

NXT – January 20, 2016: The Other Way

NXT

Date: January 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're in a bit of a weird point in NXT as it's still a few months before the next announced Takeover and we're just starting to set up the big feuds before we get to the really big feuds. Next week it's Baron Corbin vs. Samoa Joe vs. Sami Zayn for the #1 contendership so odds are they'll get some focus tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sami Zayn vs. Adam Rose

Sami works on a wristlock to start and spins around into an armbar. We're already well into the OLE chants but Rose cuts them off with a kick to the head. Some elbow drops set up a chinlock on Sami but he's quickly on his feet. Rose chops him right back down though and drops a top rope headbutt for two before choking on the ropes. Sami shrugs those off as well though and grabs a Koji Clutch out of nowhere for the submission at 5:27.

Rating: D+. If there's one thing Sami Zayn does better than almost anyone, it's taking a beating and making a quick comeback to win while keeping it realistic. Bringing Rose back for a loss like this is the right way to use veterans here because having the big stars come down and treating them like a bigger deal than the NXT roster isn't going to be accepted. That and Sami is a bigger deal than Rose anyway.

Johnny Gargano says he isn't intimidated by a bully like Samoa Joe. His solution: punch Joe in the mouth. As long as his heart is beating, Johnny Wrestling will not back down.

Chad Gable and Jason Jordan talk about not being nominated for Tag Team of the Year while Blake and Murphy were on the list. They know they're getting better and they're going to the top. Another word for top is alpha and they're both Americans, so they might as well be called American Alpha.

Tye Dillinger vs. Apollo Crews

Dillinger's entrance is even more energetic than usual here. They circle each other a bit to start until Dillinger takes him down with a wristlock. A headlock puts Crews on the mat and it's time for a quick victory lap with Tye giving himself a ten. That earns him a delayed vertical suplex with Crews only slipping a bit as Dillinger knees him in the head. It's a bit more impressive than when Lashley does it. Dillinger rolls outside but slide back in to hit a dive on Crews. Something like a Codebreaker gets two on Apollo but he pops back up and hits his lifting sitout powerbomb for the pin at 4:35.

Rating: C+. Better match than I was expecting here with Dillinger putting in more effort than I've seen from him in a long time. Crews continues to be an amazing athlete but I still haven't found a reason to connect with him yet. He's just a guy out there doing a bunch of cool looking stuff with nothing more to him. Talented for sure, but he needs some fine tuning.

Post match Crews says he's had something on his mind for a few weeks now. He isn't one to have a match end in a disqualification. Now he knows he hasn't earned a title shot, but he'd love to face Finn Balor one more time, even in a non-title match.

Alexa Bliss isn't happy with Blake and Murphy losing in London but she's going to lead by example tonight when she teams with Emma and beats up Bayley and Carmella.

We get a Vaudevillains vignette with the two of them looking very angry.

Stills of Kevin Owens appearing at the NXT Milwaukee house show.

Baron Corbin vs. Rich Swann

Swann is a longtime indy talent who recently signed with NXT. Corbin throws him into the corner to start and backdrops him into a 450. Off to something like a Tazmission from Corbin before Rich starts using some speed to avoid a few charges. A spinning kick to the face gets two on Corbin but Rich misses something off the top and charges into a big swinging Rock Bottom (called Deep Six) for the pin at 3:14.

Rating: C. Again a better match than I was expecting here with Swann looking solid in his debut. This isn't a match to judge him off though as he didn't have a character or anything like that. Then again that's how a lot of people have started down in NXT and turned out just fine so I wouldn't be worried. Corbin having a secondary finisher is a good idea as End of Days only works so well.

Bayley and Carmella are ready for their tag match tonight when Dawson and Wilder come in to say Carmella is a loser just like Enzo and Cass. Carmella is so upset that she's being driven bananas (her words) but Bayley says save it for the match.

Carmella/Bayley vs. Emma/Alexa Bliss

Dana is here with Emma/Bliss. Emma gets in a cheap shot on Bayley and the champ's ribs are damaged before the opening bell. Bayley starts anyway but is quickly dragged into the corner and stomped in the corner with the villains staying on the bad ribs. We take an early break and come back with Bliss holding Bayley in an armbar. Bayley gets up and hits a quick middle rope dropkick which only hurts her ribs even more. Emma breaks up the hot tag attempt and gets suplexed as a result, only to have Dana offer a distraction to prevent another tag attempt.

The Emma Sandwich (called a cross body in the corner) stays on the ribs and it's back to Bliss for another armbar, even though Bayley's hand is grabbing the ropes. Bliss drags her away and that's good enough for the referee for some reason. Bayley fights out of the corner though and tags in Carmella to take over on Bliss as things speed up. Carmella's little dance sets up a Bronco Buster and the leg crossface makes Bliss tap at 9:26.

Rating: C+. Standard formula tag match here with Bayley playing the

perfect face in peril until Carmella gets to make the comeback for the win. It makes a lot more sense to have Carmella get the win here as she needs to be built up before the title match and what better way to do that than by beating one of the many midcard heels?

Balor agrees to give Crews a non-title match.

Johnny Gargano vs. Samoa Joe

The fans start a JOHNNY WRESTLING chant which is such an awesome name. Joe drives him into the corner to start and grinds his forearm over Johnny's face before elbowing him in the jaw. Gargano snaps off a quick enziguri to put Joe on the floor, only to have him kick Johnny's leg out to take over again. The snap jabs have Gargano in trouble again and Joe kicks the leg out one more time, sending Gargano into a near 360.

Another kick puts Gargano on the floor but he dives in at nine with Graves ripping on him for going back to the beating. Back in and a quick enziguri and DDT stagger Joe but he kicks Gargano out of the air on a slingshot attempt. Gargano is already knocked silly so the Kojima Clutch puts him out of his misery at 4:30.

Rating: C+. Joe is the kind of guy who can work this physical ROH style and make it look good in short bursts. The Ciampa match was better but this was another hard hitting match where both guys came out looking good, even though this was pretty one sided for the most part. Gargano is another name that should be fine.

Overall Rating: B. This is where NXT continues to amaze me. They can have a week of nothing but storytelling and then the next week they do almost nothing but solid wrestling. The triple threat is looking better and you have another big match to build towards with Crews vs. Balor, even though it's non-title. As usual, they set up a goal and then they accomplish it, usually in the span of just a week. That's unheard of in today's wrestling and NXT does it nearly every single time. Well done, as usual.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Adam Rose – Koji Clutch

Apollo Crews b. Tye Dillinger – Lifting sitout powerbomb

Baron Corbin b. Rich Swann – Deep Six

Carmella/Bayley b. Emma/Alexa Bliss – Leg crossface to Bliss

Samoa Joe b. Johnny Gargano – Koquina Clutch

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Monday Nitro – August 28, 2000: It Raises So Many Questions

Monday Nitro #255

Date: August 28, 2016

Location: Pan American Center, Las Cruces, New Mexico

Attendance: 4,588

Commentators: Mark Madden, Tony Schiavone

I'm sitting here trying to write an introduction for this show and I honestly can't remember anything from the last two shows. I watched Nitro a week ago and Thunder three days ago and I have no idea what happened.

The big matches are Booker T. vs. Kevin Nash and Scott Steiner vs. Goldberg, but none of the details or any of the other details are coming to me. So little of this has any staying power whatsoever and feels like they're flying from story to story with nothing in between. Let's get to it.

We actually open with an NWO video. As in the Outsiders/Jarrett/Hart. Why in the world is this airing and why do I have a chill running up my spine at the possibilities?

Scott Steiner, Kevin Nash, Jeff Jarrett and Vince Russo get out of a limo.

Dark Carnival vs. 3 Count

It's Vampiro and the Clowns here, leaving Muta of all people to do commentary. This goes as well as you would expect it to as Madden "translates". The band dives onto the Carnival a few times to take over I'm pretty sure Muta's voice is overdubbed here and you can almost feel the racial overtones from here. The Clowns are knocked to the floor and a double suplex drops Vampiro. Muta screams for some reason and Tony asks Mark what he said. Madden: "He said AAHHHHHH!!!!" Back in and Vampiro hits a Nail in the Coffin to Moore, setting up a guillotine foot drop from Shaggy for the pin.

Post match Tank Abbott comes out to destroy 3 Count. The Carnival and 3 Count beat Tank down until Demon makes the save. Muta gets in with the mist to Demon, only to have Sting come out for the real save. That would be three people running in, mist and a ball bat as fallout from a 2:40 match. Sting, Tank and Demon pose in a very odd visual.

Here are Russo, Nash, Jarrett, Steiner and the Natural Born Thrillers with something to say, though I have a feeling Nash and Russo will do most of the talking. Russo tells us to cheer him because this is the elite group of WCW. Wasn't this the same group that wanted to kill each other at New Blood Rising? Now the Band is back together and Goldberg is in trouble. All Goldberg had to do was sign his release but now it's going to become New York ugly.

Jarrett says he has all the stroke around here no one can touch them. Some of the people here might find it odd that Nash is back on the team. However, Jarrett wants to talk about something personal, like Mike Awesome. Mike cost him the US Title last week so Jarrett wants him in a Bunkhouse Brawl at Fall Brawl. Steiner got his revenge last week and Goldberg found out what payback was. He could walk backwards and look better than Goldberg's girlfriend and that's about it.

Nash says he should have called himself the Puppet Master instead of Big Sexy. Every few months he suckers people in so they'll buy his merchandise but now that it's all sold out, you get the real him. He doesn't care about any of the fans and he never will. The people can't get him title shots or watch his back but the people in this ring certainly can. The fans start chanting for Booker but Nash promises to take the title in Buffalo at Fall Brawl. Russo says not so fast though because Nash isn't getting the title shot at the pay per view. Instead, he's getting the shot tonight with Jarrett as referee and Steiner as outside enforcer.

Cue Booker to tell Nash to shut up and to tell Russo to pick a buddy to get beaten up. This brings out the Cat and Ms. Jones with the former wanting his karate gi to give someone else a beating. The Thrillers let the two of them walk by and Cat gets in the ring to tell Russo to get out of town because he's not the boss. Nash and company beat Cat and Booker down so here are the Filthy Animals to go after the Thrillers.

They get through the line and are destroyed by the big names as well before Russo and company go up the ramp. Goldberg appears on screen in the desert, digging a hole. He promises to come back tonight and take care of all the goons though before bringing Russo to the desert and burying him in the sand. In other words, Russo is next.

Let's pause here for a second and recap. Here's a list of people involved in the first segment:

3 Count (Karagias, Moore, Helms)

Dark Carnival (Vampiro, Muta, Insane Clown Posse)

Tank Abbott

Sting

Demon

Here's a list of people involved in the second segment:

Vince Russo

Kevin Nash

Jeff Jarrett

Scott Steiner

Natural Born Thrillers (Reno, Sanders, Jindrak, Stasiak, O'Haire, Palumbo)

Booker T.

