

SuperBrawl 1995: Find Me An Interesting Giraffe

SuperBrawl V

Date: February 19, 1995

Location: Baltimore Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Attendance: 13, 390

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan

This was actually a request on Twitter from the people over at markedout.com. If there's ever a show that I can find that you want me to review, let me know and I'd be glad to take a look at it. This is from a bad time for WCW as Hogan had debuted and basically taken the whole company over, running roughshod over everyone in sight. Tonight's main event is Hogan vs. Vader for the title, after Hogan no sold the powerbomb recently on the Clash of the Champions. See, not the most logical thing in the world. Let's get to it.

Now the WWE Network version of this show says that the opening is missing and that their version is the most complete one available. However, other complete versions are available online so I'll be looking at a different version before I go to the Network.

The following is actually how the show started. As much as I wish I could take credit for it, I'm not making this up.

The Nasty Boys are in the streets of Baltimore and are going on a tour. Their first stop: the Maryland Science Center. They go inside and build a tower out of blocks, but Sags presses a button that makes the table shake to see if their tower is earthquake proof. Now Knobbs plays with a static electricity machine to make his hair stand up. Sags goes off to see something else as Knobbs can't just take his hand off the machine for some reason.

After pestering some fans, he's told that Sags has gone to the aquarium. Brian goes over to find him but is handed a starfish and a crab instead. The attendant tells him that Sags went into the rainforest but Brian

can't find him there either. He goes to watch some dolphins perform when Sags comes up and says he was locked in a submarine for an hour. Then they eat some lobsters, reminisce about the show, and leave for SuperBrawl.

Normally I would make jokes about what I just saw, but I'm really not sure what it was. The levels of random in this were so out there that I can't believe it exists. I mean....WHAT WAS THAT??? They were doing experiments and Sags was locked in a submarine? I know WCW was strange around this time but my goodness what was up with this?

The opening video focuses on Hogan vs. Vader, which was set up at the end of Starrcade. That's about as easy of a match as you could ask for, but it was basically spoiled when Hogan no sold Vader's powerbomb at a recent Clash of the Champions.

The announcers chat about the main event and Gene thinks Vader wants to permanently injure Hogan.

We see a clip from earlier which shows Vader possibly arriving with Ric Flair, who was recently retired. Vader attacked another car he thought Hogan was in (Tony says that was his, as in Tony's limo. TONY SCHIAVONE HAD HIS OWN LIMO??? Were those things handed out as party favors?) where he breaks out a window and doesn't require surgery, proving conclusively that either Vader is tougher than Goldberg, or they made better limousines in 1999.

During Main Event (the regular TV show before the pay per view started), Vader came to the ring and attacked Stars N Stripes (Marcus Bagwell/the Patriot) and the jobbers they just beat.

Alex Wright vs. Paul Roma

Yeah there are actually matches on here. Wright is a newcomer and fresh off fighting the man who would be known as HHH at Starrcade. Roma is somehow a former Horsemen and Wright is a young kid trying to prove himself. Now this should be obvious, but this is WCW. Apparently this is over Wright getting all the women recently. Roma, in a singlet for the only time I can ever remember, jumps Wright during his pre-match dance. A

failure of a gorilla press puts Wright down and Paul does Wright's dance to a face reaction.

Back up and Wright grabs an armdrag to take over, but Paul pulls him down by the hair, barely selling a thing in the process. A rope walking wristdrag puts Roma down as two good looking women (ring attendants who don't do anything of note) come out. The girls don't get any attention so here's Roma's partner in Pretty Wonderful, Paul Orndorff. Alex stays on the arm but Roma pops up and takes over with some elbow drops.

Three straight backbreakers have Alex in even more trouble. Notice that Wright hasn't gotten to do anything past arm work and Roma is showing off. He sends Wright outside and poses even more as this has been a Roma showcase match so far. Alex comes back with right hands but Roma steps to the side to make Wright look stupid on a sunset flip attempt. Wright tries a backslide but Roma fights it off for at least fifteen seconds before going down for one. Roma comes right back with stomps and we hit the chinlock so let's look at the crowd. The fans aren't pleased and I'm sure the bosses aren't either.

Back up again and Alex makes a comeback, only to have Roma grab the ropes to send Alex crashing to the mat. Paul gets two off a top rope elbow before Alex starts another comeback, only to have Roma intentionally screw up a hiptoss. Orndorff breaks up a cover off a cross body but Alex dropkicks the Pauls into each other and grabs the rollup for the pin. Roma kicked out at two and a half but the referee counted the pin anyway to get out while they could.

Rating: D-. Absolutely none of this is on Wright. Alex was 19 here and in the biggest match of his career with someone completely in this for himself. In case you couldn't guess, this was Paul Roma's last match ever on a national stage. I don't remember a less professional performance in all my years of watching wrestling.

Paul was out there to make himself look good and Wright was destroyed in the process. Paul Roma is one of those guys who was around other big names and is remembered for doing some decent things, even though it was almost always the partner carrying things while Roma was just there.

Disgusting match.

Sister Sherri and the newly credible Harlem Heat (only recently renamed Booker T. and Stevie Ray from their old names of Kane and Kole) promise to keep their titles tonight. Gene can't even remember which is which yet. It's so bizarre to see a famous team as newcomers, even though they had been around for well over a year at this point.

Bunkhouse Buck vs. Jim Duggan

Buck (with manager Colonel Parker and bodyguard Meng) is a big power brawler from Tennessee. Basically think Luke Harper with less hair and less talent. They slug it out to start (duh) and the fans chant USA. As usual, why doesn't that work for Buck too? A bunch of right hands and a clothesline put Buck on the floor. More right hands set up a chinlock on Buck inside as we're firmly in brawl mode. Buck finally sneaks in a shot with a rope and Duggan is knocked to the floor.

Back in and we hit the chinlock on Duggan as this is already in big trouble. Duggan fights up again and kicks Buck into the corner, followed by a backdrop and yet another chinlock. Jim yells at the referee and walks around the ring after a right hand to the face. An elbow gets two for Duggan as this marathon of first gear wrestling continues. Duggan puts on a ridiculous third chinlock in about seven minutes before yelling at Parker.

A spinning slam and knee drop get two for Jim, who is....my goodness it's the FOURTH chinlock. Jim mixes up his right hands by throwing them in the corner instead. With that working so well, Duggan puts on an armbar. Yes seriously, ten minutes into THIS match and it's an armbar. Parker gets on the apron but Buck accidentally throws Duggan into him, only to have Duggan bounce back and hit a Three Point Clothesline for the pin.

Rating: F. I don't remember the last time a major show started with a worse half hour. Absolutely horrible match here and I have no idea why this was even on the card. Duggan on offense for most of the match is one of the worst imaginable ideas, but having it be against Bunkhouse Buck was even worse. This was horrible and I have no idea who thought it was a good idea.

Meng comes in and massacres Duggan, instantly becoming the most interesting thing on the show so far. Well ok so it's as entertaining as a superkick and nerve hold can be but it's not Duggan vs. Buck so points for that.

The Nasty Boys are ready for their title shot tonight and will take Harlem Heat to Nastyville for the last time. They'll slap Sherri's face off if they have to.

Dave Sullivan vs. Kevin Sullivan

Oh sweet goodness I thought I had blocked this out of my mind. So these two are brothers and Dave (formerly Evad, which is Dave backwards because Dave is dyslexic, even though I don't think that's how it works) is a huge Hulkamaniac but Kevin despises Hulk so this is a grudge match. The problem here is Kevin is 100x the wrestler Dave is, and if you've ever seen a Kevin Sullivan match, you know what we could be in for here. Kevin has the Butcher (Brutus Beefcake) in his corner here.

Dave is ready for a sneak attack from his brother and hits one of the most awkward elbows to the face to send Kevin outside. Ten very slow rams into the buckle set up ten very slow (and badly exposed by the camera) right hands from Dave. Butcher trips Dave up as we hear about Kevin cutting Dave's hair and destroying the boots that Hogan gave him (allegedly the same ones he wore to defeat Andre), which Dave called the magic slippers. So yes, not only is Hogan dominating everyone in the main event, one of the characters on this show is a Hogan super fan.

Back in and Kevin stops a stumble with a boot to the face. Dave fights back from his knees and chokes a lot, only to have Kevin chop him back down. Kevin crotches himself on the ropes though, allowing Dave to very slowly ram him into the buckle again. This draws Butcher to the apron and Kevin sends Dave into him, setting up a.....hand on Dave's trunks for the pin. In theory it was a rollup with a handful of trunks, but Kevin wasn't actually making contact with Dave or rolling him up in any way, shape or form.

Rating: D-. I can't believe I'm saying this, but Buck vs. Duggan is actually the match of the night in the first 45 minutes. This almost

trumped it but my goodness Dave was terrible. I mean....my goodness man. This is really the best the promotion could offer? How could this possibly be considered a good idea? Is there really anything here other than Hogan's ego needing a good rub? If so, was there no one you could put out there instead of Dave Sullivan?

The ram into Butcher might have hurt his face (which the announcers said was full of metal plates, meaning Dave has a face harder than steel). This would lead to him being known as the Man With No Face. You think I can make this stuff up??? Kevin doesn't seem to mind.

Tony tries to talk about the show but Heenan has problems with his chair. The point of this is to announce Pedro Morales debuting as a Spanish announcer. I've always liked the guy so I can't complain.

Avalanche (Earthquake) and Big Bubba Rogers (Big Boss Man) cut a promo that belongs in the 80s. Avalanche's is the exact same promo he cut for years but with a different name at the end. Rogers on the other hand is tired of listening to the fans and is out for himself now. This was really, really lame.

Tag Team Titles: Harlem Heat vs. Nasty Boys

Harlem Heat, with Sherri in the corner, is defending and these teams fought about 19 times in a row. The Nasty Boys are the good guys here. Before we get going, Booker calls a fan a dumb idiot. Doesn't that mean they're actually smart? All four jaw at each other to start until it's Brian and Booker getting things going. Mr. T. slaps him in the face but misses a side kick and crotches himself on the ropes.

Off to Sags for a gutbuster and an elbow to the ribs (called the leg for some reason) with Stevie making the save via a hearty slap on the back. Heenan wants Stevie to kick Sags like a dog but gets forearms to the face instead. Unfortunately this is before Booker was a well rounded wrestler so this is going to be a brawl no matter who is in there. The Boys get Booker into the corner for some clubberin and Brian drops a leg to the back of the head (well, he is Hogan's buddy after all).

Booker's raised boot in the corner doesn't do much but Stevie offers a

cheap shot from the apron, allowing Booker to dropkick Sags out to the floor. Back in and Stevie kicks Jerry right back outside where Sherri gets in a glove shot to stagger Sags all over again. Booker does the years away from being named Spinarooni and it's off to a chinlock. Sags' comeback is stopped by another kick to the face and Stevie puts on another chinlock.

Another comeback is countered with another kick and Booker comes in for a front facelock. Those holds ate up the better part of three minutes. Booker misses a middle rope elbow and Sags scores with a powerslam. The hot tag brings in Brian to a lukewarm reaction at best. A double DDT to the champs draws the pop of the night (see how much bigger of a move that used to be?) but Booker saves the pin. Sherri hits Stevie with the loaded purse by mistake and Brian gets the pin and the titles.

Rating: D. Match of the night here by about 10,000 and it was boring stuff all throughout. Cut this down to like twelve minutes instead of the seventeen (!) it got and this is far better. These teams were better (or at least more entertaining) when it was a wild brawl instead of a match, but Harlem Heat would get a lot better in the next year or so.

