

New Column: Let's Think About This

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A trip through KB's mind on a Wednesday night with Tito Santana, William Regal, Kofi Kingston and Alexa Bliss.

Monday Night Raw – December 9, 2002: Three Times! THREE TIMES!

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 9, 2002

Location: Thompson-Boling Arena, Knoxville, Tennessee

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Armageddon and that means it's time for the HHH vs. Shawn Michaels Show (as in the official version instead of the unofficial one we've seen for weeks now). Other than that, I really can't think of anything important that Raw has to offer on Sunday but it's not like Raw cares about anyone but these two anyway. Let's get to it.

Eric Bischoff and Chief Morely are in the ring with Shawn Michaels and HHH appearing on the screen. Bischoff gets right to the point: Sunday's match is going to be 2/3 falls. That's not all though as each fall will have a special stipulation. The first fall will be a street fight, the second will be held inside a cage and the third is a ladder match. HHH and Shawn didn't say a word. So to clarify, we're likely getting THREE Shawn vs. HHH matches and HHH will get to beat Shawn in his signature match to become the champion all over again. Oh joy.

Booker T./Goldust vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

During the entrances, a four way elimination match is confirmed for Sunday with Chris Jericho/Christian defending against these two teams and the Dudley Boyz. Booker works on Storm's arm to start and let's hit the HHH talk. Goldust comes in for the yet to be named Rear View on Regal. A suplex drops Goldust though and it's off to a chinlock. That goes nowhere so it's already off to Booker as the announcers manage to talk about the match for a bit.

Booker's spinebuster gets two on Lance and it's already back to the HHH discussion. There's the ax kick for two more but Goldust tags himself in for a double clothesline. Shattered Dreams makes Regal cringe and something like a Hart Attack gets two on Storm. Lance comes right back with a Sharpshooter though and Goldust tape.

Rating: C-. This was all about the angle building but that doesn't mean much given how fast they're throwing together this weak link story for Goldust. I'm not sure why they couldn't just have Booker and Goldust go on a roll and beat some teams but why do that when you can have them lose over and over in the first place?

Goldust says he's the weak link and wants Booker to find a new partner.

Trish Stratus is reading Hulk Hogan's new book for no apparent reason when Chris Jericho comes in to read an excerpt. Apparently he made Hogan tap at one point but he'd rather talk about the sexual tension between himself and Trish. She thinks Vitamin C sounds very nu-Trish-ous. Then again she saw him without his clothes on two weeks ago and thinks it's Vitamin Wee. These two have great chemistry together.

Rob Van Dam is on the phone in Bischoff's office when the bosses come in to hang up the call. Bischoff needs to keep the line open for his call from Scott Steiner. Van Dam leaves but tells Bischoff that he just hung up on Steiner. I would pay so much money to see Steiner and Van Dam have a five minute chat about....well anything really.

Steven Richards vs. Jacqueline

Jacqueline is in a triple threat match with Trish and Victoria on Sunday, just in case you weren't over the card already. Steven easily powers her into the corner to start but gets armdragged down.

Richards gets serious and grabs a side slam for two with Jackie's foot on the ropes freaking him out. A DDT gives Jackie two more but she drops him throat first across the top rope. The StevieDT is good for the pin and I have no idea why this existed.

Victoria comes in to go after Jackie but Trish makes the save. Jackie wants nothing from Trish and the loser's music plays for some reason.

Jeff Hardy is honored to be compared to a young HBK but the real version comes in to say he's not dead. Shawn knows Jeff is going to take a beating tonight and says take advantage of HHH when he gets cocky. Jeff is grateful for the advice and says if Shawn needs help in the ladder match, let him know.

Rob Van Dam vs. Batista

Batista throws him around to start as JR gets in his regular mention of Rob's offense being "unorthodox". Choking underneath the ropes ensues until Rob gets in a few kicks to take over. Rolling Thunder gives Van Dam two but Flair grabs Rob's foot. Cue Kane for the fast DQ.

Kane and Van Dam clean house.

Morely yells at Kane, who doesn't know who Morely is. The Chief explains things so Kane does a Val Venis impression, earning himself a handicap match with 3 Minute Warning.

Christopher Nowinski/D'Lo Brown vs. Maven/Al Snow

And Brown is just a heel now. The good guys clean house to start with Snow armdragging Brown a few times. Maven comes in for some right hands of his own until Nowinski pulls him down from behind. The slow beatdown begins with the fans saying someone sucks. My guess would be the whole match but I'm too big of a Brown fan to say that. Nowinski gets dropkicked off the top and the hot tag brings in Snow. The trapping headbutts have Brown in trouble until Chris makes the save. The Sky High puts Snow away.

