

Wrestling Wars Podcast

Episode 20

I've been on a bit of a podcast tear lately with three episodes of a different show recorded yesterday and then this ninety minute marathon with NorCal as we cover a PACKED week of wrestling news ranging from Hogan, TNA screwing up (double shot this week), Global Force Wrestling's TV tapings, a quick Battleground recap and of course some recommendations.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-20-making-up-for-time-lost-time-with-an-ironmannn-wrestling-podcast-headlines-and-more-headlines-with-kb/>

Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – July 20, 2015

This one could be interesting as I barely remember the show as I was falling asleep due to a long day of traveling. This is the fallout show from Battleground where Undertaker returned (again. There's probably a three disc set of Undertaker returns ready to be made) to go after Brock Lesnar and set up the main event of Summerslam. We're on the road to the second biggest show of the year so let's get to it.

They opened as they should have, with Undertaker coming out and saying streaks are made to be broken. The gist of this was Undertaker being annoyed at Heyman and Lesnar for bragging about breaking the Streak over and over for the last fifteen months. To be fair, it is getting a bit old. The big story later in the night would be Heyman coming out to brag

even more when Undertaker appeared, triggering a massive brawl, broken up by the locker room.

There isn't much to say here because the whole thing was awesome, but more importantly, they let it feel awesome. They let this thing feel like a brawl between two monsters, but I'm not sure how the match is going to go. Do you really want Undertaker to get suplexed all over the place? Undertaker isn't going to be a heel in this match no matter what they do, and thankfully they didn't seem to be trying to make him one. Anyway, the segments really worked and the match should be good, though I emphasize should.

Oh and there was something about the Authority wanting to prevent the match from being broken up. I stop caring when they're talking most of the time so I'm not sure what their issue was.

Charlotte beat Brie Bella in a totally watchable match. Brie still isn't great in the ring and probably never will be, but she's to the point where she can have a watchable match with someone talented like Charlotte. Also, nice touch on not having Charlotte get beaten yet, though I have a feeling she will when she comes up against Nikki because All Hail The Bellas.

Los Matadores beat the Prime Time Players in a non-title match because there was nothing better to do than to have New Day distract the champions so the low level team can beat them in a match that isn't going to lead anywhere.

Big Show beat Miz in a quick match that I think was supposed to make us care about the giant again. He then challenged Ryback to a fight on Tough Enough to try to make people watch it. It says a lot when Big Show is considered a draw.

Roman Reigns beat Luke Harper via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered. This seems to be setting up a tag match at Summerslam with Ambrose coming in to help out his brother. I'd be interested in seeing them bring in a third man each, but bringing in Sting would be one of the lamest ideas they could have as it would overshadow the story they're shooting for with Reigns vs. Wyatt, as well as making people clamor for Wyatt vs.

Sting because they're both supernatural or something and that instantly means you would want to see them fight.

Rollins bragged about keeping the title, Cena came out and said Rollins needed to take the title more seriously, and nothing else happened. I'm really hoping they're not setting up champion vs. champion, but given how the ratings have been going, it seems like we're getting back towards Cena on top as he's the only one that can really move things these days. And since the idea of ever pushing anyone as a big star is foreign to WWE, this is what we're stuck with for now.

Sasha Banks and Naomi beat Paige and Becky Lynch in another pretty good match. This actually got thirteen minutes and didn't feel long, which is more than you would ever expect out of a Divas match. The division has gotten the big boost that it needs, but they really need to go somewhere with it in the next few weeks. There's more than enough time to have it be the big blow away story they need and thankfully Stephanie hasn't been a thing for the most part.

The main event was a six man tag with Cena/Orton/Cesaro beating Sheamus/Owens/Rusev in a match that actually tied things up in a nice package to end the show. That's not something you often see but it worked well enough one time. Other than that though, the big story was Owens and Sheamus walking out on their partner, leaving Rusev to take a big beating. Combine this with Rusev being the default face in his match with Owens on Smackdown and.....no I don't think they're turning Rusev.

Owens leaving makes sense as he lives to fight another day and I guess the same is true for Sheamus, though it's still not the best result in the world. Based on what happened on Smackdown we're going to get Cesaro vs. Owens at Summerslam and since we just NEED the Ziggler vs. Rusev showdown, there's no turning it into a triple threat. It would be nice to have a title for them to fight over, but we need champion vs. champion for reasons that aren't entirely clear.

Overall Raw was just kind of there with almost all of the focus being on Undertaker vs. Lesnar. Rollins will have his day soon enough and a win over Cena at one of the biggest show of the year would help him a lot,

though I have a feeling Cena would get the title to make things all better again.

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Thunder – March 1, 2000: One Rung At A Time

Thunder

Date: March 1, 2000

Location: Fargodome, Fargo, North Dakota

Attendance: 5,368

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan

We're getting closer to Uncensored, meaning it's time for more matches that people don't want to see and characters old enough to be our parents. The big story continues to be Sid vs. Jarrett, with a co-main event of WCW vs. the fans in a battle to make us accept Jarrett as anything but the career midcarder that he is. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Nitro, which actually wasn't a total disaster.

Sid asks Terry Taylor if everything is ready, which it is. I have a feeling I don't want to know what he's talking about.

Opening sequence.

Cruiserweight Title: The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea vs. Chavo Guerrero

Chavo is challenging. Tenay starts off by talking about Mysterio and Guerrero wanting to challenge for the title, meaning there's no one active worth fighting the Prince. Nice job Mike. They slug it out to start with Chavo getting whipped into the ropes, only to float over into a DDT ala the Maivia Hurricane.

