

Thought of the Day: Who Is The Star Of Raw?

Look back at the last few weeks and this isn't very clear.

Who is the focal point of Raw? It's not Bryan, who was only on TV for about five minutes on Monday and got laid out to end the show.

It might be Orton, who is becoming his old self again.

HHH/Stephanie? Yeah probably, but they're not really even involved in the main feud.

Punk? Well he and Heyman are getting as much TV time as anyone so we could go with one of them.

In short, it's really not clear who or what Raw is focused around right now and it's making for some weaker shows.

Hart Foundation: Before They Were Awesome

Hart Foundation

Host: Craig DeGeorge

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jesse Ventura, Alfred Hayes, Gorilla Monsoon, Bobby Heenan

This is something I haven't done in a good while: an old Coliseum Video. The tape is exactly what it sounds like: a profile on the Hart Foundation

featuring matches and interviews. I guess I can force myself to sit through an hour and forty minutes of one of the best tag teams ever. Let's get to it.

In case you're REALLY new at this, the Hart Foundation (the Harts) are Bret the Hitman Hart and Jim the Anvil Neidhart.

Tag Titles: Hart Foundation vs. British Bulldogs

This is barely even a match as it's more important for referee Danny Davis using some very questionable tactics, including going to the floor as Smith has Neidhart covered. The Harts hit a double DDT on Smith as Davis is on the floor, followed by the Hart Attack and a fast count to give the Harts the belts. Davis had been teasing a heel turn forever but this finally cemented it and got the Harts rolling. The whole thing was less than three minutes from bell to bell.

We now jump back in time a bit, as is the custom with almost all of these tapes.

Hart Foundation vs. Rougeau Brothers

This is from MSG on September 22, 1986 and is the Rougeaus' MSG debut. We're joined in progress but it doesn't seem to be that long. Bret cranks on Jacques' arm to start but Jacques takes over before flipping over Bret's back into a dropkick to send Hart to the floor. Off to Ray for a headlock and a dropkick of his own to send Bret back to the floor. The Harts huddle in the aisle before it's off to Jacques vs. Anvil.

Jacques can't budge the big Anvil so Neidhart just strokes his beard and says bring it. Neidhart tries a shoulder but Jacques jumps over him and catches Jim in a slam. Bret breaks up a Boston crab attempt and it's Jacques in trouble. The Harts hit something resembling the Demolition Decapitator for two as the crowd is still into this. Jacques is sent to

the floor where Bret drops him face first on a chair because that's the kind of guy he is.

Back inside and we hit the chinlock from Bret for a second before Jacques comes back with a monkey flip. Neidhart comes back in for a front facelock and Bret comes in to break up a tag attempt. Jacques tries to speed things up but gets caught with a knee in the back to put him down. Neidhart ducks a spinning cross body as Jacques is still in trouble. Back to Bret who puts on a front facelock of his own but it's Neidhart coming in to distract the referee so he misses the tag to Ray.

Bret ties Jacques in the ropes for a cross body but the middle rope elbow misses. Neidhart can't prevent the tag this time and it's off to Ray to speed things up. After some of the house is cleaned Ray hooks a sleeper on Neidhart, only to have Bret break things up. Everything breaks down and Ray charges into Bret's boots in the corner. The distraction is enough for Jacques to slingshot in with a sunset flip to pin Neidhart.

Rating: C. This took awhile to get going but it picked up at the end. The Rougeaus were a nice high flying tag team but there wasn't much to them as far as personality goes. By the time they fixed that problem in the late 80s they had been surpassed by a bunch of teams and injuries caught up to them. Still though, decent match here.

Ricky Steamboat vs. Bret Hart

From Boston on March 8, 1986. Bret doesn't mean anything yet and Steamboat hasn't established himself as a master, meaning at this point he's just good. Apparently Bret picked this match himself over how awesome he thought it was. Bret jumps Steamboat in the corner as Jimmy Hart invades the commentary booth to brag about how awesome Bret is. Steamboat counters a whip to send Bret chest first into the buckle to get himself a breather. The fans are WAY into Steamboat here.

Ricky chops away but stops to go after Jimmy. For once the distraction

actually isn't a problem as he grabs an armbar on Hart. A series of right hands and chops to the arm have Bret in trouble so Steamboat lifts him into the air by the arm to show off a bit. Back up and Ricky speeds things up by sliding through Bret's legs twice in a row before snapping off a great armdrag to get us back to the armbar. Jimmy talks a lot and in the only time I can remember, Ricky shouts at him to SHUT UP.

Back up again and Steamboat leapfrogs a few times before hiptossing Bret back into the armbar. Bret fights up but walks into a superkick to put him right back down. A spinning neckbreaker FINALLY puts Steamboat down to give Bret some control. Bret stomps at the ribs and pounds away as only he can, including a right hand to the ribs to send Steamboat to the floor. A suplex brings Ricky back in for two.

Off to a headlock by Hart but the fans are right there to cheer Ricky back into things. A clothesline puts Steamboat down again but he slams Hart to get a breather. Ricky's splash hits knees though and Hart takes control again. They head outside so Bret can hug Jimmy and send Steamboat back first into the apron. Back in and a powerslam gets two on the Dragon but Bret misses the middle rope elbow.

Steamboat suplexes him down for two as both guys are spent. Ricky drives in some shots to the head and shoves the referee away so he can chop at Hart in the corner. The referee gets crushed in the corner before Bret hits the Hart Attack clothesline so there's no count. Back up again and Bret hits a cross body but Steamboat rolls through for the pin.

Rating: B. Good stuff here but Bret didn't have anything that would have finished Dragon off. If this was about three years later it could have been a classic but as it is it's just very good. Steamboat was just so smooth out there and could have a good match with anyone, so if you put him with someone like Hart it's guaranteed gold.

Hart Foundation/Honky Tonk Man vs. Junkyard Dog/Davey Boy Smith/Tito Santana

Bret is spelled Brett in the pre-match graphics. This is from January 6, 1987 at a Superstars but that dolt DeGeorge says it's from December of 86. Bret and Davey get us going with Smith shoving Hart around with ease. Davey slams all three heels down with ease and it's time for a meeting on the floor. Back in and Smith slides through Bret's knees and gets two off a victory roll.

Off to Honky vs. JYD with the Dog pounding away to the biggest reactions of the match. Neidhart comes in and immediately takes his straps down, only to accidentally hit Honky with a forearm. Off to Tito for right hands and a front facelock before Honky gets the tag. That only lasts for a few seconds before Tito punches him into the corner for a tag off to Bret. We get the required chest bump in the corner from Hart and it's back to JYD for an armbar.

Neidhart comes in and finally gets a shot in to Dog's throat to put him down. Honky drops some elbows on Dog before it's back to Hart to work on the back. A legdrop gets two and we hit the chinlock so Dog can have a breather. Heenan tries to explain that the booing Honky is getting could be for Tito or the Dog, getting a rare chuckle from Gorilla. Dog gets caught in a chinlock but his tag to Santana isn't seen, allowing Honky to come back in for a chinlock of his own.

Dog fights up again but gets caught in a front facelock from Neidhart. Honky comes back in off an unseen tag to clothesline Dog down for two. A middle rope fist drop misses though and it's hot tag to Tito. There's the flying forearm but Anvil makes a quick save. Back to Bret for an atomic drop before they hit head to head. Tito crawls over and brings in Smith as everything breaks down. In a stupid finish, all three heels are whipped into each other out of different corners and the Bulldog pins Hart.

Rating: D. Well the good times on the tape had to end sooner or later. JYD was very over with the crowd but man alive could he drag a match down in a hurry. Way too many chinlocks and rest holds here on top of a stupid

finish to make things even worse. Also, for a tape about the Hart Foundation, shouldn't they win more matches?

We now go to the big piece of the tape: an investigative report at the Hart Foundation headquarters. It's a big office building with a receptionist and a bunch of awards and plaques on the walls. The receptionist doesn't know who Gene is so he makes some sexist jokes as is his custom. She winds up showing him around and explaining some of the awards and photos on the wall. Allegedly there are 200 secretaries working for the Foundation. Gene hears someone screaming but the receptionist says she didn't hear a thing.

The receptionist asks for Gene's credentials as this is getting stupid in a hurry. Gene is shuffled off to a second receptionist who appears to be a reject from a bad adult film. Back to the first receptionist who doesn't remember him. Gene gets frustrated and finally goes through a door to find the Harts (including Danny Davis, now a bad wrestler) playing with action figures. Jimmy freaks out and eventually says he'll answer some questions.

