

Back From Raw

A few notes. 1. Ryback beat Dolph Ziggler and Titus O'Neil beat Kofi Kingston in the dark matches.

2. Paul Heyman is AMAZING and owned the crowd.

3. The place went nuts for Paige.

4. "No Zeb. I'm a Paul Heyman guy" was the non-Bryan moment of the night. I'm not sure what they're going to do though as he's still a heel. It's a perfect fit though and most importantly there's no Jack Swagger.

5. There were Adam Rose and Bo Dallas vignettes. I didn't see a "coming soon" graphic for Dallas though. He seems like a motivational speaker or something. The fans were WAY into Rose.

6. Rusev was impressive and Lana is hot in person.

7. The roof went off when Shield came out.

8. I'm not sure if you could hear it but the fans were singing JOHN CENA SUCKS to the trumpet part (as in the duh duh nuh nuh. The part before Your time is up, my time is now) of his song throughout the night.

9. I had a blast.

10. Oh and NO STING SO SHUT UP ABOUT HIM ALREADY!

11. Oh and I met Bob Backlund. Twice.

Monday Night Raw – April 7, 2014: The Fun One

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 7, 2014

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the night after one of the best show in years and the big question is where do they go from here? For the first time ever, Undertaker is coming off a loss at Wrestlemania in what very well may be his last match. Other than that we've got a new WWE World Heavyweight Champion in the form of a goat man. Tonight is usually one of the most fun shows of the year. Let's get to it.

I'll be in the arena again tonight so use this thread to talk about all the awesome stuff that takes place.

Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 31, 2014

Last night's show was something very special and a great example of how to do a go home show. It wasn't supposed to be about the wrestling and that was to be expected. Let's get to it.

First up was Undertaker showing down with Brock Lesnar and Brock finally getting in some offense on Undertaker. The main complaint that I saw people making was that it took too long to get to the brawling last night, to which all I can say is wrestling fans are impatient nowadays. Heaven forbid you have to wait maybe ninety seconds to see the guys

fight. This is one of those moments that was built up for a few weeks and did what it was supposed to do. Every single time Brock has been leading up to a match he's looked weak in advance, then he goes into Beast Mode in the actual match. Why does this continue to fool people?

Del Rio vs. Big E. was actually a solid match but I'm getting annoyed at the booking. Alberto has now beaten Big E. twice this month but there has been no significant mention of a title match coming up. Big E. never defends the thing anyway and while he beats up everyone except for Del Rio (nothing wrong with having a guy you can't beat), Alberto seems to have no interest in the title. You don't have to have him win it (though that would be fine), but at least have him look like he wants it. In other words, make a title look valuable and it will become valuable.

The Wyatts had another awesome promo. The thing that makes them work is how different they look when they're talking. Notice that Bray is constantly moving around, changing the pitch of his voice, moving closer to the camera, and switching from serious to comedic. It's unique and that makes people pay attention to him. The fact that he's totally into his character and is so out there that it makes people want to see more makes it even better.

The Total Divas had a recap and a Summer vs. Natalya match. The match was bad but Summer looks great in her outfits so I can't complain at all.

This brought us to the highlight of the night as the Authority came out to announce the end of the YES Movement. While the HHH and Stephanie bits mocking the pose were a bit annoying, the rest was perfect. HHH basically brought up every common insult against him and laughed them off, because showing an AWESOME video, narrated by Stephanie in a brilliant touch, listing off all of the flavors of the month that he's destroyed over the

years.

This is what HHH has been needing to do for a long time now. Don't talk about his power or his authority, but talk about how he's one of the best in ring performer of all time (which he is). People often forget how good he is and that's a shame coming into what's going to be an awesome match. Yeah HHH can get annoying on camera, but the guy can flat out go in the ring and will do exactly that on Sunday. The video was exactly what he needed to do and it worked like a charm. The fact that Stephanie looked great last night helped too.

Orton and Batista came out as well but they didn't add too much. Batista pointing out that HHH has never beaten him continues to be all he needs to say, but HHH wanting Orton to be the Viper again is a very questionable move. It doesn't make sense as he's basically given up on Randy being the face of the company (thank goodness), but he still wants Orton at his peak? That's not very logical for a heel.

The two tag matches didn't do anything for me. The eight man tag was fine but it just didn't interest me at all. Los Matadores are nothing interesting and the lack of El Torito made it even worse.

Bray Wyatt had a long squash over R-Truth, but the important part was after the match. John Cena wore Wyatt gear and snuck up on them in his first mind game of the feud. The interesting thing here was the pop from the crowd. They went NUTS for Cena in one of the loudest pops I can remember him getting in months. This brings us back to Wrestling 101.

John Cena vs. Bray Wyatt boils down to a very simple concept: good vs. evil. John Cena is the bright and colorful hero and Bray Wyatt is the

dark and sinister monster. At the end of the day, people want to see John Cena, their hero even though they get tired of him once in awhile, rise up and kill the monster hiding in the fans' closet. Cena has been afraid but is standing up to face his fears and using his mind and strength to fight for what he believes in.

That's wrestling at its core: seeing larger than life characters doing things that fans wish they could do. It worked for Hogan standing up for America and it worked for Austin beating up his boss. Cena showing weakness and then rising above it (not necessarily winning mind you) is something interesting and the reaction from the crowd the last few weeks proves it.

The lumberjill match was nothing special. At the end of the day I wish they went with just a one on one match at Wrestlemania instead of some 14 Diva mess. There are girls out there capable of putting on an entertaining match, but for some reason they're throwing Vickie, who apparently we're now supposed to sympathize with, into the mix. I have a bad feeling AJ either wins on Sunday, or somehow Vickie walks out as champion. Neither interests me at all unless Paige debuts the next night on Raw.

Then we got one heck of a Cena promo. The guy can just turn on the goods whenever he needs to and that's what we got last night. Telling people to run down to Wrestlemania or watch on the WWE Network was both a nice plug for the show (I miss those things) as well as a great way to make the event feel like it needed to be seen. You don't get those anymore and Cena is the kind of guy who demands attention when he's in serious mode. It just works and it did last night.

Kane vs. Reigns wasn't the point of the Shield segment. The important

part was Roman winning 80% of the fans' votes. If those numbers are legit, the fans are buying into him as the star of the team and that's exactly what WWE wants. The down side of it though was the Outlaws appearing. Just look at them walking down the ramp and then look at Shield. It just doesn't work for me and I'm afraid Shield is going to have to tone things way down so the Outlaws can keep up with them. I still don't get how anyone but the Outlaws benefit from this.

Piper's Pit and the big brawl existed and that's about all there is to say about it. Big Show is being pushed really hard as the winner of the battle royal, which gives me hope for a swerve. Him winning just isn't interesting and he doesn't need it. Sheamus is needing a big win and this would be perfect for him. Oh and Piper losing his mind over the people interrupting him was hilarious.

The main event was exactly what it should have been. I think WWE knew the fans would get restless if they had a regular match so they went with the wild brawl instead. Again this was about the moment rather than the match and that's fine. You couldn't have the go home show without Bryan making one last run in and that's exactly what we got. It was a white hot way to end the show and take us into Wrestlemania on Sunday.

Overall last night was the exactly right formula for a go home show. The wrestling wasn't great but it was just good enough to get us through to the important stuff. Every match got time and I'm more fired up to see the show than I was before. Excellent stuff last night with HHH and Cena stealing yet another show.

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

Monday Night Raw – March 31, 2014: I'm Ready For Wrestlemania

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 31, 2014

Location: Verizon Center, Washington D.C.

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

It's the final Raw before Wrestlemania so I wouldn't expect the most exciting shot tonight. Everything is set up for Sunday and all there is left to do is give us the hard sell. There's a chance to have something else change before we get there but I can't imagine it would be anything big. Let's get to it.

Here's Undertaker to open the show. As he makes his entrance to the ring, we see a clip from the end of last week's show. He looks at the sign and says twenty one men have stood up and twenty one men have been sat down. At the showcase of the immortals, he will go further than anyone else and that is why the Streak stays alive. Brock is probably thinking how he's going to break the Streak, but what he should be thinking is what happens when Undertaker takes him out into the deep water.

What is Brock going to do when his feet can't hit the bottom? Will he try and take Undertaker down with him, or will he try to swim back to shore?

Of course there are some people that think the Streak will end one day. However, there are three things that can't be beaten: Death, taxes, and the Streak. He goes to say the catchphrase but here are Lesnar and Heyman to interrupt.

