

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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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.

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00XOUNBEA>

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 backplash 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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Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – May 11, 2015

It's the final show before Payback and there have been some notable changes in the last few weeks. To begin with, the show has felt a lot tighter lately as there has been a lot less talking and a lot more fighting, which makes for a better run show. We need to wrap things up before the four way and the fact that we're in Ambrose' hometown should help. Let's get to it.

We open with HHH saying that daddy is home to straighten things out. This has been my biggest issue with Rollins and HHH: why in the world is Rollins acting like he's HHH's four year old son and trying to please him all the time? He's the WWE World Champion and he's still cowering in fear of HHH. Just let him be a man for once. You can still have him be a heel and everything will be fine, but let him have a backbone around the Authority for a change. You can do that without having him rebel.

Anyway, HHH is here to put an end to Kane vs. Rollins. For some reason, HHH implies that he and Kane have been friends for years and this isn't the Kane he knew. As I said last week, when were they EVER friends? Just because something happened in the past doesn't mean they're friends now. Look back at Wrestlemania XXX where Piper and Hogan were about to fight all over again. The big reveal of this: if Rollins doesn't keep the title on Sunday, Kane is out of a job. In other words, it's all about Kane. Again.

Kane put all of the participants in the title match on Sunday in action tonight, starting with Ambrose squashing the Stooges.

Sheamus was on commentary as Barrett beat Ziggler in a short match, followed by a Brogue Kick. I like this loose association between Sheamus and Barrett as they would make a decent on/off tag team.

Erick Rowan squashed Fandango because....well why do you think he did?

Cena's speech before the Open Challenge was about how important the US Title is because anyone can have a chance at taking it from him. That's a great line and very true. The match against Neville was as awesome as you would expect with Neville hitting the Red Arrow until Rusev interfered because that feud MUST continue.

These Open Challenges have been one of the best things to happen to Cena in years. You might have noticed that the fans have been saying LET'S GO CENA more and more recently and there's a reason for that: he's been treating us to some great wrestling every single week. At the end of the day, that's what it boils down to: the fans want to see good wrestling and Cena lets things open up a bit instead of doing the same stuff over and over again. Let Cena, one of the best of all time, wrestle someone new every week and this is what you get.

Rusev knocked Cena out with the Accolade post match to appeal to the false hope demographic.

Kane and Reigns brawled instead of having a match, setting up a rematch on Friday.

Tamina beat Brie Bella to set up the tag match Sunday. Nikki is so far and away better than Brie in the ring that it's unreal.

Curtis Axel and Macho Mandow beat up the Ascension instead of having their match. The pain this brings me knows no bounds and I hope the real team breaks them into more pieces than Brutus Beefcake's face.

Daniel Bryan has to vacate the Intercontinental Title due to his injuries. I know it's sad but this really shouldn't surprise anyone at this point. Bryan needs to go away until he's ready, then find another 15

doctors to say he's really ready.

Cesaro beat Big E. in a decent power match. Just a setup for Sunday.

Elimination Chamber is coming back two weeks after Payback. That's four weeks before Monday In The Bank. To translate, here's how the WWE is thinking these days:

"LET'S GIVE THEM A LOT OF COOL FREE STUFF!!! THEN THEY'LL PAY FOR THE UNCOOL STUFF!"

Also they won't promote the old wrestling stuff for whatever reason. Instead it's Jerry Springer's horrible show, their animated stuff (including that one episode of Hulk Hogan's Rock and Wrestling they put up) and the podcasts. Mention the old wrestling and it would get pushed too.

Bray Wyatt said what Bray Wyatt says and Ryback leveled him. I still have no idea why they're fighting but Wyatt needs a point again soon.

Orton and Rollins had the same match they've had over and over again until the Stooges came in for the DQ. This was one of those matches where you were just waiting for the DQ and they didn't hide the fact whatsoever. Everyone came in for the show ending brawl with Ambrose standing tall.

This wasn't a great stand alone show but it was a really fun go home show. Most of the matches for Sunday got time and the fans were hot all night. Throw in a good Cena open challenge and there's not much more you could ask for. Fun stuff here and everyone looks good going into Sunday.

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Payback 2015: They Did It Again!

