

Sheamus Out 4-6 Months

Shoulder injury.

I was about to make a Thought of the Day called “What happened to Sheamus?”. This might be the best thing for him as he DESPERATELY needs to freshen up his character.

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Advertising WWE Matches (The Mad Men Table Of Contents)

Over the last few years wrestling television has changed from a show of squashes to what you see today with the stories being advanced every week for two or three hours a night. However there are a few changes in how the shows could be presented from week to week that could help things a lot. Today we’re going to look at how WWE screws up the advertising of their show and how easily this could be fixed. Let’s get to it.

This was originally going to be part of another I Want To Talk A Little Bit About but it evolved into its own. I could get used to this.

The other day I was reading and at the start of the book there was a table of contents. It’s a basic idea and tells you what you’re going to get in the book you’re reading. Last night’s Raw (August 5, 2013) was a pretty stacked show, with John Cena, Randy Orton, Daniel Bryan, CM Punk,

Rob Van Dam and Shield in action. Of all those guys, two were announced early in the show. The other six were announced as being in action over an hour into the broadcast.

Now jump with me back to 1987. The main WWF show was Superstars of Wrestling and it always had the same intro: Vince and company telling us the wrestlers we would be seeing on the card. It might not include their opponents (as more often than not they would be in a squash match) but you would see who was wrestling that day and you knew inside the first 40 seconds of the show. In other words, it was like you had a table of contents that was telling you what you were going to see on the show that night.

This brings us to today's shows where you often hear only one or two matches at the start of the show. You can probably guess that certain people will be on the show, but it's really a guessing game. In other words, you have to judge the book by its cover instead of actually knowing what you're going to be getting that night. Now, this is a bad idea and let's take a look at a few reasons why.

First and foremost, if you know what you're getting later, there's a good chance the fans of those people are going to stick around. Suppose you're a Randy Orton fan. If you're watching Raw and hear that he's going to be in a match against anyone that night, odds are you're going to stick around. Many fans would stick around no matter who it's against, but on occasion it's going to be against someone that people aren't going to be interested in.

This brings us to the second point of advertising the matches: pick what you mention. For instance, last night we had Rob Van Dam facing the World Heavyweight Champion Alberto Del Rio. That's a very popular former world

champion in a rematch with a world champion that people would like to see. In other words, it's a match worth mentioning at the top of the show. On the other hand, a few weeks back we had CM Punk vs. Darren Young. The way to advertise that: "CM Punk will be in action later tonight."

Going back to Raw from last night, the main event was a six man tag between Shield and Daniel Bryan/Randy Orton/John Cena. The match was announced at roughly 9:15 and the opening bell was about an hour and forty five minutes later. That's a big match but it's only getting 105 minutes of time to build. This move causes another set of problems which can be rectified in just a few easy steps.

We'll start with the most obvious problem: it's not enough time to get the word out. If you weren't watching in a span of less than two hours, you had no idea the match was happening by the end of the show and you'll miss the match. These are three world champion caliber guys fighting the top three man team in years with potential world title implications. Daniel Bryan also happens to be the hottest act in the world right now and Cena is his opponent at the second biggest show of the year where Orton might cash in his shot at the title. And this gets less than two hours of build.

Here's the simple solution: announce the match for next week's show. It's a simple solution: you give it seven days to build up to the match instead of half a show and people have a chance to hear about it and anticipate it. Think about Wrestlemania 28. The main event had over a year to build up and it made a fortune. It's a simple principle: give it more time and people will be more interested.

Now what can you do in this week? You can use that social media that WWE

is head over heels for to talk about the match. Have Bryan, Cena and Orton cut promos and put them on the App and have Shield respond to give the match another reason (sidebar: why did Shield come down in the first place? It was never explained, likely due to not having enough time) to happen. Have Orton Tweet about possibly cashing in the briefcase on Cena if he's vulnerable. Which is more interesting? Hearing Orton tease a cash-in or hearing a 15 year old from Ogallala, Nebraska talk about how much he's looking forward to something.

Think of the whole thing in practical terms. If you go to a restaurant to buy some food for the night, it's not all in plain brown bags. It's on a menu which tells you exactly what you're getting. You don't buy some mystery bag and hope you get something good in it. You look at what's presented and pick something if you think it looks good. The same idea is true of wrestling: if you like what's offered to you that night, you'll stick around for the show and stay until you get what you agreed to stick around for.

It also solves another problem: what was going to fill in the rest of the card? This is one of those things that gets on my nerves with general manager characters. Suppose Orton, Bryan or Shield hadn't come out during that segment? What was Maddox supposed to be filling in the rest of his show with? You book that main event in advance and the show is much more logical, as you have a match for the show coming in and aren't booking things on the fly.

Booking things in advance also keeps the card from changing around all the time. Instead of mentioning something and then never following up on the idea later on because there's no bridge to the next week, you already have a match set up in advance and can build the show around that. If nothing else it could help prevent continuity errors like something being brought up one week and never mentioned or followed up on the next.

Finally, there's another out for the WWE by advertising the matches in advance. If a majority of the matches are announced in advance and someone sticks around because they want to see something but doesn't like it, they only have themselves to blame. You knew what you were offered, you agreed to stick around, potentially for hours on end, and you wanted to see a match. If it turns out the match sucks, you can't blame WWE for it as it was your idea. It's better than having someone wait up and then say "I waited two hours for THAT? Screw this company."

Overall, WWE has a lot of good stuff to offer its fans but it goes about telling them those matches exist very badly. Whether it's giving them just over an hour and a half's notice that a match is coming or not letting the match build itself up at all or offering WWE the Mystery Meat of the Day card and hoping you like what you get, there are distinct problems with the way the shows are advertised. Fix these things up and the shows would easily attract a bigger audience.

TNA One Night Only – 10 Reunion: Stop Me If You've Seen This Before

10 Reunion

Date: August 2, 2013

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Taz

It's a non-PPV month which means it's time for another One Night Only. The theme this time is a celebration of the first ten years of the

company, presumably because 10 Reunion sounds better than 11 Reunion. In other words, it's more of the same idea but with regular matches instead of anything themed. Let's get to it.

The opening video shows a few clips from the early days then jumps ahead four years to Angle debuting. Now it's 2010 with Hogan debuting and the Band walking out. We get Angle headbutting Joe and various things happening to Abyss, plus the XXX vs. AMW cage match (Elix Skipper continues to amaze me) and various other moments.

We get a music video, set to a song about taking it higher and higher, of highlights from the X-Division with a focus on the old weekly PPV days. Nice stuff here.

Kenny King vs. Sonjay Dutt vs. Petey Williams

It's not enough that I have to watch these things on Impact but now I have to be bored by them on the PPVs too. Oh joy. It would seem more appropriate to have Dutt vs. Williams here as King wasn't around for much of the first ten years, if any at all. Also spare telling me that he was around in 2006. Anyway Petey seems to be the crowd favorite here but both guys send him down in the corner. Sonjay sends King to the floor but Petey grabs him in a wristlock.

Off to some Rings of Saturn into a rollup for two on Dutt but now King is back in. Both Dutt and Kenny are put in 619 position but King gets up before taking a dropkick to the back. Sonjay hits a running forearm to Sonjay in the corner and bulldogs him down onto King for two. Kenny takes both guys down and sends Dutt to the floor. A legdrop crushes Williams for two and Dutt is dropkicked back to the floor. Off to a crossface chickenwing on Petey but King is no Bob Backlund so Petey fires off some elbows to escape.

Petey comes back with some chops but Sonjay has to come back in to break up the Royal Flush. Sonjay shoves Williams down to avoid a superplex but King crotches Dutt on the top. King is clotheslined to the floor and Williams snaps off a slingshot hurricanrana. Back in and Dutt hits a quick hurricanrana on Williams but King comes in to put Dutt down with snake eyes. We hit the chinlock on Sonjay followed by a running knee to

the ribs for two. Williams comes back in to drop both guys but gets caught in a Sonjay small package for another near fall.

King and Williams are sent to the floor and Sonjay hits a big dive to take both of them out. Dutt seems to be the only one the fans like but King whips him into the barricade to take over again. Petey and Kenny get back in with Williams hitting the slingshot Codebreaker for two. Taz says Petey looks like Peter Boyle ("Not that Peter Boyle!" Thank goodness Taz is back....I guess.) as Dutt breaks up the Canadian Destroyer on King.

A slingshot legdrop to the back of Petey's head gets two for Sonjay but Kenny kicks Dutt in the back of the head. Sonjay breaks up another Destroyer attempt and dropkicks both guys down but misses the moonsault double stomp. The Destroyer connects on Sonjay but King comes in with the Royal Flush on Petey for the pin.

Rating: C-. It wasn't bad but MAN this went too long. It was obvious that King was winning as he's the only guy currently on the active roster and Heaven forbid we don't want the reunion show to be about the past right? This match wasn't bad but it didn't need to run over twelve minutes like it did here. That's too long for a spot fest with no story.

We're going to be counting down the Top Ten moments in TNA history from Slammiversary in 2012.

10 is Jarrett vs. Raven with Sabu debuting to prevent Jarrett from winning the title. That doesn't sound like a top ten moment to me.

9. Hulk Hogan debuts and won't rejoin the Band.

Video on Gail Kim, including her beating Awesome Kong for the first Knockouts title in a good match. We also get a video on Velvet Sky, talking about her being bullied as teenager. I still have a BIG problem believing that an athletic chick who looks like that was bullied a lot in high school. These two traded the title a few times and tonight it's a grudge match.

Gail Kim vs. Velvet Sky

Tenay can't convince Taz to say let the pigeons loose again. They get

into a hip shaking contest to start until Velvet dropkicks her out to the floor. Back in and another dropkick puts Gail down for two and a bulldog gets the same. Velvet pounds away in the corner but is dropped face first on the buckle to change momentum. A clothesline gets two for Kim as Taz accuses the referee of cheating.

Velvet comes back with forearms of her own and Gail waves at Taz for no apparent reason. Gail takes Velvet down as Taz compares Velvet to the Berzerker John Nord. Velvet's knee is bent around Gail's neck as Taz makes jokes about the referee selling illegal DVDs. Velvet makes her comeback with some clotheslines and a headscissors followed by a bad spear for two. Eat Defeat is countered into In Yo Face to give Velvet the pin.

Rating: D+. The match was ok and it's nice to see two girls who were actually important to TNA over the years, but you expect more from a ten year reunion show match. The same is true of the opener. That's the best we're going to get to celebrate the signature divisions of the company? The match wasn't bad but it's nothing memorable at all.