A spinebuster gets two on the champ and he gets sent outside, setting up a big plancha from Chavo, who looks more comfortable out there than he has in a long time. Back in and Chavo dropkicks him into the corner, setting up the tornado DDT, only to draw Paisley up to the apron. Since Chavo isn't all that bright, the distraction lets Prince hit him with the belt, only to get caught for the quick DQ. Too short to rate but it wasn't bad, which is the standard case for Chavo.

Sid has gotten his wish: a six man tag where he teams with Booker/Kidman (WOOT!) to face Jarrett/Harris Twins (T00W!).

Luger thinks Vampiro is stupid and Flair is going to take out Bagwell. I'm digging these Flair vs. midcarders matchers.

Chavo says he went broke selling Amway products and is back to become Cruiserweight Champion. He steals Gene's watch to keep up the family tradition.

Dustin Rhodes vs. Terry Funk

You would think this would be on Nitro, which is why it's airing on Thunder. Because WCW you see. Before the match, Dustin stops to say that the fans make him sick and he doesn't care about us anymore. We see a clip of Rhodes jumping Funk at an autograph signing earlier in the day. It's clearly staged because there's no way WCW had that many fans.

Back in the arena and Funk jumps Rhodes from behind with a chair. They fight to the floor with Dustin backdropping his way out of a piledriver and DDTing Funk on the concrete. Back in and some chair shots don't knock Funk out as I don't think this was a match despite the bell ringing. Security finally breaks it up.

The Harris Twins aren't impressed by the Mamalukes giving them a pair of cement shoes and plan to give them an H Bomb. Jarrett says they're ready for the six man tag tonight but first they need to eliminate some of their women through some contests.

Booker, Kidman and Sid talk strategy until the director shouts "clear." THUNDER IS TAPED!!! How can they possibly make a mistake like that on a taped show? I know they only have one day to turn it around now, but Smackdown airs a day later in Canada and you don't see mistakes like that. How in the world is that even possible???

3 Count vs. Brian Knobbs/Fit Finlay/The Dog

Dog is Al Greene, who is different than Big Al. Let's keep this quick: weapons, brawling, no selling, 3 Count runs, press slam through a table to pin Evan.

La Parka now has a blue and white costume on and a new voiceover guy, who seems to be a fan of Konnan. From here on out, it's one chair shot for La Parka and one for all his homies.

The NWO girls have a spelling bee. The only word spelled properly: rat.

La Parka vs. The Demon

Demon pounds away to start but gets crotched on top because Demon is a glorified comedy character minus any form of comedy. It's already chair time but La Parka takes so much time setting up what looked like a huricanrana that Demon slaps him down off the top to break it up. Demon drops a dancing elbow and slaps on a full nelson, only to get kicked low. A corkscrew splash from La Parka is good for the pin to keep Demon as a loser.

Rating: D. I like La Parka and he was definitely getting more and more

popular because he was a lot better than a good amount of the talent on the roster. Couple that with him getting over with a chair and there was no way he was ever going anywhere. Demon continues to be another dark spot in WCW but there are so many now that it's rare to see a bright spot.

Nick Patrick preps Mark Johnson for his match against Mickie Jay. Who goes to NICK PATRICK for wrestling advice?

The spelling bee winner beats Gene in arm wrestling.

Sting says he'll fight Luger for the last time at Uncensored.

Luger says what you see him do to Vampiro tonight is just a preview of what Sting will get. This is such a basic feud and works fine, but the fact that it's about Lex Luger vs. Sting in 2000 kills anything it could get going.

Buff Bagwell hits on Miss Hancock. He does have good taste.

Total Package vs. Vampiro

They slap/chop it out to start as Tenay talks about Vampiro reminding him of Sting. Aside from the charisma, power and abilities, I'd say he's almost right. Vampiro takes over with some strikes of his own, capped off by ducking a clothesline and superkicking Luger into the corner. The Sting comparisons show some merit as Luger backs off, only to sucker Vampiro in and drive him into the buckle.

Luger starts in on the back and hits a press slam followed by a powerslam. The Rack is countered as Vampiro slips down and kicks him in the face, followed by a hair pull bulldog. Cue Flair for a distraction, allowing Liz to hit Vampiro with the bat so Luger can Rack him for the win.

Rating: D+. Vampiro loses to a big name after performing far better in the match. Who saw that coming? It's nice to see these guys getting to rub elbows with stars like Luger and Flair and at least it took cheating to beat him. Things are looking ever so slightly up and I can accept Vampiro losing, but can we get ANYONE but Luger in there? The guy doesn't

have it anymore and it shows badly.

Vampiro gets his arm broken post match.

Post break (and post replay of what we just saw), Vampiro won't let the medics tend to him so Finlay attacks him.

Mickie Jay vs. Mark Johnson

Johnson hits him with a roll of quarters from Nick Patrick for the pin in about five seconds.

The same NWO chick wins the swimsuit competition. Thankfully Gene's dirty old man gimmick is gone.