Ms. Jones

The Cat

Filthy Animals (Konnan, Juvy, Mysterio, Disqo)

Goldberg

To recap, TWENTY EIGHT PEOPLE were involved in the first two segments. We're not even a fourth of the way into this show and we've nearly had enough people to run a Royal Rumble. You think they might be overdoing it a little bit???

Cat is taken away in an ambulance.

Russo tells his buddies to keep an eye on him because Goldberg might bury him alive. Jarrett has someone coming in to deal with Goldberg while they get ready for later. So in other words, Russo and Goldberg is the big story instead of the World Title. Raise your hand if you're surprised. Goldberg calls Russo (thank goodness he knew his number and could get to a phone in the desert) and says he's on his way.

Tygress vs. Major Gunns vs. Paisley

Paisley kicks Gunns in the back and leaves as Tygress rolls her up for the pin in 20 seconds. The referee says it was only a two so Paisley and Tygress beat Gunns up even more before leaving with no cover. I don't even know how to call this stupid.

The Animals beat up the Thrillers and Konnan makes fun of Russo. So yeah, again it's all about Russo.

Jarrett has a truck full of guitars. Ok that's actually funny.

Mike Awesome is now a fan of the 1970s. I knew this was coming and it really doesn't help. He just came in for an interview and is wearing a blue leisure suit with disco playing in the background. Awesome wants Rick Steiner in a Bunkhouse Brawl as a warmup later tonight.

Kronik vs. Harris Twins

This is a House of Pain match, meaning a cage where you have to handcuff your opponents to the cage wall, because that makes sense. It's a slugout to start with the camera jumping around way too often. Clark suplexes Ron and drops a middle rope elbow and Adams plants Ron with a full nelson slam. With enough wrestling having been done so far, Adams throws Ron through the cage wall and they brawl on the floor with Don beating up a fan for no apparent reason. The match, a cage match, is thrown out in less than two and a half minutes.

Preview of The Way of the Gun, an upcoming movie.

Here's Team Canada to issue a challenge to MIA for a Prisoner of War match. In other words, the winner gets to kidnap a member of the other team and keep them for an undisclosed period of time. Cue the MIA, with Rection saying their name now stands for Made in America. The match is on, as long as it can be a tables match.

Lance Storm vs. Sgt. AWOL

Non-title. AWOL takes him down to start and they're quickly on the floor with Storm getting kicked in the face. Storm gets back in and Skipper

hits AWOL with the flag, allowing Storm to dropkick AWOL off the apron and through the table.

Storm grabs Gunns and bails.

Sting (with the announcers being heard off camera) accepts Muta's challenge. When did he make that challenge?

Mike Awesome vs. Rick Steiner

Bunkhouse Brawl, meaning no holds barred. Thankfully Awesome is in his regular gear here. Steiner jumps him to start but Mike clotheslines him to the floor and hits a big old dive over the top. Awesome throws in a table but Jeff Jarrett runs in with a pipe, allowing Steiner to German suplex Awesome through the table for the pin.

Ok, stop for a second. To recap, we've just finished our fifth match, which has consisted of a six man tag, a triple threat, a gimmick cage match, a tables match and a hardcore match. Total match time: 8:23. That should be the first hour and a half of a pay per view and we haven't even had nine minutes of action. How in the world did we get here?

WCW World Title: Booker T. vs. Kevin Nash

Booker is defending, Russo is on commentary, Jarrett is inside referee and Steiner is outside referee. This is your first half main event, meaning that indeed, this show is more about Goldberg and Russo. Nash kicks him in the face to start and they head to the floor with Jarrett actually counting them both out.

Russo is off commentary to yell at Jarrett for throwing Booker back inside, only to have Jeff shove him back to the booth. Back in and Booker hammers away in the corner as Jeff seems to be calling it down the middle. I'm sure that's going to last until the end of the match too. Nash drops the champ with a clothesline for two. Russo freaks out as Steiner hits Booker in the back, sending Jarrett outside while Nash covers Booker. Jeff shoves Russo as Nash slowly beats on Booker with Russo threatening to fire the referee.

There's a superkick to Nash, followed by the side kick for no cover. The

ax kick sets up the Spinarooni and the missile dropkick. Steiner comes back and we hear the production team doing an audio test. Of course we do. Booker drops Steiner but Jeff hits the champ with a guitar because we needed a swerve of a group set up twenty minutes ago in a seven and a half minute match. Nash gets up and Jackknifes Booker for the pin and his fifth title.

Rating: D-. This is a classic case of WHAT WAS THE POINT. Like I said, the group was announced maybe half an hour ago at most but we had a swerve, teasing issues between them. Then they get to say it's all a swerve and laugh after Russo acted all freaked out for about three minutes. Again I ask: what was the point? I'm sure it's more of Russo's brilliant writing that went over my head, which happens way too often on these shows. Just let the fix be in from the start next time and stop making things complicated.

Tony: "This is the worst thing to ever happen to the WCW World Title. And we've seen a lot of bad things happen to it."

Russo and company celebrate but they still need to worry about Goldberg.

Booker leaves as Goldberg arrives, which gets him to stick around.

Shane Douglas and Torrie Wilson are in the crowd with Shane saying he left Kidman alive at New Blood Rising. That's not a mistake he'll make again because he wants a scaffold match at Fall Brawl. Of course he does. Cue Crowbar to go after Shane for whatever reason but Daffney is down under the balcony for an unintentional distraction, allowing Shane to throw Crowbar off the balcony and through a well placed table.

Shane goes down after him and shoves Daffney (there's your required violence against a woman) before heading to the ring with Torrie. That was just a warmup so if there's a man who wants to give him a real test, come out here now. Cue Goldberg to dispatch Shane with the usual. So we have a match set up, a random Crowbar appearance, a big bump to likely write Crowbar off TV, a woman being shoved, and Goldberg destroying Shane so no one remembers what Shane did. This show makes me need oxygen.

Nash goes into the shower (complete with the censored stuff) but Booker

jumps him from behind.

Russo panics so Steiner goes to deal with Goldberg. Why doesn't Russo go with him?

We get a wedding invitation from David Flair and Miss Hancock (in Charlotte) for two weeks from tonight.

Jeff Jarrett vs. Big Vito

Madden makes Italian jokes and Tony talks about Russo as Vito powerslams Jeff for two. A loud right hand drops Jeff again but Jarrett comes back with some right hands of his own. There's the Mafia Kick and a legdrop for two on Jarrett as Vito continues to be far more adequate in the ring than you would expect him to be. A top rope elbow gets two more on Jarrett as Madden is freaking out. Jeff's enziguri looks to set up the Stroke but Vito counters with a good looking belly to back. Vito drops a top rope headbutt for two more but the Big Vito Special (Impaler) is countered into the Stroke for the clean pin.

Rating: C. Write this down because I don't think there's going to be another clean finish in this company for probably weeks. This worked far better than it had any right to be with Vito more than hanging in there against the more talented Jarrett. Like so many people on the roster though, Vito can do as much as he wants but with this basic of a gimmick, the glass ceiling is going to leave one heck of a bump on the back of his head.

Jarrett goes outside to get more guitars but Mike Awesome is waiting under the pile and takes Jeff out. Again, that was clever.

Natural Born Thrillers vs. Filthy Animals

This is a ten person elimination tag with Stasiak as the odd man out and Tygress in the ring for the Animals. Palumbo and Guerrera get things going with Juvy kicking at the legs and taking him over with a nice suplex. Juvy tries to go up but gets caught in midair for a fall away slam. Stasiak brings up Paul Orndorff as their trainer but doesn't seem to think too much of him. Reno comes in to pound on Mysterio but it's

quickly back to Juvy to counter a powerbomb, allowing Rey to drop a springboard legdrop. A suplex puts Rey down and Jindrak comes in for a no hands Lionsault.

Kidman comes in but eats a tilt-a-whirl slam...which he doesn't quite sell as he pops up with a Chartbuster. The hot tag brings in Konnan to clean house as everything breaks down with a bunch of people fighting to the floor for an eight man countout. We're down to Sanders vs. Tygress with the latter knocking Mike into the corner for a Bronco Buster. That goes nowhere and the 3.0 gives Mike the easy pin.

Rating: D. Well it was fun while it lasted, or at least the first three minutes or so before we had to get to the trick to get out of having a match go on forever. On top of that, we had another woman getting beaten up by a man so everyone wins. This was another good idea that had to be rushed through because Russo is a nitwit.

Goldberg lays out Scott Steiner.

Russo is looking for any protection he can find (because just LEAVING is out of the question) and runs into Vito. After a quick apology from Russo, Vito gives him the kiss of death.

Here's Russo in the arena because that's the best place he could hide. Vito actually comes out with him and you can see the swerve coming from here. What swerve? No idea but you know one is coming. Russo is all MANLY again and calls out Goldberg because this is Russo's house and these are Russo's people.

Cue Goldberg as Russo KEEPS TALKING, saying that Goldberg can't touch him. Wait...he's been running scared all night and NOW he remembers that??? Tony: "This is real life fans." Vito blasts Russo with the stick ball bat and stomps away. Goldberg throws Vito something (keys maybe) and tells Vito to take out the garbage. Vito carries Russo off, presumably out to the grave in the desert. I'm sure Goldberg and Vito, great pals of course, talked about where it was and that Vito has a good knowledge of the New Mexico desert's geography.

Sting vs. Great Muta

They start fighting in the aisle before the bell and we're not going to have a match are we? Sting takes over and hits Muta with a chair, only to get kicked back. Since this hasn't gone on long enough, Vampiro and the Clowns cut through the video screen so Vampiro can dive off and hit Sting with a kendo stick. I guess walking out was too passe. Sting fights back and they climb onto the screen. The Clowns pull him through the hole in the screen and pound him down for way longer than this needed to go.

We cut to the desert with Bret Hart of all people getting out of a car to say he hates Russo more than anyone. Bret says he's never forgotten Montreal and he wants to help bury Russo. Goldberg, like an idiot, agrees, and hands Bret a shovel. Bret blasts Goldberg in the back with said shovel and yells about Goldberg ending his career to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. Vince Russo has lost his mind. Like, moreso than usual. This was one of those rare episodes where you sit in awe watching, not sure how to react to anything. I'm sitting here trying to come up with something to say about this show but between all those gimmick matches rolled up into one show and Russo playing the high school scream queen running away from Goldberg the slasher to THE ASSAULT IN THE DESERT (how did Hart know they were there?), I really have no idea how to talk about this.

The worst part though: this show ran unopposed. The night before, the WWF had Summerslam 2000 (Rock vs. HHH vs. Angle, Benoit vs. Jericho in a 2/3 falls match and the first ever TLC) but Raw was preempted by a dog show. Therefore, you had a hot wrestling audience with zero competition (Monday Night Football started in a week) and this is what WCW gave them.

