

NXT – June 27, 2012: The Hits Keep On Coming

NXT

Date: June 27, 2012

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Byron Saxton Jim Ross

We're back again after last week's great debut episode. Tonight we're going to get a lot of new people debuting which is a cool idea. The perk of NXT being merged with FCW is that there are a ton of guys that the masses haven't seen before and they're letting them trickle in, which is a good way to keep people watching. Let's get to it.

Seth Rollins vs. Jiro

Rollins is Tyler Black from ROH. Jiro is a Japanese guy who looks to be a jobber. Regal isn't on commentary this week which makes this show go down a bit already. They chop it out and Rollins sends him into the corner. Rollins hits a kind of running curb stomp called The Blackout for the pin at 1:32.

Rollins says he's here to rip the roots out of the ground and the clouds out of the sky and change the world. Jinder Mahal comes out and glares at him on his way to the ring for the next match.

Jinder Mahal vs. Jason Jordan

Jordan is regarded as a top prospect according to JR. The bell rings twice for no apparent reason. Mahal pounds him down in the corner and hits a neckbreaker for two. Off to a chinlock followed by a butterfly suplex for two. Jordan tries a comeback but is quickly kneed down. Camel Clutch ends this at 2:51.

Mahal says he's going to remake NXT in his vision. My goodness why does WWE think we care about this guy?

Leo Kruger is coming. He comes off like a smarmy heel from Africa. He

says he's the alpha male lion. So he's a white Monty Brown? Apparently he debuts tonight.

The first Raw is a Raw moment.

Leo Kruger vs. Aiden English

Kruger pounds him down but English hits a quick dropkick. That's the extent of his offense though as Kruger chokes away in the corner and hits a snap suplex. Kruger looks like a psycho Al Snow with curlier hair. Rear naked choke/sleeper gets the pin at 1:25.

Richie Steamboat says he's not trying to fill his father's shoes, but rather his own. He looks JUST like his daddy too.

Usos vs. The Ascension

Regal and Chris Russo are on commentary now along with JR. You know the Siva Tao is popular here with a college crowd. The Usos take over to start and double team Cameron for two. Cameron goes insane and pounds both Usos down until he brings in O'Brien for the same kind of stuff. They tag in and out a lot and pound away on Jey with a bunch of pounds and stomps. Jey hits a headbutt to bring in Jimmy who runs over Cameron a bit. Samoan Drop puts him down as does the Umaga Attack in the corner. Jey gets sent to the floor and Jimmy walks into the Downcast for the pin at 3:40.

Rating: C+. The match was nothing of note but I'm more impressed by the entrances. This is something you don't get in the homogenized world of WWE anymore. The Usos had their full screaming entrance while the Ascension looks like something out of a thriller movie. That's not something you get with the big arenas and Cole riffing on half the people that come out and ignoring the other half. The match was basically a squash.

Richie Steamboat vs. Rick Victor

Man they don't waste any time around here do they? Papa Steamboat is in the front row. Richie armdrags Victor down a few times and hooks an armbar. Steamboat chops in the corner and the fans chant W00, so

apparently we have an educated crowd here. A clothesline gets two for Richie and it's back to the armbar. Richie hits a crossbody and some clotheslines followed by elbows in the corner. A running spinning mat slam (Heath Slater used to use it) called the Slingblade gets the pin at 4:25.

Rating: D+. I really wasn't huge on Richie here. He didn't come off as anything special and his offense was just a step above basic. I'm also not a fan of that spinning finisher and I'd have rather seen him use a superkick like he used in FCW. Either way, this was a pretty disappointing debut, but that's just his first match and there's no way you can predict a career off of one match.

Antonio Cesaro is a dangerous man.

Raw ReBound is about the end of the show.

Dante Dash vs. Antonio Cesaro

Dash is a big muscular black guy. Cesaro takes him to the mat almost immediately and rubs his face in the mat. A gutwrench suplex puts Dash down and it's off to a chinlock. A spinebuster puts Dash down again and the Neutralizer gets the pin at 1:48.

Bray Wyatt video with him talking about real love.

Derrick Bateman vs. Johnny Curtis

Curtis slaps him in the face and runs away almost immediately. Bateman chases him back inside and dropkicks him down. Curtis takes over and goes after the leg and we're told Kassius Onoo debuts next week. Curtis hooks an inverted Indian Deathlock but Bateman chops his way out of it. There's a spinning toehold by Johnny but Derrick escapes pretty quickly. He comes back with a falling forward DDT and the falling bulldog which he calls the DVD for the pin at 3:45.

Rating: D+. The match was pretty dull and it wasn't helped by the fact that we saw them fight for the better part of a year. This was nothing of note and it being so short made it even less interesting. At the end of the day these two aren't that interesting as Bateman is kind of an

everyman who has some quirks to him while Curtis is “weird”. Nothing to see here.

Overall Rating: B-. This wasn't quite as good as last week's show but it was still a very solid show. The running idea of debuts is fine as you have to introduce the characters to the audience as a lot of them are new guys. They're putting together some very good stuff here as they have a lot of fresh faces and a GREAT presentation. Also there are no frills to this show and they flew through six matches and some video packages in under 45 minutes. That's not bad.

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NXT – June 20, 2012: Why Isn't This On In America???

NXT

Date: June 20, 2012

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, William Regal

It's FINALLY a new season of this shindig and things are really shaken up. We're permanently in Florida now with FCW and NXT merging and I can't say I'm complaining a bit. These will now be up on Thursdays instead of Wednesdays as they only air internationally at the moment, so I have to wait for the videos to surface online. I don't know what to expect from this so let's get to it.

The opening video is about how each generation has its own stars that define their era. NXT is about those that strive to make their own history. Cool video and this looks great so far.

Regal welcomes us to the show in a voiceover. I really like the arena as

there's a small Titantron which looks like it belongs in a more intimate setting.

Here's JR to welcome us to the show. He brings out Dusty Rhodes who apparently is the new General Manager of NXT. The main event is McGillicutty vs. Kidd and Dusty is very excited about it. You can say a lot about Dusty Rhodes and a lot of it is critical, but you can NEVER say he comes off as bored or dull. The guy always sounds like he cares about what he's talking about and that makes a ton of difference.

Video on Bo Dallas which I believe we saw last week. His dad is Mike Rotunda, more famous as IRS. He talks about smiling all the time and being ready to go at any time.

We get the Vince Hospital clip from Raw.

Bo Dallas vs. Rick Victor

Regal and JR are on commentary so I can't complain there. The crowd sounds fired up already and I'm really digging this so far. It looks different from the regular WWE setup which is a nice change of pace. Dallas controls with some armdrags to start but Victor chops away in the corner. Snap powerslam puts Victor down and a spear gets the pin for Dallas at 2:17. I didn't see enough of Dallas here to tell what I thought of him but it wasn't bad.

Dallas says you just saw his game plan being executed and that this is just the beginning. He talks about his smile some more. Dallas is only 22 and looks even younger than that, but that's the point of being in the minors like this. He has potential at least.

Video on Seth Rollins who talks about being the change we've been waiting for. He debuts next week.

Video on Antonio Cesaro and how awesome he is. He's The Future and will also debut next week.

Damien Sandow vs. Jason Jordan

The announcer messes up Sandow's hometown, calling it Palto Alo. Sandow

does his usual schtick, talking about how this is an unworthy opponent. Therefore, he won't be wrestling tonight. No match.

Video on The Ascension, which is a stable I've heard a lot of good things about. They're standing on a rooftop and say they will rise. There are only two here instead of the three that I believe they usually have.

Raw ReBound is about John vs. John.

The Ascension vs. Mike Dalton/CJ Parker

Ascension is Conor O'Brien and Kenneth Cameron. Their entrance is pretty awesome with music that sounds like something out of a thriller movie's trailer and blue lighting. They actually look intimidating and above all else, they look DIFFERENT. That's been missing so badly on this show as everyone is just out there in trunks wrestling. Cameron and Parker start things off and the Ascension controls early. Off to O'Brien who stomps away on Parker in the corner. Ascension hits rapid fire elbows followed by a jawbreaker from Cameron into a flapjack by O'Brien for the pin at 1:11. I like what I see again. The finisher is called The Downcast.

Video on Bray Wyatt, more commonly known as Husky Harris. He's in a small town in the south and says that it's time for parents to quit lying to their children because monsters like him are real. I've heard rave reviews about this character and I think I can see why.

Derrick Bateman is looking for Johnny Curtis in the bathroom where Curtis is brushing his teeth. They leave the room together and Bateman looks annoyed. Apparently they're the main event next week. Curtis washes his hands on Bateman's shirt. These two still annoy me.

Tyson Kidd vs. Michael McGillicutty

Kidd works over the arm to start as the fans chant USA. McGillicutty runs Kidd over and counters an O'Connor Roll, only to have Kidd fire off kicks. Michael bails to the floor for a breather before locking up in a test of strength. Kidd climbs the ropes to escape and hooks the armbar again. Kidd throws him over the top and face first into the apron. That's followed by a suicide dive and we take a break.

Back with Tyson stomping McGillicutty down in the corner and hitting a leg lariat for two. McGillicutty sends him to the apron and hits a knee lift, followed by an elevated neckbreaker for two. We hit the chinlock but Kidd gets back up quickly. Kidd hooks a sunset flip but McGillicutty hits a clothesline to the back of the head for two. McGillicutty puts him in the Tree of Woe and chokes away.

Kidd gets put in the Tree of Woe again but his baseball slide misses, giving us his pop's signature crotch shot into the post. Kidd speeds up and fires off a bunch of kicks including a dropkick to the side of the head for two. McGillicutty counters a springboard clothesline with a dropkick for two.

Kidd comes back with a moonsault press for two. The fans are really getting into this. Dungeon Lock doesn't work and McGillicutty hits a Saito Suplex for two. McGillicutty puts on a half crab which is supposed to be called a Sharpshooter. The Perfectplex is countered into a small package for two. Kidd grabs the Dungeon Lock for the tap at 14:07.

Rating: B. These two continue to have some excellent chemistry together. Their styles mesh just right and they have yet to fail to have a good match. Kidd is in that weird spot where he's not going to be able to be a full time guy on the main rosters but he's great for something like this. McGillicutty is about the same but he's not quite as good. Together though they're a solid combination.

Overall Rating: B. For a debut episode, they nailed this one pretty well. Based on this episode, it's a great upgrade over what I spent a year watching. It's nice to see some fresh faces and above all else, this show had an energy to it. I want to see more of this and that's the most important thing for the first episode of a show like this. Good stuff and I'm excited about this show.

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NXT – June 13, 2012: This Is How The Season Finally Ends

NXT

Date: June 13, 2012

Location: Verizon Wireless Arena, Manchester, New Hampshire

Commentators: Josh Matthews, William Regal

So I went to WWE.com, sort of dreading this show as usual when I saw it: "On the final episode of NXT before the ALL NEW NXT...". For the first time in a good many Wednesdays, the sight of NXT brought a smile to my face. After SIXTY SIX WEEKS, it's finally ending. This is the last episode of this season and I can't believe it's really here. Let's get to it.

I can't believe I'm saying this but it's kind of saddening to hear this song for the final time this season.

Curt Hawkins/Tyler Reks vs. Derrick Bateman/Percy Watson

Regal says the bright green is apparently a tribute to the Dynamic Dudes. There's something you'll never hear again. Hawkins and Bateman gets us going here. Bateman takes it to the mat so Hawkins celebrates his escape. The fans start clapping for Bateman so it's off to Reks who gets crucified down for two. Watson comes in and speeds things up a bit.

Reks gets knocked into the wrong corner by a European Uppercut. Hawkins: "REKS I'M OVER HERE!" Bateman hooks a headlock but charges into a boot in the corner to shift momentum again. Hawkins hooks a chinlock which is quickly broken by a jawbreaker. Watson comes in for some dropkicks and throws Hawkins into Reks to send them out to the floor. Bateman dives on both guys and we take a break.

Back with Watson fighting off both guys but getting dropped on the top turnbuckle for two. Reks hooks a chinlock for a bit followed by a neckbreaker for two. Back to Curt who hits a suplex for two. Off to another chinlock as Regal talks about how a chinlock is supposed to be executed. An other the shoulder bicycle kick gets two on Watson. Josh

confirms that next week the New NXT begins.

Back to Reks who kicks Percy in the ribs and hooks chinlock #3. Watson finally comes back and hits an enziguri to Tyler, allowing for the hot tag to Bateman. Reks doesn't tag out at all and things speed up. Bateman hits a running flip neckbreaker (think Morrison's flip neckbreaker) for two. After a Hawkins distraction, Reks hits his powerbomb into a spinning DDT for the pin at 11:05.

Rating: C+. This was fine. It was a formula based tag match and the ending was pretty solid. Bateman has gotten a lot better in the last few months and it's no longer a strain to watch the guy. I don't see him as anything better than a jobber at the moment but maybe things could change with the proper changes.

During the break we get a clip of the All New NXT. It looks pretty awesome actually.

Kaitlyn vs. Natalya

Natalya immediately takes her down with a heel trip and they trade rollups for two each. Another rollup gets two for Kaitlyn. Natalya sends her to the floor and poses before knocking Kaitlyn off the apron. She sits on Kaitlyn for two and then hooks on a bow and arrow hold. Kaitlyn rolls her up again for two. That seems to be her only offense. Nattie misses a charge in the corner and Kaitlyn shoves her down. A crossbody gets two. Natalya cradles her in the corner with feet on the ropes for two. Her argument with the referee lets Kaitlyn hook ANOTHER rollup for two. A sunset flip out of nowhere gets the pin for Kaitlyn at 5:20.

Rating: D-. This was horrible. Kaitlyn looked terrible out there, both in the ring and in the face. For some reason all she did here were rollups other than just a few shots here or there. The match was terrible with neither girl really doing anything at all other than Natalya posing and Kaitlyn rolling people up. Terrible match.

Natalya throws a fit post match.

We get a quick word from Bo Dallas (Taylor Rotunda) who is ready to

fight.

Raw ReBounce is about Vince/Ace/Show/Cena.

Usos vs. Michael McGillicutty/Johnny Curtis

They have almost fifteen minutes for this. Before the match starts, Richie Steamboat says he's looking to fill his own shoes, not his father's. Michael and Jimmy start things off and McGillicutty takes him down to the mat with ease. Regal talks about how great Samoans are at wrestling as well as rugby. Jimmy takes him down with an armbar and it's off to Jey. Curtis comes in and rips at Jey's face.

A legdrop misses and Jey hooks a chinlock. McGillicutty offers a distraction and Curtis drops him onto the top rope in the EXACT same sequence from the first tag match. Curtis drops Jey's leg onto the top rope to ground him even further and McGillicutty adds some cheating offense of his own to it. Curtis cannonballs down onto the knee as we take a break. Back with McGillicutty with a knee hold on Jey.

Back to Curtis and the knee gets wrapped around the post. We get a full Indian Deathlock but Jey chops his way out of it. When all else fails, hit the other guy I guess. Curtis prevents the tag but McGillicutty's attempted cannonball onto the leg is countered by having him kicked over the top. Off to Jimmy who cleans house. Jey is almost immediately tagged back in for a double team Samoan Drop. Curtis drops a guillotine legdrop to break up the cover and both guys are down. The McGillicutter is countered and after a superkick from Jey, the Superfly Splash from Jimmy gets the pin on McGillicutty at 11:42.

Rating: B-. Another good match here with the leg work being a good idea, as the Usos are a flying team so slowing them down is the right idea. There's something appropriate about the Usos winning the last match of this season, and there's something even more appropriate about it being a meaningless tag match as so many of their matches have been.

