

Wrestlemania 29 Preview: Ryback vs. Mark Henry

At least it isn't called the Colossal Jostle. There isn't as much to say about this one. At the end of the day this is one of those matches that is there to give us a cool visual rather than have a competitive match. I don't think it's any secret that the odds say the match ends with a big old Shell Shock on the big old Henry, and that's the right call for this match. It shouldn't run more than seven minutes tops, as you don't want to expose either of these guys as being as limited in the ring as they actually are.

Ryback NEEDS this win far more than Henry does. Mark is old and banged up and likely doesn't have much more time in the company. Ryback on the other hand has a good chance of being one of the top stars in the company for a few years to come. A win over Henry would have meant a lot more a year ago, but here it still means a lot and the Shell Shock can be the signature spot for him for a long time to come. Big moves like that at Wrestlemania have done a lot for guys in the past, so why not do it again here?

As for the match, if it's somehow not clear yet, Ryback wins with the Shell Shock. He definitely needs this match more than Henry, as Ryback hasn't had a big win since....before the Cell? The big question is can he pull the move off without botching it badly? Henry is another guy like Jericho who can do as many jobs as you ask him to do and he's still going to be a solid threat because of how big and powerful he is. He'll also look good here because Ryback can throw him around like the monster that he is. These matches can work wonders for someone and I think that's what's going to happen for Ryback.....assuming he can hit the Shell Shock.

Wrestlemania 29 Preview – Tag Titles: HELL NO vs. Big E. Langston/Dolph Ziggler

This could go more than one way. First and foremost this is one of the matches that depends on where it is on the card. If it's late in the show, I can't imagine we don't see new champions. If it's earlier on in the show, I think the champions retain and Ziggler walks out with a title later on in the form of the Smackdown big gold belt. This is also interesting because it's the in ring debut of Langston, who has had some very entertaining matches down in NXT. I'm not sure if we're going to see the fun Langston or another generic power guy, but either way it should be fun.

Now the main idea here is that one way or another, we need new tag champions. Kane and Bryan have held the belts for like six months now and it's WAY past the point where they should have dropped them. The champions aren't funny anymore, they're not really fighting, their matches are nothing special, and the joke is way past over. I don't see why we're sitting around watching them anymore when they're not doing anything of note and haven't been for months now. If Langston and Ziggler don't take the gold from them, hopefully someone does so soon.

As for the match, I'll go with the unlikely idea of new champions. It's pure instinct which is rarely right but I can't go with the champions retaining again after all these months. Ziggler has been on a very small roll so maybe they'll FINALLY give him something instead of just having him hold up a dented briefcase for nine months and hoping we think

that means something. Then again there isn't much to the tag titles so it doesn't fix anything, but in WWE's eyes the gold is enough to make you mean whatever they want you to mean. The titles change here methinks.

Oh and I've heard rumors of making this a six person tag with AJ and Kaitlyn being added to make it winner takes all titles. If that's the case, I'd bet on the heels taking the belts even more. AJ is a good five months past being the best option for the title, but at least she would be better (and look better) than Kaitlyn.

Wrestlemania 29 Preview – No Holds Barred Career Match: Brock Lesnar vs. HHH

Now stop me if you've heard this one before. Brock Lesnar debuted a year ago and this is his second feud. He's spent roughly eleven months feuding with HHH over something that I'm still not entirely clear on. I think Lesnar started this because he was mad about HHH running the show and then beat him up at Summerslam, but now it's about revenge for Vince. Or something. Anyway, we saw these two have a No DQ match at Summerslam which was nothing all that exciting at all.

On top of that, the stipulation of HHH's career being on the line really doesn't add much because HHH is already retired for all intents and purposes. He wrestled twice last year and I think four times on TV the year before. Putting his career on the line is nowhere near the same as when Flair or Michaels

did it as they were both active competitors. I get what they're going for with the added stipulation, but at the end of the day the match isn't very exciting at all. It's the same thing we saw and were bored by eight months ago with HHH trying and likely failing to have the big epic showdown he's hoping for.

As for Lesnar, the problem is very simple: what does he gain from this match? He's already beaten HHH once and has done nothing else for the rest of his time in the company other than lose to Cena. Why in the world would you have someone like that with that much money being spent on him in the same feud for the better part of a year with the match not being great? It seems like such a waste, but given the millions he's making a match, can you blame Brock for doing stupid matches like these?

The build has been nothing special either as it feels like they're trying to recreate what happened last year with Taker vs. HHH. The idea of the feud is that Brock beat up HHH last summer and now HHH wants a rematch to prove how awesome he is. The idea of HHH fighting for Vince's honor doesn't do much for me and neither does Shawn being in his heterosexual life mate's corner. It's going to be a lot of what we saw before with Shawn likely superkicking Heyman at some point. I wouldn't be surprised to see Stephanie and Vince make appearances during the match as well.

As for the match itself, I can't imagine HHH losing. He's 43 years old and can still put on good matches which give younger guys a solid rub as a result. As stupid of an idea as it would be to have Lesnar go 1-2 in his first year back with the company and waste two of those matches on HHH of all people, I can't picture it going any other way. HHH is going to get back in the ring again which is the right move, but at this price I'm not sure if it's worth it. Either way the match will be very physical but likely not live up to the standards they've set for the match, as HHH's "epic" matches rarely work

at all.

Wrestlemania 29 Preview: Fandango vs. Chris Jericho

This is quite the debut match. Fandango is Johnny Curtis in another new gimmick as a dancer (I'll give them this: they're repackaging him over and over until he finds something that works. It's VERY refreshing to see someone getting a new gimmick for a change instead of the same failing gimmick pounded into the ground. Look at someone like Chris Masters. There's obviously talent there but WWE wouldn't let him have anything but "he's muscular and strong". A gimmick change can do wonders for a guy) who won't wrestle until someone pronounces his name right. Jericho, ever the smart aleck, mispronounced his name over and over, finally making Fandango snap.

This is a match which could go either way. If the Fandango character is deemed a failure, Jericho goes over. However, Jericho is the undisputed king of the jobbers and is willing to put over anyone on two legs at a moment's notice. It's not like Jericho's character is going to lose his status with a loss here either as he's firmly in the legend status where he could lose every week for a year and still be at the same level. The build for this has been pretty solid with Fandango being so over the top that he's very entertaining. The problem for him is likely to be his in ring work, which from what I saw at a house show in February is bad at best and depressing at worst.

As for the winner, I've got to go with Fandango. He's been

built up too well and it's clear that WWE sees something in him, given the amount of times they've repackaged him over the last few years. Jericho is likely leaving again to do band stuff, so a loss and post match beatdown could very well be likely. The match is likely to be entertaining because of both guys being such entertaining characters. Fandango wins and should send Jericho part of his paycheck every week for a year as a result for putting him over like this at Wrestlemania.

Wrestlemania 29 Preview: Tons of Funk/Funkadactyls vs. Rhodes Scholars/Bellas

I wouldn't be surprised to see this get bumped to the pre-show as well. This is the big return of the Bellas in what is supposed to be part of the resurgence of the Divas division by giving the Funkadactyls a rub. The problem with that theory is that no one is going to care about any Diva if they're treated like schmucks like Kaitlyn. As for the male counterparts....eh. Tons of Funk are a glorified comedy team with the dancing stuff but the kids like them a lot in the same vein of Rikishi and Too Cool back in the day. The Scholars on the other hand are back together and still losing almost every time they're out there. I'm hoping the team is done for good after this so we can get them doing something worthwhile. Given that the tag division reboot is dead, having them as singles guys is the only thing left for them.

