

Monday Night Raw – April 24, 2017: I Should Be Paid Back For This Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 24, 2017

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

It's the go home show for Payback and that means we're getting closer to knowing how the Superstar Shakeup will really be going. Last week we saw Braun Strowman break the ring when he superplexed Big Show and tonight he's facing Kalisto in a dumpster match. I'm not sure that makes sense either but let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Braun Strowman destroying things for the last two weeks.

Opening sequence.

Here's Chris Jericho for the Highlight Reel. Jericho says this is the last Highlight Reel on Raw because he's winning the US Title and moving over to Smackdown. It doesn't matter if it's Raw, Smackdown or Southpaw Regional though because these people are the friends of Jericho and they'll cheer him on man. Tonight's guest is a real star and that would be....Chris Jericho! Cue Miz and Maryse to interrupt though with the former saying this show is about the it couple. Jericho says they better watch.....it couple.

Miz gets to the point and says MizTV is replacing the Highlight Reel, meaning it's time to replace the set. Now it's Dean Ambrose, who turns this into the Ambrose Asylum with all three as his guests. Dean wants Jericho to win on Sunday, despite their checkered past. Jericho broke a potted plant over his head and Dean broke his light up jacket. Jericho brings up the \$15,000 but Dean has a gift: a home made light up jacket! Dean says he should try it on man but Miz cuts them off.

We get a good rant about how Miz should be the only one getting gifts, which earns him Dirty Deeds. Dean leaves so Jericho asks what happens when you're married to a stupid idiot like Miz. After putting her on the list, Jericho leaves, wearing the new jacket (which is a sport coat with Christmas lights wrapped around).

Sheamus vs. Matt Hardy

Matt starts fast with a neckbreaker and three straight legdrops for two. The ten forearms are broken up and Matt hits the Side Effect on the apron as we take an early break. Back with the forearms working this time, only to have Sheamus miss a charge into the post. Matt's bulldog and a middle rope elbow get two but Matt gets sent outside. Sheamus follows and goes after Jeff, allowing Matt to hit the Twist of Fate for the clean pin at 10:02.

Rating: C-. I'm not sure how wise it is to have the Hardys wrestle singles matches as they really don't have the same fire that the tag matches do. The match wasn't much to see but there's only so much they can do in less than seven minutes of actual TV time. It's too early to take the belts off of them but I'd keep Matt out of a singles role.

Post match tempers seem to flare but they all shake hands.

Miz and Maryse cut off Kurt Angle's phone call to yell about Ambrose and Jericho. Angle doesn't want to hear about it and makes a tag match with Miz getting to pick his own partner.

Neville/TJ Perkins vs. Austin Aries/Jack Gallagher

The good guys clear the ring and we take a break before the opening bell. We're joined in progress with Gallagher in trouble until he slips over for the hot tag to Aries. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Aries cleaning house, including clapping his hands around Neville's ears. Both villains are sent outside for a double suicide dive and it's Perkins getting caught in the Last Chancery. Gallagher comes in to take care of Neville and it's a discus Fivearm to put Perkins away at 3:06 shown.

Rating: D+. The time factor caught up with them again but it's a

good idea to build Aries up more and more as he gets closer to his title shot. Perkins is a good choice for Neville's buddy and I could see him getting the title back down the line. Gallagher....dang what happened to him? They just stopped featuring him and let him be that guy who does the same collection of spots over and over, which is quite the shame.

Braun Strowman vs. Kalisto

It's a dumpster match, which means you have to put them inside but don't have to close the lid. Before the match, Braun says everyone here is trash and putting Kalisto in the dumpster will be like putting everyone in there too, including Roman Reigns. In the back, Kalisto tells Angle he has to fight like a man.

Kalisto starts with some kicks but his flip dive is caught in a suplex, only to have Strowman throw him across the ring. A front facelock over the ropes has Strowman in some trouble but he throws Kalisto down again. Strowman loads up a press slam but Kalisto slips out and dropkicks him into the dumpster for the win at 6:13.

Rating: F. I know WWE's official line is that wins and losses don't matter but you're trying to build Strowman up as an opponent for Lesnar. Two weeks ago, Strowman absolutely destroyed Reigns in one of the coolest segments in years. In the two weeks since, he's gone to a draw with Big Show (But he stood up and that makes up for it!) and now he's lost to Kalisto. He'll probably beat Reigns on Sunday and that's supposed to make up for this right? I'm sure no one will EVER reference this loss again and Strowman will be forever awesome.

Post match Strowman destroys Kalisto and puts him in the dumpster. He locks it shut and pushes the dumpster off the stage for what must have been a full two and a half foot fall. If this is how they want to build up Strowman, they have a LONG way to go.

After a break, Kalisto is stretchered out.

Video on Roman Reigns.

Bray Wyatt wants to make Randy Orton suffer.

Dana Brooke vs. Alicia Fox

This is over Emma stirring up some issues between them. Cue Emma less than thirty seconds in as Dana's cartwheel splash hits knees. Fox misses the ax kick though and a Samoan Driver ends Alicia at 1:12.

Emma hugs Dana, who shoves her away.

We run down the pay per view card and get the first details on the House of Horrors match: the match will start in the House of Horrors and end in the ring. That's a lot more than we knew before.

Samoa Joe and Anderson and Gallows are ready to torture Enzo Amore/Big Cass and Seth Rollins.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Anderson and Gallows

Enzo does his full entrance but the villains jump him from the crowd. Rollins runs out for the save but Enzo is laid out as we go to a break. Back with Angle announcing a replacement for the injured Enzo.

Finn Balor/Big Cass/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Anderson and Gallows

It's a big brawl to start (of course) with Balor kicking Anderson in the head a few times before it's off to Joe for the heavy forearms. Anderson comes back in for an armbar and a side slam. Gallows comes in and kicks Cass off the apron but misses an elbow drop. The hot tag brings in Rollins for the Sling Blade and everyone is knocked to the floor.

Seth loads up the springboard knee to Anderson but Joe kicks him in the knee. Cue Balor to take care of Joe, leaving Rollins to hit a springboard clothesline on Anderson. Seth loads up the Pedigree but opts for a hammerlock jumping knee to the face (think the Rainmaker) for the pin at 5:58.

Rating: C. The Club loses again and I can't say I'm all that surprised. Ever since they split from AJ Styles last year it's been one horrible loss after another, even when they won the Tag Team Titles. I'm not sure what Balor is going to do next but Rollins vs. Joe has serious potential, especially if Rollins has dropped the Pedigree for good.

Sheamus and Cesaro aren't willing to team with Miz.

Here's Alexa Bliss to talk about how people come out here to talk. Some of them want to become a champion but some of them talk about how much they want to become a WWE superstar. It's all sunshine and rainbows and she nearly vomits in her mouth a bit. She's here to fight so here's Bayley to call Bliss out for talking about people behind their backs. Bayley holds up the title and says she'll do whatever it takes to walk out of her hometown with the title on Sunday.

Bliss loves the idea of beating Bayley up in front of her father but has another question: has Bayley ever even kissed a boy? Not that it matters as Bliss can't wait to destroy her. Cue Sasha Banks with Bliss saying it's time for part 3000 of the Banks and Bayley side show. Bliss asks if Banks puts love letters in the lunches she makes for Bayley. Banks is ready to shut Bliss up but Alexa says not now because Banks is unhinged. That earns her a punch to the face and it seems that the match is on.

Sasha Banks vs. Alexa Bliss

Bayley is on commentary and is immediately grilled about how she keeps coming close to losing the title. Banks forearm Bliss to start but can't hit the double knees in the corner. Bliss stomps away but gets sent into the corner again. That's enough for Alexa as she walks out at 2:38.

Bayley goes after Bliss but Alexa runs away, only to turn around and get in a cheap shot. Sasha chases her off.

Ambrose tries to mend fences with Jericho and asks if he can be taken off the list. That's too far for Jericho because it's in pen. The \$15,000 is brought up again so Dean shows off the replacement jacket. Jericho also brings up the powerbomb onto the tacks but Dean says he wouldn't do it again. He likes the jacket though and Dean JUST UNMADE THE LIST! Dean is fired up and slaps Jericho on the back, earning him another spot on the list.

Heath Slater and Curtis Axel are ready to talk about being in Marine

5 when Miz and Maryse show up (good thing there were two extra chairs there). Neither want to be his partner so Miz says they'll never work in this town again. Axel: "Kansas City?" Miz gets a note delivered and apparently he has a partner, who he describes as awesome.

Curt Hawkins issues an open challenge to his "Star Factory".

Curt Hawkins vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is looking bigger tonight. They trade some shots to start until Crews hits a running boot to the face. A jumping clothesline sets up an enziguri, followed by the Toss Powerbomb for the pin on Hawkins at 2:09.

Titus O'Neil comes out to celebrate with Crews and Apollo seems a bit more interested this week.

We look back at Kalisto and Strowman. Kalisto has suffered hip and cervical trauma.

Roman Reigns has issued a statement saying he's banged up but he'll fight.

Long video on Strowman vs. Reigns.

Austin Aries pitches an idea to Angle for the main event of 205 Live. Kurt says he'll think about it so Aries gives him a banana. The Drifter walks by and Kurt makes sure to point out that he's not the partner.

Dean Ambrose/Chris Jericho vs. The Miz/???

And it's....someone who has some issues with being on time as he's not here. Miz says the match is canceled and goes to leave but here's Angle to say the match is on. Jericho takes off the replacement jacket and chops Miz in the corner, setting up some double teaming. Miz gets clotheslined out to the floor and we take a break.

The match is joined in progress with Miz still alone and Jericho's arrogant cover getting one. Ambrose comes in and Miz begs off, earning himself a chase on the floor. Maryse offers a distraction

though and Miz gets in a boot to the face to take over for the first time. Back in and the Reality Check gets two but the YES Kick is countered into a rollup. Jericho comes in with the Lionsault but the Codebreaker is blocked.