Earlier tonight, I watched JBL interview the Road Dogg on the WWE Network. Russo was brought up with JBL mentioning the theory that Russo was sent to WCW to ruin the company. I've never bought that theory but if you watch a show like this, it's really hard to believe that McMahon fought very hard to keep Russo. He had to know that Russo was insane and wanted to do stuff like this, but my goodness there was no way anyone knew it could be this bad. This is one of those shows you need to see for yourselves as it's one of the biggest head trips that I've ever seen.

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Impact Wrestling – January 19, 2016: The Future Is Dark With This One

Impact Wrestling

Date: January 19, 2016

Location: Sands Bethlehem Events Center, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

It's another big night as we have the final showdown between Ethan Carter III and Matt Hardy for the TNA World Title. This time it's a last man standing match with Carter defending his title and Hardy putting his TNA career on the line. Other than that we might find out the latest name on Kurt Angle's farewell tour as he approaches his final match at the end of the month. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Matt Hardy's rise through the World Title Series, only to slip up in the finals against Carter. This set up their latest match for the title with Hardy offering to put his career on the line.

Opening sequence.

Here's Jeff Hardy (of course) to call out his brother (of course) for a chat. Jeff talks about how they became famous by being risk takers and diving off ladders. He may be the artist in the family but he would never be where he was without Matt. Tonight feels off though and Matt thinks it's because his career is on the line. Matt talks about how he's let everyone down but tonight is the night to gamble. Wrestling is like a game of chess and tonight Matt knows he can checkmate Carter.

Tonight the dream comes true but here's Tyrus to interrupt. A dream can turn into a nightmare with a single change. Matt will be taken out by Carter tonight but no one has dealt with Jeff yet. Tyrus has done everything in this company for business, but tonight he wants to settle a personal issue with Jeff. Let's do it right now.

Jeff Hardy vs. Tyrus

Tyrus throws him into the corner to start but Jeff botches something off the top, sending him down and tweaking his knee. The big guy slowly starts working on the knee by wrapping it around the ropes and post. The referee tries to make the save but gets shoved down to DQ Tyrus at 2:58.

Jeff gives Tyrus a Twisting Stunner post match.

Feast or Fired video as this year's edition is next week. This year the X-Division Title seems to have been replaced by the King of the Mountain Title.

The Wolves have beaten everyone but now they want Beer Money. Crazy Steve comes in and grabs Davey's belt but Abyss jumps the Wolves from behind. So now it's Steve/Abyss as a team? Uh, sure why not.

Knockouts Title: Awesome Kong vs. Gail Kim

Kim is defending as we're flashing back to Bound For Glory. Oh wait it's ok because Kong has backup now. Kong runs her over to start and grabs a sleeper for a spinning throw. That's a new one. We hit the neck crank (that's not a new one) for a bit before Kong headbutts her into the corner. A running splash misses though and Kim puts on something like a Black Widow on the mat, followed by a rollup for two.

Kim drops the giant with a tornado DDT but Jade pulls her out to the floor. Gail gets back in but dives onto the Dollhouse instead of going after Kong but a neckbreaker gets two. Jade breaks it up with a distraction though, which draws out the Beautiful People to go after the Dollhouse. Kong almost hits Jade by mistake and it's Eat Defeat, followed by launching Jade onto Kong, to retain Gail's title at 5:45.

Rating: D. So we have Gail Kim, the Wolves, Carter and the Hardys on top. As usual, it feels like these people have been the champions or near the top of the card for the better part of ever. Kim is still entertaining in the ring and as polished as any performer in the history of the division but there's nothing left for her to do. Nothing. We've covered all of this and I really have no interest in seeing Kim vs. Kong all over again, no matter how awesome it was eight and half years ago.

We look back at Jeff getting injured earlier in case you have a really short attention span.

Here's Beer Money to call out Bram/Eric Young for a fight. Instead they get Eli Drake/Jesse Godderz who say it's not 2006 and Beer Money's time is done. Storm semi-quotes Roddy Piper ("I'm all out of beer.") and the brawl is on.

Beer Money vs. Eli Drake/Jesse Godderz

They slug it out on the floor to start until it's Drake beating on James in the ring. That goes nowhere as the hot tag brings in Roode to clean house, including a Hart Attack on Drake and a catapult into a DDT on Godderz. The double suplex on Drake sets up the name shouting, followed by DWI to put Godderz away at 4:00.

Rating: C-. Yeah fine. This whole thing is about setting up Beer Money vs. the Wolves and there's nothing wrong with that. It's going to be a big match and probably really good once it happens but the winners (likely the Wolves) are going to need a fresh set of challengers. If the best they've got is Abyss/Crazy Steve, they're in big trouble.

We look at Jeff injuring his knee for the third time in forty minutes.

Matt tells Jeff to go to the hospital so the knee doesn't get hurt even worse.

Here's Kurt Angle to address his farewell tour. Last week he had a five star match with Drew Galloway (not really but it was good). Now he's not sure who to face next because there's a lot of great talent in the back. This brings out Lashley, who talks about Kurt getting him into professional wrestling because he saw something special in Lashley.

They finally had their big showdown last year and it was a great match. It was the best of times and it was the worst of times for Lashley because he was in the ring with Kurt Angle but he lost. Now Lashley needs one more match to get this out of his system. That's fine with Angle, who says it's going to be real. This was fine.

Post break a woman comes up to Lashley and whispers that his pain is her pleasure.

Mike Bennett vs. Pepper Parks

This is Bennett's debut on Impact and Parks gets a jobber entrance. They slowly walk around a bit until Parks shoves him into the corner. Bennett superkicks him down and hammers away as Maria seems to approve. A pair of suplexes puts Parks down again and Divine Intervention (Samoan Driver) gives Mike the pin at 2:59.

Post match Bennett talks about building a kingdom of miracles where everyone says "yes we do."

Ethan says this ends tonight. Matt has his wife and son but Ethan has his family in Tyus. This week, Matt Hardy goes home in this, and the camera zooms out to show that they're sitting in an ambulance.

TNA World Title: Matt Hardy vs. Ethan Carter III

Carter is defending and this is last man standing. Matt jumps him during the big match intros but Carter spears him right back and hammers away. Hardy is quickly on the floor (some hero) and Ethan drives him into various objects for an early four. A suplex onto the ramp allows Ethan to set up a pair of tables. Matt puts Ethan on both of them but gets caught

on the top with a right hand. Instead Matt suplexes him back inside and we take a break.

Back with a ladder in the ring and Matt scoring with the Side Effect. Matt gets another table but takes way too long setting up the ladder, allowing Carter to grab a Russian legsweep. The fans are split on who to cheer for her as Ethan goes up and splashes Matt through the table. Matt gets up and hits a quick Twist of Fate for about seven, followed by a low blow. Now the fans are booing Hardy and Matt isn't pleased.

Ethan is up at seven so Matt gives him another Twist of Fate through one of the tables at ringside. That's only good for a nine though so Matt puts a chair around Ethan's neck for another Twist of Fate. Carter is bleeding from the mouth but gets up at nine again, only to fall at ten.

With nothing else working, Matt goes to his wife and gets a hammer out of her bag. Ethan ducks the death shot and hits Matt low, setting up a 1%er. Cue Tyrus to turn on Carter with a Big Ending, which gives Matt another nine count. Ok you've done the big heel spot and you did the turn. Just change the stupid title already. Ethan goes after Tyrus but Matt blasts him with the belt, finally giving him the win at 19:45.

Rating: C+. It's a good brawl but yeah, you're supposed to get hyped about a power alliance between a heel nostalgia act and the former Brodus Clay. I have no idea who they think this is supposed to appeal to but at the end of the day, this is their big idea to get people to watch. Is it any wonder why their audience has shrunk so much?

Post break, Matt says he beat the unbeatable for himself. He came back here to help but he's done listening to all these people because none of them matter. All that matters is the title and his wife because this is the era of Big Money Matt. With Carter still down (that was one heck of a belt shot), Matt gives him a Conchairto to close the show.

Overall Rating: D+. The future of this company looks less and less interesting every week. So now I have to watch the usual suspects go after Matt Hardy before we get the HUGE, yes HUGE I SAY, showdown between Matt and Jeff, likely all the way at Bound For Glory? The rest of the show was good enough but they're running through a lot of material in a

really short amount of time again and that's often a problem in wrestling promotions. Decent show, but good night their future looks like a mess.

Results

Jeff Hardy b. Tyrus via DQ when Tyrus shoved the referee

Gail Kim b. Awesome – Pin after throwing Jade onto Kongo

Beer Money b. Eli Drake/Jesse Godderz – DWI to Godderz

Mike Bennett b. Pepper Parks – Divine Intervention

Matt Hardy b. Ethan Carter III – Carter couldn't answer the ten count

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2015 Awards: Promo of the Year

This isn't the most in depth field in the world.

We'll start with the usual leader in Paul Heyman, who has two options here. These weren't exactly his best efforts, especially compared to last year, but they're still both solid options.

First up we have the post Wrestlemania promo with Heyman saying Brock will be getting his rematch that night instead of waiting any amount of time. This was all about the delivery that only Heyman can bring.

Second was GLORY GLORY BROCK LESNAR with Heyman breaking into song. There isn't much else to say about this one but sweet goodness it was catchy.

Since this is going to be a short list, I'll throw in Bray Wyatt bragging about being the new demon of WWE after kidnapping Undertaker and stealing his soul or whatever it was he did. Now of course this didn't lead anywhere but it was cool at the time with the thunder and lightning helping a lot.

With those out of the way, we're up to the real winner: Kevin Owens' debut promo against John Cena. I mean....dang man. Owens looked more comfortable in front of a main roster audience than anyone in years. His line of "You don't get to give me advice. I've been doing this longer than you." set the tone for his entire run and there was no looking back. The fact that he actually beat Cena in their showdown made this even better. Owens was instantly a player with this promo though and it was the best all year.

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2011: They Wouldn't

Royal Rumble 2011

Date: January 30, 2011

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,113

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Matt Striker

This is a weird Rumble as for one year only they tried having forty people in the Rumble instead of the usual thirty. It didn't quite work so they never tried it again, but for this year as a result there are only four matches on the whole card: two world titles, a Divas match and the Rumble itself. This is one of those rumbles I barely remember. Let's get to it.

The opening video is exactly what you would expect.

Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

Edge is defending and if he uses the spear here, Ziggler wins the title because Vickie is a crooked boss. Dolph takes over early and pounds on Edge in the corner but gets whipped across the ring to shift momentum. This is during Cole's heel phase so he's very annoying at this point. A gutbuster gets two for the champion and he takes things to the floor. Ziggler is rammed into the apron and the barricade for good measure as Edge stands tall.

