

# Royal Rumble 2016 Preview

This is one of the most difficult shows of the year to predict and it's not just because of the battle royal. Aside from the big main event, it's hard to guess a lot of the title matches because there's a chance that they're starting a new title program but they also might just be extending the current ones a few more months. Then there's the whole "let's throw the roster into one match for the title." Let's get to it.

We'll start on the pre-show with a nice little concept: a four way tag with the winning team getting Rumble spots. We've got Darren Young/Damien Sandow (So are the Players officially split?) vs. the Dudley Boyz vs. Ascension vs. Mark Henry/Jack Swagger. Ascension is written off of course and there's no reason to pick Young/Sandow. Therefore, we'll go with the only team remaining and the only one comprised of two former World Champions. Neither guy has a chance of winning but the more former World Champions you add to a World Title match the more prestige it has. If nothing else due to how lame the other options are.

Del Rio retains the US Title. Why? Well for some reason WWE insists on making us sit through as many boring Del Rio matches as we can while the title gets less and less interesting every single week. I had a good time believing that Kalisto could go somewhere as champion but in the back of my head I knew WWE would hand it back to Del Rio as soon as possible. I have no idea who takes it off him (AJ maybe?) but it's not going to be Kalisto at this show.

I'll go with Ambrose keeping the title from Owens. In theory Owens should be in line for a big match at Wrestlemania and I can't imagine they put the title on him beforehand. Last man standing is a good way to have him lose but still keep him looking strong as Dean could win through shenanigans after a long fight. As long as they don't do the lame and way overdone "trap him under some big object" ending, this should be a really wild brawl that both guys are capable of delivering. Ambrose wins, though both guys should be in the Rumble too.

In a pick that doesn't make a ton of sense, I'll go with the Usos to win

the titles off New Day. It's not that New Day isn't entertaining still (though the Jericho stuff has been horrible), but they've cleaned out the division more than once now so unless Enzo/Cass or Gable/Jordan are coming to the main roster like Monday or something, who else is New Day supposed to fight?

Charlotte retains, likely setting up a match against Sasha Banks as we roll into Wrestlemania, which could set up Bayley vs. Sasha on the main roster. Not that WWE is smart enough to pull that off of course. We're likely setting for the return of Nikki to challenge Charlotte in a copy of AJ returning to take the title from Paige in 2014.

That brings us to the main event and good night where do you start? Well actually you start with Reigns based on Monday, but I think it finishes with HHH. Yeah as simple of a story as they have, I really do think this winds up being HHH coming out in the last spot and defeating a worn out Reigns to win the title. However, I don't think it sets up HHH vs. Reigns at Wrestlemania. Instead I think they'll do that match at Fastlane and then set up Reigns vs. Lesnar II at Wrestlemania. I can't imagine they keep the title on Reigns as if nothing else, it leaves no one as a realistic challenger.

Now for the interesting parts: the surprises. Counting the two names from the pre-show, we'll have fifteen names announced. I won't bother trying to predict all fifteen as it's likely going to be one or two of the Social Outcasts and a bunch of midcard fillers plus HHH to cap it off. That leaves a handful of spots for legends and new names so here are a few guesses.

Word on the street is they're putting the Tough Enough winner in there for some hazing. If so, whatever. It'll take two minutes and no one is going to remember because Tough Enough winners barely ever mean anything because it's a stupid concept that doesn't work.

I don't think we get AJ Styles and I'd almost bet on the fact that we don't get Daniel Bryan. AJ likely debuts the next night or the next week and Bryan being in the Rumble would be a borderline disaster based on the last two years. Both guys would be fun, but the problem boils down to

this: what's the point of bringing them in if they're just going to lose?

For legends picks, let's go with Jim Duggan and.....Papa Shango. Why? Well why not? If they can bring in the Boogeyman last year, why not bring in Shango here? I'll throw in Vader too, just so the announcers can make a lame Star Wars joke.

Finally, I'll go with Sami Zayn as the NXT representative. The fans know who he is and he can go right back down to NXT to build towards Sami vs. Balor at Takeover.

Overall, this is always a show worth looking forward to. The Rumble is one of the few matches that is always fun due to the drama and surprises included and this has the potential to be something awesome. I like the idea of putting the title on the line as it really does feel like the biggest Rumble of all time. Reigns is likely dropping the belt here to set up his big win at Wrestlemania, but this has the potential to throw a huge curveball. I know HHH vs. Reigns is likely at some point, but there's always the chance that it could go another way.

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# 2015 Awards: Best Major Show

This is always a big one.

We'll start up north with Takeover: Brooklyn which had one of the best one-two main events I've ever seen, though Bayley vs. Sasha still should have gone on last. The crowd helped this one a lot as everyone was losing their minds over what they were seeing. It's a great show and the real main event is probably the match of the year.

There's also Wrestle Kingdom IX which was the usual stacked New Japan card with one great match after another. The problem here though, as usual, is how long the show is. I really liked the action but they could have cut at least half an hour off. The show was shorter than usual but it still felt long, which isn't a good thing. This is way up there for the action alone.

Speaking of action we have Ultima Lucha, which combined to go three hours and had some great culminations to some awesome feuds and stories. Believe it or not it was probably the Vampiro match that stole the show with the old retired Vampiro going full on insane one last time before revealing that he had been Pentagon's master the whole time. The rest of the card is (mostly) awesome and it was a great cap to one of the biggest surprises I've ever seen with Lucha Underground.

Now we have one of the usual suspects in Wrestlemania. You can't have a discussion of major shows without looking at the biggest show of the year and Wrestlemania was a shocking surprise. The thing is, people said that it probably wouldn't hold up as well on a second viewing and that wound up being the case as the redo dropped a little bit. The thing with Wrestlemania XXXI was how low people's expectations were coming in. Most people, including myself, thought the show looked like a disaster on paper but it wound up being a really strong outing.

Finally though, there's Takeover: London. I think the subtitle I used for this show sums it up better than anything else: what a great night of

wrestling matches. The worst match on the card was totally fine (Crews vs. Corbin) and the next worse match received a strong B. NXT is the it promotion for a strong card with well built stories that pay off in the end and London might have been the strongest. Anytime you get a Sting vs. Vader story like they had in Bayley vs. Jax, you know you're in for a good night. This was my favorite big show of the year and I'm almost certain it's going to have the required staying power.

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## 2015 Awards: Rookie of the Year

This might be the trickiest of all as you could say Sting is a rookie as he had his first WWE match in 2015. Since that could make things really complicated though, we'll go with people I consider rookies, meaning I might not consider some of your choices.

We'll start with someone outside WWE because I'm a WWE mark or something. ROH's Dalton Castle had debuted a few years earlier but changed his gimmick and debuted in the Top Prospect Tournament in the early part of the year. This turned into a great run for him as he became one of the more entertaining guys on the roster with a surprisingly strong offense

and a great character. He's one of the people I enjoy most when watching ROH and his charisma alone will take him a long way.

Asuka is really kind of cheating as she's been wrestling for over ten years. However, she debuted in NXT and was instantly the second (at worst) woman on the roster. It's pretty clear Asuka vs. Bayley is coming at Takeover in Dallas and it should be one of the most awesome matches they've had....well since the last time Bayley had a big showdown match. This is a stretch but she's a rookie in WWE at least and that's close enough.

Speaking of rookie women in NXT, we have Nia Jax, who actually did debut in 2015. I know her character is limited and I still don't get why she and Eva Marie are teaming, but she played a perfect Vader to Bayley's Sting, which is really impressive given that she was debuting six months prior to that. I don't know how far she can go, but Nia is a great monster with a great look.

However, we finally have the runaway winner in Chad Gable. This is a guy who just gets it and was ready for the main roster about ten seconds after he debuted. Gable is the closest thing to another version of Kurt Angle as he went from the Olympics to the WWE where he's a comedic goon who was capable of out wrestling anyone. This guy could be something very special in the future and he's just fun to watch, especially when he's with Jason Jordan.

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# Thunder – August 30, 2000: It's A Good Show

## Thunder

Date: August 30, 2000

Location: Tuscon Convention Center, Tuscon, Arizona

Commentators: Stevie Ray, Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay

This is another case where just getting up to a coherent show would be a huge improvement over what they had on Monday. Thunder isn't usually the best show in the world but at least it has a tendency to make sense. Nash is the World Champion now, which could actually work if he puts Booker over at the pay per view. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap from Nitro. Normally editing things down to a few minutes works but in this case, the show is still a disaster.

Here's Team Canada with the captured Major Gunns in the ring. Elix Skipper says "Show me the Canadian money!" Gunns has to hold the flag and rolls her eyes throughout Storm's speech about how we all want to be Canadians. The Canadian national anthem plays so Gunns drops the flag and rips her top off to reveal an American flag bra. Cue Team Canada's opponents.

## Team Canada vs. Kronik

Storm is sent to the floor and Adams launches Skipper down on top of him. We settle down with Clark stomping away at Skipper in the corner. Tony promises the announcement of a first time ever match this coming Monday on Nitro. A double shoulder drops Skipper and he dives backwards into a full nelson slam, only to have Storm springboard in with a clothesline for two. Tony: "One, two, HE ALMOST BEAT HIM!" Yeah because the US Champion getting a pin would be shocking.

Adams clotheslines both guys down and brings in Clark for the Meltdown on Skipper for two. Storm breaks up High Times and goes for the flag, only to have Gunns jab him between the legs. The full nelson slam and High Times puts Storm away, because why not pin the US Champion in a nothing match?

