

Smackdown – August 14, 2003: The XFL, the WBF and Cracker Barrel vs. Bob Evans

Smackdown

Date: August 14, 2003

Location: Savvis Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in a new era around here as Brock Lesnar has turned heel again, this time siding with Vince McMahon against Smackdown World Champion Kurt Angle. You can pretty much guarantee the Summerslam title match now, but it does beg the question of why Vince refused to give Lesnar a title shot in the first place. Either this plan came together in the span of a week or there's a bit of a lack of logic there. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's a smug Vince to get things going. Vince wants to talk about the REAL Brock Lesnar, many of whom probably think they know quite well. He won the NCAA Title right here and the fans may know some things about him, but there's a side Vince knows and we don't. Brock is really an animal (at least he's not a manster, which Cole is still trying to get over) and we see a few clips to sum up last week's charade.

This includes Angle being tossed into the cage, which Vince says is Brock's version of dwarf tossing. Brock comes out and explains his definition of friendship. The only reason you need friends is to help yourself but after that's no longer an option, they're no longer your friend. As soon as Angle became champion, Angle's value to him ended. The fans can't judge him because they would do the same. They suck too.

Vince gets to the bigger point: Angle is defending against Brock at Summerslam. This brings out Stephanie (dang it had been a nice two weeks and dang that's some really bad canned applause) and Brock seems to hide behind Vince. Give him another ten years or so. Stephanie yells at Vince

for sending A-Train to attack her so Sable could win a match. She thinks Vince is scared of her having power but she's not going to quit.

Vince is a great businessman but as a father and husband, he's a piece of garbage. Screeching mode ensues with Stephanie shouting that Vince is NOTHING. Vince says that Stephanie is a bad investment, but the worst investment was the day he married Linda. As for tonight though, Stephanie can face A-Train. That's three out of four TV main events with a McMahon in the ring and again, I can't say I'm surprised. They did make this faster though as it only took fourteen minutes instead of sixteen, all to set up Stephanie vs. A-Train.

Tag Team Titles: Rey Mysterio/Billy Kidman vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

Haas and Benjamin are defending. Kidman and Haas start things off and we hit that Stephanie discussion. An armdrag takes Haas down but Shelton kicks Kidman's knee out and cannonballs down for good measure. A missed charge allows the hot tag to Rey though and things speed way back up. They seem to botch something in the corner but Rey switches into an attempt at a tornado DDT.

That's broken up as well as Shelton throws him up for something like a northern lights suplex...which hurts Shelton? Was it supposed to have been turned into a neckbreaker? Anyway Haas gets in a cheap shot from behind and Shelton grabs a t-bone for two. Everything breaks down with Kidman diving onto Haas, leaving Shelton to take a super hurricanrana for a delayed two.

We take a break and come back with Rey taking a big backdrop to the floor and clutching his knee. It's Mysterio so that's likely six months off. Charlie takes over by choking on the ropes and starts kicking at the ribs. Not the knee that Rey was holding of course, but the ribs. It makes sense when his finisher is the Haas of Pain but they're kind of ignoring what they're being handed.

Benjamin comes in for a bearhug and an abdominal stretch. As usual, I greatly approve of mixing up your holds when you have so many options. Shelton's jump onto Rey's back gives Charlie two and a dropkick to the ribs makes things even worse for Rey. Haas grabs an armbar of all things,

allowing Rey to hit a dropkick of his own. That bangs up his knee again though and Shelton breaks up the hot tag. They're building the heck out of that thing and it's working very well. Imagine that: it's easy to sympathize with Mysterio.

Rey gets in a flying mare though and a basement dropkick allows the hot tag to Kidman. Everything breaks down in a hurry as Kidman takes both champs down, including a BK Bomb for two on Haas. A belly to belly cuts Kidman off but it's Mysterio springboarding in with the legdrop for a sweet save.

Rey hurricanranas Benjamin to the floor and powerbombs Haas off the ropes, right into shooting star press position. The referee is too busy watching Rey 619 Benjamin though, allowing Haas to kick out at two. Awesome sequence. Benjamin tries to grab a belt but Rey takes it away, distracting the referee long enough that Benjamin can superkick Kidman into a rollup to retain.

Rating: B+. Heck of a match between these teams and that's all you could have expected. Kidman and Mysterio work very well together and it's no surprise that they were able to have a highly entertaining and quality match with another very talented team. I could live with this a lot more if Mysterio wasn't the Cruiserweight Champion but really, who else is there for him to face at the moment other than Kidman?

Doug Basham vs. Billy Gunn

Gunn goes straight at him to start and hits some clotheslines as the announcers talk about Shaniqua. The hiptoss into a neckbreaker gets two as Shaniqua throws Torrie in. The distraction lets the Bashams hit a Russian legsweep/clothesline combo (the Ball and Gag, because of course it is) for the very fast pin.

Post match the Bashams keep up the beating until Jamie Noble runs in to save Torrie (and her torn trunks). Thankfully the Bashams don't run from the powers of redneck violence and everyone is beaten down. The beatdown takes two or three times as long as the match.

The APA thinks Shaniqua is Shelton Benjamin in drag. Faarooq shifts gears

and thinks the APA Offices should be opened again. Bradshaw goes back to the Shaniqua thing and it's really not funny.

Big Show leaves Vince's office with a smile on his face.

Undertaker vs. A-Train is set for Summerslam. You may notice the lack of Rey Mysterio and John Cena on the pay per view. No room for people like that of course.

Big Show vs. Undertaker

Show tosses him down without much effort and breaks up a waistlock without about as little effort. Some clotheslines stagger Show though and Undertaker slips out of a chokeslam into a Fujiwara armbar. A DDT gets a very bad looking cover (Undertaker was over his arms and face instead of the shoulders) and the apron legdrop makes things even worse for Show.

Old School connects but Undertaker walks into a side slam to bang up his previously bad ribs. Show's clothesline gets two but the fans aren't impressed and tell him he sucks. Well yeah but you don't have to remind him of it so often. Undertaker gets in the jumping clothesline and a legdrop for two before the straps come down. You don't see that too often from Undertaker and he goes into boxing mode in the corner.

Show grabs the referee to block the chokeslam though and hits the bad ribs. The referee is down from a shot that shouldn't have dropped him and the fight goes outside. Show gets posted and clotheslined into the crowd, only to have A-Train come in with a 2x4 to Undertaker's ribs. Only Show can beat the ten and wins by countout.

Rating: D+. This was better than I would have guessed and it did help set up the pay per view match. Big Show is kind of just there again but that's the case with him more often than not. Maybe he'll heat up a bit down the line but for now, it seems time for him to fall back down from the main event scene. As for Undertaker vs. A-Train...well maybe it'll be short.

Post break, Undertaker needs to be treated before he interferes in the "main event".

Tajiri vs. Rhyno

Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit are on commentary. Tajiri kicks away to start until a hard clothesline takes him down. Rhyno, with a glare at Eddie, gets two off a suplex. Another kick gives Tajiri the same as they're certainly not wasting time here. Benoit and Eddie debate Bob Evans vs. Cracker Barrel as Tajiri sends Rhyno into the corner and hits the Buzzsaw Kick for the fast pin.

Post match Benoit wants a ride in Eddie's truck but first, we need some hydraulics. That's too much for Eddie who leaves Benoit in the truck and walks away. Benoit isn't often put into comedy roles but it worked well here. It's still not something he should be doing too often but once in a while, it's entertaining.

Zach Gowen vs. John Cena

Before the match, Cena raps about Gowen having one leg, including saying he would be the perfect partner in a three legged race. Normally I wouldn't laugh but having to keep Gowen around as a glorified mascot has made me lose a lot of patience for him. Cena runs him over with a hard shoulder before working Gowen over in the corner. The FU is teased but Cena lets him down, instead having the super version countered into a flying armbar on Cena's bad shoulder. That's good for two but the FU puts Gowen away in short order.

Rating: D. Do you get the idea with Gowen yet? I didn't know if him doing the same thing over and over again was enough to make the idea clear yet. Cena winning and winning in short order should seal Gowen's fate just a little bit more but leave it to WWE to keep going with the guy and not get the hint just yet.

We recap Undertaker and A-Train from earlier.

Stephanie is warming up (good thing she had gear ready) and the fans seem pleased. I mean the outfit being very low cut has a lot to do with it but Stephanie will take any cheering there is to be had. A-Train comes in and hints at wanting rough sex. I'll leave you with getting that image out of your head.

During the break, Matt Hardy jumped Gowen as he was leaving the arena. I knew I always liked Matt for a reason.

Spanky, in what looks like a Kool-Aid shirt, chugs chocolate syrup and gets some on Vince. The boss doesn't recognize Kendrick, who says he's been working here for like a year (it hasn't even been five months since he officially got a contract in storyline terms). Kendrick is annoyed and brings up the failures of the XFL and the WBF (I didn't know the second was allowed to be mentioned). As a result, he'll face Brock later tonight.

