbo ladder and drops the BIGGEST ELBOW EVER through Vince through the table. The Sweet Chin Music is the icing on the carnage and it's finally over.

Rating: C+. This is a hard one to grade as it's really closer to a long segment than a match. Shawn DESTROYED Vince here and that's what the whole thing was supposed to be. Unfortunately this feud would keep going for about six more months with DX reuniting to fight Vince and all his cronies. Still though, it was certainly entertaining and that's all it was supposed to be.

Vince is wheeled out on a stretcher but still manages to flip off Shawn. That's so Vince.

Wrestlemania 23 is coming to Detroit.

We recap the Smackdown World Title match, or the Eddie Guerrero Tribute match. You can call it either thing really as they're the same thing. Guerrero died five months ago and Rey dedicated his Royal Rumble performance to Eddie, so of course he won. Randy Orton told Rey that Eddie was burning, which was enough to get Rey to put his title shot on the line at No Way Out.

Rey lost, but Teddy Long made it a triple threat with Rey involved, even though Rey lost a fair bet to Orton. This gets the music video, set to I Dare You by Shinedown. Oh and Kurt Angle is world champion coming into this and couldn't be more of an afterthought. He was in Wrestling Machine mode at this point though and was completely made of awesome.

Smackdown World Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Kurt Angle vs. Randy Orton

P.O.D. plays Rey to the ring. Rey comes out in some freaky looking eagle headdress which I guess is a Mexican thing. During Angle's entrance, Orton grabs the belt from the referee and blasts Kurt in the face to send him to the floor. Rey tries a springboard cross body but Orton dropkicks him out of the air for two. Angle is back in now for a German suplex on Orton before suplexing BOTH GUYS AT ONCE. Angle is amazing, period.

Orton hits his backbreaker on Angle for two of his own as this is very fast paced to start. A belly to belly puts Orton down and Kurt puts Randy on the top for something, but Rey charges at Angle to break it up. Angle instead launches Rey up at Randy who is taken down in a SWEET hurricanrana by the masked dude. The ankle lock to Orton is quickly broken up by Rey and a big kick to Kurt's head gets two. The fans chant for the 619 but as Rey loads it up, Kurt grabs the legs into the ankle lock with the grapevine.

Orton distracts the referee as Rey taps before finally breaking up the hold. Angle starts busting out the Germans and an Angle Slam puts Rey on the floor. The ankle lock goes on Randy and there's a grapevine for good measure. Orton taps but now Rey pulls the referee out and covers his eyes in a pretty brilliant move. Back to the ankle lock but Rey drops the dime on Angle to break it up. The fans are booing Rey for some reason.

Mysterio misses a charge into the corner and slams his shoulder into the

corner. The Angle Slam to Orton is countered into an RK0 but since this is Wrestlemania it only gets two. Randy limps to the top rope for some reason and you just don't do that with Kurt Angle in the ring. There's the running up the corner suplex but Rey tries the 619 around the post. I say try because he slips off the apron and has to just kick Angle in the head for two.

Angle is kicked to the floor and there's an over the shoulder backbreaker into a neckbreaker for two on Rey. I love that move. Randy loads up the RK0 but gets Angle Slammed for two for Kurt. The Angle Slam to Rey is escaped and an armdrag sends Angle to the floor. The 619 and West Coast Pop to Orton give Mysterio the title.

Rating: C-. Uh....what? No seriously, where's the rest of this match? The Smackdown World Title match with a new champion gets less than nine and a half minutes at Wrestlemania? It was entertaining while it lasted, but there are Smackdown main events that get twice the amount of time this got. Was Rey ever even in trouble in this match? I'm guessing the match got cut short, but we had nearly 20 minutes for Vince to get beaten up? This is a head scratcher if there's ever been one.

Chavo and Vickie celebrate with Rey.

Cena and HHH are getting ready in the back.

Candace Michelle vs. Torrie Wilson

This is your Playboy match of the year. Lillian screwing up the hometowns is the most entertaining thing about this match. They're in their underwear and this is a pillow fight. Torrie coming out to what would become Laycool's music is rather odd. What do you want here? There's a bed in the ring, stuff is turned over, Torrie wins after like FOUR MINUTES. Remember that: this got four minutes, the Smackdown World Title got nine.

Rating: F. Were you expecting more here? Next.

Video on the Wrestlemania press conference.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. John Cena

HHH, known as the King of Kings, is in what can best be described as viking attire and rises up out of the stage on a throne. He had Thor's hammer next to him and a bottle of water in his hand which doesn't quite fit. Before Cena comes out we get a newsreel about Chicago in the Great Depression. The stage raises up and a car from the 30s drives out, complete with machine gun toting gangsters (one of which was played by future WWE Champion and Cena rival CM Punk who we'll get back to later).

Cena comes out in a fedora and the shorts shooting a Tommy gun. After the big match intros (the announcer introducing them when they're in opposite corners) we're ready to go. HHH grabs a quick hammerlock and takes Cena down to frustrate him a bit. Cena gets caught in a wristlock and sent into the corner again as the fans tell Cena that he sucks. All HHH so far. With nothing else working, Cena tries a quick FU but gets punched in the face. After about four minutes of nothing significant, Cena is thrown to the floor, only to come back in with right hands.

A quick fisherman's suplex gets two for Cena and it's off to a chinlock by the champ. The fans tell Cena that he can't wrestle and HHH fights up. A hard whip sends HHH over the corner and out to the floor but he pokes Cena in the eye to break Cena's momentum. HHH can't piledrive Cena on the floor though and gets backdropped onto the steel instead. Back in and HHH hits the jumping knee to the face to a big reaction.

Back to the floor we go and Cena is whipped hard into the steps. They head inside again for a facebuster from the challenger and a big old clothesline for two. A neckbreaker gets the same as the fans alternate between "screw you Cena" and "Cena sucks." Off to a neck crank by the Game which is transitioned into a sleeper and then a chinlock. The champ shoves him off and hits a clothesline to put both guys down again. Back up and Cena fires off some more clotheslines followed by a powerslam for no cover.

The spinning mat slam puts HHH down but the Game pops up for a spinebuster to block the Shuffle. Back to the sleeper but Cena almost immediately suplexes his way out of it. Now the Shuffle hits and there's Cena's new submission hold the STFU. HHH grabs a rope but Cena is in the zone now. The FU is countered but Cena is shoved into the referee.

HHH hits both of them low and gets the sledgehammer which goes upside Cena's head. Since this is Wrestlemania though it only gets two instead of putting Cena in need of perpetual care. Back up and HHH charges into the FU for two so Cena goes up top. A cross body misses and HHH tries the Pedigree, only to be countered into the STF. With nowhere else to go, HHH taps out and keeps the title on Cena.

Rating: B-. This is one of the recurring problems with HHH matches: when he tries to have a big epic match it rarely works. Cena got a solid rub out of beating him here but at the same time the match wasn't all that great. It felt like a way to make Cena a big deal rather than have a match between the two of them. It also didn't help that there was no real issue between the two of them.

A highlight package ends the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is one of the most forgettable Wrestlemanias in history. There's nothing of note on here, none of the matches are great other than a middle of the show hardcore match which led to some great stuff. Batista being gone hurt this show a lot as Cena wasn't quite ready to shoulder the weight of Wrestlemania yet. It's not horrible, but it's totally forgettable and not required viewing at all.

Ratings Comparison

Big Show/Kane vs. Carlito/Chris Masters

Original: D+

Redo: C

Rob Van Dam vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. Ric Flair vs. Finlay vs. Matt Hardy vs. Bobby Lashley

Original: B

Redo: B

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Chris Benoit

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Edge vs. Mick Foley

Original: A

Redo: A

Boogeyman vs. Booker T/Sharmell

Original: F

Redo: F

Mickie James vs. Trish Stratus

Original: B

Redo: B-

Undertaker vs. Mark Henry

Original: D

Redo: D+

Shawn Michaels vs. Vince McMahon

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Rey Mysterio vs. Kurt Angle vs. Randy Orton

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Torrie Wilson vs. Candice Michelle

Original: F

Redo: F

HHH vs. John Cena

Original: A-

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: D+

In the first one I said it wasn't something I'd want to see again. Apparently that was accurate as the rating PLUNGED on a second viewing.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/29/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-22-i-barely-remember-this-show/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of the Intercontinental Title at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01D4D3EGQ>

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

Monday Night Raw – June 26, 1995: The Dentist Makes Sense

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 26, 1995

Location: Danville High School, Danville, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 2,700

Commentators: Shawn Michaels, Vince McMahon

We're FINALLY past King of the Ring and the big story is the rise of King Mabel. For reasons that I'll just never understand, Shawn Michaels and Undertaker were taken out in the first round, leaving us with one of the worst tournaments of all time. Ok to be fair the tournament was always going to be one of the worst ever but that didn't help things. Let's get to it.

