

Monday Night Raw – August 12, 2002: They Can Do It

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 12, 2002

Location: Key Arena, Seattle, Washington

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

With less than two weeks to go before Summerslam, it might be nice to add a few matches to the card. Unless I'm missing something, all we have at the moment is Rock vs. Lesnar and HHH vs. Shawn Michaels. While those are both big matches, you need more than that to fill out a show. I mean, Shawn and HHH might disagree but not everyone thinks like they do. Let's get to it.

Lesnar and Paul Heyman arrive, tickets in hand. You know, the exclusive contract thing kind of stops meaning anything when people keep showing up like this.

Opening sequence.

Eric Bischoff blames Stephanie McMahon for Lesnar and Heyman being here. You know, because Lesnar and Heyman are the kind of guys who are going to be in on some big promotion vs. promotion war.

Here's HHH to open things up. All week long, people have been asking him how he could do that to his best friend, but Shawn never was his best friend. Insert your own GASP here. HHH just used Shawn to get to the top of the company, just like Shawn used HHH to stay at the top. He's better than Shawn was on his best day and blames the fans for his actions.

HHH has crippled people in this ring before and he'll do it again. One day Shawn is going to be watching the show in his wheelchair and he'll show his son the man that kept him at home for good. Cue the Rock to say he can beat HHH up anytime but he wants Lesnar tonight. HHH asks Rock who he thinks he is so Rock reminds him who the Undisputed Champion is, meaning HHH can shut up.

A challenge is issued and HHH says he'd love to go. Rock: "Then go get the Rock a bologna sandwich because this doesn't concern you." The fight is on but Lesnar jumps to the apron for a distraction, setting up the Pedigree on Rock. This was WAY too long as HHH

continues to be one of the most boring talkers in years.

Post break, Rock demands HHH tonight. Bischoff says he'll try to make it happen.

Trish Stratus/Spike Dudley vs. Christopher Nowinski/Molly Holly

Before the match, Trish slaps the Fink for insulting Lillian. You know, because people remember that. The guys start things off as the fans want puppies. Nowinski slams Spike so Molly can cover for two (JR: "Probably an unfamiliar position for Molly.") and slap her ex around a bit. Trish (who looks especially good in blue) comes in to make things a bit more fair until Chris pulls her down by the hair. Stratusfaction puts Nowinski down and it's back to Spike, despite Trish having better luck against the male villain. Spike sends Molly into the Chick Kick but Nowinski grabs a spinning double underhook slam for the pin.

Rating: D. I'm not sure what the point of this one was but the important thing was toning the sex jokes WAY down. There were a few here and there though nothing compared to what it was before. I can live with a bad storyline as long as it doesn't turn into something that embarrassing again.

We look back at 3 Minute Warning beating up Moolah and Mae Young.

Goldust stops Bischoff in the back and asks for a Tag Team Title shot. Bischoff gives them the shot at Summerslam, earning himself a leg visit from Minidust.

Here's heel Fink to talk about how great he is and say Lillian got what was coming to her. She's a ditz who swallowed her way into a job (seriously). Kane's music hits....and no one comes out. Ok then.

Bischoff makes Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit for Summerslam due to Stacy stealing contracts from Stephanie on Smackdown to keep that nonsense going. The Hardys are annoyed about being ignored so Bischoff flips a coin to give Jeff a match against Van Dam tonight for the title shot against Benoit.

Booker T. vs. Lance Storm

Booker works on the arm to start but crotches himself on a side kick attempt. That means a kick to the ribs and an elbow to the neck until Booker gets the spinning sunset flip out of the corner. Storm suplexes him right back down and grabs a cravate for a bit. As is the custom, the rest hold triggers the comeback with Booker getting

in his usual. Christian offers a distraction so Goldust pops Storm in the jaw, setting up the ax kick for the pin.

Rating: C. This was fine and that's what you would expect from these two talented guys. It's nice to see some teams put together into a feud and the Un-Americans could be just fine as a three man heel team for a long time. I'd have loved for this to get more time but that would mean less HHH talking time.

Test comes out for the beatdown but Undertaker makes the save. Minidust is here too and gets beaten up until we take a break. Back with Bischoff in the ring with Minidust announcing an eight man tag later tonight with the Un-Americans/HHH vs. Rock/Booker T./Goldust/Undertaker. As for Minidust though, Bischoff would like to see a Spinarooni. The entertainment ends, 3 Minute Warning comes in, JR and King are appalled. I think you know the drill by now. We're still not done yet as Bischoff brings out Stacy Keibler so stripping and table dancing can ensue while Mini-Dust is taken away on a stretcher.

Chris Jericho/Big Show vs. Ric Flair/Bubba Ray Dudley

Those are some odd teams and one of them would wind up being Tag Team Champions. Flair and Jericho start (thank goodness) and keep it basic with a backdrop to put Flair down as the high spot. It's off to Bubba, who JR thinks is a big heavier than advertised. Show comes in and powerslams Bubba with ease, followed by some heavy chops.

Ric gets to try his luck and it's about the same as Bubba with chops having little to no effect on the monster. It's back to Jericho who misses a charge and crotches himself on the ropes. Everything breaks down and Bubba starts cleaning house with a side slam getting two on Chris. Flair takes Show into the crowd, leaving Jericho to hit Bubba low and grab the Walls for the submission.

Rating: C+. This was a bit better than I was expecting though that's not really saying much. At least Jericho got the win over Bubba and Big Show didn't horribly botch anything or injure anyone in the process and that's a step up for him. Flair vs. Jericho has potential when they make the match for Summerslam and that's something the card needs.

Post match Flair takes Jericho's tights down but can't get the Figure Four because the legs are tied together.

After a break, Jericho is so mad that he wants to face Flair at Summerslam. As a bonus, he's going to perform with his band Fozzy right here next week.

Video on Shawn's career in case you're not familiar. In this case, that makes sense as if you started watching in the last four years or so, you've probably never seen him have a match.

Tommy Dreamer vs. Steven Richards

I'm not sure if the Hardcore Title is on the line here but they're only allowed one weapon each. Dreamer has a kendo stick and Richards brings in a chair as the ECW chants start up. Richards starts fast by stealing the stick and unloading on Dreamer's knee. That's like, psychology and stuff. A spinebuster gets Dreamer out of trouble and he ties Richards up in the Tree of Woe for the baseball slide into the chair. Dreamer chairs him in the head for the pin.

Rating: D+. I've seen far worse and there was actually a little thinking in this one for a change. It's still not good or anything but I'm no sure why this wasn't for the title, especially if Dreamer was just going to win. If nothing else it's better by not having someone run in and steal the title.

Jeff Hardy vs. Rob Van Dam

The winner gets Benoit for the Intercontinental Title at Summerslam. Lita is shown watching from the World. I'd share a fruit plate with her in New York City. They run the ropes to start with Van Dam missing the spinning kick to the face. Jeff puts him on the floor for the barricade running clothesline, only to have Rob kick him out of the air.

Back in and the top rope kick to the face drops Jeff and Rolling Thunder gets two. Jeff's Whisper in the Wind gets the same but he takes WAY too much time going up. Rob kicks him in the head but the referee gets bumped, allowing Matt to come in and turn on his brother. The Five Star gives Rob the title shot.

Rating: C. This was watchable and I'm glad they're splitting up the Hardys for the moment. It's not like there are a ton of teams for them to feud with so let them move on and do something on their own. It seems that WWE has wanted to split them up for the better part of ever so it's hardly the worst idea in the world.

On Smackdown: Lesnar vs. Rikishi!

Test gets Undertaker at Summerslam.

Bischoff yells at Kevin Dunn (who really does sound like Cornette's imitation) for putting up that Smackdown teaser. Apparently that was a commercial, which should mean Bischoff and Raw made money. Eric isn't happy and makes HHH vs. Rock for next week.

HHH/Un-Americans vs. The Rock/Booker T./Goldust/Undertaker

After some long entrances, Goldust cranks on Storm's arm to start before handing it off to Booker for more of the same. A good looking superkick gets two on Lance and it's off to Rock for one heck of a pop. Rock cleans house but makes the mistake of talking trash (Rock? Never.), allowing Storm to get in a few cheap shots to take over. HHH comes in and tries the jumping knee but Test knees Rock from the apron, leaving no one for HHH to hit. Sounds like lame revenge from 1999.

It's enough for the tag off to Booker so Christian can hammer away. Mr. T. fights back until Storm's great superkick allows the tag to Test. HHH gets two off a suplex and it's back to Christian for a chinlock. Since he isn't bright enough to do something original, Test comes in for a chinlock of his own. A side slam keeps Booker in trouble as the fans want Taker. I know this because they're chanting WE WANT TAKER.

HHH puts on a sleeper but Booker gets in a side kick, allowing the VERY hot tag to Undertaker. Everything breaks down in a hurry and it's Rock and Undertaker cleaning house. Test breaks up a double chokeslam attempt but Booker saves Undertaker from a pumphandle slam. Rock punches HHH out to the floor, ducks the big boot and Rock Bottoms Test for two with HHH making the save. Storm gets chokeslammed and Test boots Undertaker down to save Christian from the Last Ride and steal the pin.

Rating: B. That was a very hot finish with the charisma more than carrying some of the weaker talents in the match. They even had a good false finish on that Test near fall at the end. It's a much better match than I was expecting from an eight man tag and that's a good sign when Raw hasn't exactly been great recently.

Overall Rating: C+. It's amazing how much better a show gets when we don't have five HHH vs. Shawn segments in two hours. There was a certain energy here to make the show a lot easier to sit through than in recent weeks. Summerslam is starting to take shape too and

that's the best thing that could possibly happen at this point. This was a good show with solid action and storyline advancement which is actually a rare combination in wrestling, as unfortunate as that may be.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – January 9, 2017: The Night Stephanie Shouted a Lot

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 9, 2017

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's a big night as WWE tries in vain to fight off the College Football National Championship game. Their best bet is appropriately enough a Hail Mary in the form of having Undertaker and Shawn Michaels appear, along with Roman Reigns defending the US Title against Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens in a handicap match. Let's get to it.

Stephanie McMahon is in the back with Mick Foley (who now has even

less hair) for his annual performance review. First though, she wants to talk about the rumor that Undertaker will be here tonight. You mean the rumor that you SHOWED A VIDEO FOR LAST WEEK? Seth Rollins comes in and tells Stephanie he's in the Royal Rumble. Before that can go anywhere, Braun Strowman comes in to say he wants Goldberg or Reigns tonight. Rollins punches Strowman in the face and throws a plant at him until security breaks it up. Stephanie goes into screech mode to say she'll handle this.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Reigns is defending. Hang on a second though as Strowman comes out and gets in a fight with Reigns, leading to a 3-1 beatdown. Cue Rollins with a chair for the save, allowing Reigns to grab his own chair to attack as well, so no match for now.

Cue Stephanie to say there's going to be a handicap match later tonight while Rollins faces Strowman.

Seth Rollins vs. Braun Strowman

Braun doesn't waste time and cleans house immediately crushes Seth in the corner. Rollins can't get anything in as Braun pulls him away from the ropes. A neck snap across the top rope staggers the monster but he knocks Rollins off the apron with ease to send us to a break. Back with Rollins hitting a suicide dive and running knee to the face.

A low superkick gets two and the springboard knee to the face only has a limited effect. Seth knocks him off the top (which freaks Byron out way too much considering it was the second time in the match) and a frog splash gets two. One more trip to the top goes a bit worse though as Rollins crashes into the barricade. Braun is fine with just watching him for the double countout at 11:36.

Rating: C-. It's interesting that they didn't have Braun get the win here as he still doesn't really have a major victory to his name (save for maybe last week over Sami but I'm not sure if that's major). That being said, beating Rollins might be a bit too much for him at this point. At least they had him look good though and that's

what matters.

Seth holds Braun off with a chair.

Clip of Shawn's new movie The Resurrection of Gavin Stone.

Bayley is really excited about facing Charlotte at the Royal Rumble and Sasha Banks says she'll have her back. Charlotte comes in to laugh at them and Sasha yells at her, only to get jumped by Nia Jax. Nia cleans house and winds up choking Charlotte before walking away.

We look back at the Gentleman's Duel.

Jack Gallagher vs. Drew Gulak

Gulak takes over quickly with a middle rope clothesline and cranks on a double arm choke. Gallagher comes back with his headstand in the corner, followed by a headbutt and running corner dropkick for the pin at 3:21.

Rating: D+. This is a great example of how important a character is. Gulak is one of the least interesting wrestlers in the division and is going absolutely nowhere. Gallagher is a character unlike most in WWE and he stands out as a result. It also helps that he's one of the only people who could play the character. If you don't think that's important, picture anyone else playing Undertaker.

Post match Gallagher says he has the rite to give Daivari a thrashing like never before in WWE. Instead though, he'd like to invite him to parlay, as in a sitdown meeting to discuss terms of agreement.

TJ Perkins teaches Shawn Michaels to dab.

Stephanie pesters Foley about where Undertaker is. Apparently Foley's ENTIRE performance review depends on getting Undertaker in the ring in the next hour. There's no real reason for this other than Stephanie decrees it and therefore we're not allowed to question it.