Crowbar vs. Wall

It's a fast start as Crowbar knocks him off the apron and hits a flip dive. Wall gets sent into the barricade but shrugs off all the offense back inside. A big boot drops Crowbar and Wall chokeslams him for good measure. They head outside with Crowbar staggering him with a dropkick and blasting Wall with a chair. A top rope splash to the floor crushes Wall again but he's still able to easily block a suplex back into the ring. They fight to the apron again where Crowbar charges at him, only to get caught and chokeslammed through the announcers' table for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Most of that is for the big spot at the end which really did look awesome. Crowbar is good for a violent, hardcore character and Wall is fine as an unstoppable force who will one day be stopped by some young up and comer. Well, at least that's what would happen in a good wrestling company, so there's no chance it happens here.

Crowbar gets stretchered out.

Video on Hogan vs. Luger. Isn't it Sting vs. Luger now?

Sid/Kidman/Booker say they're going to win.

The first three NWO girls are tied for last and the worst looking one is eliminated. The three jump the winner of the contests and attack her with makeup, meaning the fourth one is eliminated. This was somehow a bigger

waste of time than it sounds.

Buff Bagwell vs. Ric Flair

After some posing to start, Buff headlocks him down and grabs the leg, setting up a Dusty Rhodes level figure four, sending Flair to the ropes for the break. Buff punches, backdrops, punches and punches some more until we get the Flair Flop. A backslide gets one for Buff and it's time for more punching. The referee actually warns him about the punching, which lets Flair hit two straight low blows.

Flair starts chopping away until Buff gets tired of selling and fires off some right hands. See, now that is like something Sting would do, not be some lame supernatural inspired character. There's another backdrop and a lame clothesline from Bagwell, followed by a superplex to put both guys down. Cue Liz and Luger to distract the referee (because no referee has ever watched wrestling) from counting the pin off a Blockbuster. A ball bat shot from Luger gives Flair the pin.

Rating: D-. Good night Bagwell was lazy. The entire match was punches, backdrops and a Blockbuster with a pretty lame superplex thrown in. Flair was doing his usual stuff but you can only get so far with a lame opponent and not much time. It's a bad match and the ending was obvious, but at least they're going somewhere with Luger and Flair.

Hennig comes out to save Buff from a post match beatdown.

We get another clip of the Crowbar chokeslam, which really did look good.

Bagwell picks up the eliminated NWO girl. Good grief could they make him look like any more of a loser?

Jeff Jarrett/Harris Twins vs. Sid Vicious/Kidman/Booker

The NWO girls are sent to the back before the match. Booker and Jarrett get things going with a nice, basic sequence of shoulders and hiptosses until Booker slams Jeff into the corner for a tag to Ron. Before we get on with the match, I want to talk about that sequence for a bit. It was so simple but it was one of the more enjoyable things on the show. No it wasn't much, but it was two guys who know how to wrestle doing their

jobs. There weren't any punches, interference or cheating, but rather two guys doing what they do best. Why is that so hard for WCW to do?

Anyway it's off to Ron who eats a forearm from Booker and a bunch of dropkicks from Kidman, sending him over to the corner to tag Don. Kidman doesn't do so well here as his Fameasser is countered and Don takes his head off with a clothesline. Off to Jarrett for some choking on the ropes but he misses the running crotch attack and staggers into Sid's corner, but the referee would rather not be bored to sleep so Sid can't do anything.

Speaking of sleep, we get Jeff's countered sleeper spot before Kidman avoids a charge into the corner. Kidman tags both partners at once (because why not) and everything breaks down. Booker runs interference as Sid chokeslams and powerbombs Jeff. No cover of course as the Twins pull the referee to the floor, which isn't a DQ because WCW. Kidman missile dropkicks Booker by mistake, giving Jarrett the pin.

Rating: C-. I liked this one better than I thought I would but they didn't give it enough time to go anywhere. The big story here though was of course the two younger guys getting a shot in the main event. It's not a major step forward but at least they're being given a chance. Those two are by far the most qualified to move up the ladder and it's nice to see them getting a foot up the rungs.

Kidman and Booker both take H Bombs and Sid gets guitared to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. This show was a mess with a bunch of bad matches and really lame stories with little advancement. That's the big thing: nothing happened here as we continue towards Jarrett vs. Sid in a match no one wants to see in the first place. I know they're setting up Sting vs. Luger, but, just like the other match, no one wants to see that either. Just a bad show with nothing going on in a bad promotion with nothing going on.

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for just \$3.99 at:

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Reviewing the Review: Battleground 2015

This is going to be an interesting one as I was up late watching Battleground and had to leave to get on a plane about half an hour after the show ended. I saw the whole show, but I had a lot on my mind at the time. Now that I've had some time to think about the show, my opinions on it have shifted a bit. Let's get to it.

Starting on the pre-show, King Barrett retained the Crown against R-Truth. Oh sweet goodness I hated this feud, I hated this match and I hated how Barrett was treated during the whole thing. Yeah Barrett won, but that's like giving someone a sticker for not getting arrested this week: it's exactly what he was supposed to do and not something he really should be praised for doing. I don't know what WWE's obsession is with treating Barrett like a joke but I'm hoping (yet again) that they'll treat him seriously this time around.

Randy Orton vs. Sheamus was interesting, which goes against the main thing holding it back: the match didn't change anything. Orton won, but would it really have been different if Sheamus won? No one has anything to lose and Orton is just kind of floating with nothing to do. I don't want to see these two fight again because it's not that interesting. Both

guys were fine in the ring and the match was a good choice for an opener with the hometown boy winning, but there was nothing important here.

