

So Uh.... .THAT Just Happened

And I didn't see this one coming. Shane McMahon just returned to open Raw. It seems that only his hair has aged though.

Brock Lesnar Attacks Dean Ambrose Before Raw

And there's a video. In theory this is now a Wrestlemania match, meaning Bray vs. Brock could be off the books.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/brock-lesnar-attacks-dean-ambrose-in-parking-lot-before-tonights-monday-night-raw/>

Also, how cool is it to see an actual angle that feels like it's going on in real life? Why can that only happen for Wrestlemania?

Monday Night Raw – February 15, 2016: Is There A Fast Lane Away From Sunday?

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 15, 2016

Location: Honda Center, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Fastlane and in theory Brock is in the house again tonight. The big story coming out of last week seems to be Ambrose wanting to fight Lesnar whenever he can and seemingly having no issues with fighting Roman Reigns at the same time. This could make for some issues at Sunday's show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Brock/Ambrose/Reigns issues. Brock hitting Reigns in the head with a table is still awesome.

Here's Ambrose to get things going. Dean (I love how he holds a microphone) says he's in for the fight of his life on Sunday but this is Monday Night Raw. A long time ago, Dean learned that when you have to deal with the biggest bully, sometimes you have to get some dirt on your fingernails. Therefore, he wants Brock out here right now, but it's Stephanie instead. Dean hanging his head and giving a look of "oh dang it not this nonsense" is perfect.

She thinks Dean is out here filibustering because he couldn't get it done last week and needed Roman Reigns to save him. Stephanie asks the fans if they want to see Dean get F5'd tonight. For some reason they like the idea so Stephanie gives them just that: a Fatal Fiveway for the title. Also, if Reigns interferes, Dean is disqualified from Sunday's match. To translate, Stephanie just said "Whatever you have going on, forget about it. This is MY show and I'm the only one that matters."

Intercontinental Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens vs. Stardust vs. Tyler Breeze vs. Dolph Ziggler

Dean is defending of course and this is one fall to a finish. They really need to change the title here but good grief could these challengers (save for Owens) be any bigger set of losers? No tags here to make sure this is as insane as possible. Ambrose gets double teamed by Stardust and Breeze to start as JBL thinks Roman should come out to get rid of Ambrose on Sunday. Not the worst idea actually.

Dean sends Breeze to the floor and elbows Stardust in the face, only to have Owens run in to take Ambrose down. The champ slugs Owens in the corner as the other three guys have disappeared. Owens is sent to the floor, allowing Ziggler to spinwheel kick Ambrose down for two. We get an

air guitar before the big jumping elbow gets two on Dean.

Time for the parade of secondary finishers until Owens powerbombs Breeze onto the floor to take out Ziggler and Stardust. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered by an Ambrose hurricanrana before Dean dives on the other three outside. Back in and a swinging neckbreaker sets up the top rope standing elbow for two on Kevin. We take a break and come back with Dean bulldogging Stardust as the other three are on the floor. Dolph gets back in and pulls Ambrose off the top with a super X-Factor, only to have Stardust kick him in the face.

More secondary finishers connect until it's only Owens on his feet for three straight Cannonballs to crush everyone but Breeze. Tyler Beauty Shots Owens for two with everyone else making the save. Breeze loads up an Unprettier on Ambrose but Cole thinks it's a backslide. Suddenly I want to flip over to the Grammys. Everything breaks down and Owens powerbombs Breeze for the pin and the title at 12:40.

Rating: C+. Fun match here and the best possible option at the end. Dean could be moving up for something special at Wrestlemania and beyond so having the Intercontinental Title was only going to hold him back. Owens being a two time champion is a great sign for him but hopefully he doesn't get stuck in some big multiman title match at Wrestlemania.

Post break Ambrose promises to win on Sunday no matter what.

We cut back to the announcers but have to go back to Renee because Owens is gloating about his win. He orders Young to tell the world that he was right but here's Ziggler (back in his snazzy vest) to challenge for a title shot on Sunday. Owens says nah.

Here's New Day for a chat and we look back to September for New Day's trombone vs. kazoo showdown with Edge and Christian. New Day will be on the Peep Show on Sunday's preshow. New Day says you don't bring a kazoo to a trombone fight because it's not even a real instrument. They discuss various instruments and talk about being on the Peep Show Sunday but tonight, they want to deal with Mark Henry for walking out on them last week. Therefore, it's time for a match.

Mark Henry vs. Big E.

Henry slams him down to start and we get a Junkyard Dog headbutt to send E. outside. A New Day distraction lets Big E. drive Henry into the barricade, setting up a one man Unicorn Stampede back inside. The Warrior Splash gets two and Big E. puts on the abdominal stretch, only to have Henry throw him around like he's nothing. A big boot drops Big E. but he avoids a charge in the corner and loads up the Big Ending, only to have Henry fall off before the impact, giving Big E. the pin at 4:42.

Rating: D+. Those were some impressive power displays out there but it looks like Henry might be hurt again. I mean to be fair it's been a while since he's had a long term injury so it's kind of appropriate that he has one last one for the road. I know he means nothing these days, but Henry's power is still awesome to see.

Here's Brie Bella for an in ring interview. Before she can get anywhere, here are Charlotte and Ric to interrupt. Does Ric actually do anything these days or is he just there as a bonus? Charlotte talks about Bryan being in a league of his own back in the day but Brie says that Bryan is still in that league. The champ is surprised that Brie isn't at home with her husband after that devastating of a loss.

Brie knows that Bryan supports her 100%. Charlotte: "You mean you support you and Daniel 100%." They argue back and forth with Charlotte saying Brie needs to go back home and help her injured family, which Brie thinks is a way to get out of Sunday's show. Charlotte insults Brie's unborn goat faced vegan babies and it's on. Ric pulls his daughter to the floor before he can get involved, likely because this isn't covered by Medicare.

We look back at the Wyatts destroying people over the last few weeks.

The Miz vs. AJ Styles

Chris Jericho is on commentary. Miz jumps him before the bell and since DQ's aren't a thing unless the script calls for them, we're ready to go with Miz in early control. Some hard forearms set up a chinlock followed by a double arm crank on AJ. Back up and the Reality Check is broken up

but Miz knocks him to the floor for something like a slingshot dropkick through the ropes. Miz stops to yell at Jericho though, allowing AJ to hit the springboard forearm off the steps as we go to a break.

Back with Miz getting two off a top rope ax handle and hitting the chinlock again. AJ pops up with some shots to the face and a running seated forearm. There's another forearm in the corner as Jericho talks about how versatile AJ is getting with that move. Miz gets two off a faceplant but the Skull Crushing Finale is countered into a rollup for two. AJ scores with the Pele but gets crotched on the top. That's fine with AJ as he nails the springboard forearm for two more. The Skull Crushing Finale out of nowhere gets the same but Miz misses a charge in the corner, setting up the Calf Crusher for the tap at 11:50.

Rating: B. That might be a big high but I was really liking this one. AJ looked great as usual but Miz was more than hanging with him. I know he's one of the least popular guys on the roster but Miz really can put on a good match if he's given the chance. You knew AJ was winning here but it was a fun trip to get there.

Post match Jericho grabs a mic but AJ cuts him off, saying Jericho's win on Smackdown just tied things up. AJ has an idea for one more match and it would be....at Fastlane. Well that was a letdown. Jericho thinks that would be phenomenal but he's not sure if he wants to do it one more time. He'll think about it though and give AJ an answer on Smackdown.

Here are the Dudley Boyz but they opt to not pull out a table before climbing in the ring. Bubba invites the Usos to come out before they'll want to hear this too. No Usos though, because they're just like these people in the crowd according to D-Von. These people thought the Dudleyz were coming back as a nostalgia act and then ride off into the sunset. Bubba thinks this might be a shock to people but on Smackdown, they promised to never use tables again. If they ever want to see the tables again, they need to watch the WWE Network.

Summer Rae vs. Paige

Total Divas match of the week. Summer throws her around to start and chokes on the ropes and then in the corner. Paige fights up and hits a

running knee in the corner for her comeback. The PT0 is loaded up but Summer reverses into a rollup for the pin at 3:31.

Rating: D. So now it's time for Paige to be put into the ridiculous losing role that isn't going to lead anywhere because she's not in the main Divas group. I'm sure she'll have some relative get injured though and therefore we can move on to her beating the champ and getting a title shot based on sympathy.

Here's Paul Heyman to talk about Sunday's historic triple threat. One beast will emerge victorious and then face HHH for the WWE World Title at Wrestlemania. Now Paul doesn't want to spend the next few minutes talking while Roman Reigns watches on a monitor. Therefore, he'd like Reigns to come out here for this meeting face to face. Heyman talks about the respect he has for Reigns but doesn't believe that he can pull it off this Sunday.

In a perfect world, Reigns wins and goes home to his wife and daughter to say that daddy did it. However, Brock Lesnar is standing in his way. The other challenge in his way is Dean Ambrose, which is why this Sunday, Reigns has to choose between his daughter and his best friend. There are those who choose friends but they wind up in divorce court. There are others who stand in the middle of the ring after winning the main event of Wrestlemania but they wind up alone in the back with no friends congratulating him. This Sunday, Brock stands in his way as his enemy but so does Dean Ambrose.

Reigns chuckles at what Heyman just said but at the end of the day, Heyman knows that Reigns can beat his boy. Roman promises to win on Sunday and Heyman leaves, only to have the Dudleyz jump Reigns from behind. Cue Ambrose to make the save and likely give us a main event. The Dudleyz are dispatched and Dean tries Dirty Deeds on Reigns but gets shoved away. Dean points at the sign and they smile at each other.