Paul says this isn't a match Brock has to win, but rather a match Undertaker can't lose. All it takes is one F5 and then three seconds later it's all over. This Sunday is the biggest Wrestlemania moment since Hulk Hogan defeated Andre the Giant, and that's a spoiler. Lesnar turns to leave but looks back and walks down to the ring. Undertaker gets ready to go so Brock stops to point at the sign. He circles the ring and gets in after a Heyman distraction. Undertaker gets in some shots but gets caught in the F5, laying Undertaker out for the first time in the feud.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Big E.

Battle royal hype time. Del Rio gets run over for an early two and a fall away slam gets the same. Big E. avoids a charge into the post and hurts his shoulder, allowing Del Rio to crush Big E.'s hand into the steps. Back from a break with Big E. suplexing Del Rio down and trying to get some feeling back into his shoulder.

Alberto grabs the armbreaker over the ropes but Big E. catches him coming off the top to take over. A belly to belly looks to set up the Big Ending but Del Rio escapes into the Backstabber for two. The armbreaker is countered into a powerslam for two but now the armbreaker goes on. Big E. tries to power out but gets put in the full hold.

He rolls up again and powers Del Rio up into a modified powerbomb for two as Del Rio grabs the rope. Big E. misses another charge and gets hung up in the ropes, allowing Alberto to go up for a HUGE double stomp to the chest, drawing a big gasp from the crowd. The superkick is good for the pin at 10:29 as Del Rio continues to be Big E.'s Kryptonite.

Rating: C+. This was by far the best match these two have ever had and a

lot of it is because they had the time to work on things. That being said, can we please have them fight for the title now? Del Rio has pinned Big E. clean at least twice in a row now, but there's never any mention of him wanting the title. Either have him go after the belt or stop having them fight.

We look back at the Wyatts knocking out Cena and putting him in the mask last week.

Bray says the world craves change. However they turn a blind eye to the landfills because you can't just whisper in people's ears anymore and expect them to listen. He gets right up in the camera and asks if he has their attention now. She told him that he would be the one to change diamonds into dust and change the world. They're going to cry for Cena but in time they'll forget him when Cena is left with nothing. Bray says he's the monster and sings about having the whole world in his hands.

We get a Total Divas recap, which I can't believe has taken this long.

Natalya vs. Summer Rae

This is a result of a fight on Total Divas. Vickie is on commentary and tells us that the Divas match on Sunday is going to be one fall with all fourteen girls in there at the same time. They're not even trying to keep things calm. Natalya takes Summer down and the dancing girl screams a lot. She comes back with a bad looking clothesline and puts on a chinlock for a few moments.

Nattie fights back with a low dropkick and snap suplex. Summer slaps her in the face so Natalya returns the favor. Rae charges at her but gets taken down, only to kick out of the Sharpshooter. She comes back with a quick kick to the head and gets the pin on Natalya out of nowhere at 2:23.

Here's the Authority for the end of the YES Movement. Stephanie says tonight is the chance for everyone to say goodbye before HHH destroys Daniel Bryan on Sunday. HHH talks about how people are looking at Bryan as the flavor of the month. He and Stephanie demonstrate Fandangoing before saying the fans are the reason nothing came from that. Stephanie starts a YES chant and says anyone can get that going.

Daniel Bryan won't be here tonight because it's best for business. HHH says people don't understand business, such as when they say he has power because he married well. While it's true he married spectacularly, the reason he has what he has is because of his dominance in the ring. It didn't matter what guy you jumped on as the savior, because HHH was going to take them down.

This takes us to a video, narrated by Stephanie, of various people he's taken down over the years, such as Booker T, Scott Steiner, RVD, Jeff Hardy, Goldberg, Mick Foley, Chris Jericho and Kurt Angle. All of them rose up for a bit but now all that's left is the Game. At Wrestlemania, Daniel Bryan will be another sacrificial lamb and the fans will lose another chosen one, because there is only one HHH. This was AMAZING and sold the idea perfectly.

Back live and HHH says they were all just players, but he's the Game now more than ever. On Sunday, he'll destroy Daniel Bryan and then walk out as the WWE World Heavyweight Champion. They go to leave but here's Batista to interrupt. Batista digs the video, but noticed he wasn't in it because HHH has never beaten him. HHH makes fun of Batista's Georgetown (local college basketball team) jersey but Batista says HHH shouldn't be worried about a title match he's not even in yet. HHH says go get ready for your match and Batista says that's a good idea, which makes sense because Stephanie is the brawn of this family.

Orton comes out and says he wants a front row seat if Stephanie is about to slap him again. Orton says he respects the Authority and loves the idea of a triple threat, but asks HHH to think again about being in the

title match. HHH tells Orton that no amount of sucking up is going to get him out of this because his title reign is coming to an end very soon. That is, unless Orton can become the Viper again. HHH makes the main event No DQ to try and make Orton all the more evil.

Usos/Los Matadores vs. Real Americans/Ryback/Curtis Axel

Ryback shoves Jimmy into the corner to start but Jimmy comes back with kicks in the chest. The Usos hit a double kick to the ribs, only to have Ryback run Jey over and make the tag off to Axel. Jey catapults Curtis into a forearm from Fernando and Diego follows in with a slingshot splash. Axel gets double teamed by both teams until it's back to Jey for a wristlock.

Off to Cesaro for some hard forearms before Swagger comes in to stomp away. Jey fights back with right hands and clotheslines before sending Ryback out to the floor. Fernando comes in and tags out to Jimmy before anything happens. Jimmy and Fernando dive over the top to take out the Real Americans, setting up Jey with a top rope cross body for two on Swagger.

Jack sends him to the floor and knocks him off the apron for a crash. Back from a break with Cesaro dropkicking Jey down for two and getting the same off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. Swagger comes in and literally throws Cesaro into the corner onto Jey. Ryback comes in and puts on a chinlock until Jey fights up and hits a bulldog. The hot tag brings in Jimmy to clean house and speed things way up.

A release Samoan drop puts Axel down and the running Umaga attack in the corner gets two. Ryback gets superkicked to the floor and Axel gets two off a rollup. Jack makes a blind tag and kicks Jimmy in the face for two with Diego making the save. Cesaro loads up the Swing but Fernando breaks it up to a lot of booing. Back inside and the Vader Bomb is countered but Jimmy avoids the Patriot Lock and kicks Swagger in the face. Diego dives off the top but lands in the Patriot Lock but doesn't tap. Swagger goes

after Jey but the Matadores switch, allowing Fernando to roll Jack up for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: C. It's not a bad match but the division just isn't all that interesting. Los Matadores being employed still makes my head shake, especially when El Torito isn't involved. The ending with the Twin Magic wasn't a terrible idea and it's nice to see them add another team that could win the titles on Sunday.

Cody Rhodes/Goldust vs. Fandango/Damien Sandow

Fandango takes Cody into the corner before it's off to Sandow to stomp away, knocking Rhodes out to the floor. We hit a chinlock on Cody before a drop toehold breaks up a hot tag attempt. Cody kicks Damien away and tags Goldust anyway to clean house. Goldust takes both heels down with the top rope cross body before getting two on Sandow. Cody dives off the top to take down Fandango, allowing Goldust to hit the Final Cut for the pin on Damien at 4:08.

Rating: D+. There wasn't much to see here as it was nothing more than a way to get people on the show before the Wrestlemania match on Sunday. That's something you often get on the go home shows, which doesn't exactly make for good TV but it's something you have to do to avoid injuries.

We recap Shield vs. Kane/Outlaws.

Shield says they almost feel bad for Kane. One of them will be facing Kane tonight, decided by a WWE App vote. Rollins says the geriatric Outlaws will be joining Kane on Sunday and be shown why the fist is the new symbol of excellence. Ambrose promises to show the old guys a new things about attitude. Reigns says Believe in the Shield.

R-Truth vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray runs him over to start and laughs a lot, only to run into a leg lariat. Wyatt comes right back with the hard running cross body before hammering away with right hands and headbutts. We hit a quick camel clutch for a bit before a belly to back suplex into a facebuster puts Truth down again. Sister Abigail is enough for the pin at 4:35.

Rating: D. It's just a long squash. There really isn't much else to say about this match. However, Bray continues to be totally dominant and that's what you need coming into the biggest match of his career. Sunday could be a huge moment for Bray if it's done right, which doesn't mean he needs to win.