Miz goes to leave so Ambrose follows him up the ramp. Dirty Deeds is loaded up on the stage but here's Bray Wyatt to knock Dean off. Sister Abigail sends Dean into the wall and a second one plants Jericho in the ring. Miz poses with Wyatt...and takes Sister Abigail as well. Bray kneels down to end the show and we'll say the match was thrown out at about 8:30.

Rating: D. So that happened. I'm assuming this was just a way to set up Orton vs. Wyatt as Miz and Ambrose have nothing to do on Sunday, save for hosting a talking segment on the Kickoff Show. Wyatt is an interesting choice for a partner and it's nice to have him actually show up but....yeah this didn't work.

Overall Rating: F+. I'm trying to think of a highlight tonight and the best I've got is Alexa's promo about how Bayley made her sick. Other than that, this was one heck of a bomb with Strowman's loss and the ridiculous dumpster thing being the low point. I don't know if creative was told to punt until after Payback or what but this REALLY didn't work and I haven't been left scratching my head so many times over the course of a night since probably something TNA did. This was really, really bad and that's about as nice as I can go with it.

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Monday Night Raw – November 18, 2002: I'd Rather Talk About Anthology

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 18, 2002

Location: Webster Bank Arena, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're past Survivor Series and that means Shawn Michaels gets to keep HHH's World Title warm for the next few weeks. That's really all that matters from the Raw side as the show was almost all about the Elimination Chamber, which makes sense for the most part. We're less than four weeks away from the next pay per view so let's get to it.

Eric Bischoff is in the parking lot waiting on someone unnamed but gets Ric Flair instead. There's no HHH but Bischoff has him in a #1 contenders match tonight so he better be here soon. Flair gets in Bischoff's face, talking about how HHH had a crushed trachea last night but kept fighting anyway. Ric thinks Bischoff only cares about the show so Eric gives him a match against Kane. That doesn't seem to bother Ric because he'll show Kane how it used to be done.

Opening sequence.

Here's Shawn to get things going. After declaring himself the NEW World Heavyweight Champion, he talks about not being able to believe this is real. Last night he accomplished his goal of becoming the NEW World Heavyweight Champion but now he's not sure what to do. Does he want to be someone who keeps going way after his prime or be someone who knows when to hang it up?

Walking away now would be the smart, logical thing but he's never been the most logical guy. He'd love to come out here and see what he can do against all that young talent in the back so let's just see what this old, beat up body has left in it. Cue Rob Van Dam to

talk about what an inspiration Shawn was when Rob was growing up. If Shawn wants to meet some new faces, how about his first title defense is against Rob Van Dam? Shawn sounds ready to accept but here's Bischoff to cut them off.

If Van Dam wants to be the #1 contender, he can win a triple threat match also involving Booker T. and Chris Jericho for a shot at the title next week. That sounds fine but Shawn has a bone to pick with Eric. He's not going to represent a show that features necrophilia because it offends him as a wrestling fan. That's about it on that subject so Shawn gets in one more shot at HHH before wrapping things up.

We're coming up on the 10th anniversary of Monday Night Raw so here's a look at the first episode.

3 Minute Warning/Rico vs. Dudley Boyz

D-Von is back on the team, thank goodness. Bubba hammers on Rico to start but a little heel distraction lets Jamal deck Bubba from behind. That's not enough for Rico to hit a (great looking) moonsault though and Bubba drops him with a clothesline. D-Von comes in to almost no reaction and starts to clean house with Rosey being sent outside. What's Up hits Rico low but Jamal actually hits a dropkick. Spike gets kicked to the floor, leaving Rico to take 3D for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was basically "hey the Dudleys are back" and there's nothing wrong with that. The team really needed to be put back together after the pretty horrible face runs (though I'll miss Reverend D-Von's music) so let them go back to something you know will work. It's not like the tag division is overflowing with talent or anything.

Stacy makes testicle jokes and is going to unveil Test's new shirt tonight.

HHH is on the way.

Recap of the Chamber.

Scott Steiner, who seems to be the person Bischoff was waiting for earlier, arrives to Bischoff's delight. Steiner still hasn't signed yet.

Here's Stacy with a bunch of lame testicles shirts, which are just

puns in white text on a black shirt. She puts them in a t-shirt gun and launches some into the crowd until Steven Richards comes out to interrupt. He complains about this being stupid and takes a shirt to the groin. Crazy Victoria comes out and bites Victoria's nails off before leaving with Steven.

Post break Stacy freaks out so Eric gives her a title match against Victoria.

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

The brawl starts in the aisle for no apparent reason and it's the evil foreigners taking over on Dreamer. Jeff dives off the apron to take Regal down but William kicks Dreamer in the head to give Lance the pin.

Dreamer gets beaten down post match with Storm doing Raven's drop toehold onto a chair.

We look back at Steiner beating up Matt Hardy and Christopher Nowinski at Survivor Series.

Here's Steiner for presumably his big signing announcement. Steiner talks about only caring for his freaks and his peaks before saying he's been watching both shows a lot lately. People have been talking about being the best of all time but the best of all time is standing right here. Cue Chris Jericho to say he's the King of the World so Steiner needs to shush. If you want to talk bodies, look at this gorgeous piece of meat. A brawl is teased but Jericho declines because he has a #1 contenders match later. Scott says he'll stick around. Having Steiner not wrestle is probably the best for everyone at the moment.

Women's Title: Victoria vs. Stacy Keibler

Stacy is challenging. Victoria chokes her a lot, Stacy does her horrible looking leg based offense and the Widow's Peak retains the title in just over a minute.

Victoria stays on her but Trish Stratus comes out for the save. Richards comes out and lays Trish out.

Hurricane talks about his song to promote the Anthology CD set. I loved that thing.

Maven is at the World.

Al Snow vs. Christopher Nowinski

Nowinski is in a suit with a backpack and this is a "School of Hard Knocks" match because WE DON'T DO HARDCORE ANYMORE. Snow hits him with a small blackboard and knocks Chris into the crowd. That means it's time for the bowling ball but Nowinski gets in a spinebuster before anything can be done. More weapons, including a freaking skeleton, are brought in with Chris talking to the skull. Snow hits him in the ribs with a femur before switching over to a chair. We get the bowling ball to the crotch spot as Chris is bleeding from the mouth. The moonsault only hits a pile of chairs though and Chris gets the easy pin.

Rating: F. It's not funny, it's nothing we haven't seen a hundred times before, Nowinski isn't getting anywhere out of this and the whole thing is just a major waste of time. Just do the Hardcore Title again if it's that important to you. Either that or put Nowinski in a tag team or something else where he's not on his own because this is a bunch of stupid stuff week after week.

Val Venis doesn't want to be known by that name anymore and now works for Bischoff.

Kane vs. Ric Flair

Ric is in a suit but says he's not going to fight. Cue Batista to lay Kane out instead.

Jericho can't get Christian to help him tonight.

Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho vs. Kane

The winner gets Shawn next week. Before the match, Booker isn't cool with not being mentioned as a potential title contender. JR says that the research staff says Shawn hasn't wrestled on Raw since October 1997. The internet research staff (and a decent knowledge of Raw) says WWE needs a new research staff. Jericho gets double teamed to start but, as usual, the double teamers argue over who gets to go for the cover.

Rob's standing moonsault gets two as the announcers keep bringing up the fact that there are no disqualifications. Jericho hits Booker in the head with the Tag Team Title for two but Rob gives him the monkey flip out of the corner. Van Dam is sent outside so Booker pops back up for some chops and a Walls of Jericho on Chris. In case you didn't get the idea, Van Dam makes the save and gives Booker an ax kick, only to have Jericho add a Five Star (good one too) on Rob.

Booker kicks Jericho down but gets dropkicked down by Van Dam. The snap spinebuster gets two on Jericho, only to have Christian come out and chair Booker in the back. Jericho grabs the Walls but here's Steiner for the save. The beatdown ensues and Rob adds the Five Star for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: B-. Good match here, or at least it was until we had to get two people interfering. This felt like three guys trying to get their heat back, which they certainly have to do after everything has been shifted to HHH vs. Shawn. It's also nice to see a good match get some time, though it might be that the match was good because it got time. Sometimes it's hard to tell which it actually is.

Shawn comes out to shake Rob's hand to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. Bad show with some good highlights, which means it's a big upgrade over most of what we see from Raw anymore. The main difference is the lack of HHH (who they said was coming here tonight and was then never mentioned again), who really does drag down almost everything that happens on this show. While Shawn doesn't even wrestle, it already feels like a breath of fresh air, which is one of the best things that could have happened to the show at the moment.

Now, that being said, Stacy was a major focal point on this show and that's not a good thing. Other than the World Title situation, Stacy being destroyed by crazy Victoria was the biggest thing on this show. The lack of a midcard title is really hurting this show as there's the World Title, the meaningless Tag Team Titles (because there are all of three teams on the roster) and then it's a bunch of nothing stories that are there to give people something to do without putting much effort into them.

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Monday Night Raw – April 17, 2017: That Ambulance Died in Vain

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 17, 2017

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

Just in case we haven't had enough going on of late, this is kind of a relaunch for Raw as we have a fresh roster at full strength for the first time. In addition to all the new names, the interesting question is will Roman Reigns be here. After Braun Strowman basically killed him last week, it should be interesting to see if he'll be here tonight. If so, WWE is missing a major opportunity. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Strowman destroying Reigns last week, turning himself into the biggest unintentional face on the roster as a result.

Here's Strowman to open things up. Strowman is proud of the beating he gave Roman last week, which saw Reigns have a separated shoulder and cracked ribs. Reigns will NOT be here tonight and that earns one heck of a YES chant. Strowman says he's ready to tear through the locker room but here's General Manager Kurt Angle to interrupt. The boss gets right to the point and makes Strowman vs. Reigns for Payback. As for tonight, Strowman has the night off but Braun wants more competition. That sounds like a threat.