Next week someone is being awarded a prize named after Vince's father. Ok then. I wonder if this is going to replace the Warrior Award.

Another video on the Wyatts dominating people.

Zack Ryder vs. Heath Slater

Slater shoves him around to start and it's time for the victory lap around the ring. Back in and Ryder scores with a clothesline followed by the middle rope dropkick. Slater is sent to the floor and Ryder nails a nice flip dive to take them all out. Bo offers a distraction though, allowing Slater to hit an implant DDT for the pin at 2:05.

R-Truth is on a date when Goldust appears as a waiter (R-Truth: "This isn't Table for 3 on the WWE Network!") to offer champagne. R-Truth: "We're not in your house." Goldust: "Of course not. It's not 1997." The champagne is sprayed all over the woman and Goldust bails. These are starting to get funnier at least.

Video on Kevin Owens, who is officially defending the title against Ziggler on Sunday.

Lucha Dragons/Neville vs. League of Nations

Sheamus is back so it's Barrett on the floor, minus a shirt this time. Kalisto vs. Del Rio for the US Title is Sunday's pre-show match. Kalisto headscissors Rusev to the floor to start but Del Rio gets in a cheap shot as everything breaks down. Neville and Kalisto dive off the top and Cara suicide dives through the ropes to take everyone out as we take a break.

Back with Rusev getting two on Kalisto before sending him to the floor. That goes nowhere so it's back to Sheamus for some stomping. Kalisto knees his way out of a suplex though and makes the hot tag off to Cara as things speed up. A standing Lionsault gets two on Del Rio and it's time for everyone to kick everyone else in the head. Cara suicide dives again to take out Del Rio but Barrett offers a distraction, setting up the top rope double stomp for the pin on Cara at 9:20.

Rating: C-. Well at least they didn't have the champ get pinned again. Cara is fine taking the loss here as there's almost no way the Dragons are still a thing after Wrestlemania. I would have liked to see Del Rio get his title shot on TV before the pay per view though as I really don't need to see them AGAIN on a big stage. Good enough here though and that's all it needed to be.

Booker T. video for Black History Month.

We see a video from earlier today of Naomi and Tamina attacking Becky Lynch.

Del Rio says that Kalisto has a long way to go before proving that he's a real champion. Therefore, let's make Sunday's match a 2/3 falls match.

Naomi vs. Becky Lynch

Becky doesn't have anyone to counter Tamina here. A quick suplex sends Naomi out to the floor but she comes back in with her dancing kicks into the kick to the head. We hit the armbar (because the kicks to the legs are forgotten) but Becky rolls into the Disarm-Her for the tap at 2:07.

Post match the beatdown is on until Sasha Banks comes out for the save.

Third Wyatts video.

Reigns/Ambrose vs. Dudley Boyz on Smackdown.

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman

Before the match, the Family tells us we have the choice to beg for mercy and embrace Bray's freedom. The Family would destroy this machine and offer the people paradise in exchange for bowing to him. Bray has made a choice for Kane and Ryback, just like Strowman is about to make a choice for Big Show right now.

Big Show, who is appearing "live" on the Steve Austin Show immediately after this goes off the air, comes out and the opening bell rings at 11:05pm. The big power lockup sees them fight each other into the corner until Braun clotheslines him down. An elbow drop doesn't even get a one count so Show reverses a suplex to take over. The Wyatts come in for the DQ at 2:30.

Post match the beating is on until Ryback and Kane come out for the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was a rough sit after the first hour. As usual, this show felt like it was just going on and on for the sake of going on

and on, which is one of the last things you want on a go home show. Having the Wyatts on last was questionable at best, but I have a bad feeling the horrible rating will be blamed on Bray somehow instead of Show or Strowman. They really haven't hidden the fact that Sunday is a one match show (plus Jericho vs. Styles which should be good) and it's going to be a rough sit, much like this show really was.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Stardust, Dean Ambrose, Tyler Breeze and Dolph Ziggler – Pop Up Powerbomb to Breeze

Big E. b. Mark Henry – Henry fell out of the Big Ending

AJ Styles b. The Miz – Calf Crusher

Summer Rae b. Paige – Rollup

Heath Slater b. Zack Ryder – Implant DDT

League of Nations b. Neville/Lucha Dragons – Top rope double stomp to Cara

Becky Lynch b. Naomi – Disarm-Her

Big Show b. Braun Strowman via DQ when the Wyatt Family interfered

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Monday Night Raw – February 8, 2016: YES Is No More

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 8, 2016

Location: KeyArena, Seattle, Washington

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's a sad day in WWE as Daniel Bryan has been forced to retire due to his in ring injuries. The announcement has been confirmed by WWE and could possibly close out tonight's show. In addition to this big deal we also have Brock Lesnar on hand again this week as he's getting ready for his match with Dean Ambrose and Roman Reigns at FastLane. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Stephanie is in the ring for the official contract signing for Fastlane's main event. The fans chant for Bryan but Stephanie says Bryan isn't the one going on to Wrestlemania to face her husband HHH. Stephanie lists off the three men in the triple threat at Fastlane and here's Dean to jump the gun. However, there will be NO physical violence here tonight so Reigns can come out here as well.

Reigns wants to start the fighting now so let's get to it (it's catching on). This brings out Lesnar but Stephanie cuts off Heyman's line because everyone knows who he is. They all sign so Stephanie leaves, only to have Brock hit Reigns with the table and give Ambrose an F5. Well so much for Fastlane being interesting. HHH comes out to stare everyone down.

Cole addresses Bryan's retirement and we see a clip of his debut on NXT in 2010.

Post break, Reigns and Ambrose promise to get Brock tonight.

Kevin Owens vs. Dolph Ziggler

Owens runs him over to start and hits a Cannonball in less than thirty seconds for an early near fall. Kevin stands on his head against the rope while talking a lot of trash at the same time. A clothesline followed by a bow gets two for Owens but Ziggler grabs a sleeper and they fall to the floor as we take a break. Back with Ziggler fighting out of a chinlock, only to get backslashed for two. Ziggler starts his comeback with a Stinger Splash and neckbreaker to set up the elbow for two of his own.

The superkick gets another near fall for Owens but the Pop Up Powerbomb is easily countered, setting up the running DDT. Owens gets draped over the apron, allowing Dolph to hit a Fameasser onto the floor. Both guys are down for a VERY close nine count (they actually had me there) before they dive inside. Owens misses a Cannonball though, allowing Ziggler to roll him up and put his feet on the ropes for the pin at 11:14.

Rating: D+. I would love to hear the explanation for this one. Are they turning Ziggler heel? If so, it really doesn't seem like it as Ziggler wasn't treated like a heel after the match and the whole thing felt like nothing special. Owens must have forgotten to shake hands with someone or something.

Another Daniel Bryan moment saw him winning the US Title at Night of Champions 2010.

The Dudleyz come in to see the Usos, who have a tables match against New Day later tonight. Bubba and D-Von don't quite get this because that's their match. If they can get it approved, the Dudleyz would love to team up with the New Day for the match.

Video on Ryback.

Charlotte vs. Alicia Fox

Non-title and a rematch from Smackdown. An early Figure Eight attempt is broken up but Charlotte drops her with a neckbreaker for two. After cutting off a WE WANT SASHA chant, the champ puts Fox in a Figure Four Neck Lock. The comeback doesn't go anywhere and the Figure Eight gives

Charlotte the tap out at 5:15.

Rating: D. Just a squash here and the same match we saw on Smackdown. I'm not sure if this is supposed to help build up Brie vs. Charlotte just because Brie and Alicia are on the same "team", but this really wasn't the most interesting thing. If nothing else it makes me wonder why I bother watching Smackdown when they just air the same stuff here with nothing extra being added.

It's time for MizTV but before the guest comes out, Miz has to yell about AJ Styles attacking him. Who does AJ really think he is when he attacks an A-lister like the Miz? This brings out Chris Jericho to tells Miz to shut up. Before Miz can have much of a rebuttal, Jericho says it's time for the Highlight Reel. A bunch of roadies run in and take over the set, including lowering the Jeritron 5000. Miz says this isn't Jericho's show, so Jericho demands that his stool and potted plant are brought in.

Jericho shows us a clip of AJ knocking Miz's tooth out of his mouth on Smackdown, drawing a YOU LOOK STUPID chant. Miz: "I'm not Sheamus." Last week he had a major audition with Spielberg and thankfully his team of Hollywood dentists saved the day. Jericho sings about wanting his two front teeth for Christmas so Miz counters with a clip of AJ's pin over Jericho a few weeks back. Chris can't wait to take care of AJ on Smackdown so here's Styles. Miz is quickly dispatched and AJ stares Jericho up the aisle to wrap things up.

We recap Lesnar destroying Ambrose and Reigns earlier.

Bryan won Money in the Bank in 2011.

Ryback vs. Bray Wyatt

We get the return of the GOLDBERG chants as Ryback runs Bray over. Another big shot sends him out to the floor but the Family offers a distraction, allowing Bray to take Ryback down as we go to a break. Back with Bray clotheslining Ryback down again but missing a charge into the post. A cross body into some right hands have Bray in trouble and a spinebuster gets another two count. The Meathook is countered into Sister Abigail for a pin out of nowhere at 6:50.