Xavier Woods gets beaten down post match. The Wyatts pose but there's another guy in coveralls and a sheep mask. Bray looks up at him and it's John Cena to an ERUPTION. Rowan takes an AA but Bray escapes to fight on Sunday. That's one of the loudest pops for Cena that I've heard in months. Bray gives Cena a bizarre look from the ramp.

We look back at Vickie making the Divas Title match.

AJ Lee vs. Naomi

Lumberjill match with the other challengers on the floor and Vickie on the stage. AJ is immediately sent to the floor and thrown back in but Naomi doesn't get the same treatment. Now the champion is sent outside again and the other girls throw her right back in. Back in and AJ fires off kicks to the ribs before it's off to a guillotine check.

A swinging neckbreaker gets two on Naomi but she comes back with a kick to the head. AJ is sent to the floor again but Tamina tries to protect her. That's fine with them though as Tamina gets beaten down as well. The Divas throw AJ back inside after one heck of a beating, allowing Naomi to hit the Rear View for the easy pin at 4:04.

Rating: D. Build for the PPV, I don't know why we've got the AJ vs. Vickie feud after months of AJ getting pinned but that's the WWE for you. I have a bad feeling AJ leaves with the title, but I'm hoping Paige shows up the next night on Raw to take the title. It wasn't really much of a match anyway but the girls looked good on the floor.

A nervous John Cena talks about Bray Wyatt spreading his propaganda. Cena has just shown Bray what happens when he gets backed into a corner. On Sunday John Cena will be a monster because being a monster for a day secures a legacy for a lifetime. Yes he's afraid but the moment you realize he has the ability to face it, everything is worth it. Cena is bringing the change to the eater of worlds on Sunday and tells us all to be watching on Sunday.

The expert panel talks about Bray vs. Cena.

We look back at the opening segment.

Roman Reigns wins the poll with 80% of the vote.

Roman Reigns vs. Kane

Kane gets pounded down in the corner but raises a boot to stop a charging Reigns. A hard clothesline sets up the chokeslam but Reigns powers out of it. Some right hands stagger Kane and there's a BIG running clothesline to drop Kane. Kane gets knocked into the ropes and the running boot to the side of the heads knocks him back inside. He loads up the Superman Punch but here come the Outlaws. Ambrose and Rollins cut them off though, allowing Reigns to nail the Superman Punch. The other Shield members get inside to surround Kane and the beating is on for the DQ at 3:09.

Rating: D+. This was the buildup match for the six man which still isn't all that interesting. I see the Outlaws coming to the ring and the idea of them facing Rollins and Ambrose at Wrestlemania just doesn't work for

me at all. They look like a team you bring in on Raw for a special moment to set up a PPV match against a big team. But hey, the Outlaws want to have the match and that's what matters.

It's time for Piper's Pit with a surprise guest. Piper says it's Wrestlemania season and is thrilled that Wrestlemania I was 29 years ago today. He talks about how important Andre the Giant was to the first Wrestlemania and says the winner of the battle royal will get their Wrestlemania moment. Piper is about to talk about his favorite for the match but here's Miz to interrupt.

Miz brags about actually winning in the main event of Wrestlemania, meaning the other 29 superstars don't compare to him at all, just like the Pit doesn't compare to MizTV. This brings out Sheamus to make Piper even angrier. Sheamus says Miz isn't fit to hold Roddy's kilt before talking about winning the battle royal. Cue Titus as Piper is getting hilarious with his ranting over the interruptions. He spells out his name and barks in Piper's face.

Here's Ziggler, drawing out a "REALLY??? REALLY??? I'M TALKING HERE!!!" from Piper. Roddy looks at all of them and has something to say to each of them. Piper pokes Miz in the eye and throws him to Sheamus as a fight breaks out. A bunch of other guys in the battle royal hit the ring for a ten to twelve man fight.

Rey Mysterio comes out with music to kick Dolph in the head. Sin Cara takes a 619 and Brogue Kick until Big Show comes out to really clean the ring. Rey and Big Show are the only ones left standing and Rey begs off, only to hit a 619 to the ribs. A top rope seated senton is just dumb though and Rey is thrown to the floor in a big pile. Roddy raises Big Show's hand to end the segment.

Batista vs. Randy Orton

No DQ and non-title. Batista is the hometown boy and gets a decent

reaction from the crowd. Before the match here are HHH and Stephanie coming down to do commentary. Orton takes him down to the floor to start and hammers away but gets sent into the post. Back in and Randy stomps away before sending Batista out to the floor and into the barricade.

Batista's arm is rammed into the announce table a lot and a belly to back suplex onto the barricade has him in even more trouble. Randy nails him in the back with a chair before they head back inside. Batista knocks Orton right back to the floor and slams him into the announce table a few times. HHH says show him the Animal so Batista rams Orton spine first into the apron. He gets a chair of his own but Randy pulls on a kendo stick to blast Batista.

Back in again and the spinebuster puts Orton down but the Batista Bomb is countered into the backbreaker. There's the Elevated DDT but Daniel Bryan jumps over the announce table and jumps HHH. Orton goes outside to take out Bryan but gets taken down as well. Randy gets back up and sends Bryan into the steps as Stephanie checks on her "baby". Batista nails Orton with the spear but Bryan kicks him in the head and hits the knee. FLYING GOAT takes HHH down as everything is going nuts. A bunch of kendo stick shots knock HHH into the ring before Bryan dropkicks Orton off the apron. The match is thrown out at about 8:00.

Rating: C+. This was a nice brawl but it was all about the moment of course. Bryan had to show up here and tonight was his night to end the show. Orton vs. Batista actually wasn't bad but thank goodness they didn't do it as the main event of Wrestlemania. It was good but it wasn't THAT good.

A huge YES chant erupts as HHH shouts that Bryan is done to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This is a show where you have to take something big into account. This was all about getting ready for Sunday and the wrestling took a huge backseat to the building process. The matches were pretty lame, but the matches all got TV time and I'm more excited for

Wrestlemania than I have been in years.

Results

Alberto Del Rio b. Big E. – Superkick

Summer Rae b. Natalya – Kick to the faceless

Los Matadores/Usos b. Real Americans/Curtis Axel/Ryback – Rollup to Swagger

Cody Rhodes/Goldust b. Damien Sandow/Fandango – Final Cut to Sandow

Bray Wyatt b. R-Truth – Sister Abigail

Naomi b. AJ Lee – Pin after the lumberjills beat up AJ on the floor

Kane b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Dean Ambrose and Seth Rollins interfered

Randy Orton vs. Batista went to a no contest

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 25, 2014

We're getting very close to Wrestlemania last night with only one Raw left after last night. The big story was the absence of Daniel Bryan but

everything else was covered. Let's get to it.

The opening was Stephanie being called a sl** by Batista and Big Dave spearing Orton. This worked very well as the focus shifted to Batista vs. Orton instead of just HHH vs. Bryan as we've seen for the last few weeks. They're doing a great job at planting seeds of doubt about Bryan winning, which is the best thing you can do in a match that has a seemingly obvious ending.

Having Batista and Orton have their own issues also opens up a few more doors to the match. It's going to be boring if everyone is waiting for Bryan to hit the running knee on someone to win the title, so having the others have issues helps a lot. This and the very good HHH promo later gave me a lot more hope for both matches.

The HHH interview was HHH sounding evil and letting us inside his mind heading into Wrestlemania. While it's clear that HHH is corrupt and evil, it's ok as long as he can justify his own actions. HHH wanting to be the champion himself because he's the only one he can trust is where this story should have gone from the beginning and it's the right ending now.

The fourway was really good stuff with a lot of great false finishes. I love the idea of having a #1 contenders match to earn a title shot rather than just having someone beat Big E. to set up the title match. That being said, Christian didn't get the shot as he was injured in the match but it was a nice idea at least.

Wyatts were awesome. Nothing new here.

Scooby-Doo was just there to promote the movie and there's nothing wrong with that. The movie is good too if you've got an hour and twenty minutes to kill. I'm not sure what Sandow did to tick WWE off though.

Los Matadores beat Ryback/Axel, who are still getting a title shot at Wrestlemania. Apparently Los Matadores and the Real Americans have been added to the title match as well which helps a lot.

Fandango vs. Cody happened and that's about all I've got on that one.

The Hogan/Schwarzenegger segment was exactly what it needed to be. Miz

getting to come out there might have been the second biggest night of his career.

Big Show beat up Titus O'Neil. Titus looked good but it doesn't matter when Big Show just shrugs off the offense and knocked Titus out for the pin.

