

Monday Night Raw – December 22, 1997: Russo Done Right

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 22, 1997

Location: Memorial Auditorium, Lowell, Massachusetts

Attendance: 2,403

Commentators: Jim Ross, Michael Cole, Kevin Kelly, Jim Cornette

It's the Christmas show and things are really starting to find their groove. The Royal Rumble is coming soon and it's getting clearer and clearer every week that Steve Austin is the next guy. However we still have Undertaker vs. Kane and Undertaker vs. Shawn to go, as well as Owen Hart running around. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of last week's show with the LOD being destroyed by D-Generation X and the New Age Outlaws.

Opening sequence.

The arena has a Christmas theme with wreaths and snow falling.

Here's D-Generation X with the guys in bathrobes. Shawn asks if all the little boys have been good this year. Before they get their presents though, HHH has a little bit of business to take care of. The Legion of Doom had a great fifteen year career taken down in a single night by D-Generation X. However, the New Age Outlaws want credit for what happened, but they would be best served by staying out of D-Generation X's business.

As for Owen Hart, HHH won the Rock, Paper, Scissors competition last week and now he gets Owen served to him on a silver platter. HHH tells Owen what he can suck on and now it's time for Shawn to address Undertaker. Back in the Cell, Shawn gave Undertaker the beating of his life and he's never going to lay down in a casket. Finally it's time for the present. D-Generation X disrobes to reveal Christmas boxers, which are lowered to reveal.....something censored by D-Generation X logos. I think I'm better

off not knowing here.

This brings out Slaughter, who points out that Shawn hasn't defended the European Title in sixty days so he can either defend it tonight or be stripped of the belt. Shawn is fine with that, so Slaughter makes Shawn vs. HHH for the title later tonight. They tease a quick argument but everything seems to be fine.

Thrasher vs. Henry Godwinn

On the way to the ring, Henry says the Outlaws owe he and Phineas a title shot. Thrasher crashes into him in the corner and hits a quick cross body for two, drawing in Phineas for the DQ in just over a minute.

The Godwinns lay out the Headbangers and beat them with leather straps.

We recap Dude Love vs. the Outlaws over the last two weeks.

Mankind says that when the Outlaws hurt Dude Love's ribs, they hurt his too. Since they've ruined his eggnog drinking for the year, it's better for him to give the Outlaws a beating than to receive one, starting tonight.

After last week's show, Santa Claus showed up to ask Sable if she had been naughty or nice. Instead he got a kid, who didn't think he was the real Santa. Incensed, Santa throws the kid out. Cue Steve Austin to ask if this is the real Santa either. If it's the real Santa, what did Austin want when he was six years old? Santa thinks it was a Barbie and tiddlywinks. That earns Santa a Stunner and the fans are WAY too excited. Cornette: "He cracked Kris' kringle!"

HHH and Shawn can be heard arguing behind closed doors.

The Rock vs. The Undertaker

Non-title. The Nation offers an early distraction and Rock gets in some right hands, only to charge into a boot in the corner. Another big boot gets two and it's time to crank on the wrist. Old School is loaded up but Paul Bearer comes out for a distraction, allowing Kama to crotch Undertaker for the save. This match might be a bit overbooked. Back from

a break with Rock stomping him down in the corner, followed by the Elbow for two.

Off to a nerve hold on Undertaker as the announcers are talking about what a big win this would be for Rocky. Again, it's not hard to tell a story on commentary. Undertaker's comeback is stopped with a low blow and it's back to the nerve hold. The second attempt at a comeback works a bit better with the chokeslam knocking Rocky silly. A tombstone plants Rock but here's Kane for the no contest.

Rating: C. These two never had the best chemistry but you could see the future of the Rock coming out here. Undertaker was still in his groove at this point and it was cool to see him selling so much for someone a few rungs beneath him. Good enough match, though the Kane ending was pretty obvious.

Bearer calls Undertaker a sham of a man who ran from Kane last week. Another mention of Undertaker's dead parents is enough to make Undertaker lunge for Bearer but Kane punches him back. Undertaker grabs Kane by the throat but lets go and gets beaten into the corner without putting up a fight.

We recap the first hour.

Hour #2 begins.

European Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn is defending but Owen Hart runs in and nails HHH during the entrances. Slaughter comes out to break it up and Shawn claims conspiracy. Back from a break and, in what is becoming WAY too common of a custom, we replay exactly what we just saw. The match will take place later.

The New Age Outlaws search for Mankind in the bowels of the building but beat up someone who just happened to be down there.

Marc Mero vs. Scott Taylor

Before the match, Mero tells Sable to come out here in her special

outfit, which is a full body reindeer costume. Cornette is livid as Sable doesn't want to come to the ring. The reindeer's nose lights up and Mero throws her out. After the opening bell, Sable takes off the reindeer head and Mero is already distracted. Taylor fires off some chops and sends Marc face first into the mat. A rollup gets two for Scott and that flipping double kick to the back gets the same, only to have Mero grab the TKO for the fast pin.

Mero hits Taylor low post match and loads up another TKO, only to have Brandi come in for the save. Sable takes off the reindeer gear to reveal a rather fetching Mrs. Clause outfit.

HHH says he has everything to gain tonight.

Kurrgan vs. 8-Ball

8-Ball goes after the knee to start but his right hands in the corner have almost no effect. Jackyl keeps talking on a live mic at ringside and the distraction lets Kurrgan get in a cheap shot. Back in and some clotheslines put Kurrgan on his knee but Jackyl grabs his foot. Kurrgan's sideslam is enough for the pin.

Recon and Sniper come in to triple team 8-Bull but Skull makes the save with a 2x4.

The Outlaws still can't find Mankind.

Ken Shamrock vs. D'Lo Brown

Shamrock gets right to the point by taking Brown to the mat by the leg. A fireman's carry and a headlock takeover have D'Lo in even more trouble as the announcers give us one of the first discussions of the Royal Rumble. The belly to belly sets up the ankle lock to make Brown give up.

The Nation is ready to go after Shamrock but the Rock calls them off. Now, Rock knows that his fans want to know how he feels about the Gulf Crisis. Well maybe he'll get into that another day, because now he wants to call the UFC a bunch of has been's. Rock is in a giving mood tonight though and offers Shamrock an Intercontinental Title shot at the Royal Rumble.

Shawn says he's fixing D-Generation X tonight.

The Outlaws find Mankind, who beats the tar out of them as he sings The Christmas Song. Eventually they get him into a walk-in freezer and lock him inside.

Here are Goldust and Luna in with Goldust as a Christmas tree and Luna in a silver two piece swimsuit. Not quite the traditional look, with Cornette describing it as what happened when the nuclear power plant was installed near the North Pole. Goldust reads A Visit From St. Nicholas (the real name of the poem most commonly known as The Night Before Christmas) in a very stereotypical high pitched voice. The real Santa comes out to give candy to the fans before he knocks the coal out of Goldust. As you might expect, it's Vader. Cornette: "I thought it was a jolly fat man in a red suit, and it was!"

European Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn is defending, meaning nothing has really changed in the last hour. There's no contact for the first minute before they lock up. HHH shoves him down, runs the ropes for about fifteen seconds, and covers Shawn for the pin after no action.

HHH celebrates like he just won the WWF World Title to end the show. Shawn starts to cry and says he's never been so emotionally and physically drained after a match. HHH channels Rocky Balboa and says "YO SARGE, I DID IT!" Slaughter laughs and says, without a microphone, that HHH is defending against Owen Hart last week. D-Generation X has no idea to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This is what Russo is capable of when he has someone to funnel his ideas into a watchable show. There are still some kinks that need ironing out but the show is still coherent enough and the stories were all advanced tonight. If you cut stuff like the Henry vs. Thrasher match and probably Kurrigan's squash and added that time onto some of the matches, you would have one heck of a show here. Still though, the year is closing out on a hot streak, which is a really nice surprise.

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: August 31, 2015

So....yeah I've missed these for a few weeks. I know I missed the week before this but it's a stretch to do one of these for this show and going back another week would be even worse. Anyway, it's eight days after Summerslam and Sting is back to go after Seth Rollins, despite having losing his only match in the company. Let's get to it.

We opened with Sting and that still doesn't feel right in WWE. Sting was out there to talk about Rollins, but this somehow turned into a love fest for HHH. His speech was about how losing to HHH (who hit him in the head with a sledgehammer) earned his respect and Rollins will never be half the man that HHH is. Sting is going to prove that Rollins hasn't earned the respect that he's claiming, which is Sting's entire character in a nutshell.

In other words, this feud is now going to be about HHH, because it sets up the feud with HHH vs. Rollins, which has been coming for months now it seems. I like the idea, but it would be a bit nicer if these were shades of gray instead of just making it clear that this is where the feud is

going. I'm still not sure if Sting wins the title or not, though they seem to be making it a bit too clear that Sheamus is cashing in. I know WWE likes to beat things over our heads because they think we're idiots, but this is almost too obvious. Therefore, I'm thinking Rollins retains over Sting, which almost guarantees that Sting gets the belt.

Rollins wanted his statue so Stephanie made sure to praise HHH a bit (made sense here for a change) before telling him to go ask Sting. This would be another segment that really didn't change anything but why bother with something like that?

Rusev and Ziggler had a long match that ended in a DQ because this is destined to end in a mixed tag. Well at least it was. Now the interesting part here was where this went for the rest of the night, as Summer would be seen sneaking into Ziggler locker room before then running off screaming as Ziggler came out mostly sans clothing.

This got us into a soap opera which has been going ever since and I hate to admit the fact that I'm kind of loving it. Above all else: they've given me a reason to care. There's a story here that is so over the top and ridiculous that it's hard not to get sucked in, even though I know it's bad. It helps that Rusev is left playing the role of muscle while everyone else does the drama, which is a much better fit for him. Well done all around Well that and Lana's new outfit. That's kind of a big plus too.

The best thing about this story though is I'm not sure if Ziggler cheated on Lana or not. Granted it's about as low stake as you can get, but there's always something good about not knowing where a story is going. It could be either ending here, though hopefully it ends with Ziggler going full on heel again because Dolph being noble and loyal to Lana doesn't fit him in the slightest.

One of the other big stories of the night was Team PCB having a Beat the Clock Challenge for the right to face Nikki Bella for the title at Night of Champions. Charlotte wound up winning in something not really surprising, but I lost almost all interest in the Divas division (yeah it's not a revolution, no matter how many times they've hammered it into

our head that it's a revolution) after the last month wasting our time. The matches were nothing special because of how short the time was, but at least we're FINALLY getting to the title hunt, even if it means we have to listen to Nikki talk about being some empowered woman or whatever.

Ryback beat Big Show in a short match thanks to Miz, which seems to be the blowoff for this feud. I can't say I'm complaining as I really didn't need to see these three fight any longer. Big Show still seems to want to go after Miz, but at least they can't be fighting over a title anytime soon. The match was short and a way for Ryback to show off his power, which he's done about a dozen times on Big Show, which is why the company thinks it's so impressive.

Kevin Owens beat Cesaro in a really good Summerslam rematch where Owens knocked him ribs first into the announcers' table to injure Cesaro's ribs. This was a good win for Owens and wraps up their feud, unfortunately with Cesaro getting swept but fortunately with no rubber match that WWE loves to put on. Owens seems primed for a shot at the Intercontinental Title and that's a great spot for him right now, whether he wins the title or not.

Braun Strowman squashed Dean Ambrose, which is the best thing that he could have done for his first official match. The guy is a monster and he can tear a path of destruction for a few months until someone finally knocks him off. Just don't make it obvious that he's going to eventually be knocked off and everything will be fine.

The Dudleyz beat New Day in a non-title match because they have to have a champion lose once every few weeks, just to keep them interesting you see. Also because they don't have any other teams to beat down besides the ones with the titles. More on that next week.

The big segment to end the show had Rollins demanding his statue back but being told by the Authority that he has to defend both titles at Night of Champions. Stephanie talked a lot but I usually get lost when she talks because all I can hear are buzzwords and charities that I'll never hear of again because Stephanie has moved on to something else for her cause

of the month. She does quite a few charity bits no?