We open with stills of the Kiss My Foot match and the post match destruction of Lawler.

Shawn Michaels comes out to do commentary in Lawler's place as Lawler is the kind of guy who would take a week off to sell a beating like that. Today, he would have been back before the end of the show.

Opening sequence.

Smoking Gunns vs. Black Phantom/Jason Arndt

Billy takes Jason down to start and the Gunns start double teaming in the corner. The Sidewinder puts him away in less than two minutes with Phantom never getting in.

Earlier today, Lawler was at his dentist's office. That would of course be Isaac Yankem DDS, who would eventually become Kane. Lawler swears vengeance with Yankem (not shown yet) helping him along the way. The key here: Lawler says Yankem used to be a wrestler under a different name. That's EXACTLY the kind of thing you never get and the simple key to make the whole story make sense.

Recap video of last night's show.

Skip vs. Scott Taylor

Scotty 2 Hotty that is. Skip does his exercises to start but gets knocked out to the floor with a nice dropkick. Scotty gets pulled to the floor for a slam and Skip drops a top rope headbutt. Back in and a top rope hurricanrana gives Skip the pin. Total squash and again this is all about Sunny, as it should be.

Diesel was in a celebrity softball game over the weekend.

Todd Pettengill recaps last night's show because we haven't done that enough yet so far. Apparently this is supposed to make us want the encore, though you would think they might lower the price a bit when the ending could be spoiled by Raw. Anyway Sid walking out on the match (because SID is so cowardly) set up Sid vs. Diesel for the title at In Your House II in a lumberjack match.

Savio Vega, not banged up in the slightest after having three matches last night, is ready to win the Intercontinental Title.

Sid vs. Bam Bam Bigelow next week.

Man Mountain Rock vs. Phil Apollo

Rock has a new WWF logo guitar and Apollo would play Doink at various times in his career. A belly to belly sets up a slam which sets up the Fujiwara Armbar to make Phil tap.

King Mabel vs. Kenny Kendall

You can hear the groans as soon as the throne makes its appearance. Mabel shouts about being the king and stomps away in the corner as the fans die more and more every second. A release northern lights suplex sends Kenny flying and Mabel throws him outside. Back in and Kenny's comeback earns him a belly to belly for the pin.

Waylon Mercy is coming next week. He's also a lifeguard this week.

Shawn declares Sid as all bark and no bite.

Hall of Fame recap eats up a good amount of time. It's really strange to see this in a hotel instead of an arena like it is today. For reasons that aren't clear, Bill Murray inducted George Steele from atop an elephant on the set of a movie called Larger Than Life. I actually saw that in theaters.

Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Savio Vega

Jarrett is defending of course. Roadie tries to get in a cheap shot from behind (therefore earning his pay), only to have Vega catch him coming in and knock Jeff down for his efforts. A slam sets up even more right hands before Jarrett accidentally knocks Roadie off the apron. There's a clothesline to put Jeff on the floor next to his employee but Jeff stops to shout at Shawn on commentary for no apparent reason.

Back from a break with Jeff grabbing a swinging neckbreaker before Roadie adds in some choking on the middle rope. Jeff crotches himself on said rope though, allowing Vega to grab a belly to back suplex. A Rock Bottom plants the champ again but Vega has to dropkick Roadie, sending him into Shawn again. That triggers a fight between Shawn and Roadie, drawing Jarrett out to go after Shawn. For some reason that's not a DQ but Roadie coming in and clotheslining Vega is.

Rating: C. Still good stuff here with Vega being more than capable of helping Jarrett have a watchable match. The ending was clearly there to set up a bigger match down the line though as Shawn is ready to come back from his various injuries. Shawn vs. Jarrett should be fine and Vega gets to keep looking strong after his run to the tournament finals the night before.

Shawn dances (sans shirt of course) on the announcers' table until Jarrett and Roadie come out to yell some more to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. Best show they've had in a few weeks but a lot of that is due to the lack of foot issues. Jarrett vs. Vega was fine enough and offered a nice break but there's only so much you can do when you're building towards Diesel vs. Sid AGAIN. They just have no idea what's going on right now and the Mabel super push is going to make it even worse.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of the Intercontinental Title at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01D4D3EG0>

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

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Smackdown – March 24, 2016: Smackdown And Such

Smackdown

Date: March 24, 2016

Location: TD Banknorth Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

Brock is here for a rare Smackdown appearance so you know we're getting closer and closer to Wrestlemania. There are two shows left before the biggest show of the year and things are ranging from hot to lukewarm at best so it should be interesting to see which one we get here tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Non-title and Becky Lynch is on commentary. We're not quite ready to go though as Charlotte promises to lead the WOO Revolution over Sasha and Becky in front of a record setting crowd in Dallas. Simple speech but rather efficient. Like any good heel champion, Charlotte is on the floor

before anything can happen to her. Back in and Sasha flips her over for two before slapping the champ in the face.

Charlotte comes back with a kick to the face and a neckbreaker, giving us a good old fashioned WOO. We hit the chinlock before a big chop puts Banks down again. A Thesz press gets two on the champ but the double knees in the corner miss. They head outside for a minute and it's Sasha being whipped into Becky. Charlotte takes her back inside for the Figure Eight, only to be small packaged to give Sasha the surprise pin at 4:56.

Rating: C. Not a great match as they didn't have time but hopefully the intensity shown here is a good indication of what we're going to be seeing in Dallas. They're doing a good job of setting this up as a match where anyone can win, even though I can't imagine Becky having much of a chance. Good TV match here though and that's how you build to the big stuff.

Post match Becky gets in the ring for a Bex Plex to both of them, followed by Sasha giving Charlotte a Backstabber.

Here's New Day for their weekly chat. We're just ten days away from Wrestlemania XXXII and they'll be having a match against the League of Nations. The League is so boring that they're like the going to the DMV of WWE. If they were a Star Wars character, they would be the Jar Jar Binks of WWE. Or if they were another sports star they would be the Michael Jordan of baseball. As usual, this was all about how strong New Day sells the material instead of whatever they're actually saying.

Kofi Kingston vs. Sheamus

No Del Rio for some reason. Sheamus isn't playing around here and throws Kofi into the corner for an early stomping. It's not quite the Unicorn Stampede but Sheamus is hardly trained for such combat. Kofi gets back up for some stomping of his own to send Sheamus to the floor. A big standoff is teased but the power of Francesca II calms things down. Kofi gets tripped off the apron though and we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Rusev shouting in some insults. We hit the chinlock with Sheamus clearly calling some spots, one of which

seems to be missing a middle rope knee drop. Things get even worse for Sheamus as he misses a charge into the post to start Kofi's comeback. There's the Boom Drop and Kofi follows with a flip dive over the top to take out Sheamus again. Back in and Sheamus grabs a suplex slam for two before going for a turnbuckle pad. Rusev offers a distraction so New Day chases him off, only to have Barrett's distraction set up the Brogue Kick for the pin on Kofi at 10:28.

Rating: C-. Kofi is getting better and better every week, to the point where I could easily see him going up to the main event after the New Day run is over. You have to give the League something before they get to the pay per view though and this was as fine as anything else, especially with them playing up the numbers advantage for the League.

Usos vs. Ascension

Viktor runs Jey over to start and it's off to Konnor for a chinlock. That goes as far as a first minute chinlock is going to go as Jey fights up and sends Konnor into the corner. Everything breaks down and a double superkick puts Viktor away at 1:37.

Post match the Usos put Viktor through a table.

The Dudley Boyz don't think much of the Usos as they're only two time Tag Team Champions. They've beaten up Rikishi and they could beat up the Wild Samoans, but here's Roman Reigns to interrupt. Reigns doesn't like the way Bubba is disrespecting his family so let's have a fight tonight.

Long video on Shane vs. Undertaker, the same one from Raw.

Dolph Ziggler/Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens/The Miz

Sami and Miz get things going as we have to hear about the other three guys being added to the Intercontinental Title match for the sake of making it way more of a mess than it needs to be. Sami works on the arm to start (there's a safe idea) before it's off to Ziggler for a rollup. Owens: "WE GET IT! YOU WENT TO COLLEGE!" Dolph's headlock slows things down but Miz puts a knee into his ribs to take over.

Owens comes in and eats a dropkick, only to run away from Zayn. He teases

leaving again but this time Miz will have nothing to do with that and grabs Kevin's arm, allowing Zayn to get in a dive to take them out. Some elbows to the head have Owens in trouble and that's about it for this dream match. I would say save it for Wrestlemania but apparently we wanted a seven way ladder match including a guy who has won one match in nearly two years. Ziggler comes in and gets stomped in the corner before a catapult puts him on the floor.