As for the match, I think it goes to the dancing team, presumably with Naomi getting the win. It's clear that WWE

sees them as the next big thing in the Divas division. She got a spot in a PPV title match late last year and was showcased in the tag match on Monday. She's much better in the ring than Cameron, but Cameron is better in the looks department which tends to be the bigger deal anymore. This isn't going to be much of a match and it might get eight minutes at most. I'd bet on the dancers to win though, if nothing else for the big dance party post match.

Wrestlemania 29 Preview: Pre-Show – Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Wade Barrett

What better place to start a preview than with the match that starts before the actual show? I'm still not entirely sure what these guys are fighting over. I'd assume it was the movies they were in, but it's not like that's been mentioned for two weeks or so. Barrett has been champion for months now and at times I forget he even has the belt since he loses so many non-title matches, including one to Miz a few weeks ago on Raw. The idea is supposed to be that Miz is some kind of Figure Four master or whatever, even though he's used the move for like three months and has only been decent at it for about two of those, so look for a lot of Figure Four attempts.

There's a reason this match is going to be on the pre-show. Not many people are interested in seeing it, it's not going to be much in terms of quality, the title means next to nothing, we saw this match two weeks ago, and Barrett is a lame

champion. I'll go with Miz to win here to give the fans something to "care" about, even though not many people care about him at all.

On This Day: April 6, 1997 – Spring Stampede 1997: Page's Big Break

Spring Stampede 1997

Date: April 6, 1997

Location: Tupelo Coliseum, Tupelo, Mississippi

Attendance: 8,356

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Dusty Rhodes

I had planned on continuing with the 1998 shows but it occurred to me that I was going to run out of PPVs in my series of Nitro reviews. This is only a few months after where I am in that series though so I won't be too far removed at least. This is a B show with no Hogan, Piper, or anyone else for the most part and a main event of Savage vs. Page in a grudge match. Savage joined the NWO at SuperBrawl and was put with Page to bring DDP up to the main event. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Page vs. Savage of course. On and the Steiners vs. Outsiders for the millionth time. The third match talked about is the Women's Title match. See what we're up against here?

This is where Uncensored 96 happened. It HAS TO be better than that right?

Nash has said that he'll fight all of WCW if he has to. Scott

Hall is missing and has been for THREE WEEKS, but they've announced him up to this point just because. Therefore it'll be a handicap match for the titles with Nash vs. Steiners.

Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Ultimo Dragon

No Sonny with Dragon here. Dragon takes him to the mat to start and then Rey takes Dragon down to the mat as well. There's a camel clutch but Dragon quickly escapes. We get to a standoff so Dragon hits the rapidfire kicks to take Rey down. Flair has a big announcement later tonight. Dragon hooks an armbar and they're still on the mat. Back up and he hits a kind of spinning crucifix into a modified version of what we call Shock Treatment.

Powerbomb is followed by a hot shot and then a sleeper by Dragon. Not a Dragon Sleeper but a sleeper by Dragon that is. A BIG Liger Bomb puts Rey down but Dragon won't cover. There haven't been any pin attempts between falls and it's kind of hurting the match. Tombstone gets two and it's back to the sleeper. Rey comes back with a spinwheel kick but Dragon kicks him down because Rey can't follow up.

Gordbuster sets up an Indian Deathlock. Rey gets out and manages to kick Dragon off to the floor to get a breather. Sleeper #3 goes on by Dragon but Rey counters into one of his own to a BIG pop. Dragon gets thrown to the floor again and Rey hits a dive up and over the top. And let's cut to Lee Marshall to get a statement from Kevin Nash. Instead it's Syxx and we can't hear him so there was NO POINT to this.

Back to see Rey dropping the dime for a delayed two. Rey loads up a moonsault press but Dragon dropkicks him off the top and Mysterio crashes down onto the floor. Dragon dives over the top but hurts himself at the same time. Back in Rey tries a Lionsault press but Dragon dropkicks him out of the air in a cool counter. Giant swing by Dragon puts both guys down. They trade fast pinfall attempts for two each and an enziguri puts

Rey down. Super rana gets two for Dragon. Tiger and dragon suplexes by Dragon are both countered by Rey and a standing rana gets the pin for Mysterio.

Rating: C+. It was an entertaining match but for the most part it was a mess. They kept seeing to be missing the chemistry out there and that's a bad thing most of the time. Also the mat work is the wrong idea here. Not a bad match at all but this was one of those matches you expected more from. Dragon would win the TV Title the next night.

Marshall tries to get to talk to Nash again but gets Syxx again. The Steiners try to jump through the door but security stops them. Scott gets maced and handcuffed. Ok then.

Women's Title: Akira Hokuto vs. Madusa

This was a weird title as it only existed for a few years. It was won in December of 96 and defended a handful of times ever. It was vacated in the summer, won in Japan in September and never mentioned on WCW TV more than twice again. Later on they actually introduced a Women's Cruiserweight Championship. Hokuto is champion coming in. For some reason that I'll never fathom, Lee Marshall, the guy WCW fired for being horrible at commentary, is talking about this match.

They start off fast with Madusa hammering her down in the corner but walking into a clothesline. Akira chokes her in the corner and covers for two as Madusa bridges out. She hits some hair slams for two and Hokuto goes to the corner. Madusa hits a Stratusphere to take her down but Hokuto is right back on the leg. Madusa fights off Onoo and hits a pair of dropkicks. The American hits a German on the Japanese woman but Sonny distracts again. Luna Vachon comes in and takes out Madusa's knee so that Akira can retain.

Rating: F+. Madusa looked like Kaitlyn a little bit so I can't call it a full on failure, but dang this was boring. At the end of the day you can't bring out a title once every four

months and expect us to care about it. Nothing to see in the match either with both chicks doing basic stuff for five minutes.

TV Title: Prince Iaukea vs. Steven Regal

So on February 13, 1997, the WWF's young Samoan Rocky Maivia beat the blue blood Hunter Hearst Helmsley for the Intercontinental Title. On February 17, 1997, WCW's young Samoan Prince Iaukea beat the blue blood Lord Steven Regal for the TV Title. Now I'm sure this was a TOTAL coincidence right? Iaukea had nothing to offer in the ring and lost the title the next night.

Regal stalls for awhile so we're told that Scott Steiner has been arrested. The Prince takes him to the mat with a headlock as Tony tries to explain that Iaukea is one of the lines of defense against the NWO. Dennis Rodman is part of the NWO and since we hate him, let's plug his movie and air clips of it tomorrow night on Nitro! Regal comes back with a knee lift but it's right back to the headlock by the Prince.

Cross body gets two for the champ. Regal complains about a punch so Heenan says that Iaukea doesn't know that he's the champion right now. Prince takes him down with a test of strength so Regal hooks a headscissors and nips up into an eye poke. It's now a singles match for the tag titles with Rick vs. Nash. Regal hooks a full nelson and then pounds him down in the corner.

The Prince Hawaiians Up and then does nothing at all with it. Regal easily takes him into the corner and hits a pair of knees to the face. A cross body by Prince misses and Regal takes control again. He whips the Prince into the corner and tries a rollup but Iaukea sits on him and gets the pin to retain.

Rating: D. Iaukea was just so boring it's unreal. He never had anything special about him and it never caught on with the

fans at all. Regal is great but he can't work miracles here, and despite Iaukea holding the belt for almost two months, he never got any better for the most part. Nothing to see here.

Regal beats up the Prince post match and puts him in the Regal Stretch.

Here's Flair for some big announcement. Gene thinks that it's Flair returning to the ring. Flair says that the Horsemen will win tonight and that he's back on May 1. He says Anderson will be back but it never happened. As for Flair and Piper....Kevin Greene is coming to WCW. Seriously, that's practically a direct quote. Flair wants the NWO in Charlotte and he doesn't care who it is because the Horsemen are going to run them out of here. WHY DID IT TAKE THEM 10 MONTHS TO FREAKING DO THAT???