Hart tells the origins of the Hart Foundation, talking about Neidhart being the greatest football player of all time (he never played in any regular season NFL games) and Bret being a scientific master. Jimmy insists that the toys are ACTION figures because girls play with dolls. He also claims that they get cheated in every match they don't win and a WE DIDN'T LOSE chant breaks out.

Gene suggests that Davis is a crooked referee because his knuckles are red from taking money under the table. Jimmy says pink is awesome as a screaming girl goes running by, but none of the Harts see her. Gene wants to know where their gym equipment is so the receptionists come back in to act as "trainers". Bret insists that Stu knows about this because he's here once a month. We're finally done after almost fifteen minutes of this nonsense.

We now get the Danny Davis Story, which saw him come to the ring to take over as referee for a Tito Santana vs. Rocky Stone (jobber) match but Jack Tunney suspends him for life instead. Tito realizes he can destroy Davis now with no repercussions but Jimmy Hart gets Davis out of the way.

Jimmy welcomes Davis to the Hart Foundation.

Hart Foundation vs. Jerry Allen/Jim Powers

From March 7, 1987 on Superstars, only here to see Davis in wrestling gear for the first time. This is also non-title. Allen throws Bret into the corner to start but gets clotheslined down so it's off to Neidhart. Bret slingshows Jim in over the top for a splash but Neidhart pulls him up at two. Hart Attack ends this quick.

We get some clips from the six man tag with the Foundation against Tito and the Bulldogs from Wrestlemania 3. All we see is Davis getting DESTROYED by all three guys until a melee saves him and Bret cracks Dynamite with the megaphone to give Davis the fluke pin.

Tag Titles: Hart Foundation vs. British Bulldogs

This is from Boston on November 1, 1986 with the Bulldogs defending. Bret shoves Dynamite around to start but Dynamite shoves right back. Kid fights out of the corner and knocks Hart to the floor before coming back in to face Davey. A rollup out of the corner gets two for Hart but he bails to the floor again. Neidhart comes in and gets dropkicked down before being caught in a headlock.

Anvil comes back with a hard slam and pulls Bret in for a slingshot splash for two. The Harts take over on Davey with the fast tags and cheating where they can sneak it in. Bret chokes away in the corner as Jim has the referee before taking Davey to the floor for a slam. Back to Neidhart for a chinlock with a knee in the back before shifting to a

front facelock. Bret comes in to break up a hot tag, meaning we have a regular spot from the Harts.

Smith grabs a quick two off a crucifix, only to be stomped down by Bret again. We hit the front facelock again but Bret pulls Smith back to the Hart corner to break up the tag again. Bret hooks a sleeper but Davey fights out and hits a quick press slam, allowing for the hot tag off to Dynamite. The Kid cleans house and hits his snap suplex and a headbutt on Bret.

Hart gets caught in a sleeper but the referee gets taken out by his flailing arms. Neidhart gets in a cheap shot on Dynamite and drags Bret over but it's only good for two. BIG pop on the kickout there. Anvil slams Dynamite down and puts Bret on top again but Kid kicks out AGAIN. Bulldog gets up and gets an illegal pin on the illegal Anvil to retain the belts.

Rating: B-. Really solid match here with both teams looking great. Those kickouts at the end had the fans going nuts and for good reason. These teams ha incredible chemistry together and again that's something you can't teach. The fans always respond to it as well which is all you can ask for.

Bret lays out Dynamite with a piledriver post match.

Tag Titles: Hart Foundation vs. Killer Bees

From MSG on February 23, 1987 with the Harts defending. Bret has said these teams fought each other somewhere between 300-500 times so to say they know each other is an understatement. Anvil starts against Jim Brunzell as Jimmy Hart says Danny Davis has every right to be at ringside. Brunzell cranks on the arm to start so it's quickly off to Bret. Brunzell can't get a hiptoss so he opts for a headscissors into a sunset flip for two before cranking on the arm.

It's off to Brian Blair who gets Bret tied up in the ropes. Jimmy panics as Blair slingshots Bret into Anvil, sending the champions out to the floor. Back in with Brunzell cranking on Bret's arm before it's back to Blair for a double elbow to the face. Bret drives Blair into the corner and Anvil takes over with raw power. Back to Bret who gets two off a clothesline and drives a knee into Blair's ribs. Anvil gets in some blatant cheap shots to the ribs right in front of the referee.

Bret hooks the front facelock and drives Blair back into the corner for some choking from Anvil. Neidhart puts on a chinlock before slamming Blair down for the slingshot splash from Bret. Brian reverses Bret into the corner for the chest bump but Hart is able to drive him back into the corner for the tag off to Neidhart. Blair tries to run the ropes but a Hart knee to the back stops him again.

Neidhart hooks a bearhug before we get the front facelock spot that the Harts have used in every match so far. Bret puts on a reverse chinlock but gets countered into an electric chair to put both guys down. Hot tag brings in Brunzell and house is cleaned. The bell rings for no apparent reason and in the confusion Davis blasts Brunzell, giving Bret the pin to retain.

Rating: C+. This is one of those matches that's almost impossible to screw up. The Bees were never very successful but they were fine for spots like this by making the champions look good. Davis was doing what he was supposed to do here as he was never going to be anything of note in the ring.

Overall Rating: B-. Oh come on it's the Hart Foundation and this isn't even their best stuff. The good thing about this tape is that it focuses on the tag team and only touches on Davis' involvement. There's SO much more they could include if there was a full length DVD made about these guys which is something WWE might want to look into. Good stuff here if you have an hour and a half to kill.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume I at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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

Monday Nitro – May 11, 1998: Back To The Salt Mines Giant

Monday Nitro #136

Date: May 11, 1998

Location: Kemper Arena, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

It's the go home show for Slamboree and we're back to the three hour shows again tonight because I haven't suffered enough so far. The main story continues to be the NWO civil war since the new world champion is apparently too busy to defend his newly won title on the pay per view. The card is mostly set but we might get a few more minor matches announced tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap from the end of last week's show when Bret held back Adams, telling him to let the Wolfpack and WCW fight.

Opening sequence.

Tony promises us more on the NWO tonight and shows us the end of last week's show again.

Gene brings out Bret for the opening interview. Hart is still in street clothes and not NWO gear. He calls Savage a big chicken who has been ducking Bret for years. Bret accuses Savage of coming to WCW to hide from him but now Randy's worst nightmare has come true because Bret is in WCW. We get a clip from last week with Bret putting Savage in the Sharpshooter, with promises of more to come at Slamboree.

Back from a break with Gene introducing the Nitro Girls who come out one by one.

Barry Horowitz vs. Disco Inferno

Barry hits a quick jawbreaker to take over followed by something resembling a Skull Crushing Finale for no cover. A backbreaker gets two on Disco but Inferno comes back with an atomic drop and a swinging neckbreaker....for the pin? That came out of nowhere.

Here's Randy Savage with something to say. He says if Bret thinks he's running scared, just wait for Slamboree to see how far Savage runs away. Tonight though Savage wants to challenge Hogan for the world title so he can defend it against Bret on Sunday.

Kidman vs. Juventud Guerrera

Security takes away a sign before the guys in the ring speed up to start. A pair of headscissors puts Kidman down to the floor. Juvy follows out with a BIG plancha to take Kidman down again before we head back inside. A slingshot legdrop gets two for Kidman but he pops up and tries a powerbomb but instead flips Juvy forward to land on his face. That was odd looking as Juvy appeared to counter into a faceplant but it was Kidman planting Juvy.

Kidman goes up but jumps into a dropkick to the ribs and gets taken down by a spinwheel kick. A springboard cross body gets the same for Guerrera

and we get a pinfall reversal sequence with a string of near falls until Juventud hits the Juvy Driver for two. Not that it matters though as Reese sneaks in with the chokebomb, allowing Kidman to hit a quick Seven Year Itch for the pin.

Rating: C-. The flying wasn't bad but the Flock vs. Juvy isn't doing much for me. There's no way Guerrera is going to face the top guys in the group so there's almost no interest in these matches. Kidman is the best choice for Juvy to fight until he gets to have the big David vs. Goliath match with Reese, who I don't think has had a match yet.

Reese carries Juvy out while carrying Kidman on his back.

Here's Eric Bischoff on a motorcycle to prove how awesome he is. After assuring us of his love, he wants to know what Vince McMahon is thinking right now. For a few weeks now, Vince has been sending his cronies around but he knows Bischoff won't be there. If Sean Waltman wants an apology from Eric Bischoff, he shouldn't have shown up at WCW offices on a Monday afternoon. As for the apology, Waltman can bite him.

Bischoff talks about coming to Vince's backyard for the PPV Sunday so why don't they have a fight live on PPV? Eric guarantees that Vince won't show up, which in wrestling is how you guarantee that someone WILL be there. If I remember right, this led to a big lawsuit between the two companies with WCW having to pay out a big settlement.

