

Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: February 23, 2015

We're past Fast Lane now and the only thing left between here and Wrestlemania is time. Well that and five Raws and Smackdowns of course. The main story tonight is the start of the hard build between Lesnar and Reigns as well as filling in the rest of the card for the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

To begin with, let's get through the big story of the week which didn't air on Raw: Brock Lesnar not appearing. Allegedly this was over some undisclosed contract issue, which seems to be very convenient given that he was seen at UFC 184 over the weekend. I'm not saying it's an angle, but there's enough there that it seems like it's a possibility. Either way, Lesnar will be in the main event at Wrestlemania and I'd be absolutely shocked if anything else happened. At the end of the day, Brock will be there for the right price because unlike CM Punk, he isn't completely delusional.

Orton opened the show and said this wouldn't be a twenty minute speech. He wants Rollins but got the full Authority instead, and OF COURSE we had to listen to Stephanie say every corporate name she could fit into a single speech. That might be the most annoying thing she does. Everything has to be proper titles and it comes off like the least natural way of speaking I've seen in years. There's going to be a business conference later in the night to get to the point of this. I'm as riveted as you are. Not by the dumb story, but by Stephanie. I mean, don't you just freeze in place when she speaks?

Dolph Ziggler pinned Bad News Barrett. I've ranted enough about how annoying it is when the Intercontinental Champion loses, but at least this seems to be setting up a big match at Wrestlemania....where the perennial loser will win and all is supposed to be forgotten right?

The business conference was more of STEPHANIE POWER as she got Orton to agree to team with Rollins tonight. As I said back on Monday, this felt

like just a way of killing time until we get to the obvious ending. That kind of storytelling rarely works, especially with so little time before Wrestlemania.

The Prime Time Players beat the Ascension because....well why not just bail out of the Ascension story before it has the chance to go anywhere? Now, can someone please tell me what that story was supposed to be, because the legends thing stopped weeks ago.

Now we get to the big segment of the night: Daniel Bryan endorsing Roman Reigns and then Paul Heyman coming out to say the exact same thing he's been saying for weeks: Reigns is awesome, but not awesome enough. This segment was well done, well spoken and had a very clear goal. However, it completely failed at its intended goal: making me care about Roman Reigns.

They're following a script now and the idea makes sense, but Reigns is just not someone the fans can relate to. Look back at the Bryan story. It's such a basic concept with the volume turned way up: Bryan is the every man who has been held down by the machine but will not stop fighting until he overcomes the odds and achieves his glory. What is Reigns' story? Come see Superman fight Doomsday? That's only a story when Superman loses, and I don't picture Roman Reigns losing at Wrestlemania.

Someone tell me why I should care about Roman Reigns. Yeah he had a really cool run as part of the Shield, but Rollins has grown by leaps and bounds since then and Ambrose has had his moments. Reigns is basically the same guy he was a year ago at this time but without his partners around him. The more I think about it, the more I see him as Diesel in 1994: big, strong, not that interesting because there's little to him other than power and high impact offense. That's not enough to carry him against Lesnar and I don't see this experiment working longer than a few months.

Kidd and Cesaro beat the Usos in their rematch. This was about what you would expect and thankfully they didn't just switch the titles right back. The Usos can do something else besides get the belts back (I'm not sure what exactly) and just let Kidd and Cesaro show off for the next

four months or so. The Usos were good long term placeholders, but I've seen enough of them with the belts in the last year.

Mizdow has gotten a commercial shoot by being the stunt double. This would be the 318th issue to start the eventual face turn.

Bray Wyatt says his usual insane stuff about Undertaker. At least he has a target now.

Jack Swagger beat Stardust with the Patriot Lock after a distraction from Goldust. I don't like Wrestlemania rematches and we seem to be getting more than one this year.

Cena and Rusev argued over political ideologies, monetary policy and whether or not Cena gave up in the Accolade. Or Acolyte, whichever Cena is calling it this time. It's worked for 40 years and it works now.

Rollins and Orton didn't have much to say.

Cool video on Sting to catch younger fans up.

The Bellas vs. Paige/Emma lasted 30 seconds. They seem to be setting up Bellas vs. Paige/AJ in a dream tag match. That would likely be Kevin Dunn's dream with the Bellas going over.

The Bushwhackers are going into the Hall of Fame. Luke licked my face when I was three so I can't complain too much.

Ryback beat Curtis Axel in 44 seconds. That Axelmania and the Royal Rumble clock are the most entertaining things Axel has ever done.

The final match was your standard main event tag with Reigns and Bryan beating Orton and Rollins with the running knee ending Seth. Orton bailed after Rollins tagged himself in but didn't RK0 Rollins for some reason. That reason would be ALL HAIL STEPHANIE of course, because Heaven forbid he offend her.

Overall, this show proved one thing: the road to this year's Wrestlemania is lacking. The stories are being told well enough, but they're just not very good stories. Reigns isn't an interesting hero, Orton vs. Rollins

needs to just get set up already, the Intercontinental Champion is the biggest loser this side of Barry Horowitz and there are at least two upcoming rematches if not more. That doesn't scream biggest show of the year to me. It screams "oh dang we blew our ideas last year and we've got nothing left for this time." That's not good in any way, shape or form.

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania III: The Stuff That Wrestling Is Made Of

Wrestlemania III

Date: March 29, 1987

Location: Pontiac Silverdome, Pontiac, Michigan

Attendance: 93,173

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse Ventura

This is the biggest show in wrestling history with the biggest match in wrestling history as its main event. How's that for a standard to live up to? In case you're one of the six wrestling fans ever that hasn't heard of this show, the main event is Hulk Hogan defending the WWF Title against Andre the Giant in a match four years in the making. In the undercard we have the greatest match of all time. This is the first show where they treated Wrestlemania as something huge and not just a big

house show, making it the first “modern” Wrestlemania. Let’s get to it.

The wide shot of the arena is still quite a sight. Oh and for once and for all: there were 93,000 people there. The argument about how it doesn’t hold that many doesn’t hold up as the total often listed is for football, which requires WAY more space than a wrestling show. It would be like covering half the field with more seats. On the other hand, let’s say WWE is lying about the number. A lie? In wrestling? Surely you jest. I don’t get why people are so obsessed with proving there were less people there than claimed.

Aretha Franklin sings America the Beautiful.

Gorilla and Jesse are with celebrities Bob Uecker and Mary Hart.

Can-Am Connection vs. Don Muraco/Bob Orton

No story here as they’re just two teams having a match. The Can-Am Connection is Rick Martel (Can) and Tom Zenk (Am) which would kind of evolve into Strike Force. Martel and Muraco start things off with Rick hitting a quick shoulder to take Don down. A hip block and a kind of monkey flip put Muraco down again and it’s a standoff. Zenk comes in for a double monkey flip and it’s off to Orton who gets armdragged down as well.

Bob gets hit from one corner to the other until Zenk takes him down with an armbar. All Connection so far. They trade full nelsons and Muraco hits Orton by mistake for two. Bob gets his arm cranked on a bit until FINALLY making the tag out to Muraco. The bad luck continues for the heels as Don is slammed down and has his arm worked on as well.

Orton and Muraco finally start cheating with a knee to Zenk’s back and a shot from the middle rope. Zenk and Bob ram heads and it’s a double tag as everything breaks down. The heels are sent into each other and a double dropkick takes Orton down. Muraco gets double teamed and a cross body with a trip from Zenk is enough for Martel to get the pin.

Rating: B-. I’ve called this the best opening match in Wrestlemania history and I don’t think it’s that far off from the truth. There are

definitely matches of higher quality, but think about what an opening match is supposed to do. It's designed to set the tone for a show and this one did that. It's about five and a half minutes long and the good guys beat the bad guys with some nice continuity. It's nothing flashy but it wasn't supposed to be. This is a very nice, basic tag match and the crowd was into it, which is all it was supposed to accomplish. Good stuff here.

We recap Hercules vs. Billy Jack Haynes which is the battle of the full nelson.

Heenan and Hercules say about what you would expect them to say.

Hercules vs. Billy Jack Haynes

This is power vs. power so expect some pretty weak chemistry. Hebner tries to get in between them in the corner which is more than a referee should do. Haynes hits a press slam but Hercules bails to the corner to avoid the full nelson. Hercules comes back with a big old clothesline and both guys are down already. A backdrop puts Haynes down and Herc pounds on the back a bit. This is very slow paced compared to the opener.

A suplex gets two for Hercules as he picks Haynes up. Billy can't suplex Hercules because of the back so the Greek guy hits a backbreaker to keep the momentum up. Hercules hooks the full nelson but can't get the fingers locked, allowing Billy to escape. Jack fights out of it and they clothesline each other down. Haynes grabs a quick atomic drop to fire the crowd up but his back messes up again. A clothesline sets up a legdrop on Hercules and a middle rope fist to the head keeps Hercules in trouble. Jack gets the full nelson but Hercules pulls them both to the floor. Herc gets put in the hold again but a double countout ends this.

Rating: D+. The fact that the crowd is hot for everything tonight is all that made this passable, which can be a great tool to bring a match up a lot. At the end of the day, they're WAY too similar and neither guy is exactly someone that can carry a match. It's not terrible but it didn't go anywhere at all. This would be the only feud of note that Haynes had and he would be jobbing soon.

Post match Hercules blasts Haynes with his chain a few times and busts him open.

King Kong Bundy and his midgets say they'll beat Hillbilly Jim and his midgets.

The other team says the exact opposite.

Hillbilly Jim/Little Beaver/Haiti Kid vs. King Kong Bundy/Lord Littlebrook/Little Tokyo

Beaver would be 52 and Littlebrook would be 58 at this point. Uecker jumps in on commentary. Haiti and Tokyo start before we get a four way crisscross. The good small guys hook a stupid looking hold called the rowboat on their evil counterparts and the crowd doesn't seem interested. Off to Beaver as Uecker seems really happy to be here. Jesse wants to see Bundy crush one of these guys because that's the kind of guy he is.

Littlebrook vs. Beaver at the moment but it's quickly off to Bundy. Beaver and Haiti annoy him a bit until it's off to Hillbilly for a nice ovation. Bundy gets dropped by a clothesline and an elbow drop allows Jim and company to pile on for a two. Jim gets caught in a front facelock but Beaver comes in and blasts Bundy in the face to get on his nerves again. Bundy finally grabs Beaver and crushes him with a slam and an elbow drop, drawing a DQ.

Rating: D+. This is another of those matches where you have to consider what they were going for. You've got two giants and four midgets out there with Hillbilly Jim picking up a 52 year old man so he can pull on Jim's beard. How tough can I be on a match like this? Unfortunately Beaver's back was hurt by Bundy in this and he had to retire.

Even the heel midgets turn on Bundy for what he did. Jim carries out Little Beaver ala Superman and Supergirl.

Macho Man won't let Liz get interviewed.

We recap Race vs. JYD. Race is the King of Wrestling but Dog refuses to bow because he doesn't think we have kings here in America. One night JYD put Race's robe and crown on but Race decked him and tried to force JYD

to bow. JYD is the Junkyard Dog in case you're new at this.

Race, Heenan and Moolah (the Queen) says that there won't be a new king tonight.

Harley Race vs. Junkyard Dog

The loser has to bow. Uecker is apparently in love with Moolah and bails out of the booth. Race comes out to either Lawler's music or the song Lawler's music was remixed from. Dog says that he wants to take over the spot on the throne. Oh and I forgot to mention the ring carts which only appeared here and at Mania 6. Those things were AWESOME. Dog blocks some punches to start and pounds away but Race trips up JYD to give Race control.

Dog comes right back with a headbutt to send Race to the floor before pulling him right back in. Race gets knocked to the floor again and is in big trouble. Back in and Race tries a headbutt and knocks himself silly. A Flair Flip in the corner sends Race to the floor AGAIN but it still doesn't last long. Back inside Dog hits some headbutts but has to stop to chase off Heenan, allowing Race to hit a belly to belly for the pin.

Rating: D. This wasn't that good primarily due to time. The majority of the match was spent with Race on the floor which isn't what you expect from him. Dog was all about personality and crowd response as most of his offense was a bunch of headbutts. Not much to see here but the crowd was into it.

Dog bows to Race but then blasts him with a chair and steals the robe.

Hogan talks about riding to the show after hearing people telling him this was his last ride. Tonight it's time for Andre to face the truth and all Hogan has to do is beat a 7'4 520lb giant. Andre has to beat Hogan and every Hulkamaniac in the world. Hulkamania is going to get Andre, not the dirty air or the politicians (HUH?) and Andre has to face the truth. I've seen the match he's talking about probably 40 times and it still feels huge.

Dream Team vs. Rougeau Brothers

The Dream Team is Brutus Beefcake and Greg Valentine but they've been having problems lately. Dino Bravo and Johnny V are with them here. Ray and Brutus start things off with Ray sending Brutus into the Rougeau corner for some double teaming. Off to Valentine as the Rougeaus tag in and out multiple times. Jacques finally sticks around for a bit and misses a cross body out of the corner.

Greg drops a bunch of elbows and puts on the Figure Four as Bobby Heenan comes into the commentary booth. Jacques gets to the rope before reversing a piledriver so he can tag Ray. While this is going on, Bobby and Gorilla argue about midgets. Ray puts Greg in a sleeper and Brutus' save goes awry. Valentine gets caught in the Rougeau Bomb but Dino comes in off the middle rope though with a shot to Ray's back, giving the Dream Team the pin.

Rating: C-. This was all angle rather than the match. The Rougeaus were a talented team and looked solid out there while the Dream Team looked like a relic of the past. Thankfully this would be the end for them as Bravo would replace Beefcake immediately, although the New Dream Team never went anywhere.

Valentine, Bravo and Johnny V (short for Valentine but shortened to avoid confusion) leave Beefcake behind.

We recap Adrian Adonis vs. Roddy Piper. Piper had left to make a movie and came back to find Piper's Pit taken over by Adonis' Flower Shop with Orton having sided with Adonis. Orton, Adonis, Muraco and Hart broke Piper's leg but he came back with a ball bat and DESTROYED the Flower Shop. This is also billed as Piper's farewell match.

Piper says he's not going out to a man that wears a dress. No Retreat and No Surrender!

Roddy Piper vs. Adrian Adonis

The loser gets their hair cut and is probably the third biggest match on the show if not the second biggest. Piper walks to the ring instead of taking the cart to soak everything in a little bit more. The fans go NUTS for Piper who is still somewhat freshly face. Adonis is rather plump

here, giving us a great line from Jesse: "We're either going to have a bald Scot or Humpty Dumpty." Piper takes off his belt and they whip each other a few times with Adonis taking over.