Jeff Jarrett/Steve McMichael vs. Public Enemy

Can Jarrett carry three people? I certainly hope so or this is going to be awful. Mongo vs. Rocco to start us off and it's time to stall. Rocco finds Mongo's lack of talent disturbing so he chats with known ring general Johnny Grunge. Mongo tackles both enemies and it's a double Horsemen strut. Off to Jarrett (thank goodness) vs. Grunge and Double J hooks an abdominal stretch.

Johnny gets out of it and tries a leapfrog but gets caught by an uppercut from Grunge. Jeff gets knocked to the floor and teases walking out but comes back and counts with the referee. Back to the starters and it's a Mongo chinlock on Rock. McMichael works on the back with a backbreaker and a tilt-a-whirl for two. Everything breaks down and they go split screen.

Rock is thrown into the side of a covered wagon. I'll give WCW this: their PPV sets tended to be really cool and definitely not generic like most WWE ones today. Grunge tries to put Debra on the table but Jeff saves with a chair. As Rock is thrown into a steer, Grunge dives through a table. Back to the

ring and it's completely broken down. Debra trips Rocco and it's briefcase time. Jeff cleans house with dropkicks but Rock gets the briefcase. Figure Four to Grunge but Rock blasts Jeff with the case and Jarrett is pinned while holding Grunge in the hold.

Rating: D. This wasn't as horrible as I was expecting. I thought it was going to be horrible but it wasn't all that bad. It furthers the really annoying Horsemen split which would finally happen after many more months. Boring match for the most part but the wagon spot was kind of cool.

Gene talks to Harlem Heat who are in a four corners match tonight, as singles competitors with Luger and Giant. The winner gets a shot at Hogan, so who do you think is going to win eventually? Sherri says her guys are ready. This would be the match where Booker rants about Hogan and calls him the N word before immediately panicking. It's censored in this version (home video) and he says sucka but you can read his lips saying the other word.

US Title: Dean Malenko vs. Chris Benoit

Dean is champion coming in. They go into the corner almost immediately and it's a clean break. They go to the mat and neither guy can get control for more than a few seconds. Malenko is sent to the floor but he runs back in almost immediately. Malenko takes him to the mat and works on the knee as Woman screams. Benoit kicks him off and it's back to a stalemate.

Benoit hooks a top wristlock and things slow back down again. Back up into a test of strength which neither can really win. Benoit does the always amazing bridge which he holds while Malenko lands on him. Chris takes him to the mat and works on the arm before into a chinlock and surfboard hold. It's a Benoit match so of course they're flying through holds. Malenko escapes with a belly to back suplex and takes over.

Small package gets two for Dean.

Here come the chops from Benoit but they seem to wake Malenko up. Camel clutch goes on for a bit and then it's off to a short arm scissors. Benoit does the Shawn/Bulldog counter and both guys are down. Clothesline gets two for Chris. Now it's an abdominal stretch as the submission parade continues. Dean comes up with an interesting counter by dropping to one knee. I don't remember ever seeing that before.

Benoit works on the ribs some more and channels his inner Dynamite with a snap suplex for two. Dean tries a vertical suplex but Benoit reverses into a reverse suplex...and here comes Jackie to ruin everything that they've got going on here. We've got a catfight on the floor and Jimmy Hart comes out...to do nothing.

Swan Dive hits and Jimmy is stealing the title. Here comes Eddie Guerrero and Dean gets draped over the top rope. Dean suplexes Benoit over the top and out to the floor, probably breaking the Canadian's hip. Arn Anderson comes out and beats up Dean but Kevin Sullivan comes out and Anderson lets him hit Benoit with a Singapore cane which gets the DQ.

Rating: B-. This was getting good until we had five run-ins inside of three minutes. This Benoit vs. Sullivan feud went on for over a year and I don't think anything was ever really settled. The ending here sucked but the match wasn't great in the first place. They were having a slow submission based match but it wasn't really that great. The last five minutes before the interference were good though.

Everyone other than Arn leave together and put the belt on Eddie's shoulder for some reason, in the third (that I know of) stolen belt storyline of the year. Dean says he wasn't supposed to be here, which was supposed to lead to some faction but it never came together.

Tag Titles: Kevin Nash vs. Rick Steiner

Only in WCW. Nick Patrick is referee because we need more gimmicks in this. Rick jumps him but gets knocked down almost immediately. DiBiase and Syxx are at ringside so this is 4-1. Nash pounds on him in the corner and hits his knees but runs into a boot. Belly to belly suplex looks like Rick is picking up a boulder. That suplex/powerslam move he uses gets two.

Syxx pulls the top rope down and Steiner crashes to the floor. Back in the side slam gets two. Why isn't Patrick fast counting him? The Outsiders are the champions coming in here. DiBiase gets in a right hand and Nash hits the running crotch attack while Rick is in 619 position. Big boot puts Rick down as we're totally in squash territory. There's the Jackknife but Steiner kicks out. I don't remember many people ever doing that other than Undertaker.

Steiner hits him low on another Jackknife attempt which Patrick actually doesn't DQ him for. He's kind of doing a bad job of being an evil referee here. Rick hits the bulldog but it only gets two, even though Nash's shoulder never came up. Down goes Syxx but Nash comes back with a clothesline to take over again.

Syxx takes off the buckle pad and Snake Eyes onto the buckle sets up Snake Eyes on the buckle which sets up Snake Eyes on the buckle which sets up the Jackknife for the pin and a forced count (Patrick was hesitant) for the pin. The interesting thing here is that DiBiase says that's enough in the middle of this and Nash yells at him. DiBiase walks out.

Rating: D-. So Nash wins a squash on PPV in a one on one match for the titles. I guess the more important part here is that DiBiase looks to be defecting which would mean more if he was an actual wrestler. This would lead to him managing the Steiners which would last for awhile until I think February. The match sucked.

Luger and Giant are ready.

Stevie Ray vs. Booker T vs. Giant vs. Lex Luger

One fall to a finish here and the winner gets Hogan eventually. Luger vs. Booker to start which should be interesting. Feeling out process to start until Luger starts slamming Booker a few times. Off to Stevie who punches Luger down a bit but gets caught between Giant and Luger which goes badly as you can imagine. Off to Giant and Stevie looks scared. Stevie knocks Giant back and gets loudly booed but Giant comes back with a clothesline.

Booker gets thrown around as well and it's time for a meeting on the floor. I keep forgetting this is a four corners match. That gets remedied by Giant vs. Luger who have a power lockup. Luger tries a slam but Giant falls on him for two. The tag in Harlem Heat and the brothers having to fight gets a big reaction from the crowd.

They lock up and Booker works on the arm. There's a lot of non contact here which makes sense for the most part. Booker tags in Lex and all is right with the world again. Stevie comes back with strikes and it's Booker with a side suplex to put Lex down. A knee drop misses and it's Giant time. A big elbow drop misses and Stevie comes in sans tag. An ax kick by Stevie doesn't work and neither does a side kick so they go to the knees to get Giant down.

Giant gets up with ease and a big boot puts Ray down. Off to Luger again for some elbow drops which get two. Belly to back puts Booker down but Stevie breaks up the Rack. Booker hooks a chinlock and the Harlem side kick gets two. Harlem Heat double team Luger and it's back to the chinlock. Lex suplexes his way out of it but Booker breaks it up. Giant breaks up a cover off an ax kick but there's no cover. Harlem Hangover misses and it's Stevie vs. Giant. Giant kicks Booker to the floor and calls for the chokeslam but tags in Luger so he can win with

the Rack instead.