However, there is something interesting about how the match was worked. They definitely picked up the pace in the second half, but it felt like a long TV match minus the commercial instead of a pay per view match. It's very telling that they're basically working pay per view style matches on TV today, which takes away from something like this. You can see that they rarely change from the same formula, and that's something that makes pay per views feel a lot less special. Anyway, good match but nothing I'm ever going to think of again.

After a recap of Stephanie's awesomeness, Stephanie made a triple threat between a member of each Divas trio later. I've ranted enough about Stephanie hijacking this story to stroke her own ego, but can we at least make it clear if she's a face or a heel? She associates with the heel, but does face things when she's on her own and we're just supposed to accept it because this is the REAL Stephanie as opposed to the Authority Stephanie. Or do I have that backwards?

The Prime Time Players beat New Day to retain the Tag Team Titles in another Raw match. The only thing of note here was Xavier Woods being an obnoxious jerk during the match, making him more entertaining than he had ever been. The Players are fine as champions, but New Day has the potential to be one of those long running acts in the midcard that stays entertaining with or without ever doing much. That's a good thing, and given that the oldest member is Kofi at 33, it's not like they have to rush anything. Let these guys grow into something special instead of just breaking them up after a few months.

Bray Wyatt and Roman Reigns beat each other up for a long time until Luke Harper reunited with Wyatt to give him the win. This was the old school HIT EACH OTHER REALLY HARD style and these two nailed it as you kind of knew they would. It seems like we're heading for a showdown with the Wyatts vs. Ambrose/Reigns, which is probably the best idea all around. Wyatt has been floating for a bit so putting him back with the guy that helped make him the biggest he's ever been is a good idea.

Sasha Banks, Charlotte had a good match with Brie Bella in there too. The idea here was to let the two newcomers show off but they have to make it a three way to play up the three way feud that Stephanie has graced us with. They did a good job of keeping Brie away from the action and that's the right move here as Brie just can't keep up with these two. However, the stuff she did was acceptable as they kept it in small doses. There's nothing wrong with that as Brie isn't great in the ring, but she's certainly passable and that's a much better result than some of the disasters the Divas have had before.

This was meant to be a big showcase and it didn't get there, but it was certainly good, which is a step in the right direction. Once we can get past praising Stephanie for setting this up and giving them a fighting chance to get the title off Nikki, things could pick up. I dig the idea though and they worked the match the best way they could have, which gives me a lot of hope for the future.

Oh and screw Cole's "TEAM BELLA IS MORTAL!" line when Brie tapped out. They're the Bellas, not Moolah in the 80s. Then they're faces on Raw because.....well because they're the Bellas.

Now we get to the big match of the night as John Cena defended the US Title against Kevin Owens in their rubber match. This is the most controversial match of the show and while I started absolutely hating it, the more I think about it, and after I heard Owens' promo on Smackdown this week, the more I can live with it. Yes Owens tapped out, but as he said on Smackdown, it's his nature to live to fight another day. It came off more as Owens saying it's not worth it anymore so he'll just fight Cena again later.

However, the tap out came after Owens survived every single thing Cena threw at him, including the super AA, which, as far as I can remember, no one has ever kicked out of before. I would have gone the other way with it: Owens survives the STF and then goes down to the super AA, putting him on a short list of Cena opponents.

At the end of the day though, Owens debuted about two months ago, went 1-2 against Cena in three classics, and is going to have an awesome match

against Cesaro at Summerslam. That's quite the debut, but as usual I think it's a case of people (myself included) wanting someone to go straight to the top after they did the same in NXT. I loved what Owens did and while I would have loved to see him take the title, I understand why they went the way they did.

Big Show punched Miz out because Ryback has a staph infection. There wasn't much else they could do here.

Finally we had Brock Lesnar challenging Seth Rollins for the World Title. Much like the opener, this was basically a Raw match with Brock beating him up for nine minutes and then Undertaker showing up to get his revenge on Brock for breaking the Streak a year and a half ago. Keeping the title on Rollins makes sense here, but I really didn't like how they made him look like an afterthought. That's the World Heavyweight Champion, not Santino. Treat both him and the title with the respect they deserve. On top of all that though, it looked like they were trying to make Undertaker heel, and if that's the case they're stupider than I thought.

Overall, Battleground exceeded some very low expectations and kept up the WWE's streak of having good pay per views. There was nothing that blew me away, but the show as a whole was entertaining enough and the whole show was more than acceptable. Now we get to go to Summerslam though, where things can get really big for a change.

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Bully Ray Gone From TNA. Again.

<http://www.wrestlezone.com/news/601489-report-major-name-gone-from-tna>

Is it really an invasion angle if there's no one left in the place you're invading?

I've supported TNA for a long time and want them to survive, but this is into the so bad it's funny territory.

Hulk Hogan's Racial Statements

I'm not really even sure what to call this as it's not so much a rant and there have been FAR more racist statements made by celebrities over the years. However, it's still a big story so here we go.

First of all, I don't want this to turn into a big racism debate and I don't want to see any comments in that area either.

As for what Hogan said, yeah it's bad. I understand that it was said in private and that he didn't know the cameras were on and that he would have never said it publicly, but the fact of the matter is that it's out there and his intention, meaning or knowledge that it was being recorded

do not matter. The statements are out there and Hogan has to live with the consequences.

At the end of the day, what Hogan meant by it doesn't matter. If Hogan is a racist who hates black people (not saying he is), it doesn't matter. What matters is that these things were heard and people have already made up their minds about what Hogan meant and said when he thought no one was listening. Every single one of us has said or done something stupid in our lives and lived with the consequences. Hogan is a bigger figure than we are and the consequences are therefore bigger and higher profile for him.