As they come back in, Ziggler grabs a neckbreaker for two and hits an elbow to the chest. Off to a chinlock as Dolph stays on the neck. The fans cheer for Edge of course and he fights up, only to get caught in a middle rope sunset flip. Edge comes back with a slingshot into the buckle and now Dolph is in trouble. A rollup out of the corner gets two for Edge but Dolph hits another neckbreaker for two of his own.

Off to the chinlock until Edge rolls out to the apron. Ziggler knocks him into the barricade and it's back inside for the chinlock. Edge fights up

but they both try cross bodies to put both guys down. Ziggy misses a Stinger Splash in the corner and Edge catches him in a flapjack to put both guys down again. Edge counters the Fameasser into a sitout powerbomb for two more but he can't follow up.

The champion goes up but has to fight out of a superplex. Ziggler gets knocked down and hit by a top rope cross body, only for Ziggler to roll through for two. Now the fans start cheering for Ziggler as he gets two off a dropkick. The Zig Zag misses and Edge busts out the Edgecator of all things. Dolph grabs the rope so Edge dives at him on said ropes, only to clothesline himself on them.

The Fameasser gets two and both guys are down again. A big boot puts Ziggler down for about the seventh time and Edge gets into spear position. Like an idiot, Vickie reminds him of this, allowing Dolph to catch Edge in the sleeper. Edge rolls out of it and hits the Impaler for two as Vickie pulls the referee out of the ring. Vickie slaps Edge but the champion dodges a charging Dolph into a rollup for two.

She slaps Edge AGAIN so here's Kelly Kelly to take Vickie down. In the melee the Zig Zag hits for two and a BIG pop on the kickout. There's the sleeper and while trying to escape it, Edge knocks the referee down. Edge escapes the hold with a kind of Stunner and realizes there's no referee or Vickie so there's the spear to Ziggler. The referee wakes up and Edge hits an Unprettier to retain the title.

Rating: A-. Good stuff here again although the ending is kind of stupid. Eventually Edge would be stripped of the title for using the spear (I can't remember if it was here or another match) and Ziggler would have a stupid 45 minutes or less reign. I don't think anyone, including Dolph, considers that a real reign but hey, Ziggler is a former world champion so we have to respect him, right WWE?

We recap Orton vs. Miz. The champion Miz cashed in MITB on Orton back in November and beat him in a tables match at TLC. Tonight it's an actual match which means Miz is likely in trouble.

Miz says he'll win.

Raw World Title: The Miz vs. Randy Orton

Miz has Riley with him here. Orton pounds away to start as Cole is already on his knees to suck Miz off. The champ is knocked out to the floor and gets sent into the barricades a few times. Back in and Orton kicks him in the face before stomping away a bit. Cole is already on one of his rants about how noble Miz is in comparison to Edge. Orton chokes on the ropes a bit as Cole says that Orton should have stated in advance that he wanted to brawl.

Riley finally guillotines Orton on the top rope to give Miz a chance. Orton shrugs the offense off and slugs Miz down, only to miss a running knee in the corner. Cole stays on his rant about how awesome Miz is as Riley interferes some more. Cole high fives Riley and Miz hooks a chinlock for a bit. Striker continues his brilliance by saying Miz is working on the midsection to set up the SKULL Crushing Finale. A running knee to Orton's face gets two and it's back to the chinlock.

Randy blocks a German Suplex and elbows Miz down to break the momentum. Miz comes right back with a big boot to the face for two and the champion is getting frustrated. Miz goes up and gets crotched right back down, allowing Orton to hit his daddy's superplex for two. Randy starts his comeback with the clotheslines and the backbreaker to send Miz to the apron. Why would you go there against Orton? Perhaps it's because he can backdrop Orton out to the floor to counter and have Riley stomp away a bit.

A top rope ax handle gets two for Miz so he pounds away on Orton's head. Back to the chinlock but Orton fights out of this one much faster. Not that it matters though as Orton gets sent through the ropes and out to the floor where Miz catapults him into the post. Orton gets back in at nine and is all fired up, only to get punched into the corner. Randy comes back with a clothesline and the powerslam before hitting the circle stomp.

Riley breaks up something like a powerbomb, allowing Miz to hit a modified Reality Check for two. Both finishers are countered and Orton hits an Angle Slam of all things for two. I vaguely remember him using

that around this time. Miz's attempt at walking out fails but he gets in something we can't see for two back inside.

Randy gets two off a rollup and there's the Elevated DDT. Orton loads up the RKO but here's the New Nexus for a distraction. Riley tries to come in but in a great looking spot, Orton LAUNCHES Riley over the top (and over the referee) onto Nexus. The RKO hits but Punk runs in with a GTS to keep the belt on Miz. Cole literally jumps for joy.

Rating: B. I was digging this match a lot and the ending would wind up making a lot more sense than it does on paper here. While Punk would obviously go on to feud with Punk for a few months, Miz would face Jerry Lawler of all people at Elimination Chamber before moving on to the main event of Wrestlemania. Good stuff here though and one of Miz's best matches ever. Gee you hear that a lot when Orton is the opponent don't you?

Dashing Cody Rhodes will not be here tonight because of his shattered face. This would lead to Dr. Cody Doom which was pretty awesome and then wound up being wasted.

Fans say who they think is going to win the Rumble.

Divas Title: Natalya vs. Laycool

Nattie beat them in a handicap match to win the title and this is the rematch. Before anything gets going though, we have an e-mail from the anonymous GM. We're going to make it a four way just for the sake of making it a fourway and we want to have a new champion.

Divas Title: Michelle McCool vs. Layla vs. Eve Torres vs. Natalya

Nattie is defending as I said and this is one fall to a finish. Laycool goes after both other chicks to start and Eve gets double teamed. Natalya comes back with a slingshot to send Layla into Michelle as Matt actually tries to analyze this match. We get down to Laycool squaring off but before they do anything, Eve and Nattie come back in.

Layla breaks up the Sharpshooter on Eve so Natalya puts the Sharpshooter on BOTH OF THEM AT ONCE. Layla hits the neckbreaker on Eve to send her to

the floor but Michelle kicks Eve out to the floor. Michelle misses a bit boot and takes Layla's head off by mistake. She and the champ fight to the floor, allowing Eve to sneak in and steal the pin with a moonsault.

Rating: D+. That might become my default rating for Divas matches as most of them fall into the same category: not bad but nothing worth seeing at all for the most part. The double Sharpshooter was cool but it's a five second sequence out of a five minute match. Also, why am I supposed to be excited about Eve winning the title when she wasn't even important enough to put into the match in the first place?

Michelle is mad because she had Natalya covered at the same time but the referee didn't see it.

A cleanshaven Daniel Bryan is excited for the Rumble because he could win. He's with Gail at this point and the Bells come up to offer their condolences for trying to hook up with Bryan. The Bellas imply they're better looking than Gail and a fight breaks out.

Rumble By The Numbers time!

40 entrants

1 winner

24 winners

656 losing entrants

39 eliminations by Shawn, a record

26 WWE Hall of Famers who have competed

183,932lbs that has competed in the Rumble, or 92 tons or 492 Big Shows

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

11 eliminations by Kane in 2001, a record

13 straight Rumbles for Kane, also a record

62:12 Mysterio lasted in the 2006 Rumble

1 second, the record for shortest time in the Rumble, held by Santino Marella

3 wins by Austin

2, the number of wins that spot #1 has produced, the same as #30

70% of winners have gone on to win the title at Mania

Royal Rumble

40 entrants this year and it's Punk at #1 and before #2 comes out, here's the Corre (Barrett, Jackson, Slater and Gabriel) to surround Punk. They jump him until Punk's Nexus guys come out for the save. The GM sends an e-mail that says everyone not named CM Punk needs to get out or they're out of the Rumble. Anyway Daniel Bryan is #2 and the internet explodes.

They speed things up to start and Bryan fires off some kicks to the ribs. Striker talks about how the internet loves this match as Bryan is sent to the apron. The dueling chants begin and Bryan misses a dropkick in the corner. Justin Gabriel is #3 and immediately goes after Punk. Bryan clotheslines CM down and Gabriel misses the 450, allowing Bryan to dump Justin out.

Zack Ryder, still a heel, is #4. He immediately takes Bryan down and hits the Broski Boot to both guys. Bryan launches Ryder into the air for a Rough Ryder into Punk, only to get dumped to the floor by Daniel. Back to Punk vs. Bryan until William Regal is #5. He starts busting out the knees to the face and some suplexes before hitting the knee trembler to Punk. The student and the teacher (Bryan and Regal) slug it out before Punk kicks the teacher in the head. Bryan kicks Punk in the head for kicking Regal in the head and only Daniel is left standing.

Ted DiBiase is #6 along with Maryse. Bryan rips off kicks to Regal before trying to dump Ted out. John Morrison is #7 to a BIG pop. He comes in (after slipping) with a slingshot kick to Regal and the Flying Chuck to Punk. A C4 takes Bryan down but DiBiase dumps Morrison to the apron. As Regal is eliminated, we get at the time the best Rumble save ever, as Morrison is knocked from the apron but catches himself on the barricade.

His feet never touch as he pulls himself up to the barricade, tightrope walks down to the steps, jumps to said steps, kicks Regal in the head, and gets back in. That blew my mind live.

Yoshi Tatsu (Striker calls him the Poison Fist of the Pacific Rim because Striker likes to think he's smart) is #8 and goes right after Punk. Husky Harris is #9 and he beats everyone not named Punk before standing guard over his leader. Chavo Guerrero is #10 as these intervals are getting really short. Chavo loads up Three Amigos on DiBiase but Punk breaks it up. Now Punk takes two of them but Morrison breaks it up at two. So this time Morrison takes two suplexes but BRYAN breaks it up and finally Daniel takes all three suplexes.

Chavo takes Harris down with a middle rope missile dropkick and Mark Henry is #11. For some reason Chavo dives on him and is immediately dumped out. Yoshi is sent out as well as JTG is #12. Michael McGillicutty is #13 and he takes out JTG almost immediately before teaming up with Harris to dump DiBiase. Christ Masters is #14 and puts Punk to the apron with the Masterlock until McGillicutty makes the save. Masters and Bryan slug it out until Otunga is #15, giving Punk and the Nexus four members.

They gang up on and toss Bryan pretty easily and there goes Masters as well. There goes Morrison too and the elimination of Henry clears the ring. Tyler Reks from ECW gets to come in at #16 and you can figure out what happens to him in about 40 seconds. Vladimir Kozlov is #17 but the numbers catch up with him and it's Punk who gets to do the honors. We're just waiting for Cena to come out now.