8. Kurt Angle moonsaults Mr. Anderson at Lockdown, mostly missing.

7. Joe vs. Daniels vs. AJ in the Unbreakable three way. That should be higher up. Like WAY higher up.

We're also getting the intro on each individual moment which is a waste of time. Gee I wonder why they're doing that.

Joseph Park says his time here has been unbelievable. He's reached the bar he set for himself and is proud to have beaten Joey Ryan. He's only been here for a year but his brother Chris (You know, Abyss?) was here for over seven years. Tonight, Joseph will take his place in the gauntlet match and who knows what's going to happen. Maybe at TNA 20 Park can be the star.

Gauntlet Battle Royal

Man TNA LOVES them some gauntlet matches. Basically this is a catch all mini Royal Rumble. Johnny Devine is #1 and Shark Boy is #2. Devine takes

him down and pounds away with stomps to the ribs. After that, Devine stomps away even more before trying a double jump moonsault and TOTALLY botching it, falling off the middle rope onto the back of his head a good two feet from Shark Boy. Sharky throws him out to end Devine's embarrassment.

Chase Stevens of the Naturals is #3 and is still as generic as ever. He pounds on Sharky for awhile until Shark Boy comes back with a Thesz Press. He's a Stone Cold ripoff remember. Cassidy Riley, a former Raven tribute character, is #4. Seriously, these are the best guys you could find? Riley mostly misses a Lionsault on Shark Boy and covers like the nitwit that he is. Stevens and Riley are both guys in trunks with nothing distinguishing about them, making this match feel even more dull. They double team Shark Boy down and yell at the crowd, who likely doesn't know who they are.

Here's Robbie E at #5 because we don't have enough heels in there already. Stevens and Riley double team him as well before pairing off with the comedy guys. Sharky hits a Dead Sea Drop on Stevens but Robbie knocks them all down and stomps around in a circle. Jesse Godderz is #5 and I groan out loud.

At this point it's very clear that these themes mean absolutely nothing and that these matches are taking place to fill in time on a PPV they know people aren't going to buy. TNA may not be the biggest promotion of all time, but there's an actual history to them that they could present a good show from. To throw out a few no names like Riley and Stevens along with some comedy jobbers isn't a tribute. It's a way to con TNA fans out of a few bucks and fill in time on a show so you can't be accused of flat out lying.

Anyway, Jesse and Robbie yell at each other long enough to have Riley and Stevens jump them from behind. Taz talks about the Heavenly Bodies for no apparent reason as Bromance eliminates Riley. Here's Matt Morgan at #7 in perhaps his last TNA appearance. He immediately puts out Stevens but Bromance tries to double team him. Shark Boy bites Jesse and Morgan eliminates both Jesse and Robbie to get us down to two. Shark Boy can't hurt Matt and gets lifted in the air in a choke as Mr. Anderson is #8.

Morgan knocks Shark Boy into the corner as Anderson offers a truce with the big man. Shark Boy hangs on in an elimination attempt but Anderson stomps him down onto the apron. Morgan finally turns on Anderson and chokes him in the corner until Johnny Swinger is #9. He fires away at the stars until Anderson takes over on him and the match slows down AGAIN.

Joseph Park is #10 to give us a final group of Park, Morgan, Sharky, Swinger and Anderson. Joseph fires away on everyone not named Shark Boy until Anderson pokes him in the eye. Swinger and Anderson team up to try to eliminate Park but Anderson dumps Swinger. Morgan kicks Sharky out and we're down to the three biggest names. Park is double teamed but Morgan doesn't want Anderson helping him.

Anderson charges at Park but gets low bridged to the floor. As usual Park is shocked that it worked and walks into a discus lariat from Morgan. Matt tries to throw him out in the corner but Park punches his way out. The Carbon Footprint misses and Morgan crotches himself on the ropes. Park pounds away and runs Morgan over with a shoulder block. There's the middle rope splash and apparently you win by pinfall in the final two. Morgan kicks out and hits the Carbon Footprint for the pin.

Rating: D-. This match felt like it was about three days long and the ending was nothing of note. Again, there were ten people in this match and most of them were either jobbers or comedy guys plus Anderson and Morgan. This is probably going to be the longest match of the night and it was ridiculously boring. This show has been terribly uninteresting so far and we're just over an hour into it.

6. Hogan loses to Sting at Bound For Glory 2011 and turns face. It was so nice of him to put over that young Sting kid.

Bad Influence is ready for Team 3D and LAX. Kaz says Team 3D was a great team and LAX is an airport. Team 3D split up and clearly aren't best friends like Bad Influence so they clearly won't win. Daniels says they're the present of tag team wrestling and west coast boogeymen. Good stuff here as always.

Video on the tag team division over the years.

Team 3D vs. LAX vs. Bad Influence

Now THIS is more like it. Team 3D and LAX at least are famous tag teams and Bad Influence has been around for a long time in the company. We start with Homicide vs. Bully, who won the world title about a week before this was filmed. Bully pounds him down with ease but Homicide comes back with right hands to the jaw. Kaz tags himself in to work on Homicide and it's a feeling out process.

Homicide takes him down but Kaz nips up, only to be taken into the LAX corner. It's off to Hernandez for a front suplex before it's right back to Homicide who gets popped in the jaw by Daniels. Hernandez gets the tag and helps Homicide with some double teaming followed by an overhead choke throw from SuperMex. Kaz finally starts cheating by tripping up Hernandez to give Daniels a breather. It's off to Kazarian who gets two via an elbow drop to Hernandez before bringing Daniels back for a countered double suplex on SuperMex.

Bully punches the now legal Homicide from the apron but we stick with LAX vs. Bad Influence. Daniels drives Homicide down with two feet to the chest for two before offering either Dudley a tag. Homicide gets in a shot to Chris' ribs and D-Von tags himself in. A headbutt gets two on Homicide and it's off to Bully for a big elbow. D-Von comes back in for a nerve hold and a clothesline followed by a Spinarooni of all things.

A release Rock Bottom gets two on Homicide and it's off to Kaz. Homicide ducks a clothesline and it's FINALLY off to Hernandez to clean house. In an impressive power display, Hernandez puts Kaz and Daniels on his shoulders at the same time for a kneeling backbreaker. That guy is scary strong. Everything breaks down and Hernandez dives over the top rope to take out Kaz and D-Von. Homicide hits the Gringo Cutter to Daniels from the top but a blind tag brings in D-Von for the 3D on Homicide and the pin.

Rating: C+. This was MUCH better than the rest of the show so far as it actually had some interesting teams in there. The earlier matches have been ok but the people in them haven't sparked any interest. You had to have Team 3D win here given their current status so I have few issues

here. The show needed a match like this to save it from the spiral it was caught in.

5. Christian comes to TNA.

4. Kurt Angle comes to TNA and gets in a fight with TNA's top guy Samoa Joe. That should be MUCH higher.

Austin Aries can't believe he has to face Jeff Hardy. He was hoping to fight someone more exciting as he's already fought Jeff Hardy over and over. The problem is he's never beaten Jeff Hardy. The stakes aren't all that high here though as it's just a regular match with no ladders. We're in the dump of an Impact Zone with all of Hardy's Creatures of the Night, so of course Hardy is the favorite.

We get a hype video for Bound For Glory 2012 with Hardy vs. Aries to set this up. This doesn't really work as the video is about Aries saying Hardy isn't great until he beats Aries, which he did at BFG. We also get clips of Aries winning the title, losing it to Hardy and losing the rematch at Turning Point.

Austin Aries vs. Jeff Hardy

They throw a t-shirt around to start and the fans are completely behind Hardy. Aries scores first with an armdrag and lays out on the turnbuckle. Hardy jumps over him in the corner and drop toeholds Aries into the corner. Austin wants a DQ for some reason but has to settle for jumping over Hardy in the corner, only to be caught in another drop toehold. Hardy drop toeholds him down for a third time and Aries takes a breather on the floor. Make that he's walking out before charging back in, only to be sent right back to the floor.

Hardy follows up with a running clothesline off the apron but Aries grabs the referee to block a Swanton Bomb. Jeff is crotched on top for two and Aries finally gets to go on offense. We hit an armbar because that's little more than a rest hold anymore. A jumping elbow gets two for Aries and another from the middle rope gets two more. Aries pounds away in the corner but Jeff fires off right hands of his own, only to miss a charge in the corner.

Aries goes to the middle rope and does Jeff's dance but a splash only hits knees. Hardy wins another quite slugout and clotheslines Aries down. A basement dropkick puts Aries down for two but he backdrops out of a piledriver. Now Hardy's middle rope splash hits for two of his own but Aries counters a headscissors to crotch him on the top rope. The brainbuster gets two and Aries is shocked. He heads up top but Hardy rolls away from the 450 and grabs a small package for the quick pin on Aries.

Rating: B. Now THIS is more like it. This was a very good match with both guys working hard to fire up the crowd. Hardy is a big deal in TNA's history and Aries is....kind of I guess. Then again I stopped caring about the whole ten year thing an hour ago. Good match here as this show is suddenly on the right track.

3. AJ Styles beats Jerry Lynn twice in a row to become the first X-Division Champion.

2. Hulk Hogan signs with TNA.

Video on James Storm vs. Bobby Roode over the years. I think this is borrowed from the build to Lockdown. This even gets a music video, complete with video from Bound For Glory with the King Mo nonsense.

Bobby Roode vs. James Storm

Feeling out process to start with Storm taking him into the corner for a clean break. They trade hammerlocks before Storm runs Roode over with a shoulder. Storm takes him down with a backdrop but Roode bails to the floor to avoid the Last Call. Back in and Roode sends him over the top but Storm skins the cat and throws Roode to the floor. James hits Roode in the head with a water bottle but gets his throat snapped across the top rope to change control.

Bobby stomps away back in the ring and drops a knee for two before hooking a chinlock. A middle rope blockbuster gets two for Roode and he's getting frustrated. Roode suplexes Storm down and puts on another chinlock. Storm fights up but gets caught in a sleeper to put him right back down. The arm only falls twice and the comeback is on with Storm

suplexing his way out of the hold.

Storm wins a slugout and hits some clotheslines to take over. The corner enziguri and a running neckbreaker gets two for Storm and a top rope hurricanrana gets the same. Back up and Roode hits the big spinebuster for two but the fisherman's suplex is countered into Closing Time. Roode grabs the rope and blocks a Codebreaker, allowing for a rollup with feet on the ropes to pin Storm.

Rating: B-. This was good stuff for the most part but of course Storm loses again. That's really all he knows how to do in a big match situation, especially against Roode. It's a solid match with a solid backstory but it's not the best match in the world. The problem here is the hatred is gone so it's almost a nostalgia match at this point.

1. Sting returns in 2006. Just...no. It's a moment but Angle jumping should have been #1, especially considering that this wasn't even Sting's first time in TNA.