Overall, Raw was a really solid show this week with almost everything serving a purpose or at least being good. Night of Champions is looking like an awesome show instead of the filler show that it so often is. We're still waiting on that statue to be destroyed but I'm sure it's going down soon enough. Good week this time though as they're actually hot right now.

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Monday Night Raw – September 7, 2015: They Certainly Got The Labor Part Right

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 7, 2015

Location: Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton, Michael Cole

It's a holiday show, which means we might not be in for the most action packed episode this week. Coming out of this weekend, the question is what does John Cena's potential injury mean for Seth Rollins and his

double title defenses? WWE has said Cena isn't injured, but there's always a chance it's going to be addressed. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Seth Rollins gets things going this week and tells us about how special he is. Until he cashed in Money in the Bank at Wrestlemania, everyone believed Brock Lesnar was invincible. Then he knocked John Cena off the pedestal and became the first man to hold both the US and World Titles at the same time. Yes Seth we know. Much like everyone else in WWE, you feel the need to repeat the same lines over and over because it gets them talking on Facebook or something.

Anyway, he had a statue, Sting stole it, and now Rollins wants to crush Sting's legacy as a result. Seth can do that by beating Sting at Night of Champions, but then he has to deal with Cena, who has politicked his way into the title scene again. That presented a problem but then Rollins remembered who he was. This has been his year so he'll solve this problem just like any other.

Rollins wants his statue back so here's Sting on screen, standing next to the statue. Come and get it he says, so Rollins says he's not afraid. Cue Sheamus instead who asks if Seth is worried about Sunday. Seth is worried about his statue instead but he makes sure to call Sheamus Ronald McDonald with a bad haircut. Sheamus: "Leave my family out of this." Sheamus teases cashing in at Night of Champions.

Post break Seth goes to see Stephanie to ask if HHH has a plan. After Stephanie gets annoyed at Seth for not thinking she can handle this (you have to get that Stephanie praise in there you see), HHH comes in and Rollins is relieved. HHH makes things even worse though as he makes Rollins vs. Ryback and Rollins/New Day vs. Prime Time Players/John Cena. Stephanie says she thought Rollins should go after Sting but Rollins wanted to hear HHH's idea.

Paige vs. Sasha Banks

Rematch from last week where Paige only had about a minute and a half to beat Sasha, meaning she came up short. Paige throws Sasha around to start

and elbows her in the corner, only to have her kick caught, setting up Sasha's double knees in the corner for two. Back from a break with Sasha getting another near fall and throwing on a chinlock.

Paige quickly fights out but gets pulled off the middle rope to give Sasha another near fall. Sasha's cross body is nearly countered into the Rampaige but Banks gets to the floor. Back in and a quick wheelbarrow suplex gives Paige two but Naomi comes in for a distraction, allowing Paige to grab a small package for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. It's a nice match but the commentary suggests that the Divas Title match will indeed be at Night of Champions rather than next week as was hinted at on Smackdown. Therefore, this was another match that is meant to fill in time until we can get the big Nikki Bella moment that we've all been waiting for, meaning this has been another ten minutes of your time wasted.

Ascension vs. Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Now, on Smackdown, Ascension was made to look tough again when they beat up Neville. I'm sure WWE wouldn't totally waste that by having them get squashed here and act like Smackdown meant nothing. Dean beats Viktor up to start before it's off to Roman for more of the same. That's fine with Reigns who punches out both Ascension members with ease before Dean comes in with a suicide dive. The apron boot to Viktor sets up the Superman Punch and a Doomsday Device of all things, which sets up the spear. Dirty Deeds puts Viktor away at 2:53.

Post match the Wyatts come on screen to say the apocalypse is at Night of Champions.

That being said, SCREW YOU WWE! You set something up on Smackdown and you can't send out Los freaking Matadores do job here? No of course not, because why do that when Ascension is there? Geez they make Smackdown worthless by their own actions.

Ryback says Rollins whines a lot and is an architect but tonight, Ryback's plans are a Meathook and Shell Shock. Kevin Owens comes up to wish Ryback good luck and warns him not to bite off more than he can

chew.

We recap Lana/Dolph Ziggler/Rusev/Summer Rae. There's even a narrator for this.

Ryback vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title and in a VERY cool thing, Ryback lets a kid hold the Intercontinental Title. The announcers are too busy getting in their talking points to notice of course. Rollins bails outside and hits the stall button to start. A shoulder sends Rollins right back to the floor but Ryback is patient enough to stay inside. Rollins gets rammed into the corner as the announcers argue over whether or not Sting stole the statue. As in the thing he doesn't own that he took.

Ryback stays on the arm before chopping Seth down with ease. The delayed vertical suplex, with Ryback walking around the ring, gets two on Seth. Rollins gets Ryback out to the floor and tries a suicide dive, only to have Ryback catch him in midair. Ryback is whipped into various metal objects and it's time for another break. Back with Seth getting two off a neckbreaker and putting on a chinlock.

Ryback punches him in the face and sends Seth flying with a backdrop. A powerbomb and the low superkick are both countered but the second attempt at the powerbomb connects for two. For some reason Ryback goes to the top but has to break up Seth's superplex attempt. The top rope splash misses and Rollins baseball slides Ryback outside.

There's the suicide dive but Ryback is still able to beat the count. Back in and Seth charges into a spinebuster but he escapes Shell Shock and nails an enziguri. This brings up Sting to say the statue is waiting for Rollins, allowing Ryback to grab a small package for the pin at 18:45, good for the second distraction into a small package finish of the night.

Rating: B-. This a better finish, this is a much higher grade. It's a bad sign when they're already reusing a finish less than an hour and twenty minutes into the show but you can't expect them to think of that much on their own. Ryback getting the pin is a nice surprise though as he's one of the best Intercontinental Champions in years.

Sting pops up again and puts a Sting mask on the statue.

Rollins (yes again with Rollins) is looking for his statue but here's New Day to interrupt with a trombone recital. Seth yells at them but runs into Edge and Christian who are here for the Steve Austin Show. Edge brings up Rollins threatening to kill him to get the Authority back and wants a fight right now. Rollins bails so Woods wants a musical battle. This means the return of the KAZOO!

Edge thinks New Day sucks but Big E. eats the kazoo. Well he stuck it in his mouth and threw it out but we'll say he ate it. The Dudleyz come up and tell New Day that the Prime Time Players get a title shot next week. The winners of that face the Dudleyz at Night of Champions. New Day freaks out but Bubba says now they can leave. Oh and the Dudleyz have a new song: GET! THE TABLES! GET! THE TABLES! With rhythmic clapping of course. Well that was awesome.

Here's Summer Rae, who is sad over everything that happened last week. We get the recap again, with Cole saying it "gripped the world." No Cole, it didn't. Also, Ziggler and Lana are WWE's power couple. Yes, he said power couple. Summer wants to apologize to the person who has been hurt so much in all this: Rusev.

This brings Rusev out so Summer can thank him for all of his inspiration. Last week when Ziggler invited her into his locker room, everything was just too much for her and she temporarily betrayed him. Rusev forgives her so Lana says "thank you Ru Ru." Rusev rips on Ziggler a bit, so here's Dolph with a message from Lana (who is out with a broken wrist) in the form of a superkick. I hate myself for starting to love this story.

Randy Orton vs. Sheamus

Yes, AGAIN. Orton quickly takes him down in an armbar, likely because he's so bored by this pairing that he needs a rest. Back up and they're still in the feeling out process until a shoulder puts Sheamus on the floor. Sheamus gets back in and heads outside almost immediately (same idea as Rollins earlier). He yells at the fans on the mic but catches Orton coming out with the Irish Curse as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus holding a chinlock, followed by the Regal Roll. He demands that everyone respect the hawk and snaps Orton's throat across the top. The battering ram from the top gets two and the fans are really not interested here. The Cloverleaf doesn't work so Sheamus resurrects the Edgeucator (a Sharpshooter but with Sheamus pushing on the legs instead of pulling). Orton makes the ropes and comes back with the hanging DDT, only to charge into White Noise for two. The Brogue Kick misses though and the RKO ends Sheamus at 15:49.

Rating: C-. Not only was it boring but it wasn't even that good. These two just do not have chemistry and they've bored the crowd so many times now that I'm sick of both of them. I'm a fan of both guys but it's not an interesting match. Never let these two fight again and the show will be a lot more entertaining.

Post match the Wyatts surround Orton, who was seen talking to Reigns and Orton earlier. Orton gets destroyed by all three monsters and Reigns/Ambrose aren't even nice enough to come out for a save.

Cole calls next week the season premiere, which of course is taking place on the show before a pay per view because THEY CAN'T EVEN GET A SCHEDULE RIGHT WHEN THEY MAKE UP THESE ARBITRARY DATES IN THE FIRST PLACE!!!

Los Matadores vs. Dudley Boyz

Diego takes Bubba down to start and the masked men get in some quick fast paced offense. That's the extent of the good for them though as D-Von comes in to clean house and 3D ends Fernando at 1:38.

Post match Los Matadores blame El Torito so the Dudleyz make the save. Fernando goes through a table.

Cesaro vs. The Miz

This is fallout from earlier tonight when Cesaro turned down Miz's offer to help publicize the Cesaro Section. Cesaro takes him down to start and easily throws Miz to the floor for some more of the beating. The fans are behind Cesaro as you might expect but Miz kicks Cesaro in the still banged up ribs to take over. Cesaro flips over the top rope because he's

athletic like that, only to get dropped ribs first onto the top rope. Miz kicks him to the floor and sends Cesaro into the barricade a few times but here's Big Show to chase Miz around, causing a double countout at 4:17.

Rating: D-. So now we're doing Miz vs. Big Show vs. Cesaro? As in they're doing the same story they just did but with Cesaro instead of Ryback? This show has been a mess so far and it's not getting any better as it goes on. Can we please get something interesting instead of this lame stuff all over again?

Back from a break and it's Bella time. Nikki shows off the Bellatron and invites us all to the Bellabration next week when she breaks the record. This brings out PCB, with Charlotte making the announcement that she'll be challenging Nikki for the title next week instead of at Night of Champions. A brawl ensues and Nikki taps to the Figure Eight.

John Cena/Prime Time Players vs. New Day/Seth Rollins

A fan tries to follow Rollins to the ring but he's quickly stopped by security. Cena and Rollins get things going but it's off to Big E. before anything can happen. The NEW DAY SUCKS headlock goes on as Woods plays the trombone. Woods: "Cena's gonna learn today what some tricep meat feels like!" E. shoves Cena around as JBL does his best JR impression by making some football analogy that doesn't go anywhere. The belly to belly gets two on Cena and it's off to Rollins for some stomps. Big E. tags himself back in for the rotating stomps and Seth doesn't get the idea.

Back from a break with Kofi getting two on Cena off a high cross body. The SOS gets two more and Rollins breaks up a hot tag attempt. It's back to Big E. as Woods sits on the steps for some tromboning. E. misses the Warrior Splash and Titus finally gets the tag to clean house. Everything breaks down and Darren gives Woods the Gut Check, only to have Big E. suplexes Titus down. Cena and Rollins get tags and the Pedigree is countered into the STF, only to have Rollins get to the corner for the tag to Kofi. The second high cross body is rolled through into the AA to put Kofi down at 13:08.

Rating: C. Yeah fine. It's one of the better things on the show and

that's a nice improvement after everything else we've had to go through tonight. Cena pinning Kofi is fine as New Day is firmly in a spot where they can get their heat back with one set of antics and a loss means little.

Cena does the Millions of Dollars dance before leaving Rollins alone in the ring. Sting appears on screen in front of the statue. The lights come up and the statue is in front of a garbage truck. I think you can guess what happens. Rollins grabs his titles to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This was one of those shows where you were punished for being a fan. They didn't put in any effort on this one because no one. The worst part about this show is that it could have been good but they were clearly not trying. It was one of those shows where they were just here to fill in time before the real stuff starts up again next week on the season premiere, which can't be after Night of Champions because of reasons.