Rating: C+. This wasn't bad for the most part as it was really a tag match in disguise. That being said, it didn't mean a thing as Luger wouldn't get his title shot until August so this was kind of a waste of time. The match itself was pretty fun though as both teams played it like a tag match instead of the fourway which was the right idea.

Randy Savage vs. Diamond Dallas Page

We get the long walk to the ring with Savage and Liz. Savage wants to make it a party. "SLIM JIMS FOR EVERYBODY!!!" This is the first main event for Page. He cuts a quick promo before the match about having to stand up for what he believes in. Savage did something to Kimberly so this is a revenge match. It's not important enough to mention, but it's worth revenge. Ok then. This is No DQ.

Savage stalls like he's in Memphis (it's close to it) but jumps Page to get us going. Page fights back and they go into the ring. He tries something like a suplex but I have no idea what it wound up being. A quick Cutter attempt is countered and Page is sent to the floor. They go into the crowd and the camera chasing after them is kind of cool. Page grabs a trashcan to blast Savage in the head. Savage is NWO in case that means anything to you.

They brawl back to the ring with some choking on the way. Savage hides behind Kimberly and Liz rakes Page's back. There's the ax handle to the floor and Page is sent into the floor. With Page down, Savage chases Kimberly but is stopped by an attractive chair. After a shot to the back he beats up Dave Penzer and brings in another chair. Coming back in Page manages something like a Van Daminator but with a shove instead of a spin kick.

Unfortunately for Page he can't follow up so Savage chokes away in the corner. Page makes a quick comeback but is knocked

right back don. Discus lariat out of nowhere puts Savage down but Page is spent. Savage slams him three times and goes to the floor to get the bell. Kimberly steals it from him but Savage jumps anyway, right into the feet instead of the elbow. I HATE that spot. Cutter is countered with a low blow for two.

Savage beats up the referee after the count and hits a good piledriver on him. He takes the belt off of Mark Curtis and whips him a little bit. The elbow hits but there's no referee. Cue Nick Patrick in the sleeveless shirt of EVIL. Diamond Cutter out of NOWHERE hits and Patrick counts the pin because of the Nash stuff earlier.

Rating: B-. Good match here with Page pulling off a great upset win to pop the crowd and send them home happy. The brawling wasn't great but they did it well enough for what the purpose here was. These two would feud over most of the summer and it brought Page up to the main event level that he would stay at for years.

Post match the whole NWO (including DiBiase) comes out as Nash has Patrick by the shirt. The fans want Sting but you know he's not coming out on this show. Patrick gets beaten down and Page is sent to the floor. Savage goes after Kimberly but Bischoff stops a smack. There's a shoving match and Savage drills Bischoff and the NWO FREAKS to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was very much a filler show as nothing of note happened here at all. It's certainly not the worst show I've ever seen and I wouldn't call it bad, but I certainly wouldn't call it good either. Either way, things would only continue to be this way for the next few months with nothing significant happening until the fall when Sting vs. Hogan really got going.

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXVIII: This Show Got Me Excited All Over Again

Wrestlemania XXVIII

Date: April 1, 2012

Location: Sun Life Stadium, Miami, Florida

Attendance: 78,363

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

We wrap things up with this and a main event which no one ever thought we would see: John Cena vs. The Rock. This is one of if not the only match ever that I had to see. I didn't know if it would be good or bad, but I needed to see it. The match was announced the night after the last Wrestlemania and was literally built for a year. On the undercard we have Punk vs. Jericho for the world title, Sheamus vs. Bryan for the other title and HHH vs. Undertaker inside the Cell. When that is a DISTANT second match, you know you've got something huge. Let's get to it.

Lillian Garcia sings America the Beautiful.

The opening video is about how Cena and Rock's lives have both built up to this moment and how this match is Once In A Lifetime. Oh and HHH vs. Undertaker is happening too.

Smackdown World Title: Sheamus vs. Daniel Bryan

Sheamus won the Rumble to earn this show. We're pre-beard for Bryan here which is weird to see anymore. The bell rings, Bryan kisses his girlfriend AJ, turns around into a Brogue Kick and we have a new champion in 18 seconds. That number would haunt Bryan for at least six months.

Team Johnny is fired up for the twelve man tag for later tonight. Miz brags about being in the main event last year but it's Otunga who gets them to be quiet for a pep talk from Johnny Ace.

Win tickets to Wrestlemania 29!

Kane vs. Randy Orton

Kane had recently put the mask back on again and went after Orton to prove that he's still evil because last summer he lost a street fight to Orton and then shook his hand. Why is it Orton who gets these months and years long backstories? The opener didn't quite have its intended effect as the fans are chanting for Daniel Bryan. Kane takes over to start but the chokeslam is broken up by kicks to the ribs. Orton gets him down and stomps away but Kane reverses the Elevated DDT (called a bulldog by Cole) and takes over with a big boot.

Kane's low dropkick gets a near fall and it's off to a chinlock. Back up and they slug it out with Randy taking over. Kane will have none of that though and clotheslines Randy down for two. The side slam gets two more and it's back to the chinlock. A swinging neckbreaker out of nowhere puts Kane down but the monster hits a vertical suplex for another two count. Off to chinlock #3 as the match slows down again.

Orton backflips out of another side slam and his backbreaker puts Kane down for a bit. There's the powerslam and Orton is getting fired up. Kane goes shoulder first into the post and now the Elevated DDT hits (again called a bulldog by Cole). The RK0 is countered into a big boot for two more for Kane but the top rope clothesline is blocked by a dropkick. Orton loads up the Punt but walks into a chokeslam for a close two. Another RK0 is countered and Kane goes to the middle rope. Orton tries a superplex but Kane shrugs him off and hits a middle rope chokeslam for the upset win.

Rating: B-. I had always wanted to see these two have a match and I was pleased when I finally saw it. Kane can have a good match on a big stage when he needs to and that's what he did here. Orton is bulletproof so it's not like losing here means anything of note. This was a nice surprise and a good match with a big ending.

Santino is with Mick Foley in a sailor hat and a guy from the fishing show Deadliest Catch. They're eating crabs and Foley makes bad pirate jokes. Socko and Cobra make appearances, as does Ron Simmons and I think you can get the joke from here.

Some National Guard people are here.

Intercontinental Title: Cody Rhodes vs. Big Show

Cody is defending and the idea here is that Big Show has never had a good Wrestlemania moment. You know, because winning a meaningless midcard title in 2012 is more important than main eventing the show in possibly the biggest and best year the company has ever had. During the entrance we get some "highlights" from Show's career. Naturally the pin in the 8 man tag last year is never mentioned at all.

Cody runs to the floor to start but Show easily throws him back into the ring. There's a beal across the ring and a hard chop in the corner, followed by a Stink Face for good measure. Cody comes back with some dropkicks to the knee and pounds away as much as he can. Rhodes pounds on Show's back a bit and is LAUNCHED off on the kickout. The champion works on the knee a bit with a standing leg lock and a DDT to take it down. After some stomps to Show's head, he shoves Cody away with ease but gets caught by the Disaster Kick. A second is countered with a spear though and the WMD makes Show the champion.

Rating: D+. What were you expecting here? At the end of the day, Cody has nothing that was going to keep Show down and with all the building up of the match about Show's past embarrassments, there was only one way this could end. That and it's only about five minutes so it didn't have enough time to suck or anything. Not great but it was exactly what it was expect to be.

Video on what it means to be a Diva.

We recap the Divas tag. Kelly Kelly had been a guest on Extra with Maria Menunos when Eve and Beth came in and claimed they should be the guests. A tag match was made.