We take a break and come back with Ziggler blocking the backplash with the only counter that people use for that move. The hot tag brings in Sami for his running clotheslines and a high cross body to Miz. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two as everything breaks down. Owens breaks up the Helluva Kick and a victory roll gets two on Miz. Both guys are down but now it's time for Owens to walk out, only to have Sin Cara, Zack Ryder and Stardust stop him. Back in and Miz gives Owens a Skull Crushing Finale, setting up a superkick and Helluva Kick for the pin on Miz at 13:57.

Rating: C+. That scene with Ryder, Cara and Stardust coming out to stop Owens from leaving sums up every problem this title match has. If for whatever reason we can't have Zayn vs. Owens, the best solution is to just add Miz and Ziggler to the mix. I'm not wild on it but it's as good of a story as we can get. The other three can't even get into a match on Smackdown and really do come off as people just there for the sake of being there. As usual, if you can eliminate something entirely and tell the same story, they're really not necessary.

Post match Stardust comes in with the Queen's Crossbow to Zayn. Ryder and Cara come in for the big brawl and it's Ryder of all people standing tall.

Recap of Roman Reigns vs. HHH/Stephanie on Raw.

Roman Reigns vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Reigns comes through the entrance again. Bubba immediately hits the floor to yell at the fans which is why he's such a great heel. Back in and a Superman Punch sends Ray right back out to the floor. The brawl heads outside and Ray is in even more trouble as Reigns slams him into the

table over and over for a DQ at 1:52.

D-Von's save attempt earns him a Superman Punch and some steps to the shoulder. Reigns spears Bubba for good measure.

Goldust is painting his face in the bathroom when R-Truth comes in to call him partner. They're still not partners but Goldust denies coming down to help him on Monday. Somehow Truth knows that Goldust sleeps without clothes on so Goldust paints NO on Truth's forehead. Truth looks in the mirror. "ON! IT'S ON!"

The Lucha Dragons are in the back to talk about how they can leave Wrestlemania with a title each. Cara leaves and Ryback comes in to talk about how much bigger and stronger he is than Kalisto. He can bench press Kalisto with one arm and ate that much weight for breakfast this morning. Ryback deserves the Wrestlemania spotlight and Kalisto can settle for a flashlight. Kalisto says he'll win and leaves.

Tyler Breeze vs. AJ Styles

AJ starts with his striking sequence to send Breeze outside, setting up a springboard forearm. Breeze, who is announced for the Andre battle royal, knees AJ in the face but his superplex is broken up. Another Phenomenal Forearm is enough to pin Breeze at 2:03.

Here are Brock and Heyman to wrap things up. Heyman cuts off the speech by saying that his name is Paul Heyman and this is your main event of the evening. Brock is going to be your Wrestlemania moment, just like when he conquered the Streak. That still gets people to boo. That brings Heyman to the no holds barred street fight at Wrestlemania, which means Dean can use anything he can get his hands on against BROCK LESNAR.

It can be a chair, a table or a kendo stick but it won't be enough. Now we have Mick Foley and Terry Funk handing Dean various weapons to use against Lesnar too. To shoot from the hip a bit, the only reason Funk and Foley are still alive is because Heyman's prayers continue to go unanswered. What Ambrose doesn't understand is that if Dean can get his hands on something, Brock can get his hands on as well. However, Brock can also get his hands on Dean and that's just going to end badly.

Heyman invites Dean out to fight right now but he gets the Wyatt Family (minus Harper) instead. Brock seems to like the idea of being surrounded but here's Dean to interrupt. Lesnar gets in a quick suplex to Rowan as Dean gets in, only to have Strowman take Brock's head off with a clothesline. Dean's distraction lets Brock suplex Strowman (first time for that I believe) before beating Lesnar down with the kendo stick. That's fine with Brock who pops up and gives him an F5 to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling wasn't great here but this was all about helping to set the stage for Wrestlemania. Things are really starting to shape up for the big night and they're doing a better job of setting it up than they did last year. There are still some major issues on the pay per view of course but they're doing what they can to fix some of them as fast as they can. This was a good enough building show and that's exactly what it needed to be.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Small package

Sheamus b. Kofi Kingston – Brogue Kick

Usos b. Ascension – Double superkick to Viktor

Sami Zayn/Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens/The Miz – Helluva Kick to Miz

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Reigns sent him into the announcers' table

AJ Styles b. Tyler Breeze – Phenomenal Forearm

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Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode 42

The Wrestlemania preview.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-42-kb-and-myself-head-home-to-wrestlemania/>

New Column: The Other Other Mr. Wrestlemania

On one of my all time favorites.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-other-other-mr-wrestlemania/>

Monday Nitro – October 30,

2000: So That's Why He's There

Monday Nitro #264

Date: October 30, 2000

Location: Bren Events Center, Irvine, California

Commentators: Mark Madden, Scott Hudson, Tony Schiavone

We're past Halloween Havoc and as you might expect, WCW managed to screw up what should have been a pretty easy show. Booker T. is still the World Champion after Scott Steiner got disqualified, meaning tonight it's Booker defending against Mike Awesome in a match I'm sure will happen as advertised. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last night's results, thankfully omitting the Sting Army.

Someone is here in a white limo.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Kidman/Rey Mysterio vs. Mark Jindrak/Sean O'Haire

Jindrak and O'Haire are defending and we hear about a new CEO arriving tonight. So what was the point of having two guys fight over being Commissioner for so long? I'm assuming we can add that to the list of stories that go nowhere and mean nothing. Konnan sits in on commentary, which could be a lot more entertaining than it has any right to be. Rey slaps Jindrak in the face to start as Konnan talks about an article on Jindrak's high school sports career.

Kidman comes in and stomps Jindrak in the corner until it's off to O'Haire for a hard shot to the face. A blind tag brings in Rey with a springboard sunset flip but Sean drops him with a slingshot sitout powerbomb. That great looking springboard clothesline gives Jindrak a near fall as well but Rey comes back with a hurricanrana out of the corner. The hot tag brings in Kidman to clean house as everything breaks

down. The BK Bomb drops Jindrak to set up the Nutcracker Supreme, followed by a botched count as the Boogie Knights are late running in. Disco gets in a Last Dance, giving O'Haire the pin to retain.

Rating: C+. As usual this company does much better when they just let the wrestlers wrestle. There were too many botches in here to really have it work but putting Jindrak and O'Haire out there with guys like Mysterio and Kidman is only going to do good things for them. Hopefully these matches are signs of the future instead of signs that Jindrak and O'Haire are being carried.

Mike Sanders is in the back with Kevin Nash when Scott Steiner comes up and demands a title match tonight. That's fine with Mike so Scott leaves. Kevin tells Sanders to pick his battles.

Hardcore Title: Reno vs. Kwee Wee

Reno is defending after beating Kwee Wee last week but Rolling the Dice on Paisley after the match. Before the match, Kwee Wee talks about beating up Reno in the Power Plant and not wanting to be one of the Natural Born Ratings Killers. I'll never get used to this meta nonsense. Kwee Wee starts in with some trashcan shots and a sunset flip on the floor for two as the announcers talk about Steiner.

The fans want tables as the champ starts swinging a kendo stick to take over. Kwee Wee gets in a few more shots and they head up the ramp, only to have the Thrillers come out and beat him down. The big toss from O'Haire and Jindrak sends Kwee Wee flying back inside, setting up the Roll of the Dice onto a trashcan lid to retain Reno's title.

Rating: D. One guy hit the other one with weapons and then the other guy hit the first one with weapons, followed by the Thrillers coming out to make this nothing. You would think they would be out there at the bell since there were no rules but that might make too much sense. I like the idea that Kwee Wee was in the Power Plant class with these guys but doesn't want to side with them but the gimmick is making this more of a joke than anything else.

Here's General Reaction to talk about how proud he is of winning the title

but has to call out the Misfits, including Major Gunns back in the camouflage. After a bunch of hugs, Rection rips the Canadian sticker off and makes it the US Title again. He dedicates this to all the C team players like Konnan and Mysterio (Really? They're C team? What's the B team then?) who never get a chance to show what they can do.

Gene starts the slow clap for Rection and the roster comes out to applaud for him. Even Booker and Goldberg, the latter of whom says he appreciates Hugh (yes Hugh) make appearances. You know what might make this better? Renaming the champ Bill DeMott. This was quite a moment but it's really hard to get fired up for someone named General Rection.

We're not done yet as Lance Storm pops up on screen to say Rection never beat him for that title. If Rection is man enough, he'll give Storm another shot at that title. Rection is one step ahead of him as he's already had the rematch made and signed (complete with a contract) for Mayhem. Goldberg tells Hugh to shut Storm up. This was a lot better than I was expecting and felt like a really strong rub, assuming he doesn't drop the title soon.

