

She's Going to Wrestlemania!

Something something BAD REPUTATION!!!

Again not quite as Asuka won, last eliminating Nikki Bella. The others in the final four were Brie Bella and Sasha Banks. ASuka was about to pick the champion to challenge when RONDA ROUSEY came out. Ronda, in a Roddy Piper t-shirt and what looked to be Piper's old jacket, offered Asuka a handshake and then pulled it back before pointing to the Wrestlemania sign. Rousey shook Stephanie's hand too and Stephanie awkwardly stared at her to end the show.

I'm sold, either way. Well not with Stephanie vs. Rousey but Rousey vs. Asuka works for me.

He's Going to Wrestlemania!

YES! YES! YES HE IS! By that I mean Shinsuke Nakamura of course, who last eliminated Roman Reigns to win. John Cena and Finn Balor filled out the final four. The big surprise was Rey Mysterio with Hurricane as a comedy joke. Andrade Cien Almas and Adam Cole were the NXT representatives. No Daniel Bryan.

Also, Nakamura said he wanted to face AJ Styles, so the match seems to be made for Wrestlemania.

I was completely wrong about this as I never would have guessed Nakamura to win. Some people said he would though and it turns out they were right.

Royal Rumble 2018 Preview

The big day is here. We're less than twenty four hours away from the "2018 Royal Rumble" and that means we're in for one of the biggest nights of the wrestling year. In this case we have two Royal Rumble matches to go with two far less interesting World Title matches, but the double Rumble on its own should be enough to carry the show as far as it needs to go. Besides, even if the Rumbles are terrible, they're still Royal Rumbles and that makes them entertaining by definition.

Kickoff Show: US Title: Bobby Roode(c) vs. ???

This is an open challenge with new champion Roode defending against an opponent to be named. In this case, that could be anyone and that makes this a little more interesting. It also opens the door for another Rumble name if a surprise shows up as there's always the chance that someone will work two matches on the show, though that tends to not be the case most of the time.

I'll take Jinder Mahal to answer the challenge and Roode to retain. The other options would likely be Tye Dillinger and Dolph Ziggler, though I would need therapy to get my head around the idea of Ziggler vacating the title and then coming back to try and win it in a regular match. Roode should of course retain and sadly enough, he has to do it on the pre-show.

Kickoff Show: Revival vs. Anderson and Gallows

You know, I'm already more optimistic about this match than I was when they fought Monday on "Raw". Really, it can't get any worse for the Revival than what happened to them there so it's a nice relief to know we might actually get

an interesting match. At the very least there isn't likely to be a completely unnecessary legends beatdown, so things are looking up.

Unfortunately I'll take Anderson and Gallows to win here. Not that they need it more (though a win would be nice for them) but more along the lines of WWE seems to like the idea of throwing someone out there and having them lose in a short match before having them lose in a longer match. This should be fine though, and if Revival can pull off the win, even better.

Kickoff Show: Kalisto/Lince Dorado/Gran Metalik vs. TJP/Jack Gallagher/Drew Gulak

Watch them put this on the pre-show second, leaving one of the other matches to get the empty arena treatment. This feels like any other six man tag you might see on "205 Live" and as luck would have it, the same three good guys fought TJP and two other partners on this week's show. For WWE, this is impressive progress.

I'll take the luchadors to win because really, it's not like it matters one way or another. We're still waiting on the new General Manager to take over "205 Live" and reset things (again) so there's no way of telling what to expect at the moment. You'll get some nice dives and flips, but really there's not much to this one. It'll serve its purpose of warming up the crowd, but that purpose is low when there are so many other matches on the card.

Raw Tag Team Titles: Seth Rollins/Jason Jordan(c) vs. The Bar

Jordan and Rollins have only been champions for a month now and it already feels like they've had them for a year. I'm not sure why I'm supposed to be interested in Jordan's heel turn and move into a feud with Rollins in the injured Dean Ambrose's place but that might suggest that WWE has to come up with something that fits instead of just writing a new

story two months out.

I'll take Rollins and Jordan to retain for now but you know they're going to lose the titles in the near future. Sheamus' injury issues would suggest that they're not the best options in the world to take the titles so I'll wait on Anderson and Gallows to win the titles, probably at "Elimination Chamber 2018" For now though, it's more miscommunication as we wait on the heel turn.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles(c) vs. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn

What a weird title match. Does anyone believe we're going to have co-champions? I get that the idea is something about Shane McMahon vs. Daniel Bryan in their ridiculous power struggle story because WWE for some reason thinks that's more important than the World Title situation, but for now we're getting this match for the title on one of the biggest pay per views of the year.

I'm not sure how, but Styles retains here, possibly through interference from the two bosses. I mean, it's hard to imagine that they're not at ringside to keep the focus where it needs to be, but other than that we're likely watching a lot of double teaming from some great heels while they try to make the match work. Styles can be great against either of them, but for some reason they've gone with the least appealing match they could choose. But yeah, Styles retains.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos(c) vs. Chad Gable/Shelton Benjamin

This is a 2/3 falls match, which seems like a smart idea on a show with so much time to fill. If they spend their time right, they can put together something very entertaining here as they all know how to fly around the ring and be very entertaining. The Usos have been the best team in the company for a very long time and that could make for a fun

match, especially given the amount of time they should have.

I'll take the Usos to retain here as their feud against the Bludgeon Brothers seems to be set in stone from here. Benjamin and Gable are almost guaranteed to win one fall and then we can move on to the teams going crazy in the third fall. The Usos are more than capable of rocking the house with good challengers and that's what they have here. This should be a lot of fun.

Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar(c) vs. Kane vs. Braun Strowman

This is being written a few hours after Johnny Gargano and Andrade Cien Almas rocked the house for the NXT Title. Now why do I have a feeling that this one might not have the same level of emotion? The Universal Title has continued to be a thing that exists while we wait until New Orleans and there's just no hiding that.

I'd like to say Braun Strowman wins here just for the sake of some false hope but it's going to be Brock Lesnar pinning Kane (though pinning Strowman wouldn't shock me) to retain the title and head on to the big title match with Roman Reigns. Hopefully this approaches the intensity of the hoss fights from late last year but I'm not exactly buying the idea of Kane being able to do that. Hopefully he doesn't slow things down too badly, but he should just be there to take the pin.

Men's Royal Rumble

The more I think about it, the more drama I think there might be in this. That's a little bit of a change of pace as WWE has done next to nothing to hype this match. It's really just been "hey it's the Rumble" and we'll worry about the rest later. There are a few potential winners and while some of them are more interesting than others, as usual, it's going to boil down to just a few options.

I'm torn on this one but I think I'm going to go with Roman Reigns. It's either going to be him or Shinsuke Nakamura (or maybe John Cena) but it would be better if they didn't waste our time with the false hope of Reigns not going to the title match in New Orleans. Of course they could use this to make a new star but that doesn't seem to be their cup of tea lately. Hopefully it happens here though, as they REALLY need that at the moment.

Women's Royal Rumble

I'm starting to get more interested in this one as I'm curious to see what they might throw in here to fill in the spots. That being said, EGADS WHY MUST STEPHANIE MCMAHON BE ON COMMENTARY DURING THE ENTIRE THING??? I really could go without the announcers cowering in fear of her hatred of all things pronouns and trying to be all casual and funny while speaks the corporate line all match.

The more I think about it, the more I think Nia Jax takes this. Asuka seems to be a little too easy and hopefully it sets up Asuka vs. Charlotte. Asuka vs. Alexa Bliss II isn't a Wrestlemania caliber match and they would be crazy to go there when Charlotte is an option. Go with Jax and see who she gets to face for the title while FINALLY giving her a big win at the same time. It's a better story, but none of the options are really great.