**Rating:** C-. Not the worst power vs. speed match as I could watch Storm being that smooth in the ring all day. The guy just looks natural flying around at a level that almost no one else reaches. I didn't like the ending but at least the match leading up to it was good enough and we're off to a nice start.

Post match here's General Rection comes down to try to save Gunns but the Canadians fight back, drawing out the rest of the Misfits for the save. The Canadians get away with Gunns.

The Natural Born Thrillers are ready for a limo but it's Nash and Steiner. The new champ wants to have fun tonight "and that's a shoot."

We see a clip of the Thunder Tailgate Party. Ignore Vito still wearing the Hardcore Title, making this a month old at least.

Here are Steiner, Jarrett, Nash and the Thrillers (you knew the mega heel stable was coming) with Scott going first. Apparently he isn't allowed to call Goldberg all the names he wants because the corporate sponsors won't let him. Some villain. He got hit in the face with a pipe on Monday and has the banged up eyes to prove it. After Steiner swears a bit (that's more like it), he promises to take care of Goldberg at Fall Brawl.

Nash talks about winning the World Title for the fifth time on Monday. Stevie: "And no one remembers the first four." Well to be fair those, three of those reigns combined to last about two weeks. He's watched the tape back a few times and sees why Jarrett played it so fair during the match: Jeff wanted Nash to win the title on his own, because Nash wanted to do it for the people. Gee I just thought it was bad writing.

The fans actually cheer the line (save for Daffney and the Crowbar look-a-like, who are in the audience for some reason) and Nash chuckles. All that means is more people willing to pay another \$30 at an autograph



signing because their picture has the belt in it. Nash touts the Thrillers as the future and says Goldberg is out in the desert so there's no one to stop them tonight.

Cue Booker to say he has a clique of his own, so here are Vito, Awesome and the Filthy Animals. So the clique known as the Animals are part of an even bigger clique? You think you might be overdoing this faction war stuff? Booker is worried about the guys in the ring taking over WCW and the fight is on until security makes the save.

A few notes here. First, I don't really see why this is a problem since we've established that Cat is more powerful than Russo. Second, this was actually a well done segment with the storyline being laid out right in front of us. That's one area where Russo excels: he can set up a big story really, really well.

Unfortunately that brings us to the third point: we're going to have to see where this goes and that's Russo's downfall. He can set stuff up but at some point he has to execute those stories and the whole thing collapses. On top of that, if you've seen one Russo faction war story, you've seen them all. Thankfully this one is off to a good start though and you have to take the little things while you can. Oh and ignore the setup having plot holes the size of Russo's MANLY biceps of course.

Back from a break and we see Nash taking over the control booth during the commercial. Apparently he's in charge now and sends Reno to face Mike Awesome.

Rection wants Storm at Fall Brawl. For AMERICA. And Gunns.

Wedding invitation for a week from Monday.

### Reno vs. Mike Awesome

Awesome is in ring gear here, which really makes me wonder why the 70s thing existed. He doesn't wear the stuff to the ring and wrestles the same so why do it other than to amuse the writers? Awesome elbows him in the face to start and throws him down with a German suplex for no cover.

The slingshot shoulder gets two for Mike and we hear about War Games 2000

airing this Monday on Nitro, meaning it's the first time ever both A, on TV and B, for the World Title. Thanks for giving us a full FIVE DAYS notice for this huge match. Reno gets in a shot to the ribs but stops to go after Daffney's boyfriend (Ozzie) for no apparent reason. Stevie: "How did they get front row seats in this venue?" Back in and Mike grabs the Awesome Bomb for a quick pin. Stevie: "BUT HOW DID THEY GET THE SEATS TONY???"

**Rating:** D+. Another match that didn't have enough time to go anywhere and the Ozzie stuff didn't make much sense. Reno is yet another guy with a great look who could have been something if he was given the chance. Awesome did his usual but he was really just a warm body here, which is yet another waste of talent.

Reno beats up Ozzie and Daffney throws popcorn.

During the break, Jarrett jumped Awesome until Jimmy Hart and Finlay of all people broke it up. I like this attacks during the break stuff. There's something so fake about having nothing happen until we're back from a commercial.

This week's sitdown interview is with Paul Orndorff earlier today in the empty arena. Tony asks about Orndorff being in charge of the Power Plant. Paul calls the students his kids and he's so proud of all of them. The Power Plant is brutal but he's looking for the best of the best (I guess Batista isn't considered that great).

Orndorff keeps the students working hard and has them clean the place because they need to learn that no one is above anything. Tony brings up the Natural Born Thrillers having no respect for Orndorff and claiming that it was their talent that got them here. Mike Sanders called Orndorff a miserable old man and that's more than enough for Paul.

It's time for an old school rant with Paul talking about how these kids are ungrateful and how they were nothing before he got hold of them. Tony keeps egging him on by saying how often the Thrillers talk like this and you can see Orndorff getting madder and madder because this is what he gets every time he tries to help someone. Really good stuff from Orndorff here as he gets the role perfectly and nailed it, as most old school guys

can.

Back live and here are the Thrillers with signs about Orndorff, including "Your best match was against Vader" and "Aren't you dead yet?" The signs are turned around to spell out WE RULE.

Steiner hits Reno with a pipe for losing.

Booker says his knee is fine and he's ready for Mike Sanders tonight.

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

Jindrak and O'Haire are challenging, as ordered by Nash and company. Before we get started, O'Haire says we'll make it fair by letting Disco be on the team. Or we could just have a tag match but that might make too much sense. Konnan sits in on commentary. O'Haire slams Disco down to start and hits that sweet springboard clothesline of his. Disco gets in a few shots and wisely brings in Juvy for some quick legdrops.

Off to Rey for the Bronco Buster but he dives into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. It's off to Jindrak who gets two off a clothesline, followed by a nice Torture Rack neckbreaker for two more. Mark misses a dropkick though and it's off to Juvy for some dropkicks of his own. In the melee, O'Haire gets in a quick tag, allowing Jindrak to throw Juvy into the air for a powerslam from Sean.

Juvy rolls to the floor so Sean hiptosses him over the top and back inside. There's something awesome about small people being thrown around like that. Back in and the hot tag brings in Rey as everything breaks down. O'Haire kicks Disco in the face but Juvy breaks up the Seanton Bomb and pulls Sean down with a hurricanrana. A quick Rey legdrop between the legs retains the titles.

**Rating:** B-. Now this is how you do the power vs. speed formula. This worked really well back and forth, even if the idea of the champions having the advantage goes completely against face/heel psychology. Jindrak and O'Haire's good looking tandem stuff makes up for it though, along with Juvy and Rey bumping like pinballs.

Mike Sanders gets Booker T. tonight. Jarrett comes in and says he's booked himself in a match that could end his career. Just give us the comedy reveal already.

Steiner attacks Jindrak and O'Haire as well.

#### Mike Sanders vs. Booker T.

Sanders tells Booker to bring it so here's a livid Mr. T. Booker drops him with an early clothesline and hammers away with right hands in the corner. The ax kick, side kick and Book End put Sanders away in barely a minute.

Post break Booker is limping and Sanders gets beaten down as well.

Jarrett is getting his blood pressure checked before his big intimidating match.

#### Big Vito vs. Chuck Palumbo

This is the result of a Vito challenge. They trade early slams for two until Vito grabs a suplex and drops the top rope elbow. The top rope headbutt misses though and Palumbo hits a nice top rope shoulder for two of his own. Not that it matters as Vito hits him in the ribs and scores with the implant DDT for another quick win. So much for Nash's boys being, you know, good.

Steiner beats up Palumbo as well. Good for him as Palumbo should be able to last two minutes against Big Vito.

#### Harris Twins vs. Misfits in Action

AWOL/Rection here. It's a big fight to start as is almost always the custom in tag matches around here. The Misfits take over with AWOL working over we'll say Don as things settle down. Since that's too calm for WCW, here's Storm with Major Gunns for a distraction. AWOL goes through a table because what else is he supposed to do. The H Bomb is broken up by Rection, who loads up No Laughing Matter, only to have Skipper come out and hit him with the flag. Isn't that disrespecting the Maple Leaf? We're still not done though as Kronik comes in for High Times

on Ron, setting up No Laughing Matter for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Well you knew something like this was coming. Who in the world thought we needed five people running in and a weapon shot on a quick TV match? The Misfits are another team that could go somewhere if there weren't so many factions on the show that take up space. We're currently at seven stables and counting (Misfits, Thrillers, Team Canada, Nash's group, Booker's group, Filthy Animals, Dark Carnival) so how exactly are the Misfits supposed to stand out?

AWOL saves Rection from Storm.

Leia Meow whips the Dragons for losing so much. If they don't get better, they have to lick her boots. Ok then.

Steiner and Nash interrupt Jarrett at prayer and offer to have his back out there tonight. Jarrett has to do this himself.

Jeff Jarrett vs. ???

It's Kwee Wee. There's nothing else to say here and if you've ever watched wrestling before, you knew a swerve was coming the whole way. Jarrett jumps him at the bell as Paisley sits in on commentary. Kwee Wee gets slugged down as Stevie talks about keeping his yaks intact. A hiptoss and back elbow put Jarrett down but he sidesteps a missile dropkick.

Jeff loads up the Stroke but throws him down when Mike Awesome comes out for a distraction. A quick rollup gets two on Jeff but the referee gets rid of Awesome, allowing Jeff to...do nothing. Kwee Wee tries what looks like a powerbomb but drops Jarrett for two instead. The Stroke wraps it up pretty quick.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here as you could see the joke from the second they announced this in the first place. At least in this case they weren't really trying to hide it which makes this a lot easier to sit through. Nash and Steiner playing along helped and at least the match was short enough.