Payback 2015

Date: May 17, 2015

Location: Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

We continue the rapid fire pay per views with one of the lower level yet often surprising shows of the year. The main event tonight is Seth Rollins defending the World Title in a four way against Dean Ambrose, Roman Reigns and Randy Orton with Director of Operations Kane's job on the line. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Stardust vs. R-Truth

Bonus match because we're just that lucky. Truth slaps him in the face to start as the fans chant for Cody and the announcers talk about the main event. Back up and Truth knocks him out to the apron as Cole isn't sure if Truth says he'll "make you disappear like your favorite" magician or mortician. Truth gets two off a jackknife cover but Stardust hits him in the face. Stardust eats the release gordbuster but nails a knee to the head for two. Off to a cravate on Truth followed by Matt Hardy's Side Effect for two. We get a slap to the face with a glove to set off a duel before Little Jimmy ends Stardust at 6:49.

Rating: D. What a boring match. There was no reason for this to take place other than "Hey, let's have another match!" Neither guy has

anything going for them at the moment and thankfully this didn't have any plastic spiders involved. Nothing to see here but to be fair it was a bonus so it's not like anything is taken away.

There will be a new Steve Austin Podcast with Paul Heyman on June 1.

Pre-Show: Mega Powers vs. Ascension

That would be Curtis Axel as Hulk Hogan and Damien Sandow as Macho Mandow in case it's Thursday and this gimmick is already dead. They were listed as the Meta Powers until tonight's show. JBL thinks they look like Nacho Man and the Huckster for you mid-90s fans out there. Konnor kicks Axel in the ribs to start but it's already time for HULKING UP. Curtis gets two off a legdrop and it's off to Viktor for a chinlock. That goes nowhere so the hot tag brings in Mandow as the Powers clean house. The big elbow doesn't work though and it's the Fall of Man for the pin at 2:55. Thank goodness.

The opening video talks about Rollins trying to keep the title and Cena vs. Rusev in their final battle.

Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler looks utterly ridiculous in his cutoff jean vest and pink bandana. He goes right after Sheamus to start and knocks him to the floor where Sheamus comes up holding his knee. Back in and a cross body gets two but Sheamus takes his head off with a running ax handle. A suplex puts Ziggler down again and we hit the chinlock. Back up and Ziggler sidesteps a charge to send Sheamus into the post. Some forearms and a cross body put Sheamus in the corner and the jumping DDT gets two.

Ziggler sends him back to the corner and there's something resembling a Stink Face to make up for Sheamus bailing on the stipulations last month. A livid Sheamus misses the Brogue and eats the Fameasser for two. Now Sheamus gets all fired up and slugs Ziggler down for some two counts and White Noise sets up the Cloverleaf. Ziggler makes it to the ropes and Sheamus is livid again, demanding that Ziggler give up. Instead Dolph headbutts Sheamus (busting himself WAY open) and superkicks him down for two. Ziggler is dizzy from the blood loss though and the Brogue Kick ends

this at 12:27.

Rating: B-. I had a good time with this and that blood came out of nowhere. Sheamus needed this win more than Ziggler did as Dolph can bounce back no matter what. Maybe that kick can knock Ziggler out of the 80s and into the late 90s for a change because he looks ridiculous in that attire.

Kane and Rollins bicker some more with Kane implying he wants Rollins to lose the title and doesn't mind getting fired. Rollins threatens Stogge violence and gets laughed off. There was zero reason for this to be on pay per view.

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

2/3 falls with New Day defending after taking the belts from Cesaro/Kidd at Extreme Rules. New Day comes out and suggests positive thinking for everyone here, including the Baltimore Orioles in the audience because they haven't won a World Series in over 30 years. Kidd slams Kofi (teaming with Big E. here) down to start and it's quickly off to the power guys.

A powerslam gets two on E. but he comes back with a gorilla press to put Cesaro down. Back to Kofi who gets caught in a delayed vertical suplex with Kidd coming off the top to drive him down. Kidd catapults Kofi into a spinebuster and the Swing into a dropkick mostly misses but gets the pin and the first fall at 2:50.

Woods wants in via the Freebird Rule but eats a cannonball off the apron for his efforts. Kofi and Big E. officially start the second fall but Big E. misses a spear through the apron for a big crash. Kidd gets greedy though and dives over the top into a release overhead belly to belly to give the champions control. We hit the bearhug on Tyson as Woods shouts that he's the mastermind of the team.

Kidd escapes and makes the hot tag, but Big E. spears Cesaro through the ropes and into the barricade for a big crash. Fans: "THIS IS AWESOME!" Woods: "WE KNOW THAT!" Kofi goes up top but dives into a dropkick. Kidd kicks as fast as he can but gets caught in a mostly missed (notice the

trend) Midnight Hour (Kofi's DDT was more like an elbow to the back) to tie it up at 8:14 total.

