

# NXT – February 7, 2018: That's Nice For A Change

## NXT

Date: February 7, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We're back to the regular shows this week with about two months to go before Takeover: New Orleans. That means it's time for some short form stories before we move on towards the bigger stuff with a few weeks before the important show. That doesn't mean this first period has to be weak though as this is often some of the best material NXT has to offer. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era vs. Sanity

Undisputed Era is defending. Adam Cole is here as a second but it's Sanity jumping the champs from behind to start the brawl before the bell. Security comes in and here's William Regal (to a BIG pop) to say enough is enough. This ends tonight with all six men in a tornado tag match. No match here of course.

### Heavy Machinery vs. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss

Dozovic and Moss start things off with Otis shoving him down in short order. A double falling headbutt crushes Moss for an early two but he's right back with a clothesline to the back of the head. It's off to Tino (who the fans don't like) for a good looking dropkick on Knight, followed by a clothesline for Moss.

Riddick isn't happy with Tino for some reason and chops him for another tag. The disagreement allows the hot tag to Otis and house is cleaned in a hurry. Everything breaks down and Moss' rollup with feet on the ropes (how they won the first match) gets two. Knight flips off the apron to

take Moss down and the Compactor ends Sabbatelli at 4:10.

**Rating:** D+. Sabbatelli and Moss aren't exactly killing it out there and I'm not sure how much of a future they have. I'd like to see Tino on his own as he has the look and the attitude to make something work, but the in-ring work might not be there. Heavy Machinery doesn't have the highest ceiling but it's cool to see them get another win.

Post match, Moss walks out on Tino.

Here's Johnny Gargano for his first comments since Takeover. He had never been as confident as he was against Andrade Cien Almas but it didn't work. It's time for him to keep going though and that's because the fans were right there for him when he needed them most. Johnny: "I'M JOHNNY FREAKING WRESTLING!" It took a crutch shot to the back to put him down but now it's time for Johnny to go after Tommaso Ciampa.

This brings out Almas and Zelina Vega though as the feud isn't over. Vega laughs off Johnny wanting respect because he only proved Almas as the better man. Almas can beat Gargano again and again because Gargano is Johnny Loser. The fans want Candice LeRae so Vega shoves Johnny, drawing Candice to the ring to shove her down. Vega goes on a rant about wanting to get rid of Gargano so we're having a title vs. NXT career match. After their previous match, they would be crazy to not do it again.

Shayna Baszler says people against her have three choices: tap, nap or snap. She'll be Women's Champion.

Next week: Pete Dunne vs. Roderick Strong for the UK Title.

Tyler Bate is disappointed by his loss but hes ready to have another Match of the Year against the best NXT has to offer.

### Bianca Belair vs. Jessix Hill

Hill offers a left handed handshake to start but Bianca won't let go. Instead it's a torture rack with some squats, followed by the Alley Oop to pin Hill at 1:13. A good chunk of that was spent waiting for the handshake.

Video on Kairi Sane.

Next week: Ember Moon defends against Baszler.

### Sanity vs. Undisputed Era

Tornado rules. It's a brawl to start (as it should be) with Sanity getting the better of it, mainly thanks to Dain. The fighting takes us to an early break and we come back with the brawl continuing. Young, Wolfe, O'Reilly and Cole fight to the back, leaving Fish to moonsault Dain for two.

It's kendo stick time, even though I don't remember tornado rules meaning No DQ. Dain pulls it out of Fish's hands though as the other four are back. Fish runs up to the stage and tries a forearm to Dain's face, earning himself a toss off the stage onto everyone else in a big crash. There's something to be said about taking a human and tossing him around with such ease.

Back from another break with Dain pounding on Cole in the ring while everyone else is still down. An enziguri gives Cole a breather but Wolfe is back in with a Batista Bomb. O'Reilly and Fish come back in to double team Wolfe so Dain runs them over. Dain's Michinoku Driver gets two on Fish but Cole superkicks him for a save. Ax and Smash puts Young on the floor but Dain is right back up with the heavy strikes to take over.

Unfortunately Dain's Cannonball through a table misses Cole and Wolfe gets triple teamed. Total Elimination puts Wolfe down but it's Young making the save with the kendo stick. Cole drops him with a superkick though and the Last Shot gets....two? I'd have bet on that being the finish. Dain is back in and runs everyone over, including a backsplash/running dropkick combination. The Ulster Plantation ends Fish at 20:03.

**Rating:** B. I was very pleased with that ending as I would have bet on it being Dain running through everyone and then getting neutralized just long enough to give the Era the win. Instead this was the Killian Dain Show as he was the unstoppable force and ran through all three members of the team like they could barely touch him. It's nice to see things go in

a different direction and it was a wild brawl to get there. That's how this feud should have ended and I'm curious to see where things go next.

**Overall Rating:** A-. That last line sums things up nicely: I'm curious to see where things go next. How often do you actually look forward to things week to week in WWE? Or most wrestling companies for that matter? NXT knows how to keep you wanting to come back for more and that's a really hard thing to do. I want to see more of Dain and I want to see Gargano vs. Almas II. Throw in the women's division getting more interesting and Ciampa still lurking around and it's a good time to be watching NXT.

### Results

Heavy Machinery b. Tino Sabbatelli/Riddick Moss – Compactor to Sabbatelli

Bianca Belair b. Jessix Hill – Alley Oop

Sanity b. Undisputed Era – Ulster Plantation to Fish

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# New Column: How To Get To Styles vs. Nakamura

I'm not sure what else to call this.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-get-styles-vs-nakamura/>

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## Smackdown – February 6, 2018: Better Than Lemonade And Purple Stuff

### Smackdown

Date: February 6, 2018

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

As is often becoming the case around here, it's a big night with some major matches set for the show. This week we have Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn for the #1 contendership to AJ Styles for the Smackdown World Title at Fastlane. In addition to that, US Champion Bobby Roode is defending against Rusev on Rusev Day. Let's get to it.

Commissioner Shane McMahon is in the ring to open things up. Shane talks about Sami vs. Owens but doesn't think either of them deserve a shot. Someone he does think something of is General Manager Daniel Bryan. Daniel comes out and Shane talks about how the two of them listen to the fans every week. Fans: "RUSEV DAY! RUSEV DAY!" Shane: "Duly noted."

Shane asks why Bryan keeps giving Sami and Kevin these chances. Yes, Daniel has changed the WWE landscape with the YES Movement but the Yep Movement is a poor imitation. Shane knows that Bryan wants to be

wrestling more than anything and he knows what Bryan is doing. Bryan doesn't quite get it but Shane accuses him of living vicariously through Kevin and Sami.

Before anything of note can be said, cue AJ Styles, to say he's traveled 10,000 miles since the new year began because that's what a champion does. He'll defend the title against anyone who gets a title shot and walk into Wrestlemania as WWE Champion. Simple and to the point here, but if they're not going to put Bryan in the ring (which I don't think they will), they're treading on thin ice by even hinting at it.

Shinsuke Nakamura comes up to AJ in the back and says he'll beat him at Wrestlemania.

#### Liv Morgan vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Charlotte stomps her to the floor and we hit the break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Morgan in control but getting chopped down for her efforts. Morgan's low superkick gets two but Charlotte scores with a neckbreaker and spear. Sarah Logan offers a distraction but just gets herself and Ruby ejected. Charlotte kicks Liv in the face and the Figure Eight makes Morgan tap at 7:59.

**Rating:** D+. Acceptable match here as Charlotte gets to score a little revenge on the Squad, because that team can keep absorbing losses like this. Charlotte looks dominant but I'm not sure who her next challenger is. Assuming they're setting up the match with Asuka at Wrestlemania, I guess we'll be seeing Charlotte vs. Ruby at Fastlane. That's not exactly big though as Ruby hasn't won much of anything since debuting.

Charlotte says that's one down and two to go.

Video on Roman Reigns at the National Civil Rights Museum for Black History Month.

Kevin Owens says he'll win.

#### Bludgeon Brothers vs. ???/???

Harper runs over Jobber #1 to start and #2 bails straight away, only to

be taken down by Rowan. The double spinebuster ends #1 at 1:22.

Post match the Usos come out for the staredown but the Brothers walk past them. Back from a break, the Usos talk about a state of mind. They turn their mind into a prison, which they run. There are a lot of people out here starving but they're not talking about people having cupcakes.

There are a lot of people out here looking thirsty but they're not talking about lemonade or that purple stuff. They're talking about the hunger and thirst for success. They went from "these guys are alright" to the match of the night. It used to be Uso Crazy but now it's DAY ONE ISH! When you feel something creeping up on you, it's not paranoia because it's the Usos. I'm not sure what the heck was said here, but that was some awesome energy and I was digging the whole thing.

And now, the first Smackdown Top Ten List.

10. Tye Dillinger
9. Randy Orton
8. Becky Lynch
7. Usos
6. New Day
5. Bobby Roode
4. Naomi
3. Shinsuke Nakamura
2. Charlotte
1. AJ Styles

Well that...was pointless.

Corey Graves has issues with the list, including New Day being above the Usos and the lack of Rusev.

New Day, answering fan questions tonight, gives Corey Graves a 6% chance in a street fight.

Aiden English says the ring being a canvas is appropriate because art will be happening tonight. Rusev is working out and shouts MACHKA.

Aiden sings Rusev's entrance, complete with sing-a-long words on the screen and a bouncing Rusev head.