Here's David Flair with the DNA testing results, which say Buff Bagwell is NOT the father. You know, which you can get in less than 24 hours. Cue MI Smooth (Madden: "You ever notice he looks like an inflated Cuba Gooding Jr.?") to say he has a bone to pick with David. Apparently Smooth never told him that Buff was the dad and David just jumped to that conclusion.

David Flair vs. MI Smooth

Smooth destroys him as you would expect and we get a Flair Flip in the corner. David's sunset flip only gets two and it's a Bubba Bomb to put David away in a hurry.

Jimmy Hart issues an open challenge to wrestle any radio DJ. Oh sweet goodness wasn't Mancow enough?

Here are the Boogie Knights with something to say. Disco: "I'm not entirely sure why we're out here." Apparently Sanders sent them out here, perhaps to praise their abdominal development. This brings out Goldberg

to easily toss the two of them over the top and take their mic. Goldberg didn't know who he was until a few weeks ago but now adversity has introduced him to himself. After last night, Kronik knows who he is to. The record is just a number and now everyone in the back is next. You would think they could have had him beat the Knights to get two more wins here.

The new CEO comes out of his office and we look at his feet. Since this is WCW though, the camera is looking up and has to pan down quickly so we see the new boss' face.

Here's Mike Sanders in a suit with something to say. Sanders brags about his win last night, including bragging about knocking out the Cat for the 1-2-3. Actually it was a 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 because it was a countout but close enough I guess. That brings him to business though as the World Title match is now going to be Booker defending against Awesome and Steiner. As for the CEO, all he's going to run is around getting Sanders coffee. This new CEO is going to drop out of WCW faster than Shawn Stasiak drops out of a spelling bee.

Cue Ric Flair, who we saw earlier. You would think they would edit these things to make sure they don't give away the big moment of the night but that's too low brow for them I guess. Flair has been watching Sanders lately and he's impressed by what he sees. However, Sanders and the rest of the Thrillers are going to start playing by the rules or they're not going to play at all.

Mike gets sent out but first of all, Flair is going to have him fight the Cat again tonight and it's going to be by the rules. That brings us back to last night and we'll start with Lex Luger. Ric asked Luger to watch out for his boy but Luger went a bit too far. Buff Bagwell is owed an apology but it seems that Luger is back.

This brings out Jeff Jarrett, who has to find a working mic. Jarrett thinks Ric Flair is going to be around until after civilization ends (not that far off actually). Flair: "The only time you're the chosen one is when you're in a room full of girls." They threaten each other a bit and Flair keeps insisting that he's retired. I'll believe any of this will

mean something when I actually see it happen.

Here's Lex Luger with something to say. Last night Ric made him an offer: take care of David and he'll be back full time. Luger brags about all his accomplishments and his bank account before saying last night with Buff was just business. Tonight though he wants to make an announcement: he's next. For Goldberg that is. Buff comes out and fumbles over his challenge to Luger, setting up a match for later. Actually Buff has a referee here with him just in case so let's do it right now.

Lex Luger vs. Buff Bagwell

Buff starts with that double arm DDT but the Blockbuster hits the referee by mistake. Luger uses the distraction to get in some chair shots, setting up the Rack for the quick win. It amazes me how Buff continues to be treated as such a nothing guy. He's kind of the Dolph Ziggler of his day.

Shawn Stasiak promises loyalty to the Thrillers. Nash gives Palumbo and Stasiak a quick spanking and offers to let Pamela give him one.

Kronik vs. Perfect Event

Nash sits in on commentary. Stasiak actually knocks Adams into the corner to start as a loud WE WANT SCOTT HALL chant breaks out. It's off to Clark to stomp Palumbo down in the corner and Stasiak gets knocked out to the floor. Nash: "Walk it off kid." That sends Stasiak off to the back as the full nelson slam plants Palumbo. High Times puts Palumbo away.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here as the dull Shawn Stasiak face turn continues, even though I have little reason to believe that he's actually going to turn as WCW is likely to make it a SWERVE. There wasn't much to the match of course but that's what you have to expect from a Perfect Event match.

Post break Nash leads the Thrillers to find Stasiak.

Booker isn't worried about having two challengers at once. Steiner cheated to get where he is while Awesome won his shot fair and square.

The Cat vs. Mike Sanders

Before the match, Cat says he saw Madden in the shower earlier today. Hudson: "What was he doing watching you in the shower?" Sanders asks for a handshake but it's a chop to the chest instead. Cat starts hammering away in the corner before they head outside, allowing Madden to rant about how much he hates Cat because Madden looks GREAT in said shower. Back in and Mike puts on a chinlock for a bit before Cat fights up with his dancing elbow. A quick Feliner gives Cat the pin in a hurry.

Post match Shane Douglas pops up on screen and says Cat needs to worry about his own house. The camera pans over to Ms. Jones, who gets a backbreaker for slapping Shane in the face.

Cat is livid post break.

Mike Awesome likes the idea of Steiner being in the main event and suggests an alliance to take Steiner out.

WCW World Title: Mike Awesome vs. Booker T. vs. Scott Steiner

Booker is defending. Before the match Steiner rants about how he should have won last week and got ripped off anyway. Booker limps out to the ring and Mike couldn't feel more added on if he was a free toaster for opening a bank account. Steiner and Booker start fighting before Awesome comes out and Booker hits a quick sidekick to take over. Mike finally comes out maybe two minutes in and it's time to clean house. Awesome's flying shoulder gets two on Booker but Steiner comes back in with his belly to belly.

The elbow into the pushups have Booker in trouble but Awesome goes up for a clothesline. The Awesome Splash gets two on Steiner until Booker gets in a side kick to put everyone down. Booker is up first, only to get suplexed by Steiner. Scott beats on the champ outside until Awesome gets in a chair shot. Back in and Scott gets two off the super Angle Slam and there's the Recliner, only to have Booker kick Steiner in the face. The Bookend to Awesome retains the title.

Rating: D+. Ah so Awesome was put in there as a jobber. I have a hard

time believing that WCW planned this all the way back in Australia but it's a better idea than they have most of the time. The problem here continues to be that Steiner is a fairly one note character who is doing what he can but it's now more of a matter of time until he gets the title, which makes a lot of these shows feel unimportant.

Steiner has to be held back by security. Booker issues a challenge for him at some point in the future because the fans want to see it.

Overall Rating: D. It's still a bad show but they got rid of a lot of the stuff that really slowed things down, such as Jeff Jarrett, Shane Douglas wrestling and the Thrillers looking like morons. As we've covered multiple times, a lot of the wrestlers just really aren't that good right now. The stories are trying but there's only so far guys like Lex Luger, David Flair and an old Scott Steiner can take you.

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NXT – March 23, 2016: Business As Usual

NXT

Date: March 23, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're getting very close to Takeover: Dallas with just two shows to go before perhaps the biggest show in the history of the promotion. The card is almost entirely set now and it should be interesting to see how they final building process goes. NXT tends to be good at this so hopefully the trend continues. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Elias Samson vs. Johnny Gargano

Samson is still undefeated and starts fast by pounding Johnny down in the corner. I'm hoping this doesn't turn into a squash as Gargano deserves better for the Johnny Wrestling name alone. With Johnny down, Samson gets a bit distracted by going into something like a trance. Samson charges into a boot in the corner and eats a kick to the head, only to catch a charging Johnny with a knee to the ribs. Another jumping knee is countered with a quick rollup to give Gargano the pin at 2:18. Well that was sudden.

Samson lays Gargano out with the neckbreaker post match and sends him into the post for good measure. He loads up another neckbreaker on the ramp but Apollo Crews comes out for the save.

Takeover video.

Rich Swann vs. Finn Balor

Non-title of course. Balor takes him to the mat with a wristlock to start and Rich can't get to his feet. Instead it's off to a headlock before the champ easily takes it down to a hammerlock. Back up and a good looking dropkick staggers Balor, followed by a spinning kick to the face. Another dropkick puts Balor on the floor and the fans are behind Swann here. Balor is all fired up now though and sends Swann outside on the other side for a hard kick to the head. The Coup de Grace sets up Bloody Sunday for the pin on Swann at 5:22.

Rating: C+. I can always go for a quick match where a big name actually has to break a sweat to beat someone a few levels beneath him. It's also

a good idea to get Balor out there every now and then to make sure that people don't forget how good he really is. They're doing a nice job with Swann in his first two matches as he's gotten to show off in losing efforts.

Emma and Dana Brooke are ready for Emma's rematch with Asuka. Dana has been helping her train and tonight Emma is going to do the job. She also confirms that she's been out due to injury.