This show felt like it went on for about eight hours, but that's what you have to expect on a holiday. Of course they can't do something special here because they don't want to waste it, even though they never actually use these special ideas that they're allegedly saving. Not the worst show ever this week, but it was a LONG sit that would have been far better at two hours. I didn't say good, but at least better.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Paige – Small package

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns b. Ascension – Dirty Deeds to Viktor

Ryback b. Seth Rollins – Small package

Randy Orton b. Sheamus – RKO

Dudley Boyz b. Los Matadores – 3D to Fernando

Cesaro vs. The Miz went to a double countout

John Cena/Prime Time Players b. New Day/Seth Rollins – Attitude

Adjustment to Kingston

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Monday Night Raw – August 31, 2015: Male Cheerleaders And The Periodic Table

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 31, 2015

Location: Amalie Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Last week saw the return of Sting and the disappearance of a statue, meaning tonight is likely to continue the time honored tradition of destroying that statue once and for all. Sting vs. Seth Rollins for the WWE World Title is confirmed for Night of Champions, but what about Rollins' US Title? John Cena is still lurking so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's closing segment where Sting appeared in the statue's place. HHH made the match after the show went off the air.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sting (with complete face paint this week) to open things up. JBL: "The man who put Starrcade on the map!" Just...no. Under no circumstances can that be considered correct. Sting hasn't been around much since Wrestlemania where he lost to HHH. Due to that match, he'll always have respect for HHH, but now his sights are set on Seth Rollins.

Ever since Wrestlemania it has been injustice after injustice and last week he had to hear Seth Rollins comparing himself to names like Bruno Sammartino, Andre the Giant and the Ultimate Warrior. Sting has won titles around the world but there is one that has eluded him throughout his career. At Night of Champions, Sting is going to prove that Rollins isn't half the man HHH is and that Rollins can't hang with Sting on his best day.

Rollins is upset but Stephanie talks him down. Seth lists his accomplishments this year and calls everything Sting said wrong. Stephanie brings up Sting's comparison to HHH and thinks Sting is absolutely right. Seth wants his statue so Stephanie suggests he go ask Sting.

Rusev vs. Dolph Ziggler

An attempt at a single leg doesn't get Dolph anywhere so he dropkicks Rusev in the face instead. Back in and Rusev slowly stomps Ziggler down, as is his custom. We get a dueling Rusev chant, followed by Dolph missing a splash in the corner. The sleeper slows Rusev down a bit so he backs Ziggler into the corner for a break. Ziggler gets knocked into the barricade and we take a break.

Back with Rusev throwing on a bearhug, which really should have been put on during the break. Rusev misses a charge of his own but easily breaks up a neckbreaker with a suplex. A running flip backsplash gets two more and Ziggler is in trouble. The spinwheel kick gets the same for Rusev but he walks into a superkick out of nowhere.

They head outside with Rusev charging into the steps but both guys dive in to beat the count at nine. Rusev superkicks him down as well because

everyone has to use superkicks in this company. Ziggler sneaks out of the Accolade and a quick Zig Zag drops Rusev, only to have Summer come in for the DQ at 14:21.

Rating: D+. This was more long than it was good and again they're setting up the mixed tag. Why we needed to see another match between the two of them to set up the obvious match is beyond me, but at least they didn't have a clean finish. Lana is going to be awesome in the ring, mainly because she's awesome at everything else so why would this be any different?

A catfight ensues until Ziggler pulls them apart.

Post break Ziggler brags about what just happened. He goes into a room as Renee talks a bit and we see Summer sneak in behind him.

It's time for the Beat the Clock Challenge for the #1 contendership to the Divas Title, but Team Bella has something to say. Nikki is so proud of making it this far, but we've got a Bellatron counting us down to the second she breaks the record.

Alicia Fox vs. Becky Lynch

This is the first match in a Beat the Clock Challenge, meaning whoever wins in the shortest time wins, earning a title shot, presumably at Night of Champions. Becky tries for some fast rollups to start but she gets a bit sloppy and Fox takes over. A chinlock slows things down even more and you can see Becky panicking over the time being spent. Back up and some clotheslines get two for Lynch, followed by a springboard kick in the corner. They hit the mat and Becky grabs Disarm-Her for the win at 3:21.

Rating: D. This is the other issue with the Divas Revolution: the newcomers got over having these epic 10-15 minute wars but now they're stuck with the three minute matches that have plagued the division for years. For once, this isn't on them because there's very little they can do in so little time and that's not going to change.

Ryback talks about defending his title against everyone and tonight the Big Show will be no different. As he's talking, we hear someone scream

and see Summer Rae running out of Ziggler's locker room. Ziggler is in a towel and looks surprised.

Intercontinental Title: Big Show vs. Ryback

Big Show is challenging, Miz is on commentary and we get big match intros. Show takes him into the corner for the loud chop to start and slowly drops an elbow for a close two. With Ryback down, Show demands a microphone so he can address the PLEASE RETIRE chants. He says find someone to do it so Ryback picks him up for a slam, only to have Show fall on him for two more. Show hits the chinlock for a few moments but Ryback fights up and hits a good looking flying tackle.

The splash is caught by the throat though, only have Ryback slip out and hook a double leg takedown (no that wasn't a spinebuster) for a near fall of his own. The Meathook is countered into the chokeslam for two but Show goes up. Since we're in Flair Country, the slam off the top is very appropriate. Another Meathook attempt is countered with a spear but Miz gets up for a distraction, allowing Ryback to grab Shell Shock to retain at 7:14.

Rating: C. They had me worried that they were going to change the title here in what would have been one of the dumbest ideas in a long time. I'm sure we'll get Miz vs. Ryback now, even though Ryback beat him in two minutes a few weeks back. Ryback is the best Intercontinental Champion in a long time and it's nice to see the title meaning something.

Charlotte vs. Brie Bella

Charlotte's time to beat is 3:21 because only PCB can win. Brie starts hiding in the ropes to start because she must "protect the Bella Empire." A Figure Eight attempt doesn't work and Charlotte has less than two minutes to go. Instead Natural Selection hits out of nowhere for the pin at 1:40 to set Charlotte's time.

We look at the Dudleyz returning last week.

The Dudleyz say they're back for one more title reign because it would make them ten time Tag Team Champions. Tonight: New Day goes through a

table.

Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

Owens talks trash to start (shocking I know) and gets shoved down to the mat. A big boot stops Owens cold and Cesaro casually lifts him up for a suplex, complete with right hands to the gut. Cesaro gets two off a double stomp and it's time for Owens to bail to the floor. That's fine with Cesaro, who follows him out with a running European uppercut.

A high cross body gets two for Cesaro but Owens comes back with an elbow to the jaw and a backsplash. Owens: "WHERE'S YOUR SECTION NOW???" A corner clothesline sets up the Cannonball and we hit the chinlock on Cesaro. That goes nowhere so Owens busts out the torture rack neckbreaker for two instead and we take a break.

Back with Cesaro failing to superplex Owens so he dropkicks Kevin in the face and gutwrench superplexes him instead. That reverse Angle Slam gets two for Cesaro but Owens superkicks him for the same. Owens tells Cole to watch but misses another Cannonball.

Instead of doing something smart though, Kevin slaps him in the face. In a scary power display, Cesaro catches a tornado DDT in mid air and slams Owens down into a Crossface. Like, how do you even do that? Cesaro can't suplex him over the top and Owens knocks him HARD into the announcers' table. Back in and Cesaro can't Swing him because of the ribs, allowing the Pop Up Powerbomb to put Cesaro away at 16:10.

Rating: B. I liked this better than the Summerslam match as Owens beat him clear after setting up an injury right before the ending. Cesaro took a great looking bump onto the table and Owens has won his last three singles matches. It's very nice to see him not jobbing every single week for a change and I'd love to see him go after Ryback and the Intercontinental Title next.

Ziggler tries to explain that he thought Summer was Lana. Nothing happened and he threw on a towel as soon as he knew who it was. Lana doesn't buy it and leaves.

Dean Ambrose vs. Braun Strowman

The fireflies still look awesome. Bray thanks Abigail for giving him the black sheep as her greatest gift. For thousands of years, mankind has tried to predict the end of the world. Tonight the seventh trumpet sounds and they will walk among you undisguised. Stroman, in a voice that Christian Bale would think is too over the top, says this is the apocalypse. Reigns comes out as backup as you would expect.

Strowman throws Dean around with one hand to start and I think the message has been sent. Dean gets in his fast striking but Stroman just throws him down again. A kick knocks Dean to the floor and the slow beating continues. Reigns finally comes over for the DQ at 3:09.

Rating: D+. Nothing to the match here but it did exactly what it was supposed to. Stroman looks like the best monster that we've had in a long time and that's all he's supposed to look like. Eventually someone is going to beat him, but until then it's going to be fun watching him be the modern day Zeus or whatever other monster you pick. It's an old formula that keeps coming back because it works.

Stroman cleans house and no sells a chair to the back. Reigns' right hand has a bit more effect but Harper comes in with the superkick to put Roman down. Dean gets choked out and Reigns takes that spinning powerbomb thing. Bray comes in for Sister Abigail to Reigns. Notice that Bray didn't have to do a thing here, which is exactly why he needs minions.

We look at Rollins beating Cena at Summerslam.

Clip of Sting's opening promo.

Rollins wants his statue back and tells Sting to stay out of his business. Maybe if Sting had a subscription to the WWE Network, he could know how great Seth has been. Yeah HHH used to be a big deal, but HHH never held the US and WWE World Titles at the same time.

Paige vs. Sasha Banks

Paige has to beat 1:40 so she starts very fast and gets some rollups for two each. The fans are split as Paige fires off some running knees for

two. The Rampaige connects but Tamina and Naomi pull Sasha to the floor as the clock runs out at 1:40.

Team Bella comes out to pose.

Summer Rae says that Zigler called her into his locker room but then he just started stripping. She was mesmerized and speechless and then he asked her to join him in the shower. After he got out, he gave Summer the look but she ran out. Summer will never forget the image though.

Lana is crying and can't say anything.

New Day vs. Dudley Boyz

Non-title. Woods calls the Dudleyz a menace to culture, society and furniture around the world. Big E. asks if you remember the times sitting around the table with your granny and that weird uncle around the Thanksgiving table. Or all that money you cleaned up at the poker table. Or all those summers around the pool table. And where would we be without the Periodic Table? Remember all the fun you had learning your multiplication table? Big E. and Kofi pull out what Woods calls the last table (covered in bubble wrap) here tonight. A SAVE THE TABLES chant takes us to a break before the match.

The Prime Time Players are on commentary as Big E. and D-Von get things going. But it's quickly off to Bubba vs. Kofi. Woods suggests clapping but Bubba turns it into NEW DAY SUCKS. A clothesline under the arm stops Kofi cold and New Day is sent out to the floor as we take a break. Back with D-Von clotheslining both champions down but Woods low bridges him to the floor. As Woods brushes his hair, Big E. drives D-Von into the barricade. That sounds like a valid reason to dance to me and Big E. agrees.

The rotating stomps set up Big E.'s splash for two. An abdominal stretch slows things down and Kofi's chinlock does the same. Woods mocks the TABLES chant but Kofi dives into a clothesline, allowing for the tag off to Bubba. Bubba hiptosses Woods in but D-Von hiptosses him right back out in a funny spot. 3D quickly ends Kofi, which JBL calls the Dudleyz' first match in WWE in ten years. Even he doesn't watch Smackdown.

Rating: C. I liked the match but the booking makes my head hurt. You have three members of New Day and two of them are the recognized Tag Team Champions. I think you get what I'm going for here. It's very interesting that the Dudleyz have been doing the same thing for about ten years now and it's still more entertaining than 90% of most tag teams.

Here's Seth Rollins to call out Sting. The things Sting said earlier tonight showed him why WCW went out of business. We can't possibly be talking about that again...right? Rollins wants Sting to take back what he said about HHH being that much better than him because Seth is every bit as good as HHH and one day could even be better. However, Rollins wants his status but gets Stephanie instead.