#### US Title: Rusev vs. Bobby Roode

Rusev is challenging. Feeling out process to start as they actually take it to the mat at a slow pace. Rusev takes him down again and we go to an early break. Back with Roode getting two off a Blockbuster but walking into a fall away slam. We hit the chinlock for a good while until a hard shot to the face wakes Roode up.

The running forearm and a clothesline have Rusev in trouble but English offers a distraction. A hard kick to the head gives Rusev two and we take a break. Back again with Roode hitting a spinebuster but going after English, allowing Rusev to get in the Machka Kick. The Accolade is broken up though so they trade rollups for two each. Another Accolade is reversed is reversed into the Glorious DDT to retain the title at 15:49.

**Rating:** B-. Good match here, though again I wonder why they're refusing to do ANYTHING with Rusev out of the ordinary when he's being cheered like no one else week to week. It's not like the US Title is doing much for Roode and even a short reign would give the fans something extra to cheer for. I don't get it, but that's WWE logic for you.

Roode poses but an RKO OUTTA NOWHERE takes him down. English and Rusev get one each as well. That wasn't a heel turn but rather Orton being Orton. Now just have Orton put one or two of them over and we might be getting somewhere.

Shelton Benjamin and Chad Gable have their own bulletin board and wonder how this is what they have to work with in the tag team division. These on-screen graphics during the promos need to die in a fire already.

#### Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable vs. Ascension



Konnor wins an early slugout with Benjamin and Ascension clears the ring early on. A missed boot in the corner lets Gable start in on Konnor's knee though with a variety of leglocks keeping him in trouble. Konnor grabs a flapjack though and the hot tag brings in Viktor to start cleaning house. That includes a middle rope knee to Chad's face for two but Benjamin gets in a blind tag. Rolling Chaos Theory into the powerbomb/top rope clothesline puts Viktor away at 3:50.

**Rating:** D+. Just a quick win for Benjamin and Gable here to keep them hot, possibly for an upcoming match with the Bludgeon Brothers. Ascension was showing some fire here and that's a good thing, as it's not like they get a ton of ring time in the first place. Let them show what they can do and hopefully get another chance in the future.

New Day talks about who would be ranked highest if they were voted as individuals. This seems to go straight to Kofi, who wants the World Title this year. I could go for that.

Various wrestlers reacted to the Top Ten.

Sami wants his own moment on top of WWE.

### Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

The winner gets AJ, on commentary, at Fastlane. They're tentative to start until Owens runs him over, only to charge into some armdrags. Some right hands send Owens to the floor and he tells Sami to calm down. Owens gets knocked off the apron and we take a break. Back with Sami in trouble but still being able to block the Cannonball.

The exploder suplex into the corner is countered so Sami settles for a tornado DDT and two instead. Sami gets shoved off the top but is still able to get his knees up and block the Swanton. Kevin rolls to the floor and gets caught with a diving DDT to put both guys down on the outside.

Back in and a superkick sets up Owens' frog splash for two more and he can't believe the kickout. Sami is right back up with the Blue Thunder Bomb (which now has a chance to win as he got a pin out of it a few weeks back) for another near fall (ok maybe I'm overly optimistic). Owens

stumbles out to the floor and it's time for the argument with AJ, who beats both guys up (though he hit Sami first) for the no contest at 14:02.

**Rating:** C+. These two have great chemistry together and it's very easy to have Sami slip back into face mode, even for one night only. He's a natural face who is playing a good heel and it makes for an easy dynamic against a natural heel like Owens. They had a good match here, even if the ending was obvious from before the opening bell.

Cue Bryan to say it's a triple threat at Fastlane, leaving AJ wanting a fight to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. I liked this one about as much as I could have as it didn't really offer anything that bad and advanced enough stories. That being said, can we PLEASE get off this Shane vs. Bryan feud already? It feels like it's been going on for the better part of ever now and I'm no closer to wanting to boo Bryan, even if that's what WWE wants us to do. Not a great show, but it did its job well enough.

## Results

Charlotte b. Liv Morgan – Figure Eight

Bludgeon Brothers b. ???/??? – Double spinebuster

Bobby Roode b. Rusev – Glorious DDT

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable b. Ascension – Powerbomb/top rope combination to Viktor

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens went to a no contest when AJ Styles interfered

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# Monday Night Raw – February 5, 2018: The Road To Reigning

## Monday Night Raw

Date: February 5, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jonathan Coachman, Corey Graves

We're less than a month away from Elimination Chamber and that means we need to fill in the Chambers. Three men have already qualified for their match and tonight we'll have another name added as Roman Reigns faces Bray Wyatt. Other than that we might get some more updates on John Cena's weird actions last week so let's get to it.

Bray Wyatt talks about his greatest victory taking place inside the Elimination Chamber. When he looks at Reigns, all he sees is a string of failures. Tonight, that string continues.

Reigns says the failures and successes are the marks of a great journey. He'll spear Wyatt in half and march on to Wrestlemania to take Suplex City apart. Ignore Reigns reading this off a card.

The announcers are back near the stage instead of at ringside like they were for most of last week.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Bray Wyatt vs. Roman Reigns

They trade headlocks to start until Reigns powers him into the corner. A charge misses though to give Bray two as Matt Hardy is watching in the back. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Reigns fights back and clotheslines him to the floor. The apron dropkick is broken up with a hard clothesline and Reigns is sent into the steps as we take a break. Back with Wyatt holding a reverse chinlock until Reigns grabs a Samoan drop.

Bray runs him over with the crossbody and takes Reigns to the corner. The superplex attempt is reversed into a powerbomb for two on Bray and Wyatt is in trouble. He's fine enough to counter the Superman Punch into a release Rock Bottom and the backsplash gets two. Reigns' spear is blocked and Sister Abigail gets two and it's time to just unload with right hands. Another Sister Abigail is blocked and the spear (which was a shove minus any significant contact) sends Reigns to the Chamber at 14:50.

**Rating:** C+. These two have solid chemistry but that was a bad ending. Reigns just shrugs everything off and mostly misses a spear for the pin. It's also REALLY hard to buy Reigns as being in jeopardy when you know full well what's coming at Wrestlemania. But let's just act like there's drama there and hope for the best right?

Post match Matt Hardy comes in and hits a Twist of Fate on Bray.

Seth Rollins is worried about Jason Jordan being too injured to help the team tonight.

### Finn Balor vs. Dash Wilder

Hang on a second as Scott Dawson wants to make this a tag match if Balor wants to pick one of his buddies to be his partner. We've got a deal.

### Finn Balor/Karl Anderson vs. Revival

Anderson and Wilder get things going with neither being able to get very far. Instead everything breaks down in a hurry and it's Revival being sent to the floor in a heap as we take an early break. Back with Dawson holding Finn in an armbar until Balor fights up without too much effort. Anderson gets the hot tag and cleans house, including a spinebuster for

two on Dawson. It's back to Balor for the Sling Blade, followed by the shotgun dropkick on Dawson. The Coup de Grace is good for the pin on Scott at 8:10.

**Rating:** C. Perfectly fine match here and while I wouldn't have had the Revival lose (again), at least they're losing to wrestlers who can get something out of it and aren't in their 50s. That being said, it would be nice to see Revival either succeed or fail in back to back weeks for a change instead of getting my hopes up and wildly dashing them the next.

Sasha Banks is watching her match with Asuka from last week when Bayley comes in to say Sasha needs to stop torturing herself. Sasha wants to prove that she's still the Boss around here. Bayley brings up Sasha eliminating her from the Rumble and Sasha says she'd do it again in the Chamber. As usual, the scene was fine but the promos sounded terrible because they were reading off a script instead of being allowed to sound natural.

#### Cedric Alexander/Mustafa Ali vs. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak

205 Live GM Drake Maverick is on commentary. Nese shoves Ali around to start and it's off to Cedric in a hurry. Tony powers him down as well and it's off to Gulak for an ax handle to the ribs. Cedric is sat on the top rope and a hard clothesline from Gulak sends him down onto his shoulder.

A missed charge sends Nese into the corner and the hot tag brings in Ali for a high dropkick. The tornado DDT gets two on Gulak with Nese making the save. Cedric is right back up with a HUGE flip dive to take Nese down but Gulak rolls through Ali's high crossbody for two. A blind tag brings in Cedric and it's the springboard clothesline into the Lumbar Check to end Gulak at 4:18.

**Rating:** C-. The energy was good but, again, they're not exactly doing anything we haven't seen before. What they are doing though is putting the bigger matches on 205 Live and leaving this nothing match on Raw. That was a huge problem for months and hopefully this is a big step in fixing things.

Here's General Manager Kurt Angle to announce who will be joining Alexa

Bliss in the Elimination Chamber. Challenging Bliss will be Bayley, Mandy Rose, Mickie James, Sonya Deville and Sasha Banks. You may notice the lack of Nia Jax, who will be facing Asuka at the pay per view. If Jax wins, she'll be added to the Women's Title match at Wrestlemania to make it a triple threat.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say this is unfair. She wants to know why there's a double standard going on. Why is she fighting in the Chamber while Brock Lesnar just has to face the winner? Alexa thinks it's sexist so Angle polls the audience on their opinion. The fans chant YES but Bliss walks out.

John Cena is ready to fight his way to Wrestlemania and winning a triple threat match tonight is the perfect way to get there.