Sarah Dobson vs. Alexa Bliss

Bliss is back in the old pink attire. Dobson takes her into the corner to start but misses a charge to give Bliss a quick two. We hit an armbar on Dobson as the announcers argue over how big a star Bliss really is. Bliss misses a charge in the corner and Dobson gets two off a high cross body. This brings Blake and Murphy to the apron for a distraction and cheap shot, setting up the Sparkle Splash to give Bliss the pin at 4:12.

Rating: D. Much like on the main roster, you can really see the line between the wrestlers and the Divas. Bliss is really just out there because of her looks instead of her ring skills, though she's awesome as the evil heel manager. Dobson wasn't bad from what I can see here and I know she's done some good stuff out on the indies.

Samoa Joe has nothing to say.

Bull Dempsey vs. Danny Burch

Well this is a bit more awkward. No match though as Samoa Joe comes out and destroys both guys before shouting about how he's coming for Balor and the title.

Video on the awesomeness that is American Alpha with the two of them talking about their paths through the amateur ranks towards NXT. None of that matters unless they win the NXT Tag Team Titles though.

Jose No Way is coming.

Emma vs. Asuka

Emma actually takes over with a headlock to start but Asuka reverses into one of her own. A jumping cross armbreaker has Emma in major trouble and the flying hip attack gets two for Asuka as we take a break. Back with Asuka working on a hammerlock until she gets bored and switches over to an ankle lock.

Emma finally kicks her to the floor and starts pounding away before putting her feet on Asuka's shoulders and pulling at the arms. It's off to a regular chinlock with Emma putting her knee in the back. As has been the case all match, the hold is quickly broken so Emma can put her in the Tree of Woe for some shots to the ribs.

Asuka is up at two though and the frustration is starting to set in. They run the ropes a few times until another hip attack drops Emma as the comeback begins. Emma dropkicks her into the ropes but Asuka bounces off for another hip attack. A good looking German suplex sends Emma flying and it's the Asuka Lock for the tap out at 15:14.

Rating: B. This was a very nice change of pace as these two still have some nice chemistry together. They were going with an enhanced version of the same formula from Balor vs. Swann here as the bigger name had to work harder than expected with a challenger. They've done an awesome job of setting up Bayley and Asuka as unstoppable, meaning the match is going to have some awesome buzz going on.

Overall Rating: C+. Nothing great here but the build towards the big show has been awesome so far. The card is mostly set at this point and there's only so much that a few more TV shows are going to be able to do. They're doing a good job of going around the card and giving everything a good build so I actually have some faith in what they might be able to pull off in Dallas.

Results

Johnny Gargano b. Elias Samson – Rollup

Finn Balor b. Rich Swann – Bloody Sunday

Alexa Bliss b. Sarah Dobson – Sparkle Splash

Asuka b. Emma – Asuka Lock

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Monday Night Raw – June 19, 1995: It's About Feet Again!

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 19, 1995

Location: Struthers High School, Struthers, Ohio

Attendance: 1,450

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

It's finally the go home show for King of the Ring 1995 and it's not a moment too soon. Last week was mostly built around Jerry Lawler's feet and I'm really not sure how many more times I can sit through something like that. We might even get some build towards the tournament for a change. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Undertaker vs. Mike McReynolds

Undertaker gets in an uppercut as this is the kind of beating that you

get with Undertaker vs. a guy named Mike McReynolds. The smoke is still clouding the arena as the chokeslam and Tombstone wrap this up in a hurry.

McReynolds gets put in a body bag post match. He probably earned it.

Lawler goes on another rant about making Bret kiss his feet.

We look back at Bob Backlund destroying Man Mountain Rock's guitar.

Man Mountain Rock thinks that was a pretty crummy thing to do.

Adam Bomb vs. Bill Payne

Adam runs him over with a shoulder to start and sends Payne flying with hiptosses. A side slam and belly to back suplex sets up the top rope clothesline to put Bill away. I still have a bit of a soft spot for Bomb.

King of the Ring control center with ANOTHER focus on Lawler's feet. This really is the main event. Lawler torments Vince with the plastic feet and Bret says this is going to be a nice match against a slimeball. We wrap it up with a mention of the tournament with Razor Ramon's injury being mentioned. It's nice to have them actually tell you that a major name might be off the show. I can barely think of another instance in this era actually.

Sid/Tatanka vs. Headshrinkers

This is Fatu and Sione (Barbarian) instead of Samu. I remember waiting for Samu to make his comeback from eating bad fish for months but nothing ever came of it. I was devastated. Fatu and Tatanka get things going with Fatu (somehow the only Hall of Famer in this match) pounding down right hands in the corner. Tatanka sends him to the floor but we cut to Sid, who is blinking a lot.

Tatanka's DDT just makes Fatu dance and you can see a lot of the Usos in there. It's off to Sid so Fatu Moon Walks into the corner for the tag and the Headshrinkers knock Sid into trouble as well. A big clothesline turns Fatu inside out though to give us a signature bump and we take a break.

Back with Tatanka getting in some cheap shots from the apron before Fatu avoids a charge, only to have Tatanka break up the hot tag attempt. Not that it matters as we get the tag a few seconds later, bringing in Sione for a piledriver on Tatanka for a near fall. Everything breaks down and Sid powerbombs Fatu in the ring and gives Sione one on the floor, setting up an easy pin for Tatanka.

Rating: D+. This was the dark days of the Headshrinkers as Fatu was kind of a Rikishi prototype and Sione never worked that well as a partner. There's always room for a Samoan team and you can use them for jobbers in spots like this. The problem was that they were losing to Sid and Tatanka who were a pretty lame main event threat.

We look at Sid injuring Diesel's elbow until Bigelow made the save. As a bonus, we get a recap of the entire build which really isn't helping things out.

Diesel isn't worried about his elbow injury and Bigelow says there's a lot of positive energy. Vince doesn't buy this, but to be fair almost no one bought King of the Ring.

Lawler goes on a great maniacal tirade about how much he wants Bret to kiss his feet.

We go to Lawler's dungeon to see what he has planned to use on Bret, including something called the Fallbrett. Lawler is clearly having a blast with this, even though it's such a stupid idea.

Buck Quartermaine vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley

HHH is still undefeated at this point. Buck's arm work goes nowhere so the announcers talk about the Kiss My Foot match again. Some right hands and chops have Buck (whose boots don't match) in trouble in the corner, followed by the Pedigree for the pin.

Shawn Michaels vs. Gus Kantarrakis

Gus is a very hairy guy and Vince makes sure to say his full name every time. Shawn runs him over to start and rides the goon on the mat a bit. With nothing else to do, Shawn jumps out to the floor and sits in the

front row. Back in and Gus gets a few shots before they head outside again where the jobber gets suplexed on the floor. The superkick puts Gus out as you would expect.

Post match Kama comes in to jump Shawn but is quickly dispatched. Undertaker and Mabel come out as well but nothing happens.

Lawler promises to make Bret kiss his feet one more time to wrap it up.

Overall Rating: D. There's a reason these shows are so nearly universally hated. Whether the WWF agrees with it or not, the Kiss My Foot match is the real main event on Sunday instead of the main event tag match which isn't doing anything for anyone. The company was in a horrible place at this point and it's really not surprising that King of the Ring was such a disaster.

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXI (2016 Redo):

Got Any Change?

Wrestlemania XXI

Date: April 3, 2005

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 20,193

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

If last year's show was about change, this one is ten times stronger. This year is about introducing the newest generation of mega stars into the top of the card and it couldn't happen sooner. JBL and HHH had been very boring champions with HHH cutting the wings off nearly everyone (including Orton, who turned face after taking the title from Benoit, only to drop it back to HHH a month later). With no one left, it's time for someone new. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Battle Royal

Raw: William Regal, Tajiri, Rhyno, Hurricane, Rosey, Simon Dean, Snitsky, Chris Masters, Val Venis, Maven, Sylvan Grenier, Rob Conway, Tyson Tomko, Viscera

Smackdown: Hardcore Holly, Charlie Haas, Luther Reigns, Scotty 2 Hotty, Funaki, Spike Dudley, Billy Kidman, Doug Basham, Danny Basham, Orlando Jordan, Paul London, Heidenreich, Mark Jindrak, Booker T., Nunzio, Akio

This would become a tradition and a way to get a lot more people on the show and therefore a Wrestlemania payday. This is also interpromotional so everyone is in a red Raw shirt or a blue Smackdown shirt. Regal and Tajiri are Raw Tag Team Champions, Dean is a fitness guru, Snitsky is a freaky guy, Masters is strong, Tomko is Christian's enforcer, Reigns is another big power guy, Jordan is a JBL lackey and US Champion, London is Cruiserweight Champion and Heidenreich is just weird. I'm not sure why Smackdown has one more name than Raw but it doesn't really matter. General managers Eric Bischoff and Teddy Long are at ringside.