Here's Shawn Stasiak for an arm wrestling challenge. As you might expect,

here's Orndorff to answer as well as scare Stasiak half to death. Paul almost has it won but then punches Shawn in the face like a ticked off veteran should. There's a piledriver for Stasiak before Orndorff grabs a chair and fights off the rest of the Thrillers. This REALLY hasn't been their night but Orndorff is already better than most of the people on this show.

Cat and Ms. Jones get here.

Here's Cat in the arena to call out Nash, who works for Russo who works for Cat. Therefore it's time for Cat vs. Nash...which doesn't actually start as Cat has to beat up Steiner and Jarrett. Nash comes in with a ball bat because THE CAT is just so tough. Jones tries to slap Jeff but gets guitared, which finally draws out Booker to help. The Thrillers come out and keep the beating going to end the show. I have no idea why the Animals, Awesome or Vito didn't come out to help but that's continuity for you.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This was the best Thunder in probably a year at least. Well at least the first half was as the rest turned into another goofy mess. The key thing here is they toned down all the ridiculous insanity and just told their big story with wrestling matches. That's one of the things that drives me craziest about Russo: there's good(ish) stuff buried deep under the mess, but there's so much bad to get through that it's hard to keep trying. Still though, awesome first hour this week and not a bad enough second hour to kill it.

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# 2015 Awards: Feud of the Year

This is another one that doesn't have a lot of options this year but the top choices are good.

As usual, we'll knock out the honorable mentions first.

Brock vs. Undertaker had two good to awesome matches with a Match of the Year candidate inside the Cell. My big problem with this one is how it started up again. The Undertaker coming out and costing Brock the title didn't work for me as it took him a year and a half to come back and go after Brock with the World Champion getting sacrificed to set it up. That and the messy ending to their Summerslam match. It was such a disaster.

That's about it for the honorable mentions actually. Like I said, it's not the best year.

One of the two big ones is of course Kevin Owens vs. John Cena with the whole battle of different roads to get to the top level. This one was carried by the promos but Owens winning made the whole thing a huge success. I know a lot of people say that Owens losing the last two matches killed it, but Owens would win the Intercontinental Title later in the year and could easily be a main event player by the time Summerslam rolls around. How much of that do you think is due to the first win over Cena?

The other option is Sasha Banks vs. Bayley, which just worked on every level. You had the perfect good vs. bad style with two awesome matches (I still swoon over that Bank Statement reversal) and it main evented a Takeover. That alone is remarkable and the fact that they brought Izzy into it and MADE HER CRY was one of the best heel moves I've seen in years.

Picking a winner here is splitting hairs, but I have to go with Owens vs. Cena, just due to the shock of that first win. Bayley winning was an

amazing moment but it was also obvious from the second she got the title shot. The surprise of Owens pinning Cena in a great match on pay per view was such a stunning moment and is enough to pull this forward.

That being said, it's rather sad that there are so few feuds these days. Everything is about setting up a rubber match or for a title. It's so rare to see a good personal feud but when they work, they're as entertaining as anything wrestling can produce. Now why can't WWE produce more of them?

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2014: Oh NO! NO! NO!

## Royal Rumble 2014

Date: January 26, 2014

Location: Consol Energy Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

The big story here is the rise of Daniel Bryan, who has gone from solid midcard guy to the people's choice to win the Rumble. However, Batista has returned and is basically the guaranteed winner of the Rumble, no



matter what the fans want to see. I can't imagine this ends well. Let's get to it.

#### Pre-Show: Tag Team Titles: Goldust/Cody Rhodes vs. New Age Outlaws

The Outlaws reunited as a nostalgia act and pinned the champs to earn this shot. Dogg and Cody get things going with Dogg hammering away, only to miss his Shake Rattle and Roll punch. Cody misses the Disaster Kick but sends both Outlaws to the floor. The champs hit dives on the Outlaws as we take a break. Back with Goldust in trouble as Dogg puts on a chinlock.

The Outlaws double team Goldust for a bit until he hits a jumping sunset flip for two on Dogg. Gunn charges into a powerslam and there's the hot tag to Cody. A missile dropkick drops both Outlaws and Cross Rhodes plants Dogg for two with Billy making the save. Gunn makes a blind tag and hits a Fameasser on Cody for the big upset win.

**Rating:** C. This was fine for an opener and the fans were into the nostalgia. The Outlaws were only transitional champions anyway as the Usos would get the belts before Wrestlemania. Cody and Goldust had them back before the year was over too so no one was really hurt by this.

The opening video talks about working to achieve your dreams. Sometimes there's a very thin line between almost getting there and getting everything you want. We also focus on Orton vs. Cena because that's the real main event here. The Rumble itself gets a quick mention too.

#### Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Daniel joined the Wyatt Family on the last Raw of the year but then rejected them a few weeks later, leading to one of the loudest YES chants you'll ever hear. Bryan punches out of the corner to start but Bray drives knees into his ribs and blasts him with an elbow. That's fine with Bryan as he kicks the knee out but has to go after Bray's followers Luke Harper and Erick Rowan. A suicide dive drops Harper but the referee ejects both monsters.

Bray huddles with his Family on the floor, allowing Daniel to take him

down with a plancha. Back in and a high cross body gets two on Wyatt but he chops Daniel off the middle rope and out to the floor. Bray charges at Daniel but drives the bad knee into the steps to put him back down again. Back in and Daniel starts kicking at the leg before snapping off a dragon screw leg whip. A modified curb stomp gets two for Bryan but Bray drives him back into the corner.

They slug it out to the apron with Wyatt snapping Daniel's shoulder down in a big crash. Back in and Bray hits his release suplex slam and we hit the chinlock. Bray puts Daniel's head against the post and drives in forearms to follow up on Bryan's recent concussion. Back in again and a kick to the face gives Bray a few near falls. A big release Rock Bottom plants him again and Bray does his Spider Walk out of the corner. Bryan finally avoids an elbow drop and hits a running clothesline.

Some kicks stagger Bray and a drop toehold sends him into the middle buckle. Daniel kicks away in the corner and nails a top rope hurricanrana for two. Another running clothesline is countered by a running elbow to the chest as Bray takes over again. Bryan low bridges him to the floor and hits a running tornado DDT off the apron. A running dropkick sends Bray into the barricade and a missile dropkick puts Wyatt down in the ring.

The YES Kicks get two but Bray turns him inside out with a clothesline for two. Sister Abigail is countered but Bray bites his way out of the YES Lock. Daniel scores with more kicks and hits a top rope splash but Bray ducks to the floor to avoid the running knee. The Flying Goat is blocked though and Bray hits Sister Abigail into the barricade to knock Bryan silly. Back in and another Sister Abigail is good for the pin.

**Rating:** A. This was considered a match of the year contender and it's easy to see why. These two beat the tar out of each other with each move getting harder and harder than the previous. Bryan lost here but came out looking like a star. Bray on the other hand looks like a killer and that's exactly what he's supposed to be.

Paul Heyman says Brock Lesnar is going to challenge the winner of Orton vs. Cena for the World Title. However, first he has to make an example

out of Big Show.

Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is here.

The expert panel of Jim Duggan, Shawn Michaels and Ric Flair aren't sure who to pick between Lesnar and Big Show.

### Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

These two have had a feud for years and this time Big Show has been getting the better of it through pure power. Lesnar takes Show down before the bell and pounds on him with fists and then a chair. As Big Show is down, Lawler says Big Show gave Lesnar his first loss at the 2002 Royal Rumble, which would be three months before Lesnar debuted. We get the opening bell with Lesnar getting another chair but Show nails him with the KO Punch. Lesnar is rocked and Show takes him outside for a whip into the barricade. Back in and Big Show loads up another KO but Lesnar ducks and throws him up for the F5 for the easy pin.

Lesnar beats on him with the chair even more after the match. He's broken two chairs over Show's back.

Shield says they have 27 enemies tonight and it'll be the three of them left standing. Only one of them can stand tall at the end but Reigns thinks he has the winning number. He won't say what it is though. Dean offers to tell him his if Reigns tells his. Dean: "What if I have two numbers? I have ALL the numbers!" They agree to believe in the Shield.

Orton says he's going to beat Cena and put him to the back of the line. Renee Young asks about Batista, Brock Lesnar and Bray Wyatt wanting title shots but Orton laughs it off and calls Wyatt a deranged hillbilly Duck Dynasty reject.

We recap Orton vs. Cena. This is more about their short term history, focusing on the titles being unified back in December. Orton seems to be cracking under the pressure of being champion and even attacked Cena's father at Raw recently.

### WWE World Title: Randy Orton vs. John Cena

No countout and no DQ with Orton defending.. The fans loudly chant for Daniel Bryan before and after the bell. They hit the mat and the fans are already bored less than twenty seconds in. Cena fights up and gets two off a bulldog but charges into an elbow in the corner. Now a Randy Savage chant starts up and Orton stops for a second before kicking Cena even more.

Off to a chinlock as the fans chant for Y2J. After fighting out, Cena catches on and tries a Boston crab. Orton kicks him to the floor during a brief Undertaker chant and now it's just the standard boring chant. A clothesline puts Orton back outside but he sends Cena into the steps. Back in and a DDT gets two for Orton as the fans just say both guys suck. Cena comes back with shoulder blocks and the ProtoBomb, only to take too long jawing and walk into a powerslam for two.