Cena didn't see the sheep mask in a bathroom mirror. People were comparing this to Hogan vs. Warrior and Undertaker vs. Orton but it came off more as the Wyatts are creepy. Cena literally didn't see it so it was the Wyatts stalking him and Cena not knowing what was going on rather than him going nuts.

Harper and Cena had the best match of Harper's career. Luke looked GREAT out there and thankfully didn't have to job at the end of it. Cena continues to make people look far better than anyone else can and he did it very well with Harper last night. The ending was eery with the Wyatts tying Cena to the ropes and putting the sheep mask on his face. The fact that it was in the dark made it even better as you were left to think about what those creepy guys might have been doing to Cena.

The Divas Title match was announced and apparently AJ will be defending against thirteen people. The Total Divas theme song playing to end the segment made one thing clear: this was a big commercial for the show. Even with that, I have a feeling they're going to keep the title on AJ, perhaps for a Paige debut the next night?

Scott Hall is going into the Hall of Fame. I'm surprised they listed him as Razor Ramon instead of Scott but the fact that he's sober enough to be inducted is wonderful.

Shield vs. Real Americans was good stuff and Rollins continues to look awesome. I already went on a rant about the Outlaws being in the six man with Kane at Wrestlemania does nothing for me so I'll spare you from a repeat. The word on the street says that it's so the Outlaws can work with the Shield because they want to, and Heaven forbid the Outlaws don't get what they want. Hopefully Shield destroys them and sends the Outlaws back into retirement.

I've never been the biggest Outlaws fan in the world but they're not horrible. The problem is I don't see the benefit in having them around anymore. It was a nice nostalgia run and them winning the belts was a nice moment, but it's been done and they lost the titles and their rematch. Why do we need to see them anymore?

Heyman/Lesnar vs. Undertaker was exactly what you would expect and there wasn't much to complain about with it. Undertaker was creepy and Lesnar got run off again, meaning the odds are he'll get the better of the dead guy next week as we head to Wrestlemania. The build to the match has been different than most as Brock is being treated as a huge underdog despite being the biggest threat to the Streak in years.

Raw was another solid effort last night. The company is clicking at the right now time and Wrestlemania is looking better and better every week. Bryan not being there last night was a good thing as he gets most of the attention whenever he's on screen. It made the show feel more like a complete card and even added three matches to fill the whole thing out. It was a good show and I'm fired up for Wrestlemania.

Oh yeah and there were Punk chants. WWE just ignored them and went on with the show, as they should have. The strategy worked and the whiny fans got into the show multiple times.

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Monday Night Raw – March 24, 2014: Everything But Bryan

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 24, 2014

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

We're just two weeks from the biggest show of the year but tonight is about the guest stars. Tonight we've got a double shot with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Scooby-Doo, the latter of whom is here because the WWE animated movie comes out tomorrow. Other than that we get the fallout from Bryan being attacked by the boss last week and a showdown between Undertaker and Lesnar. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's closing sequence with the fake cops and Stephanie ranting about respect and HHH destroying Bryan with a chair.

Here's Stephanie to get things going. She talks about how people on social media have been saying how what HHH did last week was disgusting. However, the Authority won't let the YES Movement steer this ship the wrong way. The WWE needs leadership through strong people like herself. The fans LOUDLY cheer for Punk but Stephanie just goes through them until it calms down. She lists off some of HHH's accolades but gets Randy Orton instead.

Randy respects HHH but if he beats Daniel Bryan earlier in the night (Stephanie: "You mean when he beats Daniel Bryan."), he'll do whatever he has to do to retain the title. The fans chant for Bryan and Stephanie acknowledges them by saying he's not coming out. Orton sucks up to Stephanie and suggests that HHH beat the tar out of Daniel Bryan, but let that be it for the night for HHH. The New York fans think this is boring but here's Batista to really fire them up.

Big Dave says the fans can chant and the two people in the ring can run their mouths all they want, but he's the next WWE Champion. The mic cuts out a bit as Batista tells us to DEAL WITH IT. Things stop a bit as we fix the mic until Batista points out that HHH has never beaten him. Batista calls Orton out for sucking up to everyone lately and drooling on Stephanie. "I think she's been drooled on before. Actually, make that a lot." Stephanie slaps Batista for the insult and Orton is nearly keeling over in what looks to be shock or laughter. Stephanie walks out and Batista spears Orton down to LOUD booing.

Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Christian vs. Alberto Del Rio

Winner gets an Intercontinental Title shot tomorrow night on Main Event against Big E. It's one fall to a finish and anything goes. Sheamus and Christian fight on the floor to start until we get down to Sheamus vs. Ziggler in the ring. They trade strikes for a bit until the guys switch off again. Christian dives to the floor but gets caught by Sheamus, who launches him into the barricade with a fall away slam.

Sheamus loads up the ten forearms to Ziggler but has to duck a running enziguri from Del Rio. Dolph knocks Sheamus to the floor and gets two on Del Rio but Christian pulls Ziggler outside again. Sheamus hits a Cactus Clothesline on Christian, sending both of them into the timekeeper's area as we take a break.

Back with Ziggler and Christian in the ring as Sheamus hits the rolling fireman's carry to Del Rio on the floor. Christian hits a high cross body on Dolph but gets rolled through for two. A loud ZIGGLER chant starts up as Christian stands on Dolph's head for two. Ziggler gets knocked to the floor so Sheamus hits his ax handles and high knee to Christian. Alberto charges into the Irish Curse and Christian is sent to the floor. The ten forearms puts Alberto on the floor so Sheamus goes up for a dive, only to be taken down by a top rope X Factor for two from Ziggler.

The running DDT gets two on Del Rio but Christian snaps the back of

Dolph's neck across the top rope. The fans think this is awesome as Christian counters a Fameasser into a powerbomb for two. Del Rio breaks up the pin with a superkick but Sheamus breaks up the pin. There's the Cloverleaf on Del Rio but Sheamus breaks it up to powerslam Christian. Del Rio breaks up the Brogue Kick and puts Sheamus in the cross armbreaker. Sheamus powers up and lifts Alberto up but Zigler takes them both down with a Zig Zag. Christian comes back in with the Killswitch to Dolph for the pin out of nowhere at 12:00.

Rating: B. I had a great time with this one and I was wondering who was going to win in the end. That's the best thing you can ask for in a match most of the time and it worked very well here. Christian vs. Big E. is fine for a one off match and the other guys looked great as well.

Christian won't shake Big E.'s hand after the match.

The Wyatts pop up on screen and Bray talks about fans being interested in things they can't see. But they can see Cena everywhere because he's on billboards and t-shirts. Bray is someone you can't see because he is the key to the city of woe. He's everywhere but you can only feel him. Harper says they're coming to fight Cena. Run.

We get a clip of the Scooby-Doo movie and here's the Mystery Machine in the arena. Sin Cara (the second biggest wrestler in the movie. If it was based on the active roster, he would be the Daniel Bryan to John Cena) pops out and here's Scooby to go with him. It's a guy in a costume if that wasn't clear.

Sin Cara vs. Damien Sandow

The lighting is back. Sin avoids a charge in the corner and hits a springboard cross body and the Tajiri Elbow, followed by the Swanton for the pin at 1:07.

We look at Kane and the Outlaws beating down the Shield on Friday.

Los Matadores vs. Curtis Axel/Ryback

Ryback and Axel are officially out of the battle royal and will be getting a Tag Team Title match at Wrestlemania. Curtis starts with Fernando but the Shield comes to the barricade for a distraction, allowing Fernando to get the pin at 1:05.

Shield destroys Ryback and Axel post match with the spear and Triple Bomb laying Ryback out.

Cole brings out HHH for a sitdown interview. We look at the attack from last week and Cole asks HHH to justify that. HHH wants to know if he wants an answer as the COO or a competitor. He goes on a short rant about taking advantage of an upcoming opponent before shifting towards Occupy Raw. Bryan and the fans tried to hijack Raw and the people were put in danger. HHH asks Cole why he chalked that up to a memorable moment but what HHH did was despicable.

What happened to this world since HHH stopped competing full time? He did horrible things to people and looked into their eyes, seeing the same lust for success that he had. People would fight the system but now he sees soft and pathetic people in the crowd. He sees a bunch of powerless people with no desire who cry when they don't get what they want. If they're mad, Tweet him about it. HHH is sick of the whole thing because the world has changed and he doesn't like it.

