

Ring of Honor TV – September 2, 2015: I Didn't Think You Could Screw Up A Cheeseburger

Ring of Honor

Date: September 2, 2015

Location: William J. Myers Pavilion, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: King Corino, Kevin Kelly

We're coming up on All-Star Extravaganza where Lethal will again have to defend both of his titles in one night. That is of course assuming he makes it out of tonight's TV Title defense against the powerhouse Hanson, who is one of the many people in line for a shot at one of the belts. Let's get to it.

Adam Page vs. Jay Briscoe

Page has called Briscoe out for a few weeks for reasons that aren't really clear. The announcers call Jay Briscoe a legend and one of the all time greats in Ring of Honor. If you're talking just titles, Briscoe is pretty easily a mile ahead of anyone else and really is one of the best they've ever had. Page slaps him in the face instead of shaking hands. Jay actually offers another handshake and gets slapped one more time. Some left hands have Adam in trouble and he gets knocked to the floor for a suicide dive. Page's young boy Colby Corino hits Jay in the back for the quick DQ at 1:45.

Page, who never took his vest off, throws a chair at Jay's head and gives him the Rite of Passage on a pile of chairs. Mark Briscoe comes out for the save a few moments too late.

We recap Dalton Castle vs. Silas Young, which has evolved into a battle over Castle's boys.

Castle will be silent no longer and is going to come crashing down on Silas Young like a thousand foot wave from the hand of Poseidon. The boys

can be on the line, but if Castle wins, Young becomes one of Dalton's boys. That makes things more interesting.

Cedric Alexander vs. Caprice Coleman

These two used to be partners. Before the match, Cedric sends manager Veda Scott to the back so Coleman gets in a verbal jab at her expense. The livid Cedric gets punched in the face and slammed into a rollup for one. Veda is still on the floor, which is certainly not a bad thing. She offers a quick distraction and Cedric kicks Coleman's head off as we take a break.

Back with Cedric chopping his former mentor and cutting off a comeback. Coleman sends him outside for a hurricanrana before bringing Cedric back in for a second hurricanrana and a near fall. Cedric's Michinoku Driver gets two so Veda slips him the wrench, only to have Stokely Carmichael (Moose's manager) come out and drop Veda, allowing Moose to take the wrench away. The distraction lets Coleman come off the top with the Sky Splitter (Rough Ryder) for the pin at 8:08.

Rating: C-. I have no idea why I'm supposed to care about either of these guys. They're both very stereotypical Ring of Honor guys: good enough hands in the ring but lacking presence and any reason for me to be interested in either of them. Veda is much more interesting than both of them, but that's not really saying much.

Moose KO's Cedric with the wrench. Prince Nana comes out and hands Coleman an envelope.

Brutal Bob Evans vs. Cheeseburger

This is one of those feuds that just won't die. Evans swears at Cheeseburger to start so Cheeseburger ducks a chair shot and hits a flip dive off the barricade to start. They get inside and Evans begs off, only to send Cheeseburger into the corner. Evans pulls Cheeseburger up at two so he can keep up the beating. A shoulder block gets two for Bob but Cheeseburger kicks away from the mat. Bob heads outside to load up a table but Cheeseburger smacks him off the apron and through the table instead, earning a countout.

Rating: D-. What a waste of time. They really hammered in the idea here and it's not a very good one. These two have been feuding for months and I have no reason to care. Cheeseburger is smaller than Spike Dudley and comes off as a waste of time more than anything else. Total waste of time.

Jay Lethal promises to beat Hanson so badly tonight that Hanson's dog is going to run away and Hanson is going to lose his house. I loved that line.

TV Title: Hanson vs. Jay Lethal

Lethal is defending and Bobby Fish, who will be facing the winner of this at All-Star Extravaganza, is on commentary. Hanson throws Lethal around to start and kicks his head off with a big boot. The champ's chops have no effect so Truth Martini offers a distraction, allowing Lethal to dropkick him out to the floor. A suicide dive from the champ takes us to a break.

Back with Lethal snapping Hanson's throat across the top rope by the beard and slapping on a chinlock. That goes nowhere so Hanson comes back with a nice gutwrench slam. A cartwheel into a clothesline gets two on Jay as the announcers talk about the grind of being a double champion. That's how you tell stories on commentary instead of talking about England winning some competition in some sport that isn't clearly defined.

Hanson's Bronco Buster is countered with a raised boot, followed by Jay's top rope elbow for two. Hanson tries his Lethal Injection and only kind of botches it, followed by a moonsault which hits Lethal's knees. Fish brings up the obvious point: shouldn't that hurt Lethal's legs? Two straight Lethal Injections (the Tajiri handspring into a Diamond Cutter. Doing it twice doesn't make it any less stupid looking) retain Jay's title at 11:27.

Rating: C-. Just ok here as it was mainly a quick challenge for Lethal to get out of the way. You have to let him win a match or two like this every now and then, especially when Lethal has a bunch of bigger matches coming up. I really liked the announcers talking about how Lethal is

trying to do too much as that is the most logical place to take the story.

Lethal talks trash about ReDRagon so Fish gets on the apron and is quickly joined by Kyle O'Reilly (a future World Title contender). Roderick Strong comes out to stare Lethal down as well and the champ runs off to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. I'm having a really hard time caring about a lot of these stories. Lethal's stuff is more about getting to the point where he collapses under the weight of everything he's trying to do. That can make for a good long story but it's not working for a one off week. The rest of the matches didn't do much for me, save for the opener which set up something interesting down the line. These stories aren't doing it for me, but I had a really good time with the Tag Team Title stuff, mainly because it was all self contained and I didn't need to see a bunch of other shows to get the idea. Easily fixed, but not a great show.

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Impact Wrestling – September

2, 2015: I Hated This Show

Impact Wrestling

Date: September 2, 2015

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

It's full on war now as the Global Force roster attacked several TNA wrestlers last week with Karen Jarrett revealing that she was behind the attacks on Drew Galloway and Bully Ray in recent weeks. In addition to the invasion, it's almost time for Bound For Glory, which really hasn't been set up yet. Let's get to it.

The Hardys and Ethan Carter III arrived earlier. Carter defends against Matt Hardy tonight and if he retains, Jeff Hardy is Carter's personal assistant.

We recap Karen Jarrett being revealed as the evil mastermind last week.

The Jarretts lead the GFW roster to the ring. Jeff talks (again) about returning on June 24 and being inducted into the Hall of Fame. He brags about all the success the GFW/TNA show had but Karen cuts him off to explain that she did everything for all the hard work her husband has put in for GFW. Yes she set these wheels in motion and had Chris Adonis take out Bully Ray. Jeff is building a new empire and no one in the back can compete with these boys. Adonis issues an open challenge to anyone in the back so here's Lashley.

Lashley vs. Chris Mordetzky

Lashley throws him down to start and then drops Chris with a clothesline. The Mordetzky Lock (full nelson) is quickly countered into a full nelson slam but Mordetzky nails a Polish Hammer (double ax handle to the chest) to take over. We hit the chinlock before they head outside with Lashley being sent into the steps. Back in and a butterfly suplex seems to annoy Lashley more than hurt him. A double clothesline puts both guys down and it's Lashley up first with a German suplex. The spear is countered into a spinebuster but Lashley easily blocks the full nelson. Now the spear

connects but here's GFW for the DQ at 8:57.

Rating: D+. Totally meh match here as this was nothing to see and just a match to show that Mordetsky is part of GFW's roster. I still have no reason to care about a group of people who have been around for a month and range from no one interesting to WWE rejects. Nothing to see here.