She suggests the Rollins chill out because Sting is getting in his head over a stupid statue. Rollins still wants his statue but this time gets John Cena. John talks about the Authority bending Rollins to their will because that's what they do. They picked Rollins because he was the only one willing to stab the Shield in the back. Rollins is going to be the flavor of the month because the Authority would never allow him to do what he's about to do right now.

Rollins has a lot of titles right now and since the Authority said every title is on the line at Night of Champions, Cena is cashing in his rematch for the US Title on the same night Rollins has to defend against Sting. Cena asks Stephanie if he can do that and she reluctantly agrees. Sting comes out to pose with Cena to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was one of the best shows they've had in a very long time. It kept moving all night and they didn't have anything out there that took too long. There's enough stuff going on here to find something interesting and nothing was really bad. Well maybe the opening match but at least it led somewhere. I had a really good time with this show and it flew by, which is a rare thing for Raw.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Rusev via DQ when Summer Rae interfered

Becky Lynch b. Alicia Fox – Disarm-Her

Ryback b. Big Show – Shell Shock

Charlotte b. Brie Bella – Natural Selection

Cesaro b. Kevin Owens – Pop Up Powerbomb

Braun Stroman b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Roman Reigns interfered

Paige vs. Sasha Banks went to a time limit draw

Dudley Boyz b. New Day – 3D to Kingston

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Monday Night Raw – September 22, 1997 (2015 Redo): That Night In The Garden

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 22, 1997

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 14,615

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is one of the biggest and more important episodes in the history of the show. For the first time ever, the show is in the world's most famous arena as we're getting closer to Badd Blood: In Your House. The crowd hasn't been this big in a long time and you know the company is going to put on something special in this arena. Let's get to it.

We open with a video on the Garden itself, focusing on some of the major moments in company history in the building, such as Hogan winning his first title, Wrestlemania I, various Roddy Piper antics, Snuka's cage dive, Wrestlemania X and many others. Like I said, they're treating this like a very, very big deal and they certainly should.

Opening sequence.

Intercontinental Title Tournament First Round: Rocky Maivia vs. Ahmed Johnson

Slaughter comes out to eject the Nation before we get started. The winner of this gets Faarooq, who is advancing due to Shamrock having a punctured lung. Maivia jumps him on the floor but Johnson launches Rocky into the corner. Rocky's floatover DDT plants Johnson as Captain Lou Albano wanders out to ringside for no apparent reason. They head outside with Rocky sending him into the steps. Johnson has a bloody hand and Lawler finally says the truth that everyone knew about Johnson a year ago: he's injury prone. A spinebuster puts Rocky down and the Pearl River Plunge sends Johnson to the semi-finals.

Rating: D. Ahmed Johnson was a physical beast and a very strong in ring talent, but there comes a point where the guy can't be trusted with any kind of a push due to not being able to stay healthy. This was too short to mean much, but Johnson was himself and Rocky was still figuring out his heel persona.

Here's Steve Austin in the crowd to say you can't have Raw in New York City without Stone Cold. Nothing else is said, but this felt so much more natural than just showing him in the back with a camera on him for no reason other than the script says it's time to do that.

Sable plays lazer (that's how it's spelled on the box) tag with Howard

Finkel. I'm thinking this is a commercial.

Legendary boxer Floyd Patterson is here.

Stills of Shawn taking the European Title from the Bulldog in England. This is considered little more than a power play from Shawn who took the title so he could get one up on the Harts and took a title he had no desire or need to hold.

Here's Undertaker with something to say. Vince announces a new stipulation to the Hell in a Cell match: the winner is the new #1 contender for the WWF World Title at Survivor Series. First up, Undertaker says the reaper will be calling for Bret soon, but first there is Shawn Michaels. The only way out of the Cell is over Undertaker's dead body but Undertaker will never rest in peace.

This brings out Shawn to complain about the WWF putting him in a no win situation. First he was put in the guest referee spot at Summerslam and now Undertaker is supposed to bury him alive. Then if he wins all that, he gets his title shot. Why should Shawn have to earn a title shot, when he's the only man ever to win every title in this company? Shawn promises to be one step ahead of everyone inside the Cell and all Undertaker has to do is show up.

Faarooq/Kama Mustafa vs. Legion of Doom

Sunny does ring announcing for no particular reason. Animal and Kama start it off with Kama being sent to the floor, only to run back in to hammer Animal in the back. A powerslam plants Kama though and it's off to Faarooq vs. Hawk. Kama and Faarooq take turns on Hawk but he comes back with a neckbreaker, with Faarooq falling down before Hawk even starts. The Doomsday Device is loaded up but the rest of the Nation comes in for the DQ.

Ahmed tries for the save but the Nation still has a one man advantage and beats him down as well.

Clip of the Snuka cage dive in 1983.

Intercontinental Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Owen Hart vs. Brian

Pillman

Owen has cops surrounding the ring. This week, Pillman has Terri in a leather skirt and leather bra, plus a belly button ring and a collar around her neck. Pillman's arm is in a sling due to falling in the bathtub for trying one too many things with Terri. Therefore, he has to forfeit here to send Owen into the finals. Owen agrees but Slaughter comes out and wants to see the x-rays and a doctor's report. Slaughter throws the mic at him and Pillman catches it with the bad arm. The match is on or Pillman never wrestles here again.

They slowly fight over a test of strength before having a clean break in the corner. A slow paced rollup gets two for Owen as I think you get the idea by this point. We take a break and come back with Owen all fired up due to Terri (I'm sticking with Terri as the announcers keep swapping between that and Marlana. It's the same person) hitting Owen with her purse, which Owen blamed on Pillman. Owen gets suplexed down but here's Goldust to attack Owen, eliminating Pillman and sending Hart to the finals.

Rating: D+. I liked the idea here so it's hard to fault them for not having a plan. The purse part really wasn't needed as you could have just done the same match until Goldust came in, but points for mixing things up a bit at least. It wasn't a good match or anything, but it was nice to see them trying something that made sense.

Owen brags about his win but Austin comes in and nearly gets arrested. Vince comes in and says hang on. Apparently Vince has authority over police officers because he gets them to back off for now. He asks Austin why he doesn't get that he's barred from competing at the moment. Austin could wind up paralyzed (Lawler: "That would be good.") and the WWF isn't going to let him do that. What Austin needs to learn is to work within the system.

Austin says this is what he does for a living and no one can tell him that he isn't the best in the world. He appreciates that the WWF cares, and there's the first of 1,000 Stunners to Vince, who sells it worse than anyone ever by falling over Austin and shaking like a fish. That's enough

for the cops to arrest Austin, who is cheered louder than anyone in years. As the cops are taking him away, Austin flips Vince off one more time, beginning the greatest war in wrestling history.

Let's stop and look at this for a second. Obviously Vince would go on to become Mr. McMahon, probably the best villain that has ever lived (or one of the best no matter how you look at it). His big line is coming in November, but look back at what led up to that. You have Bret going nuts on Vince back in February, then the multiple issues with Shawn, and now Austin.

When Austin won the WWF World Title in 1998, Vince told Austin that they could do things the easy way or the hard way. Most of 1997 was Vince trying to do things the easy way and getting burned. When he saw that the old ways weren't working anymore, he went full on the other way and became Mr. McMahon, who would keep control by any means he had available. Mr. McMahon was a character with a much stronger backstory than he's given credit for having.

Hour #2 is dedicated to Bulldog Brower. What does it say when you're not even worthy of having a full show dedicated to you?

The remaining announcers brag about not leaving the booth in a shot at WCW.

We get a bunch of replays of the Stunner to Vince.

Dude Love vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley

Pinfalls count anywhere. Helmsley throws in a crotch chop before the curtsey. Dude's music plays but instead he pops up on screen. He won't be coming out here because pinfalls count anywhere really isn't his bag. It's not a love thing you see. However, Dude knows someone whose bag it is. He's a kind man and a cooky type of cat.

In a bizarre visual, Mankind comes in to talk to Dude Love face to face. As much as Mankind has dreamed of hurting Helmsley in this match, there's someone Mankind knows who could do it even worse. Dude asks Mankind to bring him out, so here's CACTUS JACK, making his WWF debut and standing

with the other two faces of Foley.

This is another one of the most amazing visuals ever as we're almost inside of Foley's head here and seeing how out there he really could be. The idea of actually seeing all three of them next to each other blew my mind and was something that had to be seen to be believed. The best part: it's going to get even better.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Cactus Jack

The fans lose their minds at Cactus actually being in the WWF. Helmsley charges right at him and gets nailed with a trashcan on the ramp. The ECW chants start up and Cactus peels back the floor mats for a swinging neckbreaker on the concrete. They head inside, just so the Cactus Clothesline can take it back outside again. Helmsley starts running so Chyna can get in a cheap shot, which is totally legal here.

They fight into the crowd and then into the back with Helmsley slamming Cactus on the concrete for two. Cactus comes back with a fire extinguisher blast to the face, sending Helmsley into the barricade, which is completely broken down. Not just a piece of it but the entire section on one side of the ring. It heads back inside but Cactus whips him across the ring so hard that Helmsley falls right back to the floor. The Cactus Elbow off the apron only hits trashcan though and Helmsley FINALLY has a breather.

We take a break and come back with the guys in the ring and Helmsley hitting Jack with a mop. They fight to the apron and Cactus gets in a low blow to knock Helmsley outside. Cactus dives off with a sunset flip for two, followed by a backdrop onto the ramp for a sick thud. Chyna's chair shot to Cactus has almost no effect so Helmsley hits Cactus in the back, only to drive Cactus into Chyna, who goes into the steps.

Chyna is out cold so Helmsley suplexes Cactus on the ramp as both guys can barely move. A shovel to the back keeps Cactus down and Helmsley slams him head first into the steel. Now it's table time and the fans couldn't be happier. Helmsley loads up the Pedigree but Cactus reverses and grabs a pulling piledriver to drive Helmsley through the table for the pin. We get a famous visual of the camera looking down at Cactus, who

smiles at the pain.

Rating: A. This is one of the best matches ever on Raw and one of the best moments the company ever had. The promo before this set Cactus up as perfectly as it could have and the Three Faces of Foley are finally here. Great stuff here and something that really hadn't been seen in the WWF before. I mean, it had been seen in ECW, but the WWF in Madison Square Garden is a bit higher on the food chain.

So in the last half hour, we had the first Stunner to Vince, the debut of Cactus Jack and then that classic. If there has ever been a better and more famous half hour in the history of Monday Night Raw, I've never seen it.

Video on a sweepstakes for Survivor Series.

Clip of the first Wrestlemania with Andre the Giant slamming Big John Studd.

More stills of Bulldog vs. Shawn in England.

Here's Shawn with the chair that started his feud with Undertaker. Shawn has a story for us because we're all wondering how he became the first Grand Slam Champion. Shawn sits down in the chair and says he wants Undertaker out here to face him right now. So much for story time.

We take a break and come back with Shawn still calling Undertaker out. Cue the Undertaker, who was nice enough to wait until the show came back from a break. Helmsley comes out to slow him down and Shawn gets in the chair shots as Rude and Chyna come out to help. Rude chairs Undertaker a few times and Undertaker just stands up, sending Shawn and company running off.

Bret Hart vs. Goldust

Non-title. Before the match, Bret says he doesn't care who wins between Undertaker and Shawn. He's not afraid of Undertaker and he'd love to give Shawn the beating he deserves for what he did to the Bulldog. Goldust still only has half the paint on, which is due to half of him missing. They slug it out to start as Lawler gets in as many jokes as he can about

Pillman and Terri.

Bret stomps him down in the corner and starts going after the knee so Goldust rakes his eyes. That's fine with Bret who cannonballs down onto the knee and flips off a fan in the front row. He slaps on the Figure Four around the post but Shawn saunters down the ramp as we take a break. Back with Bret staying on the leg and Shawn dancing on the stage. So where is Undertaker while this is going on?

Goldust gets in a few right hands but a kick to the knee puts him right back down. A suplex gives Goldust a breather and he gets in a sweet right hand. Goldust kicks Bret out to the floor and limps outside to keep up the fight. Back in and a bulldog gets two on Bret but raises his boot and gets caught in the Sharpshooter for the quick submission.