Instead it's R-Truth at #18 and it's the same result. The only highlight is Punk hitting the knee in the corner and saying WHAT'S UP with a big goofy grin on his face. There goes Truth but Great Khali returns at #19 to scare Punk half to death. He fights all of the Nexus off and manages to dump Harris which is a big breakthrough. Khali chops Punk down and Mason Ryan, also of the Nexus, is #20. After a brief slugout he puts Khali out and we're right back where we were.

In our second major return of the Rumble, Booker T is #21 and Striker FREAKS. Booker fires off as many kicks as he can and hits the Bookend on

McGillicutty. You know we're getting the Spinarooni but Ryan throws Booker out as soon as it's over. Punk: "WE'RE GOING TO WRESTLEMANIA!" All hope seems to be lost but heeeeeeeeeere's Cena at #22. The hometown boy charges at the ring and puts out McGillicutty, Ryan and Otunga to get us down to one on one.

Cena pounds away and escapes the GTS before a double clothesline puts both guys down. Hornswoggle is #23 and is immediately kicked down by Punk. Atta boy CM! Punk loads up the GTS but Cena escapes and this the AA to toss Punk out. In next is Tyson Kidd at #24 and he gets caught between Cena and Horny. The Swogg busts out a headscissors before Cena hits the AA. In a decent visual, Horny hits an AA of his own allowing for the elimination by Cena.

Heath Slater is #25 and DEAR GOODNESS he looks hilarious in trunks. He might be as pale as Sheamus used to be and the visual is horrible. Horny hits some Sweet Shin Music and a Stunner followed by a double Five Knuckle Shuffle. There's a Tadpole Splash and Slater is gone. Cole sounds like he's about to be sick. Kofi Kingston is #26 and this should be interesting. Kofi fires off some kicks of course followed by some punches in the corner until Jack Swagger is #27.

Cole talks about the luck of #27 and Jerry correctly points out that the number is lucky in 30 man matches, not 40. Swagger hits the Vader Bomb on both full sized guys but as he goes after Hornswoggle, Kofi cross bodies Swagger down. There's the Boom Drop with horny as a stepping stone and it's King Sheamus at #28. Cena takes the Irish Curse and there's only Horny left to face Sheamus. Horny loads up Sweet Shin Music but Cena saves Horny from elimination. The tiny man loads up the Tadpole Splash but gets Brogue Kicked out, thank goodness.

Mysterio is #29 and he hits a pair of headscissors on Swagger and Sheamus but Sheamus breaks up the 619. Trouble in Paradise takes Sheamus down but Swagger takes Kofi down. Rey hits a headscissors to put Swagger on the apron and a 619 gets the elimination. Wade Barrett is #30 and it turns into a bunch of mini brawls. Winds of Change take Cena down and Zigler is #31. There's a pretty big talent pool in there at the moment with Cena, Mysterio, Sheamus, Kingston, Zigler and Barrett.

Barrett and Dolph go after Cena but Mysterio makes a save for no apparent reason. Diesel is the final big return at #32 and there's your big pop. This is the appearance that set up Diesel vs. HHH and Punk for the latter half of the year. Everyone is stunned but I think it's just at how black Diesel has gotten his hair. That's some high quality polish. We get a Diesel chant and he cleans house in a much more effective way than you would expect. Diesel's style is really good for something like this as he does so many basic moves but he's so big that they look that much more impressive.

Drew McIntyre is #33 and we get a LOUD let's go Diesel chant. Diesel gets caught in 619 position and in a very rare occurrence, the move gets booed. Alex Riley is #34 and Cole loses his mind when Miz's music hits again. Diesel misses a big boot and gets kicked out by Barrett. The DIESEL chant rocks the Garden as Miz sits in on commentary. Big Show is in at #35, so Striker talks about how much taller Show is than the tallest player in the NHL. For once I agree with Cole when he says "WHO CARES???" We know Big Show is tall, and simply telling us he's taller than a guy who is 6'9 doesn't change anything.

Show and Diesel have a staredown in the aisle which is a FAR better (and actual) illustration of how big Show is. McIntyre and Sheamus get dropped by Show and there's a chokeslam for Barrett. Show dumps Ziggler as Cena dumps Riley. Show shoves McIntyre out as Big Zeke is #36. He immediately throws out Show to a shockingly non-reaction. We have Barrett, Jackson, Kingston, Cena, Mysterio and Sheamus at the moment.

Santino is #37 and literally immediately breaks his record of 1 second in the Rumble. Jackson almost immediately decks him and knocks Santino to the mat and out to the floor which isn't an elimination. Remember that. Jackson tries to put Cena out and Del Rio is #38. He's still new at this point and hasn't gotten on almost everyone's nerves yet.

Striker tells us that Riley has been eliminated five minutes after it happens. Not only is he annoying but he's a bad broadcaster on top of that. Alberto wisely takes forever to get into the ring as Miz's voice sounds really hoarse. By long enough I mean Orton jumps him in the aisle at #39. There's a quick RKO to Del Rio and one for Sheamus as well. A

third hits Kofi and he's gone. Sheamus is out too and it's time for Cena vs. Orton. John points to the sign but Kane's pyro goes off at #40 to complete the field and scare Cena to death.

So we've got Cena, Mystério, Barrett, Jackson, Del Rio, Orton and Kane in the ring. I've seen far worse. Kane focuses on Orton and hits the side slam, only to be run over by Big Zeke. Jackson misses a charge though and goes out via a low bridge. Mystério jumps into a chokeslam grip but Rey headscissors him out, only to be dumped by Barrett. Orton goes after Alberto while Cena beats up Barrett. Cena gets sent to the apron but gets back in via a shoulder to Wade's ribs.

Things slow down again and NOW we get Cena vs. Orton. The fans barely react to it though so Barrett breaks it up. There's an AA to Del Rio and here's Riley again. He distracts Cena enough to have Miz run in and dump Cena to get us down to Orton, Barrett and Del Rio in the ring. There's the backbreaker to Del Rio and Orton dumps Barrett, only to have Alberto sneak in on him to win the Rumble.

Rating: A. This was a VERY well done Rumble as they hit the three act structure and had a great balance of main event guys as well as new stars and legends. While it doesn't seem like a big shock now, Del Rio had only been around for about four months. This would be like a member of the Shield winning the Rumble in 2013. Excellent Rumble though and one of the best ever.

Del Rio celebrates.....AND SANTINO CRAWLS BACK IN! He went UNDER remember so the match isn't over yet. Del Rio doesn't see him coming and Santino hits the Cobra! Cole: "OH MY GOD!!!" He goes for the elimination but Del Rio reverses and dumps Santino out to really win. I remember watching this and my heart STOPPED as soon as Santino got back in. The exact words I said: "THEY WOULDN'T! THEY COULDN'T! Oh they didn't." This makes the match even better as the fans LOST IT when he got back in.

Ricardo is literally on the floor screaming Del Rio to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. The worst and only bad match was the Divas and you have looks in that one so how can this be anything below great? 2011 was the start of the good period for WWE and they kicked it off with a bang

with a great Rumble here. This is an excellent show and well worth checking out. Good stuff here.

Ratings Comparison

Edge vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: A-

Redo: A-

Miz vs. Randy Orton

Original: B

Redo: B

Eve Torres vs. Natalya vs. Layla vs. Michelle McCool

Original: D

Redo: D+

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

This is why I don't see the point in redoing the newer shows: my taste hasn't changed much.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/30/royal-rumble-2011-his-name-is-alberto-del-rio/>

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2010: The Swerve That Made Sense

Royal Rumble 2010

Date: January 31, 2010

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 16,697

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Matt Striker

We're getting close to the end of the run here with only three shows left. Tonight we've got the Rumble of course along with Undertaker defending against Mysterio and Sheamus defending against Orton. I remember really liking this one as the new generation had arrived and was rising up the card. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the Road to Wrestlemania is beginning and how it determines what happens for months to come. This is called the most star studded Rumble ever, which is a tagline that has been used before.

ECW Title: Christian vs. Ezekiel Jackson

Christian is defending and man that ECW ring announcer has an annoying

voice. Regal is with Jackson here. According to Striker, Jackson went to Columbia Law School. Now there's a factoid that fell through the cracks. Jackson shoves Christian into the corner and then does it again into the ropes so the champion slaps him in the face. After a brief chase, Christian dropkicks Jackson out to the floor.

The springboard plancha takes Jackson out and we head back in. Christian finally gets caught in the corner and pounded on before having the Killswitch easily blocked. Instead Christian chokes away on the ropes and hits another shot to the face. Jackson throws Christian to the floor where Regal tries to throw him back in, earning himself an ejection. Off to a neck crank back inside which Jackson picks up into a kind of cobra clutch slam for two.

A vertical suplex gets two for Big Zeke and it's time for more choking. A sunset flip is easily blocked by Jackson and it's back to the chinlock. Striker tries to figure out what a peep is, as he knows it as a something made of chocolate. Some shots to the face get Christian out of trouble for awhile, or at least until a clothesline to the back of the head gets two.

Jackson hooks both of Christian's arms back for another hold before putting the champion on top. The superplex is blocked and Christian hits a top rope back elbow for two (LOVE that move). Jackson's big clothesline misses and a middle rope dropkick gets two for the champion. A spinwheel kick gets two on Jackson but a swan dive misses and gives Zeke a near fall as does a backbreaker.

The tornado DDT gets ANOTHER two for Christian so Jackson takes his head off with a clothesline. Off to a sleeper from Christian when the Killswitch doesn't work but Jackson counters into a powerslam position to ram Christian's back into the buckle. Christian slides down Jackson's back and grabs the Killswitch out of nowhere to retain.

Rating: C+. Trim two minutes out of this and it goes WAY up in quality. The period of near falls went on too long without getting any significant heat from the crowd. Jackson would get the title in a little over two weeks on the final episode of ECW because if there's one man that should

be the final ECW Champion, it's a musclehead that could barely get through a five minute match most of the time.

Cryme Tyme come in to try to get a second spot in the Rumble from Teddy and Tiffany. Khali says "no dice homeslice" to selling their spot because he's keeping it real. Apparently he's learned his English from Family Matters (Singh's words, not mine). Ok then. Anyway US Champion the Miz comes in and laughs which causes him to have to defend against MVP.

Orton is in the back when Cody Rhodes comes in. He's there for Randy in the title match tonight but that's not all. Apparently DiBiase isn't in on this because his mind is on winning the Rumble and taking the title from Orton.

US Title: The Miz vs. MVP

A quick clothesline gets two for MVP and he works on the champ's ribs to start. Miz gets a boot up in the corner to slow him down but MVP comes right back with a belly to back suplex for two. They head to the floor for this gem from Striker: "Miz is one of the most recognizable faces on this planet." I don't think Miz is one of the most recognizable faces in this match.