Maybe it's on him to decide where everything goes. This is the beginning of the Reality Era and the reality is this: at Wrestlemania, he ends Daniel Bryan's little run at the top and ends the YES Movement along with it. The reality is at Wrestlemania he'll beat Daniel Bryan and enter a triple threat match where he'll take the WWE Title for himself instead of living off past glory. Really solid stuff from the Game here.

Fandango vs. Cody Rhodes

Goldust has a mask over his face paint now. Fandango takes over to start and a slingshot legdrop gets two. A snap suplex gets the same and Fandango cranks on the arm a bit. Cody comes back with a springboard dropkick but Summer and Goldust have a dance off. Summer hurts her ankle and Cody hits a quick Disaster Kick for the pin at 2:48.

Clip from the new Schwarzenegger movie Sabotage.

Here's Hogan with something to say but we have to wait for the big nostalgia chant. He doesn't want to be nostalgic but Wrestlemania is two weeks away. We might be in a different part of the city, but thirty years ago he and Mr. T. made history in New York. Hogan stops to point at the sign and says he's real psyched up for Wrestlemania. He's also excited about tonight's guest starts: Joe Maganeillo and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Joe is taller than Hogan so Arnold looks tiny out there. The fans love Arnold and give him a big ovation. A year ago Arnold got to induct Bruno Sammartino into the Hall of Fame with another great hero like Hulk Hogan. Arnold raves about Hogan's physique and asks the fans to cheer Joe. Maganeillo talks about how pumped he is to be in the ring with two icons like Hulk and Arnold. Arnold brings up the battle royal and talks about hanging out with Andre on a movie set. He asks if Hogan has room for two more athletes in the battle royal but here's Miz to interrupt.

Miz says he'll be going to see Sabotage, just like Arnold and Joe went to see his movies. He guarantees to win the battle royal but Hogan says he's in the wrong place. Joe says if Miz wants the three of them gone to get rid of them himself. All three guys get in a shot and Hogan throws Miz over the top.

Big Show vs. Titus O'Neill

Titus kicks Big Show into the corner and stomps away to send Big Show to the mat. A legdrop gets two and a splash in the corner has Big Show in trouble again. The fans chant for Punk again as Titus drops Big Show with a flying shoulder for two. Big Show shrugs it off, spears Titus down and hits the WMD for the pin at 2:24.

Shield comes in to see the Authority and wants to know where the three of them stand in this whole thing. HHH says the business between Kane, the Outlaws and the Shield is between the six of them. Stephanie makes Shield vs. Real Americans for later and they can discuss things afterwards. Reigns gives HHH a bit of a look.

John Cena is in the bathroom and running water over his face. The sheep mask can be seen in the mirror.

John Cena vs. Luke Harper

Luke takes Cena into the corner to start and the fans are all over John here. Cena fights back but walks into a backbreaker for two. A loud LET'S GO HARPER chant starts up as Cena comes back with right hands in the corner. Something resembling a Stinger Splash crushes Harper in the corner but he walks into a pumphandle throw for two. Cena is thrown to the floor and Bray crouches in front of him but Harper comes out with a forearm to the back. We get a Fruity Pebbles chant as Harper hammers away even more.

Back with Cena fighting out of a chinlock but walking into a suplex to put him down again. The AA is countered and Harper gets two off a boot to the face. Cena counters the discus lariat into the ProtoBomb but Harper pops up and hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Luke tries a powerbomb but gets countered into what was supposed to be a hurricanrana. The STF is kicked away to send Cena to the floor and Harper hits a great looking suicide dive. Cena's head bounced off the barricade and Bray came out of his chair.

Back in and Cena grabs the STF but Harper pokes him in the eye. A DDT gets two on John and Harper puts him on the top rope. Cena powers out of a butterfly superplex attempt and hits the top rope Fameasser for two. A second ProtoBomb and the Shuffle connect but Harper escapes the AA and picks him up for a belly to back suplex, only to slam Cena face first into the mat.

Cena EXPLODES out of the corner with a clothesline but the lights go out as he loads up the AA. You can hear something in the ring and as the lights come back on, Cena is tied in the ropes with the sheep mask on. The Wyatts surround an unconscious Cena as the match is thrown out at about 14:00.

Rating: B. I was digging this match and I really liked the ending. Harper looked better tonight than he ever has before which gives me hope for his future. The ending with Cena being tied up and us not seeing what happened to him is creepy as there's something terrifying about having to imagine what those three monsters did to him.

Divas Title: Naomi vs. AJ Lee

AJ is defending. Naomi quickly sends her to the floor but AJ says she doesn't need this. She skips out and it's a countout at 1:12.

Post match here's Vickie Guerrero who AJ insulted on Smackdown. Vickie didn't care for what AJ said on Smackdown, so at Wrestlemania it will be the Vickie Guerrero Divas Championship Special. AJ will defend against the Funkadactyls, the Bella Twins, Natalya, Eva Marie, Emma, Aksana, Alicia Fox, Summer Rae, Rosa Mendes, Layla and Tamina.

Scott Hall is announced for the Hall of Fame.

We look at the opening segment again. Orton vs. Batista one on one next week.

Real Americans vs. Shield

It's Rollins and Ambrose meeting the Americans in the aisle to start the big brawl. The fans chant WE THE PEOPLE as Ambrose throws Cesaro inside for the opening bell. Dean stomps him down in the corner and we get a Hart Attack with Rollins hitting a neckbreaker instead of a clothesline. Off to Swagger but Seth meets him with right hands and Three Amigos with Ambrose helping out on the third.

Shield takes their turns on Swagger until he drives Dean into the corner for the tag to Cesaro. The WE THE PEOPLE chants continue as Cesaro takes over and puts Dean in a chinlock. Back to Swagger for the Vader Bomb but Ambrose gets his feet up. A middle rope back elbow drops Swagger but Cesaro knocks Seth off the apron. Cesaro counters a backdrop into the Swing but Seth breaks up the cover. Ambrose is sent outside and the Americans swing him by his arms and legs into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro putting Dean in a front facelock but making the mistake of slapping him. Dean says bring it so Cesaro kicks him in the chest. Dean pops back up and clotheslines Cesaro down, finally allowing the hot tag to Seth. Rollins cleans house and hits the running forearm in the corner to set up a Downward Spiral into the middle buckle. Cesaro gets LAUNCHED over the top to the floor and Swagger gets clotheslined as well.

A suicide dive puts Cesaro into the crowd and Seth runs back in for a BIG flip dive to take Jack down as well. Back in and a top rope knee to the head drops Swagger but Cesaro makes the save. Ambrose runs in but gets backdropped to the floor. Rollins clotheslines Cesaro outside but gets caught in the Patriot Lock. He makes the rope and lands on his feet, setting up an enziguri and the Black Out (now called Peace of Mind) for the pin at 14:00.

Rating: B-. Seth Rollins is perfect for what he's doing at the moment and Ambrose continues to look awesome. Face Shield is totally working for me as they've transitioned perfectly in about a week. That's a sign of incredible talent and another reason why Shield is the best act in a long time.

Post match Reigns hits the Superman Punch and spear on Cesaro, setting up the Triple Bomb through the table. Shield poses but Kane and the Outlaws (all in suits) come to the stage. Kane announces the six man tag at Wrestlemania. The Outlaws just do not work for me in this role at all. Shield just tore the house down with two very talented guys. I'm not buying into seeing the Outlaws do their little shortcuts and the same jokes we've heard on a million reunion shows.

It just doesn't work for me and the minute I saw them come out on Smackdown I lost most of my interest in this story. What does Shield get out of this feud? A rub from a former World Champion? They've gotten that from far bigger stars than Kane. A match against former Tag Team Champions? They've destroyed every team they've fought and had a better match at Elimination Chamber than the Outlaws could ever dream of. This is a BIG step down for Shield and it doesn't interest me in the slightest.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar to close the show. Paul talks about how the Streak is the most impressive thing in WWE history, which is why Brock (sporting an Eat, Sleep, Break the Streak shirt) is going to end it. That doesn't take away from the 21 victories that Undertaker has and his legacy will still be great. John Cena couldn't go 21-0, Andre the Giant couldn't go 21-0 and even Brock Lesnar will never be able to be 21-0 at Wrestlemania.

Paul goes on about how important Wrestlemania is but Brock takes the mic. He says he's here to fight and since he and Undertaker are both here, let's do it right now. There's no gong but we've got druids. They bring a casket to ringside as the chanting plays through the arena. The druids

stand in the aisle and Brock is starting to look a bit nervous as he stares at the casket. Brock kicks at the lid as the chanting continues. He finally opens it but the casket is empty. Heyman isn't pleased as Brock asks if this is some kind of joke.