Here's Shawn to talk about about the Rumble. He's enjoying the idea of Royal Rumble season, especially since it's in his hometown, which is where he won the WWE World Title twenty years ago. "And yes, I am

that old." Shawn is much more comfortable sitting on the outside when you think about all the people in that match.

Cue the ONE MORE MATCH chant so Shawn says he's going to teach us a lesson in standing up to peer pressure. He's here to talk about his new movie but here are Rusev, Jinder Mahal and Lana to interrupt. Rusev thinks Lana should have been in the movie and says Shawn can put her in via CGI. Shawn accuses Rusev of being a Wookie but Rusev says Lana should have won the Golden Globe. Shawn: "Could you not talk about golden globes? It makes me a bit uncomfortable."

Cue Enzo and Big Cass to say Shawn is the realest guy in the room. Shawn asks Enzo what we have over here. Shawn: "HATERS! HATERS I TELL YOU!" Cass thinks they could be in a movie called Beauty and the Beast or the Pianist. Shawn cringes and Cass explains the title in a joke that both hits and misses at the same time. They finally get to the challenge with Rusev wanting to fight Cass but it's going to be Mahal instead. Shawn thinks he'll stay out here for the match and if you're not down with that, guess what two words he has for you.

Jinder Mahal vs. Big Cass

Joined in progress with Mahal hitting a running knee and a low dropkick for two. With legs as long as his, that offense makes sense. Cass comes back with his corner splashes but Rusev grabs his foot. That earns him Sweet Chin Music. The East River Crossing (pretty much botched) and the Empire Elbow wrap Mahal up at 3:09.

Rating: D. That botch didn't look good and it might be time for Cass to get another big power finisher. Above all else though, Shawn is a good example of how to use a legend. He came in, promoted his movie (by saying the date over and over in an old school move), was involved in a nothing match and gives a quick endorsement before leaving. In other words, it was effective instead of something like Ric Flair where it's a mess.

Emmalina video.

Neville vs. Lince Dorado

Dorado hits a very quick handspring into a Stunner followed by a running dive to the floor. Back in and Neville hits something like a fireman's carry slam into an armbar. A release F5 sets up a Rings of Saturn of all things to make Dorado tap at 2:59.

Rich Swann comes out for the save but Neville ducks the big kick to the head.

Video on Edge winning the Royal Rumble.

Sasha and Bayley come in to see Stephanie and demand a tag match next week. Stephanie tells Sasha to take the bass out of her voice because she's the only boss in this room. If Bayley keeps yelling, she'll lose her title shot. The tag match is on for tonight.

Luke Gallows vs. Sheamus

Cesaro and Anderson are on commentary to make it a five man booth. They slug it out to start until Sheamus gets in a spinning kick to the face. The slingshot shoulder gets two and they head outside for more slugging out. A big boot knocks Sheamus off the top though and we take a break. Back with Sheamus hitting the ten forearms to the chest followed by the top rope clothesline for two. The Brogue Kick is loaded up but Anderson hits Cesaro with a bottle. The distraction lets Luke get in a flapjack for two. Sheamus pops up and hits the Brogue for the pin at 10:20.

Rating: D+. These teams just aren't interesting and their matches aren't any good either. The idea of taking four guys who wrestle a similar enough style isn't something that works too often and that's what's going on here. It doesn't help that none of them have shown any personality that's going to bring in any interest but hey, Sheamus and Cesaro had a series of matches and that makes them interesting right?

Reigns says he'll retain.

Here's Foley to request Undertaker come out, making it sound like he's summoning the Candyman (not Brad Armstrong for you old school fans). The lights go out...and here's Stephanie to rip on Foley for being unable to produce the Undertaker. Stephanie talks about all

the issues Foley has created, including putting the Cruiserweight division on the line, creating the monster Braun Strowman and above all else: ALLOWING SMACKDOWN TO BEAT RAW IN THE RATINGS.

Before I can elaborate on how stupid that is, Undertaker cuts them off and makes his big appearance. After a very long entrance (duh), Undertaker says he goes where he wants, when he wants and no one (as he gets in Stephanie's face) tells him what to do. He'll be in the Royal Rumble and has dug 29 holes for 29 souls so he can be in the main event of Wrestlemania. If anyone stands in his way, they will REST IN PEACE.

Jericho and Owens are ready to become national heroes because it's time America was represented by two Canadians.

Nia Jax/Charlotte vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks

It's a big standoff to start and we take a break less than a minute in. Back with Banks in control of Charlotte until a shot to the knee puts her right back down. Bayley gets the tag and does her elbow to the back into the sliding clothesline spot but it's off to Nia for the domination. Charlotte comes in for some suplexes before the hot tag brings Sasha back in. That goes nowhere though and Bayley has to come back in, only to be run over by Nia. The big leg is enough to put Bayley away at 8:55.

Rating: D. I'm really not sure what they were going for here but it didn't do much good. Unless Nia is being added to the title match (gee, if only there was a power mad boss who could make it happen), I have no idea what the point of this was. The match wasn't even good and that's not promising going into the pay per view.

Noam Dar offers Alicia a free slap but she kisses him instead. Dar is shaken and Alicia says Cedric was right: he can't handle a real woman.

Here's New Day to address Titus O'Neil wanting to be part of the team. After a break, Titus comes out and suggests being on the team again but first, let's look at a clip of the original NXT with Titus stumbling while trying to carry a keg. They have an offer for Titus:

if he can carry a keg around the ring in less than 12.7 seconds (the winning time of the original contest), he wins. Titus runs around but drops the keg before crossing the line. A match is made for after a second break.

Kofi Kingston vs. Titus O'Neil

Kofi runs around to start because Titus isn't smart enough to keep up with him. A chop off goes to Titus and he gets two off a big boot. Kofi's sunset flip gets the same and it's time for some tromboning. That's fine with Titus as he throws Kofi onto the rest of the team and Trouble in Paradise wraps O'Neil up at 3:39.

Rating: D-. WHY IS NEW DAY FEUDING WITH TITUS O'NEIL??? Is this really the best that WWE can find for them? These guys were borderline main eventers just a few months ago and now they're feuding with Titus O'Neil less than a month after losing the belts? It says a lot when you can drag Kofi down but Titus pulled it off. That's impressive.

Video on the UK Tournament.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Reigns is defending and is smart enough to lock Jericho in the shark cage, only to have Owens make a last second save. The champ is thrown against the cage, which falls down off the stage in a quieter than expected crash. Another shove sends Reigns into the steps as we're waiting on the opening bell. The challengers have to tag here so Owens starts out for the team.

Jericho comes in and grabs the chinlock, only to have Roman, whose arm is banged up, come back with clotheslines. The Superman Punch misses Jericho and a Lionsault gets two. A Pop-Up Codebreaker is countered with back to back Superman Punches but Owens gets in a superkick from the floor. Reigns blocks the apron powerbomb though and scores with the apron dropkick. The Codebreaker slows Roman down though and now Owens hits the powerbomb on the apron. Back in and another Codebreaker gives Jericho the pin and the title at 8:19.

Rating: C-. What does it say that it took two World Champions to get

the US Title off of Reigns? Like, couldn't they have done the EXACT SAME THING by having Owens interfere and cost Reigns the title in one of their many matches? Nah, that might imply that Reigns isn't invincible and therefore make things a bit more interesting. It's not like this was some big major screwjob or anything as they just beat Reigns and that was it. I'm glad Jericho won the title though as Reigns certainly didn't need it.

Overall Rating: D+. This show started off fairly strong and then fell off a cliff in the last hour. Above all else, Stephanie was up to her old tricks again and it really hurt the good things going on. Was the whole point of the performance evaluation just to set up the line about Undertaker doing whatever he wanted? That's what we had to sit through all those Stephanie segments for? Other than that, the wrestling wasn't great but I'm getting the Royal Rumble itch and that's a very good sign. Not a great show here, but the title change is a positive step forward. Tone down the Stephanie and the show is much better in a hurry.

Results

Braun Strowman vs. Seth Rollins went to a double countout

Jack Gallagher b. Drew Gulak – Running corner dropkick

Big Cass b. Jinder Mahal – Empire Elbow

Neville b. Lince Dorado – Rings of Saturn

Sheamus b. Luke Gallows – Brogue Kick

Nia Jax/Charlotte b. Bayley/Sasha Banks – Legdrop to Bayley

Kofi Kingston b. Titus O'Neil – Trouble in Paradise

Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho b. Roman Reigns – Codebreaker

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – August 5, 2002: This is Worse Than Katie Vick

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 5, 2002

Location: Baltimore Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Summerslam continues to approach and that means we're in need of some major matches. The big story around here though is someone attacking Shawn Michaels, sending HHH right back into caring about his former best friend who he just happens to beat up every now and then. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Shawn Michaels being attacked and everyone being a suspect, set to Rey Mysterio's old WCW music for some reason.

Opening sequence.

Here's Chris Jericho to get things going. This is his show now and only a certified genius like Eric Bischoff would bring him to Raw. After calling the fans losers (you're better than that Chris), he says Bischoff gets the difference in talent between Jericho and Ric Flair. JR: "I just totally disagree with that." HHH cuts him off because we haven't seen these two fight enough this year. HHH suggests that Jericho had something to do with Shawn's attack as a

way to get back at HHH for the loss at Wrestlemania. That....really doesn't make sense but neither does most of what HHH says.

Jericho says it wasn't him and brings up the problem with HHH's theory: he just beat up Shawn a few weeks ago and now it would hurt HHH to have someone else attack Michaels? Jericho accuses HHH of being the attacker but HHH says he was in the ring when it happened. That's not exactly beyond a reasonable doubt but I'll take what I can get.

Anyway, HHH is going to find out who did it because he Pedigreed Shawn for his own good. HHH leaves and is quickly replaced by Rob Van Dam, whose chants annoy Jericho all over again. Rob is here for the official welcome to Raw and to ask Jericho what he's been smoking. A match is set up due to Jericho getting annoyed at the RVD chants.

Big Show vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Tables match. Show has slightly altered gear this week as the one piece swimsuit look now ends in shorts. So he's wearing a woman's one piece swimsuit but is self-conscious about his thighs. Bubba slugs away to start but gets caught in a good looking belly to belly. Some shots on the floor stagger Show for a few seconds until Show beats him down again. There's a side slam to Bubba and it's already time for a table.

Show kicks the table in half by mistake so Bubba folds it up and hits him in the head. That goes nowhere so here's Trish to distract Show (the leather skirt helps with that), allowing Spike to come in and hit the big man with a football helmet. Show staggers into a flapjack through the table to give Bubba the win.

Rating: D-. As you might expect, Trish's outfit was the only good thing about this one. I have no idea why Show is jobbing to Bubba Ray Dudley and a football helmet but I'm sure it's going to result in Bubba getting a push because THAT'S what the world is waiting for. There's something to be said for trying something new but there's no real logic behind picking someone whose push is guaranteed to be a failure.

The Un-Americans run down America and the Undertaker. This involves talking about slaughtering innocent people in response to 9/11 and yeah, that's too far. Like, way too far. Sgt. Slaughter comes in and offers to show them some real American aggression. This is going to be a very, very long night.

We look back at Moolah and Mae Young getting beaten down last week.

Hardcore Title: Tommy Dreamer vs. Bradshaw

Dreamer is defending and this seems to take JR by surprise as he says this was coming later in the show. They actually start fighting in the back, which is an interesting idea for the division for a change. Therefore, they're almost immediately in the arena to make sure this is your run of the mill hardcore match. JR calls this a Raw exclusive and I wouldn't brag about that.

Bradshaw beats him around the arena for a few near falls until Dreamer pulls him into the post. After some more weapons shots, Dreamer gets tossed with a middle rope fall away slam. A powerbomb gets two for Bradshaw and Dreamer gets the same off a shot to the head. Dreamer DDTs him on the floor for the pin and the title.

Rating: F. Nothing interesting and nothing new here, save for JR bragging about the division. It says a lot about the show when the announcers don't seem to know what's going on with the format. The division is so far beyond a waste of time at this point and I have no idea why so many of these people are still employed.

William Regal and Christopher Nowinski are talking about their tag match later when they run into Molly Holly and her new friend Victoria. Nowinski likes the idea of de-virginizing Molly and has to read the back of Victoria's trunks to remember her name. Funny, but still rather disturbing.

Goldust complains to Booker T. about Mike Myers stealing his idea for Goldmember. As retaliation, Goldust introduces Minidust, who promptly enjoys Booker's leg. Thankfully HHH (What am I saying?) comes in and accuses Booker of attacking Shawn. Booker isn't happy.

Howard Finkel asks Bischoff if he can challenge Lillian Garcia to be

the official ring announcer. Bischoff actually agrees because WE'RE HAVING A STORY ABOUT BATTLING RING ANNOUNCERS! Were the referees busy this week? Fink has a letter to deliver to Bischoff and it turns out to be from Stephanie, listing off various talents appearing on this week's show. If nothing else we get to hear Fink do his big introductions voice which I'll never get tired of hearing.