Nitro Girls with Alex Wright. You know the drill by now.

Yuji Nagata vs. Scott Norton

Norton runs him over in the corner and powerslams Nagata down with ease. Nagata comes back with some kicks and is loudly booed so Norton runs him over, drawing more boos. Scott no sells a belly to back suplex as we cut to Sonny Onoo and miss some stuff. Norton's shoulder breaker ends this

quick.

CALL THE HOTLINE!

We recap Hennig joining the Wolfpack.

Hugh Morrus vs. Jim Powers

Morrus hits a quick powerslam and No Laughing Matter ends this in about 20 seconds.

The Wolfpack comes to the ring as we take a break. Actually scratch the break as the NWO is more important. It's just Nash and Konnan this week but maybe we'll get a new member tonight. Nash talks about himself and Hall forming the NWO and Hogan jumping on the train as it was pulling away. The real NWO is wearing black and red and they're scaring Hollywood. Hogan is supposed to be here tonight and he needs to say that Nash is the real big man. Also stop using their hand signals because they're not using them right. The NWO music plays them off when Nash didn't seem to be done.

Hour #2 begins.

Ultimo Dragon vs. Johnny Swinger

Dragon easily leg sweeps Swinger down to start and there's the headstand in the corner as Swinger dances. Johnny slams him down for two and adds a belly to back suplex for the same. Here's Chavo Guerrero but before he can do anything Dragon hooks the top rope hurricanrana and the Dragon Sleeper ends this.

Chavo shakes Dragon's hand but here's Eddie to shove his nephew away. Chavo shoves Eddie down and Eddie says hit him in the jaw so Dragon puts Eddie in the Dragon Sleeper. Eddie goes after Dragon but Chavo pulls him

off so Eddie leaves.

Before they're even out of the ring, here's Dusty Rhodes with something to say. He says before the night is over and before all the tickets are turned in and all the money has been countered, Kevin Nash is going to be in Hogan's face. Dusty says that Hogan isn't doing right by everyone in the NWO by doing stuff like firing Syxx and keeping Hall off TV. A long time ago Hall offered up his innocent to Dusty but Dusty didn't pay him back in scorn. Instead he gave him shelter from the storm (Dusty said the same thing when Sapphire left him for Ted DiBiase at Summerslam 1990) and made him a cool guy.

Right now Scott Hall has a personal problem but he'll beat that problem and be at Slamboree this Sunday. Randy Savage needs to stop complaining right now because the Wolfpack has no pecking order. Before tonight is over, Nash is going to be in Hogan's ugly face and that's that. I guess this was Dusty joining the Wolfpack?

US Title: Goldberg vs. Len Denton

Denton is more famous as the Grappler, which isn't a name that most people are going to remember as a lot of his career was in the 70s and 80s. He was however the man that Jake Roberts had in a front facelock when Jake slipped and fell backwards, inventing the DDT. Denton hits a jawbreaker but gets speared and Jackhammered down to make Goldberg 83-0.

We get a clip from MTV over the weekend with Page jumping Raven in a wrestling ring MTV had set up for some reason.

Here's JJ Dillon with Raven in toe. Apparently Raven has filed a grievance against almost everyone in WCW over them causing an unsafe working environment. Therefore, JJ has ordered some riot control officers to take care of Raven while the rest of the company works to make the company safer.

Raven has three main grievances: an unnamed assailant, Diamond Dallas Page wanting another match which he'll get in a Bowery Death Match (last man standing in a cage) and the strife between Hammer and Saturn. Saturn lost last week but if he has something to say, come out here and say it. Saturn comes out and....is told to lay out Hammer at Raven's orders. Jerry Flynn of all people comes out to beat up Saturn and this appears to be a match.

Saturn vs. Jerry Flynn

Saturn suplexes him down and gets a quick pin with the Death Valley Driver.

We see Bischoff's challenge to Vince again.

We recap the TV Title change last week.

TV Title: Fit Finlay vs. Robbie Rage

Heenan is on commentary at the halfway point of the show. Rage takes over with a quick clothesline in the corner before pulling Finlay away from the ropes, slamming him down the to mat. Finlay grabs the leg to take Rage down and stays on the knee for a bit. They head to the floor with Finlay beating up Kaos as well, but the distraction allows Rage to slam him down in the ring. A top rope splash gets two, sending Rage after the referee. Booker T comes out to break up the interference from Kaos, allowing Finlay to tombstone Rage for the pin.

Rating: D. The match was ok, but it's almost impossible to care about Finlay defending the title against a tag team jobber. Somehow we went from Benoit vs. Booker to this in the span of a few weeks without ever getting to see Benoit win the title. Much like Denton earlier, it always makes me wonder what the criteria is for a title shot. When was the last time Rage even had a singles match, let alone won it?

Benoit comes out and goes after Booker but security pulls them apart. JJ says their matches are cancelled and they're fighting tonight for a shot against Finlay on Sunday. This would be more shocking if Tony hadn't told us this on two different occasions already tonight, including during the TV Title match.

We see the challenge. Again.

More Nitro Girls.

Nitro Party winner.

Lenny Lane vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Feeling out process to start until Page fires off knees to the ribs and puts Lane down with a tilt-a-whirl side slam. Lane comes back with some choking and does the Diamond Cutter sign. He bulldogs Page down for two but Page fights up and puts Lane on the top rope for the Diamond Cutter to end it.

Page wants Raven to come out here right now so he can bang him tonight before he bangs Raven on Sunday.

Bischoff Challenge Part 4.

Hour #3 begins so here are Hogan and Bischoff, flanked by the rest of the B-Team (Adams, Disciple and Vincent) with something to say. First of all Hogan brags about how awesome he is and how we all need to go see 3 Ninjas and the new Assault on Devil's Island movie. Hogan goes on some tangent about going to wrestling school before accepting Savage's challenge for tonight. He calls Nash out here for the big showdown as this is somehow over five minutes long now.

After some gay jokes abound, Hogan demands an apology and for Nash to

admit that he poached Hennig away from him. Also Nash has to admit that Mr. Hogan is the leader and champion and that Nash has to get back on his good side. Nash says that he won't apologize and that he'll go through all of Hogan's goons to get to Hogan. Hogan promises a big gun that Nash can't handle, so here's Giant back in the Black and White. Nash gets destroyed and spray painted. Savage, Konnan and Dusty come out which gets rid of the NWO for some reason.

Tony and his goon squad ask about the tag match with Sting/Giant vs. the Outsiders on Sunday.

We recap Jericho mocking Malenko last week before beating Bore-Us Malenko.

Jericho is in the ring with something under a sheet. He demands to be called the Lionheart, the Man of 1004 Holds and the Ayatollah of Rock and Rollah. Jericho shows off his trophies, including a prosthetic leg to represent Rey's knee. However, there's no one left for Jericho to face so he's going to retire the title. This brings out JJ Dillon to announce a cruiserweight battle royal for Sunday with the winner getting a title shot later in the night.

Jericho isn't pleased and thinks JJ isn't being fair to the winner by making him face 14 guys and then get beaten up by the champion. He then pulls the sheet off, revealing a defaced picture of Dean Malenko, holding a bunch of celery and saying he's a Jericho-hollic. This brings out Dean's brother Joe to say be nice to Dean, earning a prosthetic leg to the head.

Glacier claims someone has stolen the Cryonic Kick.

Glacier vs. Sick Boy

Sick Boy gets jumped coming back into the ring but Glacier has to stop to

pose. A few punches slow Glacier down but Glacier hits a kick to the....shoulder? Either way it knocks Sick Boy into the referee so the Cryonic Kick (superkick) gets no count. Cue Saturn to kick Glacier in the face, giving Sick Boy two, even though the bell rang. Glacier kicks him in the face again for the pin.

Post match Saturn lays Glacier out again, this time with a Death Valley Driver. They're really trying to get their money out of Glacier.

We recap Scott Steiner pretending to give up on the NWO before turning on Rick again in a ruse as Adams attacked Rick.

Here's Lex Luger to say Rick Steiner is out for 3-4 months due to shoulder surgery, so he wants either Adams or Scott Steiner at Slamboree.

Chris Benoit vs. Booker T

The winner gets a TV Title shot against Finlay on Sunday. Benoit jumps Booker as he comes into the ring and the attack is on fast. Booker comes back with a great looking hook kick to the jaw and some forearms to the back. A nice gorilla press puts Benoit down again but he comes back with right hands of his own. They slug it out until Benoit snaps off a German suplex to put both guys down.