We start the third fall with Cesaro finally getting back on the apron to take another hot tag. He starts cleaning house but can't get Big E. up for the tiger bomb and just drops him in a bad looking spot. Instead he hits a running European uppercut followed by a kind of Demolition Decapitation with Kidd springboarding into the elbow drop. Big E. is whipped over the announcers' table. A huge uppercut drops Kofi again but E. dives in for the save. In the melee, Woods sneaks in and small packages Kidd for the pin to retain at 13:20.

Rating: B. Good stuff here but the botches hurt it for me a bit. Still though, this was the awesome stuff you would expect from both teams. They even left the door open to continue it, as one day Kidd and Cesaro will get a clean shot against these two, which is exactly what they're shooting for here. Also this could have been five minutes longer for three falls.

Elimination Chamber ad.

Ryback promises to prove himself to Bray Wyatt tonight.

We recap Wyatt vs. Ryback. This still doesn't explain why they're fighting.

Ryback vs. Bray Wyatt

Ryback stomps him down to start and easily clotheslines Bray out to the floor. He grabs him by the beard to bring him back in but Bray hits his running cross body to take over. We hit a bad looking chinlock (Bray's arm is nowhere near Ryback's throat) before he sidesteps a charging Ryback to send him into the post.

Bray sends him into the apron and hits a nice backplash off the apron to crush Ryback's ribs. The countout is barely beaten so Bray hits a running charge in the corner, only to get powerbombed off the middle rope. They both head to the floor with Ryback circling around, only to walk into a hard clothesline.

Back in again and Ryback kicks the arm away to block another clothesline. A spinebuster has Bray in trouble but he pops up and sets Ryback on the ropes for a superplex. Ryback headbutts him down and hits a top rope splash of all things, causing his injured ribs (from the backslash) to flare up. Both finishers are countered and Bray pulls the turnbuckle pad off. The referee looks at the pad, allowing Bray to drive the bad ribs into the exposed buckle, setting up Sister Abigail for the pin at 10:29.

Rating: B-. They're rolling with these matches so far tonight. This was the power brawl they needed to go with and the ribs helped them out a lot. Bray getting the pin is a nice touch for him and Ryback has a complaint for a rematch (notice the trend tonight). Good stuff here and I had a better time with it than I was expecting.

Money in the Bank ad, with a Home Shopping Network theme. The show is June 14, which is two weeks after Elimination Chamber, which is two weeks after Payback.

We recap Rusev vs. Cena. Rusev won at Fast Lane but Cena won the title at Wrestlemania XXXI and the rematch at Extreme Rules. Tonight is the final battle in an I Quit match.

US Title: John Cena vs. Rusev

Cena is defending in an I Quit match. Rusev gives Cena a chance to quit before the match to please half the fans but Cena wants to get on with it, earning him a kick to the ribs. The fans want Lana so Rusev makes her sit in a chair near Lawler. Back in and Rusev stomps away as the fans carry on the dueling chants. Rusev dropkicks him into the corner for a no and a spinwheel kick puts Cena down again.

The fans chant for Lana so Rusev goes outside to yell at her. Cena has had no offense so far. It's time to wave the Russian flag before a fall away slam sends Cena out to the floor. Cena goes into the steps but won't quit so Rusev puts the steps in the corner for two more hard whips. The steps go down and Cena finally hits a backdrop for his first offensive move. Then, like a schmuck, he tries a cross body and gets caught in a swinging Rock Bottom onto the steps.

The big stomp hits the steps though and Cena nails a quick AA onto them as well but Rusev can't speak. Cena sends him into the post for a no and then threatens to put him through the barricade if he doesn't quit. Rusev says no so Cena does what he promised. That's another no so they fight up to the technical area with Rusev gently laying Cena on a table with an Alabama Slam.

Cena pops up and puts the table against the wall before hitting Rusev with a monitor. Still no from the Russian so Cena hits him with a laptop for the same result. The AA is countered into a better Alabama Slam through the table but Cena still says no. Rusev finds the pyro controls but Cena AA's him onto the fireworks, causing them to go off. Somehow that's still a no so Cena finds a piece of a barricade and nails Rusev in the face.

The barricade is put up against the apron but Rusev suplexes Cena halfway through it for another no. The stunned look on Rusev's face is perfect. Back inside the ring and we hit the Accolade but Cena is out cold, meaning he can't say he quits. With nothing left to do, Rusev unhooks the top rope and pours water over Cena to wake him up. Rusev pulls back the hook but Cena takes him down into the STF with the rope over Rusev's face. He rants in Russian and Lana quits for him at 28:49.