The rosters stare each other down to start and Hurricane gives Heidenreich a mask. Ever the nice guy, Heidenreich hits him in the face

to start the fighting. Spike hides on the apron and we're firmly in the part of the battle royal where you can't tell anything that's going on. Reigns pulls Hurricane off the top and dumps him out but a bunch of guys get rid of Reigns just as quickly.

A bunch of people go after Viscera and knock him down because they're not that bright. Four guys hold him down and Scotty adds the Worm, only to have Masters throw out Scotty, Funaki, Spike and Kidman in a row. Well at least the ring is a little bit clearer. Haas is eliminated and a quick Regal chant goes nowhere. Nunzio is thrown under the bottom rope as the match slows a bit. Maven was eliminated somewhere in there.

Heidenreich, still in the Hurricane mask, rips the turnbuckle pad off for no apparent reason. I told you he was strange. Venis is clotheslined out by Heidenreich and Simon is out a few seconds later. Grenier follows and so does Rosey. Rhino Gores Snitsky but Holly puts Rhino out shortly thereafter. There goes Conway followed by both Bashams as the match is now a lot easier to keep track of. Raw and Smackdown square off again and it's Holly planting Regal with the Alabama Slam.

Jordan eliminates Tomko and Viscera sends Akio over the top and face first onto the steps. Masters eliminates Holly who is followed by Regal. Tajiri sprays the mist into Heidenreich's face and he eliminates London by mistake. By mistake because they're both on Smackdown and the idea here is brand vs. brand, even though it's every man for themselves. Tajiri and Heidenreich go to the apron and both guys are out a few seconds later. We're down to Masters, Viscera, Snitsky, Jindrak and Booker.

Jindrak catapults Snitsky out and absolutely levels Viscera with a left hand. Masters dumps Jindrak from behind and we're down to three but Nunzio comes back in because he was never eliminated. He actually makes it a full ten seconds before being eliminated for real and it's Viscera, Masters and Booker to go. Booker fights out of the double team but the side kick lands on the ropes. Viscera misses a charge and gets low bridged out, leaving Booker to superkick Masters out for the win at 11:36.

Rating: D+. Not the worst battle royal here as they had a bunch of people in there but it was clearly just a way to get them on the DVD for the royalty payment. Still though, Booker winning was a good idea and it's hard to complain about a bonus match that doesn't hurt anything and wasn't part of the main show.

Lillian Garcia sings America the Beautiful.

We get one of my favorite parts of this show: the trailers. The theme of this show was Wrestlemania Goes Hollywood, meaning there were several parody movie scenes with wrestlers in place of the actors. We have Eugene as Forrest Gump, Booker T. as Samuel L. Jackson from Pulp Fiction, HHH as Braveheart, John Cena and JBL as Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson from A Few Good Men, Undertaker as Dirty Harry, Christy Hemme as Meg Ryan from When Harry Met Sally, Christian, Chris Benoit and Stacy Keibler in the interrogation scene from Basic Instinct and most of the roster as Robert De Niro from Taxi Driver.

Now we get the debut of the final trailer from Gladiator. The emperor comes down to congratulate the gladiator whose face we can't see. The voice sounds very familiar though and he takes off the helmet to reveal Steve Austin, who describes himself as a beer drinker among beer drinkers and the master of the middle finger. He promises to create havoc at Wrestlemania tonight because that's what he does. Good stuff here, as were all of these.

The aisle has a red carpet and there's a movie marquee that advertises Wrestlemania XXI. It's one of their better sets ever actually.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Rey Mysterio

This is face vs. face as they're the reigning Smackdown Tag Team Champions. Eddie however is a bit frustrated because he thinks Rey has been showing him up a bit lately. No superhero gear this time as Rey is in a combination Mexican/USA flag costume instead. The bell rings and Rey is already adjusting his mask. Rey flips out of a fireman's carry and shoulders Eddie down until Guerrero armdrags him down.

A headscissors puts Eddie on the floor and it's time to adjust the mask

again. It has a Velcro hook instead of the usual buttons and that's not going to work very well. Back in and Eddie takes him down with a wristlock until a monkey flip sends Eddie flying. A right hand knocks Rey off the apron though as the aggression is starting. Back in and Eddie gets two off a belly to back before slapping on a surfboard (which takes a good while to finally apply). Eddie has to let go and Rey fixes the mask again.

We hit an STF on Rey but Eddie doesn't pull back on it very well. Mysterio armdrags out of an armbars and Eddie is looking frustrated. More mask adjustment sets up a flip dive from Rey, followed by more time spent fixing the thing. Mysterio tries to speed things up but Eddie drops him with an elbow to the jaw. Three Amigos are broken up but Rey gets caught in a backbreaker. Two more Amigos connect but Rey counters (adjusting the mask in the process) into the 619, only to have that countered into another backbreaker.

The Three Amigos finally work but the frog splash misses. 619 connects and Rey is bleeding from the mouth. The West Coast Pop is countered into a sweet powerbomb for two as the fans are behind Eddie. Back up and a quick hurricanrana gives Rey the pin (with one final mask fix) at 12:36.

Rating: B. Good stuff here but I think they were expecting something even better. This is what happens when you have a masterpiece like these two had at Halloween Havoc 1997: it sets a virtually unbreakable precedent and puts way too much pressure on them to top it every time they square off again. This kicked off a four month long feud between the two which produced some excellent matches, which was tragically followed up by Eddie's death in November.

Eddie shakes Rey's hand.

JBL and company run into HHH and Flair. They compare legacies and HHH laughs at the idea of anyone believing JBL is as good as he thinks. A future showdown is teased but thankfully this never went anywhere. Flair gets in a WOO just because.

Adam Sandler and Rob Schneider are here.

Chris Jericho vs. Chris Benoit vs. Christian vs. Edge vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. Kane

Money in the Bank, which means a ladder match for a briefcase which guarantees them a World Title shot at any time in the next year. Jericho came up with this one night on Raw and others signed up over the next few weeks. This and the battle royal were a much better idea than the multi-team tag matches we sat through last year. Christian has Tomko with him. Shelton is the Intercontinental Champion and has become one heck of a singles star in recent months. Kane's entrance is again cool as the set has flames all over it, including the ladders set up near the entrance.

Kane starts fighting in the aisle and beats up all four Canadians plus Shelton. Benjamin and Benoit suplex him at ringside but Jericho smacks Edge in the face with a ladder as the bell rings. Jericho beats Shelton up to start but stops to dive on Benoit. Christian dives on all three of his fellow Canadians but Benjamin dives onto all of them plus Tomko. Kane takes out all five of them with a clothesline from the top before hitting Edge with a fresh ladder.

Jericho dropkicks the ladder into Kane but comes up holding his leg. Shelton and Edge take ladders to the face and Edge gets a second dose. Benoit comes back in to German Jericho and the ladder at the same time but Kane breaks up the first climb. That's fine with Benoit as he grabs the Crossface on Kane. Edge gets the same treatment until Kane hits Benoit in the face with the ladder for the save. Kane isn't done with him as he crushes Benoit's arm between the ladder, only to turn into a spear from Edge.

We get a quick Edge and Christian reunion as they crush Kane with ladders, much to the delight of the crowd. Shelton gets back in and kicks a ladder into Christian's face and flapjacks Edge into the ladder for good measure. Jericho and Benjamin fight on top of the ladder but Christian sets up his own and joins them. Benoit climbs up with one arm but here's Edge on a third ladder. Lawler: "It's like open house at Home Depot!"

Christian takes Benoit down by the arm, Jericho gets shoved off and

Shelton hits his t-bone exploder suplex to take Edge down. The ladder falls on the two of them to make it even worse. Christian bridges a ladder up against another one to make a ramp but Jericho puts him down and climbs, only to have Shelton run up the ramp and clothesline him down. Kane comes back in and cleans house until Tomko kicks him in the face. Tomko lifts Christian up ala Rhyno at Wrestlemania XVII but Kane makes a save.

Kane sends the ladder over to send Christian crashing to the floor and onto Tomko. Well it's better than those insane crashes Christian used to take. Jericho and Kane both fall off the ladder with Kane crashing in the middle of the ring. Benoit drops a Swan Dive off the ladder to bust himself open. The bloody Canadian climbs up but Kane does the Undertaker situp, only to get headbutted back down to the mat. Benoit is alone up there but Edge BLASTS him in the bad arm with a chair, allowing him to climb up (JR: "Somebody stop him! Anyone! Even Christian!") and win at 15:20.

Rating: A-. It's amazing how much better these things are when you have a more reasonable number of people. Six seems to be the magic number but the later versions would have seven or eight and the whole thing would get too crowded and watered down. This was awesome fun though with some great spots that would be built on in future years. Edge getting the win is the biggest moment of his career and it felt like a huge moment. Really good way to introduce the concept.