Kane is coming back. Oh yeah. He's been gone.

Test vs. Sgt. Slaughter

Test kicks him in the face before the bell and there's no match. Seriously that's the whole thing.

Booker T./Goldust vs. William Regal/Christopher Nowinski

Goldust punches Nowinski in the face to start and follows up with a running hip attack because that's how Goldust's offense works. The bad guys start working on Goldust's arm to take over as the fans tells Chris that Harvard sucks. Lawler starts talking about Molly wanting to sleep with Nowinski and those old awkward feelings start up again. Regal is finally sent into the corner for the hot tag off to Booker so house can be cleaned. Everything breaks down with both teams getting near falls off secondary finishers. An atomic drop into the ax kick puts Regal away.

Rating: C. This was your standard tag team formula match, making it by far and away the best thing on the show thus far. Booker and Goldust are a legitimately entertaining tag team and therefore they're stuck spinning their wheels while HHH accuses Booker of attacking Shawn for his weekly table scraps.

HHH accuses the Un-Americans of attacking Shawn and hits a table with the hammer.

Trish Stratus vs. Victoria

Molly is on commentary and oh my this is going to get rough in a hurry. Twenty seconds into the match, Lawler flat out asks Molly if she's a virgin. Lawler: "Do you have a fondness for cherries?" The match starts slowly and Victoria hurts her knee as the cherry jokes

continue. Naturally it's a ruse so Victoria can kick Trish in the face, which greatly pleases Molly. JR says it makes her sound "multi-orgasmic". Trish chops away and now let's talk about how far Spike got with Molly. A sunset flip is reversed and Victoria grabs the ropes for the pin.

Rating: F. This has nothing to do with the match. Lawler was as disturbing as I've ever heard him here and JR didn't even do much to stop him. There's no excuse for this story to exist and it's absolutely disgusting. I know Katie Vick is still coming up this year but this might be even worse as it's about a real person and is supposed to be from a face.

Show is annoyed at HHH accusing him too.

Tag Team Titles: Hardy Boys vs. Un-Americans

Storm and Christian are defending. Matt and Christian slug it out to start before it's off to Jeff for the high pitch pop. The heels take over with some double teaming but Jeff scores with the Whisper in the Wind. The hot tag brings in Matt for the Twist of Fate but Christian gets in a cheap shot to give Storm two. Jeff dives off the barricade to take Christian down again and the Swanton connects, only to have Christian pull the referee out for the DQ.

Rating: D. Another horribly uninteresting match here with the Hardys not exactly putting in a ton of effort. The Un-Americans are fine for a basic heel team and they can wrestle a good enough match but you need more than four minutes against an unmotivated team. Nothing to see here but at least Jeff is getting a response.

Test goes after the Hardys until Undertaker makes the save. The Un-Americans bail so Undertaker steals a police motorcycle and gives chase.

Here's Bischoff to deal with the Howard and Lillian issue, which the fans didn't seem to know existed. First of all though, Eric promises a surprise for HHH later on. I'm so thrilled. Anyway, the announcers take turns plugging the new movie XXX and of course we see a trailer. Finkel implies that Lillian enjoys servicing multiple

sailors and this time he's the heel, unlike ANYONE who makes fun of Molly for being a virgin. Bischoff sends out 3 Minute Warning to destroy Lillian because this is supposed to be entertaining.

Chris Jericho vs. Rob Van Dam

Jericho starts fast and hammers away in the corner but gets monkey flipped for two. Seriously who goes for a cover after a monkey flip? A slingshot flip dive puts Jericho down again until he grabs a release German suplex to really take over. Jericho goes for the turnbuckle pad but settles for a spinning kick to the face instead. The Lionsault hits knees and Van Dam's Rolling Thunder is good for two. Rob reverses the Walls attempt into a small package for two and there's the ref bump. Chris chairs him down but Flair comes in with a chair to Jericho's head, setting up the Five Star for the pin.

Rating: B-. Match of the night by far here and that's something that this show was dying for at this point. Flair vs. Jericho should be a lot of fun and Van Dam can do...something for Summerslam. The match was pretty good but this show is just so far beyond saving that it doesn't matter at this point.

Bischoff is on his way to the ring with a surprise for HHH. This is perhaps the most unnecessary scene I can remember in wrestling this year.

Here's Bischoff to introduce HHH for his big surprise. The surprise is a live feed from San Antonio so HHH can talk to Shawn. They're cool at the moment and it seems that the Pedigree is forgotten. We get to hear them make up on air until HHH finally gets to the point by asking if Shawn remembers anything.

That's a big negative so HHH promises to find out who did it. We have a break in the case though: the Greensboro police have sent Shawn some security footage, which he hasn't actually watched yet. We see the video, it's really blurry, Shawn enhances it, and it's HHH. I mean, you could see that before it was enhanced but let's stretch this out even longer. HHH admits it (well he kind of had to) and apparently his motive was to show that Shawn needed HHH's protection. From HHH you mean?

Anyway the doctors have told Shawn that he'll make a 100% recovery. Say by...Summerslam? HHH: "What are you going to do? Talk me to death?" Shawn wants to fight at Summerslam, even though HHH asks what happens if Shawn can't take care of his family anymore. Michaels doesn't really care and the fight is set for Summerslam to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. This is a rather interesting case where I remember the ending very differently. At the time, I LOVED the idea of Shawn coming back to face HHH in a fight at Summerslam but that's all I remember about about the segment and really the show in general. While the announcement was a good idea and came off well, almost EVERYTHING else was a mess and really kept everything from having a chance.

Before we get to the rest of this mess, let's look at the big angle. Now keep in mind that HHH knew the whole idea throughout the show. I get the idea of wanting to put up a front but what in the world was the point of doing that if you're going to do the big reveal just a week later? Set this up, wait a few weeks and THEN do the HHH reveal. Either that or just cut out the whole Pedigree thing from a few weeks ago. What's the point of having HHH run around for a week and waste our time? Did he really think he was going to get away with it? I know he has delusions of grandeur but this was a stretch even for him.

That leaves us with the rest of the show, which included a battle of the ring announcers, a horrible table match, an even worse hardcore match, Minidust and finally, an absolutely unnecessary and deplorable batch of commentary during the Trish vs. Victoria match. There's a difference between bad wrestling and a ridiculous waste of time with this one being far more of the latter than the former.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – January 2, 2017: I Love it When WWE Trolls Us

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 2, 2017

Location: Amalie Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

Welcome to the new year and welcome to the official Road to Wrestlemania. It's a stacked show this week with three matches announced, including a Last Man Standing match between Braun Strowman and Sami Zayn. On top of that we have the return of Goldberg, which will be followed by the return of Brock Lesnar next week. Let's get to it.

Here's Mick Foley, who has lost a lot of hair to go with his weight loss, to open the show. After showing us that he wrote the name of the town on the back of his hand to avoid any further issues, here are Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho to talk about the shark cage. Owens has to say Jericho is being hung up like a sexy pinata before ripping into Foley for giving Roman Reigns another title shot.

Jericho laments Foley putting him in the Cage of Jericho "and locking me in man." For some reason, this makes Foley want to see the Kevin Owens Show tonight, featuring Goldberg as the first guest. Jericho accuses Foley of abusing his power so here's Stephanie McMahon to cut them off.

Tonight, Reigns is defending the US Title against Jericho and if Roman is counted out or disqualified, the title changes hands.

Stephanie brings up the ratings loss last week (STOP MAKING THAT A PLOT POINT!) so tonight it's Owens vs. Rollins with the loser being banned from ringside for the US Title match.

Kevin Owens vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Owens bails to the floor to start and takes back to back suicide dives but the champ starts stomping away back inside. Seth gets two off a Blockbuster and we take a break. Back with Owens getting two off the backplash and Cole repeating the stipulations, which doesn't make me feel much better.

Rollins gets backdropped to the floor for a big crash but the Cannonball only hits the barricade. Back in and Rollins scores with an enziguri but has to get some blood back into his leg. The Sling Blade drops Owens again and Owens is sent outside where he hits Rollins with the bell for the DQ at 11:49.

Rating: C-. Sweet goodness they've beaten this feud into the ground and it's completely worthless anymore. This was just going through the motions for about twelve minutes for the sake of determining that Owens will be banned from ringside in the main event. If that's the best they can do for the World Champion, just give it to Reigns already so we can learn to get used to him all over again.

Karl Anderson vs. Cesaro

Sheamus is on commentary. They trade some big power shots to start with Cesaro getting the upper hand as you might expect. We take an early break and come back with Cesaro suplexing him down, giving us a discussion of how strong Cesaro is. Anderson kicks him in the chest so Cesaro uppercuts him in the chin over and over. This prompts a Paula Abdul reference from Saxton, which just makes me want to go watch some old MTV.

Cesaro climbs the corner for a twisting crossbody but a spinebuster gets two. Sheamus goes to the ring to deal with Gallows, prompting Graves to wonder why Sheamus wasn't down there from the start. The running knee staggers Cesaro but he catches Anderson on the top. Sheamus goes after Gallows though and that knocks Cesaro off, setting up a top rope neckbreaker to give Anderson the pin at 10:50.

Rating: C. So to clarify: the team that lost over and over again to the champs are probably getting another shot at Cesaro and Sheamus who STILL can't get along. This whole division has just died in the

span of a few weeks since New Day lost the belts and it shows how worthless the division is anymore.

Recap of Sami Zayn vs. Braun Strowman.

Video on Goldberg vs. Lesnar plus Goldberg entering the Royal Rumble.

Sami Zayn vs. Braun Strowman

Last man standing, meaning Sami is about to die. Sami gets in a jab and tries some kendo stick shots but Braun just breaks it over his leg. Another stick gets about the same treatment and the moonsault off the barricade is pulled out of the air. A few rams into the post have Strowman staggered until he punches Sami to block the diving DDT. Some clotheslines drop Sami, whose offense is shrugged off over and over again.

Back with Sami being sent off the ramp as the match goes out of the arena, meaning the fans can't see. As you might expect, this earns some widespread booing. Sami finally sends Braun into the equipment cases so Strowman throws him on top of them. Strowman THROWS A CASE AT HIM and thankfully it doesn't cause a bad case of death.

Sami cracks him in the back with a chair as they stagger back into the arena. That just earns Zayn a toss onto the stage, followed by a whip into the screen. Zayn chairs him again and Braun is staggered, followed by a crossbody to put Strowman through some tables for a six count but Strowman is reeling.

Sami swings again but Braun grabs the chair and drags him up onto the ramp in another scary power display. The powerslam on the floor gives Braun a seven so Strowman just unloads on him with knees to the head and right hands. Another powerslam on the floor ends Sami at 15:48.

Rating: B. I had a lot more fun with this one than I was expecting to as they gave Sami all the offense they realistically could. It's also a good sign that Strowman is rapidly getting the hang of wrestling like a monster instead of just standing around and doing power stuff. They beat the heck out of each other here and Strowman selling yet still shrugging the offense off was done quite well.

Sami does a stretcher job but Strowman turns it over.

Video on the Gentleman's Duel from 205 Live.

Jack Gallagher gives New Day dueling lessons with umbrellas. The hip swivel doesn't please Gallagher and he walks off.

Here's New Day for their New Year's Resolution. 2016 was a good year for them due to setting the Tag Team Title record so now they're entering the Royal Rumble. Before they can announce their resolutions though, here's Titus O'Neil doing the New Day entrance and throwing in some dancing. He thinks New Day needs a fourth member and even dances to his own whistle. Titus thinks he would look great on the cereal box but Woods thinks it should be on a milk carton. A match is set up and Titus punches Woods in the jaw.

Xavier Woods vs. Titus O'Neil

Woods kicks away at the legs to start but gets slammed right back down. We hit a chinlock for a bit as the announcers discuss Titus' dancing abilities. Woods gets in some more kicks and low bridges O'Neil to the floor. The back to back backbreakers drop Woods but he grabs a sunset flip for the pin at 3:52.

Rating: C-. Not bad here but it felt like pure filler, which happens far too often on this show. Woods can go in the ring and I like the fact that he's getting to show off his in ring skills. It's not the worst match in the world either and Titus was somewhat entertaining with the New Day tryout.

Bayley comes in to talk to Stephanie about last week's match against Charlotte. Stephanie never wanted Bayley on this show because she's just a kid compared to a woman like Charlotte. Bayley says she doesn't have the famous last name but she belongs here because she's just who she is. That earns her a #1 contenders match against Nia Jax.

Cedric Alexander and Alicia Fox run into Noam Dar, who apologizes but hits on Alicia even more.

Cedric Alexander vs. Drew Gulak

Gulak takes him down to start as the announcers talk about how tough Drew is for his lack of kneepads. Cedric gets in a quick dropkick to take over but Tony Nese goes after Alicia, setting up a rollup with trunks to give Gulak the pin at 2:25.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Chris Jericho

Owens is banned from ringside, Reigns is defending and loses the title if he gets counted out or disqualified. The champ runs Jericho

over to start as the fans are split on Reigns. A middle rope dropkick gets two for Jericho so Reigns comes back with his string of clotheslines. Reigns tries the apron dropkick but crashes into the post instead, giving Jericho a near countout as we take a break.

Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and hitting his modified belly to back suplex for two. The Superman Punch is blocked but the Lionsault hits knees. The other finishers are broken up until Jericho grabs the Walls. That lasts as long as you would expect the Walls to last until Jericho goes up top again, only to dive into the Superman Punch for a near fall.

Another spear is broken up and Jericho takes off a turnbuckle pad. That sets up the old Eddie Guerrero grab the belt and pretend to get hit with it spot. The referee doesn't buy it so instead the Codebreaker gets two. Jericho goes into the exposed buckle and the spear retains the title at 13:06.

Rating: C+. The ending actually deflated me and that's not a good thing about the top face on a show. There's just no reason for Reigns to keep the title at this point and everyone has to know it at this point. He's not helping the title and he doesn't gain anything by holding it so why keep doing it this way? I mean, other than as a middle finger to the fans who want ANYONE else to hold the title.

TJ Perkins vs. Brian Kendrick

Neville is watching in the back. Perkins gets two off an early dropkick but Kendrick snaps the throat across the top rope to take over. Back up and a hurricanrana off the top drops Kendrick. The Detonation Kick into the kneebar makes Kendrick tap at 2:39.

Video on the UK Title tournament.

Rusev/Jinder Mahal vs. Big Cass

This was supposed to be a tag match but Enzo is still injured. Cass fights them off without much effort to start before Jinder goes after Enzo. The distraction sets up a superkick from Rusev for the pin at 1:32.

Bayley vs. Nia Jax

Charlotte is on commentary and the winner gets the title shot at the Royal Rumble. Bayley's headlock starts things off and she's easily tossed around the ring with almost no effort. A cobra clutch has

Bayley rag dolled around the ring until Bayley sends her shoulder first into the post. Another charge takes Bayley down though...and here's Sasha for the distraction, setting up the super Bayley to Belly to pin Jax at 3:21.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what you would expect and there's not much else to say about it. The commentary might as well have given away the finish before the match even started as they didn't bring up the possibility of Charlotte vs. Nia until about fifteen seconds before the finish. At least Bayley won and wasn't completely dead before the finish.

Undertaker and Shawn Michaels are here next week.

It's time for the Kevin Owens Show with a lawn chair, a table and a man standing in place with a sign over his face. Owens introduces Jericho as his first guest and he's not happy. See, the fans were chanting for Goldberg just a few minutes ago and that means TAMPA JUST MADE THE LIST.

Jericho has breaking news: he's the third (sixth) entrant in the Royal Rumble! Owens isn't pleased but Jericho says no matter what happens, they're still the champ. Kevin still doesn't want to do it but he gets cut off by Goldberg's full entrance. Goldberg throws the chair out of the ring and Jericho isn't impressed. Jericho: "You know what happens when you destroy the set?" Goldberg: "YEAH! Spear, Jackhammer."

Owens throws out the rest of the set and the brawl is teased until Paul Heyman breaks it up. He says the Rumble will be elimination, repeat, elimination, repeat but Roman Reigns interrupts as well. That brings Reigns to Lesnar but now it's Braun coming out to take the mic from a cowering Heyman. Owens and Jericho bail to the floor and Strowman is in the Rumble too. A double spear drops Strowman and posing ends the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a show where the length killed it. The show didn't feel like it was going to be all that great in the first place but then it just kept going to drag it down even further. I'm thoroughly convinced that they're intentionally ticking us off with the Reigns/Rollins/Owens/Jericho stuff at this point because there's almost no way anyone could think it's the best possible option. It's not interesting, the wrestling isn't great and it's very stale. In other words, enjoy three more weeks' worth of it. The last man

standing match was good but it's stuck in a never ending field of mediocrity that is Raw.

Results

Seth Rollins b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Owens used the ring bell

Karl Anderson b. Cesaro – Top rope neckbreaker

Braun Strowman b. Sami Zayn when Zayn couldn't answer the ten count

Xavier Woods b. Titus O'Neil – Sunset flip

Drew Gulak b. Cedric Alexander – Rollup with a handful of trunks

TJ Perkins b. Brian Kendrick – Kneebar

Rusev/Jinder Mahal b. Big Cass – Superkick

Bayley b. Nia Jax – Super Bayley to belly

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – July 29, 2002: The Turn After the Turn Before the Turn

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 29, 2002

Location: Greensboro Coliseum, Greensboro, North Carolina

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're officially in the HHH Era on Raw but unfortunately he doesn't really have a lot to do yet. Last week HHH debuted on the show and turned heel by beating up Shawn Michaels, but there's absolutely no way that's going to lead to a match anytime soon of course. With about a month left before Summerslam, the card is in need of some matches in a hurry. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Shawn and HHH from last week, which is almost the only thing worth talking about. At least it wasn't Stephanie vs. Eric again.

Opening sequence.

Here's Bischoff to get things going and he's already talking about Stephanie. She stole Lesnar last week and this week he's got a knockout of his own. Here are the newest members of the Raw roster: Christian, Lance Storm and Test, the Un-Americans. So...what about that whole building up tag teams over on Smackdown? Total waste of time for the sake of Stephanie vs. Bischoff? Good to know.

Storm points to the upside flag Test is carrying, which stands for America being in distress. Let's look at some of those American icons, such as Elvis Presley, a fat drug addict who died on the toilet. We hear similar complaints about Marilyn Monroe, Babe Ruth and John Wayne (JR: "NOW WAIT A MINUTE!"). The champs don't think much of America, save for Bischoff of course.

A fired up Shawn Michaels of all people cuts them off and says he wants to exercise his rights as an American citizen to beat HHH from one side of this arena to the other. Shawn doesn't want to hear from some Canucks who are still mad that he beat up Bret Hart. If Bischoff doesn't bring HHH to him, he'll go find HHH himself. Storm says Shawn will get what's coming to him. Did Shawn really need to come out here at this point? It's not like these segments couldn't be split up.

Bischoff is talking to Eddie Guerrero when a messenger comes up and says a woman in a limo has sent for him. Eric isn't interested and says she can wait. I'm thinking....Linda?

Booker T. vs. Eddie Guerrero

Booker starts fast with a flapjack for an early near fall as Lawler wants to know what happened to Booker's bad back. Fair question

actually. Eddie remembers it as well and forearms Booker in the back to take over. A one armed camel clutch keeps Booker in trouble and it's time for some Spanish trash talk.

Eddie unhooks the turnbuckle pad and it's time for the comeback, including a clothesline for two. As expected, Booker sends Eddie pretty close to the buckle (it wasn't clear if he knew about the pad being gone) and hits an ax kick to the side of the head (Eddie wasn't bent over) for the pin.

Rating: C. The ending was a bit off but the match got a little more time than usual and let Booker get a win instead of losing all over again. There's quite the midcard being built around here and they actually have a title to fight over. If one of them could, I don't know, head towards the main event, things might get interesting for a change.

Moolah and Mae Young are in the limo.

Shawn goes HHH hunting but finds Booker and Goldust instead. Booker isn't cool with Shawn throwing him out of the NWO but Shawn says it was business. That sounds like an invitation to a fight and Goldust can dig that. Sucka.

Trish Stratus/Bubba Ray Dudley vs. William Regal/Molly Holly

Rematch from last week but Regal is injured, meaning we have a replacement.

Trish Stratus/Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Big Show/Molly Holly

Lawler slips up and implies that Molly is good looking before remembering to be a face and pretend she's overweight. Molly takes Trish down to start but Big Show misses an elbow, meaning we get the Show vs. Bubba match that we were all waiting for. Bubba's bad arm gives him away though and it's Show taking over without too much trouble.

The women come in again with Trish getting two off the Chick Kick, allowing JR to mention that Molly doesn't spend too much time on her back. Molly tries to go after Bubba, earning her a quick dance. Show saves What's Up but takes some steps to the head, leaving Molly to get caught in a Doomsday Device for the pin.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here, aside from some bad jokes at Molly's expense. I'm still not sure where we're going with Trish/Bubba but they've managed to come up with worse ideas before.

I'm also looking forward o getting away from Trish vs. Molly because even Lawler is having issues remembering his stupid motivations here.

Show cleans house and sets up a table but Trish saves Bubba with some distracting chair shots.

Post break, Show yells at Shawn and mild threats are issued.

Ric Flair gives Jeff Hardy a pep talk when Bischoff comes in. Flair doesn't think Jeff should risk his life for ratings every week, including in a hardcore match tonight with Bradshaw. On top of that, Ric has an announcement for later tonight. Moolah and Mae Young come in for a book plug and generally unfunny shenanigans. Bischoff will let them plug the book in the ring.

Hardcore Title: Jeff Hardy vs. Bradshaw

Jeff is challenging and now billed from just North Carolina for the cheap pop. Bradshaw knocks him around to start and gets two off a very hardcore elbow drop. A trashcan shot to the back looks to set up a powerbomb off the steps but Jeff backdrops his way out instead. It's ladder time because that's all Jeff knows how to do anymore. The ref gets bumped to keep this going and Bradshaw is knocked off the ladder. A Swanton in Bradshaw's general area gives Jeff the pin and the title.

Rating: D. I hit you, you hit me, the finish sucks and does nothing for anyone. Hardy wins another meaningless title to go with his recent European Title win, meaning he's likely losing this one by the end of the month at the latest. If nothing else I hope he does so we don't have to see Jeff's personalized title with his "artwork" included.

Johnny the Bull and Tommy Dreamer win the title.

Regal was faking his injury and goes off to get a massage. Benoit comes out of the green room and says he doesn't need luck.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is challenging. A fight over a wristlock goes nowhere as the announcers talk about Flair having a big announcement for later tonight. Benoit gets tired of the posing and kicks Van Dam in the ribs as the conversation moves on to a Shawn/HHH discussion. Rob kicks him in the face to set up a big dive over the top to really wake the crowd up.

Back in and Rob does his splits to set up a monkey flip, only to have Benoit score with a basement dropkick to the head. Van Dam goes shoulder first into the post as it's time to set up for the Crossface. Benoit cranks on the arm and cuts off the champ's comeback by sending him hard back to the mat.

The stepover kick to the face drops Benoit though and Rolling Thunder is good for two. Rob misses the Five Star and that means it's time for the Crossface. A rope is reached but Benoit grabs the hold all over again. Van Dam rolls away but Benoit throws his feet on the ropes for the pin and the title.

Rating: B. Good stuff here and it's a positive sign to have Benoit already with a title again so soon after his return. Van Dam will be back and you can almost guarantee a rematch from here. The wrestling was solid too with the story making sense all the way through. The arm work even played into the ending with Benoit going from the Crossface to the pin.

Shawn tells the door attendant to let HHH know that he's waiting in the parking lot. Big Show is watching.

Moolah and Mae Young are in the ring with Bischoff saying they have three minutes. Bischoff actually dozes off as Moolah talks about some stories. Mae almost gets in a fight with Moolah...and here comes 3 Minute Warning. The women take a beating and NO ONE COMES OUT TO HELP THEM. Bischoff names the monsters as Jamal and Rosey.

After a break, with Mae being carted out, Bischoff says that when he snaps his fingers, things happen. Cue Undertaker to say this finger snapping thing could be interesting. Christopher Nowinski interrupts and makes the mistake of insulting the Undertaker. Let's have a match.

Undertaker vs. Christopher Nowinski

Chris tries to talk his way out of this but gets sent into the corner. Undertaker charges into an elbow in the corner and Chris Harvard (JR's name) hammers away, only to get caught with Old School. The Last Ride wraps it up quick.

Post match the Un-Americans come out for the beatdown, including a mostly messed up Conchairto. It's so bad that they have to try a second time and still only barely graze him. How hard can it be to hit someone in the head?

After a break, the Un-Americans say they have one more piece of business.

Rock implies Coach slept with a cow and Coach makes the mistake of going down the rabbit hole. This prompts Rock to go into the full story, capped off sound effects and saying Coach likes to stick microphones up cows' rectums. Coach: "Rock it was just one night."

Rock: "WHOA WHOA WHOA WHOA WHOA! THE ROCK WAS KIDDING! Hey is that a cow over there?" Coach: "Where???"

Anyway, Rock is ready to give Brock Lesnar the beating he deserves but first, he's facing Ric Flair in Flair Country. Rock talks about how big it's going to be, says IF YA SMELL, waits for JR to talk about the match, struts on and off screen, and then says IS COOKIN. This was great in the way that only Rock can make something great.

Here's HHH to address Shawn. It was HHH's idea to have Shawn as his manager so they could take over the WWE together. Shawn doesn't understand that his time is over and it's not about him anymore. All the injuries have caught up with him and last Monday was a slap of reality in Shawn's face. Shawn's career is over and he needs to just accept it and be HHH's manager. A producer gets up on the apron and tells HHH something, which sends him running to the back.

We come back from a break with wrestlers around an unconscious and bloody Shawn. HHH demands help for his buddy and Shawn is taken away in an ambulance. Bischoff suggests that HHH was behind it and we get a censored F Bomb.

