

# I'm Stunned

Raw spoilers incoming. The controversy wound up being Rock interfering in the Rumble, meaning Rusev got screwed. The solution? Bryan vs. Rollins tonight with the winner going to face Reigns at Fast Lane for the Mania title shot. Rusev wasn't mentioned in the promo.

We're not done though. REigns was in the ring for the discussion and then had to fight Big Show. Big Show PINNED REIGNS, for his first pinfall loss in a singles match in less than three minutes. I know I said it wasn't fair at the Rumble, but commence saying this company is making this nonsense up as they go.

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## Monday Night Raw – March 17, 1997: Bret Snaps

### Monday Night Raw

Date: March 17, 1997

Location: War Memorial, Syracuse, New York

Attendance: 4,737

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Vince McMahon

Here's where everything changes for good and it blew the doors off the place. This is the go home show for Wrestlemania XIII and Bret Hart is challenging Sid for the World Title inside a steel cage. Hart has been getting screwed over and over again around this time, but this is his chance to get things back to normal. Let's get to it.

## Legion of Doom vs. Savio Vega/Crush

Savio and Crush are here without Faarooq. It's a brawl on the floor to start with Hawk punching Savio in the jaw. Animal and Crush get inside as the fans are entirely behind the LOD, which is completely different from the NOD. All four get inside as we go to a split screen with Ahmed Johnson (in a bright purple jacket with a huge A J on the chest). The Nation bails to the floor for a breather and we go to a new split screen of Faarooq speaking Ebonics (his word) to communicate with Johnson.

Animal puts Vega in a chinlock as the third split screen of the match shows a clip from last night at Madison Square Garden (which I believe is the last house show recorded from that or any venue) of the Nation beating up Johnson with a 2x4. Crush comes in and no sells a Hawk clothesline but gets taken down by a dropkick and slam. We take a break and come back with Savio hitting his running spinwheel kick in the corner for no cover on Hawk.

Split screen #4 shows no Faarooq but we go to a full screen (thankfully with a monitor showing the match) to see Faarooq jump Johnson with a nightstick. Animal comes in off the hot tag and hits a double clothesline as everything breaks down. Crush gets loaded up for the Doomsday Device but Faarooq comes in with the nightstick for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. These split screens have to go. They're causing the matches to be rushed because the show is trying to fit in too much stuff onto a show that can't handle it yet. It didn't help that it was a bad match with a lame ending, but I would have liked to be able to see the match. They easily could have either showed us the clip from last night before the match or simply told us about it. Faarooq attacking Johnson could have gone before the bell too. I like that they're giving the stories some time, but they shouldn't be sharing time with the match. It's too rushed.

Johnson runs in with the 2x4 for the save. The yet to be named (and still fat) D'Lo Brown takes the Doomsday Device.

We look at the Slammy nominations for Freedom of Speech: Jerry Lawler, Paul Heyman, Steve Austin, Howard Stern (never appeared in WWF) and Faarooq. Guess who won.

There are rumors that the title won't be on the line in the main event. Gorilla Monsoon is en route to the arena to make a decision, as is Shawn Michaels for less decision making.

### Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Flash Funk

Chyna is officially named for the first time here. It takes forever to get her out of the ring, even when Flash threatens to hit her. Vince talks about HHH being more arrogant lately as Funk armdrags him down a few times and scores with a dropkick to send HHH to the floor. Back in and the pre-Game counters a reverse leapfrog into an electric chair drop to take over.

The Flair knee drop (complete with the camera cut so we can't see it hit mat instead of head) has Funk in trouble but he comes back with a slam and top rope legdrop for two, with Chyna pulling him off the cover. A German suplex of all things gets two for HHH but he dives into a weak superkick for another two. Funk goes up top but Chyna interferes again (right in front of the referee), allowing HHH to hit the Pedigree for the pin.

**Rating:** D. This was basically a nearly six minute commercial for Chyna and establishing that she can be big and intimidating. It was a good pairing and the two had success, but they were rough around the edges to start. Nothing match of course but that's what you have to expect from most squashes.

Shawn Michaels arrives.

We see a press conference where the Governor of New Jersey lifted a tax, allowing the WWF to come back. Of all people, they sent Undertaker to this in full gear. It's quite the visual if nothing else.

### Mini Vader/Mini Mankind vs. Mini Goldust/Mascarita Sagrada

This was a thing that happened a lot around this time and I still don't get it. The problem with this batch though is other than Sagrada, they're all about the same size as Rey Mysterio, which just makes them look like a bunch of 13 year olds in Halloween costumes. Goldust and Vader get

things going with Vader punching him in the face to counter the deep breaths. Some armdrags put Vader outside so it's off to Mankind for a running clothesline.

Sagrada comes in to actually do something exciting with his insanely fast flips and wristdrags. Mankind is sent to the floor but Vader sneaks in with a big running clothesline to the back of the head. It seems like this is under lucha libre rules, meaning going to the floor counts as a tag. Everyone winds up outside with Goldust hitting a cannonball off the apron to take Vader down, leaving Sagrada to victory roll Mankind for the pin. This was what it was.

Sagrada shoves Vader off the stage and hits a big (work with me here) cross body to take him down.

Gorilla Monsoon announces that the cage match will indeed be for the title. When was this ever in doubt?

Here's Bret with something to say. He immediately gets into heel mode, saying he won the Royal Rumble and Final Four and deserves some respect. The new motto around here seems to be you scratch my back and I'll stab yours. That's the kind of thing the old Bret would never say. After he wins the title tonight, which of course he will, he'll give Undertaker a shot and Undertaker can get in line with everyone else. Bret goes on about how he's going to hurt Austin on Sunday and how he can't wait for Shamrock to hear Austin say he quits. Just like last week, Bret is knocking this out of the park.

### Mike Bell vs. The Sultan

Rocky is on commentary as Sultan piledrives, splashes and clutches Bell to win in less than a minute.

Sultan gets in Maivia's face post match but Tony Atlas is here again to hold Rocky back. I'm still not sure why we're supposed to be interested in Atlas being out there all the time.

Hour #2 begins.

Here's Shawn for a chat and he's back in full face mode. He immediately

says he's found his smile again because he left it in San Antonio but now he's bringing it wherever he goes. A lot of fans sent him thank you cards and he thanks them for their patience because he's a hard man to deal with. Vince asks about the knee injury and Shawn brings up President Clinton injuring his knee recently (well 18 years ago but you get the idea). He's getting the knee looked at soon and should be back in a few months. One way or another, his clothes are coming off.

However, he has a bone to pick with Vince. He's been sitting at home and knows that Wrestlemania is right around the corner. For some reason, his phone just hasn't rung and there's just no way to have a Wrestlemania without Shawn Michaels. He can walk well enough to get to Wrestlemania and do some commentary on the main event. While he's at it, he might as well show up at the Slammys this Friday.

### Vader vs. British Bulldog

Owen, Mankind and Bearer are at ringside. Vader shoves him around a few times and then pounds the Bulldog down in the corner with ease. Back up and Smith's shoulders finally drop Vader and he actually hits the delayed vertical suplex. That's freaking insane when you think about it. We take a break and come back with Vader's middle rope splash getting two. Bulldog avoids a sitdown splash but his old crucifix is countered into a kind of Samoan drop.

Yet another splash gets two for Vader and the middle rope standing splash sends Bulldog flying across the ring. He's still able to slam a diving Vader though, which is far more common of a spot than I thought it was. Bulldog picks him up, walks him around, and then slams him down in another scary display of strength. The powerslam is loaded up but Mankind gets involved for the DQ.

**Rating:** C. Decent power match here with Bulldog's offense looking very impressive. I mean, he got Vader up for the delayed vertical suplex. That's cool looking no matter how you look at it. I get why they went with that ending too as they didn't want a champion losing going into a title defense. They need to watch these old shows to get some ideas.

Slammy ad.

## Billy Gunn vs. Aaron Ferguson

Shamrock is on commentary and says Billy needs to pay attention to his opponent, because you never know what might happen. Gunn takes him down for a bad looking knee bar and Shamrock doesn't sound impressed. The worst cross armbar I've ever seen makes Ferguson give up.

Gunn gets in Shamrock's face post match and Ken gets in the ring. Shamrock gets in and takes him down into a Fujiwara armbar to make Gunn tap, which I believe is the first time that had ever been done in this company. The ankle lock makes it happen for the second time and Gunn tries to go get a chair but bails anyway.

We go to Austin who says that didn't impress him because Gunn just finished a match. All Shamrock did was have some street fights that someone filmed, which means he's an overrated piece of trash. One day he'll beat Shamrock up and punch his lights out. Vince asks why he's here tonight and Austin says he shows up anywhere there's a ring. He's going to win the title on Sunday and beat up Bret Hart because Hart can't lace his boots. Vince sounds terrified and it's with good reasons. You could see that look in Austin's eyes here and he's on a roll, clearly ready to go to the top of the company.

Sid tells Austin to stay out of his business because he rules the world.

The cage is being set up so the announcers preview the main event.

## WWF World Title: Sycho Sid vs. Bret Hart

In a cage with old school escape only rules and Bret challenging. He still high fives fans on the way to the ring because the heel character is there but he hasn't fully turned yet. Sid fists bumps fans too though so maybe Bret is already a full on heel. Hart is aggressive to start and stomps Sid down in the corner. That's fine with Sid who hits his awkward right hands to the head, only to be snapmared down.

An early escape attempt causes Bret to get crotched on the ropes and Sid takes over. Bret is sent spine first into the cage three times in a row but he's still able to catch Sid going over the top. They get back onto

the mat with Sid pulling him down by the hair and going for the door but Austin comes out to keep the door closed. After a break, Bret is working on the champ's back, only to have Sid hit a powerbomb out of nowhere.

Sid climbs up but Austin climbs as well and punches Sid back down into the cage. The war over Colonel Park's contract continues! If you don't get that reference, be glad you weren't watching WCW back then. Bret climbs up as well and actually helps Austin beat up Sid instead of, you know, walking out the door with no one else around.

This brings out Undertaker to help Sid because he wants him to retain the title to ensure his title shot on Sunday. All four are on the corner of the cage until Austin and Undertaker fall down and Bret superplexes Sid. Austin chairs Undertaker as both guys in the match go to leave. Undertaker slams the door on Bret's head and Sid climbs out to retain.

**Rating:** C. The match was nothing special but man alive do I love smart stories. Everyone here was doing exactly what they should have been doing and it made perfect sense. That shot of them all fighting on the cage was awesome and it's so cool to see the whole thing playing out because they all want the title. Not because some evil boss told them what to do or some power struggle, but because they want to be World Heavyweight Champion.

After a break, Vince is in the ring with half of the cage down to talk to Bret. Hart shoves him down and goes into one of the greatest tirades since Savage split up the Mega Powers, dropping every swear word that he can think of about how everyone is against him and Vince keeps turning a blind eye to him getting screwed. Austin gets on the screen to call Bret a crying loser who couldn't get the job done.

This brings out Sid, Undertaker and Austin with the big men pairing off for a brawl in the ring while Austin hammers on Bret outside. Bret fights back and nails Pat Patterson as Sid and Undertaker try to chokeslam each other. Undertaker starts getting the better of it as Shawn slowly walks down the ramp as Bret and Austin keep fighting. Michaels looks at both of them and gets in the ring with a chair as Sid and Undertaker fight to the floor to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The show still wasn't great this week with some bad to watchable wrestling but the historical significance of the angles was great. Bret turning heel was exactly what the main event needed and the big payoff this Sunday was exactly what the company needed and set up the next six months that would get them back in the fight. They were about to hit an incredible stretch and Bret vs. Austin would be at the top of the card. Not a great show this week but a very, very important one.

Here's Wrestlemania if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/03/22/wrestlemania-count-up-wrestlemania-xiii-austins-ascension/>

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And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# Monday Night Raw – March 10, 1997: The Skeleton of Greatness

## Monday Night Raw

Date: March 10, 1997

Location: Centrum Center, Worcester, Massachusetts

Attendance: 4,088

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross



This is the show where everything changes. After years of the same set and look, Raw changes over to the modern look with the metal ramp and huge screen that is still around today, FINALLY making it look like a modern show. We're getting closer to Wrestlemania which means things are about to get really interesting in a hurry. Bret Hart isn't pleased with the treatment he's been getting lately and very soon he's going to have a chance to get the title back. However, Steve Austin is lurking around and is willing to do whatever he can to ruin Bret's life. Let's get to it.

