

Smackdown – July 5, 2001: That's A Bad Sign

Smackdown

Date: July 5, 2001

Location: Tacoma Dome, Tacoma, Washington

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jim Ross

This is another old request as I try to knock some of my way too long list down. We're very early into the Invasion and Steve Austin is currently out due to an injury and is sitting in Vince McMahon's office singing campfire songs with Kurt Angle, who has basically decided he's Austin's best friend. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Torrie Wilson trying to seduce Vince to get a contract, only to have Linda catch them in a scene that wasn't very funny. This is in no way a reason for Vince to get physical with Torrie Wilson in a swimsuit top.

Opening sequence.

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

Bubba and D-Von are defending as Spike tries to find someone to help fight off his brothers, who don't like him dating Molly Holly. This is another sign of the times as you would just have random title matches on TV instead of spending weeks setting up a title match on pay per view. D-Von and Jericho start things off with Jericho scoring off some chops. A springboard dropkick sends D-Von outside and Spike dives on both Dudleys. Well the other Dudleys that is. I can assure you he didn't dive on himself.

Back in and Spike plays D-Von in What's Up to D-Von but the Dudley Dawg is easily broken up. It's time for Spike to get beaten down, including an awesome double flapjack to send him crashing to the mat in a great looking landing. D-Von misses a middle rope legdrop and the hot tag brings in Jericho to clean house. Jericho can't keep the Walls on though

as D-Von makes a quick save, leaving Spike to come in instead. A quick 3D ends Spike to retain the titles.

Rating: C-. That flapjack alone makes this match go up in value. I mean Spike just slammed into that mat and landed on his face. How can you not love that? Jericho vs. the Dudley Boyz wasn't the most interesting feud and it didn't do much other than fill in a little time before he moved on to the big time with the invasion.

Jericho clears the ring post match.

Austin and Debra come in to see Vince, who rants against Torrie for what happened on Monday. Debra blames Vince but Austin has a present to make things better. Vince opens the big red box and it's.....a cowboy hat. Austin has one of his own but Angle comes in and feels left out. There's one more box though and it's a smaller hat, just for Kurt, who has never been happier. Austin looks like he wants to kill him. Then why did Austin buy the hat? This was an awkward phase of comedy but they're nailing the timing and it's actually really funny stuff.

Earlier today the WWF and WCW referees got in a fight, which actually set up a pay per view match for reasons I don't want to comprehend.

Crash Holly vs. Jacqueline

Crash knocks her around to start but they head outside with Jacqueline sending him shoulder first into the post. Back in and we hit the armbar for a bit before Crash gets two off a northern lights suplex. Crash gets crotched on the top and a super hurricanrana gives Jacqueline the pin.

Rating: D-. This was a stretch when Jacqueline was wrestling various men despite there being no real reason to see her do so. Basically it was a way to show off how awesome she was (quite the stretch) and, again, no one was really all that interested. This would happen from time to time and the fact that it never lead anywhere didn't seem to change much.

Trish (looking GREAT here) comes in to thank Jeff Hardy for saving her from Big Show. Lita and Matt come in to make her leave. Jeff thinks there's nothing wrong with this, which might have something to do with

Trish kissing Matt last week.

We look back at Austin, Angle and WCW wrestler Buff Bagwell beating down WCW World Champion Booker T. Austin and Angle beat Bagwell down and threw him outside.

Various wrestlers, many of them who used to work in WCW, laugh at Booker for taking such a beating. Booker says he's ready to defend his title tonight.

Vince gets a summons about a settlement with Linda. Austin blames Angle and wants his hat back but Angle calls him an Indian giver.

WCW Cruiserweight Title: Billy Kidman vs. Gregory Helms

This is a WCW match complete with graphics and Scott Hudson and Arn Anderson on commentary. Helms used to be Gregory but we can't have two Shanes on the roster. The announcers talk about Booker defending the WCW World Title tonight and ignore the match to really make this feel like something out of WCW. Helms is sent to the floor and taken down with a dive.