Rating: B-. This was a good match that people aren't going to remember after everything else that happened on this show. It's always cool to see Bret getting to pick a talented wrestler to pieces and then make them quit. That is the definition of technical wrestling and psychology and Bret was as good as anyone in history at making it work.

Bret won't let go so Shawn runs in for the save. Cue Helmsley, Chyna, Owen and the limping Bulldog. Rude and Neidhart follow but it's Undertaker to really make things interesting. Shawn and Bret are left alone with Undertaker and a double chokeslam ends the show.

Overall Rating: A. This is still one of the best episodes the show has ever had. They knew they had to do something special in Madison Square Garden and knocked it out of the park. You can see the future waiting to break out here and the main event stuff is just as great. The three way feud between Undertaker, Bret and Shawn is the culmination of the last year of main event storylines (well minus Sid but is anyone really missing him?). It's still a great show and well worth seeing if you never have before.

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Monday Night Raw – August 24, 2015: Feel The Heat. I'm Sure It's There Somewhere.

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 24, 2015

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Summerslam has come and gone and we have two main event fallout stories to deal with. Jon Stewart, the host of Summerslam, cost John Cena the US Title by interfering to help Seth Rollins last night. In addition, Brock Lesnar made Undertaker tap out but the referee didn't see it, allowing Undertaker to hit Brock low and make him pass out in the Hell's Gate, likely setting the stage for a third match between the two. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, HHH praised Seth Rollins for making Summerslam live up to its hype last night. Rollins, holding both titles, is officially the man in WWE and it's time for him to take his place among the legends of this industry with a statue.

Opening sequence.

We open with Heyman and a ticked off Lesnar. Heyman gets right to it and says Brock isn't happy. How did we go from Brock being the first man to make Undertaker tap out to the history books showing Undertaker won the match? Last night the Undertaker went to Suplex City and was then locked in a Kimura and Undertaker tapped out, which we see clear video of him doing. Heyman is a father and knows what it's like to have to break your kid's heart by telling him fairy tales aren't real.

After explaining what it means to tap, Heyman says Brock doesn't blame the referee or timekeeper. The fans boo the timekeeper so Heyman takes a jab at them for booing compassion. Undertaker collapsed on the way to the back again but we don't need to talk about that just yet. Imagine last night when someone had to pull Brock off of Undertaker to save him from a beating. Once Undertaker knew he had a reprieve, he went low on Brock and made him pass out in Hell's Gate.

It was Undertaker's last bullet as the gunslinger, but it turns out that Undertaker can't shoot with Brock. Lesnar wants Undertaker one more time, but not at Wrestlemania, Survivor Series or the Royal Rumble. Brock wants Undertaker right here TONIGHT. Instead he gets Bo Dallas. Even Heyman looks stunned by this one.

Dallas says Brock passed out last night but at least he probably had a sweet dream of beating Undertaker. Those dreams can come true if he just BOLIEVES! It's Suplex City time and Brock eventually leaves, only to go back for one more German. He leaves again but Heyman wants one more. Dallas is out cold so Lesnar makes it easy on him with an F5.

New Day vs. Lucha Dragons

Non-title and the Prime Time Players are on commentary. Big E. introduces Woods as the feature presentation so here's Xavier playing a trombone. E. sings a modified version of New York, New York about how awesome they are as champions. Just when you think these guys are running out of ideas they have the singing gimmick to fall back on. As usual, these three are hilarious together. Kofi and Cara get things going before it's quickly off to Kalisto who flips Kingston to the floor. Big E. gets kicked out to the floor but is able to catch a diving Kalisto in midair. Cara adds a

dive and we take an early break.

Back with New Day in control and Woods playing the trombone. Cara backflips over E. into the tag to Kalisto as things speed up. A sunset bomb gets two on Kofi as everything breaks down. E. pulls Cara to the floor and the distraction lets Kofi grab Kalisto in a reverse suplex. Woods plays some Taps as the Midnight Hour puts Kalisto away at 6:19. Too much was in the break to rate it but the match was great fun.

Post match New Day celebrates but the DUDLEY BOYS return and clean house. Woods gets What's Up and the place is just coming unglued. Bubba isn't done yet because it's table time. Kofi and Big E. are nowhere to be found and the 3D puts Woods through the table. The Dudleys aren't done yet as they go outside to yell at the Prime Time Players a bit before posing on the ropes and soaking in the thunderous cheers.

Stills of Jon Stewart costing John Cena the US Title.

Video on John Cena granting his 500th Make-A-Wish, the most of anyone in history. Like him or not, these things are just cool.

The Authority is looking at Rollins' statue when Rollins comes in to brag about receiving one.

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt/Luke Harper

Rematch from last night. Dean takes everyone out to start but eats a suicide dive from Harper. Reigns comes over to help and it's an apron boot to Harper to take us to a commercial. Note that we saw Dean and the Wyatts' entrance plus less than two minutes of action between breaks. Back with Bray clotheslining Dean for two before it's off to Harper for a catapult into the middle rope.

Bray gets two more off a DDT and plants Dean with a gutbuster before it's off to Harper, who eats a tornado DDT. A double tag brings in Reigns and Wyatt with Roman cleaning house with some nice throws followed by a corner clothesline. See how much better it is when you mix stuff up instead of just doing the same clotheslines over and over? Everything breaks down and Dean sends Bray to the floor for a suicide dive.

Roman does something like a Jackhammer on Wyatt but Harper comes in with superkicks (JBL: "Superkick party!"). Sister Abigail is broken up and Reigns nails a Superman Punch. Ambrose dives on Harper and we've got...a third Wyatt. This guy is massive, even bigger than Reigns, and wearing a black sheep mask. Roman tries the Superman Punch, only to get pulled out of the air for the DQ at 10:39.

Rating: C+. Fun brawl here but obviously this was just about introducing the new monster. Adding in someone new is a good idea as the Wyatts work best when Bray has a few minions to throw at people, meaning he gets to stay safe instead of taking falls all the time. Good match here but it didn't have time to go anywhere like last night.

The guy beats Ambrose down and chokes Reigns out as the fans ask WHO ARE YOU. Ambrose comes back with a kick to the head for no effect and the monster chokes him out as well. Bray poses next to him as we take a break. Apparently the new guy is a former strongman competitor who wrestled in NXT under the name Braun Stowman.

It's time for MizTV with Team PCB as guests. Charlotte says her dad was part of the greatest faction in WWE history. No not Evolution, which is really the only faction he was ever part of in WWE, but the Horsemen. To be fair, WWE is convinced they are wrestling at this point so it's close enough in their eyes. Miz brags about himself but Paige says they're not into him. The trio says they'll fight any woman, man, dinosaur or cyborg.

Paige talks about being all dominant so here's Team Bella. Nikki makes a Donald Trump joke and Brie says they empower women all over the world. Fox and Becky yell at each other a bit over how long Alicia has been around. Nikki: "Wins and losses, who cares?" Miz says cool it and says he sees a bunch of women who fight like girls. PCB gets in his face but Team Bella jumps them from behind and knocks PCB to the floor.

Team Bella vs. Team PCB

This is joined in progress in case you haven't seen it enough yet. Becky drops a leg on Brie before it's off to Charlotte for the Charlotte's Web on Nikki for two. PCB starts taking turns on the champ and Becky gets two off a backslide. The Bellas take over for a bit before Becky and

Charlotte clean house with dropkicks to send them out to the floor. Charlotte dives on all three and we take a break.

Back with Charlotte in trouble and Nikki throwing her out to the floor. Nikki sends the leg into the post and everyone starts working on Charlotte's leg. The fans are doing the wave as Paige gets the hot tag. Fox takes her down as well and now it's a WE ARE AWESOME chant. Everything breaks down and Nikki hits Paige with the big forearm, followed by the ax kick from Fox for the pin at 14:30.

Rating: D. I'm done with the Divas Revolution for now and they're right back to where they were before. When the star of your division flat out says "wins and losses don't matter", what's the point of watching the matches anymore? I had hope that they were going somewhere new with this division, but tonight proves that it's just about making the Bellas look good and we've already spent the last year doing that with Nikki vs. Brie which wound up going nowhere. Well done WWE on screwing up something so promising again for the sake of the Bellas.

King Barrett and Stardust are here for a tag match but Stardust beats Barrett up before the match. This brings out Neville to go after Stardust as the referee gets out of the ring. Stardust rolls away before the Red Arrow can launch though.

Here's Jon Stewart for an explanation. He understands that some people are mad at him, but some people are also happy with him. Some people had to comfort their children last night and explain who the little old man who attacked John Cena was. Well here's why he did it: it wasn't to help Rollins retain or to do what's best for business. Instead, it was because he couldn't let John Cena tie Ric Flair's record because the champ is Flair.

This brings out Flair himself and Stewart loses his mind. Flair says he appreciated Stewart's sentiments last night but he was pulling for Cena. The record is going to fall someday and Flair would like it to fall to someone he respects. Ric says Stewart messed up everything but here's Cena to freak Stewart out in a completely different way. Cena says he's at peace for what happened last night, but Stewart kept the title on

Rollins as a result, in addition to making him the US Champion.

That was the title that Cena used to give everyone an opportunity, from names like Cesaro to Kevin Owens to Sami Zayn. Stewart freaks out and tries to backpedal but Cena says the titles are in the hands of the Authority. This is a chance for Cena to win the titles back and there's an AA to Stewart. Flair just stands there as all this happens and then leaves.

Post break Cena says he was doing what he thought was right. Later tonight, he'll have another talk with Seth Rollins.

Dolph Ziggler/Randy Orton/Ryback/Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens/Big Show/Rusev/Sheamus

Ziggler is now in tights. Ryback and Rusev get things going before it's off to Cesaro for a headlock. Ziggler gets the tag and tries a superkick but Rusev bails to the floor. It's about to explode on the floor as we take a break. Back with Show telling Ziggler to bring it on before chopping him down. Show: "I'M A GIANT!" It's off to Owens to wake the fans up a bit but that ends when Sheamus gets the tag for a release suplex.

Sheamus puts Ziggler in the Brock Lock, followed by an Irish Curse for no cover. Back from another break with Ziggler DDTing Big Show but Rusev breaks up the hot tag attempt. Summer slaps Dolph so Lana tackles her down and the distraction lets Ziggler scores with the Fameasser. Ziggler finally dives over for the tag to Cesaro, who uppercuts the heck out of Owens.

Rusev comes in and takes the Swing, leaving Ryback and Owens to slug it out. The Cannonball is broken up by a spinebuster and there's the Meathook. Kevin breaks up the Shell Shock though and a double clothesline drops both of them. It's Orton coming in off the hot tag and cleaning house, but Show makes his job easier by KO Punching Sheamus by mistake, setting up the RK0 for the pin at 17:55.

Rating: C+. So I'm guessing this means it's time to make Show face again because we haven't done something with him in long enough. I mean, it's

not like you can have him take the fall here. Why do that when you have Sheamus to do it for him? The match was much more long than good, which is all you can expect here.

Owens and Rusev beat Show down post match before walking out. The winners come in with Zigler superkicking Show, followed by Cesaro and Ryback lifting Show up for an RKO. For once the camera team made sure to hide the fact that it barely connected.

We look at Lesnar vs. Undertaker from last night.

Recap of the new Wyatt Family member.

Bray says he tried to warn Roman. As long as there is breath in Reigns' body, Bray will be there to stop him. Look at Reigns' so called brother. Roman pulled him into this war and now Dean is just a pawn. Last night was Roman's moment of glory but now it's over. Tonight you witnessed her greatest gift. Bray introduces us to Braun Stowman, Abigail's black sheep.

The Authority stops Cena in the back and has security escort him out of the arena.

It's time for the Rollins statue unveiling, but the statue is under a curtain, despite us seeing it earlier in the night. First up though, Stephanie leads us in singing Happy Birthday to her dad, who turns 70 today. HHH talks about what you want in a man to immortalize in bronze. The three qualities you would want in such a man are hustle, loyalty and respect. There's only one man in this company who deserves that, so here's Seth Rollins. The champ brags about how amazing this is because so few people receive this honor.