Brock goes to yell at the druids who start to walk away. He slowly stalks them but they get most of the way up the ramp. Brock walks back to the ring and closes the casket, drawing an Undertaker chant. Lesnar says he's not here to play games and Paul starts to talk, but Brock says he's leaving.

Heyman stops him because that's what Undertaker wants. Paul rants about Undertaker being a coward and says all Undertaker can do is an empty casket, so of course the casket opens up to reveal Undertaker. He sits up and Paul PANICS. The lights come on and Brock looks scared but doesn't bail. The fight is on with Undertaker hammering away and clotheslining Brock onto the casket. Paul says it's not worth it and begs Lesnar to leave. Lesnar points to the sign as Undertaker does the throat slit to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. The Wrestlemania build continues to rock as tonight they focused on Shield, Batista, Orton and HHH. Bryan wasn't there tonight but that's a good thing in a way. Yeah the odds are that Bryan leaves with the title, but they're doing a great job of planting even the slightest bit of doubt. Daniel Bryan vs. HHH is arguably the real main event, but they're making it seem like there's a chance that something else could happen, and that's the right move.

Other than that we had some great build for the show with the battle royal getting a nice focus and a solid main event segment as well. We also got some of the best in ring action we've had on this show in months with the long matches being good and the short matches being the uninteresting ones. Couple that with three new matches being announced to likely fill out the card and I was very pleased tonight. The company is clicking at the right time and that's all that matters.

Results

Christian b. Sheamus, Alberto Del Rio and Dolph Ziggler – Killswitch to Ziggler

Sin Cara b. Damien Sandow – Swanton Bomb

Los Matadores b. Curtis Axel/Sin Cara – Rollup to Axel

Cody Rhodes b. Fandango – Disaster Kick

Big Show b. Titus O'Neil – WMD

John Cena vs. Luke Harper went to a no contest

Naomi b. AJ Lee via countout

Shield b. Real Americans – Peace of Mind to Swagger

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Newest Hall of Fame Member Announced

That makes seven for this year. It's Scott Hall, who actually belongs in the Hall of Fame.

Raw Is In Brooklyn Tonight

And the fans are feeling chatty. It's going to be a long show.

Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 18, 2014

Last night's show was about driving these shows into the fans' hearts. The matches are mostly set but now we need a reason to care about what we're watching. The show did a good job of making you feel what the wrestlers were feeling and that's hard to do. Let's get to it.

The HHH/Batista/Orton argument to start things off was as good as it was going to be. Batista being acknowledged as a movie star and the No Paparazzi shirt were signs of a character change for him and of things to come. HHH getting so frustrated with both guys that he put himself into the match makes sense and offers some drama to the Bryan vs. HHH match.

Yeah it's obvious that Bryan makes the title match and gets the belt (in theory) but it's nice to see them adding something to it. There's nothing wrong with having an obvious ending, but adding some drama isn't a bad idea. This is the Mike Tyson as guest referee of Wrestlemania XXX.

It's also nice to see some animosity between Batista and Orton. Until now they've just been kind of there in the background of Daniel Bryan vs. HHH which didn't work as there was no actual guarantee either of them would make the title match leading into last night. I'm glad they haven't been forgotten because there's a natural history there if they'll just acknowledge it. Making it a three or even a fourway isn't my favorite thing in the world but it's the logical call this year.

The Real Americans beat the Usos to presumably earn a title shot. Because THERE ARE NO OTHER IDEAS IN THE HISTORY OF BOOKING OTHER THAN HAVING THE CHAMPIONS GET PINNED BY A CHALLENGER BECAUSE JUST HAVING A FREAKING #1 CONTENDERS MATCH IS TOO COMPLICATED FOR A BUNCH OF HOLLYWOOD HACKS WHO CAN'T GET A JOB OUTSIDE OF STEPHANIE MCMAHON'S OFFICE!!!

I wasn't big on the booking if that wasn't clear.

WWE has a new animated series called Slam City where the wrestlers all get fired and have to get real jobs. It's an idea but can we get a Hulk's Rock And Wrestling channel on the Network?

Sheamus beat Titus O'Neil in the St. Patrick's Day thing. It's nothing of note but it looks like Titus is going to become a jobber to the stars. Titus, Sheamus and Christian are all in the battle royal which isn't a surprise.

Arnold Schwarzenegger and Scooby Doo will be guest stars next week. Yeah Arnold isn't a big deal anymore, but I sat through Florence Henderson as the guest star of a Raw I went to. I approve of Arnold.

Cena and Bray Wyatt had the segment of the night. Cena admitted to being afraid of Bray because Wyatt is something he's never faced before. Bray has accused Cena of being hollow and being afraid of what's coming to him after his career is over. There's a HUGE story to get into with that angle if they choose to but I have a feeling it's not happening. When I say huge, I mean that could culminate at like Wrestlemania 35.

Bray continues to be one of the best promo men in the business as I totally bought everything that he's saying. However, there was one thing during his promo that was incredibly interesting: a John Cena chant.

Think about that for a minute. Bray Wyatt is talking about getting rid of John Cena and the fans LOUDLY chant for John as a result. You often hear fans booing Cena and the "Let's Go Cena/Cena Sucks!" chants, but as soon as the idea of no more Cena comes up, it's "CENA! CENA! CENA!" I've said it before and I'll say it here again: so many fans aren't going to realize how truly great Cena is until the day he's gone.

I've mostly covered the Orton vs. Bryan stuff earlier, but the No DQ stipulation helped a lot here. Batista came out to help Bryan and they set up a nice shot at the end: Batista takes out Orton, Bryan steals the pin. Nice "what if" scenario for Wrestlemania.

Heyman's weekly promo was nothing special but the idea of Brock being able to destroy Undertaker's opponents far more easily than Undertaker could. The line of "Now he conquers death itself" line was excellent.

Goldust vs. Fandango was an interesting idea but the match wasn't much. I did really like having a random match though, just as a breather from the rest of the show.

Kane vs. Shield sounds like a way to bring Ascension up as the replacements for the Shield. There isn't much else to say than that. Lawler was just a catalyst for the story advancement.

Yet again a champion got pinned to set up a future match. It seems like we're getting Nikki vs. Naomi vs. AJ vs. Tamina for the title. It's so we can have a Total Divas season finale, but at least they didn't rush through AJ's title reign to get there.

Mr. T. goes into the Hall of Fame. No complaints from me on that one.

The battle royal match was nothing special and exactly what it needed to be. I'm sorry for all the short lines here but there isn't much to say about a lot of this stuff.

Bray squashed Kofi and looked awesome doing it.

The big segment to end the show was HHH saying he respected Bryan but being sent back on Stephanie's orders. Cops came out and handcuffed Bryan before being revealed that they weren't really cops and it was all A RUSE. The huge beating ensued and HHH looked pure evil. That's what this story has needed and it worked like a charm here. I've heard complaints that HHH beat him up too long but I didn't get that feeling at all. I forgot to mention that Stephanie revealed she had the key all along. Why that's supposed to be a shock doesn't quite register to me.

Overall last night's show was excellent and there's nothing I can really

add to it. It's really hard to go on and on about a show I really liked and it's even worse when it's just building up to the rest of the pay per view. Great episode this week and Wrestlemania is going to rock.

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Monday Night Raw – March 17, 2014: The Pathos to Wrestlemania

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 17, 2014

Location: AT&T Center, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

We're under three weeks to Wrestlemania now and we've got the biggest matches down now. The main story coming into tonight will be HHH retaliating against Daniel Bryan as he promised to do on Smackdown. Other than that we're likely going to get some more entrants into the Andre battle royal. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Occupy Raw last week.

HHH is in the ring and says what happens at Wrestlemania is all going to be our fault. He's had a week to think about what happened with Daniel Bryan and it doesn't sit well with him. At Wrestlemania, he's going to do what he always does in the ring, but we'll see that in twenty days. He tells us to enjoy the rest of the show but here's Batista to interrupt.

Batista says HHH has problems with Daniel Bryan but the real problems are with him. HHH has no right to add Bryan to Batista's main event because he's back to be WWE Champion. Batista wants to know what HHH is thinking, but HHH wants to know why Batista thinks Bryan has a chance to make it to the title match at all.