Samoa Joe vs. Chris Jericho

Seth Rollins, who faces Joe at Payback, is on commentary. Joe goes right after Jericho to start but gets dropkicked out to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Joe in control and hitting his chop to the shoulder blades. We hit the nerve hold for a bit, followed by the scoop powerslam for two. The crowd sounds rather energized tonight, which I'm sure has nothing to do with the lack of Reigns and Stephanie tonight.

Joe misses a middle rope backplash (though his leg landed on the back of Jericho's head), allowing Chris to grab the Walls. That doesn't last long though as Jericho escapes and grabs the Koquina Clutch. Jericho tries the Bret Hart/Roddy Piper counter but Joe turns over and keeps the hold for the tap out at 9:08.

Rating: C+. They're making Joe out to be a killer and that's a great sign for his future. The fact that he just beat Jericho clean by submission shows that there's something to him and WWE knows it. I'd love to see Joe vs. Lesnar way down the line and they've built him as the kind of guy who could give him a run for his money.

Post match Joe says he remembers the night he debuts and the noise the fans made. Joe worked for HHH and since he cares about his clients, he'll take care of Seth at Payback. Seth says of course it was personal and Joe is going to learn that Payback is a b****.

Anderson and Gallows are on the way to the ring when they pass by the Drifter playing his guitar. They'll be facing Golden Truth tonight but Strowman runs Golden Truth over and beats the heck out of them.

Strowman won't leave.

Anderson and Gallows are in the ring with Anderson saying Golden Truth just got the United Airlines treatment. They came here for a fight so get someone out here.

Anderson and Gallows vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

After Enzo calls this the realest night of the week, Cass hammers on Anderson with a right hand to the ribs putting Karl down. Cass keeps things up by throwing Enzo at both bald guys as we take a break. Back with Enzo in trouble (some things never change), including a DDT on the arm and an armbar from Gallows. A spinebuster makes things even worse but Enzo comes off the middle rope with the jumping DDT.

Cass comes in and cleans house with the usual, including a big boot to knock Gallows outside. It takes Cass outside as well though, leaving Enzo to try another jumping DDT. Anderson is ready this time though and catches him in midair before throwing him knees first at the top rope. That's some rather unique offense but it's enough to put Enzo away at 10:48.

Rating: C-. Well Anderson and Gallows certainly needed the win, especially with Wilder (and presumably the Revival as a whole) on the shelf for a few months. The match was good enough though that ending was a big odd. You would expect Anderson to use that as a setup for the finish but it got the pin so it doesn't make a huge difference.

Video on Mickie James.

Video on Nia Jax.

Here are Miz and Maryse for MizTV. Miz starts talking about the Superstar Shakeup but gets cut off by Dean Ambrose, the scheduled guest, before he can get very far. Ambrose sucks up to the Ohio crowd before ripping on Miz's gear. Miz doesn't want to hear it because he's done everything he can to make the people in that locker room look like superstars while Ambrose makes them look like regular wrestlers.

It doesn't matter though because people love Ambrose, who was #1 pick in the Draft and was WWE Champion at Summerslam. Then Dean wasted all that momentum when he was on the Kickoff Show six months later. Ambrose doesn't care what he looks like because he loves coming out here in front of twenty people or a hundred thousand.

That's why he's the Intercontinental Champion, which he beat Miz for in the first place. Maryse says the title doesn't make the man so Dean asks her to hold the mic. As Miz goes on another rant, Dean empties his pockets and takes his jacket off before hammering Miz down. Dirty Deeds doesn't work though and Miz and Maryse run.

Strowman drags Kalisto through the back and throws him in a trashcan. Big Show runs Strowman over and says pick on someone your own size.

TJ Perkins vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville comes out to watch in what is billed as a special appearance. This brings out Austin Aries for "an even more special

appearance". They trade wristlocks to start with Gallagher taking him to the mat and cranking on both arms at the same time. Perkins does a bit of dabbing but can't handle the fact that Gallagher pops up. William III is sent to the floor to Gallagher's dismay but he misses a charge to the floor for a heck of a crash.

Back from a break with Gallagher flipping out of a suplex and grabbing a t-bone suplex of his own. The headbutt sends Perkins outside but it allows Jack to reclaim his trusty umbrella. That means the Mary Poppins dive but Perkins throws Gallagher into Aries. Austin is about to go inside, only to have Neville break it up. The distraction lets TJ kick the rope into Gallagher, setting up the Detonation Kick for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. This is what 205 Live had needed to do for months now: build up some other stop stars aside from just the champion and his #1 contender. Odds are this sets up a tag match, which should be rather entertaining if it's given enough time to go somewhere. I liked this match more than I was expecting to and I'm glad they're giving Perkins more of a push.

Titus O'Neil congratulates Apollo Crews on his impending fatherhood but Titus wants to know how Apollo is going to make an impact. The best idea Titus has is joining the Titus Brand. Maybe Crews could get into travel with the Apollo Cruise where they'll dance to Apollo Blues. If that goes badly, they can go to the new law firm: Apollo Sues. Titus gives him a card but Crews doesn't seem convinced.

The Hardys are glad to be back and look forward to working with the new talent. Sheamus and Cesaro come up to talk about how much they respect the Hardys but it'll be an honor to win the titles from such legends.

Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Winner gets Bayley at Payback. Nia cleans house to start but Bliss bails to the floor, allowing Mickie and Sasha to dropkick Nia outside. Sasha gets the better of it and sends Mickie outside for a dive onto all three as we take a break. Back with Alexa in control until she charges into a slam from Nia.

Jax slams all three on top of each other before swinging Mickie around in a cobra clutch. It's off to a bearhug on Banks with Nia easily suplexing her way out of Sasha's guillotine counter. Mickie armbars her way out of a choke but Nia throws her at Sasha in the

corner. Alexa goes up top to try a dropkick but thinks twice when Nia stares her down. A missed charge sends Nia into the post, allowing everyone else to hammer on each other.

The double knees in the corner get two on Bliss with Nia making the save. Mickie gets pulled outside as well and it's down to Sasha vs. Alexa. James has to break up a Bank Statement but here's Nia to knock Mickie off the top. The Samoan drop plants Banks but Bliss runs in for the 13:44.

Rating: C+. The time brings this one down a bit though it was a lot of fun until the end. Bliss winning, especially in her hometown, is a nice touch though they need to stop having Jax get THIS close, only to slip up after dominating everything in sight. It's the right call though as Banks vs. Bayley is still going to be a major showdown one day in the future.

Show says he'll beat up Strowman.

Finn Balor vs. Curt Hawkins

Coup de Grace finishes Hawkins in 36 seconds. Balor isn't even sweating.

Chris Jericho can't stop thinking about his rematch with Kevin Owens and thinks America deserves a better face. If he wins the title back he heads to Smackdown, but it doesn't matter if it's Smackdown, Velocity, Sunday Night Heat or Nitro: the Friends of Jericho will follow him anywhere. Chris: "You hear them Tom?" Mike Rome: "It's Mike, Chris." We get the Bugs Bunny/Daffy Duck routine as Mike forgets his own name. Chris: "You know what happens when you don't know your own name?" Elias Samson wanders up and plays his guitar so Jericho lets Mike/Tom off the list and puts Samson on instead.

Bray Wyatt asks what we're afraid of. Maybe the unknown? The dark? Or the monster underneath our bed. Fear lives in his house and we hear about how much Bray wants to hear Randy Orton scream. I love Bray but these things are getting really tiresome as there's no reason to believe he has a chance of winning and he'll just keep plugging along like the loss means nothing.

Alicia Fox and Dana Brooke are watching clips from 205 Live when Emma comes up to say Dana was laughing at Alicia getting powder thrown in her face all week long. Fox doesn't want to be Dana's friend anymore. Dana calls Emma out for lying but Emma says that's

what she gets for standing on her own two feet.

Jeff Hardy vs. Cesaro

Cesaro takes him down to start but gets sent to the floor for a clothesline from the apron. Jeff seems to be banged up on the floor and gets caught with the running uppercut. Back from a break with Cesaro getting two and having his chinlock broken in a hurry. Jeff's knee seems to be fine but Cesaro nails him with the springboard corkscrew elbow for two.

Jeff fights up and gets the same off the Whisper in the Wind, followed by the Twisting Stunner, which isn't the Twist of Fate but you can't expect the announcers to be able to really call the moves properly. I mean, it might run them afoul of JBL and that just sounds scary. Anyway, the Swanton is good for the pin at 13:01.

Rating: C. They billed this as a dream match which is quite the stretch, though I do appreciate WWE treating Jeff like a legend. I know it's been nearly ten years but Jeff is a former three time World Champion. You have to treat someone like that as something special and it's a good sign that WWE is doing just that.

Golden Truth and Kalisto are injured but here are Heath Slater and Rhyno, the latter of whom is eating cheese whiz and crackers. Slater is VERY excited about being back on Raw but they both hide when Strowman comes by. Rhyno even dropped his crackers!

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman

The brawl starts in the aisle with Strowman tossing him into the barricade. Show sends him into it as well and we actually start the match. A baseball slide of all things puts Strowman on the floor but he comes back with a running dropkick of his own. Strowman gets in a suplex and drops an elbow as they're moving in very slow motion here.

Show escapes the powerslam and hits a splash in the corner. The chokeslam gets two and Strowman's powerslam is good for the same. Braun gets crotched on top but knocks Show away, only to dive into the KO Punch for two. With nothing else working, Show goes up top but gets superplexed down.....and they break the ring for the no contest 12:36.

Rating: D. Nope. I know the ring breaking spot is going to get a lot of attention but this COMPLETELY missed the point of the match and

did nothing to push Strowman. You know who looked good here? Show, who hung move for move with a guy who TURNED OVER AN AMBULANCE LAST WEEK.

