

# Monday Night Raw – May 15, 2017: For Once, This Show Didn't Take A.....Dive

## Monday Night Raw

Date: May 15, 2017

Location: Prudential Center, Newark, New Jersey

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

This could be an interesting show as the roster is freshly back from Europe, meaning there could be some severe jet lag issues. The other major issue at the moment is Braun Strowman, whose recent surgery will put him out until November instead of early July as originally thought. Tonight we might find out who is going to take his place. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Roman Reigns beating down Braun Strowman and putting him on the shelf for a long time.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to open the show. He talks about Strowman's injury and says we need a new name at the top of the card to challenge Brock Lesnar for the Universal Title. Therefore, we're going to have an extreme five way at Extreme Rules for the #1 contendership with Seth Rollins, Finn Balor, Bray Wyatt, Samoa Joe and Roman Reigns facing off for the shot.

This brings out Reigns to say he's the Big Dog, Balor to say he never lost the Universal Title and that he beat Reigns, Joe to say he's shown his worth through his actions, Wyatt to say everyone will fall, cower and run and Rollins to say he wants to fight. Joe obliges him and it's a huge brawl with Balor hitting a big flip dive and leaving everyone laying. This was EXACTLY what they needed to do as they've set up the match with a clear goal and dealt with the next few months without missing a beat. That's as good as it could have been done.

Post break Rollins, Reigns and Balor are all fired up so Angle makes some matches for later tonight: Rollins vs. Wyatt and Reigns vs. Balor.

#### Jeff Hardy vs. Sheamus

Sheamus is in a shirt for some reason and gets stomped down in the corner. Jeff's dive over the top is easily caught though and Sheamus sends him into the barricade as we go to a break. Back with Sheamus hitting a hard knee to the jaw for two but Jeff dropkicks him out of the air and gets two off a Twisting Stunner. Sheamus kicks Matt off the apron but walks into the Twist of Fate, followed by the Swanton for the pin at 8:36.

**Rating:** D+. And I still don't care. Really, we've seen these guys have singles matches multiple times now and I have little reason to believe Sheamus and Cesaro are going to win the titles. Then again that means they likely will get them, which would make them the first team to pin the Hardys in the better part of three years.

#### Sasha Banks vs. Alicia Fox

Banks beat her last week but Fox had her shoulder up at two. Fox kicks her in the face for two to start and hits that great looking northern lights suplex for two. Sasha can't get the Bank Statement and seems to hurt her leg on the way down. Back in and Fox hits the ax kick for the completely clean pin at 3:02.

**Rating:** D. I'm sorry what now? I mean, I'm a bigger Fox fan than most people but I really don't get this one. Unless they're going with Banks losing a match she should win and turning heel in frustration, I really don't get this. Fox isn't on Banks' level and this really isn't the most logical thing in the world.

#### Intercontinental Title: Dean Ambrose vs. The Miz

Ambrose is defending and we get some Big Match Intros. Miz bails to the floor though and we take a break. Back with Miz hitting his running clothesline in the corner, followed by the YES Kicks. Dean comes back with a suicide dive, followed by a bulldog for two back inside. Miz misses a running charge in the corner, followed by the

top rope standing elbow to give Dean two more.

The rebound lariat is countered into the Skull Crushing Finale for the very close near fall, giving us a shocked look from Miz. Dean sends him outside again so Miz hides behind Maryse, only to have Dean dive anyway. Maryse offers a distraction but the low blow is blocked, allowing Dean to kick Miz low for the DQ at 12:02. Dean looks stunned at the DQ for some reason.

**Rating:** C+. That's as obvious of a setup for a No DQ rematch as I've ever seen and that's fine. Miz vs. Ambrose is a good feud and Miz winning his seventh title is a good idea. I liked the match more than I was expecting to and they actually had me for a second on that Skull Crushing Finale.

Balor says Roman's yard is in his universe.

Here's Alexa Bliss for a chat. Bliss rips on Newark a bit before talking about what it's like to be a winner. When you're smarter than everyone else and more dominant than everyone else, winning just comes easily. If you're a failure, say what. Crowd: "WHAT!" Bliss: "My point exactly." If she had entered Miss USA last night, she would have walked off with the crown. Bliss: "So Miss USA: you're welcome."

Cue Bayley to interrupt though she knows Bliss doesn't care what she says. Bayley is invoking her rematch clause at Extreme Rules but Bliss needs to make it clear that it won't be extreme pogo sticking. Bliss talks down as only she can and suggests Bayley leave the championships to the adults. A dropkick puts Bliss on the floor but she snaps Bayley's throat on the ropes and comes up with a kendo stick. One heck of a shot to the back sends Bayley outside and Bliss poses with the title. Heck of a segment from Bliss here, who is still on fire.

Angle is on the phone with Sami Zayn when Miz comes in to complain about what Ambrose did. Kurt gives him a rematch at Extreme Rules but Miz wants a match where the title can change hands on a countout or a DQ. Maryse yells at Angle in French so Angle uses some high school French to say he's a gold freaking medalist. Cue the Drifter

to scare Miz and Maryse off. Angle: "Can I help you?" The Drifter leaves.

### Neville/TJP vs. Jack Gallagher/Austin Aries

I would have expected this to headline 205 Live. TJP charges into a boot to the face to start and the heels are sent outside for a flip dive. Back with Neville in control on Aries and sending him outside. Aries fights out of a chinlock (fans: "CM PUNK!") and claps his hands around TJP's ears, allowing the tag off to Gallagher. Jack mixes it up a bit his week with some suplexes for two and everything breaks down. Aries' bad knee gets taken out but he's still able to hit a top rope ax handle. It sounds like the fans are chanting for Derek Jeter as TJP hits the Detonation Kick for the pin on Gallagher at 9:42.

**Rating:** C. If the fans were really chanting for Punk and Jeter, good grief get over yourselves. The northeast is supposed to be this hot bed for indy wrestling and you have WWE giving you a freaking cruiserweight division but LET'S CHANT FOR OTHER SPORTS! That's going to make WWE love the cruiserweights so much and the little guys are going to be SO over with the office. Well done you bunch of pompous twits.

Bayley is banged up when Angle comes in to say the rematch will be a regular match. That's not what Bayley wants though so Angle makes it a kendo stick on a pole match.

Golden Truth fires each other up.

### Finn Balor vs. Roman Reigns

Before the match we see the full opening video of Reigns and Strowman again. Reigns starts fast by throwing Balor around the ring, only to get kicked in the face twice in a row. Roman misses a charge and goes shoulder first into the post, followed by a HARD running kick to the face. A double stomp to the back knocks Reigns even sillier as this has been almost one sided so far.

Back with Reigns hitting the apron dropkick to send Balor ribs first into the post. Reigns fires off the clotheslines in the corner and

gets two off a sitout powerbomb. The bad shoulder gives out off another powerbomb attempt though and Balor hits a good looking double stomp. The Sling Blade drops Reigns but a Superman Punch is good for two. Balor kicks him down again, only to have the Coup de Grace broken up. The spear gives Reigns the clean pin at 14:36.

**Rating:** B. This felt like a main event match and there's nothing wrong with Reigns getting the clean pin. Balor pinned him when it mattered a lot more and he's a made man for a long time as a result. Also none of this really matters when we're coming up on the pay per view anyway. Good match though.

The lights go out and the announcers are surprised when it's Bray Wyatt on screen. Wyatt wants to slay Lesnar. Oh and he'll beat Rollins too.

Seth Rollins says he slayed the King so he can slay the Beast.

Golden Truth comes out for a match but Goldust turns on Truth and beats him down. Goldust: "That's what's up."

#### Enzo Amore vs. Apollo Crews

Enzo talks about being from New Jersey but Titus O'Neil comes out and does his own version of the signature entrance, complete with a bit of the dance. Cass says hang on a second because the plans have changed.

#### Big Cass vs. Titus O'Neil

Titus is in a suit and beats Cass down but stops to take the belt off. Enzo offers a distraction though and a big boot ends Titus at 1:15.

Enzo takes a selfie with Crews, who enziguris him post match. That only kind of felt like a heel turn.

#### Bray Wyatt vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins starts fast and sends Bray outside for a....dive. Bray Rock Bottoms him onto the barricade though and we take a break. Back with Wyatt still in control and grabbing a superplex. Another Rock Bottom is broken up though and....let's have a graphic for the pay per view

match IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS MATCH.

Anyway Seth tosses him to the floor for a....dive before Bray hits one of the hardest clotheslines I've ever seen. Another Rock Bottom gives Bray two but Seth gets in his low superkick for the same. Bray gets tossed outside (third time) for a top rope...oh you get the idea by now but Samoa Joe comes in for the most obvious DQ in recent memory at 14:13.

**Rating:** C-. As repetitive as the match was, it really took a.....dive as they kept doing the same stuff over and over again. It also doesn't help that I had the DQ written up before the match started but to be fair, that's the logical ending and the right place to have Joe on the show. Good enough match but nothing great.

Bray and Joe beat on Rollins until Wyatt hits Joe with Sister Abigail to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This show's one job was to set up Extreme Rules and they did that in spades with three title matches and the five way being announced. After that, everything else was basically a bonus, including a title match, a team splitting up and a pair of heel turns. That's quite the show and we had some good wrestling involved as well. No it wasn't a great show but it did its job and was entertaining. What else can you really want from a show?

### Results

Jeff Hardy b. Sheamus – Swanton Bomb

Alicia Fox b. Sasha Banks – Ax kick

Miz b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Ambrose kicked him low

Neville/TJP b. Jack Gallagher/Austin Aries – Detonation Kick to Gallagher

Roman Reigns b. Finn Balor – Spear

Big Cass b. Titus O'Neil – Big boot

Seth Rollins b. Bray Wyatt via DQ when Samoa Joe interfered

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# Monday Night Raw – December 9, 2002: Three Times! THREE TIMES!

## Monday Night Raw

Date: December 9, 2002

Location: Thompson-Boling Arena, Knoxville, Tennessee

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Armageddon and that means it's time for the HHH vs. Shawn Michaels Show (as in the official version instead of the unofficial one we've seen for weeks now). Other than that, I really can't think of anything important that Raw has to offer on Sunday but it's not like Raw cares about anyone but these two anyway. Let's get to it.

