

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 26, 1994

Location: Liberty High School, Liberty, New York

Attendance: 1,400

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

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

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

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

British Bulldog vs. Tatanka

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Henry O. Godwinn vs. Mike Khoury

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

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

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

House show ads.

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

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

Rich Myers vs. Kwang

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

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

Video on Kama, who is coming as well.

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

Undertaker vs. Brooklyn Brawler

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

Rating: D. What do you want me to say here? This was a total squash with

the Undertaker facing the Brooklyn Brawler. Vince said this was the Undertaker's first match on Raw in three months. I'm not sure whether that's sad or a relief that he didn't have to be associated with this mess.

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

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

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 19, 1994

Location: Liberty High School, Liberty, New York

Attendance: 1,400

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

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

Opening sequence.

IRS vs. Lex Luger

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

IRS sends Lex outside though and the Druid (who apparently weighs somewhere between 240 and 450lbs) posts him to give his boss (I guess?) control. We see some rings on the Druid's hand, which Vince says look familiar. He doesn't say where he's seen them of course but they do look familiar.

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

Rating: D. Another lame match but at least it was shorter this time around. The Million Dollar Team is still one of the worst stables I've ever seen though as the thing just keeps going with nothing interesting going on in the slightest. I mean, IRS as the main wrestler just isn't

going to work no matter what you do with him. He's fine as a midcard guy but they're actually making him the focus. That's almost frightening.

The Druid is Tatanka.

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

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

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

Smoking Gunns vs. Roy Raymond/Chris Avery

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

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

Speaking of which, Henry Godwinn debuts next week.

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

Enough of that though as Backlund talks about hurting Bret Hart at

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

Bob Holly vs. Chris Canyon

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

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

Here's a Royal Rumble control center with Bret vs. Diesel being announced for the first time on Raw. Diesel says Bret has jumped right on this title match idea by naming the time and place. He isn't sure how Bret has gotten away with wearing pink for so long because a real man wears black with a little gold. At the Rumble, they'll both be black and blue.

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

Well Dunn vs. Bushwhackers

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

off to Butch for more clotheslines. Harvey tries to interfere but Fink pulls him down by the pants, allowing Butch to roll Well up for the pin.

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

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

Jim Neidhart vs. Nick Barberri

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

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

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

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 12, 1994

Location: Liberty High School, Liberty, New York

Attendance: 1,400

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

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

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

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

Opening sequence.

Bob Backlund vs. Doink the Clown

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

Back up and they stare at each other for a bit as the fans are entirely

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

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

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

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

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

Tatanka/Bam Bam Bigelow

Men on a Mission

Headshrinkers

Jim Neidhart/Owen Hart

Heavenly Bodies

Bushwhackers

Smoking Gunns

Well Dunn

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

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

Razor Ramon vs. Mark Starr

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

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

Make-A-Wish ad.

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

Lawler wants to talk about athletes making a fortune and then charging for autographs. On top of that (which is really pitiful in the first place), they're not even paying taxes. The biggest tax cheat of them all though is the Undertaker, who claims to have the power of the urn. IRS

however has the power of the Million Dollar Man's money, which is more than enough to make Undertaker pay. Also, IRS is going to make Lex Luger pay next week and promises to have friends behind him.

Hakushi is still coming.

Aldo Montoya vs. Nick Barberri

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

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

Clips from the 100th episode of WWF Mania.

King Kong Bundy vs. Bobby Knight

Knight (dang I wish it was the famous one) bounces off Bundy to start and is sent hard into the post for his efforts. Back in and Bundy yells a lot before actually going to the middle rope, only to have Knight bail to the floor out of self preservation. Bundy slowly pounds him down and finishes with the Avalanche (big splash) for a five count.

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

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

Overall Rating: F. Oh yeah this was bad. That Santa bit at the end was the best thing of the night and it was all of a minute long. It's bad

enough that it's this year and now I have to sit through the Christmas season as well, meaning everyone isn't interested in trying? Horrible show here and one of the weakest I've ever seen. At least it was short though.

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Monday Night Raw – December 5, 1994: I Had To Start Somewhere

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 5, 1994

Location: Mid-Hudson Civic Center, Poughkeepsie, New York

Attendance: 2,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

This was on a list of requested shows so I might as well knock some of them out. That and I've never actually done an episode from 1994 and if I'm going to (eventually) do all of the episodes in history, I need to start somewhere. I have no idea why this was requested as it's a pretty dead time in the promotion's history. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence. I miss that old song, though Vince has to talk over it with an advertisement.

Shawn Michaels is brought out for commentary.

Jeff Jarrett vs. British Bulldog

Of note here: a cable puller "screws up", giving us the debut of the Roadie, later to be known as Road Dogg. An early armdrag takes Bulldog down and it's already time for some strutting. Jarrett takes him down again and walks over Bulldog's back (Vince: "Shades of Shawn Michaels!") for some more posing. A hiptoss doesn't work as well though as Bulldog sends Jeff out to the floor before doing Jeff's strut in a funny bit.

Back in and Jeff, with tinsel between his legs, gets run over again because he's not bright enough to realize that the power isn't working. Smith keeps countering a headscissors but the cable puller claps Jeff back to his feet. There's the delayed vertical (with Jeff doing a great terrified face) but Bulldog gets crotched on top for a superplex. We're off to a weak chinlock for a good bit before going to a break.

Back with Jeff missing a middle rope fist drop, followed by a double clothesline to put both guys down. Shawn again points out the tinsel on Jarrett's tights, likely because it's rather shiny and Shawn is easily distracted. Somehow this makes Vince refer to Jeff as the Tim Allen of the WWF.

Jeff grabs a sleeper for a long time before a bulldog to the Bulldog (you know these announcers are going to crack jokes about that one) gets two. Back to the chinlock as this is going way too long. Bulldog fights up with an atomic drop and a series of clotheslines to send Jarrett outside. Jeff staggers up the aisle but is quickly caught, only to have the cable puller grab Bulldog's leg, allowing Jeff to beat the count back in.

Rating: D+. This was your usual one long match on Raw back in the day, but that doesn't mean it's good. There was too much chinlockery going on here and they easily could have cut out about three or four minutes. The result was the right choice though as they might have finally found a way to get people to care about Jeff Jarrett. I mean, I wouldn't bet on it

but it's always possible.

House show ads. Now there's something you don't see that often anymore.

Some WWF wrestlers were at a dinner for American sportcasters with keynote speaker....Gerald Ford?

1-2-3 Kid vs. Barry Horowitz

Kid starts fast with a dropkick and the rapid fire kicks in the corner. Barry comes back with a quick butterfly suplex as Vince plugs Diesel being in the King's Court tonight, only to get on Shawn's nerves. There's a Hennig necksnap for no cover as Vince begs people to come to the house shows. Not that it matters as the Kid comes back with two spinwheel kicks and an Oklahoma Roll for the pin.

Preview of next week's show with crazy Bob Backlund vs. Doink the Clown. I actually kind of want to see that mess.

Ad for the new WWF Raw game for SNES. That game wasn't bad actually.

Kwang vs. Scott Taylor

Better known as Savio Vega in a mask vs. Scotty 2 Hotty. Kwang drops Taylor with a shot to the face before dropping him with a faceplant. Shawn brags about his contract being better than Michael Jordan's baseball deal and we hit the nerve hold. Harvey Wippleman yells at Howard Finkel to continue their horrible feud that actually existed for reasons I'll never understand. Kwang's running spinwheel kick crushes Taylor in the corner and it's back to the nerve hold. Another spinwheel kick puts Taylor away, thank goodness. Kwang was such a weak character and it's no shock that he didn't last.

Ad for Lex Luger vs. Owen Hart on Action Zone.

It's time for the King's Court (Lawler's interview segment). After some good old audience insulting, here's the surprise guest: Shawn Michaels! So Vince was wrong about Diesel? Lawler calls Diesel stupid for doing things like buying a zebra and calling it Spot. Shawn claims to have plucked Diesel from obscurity (well yeah Vinnie Vegas was pretty obscure)

and no one puts him down, including some 7'0 goon. Everything Diesel has ever earned was because of Shawn and he made Diesel on his own. However, Shawn can also disassemble him just as fast. If Diesel wants to find him, just come to the Heartbreak Hotel.

Bob Holly crashed in his latest race. This is making me long for the "This Week in WCW Motorsports" segments.

There will be a special 100th episode celebration of WWF Mania. I remember liking that show.

Hakushi is coming.

Well Dunn vs. Bushwhackers

See, one is named Well and the other is named Dunn. They're managed by Wippleman in case you were still confused about how much potential they had. The Bushwhackers drop both guys with a double clothesline to start but Well drops Luke with an ax handle from the apron. We get some breaking news: there will be a tournament for the vacant Tag Team Titles. So I guess this is like a boring preview? Not that we'll see any of it because the whole thing is taking place on Superstars.

Well dives onto Luke's back as this is actually less interesting than I was expecting. Some rapid fire legdrops keep Luke in trouble and Shawn plugs a movie airing on USA. Even more legdrops don't actually make the match any better so Luke clotheslines him down for a breather. The hot tag brings in Butch o clean maybe a room or two until Harvey trips him up, allowing Dunn to get in a knee to the back for the pin.

Rating: D-. Again, one was named Well and the other was named Dunn. Is there any real surprise that WCW was able to take over so easily? The only interesting part here was hearing Shawn cracking jokes for five minutes as he knew this was a disaster. Nothing to see here and I continue to be amazed that the Bushwhackers still had jobs at this point.

Fink tells the referee what happened but nothing changes.

Bob Backlund wants to exterminate Doink next week on his path to being

WWF Champion again.

Overall Rating: D. Well that was bad. They were certainly in the Saturday Night's Main Event format at this point with the one big match going on first and then hoping people fell asleep and couldn't change the channel for the rest of the horrible show. It's no surprise that this era has basically been erased from history after this mess. For some reason though, I'm sure it's only going to get worse.

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Monday Night Raw – January 11, 2016: That Football Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 11, 2016

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're getting closer and closer to the Royal Rumble though now we're missing John Cena who is out 6-9 months due to a torn shoulder. However, Brock Lesnar is back tonight and there's a good chance he's going to enter the Royal Rumble match which will now be for Roman Reigns' WWE

World Title. Let's get to it.

We open with the long recap from last week with Vince trying to screw Reigns over and then making the Rumble for the title.

The roster is on the stage as the McMahons strut down to the ring. Vince welcomes the next WWE World Heavyweight Champion: one of the people on that stage. Whoever throws Reigns over the top might not win the title but it would be quite the moment. It could be someone like Dolph Ziggler who has been around for so long and tried to reach that brass ring. Or maybe Kevin Owens who has accomplished so much in so little time. Or what about a New Day for the title?