Back in and Kidman is hiptossed out for a big crash. Anderson rips on the cowboy hot segment as Kidman gets beaten down even more. A BK Bomb (Sky High) gets two but the shooting star misses. The Nightmare on Helm Street gets two and a modified Kid Crusher (basically the Killswitch) gives us a new champion.

Rating: C+. The match was what you would expect from these two but the crowd just did not care and I can't really blame them. These fans have no reason to care about WCW or its titles because that's not what they came here to see. Kidman and Helms are very talented but there's no connection to them for the WWF fans. Build these guys up under the WWF banner and then do the big war.

Vince blames women for his problems and Debra is incensed. His plan is to explain to the people and everything will be ok. Angle thinks telling the truth is the answer, just like he learned in the Boy Scouts.

Christian has Edge's King of the Ring trophy ready for Edge's

Intercontinental Title shot tonight. Apparently Edge would rather Christian stay in the back though and Christian looks disappointed. You can see the split coming and it's really well done so far.

Here's Vince to talk about what's been happening to him recently. See, when you die you leave a good or a bad reputation behind. Linda would like you to believe that he has a bad reputation because he's a womanizer and a skirt chaser. Just for the record he wasn't going to go that far with Torrie because he was just testing her loyalty. Yeah that's it. On July 23 he has to appear before a judge about division of assets with Linda and right now he'd like to say he's sorry. Vince drops to a knee and apologizes to everyone and IS THERE A POINT TO THIS COMING ANYTIME SOON???

William Regal and Tajiri come out and beg Vince to get up because it's not his fault. Vince hugs Regal and we cut to Austin and Angle looking stunned. It's not Vince's fault that women are so attracted to him or that he's a self made billionaire. He's Vince McMahon and he's proud of it. Again, if anyone can explain the point of this to me, I'd love to hear it and tell you that it's nothing more than an excuse for Vince to take up more TV time.

Hardy Boyz vs. Big Show/Billy Gunn

Apparently Billy and Big Show think everyone is against them. Right. Billy charges into an armdrag and Matt grabs an armbar. It's off to Jeff (wearing a hat) for two off Poetry in Motion. Big Show and his one piece women's swimsuit come in for the Alley Oop (lifts Jeff for a powerbomb but falls backwards to send Jeff face first into the mat). Show takes a ridiculous amount of time going to the middle rope, allowing Jeff to avoid an elbow drop.

The hot tag brings in Matt (European Champion, which isn't important enough to mention until nearly the end of the match) who is quickly launched out to the floor. Lita uses the distraction to hit the hurricanrana on Billy, allowing Jeff to hit a missile dropkick on Big Show. The Twist of Fate/Swanton/legdrop crush Show but Billy comes back in with his cobra clutch slam to give Show the pin on Matt.

Rating: D. For the life of me I do not get the obsession with pushing Billy Gunn outside of his most popular character. He's just a guy who has a look and almost nothing more. If Big Show and Billy Gunn are the best they can do for a tag team at this point, they might as well just have the Hardys feud with Edge and Christian and the Dudleys forever because there's nothing worth seeing here. Well other than Lita of course.

Vince tells Angle/Austin/Tajiri/Regal that he's taking the night off and going to a bar. Actually, Tajiri can come with him. I'm assuming Tajiri will put a shirt on at some point. The two of them leave so Austin and Angle can yell at Regal for hugging Vince without their permission. Austin and Angle get in an argument over who makes the other sicker.

Intercontinental Title: Albert vs. Edge

Believe it or not (and I'm not sure why you wouldn't), Albert is defending. You can tell how much this match matters as the video during the entrances is about Undertaker (who challenges for the title on Monday) vs. Diamond Dallas Page. Before the match, Edge rips on Albert's X Factor theme (I always liked it) to tick the monster off. Edge has to fight out of the Baldo Bomb (chokebomb) but eats a bicycle kick square to the hands.