Piper comes right back by sending Adrian into the corner for Flair Flip to the floor. Both Adonis and Hart get pulled back in and Piper rams them together to send them back outside. Back in again and Piper throws Hart off the top and onto Adonis but Jimmy FINALLY gets something right by tripping Roddy down.

Now it's Adonis in control as they head to the floor. Piper gets sent into the announce table and Jimmy adds a spray of perfume into his eyes. There's Adrian's sleeper (Good Night Irene) and Piper is almost out, but Adonis lets him go at two arm drops. Brutus Beefcake runs out to wake Piper up and after a missed clipper shot from Adonis, Piper puts him in the sleeper for the win.

Rating: C+. This was the exact kind of wild brawl that you would expect it to be. The ending was the right move as Adonis had accidentally cut Beefcake's hair recently so it made sense given the haircut stuff. This is the right way for Roddy to go out though and the fans were way into it. Fun stuff here.

Post match Adonis gets his hair cut and punches a mirror. Roddy gets his big sendoff.

Jesse is introduced to the crowd before the next match to annoy Gorilla.

Hart Foundation/Danny Davis vs. British Bulldogs/Tito Santana

Davis is a crooked referee that cost both the Bulldogs and Santana their titles. Apparently this is Davis' debut as a wrestler. Mary Hart (no relation) is on commentary along with Uecker here as well. Tito beats up Danny before the match before we get going with Bret and Santana. Jesse steals the Bulldogs' mascot Matilda as he leaves. Off to Davey vs. Anvil and Smith pulls him by the beard. That's a bit rough even for Neidhart.

Tito comes back in to work on the arm but gets sent to the heel corner for some high quality choking. That goes nowhere so here's Smith vs.

Neidhart again. Jim takes him down with a suplex but Bret misses a middle rope elbow. Dynamite comes in for the chest to buckle bump from Bret but Hart comes back with some punches. Tito tries to break up some interference but only allows even more cheating by Neidhart.

Jim hooks a modified camel clutch on Dynamite before it's back to Bret. I don't think we've seen Davis in yet but before I can finish that sentence he's in for a few stomps. That's the extent of his offense as it's already back to Bret for some actual skill. The sun is starting to go down so the arena looks dark now. Back to Danny for one kick before it's time for the Hitman again.

The Harts slingshot Davis right onto Dynamite's knees and it's off to Santana for the beating on Davis that the fans have been waiting for. Tito destroys Danny and hits the forearm but Neidhart breaks up the Figure Four. Off to Smith who rams Davis' head into Dynamite's. A jumping tombstone (not yet named) kills Davis even more but Smith doesn't want the cover. There's the delayed vertical followed by the powerslam but everything breaks down. Davis pops up and hits Smith with the megaphone for the pin in the melee.

Rating: C-. As fun as the beating Davis took was, the ending is really stupid as he popped up like nothing and was able to knock out a power guy with a single shot? The guy was a referee a few months ago but he's able to do that with one shot? Bad ending aside, this was fun stuff and the fans were WAY into it.

Heenan and Andre say that Andre can't be defeated and everyone knows it. Bobby's white suit is rather awesome.

Butch Reed vs. Koko B. Ware

Slick is here with Reed. That comes into play later. Reed overpowers him to start which is appropriate in a power vs. speed match. Koko comes back with that dropkick of his to send Reed out to the floor. Back in and a shot to the Bird Man's ribs give Butch control again but Koko hiptosses him down. Koko pounds away and hits another dropkick for two. A run of the ropes proves deadly though as Reed rolls through a cross body and a handful of tights pins Ware.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here as Koko was there as a warm body to lose to Butch. Reed was going to be the Intercontinental Champion after Steamboat got done with it but Honky talked his way into getting the belt instead. This match was there only to set up the post match stuff which we'll get to now.

Tito runs in and beats up Slick, ripping off his "expensive" suit. A double dropkick sends Reed to the floor.

So far we've had eight matches and on average it's probably a C- at best. I think the next one might help bring things up a bit.

We recap Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat. On an episode of Superstars, Savage smashed Steamboat's throat into the barricade and crushed his larynx with the ring bell. One night on SNME, George Steele was facing Randy Savage and promised a surprise. Steele kidnapped Liz and when Savage got up, he saw Steamboat staring up at him and terror reigned.

Savage says that he's retaining the title and is going to prove how amazing he is.

Steamboat says this is their destiny and the Dragon is going to scorch Savage's back. This promo still gives me chills.

Intercontinental Title: Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat

The fans give an audible pop for Savage which even the announcers have to acknowledge. George Steele comes out to back up Steamboat and show off that green tongue. They shove each other around a few times before Randy takes an early breather. Savage misses a back elbow and Steamboat hits a pair of those perfect armdrags of his. Randy is lifted into the air via a choke and it's back to the floor.

Back in and Savage gets in his first shot before sending Ricky into the buckle. Steamboat immediately comes back by grabbing the wrist and lifting Savage into the air. Savage comes back with an elbow to the face before sending Steamboat over the top and out to the floor. Randy starts going after the throat but has to stop to try to get his left arm working

again. Steamboat sends him into the buckle and chops away, sending Savage into the ropes.

With the champion tied up, Steamboat fires away with a vengeance. Savage gets loose and Ricky hits a cross body for two, kicking off one of the fastest sets of near falls you'll EVER see. Randy finally slows him down with a knee to the back and a toss over the ropes, only to have Ricky skin the cat. Savage throws him out again and knocks him into the crowd for good measure. The top rope ax handle keeps Steamboat down even longer and Savage is in full control.

Savage hits a clothesline for two which Gorilla doesn't like. Gorilla: "That could be a disqualification." Jesse: "For what?" Gorilla: "Intentional." Jesse: "Well of course it was intentional!" Gorilla could find some weird stuff to complain about at times. After a pair of Savage suplexes for two, Ricky starts firing back and sends Savage out to the floor. A top rope chop gets two for the challenger and they speed things up all over again.

We get another chase on the floor followed by a sunset flip by the Dragon for two. They trade ANOTHER great pinfall reversal sequence as Jesse declares this one of the greatest matches he's ever seen. A slingshot sends Savage face first into the post and there's a sunset flip for two for the Dragon. Savage reverses an O'Connor Roll with a handful of tights for two. Randy uses the tights again and sends Dragon shoulder first into the post.

They reverse an Irish whip and the referee gets bumped. Randy hits another clothesline and drops the big elbow but there's no referee. Savage goes to get the bell but Steele takes it away. That earns the Animal a kick in the head so he shoves Savage off the top. Steamboat is back up and famously counters a slam into a small package for the pin and the title.

Rating: A+. This is the greatest match of all time so what do you expect me to give it. I'm amazed at how well this holds up nearly 26 years later as there is nothing wrong with it at all. The story goes that these two practiced this match at Savage's house for three months beforehand and it

shows. Not a thing is even close to screwed up and they're so fast out there it's unbelievable. How anyone can say this is anything but perfect astounds me to this day. If you haven't seen this before, watch it now and take notes.

Alice Cooper (male rock/metal singer) is here to back up Jake Roberts against Honky and Jimmy Hart. This was set up because Honky hit Jake in the back with a guitar, which was allegedly the reason for Jake's addiction to pain medication that has plagued him for years. Jake says Honky got his shot but didn't make it count. His mustache alone makes him the favorite.

Honky Tonk Man vs. Jake Roberts

This is one of the matches that is there to give us a breather between the masterpiece and the main event. Jake pounds away to start and hits a knee lift to send Honky out to the floor. Honky still can't get his ring suit off so Jake rips it off for him. Jake follows him to the floor and slams Honky down before heading back inside. Back in and Jake charges into a knee to the face to shift momentum.

Honky drops a pair of knees to Jake's back but misses a punch and walks into the short clothesline. The grease in Honky's hair allows him to escape the DDT and we head outside again. Jake is sent into the post and the barricade so Honky can dance a bit. Back in and a middle rope punch puts Jake in even more trouble. There's a knee drop to the Snake and a pair of elbows for no cover.

The Shake Rattle and Roll (swinging neckbreaker) is countered by Jake and there's an atomic drop for the eternally funny selling by Honky. Jake punches him to the apron and Honky gets caught in between the ropes, meaning he bounces back up every time Jake punches him. The DDT is countered again and after a Jimmy interference, Honky grabs a rollup and the top rope for the upset pin.

Rating: C. You could see the Honky Tonk Man character coming on here as Jake was way better but got cheated at the end. Honky would ride that one idea for the next year and a half, drawing WAY more money and heat than he had any right to earn. Jake would feud with various heels for the next

few months while being one of the many challengers to chase Honky. He finally got with Rick Rude for an awesome string of matches.

Post match Honky is chased off and Jimmy gets covered by Damien the snake.

Gene Okerlund announces a new world indoor attendance record of 93,173. That's awesome.

Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Sheik vs. Killer Bees

Unlike the previous match that had a feud going with it, this is just a random heel and face pairing. Slick (the foreigners' manager) still has his torn up suit on. Volkoff starts singing the Soviet national anthem but the pretty new Jim Duggan runs out to break it up. The Bees finally show up and it's a big brawl to start. Duggan is marching around at ringside with the 2x4 complete with a little American flag taped to it.

We start with Blair and Sheik but it's quickly off to Brunzell. The Bees work over Iron's arm with tags faster than I can type them. They stay on the arm until Brunzell hits his gorgeous dropkick for two on Sheik. Everything breaks down for a bit and Brunzell gets caught in the corner. Nikolai keeps Brunzell in trouble as the fans chant USA. There's the bearhug by the Russian but Jim smacks his ears to break the hold.

Off to Sheik for the gutwrench suplex for two and a regular version for two. Brunzell comes back with a quick high knee but the referee doesn't see the tag. A double elbow puts Jim down again and Sheik poses a lot. Duggan chases Volkoff into the ring and sees Sheik with the camel clutch on Brunzell. Being the patriot that he is, Duggan blasts Sheik in the back with the board for the DQ.

Rating: C-. Not a terrible little match here until the stupid ending. This was again about furthering another feud in the form of Duggan against the evil foreigners. Why the Bees would be ok with Duggan doing that is beyond me but I guess since they're all good guys they have to get along in WWF logic.

Andre says the next time you see him, he'll be world heavyweight

champion. Heenan says he'll be the manager of the world champion and go down in history.

We recap Andre the Giant vs. Hulk Hogan. Andre was there three years ago when Hogan won the title and they teamed together a few times with Hogan making the save when Andre was double teamed. There's a LONG story (not mentioned in the show because it isn't important) about Andre getting suspended and wrestling in a mask until Bobby Heenan, the guy behind the suspension, got it lifted.

Andre appeared with Hogan in Piper's Pit where both received trophies; Andre's for being undefeated for fifteen years and Hogan's for being world champion for three years. However, Andre's trophy was noticeably smaller, prompting him to say "three years to be a champion, that's a long time." A few weeks later, Andre walked into the Pit with Heenan at his side and challenges Hogan for Wrestlemania. Hogan is STUNNED and has the crucifix ripped off his chest. Hogan finally agrees to fight Andre at Wrestlemania and the arena exploded. Make no mistake about it: THIS is why Wrestlemania III is the biggest show ever.

Hogan talks about how he's going to knock the giant down and shake the world.

Bob Uecker is brought in as the guest ring announcer. Jesse says hi to Terry, Tyrell and Jade back in Minneapolis. He did this on nearly every show but never said who those people were. It was nothing secretive: it's his wife and kids. Mary Hart is guest timekeeper.

WWF World Title: Andre the Giant vs. Hulk Hogan

Hogan walks to the ring and the ovation is unreal. To put it simply, this is the biggest match in the history of professional wrestling. We get the historic staredown and we're really supposed to believe that Hogan is nine inches shorter than Andre? It's like three at most. Hogan punches away to start but goes for a slam a minute into this and falls down, giving Andre a very close two. That right there would fuel the rematch requests for the next year. Hulk's back is hurt and Andre starts taunting him. A big forearm hits Hogan in the back and Andre slams him twice. Andre pounds away very slowly and hits a few headbutts.

Hulk fights back up with some forearms into the head. A running elbow staggers the Giant and Hogan sends him head first into the buckle ten times, only to charge into a boot to slow things right back down again. We hit the bearhug and Hogan is in trouble. This lasts for a LONG while until Hogan punches his way out of it, possibly hurting his hand in the process. Hulk rams into him a few times but charges into a chop to put Hogan down again. A boot to the ribs knocks Hulk to the floor but Andre headbutts the post. Hogan tries a piledriver of all things but is easily backdropped down.

We head back in for the legendary ending sequence. Hogan ducks a big boot and clotheslines down. It's Hulk Up time and in the most famous scene in wrestling history, Hulk Hogan slams Andre the Giant to blow the roof off the place. The big legdrop makes Hogan immortal and the title is retained.

Rating: B. Ok here's the thing: if you think this is about the wrestling itself, you have completely missed the point here. This was about making Hogan look like the biggest star ever and to say it did that is an understatement. On top of that, the match isn't that bad. Don't get me wrong: it's not a masterpiece or anything like that, but the match is nowhere near as bad as it's made out to be. This was exactly what it was supposed to be.

Hogan poses for a long time as Heenan leaves with his head in his hands, wondering where it all went wrong.

Overall Rating: A+. There's really no other grade to give this. It's the biggest show of all time, the greatest match of all time is on here, and the main event has two of the most famous images of all time. This show is the pinnacle of wrestling in America and it's never been as big as this again. There's nothing truly bad on this show as even the weaker matches are at least really short. This show was never about the wrestling though. It's all spectacle here and it's an absolute must see show for any fan and it still goes by very smoothly. If you somehow haven't seen this, definitely check it out.

Ratings Comparison

Can-Am Connection vs. Don Muraco/Bob Orton

Original: B+

Redo: B-

Billy Jack Haynes vs. Hercules

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Hillbilly Jim/Haiti Kid/Little Beaver vs. King Kong Bundy/Little Tokyo/Lord Littlebrook

Original: F

Redo: D+

Harley Race vs. Junkyard Dog

Original: D+

Redo: D

Dream Team vs. Rougeau Brothers

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Roddy Piper vs. Adrian Adonis

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Hart Foundation/Danny Davis vs. Tito Santana/British Bulldogs

Original: C

Redo: C-

Butch Reed vs. Koko B. Ware

Original: N/A

Redo: D

Ricky Steamboat vs. Randy Savage

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Jake Roberts vs. Honky Tonk Man

Original: C

Redo: C

Killer Bees vs. Iron Sheik/Nikolai Volkoff

Original: D

Redo: C-

Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant

Original: A

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: B+

Redo: A+

It still holds up.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/03/07/wrestlemania-count-up-3-this-show-is-required-viewing-for-all-fans/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania II: The Ugly Stepchild Of Wrestlemania

Wrestlemania II

Date: April 7, 1986

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, New York City, New York/Rosemont Horizon, Chicago, Illinois/Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 16,585 (New York), 9,000 (Chicago), 14,500 (Los Angeles), 40,085 (Total)

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Susan St. James, Gene Okerlund, Gorilla Monsoon, Cathy Lee Crosby, Alfred Hayes, Jesse Ventura, Elvira

This is one of those ideas that they tried once and only once before never thinking about doing it again. After the success of Wrestlemania, the idea was that Wrestlemania 2 had to be bigger, so Vince came up with the idea of splitting it into three cities. This show is widely considered to be one of if not the worst Wrestlemania of all time and with main events such as Piper vs. Mr. T. in a boxing match and Hogan vs. Bundy in a cage it's not hard to see why. Let's get to it.