This brings out Randy Orton to throw in his two cents. Orton is worried about Bryan being added as well but HHH cuts him off and asks if Bryan is really that much in their heads. The fans chant YES and Batista says Bryan may be in their heads, but nowhere near as much as he's in HHH's. Orton asks for and receives a No DQ match against Bryan tonight to prove he can do what Batista couldn't.

Orton and Batista argue with Batista saying the YES Movement exists is because Orton sucks. He calls Orton a paper champion who only has those belts because of HHH's support. HHH tries to hold them apart but gets shoved away so he just leaves. Batista says HHH has to fix this but HHH says he's sick of this.

He's sick of the little troll face Daniel Bryan, the fans chanting for him, of Hollywood movie stars telling HHH how to run this business, and of talented guys who need him to hold their hand to win a match. Maybe the old man was right: the only one you can trust in this world is yourself, so there's going to be a triple threat at Wrestlemania, but Daniel Bryan won't be in it. Instead, HHH is going to beat Daniel Bryan and go into the match himself. In other words, the winner goes to the title match. HHH leaves and Orton lays out Batista with an RKO.

Batista leaves and says coming back was a big mistake.

Real Americans vs. Usos

Non-title and this is a result of the Usos saving Cody Rhodes and Goldust from a post match attack by the Real Americans on Smackdown. Jey runs over Swagger to start and catches him in a spinebuster. Cole screws up early this time and says a win for the Tag Team Champions could give the Real Americans a shot at the titles. Cesaro comes in and works over Jey in the corner but gets caught by a kick to the chest.

Off to Jimmy for an uppercut and a slam. Jey comes back in and tries a leapfrog but jumps into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. Off to Swagger again for a chinlock but Jimmy fights up and tags his brother back in to speed things up. A Cesaro distraction lets Jack kick Jimmy to the floor and we take a break. Back with Cesaro in control of Jimmy but he punches his way out of the corner.

Swagger catches him in a belly to belly suplex for two, followed by the Vader Bomb/Cesaro double stomp spot. The announcers praise the company for some awards the WWE App has won as Cesaro nails Jimmy with a European uppercut. Jimmy avoids a charge from Swagger and knocks Cesaro to the floor. A spinning kick to the back of Swagger's head is enough for the hot tag to Jey who shouts US a lot before the corner Umaga attack gets two.

Jimmy breaks up a Cesaro Swing attempt and throws Cesaro at Jey for a Samoan drop and a near fall. Swagger comes back in and gets caught by the double superkick to send him to the floor. Jimmy dives onto Jack but Cesaro blocks a Jey dive with the European uppercut, setting up the Neutralizer for the pin on Jey at 12:25.

Rating: C. The match was fun but at the same time can we PLEASE stop having new champions lose matches to set up a future Tag Title match, which will likely have the New Age Outlaws as well. Here's a simple way to do this instead: "The following contest is for the #1 contendership to the Tag Team Championship!" Throw Los Matadores out there and have a

match, making both the champions and challengers look strong. Why do I have to give writing lessons to a WRITING TEAM?

We look at WWE Slam City, an animated series about what happens when the wrestlers all get fired and have to get day jobs. I've heard worse ideas actually.

Clip from Smackdown of the Shield costing Kane a match and leaving him laying after a Reigns spear to end the show.

Kane comes up to Shield in the back and says all four of them made mistakes on Friday. Ambrose doesn't seem to care but Kane says they have a mission. If he can't count on them then the Authority can't count on them, meaning they're a liability. Kane asks if he can count on them. Rollins says they're united and Reigns says believe it. Kane gets even more serious and calls them replaceable.

Hornswoggle hands out t-shirts to fans when Bad News Barrett rises up on his podium. He makes fun of the leprechaun celebrating St. Patrick's Day and talks about St. Patrick chasing the snakes out of Ireland. However, the bad news is the fans will spend all day getting drunk, have a hangover tomorrow and regret all the stupid things they've done.

Sheamus vs. Titus O'Neil

Hornswoggle is still at ringside. Titus is officially in the battle royal and comes out with a big green and white hat and a bright orange beard painted on his face. Christian is on commentary and announces himself as an entrant as well. O'Neil hammers Sheamus into the corner to start but gets sent to the floor and shouldered off the apron. Titus rams him into the post as Christian says he's undefeated except for the losses he's caused himself.

Christian says JBL looks like David Spade in a fat suit and JBL nearly

loses it. Titus slams Sheamus to the mat and then the floor before throwing Hornswoggle inside. He tries a fall away slam but Sheamus comes back in and catches the little guy before throwing him into Titus' ribs. There are the ten forearms to the chest and a powerslam setting up the Brogue Kick for the pin at 4:11.

Rating: C. Decent little power match here but Titus needs to win a match that matters instead of just being a jobber to the stars. He showed so much potential before the Darren Young match but this is his first appearance in weeks. It's better than having nothing to do though so it could be worse.

Sheamus enters the battle royal post match but Christian attacks him and hits the Killswitch on the floor because this feud just can't end.

Next week's guest star: Arnold Schwarzenegger. Scooby Doo and the Mystery Machine will be there as well.

Here's Cena to talk about the Wyatts. He says he's been here 12 years and has had over 3,500 matches which makes him like family to the WWE Universe. They're like an old married couple and he has a secret for them: he's afraid of Bray Wyatt. He's afraid of everything Bray stands for and what he is, because he's never fought anyone like Bray before.

Bray is trying to convince the people that what you see with John Cena isn't real. Cena won't take that because he believes in everything he's done and stands for because Wrestlemania is about fighting for every scar and injury he's been through. He'll fight for his legacy at Wrestlemania and here are the Wyatts on screen.

Bray is wearing a Cena shirt and says children believe in superheroes because they want to believe the world is good. They haven't learned the truth about life yet. Bray's childhood wasn't all rainbows and butterflies. He has scars of his own because the world gave them to him. Everything he loves in life is going to wither away and die.

The fans chant for Cena as Bray says he could be just like John. He could sign autographs and kiss babies to make sure people bought his merchandise and go home to his plastic girlfriend in his castle while making jokes about everything to make himself feel better. At Wrestlemania, Bray doesn't care if he dies as long as the world sees Cena the way he does. Follow the buzzards.

Randy Orton vs. Daniel Bryan

No DQ and non-title. Orton hammers him into the corner to start but can't ram Bryan face first into the buckle. Daniel scores with a knee to the ribs and wraps Randy's leg around the post. Back in and Orton uppercuts Bryan down and heads to the floor for some forearms to the chest. Daniel comes back with a hard shot to knock Orton off the apron before nailing the FLYING GOAT. Orton pulls a kendo stick out from under the ring and says there's no bell to ring because it's No DQ. He belly to back suplexes Bryan onto the announce table and we take a break.

Back with Orton still in control and working over Bryan's back before crotching him against the post. He hits the backbreaker from the apron to the floor in a nice looking move as the announcers talk about HHH losing his cool earlier tonight. They head inside again with Orton throwing Bryan into the corner before stopping to do the YES motion. Bryan backflips over Orton out of the corner and hits the running clothesline.

Daniel hits the running dropkick in the corner to set up a top rope hurricanrana for two. It's kendo stick/YES KICK time with Daniel going off on Orton. The big kick to the head gets two more but Randy pops up and crotches Daniel on the top rope. A superplex gets two for the champion and he just stomps on Bryan out of frustration.

The Elevated DDT puts Daniel down but he rolls to the floor before the RK0. Orton comes outside and gets caught by the running dropkick, sending Orton into the timekeeper's area. Randy gets a chair and blasts Daniel in the ribs and back before heading back inside, only to have Batista spear

Orton in half. Bryan dropkicks Batista outside and steals the pin on Batista at 14:32.

Rating: B-. These guys get better each time they're out there and this was their most entertaining match in awhile. The No DQ rule helped a lot and even though it was pretty obvious Batista was coming back, the stuff we got leading up to that was entertaining as well. Good match here.

Batista hits the Bomb on Orton post match.

How to get the WWE Network.

Here's Heyman with something to say. He says Undertaker has gotten a lot of wins at Wrestlemania but barely survived. Those same opponents have been easily beaten by Brock Lesnar and Heyman has proof. We get a video of Undertaker's Wrestlemania matches, showing how much more difficult each victory has been because Undertaker is getting older. On the other hand, Brock has destroyed HHH, Mark Henry and CM Punk. The video closes with a great line: "Now he will conquer death itself." Heyman says the Streak will Rest in Peace at Wrestlemania.