Scratch the title change which might be interesting. Apparently Knobbs threw Booker over the top and that's a DQ, meaning the Heat keep the titles.

Savage and Sting are ready for the monsters. That almost has to be better if they just follow the standard formula. Gene: "This has been one of the best four or five pay per views I've ever been involved in."

Ad for Uncensored, which actually might be worse than this show. If you've never seen it, imagine a match taking place in the back of a truck as it goes down a highway. Literally, that's what happened.

The announcers preview Blacktop Bully vs. Dustin Rhodes, which is part of the Rhodes Family vs. Colonel Parker's Stud Stable. The Bully is Barry Darsow, better known as Demolition Smash but as an evil truck driver. Dustin got him sent to prison for reasons not important enough to explain here, but lucky for you, I care about this story more than WCW.

Bully debuted as a really obnoxious fan who eventually pushed Dustin, causing the arrest. Colonel Parker bailed him out of jail to add Bully into the feud with the Rhodes Family, which was the WarGames match in 1994. The feud is still going FIVE MONTHS AFTER FREAKING WARGAMES. 1995 was such a stupid time for WCW.

Blacktop Bully vs. Dustin Rhodes

Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel comes out and says Meng can't be at ringside for this match due to his attack on Duggan earlier tonight. Bully tries to get in a cheap shot to start but Dustin ducks underneath and hammers away in the corner. That's fine with Bully who shrugs them off and chop blocks Dustin down before ripping the jacket off. The choke with the jacket doesn't count as a foreign object because Dustin brought it in. But a removed boot is considered illegal? Wrestling rules are really screwy sometimes.

Dustin kicks him to the floor and Bully comes up holding his arm. Naturally (remember Dustin is the Natural at this point) this leads to a headlock but at least Dustin wakes up a few seconds later and cranks on the arm. The arm is sent into the buckle and we hit that hammerlock. The fans chant KFC at Parker because he's been called a chicken. Again, this is as good as it got around this time. Bully tries to wrestle out of things but get caught in another hammerlock.

Back up and Dustin jacks Bully's jaw before planting him with a suplex for two. Dustin teases going after Parker but punches a diving Bully out of the air. Bully finally gets in a shot of his own and this match MUST CONTINUE, meaning even more trucker jokes from Heenan. We hit the slow stomping portion of the match as the fans are just deadly silent. A belly to back suplex sets up another chinlock to kill even more time.

Bully dumps him through the ropes and onto the steps and the fans still don't care. This is one of the quietest crowds I've ever heard but Dustin trips him up and wraps the leg around the post to wake them up for a few seconds. Dustin knocks him out of the air to put both guys down again and the fans try to get going.

The Bully finally loses his vest, revealing one heck of a beer gut in the

process. Dustin's bulldog connects for two with Parker putting his foot on the ropes for the break. For reasons of general stupidity, Dustin suplexes Parker into the ring and tries the same on the Bully, only to have Parker grab the leg for the Wrestlemania V ending after SIXTEEN MINUTES.

Rating: D. Good grief this was long. These matches have just dragged on over and over all night long and this was one of the longest. Bully is one of the lamest characters I've ever seen and somehow, these two had a match in the back of a freaking truck the next month, which thankfully got Dustin fired so he could be Goldust by the end of the year. So to clarify, we just saw a sixteen minute Goldust vs. Repo Man match on pay per view.

Vader does his usual I AM A MONSTER promo and throws in a shout out to his son Jesse. He won't confirm or deny that Flair was in one of the limos earlier.

The announcers talk about the title match. Tony wants to know if the lady in Vader's limo was Ric Flair.

Speaking of Flair, here he is and of course Baltimore loves him after he lost to Hogan as a heel. Flair asks why he would be in Vader's limousine and makes sure to rant about Hogan for a bit. He'll be sitting at ringside with five good looking women for the last two matches.

Avalanche/Big Bubba Rogers vs. Sting/Randy Savage

Maybe this can be better through pure talent in the ring. Great Muta (without paint and sitting next to the yet to be named Sonny Onoo) is in the audience, probably wondering when he can get out of this stupid show. Avalanche shoves Sting into the corner to start and hammers away with the big forearms but Sting staggers him with clotheslines and a dropkick. Off to Rogers for a backbreaker but he makes the mistake of going up, allowing Savage to crotch him down.

Sting plants him with a slam off the top and punches Bubba out to the floor, setting up Savage's top rope ax handle. As the guys are on the floor, Heenan calls Flair the thing that stirs the drink. Sting invites

Flair to come into the ring as Bubba slugs Savage down but misses a sitting splash. Savage, ever the psycho, slaps Avalanche in the face twice in a row. After a quick chase, Avalanche misses a charge in the corner and winds up on the top rope for some kicks to the ample gut.

It's off to Sting to go after the ribs and put on the Scorpion but everything breaks down. Stinger Splashes nail both giants but Avalanche comes back with something like a chokeslam to stop Sting cold. The villains take over again until Sting slams Avalanche, only to walk into a right hand from Bubba, which sends Sting head first between Avalanche's legs. It's a hot tag to Savage to clean some house but Sting gets a quick tag, setting up a high cross body on Avalanche who topples over Bubba, giving Sting the pin.

Rating: C. Yes it was your standard TV main event and no it wasn't anything special, but it was so refreshing to watch some people with charisma after watching the previous two hours of horrible. Sting and Savage are good examples of people who can make a match better by pure charisma, even if the action isn't great. This was nothing special but it was one thing everything else wasn't: entertaining.

CALL THE HOTLINE!

More main event talk with Tony saying the feud started at SuperBrawl, meaning Starrcade. That passes for an interesting point on this show.

We recap Hogan vs. Vader, which is your standard Hogan vs. monster formula, but with a different kind of monster. Vader spent months saying Hogan was ducking him, so Hogan no sold the powerbomb to make this feud look lame. This actually is a dream match, or at least it would have been three years ago.

Hogan says he's ready for the latest challenge of Hulkamania. Even his family is worried about Vader hurting him tonight but the Pythons are ready for Vader Time.

WCW World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Vader

Hogan is defending of course and Vader is US Champion. For the sake of

clarity, only Hogan will be referred to as champion. Hogan has Jimmy Hart in his corner which never worked for me. Flair is still at ringside too with Commissioner Nick Bockwinkel watching next to the timekeeper. We get the Big Match Intros to kill more time and they're actually making this feel important. Vader no sells right hands to start and the mask is off early.

The champ fires off a bunch of slaps and a clothesline but Vader is all BRING IT. The frontal assault didn't work so Hogan tries a wristlock for the same result. Vader starts pounding away in the corner and the fans are cheering the monster. A splash sends Hogan running to the floor but he knocks Vader over the barricade and at Flair's feet. Back in and Hogan just fires off all the right hands he can before clotheslining Vader out to the floor. Choking in the corner keeps Vader in trouble as the fans are suddenly quiet again. The slam attempt fails and Vader hits the standing body attack as Hogan is quickly reeling.

Hogan shouts to Jimmy that the man is too strong because when you have Vader killing you, Jimmy Hart is your best possible option. The Vader Bomb connects (Heenan: "MAGILLA GORILLA!") but Vader takes too long loading up the moonsault and only hits mat. They fight to the floor and our hero cracks Vader with a chair. Vader is in trouble but he shrugs it off and runs Hogan again, just like he did back in 1992.

It's Hulk Up time but the legdrop gets one with Vader throwing him to his feet on the kickout. There goes the referee and Vader powerbombs Hogan for no count. Flair comes in and counts three, but thankfully Vader doesn't think he's won the title. The referee crawls over for two and it's time for Hulk Up #2 with Vader getting knocked to the floor, only to have Flair come in for the DQ.

Rating: C. That's it? That's the big Hogan vs. Vader showdown that should have headlined Starrcade but the world was just dying for that Brutus Beefcake vs. Hogan showdown. I'm assuming now that I'm supposed to want to see Vader vs. Hogan II with a gimmick attached instead of Hogan trying to get his title back after the heels take the title away here. But that might mean Hogan isn't the greatest thing ever and that's not a world WCW wanted to live in so we get this lame ending instead. Still though,

decent match.

Hogan gets put in the Figure Four but Sting and Savage run out for the save. Hulk N Pals celebrate to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. Yeah it's a disaster and one of the worst cards I've ever sat through, but it's the please introduce me to a hyper giraffe kind of bad instead of wanting to flog an old man with a tree branch kind of bad. The problem here is that none of this, other than the main event, needed to be on pay per view. It's a big batch of TV matches with nothing good or even remotely good until the main event matches. Just a horrible show all around from a very dark period for WCW.

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Slammiversary 2014: Now With Even Less Context!

Since it's Memorial Day weekend, Destination America decided not to air a new episode of Impact (EVERYTHING IS FINE!!!). Instead, they're airing a completely out of context pay per view from last year. That's actually not a horrible idea, but

somehow this is the only presentable pay per view they've had in the last year. That's sad.

Slammiversary 2014

Date: June 15, 2014

Location: College Park Center, Arlington, Texas

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tazz

Time for another TNA pay per view which at least has been good in the last few years. The show has had some decent build, but due to a combination of injuries and TNA's horrific marketing skills, the World Title match has been changed and there was no mention of the X Division Title match on television. The show does look good on paper though and we get the newest Hall of Fame announcement. Let's get to it.

We open with the trio in the back with MVP saying he's here to make sure Dixie doesn't screw things up tonight. MVP can't be out there with them though because of his knee.

Video on the history of TNA up to this point.

X-Division Title: Sanada vs. Tigre Uno vs. Davey Richards vs. Eddie Edwards vs. Crazy Steve vs. Manik

Sanada is defending and this is a ladder match. Also keep in mind that Destination X and Option C are coming up soon. Manik dives through the ropes to take out Sanada before the bell. The Wolves follow suit with stereo suicide dives and Steve has apparently knocked Tigre Uno down. Steve gets a ladder from under the ring and uses it to climb back to the apron. Tigre dropkicks him down and mostly misses a corkscrew dive to take everyone out.

Sanada and Manik fight over a ladder in the ring with the champion taking over via a springboard chop to the head. Tigre replaces Manik and kicks Sanada in the back of the head but the Wolves double team him into a German suplex onto the ladder in the corner. Edwards throws in a fresh ladder but

Manik dropkicks both of them down. Steve (very popular tonight) comes in for the Terry Funk spinning ladder spot, taking down everyone that comes into the ring.

Manik makes a save but Steve shoves the ladder over, only to have Manik land on the top rope and dive out to knock out the Wolves. Steve goes up again and touches the belt but of course loses his hand eye coordination since this is a ladder match, allowing Sanada to make the save. The ladder is busted so Sanada slams Steve onto it to set up the moonsault. The fans think this is awesome as Tigre enziguris Sanada off a better ladder.

Tigre wedges the broken ladder into the standing one to form a bridge, but the Wolves catch him in a powerbomb/top rope Backstabber combo. The Wolves both go after the belt but Sanada makes the save. Edwards Sanada clothesline each other to the floor and Eddie crashes into the barricade, leaving Davey on top. Manik makes the save and powerbombs Davey onto the bridged ladder in a SCARY landing. Sanada climbs up to retain at 9:40 before someone dies.

Rating: B-. The match was fun but some of those spots looked too dangerous for my taste. Richards getting powerbombed was way too scary looking and I didn't like how he landed. Hopefully everyone is fine, but I question having people go through a match like this without even giving the match hype on TV.