This is on a Monday for some reason.

This was a tape I watched to death back when I was a kid so the theme music for this brings a smile to my face.

Vince opens things up in New York and introduces Susan St. James, a popular actress of the day, to be his co-commentator.

Ray Charles sings America the Beautiful.

Gene is in Chicago and welcomes us to the city for later on.

Roddy Piper and his trainer for the fight Lou Duva (famous boxing trainer) say Piper is ready. Piper promises to quit wrestling and boxing if he gets knocked out. He'll also quit playing tiddlywinks and dating girls, but he'll stick with Bob Orton of course. Those two spent WAY too much time together.

Paul Orndorff vs. Don Muraco

This is fallout from the main event of Mania last year as Orndorff turned face due to Piper and Orton leaving him behind. Muraco is an associate of Piper so this is kind of a proxy feud for Paul. Muraco has Fuji with him too. Both guys say they'll win in a voiceover as the match starts. Paul slams Muraco down to start and the crowd is already hot. Orndorff makes a slant eyes face at Fuji which today would get him thrown out of the company. In 1986, he was making \$20,000 a week later in the year. It's funny how times change.

Paul takes him down to the mat with an armbar as Susan St. James clearly has no idea what's going on. She's trying but this isn't something she knows about at all it would seem. Paul cranks on a wristlock before going back down to the armbar. Susan: "He looks like he's using some ancient Chinese techniques". Uh...yeah. Muraco finally escapes and sends Paul into the corner, only to have Orndorff go off on him as they brawl to the floor. In something you won't ever hear again I don't think, the opening match of Wrestlemania goes to a double countout. The fans chant some expletives.

Rating: D. What do you want here? The match is four minutes long and ends in a double countout. It was hot while it lasted, but the problem is that it didn't last long enough at all. This was a pretty big feud and it gets a four minute match? That's all they can spare these guys? Orndorff would have a MEGA heel turn later in the summer which would eventually draw

74,000 people to an outdoor show in Toronto. That's some drawing power.

Mr. T. says he doesn't like to do a lot of talking before a fight before proceeding to talk more in 30 seconds than Goldberg said in his entire career. To show you the production values, he's drowned out by Fink announcing the results of the previous match.

Intercontinental Title: George Steele vs. Randy Savage

This was a pretty big feud that also wound up meaning a lot more the next year than it does here. The basic idea is that George is in love with Liz and doesn't like how Savage treats her. There's a great angle right there that hasn't been used in a LONG time (Punk/AJ/Bryan isn't the same thing). Savage in an inset interview babbles as only Savage can without saying anything of note.

Steele does a freaky kind of dance and Savage immediately bails to the floor. That works so well that they do it again and make it three times until FINALLY George chases after him. Steele catches Savage going back in and bites his calf before they head back in. Randy hits a running knee to the chest but Steele easily lifts him into the air and chokes him down. George gets caught looking at Liz though and is tied up in the ropes so Savage pounds away.

A top rope cross body gets two for the champ (Savage in case you're really young) and Steele throws him to the floor. Randy slips under the ring and sneaks up on George, only to get bitten on the arm. Savage goes to the floor and finds....a bouquet of flowers? George shoves them into Randy's face before going to eat a turnbuckle (don't ask).

The stuffing goes into Savage's face but Steele AGAIN gets distracted by Liz, allowing Savage to hit the ax handle to the back. Back in and Savage hits the slam and elbow for two. Wait what? This is 1986 and the SAVAGE ELBOW only gets two? Steele grabs Savage by the face and sends him into the corner, only to get tripped up and pinned with the feet on the ropes to retain the title.

Rating: C-. This is one of those matches where your individual taste is going to vary a lot. On one hand, it's a comedy match but not an

incredibly funny one, while on the other hand it's terrible from a wrestling perspective. On the other hand, you have three hands and should see a surgeon immediately. The point is this wasn't much of a match and never would have made it onto a modern Mania card. Of course it wouldn't; the Intercontinental Title doesn't exist around Wrestlemania time. Also, of all the people in the WWF, GEORGE STEELE gets to kick out of the elbow? REALLY? This was fun for the goofiness if nothing else.

Savage and Liz immediately bail so Steele eats another buckle.

Bill Fralic (a football player) and Big John Studd are both in a battle royal later today and they talk some trash, once again being drowned out by Fink.

Vince asks Susan if she likes snakes. Make your own jokes.

Jake Roberts vs. George Wells

Wells is a former football player who never did another thing of note in wrestling other than be in this match. Jake is brand new at this point and is promptly run over and backdropped down in the first ten seconds. A flying shoulder takes Jake down and there's a headbutt for good measure. Wells hits a decent flying headscissors followed by a slam for no cover. A knee lift has Jake draped in the ropes and a powerslam gets two. Roberts comes back with a poke to the eyes and a knee lift followed by the DDT for the fast pin. This was pretty much domination until the last ten seconds.

Jake wraps George up in the snake post match and makes Wells foam at the mouth.

We recap Piper vs. T which is allegedly based on a boxing match that happened in Phoenix, as apparently we're ignoring ALL of the stuff from last year that set up the first Wrestlemania.

Hogan predicts T to win and says his ribs will be fine in the cage tonight.

We introduce the "celebrities." First up is Joan Rivers as guest ring announcer, Darryl Dawkins, Cab Calloway and G. Gordon Liddy as guest

judges and Herb from Burger King commercials (you won't remember him) is guest timekeeper.

Roddy Piper vs. Mr. T.

This is a boxing match with ten three minute rounds. T has Joe Frazier as his trainer and the Haiti Kid to counter Orton. Piper is the aggressor to start as Vince calls T's defensive stance a peek-a-boo style. Roddy grabs on the ropes and T fires away some body shots. These rounds might only be two minutes rounds. Piper takes him into the corner but T bobs and weaves before popping Roddy in the face a few times. It turns into another brawl on the ropes for the last thirty seconds or so of the round.

Everyone comes in to break up the brawl and we take a break between rounds. T gets in a few shots to the face to open round 2 but Piper apparently has a bunch of goo on his face. There's an Orton/Piper joke in there somewhere. After the face gets cleaned off Piper starts pounding away and T is in trouble. I'll change the numbers again because the rounds are indeed three minutes long. Piper gets him into the corner and pounds away, dropping him with a pair of shots to the head after about seven shots that missed BADLY. That gets an eight count and round 2 ends with T going down just after the bell.

Piper gets in a few cheap shots after the bell because that's the kind of guy he is. We start round 3 with T firing away but they're clearly getting tired. Piper goes down in his corner but pulls himself up before the count. T pounds him right back down in the corner and this time gets a seven count. This turns into move of a shoving match until T gets in a right hand to knock Piper out of the ring and out to the floor. Round 3 ends with nothing of note going on.

T talks trash in between rounds so Piper throws his stool across the ring as round 4 begins. They slug it out with T finally taking over. Piper DRILLS him with a right hand that knocks T's mouthpiece out. T comes back with the same kind of a punch....and then Piper shoves the referee down and slams T for the DQ.

Rating: D. This was one of those things that everyone knew was going to be a disaster and the best chance they had was to make it goofy.

Thankfully we're talking about Roddy Piper in the 80s so you know he can bring the goofy. There were some decent punches in here but like all other wrestling boxing matches, you knew it would end with some sort of a DQ. This was pretty much it for Mr. T in the WWF other than a few cameos later on.

Off to Chicago!

Gene and Gorilla bring in Kathy Lee Crosby to do commentary.

Women's Title: Fabulous Moolah vs. Velvet McIntyre

Moolah is defending of course and hits about five hair mares in a row to start things off. Velvet comes back with some one footed dropkicks before going up and missing a splash for Moolah to get the pin. This barely lasted 90 seconds which may have been due to McIntyre's outfit breaking when she came off the ropes.

Corporal Kirchner vs. Nikolai Volkoff

This is a flag match which means a regular match where the winner gets to wave their flag. For some reason the ring is VERY loud all of a sudden. Kirchner is a guy you likely won't have heard of but he's famous for being VERY stiff which is why he wasn't around long. Blassie is with Nikolai here and his man hits a spinning kick to start.

We head to the floor where Volkoff rams him into the post and cuts the Corporal open with a piece of razor that he immediately puts back down into his trunks. Blassie yells at Kirchner a bit before they head back inside. It's a slugout but Blassie throws in his cane which goes upside Nikolai's head for the pin. This was another very short match.

Gene takes over the ring announcing for the NFL/WWF battle royal. There are six football players and fourteen wrestlers. Dick Butkus is a guest referee.

Battle Royal

NFL: Jimbo Covert, Harvey Martin, Ernie Holmes, Bill Fralic, Russ Francis, William Perry

WWF: Pedro Morales, Tony Atlas, Ted Arcidi, Dan Spivey, Hillbilly Jim, King Tonga, Iron Sheik, B. Brian Blair, Jim Brunzell, Big John Studd, Bruno Sammartino, Jim Neidhart, Bret Hart

Perry is the hometown boy but once they said Andre's name there was little doubt as to who was winning. Ernie Ladd jumps in on commentary as a former wrestler and football player. Andre chills in the corner and beats up anyone that comes near him. Perry gets ganged up on a few times in the corner but fights them off as Covert and Tonga go out. Francis goes after Andre like a crazy man and Holmes is gone.

The two giants go at it for a bit and Brunzell is gone. There's never much to talk about in battle royals as most of it is just a bunch of brawls and the occasional elimination like Atlas going out here. Studd beats up Perry in the corner as Martin and Morales put each other out. Arcidi loads up Blair but Bruno makes the save for some reason. Not that it matters though as Arcidi is put out just a few seconds later. Spivey is gone as are Blair and Hillbilly. We're down to about eight or so.

Fralic is dumped out by a bunch of people and Bruno backdrops Sheik out. Studd dumps Bruno and we're down to Andre, Studd, Francis, Perry and the Harts. Perry shrugs off both Harts and sends them to the apron for the biggest pop of the night. He starts firing off tackles at Studd before running into an elbow for the elimination. Perry offers a handshake but pulls Studd out to the floor to another big pop. The Harts get Andre tied in the ropes and easily dump Francis. They pound away on Andre a bit but the big man is like dude please. He grabs Neidhart by the beard and kicks him out before tossing Bret on Anvil to win.

Rating: D. This was another pretty lame match with the football players not being able to do much due to not being wrestlers. Perry was incredibly popular and got a great reaction from the crowd, but other than him the NFL guys didn't add anything at all here. Andre winning was the only logical choice and there's not much else to say here.

Vince and Susan talk to Piper in New York and of course he says he's awesome and didn't lose at all.

Back in Chicago Jimbo Covert says he got cheated by Fralic. Iron Sheik

says he's proven wrestlers are better than football players.

We look at the end of the battle royal again.

Tag Titles: Dream Team vs. British Bulldogs

The Dream Team is Brutus Beefcake and Greg Valentine and they're defending. For absolutely no apparent reason, the Bulldogs have Ozzy Osbourne in their corner. Smith and Valentine start things off with Davey pounding away in the corner. Off to a wristlock before Dynamite comes in to send Valentine into the buckle for two. There's the snap suplex for no cover and it's back to Davey for the delayed vertical.

Greg gets in a few shots in the corner including a forearm to the back to take over and finally bring in Brutus. He cranks on the arm and is immediately gorilla pressed down by Smith. Dynamite comes in again and gets two off a small package. Beefcake makes a blind tag though and Valentine comes in off the top via another forearm to the back and the champions take over. Kid comes right back and pounds away before bringing Smith back in.

The Bulldogs hit a double headbutt for two for Kid but Brutus comes in sans tag to switch momentum right back. Valentine gets two off a kneeling piledriver but falls victim to the Arn Anderson self-crotching mistake. He continues the Horsemen theme by going up top and getting slammed down ala Flair as everything breaks down. Dynamite gets sent to the floor so Smith comes in with the powerslam (not yet the finisher) for two on Valentine.

Davey misses a charges into the post though and his shoulder is hurt in a hurry. Brutus comes in to work over the arm and hits a kind of hammerlock slam. Valentine hits a shoulderbreaker but pulls up before covering. In a VERY sudden ending, Dynamite gets on the top rope while still illegal and Davey rams Valentine's head into that of Dynamite for the pin and the title.

Rating: B. It's not a great or even a very good match but after nearly two hours of lame wrestling with nothing matches, this was a great breath of fresh air. The Bulldogs would be champions for the better part of a

year while the Dream Team would survive for another year before splitting at the next Wrestlemania. Good stuff here though.

Both sets of announcers talk about the title change. I'll give the female celebrities this: they sound like they're enjoying themselves and they're trying at least.

Off to Los Angeles.

Ricky Steamboat vs. Hercules Hernandez

Lee Marshall of non-fame in WCW is the announcer. This was supposed to be Steamboat vs. Hart but WWF saw more star power in Hernandez. This wasn't their best time from a thinking standpoint. Hercules pounds on him to start but Steamboat goes to the arm as is his custom. A kick to the ribs puts Hernandez down and it's off to an armbar. Back up and Steamboat does some leapfrogs before elbowing Herc down.

We head to the armbar again until Hernandez rams him into the buckle and hits a clothesline to take Steamboat down. A hot shot has Steamboat in trouble again but he comes back with a failed slam attempt that gives Hercules two. A pair of elbows get two more due to a very lazy cover. Hercules hits a tilt-a-whirl slam for two and there's a gorilla press slam to go with it. Make it a pair of gorilla presses but Hernandez's splash hits knees, allowing Ricky to hit the top rope cross body for the pin.

Rating: C-. Very basic match here with power vs. speed, although most of the speed guy's offense involved an armbar. That's something you have to get used to in Steamboat matches though so it's not a disappointment or anything. The match itself was pretty dull stuff but Steamboat in the 80s is never a bad thing.

Adrian Adonis vs. Uncle Elmer

We hit the stereotypes now the gay character vs. the hillbilly character. Elmer, weighing roughly 450lbs, runs off Adonis and Jimmy Hart before the match and we get a good shot of Adrian's pink dress. We finally get inside and Elmer starts pounding away before sending Adonis into the

corner for a Flair Flip. Adrian gets sent into the corner two more times in a row with the second time landing him on the floor. Back in and there goes the dress as Adrian gets tied up in the ropes. A single punch to the chest puts Elmer down but he comes back with a corner splash, only to miss the big leg drop. A top rope headbutt gives Adrian a pin.