Back in and Miz sends MVP to the apron and gets kicked into the table on the floor. Not that this is treated like anything of note because the announcers are laughing about Sherri Shepard from The View. Miz sends shoulders into MVP's ribs in the corner followed by the running corner clothesline. A top rope double ax gets two for Miz and we hit the chinlock.

After that eats up some time, MVP pounds away with all of his usual stuff. Ballin hits and a running boot to the side of the head gets two for the challenger. A big shoulder block gets the same for MVP but he misses a running boot in the corner. MVP grabs three straight quick near falls but gets caught in a small package for the pin to keep the title on Miz.

Rating: D+. If there was a reason for this to be on PPV other than the show was running short, I don't know what it was. Miz didn't look like

anything special out there but somehow he would be world champion a year later. MVP on the other hand would be out of the WWE but he did well enough in Japan. Nothing to see here other than a filler match.

Post match MVP hits the Playmaker on Miz and gets booed LOUDLY. He lost completely clean so the booing is deserved.

Show and Jericho, the former tag team champions, run into each other. Show accuses him of being jealous of the chemistry Show and Miz have but Jericho brushes it off. He calls the crowd gelatinous worms before pointing out all of the similarities he and Miz have. Show says he'll throw both Miz and Jericho out to win the Rumble. R-Truth pops up and says he'll do the same. Show leaves Jericho standing there much to Jericho's chagrin.

DiBiase wishes Orton luck and says he's got Randy's back. Orton asks where Cody is but DiBiase doesn't know. This was during the time when Legacy was about to die and both members were trying to get on Randy's best side. DiBiase claims that Rhodes only wants to win the Rumble but Orton has heard enough. He doesn't want anyone's help and gets a clear face pop in response.

The National Guard is here.

Raw World Title: Sheamus vs. Randy Orton

Sheamus won the title in a shocker last month at TLC and is heel here. He's also still not that good and wouldn't really hit his stride for about a year and a half. They stare at each other to start and my goodness is Sheamus pale. A dropkick puts the champion down but he comes right back with a running ax handle. Sheamus gets in a shot to the arm and we head to the floor where said arm is sent into the steps.

Back in and Orton goes for the knee and things slow down a bit. Orton wouldn't really pick up the pace of his offense until about the following year which made his matches pretty hard to sit through. Sheamus comes back by sending Orton's shoulder into the post twice and hitting some shoulder blocks in the corner. That gets him nowhere though as Orton takes out the knee again and knocks Sheamus to the floor.

They head inside again and yet AGAIN momentum shifts back to Sheamus as he hits a DDT on the arm for two. Off to an armbar for a bit before they slug it out to the boo/yay chants. Orton wins the slugout but walks into the Irish Curse for two. The High Cross is escaped and Orton kicks Sheamus in the head to send him to the outside. Orton gets ready for the RKO but Rhodes jumps the guardrail and blasts Sheamus in the back before running away. The referee sees it though and despite Orton hitting the RKO, he's disqualified and Sheamus keeps the title. Lame ending to a pretty lame match.

Rating: D+. Like I said, Sheamus just wasn't very good yet. He was still this big imposing brawler who pounded on people and that's about it. There was indeed a story in the match but it wasn't a very entertaining one as they just kept beating on each other's limbs but when there's no difference because of the beating, the story doesn't work. The ending didn't help either but it did set up something in the future.

Post match Orton snaps on Cody as DiBiase comes down to save his partner. While Orton yells at Cody in the corner, Sheamus comes back in and lays out Randy with a Brogue Kick.

We recap Mickie vs. McCool. This was an awkward feud as Mickie won the title shot in a triple threat and then Laycool made fun of Mickie for being fat. This is of course odd as Mickie is a professional athlete and gorgeous and would only be called fat by a crazy person. It's also pretty disturbing when you consider how WWE pushes the Divas as role models. The final bit of it was a segment where Mickie got beaten down and covered in food.

Women's Title: Michelle McCool vs. Mickie James

Pre match Michelle runs her mouth about how fat Mickie is and accuses her of skipping out on the match. Michelle offers cake and here's Layla in a Mickie Pig costume. The real Mickie sprints to the ring and hits a Thesz Press on Layla on the floor. She heads inside, sends Michelle into Layla and hits the MickieDT for the pin and the title in 20 seconds.

Post match the other Divas bring out a cake and smash it into Laycool's faces.

We recap Mysterio vs. Undertaker. Rey won the shot by slamming a cage door onto Batista's head to escape because that's what heroes do. Taker said he'll show no mercy on Mysterio so Rey uses the same line everyone does on Taker: he isn't afraid. Batista beat up Mysterio as well, claiming that Undertaker and the world title was his.

Smackdown World Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Undertaker

Mysterio, in the deep south, comes out wearing a white hood. Striker talks about Lawler being in the ring with Kamala and Lord Humongous (Sid) because he thinks it makes him sound interesting. He's trying to make a comparison to being in the ring with Undertaker, but if he was as smart as he thinks he is, he would ask Jerry what it's like to be in the ring with Undertaker himself, which would save a lot of headaches.

Rey fires off some shots in the corner before Taker grabs him by the neck and throws him up and over the top and out to the floor. That looked awesome. Back to the apron and Rey fires off strikes to the face, only to get punched right back down to the floor by a single shot. Taker misses the legdrop on the apron but hits it the second time before heading back in. Rey counters a chokeslam into the 619 but Taker easily grabs the legs. Tombstone is countered and Taker misses an elbow drop.

Rey tries a springboard cross body but jumps into a boot to the chest. We head to the floor again and there's another big boot to the head to take Rey down. A third big boot keeps Rey down but the fourth misses and Taker sends his leg around the post. Rey hits a baseball slide to send the leg into said post and Taker is in trouble. The seated senton off the apron is caught and Taker puts him back on the apron, only to be caught by an Asai Moonsault to put both guys down.

Taker grabs Rey by the throat and slams him into the barricade. The champion's nose is busted a bit. Taker does that lifting wristlock of his to crank on the arm a bit before punching Rey down in the corner for a bit. A big side slam gets two for the guy who would use a side slam in this match as Striker goes into this big speech about how the blood shows that undertaker is mortal. Seriously, it's a BLOODY NOSE. Watch the freaking Lesnar match in the Cell when the blood is literally dripping

from Taker's head and down onto Lesnar's body.

Rey starts firing off some punches but a single shot from Taker is enough to put him back down. A jawbreaker finally staggers the big man and they do a kind of cross body, although Taker counters into something like Langston's Big Ending, so it's hard to say which hurt worse. Taker sits up so Rey kicks him in the face. Why has no one done that before? Rey drops the dime (springboard legdrop) for two but Taker kills him with a big clothesline. The Last Ride is countered and the 619 hits as does a second one, but the West Coast Pop is countered into the Last Ride to retain the title.

Rating: B. This was solid stuff for the most part for a few reasons. First of all, they didn't make Taker look ridiculous to get into position for Rey's moves. That's my biggest issue with most of Rey's battles against giants: how stupid the big men look. The other good thing here is that Taker wasn't knocked silly after just a few moves. Rey only hit maybe a dozen offensive moves here other than basic strikes and it wouldn't have made sense to have Taker in major trouble. Finally, Rey can bump like crazy when he's trying to. The only issues here are the lack of a threat to Taker and Striker's commentary. Chill out already man.

Shawn is watching in the back when Kane comes in and says Shawn's obsession with Taker is unhealthy. This is KANE calling something unhealthy. He warns Shawn to cool it with Taker because it won't end well. Kane leaves and HHH comes in. Shawn apologizes for whatever happened on Raw which apparently isn't important enough to specify. HHH agrees Shawn vs. Taker is meant to be, but it won't be by wining the Rumble.

Rumble by the Numbers time:

23 Winners

627 entrants eliminated

36 eliminations by Austin

11 eliminations by Kane in 2001

2002 was the last Rumble in Atlanta

62:12 Rey was in the Rumble in 2006

2 seconds was the record for 20 years until Santino broke it last year

3 wins for Austin

2 win for #1, the same as #30

70% of the winners win at Mania

Royal Rumble

Dolph Ziggler is #1 and Evan Bourne is #2. Bourne snaps off a headscissors to start and follows up with a spinwheel kick to take Dolph down. Ziggler comes back with the Zig Zag but can't throw Evan out. Bourne decks Ziggler and hits Air Bourne as CM Punk of the Straightedge Society is #3. He slams the other two guys' heads together and dumps them out one after the other. Punk gets a mic and says that tonight is the greatest night in the history of the Straightedge Society. These two are just the first of 29 men who will challenge him, but they can be saved.

The clock starts running down, so Punk gives us the line of the night: "Excuse me, it's clobberin time." JTG is #4 and after a few clotheslines, he poses like an idiot in the corner and gets dumped. Punk gets the mic again and says that not everyone can be saved because they don't have his dedication. Great Khali is #5 and Punk immediately says he can make Khali greater by saving him. He asks Khali to raise his hand for the Straightedge Pledge but Khali lowers the hand onto Punk's head for the chop.

There's the Khali Vice and in less than 90 seconds, Beth Phoenix of all people is #6. She stares down Khali and gets picked up and placed on the apron. Beth kisses Khali but in the process pulls him over the top to eliminate him. Phoenix gets back in and BEATS UP PUNK, only to get caught in a GTS to the chest. Would that really knock her out? Before she's dumped out, here's Zack Ryder at #7.

As Ryder gets in, Punk grabs the mic and says Zack has potential. PREACH

IT BROTHER! Punk starts offering him a spot but his Ryder with the mic before he gets done with it. The fans are going nuts for Punk now and there goes Ryder. Punk talks about how great he is and wants to know who is next, but whoever it is, they're inferior to Punk. In at #8 is HHH as we enter the second segment of the Rumble.

They stare each other down and HHH starts punching. The facebuster has Punk staggered and a spinebuster puts him down as Drew McIntyre is #9. That gives us a tag champion in HHH and the IC Champion in Drew at the moment. HHH is looking a bit flabby here. He hits the high knee on McIntyre and escapes the GTS to eliminate Punk. DiBiase is #10 as we're flying through this.

HHH gets double teamed down in the corner until John Morrison, the guy that lost the title to McIntyre, is #11. He takes both heels down and pounds away on them before hitting a jumping DDT on Drew. Starship Pain almost completely misses Drew and HHH clotheslines John down. Kane is #12 and comes in with the top rope clothesline to HHH. There's a double chokeslam to McIntyre and Morrison before Kane tries to dump DiBiase.

Rhodes is #13 and saves Ted as he comes in. Morrison is sent to the apron and springboards back in, only to get dropkicked out of the air. Legacy goes after Kane but HHH saves him for no apparent reason. Cody saves himself from being eliminated and MVP is #14. Miz runs up behind him though and blasts MVP with the US Title. Morrison hits the Moonlight Drive on McIntyre to break up the Future Shock on Kane. HHH is in trouble in the corner and MVP is carried to the back.