Lashley gets destroyed so here are the Wolves for a failed save. Jeff says bring out the surprise so here she is with the Tag Team Title Feast or Fired briefcase. She says Magnus gave it to her, which apparently you can just do.

Tag Team Titles: Wolves vs. Brian Myers/Trevor Lee

Wait a minute because Earl Hebner won't do it, earning him a right hand from Jeff. Another referee is forced to ringside and the match is on. Trevor dropkicks Edwards down for two as this is actually a regular match for a change. Myers comes in for a slam of his own but the Wolves come back with stereo submission holds, only to break them up to go after Sonjay Dutt. Myers brings in a pipe but the distraction lets Lee blast Davey with the briefcase for the pin and the titles at 2:35. There's your token title win to make this invasion IMPORTANT.

Bobby Roode only cares about winning the King of the Mountain Title tonight.

Long recap of everything that just happened.

Ethan Carter III talks about his love of stories and how tonight, Matt's story of going for the World Title ends tonight.

King of the Mountain Title: PJ Black vs. Bobby Roode

Black is defending and Roode stops to brag about being a TNA original. This is TNA's house and Roode is bringing the title home. It's a brawl on the floor to start as Matthews mistakenly says Black won the title last week. They get inside for some chops but Black blocks a suplex and sends Roode outside for a suicide dive. A springboard clothesline drops Roode and we take a break. Back with Roode winning a slugout and getting two off a spinebuster.

The Roode Bomb is broken up and Gabriel gets two off a reverse DDT. Black's top rope Lionsault hits knees though and Roode slaps on the Crossface, only to have Dutt come out for a distraction. It doesn't work this time though as Roode puts the Crossface back on. Drew Galloway takes Dutt out and Black...is free because Roode let it go for no apparent reason. Black's springboard is countered into the Roode Bomb for the pin and the title at 13:15.

Rating: C+. The match was fine but what does this title change mean? That would be nothing, because the title has no important lineage and has been thrown out there for some meaningless changes. It's the old Russo idea that you can get people to care because the title changes without the idea of making people care about the title in the first place.

Post match GFW chases Roode off and Jeff rants about everything going on here. Cue Dixie and OH DEAR GOD SHUT UP! They're going back and forth about stabbing each other in the back and all the mistakes each other has made like ANYONE cares. Jeff brings up his ownership stake and Dixie proposes a winner take all match. Jeff agrees and Drew Galloway comes out to be on Dixie's team. Drew wants to stand up for TNA and the Wolves and Lashley come out to join him in Team TNA.

Dinero and Matthews talk about what just happened.

Here's the returning Kenny King with a mic in hand. He's been going through an identity crisis in the last year but now he's just here on his own. Kenny doesn't want to be the kind of guy who jumps someone from behind and uses a numbers advantage to beat someone down. He issues an open challenge to anyone from any roster to come fight him right now.

Bram vs. Kenny King

Bram goes right after King to start but Kenny takes him down with a nice dive. He tries it once too often though and eats a clothesline to give Bram control. King comes back with a running elbow in the corner, followed by an enziguiri to put Bram in the corner. Bram ducks another dive though and the Brighter Side of Suffering gives Bram the pin at 3:37.

Rating: D+. So King comes back, turns face, and loses in less than four minutes. That being said, this match was nothing to see but it calmed me down a lot after the stupid hostile takeover stuff had me losing my mind. This was something different than that one big story, though it was stupid in its own way.

The Hardys say Matt will win the title. Has there been a more tacked on feud than this in recent years?

Here's Velvet Sky with something to say. She's been keeping to herself since she got back for a reason. The Knockouts division has been evolving constantly and so has she. The Dollhouse is out of control and Taryn is going to pay. Velvet tells Taryn to come out here but she comes up on screen to say how sick she is of being compared to Velvet as the hot blonde in TNA.

Taryn has been in movies and on TV but Velvet looks like a Hot Topic reject. This is Taryn's house and now she has to play with Taryn's dolls. Cue the Dollhouse, who quickly beats Tarn down. Angelina Love and Madison Rayne come out and yes, the Beautiful People are back.

Video on Matt Hardy vs. Ethan Carter III in Full Metal Mayhem, which of course set up tonight's regular match.

Dixie gives Team TNA their pep talk. It's Lethal Lockdown in two weeks for full control.

TNA World Title: Matt Hardy vs. Ethan Carter III

Ethan is defending and if Matt loses, Jeff Hardy is Ethan's personal assistant. Josh: "EC3 and Matt Hardy have been rivals for quite some time." No Josh, they haven't been. Feeling out process to start until Matt hits a running Diamond Cutter (called a neckbreaker) for two. A big clothesline puts the champion on the floor and it's off to a break. Back with Carter missing a middle rope elbow but putting on a sleeper.

Matt fights up and nails some clotheslines, followed by the Side Effect. The referee gets bumped off the Twist of Fate attempt though and there's no one to count. A belt shot to Matt's head gets two because Matt WILL

NOT DIE, which seems to be code for WILL NOT STOP DRAGGING OUT OBVIOUS ENDINGS. Jeff gets in a cheap shot on Carter to give Matt two but they ram heads and Carter falls on top for two. Tyrus grabs Matt's leg and gets chaired by Jeff, only to have Ethan hit a TKO on Matt for two more. The referee gets distracted again and a low blow and sunset flip retain Carter's title at 13:17.

Rating: C. Wow you know what that wasn't? Epic. You know why it wasn't? Because they did the big gimmick match three weeks ago and this company is too stupid to figure out that they shouldn't do things in that order. The match was fine but I have no reason to care about Matt Hardy as a lame duck challenger before we get to the Bound For Glory and whatever they have planned there.

Jeff now has to work for Carter and is forced to raise the champ's hand to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. I've sat through a lot from TNA over the years. I survived Immortal, THEY, all of Russo's nonsense and Dixieland. Tonight, for the first time, I got mad at them over how bad things got. This invasion is one of the worst written, lamest attempts at doing something that I've ever seen. Case in point: if the blowoff is in two weeks, the whole story lasted five shows. Even the WWF InVasion, one of the most botched stories ever, ran several months before the big ending.

Instead, TNA has decided that we care about the power struggle (because they're too stupid to run ANYTHING BUT A POWER STRUGGLE) between Jeff and Dixie, leaving Ethan Carter III, a guy who could have been a much bigger deal for them, fighting the Hardys in a midcard feud. We're a month away from Bound For Glory and their big story is going to be blown off on TV two weeks beforehand.

If TNA is going down, and I'm sure they won't because these morons somehow back their way into deal after deal to keep this mess going another six months, they're going out as only they can: with no idea of how to run a good show, bad storytelling, stupid decisions, and the wrong people on top because those people think the fans care about them. This was a disaster and I absolutely hated it.

Results

Lashley b. Chris Mordetzky via DQ when the GFW roster interfered

Brian Myers/Trevor Lee b. Wolves – Lee pinned Richards after a briefcase to the head

Bobby Roode b. PJ Black – Roode Bomb

Bram b. Kenny King – Brighter Side of Suffering

Ethan Carter III b. Matt Hardy – Sunset flip

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NXT – September 2, 2015: One More For Dusty

NXT

Date: September 2, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves

The focus goes back on the tag teams tonight as we begin the Dusty Classic. This is a tag team tournament for a prize to be announced and

with most of the participants to be announced as well. The idea is to have the past, present and future of NXT involved to honor the spirit of Dusty Rhodes. Let's get to it.

The opening video hypes up the tournament and talks about paying tribute to the Dream.