Overall Thoughts

Like I said, they've done a pretty pathetic job of setting up this show. They've focused on the two World Title matches without realizing that there's not much to either of them in the first place. The "Raw" match is the most obvious ending in the world and the "Smackdown" match is more about the bosses being passive aggressive to each other than the title match or the wrestlers involved. That's not lost on the fans and it hasn't helped make me interested in the show.

Other than that we have the two Rumbles themselves, which haven't built up anyone but Asuka as a real threat to win either match. You could go for Nakamura or Reigns, but other than the two of them the thing feels like it could be anyone winning, even though almost no one has been built up for either match. Hopefully the matches do better than they seem on paper, which should be the case given that it's the Rumble.

Oh and for surprise picks: Kaitlyn, Michelle McCool, Tommy Dreamer and for some reason, Ryback.

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NXT Takeover – Philadelphia: Holy Bleep Indeed

Takeover: Philadelphia

Date: January 28, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Percy Watson, Mauro Ranallo

This one is a little bit different as we don't really have a top match to build this show around. There's a lot of good stuff but nothing all that great. That being said, it's kind of NXT's bread and butter as they know how to set up a full card instead of hanging everything onto one match. Let's get to it.

Paul Heyman narrates the opening video, which is either brilliant or missing the point. He talks about how this city has a rich history of fighting but tonight is about the future. We see the standard clips of the big matches before Heyman caps it off with the WE ARE NXT line. Heyman is synonymous with Philadelphia but has never done anything of note in NXT, but the delivery more than makes up for it.

Nigel McGuinness is sick today so Percy gets to take up the slack. This could be a long night.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era vs. Authors of Pain

The Era is defending but there's no Adam Cole due to his match later. The Authors jump the champs to start things off, sending Fish and O'Reilly outside before the opening bell. Fish bails from Razar to start so it's Kyle coming in to take him down and strike away. That goes as long as you would expect with Razar powering out without much effort, meaning it's time to get another breather.

Back in and Fish goes after the knee but gets knocked around by the raw power. It's off to Akum for some shots to the head, which send the champs outside. Walking away doesn't work as Fish is pulled back and dropped face first onto the barricade. Back in and Akum gets low bridged to the floor, allowing Fish to kick him in the leg and really take over. Fish spears Razar to the floor (I didn't think he could pull that off) and it's time for the double kicks to the ribs.

Some hard kicks to the leg take Akum down and O'Reilly comes back in for a leg lock. Some champion miscommunication allows Akum to hit a good back body drop for the hot tag off to Razar, even though there really aren't any faces in this. The fall away slam/drop backwards with Fish on Razar's back combination crushes the champs all over again but they're right back up with the strikes in the corner.

Fish again shows off the power with an exploder suplex for two but Razar slugs them down. Akum comes back in on the bad leg but it's a jumping knee to the head to cut off the Last Chapter. O'Reilly grabs a kneebar on Akum and Fish gets a choke on Razar, who flips him down onto Kyle for the save. Not bad.

Everyone is down so the fans start the dueling chants. It's Akum up first and buckle bombing Fish. A buckle bomb crushes O'Reilly and the Super Collider connects but Akum can't powerbomb Fish. Instead it's a hurricanrana to send the Authors into each other and Fish rolls Akum up to retain at 14:56.

Rating: B. While not a great match, it was a smart match with the champs coming at them with a power game to go with the striking and submissions. The leg work was a good story to tell throughout the match as they broke the Authors down and actually went after them instead of running away and stealing a win. I liked the story here and it made for a good match.

War Machine is here.

Earlier today, Velveteen Dream promised a thirty second knockout of Kassius Ohno.

Velveteen Dream vs. Kassius Ohno

Dream now has a muscular man and a woman to help him with his entrance, including a large pillow containing his custom made mouth piece. He's also now in boxing trunks for a rather sharp change of pace. After Ohno's entrance, Dream boxes the buckle a little bit. The fans count and Dream hits a big right hand to knock Ohno down at 27 seconds.

Dream dances around though (how Rocky I of him) and gets forearmed in the face, knocking the mouth piece out. Back up and Dream scores with a swinging spinebuster from two as the fans are almost entirely behind Dream here. We hit the chinlock until Ohno powers him into the corner, where Dream unloads with rights and lefts. Dream shouts DREAM OVER at Ohno, followed by a top rope double ax for two more. The second chinlock goes a bit better but Ohno powers out of it

again, this time slamming Dream down.

Back up and Ohno easily wins a strike off, followed by the running backsplash. A superkick cuts Ohno off and the wind up DDT (with no snap this time around) gets two, followed by Dream's Death Valley Driver for the same. The rolling forearm drops Dream but it's another Death Valley Driver into the Purple Rainmaker (from the post) for the pin on Ohno at 10:46.

Rating: B-. Now where can I get a pair of those shorts? Dream needed this win and that's why you have someone like Ohno on the roster. He can hit the heck out of people but at the end of the day, he's going to get pinned off a big finisher. Dream just has the makings of a star though as the fans buy into him, though he's dead in the water on the main roster where Cole and company would talk about every single thing he does and how they don't understand it. Good match here, but there was no way they could follow Dream's two previous matches.

We recap Ember Moon vs. Shayna Baszler. Shayna is the newcomer/outsider as a former mixed martial artist who has choked a bunch of women out. Moon won't stand for the bullying but Baszler says this has been her plan all along. Above all else though, this feud has shown how lame Ember is while Baszler has shown up and looks like a polished pro right out of the gate.

Women's Title: Shayna Baszler vs. Ember Moon

Moon is defending. Baszler easily takes her down to start and kicks Moon's leg out. Back up and Moon scores with some dropkicks to put Baszler out on the floor. A suicide dive drops her again but Baszler takes the hair down and unloads with strikes to the face and chest. Makes sense here as they're having Baszler easily win the stand-up fighting but getting beaten down in the wrestling.

Baszler steps on the arm like she did to Dakota Kai and it's off to an armbar. More knees and stomps to the arm have Moon in trouble before Baszler just pulls on the arm. Moon gets in a few slaps though, followed by a kick to the chest and a springboard spinning crossbody. The Eclipse connects but it hurts the arm even more,

causing Moon to writhe in pain in the corner.

The trainer comes in to check on the arm and the fans are NOT happy with the delay. Baszler finally gets up and tries a cross armbreaker, only to have Moon get her feet on the ropes. The armbreaker goes on again in the middle of the ring with Baszler even pulling the legs back towards the middle, just in case. Somehow Moon rolls her over though and stacks Baszler up to retain at 10:11, sending Mauro into a huge MAMA MIA.

Rating: B. Moon escaped here and that's likely to set up a rematch where Baszler wins the title. I get the idea of not putting the title on Baszler just yet but Moon needs to get better in a hurry. They told a good story with the ending as the inexperienced Baszler was too focused on one move and left herself vulnerable, which makes Ember look like a veteran who might have lost the physical battle but won the mental game. At the end of the day, the lack of ever defeating Asuka is hard to overcome and it's weighing her down a lot. This should help her though and having to fight from underneath is a good story for her.

Moon is helped out but Baszler sneaks up from behind and grabs the choke.

Ricochet (billed as Trevor "Ricochet" Mann) is here.

We recap Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole. Black knocked Cole out of the #1 contenders tournament by kicking him in the head, only to have Cole cost Black the tournament final. A match was set up but William Regal made it Extreme Rules, which might play more towards Cole's strengths.