Overall Rating: C+. And that's NXT Season 5. The overall rating of slightly above average is about right for the whole season too: there were some ok moments, but all in all it was just ok. Nothing significant

ever happened, no one won, almost everyone wound up on Smackdown, and it was clear that the contest part of the show was worthless by the end of it. The new season will help things a lot as it can be just a regular show instead of a contest, which is something they've needed to do for about a year now. Tonight's show was decent but as usual, it means nothing at all.

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NXT – June 6, 2012: End My Pain

NXT

Date: June 6, 2012

Location: Colonial Center, Columbia, South Carolina

Commentators: Matt Striker, Josh Matthews

Back to the land of no storylines allowed. I would usually say that this should be interesting, but for the most part I'm pretty sure it won't be. At the end of the day, we have about 45 minutes of wrestling here which isn't bad between guys that aren't good enough to get into the top two shows. Let's get to it.

Dang it no Regal this week.

Tyler Reks vs. Jey Uso

Feeling out process to start with Reks running over Uso a few times. Jey comes back with a running chinlock (looked pretty cool actually) to take over. Uso charges into a boot in the corner and a belly to back suplex for two. Reks pounds him down with power strikes but misses a charge,

sending his shoulder into the post.

Jey goes after the arm and hits a spinning forearm. He starts doing the chants to the crowd the pops are great. Samoan drop gets two. Reks takes him down again and goes up, but Jey slams him down for two. Now Jey goes up but gets crotched for his efforts. Reks puts him up in a Razor's Edge position then spins Jey down into a kind of a DDT move for the pin at 5:00.

Rating: D+. Not bad here but other than the crowd popping for the USO shout, things were pretty dead here. It's not a bad match but it's likely to lead to Usos vs. Reks/Hawkins #19 or so, which isn't a match I can really get behind anymore. I still don't get the appeal of Reks at all. It's just not clicking for him.

Percy Watson vs. JTG

JTG speeds things up to start which actually works. This is supposed to be the new and improved version of him and I guess that's true as the tights are less annoying than what he used to wear. Watson smiles a lot in the ring. JTG controls for the opening until Watson avoids a charge. Watson's headscissors out of the corner is countered and he falls out to the floor.

Back in and JTG pounds away before hooking a seated abdominal stretch. A kind of slam gets two. JTG is getting frustrated. If I had hair like that I likely would be too. He goes to the middle rope but dives into a facebuster to put both guys down. Watson speeds things up and hits his usual jumping attacks. The crowd doesn't seem to care as much this time. Heisman gets two. We get a freaking JTG chant as Persecution gets the pin at 6:01.

Rating: D. This crowd has lost all of its chanting privileges. I mean.....THEY WERE CHANTING FOR FREAKING JTG! The match itself was nothing of note at all as JTG being on offense is never a good idea. Watson again

has the same problems: he's the same guy over and over again, doing the same stuff every week.

Tamina Snuka vs. Natalya

Natalya now wears a kind of cape. She quickly powers Tamina down to the mat and they trade headlocks. Back up and Natalya runs her over as Striker calls her Nattie. Whatever her name is she gets dropkicked down for two. The crowd is almost silent for this. Tamina misses a charge and Natalya sits on her with arms folded for two.

Suplex gets two as well. Natalya tries another one but gets small packaged for two. Off to an abdominal stretch but Natalya picks up Tamina's leg on top of the regular hold. Tamina escapes and comes back with chops but Natalya rolls away before Tamina can try for the splash. Sharpshooter is broken up as Tamina kicks her to the floor. Natalya charges back in to a Samoan Drop and the Superfly Splash gets the pin at 6:21.

Rating: D. This was nothing. Both girls have jobs because of their dads, but that doesn't always mean success. Well to be fair Natalya is good but there's nothing going on for her due to it not being her time right now. The match was your usual boring affair from the Divas, but a longer version of it.

Raw ReBound is about Cole's destruction.

Tyson Kidd/Justin Gabriel vs. Heath Slater/Johnny Curtis

Kidd and Slater get us going. Slater grabs a headlock but Kidd makes a blind tag. Kidd and Gabriel kind of mess up a double hip toss and it's off to Curtis instead. Justin sweeps the legs out and brings in Kidd for a slingshot reverse victory roll for two. Tyson tries the Dungeon Lock but has to settle for a wristlock instead. Slater comes in but Kidd

dropkicks them both down at once.

Sharpshooter to Slater doesn't work so it's back to Gabriel. A BIG suicide dive takes Slater out and Kidd/Gabriel pose in the ring as we take a break. Back with Kidd in control of Slater. He goes up but gets distracted by Curtis, allowing Heath to powerslam him off the top for two and control. Off to the chinlock for a bit and then into the heel corner.

Kidd fights both guys off at once but walks into a spinebuster before he can make the tag off to Gabriel. Curtis comes in and hits a suplex for two. After a quick wear down hold, Curtis and Slater try a double team but Kidd counters and drops them both. Slater blocks the tag again with a running neckbreaker for two. His middle rope knee drop misses though and it's hot tag to Gabriel. Justin speeds things up as you would expect and hits a jumping tornado DDT for two on Curtis. A combination Hart Attack/Blockbuster gets the pin on Curtis at 10:05.

Rating: C+. This was by far the best match of the night but it's a far cry from some of the main events we've been having lately. Still though it wasn't that bad and the double team finisher wasn't bad at all. The problem is there was no doubt as to who would win given the levels of talent on either side.

Overall Rating: D. This was really dull. The same problems I've been talking about for weeks are still here and they're not going to change anytime soon. I can't believe I'm saying this, but Maxine being on this show is such an improvement that it's almost uncanny. The show wasn't bad or anything, but it was really uninteresting.

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Backlash 2009: The First Time Cena Got Blown Up

Backlash 2009

Date: April 26, 2009

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Attendance: 8,357

Commentators: Jim Ross, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

Back with the final chronological Backlash before we jump back to 2006 to close out WWE PPVs. The main events tonight are Edge vs. Cena in a last man standing match and Legacy vs. HHH/Shane/Batista for the other world title which is one of those "whoever gets the pin gets the title" deals. I remember really liking this show so hopefully it's still good. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Wrestlemania and how this is just a replay of the main matches from there. It worked last year so hopefully it does here too. The Hardys fight again tonight too.

ECW Title: Jack Swagger vs. Christian

Christian recently returned and is getting his title match here after winning an overly complicated competition. Swagger takes him down but Christian comes back with right hands and a jumping back elbow for two. Swagger is like screw that and picks Christian up and launches him to the floor. Back inside and Swagger wraps him up on the mat. That gets shifted to a bearhug and the Canadian is in trouble.

Christian breaks it up with some forearms but Swagger gets behind him into a gutbuster for two. Back to that body vice on the mat which plays into Swagger being an All-American wrestler. The Canadian escapes and hits the pendulum kick in the corner but Swagger drills him again. Vader Bomb hits knees but Christian's tornado DDT is countered as well. Sunset flip gets a VERY close two for the challenger.

Gutwrench powerbomb is countered but Christian's ribs are getting really

banged up now. Swagger puts him on the middle rope and this time the tornado DDT connects, getting two. Jack hits a belly to belly to put Christian down again and they head to the floor. Swagger BLASTS him with a right hand and tries a German off the apron but Christian holds the rope.

Back inside Christian goes up top but gets backdropped down. A top rope Vader Bomb gets two but an Oklahoma Stampede is countered into a rollup for two. The second attempt at the Stampede gets two so they both take off buckle pads. Swagger goes into one first and the Unprettier gets the pin and the title.

Rating: B-. This was the right kind of match for an opener with Christian having to fight from behind until he caught Swagger using his own tricks. Christian would dominate ECW for the next ten months or so until it was replaced by NXT while Swagger would move over to the main shows and become world champion in a questionable move.

Christian celebrates in the back but stops to go talk to Edge. Edge says this must make Christian think he's better than he is now because Edge doesn't have a title. Christian wants to know what changed Edge and Edge says it was Cena. That's why he's not fun anymore.

Chris Jericho vs. Ricky Steamboat

This should be a treat. The story here is that Jericho went on an anti-legend kick in the past few months until he beat three of them (Piper, Snuka and Steamboat) at Mania. The thing is Steamboat, who might have wrestled one match in 15 years, stole the show and looked like he could still go out there and wrestle for 45 minutes and beat half the guys on the roster. He was 56-57 at this point, so he wanted one last match, one on one with Jericho.

Steamboat takes him down to the mat and Jericho has to get to the rope to escape. Ricky goes to the floor and makes Jericho miss him a few times before hitting a dive over the top and out onto the Canadian. Back in and there's the armdrag into the armbar. The fans tell Steamboat that he still has it. Jericho gets up but walks right back into the armdrag/bar again. They slug it out and Steamboat is knocked over the top but he

skins the cat, because he's that awesome.

Jericho clotheslines him to the floor and springboard dropkicks him right back down. Off to a chinlock but Steamboat fights out and hits another armdrag. Back to the chinlock as Jericho talks trash. That's one of the things I've always liked about him: he keeps things from getting completely dull during a usually dull part of the match. Back up and Steamboat shoves off the bulldog and Jericho gets caught on the ropes.

Steamboat goes all the way to the back for a belly to back suplex but the delayed cover only gets two. Some chops get another two count as does a powerslam. Jericho comes back with a running enziguri for two and the bulldog puts Steamboat down. The Lionsault is broken up but Jericho reverses the reversal into the Walls. Steamboat slips out from under them but can't remember how to put on the figure four. That's where the match gets kind of sad.

Jericho escapes and charges into the post, allowing the top rope crossbody to get two. Ricky goes up again but dives into the Codebreaker...for two. We get the WM 3 ending with the small package out of the slam for two, but Jericho slaps on the Walls and cranks hard for the tap. That's one of the only times (if not the only time) I can remember Steamboat submitting.

Rating: C+. This is a really hard one to grade. Steamboat tried as hard as he could, but at the end of the day he's nearing 60 and had wrestled two matches in almost fifteen years. Now don't get me wrong: Steamboat DID NOT look awful out there, but he looked old. It's sad to see him when you know what he used to be capable of, but all things considered, this was a solid performance. It's VERY good that it was the last time too, because it would have gotten bad if he had kept going. The match was fun but it didn't blow me away like the Mania performance did.

Steamboat gets a standing ovation post match, which he deserves.

Santino runs into Beth in the back and talks to "Santina" on the phone, who says she's coming. Oh geez I forgot about this. Santino won't admit he's Santina and says Beth is the delusional one. Beth breaks up with him.

Kane vs. CM Punk

Punk won MITB and Kane isn't happy about it. Punk holds him off with some kicks but has to stick and move against the monster. Kane charges into a boot and gets caught in an arm hold over the ropes. Punk dropkicks him to the floor but his dive is caught in a chokeslam position. He fights up to the apron and hits a clothesline down onto Kane to take over again. Kane sends Punk rib first into the post and baseball slides into them, giving him his first advantage.

Off to a bodyscissors as it occurs to me how boring matches can become when there's no story to them. The reviews of them become boring too because there's nothing to say here other than the play by play. I don't like doing them like that but there's nothing else to do as there's no story to this at all. Punk elbows out of it but charges into a clothesline. Punk hits a backbreaker to stay on the back which is the same kind of boring match stuff that I was talking about. The wrestling is fine but it's the same stuff we've seen a million times and there's no reason to care about it because of a lack of a story.

Chokeslam is countered into a DDT on the arm and Punk follows up with kicks to the leg. Well of course he does. Punk hooks a kind of crucifix hold on the arm in the corner but the knee in the corner is countered by a kick to the face. Kane goes up for the clothesline but Punk hits a running enziguri. The GTS is countered but there's the bulldog and knee. Scratch that, reverse it. You get the idea I'm sure. Punk tries the springboard clothesline but jumps into an uppercut. Kane gets caught in a Fujiwara Armbar but he comes back with a side slam. Punk fires off the strikes but walks into a two arm chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: C-. Nothing to see here as they were totally going through the motions. The match wasn't bad or anything but there was nothing interesting to it at all. This was there to fill in about fifteen minutes total of PPV time which was fine, but this was nothing you couldn't see weekly on Smackdown. I was expecting a bit more too.

We recap the battle of the Hardys. Matt went crazy on Jeff after losing the ECW Title and was revealed to be the guy that was causing all kinds

of problems for Jeff and ultimately the world title. They had a match at Mania where Matt went insane and got the pin. Then Matt won a stretcher match on Smackdown so tonight it's an I Quit match. The problem at the end of the day was that people didn't really want to see these two guys fight. This gets the music video treatment.

Matt Hardy vs. Jeff Hardy

I Quit rules remember. Jeff goes off on him in the corner and hits a seated dropkick to send Matt to the floor. Jeff hits a dive and the referee asks if they want to quit. Yeah they'll quit a minute into the match, sure. With a running start, Jeff hits Poetry in Motion off the steps. Back in and Jeff hits the slingshot dropkick in the corner. A middle rope legdrop hits Matt and it's off to a chinlock. The lack of covers is always a bit hard to get used to in these matches.

Matt rams him into the buckle to break the hold but can't do much to follow up. Jeff goes up but gets shoved to the floor in a great crash. Matt wraps Jeff's leg around the post and we get the first ask with the mic. Jeff says no both times so Matt bends the knee around the post. Matt puts on a figure four and Jeff still won't quit. Jerry thinks Matt is going after the knee. You can't buy this kind of analysis people!

Jeff escapes but gets put right back in it again. That doesn't work so Matt hooks a seated half crab but Jeff still won't quit. Matt puts him in the Tree of Woe and bends Jeff's head back but Jeff won't quit. Instead of holding him there longer, Matt rants and probably posts a YouTube video about it. He puts Jeff on top but his belly to back superplex is countered into a crossbody.

Jeff hooks a standing Texas Cloverleaf and Matt taps but won't say he quits. They botch a Twist of Fate so the second attempt works a bit better. Matt still won't quit so Jeff gets a table. Matt rolls to the floor but Jeff follows with the Twist to take him down again. Back in the ring now and Jeff puts him on the table.

Before he does anything though, Jeff grabs some tape from under the ring and ties Matt's hands and feet together. Now he gets a rope and ties Matt to the table. Matt still won't quit so Jeff gets a ladder. Jeff climbs

said ladder but Matt begs for mercy. He says Mom and Dad wouldn't like it and that he loves Jeff. Matt quits to prevent Jeff from jumping.

Rating: C. This was a fun match but the ending hurt it badly. With all the stuff that Matt has been through over the years, he quits to avoid a legdrop through the table? The match was just ok up to that point but at the end of the day like I said earlier, I don't think people were really that interested in seeing these guys fight. This ended the feud, which is probably best for everyone involved.

Jeff jumps on him anyway.

Orton talks about Batista and how he (Orton) wants the title. He tries to manipulate Dave into believing that HHH is using him.

Here's Great Khali because he wants to kiss Santina. This isn't going to end well at all. Ok so there was a battle royal at Mania for the title of Miss Wrestlemania. Santino wore a dress and said he was his own twin sister and won the battle royal. Beth said that it was Santino in drag but he wouldn't admit it. Khali fell for Santina and wants to kiss her so Santino is in a tight spot. This is one of the dumbest stories I can remember in a very long time, so of course it went on for months.

After Singh says Khali wants Santina, here "she" comes to Billy and Chuck's old music. Santina says she can't kiss Khali because she's not who she says she is. She isn't single because she's in love with another man. That man is....JR. Oh give me a break. From what I can tell, this was another unplanned shot at JR. JR gets annoyed when Santina says he calls her his little slobberknocker. Khali apologizes but wants to see proof of their love in the form of a kiss.