Last night he won this match and became a legend. Rollins goes on for a LONG time about how awesome he is and promises to retain the title at Wrestlemania after Wrestlemania after Wrestlemania. They finally pull the curtain and instead of a statue, it's Sting. Why his facepaint is already chipped off isn't clear but maybe it melted off while he was waiting so long for Rollins to finish talking. Sting cleans house and holds up the title as Rollins panics to end the show. Why? It's an old guy who has

never won a match in this company.

Overall Rating: C-. This show was rolling along after the first hour and then the Divas killed it deader than dead. That segment and match were so bad and just destroyed everything the show had built up in the first hour. Other than that, the show was watchable enough but the Cena segment really didn't do it any favors. As usual I'm more interested in NXT this week, but you knew WWE was going to do something to screw up what they had going for it.

Results

New Day b. Lucha Dragons – Midnight Hour to Kalisto

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Luke Harper/Bray Wyatt via DQ when an unknown man interfered

Team Bella b. Team PCB – Ax kick to Paige

Randy Orton/Cesaro/Ryback/Dolph Ziggler b. Sheamus/Big Show/Rusev/Kevin Owens – RKO to Sheamus

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: August 17, 2015

I know it's last minute but I needed to get this in before Takeover tonight or there's really no point in doing it. We're almost to Summerslam and it's time for one last gasp to try to make Undertaker a heel against Brock as we're in Brock's hometown. Other than that we're going to get the big go home promo from Cena which is destined to rock. Let's get to it.

HHH and Stephanie opened things up with a commercial for Summerslam, which continues to show that these two are almost incapable of having a normal discussion of anything. Stephanie is WAY worse about it though as HHH seems like he could turn it off if he wanted, but Stephanie really does seem like this is the way she thinks. Couple that with the law stating that no one is ever allowed to get one over on her in any way shape or form and she can get really annoying in a hurry. She's incredibly talented, but my goodness she can get annoying in a hurry.

Orton/Cesaro beat Owens/Sheamus in your standard Raw tag match. The ending seemed a bit botched as Owens was either too far away for the RKO or wasn't ready to take it. The more I think about it, the more the former seems likely as the RKO isn't exactly the hardest move in the world to take as you just have to fall on your face, which is about as standard of a move as there is. I'm sure Owens will get the blame for it anyway though as WWE is the kind of company where if you botch something, the best solution is to punish you for about a month instead of just forgetting about it and writing it off as a one off error.

The problem with the match was that it wasn't very exciting. They basically chinlocked each other for about eight minutes and then did a few other things. Unfortunately there isn't enough interest in either feud because we've seen them fight each other about a half dozen times in tag matches, because, as I spent a lot of time in the original review talking about, WWE currently has about four ways to build a feud with "tonight, it's a must see tag match" being at the top of the list.

Undertaker says he'll win on Sunday. Simple, to the point, and not eight minutes for the sake of talking for eight minutes because that's how they do promos. Why can't more people get this treatment? Like Orton for example. He can talk well enough, but he's really, really not suited for the long winded promos like Cena and HHH. WWE really needs to understand that wrestling isn't a one size fits all industry.

Rollins told the Authority he wants a statue if he wins on Sunday. Why do I have a feeling that's the latest version of a trophy which must be destroyed?

Reigns beat Harper for the third time in the last month. This is in addition to the two tag matches they've been in against each other. Yeah the matches are entertaining, but there are other people you can use for these matches. Since July 20, and again omitting the tags, those two have spent a combined 40 minutes fighting each other on TV. Now I'm supposed to want to see them fight again in a featured match on pay per view, which is likely getting nearly 20 more minutes?

Think of it like this. I love Star Wars. It's one of my favorite movies and I've seen it more times than I can count. That being said, if I watched it three times in a month, I'd probably start getting bored with it. Yeah Reigns vs. Harper is normally entertaining, but how many times can I watch Harper do his power stuff and then eat a spear for the pin? Mix that stuff up a little bit, especially when you have the roster you have on tap. Let them squash people and then cut promos instead. You get two matches and talking. I'm sure that could eat up the fifteen minutes instead of "dang these two AGAIN?"

Becky Lynch beat Tamina in a lame match. I'll get into this more later (as I have way too often lately), but there's no reason for the Divas to be fighting at the moment.

Speaking of overdone matches, Rusev made Mark Henry tap to the Accolade. Just stop with this. It wasn't really that interesting at its peak, and it hasn't been interesting whatsoever in the three times Henry has been squashed by Rusev in August alone. Like I said, when WWE gets an idea stuck in their head, that's all you're going to see for a long time.

Post match Ziggler returned to save Lana, giving us more of some of the worst chemistry in history. The pairing doesn't work, so we're stuck with it for the time being. Remember those WE WANT LANA chants from before? Notice that they're gone when she's with Ziggler? Well apparently WWE wants it that way, likely because Lana isn't on Total Divas.

So I know I harp a lot on WWE repeating things. It seems there's something to that as they reaired the same Undertaker vs. Lesnar video from last week. I get that you can't record some huge, epic package every week, but you couldn't grab a camera and get some fresh interviews with people talking about the match?

Ryback beat Miz in a preview for Sunday. I'm never a fan of having a challenger lose clean (or in any way really) to the champion before a title shot and I didn't like it here. Have Miz walk out or something, but don't have him get pinned in a short match.

Now we get to one of the biggest stories of the night with the contract signing (that would be the other big idea creative uses) between John Cena and Seth Rollins. I covered most of this in the column this week, but I didn't mention Cena and Rollins both acknowledging that Rollins is basically HHH's son in this whole story.

The sooner they get away from this, the much better Rollins will be for it. The idea that Rollins, who is the World Champion, is about half way to being a HHH tribute (note that I said halfway. This could be WAY worse, like with AJ Styles and Ric Flair in early 2010). Rollins is capable of being a huge star in the mold of a Jeff Hardy or Shawn Michaels but he has to stop and pay homage to HHH. Now I'd say it's pretty clear that he's going to go over HHH at some point, but they need to actually get to that point instead of having Rollins use the Pedigree, which is completely wrong for him. It's fine for a payoff, but the road there is tough.

There was an eight man tag with the four teams in Sunday's match. The good guys won.

Stardust and Barrett talked about their match on Sunday. I could go for these two as a regular team. It's not like they have anything else going

on.

Sasha Banks made Nikki Bella tap out in a non-title match. Not that this means anything of course and not that it's likely to be mentioned again after Sunday of course. Since Sasha made Nikki tap, there was no mention of a title shot anytime soon. I'm so fed up with this non-story and I really do think it would have been better to hold off on the Revolution until after Summerslam. If nothing else it means Banks isn't likely to be champion anymore (not that you would know she is because it might affect the Bella brand, which is TOTALLY a thing) and you can focus on chasing the Divas Title, which will finally be in season. Enough of this though, as I'm running out of things to complain about with the story.

Speaking of running out of things to say, Heyman is getting close to that point with the Undertaker vs. Lesnar rematch. This time he opted for singing hymns about Brock, which led to Undertaker coming out again and kicking Lesnar low. As usual, WWE only knows one or two ways to put together a story and if that means doing some of the most nonsensical things they can come up with to get to face Lesnar vs. heel Undertaker, so be it.

That's the big summary of WWE's issues: instead of booking to suit the talent, they plug the talent into formulas they may not fit into because that's how they run the shows. Undertaker isn't working as this heel they want him to be, so they're likely going to keep pushing it until we get the third match in a trilogy at Wrestlemania, because WWE loves itself some trilogies, for Undertaker's retirement match. The segment was good until the Undertaker completely went away from his character, but that's how things work in WWE. At least the writers got what they wanted out of it and if we don't like it, that's on us I guess.

Overall this wasn't a great show, but it set up Summerslam well and sold me on the main events. I'm not wild on how they're going about Undertaker vs. Lesnar, but the match has the potential to be an awesome brawl. That is of course unless they have to protect Undertaker, which is more than understandable as Cena could barely survive that kind of a beating. I'm sold on the upper card, but that midcard stuff is going to need one heck of a coupon to get me on board.

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Monday Night Raw – August 17, 2015: Glory, Glory, Repeat, Repeat

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 17, 2015

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Summerslam and we're in Brock Lesnar's hometown. Lesnar is in the house tonight for a showdown with the Undertaker, which is probably the best chance WWE will have at getting Undertaker booted in this whole story. Other than that we have another stare down between John Cena and Seth Rollins before their title for title match on Sunday. Let's get to it.

With no opening sequence, here are HHH and Stephanie to get things going. Stephanie says this is like Christmas morning when you're waiting to open your presents. Shouldn't that be Christmas Eve? There is very little waiting to open presents on Christmas morning. They plug the \$9.99 price of course, which has basically become their catchphrase. HHH runs through the card and Stephanie makes sure to call Cena and Rollins' match from a month ago infamous.

What exactly is infamous about that match? I mean, there was a big moment, but that doesn't make it infamous. They throw in that Jon Stewart is the official host, with Stephanie of course turning it into a press release because just saying "former Daily Show host Jon Stewart" is too low key for her. We're promised a big week and a big night so it's time to start things up.

Randy Orton/Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens/Sheamus

A few notes during the entrances. First of all, I have time to make notes during the entrances despite Orton coming out before the break. Back from the break and his music is still playing and we waste time on the entrances. Second, Sportscenter is broadcasting from Summerslam this Sunday, which is really awesome. Cesaro and Sheamus get things going but the fans want Orton instead. Fans: "YOU LOOK STUPID!" Sheamus rolls to the floor and says "respect the hawk!"

Back in and a shoulder sends Sheamus outside again as they're starting slowly here. Owens gets his turn and cuts Orton off from making a tag in a wily move. That earns him a clothesline and now Orton makes the tag (with a big windup to play to the crowd), allowing Cesaro to come in for a delayed suplex. A running uppercut sends Owens to the floor and us to a break.

We come back with Owens hammering on Orton and sending him into Sheamus' raised boot. Off to a chinlock for a bit before Orton throws Owens down and makes the hot tag to Cesaro. House is cleaned as it often is during a hot tag, but Sheamus gets in a shot to slow Cesaro down. Sheamus goes up but dives into an uppercut for two but is still able to send Cesaro over the top and (eventually) out to the floor.

Orton is fine with that as he sneaks up on Sheamus for the hanging DDT. Owens tries to come in but...doesn't take the RKO. That looked a bit botched as Owens didn't go down, which I'm sure is due to his overwhelming fat and total inability to connect with an audience so he should probably lost five matches in a row. Instead Sheamus takes the RKO for the pin at 13:30.

Rating: D+. I wasn't feeling this one but the botch at the end really didn't hurt things that much. The problem here was the match being a bit longer than it needed to and focusing on the chinlocks and rest holds instead of really anything else. These feuds aren't exactly lighting the world on fire, but Owens and Cesaro can redeem themselves with an awesome match. Orton vs. Sheamus...well that might take a bit more effort.

Video on Undertaker and Lesnar's issues since Battleground.

Undertaker, covered in smoke and shadows, talks about the reaper calling your name, which means it's over. The hounds are baying for Lesnar's soul and the gates are opening to welcome him to his eternal punishment. Brock's name has been called and he will never rest in peace.

Here's Rollins breaking Cena's nose, in case you missed it the first 1938 times.

Rollins says the contract signing tonight will seal the deal for Sunday. The Authority agrees, but Rollins has one more request. When he wins on Sunday and becomes the first double champion, he deserves a spot among the legends, like a statue. Stephanie actually agrees.

Roman Reigns vs. Luke Harper

Since there is no other way to build a tag match besides have every possible combination fight time after time. Ambrose is on commentary. Reigns starts slugging away to start (shocking) as Dean tries to figure out how Harper is part of Bray's family. Byron asks Dean why the two families hate each other. Dean: "It's like cats hating dogs. I don't know why they hate each other either but we hate the Wyatts too." Reigns kicks away at Harper and clotheslines him out to the floor, setting up the running apron boot as we take a break.