A snap suplex gets two on Booker but he grabs a powerslam of his own to get a breather. Benoit ducks the side kick to send Booker into the ropes and a belly to back puts Booker down again. There's the Swan Dive for two but Booker elbows him in the face and hits the ax kick. The spinebuster puts Benoit down but he ducks the side kick. Benoit grabs the Crossface out of nowhere for the submission and the title shot.

Rating: C+. These two have chemistry together and hopefully this sets up Benoit's long overdue title win. Booker has been booked so well over the last few months that a win over him actually means something, even though

this is his second loss in a row. Good stuff here which is what this show has needed.

WCW World Title: Hollywood Hogan vs. Randy Savage

Unfortunately there's a lot of time left. Hogan looks a bit tipsy. Savage jumps Hogan from behind and takes over before pounding away in the corner. Hogan comes back with a right hand and chokes away in the corner as well. Savage has his shoulder sent into the post as we enter the garbage brawling period.

Back in and Hogan clotheslines Randy down before choking even more. Right hands have Savage in trouble in the corner again but the champion gets kicked low. Not that it matters as Hogan kicks him in the face but misses the legdrop. Disciple breaks up the elbow and here Hart with a belt shot on Savage, giving Hogan the pin.

Rating: D. Do I really need to explain this one? Really? Hogan was incapable of having a good match at this point if his life depended on it and Savage was basically nothing but punches, ax handles and the big elbow. It's a bad sign when the best thing you can say about a match is that it was short but that's all this one has.

Post match here are Nash and Piper for the save with Roddy saying he doesn't want to fight Nash. Instead he names Savage as the winner by DQ which changes nothing. Piper yells at Hogan and Hart but names himself as referee for Hart vs. Savage. Giant comes to the ring and Sting is in the rafters to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. As usual here there's some decent stuff but so much of the show is spent on worthless matches. Scott Norton vs. Yuji Nagata? Disco Inferno vs. Barry Horowitz? Glacier vs. Sick Boy? Can you blame people for going over to Raw in droves? On top of that we have Giant joining the NWO again as the story is now at two years old and showing no signs of stopping. Slamboree is in a few days and I can't think of a

single match on it I'm looking forward to. That's a really bad sign.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume I at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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

Jerry Lawler vs. Jason Voorhees

It is exactly what it sounds like.

And there's a rematch!

It's somehow even worse than when Lawler dressed up as Super <http://topmednorr.com> King to stare down Batman (played by Adam West himself) in Memphis. Wrestling is weird.

Raw Rating

Not something I usually talk about but this week is a bit different. Raw drew a 2.68 last night, which is down again. Ratings have been trending down with Bryan on top which isn't

a good sign. Yeah there's a lot of other stuff at the moment, but Bryan doesn't seem to be helping anything.

Monday Night Raw – September 30, 2013: Paul Heyman's Indecent Proposal

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 30, 2013

Location: Mississippi Coast Coliseum, Biloxi, Mississippi

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the final show before Battleground a mere fifteen days after Night of Champions. If that's too fast for you, don't worry because you'll get another PPV just three weeks after this Sunday. Tonight will probably just firm up stuff for the show on Sunday, but there's a chance we'll get new developments in the potential locker room revolt. Let's get to it.

It's breast cancer awareness month again, meaning the middle rope is pink and there's a graphic on the ramp.

Here's Punk to open things up and we get a clip from Heyman's scheme last week, leading to Ryback's beatdown. Punk talks about how things are often unpredictable around here but once in awhile you can guess what's happening. Take last week for instance: Punk was in his hometown so of course Heyman was going to come after him. Everyone knew Punk would get jumped if he went after Heyman and that's exactly what happened.

That doesn't matter though as the story ends with Punk making Axel go to sleep, showing Ryback what happens to bullies, and when Punk gets his

hands on Paul Heyman. The story could end at anytime. It could be at Battleground, or it could be right here tonight. Punk isn't leaving the ring until he gets a fight with one of Heyman's guys and he gets rid of Heyman for good.

Cue Brad Maddox (Punk: "You don't even get an entrance song?") who says this ultimate showdown isn't best for business. Punk already has his match with Ryback on Sunday so there's no need to give him another one now. Maddox is willing to give Punk a match here tonight though....and here's Big E. Langston for the first time in weeks. Big E. says he's Punk's man if Punk wants aggression and the beating is on. Punk is tossed into the corner but he misses a charge into the post and here's a referee. The bell is after the break.

CM Punk vs. Big E. Langston

Joined in progress with Punk firing off kicks on the floor before sending Langston back inside for a high cross body for one. Big E. escapes the GTS and slams Punk out of the corner for two. A splash to Punk's back gets the same and it's off to a half crab from Big E. CM fights up but gets run over by Langston for two more. A nice looking belly to belly suplex puts Punk down again and Langston is getting a little frustrated.

Punk comes back with a high kick for two but gets taken down by a clothesline for the same. A second splash misses though and it's Punk coming back with his kicks. Langston is taken down with a neckbreaker and there's the running knee in the corner. There's the Macho Elbow and the GTS is good for the clean pin at 5:52 shown.

Rating: C. This was decent but just kind of there for the most part. I'm not sure I get the point of bringing Langston back just for a job to Punk, but at least he was in there with a big star instead of having the same match with Ziggler over and over. Langston was kind of lost in the shuffle for the last month and a half so it's good to at least see him on TV again.

We recap Cody Rhodes being fired.

Kofi Kingston vs. Fandango

Fandango is in a pink shirt, allowing Cole to list off everything he can about the Susan G. Komen Foundation. We also get part of a compilation of 30 Troubles in Paradise from Youtube, because we need to see a Youtube player on screen instead of just showing the video right? Fandango takes Kofi down with a quick suplex and puts on a chinlock as the fans chant overrated. Kofi spins out of a hiptoss and DDTs Fandango down for a breather. Kingston comes back with some double chops but gets sent into the buckle. Fandango goes up but Kofi moves before the legdrop. Trouble in Paradise is good for the pin at 3:02.

Rating: D. Well that happened. The match was only three minutes long and the only move that was interesting at all was the finisher. Fandango has a fun character but he has almost nothing of note in the ring. The long pants still aren't working for Kofi and if rumors are to be believed, they're why he isn't being pushed as hard anymore. Seriously.

Post match here are the Wyatts with Bray sitting on the stage, asking why these things happen to him. He promises to knock everyone down one by one, so follow the buzzards. Creepy as ever.

Ziggler vs. Sandow is the Kickoff match for Sunday.

The Bellas are in the back when Randy Orton (fangirl pop) comes up to offer some sarcastic congratulations to Brie for her engagement to Daniel Bryan. Orton wants to know the date before it needs to be scheduled before Battleground because Daniel won't be able to make it after then.

Paul Heyman chastises Renee Young for thinking Punk will be taking him out anytime soon. Heyman says Punk was a nobody who because a Paul Heyman guy before becoming WWE Champion but the forgot what made them the best

in the world. Renee says that Axel and Ryback can be seen hiding off camera, meaning Heyman must be planning another trap. Heyman says he has a big plan for tonight's Raw and if Punk wants to do something about it, go ahead and try.

Los Matadores vs. 3MB

It's Mahal and Slater here. Los Matadores are named Fernando and Diego and their graphic says they have a miniature bull with them named El Torito. After an over the top intro sequence with a bunch of flips and waving of red capes, we start with Diego (Primo) throwing Mahal around and into the corner for a tag off to Slater.

Heath is thrown around and backdropped but he shoves I think Fernando into the corner for some double teaming. A knee drop has Fernando in trouble and we hit a quick chinlock. Fernando comes back with a headscissors and it's back to Diego to clean house. Everything breaks down and something resembling a double Angle Slam takes out Slater at 3:58.

Rating: D. I'm not sure what to say here. I was laughing for most of the match, but it wasn't what I would call funny. It's definitely in the "so over the top it's ok" category as they're playing it completely for laughs, but at the end of the day it's still Epico and Primo which doesn't help them that much. They have potential as a comedy team but nothing more than that.

Here are HHH and Stephanie to address the Rhodes family face to face. Goldust comes out in a suit while still wearing the facepaint. Stephanie congratulates Cody on the wedding and hopes he got the Bed Bath and Beyond gift card. HHH wants to know why they're staring at him because this is what, the fourth opportunity the family has gotten? Cody failed, Goldust failed and Dusty made it about himself. Is Dusty still upset about not being able to do anything outside of Florida or the NWA (I'd be shocked if more than 5% of the live crowd understood that)?

Stephanie says Dusty has a very important job by training new superstars down in Orlando, meaning the future is in Dusty's hands. Tonight though, the family's future is in Stephanie and HHH's hands. They'd like to give Cody and Goldust a job if they can beat Rollins and Reigns this Sunday at Battleground. If they lose though, neither of them will ever work for WWE again, including Dusty.