Eric Bischoff and Chief Morely are in the ring with Shawn Michaels and HHH appearing on the screen. Bischoff gets right to the point: Sunday's match is going to be 2/3 falls. That's not all though as each fall will have a special stipulation. The first fall will be a street fight, the second will be held inside a cage and the third is a ladder match. HHH and Shawn didn't say a word. So to clarify, we're likely getting THREE Shawn vs. HHH matches and HHH will get to beat Shawn in his signature match to become the champion all over

again. Oh joy.

### Booker T./Goldust vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

During the entrances, a four way elimination match is confirmed for Sunday with Chris Jericho/Christian defending against these two teams and the Dudley Boyz. Booker works on Storm's arm to start and let's hit the HHH talk. Goldust comes in for the yet to be named Rear View on Regal. A suplex drops Goldust though and it's off to a chinlock. That goes nowhere so it's already off to Booker as the announcers manage to talk about the match for a bit.

Booker's spinebuster gets two on Lance and it's already back to the HHH discussion. There's the ax kick for two more but Goldust tags himself in for a double clothesline. Shattered Dreams makes Regal cringe and something like a Hart Attack gets two on Storm. Lance comes right back with a Sharpshooter though and Goldust tape.

**Rating:** C-. This was all about the angle building but that doesn't mean much given how fast they're throwing together this weak link story for Goldust. I'm not sure why they couldn't just have Booker and Goldust go on a roll and beat some teams but why do that when you can have them lose over and over in the first place?

Goldust says he's the weak link and wants Booker to find a new partner.

Trish Stratus is reading Hulk Hogan's new book for no apparent reason when Chris Jericho comes in to read an excerpt. Apparently he made Hogan tap at one point but he'd rather talk about the sexual tension between himself and Trish. She thinks Vitamin C sounds very nu-Trish-ous. Then again she saw him without his clothes on two weeks ago and thinks it's Vitamin Wee. These two have great chemistry together.

Rob Van Dam is on the phone in Bischoff's office when the bosses come in to hang up the call. Bischoff needs to keep the line open for his call from Scott Steiner. Van Dam leaves but tells Bischoff that he just hung up on Steiner. I would pay so much money to see Steiner and Van Dam have a five minute chat about....well anything really.

### Steven Richards vs. Jacqueline

Jacqueline is in a triple threat match with Trish and Victoria on Sunday, just in case you weren't over the card already. Steven



easily powers her into the corner to start but gets armdragged down. Richards gets serious and grabs a side slam for two with Jackie's foot on the ropes freaking him out. A DDT gives Jackie two more but she drops him throat first across the top rope. The StevieDT is good for the pin and I have no idea why this existed.

Victoria comes in to go after Jackie but Trish makes the save. Jackie wants nothing from Trish and the loser's music plays for some reason.

Jeff Hardy is honored to be compared to a young HBK but the real version comes in to say he's not dead. Shawn knows Jeff is going to take a beating tonight and says take advantage of HHH when he gets cocky. Jeff is grateful for the advice and says if Shawn needs help in the ladder match, let him know.

#### Rob Van Dam vs. Batista

Batista throws him around to start as JR gets in his regular mention of Rob's offense being "unorthodox". Choking underneath the ropes ensues until Rob gets in a few kicks to take over. Rolling Thunder gives Van Dam two but Flair grabs Rob's foot. Cue Kane for the fast DQ.

Kane and Van Dam clean house.

Morely yells at Kane, who doesn't know who Morely is. The Chief explains things so Kane does a Val Venis impression, earning himself a handicap match with 3 Minute Warning.

#### Christopher Nowinski/D'Lo Brown vs. Maven/Al Snow

And Brown is just a heel now. The good guys clean house to start with Snow armdragging Brown a few times. Maven comes in for some right hands of his own until Nowinski pulls him down from behind. The slow beatdown begins with the fans saying someone sucks. My guess would be the whole match but I'm too big of a Brown fan to say that. Nowinski gets dropkicked off the top and the hot tag brings in Snow. The trapping headbutts have Brown in trouble until Chris makes the save. The Sky High puts Snow away.

**Rating:** D. This is as low level of a feud as you can get and despite the pre-match video on the match, I have no idea why these guys are feuding. I don't know if this is still supposed to hype up Tough Enough but it's really not interesting. Also, this gets nearly two minutes longer than Batista vs. Van Dam? Is Batista really that

incapable of wrestling a longer match?

Booker tries to talk Goldust out of splitting up the team. The plea is enough and they'll be a team at the pay per view. So they set up and blew off the story in about forty minutes. That might be a record even for Raw. The story is fine but could we get a bit more time to let it set in? At least have the story go on longer than two weeks to let it have some impact.

### HHH vs. Jeff Hardy

HHH pulls him off the ropes during the entrances but Jeff gets in the legdrop between the legs. That's enough trouble for HHH as he takes Hardy outside for some whips into the steps. Back in and a spinebuster sets up a side slam, followed by an over the shoulder backbreaker. Jeff's comeback consists of a running forearm before two Pedigrees (because HHH can't just have one of anything) give HHH the pin.

**Rating:** D. Well it's not like Jeff is doing anything at this point. You knew they were going to put HHH over someone very hard to make sure you know how awesome he is before Sunday's title match. Just in case you didn't realize how completely awesome HHH was you see. Hardy was treated like a jobber here, though to be fair it's not that far from the truth.

HHH loads up a chair but Shawn comes out for the staredown as we take a break. Back with Flair saying he'd like a word with Shawn. With Shawn holding the title, Flair talks about carrying that very belt around the airports (not quite) but then someone told him that Shawn was the new man.

Then one day Arn Anderson said Shawn was a tough act to follow and Flair had to take a look in the mirror. Ric realized that he wasn't the best in the world anymore and there was no way around it. As high as Shawn was on the pedestal though, there's a new man in town. That man's name is HHH and he's the best in the world. Shawn needs to concede the fact that he needs to pass the torch. If Shawn tries to keep going, HHH will kill him on the way to taking the most coveted prize in this business. Shawn seems to buy into the idea and walks away as HHH reiterates what Flair just said.

Great stuff here from Flair but there's no way around the fact that we're looking at three Shawn vs. HHH matches on Sunday despite no one wanting to see it. The first match was great but their promos

haven't done much since then. Couple that with the fact that I can't imagine their match is going to validate crushing everyone else in their paths to get there and it's hard to imagine this is worth all the effort.

The Raw Retro for the week is Mike Tyson debuting and Steve Austin getting in his face. You can hear WCW collapsing from here.

### Kane vs. 3 Minute Warning

Rico offers an early distraction so the Samoans can jump Kane from behind. Double headbutts have Kane in trouble and Rosey gets two off a legdrop. The running DDT plants Jamal and Rosey splashes his partner by mistake. The chokeslam puts Jamal down for the pin in less than three minutes. We have four teams and the Samoans are jobbing in a handicap match?

Rico helps with a post match beatdown until Van Dam makes the save. Jamal even eats a Van Terminator.

Stacy is in a rather sexy Santa outfit and debuts the Test blue ball Christmas ornament. Yes, this really is the joke they're STILL going with. Just in case you didn't get the idea, Stacy sings a Christmas carol about the testicles roasting over an open fire.

RNN BREAKING NEWS shows Randy Orton at the New York Stock Exchange. We run down the pay per view card with all four of its announced matches.

Chris Jericho wants to put Trish through a table in their six person tag. Oh and it's rather large in case you were wondering. Victoria comes up and says she'll be the one doing that.

Shawn tells Flair that he'll be waiting for HHH in the parking lot.

### Trish Stratus/Dudley Boyz vs. Chris Jericho/Christian/Victoria

Tables match. D-Von hammers Christian into the corner before it's off to Bubba for the big elbows. Why they're tagging isn't clear but I'd assume it's because they need to fill in some extra time and don't have any more matches. It's off to Victoria, who takes What's Up. Trish hits one on Jericho to make Lawler a bit envious. D-Von brings in the first table but gets knocked off the apron. That's fine though as Bubba loads up a powerbomb on Victoria...and we take a break?

Back with Bubba in a chinlock and JR apologizing for the abrupt

commercial. Victoria comes in to work on Bubba as we see a clip of Jericho breaking up the powerbomb before the commercial. The referee doesn't see a tag to D-Von, who can't come in despite, as JR has mentioned more than once, there being no disqualifications. Now the announcers discuss which version of Shawn will show up on Sunday (Shawn Michaels, HBK or the Showstopper).

The Lionsault hits knees and Bubba covers out of instinct as Christian slides in a table. That table is set up in the corner and Jericho bounces off of it as this just keeps going. Bubba dives over for the hot tag to D-Von and house is cleaned in a hurry. Jericho saves Christian from being suplexed through a table but takes 3D for his efforts.

The Dudleys load Victoria up for a powerbomb but Richards comes out for the save, only to have Spike Dudley get rid of him. Christian eats a good looking double flapjack but now Regal and Storm come in to jump Bubba and D-Von. Booker T. and Goldust make it SIX RUN-INS as they go after the champs.

Jericho takes the Stratusphere for some reason and since it's just a weak hurricanrana, Chris takes Trish's head off with a clothesline. Booker saves Trish and stops for a Spinarooni but gets dropped by Storm. That earns Lance a 3D and the Dudleys finally help Trish powerbomb Victoria through the table for the win.

**Rating:** D. Did I mention there isn't much on this show and they don't have enough to fill in two hours? This match ran over fifteen minutes with six people running in. The tagging stuff got old in a hurry, especially with JR mentioning more than once that there were no disqualifications. Why he didn't mention the tags not being necessary isn't clear but it might have made too much sense.

HHH and Flair head to the parking lot where Shawn hits HHH in the head with a shovel. Flair takes a shot as well (at least wait for the bar) and a trashcan shot knocks HHH into a dumpster. As you might expect, Shawn climbs the highest thing he can find (the production truck) and dives onto HHH for the big crash. Shawn rants about having heart to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. Yeah this isn't working and it's very, very clear that the red side of Armageddon is a horrible show with EVERYTHING banked on Shawn vs. HHH. I'm not even sure why the Tag Team Title match needs to be a four way when you could easily have two tags to

flesh things out a bit. The long matches and bad wrestling didn't help here but above all else, Raw needs something fresh instead of HHH vs. Shawn again.