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Ascension vs. Rhyno/Baron Corbin

Rhyno runs Viktor over to start but Viktor rolls into a shoulder to put Rhyno down. Konor and Corbin come in but a quick double shoulder drops Baron. The double teaming doesn't last long though and Viktor is sent shoulder first into the post, allowing Rhyno to get some shots in. Back to Corbin as it seems the Ascension are the faces here. Konor gets the hot tag and cleans house on Baron before avoiding a Gore. Corbin breaks up the Fall of Man though and Rhyno Gores Konor for the pin at 5:39.

Rating: D. This was an awkward match with both teams looking a bit off. It's also very telling that the Ascension can't even get a win over a thrown together team where the members don't even get along down in NXT. They've just died since they got called up to the main roster and WWE has no issues with it.

Neville and Solomon Crowe are in the tournament. They're both excited but Solomon freaks Neville out a bit.

Nia Jax is still coming.

Alexa Bliss vs. Blue Pants

Bliss takes Blue Pants down for a beating to start and throws her to the mat by the hair. Pants gets rammed into the buckle and a kick to the back sets up an armbar. Back up and Pants fires off some kicks and a northern lights suplex gets two. She misses a charge in the corner though and the Sparkle Splash gives Alexa the pin at 3:34.

Rating: C-. Total squash but that was exactly what it was supposed to be.

Bliss is the evil mastermind and Blue Pants is nothing more than a cult favorite who can only win matches through interference. There's no point in having her win here when she just shows up for goofy appearances so everyone is fine.

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa are in Regal's office when Tyler Breeze storms in. Tyler demands a spot in the tournament so Regal gives him Bull Dempsey to face Gargano and Ciampa next week.

Emma says the Divas Revolution isn't happening without her.

Apollo Crews vs. Martin Stone

Apollo starts fast with an armdrag but Stone clotheslines him down to take over. Off to a chinlock for a bit before Crews comes back with a standing enziguri. The gorilla press and standing moonsault put Stone away at 2:57. Crews looked good but he needs to do something besides just being all athletic and awesome.

Chad Gable and Jason Jordan say they'll get to write this tournament's history after winning the whole thing. Neville is flying too close to the sun and Crowe is going to be forgotten. Jordan finally says the Ready Willing and Gable line. Gable is money.

Finn Balor is ready to defend his title in Texas, but first of all he's in the Dusty Classic. His partner, Samoa Joe, comes in and says he wants to win it all. Balor shakes his hand and says he's ready. So I guess Joe is going to be the next major challenger.

Eva Marie vs. Billie Kay

We get an Eva chant to start, which I don't buy as legit for a second. Eva fires off some shoulders in the corner and grabs a suplex for two. A seated abdominal stretch is countered by a small package but Eva comes back with a backsplash (that's WAY too common a move these days) for two more. Kay makes a quick comeback with a clothesline and suplex for two of her own, but the interesting part is the fans booing Eva out of the building for kicking out. That was awesome in a way. Back up and Sliced Red #2 beats Kay at 3:45.

Rating: D. Eva is gorgeous and looks great in her gear, has awesome presence, but above all else, she's just not that good in the ring. If they try to push her as a star in the division, the heat is going to be out of this world. The NXT fans simply do not want her in their company and it's not surprising in the slightest.

The Hype Bros and Enzo/Cass argued over what part of New York to celebrate in after winning last week.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic: Solomon Crowe/Neville vs. Chad Gable/Jason Jordan

Gable takes Crowe to the mat to start and easily rolls him around into a backslide for two. Back up and Crowe counters a leapfrog into a flapjack (nice move) before it's off to Neville for a very nice welcome home reaction. Jordan takes Neville down to the mat with some nice amateur stuff but Neville flips out of a suplex and sends Jason to the floor as we take a break. Back with Jordan throwing Solomon down just like he did to Neville before a wicked overhead belly to belly drops Crowe again.

Gable comes back in and mocks Solomon, even having Jordan fan him off while Crowe is on the floor. Jordan throws on a chinlock for a bit before Solomon adds a bow and arrow of his own. The hold is finally broken and Crowe dives over for the tag, allowing Neville to come in for his usual fast paced stuff.

Gable pulls Jason to the floor to break up the Red Arrow. That's fine with Neville as he dives on both of them with Crowe following with a dive of his own. Back in and Jordan catches Neville's next dive and throws him face first onto the mat. Crowe tags himself in and gets suplexed again, setting up the Grand Amplitude (the announcers don't know the name) for the pin at 12:48.

Rating: C+. Good match here and Crowe tagging himself in might lead to a heel turn for him, which probably won't save him but it's better than whatever it was he's been doing for the last few weeks. Neville really does come off as a star here and you can see what they're going for with the superhero idea.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked the show for the most part and they're making the tournament feel like a huge deal. That's exactly what something this important should be and I love the fact that they've made the whole promotion want to get involved with it. Good stuff here and what is hopefully the sign of good stuff to come.

Results

Baron Corbin/Rhyno b. Ascension – Gore to Konor

Alexa Bliss b. Blue Pants – Sparkle Splash

Apollo Crews b. Martin Stone – Standing moonsault

Eva Marie b. Billie Kay – Sliced Red #2

Chad Gable/Jason Jordan b. Neville/Solomon Crowe – Grand Amplitude to Crowe

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New Column: The Role He Was

Born To Play

Looking at why not everyone can or should be a World Champion level wrestler.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-role-he-was-born-to-play/40629/>

Monday Nitro – April 10, 2000: Kevin Nash Said It Best

Monday Nitro #235

Date: April 10, 2000

Location: Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado

Attendance: 9,074

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mark Madden, Scott Hudson

It's kind of hard to preview this show as it's all about the company being reset. Russo and Bischoff are coming in to a bigger reception than Hogan back in 1994 because they're writers and therefore more important than anything else. Since WCW is stupid, this is also the go home show for Spring Stampede, which has nothing set up so far. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Most of the roster is in and around the ring to start. More come out as this isn't the most thrilling start. Jeff Jarrett gets to talk first because we're just lucky that way. He came here to be the WCW World Champion but his master plan got derailed by some good old boys who couldn't compete in his league. Jeff gets to the point and calls for the man himself: Vince Russo.

The Long Island accent with a Russo attached talks about making the WWF

what it was before coming here to beat Vince McMahon at his own game. Within a few weeks, the new blood of WCW was making a change, but then the good old boy network kicked in. All the political BS in the back brought Russo down and all those people are sitting at home watching him now.

Then they decided that a change had to come and Russo was sent home. Even some of the wrestlers knew the change would suck. The Radicalz knew it and left. Scott Steiner knew it and got suspended. Well now the good old boys network is gone and it's time for the young guys to rise. This brings out Bischoff and they hug, giving us the new power team. The good old boys network screwed both of them over with Bischoff listing Diamond Dallas Page, Sid Vicious and Hulk Hogan in particular.

We see Sting, Luger, Sid and Page watching on a monitor in the back. Bischoff goes on about Hogan, even apologizing to everyone in the ring for how much trouble Hogan caused them. Now Bischoff wants to see the old guys so here they come. "What's up Sid? No softball game?"

Page doesn't know what Eric is smoking so Bischoff tells him to screw off. Bischoff takes credit for rebuilding Sting's career as the announcers sound like they're in awe of this. A level playing field where everyone has to earn their spot is promised but first Russo has something to say to Ric Flair. After promising to wipe Flair off the bottom of his shoe, Russo drops the bombshell: all titles are vacant.

The bored crowd chants for Goldberg as Sid says he won't give up his title. Bischoff comes up to him and threatens the end of Sid's career. "What's the matter Sid? Can't find your scissors?" Madden: "WOW!" The fans are silent so Bischoff repeats the line. Amazingly enough, the fans are still silent. Sid finally hands it over and Eric announces that all champions will be crowned at Spring Stampede.