Ric Flair vs. The Rock

Non-title and Rock requested the match. They trade armdrags to start with Flair actually sending the champ out to the floor. Back in and Rock sends him into the corner before copying the strut, earning himself some Flair chops. Rock is put on the floor again as this is almost one sided so far.

It's WAY too early for the Figure Four though and Rock is soundly booed by the North Carolina crowd. The spinebuster looks to set up the People's Elbow but Flair grabs the leg, only to have the Figure Four countered into the Sharpshooter. A poke to the eye cuts Rock off and NOW the Figure Four goes on in the middle of the ring. Rock is in the ropes quickly enough and the Rock Bottom puts Flair away.

Rating: C-. Perfectly fine match here with Rock letting Flair get to

show off in his home state. It's not like anyone is expecting anything great out of Flair at this point and he certainly didn't look bad. This was all it needed to be and the fans were into it, though it's pretty clearly just there to set up whatever Flair's announcement is going to be.

We get the handshake and the hand raise so Rock can leave Flair to make his announcement. Flair can barely get a word out though before Chris Jericho of all people comes out. A chair shot to the head drops Flair as I'm wondering how Rock didn't hear Jericho's very loud music setting this up. Jericho says Raw is Jericho to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. It's amazing what some structure and goals can do for a show. Well that and having a far better built midcard with some matches and acts actually getting some time. It's far from perfect and there's still a lot of work that needs to be done, but this is so much better than the disaster that Raw used to be that it's kind of amazing. Totally watchable show this week, which I couldn't imagine saying just two months ago.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – December

26, 2016: I Love It When They Troll Us

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 26, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the city that keeps giving even after the holidays. We're closing out the Monday Night Raw year in Chicago and unfortunately that doesn't mean the Slammy Awards. With just under five weeks to go until the Royal Rumble, the big story is Braun Strowman invading the main event. That could result in some very interesting reactions from the Chicago crowd. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Strowman's destruction last week.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie McMahon to open things up. She wishes us all happy holidays and says Mick Foley is off tonight due to his extreme work schedule as of late (possibly due to hip surgery). The fans cut her off with a CM Punk chant and she actually acknowledges it by saying if the fans could last two minutes and fifteen seconds, they would last a minute longer than Punk.

Cue Seth Rollins to say he wants HHH tonight but Stephanie says she isn't her husband's keeper. Rollins begs HHH to come down but says he'll settle for Strowman. This brings out Roman Reigns to say he wants Strowman too. Since both guys are wanting to fight Strowman, Reigns thinks they should go back there and drag him out here for a Shield style beating.

Stephanie is really fired up by the idea and even suggests that Dean Ambrose could be here. She's just kidding though because the Chicago fans are that easily manipulated. Instead, tonight we'll have Seth vs. Strowman and Reigns vs. an opponent of Stephanie's choosing.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Cesaro/Sheamus

New Day is challenging with Big E. on the floor. Cesaro gets beaten down in a hurry with double middle rope elbows and a legdrop for two each. Woods is thrown out to the floor and comes up grabbing his knee as we take a break. Back with Woods diving through the ropes into a tornado DDT to plant Cesaro on the floor.

The hot tag brings Kofi in for the flip dive and a slightly botched counter into the SOS for two on Sheamus. Everything breaks down and Woods' top rope elbow gets two on Sheamus with Cesaro making the save. The Swing goes on but Big E. gets on the apron for a distraction. That earns Kofi a gorilla press down onto the big man and a blind tag sets up the Brogue Kick to retain the titles at 10:11.

Rating: C+. This was the required rematch so Cesaro and Sheamus can move on to someone else. New Day is in the Edge and Christian position of having long since outgrown the tag division so it's time to move on to a new endeavor. Unfortunately I'm not sure what that's going to be but a strong Kofi singles run could be interesting.

Video on Brock Lesnar. Goldberg is back next week.

Strowman runs into Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens, who seem to have been looking for him. Owens thinks that Strowman is up next for the title after Reigns is dispatched so Strowman should focus on the Seth and Roman. Apparently Rollins and Reigns have been talking smack about Strowman and said his punches are like being hit with a pillow. Strowman doesn't buy the rumors and seems to want to demolish the two of them.

Golden Truth is in the back talking about Scrooge when Bayley comes up to give Goldust a Bayley Bear dressed like Dusty Rhodes. Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows come in and RIP THE BEAR'S HEAD OFF.

Nia Jax vs. Scarlet

Scarlet is a jobber wearing a Sasha shirt so the destruction is over in 53 seconds off a Samoan drop.

Nia tells Scarlet to choose a better role model and drops the big leg.

Charlotte shakes Stephanie's hand when Owens and Jericho come in to lodge an official complaint. Jericho doesn't being spiders or being in shark cages. Is Foley going to put the spiders in the cage? It might give Jericho acne-arachna-phobia! They want to be face Reigns for the US Title tonight as punishment for Foley. Stephanie says she hates bosses who use their authority to advance some personal agenda (HAHA STEPHANIE IS SO IRONIC AND FUNNY!) so she gives Owens the title shot. Jericho doesn't seem pleased but goes along with it.

Here's Bayley for a chat. She's so happy to be in Chicago because she's the new #1 contender. This brings out Charlotte to show us the clip from last week where her shoulder was up at two. Since there was a problem, Stephanie has agreed to expunge the match from the record books. However, since Charlotte is feeling charitable, she'll let Bayley have another chance to win right now. Oh and there's going to be a guest referee: Dana Brooke.

Charlotte vs. Bayley

Dana won't let Bayley go into the corner so Charlotte starts in with the chops. Bayley takes over and gets dragged off so Dana gets suplexed. Another referee runs in as Charlotte takes over in the corner with more chops. Bayley shrugs it off and grabs the Bayley to Belly but Dana pulls the referee out. Back in and Charlotte grabs a rollup with feet on the ropes, allowing Dana to count the pin at 3:39.

Rating: D. Just an angle here instead of a match and that's fine. I'm not sure how we get to Bayley's title match without Foley around, though of course there's a chance that Stephanie will be all nice and happy and give Bayley the match anyway. Bayley is going to get over huge when she wins the title, if she isn't there already. Stephanie yells at Braun, who wants Sami Zayn in a last man standing match next week. The boss agrees, as long as Seth gets the same beating Sami will get.

We look back at Neville's speech from last week, which is one of my favorite moments in a long time. He's nailing the heel character at the moment and I'm hoping he annihilates Swann to take the title.

TJ Perkins vs. Neville

Austin Aries replaces Saxton on commentary. Neville won't shake hands (as he shouldn't) so Perkins knees Neville in the chest for two early on. A spinning kick sends Neville outside and a high crossbody gets two back inside. An AUSTIN ARIES chant starts up as Neville kicks TJ in the head to send him to the floor. Back in and we hit the chinlock for a bit before a double chickenwing into double knees to the chest gives TJ two. The Detonation Kick looks to set up the kneebar but Neville reverses into a rollup and grabs the tights for the pin at 4:58.

Rating: C-. Well that didn't work quite as well as it had before. Neville really shouldn't be giving up that much offense and it's really annoying to see them possibly screwing up a great character this fast. I loved watching Neville in that tag match last week because he was eight steps ahead of everyone else but here he was just slightly better, which isn't how to make the character work that well.

Neville yells about people making fun of his accent and face not being appropriate for Monday Night Raw. It's American ignorance and arrogance that prevents them from appreciating him. Tomorrow night, Neville wants Rich Swann.

We look back at Enzo Amore getting destroyed by Jinder Mahal and Rusev at sensitivity training.

Here are Enzo and Cass with the former in a wheelchair (and of course it's leopard skin). Enzo says the sensitivity class isn't for him because he's already gotten a degree in being a certified G (which means you can teach that). We get a long rant from Enzo about how his cup runeth over and he's spilled his Haterade. Since he's done that, the big man is hitting cleanup. Cass calls out Rusev but gets someone a bonus with Jinder Mahal. Enzo pops out of the chair and pulls Mahal off the apron, leaving Cass to clear the ring. The injured Enzo is thrown into Mahal and Cass stands very tall.

Shining Stars vs. Bo Dallas/Darren Young

This is over an incident on Facebook Live earlier today. And never mind as it's Strowman time...and he's got a Christmas tree. The beatdown is on and it's officially a no contest at 1:04 (though it should be a DQ as he hit Dallas first).

Strowman destroys everyone, including Bob Backlund (though just by proxy).

Seth Rollins vs. Braun Strowman

Strowman throws him into the corner to start but Seth gets in a suicide dive on the floor. Back in and the enziguri and springboard knee to the head stagger the monster. A second knee has him even more wobbled but he pulls Seth out of the air on the third attempt. Seth actually drops him with a Blockbuster but the Pedigree is countered with a backdrop over the top. Braun runs him over again...and here's Sami through the crowd to jump Strowman for the DQ at 3:34.

Rating: C. I would have had Strowman go over clean here but I can live with what they did. Rollins shouldn't be squashed but he sold quite a bit for the monster, which is the best thing they could have done without having him get destroyed. Strowman didn't lose though and that helps so much.

Post match Braun chases Sami to the back, leaving Rollins to take the Codebreaker from an invading Jericho.

Owens praises his best friend for getting rid of Rollins, leaving it one on one tonight.

Emmalina says the wait will be worth it but she's still premiering soon.

Golden Truth vs. Anderson and Gallows

Goldust takes Anderson down in the corner to start but Gallows comes in to start the beating. Truth fights up and brings Goldust back in as everything breaks down. We actually get some fire from Goldust, who throws Anderson into the barricade. They head inside though and it's Karl getting in a rollup for the pin at 3:34.

Rating: D-. Goldust can't even get revenge for someone ripping his

dad's head off a teddy bear? I mean, they could have NOT BOOKED IT THAT WAY but how else would we get the third rollup finish of the night without it? Anderson and Gallows going after the belts is a good idea, albeit one we've seen for months now.

Rich Swann vs. Ariya Daivari

Non-title. Daivari takes him down to start but misses the early frog splash attempt. That means a double stomp to the back and the spinning kick to Daivari's head for the pin at 1:22.

Post match Swann agrees to face Neville, who jumps the champ from behind.

Daivari calls Jack Gallagher a scoundrel so of course Gallagher is next to him. Jack challenges Daivari to a duel, SLAPS HIM WITH A GLOVE, and corrects Daviari's American history by saying this makes Gallagher more like Aaron Burr.

Video on Lesnar vs. Goldberg from Survivor Series. I still don't know why I would want to see them fight a third time.

US Title: Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending. Owens hides in the corner to start and gets knocked to the floor with a right hand. Back in and Owens starts to slowly hammer away but Reigns clotheslines him down. Cue Jericho for a distraction so Owens can score with a DDT. The backsplash gets two and we take an early break.

Back with Owens getting two off the Cannonball and we hit the chinlock. Owens: "ASK HIM!" Reigns fights up and gets in the apron kick, only to get caught with a Backstabber for two. It's too early for the Pop Up Powerbomb though so Reigns grabs the sitout powerbomb for two.

The Superman Punch misses but the second attempt connects for two on Owens. Jericho offers a distraction though and Owens gets in a Codebreaker for two. This brings out Rollins to Pedigree Jericho on the floor but Owens superkicks Seth down. Back in and the spear ends Owens at 16:21.

Rating: C-. I'm actually starting to get a kick out of WWE trolling

the fans so hard. They just had the World Champion get pinned as close to clean as a World Champion is going to get pinned by Reigns again and they did it in Chicago no less. As much as I can't stand the booking, there's something amazing about how much WWE is willing to screw the fans over for their own ambitions.

Post match Owens gets Pedigreed and Jericho gets speared to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This wasn't a horrible show but you could tell they weren't putting in much of an effort on the tail end of a holiday weekend. The ending was rather annoying but it's balanced out by Strowman being this unstoppable monster. I'm not sure where he's going next but he's already an entertaining part of the show. That being said, there's really nothing that has me interested at the moment, though maybe that's due to the end of the year and the rather awful main event scene.

Results

Cesaro/Sheamus b. New Day – Brogue Kick to Kingston

Nia Jax b. Scarlet – Samoan drop

Charlotte b. Bayley – Rollup with feet on the ropes

Neville b. TJ Perkins – Rollup with a handful of tights

Shining Stars vs. Bo Dallas/Darren Young went to a no contest when Braun Strowman interfered

Braun Strowman b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Sami Zayn interfered

Anderson and Gallows b. Golden Truth – Rollup to Goldust

Rich Swann b. Ariya Daivari – Kick to the head

Roman Reigns b. Kevin Owens – Spear

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – July 22, 2002 (2016 Redo): The People's Mullet

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 22, 2002

Location: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're just over a month away from Summerslam but more importantly, HHH is now officially on Raw. I know it's not the best sounding thing in the world but at this point, Raw is absolutely dying for star power and HHH gives them a top name. Booker T., Rob Van Dam and Ric Flair are big names but they're not top level stars at this point, making HHH a necessary evil. Let's get to it.

The intro sequence now ends with a closeup of Eric Bischoff's face. There's my nightmare fuel for the week.