Vince and Stephanie laugh at the dancing but we've got Wyatts. Bray says anyone but you Roman, which brings Vince to Brock Lesnar, but here's Roman instead. The Wyatts were focused on for all of thirty seconds there. Reigns asks what happens if he wins and the McMahons nearly die laughing. However, since it's possible, let's have Reigns vs. all tonight. That's right: Reigns in a big handicap match. Again. It might even be against Dean Ambrose, but he's in our first match against Sheamus, who jumps Dean from behind on the ramp.

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and joined in progress with Sheamus pounding away on Ambrose. Dean tries to fight back but gets caught with the forearms to the chest and back. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Sheamus tries more forearms to the chest, but you know you can't do that twice in one match. Ambrose counters into forearms of his own, only to be sent to the floor and dropped onto the announcers' table. I love how the rules change depending on how they want the match to end as that's often a DQ. Back inside and Dean scores with some clotheslines, including a big one to send Sheamus outside as we take a break.

It's back to Sheamus putting on a quick broken Cloverleaf and blocking the rebound lariat. The Regal roll is countered into a rollup and a tornado DDT drops Sheamus for two more. Dirty Deeds is broken up but the rebound lariat puts Sheamus on the floor. That's fine with Sheamus as he sends Dean into the barricade over and over, only to get sent into the

post as we go to a double countout at 14:09.

Rating: C. This was your weekly back and forth match designed to eat up a bunch of TV time. If this is really their best idea to fill in time before the national champion game starts at the bottom of the hour, they're in some real trouble in the ratings tonight. I didn't care about this match for the most part, but at least Ambrose didn't take a clean loss.

Post match Dean loads up the announcers' table but Kevin Owens comes out and beats him down.

With Ambrose laid out in front of them, the announcers hype the Network. For some reason, that's hilarious.

Back from a break with Dean storming out of the trainer's room and telling Renee to feel his neck. She feels a pulse and that means Dean is still alive.

The McMahons are still dancing through the corridors when they run into Paul Heyman. We get some sucking up to the bosses until Heyman suggests that Brock get the title shot at Wrestlemania. Vince isn't thrilled so Stephanie recommends that they take this to a closed room.

Stardust vs. Titus O'Neil

Stardust has David Bowie themed facepaint. Titus throws him into the corner to start but gets pulled down into an early chinlock. O'Neil throws him down again but Stardust grabs something like Matt Hardy's Side Effect for two. Not that it matters as the Clash of the Titus puts Stardust away at 3:15.

Rating: D. Is there a point coming to either of these two anytime in the near future? Titus has beaten him twice in a row with the same finisher now so why should I want to see them fight each other again? Titus is fine as a midcard guy but he's really just a power guy. This wasn't horrible but totally uninteresting.

Post match Titus celebrates but Stardust chop blocks him and sends Titus into the barricade.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with special guests the New Day. Jericho talks about how awesome it is that he's back and shows us all the social media reaction to his return on the Jeritron 6500. He recaps his entrance into the Royal Rumble and promises to win the title until New Day cuts him off. New Day does some really generic insulting before Jericho starts the Rooty Tooty chant again.

Big E. makes fun of Chris' clothes until the Usos come out to interrupt as well. New Day turns down a request for a tag match but Jericho points out that there are six of them out there. A tag match is made for later to end this really lame segment. New Day vs. Jericho sounds like something hilarious on paper but there's just no effort on either side and it's really not working.

New Day vs. Usos

Non-title with Woods and Jericho are on the floor here. Joined in progress with Kofi kneeing Jey in the ribs. A double elbow gets two for the Usos and it's off to Big E., who isn't happy with Jey dancing. That's fine with the Usos who easily knock Big E. around before it's back to Kofi, who gets caught with a quick running Umaga attack in the corner. Kofi shoves Jimmy off the top and out to the floor, meaning it's time for Francesca. Jericho chases Woods up the ramp and we take a break.

Back with Jimmy having to fight out of Kofi's chinlock but getting crushed by a Big E. splash on the apron. Woods is back with more tromboning as the abdominal stretch is quickly broken up. Jimmy gets in a few uppercuts for a breather but Big E. takes Jey off the apron to break up the tag attempt. Back in and the Boom Drop crushes Jimmy but he gets over for the tag off to Jey as things speed up.

A belly to belly gives Big E. a near fall but Jey superkicks both of them, only to have Xavier offer a distraction. Always helpful, Jericho blows the trombone in Woods' face after Kofi has crotched Jey on top. Jericho breaks the trombone to scare Woods into tears for a funny bit. It's also an important bit as the distraction lets Jey roll up Kofi for the pin at 15:12.

Rating: C+. The match was fine but the booking continues to get on my

nerves. The idea here was supposed to be that the win gets the Usos into the title hunt because they pinned the champions. Again, is there no other possible way to set up a title match and who in the world didn't think the Usos were in the hunt already? The division has like four teams and the Dragons are out due to injury. It's lazy booking and I'm really getting tired of it.

We look at Cena's shoulder surgery.

Stephanie turns Heyman's suggestion down again. Heyman tells her to have Vince go tell Brock that but Stephanie goes all serious and says Brock is in the Rumble.

JBL announces Sting as the first inductee into the 2016 Hall of Fame class, setting up Sting's induction video.

Wyatt Family vs. Social Outcasts

The Outcasts interrupt Bray's pre-match promo with Slater suggesting that we get some penicillin because they're about to go viral. Rose and Strowman get things going but Bo tags himself in to go after the monster. A biel sends him flying into the corner though so it's off to Axel, who actually scores with a flying forearm and some right hands. That's about it though as Braun runs him over with ease to take over. It's off to Bray but cue Ryback to go after the Wyatts. The Outcasts try to help and we'll say the match is thrown out at 1:25.

We recap Kalisto pinning Alberto Del Rio in a non-title match on Smackdown.

Kalisto talks about what being US Champion would mean to him after what people like Cena and Eddie Guerrero did for the title.

US Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Kalisto

Del Rio is defending but before the match, he talks about how Cena isn't going to be in the Royal Rumble or going to Wrestlemania because Alberto took him out. Why in the world did we not hear about that after Alberto won the title in the first place??? Kalisto is run over to start and a quick DDT sends him out to the floor.

Back in and Del Rio hits a quick top rope ax handle but Kalisto comes back with a top rope seated senton. The hurricanrana (which got Kalisto the pin on Thursday) is countered into a powerbomb and we hit the chinlock. Kalisto gets back up and snaps off a headscissors to send Alberto outside, only to have the champ send him hard into the barricade as we take a break.

We come back with Kalisto missing a dive off the top and getting caught in a chinlock. This time it's Del Rio going up top but getting pulled back down, setting up the corkscrew cross body (more of a headbutt), followed by a tornado DDT for two. Kalisto tries to speed things up too much though and gets caught in a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. The low superkick is countered into a rollup and a rolling kick to the champ's head gets two more.

Del Rio crotches him on top but thankfully superplexes him down instead of doing that double stomp. The springboard Salida Del Sol is countered and Del Rio ties him in the Tree of Woe. The double stomp misses though as Kalisto is the first man to ever NOT SIT UP. Kalisto snaps off the hurricanrana driver for two and you can hear the fans groan at the kickout. Another Salida Del Sol is countered but Kalisto reverses a German suplex into a victory roll for the pin and the title at 15:18.

Rating: B-. Thank goodness. Del Rio is one of the least interesting champions I've seen in years and it's really cool to see them actually push someone instead of just having him win a non-title match and then go out and lose in the big showdown. The false finish off the hurricanrana driver was a nice touch too as I was almost sure Del Rio was retaining after the kickout. Really nice surprise here and long overdue.

We look back at Charlotte turning full heel on Becky Lynch last week.

Charlotte doesn't understand why she's the villain here when everyone looks up to her. She's going to do everything she can to be champion because she's the victim in all this.

Brie Bella vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Actually non-match as well as Becky Lynch jumps Charlotte

during her entrance before being taken out by security. Ric says Charlotte is in no condition to wrestle tonight.

Post break, Becky raves about being all alone against Charlotte and Ric Flair. Charlotte talks about being genetically superior but Becky made her tap on Thursday. She did it once and she'll do it again.

We look at Stephanie vs. Heyman from earlier.

Roman Reigns vs. All

In this case, all means Sheamus, Alberto Del Rio, Kevin Owens, the Wyatt Family, New Day, Stardust, Ascension and Tyler Breeze. Vince sends Owens in first and this seems more like a gauntlet than a handicap match. Owens grabs a waistlock to start but is quickly sent to the floor in a bit of frustration. Back in and Owens stomps him down in the corner before putting on a chinlock. Roman fights out and grabs a quick neckbreaker, only to get punched out to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Owens sending Reigns to the floor for no interference from everyone else. It's time for another chinlock before a superkick gets two for Kevin. Off to chinlock number three (Owens: "HE SAYS YES!") for a bit before the Cannonball connects for two. The backsplash misses though and Reigns glares at the McMahons during his breather.

Roman blocks a superkick and drops Owens with a big boot but here come the troops as the Superman punch is loaded up. Ascension takes the right hand instead and the combined forces of Breeze and Stardust are quickly dispatched. Vince sends in the rest of the troops and the match is thrown out at about 17:00.

Rating: D+. Well for a one vs. all match, this was about as lame as it could have gotten. I like the idea of keeping the heels protected, though they could have fed a few of them to Reigns before having the long match with Owens. At least Kevin didn't get pinned so it's not a total loss. Just not very interesting though as we were waiting on the big run-in to close things out.

Post match Reigns gets destroyed and here's Brock for the big showdown.

The first victims are New Day before Owens and Del Rio are tossed with German suplexes. Sheamus gets in a few shots until Brock levels him with a clothesline. The Wyatts didn't get involved and it's just Brock and Reigns left in the ring. Roman can't stand so Brock pulls him up and plants him with an F5. Reigns smirks up at Brock to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Did I mention that the NCAA National Championship game was on tonight? You could certainly tell that WWE knew as there wasn't exactly a lot of thought and effort being put into this one. As soon as they announced Reigns vs. All for the main event, it was very clear that there was nothing interesting happening tonight because they could air Rock vs. Austin and not put a dent in ESPN's ratings. As annoying as it is for those of us that watch, I more than get the idea here, as lame as it was. The show wasn't even terrible, but you could tell they were just waiting for next week when people will be watching.

Results

Dean Ambrose vs. Sheamus went to a double countout

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

Usos b. New Day – Rollup to Kingston

Wyatt Family b. Social Outcasts via DQ when Ryback interfered

Kalisto b. Alberto Del Rio – Victory roll

Roman Reigns vs. All went to a no contest when everyone interfered

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Monday Night Raw – January 4, 2016: One vs. All

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 4, 2016

Location: AT&T Center, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the first Raw of the year and we're starting with a bang. Tonight we're seeing the rematch between Roman Reigns and Sheamus for Roman's WWE World Title with Vince McMahon as the guest referee. It's also time to keep going towards the Royal Rumble as we've got less than three weeks to go. Let's get to it.