Rating: C-. So why couldn't they do this to Ziggler instead? It's not like he's going to have issues with a loss but instead they give Ryback a much better look and have him lose clean in his second match. As usual, it feels like this company has the potential to set something up but then they go with whatever they can to make sure it doesn't happen. As always, the worst part is you can feel it coming every time.

Post match the Wyatts destroy Ryback both in and out of the ring.

We look back at Kane and Daniel Bryan. That's still one of the funniest things the company has done in years.

Big E. is singing about working on a table while Xavier Woods is making calculations on how to destroy a table. Renee Young comes in to ask if they have a partner yet so Woods destroys the calculator. Of course they haven't because there are still three of them.

Ambrose says he's ready to fight Lesnar on his own because he's never been in the ring with him.

Titus O'Neil vs. Adam Rose

Before the match, Rose names himself the Radical Mongoose, which really doesn't work for Axel. Titus chops him in the corner to start but gets kicked in the face for two. Back up and Titus will have none of this Irish whip nonsense as he LAUNCHES Rose across the ring and takes over with some clotheslines. The Outcasts save Rose from the Clash of the Titus by pulling him to the floor, only to have O'Neil runs them all over like bowling pins. Back in and a Slater distraction lets Rose grab a rollup for the pin at 3:19.

Rating: D. The match may have sucked but Adam Rose is the Radical Mongoose. There is no way that doesn't wind up being one of the best names in years. I mean, it's like a mongoose but RADICAL. Titus getting TV time is a good thing but not as impressive as the Outcasts actually winning something.

We look at Bryan pinning Cena at Summerslam 2013.

Here's Dean Ambrose to ask what that was from Brock earlier. It certainly

couldn't have been an F5 because those are supposed to hurt. It's clear that Brock certainly can't get the job done so get out here and give it another try. No Lesnar so Dean says Brock has gone soft. "That sounds like a personal problem." Maybe Heyman didn't give him permission to come out here.

That's enough to bring out Lesnar and Dean goes right at him, only to be destroyed with ease. Dean crawls towards Brock and eats another F5 to leave him laying. Ambrose starts getting up and waves Brock back to the ring, only to have Reigns come out for a distraction. The plan seems to work as Dean hits Brock low and walks out as Brock is hunched over in pain. This worked better than I was expecting and the near falls at FastLane are going to be awesome.

Back from a break and we recap everything we just saw. Thankfully this means I have more time to flip back to Cheers, which I've seen several times but is still more entertaining than seeing the same thing twice in five minutes.

Lucha Dragons vs. Rusev/Alberto Del Rio

Rusev kicks Kalisto off the apron to start but gets rolled up for a quick two. Del Rio comes in with a snap suplex for two of his own as they're wisely setting up the hot tag to Kalisto later on. We hit the nerve hold from Rusev, followed by a chinlock from Del Rio. A snap German suplex makes things a bit better for Alberto but Cara counters a suplex into a DDT, finally allowing the hot tag to Kalisto. The springboard spinning cross body gets two on Alberto and everything breaks down. Del Rio enziguris Kalisto down though and the top rope double stomp pins the champ at 5:38.

Rating: C. Is anyone else sick of seeing champions lose? I mean, you have a wrestler coming back off a shoulder injury and a heel with an arm submission finisher, but instead let's go with pinning a champion. There's no way a multiple time World Champion could be seen as a credible champion without winning THIS match over Kalisto right?

Earlier today, Goldust thought he was Jimi Hendrix. A guitar is smashed and security drags Goldust away as Truth isn't sure what's going on.

Daniel Bryan occupied Raw along with the YES Movement.

Tamina vs. Becky Lynch

Sasha is on commentary. Tamina powers her into the corner but Becky slaps on an early sleeper. A Naomi distraction allows Tamina to get in a hard clothesline before slamming Becky's head into the mat a few times. Tamina takes her head off with a back elbow and we hit the neck crank. That goes nowhere so Naomi beats the heck out of Sasha. Becky kicks Tamina down and goes outside to help Sasha, only to walk into a superkick to give Tamina the pin at 3:42.

Rating: D. As much as I'd love to see Becky actually get somewhere, this makes the most sense for the feud. Tamina and Naomi are looking like the weaker pairing so giving them a win makes more sense. That being said, it's rather sad that there's no one else to throw out there instead of just doing singles matches to set up the tag match.

New Day offers Mark Henry a spot on the team tonight and the unicorn horn is actually accepted. Henry plays some trombone (not bad actually) but it's the dancing that gets him the job.

New Day/Mark Henry vs. Usos/Dudley Boyz

Tables match, meaning there are about fifteen tables around the arena. Only one person has to go through a table so the good guys clean house to start. A double dive drops the New Day and we take an early break. Back with New Day bossing Henry around....which doesn't go well as he doesn't like being told what to do and walks out. The good guys clean house with a double What's Up. Double superkicks all around set up a 3D to Big E. for the win at 6:42. Not enough to rate but this was nothing special.

Post match Jey comes up with a bad leg but the Dudleyz shove him down and turn heel with a SuperBomb to put Jimmy through the table.

Video on Daniel Bryan's career.

Here's Bryan, now with FAR less hair and beard) for his big speech. The DANIEL BRYAN chants get to him a bit as you knew they were going to. Now the YES chants cut him off but he says he was able to close his eyes and

feel that in a way that he never could before. When you're out here you have to keep your eyes open but he'll never forget that feeling just now.

It's time to address the giant elephant in the room though. Yes, he did have to shave his beard but he wanted to cut his hair but he looked really silly with the beard. In his only cheap plug, he cut his hair for an organization called Wigs For Kids which doesn't charge the families for the kids that get wigs from them.

That brings him to the less fun stuff and the NO chant begins. Bryan doesn't want to be doing this any more than they do but he's been wrestling since he was eighteen years old. In the first five months of his career, he had already had three concussions. He had more and more concussions as his career went on and after sixteen years, that adds up to a lot of concussions.

Eventually it reaches the point where you can't wrestle anymore, but he's been told that he was fine. He's been training to get better and was ready at a moment's notice for WWE to say he could come back. Bryan has loved wrestling in a way that he's never loved anything else, which draws a THANK YOU DANIEL chant. Then a week and a half ago he had a test that said his brain wasn't as strong as he thought it was. He's got a family to think about and they're thinking about having kids. Fans: "YES!" Daniel: "That's what Brie says all the time!" Fans: "THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID!"

Bryan officially announces his retirement and talks about all of his emotions as of late. He's gotten to do what he loves for the last sixteen years. Now let's talk about a few things that he loves. Nobody outside this arena is going to care about this, but he loves the Seattle Seahawks. Right before his music hits, he gets a little twitch in his mouth and he loves it every single time. Third, he loves hitting the ropes and doing that dive because it makes him feel like Superman. He's wrestled in the parking lots of gas stations and in front of 70,000 people in New Orleans.

While he's been doing that, he's gotten to meet people like Kane, who is the smartest man he knows. He's gotten to meet people like his mentor

William Regal. Over the years he's met children who are stronger than he could ever be like Connor. On top of that he's grateful because wrestling doesn't owe anyone in the back a thing. The people who get in this ring do it because they love to do it but one day they got behind him in a way they shouldn't have gotten behind someone who is 5'8 and 190lbs.

He's grateful because a little over two years ago in this very arena, the people here hijacked Raw during a championship celebration between Randy Orton and John Cena. However, he's grateful because his dad was sitting right over there and got to see it happen before he passed away. He's grateful for meeting the woman of his dreams and for getting to announce his retirement in front of his hometown fans.

Tomorrow morning he's starting a new life where he's not a wrestler, which means he's got one more night to enjoy this energy. We get one more YES chant as Brie comes out to celebrate with her husband to finally wrap this up at 11:25, which might be the latest this show has ever gone. This was an outstanding speech and I'm glad that it's not an angle. Bryan gets to leave and he gets to do it in (basically) his hometown. You don't get much better than that.

Overall Rating: C-. This show was all about the big promo at the end but the rest of the night was really dull stuff. It ranged from boring to really annoying at times and it was going to take something very special out of Bryan to make the whole thing work. That's exactly what we got, but it was a VERY long night to get to the amazing speech. FastLane really is looking like a nothing show, which is one of the last things they need right now.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens – Rollup with feet on the ropes

Charlotte b. Alicia Fox – Figure Eight

Bray Wyatt b. Ryback – Sister Abigail

Adam Rose b. Titus O'Neil – Rollup

Rusev/Alberto Del Rio b. Lucha Dragons – Top rope double stomp to Kalisto

Tamina b. Becky Lynch – Superkick

Usos/Dudley Boyz b. New Day/Mark Henry – 3D to Big E.

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Monday Night Raw – February 1, 2016: It Takes Talent To Be This Shortsighted

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 1, 2016

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

We have a main event set for Fastlane and Brock Lesnar is back tonight to give us all three in the same building tonight. Other than that you can see most of the card from here, but the important questions are what happens between now and Wrestlemania and whether or not new stories will start after the February pay per view. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Brock and Heyman with the former in a new red Suplex City shirt. Heyman immediately talks about the Wyatts, whose plot to get rid of Brock from the Royal Rumble worked, but it isn't keeping him out of the main event of Wrestlemania. Now Lesnar is in a triple threat at Fastlane and that means it's time for Roman Reigns and Dean Ambrose to go to Suplex City. After that, Lesnar will conquer the billion dollar trophy husband to become the new WWE World Heavyweight Champion. Heyman goes back to the triple threat so here's Ambrose to interrupt.