Spanky vs. Brock Lesnar

The opening charge is cut off by three straight powerbombs and Tazz wants the match stopped. Instead it's a LOUD chair shot to the head to bust Spanky open for the DQ. That was horrible looking and I can't say I'm all that surprised. Brock does look like a killer though. Cole: "This is not about chocolate syrup."

Post destruction, Spanks is pressed ribs first into the post and is covered with more blood. Vince comes out to smile at his new toy.

Stephanie McMahon vs. A-Train

Let's get this over with. Before the match Vince introduces Sable as the guest ring announcer. Stephanie tries to get at Sable, who makes it no countouts. The catfight is on, much like the canned heat. A-Train comes out and runs Stephanie over before hitting a running splash in the corner.

Vince gives it a thumbs down and A-Train puts her over the shoulder, only to have Undertaker come to the aisle for the brawl. Undertaker chairs A-Train in the back (I guess no countout now means no DQ) but Big Show comes in for the save. Now it's Undertaker getting chaired in the ribs, allowing A-Train to go back in and hit a Vader Bomb for the win.

Vince and Sable kiss to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. The opener helps this a lot but EGADS the A-Train and McMahon's stuff is killing this show. If you don't like the tales of the

boss and his family, there's no point to watching most of this show. There's some good wrestling but most of the time it feels like they're just throwing stuff out there for the sake of throwing it out there with Vince vs. Stephanie getting most of the time and thought.

It would be nice if they actually had a reason to be fighting but really, it's something about Vince being a bad father and Vince not just firing her for some reason. Such is life on Smackdown, but maybe Summerslam can help things a bit. Then again that might suggest that this story is ever going to end, or if anything else really matters around here. The dead times continue for this show and I can't imagine that changing in the near future.

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205 Live – January 9, 2018: The British Are Sneering

205 Live

Date: January 9, 2018

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

Another Raw (the show where the real cruiserweight stuff happens) has come and gone and Enzo Amore is STILL Cruiserweight Champion as he retained via countout last night. Enzo also came up with a bad ankle, which means we might wait even longer before getting the title off of him. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last night's title match with Amore injuring his ankle on a flip dive over the top, setting up the countout loss. You can probably pencil the rematch in for the Rumble and I think my head is going to explode if Enzo keeps the title any longer than that.

Opening sequence.

Earlier today, TJP came up to Gran Metalik and Kalisto in the back to brag about winning the Cruiserweight Classic. I love it when these grown men talk like thirteen year olds (albeit with the standard obsession with specific names and titles).

TJP vs. Gran Metalik

TJP returned last week and Metalik is back after his latest sabbatical for no apparent reason. Metalik now has a black mask which really doesn't suit him very well. The early flip off goes in Metalik's favor and a hard armdrag sets up an armbar on TJP. A basement dropkick has TJP in trouble as the announcers wonder if Metalik's loss in the Cruiserweight Classic final is still bothering him. If he's not over it in a year plus, he's not getting over the thing.

Metalik misses a dive and gets caught with an uppercut on the floor. He's fine enough to dive off the steps into a hurricanrana though and it's time to head back inside. TJP kicks him in the ribs though and it's off to the Tree of Woe. The running basement dropkick gets two and we hit the chinlock.

Back up and the springboard forearm gets two (minus the nipup, which TJP loaded up and then just didn't do), followed by a belly to back suplex for the same. Metalik gets sent hard into the corner but is right back up

with a sunset bomb off the post (cool looking move) to put both guys down. It's Metalik up first though with the rope walking dropkick getting two. The double chickenwing gutbuster gives TJP two but Metalik slips out of the Detonation Kick. Instead he dropkicks TJP into the Metalik Driver for the pin at 9:04.

Rating: C. What was up with the booking here? TJP comes back last week and is losing clean to Metalik here? I like both guys quite a bit but TJP losing here makes no sense whatsoever. If Enzo's booking has taught us anything, it's that 205 Live needs star power more than ever. If that's the case, keep TJP winning and find someone else for Metalik to beat. Or just keep doing what you're doing and wonder why this show is death.

Post match TJP snaps and breaks a bunch of stuff, including the announcers' area. It's nice that they're giving him something, but again STOP DOING IT RIGHT AFTER HE LOSES CLEAN!

We look at Nia Jax checking on Enzo Amore after his ankle injury on Raw.

A banged up Enzo says he's thinking about getting the Ford logo tattooed on his back because he's Ford tough. He'll be back to take care of Alexander but here's Tony Nese to say he wants back on the team. Not only that but he wants to be the top guy (the Bob to Enzo's Joker if you will). Enzo likes the idea but doesn't say yes. Egads can we get to the end of Enzo's title reign so the heels can grow some spines again?

Here's Jack Gallagher to talk about taking Hideo Itami out last week. Itami is out licking his wounds at the moment but as soon as he's back, Gallagher has even more damage in store for him. Gallagher isn't pleased with the fans not caring but shifts back to talks of torturing Itami. This of course brings out Itami, giving us an awesome sneer from Gallagher. The fight is on with Gallagher taking an umbrella shot to the head to send Jack running off. The fans didn't quite react to this and Itami's "COME ON" didn't help matters. Just be the silent assassin because everything else isn't working for him.

Cedric Alexander is ready to win tonight and Goldust comes in to compliment him on banging Enzo up last night. Alexander promises to hurt Enzo even worse next time and Goldust likes the idea. They almost have to

be getting ready to have Goldust screw him out of the title right? I have no idea what that accomplishes but it wouldn't shock me all that much. Whatever gives us more Amore right?

Tony Nese vs. Cedric Alexander

Enzo handles Nese's entrance. After some long posing to start, Nese cranks on the wristlock (way too common of a start in WWE these days). Nese takes him down and makes sure to suck up to Enzo. Cedric is sent face first into the apron and then the barricade before we hit a neck crank back inside. Back up and Cedric's chop doesn't get him very far as a hard whip sends him into the corner. Nese misses a charge though and the slingshot Downward Spiral takes him down.

For some reason he thinks going outside is a good idea, apparently never having watched a Cedric match before. The running flip dive gives Cedric two more and the springboard clothesline is good for the same (at least both looked quite good). The Neuralizer is countered into a gutbuster and Nese takes over. Another fireman's carry is escaped but Cedric hurts his knee. A very fast small package gives Cedric the pin at 8:56.

Rating: C-. Pretty standard 205 Live main event with Enzo running his mouth the whole time and taking away a lot of the focus that the wrestlers could have had. They're doing a very good job of making me want to see him lose but knowing WWE, they won't know when to pull the trigger and we'll be stuck with Enzo bringing this show down until Wrestlemania or so.

Post match Cedric is perfectly fine (and pointing at his brain) as Enzo tells Nese to get out now. Cedric looks down at Enzo's feet and kicks out the good ankle, followed by the Lumbar Check to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. As is always the case with an Enzo era show, none of this stuff feels like it matters. TJP loses to Metalik and Gallagher vs. Itami continues? Good for them, but none of those four are likely to be near the Cruiserweight Title anytime soon (well maybe Itami) and fans seem to know it. With so much of the time going to Enzo, everyone else gets left in the dust and that's going to be a problem when you don't have Enzo on top anymore. But hey, at least 205 Live cracked the top ten

WWE Network shows a few times right?

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Bragging Rights 2009: Even Attempted Murderers Need Rest Periods

It was mentioned that this wasn't up so here's a bit of a bonus.

Bragging Rights 2009

Date: October 25, 2009

Location: Mellon Arena, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 13,562

Commentators: Todd Grisham, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

This is back in the days of Raw vs. Smackdown meaning something but in this case there are two major matches. In addition to the Raw vs. Smackdown match, we also have John Cena vs. Randy Orton in an Iron Man match because all the other pay per view matches those two have had

haven't been enough. The card really is built around those two matches and I'm not sure what else there is to mention. Undertaker is also defending his Smackdown World Title in a four way match, which means eighteen people are involved in two matches. That might explain the hour long Iron Man match. Let's get to it.

The opening video focuses on the seven on seven brand supremacy match with Orton and Cena not even being mentioned. The rest of the show is really just filler around those two and that might be better all things considered. You would think the title match would warrant a mention though.

There are three Raw vs. Smackdown matches tonight and the winner gets a trophy. Yeah the whole Team Raw vs. Team Smackdown match that the show is built around is only a third of the formula.

We recap Miz (US Champion, Smackdown) vs. John Morrison (Intercontinental Champion, Raw). This is basically a showdown that would have happened anyway as they used to be a big tag team and now they've split with an argument over who was the Shawn and who was the Marty. In other words it's catchphrase vs. skill though Morrison was considered a much stronger prospect around this time.