That one part where Bischoff mentioned an inside reference and no one reacted sums up this show thing. This was a twenty minute segment made up almost entirely of insider stories and statements that went over the heads of probably 98% of the audience. What good old boys network is he talking about and how did they ruin what Russo had going on? Yeah I know

what they're talking about because it's 2015 and this is all ancient history. How many people had any idea what they were talking about in 2000? Also of course ignore the fact that this is Russo yet AGAIN blaming everyone else for his ideas bombing.

This was a long segment to set up the new Russo and Bischoff regime and let them get in their shots at Vince and all of their other enemies (read as anyone else who has ever had a different idea) as the fans are left sitting there wondering what in the world is going on. Finally, it really doesn't instill me with confidence when the new writers who are supposed to save the company are basically saying "yeah this is too complicated for us to fix so let's just reset the whole thing instead of booking our way out of it." That's quite the opening impression.

Hogan arrives.

During the break, all the wrestlers in the ring left.

Sting and Hogan talk about what just happened and Sting says Bischoff might as well have just kicked Hogan between the legs. Sting: "I'm not ribbing you."

WCW World Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Diamond Dallas Page vs. Total Package

This isn't a tournament for the title, but rather a tournament to face Jeff Jarrett for the title on Sunday. Page's music stops halfway through his entrance and he has no pyro. Because he has to prove himself you see. Prove himself in the World Title tournament he's already in that is.

Luger, as in the guy who was out most of last year and hasn't had an important win since Halloween Havoc, doesn't have music either as he comes to the ring as one of five potential World Title winners. It's ten minutes after the promise of a level playing field and they're already defying their own logic. In case you're wondering, Page's last major win would probably be.....well also at Halloween Havoc.

The match starts slow with both guys looking like they're in their 40s who are out there for a healthy paycheck. The announcers ignore the match

to talk about Bischoff riding Hogan's coattails in another argument that no common fan would care about. Luger stomps Page in the corner and chokes with a boot as Madden makes fun of Page as is his custom.

Some backbreakers have Page in trouble AND IT'S ANGLE TIME! Buff Bagwell comes out with full music and pyro to distract Luger, allowing Page to get in a low blow. Tony: "What's going to happen next in this program? It's only segment two!" Luger and his gonads of steel shrug off the low blow and Page gets powerslammed, only to have Buff go after Liz for a distraction. That would be the second distraction of the match and it allows Page to Diamond Cut Luger for the pin. He gets about half a second of music before they cut it off again.

Rating: D-. Oh man this show is going to SUCK. They had a four and a half minute match between two veterans who have to prove themselves and it took two distractions and a no sold low blow to put Luger down. This is going to be the old Russo idea of running an angle or three in every match because the fans are too stupid to just watch a match without some bonus entertainment to carry them through. Oh and great: we might even get Luger vs. Bagwell out of this. Again. For like the dozenth time.

Hogan can't find Bischoff.

Hennig asks Russo why he isn't in the World Title scene. Russo gives him Jarrett tonight and if he wins, he gets in the World Title match on Sunday. So there are officially three semi-final matches for two spots in a final? Now they're ignoring the laws of numbers.

Here's Tank Abbott to say he's a shootfight and not a wrestler. Well we've known that for months but at least it's confirmed. Tank came here for Goldberg and what a coincidence that Goldberg got hurt the week Tank arrived. Starting tonight, he's going to beat up innocent bystanders until Goldberg comes back. First up: Mark Madden, who loses his shirt in the beating.

Jarrett tells Russo that it better be good.

Kidman tells Torrie he wants to do this.

Hogan is given directions to Bischoff's office. These three scenes took a combined 15 seconds.

Hogan finds Bischoff and they talk in an office.

Here's Kidman with a microphone. He feels like he's been handed a get out of jail free card because he and the rest of the New Blood (of course it's an official thing now) have been held down by the old guys. Kidman wants to talk about Hulk Hogan, who has been talking about him a lot lately. Hogan doesn't have the heart and talent that Kidman have and it's taken all those years of spotlight to give Hogan that grotesque orange tan. He calls Hogan out and wouldn't you know it, Hogan is walking past a monitor in the back.

Hogan comes out and thankfully Hudson explains what the heck Kidman is talking about, because Kidman certainly didn't go into details about it. Again: WCW assumes that all of the fans are on the internet reading everything. Hogan says Kidman gives the young guys in this business a bad name. He brings up Torrie and Kidman goes after him, which Tony declares as the world turning upside down.

They fight to the floor with Hogan getting the better of it (expected) and beating Kidman up even more back inside. Cue Bischoff with a chair. Hogan runs his hand over his eyebrow and gets hit with the chair, drawing blood right where his hand went over the eyebrow. I remember seeing that as a kid and yelling at my TV how fake it looked. Kidman gets a cover and pin with Bischoff counting the three, in what is probably the only time Hogan lays down for him, or anyone for that matter.

Ric Flair arrives.

Hogan wants Bischoff and Kidman and swears a lot.

Flair watches the opening segment in the back and comes to the ring. Ric talks about Russo growing up as a Flair fan (not likely in New York but whatever) and now he thinks Flair is old. In this town, Brian Griese (current Denver Broncos quarterback) throws a lot of touchdown passes but that doesn't make fans forget about John Elway because in this town, Elway is the man. Flair was always great at throwing in the sports

analogies and getting easy pops (not a bad thing) for them.

Bischoff has the guts to walk up to come to Ric face to face and he isn't wasting money on attorneys again, so get out here right now. Instead Flair gets Scott Steiner, who calls Flair's teeth crooked. All of the WWF's current champions came from WCW (no, they didn't) because Flair and company ran them off. Steiner puts in some fake teeth to do a Flair impression, allowing Shane Douglas to return and attack Flair.

Kevin Nash returns on crutches.

Bret Hart is in the crowd.

Flair is looking for Douglas.

As luck would have it, Douglas is with Gene, who gets more emotional than you'll ever see him over what Shane just did. Douglas says that was the beginning of Flair's road and he's going to do whatever he wants.

WCW World Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Sid Vicious vs. Sting

Now this would be the semi-finals to advance to the final for the final as opposed to the semi-final for the final. Got that? These guys get their music all the way to the ring because Russo and Bischoff have already forgotten that story. Sting sidesteps a charge to start and kicks Sid onto the turnbuckle, setting up a splash to send Sid outside. Sid comes back and mocks the crowd a bit as I had already forgotten he turned heel a few weeks ago. Back in and Sting's splash hits knees (not feet as Tony calls them) to keep Sid in control.

A cobra clutch slam gets two before a double clothesline puts both guys down. Cue the Wall with a table and the referee gets put down. Sid powerbombs Sting (now the Millennium Bomb. I kind of dig that name actually) but gets chaired in the back. Wall chokeslams Sid through the table and that's a countout because SID'S BODY LAYING ON A BROKEN TABLE isn't enough to make the referee think anything is up.

Rating: D. These two have been having decent to good matches for eleven years and it took Vince Russo less than seven minutes (longest match of the night of course) to screw that up. Wall going after Sid could be one

heck of a mess, but at least it's another young guy getting a push against a veteran.

Here's Ric Flair to challenge Shane Douglas for later tonight. Not next week, not at the pay per view, not at some point in the future. Tonight, because Russo doesn't understand what it means to build to a match. That being said, Flair is the only person here who hasn't sounded stupid. It's almost like he knows what he's doing.

Hogan is still on a rampage.

Back from a break and Hogan is still on a rampage and beats up Shannon Moore and Shane Helms for not knowing where Kidman is.

Clip of the Ready to Rumble premiere.