Rating: D-. What are you expecting here? We've got REALLY basic gimmicks (although Adonis wasn't bad in his day) in a three minute match involving a man wearing a dress. This is what you call filler, albeit terrible filler. Elmer wouldn't ever really do much in the WWF but he was a pretty big deal in the indies.

Adonis puts a flower on Elmer's back post match.

We get Hogan's second promo of the show with him saying he's ready for Bundy and he begs Heenan to get involved.

Funk Brothers vs. Junkyard Dog vs. Junkyard Dog/Tito Santana

It's Terry and Hoss here, with the latter being more famous as Dory Jr. Hoss and Dog start things off with JYD sending one Funk into another and slamming them both down before the Funks head to the floor for a breather. Off to Tito vs. Terry for a bit now and it's a short bit as Terry gets clotheslined to the floor. Hoss takes a dropkick to send him out to be with his brother and the heels huddle on the floor again. Oh and they have Jimmy Hart too.

Back to the Dog vs.. Terry and they slug it out with Dog taking over. JYD rams Terry into the buckle so many times that the pad starts to come off. Terry gets thrown to the unpadded floor yet again and it's back to Hoss. Tito comes in as well and Hoss fires off the famous Funk forearms. Speaking of forearms, the flying variety takes Hoss down and the Funks head to the floor again.

Hoss gets back in for a crisscross with Terry hitting Tito in the back with a knee to take over. Tito gets knocked to the floor and JYD has to chase Jimmy off a few times before throwing Santana back in. Terry gets two off a suplex and argues with the referee a bit before getting suplexed himself. They hit the ropes and collide but Terry falls into his

own corner to bring in Hoss. The Funks hit a double clothesline which gets two for Terry who is getting frustrated.

Santana finally slides between Terry's legs and makes the hot tag to JYD. We prove we're in the 80s with a double noggin knocker to both of the Funks and a punch sends Hoss to the outside. Terry has a rope from somewhere as everything breaks down. JYD throws Terry to the floor and slams him on a table for good measure. Terry's knee is hurt and he can't stand up but he gets back inside anyway as Jimmy gets decked. Everything breaks down again and Tito puts Hoss in the Figure Four but Terry blasts Dog in the head with the megaphone for the pin.

Rating: B-. I've said before that the 1980s were the best era ever for tag wrestling and this show proves it again. Most of the show hasn't been all that great but the tag matches have been by far the best matches on the card. This was a fun and WILD match but not to the point where you couldn't keep track of what was going on. Good stuff here and after two boring matches in the LA section this was a good match to pick things up.

We set up the cage, which is the big blue kind for the first time ever.

Hogan is lifting weights with bad ribs and we recap Hogan vs. Bundy. On SNME, Hogan defended the title against Don Muraco and after the match, Bundy ran in and destroyed Hogan with a bunch of splashes to injure the ribs. The doctor says Hogan shouldn't be doing this, so Hulk does chinups with a 100lb weight around his neck.

Heenan and Bundy say they're going to take the title from Hogan.

Elvira sends it to New York for comments from Susan and Vince.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

Escape only here, as it should be. Tommy Lasorda of the LA Dodgers is guest ring announcer. Ricky Schroder, a child actor, is guest timekeeper and Robert Conrad, an adult actor, is guest referee. Hogan starts firing off right hands to start and knocks Bundy into the cage before choking Bundy with his own singlet. The following clothesline in the corner has Bundy in even more trouble and a forearm to the head staggers him even

more. All Hogan so far.

Both guys block shots into the cage but King goes to the ribs to stop Hogan cold. There's a slam to mess with the ribs even more and Bundy goes for the door. You know it's not ending that fast though so Bundy comes back to choke with the tape a bit. Another attempt to escape goes about as well and Hulk comes back with an elbow in the corner. Bundy gets rammed into the cage to bust him open and Hogan rakes his back a bit. More cage ramming occurs and Hulk climbs to the top to choke away on the ropes.

Hogan goes for the slam but Bundy falls down onto him as you would expect him to. Bundy goes to the door but Hulk grabs him for some choking with the rib tape. The Avalanche splash hits in the corner and a regular one hits as well so Hogan can shake like a fish. Hogan dives to stop Bundy from getting out but takes another Avalanche...with no effect whatsoever. The champion busts out a powerslam of all things and easily climbs out to retain.

Rating: D. It's Hogan vs. a monster in 1986 so what in the world were you expecting to see here? At the end of the day this was the safe move but with all of the other heels on the roster, this is the best they could come up with? I mean, you have Savage, Piper or even Roberts to be in there, but you pick Bundy? It's not like this was some huge feud as the SNME that set this up was five weeks before this show. I've heard that Vince was trying desperately to get Nikita Koloff to jump and be in the main event but when they fell through, they picked a monster instead. Eh when all else fails, go with the safe pick.

Hogan beats up Heenan to close the show.

Overall Rating: D. This is a tough one to grade for the same reason that I don't consider it the worst Mania ever: it was the second one and they had NO idea what they were doing here. The main thing that helps this show is that while most of the matches are worthless, they're FAST. Of all the non-tag matches, only the cage match and the boxing match break ten minutes and the cage match does so by about 15 seconds. It's certainly not a good show and if this happened today Vince would be

jumping off a building, but for its time this wasn't completely terrible.

Ratings Comparison

Paul Orndorff vs. Don Muraco

Original: D+

Redo: D

Randy Savage vs. George Steele

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Jake Roberts vs. George Wells

Original: F

Redo: D+

Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper

Original: F

Redo: D

Fabulous Moolah vs. Velvet McIntyre

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Corporal Kirschner vs. Nikolai Volkoff

Original: D-

Redo: N/A

Battle Royal

Original: B

Redo: D

British Bulldog vs. Dream Team

Original: B-

Redo: B

Rick Steamboat vs. Hercules Hernandez

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Adrian Adonis vs. Uncle Elmer

Original: N/A

Redo: D-

Terry Funk/Hoss Funk vs. Tito Santana/Junkyard Dog

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

Original: B-

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: D+

Redo: D

Dang those must have been the strong rose colored glasses back then.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/09/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-2-what-the-hell-were-they-thinking/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Lucha Underground – February 25, 2015: The Best Thing This Kind Of Company Can Do

Lucha Underground

Date: February 25, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

There are a lot of stories going on around here and the main match tonight is Cage vs. Lucha Underground Champion Prince Puma in a non-title match for a potential future title shot. Other than that we have the continuing rivalry between Texano and Alberto El Patron over the AAA World Title. Let's get to it.

A car pulls up and a woman is tied up in the back.

The house band plays us in. They really don't need to exist.

The announcers recap recent events. I want to punch both of these guys in the face.

Aerostar vs. Drago

We get a rare handshake to start before Drago is sent to the floor ten seconds in, setting up a springboard dive from Aerostar. Back in and Drago rolls up a limping Aerostar for two but the selling lasts all of five seconds. That doesn't sit well with Drago so he hits a springboard tornado DDT followed by a not great looking throw into a faceplant for two. Drago misses a charge into the corner and takes a running kick to the back.

A kick sends Aerostar to the floor with Drago hitting an even better flip dive as they're flying fast so far. Aerostar pops back up and avoids a charge on the apron, sending Drago face first into the post. It's Aerostar going up 2-1 on the dives, even though he almost leaves it short and crashes.

Back in and Drago hits a top rope hurricanrana before doing one of the most overly complicated dives into a cradle (Dragon's Lair) that I've ever seen. The flips took nearly five seconds and only got a one count. The fans think this is awesome as Aerostar sunset bombs him out to the floor. A springboard splash back inside is good enough to pin Drago in a fast ending.

Rating: C+. RIDICULOUS (in a bad way) flips aside, this was the kind of match you want to open a show like this. Usually you would want something like this in the middle of a show but given that this is just 45 minutes long after commercials, there's not enough time to build up a regular card. Very fun, but certainly not technically sound, match.

Aerostar helps him up and they shake hands again post match. Cueto comes out and says he enjoyed that. These two have fought twice now and it's 1-1. This match was so entertaining that they're going to face each other until someone wins two more times. The winner will get a unique opportunity. I could live with that idea, especially when it's not something we see that often in today's wrestling.

King Cuerno video.

Cage vs. Prince Puma

Non-title and you would think this would end the show. The champ goes

right after Cage to start but is shoved down with ease. A discus forearm staggers Cage and Puma heads to the apron, only to eat a HARD clothesline, sending him back first onto the apron and head first onto the floor in a sick crash. The Cesaro apron superplex gets two for Cage and he catches a cross body with ease and throws Puma down with a fall away slam.

We hit the neck crank before he misses an enziguri and gets thrown down again. All Cage so far and a powerslam drops Puma one more time. Cage misses a moonsault though and an enziguri sends him outside. A HUGE running shooting star off the top stuns Cage again and sends Striker into full mark mode. The springboard 450 only gets two on Cage so he throws Puma around with a gutwrench suplex. He tries one too many though and gets hurricanranaed down.

A Phoenix Splash misses and Cage is all ticked off, setting up a wicked discus lariat to turn Puma inside out for two. Cage plants him with a sitout powerbomb for two more and we hit a Brock Lock. Cue the injured Konnan, who starts a Puma chant and draws Puma the full nine inches to the ropes. A powerbomb into a buckle bomb into Weapon X (a Gory Bomb into a downward spiral) is enough to make Konnan throw in the towel to give the match to Cage.

Rating: B-. This was more storytelling than a match and there's nothing wrong with that. Cage is a monster and I'm really surprised WWE let him go off his developmental contract. He has the look and the power, but for some reason they didn't see potential in him. You would think he would be perfect as a bodyguard for someone in a Matt Morgan style role. Either way, this sets up a big showdown at some point in the future with an easy yet good story.

After a break, Konnan tells Puma that he just did him a favor.

Sexy Star rants to Cueto about the Crew injuring her friends and promises to put them in hospital. Cueto's offer: a match about Big Ryck next week with the winner getting to face the Crew. No man is allowed to help her next week either. Now THAT is some smart booking and an interesting way to get us to multiple potential conclusions.

Vinny Massaro vs. Pentagon Jr.

Massaro is a regular in California. Pentagon dedicates this match to unnamed master. A hard chop puts Massaro down to start and that double underhook driver is enough to give Pentagon the easy pin.

Pentagon powerbombs him through a table for good measure. The arm is cranked to keep up the evil streak.

King Cuerno vs. Johnny Mundo

This should be good but it makes no sense to have it as the main event when you had Puma vs. Cage. Mundo charges at Cuerno to start but eats a forearm. That just ticks him off more though as Mundo hammers away and hits a running knee to the face for two. A superkick knocks Cuerno off the apron and sets up a HUGE spinning flip dive to take Cuerno down one more time.

Back in and Cuerno slams Johnny down and drops a leg for two. It's back to the knee as Striker determines that a corner is sacred for some reason. Mundo fights back with right hands and a spear for two with his knee not being in any noticeable pain. Cuerno tries to spin around Mundo's arm but falls down on his face. To be fair though, that was quite the difficult looking spot. Thrill of the Hunt doesn't work and Mundo kicks him down again. A superkick knocks Mundo into the corner but he comes back with a springboard knee to the chest.

The Moonlight Drive looks to set up the End of the World but Cuerno kicks Mundo to the floor. A good looking suicide dive sends Johnny into the barricade as this is really picking up. Now the knee is giving out. Convenient timing after all his high spots are done. Cuerno goes back inside for an even bigger suicide dive, driving Mundo's spine into the announcers' table. The third suicide dive connects and Mundo is DONE, but Cuerno can't beat the count back in either for a double countout.

Rating: B-. Heck of a fight here but Mundo really didn't look like he was able to hang in there with Cuerno, which really doesn't hold up for the sake of a rematch. Those suicide dives looked great though and confirm Cuerno's status as my favorite guy in this promotion. Really fun beating

at the end but Striker continued to get on my nerves and brought it down a few pegs.

Mundo gets back up and dives between the ropes onto Cuerno's back. A kick to Cuerno's face drops him as well and they fight up the steps. Striker says Cuerno knows the jungle so well. That's such an appropriate line because it has ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE MOMENT. Mundo spears him through a wall (the Jungle Wall right Striker?) and that's it.

Well almost all of it as we see the car from earlier again.

Overall Rating: B. Really solid episode this week as they set up a lot of stuff for the future and had some great action at the same time. There's some real talent on this roster with Cuerno and Puma standing out, but guys like Cage and Pentagon have potential as well. The key to this show continues to be its logical, week to week booking which is the best thing a company like this can do: give you a reason to come back next week.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Thunder – October 7, 1999: Benoit's Limit

Thunder

Date: October 7, 1999

Location: UTC Arena, Chattanooga, Tennessee

Attendance: 2,411

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Larry Zbyszko

Back to this disaster again as it's we're still getting close to Halloween Havoc and the question this week is what can Goldberg do to Sid's car now. Actually the question would be why is this the best they can come up with. Russo and Ferrara aren't in charge at this point, so this might actually be the last taped event (save for Saturday Night with its insane schedule but who cares about that show at this point?) before they took over. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Dean Malenko vs. Blitzkrieg

Blitzkrieg has new attire. This could be interesting, especially if Malenko stretches him for doing too many ridiculous flips. Malenko easily takes him down to start and they trade some hammerlocks. Dean slaps on a front chancery followed by a quickly broken surfboard. Total wrestling clinic from Malenko so far. Back up again and Blitzkrieg tries to jump over Dean and gets dropped face first onto the mat for his efforts.

Dean stomps away in the corner but Blitzkrieg gets up and does an unnecessary backflip out of the corner, followed by a more necessary running dropkick in the same corner. A moonsault sets up a chinlock on Dean but he pops back up and drives a knee into the masked ribs. Well the ribs of the masked man. No one would put a mask on the ribs, though I have seen a claw onto the ribs.

Dean scores with a suplex for some two counts before cranking on the knee like you would expect from a submission specialist. Can you really call him that when he only uses one hold 95% of the time? He stomps away at the leg before hitting a nice gutbuster for two. Blitzkrieg doesn't sell the leg so Malenko suplexes him over the top and out to the floor as the announcers talk about the Outsiders on Nitro.

Blitzkrieg sends him into the barricade and hits a big twisting dive over

the top for a nice looking crash. Back in and the masked man slips, which is about as good as we're going to get for selling. Malenko plants him with a top rope belly to back superplex, followed by a quick pinfall reversal sequence. A wicked tiger bomb sets up the Cloverleaf to give Malenko the win.