Opening sequence.

Speaking of nightmares, here's Bischoff to open things up, which likely means a very long speech. Bischoff actually gets right to the point by announcing the Rock for tonight. In what Eric seems to feel is a bigger announcement, here's HHH to loud music that might be hiding a fairly uninterested pop.

Thankfully (I think?) HHH takes the mic away and introduces Shawn for the big, official reunion. We get a very audible DX chant as

Bischoff officially names Shawn as HHH's manager. Eric makes it very clear that Shawn is a step beneath HHH and that doesn't seem cool with Michaels. He isn't one to take ultimatums so he's taking the highway out of here.

Bischoff says HHH needs to go talk some sense into his buddy because he doesn't have many other options. HHH looks very annoyed as he goes after Shawn. We're still not done though as Eric says right here tonight, we're unifying the Intercontinental and European Titles in a ladder match. It's about time that belt was taken behind the barn and shot.

In the back, Shawn is storming out when HHH catches up with him. Shawn has been here for fifteen years and he doesn't like being told what to do. HHH basically begs him to drop the whole pride thing and not be like Steve Austin. Worry not of course, because HHH has an idea.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy

Ladder match and technically the titles are already unified so Jeff is challenging coming in. They hit the mat to start with Van Dam scoring off a dropkick and going for a cover out of instinct. Jeff gets knocked out to the floor for a moonsault off the apron, allowing him to bring in the first ladder.

Both guys go up and both guys are knocked right back down, meaning they both need a ladder for a duel. The champ gets the better of it and hits the cartwheel moonsault onto Jeff onto the ladder.

Something like a Russian legsweep off the ladder brings Van Dam back down, though I'm not sure why Jeff isn't down as well.

A Swanton onto the ladder onto the champ keeps Hardy down a bit longer but he climbs up in another hurry. Van Dam runs the rungs as well though and hits a huge sunset powerbomb for a big crash (and a matching pop). It's another climb on their own ladders with Rob kicking Jeff down and dropping a huge splash for a bonus. Van Dam easily pulls the belt down to retain with the ladder falling on Jeff's head.

Rating: C+. This was as good of a ladder match as you were going to have with less than seven minutes for a ladder match. Above all else though, it's a really good idea to get rid of the European Title. It hasn't meant a thing in months (if not years) and it was just taking up space while devaluing the other titles. It was nice for a very short time but it was WAY past its expiration date.

Here's Christopher Nowinski for a chat. After calling himself a Harvard graduate over and over, Nowinski is shut up by Undertaker. That means a huge beatdown from the former champion, who is officially a face it seems.

Eric Bischoff gives Rhyno a sales pitch and things seem intriguing. D'Lo Brown and Shawn Stasiak come up to ask for a match. Bischoff has a three minute hole in the show and he wants to be entertained. If they don't do it, Bischoff will take care of the entertainment himself.

Trish Stratus/Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Molly Holly/William Regal

The genders don't have to match here. Bubba is really banged up after his match last night but starts with Regal anyway. Molly comes in and shoves Bubba, who changes his mind about tagging Trish. That means the test of strength dance and a quick spank, followed by the tag off to Stratus. It's off to Regal for some gentlemanly British violence until he tries to go after Bubba. That's enough for the hot tag to Dudley and everything breaks down. Trish plays D-Von on What's Up but Bubba won't slap her chest for GET THE TABLES. While Bubba is on the floor, Regal puts Trish in the STF for the win.

Rating: D. Are they planning on going anywhere with this Bubba/Trish stuff? They've been teasing it for a good while now but it's probably better that nothing actually comes of it. Regal and Molly are a bit better fit as their characters fit, especially with the natural heel chemistry they seem to have.

Bischoff tells someone that after three minutes (of Stasiak vs. Brown), they're on. He turns the corner and runs into Chris Benoit, who will face Booker T. tonight. The winner gets Van Dam for the Intercontinental Title next week.

Here's the Rock for his first address as champion. After thanking Undertaker and Angle for the match last night, Rock talks about telling Bischoff he would be here tonight with this title. Cue Eddie Guerrero of all people to interrupt and this should be good. Eddie isn't cool with what Rock has been doing lately. See, the other night, Eddie was going to tuck his kids in and saw ROCK posters on their wall next to pictures of their dad. That earned them a lesson, so Eddie RIPPED THE POSTER UP AND BURNED IT!

Rock is aghast and thinks he's no movie star. Eddie is though, but Rock isn't sure if Eddie is Cheech or Chong. This sends Eddie into a rant about his haircut, which should be called the People's Mullet. Rock: "You look like Billy Ray Cyrus had sex with a dumb hyena." This sets up a match for later tonight and if Eddie wins, he gets a title shot. Rock accepts in song form and still wants to know if it's Cheech or Chong. Outstanding stuff here with Eddie hanging with Rock step for step. As Rock is leaving, Brock Lesnar comes out for his match and it's a Summerslam preview. Brock keeps walking and doesn't even give Rock a glance.

Brock Lesnar vs. Tommy Dreamer

Singapore Cane match. Brock isn't in a mood to play tonight as he suplexes Dreamer on the floor to start and whips him into the steps. They head inside for the first time with Brock hitting the triple backbreakers but getting kicked low, which shouldn't be legal here. A DDT gives Tommy two but the cane is knocked away and the F5 finishes Tommy in a hurry. Total squash with Lesnar never using the cane.

Undertaker comes out and knocks Lesnar around with the cane.

Big Show tells Shawn that there's no NWO to back him up anymore. You can hear a match going on in the background in a rare production error.

Shawn Stasiak vs. D'Lo Brown

Three minute time limit with Bischoff watching from the stage. Brown goes for some early near falls but walks into a powerslam as

Bischoff says thirty seconds. Bischoff finally gets bored and counts down the clock after about a minute and a half. Cue two unnamed Samoans to maul both guys for the no contest. That would of course be Jamal and Rosey, soon to be known as 3 Minute Warning.

So to recap, this match had nothing to do with competition and was all about entertaining Bischoff. Well done indeed.

HHH gives Shawn a bag containing something to wear. Shawn seems intrigued.

Goldust congratulates Booker for beating Big Show last night and gives him a Don King wig for being King of the Giant Killers. Booker actually gets into the impression to talk about his match with Benoit.

Booker T. vs. Chris Benoit

Winner gets a match with Van Dam next week and Booker has bad ribs coming in. Benoit works on the arm to start and gets knocked into the corner for his efforts. Some chops and a backbreaker have Booker in trouble and Benoit whips him hard into the buckle. Now that's the kind of intelligence you expect from Chris.

Booker's sleeper is quickly broken up with a belly to back suplex and Benoit unhooks a middle turnbuckle pad. A spinebuster plants the Canadian and a missile dropkick gets two as they're certainly moving out there. Benoit has had enough of this and starts rolling the German suplexes to damage Booker's ribs even more. Booker is finally sent into the buckle (which Nick Patrick can see) and the Crossface sends Benoit to the title match.

Rating: B. Bad refereeing at the end aside, this was a heck of a match with Benoit taking Booker apart thanks to the injury and destroying him like only Chris can. Booker looked fine in defeat as he came in injured and Benoit cheated to win on top of that. If nothing else, this makes up for Benoit jobbing to the Dudleyz last night. Well done all around.

Big Show vs. Spike Dudley

Bischoff is on commentary now. Chokeslam wraps Spike up in about a

minute.

Show loads up a table and puts the invading Bubba through it along with his brother. Bischoff is very pleased with these results.

And now, D-Generation X. Shawn talks about being rebels before being a rebel was cool and HHH loads up the ARE YOU READY. As soon as he's about to tell us to suck it though, HHH Pedigrees Shawn to turn full heel, which would be the case for several years to come.

After a break, HHH drives away. As he leaves, Stephanie arrives to continue this stupid "steal the talent" story.

The Rock vs. Eddie Guerrero

Non-title. Rock snaps off some armdrags to start and grabs an armbar but gets suplexed down to give Eddie a breather. A one footed dropkick keeps Rock in trouble and it's off to a chinlock. Eddie switches it up to a figure four headscissors with a handful of ropes for extra leverage. How that gives him more leverage has never been clear to me but it's standard heel action so I'll just go with it.

Rock fights up with those open handed punches of his and the DDT gets two. The Rock Bottom is actually countered out of the air into a rollup for two (leave it to Eddie to pull that one off) but the Frog Splash misses. Back up and it's the spinebuster into the People's Elbow for the pin.

Rating: C+. Part of that is for that counter to the Rock Bottom alone. My first reaction is why not just make this a successful title defense but Eddie hasn't exactly been lighting it up in recent weeks. He was Intercontinental Champion back in May but I'm not sure if that's enough to warrant a title shot. It actually makes sense and while I doubt it's intentional, it's good booking.

Post match Brock comes down and grabs the belt, which he throws at Rock's feet. No violence but Lesnar still seems WAY over his head here.

Bischoff goes out to see a very smug looking Stephanie. She gets out of the car and smiles as Brock and Paul Heyman gets into the car. Stephanie asks how it feels to be kicked in the testicles,

which she says about four times in a minute. Apparently Brock has been signed to Smackdown. Good to know.

Overall Rating: C. This show was all over the place with big angles and some good matches but a lot of bad stuff like bringing 3 Minute Warning to the show where there are no Tag Team Titles. You have like two teams to go after the belts so you put a fresh team on Raw? The Shawn vs. HHH thing should be fun and will be a much bigger deal as we keep going. I know the idea here is shaking up a lot of things up but they seem to be doing that almost every few weeks. It's a good show but they're walking a rather thin line at this point.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – December 19, 2016: The Holiday Blues

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 19, 2016

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the night after Roadblock and we're less than six weeks away from the Royal Rumble. That means it's still the lull period as WWE knows the audiences will be smaller over the holidays, meaning

there's a good chance this is going to be a burn off show. If nothing else we can get more from Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho vs. Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins in that fresh main event story. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Owens and Jericho are in the ring to start things off with the champ welcoming us to the Chris and Kevin Show. Kevin says he'll do whatever it takes to retain the title, including taking a Codebreaker from his best friend. "MONKEYS! SHOW US THE PICTURES!" They talk about the devastating Codebreaker, which was only so huge to make everyone believe.

Jericho thinks they're so close now that Owens can have the Hug of Jericho as a special gift. Chris isn't happy though because someone else named Chris has stolen his gimmick. Yeah, that Kris Kringle makes lists and gives people gifts so HE JUST MADE THE LIST. That brings Mick Foley (so much for the hip surgery at the moment), who reveals a Christmas shirt with a leather vest over the top.

Mick sets up a tag match for later but gets the city wrong, completely destroying the aura of the cheap pop. Going forward though, Owens is going to defend the title against Reigns at the Royal Rumble, with Jericho locked in a shark cage above the ring. Owens: "It's not even safe!"

Due to general stupidity, Jericho gets inside the cage and demands that Foley prove it safe. Owens: "Uh Chris, get out first." Foley locks him in and can't find the key (though he does find a New Day shirt, a Dude Love wallet and a key that doesn't fit). Mick says it's fine because the cage doesn't go up until he does this signal....so Jericho goes up, presumably for a good while.

Back from a break and Jericho is down, though he's dizzy and sick.

Big Cass vs. Rusev

Cass pounds away in the corner and that's a DQ at 1:01.

Here's Sasha Banks with her leg wrapped up and walking on a crutch. Last night she was defeated by the better woman and she's not

feeling much like a boss right now. Sasha wants Charlotte to come out here so she can congratulate her to her face. Instead it's Nia Jax, who says Sasha will never be a boss because she's just a little girl. The crutch is kicked out and Sasha is thrown around like she's not even there.

Foley congratulates Sheamus and Cesaro for winning the Tag Team Titles because he feels like a proud papa. He even has a present for them: new title belts, with an identical design to the Smackdown belts but with red straps. A referee comes in and tells Foley there's an emergency.

We cut to the hallway where Braun Strowman is destroying things. Foley comes up and Strowman demands Sami Zayn tonight. Mick says Sami is about a hundred miles away so Braun has to wait a bit.

Cedric Alexander vs. Noam Dar

This is over Dar hitting on Cedric's girlfriend Alicia Fox with Austin Aries on commentary. A forearm puts Dar on the floor and it's off to a break thirty seconds in. Back with Dar missing a dive off the top and possibly twisting his ankle. Cedric comes in with a springboard clothesline of his own, followed by the Lumbar Check for the pin at 5:10.

Post match Dar says they're not even because Alexander still has Alicia.

Here's New Day to address their title loss. They're cool with losing the titles because Ric Flair couldn't become a sixteen time champion without losing fifteen times. Big E.: "And that's Charlotte in a month." After declaring that they still rock, here are the new champions to interrupt. Sheamus and Cesaro are already bickering over who won last night so New Day insults Sheamus a bit more.

Cesaro on the other hand has catlike reflexes and is strong like a.....someone help Big E. out. Cesaro: "Like an ox?" Kofi was thinking more like a carpenter ant who can lift seven times his own weight. They bicker a lot with Woods talking about how much merchandise they have at the moment. Cue Anderson and Gallows to talk about how sick

they are of the New Day nerds, only to be cut off by the Shining Stars. A brawl breaks out and you can book the eight man tag from here.