Big Dust grabs the mic and says he'll be in his boys' corner. Stephanie says you're on but Dusty sounds like he wants a fight. The bosses leave and here's Shield for the brawl. Dusty tries to bring in a chair but gets beaten down as well. Cody takes the TripleBomb and the Shield stands tall.

Curtis Axel vs. R-Truth

Non-title. Axel pounds away to start but Truth comes back with kicks to the leg. He rains down right hands in the corner, only to be dropped face first onto the buckle to give the champion control again. A nice dropkick from Axel puts Truth down and we hit the chinlock. Truth fights up and hits the suplex into a Stunner for two but misses a dropkick. Before Axel can follow up, Punk's music hits and the distraction lets Truth hit the Little Jimmy for the pin at 4:20. No Punk.

Rating: D+. Not horrible here but it was all about the false ending which is getting a bit old as a finish to a match. How many times have you seen someone come out for a distraction and the guy getting beaten up badly loses as a result? Truth isn't horrible or anything but it was pretty obvious he was going to win because he was there as a pawn in the Punk vs. Heyman stuff.

Trish Stratus has had a son. Cool.

Video on Brie Bella and Daniel Bryan, which is an excuse to show clips from Total Divas.

Alicia Fox vs. Brie Bella

Feeling out process to start with Alicia taking over with some choking. The northern lights suplex gets two on Brie as AJ and Tamina are watching in the back. After a quick headscissors from Alicia, Brie comes back with some running kicks and the Bella Buster for the pin at 3:19.

Rating: D+. It's a Divas match. You do the math here.

Axel is upset but Heyman tells him to calm down. Heyman says Punk is just messing with them but is out of their league. Ryback comes up and says there's nothing to worry about because they should just give Punk what they want. Heyman tells Ryback to go get something to eat and he'll come find him in a few minutes. Ryback leaves and Heyman says he sees the world differently since Ryback saved him. Heyman says, and this is a direct quote, that he's going to go to the ring and propose to Ryback.

We look at Big Show knocking Miz out last week as per Stephanie's orders.

Big Show, in a suit, says he's doing ok. We look at a clip from Smackdown with HHH telling Big Show there aren't many jobs for a guy like him and Big Show nearly knocking HHH out. Show talks about everyone telling him to do the right thing, but that's easy to say when they're not in his shoes. How can he pick between his job and his family?

He's a good person but he has to do evil for the sake of his family. Show rants about having to knock out Dusty Rhodes and now he can't even look him in the eye. There's only so much he can take and he's not going to take it anymore. He's going to go knock HHH out. Show's eyes are bugging out and it looks very disturbing.

R-Truth is asking for an Intercontinental Title shot when Big Show comes in and lifts Maddox against the wall, demanding to know where HHH is. Maddox is let down and goes off to find him.

Zack Ryder vs. Alberto Del Rio

Del Rio takes him into the corner before running Ryder over with a shoulder block. Ryder comes back with a clothesline to send Alberto to the floor but misses a plancha to give Del Rio control again. Del Rio pounds away on the floor before heading back inside for a reverse chinlock. There's the tilt-a-whirl backbreaker and it's back to the chinlock again. Ryder comes back with all of his usual stuff but the Rough Ryder doesn't connect and Del Rio grabs a German suplex for two. The armbreaker gets the submission at 4:07.

Rating: D+. Yet another match that is long enough to grade but the length brings it down because it feels like they're just filling in time where they can. This didn't do anything for Del Rio as he didn't do anything hardcore before the match on Sunday and everyone beats Ryder anymore. Nothing to see here.

We recap the Rhodes family segment from earlier.

The breast cancer people are recognized.

Here are Ryback and Heyman for the proposal. Heyman says he was man enough to pin Punk at Night of Champions to prove he's the best in the world, but he's also an expert in political science. He owns CM Punk, so it was his obligation to squash the rebellion that Punk was starting last week in Chicago. That was getting rid of a dictator which is the right move politically. We get the same clip from earlier of Punk being beaten down by the Heyman guys in case the fans forgot it in the last hour and a half.

Heyman says he's here because Ryback decided to stand up to the bully that is CM Punk. Ryback says he hates bullies like Punk who took everything Heyman did for him and throw it back in Paul's face so he had to do something. Heyman talks about how progressive of a society we live in today and he wants more than just a client relationship with Ryback.

He wants to make a commitment to Ryback from the opening match to the main event, in sickness and in health and until death do them part.

Paul wants to make an honest man out of Ryback so he takes him by the hand and drops to a knee. Paul's proposal: will Ryback be the new Paul Heyman guy? Before there's an answer we get more Punk music and here's Punk through the crowd. He jumps the barricade...and hurts his knee, collapsing down to the floor in pain. This goes on for awhile until Punk limps to the apron but can't get in. Heyman goes for it for some stupid reason, allowing Punk to pop up with a kendo stick and lay out Heyman, Ryback and the charging Axel with ease. Axel takes a GTS as Punk hops around to show how good his knee is.

Big Show is still waiting for HHH.

Dolph Ziggler/Usos vs. Shield

On the way to the ring we get another Youtube video to answer the burning question: which Uso is a better dancer? After that greatness, we start with Ziggler getting punched by Ambrose in the corner. Ziggler comes back with a dropkick but a rake to the eyes allows for the tag off to Rollins. The Usos come in with some double teaming and it's Jimmy hooking an armbar on Seth.

Rollins takes him into the Shield corner and it's back to Ambrose for some double teaming. Jimmy ducks a double clothesline and tries a double cross body, only to be caught in the air. Jey dropkicks Jimmy's back to drop both guys down. Everything breaks down and the Usos hit stereo dives to Dean and Roman as we take a break. Back with Seth holding Jimmy in a chinlock. A suplex puts Rollins down but it's ff to Ambrose before Jimmy can make a tag.

Off to a chinlock from the US Champion as the fans are wanting Ziggler. Roman comes in to complete the trio of chinlockery before something like Cena's spinning side slam gets two. Jimmy superkicks out of it and

FINALLY makes the tag off to Dolph to fire up the crowd. Ziggler loads up the ten straight elbowso n Dean but has to dropkick Rollins out of the air before finishing.

A Fameasser gets two on Ambrose as Reigns makes the Shield save. Jimmy shoves Roman to the floor but Dean breaks up the attempted dive. Off to Rollins as Dean is sent to the floor. Roman makes a blind tag as Dolph Zig Zags Rollins, only to be speared in half for the pin at 12:04.

Rating: B-. Yeah it's the same formula the Shield has used for months, but there's nothing wrong with that at all. That spear always looks great and Ziggler went flying as a result this time. Another good match here as everyone has come to expect from Shield. The Usos need to win the tag titles at some point though.

Big Show is still waiting on HHH and even throws some flowers to the floor. Instead he gets cops who don't like that he's threatening a WWE employee. Stephanie comes in to say Show is under a lot of pressure and doesn't understand the consequences of his actions. Stephanie has talked to Show's wife and implies he can't perform to her standards as of late if you get Stephanie's drift. Everyone but Show leaves so Big Show punches a HHH poster.

RVD shows us a Youtube video of his ten most extreme moments. In case you didn't get it, WWE has a Youtube channel and you need to subscribe to it or your puppy will be lit on fire and your mother will be fed to mutant pigs. Del Rio has no idea what hardcore is about because anything goes. By anything of course they mean chairs to the back, trashcan lids, the steps and a table.

Big Show vs. Shield on Friday.

Santino Marella vs. Antonio Cesaro

Before the match we get the entire giant swing on Titus last week which is still amazing. Cesaro fires off a bunch of elbows to start and stomps on Santino's chest. A chinlock is quickly broken but Cesaro can't hook the swing. Santino comes back with his usual stuff before loading up the Cobra. Thankfully Cesaro punches him down and here's the weekly swing with Santino dropping the stupid sock. The fans are counting the revolutions as they go and we hit an insane 32. Santino stands up but immaturity falls back down, only to roll up Cesaro for the pin at 2:51. Well of course he does.

We look at the marriage announcement between Brie and Bryan again.

Lawler is in the ring to moderate the face to face meeting between Bryan and Orton. Randy talks about how he's the old Predator again and how dangerous that makes him. He's genetically superior to the B+ Bryan and will prove it on Sunday. Bryan says that's A+ all the way from Orton but asks why HHH picked him as the face of the WWE. It's because he wants Orton to be on magazines and DVDs whereas Bryan would never want to be the best because of something like that.