Santina says she's about to faint and here's Beth to complain about how stupid this is. She challenges Santina for the crown RIGHT NOW. Khali complains about what's going on here so Beth explains the whole cross dressing thing to him. She says all of the women in Punjab must be ugly. Either that or Khali is a big idiot. He chops her and the bell rings, giving Santina a win in three seconds. This is one of the dumbest angles I have ever seen and I had almost completely forgotten it. Khali rips Santina's top off for no apparent reason.

We recap Legacy vs. Batista/HHH/Shane. Orton has basically declared war on the McMahons, having punted Vince and attacked/kissed Stephanie. Shane is the only one left and Batista has been brought in to help with HHH to counteract Legacy. Orton injured Batista and this is his return feud.

Raw World Title: Randy Orton/Legacy vs. Batista/HHH/Shane McMahon

Only Orton can win the title and it can be by pin, submission, countout or DQ. HHH is champion coming in. Legacy is Ted DiBiase and Cody Rhodes in case you're a young'un. HHH goes right after Orton and they head to the floor. The other four are kind of staring at each other. This is all before the bell. Orton has run off somewhere as HHH comes back to clear the ring. The bell finally rings and there's no Orton.

Batista starts with Rhodes and destroys him in the corner with the shoulder blocks. He shouts that DiBiase is next and it's off to Shane who drops a middle rope elbow. Shane works on the arm and it's off to the champ. HHH fires off right hands and a crotch chop in whatever order you would like to think it was in. DiBiase comes in and is clotheslined down. Shane comes in to play Bret in a Hart Attack for two.

Big Dave comes in again as does Cody. Legacy has had no offense so far at all. There's a delayed vertical suplex to Rhodes but Cody rakes the eyes and brings in Ted. Legacy gets in some basic offense in the corner as they double team a bit. Batista shrugs that off and hits the spinebuster on DiBiase but Ted bails to the floor before the Bomb can hit. We're over five minutes into this and Orton hasn't been seen for any of the actual match.

DiBiase and Batista go up the aisle a bit but it's more Ted running than anything else. They head back to the ring and here's Orton to jump Big Dave, sending him into the post. He gets the tag (which wasn't seen) and goes off on Batista. The fans are into the match now, probably because they knew nothing was going to happen without Randy there. Batista gets beaten down in the corner as the tag is made to Cody.

Legacy and Orton work over Batista on the floor and Orton hits the Elevated DDT for two. Back to DiBiase who hooks a Million Dollar Chinlock. Big Dave comes back with a belly to back suplex but he still

can't make the tag. This is looking like it's going to be a long match given how early Batista is getting beaten down. Randy comes back in and things slow down again. Even JR is thinking he's going too slowly.

Off to another chinlock which is pretty quickly broken. Batista comes out of nowhere with a freaking flying headbutt of all things. Hot tag brings in Shane who cleans house. Neckbreaker gets two on Rhodes. They head to the floor and Shane pulls the top off of the table but Cody heads back in. The top rope elbow gets two as DiBiase makes the save. Orton sends Shane into the steps and we go into heel control segment #2.

Randy is legal now but he brings Ted back in for fear of being interesting. Shane gets worked over on the floor a bit more and it's back to Cody again. Legacy keeps tagging in quickly as it's back to Orton who pulls Shane back into the wrong corner. He dropkicks Shane down and DiBiase comes in for some elbow drops. It's amazing that this is the peak of DiBiase's career to this point, especially when it was him who everyone thought he was the star of Legacy.

Cody hooks a front facelock which lasts about a full minute before Shane suplexes him out of it. Back to DiBiase who keeps Shane in the ring even longer. There's the Million Dollar Dream but Shane escapes. There's the double tag to Orton and HHH with the Game pounding away in the corner. Legacy gets thrown to the floor and there's a spinebuster to Orton for two.

Everything breaks down and Cody blasts Shane with a chair. Batista gets hit in the throat with it too as the Pedigree and RK0 are both countered. HHH has to take the chair away from Batista to avoid the DQ, but he walks into the RK0 for two. The bell rings but it has to be waived off. The Punt gives Orton the title.

Rating: B-. This was a bit of a mess but after the mess that was the main event of Mania, it was definitely the right idea to bring in four other people. Orton would feud with Batista for awhile until Big Dave got hurt (again) before feuding with Cena to end the year. HHH would feud with Orton and Legacy for awhile before hooking up with Shawn again for another DX reunion.

HHH gets taken out on a stretcher.

We recap Edge vs. Cena, which is a rematch from the triple threat three weeks ago minus Big Show. That's the match with the double AA to both guys in the mind blowing spot of the match. Cena took the title from Edge and tonight is Edge's rematch in a last man standing match. The theme of the video is that Edge has had Cena's number over the years and it's really well made.

Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. John Cena

The brand of the titles is pretty much a guess at this point as they were moving around a lot at this time. Cena is defending and this is last man standing in case you forgot what you read about 20 seconds ago. Cena took a Conchairto on Raw so he's a bit messed up in the cranium. This is billed as the last match between the two. I'm sure. Edge avoids the bulldog to start and it's a standoff.

The challenger bails to the floor but misses the spear back in. Edge takes over by pounding on him in the corner before walking into a release fisherman's suplex. An Edge-0-Matic puts Cena down as we focus on the back of Cena's head. Edge wins a slugout and puts Cena down with another shot to the head. A flapjack puts Cena down again and we get a logical sleeper. Edge puts him down and finally lets go but Cena is up at seven.

Cena comes back with the shoulder blocks but Edge breaks up the Shuffle. There's a Sharpshooter of all things but Cena gets up again. Edge knocks him off the apron and into the table as we get to the more wild part of the match. That shot only gets another seven so Edge loads up the steps. The spear that Edge tries hits the steps though and Cena gets a breather. At six though Edge comes back and sends him into the steps again, putting the champ down.

Now Edge goes into the steps again as this is feeling like it's on a loop. After another eight count Cena picks up the steps and puts them in the ring albeit with some difficulty. Edge gets in another shot to the head and Cena is down again. The Canadian crushes Cena in the corner with the steps and dropkicks them into his body but both guys are down as a result. Back up and Cena launches Edge to the floor. We're about twelve

minutes into this and it hasn't been all that great so far.

Things pick up a bit with Cena picking up the steps and throwing them over the top rope and right onto Edge's head. Edge is up at eight and Cena is getting fired up. Back in the ring and they slug it out some more with a double punch putting both guys down. Back up and three AA's, an Edgecution and an Edge-0-Matic are all broken up before Edge hits a belly to back suplex to take over.

He brags too much though and Edge gets caught in the STF. He taps but it doesn't matter. As with any submission hold, Cena lets go early (I wonder if he did that with Mickie...allegedly) and Edge is up at 8. The AA is broken up again and Edge spears him down. Edge goes up top and Cena FINALLY hits the AA off the ropes but it doesn't finish things either. Cena goes up but dives into another spear. Now this is getting better.

The spear only gets nine and Edge is stunned. Both guys are barely able to stand at this point. Scratch that as Cena collapses and falls to the floor. Edge won't let the referee count and tries the Edgecution on the table, but Cena counters and hits an AA into the crowd. That wouldn't really do a ton of damage in theory but the landing would, as the fans mostly caught Edge. It gets another nine and Edge is up, although he's leaning on the barricade. Cena is stunned.

Edge is like screw this and runs off into the crowd with Cena chasing him up the stairs. They head into the concourse and Cena catches up with him, only to head right back into the arena. They go back down some different stairs and Cena bulldogs him onto the equipment area. Edge pops up and hits Cena with something metal as they go to the stage.

An Edgecution (the inverted DDT in case you don't remember what that move is) on the steel puts Cena down for nine. Edge goes into the back and comes back with a chair. Gee that's kind of lame now. He gives Cena a Conchairto on the stage...for eight. Edge's spear is caught in the AA and here's Big Show to chokeslam Cena through an exploding spotlight, giving Edge the title.

Rating: A-. This is one of those matches that really is better when you watched it live. I remember wondering what they could POSSIBLY do to end

this and then Big Show came out to blow stuff up. They had to do something like that given all of the stuff they had done so far and the explosion filled that role pretty well. The first ten minutes are just ok but after that it kicks into gear in a hurry. Great match here.

Cena is taken out on a stretcher as Edge watches from the stage. People were BEGGING for Punk to cash in here but that wouldn't be for a few more months.

Overall Rating: B. Another good show here with a solid main event. These Wrestlemania repeat shows are usually good despite having the same matches for a lot of the time. This one wasn't quite as good as the previous year's show but it was still a very solid entry with mostly satisfying matches, other than a few questionable ones here and there. Oh and the Santino stuff was freaking stupid. Other than that, good stuff though.

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Backlash 2008: For A Wrestlemania Replay, This Is Pretty Awesome

Backlash 2008

Date: April 27, 2008

Location: 1st Mariner Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Attendance: 11,277

Commentators: Mike Adamle, Tazz, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Mick Foley

We begin the final set of PPV reviews here with the next to last Backlash. The main events are mostly Mania rematches, as JBL has been

added to the Raw triple threat from Mania 24 and Edge faces Undertaker again. Other than that we have Shawn vs. Batista which is fallout from Shawn vs. Flair and sets up the Shawn vs. Jericho feud. Dang Shawn had a lot going on here. Let's get to it.

The opening video says Mania was the beginning and tonight is the revenge. Or the backlash you might say.

The announcers welcome us to the show and Mick Foley is revealed as the new commentator.

US Title: Matt Hardy vs. MVP

This is the culmination of a feud that went on for almost eight months as Matt and MVP both got hurt so they had to keep waiting. We get a clip from five months ago where MVP attacked Matt's leg. Matt returned last month to cost MVP the MITB match and tonight it's FINALLY the blowoff. We get some big match intros and we're ready to go. MVP goes for the knee of Hardy and Matt looks a bit ginger on it.

Hardy comes back so MVP bails to the floor. Back in and Matt takes him to the canvas with a headlock. A middle rope elbow to the back of the head gets two but MVP gets in a shot to the back to slow Hardy down. They go to the corner with MVP's belly to back superplex being broken up. Matt's moonsault hits knees though and the champion takes over. He works on the back/midsection which was injured as well apparently.

Off to an abdominal stretch but Matt escapes with a hip toss. He lands on MVP, meaning MVP probably has broken ribs. The champ comes back with a belly to belly for two. A clothesline finally gets Matt a breather and allows him to hit a bulldog out of the corner for two. The Playmaker is countered into the Side Effect for two. The crowd is really getting into this.

Hardy goes up but gets crotched due to a dropkick to the ropes. They go up top and Matt hits a top rope Side Effect for no cover as both guys are down. It eventually gets two as does a backslide from the champ. Matt grabs a fast rollup for two but the Twist of Fate is countered. MVP hits the Drive By (running boot to the face) and Hardy is knocked to the

floor. He barely gets back in at 8 and MVP is stunned. Another boot to the face puts Matt down but a running one in the corner hits buckle, allowing Matt to hit the Twist for the pin and the title.

Rating: B-. The idea here was to give the fans something to get all fired up over and that was certainly accomplished. This feud went on forever but the ending was the perfect kind, as the fans were all behind Matt and wanted to see him end the nearly year long reign that MVP was on. Good opener here and I was getting into it by the end.

Matt talks about how great this is and how hard he's worked. It's been worth all the injuries too. And to MVP, I am better than you.

ECW Title: Kane vs. Chavo Guerrero

Kane is defending after having won the title in 8 seconds at Mania. Chavo has his bodyguard Bam Neely. Edge attacked Kane's knee on ECW on Tuesday so the champ is coming in injured. Chavo goes for the knee so Kane hits him in the face. The low dropkick hits Chavo's face but it hurts the knee even more. Kane chokes Chavo over his back and hits a gorilla press to follow up. Guerrero finally takes the knee out and sends him face first into the buckle.

They head outside but Kane catches Chavo in the air and rams his back into the barricade. They head back in but Kane has his knee kicked out to give the challenger control. Neely gets in some shots and we go back in. Adamle is totally lost in calling this, getting basic things wrong and even having Tazz make fun of him. Chavo goes up but winds up on Kane's shoulders for an electric chair drop.

Both guys are down now but Chavo kicks the knee out again. Kane is all cool with that and grabs him by the throat. That gets released so it's a big boot to the face instead. Side slam gets two and Adamle actually called it the right name. He's getting a little better at least. Kane goes up and hits the top rope clothesline for two. Chavo goes up as well and a missile dropkick gets two. He takes out the knee again but goes up, only to get caught in a chokeslam position. Chavo escapes but the Frog Splash is caught in the chokeslam for the pin and Kane retains.

Rating: C-. Not much here but it wasn't that bad I guess. Kane needed to get a clean win here instead of making it look like a fluke/meaningless win as it was at Mania, but at the end of the day there's almost no way you can spin Chavo as a credible threat to someone like Kane. Not a great match but it could have been a lot worse.

Orton says he's been through a lot lately but he'll come out of this as world champion still.

Great Khali vs. Big Show

No real story here. They're just fighting for the sake of fighting because they're both massive. They stare each other down and slug it out a bit with Big Show moving much faster than Khali. Show headbutts him but it doesn't have much effect. They trade chops and a clothesline puts Show down. Show fights back and tries a slam, only to get clotheslined to the floor.

After nothing of note happens out there they head back in with Khali chopping him down again. A big boot puts Show down and Khali hooks on, I kid you not, a Crippler Crossface. Show fights up but can't slam Khali. Off to a nerve hold which causes a lot of screaming from Big Show. That gets broken pretty quickly but Show gets chopped down for another two count. Khali cranks on the arms as the fans think this is boring. Big Show fights up and slams Khali for two. The Punjabi Plunge is countered into the chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: D-. Next. Seriously, next. This match came, it went, there's nothing to think about here at all. Khali was big and slow and once he lost the world title, it was all downhill from there. Show may be big and slow, but at least he has some skill and a tiny bit of speed to throw in there to make his matches seem like they're actually happening instead of a series of still photographs. Horribly dull match but given who was in there, what else were you expecting?

Cena gives country music advice to Jimmy Wang Yang when Orton comes up. Orton says Cena will lose again tonight but Cena says tonight Orton will go home broken. Cena's hair looks a lot darker here than usual.

We recap Shawn vs. Batista. The idea here is that Shawn retired Flair at Wrestlemania and Batista isn't happy about that. During Flair's retirement ceremony, the camera panned over to Batista for a quick shot, which showed him being very unhappy when Shawn came out. Jericho is involved in this too, as he thinks Shawn wanted to retire Flair which Shawn doesn't like the idea of. He thinks Batista wanted to retire Flair too, which got him beaten up by both guys. Jericho is the guest referee tonight.

Shawn Michaels vs. Batista

Feeling out process to start as Batista tries to figure out how to counter the strength advantage. He tries chops which get him nowhere other than into a Batista Bomb attempt. Back in now as Shawn fires away some kicks to the legs which don't have much effect. Big Dave is like screw this and runs Shawn over to gain control. Shawn gets him down by taking out the leg again and hooks a shortarm scissors.

They actually hit the mat for a bit with Batista trying to roll out, only to get caught by some knees to the arm. Since it's a Shawn Michaels shortarm scissors though, you know the counter that's coming. It takes awhile but there it is, as Batista lifts him off the mat and throws Shawn over the top and out to the floor. Dave goes with him though and both guys are down on the outside.

Shawn rams the arm into the post as Batista is in trouble. Shawn is kind of wrestling heel here which is a natural fit for him if he needs it to be. Back in and he cranks on the arm, tying it up in the ropes for more leverage. Batista tries to take it to the corner but Shawn locks on a standing cross armbreaker which he bends over the ropes as well. That looked sick. Shawn goes up and drops a double ax to the shoulder as he's totally focused on one body part.