Rating: C. There's something so fun about a technician like Malenko throwing around a high flier like Blitzkrieg, especially when it seems like Dean is annoyed at a lot of the no selling of the leg. I mean, the guy can't even limp a bit before he does the dives? Not a bad match here, but it's nice to see Dean win whenever he's not losing to people who don't deserve the push they're getting.

We run down the card for Halloween Havoc. That show is going to hurt.

Quick look at Disco Inferno winning the Cruiserweight Title again on Monday.

Cruiserweight Title: Disco Inferno vs. Evan Karagias

Disco's entrance is edited out because he wasn't Cruiserweight Champion when this was taped. The champ cranks on the arm to start but Evan trips him up and works on the arm as well. A pair of dropkicks send Disco to the floor before he comes back in for another armbar. We could have had Psychosis doing some nice dives or Malenko using 37 varieties of an armbar, but instead we get Disco who uses a total of one kind.

Disco's backdrop is countered with a simple shove to the mat because this match can't get past second gear. Evan rains down right hands in the corner but gets sent out to the floor. More whips into various steel objects get two for the champ. Now we get to the interesting stretch of the match as Disco suplexes Evan, then suplexes him again, then can't hit the third attempt.

A double clothesline puts both guys down before Evan gets up with some right hands and a slam. Evan goes to the apron for a springboard cross body for two more, followed by a powerslam for the same. His attempt at a headscissors is countered though and Disco hits the Last Dance to retain.

Rating: D+. The match isn't bad from a technical standpoint but my goodness Disco isn't going to work in this spot. Yeah he can have some acceptable matches, but after watching Malenko earlier tonight, it's really hard to sit through Inferno defending the title against someone like Evan Karagias.

Just to show how dense WCW is, they show Disco's entrance after the match, showing that he doesn't have the belt and completely defeating the purpose of not showing it in the first place.

Bret Hart is proud of his match with Benoit on Monday.

Clip of Brad Armstrong telling Berlyn to speak English in America. This is making me long for the days of Jim Duggan vs. Boris Zhukov.

Brad Armstrong vs. Chris Adams

England is evil now? This would have been a very fun back in say...1987. The fans chant USA as Adams takes him up against the ropes for a cheap shot. They do it again but Armstrong ducks a second cheap shot. Score one for the United States school system. An armdrag sends Adams to the floor before he comes back in to trade wristlocks. Is there a ban on working ANYTHING other than the arm, or did Blitzkrieg's no selling scare everyone off?

Adams throws him to the floor and stomps away outside. Back in and Adams hits a top rope clothesline, followed by a variety of suplexes. He misses a top rope knee drop but avoids a charge and hits the superkick for two. Brad avoids a charge of his own and hits the Russian (some American hero) legsweep for the pin.

Rating: D. They expect to put Berlyn vs. Brad Armstrong on pay per view and have people pay for it? That's really the best lower card match they can find? You know who won't be on the card at Halloween Havoc? Dean Malenko. Dump Berlyn and let Armstrong have a match against Dean if nothing else. No it won't be the interesting build in the world, but at least the match will be entertaining. Armstrong is still decent in the ring but my goodness they're not giving him much to work with at the pay per view. Adams is way past his prime here at 44 years old but he still

has a decent superkick.

TV Title: Chris Benoit vs. Brian Knobbs

Benoit is defending because Heaven help us if Knobbs ever got a singles title. Brian talks trash on the floor as Jimmy Hart has to tell him to get in the ring. This is like that angle where Bobby Heenan had to give Terry Taylor specific instructions on everything to make him win but without the angle part. He finally gets in and they shove each other a bit before Benoit just fires off right hands, likely at frustration for having to fight someone like Knobbs, and dropkicks him out to the floor.

After about 45 seconds of stalling and not even a single count from the referee, we actually continue the match. Back in and Benoit blocks a charge by raising his boots but runs into a powerslam. Some right hands send Brian back to the floor but he blocks a baseball slide and throws Benoit into the steps. They head into the crowd as referee Nick Patrick argues with Jimmy Hart.

This show seems to be in a ventriloquist convention as the fans sound like they're going nuts but they appear to just be sitting there. Amazing how Smackdown and Thunder crowds always go that way. They fight up towards the chairs (minus the fans in them) and we take a break. Back with nothing having changed and no reason to believe the referee has even started counting. If you want to have a hardcore match then have a hardcore match. Just say that's what it is so the fans don't get confused by the referee's lack of actions.

They go back to ringside with Benoit being sent into the steps twice in a row. Knobbs chokes a lot and throws a chair at Benoit but the champ wins a slugout and takes it back inside for a nice change of pace. The Swan Dive misses though and Brian covers for two before using his usual lame offense. Knobbs elbows out of a German suplex attempt but Benoit goes into Wolverine mode and hits back to back Germans. Since WE MUST PROTECT BRIAN KNOBBS, Jimmy Hart breaks it up at two and we have a ref bump. Hart accidentally nails his man with the megaphone though, allowing Benoit to hit the Swan Dive to retain.

Rating: D+. Benoit is great, but there's a firm limit to what he's

capable of doing and we found it with this match. Who in the world can carry Brian Knobbs to a ten minute match without the use of weapons for a crutch? This is another case where there had to be someone else capable of having a better match. Even Hugh Morrus would have been miles ahead of Knobbs here, but Morrus isn't friends with the right people. Who was going to stick around with this show to see Brian Knobbs get a title shot?

Lash Leroux vs. Silver King

King grabs him to start but gets taken down in an armbar. Some right hands and a clothesline have King in trouble but he sees Lash duck his head and takes him down with a tornado DDT for two. In a bad looking botch, Silver King moonsaults onto Lash's head for another near fall. Thankfully Lash doesn't seem to badly messed up but that looked scary.

Lash comes back with a headscissors but his hurricanrana is countered into a good looking superbomb. We hit the chinlock but King throws in some gnawing at the head to keep it interesting. Lash fights to his feet and goes up top, only to dive into a right hand to the ribs. After an unnecessary trip to the floor, Lash escapes a powerbomb attempt and hits Whiplash for the fast pin.

Rating: C-. Not bad here but this was the lower end of the cruiserweight division. Leroux wasn't bad but he needed to do something besides just be a Cajun. There wasn't anything to this one other than Silver King's powerbomb and biting at Lash's head. Why didn't Silver King win here again?

Bret still really liked that match on Monday.

Death of Lex Luger video.

Maestro vs. Dale Torborg

Torborg is....the love child of Sting and Knuckleball Schwartz. Baseball jersey with MVP written on the chest, baseball pants with pinstripes, and red and black facepaint and gloves. There's no other way to describe him. Maestro armdrags him down a few times before cranking on the arm. That's

not exactly how you want someone who looks like Torborg to have their first match in a new gimmick. Torborg kicks him in the back and drives in some elbows for good measure, only to get caught in a belly to back suplex.

Something like Steve Austin's flip off elbow gets two for Maestro but a Rock Bottom gives Torborg the quick pin. What an odd match and I'm assuming Maestro is a good guy after the way he was going out there. Just bizarre though as both guys were making their in ring debut (at least in these characters as Torborg had a match on Nitro earlier in the year) and Maestro went from a grand entrance to easily losing a match.

Road report. These aren't as good without Lee Marshall, and that's REALLY not saying much.

Rey Mysterio Jr./Kidman vs. Disorderly Conduct

Disorderly Conduct cheat to start (well that certainly is disorderly) and get dropkicked to the floor where the Animals hit stereo dives to take them down. We settle down to Kidman beating up Mike in the ring. Tom comes in and gets the same treatment, meaning Kidman is running out of tricks. He gets a bit more complicated though by headscissoring Mike and headlocking Tom at the same time.

Rey comes in with a Lionsault for two on Mike before it's off to Tom who can't powerbomb Mysterio. Does being Kidman's partner mean you get to share his powers? Tom finally hits a kind of reverse powerbomb on Mysterio to take over with a lot of stomping keeping him in trouble. An Earthquake style powerslam plants Rey and we take a break. Back with Tom tilt-a-whirl slamming Mysterio for two as the themed jobbers keep up the double teaming. A top rope ax handle to the head gets two for Tom.

Mike distracts the referee so Rey's small package only gets two so it's back to the double teaming, including an ax handle to help Mike's neckbreaker. Off to the chinlockery portion of the match with Tom hooking two of them in a row. That's quite the feat. Back to Mike for a slam but he misses a top rope elbow. The hot tag brings in Kidman for a BK Bomb to Tom as everything breaks down. Kidman puts Tom up top and launches Rey into the super hurricanrana (that always looks cool) for the pin with

Kidman baseball sliding Mike just in case.

Rating: C. Take two power heels and put them against two high flying good guys and you're almost always guaranteed to have a passable match. This is a formula as old as professional wrestling itself and it will still work to this day. Power vs. speed is one of the most basic matchups you can see and Kidman and Mysterio were as good of a combination as there was at this point.

From Monday, Bret Hart talks about how special that match with Benoit was. You can see how important this really is to him and it's always good to see Hart a happy man.

US Title: Stevie Ray vs. Sid Vicious

It's about time Sid defended that thing. Believe it or not, this actually has a story behind it as Sid and Steiner attacked Stevie a few weeks back so Stevie wants revenge. That's better continuity than WCW has shown in months. Ray jumps him on the apron and clotheslines Sid out to the floor.

A few whips send the champ into the barricade and Stevie slams him down on the floor. I don't know what's gotten into Sid recently but this is the second match in a row where he's actually sold something. Therefore, here's Rick Steiner to hammer Stevie from behind as referee Charles Robinson stops to tie his shoes. Back in and Sid only gets two off Steiner's attack so he beats on Stevie to relieve that tension.

Ray comes back with right hands but Steiner trips him up one more time and a legdrop to the back of the head gets two for Sid. We hit the worst chinlock ever (a record Sid breaks twice a week) as Sid LAYS DOWN while barely cranking on Stevie's neck. Stevie fights up but eats a forearm from Steiner. Somehow he's able to backdrop his way out of the powerbomb, but the referee stops to tie his shoe for the second time. The Steiner Bulldog and a double powerbomb is enough to make Sid 128-0, after he was 120-0 on Nitro.

Rating: D+. Maybe it's the wrestling version of Stockholm Syndrome, but these Sid disasters are starting to turn into something resembling tolerable. No they're not good matches or anything really resembling

such, but they're at least they get in and get out without making things too stupid. They have an idea now, even though it doesn't seem likely to go anywhere.

Overall Rating: D. This is a tricky show to grade as the wrestling wasn't the worst in the world, but the lack of star power REALLY hurt things. I can tolerate low name guys if the matches are really good, but that just wasn't the case here. You need someone to invest in and Brad Armstrong just doesn't fill that role for fighting a German who is more annoying than bad.

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

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania I: The Night That Changed Everything

I had to get here eventually and it feels great to be back. These shows are the first reviews I ever did as I thought it would be fun to look back at every show leading up to Wrestlemania 25. Little did I know that I would spend four years doing them and wind up going on to do every major PPV of all time. That's appropriate as this is the birth of the modern PPV (yes Starrcade came first and no, it wasn't the same kind of

show. Well not at first at least) and the biggest event in wrestling.

Wrestlemania started off as little more than a house show with mainstream press. Fueled by the Rock N Wrestling Connection which saw wrestlers appearing in pop and rock music videos (thanks to the rise of MTV), the show was the follow up to a pair of shows called the Brawl to End it All and the War to Settle the Score.

The show, featuring Hulk Hogan and Mr. T. teaming up in the main event, was a smash hit and has since spawned an unthinkable 28 followup editions. Wrestlemania paved the way for the modern day pay per view and is by far the biggest show of the year for the WWE. We're going to examine these shows one at a time and one per day until we reach Wrestlemania 31 this year in San Francisco. Let's get to it.

Wrestlemania I

Date: March 31, 1985

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

Attendance: 19,121

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse Ventura

We begin here at a show that certainly won't be like the rest of these. This show is far more about the spectacle than the major matches which is shown in the main event. Our big match tonight is Hulk Hogan and Mr. T. teaming up to face Paul Orndorff and Roddy Piper in a grudge match. Yeah the first show doesn't even have the world title on the line. Today, there are at least two world title matches per show. Anyway, this is where it all began so let's get to it.

The opening video is a bunch of shots of New York City with the WWF logo and some pictures of the wrestlers coming in later. The celebrities for tonight's show (headlined by Muhammad Ali) are also shown.

Here's Mean Gene to sing the Star Spangled Banner.

Tito Santana says he's ready for the undefeated Executioner and he's going to teach the newcomer a thing or two about the big leagues.

The Executioner says he's going after Santana's injured leg. So much for

secrecy.

Tito Santana vs. Executioner

Executioner is Buddy Rose (of Blow Away fame) under a mask. Tito is WAY over here in MSG so he was a good choice to open things up. We start with a crisscross before Tito dropkicks Executioner out to the floor. Back in and Santana hooks a headlock to take Executioner to the mat as we're still waiting on that promised leg work. Tito charges into a boot in the corner and Executioner takes him down with a knee to the ribs. A spinning toe hold is easily escaped so Executioner goes after the other leg. So which one is injured in the first place?

Tito shrugs him off and the masked guy hides in the corner. Since it's a corner that Tito is looking straight at, the hiding doesn't go all that well and Tito slugs him down. Executioner comes back with a slam and goes up, only to be slammed right back down. A Santana splash hits knees though and we get to the knee work. That work consists of one cannonball down onto it before Tito kicks him to the floor. Back in and the forearm sets up the Figure Four to make Santana the first winner in the history of Wrestlemania.

Rating: C-. This wasn't too bad and the crowd reacted well to Santana, but Executioner was just a guy there to be evil. For an opening match this was a pretty good idea but for a match in general it was pretty lame stuff. Then again they have no idea what they're doing at this point so it's understandable.

S.D. Jones says he's ready for King Kong Bundy. I see why I've never heard him talk other than this show. He's going to get down for Bundy.

Bundy says Jones needs to be ready for the Avalanche and the five count.

S. D. Jones vs. King Kong Bundy

Here's an infamous one. Jones is a guy from the old days who is here to make the fans feel good I guess. The match lasts 23 seconds with Bundy shoving Jones into the corner, splashing him three times and getting the pin. According to the WWF the time was 9 seconds, which doesn't even make

bad sense for them.

Matt Borne, the future Doink the Clown, says he's ready to beat a worldwide star in Ricky Steamboat. Steamboat's problem is that he's too nice of a guy. That's likely true.

Steamboat says this is the biggest card ever and he's here to develop his meanness. You don't hear this often, but Steamboat failed miserably in that regard.

Matt Borne vs. Ricky Steamboat

Borne is the Maniac so I have another name to use. Steamboat is looking chiseled here. I've never seen him so ripped up and it's a strange look on him. Also he isn't called the Dragon yet which is even odder to hear. Ricky speeds things up to start and chops Borne down before hitting a chinlock only about 40 seconds in.