Eve Torres/Beth Phoenix vs. Maria Menunos/Kelly Kelly

Beth has...wings on her head? Kelly and the freshly heel Eve start things off with Kelly doing her screaming hurricanrana to take over. A handspring elbow hits Eve's knee in the corner but Kelly breaks up a moonsault and knocks Eve into the Tree of Woe. Off to Maria for a double Stink Face, resulting in the famous stain on the back of Maria's tights from Eve's makeup.

Since Maria isn't a wrestler, the beatdown on her begins quickly with Eve wrapping her up in a body vice. Off to Beth (in gold tonight) for a side bearhug as the match slows WAY down. Back to Eve for some quick double teaming but she takes too long with the shaky moonsault. It's back to Kelly as things break down a bit. A top rope seated senton gets two on Beth and the Glam Slam is countered into a bulldog. Back to Maria who goes...up. After getting pulled down, Kelly breaks up a gorilla press and a rollup is enough for Maria to pin Beth.

Rating: D+. Four good looking women in tight outfits and one of them anchors a national television show. Do you really need a further explanation as to why this happened? The interesting note: of these four, Maria is the only one involved with Wrestlemania 29 and that's as a Hall of Fame inductor.

Shawn Michaels, the guest referee inside the Cell, says either the Undertaker or HHH are done tonight.

New attendance record. As always.

Jim Ross comes out to do commentary for the Cell match.

HHH vs. Undertaker

This is inside Hell in a Cell with Shawn Michaels as guest referee. Undertaker basically became Batman in his cave and wanted a rematch to prove he could beat HHH. As in like he already did. This is also billed as End of an Era, but what era that was never actually became clear. The announcement of the Cell was perfect as HHH said he wanted one more thing, which was presumed to be Streak vs. career. It's a good lesson in

letting the feud set the stipulations, not the calendar. Undertaker debuts his new mohawk here to a gasp from the crowd. The Cell is lowered to Memory Remains by Metallica.

Taker pounds away into the corner to start with "carcinogenic" right hands according to JR. HHH pounds away as well but gets thrown out to the floor soon thereafter. HHH is sent into the Cell a few times and a backdrop puts him down on the floor again. Taker sends him into the steel over and over as it's one sided so far. Now it's the steps instead of the Cell with Taker in full control. Back in and a facebuster is no sold and down goes HHH again.

Old School connects and we head back outside again. Shawn isn't a factor yet. The steps go upside HHH's head and set up the apron legdrop. Back in and HHH hits a DDT, which somehow makes us completely even. The steps are in the ring now so HHH slams Taker's head into them a few times. A Pedigree onto the steps is blocked with a backdrop but HHH comes back with a spinebuster onto the steps, only to get caught in the Hell's Gate. In an impressive power display, HHH lifts Taker up into a powerbomb to break the hold and get two as well.

HHH throws in a pair of chairs and cracks one of them over Taker's back. Taker is whipped into the steps in the corner before they're sent to the outside. JR says there are no laws in the Cell. Other than you win by pin or submission and all that. HHH goes off with the chair, DESTROYING Undertaker Austin/Rock style. Shawn takes the chair away and tells HHH to cover Undertaker because he's not going to quit. Trips takes the chair back and shoves Shawn down before pounding on Taker even more. He tells Shawn to end it before he does.

Taker says do not stop it as he's getting back up. He turns around though and is hit in the ribs and back by the chair but it only gets two. HHH is starting to get frustrated so he hits Taker in the back with another chair and it's time for more pathos with Taker saying don't stop it. Cue the sledgehammer for a shot to the head for ANOTHER two. HHH (who is cut over the eye) has no idea what to do now.

The Game pulls up the hammer to slam it down onto Taker's head but Shawn

pulls it away to prevent the murder. Shawn is ready to stop it as Taker can barely move. Michaels raises his hand but Taker pulls him into the Hell's Gate to stop him. Trips breaks it up with a hammer shot but Taker comes back with a low blow and Hell's Gate on HHH. There's no referee though and Taker lets it go from exhaustion with his opponent out cold.

Another referee comes in as Taker hits a last effort chokeslam for two. Taker chokeslams the referee (I believe that's the same referee he beat up in 2001 against HHH as well) but walks into the superkick into the Pedigree....FOR TWO! I lost my mind watching that live because I really thought it was over. Now HHH shoves Shawn to the floor and Taker sits up to scare the life out of HHH. Taker erupts on HHH with a big boot and running clothesline, setting up snake eyes and another boot.

The Tombstone connects but HHH is up at two. Shawn has no idea what to do as both guys are slowly getting up. They slug it out from their knees before getting to their feet for more HARD punches. Another Tombstone is countered into the Pedigree for a VERY close two. HHH goes for the hammer but Taker steps on it to stop him. A HARD chair shot to the back puts HHH down and another one keeps him down.

Some more chair shots get two on HHH so Shawn screams at them to end this. HHH tries a hammer shot to the face but Taker easily blocks it. They stare each other down and HHH gives Taker a crotch chop. Trips walks out of the corner into a hammer shot to the head. HHH tries to climb up Taker's body but the strap comes down, the throat is slit, and the Tombstone makes it 20-0.

Rating: A+. This is another reason why I'm not so wild on last year's match: they're capable of SO much better and this is proof. This match told a great story with both guys destroying each other with Shawn being stuck in the middle and trying to figure out what to do in each situation. It's a great match, it's a great fight, and it's pure emotion the entire time. Great stuff here, and most importantly of all: there were moments where I thought it was over. I never bought that as a possibility last year.

After a few moments on the mat, Taker sits up but falls right back down.

He pulls himself up on Shawn and they embrace. HHH is still out cold. Shawn and Taker lift him up and carry him out of the ring. They embrace on the stage in one of the most iconic images you'll ever see. You don't often get to use that word, but it's true in this case.

Send Slim Jims to soldiers! I love charity stuff, but it's a big shift after what we just sat through.

We get clips of the Hall of Fame stuff from last night.

Here's the live presentation of the 2012 class: Mil Mascaras, Yokozuna (represented by his kids), Ron Simmons, the Horsemen (including Flair, which set off a lawsuit since he was still under contract to TNA), Mike Tyson and Edge (who gets theme music but has short hair which is such an odd look for him). This was the breather that the fans needed.

Heath Slater tries to get a spot in Flo-Rida's performance but gets turned and then shoved down. Hawkins and Reks laugh at Slater.

Team Johnny vs. Team Teddy

Johnny: Miz, Mark Henry, Drew McIntyre, Jack Swagger, Dolph Ziggler, David Otunga

Teddy: Kofi Kingston, Great Khali, R-Truth, Zack Ryder (with Eve), Booker T, Santino Marella

Each team has a Bella as a fan, the match is for total control of both brands, and Johnny is in a white suit. Oh and Vickie is with Johnny and Horny is with Teddy as the flag bearers. Otunga and Santino are team captains, because Miz and Booker aren't good enough. Kofi and Dolph start things off for their usual solid sequence. Truth comes in for a double hiptoss and a dancing legdrop.

McIntyre comes in to pound on Truth but it's quickly off to Khali to change momentum. It should also be mentioned that they're in red and blue t-shirts with the GM's on the front. Off to Booker to chop away on Drew and a superkick puts him down. Booker goes after the rest of Team Johnny but the numbers catch up with him, allowing Swagger to take over. Jack gets to beat on Kofi for a bit and it's off to Henry. Mark pounds him

down in the corner as the match slows way down.

Off to Miz with some knees to the chest and a boot to the face for two. We hit the chinlock for a bit but Booker comes back with a suplex for no cover. Zigler comes in to break up the tag and drop some elbows for two. Everything starts breaking down as Henry hits the Slam on Booker but Khali chops him down. I can't keep track of everything going on but Henry catches a diving Horny in mid-air.