Adam Cole vs. Aleister Black

Extreme Rules. Black's entrance is surrounded by candles and smoke this time around, making it look even better. Black easily wins an early strike off and moonsaults into the seated position. Cole grabs a chair and there's the ECW chant that you knew was coming. That's taken away in no time and Black has a seat on the chair as Cole needs to come up with a better idea.

Black follows him out this time and gets caught with a few shots, allowing Cole to throw in some weapons. Both guys find kendo sticks but Black throws his away and says bring it on. He's either very skilled or very stupid. A few kicks to the chest have Black in trouble but the springboard moonsault is caned out of the air in a good looking crash. Cole's Backstabber with the kendo stick (White Russian Backstabber?) gets two and it's table time.

Black breaks up a superplex attempt and gets slammed off the top onto a trashcan. A running knee drops Cole again and Black sets up another table next to the first. That's not enough though as Black pulls out a ladder but Cole kicks him down and sets the unfolded ladder in the corner. Cole is bleeding from somewhere (might be his hand) and hammers away in the corner. Black fights up and drops Cole onto the ladder in a good looking crash.

With Cole down, Black goes up top but Cole throws him a chair and superkicks it into Black's head, sending him through the tables. Mauro: "HOLY BLEEP INDEED!" That's only good for two so Cole loads up two chairs next to each other. Black is back up though and hits an AA onto the top of the chairs (FREAKING OW MAN!!!) to probably break Cole's back. A sliding knee into the chair into Cole's face gets two as Fish and O'Reilly run in for the save. High/Low on the floor drops Black and it's time to load up the announcers' table.

Cue Sanity for the save (makes sense) with Killian Dain taking everyone out with a suicide dive. With Black still down, Cole tries a suplex through the table. That's broken up as well and the double knees (ala Sasha Banks) drives Cole through instead. Fans: "MAMA MIA!" Back in and Cole scores with his own superkick and grabs a chair. Of course he walks right into Black Mass (to the shoulder) for the pin at 21:58.

Rating: A-. This kept building and turned into a star making performance for both guys. Black is on a roll at this point and that Black Mass should put him into the title match at Takeover: New Orleans. This was better than I thought it would be as it started slowly but built into a brawl with Black finally being the last man

standing by the end. Very good stuff here and easily the best part of the night so far.

Ethan Carter III, billed as EC3, is here and officially confirmed as a new signing.

We recap Andrade Cien Almas vs. Johnny Gargano. Almas has righted the ship after months of mediocrity, mainly thanks to the addition of Zelina Vega. Gargano had a nightmare of a 2017 and is on the comeback trail, finally turning himself back into Johnny Wrestling. Tonight is his chance at redemption, both by winning the title and beating Almas, who was a big part of his downward spiral.

NXT Title: Johnny Gargano vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Almas is defending and is played to the ring by a masked mariachi band. He also wears a mask to the ring but takes it off before getting inside. They start with a technical sequence and wrestle to a standoff as we see Johnny's wife Candice LeRae in the crowd. Neither finisher can connect early on and Almas bails into the corner while waving a finger at Johnny. We start again with Gargano wrestling him down into an armbar but one heck of a chop gets the champ out of trouble.

The announcers recap the Almas story of letting his career fall apart as he gets sent outside but manages to avoid the running flip dive off the apron. Back in and Almas bends Johnny's neck across the top rope, followed by the chinlock. Johnny fights up but gets caught in the Tree of Woe. Almas misses the top rope stomp though and gets suplexed into the corner. A middle rope swinging Downward Spiral gives Johnny two and the slingshot spear is good for the same.

As usual, Vega has some awesome facial expressions as you can feel her panicking on the near falls, which sell them that much more. Almas catches him with a spinning faceplant for two before going up. The regular moonsault doesn't work but Almas lands on his feet and hits a standing version for two more in a smart sequence. Johnny's superkick gets the same and they're both down again.

Gargano puts him on the top but can't hit the sunset bomb. Almas

misses the running knees in the corner but the slingshot spear is countered into a faceplant. A reverse tornado DDT gets two more and both guys are spent again. Excellent sequence. Almas can't hit the hammerlock DDT on the apron so Gargano slingshot DDTs him onto the apron instead. That's only good for a very close two back inside and Almas blocks the Gargano Escape. The running knees are broken up and there's the Lawn Dart to rock Almas again.

Vega's distraction lets Almas grab the DDT but that's reversed into a small package for a VERY close two. A low superkick gives Johnny two, with the camera panning over to tease interference but it just shows Vega panicking at the near fall. Almas cuts him off on top and it's the top rope double stomp onto the apron, followed by a hard toss to send Gargano into the apron again. Back in and the double knees are good for two and Almas is shocked. To be fair, I am too.

They fight back to their feet and Johnny somehow grabs a hurricanrana. The Gargano Escape goes on and Almas can't spin out. Vega grabs Almas' hand and the distraction lets Almas rake Johnny's eyes. The hammerlock DDT is broken up and a backdrop puts Almas on the floor for a suicide dive of all things. Vega is back up with a hurricanrana to send Johnny into the steps though and the hammerlock DDT....gets two. They had me on that one.

Gargano rolls outside and Vega goes after him, drawing Candice over the barricade for the brawl. She chases Vega to the back, drawing a THANK YOU CANDICE chant. The slingshot DDT gets a VERY close two and the Gargano Escape goes on again....but the foot is on the ropes. They head to the apron again and Almas hits the running knees to drive Johnny's head into the post, leaving him with the far away look in his eyes. A draping hammerlock DDT FINALLY ends Gargano at 32:22.

Rating: A+. Oh yeah that was amazing. They had me multiple times on the near falls and I never once got bored throughout the whole thing. Gargano is ready to be NXT Champion at some point and not having Ciampa interfere was the right decision as their match doesn't need to be for the title. It's an epic back and forth match with the great near falls being traded near the end. It takes a lot

to suck me in like that and they did it to perfection here.
Outstanding match.

Post match Candice comes back to take Johnny to the back but they stop for the pose on the stage....AND TOMMASO CIAMPA BREAKS A CRUTCH OVER JOHNNY'S BACK! Ciampa walks away as Candice tends to Johnny to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. Is Takeover capable of having a bad show? Or even a bad match for that matter? Like I said coming in, this felt more like a collection of matches and it still blew me away. The worst match was probably Dream vs. Ohno and even that was above average. Nothing was following that main event though and now you have a double main event of Black vs. Almas and Gargano vs. Ciampa set for New Orleans. That alone makes for a great show and if they have a strong undercard (War Machine vs. Undisputed Era and two others would be more than enough), it could be an all time classic. Great show here of course.

Results

Undisputed Era b. Authors of Pain – Rollup to Razar

Velveteen Dream b. Kassius Ohno – Purple Rainmaker

Ember Moon b. Shayna Baszler – Rollup

Aleister Black b. Adam Cole – Black Mass

Andrade Cien Almas b. Johnny Gargano – Hanging hammerlock DDT

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Smackdown – August 28, 2003: One of the Best Moments in Smackdown History

Smackdown

Date: August 28, 2003

Location: Haskins Center, El Paso, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

Summerslam is over and done with and this show has to be better than Raw. I know Smackdown hasn't been great in recent weeks but this week's Raw was one of the worst shows I've ever seen. Kurt Angle could sit in the ring, read a newspaper and have a watercress sandwich and it would still beat Raw so they don't have much of a bar to defeat. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Eddie Guerrero, who parks his car outside to make the already rabid fans wait on him a little longer. Eddie comes in through the crowd and is the biggest face to face around here in a LONG time (which isn't much of a stretch as he's been the hottest act on the show for months now). In a funny bit, Eddie hugs Tazz but ignores Cole before putting a sombrero on him. Eddie's family is in the front row and my goodness this is one of the best receptions you'll see in wrestling. I know it's his hometown but the fans absolutely love Eddie. It gets even better when he greets them in Spanish and says he's at home.