Here's Eugene (Eric Bischoff's, shall we say, slow nephew) with something to say. This is his second favorite Wrestlemania moment after King Kong Bundy squashed one of the midgets at Wrestlemania III and the rest of the midgets got together like an army. This brings out Muhammad Hassan and manager Daivari, a pair of Arab American wrestlers who claimed racism was the only thing holding them back.

Hassan: "Do you know why I'm angry?" Eugene: "You don't like midgets?" Hassan rants about all the fake people here in Hollywood and the prejudice and bigotry in the city's history. In his way over the top voice, Hassan goes off about taking a backseat to a loser like Eugene. He could not, would not and will not stand for this so he's going to create

a Wrestlemania moment of his own. Hassan decks the injured Eugene and puts him in the camel clutch....which brings out Hulk Hogan in the red and yellow.

Hulk cleans house with ease and the fans eat this up with a fork and spoon. Daivari's chair shot goes very badly for him and it's time to pose. This set up a tag match at Backlash with Hogan teaming up with Shawn Michaels. It's a great moment and a great surprise with Hogan bringing the crowd to his feet doing as he can do better than almost anyone else. The American flag drops, just in case you didn't know who you were supposed to cheer for. Keep in mind though: Hassan is from New York and Daivari is from Minnesota.

We recap Randy Orton vs. Undertaker. Orton had lost the Raw World Title to HHH and then lost a long feud to him, meaning it was time to give him something fresh. To get back on track, Orton turned heel again (he pretty much had to after the face turn was ruined so badly) and decided to end the Streak. Even Randy's dad Cowboy Bob thought Randy is crazy for trying this until the RKO put Undertaker down one night on Smackdown.

Undertaker vs. Randy Orton

The druids and torches are back this year. Undertaker, with his hair past his shoulders again, glides to the ring without taking a single step. No Cowboy Bob with Orton here. Orton starts with a slap and nails a nice dropkick for one. That earns him a stiff right hand to the jaw and the RKO is easily countered as Undertaker throws him to the floor.

Old School actually connects but Orton hits another dropkick and punches him in the face. Undertaker comes right back with a side slam for two. Snake Eyes looks to set up a big boot but Orton elbows him in the face to take over. The fans are all over Orton as he pounds away with forearms and right hands. A dragon sleeper (a hold Undertaker used for a bit until it became clear that it didn't fit him) has Orton in trouble spins around and counters with a DDT.

We hit the chinlock but Undertaker would rather not bore the fans so he suplexes Orton down instead. A powerslam gets two on Undertaker and Orton is stunned. I'm not sure why as he never won anything major with that

move but that's a young heel for you. He follows that up by being a young stupid heel as he pounds down right hands in the corner, only to get caught in the Last Ride. Orton slips out and tries an RKO but gets sent into the referee for a horrible ref bump. I mean Orton's forearm grazed the referee's chest and it looked like he died.

After Undertaker falls down trying another Last Ride, here's Cowboy Bob (who might have missed his cue to force the second failed powerbomb) to knock Undertaker out with the cast (He had a very slow healing arm injury. Going on twenty years at this point.) but there's still no referee. Undertaker gets up and tries a chokeslam, only to have Orton counter into an RKO in midair. That's one of my all time favorite spots. Orton is stupid enough to try a Tombstone but Undertaker reverses into the real thing to put Orton away at 14:16.

Rating: B-. This show is on fire to start with the third straight good match, which is somehow a step down after a pair of really good matches. Orton looked like a star out there and began the tradition of someone wanting to break the Streak instead of someone having a personal issue with Undertaker. This would become something like another World Title match over the years as the matches would (eventually) become bigger and bigger over time.

We recap evil Trish vs. Christy Hemme. Christy was in Playboy and Trish didn't like not being in the spotlight, setting up a title defense for Trish here. Lita tore her ACL in January to prevent another showdown with Trish and is training Christy to make us think she has a chance. The problem is Hemme is just a model and is making her debut against the best female wrestler of the generation.

Women's Title: Christy Hemme vs. Trish Stratus

Trish is defending of course and easily kicks Christy to the floor to start. Christy is sent into the steps and this is already looking one sided. Back in and the Chick Kick is blocked, followed by Christy kicking Trish low to take over. It's clear that she has NO idea what she's doing though and Lawler keeps the focus on her very short skirt. Christy sunset flips her out of the corner for two and makes her comeback with some lame

kicks, followed by a reverse Twist of Fate. That's it though as the Chick Kick puts Christy out of her misery at 4:11.

Rating: D. This was about Christy looking good and Lita being there for a completely token appearance. At the end of the day, this was going to be the future of the Divas division no matter how many people were disappointed. Your wrestling ability stopped mattering because the only important thing was how good you looked in skin tight shorts. Bad match but they kept it short as they should have.

We recap Kurt Angle vs. Shawn Michaels. Angle was dominating the Royal Rumble when Shawn came in and eliminated him with a quick superkick. This wasn't cool with Kurt and he wanted a one on one match with Shawn at Wrestlemania. You don't have to ask Shawn twice about a chance to show off at the biggest show of the year.

Shawn Michaels vs. Kurt Angle

If this is anything less than a classic, it's going to be a disappointment. They stare each other down to start until Shawn slaps her in the face. That earns him a takedown but Shawn makes it to the ropes. A headlock slows Kurt down and the fans seem to be on Angle's side. Back up and Shawn takes him right back down into a headlock. A hiptoss takes Angle down again and we hit a short arm scissors.

Angle comes up with the customary lifting counter but Shawn rolls into a sunset flip. Back to the headlock as they're doing a nice job of recreating the Bret vs. Shawn story of Shawn wrestling technical when his opponents wouldn't have expected him to go that route. A quick ankle lock attempt is countered and the Cactus Clothesline puts both guys outside.

Shawn is ticked off for some reason and loads up the announcers' table, rolls inside to break the count (a forgotten move) and gets caught in an Angle Slam into the post. Well not really the Slam itself I don't know how else you would call that. Kurt starts in on the back and puts on a body scissors. The fans are split as it's time to trade some chops. Enough of that though as Kurt grabs a belly to belly and it's time for a reverse chinlock with a knee in the back. Shawn fights up but slaps Angle for some reason, earning himself a big clothesline for two.

Kurt loads up a belly to belly superplex but gets shoved down instead. The top rope elbow misses though and Shawn crashes back first onto the mat. There go the straps but Kurt gets backdropped out to the floor and Shawn, always the crazy one, follows him out with a high cross body. Back up and the German suplex to the floor is teased again but as always, Kurt can't quite pull it off. Mainly because of the whole death thing. Shawn kicks him low for the save instead and puts Angle on the table for a spinning splash from the apron, which DOESN'T break the table in a sick landing.

Both guys are very slow to get back in as you would expect but it's Shawn with the forearm into the nipup to get the fans right back on his side. The elbow connects this time around but the superkick is countered into the ankle lock again. Shawn can't roll out of it but he finally makes the rope. The Angle Slam is countered so Kurt grabs the ankle as a consolation prize. That counter is countered into a cradle for two but now the Slam connects for two.

In another awesome moment, Kurt puts the straps back up so he can pull them right back down, only to miss the moonsault. Might be time for a new strategy Kurt. Shawn loads up another elbow but this time Angle runs the ropes for a super Angle Slam. It still only gets two so Kurt yells at him, allowing Shawn to shove him away and nail Sweet Chin Music for another near fall. Both guys are very slow to get up and Shawn leaves his foot too close to Kurt, setting up the ankle lock with the grapevine for the (very) eventual tap at 27:27.

Rating: A. Outstanding match here with the athletic slugfest at its best. There's something so great about two masters out there showing everything they could do. Shawn is at his best when he gives it everything he has but just isn't good enough, though he would win the rematch later in the year. Great stuff here and I really don't see anything else topping this tonight.

The guys get a well deserved standing ovation.

We get the full Basic Instinct trailer again with Stacy implying there's something between herself and Trish.

Mae Young and Fabulous Moolah are here.

It's time for Piper's Pit with special guest Steve Austin. Piper thanks us for the Hall of Fame induction but wants to make some history. He's been told that Austin is the toughest man in the WWE and he calls that bull. This brings out Austin, who Piper says is supposed to be some rebel. Piper slaps him in the face so Austin swears at him and slaps him right back. Piper: "I kind of like you!"

The WHAT chants get on Piper's nerves quick but he learns how to talk at the right cadence. There's a point Piper wants to differ on but the WHAT chants cut him off again. Piper says he was here when Wrestlemania didn't have a number and was ticking Vince off when Austin was in diapers. For some reason JR thinks that's quite the insult. Austin and James Dean have nothing on Piper when it comes to being a rebel.