The announcers explain the World Title situation. For once this is totally beyond their control.

Here's the trio with MVP on crutches to insult Texas A&M and the fans for booing him. They shouldn't be so angry at him while he's here against doctor's orders. Dixie has gone to the Board of Directors in an estrogen filled moment of insanity, resulting in him being censored. MVP explains the World Title situation to the live crowd and says he won't be involved in

either qualifying match. King and Lashley promise to win their matches, unlike Texas A&M.

Samoa Joe vs. Bobby Lashley

Winner goes to the title match tonight. Lashley quickly takes Joe into the corner but gets enziguried in the other corner to give Joe control. Bobby leapfrogs over the Samoan and clotheslines him down, only to have Joe pound him down with strikes. The Facewash is loaded up but Bobby rolls to the floor to get a breather. You don't go outside on Joe though and it's the suicide elbow to take Lashley out again.

Joe gets cocky for a split second and Lashley is able to send him into the steps. Back in and Lashley fights out of the corner Rock Bottom with a swinging neckbreaker for two. A snap suplex sets up a nerve hold on Joe and an elbow to the face stops his comeback cold. Another nerve hold is broken up by a kick to the head and the backsplash gets two. Now the release Rock Bottom looks to set up the Clutch but Lashley drives him into the corner. Joe has to stop himself from running into Earl Hebner, allowing Bobby to nail the spear for the pin at 8:50.

Rating: C+. This wasn't bad with Lashley getting one of his biggest wins since coming back. Putting Joe in the title match didn't make a ton of sense after Lashley beat Eric on Thursday so this was the best option all things considered. I'm still not wild on Lashley's in ring work, especially the spear due to so many people using it, but he could be worse.

The Carters have a party suite above the arena. Dixie thinks Ray will see Ethan's vicious side tonight. Dixie won't comment on the meetings she had this week until she's in the middle of the ring. The only hint she'll give is that the karma that got to MVP is nothing compared to what's coming. Spud looks like the Joker.

Magnus vs. Willow

Bram and Abyss are the seconds here. Magnus stomps away in the corner to start and avoids a baseball slide to send Willow into the steps. Back in and a big clothesline gets the same for the Brit. There's a buckle bomb for good measure and Magnus hammers away on the mask. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Willow fights back with an atomic drop and the legdrop between the legs for two.

The Twist is countered but Magnus runs into two boots in the corner. A middle rope splash gets two for Willow before Magnus avoids the Swanton. Bram tries to interfere but Abyss is right there to hammer away. All four guys start brawling on the floor until Willow goes up top and just jumps backwards onto the Brits.

Now Abyss and Bram fight in the ring with the Monster easily throwing him to the floor. The guys in the match get back in as Bram gets his metal bar, only to be one upped by Janice. They walk up the ramp as Magnus breaks up the Whisper in the Wind, setting up a belly to back suplex into a side slam for the pin on Willow at 10:00.

Rating: C-. This was a mess for the most part but not bad. They would have been better off making this a tag match to get everyone in there, but that seems to be where they're headed anyway. The Willow gimmick isn't doing anything for me either as the announcement that it's Jeff Hardy just killed the whole point of the character.

Here's Kurt Angle to announce the newest Hall of Fame inductee. Angle talks about how being in the Hall of Fame means you've earned respect forever from the boys in the back and the fans. The inductee is.....Team 3D in a bit of a surprise. A loud and long WE WANT TABLES chant goes up and we go to a wide shot of the arena for some reason.

Bully can barely get a full sentence out as the fans are chanting WELCOME BACK. They accept the induction because of

every single one of the fans. D-Von says he wasn't going to come back to TNA but if he's going out, he has to be by Bully's side after all their history together. Catchphrases and poses close out the segment.

Ethan Carter cuts a good promo about how he's beaten all the members of the TNA Hall of Fame so tonight he gets to beat the latest. This isn't Von Erich Country anymore because the Carters have taken over.

Austin Aries vs. Kenny King

Winner goes to the cage match tonight. Aries hits the corner dropkick less than thirty seconds in but King escapes the brainbuster and gets to the floor. The top rope ax handle puts King down again but King crotches him on top to get a breather. A dropkick puts Austin on the floor and King sends him hard into the barricade for good measure.

They head inside again with King hammering away before putting on something like a seated abdominal stretch. Aries fights up and smacks King's ears to put him on the floor, setting up a suicide dive. King is thrown back inside so Aries can ram him over and over into the buckles, setting up a missile dropkick for two.

King comes back with a cradle suplex and a high kick but gets caught with his feet on the ropes. The Last Chancery can't get the submission so King comes back with a springboard Blockbuster for a close two. Aries gets tired of dealing with King and takes him into the corner for a super brainbuster to send Austin to the cage at 10:04.

Rating: C+. This is the logical choice as King hasn't really shown that he can beat a guy of Aries' level in a one on one match. The ending sequence was really cool and it gives us a more intriguing main event than Eric vs. two members of the trip. Aries is a guy that could be brought up the ranks in TNA to fill in their lack of top faces.

JB introduces some Dallas Cowboys to a VERY mixed reaction. After that mention is over, JB brings out the latest Von Erichs: Ross and Marshall, accompanied by an ancient looking Kevin. The Bro Mans interrupt and say that a lot of things in Texas aren't tight, including being a Von Erich. Robbie isn't here for reasons not specified.

Bro Mans vs. Ross Von Erich/Marshall Von Erich

Marshall wrestles barefoot like Kevin did. This is DJZ and Jesse for the team tonight. Marshall cleans house on DJZ to start but can't hook the Claw. A powerslam puts DJZ back down and it's off to the older Ross for some dropkicks. Jesse breaks up something off the top rope and DJZ hits a nice flip dive to take Ross down on the ramp.

Back in and Jesse nails a dropkick but Ross avoids a second one and makes the hot tag to Marshall. Everything breaks down and Ross hits a missile dropkick to put both guys down. Jesse brings in a chair but gets it dropkicked into his face, setting up a series of basic double team moves from the brothers. Not that it matters as DJZ brings in the chair for the DQ at 5:07.

Rating: D+. Well that was a waste of pay per view time. The Von Erichs looked ok at best but it's clear that they need ring time more than anything else. They didn't know how to finish a match yet and it looked like they needed to get through a bunch of spots instead of bringing the match to a close. Not terrible, but the ending really didn't work for me.

Post match Kevin comes in to put the Claw on Jesse, drawing the only big pop from the crowd.

Angelina says she'll keep the title tonight. JB asks how many time Angelina has won the title without Velvet's help but Angelina says they're a team.

Knockouts Title: Gail Kim vs. Angelina Love

Angelina is defending and Gail won a triple threat on Thursday to set this up. Gail hits a quick running forearm to start but her top rope huricanrana is countered with a powerbomb. A side slam gets two on Kim and Angelina throws her out to the floor. Velvet interference doesn't help as Kim sends Love knees first into the steps. Back in and Gail gets crotched on the top, setting up an ugly looking reverse bulldog for two.

Sky uses the hairspray but referee Stiffler ignores it. The Botox Injection gets two and here's Earl Hebner to eject Sky and make himself referee. Gail speeds things up and gets two off a neckbreaker but gets powerbombed for two more. Kim accidentally dropkicks Earl in the back but nails Eat Defeat. Stiffler ignores the cover to check on Earl and does the same again when Love gets rolled up. Angelina reverses into a rollup of her own and Stiffler counts the pin to retain the title at 6:57.

Rating: D+. Egads this story is getting old. Didn't we have Stiffler in love with the Beautiful People like five years ago? Nothing to see here for the most part as Gail vs. Angelina has been done on PPV so many times that they ran out of stuff to do years ago. The match was ridiculously overbooked. Also don't we already have a questionable referee in Brian Hebner?

D-Von has to go back to the hotel for dinner with his kids. Bully cuts a promo on Texas wrestling legends and thinks Ethan is in way over his head. His advice to Ethan: start praying. Ethan gets crucified for the sins of his Aunt Dixie and he'll be baptized in blood.

Bully Ray vs. Ethan Carter III

Texas Death Match, meaning last man standing. Ray brings out a bullrope ala Stan Hansen for a nice tribute. Carter is thrown to the floor by the rope to start and Ray brings out a pair of tables. They're stacked next to each other on the floor but

Carter recovers from the coma he was in to get in a few shots and take over. Ray fights right back and sets up another table in the corner but the fans want cowbell.

Carter avoids the table but gets his chest ripped off by more chops. Time for the cheese grater to rip up Ethan's chest (barely), which isn't something you often see. Carter gets in a few shots to take over and sends Ray face first into a chair on the mat. He goes up top but gets crotched and superplexed onto the chair to put both guys down. Ray grabs a Dallas Cowboys trashcan from under the ring before starting to cut up the mats to expose the wood under the canvas.

Joker Spud comes out with a kendo stick shot to Ray's back for no effect. Ray kicks him low and knocks Spud silly with the stick but Carter hits a quick One Percenter onto the exposed boards for our first count over twelve minutes into the match. Ray is up at eight so Carter pours out the glass in the trashcan. Carter goes up but dives into a Bubba Cutter, sending the injured chest into the glass for a cool spot. He's up at eight though so Ray takes the stick outside to knock Ethan silly again.

Ray puts him on the tables and goes up but here's Dixie for a distraction. Bully goes after her and sends Ethan into Dixie to knock her out cold. Ethan gets punched down and Ray puts Dixie on the table. He takes too long though, allowing Spud to pull her off and Ethan knocks Ray through the tables with a kendo stick shot for the win at 17:05.

Rating: C. It was a nice brawl with some nice spots but NO ONE CARES ABOUT DIXIE. After all this, if she doesn't go through a table in New York, this whole story has been a huge waste of time. Also, never accept an induction to the Hall of Fame unless you want to lose on a last second fluke the same night. At least D-Von didn't join forces with Dixie.

We recap Anderson vs. Storm. This started in a qualifying

match for a World Title shot before Anderson cheated to win a drinking contest and made fun of cowboys. Why TNA thinks he's going to be cheered in Texas doing this is beyond me.

Mr. Anderson vs. James Storm

Storm grabs a mic even though it's 10:22 and we've got another match after this. He rips on the Cowboys because he's a Titans fan but the booing breaks up his catchphrase. The brawl is on before the bell with Anderson high fiving the Cowboys and spitting beer in Storm's face. They get in the ring for the opening bell and James goes right for the knee. A few shots have Anderson so banged up that he can't run across the ring and a Figure Four has him in even more trouble.

Anderson is quickly in the ropes and Storm misses a charge in the corner to give Mr. a breather. Storm gets crotched on the top and slammed down for two, only to send Anderson face first into the middle buckle. Now it's Anderson going up but getting kicked in the back of the head. He's still able to pick Storm up for the rolling fireman's carry off the middle rope but Storm kicks him out to the floor. Storm spits beer at the Cowboys so they jump the railing for a distraction, allowing Anderson to hit the Mic Check for the pin at 5:25.

Rating: C-. The match was short due to time but it was still entertaining enough. Anderson vs. Storm didn't need the Cowboys for this to work but since it's a midcard match in TNA, I'm sure we'll get 19 rematches to keep things going way after its expiration date. The Cowboys might get them some extra media attention if nothing else.

Austin Aries tells Eric Young that the greatest man should win the match tonight. Eric says they've flown in crazy people to the show tonight.