Speaking of nostalgia, Samoa Joe is ready to beat Kurt Angle and he wants to do it by knockout.

We recap Angle vs. Joe. Angle debuted in 2006 and challenged the undefeated Samoa Joe to his first match. Joe lost at Genesis, setting up another two matches with Angle winning 2-1. Joe would beat Angle at Lockdown 2008 for the world title so tonight is kind of a rubber match. There was another match at Hard Justice 07 but no one remembers that so we won't count it.

Samoa Joe vs. Kurt Angle

We even get big match intros for this one. Joe grabs a wristlock to start but Angle counters into a hammerlock. We keep going with the basic feeling out stuff until a shoulder block sends Angle out to the floor. Back in and another shoulder puts Angle on the outside again. Kurt is sent face first into the steps but gets in an elbow to the back as Joe comes back in. This is pretty slow paced stuff so far.

Joe hits a running kick to the chest to put Angle down and there's the

enziguri in the corner for two. A hard kick to Angle's chest and a knee drop get two more but Angle snaps off the belly to belly to take over. Off to the chinlock for a LONG time until Joe fights up, only to be taken right back down into the chinlock. Joe fights up again and hits a running boot to the chest to put Angle down.

The running backplash gets two on Angle but he pops up and rolls the Germans. Joe escapes the third with another enziguri but a missed charge in the corner sets up the Angle Slam for two. There's the ankle lock but Joe rolls through to send Angle face first into the buckle. Angle escapes the MuscleBuster into the ankle lock but Joe pulls him forward into the Koquina Clutch. Angle grabs the leg and puts the ankle lock on for the third time but Joe kicks away and tries the choke but Angle gets underneath the fat man for the Slam and the pin.

Rating: C+. The match was entertaining enough but the spark wasn't here for this match. Much like the Roode vs. Storm match there's no real reason for these two to be fighting other than they did before. The submission stuff at the end was good but the rest of the match really didn't do much of note at all.

A LONG highlight video (as in like 5 minutes) ends the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The show isn't bad but the first hour SUCKED. It had me wanting to turn this off and forget about it for a few hours but then the three way tag team match started up and things got WAY better in a hurry. At the same time though, this whole show depends on how you look at it.

If you're looking for a reunion and the return of a lot of former stars then this is a complete failure. How many people returned here? Homicide, Shark Boy, Swinger, Devine, Stevens, Riley, and arguably Dutt and Williams? So if you stretch, eight people? The biggest name being....Homicide? Or is it Shark Boy? This felt more like a two year reunion as we repeated some matches from a few years ago and little more. The show (first hour aside) is entertaining but it misses the point it was shooting for by miles.

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book of Complete 2001 Monday Night Raw Reviews at Amazon for just \$5 at:

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On This Day: August 5, 2011 – Smackdown: KB Goes To Smackdown

Smackdown

Date: August 5, 2011

Location: Rupp Arena, Lexington, Kentucky

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Booker T, Michael Cole

We have two more shows before Summerslam and this is the first of them. I'd expect a lot of build for Christian vs. Orton V and also some more from the midcard stuff that Smackdown has gotten good at. The big thing though is the freshly face Sheamus continuing Mark Henry. I'm giddy over that one. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Sheamus vs. Henry. The crowd popped huge in the arena for the line of "I'll fight him."

Sheamus vs. Great Khali

Here's a test....kind of. I was confused at first because the tron video said Jinder Mahal, which would have surprised me. Josh immediately gets on my nerves by saying they're on the campus of the University of Kentucky, which is flat out not

true. The city owns Rupp Arena and it's not on the campus. The only affiliation it has with UK is the basketball team plays there. Everyone makes that mistake that isn't from here though so it's understandable. For some reason it's like they're afraid to say Lexington.

Sheamus vs. Henry is announced for Summerslam. Khali takes him down quickly with the power game. Sheamus gets him tied up in the ropes so that Khali is facing the crowd and pounds away on the chest. He goes up top but gets chopped in the chest to send him back down to the floor. Time for a nerve hold since Khali isn't that versatile in the ring, nor does he need to be.

Khali chops away in the corner and Sheamus fires off some double axes to the chest. Sheamus is all fires up but a chop to the head stops the Brogue Kick. It only gets two, despite being the finisher of a former world champion. Vice Grip goes on but Sheamus breaks that too. He elbows Khali in the ribs and the Brogue Kick hits for the pin at 5:22.

Rating: C. Yes it was kind of boring, but what are you expecting here? Khali is a giant and Sheamus is a power brawler. If they had done technical stuff or anything else, it wouldn't make any sense and would probably be awful at the same time. Not sure what else to say here but this was fine.

The Rewind is Beth eliminating the Bellas and turning heel on Kelly. This was the Slam of the Week in the arena. No idea why they changed it.

AJ vs. Natalya

What an odd choice for a match. Commentary goes silent for some reason and until Josh says something about AJ being the Diva next door or something similar to that. AJ takes her down with a headlock and Natalya can't figure her out. And never mind as a crucifix is countered into the Sharpshooter for the tap at 2:00. This was nothing.

Post match Nattie turns on AJ, beating her down and hitting a snap suplex on the floor. She says she's with Beth: no more pretty princesses.

Ryder will be giving the State of the Showski later. The reaction to this is fake as the fans didn't move for that graphic other than a few people.

Orton gets a big pop and we see a video from last week where Orton hit an RKO on Truth on the table and then a second to go with it. He's not worried about Summerslam because he knows Christian can't beat him clean.

Video on Justin Gabriel in South Africa. This is different from last week's and it has more wrestling in it.

Tyson Kidd vs. Daniel Bryan

Barrett is on commentary. Bryan has new music which sounds like it's out of a thriller movie trailer. Bryan's pop was barely there when he came out. Some chain wrestling starts us off and Bryan does his moonsault out of the corner. Kidd is sent to the apron and then to the floor where Bryan hits a big dive through the ropes, shoving Kidd to the floor. Kidd gets a shot in on the knee and starts the attack on it.

Figure four around the post goes on and Bryan is in trouble. Barrett talks about how he doesn't think Bryan is going to cash in. That makes sense as it would be surprising if he made it that far. We take a break and come back with Kidd working on the knee. I'm not sure if anything actually changed in that break so they might have just picked up immediately where they left off.

A quick leg lock goes on until Bryan starts his comeback. He goes up top but gets crotched instead. Cole and Barrett ramble about how much they hate Bryan. Good to see them talking about the match at all. Kidd hasn't been talked about once. Bryan fights Kidd off the top and hits a missile dropkick but can't

follow up due to the knee.

He fires off some kicks but has to pause because of the pain, allowing Kidd to hit a (American) dragon screw leg whip and a half crab. Bryan escapes but can't get the LeBell Lock. Pinfall reversal sequence doesn't go anywhere but Bryan gets all fired up and hammers away with forearms. BIG kick to the head sets up the guillotine choke and we're done at 7:00. I timed the match at 7:45 live so we didn't miss much at all.

Rating: B-. Solid match here that would have been better with more time. The just under 8 minutes wasn't enough time to get going but Kidd has been able to put on some good stuff over the last few months and I've been liking him pretty well. Good stuff here and it's the kind of win Bryan needs: physical, come from behind, submission wins.

Barrett and Bryan stare each other down post match. There's a match teased but not officially announced.

State of the Showski is up next.

Here's Ryder who got a small reaction but it was there. Ryder takes credit for the ratings going up because he's the assistant GM. He says he's going to change a lot of stuff but Big Zeke cuts him off. He got zero reaction at all. Zeke says Ryder must think he's here to beat up Ryder for being in the handicap match last week. Jackson isn't happy but Ryder says he thought they had an agreement.

They're cut off by Cody's music and here's one half of the biggest rib in wrestling history (think about it: the sons of Dusty Rhodes were a metrosexual and whatever Goldust was. How could that not be a massive rib?) along with Ted who is in wrestling gear. Cody says Jackson has sour grapes and is unbecoming of a champion. He says Jackson is making the championship look bad so Cody should just take it from him and resurrect it, just like he's resurrected Ted's career.

Jackson says he's merely using DiBiase. Cody says Ted has free will and Ted should come out and beat Jackson right now. That's up to Ted and Ryder though. Ryder says cool but here's Teddy (who got a surprisingly good reaction) to protest. Ryder is NOT the assistant GM but rather Teddy's assistant. Teddy makes Ryder vs. Jackson for right now. Gee it's a good thing they're both in wrestling gear.

Ezekiel Jackson vs. Zack Ryder

Cody and Ted are banned from ringside. Cole hates Ryder so I'm really not sure if he's face or heel here. Ryder takes over and gets some kicks to the head. Front facelock doesn't work at all and Jackson catches a middle rope cross body to start up the slams. Rack and we're done at 2:30 with the tapping coming on Jackson's head.

Teddy is in his office and here's Aksana, now with long black hair and a leather suit. There's bad romantic sounding music in the background. She wants to talk business with him so he gives her one of his cards. She asks for his personal number which he gives to her. That was rather odd.

Mark Henry is up next.

At this point the show stopped taping and HHH came to the ring and talked about having stress. Ryder was still in the ring and HHH got in some one liners about various wrestlers. He asked the crowd if they could keep a secret and dropped Ryder with a Pedigree. Awesome moment and the pop of the night.

Mark Henry vs. Vladimir Kozlov

Vlad fires away but can't really get anywhere. He manages the trapping headbutts but Henry remembers that he's a monster heel and plants Kozlov with the World's Strongest Slam for the pin at 1:15.

Post match he Pillmanizes Kozlov's leg, which explains him

leaving since Kozlov was released today. Sheamus comes out late for the save with a chair. Henry bails, not wanting to fight until Summerslam. Kozlov goes out on a stretcher.

After a break Sheamus says that Henry isn't just beating people but rather is taking their ability and will to do what they love. That won't happen to Sheamus though because no one can take away his passion to compete here. There are many reasons but the biggest is because he's Irish, which means he has the Luck of the Irish. The following is a near direct quote of the next few things he says: "And that means I was born with a 24 karat horseshoe up me arse. And if need be I can rip that horseshoe out and leave hoofprints on him." Oh and Henry is a whale that belongs in the ocean with Shamu.

Michael McGillicutty/David Otunga/JTG vs. Trent Barreta/Usos Brothers

The Usos do their rhythmic dance thing. Remember when they were all sophisticated or whatever it was? Jey vs. JTG to start us off. Off to McGillicutty and then Otunga rather quickly. And now let's talk about what the announcers are tweeting at ringside. Apparently Booker said Cole is a tool. Jimmy is getting beaten down at the moment and there isn't much else to say as far as the match goes. Hot tag to Trent who is someone I'd like to see more of. Everything breaks down and the champions hit that elbow drop/backbreaker combo to end Baretta at 3:43.