Batista finally comes back with a Samoan Drop to put both guys down and buy himself a breather. Shawn gets sent into the corner and flips upside down, followed by a big clothesline from Batista's good arm. The Batista Bomb is countered into a Crossface which is pretty soon after Benoit. The Animal almost gets to a rope but Shawn floats over into a cover followed

by another Crossface back in the middle of the ring. That was slick.

Batista gets the rope and the fans are booing loudly. Jericho has to physically break the hold and Shawn isn't pleased. Batista gets a side slam with the bad arm for two and we get a quick breather. Shawn hits the forearm and nips up but he walks into the spear for two. Shawn goes up and after shoving Batista down he hits the big elbow for no cover. He loads up Sweet Chin Music but Batista counters that into a spinebuster. The Bomb is escaped but Shawn's knee gives out. Jericho checks on Shawn and it's ok to continue. Batista walks over and gets his head kicked off, giving Shawn the pin.

Rating: B. Shawn was on fire in 2008 and this was no exception. This was getting very good when it ended but the ending was fine. It's actually the beginning of a much bigger storyline as Jericho didn't believe the knee was really hurt and called Shawn out on it. These two would feud until October and it was without question the top feud of the year. Good match here but the best hadn't even started yet.

Jericho has to help Shawn to the back.

Buy the Wrestlemania DVD.

Orton comes to see HHH now and says tonight HHH won't succeed. Orton says he'll win but HHH says pride comes before the fall.

Beth Phoenix/Melina/Layla/Jillian Hall/Victoria/Natalya vs. Mickie James/Michelle McCool/Ashley/Cherry/Kelly Kelly/Maria

Mickie won the title from Beth a few weeks ago in a huge upset. There is something to be said about putting 12 good looking women in a single tag match. Beth, with curly hair, starts with Michelle, who looks GOOD in black. Beth counters the speed moves and powerslams her down for two. Off to Melina who hooks a bridging front facelock with a choke. Michelle rolls through a sunset flip and dropkicks Melina in the face.

Off to the champ (Mickie in case you forgot) who hits a rana out of the corner but Melina tags off to Natalya who is in a black and yellow body suit. It's her PPV debut so it's understandable I guess. Victoria comes

in and misses her shaking moonsault. Mickie hits an enziguri and the brawl breaks out on the floor. Ashley comes in for a HORRIBLE rana on Jillian, getting two. Thankfully Beth comes in to give her a beating for how bad it was. Ashley escapes the Glam Slam but can't tag. Mickie comes in illegally and the parade of finishers begin. After everyone hits something, Beth pins Ashley with a fisherman's buster.

Rating: D+. The match sucked, but MAN were the girls better back then. They were better in the ring and they looked a lot better too. The girls here actually looked like their outfits weren't made by the same people which is a big upgrade. Also them having more than 90 seconds a week is a big improvement too. Screw them being role models. They exist because they look good in tight spandex that shows off their bodies. Don't try to over complicate this stuff.

Some Baltimore Ravens are here.

We recap Edge vs. Undertaker. Edge tapped away the title at Mania and says he hasn't felt right ever since. Vickie, corrupt authority figure #847, has stacked the deck against Taker by making him have hard matches while Edge has basically had a month off.

Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Undertaker

Taker actually says I'm going to hurt you to Edge during the big match intros. Edge gets thrown to the floor to start and then is run over by a shoulder block. It's still in the feeling out period here. Taker charges into a boot and gets clotheslined down as Edge takes over for the first time. And never mind as Edge gets thrown into the corner and Taker pounds away even more. Taker cranks on the arm and sends the shoulder into the buckle.

The champ loads up Old School but Edge rakes the eyes to escape. Taker gets clotheslined to the floor and a baseball slide sends Taker into the barricade. Edge dives off the apron but is easily caught and rammed into the posts. That's similar to what Kane did earlier so maybe it runs in the family. The champ pounds him down some more and drops the leg on the apron but it hurts Taker's bad back.

Back in the ring a slam and legdrop get two, brother. What might have been the tombstone is countered into the Edge-0-Matic for two. With Taker in the corner Edge hits a spear to the back for two. Edge hooks a body scissors and Taker is getting ticked off. The Dead Man pounds away at Edge's face to escape but Edge hits a dropkick to the back to put him down again. Another baseball slide puts Taker on the floor and we head outside for another bit.

That goes nowhere so we head back inside for a Canadian camel clutch. Taker fights out of that by standing up but Edge hooks another body scissors and right back into the camel clutch. That gets broken up exactly the same way and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Now a double big boot puts both guys down in case you're a leg man instead of an arm man. Taker wins a slugout much to the fans' delight and a big boot puts Edge down again.

A running corner clothesline hits Edge and it's snake eyes into the big boot. An elbow drop gets two and Taker is getting a bit gassed. Old School is broken up again and Edge pounds away in the corner. That would be because he's an idiot in case you're wondering. Taker gets him in Last Ride position but Edge THINKS and climbs down as no one else has thought to do. Taker shoves him off and tries a top rope elbow (I've seen him do that live and it's awesome) but Edge moves and gets two.

The challenger rolls to the floor and grabs the belt but Taker grabs the chokeslam. Edge counters that as well, this time into a Russian legsweep for two. Edge goes up again but gets chokeslammed down for a delayed two. The tombstone is countered as Edge grabs the ropes. He pulls on them so hard that the buckle comes off. Taker gets rammed back first into it but manages a Last Ride attempt anyway.

Curt Hawkins of the Edgeheads runs in and hits Taker with the belt but that only gets two as well. The spear is countered into a DDT for two. The chokeslam is abandoned because of Zach Ryder interference (man that would be different today) so Taker opts for the Last Ride again. Edge rolls through into a rollup but Taker grabs Hell's Gate for the tap out to retain. Sweet finishing sequence.

Rating: B. I was digging this one as it was the kind of interference filled match that you expected at Mania but didn't quite get. The Mania match is better due to the atmosphere and the significance of the win, but this was still a solid match with both guys showing off some solid chemistry together. Edge would eventually get the title back and it would of course be in another good match.

Taker doesn't let go of the hold for awhile. Vickie has to come down and the horror of her running (after being in a wheelchair) makes Taker let go. Edge gets wheeled out on a stretcher.

Orton goes up to see JBL when Punk pops up. He holds up the MITB case and says good luck tonight.

Cena and HHH combine for over 80% of the four person poll of the main event.

We recap the main event. Basically it's the triple threat (Orton defending against Cena and HHH) from Mania with JBL thrown in. This gets the music video treatment.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Randy Orton vs. HHH vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

This is no DQ and no countout with elimination rules. HHH gets a big pop and Cena gets a mixed yet louder reaction. Orton gets a lot of booing and no one cares that JBL is here too. Orton immediately gets knocked to the floor by HHH and looks like he's about to throw up a frog. JBL jumps Cena but HHH says he's mine and gets in a fight with Cena on his own. Orton is still hiding on the floor so Cena takes him down.

JBL knocks Cena off the apron and onto the announce table with a LOUD landing. Orton and JBL beat on HHH in the ring with the Game being in trouble. He comes back with a double clothesline and sends JBL to the floor. Orton's shoulder hits the post and HHH goes to the floor. He sends JBL into the steps and loads up a Pedigree but JBL escapes. Cena hits the Throwback on Orton followed by the top rope Fameasser into the STFU. JBL comes back in and sets to break it up then realizes there's no reason to do so and tells Orton to tap.

HHH grabs JBL and puts him in a Crossface right in front of Orton who is still in the STFU. JBL pokes Cena in the eye for some reason which breaks the STFU, allowing Orton to shout at JBL to tap in a funny bit. Cena knocks Orton into HHH and JBL, breaking the Crossface. Orton throws Cena to the floor again but JBL kicks Randy down for two. Orton comes back with a clothesline and goes up but gets crotched.

JBL loads up a superplex but JBL and Cena make it a Tower of Doom. Cena and the Game slug it out until Cena hits a release fisherman's suplex for two. ProtoBomb takes HHH down again but the Shuffle is broken up by a spinebuster. HHH loads up the Pedigree but JBL tries the Clothesline for some reason. That results in an FU for him followed by the STFU for the tap. We're down to three but Orton immediately punts Cena for the pin and we're down to two.

So it's Orton vs. HHH in a one on one match for the title. HHH throws him to the floor where Orton lands with a thud. Randy goes into the table but HHH goes into the steps, meaning advantage champion. Orton launches him into the barricade and into the crowd. A suplex brings HHH back to ringside and Orton poses a bit. Orton stomps on HHH back in the ring and poses some more before covering for two.

HHH tries a comeback but walks into the backbreaker for another near fall. We hit the chinlock for awhile but HHH fights out of it. Orton takes him down AGAIN, this time with the powerslam for two. The RKO is countered and they slug it out. HHH hits the high knee and both guys are down again. Facebuster gets two for the Game. He clotheslines Orton to the floor and throws him over the announce table.

Orton comes back by sending HHH into the barricade and loads up a piledriver on the steps but gets countered instead. Back inside and a spinebuster puts Orton down again. The Pedigree is countered as is the RKO and the referee goes down. The RKO hits out of nowhere but the slow cover only gets two. The Punt is countered into the Pedigree for the pin and the title for HHH.

Rating: B-. The match was good although you could pretty easily write out Cena and JBL and have the same thing. They added a bit but more than half

of the match was the one on one stuff. That being said it's probably the best match Orton and HHH ever had and is certainly better than the Mania main event they would have the next year. Not a classic or anything close to one, but for a B-level main event this was perfectly fine.

Overall Rating: B+. The show isn't a masterpiece or anything but when almost all of the matches are good save for one which is relatively short, that's a pretty solid show all around. Good stuff here but the year would go downhill a bit as the feuds would get driven into the ground with the same three guys dominating everything. Still though, this was a solid show and while it's not a classic, it's worth checking out.

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Backlash 2007: I'm Not Here Anymore. I'm Over There. The Ending Sequence Blew Me Away

Backlash 2007

Date: April 29, 2007

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 14,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Taz, John Bradshaw Layfield, Joey Styles

It's the final show in this set of WWE reviews as I jump over Backlash 2006 because I'm saving it for the final review in the series. The main event here is a fourway for the belt as well as Undertaker vs. Batista II in a last man standing match. ECW is around now too and we get Vince/Umaga/Shane vs. Lashley for the ECW Title in what I'm sure will be riveting TV. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about how everything began at Wrestlemania but everything continues tonight.

Raw Tag Titles: Hardy Boys vs. Lance Cade/Trevor Murdoch

The Hardys are defending. We're back to co-branded shows here so everyone is here tonight. Matt and Cade get us going. The fans are all behind the Hardys here of course, even though Cade knocks Matt down in the corner. Matt comes back with some hiptosses for both guys before taking Cade down with a headlock. Lawler makes the always stupid statement that they're the same height on the mat.

Off to Murdoch who is quickly slammed down as well. Jeff comes in to a quick pop and things speed up. The Hardys clear the ring and Jeff hits Poetry In Motion over the top and out to the floor. Back in and Matt hits a middle rope elbow on Murdoch for two. Matt's bulldog is countered though and the challenges take over. Cade comes in for a powerbomb attempt but gets caught in a Russian legsweep which lets Jeff get the tag.

Jeff cleans house, probably finding Cade's drugs in the process. He misses a dropkick through the ropes though and crashes to the floor, changing the momentum again. Sitout Rock Bottom gets two for Cade. Murdoch comes in and blocks Jeff's jawbreaker and hits a neckbreaker for two. A big boot puts Jeff down for two. Cade and Murdoch were pretty talented in the ring, but they were just boring at the end of the day. That and the lack of competition is why they're not remembered that well at all.

The challengers keep double teaming but it's Cade that gets caught in the jawbreaker, proving that Murdoch is more of a ring technician than his partner. Murdoch also breaks up the hot tag and hits a suplex for two. Jeff mule kicks Cade down but Murdoch breaks up the tag again. Man when that tag hits the roof is going to come off. Murdoch sets for the jump off the middle rope for the sake of jumping into boots, but he blocks the boots, bringing a smile to my face. Jeff makes the tag almost immediately thereafter and the pop isn't as great as I was expecting.

Matt also cleans house (probably looking for drugs as well), destroying

everything in sight. Cade is sent to the floor but the Twist to Murdoch is countered. Side Effect gets two instead as Cade makes the save. Murdoch hits a standing sunset flip bomb for two on Matt. Trevor's fireman's carry is countered into the Twist and Swanton, allowing Matt to get the pin to retain.

Rating: B-. This was formula tag wrestling and it worked pretty well. The Hardy reunion didn't do anything great but it gave both guys something to do for awhile and brought some credibility back to the belts for about ten seconds. Jeff would go on to bigger things of course, moving into the main event scene by the end of the year while Matt would move into the Smackdown midcard.

Umaga gets a pep talk from the McMahons. Shane says he's ready. Vince says Shane should be ECW Champion but Shane says Vince should get the title instead. Vince likes the idea.

Women's Title: Melina vs. Mickie James

Melina is defending. Mickie is getting her return match here and is looking very bouncy tonight. They head to the mat to start with Mickie hitting a monkey flip for one. Off to a headlock by the challenger which is reversed into one by Melina. Mickie escapes that with ease so Melina pounds away as she can't win a wrestling match here. Mickie mounts her (lucky) and pounds away as well.

James goes up top but gets sent out to the floor to give Melina control. She chokes Mickie in the ropes and then hooks a full nelson with her legs. Now it's a choke in the corner but Mickie escapes. And never mind as Melina comes off with a seated senton to take over again immediately. That gets two so Mickie tries her spin kick. That fails also as Melina counters, sending Mickie down into the splits. James hooks Melina's legs and they slug it out with both girls in a splits position.

Mickie makes her comeback with forearms and hair tosses. She's very fired up here and it looks like a good comeback instead of the usual lame Divas offense. Mickie's rana out of the corner is countered as Melina sends her to the apron. She pops back up and hits a top rope cross body for two. Back to the corner and Melina hits a kick to the head followed by a

reverse DDT to retain.

Rating: C+. This was one of the best Divas match I've seen in YEARS. Mickie was awesome as was Melina, but most importantly of all: this was treated like a match between two women, rather than a Divas match if that makes sense. The match wasn't treated like anything different, which is the best thing they could do with the Divas anymore. Also it got time, which helped a lot.

Edge is in the back and says he liked Cena and Michaels having an hour long match on Raw. Maria has a note asking how Edge won his first title, which he says was by cashing in MITB. Mr. Kennedy pops up as the guy that asked him. He's also the current Mr. MITB and implies he'll cash in tonight.

Video on The Condemned.

US Title: MVP vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending here and is announced as being from Atlanta for a good reaction. These two had an impromptu match on Smackdown where MVP walked out. A quick Crossface attempt sends MVP to the floor and things slow down. Back in the ring MVP takes over with a headlock on the mat. Benoit bridges up into a backslide for two and then hits a belly to back suplex to break the hold.

The Sharpshooter goes on and MVP is in trouble. He makes the rope before sending Benoit into the corner. A boot to the back of the head takes Benoit down and it's off to a cravate. Benoit fights out with elbows but walks into an overhead belly to belly for two. Back to the chinlock as the fans chant that MVP is a Power Ranger. Back up and MVP misses a clothesline, allowing the Canadian to hit Rolling Germans on the American.

He goes up for the Swan Dive but MVP hooks his foot before he can get up top. MVP sends him into the corner, further jarring the neck and getting two. Benoit gets a quick Crossface but MVP grabs the ropes. Back to the neck lock but MVP gets caught using the ropes. A big kick to the head puts Benoit down but he snaps off more Rolling Germans to take over. He

tries the Swan Dive but it hits knees to change momentum again. MVP hooks a half crab for some reason but it's broken pretty quickly. Out of nowhere Benoit reverses a suplex into a small package to retain.