During the opening video, we can hear Finkel telling the fans to make some noise.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sid to open the show with an in ring chat. Sid isn't cool with teaming with Undertaker tonight, because he smells something fishy. Undertaker should just stay in the cemetery because he's getting buried at Wrestlemania. Cue Undertaker to tell Sid to just admit that he's scared. Undertaker doesn't have to be his partner tonight because he can deal with Vader and Mankind himself. He drops the catchphrase but here are Bearer, Mankind and Vader to interrupt. Bearer talks some trash and the brawl is on with Sid and Undertaker running into each other as we head to a break.

### Rocky Maivia vs. Tony Roy

Non-title. Iron Sheik, Bob Backlund and the Sultan (Rikishi) come out to talk about how they're going to take Maivia's Intercontinental Title at Wrestlemania. Roy gets in some cheap shots but eats a quick clothesline. Rocky hammers him down as Backlund rants about taking the title. The spinning DDT sets up Rocky's high cross body (WAY across the ring) for the pin in a hurry.

Sultan comes in and is dispatched just as fast. The legends get taken down as well, allowing Rocky to escape. Tony Atlas, Rocky's dad's former Tag Team Championship partner is in the crowd and joins Rocky on the ramp.

### Heavy Metal/Pentagon/Pierroth vs. Latin Lover/Hector Garza/Octagon

This was during the WWF's attempt at topping the Cruiserweight division, despite these guys not being quite as good as Mysterio and Guerrero. Garza and Metal, the two of the three not in masks, get things going as Lawler promises to beat Paul E. Dangerously in a debate later tonight. That goes nowhere so it's off to Pierroth and Lover, with Pierroth taking over with a clothesline.

Lover comes back with a spinning high cross body and Pierroth is nice enough to stand there so it can connect. Off to Octagon vs. Pentagon (the Jr. of which is currently in Lucha Underground), who look almost identical with black attire and colored masks. Pentagon gets armdragged down and it's back to Garza vs. Metal. Metal misses a charge to the corner and falls outside but is still able to avoid a charging Garza. We cut to the crowd where a big, muscular woman is sitting in the crowd. Her name hasn't been given yet but I'm sure you know who she is. Mongolia or something like that. Whoever she is, security gets rid of her as we take a break from the match going on in the background.

Back with the fans LOUDLY calling the match boring. Metal has his foot on Garza's back before it's off to Pierroth (I believe part of the heel team) as we go to a split screen of Chyna challenging Bret last week. Apparently Chyna has been arrested. For sitting in a crowd? Now we go to a new split screen for an interview with Brian Pillman who is back from another injury.

Lover dives off the top onto Pierroth, Metal dives onto both of them, and Octagon dives onto that big pile. None of this is acknowledged by the announcers until Garza does his big corkscrew plancha onto the five other guys. As we look at a double feature, Metal rolls up Lover for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. I assure you, the match was just as disjointed and messy on the show than it sounded here. It was clear that this was just meant as background noise for the storylines going on, which to be fair were more interesting than what we were seeing here. At the end of the day, there's no reason to care about any of these guys and that played a huge role in the division never going anywhere.

Wrestlemania ad.

### Roy Raymond vs. Ahmed Johnson

Johnson has been dealing with the Nation and needs partners to face them in a Chicago street fight. The good sized Raymond tries to get in some cheap shots and actually suplexes Johnson down as the Nation comes out to watch. Johnson doesn't care for the white rappers though and beats up Raymond instead, setting up an ax kick and the Pearl River Plunge to end the jobber, all with the Nation theme song playing.

Farooq goes on a rant about his father leaving him when he was a kid and calling Johnson an Uncle Tom. Johnson isn't scared of the Nation because he has the two baddest men he can find. The entire Nation can come at him because Johnson has the city of Chicago in his corner. Here are the Legion of Doom to join Ahmed and we have a street fight for Wrestlemania.

You would think that would end the segment but JR gets in the ring to interview the new team. Hawk says the game is ready and after Wrestlemania, the Nation is going to look like a pile of raw...sweat socks? Animal asks if the Nation can hear the power of the fans, triggering a big LOD chant. Johnson says all of the Nation look white now, even the black boys. Because they're scared you see.

### New Blackjacks vs. Owen Hart/British Bulldog

Non-title again. Owen cuts off new European Champion the British Bulldog but swears he isn't jealous. Before the match, Windham says they would win the titles if they were on the line here and Bradshaw accuses Owen of living off Bulldog. He also says Owen has purdy lips and the brawl is on. Owen posts Bradshaw on the floor as the cameras are still trying to master this new set. Bulldog clotheslines Windham outside and we settle down to Bradshaw hammering on Bulldog in the corner.

A split screen gives us Vader and Mankind, who will be challenging for the titles at Wrestlemania, saying the champs aren't good enough or strong enough. Bradshaw fights back against Bulldog and knocks Owen off the apron. This split screen makes it really hard to keep track of the match. Back to a full screen with Owen backdropping Bradshaw but taking a low blow as JR plugs the hotline. They head outside with Owen going into the barricade before a suplex gets two back inside.

We take a break and come back with Windham breaking out of a sleeper with a jawbreaker as the fans again think this is boring. Owen tries to make a save as Bret vs. Sid in a cage is officially announced for next week. We're still not done with the storylines during the match as Taz pops up on the split screen and warns Lawler not to keep making jokes about him. Bulldog shoves Bradshaw off the top and the hot tag brings in Owen. Spinwheel kicks drop both Blackjacks and everything breaks down with Owen putting Windham in the Sharpshooter, only to have Bulldog shove the referee for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. Wrestling wasn't exactly this show's strong suit if you haven't gotten that yet. The ending is much more about building up the friction between the champs than anything else, which was supposed to lead to them dropping the titles at Wrestlemania. There wasn't much to see here though and the split screens are getting old in a hurry. The Blackjacks went a total of nowhere off this push.

The announcers aren't sure why the Blackjacks win, even though Bulldog clearly shoved the referee.

Preview of the Slammys, which used to be a separate show and far more memorable, as well as right before Wrestlemania.

As soon as the match is over, here are Taz and Bill Alfonso to get in Lawler's face. Jerry goes right after him but Sabu dives off the top and right through a table. It's not clear who he was trying to hit but Lawler seems to approve. Sandman and Tommy Dreamer get Sabu out of there.

#### Leif Cassidy vs. Miguel Perez

Cassidy is of course Al Snow. Lawler is ranting about Heyman and ECW but switches gears to insult Puerto Rico. We see a clip of Perez debuting a few weeks back in the Manhattan Center and he's as generic as you can imagine. Perez hiptosses Cassidy over and hits some dropkicks as the crowd is really not interested.

With the match boring everyone to tears, we jump to another split screen with Paul Heyman shouting about wanting to fight Lawler. The other half of the screen is now on Lawler as we can't see any of the match. For once

I can't say I blame them. Back to the ring with Cassidy working on Perez in the corner but missing a moonsault. You can see the empty seats opposite the camera and there are more emptying as the match goes on. Perez grabs a quick rolling cradle for the pin.

**Rating:** D. It's clear that they had nothing better to do here than show the Heyman vs. Lawler stuff. Perez is just another (very hairy) guy who was brought in to fill in a spot on the roster. The company's energy is starting to build up but there's still this kind of stuff to get through at times.

Sid shouts that he doesn't react but reacts reaction. He goes on about the tag match tonight and is ready for the cage match next week. Yeah there's a major title match six days before Wrestlemania in case you didn't realize this was a very different time.

Hour #2 begins.

Jim Ross brings out newcomer Ken Shamrock of UFC fame, even though UFC meant almost nothing at this point. Shamrock is going to be the special referee in the submission match at Wrestlemania because he's a legitimate submission expert. He sucks up to the fans a bit and thanks Vince for letting him appear at Wrestlemania. Shamrock's only concern is being a fair referee which is all he ever asks in his own fights.

Cue Austin on the screen, threatening to stomp a mudhole in Shamrock if he has to keep running his mouth. Austin isn't happy with Bret getting a title shot six days before Wrestlemania, but he wouldn't mind the submission match being for the title. Shamrock doesn't have his gear tonight but he isn't going anywhere if Austin would like to come try him out. Instead it's Bret to a pretty strong but not universal ovation. Shamrock was very shaky on the mic here but to be fair he was brand new at this.

Bret says it's nice of the WWF to let him finally say something all these weeks after losing the WWF World Title. He's seen signs with people saying that Bret is crying again, but he's had it up to here with the lack of justice but he accepts the WWF's apology by giving him a title match next Monday night inside a steel cage. Sid is good, but next week

Bret is going to become a five time champion. That means Austin is the lucky one because he's going to be receiving a title shot at Wrestlemania.

In something that really affirms Bret's change of attitude, he flat out says he's the best submission wrestler in the company with Shamrock standing about five feet away from him. Everyone in the company has screwed him over (oh you have no idea) but he has no issues with Shamrock, unless he tries to screw him over at Wrestlemania. Shamrock says he'll be a fair referee and raise the winner's hand. This brings out Austin to flip both guys off and leave. I love how simple that was from Austin. Why give a big speech when you can just do something quick and leave?

This was an outstanding segment and the story of the Attitude Era in a nutshell: Bret, representing tradition and respect, can't handle it when this in your face new generation is starting to pass him by. The war with Austin carried the company through 1997 and launched Austin into superstardom, but a lot of people overlook how good Bret was in this role. Most people don't give him credit for how good he was on interviews, but he was able to keep it simple here and nail it with promos like this one. The character is great, the matches were some of the best ever, and the story was perfect.

Here's Honky Tonk Man as he's trying to find his new protege. He isn't wasting his talents on a crowd like this and mispronouncing the name of the town, which is more old school, basic heel work that is almost guaranteed to work.

### Billy Gunn vs. Aldo Montoya

Honky Tonk Man joins commentary and Montoya is Justin Credible under a mask. How amazing is it that Billy is still having pay per view matches eighteen years later? It's one of those things that just doesn't make sense that you would never imagine at this point. Gunn ties Montoya in the Tree of Woe and stomps away before nailing a running clothesline. An enziguri puts Gunn down and JR reads house show ads to ignore another boring match. Gunn grabs a quick DDT and drops a top rope legdrop for the

pin as Sunny is shown in a robe, promising undercover work on Shotgun Saturday Night.

Mankind talks about his mommy and hits himself in the head. The Undertaker thinks he knows him but he's about to know him even better. He goes on to talk about taking a bite out of a bad apple but we cut to a commercial.

### Goldust vs. Tim McNeedy

HHH and Chyna are on the stage to distract Goldust but it really doesn't work. Goldust hits a running clothesline, sends McNeedy into the corner and nails the Curtin Call for the fast pin.

HHH and Chyna come to the ring but Marlena comes out and jumps on Chyna's back to a really big reaction. Referees break it up but Chyna shoves them all away with ease and throws one onto the rest.

It's time for the debate between Lawler and Dangerously with Ross moderating. Jerry goes first and asks why ECW exists. This is the biggest exposure they've ever had because they're a bunch of misfits and thugs, who happen to be surrounding the ring. Dangerously is comically leaning over the podium as Lawler rips on ECW's obsession with violence as the Eliminators, Taz and the Dudleys look on.

Jerry calls the ECW fans idiots with Honky Tonk Man agreeing. Lawler says ECW couldn't get a crowd in a big arena in Philadelphia, even though he gets the name of the big arena wrong. Dangerously goes on one of his patented rants about how ECW is about busting themselves to earn the fans' respect and give them their money's worth. Cue Sandman, Dreamer and Beulah with Sandman saying he's ready to cane Lawler right now.

Lawler says there are four million people watching this but Dangerously is bragging about getting 1100 people. "You can get 1100 people to watch paint dry." Unless you're TNA in New York City more than once a week right? They start shouting at each other with Dangerously saying he's proud of hardcore, so Lawler implies Paul is gay.

Dreamer is ready to fight and the rest of the ECW guys get in the ring.