Miz vs. John Morrison

Non-title. The ropes are half blue and half red for a cool visual. Morrison takes him to the mat to start and Miz bails to the ropes like a good heel should. Miz is driven into the corner but heads outside for an early breather. Back in and Miz gets caught in a flapjack, followed by Morrison's standing shooting star for two. The Moonlight Drive is broken up so Morrison settles for a hard clothesline to the floor, only to have Morrison get thrown out as well for a much nastier crash.

Miz cranks on both arms for a bit before putting on a quickly broken chinlock. A slugout goes to Morrison (of course) and a leg lariat gets two. The Flying Chuck (springboard kick to the face) gets the same and now the fans are getting into these near falls. Miz bails to the floor and takes a corkscrew dive but he breaks up Starship Pain (split legged corkscrew moonsault) and pins Morrison at 10:54.

Rating: C+. The match was fine but that ending was really quite lame. The crash and burn for Morrison was fine but Miz couldn't throw in a Skull Crushing Finale? After a strong build up to this, you would kind of expect more than just what we were given here. If nothing else though, I was really glad to see Miz win here as he's worked hard after being considered a nothing guy while Morrison was rolling on charisma for a long time.

We look back at Smackdown with Team Smackdown beating defeated by another group of five, meaning the winners took their places. Both lineups had Chris Jericho and Kane as co-captains but the original lineup of:

Dolph Ziggler, Eric Escobar, Drew McIntyre and Cryme Tyme

Has been replaced by:

R-Truth, Matt Hardy, Finlay and the Hart Dynasty

It should be noted that the match match where the new team won didn't have Shad Gaspard, who was out sick. It's also not a good sign that they switched a team out with just two days before the pay per view.

Cody Rhodes, part of Team Raw tonight, is bragging about how awesome his show is when R-Truth comes in. Rhodes berates him so Truth says the only reasons Cody is here are Dusty Rhodes and Randy Orton. Big Show comes in to say Raw (his team) will win.

Michelle McCool/Natalya/Beth Phoenix vs. Melina/Kelly Kelly/Gail Kim

Smackdown vs. Raw. Natalya is part of the Hart Family and Kelly Kelly is a model who eventually became a pretty good worker. Michelle (who has gotten a very nice haircut since we last saw her) and Melina are the respective brand's women's champions. Beth and Gail get things going with Phoenix quickly dominating. It's off to Natalya who is quickly rolled up for two.

Natalya misses a charge in the corner so Gail can sit on the back of her head and bring in Kelly. A screaming headscissors drops Natalya but she drops Kelly across the top rope for two. Kelly gets caught in the wrong corner and it's off to Michelle for some bad looking knee drops. Beth

won't let Kelly get over for the tag and Michelle comes back in for some knees to the face. A jawbreaker finally lets Kelly tag Melina in and house is cleaned. Beth stops her with a slingshot suplex and everything breaks down. Everyone else goes outside and it's the Glam Slam (double chickenwing faceplant) to put Melina away at 6:54.

Rating: C-. This was fine but there was absolutely no doubt who was going to win here thanks to the best of three format. It really is amazing to see how strong the division was around this time before it collapsed with the rise of the Bellas and everyone else leaving around the same time. The match wasn't bad but just filler and a way to get the women on the show.

HHH gives Team Raw a pep talk but brings up all the stuff they've made fun of Mark Henry for over the years. Jack Swagger isn't worried about the match and Shawn threatens to replace him with the first person he sees. Hornswoggle comes in and Shawn quickly changes his mind. The team eventually rallies around DX.

We recap the Smackdown World Title match with Undertaker defending against CM Punk (getting another rematch), Batista and Rey Mysterio (friends who are getting shots because they're former champions).

Smackdown World Title: Undertaker vs. Rey Mysterio vs. CM Punk vs. Batista

Punk runs around to start and causes Undertaker to blast Batista with a clothesline. The champ sends Punk to the floor so Mysterio can dive off the apron to take him down, leaving us with a Batista vs. Undertaker showdown. Old School keeps Batista in trouble but Punk saves Mysterio from the same fate. A superplex drops Undertaker and Rey springboards in with a splash for two as Punk makes a save.

Batista comes back in to go after Punk but eats a big boot from Undertaker. Rey's springboard is countered into a Last Ride, only to have Batista spear Undertaker down for the save. Rey scores with a 619 to send Undertaker into the spinebuster but Punk makes the save again. Hell's Gate has Batista in trouble but...yeah you know who breaks it up. That just earns Punk a Last Ride for two and there's a chokeslam to Batista

for two.

Punk is tossed outside so the big guys can go at it even more with Batista hitting a quick Batista Bomb for two as Mysterio makes a save of his own. That's not cool with Rey's friend Batista and they get in an argument, allowing Undertaker to chokeslam Batista for two more. A double clothesline drops both of them so Punk can cover both of them for two. Batista gets back up and tosses Rey again, only to walk into the Tombstone to retain Undertaker's title at 9:58.

Rating: B+. They were smart to keep this one a bit shorter as it allowed the match to be this energetic throughout. This wouldn't have been as good with the laying around and it allowed Punk to keep running in and out and Undertaker and Batista to do all the big power stuff. Strong stuff here and a good bonus, though it's not going to mean anything in the long run.

Post match, Josh Matthews goes inside to talk to Rey and Batista. Rey says it was a good try but Batista asks the fans if they were close. Batista thinks he was close but he was tired of only coming this close and of his best friend stabbing him in the back. Batista: "I'm not playing. I'm gonna rip your head off." And he comes pretty close with a big clothesline as Smackdown has a new monster heel. Rey is thrown hard into the barricade and kicked in the head before Batista slowly walks away.

This was an EXCELLENT turn as Batista had a good reason to go after Mysterio but it still looks like a big guy treating a smaller one like a loser for his own failures. In other words, Batista looks like a jerk who is abusing his power and the fans will want to see Mysterio try and get some revenge, even if that's not likely. Really good stuff here and something I'd love to see happen more often. Not necessarily this specific thing but something character based and logical.

The fans are split on who wins here.

Team Raw vs. Team Smackdown

Raw – Shawn Michaels, HHH, Cody Rhodes, Big Show, Kane, Kofi Kingston,

Jack Swagger

Smackdown – Chris Jericho, Kane, Matt Hardy, Finlay, R-Truth, Hart Dynasty

One fall to a finish here. The Hart Dynasty are Tyson Kidd (speed) and David Hart-Smith (power). Cody and Truth get things going and everyone is wrestling in a red or blue shirt. Well save for DX because they're special. Rhodes spins around and grabs a leg but Big Show tags himself in.

Truth isn't crazy (yet) so he brings in Kane for the giant showdown. Show quickly puts Kane down and drops a leg before bringing in Swagger for some shots to the back. It's already off to Hardy to clothesline Swagger as the announcers push the idea that the wrestlers all really want to be the best. Normally that means with titles but let's just go with bragging rights instead. They head outside to start the big showdown as Swagger loses his shirt. But how will I know which side he's on?

Hardy is dragged into the corner for some arm cranks from Henry. A big elbow misses but Mark easily throws Matt into the corner, meaning it's time for Shawn to come in. You can hear the fans get fired up now because it's starting to get serious. Shawn may be great but he allows the tag off to Finlay for some heavy shots of his own. Sweet Chin Music makes up for it but a blind tag brings in Hart-Smith who helps hit a quick springboard Hart Attack for two on Michaels, meaning it's time for some selling.

Jericho slaps on the chinlock ("ASK HIM! ASK HIM!") before bringing in Kane for one of his own. David makes it three chinlocks in a row but Tyson's springboard elbow misses and the hot tag brings in HHH. A series of spinebusters have Smackdown in tatters but Kane stops HHH with a chokeslam. HHH puts Jericho down though and it's off to Kofi as everything speeds way up.

Trouble in Paradise gets two on Chris as everything breaks down into the parade of secondary finishers. Cole: "VINTAGE BRAGGING RIGHTS!" It's been on the air for less than an hour and a half and there's a vintage era? Anyway Big Show turns on his partners (because he's Big Show) and

chokeslams Kofi to give Jericho the pin at 15:40.

Rating: B. You can only get so far on a made up rivalry with fourteen people having to cram in all their stuff in the span of less than sixteen minutes. It certainly wasn't bad though and both teams were more than fine, albeit a bit stretched as a lot of the guys didn't quite fit the level as people like DX, Jericho and Kane. Big Show screwing over his team wasn't the most interesting thing in the world either as he does it so often but at least it makes it clear that Raw was better until Smackdown got some help. You know, in case anyone thought otherwise.

We recap Cena vs. Orton in yet another match as this rivalry cannot die. Orton attacked Cena's dad to make it even more personal and if Orton wins, Cena is off Raw. Yeah just keep pretending it's not obvious now. This is billed as the final showdown, which WWE is usually pretty good about holding up. In this case though, I give it two months at most.