A half nelson slam into a neckbreaker gets two for Cena but he gets caught on top. He headbutts his way out though and hits the top rope Fameasser for two. Orton counters the AA attempt into his backbreaker for two as the fans have calmed down a bit. The Elevated DDT off the apron to the floor gets two more on John. Orton's RK0 is countered into the STF but Randy is too close to the ropes. He grabs the ropes to block an AA as well but the referee gets bumped.

There's the STF again and Orton taps but there's no referee. Orton uses the opportunity to nail Cena with a title belt for two. He stands around too long again though and takes an AA for two more. The RK0 gets the same and now the fans want Divas. Orton misses the Punt but pulls Cena down into an STF. John counters that into a Crossface but Orton rolls into a cover for two.

Back up and Orton hits Cena with an AA, followed by Cena grabbing an RK0 for another near fall. With nothing left to do, Cena loads up a middle rope AA but has to settle for a tornado DDT. The STF goes on in the middle of the ring...we've got Wyatts. The lights go out and come back on to reveal all three on the apron. Cena goes after them but walks into an RK0 to keep the title on Orton.

**Rating:** B. This matchup has suffered from brand damage. We've seen it so

many times over the years that even if the match is good, like it was here, people just do not want to see it. The guys got the crowd to calm down a bit about halfway through the match, but there's just nothing left to see from these two. They're both hard workers and try every time they're out there but the interest is just gone.

The fans chant for Bryan as the Wyatts destroy Cena even more.

Tribute video to the recently passed away Mae Young.

The New Age Outlaws celebrate but tell Renee that she isn't invited to the party.

We get some classic Rumble promos.

Miz will win because he'll do whatever it takes to headline Wrestlemania again.

The Usos are cool with having to fight each other.

Intercontinental Champion Big E. says headlining Wrestlemania is where it's at.

Fandango thinks he's the only one worthy to headline the big dance.

Batista just says exactly.

Damien Sandow says it's insane to try the same thing and expect different results. He won't make the same mistake again.

Ryback says there are 29 superstars and one Human Wrecking Ball.

Mysterio will shock the world again.

The expert panel makes their picks. Duggan likes Ziggler, Shawn goes with Shield or Punk and Flair takes Batista.

### Royal Rumble

90 second intervals with Punk at #1 (as ordered by Kane) and Seth Rollins at #2. Punk takes him into the corner to start for some shoulders to the ribs. Some kicks stagger Rollins but he comes back with a big kick of his

own. A clothesline drops Rollins again but he pops back up with an enziguri. Both guys are down as Damien Sandow is in at #3. The fans loudly chant for Punk as he DDTs Sandow and drops Rollins with a neckbreaker at the same time.

The heels stomp Punk down until Cody Rhodes is in at #4. Cross Rhodes plants Sandow but Rollins stops an elimination attempt. Punk dumps Damien a few seconds later though and it's time for Rollins to get double teamed. Kane comes in at #5 and cleans Punk's clock. He loads up the chokeslam but Punk kicks him in the head for a surprise elimination. The debuting Alexander Rusev is in at #6.

Rusev kicks Rollins and Rhodes in the face but can't eliminate either guy. Instead he just beats everyone up until Jack Swagger is in at #7. It's Swagger vs. Rusev now but everyone opts to gang up on Rusev instead. Cody and Swagger break off and Kofi Kingston is in at #8. Everyone fights by the ropes until Jimmy Uso is in at #9. The announcers are noticing how fast the clock is going by.

Jimmy goes after Kofi in the corner as Rusev works on Swagger. Punk puts Rusev in a sleeper and Goldust is in at #10, giving us a group of Punk, Rollins, Goldust, Cody, Jimmy, Swagger, Kingston and Rusev. Goldust hammers away until Rusev nails him in the jaw. A group of people gang up on Rusev and dump him out, which isn't quite a great debut for him. Kofi gets thrown out as well but Rusev catches him in mid air. He drops Kofi on the barricade and it's time for the great return. Kingston stands up, uses the barricade as a balance beam and jumps back to the apron in a pretty cool save.

US Champion Dean Ambrose is in at #11 and goes right after Punk. Things slow down again and Dolph Ziggler is in at #12. The fans are entirely behind Dolph as the ring is getting too full. Punk has to hang onto the apron as R-Truth comes in at #13, only to be dumped in about thirty seconds by Ambrose. Rollins knocks out Jimmy and Kofi steals Swagger's boot while literally hanging on by his feet. Jack comes over to him but gets nailed by the boot as Kofi gets back in.

Kevin Nash makes a required return at #14. He eliminates Swagger with

ease and goes after Ambrose and Rollins. Punk has Ziggler dangling but Dolph gets his feet back in. Roman Reigns completes the Shield at #15, giving us Punk, Rollins, Rhodes, Kingston, Goldust, Ambrose, Ziggler, Nash and Reigns. Roman cleans house with punches and spears before launching Kofi out.

Ziggler puts Roman down with a DDT but eats a spear to cut him in half. Reigns throws Ziggler out with ease and the fans suddenly hate him. Nash gets the same treatment as Reigns now has three eliminations in less than two minutes. Great Khali is in at #16 and goes after the Shield but gets tossed by Reigns. Goldust eliminates Cody to make up for the last two years but Reigns gets rid of Goldust a second later. That leaves the Shield alone with Punk but Sheamus returns after being out six months with an injury at #17.

Sheamus cleans house and gives Dean the ten forearms followed by an Irish Curse to Rollins. Reigns eats a Brogue Kick as Miz is in at #18. Punk is just laying in the corner and making almost no effort to get back up. Miz hammers away on Reigns in the corner and Fandango is in at #19. The entire crowd starts doing his dance but Miz sends him to the apron in just a few seconds. Fandango gets back in though as Shield slowly takes over again. Reigns motions to Punk in the corner but doesn't go after him. Punk hasn't moved from there in at least five minutes now.

El Torito is in at #20, giving us Punk, Rollins, Ambrose, Reigns, Sheamus, Miz, Fandango and Torito. Of course the bull cleans house until Punk stands up. Punk grabs him by the head but takes a headscissors, only to have Fandango run Torito over. The referee checks on Punk as Torito dropkicks Fandango out. Reigns catches Torito with ease and dumps him out for his sixth elimination. Punk gets back up as Cesaro is in at #21. He immediately starts swinging Miz but Shield breaks up a Swing attempt on Punk. Instead Rollins gets swung a ridiculous THIRTY TIMES. Luke Harper is in at #22 as Reigns spears Cesaro down.

Rollins and Cesaro slug it out until Jey Uso is in at #23. The brawling slows down a bit now and JBL is in at #24. Cole: "The JBL character has never entered the Royal Rumble." Good grief. JBL wears his full suit into the ring but asks Cole to go get his jacket, allowing Reigns to dump him

out. Fans: "YOU STILL GOT IT!" Erick Rowan is in at #25 as JBL tries to talk about ANYTHING but being in the Rumble. Rowan kicks Miz out to clear things up a bit but everything slows back down again.

Harper tosses Jey Uso but the Wyatts turn around to see the Shield. Ryback is in at #26 and goes right for Cesaro as the fans chant Goldberg. Alberto Del Rio gets lucky #27 and things slow down yet again. Batista is in at #28 and the fans just rip him apart. He quickly dumps Rowan and has a staredown with Ryback before dumping him as well. Del Rio, the man who has been going after Batista since he returned, superkicks him down but gets lifted into the air and dumped with ease.

Intercontinental Champion Big E. is in at #29 to almost no reaction but the fans like him for suplexing Batista. The fans are chanting for Bryan and get even louder as the countdown clock comes on. The clock runs out...and it's Rey Mysterio. To say the fans aren't pleased with this is the understatement of the year. We're going to pause for a second here and look at this.

First of all, Rey Mysterio is a fine choice for #30 in the Royal Rumble. He's a multiple time World Champion, he's held nearly every title in WWE history, he's going to be in the Hall of Fame one day, he's the most successful cruiserweight of all time, he's won the Royal Rumble before and he's one of the most popular wrestlers ever. However, he's not the right choice for this spot.

There are two schools of thought here. The first and more prominent is that WWE just did not understand the fans and thought they would accept Batista as the big star making his return and embrace him with open arms. Then they heard the reaction and changed course to make Wrestlemania all about Daniel Bryan. The other school of thought is Bryan not being in the Rumble was planned from the beginning, they knew where they were going at Wrestlemania the entire time and the stories about Orton vs. Batista headlining the show were false rumors. I'm in the middle on that but I lean more towards the second.

Now Bryan didn't have to win the Rumble here. You could have had a bunch of different ways to get rid of him, even down to having Kane run out and



eliminate him if need be. However, he should have been in the main event. It makes sense that he at least has a chance to be in there, even if it's just to get screwed over again.

Anyway, we have a final grouping of Punk, Rollins, Ambrose, Reigns, Sheamus, Cesaro, Harper, Batista, Langston and Mysterio. Rey hurricanranas Punk to the apron as the fans are booing the heck out of the match. Sheamus clotheslines Langston out to end his worthless Rumble. Cesaro hammers on everyone in sight and Rey hits the 619 on Rollins just to make everyone even madder. Rollins enziguris Rey out for a nice pop and we're down to eight.

Dean and Seth put Harper on the apron but Reigns Superman Punches him out to give him eight eliminations. Ambrose tries to put out his Shield mates but Cesaro jumps he and Rollins. That's fine with Reigns who dumps Cesaro, Rollins and Ambrose all at once to tie Kane's record for eliminations in a single Rumble.

We're down to four now and everyone hits a finisher. Reigns takes the GTS but Kane sneaks in to eliminate Punk. That would be Punk's last WWE match to date. Kane goes off on Punk outside and chokeslams him through the announcers' table. We're down to Sheamus, Batista and Reigns but all three are down. Another Daniel Bryan chant starts up as Batista takes over, turning it into a NO chant.