The girls get in a brawl and there's the hot tag to Santino to pound on Miz. The Cobra connects and Cole panics until Zigler makes the save. Another hot tag brings in Ryder for the Rough Ryder for Dolph and a beatdown on everyone else. He loads up the Broski Boot but Eve gets in the ring as well. The referee tries to get her out and the distraction lets Miz hit the Skull Crushing Finale on Ryder for the pin, making Ace GM of both shows.

Rating: D+. As is the usual case with stuff like this, there was way too much going on to keep track of anything. There were something like 18 people involved in this whole thing and the ending was about Eve and her heel turn more than anything else. Ace would be GM for about four months or so while boring us to death against Cena. Not much to see here though due to the amount of people in the match.

Post match, Eve finally turns on Ryder for good, confirming him as the biggest loser in the WWE. Wasn't Eve already a heel in the Divas tag? Why is this supposed to be shocking?

Alex Rodriguez and Torrie Wilson are here.

We get a video on the media blitz and activities for Wrestlemania week.

To celebrate winning, Laurinitis changes the Raw World Title match rules so that if Punk gets disqualified, Jericho wins the title.

Raw World Title: Chris Jericho vs. CM Punk

This is over who is the best in the world and Jericho claims that Punk is really an alcoholic and his family has a bunch of substance abuse issues. The buildup for this really was good stuff, even though this is nowhere

near the main event. Punk takes it to the mat to start and fires off some kicks to the chest. He does the same with knees in the corner but stops when the referee gets to four. Jericho slaps him in the face and takes the beating like a man to try to get the DQ again.

Another few slaps have Punk in a frenzy but he holds off to avoid the DQ. A slam puts Jericho down but he rolls away before the Macho Elbow can be launched. Instead CM dives to the floor to take out Jericho, followed by a wicked smile. Jericho asks how Punk's sister and father are but Punk doesn't swing the chair he grabs. Punk charges into a pair of boots to the face and the challenger takes over.

They head to the apron and Punk tries a GTS, only to be clotheslined back into the ring. Jericho hooks a kind of Jackhammer to the floor for two back inside. We hit the chinlock but Punk fights up with a slap. Jericho comes right back with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two and kicks the injured back again. Some hard kicks to the torso keep Punk in trouble but he fires off some strikes of his own. The champion goes up but is pulled back down to land hard on his back.

Punk escapes a bow and arrow hold and sidesteps a charge to send Jericho crotch first into the corner. A spinning neckbreaker gets two on Chris and there's the running knee in the corner. Jericho counters the bulldog but has to stop the Lionsault to avoid knees. That counter is countered into a Walls attempt but Punk shakes him off for two. The Macho Elbow hits knees and Jericho hits the Codebreaker but it sends Punk out to the floor. Back in and Punk grabs a GTS out of nowhere for two.

Punk fires off the kicks and gets two off a quick powerslam. They trade German suplex grips but Punk gets dropped on the top rope to give Jericho control. The Lionsault gets two and Chris goes up, only to be chopped a lot to slow him down. The champion loads up a hurricanrana but gets countered into the Walls in one of Jericho's classic counters. Punk finally makes the ropes and sends Jericho to the floor to set up the suicide dive.

Jericho staggers to his feet and Punk hits the running knee, crushing Jericho's head against the post. They head back in and somehow Jericho

grabs the Codebreaker out of nowhere for two. Back up and Jericho pounds away on Punk in the corner, only to go up again and get kicked down. The GTS is countered into the Liontamer (the kneeling version of the Walls) in the middle of the ring but shifts it to the regular Walls.

Jericho has to pull him away from the ropes and Punk escapes into dueling small packages. CM rolls through again into the Anaconda Vice but Jericho knees Punk in the back of the head to escape. The Walls don't work again and Punk hooks another Vice, this time tucking his head in to avoid the knees. Jericho is trapped and finally gives up.

Rating: A. Great match here with both guys destroying each other and countering everything both guys had. I love the ending with Punk getting smarter as he kept going in a good display of psychology. Thankfully the DQ bit didn't go anywhere which makes it pretty stupid. Excellent match here though which would have been a great main event for any other show of the year.

Wrestlemania 29 is coming to New Jersey, but we'll bill it as New York because it sounds better.

Here's Brodus, who had recently debuted as the Funkasaurus. He tells everyone to get their phone, because they're gonna call their mamas. Brodus calls his own and apparently she's here tonight.....WITH THE BRIDGE CLUB! Cue a troop of old women for a BIG dance party.

Video on G.I. Joe 2 which was just released like two weeks ago. As in nearly a year after this show.

And now, it is time.

We recap Rock vs. Cena which is at least a year in the making. Something like seven years ago Cena insulted Rock in an interview, so when Rock came back to be guest host last year, he insulted Cena in his return promo. The night after Wrestlemania, Cena had challenged Rock to a one on one match at THIS Wrestlemania. This led to a year of build (minus six months for Rock to make a movie of course) which got me to the point where I HAD to see this match. I didn't know if it was going to be great, if it was going to suck, or somewhere in between, but I needed to see it.

That's never happened to me as a fan before.

Diddy comes out to bring out MGK (a rapper) to perform some song called Invincible. He does this stupid monologue about how Cena is a huge underdog in this, despite Cena being active having more experience overall than Rock. Cena is booed out of the building but gives something to an old lady who apparently is related to some Hall of Famer. We should be ready for Rock's entrance, but first we need Flo-Rida to perform two songs. I remember SCREAMING to get to it at this point. Oh and Flo has a bunch of dancers with him, presumably the same girls who were in the Bridge Club ten minutes ago.

John Cena vs. The Rock

Rock's ovation is thunderous. There's really no other way to put it as it's very clear who the fans are for here. During the big match intros, Cena is booed even further out of the stadium. They stare each other down and FINALLY the bell rings. Cena shoves him away to start and the dueling chants begin. They lock up again and this time Cena goes flying. Rock grabs a headlock before they fight over arm control.

A few armdrags put Cena down and a cradle gets a quick two for Cena. Cena has to make sure it wasn't three as he looks a bit shaken. Back up and John leapfrogs over Rock before taking him down with a headlock takeover. They get up again and Rock tries a quick Sharpshooter but Cena bails to the floor. Rock decks him as he gets back in but Cena charges at him in the corner with a hard shoulder to the ribs. Cena gets a quick one count off a clothesline before putting on a bearhug on the mat.

Back up and Rock punches away but gets low bridged out to the floor. Cena drops him ribs first onto the barricade and announce table before going to the ring for a seat. When Rock won't quit Cena throws him back inside and gets a two count. We're definitely in another gear now. Off to a bearhug on Rock's bad ribs but he won't quit. Rock finally comes back with right hands to escape and a DDT for two.

Rock wins a quick slugout and hits the spinebuster but Cena picks the leg to break up the Elbow. Cena comes back with his finishing sequence but the AA is escaped. A double clothesline puts both guys down as they take

a breather. After a few moments on the mat they slug it out with Cena punching Rock down to his knees. Rock fires off more punches and does You Can't See Me before trying the spit punch, only to get caught in the AA for a close two.

Cena goes to pick Rock up but takes the Rock Bottom for two for the Brahma Bull. Rock stomps away in the corner but walks into a side slam for two. John goes up top for a very delayed top rope Fameasser for another near fall. Rock comes back with a spinebuster into the Sharpshooter but he doesn't have it on well. Cena crawls to the rope so Rock lets go and pounds away. Back to the Sharpshooter (why don't more people do that? Even if Cena won't quit you can still do more damage) but Cena makes the rope immediately again. Gee maybe if he had pulled Cena from the rope it would have been harder to escape.

Rock fires off some elbows to the chest and sends Cena into the steps for good measure. Back inside and Cena tries a sunset flip of all things but immediately shifts into the STF in the middle of the ring. Cena drags him back to the middle of the ring and Rock is starting to fade. We get an old school arm check and Rock holds it up on the third drop. I love stuff like that. Rock makes it to the ropes and as they get back up, Cena walks into a Samoan drop to put both guys down.