Kofi and Cody argue over why Raw lost and get in a fight over it with Kofi being left laying.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Randy Orton

Orton is defending, anything goes, falls count anywhere Iron Man rules, meaning the most falls in sixty minutes wins. The introduction makes sure to point out that there will be a thirty second rest period between falls, which will come into play later. They start slow (makes sense) with Orton getting caught in a headlock, only to send Cena hard into the corner. The champ slowly stomps away but Cena grabs the STF for the immediate tap out at 3:56 (all times listed will be total and the thirty second rest periods count towards the time limit) as Orton wants to get out of the hold to avoid damage.

1-0 Cena

Orton is right back up with a powerslam for two as we're five minutes in. The very slow pace continues as we hit the chinlock on Cena. Back up and Cena initiates his finishing sequence but takes too long loading up the Five Knuckle Shuffle, allowing Orton to pop up and hit an RKO to tie things up at 9:00.

1-1

With ten minutes left, Orton knocks Cena off the apron and into the barricade. Now it's time for the anything goes aspect to take effect as Orton hits Cena in the head with a monitor for two on the floor. Back in and Orton calmly hits him in the head with a microphone for another near fall. Things slow down though as the referee has to check a cut on Cena's head and the clock is actually stopped.

Cena will have none of that and charges at Orton with right hands in the corner. They go outside again with Cena going into the steps to slow him right back down. Cena is sent into the barricade as we hit fifteen minutes in. You don't keep Cena down with just a few shots like that though and it's already time for the FU, only to have Orton catch him with an RKO to counter. That means a double pin (with Orton having to adjust his arms to get the spot right) at 16:46 to keep us tied up.

2-2

The medical staff uses the break to fix the cut in a smart use of time. Orton goes shoulder first into the post to give Cena a breather. That breather doesn't last long though as he puts Orton on the top rope for a super AA to give him the lead back at 19:23. You would think that would be a bigger spot for later in the match.

3-2 Cena

During the break, here's Legacy to beat Orton down to give Orton an easy pin to tie it up at 20:46.

3-3

Kofi runs in to chase them off, which makes sense given the segment with Rhodes earlier. Nicely done WWE. Orton and Cena are left alone and a double clothesline lets them burn off some more time. Cena takes him down by the legs and it's time to go outside again. Cena takes him up the aisle until Orton sends him into the barricade for two. They head over to the tech area and Orton sends him into the board to set off some pyro. That gives Orton an idea and this can't end well. Randy sends him through

a piece of the lighting grid for a fall at 25:20.

4-3 Orton

With Cena down, Orton goes over and starts playing with the pyro board. Like a real villain, Orton throws Cena onto the stage AND TRIES TO BLOW HIM UP WITH FIREWORKS. It doesn't actually work but that's quite the heel move. You know, attempted murder and all that. They go back to the ring because there's less violence to be found there. The champ sends him into the steps and we hit halftime.

Orton throws the steps at his head for two before cracking him over the back with a chair for two. We're firmly into the "there's no reason to believe he can kick out of these things" territory. Back in and Cena grabs a small package to tie it up at 32:40. Orton beats the heck out of Cena during the break but the referee makes sure to enforce the thirty second break. TO THE ATTEMPTED MURDERER!

4-4

Cena is basically done though and Orton makes it even worse with the elevated DDT off the apron for a fall at 35:04.

5-4 Orton

Randy is smart enough to immediately go for the cover but Cena kicks out despite likely needing to be in a hospital. The beating continues back inside with Orton hammering him in the chest for two. Orton wastes a few minutes walking around (smart) and hitting Cena every now and then, which makes sense as we have twenty minutes left and they're probably running out of big spots.

Cena, with the blood flowing again, gets in a right hand to send Orton up the ramp. The chase goes nowhere so Orton pounds away back inside. The threat of an AA sends Orton running into the crowd with Cena slowly giving chase (well he walks briskly at least) as the clock keeps ticking. Cena finally catches him and hits the champ with a trashcan. See, at least Cena keeps the violence on a lower level.

The beating knocks Orton back towards the ring as we have fifteen minutes

to go. Cena gets a few near falls at ringside before sending him through the barricade. The steps go into Orton's head and we have ten minutes left. Those steps are sat next to the table and an AA through the table ties it up again at 51:46.

5-5

Cena covers again after the rest period ends but only gets two. It's time for another table in the ring but Orton avoids the top rope legdrop to drive Cena through instead. Five minutes to go now and both guys are down again. They slug it out with four minutes left as they're clearly spent. The slugging continues with neither guy getting an advantage as we have three minutes left. Of course Cena's cardio is fine as he starts the shoulders but takes the referee out by mistake.

There's an RKO but there's no referee. Another one comes in and count two with two minutes left, earning himself a beating from the champ. The Punt misses with a minute left and Cena grabs the STF with fifty five seconds to go. Orton hangs on as long as he can but as you might expect, he taps out with three seconds left to give Cena the title back at 60:00 with a final score of 6-5.

Rating: B. It's entertaining for the most part but you could really see them running out of things to do after awhile. Having Cena win at the very end keeps both of them looking equal, which is fine, but doesn't quite make Cena look like the big winner of the feud. There was no real reason for this to be an Iron Man match but at least there was one memorable spot with the pyro.

The biggest problem here is still the burnout between these two. The fans had seen them time after time and there's almost no reason to get interested in seeing them fight one more time, especially for an hour. They're firmly at the point where people don't want to see them wrestle no matter what happens and that's never a good thing. Oh and as for the "final" meeting: they fought again before Christmas.

A long recap for a long match wraps us up.

Overall Rating: B. Not a bad show for the most part but you could cut out

the first two Raw vs. Smackdown matches and no one would notice. That being said, I kind of like the idea of shortening the series to just three matches instead of doing seven or nine matches to accomplish the same goal. It would have been nice to have some other stuff going on besides the two main events and the fourway helped a good bit but the show still felt like it was all about those two matches and nothing else. At least the wrestling was strong though and that's more important than so many other things.

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2000: When They Fought Like Angry Wrestlers

Royal Rumble 2000

Date: January 23, 2000

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 19,231

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

After sitting through 1998 and 1999, this is my reward. What we have here might be the best Rumble show of them all with one of the best matches ever and a great Rumble on top of it. 2000 is the best in ring year the company ever had and this was a great way to kick that year off. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Cactus Jack challenging HHH for the world title in a street fight. This is that "one of the best matches ever" that I was talking about. The idea is simple: Cactus wants the title back and he's facing HHH in a street fight, which means HHH is in WAY over his head. We're in Foley's hometown in Foley's match with Foley's most hardcore character. How can this not be a masterpiece?

Kurt Angle vs. ???

Angle is undefeated at this point. Kurt says he's a real winner here, unlike the New York Knicks. This is goofy Kurt, which means he's hilarious. He says that the mystery opponent must be scared to come face him, but the opponent needs to take a deep breath, come out here, and face Angle like a man. The self-help thing here is hilarious. The fans chant WE WANT TAZ....and here he is!

Kurt Angle vs. Tazz

Tazz pounds away on Angle and hits a HUGE backdrop to send him to the floor. Angle escapes a suplex in the aisle (painted like a street with a big cab hanging above the entrance, which looks like an alley. It's really cool) and takes over. Back in and Kurt hits a forearm for two and chokes away in the corner. A belly to belly puts Tazz down but Angle goes up and gets crotched. Tazz hits a super Tazplex for two before getting rolled up for two. Angle gets two more off a bridging German before walking into a release German from Tazz. We unleash the suplexes on Kurt before the Tazmission ends Angle's undefeated streak.

Rating: C+. This was short, but to say it was an effective debut is an understatement. The place ERUPTED when Tazz won which is exactly the point of the opening match. See, this is what you call LISTENING to the audience. WWF knew they had to appeal to the ECW fans and what better way than to have Tazz debut here? Today, Tazz would be in some comedy match

and would likely lose, because Heaven forbid that the fans get what they want in one city for one night.

Angle does a stretcher job.

We go to the Hardys in the back and get a clip of them and the Dudleys putting each other through tables. Terri, the Hardys' manager here, is told to stay in the back. She would be gone from the team soon, thank goodness.

Tazz says Angle is just the first victim.

Dudley Boyz vs. Hardy Boyz

I believe match #1 or #2 in a series of roughly 8000 and it's an elimination tables match. Bubba praises John Rucker of the Braves who had recently gone on a massive anti-New York rant in Sports Illustrated. The Hardys hit the ring and the match starts fast with Bubba hitting the Bubba Bomb on Jeff. No tags here thank goodness. Bubba sets up a table in the ring but before he can get another one, Jeff takes him out with a HUGE flip dive.

Jeff gets sent into the steps as Matt escapes a powerbomb through the table. D-Von suplexes Matt as Jeff CRACKS Bubba in the head with a chair. In a SICK spot, Jeff tries to run the railing but Bubba throws the table at Jeff, knocking him out of the air. That sounded GREAT. The pairings trade off and Bubba loads up the backsplash through the table, only for Jeff to come back and try a double superplex. D-Von moves the table but doesn't stop the suplex.