Jerry calls out his friends....and no one shows up. Lawler is allowed to leave as this segment comes to a strange close. I'm really not sure who I'm supposed to cheer for here as Lawler was in full on heel mode here but he was defending the WWF. This was much more about setting up Lawler actually appearing in the ECW Arena a few months later and then fighting Dreamer on pay per view in August. It was WAY different than anything else they were doing at the time and pretty entertaining but this would be like running an angle with ROH back in 2005.

### Mankind/Vader vs. Undertaker/Sycho Sid

Sid has to go it alone before Undertaker comes to the ring. After nearly a minute of double teaming, Undertaker comes out to no music and cleans house, hitting a chokeslam on Vader. Of note here, they made sure to cut the camera angle to a lower shot so you couldn't see Undertaker not getting him that high off the ground. Little things like that are what keeps starts looking special instead of making everything as realistic as possible and causing people to look human.

Vader and Sid officially get going with Vader in control off a series of headbutts and a big clothesline. A splash gets two on the champ and we hit the chinlock. It's a LONG one too with Vader holding onto Sid for over two minutes and goes into a break. Back with Sid suplexing Vader but Undertaker is fighting Mankind on the floor instead of taking the tag.

Mankind comes in and drops an elbow but Sid crawls over and makes the tag a few seconds later. Well that missed tag was pretty worthless. A chokeslam gets two on Mankind as Sid and Vader fight on the floor. Sid hits his partner by mistake and the champ gets chokeslammed, setting up a modified Taker Dive, only to have Sid lay Undertaker out with a powerbomb, giving Vader the pin.

**Rating:** D. The chinlock just killed this match and it never had the chance to recover. Not that it mattered though as this was much more about angle advancement than the match itself. Undertaker was starting to get ticked off near the end there and angry Taker breaking stuff is all kinds of fun. Also, I had forgotten the Taker Dive had debuted at least six months before Ground Zero.



Sid breaks up a post match Vader Bomb and Undertaker beats up Vader for a bit.

Bret promises to win the title to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This is a case where the good is REALLY good but the bad is horrible. It was clear that they had no interest in the midcard at this point other than maybe HHH vs. Goldust, because other than the main event and Austin vs. Hart, almost none of the wrestling stuff was worth a thing. Lawler vs. ECW was more about ECW than anything else, but it was really cool stuff to see back in the day. The core is here though and once they fill in the details, this company is going to blow Nitro out of the water.

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# Monday Night Raw – January 26, 2015: Episode IV: A New Hope

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 26, 2015

Location: WWE Studios, Stamford, Connecticut

Hosts: Michael Cole, Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield

This is going to be a special edition of the show as there won't be any new matches. Due to a very strong blizzard in the northeast, tonight's show was canceled and tomorrow's Smackdown has been postponed to a live show on Thursday night. I'd expect a lot of highlights and taped matches on this show so let's get to it.

We open with a look at the blizzard to explain why things are a bit different tonight.

Opening sequence.

Cole and Booker T. talk about what's coming, including last night's World Title match and the Royal Rumble in their entirety and an interview with Brock Lesnar.

JBL is on the roof of WWE Headquarters as the weatherman for the evening. He gets in a funny line about Sasquatches found frozen in ice dying warmer than he is right now. Points for a decent idea at least.

First up is last night's World Title match. Since I already did the play by play for this show last night, I'll be copying over the full version from last night, even though it may be clipped on this broadcast.

WWE World Heavyweight Title: Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Lesnar is defending and we get big match intros. Rollins immediately bails to the floor and Lesnar hits the first German suplex on Cena. There's the second German as Rollins comes in, only to get caught on Brock's shoulders. The Stooges make the save so Brock suplexes them at the same time. Brock launches Seth back into the ring and Germans Cena again. All Lesnar so far.

Both challengers are easily suplexed again and there's the Kimura to Cena. Brock even climbs onto Cena but Seth makes the save with the springboard knee to the head and Lesnar is in trouble. A double suplex puts Lesnar down and there's an AA but Rollins throws Cena to the floor and only gets one on the champ. Both challengers are thrown to the floor and you can see everyone laying as Brock walks around the ring. Seth knocks Brock into the steps for a breather, leaving Cena to beat Rollins

up inside.

The fans absolutely hate Cena and are thrilled to have Brock break up the Shuffle with rolling Germans. Rollins breaks it up for some reason though and knees Lesnar out to the floor. Now it's Cena getting all fired up and cleaning house, only to have Rollins knock him outside. Seth tries a springboard onto Lesna but gets caught on Brock's shoulders for an F5. John has to make a save so Brock feels the need to throw him down with another German suplex.

That's not enough for Brock though as he loads up the announcers' table (and destroys a monitor), only to walk into the AA. Brock doesn't even stay down so Cena hits another, only to have Lesnar pop up again. A third AA gets two as Rollins makes the save, followed by the Curb Stomp for two with Cena making a save. Now the fans are impressed. Lesnar throws them both down again and goes outside, only to have Cena follow him out and spear the champ through the barricade.

Cena slams him hard into the steps and blasts him in the face with the same steps, knocking the champ onto the announcers' table. Seth kicks Cena down and goes up for a top rope elbow through the table to put everyone down. That was one heck of a crash as the war continues. Back in and Rollins hits the low superkick for two on Cena but John grabs a popup sitout powerbomb for the same. Lesnar is receiving medical attention as Rollins counters a superplex attempt into the running buckle bomb for two.

Everyone is down again but Cena grabs the STF, only to have the Stooges come in for the save. Rollins plays Reigns in a Triple Bomb as a stretcher comes out for Lesnar. Cena kicks out at two so Rollins grabs the briefcase, only to miss the charge and fly out to the floor. The Stooges take a double AA and Rollins gets the single version but kicks out at two. We cut back to Lesnar who says he wants to stay out here. Cole says Lesnar has at least a broken rib. Rollins enziguris Cena down and the Curb Stomp connects for another near fall.

Rollins busts out a Phoenix Splash but Lesnar CHARGES back in for some German suplexes as Beast Mode is on. Seth flips out of a German though

and knocks Lesnar silly with the briefcase, only to have Lesnar pop up with an F5 to counter the Curb Stomp onto the briefcase to retain the title at 22:45.

**Rating:** A. If there's one thing WWE can do like no one else, it's organized carnage. These guys DESTROYED each other for twenty two minutes and I would have believed anyone could have won at any time. Lesnar going into that other level is absolutely terrifying and you believe he could beat anyone at that point. Great stuff here and well worth going out of your way to see. They're making Lesnar out to be unstoppable, meaning whoever gets to take the title off of him will be a huge star. You might even say they'll be Reign(s)ing. And yes that was as stupid as it sounded.

This Thursday, Daniel Bryan vs. Kane in a casket match on Smackdown.

Seth Rollins is live in studio for an exclusive interview. Rollins says he deserved to be in the title match at the Rumble because of his skills, not because he brought back the Authority. He did everything he was supposed to do to win the title, including Curb Stomping Lesnar. It's put him down before, but it didn't work last night.

The springboard elbow and Phoenix Splash should have won and Rollins was surprised that they didn't. Rollins even admits that he underestimated Lesnar last night, but Lesnar underestimated him as well. Lesnar may be the World Champion, but he doesn't have a Plan B. Brock will be here next, and Rollins says he can come take this chair from him. It's not often that you hear someone admit their best wasn't good enough and this came off more like a face interview than anything else. I don't think it's a turn or anything but we'll call it shades of gray.

After a break, Lesnar comes up to the interview set and says Rollins has his chair. Rollins gets up and shoves the chair down before walking away. Brock sits down and confirms that he has a broken rib but it was time for him to win last night and that's what he did. Heyman says they're not at odds with the Authority because Lesnar is going to be headlining the biggest show of the year. If the Authority has a problem with someone, Brock Lesnar will be there to take them out as long as the Authority pays

him what he's worth.

We look at a clip of Brock breaking the Streak and Lesnar says he won the match due to overcoming and conquering everything in his path, just like he has everything else. After that totally obvious piece of filler, Brock says he's happy for Reigns and hopes he's up for the challenge, because the champ is ready. When a steamroller has momentum going, get out of his way. Heyman says Reigns can't stop Lesnar. "Anything else?" Cole says Reigns will be here later tonight and Lesnar thinks he might stick around.

Lesnar vs. Reigns already sounds better. Not due to anything here as this was nothing special, but because it's not in the really boring Royal Rumble. I really do think that has more to do with it than anything else. When you get down to just Lesnar vs. Reigns as two monsters clashing, a lot of that hatred is going away and people will calm WAY down over it. Just thinking that it's Reigns vs. Lesnar at Wrestlemania and forgetting last night makes it feel a lot less annoying and dreadful. That's a big step forward.

### Royal Rumble

90 second intervals and it's Miz at #1 and R-Truth at #2. The fans immediately want Mizdow but get a headlock from R-Truth instead. Feeling out process to start until Truth gets crotched on top. In at #3 is BUBBA RAY DUDLEY, complete with taped up glasses. It's Miz getting the big beating and the wind-up elbow has Miz reeling. Truth (appropriately) helps with What's Up and is even told to get the tables. You know the Philadelphia crowd is up for that. Miz gets back up and eats 3D, allowing Bubba to easily eliminate him.

Luke Harper is in at #4 as Bubba throws out Truth. They immediately start hammering on each other and Harper fights out of the Bubba Bomb before kicking Bubba in the jaw. A big lariat puts Harper down though and the ECW chants revive Dudley. Bray Wyatt is in at #5, complete with lantern. Bubba stares him down but Harper gives us a Wyatt Family reunion as the fans want D-Von. Harper throws Bubba out and it's time for the big staredown.

They stand in place until Curtis Axel is in at #6 but Erick Rowan (who didn't qualify for the Rumble) jumps him from behind though and whips him into the barricade, apparently stealing Axel's spot. Harper looks at Rowan and wants a team up, much to Bray's excitement. Bray and Harper join forces though and Rowan gets double teamed, only to have Bray dump both of them out to clear the ring.

The Boogeyman returns at #7 and Cole informs us that the guy coming out to I'M THE BOOGEYMAN is in fact named the Boogeyman. Bray smiles at him and stops a charge with a big clothesline, setting up the easy elimination. Sin Cara is in at #8 and Cole sounds bored out of his mind. Cara gets in a kick from the apron but Bray just decks him with a right hand. Sister Abigail connects and Bray is all alone again a few seconds later.

Bray grabs the mic and issues an open invitation because he has the whole world in his hands. Zack Ryder returns at #9, hits the Broski Boot, and is quickly Bray's fifth elimination. Daniel Bryan is in at #10 to really pick things up. He immediately starts the kicks and has Bray in trouble in the corner. Even more kicks put him down as Fandango is in at #11. Bryan busts out even more kicks and an old school airplane spin but doesn't throw Fandango out.

Tyson Kidd (complete with his addictive theme song) is in at #12 to slug it out with Bryan before a double cross body puts both guys down. Stardust is in at #13 as we're firmly in the midcard portion. Cole says this is Stardust's first Rumble to split a few hairs. We currently have Wyatt, Bryan, Stardust, Fandango and Kidd in the ring. Stardust and Fandango trade skinning the cat saves before Bryan belly to back suplexes Kidd out.

Bray gets knocked through the middle rope and Bryan follows with the Flying Goat, meaning both guys are still in as Diamond Dallas Page is in at #14. Stardust jumps him upon entry but eats a Diamond Cutter. Fandango takes the middle rope version, followed by Wyatt missing a charge and taking one of his own. Rusev is in at #15 and it's time to clear out some space. He blocks a Diamond Cutter and dumps Page and Fandango, setting up a showdown between Rusev and Wyatt.

Daniel breaks it up with a top rope dropkick and unleashes more kicks, only to have Bray pop up and dump him out far earlier than I was expecting. Goldust is in at #16 as the crowd is just dead. Stardust tries to throw out Goldust (with Cole mentioning that Goldust was eliminated by his brother last year, despite saying Stardust was in his first Rumble. Like I said, splitting hairs) but Goldust saves himself. The fans start chanting for Bryan and then switch to booing.