We recap the main event, which is just an Eric Young video due to the last minute changes.

TNA World Title: Austin Aries vs. Bobby Lashley vs. Eric Young

In a cage with Young defending with wins by pin or submissino, not escape. Lashley takes over to start but gets double teamed down. The smaller guys do a fast paced sequence until Lashley throws Aries into the cage. Young gets the same as well, allowing Lashley to stand tall. Bobby throws both guys around again but misses a charge into the post. Young and Aries go at it again until Eric hammers on Bobby in the corner.

Aries powerbombs the champion down but stops to go after Lashley again, only to be suplexed into the cage for two. We get a bad looking botch as Aries hits a running cross body in the corner but Young just lets him bounce off of him for some reason. Young gets to show off his freakish strength with a double Death Valley Driver but Lashley is up at two. He puts Young on top of the cage as the fans chant please don't die. Aries goes up top as well to take Lashley down with a hurricanrana, but Eric stands up on top of the cage for the huge elbow to Bobby.

Aries punts Eric in the head though and hits the brainbuster for a very close two. Lashley spears Austin down for two and spinebusters the champion, only to miss the spear and fall out of the cage. Remember that doesn't end the match though as escape doesn't count. Young hits the top rope elbow on Aries for another close near fall. The piledriver is countered with a low dropkick to Young's face and everyone is down. Young and Aries slug it out but both guys miss forearms. Aries hits some discus forearms and the corner dropkick but walks into the piledriver to retain Eric's title at 12:10.

Rating: B-. This got better near the end but Eric keeping the title made me roll my eyes. The reign has been far better than I expected it to be but he needs to be the focal point of the company instead of the other guy in the major feuds. To be fair though, I'd assume MVP was supposed to take the title tonight before the injuries.

Young helps Aries up after the match.

Overall Rating: B-. As usual, TNA puts on a good show for Slammiversary. I really wish they could get their stuff together on TV because if this was what they were putting out there every week, things would be so much easier to sit through. Instead we're usually stuck with one story dominating a show or 19 Dixie Carter segments with her bad acting talking about whatever war she's having that no one cares about. Good show but not as good as the last few years'. Nothing blew the doors off but most of the matches were solid and nothing was bad so I can't complain much.

Results

Sanada b. Crazy Steve, Manik, Eddie Edwards, Davey Richards and Tigre Uno – Sanada pulled down the title belt

Bobby Lashley b. Samoa Joe – Spear

Magnus b. Willow – Belly to back suplex into a side slam

Ross Von Erich/Marshall Von Erich b. Bro Mans via DQ when DJZ used a chair

Angelina Love b. Gail Kim – Rollup

Ethan Carter III b. Bully Ray when Ray couldn't answer the ten count

Eric Young b. Austin Aries and Bobby Lashley – Piledriver to Aries

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Smackdown – May 21, 2015: At Least It's Not That Long

Smackdown

Date: May 21, 2015

Location: Norfolk Scope Arena, Norfolk, Virginia

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

We're already coming up on Elimination Chamber and the top of the card is already set. It's pretty clear that we're getting Rollins vs. Ambrose for the title. However, tonight is more about Payback fallout as we'll hear from Roman Reigns for the first time since he lost yet another main event. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of Raw with Ambrose fighting the Authority and coming up a bit short.

Opening sequence.

Here's Reigns to open things up. Reigns has some bad news and some good news: he lost at Payback but he had a great time. Anytime you punch Seth Rollins in the mouth, it's a great night. The Shield Triplebombed Orton through a table and he got to go toe to toe with his brother. However, Payback is gone so it's time for some big news: he's entering the Money in the Bank ladder match and you can believe he's going to win.

This brings out Dean Ambrose, who heard Payback mentioned so his ears started burning. After finding a bucket of ice to dunk his head in and

making a wrong turn at catering, here he is. He heard Reigns mention something about Money in the Bank though, and that doesn't sound like a bad idea. Reigns saw what happened Monday and wants Ambrose to have an exit strategy against the Authority next time.

Kane comes out before this can go anywhere, but Reigns says he barely recognized Kane off his back. Kane chuckles but says Reigns isn't in the Money in the Bank ladder match, because Reigns has lost his last two title shots. If Roman wants another title shot, he has to prove his worth to Kane. Ambrose calls Kane the Authority's redheaded stepchild and wants to know if Kane eats from a bowl like the lapdog he is. That's not cool with Kane, who makes Ambrose vs. Wyatt again tonight. Reigns can have the night off.

Los Matadores vs. Lucha Dragons vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd vs. Ascension

Prime Time Players/New Day are all on commentary (with only Woods talking) and the Players get Lawler to do the Millions of Dollars dance. New Day has some special clapping gloves for the commentators. Could these guys be any more awesome? Cara and Kidd get things going with Tyson trying some kind of a double arm hold but getting lifted up into a powerbomb for his efforts.

We look at the commentators for about fifteen seconds before cutting back to Viktor slugging Tyson down. Fernando replaces Viktor and almost gets caught in the Sharpshooter but Torito and Natalya get in a fight to distract Kidd. Off to Konnor for a Dominator into a DDT and we take a break. Back with Konnor keeping Tyson in trouble but Kidd stumbles over for a tag to Cara. Things speed up as Titus promises sweaty and musky guys in the Chamber. Cara wristdrags Konnor down but Viktor comes in and stomps Cara into the mat.

A nice tiger bomb plants Kalisto but Diego tags himself in for the cover. Everything breaks down and Woods is way too excited. Cesaro comes in for the first time to a very nice reaction, setting up the running European uppercuts to Viktor. Kidd comes in with a dropkick but Cesaro has to stop Diego from stealing the cover. Kalisto gets a quick two off the hurricanrana driver but Ascension makes the save. A big series of dives

is capped off by Cara corkscrew diving onto a bunch of people, only to have Kalisto jump backwards into hurricanrana to Fernando for the pin at 8:41.

Rating: B-. Total insanity here and that's exactly what it should have been. I'm digging the Dragons a lot lately as they're exactly what's advertised: high flying and fast paced offense where you can actually tell them apart. However, the more interesting thing here was the commentary. Titus and Woods were GREAT at hyping up the Chamber match here as they spent the whole match talking about how they can't wait to get to the match and all the violence and carnage that's coming in less than two weeks. That's exactly what guest commentators are supposed to be doing here and they nailed it.

We look back at Rusev dumping Lana and her hooking up with Ziggler later in the night.

We get a clip from WWE.com where Rusev promises to eat Ziggler's American heart.

Ziggler is used to girls kissing him and dealing with ex-boyfriends, but he's never been locked in a Chamber with one of them. Tonight he has King Barrett...and here's Lana to wish him good luck. Dolph asks Renee to give them a minute and tells Lana that he knows the game she's playing. He's fine with it because she's good at the kissing thing.

King Barrett vs. Dolph Ziggler

No entrance for the King. Dolph tries to take him to the mat to start and gets a boot and headbutt to the face for his efforts. The Stinger Splash and neckbreaker put Barrett down and the bit elbow drop gets two. Barrett comes right back with his spinning suplex out of the corner for two and Dolph is in trouble.

Back from a break with Ziggler fighting out of a chinlock but missing another Stinger Splash. Wasteland gets two and Barrett takes Dolph outside for a toss into the barricade. They head back inside and a boot to the face gets two but the Bull Hammer is countered by a superkick to the arm. The Zig Zag connects on the staggered Barrett for the pin at

8:02. Another day, another clean loss for Barrett.

Rating: C. Nothing to see here but it was a way to set up more of the Chamber match. At the end of the day, you can only watch so many of these matches that mean nothing before we get to another big match later on. It doesn't help that the same midcarders have been fighting each other for years now and the matches are almost interchangeable.

Lana comes out to watch, drawing speculation that she's trying to get inside Zigler's head for Rusev's sake.

We look back at Paige coming out to help the Bellas, only to nail Nikki with a Rampaige. Thankfully that doesn't come off as a heel turn.

Here's Paige with something to say. Paige says the last time she saw us, it was in her hometown of England...of London! She won a battle royal to become #1 contender to the Divas Title, but then this happened. We see a clip of Naomi attacking Paige after Paige won a battle royal last month, and that's when Naomi finally became relevant.

Then Naomi found herself a boyfriend in Tamina, but isn't she competing in the wrong division? This is Paige's division, this is her ring and this is her house. Cue Tamina and Naomi, with the latter saying she deserves the top spot in this division because of her natural talents. All Paige can do is scream a lot. Naomi says you have to take opportunities when you can and it's her turn now.

She removed Paige from the equation, quite easily she might add. Paige says she did more in one year than Tamina and the dancing dinosaur have done in their careers. Being a Diva means you have to have personality and good grief enough of the whining. Naomi needs to get over herself but she threatens to clean Paige's house. The beatdown is on and here's Nikki Bella for the save. Paige loads up the Rampaige on Naomi but Nikki forearms her down and hits the Rack Attack. I like the story here, but my goodness never let Naomi talk again.

Bray Wyatt talks about people thinking Dean Ambrose was possessed by demons. People used to talk that way and you know what? They were right. Tonight, Bray is going to prove that Ambrose has his inner demons. Dean

is in his way so run.

Nikki vs. Naomi vs. Paige for the Divas Title at Elimination Chamber.

R-Truth vs. Stardust

Gah stop having these two fight already. No entrance for Stardust, which at least saves some time. Stardust jumps him to start and scores with a springboard dropkick for two. We're already in the chinlock which is quickly broken, followed by another chinlock. Truth fights up but gets sent into the buckle for two. Dark Matter gets the same so Stardust takes off a glove, which Truth throws into the air, setting up Little Jimmy for the pin at 3:30.

Rating: D-. This gets a hearty helping of "well at least it was short." These two are stuck in the vortex of having nothing else to do so they're thrown into the same match over and over again with no one getting anywhere. At least there isn't a bag of plastic spiders deciding the finish this time.

Ryback talks about being in the Chamber the first time and promises to devour anyone who stands in the way of him and the Intercontinental Title. Oh and he has some high protein vegan recipes for Renee because the Big Guy is quite the cook. That sounded like a line that wasn't meant to make air.

We recap Cena and Owens from Monday.

We look at Owens vs. Zayn from NXT last night

Tough Enough videos.

Mega Powers vs. Adam Rose/Heath Slater

Mandow and Slater get things going with Heath being sent face first into the buckle but Adam and Heath hit a double suplex in the name of good taste. Mandow finally suplexes out and tags in Axel for the big boot and legdrop to pin Slater at 3:22.

Rating: D. It's not funny, it's not interesting, it's not creative, it's

not getting either guy anywhere and my goodness I don't care. At least it's over a pair of nothing guys like Slater and Rose and the Ascension got to beat these guys. It's another case where the guys are doing the best they can but they're in a dead gimmick that isn't going to help anyone.

Bo Dallas isn't pleased with Neville bringing up the NXT Title loss but he's amused about attacking Neville on Monday. He tells a story about a colorful bird flying around his yard when he was a kid, but one day that bird hit a power line. Bo nursed it back to health because he Bo-lieved. Neville has a broken wing, but with Bo's help, he can fly right.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dean Ambrose

Dean takes him down by the leg to start and wraps the leg around the ropes. Bray gets out in just a few seconds though and nails a running right hand to stagger Dean. That doesn't last long as Ambrose knocks him to the floor for a suicide dive, only to get sent hard into the barricade as we take a break. Back with Dean fighting out of a reverse chinlock and having to avoid the backsplash. Dean counters the hanging suplex to the floor into a tornado DDT. For some reason that doesn't knock Bray cold so Dean clotheslines him back inside and fires off those back and forth punches of his.