Matt brings in a ladder because this might as well be a TLC style match. We head to the floor where the ladder is set up in front of a table with Bubba on it. Matt dives through Bubba through the table just as Jeff dives in from off camera with a splash, sending Bubba through the table in another awesome looking spot. So it's 2-1 now with Jeff leaning a table up against the barricade. The steps are set up on their end and a table is set up like a bridge between the steps and the apron.

D-Von is placed on the bridged table but moves before Matt dives through

him. He moves AGAIN to avoid a diving Jeff, sending him through the leaning table. Cool sequence there by Ninja D-Von. Apparently Bubba doesn't have to leave. Ok that makes things more interesting. The Dudleys set up two steps in the ring and put a table across them before hitting a HUGE powerbomb on Matt to eliminate (in a sense) him. The tables are LOUD tonight too. Jeff gets beaten into the aisle but Matt quickly follows, only to get WHACKED in the head with a chair.

The Dudleys stack up four tables in front of the entrance (it's the MSG setup where the entrance is opposite the cameras). Matt gets put on the tables and Jeff is CRACKED in the head again to break up the save attempt. Bubba climbs onto the taxi over the aisle to splash Matt, but remember that wouldn't win the match. Jeff climbs up after him (I'm not sure where D-Von went) and blasts him with a chair, knocking him through two of the tables (still doesn't win). Matt puts D-Von on the table and Jeff dives off the taxi with the Swanton through D-Von through the table for the win.

Rating: B+. This was AWESOME with all four guys being young and hungry here. The Dudleys were out to prove themselves and the Hardys were out to show they could hang in a fight. They had already proven they could fight in a violent match like the ladder match, but this was a brawl instead of a high flying match. REALLY fun stuff here though and well worth a look if you haven't seen it. The Dudleys would get the titles next month, setting up the first triangle ladder match at Mania.

Angle gets a concussion test and complains that being choked out is illegal.

It's time for the Miss Rumble Bikini contest with Sgt. Slaughter, Tony Garea, Moolah, Johnny V, FREDDY FREAKING BLASSIE and Andy Richter from Late Night with Conan O'Brien as judges. Jerry gets to emcee of course. The contestants are Ivory, Terri, Kat, Jackie, BB (You shouldn't remember her) and Luna. The idea here is that Kat legitimately took her top off (full exposure too, the only intentional female nudity in WWF history) at Armageddon and more nudity was promised here.

Ivory doesn't want to do it but eventually does. Terri does her usual

skin colored one which we've seen before. Lawler freaks out over her bending over the ropes. Jackie...no one cares. BB isn't bad but again, the whole point of this is for Kat to win. Luna won't show. Kat is in a bikini made of bubble wrap. Creative if nothing else. The judges start tallying their scores but here's Mae Young to enter as well. She takes off her robe, and THERE is the nudity (it was fake). Mae wins to complete the joke. Lawler's reaction of "OH MY GOD I SAW THEM" is priceless. Mark Henry comes in to save our collective retinas.

The recently hired Coach doesn't have much to say from WWF New York.

Chyna and Jericho, the co-IC Champions, argue over who gets to wear the belt to the ring. There was a double pin in a title match and they became co-champions as a result, which is a pretty creative idea.

Angle says he's still undefeated. Rock would pin him on Smackdown a few weeks later.

Intercontinental Title: Chris Jericho vs. Chyna vs. Hardcore Holly

You know Jericho is fired up to be in MSG. He talks about how awesome his championship celebration will be, as it will make the millennium celebration look like his sister's seventh birthday party. Holly piefaces Chyna down to start before getting in a slap fight with Jericho. Chyna gets sent to the floor for the Slaughter fall, leaving the blondes to fight for a bit. Holly hits that perfect dropkick of his but Jericho comes back with the forearm.

They slug it out until Holly tries a rana (huh?), only to get caught in the Walls. Chyna makes the save, basically turning heel at the same time. Chyna sends Holly to the floor and gets drilled by Jericho. Holly and Chyna go to the floor where Jericho tries a dive but slips and only hits Holly. Back in and there's the handspring elbow and DDT from Chyna to the Canadian for two. Everyone heads to the floor where Jericho saves Chyna from a chair shot. Back in and both champions go up for a kind of double splash for two.

They both tried for a cover and a fight breaks out as a result. Chyna escapes a belly to back suplex and hits Jericho low, followed by a

Pedigree for two on Holly. Chyna goes up but gets caught in a modified Domsday Device (cross body instead of a clothesline) for a very close two. That probably should have been the finish. Now Jericho loads up a superplex but gets crotched for his efforts. Holly gets superplexed by Chyna but gets two on her off the bounce. Chyna chairs Holly in the head and puts on the Walls, only to have Jericho break it up and hit the Lionsault for the undisputed title and a BIG pop.

Rating: C+. This was pretty good and too short to get bad. It could have been on Raw but see, back in 2000, there was this crazy idea of finishing angles on PPV. I know that's insane now and everything ends in a big match on Raw or rather just stops happening one day, but back in the old days, they ended like this. Match was fine.

Rock is worried about two and only two men in the Rumble: Crash Holly and Headbanger Mosh. Cole (minus facial hair) suggests maybe Rock should be worried about, say, Big Show. Rock says go make a glass of shut up juice (not one of his better catchphrases) and tells Big Show he doesn't care what he thinks. He guarantees to win the Rumble right here in New York City and the place eats it up. I want one of those jerseys he's wearing.

Jericho says he said he'd win and he'll lead the Jerichoholics like a pried piper.

Tag Titles: Acolytes vs. New Age Outlaws

The Outlaws are defending and there's a backstory that doesn't deserve to be listed. Who would have thought that THIRTEEN YEARS LATER the Outlaws would be on house shows for the WWE again? The Outlaws are heels here but they're over like free beer in a frat house here in New York. The APA storms the ring and the beating is on quickly. Bradshaw and Billy officially get us started with Billy taking a fast beating. Both guys tag as the referee is adjusting his ear piece.

Faarooq imitates Dogg's dance before getting double teamed a bit. Bradshaw breaks up the shaky knee drop and everything breaks down. The Clothesline kills Billy and there's the spinebuster to Roadie...but Billy pulls the referee out. The ref is bumped and Road Dogg is hit with a double powerbomb. X-Pac runs in and kicks Bradshaw's head off. The

Fameasser to the future JBL retains the titles in like two and a half minutes. This had to be cut for time. The Outlaws would lose the titles to the Dudleys next month and that would be the end of the team.

Dogg rhymes about keeping the titles.

We recap HHH vs. Cactus Jack. HHH won the title the night after Summerslam from Mankind via cheating. Big Show got the title at Survivor Series but lost it back to HHH in January. Mankind stood up to the newly formed McMahon-Helmsley Era and got beaten down for his efforts. Foley got fired and we had a fake Mankind get humiliated. Rock then said that every single wrestler would walk out and form the Rock Wrestling Federation if Foley wasn't rehired. See how different storylines could be back then? Mankind got HHH to agree to a street fight at the Rumble but got beaten up for his efforts.

This led to an AWESOME promo on Smackdown, where Mankind said he wasn't ready to face HHH in a street fight, but he knew someone who did. He took off his mask and ripped open his shirt to reveal Cactus Jack, scaring HHH to death. These two, as in Cactus Jack and HHH, had fought in 1997 in the match that basically brought hardcore to the WWF and they did it in MSG, with Cactus winning clean. This was an excellent story and there was a VERY real feeling that Cactus could pull this off, because HHH was in WAY over his head. Check out the build to this match as it's some of the best stuff you'll EVER see.

WWF World Title: Cactus Jack vs. HHH

Street fight. It should also be noted that Foley lost about 30 pounds inside of a month and a half and is by far the slimmest you'll ever see him look here. HHH does the long slow walk to the ring which makes things feel even more epic. Stephanie heads to the back which is probably a good thing. Dang I miss that big title. It's SO much better looking than the stupid spinner version. Even now when it doesn't spin it doesn't look like something special but rather something like a toy. The belt on HHH looks classy.

Cactus looks like an animal and HHH looks terrified. Jack wins a quick slugout and pounds HHH down into the corner. We head to the floor for a

swinging neckbreaker on HHH and a legdrop onto the apron knocks the Game back to the floor. HHH is rammed into various metal objects but comes back with a bell shot to take over. NOW we get to the fun part as the first chair is brought in.

Back in and Jack charges right into a chair shot like an idiot. Granted for him, that's playing the character right. HHH goes to unhook the buckle instead of covering for some reason and Jack pops up to clothesline the champ down. There's a legdrop onto a chair onto HHH's head for two and we head outside again. HHH gets backdropped into the crowd and the beating begins again. JR: "They're out in the sea of humanity." Jerry: "Humanity? JR we're in New York."