Rating: D+. Just a six man here and nothing interesting at all. I have no idea why Baretta and JTG of all people got picked. They're not bad or anything but why them? Anyway this was fine but the Usos need to get their title shot already, hopefully winning the titles. I've liked them recently and some fresh champions would be nice.

Johnny Curtis sees the writing on the wall and will be in action next week.

Raw ReBound is about the Cena vs. Punk vs. HHH moments from Raw and how the match at Summerslam was made.

Christian says he isn't surprised that the match with Orton is now no holds barred. Everyone has been on Orton's side. Truth pops up to say it was a conspiracy. He says not to let the Little Jimmys fool him and that tonight Orton is gonna get got. Christian still doesn't know who Little Jimmy is.

Randy Orton/John Morrison vs. R-Truth/Christian

When did Morrison lose his pyro? Oh ok that part wasn't on the broadcast. Kind of surprised they didn't have that for the live crowd though. Orton and Truth start us off and Truth hammers him down into the corner. Morrison comes in and Truth runs so he can tag in the Canadian. There's that big spinning springboard kick for two.

Christian takes him down though and it's off to the coward crazy R-Truth. Suplex into the Stunner is countered (called that move by Booker) and Morrison goes all angry JoMo on him, hitting the running knee for two. Christian breaks it up and Orton chases him to the floor and into the crowd where we take a break. Back with Morrison and Truth hammering away on each other. During the break Orton stared Christian down a lot while the other two laid down in the ring.

Truth works on the neck which is logical. Good thing that when he went nuts he didn't lose his wrestling psychology. Christian comes in and gets a neckbreaker for two. Have one of those ever broken a neck? Middle rope headbutt misses but Christian is smart enough to take Orton out before John can make the tag. Truth comes in and does a little dance which makes it look like he wants to make a little love to Orton.

Morrison comes out of nowhere with the C4 to put both himself and Truth down. Hot tag brings in Orton and the fans are all fired up. Powerslam puts Christian down and Orton gets a jackknife cover for two. Killswitch is blocked into the

backbreaker for two. Orton grabs a rollup out of the corner for two. Christian hits a spinebuster that Booker calls a sidewalk slam. Spear misses but Christian avoids the RK0.

Instead Orton gets him in punting position but Truth and Morrison come back in. Morrison sends him to the floor and dives out onto him. Christian jumps Orton but gets caught in the elevated DDT. Truth comes in and takes the RK0 but Christian grabs the Killswitch and pins Orton 11:55 shown of what I thought was closer to 20 minutes but whatever.

Rating: B. I liked this a lot as the ending was rather intricate with all of the spots intertwining very well. The whole point of this was to make it clear that Christian could get the pin on Orton in what you could call a clean method and that's what he did here. This worked well and was a solid main event that did a few things well. Good stuff.

Overall Rating: B. This was a moving day episode of Smackdown. Not a lot actually happened here but a lot of stuff for the future was set up. You can see most of Summerslam now which you could only see pieces of a week ago at this time. The stuff that we got was pretty good and the show is shaping up pretty well. Also Aksana being back with those abs of her is never a bad thing.

Results

Sheamus b. Great Khali – Brogue Kick

Natalya b. AJ – Sharpshooter

Daniel Bryan b. Tyson Kidd – Guillotine Choke

Ezekiel Jackson b. Zack Ryder – Torture Rack

Mark Henry b. Vladimir Kozlov – World's Strongest Slam

David Otunga/Michael McGillicutty/JTG b. Uso Brothers/Trent Barreta – Elbow drop/backbreaker combination to Barreta

Christian/R-Truth b. Randy Orton/John Morrison – Killswitch to Orton

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CM Punk Teaches You Grammar

It's exactly what it sounds like and it is GLORIOUS.

This is great stuff.

On This Day: August 4, 1997 – Monday Nitro: A Surprise

Before Starrcade

Monday Nitro #99

Date: August 4, 1997

Location: Palace of Auburn Hills, Detroit, Michigan

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

This is an interesting episode as I've seen says this is the 100th episode, but I've counted each one I've done and can only come up with 99. I haven't missed any shows and there are only 99 counting this one so far. Two weeks in 1996 had no show at all so maybe they're counting one of those to get to 100. Either way, the main event tonight is Luger vs. Hogan for the title, five days before their PPV title match. That clearly won't go anywhere. Let's get to it.

Oh and this is a three hour show.

Buffer welcomes us to this special show. This whole 99 or 100 thing is going to bother me but the best I can figure out is that WCW is just lying.

After the Nitro Girls dance a bit, here are Hogan and Bischoff with something to say. Hogan runs down Luger and says that he's going to have "500,000 of his friends" watching on Saturday. It was about 1% of that but what difference does it match? Anyway, Hogan doesn't like having to defend tonight, but Luger is going to pay for the mistake tonight. Hogan says something about defending against Scott Hall instead but it didn't make much sense.

Curt Hennig vs. Mortis

Feeling out process to start until Hennig takes Mortis down with a knee lift. Curt goes after Vandenberg though and the masked dude takes over. Mortis misses an elbow and there's the Hennig neck snap. Mortis comes back with a spinwheel kick for two but Hennig goes after the knee. PerfectPlex ends this pretty quick.

Rating: C-. I don't like matches like this one as it's hard to rate due

to how fast it was. A lot of it was them walking around, but it was so short that it was still decent. This is what WCW's massive roster helps with: they have have a guy like Mortis lose, but he can go and beat up other people and get his spot back. Also since there's no shame to losing to Hennig, everything is ok for him. Why WWE doesn't use their roster like this is beyond me.

Video on Sting not talking for the last year or so.

Dean Malenko/Jeff Jarrett vs. Hector Guerrero/Chavo Guerrero

Malenko and Chavo start things off and we hit the mat very quickly. That doesn't last long so they run the ropes a bit until Dean gets taken down by a pair of dropkicks. Hector comes in to face Jeff and we have a strut vs. dance battle. A headscissors puts Jarrett down and frustrates him so he pounds away a bit. Hector makes a brief comeback but stops to jaw with Dean, letting Jeff take over again.

There's the running crotch attack to a 619'd Hector (I'm still looking for a better name for that) before it's back to Malenko. Make that back to Jeff again and Hector gets two off a backslide. Chavo breaks up the Figure Four and Dean is rolled up for two. Hector won't tag and is caught in an electric chair. Dean hooks the Cloverleaf and we're done.

Rating: C. The idea here was that Hector wouldn't tag, presumably due to stubbornness, but it doesn't make Jeff any more interesting. The guy is just flat out not interesting no matter how you try to push or package him. Malenko was fine but he needs to get away from this stupid tag team thing.

Raven still won't talk so here's Stevie Richards instead. Richards has a contract for Raven but there's a snag. He's been in Atlanta renegotiating for Raven and everything seems to be cool now. Raven looks at the contract, spits at Richards and decks him. He pulls back to punch Richards again, but Stevie blocks it and says no more.

Giant vs. Joey Maggs/Lenny Lane/Scott D'Amore

Chokeslam, chokeslam, chokeslam, about 90 seconds, interview time.

Savage pops up on the stage and says bring it before running from a fast walking Giant.

We recap the roll Lex Luger is on. Basically it's a Luger highlight video.

High Voltage vs. Public Enemy

Kaos vs. Grunge to start and Johnny wants to dance. A swinging neckbreaker puts Kaos down as does a clothesline before it's off to Rocco. Rage interferes but Kaos takes the time to pose instead of following up. Larry: "HE'S WASTING TIME!" Remember, this is LARRY ZBYSZKO complaining about stalling. High Voltage is coming off as the heel team here and it doesn't suit them that well.

Rage comes in and pounds away on Rocco a bit more but jumps off the top into Rocco's boot. My goodness how I hate that spot. Grunge comes in and beats up both guys as everything breaks down. The Public Enemy loads up the table but Rage moves, sending Rocco crashing through the wood. Not that it matters as Rage runs into Kaos and is rolled up by Grunge for the pin.

Rating: D+. As lame as the match was, there was an actual story being told out there. The idea was that High Voltage didn't have the experience to hang with the Public Enemy and the veterans used that to their advantage. This is probably the last match I would have expected something like that from but points to these guys for putting it in there.

Alex Wright cuts in on the Nitro Girls dancing. The Girls leave and Alex talks some trash about Jericho, who he faces on Saturday.

Scotty Riggs vs. Alex Wright

Non-title here. Wright sends Scotty to the floor almost immediately and hits a double ax off the apron. A suplex on the floor keeps Riggs down but he sends Wright into the barricade to get himself a breather. Back in and Alex takes over again before dancing a bit. They both hit cross bodies with Scotty falling on top for two. They head up top and Alex

headbutts him down before hitting a missile dropkick for the pin.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here to set up the title match at Road Wild. Wright using the dropkick was a nice touch as that's one of Jericho's finishing moves. Not much of a match here, but then again Riggs wasn't much of a wrestler. At least he stopped using the American Males theme.

Hour #2 starts.

Here's Luger to talk to Gene. Lex says that he was only focused on Saturday but now his focus has shifted to tonight. It's his defining moment and tonight, he's going to make history. Standard promo here but it did exactly what it needed to do. It's such a simple science but no one can pull it off anymore.

Chris Benoit vs. Syxx

Syxx starts with that headlock of his but Benoit quickly elbows him down. A spinwheel kick puts Benoit down but Chris immediately legdraps Syxx out to the floor. There's a suicide dive to take the NWO dude out. Back in and Benoit goes up, only to get caught in the Tree of Woe. Syxx hits a Bronco Buster to an upside down Benoit in a move I've never seen before. A top rope flipping legdrop misses Benoit though and Chris suplexes him down for two. Benoit loads up a belly to back superplex but here's Jarrett to attack Benoit for the DQ.

Rating: C+. This was a nice fast paced match that had to be brought down by a stupid ending. This was done to further the tag match on Sunday which at least had a purpose. Not much to see here but Benoit was fast paced as usual and Syxx continues to be much better against smaller guys. Not bad at all here.

More dancing.

Booker T vs. Vincent

Nothing match as Booker beats up Vincent and side kicks him for the pin in maybe 45 seconds.

DDP talks about his match with Flair tonight, saying that while he and

Flair have common enemies, Flair has his respect, but he has Flair's number. I like that line.

Wrath vs. Barbarian

Now here's an odd match. Barbarian knocks him back into the corner but gets clotheslined down for two. Wrath takes him down but can't hit the Death Penalty (two arm Rock Bottom) as we head to the floor. Barbarian sends him into various metal objects before we head back inside. Back in and Barbarian goes up but jumps into the Death Penalty for the pin. Too short to rate but it wasn't very good.