Bray is draped over the middle rope and knocked to the floor, where he has to escape Sister Abigail into the barricade. Back in and the release Rock Bottom plants Ambrose for no cover but Dean dropkicks the knee out. Cue the Stooges for an attempt at the same ending from Monday, but Dean is ready for them this time. A double clothesline puts Dean and Bray down so here's Rollins. Before he can get to the ring though, Roman Reigns comes through the crowd for some Superman Punches. Bray gets one of his own and Dirty Deeds is enough for the pin at 11:47.

Rating: C-. I wasn't feeling this one for the most part, but a lot of that is due to there being no real reason for these two to be fighting again. However, it seems to set up Reigns vs. Wyatt, which could be a good feud for Roman. He needs someone to conquer, but unfortunately it means Bray gets another big loss.

Overall Rating: D+. This show died about halfway through and never recovered. The Elimination Chamber build is similar to the Royal Rumble build: once you establish the people involved, there's not much to do other than have matches between the participants that have no bearing on the big match itself. That's the point WWE has hit here, but thankfully there isn't a lot of time before the pay per view.

Results

Lucha Dragons b. Los Matadores, Tyson Kidd/Cesaro and Ascension – Hurricanrana to Fernando

Dolph Ziggler b. King Barrett – Zig Zag

R-Truth b. Stardust – Little Jimmy

Mega Powers b. Adam Rose/Heath Slater – Legdrop to Slater

Dean Ambrose b. Bray Wyatt – Dirty Deeds

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NXT Takeover: Unstoppable: Joe Is Gonna De-But! Joe Is Gonna De-But!

NXT Takeover: Unstoppable

Date: May 20, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's another live two hour special with a rare rematch for the main event. Tonight it's Zayn vs. Owens II as Sami tries to get the NXT Title back from the man who beat him by referee stoppage back at Takeover: Rival. These shows are always worth checking out and there's no reason to think this won't be the same so let's get to it.

The opening video features a bunch of fans talking about why they love NXT and thanking the promotion for giving them wrestling back. It transitions into a regular opening video with clips of every match and soundbytes from the wrestlers.

Four models, wearing fur and talking pictures of themselves, walk the aisle like a runway and I think you know where this is going.

Tyler Breeze vs. Finn Balor

This was supposed to be a triple threat but we get a clip of Hideo Itami being attacked in the parking lot as he arrived. Kevin Owens is there and says that's a shame. THANK YOU! This is one of those things you never get anymore in wrestling and it drives me crazy. Itami is injured, so why not give Owens (or anyone) credit for it instead of just saying "yeah he's hurt. Too bad." It's so nice to see. It's also nice to see the full on Irish demon entrance for Balor again, complete with dreadlocks, paint, the dragon style cape and spikes down his back. He even has a huge yellow eye on his back.

Feeling out process to start with Breeze looking disturbed (rightfully

so) by Balor's appearance. Tyler finally nails a big kick to put Balor on the floor before choking with the boot in the corner. We hit the chinlock on Balor and Tyler seems to have his own group of fans tonight. Balor rolls up and tries a sunset flip but rolls through into a basement dropkick. Another dropkick to the side of the head sends Breeze outside and Balor hits a running double stomp to the back from the apron.

Back in and Balor kicks him in the head for two more. The Sling Blade gets the same but Breeze stops a charge with a Supermodel Kick for a very close two. Tyler unhooks a buckle pad but misses the Beauty Shot. Balor misses a double stomp and gets rolled up for two before being sent into the exposed buckle, setting up a Beauty Shot for two.

Balor rolls outside and walks a bit (Fans to the referee: "YOU'RE NOT COUNTING!") before surprising Breeze with a running forearm. Finn goes up to the bottom of the Titantron (Fans: "PLEASE DON'T DIE!") for a big dive to take Breeze down again. Back in and the Coup de Grace makes Balor #1 contender at 11:05.

Rating: B. Great choice for an opener here and Breeze continues his hot streak. Balor was just too much for him here though and that's the right thought process. It's hard to go with Breeze, who has gone from a comedy character to a serious wrestler, over someone who is one of the best packages in all of NXT. Balor vs. Zayn or Owens should rock the house too.

Owens watches from the back.

Someone from Game of Thrones and Stephanie McMahon are in the front row.

Clips of the northeast tour.

Dana Brooke/Emma vs. Bayley/Charlotte

That place is going to erupt when Bayley finally wins the title. Bayley catapults Dana into a clothesline from Charlotte to start and chases Emma to the floor. Emma hides behind her partner on the floor but eats a dropkick from around the corner. Back in and Emma gets in a blind shot to take over on Bayley, setting up a neck crank. The Emma Sandwich gets two

and Emma mocks the Bayley high five. That earns her a suplex and it's off to Charlotte who comes in with a double DDT. Emma's cross body is countered into the Figure Eight but Dana makes a save, only to walk into the Belly to Bayley. Natural Selection ends Emma at 6:38.

Rating: C+. This was fine but a bit short. It's a good move to not have Brooke take the fall as they're probably setting her up for something bigger down the line. Bayley not getting the pin keeps Bayley vs. Emma ready for later on and hopefully then on to the title pursuit again. Nice little match here but the time hurt it.

We look at Sami injuring his shoulder on Raw a few weeks back. I'm still not sure how legit that injury is and I love that I can't tell.

Some NXT rookies are here, headlined by the still yet to be named Uhaa Nation.

Baron Corbin vs. Rhyno

Just a power brawl here. Rhyno looks almost the same as he did back in ECW. Baron gets sidestepped and clotheslined to the floor to start and Corbin is in early trouble. Back in and Corbin knocks him off the top and out to the floor as the fans think Cor-Bin Sucks. Rhyno tries to fight back but gets thrown into the corner and stomped down until the referee pulls him off. We hit the chinlock and the fans aren't sure who they like more. Rhyno fights up and wins a slugout but Baron headbutts out of a belly to belly. Instead it's a spinebuster for two on Corbin but he blocks a Gore with a clothesline, setting up End of Days for the pin at 7:13.

Rating: C. Take two guys, let them beat each other up for seven minutes, soak in the cheers. There isn't much more to this one than that as Rhyno was brought in exactly for this purpose: make other people look good and do the job at the end, because he's an established veteran who is going to bounce back from whatever losses he has. Good power match.

We look at Owens beating up Cena on Raw.

Owens is asked about his busy week, which he breaks down in detail. The

NXT Title is a real prize, unlike the US Title. He has a bit of veteran advice for Sami: don't show up tonight, because it's the last time anyone will ever see (insert You Can't See Me) him.

Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Blake/Murphy

Enzo and Cass are challenging with Carmella in their corner, who may or may not have turned on them. Enzo says Team Cottonelle is taking an L tonight because there's a bounty on their head. In a nice touch, Cass spells out the word and we cut to a SAWFT sign in the crowd with the camera panning over each letter in time.

Enzo takes Blake (with his hair in ponytails) down to start and it's off to Big Cass, sending the champs hiding in the corner. Murphy's chop has no effect on Cass so he throws Murphy hard into the corner for two. Enzo adds a high cross body for the same but the champs cheat a bit to take over, setting up Murphy for a backbreaker. Enzo gets stomped down in the corner and caught in a powerbomb into a Codebreaker for two more.

Back to Murphy for a superplex but Amore fights him off and hits a tornado DDT to set up the double tag. Cass cleans house and gets two off the Empire Elbow before tagging a very banged up Enzo for the Rocket Launcher. Cue Alexa Bliss to jump Carmella, drawing Cass out before he can throw his partner. Bliss crotches Enzo to give Blake the pin to retain at 8:48.

Rating: C. Nice swerve here as Bliss going after Carmella was teased a bit last week but it wasn't enough to make you think it was going to happen. People were waiting on Carmella to turn and then you get a nice surprise instead. Enzo and Cass probably aren't taking the titles anytime soon and it might be time to send them to the main roster.

Eva Marie is here and is met with indifference.

We look back at Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch. Banks took Lynch under her wing and used her to retain the title. Becky shook her off and has become #1 contender, saying it's her time to prove that her career has all been worth it by becoming Women's Champion.

Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

Becky is challenging and sporting a new look with orange hair, a black coat, goggles and shorts. The ring gear is similar to Lita's look when she returned from her broken neck. Becky cranks on the arm to start and trips Sasha down into a rollup for two. We hit a pinfall reversal sequence for some near falls each until Sasha bails from an armbar attempt. Sasha crawls away from a stomp on the apron and twists Becky's arm into a faceplant on the apron. Fans: "LIKE A BOSS! LIKE A BOSS!"

Now it's Sasha going for the arm and posing on the apron to mock Lynch's entrance. We hit the chinlock from the champ before she switches to a double arm choke with her foot in Becky's back. Sasha's double stomp in the corner lands on the arm for two and Banks steps on the arm, bending it all the way back to the mat with her boot on the wrist. Off to a short arm scissors for a bit before Becky rolls over and does her Backlund/Bulldog lift into a slam to break the hold.

Becky makes the one armed comeback and gets two off a missile dropkick but Banks goes back to the arm for two. Sasha goes for the arm again but they both wind up on the floor. It's Becky going after the arm this time before throwing it back inside for a suplex onto the arm. An armbar with the feet has Banks in trouble and another suplex gets two. Fans: "SUPLEX CITY!"

Sasha flips out of a pumphandle suplex but gets pulled down into the seated armbar, sending her crawling to the ropes for the break. Becky gets kicked out to the floor again for a suicide dive but Lynch catches her (mostly) on the fly and drives the champ into the steps. Back in and Becky gets knocked off the top, setting up the Bank Statement (with an additional arm trap) for the tap out at 15:30.

Rating: A-. I know I say this every time, but I can't remember the last time I was this into a women's match or most matches for that matter. These two were beating the tar out of each other with the arm work going back and forth making for a great story throughout. These girls somehow get better and better every single time and they're stealing all of the Takeovers. Great match.

Becky gets a standing ovation.

We recap Owens vs. Zayn. They were friends for years but Owens attacked Zayn after Sami won the title at Takeover: R-Evolution. Owens said he wanted to provide a better life for his family but has been using that as an excuse to be an evil jerk. He beat Zayn for the title last time but now Sami is coming in with a bad shoulder.

NXT Title: Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Sami is challenging. Owens comes out wearing a John Cena The Champ Is Here shirt. After the Big Match Intros, Owens bails to the floor as is his custom. Sami gets tired of waiting and goes after him by sending Owens into the steps and hammering away. He throws Owens into the barricade before they spill into the crowd. Owens tries a powerbomb on the concrete but Sami grabs a barricade to escape.

Sami knocks him onto the concrete to take over again and they head inside with the Blue Thunder Bomb connecting for two. The half nelson/chicken wing suplex gets the same and Sami loads up a tornado DDT, only to have Owens block it with a raised knee to the back for a unique counter. The Cannonball misses though and the t-bone into the corner rocks Owens again. He's able to roll away from the Helluva Kick though and it's back to the floor. Another exploder suplex staggers Owens but he catches a running boot and powerbombs Sami onto the apron.

Cue the referees to check on Sami but Owens keeps hammering away. Owens stomps away as the fans want to let them fight. Kevin throws Sami against the steps and punches him down again as the doctor keeps trying to check on him. They actually get back in the ring and I'm not sure if this match is still going.