### Bayley vs. Asuka

Bayley grabs a hammerlock to start but her shoulder block just annoys Asuka. A slugout goes to Asuka and she takes Bayley down with ease. Asuka speeds things up but gets knocked off the top and out to the floor. Bayley slides out for a hurricanrana but a hip attack sends her into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Asuka elbowing her way to freedom but having another hip attack countered into a hard belly to back suplex for two. Asuka knees her in the head though and a hard kick to the back drops Bayley again. Now the hip attack connects again but Asuka misses a high crossbody. Bayley knees her in the head for two but Asuka grabs the Asuka Lock over the ropes.

That's broken up with a Stunner to send them outside but Bayley has to stop the YES Kicks back inside. They Bayley to Belly is countered and the Asuka Lock goes most of the way on. A rollup gives Bayley a VERY close two (I bought it for a second) but the cross armbreaker makes Bayley tap at 11:14.

**Rating:** B. That's Bayley's best match in a long time because they played to her strengths: fighting from behind against a better opponent that she shouldn't be beating. She's good with hope spots, even if there's no reason to believe Asuka was going to lose. The drama helped and Bayley

was working hard to get in a good match.

Post match Bayley shakes Asuka's hand.

Miz is here for his Elimination Chamber qualifying match and says his star has never been brighter. Two weeks ago, he defeated Roman Reigns to get the Intercontinental Title back and it was the highest rated show in four years. See, now that's the kind of heel logic we need to see more often. He's going to win the Chamber and move on to Wrestlemania where the reality show cameras will be rolling and his daughter will be born to see him win the Universal Title.

#### Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Joined in progress with Crews holding Miz in a delayed vertical suplex. We hit a pinfall reversal sequence for two each until Crews hits his Ultimate Warrior gorilla press drop. The standing moonsault hits knees though and Miz grabs a bodyscissors. Back up and Crews hits a sliding kick to the head to take over again, including catching the running corner clothesline. Now a standing moonsault into a standing shooting star combine for two on Miz but he crotches Crews on top. The Skull Crushing Finale sends Miz to the Chamber at 5:27.

**Rating:** C. I can't believe I'm saying this but Crews is getting better and better with the character work and a lot of that is due to Titus Worldwide. It's certainly not a strong gimmick or character but it's better than nothing and that's an upgrade at this point. If he can go somewhere off that, he could be a breakout star. For now though, just settle for good performances.

Jordan has hurt his neck and is out of the match tonight. Rollins needs a new partner so here's Roman Reigns to take the spot.

#### Tag Team Titles: Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins vs. The Bar

Rollins and Reigns are challenging. Sheamus shoulders Rollins down to start and it's quickly off to Cesaro. This goes a bit better for Rollins who knocks Cesaro into the corner, allowing the hot tag off to Reigns. It's time to start on Cesaro's arm and everything breaks down in a hurry.

Seth's suicide dive is countered into the Irish Curse and Reigns is sent into the barricade as we take a break. Back with Reigns in trouble in the corner as the Bar takes turns hammering him down. Sheamus is smart enough to knock Rollins off the apron but walks into a Superman Punch. Cue Jordan to help Rollins up to the apron so he can get the hot tag from Reigns. Everything breaks down and it's a Blockbuster to Cesaro, followed by a suicide dive to Sheamus.

Back in and the Sling Blade gets two on Cesaro as Rollins is on a roll. The suplex into the Falcon Arrow gets two more before Jordan trips Cesaro up. Reigns tells Jordan to get out as Cesaro eats the wind-up knee. Sheamus dives into a superkick but Cesaro breaks up the DoubleBomb. Jordan won't let the Bar leave though, eventually punching them both for the DQ at 13:33.

**Rating:** B-. I know we're still waiting on the heel turn from Jordan and I think this is about all we're going to get. Rollins and Reigns were rolling here but they were smart to not change the titles here. If Jordan's injury is as severe as it's rumored to be, I have no idea who Rollins is supposed to face going forward though. This tag stuff has run its course and he needs something better in the future, which Jordan wasn't going to be no matter how healthy he was.

We look at Braun Strowman destroying Kane last week.

Strowman is ready to hurt Cena and Elias.

Jordan and Rollins are still arguing when Angle comes in. Seth wishes he was the one who hurt Jordan but Kurt says that's too far. Jason tries to defend himself but Angle screams at him to go home and stay home until he's cleared.

Video on Nia Jax.

Nia Jax vs. Vanessa Floyd

A toss, a splash, a gorilla press drop and the big leg for the pin at 1:13.

Post match Nia says she doesn't fear Asuka and Asuka is going to be



wearing the mask permanently. After Elimination Chamber, Asuka will be the empress of yesterday.

### Sonya Deville vs. Mickie James

Sonya takes her down to start and drives Mickie into the corner, only to have James slug away with right hands. One of the shots might have broken Sonya's nose so Mickie adds some knees to the face, followed by a running kick to the chest for two. A hurricanrana out of the corner is broken up by a Mandy distraction and Sonya kicks away to keep her in trouble. Mickie grabs a very quick rollup out of nowhere for the pin at 3:37.

**Rating:** C-. They were hitting each other hard here and that made for an entertaining match. Mickie can certainly still go and was a heck of a hire for the division, meaning she'll be awesome in the Chamber as well. The Chamber should be a lot of fun and if they book it right could make for a heck of a fight. That being said, if they don't do things the right way (the lack of a monster is REALLY going to hurt things), it could be a mess.

Post match Absolution beats Mickie down until Bliss makes the save. That's a very smart move as Bliss continues to try and make an alliance because she knows she's done otherwise.

Next week: Finn Balor vs. Apollo Crews vs. Bray Wyatt vs. Matt Hardy for the last Chamber spot.

Here's Elias to play for a bit, even though he hates small towns like this one. Normally he flies over it but tonight he's stuck here, just before he takes over all of WWE. He skipped performing at the Super Bowl Halftime Show to be here but this song is for him. The song is about how Strowman is just a man and after this it's on to Brock. Cue Cena to interrupt though and we're ready to go.

### John Cena vs. Braun Strowman vs. Elias

The winner gets to enter the Chamber in the six spot. That's quite unfair as the two who qualified tonight don't have a chance to get in. Why? Just because they weren't booked last week? What bias. Elias bails to the

floor to start so Strowman kicks Cena in the face as we take an early break.

Back with Strowman chasing Elias around the ring, only to get caught in an AA. Well an AA attempt at least as Cena collapses under the weight. Elias is clotheslined out to the floor but some double teaming keeps Strowman in trouble. A double clothesline puts Strowman on the floor and a pair of whips into the post keep him down.

The guitar over the back into the AA onto the steps have Strowman knocked silly but Elias uses the rest of the guitar on Cena. A backbreaker gives Elias two on Cena but he comes back with the finishing sequence. The Shuffle doesn't work though as Braun is back in with the running powerslam on Cena. Elias escapes one of his own and sends Strowman to the floor before stealing the pin on Cena at 9:58.

**Rating:** D+. This was much shorter than I was expecting and while the surprise ending does help, I needed a little more than this one. Strowman as the unstoppable monster was a good idea, but it would help a bit if he wasn't just there as the big guy to be vanquished by Reigns.

Post match Strowman powerslams both guys multiple times to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. I liked this show more than I would have expected, which might have been aided by the nine matches in three hours. They advanced a bunch of stuff for the Chamber and that's only going to help with two shows left to go. Hopefully things continue to move forward next week so we can start the proper build towards Wrestlemania. Good show this week.

### Results

Roman Reigns b. Bray Wyatt – Spear

Finn Balor/Karl Anderson b. Revival – Coup de Grace to Dawson

Cedric Alexander/Mustafa Ali b. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak – Lumbar Check to Gulak

Asuka b. Bayley – Cross armbreaker

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

The Bar b. Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns via DQ when Jason Jordan interfered

Nia Jax b. Vanessa Floyd – Legdrop

Mickie James b. Sonya Deville – Rollup

Elias b. John Cena and Braun Strowman – Running powerslam to Cena

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# Monday Night Raw – January 16, 2006: Cracking Open A Time Capsule

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 16, 2006

Location: RBC Arena, Raleigh, North Carolina

Attendance: 7,500

Commentators: Joey Styles, Jerry Lawler, Jonathan Coachman

Another request and this time around it's for a pretty simple reason. I'm not sure the match was announced in advance so we'll save that for later, but it's one of those matches that you hear and say either "well of course he did" or you're so confused that you don't know which way to go next. Let's get to it.

I've already done the show before this one, which you can see here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/07/26/monday-night-raw-january-9-2006-live-sex-celebration/>

It's the Martin Luther King Jr. Day show and you know Vince is going to make sure to cover that one. That's still cool yet kind of surprising at the same time.

Opening sequence.

The match was indeed known in advance: Edge vs. Ric Flair for the WWE Championship in a Tables, Ladders and Chairs match. I mean....what?

We look at Kurt Angle moving to Smackdown to become the new World Heavyweight Champion (due to Batista tearing his tricep and being put on the shelf for about six months). He's facing Shawn Michaels tonight because this is a heck of a stacked show.

Here are Edge and Lita (just....yeah) to open things up. People have been saying Edge stole his title from Cena at New Year's Revolution but he won it fair and square. He's absolutely right actually. That's how Money in the Bank works and now he's the WWE Champion. Edge calls the shots and now he gets to call the shots, which included a live sex celebration last week. Apparently that offended some people and that's just too bad.