We hit a backbreaker, which Tazz informs us works on the back. A torture rack neckbreaker gets two for the champ and it's off to a bearhug (which also works on the back). Albert misses a splash and Edge grabs the Edge-O-Matic for no cover. Instead he goes up and scores with the missile dropkick but Albert hits him low and grabs the Baldo Bomb to retain.

Rating: C. I have no idea why but I remember thinking Albert was a cool choice for the Intercontinental Title. It wasn't going to last much longer as it would be sacrificed on the altar of the invasion but at least they gave the belt to someone fresh. You can only have Jericho, Angle, Edge and Benoit hold the thing for so long before it's time for some new blood.

The locker room apologizes to Test for beating him up (as they thought he was a WCW mole) when Austin comes in to tell them to get together and fight the bacteria that is WCW. They can start tonight by beating up

Booker T. Angle praises Austin and says Steve could beat up Booker T. and everyone else in this room, thereby screwing up the plan. Austin stares at him and throws his hat down.

Scotty 2 Hotty vs. Dean Malenko

Scotty is recently back from an injury. Malenko has Perry Saturn and Terri with him. Things start fast with Scotty armdragging Dean a few times but missing a dropkick. Malenko starts in on the leg but the Cloverleaf goes on too close to the ropes. Scotty's rollup gets two but he gets knocked to the floor with a clothesline but Dean is down as well. Cue Saturn with Scotty's hat to try the Worm on Dean (just go with it), only to have Scotty come back in and hit the real thing for the pin.

Rating: D+. Uh...yeah. Saturn being insane was funny and stayed entertaining enough for a long time though Malenko having character stuff like this wasn't the best idea. I mean, it's better than having him be a ladies man and all that (save for the Lita vignettes) but he really wasn't cut out for the WWF in general.

A WCW referee wishes Page luck but Page talks about wanting to go after Undertaker and/or Kane.

We look back at last week's Tough Enough. HHH will be on the show after Smackdown tonight and gave a speech that I believe talked a buddy of mine out of wanting to wrestle.

Austin yells at Angle and Debra about various things and is ready to beat up Booker T. Angle wants to bounce Booker around like a pogo stick so Steve sends him out to break Booker's ankle. Angle: "Hold onto my hat."

WCW World Title: Diamond Dallas Page vs. Booker T.

Page is challenging and it's another full on WCW match. By that I mean WCW logos with graphics nowhere near as good as the company had and a commentary team that never did commentary for them. Page jumps the champ during his entrance but gets elbowed out to the floor in something that looked edited. Back in and the Diamond Cutter is broken up but Booker gets dropped face first onto the buckle.

They head outside again with Page being thrown over the announcers' table and then into the crowd despite a lack of any real personal issue between them to warrant this kind of violence. Page takes over and stomps on Booker's hand back inside. A good looking Batista Bomb gets two on Booker and sets off his comeback, including the ax kick. Page bails to the floor and sends Booker into the steps before grabbing a chair. The referee is shoved down (DQ? Anyone?) and a DDT onto the chair gives Page two. Cue the Undertaker for a distraction and Booker rolls Page up to retain.

Rating: B-. Good match and all but again there's almost no reason for the fans to care. As far as WWF fans are concerned, these are brand new wrestlers who just happen to be fighting over a title. I'm sure a lot of them know who these two are but that doesn't mean they want to see a title match here. If they did, they probably would have watched Nitro more often.

Undertaker chases Page off and here's Angle to go after Booker. An ax kick puts Angle down and there's a belt shot to the face.