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# Monday Night Raw – May 8, 2017: Wake Me When We're Back Home

## Monday Night Raw

Date: May 8, 2017

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

We're over in the old country tonight for a taped show. It's roughly a month away from Extreme Rules and we don't have much of a card yet. However, you can pretty much pencil in Roman Reigns and Braun Strowman coming back from severe injuries to work the show because that's how WWE works. Let's get to it.

Here's Dean Ambrose to open the show who says Kurt Angle won't be here tonight. Dean: "I heard his dog is sick or something." For

tonight though, Ambrose is in charge. Before we can hear his first act, here are Miz and Maryse to interrupt. While the idea of Ambrose in charge could only lead to chaos, he has something else in mind. Before the show, Stephanie McMahon called him to say that Miz is in charge this week instead.

Ambrose says Miz is in the first match tonight and offers a handshake but here's Strowman with his arm in a sling to interrupt. He wants Reigns as soon as possible and then he wants Brock Lesnar. This brings out.....Kalisto, to say he wants Strowman tonight. Ambrose makes the match but Braun says he's injured. Dean heard Strowman say he could beat Kalisto with one arm though so the match is on. As for Miz, he can face Finn Balor next.

### Miz vs. Finn Balor

Miz bails to the floor to start but comes back in to take a dropkick to the face. Another trip to the floor doesn't go as well for Miz as he gets dropkicked into the barricade. Maryse pulls her husband away from the Coup de Grace and we take a break. Back with Miz getting in a short DDT for two of his own and it's off to the chinlock. Balor comes back with the Pele, followed by another kick to the head to put Miz on the floor.

Miz is reeling but a Maryse distraction lets him shove Balor into the referee. As acting GM of the night, Miz can't tolerate referees being abused so that's a DQ at 9:57. Actually not so fast as Ambrose comes out and says we're not doing it like that. The match restarts and Balor hits a Sling Blade, followed by the Coup de Grace for the pin at 12:31 (counting the break in between the falls).

**Rating:** C-. I have a feeling we'll be seeing more of this going forward but it wasn't the strongest match in the world. Then again that's what you have to expect from Miz. While I'm not wild on having the #1 contender lose a match, you have to factor in the UK crowd. Not a bad match or anything and the more they build up Balor, the better things are for them.

Nia Jax scares Alexa Bliss again but they seem to be ok.

### Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Non-title with Nia Jax and Bayley are the respective seconds. Cole actually mentions Bliss and James working together on Smackdown a few months back in a fact I didn't expect to hear. Bliss gets kicked around with ease to start and Bliss gets knocked out to the floor for an early break.

Back with Bliss working on an armbar and twisting Mickie down by said arm for two. Naturally Bliss gets in some trash talk but misses a knee drop onto the arm, allowing Mickie to start the comeback. The chokeslave is countered into a flapjack as Bayley and Nia get in a fight. Not that it matters as Bliss pulls Mickie off the top for a crash and the pin at 9:15.

**Rating:** D+. As usual Bliss' mannerisms and heel work outshine her in-ring abilities and that's a good thing. She's absolutely nailing the character right now and that's much more important than being able to do thirty different holds. Bliss vs. Bayley II should be good as they're such a natural rivalry, though you can't keep Nia away from the title forever.

Nia destroys Bayley and James post match.

Miz yells at Ambrose, who tells Miz he can go home tonight. That's not cool with Miz, who has a special MizTV later. As a bonus, Ambrose can fight Bray Wyatt.

Samoa Joe says Seth Rollins is now living on his terms. Cue Rollins for the big brawl.

### Kalisto vs. Braun Strowman

Braun says he's not wrestling this match and then kicks Kalisto in the face. Cue Roman Reigns though and we'll say it's a no contest at thirty seconds.

Three straight Superman Punches put Strowman on the floor but he still manages to kick a charging Reigns in the chest. Reigns gets the sling off the bad arm and sends it into the post over and over. A bunch of chair shots knock Strowman into the crowd. What a hero that Reigns is. I mean, assuming you believe WWE still sees him as a

major face and aren't just trolling the heck out of us anymore.

Goldust fires R-Truth up before their Tag Team Turmoil match. It seems that Goldust isn't sure about the team's future.

### Tag Team Turmoil

It's basically a gauntlet match with two teams starting and the winning team advancing to face a new team. The last team standing faces the Hardys at Extreme Rules. Enzo Amore and Big Cass start with Cesaro and Sheamus and it's Cass vs. Sheamus to get things going. An early Empire Elbow has Sheamus in trouble and Cass throws Enzo at both guys for good measure. A quick Irish Curse drops Enzo though (Enzo: "OW OW OW!") and we take a break. Back with Enzo catching Cesaro with an enziguri, only to have Sheamus pull Cass off the apron. A Sharpshooter makes Enzo tap at 6:45 and it's Heath Slater and Rhyno in third.

The brawl starts in the aisle with Slater and Rhyno getting the worse of it. Slater is thrown inside for a top rope clothesline from Sheamus, who also kicks Rhyno off the apron. A Brogue Kick ends Slater at 10:35. Anderson and Gallows are in fourth as we take a second break. Back again with Cesaro muscling Gallows up for a delayed suplex. Sheamus gives up the hot tag though and everything breaks down with all four being dropped in just a few seconds. White Noise gets two on Gallows and we take a third break. Back with Sheamus hitting Gallows with the Brogue Kick for the elimination at 22:33.

Golden Truth comes out as the last team and Goldust hammers on Sheamus to start. That doesn't last long though as Sheamus takes him down and works on the leg, leaving Cesaro to grab the Sharpshooter. R-Truth makes the save and hits a quick Lie Detector on Cesaro. The ax kick gets two but Truth misses a charge and gets rolled up for the pin at 27:48.

**Rating:** D+. This was much more long than good and showed how dull the tag division is on Mondays. Sheamus and Cesaro are talented and WAY better than I was expecting them to be but this made them feel like faces instead of the big time heels they're supposed to be. The



big problem here though is I had a hard time buying the idea that ANYONE other than Sheamus and Cesaro getting the win, especially after their interactions with the Hardys over the last few weeks.

Golden Truth gets beaten down post match but the Hardys come out for the staredown.

### Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

They head straight to the floor to start the brawl with Joe throwing him around, only to have Seth catch him with a clothesline off the steps. The fight heads back inside with Joe taking over and grabbing a suplex for two. Joe gets in a hard shot to the knee though and Rollins crumbles to the floor as we take a break. Back with Joe dropping a big knee and telling Rollins not to listen to the fans.

The Koquina Clutch is broken up with a jawbreaker and Joe is sent outside for back to back suicide dives. A springboard clothesline gives Seth two but he walks into the snap powerslam for two. Joe can't powerbomb him though and gets caught in the falcon's arrow. A turnbuckle pad is pulled off but Seth gets two off a superkick anyway. It's Rollins being sent chest first into the buckle behind the referee's back. Joe does it again in front of the referee's back for the DQ at 14:12.

**Rating:** C+. The ending hurts this a lot but these two definitely have chemistry. You can likely pencil in the third match for Extreme Rules and that could be quite the fight if they're given the right gimmick. I like that they didn't have the match end clean and after the first one ended on a fluke, there's a good chance that the third match is the real payoff.

Joe chokes him out after the match.

### TJP vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville is on commentary. TJP chills on the corner to start so Jack headbutts the heck out of him. Back in and TJP starts in on the leg but gets dropkicked in the face for his efforts. The Detonation Kick is broken up though and TJP grabs a rollup with a handful of trunks for the pin at 3:03.

**Rating:** C. It was nice while it lasted but you can see how far Gallagher has fallen. He's barely getting a reaction in his home country where he should look like a star. When you lose almost every match you have though, there's only so much that the home country crowd can do for you.

TJP goes after Jack again and puts him in the kneebar until Austin Aries makes the save.

#### Sasha Banks vs. Alicia Fox

They slap each other in the face to start before Fox gets two off her northern lights suplex. We hit the chinlock and the fans start looking at something in the crowd. Back up and Banks hits her running knees for the pin at 2:57.

#### Bray Wyatt vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Miz and Maryse on commentary. Bray punches Dean in the head to start as Miz talks about wanting to return prestige to the Intercontinental Title. Dirty Deeds doesn't work so Bray suplexes him on the floor instead. Back with Bray getting two off a DDT until Dean hits a hard clothesline. Ambrose sends him outside for the running clothesline off the barricade and here are Miz and Maryse to ringside.

Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two and Dean hits the top rope elbow. Miz grabs the Intercontinental Title for a distraction so Dean suicide dives onto him. Bray is smart enough to go after the distracted Dean, allowing Miz to hit Ambrose in the back with the title. Sister Abigail finishes Ambrose at 15:12.

**Rating:** D+. This was a long match to end a very long show. I can live with a dirty finish to set up a title match next week and Miz is someone you can buy as a threat to the title. I'm surprised Ambrose has held the thing as long as he has but it's time for him to lose it. Adding Bray to the mix could be interesting as well.

Miz poses over Ambrose and hits the catchphrase to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. I know this show isn't going to get glowing reviews and I certainly see why. The show really wasn't terrible but

it was VERY long and drawn out. You could tell that this was all about setting stuff up for next week instead of doing anything interesting here. I was bored more than once tonight but I can always give the wrestlers a bit of a break based on the jet lag and being thrown off their games like this. It's not a bad show but it's really, really sluggish and that's not good.

### Results

Finn Balor b. Miz – Coup de Grace

Alexa Bliss b. Mickie James – Bliss pulled James off the top

Kalisto vs. Braun Strowman went to a no contest when Roman Reigns interfered

Sheamus and Cesaro won Tag Team Turmoil last eliminating Golden Truth

Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe via DQ when Rollins was sent into the exposed turnbuckle

TJP b. Jack Gallagher – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Sasha Banks b. Alicia Fox – Double knees to the chest

Bray Wyatt b. Dean Ambrose – Sister Abigail

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# Monday Night Raw – December 2, 2002 (2017 Redo): The Best In The World Because They Say So

## Monday Night Raw

Date: December 2, 2002

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

So HHH is back and I'd assume that's about all you need to know for this show. That whole week without HHH around to really run the show must have scared the company as he interfered in last week's World Title match, seemingly setting up another pay per view showdown with Shawn Michaels. I'm as thrilled as you are. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about....well by George it's about HHH coming back last week! To be fair it's not like anything else was treated like it mattered last week.