The end of last week's show was the highest rated ending to Raw in two years (erg) and the day after he won the title, over 25 million people were on WWE.com (I repeat my previous erg. Wrestlers shouldn't care about that stuff.). That makes him the most watched WWE Champion of all time. That makes quite the assumption. I might have been on there playing Out Think the Fink.

As for the people who didn't like it, we see a clip of Ric Flair taking a

Conchairto for interfering last week. Later tonight he's going to finish Flair off in a TLC match but for right now, he wants live, uninterrupted sex with Lita right here. Obviously he's not a Rocky fan because WOMEN WEAKEN LEGS. A chair is brought in and Lita removes Edge's shirt before climbing on top of him.

Cue Kurt Angle with manager Daivari (King: "Can't we just have some live sex?") for the YOU SUCK chants with Angle saying were directed at Lita. Angle says tricks like this make him a joke while people like him know he's the real thing. Edge says it made him smart and a challenge is made for a title unification match. That's not happening because Edge isn't lowering himself to fight Angle.

That means a release German suplex but here's Vince McMahon to interrupt. He wants the two scheduled matches to take place tonight so Edge needs to go get ready. Vince: "And cover yourself up!" As for Angle, he'll be facing Shawn tonight, but it's a non-title match. Instead, Shawn is fighting for his contract and is gone if he loses. Long segment here but Edge is relishing this role and nailing it so far. Throw in Wrestling Machine Kurt Angle and Lita at perhaps her hottest ever and this was awesome on a variety of levels.

### Shawn Michaels vs. Kurt Angle

Non-title but Shawn's job is on the line. Shawn stares at Vince on the way to the ring because that's one of the top stories of 2006. Joined in progress after a break with Shawn chasing Daivari around the ring before heading back inside for a headlock on the mat. Angle fights up and stomps away in the corner, only to get the skin chopped off of his chest. That doesn't seem to both Angle though, who comes out with an overhead belly to belly. A hard German suplex gives Kurt two and we hit a bodyscissors.

Back up and Shawn chops him again but gets sent hard into the corner. The Angle Slam is countered into a DDT for two but Daivari low bridges Shawn to the floor. That earns Daivari a superkick, only to have Angle hit the Angle Slam on the floor as we take a break. Back with Angle having a belly to belly superplex broken up but running the corner to hit the super Angle Slam for two instead. A desperation Sweet Chin Music is

countered into the ankle lock which Shawn reverses into a small package for two of his own.

The forearm into the nip up just earns Shawn another ankle lock but this one is kicked off in short order. Angle gets knocked down to set up a weird looking missed top rope elbow. The ankle lock goes on again and Shawn flails, eventually hitting Daivari as a bonus. Angle gets the grapevine but Daivari brings in a chair and Kurt lets go for some reason. As you might expect, Daivari swings the chair and this Angle, knocking him into a rollup to give Shawn the pin.

**Rating:** B. These two have very solid chemistry and make their matches look easy. The ending was a little bit messy but at least it keeps the new champion from losing clean. I mean, they could have had it be a countout or something but why do that when you can have him get pinned? Still though, very entertaining match here and that's all you would have expected.

Angle yells at Daivari...who slaps him in the face. An Angle Slam over the top has Daivari looking rather dead.

During the break, Angle dumps Daivari.

Maria Kanellis, still the incredibly annoying and ditzy interviewer (that's not a bad thing), shows Chris Masters Carlito turning on him at New Year's Revolution. Masters blames Carlito for the loss and promises to win the Royal Rumble. Oh and tonight, John Cena is losing the Master Lock Challenge.

Ashley Massaro (never got the appeal and she was terrible in the ring) is worried about the six woman tag tonight but Trish Stratus tells her to calm down. The crazy lesbian stalker Mickie James (their partner tonight) comes in and apologizes for attacking Ashley last week. Psycho Mickie worked so well.

It's time for the Masterlock Challenge. Masters introduces Cena as the former WWE Champion and we're ready to go. We get a rare very pro-Cena chant as he sits down in the chair but Cena grabs the arm before the hold can go on. The hold goes on a few seconds later and Cena tries a variety

of escapes to no avail. Cena fights up again and almost breaks it but here's Edge for a belt shot to the head.

Shawn is having his ankle looked at when Vince comes in. Vince tells him to get out of the building before moving over to Ric Flair, on the trainer's mat next to him. Last week Ric interrupted Vince's celebration and tonight, Flair can make the magic happen one more time. Vince's mistress Candice Michelle comes in and asks Vince to critique her match. She does her stupid dance and even Flair is giving this a look to say it's the dumbest thing he's ever seen.

Candice Michelle/Torrie Wilson/Victoria vs. Trish Stratus/Mickie James/Ashley

If there is ANY justice in the world, this will be all Trish/Mickie/Victoria. Torrie has her dog with her and Victoria is in her weird short/curlier hair phase (not a bad look, just very different than her usual one). But hang on: before the match we need a behind the scenes look at Candice Michelle's GoDaddy commercial. In other words, it's her in a white tank top washing windows. To be fair, they're not trying to hide what they're going for here and she makes jokes about the whole thing.

Victoria cranks on Trish's arm to start (thank goodness) until a rollup gives Trish two. A headscissors out of the corner looks to set up Stratusfaction but Candice comes in, meaning Trish has to headscissor her down as well (with Trish's tights going rather far down in the process). Ashley gets the hot tag, much to Mickie's annoyance. She's so annoyed that she spears Ashley down, setting up the Widow's Peak for the pin.

As usual, it's SO weird anymore to see the women as nothing but eye candy with the wrestling being a detail to look at them in their revealing outfits. Total mess of course but at least they had the right wrestlers in there for the most part. To tell you what Torrie meant here, she held the dog while standing on the apron.

Rob Van Dam is back in the Royal Rumble after missing a year of action due to a torn ACL.

Carlito takes credit for keeping Van Dam on the injured list even longer. The fans chant for RVD but Carlito doesn't want to hear it because he's going to win the Royal Rumble. No one on Raw or Smackdown can throw him over the top, and that's cool. Kane, over the top, next segment.

A production guy tells Vince that a woman wants to see him. Vince thinks it's Candice and says make her wait a minute.

Post break Vince is ready for her and starts stripping but instead it's....Mama Benjamin (a rather large woman played by a comedienne who managed her son Shelton Benjamin), who throws money at him. She wants to know why Shelton isn't wrestling tonight while Shelton looks like he wants to die. Vince agrees to give him a match and Mama tells him to go get ready. Shelton leaves and Mama tells Vince to call her when he wants some chocolate thunder. Vince shivers as she leaves.

Royal Rumble rundown. All two matches announced so far.

#### Shelton Benjamin vs. Big Show

Show has a broken hand. Mama Benjamin is terrified (Shelton: "He just tall. That's all Mama.") and Show backs both of them into the corner. To his credit, Show opens the ropes for her (Mama: "You do the best you can son.") and we're ready to go. Show drops him without much effort but hurts the hand again. Shelton is smart enough to send the hand into the post and hits it again to break up the chokeslam. A fall away slam sends Shelton outside but here's HHH (who broke Show's hand) for a distraction, resulting in a countout win for Shelton.

#### Raw World Title: Edge vs. Ric Flair

Edge is defending in a TLC match, the first ever singles version. Flair's Intercontinental Title isn't on the line. Ric goes over to hug his 19 year old daughter Ashley, better known as Charlotte. Lita has changed tops, likely for the sake of the censors, but the Edge tank top works perfectly well too. Oh and Flair has a concussion thanks to Edge, just in case there weren't enough details coming into this.

Flair chops away in the corner to start but Edge decks him in the jaw to



take over. It's already time for the first ladder, which goes into Flair's head but actually doesn't draw blood. Edge puts him inside the ladder and crushes it with a chair, which somehow doesn't kill Flair. They head outside with Edge being chopped into the crowd but Flair follows him out instead of, you know, going to win the title.

Back to ringside with Edge suplexing Flair on the floor. Lita starts getting the chairs ready as Edge puts Flair on a table. The Conchairto is broken up by a testicular claw and Edge is tossed into the barricade. Lita gets slammed down as well but Edge gets in a chair shot to finally bust Flair open. It almost makes me feel better to have it happen instead of waiting on it for so long.

Edge heads back in and hits a HUGE splash to put Flair through the table on the floor. There is blood everywhere and Flair's family is panicking as we take a break. Back with Flair having a 1980s level of blood but still being able to put Edge inside a ladder for some chair shots. Flair cracks him with another chair shot and then just shoves a ladder onto him. A few shots to the ankle have Flair loading up the ladder but he moves it to the corner instead.

Flair goes up and of course gets superplexed back down for a double knockdown. Edge hits him low but misses a missile dropkick off the ladder. He's fine enough to chair Flair in the head though and it's time to climb. Somehow Ric is up and turns the ladder over, sending Edge through a table at ringside in a HUGE crash. Lita breaks up the climb though, which just makes me want to see Lita vs. Charlotte. That earns Lita a Figure Four as Edge is still down. Flair's ultra slow climb lets Edge get up though and the slug it out on top of the ladder. Naturally Edge gets the better of it and retains the title.

**Rating:** C+. I never feel right watching Flair in something like this. The guy is nearly sixty and putting his body through something like this with all the blood and violence when he's more than capable of having a good regular match. I get the idea behind it (if nothing else just saying "Flair in a TLC match" is a draw) but I wish they could come up with something better than this. It's an entertaining match, but not something I'm comfortable watching.