WCW World Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Jeff Jarrett vs. Curt Hennig

I guess this is a tournament match. I mean, the winner goes to the title match on Sunday so why not. They start brawling in the aisle despite no personal issue between the two of them. Curt takes him over to the announcers' table for a beating before Jeff clotheslines him down inside. We get the Jarrett sleeper/suplex sequence but here's the debuting Shawn Stasiak (formerly Meat in the WWF) to what sounds like Curt Hennig's old Mr. Perfect music.

The distraction makes Hennig throw a wild back elbow which Jarrett ducks and the referee gets bumped. I can't say it hit the referee because it didn't come close but Little Naitch went down anyway. Stasiak comes in and mostly fails at lifting Hennig up for a fireman's carry before dropping him in what can be most accurately described as a reverse F5. It was so botched that there's really no describing the move. The Stroke gives Jeff the pin.

Rating: D+. For those of you counting, this is the third match that has ended as a result of someone interfering. It's clear that WCW has decided they know what we want as wrestling fans and if we object we're not giving them enough of a chance. The match could have been good had it been a match and not a punching fest, but these two are just wrestlers

and no one would want to see that.

Hogan is storming through sky boxes to find Bischoff.

Nash tells someone to get here if they can.

Sting says he is loyalty and he's coming after Russo's golden boy on Sunday.

Ric Flair vs. Shane Douglas

Both guys are in street clothes. They're quickly on the floor with Ric firing off chops, followed by a low blow back inside. Hudson goes off about Douglas talking trash about Flair on the dirt sheets as Shane kicks Flair low. Cue Russo with a bat to hit Flair and that's a DQ.

Russo steals Flair's watch.

Here's Kevin Nash, who immediately rips on the new bosses who are trying to be wrestlers and screw over some of the boys. He wants to know what happened to that sweet little wrestling show we had every Monday? Like, where is the Dog when you need him? Nash has been talking to Hall, who wants to come back soon. Neither Bischoff or Russo would be here if not for he and Hall, especially Russo who they had to save from Shawn Michaels over and over. This brings out the debuting and reigning ECW World Champion to beat Nash down. Awesome wants some of this opportunity that Russo and Bischoff are offering.

Hogan is on the phone in his limo and demanding Kidman soon. The Hummer (from last summer, now white instead of black) comes up and crushes the limo. Bischoff and Kidman get out and celebrate.

WCW World Title Tournament Final: Diamond Dallas Page vs. Sting

The winner gets Jarrett on Sunday so Jeff is on commentary. Page is thrown outside to start before a pair of Stinger Splashes put him down again. The Deathlock is broken up by an arm in the ropes and Page gets two off a belly to belly. Jarrett goes after Kimberly so Page head outside, allowing Vampiro to run in give Sting the Nail in the Coffin. A Diamond Cutter sends Page to Spring Stampede.

Rating: D. I'm almost done with this show. It's almost over. If I can get through a few more minutes, this will finally be over. Then I can watch ANYTHING ELSE and see a different finish, because it's clear that we're going to be seeing a lot of the same things over and over again and it's going to get more and more annoying every week. This was just a brief workout until the ending happened, as all the matches have been so far.

Jarrett swings the guitar at Page but hits Kimberly instead.

After a break, Jarrett comes out for the closing speech. He talks about six days before his destiny is fulfilled when he is finally crowned WCW World Champion. Cue Page to beat Jarrett down but Scott Steiner hits the ring to make it 2-1. Luger, now a face I guess, comes in to help Page but Bagwell, Vampiro and Wall came in. By George WE'VE GOT STABLE WARS!!! Sting's save doesn't work as Booker T. (yes T.) comes in to help the New Blood. The New Blood obliterates the Millionaire's Club as Russo and Bischoff come out to watch. They go to leave but an angry Bret Hart is waiting for them to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. I can't call it a failure because they had an idea but that doesn't mean it was a well executed idea. Nash summed it up best: what happened to the wrestling show? It's very clear that under Russo and Bischoff, this has stopped being a wrestling show and is now just a poorly written drama.

The idea of having the youth vs. the old guys is solid, but when the stuff like "they have to earn their music and pyro" is literally forgotten fifteen minutes after it starts and the stories are almost all based around dirtsheets that wouldn't be frequently read today, those stories are quickly forgotten. That's Russo in a nutshell: yeah there are ideas there, but the ton of horrible stuff on top of them crush any positives.

Either way, this show was not good. It had a lot going on, but that doesn't mean it's a good show. Spring Stampede feels like it has the potential to be an even bigger disaster and I'm terrified to think what we might have to sit through in order to form Russo and Bischoff's vision for WCW.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

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

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

Jimmy Snuka Charged With 1983 Murder

<http://411mania.com/wrestling/jimmy-snuka-charged-with-murder/>

This has been rumored for years now and it's finally happening 32 years later. Snuka already has stomach cancer and there's a good chance he could be going down for this too. This has really been a bad year for 80s stars but this is a different kind of bad.

Monday Night Raw – August 31,

2015: Male Cheerleaders And The Periodic Table

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 31, 2015

Location: Amalie Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Last week saw the return of Sting and the disappearance of a statue, meaning tonight is likely to continue the time honored tradition of destroying that statue once and for all. Sting vs. Seth Rollins for the WWE World Title is confirmed for Night of Champions, but what about Rollins' US Title? John Cena is still lurking so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's closing segment where Sting appeared in the statue's place. HHH made the match after the show went off the air.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sting (with complete face paint this week) to open things up. JBL: "The man who put Starrcade on the map!" Just...no. Under no circumstances can that be considered correct. Sting hasn't been around much since Wrestlemania where he lost to HHH. Due to that match, he'll always have respect for HHH, but now his sights are set on Seth Rollins.

Ever since Wrestlemania it has been injustice after injustice and last week he had to hear Seth Rollins comparing himself to names like Bruno Sammartino, Andre the Giant and the Ultimate Warrior. Sting has won titles around the world but there is one that has eluded him throughout his career. At Night of Champions, Sting is going to prove that Rollins isn't half the man HHH is and that Rollins can't hang with Sting on his best day.

Rollins is upset but Stephanie talks him down. Seth lists his accomplishments this year and calls everything Sting said wrong. Stephanie brings up Sting's comparison to HHH and thinks Sting is

absolutely right. Seth wants his statue so Stephanie suggests he go ask Sting.

Rusev vs. Dolph Ziggler

An attempt at a single leg doesn't get Dolph anywhere so he dropkicks Rusev in the face instead. Back in and Rusev slowly stomps Ziggler down, as is his custom. We get a dueling Rusev chant, followed by Dolph missing a splash in the corner. The sleeper slows Rusev down a bit so he backs Ziggler into the corner for a break. Ziggler gets knocked into the barricade and we take a break.

Back with Rusev throwing on a bearhug, which really should have been put on during the break. Rusev misses a charge of his own but easily breaks up a neckbreaker with a suplex. A running flip backsplash gets two more and Ziggler is in trouble. The spinwheel kick gets the same for Rusev but he walks into a superkick out of nowhere.

They head outside with Rusev charging into the steps but both guys dive in to beat the count at nine. Rusev superkicks him down as well because everyone has to use superkicks in this company. Ziggler sneaks out of the Accolade and a quick Zig Zag drops Rusev, only to have Summer come in for the DQ at 14:21.

Rating: D+. This was more long than it was good and again they're setting up the mixed tag. Why we needed to see another match between the two of them to set up the obvious match is beyond me, but at least they didn't have a clean finish. Lana is going to be awesome in the ring, mainly because she's awesome at everything else so why would this be any different?

A catfight ensues until Ziggler pulls them apart.

Post break Ziggler brags about what just happened. He goes into a room as Renee talks a bit and we see Summer sneak in behind him.