Opening sequence.

### Dudley Boyz vs. 3 Minute Warning

They don't waste time with the wrestling to start and Rosey gets dropped with a double belly to back. A double crossbody puts Bubba and Rosey down and we get down to Jamal getting knocked back and forth between the Dudleys. Rosey and Bubba chop it out with the latter taking him down into what can best be described as a cross armbreaker. D-Von stays on the arm as this is already more technical than I was expecting.

Rico gets involved for a distraction though and D-Von gets beaten down for a short while. For some reason a DDT stops Rosey but the referee doesn't see the tag. A neckbreaker puts Rosey down again and now the tag brings Bubba back in. House is cleaned but Rico gets in a kick to the back of the head. Cue Spike for the way too fast save, allowing the brothers to hit What's Up. After Rico's interference doesn't go anywhere, a 3D finishes Rosey.

**Rating:** C-. Well that happened. Really I'm not sure what else there is to say about the match as it just came and went. It's good to have the Dudleys back but it's very clear that there's nothing to the division at this point and if 3 Minute Warning is the best they have, they're in big trouble.

We come back from a break with all three Dudleys down, thanks to an off-camera attack at the hands of Chris Jericho and Christian and 3 Minute Warning. D-Von was put in the Walls for a Conchairto and Bubba was beaten down as well while Spike was already carried out. As much as I'd like to have seen it happen, I can greatly appreciate the idea of having stuff seem more realistic instead of having it so rigidly attached to the schedule.

Sean Morely tells Eric Bischoff that he's got this covered. Oh and call him Chief Morely. HHH to come in to say that he wrestled for thirty minutes in the Elimination Chamber but now he has to beat Rob Van Dam to become #1 contender. Bischoff doesn't want to hear it and demands great TV. Morely suggests a guest referee to be announced, likely as Shawn Michaels, so HHH can overcome even more odds.

We look at the Dudleys' beatdown again.

#### Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

They hit the mat to start before trading arm cranks. Ivory gets two off a rollup as this isn't exactly thrilling so far. We hit the chinlock with Ivory pulling on Trish's face until she fights up for a neckbreaker. The Chick Kick gets two as the announcers debate who the guest referee is going to be. Trish hits a very assisted Stratusfaction for the pin.

**Rating:** D. I know Trish would get much better in the coming years but she really wasn't able to lift anything up the ladder at this point. It doesn't help that Ivory is someone who has been the same performer for years and isn't going to have a memorable match no matter what she does. They really need to bring in some exciting talent if they want this division to work as Trish vs. Victoria is only going to take them so far.

Speaking of dull women, Jackie yells at Victoria for going through her bag and a match is made. She doesn't even mind if it's not for the title, because why would she want that? Jackie beats her up because it's Texas and that means Jackie is all tough and awesome.

Jericho and Christian threaten violence against anyone who disrespect them. Christopher Nowinski instantly sucks up to them like the worm that he is. Of note: the champs' bags are chained to their lockers.

### Jeff Hardy/Tommy Dreamer vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

This is the result of Regal dislocating Dreamer's jaw a few weeks back. They start fighting in the aisle with Jeff running around the ring to take both evil foreigners down. Dreamer grabs a half crab on Storm to start and gets his jaw broken again for the gimmick infringement. Regal comes in for a knee to the jaw as there's certainly a target so far. A front facelock allows Dreamer to get over for the tag to Jeff, which the referee naturally misses. With the referee dealing with Jeff, Regal gets a buckle pad off and Dreamer goes face first into the steal for the easy pin.

**Rating:** D. Jeff and Dreamer are a really lame low level team and having them waste Regal and Storm's time isn't that interesting. Then again, it's certainly better than the stupid hardcore feud with Nowinski. You really can tell that Jeff doesn't have any fire in him at the moment but at least he wasn't out there long enough to horribly botch anything.

Ric Flair talks about Batista's rough upbringing but Batista doesn't want to go into it. Flair doesn't seem to mind and brings up Batista bouncing from foster home to foster home. Now Batista gets to use the anger in the ring.

### Batista vs. Hurricane

Spinebuster and Batista Bomb are good for the pin in under a minute. Sounds like Flair has a future as a teacher.

Kane comes out for the save because they were partners for like two weeks.

Shawn and Van Dam go face to face about how horrible HHH is. Bischoff comes in to officially make Shawn guest referee. That was ever in doubt? If Shawn doesn't play it fair, he loses the title.

### Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho

Before the match, Booker makes jokes about Jericho being left without his clothes last week and makes jokes about size. Jericho throws some chops to start and dropkicks Booker out to the floor. The top rope back elbow to the jaw gets two and it's already off to

the chinlock. After a little dance (you always need a little dance), Booker catches him on top for a big crashing superplex.

A missile dropkick gives Booker two and Jericho gets catapulted into the corner for good measure. Christian and Goldust run in but quickly cancel each other out, leaving Booker to hit the ax kick. And never mind as Chief Morely comes out and makes this a tag match, minus any sort of Teddy Long's charisma.

**Rating:** C+. The match was just there to fill time before the ending but it's always helpful to have people this talented in the ring. Even if they have nothing to do and are only having a simple match, they're going to do it well enough that it's something you can watch without getting bored. I mean, it's not good enough to have them get the World Title or anything but that's just crazy talk.

#### Tag Team Titles: Christian/Chris Jericho vs. Booker T./Goldust

Christian and Jericho are defending and this is joined in progress with Christian in early trouble. It's off to Booker to hammer away on Jericho until the champs get in a cheap shot to take over. Jericho's running crotch shot to the back sets up more dancing but Christian's attempt earns himself a crotching.

Goldust comes in to clean house and gets two off a rollup for very hot reaction. Booker's snap spinebuster gets two and he ducks Christian's belt shot. The Book End gives Booker two more with Christian pulling the referee out. Now the belt shot works and Jericho adds the Lionsault for the pin to retain because the Texas guys have to job in their home state.

**Rating:** C+. Another solid outing here with all four working hard before the annoying ending that follows the WWE formula of humiliating the hometown favorites. I guess it's a good sign that Goldust didn't lose in his hometown and it's not like Booker has much more momentum to lose, even if the fans seem to love him. They really need to change the titles soon though as Goldust and Booker have been primed up for months now.

This week's Raw Retro is Austin with the cement truck destroying Vince's Corvette.

F-View shows us Test and Stacy making out on a couch, only to have her stop for the sake of a marketing idea.

#### Jackie vs. Victoria

Non-title. Victoria shoves her down to start and stomps a lot as the announcers make sure to talk about how tough Jackie is. Jackie gets in a hurricanrana for two but charges into a boot in the corner. The slingshot legdrop gets two but the Widow's Peak is countered with a backdrop. Jackie's spinning kick to the head gives her the clean pin and WOO TEXAS! I mean, Dallas and Austin are totally the same thing. They're only two hours apart and if you can have someone the fans don't care about win a non-title match it's completely the same as the popular team losing a title match right?

Steven Richards comes in to check on Victoria. They're still in the ring post match with Victoria demanding that Jackie come back out here. Instead it's Scott Steiner for some rhyming before destroying Steven. Cue a very smiling Bischoff to offer Steiner a contract pitch. The pitch is in the back though, where Bischoff has eight women waiting for him. Steiner says he already has a super freak tonight and opens his limo to reveal....Stephanie McMahon in a short skirt and low cut top. She has things to offer Steiner that Bischoff can't. So to sum this up: Stephanie is now hotter than eight good looking women combined.

We go to the World for RNN Breaking News....but we have breaking news in the arena, where HHH and Flair are looking for Shawn, who is in a referee shirt. Shawn is going to DQ HHH for any broken rule, which is totally going to happen because we're certainly NOT guaranteed to see HHH vs. Shawn for the title again.

#### HHH vs. Rob Van Dam

The winner gets Shawn, the guest referee here, at the pay per view. Actually hang on as Shawn needs to eject Flair before we get going. HHH isn't allowed to throw a closed fist so Rob springboard kicks him down for two. A slingshot dive drops HHH and there's the spinning kick to the back. Rob kicks him in the face for two more, followed by a small package for a fast counted near fall. HHH gets caught in a sleeper with Shawn sitting in front of the ropes for a nice touch.

Back up and Shawn gets bumped and since he's a referee here instead of a wrestler, a single clothesline keeps him down for a good twenty seconds. Shawn gets up to pull a chair away from HHH so Rob kicks him down by mistake. Rolling Thunder hits HHH but a chair shot knocks Rob silly for the slow counted pin.



**Rating:** D. Not only was it short and not very good but this felt like something Austin would have done in his day. His only support is sent outside, he has a guest referee that can't stand him and he can't use a right hand. The only cheating HHH did was swinging a chair after Rob hit the referee by mistake. I know HHH is amazing and the best thing ever (save for Stephanie) but this made him look like a face instead of the top heel.

They fight post match and Shawn gets in a superkick to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D-. Between the two really bad women's matches, the HHH/Stephanie worship and Booker/Goldust losing in Texas in a title match they should have won months ago, this was a really bad show. The Tag Team Title match was fine until the end but the rest of the show was the standard problem this era has: bad wrestling, uninteresting storytelling and pushing people who are only there because WWE has decided they're the best things in the world.

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**Monday Night Raw – May 1,  
2017: The Two Fisted**

# Problem

## Monday Night Raw

Date: May 1, 2017

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

We're past Payback and that means things can finally start settling down around here. The big story continues to be Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman with Strowman beating the injured Reigns clean last night. Extreme Rules is in just over a month and an ambulance match would seem to be the next logical step. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The women's division is in the ring with a pedestal in the middle and here's Alexa Bliss for her coronation as the new champion. Bliss thanks everyone for being here tonight, even if Kurt Angle forced them to be here. The Queen is gone is gone but not to worry because the Goddess is here. These women are an inspiration, including Mickie James, despite her contemporaries Mae Young and Fabulous Moolah having moved on to a better place.

As for Sasha, she's the woman that Alexa beat to get where she is today. Sasha glares at her and Bliss backs into Nia. Bliss: "We're good. We're good." Alexa gets on the pedestal and laughs at Bayley for losing in front of all her family last night. At least now Bayley's nephews will have someone to look up to. The brawl starts in a hurry and we take a break.

Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax/Emma/Alicia Fox vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke/Mickie James

Alexa hides from Bayley to start so it's Emma forearming Bayley in the back instead. Mickie comes in and starts on the arm before it's off to Alicia vs. Dana with Brooke scoring off a running cartwheel splash. Bayley works on Alicia's arm as they're tagging in and out at a very fast pace.

Fox sends Banks outside and it's a big staredown on the floor. Back

with Nia throwing Sasha around and dropping an elbow for two. Bliss comes back in for some boot choking but Sasha avoids a charge. The hot tag brings in Bayley to take Alexa down and send her into the buckle ten straight times. Everything breaks down with everyone brawling to the floor, leaving Bliss to rake Bayley's eyes, setting up a DDT for the pin at 14:03.

**Rating:** C-. There's only so much you can do when you have eight people in there at the same time. With so many people floating around, especially people who don't have anything to do at the moment, you're not going to be able to really showcase anything other than a single feud. Bliss pinning Bayley is a good idea and I'm really glad they didn't go with the lame idea of the champion losing her first match after winning the title.

#### Enzo Amore vs. Luke Gallows

Enzo says they have bags underneath their eyes (they're Gucci) because their real life is better than their dreams. Anderson and Gallows jump them from behind though and we take a break before the bell. The match is joined in progress with Gallows working on the arm. Enzo avoids a charge in the corner though and scores with some kicks to the face, only to uppercut Amore's head off. Another shot staggers Gallows and Amore goes up, only to have Anderson offer a distraction. The flapjack gives Luke the pin at 5:30.

**Rating:** D. I am so bored with this feud as I can't even remember why they're fighting in the first place. Enzo and Cass aren't exactly the most thrilling team in the world at this point and I don't see that changing anytime soon. The Enzo schtick is starting to get old in a hurry as we have to wait a few minutes so he can say the exact same thing every single week. Then again the fans still react to it so at least it does serve a purpose, unlike this feud that doesn't seem like it's ever going to end.

Neville tells TJ Perkins to stay focused.

Here's Seth Rollins to talk about how he's persevered through everything and is doing everything he's wanted to do. Now though, he wants the Beast. Cue Finn Balor to say while Rollins has done a lot,

he's the one armed man who became the first ever Universal Champion. Remember that Seth?

Dean Ambrose comes out to say he wants part of the fight but here's Miz to say he's awesome and Balor is a coward. Miz talks about being a threat until all three tell him to shut up at the same time. Dean asks who wants to see someone beat up the Miz and pulls out his phone to call Kurt. With the call over, Dean says Kurt has made Miz vs. Balor vs. Rollins with the winner getting an Intercontinental Title match.

We look back at last night's main event.

Tony Nese/Brian Kendrick/Noam Dar vs. Rich Swann/Akira Tozawa/Jack Gallagher

The good guys all have umbrellas for their entrances. Tozawa kicks Kendrick in the face to start but Nese runs him over without much effort. Everything breaks down in a hurry and the villains are sent outside, leaving everyone else to pose. Back with Tozawa in trouble at the hands of all three heels.

Tozawa finally gets in a kick and makes the hot tag off to Swann. Rich speeds things way up and hits a running flip ax kick (Booker: "Like a Harlem Hangover!") followed by a running 450. Everything breaks down with Gallagher and Kendrick being left alone in the ring. The Captain's Hook is broken up and Jack hits the running dropkick for the pin at 10:34.

**Rating:** C+. This got MUCH better after the commercial and made me less annoyed after thinking it was the old "throw them into one match" concept. At this point 205 Live needs something to be built up other than the main event so having six guys go out there looking good is one of the best things that can be done.

We look back at Sheamus and Cesaro turning heel last night.

Here are Sheamus (who Graves correctly identifies as looking like Travis Bickle) and Cesaro for their explanation. Sheamus is tired of living in a fog where he had to pretend to like the fans. They were ready to take their titles back at Wrestlemania but then the Hardys

were thrown in for the nostalgia reaction.

That moment didn't last long though because it was just a novelty. Now they're ready to dominate again, as only they can. Cesaro and Sheamus go to leave but here are the Hardys to cut them off. Matt talks about being banged up from last night's post match ambush but their response is DELETE. The champs chase them off.

Miz is ready to get his Intercontinental Title back but Ambrose comes in to ask if Miz's hair gel gets in his eyes when he wrestles. Miz leaves so "Mean" Dean Ambrose throws it back to Bobby and Gene at ringside.

### Heath Slater vs. Apollo Crews

This is over Titus being annoyed that Slater gave Crews advice on being a new father. Crews takes him to the mat to start and Slater is already in over his head. A headscissors doesn't get Heath anywhere as Crews nips up for a staredown. Crews misses a charge in the corner though and we get a Titus vs. Rhino staredown (Perhaps over Main Event issues from last week? I know you know what I'm talking about.). Back in and Crews hits an enziguri, followed by the Toss Powerbomb for the pin at 3:46.

**Rating:** D+. This was exactly what you would expect from these two and that's not a good thing. I know Titus seems like a death sentence for Crews but you have to go somewhere with him so it's not like he has anywhere to go but up. Not a good match or anything but it's getting Crews on TV, which is a good thing for him.

Here's Angle to talk about Reigns vs. Strowman. Last night's matches had consequences with Reigns re-injuring his ribs and Strowman tearing his rotator cuff. Kurt has been thinking about this all day but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Bray is here as a savior after rising from his own ashes with burnt wings. Angle says this is his ring but Bray says it's his world.

Dean interviews Rollins because there are cameras in the locker room and therefore there must be an interview. After listing off some potential names, Dean asks if Rollins would like an Intercontinental

Title shot. Tensions are teased but Dean throws it back to Gorilla before it goes too far.

### Austin Aries vs. TJ Perkins

They trade shots in the corner to start until Aries hits one heck of a shot to the jaw. Perkins comes right back by tying him in the Tree of Woe for a running dropkick to the knee to put Aries in trouble. Back from a break with Perkins putting on a butterfly lock, followed by a springboard spinning forearm for two. Aries' knee is too banged up to be thrown across the ring and his shoulder hits the post to make it even worse.

TJ doesn't even let him fall down before he grabs a half crab in the ropes. Aries comes right back though by kicking TJ to the floor for the suicide dive. The middle rope elbow to the back gets two but the knee gives out again. TJ tries the Detonation Kick, only to have Aries reverse into the Last Chancery for the tap at 11:20.

**Rating:** B-. The wrestling was good but the important thing was building up the Last Chancery as a potential finisher. If you're just going to have Aries use the move over and over, at some point it has to actually beat someone. Even if he only wins one or two matches with it, the idea is that he can do it again, which makes it an effective finisher.

Post match Perkins puts Aries in the kneebar to leave him laying.

Ambrose interviews Balor and suggests eating a carb. Balor takes a bite of a doughnut before heading to the ring but is replaced by the Drifter, who seems to confuse Ambrose.

Golden Truth's request for a Tag Team Title shot is turned down as they don't have the best win/loss record. Angle will however put them in a Tag Team Turmoil match next week, which seems to work fine.

Last night, Angle said goodbye to Chris Jericho after he won the US Title, sending him to Smackdown.

### Seth Rollins vs. Finn Balor vs. The Miz

The winner is #1 contender to the Intercontinental Title. Miz heads

to the floor like the coward he is so it's Balor vs. Rollins to start. Neither of them seem that interested in fighting though as they keep looking at Miz before finally heading out after him. He finally gets caught and tries to fight, only to be kicked out to the floor.

We get Rollins vs. Balor again but Miz pulls Finn to the floor and hides Maryse so Seth can't hit a dive. All three get back inside, only to have Miz shove Seth off the top for a big crash as we take a break. Back with Balor elbowing out of Miz's chinlock until Rollins tries a high crossbody but lands on his head. Thankfully he's right back up but Miz sends him into Balor to put Finn down on the floor.

Both good guys take kicks to the chest until Finn throws Miz at Rollins for a DDT but dropkicks Seth down at the same time. They head outside with Balor hitting some HARD kicks to the face (Graves: "Who knew that in twenty four hours the Irish would revolutionize dentistry?"), followed by 1916 for a near fall on Rollins. Balor gets crotched against the post and Miz's low DDT gets two on Seth. Miz starts kicking at the bad knee to set up the Figure Four on Rollins but Balor makes the save.

They trade kicks to the face with Seth getting a near fall of his own. A double Blockbuster sets up a frog splash on Balor and Seth can't believe the kickout. Rollins runs the corner for the superplex into the Falcon Arrow on Miz but here's Samoa Joe to Rock Bottom him on the floor. Not that it matters as Balor is up with the Sling Blade and Coup de Grace....but here's Wyatt to shove him off the top. Sister Abigail lays Finn out and Miz steals the pin at 22:25.

**Rating:** A-. Now that's how you book a match. With the World Title scene basically on hold until July, this set up the Intercontinental Title as a much bigger deal that three former World Champions are fighting over. It also helps set up Balor vs. Wyatt and Rollins vs. Joe, which should be two major headlining feuds over the next few weeks until Reigns and Strowman are back.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show suffered from two problems. First of

all is the lack of anything on top as the champion is gone and the two main eventers are both out selling injuries. While that's a good idea and necessary, it makes for a very, very long night. It's not helping when this is the night after a pay per view, which automatically makes things feel long. We're looking at seven plus hours of wrestling in two days and that's a bit much to take. Couple that with a show where they were clearly filling in a lot of time and it's still good enough but it felt like it went on for about four days.

### Results

Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax/Alicia Fox/Emma b. Dana Brooke/Bayley/Sasha Banks/Mickie James – DDT to Bayley

Luke Gallows b. Enzo Amore – Flapjack

Rich Swann/Akira Tozawa/Jack Gallagher b. Tony Nese/Brian Kendrick/Noam Dar – Running dropkick to Kendrick

Apollo Crews b. Heath Slater – Toss Powerbomb

Austin Aries b. TJ Perkins – Last Chancery

Miz b. Seth Rollins and Finn Balor – Pin after Sister Abigail from Bray Wyatt

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# Monday Night Raw – December 27, 1993: Maybe Undertaker Is Bad At His Job

## Monday Night Raw

Date: December 27, 1993

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

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jacques, Pierre

It's the final show of the year and that means...well nothing really as one of the major matches announced for this week is Marty Jannetty vs. Johnny Polo. I have no idea why that's supposed to make me want to stick around and watch the show but no one ever accused 1993 of making sense. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Yokozuna/Ludvig Borga vs. Lex Luger/Tatanka in what should have been a pretty hot house show feud. I don't think it ever happened on TV, even though it should have been a layup.