Carlito is #15 and the ring is starting to get full. There's a Backstabber to HHH and one for Drew and Ted as well. Miz is #16 and hits a quick Finale on Carlito. Cue MVP to clothesline Miz out and eliminate himself in the process. Matt Hardy is #17 and lasts about 20 seconds before Kane puts him out. HHH immediately dumps Kane too and the ring is a lot more empty all of a sudden.

HHH starts laying out everyone and Shawn is #18. Carlito is backdropped out, Rhodes and DiBiase are tossed, Morrison gets dumped, and DX puts out McIntyre to get us down to DX. Before anything can happen though, Cena is

#19 to get us to the final third of the match. Cena cleans house and hits a double Shuffle before getting caught in the Pedigree. Out of nowhere Shawn superkicks HHH out to pop the crowd BIG.

Shelton Benjamin in that stupid gold period is #20. He hits Paydirt on both guys but gets dumped by Cena in less than 50 seconds. Yoshi Tatsu is #21 and doesn't even make it 30 seconds. Big Show is #22 and Cena is shaken. Big Show RUNS down to the ring and house is cleaned. Shawn and Cena try to eliminate each other but Show pulls Shawn back in for some reason. What's up with that tonight?

Mark Henry is #23 and we get a quick battle of the giant. Who would think those two would have a world title feud a year and a half later and be REALLY popular? Henry slams Show and falls on Cena as he tries an AA. Show spears Henry down and Chris Masters is #24. Masters tries the Masterlock on Show and gets dumped for his efforts. Now Henry goes after Show but Shawn breaks it up for some reason. R-Truth is #25 and actually dumps BOTH big guys. There's something you wouldn't expect.

Truth hits a Stroke on Cena and Jack Swagger is #26. All three guys get Vader Bombs and Swagger goes old school with a very slow Oklahoma Stampede. Jack knocks Michaels to the apron but can't get the elimination. Kingston is #27 and cleans house on Swagger, hitting the Boom Drop and dumping him out with a nice leverage move. Truth puts Kofi on the apron but gets pulled out by a reverse headscissors.

Jericho is #28 but after cleaning about half the house, Cena grabs an AA to put him down. Shawn adds the top rope elbow and tunes up the band but Kofi hits Trouble in Paradise to take him out. Cena dumps Kofi but walks into a Codebreaker. Everyone is down and EDGE makes his big return at #29. That's rather brilliant instead of waiting for the big surprise at #30, we get a SWERVE that actually makes sense.

Everyone gets a spear and Jericho is out. Edge is back about six months early and it's Edge-0-Matics all around. Batista is #30, giving us a final four of Shawn, Cena, Edge and Batista. Not bad at all. It's power all around but Edge spears him down. Everyone is down now Shawn gets up first and hits the forearm on Cena followed by the nipup.

Shawn slams every American in sight and drops the top rope elbow on Cena. Batista takes one too as Edge is still down in the corner. Sweet Chin Music hits Cena and there's one for Batista as well. Edge clotheslines Shawn to the apron and Michaels superkicks Edge back in, only to get knocked out by Batista. The crowd gasps HUGE at that and Shawn is about to cry. Shawn gets back in and superkicks the referee to vent some frustration. Shawn FINALLY leaves and Cena escapes the Batista Bomb before dumping Batista out. Edge misses the spear but throws out Cena a second later to go to Wrestlemania.

Rating: A-. This is kind of a hard one to grade. They definitely followed the three act structure which helped a lot and the match was VERY fast paced. I mean, the longest anyone was in there was Cena and he barely broke 20 minutes. The problem with that is it doesn't give anything time to develop. The main story was Shawn which is fine and he would get to Mania at the end of the day anyway. It's a really fun Rumble but not one of the best ever.

Overall Rating: B. The Rumble is very solid and the rest has nothing terrible so we'll call it a good show overall. Things would get a lot more interesting soon after this with the rise of the Nexus and a very solid Wrestlemania. This was also a time of transition for the company as a lot of the guys in this show would be gone by the end of the year. Anyway good show here and worth checking out.

Ratings Comparison

Christian vs. Ezekiel Jackson

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Miz vs. MVP

Original: B-

Redo: D+

Sheamus vs. Randy Orton

Original: B

Redo: D+

Mickie James vs. Michelle McCool

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Undertaker vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: C-

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: A-

Redo: B

Dang I liked Sheamus a lot more than I thought I did.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/29/royal-rumble-count-up-2010-one-of-the-best-ever/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

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Monday Night Raw – January 18, 2016: Not That It Matters (Maybe)

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 18, 2016

Location: Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for the Royal Rumble and that can make for a slower night of Raw. The big story from last week would seem to be Brock Lesnar being added to the Rumble to go after the WWE World Title. There's no word on where Reigns might be coming in, which opens up some options for Sunday. As for tonight, Brock is the guest on Chris Jericho's Highlight Reel so let's get to it.

Martin Luther King video. I don't know why but they always do some kind of a tribute to this. It certainly deserves the attention but this seems like one of the most important days of the year to WWE.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns with something to say. Reigns talks about this Sunday being the fight of his life but tonight he only cares about Brock Lesnar. Instead he gets Chris Jericho, who Reigns is glad to see even though Jericho isn't the man he wants right now. Lesnar will be on the Highlight Reel tonight though and Jericho wants Reigns to be there too. Reigns loves the idea but here's the League of Nations to interrupt.

Sheamus wants to know when this Rumble became Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns. I'm thinking that was last week chum. The League is involved as well and they intend to take back that WWE World Title. Sheamus insults Jericho's clothes so Chris gets in a weak insult about the mohawk. Del Rio brags about winning the Rumble a few years back but Jericho doesn't feel like having him on the Highlight Reel either.

Rusev talks about rumbling every single day in Bulgaria but Jericho can't understand him. Jericho asks Reigns who won the Rumble last year and who he eliminated to win. We get a "comes up short" joke from Jericho and a challenge is issued for right now. Apparently it's Rusev vs. Reigns with Jericho as guest referee for no real reason.

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Non-title. Reigns grabs a headlock to start before firing off right hands. The League offers a quick distraction though and Rusev gets in a cheap shot to take over. That means it's time for a chinlock though, followed by a nice spinwheel kick for two on the champ. Back from a break with Reigns trying a headbutt, only to get ground down with a headlock. JBL incorrectly says Rusev eliminated half a dozen people in his debut Rumble as I guess even he has tried to forget that worthless cameo in 2014.

Reigns fights back with the corner clotheslines, only to get kicked in the side of the head for a pretty slow two count. Rusev tries a super Samoan Drop but gets countered into a Batista Bomb for the same deliberate two. Del Rio offers a distraction so Sheamus can jump Roman from behind, but Jericho is actually smart and ejects Sheamus anyway. Barrett gets the same treatment and Jericho throws in a bonus cartwheel. In the melee, Reigns hits a quick Superman Punch and the spear for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: D+. This is another match that has been done to death and there's almost no reason to watch it again. That's the biggest problem with someone like Rusev: there's no reason to believe he's going to win a big match as all he has is the Accolade. Once people start breaking it, all the drama goes away. Not a bad match but really just a way to fill time.

Post break, Stephanie yells at Jericho for not having the authority to make that match. Jericho goes into his standard string of Stephanie insults but she cuts him off to say he insulted her by making the bigger Highlight Reel. Apparently this means she has to negotiate with Paul Heyman and owes Brock more money now. As usual, Stephanie manages to take something interesting and turn it boring.

Brie Bella vs. Natalya

Natalya brings out Paige as this is the Total Divas preview match. Even Cole calls it such. After a clip from the show of drama due to Alicia Fox unfollowing Paige on social media (the highest insult), we're ready to go with Natalya hitting a quick basement dropkick. That earns her the BRIE MODE knee and a chinlock. Brie spends too long posing after the YES Kicks though and it's a Sharpshooter to give Natalya the win at 1:30.

Wyatt Family vs. Dudley Boyz/Ryback

Why is this still a thing??? There was a tables match on Thursday where the Dudleys won, only to be put through tables after. We take a break before the bell, meaning the only thing shown between breaks was the entrances. This is joined in progress with Bubba suplexing Harper and doing some Dusty Rhodes punches, only to get kicked in the face. It's off to Rowan vs. D-Von with the latter grabbing a neckbreaker.

That's it for D-Von's offense though as Rowan takes him into the corner so the Wyatts can take turns on him. Bubba starts playing cheerleader and it's back to Rowan for the double fist head vice. We hit the chinlock from Harper for a few seconds before D-Von collides with Bray. That means a hot tag to Ryback for some house cleaning and everything breaks down. Ryback heads outside to stare down Strowman but gets decked by Wyatt. Rowan breaks up a 3D to Harper, allowing Luke to hit the discus lariat for the pin on Bubba at 6:42.

Rating: D+. Can we please get something for the Wyatts to do already? As in something they might actually win instead of being built up only to fall down again? I'm tired of seeing them beat up the Dudleyz as the matches have ranged from decent to boring and they're getting lower and lower each time. I'm not sure why we're seeing it again but I'm sure it's

due to them having nothing else to do. Not a bad match but it's really hard to care at this point.

Big Show vs. Heath Slater

Before the match, the Social Outcasts promise to win on Sunday, though Axel says he can't understand a word Rose says. Slater runs away from a big chop in the corner to start but is pulled back in by the hair. The KO Punch is good for the pin at 56 seconds.

The rest of the Outlaws are wiped out post match.

Stephanie gives the League of Nations a pep talk for the Royal Rumble.

Here are Vince and Stephanie to draw out the #1 entrant for the Royal Rumble. Vince brings up winning the 1999 Royal Rumble and Stephanie praises him for a bit. After a quick spin, Vince pulls out a ball and the #1 entrant is.....of course it's Roman Reigns. Vince thinks that's quite the coincidence so they pull another name and it's.....Roman Reigns. They even draw it a third time and leaves Reigns' name out, only to draw Reigns a third straight time. You had to know this was coming and it's probably the right call.

Becky Lynch vs. Tamina

Charlotte and Ric are at ringside. Becky starts in with the strikes but charges into a superkick. We hit the early chinlock for a bit before a slam gets two on Becky. Lynch fights back with her usual strikes in the corner, followed by the running legdrops for two. The Disarm-Her makes Tamina tap at 4:04.

Rating: D. Tamina isn't exactly the one you call on if you want an exciting match. At least Becky won and is getting a good push going into her title match on Sunday. It's a lot better now that they've got an actual story going but the silence during this non-title match really isn't the best sign.

Post match Becky asks for a Divas Title shot on Sunday but Charlotte says no. Becky gets smart by insulting Ric and saying Charlotte just isn't like her dad. That's enough for Flair, who accepts the challenge on his

daughter's behalf. Charlotte really doesn't seem cool with that.