Back with Harper holding a chinlock and Dean keeping his eye on Bray. Reigns finally suplexes out but Harper hits one of the best big boots I've ever seen for two. Even Dean just went quiet when that connected. Reigns fights out of the Gator Roll and wins another slugout before mixing things up a bit with a t-bone suplex. They head outside for a nice clothesline off the apron to drop Harper but Roman can't follow up. Back in and Reigns hits what feels like his 10th clothesline of the match, followed by a Samoan drop for two.

The Superman Punch is loaded up but Harper is smart enough to go outside, suckering Roman in for a superkick. Harper shrugs off a Superman Punch through the apron and grabs Winds of Change (called that by Cole, even though that's Barrett's name for it) for two more. Another superkick (dang these guys are repetitive) is followed by a nice sitout powerbomb but Reigns kicks out one more time. A second Superman Punch sets up the spear to give Reigns the pin at 15:00.

Rating: C. I really didn't like this as much as I should have as the amount of the same moves over and over really dragged it down for me. Reigns really needs to mix up his offense a bit with stuff like that t-bone suplex being a good place to start. He badly needs some transitional moves like that to set up the big power finishers and they shouldn't be hard to find. One good thing here: the false finish on the powerbomb was really, really good.

Post match Bray grabs Harper's head and says follow the buzzards.

Becky Lynch vs. Tamina

Tamina easily shoves Becky down to start and catches her in something like a swinging Rock Bottom for two. We're in an early chinlock as the announcers ramble about how awesome this revolution is. Becky fights up and springboards into a kick to the chest, followed by a missile dropkick for two. Tamina tries another slam, only to have Becky roll through into the Disarm-Her for the tap at 4:02.

Rating: D. Just...no on this one. I'm going to spare you another rant on how much of a waste of time it is to have the Divas wrestle random

matches while Nikki does her serious face and talks about how strong she's made this division while the announcers yap about how great this new era is. Tamina continues to be a waste of time in the ring and clearly her power stuff isn't worth much. Not their best effort, but Tamina isn't one of the best Divas.

Rusev vs. Mark Henry

Lana is on commentary. Henry comes out with the American flag and throws Rusev around to start with some powerslams for two. They head outside with Henry being sent into the post, setting up the superkick and Accolade for the submission at 2:48.

Post match Lana calls Summer in for a fight and slaps the taste out of her mouth. Now Lana wants Rusev and of course Ziggler returns to continue the feud that no one asked for in the first place. Ziggler cleans house with superkicks (just like Rusev, Rollins and Harper use) before posing with Lana. Why are they together again?

Back from a break and Ziggler says he's back to fight Rusev.

Video on the Streak, which was broken by Brock. In case you missed that. This is the same video from last week.

Ryback vs. Miz

Non-title with Big Show on commentary to hype up Summerslam and his new direct to DVD movie. Miz rips on Big Show's acting and promises to win the title on Sunday. Some hard chops put Miz down but he goes after the leg, albeit not the one that had the infection. Instead he rips at Ryback's face, earning himself a gorilla press into a powerslam. Miz makes the mistake of diving at Ryback, who catches him in midair and Shell Shocks him at 2:24.

Ryback's challenge to Big Show is declined.

It's time for Cena and Rollins to sign the contract for Sunday. Rollins (whose NEVER SHUTS UP says "YOU CAN'T SEE KNEE" on the back), is out first to suck up to Stephanie before going after the Minnesota Twins for not being very good. He promises to be awesome on Sunday and signs his

half. Seth brings up Minnesota's own Bob Dylan and his song "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

For ten years, John Cena has been on the top, but the times are changing. Cena is a disease and Rollins goes on about how Cena won't answer his challenge so here's John in person to respond. Cena brings up the obvious problem with Rollins' arguments: Yeah half of the fans are saying let's go Cena and half of them are chanting Cena sucks, but none of them are saying a word about Rollins. He calls Seth out for being a Cena ripoff who has all the talent in the world with HHH choosing him as proof. HHH even gave him the Pedigree to ensure that his own legacy lasts forever.

Last week Cena was stuck at home due to doctor's orders, but he knew he'd be back. Then it hit him as clear as Rollins' nose. Cena is a fifteen time champion and the back of his shirt says so. It didn't occur to him that he was going to have another chance to win the title until HHH brought it up. This Sunday, Cena proves that Rollins is a footnote instead of the future. The difference between HHH and Rollins is HHH was never Ric Flair's b#*\$&. This Sunday, Cena is making Rollins his. As usual, Cena nails the hard sell like no one else can.

New Day/Los Matadores vs. Prime Time Players/Lucha Dragons

Oh look: another match we've seen before. Titus throws Diego around to start but Woods and Torito get in a fight for a distraction, allowing Kalisto to hurricanrana Diego for the pin at 2:10.

Ziggler vs. Rusev is official for Sunday.

Recap of last week with Stephen Amell and Stardust, leading to their tag match on Sunday.

Stardust and Barrett give us a public service announcement about destroying Amell and Neville this Sunday. Barrett is given some new armor and proclaims himself the Cosmic King.

Nikki Bella vs. Sasha Banks

Non-title because it's still August. Nikki shoves her away for some jumping jacks before Sasha does the same. Byron brings up holding the

gold and having the power, which immediately translates into what it means if the Bellas lose a non-title match on Sunday. We hit the chinlock on Sasha and finally hear something about Saturday's Takeover. Sasha fights up and smashes Nikki in the face, followed by the double knees to the ribs for a nice reaction. Some pushups take us to a break.

Back with Sasha holding a chinlock until Nikki fights out (which seems like it was supposed to receive a face reaction. Seriously) and grabs an Alabama Slam for two. A loud WE WANT LESNAR chant starts up as Nikki powers up into an electric chair. The Rack Attack is loaded up but a Naomi distraction lets Banks roll through into the Bank Statement for the tap out at 10:41.

Rating: C-. Sasha winning is a good idea and the countdown to the title actually being defended should start next week. Nikki gets the record in four weeks so things can actually go somewhere for a change. Unfortunately I think they'll give the Bellas the win on Sunday to affirm their dominance, because the big belt isn't enough proof.

Another video of the Streak being broken.

Here's Heyman to introduce Lesnar, whose music starts at 11:01. Confetti falls and Brock gets the hero's welcome he rarely receives. Heyman sings: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the conqueror, my lord." After his third chorus of GLORY GLORY BROCK LESNAR, the gong strikes. The lights come back up and there's....no Undertaker.

Heyman asks if Jedi mind tricks are the best Undertaker has. This Sunday, Brock will take God, the devil and the Undertaker to Suplex City. Paul goes over the Battleground story again but asks why Undertaker had to kick Brock low. Undertaker did it because he knew he couldn't beat Brock, just like he never has before.

You can put Undertaker in the ring with anyone and Undertaker will have a tombstone waiting for them. However, Undertaker is in the ring with a Beast instead of a man. Heyman rants about Brock not respecting anything Undertaker has done and there go the lights again. This time it's Undertaker in the ring and he kicks Brock low again. A chokeslam plants Brock and a tombstone does the same (with Brock's head a good six inches

above the mat. Thanks editing team) to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This is a weird one to grade. They did a good but not great job of setting up the main events on Sunday, but there was more they could have done. That's the important term: there was more. The problem is so many of these ideas (throw tag teams together, contract signings, showdowns etc) have been played out for years but it's all we get.

What really suffers here, as it has for a long time, is the midcard. So many of the feuds range from bad to just lukewarm and that's not a good way to go into a huge show like this. The wrestling was good enough tonight and I want to see Summerslam, but this didn't push me over the top like it should have.

Results

Randy Orton/Cesaro b. Sheamus/Kevin Owens – RK0 to Sheamus

Roman Reigns b. Luke Harper – Spear

Becky Lynch b. Tamina – Disarm-Her

Rusev b. Mark Henry – Accolade

Ryback b. Miz – Shell Shock

Lucha Dragons/Prime Time Players b. Los Matadores/New Day – Hurricanrana to Diego

Sasha Banks b. Nikki Bella – Bank Statement

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw – August 10, 2015

So here's the thing: I really don't think this show warrants a full on Reviewing the Review. It's a stand alone show that is built around the drama of "Will Cena be at Summerslam or not." Well now we know the answer to that question, I really don't see the need to go through the entire show when nothing major happened and it was built around building to Summerslam, most of which is already set in stone. There were a few interesting things on the show which I'll cover here, but this won't be a step by step version of the show, as it would really be a big waste of your time.

Obviously the major story was Orton vs. Cesaro vs. Owens in a triple threat for a shot at the title later in the night, but I don't think the ending was ever in any serious doubt. Orton winning makes the most sense as he only has a minor story going on right now and you can easily put him in a title match, have him lose, and suffer no harm. Both matches were good, but the Sheamus interference was obvious from the second Orton pinned Cesaro.

There was a long video on Lesnar vs. Undertaker. It went well enough, but there were better ways to set up the match than the 123rd version of "yeah the Streak was amazing and I didn't think anyone would ever break it but Brock did and it was amazing" from a bunch of midcarders.

Miz, Ryback and Daniel Bryan did some stuff. It's as riveting as it sounds but I like Ryback more and more every week.

Neville beat King Barrett in a minute and twenty seconds before setting up the tag match with Stepen Amell at Summerslam. I like the idea of Amell in there as he's in great shape and looks like an athlete, but the Barrett squash just killed me. Bring up someone from NXT for that spot if it's going to be so short, but find SOMEONE else to take a quick beating like that. It doesn't accomplish anything and I really don't want to see Barrett at Summerslam now.

So yeah, Raw was good this week and most of the stuff didn't need any further discussion. Summerslam is looking great and the final go home show should offer a bit more to talk about.

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Monday Night Raw – August 10, 2015: Wet Hot American Summerslam Build

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 10, 2015

Location: Xfinity Arena, Everett, Washington

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We have less than two weeks before Summerslam and the question at the moment is whether or not John Cena is going to be able to defend his US Title in the main event against World Champion Seth Rollins due to his recently broken nose. The majority of the card is set already so the next few shows are just going to be about firming up the existing programs. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Rollins to open the show, complete with another video of the knee to the nose. Rollins is still wondering where Cena is, as he issued his challenge for Summerslam last week but there hasn't been a reply yet. Where has Cena been? Jamming on the new Dr. Dre album and contemplating reigniting his rap "career?" Cena is straight out of action, not straight out of Compton.

Rollins doesn't understand why he hasn't heard from Cena as John is scheduled for Tough Enough tomorrow. If he can be on that show, it makes Seth think that Cena is cowering from the champ. Rollins gets word that Cena is here but it's via satellite. We get a picture of Cena with only his mouth moving out of a late night talk show sketch.

"Cena", in Rollins' voice, says Yabba Dabba Doo and says he's going to Tough Enough to apply for a new job. It's gone from Hustle, Loyalty and Respect to surgery, recovery and rehab. Cena is giving up because his nose was so destroyed and there's no way he can beat Rollins and because he looks like he got a nose job from Picasso.

Seth talks about last week's WWE World Title Open Challenge but here's Cesaro to interrupt. Cesaro doesn't like hearing Rollins going on and on and on and on, but he does like hearing about another Open Challenge. Rollins says not so fast because Cesaro hasn't earned it, but here's Kevin Owens to interrupt as well.

Kevin says Cesaro believes in himself because of a bunch of CESARO SECTION signs, but why should either of these two have any say when neither of them can beat John Cena? Cena beat Rollins a few weeks back but Owens pinned Cena, so he should get the shot. Now it's Rollins coming out to make fun of Owens' gut and Cesaro's glasses but Rollins says Tom Brady has a better chance of getting a free meal in Seattle than any of them do of getting a title shot tonight, so they can all get out of here.

This brings out HHH, who didn't like Rollins saying he doesn't care what the Authority thinks. The doctors have told him that Cena is 50/50 for Summerslam, so Rollins might need a backup opponent. Therefore, tonight there's going to be a triple threat match with Cesaro vs. Orton vs. Owens, and the winner gets a title shot against Rollins TONIGHT. There were some funny lines in here, which makes me think the WWE writers had nothing to do with it. This also ran too long, which isn't surprising as they could have cut this WAY down.