Rating: C+. The constant neck holds got repetitive but the match itself was pretty good. MVP would get the title the next month in a 2/3 falls match and would hold the title for almost a year. Benoit wouldn't live through the end of summer of course, and it's scary to think that he was in the ring as a champion so close to the end of his life.

Cena says nothing before Orton pops up and talks about how similar they are. He wants an alliance tonight but Cena makes gay jokes. Ron Simmons appears, next.

We recap the ECW Title match but there isn't much to say here. Lashley beat Umaga at Wrestlemania to have Vince's head shaved. You know this isn't cool with Vince so tonight it's about revenge.

ECW Title: Vince McMahon/Shane McMahon/Umaga vs. Bobby Lashley

Lashley is champion and whoever gets the fall is champion. Shane starts us out and is promptly destroyed. Lashley throws him around and suplexes him down before throwing him to the floor. Bobby wants Vince but Shane staggers back in instead. Off to Umaga who is sent into the corner but Lashley charges into a boot to the face. Well foot tape to the face but you get the idea.

Bobby sends him into the corner again and hits some clotheslines including a big one to send him over the top rope and out to the floor. Down goes Shane so there's only Vince left on the apron. Instead Shane gets back in and takes a delayed vertical suplex. Umaga tries a headbutt but it hits the Boy Wonder by mistake. Shane finally does something effective by pulling the top rope down to send Bobby out to the floor.

Umaga sends Lashley into the steps as we continue the filler until Vince comes in. Lashley is in trouble but Vince still doesn't want the tag. Shane puts on a Fujiwara Armbar followed by a hammerlock with knees. Off to a cross armbreaker/triangle choke hybrid which Lashley can't quite power out of. Scratch that as he hits a kind of powerbomb for two. Back

to the Samoan for a headbutt followed by a bearhug.

Bobby escapes for a second but gets caught in a Samoan Drop to put him down again. Shane hooks a camel clutch for longer than should be humanly possible to survive. Lashley gets out of that too with pure power and hits a Torture Rack backbreaker (Shock Treatment ala Abyss) to Shane. Umaga gets speared and it's a Dominator to Shane but Vince finally comes in for the save. In the confusion Shane gets a belt shot in for two from Vince. Vince is ticked off now and brings in Umaga for a top rope splash. That gets two for Vince as well so Umaga does the exact same thing again to give Vince the title.

Rating: C. This was fine I guess but it would start a huge ordeal with ECW fans saying that Vince was killing the legacy of ECW. You know, because it was SO healthy after guys like Big Show was champion and we got a single ECW Rules match a week if we were lucky and guys like Matt Striker and Elijah Burke and Mike Knox and Test were featured on the show every week. Lashley would get the title back in a month or so before the title fell into the midcard level it would stay at until it was axed.

Vince and company celebrate for awhile before heading to the back and laughing at the ECW Originals.

We recap Taker vs. Batista, which is just another rematch, but this time it's Last Man Standing. The Mania match was good so hopefully this is too.

Smackdown World Title: Batista vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is defending here. Apparently he's never lost a last man standing match. I wouldn't have guessed that. He also might have a bad right arm coming into this. The chokeslam is broken up but the flying clothesline takes Batista down. Old School hits and Batista is in trouble early. Big Dave comes back with something called a powerslam for about four.

Out to the floor and Batista sends him into the barricade to take over. Scratch that as he gets sent into the steps, but Taker's arm isn't holding up that well. Batista has a bunch of tape on his leg so Taker has

a target as well, making the arm not as much of a handicap. Taker puts him on the apron and drops the leg for a five count or so. Now Undertaker gets sent into the steps but no one can follow up.

They head back into the ring with Batista going up, only to get dropped by an uppercut. A superplex puts Batista down but Undertaker can't get up either. Batista gets a seven count and they slug it out. A big clothesline puts Taker down for eight, followed by a slam and legdrop from Batista for about six. Taker sends him out to the floor and starts setting up the announce table. Batista avoids the pain though by sending Undertaker into the barricade.

Big Dave sets for a powerslam through the announce table but gets caught in a Russian legsweep, sending him into the barricade for about seven. Undertaker hits him in the face with the steps and Batista barely makes it to his feet. It's table time with Batista being placed on the table as Undertaker walks the barricade for a legdrop through Batista and the table. That looked pretty awesome but it only gets nine. Something, probably the steps, busted Batista open.

They head back in and Batista hits a spear out of nowhere, getting an eight. Batista snaps and hits three spinebusters but that gets nine as well. The Bomb is countered and Undertaker hits a chokeslam to put both guys down but Batista is up at nine to keep things going. Taker channels his inner idiot and pounds away in the corner, and he deserves the Batista Bomb that he gets.

That still doesn't end it so Batista cracks him with a chair. Taker backdrops him onto the chair, followed by the Tombstone which STILL only gets nine. The look on Taker's face is great. They head back to the floor and Taker punches him up the ramp. Batista pounds away at him but the Bomb attempt is countered. Taker tries to throw him off the stage but Batista escapes and spears him off the stage into the electrical equipment, causing an explosion. The match ends in a draw as no one can get up in time.

Rating: B. The ending was a cop out and got booed out of the building, but the rest of it was pretty good. It wasn't a masterpiece or anything

and it really became a rehash of the match at Mania, although with a counting system instead of pins or submissions. Still though it was entertaining and felt like a big time match. They would have even more matches that were good too, so this was a good second match in the series.

Cena dominates the texting poll of who will win, getting 50% of four options. Shawn got 34%, meaning that Edge and Orton combined for 16%.

Music video recaps the main event. Cena is defending against Shawn, Edge and Orton. Shawn was his opponent at Mania and Edge/Orton are here because DX is injured so they have no one to face.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Edge vs. Randy Orton

One fall to a finish. This is coming off the one hour match between Shawn and Cena on Raw. Shawn talks trash to Cena to start and it turns into a four way argument. Rated RK0 yells at the other two until the other two hammer Rated RK0 to the floor. Shawn immediately chops Cena into the corner. John comes back with a release fisherman's suplex for two.

The other two come in and have a staredown of their own. They slug it out with Orton dropkicking Edge to the floor. Cena throws him back in and this time it's Orton going to the floor, only to be beaten up by Shawn on the other side of the ring. All four head outside now and it's only Edge on his feet. Shawn slams him down and goes into the ring for a moonsault onto all three guys. That always looks great.

Shawn and Edge get back into the ring but they clothesline each other. Cena comes back in and hits a double top rope Fameasser to take both guys down, getting two on Edge out of it. He goes to cover Shawn but Orton takes his head off with a clothesline. Orton throws out the guys with long hair and hits the backbreaker on Cena for two. A knee drop gets the same and Orton sends Cena shoulder first into the post.

Cena goes to the floor and it's Shawn taking his place. Forearm and nip up follow but Edge spin wheel kicks him down for two. Orton is mad at Edge now but they team up to put down both guys. Cena gets sent into the table and it's 2-1 on Shawn in the ring. They both grab a leg and put on

what I guess you would call a double half crab. With Shawn in trouble, Cena comes in to take out both guys and save Shawn.

Cena cleans house and hits various signature moves on various opponents. Edge takes the Protoplex and Shuffle after everyone else has been shouldered out. Shawn Orton pull Cena out to the floor and send him into the post, followed by Shawn putting Orton into the same post. Shawn loads up a piledriver onto the table to Orton but Edge cracks him with a chair to break up it. Orton gives him a thumbs up and takes a chair shot for his efforts.

Edge comes into the ring and tries to use the chair on Cena but gets caught in the STF instead. Edge makes the rope and Orton comes in to replace him in the same hold. Shawn comes back in and almost gets caught in the STF but instead it's a small package on Cena for two. Shawn clears out the ring other than Cena who takes the top rope elbow for two. He loads up the superkick but has to dodge an Edge spear. Edge goes down and the top rope elbow hits him as well.

Orton comes in for the same move but Cena breaks it up before Shawn can jump. Cena tries an FU on Shawn off the top but gets caught in a double electric chair drop off the top with Shawn crashing even harder. Edge and John are the only ones left in the ring but all three of the FU attempts fail. Orton and Shawn come back and it's an RK0 for Michaels. That gets two as Cena saves, as does the Edgecution on Cena. Everyone but Shawn tries finishers on everyone but only Edge hits a spear on Orton. Cena FU's Edge and gets superkicked onto Randy for the pin. That was a great finish!

Rating: B+. I was really getting into this at the end and Cena getting superkicked down into the pin was a great way to keep everyone looking strong. The ending was so fast that I gave up trying to keep up with everything that was happening. It didn't come off as a huge main event but at the same time it wasn't supposed to. Very good stuff here though and everyone came off looking great.

Shawn yells at Cena to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. DANG this was a solid show. When you have six matches

on the card and no filler, it means the matches all get time and are able to develop. Also when the worst match is a good one, it's hard to call it anything but great. The ending to the main event had me glued to the screen, which is saying a lot when I already knew who was pinning who to win it. This was a great show and well worth checking out.

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Backlash 2006: A Shoulder Injury, A Forgotten Classic, And God In A Dance Off (Plus Final Thoughts On WWE PPVs)

Backlash 2006

Date: April 30, 2006

Location: Rupp Arena, Lexington, Kentucky

Attendance: 14,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

I can't believe I just typed that. Since I started these reviews I knew this would be the final PPV I would do for one simple reason: it's the only PPV I've ever attended live. I graduated high school around this time so it was kind of a gift to myself. I went with a friend of mine and sat in the upper deck to watch this show and I'll never forget it. This is actually the first time I've seen the show in full since the night it aired, so this is going to be an interesting experience. We've got Vince/Shane vs. Shawn/God tonight as well as Cena defending against HHH and Edge in the main event. For the last time on an old PPV, let's get to it.

As a rare bonus, I'm throwing in the match from Heat.

Rob Conway vs. Goldust

This was in essence our dark match but it aired on WWE.com as well so it's not a big deal. Conway was doing a Buff Bagwell style gimmick at this point. The announcers waste their time by trying to come up with stupid nicknames. The guys talk some trash before Goldie takes over with some rights. Goldust freaks Conway out with his usual antics and things slow down already. Conway comes back with some basic offense and gets two off a whip into the corner.

A clothesline puts Goldust down and it's off to the chinlock. Yes a chinlock two minutes into a three and a half minute match. They hit stereo crossbodies to put both guys down for another spot you wouldn't think was needed in a match this short. Conway wins a slugout and hits a swinging neckbreaker for two. He ducks his head off a whip though and Goldie hits that uppercut of his. Goldust starts his comeback and takes him into the corner for ten punches. A powerslam gets the pin for the human Academy Award.

Rating: D. Yeah whatever. No one cared about this but then again it was a match to get the crowd warmed up. Conway tried and was a big deal in OVW so he was kind of a hometown boy but his gimmick killed him. Goldust did his thing which wasn't really intimidating anymore but no one had cared about him for the most part in years. Nothing too bad due to the length but nothing good either.

The opening video is about the two main event matches. Vince and Shane are beating up Shawn because Shawn beat him at Mania and Vince went insane. The title match is a rematch from Mania with Edge thrown in.

I would have been sitting in the upper deck opposite the cameras on the right hand side.

Chris Masters vs. Carlito

These two were partners for awhile but have since had a parting of the ways. Carlito turned on him just after Mania, hitting him with a Backstabber. He would be your face in this match. They slug it out to start with Masters taking over. It's so weird to hear about how the

Kentucky Wildcats play in this arena. I would graduate from high school in the same arena in less than a month.

Carlito comes back with right hands but gets backdropped down. The announcers talk about God's in ring debut tonight as Masters gets two. Carlito throws on the Master Lock (you read that right) and Masters bails to the floor, where Carlito hits a good looking dive. Back in and Carlito pounds away in the corner at a very fast pace. No counting in Spanish from the Lexington crowd though so they officially suck.

Masters counters a rana into a buckle bomb and Carlito is in trouble all of a sudden. Off to a neck crank and Masters breaks up a comeback attempt by Carlito. Masters clotheslines him down and things slow down even more. Here comes the Masterlock but apparently shouting the name of the move you're about to use is a bad idea as Carlito counters into a rollup for two.

A springboard reverse elbow puts Masters down and it's apple time. Carlito throws it to him and dropkicks the knee out to take over even more. Masters never was the smartest guy in the world. Carlito fires off some left armed clotheslines and a dropkick for a delayed two. Masters sends him into the corner but a belly to back superplex is broken up. Carlito "hits" a moonsault press for two. Masters was halfway down before Carlito even touched him. Masterlock is countered by sending Masters' face into the buckle and the Backstabber with feet on the ropes gets the pin.

Rating: D+. This felt like a long Raw match. Carlito wasn't that popular but they were trying with him I guess. It's certainly not bad but it was very dull, which is the exact opposite of what you're looking for in an opener. I didn't really like this one live and it didn't work any better six years later.

Outside shot of Rupp Arena. I live five minutes away.

Maria screws up the result of the previous match and we get some fans' opinions on the winner of the triple threat later. Lita interrupts and makes fun of the Lexington fans. Maria implies Lita is...well that she enjoys men, so Lita threatens her. Tonight after Edge wins, it's a

private sex celebration.

Umaga vs. Ric Flair

Umaga debuted less than a month before this so this is his first real match. When you need a new kid tested, call in Naitch. Flair jumps him in the aisle and that goes badly for him. We go into the ring for the bell and Flair gets pounded into the corner. Flair pokes him in the eye and hits him low a few times, only to get chopped right back down.

The running corner attack (NOT FROM RIKISHI YOU NXT ANNOUNCERS) misses and we go to the floor. Umaga misses a charge and hits the post and it's time to go after the leg. The Figure Four is broken up and Flair is put in the Tree of Woe for a headbutt. The running hip attack sets up another headbutt which sets up the Samoan Spike for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was a total squash for Umaga but the idea here was perfect: Flair made Umaga look like a monster here which is exactly the point of something like this. Umaga would be a destruction machine, not losing until January when Cena finally put him down with a rollup of all things. This was a textbook example of how to put someone over using a legend.

Vince is in the back when Shane comes in for a pep talk. Vince insists it's a tag match and not a handicap match. Also, let him take care of God. There's nothing God can do that Vince can't do. To prove it, he takes Shane's bottle of water and pours it in on the floor. He stomps on it and declares that he's walking on water. Now he takes a well placed loaf of bread and a fish. He throws the fish away and breaks the bread and throws it away. Someone off camera throws a lot of bread at him as well as the fish. It's a "holy mackerel." Shane drinks the water and now it's purple. Get it?

We recap Mickie James vs. Trish for the title. Mickie is a psycho that is obsessed with Trish. She won the title from Trish at Mania using some VERY un-PG actions. Mickie was HOT as the psycho.

Women's Title: Mickie James vs. Trish Stratus

The girl I went to this was a lesbian so this was by far her favorite match of the night. Trish is in skin colored attire trimmed with Kentucky Blue. Nice touch. Actually that's a bit lighter than Kentucky Blue but close enough. Trish grabs a quick rollup for two and blows a kiss. She Ma-Trishes out of a clothesline and fires off forearms. A HARD bicycle kick puts Mickie down and there's a Thesz Press off the apron by Trish. That gets two back in the ring and we get a great upskirt shot of the champ.

Trish pounds away in the corner but gets dumped over the top to the floor, dislocating her shoulder in the process. You can see the bulge in her back where it's not in place. The referee throws up a quick X and Mickie covers a bit. She chokes away for the DQ after like four minutes.