It's time for the Beat the Clock Challenge for the #1 contendership to the Divas Title, but Team Bella has something to say. Nikki is so proud of making it this far, but we've got a Bellatron counting us down to the

second she breaks the record.

Alicia Fox vs. Becky Lynch

This is the first match in a Beat the Clock Challenge, meaning whoever wins in the shortest time wins, earning a title shot, presumably at Night of Champions. Becky tries for some fast rollups to start but she gets a bit sloppy and Fox takes over. A chinlock slows things down even more and you can see Becky panicking over the time being spent. Back up and some clotheslines get two for Lynch, followed by a springboard kick in the corner. They hit the mat and Becky grabs Disarm-Her for the win at 3:21.

Rating: D. This is the other issue with the Divas Revolution: the newcomers got over having these epic 10-15 minute wars but now they're stuck with the three minute matches that have plagued the division for years. For once, this isn't on them because there's very little they can do in so little time and that's not going to change.

Ryback talks about defending his title against everyone and tonight the Big Show will be no different. As he's talking, we hear someone scream and see Summer Rae running out of Ziggler's locker room. Ziggler is in a towel and looks surprised.

Intercontinental Title: Big Show vs. Ryback

Big Show is challenging, Miz is on commentary and we get big match intros. Show takes him into the corner for the loud chop to start and slowly drops an elbow for a close two. With Ryback down, Show demands a microphone so he can address the PLEASE RETIRE chants. He says find someone to do it so Ryback picks him up for a slam, only to have Show fall on him for two more. Show hits the chinlock for a few moments but Ryback fights up and hits a good looking flying tackle.

The splash is caught by the throat though, only have Ryback slip out and hook a double leg takedown (no that wasn't a spinebuster) for a near fall of his own. The Meathook is countered into the chokeslam for two but Show goes up. Since we're in Flair Country, the slam off the top is very appropriate. Another Meathook attempt is countered with a spear but Miz gets up for a distraction, allowing Ryback to grab Shell Shock to retain

at 7:14.

Rating: C. They had me worried that they were going to change the title here in what would have been one of the dumbest ideas in a long time. I'm sure we'll get Miz vs. Ryback now, even though Ryback beat him in two minutes a few weeks back. Ryback is the best Intercontinental Champion in a long time and it's nice to see the title meaning something.

Charlotte vs. Brie Bella

Charlotte's time to beat is 3:21 because only PCB can win. Brie starts hiding in the ropes to start because she must "protect the Bella Empire." A Figure Eight attempt doesn't work and Charlotte has less than two minutes to go. Instead Natural Selection hits out of nowhere for the pin at 1:40 to set Charlotte's time.

We look at the Dudleyz returning last week.

The Dudleyz say they're back for one more title reign because it would make them ten time Tag Team Champions. Tonight: New Day goes through a table.

Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

Owens talks trash to start (shocking I know) and gets shoved down to the mat. A big boot stops Owens cold and Cesaro casually lifts him up for a suplex, complete with right hands to the gut. Cesaro gets two off a double stomp and it's time for Owens to bail to the floor. That's fine with Cesaro, who follows him out with a running European uppercut.

A high cross body gets two for Cesaro but Owens comes back with an elbow to the jaw and a backplash. Owens: "WHERE'S YOUR SECTION NOW???" A corner clothesline sets up the Cannonball and we hit the chinlock on Cesaro. That goes nowhere so Owens busts out the torture rack neckbreaker for two instead and we take a break.

Back with Cesaro failing to superplex Owens so he dropkicks Kevin in the face and gutwrench superplexes him instead. That reverse Angle Slam gets two for Cesaro but Owens superkicks him for the same. Owens tells Cole to watch but misses another Cannonball.

Instead of doing something smart though, Kevin slaps him in the face. In a scary power display, Cesaro catches a tornado DDT in mid air and slams Owens down into a Crossface. Like, how do you even do that? Cesaro can't suplex him over the top and Owens knocks him HARD into the announcers' table. Back in and Cesaro can't Swing him because of the ribs, allowing the Pop Up Powerbomb to put Cesaro away at 16:10.

Rating: B. I liked this better than the Summerslam match as Owens beat him clear after setting up an injury right before the ending. Cesaro took a great looking bump onto the table and Owens has won his last three singles matches. It's very nice to see him not jobbing every single week for a change and I'd love to see him go after Ryback and the Intercontinental Title next.

Ziggler tries to explain that he thought Summer was Lana. Nothing happened and he threw on a towel as soon as he knew who it was. Lana doesn't buy it and leaves.

Dean Ambrose vs. Braun Strowman

The fireflies still look awesome. Bray thanks Abigail for giving him the black sheep as her greatest gift. For thousands of years, mankind has tried to predict the end of the world. Tonight the seventh trumpet sounds and they will walk among you undisguised. Stroman, in a voice that Christian Bale would think is too over the top, says this is the apocalypse. Reigns comes out as backup as you would expect.

Strowman throws Dean around with one hand to start and I think the message has been sent. Dean gets in his fast striking but Stroman just throws him down again. A kick knocks Dean to the floor and the slow beating continues. Reigns finally comes over for the DQ at 3:09.

Rating: D+. Nothing to the match here but it did exactly what it was supposed to. Stroman looks like the best monster that we've had in a long time and that's all he's supposed to look like. Eventually someone is going to beat him, but until then it's going to be fun watching him be the modern day Zeus or whatever other monster you pick. It's an old formula that keeps coming back because it works.

Stroman cleans house and no sells a chair to the back. Reigns' right hand has a bit more effect but Harper comes in with the superkick to put Roman down. Dean gets choked out and Reigns takes that spinning powerbomb thing. Bray comes in for Sister Abigail to Reigns. Notice that Bray didn't have to do a thing here, which is exactly why he needs minions.

We look at Rollins beating Cena at Summerslam.

Clip of Sting's opening promo.

Rollins wants his statue back and tells Sting to stay out of his business. Maybe if Sting had a subscription to the WWE Network, he could know how great Seth has been. Yeah HHH used to be a big deal, but HHH never held the US and WWE World Titles at the same time.

Paige vs. Sasha Banks

Paige has to beat 1:40 so she starts very fast and gets some rollups for two each. The fans are split as Paige fires off some running knees for two. The Rampaige connects but Tamina and Naomi pull Sasha to the floor as the clock runs out at 1:40.

Team Bella comes out to pose.

Summer Rae says that Ziggler called her into his locker room but then he just started stripping. She was mesmerized and speechless and then he asked her to join him in the shower. After he got out, he gave Summer the look but she ran out. Summer will never forget the image though.

Lana is crying and can't say anything.

New Day vs. Dudley Boyz

Non-title. Woods calls the Dudleyz a menace to culture, society and furniture around the world. Big E. asks if you remember the times sitting around the table with your granny and that weird uncle around the Thanksgiving table. Or all that money you cleaned up at the poker table. Or all those summers around the pool table. And where would we be without the Periodic Table? Remember all the fun you had learning your multiplication table? Big E. and Kofi pull out what Woods calls the last

table (covered in bubble wrap) here tonight. A SAVE THE TABLES chant takes us to a break before the match.

The Prime Time Players are on commentary as Big E. and D-Von get things going. But it's quickly off to Bubba vs. Kofi. Woods suggests clapping but Bubba turns it into NEW DAY SUCKS. A clothesline under the arm stops Kofi cold and New Day is sent out to the floor as we take a break. Back with D-Von clotheslining both champions down but Woods low bridges him to the floor. As Woods brushes his hair, Big E. drives D-Von into the barricade. That sounds like a valid reason to dance to me and Big E. agrees.