We've already established that Strowman, who didn't even win here, can beat Show and be the bigger monster but that wasn't even shown here. No, what we saw was Big Show getting to prove that he's on equal footing with Strowman, which doesn't make Strowman look unique. That makes Strowman look like he has an equal, which completely misses the point.

Strowman gets up and poses, which I guess is WWE's version of a follow up, to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This was a bit of a rough one as they certainly did a lot of stuff but the Strowman stuff felt really bad. Beating up Kalisto and Golden Truth and then going to a draw with Big Show doesn't exactly make me think he can beat Reigns or Brock Lesnar (the guy that regularly destroys Show).

The wrestling wasn't great but the show definitely felt like it was moving around at a faster pace, which is an upgrade over some weeks. There's good stuff to be seen here, but Payback is really holding things up. You have one of the new Raw guys being stuck waiting to face the Smackdown Champion in a match he has almost no chance of winning and Jericho teasing going to Smackdown while losing to Joe.

There's enough stuff on here to make me look forward to the pay per view but I'm not wild on some of the directions. Strowman's booking made my head hurt and Hardy vs. Cesaro wasn't the most thrilling thing in the world but I like Bliss getting the title shot and Joe being treated like a monster. Overall though, Strowman was the focus here and that REALLY bombed, but at least Big Show looks like an equal to the unstoppable monster.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Chris Jericho – Koquina Clutch

Anderson and Gallows b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Anderson threw Amore knees first into the corner

TJ Perkins b. Jack Gallagher – Devastation Kick

Alexa Bliss b. Nia Jax, Mickie James and Sasha Banks – Samoan Drop to James

Finn Balor b. Curt Hawkins – Coup de Grace

Jeff Hardy b. Cesaro – Swanton Bomb

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman went to a no contest when the ring broke

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Monday Night Raw – January 31, 1994: The Tax And Coin Toss Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 31, 1994

Location: Fernwood Resort, Bushkill, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 1,600

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Irwin R. Schyster

We're finally on a new taping cycle and that means we're getting ready to start the build towards Wrestlemania X. In that case we need to have some clarification on the World Title situation, which is one heck of a mess at this point. As for tonight though, it's the 1-2-3 Kid vs. Johnny Polo, which would be one heck of a drug conversation. Let's get to it.

We take a quick look at the Bret Hart vs. Lex Luger situation. They

tied in the Royal Rumble so we need to know who faces Yokozuna for the title first. The solution? A coin toss! I know face vs. face was rare back then but a coin toss? Really?

Opening sequence.

For reasons I don't even want to comprehend, IRS is on commentary. He offers the loser of the coin toss a pair of Buffalo Bills t-shirts. Luger is originally from Buffalo so he might be happy with those.

Marty Jannetty vs. Johnny Polo

Jannetty is replacing an injured Kid who is relegated to commentary. Here's what I don't get: the Kid injured his leg on January 17 and the commentary that announced his match vs. Polo was recorded after the Rumble on January 22. So why in the world did they even bother announcing the match in the first place? The 1-2-3 Kid vs. Johnny Polo isn't exactly a masterpiece so how does Marty being in there instead make any difference?

Anyway Polo insults the crowd and the Kid so Marty ties him up with the microphone cord and laughs at him a lot. Polo is sent outside and teases leaving but gets slammed in the aisle instead. Hey now, he might have had a reservation at Cracker Barrel. Back in and Marty takes a shot to the face and seems a bit, ahem.....oh you know what I mean. Back from a break with Marty botching his half of a backdrop (dude it's a simple front flip) and getting caught in a chinlock. Normally I'd say he can't botch anything out of there but you never can tell. Marty fights up and a bad looking collision sends Polo outside.

Back in and we hit the pinfall reversal sequence before Johnny slows things back down with a headlock. Polo goes up to for the "I'm only going up top so I can dive onto your raised boot" spot and it's time for the comeback. Marty crotches him on top but charges into the post. The Rocker Dropper finishes Polo a few seconds later.

Rating: D+. Thank goodness Polo was trying here because it was clear that Marty was in no condition to do anything. I still don't get how anyone could ever make it back on TV when they look like that. It's clear that Marty, who could wrestle circles around a lot of people when he's clean, is in bad shape when he can't take a backdrop. Why was he allowed to go back out there without getting in some real trouble?

IRS goes after the Kid post match and loses his briefcase somewhere in between. Cue Razor Ramon, who has recovered his gold chains which IRS stole. It seems that Kid took it, which makes me wonder how IRS couldn't catch a guy on a broken leg.

After a break, IRS blames Marty for the chains being stolen.

Jack Tunney explains the World Title situation and the weird coin toss/mini tournament idea (there are brackets for this thing) for Wrestlemania. There will be guest referees for both matches. Of note: a Videocassette of the Year Award on the wall featuring Survivor Series 1987. Can we watch that instead? This whole thing is actually rather complicated, or at least moreso than it probably should have been. Today it would just be a triple threat so it's better in a way....I think?

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Miguel Rosado

IRS officially challenges Marty for next week, which he'll accept if he has any guts. Normally those would be fighting words but in Marty's condition, he'll probably build a swing set shaped like a goldfish. Bigelow beats on him, beats on him some more, shrugs off a lame comeback and finishes with a falling headbutt.

It's coin toss time, which includes another explanation of the rules for the live crowd. I have no idea why Tony Garea, Blackjack Lanza and various other yes men are there too. Luger wins and gets to face Yokozuna first (he would have faced Crush otherwise) and can't wait to wrestle twice at Wrestlemania. Bret is upset about having to face Owen but there's no way around it.

Kwang vs. Rich Myers

Kwang is Savio Vega in a masked Japanese gimmick. Some chops and a spinwheel kick in the corner stagger Myers as we go to Owen Hart on the phone. Owen is the real winner of the coin toss because he gets to prove that he's better than Bret. The fans are doing the Wave in the tiny arena as this boring squash continues, complete with martial arts posing. Kwang ducks a middle rope crossbody and finishes with a superkick.

Rating: D-. It says a lot when a phone call is the highlight of the match. Normally I get annoyed at fans for doing something like the Wave but.....yeah it must get a bit boring with all of these squashes in a row. Kwang was a goofy gimmick and it's pretty clear you're

done when your name might come on screen during an Adam West Batman fight.

Time for the Wrestlemania Report and we recap the World Title situation for a ridiculous third time. It REALLY shouldn't be that hard.

Paul Bearer knows the Undertaker is coming back.

Earthquake vs. Corey Student

That's a horrible name, even by jobber standards. Student goes after him to start and is thrown down even faster than you would expect him to be. An over the shoulder backbreaker makes things even worse, even with IRS saying it's an illegal hold. A slam sets up the Earthquake to finish the squash, which Vince actually called it earlier on.

Rating: D. Of all the people they could pick to push as a face, it's Earthquake? If nothing else it's kind of amazing that it was only three and a half years ago that Earthquake was the top heel in the company. Nothing to see here, other than that really horrible jobber's name. Seriously: Corey Student?

Marty and Razor accept IRS' challenge with Marty going on an anti-government rant.

We run down next week's card to wrap it up.

Overall Rating: D. It wasn't a good show or anything but above all else it felt like something important was actually going on here. That's a problem that plagues so many of the shows from this era (and a lot of them today as well) but when things feel important, even a series of jobber matches are a bit easier to sit through.

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Monday Night Raw – January 24, 1994: Somebody Do Something

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 24, 1994

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross

Here's a rare one as we have a TV show taped before a pay per view yet serving as the fallout show. There's a chance that the commentary has been updated (remember that the Rumble was on a Saturday so they would have extra time) but this could be an interesting case. Let's get to it.

Lex Luger vs. Austin Steele

The commentary has indeed been done post-Rumble as the announcers talk about Luger being a co-winner. Steele has a great name but looks like Buddy Landel, which isn't the best thing in the world in 1994. Luger starts with the right hands and a pair of hiptosses but Steele actually gets in a few shots to the ribs to take over. Lex grabs a belly to back followed by a regular superplex for the pin. I don't think I've ever seen him use that as a finisher and...well it was just a superplex so there isn't much to say about it.

Rating: D. Just a match here and the ending didn't exactly do much. It's a smart move to have Luger on here two nights after he won a major match. I know the fans didn't get that at the time but at least they're keeping him on TV to keep him hot. You would think he'd be a bit more upset but he can't actually say that until next week.

We hit the Royal Rumble recap to cover everything major. Todd does screw up and say the show was last night (it was two nights ago).

Jeff Jarrett vs. John Paul

Jeff starts with a dropkick but gets small packaged and sunset flipped for two each. The comeback doesn't take long though as JR brings up a good point about Jarrett: for someone who wants to be a country singer, he certainly dresses oddly for his wrestling matches. Jarrett misses an elbow and gets rolled up for two, followed by some uppercuts to the jaw. Jeff comes right back with a rollup and a handful of trunks for the pin.

Rating: D+. Well it was better than Luger's match. I know his later stuff wasn't the most interesting in the world but DEAR GOODNESS Jeff was so much worse back at this point. The gimmick, the look and the wrestling itself really didn't work and that's a dangerous combination. It's bad enough when one of them isn't up to par but with 1994 Jarrett, I'm not sure any of them were.

Men on a Mission vs. Headshrinkers

Men on a Mission are replacing the Harts, which is annoying as I wanted to see the original match. Mo sends Fatu into the corner in one of the only successful things you'll ever see him do. The Samoans head outside for a breather as this is already dragging. For some reason Mo tries a faceplant and is almost immediately superkicked down.

It's off to Mabel to scare Fatu, who actually tries a slam. A pair of superkicks actually bring Mabel down to a knee but for some reason Fatu tries a suplex. That earns him a big boot to the face before it's back to Mo as we take a break. Back with Mo taking a double clothesline and giving one of the most bewildered faces I've ever seen. Mo is sent into the steps and chopped down but does manage to get in a sunset flip.