The announcers preview the show and it's as weird as it would seem to be.

### Lex Luger vs. Barry Horowitz

Luger sends him into the ropes as the announcers speak a lot of French for the running joke of the show. I mean, it's not a funny joke but it is in fact a running joke. Barry pokes him in the eye to get out of some arm work as we hear about Bret and Owen Hart getting a Tag Team Title shot at the Royal Rumble. Horowitz actually gets in some offense as the Quebecers switch over to Spanish. Lex shrugs it off and grabs a powerslam before finishing with a superplex.

**Rating:** D+. Better than I was expecting here with Barry getting in a good amount of offense. The superplex was a good option for a finisher instead of the Rack, which I believe Borga was using at

this point. It's always cool to see a simple move used as a finisher and it's not like it's hard to do. Just let the move get some pins and it's instantly a finisher. Why is that so complicated?

We look back at Johnny Polo interfering in a match between the 1-2-3 Kid and Marty Jannetty, causing a double countout.

Polo brags about beating both the Kid and Jannetty at the same time so tonight it'll be easy to beat Jannetty on his own.

### Marty Jannetty vs. Johnny Polo

Polo actually gets a takedown to start (Jacques: "Isn't that two points? Call the Steiners!") and scores with an armdrag for good measure. Marty comes back with an atomic drop for the funny selling and it's off to the arm. A missed charge sends Marty outside in a heap though and Johnny does a fairly scary scream into the camera. Back in and they collide as this is already going longer than I was expecting. Can you imagine Ricky Steamboat vs. Mr. Fuji going this long? Then again that was a Kung Fu Challenge and not a match so it's not the fairest comparison.

Marty's jumping back elbow sets up a high crossbody for two. Polo gets dropkicked outside so Pierre goes to check on him, earning himself a baseball slide. A second distraction fails and Marty gets in a superkick but opts to dive onto Pierre like a villain would do. Back in and Marty grabs a sunset flip but Pierre holds Polo's hands to give him the pin.

**Rating:** D+. That's quite the long match but I always like Polo as he was just having a blast making fun of everyone. It's always cool to have a manager who can wrestle a match if the need arises as it can add a lot of options to the stories. Not a terrible match here but WAY longer than it needed to be.

Pierre is ejected...from commentary. Can a referee do that? Isn't that taking your job a bit far? Especially when it's not even in a match.

Yokozuna dreams about being Santa Claus and wakes up, realizing it was only a nightmare.

### Doink the Clown vs. Spike Gray

It's clearly no longer Matt Borne playing the character as he's taller and skinnier than he was a few weeks back. Before the match, Dink gives Doink some gum. Spike gets some as well but it's something like a mini-mousetrap. Dink kicks him in the shin, which isn't a DQ because the referee is probably too busy ejecting the popcorn vendor from section 138 because he's a power mad nutjob. Dink punches Gray in the face, setting up a German suplex for the pin. How in the world are these two supposed to be faces? I mean, clowns are evil by definition and now they cheat? Think this stuff through Vince.

The Royal Rumble Report fills up time. The only new stuff here is the Hart Brothers saying they'll win the Tag Team Titles.

### Crush vs. Mike Moraldo

Crush knocks him down without much effort to start as the announcers talk about the Quebecers vs. the Hart Brothers. Talk about a match that would really set the company on fire down the road. The head vice ends Moraldo without too much effort.

Undertaker is still making that casket. I had no idea it took that much effort to put one of those things together. Or maybe Undertaker is just really bad at his job and should take up something else. Like motorcycle maintenance.

Bret tells us to not drink and drive.

We look at Alundra Blayze defeating Heidilee (yes it's one word) Morgan for the Women's Title. This looked like every bad women's match you would have seen in this era.

Kwang is coming. Hopefully he leaves even faster.

### Razor Ramon vs. Derek Domino

Non-title and non-gold chains for Ramon. Razor start with the driving shoulders but Derek makes the mistake of slapping him in the face. Domino (whose singlet is half down for some reason) gets sat on the top rope for a super fall away slam. Razor slaps him in the back of the head a few times and grabs the abdominal stretch. That

goes nowhere so it's the super belly to back into the Razor's Edge for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Yeah fine as Razor continues to be one of the best midcard acts of all time. The belly to back superplex is something that doesn't get the credit it deserves as Razor just tosses people around with the thing. You can hear all the talk about Shawn Michaels and the Intercontinental Title and that's only going to lead to good things all around.

**Overall Rating:** D+. It wasn't the kindest month to Raw but since the show debuted less than a year ago, it's not like they have a lot to compare it to. The longer matches were a bit better this week though and there was no Men on a Mission or Jeff Jarrett so we'll call this a slight improvement over last week.

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# Monday Night Raw – December 20, 1993: New York Isn't

# Memphis

## Monday Night Raw

Date: December 20, 1993

Location: Westchester County Civic Center, White Plains, New York

Attendance: 3,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

We're getting close to wrapping up the year and that means it's time to get ready for the Royal Rumble. Last week focused on setting up the casket match which will see Undertaker challenge Yokozuna for the WWF Title and we've heard rumblings of Bret Hart vs. his brother Owen. At least one of them is awesome. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Ludvig Borga beating Tatanka back in October, ending his two plus year undefeated streak. Borga then helped put him on the shelf so tonight it's all about revenge. Tatanka: "Tonight, I'm out for revenge!" Well that makes things pretty clear.

Vince and Shawn chat about tonight's show.

### Jeff Jarrett vs. PJ Walker

Two future World Champions, which would have made the audience shake their heads in 1993. Now it makes me want to cry as my head shakes but that's just me. Jeff struts away from an Irish whip but gets hiptossed down. That's about it for Walker at the moment though as Jeff gets in a dropkick. The announcers talk about Jack Tunney being up for Secretary of Defense as Jeff misses a kneedrop, only to grab a running DDT for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Sweet goodness Jarrett was dull. I'm not a fan of country music and now I have to hear about it every single time Jarrett is in the ring. The running DDT was fine for a finisher but DANG the rest of him was someone who was only going to work in Memphis. It's such a simple style of offense and that's not going to make it on the main stage.

Spend your money to tell the WWF that Lex Luger should be in the Royal Rumble!

### Men on a Mission vs. Duane Gill/Barry Hardy

Mo takes Gill (with hair here instead of his better known bald look)

down with an armbar and actually manages to avoid any major injuries. It must be a good night. Mabel comes in and drops the big fat elbow as the announcers talk about someone dying from eating pigs. Michael Cole doesn't even sound this awkward. Vince isn't done yet as he suggests that the Royal Rumble could come down to Mo vs. Mabel. Imagine that: Mabel as a main eventer. That'll be the day. More slow paced arm work continues as Shawn sounds a bit "under the weather". A reverse DDT and the middle rope splash end Hardy.

**Rating:** F. I used to love Men on a Mission but WOW they haven't aged well. Mabel was acceptable enough for the big fat monster but Mo might be the most worthless wrestler I can remember from this era. You could even say that Hardy and Gill were more valuable as they give me flashbacks to Gillberg and Barry gives me imagines of Broken Barry Horowitz.

The Royal Rumble Report runs down the card and the nine names in the Rumble.

Ludvig Borga is ready to crush Tatanka again.

#### Tatanka vs. Ludvig Borga

Tatanka chops away and we get a graphic listing the announcers. In case you're flipping through and hoping to avoid Rio Rogers I guess. Borga is in early trouble and gets sent into the post, meaning it's WAR PATH time. A high crossbody gets two but Borga gets in a clothesline for his first offense over two minutes in. The former boxer starts hammering away in the corner and gets two off a bad looking powerslam. Tatanka starts the comeback but here's Yokozuna for the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. I always liked Borga but time haven't been the nicest to him. He has a good enough look and was a solid character but the in-ring work wasn't exactly strong. On the other hand, Tatanka is a good example of someone who lived WAY beyond his expiration date and turned a one note character into a pretty nice career.

Tatanka gets double teamed but Lex Luger makes the save with a slam on Yokozuna.

The announcers bicker about what we just saw. Shawn doesn't like Luger using the forearm, which sounds like the start of a feud that never happened.

Lou Albano is presented to the crowd for no apparent reason.

### Adam Bomb vs. Mark Thomas

Bomb shoves him around and rips at Thomas' face. Vince: "Thomas is a big Barney fan!" That's the topic of the match with Shawn accusing Barney of charging 427% interest for a personal appearance. As you digest that brilliance, Thomas is powerbombed for the pin.

Thurman Plugg is coming.

We look at Owen Hart challenging his brother last week.

Bret says no way.

### Owen Hart vs. Mike Bell

Bell actually wins a fight over the arm to start so Owen hits something like a headscissors driver (he does have a tendency to drive people's heads into the mat) to take over. Shawn accuses Bret of getting more Christmas presents than Owen as Hart drops a middle rope elbow. A belly to belly sets up the Sharpshooter to make Bell tap.

**Rating:** D+. Bell got in WAY more offense than I was expecting to see here and that makes Hart's win mean just a bit more. The announcers also made sure to point out the fact that Owen got in a lot of original offense instead of just using Bret's stuff. They're trying to show the difference between the two and that's going to set up the feud even better.

We go to Undertaker's shop (complete with a sign, meaning it's an official registered business, which is quite the departure from what you would expect from Undertaker) where he's working on Yokozuna's double sized casket.

### Headshrinkers vs. Phil Apollo/Jerry Seavey

Apollo would wind up playing Doink a few years later. Samu hammers away on everyone as we hear about Donald Trump's upcoming wedding. Their conclusion: Trump is no Heart Break Kid. Seavey gets beaten from one side of the ring to the other and a double Stroke sets up a top rope splash for the pin.

**Overall Rating:** D. Nothing to see here but it's a long way towards the Royal Rumble. The Bret vs. Owen stuff is starting to go somewhere though and that's one of the best feuds the company has ever put together. Unfortunately the rest of the stuff was as boring as you could imagine with Jarrett being a major low point for the

show.