Sheamus cleans house and points at the sign before loading up a Brogue Kick. He misses Batista though and gets backdropped to the apron. Reigns elbows Sheamus out to set a new Rumble record for eliminations with twelve. That leaves Reigns vs. Batista and all of a sudden everyone is a Reigns fan. Reigns wins a slugout and clotheslines Batista down as the people chant for Roman. Batista comes back with his own horrible spear, only to have Reigns show him how it's done....and then get thrown out a few seconds later to send Batista to Wrestlemania.

**Rating:** D. This just wasn't a very good Rumble though its moments. Batista came in at the wrong time and it killed any kind of comeback he could have had. The fans did not want to see what the company was offering them at this point and they let them know about it. In their

defense though, this Rumble was kind of awful. The comedy and returns felt forced, Rusev's debut went nowhere and they might as well have given it to Batista and put on an hour of Mighty Mouse cartoons to save everyone's time. It's not a good match but the crowd reaction is certainly interesting.

Batista is booed out of the building as we see a highlight package ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. The Rumble really hurts this show as it drags down two good matches and an entertaining Lesnar squash. The problem is that's the lasting memory of this show: the fans booing the heck out of Batista as WWE seemed to think he was exactly what WWE wanted. The show isn't horrible but it leaves a really bad taste in your mouth.

#### Ratings Comparison

New Age Outlaws vs. Goldust/Cody Rhodes

Original: C

Redo: C

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Original:A

Redo: A

Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

John Cena vs. Randy Orton

Original:B

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original:B

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original:A

Redo: D+

Hokey smoke that's quite the drop.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/01/26/royal-rumble-2014-the-night-the-crowd-died/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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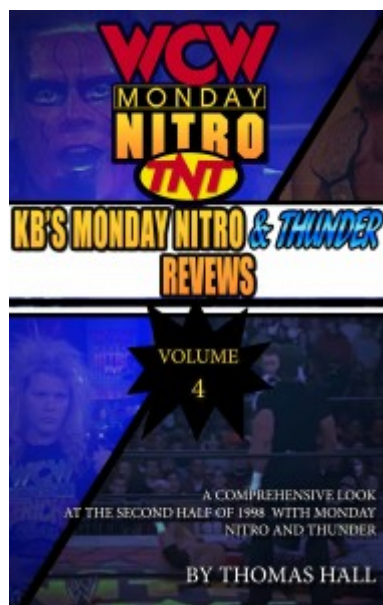
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**New E-Book: KB's Complete  
Monday Nitro Reviews Volume**

# IV



We continue through the history of one of the biggest wrestling companies of all time with the second half of Monday Nitro and Thunder from 1998. It's a bad time for WCW as the Monday Night Wars are starting to swing in the other direction. Monday Night Raw started winning again in April 1998 and WCW has been scrambling for a way to get back on top. However, their strategy seems to be a combination of quick fixes and going back to ideas that worked before. These methods don't have the most successful track records in wrestling history but maybe they'll work here.

In this book, I'll be looking at every Monday Nitro and Thunder from July 1998 through December 1998, breaking down each show match by match and segment by segment. This is a very important time in WCW's history and it should be interesting looking back and seeing what was working, what wasn't working, but most importantly why it wasn't working. As usual I'll be providing play by play, context and analysis of every show.

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I hope you like it and shoot me any questions you might have.

KB

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# Ring of Honor TV – January 20, 2016: Thy Kingdom Goes Away

## Ring of Honor

Date: January 20, 2016

Location: 2300 Arena, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 600

Commentators: Mr. Wrestling III, Kevin Kelly

It's the final night of the Philadelphia tapings with a Philadelphia Street Fight between the Young Bucks, the Kingdom and ReDRagon. If they give this match this time, it could be quite an entertaining match. We're getting closer to the 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show for the next pay per view but nothing has been set up yet. Let's get to it.

### Addiction vs. Alex Shelley/ACH

This is more about building up Shelley vs. Sabin down the line. Kazarian takes Shelley into the corner to start but accidentally forearmwrestles Daniels off the apron for some good old fashioned heel miscommunication. Alex grabs a dragon sleeper but lets it go when Sabin gets on the apron for a distraction.

ACH dropkicks Kazarian down and it's quickly off to Daniels who is taken down just as quickly. Everything breaks down for a bit and some fast double teaming puts ACH in trouble, including something like a Diamond Cutter onto Daniels' knee as we take a break. Back with ACH rolling over for a hot tag so Shelley can speed things up.

A Downward Spiral sends Kazarian face first into the middle buckle but Daniels comes back in with a top rope stomp to the chest, only to allow the hot tag a few seconds later. Everything breaks down and Shelly kicks Daniels into a German suplex for two. Sabin shakes the ropes to break up the Midnight Star, setting up Celebrity Rehab to give Addiction the pin at 9:48.

**Rating:** C-. Shelley and ACH are firmly in that category of wrestlers that I just don't care for. I get the idea behind both guys but they both seem to be going off more of a set pattern than wrestling naturally, which rarely works for me. Addiction is fine in the ring but I'd like to see them get more mic time as it's definitely their strong suit.

Post match Addiction beats on Shelley even more until Daniels punches the referee, which brings out Nigel to suspend him indefinitely without pay.

#### Mark Briscoe vs. Adam Page

Page won't shake hands to start because he's a good heel. Some early Redneck Kung Fu doesn't work but Adam misses the standing shooting star press. Mark kicks him into the corner and now the crane kick connects for Briscoe. A brainbuster gets two for Mark but he charges into a powerslam into the corner for two. The fans are all over Whitmer as the announcers talk about the Top Prospect Tournament.

Mark dropkicks Page to the floor and hits the running Blockbuster off the apron. They chop it out a bit until Page gets two off a jumping DDT (ala Dolph Ziggler). Mark sends him to the apron but can't kick him out to the floor, allowing Page to slingshot in for a clothesline to take over. BJ Whitmer yells about Mr. Wrestling III being Steve Corino, only to have Briscoe come back with a fisherman's buster and the Froggy Bow for the pin at 6:32.

**Rating:** D+. This whole match was a collection of spots. I didn't see a single instance of psychology, trying to put something together or either guy doing anything other than his signature spots. It wasn't bad or boring or anything, but could you at least work an arm or something instead of just doing the stuff you always do?

Post break, Whitmer tells Mr. Wrestling III to unmask and be a father to Colby Corino. Mr. Wrestling III gets in the ring and asks Whitmer if he has a question for him. Whitmer tries to reply but he can't get a word out before the fans boo him out of the building. BJ says everyone knows that it's Steve Corino under the mask but Mr. Wrestling III denies it again. He does know Corino however, and Corino knows someone that wants to take Whitmer out. However, instead of saying who that is, Mr.

Wrestling III just tells the Decade to leave. Well that ended flat.

Silas Young comes out and calls what happened with the Boys at Final Battle a disappointment. Whether the fans believe it or not, the Boys appreciated learning how to mow his lawn and shovel his driveway. The Boys have one chance to do the right thing and learn to be men.

#### Young Bucks vs. ReDRagon vs. Kingdom

It's Cole/Bennett for the Kingdom here and this is a street fight. The Bucks jump O'Reilly and Fish during the entrances and we're starting fast. The injured Taven gets a double superkick, as does ring announcers Bobby Cruz. ReDRagon gets back in to work on the Bucks, only to have the Kingdom come in again to turn this into a wild brawl that is going to be almost impossible to keep track of.

Bennett punches Fish down and it's Cole setting Matt in a chair in the middle of the ring. A running charge sets up a chinlock and even Kelly has to acknowledge that it's a spot they've seen before. Kyle backdrops Nick on the floor for a thud before diving into a superkick. We take a break and come back with Cole in a shopping cart and being wheeled into a superkick.

The Bucks set up a table at ringside but it's ReDRagon double teaming Matt inside. The Kingdom brings in a ladder (Mr. Wrestling III: "It's amazing what you can find in south Philadelphia") to take out ReDRagon and it's Cole putting the ladder around his neck. That only allows ReDRagon to blast the ladder with chairs before setting the ladder on top of those chairs.

Bennett comes back in to spinebuster Kyle onto the steel but the Bucks powerbomb him (Bennett) through the ladder. A Swanton onto the ladder sets up More Bang For Your Buck but Cole pulls the referee out at two. Kevin Kelly accidentally eats a superkick and Mr. Wrestling III freaks out while still shouting SUPERKICK in a funny moment.

We take another break and come back with Cole hitting the Canadian Destroyer on Matt but walking into a superkick from Nick. Bennett takes Chasing the Dragon on the floor, leaving O'Reilly and Cole to fight in



the aisle. That leaves Fish alone against the Bucks but he stops to spear Bennett through a table on the floor. A double superkick off the apron gives Fish the weakest table bump in history with Nick having to splash him the rest of the way through.

Back in and the Bucks put a party hat on Bennett for a superkick party, only to have Maria hit them both low for a save. This brings out AJ Styles to hit Bennett in the ribs with a chair before laying him out with Bloody Sunday. Maria gets a Meltzer Driver and the Indytaker into the Styles Clash puts Bennett away at 16:45.

**Rating:** B. Totally wild brawl here and a lot of fun at the same time. This wasn't about anything more than carnage and that's all they delivered the entire time. The piledriver to Maria was a good way to write her off TV and the Kingdom goes out in a great performance, especially considering it wasn't their usual combination.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This is a one match show and there's nothing wrong with that, especially when one match takes up so much of the hour. The only annoying thing here was the syndication schedule causing some issues as Mike and Maria debuted in TNA two weeks before this aired. Still though, the show was fun enough with the main event being a really good time.