Kofi Kingston is in at #17, giving us Kingston, Goldust, Stardust, Rusev and Wyatt. Bray catapults him over the top but Kofi skins the cat and comes back in with a springboard shot to the head. Everyone gets into one corner until Adam Rose is in at #18. You can hear every word of the songs now as the crowd just does not care at the moment. Kofi is thrown out but the Rosebuds catch him and walk him back to the apron. Rusev dumps Rose and Kofi a few seconds later and Roman Reigns is in at #19 to a lot less booing than I was expecting.

Roman starts cleaning house and dumps both Dust Brothers, only to get double teamed by Rusev and Wyatt. Big E. is in at #20 to clean house and give us a very powerful foursome of Big E., Rusev, Wyatt and Reigns. Mizdow is in at #21 but Miz runs out to say it's his spot. Damien finally stands up to Miz and goes in to a good reaction, only to be dumped by Rusev. Jack Swagger is in at #22 and everyone keeps brawling until Ryback is in at #23.

Ryback busts out everyone with spinebusters as JBL incorrectly says Lex Luger is the only man to win the Rumble but never win the WWE Title (Duggan). The fans chant for CM Punk but get Kane at #24, giving us Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Big E., Swagger, Ryback and Kane. Dean Ambrose wakes the crowd up again at #25 and goes right for Wyatt. We get more brawling around the ropes until Titus O'Neil is in at #26 and is dumped in about thirty seconds (counting intro) by Reigns and Rusev.

Ambrose dropkicks Wyatt up against the ropes and Bad News Barrett gets lucky #27. The ring is getting full but no one is in any real danger of being eliminated. Cesaro is in at #28 and joins the fray. Rusev sends Big E. to the apron and then kicks him out to clear the ring a bit. Big Show is in at #29 and everyone stops to stare him down. They all gang up on

him but Show shoves everyone down as Kane chokeslams Ambrose. Show does the same to Reigns before the monsters dump Ryback with ease.

Swagger is dumped by the power team as well, tying Kane for the all time record at 39 eliminations. Dolph Ziggler is in at #30, giving us a final group of Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Kane, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro, Big Show and Ziggler. Dolph has to fight out of the chokeslam from Big Show and dumps Barrett. Cesaro swings Dolph around and gets him to the apron, only to be pulled out for the elimination. Ziggler goes up top and dives right into the KO Punch, allowing Kane and Show to easily dump him, giving Kane the all time eliminations record.

Big Show KO's Wyatt and dumps him as well, leaving us with Ambrose, Reigns, Big Show and Kane as the final four. Reigns is bleeding from the side of the mouth as the brawl is on. The Shield fights out of a double chokeslam but Ambrose's rebound clothesline has almost no effect on Show. Reigns knocks Show down and the fans just are not happy. Big Show and Kane double team Roman though before a chokeslam is enough to get rid of Ambrose.

So it's Kane and Big Show vs. Reigns and the fans are LIVID. Reigns gets sent to the apron but Show tries to dump Kane, triggering a fight that has been going on for over fifteen years now. Reigns sneaks up from behind them and eliminates both guys to go to Wrestlemania at 57:23.

**Rating:** D+. I'm surprised by this but I really shouldn't be. They actually went with Reigns vs. the giants to end the Royal Rumble? This match felt like a big tease from the company as they were setting up Wyatt, Cesaro, Rusev, Ambrose and Ziggler for this big showdown but then snatched it away to go with Kane and Big Show as the big monsters. That's really what they think is the smart idea? And you know we're getting Reigns vs. Big Show at Fast Lane, probably without Big Show doing a job for him because he doesn't get pinned you see.

As for the rest of the match....yeah I liked it, but man alive it was obvious where they were going with about twenty minutes to go. Bryan going out that early is a waste, though I'm fine with him not winning it. He had his big moment last year and it would be foolish to try and



recreate it. Bryan can get the title later on in his other big moment and that's all he needs to do.

The returns were fine but there was no big surprise at the end (that's fine), and Reigns was just so obvious as a winner. Also, the commentary was getting REALLY annoying with all their stats, some of which just didn't make sense. I didn't hate this match, but Reigns is getting wedged into a spot he's just not ready for whatsoever. Wrestlemania better have an amazing undercard, because Reigns vs. Lesnar is not going to cut it on top.

Post match Kane and Big Show destroy Reigns until The Rock makes a surprise run in for the save. House is cleaned but Rusev is back in! He was never officially eliminated...so Reigns throws him out to officially win about three minutes after he won in the first place. Again, more teasing.

The Authority comes out as Rock poses with Reigns before letting Reigns point at the sign to end the show.

Reigns is in the studio for a live interview. After a quick question about how amazing last night was, Byron Saxton asks him what he thinks when people say he isn't ready. Reigns tells a story of his father Sika throwing him in the pool at the YMCA when he wasn't ready. When he went under, he scratched and clawed his way up and that's how he learned how to swim, even though he wasn't ready. As for the crowd last night, yeah he was hoping for a warmer reception but those people paid their money and can say what they want.

Reigns doesn't know if he's been handpicked as the next guy, but if he has, it's an opportunity. He has to lace up his boots and get in that ring by himself to grasp the opportunity. After the match last night, the Rock came down to help him because Rock is family. Reigns hasn't mentioned that Rock is his family too often but now he goes into the Samoan family tree. The WWE put food on his table when he was a kid and now he wants to thank them by meeting Brock Lesnar face to face both at Wrestlemania, but here tonight.

This was a good performance from Reigns as he sounded FAR more natural

here and you could tell he wasn't reading from a cheesy script. It's interesting that they're addressing all the big questions being asked about him instead of just going with whatever lame story they had. I'm not saying it's going to save things but it's more interesting than what it sounded like we were getting.

From last night on the post show, Cena was doing an interview when Rusev charged in and took the microphone from him. They got in each other's faces and the match is on for Fast Lane. Cole acknowledges that it was going to be at Wrestlemania but they're moving it up.

We look back at Sting returning to help Cena win the main event last week. HHH will call out Sting at Fast Lane.

We get the announcement for the latest inductee into the Hall of Fame: Arnold Schwarzenegger. Some wrestlers do some Arnold impressions. Ryback is actually appropriate as he played a Terminator character in OVW, complete with the Terminator theme as his music.

Dean Ambrose is walking in the snow and comes inside. After a break, Dean is messing with the heater and says it isn't even that cold here. This morning, he walked through a blizzard and hitchhiked all the way here, got in a fight on a gas station, stole some hiking boots and got here. It's not unlike the Road to Wrestlemania because he loves dangerous conditions. No matter who or what is in front of him, he's going to make it to Wrestlemania. He goes off to find out if anyone has any posters of him around here.

The next sitdown interview is with Daniel Bryan, who recaps the start of the YES Movement and his rise to the top of the company, followed by being put out of action by Kane. He feels like he let down the fans because they had supported him to get where he was. It feels like he has to win the title again, just for the people. As for being eliminated early last night, he went into the match thinking that it was the perfect opportunity to go to face the ultimate dragon and get his title back.

But he failed and Reigns rose up and made the most of the situation. Now Bryan never had WWE feed him as a kid but he's sure Reigns can have a great match at Wrestlemania and do the company proud. He's going to end

Kane in the casket match on Thursday and move on to become champion. This was definitely the weakest of the interviews so far, mainly because Bryan vs. Kane again interests absolutely no one.

Reigns and Lesnar have their big sitdown meeting but Heyman takes over the questions. He's known Reigns' family longer than Reigns has known them, all the way back to when he (Heyman) was a kid. He took Yokozuna's first publicity pictures and managed Rikishi before he was Rikishi, and saw Rikishi's kids, now known as the Usos, messing around in the ring before a WCW show. Heyman knew Reigns as a boy in Pensacola when his father was wrestling down there.

Paul also knows the Rock, but more importantly, the Rock knows Brock Lesnar. Back in 2002, the Rock ruled the roost around here, but then he met Brock Lesnar. Now Reigns wants to be the next big thing, just like Lesnar was back in 2002. However, that's not going to happen. The Rock never asked for a rematch with Brock Lesnar because just one match was enough for him. That's what Rock never told Reigns, because he doesn't want Reigns to know the truth. Lesnar is the 1 in 21-1, so how is Roman going to handle disappointing his family when he loses at Wrestlemania because he can't beat Brock?

Reigns stares Heyman down and says he'll answer that to Brock's face. He turns to face the champ and says he knows what he signed up for, but Brock doesn't know what he signed up for. Roman is going to take the title at Wrestlemania, but if he can't, he's going to take a piece of Lesnar with him. Lesnar gets right in his face and Reigns stands up. They shake hands and Brock says unlike Heyman, he doesn't respect Reigns. Roman: "But you will."

**Overall Rating:** B. This was exactly the kind of show WWE needed after last night. One of the biggest problems with WWE is they have the most scripted, stuck in a rut feeling to them. Instead, this felt completely different and allowed them to slow down rather than cramming everything into three hours with all the WACKY COMEDY and twenty minute promos all over the place. This show was far more entertaining than I was expecting and gave me new hope for the future.

The Lesnar vs. Reigns stuff was absolutely mind blowing with both guys more than holding their own under Heyman's masterful direction. Reigns kept this simple and sounded like a gladiator with short lines instead of doing all the scripted nonsense. A simple story about learning to swim made me care about him more than a year and a half of Shield matches. Overall, this was a great show and exactly what WWE needed. It's also amazing how much better last night's results feel when you get away from the dull Rumble. That's a great sign for the future.

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## **Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: January 19, 2015**

This was another special edition of the show called Raw Reunion, which is another way to have the old guys show up again for no real reason. It's also the go home show for Monday Night Raw, meaning we need to make sure everyone but Roman Reigns looks great because there's almost no doubt that he's going to Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We opened with, of course, a big in ring segment. This time though it was Brock ready to fight and wanting to get his hands on Rollins for what happened last week. Instead, HHH came out to basically blame the whole thing on Lesnar, meaning it was almost time for the boss to get beaten down. That is until STEPHANIE came out to calm things down, because no

matter who you are, including Brock freaking Lesnar, can't do anything to Stephanie.

Of all the Authority, I get annoyed at her the most because of things like this. She's treated like this demigod and everyone is just in awe of her whenever she's around, likely because of that horrible rap song of hers. Even when she gets her comeuppance, it's usually with some stupid juvenile comedy moment and then she's all evil again the next week. Let someone yell at her or call her out on being annoying for a change. You know, like they do to everyone not named Stephanie.

Anyway, Rollins got on screen and talked smack, then Cena came out and talked even more, then Stephanie (praise be her name! And please don't let her hurt us with her terrifying yet oh so seductive eyes. And don't let us hear one of her horribly stupid and pointless interviews she gives to her charity of the month or to whatever low level media outlet will talk to her as she tries to be some polished businesswoman and talks about branding like it's the most important thing in the history of ever) talked a lot, then Cena made fun of Rollins for screwing up a line because no one ever does that.

They STILL WEREN'T FREAKING DONE THOUGH as HHH put Cena in a match later on against an opponent to be named to get the three fired guys their jobs back. Of course that's not enough though because Cena had to put his spot in the title match on the line. ONE MORE THING! We're putting it up to the fans to vote because this segment didn't drag on long enough. They easily could have cut this down by fifteen minutes and dropped the stupid vote thing, but that would prevent their big idea (more on that later).

Bray Wyatt beat Daniel Bryan in a match that was longer than it needed to be. This was entertaining and Bray won thanks to Kane's help, but the important idea here is that Bray continues to be Daniel's Kryptonite. Daniel has never beaten him and just can't figure Wyatt out. Hogan didn't pin Piper (until the disasters they had in WCW) and Undertaker never pinned Bret. Having that one guy you can't solve is a good thing and a necessary element for a big character. Granted it's not likely going to last because we live in an era where everything has to go as fast as possible, but it's nice to have now.

We got the Kliq reunion in the back and Mizdow did a pretty excellent X-Pac imitation.

The Royal Rumble Legends Panel saw Hogan, Flair and Michaels do Rumble picks and tell generic stories about their wins. It all wound up being a way to have Big Show come out and look intimidating so Reigns could make the save. We're still on this story somehow and likely will be until Fast Lane. I've said this before about WCW decisions, but I'd love to hear Vince validate Big Show's position in the company. I mean....how can they possibly think he has an impact, even to newer fans?