Orton stops the YES chants before shifting over to Brie Bella. He doesn't understand what must be wrong with Brie to make her want to be with Bryan, because one day she'll realize she's sleeping with a barnyard animal. That's enough for Bryan and the beating is on. They head to the floor where Orton takes over and sends Bryan into the steps and post. The beating continues and Orton loads up the Elevated DDT on the floor, drawing out Brie to beg for mercy. Orton of course DDTs him on the floor and loads up the announce table. An RKO to Bryan through the table ends the show as Brie freaks out.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked the show a bit more than last week but the WWE Title has gone from the focus of the show to an afterthought. Everything but the world title matches got a great buildup tonight and Battleground looks a lot better as a result. Punk vs. Heyman continues to be probably the feud of the year, the Rhodes and Big Show stuff is well

done, and the Shield had another good match. Then there are the world titles though and both matches just feel tacked on. Imagine that: HHH being the focus of two stories and the world titles suffering as a result.

Results

CM Punk b. Big E. Langston – GTS

Kofi Kingston b. Fandango – Trouble in Paradise

Los Matadores b. 3MB – Double falling slam to Slater

R-Truth b. Curtis Axel – Little Jimmy

Brie Bella b. Alicia Fox – Bella Buster

Alberto Del Rio b. Zack Ryder – Cross armbreaker

Shield b. Usos/Dolph Ziggler – Spear to Ziggler

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume I at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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

On This Day: September 30,

1996 – Monday Night Raw: Just Surrender The Wars Now

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 30, 1996

Location; Hershey Park Arena, Hershey, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 3,923

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Kevin Kelly

We're in an interesting time for the WWF at this point. By interesting I mean WCW is absolutely murdering them and WWF is clinging to whatever they can find. It's about a week after Mind Games, meaning Shawn is still WWF Champion and the main feud is now Undertaker vs. Mankind as we head into Buried Alive. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of JR's recent heel turn. Man alive I have to put through this in the 1999 series and now I have to do it again here? This was right after he brought in Fake Razor and Fake Diesel debuts tonight.

Steve Austin vs. Jake Roberts

Austin was already the King of the Ring but he wasn't a huge star yet because Bret Hart hadn't been there to give him the big rub. Jake is feuding with Jerry Lawler at this point. Austin takes him into the corner to start so Jake does the exact same thing to him. Off to a headlock by Steve as JR rants about management some more. Austin stalls a lot before charging into the corner, only to have to bail to the floor to avoid the DDT.

A Lawler distraction doesn't help Austin so he goes with the elbows to the chest to take over. JR continues to rant about how much his job sucks as Austin goes after the ribs. The middle rope elbow gets two for Austin and we take a break. Back with Austin missing an elbow to the back of the

head and Jake starting the DDT sequence, only to be clotheslined down for two. Lawler gets up with two bottles of booze (for the alcoholic Jake) as Jake hits the DDT on Steve. Jerry spits whiskey in Jake's face, allowing Austin to hit the Stunner (much slower than it would become but it works that way too) for the pin.

Rating: C-. More of an angle than a match here. It's always interesting to see the original Austin though since he was a totally different yet awesome wrestler before the neck injury. The Stunner as a slow move that stops someone dead in their tracks is an interesting take on the move rather than having it be a big move like it became.

Austin and Lawler beat up Jake but Savio Vega and his leather strap make the save.

Mankind digs a grave by hand but Bearer says Undertaker has buried his own grave.

Here's the blueblood HHH to call out Mr. Perfect.

The Grimms vs. Godwinns

The Grimms are gimmick #6000 for the Harris Twins. HHH jumps in on commentary as Phineas walks around ringside with a goat. Jason Grimm starts with Phineas by grabbing a quickly broken headlock. Off to Henry vs. Jared Grimm with the Godwinn hitting a big clothesline to send Grimm to the floor. Mr. Perfect jumps in on a split screen as the twins take over on Henry. Perfect says he'll accept the challenge but he'll give HHH a few weeks to get ready. Jared's chinlock is quickly broken and it's hot tag to Phineas to clean house. Phineas escapes a backbreaker and lays out Jared with the Slop Drop (reverse DDT) for the pin.

Rating: D. The match was just a backdrop for the Perfect/HHH angle which gets annoying after awhile. It always amuses me when I see the Harris

Brothers going from generic gimmick to generic gimmick like this. Almost none of them are any better than the other so why constantly change it without putting any effort into the thing?

Video on Jeff Jarrett lip synching, meaning he jumped to WCW so we need something to move his heat to Road Dogg. Back when he sang in 1995 it was clearly Road Dogg's voice which was supposed to set up a feud between the two of them but the contract came up so we'll just reveal it here instead. Not a big loss to be fair.

Fake Razor Ramon vs. Savio Vega

JR says he brought back Razor Ramon but not Scott Hall, which is an interesting take on the idea. It's a nice jab at Hall and Nash but I don't think most of the fans cared for the most part. WWF President Gorilla Monsoon joins commentary to complain about the angle. JR of course complains about Vince and no one cares at all. It's very strange hearing Monsoon talking about Scott Hall and Kevin Nash. I can feel my childhood dying away.

Savio pounds away to start but gets sent into the corner for right hands. Razor avoids a charge into the corner as the great debate about Ramon continues on commentary. The fallaway slam puts Vega down and it's off to an armbar by Razor. The hold stays on for a good while and you can hear Lawler getting annoyed at the argument. In the back, Doc Hendrix is going to try to get an interview with Diesel. Back to the armbar as this just keeps going. Savio gets two off a small package as Hendrix can't find Diesel.

We take a break (complete with Lex Luger's WCW music over an ad for the WWF Hotline) and come back with more armbaring and more complaining from JR. Now he's complaining about Doink having a job and how Monsoon should hate it too. Savio makes a comeback and Fake Diesel (Kane, though he actually looks a lot like Nash in the attire) comes in for the DQ.

Rating: F. The idea of “anyone can play the characters” was a nice jab at WCW, but the match was HORRIBLE. It was about ten minutes of armbars and JR ranting and raving about how stupid this was. One lesson here though: Kane is a great example of repackaging until you find the right gimmick. They tried him as a knight, a dentist and Fake Diesel until they FINALLY got it right with Undertaker’s brother. The key thing though was they recognized the talent and kept at it.

Undertaker is in the graveyard and says he knew Bearer would stoop to this. He’ll be glad to dig Mankind’s grave and bury him alive.

Vader/Jim Cornette vs. Jose Lothario/Shawn Michaels

For some reason we look at a video of Marc Mero vs. Faarooq during the entrances. The wrestlers start us off as JR complains AGAIN about Diesel getting a match against Marc Mero next week but not being in the advertisements. Shawn pounds away to start but gets his head taken off with a clothesline to give the monster control. A running splash in the corner crushes Shawn and a standing fallaway slam sends him flying.

Shawn punches out of the powerbomb and actually takes Vader down with a hurricanrana, only to be launched to the floor. Back in and Vader pounds away in the corner before bringing in Cornette. He takes too much time warming up though allowing for the tag to the ancient Lothario. Corny goes to the eyes and brings in Vader but it’s back to Shawn before we get the old man death.

Shawn speeds things up with the forearm and nipup followed by the elbow. Vader ducks the superkick though and takes Shawn’s head off with a clothesline. Back from a late break with Vader changing his mind between the moonsault and the Vader Bomb, only to jump onto Shawn’s legs. Shawn actually slams him down but his back gives out on a second attempt. The powerbomb and Vader Bomb are enough to pin Shawn.

Rating: C-. The tag match was an excuse to keep this from officially

being one on one but that's all it was for all intents and purposes. The match was nothing special but it kept Vader looking strong, even though it was just to be fed to some superhero down the line. It's a good choice for a main event but there's nothing much to see here.

Vader stays on Shawn until Sid makes the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. I think I get why WCW was dominating at this point. This was AWFUL with the best matches being ok at their very best. The Razor/JR stuff was horrible and I can't imagine anyone cared. It's a nice idea for a jab but all it's going to make people do is watch the real thing on Nitro without JR's whining. Terrible show and it's a long road to February when Raw was completely changed into the show we know today.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume I at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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

On This Day: September 29, 1984 – Championship Wrestling: There Is Wrestling Outside Of Hulk Hogan

Championship Wrestling

Date: September 29, 1984

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Bruno Sammartino

This is one of those shows where it's a mix of matches from various arenas, hence the lack of a location or attendance. This is right before the wrestling world exploded with Hulkamania but the first steps have already been taken. The main event for tonight's show is Piper vs. Snuka from MSG which was probably the top feud in the company at the time. Let's get to it.

Carl Fury vs. Sgt. Slaughter

Slaughter is over like free beer in a frat house and takes forever high fiving fans before getting in the ring. Feeling out process to start with Slaughter slamming Fury down. A big middle rope clothesline sets up the Cobra Clutch for the easy submission.