We open with another long recap of Reigns vs. Vince to set up tonight's title defense.

Here's Stephanie to get things going but Roman Reigns cuts her off on the way to the ring. Reigns laughs off Stephanie's annoyance and calls Vince out. Vince isn't here yet and Stephanie goes into her degrading voice about how this isn't Roman's night. Roman says that title is his life and his family because without it he can't provide for his wife and daughter.

This amuses Stephanie even more as she rips on the fans for having so much false hope, just like Reigns. Stephanie says you can't keep a good billionaire down and promises to destroy Roman tonight. After he loses the title, she's going to work him all around the country until he drops. Then the fans are going to forget about him and move on, just like they did with Roman's father Sika. Not really Steph, not really. Roman threatens to send Vince to the hospital and Stephanie finally shuts up.

We look back at Kevin Owens' path of rage (and his loss) from last week.

Brock Lesnar is back next week.

Neville vs. Kevin Owens

Ambrose is on commentary. Neville has taped up ribs and quickly sends Kevin outside for a flip dive. Owens gets knocked across the ring and out to the floor on the outside, setting up a shooting star from the top. Back in and Owens gets smart by kicking Neville in the ribs and plants him with a hanging DDT out of the corner. Neville gets dumped out to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Neville still on the floor and missing his rib tape. He dives back in to beat the count at nine but Owens sends him back outside and hard into the barricade. Neville kicks him in the face to get a breather and busts out a sweet 450 off the apron. They head back in with Neville going up top, only to get crotched down for a Cannonball. The Pop Up Powerbomb ends Neville at 9:45.

Rating: B. I had a lot of fun with this thing as they were just beating the tar out of each other for the entire time they were out there. This was exactly what they needed to do last week with Neville looking awesome (including some fresh stuff) but Owens looking like a killer at the same time. Really well done here.

Post match Owens goes after Neville again but Ambrose dives on him to make the save. Owens loads up the announcers' table again but Dean takes over and drives him through the table with an elbow drop. Dean tells Owens that all he has to do is ask for a shot.

Vince arrives and finds it ironic that last week he was on the wrong side of the law but tonight he is the law.

Stardust vs. Titus O'Neil

So this is still a thing. Titus chops him HARD in the corner to start until the Disaster kick puts him down. Stardust slowly stomps away in the corner as well and we hit the chinlock. The fans start chanting CODY to freak Stardust out, allowing Titus to come back with a big clothesline. A big boot in the corner and the Clash of the Titus puts Stardust away at 4:26.

Rating: D. Pretty lame match but when is the last time you saw a random midcard match with no interference and a clean winner? I like what I see with Titus and he could be fine as a midcard act if you give him more of a character aside from doing a dog bark. Nothing to see here, other than the total collapse of Stardust.

Becky Lynch is getting ready when Charlotte comes up. Apparently Charlotte isn't happy that they're having a match tonight but they pinky shake anyway. Ric Flair comes in and WOO's.

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Non-title. Becky gets sent into the corner to start but grabs some armdrags to frustrate Charlotte. They hit the ropes with Becky nipping up and Charlotte cartwheeling into a standoff. Charlotte flips over in the corner but dives through the ropes into a rollup for two. Becky throws her down again but helps Charlotte up, only to take a HARD chop. Charlotte drops some knees until we take a break.

Back with Charlotte doing her figure four neck flips, which she really should bring back. Becky dives out of the corner but gets caught in midair, only to spin around into a sleeper. That earns her a backwards drop onto the mat for the break but Becky makes her comeback with clotheslines and a leg lariat. There's a t-bone suplex for two on the champ but Ric grabs Becky's leg. It doesn't work this time as Becky rolls her up and grabs the trunks for the pin at 8:50.

Rating: C+. Good match here that felt more like an NXT match than a WWE match. The ending really didn't need the trunks involved but at least Becky got a big win to likely set up the title match at the Rumble. I could use less Ric in this whole thing but at least they're getting somewhere with an actual title feud.

Post match Charlotte goes full heel (for real this time) and destroys Becky while Ric struts.

Sheamus comes in to see Vince, who implies he'll call it down the line. May the luck of the Irish be with you.

Ryback vs. Big Show

Ryback is officially in the Rumble. Show chops him into the corner to start but misses a charge, allowing Ryback to hit a quick clothesline. Ryback calls to finish it thirty seconds in, only to walk into a chokeslam. Show throws Ryback over the top...and we've got Wyatts. They surround Ryback so he goes after Harper, only to get quadruple teamed. That's not very nice of Ryback. They might have wanted to sell him some Girl Scout Cookies. We'll say the match ended at about 1:15.

Strowman chokes Ryback out as Big Show just watches. Now the Wyatts circle the ring and go after the giant. Show knocks Bray, Harper and Rowan down but spends too much time staring at Strowman, allowing the swarm to take him down. Bray says they are the four horsemen of the apocalypse and everyone will fall. The other three do an upside down Horsemen gesture.

Alberto Del Rio/Rusev vs. Usos

Hokey smoke the Usos are in different color gear. I could get used to this, but it means I can't just pick a random name and say they're starting. Jimmy and Del Rio get things going with Alberto eating an early clothesline. Rusev gets double clotheslined but the heels take over on Jey with Rusev driving him into the corner. A wicked overhead belly to belly sends Jey flying and we take a break.

Back with Jey trying a comeback on Rusev but missing an enziguri. Del Rio kicks him hard in the back and it's off to Rusev for a chinlock. Jey finally fights up with a Samoan drop and makes the tag off to Jimmy as things speed up. A kick to the face gets two and there's an enziguri to stagger Del Rio even more.

Jimmy goes up but gets crotched down but the top rope double stomp misses (thank goodness). The superkick and Superfly splash get a VERY close two on Del Rio with Rusev diving in for the save at the last second. Jey dives through the ropes to take Rusev out but lands on a raised boot. Back in and Del Rio kicks Jey in the head to tie him in the ropes, setting up the top rope double stomp for the pin at 13:25.

Rating: B-. Fun match here but I'm getting a bit bored with the fairly long midcard tag match of the week. They're entertaining and the time could have been used for far worse things, but these things are getting harder to get hyped for. It doesn't help that these two aren't the most interesting teams in the world, though the action was good. Quality, but not exactly entertaining here.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Heath Slater

Ziggler is officially in the Rumble. Slater comes out with Adam Rose, Curtis Axel and Bo Dallas, all of whom have apparently been tweeting about change all day. Ziggler gets some early rollups and small packages for two each, followed by that dropkick of his. Slater chokes a bit and throws Ziggler down by the hair. That goes nowhere and Ziggler tries a superkick but has to go after Rose. Slater grabs a rollup and gets the big upset at 4:41.

Rating: D. Sure why not. Ziggler is going to be in the exact same place no matter what he does and a loss to Heath Slater isn't going to change a thing for him. It's not like these guys are doing anything else so why not throw them together into a nothing midcard stable. I doubt it lasts past the Rumble but it's better than having them on the roster for no apparent reason.

Post match Slater says he's found some friends. Rose gets way too excited about the four of them being flowers. Axel goes on about the chains being off and Dallas says it's all about getting back up. Slater caps it off by saying they're trending worldwide despite being social outcasts. That sounds like the team name.

Ambrose is defending the Intercontinental Title against Owens on Smackdown. On the same show, Lynch will be challenging for the Divas Title.

Vince comes in to see Reigns and tells him not to cheat tonight. Reigns seems uneasy.

Here's New Day for a chat. Big E. promises to make this the greatest year of all time and they'll start by beating up the Dudley Boyz and Kalisto

like they were Mike Tyson falling off a hoverboard. We get a reenactment of Tyson falling and now it's time for a countdown. The ten count gets down to three and BREAK DOWN THE WALLS!

Yes Chris Jericho is back and declares himself as the party host for the night. He's here to save the WWE one more time, sixteen years after he debuted. Woods isn't pleased because the New Day has already saved this company through the power of positivity. Now it's time for Jericho to not be impressed because the unicorn horns are stupid.

Jericho says he's back to bring some life to this place and he's sorry that we had to sit through five minutes of Green Day and rootie tootie. Big E.: "WHO ARE YOU CALLING ROOTIE TOOTIE?????" The fans get in on the chant until Jericho announces his entrance in the Royal Rumble. The Y2J problem is back and the WWE will never EVER be the same again.

Dudley Boyz/Kalisto vs. New Day

Woods and Kalisto start but Xavier wants Bubba. That's fine with Bubba and Woods actually stays in the ring. A chop has no effect on Bubba and it's time for a ROOTIE TOOTIE chant. It's off to Kofi who is immediately caught in a very delayed vertical suplex. JBL: "Put the unicorn down." D-Von comes in and sends everyone to the floor, allowing Bubba to throw Kalisto out on top of everybody.

Back from a break with Bubba in trouble but avoiding a splash in the corner. That allows a tag off to Kalisto but it's quickly time for the Unicorn Stampede. Woods slaps on a chinlock and the Warrior splash gives Big E. a near fall. Kalisto avoids another charge and makes the tag off to D-Von as everything breaks down. Bubba cleans house and Kalisto is driven into the barricade. A quick save keeps Kofi out of What's Up and the Midnight Hour puts D-Von away at 16:40.

Rating: C+. Another fun match here and I'm glad it was D-Von taking the fall here. Kalisto is getting a chance to look like a big deal and it would have really been a waste to have him lose here. It's also cool to see New Day win a six man for a change as they lose these things way more often than they should. Good stuff here.

Here's the same recap that opened the show. Dude cut that out. You can do it in about a fourth of the time. Stop eating up so much of the show.

WWE World Title: Roman Reigns vs. Sheamus

Reigns is defending and Vince is guest referee. Sheamus jumps him to start and gets a pretty quick two count. A hard Irish (of course) whip gets two for Sheamus but Reigns comes back with the corner clotheslines. Another clothesline puts both guys on the floor for no count as Vince doesn't want Sheamus winning the match without the title. Sheamus gets in a shot with the steps but Vince wasn't paying attention as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus getting two off the Regal roll but Reigns comes back with his array of clotheslines. The Samoan drop gets a VERY delayed two and the fans boo Vince out of the building. White Noise is countered into a sitout powerbomb for another two but Vince has something in his eye. Vince: "I NEED SOME EYEDROPS!"

Now it's a Superman punch to knock Sheamus silly but Vince just won't count. Reigns finally Superman punches Vince and spears Sheamus before calling for another referee. With nothing else to do, Reigns throws Sheamus outside and over the announcers' table. Vince gets up so Reigns throws him back down and yells a lot.