Meng comes out to stare down Wrath. Wrath bails.

The hometown Steiners come out and introduce Ted DiBiase as their surprise new manager. DiBiase was one of the original members of the NWO so this is a big deal. He starts off by saying that he's seen the error of his ways before almost saying the World Wrestling Federation tag titles were on the line on Saturday. Cue the Outsiders to laugh this off and say that DiBiase is a dead man.

More dancing.

Lee Marshall does his thing.

Konnan vs. Psychosis

Konnan pounds him down to start before nearly clotheslining a horn off. A low dropkick hits the masked man and Konnan sends him to the apron. Psychosis comes back in with a top rope spinwheel kick for two. That's about the extent of his offense as Konnan hits the 187 and Tequila Sunrise for the fast tap.

Rey, still on crutches, comes out to confront Konnan post match. Konnan kicks the crutches away but Rey is faking it and breaks a crutch over Konnan's back.

Glacier/Ernest Miller vs. Damien/Silver King

King and Glacier get us going and the kicking begins. Glacier cranks on

the arm a bit but King kicks out of it pretty quickly. Damien trips up Glacier but the ice enthusiast kicks Silver down anyway. Off to Miller but the luchadores pound him down pretty quickly. Miller comes back with a bunch of kicks and here's Glacier again. A backdrop gets two on Damien but Glacier is double teamed a bit. Uninterested tag brings in Miller who uses his karate stuff, finishing Damien with a spinning kick off the top.

Rating: D. At the end of the day, Miller was so unbelievably boring in this role and it took a long time to get him to a level where anyone cared about him. Silver King and Damien actually got a win or two so they were only somewhat jobbers to the stars. Not much to see here though.

Here's Bischoff with something to say. He's here to complain about the attack by the Giant from last week and calls out JJ Dillon. The alleged boss of WCW comes out and Eric yells a lot, threatening legal actions against the Giant and violence against Larry Z. If there was a point to this getting six minutes of TV time, I have no idea what it was.

Hour #3 begins and the Nitro Girls dance on the announce table.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Ric Flair

Hennig comes out and shakes Flair's hand to mess with Page's mind. Page runs Flair down and slaps him in the face to tick him off. Hennig went to the back already so this is one on one. Page pounds away in the corner and Ric is in trouble early. Flair comes back with a poke to the eye but Page counters a backdrop attempt into a sweet sitout powerbomb for no cover. Hennig comes back out and we take a break.

Back with Flair in control and Page down in the corner. Page comes back with right hands and slams Flair off the top, but a Hennig distraction lets Flair get in a shot to the knee. There's the knee drop and Flair is in Nature Boy mode. A quick Figure Four is broken up because Page is in the ropes.

Flair pounds away even more and tries to suplex Page over the top and out to the floor. DDP counters of course and puts Ric in the Figure Four instead. Flair pokes the referee in the eye, allowing Curt to come in. Page cradles him to slow him down, but it lets Flair escape the hold.

There's a Flair Flip in the corner and Ric goes up, only to dive into a clothesline. Page calls for the Cutter but Hennig comes in for the DQ.

Rating: C+. This was fine but they more or less had a big sign saying RUN-IN COMING. That's fine though as you can't have these guys losing five days before a PPV match. I mean, this is WCW, not some crazy company like WWE that has guys in prominent matches getting pinned on go home shows.

Page clears the ring post match.

Hector Garza/Lizmark Jr. vs. Villanos

This would be IV and V for you Villano enthusiasts. Garza and IV start things off and things speed up quickly. Hector moonsaults out of the corner and clotheslines IV down before hitting a superkick. Off to Lizmark for a dropkick but V comes in and ducks the same move. Some armdrags put V down but the Villanos double team Lizmark to take over. Back to Garza who gets caught in a double gutbuster.

We head to the floor where Garza is dropkicked into the barricade. That gets boring so it's back inside where everything breaks down. Garza dives on I think IV before Lizmark and V go to the floor. IV is backdropped to the floor so Garza can hit the big corkscrew plancha. Back in and Lizmark dropkicks IV a few times, but the referee gets distracted and the switch from the brothers is enough for Lizmark to get rolled up for the pin.

Rating: C. This was fine but it was nothing more than a bridge between the big stuff later on in the show. Garza had the making of a big star and was getting over pretty well in the earlier days of TNA before getting busted for steroid possession. The other three guys never amounted to anything in the States.

Here's JJ to offer Sting a contract. Basically "we're sorry we thought you were lying because we were too stupid to use common sense and tell that it wasn't you the whole time. Maybe we should hit Turner up for vision insurance. Anyway, wanna fight Curt Hennig?" Sting lowers from the rafters and rips up the contract. See, this is something that actually deserved the six and a half minutes it got.

WCW World Title: Lex Luger vs. Hollywood Hogan

Dang man how long has it been since Hogan wrestled on Nitro? They trade hammerlocks to start and Hulk heads to the ropes. More feeling out until Hogan pounds away in the corner to take over. The fans are WAY into this here. Hogan keeps beating on him and drops a bunch of elbows. A clothesline in the corner has Lex in trouble and Hulk chokes away. Luger comes back and rams the champ into the buckle a few times to get himself a breather. Hollywood takes his head off with another clothesline and we take a break.

Back with Hogan still in control and hitting a suplex for two. A belly to back suplex puts Luger down again and a big right hand gets two. The big boot and legdrop hit for two and the pop is really weak for some reason. Another legdrop misses and it's comeback time. Luger decks the Outsiders and Savage as they try to run in. The forearm takes Hogan down and there's the Torture Rack to give us a new world champion.

Rating: B. The match itself was as by the book as you could get, but that's exactly what it should have been. The rating is almost entirely for the moment, which is WAY better here than I remember it being. Hindsight would say it was obviously only going to last until the PPV, but still man this worked really well. I'm actually surprised at how much I liked this.

The locker room empties out for the celebration. The fans go NUTS too. Everyone goes to the back and we see Giant and Luger polishing the belt to get the NWO paint off as champagne is flowing everywhere.

Hogan loses his mind in the other locker room.

Overall Rating: B. This was supposed to be a special show, and I don't often get to say this about WCW, but they absolutely nailed it. The wrestling here is ok at best, but they did a good job of setting up the PPV, they had a good start to the new part of the Sting angle, and the ending is actually excellent. I know it doesn't mean anything in the long run, but at the time this was a cool moment. Good show here which almost shocks me.

Here's Road Wild if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/05/23/road-wild-1997-you-can-see-the-problems-mounting-up-already/>

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Total Divas Viewers Rise 14%

The show is a hit. Let the Did You Knows begin!

Selling A VHS On Ebay

I found this at a bookstore the other day and thought I'd throw it on ebay to see if anyone would buy it. It's the original VHS of Bash at the Beach 1996, the Hogan heel turn show, and is in good condition. I have a few more wrestling things I might put up if this sells. Buy it before the auction ends tomorrow.

http://www.ebay.com/itm/321179254556?ssPageName=STRK:MESELX:IT&_trksid=p3984.m1555.l2649

Summerslam Count-Up – 2001: A Light In The Darkness

Summerslam 2001

Date: August 19, 2001

Location: Compaq Center, San Jose, California

Attendance: 15,293

Commentators: Jim Ross, Paul Heyman

Much like last year, a lot has changed in the last year. For one thing the Monday Night Wars are over and the WWF has absorbed the other two major companies to form the superpower that they are to this day. At the moment though we're in the middle of the Invasion war, meaning it's WCW/ECW vs. the WWF. That's your double main event tonight: Rock vs. Booker T for the WCW Title and Angle vs. Austin (in the Alliance) for the WWF Title. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a WWF themed music video for Bodies by Drowning Pool. That's still the best live performance of a song I've ever heard.

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. Lance Storm

Storm is champion and is about to explain why there is no place for offbeat shenanigans around here but Edge cuts him off. Feeling out process to start as they trade hammerlocks and headlocks. A flapjack and dropkick put Storm down and Edge clotheslines him to the floor. Back in and Edge gets two off a high cross as the announcers bicker about the Invasion. Storm drapes Edge over the top rope and knocks him into the

barricade.

Back in and Storm works on the ribs with some knees and a front suplex for two. The crowd is very hot tonight. The spear misses but Edge kicks away from the Mapleleaf and gets two off a small package. We see the WWF guys cheering Edge on from the locker room. Edge tries a crucifix but gets countered into a rolling senton for two. We hit the chinlock with a knee in Edge's back before a backsplash gets two.

Off to an abdominal stretch from the champion but he's too far away to pull on the ropes. Edge hiptosses out and sends Storm to the apron for a springboard clothesline but Edge catches him in a powerslam to put both guys down. They slug it out with Edge taking over via some clotheslines and a spinwheel kick for two.

Edge-0-Matic gets two and a hurricanrana is countered into a powerbomb for two on Storm. They hit the ropes and Storm rolls through into the half crab. Edge finally makes a rope and puts the same hold on Storm as the referee is bumped. Here's Christian who accidentally spears his brother, giving Storm two. Not that it matters as Edge pops up and hits the Edgecution for the pin and the title.

Rating: B-. I liked this more than I should have but I'm a fan of both guys. This was a nice choice for an opener as it was very technically sound and gave the fans something to get excited for with a new champion. Not that the title changing means anything in the grand scheme of the Invasion but it's not like anything really did.

Test says he didn't turn his back on the WWF but vice versa. He praises the Dudleys and says they'll take out Spike and the APA tonight. Test will show us what loyalty is tonight.

Chris Jericho calls Stephanie a big sl** and says he'll beat Rhyno tonight.

APA/Spike Dudley vs. Test/Dudley Boys

Spike has the incredibly cute Molly (looking very good in blue) with him here. Test cost the APA the tag titles a few weeks ago due to them

accusing him of being the Alliance mole. Bubba starts with Faarooq as Heyman calls Spike a bully. The Dudleys quickly double team Faarooq with the reverse 3D until it's D-Von taking him down with a clothesline and back elbow. Off to Test who gets caught in the wrong corner, allowing for the tag to Bradshaw.

A powerbomb is countered by a Test backdrop and it's back to D-Von to pound away in the corner. Spike comes in with a quick small package and rollup for two each on D-Von but Bubba gets a blind tag and LAUNCHES Spike onto the top rope to take over. Bubba comes in and stomps away in the corner before it's off to Test to pound on the very pale Spike. D-Von pulls out a table but Spike saves himself from being thrown through it. Back to D-Von for a HUGE double flapjack from both Dudleys. I'm not a Spike fan but he could be in some very impressive crashes.