Rating: A. Oh yeah this was awesome. They had built up Rusev as never quitting but you knew Lana was going to be involved somewhere in there. Really fun stuff here though as they just let the guys beat the tar out of each other. This should have been the match they did last month and cut out the chain match as this was WAY more extreme than anything last month.

The kickoff panel chats while the ring is repaired.

The New Day toasts their win (with milk!) and ask who are the five greatest teams of all time. "New Day! New Day! New Day! New Day! New Day!" They're role models who don't curse, spit or complain. Kofi: "Toast, toast. Oh pinkies!" Byron tells them that they're defending the Tag Team Titles inside the Elimination Chamber and Big E. spits out his milk while Woods curses.

Bella Twins vs. Tamina/Naomi

Nikki takes Naomi down to start and it's off to Brie for the BRIE MODE running knee. Tamina superkicks Brie onto the apron to take over before standing on the hair. Back to Naomi for a front facelock but Brie crawls away (falling on her head in the process) for the hot tag. Everything breaks down and Nikki cleans house but takes the Rear View for a near fall. Tamina drives Brie into the barricade to distract Nikki on the top, allowing Naomi to slam her off the top for the pin at 6:13.

Rating: D+. This didn't have time to go anywhere and it was one of the most obvious endings you could have imagined. Allegedly this gets Naomi into the title hunt, despite the fact that there are eight active Divas on the roster (not counting Rosa, who is nowhere near the title and shouldn't be), including the Bellas. Nothing you wouldn't see on Raw here but Nikki looked good, as always.

Ad for the WWE prank show. They can advertise this, but not "YOU CAN WATCH EVERY PAY PER VIEW EVER!" Such are the priorities in WWE.

Rusev throws Lana out.

We look back at Daniel Bryan vacating the Intercontinental Title on Raw.

King Barrett vs. Neville

Neville starts fast with the front flip out of the corner into a cross body off the middle rope to send Barrett to the floor. He loads up the headstand into the headscissors but Barrett throws the feet into the air for the kick to the ribs. I love it when they adapt like that instead of just doing the same spots in the same places. Back in and we hit the chinlock for a bit before Barrett hits the knees and big boot in the ropes.

Neville comes back with his own kicks and a standing shooting star press for two. The Bull Hammer misses but Winds of Change gets two. Neville heads to the apron for a springboard but has to turn it into an armdrag and cradle to counter another Bull Hammer. Barrett rolls away to avoid to avoid the Red Arrow so Neville dives on him, only to come up holding his

knee. He gets back inside but Barrett intentionally takes the countout at 7:26. Neville is able to stand on his own so the knee doesn't seem that bad.

Rating: C+. I had a good time with this as these two have chemistry together. Neville's strong push continues as he even gets to win a pay per view match this time. They're developing a nice midcard these days and it's actually working really well. The countout was another good idea as they've really tightened up the booking tonight for the losers.

Post match Barrett comes back in and decks Neville before putting on the robe and crown. He misses a scepter shot though and eats a German suplex, followed by the Red Arrow.

Tough Enough videos.

Kane wishes Rollins good luck.

We recap the World Title match. Kane set up a fan vote which made the match a triple threat, but when Rollins complained, Kane made it a four way with Ambrose involved as well. If Rollins loses, Kane is out of a job.

WWE World Title: Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose vs. Roman Reigns vs. Randy Orton

Rollins is defending and it's one fall to a finish. Kane comes down to watch from the beginning. Everyone zeroes in on Rollins to start but the Stooges are here to save the day. Ambrose dives onto Orton and Rollins but Reigns dives onto all of them plus the Stooges. Reigns and Rollins are the only ones in the ring for a bit and the champ hits a quick Downward Spiral into the middle buckle.

Ambrose and Orton take their places and the slug it out with Dean getting two off a powerslam. Reigns comes back in and counters an RKO before Randy and Dean fall to the floor. The champ stomps Reigns down in the corner but Dean comes back in to help his buddy. Kane finally gets involved (a full five minutes into the match) by decking Ambrose and throwing him back in to Rollins.

The springboard knee to the head gets two on Dean but Ambrose fights back with an attempt at Dirty Deeds, drawing in Kane for a chokeslam to break it up. Orton pulls Kane to the floor and slugs away at him before going back inside to t-bone suplex Rollins for two. They head outside with Randy loading up the table....and eating a TripleBomb for a quick Shield reunion. Note the MONSTER pop for that.