I more than understand why WWE let him go. Given how things are in America at the moment with all the issues in South Carolina and everywhere else, WWE can't have this kind of thing go unpunished, especially when it's someone who is really just there as a legend. The comments weren't good and it's the only move WWE could make.

So what does this mean for Hogan? Not much really. Time will pass, people will forget, and one day Hogan will be on Raw again for a big anniversary show. It happens to all kinds of celebrities who get caught saying far worse things than Hogan did and the same thing will happen to him. This isn't the end of Hulkamania or whatever people will be calling it, as Hulkamania has been nostalgia for going on twenty years now. Hogan will be back, just like so many others who have done far worse things. His fans will forgive him and that's really all there is to it.

In case you haven't seen it, here's Hogan's official statement on the rant, as given to People.com.

"Eight years ago I used offensive language during a conversation. It was unacceptable for me to have used that offensive language; there is no excuse for it; and I apologize for having done it..."

"This is not who I am. I believe very strongly that every person in the world is important and should not be treated differently based on race, gender, orientation, religious beliefs or otherwise..."

“I am disappointed with myself that I used language that is offensive and inconsistent with my own beliefs.”

Thought of the Day: Appreciating vs. Liking

This is one of those things that wrestling fans will never seem to understand but I'll keep trying to explain it.

Something that fans don't seem to understand is you can appreciate something while not caring about it. Yesterday it was announced that New Japan will continue to have its TV show airing on AXS TV. I saw the headline about it and didn't react. Why didn't I react? Because I don't care about New Japan. I'm well aware and completely agree with the fact that it's some of if not the best in ring action in the world today, but I don't have a connection to it. I'll watch a New Japan show a year or two at most, but I have no desire to watch any more than that.

Now, does that mean I don't know or get wrestling? I certainly wouldn't think so. All it means is that I don't care about New Japan. To put it into mainstream sports terms, at the moment, the St. Louis Cardinals are one of if not the best teams in Major League Baseball. However, I don't care about that team. Instead, I care about the Cleveland Indians, who really aren't that good. However, I care about the Indians because they're my team.

I care about WWE more than New Japan because I've watched WWE since before I can remember. They're my team. I'm well aware that New Japan does things better than WWE, but that doesn't mean I want to watch them all the time. I'll watch them occasionally if I'm in the mood to, but it's not like WWE where I want to see every thing they do. Me not wanting to watch New Japan doesn't mean I don't understand or love wrestling. It

means I have different taste than other fans and that's ok.

Smackdown – July 23, 2015: See? You Can Do It

Smackdown

Date: July 23, 2015

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso

This is an interesting show as Raw went off the air with a closed story for a change. The big story is of course the announcement of Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar....we're probably at V or VI over the years now. There's no chance either guy is on this show so we should get some new stuff set up for Summerslam instead. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jerry Lawler isn't here tonight, possibly due to his brother passing away this week.

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Sheamus has seen Dean's insanity but thinks Dean is just wanting a way out. Well tonight there's no way around the beating that he's going to receive from the next World Champion. Dang man Cena is here? You don't expect that on a Smackdown. Dean thinks Sheamus looks stupid and those are fighting words.

It's a brawl to start with Sheamus getting knocked to the floor where he easily stops a dive with a forearm to the head. Sheamus goes after him again but eats a tornado DDT onto the floor. We take a break and come back with Sheamus breaking up another tornado DDT attempt and starting in on the knee, which was hurt a few weeks back so why not. A powerbomb gets

two on Dean and it's time for a half crab.

Dean gets underneath Sheamus for the break and hits the rebound clothesline as the knee is suddenly fine. That stuff gets old fast but you get used to it after awhile. Now the suicide dive hits, followed by the standing elbow drop but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Harper is standing on the announcers' table as well and Dean goes after him, only to walk into a Brogue Kick. Back in and another Brogue Kick gives Sheamus the pin at 11:33.

Rating: C. The match was your standard brawl but there's one thing I really liked: this opened the show. Not a promo to set up the main event, not the same long promo that we've heard a dozen times this month, not trying to figure out if we're supposed to hate the Authority or be so happy that a little ray of Stephanie's sunshine chased the blues away again, and not a five minute recap of what we saw last week. It was a wrestling match to open the show and that's a very nice change of pace.

We get a comic book style recap of Stardust vs. Neville from last week.

Neville doesn't think Stardust is a supervillain because Stardust is a coward. You can't stop what you can't contain and the Altitude Era is upon us. Neville leaves and Stardust pops up on the video screen to laugh.

Neville vs. Adam Rose

Feeling out process to start with Rose hitting a quick snap suplex and putting on an early chinlock. Adam busts out a middle rope hurricanrana to send Neville outside but his suicide dive is countered with a forearm to the face. Some kicks and a moonsault set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 3:05.

Rating: D+. There wasn't much here but it's always good to see Neville getting in the ring. I know a feud with Stardust isn't much but it's nice to see him having a feud at all. This could lead somewhere for him with the superhero idea as it's one of the easiest things in the world for a heel to go after. Rose looked decent there too.

Neville poses when Stardust comes on the screen with a party hat on and a noisemaker in his mouth. He says even the sharpest arrows come crashing down. His hand is touching your hand (Hard Times reference) so be his hero.