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# Monday Night Raw – December 13, 1993: The Savage Stereotype

## Monday Night Raw

Date: December 13, 1993

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

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Cornette

With Bobby Heenan gone, it's probably time to start the very long running tradition of rotating commentators to go with Vince. Other than that we're getting close to the start of the build to the Royal Rumble, which means we're in for a long six weeks or so. If nothing else there's Randy Savage vs. Fatu. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We look at the end of last week's show with Heenan being thrown out of the building.

Vince brings in Cornette, with a Santa Claus cover on the tennis racket. That's so corny that it works perfectly for him.



### Randy Savage vs. Fatu

After Afa finally gets out of the ring, Savage charges into an elbow. I wonder if that's harder than his head. Randy does that one spot that you only do to a Samoan where he slams him head first into the mat. The ensuing superkick puts Savage on the floor where he tries to send Fatu head first into the steps. To paraphrase Savage at Wrestlemania IX: wrong again Slim Jim breath.

Back in and the beating continues as I have a feeling we're in the "Savage gets beaten up for five minutes and then hits the elbow for the pin" formula. Savage gets sent outside so Afa can get in a few shots, followed by a shrunken head (just go with it) shot for two. Fatu goes up but gets crotched, allowing Savage to hit the top rope ax handle to the floor. Back in and a clothesline sets up the elbow to put the Samoan away.

**Rating:** D+. Just a squash here until we got to the ending, which really didn't make Savage look all that great. Then again that formula got Savage a few World Titles in WCW so maybe there was something for it. Also, how weird is it to think that Fatu got into the Hall of Fame on his own and not in a tag team? It's a stretch to have him in there at all but it goes to show you that you never know what you might get out of the right gimmick.

Todd Pettengill makes an appeal to the fans to vote for Savage to be allowed back on WWF Mania. Gee I wonder if they will. Well I wouldn't for 99 cents a call.

Lex Luger says don't do drugs and I begin to laugh, albeit in a sad way.

### Smoking Gunns vs. Steve Smyth/Jim Messenger

We'll say Jim gets beaten up first with a double legsweep putting him down as Cornette talks about going to Toronto to beg Jack Tunney to keep Luger out of the Royal Rumble. Lou Albano comes out to scout with Vince talking about Lou managing more Tag Team Champions in WWF history. Cornette: "Give me time! Give me time!" Bart dropkicks Messenger down, followed by a top rope bulldog to give Billy the pin. Total squash.

We look back at Shawn Michaels vs. the 1-2-3 Kid last week with Razor Ramon's failed save attempt. Shawn gave him two (fairly bad for the sake of safety) Razor's Edges on the floor. Good angle to

advance a good feud.

### IRS vs. Todd Mata

Before the match, IRS opens the briefcase and shows off Razor's stolen jewelry. IRS throws him into the corner and grabs a backbreaker as Cornette comes up with a variety of excuses for what was really in the briefcase. Oh and he's dating Princess Diana. IRS grabs a belly to back suplex of all things for the pin. To be fair his finisher was a clothesline so that's hardly a stretch.

And now, Yokozuna as Santa Claus! Don't worry though as it was just a nightmare. Why was Mr. Fuji right next to Yokozuna's bed? Is that in your standard manager contract?

### Undertaker vs. JS Storm

That's one heck of a pop for Undertaker, who was one of the few hot acts even at this point. Undertaker throws him outside and into the steps as Cornette rants about the upcoming casket match. The chokeslam and Tombstone keep this one short.

Undertaker puts him in a bodybag for fun.

Jeff Jarrett debuts next week.

### Rick Martel vs. Tim McNeany

I always forget that Martel existed after about 1990. A crossbody gives Tim two and he gets the same off a sunset flip. Martel elbows him in the jaw and grabs a front facelock. Tim actually makes a quick comeback but misses a dropkick, setting up the Boston crab for the submission. Better than I was expecting for a change.

On Superstars, Owen Hart was sick of hearing about Bret and challenged him to a match.

### Bret Hart vs. Brooklyn Brawler

Hart starts with a hiptoss before going after the arm. The arm work continues as you can tell Bret isn't exactly interested in working hard here. Brawler chokes in the corner a bit but gets slammed off the top, leaving Cornette to compare the Brawler to Rush Limbaugh. Bret starts in with the Five Moves of Doom and finishes with the Sharpshooter.

**Rating:** D. This was exactly what you would expect from a five minute Bret vs. Brawler match. If nothing else it gave the announcers a chance to hype up Bret vs. Owen, which sounds like a very solid

match on paper alone when you ignore the good story behind it. Bret wasn't exactly energized out there but it's hard to blame him for being a bit lethargic.

**Overall Rating:** D-. Watching this episode felt like the stereotype that comes with the older shows: the longer matches are bad and the squash matches aren't long enough to care about. The Royal Rumble and Wrestlemania are starting to shape up though and one of those is outstanding so at least I have something to look forward to.

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# Monday Night Raw – December 6, 1993: Come Back Bobby

## **Monday Night Raw**

Date: December 6, 1993

Location: Westchester County Civic Center, White Plains, New York

Attendance: 3,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Bobby Heenan

Dang I just finished the January 1994 shows and now I get to see how we got there. We're just past the Survivor Series where Lex Luger and AMERICA defeated the evil foreigners (one of them all the way from Hawaii) but more importantly, Bret and Owen Hart took their first steps towards an amazing feud. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks back at Shawn Michaels attacking Razor Ramon during a match against Diesel. The 1-2-3 Kid made the save and we've got a match tonight. This was around the time when Shawn was suspended for a steroids violation while still Intercontinental Champion. He returned and claimed to still be champion, setting up a huge feud.

Vince and Bobby preview the show.

### Shawn Michaels vs. 1-2-3 Kid

Shawn has the Intercontinental Title but isn't champion. They start fast with Kid firing off the kicks to send Shawn outside for a springboard dive. We hit a long headlock until Kid makes the mistake of trying to climb the corner, allowing Shawn to suplex him down for the break. That's fine with Kidd who sends Shawn shoulder first into the post, only to dive into a powerslam on the floor.

We take a break and come back with Shawn working on the ribs to keep things slow, which isn't something you often see Michaels do.

Another suplex gives Shawn two and it's off to a backbreaker. Back up and a spinning kick sets up even more kicks (to be fair, kids don't have the most varied offense), only to miss something like a Swanton as we take a second break.

Just like earlier we come back to Shawn in control and hitting a Razor's Edge, only to pull the Kid up at two. Vince thinks that should be a DQ because Vince has some weird ideas at times. A second Razor's Edge brings out Razor Ramon to chase Shawn up the aisle. Shawn trips but Diesel gets in a cheap shot from the curtain as I'm guessing the match was thrown out somewhere in there, even though it should have been a countout win for the Kid.

**Rating:** B. Good match here as the Kliq (not yet formed of course) continues to be the best workers in the company and are always more than willing to work with each other. This was much better than your average match around this time, which isn't exactly shocking given who was in there.

Shawn gives Razor the Edge on the floor, albeit nearly in slow motion to prevent a bad case of death. A second Edge keeps Razor in trouble as Vince is LOSING IT on commentary.

### Quebecers vs. Bert Centeno/Mike Walsh

Non-title. Centeno starts with Jacques and slaps him in the face

before bailing out to the floor. Walsh comes in and is sent hard into the corner as the beating begins. A backdrop sends Pierre onto Centeno and the Cannonball ends a long squash.

**Rating:** D. It's not a good sign when the best part of the match was Johnny Polo sitting in a chair with his feet up reading a magazine. Then again, Polo was often the best part of the Quebecers' matches. These squashes are only going to get you so far and the Quebecers weren't the best option in the first place.

Post match Centeno is put in Polo's chair and clotheslined out.

Royal Rumble ad.

Owen Hart doesn't want to hear about Bret winning Superstar of the Year. He has a surprise coming.

#### Doink the Clown vs. Tony DeVito

DeVito is nice enough to let Doink stroll Dink around before we get going. Dink gets on the apron for no apparent reason as DeVito gets caught in an armbar. Another takedown keeps Tony in trouble as you can hear the crowd going very quiet for this, which isn't the biggest surprise. Dink is still on the apron and being rather annoying but that's standard for him.

A German suplex drops DeVito and we hit a headlock as we hear about Star Wars airing on USA. Another takedown has Vince complaining about how many times Doink has done pretty much the same thing. The Whoopee Cushion ends a squash that has me longing for the Quebecers match.

**Rating:** D-. WAY too long here as Doink has lost everything after turning heel. This was a really boring match and Dink continues to be far more annoying than he really should have been. Given that he's a small clown, that's quite a bit of an accomplishment. Bad squash with the five minute runtime being ridiculous.

Jeff Jarrett and his unnamed friend (with his awesome hat) walk the streets of Nashville and complain about never getting a break.

We look back at Crush attacking Randy Savage, which somehow got Savage suspended.

#### Crush vs. Tony Roy

Heenan says Mr. Fuji is very happy because tomorrow is the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. This is the regular phone call match

with Savage calling in from the United Kingdom. Crush shrugs off the offense and hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker as we hear about Savage's time as a macho baby. The slow beating continues as Savage's reception cutting in and out. I think he's giving us a salad recipe though. A gorilla press onto the top rope puts Tony away.

**Rating:** D. This was all about the phone call which was all to set up Savage making his in-ring return next week to face Fatu. The best part though was Vince telling Bobby that Gorilla Monsoon called in earlier today but it was a LOCAL call. The fear in Heenan's voice was perfect and I think that might be leading somewhere.

We run down next week's card and heeeeeere's Gorilla. Monsoon has good news and bad news for Heenan. The good news is he's won a free trip. Heenan: "I don't care to go anywhere!" The bad news is Monsoon grabs him by the jacket and literally drags him out of the arena. Heenan's luggage is waiting next to the door as Gorilla throws both him and it out of the building (and the company as he was off to WCW). Heenan looks close to tears as he salutes the building and leaves.

**Overall Rating:** C+. That one match really is enough to carry the whole show but the ending is actually a little sad. Heenan never was his old self in WCW and it's a shame to see him go. At least it was in a funny moment with Monsoon getting to do it. Those two had some of the best chemistry ever and Heenan's line of "I wish Monsoon was here" at the Hall of Fame gets me every time. Not a good show, but check out that opener.