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# Smackdown – January 21, 2016: That Bad Show Before The Rumble

## Smackdown

Date: January 21, 2016

Location: Nutter Center, Dayton, Ohio

Attendance: 3,000

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the go home show for the Royal Rumble and Roman Reigns is already in trouble tonight with a handicap match against the entire League of Nations. This show is almost destined to end with a big brawl between most of the different major factions in the Rumble and it wouldn't feel right if things ended any differently. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Chris Jericho to open things up. It's been fourteen months since he's been on Smackdown but he wants to talk about three days from now, which will be the biggest Royal Rumble of all time. Jericho instructs the monkeys to show us what happened on Monday, which leads us into the three and a half minute recap of most of Monday's events, including the Highlight Reel to end the show.

Back in the arena, Jericho says Brock may be the beast incarnate but Jericho is here to save the WWE. That's Sunday thought because right now, he's here to be interrupted by the New Day. Big E. wishes shame on Jericho for destroying Francesca and now making light of things while New Day is in mourning. Woods thinks there should be a documentary made about Christal (yes Christal) called Making a Brass Murderer.

Jericho is so cold blooded that he wouldn't give a crippled crab a

crutch. We get a moment of silence for Francesca but Jericho says this, along with the horns on New Day's heads, are stupid. Jericho thinks they need better unicorn names, like Sparkles, Bartholomew, Rootie and Tootie. That's enough to get them into the ring but Jericho says they already have a six man scheduled.

### New Day vs. Usos/Dolph Ziggler

Maybe this will be a bit more entertaining than the rather boring Jericho vs. New Day segments. I know they sound great on paper but they're really not working in practice. Dolph has some face paint of its own. Kofi and Jimmy get things going with Kingston taking over and telling the fans not to call them Rootie Tooties. It's quickly off to Jey for two off a double back elbow. It's off to Woods (or Tootie, giving me flashbacks to the Facts of Life, which is odd as I've never watched the show) who gets caught in a neckbreaker from Ziggler, followed by a big elbow drop for two.

Big E. comes in for a quick belly to belly and the Warrior Splash. As usual there is no reference to their history together because once something ends in WWE, it is never brought up again ever, or at least until they go back to that exact story. It's back to Kofi for a chinlock but he tries to go up top and gets dropkicked out of the air.

The hot tag brings in Jimmy to clean house with dropkicks all around and a running Umaga Attack to Kofi. Big E. low bridges him though and we take a break. Back with Big E. holding Jimmy in the abdominal stretch and Woods shouting at the fans. Woods gets two off a faceplant as Ranallo mentions Xavier going for his fourth college degree. That's just impressive.

Jimmy kicks Big E. away and scores with a Whisper in the Wind, allowing the real hot tag to Ziggler. Everything breaks down and Jey dropkicks everyone he can find. Well everyone not on his team and not wearing a referee shirt that is. A double dive takes out Kofi and Big E., leaving Woods to take a triple superkick for the pin at 14:44.

**Rating:** C. This was your standard Smackdown six man tag and there's nothing wrong with that. New Day continues to be amusing as they're

actually going from one step to another with their comedy instead of doing the same stuff over and over for months and being surprised when the reactions die off. This is where the Usos excel though and these matches are always worth at least a quick look.

Ranallo refers to Reigns having to face all four members of the League of Nations as a "stiff test." That's rather subtle.

Rumble By the Numbers video.

### Becky Lynch vs. Alicia Fox

Charlotte and Flair (kind of surprising to see him on Smackdown) are on commentary. Fox runs her over to start and takes Becky to the floor for a kick to the chest. For some reason (likely fallout from her being crazy) Alicia grabs a northern lights suplex on the floor and holds the bridge for a count that is never coming. Back in and Becky starts her clotheslines comeback until Fox knees her in the face. Not that it matters as Becky reverses a slam into the Disarm-Her for the tap at 2:59.

It's time for MizTV with guests Dean Ambrose and Kevin Owens. Miz explains the rules of a Last Man Standing match until Ambrose comes out to cut him off. Dean says Sunday isn't really even a match because it's more of an amusement park. Miz asks Ambrose if he thinks he can do a better job hosting this show.

The fan reactions send Miz to sit in the corner and Dean gets back to the amusement park idea. He goes outside and points to the apron, which is the first ride he's going to take Owens on. "Has anyone ever noticed that Owens kind of looks like a bear?" That's why he calls the edge of the steps the bear trap because he can get Owens' hand caught behind them and hit him with anything he wants, including the new Smackdown announcer. That leaves Dean with the announcers' table, which he calls Memory Lane. He can't wait to give Owens the kind of beating he deserves on this table but here's Kevin to interrupt.

Owens says he's more of a zoo enthusiast than an amusement park guy (amen brother) but more than that he's obsessed with getting his Intercontinental Title back. That's why on Sunday he'll do whatever he

has to do to get his title back and leave Dean laying. Ambrose wants to fight right now but Miz jumps Dean from behind at the mention of DeanTV. This brings Owens to the ring....to lay out Miz with the Pop Up Powerbomb. Dean fights back on Kevin but can't give him Dirty Deeds. Owens bails so Dean gives Miz the DDT instead before counting to ten (it wouldn't be the build to a Last Man Standing match without one of those).

The Wyatts are here.

### Bray Wyatt vs. Ryback

After a clip of the Wyatts laying Brock out on Raw, Ryback hits an early cross body and pounds away at Bray's head. There's the Thesz Press with Ryback ramming the back of the head into the mat. For some reason Ryback heads outside though, allowing Bray to Rock Bottom him onto the apron as we take a break.

Back with Ryback running Bray over and hitting a....dang it he hit a superkick. You would think RYBACK would be immune from using that move but it really is spreading out of control. Bray avoids the top rope splash though and gets two off the backsplash. Ryback hits a quick spinebuster and Meathook but Harper offers a distraction, allowing Strowman to send Ryback into the steps. Sister Abigail puts Ryback away at 8:00.

**Rating:** C-. I feel sorry for Ryback at times. It's clear that he's trying to get better but there's no room for someone like him to get anywhere because he's one of those guys that is going to be stuck in the midcard loop until he leaves because that's how WWE works. Bray is the same way but on a slightly higher loop.

Post match the Wyatts lay Ryback out again.

### Stardust vs. Titus O'Neil

Yes again. Titus starts fast with the hard overhead chops but Stardust takes him to the floor and sends Titus into the barricade. Back in and we hit the crossface chickenwing for a bit before Titus comes back with a shoulder and clothesline. Such varied offense. Stardust gets two off a

DDT but gets crotched on top, setting up the Clash of the Titus for the pin at 3:04.

**Rating:** D. I'm sick of seeing these two fight, especially when there's really no reason for them to keep having matches. Are they really still after each other because Titus came into Stardust's room or something for a few weeks in a row? If nothing else I do like this better than more dull Prime Time Players matches though.

Kalisto talks about Alberto being up there with Mil Mascaras, Rey Mysterio and Eddie Guerrero in Mexican wrestling, Sure Del Rio is bigger and stronger, but Kalisto has been fighting Goliaths his entire life. Del Rio comes in and says Kalisto's wins were flukes. The League appears and beats Kalisto down.

Roman Reigns comes out for his match but says he's not really surprised that the odds were stacked against him again. That just makes the fight bigger and he can't wait to come back home with his WWE World Title. Simple and to the point here.

#### Roman Reigns vs. League of Nations

Sheamus starts for the team but can't drag Reigns over to the corner. It's off to Rusev instead but he's low bridged to the floor and driven into the barricade. Back in and it's quickly off to Sheamus for a hard knee to the ribs. That means it's back to Rusev, who shouts at Reigns to tag his partner.

Sheamus puts on a chinlock with a knee in the back until Reigns sends him into the corner for a breather. Rusev comes in and misses a charge, allowing Reigns to come back with some clotheslines. The referee tells them to go home because they've got one minute, meaning it's time for Del Rio and Barrett to come in and jump Reigns for the DQ at 4:57. Barrett and Del Rio never tagged in.

**Rating:** D. Why not just make this Rusev/Sheamus instead of all four? I mean, if Barrett and Del Rio can't do anything (for whatever reason with Del Rio), why even list them? You could still do the same ending and the match might be a bit more interesting with less ridiculous odds for Roman

to overcome.

Post match the League keeps up the beatdown until the Usos come in. This draws out the Wyatts for the long beatdown on Reigns to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. What a worthless show. I really don't care any more about Sunday's show than I did before and most of the matches were either too short to rate or bad. It's really amazing how far this show has fallen in just two weeks after debuting on USA. Lame show here that you really could have skipped.

### Results

Usos/Dolph Ziggler b. New Day – Triple Superkick to Woods

Becky Lynch b. Alicia Fox – Disarm-Her

Bray Wyatt b. Ryback – Sister Abigail

Titus O'Neil b. Stardust – Clash of the Titus

Roman Reigns b. League of Nations via DQ when all four attacked Reigns

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2013: But Of Course

## Royal Rumble 2013

Date: January 27, 2013

Location: US Airways Center, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 13,00

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

This show was only a year ago and I can barely remember anything about it. Aside from the Rumble the big matches are the Rock challenging CM Punk for the WWE Title in the most obvious ending ever and Alberto Del

Rio defending his newly won World Heavyweight Championship against Big Show in a last man standing match. Other than that we've only got HELL NO vs. the Rhodes Scholars to complete the card. Let's get to it.