Another slugout goes to Rock and the spinebuster sets up the Elbow.....for TWO. The place is losing their minds on these kickouts and can you blame them a bit? Both guys are spent here but Cena hits a catapult into the corner for two. With nothing left to try, Cena loads up the middle rope AA but Rock shoves him off and tries a top rope cross body but Cena rolls through into the BIG AA for an even closer two. Cena begs the referee to call it three. That gets him nowhere so Cena loads up a People's Elbow. As he hits the second rope, Rock nips up and hits the Rock Bottom for the shocking pin.

Rating: A+. What else do you want from this? This is one of those matches which could have gone either way as they beat the tar out of each other. They had the big fight atmosphere down to perfection here and while the ending is still questionable (yet not completely wrong), it's exactly what you want a Wrestlemania main event to be. This somehow surpassed the

hype and was excellent in every sense of the word.

Cena sits on the ramp, stunned.

Rock poses to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. This is one of the best shows of all time, bar none. The two big matches delivered far better than you could have hoped for, the Raw title match was great, nothing sucked, there are multiple Wrestlemania Moments on here, and the crowd was white hot all night. This is easily in the highest levels of Wrestlemanias ever and it's every bit as good as it was when I watched it live. Great stuff and absolutely worth checking out.

Ratings Comparison

Daniel Bryan vs. Sheamus

Original:

Redo: N/A

Kane vs. Randy Orton

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Cody Rhodes vs. Big Show

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Kelly Kelly/Maria Menunos vs. Beth Phoenix/Eve Torres

Original: C+

Redo: D+

HHH vs. Undertaker

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Team Johnny vs. Team Teddy

Original: C

Redo: D+

Chris Jericho vs. CM Punk

Original: A

Redo: A

The Rock vs. John Cena

Original: B+

Redo: A+

Overall Rating

Original: A+

Redo: A

I shortchanged that main event terribly. It's a masterpiece.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/04/01/wrestlemania-xxviii-one-of-the-best-shows-of-all-time/>

Well that's that I guess. As is the case with every PPV series, some are great, some suck, a lot are in the middle. This series however is different. It's THE show and THE series which is bigger than anything else in the world of professional wrestling. Wrestlemania has been around 29 years now and with the latest edition only a day away as of right now, it's still going strong.

Around 2001, Wrestlemania became a spectacle in addition to an event as they started going to major stadiums and drawing 70,000+ people to every

show. That's remarkable and the fact that the crowds keep growing is a great sign. I love wrestling and I love Wrestlemania, so watching these shows has been a treat.

I'll be back on July 24 with the Summerslam Redos, so I hope to not see you then. Why would I want to see you? I want you at your computers reading the reviews. Go read more of them now. Or my books. Yeah preferably the books.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the WWE Championship from Amazon at:

Smackdown – April 5, 2013: The Annual Wrestlemania Commercial

Smackdown

Date: April 5, 2013

Location: Verizon Center, Washington D.C.

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Jerry Lawler

This is the very final show before Wrestlemania and therefore there isn't likely to be much going on in the ring. Expect to see a lot of buildup for Sunday which makes sense given that the whole show is already set in stone unless they add in a battle royal or something. This isn't likely going to be much but it's the price you pay to get to Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

Ryback vs. Primo/Epico

The cousins have new music. We cut to Cole and JBL at Axxess to talk about how awesome things are there. Primo starts and is quickly powerslammed. Ryback pulls Epico in and throws him into the corner before hitting a gorilla press slam. Back to Primo for a nice springboard dropkick. Epico comes in for a chinlock but gets caught in the Over the Shoulder Boulder Holder (that's the real name) and it's back to Primo. A double spear puts the cousins down and the double Shell Shock gets the pin at 3:15.

Rating: D+. What do you want here? This was exactly what it was supposed to be: a quick squash to make Ryback look strong going into the showdown on Sunday. Ryback needs the win on Sunday a lot more than Henry does as he hasn't won a big match since before the Cell loss in the fall.

We look at some more Axxess stuff like Mr. McMahon's office before looking at the Wrestlemania auction for Hurricane Sandy relief.

Video on Lesnar vs. HHH.

We get a video on Hall of Fame inductee Bruno Sammartino.

Video on Fandango and the pronunciation of his name. This transitions into a recap of Fandango attacking Jericho on Raw.

Video on this history of the Shield. This transitions into the end of last week's show with Shield being beaten down.

Here are Tons of Funk and the Funkadactyls, tonight as played by the Bellas (complete with some extra padding in the shorts and the Rhodes Scholars dancing while eating some cookies. Daniem Sandow in a Brodus hat and dancing is too much. Cody has a bald wig with the Japanese characters thrown in. The dog and pony show ends on Sunday. This brings out the real Tons of Funk and the Funkadactyls for the ring clearing brawl.

Video on the Wrestlemania press conference.

Video on Punk vs. Undertaker.

JBL and Cole talk about the exhibit where you can climb a ladder to get the MITB case. JBL to Cole: "You have the athletic ability of an Oklahoma chimpanzee."

Donald Trump Hall of Fame video.

We get a main event preview, which means we see both Rock and Cena's promos from Raw.

Del Rio says it's a good thing that he's at Axxess and not at Smackdown tonight, because Swagger would be suffering. He'll be suffering on Sunday as well and America is made up of a bunch of cultures coming together.

Jack Swagger vs. Kofi Kingston

Feeling out process to start with Swagger grabbing a top wristlock and Kofi unsuccessfully trying to flip out of it. Kofi comes back with his double leapfrogs and a back elbow before knocking Swagger to the floor. We take a break and come back with Swagger putting on a double chickenwing. Kofi fights up but a sunset flip attempt is blocked.

Instead Kofi takes Jack down with a monkey flip, only to be awkwardly sent into the corner for the Vader Bomb. Kofi gets the feet up though and hits a top rope cross body for two. An attempt at a second is caught in mid air but Kofi escapes the gutwrench powerbomb. Kofi's SOS gets two but a Colter distraction lets Swagger hook the Patriot Lock for the submission at 9:40.

Rating: C. This was fine but with less than ten minutes and about three of those spent on a commercial, there was only so much they were going to

be able to do. That being said, this is the highest profile exposure Swagger and the title match have had since the title match was announced for Wrestlemania. Not bad here but it was just there.

Overall Rating: D+. That rating could be pretty much anything tonight because it's basically just grading a two hour infomercial. This is one of those shows you have to sit through once a year and while it's unpleasant, it's just one time and it means there's nothing left to sit through before Wrestlemania. The matches were just there to say we had wrestling tonight and again, that's what you have to expect.

Results

Ryback b. Epico/Primo – Double Shell Shock

Jack Swagger b. Kofi Kingston – Patriot Lock

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my book on the History of the WWE Championship from Amazon at:

On This Day: April 5, 2012 – Impact Wrestling: Storm Was Fighting AJ A Year Ago Too

Impact Wrestling

Date: April 5, 2012

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tazz

This is a different kind of show as I have no idea what's coming here. Due to the WWE being in Orlando this week, the only recappers that care enough about Impact were at Raw and Smackdown, so there aren't any spoilers coming in this week. It's kind of a nice change of pace and I'm curious to see what happens when I don't know what to expect. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's ending with Hogan becoming the new GM.

The roster is around ringside and here's Hulk to address them. He thanks Sting for having his back and talks about meeting with creative earlier today. There's going to be a lot of new stuff coming up but first of all, let's talk about Lockdown. Hogan makes Morgan vs. Crimson and it ends there. As for the Knockouts, there's a Knockouts Championship Challenge to determine the #1 contender, whatever that means.