This is where lying, cheating and stealing started and we hear the Guerrero family history of his great, great grandmother walking the streets of El Paso, possibly after illegally jumping the border. One day a cop stopped her and asked if she belonged there. That earned the cop a tongue lashing in Spanish but she was just saying of

course she belonged in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

That was the first ever Guerrero lie but then she had to take the citizenship test. It was all in English though so she looked over at the other grandmother...and beat the heck out of her before stealing the answers to become a citizen. Finally, as she was leaving the office, she saw a low rider. Eddie: "Ok they didn't have low riders back then. It was a donkey." This brings out John Cena, who is in WAY over his head here.

Cena makes his usual gay jokes and Eddie just smiles at him. He threatens to call border patrol and that's a bit too far for Guerrero. Cena thinks Eddie should be a citizen before being the US Champion. A fight with Cena would be a setback because he would leave him with a broken....well it rhymes with setback.

Eddie isn't about to have Cena talk about his raza like that and accuses Cena of thinking he's more of an American. Cena calms him down and talks Eddie into a US Title match later tonight. Cena implies he'll leave with Eddie's sister and the brawl is on. Eddie steals Cena's jersey before rapping at him about how Cena will taste defeat thanks to the Latino Heat.

This was a GREAT face turn as Eddie is one of the most charismatic guys on the roster and the fans have been begging to cheer him for months now. Doing this to open the show in Eddie's hometown was the perfect move and exactly how it should have gone. Oh and the stuff about the grandmother was hilarious.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Nunzio

Rey is def...hang on I need a minute. Rey is defending. Sorry I haven't had to say that in a long time and I was out of practice. Cole mentions that Rey defended the title last night on Heat, which wasn't important enough to mention in advance. The referee ejects the other Italians to make sure this is one on one. Nunzio takes him down without much effort to start and gets two off a harder clothesline than I thought Nunzio could pull off.

Back up and Rey sends him outside for a corkscrew dive over the top. A baseball slide is caught though and Nunzio drops him ribs first onto the barricade. Nunzio cranks on the arms for a bit but Rey fights up without much effort. Rey goes a little too fast though and the West Coast Pop is countered into a powerbomb (which Cole calls a

gutbuster and a spinebuster) for two. A pinfall reversal sequence gets two each but Nunzio puts him on top. The belly to back superplex is reversed and Rey Drops the Dime to retain.

Rating: B-. Short match but they were rolling with the time they had. Nunzio is a talented guy and someone who can wrestle a surprisingly good match against a host of opponents. Mysterio is of course excellent but the Cruiserweight Title isn't doing him any good. The fact that there's no competition other than an occasional match doesn't help either, but that's the flaw with the title in general.

Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

A-Train has Sable in his corner, wearing a very short dress. Benoit gets thrown around with ease to start so of course he charges right at A-Train with more chops. A-Train throws him onto his shoulder to drive Benoit ribs first into the buckle and a single kick puts Benoit on the floor. The announcers make sex jokes about Sable as A-Train gets two off a double underhook gutbuster.

Instead of following up though, A-Train pulled a buckle pad off. Some chops and a German suplex give Benoit a breather and there's the Swan Dive for two. Benoit is sent back first into the exposed buckle so the Derailler can get two. That's fine with Benoit, who Crossfaces A-Train for the tap, despite A-Train's legs being underneath the ropes.

Rating: C. So their method for building A-Train up is by having him lose most of his big matches? Such is life in WWE and that gets a little tiring. I mean, I know it's just A-Train but if you want him to be a monster, I'd like to see more than him beating Stephanie in a "match". Of course WWE thinks that means the world but it's not exactly reality.

During the break, A-Train yelled at Benoit for not being able to beat him. A fight is about to break out but it's a ruse so Rhyno can Gore Benoit through a door. What did Benoit do to get stuck with these feuds?

Eddie's tire has been stolen and he accuses various people, eventually decking Johnny the Bull for smiling a bit too much.

Here's Brock Lesnar for a chat, but only after telling us to shut up and sit down because he has something to say. Since Summerslam,

everywhere he goes, he's been told he tapped out. That's quite the list of places in four days. Brock accidentally starts the YOU TAPPED OUT chant and he's sick of it. Summerslam was a fluke, a mirage and a miracle because he's never tapped out in his life.

Brock is no quitter, unlike everyone here who quits looking for jobs after they don't find one immediately (kind of an odd choice of an insult but no one ever accused Brock of being a good talker). He's been told there's no shame in tapping out to an Olympic champion. Brock: "I'M BROCK LESNAR AND I'M SPECIAL!" He's demanding a title rematch and insults Angle's ears for not coming out here immediately.

Angle pops up on screen and says Brock sounds like a baby who lost his rattle. He thinks the fans want to see action....like when he beat Brock at Summerslam. Angle offers to come out here and make Brock tap again but here's Undertaker instead. It's time for Brock to go to the back of the line because Undertaker hasn't had a title shot in a long time. Now Brock is standing in Undertaker's yard but before anything can happen, here's Big Show to interrupt. Does he come with the show like parsley with a steak?

Show talks about hurting more people than anyone ever has but here's Angle to keep this segment going even longer. Angle talks about wanting to face any of these people, all of whom he would make tap. He wants someone to make a decision....so here's Stephanie, who is in charge tonight because Vince is gone. Isn't that always supposed to be the case? Anyway it's a triple threat for the #1 contendership later tonight. This was WAY longer than it needed to be and really only served to prove that Lesnar is a really bad talker.

During the break, Cena (now in a fresh jersey with a matching hat) denies any involvement with stealing Eddie's tire.

US Title: John Cena vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie is defending and Cena comes out carrying a tire. Cole: "If this isn't evidence, I don't know what is." You should need a license to be that stupid. Of course Cena stole it but unlike Eddie, he got away with it. That would be another stupid line. Eddie runs out and starts fast, busting Cena open in a hurry with some shots to the head.

The slingshot hilo connects and Eddie pounds at the cut in the corner. The ProtoBomb gets Cena out of trouble and a hard

clothesline makes things even worse for the champ. Eddie gets in a few kicks and sends Cena outside but takes a bit too long, allowing Cena to hit him in the leg. That just earns him a ram into the announcers' table to draw a little more blood. Eddie brings his tire in but it's just a ruse to get in a chair to Cena's back. The fans eat this up with a cuchara but the frog splash misses.

Back from an abrupt break with Cena holding a double chickenwing. A delayed vertical suplex gets two and Cena bearhugs him down for two arm drops. Eddie is back up with a suplex of his own and the FU is countered into a hurricanrana. The referee gets bumped and OF COURSE the frog splash connects a few seconds later. That means a delayed two, followed by the Three Amigos but Cena hits him low for the DQ.

Rating: B. Cena wasn't ready to hang with Eddie in a long match (to be fair, not many people were on their best day) but Eddie is more than capable of carrying him to a good match. The rematch could be better but for a first match, this was about as good as it was going to get. At least neither lost clean though.

Post match Cena hits him with the chain to bust Eddie open. An FU onto the tire and it's big rim makes it even worse.

We look back at Brock destroying Zach Gowen last week, making me a much bigger Lesnar fan in the process.

Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

The winner gets Angle next week. Angle comes out to join commentary and the match starts after a break. Better than having thirty seconds of action and then going into a break. Back with Undertaker getting double teamed, including Brock hitting some shoulders in the corner. Show throws Undertaker down with a suplex so Brock can steal a near fall. You can imagine how well this goes and it starts with Undertaker being sent out to the floor.