We go to the parking lot where the WCW guys jump Undertaker but can't even knock him off his feet. Eight guys pounding on him and barely having any effect should tell you all you need to know about this story. They FINALLY get him down but WCW owner Shane McMahon comes in for the save, only to have Page beat him up too. Booker calls them off and gets beaten down as well to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. The show wasn't bad and the Austin/Angle comedy stuff is oddly hilarious but this WCW story is clearly dead in the water. You can blame it on probably a dozen factors but a lot of it comes down to people not wanting to see WCW wrestlers on the WWF show. If I didn't want to watch WCW with all of its star power, why would I care about Booker T., Diamond Dallas Page as a character so different from what made him famous and then everyone else that just happens to be there? Things are only going to get worse from here but they're really not off to a good start.

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IH70904>

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

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

Cruiserweight Classic – July 20, 2016: More Classic

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: July 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Daniel Bryan

It's week two and therefore time for more first round matches. Last week's show was entertaining stuff as they're going with a very different vibe this time around. It's rather cool to see a lot of the unknowns getting shots, even if a lot of them have almost no chance of winning the thing. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Mauro welcomes us to the show and congratulates Bryan on his new role in WWE, though no specific spot is mentioned.

Corey Graves introduces a recap of last week's show and introduces tonight's matches.

First Round: Tajiri vs. Damien Slater

Japan vs. Australia. Tajiri starts fast and sends Slater into the ropes

as they're still feeling each other out in the early going. Slater kicks him in the ribs and Bryan is right there to say kicking with Tajiri is a bad idea. Instead they fight over some wristlocks with Tajiri hammering him down with some elbows.

More kicks sets up an armbar on Slater but he makes the ropes and sends Tajiri outside for a slingshot corkscrew dive. Back in and Tajiri grabs a wristlock to slow down Slater's offense. That's so simple but actually smart at the same time. I mean it didn't work but it was smart. A running knee to the head gets two for Slater. Tajiri gets in even more kicks and grabs a quick Tarantula, followed by the handspring elbow. The Buzzsaw Kick puts Slater away at 5:49.

Rating: C. Tajiri was one of my favorites in ECW and it's a good sign that he's basically the same wrestler that he was back in the day (albeit a bit slower). Sometimes it's easier to just kick someone in the head over and over. Slater wasn't the flashiest guy out there but he looked very confident in the basic stuff he was doing.

TJ Perkins is the wrestler who makes everything look good.

Da Mack wants to be the Michael Jackson of professional wrestling. Take that for what it's worth.

First Round: Da Mack vs. TJ Perkins

Germany vs. Philippines and both guys seem cocky. Mack's dancing draws an Alex Wright reference. Perkins takes him down with a dropkick and a headscissors with some dancing that Bryan (nor myself) can identify. Mack catches him with a palm strike but Perkins dances into a Boston crab with Perkins lifting him up by the arms. The threat of a Muta Lock (bridging Indian Deathlock with a chinlock) sends Mack over to the ropes and he's able to pull TJ to the floor.

Naturally that means a big flip dive, followed by some dancing stomps back inside. Now the Muta Lock has Mack in trouble but he's right in front of the ropes. Mack is back up and runs the corner for a spinning kick to the face, only to have the landing delay the cover. Perkins is right back up with a slingshot dropkick but he misses a 450. Not that it

matters as some kicks to the head set up a kneebar to make Mack tap at 6:30.

Rating: B-. They packed a lot into a short amount of time and it was a much different style than the first match. This was all about the high flying with some submission stuff thrown in for some flavor. Mack looked like almost any high flying indy name but Perkins looked like a much more versatile and polished wrestler. Not great but entertaining enough.

Mustafa Ali says he's the most well rounded wrestler in the tournament.

Lince Dorado, a masked man, talks about wrestling around the world and being ready to face anyone.

First Round: Mustafa Ali vs. Lince Dorado

Pakistan vs. Puerto Rico. Ali doesn't want to shake hands but eventually does so to get us going. Dorado headscissors him out to the floor but gets pulled outside as well, setting up a running knee from the apron. A knee to the back gets two on Dorado but he kicks Ali in the face. Dorado isn't done as he headscissors Ali to the floor, setting up the longest Asai Moonsault I've ever seen. Back in and a springboard reverse hurricanrana (it sounds better than it looks) gets two on Ali, who comes right back with a springboard Spanish Fly for the same. Ali misses a 450 though and a shooting star gives Dorado the pin at 5:53.