GM William Regal comes out and calls Owens off, eventually ripping at Owens' face, earning Regal a headbutt. Kevin gets the title and a chair (the same weapon that started their feud in ROH) but we've got music. Cue SAMOA JOE (with that name on his shirt and called that name by Brennan) and the fans are stunned. Joe gets right in Owens' face and the champ runs. We'll call the match a no contest at about 12:00.

Rating: B+. Heck of a fight while it lasted but that's twice in a row now that Owens has knocked Zayn out to beat him. It's one heck of a rub for Owens and the beauty of it is that Zayn is going to be right back on top through pure charisma. Joe vs. Owens is going to be a war and that's quite the way to have him debut, even if it was spoiled.

Owens comes back out but says he's done his job to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. Somehow, this is a downgrade over their previous shows. Really fun show this time with the girls making up for the angle disguised as a main event. Joe debuting is a great moment as he's such a huge name on the indy scene that the NXT fans are going to accept him with open arms. This was another great Takeover and the future continues to shine so brightly for this company's future.

Results

Finn Balor b. Tyler Breeze – Coup de Grace

Charlotte/Bayley b. Dana Brooke/Emma – Natural Selection to Emma

Baron Corbin b. Rhyno – End of Days

Blake/Murphy b. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady – Blake pinned Amore after Bliss crotched him on the top rope

Sasha Banks b. Becky Lynch – Bank Statement

Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn went to a no contest

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00X0UNBEA>

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

Meltzer Says Impact Has Been Canceled

Obviously take this with a pound of salt, but allegedly Destination America has canceled the show and it's done in September. Apparently the ratings have been strong but not strong enough to warrant the money put in. No word on if this is true or if it's going to stand up going forward, but if there's truth to this, TNA is in major trouble. Again.

New Column: Woo Woo....Who?

I'm still not over this.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-woo-woo/35744/>

Monday Nitro – December 27, 1999: The Fingerpoke of Doom Doesn't Look Bad

Monday Nitro #220

Date: December 27, 1999

Location: Houston Astrodome, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 16,640

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone

We're finally done with this year and it's not a moment too soon. While Thunder was better, last week's Nitro may have been the worst show I've ever seen. The NWO is on top again but, due to Goldberg punching a limo, they don't have a top opponent to deal with so things are a big complicated. Let's get to it.

We open with a clip from Thunder of Goldberg clearing out the NWO.

The NWO walks through the back until the director tells them it's clear.

Opening sequence.

Tenay tells us about Goldberg shredding a tendon in his arm and already undergoing surgery.

If that's not enough, here's a major update: WCW Senior Executive Vince President Bill Busch is sick Ferrara and Russo's direction (Tony uses their real names here) and if Scott Hall doesn't show up by 7pm tonight, the Tag Team Titles are vacated. That time has come and gone, so the Powers That Be have booked (his word) a Lethal Lottery Tag Team Title tournament to start this week and end next week. So the big boss is sick of the booking but is letting the bookers keep going. Makes as much sense as anything else around here.

Apparently Scott Steiner has had another back surgery and his career is probably over. That sounds like a swerve.

Brian Knobbs vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Kanyon is at ringside and has a wireless mic on. Bigelow goes after him to start but Knobbs gets in a trashcan shot to take over. The announcers ask Kanyon about a title belt he had with him on Thursday as Bigelow and Knobbs fight into the crowd and we hit the ECW production style. Kanyon tells the marks in the crowd to move as he follows them, which is in no way, shape or form like the time Road Dogg did this for Al Snow vs. Big Boss Man in a hardcore match in the WWF. You can't see a thing going on but apparently Knobbs pins Bigelow. Seriously you could see their arms

and that's about it.

Sid arrives with Benoit.

There's a monster truck in the back.

The NWO has JJ Dillon in a chair and Nash throws the Tag Team Title on a table. Bret knees JJ in the ribs and that's it.

The NWO looks at the monster truck, which has an NWO logo on the side. They walk a few feet away and find Sid's still running car.

Here's Sid to yell about the NWO. Sid knows that he, Goldberg and Benoit have to watch each others' backs with the NWO around stabbing everyone in the back. I can barely understand what Sid is saying but I think he wants to beat up all four members of the NWO. What happened to Goldberg is unfortunate, but it's time for Sid to step up to the plate and go after the World Title. Sid promises to powerbomb Bret through the ring at Souled Out so I guess that's the main event.

Benoit comes out to join Sid (with a much clearer voice) and talks about wanting to get his hands on the Chosen One Jeff Jarrett. The last few weeks have made Benoit lose all respect for Jeff Jarrett and at Souled Out, Benoit will let out some of the frustration. He wants something called Triple Threat Theater, which means a 2/3 falls match with different rules for each fall.

Up first is a Dungeon Rules match, meaning pinfall or submission only with no rope breaks and if you leave the ring, you lose the match. Second would be a Bunkhouse Brawl, or street fight. Finally, it's Caged Heat, which means the Cell. Jarrett is the Chosen One to be lead to the slaughter. Cool idea actually.

We cut to the back where the NWO has spray painted Sid's car, complete with Bret's caricature of Sid on the hood. He's not a bad artist.

ZZ Top is here.

Sid and Benoit find the car and aren't happy.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Buzzkill/Mike Rotundo vs. Dean Malenko/Konnan

Buzzkill is now a full on Road Dogg knockoff, complete with the same hook to open his song. "It's me, it's me, it's that B-U-Double Z." Also, WE'VE GOT WACKY TAG PARTNERS!!! Dean and Mike get things going and hit the mat for what could be an entertaining exchange. It's quickly off to Konnan vs. Buzzkill with Konnan taking over, only to have Dean deck his partner. Everyone gets in a fight as Jim Duggan comes in to lay out Dean with the 2x4 to give Buzzkill the pin to advance.

Jarrett and Hart pull the power to the production truck and the feed cuts out. Ok then.

Back with the picture a bit snowy and a white limo arriving, containing Scott Steiner who is met by Rick Steiner with a wheelchair.

The NWO destroys catering. Is there a point to this coming anytime soon?

Tank Abbott vs. Shane

Shane is in dress clothes and gets knocked out in less than a minute. He must have tried to get \$20 out of Tank for a posed picture.

Career retrospective on Scott Steiner.

Rick wheels Scott out to the ring to the old Steiner Brothers theme. Can we just get to the swerve that WE NEVER SAW COMING already? A tearful Scott tells a story of his doctor telling him that his back will never heal and he's going to have to retire. Scott cries about never being able to wrestle his brother again and asks for the fans to say a prayer for him.

Before the Steiners can leave, here's the NWO. Bret wants a washed up nobody like Scott out of the ring, but to be honest, Scott was never that good anyway. You would think Rick would come out to protect his brother here. There are things more important than Scott Steiner, like the fact that Bret still has his belt. Jeff pretends to cry over Steiner's announcement so Nash takes over the talking. A tech guy tries to send them to a commercial so Jarrett blasts him with a guitar.

Back with the NWO still in the ring because that's what this show is about anymore. Nash isn't cool with someone taking their bats. On top of that, they're not cool with Bill Busch trying to interfere, so stay in your office and let them handle the wrestling stuff. He promises that Nash will be here tonight to wrestle in Houston. As for Goldberg, the game is about to become deadly. Bret thinks it's 4-0 Hitman over Goldberg so Goldberg can consider himself stopped.

That brings Bret to Sid, who will be destroyed even worse than his car. Jarrett rips on the town a bit as this segment just keeps going. Benoit is on for his Triple Threat Theater at Souled Out...and here are Sid and Benoit in the car with ball bats. This brings in Curt Hennig of all people to get beaten down by Benoit and Sid as the sacrificial lamb. Sid throws him onto the hood of the car.

Hennig is put in an ambulance after a break.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Harlem Heat vs. Midnight/Lash Leroux

What are the odds??? Booker and Lash get things going with Leroux getting two off a victory roll but walking into a Rock Bottom for the same. Stevie comes in and hammers Lash with a vengeance before slamming him down. Off to Midnight and it's time for something resembling a showdown. Stevie runs Midnight over with a clothesline and looks away, leaving Midnight to nip up.

A snap suplex to Stevie is treated like Hogan slamming Andre and Booker tags himself in. Booker can't bring himself to kick Midnight in the face and they do a very light sequence with Booker not wanting to hurt her. Midnight takes a backbreaker and Stevie is livid. He pulls out the slapjack and nails all three people in the match with Lash falling on Booker for the pin. That would be two matches with a weapon shot and brawling partners.

Rating: D-. Another storyline disguised as a match. I'm not sure why we needed to see yet another Harlem Heat split. More importantly than that though, this was a clear indication that we're going to be sitting through wacky tag partners and screwy finishes for all eight matches

tonight because that's all Russo knows how to book. These sort of things can be done well with Starrcade 1991 as proof, but Russo isn't good enough to figure out something as simple as "let them wrestle."

The Scream mask guy attacks Chavo.

The Revolution is at the Washington Monument and Shane wants to ask an average American a history quiz. Shane rips on the guy for not knowing that it's the anniversary of the Monument going up. I'm not sure what the point of this was supposed to be.

Some Power Plant students are in the front row. Chuck Palumbo, Elix Skipper, Mike Sanders and Reno among others are visible.

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Jerry Flynn

Flynn is in street clothes because it's more realistic or something. No announcement or teasing a World Title match and it's given the treatment that a TV Title match might receive. Tony announces Bill Busch deciding that the title can change hands on a DQ at Souled Out. Bret hammers him into the corner to start and runs the eyes across the top rope.

They head outside with Jerry whipping the champ into the barricade, drawing out Jarrett and Nash. Back in and Jerry fires off kicks in the corner but eats a DDT. Another spinning kick drops Bret but Nash distracts the referee, allowing Jarrett to come in with a ball bat to set up the Sharpshooter to retain the title.

Rating: F. Jerry Flynn in street clothes just gave Bret Hart a run for his money in a bad match with the NWO having to save the title in an unannounced match in the middle of the second hour of the show. This company really doesn't have any idea what they're doing do they?

Flynn gets the NWO treatment. He might have worn the street clothes so he doesn't have any paint on his skin. The NWO leaves but Tank Abbott comes out and knocks Flynn out again. You would be WCW World Champion a month from now people.

The Revolution is at the Library of Congress and Saturn pulls out his copy of How the Grinch Stole Christmas.

Nash is on the phone with Hall but theme music muffles the chat.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: PG-13 vs. Rick Steiner/Berlyn

PG-13 is wearing Houston Oilers jerseys (team that recently left town) and rap about how they don't care if people don't like them. Rick shakes his head to start as Berlyn spinwheel kicks Wolfie. Tony reads out the most beautiful announcement I've ever heard: Nitro returns to two hours next week. PG-13 double teams Berlyn and stomps him in the middle of the ring as I'm just waiting on the WACKY way someone will advance. Rick gets the hot tag and cleans house with Steiner Lines before planting both of them upside down on the buckles. Berlyn walks out and a belly to belly is enough to pin Wolfie.

Rick keeps beating them up and the decision is reversed. In other words, the newcomers are left laying but advance on a technicality. As stupid as WCW has become, it's good to know that some things never change.

Saturn comes up to Duggan and says they're teaming together tonight against Norman Smiley and Asya. Apparently it's mutually beneficial if they win. Well yeah that's normally how a tag match works. I can't do this line justice, so here's Saturn's statement verbatim: "Besides, brother, as optically challenged as we are, there's no way that jacked up hootchie or that sissy in a football uniform can blindside us if we stand side by side." Again, Saturn is the best part of this show and fits in perfectly because he makes just as little sense as the booking.