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# Monday Night Raw – November 25, 2002: Boring Wrestling and Violent Illness

## Monday Night Raw

Date: November 25, 2002

Location: North Charleston Coliseum, North Charleston, South, Carolina

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're still in the Shawn Michaels Era and he's actually defending the title this week against Rob Van Dam. Other than that we're still waiting on the return of HHH, who was injured at Survivor Series but probably needs to grace us with his presence again. Other than that, I'd assume we'll get a bunch of Testicle jokes. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Shawn winning the title and Van Dam earning the shot last week.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Christian/Chris Jericho vs. Dudley Boyz

Christian and Jericho are defending. D-Von drops Jericho with a clothesline to start and elbows Christian for the same result. We get some championship miscommunication and Chris gets pummeled in the corner. Christian finally scores with a backbreaker though and the champs take over for the first time.

The pace slows WAY down (as is the Canadian way) but Christian takes too much time yelling at Bubba, allowing D-Von to grab a neckbreaker. Bubba comes in and cleans house but misses the middle rope backplash. Everything breaks down (as is the tag team way) and D-Von gets two off a small package. Chris rams him into Christian though and a rollup retains the titles clean.

Actually hang on a second as here are Eric Bischoff and Sean Morely (the former Val Venis), who is now Chief of Staff. All four shoulders were on the mat at the same time for the cover so there's no pin, meaning this match MUST continue. I'm assuming this is the "heel bosses act nice to start before going really evil" segment of the night.

The match continues after a break with Bubba slamming his way out of trouble and making the hot tag off to D-Von. Notice the crowd not being as thrilled, mainly because the good guys just got pinned about as clean as you can get but the match continues on a technicality. 3D gives Bubba the pin on Christian.....but Bubba wasn't legal, so Morely restarts the match again.

The third fall begins and you can hear the fans getting annoyed. Jericho nails D-Von from behind and sleeper drops Bubba for two. That earns him a Flip Flop and Fly with What's Up making things even worse. Since there haven't been enough shenanigans in this match, it's table time but Christian dropkicks it into D-Von's face. Bubba blocks the Lionsault but Christian hits him with a belt, setting up the Walls to retain the titles for real.

**Rating:** D+. WAY too much going on here when they could have done a regular match with some extra time or just done a 2/3 falls match, despite the lack of any reason for this to go longer than usual. If nothing else though, it's nice to have some fresh blood in the title scene and the Dudleys are hardly a stretch for the automatic #1 contendership.

Shawn Michaels is ready to face Van Dam in his first Raw match in five years. He leaves to go talk to Rob for some reason when Christian and Jericho show up with champagne to celebrate. Jericho isn't happy with Scott Steiner but Christian says "forget about his freaks, peaks and Iron Sheiks". Chris goes with it and suggests that they hit the town because they need some Vitamin C. Christian: "YEAH! My name starts with a C too!"

They head into the locker room when the Dudleys come up and want to go after the champs again. Bubba says wait, because he has a plan. I



think I like this better than cutting to conveniently timed segments where people just happen to be ready to talk when someone else is done but it was still really scripted.

### Test vs. Steven Richards

This is fallout from Steven taking a Testicles shirt to the testicles. I think Test is a face now despite doing nothing new other than having the catchphrase. The threat of a big boot sends Steven bailing to the floor but he comes back in with some right hands. We're already off to a reverse chinlock so at least this is going to be short. Some clotheslines and a full nelson slam give Test two and he hammers away in the corner. A low blow (that the referee should have seen) sets up an X Factor for two, only to have Test Roll the Dice for the pin.

**Rating:** D. See, he has a catchphrase which a nine year old would find funny so I'm sure the writers are impressed enough to push Test again. Richards got in a lot of offense here, which probably isn't the best way to push Test, though then again neither is a bunch of testicle jokes. Stacy is gorgeous but that smile is only going to carry the act so far.

Christian and Jericho are in towels after their shower but the Dudleys have stolen their bags. Chase is given and the champs are locked out of the locker room. So how did the Dudleys know that the champs were getting in the shower when they turned the corner two seconds after Christian and Jericho decided to do that? I guess they overheard them but if that's the case, why didn't they jump the champs when they were standing there talking?

Test and Stacy are happy with the win and Test goes to take a shower (common theme tonight). As Stacy beams, Victoria jumps her from behind and says she'll be thinking of Stacy during the match. Instead of her long hair and long legs though, she'll be thinking of Stacy's fear. Victoria licks Stacy's ear and that's that.

### Christopher Nowinski vs. Maven

Before we get going, Chris says this is the last time that anyone

can say Maven is better than he is. Maven won Tough Enough because of politics when he mentioned his sick mother and that means it's on. Nowinski hits him with a big book and Maven is out. No match.

Jericho and Christian are in a search for clothes and find 3 Minute Warning and Rico's gear. They're far from impressed (Jericho: "Do you get a free bowl of soup with this outfit?") but Rico and the Samoans come in to scare them off.

#### Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Victoria

Trish is challenging and looks very nice in blue. They slug it out to start with Victoria grabbing something like a Thesz press before hitting some awkward kicks to the ribs. A rollup gives Trish two and the kickout sends her outside. She lands hips first, with JR saying is like a stone bouncing across a river. Victoria's slingshot legdrop gets two as Lawler thinks there's something in these two's past before explaining the backstory.

We hit a seated full nelson (that could be a solid finisher) until Trish fights up and gets some rollups for two each. Trish gets sent hard into the steps as this is already starting to drag. Back in and Trish makes another comeback, including a Chick Kick for two. We get an awkward looking shove to send Trish throat first into the ropes but it's enough to set up the Widow's Peak to retain the title.

**Rating:** D. Despite them both looking better than they have in a long time (which covers a lot of ground), the match really did feel disjointed. It was pretty clear that they had no idea how to go from move to move later on in the match, which really makes for some awkward moments. The women were getting better but they weren't ready for something this long yet, which isn't a good sign.

Victoria bites Steven Richards' ear for reasons of general insanity, which he seems to like.

Shawn praises Van Dam's athleticism but says he's missing a little something. Rob slaps him and that's just what the champ was looking for.

Video on Eric Bischoff.

Christian is worried about shrinkage but a shot of the Dudleys in the ring sends the Canadians into the arena. In the ring, the Dudleys are giving away Christian and Jericho's clothes, including a shirt and jeans. Bubba finds a jar of A\*\* Cream, which has him very confused. Bubba: "WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A\*\* CREAM???" The whole bag of clothes is sent into the crowd but they're not done yet. Cue Spike to steal the towels and we have unclothed champions.

#### Hurricane/Jeff Hardy vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

Jeff dives over the top to take out Storm before the bell and the good guys start fast. Some right hands have Regal staggered and it's off to Hurricane for a high crossbody. The Eye of the Hurricane is broken up so Hurricane has to settle for a chokeslam instead. Regal comes in for the save and starts working on Hurricane's back with a few knees. Storm adds some forearms, only to get caught with a Shining Wizard. It's not enough for the hot tag though as Hurricane tries his own half crab. Regal kicks him in the head for the break though and Storm grabs a Sharpshooter for the tap out.

**Rating:** D+. Nothing to see here but the ending was a nice touch as they went away from the standard formula for a change. You can only do the hot tag into the finish so many times so it was nice to see something get changed up. Regal and Storm aren't exactly a big upgrade but at least they're a regular team.

Jeff gets beaten down as well.

We look at Shawn's last match on Raw from December 1997 against Owen Hart.

#### Kane vs. Batista

Hang on a second as we have Ric Flair instead, telling Kane that he's not out of the woods for what he did to Ric last week. Batista comes in to jump Kane from behind and the beatdown is on. We do get a bell though and Batista gets to hammer on Kane in an actual match. Some clotheslines knock Kane around but he comes back with a big boot. The ref gets bumped so there's no one to count Kane's powerslam. Ric chairs him in the head and the Batista Bomb gives

Dave the fast pin.

We get the official terms of the Big Show trade: Big Show for Ivory, D-Von, Val Venis and Maven. That's a horrible trade. Anyway Bischoff tells Morely to bring Scott Steiner to Raw. Morely says he has a connection that can make something happen but RNN BREAKING NEWS. Randy talks about everything he's thankful for, including that good looking nurse at the rehab center.

### Goldust vs. Rico

They trade some armdrags to start until Rico gets in a big kick to take over. A lot of stomping allows JR to list off some of Rico's accomplishments as they seem to be trying to make him into something. Rico grabs an armbar until Goldust makes a short comeback, including the powerslam for two. The Curtain Call gives Goldust the clean pin.

**Rating:** D. This was more filler but you have to deal with that from time to time. JR mentioned that Booker was healing, which might have something to do with a rash of illness going around the locker room at this point (dehydration due to some issues on a tour of India). If nothing else that would explain some of the odd booking choices tonight, such as this match, which was only going to last so long.

### Raw World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Rob Van Dam

Shawn, in what looks to be the early Sami Zayn collection of tights, is defending. The champ fires off a dropkick to start but gets kicked in the ribs a few times, followed by a clothesline to send him outside. Rob is smart enough to throw him back inside for a slingshot legdrop to the bad back. A monkey flip is countered into something like Snake Eyes and Shawn starts in on the leg.

We hit the Ric Flair playbook with the leg being crushed on the ropes, followed by a Figure Four. Rob makes the ropes so Shawn forearms him into the nipup, only to miss Sweet Chin Music. Rolling Thunder onto Shawn's back gets two so Shawn comes back with a DDT. Shawn's top rope elbow gets two more but it's another backbreaker to cut him off. Rob gets in the Five Star to the back...and here's HHH

for the DQ.

**Rating:** C+. This was totally fine but you could tell that Shawn wasn't able to hit that other gear. The knee vs. back stuff was fine and I'm glad they didn't go with a clean fall over Rob, who is still recovering from the HHH loss. Speaking of HHH, thank goodness he was back so quickly to save the show. I mean, it had been a whole week without him and now we're likely going to get him in another title match.

HHH goes after Shawn post match and shrugs off a comeback. A side slam puts Shawn through an open chair to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. I'd assume the rash of illnesses changed a lot of this show but that really doesn't make the show any more excusable. It's not a good show with all the lame matches and quick build towards Armageddon, which is already looking like a boring show with another HHH vs. Shawn match on top. This wasn't the worst show in the world but it was your standard 2002 dullness.

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