Brock suplexes Show for two with Undertaker making the quick save. Undertaker starts slugging away and hits a jumping clothesline on Show (Angle: "Undertaker would probably miss me on that one.") but Brock takes him down. Show decks Lesnar but Undertaker reverses a chokeslam into a Fujiwara armbar.

That's broken up as well (they're certainly not deviating from a pattern here) and Undertaker is knocked outside with his hands getting caught in the ropes. Show chairs Undertaker down and growls

a lot as we take a break. Back with Brock on the floor and some right hands rocking Show. A triangle choke puts Show in trouble so Brock makes another save. The chokeslam gets two with Show pulling the referee out and then chokeslamming Undertaker for two of his own.

An F5 lays out Undertaker and Show makes ANOTHER save. Show chokeslams Brock for two and the kickout sends him up top for what looks to be a super chokeslam. Undertaker saves the ring from being broken and everyone is down with Show crotched on top. Brock goes up for a superplex of his own but gets caught in the Last Ride, leaving Show to fall off the top as Undertaker pins Lesnar.

Rating: D+. The constant near falls weren't really dramatic or anything as you knew it was going to be something big to get to the finish. It was entertaining enough though and that's a lot more than you can say about a lot of these matches. That being said, was there ANY reason not to have Big Show take the pin here? I mean....it's Big Show. Suddenly we're protecting him?

Angle and Undertaker do the big staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. It was nowhere near perfect but this was an entertaining show. Swap out the horrible Lesnar promo with pretty much anything else and this show is a lot better but what we got was fine. Make no mistake about it though: this was the Eddie Guerrero Show with the hometown crowd loving their hero like no one I've seen in a long time. Some of the stories have me interested and that's a nice feeling, especially after the mess that was Raw.

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Takeover: Philadelphia Preview

It's time, once again, for everybody to come about the NXT train. This weekend WWE is doing another one of its big multi-night marathons in a single city and it all starts with NXT "Takeover: Philadelphia". As usual, there's a five match card with all three titles on the line and two other matches to fill out the card. If this thing can live up to the rest of NXT's Takeover efforts, this should be excellent. Let's get to it.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era(c) vs. Authors of Pain

I could have sworn that this was supposed to be a cage match. These teams (along with Sanity) have been feuding on and off for months with the Undisputed Era coming away with the titles for the time being. However, the Authors of Pain are arguably the most dominant team in the history of NXT so there's a real chance that they could get the titles back here.

That being said, I'm taking the Undisputed Era as there's no reason to keep the Authors of Pain in NXT any longer (save for a feud with the debuting War Machine). The champs retaining and finally establishing themselves as the best of the three teams is the way to go and makes whoever can take them down look that much better. The match should be fun with the Undisputed Era cheating to win like they're supposed to.

Women's Title: Ember Moon(c) vs. Shayna Baszler

This is an interesting one in that it's not the most interesting thing in the world. Baszler has only been

around for a few weeks now and is already one of the best characters in all of NXT. She knows exactly how to play the outsider bully, mainly because it feels so natural for her. Throw in the good looking choke and it's hard to argue against her. On the other hand though, Moon doesn't really have a character. She has intense eyes and that's really about it, but she's Asuka's successor.

I'm going to take Moon retaining via DQ here, though seeing Baszler choke her out for the title wouldn't shock me. More than likely though, Baszler chokes her out but won't let go and loses the title as a result. The problem right now is that aside from Kairi Sane, there isn't another face to put the title on so Moon is probably the best option. Baszler will get the title one day though.

Kassius Ohno vs. Velveteen Dream

Ohno is a very valuable thing to have on the roster: the grizzled veteran who can wrestle a solid match while putting someone young over and making them look good at the same time. Dream is in need of a big win at the moment, having lost at "Takeover: WarGames" to Aleister Black and last week on "NXT" to Johnny Gargano. I think you get where I'm going with this.

Of course it's going to be Dream winning and there's really no doubt about this one. Throw him out there in the opener and let him take a bunch of big forearms to the head before hitting the Purple Rainmaker for the pin. It's a simple idea and the fans are going to eat up Dream's stuff, especially after his previous two great performances. Easy winner here though.

Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole

Extreme Rules. This might be the most interesting match on the show and there's a very good chance that it's going to be the best as well. Black is one of the best acts in NXT at the moment with one of the best finishers but Black is

more of an acquired taste. He's a great talker, but at the same time he needs to be able to do something in the ring to back that up.

I'm going to take Black here but Cole winning is a possibility, especially with Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly available to run interference if necessary. I could see Black getting screwed out of the title, but Black getting an NXT Title shot in New Orleans makes a lot of sense as well, meaning he should win here. I'll take Black in a match that really could go either way.

NXT Title: Andrade Cien Almas(c) vs. Johnny Gargano

This is a different kind of story as they have a past together and there's a future for both guys but at the same time there isn't much going on between them at the moment. Gargano won a competition to become #1 contender and is in the middle of a huge redemption story and Almas feels more like a transitional champion, even though he's kind of redeeming himself at the same time.

That being said, Almas retains here when Tommaso Ciampa runs in for the interference and costs Gargano his chance at becoming champion. That sets up the mother of all grudge matches in New Orleans while Almas retains the title and gets to face Black, who can kick his head off and win the title....I think. It should be a fun match as they surprised me in Brooklyn, but I'm not sure they can top what they did there.

Overall, "Takeover: Philadelphia" doesn't seem like the best show on paper. Nothing really jumps off the page at me but that's been the case before and NXT has blown me away almost every time. Almas' time on top hasn't been the most thrilling in the world but they'll set something up to get things going soon enough, because that's how NXT does things. Let them show what they can do and everything will be fine.

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Thought of the Day: Mankind Wasn't That Bright

This is what I think about at midnight.

So nineteen years ago, Mick Foley got his brains scrambled at Royal Rumble 1999 via about two dozen chair shots to the head. This allowed someone to play a tape of him saying I QUIT, which he would never say, thereby guaranteeing that he would defeat Rock. Well, in theory at least, but this isn't the brightest idea in the world.

They made it very clear that the only way to win would be to say I QUIT. They even made it clear that it had to be those words, even down to having Foley spell it out and count the letters. But given that Rock has never said "I" in his life, how was he supposed to get Rock to lose either? Saying THE ROCK QUITs wouldn't do it, so how was Foley supposed to win? I know he's not exactly smart, but isn't he making this harder than he needed to?

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2016: This Was Their BEST Idea?

Royal Rumble 2016

Date: January 24, 2016

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 15,170

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Now this one actually has my interest for a change. A year ago, WWE decided that the right idea was to have WWE World Champion Roman Reigns fight everyone in a single match for the title. This is completely different as now he fights everyone for the US Title. Anyway, the whole thing is about the main event, as it should be, so let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Mark Henry/Jack Swagger vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Darren Young/Damien Sandow vs. Ascension

One fall to a finish and the winners go to the Rumble. I can't help but call JBL cute for suggesting that any of these four have a chance to win the Rumble. The fans want Sandow and just EXPLODE when he actually gets the tag. The Wind-Up Elbow gets two on Swagger before it's off to Young so the crowd can die all over again. Konnor tags himself in and it's a big eight way standoff as we take a break.

Back with Swagger powerslamming Konnor as we hear about the fans wanting some Sandow. D-Von gets crotchted against the post so the fans change up to wanting Sexual Chocolate. Henry obliges with a hip swivel, which will probably get him fined for not focusing enough or some jazz like that. A D-VON chant gets him back to his feet because we need a long chinlock in a match that doesn't break eight minutes and has eight participants. Bubba comes in off the hot tag and cleans house with Young taking Wazzup. 3D gets two on Viktor but

Henry steals the pin at 7:58.