Video on Sasha Banks where she talks about being the Boss and debuting on Raw as part of the three way feud.

Here's King Barrett to say he's the most important thing in WWE. He defeated three names in less than 24 hours and then defeated R-Truth again this past Sunday. That win told everyone that you better hit him right between the eyes because he'll take your head off. This was an old school promo with Barrett just coming out and talking about who he is and why you should care about him. I'll take that over another loss or stupid feud any day.

Here's Kevin Owens to talk about people chanting TAP OWENS TAP at him. Yeah he tapped, but Owens gave Cena the fight of his entire career. However, he isn't the one with the motto of NEVER GIVE UP. His motto is more along the lines of "live to fight another day." Owens has no issues with turning on Rusev this Monday because Rusev was too busy trying to figure out which Lana he wants to get to second base with. Cue Rusev and it's time to fight.

Rusev vs. Kevin Owens

I'm digging these heel vs. heel matches because they make sense to the story and the heels aren't buddies just because they're heels. Summer is once again dressed as Lana. Rusev goes right after Owens to start and we take a break in about thirty seconds. Back with Owens elbowing him in the face and punching the Russian out of Rusev. Owens avoids a charge in the corner and nails a superkick, followed by the Cannonball for no cover.

Instead it's a Vader Bomb for two as Owens keeps adding new stuff to his arsenal. It's chinlock time before a Codebreaker of all things gets two more on Rusev. Another chinlock slows things down until Rusev fights back with strikes and a spinning belly to back suplex. The spinwheel kick stuns Owens again, all the way to the point that he sticks his chin out for the running superkick. Rusev loads up the Accolade but Owens rolls

outside for the countout at 9:39.

Rating: C. This worked while it lasted and I like that Owens' character is now someone who doesn't want to fight after talking a big game. However, this goes against the formula that made him a big deal down in NXT. He's talented enough to make it work, but I'd like to see him beat someone up again just because he can.

Cesaro is fired up about getting to face Seth Rollins tonight because it's all about loving this business. He would drive hundreds of miles for a handshake and missed his best friend's wedding but that's what this is all about. It's time to prove that the American dream is alive and well. Owens comes up to make fun of Cesaro, saying that Cesaro took Cena to the limit but Owens beat him. Kevin says Cesaro abandoned his family but Cesaro calls him the master of abandoning because of all the matches he's walked out on. Owens is on his way to catering so Cesaro warns him not to choke like he did against Cena. Good stuff here.

Naomi/Sasha Banks vs. Bella Twins

Nikki takes Naomi to the mat to start and I think the Bellas are actually faces here. It's off to Brie, who eats a clothesline from Naomi, allowing for a tag to Sasha. Nikki comes back in for a headscissors with pushups before Brie dropkicks Sasha for two. BRIE MODE is broken up by Tamina because the power of a scream can be devastating. Brie gets pulled outside for some stomping and we take a break.

Back with Naomi stomping a mudhole in Brie before Sasha sends her back into the corner. The double knees get two as this is a very standard formula Divas tag, which you really don't see that often. Naomi puts on a chinlock as Nikki plays cheerleader on the apron. To be fair I like the Bellas as faces more, but could we please get a reason why we're supposed to care about them now, especially when it was supposed to be such a huge moment when Brie tapped out on Sunday?

Back to Naomi for a Codebreaker (with feet instead of knees) for two before slapping on another chinlock. A BRIE MODE chant gets Brie to fight up and she finally dropkicks Naomi to the floor. Nikki comes in for her clotheslines and an Alabama Slam to Naomi. Sasha breaks up a Rack Attack

as everything breaks down. Brie and Sasha fight outside, leaving Nikki to Rack Attack Naomi for the pin at 13:14.

Rating: C+. Considering this was a Bellas match, I was kind of shocked at how much I liked it. The key thing for me here: this didn't feel like a Divas match but a match that Divas in it. I could see any male wrestlers having this same match and liking it just as much, which is a major change for this division. The Bellas turning again for no apparent reason (again) is annoying but you have to accept it at this point.

The Tough Enough cast talks about why Jake Gyllenhaal is tough.

Long recap of Undertaker vs. Lesnar on Raw.

Cesaro vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Rollins bails to the floor to start before easily countering a wristlock into a gorilla press. Back up and Seth kicks Cesaro to the floor for a suicide dive as we take a break. As you might expect, we come back to Rollins holding a chinlock but Cesaro powers out and throws some suplexes. A slam into a suplex (cool move) gets two more on Rollins as the announcers compare Cesaro to Chuck Norris.

Seth comes back again with a low superkick for two but Cesaro changes things up again with a running dropkick for a near fall. Saxton: "Is there anything Cesaro can't do?" Uh, get a pin? The buckle bomb (with a nice throw) staggers Cesaro again but he counters the Pedigree into the Sharpshooter. Rollins is too close to the ropes though so it's off to a Crossface in the middle of the ring. That doesn't work either so it's a VERY high Swiss Death for two more. The Swing is broken up by a poke to the eye though, setting up the Pedigree to give Seth the pin at 13:31.

Rating: B. Good match here and I like the idea of a heel doing something as simple as poking his opponent in the eye. It doesn't have to be this big ref bump and interference ending that we always get, especially when there's something simple they can do like a thumb to the eye. Cesaro continues to be awesome and hopefully he goes somewhere instead of just being considered bulletproof when he isn't yet.