HHH gets rammed into something made of metal that we can't see and they head into the aisle. Cactus sets up a wooden pallet and suplexes HHH onto it before screaming in his face. This isn't falls count anywhere mind you. There's a trashcan to the head and HHH gets rammed into the steel doors. The fans chant for Foley as he gets suplexed onto the trashcan. The crowd is just RUTHLESS against HHH here as they head back to the ring. The aisle is really short so it's not a long walk.

Jack rams a knee into HHH's head to drive it into the steps and it's back inside now. This is almost all Jack so far. There's the 2x4 in barbed wire but HHH hits him low to get the board away. Some shots to Cactus' ribs and back have him in trouble and HHH looks at the board as if to say "did I just do that?" Cactus blocks a shot to the head and hits HHH in the balls with the board. The double arm DDT puts HHH down as the referee takes the board out of the ring, drawing the loudest booing of the night.

Cactus wants the board back and beats up the Spanish announce team who the board was left with. He gets a board (clearly not the same one but that's likely for safety reasons) and after the referee is crushed, HHH gets hit in the forehead with the wire. The board is driven into HHH's forehead and he's busted something fierce now. The referee is back up now and we get the most famous spot of the match with Jack ripping the wire across HHH's cut to make him scream.

Cactus tries to piledrive HHH through the announce table (same thing he

won the 97 match with) but HHH counters with a backdrop. JR: "The champion is bleeding like a horse." When does a horse bleed? HHH is bleeding from his leg which is a rare sight to see. The place LOUDLY cheers for Foley and we head back inside. The Pedigree is countered into a slingshot into the post and a bulldog on the wire gets two.

HHH has a spot called to him about the steps before the Cactus Clothesline takes them both to the floor. Cactus charges but gets hiptossed into the steps, banging his knee in the process. You know a Flair disciple like HHH knows how to work on a knee. Back inside and HHH clips him down before picking up the barbed wire for another shot to the knee. HHH pulls out some handcuffs in a flashback to last year.

Cactus fights back and hits HHH in the head with the cuffs in a smart move. The cuffs are locked up a few seconds later though and HHH starts pounding away. The steps are brought in but Foley comes out of nowhere with a drop toehold to send HHH face first into the steel. A low blow keeps HHH down and Cactus bites away. HHH gets back up and grabs a chair which he literally BREAKS over the back of Cactus. They head outside again and Cactus takes some shots to the head from the chair.

Cactus says hit me again but before HHH can crush the skull, Rock pops out of nowhere and blasts HHH in the head with a chair of his own. A cop comes in and unlocks the cuffs, freeing Cactus. HHH starts backpedaling fast but gets caught on the Spanish Announce Table. The piledriver hits this time but the table DOESN'T BREAK.

We haven't gotten violent enough yet, so here's a bag of thumbtacks. Stephanie comes out (complete with snakeskin choker in a nod to Cactus) and HHH comes back with a backdrop onto the tacks. There's the Pedigree but Cactus kicks out at two to blow the roof off the place. It doesn't last long though as a Pedigree ONTO THE TACKS finally ends Cactus.

Rating: A+. FREAKING OW MAN! If there's a match that made a guy into a legitimate force better than this one made HHH, I'd love to see it. This was an absolute war with both guys destroying each other for about 27 minutes. The place never gave up on Foley and it's easily one of his best matches ever. This is one of the best brawls ever and yet again it's well

worth checking out.

HHH is taken out on a stretcher but Cactus pulls him back into the arena. There's a barbed wire shot to the head and the place cheers like crazy for Mick some more.

Linda is at WWF New York to talk about HHH's title reign. Wait no she's not. She would NEVER be involved with something involving bloodshed. And Stephanie is oh so precious and does SO much work for charity don't you know.

Royal Rumble

The intervals are "two minutes or less" according to the Fink. We get a quick look at Shawn's miracle save in 95 which would play a role in the coming weeks. D'Lo Brown is #1 and Grandmaster Sexay is #2. Feeling out process to start with Sexay countering Brown's running powerbomb into a rana. A middle rope missile dropkick puts Brown down and Mosh, complete with cones on his chest, is #3.

Kai En Tai, two guys ticked off about not being in the Rumble, runs in and are immediately thrown out. Nothing else happens for a minute or so until Christian (with his AWESOME solo theme called Blood Brother. Look it up) is #4. Nothing happens again so here's Rikishi to a POP at #5. Mosh, Christian and Brown are quickly dispatched, leaving Grandmaster and Rikishi.

Scotty 2 Hotty is #6 to complete the trio....and it's time to DANCE! The place absolutely loses it over this until Rikishi clotheslines and eliminates them both. Note that it is NOT a heel turn and just business, which Too Cool is ok with. Rikishi dances a bit more on his own and the place is still erupting.

The company took notice of those eruptions too, and the three of them wound up feuding with the Radicalz for the next four months or so, resulting in Too Cool getting the tag titles and Rikishi getting the IC Title. In other words, they were given a stupid gimmick, got it over, and were rewarded. Today, you get to lose the US Title to Jack Swagger and become a jobber to the stars if you get yourselves over. As I typed that,

Steve Blackman came in at #7 and was eliminated.

Viscera is #8 and you know New York loves itself a fat boy battle. Big Visc rams into him a few times but misses a charge and three straight superkicks put him him. Big Boss Man is #9 and won't get in, drawing some good heel heat. He stays out on the floor until Test is #10. Test pounds away on Boss Man to finally get all three guys in there. Boss Man hits Test low but Rikishi hits Test low to put both guys down.

British Bulldog is #11 as things slow down a bit. There's a low blow for Rikishi as well and Bulldog tries to get him out until Gangrel is #12. Kai En Tai comes out again and Taka is thrown over the top into a 360, landing face first on the floor. FREAKING OW MAN. This would be played multiple times over the rest of the match, much to Lawler's amusement. Edge (starting to mean something and over in New York) is #13.

Boss Man takes a Banzai Drop and Bob freaking Backlund is #14. He comes out to Hail to the Chief as he's legitimately running for Congress in Connecticut at this point. You would think that would have been a tip for Linda's future but alas no. Everyone goes after Rikishi and dumps him out to get us to the second part of the match. To recap, we've got Boss Man, Bulldog, Test, Gangrel, Backlund and Edge in there at the moment. Jericho is #15 to his third or fourth big pop of the night.

Jericho goes right for Edge in a match that would be for the world title eventually. That doesn't last long though as Jericho dumps Backlund, who yells at some fans before leaving. Actually he goes into the crowd to look for Connecticut registered voters. For a guy as bland as he was back in the day, Crazy Backlund is one of the best performances I've ever seen.

Crash is #16 and gets a double spanking from Edge and Bulldog. Ok then. Edge is sent to the apron by Bulldog so he punches the British Boy in the balls. Chyna is #17 in the far less remembered Rumble appearance. She goes right for Jericho and suplexes him out in about 30 seconds but gets knocked out by Boss Man almost immediately. Faarooq is #18 and here's the Mean Street Posse who is also out of the Rumble. Those three and Kai En Tai were all thrown out of the Rumble on Heat so five more guys could be

added in.

Anyway Faarooq is quickly dumped and Road Dogg is #19. The crowd does his entrance for him but he runs right into a low blow. The fans want Puppies, a term Road Dogg invented. Crash survives an elimination and Al Snow is #20. Roadie throws out the Bulldog and Val Venis is #21. Funaki runs in on his own and is thrown out almost immediately again. Prince Albert (Tensai) is #22 and there goes Edge.

The ring is getting too full now with Boss Man, Test, Gangrel, Crash, Road Dogg, Snow, Venis and Albert. Dogg continues his strategy: hide in the corner and wrap all four limbs around the bottom rope. I've heard worse ideas. Hardcore Holly is #23 and we're getting down to almost only big names left. Crash gets knocked to the apron but gets back in AGAIN.

Now we get to the final part of the match as The Rock is #24 to bring everyone to their feet. Boss Man is the first victim, being eliminated by a spit punch. Venis and Test double team him but Rock hangs on in the corner. He beats up Hardcore for a bit as Billy Gunn is #25. He goes right for Rocky but since no one believes Billy Gunn is going to eliminate Rock, the Great One throws out Crash to give himself something to do instead. Dogg has shifted over to another corner now.

Big Show, Rock's opponent for this match, is #26. Rocky pounds on him immediately but Albert sticks his fat head in Rock's business. Show dumps Gangrel and Test before going to stomp on Rocky. Bradshaw is #27 and is out in about 30 seconds at the hands of the Outlaws and the Mean Street Posse. Kane is #28 complete with the still sexy Tori. Venis gets thrown out almost immediately and Show stupidly gorilla presses Gunn down instead of out. Kane knocks Albert out as Godfather is #29. The Ho's are especially good looking tonight.