#### Pre-Show: US Title: The Miz vs. Antonio Cesaro

Cesaro is defending. This is just after Flair passed the Figure Four to Miz, starting the worst period of his career. Miz grabs a headlock to start and gets two off an elbow to the jaw. The headlock takes Cesaro down to the mat but he fights up and grabs one of his own. Back up and Miz tries a leapfrog but gets caught in midair with a tikt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. The champion takes over and cranks on both of Miz's arms before getting two off a Michinoku Driver.

A hard European uppercut sets up the gutwrench suplex for two and it's back to the double arm. Back up again and Miz slips out of a slam and hooks the Reality Check for two. There's the running clothesline in the corner and Miz goes up but hurts his knee on the top rope ax handle. Cesaro gets caught with his feet on the ropes, allowing Miz to get two off a rollup. Antonio misses a running knee in the corner but is still able to roll away from the Figure Four. Cesar takes him to the floor and rams Miz into the metal underneath the ring. Miz is out cold so Cesaro Neutralizes him for the pin to retain.

**Rating:** D+. Miz just doesn't work in a lot of these matches and the Figure Four doesn't work in the slightest. Thankfully he wouldn't be featured very prominently for awhile as there was just nothing to him for the most part. Cesaro still needs to get a push as he's more talented and marketable than half the roster but instead we get people like Miz.

The opening video is about time passing and how no one has enough. This ties into Punk's time as champion with Rock saying the reign ends tonight.

#### Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Alberto Del Rio

Last man standing match, which is a rematch with the same stipulations from when Alberto won the title a few weeks ago. Del Rio turned the announce table on top of Big Show so Big Show turned it on top of him a



few weeks later. Alberto is shown in the back and he runs into Bret Hart for no apparent reason whatsoever. Bret says Alberto reminds him of a Mexican version of himself. Alberto calls Bret a Canadian Del Rio and Ricardo gushes, earning him Bret's sunglasses. What a bizarre cameo.

Some hard chops have Del Rio in early trouble and a slam gets a five count. Alberto chops away but jumps off the middle rope right into a chop to change control right back. The champion dropkicks the giant's knee out but the low superkick actually knocks Big Show up from his knees to his feet. A hurricanrana and a seated senton put Big Show down and Alberto gets a breather. It's amazing how much more interesting Del Rio is by doing this lucha stuff instead of his arm work. The arm stuff is good but this is such a nice change of pace.

Big Show blocks the armbreaker with one arm and slams Del Rio down, sending him outside. Del Rio gets back in as Big Show gets a chair but the champion dropkicks him in the ribs to knock it out of his hands. A series of chair shots (crowd: "SI! SI! SI!") has Big Show down but Alberto dives into a chokeslam for an eight count. We head outside again with Del Rio getting chopped to the floor with ease. This is a very slow paced match so far.

A pair of low blows puts Big Show down in the aisle but he's up at nine. Show hits something resembling a DDT on the floor before sending Del Rio into the set. He rips a piece of the set, resembling a light tube, and blasts Del Rio over the back. Since this is WWE there's a table readily available and Big Show takes the champion on top of the set for a chokeslam through the table. The bump looked awesome but he's again on his feet at nine.

The beating takes Del Rio back to the ring and Show loads up the WMD. Alberto sees it coming and rolls outside, only to have Big Show throw Ricardo around for fun. Big Show misses a charge through the barricade (clearly heavily padded) for five but a long series of chair shots has him down again. Del Rio crushes the arm between the steps and a chair, but Alberto follows up with a fire extinguisher blast to the face for no apparent reason. Back in and the armbreaker goes on, but Ricardo ups the ante by duct taping Big Show's legs to the ropes. The giant can't get up

and Alberto retains the title.

**Rating:** C-. This wasn't the worst match in the world but it was very slowly paced and the ending made Del Rio look more clever than tough. It also doesn't help that the match was the same gimmick they did less than a month ago. Face Alberto was a nice guy but they cut the cord just six months after this. Not bad, but Del Rio winning the title here would have been much better.

Send Slim Jims to the military!

Ziggler isn't worried about being in the Rumble and AJ threatens Matt Striker with Big E. Langston for implying Ziggler can't win. Langston does one of the most mind blowing imitations of an annoying reporter while asking Ziggler for his thoughts on the main event. Dolph has little of note to say but no one was hearing him after Big E.'s bit anyway.

Cesaro says he'll continue the streak of non-Americans winning the Rumble.

The Prime Time Players.....WE'RE GETTING RUMBLE PROMOS!!!! Anyway they say anyone that thinks they'll eliminate either of them is getting a penalty flag.

Orton says he's perfect for the Rumble because it's every man for himself.

Cena is ready for the Rumble because it means he can be champion again.

Intercontinental Champion Wade Barrett says he'll restore credibility to the Rumble.

Sheamus says he won the Rumble last year and he'll do it again tonight.

Ryback isn't any catchphrase and he doesn't eat Fruity Pebbles, but he'll see food every 90 seconds. Feed him more.

We recap Miz vs. Cesaro on the pre-show.

Tag Titles: HELL NO vs. Rhodes Scholars

The Scholars are challenging. Cody kicks Bryan in the ribs as Cole references Queen lyrics. Bryan spins out of a wristlock and the fans chant for Cody's mustache. Cody's leapfrog is countered into a surfboard and it's off to Kane for a low dropkick and a two count. Rhodes scores with a dropkick of his own and drives Kane into the corner for the tag off to Sandow. Kane easily powers Sandow into the corner because, you know, he's Damien Sandow and it's off to Bryan for the YES Kicks.

JBL rants about Cole and Lawler hugging as Kane kicks Sandow in the face, knocking him out to the floor. The FLYING GOAT takes out the challengers but Cody low bridges Bryan to the floor to take over. Back in and a half crab has Daniel in trouble but he reverses into a small package to escape. Damien comes in again and drops an elbow for two before dropping the Wind-Up Elbow.

After some knees to the back it's Cody in again but he charges into a boot in the corner. Sandow breaks up a hot tag attempt and Cody puts Bryan in an over the shoulder backbreaker. Daniel slides down to escape and makes the tag to Kane. Sandow is tossed around like a rag doll but a Cody distraction prevents the top rope clothesline. Kane grabs both guys by the throat and Bryan tags himself in. The Scholars double suplex Kane but Bryan shoves Cody into a chokeslam and Daniel YES Locks Sandow to retain.

**Rating:** C. Nothing you wouldn't see on Raw around this time which means it was fine. The Scholars were a nice idea for a team but it was clear that they had no chance at this point given how low their individual stocks were. Kane and Bryan gelled perfectly well as a team and Bryan would get far bigger very soon.

Rumble By The Numbers which I've typed many times already.

HELL NO celebrates in the back when Vickie Guerrero comes up and gives them their Rumble numbers. Daniel shows Kane his but Kane won't show Bryan.

We look at the Royal Rumble Fan Fest which is another name for Axxess. This included a tournament of NXT wrestlers for a spot in the Rumble, won by Bo Dallas.

## Royal Rumble

Ziggler is #1 which he picked (the other option was #2) after winning a Beat the Clock Challenge on Raw. Dolph says he'll win and doesn't care who he faces first, bringing out a returning Chris Jericho at #2. This was a complete shock and the roof is blown off the building. Also remember that Ziggler beat Jericho to send him out of the company to give us some history. The clock is at 90 seconds between entrants this year.

Jericho is quickly sent to the apron but comes back with a top rope ax handle. Now it's Dolph on the apron as the fans tell Jericho he still has it. When did Jericho ever come close to losing it? A superplex brings Ziggler back into the ring and Cody Rhodes is in at #3. Jericho hammers away on him but Ziggler gets in a cheap shot as the double teaming begins. Chris knocks Ziggler down and puts Cody in the Walls but Dolph makes the save.

Dolph catapults Jericho throat first into the bottom rope as Kofi Kingston is in at #4. Kofi immediately speeds things up and pounds away on Cody but can't hit Ziggy with Trouble in Paradise. Ziggler is thrown to the apron and all four guys try to eliminate each other at the same time in the same spot. Santino Marella is #5 and he sends all four to the apron before loading up the Cobra. Everybody is back in and even though Santino takes Kofi down with the sock, it's Cody backdropping Marella out.

Drew McIntyre of 3MB is #6 and gets to fight Kofi as everyone else takes a breather. Back up and it's time to lay on the ropes while trying to eliminate people. Jericho is sent over the ropes but he keeps his feet off the ground and gets back in. Titus O'Neil is in at #7 to add some power, including taking Cody and Kofi down with a double clothesline. Cole finally tells us that the bark is a shout out to his fraternity from Florida. Thank you for explaining that to us after two years.

Jericho throws out McIntyre but can't do the same to Ziggler as Goldust is #8. Cody gets ready for the showdown and the fans are WAY into this. They trade the kneeling uppercuts and Goldie stomps on Cody for a bit. The fans chant for Goldust and it's David Otunga (remember him?) is in at

#9. The announcers ignore the match to talk about the commentators being in the Rumble last year as people start to pair off.

Nothing much happens until Heath Slater is in at #10. That gives us Ziggler, Jericho, Rhodes, Kingston, O'Neil, Goldust, Otunga and Slater at the moment. Slater fires off right hands to Kofi as Jericho calls spots to Ziggler. Dolph gets stuck on the apron again and Sheamus is #11 to clear out some bodies. He destroys everyone with his usual stuff before sending Titus to the apron for the ten forearms. Otunga is thrown onto Titus to get rid of O'Neil before ten forearms and a Brogue Kick get rid of the lawyer. Tensai, still the Japanese lunkhead, is #12.