Post match Edge spears him down and loads up the Conchairto, only to have Cena come in for the save to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This show is such a time capsule as you have Cena being the super face, the women being worthless in the ring yet oozing sex appeal in something that's not around nearly as strong today (which isn't a bad thing), throwing a TLC match and Shawn vs. Angle on free TV and acting like Carlito and Chris Masters could ever have any kind of main event value. The show was fun, but it really isn't something I'd want to watch week to week. It feels like it would get very grating in short order, but for a one off it was rather fun.

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# Main Event – February 1, 2018: On the Road Again

## **Main Event**

Date: January 31, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

We're FINALLY getting out of Philadelphia with the seventh TV show from the same arena in less than a week. That's just staggering when you think about it but somehow WWE puts out that much material at once, even if you consider that one of them is Mixed Match Challenge. You know, if you're one of the small number of people who actually watch the show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Bayley vs. Sonya Deville

The rest of Absolution is here so Graves gets to swoon over Mandy. Sonya takes her to the mat to start and wraps her up with a bodyscissors. An easy takedown keeps Bayley in trouble before Sonya punches her in the face a few times. Well she's certainly well rounded. Bayley snapmares her down though and hits a running basement clothesline for two.

Back up and Sonya unloads on her with right hands in the corner before it's back to the bodyscissors. That's enough for Bayley who takes her down and hammers away, knocking Sonya to the floor in the process. Bayley even shoves Mandy down, followed by a quick rollup to end Sonya at 5:06.

**Rating:** C. They made Sonya look like a killer here until the more experienced Bayley caught her in the end. That's a great way to make Sonya feel like a bit deal but for some reason they did it here on Main Event instead of somewhere that actually matters. Hopefully they both get some more time on the big shows soon as they could both benefit from such a thing.

Video on Ronda Rousey's debut.

From Raw.

### Asuka vs. Sasha Banks

Banks slaps her in the face to start and takes Asuka into the corner for a ram into the buckle. That just earns her a kick to the head and a hip attack to put Sasha on the floor. Back in and some kicks to the legs set up the armbar to keep Sasha in trouble. Banks fights up with a kick to the face and running double knees as we take a break.

We come back with Asuka in trouble after the double knees in the corner, followed by the double arm crank. A headscissors into a very fast Bank Statement is countered into a rollup for two. Sasha gets it right back on but Asuka rolls out again before being sent outside. Banks' dive is blocked with a kick to the face for a SCARY crash to the floor.

Back in and Asuka unloads with a knee to the face and some HARD strikes to the head. The hip attack in the corner sets up a missile dropkick for two so it's off to the cross armbreaker. Banks reverses that as well and Asuka's running hip attack misses, sending her outside in a heap. Banks follows with the knees off the apron (nearly crushing Asuka's head in the process) and more of them off the top for a close two. The Bank Statement goes on again but Sasha tries to move it back to the middle, allowing Asuka to reverse into the Asuka Lock for the tap at 14:28.

**Rating:** B+. This was in the "beat the heck out of each other" school of wrestling with Sasha's knees hitting Asuka over and over while Asuka just survived the whole thing and caught Banks at the end. That's the biggest win Asuka has had yet in WWE and if she can beat Charlotte, whoever finally beats Asuka is going to look like the biggest conqueror ever. Excellent match here and a lot of fun, especially after how big last night was.

From Raw again.

#### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Roman Reigns

Miz is defending and gets punched in the face to start as the beating is on in a hurry. For some reason Miz tries a chop and is suddenly the Ric Flair to Reigns' Sting. The champ gets knocked outside for a whip into the steps as the one sided beating continues. Reigns grabs a chair to chase the Miztourage off but Miz posts him to take over as we take a break.

Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and grabbing a Samoan drop. Glad to see some things never change. Miz actually wins a bit of a slugout until Reigns hits the corner clotheslines and a big boot to take over again. The YES Kicks have Reigns in trouble and a chop block puts him down.

We hit the Figure Four for a good while until Reigns turns it over, sending Miz to the ropes. Reigns' lifting sitout powerbomb gets two so Miz goes to the turnbuckle like last week. That's intercepted though and Miz pokes Reigns in the eye so the Skull Crushing Finale can get two. The Superman Punch gets the same but here's the Miztourage to interfere again. That earns them a Superman Punch and a spear but Miz grabs a rollup to retain at 18:07.

**Rating:** B-. These two have some good chemistry together, which is rather surprising given both of their reputations. Miz retaining is the right call here as it seems like they're setting up Reigns on the comeback trail. You know, because we're supposed to buy that Reigns is someone who faces adversity and wasn't anointed as the chosen one several years back.

#### Lince Dorado/Gran Metalik/Kalisto vs. Jack Gallagher/TJP/Ariya Daivari

This would be the third time we've seen the masked guys against some combination of villains, all of which have included TJP, in less than ten days. Dorado wastes no time in hurricanranaing Gallagher down, setting up a standing moonsault for two. Back up and Jack does his handstand in the corner but get sent outside for his efforts. Kalisto comes in and takes Jack down from the apron, only to have TJP take Kalisto out, sending him throat first onto the ropes.

Back from a break with Metalik walking the ropes into the dropkick on TJP. The Metalik Driver gets two on TJP with Gallagher making the save. Everything breaks down and Dorado's double handspring Stunner drops Daivari and TJP. Kalisto moonsaults onto Gallagher, leaving Metalik to charge into TJP's boots in the corner. Daivari tags himself in though and TJP isn't happy. A pair of kicks to the head lets Metalik drop the elbow on Daivari for the pin at 7:27.

**Rating:** D+. Not bad but absolutely nothing we haven't seen before. I'm getting tired of seeing these guys fight but for some reason that's all we're getting over and over again. Let the masked guys go after the regular Tag Team Titles or something, as there's always room for a lucha team on the main roster. But no, the obvious solution is to have them fight (and beat) some combination of five guys over and over while never

advancing anywhere.

Quick look at the men's Royal Rumble.

From Smackdown.

### AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens

AJ wastes no time in headscissoring Owens into the corner so it's off to Sami to work on Nakamura's arm. Styles comes back in for a few kicks before Nakamura is back in, only to be taken into the corner for the double stomping. Nakamura fights back with some shots to the head and we hit the front facelock. Sami gets thrown outside but Owens uses the distraction to shoulder Nakamura down.

That leaves Sami down on the floor so Owens yells at him, meaning it's time for the big argument. That's too much for Sami and he takes the walk up the ramp as we go to a break. Back with Owens holding Styles in a chinlock as Sami watches from the stage. AJ's belly to back facebuster gets two as Sami runs back in for the save. Sami comes in for two off a backdrop and it's quickly back to Owens for two off the backsplash. Owens chops Sami for a tag but that's not cool with Zayn, who does the same to bring Owens right back in.

They get knocked into each other so Sami leaves again, leaving Kevin to break up the Phenomenal Forearm. A Vader Bomb elbow gets two but the Pop Up Powerbomb is thwarted. Instead it's off to Nakamura for some kicks, only to have Owens bail before Kinshasa. AJ throws him right back in though and it's a spinwheel kick to the head, followed by Kinshasa to give Nakamura the pin at 15:25.

**Rating:** C+. Pretty standard main event tag match here but it advanced the story of Sami vs. Kevin's issues. AJ vs. Nakamura has a lot of time to build up and there's no need to rush things. Let that take its time to be properly built and see where they can go instead of rushing through things and running out of steam with a month to go before Wrestlemania.

And from Raw again.

### Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Finn Balor vs. John Cena

Balor has Anderson and Gallows in his corner. The fans are behind Balor of course as he takes Cena down into an armbar. Balor does it again but Cena takes him down with two straight headlocks. Cena gets sent outside and points at a fan as we hit a test of strength. The fans are looking at something else, which is initially booed and then cheered. The camera cuts to the side as Cena looks into the crowd to see what's going on. Cena punches Balor down and we take a break with Cena looking at the crowd again.

Back with Cena tossing Balor into the corner a few times but stopping to look at the crowd. The announcers say the fans are getting to him, which is a weird way to go with Cena. The finishing sequence is initiated but the Shuffle takes WAY too long, allowing Balor to move. Balor gets two off an Eye of the Hurricane and scores with the Pele.

The Sling Blade sets up the shotgun dropkick but Cena is right there with a clothesline to take him down. Cena grabs the AA for two and goes to the apron....where he tells Coach that he's just trying to go to Wrestlemania. He takes way too long to go up top and Balor kicks him down, setting up the shotgun dropkick. The Coup de Grace misses and Balor bangs up his knee. We hit one of the worst looking STF's Cena has ever put on but Balor makes the rope. Balor takes too long going up and it's the Super AA for the pin at 17:48.

**Rating:** C+. Weird crowd and weird Cena aside, this was only pretty good. The problem is both guys should be in the Chamber and Cena is likely getting the Undertaker match (erg) so I'm not sure why they needed to have Cena beat Balor here. That being said, I'm more confused about the whole crowd thing. Is that Cena's latest crisis of confidence as we head to New Orleans? It seems like he has one every other year. Oh and Balor wasn't buried. He lost, but that's a far cry from being buried.