Funaki comes out for the fourth time. JR: "For the love of Pete." Jerry: "No that's Funaki." X-Pac is #30 which was announced in advance. The final group is Road Dogg, Al Snow, Hardcore Holly, Rock, Gunn, Show, Kane, Godfather and X-Pac. Snow dumps Holly and Show puts Godfather out. Rock dumps Snow to get us to six. Billy dumps a talking too much Roadie just before getting dumped by Show.

We've got X-Pac, Kane, Big Show and Rock as the final four. I've seen far worse. Rock throws out X-Pac but the referee is with Kane who is fighting the Outlaws on the floor. Pac gets back in and the guys pair off. Show sends Rock into Kane for a big boot as the giants choke each other. Pac kicks Rock down and Kane hits a pretty good enziguri and an even better slam on Big Show. Pac kicks Kane out and a Bronco Buster on Big Show.

Rock dumps X-Pac and we're down to two. The spinebuster sets up the Elbow but since IT'S JUST A FREAKING ELBOW DROP, Show gets up and chokeslams Rock down. Show takes WAY too much time though and Rock holds onto the top rope, sending Big Show out to go to Wrestlemania. Awesome ending to an awesome match.

Rating: A. AWESOME Rumble here with the absolute right ending. This was the Rock's Rumble and there was no other person who should have won it. The only part that was a little dull here was the middle but it's certainly not bad. This followed the three part structure as all great Rumbles do and as usual, it worked like a charm. Great Rumble and one that might have a claim to best ever.

Rock says he's going to Wrestlemania when Big Show comes in and knocks him to the floor. Show stands in the ring as Rock leaves to end the show.

Overall Rating: A+. This is one of the best shows the WWF has ever put on. Period. There isn't a bad match on the whole card, the crowd is ON FIRE all night and you have two excellent matches to round out the show. I can't imagine anything in the next 12 years surpassing this one and I can't recommend it highly enough. Outstanding show.

Ratings Comparison

Tazz vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A-

Redo: C+

Hardy Boyz vs. Dudley Boyz

Original: A

Redo: B+

Chris Jericho vs. Chyna vs. Hardcore Holly

Original: C

Redo: C+

New Age Outlaws vs. Acolytes

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

HHH vs. Cactus Jack

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Royal Rumble

Original: A-

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

Still great and still the best Rumble ever.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/19/royal-rumble-count-up-2000-match-of-the-decade-maybe-yeah/>

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<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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

2017 Awards: Wrestler of the Year

I'm running out of big awards.

This is where the whole thing comes together. The entire point of wrestling comes down to the wrestling itself (close enough at least) and some people just do it better than others. It's been a great year for both men and women, hence why they're put together here. If they're both doing the same things, there's no point in not judging them the same way.

I won't be including Pete Dunne, Tetsuya Naito, Kazuchika Okada or Kenny Omega here as I just haven't seen enough from any of them. That being said, if I had seen more from Okada, there's a very good chance that he would run away with this thing. He's one of the best I've ever seen and the fact that he's just thirty years old is amazing.

We'll start with one of my favorites and someone who seems to always be a dark horse in something like this. That would be the Miz, who won the Intercontinental Title, consistently entertained and had me in stitches during the Total Bellas

stuff. I'd have been much happier to see he and Maryse win at Wrestlemania but the performance leading up to it was good enough. Hopefully he's featured even more this year as he's one of the best around.

Next up we have a newcomer who had one of the biggest rookie years (eh ok that's a stretch) in a long time with Samoa Joe. He showed up early in the year and took the Raw roster by storm, feuding with and beating Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns. There was also a one on one pay per view title shot against Brock Lesnar and then being in the main event of Summerslam, which certainly isn't bad for a debut year.

We'll go to the ladies next with Charlotte. She started and end the year with some gold while having some awesome performances in between. It might not have been as great a year as she had in 2016 with the pay per view main event but Charlotte is so great at what she does with a great mixture of smoothness and poise that it's impossible not to include her on here.

The other woman on the list is of course Asuka, who not only dominated NXT but is being treated as a big deal on the main roster as well. That sendoff she got from NXT was great stuff and really did showcase how good she had become over the years. She even mixed in some fun with the dancing, which is a very nice bonus. I'm a bit worried about what's going to happen to her in the coming year but the previous year was very impressive.

In a very different side of the spectrum, there's Braun Strowman, who went from a glorified lackey to getting multiple World Title shots on pay per view and winning a feud against Roman Reigns (that's a rare thing to say). It's hard to imagine him not being a World Champion at some point in the coming year and that's a very interesting idea indeed.

For the winner, I'll go with the safest pick I could possibly

choose and say AJ Styles. He came into the year as World Champion and left as World Champion, plus picked up a US Title in the middle. Throw in getting good matches with Shane McMahon and Jinder Mahal plus having a Match of the Year candidate with John Cena and yet it still somehow feels like any run of the mill year for Styles.

Please Bear With Me

The laptop crashed today so things might be a bit slow. I'm currently resetting it and using an older one but I'm backed up due to losing the entire day. I've got a lot of stuff I'm working on and hopefully I should have some of them up in the next day or two. I'm sorry about the lack of content today though and I'll be back up asap.

KB

Paige and Mark Henry Retire

Paige and Mark Henry have both retired, with the former due to injury and the latter seemingly just because he's old enough to.

<https://411mania.com/wrestling/paige-wrestling-ww-e-ending/>

<https://411mania.com/wrestling/mark-henry-considered-retired-ww-e-without-fanfare/>

Henry leaving isn't a big surprise as he hasn't wrestled since Wrestlemania XXXIII and honestly, it's not that big of a loss at this point. He was awesome in 2011 but aside from that, it was a lot of the same old stuff from him. He was a heck of a mainstay though, especially given how one note his character was for a long time.

Paige...egads. She's 25, has a long resume and just came back after a long hiatus due to injury. I was really interested in seeing what was going to happen with the Absolution stable but now, I can't imagine things going well for the other members. This is quite the shame and I'd have loved to see Paige against the newer women.

2017 Awards: Worst Show of the Year

This is one of the more fun ones.

For some reason, this one always seems like it should have a lot of nominees. The thing is though, most WWE pay per views aren't all that bad. Sure some of them might seem like they don't need to exist (because they don't), but at the same time most of them give you at least something worth checking out. That wasn't the case with all of them though.

I'll be leaving Survivor Series off as I thought it was actually a rather good show held down by some HORRIBLE booking and execution of the show's namesake matches. Throw those out

and make it a regular pay per view and it's a near classic with Shield vs. New Day and Brock vs. Styles. I don't get the hatred for that one outside of the terrible main event.

We'll start things off with a show that didn't seem to get the point that it was going for. Clash of Champions, in theory at least, should be a show focused on champions. That made it a little weird when the show was almost entirely built around a non-title match between Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn. The show was main evented by a title match but that was the token main event at best. This show didn't need to exist and with a total of six matches including one that was less than two minutes long, it was a mess.

If that show didn't need to exist, then Payback didn't need to even less. The problem here was the Superstar Shakeup, which was scheduled to start immediately after the pay per view. Therefore, none of the matches mattered and what we got (the House of Horrors) was a huge mess. This was a major scheduling conflict but it's not like the was going to be any good no matter what they did.

I'd feel weird if I didn't include a TNA show in here so we'll go with Bound For Glory. The show was basically headlined by the return of Alberto El Patron and that meant we were stuck hearing the word perro a lot. The wrestling wasn't great with the MMA vs. wrestlers match being a disaster and almost nothing positive standing out. As usual, this didn't need to be a pay per view but I do understand that they need something to build towards. This just wasn't the best choice.

Then you have the easy winner with Battleground and it's not one but TWO potential worst matches of the year. This show was HORRIBLE aside from AJ vs. Owens and New Day vs. the Usos but the two really bad matches more than drag those down. This was an easy pick for me and a hands down winner, mainly due to that main event. Just...egads.

Impact Wrestling – January 11, 2018: Let Me Talk To Ya About Getting Someone New

Impact Wrestling

Date: January 11, 2018

Location: Aberdeen Pavilion, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Jeremy Borash

After last week's stacked card containing four title matches and a loser leaves town match, it should be interesting to see what the company has for a follow up. There's a good chance that they won't have nearly as much to offer tonight and you really can't blame them on that front. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's major events, including the two title changes and James Storm's career ending. Thankfully they ignore that stupid World Title clip fest.

Opening sequence.

Here are Bobby Lashley and Dan Lambert to get things going. Impact has surprised Lambert as he never thought it would be this resilient. Lambert is here for two reasons. First is to have a moment of silence for James Storm's career. Since he's unemployed, maybe the fans can put together a collection and get him some beer money (good line, as Lambert is still one of the best promos in this company).

Lambert is also here to bring out the newest member of American Top Team. This man could do what Lashley couldn't do when he put Storm down. Lashley isn't happy and it's even worse when the new member is revealed to be KM. We get the shirt presentation before KM says he's proven himself by taking out everyone in front of him, capped off by helping

Lambert to get rid of Storm. KM mentions getting rid of Moose, who comes out way faster than he should. The fight doesn't last long as Moose gets beaten down until Eddie Edwards makes the save. Lashley has to pull Lambert from the ring.