Dean gets right in Brock's face and asks Heyman (or Porky) who he's calling a nutjob. Ambrose isn't stupid, crazy or scared right now because he respects Lesnar. That's why he wants to stand in front of Brock and tell him how much he wants the title. He's willing to fight his brother and Lesnar at the same time, even though he knows the beating that's coming for him at Fastlane. It better be the best beating Lesnar has ever given though because Dean is going to do whatever it takes to go to Fastlane and take the title from HHH. Dean actually leaves with no violence and Lesnar smiles.

Kalisto vs. Rusev

Non-title and Alberto Del Rio is on commentary because he gets another title shot at Fastlane. Rusev (with Lana in his corner) shoves him around to start but Kalisto starts firing off the kicks that almost every small guy uses against a bigger opponent. A hurricanrana is blocked though, only to have Kalisto stay with it and take Rusev out to the floor. The champ's dive is countered by a kick to the head though and we take a break.

Back with Kalisto charging into a shot in the corner as some of the fans in the front rows are doing the Lucha Dragons dance. A tornado DDT sends Rusev down but he plants Kalisto with a release Rock Bottom for two of his own. As you might expect, Kalisto pops right back up with a dropkick to the knee and the hurricanrana driver.

Rusev obeys the referee's command to kick out but gets kicked to the floor. Kalisto's dive is caught but he escapes what looks like a fall away slam and dropkicks Rusev into the steps. Another hurricanrana sends

Rusev into the barricade and Kalisto dives back in for the countout win at 10:11. That was one of the slowest ten counts I've ever seen.

Rating: D+. Yeah yeah we get the idea: Kalisto goes through the League before getting to face Del Rio again. This would be so much easier to watch if we didn't have to see five matches between the two of them in about two months. I'm just tired of seeing the two of them fight, even though the matches are watchable enough.

Stephanie and Reigns are in the back with the new HHH World Title belt when Ambrose comes in. Both guys are willing to do whatever it takes to get that title at Wrestlemania but Stephanie implies that they might turn on each other. She even says Ambrose is Reigns' sidekick but Dean thinks it's the other way around. That earns them a match against New Day in the main event. Nothing we haven't seen on Smackdown a half dozen times, but WWE doesn't care about Smackdown either.

We look at Nikki Bella's neck surgery.

Brie Bella says her sister is in bed watching the WWE Network. Cue Charlotte and Ric to brag about beating Nikki for the Divas Title. Charlotte would be concerned about Nikki's injuries if she had any reason to. Brie is left looking sad and good night they're actually wanting to make me care about BRIE BELLA feeling bad? That's the point we've reached?

Usos vs. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose

The Usos are announced as the Grammy Award winning Tag Team of the Year. They even re-air it after the break to make fun of Lillian's flub. There's no Bo Dallas due to his dad being in the hospital, so Slater says he's in the studio after his battle with Flo Rida last week. Axel kicks Jey in the ribs to start and it's off to Rose, who comes in with a top rope knee to the chest. The announcers go on about Stephanie suggesting that absolute power corrupts absolutely because they exist to push her stupid lines.

Axel's chinlock keeps things slow and Rose's makes it even worse until Jimmy enziguris him down. Jey comes in with a bunch of superkicks

(including one where Axel telegraphed it worse than anything I've seen in years). At least four superkicks in a row set up a double superkick and the Superfly Splash for the pin on Rose at 5:11.

Rating: 0. For obnoxious. Yeah Lillian screwed up a line so let's spend the whole match going on and on because NO ONE IN WWE HAS EVER SCREWED UP A LINE BECAUSE THEY'RE TOTALLY PERFECT AND THE GREATEST THING EVER. It's stuff like that which makes the whole company seem so stuck up that it drives me insane. Get over yourselves already and call the match instead of making fun of Garcia (a woman that people like Kevin Dunn, who I would almost bet was behind that whole thing, could never get) or talking about how insightful Stephanie's stuff was. The match sucked by the way.

Back from a break with WWE bragging about being on American Airlines in-flight magazine. Yeah that gets ten seconds but Lillian's flub gets a full match.

It's time for MizTV with special guest AJ Styles. Miz gets right to the point by cutting off AJ before he can say a word to every question. He lists off AJ's accomplishments such as being the smallest guy on the football team and coming from rural Georgia. AJ has gone all over the world and finally got to the WWE where he lasted nearly half an hour in the Royal Rumble. Then he defeated Chris Jericho in his debut match, which is a big reason why Miz sees a lot of Daniel Bryan in AJ.

Miz goes on another rant about how he fathered the YES Movement before telling the fans to be quiet. The fans think AJ (who hasn't said a word yet) can make it in the WWE without Miz's guidance but there's no chance of that happening. That's enough for AJ as he goes off on Miz in the corner and chases him off for the big hero moment. I get the idea here, but Miz actually gave AJ quite the introduction, which was probably the other intended purpose.

Brie Bella vs. Charlotte

Non-title, mainly because Brie never wins anything and therefore probably shouldn't be in this story. Brie starts fast but the BRIE MODE knee is countered with Charlotte sending her to the floor. The figure four neck lock keeps Brie in trouble but she makes the required clothesline

comeback. Now the BRIE MODE knee (minus the shouting of BRIE MODE) connects and it's off to a sleeper, only to have Ric get up on the apron. Amazingly enough the powers of Alicia Fox aren't enough to do anything, allowing Charlotte to use something like a Stunner to escape. Charlotte slaps on the Figure Four but gets rolled up for the pin at 4:45.

Rating: F. GAH THIS STUPID FREAKING COMPANY!!! So we already have the triple threat set up at Fastlane with the three NXT women but now we get the addition of BRIE BELLA so the spirit of Nikki can be upon us. I'm sure Brie will be fighting for her sister's honor or some nonsense like that because Brie and Nikki are now faces after being heels for like ever because of reasons that aren't important enough to explain. Didn't they learn anything in the Divas Revolution when Brie was dragging down every freaking match she was in with the NXT women? And it was a clean pin. On the champion. Live on Raw. Just so much dumb.

We look back at Big Show saving Reigns and Ambrose from the Wyatts on Smackdown.

Erick Rowan vs. Big Show

Show grabs the stairs to hold off Strowman and the announcers somehow don't bring up the stairs match these two had a few years back. Rowan can't suplex Show (because he's a big bad show tonight) and after spearing Strowman off the apron, the chokeslam puts Rowan away at 1:20.

Post match the Wyatts (minus Bray who is in Florida with his dad as well) beat Show down and slam him onto the steps.

Titus O'Neil vs. Tyler Breeze

At least Breeze has his full entrance back. Titus throws him into the corner to start but Breeze is smart enough to take out the knee, which is quickly wrapped around the post. We hit the half crab on Titus before he throws Tyler across the ring all the way from his back. A HUGE clothesline drops Breeze and the Clash of the Titus is good for the pin at 2:49.

HHH comes in to see Brock and asks why Dean was allowed to live. Brock

says he'll see HHH at Wrestlemania.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Owens won last week and that's got me very worried here. It's a brawl to start with Owens naturally getting the better of it. Ziggler gets thrown over the top and into the timekeeper's area as we take a break. Back with Ziggler jawbreaking his way out of a chinlock but getting crushed by the Cannonball for two. A hard elbow drops Ziggler again but he avoids a charge in the corner and hits three straight Stinger Splashes.

Thankfully Kevin will have none of that and clotheslines Dolph's head off, only to get dumped out to the floor. Back in and Owens superkicks Dolph's head off for two but takes too long going up. Ziggler's superplex is blocked though, allowing Owens to get him into the Tree of Woe. Another Cannonball connects (that looked great) and now the Pop Up Powerbomb is....countered into the Zig Zag for the pin at 10:35.

Rating: D+. That's mostly for the ending because WWE is going out of their way to screw themselves over. Kevin Owens has the potential to be something fun and fresh as a heel but we need the 50/50 booking with DOLPH ZIGGLER. Owens could be a World Champion (and if there has EVER been a time when they need someone to step up and be a big deal, it might be before Wrestlemania with Rollins and Cena both hurt) by the end of the year but he's losing here because of whatever stupid philosophy they have. This actually made me mad and what makes it even worse is that you knew it was coming the whole way.

Video on Mark Henry for Black History Month.

Here's Sasha Banks for a match but first she has something to say. Sasha says she's on her own and no one is going to stop her from winning the title. This brings out Naomi and Tamina because the world was waiting for the Team BAD blowoff. Naomi says she knew this was coming but Sasha wants them to still be friends. They do the UNITY pose and everything seems cool. Of course.

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

They trade rollups to start with Sasha getting the better of it and hitting the double knees in the corner. Becky gets knocked to the floor but Sasha doesn't want Tamina and Naomi to help. She says she doesn't need the help so Tamina and Naomi pull her to the floor for the DQ 3:40.

Rating: D+. No time of course because the NXT women never get a chance to do anything. I'd like to repeat though: no one cares about Tamina and Naomi and they're clearly just doing this (possibly a tag feud for Fastlane) so we can get BRIE BELLA as a title contender. Yeah it's a fill in challenger, but why not spend the extra time setting up your big Wrestlemania match instead of wasting your time on a nothing feud with no drama?

Post match Becky saves Sasha from the beatdown.

We get a clip of JBL interviewing Ron Simmons on the Network.