**Overall Rating:** C. Not a bad show here as we highlight all the happenings this past week in WWE. It was a big time and it's nice to see the important stuff getting the attention it deserves. We're getting closer to Wrestlemania and that means each week gets more and more important. Hopefully things continue at this pace and even better as we head further down the road.

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# Smackdown – September 4, 2003: Didn't We Do This Already?

## Smackdown

Date: September 4, 2003

Location: New Orleans Arena, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We've got a big main event this time around as Smackdown World Champion Kurt Angle is defending against the Undertaker, who won a triple threat last week to earn the shot. Brock Lesnar is looming though and there's a good chance that's not going to end well. At the same time though we have the freshly face Eddie Guerrero spreading his awesomeness all over the place and that's more than enough around here. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's triple threat with Undertaker winning the title shot.



Opening sequence, which actually still has Rock included. I can't even remember the last time he was on this show.

### Tag Team Titles: APA vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

The APA is challenging....for some reason. Faarooq powerslams Haas for two to start but Benjamin gets in a shot from behind to take over. The jump over Haas (which barely clears his head) crushes Faarooq's back and the double stomping continues. Haas grabs a bearhug (not something you would expect from him) before tripping Faarooq down for two.

Now it's Haas going up top but diving into a powerslam, allowing the hot tag to Bradshaw. A fall away slam and big boot drop the champs as everything breaks down. Bradshaw pulls Benjamin outside, leaving Faarooq to hit a spinebuster on Haas for two. Benjamin's superkick gets two on Faarooq so Bradshaw takes his head off with the Clothesline. Haas gets the foot on the rope though and a belt shot lets the champs retain.

**Rating:** D+. Actually somewhat better match than I was expecting here and thankfully the APA were just there to give the champs a rub. The division needs some more teams though and having the APA thrown in there for a week is fine enough until we get some fresh acts. Not a bad match, though the ending didn't do the champs a ton of good.

Eddie Guerrero is polishing his low rider and the US Title when the long black limo arrives. This time it's Big Show, Sable and Vince, who seem to like Eddie's car. Brock Lesnar shows up and wants to know why Vince hasn't talked to him much since Summerslam. Maybe because he's been busy with Brock's future wife? It's because Brock tapped out (Brock REALLY doesn't want to hear that) but Vince will talk to him later.

Post break, Brock is in Vince's office where the boss slaps him in the face as a wake up call. It seems to do the trick as Brock grabs him, only to be calmed down when Vince tells him to be a monster. Maybe now he can tap to Benoit or someone else instead of ripping through the roster?

Here's John Cena for a chat. Cena wants to know why Eddie is waxing the car. Is it dirty, or is he worried that Cena will "jack it with a Compton quickness"? We see a clip of Cena beating Eddie up last week and giving

him an AA onto the tire. Cena thinks Eddie should be mowing his lawn because he used him like a girl from a Girls Gone Wild video.

After calling Eddie a rather mean name, here comes the low rider. The fight is on in a hurry with Cena getting the better of it off a belt shot. He's not done either as he steals the low rider, much to Eddie's chagrin. Eddie is so shocked that he can't get out of the ring and chase after the car, which must be going a full four miles an hour as it backs out of the arena.

Post break, after Cena has left the arena, Eddie rants to Stephanie about the car. A Latino street fight in the parking lot is made for next week. Maybe by that point Eddie will figure out how to catch up with a car backing up in slow motion.

#### Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

Rematch from last week where A-Train tapped with his legs under the ropes. Benoit sticks and moves to start but the chops don't have much effect. A running elbow in the corner has an effect on Benoit though and A-Train whips him hard in the corner to start on the ribs. We're already off to a chinlock with a knee in Benoit's back as A-Train actually has some psychology.

A butterfly suplex of all things gets two on Benoit and we hit the bearhug. Benoit fights out and hits some running forearms, followed by the rolling German suplexes. The Swan Dive misses and the Train Wreck gets two but the referee gets bumped. Cue Rhyno to try a Gore on Benoit, only to hit A-Train by mistake to give Benoit the pin.

**Rating:** C-. A-Train working the back made sense but are they really spending back to back weeks protecting him? He's that important? Anyway, Rhyno vs. Benoit should be fine for a one off match but it shouldn't be any more than that. Benoit needs to move on to something important, especially after spending months with Rhyno in one form or another.

Undertaker praises Angle but says he's not tapping to the ankle lock even if his ankle is broken. Then he'll show Angle what a real submission is with the dragon sleeper. If that doesn't work, maybe it's a chokeslam or

a Tombstone or a Last Ride but he's leaving with the title. It's almost weird to hear Undertaker talk like this.

Earlier today, Torrie Wilson and Nidia compared how they look in bikinis for the sake of a bikini contest which took place before the show. Nidia puts in her false breasts and they dance for no apparent reason. Nidia rubs lotion on Torrie's back, which Torrie seems to like. Is it really already time for another Torrie likes girls story?

Angle promises to make Undertaker tap.

Vince has taken over Stephanie's office where Brock is apparently slamming things into a wall. Sable is nowhere to be seen and....egads ok then.

#### Smackdown World Title: Kurt Angle vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is challenging. Angle grabs a front facelock to start so Undertaker grabs a wristlock and cranks away. That earns him a headlock on the mat as they seem to have a lot of time here. Undertaker drops a leg on the arm and cranks on a short arm scissors. An armbar of all things sets up Old School but Angle suplexes him right back down.

Undertaker's solution is to punch Angle in the face, followed by an elbow to the chest on the apron. The apron legdrop drops Angle to the floor and Undertaker posts him for good measure. Back from a break with Undertaker still in control and amazingly not using a chinlock. Angle grabs a sleeper but gets suplexed down, leaving Undertaker to slap himself in the head. Well at least he's taking this one seriously.

Undertaker's dragon sleeper is broken up in short order so he goes with the running corner clothesline. Snake Eyes into the running big boot looks to set up a legdrop but Kurt picks the ankle. It's way too early for a tap out so Angle switches to the Slam for two instead. A second Angle Slam is countered into a chokeslam for two more.

Angle reverses the Last Ride into a sunset flip and then the ankle lock but this time Undertaker pulls him down into a Fujiwara armbar. That's rolled over into another ankle lock but Undertaker reverses again into a

triangle choke. Angle's arm drops twice so he gets his foot on the ropes for the break.

Undertaker limps into a big boot but only hits ropes, allowing Angle to slap on the ankle lock for a few more seconds. A shot to the face has Angle bleeding from the cheek and Undertaker slugs away for good measure. The chokeslam is countered into the fifth ankle lock and, again, Undertaker rolls out of it. The ankle is fine enough for a chokeslam and the Last Ride but here's Brock with a chair to beat them both down for the DQ.

**Rating:** B-. This didn't hit the level these two are capable of and the ankle lock seemingly not causing Undertaker much discomfort didn't help things. It felt like they were just doing their thing until we got to the finish, which didn't give us much drama. What we got was good, but it's really hard to buy the threat of Undertaker tapping, even to someone like Angle.

Brock destroys them both with chair and belt shots.

Post break, Undertaker refuses attention until he collapses.

Angle just settles for some ice.

Some New Orleans Saints are here.

There was a bikini contest earlier today and it's trimmed to a highlight package. How in the world can you screw up having good looking women walk around in swimsuits? It's Sable, Dawn Marie, Nidia and Torrie in Mardi Gras themed attire before they disrobe. Torrie wins but Shaniqua runs in and beats them all down. I'm really hoping this was cut due to time instead of content because that would be a new low even for WWE.

The APA isn't happy with their loss but the office is back. They even have a red bow on the door and a butler (Bradshaw: "I won him in a poker game. I even have a deed for him!") to present them with cigars and beer. This might be better if they hadn't lost earlier in the night but we're not supposed to remember that part. Well assuming you ignored what they talked about to start the segment.

## Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Tajiri

Rey is defending. They start fast with Rey armdragging him down, only to have us go into a standoff. Rey tries a headscissors out of the corner but lands on the referee, who is nice enough to throw him off so he can flip Tajiri over. The springboard is broken up with a superkick and Rey is rocked on the apron. He's fine enough to miss a 619 though and Tajiri kicks him in the back to knock him outside.

Cole brags about Mysterio defending the title week after week the last few weeks (this is his second title defense in two weeks Cole) as the handspring elbow is broken up with a spinwheel kick. Back from a break with Tajiri kicking him out of the air and grabbing a hammerlock. Not exactly a move you expect to see so late into a match. Rey sends him outside and hits a hard suicide dive to take both guys down.

Back in and Tajiri blocks a sunset bomb with right hands but it's Rey kicking him down for two. The sitout bulldog (which isn't innovative Cole) gets two and the springboard seated senton gets the same. A hard kick to the arm drops Rey for two more and we hit the Tarantula.

Rey is right back with the 619 but the springboard splash hits raised boots to the face. Mysterio is fine enough to try his own Tarantula but Tajiri breaks it up without too much effort. They head up top with Tajiri getting shoved down, setting up the West Coast Pop from the turnbuckle to retain.

**Rating:** B. Solid wrestling match here with Rey getting tested. Who would have guessed that Rey Mysterio and Tajiri would have a good match if they were given a long stretch of time? Hopefully this goes somewhere else with Rey getting to defend the title against the top cruiserweights, which is kind of the point of the title in the first place. Good match, as you probably expected.

Post match Tajiri mists him to turn heel again.