D-Von misses a middle rope splash and it's hot tag to Bradshaw who meets Test. Faarooq comes in as well and the APA cleans house but D-Von breaks up the fallaway slam. A powerbomb puts Test down but Bubba breaks up the pin. The Dudley Dog is countered with Spike being launched through the table and here's Shane McMahon with a chair to knock Bradshaw silly, giving Test the pin.

Rating: D+. Pretty pedestrian stuff here but I've seen worse. The majority of this was Spike getting destroyed and very little between the APA and the Dudleys. Test was the focus of this match which isn't the most interesting idea in the world but at least they were trying. Shane running in is kind of questionable for a match at this level but he's a loyal owner (of WCW) I guess.

WWF stars congratulate Edge on the title win but brags about getting a European Title match. Grandma calls but wants to talk to Edge. Christian isn't happy.

Shawn Stasiak comes in to see Debra (Steve Austin's wife) and thinks he should change his trunks. He was a pretty funny comedy guy who was trying to get noticed at this point but Debra throws him out.

Light Heavyweight Title/Cruiserweight Title: Tajiri vs. X-Pac

X-Pac is holding the more famous title and this is winner take all. Tajiri is the big crowd favorite but both guys are WWF wrestlers. X-Pac uses the referee to backflip out of a top wristlock. Tajiri takes him down with ease and hits a standing moonsault for two but X-Pac rides him on the mat and slaps him in the back of the head. A hurricanrana sends Pac to the floor and a big Asai Moonsault takes him down.

Pac pops right back up and crotches Tajiri against the post to take over. Back in and X-Pac puts on a surfboard but has to let it go to avoid getting pinned. X-Pac misses the Bronco Buster and gets caught in the Tree of Woe, setting up a baseball slide to the face. Another big kick to the head gets two for Tajiri. There's the Tarantula by Tajiri but it doesn't last long, as always.

Tajiri loads up a top rope hurricanrana but Pac kicks him off, only to have Tajiri pull him down into a kind of standing backslide pinning combination for two. A German suplex gets two on Tajiri but Pac sends him to the floor for a big flip dive. Back in and the X-Factor gets two and here's Albert (Tensai, Pac's stable mate). Tajiri hits the mist on Albert but gets hit low and the second X-Factor unifies the titles (for about two months).

Rating: D+. Well that happened. There wasn't anything special at all to this title as the Light Heavyweight division means nothing at all and never did, making this a boring match that no one cared about. Foley summed up the division perfectly in a promo in a few months: "X-Pac hasn't been around in a few months and I don't think anyone noticed."

A very confused Perry Saturn is looking for his love, Moppy (an actual mop) at WWF New York. Someone kidnapped her and her face is on a milk carton. This is one of the guys that was a coup in the Radicalz deal people.

Stephanie gives Rhyno a pep talk and she still can't act.

We recap Jericho vs. Stephanie which went on for months with Stephanie sending Rhyno after Chris, resulting in him Goring Jericho through the Smackdown set. I'd still have loved to see a Jericho/Stephanie on screen romance with them insulting each other so much that they became

infatuated with each other.

Chris Jericho vs. Rhyno

Stephanie is at ringside of course. Rhyno runs him over a few times to start but a cross body takes the big man down. A top rope elbow to the head drops Rhyno and a jumping back elbow to the jaw gets two. The Walls don't work and Rhyno bails to the floor, sending Jericho to the top. Stephanie grabs his foot and the delay lets Rhyno get up and Gore Jericho out of the air to take over.

Back in and Rhyno drops the injured ribs over the top rope and stomps away like a good monster heel would. Stephanie adds a LOUD slap and Rhyno hooks a body scissors to make Jericho scream. Back up and Rhyno hooks an airplane spin of all things to set up a TKO for two. Off to a surfboard with a knee in Jericho's back but Jericho fights up and gets a rollup for two. A suplex puts Jericho right back down and weakens the ribs even more.

Rhyno goes up top and misses a splash that would have missed even if Jericho hadn't moved. A double clothesline puts both guys down to give us a breather. Back up and Rhyno charges into a boot to the face and Jericho hits a middle rope missile dropkick. Stephanie finally gets involved by distracting the referee so Jericho kisses her to the floor. The Lionsault kind of hits for two and the fans are surprised at the knockout. Rhyno comes back with a big spinebuster before putting on a Liontamer (not the Walls of Jericho. It's a different move). Jericho finally crawls over to the ropes for the break but walks into a belly to belly which looks to set up the Gore. Chris dives out of the way to send Rhyno into the buckle, setting up the Walls for the submission.

Rating: B-. I liked this a lot more than I should have as it really wasn't anything special. Jericho and Stephanie had some great chemistry that it's almost impossible to not smile at their antics. Rhyno was a fine monster for Jericho to slay to make Stephanie even angrier and the match was better than I was expecting. Good stuff.

Rock torments Regal with catchphrases, sidesteps a charging Shawn Stasiak to send him running into a metal door, and leaves to get ready.

Hardcore Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy

Rob took the title from Jeff at InVasion but Jeff stole it back on Raw. This is the rematch with the belt hanging above the ring, meaning it's time to climb some ladders. Van Dam takes him to the start in a wrestling sequence but Jeff spins out into a standoff. Rob scores some kicks but misses a dropkick to give Jeff a breather. Hardy is hipblocked to the apron but he hangs on and does the same thing to send Rob to the floor. A big springboard dive takes out both guys in the first high spot of the match.

Both guys head towards the ladders but Jeff sends Rob into the barricade but misses a dive off the top. Rob drops a leg on the back of Jeff's head to put him on the floor before getting the ladder. Hardy pops up again and runs the barricade to take him down before the ladder is inside the ring. With the ladder halfway in, Van Dam gets up on the barricade and jumps onto the bottom end of the ladder to send the top into Jeff's face. Back inside and Jeff dives over Rob to send the top end of the ladder into Rob's face for good measure.

Jeff drops his legs on Rob's which is usually a cover but here just hurts. Rob puts him in the Tree of Woe and hits some shoulders to the ribs to take over even more. The ladder is placed on the bottom rope in the corner and Van Dam hits Rolling Thunder out of the corner to crush Jeff against the metal. A slingshot legdrop crushes Jeff against the ladder again but Rob can't follow up. Jeff gets up first and baseball slides the ladder into Rob's ribs to send him rolling up the aisle.

Hardy is the first person to go up top but Van Dam runs back to the ring and hits a top rope kick to bring Jeff back down. The ladder is placed on top of Jeff again for Rolling Thunder but Jeff gets back up in time to dropkick the ladder out from under Rob. A DDT plants Van Dam but he rolls away from the Swanton. The Five Star misses as well and it's time for the slow double climb. Hardy is higher up but Van Dam sends him face first into the top of the ladder and superplexes him off the top of the ladder.

They both go up again but this time it's Jeff with a sunset bomb to put both guys down. Jeff goes up again and grabs the belt but loses the

ladder underneath him. Rob grabs Jeff's foot but lets go, sending Jeff swinging back and forth. Hardy finally falls onto Van Dam before setting up the ladder again, only to have Van Dam shove it over and send Jeff into the ropes. Van Dam finally climbs up and pulls down the title for the win.

Rating: B. To the shock of no one, this was a solid match. There are certain gimmicks that are tailor made for certain people and it's ladder matches for these two. It was a good brawl and the fans were way into it as both guys were big fan favorites. It's not as good as some ladder matches but it still worked very well.

Shane gives Booker bookends made of announce tables. Seriously.

We recap DDP/Kanyon vs. the Brothers of Destruction. DDP had been revealed as the stalker of Undertaker's wife Sara which was so far removed from his character that it wasn't even funny. Kanyon and Kane were brought in because a goofy career midcarder vs. Kane somehow evens out Page vs. Undertaker. Oh and they're both tag champions to make this title for title. Kanyon is US Champion for no apparent reason.

WCW Tag Titles/WWF Tag Titles: Undertaker/Kane vs. Diamond Dallas Page/Kanyon

Inside a cage to make sure the jobbers have no chance at all. The WWF guys have the WCW titles and the WCW guys have the WWF titles because CRAZY! Undertaker's wife Sara drops the key to the cage down her shirt for safekeeping. The monsters dominate to start, shocking no one at all. Taker pounds on Page and Kane destroys Kanyon until DDP actually gets in a low blow and sends Taker into the cage.

The guys trade off opponents and Kane kicks Page's head off as Taker destroys Kanyon. Kane powerbombs Kanyon into the corner as Taker rams Page into the cage. A big boot sends DDP's head into the steel but Kanyon comes out of the corner to take Taker down. He hits a kind of Fameasser out of the corner to take Kane down but the Brothers sit up at the same time. Page and Kanyon go up top but Taker kicks Page down and tells Kane to let Kanyon go. Now it's the Brothers against Page, two on one.

They take turns with running clotheslines in the corner and Taker hits a sidewalk slam for two. Kane yells at the referee in the corner as Taker pounds Page down. There's a chain in the ring from somewhere and Taker whips Page in the back for fun. Kane is just chilling in the corner watching this. Taker tells Page he can leave and live, but if he ever looks at Sara again he's dead. DDP tries to leave but gets chokeslammed off the top a few seconds later. The Last Ride ends the slaughter and gives the Brothers both sets of titles.

Rating: D+. So you the dominant team of former world champions beat a guy who is nothing like the successful character he portrayed a few years ago and his midcard comedic lackey. Thankfully this was only ten minutes long and Sara didn't look bad. This finally ended Page's destruction by Taker and Kane once and for all I believe.

Rock is having his injured ribs checked, steps aside to let Stasiak charge past him again, and tells the doctor he'll be WCW Champion.

We recap Austin vs. Angle. Austin jumped to the Alliance because Vince McMahon was giving Angle too many hugs. Seriously, that's what caused his heel turn. Angle became the great hope for the WWF and ran through the Alliance to get to Austin, earning this shot.

WWF World Title: Steve Austin vs. Kurt Angle

Angle jumps Austin in the aisle and the fight is on fast. This was an interesting characteristic for Austin: despite turning heel, he was still basically the same guy. He would fight anyone that challenged him and would go straight at them every time. That's very rare to see in a turning wrestler, but Austin is a very rare kind of wrestler. The brawl starts in the aisle before they head into the ring for the bell.

The champion is in control in the corner but Angle clotheslines him down to take over. A cross body gets two for Kurt but Austin heads after the knee to get control. That involves going to the mat though and Angle picks the ankle for the ankle lock but Austin makes the rope. Steve sends Angle into the barricade to put Angle down again before suplexing him a few times back inside.