Fatu is right there for a save, which probably isn't necessary considering it's freaking Mo (Did I mention I'm not a fan of his?). A double headbutt gets two more but Mo manages to fall into the ropes to crotch Fatu. The hot tag brings in Mabel for all of his usual stuff, only to have the Samoans knock him outside. Mo takes another double headbutt and a top rope splash for the pin.

Rating: D-. Who decided that Men on a Mission should have gone this far? Being a big Headshrinkers fan helped a bit but this was hardly the easiest thing in the world to watch. Mabel was good for a big man but....yeah Mo was horrible. Like horrible horrible. The look on

his face when he got beaten up was amusing though.

Adam Bomb vs. Tommy Angel

Angel shrugs off some offense and scores with a few dropkicks, only to get shoved into the corner for a stomping. Bomb dropkicks him in the ribs as the announcers take shots at Bill Clinton. JR switches over to blaming Harvey Wipelman for screwing up Bomb's career as Adam hits a top rope clothesline. The Atom Smasher (powerbomb) puts Tommy away.

Rating: D. Angel was a regular jobber around this time so he was able to put on a watchable match. The same could be said for Bomb, who was a good power guy but with a gimmick based on being the result of a nuclear disaster who sounded like he was from southern Alabama was a bit too much for him to overcome.

Sparky Plugg loves cars.

Doink the Clown vs. Joey Stallings

Dink has an invisible dog...and the jobber actually sells for it. JR: "Stallings is a sandwich or two short of a picnic." Doink gets two off a belly to belly and it's off to an armbar. Back up and Stallings grabs a bad looking side slam, only to miss a dropkick. Doink grabs a powerslam and finishes with the Whoopee Cushion.

Rating: D-. I'm not sure what there is to say about this one. Do you really brag about beating someone who was attacked by a non-existent dog? I know 1994 was kind of a dumb time but are we really to the point where jobbers are scared of a tiny clown's invisible dog. I....can't believe I actually had to type that.

Tyrone Knox vs. Shawn Michaels

Knox has a good look. They run the ropes to start with Shawn taking him down and dropping an elbow across his back. Knox's offense doesn't go very far as Shawn gets in a hiptoss and stomp to the head. We hit the chinlock and Vince confirms that the WWF will NOT be replacing the NFL on CBS. Thanks for that boss. Knox gets in a few headbutts (JR: "YOU GO TYRONE!") but it's a superkick and the piledriver (good one too) for the pin.

Rating: D+. Shockingly Shawn has the best match on the card. It helps when you have someone who doesn't look like a complete loser and Knox at least looked good at times. It's still just a squash but when you have a decent opponent and one heck of a piledriver to end

the show, things are at least a bit better.

Overall Rating: F. Oh yeah this one was bad. They knew they had to be careful with what they could say in the arena and that makes for a REALLY dull show. Just long and boring here, which really shouldn't be the case on a show that is only about forty five minutes long when you take out commercials. The new cycle should help but this was really boring.

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Monday Night Raw – January 17, 1994: A Phone Call From The Future

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 17, 1994

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Crush

It's the go home show for the Royal Rumble and that means it's time for a good old fashioned hard sell show with a big brawl at the end. Unfortunately it also means more about Undertaker vs. Yokozuna to help set up one of the worst matches of all time. This show starts the second year of the show so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Tag Team Title change, including the false finish for some reason.

Opening sequence.

Crush is on commentary. I didn't know he could talk for five minutes straight, let alone an hour. We get some ranting about how Crush is going to win the Royal Rumble and how horrible Savage is.

Owen Hart vs. Terry Austin

It's weird to see Owen as a face with Bret in his corner. Owen takes him down and hits a monkey flip without the flip. We hit the chinlock as Crush is actually complimenting Owen on his good stuff, which you rarely hear from a heel comment. It's time to work on the arm as we go to a phone call from Stan Lane at Madison Square Garden for a live report on the Tag Team Title match. This is a bit more interesting as the title match wouldn't take place for another week. Owen throws him down for a top rope elbow, followed by the missile dropkick. The Sharpshooter ends Austin in a hurry.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but Crush said "Brudda" every other word and it's going to be a long night. Owen was starting to come into his own around this time and he's on the verge of launching through the roof when his brother gave him one of the best rubs of all time. You can hear the seeds in the commentary too as we keep hearing about how their issues have been smoothed over.

Owen is happy for Marty Jannetty/1-2-3 Kid but he wouldn't mind the Quebecers getting the titles back so the brothers can have a shot. Bret says about the same but knows Marty and the Kid would give them a shot too.

Tatanka vs. George South

South is a long time NWA jobber who Ric Flair always wanted to have a classic match with but the company would never let it happen. Scott hammers away in the corner and they trade clotheslines. We hear from Lane again as the title match has begun with the champs showing a lot of fire. A ram into the buckle sends Tatanka onto the warpath and it's a series of chops, capped off by the top rope chop, for the pin.

Video on Alundra Blayze.

Here are Yokozuna and Mr. Fuji for a chat. Jim Cornette isn't here because he's over in Tokyo at a press conference to get ready for

Yokozuna's big celebration. Cue Paul Bearer with the big casket to scare Yokozuna. This takes forever and of course Undertaker is inside. Yokozuna wobbles away after taking nearly six minutes for the whole thing.

Next week: The Hart Brothers vs. the Headshrinkers. That actually sounds pretty good.

Diesel vs. Scott Powers

Diesel hits Snake Eyes and a side slam before throwing it to Shawn for some cheating on the floor. There's something so evil about a guy who can beat up the jobber like that but allows his buddy to get in a few shots of his own. We go back to Lane at MSG and THOSE DASTARDLY QUEBECERS HAVE STOLEN THE TITLES BACK! As we try to digest that, Diesel powerbombs Powers and then boots him in the face (odd choice of a sequence) wraps it up.

Rating: D. This was about what you would expect but the amazing thing is that Diesel would be World Champion in about ten months. Then again that's the kind of thing you can never guess in wrestling, which is one of the most fun aspects. Diesel was starting to get good and only needed a few more months to put it all together.

We hit the Royal Rumble report with a look at most of the card and everyone in the Rumble.

Randy Savage vs. IRS

Vince calls Savage the Joe Montana of the WWF. IRS actually takes over to start and sends Savage into the corner and then to the floor. I guess Savage is devastated over the title change. Crush continues to surprise me as he basically turns his commentary into a long heel promo on Savage, only to be cut off by Savage's comeback taking us into a break.

Back with Savage being dropped across the barricade, which Crush hopes will shut his big mouth. A suplex sets up a chinlock (pretty clearly a choke) for a bit until Savage misses a charge into the corner. Savage is sent outside and we take a second break. Back again with Savage caught in an abdominal stretch before hitting the third chinlock of the match. Another quick comeback sees Savage slam him and go up for the elbow, only to have Crush come in for the DQ.

Rating: D+. The chinlocks took the life out of this but I'm glad

they didn't have IRS, who is challenging for the Intercontinental Title at the Rumble, lose clean here. You could see that Savage had lost a lot of steam at this point but he was still able to have a perfectly acceptable match, especially if he had someone willing to put in a bit more effort than IRS here.

Post match the Mini-Rumble breaks out to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Horrible show here but that's pretty standard for this era. The 94 Rumble wasn't the most interesting thing in the world and they really didn't do much of a job of featuring Luger, especially when he's possibly the biggest star in the whole thing. It really does feel like a show where anyone could win, but that doesn't always make for the best match. If nothing else we do have to sit through the build for Undertaker vs. Yokozuna and that wouldn't be good for anyone.

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Monday Night Raw – January 10, 1994: Marty Does It Again

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 10, 1994

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Randy Savage

It's the first anniversary and that's almost hard to fathom when we're used to the show being well over twenty years old. I can't imagine we'll have a ton of highlights or memorable moments as there were only so many things to pick from at this point. We do however have a Tag Team Title match with the Quebecers defending against Marty Jannetty/1-2-3 Kid. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the title match with the Quebecers helping Johnny Polo beat Marty a few weeks back. Marty and the Kid want revenge and maybe some titles.

Polo and the Quebecers are sure they'll win.

Opening sequence.

Savage comes out to do commentary.

Tag Team Titles: 1-2-3 Kid/Marty Jannetty vs. Quebecers

The Quebecers are defending of course. Marty starts with Jacques and an early victory roll almost gives us new champions. Pierre comes in and tries his luck with the Kid, who sends him outside again as we get a long 1-2-3 chant. Everything breaks down and the champs are sent together, setting up a meeting on the floor. Marty comes in and launches Kid into a dropkick on Pierre as the champs bail again. The Quebecers go to leave but come back almost immediately like the teases they are.

Back from a break with footage of a false finish during the break as Marty pinned Jacques, only to see a foot on the ropes. We settle down to Marty vs. Pierre and some heel miscommunication has the champs in trouble. It's off to the Kid, who drops both champs with a spinning kick and a flip dive from the top.

The referee is checking on a downed Jannetty and the champs shove the Kid off the top to take over for the first time. We take another break and come back with Jacques scoring with a jumping back elbow. The Quebecers do a lame looking clothesline/legsweep combo before Jacques adds a piledriver for no cover.

Instead it's the Cannonball (assisted Swanton) but they STILL don't cover. They load up a second so Marty comes in for the save, drawing some swearing from Savage. The hot tag brings in Marty for the house cleaning, capped off by a suplex/high crossbody combination for the

pin and the titles.

Rating: B. This was a bit longer than it needed to be but the pop for the title change was worth it in the end. Marty and the Kid weren't exactly long term champions as they would lose the belts back a week later at a house show but this was exactly what it was supposed to be. And remember, even though Marty won the Tag Team Titles before Shawn and had previously beaten Shawn for the Intercontinental Title, his name should be used as an insult when talking about split up tag teams. For the life of me I still don't get why it's not "he's the Jim Neidhart of the team". Anyway, good match and a fun moment.