Here are Vince and Big Show for the big closing segment. Vince didn't like that DQ finish earlier so Angle will be defending the title again. In two weeks, it's Angle vs. Lesnar in a sixty minute Iron Man match

right here on Smackdown. Oddly enough, Vince is very low key in the announcement. Vince brings out Brock...who isn't here.

Brock pops up in a sky box and thanks Vince for reminding him of who he is. Earlier tonight he proved who he is by attacking Undertaker and Angle. We pause for the YOU TAPPED OUT chants before Brock talks about what went on behind those closed doors earlier. Brock was, shall we say, softening up someone who needed to be taught a lesson. Brock steps aside and Zach Gowen is in a wheelchair with a gag around his mouth.

Brock slaps him in the broken leg and talks about the wheelchair being jet powered. Gowen panics (well duh) and Brock wheels him back to the concourse where he throws Zach out of the chair. Zach crawls away (without taking the gag off for some reason) but Brock kicks him in the broken leg. Brock talks about wanting to be the monster and we cut back to Vince looking curious.

More stomps to the leg keep Gowen in trouble before Lesnar talks about the chair being magical. See, it can fly, and Brock is going to prove it. Gowen is sat in the chair and Brock chokes him out before shoving Gowen down the steps (complete with a camera cut to Vince before the big fall) to end the show.

This was rather long as Brock had him in the stairwell for above five minutes. I get the idea here of making Brock out to be a monster, but didn't they do that when Brock caved Gowen's head in and broke his leg in the first place? I think we've covered this already and it might have been a bit more effective if he hadn't lost to Angle clean at Summerslam. The scene was effective but the camera cut hurt it a bit and it went on a tad too long. Hopefully that gets rid of Gowen for a little while longer as there's only so much you can get out of having him around.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Two long and entertaining matches are more than enough to carry this show as we flash back to the glory days of Smackdown for a week. The Iron Man match has some serious potential as they'll have time to do whatever they want, which is often lacking around here. Throw in booking Eddie vs. Cena a week in advance and it's almost like they're thinking ahead for once. This was a fun show and, stupid parts aside,

gives me hope that Smackdown might be on its way back up.

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## Thought of the Day: When Commentary Sounded Real

Somehow, it's much more real than in the reality era.

Since we have the WWE Network (still the greatest thing for any wrestling fan), I'll often throw on an old pay per view just for some background noise while I'm working on something else. The other day I threw on Survivor Series 1988 and heard the following discussion between Gorilla Monsoon and Jesse Ventura when Jacques Rougeau was tagged into the match:

Jesse: "Which Rougeau is that? Is that Jacques or Raymond?"

Gorilla: "That is Jacques. He's a little bit taller than his brother."

Jesse: "Oh that's Jacques, ok. I get those two confused."

And that's it. No insults, no jokes about how Jesse is stupid, no laughing and ignoring the match and no stupid bickering between the two

over some petty feud that only they care about while the match is ignored. This felt like a simple, realistic conversation between two people watching a wrestling match. The Rougeaus may not have been twins but it might have been difficult to remember at times (I couldn't remember which Hardy was which until about 2001) and it's not ridiculous for Jesse to be confused, or for Gorilla to say which one it is and give him a way to remember it.

Today, this would set off a minute long argument between Corey Graves and Byron Saxton because they have to fight every chance they get over whatever stupid thing is going on at the moment, all while the match is completely ignored. Then Cole will laugh about something and plug whatever is coming later in the night, ignoring the match even further.

It's such a different world of commentary and shows just how forced and scripted things have become today. Let these people sound normal and see if it's not way more effective.

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# Impact Wrestling – February 1, 2018: Here We Go For The Latest Time

## Impact Wrestling

Date: February 1, 2018

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Jeremy Borash, Josh Matthews

It's time for a new fresh taping cycle but also a fresh regime in charge of things. I mean, to be fair it had been a few months since everything was shaken up. This is the start of the taping cycle to take us all the way to the next pay per view in April, meaning it's likely time to shake up a lot of things. Let's get to it.



Someone's legs arrived earlier today. As usual, panning up is out of the question.

Opening sequence.

We look back at last week's show, showing every result including Matt Sydal winning the Grand Championship, Laurel Van Ness cheating to retain the Knockouts Title, Lashley losing to Moose and destroying Dan Lambert in retaliation and Eli Drake retaining the World Title in a triple threat. Only the triple threat involves someone who hasn't left the promotion since the matches were taped.

Opening sequence.

The four sided ring is back, thank goodness.

#### Grand Championship: Matt Sydal vs. Fallah Bahh

Sydal is defending and it's just a regular match again. Before the match, Matt gives credit to his new unnamed spiritual adviser. Bahh shoves him around with ease to start and knocks Sydal away for daring to throw some kicks. Sydal tries a sunset flip but is smart enough to pull himself up before he can be crushed. A sliding dropkick puts Bahh down and a spinwheel kick does the same.

Sydal starts in on the leg and it's a YES Kick into a standing moonsault for two. Bahh gets back up so Sydal hits some top rope knees to bring him down again. Back up and Bahh scores with some big fat chops and a Samoan drop despite not being Samoan. That rolling splash gives Bahh two but Sydal kicks him over the top to break up a Banzai drop. Back in and Bahh misses another drop, setting up the shooting star press to retain Sydal's title at 7:34.

**Rating:** C-. I still don't get the appeal of Bahh but he seems to be gaining one of those cult followings. That being said, this wasn't at all about Bahh as Sydal gets a first title defense under his (newly won) belt and can wait around until he gets a big time challenger. The spiritual adviser screams heel turn, which wouldn't exactly surprise me given how often TNA likes to go in that direction.

We look back at Lashley turning on American Top Team, including spearing both KM and Dan Lambert. About time but that's kind of an anti-climactic ending to the story.

Trevor Lee assures Caleb Konley that he's five steps ahead of everyone so the team will be fine. I just want to know what was up with the semi-Hawaiian shirts.

### KM vs. Bobby Lashley

Lashley slugs away to start and let's plug that list of people you can't see in TNA anymore but CAN see if you buy their Network! KM talks some trash but gets taken down twice in a row. An early spear attempt sees Lashley go shoulder first into the post and we take a break. Back with KM grabbing a chinlock and demanding the referee ask for a submission a few times.

Lashley misses another charge and falls to the floor, allowing KM to actually hit a running flip dive. KM misses a slingshot splash back inside though and gets taken down by a crossbody of all things. Lashley's powerslam gets two but he walks into a pumphandle slam for the same. Not that it matters as Lashley spears him down for the pin at 11:58.

**Rating:** C. KM was better than usual here but that's not exactly covering a lot of ground. The guy isn't interesting and putting him in American Top Team for a few weeks didn't do him any good. At this point he's just a warm body who can't do anything special and that's not exactly the kind of thing that this company needs at the moment.

We recap Kongo Kong destroying Chandler Park two weeks back.

Joseph Park is on the phone with Grandma Jenny when Jimmy Jacobs comes up to say he wants Abyss back to face Kong. As usual, Kong is worthless.

Lashley is going to focus on wrestling and MMA but blows off Eddie Edwards.

### Laurel Van Ness vs. Kiera Hogan

Non-title. Laurel works on the arm to start and pulls her down by the

hair. A right hand gets two, followed by a running forearm in the corner for the same. Hogan actually gets in some right hands and a low superkick for two, only to eat a curb stomp. The Unprettier is loaded up but here's Allie for a distraction, allowing Hogan to grab a rollup for the pin at 4:14.

**Rating:** D. Pure angle advancement here and there's nothing wrong with that. Hogan looked fine here and it's always good to get some fresh talent into the promotion. Allie getting another shot makes sense after she was cheated out of the title match last week, and it's not like there are a ton of options at the moment.

The mystery man is now in the building.

Alberto El Patron thinks he should be in the main event as champion but his partner tonight, Ethan Carter III, says follow his lead.

Here is LAX for their first comments since Barbed Wire Massacre. Konnan says they're still the revolution and you can't stop that. As for Sami Callihan (Konnan: "The guy was midway through a sex change operation when the doctor said just leave him like that"), they're always ready for a fight so here's OVE. Egads FIND A NEW TEAM ALREADY!

Callihan hits the mic against his own head and says they hate everything. They do respect LAX though and things need to end before one of them winds up dead. Sami promises to get the titles back at some point but for now, they have more important things to worry about. Konnan follows them up the aisle and says there are no bigger fish to fry because "we are the whole d\*\*\* tuna". As I ponder the meanings of that line, Konley and Lee jump LAX and beat them down. They're not exactly a great team but they're different at least.

Moose and Johnny Impact (who Moose almost calls by all of his old names) are ready to win the tag match.

This week's old clip: Drew Galloway debuts and beats up Ethan Carter III. Again: STOP SHOWING THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T WORK HERE ANYMORE BEATING UP YOUR (then) CURRENT TALENT!

Eli Drake thinks Chris Adonis brought the mystery man but Adonis says no. Tonight is all about the life of Eli though.

Cage is coming.

### Ethan Carter III/Alberto El Patron vs. Johnny Impact/Moose

Johnny and Ethan start things off with Impact spinning out of a wristlock and into one of his own. Moose does his pose and comes in for a dropkick to keep Carter in trouble. The double teaming begins, setting up Impact's breakdancing legdrop for two. Alberto gets in a cheap shot from the apron, allowing Carter to get in a knee to the ribs so the villains can take over.