As he tries for his fourth suplex in a row though, Angle reverses into the Rolling German Suplexes to stagger the champion. Kurt hits a remarkable SEVEN straight suplexes to put Austin down, but the Angle Slam is escaped and Austin pokes Kurt in the eye. Austin nails a superplex and there's a Stunner out of nowhere for two. A second Stunner hits but Angle falls out to the floor. Austin sends him into the post to bust the challenger open then does it again for good measure.

Back inside though, all of that beating just gets two. Since it didn't work, Austin sends him to the post again to bust Angle open even more. Austin goes to drop Angle onto the announce table but Angle slides down his back and sends Steve over the barricade and into the crowd, only for Austin to grab Angle and suplex him onto the concrete. Back to ringside and Angle grabs the ankle lock but it doesn't count out there. Kurt realizes this so he grabs Austin back into the ring to put the hold on again, only for Austin to grab the rope.

Back to ringside again because we haven't been there in awhile. Angle hits a release belly to belly suplex followed by a belly to back. We head back in and Angle actually hits his moonsault for a VERY close two. Austin grabs a Million Dollar Dream, his old finishing move, but Angle climbs the ropes ala Bret Hart at Survivor Series 1996 and Rock at Wrestlemania X7. However this time Austin kicks out but also hangs onto the hold as the psychology of that spot gets even deeper.

Angle finally makes a rope but he's spent. There's the third Stunner but SOMEHOW Angle kicks out again. Steve slaps him in the face which only fires Angle up enough for a quick Angle Slam for a very delayed two count. Austin has had enough of this and punches the referee but walks into a DDT from Kurt for no count. Here's a second referee to count two, only to get a Stunner for his efforts. A third referee comes out and gets decked but Angle hits another Angle Slam. A WCW referee comes out and ends the match with a DQ, keeping the title on Austin and in the Alliance.

Rating: A-. This was a great war with both guys leaving it all in the ring. The match also made Angle look all the greater because Austin couldn't beat him and had to get himself disqualified. This gave the WWF

the hero that it was needing, which is the whole point of this match. Angle would get another chance in the future though, and all it took was kidnapping Austin, threatening to throw him off a bridge in Toronto and throwing him in a kid's pool.

Angle destroys the WCW referees post match.

JR goes into full I CAN'T STOP SHOUTING AND SHAKING MY HEAD mode about how Austin can't beat Angle.

We recap Rock vs. Booker T. Rock came back from making Scorpion King and affirmed his loyalty to the WWF by laying out Shane. Booker is his first opponent because....well how else are you going to have Austin and Rock as world champions at the same time?

WCW World Title: Booker T. vs. The Rock

Rock has bad ribs coming in due to a Bookend (Rock Bottom) through a table. Rock fires off right hands to start but has to chase Shane around the ring. Booker jumps him coming back in but gets sent into Shane, setting up a Samoan drop for two. Things settle down a bit and Rock clotheslines Booker down before hooking a side roll for two. Rock wins a slugout and sends Booker out to the floor.

They head over to the announce table and Rock gets in a blatant low blow. Now it's into the crowd with Booker sending Rock's ribs into the barricade to take over. Back to ringside and Booker loads up the announce table but Rock comes back with right hands. Booker easily reverses a whip into the post and Shane takes off the turnbuckle pad. Back in (finally) and an elbow to the face gets two for the champion.

A knee drop to the face has Rock in trouble and Heyman wants a Spinaroni. JR: "It sounds like something from Chef Boy-Ardee." We hit the chinlock for a bit before Rock comes back and hooks a Sharpshooter. Shane is pulled in again but Booker gets in a cheap shot for two. A slingshot into the exposed buckle has Booker in trouble and Rock gets two off a DDT. Shane puts a chair in the ring and picks up the WCW Title. The referee goes to get rid of the chair and Shane lays out Rock with the belt. This brings out the APA to lay out the Boy Wonder.

Both guys in the ring are down and Shane is knocked silly. His eyes rolled back in his head while laid out is a great visual. The Bookend lays out Rock but the referee is with Shane so the delayed cover only gets two. Rock's clothesline and the belly to belly get two and there's the People's Elbow but Shane comes back in for the save. Shane gets a Rock Bottom on the floor (eyes open again) and Rock hits the spit punch on Booker, only to walk into a spinebuster. The ax kick sets up the Spinaroooni but the Rock Bottom connects for the pin and the title for Rock.

Rating: B. The match is good but I doubt even Booker's mama gave him a chance in this match. Overbooking the match helped and Booker didn't look like a jobber or anything but at the end of the day it was fifteen minutes of killing time until the obvious ending. Still though, good match that got stuck being on after a classic.

Rock celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. For a period as bad as the Invasion, this was an excellent show. The world title matches were very good, the ladder match was better than I expected and there was some other nice stuff sprinkled in. Nothing on here is really bad at all and the crowd was hot all night. Good show here and worth seeing if you want a good way to kill three hours.

Ratings Comparison

Edge vs. Lance Storm

Original: B

Redo: B-

APA/Spike Dudley vs. Test/Dudley Boys

Original: C

Redo: D+

Tajiri vs. X-Pac

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Rhyno vs. Chris Jericho

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Rob Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy

Original: B-

Redo: B

Diamond Dallas Page/Kanyon vs. Undertaker/Kane

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Steve Austin vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A-

Redo: A-

The Rock vs. Booker T

Original: B+

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: B+

Redo: A-

About the same all around.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/08/04/history-of-summerslam-count-up-summerslam-2001-summerslam-gets-all-alliancey/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete 2001 Monday Night Raw Reviews at Amazon for just \$5 at:

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Monday Night Raw – August 5, 2013: Don't Touch The Beard!

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 5, 2013

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're back live this week after last week's not so great taped show. No matches have been announced for tonight that I can remember but there will be Daniel Bryan's corporate makeover. We're rapidly approaching Summerslam and there are only three matches announced. Odds are we'll get a lot of stuff added on tonight and Friday so let's get to it.

Here's Stephanie to open the show. She talks about Bryan's corporate makeover and gives us a video of him being fitted in a suit and having his hair cleaned up. Back in the arena and the fans chant NO. Here's the improved Bryan in a suit with a ponytail and a beard. He isn't sure how the fans like it but he doesn't think this is what the company wants. They clearly want someone in cargo shorts and a yellow t-shirt who will sell a bunch of stuff the people don't need.

Bryan talks about how Cena has been on the top of the mountain for ten years now because he's an entertainer, but Bryan is a wrestler. If Cena was fired he'd go back to his mansion and cars and would never have to wrestle again. If Bryan were to be fired tomorrow, he'd be in every armory and gym because that's what he loves to do. The fans cheer and Bryan thinks they love wrestling too. Bryan says he'll dress up for now but at Summerslam, he's going to make John Cena tap out like everyone wants him to do.

This brings out Vince who says he appreciates Stephanie's efforts and thinks Bryan has given it the old college try but it's not perfect. Vince talks about how he doesn't want Bryan or Cena to be champion because we've never had a dwarf as champion. Bryan is so unkempt that he looks like a miniature Mick Foley but maybe we can work something out. There's one final thing that needs to go though: the beard. Vince calls for the barber's chair but Bryan says no. The boss talks about how Bryan will do this if he wants to be WWE Champion and this is the first step.

Bryan gets out of the ring and takes off the suit jacket but Vince says we need a barber. The barber is going to be...Wade Barrett? Wade gets ready to shave him but Bryan jumps him and shaves off Wade's beard (or at least half of it) before sending Barrett into the crowd. Bryan says he won't change for Vince because he's going to be who he is and then be WWE champion. He takes off the shirt to reveal a t-shirt saying The Beard Is Here with an arrow pointing up. Vince is ticked.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Rob Van Dam

Miz is on commentary. Non-title again and Ricardo is back, a week earlier than the reported return date. Del Rio attacks to start but Van Dam fires back with forearms to the jaw. A standing moonsault gets two and Del Rio rolls to the floor, only to have Rob hit a moonsault off the apron as we take a break.

Back with Van Dam blocking a shot into the buckle and kicking Del Rio down.

Rolling Thunder misses and Alberto's low superkick gets two. Alberto misses his running enziguri in the corner and Van Dam kicks him down

before. Rolling Thunder connects for two but the split legged moonsault hits knees. Ricardo puts the bucket in the corner but it's Alberto being sent face first into it, giving Van Dam a rollup for the pin at 6:14. Not long enough shown to rate but did we really need this loss?

Post match Del Rio superkicks Ricardo and hits him with the bucket before crushing him between the steps and the post.

Here's Cody Rhodes in the ring to talk about Sandow jumping him from behind last week. He has a present for Sandow in a box but first, we look at their issues over the past few weeks. Back in the arena and Cody opens the box: the crushed briefcase, complete with seaweed hanging off the side. Here's Damien himself to say put the case down and walk away. Cody puts it down but charges at Sandow and the fight is on. Cody kicks him to the floor and opens the case to reveal the actual contract. Rhodes puts it back in the case and throws it back at Sandow who doesn't pick it up.

Ryback vs. Mark Henry

They stare each other down and Ryback grabs a headlock to start. Henry runs him over with a shoulder but Ryback goes after Henry's knee. Mark comes back and knocks Ryback to the floor....and Ryback walks out at 1:46. Thanks for this one guys.

The Bellas are arguing over who looked better on Total Divas. Eva Marie comes up to laugh about how they made Natalya look stupid last week. Natalya comes up and slaps a Bella, likely setting up a match later.

Here's Cena with something to say. Cena says he's used to being a target but most of the time the people are just mad at him. Every once in awhile though he has to face a true fan favorite, which means the people have to choose. He's been listening to the people and it's obvious the fans Daniel Bryan. Cena heard what the people said and he doesn't blame them.

He also heard what Daniel Bryan said earlier and it made Daniel Bryan sound ignorant. Daniel Bryan said the same things that The Rock and CM Punk and everyone else who doesn't like the color of Cena's shirt or the kind of cereal he eats. Cena was back a day after breaking his neck and his elbow looks like a football but he's here because he loves it.

Bryan talked about wrestling in armories and gyms because that's where he's most comfortable. Daniel was right that if Cena was fired tomorrow he'd never wrestle again because he wouldn't settle for anything but the best and he wouldn't tarnish the WWE by going elsewhere. Cena has heard people tell him he can't wrestle for years and he knows what it sounds like. He's been WWE Champion 11 times and that's too many times to be lucky. Cena thinks the fans want to see Bryan vs. Cena right now and there's the YES chant.

This is a huge match for Bryan and if he wins, he's earned the WWE Championship, but if he loses he has to admit that he's not good enough. Bryan is on fire but Cena has been mowing people down since January. At Summerslam the people can cheer for whomever they want, but Cena is walking out champion. Excellent stuff here that sets up the dynamic of the match perfectly.