Rating: D. This wasn't great but it did everything it needed to do. At the end of the day, other than MAYBE the Dudleyz, Swagger and Henry were the only pairing that made sense here. Just let us have two former World Champions in there to fill in a few spots. It's not like anyone wanted to see Young or Ascension (a sign in the crowd called them today's joke and I can't say I disagree) in there so go with what makes sense.

Vince and Stephanie McMahon show up in a limo (So they're good at this point. Got it.) and talk about how awesome tonight is going to be and how fair it is to Reigns. Vince loves the idea, almost as much as he loves himself.

The opening video recaps the only thing that matters here with the tagline of One vs. All. I liked that last year and I still do.

Intercontinental Title: Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose is defending and this is last man standing. They go right after each other to start with Dean hammering away and biting Owens' head before scoring with the bulldog out of the corner. What looks like a tablet to the head gives Owens a breather and a superkick sets up the Cannonball through the barricade. A few chair shots keep Dean in trouble and Owens has a seat as the champ gets up.

Two chairs are set up in the middle of the ring but, just like putting a chair in the corner, whoever sets them up goes through them, meaning Ambrose backdrops him through the chairs. A suicide dive is countered into a ram into the apron followed by a whip into the steps for about a seven. With Ambrose getting up again, Owens loads up two tables on top of each other but the superplex is blocked, meaning we'll get back to the big crash later.

Dirty Deeds gets eight on Owens and another one onto a chair sends Owens rolling to the floor to land on his feet at nine. Eh that's kind of clever. The fans want Owens to fight (multiple times even) but Dean elbows him through a table. That's still not enough so Dean says he hates Owens. Kevin: "I hate you too!" Back in and Owens' swinging fisherman's superplex sends Dean through another table to give Kevin a nine count. Owens lays Dean on a set of chairs but the champ pops up and shoves him through the double tables to retain at 20:50.

Rating: B+. It's no masterpiece but this is the kind of show that only needs one great match to be a classic, making this a bonus. The big spot at the end was a good choice and I kind of like that over a finisher onto something made of metal. It's a good match and a good way to open things up since the rest of the card is just a way to get to the main event.

We recap heel New Day (what a weird concept, though they're rapidly turning face here) vs. the Usos, which has involved Chris Jericho destroying Francesca to freak Woods out.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Usos

New Day is defending (of course) and there's no Woods. Kofi asks for a moment of silence for Francesca but here's Woods with a new trombone named Francesca II. See, he's in mourning but a man has, ahem, needs. This isn't it for them tonight though as New Day wants the World Title so 2016 can be all gold everything. Kofi: "GOLDEN UNICORNS!" Woods: "Stay golden pony boy."

The twins take over to start and the fans aren't all that thrilled. A jawbreaker puts Jimmy down and it's off to Big E. for some hip swiveling, only to have Jey dropkick him into the barricade. Woods proves his worth to the team by dropping Jey to take over again. Sometimes it's a bit harder to get rid of those old heel tendencies you see. The fans demand a Francesca performance but Woods plays when he wants to, which isn't while Kofi has Jey in a chinlock.

The Warrior Splash gives Big E. two as JBL talks about NFL coin flips. A spinning enziguiri drops Kofi and there's the hot tag to Jimmy so house can be cleaned. Normally the fans are a bit more enthusiastic about that but New Day is just WAY too popular here for fans to get behind the Usos.

Everything breaks down and a Whisper in the Wind gets two on Big E. A belly to belly gets the same on Jey but the spear through the ropes is blocked by a raised knee. Why not just step to the side? The second attempt works a bit better but it's too early for the Midnight Hour. Jey superkicks Kofi into the Superfly Splash for two as a foot goes on the rope. Kofi eats another superkick but a blind tag brings in Big E. for the Big Ending to retain at 10:52.

Rating: B-. This took some time to get rolling but once everything broke down, it was as good as you would expect from these teams. New Day is clearly the future of the division despite being champs for

nearly five months at this point. Catching a top rope splash out of the air is really impressive as the champs continue to show that they have the ring work to back up their charisma.

We look back at Brock Lesnar beating up the League of Nations, followed by Reigns spearing Brock. The Wyatts then beat Reigns and Brock up to make themselves a threat for later tonight.

The Wyatts say they'll win the title for Bray tonight. Singing ensues.

US Title: Kalisto vs. Alberto Del Rio

Kalisto is challenging and they've been trading the title for a few weeks now. Kalisto starts fast with the strikes to send him outside for a suicide dive. Now you might think this is competitive, but JBL is right there to hammer in the ideas that David NEVER beats Goliath and that Kalisto is going to get destroyed. You know, in case you're dumb enough to not get the idea here.

Back in and Del Rio kicks him down, followed by a top rope ax handle for two. That means JBL gets to talk about how fun it is to beat up luchadors. Two knees to the ribs have Kalisto in more trouble and it's time to go after the mask. There's some good heel psychology in there about someone with Del Rio knowing the tradition of the mask and going after it anyway but the announcers gloss over it.

Del Rio's low superkick gets two and Kalisto gets the same off a springboard tornado DDT. Kalisto goes up top but gets caught in a reverse superplex. They HORRIBLY botch a Code Red (the sunset bomb) so Kalisto goes straight to the Salida Del Sol for two. Del Rio unhooks a turnbuckle pad and of course he goes into it, setting up another Salida Del Sol for the pin and the title at 11:32.

Rating: C+. Not bad here but the commentary was driving me crazy here. JBL kept talking about how there was NO WAY the smaller guy could win and that's exactly what we saw happening. There's a difference between setting up an idea and just hammering it into the ground, which is what we had here. The match itself was fine but I do wonder how they screwed up Kalisto. He might not have been a future World Champion but he's someone that could have been a fixture in the midcard. Instead, he's just a guy on the roster because we needed to feed him to Rusev down the line. You know, to feed him to Reigns.

Pre-show recap.

Paul Heyman comes up to Stephanie and says they can renegotiate Lesnar's contract after he wins the Rumble. Stephanie is cool with that as long as Reigns is taken to Suplex City. Why she hates Reigns isn't clear but I'd assume it's because she just feels like it at the moment.

Recap of Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch. They were best friends but Charlotte won the title and realized she didn't need Becky anymore. Becky talked Ric Flair into accepting the title shot for his daughter and we're ready to roll.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Charlotte is defending and has her dad with her. Feeling out process to start with Charlotte shouldering her down. Becky goes right for the arm and the fans are entirely behind her. The announcers explain the Figure Eight as Charlotte grabs an armbar of her own. Back up and a kick to the chest puts Charlotte on the floor where Ric gets in Becky's way. A clothesline drops the champ again so Flair kisses Becky for your weekly case of sexual assault (edited off the Network).

Charlotte takes over and grabs a cravate as the fans are WAY behind Becky here. Like moreso than usual. Thankfully Charlotte mocks the chants before doing the headscissor faceplants followed by the Figure Four necklock. Becky gets out and starts firing off dropkicks to take over but a neckbreaker puts Charlotte right back in control.

The Bexploder gets two and Charlotte's spear gets the same. You can hear Flair freaking out as only he can and it wouldn't be the same without that screaming. Becky gets a cross armbreaker out of the corner and the fans get right back into this, only to have a powerbomb break the hold to give Charlotte two. The Disarm-Her goes on but Flair throws his jacket at Becky for the distraction, allowing Charlotte to get another spear to retain at 11:34.

Rating: B. Another good match between the two of them but I'm really starting to roll my eyes at Flair's interference. We get the concept already and there's no need to keep doing it over and over. At some point Charlotte needs to drop him and once that happens, she's going to go through the roof, which would turn out to be in a bigger way than anyone could have expected.