The poll says Cena puts the shot on the line. From what I've heard, people who voted no were told they voted yes, as were people who downloaded the App and hadn't voted yet. This kind of chicanery doesn't really surprise me, but it's still very annoying to see. Yeah it was a way get people to download the App, but they should be able to find better ways than this. It was a stupid vote to have and the results should have been obvious. It made the opening segment even longer too and that's never a good thing.

Dean Ambrose pinned Bad News Barrett. I think I pinned him in a non-title match a few weeks back.

Rumble by the Numbers. That's still cool.

New Day beat Cesaro and Tyson Kidd in a quick match. I still like the losers here.

The NWO came out and took credit for everything good ever (literally) until Ascension came out. This brought out the APA and New Age Outlaws to beat up the Ascension, because the tag team division is SO deep that you can have old guys beat them up like this. I mean, I could go for another six months of Miz/Mizdow or Dust Brothers vs. the Usos couldn't you?

Cena is facing Big Show/Kane/Rollins in the main event. As usual, just going through the motions.

Paige and Natayla won your weekly pointless Divas match, defeating Summer Rae and Alicia Fox.

Rusev, R-Truth, 46 seconds.

Lesnar scared Rollins because last week's big hero moment is totally forgotten.

Jey Uso beat the Miz. I don't care either.

The three villains destroyed Cena for most of the match until Sting came out and pointed (not at the sign of course. He hasn't earned that right yet), allowing Cena to roll Rollins up for the pin. Cena ran from the monsters and Lesnar came out to destroy everything in sight to end the show. Of note after the show, there was a kid crying that HHH wanted to hurt Cena so HHH broke character and told him it was ok. I love little things like that and it's not like it hurt anything. If nothing else he can say it's best for business to make sure everyone goes home happy.

Overall, Raw wasn't horrible this week but it really didn't do much for me. They're trying to hide that it's Reigns winning the Rumble, but at the end of the day it's about as clear as Stephanie's diamond eyes. Sorry just had to get in a bit more sucking up before she started talking again. The wrestling wasn't much this week and it was clear they were filling in time, which unfortunately didn't make me want to see Sunday's show any more than I already did. Not a fan of this one for the most part, but it had some watchable moments.

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# **(Updated) Monday Night Raw and Smackdown Canceled This Week**

I know the fans were upset but this is ridiculous. Or maybe there's a horrible blizzard in the northeast and there's a travel ban in Connecticut. Either way, no live show tonight. It's not clear what will air instead.

UPDATE! Unfortunately not with Gene Okerlund.

Smackdown will be airing live on Thursday and will basically be Raw cut down by an hour. Tonight's show will be a studio show.

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## **Monday Night Raw – January 19, 2015: Old School Never Dies. It Just Keeps Going.**

### **Monday Night Raw**

Date: January 19, 2015

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Booker T., Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

This is a special episode as it's not only the go home show for the Royal Rumble but also the Raw Reunion with some big names being brought back in for an appearance. Those are almost always at least somewhat interesting, though there are other times where the legends are just there without



doing anything special. Let's get to it.

We open with a tribute to Martin Luther King, which WWE airs in some form every year.

Opening sequence.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar to get things going. Brock cuts off Heyman's intro and says he's here to fight Seth Rollins. He gives Rollins ten seconds and the crowd is nice enough to count it down for him. Instead, here's HHH to address the champ. He understands that Brock is upset about getting Curb Stomped into the ground. However, wouldn't Brock have done that if he had the chance?

After all, he suplexed Rollins first, so maybe Seth's actions are understandable. Maybe we should just go to the back and get Brock a steak while he and Heyman talk about things. Brock isn't pleased and asks if HHH is here to fix this or fight. Heyman loses his mind but here are Stephanie with Big Show and Kane to intervene. Lesnar and the Authority have a standoff but Rollins pops up on screen (prompting Heyman to grab his own head and shout OH NO).

He'll be getting his shot at Lesnar soon enough, right before he takes Brock's title. Heyman says let the adults talk about things and wants the Authority to put a leash on their puppy. If they don't fix things, the roster is going to be destroyed and Lesnar is walking out Sunday with the champion. Cue Cena (now in a blue shirt and hat) to say that they're going to beat each other up on Sunday. However, he's here to talk to the Authority.

They offered him a spot on the team a few months back but he politely declined. Every week, the Authority tries to make him quit, but he wants them to keep it up. Every single thing they say and do lights a new fire him that he's taking to the Rumble this Sunday to get the title back. The Authority used their power and politics to get three people fired, so he's going to enjoy sticking it to them this Sunday.

Stephanie cuts off his exit and says Cena reached a turning point when he brought back the Authority. Now he's a loser and a liar and no one wants

to cheer that. Rollins says Cena will fail again on Sunday because Cena's time is up. He should just duck out of the match on Sunday and walk off with whatever dignity he has left.

Cena of course mocks Rollins for saying "tuck his legs between his legs" before saying everyone will respect him after Sunday. Cena offers to sweeten the pot: if he wins the title Sunday, Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler get their jobs back. HHH seems intrigued but wants one more stipulation: Cena has to have a match tonight and if he wins, all three of them get their jobs back. If he loses though, they stay fired and he's out of the triple threat. We're still not done though because HHH wants to make it an App poll.

How to download the App.

This opening segment was ridiculous. First of all, you bring out Stephanie as the mediator? Of course, because Stephanie is the greatest thing in the history of ever and her mere presence can soothe the savage beast. Then you have even more of Cena vs. the Authority because it worked with Austin vs. McMahon and.....well it worked well enough with Austin vs. McMahon to mention it twice.

The stipulations are stupid and make sure you know Lesnar isn't walking out, but it does leave the door open for a Rollins cash-in after the match. Thankfully they've changed it up so those guys can get their jobs back tonight, thereby making the last two weeks totally pointless. I'm so glad we saw the Authority make those three people mildly annoyed and inconvenienced instead of destroying their lives.

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Cole says it's been nearly a year since Bryan wrestled on Raw. More like eight and a half months but close enough. Cole never has been very good at counting. Bryan starts fast by knocking Bray to the floor and hitting a huge dive....and here's Kane, leading to a break less than two minutes into the match. Stephanie wants to talk? All the time in the world. Rematch of a Match of the Year candidate? Two minutes and we NEED a break.

Back with Bray missing a charge into the middle buckle but still being able to knock Bryan off the top rope. Bray puts on a nerve hold before hitting his flying body block to put Daniel down again. The announcers start speculating about Bryan's potential Rumble spot and him not having the cardio to get through the whole match as Bray drops knees and goes to a chinlock. Back up and Bray hits a HARD clothesline, sending Daniel out to the floor, holding his neck.

We return from another break with Bray getting two off a backsplash. Bryan scores with a running clot, followed by the running dropkick in the corner. A top rope hurricanrana gets two and it's time to unleash the kicks. Wyatt gets clotheslined to the floor and the Flying Goat takes him down again. Kane gets in a cheap shot on the way back in though, allowing Bray to send him into the buckle, followed by Sister Abigail for the pin at 16:13.

**Rating:** C+. The match was physical and violent....at least what we saw of it was. You knew Kane was going to interfere and cost Bryan the win, but it doesn't really matter as long as Daniel beats him on Smackdown. Bray winning is a nice moment for him and it's cool that Bryan has a big name he's never been able to beat. You could bring that up at a later date for a major match.

Kane chokeslams Bryan post match and hits some bad looking right hands.

HHH is on the phone when Scott Hall and Kevin Nash (in NWO shirts) come into his office. They mock him for wearing a suit and ask him to come out with them tonight. Shawn Michaels pops in and offers HHH a spot on the legends panel. HHH should drop the suit, bring back the three fired guys and make their lives miserable here. HHH: "I don't tell you how to shoot defenseless animals."

Nash wonders where X-Pac is and here's Damien Mizdow in X-Pac attire. The real one comes in and they do the poses until Miz comes in to take Mizdow away. Nash: "What kind of show are you running?" You knew this was coming and it was fine. Mizdow's history with DX wasn't mentioned, even though it was the high point of his career back then.

We recap HHH putting the Cena match to a fan vote.

It's time for the Royal Rumble Legends Panel with guests Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair and Shawn Michaels. The first question is should Cena put his title shot on the line to get the three jobs back. Only Flair says no and only Hogan's answer is more than one word long with "definitely yes." Ric says winning the Rumble was still the greatest night of his career and defeating people like Shawn Michaels, Undertaker, Roddy Piper and Randy Savage made it even better.

Shawn is asked about winning back to back Rumbles and the famous shot of his foot dangling above the ground. He talks about the Rumble being the future and the winner's future being Wrestlemania. Shawn says the two men next to him wouldn't be where they are now without the Rumble and there wouldn't be a Mr. Wrestlemania without the Royal Rumble. Hogan goes last and says he remembers the competition in the Rumble and defeating super talent after super talent to win the matches. Thankfully he had Hulkamania in his corner to help him survive.

As for this year's picks, Shawn goes with Bray Wyatt and Hogan isn't pleased. Shawn gets annoyed and wants a rematch of Summerslam 2005. Hogan: "You don't want any of that again do you?" Shawn: "Nah probably not." Hogan picks Daniel Bryan and Flair goes with Ambrose, but here's Big Show because where would we be without him. He says all three of them are jealous of him and brings up beating Hogan at Halloween Havoc 1995. Then he beat Flair for the World Title on Nitro a few months later. Then he showed up in the WWF and Shawn retired (not quite) because he knew Big Show would eat him alive.

Now the three of them are washed up has been out here begging for a bit of attention. He's going to win on Sunday and no one in the back can stop him. The fans are already looking up for Reigns. Show threatens to beat them all up so Flair takes his jacket off and starts throwing punches, only to take the KO Punch. Cue Reigns to check on the legends and clothesline Big Show out to the floor. Show comes up favoring his arm and bails.

The votes are in and Cena is going to put his title shot on the line to save the jobs by a vote of 85% to 15%. Cena says the most important part of the WWE is the WWE Universe and tonight he's fighting for his friends.

## Bad News Barrett vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title. Dean takes him to the mat to start before running Barrett over with an elbow and clothesline. A power drive elbow gets two but Barrett comes back with a kick to the throat and another to the jaw. Ambrose comes back by knocking Barrett to the floor as we take a break. Of note here, the bottom line said that the series finale of Rivalries is airing tomorrow night on the Network. There have been six episodes and they're already canceling it? It's a good idea for a show and they can only come up with six shows, but they can have twenty Monday Night Wars shows? Really?

Back with Dean laid across the top rope and getting forearmed in the back for two. It's already off to the chinlock until Dean fights up with a bulldog out of the corner. The standing elbow drop gets two but the knee gives out, meaning Dean can't hit the running dropkick. He can however hit the rebounding clothesline and goes up top, only to get caught in the Wasteland. Dean fights out of that and Dirty Deeds pins Barrett at 8:16.

**Rating:** C-. There was no possible outcome here where the fans were going to be pleased. The champ loses but Dean gets a win back, even though his career was completely crippled or whatever shortsighted fans said after he lost the Wyatt feud. The match wasn't anything to see but I really wonder what Barrett did to get this role as the champion that always loses. I know it's a running joke, but no one has it as bad as Barrett.

It's time for Rumble by the numbers.

30 men

782 entrants eliminated

2 feet must hit the floor

39 eliminations for Shawn Michaels, the all time record

38 eliminations for Kane, second place

15 years that Kane has eliminated someone

11 eliminations in 2001 to give Kane the record for a single matching

12 eliminations in 2014 for Roman Reigns to break the record

216,577 or 108 tons in the Rumble over the years

9 won in Rumble debut

43 Hall of Famers have competed

26 nations have been represented

1 time the Rumble has broadcasted on the Network

170 countries have the Network

170,822 people in attendance

3 Steve Austin victories

1 second that Santino Marella lasted to set the record

62:12 that Rey Mysterio lasted to set the record

3:51:32 that HHH has spent in the Rumble, the longest all time

2 winners from both #1 and #30

Here's the New Day to say they're always positive to keep the rage under control. They're here to make sure everyone has a smile on their face and they're doing it for the day. Woods is out with an ankle injury so it's just a tag here.