UPDATE! Featuring tag champions Dick Murdoch and Adrian Adonis, known as the North/South Connection. We see them wrestling cattle down on Murdoch's ranch in Texas. I'd love to see little bits like this come back in today's WWE. They take like 30 seconds but add some character to the guys.

Buy the WWF Magazine!

Jose Luis Rivera vs. Kamala

Kamala chops him into the corner and throws him down but here's Andre the Giant to stare down the Ugandan. After a longer squash than I was expecting, Kamala kills Rivera dead with a headbutt and the splash. This was a backdrop for the Andre stuff.

Aldo Marino vs. Bret HartT

Bret is just a guy in trunks here but he's the featured guy, complete

with a second T. An armbar takes Aldo down as we hear house show announcements from the Fink. More armbars abound before a hard elbow puts Marino down. A legdrop and clothesline sets up a piledriver to give Bret the pin. Total squash.

We go to break to the Ghostbusters theme.

House show ads.

Sgt. Slaughter wants your money to refurbish the Statue of Liberty.

Steve Lombardi vs. Dynamite Kid

Lombardi would be better known as the Brooklyn Brawler. Bulldog pounds away and gets two off a gutwrench suplex. A backbreaker gets two for Dynamite as Vince calls Lombardi a wet dishrag. There's a missile dropkick and a nipup from the Brit as the crowd is getting into him here. A Swan Dive completes the squash.

We go to Piper's Pit with guests Lou Albano and Ken Patera. Piper goes on a rant about how the fans' heroes are afraid of Patera. Ken talks about coming back after three years because he loves this place. He tells a story about 4-5 people jumping him in an arena and locking him in a closet before slamming the door over and over on his arm. He's going to find out who did it and take care of them. I don't recall this ever going anywhere.

Joe Mirto/Joe Mascara vs. Iron Sheik/Nikolai Volkoff

Joe Mascara? Who thought that was a good wrestling name? Was James Nail Polish taken? Volkoff does the Russian national anthem bit to rile up the crowd. Sheik sends Mascara into the ropes, meaning that indeed, the Mascara is running. Volkoff gets in a few shots before it's off to Mirto vs. Sheik. The fans want Slaughter who has been feuding with the evil

foreigners. Volkoff hits his gorilla press backbreaker, which I believe is used on the Coliseum Video opening sequence, for the pin.

Jimmy Snuka vs. Roddy Piper

This is joined in progress from MSG and the full version can be found on the Best of the WWF Volume 1. Snuka is down from a poke to the eye but comes back with chops to send Roddy to the floor. Back in and Jimmy hooks a sleeper but Roddy drags both of them out to the floor, finally breaking the hold.

Not that it matters as Jimmy posts him before taking Roddy back inside for a whooping. Roddy is busted open. There's a headbutt and one of the most awkward looking high cross bodies ever, with the move connecting followed by Roddy staggering back into the ropes and Jimmy landing on the ropes before falling onto the floor for a fast countout.

Rating: C. The crowd was white hot to see Piper take a beating but with only three minutes and fifteen seconds shown, it's hard to get into this. To be fair though, it's also the most we've seen from a single match on this show so it's hard to complain much. Roddy vs. Snuka was the hottest feud in a long time so this was a real treat for the fans watching this week.

Piper destroys Jimmy with a chair post match, sending him out on a stretcher.

We get a preview for next week's show, including a Fabulous Freebirds match. I'm pretty sure that's their only match ever in the WWF.

Overall Rating: C+. These shows are hard to grade as most of the matches can't go anywhere due to the time restraints. We did however get to see (part of) a big feature match and both parties in the other top feud of Slaughter vs. Sheik/Volkoff. The interesting thing here was the total

lack of Hogan. He was only mentioned in the WWF Magazine ad and never again. More proof though: there is wrestling other than Hulk Hogan.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume I at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Catering To Different Groups Of Fans

One of the biggest complaints you'll see today is that wrestling is booked for kids or that so many fans think the product is stupid. How many times have you heard someone complain about John Cena targeting almost exclusively to children with his promos (ignoring that this isn't correct)? I've tried to explain this over and over again, but if a short version doesn't work, why not write a lot more about it? Today we're going to look at how wrestling is marketed to certain audiences and why it's a bad idea to cater to certain fans. Let's get to it.

We start in a book instead of the 80s this time. There's a very interesting (and highly recommended) book called *Those Guys Have All The Fun* which chronicles the history of ESPN. Back in the early days, ESPN was known for airing almost all college basketball. As in it was aired for over three quarters of the day at times. It was becoming more and more popular, so an executive suggested that ESPN aired nothing but

basketball 24/7, but a fellow executive said no way. While it was fine to have a lot of basketball, it would be a much better idea to include stuff like skiing, tennis, running etc.

Now why did the other executive suggest this? His answer was very simple (paraphrased): "If we have 19 hours of basketball instead of 24, we're not going to lose many basketball fans. But, if we have 24 hours of basketball instead of 5 hours of other stuff, we lose the skiing, tennis and running fans." As is the case with almost anything else in life, this can be tied into the world of wrestling.

I've seen every single episode of Monday Night Raw ever. Whether it was watching live or taping it, I've never missed an episode in the twenty plus year history of Raw. In short, I'm a lifer. There is nothing I can imagine WWE doing that is going to make me stop watching the show and they have my full loyalty. I'm sure there are a lot of other fans who are in the same group that I am: loyal fans who are going to watch no matter what is presented.

That last line sums up the entire point of what I'm talking about: a large amount of fans are going to watch wrestling no matter what's presented on the show. Fans that are intense in their devotion to the product, as in intense enough to go on the internet and check out sites like this one and read other peoples' opinions on wrestling, aren't going anywhere anytime soon. Therefore, why in the world should WWE waste their time catering to them?

The obsessive fans, often called the IWC, stereotypically love people like CM Punk and Daniel Bryan while thinking guys like Orton and Cena are shoved down our throats. However, when guys like Cena and Orton are on top and guys like Punk and Bryan are clearly steps below those bigger

names, the same fans keep coming back over and over again and can snap off histories and results like no one else can. In other words, they claim to hate the show yet they never miss an episode.

That's why WWE doesn't cater to the internet fans and why they shouldn't: those people are going to watch almost every week and it would be a waste of potential revenue to appeal to such people. We may want to see Daniel Bryan vs. CM Punk for the world title at Wrestlemania, but the masses have little interest in seeing such a thing. While the fans that know Bryan and Punk know what they're capable of, a lot of fans see them as just two small guys who don't look all that interesting. How likely would you be to spend \$50-\$60 to see two guys who might be interesting fight?

Here's the thing that the more obsessive fans can't accept for whatever reason: most people that watch wrestling don't care to see wrestling. Yeah it's a part of the show, but much more of it is about the entertainment aspect. Companies like Ring of Honor talk about being all about the action and jazz like that, but look where Ring of Honor is: on a few television stations in less than major cities with a good PPV meaning the feed only cuts out a few times per match. Most fans likely have no idea what ROH is other than hearing it on a Punk DVD and there's a reason for it: the masses do not care about all wrestling all the time.

If you want a more historical example, look back at the two most successful eras in modern wrestling history: the Golden Age and the Attitude Era. The Golden Age of the 1980s was all about the over the top and colorful antics of guys like Hulk Hogan. Hulk was never what would be considered a ring general, but he had a formula that worked out as well as anything else ever has. Look at Wrestlemania III. There's a match with incredible action that changed the way wrestling worked, and on the other hand we have the biggest match ever. Which do you think drew more people to the show?

There's also the Attitude Era, where wrestling was a rare luxury. I can't count how many times I've watched a Raw from 1999 where a match ran about two minutes before someone came in for a DQ to set up more story elements. Again though, look at how much money the Attitude Era produced by comparison to times like the mid-90s or the Ruthless Aggression Era when wrestling was the focal point of the show. It's two different worlds and the story driven shows, as in the shows booked for the masses instead of the loyal fans, are far more successful.

Let's move on now to a more modern idea which continues to make me shake my head: the John Cena issue. One of the most common complaints you hear about Cena is that he's booked for children and makes really stupid jokes. This is very true and I don't argue any point of it. I also don't argue that it's the smartest thing the WWE can do for a variety of reasons.

First and foremost, there's the obvious one: merchandising. John Cena appeals to children and every few months he has a new t-shirt out and it's only \$24.99 to make your kid smile because he gets to look like his hero. The NWO did it, Austin did it, Rock did it, but now Cena doing it is stupid because the shirt is red or blue?