Kalisto/Dean Ambrose vs. Alberto Del Rio/Sheamus

Here's your fifteen minute match designed to do nothing more than to kill fifteen minutes. Kevin Owens is on commentary to make this more entertaining. Ambrose pounds on Sheamus to start and it's quickly off to Kalisto, who is slammed down onto Sheamus for two. Del Rio is sent to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Sheamus hammering on Kalisto in the corner until the masked man jawbreaks his way out of a chinlock. The hot tag brings in Ambrose to start speeding things up, including a suicide dive to take out Del Rio. Dean gets in trouble again though as Sheamus gets two off an Irish Curse.

Del Rio gets the same off a kick to the head and it's time for some choking on the ropes. A Backstabber stops Dean's latest comeback but the top rope double stomp is broken up by something like an armdrag. Owens hopes Ambrose hurt himself but Dean is fine enough for a big clothesline to Sheamus and a hot tag to Kalisto.

A headscissors and the rolling kick to the head have Sheamus in trouble and Kalisto stumbles into a tornado DDT. The Salida Del Sol gets two with Del Rio making the save. Dean takes him to the floor and gets kicked in the face, leaving Sheamus to Brogue Kick Kalisto for the pin at 13:20.

Rating: C+. The match picked up a lot near the end until the really stupid booking took over. This is a place where a countout or something would have worked well, or just have Kalisto get another upset pin over Sheamus. It's not like pins mean anything on Sunday so just do it here and give me another reason to be interested in Kalisto. Or have him look like someone in over his head and take away some of the hype for Sunday. Same thing right?

We recap the opening segment.

Clips of the India tour.

We look at Jericho breaking Xavier Woods' trombone last week.

Earlier today, there was a funeral for Francesca the Trombone. Big E. starts quoting Jay Z. and Woods loses it. Kofi offers to get a new trombone but that's too much so soon. Francesca lives forever in Xavier's heart and she would want Big E. to beat Jey Uso.

Here's the annual All About The Numbers video.

30 entrants

28 Royal Rumble

811 people eliminations

42 eliminations by Kane, the most of all time

46 WWE Hall of Famers who have entered

8 Hall of Famers who have won

3 wins by Steve Austin

62:12 that Rey Mysterio lasted

1 second that Santino Marella lasted

2 straight wins Roman needs to retain

18 years since that happened

15 former World Champions on the roster

6 former Royal Rumble winners

1, as in the number that Reigns will enter the Rumble

Big E. vs. Jey Uso

Kofi and Xavier are in suits from the funeral. Big E. takes him down to start until Jey jumps over in the corner and starts dancing. A quick cross body gets two for Jey and they head outside, only to have Jey get backdropped on the floor as we take a break. Back with Jey in the abdominal stretch before he avoids the apron splash to send E. outside

again.

The running Umaga Attack misses in the corner but Jey settles for a kick to the face for two instead. E. misses another charge and falls to the floor so Jey can nail a nice plancha. Back in and Woods offers a distraction to break up the Superfly Splash, allowing the Big Ending to give E. the win at 9:34.

Rating: D+. Not much to this one but at least the trombone stuff before the match was funny. It's still not exactly entertaining or anything though as we've seen these guys fighting so many times now. The tag division needs some fresh blood and it's not like there's a team ready for the main roster down in NXT or anything.

Mark Henry, Titus O'Neil and R-Truth are in the back talking about the dream. Neville comes in and it's a bit awkward.

The League is talking about something.

Mark Henry/Titus O'Neil/R-Truth vs. Stardust/Ascension/Tyler Breeze

All eight of these guys will be in the Royal Rumble. Titus throws Viktor around to start and it's quickly off to Neville vs. Stardust with the latter dancing for some reason. Mark comes in and runs Stardust over before Truth comes in to work on a hammerlock. There's a hiptoss to Stardust but Breeze kicks Truth off the apron to take over.

It's quickly back to Konnor for an elbow drop but Truth grabs a DDT to absolutely no reaction. Neville and Breeze come in to speed things up with Neville throwing him down and getting two off the standing shooting star. Everything breaks down and the World's Strongest Slam to Breeze sets up the Red Arrow for the pin at 6:11.

Rating: D+. I know it's too late for Breeze (you know, three months after he debuted on the main roster) but Konnor and Viktor aren't available to take that pin? Yeah I'm not even going to bother getting annoyed at this one. WWE has decided Breeze isn't worth investing in on the main roster and that's about it for him.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with Jericho introducing his guests but

being cut off by Heyman. Jericho cuts off Heyman's signature lines and asks where Lesnar is. Brock will indeed be here tonight but Heyman would rather talk about what happened the last time Jericho and Lesnar were in the same ring together.

Jericho gets back to the Rumble though and asks why Heyman tried to get Lesnar straight to the main event of Wrestlemania. Could it be that Brock has developed so many enemies that Heyman doesn't think he's a lock to win again? Heyman laughs it off and plugs the Network by saying people subscribe to see Brock fight any one man so why wouldn't you subscribe to see him fight everyone at once. Jericho suggests that he'll throw Brock out and here's Lesnar for a rebuttal.

Before anything can be said or done though, here's Roman just like he promised. We get the big showdown as Jericho steps to the side and Reigns spears the heck out of Lesnar. Before anything else can happen though, Lesnar has to deal with the League of Nations, allowing Roman to spear Lesnar down again. Cue the Wyatts and the numbers get the better of Reigns but Brock sends the Family after Lesnar. They circle Brock and get in a shot apiece with Sister Abigail's Kiss leaving Brock laying to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This is always a tricky show to grade as it's certainly not about the wrestling. The show before the Royal Rumble is about setting up the battle royal and they did that well enough, though they're making no secret that it's mainly about Reigns vs. Lesnar. The problem with that is any major surprises can completely change the course of the Rumble so a lot of this might not matter. At least we got some build to the rest of the show, but Sunday is a one match show and the build for that was ok at best. Not a great show but it did enough of what it was supposed to do.

Results

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

Natalya b. Brie Bella – Sharpshooter

Big Show b. Heath Slater – KO Punch

Becky Lynch b. Tamina – Disarm-Her

Sheamus/Alberto Del Rio b. Kalisto/Dean Ambrose – Brogue Kick to Kalisto

Big E. b. Jey Uso – Big Ending

Neville/Titus O'Neil/R-Truth/Mark Henry b. Stardust/Tyler

Breeze/Ascension – Red Arrow to Breeze

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

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The #1 Entrant In The Royal Rumble Is...

Yep. It's Roman Reigns. Were you expecting anything else? The drawing was rigged of course.

2015 Awards: Moment of the Year

This one is always kind of hard to pick.

Again, we'll get through some of the easier ones first.

The Salida Del Sol through the ladder at TLC was amazing and one of the biggest high spots in a LONG time. Just...dang. It doesn't really have a long lasting impact but it was really cool and definitely deserves mentioning.

For a quick one, Brock Lesnar sitting up next to Undertaker and laughing at him, only to have Undertaker do the same. Again, didn't mean much but it was awesome at the time.

The Ronda Rousey appearance at Wrestlemania was great as well with the great line of "She's going to reach down your throat and play jump rope with your Fallopian tubes." This would be a nearly runaway winner if Rousey had really hurt Stephanie but pesky contracts prevented it.

Shield reunited for all of thirty seconds. That's more of a preview than an awesome moment though.

Now we'll get down to the actual top choices.

First up was the Divas Revolution, which would have been even better had Stephanie not been involved. I get that she wanted to be involved because she's Stephanie and has to be involved in something cool every time, but it was Paige's story and should have gotten the moment to make the whole thing work.

Another major one is Seth Rollins cashing in Money in the Bank. This was a legitimate shocking moment and the big story that people remember from Wrestlemania. I don't know if I'd put it at number one but it worked very well at the time, before WWE decided to make Rollins a worthless champion.

From the same show, there's the NWO vs. DX. This was the Monday Night Wars in the span of fifteen minutes and I had a blast with it. Points off for the complete lack of continuity and HHH winning, but this was so much fun.

Then Bayley did a reverse super hurricanrana, gave Sasha Banks a Bayley to Belly and won the Women's Title, followed by the Four Horsewomen posing in the ring one last time. Wrestling is all about emotion and that's what you got here. This was as good as it got in 2015 and it's going to be a long time before anything tops this.

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2015 Awards: Non-Wrestler of the Year

This might as well be named the Heyman Award.

Let's get some of the easier ones out of the way first.

Renee Young is adorable. Like, too adorable. She's going to wind up at ESPN at some point and WWE will lose one of their most versatile backstage people they've had in a long time. She's gorgeous, she's smart,

she's witty and she knows she is. That's a very powerful combination and she makes it work.

Lana....dang how could they screw her up this badly? If there has ever been someone who seemed ready to explode on the Divas division and be one of the most over acts in years (not named Bayley or Sasha that is), this should have been it. Instead though, they put her with Dolph Ziggler where she disappears and then back with Rusev because all hail TMZ and now she's disappeared even more. They had something here and then just completely overthought it and screwed the whole thing up.

Corey Graves is growing on me a lot in recent months but he's not quite there yet.

Maria Kanellis was on fire in ROH this year as she was nailing the "yeah I know I'm gorgeous" characters and running with it as the Queen of the Kingdom. Unfortunately ROH didn't really do much with her, though she was always awesome on screen.

William Regal is still the best GM in years, though he wasn't around much this year.

Now we'll get to the big ones.

Stephanie McMahon. To save myself from a rant, we'll go with she's awesome and if she actually got what was coming to her a few times (and learned how to speak like a human), she would run away with this almost every year. Oh and stop dancing. It's not funny and doesn't make us relate to you.

HHH....can you really call him a non-wrestler? I mean, he wrestles every now and then. HHH is what an authority figure should be: he speaks very well, can go on some power mad rampages, but knows how to take a GREAT beating to make up for it. Unless you're from WCW and then he must destroy you, after having a Terminator themed entrance with an Arnold Schwarzenegger cameo of course. Seriously what was that?

That leaves us with two, including Heyman himself. Here's the thing though: he really hasn't been around this year. When he's there he's

great, but there's no other Paul Heyman Guy to fill in time until Brock comes back from his multiple sabbaticals. Heyman can talk very well, but I can only hear him talk about knowing Roman Reigns' family and how Undertaker is the last gunslinger or whatever so many times before I just stop caring. This was an off year for Heyman, and that's probably due to ring rust.

Finally though, we have a concept you don't often see in wrestling: an actor portraying a character to make it all the more awesome. That brings us to our winner: Dario Cueto of Lucha Underground. Dario has some of the most entertaining appearances and best speaking skills you'll ever see. Above all else though, he makes you believe what he's saying. It's just fun to watch the guy and he's evil for the sake of being evil. What more can you ask for than that? Cueto wins here and he more than earned it.

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