### Kofi Kingston/Big E. vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

Rose is on the floor as well because he feels forgotten by WWE, just like Kidd and Cesaro. Big E. throws Kidd into the air for a dropkick from Kofi, but Rose offers a distraction so Cesaro can sneak in an uppercut. A suplex/side slam combo (called a Blockbuster by Booker) gets two on Kofi and the Cesaro Swing into the dropkick gets the same with Big E. having to make a save. Cesaro picks Kofi up to drive him into the corner but Kofi kicks off of Kidd and rolls up Cesaro for the pin out of nowhere at

2:59. It's nice to see them change the formula up for once instead of the same thing over and over. It keeps it a bit exciting.

Here's the NWO (Hall, Nash and Waltman) for a chat. The fact that Hall is allowed on live TV is proof that DDP should be canonized. Nash says the NWO created the Monday Night Wars, which you can relive on the WWE Network. "You're welcome Hunter." They're responsible for Austin, DX and the Attitude Era. Nash acknowledges they have egos, but you have to admit they created every single good thing ever. Waltman gets the mic but here's Ascension to interrupt.

They see the NWO as three dogs ready to be put out of their misery, because Ascension was born and bred to rip and shred. No team from the past, present or future is better than they are, especially not one from WCW. The NWO is ready to fight but JBL won't have any of this. He takes off the jacket and tie and says wearing spikes doesn't make you a legend any more than painting yourself green makes you a frog. He was afraid this would happen, so he made a phone call. JBL takes off his shirt to reveal an APA shirt and here's Ron Simmons.

Before anything happens though, here are the New Age Outlaws in Dallas Cowboys jerseys to interrupt. Dogg says an old school party doesn't stop and the brawl is on with only the Outlaws getting physical. Billy hits a nice tilt-a-whirl slam and JBL starts stretching his arm. The Clothesline knocks Viktor silly and Waltman pulls off the NWO shirt to reveal the DX colors. This was every bit as fun as I thought it was going to be and was one of the better old school reunion segments. Also, anyone for JBL in the Hall of Fame?

The Authority announces Cena's opponent for later tonight. Complete with a drum roll, it's Cena vs. Seth Rollins, Big Show and Kane. A bugler comes up to play Taps.

#### Paige/Natalya vs. Summer Rae/Alicia Fox

The Bellas are on commentary and will be facing Paige/Natalya at the Rumble. A double suplex gets two on Summer but Natalya goes after Alicia, allowing Rae to spin kick her for two. Natalya gets over for the hot tag to Paige and things speed up with Alicia eating a superkick for two.

Everything breaks down and another superkick sets up the PT0 for the submission at 2:55. I'm glad they're not doing the Nikki vs. Natalya title match as we've seen it so many times already that whatever appeal it had is long gone.

The Kickoff match this Sunday is New Day vs. Cesaro/Kidd/Rose in an elimination tag.

#### Rusev vs. R-Truth

Only Truth gets an entrance and he's a step off on his rap. Truth says everyone is coming for Rusev on Sunday and that's the whole truth. "Whomp there it is." Truth quickly knocks him over the top but eats the jumping superkick. The Accolade makes him tap at 46 seconds.

Rollins and Lesnar meet up in the back and Brock suggests that Seth take Cena out tonight. Then Brock can take Rollins out on Sunday. Unlike last week, Rollins looks shaken.

#### Jey Uso vs. Miz

Gah do something else already. Miz spends too much time looking at Mizdow and gets rolled up for two. Some choking sets up the Reality Check for two and we hit the chinlock. The top rope ax handle drops Jey but he avoids a charge, sending Miz into the post. A superkick and the Superfly Splash are good for the pin on Miz at 2:56. I can't imagine Miz and Mizdow are still together this time next week.

Hogan says it can only get better for Cena from here.

The New Age Outlaws vs. the Ascension has been added to Sunday.

#### John Cena vs. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins

One fall to a finish and it's Cena vs. Big Show to start but John wants to go after Rollins. Show scores with a big chop and it's off to Rollins to hammer Cena down. Rollins gets in some stomps in the corner but Cena's bulldog sends him rolling out to the floor. Kane gets the top and sends Cena into Big Show's boot before the bigger giant comes in for a corner splash. Cena's slam attempt fails (of course it did this early on) and we



take a break.

Back with Rollins putting Cena in a sleeper before a Blockbuster gets two. Rollins misses the top rope knee though and Cena scores with the shoulders. The ProtoBomb puts Rollins down again but the Stooges break up the AA attempt. Rollins blasts him with a low superkick for two but the AA connects, only to have Kane pulls Cena outside. Big Show adds a spear and the Authority is literally standing over Cena gloating. He dives in at nine though and gets chokeslammed for two. Rollins loads up the Curb Stomp....and STING shows up on the screen. He walks into the arena and Cena rolls up Rollins for the pin at 13:08.

**Rating:** D+. Sting just showed up on Raw for the first time ever. I still need a minute. Ok I'm good now. I really liked this better than having the trio show up because there's no reason for them to be there other than storyline, but Sting showing up is an awesome surprise. I'd keep going but we're not done.

Cena goes into the crowd and HHH shouts that Sting doesn't belong here. Cue Lesnar for right hands to Rollins, an F5 to Kane and an AA (yes an AA) to Big Show. Heyman holds up the title as Rollins runs away to end the show. Lesnar looked like and was received like a superhero here.

**Overall Rating:** C-. I know I'm going to catch flack for this but I really didn't hate this show. They kept things moving fast enough that I was stunned when it was nearly 10pm. The reunion stuff was fine and they beefed up the card for Sunday. The lack of wrestling is by far the biggest thing holding this show back though and it was really telling when there had been one match an hour in. I know a lot of people wouldn't like this one, but it was nice to see a show that didn't drag for a change.

## Results

Bray Wyatt b. Daniel Bryan – Sister Abigail

Dean Ambrose b. Bad News Barrett – Dirty Deeds

New Day b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – Rollup to Cesaro

Natalya/Paige b. Alicia Fox/Summer Rae – PTO to Fox

Rusev b. R-Truth – Accolade

Jey Uso b. Miz – Superfly Splash

John Cena b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins – Rollup to Rollins

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## **Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: January 12, 2015**

Raw was back in New Orleans for the first time since the night after Wrestlemania last year, meaning the fans are going to be hot all night. The big story is the return of Daniel Bryan and how serious he seems to be about winning the Rumble and main eventing Wrestlemania again. The key thing is this gives us a new option other than Reigns for the top spot, which is far more interesting than just having the long choice. Let's get to it.

To the shock of no one paying attention, we opened with a long promo between Cena and the Authority, talking about things that happened back at Survivor Series. Basically Cena thinks the Authority sucks (and he has a HASHTAG for it) and he's going to win the WWE Title to get Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler their jobs back. See, he's going to win the title and

then leave, because that's going to make the Authority miss him. I'm not sure if this was supposed to be a job at Lesnar, but it came off as more of a stupid idea than anything else.

HHH and Stephanie came out and offered Cena a deal: the trio can have their jobs back if Cena can beat Rollins in a lumberjack match right now. So to recap, in the span of a month, Cena and Rollins have had a regular match, a tables match, a (really good) cage match and a lumberjack match.

In a logical world, that should be months and months of matches, not a single month. It shows how WWE feels desperate to keep people watching with quick fixes instead of setting this stuff up. As usual, I'll point you to NXT. You know what you don't see a lot of there? Gimmick matches. The gimmick matches, when they happen, are to blow off a feud. Neville fought Dallas in a ladder match and you see a few 2/3 falls matches in there. They let the regular stories build up to the gimmicks instead of just throwing them all out there at once, which makes them mean more.

In NXT, you hear the words "ladder match" and gasp because it's something very rare and therefore special. In WWE you hear the words ladder match and roll your eyes because they have at least three a year between MITB and TLC. The same is true of cage matches, which happen WAY too often on Raw and with almost no build.

That's another issue with the lumberjack match on Monday: they had all of five minutes' notice. How are the fans that might want to see it supposed to know? Hope that they read Twitter? Is that really what you're hoping for? It's a bad idea and amazingly enough, it doesn't seem to be anything successful.

As for the match itself, of course Rollins won with interference. It was entertaining enough and a good match, but I'm tired of seeing them fight. You know they're just waiting on a reason to bring the trio back and I'd be shocked if they weren't in the Rumble, making this entire storyline a waste of time. You know, like so many other things you see in WWE anymore, which is really getting old.

Due to their comments about the trio being fired on Smackdown, Stephanie punished the Usos by making Naomi wrestle with an arm tied behind her and

Ambrose has to see a psychiatrist or he's out of the Rumble. Simple idea, but the Naomi thing sounds destined to fall flat.

Dean's evaluation was of course a comedy segment with him freaking out over the doctor's clock, calling Stephanie a HO in a funny bit and switching roles with the doctor. Other than the Stephanie bit, there really wasn't much to see in this and I really wish they had done something more with it. It's a very good sign that Dean is still getting a focus, even though he was completely and totally buried by losing in pay per view main events right? That's how it works no?

The New Day beat Kidd and Cesaro in an average match. I really like Kidd and Cesaro as a team, even though they seem to be little more than jobbers at this point. Why are they jobbers you ask? It's because that's the role they were given when the team was put together and screw you if you think they should rise up the card, because that's the role they're given and nothing is going to change that. That seems to be the mentality in WWE way too often and unfortunately it rarely changes.

Big Show came out, talked about being an awesome giant and ran away from Reigns and his horrible scripted promos. They've been doing this FOREVER now and I really hope they blow this off at the Rumble instead of taking it all the way out to Fast Lane. As for Reigns' promos, his delivery is fine but Steve Austin on his best day would have trouble getting over this horrible material.

Now the interesting part for Reigns came when he had a really entertaining match against Luke Harper. The key here though was Harper, who looked absolutely awesome. The stuff that he can do at his size is incredible and he looks like one of the best guys on the roster today. Why can't he and Reigns be having a great feud and beat the tar out of each other for weeks on end? Instead we have Big Show because he was a big deal like, years ago. I really hope Harper gets a push in the future because he's more than earned it at this point.

Mizdow reveals that he's been filming Miz in his home, much to Miz's chagrin. They need to split them eventually and this might work. As usual, I like that it's something interesting and unique to the

characters. It's actual writing for the characters instead of writing for the story and putting the characters in. Those are two very, very different things. One is good and the other is what makes wrestling hard to sit through.

Alicia Fox beat Naomi in a dull match with Naomi's arm tied behind her back. See, it's Total Divas AND the Authority stories combined! HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY TOP THIS???

Lesnar and Heyman came out and said they're awesome. This is basically a way to say Lesnar is coming for Rollins too. I really don't care about Lesnar at this point because he's been gone for so long and it's ruined so much of the main event scene.

Miz beat Jey Uso to continue a feud that is long since over. Once the Naomi Goes Hollywood stuff went away, the feud died in a hurry.

Daniel Bryan and Stephanie (because she isn't on this show enough) came out and did their usual thing. They really are just doing the same story over again...and I'm not sure how to feel about that. If Bryan wins again, it's Bret Hart winning at Wrestlemania X. If Bryan doesn't get there.....I'm really interested to see where he goes from there. I'd be fine seeing him win though. Kane came out and got beaten up for his efforts, setting up their match on Smackdown.

Now we get to the part of the show I liked best. Rollins was in the back when Heyman and Lesnar came up to him. Lesnar simply threatened him and Rollins didn't blink. Instead he looked Lesnar in the eye said he's the future. Heyman was a key here as he sounded worried and offered an alliance to take out Cena. Seth stood there and the camera stayed on their faces the whole time for a great visual.

For the first time ever, I completely buy Rollins as a main event player, but the key here is he has the resume to back it up. Look back to Royal Rumble 2008 when Jeff Hardy was pushed against Randy Orton. That entire show was built around the idea that Hardy could win and it sold like nothing had in years.

However, at the end of the day, it was all hype because Hardy didn't have

the resume to be a believable World Champion. Now though, Rollins has both the resume and the skill to take the title at the Rumble and that little sliver of a chance makes the whole thing that much more interesting. This felt like a turning point and it couldn't come at a better time.

Brie Bella beat Paige in a nothing match.