Frustration gets the better of Roman and he grabs Vince with the fans chanting for the table. Cue a power walking Stephanie to get on the apron so Reigns throws Vince into the ropes, bringing Stephanie inside. She bails to the floor as Reigns loads up a spear to Vince but eats a Brogue kick. A second one knocks Reigns out but Vince is slow to count (looked like a missed cue). Crooked referee Scott Armstrong comes in to count two. Reigns blocks another Brogue with a Superman punch and spears Sheamus down to retain at 18:20.

Rating: C+. Well it told a good story and Vince continues to be one of the best performers in the world. They actually had me believing they might change the title here which says a lot given that we're less than three weeks away from the Rumble and it was Sheamus. Solid stuff here and they're on a roll with the storytelling all over again.

Post match Vince says Reigns is going to defend the WWE World Title again at the Royal Rumble. Reigns keeps saying one vs. all so that's exactly what he's going to get. At the Royal Rumble, Reigns will defend his title against twenty nine other men in the Royal Rumble match.

Overall Rating: B-. This was another good show and you can see the effort involved. They've reached the point where they have to start putting in some effort for the Rumble and ensuing Wrestlemania season and it's already starting to pay off. The shows aren't great or anything but they're so far ahead of what they were doing just a month ago. Good show here and hopefully a sign of a hot Rumble and Wrestlemania build.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Neville – Pop Up Powerbomb

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

Becky Lynch b. Charlotte – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Ryback b. Big Show via DQ when the Wyatt Family interfered

Alberto Del Rio/Rusev b. Usos – Top rope double stomp to Jey

Heath Slater b. Dolph Ziggler – Rollup

New Day b. Dudley Boyz/Kalisto – Midnight Hour to D-Von

Roman Reigns b. Sheamus – Spear

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Monday Night Raw – January 4, 1999: He Did It

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 4, 1999

Location: DCU Center, Worcester, Massachusetts

Attendance: 10,668

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

This is the Raw from the same night as the Fingerpoke of Doom and of course features Mankind winning his first world title. The rest of the show is more or less forgotten and since this is my favorite moment in the history of wrestling I just wanted to do this show. Let's get to it.

A video about the career of HBK opens the show. He had recently been fired as Commissioner by Vince so this is kind of a goodbye thing. Vince yells to cut the video, so we cut to the arena to see the Corporation coming to the ring. There is a lot of talent in there to put it mildly. Oh and Test is there too. Vince talks about how Shawn humiliated his son and if anyone does that again, they have to deal with Vince.

A live shot of Shawn coming to the arena is shown on the screen, and there's the music. Not sure what the point of the video was since he was there seconds later. He has the cavalry with him, and it's DX. And by that, I mean the REAL DX: HHH, X-Pac, Chyna and the Outlaws. This team with Shawn is a weird visual but cool at the same time.

According to Shawn he's still the Commissioner because the contract is iron clad and Vince said the Commissioner answered to no one, including Vince. Shawn says the only way he leaves

is if he resigns, which more or less set up the Vince makes Shawn's life a living nightmare angle. We see a clip of Vince drawing his number for the Rumble and he wanted #2. Shawn therefore grants his wish, setting up one of the worst Rumbles of all time. He also promises Vince a surprise for later in the night, which will drive him Stone Cold Crazy.

By the way, Cole is somehow more of an annoying douche here than he is now.

Ken Shamrock vs. Steve Blackman

Shamrock is the IC and a tag champion here but this is nontitle. Ken was in the ring for the opening segment but had a regular entrance for no apparent reason. It's a striking contest to start with Blackman taking over. We hear about Billy Gunn feuding with Shamrock, more or less giving away the ending.

Dan Severn, in a neck brace, comes down. He used to be both UFC Champion and NWA Champion at the same time. It's so weird hearing about UFC on WWF TV. His mustache on his own could probably win the IC Title. It's that awesome. Dan and Shamrock were big rivals in UFC so there's the reason. Shamrock hits his belly to belly which is more of a throw than anything else. Severn pops up on the apron and Billy Gunn runs down for a Fameasser to Shamrock, giving Blackman the pin. Predictable but fine.

Rating: N/A. Not about the match or anything as this was just for the angle. That's perfectly fine and is a common practice in wrestling today still. Blackman was just boring to put it mildly, but he was trying at least. The Attitude Era was known for having a point to everything, and this had about three angles going at once, which is average for the time.

Gunn and Shamrock are fighting in the back.

Here comes Mankind for no apparent reason. He doesn't have his

far more famous music yet either. Foley beat up Shane last week apparently. Foley: "I swear that was the first time I've ever grabbed another man's testicles." He's just awesome at this point with his promos as he's a clueless putz that seems to find himself in the top feuds in the company but everyone loves him and he can back it up. It was just out there all the time, but it worked like a charm.

He wants a shot at the Rock and the Title at the Rumble. We get an I Love Lucy reference as he says that's what the fans want. He corrects the fans by saying he's not God but he's good. Foley beat Rock at Rock Bottom but Vince changed the decision. Vince comes out and blames Foley for blaming the fans. He says Foley hasn't paid his dues and no more title shots for him.

Vince makes HHH vs. Foley tonight with the winner getting a spot in the Rumble. We see a clip of Foley beating up Shane, and Shane is announced as the guest referee. I knew that before it was said. There was a hardon for guest refs around this time so it was pretty clear that was coming.

Chyna and her friend Sammy are here.

Mark Henry vs. Goldust

Henry is sexual chocolate here and wants Chyna. How weird is it that these two are still employed? Goldie is still a bit insane here unlike now when there is nothing special about his character in the slightest. Goldust goes to the legs because that's what you do against every big man you ever fight. Just as always, it doesn't work.

Henry more or less dominates, hitting a big elbow drop. A press slam drop ends Goldie's comeback and here are Chyna and Sammy on the stage. This allows Goldust to hit Shattered Dreams, which is of course a DQ.

Rating: D. This was just a waste of time and did nothing but

set up the angle that's about to happen. Goldust didn't really mean much at all and Henry was in this whole thing with Chyna. You got a lot more pointless matches like these at this time, but it was a far more angle heavy period of time.

Sammy and Chyna get in and Chyna has something to say. The other night with him was incredible, but she's not enough woman for him. She introduces him to her friend Sammy. Chyna makes the inevitable offer, and Henry faints. I'm not sure if this ends tonight, but the payoff for this is BAD. Apparently it doesn't but Sammy is a transvestite. Gotta love Russo!

Jesse Ventura is governor of Minnesota. That's still insane. His line at the inauguration: "We shocked the world." Amen. Also for you REALLY old school fans, Terry, Tyrell and Jade are here, more commonly known as his wife, son and daughter. Just in case you never got those references.

Dennis Knight (soon to be Mideon) is in a dungeon, chained to the ceiling with various metal objects hanging around and laying on the floor. Sure why not?

Godfather vs. Test

Test is in the Corporation, which would change later. He had just debuted recently before this as a hired gun. Ho Train hits and Test is in trouble. Val Venis comes out as Test hits a big boot. Godfather and Test fight on the floor and the referee just throws it out for no apparent reason. Val runs down and brawls with Test. This whole thing took like 2 minutes.

DX is talking.

Mankind vs. HHH

Winner goes to the Rumble. Shane is guest referee. HHH works on the arm as Cole is REALLY annoying already. This is going to be short. Foley hits a baseball slide to put HHH down. HHH

gets a sunset flip but Foley grabs the ropes. Shane kicks his arm and makes a fast count to end it. Like I said it was short, as in like 2 minutes.

HHH apologizes but says business is business and a win is a win. To avoid thoughts of a heel turn he gives Shane a Pedigree before saying to Foley that Shane is all his. Mankind says this is something my high school coach taught me. He more or less puts Shane in an abdominal stretch while sitting down. Foley says he'll break Shane's shoulder if Vince and the Stooges, who have just come out (ok not in Patterson's case but 2/3 isn't bad), come any closer. He wants a title shot TONIGHT and makes Shane scream. Vince agrees but Foley wants No Disqualifications. It's on, and Rock comes out to yell at Vince.

Slam of the Week is X-Pac getting kicked in the head by Bossman.

We recap what just happened.

Edge vs. D'Lo Brown

Edge has only been around about 6 months at this point and still comes through the crowd. I LOVED this guy back in the day and did for a long time. Brown and Henry have been having issues with PMS, so expect a run in here. No bell here as we just get going. Big plancha to the floor by Edge which has no effect for some reason.

Liger Bomb to Edge doesn't get a cover as D'Lo has to play to the crowd. Very nice top rope cross body from Edge gets two. Here's PMS as has been a theme tonight. Terri is pregnant but won't say who the father is. D'Lo accidentally knocks her to the floor and she holds her stomach. This would result in Brown being their slave more or less. I hated this stable, as did most people. The match just ends.

Rating: C+. This was a fun match as Brown was always solid in

the ring and Edge was AWESOME when he debuted. This was a great pairing and I'd love to see them go at it again. And then we have to do a lost baby angle which was one of Russo's favorites. It turned out that Terri was never pregnant of course.

Kane comes out with Shane, Bearer and the Stooges. He's in the Corporation as well but doesn't seem happy about it. Kane has a sign on his back for the Brisco Brothers' Body Shop. Shane says this is a handicap match against the Stooges. Wait what?

Gerald Brisco/Pat Patterson vs. Kane

Vince comes out again and says this is because the Stooges were partially responsible for Shane getting hurt last week. Patterson tries to bribe Kane with what he has in his pocket: a cigarette and a condom. Would anyone else like to just watch Patterson go about his daily life? Chokeslam for Brisco. Patterson gets a chair but Kane sees him. Shane is in the ring with a mic and egging Kane on which is funny stuff. Kane PUNTS the chair off the mat and over the top. That was rather impressive looking actually. Kane grabs Shane by the throat but Vince says Kane will go back, meaning to an insane asylum. Not even a match.

Dennis Knight is still in the dungeon. The Acolytes come in and say "he's ready for you." Knight is more scared by this. The he is Undertaker and Knight would become Mideon in a FREAKY ceremony the next week.

Hardcore Title: Al Snow vs. Road Dogg

Snow is the challenger and wearing a shirt covered in "blood" from a bloodbath from the Brood. Snow hides behind the curtain and we fight on the stage. The Hardcore Title was actually a coveted title at this point and not a joke. It's very violent very early as Snow is dominating. He hits a moonsault off the barricade but Road Dogg moves, sending Snow through a table.

Big old cookie sheet (why are those under wrestling rings or in arenas ever?) gets two. They head up the ramp and off to the side towards the back. Dogg goes up a set of steps and does a flying leap to take Snow down with a double axehandle. We're in a supply closet now or something and various stupid things are used as weapons.