We look back at the 1-2-3 Kid beating Razor Ramon about nine months ago.

Jim Ross does the Royal Rumble Report so we go over the rules and look at all 30 entrants. The rest of the card gets a look and thankfully the Quebecers still have their belts in the graphic.

Last year, Jerry Lawler tormented Tiny Tim. This wasn't funny in 1993 and it still isn't now.

Ludvig Borga vs. Brad Anderson

Joined in progress with Borga destroying the jobber and shrugging off some clotheslines. Lex Luger calls in to talk about the Rumble as Borga scores with a side slam. The torture rack ends Anderson in a hurry.

We look at Yokozuna winning a squash but getting scared by Undertaker building a casket to reveal the stipulations.

Back in September, Doink threw water on Bobby Heenan to officially turn face

Undertaker vs. Ray Hudson

Snake Eyes, chokeslam, Tombstone. There might have been some uppercuts scattered in between.

We look back at Bastion Booger vs. Bam Bam Bigelow, which is fallout from Luna Vachon rubbing Booger's hump.

Macho Man has a Happy Anniversary Raw cake and just happens to be facing IRS next week. Either the next match is running a long time or there's something planned for the end of the show.

Bastion Booger vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Bam Bam beats him down to the mat to start as I have to hear far too much about hump rubbing. Booger ducks a charge and sends Bigelow outside so Luna blows Bastion kisses. The distraction lets Booger hit him from behind and drop the headbutt for the pin. At least it was short. Fat but short.

Bigelow beats him up even more post match.

Polo and the Quebecers are distraught but they have a rematch at Madison Square Garden in a week.

Kamala turned face in 1993. This would lead to bowling.

IRS comes out and gets thrown into the cake to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. It's so weird to see Raw having almost no big moments to look back on when you're used to the show having a greatest hits list dating back nearly twenty five years. The title change was a nice way to commemorate the anniversary but that's about all there is here. You might think they would spend more time on the World Title match at the upcoming Royal Rumble but we had humps to rub.

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Monday Night Raw – January

3, 1994: A New Year's Hangover?

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 3, 1994

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

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Johnny Polo

It's a new year as we're getting close to the start of the second year of Raw. We're also getting close to the 1994 Royal Rumble and that means we're still in the fallout of the Lex Express. It also means we're seeing the upgraded Bret Hart rising to the top of the company and that's a very, very good thing. Let's get to it.

We open with Undertaker building a casket which Paul Bearer says is for Yokozuna. Undertaker's New Year's Resolution is to make Yokozuna rest in peace.

On Wrestling Challenge, Jim Cornette reveals that the title match he accidentally signed Yokozuna up for a casket match. As expected, Yokozuna is scared of caskets. Of note here: Stan Lane, as in Cornette's old client in the Midnight Express, is the interviewer here.

Opening sequence.

Yokozuna vs. Dan Dubiel

For some reason Dubiel goes right after him and has exactly the same luck you would expect. A hard Rock Bottom sets up an even harder belly to belly with Polo absolutely loving this on commentary. The usual sets up the Banzai Drop with Yokozuna landing much higher than usual and nearly hitting the guy's neck for the pin. That could have been very, very bad but Dubiel seems to be fine.

Rating: D+. The first thing here is how much better Polo is on commentary. He's just so laid back and relaxed about everything and that's all exactly what he should have been. It made for a very amusing exchange as he kept referring to Vince as Vic. Oh and the Banzai Drop looked TERRIFYING here, which is fine as long as the jobber was ok.

We look back at the Quebecers switching places and still losing to

Lex Luger anyway. Polo took a steel forearm of his own.

Earlier today, Luger sat down with Vince for a chat. Luger is on fire at the moment but none of that matters if he doesn't get to compete in the Royal Rumble. We'll find out whether or not he gets to be involved in a week but the people have already given him a vote of confidence via a poll. Until the decision is made though, Jim Cornette and the rest of Yokozuna's people can keep being worried about having to face even more competition. Lex gives Tunney and the people one last plea and we're done in a hurry.

Sparky Plugg drives cars.

Smoking Gunns vs. Bastion Booger/Bam Bam Bigelow

My that's a lot of B's, plus Luna Vachon in the monsters' corner. Bigelow throws Billy around to start but a dropkick puts him on the floor. It's off to Bart for some arm cranking before Booger comes in, meaning Polo wants to know what's up with the hump on his neck. The cowboys are sent outside and it's time for an early break. Back with Booger getting shouldered down but he low bridges Bart...through the ropes because Bart didn't get over the top for some reason.

Polo talks about Booger wanting to lose three pounds by the end of the year but there are several excuses, such as a dog running his running shoes or the TV at the gym being on the wrong channel. It's off to Bigelow, who Polo says has made Barney and Betty proud since he broke up with Pebbles.

A legdrop gets two on Bart but he avoids a charge and makes the hot tag to Billy. Polo: "N000000000!!!!!!" Luna is busy rubbing Booger's hump (don't ask) and a double backdrop gets two on Bigelow.

Unfortunately for Bam Bam, Bastion kisses Luna and gets slapped for his efforts. Bigelow finally sees what's going on and gets in a brawl with his partner for the countout.

Rating: F. Go back and read through some of what I wrote near the end of that match and try to figure out why I call this match a failure. There was nothing to this one and it was a great example of how horrible wrestling can get at times. I'm sure Vince found this hilarious in some twisted way and I'm going to leave it inside his head.

Todd Pettengill is in the Royal Rumble Control Center to explain the concept of the namesake match and list off twenty seven confirmed

named. The other three will be announced over the weekend. The rest of the card gets some attention as well.

Next week: Raw's First Anniversary!

Jeff Jarrett vs. John Chrystal

Jeff actually gets rolled up for two to start so he runs John over without much effort. A sunset flip gives John two more and it's time for some right hands while the announcers talk about the pay per view. Chrystal gets in a weird powerslam for two more but a running DDT (not a great one either) gives Jeff the pin.

Rating: D. Who would have expected this to be so competitive? Again though Jarrett was hardly anything worth seeing but that's the case with almost anything he did more often than not. The long blond hair didn't help him much either but at least John seemed more than game here.

Last week, Polo beat Marty Jannetty with a little help from the Quebecers. Therefore, Jannetty and the 1-2-3 Kid come out to ask for a Tag Team Title shot against the Quebecers next week.

Razor Ramon doesn't want us to smoke.

Shawn Michaels vs. Brian Walsh

Since this is going to be a squash, let's take a phone call from Quebecer Jacques. Shawn takes him to the mat without breaking a sweat and it's time to work on an armbar. Walsh bridges up from the mat and Shawn can't break him down. A few rollups are good for two each on Shawn and Polo is freaking out. With nothing else working, Shawn throws him to the floor so Diesel can....put him back inside. A bodyguard who does his job and nothing more? I don't see much of a future for him in this business. We hit a chinlock on Brian so Johnny can talk about his ancestor Horatio Abercrombie Polo settling the island of Palm Beach. Walsh makes a comeback but misses a dropkick, setting up the superkick. A piledriver gives Shawn the pin.

Rating: D. This was similar to the previous match, making it a pair of slightly more competitive than usual squash matches. Polo continued to be the most entertaining part of the match but I'm not sure he's enough to overcome an interview with Jacques. How could someone decide that was the best possible option here?

We run down the Anniversary Show card to end the show.

Overall Rating: F+. Pretty standard show for the time and that's not too surprising. As mentioned multiple times, Polo was the best part of the show and that's a good thing, assuming he actually sticks around. Unfortunately I have a feeling we'll be seeing a replacement sooner rather than later because it could mean some entertaining TV. It's a bunch of bad wrestling around Polo though and that's not going to work.

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Monday Night Raw – November 11, 2002: Just the Two of Them

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 11, 2002

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Survivor Series 2002 and that means we're in for a lot of talking about the Elimination Chamber. Why do I have a feeling that means we get to hear about HHH being amazing and being able to overcome the odds? I know the others are just window dressing around the HHH vs. Shawn match but would at least giving us

a reason to believe something is possible be that much to ask? Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

HHH vs. Booker T. later tonight and Shawn is here as well.

Tag Team Titles: Rob Van Dam/Kane vs. Chris Jericho/Christian

Christian and Jericho, coming out to Saliva's King of the World here, are defending. Van Dam and Jericho run the ropes to start with Rob scoring off a kick to the jaw and the standing moonsault. Kane comes in to a very nice pop and punches Jericho out of the air. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Kane chokeslamming Jericho but the referee is distracted, allowing Christian to get in a low blow. Can we please get a referee who isn't a complete screwup for once? It's amazing how only one or two ever have been able to get this stuff right.

Christian works Kane over for a bit until it's off to Van Dam without too much trouble. Rolling Thunder gets two on Christian but Jericho offers a distraction, allowing Christian to shove Van Dam to the floor. Things settle back down with Jericho getting two off a belly to back and grabbing a chinlock. Jericho stops to dance and actually hits his running crotch attack to the back of the neck.

The champs try some double teaming with Van Dam clotheslining Christian, allowing the hot tag to Kane. Everything breaks down again and the top rope clothesline misses. The Canadians suplex Kane down but he pops up for a chokeslam on Christian. Jericho is right back up for a belt shot to the mask, leaving Van Dam to Five Star Christian for no cover. Kane rolls onto Christian but Jericho hits him with a chair for the DQ.

Rating: B-. This was getting really good near the end with the cheap ending to save everyone. Jericho attacking Kane before Sunday made sense but the Tag Team Title situation is still kind of a mess. Christian and Jericho are probably the best option they have but it would be nice to have some regular teams instead of just throwing people together for a change.

Jericho wears Kane out with the chair.

Post break, Jericho says he's winning the match no matter what. Christian says he's the official alternate for anyone who can't make the match. Jericho chairs him down because no one is winning that

match but him.