Bray Wyatt is in the Rumble and Randy Savage is in the Hall of Fame. Guess which one of these things gave me the biggest and most genuine smile I've had in wrestling in years.

Ascension destroyed more jobbers.

Rusev beat Ambrose via referee stoppage. Again, a loss due to an existing knee injury isn't going to cripple Ambrose's push and I continue to chuckle when people insist he's being shoved down the card.

The Authority moderated a three way contract signing between Lesnar, Rollins and Cena. Again, Seth stood toe to toe with both of them and looked on their level. I can't emphasize enough how important it is that Rollins has this kind of star power already. I'll give you two guesses how this went. Thankfully it was Seth standing tall.

Oh yeah we're in Rumble season and it's working just as it's supposed to. Rollins being added to that title match has made the whole thing feel so much more interesting and fresh, which is exactly what it's been missing. I'm not sure who is coming out of that match with the title but I really want to see where it goes. The same is true of the Rumble itself, as suddenly it's gone from the Roman Reigns show to "can Bryan do it again?" Adding something to the mix makes things that much better.

On the other hand you have the midcard, where things are stagnant again. Big Show vs. Reigns, Usos vs. Miz/Mizdow, Mizdow going solo, Rusev beating up various people and winning or escaping every time and Total Divas in general have all felt like they've been going on for months and it's really hard to care at this point. Hopefully things shake up in the Rumble and it couldn't happen at a at a better time. This week was a good show, mainly because they're adding stuff into the main event scene to

freshen it up.

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# Monday Night Raw – January 12, 2015: I Saw The Future

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 12, 2015

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

We're back in the same building as the excellent post Wrestlemania Raw and the big story is what happens to the three guys (Ziggler, Ryback and Rowan) who were fired last week. The Authority is running roughshod on the company all over again and the question is will Cena be able to focus on his war against the team and get the title back from Lesnar at the Royal Rumble. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the Authority's return to Raw last week (after being on the show the previous week) and firing Erick Rowan, Dolph Ziggler and Ryback to end the show, followed by a major celebration for John Cena.

Here's Cena to open the show. He doesn't seem all that upset after costing three people their jobs last week. Cena talks about how New

Orleans is about having a good time, even though the Authority is back in power. He can't believe he works for two people who got their jobs back because their whipping boy held a Hall of Famer hostage and made Cena gamble with his health. That's the same decision he would make every time though because it's the right thing.

HHH is a first ballot Hall of Famer and one of the best of all time but he's only going to be remembered as a slimy villain who wants to make us all miserable. Last week the Authority fired three men so Cena has to appeal to the audience. Did any of them deserve to be fired? Do the fans want to see them back tonight? Cena asks us to go on social media and use the hashtag Authoritysucks to voice their opinions.

However, Cena has a backup plan: win the WWE World Heavyweight Title at the Royal Rumble. As soon as he can say THE CHAMP IS HERE, is the very moment that he can say you can't see me. He'll win the championship and go home until those three guys are rehired, or else this show's most coveted prize is going away and won't be at Wrestlemania.

This brings out the Authority with smirks on their faces. Stephanie laughs off the Authoritysucks bit and says the three guys will be thrilled to see Cena win the title and walk away. HHH expected more than seeing Cena take his ball and go home. He recaps Survivor Series again and talks about how the Authority was gone, but now they've found a way back in. A hero wouldn't turn his back on WWE, but the Authority is going to give Cena another chance.

HHH polls the audience about bringing the three guys back and, upon hearing an affirmative reply, asks Cena how much he wants those three back. All Cena has to do to get their jobs back is win his match tonight. Cena asks how many guys he's up against tonight but HHH says it's nothing that complicated. It's a one on one match with Seth Rollins but they're going to make it a lumberjack match to keep things fair. Here come the lumberjacks because the match starts right now.

### John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

We have Big Show, Kane, Cesaro and pretty much every other heel on the roster as lumberjacks. Rollins stomps him down to start and throws Cena



to the floor for the traditional beating. A clothesline puts Rollins on the floor and he isn't touched as we go to a break. Exactly as you would expect so far, meaning it's time to crank it up in a few minutes when the NCAA National Championship game starts.

Back with Cena in trouble after Barrett tripped him during the break. Booker is calling this whole situation unfair as he's the good guy commentator. The ProtoBomb sets up the Shuffle and the AA but the Stooges get on the apron, allowing Rollins to get outside. Cena dives onto the pile of lumberjacks and Fandango is holding his knee. I'll let you make your own dancing jokes. Back in and Cena covers for two, only to eat the low superkick for the same. Seth goes up top and counters a superplex attempt into an across the ring buckle bomb for two. That kind of power out of Rollins always surprises me.

Cena tries a pop up powerbomb but doesn't get under Rollins enough, making it look more like a spinebuster. Seth flips out of the AA and hits a standing Sliced Bread #2 for another near fall. There's another AA but the lumberjacks (including Fandango who seems to be fine) pull Cena to the floor for a beating, including the Cesaro Swing into the barricade. Back in and the Curb Stomp is countered into the STF but Kane pulls Rollins' arm towards the ropes. It turns into a tug of war over Rollins but Big Show pulls Cena to the floor for the KO Punch, giving Rollins the pin at 13:50.

**Rating:** B. This worked well but I'm really tired of seeing these two fight. In the span of less than a month, they've now had a regular match, a tables match, a cage match and a lumberjack match. That should be at least four months worth of matches but we're getting it in four weeks. They've done the same thing with Ambrose vs. Wyatt and it's having the same result: it's really hard to care about what we're seeing because they just had another big match a week or so ago.

The Usos are in Stephanie's office when Dean Ambrose comes in. All three of them had some negative things to say on Smackdown about the firings. That's fine and there are no firings. The Usos go to leave, but Stephanie stops them and asks Jimmy to tell Naomi that she's competing with one arm behind her back tonight. As for Dean, he checked himself out of the

hospital last week so he might be a danger to himself. Therefore, tonight he has to pass a psychiatric evaluation or he's out of the Rumble. This has some potential if they do it right.

Miz talks about his close friend George Clooney winning the Cecil B. DeMille Award last night at the Golden Globes. Keep it up and he'll win a Slammy.

It's already time for the evaluation. Dean thinks he's here because he's been a "bad widdle boy." Ambrose is freaked out by the doctor's ticking clock and we go to a break. I love watching Dean be one step off and being all twitchy. It makes him seem like a more well rounded character instead of someone who was created in a board room to make sure he's the best corporate character they can put together.

#### New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

It's Kofi and Woods in action here with Big E. and Adam Rose on the floor. Cesaro and Kidd attacked Big E. last week because New Day is just too positive all the time. So they're just curmudgeons? I approve of this gimmick. Kofi starts with Cesaro but Kidd gets a blind tag and kicks Kofi in the chest.

Cesaro stomps away and swings Kofi into the dropkick for two. Back up and Kofi kicks everyone down to the floor before diving over to Woods for the hot tag. The Honor Roll (flipping clothesline) drops Kidd and Cesaro gets low bridged to the floor. Rose gets on the apron but his distraction doesn't work, allowing Woods to plant him with a backbreaker, followed by a top rope double stomp from Kofi for the pin at 3:48.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to see here and I'm liking the fact that New Day keeps winning, as long as their first loss isn't something totally meaningless that ends with "oh, they lost." Speaking of losing, it's very frustrating to see Cesaro and Kidd put together for a team, just to see them job every time. Have they actually won a match yet?

We get a barrage of wrestlers doing their best OH YEAH in honor of Randy Savage being "expected" to be inducted into the Hall of Fame tonight. Above all else, I want Xavier Woods' NES controller hat.

The Indianapolis Colts celebrates their win yesterday like Ric Flair.

Here's Big Show for a chat. Whoever said that all men are created equal was obviously not a giant. Most of you were probably scared on your first day of work. On his first day, he beat Hulk Hogan for the World Title. The fans chant boring but Big Show laughs them off and calls everyone losers. Competition is supposed to be good for America, but no one wants competition at work. Everyone here would stab someone in the back for job security, just like he did to Cena.

That brings him to Roman Reigns, who he doesn't see as competition. He sees Reigns like the New York Knicks, currently on a 15 game losing streak. Show is going to knock him into the front row next to Spike Lee (longtime Knicks fan) and make him a loser. Therefore, if you like Roman Reigns, you're a loser as well.

Cue Reigns for the big brawl but Show walks out. Reigns thought he wasn't a threat so why is Show leaving? Roman says he doesn't want Show's spot, but he does remember that first title win over Hogan. He was twelve years old or so and that makes him think of a story. A long time ago in a land far away, there was a little boy named Roman Reigns. It's the story of Jack and the Beanstalk but Roman hit the giant in the mouth. The giant ran away, and that's why Big Show is the loser.

### Roman Reigns vs. Luke Harper

This has potential. Harper hammers away in the corner to start but Reigns knocks him to the floor as we take a break less than a minute in. Back with Reigns hitting a knee lift and raking Harper's face across the rope. Three straight suplex attempts are blocked and Roman counters into a kind of Jackhammer. Someone really should use that as their finisher again. Harper dropkicks him out to the floor and sends Reigns hard into the steps. Back in and Harper busts out a freaking slingshot hilo for two. That's not something a guy his size should be able to do.

Reigns comes back with a neckbreaker but Harper rips the face to break up the Samoan drop. Luke's powerbomb is countered into something like the ProtoBomb. The Superman Punch is loaded up but Big Show throws a chair at Reigns. Naturally, that isn't a DQ because wrestling rules as made up

depending on the situation. A Boss Man Slam gets two for Harper but he turns into the Superman Punch. Show interferes again and Harper nails a superkick for two. The discus lariat misses though and a spear puts Harper away at 10:46.

**Rating:** B-. Luke Harper is a freaking STAR. He wrestles like someone Shawn Michaels' size but has the look and size of a monster. Why aren't we gearing up for a showdown between Harper and Reigns with Big Show being the cannon fodder? For reasons I will never understand, it looks like we're not getting Show vs. Reigns (well, the blowoff at least as we've seen them fight twice already) until Fast Lane. That's our reward for sticking with this show.

We recap the lumberjack match.

Miz talks about Boyhood winning Best Picture at the Golden Globes. It was filmed over several years with the same actors. Mizdow has been doing the same thing at Miz's house, allowing him to film a movie called Manhood. Both guys shudder a bit.

#### Naomi vs. Alicia Fox

Naomi has one arm behind her back. Fox makes fun of her by trying a test of strength before getting two off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. She cranks on the good arm until Naomi takes her to the floor for some rams into the apron. Back in and the ax kick gives Fox the pin at 2:37. This would be the match where you're hit over the head with how mean the Authority is because you're not smart enough to understand a concept without it being shown to you over and over.

Back to the evaluation, where Dean is going to look at pictures and saying the first word that comes to his mind. "THURSDAY!"

HHH – Irritable bowel syndrome

Rollins – Scumbag

Reigns – Brotha

Kane – Toothpaste

Duggan – H0!

Stephanie – H0!

Minor note here: Ambrose was bouncing up and down during the interview. It's the little stuff like that which takes people to a new level. Instead of just sitting there waiting for his line, he's actually doing something and staying in character. It feels so much more natural than the stiff and scripted stuff we usually get.

Here are Lesnar and Heyman for the first time in a few weeks. Heyman talks about being in New Orleans several months back, where we witnessed the Streak dying. Lesnar isn't one to live in the past, but if he was, he would list off all of his accomplishments. No man has ever been NCAA, UFC and WWE Champion, but one beast has. Heyman however loves to live in the past and runs down the fans for being crushed when the Streak ended.

On the other hand, you have this fantasy in WWE of "then, now and forever." The fantasy was the Streak running forever or that the Ce-Nation will rise above Lesnar at the Royal Rumble. Now the idea is that Rollins is the future of the WWE, but tonight Lesnar will see both challengers face to face.

More people give us their OH YEAHS with Miz knocking it out of the park and Nikki trying to make it sexy.

### Jey Uso vs. Miz

Miz hits his running clothesline in the corner to start but jumps into a shot to the ribs. Jey loads up a slam and Mizdow comes in to slam himself off the top. The partners get involved in a tug of war, allowing Miz to grab a quick Skull Crushing Finale for the pin at 2:09. This feud needs to end like a month ago.