Team BAD vs. Team Bella

PCB (their new name after an adult site had already taken Submission Sorority. You can't make that stuff up) is on commentary. In an inset interview, Team BAD debuts the term Belladashians and I want to reach for a gun. Naomi elbows Fox in the face to start but it's off to Nikki for two off a back elbow. BAD takes over on the champ though with Naomi doing her corner wiggle, earning her a spinebuster from Nikki for two. Nikki's spinning kick out of the corner drops Naomi again and we take a break.

Back with Sasha getting two on Nikki as PCB laughs at the idea of the Bellas starting the Divas Revolution. Nikki finally gets free and makes the hot tag to Brie, who is as over as she's ever been since it's her husband's home territory. Brie cleans house as everything breaks down but Tamina gets in a few good shots. The superkick is loaded up but Brie gets

a HORRIBLE looking rollup for the pin on Tamina at 9:00. Come on, it's a ROLLUP. How can you not do that properly?

Rating: C. This was fine for the most part but the ending sequence was a letdown. I like the idea of putting Brie in there where she's going to be popular, but I'm getting really tired of the Bellas not knowing if they're faces or heels from one week to another. You can't have their personalities on Total Divas and then expect people to cheer for them on Raw. Well at least you can't if you have the slightest bit of intelligence about you.

Everyone brawls post match and the Bellas and Fox are knocked to the floor, leaving everyone else to have a staredown. So much for winning meaning anything.

Stephen Amell is here.

New Day vs. Los Matadores

Kofi's grin as he skips to the ring is greatness. New Day takes over early on and we hit the rotating stomps on Diego in the corner as Woods plays cheerleader on the floor. Big E. slams Diego down for two but he misses a charge into the post. The tag brings in Fernando to speed things up with some weird shouting and a springboard flip dive to take Kofi down. Woods gets Kofi out of the way of a charge but Torito takes him over with a hurricanrana. The Midnight Hour is enough to put Fernando away at 4:01.

Rating: D+. It's just a squash but it's nice to get the Matadores out of the running for the title shot. I don't think anyone would have bought them in there and it never would have worked. I'm really hoping we aren't stuck with New Day vs. Prime Time Players again but adding another team or two would spruce things right up.

Post break New Day is dancing and singing in the back when Renee Young comes in and says it's New Day vs. the Prime Time Players vs. Los Matadores vs. Lucha Dragons. New Day thinks we should just add Doom, Men on a Mission and Harlem Heat but then decide that a four way is fine. Renee even joins in on the clapping. I'm very glad WWE has basically said

Los Matadores losing there meant nothing as they're instantly in the title match anyway. Why do we watch these TV matches again?

HHH gives Rollins a pep talk. It's a wonder that Rollins isn't sitting on his daddy's knee for this one.

We recap Reigns issuing a challenge on Smackdown for himself/Ambrose vs. Wyatt/Harper at Summerslam, which was accepted at the end of the show. Take note, as this is one of the only times all year that something actually happens on Summerslam.

Cesaro vs. Randy Orton vs. Kevin Owens

No one gets an entrance as they're all in the ring when we come back from a break. Owens gets double teamed to start so he bails to the floor, leaving Orton to roll Cesaro up for a fast two. Cesaro can't swing Owens so he gets two off a double stomp instead. Orton pops back up for a pair of t-bone suplexes but Owens is able to post Cesaro and snap Orton's throat across the top rope.

A backplash gets two on Randy as this is very fast paced so far. The fans are behind Kevin as he hammers Orton down in the corner. Cesaro comes back in and Orton is sent to the floor. That's fine with Owens who knocks Cesaro outside with him, only to have Orton drop Cesaro back first onto the barricade. Owens drops Cesaro onto the barricade as well but Orton sends Kevin into it so he won't feel left out.

All three get back in with Owens busting out a string of European uppercuts, only to walk into Orton's backbreaker. Cesaro high cross bodies Orton for two more but he has to counter the RKO into a Crossface. Randy grabs a rope but it doesn't count in a triple threat because it's No DQ, so Orton crawls to the floor for the break. Owens knocks Cesaro to the floor and hits a flip dive to take both guys out as we take a break, with Cesaro holding his knee.

Back with Cesaro on his feet in the corner but getting sent into the buckle for the Cannonball to give Owens another near fall. Owens goes up top but has to fight off a superplex. That's fine for one person, but Orton and Cesaro are easily able to double superplex him down in a cool

looking visual. It's Cesaro covering for two but Orton will have none of that.

They slug it out instead and Randy gets swung, setting up the Sharpshooter. Cesaro lets go because of Owens, but the Swing is kicked away, sending Cesaro into Orton. Randy is fine enough to powerslam Owens though, sending both guys to the apron for a double Orton DDT.

Cesaro breaks up the RK0 and hits a nice dive to take Owens out, followed by a springboard twisting European uppercut for two. That was one heck of a sequence. Cesaro takes Owens up to but gets shoved down, only to put his knees up to block the Swanton. A superkick takes Cesaro's head off but it's an RK0 to block the Pop Up Powerbomb. Cesaro eats an RK0 as well, giving Orton the pin and the title shot at 18:15.

Rating: B+. Yeah Orton won, but if Cesaro won here and lost to Rollins tonight, people would have complained about Cesaro getting pinned. On the other hand, if Owens won here and lost to Rollins tonight, people would have complained about Owens getting pinned. Now on the third hand (find a friend who will lend you a hand), Orton can win and then lose to Rollins and people will only complain about it being Orton in the main event slot again, as it was pretty clear he would be when he came out for the opening segment. Really good match of course, as you would expect with those three in there.

Ambrose said he didn't have a friend growing up, but it's nice to have one now so he can get bailed out of jail in Laredo. Reigns thinks Wyatt wouldn't do anything for Harper because they're not family. Ambrose knows how Reigns likes his coffee, water and beer, which is proof that they're brothers. Believe that.

We get quick thoughts from various legends and wrestlers about the history of Undertaker and how amazing the Streak really was. Heyman wants to hear about the myth of Brock Lesnar, which leads to a variety of people talking about how unique Brock's skills really are and how you can only hope to survive instead of defeating him.

We see some clips of the Streak ending and people talk about what a shock it was. Heyman's look of astonishment when the pin actually happened was

perfect. Then fifteen months later Undertaker interrupted Brock squashing Rollins at Battleground and a huge brawl ensued the next night on Raw. The talking heads are split on their pick for Summerslam. This was every "they're both so awesome" segment you've ever seen.

Undertaker and Lesnar will both be here next week, in Brock's hometown of Minneapolis.

Dean Ambrose vs. Luke Harper

Reigns and Wyatt are at ringside. Ambrose slugs away at Harper to start as I think we get a SEA-HAWKS chant early on. A big side slam plants Dean for two but he low bridges Harper to the floor for a running standing elbow from the apron as we take an early break. Back with Harper Gator Rollins Harper and putting on a chinlock. Wyatt has taken Byron's chair so Byron is left standing. Fans: "SIT DOWN BYRON!"

Ambrose fights out of a chinlock and scores with a tornado DDT but Dirty Deeds is countered. The fight spills outside with Dean blasting Wyatt over the table and heading back inside for the rebound clothesline on Harper. Reigns intercepts Bray before he can interfere but eats a superkick from Harper. That earns Harper a suicide dive from Ambrose but Dean gets crotched back inside. The discus clothesline puts Dean away at 9:35.

Rating: C. I liked this more than I would have expected to given how many times we've seen them fight. The tag match at Summerslam should be fun, but it doesn't quite feel like a huge match. It's still not really clear why Wyatt hates Reigns, but at least there's enough of a backstory there to warrant another match.

It's time for MizTV, but first of all Miz has to rip on Amell, saying that once Stardust runs through him, call Miz up for some rebranding and acting lessons. Tonight's guest is Daniel Bryan and it take a bit for the chants to wear down. Miz asks for quiet so the chants get even louder. Bryan, in a funny timid voice: "Miz wants you to shut up so you better be quiet!"

Bryan finally gets a chance to speak and says he isn't just here to be on

MizTV. Of course he wasn't going to miss Raw in Washington and it's time for that SEA-HAWKS chant again. Miz reminds the people that he's a Cleveland Browns fan (that explains so much) before bringing up mentoring Bryan on the first season of NXT. Bryan mocks Miz's Hollywood career and wardrobe, but thinks that his own accomplishments are due to hard work and all the fans around the world. Miz asks about Bryan's medical status, which is still not great. That brings Bryan to his new book, which is a New York Times bestseller, and Tough Enough.

Miz goes on to Ryback and the Intercontinental Title, which should be awarded to Miz after all this waiting. Cue Big Show to call Miz a cross dressing Jedi manure spreader. The fans tell Big Show to retire but he says find someone to retire him. This brings out the returning Ryback so Miz bails, but Bryan throws him back inside to meet the monsters. Ryback cleans house and poses with Bryan to end things.

Video on Charlotte.

It's a three team Divas elimination tag at Summerslam.

Mark Henry vs. Rusev

Lana is on commentary and confirms that Dolph will be back after Summerslam. Summer quickly gets on the apron for a distraction but Lana pulls her down. That's fine with Rusev who superkicks Henry down, only to have both girls come in for the no contest at 1:07.

Summer puts Lana in the Accolade and a Rusev flag falls.

We recap Neville vs. Stardust over the last week.

Neville vs. King Barrett

Neville starts fast, kicks Barrett in the head and scores with the Red Arrow for the pin at 1:20. Total and complete squash because that's what Barrett does.

Stardust comes in to lay Neville out but stops for a staredown with Amell. He knocks Amell's hat off and Stephen jumps the railing, jumps to the apron and jumps over the top rope to tackle Stardust in a pretty

impressive athletic display. Security quickly breaks it up.

After a break HHH yells at Amell, but Stephen wants a tag match at Summerslam. HHH laughs the idea off, but Amell shouts him down and offers to sign any waivers he has to sign. Ever the genius, HHH agrees to a tag match between Wade Barrett (yes Wade)/Stardust vs. Amell/Neville at Summerslam. HHH: "Don't bring a stunt man."

Sheamus doesn't care if Rollins or Orton wins tonight because he might just cash in on either of them.

WWE World Title: Randy Orton vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins is defending and stalls on the floor early on. The champ comes in and the threat of an RKO sends him bailing to the floor as we go to the final commercial. Back with Rollins holding a chinlock before Orton makes a comeback with clotheslines and the powerslam for two. That's enough for Seth as he goes outside to get the belt, only to eat another clothesline from Orton. He drops Rollins on the announcers' table before they head back inside where Seth nails the low superkick.

The champ gets crotched on top and superplexed down for two. Orton can't follow up but is able to counter the Pedigree, only to have his DDT countered. Rollins has one of his own and teases the RKO but settles for another failed Pedigree attempt. Orton backdrops him to the apron for the springboard knee but Seth dives into the RKO (in one of those spots where he was clearly just diving that way so he could dive into the move), drawing in Sheamus for the DQ at 13:38.

Rating: C+. Yeah fine. I think we all knew this was the ending and there was nothing wrong with that as they weren't going to change the title just two weeks before Summerslam. Good enough match though as these two have chemistry, but they need to get off this Sheamus vs. Orton stuff already because it's really not interesting.

Post match Sheamus Brogue Kicks Rollins and goes to cash in but eats the RKO to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Not a great show this week but they moved things

forward going into Summerslam and that's all that mattered. I'm digging the idea of the title being defended on TV as even though it's highly unlikely that we'd see a title change, the mere chance that it could happen makes the match feel better. I liked this show a lot better than the recent weeks and while it's still not excellent, at least it's a step in the right direction and the kind of show they needed to have tonight.

Results

Team Bella b. Team BAD – Rollup to Tamina

New Day b. Los Matadores – Midnight Hour to Fernando

Randy Orton b. Cesaro and Kevin Owens – RKO to Cesaro

Luke Harper b. Dean Ambrose – Discus lariat

Rusev vs. Mark Henry went to a no contest when Lana and Summer Rae interfered

Neville b. King Barrett – Red Arrow

Randy Orton b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Sheamus interfered

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