Like I said, Lambert is a great promo but this story has long passed its expiration date. It's been going for several months now and there's no real reason to keep it going at this point. They've covered the MMA vs. wrestlers thing (with the MMA guys dominating) and now they're just regular heels. That's all well and good and Lambert shifting towards being a regular manager is better, but this is living on borrowed time to put it mildly.

Post break, the obvious tag match is made.

The announcers recap last week's show again.

Here's Grand Champion Ethan Carter III to issue an open challenge for the title. First though, Carter needs to mock Matt Sydal for choking over and over again every time he has a chance to win the big one. Sydal chokes so much he might as well play forward for the Ottawa Senators. That gets the expected heat from the crowd and now the open challenge is on.

Grand Championship: Ethan Carter III vs. Petey Williams

Carter is defending of course...and there are no judges or any mention of the round system. Could it be true? Did my New Year's wish come true? Well at least the one regarding the Grand Championship? The fans are way into Petey and a headscissors makes those cheers even louder. He ties Carter in the Tree of Woe as we hear, for the second time in the match, about what a great comeback story Williams was in 2017.

Carter sends him into the corner and chokes on the rope, followed by a knee to the ribs. A waistlock keeps Petey down for a bit but he reverses into a side roll for two. The Canadian Destroyer is countered into a TK3 for two and Petey is sent outside. As Petey holds his knee, Sydal runs in for the DQ at 4:49. There was no mention made of the round system and judges being dropped.

Rating: D. This was too short to mean much but I'm more interested in this seemingly turning back into the TV Title. I'm guessing Sydal's promo last week where he suggested a regular match for the title is all we're getting and I'm really fine with that. The round system was a bad idea from the first day and the thing should have just been a regular midcard title. This is the right move and gets rid of a problem that doesn't need to exist.

Allie isn't happy with Laurel Van Ness attacking her last week. She's not the weak little Allie anymore and she's ready to play if Laurel wants to. Much more serious here, but still with a hint of the old Allie in there, as there should be.

Alberto El Patron isn't happy.

Sydal says Carter can't call him out and not expect to pay the consequences. He wants a title shot with a sixty minute time limit and no rounds ("That's out") and no judges ("They're gone"). If Carter can beat him there, then he'll get a handshake and a hug. The challenge makes sense, and PLEASE let that be a permanent change.

We see James Storm winning the World Title from Kurt Angle in less than two minutes on October 20, 2011.

KC Spinelli vs. Laurel Van Ness

Non-title. Laurel takes her straight into the corner and knees her in the ribs before yelling at Spinelli for touching her fur coat. Spinelli slaps her right back but gets kicked in the face for her disrespect. A bridging vertical suplex (that's a new one for some reason) gets two on Laurel and they kick each other in the face at the same time. Laurel is up first and a curb stomp into the Unprettier is good for the pin on Spinelli at 5:22.

Rating: D+. This was fine as a way to get Laurel a win under her belt and that's always a good idea. Of course it would have been a good idea to have Spinelli work a match on Impact before they showed her in the Canadian promotion but that's another problem for later. If nothing else, Laurel's gimmick is really starting to work for her. She looks

outstanding in her gear but the shots of her face are nothing short of unnerving.

Post match Allie comes in and beats on Laurel before holding up the title.

Here are Eli Drake and Chris Adonis for a championship address. Adonis channels a little Rick Rude with a "what we'd like to have right now" to introduce for the champ. Drake calls anyone who lives in this horrible weather year round a dummy before holding up the title. He shifts his attention to Alberto, who came back all upset but then thought he could swim with the big fish.

Drake is standing here with the title and Alberto should have stayed at the bar. He'll defend the title again next week in Detroit but here's Alberto to interrupt. Alberto, now a full on face again, says he'd love to beat Drake around the ring next week. He wants to fight now but here's Johnny Impact to interrupt. Johnny has heard about both of them being in Detroit so he'll have to join the party. The brawl is on with Johnny getting the better of it. Drake has already beaten both of these guys and I'm really not sure why we need to see these three fight any more, save for the company has nothing else to do at this point.

We look at Raven having his head shaved back in 2003.

Recap of the opening segment.

American Top Team (now just Lambert, Lashley and KM) are in the back and Lambert gives KM all of the credit for getting rid of Storm. Lashley isn't happy.

Chandler and Joseph Park are glad about Chandler's win last week. Jimmy Jacobs comes up to ask what happened to Abyss. Jacobs: "You used to be the guy that put people into ambulance and now you're the guy chasing ambulances." Chandler, in a nasal voice, stands up to Jacobs because Joseph is family. Jacobs steps aside so Kongo Kong, who Jimmy says is family to him can come in. Chandler: "So scary!" I like the Parks but I could go without seeing Jacobs or Kong ever again, especially the latter.

OVE wrecks LAX's clubhouse. Good grief ENOUGH BETWEEN THESE TEAMS ALREADY! Post break LAX finds the wrecked clubhouse and says it's time to go back to their roots. Barbed wire is mentioned.

Cult of Lee/Hakim Zane vs. Dezmond Xavier/Garza Jr./Sonjay Dutt

Garza headbutts Zane around to start and brings in Xavier to trip him up a few times. A dropkick to the back of the head sends Zane outside as everything breaks down. Back from a break with Zane charging into Dutt's boot in the corner as Lee poses in the corner. Zane actually gets in a few shots to the back and hands it off to Konley for a double arm crank. Lee kicks at the chest as we hear about Ishimori defending the title in Japan.

Even Zane gets to come in for a chinlock until Dutt dropkicks him down. The hot tag brings in Garza to clean house but hang on because IT'S TIME FOR GARZA TO TAKE OFF HIS PANTS! It's so distracting that Konley and Lee don't notice Zane's missile dropkick which hits them by mistake. Dezmond comes in and hits the Final Flash for the pin on Zane at 10:27.

Rating: C-. This was your run of the mill X-Division match and that's the big problem: even when you get someone like Xavier or Ishimori, they're stuck with these generic heels who don't do anything to set themselves apart. Why should I be interested in seeing people defeat weak talents and not get to show off what they can do? It's a big reason why the division is boring and I don't see that changing anytime soon.

Post match Ishimori comes out and holds up the title in front of Xavier. They shake hands before their title match next week.

Also next week: Kongo Kong vs. Chandler Park and clips of the triple threat match from Detroit. You know, a match we can't have HERE. Also, a barbed wire match with OVE vs. LAX.

Moose/Eddie Edwards vs. KM/Bobby Lashley

It's a brawl to start until we settle down to KM vs. Moose. Some chops in the corner have KM in trouble but he avoids Edwards' elbow, allowing the beatdown to begin. Back from an early break with Lashley slamming Eddie

for two but missing a charge to fall outside. Moose comes in for a double elbow to KM, followed by Eddie jumping on Moose's back for a double backplash. Edwards gets posted though and the heels take over again.

Lashley's neckbreaker doesn't even get one as Moose is in there IMMEDIATELY for the save. Eddie reverses a suplex to put KM down but Lashley breaks up the tag attempt. Lashley charges into a knee though and a middle rope dropkick puts him down. A crawl through the legs is enough to bring in KM and Moose's middle rope chokebomb gets two. KM gets low bridged to the floor and Eddie follows him out with the suicide dive. Lambert gets in a cheap shot though and KM's powerbomb into a Backstabber is enough to pin Eddie at 14:46.

Rating: D+. This was a way to establish KM as a member of the team but it should also help further the wedge between Lambert and Lashley, likely leading to Lashley turning face. I'm not sure why this is considered a big deal when people turn around here so frequently (including Lashley) but that's certainly better for a conclusion to the story than anything else I've seen so far.

A preview of OVE vs. LAX wraps us up.

Overall Rating: C. Not a bad show this week as they were advancing a lot of stuff while getting ready for some of the bigger matches down the line. You need that kind of show, especially coming off of a bigger episode like last week. That being said, I have no idea why we can't have a World Title match in the arena the show is airing from. It doesn't feel right and comes off like it's less important than everything else. Fix that up and the title seems more important. Other than that, they've got some good stuff going here and it's not a huge falloff coming out of last week. Not a good show, but it did its job well enough.

Results

Ethan Carter III b. Petey Williams via DQ when Matt Sydal interfered

Laurel Van Ness b. KC Spinelli – Unprettier

Dezmond Xavier/Sonjay Dutt/Garza Jr. b. Cult of Lee/Hakim Zane – Final

Flash to Zane

KM/Lashley b. Moose/Eddie Edwards – Powerbomb into a Backstabber to Edwards

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

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

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

Happy Birthday

To Monday Night Raw, which debuted 25 years ago today. I still haven't missed a show and I don't see that changing anytime soon.