Owens comes out and gives Cesaro a Pop Up Powerbomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I liked this more than I've liked a Smackdown in a long time for one reason: this felt like a wrestling heavy show instead of the usual Raw supplement we get most of the time. The Divas got time, the main event was good, and the worst match was barely long enough to rate. It's a good, fun show that let the wrestlers wrestle and advanced some midcard storylines. That's what a show like Smackdown should be if it's not going to be anywhere near Raw's level. Good use of the blue show this week.

Results

Sheamus b. Dean Ambrose – Brogue Kick

Neville b. Adam Rose – Red Arrow

Rusev b. Kevin Owens via countout

Bella Twins b. Naomi/Sasha Banks – Rack Attack to Naomi

Seth Rollins b. Cesaro – Pedigree

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Ring of Honor – July 22, 2015: They Did It.....Whatever That Was!

Ring of Honor

Date: July 22, 2015

Location: Terminal 5, New York City, New York

Commentators: King Corino, Kevin Kelly

This has the potential to be a very interesting show as it's the 200th episode under the Sinclair Broadcasting banner as well as the go home show before this Friday's Death Before Dishonor pay per view. I'm really hoping they don't go too heavy with the historical stuff here because the pay per view market is still young for them. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

It seems that most of this show will be a clip show, but I won't be rating the matches since I won't be seeing the majority of them and it's not really fair to say if a match is good or bad based on a quick clip.

After a quick intro from the announcers, we go to a clip from April 25, 2015 when the Addiction took the Tag Team Titles from ReDragon. We see most of the finish after ReDragon's hot tag, setting up a series of double team moves for near falls. ReDragon takes over but a masked man known as the KRD runs in and superkicks O'Reilly by mistake, setting up Celebrity Rehab to give the Addiction the titles.

The masked man is revealed to be Chris Sabin and the Addiction joins him to beat down the former champions. Apparently this was a big reveal, but there's no backstory given. Quit assuming people watch all your shows. O'Reilly is busted open but the blood is censored, which I like WAY better than turning the screen black and white. What difference does it make what color it is? We know it's blood, so why bother?

Various wrestlers are excited about making it to 200 episodes.

Highlights from Steel Cage Warfare from July 27, 2013 where SCUM was destroyed. King Corino laughs off being evil.

Package on the Top Prospect Tournament, capped off by Donovan Dijak beating Will Ferrara in the finals. They show how the match ends but then go back to show the last few minutes. The main highlight here: a Mark Jindrak reference. Now there's one you don't see every day. The ending was a nice back and forth slugout with Dijak hitting Feast Your Eyes (a Burning Hammer into a GTS) for the win and the tournament.

Clip of the end of Tag Wars on December 27, 2014 with ACH/Matt Sydal vs. the Briscoes vs. Addiction vs. ReDragon. Chasing the Dragon was enough to pin ACH/Sydal and retain the Tag Team Titles.

Clip of Hanson vs. AJ Styles from November 22, 2014. Hanson hits a nice powerbomb for two but takes too much time going up (especially considering how big he is), allowing Styles to hit the Clash for the pin.

One last clip of Lance Storm vs. Mike Bennett from August 4, 2012. That's kind of a random one to end on but any extra Maria is a great thing. Bennett won with a Photo Finish (TKO) onto a chair.

House of Truth vs. Briscoe Brothers/ODB/Roderick Strong

That would be Donovan Dijak/Jay Diesel/Jay Lethal/Truth Martini. ODB and Truth actually start with Martini busting out a Spinarooni. It's off to Lethal vs. Strong, so Lethal tags out to Dijak for our first actual violence. Roderick takes over and drags Donovan to the corner for the tag to the Briscoes for some double teaming. Mark hits a middle rope splash and we take a break, coming back to Donovan hitting a release suplex slam on Mark to take over.

Off to Lethal for some stomping in the corner as the heels start rotating. Everyone but Truth gets in some shots on Mark until he comes back with a middle rope forearm to the face. The hot tag brings in his brother for left hands and a neckbreaker to Dijak. The Jay's (as in not Diesel) slug it out with Lethal taking over and slapping on a cobra clutch. We take a break and come back with Roderick getting the hot tag to hammer away on the World Champion.

The Sick Kick gets two and everything breaks down with Lethal superkicking Roderick. ODB tags herself in and chokes the champ, allowing for a tag off to Martini. The House of Truth surrounds ODB but she takes a shot from the flask and slugs all of them until the heroes come back in. Everyone goes to the floor, leaving ODB to spit booze in Truth's eyes, setting up a rollup pin at 16:35.

Rating: D+. Well that happened, and instead of setting up something for the pay per view, a wrestling valet pinned a manager. I'm so glad we got that instead of anything between the World Champion and his challenger or any mention of the Briscoes' match on Friday. No, what we needed was Truth Martini getting rolled up for a laugh instead of talking about a pay per view. I know they're new at this but work with me here people.

Overall Rating: D-. I don't want to say this was a bad show, but it was a misfire. Like I said in the opening, this would have been fine for a stand alone special anniversary show, but it doesn't work when you have this right before a pay per view. A lot of the highlights were either meaningless or fine but it didn't really make me want to watch more of the show. The idea here was fine, but they needed to tweak it a lot more to make it work.

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Lucha Underground – July 22, 2015: Fighting Death

Lucha Underground

Date: July 22, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

Ultima Lucha is almost upon us and the major story is Mil Muertes casually destroying Prince Puma last week. The title match seems to be inevitable but you never can tell with this promotion. Well you can if you read the spoilers but that's just cheating. We also need to find out who the final medallion winner will be so let's get to it.