Chris Jericho says everyone has been talking about AJ Styles....except for him. Everything about their match last week was tremendous except for the outcome. AJ showed that he's a tenacious pitbull and Jericho is going to be watching AJ's match with Miz on Smackdown.

R-Truth goes into the bathroom and finds Goldust crouching on the toilet. Goldust still won't take no for an answer on the team but Truth thinks Goldust is a weirdo. That means it's time to bring up Little Jimmy, which seems to get to Truth a bit. Remember like eight days ago when Truth was still crazy and not the straight man in these vignettes?

New Day vs. Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Non-title because the champions need to lose again and Heyman is on commentary. Before the match, Woods talks about how the comments from Rock have Francesca so upset that she can't sleep at night. Rocky needs to think of the children, like the one they point at in the front row doing the New Day dance. Tonight they're taking care of Rock's cousin and they'll throw in Dean too.

Reigns and Kofi get things going with Kingston having to get out of a Samoan Drop, earning himself a right hand to the head. It's off to Dean

for a basement clothesline as Heyman is already frustrated with Cole's talk about Ambrose staring Lesnar down earlier. The threat of the Superman Punch causes Woods and Big E. to pull Kofi to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Big E. missing the Apron Splash but Ambrose is kept in trouble with a whip into the steps. Kofi kicks him in the head for two as Woods jumps in on commentary to yell about how awesome they are. Ambrose stays in trouble and Big E. gets two off a splash. Heyman is trying to get in on this but there's only so much you can do with Woods blasting that trombone.

We hit the abdominal stretch (Woods: "Stretch the abs!") but Dean doesn't like the spanking and bites Big E.'s nose. A suplex allows the hot tag to Reigns and it's time for some corner clotheslines. The other hot tag brings in Ambrose as everything breaks down. The Superman Punch sets up Dirty Deeds on Big E. for the pin at 17:22.

Rating: D+. Hey look: champions lose again clean. This is how things work in WWE this time of year and they really don't care how obvious they make it coming in. The match was fine but they made it clear that New Day was losing here for the sake of pushing Reigns and Ambrose. Pushing the two of them is fine, but it's really sad that they had no one else to lose to Reigns and Ambrose. Can you imagine sitting through another League "showdown"?

Post match Brock comes out for the showdown but New Day attacks Reigns, allowing Brock to F5 Ambrose to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Oh man this one was rough. This was a show where they made it clear that they don't care what's going on until the night after Fastlane, which makes me wonder why I'm going to watch until then. We're getting stuff like Brie Bella fighting for the spirit of her sister, whose goal in life is to get John Cena to marry and impregnate her. That's my hero in the Divas division.

On top of that, there's the nonsense with the 50/50 booking. Again: the roster is so depleted right now and tonight we saw Dolph Ziggler, the definition of career midcarder, is beating Kevin Owens clean. Why? Just

because Owens won last week and we need to set up something at Fastlane. Instead of having Owens look like a killer and setting up something big at Wrestlemania, we need to see this nothing feud and story that is only taking place to fill in time before we get to Wrestlemania.

Then why have Fastlane? Why not just give us a ten week build to Wrestlemania? That's where WWE loses me. It's clear that they're just having a filler show at Fastlane, so why should I bother paying attention for the next three weeks? They're resetting again after the show and we've got a month before the biggest show of all time. Well done on making it feel special WWE. Really, it takes talent to be this shortsighted.

Results

Kalisto b. Rusev via countout

Usos b. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose – Superfly Splash to Rose

Brie Bella b. Charlotte – Small package

Big Show b. Erick Rowan – Chokeslam

Titus O'Neil b. Tyler Breeze – Clash of the Titus

Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens – Zig Zag

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. New Day – Dirty Deeds to Big E.

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Monday Night Raw – January 25, 2016: They're Always Watching

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 25, 2016

Location: American Airlines Arena, Miami, Florida

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're officially on the Road to Wrestlemania with a new WWE World Champion in HHH, who entered the Royal Rumble as the surprise #30 entrant. There's a lot of time for changes in the next few weeks though as Fastlane is in less than a month. Also, WWE has advertised a major star making his return tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Reigns in the Rumble and the ending. I do love the fact that the League beat him down but was too busy carrying off a TV monitor (What was that anyway?) to bother THROWING HIM IN AND OVER THE TOP for an elimination but cocky heels will be cocky heels.

Vince and Stephanie strut to the ring to open things up. They're very happy because it's the night after the Royal Rumble and they've broken Roman Reigns. Just like everyone here, Reigns is going to tuck his tail between his legs and run away hiding because he's a broken man with no title. Vince confesses to take joy in the misery of others and Reigns is now more miserable than everyone.

Last night they had the fans eating out of the palm of their hands because all the false hope about Brock Lesnar, AJ Styles and Roman Reigns was a waste of time because they knew who #30 was going to be. This brings out HHH (after a huge batch of praise from Stephanie of course) who says it's good to be the king. Roman isn't champion today because he lacks respect. HHH can put up with everything from Reigns but he can't

put up with Reigns disrespecting Vince McMahon in the place he created.

As for people who say he doesn't need to be champion again, they're right. With the career he's had, he doesn't need this again. However, he's champion again because he wants to be and people like Reigns don't deserve to be. The fans chant for Reigns but it's time to figure out who is going to face HHH for the title at Wrestlemania. Tonight though, they're going to evaluate the talent and announce the main event of Fastlane. The winner of that match will go on to face HHH for the title at Wrestlemania.

This was really, really lame, even by opening Raw promo standards. I still have no idea why I'm supposed to want to see Reigns come back and win the title again. Between him having a half hour nap during the Rumble last night and not really having a character in the first place, I have no idea why I'm supposed to want to see him fight the odds and overcome. Last night really wasn't a good sign for him going forward, at least not as the very top guy on the roster. He'll be fine as a main event player, but he needs a lot of work before he's that guy.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Ziggler superkicks him at the bell for a fast two and Owens bails out to the floor. Back in and Dolph scores with a dropkick as we head to a break. Back with Dolph's superkick being blocked, meaning he has to settle for a Fameasser instead. We hit the sleeper for a bit until Owens drops him into the buckle. The Cannonball misses so Owens grabs a German Suplex, only to charge into another superkick. Ziggler stomps away in the corner but gets crotched on top, setting up the Pop Up Powerbomb to give Owens the pin at 8:45.

Rating: C-. This was fine but I'm going to get really sick of this "IMPRESS THE AUTHORITY" stuff all night long. I understand that this show is all about them and making sure they look as awesome as possible but could we please go more than a week without having to pound it into the fans' heads? Owens looked better here, which to be fair isn't hard against Ziggler, who has wrestled the exact same match for years now.

Reigns arrives and laughs off the idea that he's miserable. He sends JoJo

to tell Vince and HHH that he's here.

Here are the Social Outcasts with something to say, including Heath Slater going outside to get in rapper Flo Rida's face. Rose calls Slater Red Dragon and Axel doesn't get it. Dallas calls Rida into the ring for a showdown, but it's going to be a rap battle. Bo Rida (seriously) puts on a hat, sunglasses and gold chain before calling Flo very disrespectful. "You need to express yourself in a more discerning manner. All you have is ace high but I have a full house like I'm Danny Tanner." Flo Rida does his own rap and the fans aren't really responding until he introduces the Dudley Boyz for a tag match.

Dudley Boyz vs. Bo Dallas/Curtis Axel

Joined in progress with Dallas (now in a singlet) fighting out of a headlock until it's off to Axel for some shots to Bubba's jaw. That means it's time for the Bo-Train victory lap around the ring in a funny bit. Back in and D-Von takes over on Axel with a running clothesline in the corner for two. Bubba comes in off a blind tag and the reverse 3D drops Axel again. Slater gets on the apron but Rida shoves him over the top, meaning it's time for What's Up. 3D puts Axel away at 4:48.

Rating: D. Hey did you know that Flo Rida is a celebrity? Because he really is. Like, he's someone people know and pay money to see and such. If you didn't, you certainly do after watching this match because that's all this match existed to accomplish. This was nothing more than "hey we've got someone you might have heard of on our show!" and that makes for another waste of time.

AJ Styles is about to introduce himself to the WWE but Chris Jericho, his opponent tonight, interrupts. Jericho talks about AJ's success around the world but he's never done it here. Good luck tonight and welcome to the big leagues.

Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles

The fans are entirely behind AJ as Jericho chops away to start. AJ flips over him and goes to the apron, only to get dropkicked out to the floor in a good looking shot. Back in and Styles grabs a headlock as the

announcers try to talk about AJ's pre-WWE run without mentioning companies by name. The drop down into the dropkick sends Jericho to the floor but Chris trips him face first onto the apron as we take a break.

Back with Jericho holding a chinlock before both guys try cross bodies at the same time. AJ is up first with some quick strikes to the face and a running clothesline in the corner. The Walls don't work so Chris settle with a northern lights suplex for two, followed by the running enziguri for the same. AJ stops a charge with a raised boot and hits the springboard forearm for two of his own. The Walls are broken up but AJ misses a top rope splash. The Lionsault hits knees but AJ can't quite get the Clash. Jericho rolls into a cradle but AJ pushes forward into a sunset flip for the pin at 13:47.

Rating: B. This was exactly what AJ's singles debut needed to be as he hung with one of the better in ring workers on the roster and pinned him with a counter. Really good stuff here and AJ looks like a major player. They're saving that Clash for a big moment though and it's going to blow the roof off the place when it hits.

Post match AJ offers a handshake and Jericho accepts before pulling AJ in. Jericho says something we can't hear before leaving with no violence.

Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch

Becky goes right after her to start but Sasha takes it to the mat and hits a running slap to the face of all things for two. We hit a neck crank on Lynch for a bit before she grabs a t-bone for two of her own. The double knees in the corner gets the same for Sasha and there's the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte come in for the DQ at 3:33.

Rating: C. It was working while it lasted but the DQ makes the most sense. You don't want to have Becky get screwed over one night and then have her lose clean the next night, even if it's to Sasha. It's also nice to see Sasha get to be herself for a change instead of being the weird female New Day member or whatever the heck that was supposed to be.

Charlotte beats Becky down and gives Sasha the Natural Selection before posing with the title. Three way seems likely.

Goldust puts on R-Truth's headphones for some reason. R-Truth comes in and thinks Goldust is gay but it turns out that Goldust just wants to be a team. Uh....yeah.

Kane vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray pounds him into the corner to start as Cole actually has the nerve to bring up the stuff around Survivor Series. That feels so long ago but it was only two months. A running forearm to the back of the head puts Kane down as we take a break about a minute into the match. Back with Bray missing the backplash and what sounds like a RANDY SAVAGE chant. Kane drops an elbow for two and the fans go crazy with the booing. A release Rock Bottom gets two for Bray and a Harper distraction lets Sister Abigail put Kane away at 7:03.

Rating: D. I can't blame the fans for booing this one out of the building. We've covered Kane vs. Wyatt so many times now that I have no idea why anyone would be interested in seeing them fight again. Kane has been around for so long now that there's nothing left for him to do, especially when he's just been Kane: midcard monster for so many years now. Why do you think the Daniel Bryan stuff went so well for him? It's because it was so completely different and out of character for him that it was hard not to enjoy. Kane is talented, but we've covered it.

The Wyatts beat Kane down post match.

There's a long black limo here which might have the big star inside. Post break Rich Brennan knocks on the door and it's....Miz. He hasn't been around in three weeks so ratings are spiking as we speak. As he's talking (and ratings are spiking), a black truck pulls up and it's the Rock, who tells Miz to park the truck.

Rock runs into Rick Ross (just hanging around) and then Big Show. After a chat about how Big Show actually should have won (which Rock agrees with), Rock says he was cast as the Scorpion King because he won that match. Show looks like he's about to cry and breaks the laptop he's holding.

Next up Rock sees Lana and brings up that night in Brooklyn with Rusev on

Raw. What people don't know is that Lana came to Rock's hotel room for some wine and "special exercises" that night, including the one legged Russian vacuum. Lana smiles quite a bit until Rusev comes up and sneers quite a bit. The engagement is brought up and Rusev congratulates him for having such a flexible fiancée. Rock talks to the camera as he's walking towards the gorilla position (which he actually names) before saying he's FINALLY back home.

Now in the ring, Rock asks if the people are ready for Wrestlemania. "JBL is ready. Michael Cole is ready. That other black dude that I don't know is ready." The fans chant for the Randy Savage lookalike in the front row so Rock says it's time to go off script. He asks who the Savage/Hogan/Undertaker impersonators are ("The weed must be good in Miami tonight.") but doesn't have much to say to them. Cool little moment though. Wrestlemania is in a few months but it's time to talk about tonight....and here's New Day.

Woods says that the black guy Rock didn't know is named Byron Saxton and he's the best commentator at that table. Kofi: "How about we talk about the black guys that you do know?" Woods brings up beating the Usos so badly that when they walk north, they're looking south. As for Rock though, if he's the People's Champion, where's his gold? I mean, New Day has gold around their waists as well as in the form of Francesca II. Big E. rips on Miami for losing LeBron James but says Rock did the same thing when he went to Hollywood. Was that for the people or for the paycheck? Either way, New Day rocks.

Rock says he does know who New Day is. They're the Tag Team Champions, extremely entertaining, and wearing llama anatomy on their heads. New Day: "YOU CAN'T SAY THAT ON TV!" Woods corrects him so Rock calls Big E. a she. "Big mama didn't like that!" Rock thinks Big E. is strong and nerdy. It's like the Incredible Hulk banged Urkel. Woods drops his trombone and asks if he did that. 90's TV fans will find that line funny.

Rock offers to stick Francesca II somewhere but New Day calls for a huddle. They decline and start to leave but Rock says not so fast because he has a plan B. Cue the Usos to go after New Day with Big E. getting a Rock Bottom. Woods is left alone with Rock and it's a double superkick

into the spinebuster to set up the People's Elbow.

Paige/Natalya vs. Brie Bella/Alicia Fox

Natalya and Alicia get things going but it's quickly off to Brie for the seated abdominal stretch. The YES Kicks have Natalya in trouble but Brie Mode misses, allowing Paige to come in for the PT0. Alicia makes the save so Paige puts Brie away with the Rampaige for the pin at 2:45.

WWE is working with the Boys and Girls Club for anti-bullying stuff.

Miz is in the ring to complain about being interrupted but his opponent's music cuts him off.

Kalisto vs. The Miz

Non-title. Miz stomps him down in the corner but a headscissors sends him to the floor for a suicide dive from the champ. Back in and Kalisto rolls over Miz's back into a front facelock. A springboard cross body gets two for Kalisto and we take a break. THIS MATCH gets a break? I had the finish written out as soon as Kalisto's music hit and we take a break?

Back with Miz getting two off a clothesline and dropping a top rope ax handle for the same. He stops to yell at the fans though, allowing Kalisto to kick him in the head and hit the corkscrew cross body for two of his own. Miz's short DDT gets the same and he loads up the Skull Crushing Finale, only to have Kalisto kick off the ropes into the Salida Del Sol for the pin at 9:33.

Rating: C-. Nothing much to see here with a pretty easy to guess finish. If nothing else though, it's nice to see Kalisto getting a win and not losing the title three days after he wins it in the first place. Hopefully he's done with Del Rio as there's only so much you can do with that feud and they passed it after their second match.

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. Rusev/Sheamus

Rusev and Reigns slug it out to start but the League is quickly sent to the floor, allowing Ambrose to dive on both guys as we take an early break. Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and diving over for

the hot tag. Ambrose goes nuts as is his custom and cleans house, only to miss a dive over the barricade and coming up with a bad knee. Rusev drags him back to ringside and sends him back first into the barricade a few times.

Back in and Rusev gets two off some gutwrench suplexes before it's off to Sheamus. Three straight Irish Curses have Dean's back in even more trouble and we hit the chinlock. Rusev drops some elbows and puts on a chinlock of his own. Back to Sheamus for the forearms to the chest and back to send Dean outside, only to have Ambrose do his apron 619 and score with a clothesline.

That's enough for the hot tag to Reigns as everything breaks down. Sheamus gets a Samoan Drop on the floor and Rusev takes the apron boot. Del Rio and Barrett have to be chased off though and Rusev hits two straight superkicks, followed by the Brogue Kick for two with Dean making the save. Ambrose dives off the apron to take out Rusev and Reigns spears Sheamus for the pin at 15:18.

Rating: B-. This was a step above your standard Smackdown main event tag match, even though it's something like the 948th time that Reigns has beaten the League. I can't even remember the group last thing they actually pulled off aside from taking the US Title back from Kalisto. Then again this is exactly what we were expecting them to become and there's nothing wrong with that.

Post match Reigns and Ambrose set up the announcers' tables and Double Bomb Rusev through the English version. Reigns' music plays for all of ten seconds before Stephanie power walks out. The main event at Fastlane is....Ambrose vs. Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar. Interesting, but so much for the stipulations meaning anything tonight.

Overall Rating: C+. This is a really good example of a show that was good at three hours but would have been great at two hours. As usual, there's too much filler weighing down an otherwise good show. On top of that, I'm really not a fan of the "Authority evaluation" stuff as it makes me think the roster isn't trying the rest of the time. Or that the wrestlers are stupid enough to believe that they might have a fair chance instead of

whoever the Authority wants to get the shot. Still though, good enough and we have a PPV main event set to get us to Wrestlemania so there's at least an idea now.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Dolph Ziggler – Pop Up Powerbomb

Dudley Boyz b. Bo Dallas/Curtis Axel – 3D to Axel

AJ Styles b. Chris Jericho – Sunset flip

Sasha Banks b. Becky Lynch via DQ when Charlotte interfered

Bray Wyatt b. Kane – Sister Abigail

Paige/Natalya b. Brie Bella/Alicia Fox – Rampaige to Bella

Kalisto b. The Miz – Salida Del Sol

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Rusev/Sheamus – Spear to Sheamus

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 18, 2016

Location: Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

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

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

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

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

Brie Bella vs. Natalya

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

Wyatt Family vs. Dudley Boyz/Ryback

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

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

Rating: D+. Can we please get something for the Wyatts to do already? As in something they might actually win instead of being built up only to fall down again? I'm tired of seeing them beat up the Dudleyz as the matches have ranged from decent to boring and they're getting lower and lower each time. I'm not sure why we're seeing it again but I'm sure it's due to them having nothing else to do. Not a bad match but it's really hard to care at this point.

Big Show vs. Heath Slater

Before the match, the Social Outcasts promise to win on Sunday, though Axel says he can't understand a word Rose says. Slater runs away from a

big chop in the corner to start but is pulled back in by the hair. The KO Punch is good for the pin at 56 seconds.

The rest of the Outlaws are wiped out post match.