Rating: B+. Take two guys and let them fly all over the place for a few minutes. It worked back in WCW and it's still going to work today. This was easily the most entertaining thing so far with two guys who both got to show off a lot. I've seen Dorado before but Ali looked a lot better than I was expecting. Really fun match here and the kind I've been waiting for.

Akira Tozawa is excited to be here.

Kenneth Johnson thinks it's his time.

First Round: Akira Tozawa vs. Kenneth Johnson

Japan vs. USA. Again they fight over a wristlock to start until Johnson

actually takes him to the mat and works on the leg. A headlock into a headscissors gives us a standoff. Tozawa, the heavy favorite coming in, finally starts getting serious and wins a chop off before just punching Johnson in the jaw.

Johnson takes a hard roaring elbow but comes right back with a dropkick for no cover. There's a double clothesline to put both guys down until Tozawa goes nuts with some forearms to the jaw. Johnson stops him cold with knees to the face and a jackknife cover for two. Kenneth misses a middle rope spinning legdrop though and Tozawa snaps off a hard German suplex for two, followed by a bridging German for the pin at 10:00.

Rating: B. Tozawa cranked it up in the end and looked like one of the favorites to win the whole thing. Johnson was the definition of a guy in tights but he held his own here against someone with a lot more experience and skill. There was even a good story here with Tozawa underestimating him and Johnson trying to make the most of it until he was overcome by all the skill and experience. The match was shockingly good and far better than the squash I was expecting.

Overall Rating: B+. The last two matches were definitely upgrades over the first two with two flashy, high flying cruiserweight styles matches which is more what I was looking for here. I do however like the multiple styles because they keep the thing from getting stale with the same stuff over and over. Mixing it up is always an appreciated touch and it made the show much more entertaining this week.

Results

Tajiri b. Damien Slater – Buzzsaw Kick

TJ Perkins b. Da Mack – Kneebars

Lince Dorado b. Mustafa Ali – Shooting Star Press

Akira Tozawa b. Kenneth Johnson – German suplex

Results

Tajiri b. Damien Slater – Buzzsaw Kick

TJ Perkins b. Da Mack – Kneebar

Lince Dorado b. Mustafa Ali – Shooting Star Press

Akira Tozawa b. Kenneth Johnson – German suplex

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Full WWE Draft Results

Including the picks from the Network.

Monday Night Raw

1. Seth Rollins
2. Charlotte
3. Finn Balor
4. Roman Reigns
5. Brock Lesnar
6. New Day
7. Sami Zayn

8. Sasha Banks
9. Chris Jericho
10. Rusev w/Lana
11. Kevin Owens
12. Enzo Amore/Big Cass
13. The Club
14. Big Show
15. Nia Jax
16. Neville
17. Cesaro
18. Sheamus
19. Golden Truth
20. Titus O'Neil
21. Paige
22. Darren Young
23. Sin Cara
24. Jack Swagger
25. Dudley Boyz
26. Summer Rae
27. Mark Henry
28. Braun Strowman
29. Bo Dallas

30. Shining Stars

31. Alicia Fox

32. Dana Brooke

33. Curtis Axel

Smackdown

1. Dean Ambrose

2. AJ Styles

3. John Cena

4. Randy Orton

5. Bray Wyatt

6. Becky Lynch

7. The Miz w/Maryse

8. Baron Corbin

9. American Alpha

10. Dolph Ziggler

11. Natalya

12. Alberto Del Rio

13. Usos

14. Kane

15. Kalisto

16. Naomi

17. Ascension

18. Zack Ryder
 19. Apollo Crews
 20. Alexa Bliss
 21. Breezango
 22. Eva Marie
 23. Vaudevillains
 24. Erick Rowan
 25. Mojo Rawley
 26. Carmella
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All 30 Televised Draft Picks

I'll be updating this throughout the night with all the picks so keep refreshing. I also won't update the tags until after the show in case you don't want to be spoiled. There will be an additional thirty picks on the Network later tonight.