The Revolution rants about the White House and Bill Clinton and kidnap a guy in a Clinton mask. Somehow this is more effective than their last few weeks of material.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Asya/Norman Smiley vs. Perry Saturn/Jim Duggan

Duggan's family is at ringside as he beats up Saturn before the match starts. Norman gets in some easy shots, including the swinging slam. The spanking dance connects but Saturn breaks up the Big Wiggle with a suplex. Saturn slams him down and drops the top rope elbow onto the chest protector to hurt his own arm. Asya is tagged in and shoves Saturn from

behind, followed by a low blow and clothesline. A superplex drops Saturn and Duggan drops a knee on his partner (complete with counting his own pin for reasons of dumb), allowing Norman to get the pin to advance.

Rating: D-. Can we go back to the part where the Powers That Be literally had the fourth wall broken and screw up everything in sight? I'm starting to think it might be easier to sit through than the night of the wacky tag team partners. This was another bad match with a screwy finish because that's all we have here.

Duggan, the loser, brings his family in to celebrate.

US Title: Kidman vs. Jeff Jarrett

Kidman is challenging and gets jumped from behind to start. A hotshot stops Kidman's comeback and the announcers ignore the match to talk about Triple Threat Theater. Jeff turns around and eats a Bodog and dropkick, only to catapult Kidman out to the floor to stop him again. Cue Nash and Hart because you think we can go a full half hour without the NWO? Kidman rolls through a high cross body for two but gets caught in a quick sleeper. Say it with me: Kidman reverses into one of his own for a few arm drops, followed by the BK Bomb for two.

That's about it for the NWO not being the focus of the match though as Nash low bridges Kidman to the floor, only to have the Filthy Animals run in to lay out Jarrett with a crutch. It's only good for two, but it draws one of the loudest reactions of the night. Jeff tries a powerbomb and gets the standard counter. Heenan: "I've never seen anything like that!" Kidman goes up top but takes a ball bat to the ankle, setting up the Stroke for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was one of the better matches of the night, but my goodness it's ok to let a champion look strong instead of needing help all the time. It's nowhere near as bad as the Jerry Flynn mess but at least let Jeff do his own cheating to win. Watchable match, partially due to getting some time, but it was too bogged down as usual.

Gene brings out Luger and Liz for a chat but Luger is dressed as Sting and comes out to Sting's music. Luger imitates Sting and talks about how

awesome Luger really is and how severe the beating Luger gave him was. The lights go out and come back on to show black roses in the ring. So yeah, this feud is CONTINUING.

Nash gives Hall directions over the phone.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Ron Harris/Don Harris vs. Meng/Finlay

I'm not even going to bother calling this stupid. Finlay and Meng fight so the Twins, ever so brilliant, attack them both. Just let them beat each other up then pin the scraps. Why is that so complicated? A double big boot puts the hardcore guys on the floor and they fight until it's a countout to advance the Twins. This was, again, a waste of time.

David Flair and Daffney call themselves Natural Born Killers. That was a disturbing movie.

Here's 3 Count to pick things up. They do their dance but Vampiro comes in and cleans house. As luck would have it, he and Evan are up next.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Evan Karagias/Vampiro vs. David Flair/Maestro

Scratch that last team as Crowbar, who debuted last week, attacks Maestro in the aisle and takes his place. Sure why not. Ignore the fact that he worked at a gas station and has no wrestling license or training as far as WCW knows. Anyway he starts with a German suplex on Vampiro (good looking one too) before it's off to David for a suplex (not so good looking one) of his own.

It's so lame that Vampiro pops up and plants both psychos (yeah Vampiro is the sane one here) with a double DDT. A Rock Bottom to Crowbar allows Vampiro to make the hot tag to Evan, who is promptly knocked off the top and down onto Crowbar. Back inside with Vampiro "hitting" a top rope clothesline for two on David but the other 3 Count members get in to go after Vampiro. The partners implode but Vampiro fights both of them off with ease, setting up the Nail in the Coffin on David. No referee though as Crowbar nails Vampiro with a crowbar, giving David the pin.

Rating: F. This was the sixth match of eight tournament matches tonight and they're now six for six in having at least one team implode. I know I say Russo only has a few ideas in different forms, but he's done the same idea six times in less than three hours. Suddenly Oklahoma makes so much more sense.

3 Count loads up the song post match but Flair and Crowbar clean house. This brings out Lenny and Lodi as Standards and Practices, complete with the yet to be named Miss Hancock (Stacy Keibler) in a skirt shorter than your local vanilla midget. They promise to take Flair and Crowbar off TV if this violence keeps up. This of course earns them more violence.

Jarrett is told not to worry about Hall not being here yet.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Disco Inferno/Big Vito vs. Buff Bagwell/Chris Canyon

The Italians have Johnny the Bull and Tony Marinara with them. Everyone but Disco head to the floor to start before Canyon slides back in, earning him some knees to the back. A Russian legsweep drops Disco but Canyon heads back outside to get the Italians away from the girls. Canyon leaves with the girls to split up ANOTHER tag team. Buff fights back but Vito nails him with a great looking superkick to take over again. Disco gets caught in a neckbreaker but there's no partner (Tony: "Chris Champion Canyon") to tag. Disco accidentally hits Vito with a chain, setting up the Blockbuster for the pin.

Rating: D-. They're seven for seven in teams splitting and almost half have had a weapon spot. I would ask if this was the best they could do, but yes, this really is the best they can do: the same match over and over and over. In a weird way, I'm actually hoping they manage to do it again one more time in the last match because it would be one of the most amazing things ever to see them do the exact same plot point eight times in one night.

Buff gets laid out post match.

Here's the NWO to say Hall isn't here yet but his arrival is imminent. Nash asks for a brief delay to let him get here.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: The Wall/Sid Vicious vs. Outsiders

Remember that Sid and Wall seemed to form a friendship last week. Nash gets in on his own and does a Hogan shirt rip to start against Wall. Kevin slugs away but Wall punches him down and scores with a belly to back suplex. Wall hits a big boot but Bret nails him in the back with a bat to let Nash take over. Sid chases Bret and Wall is suddenly putting Nash in a chinlock. He no sold a ball bat shot from the World Champion? Sid comes in and shoves the referee down before cleaning house, only to have Bret nail Wall with the bat for the pin to advance Nash.

Rating: F. He no sold a baseball bat shot. A shot from Liz put Sting out for months but Wall is back on offense fifteen seconds later? How can anyone actually think that's acceptable? This was more NWO interference dominating the entire match with no one having a chance against the heel stable. And now I'm disappointed with the lack of the partners fighting. I was looking forward to that.

Benoit comes in to save Sid from a powerbomb but here comes a limping Scott Steiner (presumably the Scott that Nash has been meaning all night. I was hoping for Riggs) with a ball bat of his own....and of course he's NWO because what else would he be? As usual, there's no value to a scam that was set up and paid off in the span of two hours. NWO propaganda falls from the ceiling and an NWO banner is lowered. Sid car is brought out and Sid is put in the back. They drive him to the back where the monster truck crushes the car to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. Somehow, this is miles better than last week's show. The wrestling was nothing special (Kidman vs. Jarrett was decent before it fell apart), the booking has been covered already, the ending was stupid, and this whole show was a mess. You can tell Russo has lost some authority though and that's the best thing that could possibly happen to this company.

That's it for WCW in 1999 and I don't think there's a need to explain all of the disasters in this company over the year. Here's the most telling part though: the Fingerpoke of Doom is looking more and more like a high point every day. I'll leave you with this: I'm fairly certain I'm right

when I say this was the worst calendar year in the history of any wrestling promotion ever.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume III at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00X0UNBEA>

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

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

Sign of the Times

The Network really has changed things. On Amazon.com, the Summerslam Anthology DVD collection (through 2008): \$40. Regular price: \$250.

Thought of the Day: Be Careful What You Wish For

Because you might just get Lana.

If there's one major criticism of the Divas division over the years, it's been that they're models acting like wrestlers and praise be the name of Divas like AJ and Paige right? Well now we have Lana, a model who, to the

best of my knowledge, has zero wrestling experience ever. Yeah she's good in her role, she's gorgeous, her legs never seem to end and she can make people boo or cheer her at will, but at the end of the day, she's a model who got hired for her looks instead of her wrestling ability.

Just remember that if she gets this mega push that people want her to have, one day she's going to have to have a match. Keep that in mind while you cheer for her and want her to be the new face of the division. It might go very well as she's a very athletic woman, but it could also be Maria Kanellis all over again.

Monday Night Raw – May 18, 2015: Must Go Faster, Must Go Faster

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 18, 2015

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

Payback is done and that means we have less than two weeks to go before Elimination Chamber and less than four weeks to go before Money in the Bank. Rollins retained the World Title last night with help from Kane and the Stooges, meaning Kane keeps his job. Now it's time to find out who is next for the champ so let's get to it.

We open with the stills from last night's main event.

Here's the Authority to open things up. Stephanie says she knows we all missed her and the sweet sound of her voice, but don't worry because she's back. HHH hates to be the one that told you so, but he told you so. Rollins is still World Champion because he got the job done over all of

his challengers. Therefore tonight, we're going to be paying tribute to Rollins in something called Seth Rollins: Architect of a Dream, which will include comments from all three men that Rollins defeated last night.

This brings us to tonight, and something hidden behind them. HHH unveils the Intercontinental Title, which will be decided for the first time ever inside the Elimination Chamber. After a quick package on the Chamber, here's Sheamus to interrupt. Why are we having this Chamber match, when this happened? We see a clip of Sheamus destroying Bryan a few weeks back and possibly putting him out of action.

Sheamus wants the title right now, but here's Ryback to interrupt. Ryback defends Bryan by saying he's more of a man than Sheamus will ever be by fighting to become the Intercontinental Champion. If Sheamus likes picking on little guys so much, why not try picking on the Big Guy? Stephanie says they're both in the Chamber but they're going to fight each other right now.

Sheamus vs. Ryback

Ryback, with bad ribs coming in, bangs on his chest to start and takes Sheamus down with a Thesz press. A powerslam gets two on Sheamus and they head outside with Ryback and the bad ribs being knocked into the barricade as we take a break. Back with the two of them slugging it out from their knees as Cole thinks Ryback insulting Stephanie told him that Ryback had bad ribs. You know, instead of the tape. Sheamus kicks him in the ribs and hits five of the ten forearms until Ryback pulls him over the ropes.

A powerbomb puts Sheamus down but Ryback can't cover. Ryback gets two off a spinebuster but Sheamus wants to take it outside. That's fine with Ryback as he gorilla presses him onto the table for a big bounce. After sending him into the post, Ryback takes him into the corner where Sheamus claims something in his eye. The referee breaks it up and Sheamus nails a Brogue Kick for the pin at 10:06.

Rating: C+. This was about what I was expecting as they're both the kind of big power brawlers who can pull off this kind of a match very well.

Much like last night, WWE is nailing the idea of keeping the losers strong as the referee shoving Ryback away set up the Brogue instead of anything Sheamus did on his own. That's a nice touch and helps a lot.