Rating: D. This is as low level of a feud as you can get and despite the pre-match video on the match, I have no idea why these guys are feuding. I don't know if this is still supposed to hype up Tough Enough but it's really not interesting. Also, this gets nearly two minutes longer than Batista vs. Van Dam? Is Batista really that incapable of wrestling a longer match?

Booker tries to talk Goldust out of splitting up the team. The plea is enough and they'll be a team at the pay per view. So they set up and blew off the story in about forty minutes. That might be a record even for Raw. The story is fine but could we get a bit more time to let it set in? At least have the story go on longer than two weeks to let it have some impact.

HHH vs. Jeff Hardy

HHH pulls him off the ropes during the entrances but Jeff gets in the legdrop between the legs. That's enough trouble for HHH as he takes Hardy outside for some whips into the steps. Back in and a spinebuster sets up a side slam, followed by an over the shoulder backbreaker. Jeff's comeback consists of a running forearm before two Pedigrees (because HHH can't just have one of anything) give HHH the pin.

Rating: D. Well it's not like Jeff is doing anything at this point. You knew they were going to put HHH over someone very hard to make sure you know how awesome he is before Sunday's title match. Just in case you didn't realize how completely awesome HHH was you see. Hardy was treated like a jobber here, though to be fair it's not that far from the truth.

HHH loads up a chair but Shawn comes out for the staredown as we take a break. Back with Flair saying he'd like a word with Shawn. With Shawn holding the title, Flair talks about carrying that very belt around the airports (not quite) but then someone told him that Shawn was the new man.

Then one day Arn Anderson said Shawn was a tough act to follow and Flair had to take a look in the mirror. Ric realized that he wasn't the best in the world anymore and there was no way around it. As high as Shawn was on the pedestal though, there's a new man in town. That man's name is HHH and he's the best in the world. Shawn needs to concede the fact that he needs to pass the torch. If Shawn tries to keep going, HHH will kill him on the way to taking the most coveted prize in this business. Shawn seems to buy into the idea and walks away as HHH reiterates what Flair just said.

Great stuff here from Flair but there's no way around the fact that we're looking at three Shawn vs. HHH matches on Sunday despite no one wanting to see it. The first match was great but their promos haven't done much since then. Couple that with the fact that I can't

imagine their match is going to validate crushing everyone else in their paths to get there and it's hard to imagine this is worth all the effort.

The Raw Retro for the week is Mike Tyson debuting and Steve Austin getting in his face. You can hear WCW collapsing from here.

Kane vs. 3 Minute Warning

Rico offers an early distraction so the Samoans can jump Kane from behind. Double headbutts have Kane in trouble and Rosey gets two off a legdrop. The running DDT plants Jamal and Rosey splashes his partner by mistake. The chokeslam puts Jamal down for the pin in less than three minutes. We have four teams and the Samoans are jobbing in a handicap match?

Rico helps with a post match beatdown until Van Dam makes the save. Jamal even eats a Van Terminator.

Stacy is in a rather sexy Santa outfit and debuts the Test blue ball Christmas ornament. Yes, this really is the joke they're STILL going with. Just in case you didn't get the idea, Stacy sings a Christmas carol about the testicles roasting over an open fire.

RNN BREAKING NEWS shows Randy Orton at the New York Stock Exchange.

We run down the pay per view card with all four of its announced matches.

Chris Jericho wants to put Trish through a table in their six person tag. Oh and it's rather large in case you were wondering. Victoria comes up and says she'll be the one doing that.

Shawn tells Flair that he'll be waiting for HHH in the parking lot.

Trish Stratus/Dudley Boyz vs. Chris Jericho/Christian/Victoria

Tables match. D-Von hammers Christian into the corner before it's off to Bubba for the big elbows. Why they're tagging isn't clear but I'd assume it's because they need to fill in some extra time and don't have any more matches. It's off to Victoria, who takes What's Up. Trish hits one on Jericho to make Lawler a bit envious. D-Von brings in the first table but gets knocked off the apron. That's fine though as Bubba loads up a powerbomb on Victoria....and we take a break?

Back with Bubba in a chinlock and JR apologizing for the abrupt commercial. Victoria comes in to work on Bubba as we see a clip of

Jericho breaking up the powerbomb before the commercial. The referee doesn't see a tag to D-Von, who can't come in despite, as JR has mentioned more than once, there being no disqualifications. Now the announcers discuss which version of Shawn will show up on Sunday (Shawn Michaels, HBK or the Showstopper).