Cena drops the mic but here's Orton. He talks about how Cena is always aware of the target on his back but he never remembers the target in front of his face. The briefcase is what matters because it means Orton will be WWE Champion. It could happen at Summerslam, it could happen the night after, or it could happen at Wrestlemania. All it means is that the champ is here, not with Cena.

Cue Shield of all people as things get even more interesting. They surround the stars but here's Bryan (still in the ponytail) for the save. Shield runs off now that the odds are even but it's GM time, with Maddox making the six man main event. When did Maddox shrink and become a bald black man?

Wyatt Family vs. Tons of Funk

Harper starts with Tensai and shouts yeah a lot. A big boot puts Tensai down and it's off to Rowan for forearms in the corner but he runs into an elbow. Tensai puts him down with a clothesline and everything breaks down with Rowan running Brodus down. Harper's discus lariat sets up a splash from Rowan to pin Tensai at 1:20.

Post match Bray gets in and hits Sister Abigail on Brodus before grabbing a mic. He says Kane isn't a monster but rather an illusion. The demon is

a lie but he himself is much different. He's the man of 1000 truths and the eater of worlds. He is forever and follow the buzzards. Wyatt kneels over Brodus but Kane's pyro lights up the arena.

On screen, Kane says that when you pull the wings off a buzzard, they're impossible to follow. He sees through Bray's words and sees that Bray is here to maim everyone in his path. Kane likes that and does them as well, but he does them for amusement, not to spread a message. Bray will find out why Kane is the devil's favorite demon at Summerslam. Not the Family nor anyone else can save Wyatt from the ring of fire. Fire shoots out of the posts and Bray drops to his knees in laughter.

Punk is in the back and wants to talk about Curtis Axel's dad Mr. Perfect and Bobby Heenan. The difference between those two and Axel/Heyman is Perfect had his own thoughts when he was on screen with Heenan. The younger version having Heyman as his guide is going to earn him a beating tonight. After that, Punk is going to take the Beast's manhood away, just like he promised.

Kaitlyn vs. Layla

Thankfully Layla hasn't dropped the shorts. Layla says she turned on Kaitlyn for the attention and she's coming for all the regular divas and the Total Divas. Kaitlyn takes her down to start and pounds away so Layla runs to the ropes. The referee pulls Kaitlyn away, allowing Layla to take over with a DDT. Layla chokes away in the corner and slams Kaitlyn face first into the mat. She charges into a backbreaker though and Kaitlyn starts her comeback. The gutbuster puts Kaitlyn down but here's AJ to distract Kaitlyn from the spear. Layla bails to the apron but an AJ distraction lets Layla kick Kaitlyn in the head for the pin at 2:59.

Kaitlyn and Layla skip around the ring post match. Apparently that kick is called the Bombshell.

We recap Cody and Sandow's issues from earlier. Cody vs. Sandow is official for Summerslam.

Christian vs. Heath Slater

Christian sends him into 619 position but can't uppercut Slater because of the other Band members. Slater takes over with some forearms to the chest and it's off to the chinlock. Slater jumps off the middle rope and lands on Christian's boot and a flapjack sets up a middle rope dropkick for two for Christian. Slater is knocked to the apron and backdropped back inside so the sunset flip out of the corner can get two. Slater stops to dance but gets caught by the spear for the pin at 3:15.

Rating: C-. This was a better match than I was expecting but it still was nothing great. Christian looked good and gets a win before the PPV, unlike Del Rio earlier. That being said, it would appear that Del Rio wins at Summerslam because that's what WWE does. Why they think losing all the matches until winning the blowoff makes things ok I'm not sure, but that's the status quo.

CM Punk vs. Curtis Axel

Non-title of course. Punk charges up the ramp before the bell and the brawl starts near the stage. Punk keeps trying to get to Heyman who has gone backstage. They head to the ring with Punk in control and the bell rings. Axel takes over with some chops but Punk takes him down into an Indian Deathlock of all things. Before he falls down with the hold, Punk spits in the air and tries to slap it away ala Mr. Perfect and the gum. Axel rolls to the floor and gets caught with the suicide dive as we take a break.

Back with Axel cranking on an armbar and elbowing Punk in the face for two. A middle rope elbow sets up another chinlock from Axel as Heyman comes back to ringside. Punk finally rolls out of the hold and crawls over at Heyman, only to be clotheslined down for two. Punk comes back with a spinning cross body out of the corner but a Heyman distraction lets Curtis take over. CM comes back with a kick to the head and the running knee in the corner but Curtis breaks up the Macho Elbow. The McGillicutter gets two but Punk kicks Axel in the head again. Not that it matters as he goes after Heyman, drawing a DQ at 10:22.

Rating: C+. I was digging this match until the end but the ending kind of sucked. To be fair though they didn't have Axel do another job which is

the right idea. Punk vs. Lesnar is going to be golden and the hatred that Punk has for Heyman is selling this feud as perfectly as you could ask it to. Decent match here with Axel getting to look good.

Post match here's Lesnar but Axel pulls Punk to the floor. Punk takes him down with a GTS and grabs a chair but Brock takes it away. Punk fires off forearms and kicks to the head to stagger Brock and a flying forearm off the table takes Brock down. Not that it matters as Lesnar casually grabs him and throws him down with a belly to belly. They head inside but Punk escapes the F5 and hits Brock in the back with the chair. Heyman is in the ring and drops to his knees in terror but Lesnar takes the chair away from Punk and lays him out with the F5. Brock nails Punk in the back with the chair for good measure.

After a break Lesnar wants to know if that's the best the world has to offer. Heyman says next week, he's going to the ring and giving Punk a chance at a man vs. man fight.

Fandango vs. Kofi Kingston

Kofi is much skinnier and is in long tights now. Fandango takes over quickly to start and takes Kofi down as the announcers talk about ballet. A quick chinlock sets up a dropkick to Kofi but a middle rope knee drop misses. Kofi comes back with a dropkick and the Boom Drop but Fandango bails from Trouble in Paradise. Fandango gets in a kick of his own but misses the legdrop, allowing Kofi to get two off a cross body. Trouble in Paradise is good for the pin at 3:43.

Rating: D+. I hope that was just ring rust from Kofi as he didn't look very good out there at all. The fans didn't seem to care about him at all and the tights aren't working for him. Fandango has fallen since that concussion and it's a shame to see the booking go this way for him. Kofi didn't look all that good though and hopefully he gets better.

HHH is in the office when Stephanie comes in crying. Vince hated the segment and HHH goes NUTS, ranting and raving about how Vince is no longer a creative genius and goes on his own whims. HHH isn't going to stand by and watch the ship go down and he's going to do something about Vince.

Real Americans vs. Usos

Colter resorts to making fun of cheese and the Green Bay Packers to get heat. Jey runs over Swagger for two to start but gets caught in the powerslam/belly to belly for two. Off to Cesaro for a double stomp for two more before Jack comes in with a shoulder to the leg. Swagger finally misses the Vader Bomb and it's hot tag to Jimmy. Everything breaks down and Jimmy hits a big dive to take Swagger out. Cesaro jumps into part of a superkick but gets out at two. A Colter distraction lets Cesaro hit a quick Naturalizer for the pin on Jimmy at 3:52.

Rating: D+. This was ok but I'm having a bit of trouble buying the Real Americans as a threat after all those matches they lost. The Usos are the latest team to get going for a few weeks and then fall back into jobber status a few weeks later. That's WWE booking for you because Heaven forbid anyone get hot when it's not for a title.

Big E. Langston vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler hits a quick dropkick for one and gets out of a gorilla press, only to be knocked off the apron and out to the floor. Back in and Langston puts on an abdominal stretch for a big. Big E. misses a charge into the post and Ziggler snaps off a quick Stinger Splash and a neckbreaker for two. Ziggler tries to speed things up but gets caught in a drop into a backbreaker to put him down. Langston misses a splash and Dolph mostly misses a Fameasser for two. Kaitlyn comes out to go after AJ because that feud hasn't gone on long enough. The girls get in the ring and Big E. runs Dolph over. Big Ending and we're done at 4:14.

Rating: D+. The crowd didn't care here and I don't think they'll care much more about the tag match this sets up for Summerslam. Why Ziggler would want to team with Kaitlyn after this I'm not sure as she just cost him a match but that's WWE logic for you. Not much to see here but Langston clearly has a ton of potential.

John Cena/Daniel Bryan/Randy Orton vs. Shield

The bell rings at 10:59 so don't expect much from this one. Orton starts with Rollins and it's Seth in early trouble. A suplex puts him down and

it's off to Bryan with a middle rope dropkick but Ambrose gets the tag. That's cool with Bryan as he runs Dean over with a clothesline and sends him to the floor for the FLYING GOAT.

Reigns gets in a shot on the floor to take over and it's Bryan as your face in peril. Rollins hooks a chinlock before it's off to Roman for some power. A double gutbuster gets two on Bryan but he charges over for the tag to Cena...but the referee doesn't see it. Everything breaks down anyway and Bryan gets the YES Lock on Rollins, drawing in the other Shield members for the DQ at 5:26.

Rating: C-. This was what you would have expected. The match didn't have time to go anywhere and was just there to set up the post match stuff. I'm not a fan of endings like that because there are saves made all the time that don't draw DQ's. This was crippled by a lack of time which is a shame.

Post match Orton lays out Bryan with an RK0 but has to help Cena clear the ring. Shield runs and there's an RK0 to Cena. Orton GETS THE BRIEFCASE but Shield comes down and beats up Cena and Bryan even more. Orton walks away in a heelish move and Bryan takes a TripleBomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was a moving day towards Summerslam as we added a match and enhanced a lot of the others. The matches were good enough tonight but this was all about the promos and storytelling which often make for better episodes. Bryan vs. Cena is going to be AWESOME with both guys trying to prove the other wrong and the promos showed that. Punk vs. Lesnar looks good with Punk trying to slay the monster and the physical side has a chance. Good but not great show tonight.

Results

Rob Van Dam b. Alberto Del Rio – Rolling Cradle

Mark Henry b. Ryback via countout

Wyatt Family b. Tons of Funk – Splash to Clay

Layla b. Kaitlyn – Bombshell Kick

Christian b. Heath Slater – Spear

Kofi Kingston b. Fandango – Trouble in Paradise

Real Americans b. Usos – Neutralizer to Jimmy Uso

Big E. Langston b. Dolph Ziggler – Big Ending

Randy Orton/John Cena/Daniel Bryan b. Shield via DQ when Ambrose and Reigns wouldn't leave the ring

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