Rating: N/A. I can't give this a fair grade as the injury derailed it maybe two minutes in. The shoulder injury was SICK live as you could see it out of joint on the big screen and the crash that hurt it was terrible looking. Trish would be out for about two months because of this which is a shame as this was one of the best Divas feuds in years. Also, as someone that has seen these girls up close, cameras do not do them justice. They are stunning in person, as are most of the Divas.

Maria corrects her mistake about Masters earlier and brings in Shawn. He says God is with him as always and he knows it's a handicap match.

Money in the Bank Briefcase/Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Shelton Benjamin

It's winner take all with Rob holding the case and Shelton holding the title. Shelton takes him to the mat to start and rides Van Dam a bit. The fans are completely behind RVD, namely because this is during the opening part of Shelton's heel run. Shelton backflips out of a wristlock to show that he can hang with Rob in all of the high flying stuff. RVD gets his rolling cradle for two and Shelton bails to the corner.

Shelton keeps getting frustrated and heads to the floor for a breather. Back in and Benjamin pounds him down and fires off some forearms. Rob will have none of that and kicks Shelton down. The champ (Shelton) bails to the floor again to avoid Rolling Thunder so Rob dives to the floor to

take him out. Shelton runs back in and hits a sunset bomb to the floor to take over again.

Back in and Benjamin works over the back before hooking a chinlock with a knee in the spine. Rob quickly escapes that but gets caught by a knee lift for two. Back to the chinlock which might be a choke. Not that it matters as Rob makes the rope. Rob fights up and tries Rolling Thunder but Shelton catches him in a Samoan Drop in a SWEET counter. They go up and Rob knocks him off the top, but Shelton JUMPS up the corner (not runs the corner. He JUMPED from the mat to the top rope and superplexes Rob down for two.

Off to a kind of rear naked choke which is broken up again. A spin kick takes down Shelton as do some clotheslines. Van Dam kicks him down a few more times and FINALLY hits Rolling Thunder for two. See? Build it up, then pay it off. Not that hard. Split legged moonsault out of the corner gets two. Shelton counters the monkey flip but another spin kick puts him down. Five Star misses and Shelton hits a DDT for two. Actually make that six as it's three two counts, the third having feet on the ropes.

Shelton goes to the floor for no apparent reason. Oh ok he's grabbing the briefcase. Rob goes to the floor after him but gets knocked down quickly. Back in and Shelton hits a top rope cross body which Van Dam rolls through for two. Dragon Whip misses Van Dam and he hits a rana to take Shelton down. Shelton goes for the case and there goes the referee. Rob ducks a shot and hits a van Daminator with the case. Five Star gives Rob the title.

Rating: B. This was a very fun match and the Five Star absolutely has to be seen to be believed. He didn't hold the title long but he would cash in the case in about a month and a half for the WWE Title at One Night Stand. Shelton never got back to the point he was at a year before this, which is a shame as he was on fire at that point. Good match here.

We recap Kane vs. Big Show. They were tag champions until Kane started hearing voices that said May 19. The reason for this would never be explained but it would be the date See No Evil came out, as well as the date that it was revealed that Undertaker lit the fire that killed his

parents. It might not have been that but it was something related to it. This would result in a fake Kane in the mask feuding with real Kane without the mask. In short: it was ridiculous.

Big Show says Kane has a movie coming out on May 19th and he needs to get over whatever issues he's got going on. Kane attacked Big Show recently and Show's eye is messed up, so tonight it's an eye for an eye.

Kane vs. Big Show

Kane jumps him before the bell so Show GORILLA PRESSES him. That is SCARY power. Show charges into a boot and Kane goes for the eye. They go to the floor and as they get back in, Kane sends him into the post to take over. Some choking and a corner clothesline hit Big Show and with a loud whisper of GO DOWN, another clothesline puts Show down. Show slams him down but misses an elbow drop, allowing Kane to work on the arm.

The arm work goes on for awhile with Show on his knees. While in that position, he's up to Kane's shoulder. Kane goes up but jumps into a fallaway slam as Show takes over. A corner charges hits and Kane is in trouble. The chokeslam is countered into what was supposed to be a DDT but was rather an arm on Show's back that he fell down from. A big boot that literally has four inches between itself and Kane's face gets two.

JR is calling it an ugly match which is the code for "we know it sucks too". Powerslam gets two for Show and he goes after the eye. Kane blocks that and kicks Show in the head, sending him out to the floor. And now we bring out the suck, as the arena goes red and Kane's voice fills the arena, talking about May 19. Kane freaks out and has a bit of a fit on the mat. Show is concerned about him so he grabs a chair and blasts Kane in the head with it to knock him out. The match just ends.

Rating: F. There's no other way to put it. The premise was stupid, the match SUCKED with some of the worst looking miscues I've seen this side of a Divas match, and the ending was ridiculous. The live crowd thought the match sucked, but MAN watching this again shows me what this match was: it wasn't just bad. It was REALLY bad. These two can never have a good match together it seems.

Candice Michelle has a chest cold and goes to Vince to heal it because he's God. Vince puts his hand on her chest and prays for her in a parody of a spiritual healer. Candice sounds like she's having an orgasm. This is so stupid I can't comprehend it. The arena hated it too. Shane comes in to take Vince away and he's annoyed.

We recap the "tag" match. Before Mania, Shawn told Vince to get over Montreal so Vince declared war on Shawn. The idea is that Shawn is a Christian but he has to resort to levels he doesn't want to in order beat him, which he did at Wrestlemania. Vince created his own religion: McMahonism. This resulted in some skits in a church which reached new levels of bad taste. Vince made a "tag" match between himself/Shane vs. Shawn/God. I was really worried about what they were going to do for God here.

Shawn Michaels/God vs. Vince McMahon/Shane McMahon

Vince introduces God and we get a spotlight. His tron video is clouds and he comes out to harp and piano music. Vince stops and criticizes God before challenging him to a dance contest. I kid you not, this is really happening. The spotlights gets in the ring and Vince tells the referee to check him out. Vince makes the match no holds barred because the idea of Vince wrestling an actual match isn't pleasing. Sexy Boy finally hits to end this stupidity.

Vince starts to run his mouth some more and Shawn finally drills him to get going. The daddy goes to the floor while Shawn beats up Shane. Shawn dives on Vince before clotheslining Shane to the floor and hitting a flip dive to take him out. Michaels chops Shane up the ramp but Shane comes back with knees to the stomach. Shane tries to piledrive Shawn off the stage but gets backdropped instead.

Shawn comes back but here's Vince with a chair as they're all on the stage now. Shawn blocks the shot and takes Shane down again before hitting a cross body on Vince off the stage. This looked like nothing live but it looked good on camera. Shawn climbs back up to the stage but gets hit in the face with the chair by Shane. Michaels is busted which I never noticed in the arena.

Shane and Shawn head back to the ring and Shawn goes into the post. Shawn gets sent into the barricade and then back into the ring as Shane is in complete control. The top rope elbow misses and both guys are down. Vince is on the apron now and apparently they have to tag. Shane DDTs Shawn down and it's off to Vince. Vince takes his belt off and whips Shawn's back because he's that evil. Shane throws in a garbage can and Shawn gets his head caved in.

Vince wants a mic and taunts God a bit. God walks out and Vince says come back. Vince declares that God has left the building, but Shawn hasn't. He stands Shawn up and tries a superkick but the kick gets caught. Shawn makes his comeback and hits the forearm and nip-up. Shane misses a chair shot and caves in Vince's head by mistake. It's a forearm for Shane followed by an atomic drop and some clotheslines. Shawn's top rope elbow hits and both McMahons taste superkicks.

Shawn, ever the genius, doesn't go for a cover but rather goes to the floor for a table. Make that two tables. My fellow Lexingtonians (yes that's what they're called) want ladders because much like other wrestling fans, they're greedy people. Both McMahons are put on tables and here comes the ladder. It's the jumbo sized ladder too. Shawn climbs up but has to dive on the invading Spirit Squad. That was incredible live but the camera didn't get a great shot of it. The main problem was you didn't see them until the dive so Shawn looked crazy.

The numbers catch up with Shawn and he gets beaten down by the five male cheerleaders who are currently tag team champions at this point. They throw Shawn back in and get the McMahons off the tables. The Squad takes Shawn into the ring and hit their finisher on him, which is them all picking him up at once and dropping him through a table. Vince gets the pin. JR calls this BS but the uncensored version.

Rating: D. The match was boring, but JR put it best during the match: this was uncomfortable. On top of that, the whole thing was stupid. This would set up a feud that ran for the whole year which didn't work all that well either. It did lead to the reformation of DX which was pretty interesting, but dang this first part was torture to sit through. Not a horrible match but dang this was a chore to sit through.

The Squad put the McMahons on their shoulders with the man that would become Dolph Ziggler cheering the loudest.

Cena, drawing mostly boos, says that he doesn't have to get pinned tonight so the wins HHH has gotten over him lately don't matter. He's heard everything lately and the fans are divided. The silence is the voice of the people that want Edge to win the title. The cheers are for HHH, but there's one voice that will stand tall at the end. That would be the voice of Lillian Garcia who will declare Cena still WWE Champion. I missed most of this promo the first time as I was watching what was being set up in the ring.

It's time for Matt Striker's Classroom because we can't fill in a three hour PPV with just Raw matches. Striker says that there's another miracle tonight: there's an intelligent person in Kentucky. He talks about what Kentucky is known for: illegally recruited basketball players and fried chicken. It's not known for its education though, but he's here to remedy that. Striker brings out the best educated person ever from Kentucky: Eugene, who was mentally slow. Literally, that was his character. His music was very catchy though.

Striker calls Eugene proof that you shouldn't marry your sister. Eugene may be the smartest person ever from Kentucky but Striker doesn't think he can even spell his own name. He hands Eugene a piece of chalk and asks him to write it on the chalk board. Eugene writes that Striker enjoys human waste. Striker criticizes the grammar and punctuation, but Eugene is picking his nose. He starts to eat it but Striker stops it. I think you all know what's coming, and there it goes into Striker's mouth. Eugene stuns him too. This would result in a match a few weeks later on Raw which Striker won.

We recap the world title match. Cena beat HHH at Mania to retain but HHH said he wanted another title shot. Edge came out and said he earned the shot by beating Foley in their famous hardcore match. The solution is of course a triple threat match.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. HHH vs. Edge

Cena is defending if that wasn't clear. HHH is the huge crowd favorite.

The girl I was with was a huge Cena fan so I was for Edge all night. Well I liked Edge so it wasn't completely because of her. Edge tells the other two to go at it and heads to the floor. That's cool with HHH and Cena as they slug it out, won by the champion. Some shoulders take HHH down and there's the release fisherman's suplex for two. Edge makes the save and bails right back to the floor.

Cena punches the Game some more but walks into the high knee which gets two and some applause. Edge makes another save and heads right back to the floor. HHH and Cena finally have enough of the Canadian and they both go after him. Cena clotheslines Edge to the floor and takes turns with HHH ramming Edge into the announce table. This is awesome as it turns into a contest to see who can do it harder. Edge goes into the table about 10 times and looks mostly dead.

All three go back in but HHH throws Cena to the floor. Cena pulls HHH off the apron and rams his face into said apron. A top rope splash gets two on Edge and Cena loads up the Shuffle, only for Lita to pull the rope down and send Cena to the floor. HHH rams Cena into the steps and goes back in for a facebuster on Edge. The knee to the face gets two as does the spinebuster.

Edge counters a suplex and hits the Edge-0-Matic for two. HHH shrugs that off and puts on a sleeper but Edge reverses into one of his own. We have a Cena chant as he gets both guys up for the FU at once. That blew my mind at the time and he didn't even hit the move. Edge gets off the top and spears Cena down while HHH is still in the FU position, giving the Game a Samoan Drop from Cena. Cool spot.

HHH and Edge head to the floor and HHH gets catapulted into the post to bust him open. Edge DDTs HHH on the table, leaving blood everywhere when the table doesn't break. That made me cringe in the arena. HHH is COVERED in blood. Back in and Edge dropkicks Cena for two. He spears Cena in the corner but Cena counters the regular one into the STFU. Edge is about to tap but HHH pops up and blocks the hand from coming down and hits Cena in the head with the mic to break the hold.

HHH caves Edge's head in with a chair shot, knocking him into the crowd.

He heads back inside and walks right into the STFU just like at Mania. There is blood everywhere. HHH keeps his arm up (there need to be more arm checks from the referees. I miss those) and finally makes the rope. FU is countered into a Pedigree but that's countered back into the STFU. Edge breaks it up and there goes the referee.

Cena tries to FU Edge from the middle rope but HHH gets beneath Cena to make it a modified Tower of Doom. Everyone is down so Lita brings in a chair. She charges at HHH with it but walks into a spinebuster which got a big pop in the arena. HHH gets the chair but throws it down. Instead he pulls out the sledgehammer but Edge spears him down. Edge gets the hammer but Cena loads him into the FU. HHH breaks that up with a low blow but the Pedigree to Cena is countered into a rollup for the pin to retain.

Rating: B+. This was WAY better from this perspective as I wasn't all that impressed when I saw it live. This was actually an awesome match with a great blade job from HHH and almost non-stop action. Cena getting another win over HHH was another big step in his push towards the top of the company as he wasn't quite there yet. This was a great match and it really impressed me on a second viewing.

HHH blasts them both with the hammer and leaves to King of Kings to end the show. To this day I'm not sure why they went with that ending.

Overall Rating: C+. Leave it to me to go with right in the middle to end things. This show is a strange one as it's barely a B-level show, but there are two very good matches on it, including what you could probably call a forgotten classic of a main event. The problem with the show is that the bad parts are VERY bad and they really bring the show down. That being said, it's still the first and to this point only PPV I've attended live so I have to give it the benefit of the doubt.

That's the end of WWE/F. This has an even longer history of PPVs than the other two companies (combined actually) and maybe it's the fanboy in me, but I say they've done it best. WWF (screw those panda people. I grew up calling it WWF so it's WWF) has mastered the art of putting together a major show. That being said, they often times forget how to do it and I'm sure you can name a ton of entries where they did just that.

On the other hand, they pulled off stuff like Wrestlemania X7 and Summerslam 2002 which put just about any other company's stuff to shame. Over time they've had a ton of shows and therefore they've had a lot more practice to pull them off. The days of the Big Four are long gone and I don't think they're ever going to drop down below one a month again. That being said, it's nowhere near as bad as people make it out to be but that's another topic.

Overall, WWF has had better luck in my eyes on PPV, but they're far from perfect. The Brand Split shows never were that good as they flat out did not have enough talent on each show to run full three hour PPVs. I'd love to see the In Your House idea come back as a mid level PPV that was only two hours but cost less money. That's just one of a number of possible solutions that could work, but again I'm getting off track. Just like with the other two companies (ECW only had 21 PPVs so I'm omitting them), the WWF has had its ups and downs but when their shows are good, there's nothing better.

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Backlash 2005: Hogan's "One More Match"

Backlash 2005

Date: May 1, 2005

Location: Verizon Wireless Arena, Manchester, New Hampshire

Attendance: 14,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're back another year later and the main event is Batista vs. HHH II for Batista's newly won title. Other than that we also have Hogan's "one more match", teaming with Shawn against Daivari and Muhammad Hassan. I barely remember anything from this time of the company's history which

usually means I enjoy it more because it's a nice surprise. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Hogan with the fans chanting for one more match. The other part is about HHH vs. Batista.

Intercontinental Title: Chris Jericho vs. Shelton Benjamin

Benjamin is defending and is still the hottest thing in the world not named Batista or Cena. He would have my favorite match of all time the next night on Raw. Jericho is here because he has nothing else to do. This was part of a really bad funk for him before he would leave in the fall, which was a really good thing for him. This is face vs. face. JR seems to forget Trish's involvement in last year's Backlash, saying Jericho beat Christian.