They find a cart of potted plants to throw at each other. This is more intense than it sounds. Snow gets a steel pole and does some nice spinning and flipping (there's a proper term for it but I can't think of it. Think of a drill team) with it before driving it into Roadie. They go outside into the snow. Keep in mind this is Massachusetts in early January so it's FREEZING.

Snow gets put in a wheelbarrow or something and shoved into a wall. The referee can't stand up in the snow which is kind of funny. A piledriver on a wooden pallet pins Snow so Road Dogg retains (Cole of course says he won the title because Michael Cole is an idiotic douche).

Rating: B. Keep in mind this was a hardcore match and not a regular match when thinking about that grade. This was actually quite good and worked rather well. Road Dogg was cleaning up his real life a lot around this time and got off of drugs and stopped drinking for the most part and his in ring work went WAY up as a result. The push was kind of a reward for it and he would get the IC Title in two months. This was one of the better Hardcore Title matches I remember actually.

Dennis Knight is thrown through a door.

The Corporation jumps Shawn and beats the living tar out of him, throwing him into the window of a car. That's all in theory that is as the cameraman was knocked down and we heard glass breaking. When we come back Shawn is bloody and in the windshield.

WWF Title: Mankind vs. The Rock

This is No DQ remember. This is the match that Tony Schiavone gave the ending away to on their show, shifting the ratings for the night because of it. DX comes out to back up Foley, because they couldn't go to the hospital with Shawn or help defend him right? Rock of course has the Corporation with him.

Rock jumps him immediately and knocks him to the floor. He won't let the Corporation beat them up because he wants to do it himself. How noble of our heel champion. Foley does his first sick bump of the match as he goes knee first into the steps and flies over them in a painful looking shot. These two always had mad chemistry together, which is something that could be said about most guys with Rock actually.

Rock does commentary during the match, which always cracked me up. He talks a bit too much though so Foley takes over. Foley does a promo of his own and we cut to a shot of Vince and Shane, but we hear a bell ring. Foley is down and Rock has the bell. Subtle. Rock Bottom through a table and Foley is in trouble. This has all taken less than three minutes so I'm not leaving much out at all.

To play up the spontaneous nature here Rock is in street clothes, as in the kind you would work out in. Corporate Elbow (debuted 5 minutes from my house) hits for two as this is ALL Rock. Foley with a spinning neckbreaker out of nowhere to get both guys down. Bossman throws the belt in and a shot to the head (sounded SICK) gets two as well. Double arm DDT onto the belt and Rock is in big trouble.

There's Mr. Socko as the crowd has lost it. Mandible Claw goes on but Shamrock pops Foley with a chair. Billy Gunn takes him down and the brawl begins. Everything goes crazy and CUE GLASS SHATTER! Austin comes out and everyone loses it. He caves Rock's head in with a chair and pulls Mick on top for the pin and the world title as the roof is blown off the arena.

Rating: A+. This was about a shocking moment and excitement and a feel good story and they NAILED it. This is very personal bias heavy, but they're my reviews so who cares?

DX puts Foley on their shoulders as the Corporation carries Rock out. Cole gets in the famous line of "Mick Foley has achieved his dream and the dream of everyone else who has been told you can't do it!" This is one of the best feel good moment in WWF history as Foley was considered one of the best to never be world champion as he worked as hard as anyone else but was never given a serious shot at it.

He got the shot tonight and he won the title. Road Dogg does the big announcement of Mankind being the new champion to a HUGE ovation. Foley dedicates the win to his kids and takes a lap around the ring with the belt to end the show. This is my favorite moment in wrestling history, bar none.

Overall Rating: B-. I hate to use that grade as the show is far from average given the ending but the rest of the show is pretty bad. The last half hour is great stuff though which pushes the rating higher.

There was a very clear and predictable pattern for everything that wasn't the main event and it got annoying after awhile. The ending more than makes up for it though as this was just perfect all around. Great moment and 100% worth seeing. If you even remotely like Foley I defy you to not smile a bit while you watch this.

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books

at:

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

Monday Night Raw – December 28, 2015: Pay No Attention To The Roster At The House Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 28, 2015

Location: Barclay's Center, Brooklyn, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We'll wrap up the year with John Cena making his return after a few months off to film a reality show. Tonight Cena is facing Alberto Del Rio in what sounds like a non-title match, meaning we're likely to see another champion lose again. It should be interesting to see if Cena is going to have a mini feud with the League of Nations or if it's just going to be a one off match. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence. They really need to update the video due to all the current injuries.

Here's Vince McMahon to open things up. He's here to settle a score with Roman Reigns so here's the champ in a hurry. After seeing clips of what Roman put Stephanie through last week, Vince yells at Roman for embarrassing his family last week. Nobody turns their back on a McMahon and embarrasses them, including Roman Reigns.

Roman can't just say everything to anyone he wants because this is Vince's ring and Vince's company. Reigns says Vince is just a crazy rich guy. Vince: "I'm a freaking billionaire. There's a difference." The champ

says Vince doesn't own this title because it belongs to him and his supporters. Vince doesn't think Reigns is going to be champion that long and here's a DANIEL BRYAN chant, only to have Vince tell them to shut up.

Now it's CM Punk as Reign asks if he's going to be in a handicap match or a gauntlet match. Vince brings up the Wild Samoans and making Afa wrestle every night to ruin him while making a fortune. As for Roman's dad Sika, Vince used him up and paid him peanuts for all the work. Roman shoves him down and Vince holds his neck, demanding someone help. This brings out a concerned Stephanie, meaning we get ACTING!

She tells the security guards to arrest Reigns but they say no because they're not her personal police. If Stephanie doesn't step back, she's going to jail instead. That means a YES chant but Vince is back up. Vince tries to calm the cops down but winds up grabbing one by the shoulders, earning Vince an arresting. The cop reads him his rights as Stephanie goes on about how they can't do this. Reigns is just kind of there on the side as all this is happening.

During the break, Stephanie yelled at the cops a lot more.

Cole: "We're not sure what the charges are at the moment."

Neville vs. Kevin Owens

Neville kicks him down and almost immediately loads up the Red Arrow. That goes nowhere so Neville rolls him up for the pin at 24 seconds.

Owens destroys him post match.

Post break Neville is still being helped out. Owens runs back down and takes Neville's head off with a clothesline. He loads up the powerbomb on the floor but Ambrose runs out for the save.

Clips of John Cena co-hosting the Today Show.

Rock will be at Wrestlemania XXXII.

Becky Lynch talks about moving to New York City with no money and getting a chance to fight in Brooklyn tonight.

Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch

Before the match, Sasha says the real best town in the world is of course Boston. Naomi gets in a few jabs at Brooklyn as well but Tamina doesn't get to say anything. Well at least it's not all bad. Becky chases her to the floor to start before grabbing an armbar to slow things down. Sasha runs the corner for an armdrag but Becky starts going after the knee. A reverse figure four has Sasha in trouble but Tamina pulls her to the ropes.

Becky gets tired of the numbers game and baseball slides Tamina down, setting up a huge top rope dive to take all of them out. We come back from a break with Becky cranking on an armbar, only to get caught in the corner for the knees to the back. Sasha puts her foot in Becky's back and pulls on the arms but stops for UNITY! The fans think this is boring as Sasha stays on the back with a legdrop.

Back up and Sasha botches something that looked like a headscissors, only to send her into a 619 position. Becky avoids a charge though and sends Sasha into Naomi and Tamina. Sasha doesn't seem to mind as she tries the Bank Statement but can't flip Becky over. An exploder suplex into the corner gets two and the fans are wanting this to end. Cue Tamina to try to get in, allowing Naomi to kick Becky in the head, setting up the Bank Statement, only to have Becky reverse into the Disarm-Her. Sasha rolls through as well though and grabs the trunks for the pin at 15:39.

Rating: C+. Too many botches and WAY too much Tamina and Naomi here but the ending sequence worked. The other problem here was the lack of timing. The thing to remember is these two got their start in WWE wrestling long NXT style matches but then had to switch to short form stuff. Asking them to go back to the long stuff here isn't easy and the timing showed badly.

Vince has been booked and we have a goofy mugshot.

Renee Young is outside the police precinct and has little to report.

Kofi Kingston vs. Kalisto

This is the birthplace of the trombone so it's time for some songs! Actually no because Francesca (the trombone) reminds Woods that these fans didn't vote for New Day as Tag Team of the Year. Kofi goes on a rant about how New Day will come over and fight kids who don't listen to their children. This causes Big E. to roll around laughing so Woods shouts "HE'S ROFLING!"

Cole thinks this might be a high flying match. Just a hunch of course. Kofi grabs a wristlock to start but Kalisto flips him into the corner and springboards up into the corner for a wristdrag. A headscissors takes Kofi down again and there's the corkscrew cross body into the hurricanrana driver. No count though as Kalisto has to dropkick Kofi into Woods and Big E. Cara takes them both down, allowing Kalisto to grab a hurricanrana for the pin at 2:48.

Post match Woods challenges Sin Cara to face Big E. right now. Well after the commercial of course.

Sin Cara vs. Big E.

Joined in progress with Cara getting out of the abdominal stretch but taking a hard backdrop. A moonsault is caught in mid air, only to have Cara send him out to the floor. Big E. pulls him off the apron for a huge crash, meaning it's time for some sweet Francesca. The referee comes over and brings in the doctor to check on Cara but the match continues.

Big E. asks about the shoulder and runs Cara over to make sure it's ok. We hit another abdominal stretch for a bit before Big E. charges into the post. A cross body staggers E. and a standing moonsault gets two. Cara actually gets him into the corner for a rolling senton but Woods comes in for a distraction, allowing the Big Ending to put Cara away at 5:20.

Rating: D+. It's hard to grade a match where a guy seems to have been hurt so early on. Even at his best though, Cara is a far cry from Kalisto as the fire really isn't there in his singles matches. It really didn't work here though and I'm not sure how much of that is to blame on the bad arm.

Here's Miz for his year in review. We'll start on January 1 with his New

Year's Resolution but here's Ryback to interrupt. He's had his fill of MizTV but here's Goldust to interrupt as well. He doesn't think Miz is going to win a SAG Award or an Oscar or a Golden Globe but before he can go anywhere with that, here's Zack Ryder to a ROAR. Zack talks about 2016 being his year but Miz has something else to talk about.

Miz: "On January 2nd...." This brings out R-Truth to interrupt with a speech about trying to be voted Superstar of the Year. Miz points out that the Slammys were last week and Truth remembers winning one. Truth: "I need to get one of those daily planners." Miz tries to keep going but here's Heath Slater for yet another interruption.

Before he can say anything, Big Show comes out to knock Slater cold. Show takes out everyone but Truth is smart enough to lay down. He looks up though and eats a chokeslam, leaving only Ryback and Big Show standing. Show throws him out as well and mocks the fans for telling him to retire. Therefore, he's entering the Royal Rumble and wants to be #1.