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

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

Becky Lynch vs. Tamina

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

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

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

Kalisto/Dean Ambrose vs. Alberto Del Rio/Sheamus

Here's your fifteen minute match designed to do nothing more than to kill fifteen minutes. Kevin Owens is on commentary to make this more entertaining. Ambrose pounds on Sheamus to start and it's quickly off to

Kalisto, who is slammed down onto Sheamus for two. Del Rio is sent to the floor and we take a break.

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

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

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

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

We recap the opening segment.

Clips of the India tour.

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

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

Here's the annual All About The Numbers video.

30 entrants

28 Royal Rumble

811 people eliminations

42 eliminations by Kane, the most of all time

46 WWE Hall of Famers who have entered

8 Hall of Famers who have won

3 wins by Steve Austin

62:12 that Rey Mysterio lasted

1 second that Santino Marella lasted

2 straight wins Roman needs to retain

18 years since that happened

15 former World Champions on the roster

6 former Royal Rumble winners

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

Big E. vs. Jey Uso

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

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

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

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

The League is talking about something.

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

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

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

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

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

Jericho gets back to the Rumble though and asks why Heyman tried to get Lesnar straight to the main event of Wrestlemania. Could it be that Brock

has developed so many enemies that Heyman doesn't think he's a lock to win again? Heyman laughs it off and plugs the Network by saying people subscribe to see Brock fight any one man so why wouldn't you subscribe to see him fight everyone at once. Jericho suggests that he'll throw Brock out and here's Lesnar for a rebuttal.

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

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

Results

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

Natalya b. Brie Bella – Sharpshooter

Big Show b. Heath Slater – KO Punch

Becky Lynch b. Tamina – Disarm-Her

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

Big E. b. Jey Uso – Big Ending

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

Breeze/Ascension – Red Arrow to Breeze

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Monday Night Raw – December 26, 1994: The One With A Howard Finkel Promo

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 26, 1994

Location: Liberty High School, Liberty, New York

Attendance: 1,400

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

We'll wrap up this month here with an appearance from the Undertaker, who at least should be able to pick things up a bit. I'm sure we'll get something else on Christmas as we're now past the holiday, meaning we might find out what Shawn got for Christmas. If nothing else, at least he can make it funny. Well funnier than Harvey Wippleman without pants. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Tatanka being revealed as the Druid a few weeks back. This of course sets up Tatanka vs. British Bulldog.

Ted DiBiase promises to take care of Bulldog and then Luger.

British Bulldog vs. Tatanka

Shawn tries to figure out Boxing Day as Tatanka bails from an armbar. A shoulder puts Tatanka down instead and at least the fans are starting to get into this. Bulldog gets two off a crucifix and the delayed vertical suplex sends Tatanka outside. The powerslam doesn't work though and we take a break.

Back with Bulldog getting dropped with a knee to the ribs to set up a chinlock. Tatanka gets punched out of the air though and Bulldog runs him over a few times, only to have DiBiase low bridge him out to the floor. This brings out Luger (who should have been here earlier like a good partner) to go after DiBiase, only to get in the ring and hammer on Tatanka for the DQ as Bam Bam Bigelow comes out almost immediately.

Rating: D+. This could have been worse but the ending didn't help things. In theory this is setting up a tag match later on, though it should be setting up the Tag Team Title match. How Luger and Bulldog weren't in that thing is beyond me, especially when you have a team like Well freaking Dunn in there.

Luger and Bulldog clear the ring and it's a double DQ, which makes no sense given that no one attacked Bulldog until after the bell.

It's another Royal Rumble Report with Todd Pettengill explaining the rules and uttering the three devastating words: sixty second intervals. There was no way the match could work with so little time and they never tried it again. We hear the updated list of participants and I'm hating the show all over again. There might be three names listed here (Luger, Bulldog and Michaels) who have a prayer of winning and that's the problem: it was those three and then nothing but losers filling out the group.

As for the World Title match, Bret Hart is in front of a fireplace in Calgary and talks about how nice it was to be with his family over the holidays. He can't believe his brother cost him the title and wants everyone but Owen to have a Happy New Year.

Undertaker vs. IRS and Razor Ramon vs. Jeff Jarrett for the Intercontinental Title are also announced for the show.

Henry O. Godwinn vs. Mike Khoury

This is Henry's debut and he looks heelish though the silence would suggest he should be unemployed. A quick slam puts Khoury down but Henry goes to look through the ropes for no apparent reason. Henry fishhooks Mike's jaws for a bit as this is already a disaster. A legdrop and the Slop Drop (reverse DDT) finally puts Mike away.

Rating: F. The match sucked and I never want to watch another Henry Godwinn match. What more is there for me to say here? I mean, the match was a disaster and there was almost nothing redeeming here whatsoever. This was horrible and Henry looks like one of the biggest flops in years. Total failure.

Video on Hakushi, who is about to make his debut. Why he has a WWF highlight reel already isn't clear.

House show ads.

Here's the King's Court with special guest Diesel. Lawler offers a handshake and is immediately put down on his knees in pain. After that goes nowhere, Lawler plugs Diesel's house show matches against Backlund which in a word, really didn't draw. Jerry goes on and on about Backlund or Bret hurting Diesel until Lawler gets thrown to the floor. This took FOREVER and allegedly was taped more than once because the fans just did not care.

Another tournament recap, but only of a single first round match. Egads what a slow time.

Rich Myers vs. Kwang

Myers actually gets in a few shots before missing a running flip, allowing Kwang to punch him in the face and blow some mist. The match is so boring that we cut to a HOWARD FINKEL promo where he apologizes for pulling Harvey Wippleman's pants down. A dragon screw leg whip (So he's the American....er Puerto Rican Muta?) and the spinwheel kick finally put

Myers away.

We get a promo from boxer Vinny Pazienza about his fight against Roberto Duran. Vinny wants to fight Shawn next. I want to hurt this show.

Video on Kama, who is coming as well.

Ted DiBiase agrees to Luger/Bulldog vs. Bigelow/Tatanka next week.

Undertaker vs. Brooklyn Brawler

This is the big match they've hyped up all night. Undertaker boots him in the face and drops him with a belly to back suplex of all things. Not quite Old School drops Brawler again before Undertaker sends him shoulder first into the post. The Tombstone finally wraps this up.

Rating: D. What do you want me to say here? This was a total squash with the Undertaker facing the Brooklyn Brawler. Vince said this was the Undertaker's first match on Raw in three months. I'm not sure whether that's sad or a relief that he didn't have to be associated with this mess.

IRS and the Druids come out to stare at Undertaker to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. This might have been the show of the month. It's such a horrible time for the show and the promotion as a whole as they had no idea what they were doing or where they wanted to go. I mean, Diesel vs. Bob Backlund, which started in an eight second match, is their big house show draw. What do you think is going to happen?

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Monday Night Raw – December 19, 1994: Even Santa Has Given Up

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 19, 1994

Location: Liberty High School, Liberty, New York

Attendance: 1,400

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

It's a double main event tonight with Lex Luger vs. IRS and Well Dunn vs. Bushwhackers II! Now how in the world could this not be the best show of the year so far? We're also starting to get kind of close to the Royal Rumble but the only thing mentioned so far has been the Tag Team Title match with participants to be announced. Maybe we can get a Christmas miracle or something. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

IRS vs. Lex Luger

Luger has what looks like the most bored kid in history carry the American flag to the ring. Lex shoves him down to start as Shawn calls him the Total Package. Vince is trying to figure out who the Druids are and thinks it could be either King Kong Bundy or Tatanka. That's so stupid I'm not even sure how to make fun of it. A hiptoss and slam put IRS down and there's an AMERICAN (though not a Real American because that's been taken) clothesline to give Luger a near fall.

IRS sends Lex outside though and the Druid (who apparently weighs somewhere between 240 and 450lbs) posts him to give his boss (I guess?)

control. We see some rings on the Druid's hand, which Vince says look familiar. He doesn't say where he's seen them of course but they do look familiar.

We take a break and come back with IRS dropping some elbows for two more. It's off to the chinlock before DiBiase offers some advice. Apparently he said "drop a leg and cover", only to have Luger come back with right hands (Shawn: "Luger punches like a girl."). The Druid trips Luger up and slaps him though, triggering a brawl which leads to a countout win for IRS.

Rating: D. Another lame match but at least it was shorter this time around. The Million Dollar Team is still one of the worst stables I've ever seen though as the thing just keeps going with nothing interesting going on in the slightest. I mean, IRS as the main wrestler just isn't going to work no matter what you do with him. He's fine as a midcard guy but they're actually making him the focus. That's almost frightening.

The Druid is Tatanka.

We recap the first round of the Tag Team Title tournament.

The Bushwhackers are getting the Fink ready by rubbing sardines in his face.

Jeff Jarrett runs into comedian Rip Taylor at Bally's in Las Vegas. This continues to be bad.

Smoking Gunns vs. Roy Raymond/Chris Avery

Billy and Raymond get things going as we hear about the Gunns entering rodeo competitions. Well that's better than entering toughman competitions on live television. Bart suplexes Roy as the announcers break down the upcoming Bushwhackers vs. Well Dunn match. Avery comes in and has about the same success until he pulls some hair to take over....for all of two seconds. Bart hiptosses him again as Shawn just lays into Vince for his obsession with cowboys. A powerbomb/top rope legdrop combo finally puts Chris away.

Rating: D. The Smoking Gunns are one of the most successful teams from

one of the worst eras in tag team history. Until we FINALLY got to Owen/Bulldog as champions in 1996, the titles died more and more every single week. Teams like the Godwinns didn't help things and it's no wonder that the Gunns stayed on top so long.