Jericho takes him down to start and apparently this is about Jericho's singing or something. Off to an armbar by Shelton and Jericho can't out quick him. Jericho slaps him and it turns into a fist fight. He chops the champion up against the ropes and they fight over a suplex. Jericho gets sent to the apron but manages to backdrop Shelton to the floor. Shelton lands on his feet and tries a powerbomb but Jericho rana's him down. Cool sequence but if it had been faster it would have been amazing.

Shelton gets sent into the barricade and we head back in. A suplex gets two for the Canadian and we hit the chinlock. Jericho starts playing heel in the match, choking Shelton on the bottom rope. Shelton sends him into the corner and hits a Stinger Splash to the back followed by a suplex. Jericho gets in a shot to the back but a quick Lionsault attempt is broken up. They go to the corner with Benjamin being shoved off. He JUMPS to the top rope and superplexes Jericho down. TAKE THAT ANGLE! The superplex only gets two but DANG that was cool.

The champ hooks a chinlock with a bodyscissors and Jericho is in trouble. Both guys get back up and it's a double clothesline to put everyone down. Jericho gets up first and puts Shelton in 619 position, but Benjamin pops up and hits a Samoan Drop for two. Jericho hits the running enziguri out of nowhere for two. Shelton comes back with a HUGE springboard bulldog for two. That guy's jumping is getting better and better.

The Canadian takes the legs out and tries the Walls (BIG pop for that) but changes to a slingshot instead. Benjamin jumps down and hits the T-Bone for two as Jericho's feet were in the ropes. The Dragon Whip misses and Jericho hooks the Walls in the middle of the ring. Benjamin crawls over to the ropes and the fans aren't pleased.

Jericho stomps away but Shelton comes back with kind of a falling bicycle kick to the face for two. It was like Trouble in Paradise without the spin. Lionsault is countered but Jericho countered the counter into a Walls attempt but Shelton kicks him over into a rollup. Jericho counters THAT but Shelton counters into a jackknife cradle for the pin to retain. That was a SWEET ending sequence.

Rating: B. This was a very good opener and a great way to see both guys get to show off. Jericho is the right kind of choice for this, but the next night it would be Shawn in there with Shelton and sweet goodness did they tear the house down. Anyway, this was solid stuff and the crowd is nice and woken up now. Good, good stuff.

Jericho has no comment post match.

Edge says Benoit should be worried about their match tonight. Edge stopped Benoit from becoming Mr. Money In The Bank and tonight the people want to see Benoit get his revenge. That's not happening though, because Edge will be the last man standing, and you can bank on it.

Raw Tag Titles: Tag Team Turmoil

There are five teams in this and it's a gauntlet. Two teams start, the winners advance, the last team standing wins. We start with The Heartthrobs vs. Regal/Tajiri, the latter of whom are the defending champions. Regal starts with Romeo Roselli with Romeo taking over. Antonio (Thomas) comes in but Regal immediately takes him to the mat. Off to Tajiri who kicks the tar out of Thomas. Tajiri hooks a freaky looking hold which is kind of like a Pedigree Lock if you can call it anything. Antonio suplexes him down for two. They go to the corner and Tajiri comes out with a sunset flip for the pin to advance.

The third team is Maven/Simon Dean. There's no break in between either.

Maven and Dean are fitness enthusiasts so they keep exercising during the matches. Simon and Tajiri start but it's quickly off to Maven. From the apron Regal fires in a knee to Simon's back and it's off to William to clean house. The knee trembler gets the pin on Simon.

La Resistance is fourth and we start on the floor. Back inside for Grenier vs. Tajiri with the Japanese man kicking away with some force. The champions tag in and out pretty quickly so it's back to Tajiri again. Conway gets Regal into the corner to pound away and everything breaks down. Here's the Tarantula but Conway breaks it up and guillotines him, giving Grenier the pin with a handful of tights.

Hurricane and Rosey are the last team to face La Resistance. A quick Hurricane cross body gets two on Grenier. Blockbuster gets the same. Sylvan throws him over the corner and Hurricane's ankle hits the post on the way down. Hurricane gets put in a chinlock followed by a modified belly to back suplex for two. An awful looking middle rope elbow misses and it's off to Rosey with no one caring. A World's Strongest Slam gets two on Grenier and everything breaks down. The French dudes hit a double spinebuster on Rosey for two. The good guys do a Snuka/Andre double climbing splash (as in Hurricane fell on Grenier) for the titles.

Rating: D. The problem I have with these matches as well as Cruiserweight Opens is that the matches all end in about four minutes. The longest here was under 4:10, which makes you wonder why other matches last longer than that ever. It's not like these matches are impressive or anything as they're really just collections of squashes and quick falls, which aren't interesting and it's just the luck of the draw for the most part. Hurricane and Rosey would go on to be some of the most forgotten tag champions ever.

We recap Edge vs. Benoit. This started in the MITB match where Benoit had a bad arm coming in. He almost had the case and therefore the match won, but Edge hit him in the arm with a chair. In theory that's legal but I guess for some reason it's evil because Edge did it or something? They had a match on Raw which Benoit won on an almost fluke rollup. Edge destroyed him and his arm even more post match. Bischoff made a last man standing match as a result.

Edge vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit's arm isn't taped but he's a sneaky Canadian so it might be fake. Benoit immediately takes him down and we're on. Chris pounds on him a bit as the fans chant YOU SCREWED BRET. Geez it even happens in America at this show. We go to the corner for the chopping as this is all Benoit so far. Edge gets in a shot to take over and the fans want Matt. They would get him in a few months. A spear attempt is countered by a drop toe hold and it's back to even.

Benoit drives in knees to a downed Edge but the taller Canadian comes back with a shot to the head. They go to the floor and Edge finds a garbage can lid, but Benoit baseball slides him down before it can be used. Edge gets backdropped into the crowd and Chris heads out there with him. Back into the ring and Benoit hooks a quick Sharpshooter to make Edge tap but it doesn't matter here.

With Edge barely back to his feet, Benoit snaps off the Rolling Germans to send Edge to the floor, drawing an eight count. Benoit knocks him right back off the apron again, this time for another eight. Chris tries a suicide dive but gets his head blasted in by a trashcan lid on the way down. That gets a seven so Edge bashes him again, this time getting six. A fan keeps chanting that Edge cheated on his wife, which is true but has little relevance here.

Back into the ring and Edge loads up a superplex onto a trashcan which has Benoit's legs twitching. Edge is down too but gets up at seven while Benoit is up at eight. Edge hits a running knee to the head and wears him out with a trashcan lid. Naturally it's time for a ladder, but Edge climbs with his back to Benoit. There's the German suplex off the ladder and both guys are down. That draws a double eight and Benoit is getting frustrated.

Another release German puts Edge down, this time getting about seven. With Edge still down, Benoit goes up and launches a Swan Dive at Edge but misses, driving his head into the mat. Edge finds the briefcase but Benoit grabs the Crossface before getting hit in the face. Back up and it's time for MORE Rolling Germans. Edge finally escapes and hits the

Edgecution onto the briefcase. Of course, that only gets 9. Edge spears him down for nine. Benoit gets up so Edge spears him down for nine. Benoit gets up so Edge pulls a brick out of the briefcase and blasts Benoit with that for the ten count and the win.

Rating: B. For some reason I see Bobby Heenan smiling at Edge doing that. It's just such a Brain sounding move. I was digging this, but given what we knew would come about two years later, those shots to the head of Benoit are very hard to watch anymore. Edge was put over here which was the important thing, as he needed wins like these to move up the ladder over the course of the year.

Lita (looking GOOD) is in the back watching and smiles. Kane comes in and asks if she's ready to help take out Viscera. There's some kind of a deal where if Viscera loses, Trish has to sleep with him or something. Kane and Lita make out because Kane is a lucky man.

Here's Lawler to promote the Viva Las Divas magazine. He brings out the girls and this is probably why there are only six matches on the card. We see every chick's favorite photo to fill in some time. Lawler says he's going to ask a lot of personal questions but here's Chris Masters. The girls all leave and Masters says it's time for a Masterlock Challenge. This time it's a girl with very short hair, who apparently is indy wrestler Melissa Coates. Masters wins easily.

Trish leaves her locker room and runs into Viscera. Ok apparently if he wins, they have a date. He has some lingerie for her and this is awkward.

Kane vs. Viscera

Kane runs into Viscera and bounces off of him. He kicks Viscera tot he floor and dives onto Visc to take over. The fans still want Matt. Back in and Viscera hits the wheel kick and we get a pelvic thrust. Kane goes after Trish for some reason but gets splashed and caught in a Samoan Drop for two. Sidewalk slam gets the same. Kane gets in a boot to the face and the top rope clothesline looks to set up the chokeslam, but Visc elbows out of it.

A clothesline puts Kane on the floor but Viscera runs into the post.

Trish goes after Kane with a chair for some reason but Lita blasts her with a crutch (Lita had a bad knee). Back in Kane goes up but dives into a choke bomb for two. Lita gets in the ring for some reason and Visc tries to kiss her, but Kane comes back with a big boot and a chokslam for the pin.

Rating: D. This was a boring match for the most part and I really don't get what the idea of this was supposed to be at all. So did Trish want to sleep with Visc or something? Why else would she have gone after Kane like that? Either way it made little sense and the match wasn't any good either.

Trish yells at Viscera post match and says even if he had won, she wouldn't have slept with him. She says she'll get a real man so he picks her up, shakes her, and then splashes her, which I think was supposed to be a face turn. Trish is taken out on a stretcher.

We recap Hogan/Shawn vs. Daivari/Hassan. Hogan went into the HOF the night before Wrestlemania 21, Hogan beat up Hassan and Daivari at Mania 21, they beat up Shawn, Shawn asked Hogan to be his partner for one more match, and here we are.

Hulk Hogan/Shawn Michaels vs. Muhammad Hassan/Daivari

Hogan and Hassan get us going with Hogan drawing a line on the mat. He easily shoves Hassan away and grabs a headlock. There goes the bandana and the evil ones beat on Hogan in the corner. Hulk runs them both over with a clothesline and Hassan gets beaten on now, despite being illegal. Off to Shawn for a double big boot and it's Michaels in full control again.

Michaels misses an elbow and it's off to Daivari. Hogan comes back in as this is a total squash so far. Out to the floor and Hogan puts a Hogan hat on Daivari before punching him. Is that some inner self hate manifesting itself perhaps? Back in for some elbow drops and a boot to the eyes. Shawn comes back in and the beating continues. He chops Daivari down, followed by the forearm and nip up.

The top rope elbow hits and Shawn tunes up the band, but Hogan goes after

Hassan. While he's being put out, Hassan hits Shawn in the back with a pipe of some kind for two. Hassan works on the back and it's back to Daivari for a hold. Back to the chinlock before the camel clutch goes on. The hold stays on long enough to make it look completely ineffective until Shawn breaks it with an electric chair. Hot tag to Hogan, house is cleaned. His hip is messed up though so he can't use the legdrop though, so Hassan hits him in the back with the pipe. That draws the Hulk Up and it's big boot, superkick, pin on Daivari.

Rating: D+. This was just to get the crowd all fired up and on that regard it worked, but other than that there wasn't much in this at all. It was basically a long and extended squash with Hogan picking up the win to give the people a feel good moment. Also it set up the reason for them to be around each other again in the future, which set up Summerslam.

HHH says Batista got lucky and the Pedigree will take care of Batista.

Here are Christian and Tomko for no apparent reason. He says this may be the last time you see him on a Raw PPV because there's a Draft coming. Christian wants to express himself so he's going to rap for us. He makes fun of the main eventers....and that's about it.

We recap the main event. HHH and Batista were in Evolution together before Batista got hot and won the Rumble. He beat HHH at Mania but HHH says that was just one lucky night. This is the rematch.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Batista

HHH goes right at him and tries a fast Pedigree but Big Dave quickly escapes. The exact same thing happens but with Batista trying the Bomb. A backdrop puts HHH down as we're still kind of in an opening phase here. Another Pedigree attempt is countered into a backdrop to the floor. Batista follows but gets rammed into the barricade and suplexed on the floor. They head back inside and Batista's spine is getting worked over. Batista tries a quick Bomb but HHH gets in a shot to break it up.

HHH drives his shoulders into the back of Batista in the corner and sends him to the floor so Flair can get in some shots. Back in and HHH hits a spinebuster for two after a quick slugout. This match isn't flowing all

that well at all. Batista grabs a side slam out of nowhere and clotheslines HHH out to the floor. Back in and Batista starts shaking the ropes. Flair tries to get in which allows HHH to get a belt shot in for two.

They slug it out for a bit and another Pedigree attempt is countered. Batista is all fired up now but he clotheslines the referee down. Pedigree hits but the referee's head is somewhere over Hoboken. Flair throws him back in but the guy is out cold. Another referee comes out and Batista hits a spinebuster for a close two. Batista hits a bunch of clotheslines in the corner but HHH kicks the referee low.

Batista loads up the Bomb but it draws in Flair. HHH tries the Pedigree for the 8th time but gets catapulted into the corner. ANOTHER Batista Bomb attempt is counted by a low blow but HHH channels his inner lunthead and goes into the corner for punches. He deserves the Batista Bomb that he gets as well as the loss that it brings him.

Rating: D. This was really dull as it was about 70% finisher attempts. Power vs. power rarely works and it didn't work here for the most part. Yes HHH jobbed which is a lot of what made Batista look legit, but the match was horrible. Batista needs someone that he can dominate rather than someone who is going to do nothing but try Pedigrees. This was a really bad main event.

Overall Rating: D. The show was ok, but what in the world changed here? Batista keeps the title, Hogan/Shawn meant nothing at all for months, and Edge beats Benoit in a match that didn't mean anything. The first half of 2005 was such a weak time but the Draft would bring that Cena guy to Raw which would change everything in wrestling. This was a pretty forgettable show though, but it's not completely horrible.

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Backlash 2004: Benoit Vs. Shawn In Canada With Earl Hebner As Referee

Backlash 2004

Date: April 18, 2004

Location: Rexall Place, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Attendance: 13,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're back to the PPV series again and this time it's Backlash in Canada. The main event is a rematch of the main event of Wrestlemania XX with Benoit defending his newly won title against Shawn and HHH. The original is said to be the best triple threat match ever and a lot of the time the Backlash rematches are even better due to the lack of pressure from Wrestlemania. We're also in Benoit's hometown so if he was the favorite in MSG, this is going to be about 10x louder. There's also a hardcore match between Cactus Jack and Randy Orton which is awesome. Let's get to it.

We open with a video about Benoit winning the title at Wrestlemania, as if it could be anything else. The tagline of "and so it begins again" is nice as it's a play off of the Wrestlemania tagline of "Where It All Begins Again."

Shelton Benjamin vs. Ric Flair

Flair is still in Evolution and Shelton is the hot young singles star looking to make a name for himself. He beat HHH twice in a row, once by pin and once by countout. Flair is here to avenge The Game. Shelton takes him into the corner but Flair comes back with his chops and punches. The Stinger Splash misses but Shelton lands on the top rope and gets down unharmed. Benjamin speeds things up and dropkicks Flair to the floor.

Nothing happens out there so we head back in for a thumb to the eye. Flair goes up and you know how that ends. Another thumb to the eye lets

Flair take over but Shelton will have none of that and pounds away on Flair's old head in the corner. Flair takes the knee out and the momentum shifts very fast. He doesn't work on it long and it's time for the Figure Four. Shelton blocks it for a bit but the leg goes down and the hold goes on.