Stephanie puts Kane in charge of the celebration tonight. Rollins and the Stooges come in with champagne and give Kane a glass for finally having something to celebrate. This brings in Dean Ambrose to say he's willing to give Seth a rematch for the title at Elimination Chamber. The Authority says no and leaves with Kane saying the champion gets to decide his own fate. Dean mocks Kane for being their lapdog and asks what Paul Bearer or Undertaker would think of Kane now. That earns him a match against Bray Wyatt tonight and a glass of champagne. Dean: "You shouldn't drink on the clock."

Renee Young brings out Neville for a chat. She asks about Neville having to face so much adversity, which Neville says makes him feel ten feet tall. He was the longest reigning NXT Champion of all time.....and here's Bo Dallas to interrupt. Dallas says this is like a fairy tale but in Neville's case, it's going to be the little engine that couldn't. Neville brings up beating Dallas to start his NXT title reign and the fight is on with Dallas going after Neville's tweaked knee. Neville knocks him to the floor but it's time for his match.

Neville vs. King Barrett

Dallas is on commentary and says that going after Neville's knee was a good thing, as it will make a victory mean all the more. Neville fights out of the corner as Booker and Dallas have a battle of wits on commentary. The King starts going after the knee as we take a break. Back with a chop block getting two for Barrett but he misses a running big boot in the corner. Neville hurts his knee on a kick to the ribs and can't hit the German suplex. The knee buckles one more time and it's the Bull Hammer for the pin at 7:35. Cole makes sure to remind us of the pre-match attack to keep Neville looking strong.

Rating: C-. This didn't have the time to go anywhere but it gives Neville his next feud and Dallas his first feud in the better part of ever. Taking away Neville's ability to fly is an interesting idea as well as

it's going to make him have to show what he can do otherwise. Good storyline development in a not great match.

Post match Dallas comes in and goes after the knee again by wrapping it around the post.

Titus O'Neil has been named Celebrity Father of the Year.

Here's Rusev for his explanation of last night but with no Lana in sight. Rusev says there is no Lana here and that he didn't say he quit when he was ranting in Bulgarian last night. Therefore, he wants to restart the match against Cena right now. Instead he gets a leggy blonde who he told to not come out here again. Rusev isn't just the Bulgarian brute because he's misunderstood.

She believes in him and has believed in him every step of the way. The accent is starting to break as she speaks. Rusev calls her pathetic but she tells him enough because she just wants what's best for the two of them. Lana couldn't watch him in all this pain but Rusev says he doesn't need her so get out. Lana walks away as Rusev screams at her even more.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray puts him down to start but misses a backplash, allowing Dean to tie up the legs and rip at Bray's face. Back up and Bray hits a big clothesline followed by a kick to the back and a kick to the chest. We hit the chinlock for a few seconds before Bray knocks him into the ropes. Instead of pulling him back in, Bray slides outside and pulls him from the ropes and into a suplex. Think Orton's DDT but a suplex to the floor instead.

Back from a break with Bray kicking Ambrose down before they both head outside for a double clothesline. The fans want tables because a good wrestling match isn't enough for them. Dean fights back with his punches and chops before tying Bray in the ropes for the running dropkick. Bray is hung over the ropes for a middle rope Fameasser for two. A low bridge sends Wyatt to the floor but he partially blocks the suicide dive.

Back in and both finishers are countered before Bray nails Dean to block

the rebound lariat. Now the rebound lariat connects and Dean loads up a superplex. Bray shoves him off but the middle rope backslash only hits mat. Dean goes up but here are the Stooges to interfere with Noble shoving Dean into Sister Abigail for the pin at 13:30.

Rating: B-. Fun brawl here which is exactly what it needed to be. Bray is starting to get his feet back under him after the waste of a loss against Undertaker at Wrestlemania. Ambrose is likely getting the title shot at Elimination Chamber, which may be repetitive but at least it's not the Kane vs. Rollins showdown that 18 people might want to see.

Tough Enough videos. We have over a month of these things to go?

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

Woods is banned from ringside so it's Kofi/Big E. here. Before the match, New Day thinks it's unfair that they have to defend their titles against FIVE other teams inside the Elimination Chamber. Even the simple illiterate people here can understand why this is unfair. Cesaro and E. start with Cesaro being dropped out of a gorilla press, Ultimate Warrior style. That's fine with Cesaro as he hits a delayed vertical suplex to put New Day on the floor, setting up Kidd for a hurricanrana off the apron as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro uppercutting Big E. but getting taken down in a belly to belly. Kidd comes in off the hot tag to clean house as Cole announces R-Truth, Rusev and King Barrett for the Intercontinental Title Chamber match. Kidd puts Kofi in the Sharpshooter but E. makes the save. Cesaro comes in to slug it out with E. and the match is thrown out at 5:54. Not enough of the match was shown but it was just a way to extend the feud.

Woods comes out to keep up the brawl post match but here are the Lucha Dragons, Los Matadores, Ascension and the Prime Time Players to give us our six teams. The Dragons dive on everyone not named Woods (or Sin Cara/Kalisto) and the Players beat up Woods. Cole confirms that these are the six teams for the Chamber in case it's not clear.

It's Open Challenge time. Cena says last night's win can be summed up in three letters: USA. He has the honor to carry the red, white and blue

into battle every night. Men like the soldiers in the crowd are the reason that make this title mean more than anything else in this company. Everyone has a shot at this title and this is our championship. It's time to give someone a shot,

US Title: John Cena vs. Kevin Owens

Oh my. Oh my indeed. Owens is the defending NXT Champion and brings the belt with him. He congratulates Cena on his win last night before saying there's no need for an introduction. If you don't know who he is, then Owens just doesn't have time for you. Owens is here to give Cena some peace of mind.

Cena may think that he injured Sami Zayn, but Owens was the one that injured him a long time ago. This Wednesday at Takeover: Unstoppable, Owens is going to finish what he started with Sami months ago. Cena isn't cool with Owens saying the people don't matter because there's no WWE without them. He has some veteran advice for Owens, but Kevin says he's been doing this longer than Cena. The difference is that he just didn't get a break until now, so Cena doesn't get to give him advice.

Cena warns him instead. Sami Zayn blew out his shoulder and said give me everything you got. Owens doesn't have that fire in his eyes and he's in way over his head right now. Cena is ready to go but Owens says he already has a prize in the NXT Title. Therefore, no match tonight but they'll fight one day on Owens' terms. Kevin kicks Cena in the ribs and nails the Pop Up Powerbomb before picking up both titles, only to throw the US Title down and stomp on it. Good grief how amazing do the next five or so years sound in WWE?

We look back at Bryan vacating the title last week.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Stardust

Uh...sure. Ziggler gets taken down to start so Stardust can stomp on the ribs before hitting a hard clothesline to go after the bad eye (busted open last night). Back up and a Zig Zag gives Dolph the pin at 1:28.

Post match Ziggler says his eye hurts but the loss hurts more. It's

hockey time though and chicks dig scars so here you go. Cole tells him that he's the last entrant in the Elimination Chamber. So other than Rusev and Ryback, everyone else is a standard Intercontinental Title level guy. Great way to elevate the title.

Ziggler says he'll go through anyone to get the title and here's a very smiling Lana to kiss Dolph. He doesn't seem to mind so she does it again for a big smile. Cue a livid Rusev to beat Ziggler down and stare at Lana. She slaps Rusev in the face and draws a huge LANA chant, followed by the Zig Zag from Dolph. Well so much for Lana meaning anything.

Kane glares at Adam Rose and Rosa for kissing in the back.

Luke Harper/Erick Rowan vs. Fandango/Zack Ryder

Harper headlocks Fandango to start but walks into a dropkick. They head outside with Harper kicking him in the face before handing it off to Rowan for a splash. The fans want Ryder but get a tornado DDT from Fandango to Harper, setting up the hot tag to Ryder. Zack starts to clean house but walks into a spinning Boss Man Slam, setting up the hot tag to Rowan. Luke superkicks Ryder right into a full nelson slam for the pin at 3:25.

Rating: D+. Just a way to establish that Harper and Rowan are back together to destroy people. I'm not sure why they're not in the Chamber over, say, Los Matadores, but at least there's a team around to destroy everyone. Nice squash here and at least they kept it short instead of keeping up the false hope.

Stephanie cuts the Bellas off in the back and does her condescending talk to Brie about her emotions over Bryan. She's scheduled some counseling sessions for Brie over her issues, and therefore Brie isn't allowed at ringside with Nikki.

Divas Title: Naomi vs. Nikki Bella

Naomi is challenging after pinning Nikki last night. After some big match intros, Nikki pulls her in from the apron and nails a big clothesline to send Naomi out to the floor. A suicide dive takes out Naomi and Tamina as

we take a break. Back with Naomi putting on a chinlock as trainers are checking on an injured Tamina. Nikki comes back with a forearm and dropkicks, followed by a backdrop. There's the Rack Attack but Tamina comes in with a superkick for the DQ at 6:29. Again not enough seen to rate but this wasn't much to see.

Post match Paige comes in for the save but lays out Nikki with the Rampaige because she wants the title.

We look back at Owens laying Cena out earlier.

HHH shakes Owens' hand. Renee comes up and asks what that was all about. Owens says the Authority liked what he did so much that they're giving him a match against Cena at Elimination Chamber.

The cast of the Entourage movie will be here next week.

It's time for The Architect of a Dream celebration with the Authority and Kane hosting. Stephanie introduces Rollins, flanked by the Stooges. HHH praises the champ and says everyone is going to get to praise him individually. It's Kane up first for his usual mention of Rollins being short but he's proud of Rollins for still being champion because Seth is best for business. Rollins: "That's all you have to say?" Kane begrudgingly thanks Rollins for saving his job and has a video ready for Seth.

After a nice video on Seth's days with the Authority, Noble says there's a saying in West Virginia: cream rises to the top. It's been an honor to protect Rollins and the most important title in WWE. Mercury is about to speak when Dean Ambrose comes out to interrupt.

Stephanie goes into her evil voice but Dean says he was busy looking for the perfect Justin Bieber outfit for Rollins. He's here to give Seth one more chance for a match with him, as long as the title is on the line. Seth says Dean needs to go to the back of the line with Roman Reigns and Randy Orton, but Ambrose calls himself a notorious line jumper. Stephanie tells Rollins to get him so there goes the jacket and the brawl is on.

The Stooges immediately intervene but Dean cleans house. They fight to

the floor with Seth being backdropped onto the announcers' table and Dean unveiling a batch of cinder blocks. He loads up a Conchairto on the blocks but Stephanie says let Seth go and he'll get a title match.

Dean doesn't answer but the Stooges take the chair away from him. Ambrose easily fights them off and dives onto the Stooges and Kane before heading inside to go after Rollins. HHH saves the champ and Kane gets in a kick to Dean's face. The chokeslam is countered but Rollins saves Kane from Dirty Deeds. A Pedigree leaves Dean laying to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I had a good time with this show as they're hitting the ground running to get to Elimination Chamber. Owens stole the show though as he had one of the best main roster debuts I can remember in a good while. I'm not wild on having the next pay per view so soon, but at least they're getting us through the rushed build as fast as they can. Good show this week as they're moving things forward for a change.

Results

Sheamus b. Ryback – Brogue Kick

King Barrett b. Neville – Bullhammer

Bray Wyatt b. Dean Ambrose – Sister Abigail

New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd went to a double DQ when all four fought in the ring

Dolph Ziggler b. Stardust – Zig Zag

Luke Harper/Erick Rowan b. Fandango/Zack Ryder – Full nelson slam to Ryder

Nikki Bella b. Naomi via DQ when Tamina interfered

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