Ryback vs. Big Show

In case you didn't see this enough earlier in the year. Ryback gets thrown around to start but hits a quick middle rope dropkick, only to have Show drop under the bottom rope. It's a countout to give Ryback the win at 2:56.

Dean Ambrose/Usos vs. League of Nations

No Del Rio here. Sheamus dedicates this match to Vince and headlocks Jimmy down to start. A double dropkick knocks Sheamus to the floor and Rusev joins him off a double atomic drop and a missile dropkick from Dean. The League takes a break on the floor until Dean follows them out and stomps Sheamus down. Back to Jimmy for chops in the corner but Rusev hiptosses him down and we've got a bad leg.

We come back from a break with Jimmy still in trouble and Rusev putting him in a half crab. They're doing a really good job of hiding Barrett's injury as he's on the apron but hasn't had any actual contact. It's off to Sheamus who quickly gives up a tag to Ambrose. Dean cleans house on Rusev to near silence and Jey dives onto Sheamus. The top rope elbow gets

two on Rusev but Barrett offers a distraction so Rusev can superkick Dean, sending us to another break.

Back again with Rusev missing a middle rope splash and Dean tagging in Jey. The running Umaga attack gets two with Rusev making the save. Jey superkicks Sheamus but Barrett offers a distraction (again, well done on hiding the injury) to delay the Superfly splash. The Brogue Kick finally puts Jey out at 16:57.

Rating: C-. This is a tough one to grade as they had to do a lot of tricks to make this work. Having Jimmy go out with the injury made this a regular tag since Barrett can't do anything physical due to his neck, but that made for a really awkward match as they were clearly trying to hide things. The length didn't help either but that's due to the brilliant idea of having a house show on the same night as Raw.

Post match Owens comes in through the crowd and sending Ambrose into the steps. A powerbomb puts Dean through the table and makes him convulse a lot.

We look back at Rock announcing that he's going to be at Wrestlemania in case you thought that changed.

Recap of the arrest.

Renee is still at the precinct with other media waiting on Vince to come out. Here are the McMahons, because you can totally be booked and let out on bail in two hours in New York City. They bail into a car and leave.

John Cena vs. Alberto Del Rio

Before the match, Cena comes out to rip on the League of Nations for not respecting the USA. He brings up the fact that Del Rio hasn't defended the title on Raw and that he won't defend it tonight. This brings out Del Rio to say he defends his title wherever he wants so Cena says do it here. They argue back and forth for a few more minutes until Del Rio agrees to make it a title match.

Back from a break and before the match, we get a tribute to Motorhead's Lemmy, who passed away earlier today.

US Title: John Cena vs. Alberto Del Rio

Del Rio is defending of course. After the big match intros, Alberto starts with right hands in the corner and sends him face first into the post. We hit a quick chinlock with a knee in Cena's back but Alberto misses a charge and crashes out to the floor. Back from a break with Cena dropkicking him out of the air and starting his finishing sequence. Del Rio breaks it up with a Backstabber and tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two.

Cena's tornado DDT gets the same and NOW the fans are getting into it. They get back up and the AA is countered, only to have the referee get bumped. The STF makes Del Rio tap but there's no referee, allowing the League to run out for a superkick to Cena. That's only good for two though as Cena cleans house but gets caught by the low superkick for two. There's the AA but the League comes in for the DQ at 14:05.

Rating: C+. You must be doing something right when you can get a Brooklyn crowd to cheer for Cena. I'm kind of glad they didn't change the title back here as it would have been too easy of a finish for the show but Del Rio keeping the title isn't doing it any favors. At least Cena is back though and that should help everyone.

Post match the League swarms until the Usos come out for a failed save. The League goes for chairs but Roman comes in for the real save. Reigns Superman punches Sheamus but here's Vince to make Reigns vs. Sheamus for the title next week. With Vince as guest referee of course.

Overall Rating: D+. This is good proof of what can happen when you're shorthanded and have to run a three hour show on your own. That being said, this could have been WAY worse and I really didn't see it as bad as a lot of people did. It's not a good show but given that it's the end of the year and so many of the people weren't there, this wasn't all that terrible. We had to sit through a lot of time wasting though and that's one of the worst things that I have to sit through week to week on Raw. Making it even worse made this feel like an even longer show than usual, but at least they had more of a reason this time.

Results

Neville b. Kevin Owens – Rollup

Sasha Banks b. Becky Lynch – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Kalisto b. Kofi Kingston – Hurricanrana

Big E. b. Sin Cara – Big Ending

Ryback b. Big Show via countout

League of Nations b. Dean Ambrose/Usos – Brogue Kick to Jey

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Monday Night Raw – December 21, 2015: I'll Accept This Show on WWE's Behalf

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 21, 2015

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the Slammy Awards! Tonight is all about picking the best of the

year, or at least whoever the fans pick as the best of the year. The big award is of course Superstar of the Year which is likely going to Roman Reigns again. The other major story though is fallout from last week's World Title change, which likely means Stephanie going after Reigns. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Reigns beating Sheamus and infuriating the McMahons last week.

Here's a very happy Stephanie to open things up. She thinks we're confused by her mood but it's very simple: McMahons are fighters and tonight is all about a celebration. Cue Roman Reigns who says everyone is in a good mood tonight. Stephanie is really not happy that he's here but Reigns says he doesn't sweat anyone, including the League of Nations, any of the McMahons or HHH himself.

That's too much for Stephanie as she starts shrieking at him to get out of her ring and does her usual whining about her family and her legacy and all that jazz. Reigns doesn't really care and turns his back on her, eventually leaving very slowly. This makes Stephanie demand that he come back here but Reigns just keeps going. Stephanie says that means consequences so she makes the Usos vs. the New day in a handicap match and Ambrose vs. Sheamus inside a cage. Reigns keeps going up the steps and posing with the title.

It's time for the first award with Dolph Ziggler (in a tuxedo) presenting Breakout Star of the Year. Here are the nominees:

Kevin Owens

Neville

Charlotte

Tyler Breeze

Braun Strowman

After a break, the winner is....Neville. Neville says he's excited about this and completely surprised until Kevin Owens comes out to interrupt.

Owens says that's his award and gets in a fight with Ziggler until.....cue the Wyatts for a completely unrelated match.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

Bray gets punched into the corner to start but a Harper distraction lets him come back with a big running clothesline. The Wyatts go after Kane so he heads outside after him, drawing a quick DQ at 54 seconds.

Kane gets beaten down post match until the Dudley Boyz and Tommy Dreamer come out for the save because this is still a feud.

Kane/Dudley Boyz/Tommy Dreamer vs. Wyatt Family

This is joined in progress with Dreamer in trouble and the announcers comparing Kane to Chewbacca. Dreamer quickly fights up and makes the tag to Kane for a kick to Harper's face. It's off to Bubba for some house cleaning but everything breaks down a few seconds later. There's What's Up to Harper, which JBL says is like a sofa. 3D to Rowan but Strowman takes Bubba and D-Von down with a double clothesline. The discus lariat puts D-Von out for the pin at 2:43 shown.

Here's the returning (for one night only I believe) Santino Marella to present the LOL Laugh Out Loudest Moment of the Year. The nominees are:

Edge and Christian vs. New Day in a trombone vs. kazoo battle

The Bushwhackers' Hall of Fame induction speech

Miz's "commercial" for erectile dysfunction

The Authority dances with New Day

R-Truth thinks he's in the Money in the Bank ladder match

After a break, the winner is R-Truth. Well that's one out of two at least. Santino tries to accept the award for himself but Truth comes out and starts a light brawl for the trophy.

We get a quick visit from Old Saint Mick (with elf Noelle). He wishes us all Happy Holidays and says he's very sorry for giving Xavier Woods that

trombone last year.

Here's Paul Heyman to present the OMG Moment of the Year Award. After saying that Brock Lesnar should win all the awards save for LOL and Diva of the Year, here are the nominees:

Seth Rollins cashes in Money in the Bank at Wrestlemania

Brock Lesnar the night after Wrestlemania

Kalisto's Salida Del Sol through the ladder at Tables Ladders and Chairs

Wyatt Family kidnaps Undertaker at Hell in a Cell

Sheamus cashes in Money in the Bank at Survivor Series

After a break, Kalisto wins. Really? It was good but biggest shock of the year? Not really. Kalisto is here in a suit and without much to say as an acceptance speech.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Ziggler goes right at him to start and tries the sleeper so Owens drops back with all his weight for the break. A big elbow sends Ziggler to the floor and Owens shouts that HE is the breakout star. Well to be fair he's right. We hit the chinlock on Dolph and we actually show the brawl from earlier tonight which set this up. Well at least it's during a hold but dude, it was less than an hour ago.

Back up and Ziggler grabs a rollup for two, only to have his head taken off by a clothesline. After another chinlock, Dolph grabs the running DDT and we take a break. We come back with Owens getting two off a superplex but eating a superkick to put him outside. A quick Fameasser gets two for Dolph (in case you thought Owens was doing it) but Owens comes right back with the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 11:08.

Rating: C. Well at least Owens won. Unfortunately we're still stuck in the same circle of chasing our own tail with the midcard because they had something interesting with Owens and then reverted him back to the same character just a week later. I'm sure it just wasn't getting over because

of some social media score determining that people didn't care enough or whatever, because that's what seems to run WWE these days.

Here's Stephanie (of course) to present Superstar of the Year with every member of the roster as a nominee. We get a quick video of everyone on the roster before the nominees are listed as:

Roman Reigns

Sheamus

John Cena

Kevin Owens

Dean Ambrose

Bray Wyatt

New Day (all three members)

Undertaker

Kane

Sting

Brock Lesnar

Seth Rollins

Post break the winner is.....Seth Rollins, who actually limps out on crutches. The fans thank him but he says this was obvious the whole time. Seth does his usual recap of his year and says that his success went away just as quickly as it came. That title is coming back to him in the new year because he will retake what he never lost.

John Cena returns next week to face Alberto Del Rio.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Jack Swagger

I KNEW IT WOULD BE SWAGGER!!! As soon as I saw Del Rio in the ring I knew

it would be Swagger. It had to be Swagger because he's Del Rio's personal jobber and that's the only idea WWE has for Swagger. Non-title of course. Del Rio kicks him to the floor and hits a quick baseball slide as we take a break. Back with Del Rio getting two off a DDT but Jack ducks the low superkick and grabs a quick belly to belly. The Vader Bomb gets two and Jack loads up a superplex, only to slip and get caught with the top rope double stomp for the pin at 7:07. Not enough seen to rate but this was the same stuff we've seen from them every time.

The League beats Jack down post match.

Here's Mark Henry to present the new Hero in All of Us Award, which seems to be for best charity work. The nominees are:

Natalya

Roman Reigns

Big Show

Titus O'Neil

John Cena

After a break, the winner is John Cena. He's not here tonight but Henry says that Cena and all the other nominees do this out of the goodness of their hearts rather than for awards. Henry accepts the award on Cena's behalf.