Flair uses the rope to cheat so the hold is broken. A chop gets two. Flair goes back to the knee but gets caught by the Dragon Whip kick to put both guys down. Shelton whips him into the corner and Flair crashes over the top and out to the floor. Flair pulls out a weapon of some sort but gets splashed in the corner. A top rope clothesline pins the Nature Boy.

Rating: C+. This was fine for an opener. Shelton was a rising star at this point and a win over Flair wasn't going to hurt anything. He would get the IC Title by the end of the year and he would become the next big star that never became a big star for various reasons. Still though, good stuff here and fine for an opening match which got the crowd going.

Orton says Shelton is overrated and we should talk about Randy's winning streak instead. Why aren't people talking about him holding the IC Title longer than anyone in seven years? He's beaten legend after legend and tonight it's Mick Foley's turn. Mick is like an old dog that has to be put down.

Jonathan Coachman vs. Tajiri

You read that right. Tajiri misted Coach a few weeks ago, then Coach cost Tajiri a match against Christian. Coach armdrags him down to start and Tajiri isn't sure what to make of that. Coach keeps trying to tie him up but Tajiri keeps firing away kicks. They go to the floor and Tajiri kicks the post to change the flow of the match. Back in and Coach cannonballs down onto the leg and Tajiri is in trouble. Coach hooks a leg bar but Tajiri reverses into a kind of half crab which is pretty quickly broken up.

The leg bar goes on again so Tajiri kicks him in the back. Another to the face and the hold is finally broken up. Coach goes up and gets crotched, allowing a baseball slide dropkick to the back of the head to connect.

Handspring elbow sets up another dropkick and it's rapid fire strike time. Coach grabs a cheating rollup for two. Like an idiot, Coach charges at Tajiri in the corner and is put in the Tarantula for his efforts. Garrison Cage comes out and distracts Tajiri for no apparent reason and Coach rolls him up for the pin.

Rating: D+. You know, this wasn't half bad. There's no reason for it to be on PPV, but the match wasn't all that bad. Coach kept it simple by going after the legs which is the best thing to do against a martial artist so I can't fault him there. The ending was stupid but this was such a big surprise that it wasn't a big deal.

HHH arrived earlier.

We recap Jericho vs. Christian/Trish which was an awesome storyline. It started with Jericho hitting on Trish which turned out to be a bet between Jericho and Christian about whether or not he could get Trish in bed. Trish found out about it but Jericho said that he really loved Trish, which seemed legit. Christian turned on Jericho in a show of tough love and they had a match at Mania. Trish turned on Jericho to give Christian the win. Tonight it's about revenge.

Christian/Trish Stratus vs. Chris Jericho

Evil Trish was HOT. Jericho slaps Christian down and glares at Trish who runs. The chase is on but Christian's sneak attack is broken up with ease. The evil ones have to tag here so the guys start. Jericho hits a vertical suplex and the posing cover (POP) for two. The crowd keeps chanting SL** at Trish and Christian missees a charge to send him to the floor. The springboard dropkick puts Christian on the floor and Jericho stands tall.

Trish can't sneak in a Chick Kick and the guys head back in for a top rope back elbow by Jericho, getting two. Jericho gets sent into Trish but gets draped over the top forp to give Christian control. He does the same thing over the barricade and it's off to Trish. She slaps Jericho and gives us a great cleavage shot at the same time. Chick Kick gets no cover so it's back to Captain Charisma. A quick Walls attempt is countered but Jericho's head winds up between Christian's legs ala Sting.

Jericho comes back with the sleeper drop for two. Trish slaps Jericho, allowing for an elevated reverse DDT out of the corner by Christian which gets two. Trish tries to come in but gets spanked for her troubles. That's a lucky Jericho. Christian hits the Unprettier out of nowhere but Trish's cover only gets two.

Trish tries to come back in but gets clotheslined down. Christian takes Jericho down and now only the referee is on his feet. Trish rolls to the floor and Jericho hits the running hip attack while Christian is in 619 position. Lionsault gets knees and Christian puts on a Texas Cloverleaf. Jericho escapes and tries the Walls but instead he catapults Christian into Trish. The running enziguri gets the pin on Christian.

Rating: B-. Another good match here and it evens the score in this feud as it was supposed to do. This was a very well constructed feud and it made sense all the way through. This would lead to a cage match on Raw where Christian would be hurt, putting him on the shelf for four months. Again I'd like to reiterate: evil Trish is HOT.

Eugene has a magazine and wanders into the women's locker room where Gail freaks out. Regal gets him out.

We get a video about Chris Benoit Day in Edmonton which I think was on Hard Knocks. Benoit's family is here. This is kind of hard to see now.

Women's Title: Victoria vs. Lita

Victoria is champion and is looking good here. Lita tries to speed things up to start but gets thrown to the mat with a kind of armdrag. They both tumble out to the floor which goes nowhere. A bad looking backslide gets two for Victoria. They do a pinfall reversal sequence which goes nowhere. Victoria slams her down and hits her dancing moonsault for two followed by a chinlock. A floatover snap suplex gets two for the champ.

This has been a really slow paced and dull match so far. A surfboard goes on and Lita is in even more trouble. The spinning side slam is countered and Lita knocks her down with some clotheslines. Lita hooks a hurricanrana and then puts on a sleeper which transitions into a kind of triangle choke. That gets escaped pretty easily and the spinning side

slam gets two. Victoria's moonsault misses (as in Lita rolled too slowly and the arms hit her) but the Twist of Fate is countered and a small package retains the title.

Rating: F+. This was one of the worst matches I can remember with the girls in a long time. It was REALLY slow paced and the botches were noticeably bad. The division was in big need of something fresh, which is why we got Lita vs. Trish again, as both of them were just awesome at what they did. Horrible match.

Gail and Molly beat down the other girls post match.

We recap Orton vs. Foley. The idea here is that Orton is young and awesome and Foley is old and not so awesome. Orton was the Legend Killer and Orton wanted to take him out to prove that it was his time now. Foley didn't want to fight and walked away for months, before returning at the Rumble to destroy Orton. Evolution helped Orton out so Foley brought in The Rock to even things up a bit. Evolution won at Wrestlemania so now Foley wants a rematch on his terms: hardcore. Foley says that hardcore is about doing it for the fans, but there's a tiny part of him that enjoys this. He's going to love what he does to Orton tonight.

Intercontinental Title: Cactus Jack vs. Randy Orton

Hardcore of course. Foley comes out as Mick Foley and has the Mankind music, but screw that. He's in Cactus Jack attire and this is a hardcore match. He has the barbed wire ball bat called Barbie with him. Orton holds up a trashcan to defend himself but Foley knocks it out of his hands with the bat. They go to the floor and there goes a cameraman. Orton drop toeholds him into the steps and gets the bat but they fight over it.

Orton gets kicked away but he finds a trashcan from somewhere and cleans Mick's clock with it. Mick shrugs that off and BLASTS Orton with it. Back in the ring and Foley hits the running knee lift followed by a legdrop for two. Back to the floor again and Jack hits a swinging neckbreaker but Orton moves before the middle rope elbow can be used. Randy, who is still in his t-shirt, tries to walk away but Foley chases after him. A belly to back suplex by the champion gets two on the ramp, as does a backslide.

Randy slams Jack's head into the ramp with a THUD for two. Back in the ring (I've been saying variations of that a lot tonight) and Orton tries to drive Barbie into Jack's face, but Cactus counters with a low blow. Here's Socko but Foley isn't sure whether to use that or Barbie. He takes the sock off and Barbie connects with Orton's head. Blood is literally flowing down Orton's face. Another shot hits Orton's head and Foley is in complete control.

Mick pounds Orton down in the corner and hits the running knee to the face. Back to Barbie as Mick has that look in his eyes. Now he just drives the bat into Orton's face and there goes the t-shirt. Foley puts the bat between Orton's legs and drops a leg on it which is just painful in a lot of ways. Mick goes to the floor and pulls out....oh geez he pulls out a gas can and a lighter.

He covers Barbie in gas but here's Bischoff to say do that and the show ends here. Foley throws it down and for the life of me I have never gotten what the point of that sequence was unless it was somehow legit. Either way, Foley throws it down and finds a whole board covered in barbed wire. He knocks Orton near it but Orton comes back with a slam onto the board, drawing a LOUD holy chant from the fans.

The board gets placed in the corner and after some nice reversals on the Irish whip, Foley goes into it face first. With Jack down in the ropes, Orton shoves the board down onto him in a simple but good move. Orton finds a bag full of thumbtacks. The RKO onto them is countered and the look on Orton's face when his back hits the tacks is PERFECT. A rollup gets two for Foley as Orton goes to look for medical attention. Jack will have none of that and they go up the ramp.

They head backstage but come back before we can get a camera back there. Foley throws him off the stage and through a bunch of tables. Since it's Cactus Jack, you know he's gonna drop the elbow onto Orton on top of that. After the referees seem ready to stop it, Foley drills them both and there's the elbow. Mick is a bit too dead to cover though so after the delay, Orton SOMEHOW kicks out.

Back to the ring and Orton looks completely out of it. Double Arm DDT

gets two and Foley isn't sure what else he can do to pull this off. Orton goes to the floor while Foley puts the barbed wire board up in the corner. While he's doing that though Orton gets Barbie from somewhere and lays in a few shots on Cactus. Foley finds Socko and grabs the Claw to stop a big shot to the head with Barbie. A low blow gets Orton out of the hold and the RKO puts Foley down but it only gets two. Another RKO onto Barbie FINALLY gets the pin.

Rating: A. It's not quite as good as the match with Edge but DANG this was great. Orton is now a made man as he somehow not only survived this but he won it. Up to this point he was a pretty boy, much like HHH vs. Jack in 2000 at the Rumble. That seems to be what they were going for here and for the most part I'd certainly say it worked. Foley would go away for awhile while Orton feuded with Edge and then won the title in the fall. Great match here and Orton looked great during the whole thing.

HHH says that Orton has become a legend rather than a legend killer. Also Benoit won't get lucky again tonight and HHH will get his title back.

La Resistance vs. Hurricane/Rosey

This is what we call a filler match to bring the crowd back down. It isn't even for a title. Conway and Hurricane start and the crowd goes almost completely silent. A headscissors takes Conway down and it's off to Rosey. That's really only so he can throw at Conway and it's back to the storm guy.

Conway hits a swinging neckbreaker and powerslam before tagging in Grenier. Grenier puts on a powerslam and here's Eugene. Hurricane tags Rosey as Eugene plays with the flags. Rosey misses a corner splash but Hurricane dives on both French dudes on the floor. Eugene runs the ropes but does nothing else. Eye of the Hurricane gets the pin on Grenier.

Rating: D+. The match could have and probably should have been on Raw, but dang I always feel sorry for the people in this match. They know no one is really interested in seeing them out there but they have to go out and work a match anyway, which no one wants to see and that no one is going to talk about, but they do it anyway. This was fine and Eugene didn't add or subtract anything.

We recap Edge vs. Kane. Edge is back from neck surgery and needs an opponent, so he gets Kane, end of recap.

Edge vs. Kane

Edge has a broken wrist or arm or something too. Edge fires off a right hand (the good hand) for no effect. He gets Kane into the corner as JR is talking about football for some reason. Middle rope clothesline looks to set up the spear but Kane heads to the outside. Kane finally wakes up and rams the bad arm and hand into the steps to take over.

Back in and he hammers on the hand some more as the fans chant that Hebner screwed Bret for the millionth time in this match alone. Lawler amuses himself by singing the Mountie's song Sidewalk slam sets up a missed elbow and Edge comes back with a spinwheel kick. He takes Kane down again but Kane sits up. The referee is sent to the floor so a cast shot to the head and a spear get the pin.

Rating: D-. What a horribly uninteresting match. Edge didn't get out of the funk that he was in for the better part of a year and Kane had to marry Lita to get anything going. I didn't like this at all and I don't think many other people did either. Let's go with this: Tajiri vs. Coach was a much more entertaining match. Let that sink in for a minute.

We recap the main event, which is just a rematch from Wrestlemania but here in Benoit's hometown. It should be entertaining at least and there isn't much else to say.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit's pop is INSANE. He puts the title in both of their faces during his entrance which is a nice touch. The champ goes after HHH to start and doesn't want Shawn to get any of the Game for some reason. HHH is sent to the floor so Shawn and Benoit can chop it out. The Game comes back in and hits the flying knee to Shawn. Benoit is thrown to the floor and it's the DX explosion. After a quick fight they knock Benoit back to the floor, drawing a ton of booing.

Benoit comes back in and hits Germans on both guys. Jerry says it's hard

to see who is doing what to who. No not really King, not really. Shawn gets flipped in the corner and out to the floor to get it back down to two. HHH jumps into the Crossface but Benoit lets it go to stop Shawn. Shawn's back is rammed into the barricade twice to keep him down on the outside. Benoit goes up but HHH punches him in the jaw to slow him down.

HHH loads up a superplex but Shawn makes the save. Benoit literally falls off the top rope all the way to the floor. That's a much scarier sight given what we know now. Shawn drops HHH in an electric chair for two. HHH comes back with a facebuster and Benoit's Swan Dive gets two on HBK. The Game goes to the floor and Shawn's forearm takes out the referee. Shawn goes to the floor now so we get both a Pedigree and Sharpshooter counter. The second attempt at the Sharpshooter works on HHH but Shawn makes the save. His save is countered into the Crossface but there's no referee, so we better let go of the hold right?

Now Shawn puts the Sharpshooter on Benoit and Earl Hebner comes out to be the second referee. Ha Ha Ha it's like Montreal yes WE GET IT ALREADY! Shawn swings at Benoit but gets caught in the Crossface again, only to have it broken up by HHH. A HHH DDT gets two on the champion. Benoit throws him over the corner and it's back to HBK vs. Benoit. Chris gets thrown to the floor, landing on top of HHH.

Shawn tries to dive on the both of them but crashes through the table in a good explosion. Back in the ring Benoit's shoulder goes hard into the post and then it does it a second time. Instead of going after the arm, the Cerebral Assassin puts on a camel clutch. The fans FINALLY drop the Bret stuff and chant for Benoit. HHH pounds away in the corner but gets caught in snake eyes to put him down.

It's basically a one on one match at the moment. Benoit ducks a right hand and puts on Rolling Germans. The Swan Dive misses and there's a Pedigree but HHH's cover takes awhile, allowing Shawn to come back from the dead for the save. With Benoit down, Shawn hits the forearm to put HHH down. The top rope elbow hits but again Shawn can't cover. Shawn loads up the superkick but instead kicks Benoit off the apron to make him PURE EVIL in Canada.

HHH hits a low blow for two on Shawn and everyone is down. Pedigree is countered by a backdrop to the floor but the fans won't cheer Shawn period. HHH comes back in with the sledgehammer, drilling it right into Shawn's back. HHH sets for another hammer shot to Shawn but Benoit makes the save, only to get sent into the steps. The Game sets for a Pedigree onto the steps but Benoit counters with a slingshot to send that nose into the post. Back in, Chin Music is countered into the Sharpshooter and after a LONG time, it's finally over with Benoit retaining by submission.

Rating: B+. I really couldn't get into this one as much as the other one. There was a lot more laying around this time, but this was a different kind of match. This was all about having a Benoit showcase instead of having a masterpiece. Considering the situations here, it's hard to argue with them going that route. It worked well enough here though and it was a great match.

Overall Rating: B. With two very good to great matches here, the rest of the stuff can be overlooked. This was a very Canadian heavy show which is the right idea as, you know, it was in Canada. Unfortunately Benoit would fall through the floor after this because HHH and Shawn decided to completely dominate the show for the summer, having a 55 minute match at Bad Blood. You know, because that's what people are begging for here clearly. This was a show with great parts, rather than a great show if that makes sense, but it's still good.

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