Off to a headlock instead with Steamboat backflipping over Borne twice with the second time resulting in an atomic drop. Back to the headlock which is shifted into a front facelock but Borne comes back with a snap suplex for two. Ricky is like dude I'm Ricky Steamboat and suplexes Borne down, followed by a swinging neckbreaker. A shoulder block puts Borne down and the cross body ends this near squash clean.

Rating: D+. Eh it's Steamboat in the 80s so how bad can this be? Ricky wasn't a huge star yet but he was rapidly becoming known as something special. It would be another year or so before he started tearing the house down on a regular basis and started having his masterpieces. Borne would be a lot better when he had a gimmick to go with his skills.

The Sammartinos are ready for Johnny V and Brutus Beefcake. Bruno threatens Johnny V is he tries to get involved.

David Sammartino vs. Brutus Beefcake

Sammartino was the son of a legend and had a good way into the business as a result. He had a good look on top of that, but he had one thing holding him back: he had no talent. His "career" was really just a way to keep Bruno around for a few more years to draw in some extra crowds and

that's the only reason this match is happening. Beefcake is new at this point and is nowhere near what he would become so this is going to be pretty bad.

David's height doesn't help him either as he's about 5'8 or so. They head to the mat to start and Brutus has to bail to the floor for a breather. Back in and Sammartino takes it right back to the mat with a front facelock. A legdrop to the arm has Beefcake in trouble and it's time to talk to the managers a bit. Beefcake comes back with a headlock takeover but David grabs the legs to work them over a bit.

Off to a leg lock as we keep things very basic so far. Brutus fights up with his leg seeming fine all of a sudden. He drops some forearms to David's back and there's a hard whip into the corner by Beefcake. David comes back with a backdrop and they slug it out a bit. Sammartino strikes like his daddy. A suplex gets two for David but Brutus sends him to the floor. The managers get into a fight and both guys run in for a double DQ.

Rating: D+. This is a hard one to grade as it's a competitive match and not completely terrible, but the problem is how low level of quality this was. Neither guy was terrible but you could tell they were trying which makes a big difference. This could have been WAY worse but it just wasn't that good in the first place.

I forgot to mention how the interviews are being done. Alfred Hayes is standing in the entrance with the ring behind him as the guys come by him for their matches. The interviews are recorded earlier in the day though so it's kind of odd.

Anyway Valentine says he's tough and leaner than usual.

JYD says he's going to take a bite out of Valentine. So he's promising to cheat? Good to know.

Intercontinental Title: Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine

Dog cranks on the arm to start and punches him in the shoulder ala Marciano. A punch to the face takes Valentine down and a headbutt sends

the champion (Greg in case you're not familiar with this era) to the floor. Valentine tries his luck at the arm now and pounds away with some forearms to the back of the head. I'm not sure if that should hurt the Dog or not.

The champion goes after the leg now with what looks to be the start of a half crab but he never turns Dog over. A kind of DDT on the leg has the Dog in trouble again and there's a headbutt between the legs. Dog breaks up the Figure Four and hits a headbutt to stagger the champ some more. Jimmy Hart tries to interfere but Dog causes Valentine to blast him in the head instead. Valentine grabs a fast rollup and puts his feet on the ropes for the pin.

Rating: D+. I'm getting tired of using that rating but this is what the matches keep coming out as: not terrible but nothing good at all. Valentine would get back to his current feud with Tito Santana very soon with the title changing hands pretty soon if I remember properly. Dog was there as more of a fun character than a serious threat so this was fine.

Speaking of Santana, here he is to tell the referee what happened. The referee restarts the match but Valentine walks out for the countout without ever getting back in. That's just building Santana vs. Valentine for later.

Iron Sheik and Nikolai Volkoff say their countries are better than America. Where's my pitchfork when I need to run freaks like these off?

The US Express say they're ready.

Tag Titles: US Express vs. Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Sheik

The Express is Barry Windham and Mike Rotundo and they're defending tonight. A little trivia for you: the song Real American was originally used for the two of them but Hogan wound up using it instead. The heels do their whole Russian national anthem and Iran/Russia #1 deal before the match. Rotundo and Sheik start things off with the Iranian hooking a headlock. A dropkick puts Sheik down and Mike grabs a headlock.

Off to Barry who avoids double teaming and causes the challengers to

collide. Back to Rotundo to work over Nikolai with an elbow drop getting two. Windham comes in off the top with a shot to the arm and Rotundo does the same thing. Sheik suplexes Mike down for two as the foreigners take over. Nikolai drops him throat first across the throat and the USA chant starts up.

A sunset flip gets a quick two for Mike but it's back to Sheik for an abdominal stretch. That doesn't last long though as Mike hiptosses out of it and it's off to Barry via the hot tag. The bulldog (Barry's finisher at the time) takes Volkoff out as everything breaks down. In the melee, Sheik hits Windham in the back with the cane for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C. This was a better match than we've seen so far with the fans getting way into the whole USA vs. foreigners thing. The title change was there only so something historic could happen and the Express got the belts back about two and a half months later. They would split soon after that with both guys heading to the NWA.

Sheik and Volkoff said they've proven their superiority now.

Intermission which is edited out of the home video releases.

Big John Studd says he'll slam Andre and keep the money.

Big John Studd vs. Andre the Giant

This is a bodyslam challenge with some special stipulations: if Andre wins, he gets \$15,000 but if Studd wins, Andre has to retire. Studd charges in to start but is immediately chopped back and he bails to the floor. Back in and Andre punches him in the head and rams him in the corner with all of his weight. Studd goes for a slam and Andre is just like dude please. The fans chant for a slam as Andre puts on a bearhug. That goes on for a good while until Andre shifts over to a facelock. Apparently if this goes to the time limit, Andre has to retire. Andre kicks at the leg for a bit and casually slams Studd for the win. It's as quick as it sounds.

Rating: D. This was pretty terrible but the fans loved Andre and he had to be on here. Also this was part of a big feud as Andre and Studd cut

Andre's hair a few weeks before this. The match was pretty weak but then again what are you going to expect from these two guys with Andre's body starting to fail on him.

Andre hands a few bucks out to the fans but Heenan steals the bag and runs off.

Andre says he doesn't care about the money because he's better than Studd and now he's proven it. He isn't retiring anytime soon either.

Cyndi Lauper and Wendi Richter want Wendi's title back. Richter is MAD here and has a nearly man's voice.

Moolah and Lelani Kai are ready to keep the title.

Women's Title: Lelani Kai vs. Wendi Richter

The big deal here is that Cyndi Lauper, pop superstar of her day, is in Richter's corner. Moolah, as in the woman who cost Richter the title a few weeks ago, is in Kai's corner. The camera is on a wide shot for the start of Richter's music (Girls Just Wanna Have Fun) and the whole crowd literally gets up at once. Cool visual. For reasons that continue to elude me, the slow motion shot of Richter and Lauper running through the back and into the arena is a famous clip.

They both pull hair to start and we're clearly in a normal women's match here. By that I mean neither girl is that good in the ring and their moves are really overblown. Richter cranks on the arm for a bit until Kai pulls her hair to take over. Now the champion works on the arm for a bit and Richter is in trouble. More hair pulling ensues until Richter puts on a body scissors.

Kai charges into a boot in the corner and Richter shoves the referee away like a jerk. Moolah chokes away at Wendi in the corner until Lauper comes over to make the save. Richter hits a kind of reverse AA and a splash for two. Lelani hits a backbreaker for two before going up for a cross body, only to have Wendi roll through for the pin and the title.

Rating: D. These two just didn't work that well, but that would be the case for almost any women's match back in the 80s. The girls were out

there basically for a spectacle or in this case the pop culture connection that was driving the era. Richter was a HUGE star at this point, occasionally main eventing house shows when Hogan was in another city.

Richter and Lauper dance around the ring in celebration in another semi-famous scene.

Richter and Lauper celebrate in the back as well.

We introduce the celebrities for the main event. The guest ring announcer is Billy Martin, former manager of the Yankees. He introduces Liberace as guest timekeeper, accompanied by four Rockettes. They all get in the ring and do the famous kicks which you'll see in the occasional highlight package. The guest referee is someone you may have heard of: Muhammad Ali. Jose Torres, another boxer, is on the floor as well.

Hulk Hogan/Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper/Paul Orndorff

Piper comes out with the full New York Pipe and Drums band while Hogan and T come out to Eye of the Tiger. Advantage Hogan/T. Piper and Orndorff have Bob Orton as their second while Hogan/T have Jimmy Snuka. Advantage Hogan/T. This is looking kind of one sided isn't it? Oh and Pat Patterson is the inside referee while Ali is the outside referee. The heels all hug and we're ready to go.

Orndorff and Hogan get things going but Piper tags in before there's any contact. Therefore T wants to fight Piper and they immediately head to the mat. T and Piper do some amateur stuff and T actually lasts long enough for a standoff. We get some staring until T hooks Piper in an airplane spin. Everything breaks down and Ali gets in to help break it up. Orton and Snuka try to get in as well but Ali glares Orton down.

Things break down again and the heels get rammed together until we get down to Hogan vs. Piper. Hulk rams Piper's head into the mat over and over until it's back to T. Hogan offers his knee as something to ram Piper's head into and it's back to the champion to send Piper to the outside. Orndorff jumps Hogan from behind and knocks him outside where Roddy blasts him with a chair.

Paul chokes away from the apron until T charges in for the save. Pat Patterson has to pull T off and you know he enjoys this in some way. A double atomic drop puts Hogan down and Orndorff hits a vertical suplex. Roddy comes back in to get in his punches and knee shots followed by an Orndorff top rope elbow to the back of Hulk's neck for two. Paul goes up again but misses the knee drop and there's the hot tag to T.

Orndorff and T brawl on the mat for a bit until Mr. gets in trouble via a Piper front facelock. That goes nowhere though as T stands up and makes the tag with no effort to be seen. Hogan pounds away but walks into a belly to back suplex. Orton and Snuka get in the ring for no apparent reason and as the referee calms things down, Orton comes in off the top with the cast but hits Orndorff by mistake to give Hogan the pin.

Rating: B-. Is it great? Not even close, but the point of this match was the crowd reacting to it rather than the match itself. It's easily the best match of the night and while the only question coming into tonight was who was getting the fall. This was exactly what the fans wanted and that's what this was supposed to be about. Nice main event here.

Piper and Orton bail but the good guys let Orndorff leave without beating on him even more.

We recap the ending of the main event.

Hogan, T and Snuka talk about winning.

Credits end the show. That's a sign of the past.

Overall Rating: D+. First and foremost let me make something clear: the overall rating for this show means jack because the whole thing was there for the spectacle and the matches were an afterthought other than the main event. This show was a huge success and kickstarted what is known as the Golden Era, so I don't think you can call it anything but a good show. It's also on the list of shows that every fan has to see at least once, just so they can say they've seen it. Not great quality, but incredible historical significance.

Ratings Comparison

Tito Santana vs. Executioner

Original: C

Redo: C-

King Kong Bundy vs. S.D. Jones

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Ricky Steamboat vs. Matt Borne

Original: C-

Redo: D+

David Sammartino vs. Brutus Beefcake

Original: D-

Redo: D+

Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Shiek vs. U.S. Express

Original: B-

Redo: C

Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd

Original: D+

Redo: D

Wendi Richter vs. Lelani Kai

Original: B

Redo: D

Hulk Hogan/Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper/Paul Orndorff

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/08/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-1-just-a-big-house-show/>

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Impact Wrestling – February 27, 2015: I'm Running Out Of

Things To Complain About

Impact Wrestling

Date: February 27, 2015

Location: Manchester Arena, Manchester, England

Attendance: 3,300

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Taz

It's off to England now after two pretty solid shows in Scotland. The main story coming out of last week is MVP earning a World Title shot by winning the gauntlet match, even though it was more of a group effort from the Beat Down Clan. Other than that we have the continuing story of Bram vs. Magnus, which should pick up again here in England. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the gauntlet match with Kurt Angle almost surviving the entire BDC but finally getting caught at the end.

Here's Kurt Angle who doesn't waste any time in calling out Lashley. Kurt says Lashley doesn't have to respect him, but he needs to respect the title. Last week Lashley didn't do anything to help him in the gauntlet match, but Lashley rightly says that wasn't his fight. Therefore tonight, it's MVP vs. Lashley and Angle won't be there to help him. Lashley doesn't want his help because it's his own fight. Angle says he won't help him and leaves.

Lashley is about to do the same but the Beat Down Clan interrupts. Joe says the BDC doesn't need luck because tonight, the Clan's MVP will win the title by any means available. MVP says no one has Lashley's back, so tonight the Clan gets its belt back. This wasn't bad but the Lashley vs. Kurt exchange was kind of lame. Lashley didn't want help so Angle emphasizes that he's not getting help? That came off kind of odd.

The announcers talk about what happened. I really like that they emphasize that Taz used to be a World Champion. A lot of younger fans might not have seen him in the ring (he retired about thirteen years ago) so just throw in that he used to be a big deal. It gives him some credibility instead of just letting him seem like some old guy.

Mr. Anderson/Rockstar Spud vs. Tyrus/Ethan Carter III

Anderson does his intro and Spud gets in a quick intro of his own. Tyrus reluctantly reveals his shaved head and no sells a right hand to the face from Anderson. Mr. hammers away in the corner before it's off to Spud for more of the same. A bite to the head only makes Tyrus mad though and he plants Spud with a World's Strongest Slam. Does that make him a mashed potato? Spud misses an elbow from Carter and makes the hot tag to Anderson, who hits a pretty bad looking neckbreaker for two on the big man.

The fans chant for Spud as Tyrus hits Anderson low and slows things down. Back to Carter for some right hands in the corner. I'm so glad his arm injury hasn't kept him out of the ring for too long. Carter is way too good to be on the sideline that long. Tyrus slams Anderson down but COMPLETELY misses a Vader Bomb (his feet might have hit Anderson's chest if Anderson hadn't moved but that's it), allowing for the tag to Spud. An Underdog (Dudley Dog) drops Tyrus and Anderson adds a low blow and the Mic Check, allowing Spud to get the pin at 7:00.

Rating: C-. This is as entertaining of a feud as there is in wrestling right now. Spud is nailing his underdog roll and Carter has mastered the idea of being an evil heel that you want to see lose. Hopefully that leads to the World Title for Carter, as he's probably the best heel not named Bully Ray in years for TNA.

We recap the formation of the Trio, which led to the Beat Down Clan and helped Lashley beat Eric Young for the World Title. I always enjoy seeing Eric Young in pain.

After a break, Ethan promises to shave Spud's hair tonight.