Video on HHH vs. Shawn Michaels because, again, Sunday is all about them.

Booker is warming up when Ace Reporter Gregory Helms comes in to ask about the Chamber. Booker has been doing more thinking than Abraham Lincoln because he's ready to beat up HHH, you dig? Goldust comes in to talk about the size of his microphone and mentions that they're teaming up tonight to face Test/Steven Richards. Goldust: "Beware of the testicles because they're becoming stronger." To clarify, he's NOT talking about Test's fans.

Jeff Hardy vs. Lance Storm

JR yells about Storm and Regal carrying their flags on Veterans Day. For those of you unfamiliar, it's also the Canadian and UK's Remembrance Days, making this day important to all countries. Jeff doesn't even have a flag but JR doesn't bother complaining about that. An early crucifix attempt is countered into a Regal roll for two on Hardy and a backbeaker is good for the same.

Jeff's legdrop between the legs gets a fast two but Storm sends him hard into the corner to work on the back some more. Lance cranks on the arms but gets caught by a mule kick to the chest to start the real comeback. The Whisper in the Wind gets two and they seem to botch a whip so Jeff gets two off a rollup instead.

Hardy sends him to the floor where Regal offers some help. As you might expect, Jeff tries to run the barricade but manages to fall off, setting up a regular double clothesline instead. Somehow he mess THAT up too as he misses Regal and only grazes Storm. Tommy Dreamer runs out to take care of Regal, leaving Jeff to hit a reverse Twist of Fate and the Swanton for the pin.

Rating: D+. So that was a mess and I can't imagine it can be blamed on anyone but Jeff and his dealer. While he would have worse matches than this later on, it was clear that Jeff didn't need to be in the ring at this point. It wasn't the worst match in the world but I'd be scared to see what would happen if Hardy was in there with someone less talented than Storm.

We look back at Victoria attacking Terri last week.

Eric Bischoff has made Terri vs. Victoria for tonight. Terri freaks out as you would expect but Victoria is in the ring calling her out

for looking like Trish Stratus. Terri says she's not a wrestler (well duh) but Eric says go wrestler or get fired. He brings up her daughter because he's a good heel boss.

Post break, Terri comes out and tries to beg off because there's nothing for Victoria to prove. Victoria lets her off from the match but beats her up anyway. Terri loses her top (of course) but hits Victoria with a shoe. That earns her a slam on the ramp and a whip into the steps. Charles Robinson tries to break it up and gets hit low, leaving Victoria to grab a ladder. Trish finally comes out for the save.

Batista is walking through the back when Ric Flair comes out of HHH's locker room (no idea how Flair knew Batista was there) to say how impressive Batista is. Batista won't shake his hand but does say thank you.

D'Lo Brown vs. Dave Batista

JR tries to convince us that Brown has a chance here as the big clothesline, spinebuster and Batista Bomb wrap this up in a hurry.

Thank you veterans.

Here's Shawn for a chat. By now, everyone knows how he believes in his God, his family and in each and every one of them. The thing is he's human, and that means he also believes in retribution. Shawn doesn't know what an Elimination Chamber match is but he didn't know what a ladder match, the Cell or a Marathon match was but they wound up going just fine. Well he lost the first two ladder matches, nearly died in the Cell and apparently can't remember the name of the third so this might not be the best idea.

It was only four years off with a career ending back injury but hey, it could happen! He might not be the Heartbreak Kid anymore but he's still Shawn Michaels and that might be enough. Shawn really doesn't care about winning the World Heavyweight Championship. All that matters is making sure HHH doesn't walk out with the belt. Shawn believes all things are possible and it's possible that he's the next champ. Cue HHH to say that in this arena, he's god. The brawl is on and HHH leaves him laying with the Pedigree. Referees come out to break up the sledgehammer swing.

Dudley Boyz vs. 3 Minute Warning

Jeff Hardy is here as there's a six man tables match between

Bubba/Spike/Jeff vs. Rico/3 Minute Warning on Sunday. Normally I would ask why Rico wasn't facing Jeff earlier but Storm was the better option all Jeff issues considered. Bubba beats up both Samoans to start and Spike adds a top rope double stomp to Jamal's ribs. A backdrop sends Spike to the floor for one heck of a crash. The slow beating sees Spike being sent outside but Bubba tags himself in on the way through the ropes. Bubba cleans house as Jeff beats up Rico. Jamal gives Bubba the pop up Samoan drop for the fast pin.

Jeff beats up all three bad guys but misses the Swanton as Rico is pulled to safety. Jamal splashes Jeff and Spike through the same table for a huge crash.

Scott Steiner video.

Here's Christopher Nowinski to say Pete Rose should be in the Hall of Fame. Never mind of course as he's just doing an experiment in crowd manipulation.

Al Snow vs. Christopher Nowinski

Snow charges the ring and Nowinski drops the mic for a rather loud noise. A headlock takes Chris down and a right hand to the jaw makes things even worse. Nowinski grabs a rollup and puts his feet on the ropes for the pin.

Chris goes after him again post match but Maven makes the save.

Here's Eric Bischoff for a chat. After a quick plug for tomorrow's Super Tuesday special, we get a video on the making of the Chamber. Eric actually explains the concept and that's about it.

F-View shows us Steven Richards trying to get Stacy to be his marketing agent too. In other words, he wants her to spank him with the kendo stick. Test does it instead and Stacy bends over for something but.....RNN BREAKING NEWS!

Orton has suffered a setback in the form of a chaffed shoulder due to a bad sling. It's been solved though and his recovery will be fine.

Trish says buy Anthology.

Hurricane/Goldust vs. Test/Steven Richards

Test beats on Hurricane to start before it's off to Richards who takes a Blockbuster. Richards hits Test by mistake and the Eye of

the Hurricane gets two. Everything breaks down and Test Rolls the Dice on Hurricane for the fast pin.

Richards hugs Stacy so Test beats him up. Test: "DON'T YOU EVER TOUCH ONE OF MY TESTICLES!"

Booker tells HHH that he'll win on Sunday. There are five opponents on Sunday and someone is beating HHH. The champ holds up five fingers and slowly counts them down. I think you get where this is going.

HHH vs. Booker T.

Non-title. Booker spinwheel kicks him down at the bell and scores with a suplex on the floor. That earns Booker a whip into the steps and the jumping knee/facebuster back inside. Naturally the announcers are talking about college football with JR getting overly annoyed. Booker elbows HHH in the face to set up the ax kick but has to slam Flair off the top. Flair gets kicked to the floor but it's a low blow in the Pedigree to give HHH the pin.

Rating: D. And so much for Booker, just in case you thought he had the slightest chance of pulling off a miracle on Sunday. There was no reason to have him lose here other than to make sure you knew HHH was the star. Booker didn't have to win but do a no contest or something other than having Booker lose like this. Then again he's already lost all the credibility he could have had in the first place so this doesn't exactly cripple him.

Shawn comes in to beat on HHH and Flair but all six Chamber participants come in for the brawl. Everyone hits everyone as this goes on WAY too long. Shawn eventually gives HHH a Pedigree but gets chaired by Jericho to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. This show managed to kill off the Elimination Chamber before the thing even debuts. WWE is making one thing very clear: HHH and Shawn Michaels are all that matter on Sunday and the other four are just window dressing. They really would have been better off doing a cage match or something like that but I guess Shawn isn't ready to do that kind of thing yet. Either way, there's no secret that the other four have no chance and WWE isn't bothering to hide it.

The rest of the show continued to showcase how worthless most of Raw really is. We sat through a bunch of short, worthless matches that

aren't interesting and didn't do anything to make me want to keep watching. Everything feels either sloppy or lethargic with nothing that would even remotely classify as a hot feud. When you factor in that it's being compared to the recently amazing Smackdown, the show somehow feels even worse, if that's possible.

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Monday Night Raw – April 10, 2017: Shake Shake Shake

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 10, 2017

Location: Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

In case last week's post-Wrestlemania show wasn't enough for you, this week we have the first half of the Superstar Shakeup, which will see various talents going to the other shows. In other words, it's whatever they can call the Draft this time around. We're also less than three weeks away from Payback so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here are Miz and Maryse as Cena and Nikki for their return to Raw. Miz knows they said they were going to Hollywood but it turns out they sucked as actors. So what better way to revamp their careers than come back here? Cue Dean Ambrose, who is so glad to see John and Nikki and congratulates them on their engagement.

Miz tries to explain this to him but Dean cuts them off and congratulates them on beating the horrible Miz and Maryse at Wrestlemania. Dean loved Cena's commercial as an elephant but warns against doing something stupid like making Marine 5. Miz reveals their real identities...and gets taken down by Dirty Deeds.

Kurt Angle is on the phone when Sami Zayn comes in to ask if he's going to Smackdown. Does being here tonight mean he's staying on Raw? Angle cuts him off and says there's a lot of interest from Smackdown, which Sami asks him to quantify. Miz and Maryse come in to cut him off to trigger an argument, which sets up a match between the two. Angle looks like he's about to snap after being here two weeks.

New Day vs. Revival

Woods and Big E. here as Kofi is out after Revival severely hurt his ankle. Not to worry though as Big E. has a Kofi blowup doll as a replacement. Revival mocks Kofi's injury via some custom t-shirts and are quickly taken down for their efforts. New Day works on Wilder until we take an early break. Back with Dawson working on Woods' ribs as we hear more about Kofi's ankle injury and subsequent surgery. The hot tag brings in Big E. to clean house with belly to bellies and a Warrior splash on Wilder.

Dawson gets in a cheap shot to give Dash two, only to have Woods hit a ridiculous springboard elbow (who was less than a foot from the opposite rope) for two on Scott. Revival makes a blind tag and breaks up the Midnight Hour, only to have Woods dive right into the Shatter Machine for the pin at 7:56.