It's Austin's turn now and he rips on Piper a bit, in time with the WHAT chants. Piper says this is failure to communicate and here's Carlito if all people to interrupt. Carlito thinks these arguments are stupid because neither of them are cool enough for him (that's and spitting apples at people are pretty much his entire gimmick). Austin invites him into the ring but Piper has no idea who Carlito is.

Carlito wants them both to leave and can we just get to the Stunners already? Piper steals the apple and spits some of it at Carlito. That earns him some left hands to the head as Austin just watches. Austin finally beats Carlito up, throws him to Piper for a thumb to the eye and gives him the Stunner. It's time to drink for a good while until Austin finally Stuns Piper too. This went on WAY too long and I have no idea what they were going for but it completely missed. None of them looked like they wanted to be there and Carlito didn't get anything out of it.

Backlash ad.

Here's the full Taxi Driver trailer which was voted the best by the fans. The highlight is Batista turning it into a Who's On First routine.

[Akebono vs. Big Show](#)

Why not have some sumo wrestling on the show? You win by pushing your opponent outside the circle or by knocking him off his feet. Akebono is a sumo champion and would become a full time professional wrestler in Japan soon after this. Cole and Tazz treat this as something serious but the fans clearly don't care. After they go through all the rituals, Akebono wins with relative ease in 1:02. This really, really didn't need to be here and was lost on the fans, which really isn't surprising as it wasn't exactly what they signed up for.

We recap John Cena vs. JBL which is entirely built around a culture clash. Cena won a #1 contenders tournament to earn this shot by beating Angle at No Way Out 2004. JBL is old school and rich while Cena is a brash, in your face rapper who wears throwback jerseys and hats. He had turned the US Title into a spinner belt so JBL helped his lackey Orlando Jordan take the title and then burned it (ok so JBL wasn't all bad).

JBL got in Cena's face and said the only way Cena's family could pay the bills was to have his mama on her back all the time. Since they weren't allowed to touch each other, Cena ruined JBL's car, clothes and limousine to try to get JBL to punch him. Naturally this got Cena arrested and JBL hit him while he was defenseless. The build was good, but there's no question that this is the second biggest match on the show.

Smackdown World Title: John Bradshaw Layfield vs. John Cena

JBL is defending and comes to the ring in a limo with a police escort. To make it even better, JBL dollars fall from the ceiling. I always liked the way JBL held the belt (clasped together but in his hand instead of around his waist). He even sends the Cabinet to the back so this is one on one. Feeling out process to start with Cena getting the better of it until he runs into a boot to the jaw to stagger him.

They trade shoulders with JBL getting the better of it by running Cena over. A big chop staggers Cena again and the champ chokes him on the middle rope. Cena's comeback is stopped with a spinebuster and punching him in the head. A short arm clothesline (ala Jake Roberts) sets up a sleeper but Cena finally escapes with a belly to back suplex.

There's a double clothesline to put both guys down again and it's JBL up

first. Cena takes a neckbreaker on the floor and a superplex keeps him in trouble but JBL can't follow up. JBL eventually gets two and goes to the middle rope, diving right into a powerslam (not a scoop slam Cole) to give Cena an opening. The running shoulders and a hiptoss draw some trash talk and the fans are trying to wake up. The Shuffle connects and Cena ducks the Clothesline, setting up the FU for the pin and the title at 11:27.

Rating: D+. For what was supposed to be a changing of the guard, this was really boring stuff. JBL just could not do it in the ring again at this point and it was clear for months now. Cena winning the first title at Wrestlemania is a big deal and he did what he could but you need a better opponent. JBL had a long run and this was a pretty weak way to end it. Not that I expected anything else though. Their really violent rematch was MILES better and what this match should have been.

Cena celebrates in the crowd.

We look at last night's Hall of Fame inductions, headlined by Piper and Hogan. They had to go in together.

Gene Okerlund introduces the Class of 2005: Nikolai Volkoff, Iron Sheik, Paul Orndorff (who points to Miss Jackie as she escorts him), Bob Orton, Jimmy Hart, Roddy Piper and Hulk Hogan. In other words: pretty much Wrestlemania I as a whole.

Wrestlemania XXII is in Chicago.

We recap the main event. Batista had been Evolution's animal but he was slowly getting better and smarter. This scared HHH, who thought the whole thing was about him. He and Flair put together a plan to manipulate Batista into fighting JBL at Wrestlemania but Batista overheard them, leading to him beating HHH up. Now HHH has to fight the monster on his own and no one, including Cena, is hotter than Batista.

Raw World Title: Batista vs. HHH

Motorhead plays HHH to the ring and seem to forget the words as it's a horrible rendition. HHH is also coming out first and rises up through the

stage because his entrance needs to be much cooler than Batista's. They circle each other to start and we get the big power lockup. HHH's headlock doesn't get him anywhere and Batista takes over with something like a powerslam.

The champ gets thrown into the corner for some right hands but HHH finally sends him out to the floor for a breather. Flair gets caught trying to sneak in a shot, which isn't enough for an ejection but whatever. Back in and it's time for choking and stomping, including some extra from Flair. HHH starts in on the back as this is kind of an awkward way to start. An elbow to the back clearly doesn't make contact so HHH drops some knees instead. A backbreaker keeps up the focus and Flair gets in even more choking.

Some right hands stagger HHH but it's a spinebuster (because that doesn't weaken Batista's spinebuster whatsoever) for a few two counts in a row. The Pedigree is broken up with a backdrop but HHH cuts him off AGAIN with a facebuster. HHH goes up top and dives into a clothesline followed by a side slam for two. That's enough offense for now as Batista charges into a raised boot in the corner.

Batista comes right back with a hard whip to send HHH out to the floor but the champ sends him hard into the steps to regain control. The Pedigree onto the steps is countered into a slingshot into the post, drawing blood from HHH's head. Back in and Batista goes after the cut with some big forearms before driving the shoulders in the corner.

The fans are trying to get behind Batista again but that HHH dominance killed a lot of the match. Flair tries a distraction so HHH can get a chair but the referee takes it away. Ric takes out the referee and tries a belt shot, only to walk into a spinebuster instead. HHH gets in the belt shot for two. Now the Batista spinebuster connects but a low blow stops the fans AGAIN. The Pedigree is blocked and Sheamus' White Noise sets up the Batista Bomb to give us a new champion at 21:40.

Rating: C-. Screw off with HHH and his ridiculous ego. Batista won in the end but this was ALL about HHH and making sure he looked as strong as possible in defeat. The fans wanted to cheer here but it felt like every

other HHH match in this era but with Batista finally surviving to win the title. The fifteen minutes of dominance here really hurt the match and that's mainly because of HHH not letting Batista get in enough offense until the end. Couple that with HHH's awesome entrance and this felt more like a farewell to HHH than the coronation of a new star.

Batista holds up the title to HHH and poses to take us to the highlight package.

Overall Rating: B. This is a very lopsided show as the last hour and a half is a BIG drop from the first two hours and fifteen minutes. The World Title matches just aren't very good (much more boring than bad though) and some of the other stuff like Piper's Pit and the sumo match was just plain awful. I'm really not sure what the point of the Pit was unless they were going for a rub for Carlito, but you would think that him beating Cena in his debut match in the fall would have accomplished that just fine.

On the other hand though, four of the five first matches range from good to excellent with only Trish vs. Christy (a four minute match with three gorgeous women) falling short. If you could cut out a good chunk of the last third, this is a MUCH stronger show and one of the better ones of all time. Considering that's similar to what I said last year, it's pretty easy to see that pushing four hours (or five last year) is too long for a wrestling show. Obviously you can't expect everything to be great, but cut some of it down or improve it a lot. Still though, the really good more than outweighs the bad here and that's always a positive.

Ratings Comparison

Rey Mysterio vs. Eddie Guerrero

Original: B-

2013 Redo: C+

2016 Redo: B

Money in the Bank

Original: A

2013 Redo: B+

2016 Redo: A-

Undertaker vs. Randy Orton

Original: B-

2013 Redo: C+

2016 Redo: B-

Christy Hemme vs. Trish Stratus

Original: F+

2013 Redo: F

2016 Redo: D

Kurt Angle vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A+

2013 Redo: A+

2016 Redo: A

Big Show vs. Akebono

Original: F

2013 Redo: N/A

2016 Redo: N/A

John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Original: D

2013 Redo: D

2016 Redo: D+

Batista vs. HHH

Original: C-

2013 Redo: C-

2016 Redo: C-

Overall Rating

Original: C+

2013 Redo: B-

2016 Redo: B

This show continues to be something that is better than all of its individual parts.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/29/history-of-wrestlemania-wrestlemania-21-best-ad-campaign-ever/>

Here's the 2013 Redo if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/03/30/wrestlemania-count-up-wrestlemania-xxi-another-new-generation/>

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