There were some other awards given out before the show went on the air, including:

Rivalry of the Year – Lesnar vs. Undertaker

WWE Network Original Show of the Year – Steve Austin Show

Double Cross of the Year – Damien Mizdow

Extreme Moment of the Year – Reigns attacks HHH

Here's Santa Claus (as played by Bo Dallas) to introduce the Surprise

Return of the Year. He's the REAL Santa and not the fat old man at the mall. Here are the nominees:

Dudley Boyz

Chris Jericho

Alberto Del Rio

Kane

Sting

Post break the winner is Sting, who also isn't here tonight either.

New Day vs. Usos

Non-title handicap match. Before the match, New Day blames the fans for spoiling the Tag Team of the Year award. Therefore, they're going to SPOIL STAR WARS! Kofi cuts Big E. off because he hasn't seen it yet. Woods: "YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT YET?????" Dancing solves the problem and we're ready to go.

Jimmy and Kofi get things going with the twins starting in on the arm. Kofi works on Jey's arm as well, only to get kicked into the corner. Big E. and Xavier break up the Rikishi attack and all three have to move before the Usos can dive on them. Back with Jey being dragged into the corner for the Unicorn Stampede with Woods dropping to the floor for some musical accompaniment.

Big E. slaps on the abdominal stretch for a bit and gets two off the Warrior splash. Jey fights up and makes the hot tag to Jimmy for some good house cleaning. The Samoan drop gets two on Woods and New Day heads outside, only to have Big E. break up the double dive. Not that it matters as Jimmy rolls Woods up for the pin at 10:59.

Rating: C-. For every few steps this company takes forward, we get something like this. You make this a handicap match so the Usos can lose, but oh no because you need to keep them looking strong for later so let's put them over the champions here because we have no other way to actually

get them over. Like giving them an award or something. This is the kind of stuff that drives me the craziest and it just keeps happening over and over. Also there was no mention of the Stephanie/Reigns story from earlier.

Here's R-Truth to present Diva of the Year. The nominees are:

Nikki Bella

Naomi

Paige

Sasha Banks

Charlotte

Back with....Paige winning. Well that's quite the surprise. Oh wait it's actually a Steve Harvey joke because Truth read it wrong. Therefore, Nikki Bella wins. See, in WWE, just saying something exists means that it's funny. Nikki comes out and has Paige stand there next to her as she dedicates this to every woman in the company. So she's a face again.

Rusev vs. Neville

The League is here and Miz is on commentary. Rusev stomps him down in the corner to start and we hit an early chinlock as Miz says Neville could go even further with the right management. Neville fights up and kicks Rusev to the post, only to be sent into the post. A belly to belly sends Neville crashing down and we take a break.

Back with Neville moonsaulting to the floor as JBL gets in his weekly "THERE'S YOUR SPORTSCENTER HIGHLIGHT" line. Neville loads up the Red Arrow with Rusev across the ring. That goes as well as you would think as he dives into the jumping superkick, setting up the Accolade to give Rusev the win at 7:38.

Rating: D+. So they'll protect the Usos but not Neville, who won an award earlier tonight on the show? Another nothing match here as Neville is still a jobber but at least Rusev got a win for a change. He's still a

mess after Lana came back so it's cool to see him acting like his old self for at least one night.

The League beats Neville down as well.

Miz is presenting the THIS IS AWESOME Award. After complaining about not being nominated, he introduces the nominees as:

Brock Lesnar destroying J and J's car

Randy Orton's RKO to Rollins at Wrestlemania

Stephanie McMahon starting the Divas Revolution

The Shield reuniting to beat down Orton

Rock and Ronda Rousey at Wrestlemania

After we come back, Stephanie FINALLY gets her award as Rock and Ronda Rousey wins. Miz accepts on Rock's behalf and plugs Santa's Little Helper.

Becky Lynch vs. Brie Bella

Rematch from Smackdown because it's a meaningless show. Brie takes over to start and puts on a quickly broken chinlock, only to knee Becky down. The YES Kicks get two and we hit a seated abdominal stretch. Well stretch is a relative term as Brie isn't pulling back or anything but she's trying. We hit another armbar as this has been all Brie so far. Becky makes her comeback with clotheslines but THIS IS A BRIE BELLA MATCH so she cuts her down with a dropkick, only to get rolled up into the Disarm-Her for the tap at 5:14.

Rating: D+. As I think we've learned by now, Brie really isn't that good. They had an idea here with the arm but Brie really couldn't carry this to anything beyond the run of the mill Divas match. She still has no idea if she's a face or a heel and it makes for some really awkward matches.

Ric Flair introduces the nominees for Match of the Year:

John Cena vs. Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins – Royal Rumble

Sting vs. HHH – Wrestlemania

John Cena vs. Kevin Owens – Elimination Chamber

Roman Reigns vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens vs. Alberto Del Rio – Raw
– October 26

Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar – Hell in a Cell

The final award of the night goes to Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar and for the fourth time tonight, the big name isn't here to accept. Heyman comes out instead and says Brock doesn't come out and accept awards. Brock wants a fight but no one in the back is man enough to face Brock Lesnar. One phenom this year stood up and took a beating but there is only one conqueror.

The cage is lowered.

In the back, the League attacks the Usos with Rusev and Del Rio putting on their submissions. Both of them get Brogue Kicks as well.

Ambrose defends tomorrow night against Kevin Owens and Dolph Ziggler. Why should Ziggler get a shot when Owens pinned him earlier tonight?

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title. Sheamus Brogue Kicks Dean before he can get inside and since referees have no authority in WWE, the match starts anyway. We get the ten forearms to the chest as the fans chant SHEAMUS IS BORING. Sheamus actually acknowledges them and waves the chants on, only to get backdropped into the cage wall. Dean goes for the climb but Sheamus is right up after him for White Noise off the top for two.

Now it's Sheamus going up but getting crotched down, only to be met by the League as he tries to escape. That's fine with Dean as he dives down onto Sheamus with the elbow for a VERY close two. Del Rio slams the door on Dean's head though, drawing out Reigns to take out the League with a chair. Thanks for coming BEFORE they cost your buddy the match Roman.

The League runs off and Sheamus climbs up, only to have Reigns waiting on

him with a chair. Roman throws it to Dean and Sheamus is caught. Dirty Deeds onto the chair doesn't even get a cover as Dean climbs, allowing Sheamus to catch him on top. They slug it out on top of the cage and slowly come down with Dean getting headbutted off for the win at 10:45.

Rating: C. This was fine with Ambrose and Reigns surviving one more time. They've done a great job of setting those two up as unbreakable brothers, meaning that the eventual split is going to be even better. Sheamus losing here is fine enough because no one buys him as a real threat to win the title again and his rematch is likely coming on the first Raw of the year instead of at the Rumble or on any other big stage.

Tom Phillips asks Stephanie for her reaction so she beats him down with slaps. Tom sells them like death to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. I'm a big sucker for the Slammy Awards but this didn't do it for me. The big stars not being there to accept really crippled things and most of the award picks were fine, meaning there wasn't much to get annoyed about. Cena being back next week will help and there are places they can go from here, but the show as a whole was really nothing great. That puts it WAY ahead of recent weeks though so it's definitely not horrible, but still nothing I'm going to remember by the new year.

Results

Kane b. Bray Wyatt via DQ when the Wyatt Family interfered

Wyatt Family b. Tommy Dreamer/Dudley Boyz/Kane – Discus lariat to D-Von

Kevin Owens b. Dolph Ziggler – Pop Up Powerbomb

Alberto Del Rio b. Jack Swagger – Top rope double stomp

Usos b. New Day – Rollup to Woods

Rusev b. Neville – Accolade

Becky Lynch b. Brie Bella – Disarm-Her

Dean Ambrose b. Sheamus – Ambrose escaped the cage

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Monday Night Raw – December 14, 2015: They Really Just Did That!

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 14, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Now this could be a very interesting show. Last night Roman Reigns finally showed the fire he's been needing for years and destroyed the League of Nations as well as HHH. This starts the road to the Royal Rumble but there is almost no way to predict how a Philadelphia crowd is going to react. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last night's main event and Reigns' post match attacks.

Here's a ticked off Stephanie McMahon to open things. She talks about how badly businesswomen are perceived. Take away her money and her education and she's just like you. Last night she had to explain to her daughters

why their daddy was beaten up and spitting blood in the hospital last night. It's obvious the fans want her to be cold hearted and vindictive so that's what they're going to get.

This brings out Roman, who says it's his daughter's birthday and he can't wait to see her when he gets home. Stephanie asks how Reigns can say that when her husband is so hurt. Reigns says he's got stuff to do so fire him or move on. The boss yells about how Reigns failed again last night as he always does because he's a disgrace and a failure. Roman disagrees because it's really Stephanie and HHH that are the disgraces. Make that the entire McMahon Family, so Stephanie slaps him about ten times. She won't fire him because her husband asked him not to. Vince might though, because he's on the way tonight.

Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler

Non-title and I believe the fourth straight show where Ziggler has been in the match after the opening segment. Dean wristlocks him down to start and gets two off a slam. We hit a Regal Stretch of all things on Ziggler before Dean sends him to the floor for a suicide dive. This has been one sided so far. Back in and we hit a pinfall reversal sequence until Dirty Deeds doesn't work to send us to a stalemate as we take a break.

Back with Ziggler taking over by dropkicking Ambrose out of the air, followed by the Fameasser for two. Dean grabs a belly to back suplex into a faceplant for two of his own and now the fans think this is awesome. Oh come on you far too quickly impressed people. It's not that great. Dean misses a charge into the corner and eats the superkick, only to hit the rebound lariat before going down. This brings in Kevin Owens to throw Ziggler outside for the DQ at 12:21.

Rating: C+. Way too happy fans aside, this was a smart way to go for the first match on a show in Philadelphia. There's a group of wrestlers that they're going to cheer no matter what and these two are near the top. The match was good enough despite being little more than a bunch of spots going back and forth.

Owens powerbombs Dean twice and holds up the title. Ziggler tries to come in but gets kicked in the knee, followed by a powerbomb onto Dean as

Owens stands over both of them.

We look at Stephanie slapping Reigns again. They're making it very difficult for me to keep calm tonight.

Owens says he doesn't have to justify himself to anyone because that was just the beginning. He isn't going to stop until he drives Dean into an institution and takes back HIS Intercontinental Title.

The ECW guys are getting ready for their extreme rules match against the Wyatts. If this city has taught Bubba one thing it's that you have to keep getting back up.

Stephanie is waiting on Vince.