Here's Taryn Terrell to address Awesome Kong. Kong may have made her intentions clear, so get out here so Taryn can do the same thing. Instead here's Gail Kim to tell Taryn how tough Kong is. If Taryn thinks Havok was tough, think about what Kong did to her. Taryn knows what she wants and is ready for Kong anytime. Kim leaves and the lights go out. Kong is in the ring and shrugs off everything Taryn throws at her before planting her with the Implant Buster. That could be deadly for Terrell.

The BDC throws the cameraman out of their meeting.

We look at the BDC helping Lashley win the World Title back in January and then attacking Lashley just two weeks later.

Austin Aries might have a surprise for us tonight and holds up the briefcase.

Chris Melendez/Brooke vs. Robbie E./Angelina Love

I still don't get the appeal of Melendez. Yeah it's impressive that he can get around on one leg, but once you see that it's pretty much the end of his usefulness. He's not bad, but he's a pretty generic power guy other than the leg. Robbie gets in a cheap shot on Chris but gets hammered down and suplexed for two. Off to Brooke vs. Robbie with E. mocking her with Karate Kid crane poses, allowing Love to sneak in with some shots to the back. Some dropkicks send Love over to tag E. but eats a flapjack first. DJZ offers a distraction though, allowing E. to shove Brooke off the top for the pin at 3:26.

Rating: D. Eh it's a comedy feud so it's kind of hard to really complain about this match. If nothing else we get to stare at Brooke and E. is so over the top and insane that it's a lot easier to sit through. As I said though, where was Melendez at the end? He can't handle someone like the BroMans?

Carter tries to go into Spud's locker room to shave his head but Anderson makes the save after a break. Tyrus ran in to help out his boss. Didn't we cover this already?

Gunner wants to know why Angle is leaving but Kurt says Lashley doesn't want him around. That's not enough for Gunner who wants the old Angle back. He slaps Kurt in the face but nothing comes of it.

Here's Austin Aries with something to say. He's thinking about cashing in this Feast or Fired briefcase tonight, but here's Samoa Joe to interrupt. Joe isn't going to allow Aries to cash in the case tonight because he can have trained assassins on him at any given moment. Would those be the ninjas in the panel vans? Aries wants to know where the old Joe has gone

and a challenge is thrown out. Joe says bring it so Aries dives through the ropes to take him down.

Austin Aries vs. Samoa Joe

Joined in progress after a break with Aries hammering away in the corner. Joe is too big to have his brain busted though and sends Aries out to the floor. Back in and Joe stomps away before driving a knee into Aries' ribs. This isn't the most interesting stuff so far. They slug it out with Aries getting the better of it, only to eat a running boot to the face and the backplash for no cover.

We hit the bearhug on Aries for a bit before Aries low bridges him to the floor. A big top rope ax handle nails Joe but the brainbuster still doesn't work. Aries escapes the Muscle Buster and hits some discus forearms to set up the Last Chancery. I'd buy that hold as more of a threat if it ever won anything. Cue Kenny King with the briefcase for a distraction, allowing Joe to put on the Clutch. Aries sends him face first into the case (not a DQ because of course not) and hits a 450 for the pin at 7:55.

Rating: C+. These kind of matches feel like they're just going through the motions more often than not. There's almost no reason for these two to be fighting other than they need something to fill in the card. It's not a bad match or anything, but it just comes and goes and is another match on the show that I won't remember later.

The BDC comes in post match and puts Aries on the table. Low Ki hits the double stomp to Aries' ribs but the table doesn't break all the way. Instead, Joe adds a running backplash to really send Aries through the wood.

Lashley says MVP has to go through him to win the title. He doesn't need Angle's help either. WWE, take note on how to keep your monsters short and to the point like this.

MVP praises Eric Young for injuring Roode last week. Young thinks there's a hole in his heart and he has to fill it in with revenge. MVP suggests getting some of that revenge on Lashley for taking his World Title last

year.

The BDC has stolen Aries' Feast or Fired briefcase.

Noam Dar vs. Rampage Brown

Both guys are from British Boot Camp but before they can get very far, Bram comes in to beat up both guys with Impaler DDTs at 0:54.

Bram wants Magnus out here right now but he gets Grado instead. Grado dances down and gets in Bram's face, only to get run over with ease. The third implant DDT puts Grado down again but there's no Magnus.

TNA World Title: MVP vs. Bobby Lashley

Lashley is defending and runs him over to start before hitting a running clothesline in the corner. Some more clotheslines set up a delayed vertical suplex as it's all Lashley so far. Again, this is what Reigns should be doing. MVP bails to the floor but the rest of the BDC tries to interfere, earning then ejections as we take a break. Back with MVP sending him into the steps for two and kicking the champ in the back.

More stomping ensues as we get to the core problem with MVP: he isn't the most interesting guy in the ring. Kenny King and Samoa Joe are still at ringside for a stomping as I guess only half of the team was ejected. Back inside and MVP stomps away even more but both guys collide to put them down again. Lashley charges into the corner and plants MVP with a spinebuster for two. MVP tosses him with a suplex but misses the Black Out.

A spear drops MVP but the referee is bumped as well, as per the contractually obligated ref bump in title matches. Cue Eric Young with a chair to Lashley's back but Bobby Roode comes out to break up a piledriver attempt. Young is gone so Lashley hits a powerslam on MVP, but the BDC breaks up the pin again. Cue Gunner to take out Joe, allowing MVP to hit the Play of the Day on Lashley for two. MVP grabs a chair but Drew Galloway takes him down, allowing the spear to retain Lashley's title at 15:45.

Rating: C. The wrestling wasn't great but this was about Lashley fighting

off all odds to keep his title. It's a basic story but TNA is pulling it off well enough. They telegraphed the ending with Angle vs. Lashley earlier in the night and I'm sure MVP will get the title one day, but the BDC is starting to look weak without being able to get the big belt. There was too much insanity here for my tastes but I've seen far worse.

Overall Rating: C+. TNA continues its nice roll with another good, although not great show this week. Lashley vs. Angle vs. MVP is an interesting feud but hopefully it doesn't add up to another triple threat match for the title. The rest of the show is actually more entertaining than I was expecting and the midcard is pretty easily more entertaining than WWE's. However, is there a reason these guys are all fighting? A midcard title wouldn't be the worst thing for TNA, but for now it's surviving well enough.

Results

Rockstar Spud/Mr. Anderson b. Tyrus/Ethan Carter III – Spud pinned Tyrus after a Mic Check from Anderson

Robbie E./Angelina Love b. Brooke/Chris Melendez – Shove off the top

Austin Aries b. Samoa Joe – 450 Splash

Noam Dar vs. Rampage Brown went to a no contest when Bram interfered

Lashley b. MVP – Spear

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Reviewing the Review: Fast Lane 2015

So with this show, we had a meaningless show with a main event that no one wanted to see and a bunch of matches in the midcard that are there to set up future rematches, and it's all free on the WWE Network, making it harder for me to complain about it? What a confusing show I've wondered into. Let's get to it.

The pre-show segment was an interview instead of a match, because somehow the roster is thin enough that they have to have a talking segment on the pay per view and no match to warm the crowd up. Heyman was a bit weak as he said whoever wins between Bryan and Reigns will be the ultimate loser, but he got the point across well enough. The entertaining part though was Mizdow standing up to Miz for a few seconds when Miz told him to face the corner. This is a slow burn, but it would have been a lot better if they had just let Mizdow win a few more matches before the showdown. This was storyline development and that's fine.

On a side note, why do we need a car themed show? We've already had Over the Limit which went nowhere. What is this obsession with cars? Did Thruman Sparky Plugg start a cult to get revenge for being named Thurman?

The Authority beat Ziggler/Ryback/Rowan with Big Show knocking Ziggler out cold to give Kane the pin. This booking has gone beyond the idea of coincidence and has reached the point of WHAT ARE THEY THINKING. Rollins isn't even involved in the pin and you have to give the loss to Ziggler instead of the already destroyed Rowan? I get the idea that guys like Ziggler are so over that they stay hot despite these losses, but there comes a point where he stops being over and starts being a loser.

On top of that, we still have Kane and Big Show being treated like the second coming of the Mega Powers where no one can ever make them look bad whatsoever, but in this case we've seen the match for fifteen years and I

still haven't seen them entertain me. There's a place for those two on the roster but it's putting people over in the midcard, not hogging near main event spots and even winning matches there.

You build up monsters to have someone beat them. That's exactly what happened, but then the monsters just stick around instead of going away for awhile. For some reason, these things just keep happening over and over and it stopped being interesting twelve years ago. I know that sounds like an exaggeration, but somehow it's reality.

That being said, at least the match was entertaining enough. It makes sense for them to have this match down as they've done variations of it on Raw and Smackdown for months now, because THIS STORY WILL NOT END. I know I've harped on this for months, but my goodness it's been going on for months on end now with no ending in sight. Stop tormenting the guys for their Survivor Series actions and move on to ANYTHING else.

Orton ran out post match and cleaned house. It's about time, especially considering he was crazed enough to stand in the back for fifteen minutes before attacking his hated enemy.

Goldust and Dusty Rhodes had a great exchange with Goldust saying he had to beat Stardust so badly that it brought him back to reality as Cody. Dusty didn't want it to be that bad but Goldust said there was no other way. As usual, the old guys can talk better than almost anyone today.

However, the match was a pretty bad opposite. The idea was neither guy wanted to do this, but that doesn't make sense. Goldust may not want to do this but he said he had to, and Stardust has shown no issue with attacking his brother over the last few weeks. It made the whole match feel way off and didn't accomplish anything they were shooting for. Either have them fight or don't set up the story so they should be fighting. Goldust won with a crucifix on what looked to be a botched finish. Stardust attacked his brother in the back after the match and blamed Dusty for their issues.

We got a package on Jon Stewart vs. Seth Rollins. See, THIS is a good celebrity appearance. It's so annoying seeing C and D list celebrities shoved into the shows to try and make WWE look important. That idea stops

working when you have to remind us who the celebrity is and why they're famous. Stewart is one of the top stars in TV today and has a huge following. It makes for some interesting TV, but the timing isn't great as Wrestlemania is coming up soon. That being said, you can't really wait when something like this happens, even though WWE likes to drag their feet for months at a time.

Cesaro and Tyson Kidd won the Tag Team Titles from the Usos in a good match that we've seen far too many times before. I'm happy with the results though as the Usos can win the belts back whenever and don't need to change anything about their act. Kidd and Cesaro have worked hard over the last year and more than deserve some recognition.

HHH called out Sting and gave one heck of a promo, walking around Sting and talking about how this is about WCW vs. WWE. I get the idea behind it, but HHH saying he was one of the main reasons WWE won the Monday Night Wars is pretty laughable. That being said, there's a much bigger issue for WWE here. What are they supposed to do at Wrestlemania? I can't imagine the WCW guy winning the match, but how in the world do you bring in Sting and have him lose? Doesn't that defeat the entire point of having him show up? However, the ball bat vs. the sledgehammer was perfect and got a big smile from me.

Paige lost to Nikki Bella in the Divas Title match. This was about what I expected with Nikki grabbing the trunks to retain the title. I know the big idea right now is GIVE DIVAS A CHANCE, but they had five and a half minutes here and I really don't want to give them much more of a chance after this. The Bellas just aren't that good in the ring but they're the focus of the division because of Total Divas. Granted the lack of any interesting story here didn't help them and Paige having as good of a chance as a snowman on Miami Beach made it even worse.

Bad News Barrett retained the Intercontinental Title via DQ when Ambrose stomped him a lot. The champ spent the entire match trying to run away, which felt WAY out of character for him. Granted it's also out of character for him to win a match but that's another story. This really didn't help either guy as Dean blows what should be another layup and Barrett gets to look like a lame coward all over again. But hey, maybe

they can have a rematch and make both guys look awful one more time, just on a bigger stage.

Bray Wyatt came out to Undertaker's entrance, popped out of a coffin, and challenged Undertaker like everyone knew he would. They had to do this at some point and if they can kill off more time on a bad PPV, so be it.

Cena and Rusev had the match everyone thought they would have with Lana offering a distraction so Rusev could kick Cena low and make him pass out in the Accolade. If there's one thing Cena can do well (and there are a lot more than that), it's have the heavyweight slugfest. They did a good job of not having Cena hit the AA until the end, which made the impact a lot stronger. That and we didn't have to see Rusev kick out of it three or four times as is the custom for Cena matches. Again this was to set up a rematch and there's nothing wrong with that for the most part. If nothing else, it means looking at Lana some more.

Roman Reigns pinned Daniel Bryan clean in the main event with a spear. This was the match that they needed to have as Reigns goes over the only other person people wanted to see face Lesnar clean, basically giving him the big endorsement. Yeah people wanted to see Bryan, but Reigns hanging in there for nearly twenty minutes, kicking out of the running knee and getting the pin helped him quite a bit. It made him look like a warrior instead of someone being handed the spot and that's exactly what he needed. At the end of the day, fans will always respond to good wrestling and that's exactly what they got here.

Unfortunately, the last two matches being good to very good didn't validate this show's existence. No matter what they threw out there, this show didn't need to happen. They would have been better off just setting up a nine week Wrestlemania build and doing these matches along the way to California. It's a good enough show to pass, but there's no need for it to be taking place and that outweighs whatever good wrestling they had on the show.

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Smackdown – February 26, 2015: Erg

Smackdown

Date: February 26, 2015

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

Wrestlemania is creeping up on us and you can see most of the card from here. The main story coming out of Monday was Randy Orton rejoining the Authority for about two and a half hours but ultimately turning back against them. For some reason he let Seth Rollins off easy, which likely won't be addressed tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to open things up. The fans chant YES but Bryan shouts NO for a change. That's what he said a few years ago when he was frustrated at the lack of opportunities. He was wrong though, because the fans were in his corner. The fans gave him the opportunity to climb the ladder to the top and he won the WWE World Heavyweight Championship in the main event of Wrestlemania XXX. He had to give it up due to injury, but then he had another chance to get it back at Fast Lane.

However, he failed and there's no Wrestlemania main event this year. Without that motivation, does that mean the YES Movement is dead? NO it does not! He won't back down because he has big plans this year. Before he can get those out though, here's Bad News Barrett who has somehow gone

a full three days since losing a match.

No one wants to hear Bryan's sob story because losers like Bryan don't deserve the spotlight. Neither does a thief like Dean Ambrose, so here's Dean for the brawl. He and Barrett fight to the floor so Bryan picks up the Intercontinental Title. Barrett demands it back but Ambrose decks him from behind and takes the belt back. Daniel didn't seem interested in the belt other than keeping it away from Barrett. Cole sounds like he's begging us to believe that Barrett is still champion.