Rating: B-. The last two weeks have been EXACTLY how Revival should have been debuted. Revival has beaten an all time great team twice in a row and it's not like New Day is going to lose anything as a

result. They've been bulletproof for a long time now so putting Revival over like this isn't going to cause them any harm.

Neville isn't worried about facing Austin Aries again when TJ Perkins comes up. TJ threatens to make Neville eat his words but Neville calls him a joke. Perkins won the Cruiserweight Classic but once 205 Live debuted, TJ's career has gone nowhere. Now all of TJ's opportunities are being taken by people like Aries. The only person with any respect for Perkins is Neville, which seems to get TJ's attention. Cue Aries to say he's earned all these opportunities but TJ doesn't seem to buy it.

Curt Hawkins is here to call himself the biggest acquisition since the Louisiana Purchase. This brings out Big Show to knock him out with one punch. For some reason this makes Cole speculate that Big Show is going to Smackdown.

Austin Aries vs. TJ Perkins

Aries' title shot will officially come at Payback. Neville is on commentary and Cole asks if he can play journalist for a minute. Neville: "Nope." Perkins takes Aries down with a headscissors but stops to check his hair and dab a bit. They run the ropes with Aries cartwheeling away and catching Perkins with a basement dropkick.

That earns Aries a quick rest on top and some mocking of Perkins' taunting. TJ misses his pendulum dropkick and gets taken down by a neckbreaker across the middle rope. Aries dives off the top and that's too much for Neville, who comes down the ramp for a staredown. The distraction lets Perkins grab a small package for the pin at 3:36.

Rating: C. This has me interested as Aries vs. Neville II sounds good but Perkins is one of the only names that could hang on their level if he's on top of his game. If nothing else it could mean Perkins turning heel, which he should have done about six months ago. Good enough match here but the angle is more important.

Aries stares Neville down but Perkins comes in and gives Aries the Detonation Kick, seemingly turning full heel.

Here's Seth Rollins for a chat. He didn't know if he would ever be in this ring again because he gave everything he had to get ready for Wrestlemania. Last week he woke up after a war with HHH and his knee had never been in so much pain. All he knew was that he had never felt so good because at Wrestlemania, he slayed the King.

There are a lot of things Rollins wants to do around here ("The name Samoa Joe comes to mind."), including wanting to get his hands on the Universal Title. However, something happened at Wrestlemania that might prevent it from happening. We see a clip of Stephanie being knocked through a table, which means she'll be out for a while. Then she'll be back though and Rollins becomes public enemy #1. Therefore, it's probably easier for him to go to Smackdown. That's not what's going to happen though as Seth took the easy way out once and he's not doing it again.

Cue Angle to say that yes, Stephanie made it clear she wants him gone. Angle watched Wrestlemania though and saw Seth win a fight on one leg. Stephanie's opinion aside, as long as Angle is in charge, Seth has a home here on Raw. Angle goes to leave but Samoa Joe comes in for the fight. Rollins superkicks him to the floor though and Joe bails.

Kevin Owens doesn't care about the Superstar Shakeup because he'll be on top of either brand. He says go find Chris Jericho and ask him about the Shakeup because he'd love to go to Smackdown and find some success. Owens is the top champion on Raw and doesn't want to hear about Dean Ambrose.

Charlotte vs. Nia Jax

Nia runs her over to start and scores with a shoulder breaker to really take over. Some elbows to the back have Charlotte reeling and it's off to a chinlock. The fans look at something in the crowd as Nia throws Charlotte down but some shots to the ribs give Charlotte an opening. A chop block sets up Natural Selection for two and Nia goes shoulder first into the post. Charlotte hits the moonsault to the floor with her boot hitting Nia square in the head. Nia barely makes it back inside and the Figure Four is easily blocked. A Samoan

Drop crushes Charlotte for the pin at 5:58.

Rating: C. This was sloppy at times but it completely got the point across. Nia looks like a much bigger deal now as beating Charlotte is still a huge accomplishment with only a handful of people being able to do it on occasion. Jax still needs experience but once she gets that under her belt, she's going to be something very special.

Video on Finn Balor.

Jinder Mahal vs. Finn Balor

Balor starts fast with some kicks until Mahal blasts him with a forearm to the jaw. Not that it matters as he kicks Mahal in the head and scores with the Sling Blade. The running corner dropkick sets up the Coup de Grace to put Jinder away at 2:48.

With Balor still in the ring, Bray Wyatt pops up on screen to say he's here on Raw. In three weeks, the entire world will be able to see him torture Randy Orton at Payback in a House of Horrors match. On the other hand, Balor needs to watch himself because Bray will be watching him.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Apollo Crews, Kalisto, Heath Slater and Rhyno are all coming to Raw.

The Miz vs. Sami Zayn

Sami does his springboard leapfrog to set up the armdrags, followed by a clothesline to send Miz outside. Miz hides behind Maryse to prevent the dive though and we take a break. Back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock but getting caught in a DDT for two. Miz does the YES Kicks but Sami reverses into the Blue Thunder Bomb for its traditional near fall. Maryse makes the save by pulling Miz away from the Helluva Kick but Sami grabs a rollup for the pin at 7:39.

Rating: C+. Not bad here and it's always nice to see Sami get a win like this. I'd still like to see Sami head over to Smackdown and now he might even go over with some fresh momentum. At the moment, Smackdown is running very low on talent so hopefully someone goes over to the blue show to balance things out a bit.

In the back, Michael Cole has a sitdown interview with Roman Reigns. Roman says the win over Undertaker was the biggest win of his career but it was bittersweet. He's had great guidance but he's not sure how you retire someone you respect so much. Braun Strowman comes in and the fight is on with Reigns being destroyed.

Reigns gets powerlmsammed onto an anvil case and Braun crushes him by wheeling another case into Reigns' head. Fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!" Reigns is taken out on a stretcher. Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!" Strowman shoves the stretcher down a flight of stairs, drawing the pop of the night. Reigns is wheeled into the ambulance. Braun: "I'M NOT THROUGH WITH YOU YET BOY!" Strowman beats him up even more and TURNS THE AMBULANCE OVER with Reigns inside.

Post break Reigns is loaded into a new ambulance, which unfortunately isn't being driven by Strowman.

Hardys/Sheamus/Cesaro vs. Shining Stars/Anderson and Gallows

Before the bell, Elias Samson wanders out onto the stage, sending Graves through the roof due to his long standing hatred of all things Samson. Anderson gets taken down to start with Sheamus dropping a knee. Back from a break with Cesaro in trouble and Sheamus having to make a save. That earns him a Backstabber from Prim but allows Cesaro to dive over for the hot tag to Matt. Everything breaks down and Gallows breaks up a Side Effect. Sheamus and Cesaro send Anderson and Gallows to the floor, leaving Jeff to hit a Poetry in Motion flip dive onto the floor. Back inside, Primo takes the Twist and Swanton for the pin at 7:48.

Rating: C-. This match had no chance of following the Strowman and Reigns segment and I think everyone knew it. The Hardys are still a great nostalgia act but if they're just Matt and Jeff, I'm not sure how long they're going to be able to last at this level. Then again, I'm not sure how long they're supposed to last.

The winners pose for a good while.

Dana Brooke is reading "How to Be Your Own Protege" when Emma comes in. She seems to think Dana still works for her but Dana says that

was last year and things have changed.

Here's Sasha Banks to introduce Bayley for a chat. Bayley thanks everyone for their support because she's still the same 12 year old girl that loved this so much. Sasha congratulates Bayley for her win but now she wants a title shot of her own. Cue Alexa Bliss to say the two of them are nauseating.

She's the two time Smackdown Women's Champion and now wants to add the Raw Women's Title. This brings out Mickie James to say Bayley's nightmare is just beginning. Before she can go any further, here's Nia Jax to run her over. Bliss pushes Banks into Nia, who sends her outside. Bayley gets planted with the Samoan drop and Nia says the title is hers.

Reigns has cracked ribs, internal injuries and a possible separated shoulder.

Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. An early Dirty Deeds attempt sends Owens bailing to the floor but Dean whips him into the barricade. Dean scores with a dive and we take a break. Back with Dean caught in a chinlock. Owens: "I could do this all night baby!" Dean fights up and gets sent outside in a crash, followed by a ram into the post. Back in and Ambrose gets in a good shot to knock Owens outside, setting up a suicide dive.

That's not enough for Dirty Deeds though but Owens misses a Cannonball. Dean clotheslines him down but Kevin bails outside. That's fine with Dean, who hits the top rope elbow. Back in and Owens hits the package piledriver slam for two as the fans want Jericho. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered but Owens escapes Dirty Deeds as well. A superkick blocks the rebound lariat but Dean rolls through into Dirty Deeds for the clean pin at 14:15.

Rating: B. Lack of caring from the crowd aside (yeah fans aren't that interested in a match with nothing on the line after a three and a half hour taping and no story in sight), this was a good back and forth fight between two people with underrated chemistry. I

liked it more than I was expecting to but it was missing something to take it to the next level.

Post match Chris Jericho comes out to hit Owens with a Codebreaker to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The wrestling was much better than usual here and they added some big names to the Raw roster, which should really freshen things up a lot. They still need to get rid of some of the excess names because the roster is rather bloated (getting rid of the Cruiserweights would be a good place to start) and I'm sure five or six names will be heading to Smackdown otherwise. Good show here as they kept the energy up, complete with some hilariously unintentional comedy (I think?) with Strowman vs. Reigns.

Results

Revival b. New Day – Shatter Machine to Woods

TJ Perkins b. Austin Aries – Small package

Nia Jax b. Charlotte – Samoan Drop

Finn Balor b. Jinder Mahal – Coup de Grace

Sami Zayn b. The Miz – Rollup

Hardys/Sheamus/Cesaro b. Anderson and Gallows/Shining Stars – Swanton Bomb to Primo

Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens – Codebreaker

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