The rotating stomps set up Big E.'s splash for two. An abdominal stretch slows things down and Kofi's chinlock does the same. Woods mocks the TABLES chant but Kofi dives into a clothesline, allowing for the tag off to Bubba. Bubba hiptosses Woods in but D-Von hiptosses him right back out in a funny spot. 3D quickly ends Kofi, which JBL calls the Dudleyz' first match in WWE in ten years. Even he doesn't watch Smackdown.

Rating: C. I liked the match but the booking makes my head hurt. You have three members of New Day and two of them are the recognized Tag Team Champions. I think you get what I'm going for here. It's very interesting that the Dudleyz have been doing the same thing for about ten years now and it's still more entertaining than 90% of most tag teams.

Here's Seth Rollins to call out Sting. The things Sting said earlier tonight showed him why WCW went out of business. We can't possibly be talking about that again....right? Rollins wants Sting to take back what he said about HHH being that much better than him because Seth is every bit as good as HHH and one day could even be better. However, Rollins wants his status but gets Stephanie instead.

She suggests the Rollins chill out because Sting is getting in his head over a stupid statue. Rollins still wants his statue but this time gets John Cena. John talks about the Authority bending Rollins to their will because that's what they do. They picked Rollins because he was the only one willing to stab the Shield in the back. Rollins is going to be the flavor of the month because the Authority would never allow him to do

what he's about to do right now.

Rollins has a lot of titles right now and since the Authority said every title is on the line at Night of Champions, Cena is cashing in his rematch for the US Title on the same night Rollins has to defend against Sting. Cena asks Stephanie if he can do that and she reluctantly agrees. Sting comes out to pose with Cena to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was one of the best shows they've had in a very long time. It kept moving all night and they didn't have anything out there that took too long. There's enough stuff going on here to find something interesting and nothing was really bad. Well maybe the opening match but at least it led somewhere. I had a really good time with this show and it flew by, which is a rare thing for Raw.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Rusev via DQ when Summer Rae interfered

Becky Lynch b. Alicia Fox – Disarm-Her

Ryback b. Big Show – Shell Shock

Charlotte b. Brie Bella – Natural Selection

Cesaro b. Kevin Owens – Pop Up Powerbomb

Braun Stroman b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Roman Reigns interfered

Paige vs. Sasha Banks went to a time limit draw

Dudley Boyz b. New Day – 3D to Kingston

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

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

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

Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode 24

NorCal and I have a long chat about Summerslam, Takeover: Brooklyn and a bit about Raw.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-25-kb-is-here-for-nxt-takeover-summerslam-and-the-aftermath-rolling-into-night-of-champions/>

Monday Night Raw – September 22, 1997 (2015 Redo): That Night In The Garden

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 22, 1997

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 14,615

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is one of the biggest and more important episodes in the history of the show. For the first time ever, the show is in the world's most famous arena as we're getting closer to Badd Blood: In Your House. The crowd

hasn't been this big in a long time and you know the company is going to put on something special in this arena. Let's get to it.

We open with a video on the Garden itself, focusing on some of the major moments in company history in the building, such as Hogan winning his first title, Wrestlemania I, various Roddy Piper antics, Snuka's cage dive, Wrestlemania X and many others. Like I said, they're treating this like a very, very big deal and they certainly should.

Opening sequence.

Intercontinental Title Tournament First Round: Rocky Maivia vs. Ahmed Johnson

Slaughter comes out to eject the Nation before we get started. The winner of this gets Faarooq, who is advancing due to Shamrock having a punctured lung. Maivia jumps him on the floor but Johnson launches Rocky into the corner. Rocky's floatover DDT plants Johnson as Captain Lou Albano wanders out to ringside for no apparent reason. They head outside with Rocky sending him into the steps. Johnson has a bloody hand and Lawler finally says the truth that everyone knew about Johnson a year ago: he's injury prone. A spinebuster puts Rocky down and the Pearl River Plunge sends Johnson to the semi-finals.

Rating: D. Ahmed Johnson was a physical beast and a very strong in ring talent, but there comes a point where the guy can't be trusted with any kind of a push due to not being able to stay healthy. This was too short to mean much, but Johnson was himself and Rocky was still figuring out his heel persona.

Here's Steve Austin in the crowd to say you can't have Raw in New York City without Stone Cold. Nothing else is said, but this felt so much more natural than just showing him in the back with a camera on him for no reason other than the script says it's time to do that.

Sable plays lazer (that's how it's spelled on the box) tag with Howard Finkel. I'm thinking this is a commercial.

Legendary boxer Floyd Patterson is here.

Stills of Shawn taking the European Title from the Bulldog in England. This is considered little more than a power play from Shawn who took the title so he could get one up on the Harts and took a title he had no desire or need to hold.

Here's Undertaker with something to say. Vince announces a new stipulation to the Hell in a Cell match: the winner is the new #1 contender for the WWF World Title at Survivor Series. First up, Undertaker says the reaper will be calling for Bret soon, but first there is Shawn Michaels. The only way out of the Cell is over Undertaker's dead body but Undertaker will never rest in peace.

This brings out Shawn to complain about the WWF putting him in a no win situation. First he was put in the guest referee spot at Summerslam and now Undertaker is supposed to bury him alive. Then if he wins all that, he gets his title shot. Why should Shawn have to earn a title shot, when he's the only man ever to win every title in this company? Shawn promises to be one step ahead of everyone inside the Cell and all Undertaker has to do is show up.

Faarooq/Kama Mustafa vs. Legion of Doom

Sunny does ring announcing for no particular reason. Animal and Kama start it off with Kama being sent to the floor, only to run back in to hammer Animal in the back. A powerslam plants Kama though and it's off to Faarooq vs. Hawk. Kama and Faarooq take turns on Hawk but he comes back with a neckbreaker, with Faarooq falling down before Hawk even starts. The Doomsday Device is loaded up but the rest of the Nation comes in for the DQ.

Ahmed tries for the save but the Nation still has a one man advantage and beats him down as well.

Clip of the Snuka cage dive in 1983.

Intercontinental Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Owen Hart vs. Brian Pillman

Owen has cops surrounding the ring. This week, Pillman has Terri in a

leather skirt and leather bra, plus a belly button ring and a collar around her neck. Pillman's arm is in a sling due to falling in the bathtub for trying one too many things with Terri. Therefore, he has to forfeit here to send Owen into the finals. Owen agrees but Slaughter comes out and wants to see the x-rays and a doctor's report. Slaughter throws the mic at him and Pillman catches it with the bad arm. The match is on or Pillman never wrestles here again.

They slowly fight over a test of strength before having a clean break in the corner. A slow paced rollup gets two for Owen as I think you get the idea by this point. We take a break and come back with Owen all fired up due to Terri (I'm sticking with Terri as the announcers keep swapping between that and Marlena. It's the same person) hitting Owen with her purse, which Owen blamed on Pillman. Owen gets suplexed down but here's Goldust to attack Owen, eliminating Pillman and sending Hart to the finals.

Rating: D+. I liked the idea here so it's hard to fault them for not having a plan. The purse part really wasn't needed as you could have just done the same match until Goldust came in, but points for mixing things up a bit at least. It wasn't a good match or anything, but it was nice to see them trying something that made sense.

Owen brags about his win but Austin comes in and nearly gets arrested. Vince comes in and says hang on. Apparently Vince has authority over police officers because he gets them to back off for now. He asks Austin why he doesn't get that he's barred from competing at the moment. Austin could wind up paralyzed (Lawler: "That would be good.") and the WWF isn't going to let him do that. What Austin needs to learn is to work within the system.