Hogan calls out Eric Bischoff but Flair says he's not here. Flair says no one tells him anything so Hogan says get Eric here. Here's Roode who says he's right on time. Roode says that his only obligation is Lockdown so he's out of here. Hogan says hang on a minute and calls Anderson into the ring. He makes Roode vs. Anderson tonight because it's what the people want. As for Angle, he won't be wrestling Hardy at Lockdown. That draws booing, so he's wrestling Hardy tonight. Actually RIGHT NOW! As in after a break!

Jeff Hardy vs. Kurt Angle

Hardy hooks an armbar to start and Kurt has some issues breaking it. Instead of wrestling he goes to the eyes but Hardy whips off a headscissors to send Kurt to the floor. There's a slingshot dropkick and they brawl to the outside. Kurt is busted open. Kurt pounds Jeff down and we take a break. Back with Jeff hitting a great Whisper in the Wind to put both guys down. Twist is countered into the Rolling Germans with Kurt trapping Jeff's left arm.

Jeff comes back with a Twisting Stunner but as he sets for the Swanton, Kurt runs the corner and hits the belly to belly. There's the ankle lock but Jeff counters and hits a mule kick to put Angle down. Kurt grabs the referee to prevent the Swanton and tries to get Jeff to jump into a low blow but it's avoided. Twist is countered again and Angle goes to the floor where he takes the countout at 12:54.

Rating: B-. This was getting good until the ending. I'd bet money on the rematch happening in ten days anyway (namely because I saw the rematch being made before I wrote this rating) because the idea of making people pay to see the match is a stupid idea in wrestling right? Good match until the bad ending.

Hogan runs into Angle in the back and makes the rematch for Lockdown in ten days. I give up.

Flair gets Eric on the phone and says get here.

Ray is trending apparently and says he'll be the next world champion. He's going to take care of Aries next.

Ray is in the ring and says he's eaten chicken wings bigger than Aries. Here's the X Champion who quiets the crowd down and the blasts Ray with the mic. He pounds Ray in the corner and the beating is on. He goes for ten punches in the corner but Ray hits a HUGE powerbomb out of the corner.

Joseph Park is looking in catering for Abyss. No luck again. He needs to find someone soon.

AJ is praising Storm when Storm pops up. Storm has to have a match tonight and he wants it to be with the best. Storm vs. AJ later. Geez think they're stacking this show enough?

Mickie James vs. Winter vs. Tara vs. Angelina Love vs. Madison Rayne vs. Velvet Sky

I think this is one fall. Angelina and Madison start and

everyone runs in to break up the pins. Mickie replaces Madison and gets two off a neckbreaker. Side slam gets the same for Angelina. Velvet tags herself in and hits a low dropkick. Rayne and Love get in an argument as Tara comes in. The spinning side slam gets two and it's off to Mickie vs. Velvet. Madison knocks Mickie down before she gets in and we go to the parade of finishers which culminates with Velvet hitting In Yo Face on Mickie for the pin at 7:08.

Rating: D+. I know I'm underrating these most of the time but I don't care about women's wrestling most of the time. Nothing to see here but at least they're getting back to Velvet who is the most popular of the Knockouts. I don't think Winter was ever in the match which is sad as I love that pale British thing.

Anderson says he'll beat Roode when the champ and his security come in.

Storm and Hardy were at some country music awards.

Off to Eric Young's bachelor party. They have suckers, non-alcoholic beer and a fantasy baseball draft. ODB comes in with alcohol and chicken wings. This goes nowhere.

James Storm vs. AJ Styles

Feeling out process for the first few minutes of the match. They fight over headlocks and AJ keeps looking for the kick. AJ takes it to the mat and goes for the leg but Storm runs. Did Styles add a submission that I don't remember? Styles is sent to the corner and Storm hits a running enziguri from the apron. He goes up but AJ hits an enziguri of his own. AJ goes up but gets caught in a wicked Eye of the Storm for two. He tries the Closing Time but AJ blocks it and tries a figure four. That gets him nowhere so Styles tries the backflip into the reverse DDT, only for Storm to duck and kick AJ's head off for the pin at 6:38.

Rating: C+. Pretty good match here and that was an AWESOME superkick. The look on Styles' face after he gets up is great as he looks like he got hit by a bus. This is what Storm needs before the main event at Lockdown: clean wins over big names. AJ isn't going to get a main event push anytime soon so have him put people over like this.

Storm wants Roode in the ring next week.

Hogan tells Sting to take the time to get healthy because he needs Sting.

Storm celebrates with Montgomery Gentry, a country act. He leaves and Roode/security come up and the champ spits water at them.

Motorcity Machineguns vs. Mexican America

Here's their big return. Shelley and Anarquia start things off with the Guns controlling early. Sabin comes in as does Hernandez. The speed takes over with a bulldog for two and it's back to Shelley for some more double teaming. Shelley's tornado DDT is broken up but we get quick heel miscommunication. The Guns speed things up and finish with Skull and Bones at 4:19.

Rating: C. This was just a squash as the Guns were clearly never in any danger. The thing is I don't know what they're supposed to do other than a feud with Joe and Magnus, as the division is about two teams deep at this point. They're still fun to watch but there's no Beer Money to feud with. I'm glad they're back though.

Bischoff gets here and Flair whines about Hogan.

Back from a break and Hulk is in the ring, calling out Eric. Eric talks about how no one would predict that this would happen in the year 2012: Bischoff vs. Hogan. Eric says there are a lot of differences between the two of them but the big

one is Hogan isn't a leader. Hogan isn't a leader of men like Eric is.

Hulk makes Team Garrett vs. Team Eric at Lockdown in Lethal Lockdown. Oh sweet merciful goodness he's captaining the team for the namesake match at the second biggest show of the year. If Eric's team wins, Garrett is off the roster forever. If Garrett's team wins, Eric is gone...and he can never use the Eric Bischoff name again. How exactly can he do that? I mean...it's his name.

Video on Storm training.

Mr. Anderson vs. Bobby Roode

Unless there's an overrun which there hasn't been in months, this is going to be a pretty short match. The security gets thrown out before the match and Anderson jumps Roode in the aisle. Anderson takes over quickly but the champ takes him down. We're told that next week there's a best of three series for the man advantage in Lethal Lockdown.

Roode runs his mouth about being the champ and walks into a powerslam for two. Fisherman's suplex is countered as is Anderson's neckbreaker. There goes the referee and Anderson hits the rolling fireman's carry slam. Roode steals a beer from what appeared to be an 8 year old's hands and the bottle goes across Anderson's head for the pin at 4:11.

Rating: C. I'm trying to get over that kid. Seriously he looked like he was 11 at oldest. The match was nothing special but given just over four minutes there was only so much that they could do. Not much to see to it and the post match stuff doesn't really mean much. Anderson is in the main event jobber role now which is about where he belongs.

Hogan and Storm come out post match and Hogan reverses the decision. Roode doesn't seem to care.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a significantly better show than the last two, but I don't like what it looks like they're doing. It looks like they're stacking the TV shows to get the TV ratings up which is fine short term but it's a bad idea for the long term. I'm not wild on Hogan as GM but if we get rid of Bischoff in two weeks I'm good. This was a good show for the most part, but I'm not sure I like where things are heading.

Results

Jeff Hardy b. Kurt Angle via countout

Velvet Sky b. Angelina Love, Mickie James, Winter, Madison Rayne and Tara – In Yo Face to James

James Storm b. AJ Styles – Last Call

Motor City Machineguns b. Mexican America – Skull and Bones to Anarquia

Mr. Anderson b. Bobby Roode via DQ when Roode hit Anderson with a beer bottle

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