Speaking of which, Henry Godwinn debuts next week.

This week's King's Court has Bob Backlund as a guest. They're milking the heck out of this guy. Lawler isn't pleased with Jack Tunney ripping Backlund off in something he doesn't explain well enough. Backlund knows what he is and knows where the plebeians stand. The fans chant EIGHT SECONDS (the amount of time it took for Diesel to beat Backlund) as Bob uses a bunch of big words.

Enough of that though as Backlund talks about hurting Bret Hart at Survivor Series. It was like he was putting the chickenwing on all the people at once. Bob is happy to face Bret at any time, whenever he comes back. Finally, Bob wants to talk about Diesel, who stole the title from him. Backlund: "Kevin Nash, you're like a neanderthal." Shawn: "Did you hear that Vince? KEVIN NASH!" The hatred in Vince's voice is great. Bob calls Nash the tyrannosaurus rex of the WWF, meaning he'll be extinct soon due to a chickenwing.

Bob Holly vs. Chris Canyon

Yes that Canyon (well Canyon), who is in a weird purple half singlet and gold trunks. Holly armdrags him into an armbar to start, only to get caught in a belly to back suplex for two. It's off to a chinlock from Bob (not something you often see from a face) as Shawn brags about himself to kill time. Holly slams him down and drops a top rope elbow for the pin.

Rating: D-. A lot of that is due to the bizarre color combination on Canyon. Seriously it was that distracting. Holly continues to be one of those guys who was watchable in the ring but never had a chance because of the ridiculous gimmick he was stuck with. Canyon would do better later on of course.

Here's a Royal Rumble control center with Bret vs. Diesel being announced for the first time on Raw. Diesel says Bret has jumped right on this

title match idea by naming the time and place. He isn't sure how Bret has gotten away with wearing pink for so long because a real man wears black with a little gold. At the Rumble, they'll both be black and blue.

We also get the first ten entrants for the Rumble itself. This just makes me sad.

Well Dunn vs. Bushwhackers

The managers are the big draw here. Again, this just makes me sad. The Bushwhackers clean house again to start with both villains being knocked to the floor. Even the Fink gets to do some whacking. We settle down to Dunn taking over on Butch, only to have Luke dragged inside to send Dunn into Well. Luke gets kicked in the ribs from the apron and Well comes in with a top rope elbow to the jaw. Dunn dives into a raised boot and it's off to Butch for more clotheslines. Harvey tries to interfere but Fink pulls him down by the pants, allowing Butch to roll Well up for the pin.

Rating: D. Somehow, this might have been a big step up over their first match. Well Dunn was clearly never going anywhere and somehow this was more about the fighting managers than anything else. At least we got the comedy spot at the end because this would have been a waste of time otherwise.

Santa Claus sits on Mabel's lap for whatever reason. Comedy I believe.

Jim Neidhart vs. Nick Barberri

Neidhart yells at the Spanish announcers for some reason. Forearms put Nick down and a backdrop sends him over the top. Back in and a bad camel clutch makes Nick give up. This was it for Neidhart for a few years for whatever reason.

One more Rumble preview and a look at next week's card wraps things up.

Overall Rating: D. Dang 1995 is looking better every week. I can't get over the fact that they thought Well Dunn vs. Bushwhackers II was going to be an interesting draw. You really can tell that they're taking some time off at this point and it's getting more and more pitiful every single week.

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Monday Night Raw – December 12, 1994: How Bob Backlund Is Like Steve Austin

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 12, 1994

Location: Liberty High School, Liberty, New York

Attendance: 1,400

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

So I just knocked out the show from the previous week and it occurs to me that I could actually get a lot of these done in a hurry. At this point I've done just under half of the episode of Monday Night Raw and I really could add to that with a lot of the earlier years. Therefore, I might as well take care of some of them as I could do a month's worth of shows in the time it takes me to do a single pay per view. Let's get to it.

Bob Backlund rants about Doink besmirching the WWF and leading it into hypocrisy.

Doink is ready to show off his amateur background. What a bizarre main

event choice.

Opening sequence.

Bob Backlund vs. Doink the Clown

I'd like to remind you that Backlund was WWF World Champion about two and a half weeks ago. I can't get over the fact that they're actually in a high school gym. It's something you would expect to make a TNA joke over but here it is on Raw. Doink comes out for a distraction so Doink can jump Backlund from behind. Maybe Backlund is right about Doink being evil.

Back up and they stare at each other for a bit as the fans are entirely behind Doink. Backlund takes him down and rides him a bit until Doink grabs the ropes for the save. So we've got a crazy man and a clown having an amateur wrestling match. I guess Vince was right with his "anything can happen in the World Wrestling Federation" line. A nice amateur trip sets up a rollup for two on Bob, who has a bunch of Doink's makeup on his back.

Backlund has to flip out of a headscissors before walking into a hiptoss for two. They get up again and Bob nails him with a hard forearm to the face before starting in on the arm. We take a break and come back with Bob holding a Fujiwara armbar. That's too interesting so it's off to a regular wristlock as Shawn keeps talking about managing Backlund. How bored were they to come up with this kind of stuff?

Somehow we're about ten minutes into this match (not counting the commercial) as Backlund works on a hammerlock. Doink FINALLY comes back with a middle rope cross body and a small package for two, only to miss an elbow drop. That means the chickenwing to make Doink tap.

Rating: F. There was a match back in 2001 with Steve Austin vs. Chris Benoit where Austin started doing a bunch of amateur stuff to shock Benoit. The thing is, that match worked because Austin knew how to play to a crowd and make the match fun. Other than an interesting idea here, this was one of the least interesting things I've seen in a long time as Doink could have been anyone and had the same match. That's never a good thing and made for a waste of the one good idea they had here.

We look at the brackets for the Tag Team Title tournament.

Tatanka/Bam Bam Bigelow

Men on a Mission

Headshrinkers

Jim Neidhart/Owen Hart

Heavenly Bodies

Bushwhackers

Smoking Gunns

Well Dunn

Shawn has no thoughts on the tournament because he isn't involved. Instead, he shows us some Raw on SNES. There's even a VHS with tips and strategies. Allow me to simplify things: punch and kick a lot then pin the other guy.

Jeff Jarrett is moving to Las Vegas and is going to have a sweepstakes. Uh...yeah.

Razor Ramon vs. Mark Starr

Non-title of course. Razor starts with the driving shoulders as Shawn makes fun of Barbara Walters. Some very loud chops have Starr reeling but he gets in a cross body. Razor actually botches the catch into the fall away slam but is smart enough to turn it into a knee injury to protect himself. That kind of on the fly thinking is never seen these days and it's sad. Razor just blasts him with a forearm though and it's the belly to back superplex and Razor's Edge for the easy pin.

Rating: D. That knee injury thing was such a breath of air. I mean, the match was still a squash but it was so nice to see them not just waste time and make the match look fake. Nothing else to see here, though Starr would actually be put in a low level tag team in WCW in a few years.

Make-A-Wish ad.

It's time for another King's Court which really is the best way to showcase Lawler at this point. In this case, he tells the kids to close their eyes and imagine what they'll get for Christmas. "Now what do you see? Nothing! Exactly what you'll get!" The guest tonight is IRS, who has Undertaker's druids with him as part of one of the lamest feuds in company history.

Lawler wants to talk about athletes making a fortune and then charging for autographs. On top of that (which is really pitiful in the first place), they're not even paying taxes. The biggest tax cheat of them all though is the Undertaker, who claims to have the power of the urn. IRS however has the power of the Million Dollar Man's money, which is more than enough to make Undertaker pay. Also, IRS is going to make Lex Luger pay next week and promises to have friends behind him.

Hakushi is still coming.

Aldo Montoya vs. Nick Barberri

Montoya recently turned down a spot on Ted DiBiase's Million Dollar Team and Shawn just rips him apart for his decision. Nick tries to get Montoya in an early wheelbarrow slam only to be sent throat first into the middle rope. Harvey Wippleman comes out to watch as Aldo cranks on an armbar. Barberri sends him into the buckle as we're promised Well Dunn vs. the Bushwhackers AGAIN next week. Egads what is wrong with this company? Aldo makes his comeback as Shawn points out that Montoya's mask is a jockstrap. Montoya finishes with a quick middle rope bulldog.

Wippleman yells at the Fink, who will be in the Bushwhackers' corner next week.

Clips from the 100th episode of WWF Mania.

King Kong Bundy vs. Bobby Knight

Knight (dang I wish it was the famous one) bounces off Bundy to start and is sent hard into the post for his efforts. Back in and Bundy yells a lot

before actually going to the middle rope, only to have Knight bail to the floor out of self preservation. Bundy slowly pounds him down and finishes with the Avalanche (big splash) for a five count.

Rating: D. Yeah what do you want from me here? This was longer than it needed to be and there's only so much you can get out of King Kong Bundy in 1994. Nothing to see here, as is so often the case with most of the shows from this era. Bundy was actually a decent choice for a monster with no upside, which is what he needed to be for the most part.

Santa Claus comes out and gives Shawn a toy Ladies Title to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. Oh yeah this was bad. That Santa bit at the end was the best thing of the night and it was all of a minute long. It's bad enough that it's this year and now I have to sit through the Christmas season as well, meaning everyone isn't interested in trying? Horrible show here and one of the weakest I've ever seen. At least it was short though.

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