Charlotte beats on Becky post match but here's Sasha Banks for the save and Bank Statement on the champ. Cole: "Sasha Banks making a statement with the Bank Statement!" I bet he spent two weeks coming up with that one.

Some fans went to the Performance Center under the ruse of being part of a focus group. The wound up getting to meet a full tour of the facility and met most of the NXT roster. Note to self: sign up for focus groups.

Rumble By the Numbers video, which is still one of my favorite annual traditions. This is tied in with the stats that Reigns, who is entering at #1, has to overcome to retain the title.

WWE World Title: Royal Rumble

Reigns is defending and comes in at #1, making the tagline One vs. All. We have 90 second intervals here and that's rarely a good thing. I had forgotten about Reigns' through the crowd entrance and how unfitting it was. Can you imagine him trying to pull that today without getting pummeled? Anyway Reigns is in at #2 and Rusev is in at #2, which is smart as they had an awesome final section to a battle royal on Smackdown back in 2015. They start slugging it out and even JBL knows they can't keep up this pace. Rusev gets in a spinwheel kick but can't throw him out. Well not over the top at least as he sends Roman through the ropes instead. The spear however is enough to put Rusev out as the clock begins.

And then, in perhaps the dumbest production decision I've ever seen in WWE, the camera stays on Reigns' face as AJ STYLES makes his debut at #3. Like literally, the camera just locks in on Reigns as the crowd freaks out. They even posted a different cut of this on the WWE YouTube page because it was such a stupid visual. Thanks to the entrance taking forever, we only have time for AJ to not be able to hit the Styles Clash and a Samoan drop planting AJ.

Tyler Breeze is in at #4 and the fans are COMPLETELY behind AJ, which isn't all that surprising. Breeze scores with a few right hands before a pretty unnecessary double team gets rid of him. Curtis Axel (with the WAY too over Social Outcasts) is in at #5 to send AJ into the buckle, earning himself some forearms to the face. Reigns gets back up and the Outcasts are beaten down until AJ clotheslines Axel out (JBL: "The chains are back on."). Chris Jericho is in at #6 and we've got a snappy triple threat going here.

AJ gets knocked down and Reigns is sent into the post, leaving Styles to have to fight out of the Walls. Kane is in at #7 and Cole is WAY too fast to call him the greatest performer in the Rumble's history. Wouldn't it have helped if he had actually WON THE THING a time or two Cole? Styles goes right after the monster but gets kicked down and all four head to a corner until Goldust is in at #8. Not a lot happens here other than the fans chanting for AJ even more because he debuted as a star, which only a handful of people get to do. Ryback is in at #9 and gets to clean house without eliminating anyone.

AJ clotheslines Reigns in the corner to another big pop and it's Kofi Kingston in at #10 (with New Day staying at ringside) so we can just start the clock for the big save. At the moment we have Reigns, Styles, Jericho, Kane, Goldust, Ryback and Kingston. AJ comes off the top to hit Jericho and it's Titus O'Neil in at #11. Styles and Jericho take backbreakers and Goldust is tossed. Kofi almost gets rid of Reigns and is somehow even more popular than he's been all night.

R-Truth is in at #12 and of course he pulls out a ladder and climbs up to retrieve...nothing. I forgot how much I enjoyed Truth's confused gimmick. Kane pulls him down and tosses him out before throwing the ladder out as a bonus. A clothesline puts Kofi over the top and right onto Big E.'s shoulders for the big save. Eh not as good as some I've seen but you can't have a classic every year. Luke Harper is in at #13 and here are Vince and the League of Nations to pull Roman to the floor (under the ropes of course). The champ is sent into the steps and kicked in the face by multiple members of the team.

This goes on so long that Stardust comes in at #14. Rusev splashes Reigns through the table as we have NO IDEA what is going on in the ring during all this. While we were gone, Jericho eliminated Kingston which was of course ignored by the announcers. Now for the stupid part: Vince and the Nation JUST LEAVES.

Like, they don't throw him inside and then back out. They don't pay someone off to get rid of Reigns. They don't do anything but leave while Reigns is taken out on a stretcher. You would think Vince would have learned his lesson from Steve Austin in 1999 but he's a heel so this is just really stupid instead of head caving in stupid. Big Show comes in at #15 and eliminates Titus and Ryback, giving us

a lineup of Reigns (being taken out), Styles, Jericho, Kane, Harper, Stardust and Show. Reigns is now walking in front of the stretcher, making this even less of a good idea.

Styles escapes a chokeslam and it's Neville in at #16. The rapid fire kicks stagger some people as Reigns is shown WALKING TO THE BACK UNDER HIS OWN POWER. What a hero he certainly is. Braun Strowman is in at #17 and hopefully some people are about to be tossed. Strowman casually eliminates Kane and has the showdown with Big Show. The standing choke (what a stupid move) knocks Show out and Strowman eliminates him a few seconds later.

A limping Kevin Owens is in at #18 and that's good for one heck of a pop. Styles is there to meet him and you know the fans are into that. Neville throws AJ to the apron and Kevin adds a superkick to get rid of Styles, making himself a full on heel once again. Dean Ambrose is in at #19 and Owens is waiting on him to keep up the brawl from earlier. Since there's nothing like a Royal Rumble for the World Title going on, let's look at the Reigns beatdown from earlier.

Sami Zayn is in at #20 for a main roster cameo and of course he goes after Owens in a slugout. Kevin is gone in a hurry and we've got Reigns (not in the ring), Harper, Stardust, Jericho, Zayn, Ambrose, Neville and Strowman. Erick Rowan joins the field at #21 as the Wyatts are strong in this one. Harper and Rowan get together to get rid of Stardust and Neville as Strowman chokes Jericho out.

Mark Henry is in at #22 and is eliminated by the Wyatts in less than a minute. Strowman tosses Sami leaving Ambrose and Jericho to fight the monsters. Cole: "I don't see any help coming anytime soon." The clock is ticking down as he says this so you know it's going to be someone big. As you might expect, Brock Lesnar is in at #23 and the place just goes NUTS.

It's time for some suplexes with Harper and Rowan flying across the ring (not eliminated). It takes three clotheslines to drop Strowman and there goes Rowan. Harper takes a German suplex but Brock can't suplex Strowman. Now THAT is a rub. Braun goes shoulder first into the post and another clothesline puts him down. Jack Swagger is in at #24 and lasts about fifteen seconds before Lesnar gets rid of him. More suplexes abound as Lesnar is rapidly running out of things to do.

The Miz is in at #25, giving us Reigns (you know the drill by now), Jericho, Harper, Strowman, Ambrose, Lesnar and Miz, who walks around for a bit before going in to face Brock. He actually gets on commentary and threatens to turn Disney World into Mizney World. Harper takes another German suplex and Strowman gets shouldered in the corner. That's enough to get rid of Harper and Alberto Del Rio is in at #26. Alberto and Dean double team Lesnar in the corner and are promptly launched across the ring. Some clotheslines get rid of Strowman and the fans are VERY pleased.

Bray Wyatt gets lucky #27 and the other three Wyatts all get back in to pummel Brock. Brock tosses the three eliminated guys out again and suplexes Bray but Harper saves the F5 with a kick to the chest (or face if you're Cole). Unlike Vince and the League (who did almost the same thing earlier), Bray is smart enough to ELIMINATE BROCK, who responds by.....calmly walking away instead of, you know, breaking people in half and making a throw rug out of their entrails.