Dean Ambrose vs. Miz

Is he going to step on Miz's sunglasses and break his foot this time? No Mizdow because he might be off shooting the commercial he mentioned on Raw. An early rollup gets two for Dean but he gets caught in a neckbreaker for the same. We're already in the chinlock but Ambrose fights up with rights and lefts. Some running forearms drop Miz again but Barrett comes back out to steal the belt again. The distraction doesn't work for once though as Dean hits Dirty Deeds for the pin on Miz at 2:47.

We look at stills of Orton returning on Sunday and video of the story with Rollins on Monday. Lawler tries to defend Orton's lack of action by saying he was worried about Big Show and Kane. I'd be worried about them too if I wanted anyone to stay awake during my matches. Seriously even Bryan couldn't survive a Kane feud.

After a break, Barrett can't get Renee's name right but says Ambrose and Bryan don't deserve to touch this title.

Naomi vs. Natalya

Say it with me: this officially started on Total Divas, even though there's been almost no animosity between them on that show. Somehow though, that's better continuity than you usually get on the main shows. They run the ropes to start and Natalya drops down, only to get rolled up for two. A headscissors drops Natalya again and we hit a chinlock with Naomi using her legs instead of the arms. Both girls hit cross bodies and the guys get into it on the floor. The referee holds Naomi back from a downed Natalya, allowing the Canadian to hit the discus lariat for the

pin at 2:48.

Here are the Russians to brag about their win on Sunday. Rusev says this is what a championship looks like and Lana walks us through some stills of Cena's spirit being crushed over and over again. Lana says Rusev isn't one to sleep on the job and brags about Putin sending them congratulatory emails. She even shows us one, of course in Russian, which probably has a very funny translation.

Rusev repeats that Cena gets no shot at Wrestlemania so he needs a new opponent. Cue Jack Swagger as we flash back to August. Jack says there's no such thing as a scared US Champion and the fight is on. Just like happens every single time, Rusev survives a storm and superkicks Swagger into the Accolade. Was there NO ONE ELSE they could have used for this spot? Like.....sweet goodness there really isn't much of anyone is there? Is the roster really that thin? Or are the faces really that lame?

Bad News Barrett vs. Daniel Bryan

Non-title of course, because even Bryan hasn't fallen enough to want the Intercontinental Title. Barrett isn't sure where to put the title. Byron Saxton introduces R-Truth on commentary. Truth: "COACH! I MISSED YOU!" Ok that was funny. Barrett shoves Bryan down to start but gets sent into the corner for a kick to the ribs. The surfboard knee stomp sends Barrett back into the corner as Truth thinks a crumpet is a musical instrument.

More kicks stagger Barrett but the Winds of Change connect for two. Daniel bails to the floor as Truth keeps babbling about how he should be Intercontinental Champion. Back from a break with Barrett putting on a chinlock. I really do feel sorry for him. This is at least the second and probably third loser title reign for him and I don't know what he does to deserve it.

Bryan fights up and hits more YES Kicks for two but Barrett avoids the running dropkick in the corner. The title was knocked to the floor and Barrett is distracted, allowing Bryan to hit the Flying Goat. Truth: "Bryan looks like a chicken dipped in Rogaine." How do you even respond to that? The YES Lock goes on and Truth sneaks over to the corner and steals the belt but gets back on commentary with the belt under his

jacket. Bad News makes the ropes but turns around for the running knee and the pin at 10:31.

Rating: C-. This feud is turning into a battle over who can suck more than the other guy. Somehow though, Barrett is going to wind up leaving with the belt because that's how WWE works. Then they'll wonder why no one cares about Barrett, the title, or the losers in the match. Truth was funny on commentary but that doesn't mean I want to see him in the ring. At least the title is getting some attention tonight though.

Barrett can't find the title but Truth denies any involvement. This is somehow making Barrett come off like someone we should feel sorry for, because we're supposed to feel sorry for someone who loses every match he has.

We get a sitdown interview with Roman Reigns from earlier today. Reigns praises Bryan for a hard fought match on Sunday and says Bryan knows what it takes to get where Reigns is going. We look at a clip of Heyman's speech on Monday about how Reigns just can't do it. Roman is tired of hearing about how he can't do something and says he'll have to train harder than ever before. Lesnar has been on this stage before but Reigns doesn't have any experience at this level. He needs to talk to people in his family to see what it's like to be there.

Reigns wants Lesnar to be bouncing around the ring and at his very best when he faces a man representing a proud family who is trying to make a better life for himself and his family. My goodness this guy is just not good at making me care about him. That's the problem with him: he's just ok at most things other than spearing people in half. He's great as a heavyweight monster, but as a humanized character, he's just stuck in the middle of the pack. Five minutes of him talking about what he needs to do didn't make me care about him any more than I did in the first place, and I can't imagine it getting better anytime soon.

Truth runs into Ambrose and says he beat Barrett for the title. Ambrose says he's coming for the belt so Truth just hands it to him. Cole: "HAHAHAHA!" And that sums up the whole thing better than I ever could.

Fandango vs. Curtis Axel

Axel shows us a clock which has him in the Royal Rumble for 32 hours, giving Cole and Lawler something else to laugh about. Fandango jumps him to start so Axel throws him over the top. Curtis: AXELMANIA! Fandango plants him with a release suplex and the Last Dance is good for the pin at 1:03. Again, I care about the loser more than the winner.

Miz interrupts Mizdow's commercial shoot and mocks him for just ripping Miz off. The director didn't know Miz was interested in being part of this commercial and gives him the part instead. That's ANOTHER face who is treated like a loser, but at least he hasn't.....when did he last win a match? This company is really bad at setting up good guys. Of course they have to face adversity, but they really need to win once in awhile. This idea of just letting the fans carry them doesn't hold up for everyone but it seems to be all WWE is doing lately. Either that or have the champ lose every time.

Barrett will be defending the Intercontinental Title at Wrestlemania in a ladder match against an unknown number of unnamed opponents. Sheamus returns there maybe?

We get the Sting career retrospective. WWE does a lot of things wrong but they're awesome at things like this.

Adam Rose vs. Goldust

Rose has entered the Andre battle royal. Before the match we get a recap of Stardust attacking his brother on Sunday. Rose jumps him to start and charges into the powerslam for two. The Final Cut is good for the pin at 1:02.

Stardust is dressed as a monkey Rosebud and jumps Goldust.

Bray Wyatt claims that Undertaker is clinging to his legacy. He's a snake, but even the cleverest rat can only run from the snake for so long. How long does Undertaker think he can hide? Time is ticking because Wrestlemania is approaching. Come find him.

Seth Rollins/Kane/Big Show vs. Erick Rowan/Dolph Ziggler/Ryback

We get the Jon Stewart response to Rollins before the match starts. Kane

headlocks Rowan to start but gets runs over by a shoulder block. A fall away slam (that's way too popular of a move these days) and jumping elbow get two for Rowan and it's off to Ziggler for a nice response. Kane drives Dolph into the corner for a tag to Rollins, who is quickly dropped with a neckbreaker.

Big Show makes a blind tag and throws Ziggler down with a cobra clutch throw as we take a break. Back with Kane holding Ziggler in a chinlock before kicking him in the face to give Rollins two. Big Show comes back in with a headbutt to set up the Vader Bomb. Big Show: "I'M GOING TO HIT MY MOVE!" It's only good for two though and Dolph scores with a quick Fameasser but he has to add a running DDT to Kane. That's finally enough for the tag to Ryback and house is cleaned.

An overhead belly to belly sends Rollins flying into the corner and a big powerslam plants him for good measure. The Meat Hook connects but Mercury comes in for a distraction. Big Show breaks up a double Shell Shock as everything breaks down. Rollins dives onto Rowan but his Blockbuster attempt is caught in a Shell Shock. Kane makes a save but eats a Zig Zag, only to get dropped by Rollins. The Stooges are thrown in again and the distraction lets Ryback hit Shell Shock on Rollins for the pin at 11:07.

Rating: C+. Well the booking has been frustrating all night so why not job out Rollins again while trading wins in the never ending feud as well? If there's one good thing here, it's Ryback looking like a monster this whole time. However, none of this matters until it actually leads somewhere for him. Odds are he'll be put into the battle royal though and get lost in the shuffle.

Overall Rating: D+. This show was one of the most head scratching shows I've seen in a very long time. Between having the Intercontinental Title literally handed over from one guy to another in what felt like a parody sketch instead of....whatever that really was supposed to be to faces looking like hopeless losers to somehow making me feel bad for a villain to trading wins with Big Show and Kane continuing to look strong to set up whatever in the world they're going to do, this show was every problem WWE has going on right now.

The short matches are a confusing point for me. On one hand, I really don't want to see these matches keep going on and on, but at the same time I'd like to see a match get enough time to not be a huge waste. Throw in Roman Reigns just talking for five minutes and not getting anywhere and this was a really rough show to sit through.

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Miz – Dirty Deeds

Natalya b. Naomi – Discus lariat

Daniel Bryan b. Bad News Barrett – Running knee

Fandango b. Curtis Axel – Last Dance

Goldust b. Adam Rose – Final Cut

Dolph Ziggler/Erick Rowan/Ryback b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins – Shell Shock to Rollins

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NXT – February 25, 2015: It Had To Happen Eventually

NXT

Date: February 25, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Alex Riley, Tom Phillips

We're still living in Kevin Owens' NXT as he shows no sign of letting up soon. Last week he ran through former NXT Champion Adrian Neville, clearing more of the path to get to his showdown with Finn Balor. Other than that, we have the potential split of Carmella from Enzo Amore and Colin Cassady, which might be well received by the NXT fans. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Hideo Itami vs. Bull Dempsey

Dempsey elbows him in the face to start and drives another into Hideo's chest. A chinlock doesn't last long as Itami fires off elbows of his own, followed by kicks to the leg. That's fine with Dempsey who hits a running Vader style splash for two to regain control. When all else fails, just have the big guy run someone over. Itami comes back with a quick series of strike and a running basement dropkick in the corner. A running kick to the face is enough to pin Dempsey at 2:50.

Tyler Breeze superkicks Itami as he leaves. He stops to take a picture though and Itami gets up to chase him away.

Video on The Brian Kendrick, who is making a return tonight like Rhyno did last week.

Lucha Dragons vs. Tye Dillinger/Jason Jordan

During Dillinger/Jordan's entrances, Solomon Crowe hacks the feed and says he'll be NXT Champion. Jordan drags Sin Cara into the corner but Kalisto is pulled in, only to get face planted for his efforts. Off to Dillinger for a mocking bow to Cara as the fans chant NO ME GUSTA ("I don't like it!") and a slam to Kalisto.

It's quickly back to Cara who quickly takes Dillinger into the Dragons' corner for a tag back to Kalisto. That's quite the fast exchange. Dillinger and Jordan (thank goodness for those letters on the trunks. To

be fair I couldn't tell the Hardy Boys apart for years either) don't seem to agree on a tag so Tye tells him to relax. Cara slips over for a tag to Kalisto as things speed way up. Jordan drops to the floor and walks out on the match, allowing the Salida Del Sol and Swanton Bomb to pin Dillinger at 3:31.

Rating: D+. This was angle advancement but I'm getting a little bored with the Dragons. We saw them win and lose the titles and they're still basically the same team. Those belts have always been defined by heel teams so the Dragons never did much for me with the titles. Nothing much to see here, especially considering Jordan and Dillinger haven't meant anything in months.

Finn Balor is ready for Kendrick tonight and isn't looking ahead to Owens.

After a break, Dillinger demands Jordan come out here. He doesn't care whose match is next because he can whip that man too.

Baron Corbin vs. Tye Dillinger

End of Days, 17 seconds. Corbin needs to move up the ladder a bit now. Give him a feud against someone not named Dempsey.

Charlotte says the title is coming back where it belongs next week.

Breeze says Itami will soon be squashed in his trap.

Quick video on Sami Zayn in Abu Dhabi.

Bayley vs. Becky Lynch

The fans are split on who to cheer for but the Bayley fans boo at the Becky fans. Becky charges into an elbow in the corner but avoids a splash, setting up a pumphandle suplex for two on Bayley. A hair whip legdrop gets the same and we hit the chinlock. Bayley fights up and takes Becky outside for a baseball slide through the corner ala Sami's running DDT.

Back in and the aggression comes out of Bayley with some running corner

elbows, complete with the tightening of the hair band (as usual, far more adorable than it should be). Bayley tweaks her arm but shoves Becky away and keeps going. A middle rope back elbow to the jaw gets two on Lynch. The Belly to Bayley is countered into a seated armbar out of nowhere and Bayley taps at 4:30.

Rating: C. As usual, this is miles ahead of the messes that the Divas usually put on. The Divas seem impressed when they manage a suplex. This was a four and a half minute match with different stages and even some psychology with the arm. It's so much better than listening to BRIE MODE or someone putting on lip gloss. You can still be a heel without makeup if that's believable.

Rhyno is back because he loves the intensity he sees here in NXT. It reminds him of the energy he has when he Gores people in half.

Jason Jordan did what he did and will give an explanation when he wants to.

Finn Balor vs. The Brian Kendrick

Owens is on commentary and says he'd love to face Balor anytime he'd like. Kendrick grabs a headlock to start but gets thrown off and dropkicked down. Brian claims an ankle injury but goldbricks to grab a small package for two. Back to the headlock on the mat but Balor kicks him off, sending Kendrick crawling away. It's even more goldbricking though as he grabs a hammerlock. Owens doesn't like something Riley says and leaves as Kendrick grabs another headlock.

Back from a break with Balor hitting a running forearm to the jaw to put Kendrick down. Finn charges into a boot to the jaw though and eats a tornado DDT for two. A kick to the chest drops Kendrick again though and the Sling Blade does the same. The top rope double stomp is good for the pin on Kendrick at 11:32.

Rating: C-. I like seeing Balor having a bit simpler match for a change but I've never been a fan of Kendrick. He's much more interesting on the mic than in the ring but it's continuing a cool idea of having people return to the show like this. Owens vs. Balor has real potential to tear

the house down though and this was more build to that.

Post match Owens comes out and stares at Balor before throwing Riley over the announcers' desk. Balor stares him down from the ring and invites Owens to come fight him. The champ walks away to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This really didn't do it for me and was one of the weaker shows they've had in a long time. They're in a holding pattern until we get to Balor vs. Owens and then the big rematch with Owens vs. Zayn. Tonight's show felt like a filler episode but next week there's going to be a title match which NXT almost always does well. Not a bad show this week, but not one of their better episodes.

Results

Hideo Itami b. Bull Dempsey – Running boot to the face

Lucha Dragons b. Jason Jordan/Tye Dillinger – Swanton Bomb to Dillinger

Baron Corbin b. Tye Dillinger – End of Days

Becky Lynch b. Bayley – Seated armbar

Finn Balor b. The Brian Kendrick – Top rope double stomp

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