Austin says this is what he does for a living and no one can tell him that he isn't the best in the world. He appreciates that the WWF cares, and there's the first of 1,000 Stunners to Vince, who sells it worse than anyone ever by falling over Austin and shaking like a fish. That's enough for the cops to arrest Austin, who is cheered louder than anyone in years. As the cops are taking him away, Austin flips Vince off one more time, beginning the greatest war in wrestling history.

Let's stop and look at this for a second. Obviously Vince would go on to become Mr. McMahon, probably the best villain that has ever lived (or one of the best no matter how you look at it). His big line is coming in November, but look back at what led up to that. You have Bret going nuts on Vince back in February, then the multiple issues with Shawn, and now Austin.

When Austin won the WWF World Title in 1998, Vince told Austin that they could do things the easy way or the hard way. Most of 1997 was Vince trying to do things the easy way and getting burned. When he saw that the old ways weren't working anymore, he went full on the other way and became Mr. McMahon, who would keep control by any means he had available. Mr. McMahon was a character with a much stronger backstory than he's given credit for having.

Hour #2 is dedicated to Bulldog Brower. What does it say when you're not even worthy of having a full show dedicated to you?

The remaining announcers brag about not leaving the booth in a shot at WCW.

We get a bunch of replays of the Stunner to Vince.

Dude Love vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley

Pinfalls count anywhere. Helmsley throws in a crotch chop before the curtsey. Dude's music plays but instead he pops up on screen. He won't be coming out here because pinfalls count anywhere really isn't his bag. It's not a love thing you see. However, Dude knows someone whose bag it is. He's a kind man and a cooky type of cat.

In a bizarre visual, Mankind comes in to talk to Dude Love face to face. As much as Mankind has dreamed of hurting Helmsley in this match, there's someone Mankind knows who could do it even worse. Dude asks Mankind to bring him out, so here's CACTUS JACK, making his WWF debut and standing with the other two faces of Foley.

This is another one of the most amazing visuals ever as we're almost inside of Foley's head here and seeing how out there he really could be.

The idea of actually seeing all three of them next to each other blew my mind and was something that had to be seen to be believed. The best part: it's going to get even better.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Cactus Jack

The fans lose their minds at Cactus actually being in the WWF. Helmsley charges right at him and gets nailed with a trashcan on the ramp. The ECW chants start up and Cactus peels back the floor mats for a swinging neckbreaker on the concrete. They head inside, just so the Cactus Clothesline can take it back outside again. Helmsley starts running so Chyna can get in a cheap shot, which is totally legal here.

They fight into the crowd and then into the back with Helmsley slamming Cactus on the concrete for two. Cactus comes back with a fire extinguisher blast to the face, sending Helmsley into the barricade, which is completely broken down. Not just a piece of it but the entire section on one side of the ring. It heads back inside but Cactus whips him across the ring so hard that Helmsley falls right back to the floor. The Cactus Elbow off the apron only hits trashcan though and Helmsley FINALLY has a breather.

We take a break and come back with the guys in the ring and Helmsley hitting Jack with a mop. They fight to the apron and Cactus gets in a low blow to knock Helmsley outside. Cactus dives off with a sunset flip for two, followed by a backdrop onto the ramp for a sick thud. Chyna's chair shot to Cactus has almost no effect so Helmsley hits Cactus in the back, only to drive Cactus into Chyna, who goes into the steps.

Chyna is out cold so Helmsley suplexes Cactus on the ramp as both guys can barely move. A shovel to the back keeps Cactus down and Helmsley slams him head first into the steel. Now it's table time and the fans couldn't be happier. Helmsley loads up the Pedigree but Cactus reverses and grabs a pulling piledriver to drive Helmsley through the table for the pin. We get a famous visual of the camera looking down at Cactus, who smiles at the pain.

Rating: A. This is one of the best matches ever on Raw and one of best moments the company ever had. The promo before this set Cactus up as

perfectly as it could have and the Three Faces of Foley are finally here. Great stuff here and something that really hadn't been seen in the WWF before. I mean, it had been seen in ECW, but the WWF in Madison Square Garden is a bit higher on the food chain.

So in the last half hour, we had the first Stunner to Vince, the debut of Cactus Jack and then that classic. If there has ever been a better and more famous half hour in the history of Monday Night Raw, I've never seen it.

Video on a sweepstakes for Survivor Series.

Clip of the first Wrestlemania with Andre the Giant slamming Big John Studd.

More stills of Bulldog vs. Shawn in England.

Here's Shawn with the chair that started his feud with Undertaker. Shawn has a story for us because we're all wondering how he became the first Grand Slam Champion. Shawn sits down in the chair and says he wants Undertaker out here to face him right now. So much for story time.

We take a break and come back with Shawn still calling Undertaker out. Cue the Undertaker, who was nice enough to wait until the show came back from a break. Helmsley comes out to slow him down and Shawn gets in the chair shots as Rude and Chyna come out to help. Rude chairs Undertaker a few times and Undertaker just stands up, sending Shawn and company running off.

Bret Hart vs. Goldust

Non-title. Before the match, Bret says he doesn't care who wins between Undertaker and Shawn. He's not afraid of Undertaker and he'd love to give Shawn the beating he deserves for what he did to the Bulldog. Goldust still only has half the paint on, which is due to half of him missing. They slug it out to start as Lawler gets in as many jokes as he can about Pillman and Terri.

Bret stomps him down in the corner and starts going after the knee so Goldust rakes his eyes. That's fine with Bret who cannonballs down onto

the knee and flips off a fan in the front row. He slaps on the Figure Four around the post but Shawn saunters down the ramp as we take a break. Back with Bret staying on the leg and Shawn dancing on the stage. So where is Undertaker while this is going on?

Goldust gets in a few right hands but a kick to the knee puts him right back down. A suplex gives Goldust a breather and he gets in a sweet right hand. Goldust kicks Bret out to the floor and limps outside to keep up the fight. Back in and a bulldog gets two on Bret but raises his boot and gets caught in the Sharpshooter for the quick submission.

Rating: B-. This was a good match that people aren't going to remember after everything else that happened on this show. It's always cool to see Bret getting to pick a talented wrestler to pieces and then make them quit. That is the definition of technical wrestling and psychology and Bret was as good as anyone in history at making it work.

Bret won't let go so Shawn runs in for the save. Cue Helmsley, Chyna, Owen and the limping Bulldog. Rude and Neidhart follow but it's Undertaker to really make things interesting. Shawn and Bret are left alone with Undertaker and a double chokeslam ends the show.

Overall Rating: A. This is still one of the best episodes the show has ever had. They knew they had to do something special in Madison Square Garden and knocked it out of the park. You can see the future waiting to break out here and the main event stuff is just as great. The three way feud between Undertaker, Bret and Shawn is the culmination of the last year of main event storylines (well minus Sid but is anyone really missing him?). It's still a great show and well worth seeing if you never have before.

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Thought of the Day: Something Russo Got Right

I've been watching a lot of Raw from 1997 lately and it's such a different way of doing things.

Coming into Survivor Series, there is almost no card announced. You can see so many of the matches ready, but more often than not, the matches are all just announced at once. In other words, no long promos to set up a match and no contract signings. The matches are made by the powers that be, who actually do stuff when the cameras aren't rolling.

Also back in the day, you would see a lot of title matches just announced for the next week. For instance Ken Shamrock gets a World Title shot against Bret Hart. When was this made? Sometime during the week. Who made it? The WWF brass. No promo, no real reason for it, and we get a nice match as a result. In other words, the company didn't take you by the hand and explain everything to you like a four year old. I get the idea of wanting to explain stuff, but it could be as simple of an explanation as "Shamrock has been on a roll recently so the WWF has granted him a title opportunity." Three seconds, point made, move on.