Dolph Ziggler is in at #28 and it's FINALLY time for Miz to get in. A Skull Crushing Finale plants Dolph but Miz can't put him out. Sheamus is in at #29 but Reigns jumps him in the aisle, over twenty four minutes after he left and over HALF AN HOUR after the beatdown started. Naturally he's booed out of the building but still manages to get rid of Del Rio. I get that they're trying to repeat the 1999 Royal Rumble and ignoring the fact that they're copying the worst Rumble of all time, but there's a big stretch between the biggest star of all time and Roman Reigns.

Anyway Roman fights Bray for a bit and it's HHH in at #30 for one of the most obvious "swerves" in recent history. The final group is Reigns, Jericho, Ambrose, Wyatt, Ziggler, Sheamus and HHH, who gets a HUGE pop because the fans have a way out of Reigns winning the whole thing. Why the announcers have HHH stats despite him being A COMPLETE SURPRISE isn't clear but we'll chalk it up to the regular way of making it clear that this is entirely staged.

HHH and Reigns do the big staredown and the top heel is suddenly the big hero because that's how little people care about Reigns. Ziggler charges into a Pedigree like a goof and Wyatt takes a spear so Reigns can have equal power. The facebuster looks to set up a Pedigree on Reigns but Sheamus and Ambrose throw them both to the apron. Jericho bulldogs Bray down and hits a Lionsault but takes a

Zig Zag. A superkick can't knock HHH off the apron and he gets back in to eliminate Ziggler a few seconds later.

Bray and HHH have a very interesting staredown which isn't likely to go anywhere. Sheamus saves HHH from Sister Abigail and Bray is tossed. Dean and Sheamus fight for a bit until Jericho dives on Ambrose. A Codebreaker puts HHH down but Dean eliminates Jericho to get us down to four. Dean eats a Brogue Kick but sidesteps a charge to get rid of Sheamus, followed by HHH eliminating Reigns to the pop of the night.

So we're down to Ambrose vs. HHH and Reigns stays on the floor instead out helping his buddy due to a combination of stupidity, honor and plot convenience. The rebound lariat (which Cole calls, I kid you not, the Wacky Line) has HHH in trouble and Dean sends him to the apron, only to be backdropped to the floor to make HHH the winner and champion at 1:01:42.

Rating: A-. This one took a good while to get going but once Reigns left, everything picked up. That's where everything starts falling apart. This match is all about Reigns and the problem is very simple: people don't seem to like him. It says a lot that Jericho lasted 51 minutes and Reigns officially went 58 though only one of them needed half an hour of rest. That right there is proof positive that Reigns probably isn't going to be get cheered most of the time. This made him look very lame and that's one of the worst things you can do to a star. Having him WALK OUT OF THE ARENA was just horrible and the worst possible idea.

The rest of the match was pretty awesome though as you had everyone fighting over the title. Unfortunately there are some major holes, such as Brock just walking away and having to wait for Reigns to come back. It's not the best Rumble of all time as Reigns loomed over the whole thing but having the title on the line was a great idea and something I wish they did more often than every twenty four years. Give us some better options for the possible winner and ANYTHING other than Reigns vs. HHH as the big story and this is one of the best of all time.

HHH and family celebrate as fireworks take us out.

Overall Rating: A. This was a one match show and anything else worth watching on the show (such as the opener) was going to be more than enough to make this awesome. While it wound up setting the stage for

the worst Wrestlemania in a long time, at least we have an awesome Royal Rumble to get us there. WWE had a lot of potential at this point, especially considering all the injuries they had at the time. It's a strong Rumble, assuming you ignore the completely backwards reactions for Reigns.

Ratings Comparison

Mark Henry/Jack Swagger vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Darren Young/Damien Sandow vs. Ascension

Original: D+

Redo: D

Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Original: B

Redo: B+

New Day vs. Usos

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Alberto Del Rio vs. Kalisto

Original: C

Redo: C+

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch:

Original: C-

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: A-

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

What was up with me hating the women like that?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2016/01/24/royal-rumble-2016-this-rumb>

[le-game-thing/](#)

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the 2018 Updated Version of the History of the WWE Championship in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history-of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

New Book: KB's History of the WWE Championship (2018 Updated Version)



If you're a wrestling fan, you know about the WWE

Championship. It's the most famous wrestling title in the world and has been for a very long time now. The title has been around since 1963 and has gone through a long list of champions over nearly fifty five years of history. You probably know all of the recent history, but there's a lot more to it than that.

In this book, I look back at the title's history by looking at over 285 matches, all of which are for the WWE Championship. These matches range from the first ever title change all the way to the most recent title change in November 2017. There are matches from pay per views, house shows, TV shows and more with every WWE Champion in history covered.

This book was originally released in 2013 but a few things have changed since then. I've gone through and updated a few matches which were poorly written in the first place and redone and/or added nearly seventy matches. Also added are brief thoughts and a few stats on each champion, summing up their time with the title. It's also better organized and just a better overall presentation this time around.

The book runs just shy of 500 pages and is available on Amazon both in a physical paperback for \$12.99 or an e-book format (which has **ALSO** been updated) for \$2.99. In case you don't have a Kindle, there are plenty of **FREE** apps you can get from Amazon for pretty much any electronic device, all of which are available at this [link](#).

You can pick up the book from Amazon [here](#).

And From the UK Amazon [here](#).

Or if you're in another country with its own Amazon page, just search "KB WWE Championship" and it should be the first thing to come up.

Also you can still get any of my previous books on the Intercontinental Championship, Monday Night Raw from 1997, 1998, 2001 and the first half of 2014, Monday Nitro from 1995-1999, In Your House, Summerslam, Starrcade, ECW Pay Per Views, Royal Rumble, Saturday Night's Main Event, the WWF and WCW pay per views from 1998, Wrestlemania, WWE Grab Bag and Clash of the Champions at my author's page [here](#).

I hope you like it and shoot me any questions you might have.

KB

On the Big Royal Rumble Matches

We're almost to one of my favorite matches of the year as the Royal Rumble is almost upon us. Well the double Royal Rumble in this case but you get the idea. The interesting thing this time around is either Royal Rumble could go in multiple directions and that makes things a lot more fun. So what to do with each one? Or the title matches for that matter?

We'll start with the men's Rumble, which is probably the hardest of the four top matches to pick. You really could go in several different ways, but the best option would [seem to be either Roman Reigns or Shinsuke Nakamura](#), who are the favorites on at least one betting site. The more I think about it the more I'm leaning towards Reigns, as you can imagine WWE wanting to "get it right" in Philadelphia this time around.

As for the women's Rumble...dang again. While it's hard to imagine anyone not named Asuka winning this, the fun part [might be guessing who is going to be in the thing](#). We already know eighteen names announced, leaving twelve in the air for either legends or NXT talent. I can't imagine we see Ronda Rousey but after this week's

Raw, Trish Stratus and the Bella Twins are all strong possibilities. Asuka will win, but the fun part is seeing who she defeats to get there.

Then we have the World Title matches with one of them being a little easier to predict than the other. That would be the WWE Championship match as I can't imagine Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens taking the title from AJ Styles and becoming the co-champions. AJ should retain here, and then we can figure out an opponent for him down the road (likely at Fastlane).

Finally there's the Universal Title match and really, there isn't a ton of doubt here either. Roman Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar is all but chiseled into stone for Wrestlemania XXXIV in New Orleans. With Kane around, they can easily keep the title on Lesnar without taking anything away from Braun Strowman. That's especially important with Strowman [having a pretty big match on the Wrestlemania card](#).

The show should be a lot of fun, but those Rumble matches alone should make the card worth seeing. They're much more interesting than the two World Title matches, mainly due to the wide open fields. It's one of my favorite nights of the year and this time around the best part is doubled.