Monday Night Raw

1. Seth Rollins
2. Charlotte
3. Finn Balor

4. Roman Reigns
5. Brock Lesnar
6. New Day
7. Sami Zayn
8. Sasha Banks
9. Chris Jericho
10. Rusev w/Lana
11. Kevin Owens
12. Enzo Amore/Big Cass
13. The Club
14. Big Show
15. Nia Jax
16. Neville
17. Cesaro
18. Sheamus

Smackdown

1. Dean Ambrose
2. AJ Styles
3. John Cena
4. Randy Orton
5. Bray Wyatt
6. Becky Lynch

7. The Miz w/Maryse
 8. Baron Corbin
 9. American Alpha
 10. Dolph Ziggler
 11. Natalya
 12. Alberto Del Rio
-

WWE Releases Draft Rules

<http://www.wwe.com/article/wwe-draft-rules-2016?sf31145497=1>

Just in case you thought Smackdown would be treated equally or better you see. Of course I don't know why you would think that when Stephanie runs Raw.

Cruiserweight Classic – July 13, 2016: Wrestling Matters

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: July 13, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Daniel Bryan

This is something very different as it's all about the actual wrestling. What we have here is a thirty two man international tournament with a bunch of wrestlers coming in from outside the company to compete. From what I understand there won't be any storylines here, though that could change as we go along. Let's get to it.

The opening video, narrated by HHH, shows clips of various great cruiserweight matches over the years. HHH talks about how this has always been the most exciting style of wrestling and tonight it's time to start the new generation with people trying to blaze a new trail.

Opening sequence.

Corey Graves shows us the four matches we'll be seeing tonight.

Gran Metalik (Mascara Dorado) from Mexico and Alejandro Saez from Chile say they're here to represent their countries.

The set is very similar to NXT's though there's no ramp and the aisle comes from the corner instead of to the side of the ring.

First Round: Alejandro Saez vs. Gran Metalik

According to their quick bios, Saez is a striker while Metalik is a luchador. Charles Robinson brings them to the middle of the ring for a handshake and we're ready to go. Saez starts things fast with a shoulder and basement dropkick, followed by a springboard missile dropkick for two.

A quick argument with the referee allows Metalik to knock him outside for an ACH middle rope springboard flip dive. Back in and a top rope (as in from the middle of the rope instead of the corner) gets two on Saez but Gran gets kicked out to the floor. Saez hits a shooting star off the apron, only to get caught in a Samoan Driver to give Metalik the pin at 4:05.

Rating: B-. Oh yeah this was the perfect choice for an opener. They kept it short and to the point here with fast paced high flying and a quick finish. Metalik seems like a big deal and a potential favorite here, though it's probably way too early to predict something like that when

we've only seen two people so far. This was a good opener though and that's so important for something like this tournament.

Metalik is announced as the official winner ala a UFC fight.

Ariya Daivari (the brother of the better known Daivari) knows what it takes to win and he'll do whatever it takes.

Hoho Lun is here to show that this is his job.

First Round: Ariya Daivar vs. Hoho Lun

Lun is a regular in a very small Chinese promotion I watch so this is kind of bizarre. Daivari won't shake hands to give us our first heel. A dropkick puts Daivari down to start and a second one to the back gets two as the fans are a lot more quiet this time around. Daivari comes back with a neckbreaker and a good looking jumping knee to the face for two of his own.

We hit the chinlock as the fans chant H0H0 to the OLE tune. Daivari kicks him in the head but a slap to the face just sets Hoho off and earns Daivari a spinwheel kick to the face. A running knee to the back of Daivari's head and a low superkick set up a German suplex to put Daivari away at 5:07.