R-Truth vs. Bo Dallas

0...k? Truth shoulders him down and takes a victory lap early on. As the match is going on, we cut to the back where Vince arrives. It has been WAY too long since something has happened during a match on this show. We cut back to the ring where Dallas and Truth look terrified. Truth snapmares him down and here's Vince while the match is still going on. Everything stops and Vince gets in the ring to tell both guys to get out of his ring, drawing one of the pops of the night. The match ended at 3:27 but no rating of course.

Vince talks about Reigns sweating in the back because he might get fired. That's enough for now though as he goes and sits at ringside, saying Roman is going to sweat a bit more. After a break, Vince calls Reigns down to the ring to take his medicine. Reigns comes out (down the ramp for a change) and Vince demands an apology for what Roman did to HHH last night. Roman smirks a bit so Vince threatens to beat him up right now. There goes the jacket but here's Sheamus to interrupt before it goes any further.

Sheamus wants to be the one that beats an apology out of Reigns but the fans cut him off with the YOU LOOK STUPID chant. On behalf of Vince's Irish coat of arms, Sheamus wants to challenge Reigns for tonight. Sheamus knows he can beat Reigns at any time, so let's make it a title

match. Vince asks the fans if they're interested but there's no chance that's happening. Reigns wants to know why not and thinks it's because the old man's grapefruits have shriveled to prunes. That's too far for Vince so it's on for tonight. However, if Reigns doesn't become champion, he's fired. Vince kicks Reigns low and leaves.

Alberto Del Rio/Rusev vs. Ryback/Jack Swagger

Lana is actually at ringside during a League match for a change. Ryback starts fast with the delayed vertical suplex for two on Rusev. It's off to Del Rio for some kicks in the corner and Ryback stands perfectly still as Alberto runs across the ring for the enziguri. Some stomping sets up a chinlock from Alberto as the fans are really not interested here. It's hard to bore a Philadelphia crowd but they've managed to pull it off.

The fans try a WE THE PEOPLE chant and Ryback responds with a suplex to Rusev, setting up the hot tag to Swagger. Jack makes the comeback with his usual and gets Rusev in the Patriot Lock, only to get caught in a Backstabber. Ryback gets thrown out and back to back superkicks give Rusev the pin on Swagger at 6:35.

Rating: D+. Just a quick match here (thank goodness) and the League continues to be a lame group that is effective yet boring. At least Swagger took the fall here instead of Ryback, who can't take too many more falls before he loses any credibility he might have built up over the summer. Well any more of it that is as most of it is already gone.

The Rosebush talks about the Charlotte/Becky Lynch situation and Tommy Dreamer being offended by Rose saying he spray tanned. Apparently Dreamer's skin is as thin as his hair.

Tyler Breeze vs. Neville

I'm off to watch one of their great NXT showdowns instead of this likely nothing match. Before we start, here's Miz to direct the match and call for the bell. Neville works on a headlock to start as Miz tells him to crank on the head. We hit a chinlock instead until Breeze comes back with some stomps as we keep cutting to Miz. Tyler puts on his own front facelock as Miz tries to lead some Neville chants. Neville fights up

again and nails a great looking (and sounding) superkick, setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 4:55.

Rating: C-. This wasn't bad but is clearly part of a longer story. Miz and Neville are an intriguing pair as they both need something to do so why not try something new? Speaking of something new, how about WE STOP JOBBING BREEZE??? Did they really just need a new midcard jobber and that's the only reason they called him up? That's the best they can do for someone that worked that hard in NXT? What a shame indeed.

Neville is getting annoyed at Miz after a break but Miz suggests that Neville could be a superhero in the next Star Wars movie. However, he needs Neville to teach him his accent so he can be the next James Bond. Neville still isn't interested and walks off.

The Wyatts promise to bury the ECW guys.

Wyatt Family vs. Tommy Dreamer/Rhyno/Dudley Boyz

Extreme rules. The Wyatts surround the ECW guys to start as JBL acts like ECW was the greatest thing of all time. Bubba and Dreamer lead the house cleaning and it's time for some weapons. Back in and the Dudleys give Rowan What's Up but Harper comes in for a save with the superkick. Dreamer hits him with a few hard objects and loads up a superplex, only to have Strowman pull him to the floor. Bubba completes the superplex but Rowan makes it a Tower of Doom sending Harper down onto the chair as we take a break.

Back with the Wyatts in control until Rhyno cleans house. Dreamer gets to do the baseball slide into the dropkick in the Tree of Woe on Harper and Bray is knocked into the crowd. Strowman gets thrown over the announcers' table and Bubba follows Bray into the crowd. Harper is on the stage with Dreamer but his powerbomb is countered into a Death Valley Driver through a pair of conveniently placed tables. Strowman helps Bray against Bubba until Dreamer makes the save with a kendo stick. That's fine with Strowman who powerslams Dreamer through part of the barricade.

Bubba beats Bray up near the announcers' table and throws the cover on him. Back in the ring (finally) and the Dudleys beat up Harper until Luke

fighters them off with relative ease and loads up a table. Bubba runs back in for 3D but Bray makes the save and gives D-Von Sister Abigail on the floor. Rowan returns with a spinwheel kick to Bubba but Rhyno suplexes him down. The Gore hits knee though and Sister Abigail plants Rhyno. Rowan loads up a table and a top rope splash sends Rhyno through the wood for the pin at 15:33.

Rating: B. This was WAY more fun than it had any right to be and thank goodness the right team won. They had me believing that the ECW guys were going to win here and riots would have been justified. Instead this was much more of a treat for the live crowd and a pretty fun match for the most part, especially seeing Tommy Dreamer in pain. Good stuff and a really fun surprise.

We recap the Reigns story for the night.

Here's New Day for their latest celebration. Big E. and Kofi are limping after last night and Woods says they're not in a mood to party for once. We see some stills of the bigger crashes and the fans cut Kofi off with a NEW DAY ROCKS chant. Kofi is so messed up that he couldn't even do the full skip clap on the way to the ring. They invite the Usos to the ring and Woods gets right to the point by saying the Usos have earned New Day's respect.

A truce is offered but the twins aren't buying it. Instead Big E. asks the Lucha Dragons to come out here as well. Kofi praises Sin and says the Dragons are his son's favorite tag team. Kalisto calls that a really nice speech but asks about Woods throwing his trombone at him for a save. Xavier can't change the past but last night these three teams took the tag division to a new level and it was for the fans.

Again the handshake is offered and this time they're actually accepted. The four of them leave and Woods insists that they were being sincere, but tonight it's ALL ABOUT THE NEW DAY! It's time to dance so the Usos and Dragons come out to beat them up. That's really heelish of them (though it won't be considered as such) after they lost last night in a No DQ match and New Day really didn't do anything bad tonight.

Brie Bella/Alicia Fox vs. Becky Lynch/Charlotte

Team BAD is in the front row and Ric Flair is with his daughter. Brie avoids a Charlotte charge in the corner to start and sends the champ head first into the buckle. We hit a very early chinlock followed by the YES Kicks for two. Charlotte gets over for the tag to Becky and everything breaks down. With the referee distracted, Ric trips Alicia and Becky grabs the Disarm-Her for the submission at 4:26.

Rating: D. I have no idea who I'm supposed to cheer and who I'm supposed to boo. So Becky knew that Charlotte cheated to retain last night but is still friends with her after Charlotte blew her off last night. Then Charlotte's dad cheats instead of Charlotte to pin Alicia, who was doing the Daniel Bryan kicks for a guaranteed face reaction despite being a heel (I think?) at the moment. This division MAKES NO SENSE. Oh and did Team BAD do anything to warrant being at ringside?

The Prime Time Players still merchandise for Christmas.

We look back at last night's main event.

Vince talks to the League of Nations, again minus Barrett.

WWE World Title: Sheamus vs. Roman Reigns

Sheamus is defending, Roman is fired if he doesn't win the title and Vince is at ringside. Reigns takes him right to the corner for the clotheslines and the fans are behind him for a change. A quick Regal Roll sends Reigns outside and Sheamus slams him onto the table as we take a break. Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and suplexing Sheamus for a breather.

Sheamus sends him to the apron but Reigns snaps the throat across the top and hits the apron boot. A Samoan drop is broken up so Roman just takes him to the middle rope for a bigger drop. The Irish Curse gets two so Reigns lifts Sheamus up for two off a powerbomb. Sheamus slams him down in turn and puts on the Cloverleaf (Not the Texas Cloverleaf but rather the old Edgecator. That's a bad name.), sending Roman over to the ropes.

The fans are still cheering for Roman and a Superman punch knocks Sheamus silly. Vince pulls the referee out at two though and Sheamus grabs White

Noise for two. Dang they're getting close on these kickouts. Vince grabs the referee and tells him something. Sheamus pushes Reigns to the floor and here comes the League with Rusev kicking (a bloody) Reigns in the head.

Back in and Sheamus ducks the Brogue and hits another Superman punch to the champ and one to knock Vince silly....only to eat a Brogue Kick for a VERY near fall. This is AWESOME drama and the best stuff they've had since Rollins vs. Ziggler at last year's Survivor Series. Sheamus loads up another Brogue and walks into a spear to give Reigns the title at 16:55!

Rating: B. The wrestling is totally inconsequential here as they NAILED the drama and the story here. This was exactly what needed to happen for a long time now and Reigns is totally over with the fans, at least at the moment. I'm actually in shock here and the moment was exactly what it needed to be. Well done WWE, which I wouldn't have believed I'd be saying a week ago.

The announcers put this over as a huge moment as Roman celebrates, including kicking Vince out to the floor. I do love the fact that the solution for Reigns was to make the show as bad as they possibly could so the fans would cheer him by default. It sounds bad but dang if it didn't work. The show actually ends with Reigns as champion and no shenanigans.

Overall Rating: B+. This show had the most important thing a show can have and that is uncertainty. I didn't know what was going to happen in the main event (or the extreme rules match for that matter) and that's where they have you. The idea behind wrestling (most of the time at least) is that you shouldn't be able to know what's coming but you want to see what's coming. That's how I felt for the main event. I really didn't know what was happening and I wanted to find out.

The energy was way up for this show and it made for the best week in months. It's no classic or anything, but it addressed one of the biggest issues they've had a long time: going through the motions with almost nothing interesting happening. There's a long way to go until we get to the Rumble but this was a big step in the right direction.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Kevin Owens interfered

R-Truth vs. Bo Dallas went to a no contest when Vince McMahon stopped the match

Alberto Del Rio/Rusev b. Jack Swagger/Ryback – Superkick to Swagger

Neville b. Tyler Breeze – Red Arrow

Wyatt Family b. Dudley Boyz/Rhyno/Tommy Dreamer – Top rope splash through a table to Rhyno

Becky Lynch/Charlotte b. Alicia Fox/Brie Bella – Disarm-Her to Fox

Roman Reigns b. Sheamus – Spear

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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