Here's Daniel Bryan in the city where he won the World Title at Wrestlemania XXX. Bryan thinks something big happened here the last time he was in New Orleans. It slowly starts coming back to him that he won the main event of Wrestlemania XXX, which isn't bad for a lumberjack looking B+ player. Since this is the city of his greatest accomplishment,

he should declare his intention to do it all over again and win the main event of Wrestlemania XXXI.

This brings out Stephanie with a copy of her fitness DVD for Bryan, complete with a mini commercial. Bryan isn't interested so Stephanie talks about making history at Wrestlemania XXX a couple of miles from here (the buildings are actually adjacent), but this is what she remembers. We see a clip of Kane tombstoning Bryan on the floor, steps and table. Stephanie says an A+ player not only wins the big one but stays on top.

She isn't sure if he's ready to do this again, but YES of course he is. Bryan: "Go ahead and raise your arms. I bet it's a better workout than you get on that DVD. HO!" He's an average Joe who will never stop fighting. They will never stop fighting. We will never stop fighting and go through Wrestlemania XXXI until they prove the Authority wrong again. Stephanie says Bryan's first match back will be on Smackdown (this was already announced) against Kane. The monster comes out and the fight is on, but Bryan fights out of a tombstone on the steps and hammers away on Kane. He even busts out the Flying Goat.

Rollins is in the back when Lesnar comes up to mock the idea of Rollins winning the title. Seth stares him down and says he's the future, but Lesnar says the future starts when he says it does. Heyman thinks maybe they can get rid of Cena together and then the best man wins. He looks very nervous about Rollins, who has stared Lesnar down the entire time. For the first time, I saw that real star power in Rollins from this one exchange. Simple but perfect.

### Brie Bella vs. Paige

Natalya, Kidd and Nikki are at ringside. Paige goes right at her to start but gets sent into the buckle, allowing Brie to hit the middle rope dropkick. Paige fights out of a chinock but Kidd gets on the apron for a distraction, allowing Brie to roll her up for the pin at 2:10.

After the match, Paige slaps Kidd and Natalya doesn't seem to mind. I love Paige, but I fully support anyone wearing a cat shirt.

We look back at last week's ambulance match.

Bray Wyatt says thirty souls enter the Royal Rumble and 29 will have to realize that they're not in Wonerland any longer. Some will laugh, some will cry but some will sit in silence at how Bray changes the world. No one on earth will be immune to his wrath. Run.

We finally have it confirmed: Randy Savage is the first entrant of the Hall of Fame Class of 2015. He will be inducted by Hulk Hogan.

#### Ascension vs. ???/???

Konor takes #1 into the corner to start as JBL is ripping on the jobbers again. Booker and Cole are a bit nicer and say they have to fight whoever they're put up against and that they've won every match they've had so far. Fall of Man ends #2 at 1:20.

Ambrose is now counciling the doctor and gets his approval on the papers to stay in the Rumble. As soon as the papers are signed and the doctor is still crying, Ambrose calls him a spineless, gutless pile of cow waste. This really could have been a better comedy idea but it wasn't bad.

Here are Lana and Rusev to thank the Authority for firing Ryback before the showdown tonight. They also thank Cena for failing to save his friends like any American would. Maybe Ryback can get a job in a deli like he had in that stupid story a few weeks back. Rusev calls Ryback lucky for being fired and because the super American John Cena couldn't get his job back. He was going to throw Ryback and twenty eight other men out of the Rumble, so here's Ambrose to easily knock him to the floor.

#### Rusev vs. Dean Ambrose

Joined in progress after a break with Ambrose bulldogging Rusev. The Russian kicks at the knee (injured in the ambulance match) to take over and wraps it around the ropes. Dean counters the jumping superkick into a rollup for two and the Macho Elbow gets the same. The referee tries to stop the match due to the knee and has no choice after Dean is tied in the Tree of Woe at 4:38.

**Rating:** C. This was more of an angle than anything else and Ambrose loses

again, like he almost always does. At least in this case it wasn't through another pin or submission and the loss can be blamed on the referee more than Ambrose. I did like them planting the seeds of Cena vs. Rusev though because that's the big match at Wrestlemania, especially if Rusev wins.

Here's the Authority to moderate the contract signing. After everyone comes out, Heyman says he can't take credit for bringing back the Authority because it was all Rollins' plan. The plan was endorsed by Heyman and desperately needed by John Cena. What's bad for Cena is good for Lesnar and best for business. Heyman doesn't like the idea of a triple threat match because it could mean a double cross where Lesnar doesn't have to lose to drop the title.

Rollins thanks Heyman for reciting the rules of ever triple threat match ever and asks if Lesnar is scared of a triple threat. Paul gets cut off because Rollins isn't done. Seth doesn't have the list of accomplishments that Lesnar have, but Lesnar doesn't have the list that Seth has. He built and destroyed the Shield, won Money in the Bank, and pinned John Cena's shoulders to the mat. Either by plan A (the match) or plan B (the briefcase), Rollins is is leaving with the title. Lesnar says he conquered Undertaker, HHH and Cena, so he'll conquer Rollins at the Rumble.

Cena says it's time for a beating and he's walking out champion before signing. Rollins lists off all the plans that Cena has had but failed before the fight is on. Seth is knocked to the floor and Lesnar takes the AA through the table, only to have Rollins Curb Stomp Cena. There's a Curb Stomp to Brock to end the show. More importantly than all else: Rollins looked like an equal. That cannot be understated.

**Overall Rating:** B. Yes that's probably high but man was this show easier to sit through. They actually had some good matches and set up some stuff for the future, but most importantly of all they had a chance to breathe. Instead of just packing every thing they possibly could into the show, there were a few breaks in there and it makes things so much easier.

On top of that though, the best moments were from Harper and Rollins.



Those two looked AWESOME tonight and they gave me new hopes for both of them. Harper can move like almost no one else in the company and Rollins looked like a star standing there in front of Lesnar. I had a really good time with this show (save for a bit too much Stephanie) and didn't once feel like it was dragging on forever. That's the most important step in the right direction they could have.

## Results

Seth Rollins b. John Cena – Pin after a KO Punch from Big Show

New Day b. Tyson Kidd/Cesaro – Backbreaker/top rope double stomp combo

Roman Reigns b. Luke Harper – Spear

Alicia Fox b. Naomi – Ax kick

Miz b. Jey Uso – Skull Crushing Finale

Brie Bella b. Paige – Rollup

Ascension b. ???/??? – Fall of Man to #2

Rusev b. Dean Ambrose via referee stoppage

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

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# Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: January 5, 2015

Well the Authority is back and I'm not sure what else you're expecting the show to focus on this week. The previous week Cena agreed to bring them back for the sake of protecting his BEST FRIEND EVER Edge, and of course the Authority just happened to be there that night. This is likely to set up Wrestlemania and the return of Sting, which should be awesome when it finally happens. Let's get to it.

The roster was in the ring for the Authority's big return. As in their return from last week when they really came back because of course they were in the back. Screw suspension of disbelief and all that nonsense. They actually kept this one short as the Authority's only announcements were Rollins being added to the title match at the Rumble, John Cena Appreciation Night later, and Dolph Ziggler defending the Intercontinental Title against Bad News Barrett right now.

First up we'll look at the PPV title match. I REALLY like Rollins being added to make it a triple threat, as we've seen Cena vs. Lesnar far too often now. At the end of the day, why am I supposed to care about seeing the same guys fight each other with Cena getting closer and closer every time? This also opens a door to avoid Lesnar vs. Reigns for the title at Wrestlemania. There are multiple ways out now, and that's the best news we could have had in a long time.

Bad News Barrett took the Intercontinental Title back from Dolph Ziggler in classic Russo booking. Ziggler pinned him in less than three minutes but Kane came out to say it's 2/3 falls, with Barrett winning the next two. This is the start of the night's big idea and it really should have been more obvious after you know where it's going. I'm not wild on another title change, especially after Barrett looked like a face last week. Then again, you can't expect something like week to week continuity around here. It's not like this is NXT or something.

All night had some great John Cena moments, most of which are the same

ones you always see for something like this. I really would like to see them bust out some fresh ones every now and then.

Roman Reigns still can't talk. I'm interested in where this is going though, because on Smackdown he cut a really goofy promo but then said of course it was hard to say and winked at the camera, acknowledging that it's a badly scripted promo. I doubt that goes anywhere, but it's an interesting possibility.

Bray Wyatt is still creepy.

The Ascension came out for the promo and reaction from the announcers that I've already written far too much about.

Roman Reigns beat Big Show via DQ in the feud that will not die. They're still dragging this thing out and I'm scared that they won't blow it off until Fast Lane. Does anyone even remember why they're fighting? Was there ever a reason in the first place? It's a boring feud and for some reason it just keeps going. It didn't help that Show basically squashed him and then lost via DQ.

Nikki Bella beat Natalya for the second time in two weeks. I'm still just waiting for Naomi to take the title and end this ridiculous Bella domination. Or we could just cancel Total Divas already and stop these stupid stories.

Dean Ambrose is violent.

Erick Rowan lost to Luke Harper via a fast count from the Stooges. More angle advancement and thankfully we haven't had the big showdown between these two. Then again, it's not like WWE knows how to build a match other than to have them fight each other a bunch, nor do they seem to have any sort of a plan for or interest in Rowan.

Alicia Fox beat up Naomi in the back because Total Divas thinks it's interesting.

Bray Wyatt beat Dean Ambrose again in an ambulance match to end their feud. As usual, WWE doesn't know how to pace a feud. We started with a TLC match then had a bunch of street fights and they end it with an

ambulance match. Why an ambulance you ask? No clue, as there's no connection to an ambulance in their feud. They wound up feuding just because they were feuding before and that almost never makes for a good story.

On top of that, the match was nothing interesting. It's the problem with having a feud based on violent matches: eventually you get numb to what they're doing. Ambrose has dropped how many elbows through tables now? I don't know why I'm supposed to care now because the table has a red cross painted on.

Miz/Damien Mizdow/Alicia Fox beat the Usos/Naomi in a six person tag. This feud has run out of steam, meaning we're likely getting it for another six weeks. The match was nothing special and it didn't help that it came on a long, draining show.

Ryback's punishment is a handicap match against Rollins and Kane but his big moment is he wasn't knocked out by the first Curb Stomp. He was however knocked out by the second Curb Stomp to give the villains the win.

Big E. beat Adam Rose via DQ when two masked men, played by Cesaro and Tyson Kidd, interfered. They just HAD to put this in? The show felt like it had been going on for a year at this point and I really could have used a breather. Air a video package or something but stop cramming everything in every chance they have. It's ok to let the show breathe for a minute, but WWE insists on jamming in every story and angle they can. It makes the show very tiring and I don't want to see any more at this point.

The big ending segment was the Authority praising Cena and then bringing out the other members of Team Cena from Survivor Series (the show that will not die). The Authority fired Ziggler, Ryback and Rowan for a big dramatic moment. Things picked up though as confetti and balloons fell and music played to celebrate John Cena to end the show. I'll give them that one as the look on Cena's face as the Authority smiled was perfect.

This show was LONG. That's my big complaint here in case you missed it the first dozen or so times. It felt like they were cramming in every

single idea they had and it makes for a very tiring show. The big angle isn't going to mean anything long term because I'd be stunned if those three weren't back for the Rumble. The ending scene was about breaking Cena's spirit....which is a really questionable idea. Why you ask?

Has Cena even mentioned Lesnar at the Rumble? We haven't gotten one promo about the match, one reason to think that Cena is focused, or one thing that really makes me want to see him fight Lesnar again. Sure he'll mention Brock once in awhile, but it's always broken up by something from the Authority or Rollins. The title match is a complete afterthought at this point and that's not what we should be having going into the Road to Wrestlemania. I can't wait for Lesnar to lose the title so we can get back to something resembling normal around here.

Other than Cena and the Authority, this show just didn't do anything for me. We've seen the same feuds and stories for so long now that it's almost impossible to care about them again. I know we keep saying the Road to Wrestlemania will re-energize things, but nothing ever seems to change. Maybe it's coming soon, but the Rumble needs to be a home run at this point.

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