Carter drops an elbow and grabs a chinlock for a few seconds before throwing Moose outside. That means a few rams into the barricade, followed by a double suplex for two back inside. The solo suplex is reversed though and it's a lukewarm tag to Impact. It's way too early for Starship Pain so Impact settles for the Flying Chuck. Unfortunately that only knocks Carter into his own corner, allowing Alberto to come right back in.

We take a break and come back with Alberto sending Impact into the corner over and over to keep him in trouble. Carter pulls Moose off the apron before coming in for the TK3 and a near fall of his own. A top rope ax handle gives Alberto two but Johnny reverses a belly to back superplex into a crossbody to put both guys down.

That's enough for the hot tag to Moose, who comes in with a series of running corner dropkicks for two. Alberto ducks the Game Changer and scores with the Backstabber for two of his own. Johnny gets caught in the Tree of Woe and the top rope double stomp connects. Not that it matters as Moose is right there with a hard clothesline to put Alberto away at 18:53.

**Rating:** C. Totally standard main event style tag here but it's nice to see Moose getting a big pin like this. The main event scene needs some fresh names after that three way feud ate up the last several months and Moose would be a good addition. I'm rather tired of Alberto vs. Johnny

and it would be a good idea to keep them apart for a long time.

Here are Drake and Adonis for the big closing segment. Adonis has a few facts for Drake, starting with Drake being the greatest champion ever. We see a quick highlight reel, followed by the second fact: Drake is greatest dresser to ever live. Finally, we have fact #3: Drake is the greatest friend that ever lived.

For some reason the clip is from Thanksgiving where Adonis had to wear the turkey suit and he's not happy. Drake says the pie from Thanksgiving was delicious and Adonis rocked the turkey suit. The champ adds up the facts that Adonis laid out and there's only one conclusion: Drake is the greatest man that ever lived. I think you know where this is going.

Cue the returning AUSTIN ARIES (with banana) to interrupt, earning a loud WELCOME BACK chant. Aries says he missed the fans too but he heard Drake refer to himself as the greatest man that ever lived. After listing off his own resume around here, Aries throws the challenge out for anywhere anytime. Drake takes off his jacket and says the best thing that Aries has ever done is sit behind a desk and talk about the matches. There's no match right now but Adonis cheap shots Aries with the belt. That's enough to change Drake's mind and the title is on the line RIGHT NOW.

#### Impact Wrestling World Title: Austin Aries vs. Eli Drake

Drake is defending and covers for a very quick two. After an argument with the referee, Drake misses a charge into the post, setting up Aries' corner dropkick. The brainbuster gives us a new champion at 50 seconds.

As expected, the announcers soundly undersell the title change to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. The show was fine enough but egads I didn't like that ending. Drake has held the title for about five months and he just loses it in no time in an impromptu match because Aries is freshly available. This company has a really bad habit of not building stories up over time and going for the big shock instead of setting something up in the name or proper storytelling. At least Aries has his own history here and it's not some total newcomer winning the title.

Overall the show was watchable enough but I can't really go beyond that. For a show that was supposed to be the latest restart, only the title change felt like something new. A lot of the feuds and stories seemed to be taking their next step and none of the felt like a big deal. It's not a bad show by any means but, last five minutes aside, this really wasn't eventful.

## Results

Matt Sydal b. Fallah Bahh – Shooting star press

Bobby Lashley b. KM – Spear

Kiera Hogan b. Laurel Van Ness – Rollup

Johnny Impact/Moose b. Alberto El Patron/Ethan Carter III – Clothesline to El Patron

Austin Aries b. Eli Drake – Brainbuster

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# 205 Live – January 30, 2018: Hail the Big Potato

## 205 Live

Date: January 30, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

It's a big week around here as we have the first ever General Manager being announced. In addition to that though, we also have the next step in the Cruiserweight Title situation as the title was vacated due to Enzo Amore being released from the company. That sounds like a tournament and that wouldn't be the worst thing in the world. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to open things up with the big announcement. He's not alone though as he's flanked by TNA's Rockstar Spud. Bryan mentions the Cruiserweight Classic before talking about the new General Manager. Under his leadership, this show will be giving us the kind of action that the fans want.

Spud is officially named Drake Maverick (with Vic mentioning the Rockstar Spud name) and Bryan leaves him to make his initial speech. Drake has dedicated his entire career to get here and he's proud to be here in WWE. As for the title, there will be a sixteen man elimination tournament to crown a new champion with the finals taking place at Wrestlemania. That tournament starts TONIGHT with Gran Metalik vs. Cedric Alexander and Tyler Bate (making his 205 Live debut) vs. TJP.

I like the pick. Maverick had some good intensity and sold the promo very well. We solve both problems in one move and hopefully have some structure to the show going forward. It also helps that he can wrestle down the line if need be and it's not like it would be a stretch to have him against the other cruiserweights. This works well all things considered.

## Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Cedric Alexander vs. Gran Metalik

Before the match, Cedric says he's ready to win. In the back, Maverick tells Metalik to show him something. Cedric grabs the arm to start but Metalik flips away. A headscissors goes nowhere with Alexander waving a finger no. Instead he sends Metalik over the ropes, only to charge into a kick to the head. Metalik adds a top rope dropkick but Alexander is right back up with a top rope clothesline and a flip dive to the floor.

Back in and we hit the chinlock on Metalik for a bit before Alexander charges into a superkick. Metalik sends him outside for a running flip dive, drawing a rare 205 chant. They trade some shots to the head until Metalik gets two off a standing C4. Metalik catches him on top though and mostly hits a springboard hurricanrana for two of his own. The Lumbar Check is reversed into a DDT (sweet counter) for two but the moonsault hits boots. Cedric grabs the Lumbar Check for the pin at 9:25.

**Rating:** B. I'd be surprised if Alexander didn't either win the tournament or lose in the finals as he was at worst a heavy favorite to take the title from Amore. He's been around for a long time now and has one of the most successful finishers around the division. Now go somewhere with him. Metalik continues to be a solid hand as well, which should do him a lot of good.

Video on Tyler Bate, most of which I believe has aired on NXT before.

Jack Gallagher thinks he should be in the tournament finals.

Drew Gulak presents Maverick with some flowers in the hopes that he'll support law and order.

Mustafa Ali lost a big match last week but he heard the fans cheering him on. He's ready to get back to it though and earn the Cruiserweight Title.

TJP insists on being referred to as the first ever Cruiserweight Champion and reminds us that he won the Cruiserweight Classic. Maverick comes in and says that was a long time ago. He'd like to know which TJP is going to show up tonight. Will it be TJP the champion or the TJP who whines



when he doesn't get his way?

Akira Tozawa wanted to be GM but he'll settle for winning the title again at Wrestlemania.

### Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: TJP vs. Tyler Bate

As you might expect, the fans are behind Bate. They fight over the arm to start until spins into a headscissors for two with a dab thrown in for good measure. Bate reverses into a headscissors and even a nip up can't get TJP out of trouble. We actually get some dueling chants, albeit with the LET'S GO TYLER side easily dominating. Bate tries to roll him into another hold but gets caught something like a surfboard. He reverses into one of his own though and even stands up to rock TJP back and forth for a painful looking visual.

With the hold not getting him anywhere, Bate sends him outside for a suicide dive, which doesn't get the biggest reaction in the world. Back in and some choking in the corner gets TJP out of trouble, followed by a belly to back suplex for two. We hit a double underhook crank on Bate so he powers TJP into the corner for the break. As usual, there's no substitute for straight power.

Bate charges into the corner though and TJP jumps up for a half crab with the two of them in the ropes. That's a new one. Nigel gets in a great stat as he mentions Bate being born the year TJP had his first match. Back up and Bate hits a running big boot to the face to knock TJP's head off. A delayed German suplex gets two and TJP looks rocked. Some kicks to the leg stagger Bate but he tosses TJP with another suplex.

A standing shooting star gets two but TJP goes back to the knee to take Bate down again. Bate misses his rebound clothesline and it's off to the kneebar. As usual though (as in what happens nearly EVERY SINGLE TIME), the first attempt is broken up without much effort. A hard clothesline drops TJP for two but Bate is feeling the knee injury. He's still able to do the airplane spin (which I actually thought was playing at double speed) and TJP is all dizzified.

The Tyler Driver 97 doesn't work though and it's back to the kneebar.

This one is reversed into a rollup, followed by that hard left hand to TJP's jaw. Spiral Tap misses though and it's the third kneebar to have Bate in real trouble. Somehow he makes the ropes AGAIN so let's try the Tyler Driver again. This time TJP grabs the ropes and reverses into a rollup with a handful of trunks to win at 14:33.

**Rating:** B. They were starting to roll here with the leg injury being perfectly fine. I still can't emphasize enough how impressive Bate is for someone his age. His power stuff is awesome and the athleticism is impressive, especially for someone with as plain of a look as he has. Give him some more experience and time to learn and he could be a very solid player. TJP winning is a bit of a surprise but maybe they're dropping the whole whining thing and just letting him do what worked before.

Next week in first round matches: Kalisto vs. Lince Dorado and Hideo Itami vs. the debuting Roderick Strong.

**Overall Rating:** A-. What more can you ask for? No Enzo, the top issue is addressed, we have two very good matches and an energetic debut, plus two more tournament matches being announced in advance. It's almost like they're trying around here all of a sudden and that's not something you get on this show very often. Excellent show here and one of the best 205 Live has ever done.

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