Rollins puts his arms around Reigns and Dean before putting out his fist. We'll skip ahead a few seconds to Ambrose loading up Rollins for another powerbomb with Kane having to make a save. Rollins is laid on the table for a DoubleBomb to Kane but the table doesn't break. Fans: "ONE MORE TIME!" They get their wish here and now Kane is driven through Rollins through the table. Reigns: "Not much else to do." Ambrose: "No there's not." Reigns: "Loser buys the beers?"

They slug it out in the ring with Reigns missing the clothesline and eating a cross body for two. Reigns gets a rollup of his own but lifts Dean up into a sitout powerbomb for two of his own. The Superman Punch connects for a very close two but the spear hits knee. Reigns spins out of Dirty Deeds though and nails the spear, only to have Rollins dive in for the save.

There's a Superman Punch to Rollins but Dean clotheslines Roman down. Dirty Deeds lays out Seth but Kane pulls him to the floor. Kane chokeslams Reigns onto the stairs but Orton is back up to lay Kane out. Mercury breaks up the elevated DDT so both Stooges get RKOs. Now the DDT works but Kane has to eat an RKO, allowing Rollins to hit a Pedigree of all things to retain the title at 20:52.

Rating: A-. Loved the match but can we please have Rollins stop acting like HHH is his great and mighty father who must be pleased at all times? It's beyond old already. Anyway, they made the exactly right call by having this be pure chaos and the Shield tease was awesome. Those three are going to headline a show someday and it's going to be a huge deal. Really funny stuff here and a great way to cap off the show. Hopefully this doesn't set up Rollins vs. Kane though.

HHH comes out to celebrate with Rollins to close the show.

Overall Rating: A. Why is Payback always so awesome? I'd really like an answer to this. It's clearly meant to be a B show and has a stupid name but this is the third year in a row that it's been one of the best shows all year. Only the Bellas match was kind of lame but other than that, this show was really fun match after really fun match. I had a blast with this and somehow that's becoming less and less of a surprise every year, which is a very good thing.

Results

Sheamus b. Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick

New Day b. Tyson Kidd/Cesaro – Small package to Kidd

Bray Wyatt b. Ryback – Sister Abigail

John Cena b. Rusev – Lana quit for Rusev while Rusev was in the STF

Naomi/Tamina b. Bella Twins – Slam off the top

Neville b. King Barrett via countout

Seth Rollins b. Roman Reigns, Randy Orton and Dean Ambrose – Pedigree to Orton

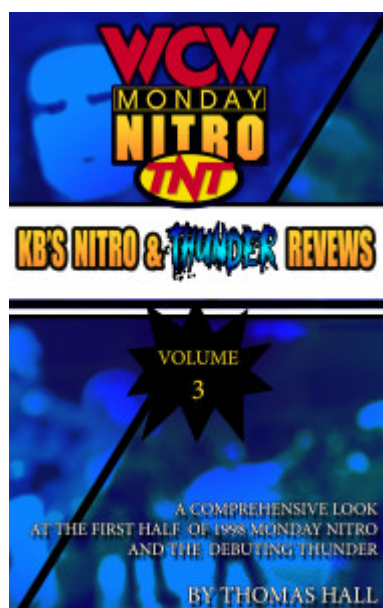
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New E-Book: KB's History Of Monday Nitro Volume III (Including Thunder!)



When we last left WCW, they were the undisputed kings of the Monday Night Wars and that's certainly still the case as they come into 1998. Things were so good that they decided to more than double the amount of television they were airing per week. To say this might have been too much too soon is an understatement but WCW had done stupider stuff before.

In this book, I'll be looking at every episode of Monday Nitro and Thunder from January through June of 1998. This is the time where the Monday Night Wars finally started to get competitive again after nearly two years of being completely one sided. Having two shows a week was a fresh idea as well, making this a very important time in wrestling history. As usual I'll be providing play by play, historical context and analysis of every show.

Also remember that I've already covered 1995-1997 Monday Nitro in case you don't want to jump right into the later stuff. Both books are available from my Amazon author page.

The books runs over 300 pages on a Kindle and only costs \$3.99, or the equivalent in other currencies. If you don't have a Kindle or e-book reader, there are several **FREE** apps you can use to read it on pretty much any electronic device. You can find those from Amazon [here](#).

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Also you can still get any of my previous books on the WWE Championship, Monday Night Raw from 1998 and 2001, Monday Nitro from 1995-97, In Your House, Summerslam, Starrcade, ECW Pay Per Views, Royal Rumble, Saturday Night's Main Event, the WWF and WCW pay per views from 1998 and Clash of the Champions at my author's page [here](#).

I hope you like it and shoot me any questions you might have.

KB