Shining Stars/Anderson and Gallows vs. Cesaro/Sheamus/New Day

This is joined in progress with Epico hitting a nice double underhook gutbuster on Kofi. Gallows and Anderson take turns on Kingston as Saxton thinks Cesaro and Sheamus had one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of the division last night. This is why people make fun of you Byron. Anderson spikes Kofi and we take a break.

Back with the Shining Stars diving onto the champs and the Boot of Doom getting two on Kofi. Big E. comes in to clean house but Sheamus tags himself in, setting up an assisted White Noise for two on Epico. Cesaro comes in and swings Primo into the Sharpshooter for the submission at 10:46.

Rating: C. That's your tag division people: the bickering champs, the bald guys who put "ski" at the end of random words, the jobbers and the team that is better than all of them put together. New Day is in a weird place now as they need something new to do but I'm not sure how they're going to go fight outside of the division.

We recap the opening segment.

Enzo and Cass are talking about what they're doing tonight when Enzo gets a letter. Due to exposing himself in the workplace on November 21, Enzo has to undergo sensitivity training.

Here's Neville to brag about beating down TJ Perkins and Rich Swann last night. What he can't understand is why people cheered him. Normally they only cheer for him because they feel sorry for him but he doesn't need their pity. Neville will obliterate the division and can show up on 205 Live anytime.

Cue Swann to ask what was up with last night. Neville cuts him off and talks about mentoring Swann in Japan and getting no gratitude. This brings out Brian Kendrick to say he respects Neville. The double beatdown is on with TJ Perkins making a failed save attempt.

Neville was GREAT here and maybe the best thing about the show so far.

It's time for sensitivity training with Darren Young, Bob Backlund, Bo Dallas and Jinder Mahal joining Amore. Enzo gets to go first and starts in with his usual promo. He blames his partner for being here, which the therapist interprets as Enzo and Cass being married. Mahal goes next and the therapist asks how to spell his name. Enzo stands up and says exactly what you would expect him to say.

Titus O'Neil vs. Sin Cara

Strowman comes in for the no contest at 40 seconds.

Braun drags Cara to the stage and throws him through a Christmas tree and a bunch of presents as Foley looks on helpless.

Jericho is annoyed at being stuck in the cage because he's arachnophobic. Owens: "That means scared of spiders." Jericho: "I'm scared of them too!" After asking if Owens knows what it's like to hang above the ring like a sexy pinata, they agree to work together tonight because Reigns and Rollins need to get.....IT!

Here's Charlotte to address winning the title back last night. She goes into a big speech about how no one is on her level because she's a guaranteed win on pay per view. This brings out Bayley and Charlotte isn't pleased. Bayley knows Sasha vs. Charlotte was the greatest rivalry of all time but now it's time for the Bayley vs. Charlotte rivalry to begin.

Last night was all about the scoreboard and Bayley is 2-0 against Charlotte, including at Survivor Series earlier this year. Charlotte put up four fingers last night for the Four Horsewomen but Bayley didn't come up with the rest of them because she just wasn't good enough. The challenge is issued and Charlotte actually agrees to fight right now.

Bayley vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Charlotte works the arm to start and puts Bayley in trouble with the figure four headscissors. A headlock gets Bayley out of trouble and she rides Charlotte on the mat. We even get a

little strut before Charlotte is sent outside. Back from a break with Charlotte ramming Bayley face first into the mat over and over. A chinlock keeps Bayley in trouble but she fights out of the corner and gets in her sliding clothesline. Charlotte sends her into the corner again but the moonsault only gets two. Bayley reverses a chop into a backslide (with Charlotte's shoulder clearly up) to put Charlotte away at 14:45. Graves points out the shoulder being up and replays confirm it.

Rating: D+. This was actually one of the sloppier matches I've seen in a good while. Maybe it was nerves or Charlotte being a bit tired after last night but this really didn't work as well as I was expecting. I don't think Bayley gets the title at the Royal Rumble but the big match at Wrestlemania has a lot of potential.

More from sensitivity training with Enzo making fun of Mahal but not hitting him, which shows progress.

Emmalina is sick of hearing about the Four Horsewomen and will be here when she feels like it.

The sensitivity class graduates. Enzo unsuccessfully hits on the teacher until Rusev comes in. Mahal blocks the other way out and the double beatdown is on. Lana comes in for a slap to Enzo's face.

Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Rollins gets caught in the wrong corner to start and the Canadians take turns stomping him down. A quick Sling Blade puts Jericho down for two and the bad guys try to leave, only to get caught from behind. Back from a break with Reigns hitting his running clothesline on Owens, only to get decked so Jericho can take over.

The slow beating continues and we even get one of the suddenly favorite crowd reactions shots, showing a very bored looking girl. Owens puts on a chinlock of his own until Reigns gets free off a Samoan drop. Rollins comes in with a DDT/neckbreaker combo, earning himself two more crowd reaction shots. Jericho blocks a Pedigree and the frog splash to set up the Walls, sending Seth over to the ropes. Reigns gets in a Superman Punch and reaches for the hot tag, only to

have Strowman run out to go after Roman for the DQ at 15:04.

Rating: D. Strowman getting involved is at least a little more interesting but DANG I'm bored with the main event scene right now. People were ready to cheer for Jericho, only to have the carpet pulled out from underneath them because SURPRISE, we're right back where we were when these matches were announced.

A powerslam plants Reigns as Jericho and Owens watch from the ramp.

Overall Rating: D+. There was some effort this week but you could tell they weren't putting forth their best try. Stuff like the sensitivity training felt like the old, bad comedy bits and the main event, save for Strowman, was just horrible. My guess is this is due to the holidays but they didn't do themselves any favors this week. Not a good show but not a complete waste of time.

Results

Rusev b. Big Cass via DQ when Cass wouldn't stop attacking in the corner

Cedric Alexander b. Noam Dar – Lumbar Check

Cesaro/Sheamus/New Day b. Shining Stars/Anderson and Gallows – Sharpshooter to Primo

Titus O'Neil vs. Sin Cara went to a no contest when Braun Strowman interfered

Bayley b. Charlotte – Backslide

Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins b. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho via DQ when Braun Strowman interfered

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

Monday Night Raw – July 15, 2002 (2016 Redo): Back to the Beginning

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 15, 2002

Location: Continental Airlines Arena, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is a big one. Last week it was clear that something had to change around here after one of the most dreadful nights in the history of this show. It's not so much that the wrestling was bad (save for the mixed tag) but there was almost nothing worth watching and one boring match after another. Things really do need to change and change they will. Let's get to it.

Undertaker is in his locker room with....Paul Heyman? Maybe a Mean Mark reunion? Heyman takes credit for tonight's main event (Undertaker/Brock Lesnar vs. Ric Flair/Rob Van Dam) because he's looking forward to Undertaker vs. Brock at Summerslam. Undertaker is ready to make Brock famous and Heyman gets out as fast as he can.

Opening sequence.

Here's the NWO to open things up. Actually it's just their music as Vince McMahon comes out instead. Why did he do that you ask? It's because the NWO is gone for good, no matter what. That's certainly an improvement and it's not like that story was doing anything for anyone other than Shawn and the now injured Nash.

Vince goes over some of the World Champions in the company's history (omitting some big names and getting some major reactions to some

others) but says it's time for a new era. The shake up of both shows begins right here because both show will have a General Manager. Vince says "General Manager" about ten times and kind of threatens the audience with what's going to happen. The roster is sitting in the back watching the announcement because that's what wrestlers do. Flair thinks the new boss will be a McMahon.

Jeff Hardy/Dudley Boyz vs. William Regal/Eddie Guerrero/Chris Benoit

Elimination rules so this has a lot of potential. It's a big brawl to start with Spike forearming Eddie for a way too early two count. Spike tries a sunset flip but gets small packaged to get us down to 3-2. Bubba gives Eddie a Bubba Bomb but Regal breaks up the cover and drags his partner into the corner for the tag off to Benoit.

The beating goes on for a bit until some Dudleyville right hands take Benoit down. Jeff comes in off the hot tag so house can be cleaned, only to have Eddie pull him down from the floor. The fast pace continues with Eddie taking Jeff's head off with a clothesline and Regal hitting his weird jumping knees. A butterfly suplex gets two and the fans are staying right there with Hardy (Odd pink/white shirt aside. It looks like he poured paint over his head.).

Bubba makes a save and everything breaks down into the huge brawl. Eddie throws in the European Title with Bubba nailing Regal in the head for the DQ. A Swanton Bomb gets rid of Regal and we take a break with Benoit/Guerrero vs. Hardy to go. Back with Jeff grabbing his double legdrop rollup to get rid of Guerrero. Benoit snaps off a German suplex but gets caught by the Whisper in the Wind. Cue Eddie for another distraction so Regal can get in a brass knuckles shot to knock Jeff silly. The Crossface on the unconscious Hardy gives Benoit the win.

Rating: B. Now this is more like it. They were beating the heck out of each other at a frantic pace which is the kind of opening match you never get around here. To top it off they even managed to keep a champion strong as it took three people and a brass knuckles shot to put Hardy down. Well done all around here and a really good opener.

Bubba and Spike save Jeff from going through a table.

Coach speculates that the new GM could be Mick Foley or Vince's brother (there's a name you almost never hear about) but Heyman thinks it's him. Paul goes up to see Vince but a woman comes in to tell Vince that the new GM just arrived. After a break the new GM comes in and it's....Shane McMahon, who isn't the GM. Well so much for that. Shane is here to make sure Vince doesn't screw things up. Vince: "You tried to put me out of business and now you have this concern?" Remember that line when we get to Smackdown. Shane knows who it is and thinks the new GM is a parasite.

Tommy Dreamer and Van Dam don't know who the GM is but Rob had fun beating Heyman up last week. Rob leaves and Steven Richards comes in to set up a Singapore Cane match for later. Stevie canes Dreamer for a little preview.

Tommy Dreamer vs. Steven Richards

Canes are legal. The brawl heads outside early on with Dreamer picking up the steps (dude follow the rules) and getting caned in the jaw for his efforts. It's a strong enough shot to draw some blood and Stevie suplexes him onto the ramp. Back in and Richards hits him a few more times as there's only so much you can do with Singapore canes. Dreamer says bring it on and unloads on him with the cane. The DDT gets two but Richards' superkick gets the same. Dreamer grabs the damaged stick and SHATTERS IT over Steven's head for the pin.

Rating: D. The match was an excuse to do violent stuff to each other and that's fine enough for something this short. It wasn't the worst match in the world or anything and this was just over a year since ECW went under, meaning it doesn't feel as pitiful as some of the nostalgia pushes like we've seen over the years.

Booker T. says that even though the NWO is dead, he still has issues with the Big Show. He wants to see a Coacharooni because Rock isn't the only one who can mess with the Coach. The dancing isn't that impressive and Lawler wants to know if Coach is Caucasian. Booker is all fired up....and here's Eric Bischoff. Yes seriously, THIS is where

they decided to debut him.

Here's Vince in the arena to introduce the new General Manager: ERIC BISCHOFF! It doesn't have quite the impact since we just saw him before the commercial. I've never understood that thinking and it really does hurt what should have been a huge moment. Bischoff talks about running the real WCW, meaning not the watered down version that invaded this company.

We hear about all the signings he made to show off his ruthless aggression. Next up are the Raw spoilers as the crowd is just dying listening to this speech which has NOTHING to do with what's going on here. Nitro changed the face of sports entertainment forever and Bischoff made Vince keep up with him.

Bischoff was THIS CLOSE to putting the WWF out of business (not quite) and now it's time to turn this show around. Eric says we'll start things on Vengeance when he'll sign the one piece of talent he never could get his hands on: HHH. So we're just supposed to forget the Jean-Paul Levesque days? Bischoff promises to put the E back in WWE to FINALLY wrap this up.

Post break Bischoff sucks up to Undertaker despite him never coming to WCW ("I guess loyalty meant more to you than money.") but Bradshaw scares the new boss off.

Women's Title: Molly Holly vs. Trish Stratus

Molly is defending and I have no idea why this isn't on Sunday's pay per view. Lawler's monitor goes out and the thought of not being able to see Trish terrifies him. Why he can't just LOOK UP isn't clear but I guess it's a Bischoff rule. A running flip neckbreaker gets two for the champ and Trish trips trying a clothesline. Molly gets two more off a backbreaker and easily counters Stratusfaction into a rollup with feet on the ropes to retain.

Ric Flair isn't interested in Bischoff.

Big Show vs. Booker T.

Show easily takes over to start and gets in an impressive looking suplex. A whip sends Booker into the corner and Show casually leans

into a raised boot. Booker Cactus Clotheslines him to the floor but misses a chair shot. Show grabs the chair instead, shoves the referee and chairs Booker for the DQ.

Rating: D. So wait. They split up the NWO and NOW they make Show tough again? As usual Booker gets to look like nothing for the sake of another Big Show push because the real money is in Big Show and his bad fitting singlet. I really don't get this but if Booker wins the rematch via pin, it makes up for a lot.