The opening recap covers Texano vs. Blue Demon Jr. over who really is Mexico. Not Mexican remember, but the entire country of Mexico.

Big Ryck is in Dario Cueto's office where the boss thinks Ryck has lost focus and has been blinded by Daivari's money. Cueto holds up the last medallion and asks what's more important, money or power. Ryck says he can have both and gets the medallion and a roll of cash. They finally see eye to eye.

Johnny Mundo vs. Texano

This could be good. The fans chant JOHNNY ZERO but change it up to a standard Texano chant. Mundo hides in a corner like he should do as a heel before kicking Texano in the face to take over. Texano kicks him right back for two and the fans are way behind the good guy here. Johnny comes right back and heads outside for a neckbreaker onto the floor in a nice looking move.

Back in and the running knee to the head quiets the JOHNNY ZERO chants, followed by a chinlock. That goes nowhere so Texano fires off a chop. Johnny ducks a second so Texano chops him in the back for a nice spot. A Rough Ryder gets two on Johnny but he blasts Texano with a Flying Chuck for two. Texano fights back again but the Crew comes in to beat him down

for the DQ.

Rating: C-. This wasn't bad but they were just trading kicks to the head for most of the time. I still like Texano and Mundo looks like the biggest star in the world (see what I did there?) around here. Nice little match here but it was there to set up the post match stuff instead of anything else.

Alberto makes the save and has a staredown with Texano but they both walk away.

Hernandez is in Dario's office (and somewhere you can hear Dixie Carter crying) when Cueto says he's splitting Ultima Lucha into two weeks. I'm not wild on the idea but it's all they could do given their timeslot. As for Hernandez, he'll be on the card in a match against Drago, but since so many fans hate him, they'll be around the ring with straps. Hernandez doesn't seem worried.

The Mack vs. Cage

Mack pinned Cage a few weeks back so this is a chance for revenge. Cage fires off a bunch of clotheslines to start...and gets sunset flipped out of the corner for a pin in less than 45 seconds. Dang it stop hurting your big stars.

They brawl on the floor and into the crowd until Dario comes out to make a hardcore match for Ultima Lucha with their match taking place next week. Dario isn't done though as he's going to explain the Aztec medallions after the break.

Back from a break with Dario in the ring and a new title belt next to him. The belt has slots for all seven medallions lined up across the middle in a kind of hideous design. It's the Gift of the Gods Title, which is good for a Lucha Underground Title match anytime, as long as you give Cueto a one week notice so he can properly promote. On top of that though, you're going to have to defend the title if you take your time. Now we need a first champion, so everyone who has a medallion needs to come to the ring.

This brings out Jack Evans, Aerostar, King Cuerno, Bengala, Sexy Star, and Big Ryck. Everyone puts their medallion into the belt but since there's no Fenix, we have an open medallion. That can't work, so let's have a battle royal where the final two will have a regular match for the medallion. Cue the returning Fenix, who is quickly put into the battle royal. I like the concept of the Gift of the Gods Title, with the one week idea being a very welcome change.

Battle Royal

Fenix, Kill Shot, Marty Martinez, Argenis, Famous B., Mascarita Sagrada, Vinny Massaro, Delavar Daivari, Super Fly, Ricky Mandel

Remember that it's a battle royal until the final two, when it's pin or submission. Fenix is in a shirt over his tights for some reason. It's a brawl to start with Famous B. Pedigreeing Mandel and dropping a legdrop. Mandel is quickly tossed and Argenis is sent out as well. Daivari kicks Kill Shot out, followed by a slugout between Famous B. and Massaro as the fans try to remember who either guy is. Sagrada monkey flips Super Fly out but eliminates himself in the process.

We're down to Famous B., Martinez, Daivari and Fenix. Martinez and Daivari double team B. out but Fenix quickly tosses Daivari, leaving us with Marty vs. Fenix for the medallion. Gee I wonder what's going to happen. Marty hits a quick dropkick for two and Fenix rolls outside, where Marty isn't willing to try a big dive. Back in and a Tajiri handspring elbow drops Marty, setting up a springboard wristdrag. They horribly botch a hurricanrana but it's still good enough for Fenix to get a pin.

Rating: D+. The best part here was they kept it quick (about seven minutes total) when there it was obvious that Fenix was going to win. Fenix is probably the odds on favorite to win the title at Ultima Lucha but it should at least offer him some better competition than this did. Not bad, but it was pretty much just waiting seven minutes before the obvious.

Fenix puts his medallion inside the belt.

We run down the Ultima Lucha card.

Here's Prince Puma for the hard sell before the title match. He's about to speak for the first time (really? He didn't talk back in the day?) but Katrina and Muertes (rocking a suit) cut him off before he can say a word. The Disciples of Death run in but Puma fights them off to stare at Muertes again. Mil gets in but Puma kicks him in the face, setting up the 630 to end the show. This was the kind of thing they needed to do with Puma as it's been one sided to Muertes so far.

Overall Rating: C+. Not a great wrestling show but a solid push towards the biggest show of the year. That's exactly what a go home show is supposed to be and they mostly nailed it here. It's also nice to see what the Gift of the Gods Title is after all the weeks of hyping it up and the idea actually works well. Throw in Fenix returning and Puma finally getting one up on Muertes and I'm ready to see Ultima Lucha.

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