Side note about the shirts: look at the lessons/morals the shirts are teaching kids. Austin: "Screw authority and beat up people who disagree with you." Rock: "Be as big of a jerk as you can and insult anyone you don't like." Hogan: "Exercise, pray and believe in yourself." Cena: "Work hard, be loyal and respect people." Why do people complain about Hogan and Cena's catchphrases? Austin, Rock and the NWO basically tell people to cause as much trouble as possible while Cena and Hogan say be good and work hard to get what you want. Those are bad things to teach kids?

Second, yeah Cena caters to kids and the jokes he makes are usually really corny. I hear all of his promos and I don't get why people complain about them so much. At the end of the day, they're not made for me and I'd be ridiculous to expect everything was trying to appeal to my demographic. Cena is there for kids (other than that whole year long feud with Rock where the promos were mostly for adults, as was the entire feud. The same was true with Lesnar. Cena only caters to kids though and there's an army of fans who will tell you so) and guys like Punk, Heyman, Orton, the Wyatts, Shield and Bryan are there for older fans.

Finally, yeah Cena does a lot of the same stuff over and over again. This would be totally different than:

Right hands, middle finger, Thesz Press, Stunner

Samoan drop, spinebuster, Rock Bottom, People's Elbow

Big boot, chokeslam, Last Ride, Tombston

Knee crusher, knee drop, cannonball down onto the leg, Figure Four

Atomic drop, backbreaker, middle rope elbow, Russian legsweep, Sharpshooter

Hulk Up, right hands, big boot, legdrop

And I could go on and on. EVERYONE has sequences they use and Cena is no different than anyone else. He uses the Five Knuckle Shuffle, but for some reason that's stupid where as a 20 second build to a standard elbow drop is fine? You can call most of Daniel Bryan's spots ten seconds before he does most of them. Again, it would be ridiculous to try to mix things up simply because some fans are bored by what they see in Cena's matches.

Overall, the rabid fans that watch every week have one general problem: they watch every week. If you watch wrestling, or anything for that matter, long enough you're going to see a few of the same things come up over and over. Here's the thing though: there are a lot of fans who either A, don't care that things happen again and again or B, don't watch every single episode and don't notice it over and over again. Wrestling should never be catered to the people that watch weekly, for that very simple reason: why try to get people to watch when they're already watching and you could bring in more fans with other stuff?

Impact – June 4, 2004: Impact Debuts And Blows Away Today's Product

Impact

Date: June 4, 2004

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Don West

I found this online and had always wanted to do it so here you go. This is the debut episode of Impact, still coming from Orlando and on Fox Sports Net at I believe 3pm EST on Friday afternoons. TNA still hadn't even had a three hour PPV yet and I doubt Victory Road had even been announced yet, meaning we're still in the days of the weekly two hour PPVs. Jeff Jarrett is currently champion, having won the title just two days earlier. Let's get to it.

They still have the six sided ring here.

Team Canada vs. Amazing Red/Sonjay Dutt/Hector Garza

Team Canada is Petey Williams, Eric Young and Bobby Roode. Another very different idea from this point is the time limit on screen. Non-title matches only have ten minute time limits and title matches get thirty minutes. If the match goes to a time limit draw, a judge will decide the winner. The Canadians all bail to the floor to start and there's the triple dive. We start in the ring with Eric Young (with BIG bushy hair) getting beaten up by Amazing Red until the Canadians take Eric out.

Roode pounds away on Red as the power member of the Canadians, getting two off an elbow. There's also an ESPN style bottom line, running down results of recent TNA PPVs. Petey gets two off a middle rope bulldog and Coach Scott D'Amore gets in a cheap shot of his own. Back to Roode for a nice suplex before knocking Dutt and Garza out to the floor.

Red comes back with a simultaneous headscissors to Roode and DDT to Young, allowing for the hot tag to Garza. Roode takes him down with a tilt-a-whirl powerbomb as everything breaks down. Red gets two on Roode off a springboard hurricanrana but Petey snaps off the Canadian Destroyer to take Red out. Roode's Razor's Edge is countered into a hurricanrana by Dutt, setting up a corkscrew moonsault from Dutt for the pin.

Rating: C. This was fine for an opener with most of the guys busting out all of their dives. It's the standard formula of throwing some fast paced guys out there to open up a show and it still works as well as anything else. It's always fun to see how big starts like Roode got their starts as he looked good here.

We recap Jarrett winning the title in the first King of the Mountain match.

Tenay and West talk about how awesome TNA is and introduce a highlight package from their first two years. This includes Toby Keith in TNA...and that's it. Apparently more highlights are coming next week.

We run down the card for Wednesday's show.

Shark Boy vs. Abyss

Sharky goes after Abyss and bites his way out of a chokeslam. A high cross body is caught in an easy slam before the Black Hole Slam ends this quick. Total squash for Abyss.

Popeye hugs Shark Boy. Yes the same Popeye you're thinking of.

Tag Titles: America's Most Wanted vs. Kid Kash/Dallas

AMW is challenging. The idea is Kash and Dallas have been ducking the only team they know can take the titles but tonight they're out of places to run. The winners here have to defend against the winners of a fan poll next Wednesday night. Kash and Storm get us going with the Cowboy taking him down by the arm. Off to Harris for a clothesline and bulldog for two but Dallas makes the save.

Back to Storm who gets caught in a hot shot, allowing for the tag off to the big man Dallas. We take a break and come back with Storm superkicking Kash down, only to have Dallas make the save at two. Kash goes to the corner and climbs onto Kash's shoulders but misses the moonsault, allowing for the hot tag off to Harris. A cross body and clothesline get two each on Dallas as everything breaks down. Dallas loads up Storm in a reverse Razor's Edge before flipping him down onto his back for a frog splash from Kid but Harris spears Kash down. Dallas kicks Harris in the face but Storm rolls him up for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C+. Basic tag formula here with a title change to give the show

some historical significance. AMW continues to be the best team ever in TNA as they have that chemistry that you only see in great teams. Kash and Dallas were just placeholder champions until AMW stopped their singles stuff over the last month or so.

Video on the World X Cup.

Here's Dusty Rhodes who is acting as the judge in case matches go to the time limit. Dusty talks about tradition and drops names like Thesz, the Funks, the Briscos, AJ Styles and Ron Killings. Not quite the same level but nice idea. Now on to Jeff Jarrett, who slapped tradition in the face when he won the title back earlier this week. Cue Jarrett (West: "The thirty time NWA Champion!") who says he used to look up to Dusty but that was twenty years ago when Dusty was in the twilight of his career.

If Dusty needs the \$200, there are better ways to get it than standing here in Jarrett's ring. Jeff speaks in cowboy terms, talking about how Dusty is John Wayne and Jeff will give him five paces to get out of Dodge. Dusty slaps him with the cowboy hat and beats on the champion, only to have Jeff come back and load up the guitar until Ron Killings makes the save. Jeff cracks the guitar over Killings' head but BG James and Konnan make the real save with James swearing vengeance.

Video on the X-Division.

There's a fourway match for a shot at Kazarian's X Title. Vince Russo, director of authority, won't say who the fourth man is.

Chris Sabin vs. Michael Shane vs. Elix Skipper vs. AJ Styles

Styles is a mystery man, revealed about twenty seconds after Russo wouldn't reveal him. This is his first of about 85 returns to the X-Division. It's a wild brawl to start as thankfully we don't have tags in this. Shane and Styles are the only ones left in the ring and AJ does

that sweet drop down into a dropkick spot, only to be taken down by a springboard missile dropkick from Sabin.

Skipper kicks Sabin down for two but Shane is back up with forearms. A wheelbarrow suplex puts Skipper down again as the fans are all over Shane. AJ pulls Michael out to the floor but gets suplexed down for his troubles. Skipper slams Sabin for two but gets caught in an Edgecution for two for Sabin. Chris escapes a rollup from AJ and gets two of his own off a springboard tornado DDT.

Shane is back in with a belly to belly on Sabin but gets crotched by AJ, allowing Elix to walk the ropes into a hurricanrana to send Michael to the floor. AJ sends Sabin to the floor and hits a big flip dive to take Skipper down as well. Shane loads up a superkick to Sabin, only to have AJ springboard in with a sunset flip, only to roll through into the Styles Clash for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: C+. Nice insane X-Division match to show off what the X-Division was all about. Styles winning was pretty obvious but that doesn't make it a bad thing. He's one of those guys you have to showcase on the first TV show and they did a great job at it here. It's also still weird to see Sabin as just another guy.

Kazarian comes out for the staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a solid show actually. They covered a wide variety of stories and parts of the company as well as building up for future shows. That's a really good job for a debut show, but the fact that they had two years of material already helped them out a lot. Good stuff here though and much better than I was expecting.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume I at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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