Show chokeslams Booker through the announcers' table.

Heyman talks about Bischoff while Brock Lesnar lifts a piece of the set. You know, as monsters do. Paul has a plan for the tag match and Lesnar is pleased.

The announcers pay tribute to Jimmy Miranda, the head of the merchandise stands. I've heard Austin and Jericho speak very highly of him.

Hardcore Title: Christopher Nowinski vs. Bradshaw

The title now has a Texas flag design and I actually kind of like it. Nowinski is challenging of course and tries to get out of the match. Chris offers to lay down so Bradshaw can get the pin but IT'S A SWERVE! I mean, the SWERVE doesn't work but at least he tried. The beating takes Chris into the back where Johnny the Bull jumps Bradshaw and wins the title.

Show comes in to see Bischoff and gets a match with Booker on Sunday.

Johnny the Bull thanks Eric for the chance and gets clotheslined so Bradshaw can get the title back.

Undertaker and Lesnar have a showdown.

Undertaker/Brock Lesnar vs. Rob Van Dam/Ric Flair

Flair and Undertaker start things off with some early chops actually setting up a WAY too early Figure Four. Undertaker will have none of that so Flair hits him low, only to have the champ get in a chokeslam for two. It's off to Lesnar who throws Ric all over the

place and gives him the triple backbreaker. Undertaker gets a thumb to the eye but you don't need to be able to see to superplex Flair into a big crash.

A great looking powerslam plants Ric again but Flair is able to get over for the hot tag. Van Dam kicks Brock down and gets two off Rolling Thunder to Undertaker. Everything breaks down and Brock gives Flair the F5. A kick to the chest sets up the Five Star hits on Lesnar, only to have Undertaker plant Rob with the Last Ride for the pin.

Rating: C. This started off slow but a hot ending really helped pick it up. I'm really not sure why they didn't just have Flair lose here as you would think he was the perfect option to do the job. But hey, that's the point of the Intercontinental Champion right? Lesnar continues to not look great but putting him in there with people like Flair and Van Dam should do him some good.

Bischoff calls Rock and says he'll be at Smackdown to sign him.

Overall Rating: C+. The show worked well enough but the Bischoff speech in the middle just crippled the whole thing. I liked the wrestling better this time around but there are still a lot of things in their way. We're now pretty much back to where we were with the two owners (or at least we will be after Smackdown) and that's....not the most interesting idea in the world. Raw can be good if it can get out of its own way but given the way things have been going in recent weeks, I don't see that happening anytime soon.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Monday Night Raw – December 12, 2016: New Day Still Rocks

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 12, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the go home show for Roadblock: End of the Line (because there were NO OTHER NAMES FOR A PAY PER VIEW BESIDES ROADBLOCK so they had to use the name twice) but we've got two big deals to get through before the pay per view. Tonight we have the long awaited debut of the made over Emmalina as well as New Day trying to extend their Tag Team Title reign one more day in the hopes of matching Demolition's all time record. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows vs. Cesaro/Sheamus

New Day is defending and if they keep the titles, they tie the record for the longest Tag Team Title reign in WWE history. Woods talks about how this is their chance to elevate every New Day fan ever, along with Woods' grandma. However, Xavier doesn't get the idea of one more triple threat. Kofi says New Day IS the triple threat with Woods as the brain, Kofi as the handsome finesse and Big E. as the big, thick, meaty third leg.

Kofi and Cesaro start things off and the spinning high crossbody gives Kingston an early two. A dropkick sends Sheamus into the corner so the champs can run him over for two. Anderson and Gallows get to take over on Kofi and it's off to a break. Back with Big E. down and Anderson and Gallows hitting something like a running

Demolition Decapitator (nice touch) for two on Kofi. Sheamus tags himself in and starts cleaning house with the Philadelphia fans getting way into the ten forearms to the chest.

Big E. dives in to save the cover but gets an Irish Curse for his efforts. The Boot of Doom gets two on Sheamus with Cesaro making the save this time. That's enough for the hot tag to Cesaro, who busts out all of his favorites, capped off with a high crossbody for two on Karl. Anderson gets caught in the Swing into the Sharpshooter but Big E. makes the save, only to have Cesaro hurricanrana his way out of a powerbomb. A Hart Attack with a Brogue Kick drops Anderson but Kofi runs in with Trouble in Paradise to pin Sheamus at 11:57.

Rating: B. I find it interesting that New Day won this clean instead of doing a heel turn, or really anything heelish for that matter. Of course there's always the chance that something is done later in the night to screw this up but for now, that's one of the unbreakable record that I never would have expected to be broken coming down.

The place goes NUTS for the record as New Day celebrates.

Back from a break with New Day arriving at their celebration party. After we stop to hug Stephanie, champagne is poured and goes right into Stephanie's eyes. She throws the big bowl of Booty0's everywhere and storms off because we haven't had enough Stephanie moments lately. We just saw (what should have been) one of the longest, most untouchable records in WWE history matched and broken but no, because WE NEED A STEPHANIE STORY!

We look back at Sami Zayn/Braun Strowman/Mick Foley's issues over the last few weeks. Sami has said he wants a match with Strowman "or else".

Back with Stephanie all covered in champagne (because we're supposed to believe that the smartest, most amazing woman that ever lived didn't realize that she might get covered with champagne in a celebration INVOLVING CHAMPAGNE BEING SPRAYED EVERYWHERE) when Owens comes in to ask for a yet to be determined favor.

Braun Strowman vs. Curtis Axel

Splash, torture rack, wheelbarrow slam, Braun wins at 1:14.

Braun says Foley is protecting Sami because Sami can't last two minutes against him. Foley is watching from the back when Sami comes in to demand the match on Sunday. No one saved Foley and Mick wouldn't be where he is now if someone did. Mick says he'll put Sami up against anyone on the roster but Strowman. That's interpreted as Foley believing Sami can't do it so Sami says if Mick won't give him the opportunity, then maybe he doesn't need to be on Raw anymore. Foley says he'll call Daniel Bryan and work out a trade.

Ariya Daivari vs. Lince Dorado

Daivari knocks him to the floor to start but here's Jack Gallagher to interfere. Gallagher has a mic though and actually announces his intentions to interfere in this match (because it would be ungentlemanly to not announce it in advance) because Daivari is a right scoundrel who deserves a proper thrashing. Jack officially comes in for the DQ at 2:37.

It's time for Seth Rollins with the Rollins Report. After saying he wants HHH again, Rollins wants to know if Kevin Owens will be in Chris Jericho's corner this Sunday so he brings out Owens as his guest. Owens comes to the stage...and sits on his own stool. Seth asks about the friendship with Jericho so Owens says they'll have each others backs. As for tonight though, Owens will be teaming with Jericho against New Day for the Tag Team Titles.

Cue Jericho to say he thinks Owens is nuts. Owens loves the idea of stopping New Day's bid for the record but Rollins suggests that Owens is trying to order Jericho around. Rollins calls Jericho sparkle crotch and that means HE.....is going to make Jericho drop his pen. He's going to put Rollins on the disabled list instead. The Canadians head to the ring and beat Seth down. Reigns comes out for the WAY too late save and the Canadians bail.

Rich Swann recaps the incident on 205 Live that set up Sunday's Cruiserweight Title triple threat. Brian Kendrick comes in and threatens to stab Swann in the back. TJ Perkins comes in to laugh at Kendrick and it's time for a match.

TJ Perkins vs. Brian Kendrick

An early wristlock doesn't get Kendrick very far and he has to bail from the kneebar. The Wrecking Ball dropkick knocks Brian outside and we take a break. Back with Perkins hitting a jumping spin kick to the head and a springboard missile dropkick for two. The Captain's Hook is countered into the kneebar so Kendrick dives over to the ropes. Back up and Sliced Bread #2 gives Kendrick the pin at 8:24.

Rating: C-. So flash back to any time these two have fought in the last few months and update the details as necessary. This wasn't interesting because neither of the wrestlers are interesting. The triple threat has some potential but for the life of me I never need to see these two fight again.

Foley adds Rollins/Reigns to the Tag Team Title match because it's Philadelphia and we need another three way dance.

Charlotte and Sasha Banks will have no rematch after Sunday.

Video on Sasha vs. Charlotte.

Bayley vs. Alicia Fox

This is over a destroyed Bayley Bear. Bayley rides her to the mat to start and rides Fox for a bit, earning some HEY WE WANT SOME BAYLEY chants. The ax kick gets two for Fox but she spends too much time talking trash and walks into the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 2:45.

Here are Lana and Rusev to make fun of Enzo Amore. They've got some footage of what happened after the doors closed last week and of course we don't get to see it. They make some more fun of Enzo until Big Cass comes out to brawl. Rusev and Lana bail, likely setting up a match on Sunday.

Jericho suggests that winning the Tag Team Titles might help his friendship with Owens.

Emmalina's debut is postponed.

Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Sami dropkicks him to start but gets kneed in the face to give Jinder what is likely a short term advantage. The chinlock keeps Sami down until the exploder and Helluva Kick give him the pin at 3:20.

Rating: D+. This was just a way to possibly write Sami off Raw, assuming they send Sami over to Smackdown like he should have been in the first place. Mahal is fine for a spot like this, though I find it hard to believe that this match was already set up coming into tonight's show. Granted I can live with this though because IT'S NOT MAHAL VS. DARREN YOUNG!!!

Post match Mick comes out to say that Sami will be traded to Smackdown for a talent to be named. All he has to do is sign the deal, but first Mick offers to tell him who the talent will be. The official offer will be Sami for.....Eva Marie. Sami goes nuts because he's worth 100 Eva Marie's and he's tired of making up for Foley's mistakes. He actually grabs Mick's shirt and shoves him away because he wants Strowman so badly.

Foley agrees to make the match for Roadblock but says Sami better have the anger ready. There was never any trade proposed (the paper was blank) because Foley wouldn't trade him. The only catch is there's a ten minute time limit (earlier tonight Braun said Sami couldn't last two minutes) because that's all Mick is willing to risk Sami's health.

Video on John Cena hosting Saturday Night Live.

Recap of New Day's night.

Tag Team Titles: Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. New Day

New Day is defending and has the chance to surpass Demolition's record reign. Again. Woods and Rollins start things off with a Sling Blade dropping Xavier. It's off to Reigns vs. Big E. with E.'s spear being blocked by a raised knee. Jericho gets smart by tagging himself in to take over on Big E., including a top rope back elbow to the jaw. Owens and Big E. are both dropped by a double

clothesline so it's back to Woods.

Xavier is taken to the top and it's almost a double Canadian superplex, only to have everyone else get involved for the super Tower of Doom to send us to a break. Back with Owens holding Woods in a chinlock until he misses the backsplash. The hot tag brings in Big E. to clean house with the belly to belly suplexes. We hit the hip swivel and the Warrior splash crushes Jericho, only to have Seth tag himself in. Everything breaks down again and Seth suicide dives onto Chris.

Another one takes out Big E., followed by a third to get rid of Kofi and Big E. at the same time. Jericho's Codebreaker to Reigns is countered into a sitout powerbomb for a hot two. The Superman Punch nails Owens and Jericho rolls Reigns up for an even hotter near fall. Woods makes a blind tag and hits his really long top rope elbow for two on Roman. A knee to the face drops Woods but Rollins superkicks Owens to the floor.

Jericho crotches Rollins on top and Owens adds a Cannonball. The Lionsault gets two on Woods (I bought it for a second) and it's off to the Walls to put Xavier in even more trouble. Woods turns it over and small packages him for two but he walks into a Pop Up Codebreaker. Rollins dives in for the save by shoving Owens into Jericho to break up the pin (smart). That means CANADIAN ARGUING, leaving Rollins to Pedigree Jericho. Big E. pulls Seth to the floor and Woods covers to retain at 20:23.

Rating: B+. This whole match is summed up with one line: New Day retained. That's the only logical way to end this and it's all that matters in the grand scheme of things. Now what makes it even better is they had some outstanding near falls and false finishes. New Day breaking the record makes the most sense and that's what matters, no matter how you look at it.

Post match Owens and Jericho yell at each other with Chris saying they're done. Jericho leaves and tells Owens to turn around, allowing Reigns to spear him to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. It really is amazing how well something can work

when you tease a bad ending and then do the smart thing to send the fans home happy. I really liked the show this week as Raw has found a bit better balance. New Day retaining in two very good matches is the right way to go about things and the show was a lot of fun as a result. I don't really care about Roadblock but at least we had a great go home show.

Results

New Day b. Cesaro/Sheamus and Anderson and Gallows – Trouble in Paradise to Sheamus

Braun Strowman b. Curtis Axel – Wheelbarrow slam

Ariya Daivari b. Lince Dorado via DQ when Jack Gallagher interfered

Brian Kendrick b. TJ Perkins – Sliced Bread #2

Bayley b. Alicia Fox – Bayley to Belly

Sami Zayn b. Jinder Mahal – Helluva Kick

New Day b. Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins and Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens – Pedigree to Jericho

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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