HHH and Stephanie are in the back and Stephanie doesn't like the idea of HHH talking to Bryan tonight. She'll ignore him saying he wants to talk to Bryan "like a man" and goes on a rant about Bryan spitting on the McMahon legacy. HHH says it's just talking but Stephanie wants to know what happens when HHH wins the title and has to go on the road. What about their business or the family. HHH glares at her and says he's got this so don't worry about it. Stephanie says he better take care of things before storming out.

Goldust vs. Fandango

Goldust looks at Summer Rae and still catches Fandango coming after him. A few atomic drops have the dancer in trouble and Goldust does a few

steps of his own. Summer gets on the apron as Goldust does some disco dancing. He barks at Summer but Cody catches her, only to have Fandango get in some cheap shots.

Summer doesn't mind being caught by Cody but Fandango isn't pleased. We hit the chinlock for a few moments before Goldust fights up, only to get caught in the chinlock again. Goldust has a bit of blood next to his right eye. A suplex gets two on Goldust but Fandango misses the top rope legdrop. Goldust hits a quick Final Cut for the pin at 5:13. Goldust looked angry about the cut.

Rating: C-. You know what? I kind of liked this. No story, no reason for the match, nothing after. Just two guys having a match for about five minutes and the bigger star getting a clean pin. Everything has a point most of the time and it gets a bit tiring at times. I rather enjoyed just having a quick match with no meaning to it at all. Not a bad match either.

Here's Kane to address the Shield. He talks about all the safety codes that were broken last week in the Occupy Raw movement and blames someone for causing it. Jerry Lawler of all people was apparently responsible for getting those fans into the ring, which JBL accused him of doing last week. Lawler won't get up so here's Shield to deal with the problem. Kane unbuttons his shirt and says he's known Jerry for a long time. Lawler isn't in fighting shape so Kane is only going to enjoy this a little. Jerry is given the chance to speak on his own behalf as Shield surrounds him.

Instead it's Rollins saying he sees the look in Lawler's eyes and has a good feeling Daniel Bryan isn't coming to save him. The Shield however, always does what's best for business. They slowly turn to face Kane and Lawler takes the opportunity to run for his life. Kane stares the three of them down and shakes his head. He says Reigns doesn't know what he's about to do and the beating is on. Kane fights them off for awhile but Rollins kicks his head off and the spear drops him. There's the Triple

Bomb and Kane is left laying. This still didn't feel like a face turn but rather an anti-Kane turn.

Funkadactyls vs. AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka

Naomi is back with a patch over her eye (and of course it has glitter) and the Bellas are on commentary. Nikki thinks she should get a Divas Title shot, even though Naomi is #1 contender. Cameron hammers away on Tamina to start but gets her head taken off by a clothesline. AJ comes in and puts on a chinlock as the Bellas tease JBL with talk of tattoos. Back to Tamina but Cameron makes the tag off to Naomi. Everything breaks down and AJ grabs a guillotine choke on Naomi, only to be slammed down, followed by the split legged moonsault for the pin at 3:42.

Rating: C. For commercial for Total Divas. Multi-Diva match at the PPV. Next.

AJ yells at Tamina post match and gets shoved down. Tamina walks off.

The latest inductee into the Hall of Fame is Mr. T., which was announced earlier today.

We look back at Hogan announcing the battle royal last week.

Big E./Big Show/Dolph Ziggler/Mark Henry vs. Alberto Del Rio/Damien Sandow/Curtis Axel/Ryback

All eight of these guys are in the battle royal. Big E. and Ryback start things out and a weak Goldberg chant begins. Ryback shoves him into the corner but Big E. runs him over with a big shoulder. Off to Henry vs. Axel with Mark kicking Curtis' face off. Ziggler gets the tag to a high pitched pop and grabs a neckbreaker on Ryback. A dropkick sends the power guy to the floor and it's a standoff as we go to a break.

Back with Sandow working over Ziggler before it's off to Ryback for a delayed vertical suplex. He takes a bit too long though and Dolph counters into a small package for two. Back to Axel for some elbows to the head but Ziggler comes back with a DDT. Sandow breaks up the hot tag attempt and sends Dolph head first into the buckle. He misses a charge though and goes head first into the buckle as well, allowing the hot tag to Big Show. Everything breaks down and people are thrown up and over the top rope. Big Show and Sandow are left alone and it's a chokeslam for the pin at approximately 12:00.

Rating: C-. This was just a preview for the battle royal and there's nothing wrong with that. Much like everything else tonight, the wrestling wasn't the point here and it really didn't need to be. The battle royal is going to be a big part of the show and it's going to be a fun match so points for actually building it a big.

We look back at the Bryan/Batista/Orton situation from earlier.

Batista tries to leave again and says he's never quit anything in his life. He's leaving Wrestlemania with the title no matter who the third man is.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kofi Kingston

Before the match we get a video on Bray vs. Cena set to a rap song about a guy being strange since birth and talking about legacy with clips of Bray's original backwoods videos, comparing them to Cena's mainstream appeal. This is really starting to work. The match is a total squash with Bray destroying Kofi while singing about having the joy down in his heart. He runs Kofi over with a clothesline and drives in right hands before dropping him with a gutbuster. Sister Abigail ends this squash at 2:55.

Trailer for Oculus, a new movie from WWE Studios. It's a horror movie about an evil mirror.

Here's HHH for the big talk with Bryan. Daniel accepts his invitation down to the ring and HHH says this has never been personal. It's always been about what's best for business whether Daniel can understand that or not. Somehow this has been where it's always led and they're going to fight in three weeks at Wrestlemania. HHH won't apologize for what he does to Bryan in that ring and he wouldn't expect an apology from Bryan either. Bryan has crossed a line and HHH has to put an end to it at Wrestlemania because he has no choice.

HHH has to end the YES Movement and end the uprising and shut everything down. He has to do that and if he has to destroy Daniel to do that, then so be it. There are no hard feelings in all of this and may the best man win. HHH sticks out his hand but Bryan shakes his head no. That's cool with HHH because he would do the exact same thing. HHH has tried to stop Bryan since Summerslam and dumped a world on top of him, but Bryan is still standing here. The fans chant for Daniel Bryan because he hasn't folded under the pressure. Now the fans try a CM Punk chant as HHH says Bryan has earned his respect.

He goes to leave but here's Stephanie to rant about respect. Bryan endangered people's lives last week including HHH's, so she's pressing formal charges. Cops come out to arrest Bryan, though I'm not sure they have jurisdiction over something that happened in Tennessee. The cops surround Bryan and forcibly take him to the ground with nightsticks. They don't beat him, but HHH has that evil smile on his face. He calls the cops as Bryan's hands are bound behind his back.

HHH says this isn't what he wants because these aren't even real cops. They leave the ring and Stephanie is smiling as well. HHH is looking forward to this and goes after a defenseless Bryan. They head outside with HHH sending him into the steps and announce table as Stephanie cheers him on. Bryan comes back with some headbutts, only to be dropped on the announce table again.

He screams about his arm before HHH throws him into the

barricade and punches even more. The beating keeps going with Bryan just getting destroyed. HHH lays him on the table one more time and Stephanie mocks the YES motion. She gets in a few slaps for good measure. Bryan: "YOU HIT LIKE A GIRL!" HHH lay shim against the post and cracks Bryan in the head with a chair like a Concharito. Daniel is out cold so HHH adds a Pedigree and kisses Stephanie. He says this belongs to them and there is no YES Movement.

Overall Rating: B+. Tonight was all about the emotions leading up to Wrestlemania. We saw it in the triple threat story, heard about it with Cena being afraid of Bray Wyatt, heard it from Big Show when he talked about what the battle royal meant to him and saw it with Kane being angry at the Shield.

The matches are all set but tonight was a big step in making us care. Having a good match is one thing, but making the fans CARE about it is a different story entirely. The latter is very rare but they're going for it with this Wrestlemania. That's the right way to go about a big show and they're giving it the effort it needs. Tonight made me want to see these matches on a different level than I did before and that's exactly what these shows are supposed to do.

Results

Real Americans b. Usos – Neutralizer to Jey

Sheamus b. Titus O'Neil – Brogue Kick

Daniel Bryan b. Randy Orton – Pin after a spear from Batista

Goldust b. Fandango – Final Cut

Funkadactyls b. Tamina Snuka/AJ Lee – Split legged moonsault to AJ

Big E./Big Show/Dolph Ziggler/Mark Henry b. Alberto Del Rio/Damien Sandow/Curtis Axel/Ryback – Chokeslam to Sandow

Bray Wyatt b. Kofi Kingston – Sister Abigail

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