Rating: C. Lun is a small guy and I'm surprised that he went over the brother of a name like Daivari. If nothing else you would think they would go with Daivari for the sake of having a heel going forward. Lun doesn't seem to have much of a future in this but it's cool to see him get a win, if nothing else due to him being from a small promotion that not a lot of people have heard of.

Clement Petiot is a Lance Storm student from France and seems to be one of the bigger guys in the field.

Cedric Alexander is from Charlotte and used to be in Ring of Honor.

First Round: Clement Petiot vs. Cedric Alexander

They almost get in a fight before the bell rings and it's time to hit the

mat with Cedric quickly escaping a front facelock. Clement is sent outside and Alexander teases a big dive to the floor but moonsaults back to the middle instead. Back in and a great looking dropkick puts Petiot down for two but Clement sends him hard into the corner.

We hit the chinlock before a running knee to the face gets two in the corner. Cedric comes right back with a perfect springboard clothesline but Clement flips him inside out with a discus clothesline. Not that it matters as Cedric comes right back with the Lumbar Check (belly to back suplex into a Backstabber) for the pin at 6:01.

Rating: C. Three matches in and we have three faces going forward but there's a lot of time left to get some villains. Alexander looked great here with that springboard clothesline being as smooth as any I've seen in a long time. Petiot was fine but clearly needs some ring time and a bit more of a character to make him stand out.

Kota Ibushi is ready to prove himself.

Sean Maluta is Afa's nephew and another part of the Anoa'i Family.

First Round: Sean Maluta vs. Kota Ibushi

Ibushi is a big crowd favorite. Feeling out process to start with Maluta taking him down to the mat, only to have Ibushi come back with a kick to the chest. A t-bone suplex sends Maluta flying but Sean gets in a middle rope Codebreaker to knock Ibushi silly. Maluta sends him to the floor and tries a running flip dive, which may or may not have been botched as he landed on the apron but it might have been intentional as he immediately flipped over again to take Ibushi down.

Back in and Kota hits a very high dropkick before some very fast strikes have Sean in trouble. A standing moonsault gets two on Sean but he blocks a superplex, only to get kicked hard out to the floor. Ibushi keeps things fast with a running springboard moonsault to take Sean down. Back in and a superkick knocks Kota silly for two but he pops up and hits a sitout Last Ride for the pin at 9:40.

Rating: B. Best match of the night here and a lot of that is due to the

time. Ibushi is definitely one of the big favorites and it's clear that he's a big star as they put him in the main event slot on the debut episode. Maluta looked good and could probably get a developmental deal very soon. Ibushi is going to be a big deal if he signs with WWE though and his match with Alexander should be awesome.

Overall Rating: B. This was a strong start to the show and the key was they kept the matches fast. With no stories and a lot of wrestlers that fans probably haven't seen before, it's very important to not let them get bored. Keeping the matches quick with fast paced offense and simple stories is going to allow the fans to stick with this and prevents the audience from losing interest in people who aren't the most interesting in the first place. It's a good show concept but the first few weeks are going to be a bit more rough with a lot of first round matches before we get to the bigger stuff down the line. Good start though.

Results

Gran Metalik b. Alejandro Saez – Samoan Driver

Hoho Lun b. Ariya Daivari – German Suplex

Cedric Alexander b. Clement Petiot – Lumbar Check

Kota Ibushi b. Sean Maluta – Sitout Powerbomb

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FWZZ2UA>

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

Brock Lesnar's Summerslam Opponent

Is Randy Orton, officially announced on Smackdown though it was leaked yesterday.

I like this as Orton is someone who could possibly beat him and makes for an intriguing match. If nothing else the RKO to counter the F5 should be sweet. Above all else though it's fresh, save for Lesnar beating him in five minutes on Smackdown back in 2002.