Everybody goes after Tensai to make a big cluster in the corner. That goes nowhere at all so Brodus Clay comes in at #13. We get a Tons of Funk preview before Goldust backdrops Cody to the apron, only to get pulled to the apron as well. Cody gets back in and sends Goldust into the post for the elimination and a lot of booing. Rey Mysterio is #14 to make the crowd happy again. Ziggler and Jericho get quick 619s and the top rope splash crushes Jericho. Things slow down a bit until we reach the halfway point with Darren Young at #15.

A bunch of guys join forces to dump Brodus and Kofi puts out Tensai a few seconds later. Now we get to the part that everybody was waiting on as Kofi is knocked off the apron, only to land on Tensai's back. He jumps onto the announcers' table as he tries to figure this out. Why he doesn't just jump two feet to get onto the steps is beyond me. Bo Dallas is #16 as this is going on. Instead of the steps, Kofi gets JBL's office chair and pogos his way back to the ring. Kingston pulls Darren out of the ring but gets caught with the Disaster Kick for the elimination before he can get back inside.

Godfather gives us the nostalgia pop at #17 and is dropkicked out by Ziggler four seconds later. He seems ok with that and leaves with his women. The whole point was the entrance anyway so I have no issue with that. Wade Barrett is in at #18 as the ring is getting too full. Everything slows down again and John Cena is #19 to clear out some tired people. Everybody gets ready for him so Cena comes a charging. John fights them all off and throws out Slater and Cody but can't dump

Jericho.

Damien Sandow is #20, giving us Ziggler, Jericho, Sheamus, Mystério, Dallas, Barrett, Cena and Sandow. Mystério and Barrett fight to the apron and a big forearm puts Rey out. Sheamus goes right after Wade as Jericho tries to put Cena in the Walls. Daniel Bryan is #21 and fires off kicks to Sandow. Now it's Barrett getting the kicks as everyone else is down. Sheamus and Bryan try to put Jericho out but he slides back in under the ropes.

Antonio Cesaro is in at #22 and gets in a fight with Sheamus as the fans start the dueling Cena chants. Everybody is back up now and Great Khali is #23. It's chops all around until things calm a bit. Kane comes in at #24 to fire things up again (get it?) but the ring is too full. It gets even worse with Zach Ryder coming in at #25 but HELL NO dumps Khali. Bryan dumps Kane but Cesaro dumps Bryan into Kane's arms. Daniel: YES! Kane shouts no and drops Bryan for the elimination in a funny bit.

Randy Orton is #26 and it's powerslams all around. Ziggler and Dallas get a double Elevated DDT and it's an RK0 for Ryder, followed by the elimination. Jinder Mahal gets lucky #27 as Cesaro lifts Cena up, only to be eliminated himself. Ziggler gets launched to the ropes but slides back in as Miz is #28. He gets in a fight with Cesaro in the aisle and limps into the ring to sell the ankle injury from earlier. Sheamus dumps Mahal and Sin Cara is #29.

Cara tries an enziguri on Ziggler which misses by four inches but Ziggler sells it anyway. Bo Dallas pulls Barrett out in an elimination that should have led further than it did. Miz sends Jericho to the apron as Barrett pulls Dallas out from the floor. Ryback is #30 to give us a final grouping of Ryback, Ziggler, Jericho, Sheamus, Cena, Sandow, Orton, Miz and Sin Cara. Damien is out first and Sin Cara quickly follows. Miz tries to power Ryback out and is tossed as well to get us down to six. Jericho is somehow still alive and hits a Lionsault on Cena but the springboard dropkick doesn't eliminate Sheamus.

Ziggler backdrops Jericho to the apron and superkicks him out (missed as well but he's spent at this point) but walks into an RK0. There's one for

Cena as well and Sheamus gets the third. That leaves Ryback to fight Orton but the monster gets taken down with an Elevated DDT. Ryback fights off the RKO and clotheslines Randy out to get us down to four. Ziggler DDTs Cena down but a Brogue Kick puts Dolph on the floor.

It's Sheamus, Ryback and Cena with Ryback getting double suplexed down. Cena and Sheamus make things serious by LOOKING AT THE SIGN. John takes over but Ryback runs him over with a clothesline. Sheamus escapes the Shell Shock, looks at the sign, and hits White Noise on Ryback. The Brogue Kick is countered with a backdrop to eliminate Sheamus and we're down to two.

They LOOK AT THE SIGN and do their signature taunts before Ryback spinebusters Cena down. The Meathook is countered into the STF and Ryback passes out, leaving him as dead weight. Ryback fights out of the corner and Cena's head into the mat. He loads up a powerslam but Cena slips out the back and shoves Ryback out for the win and title shot at Wrestlemania.

**Rating:** B. It's a good but not great Rumble. That being said, there was almost no other option to win here, even though it set up the rematch that no one wanted to see. There's certainly some good stuff in it and there were no down spots, but you would expect more big moments than we got here.

Coming Home ad for Wrestlemania. That still should have been Wrestlemania XXX.

We recap CM Punk vs. The Rock. It's a basic story: Punk has been champion for 434 days and Rock is getting a title shot because he's the Rock, which was kind of a lame reason, especially when the shot was announced six months ago. That began a countdown that made everything Punk did meaningless, because there was no way it would be anyone but Rock taking the belt from him here. Yeah Punk got in some shots on Rock before the match, but this was as much of a layup as you could get. Also if Shield or anyone interferes, Punk is stripped of the title.

Rock, after waiting for them to chant his name, says he isn't worried about Shield, even though they busted up his lung recently. He goes on a

rant about how many hard things he's been through, but redeems himself a bit by talking about his mom getting cancer but beating it to be here tonight. Punk has said that the people don't count but Rock says every single one of them count to him. He reaches his hand out to everyone that believes in the Rock so he can get their power, if you smell what he's cooking.

#### Raw World Title: The Rock vs. CM Punk

Punk of course has Heyman with him. He charges right into the brawl and actually pounds Rock down into the corner. A quick Rock Bottom is countered but Punk is sent outside. Rock follows him outside and sends the champion into the barricade before loading up the announce table. Punk comes back with a shot to the ribs and puts the table back together in a great bit. Back in and Rock scores with more right hands to knock Punk to the floor again.

Punk is whipped into the barricade one more time but he gets a boot up to stop a charging Bull. He finishes fixing the announce table instead of following up on Rock before dropping Rock ribs first on the barricade. They head inside again for a body vice from CM followed by a knee to the ribs for two. Off to a freaky looking hold where Punk pins Rock's shoulders down but pulls back on his head to crank on the shoulders and back.

More choking follows and a knee to the back has Rock on the apron, followed by a springboard dropkick to send him outside. Punk tries a top rope ax handle to take Rock down but injures his knee in the process. Rock scores with some kicks to the knee but the champion easily sends him out to the floor to stop the comeback. Back in and Punk misses the springboard clothesline and reinjures the knee, giving Rock his opening.

A DDT gets one on Punk but he fights out of the Rock Bottom. The GTS is countered into a Sharpshooter attempt but Punk counters into the Anaconda Vice in a nice sequence. Rock rolls over into a cradle, forcing Punk to let go of the hold. Back up and tries the Rock Bottom but Punk counters into a rollup for two, only to be countered into a low seated Sharpshooter. Punk is next to the rope so naturally he takes thirty



seconds to get the break.

Rock takes him to the floor and loads up the announce table again. They fight on top but Rock counters a GTS attempt into what was supposed to be a Rock Bottom but was really more like the table collapsing with Rock's arm around Punk's chest. Rock comes up holding his knee and both guys make it back in at an eight count. Punk scores with a high kick but both guys are down.

Back up and Rock wins a slugout before scoring with the spinebuster. He loads up the People's Elbow and there go the lights. Cole can see Shield pulling Rock to the floor and powerbombing him through the table. The lights come back up and Rock is laid out as the referee has no idea what's going on. The announcers try to tell Mike Chioda what happened and Punk feigns innocence.

He throws Rock back in for the pin and celebrates but here's Vince to say Punk is stripped of the title for the interference. Rock says no and to restart the match. The bell rings again and Punk stomps away as JBL threatens to put Cole through a table for playing cheerleader. The Macho Elbow gets two but the GTS is countered into a spinebuster, setting up the People's Elbow to end Punk's reign.

**Rating:** B. It's another good match but it felt like they were dancing around for twenty three minutes before we got to the obvious ending. The Shield stuff was a decent fake out but it really didn't need to be there. Rock winning was obvious though and that really put a ceiling on how high this was going to get.

Rock celebrates for about three minutes to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. Yeah it's a good show overall, but the major problem is obvious: there was no other possibly ending other than Rock vs. Cena at Wrestlemania 29 and almost everyone knew it. The show is definitely entertaining and actually really good at times, but it was so telegraphed up and down the card that it offers almost no excitement at all, even on the initial viewing. Still though, worth checking out if you have nothing else to do.

## Ratings Comparison

Antonio Cesaro vs. The Miz

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Alberto Del Rio vs. Big Show

Original: B

Redo: C-

HELL NO vs. Rhodes Scholars

Original: C

Redo: C

Royal Rumble

Original: C+

Redo: B

The Rock vs. CM Punk

Original: B

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: A-

Redo: B

That original overall rating is too high for what I gave everything else. Also I think the original last man standing match rating is closer to the accurate one. It just didn't hold up as well on a second viewing, but it was good.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/01/27/royal-rumble-2013-by-the-book-and-still-awesome/>

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