Thought of the Day: That Brock Lesnar Announcement

The one where his opponent will be announced this week. Hopefully it's a sign of things to come. Smackdown is going live two weeks from today and for years it's been a dead, nothing show with matches airing again the next week on Raw with no mention of them already happening on Thursday. By airing big news like this on Smackdown, WWE is starting to get some buzz going on Smackdown where it might be worth seeing again. Do that multiple times and people might actually start watching.

Jerry Lawler Reinstated, Charges Dismissed

<http://411mania.com/wrestling/domestic-assault-charges-against-jerry-lawler-dismissed/>

You kind of had to expect him to be back immediately after this was cleared up. It's not like Otunga was going to be a long term replacement (just not enough experience though he was fine in the little time he was in the role) so it should be nice to have Lawler back in his heel role.

Possible New WWE Pay Per View Schedule Leaks

Of course take this with a big bag of salt but there's a chance that this is legit. Click on the picture for a better image.



2016 PAY-PER-VIEW SCHEDULE*

PPV EVENTS	DATES	VENUE	CITY/STATE	EVENT TIME	BRAND
Royal Rumble*	1/24/2016	Amway Center	Orlando, FL	8p/9p	RAW/SD
WrestleMania XXX	3/29/2016	Quicken Loans Arena	Cleveland, OH	8p/9p	
WrestleMania XXX	4/19/2016	AT&T Stadium	Dallas, TX	7p/8p	RAW/SD
Payback**	5/3/2016	Allstate Arena	Chicago, IL	8p/9p	
Extreme Rules**	5/24/2016	Prudential Center	Newark, NJ	8p/9p	
Money in the Bank**	6/13/2016	Las Vegas Arena	Las Vegas, NV	8p/9p	
Backlash**	7/18/2016	Verizon Center	Washington, DC	8p/9p	
SummerSlam*	8/21/2016	Barclays Center	Brooklyn, NY	7p/8p	RAW/SD
Backlash** (Network Exclusive)	8/31/2016	TBD	Richmond, VA	8p/9p	SmackDown
Clash of Champions**	9/26/2016	Bankers Life Fieldhouse	Indianapolis, IN	8p/9p	RAW
No Mercy**	10/19/2016	Soldier 3 Center	San Antonio, TX	8p/9p	SmackDown
Hell in a Cell**	10/29/2016	TD Garden	Boston, MA	8p/9p	RAW
Survivor Series*	11/25/2016	TBD	Tampa, FL	7p/8p	RAW/SD
WWE TLC**	12/14/2016	TBD	Dallas, TX	8p/9p	SmackDown
WrestleMania XXX	12/18/2016	Chesapeake Energy Center	Oklahoma City, OK	8p/9p	RAW

The first thing I think is SWEET GOODNESS THAT'S A LOT OF SHOWS and that's going to be the take away from this schedule. You're looking at basically two shows a month with two or three weeks between them. I can go with that if they cut some of the times down but a lot of people are going to get burned out in a hurry if they're running a three hour (potentially plus if Money in the Bank is the first of its kind) show with an hour pre-show. I can watch wrestling all day every day but even I think that's a lot.

Now for the good: WAY better names. Stuff like Backlash, No Mercy and Clash of the Champions are improvements over a lot of the goofy names we have to put up with so often. It's also going to be nice if the wrestlers are allowed to have some more time but the worst thing they could do is the old formula of making so many matches filler. I'm talking about airing stuff like Mordecai vs. Hardcore Holly on pay per view. Fans aren't going to put up with that and it could get old in a hurry.

It might help a lot if some of these shows are two hours

instead of three. Look at Money in the Bank. You could have cut off at least two matches (meaning keep them on the pre-show where they were scheduled in the first place) and trimmed the thing down a bit. If you're paying the same price for it on the Network (I'm aware some people are going to get it on regular pay per view still), it's ok to trim off some of the fat and let the shows actually work for a change.

It's too early to tell but I'm skeptical about this. Knowing WWE, whose new philosophy seems to be CRAM AS MUCH AS YOU CAN IN, I'm worried about what we might be going through with them burning through everything they can as fast as they can.