The Lionsault hits knees and Bubba covers out of instinct as Christian slides in a table. That table is set up in the corner and Jericho bounces off of it as this just keeps going. Bubba dives over for the hot tag to D-Von and house is cleaned in a hurry. Jericho saves Christian from being suplexed through a table but takes 3D for his efforts.

The Dudleys load Victoria up for a powerbomb but Richards comes out for the save, only to have Spike Dudley get rid of him. Christian eats a good looking double flapjack but now Regal and Storm come in to jump Bubba and D-Von. Booker T. and Goldust make it SIX RUN-INS as they go after the champs.

Jericho takes the Stratusphere for some reason and since it's just a weak hurricanrana, Chris takes Trish's head off with a clothesline. Booker saves Trish and stops for a Spinaroooni but gets dropped by Storm. That earns Lance a 3D and the Dudleys finally help Trish powerbomb Victoria through the table for the win.

Rating: D. Did I mention there isn't much on this show and they don't have enough to fill in two hours? This match ran over fifteen minutes with six people running in. The tagging stuff got old in a hurry, especially with JR mentioning more than once that there were no disqualifications. Why he didn't mention the tags not being necessary isn't clear but it might have made too much sense.

HHH and Flair head to the parking lot where Shawn hits HHH in the head with a shovel. Flair takes a shot as well (at least wait for the bar) and a trashcan shot knocks HHH into a dumpster. As you might expect, Shawn climbs the highest thing he can find (the production truck) and dives onto HHH for the big crash. Shawn rants about having heart to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Yeah this isn't working and it's very, very clear that the red side of Armageddon is a horrible show with EVERYTHING banked on Shawn vs. HHH. I'm not even sure why the Tag Team Title match needs to be a four way when you could easily have two tags to flesh things out a bit. The long matches and bad wrestling didn't

help here but above all else, Raw needs something fresh instead of HHH vs. Shawn again.

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NXT – May 10, 2017: Four Out of Five

NXT

Date: May 10, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness

With ten days to go until Takeover: Chicago, it's time to crown a new #1 contender to the NXT Title. Tonight we have Hideo Itami facing Roderick Strong for the shot at Bobby Roode in Chicago. While this should seem like a foregone conclusion, Strong was built up quite well in the back to back video packages and looks good coming into the match. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Strong vs. Itami, which is all that needs to be focused on.

Opening sequence.

Aleister Black vs. Cesaro Bononi

The jobber is massive at probably 6'6 with a good look. A kick to the chest drops him with ease though and Black has a seat. More kicks set up a knee to the back and Black Mass puts Bononi away at 1:29. Great pop for the finish.

We look back at last week's battle royal with Asuka interfering and injuring Ember Moon. For the first time, Moon is officially ruled out, meaning it's going to be a triple threat.

Pete Dunne vs. Tyler Bate for the UK Title is also confirmed for Takeover.

Video on Dunne.

Video on Ruby Riot, including her growing up in Indiana. She has a lot of tattoos and they all tell a story. The end of the story: Ruby Riot on Women's Champion. No one has ever seen anyone like her and she's here to break the mold of the women's division. Does anyone NOT break that mold?

Earlier today we had a sitdown interview with Nikki Cross but she couldn't sit still and refused to let a microphone be set up. She finally just grabbed the thing and said three, two, one action. Then she started messing with the boom mic while talking about Ruby. She wants to fight right now and wants her title too. This was rather disturbing in a good way.

Drew McIntyre is ready to take the NXT Title. Wesley Blake of all people comes in to say he deserves the shot. That seems to set up a match.

The Velveteen Dream is coming.

Here's DIY for a chat. They never had a fair rematch for the titles so it's high time they got their shot at the Authors of Pain. This brings out....Riddick Moss and Tino Sabbatelli? Really? They say the line starts behind them but DIY says Sabbatelli and Moss just crossed the line. The fight is on with DIY easily clearing the ring but here's a referee.

DIY vs. Riddick Moss/Tino Sabbatelli

Moss knees Ciampa down to start and it's off to Tino for a beating in the corner. The heels take turns stomping away until Sabbatelli grabs a chinlock. Ciampa throws him away though and the hot tag brings in Gargano to clean house. A kick to the head takes Moss down and the slingshot spear gets a rather delayed two (seemed like a slightly blown save). Gargano hits a dive to the floor and the Meet in the Middle ends Moss at 5:03.

Rating: C-. This was just a step above a squash with DIY looking like the polished team that they really are. Well done on bringing in Sabbatelli and Moss like this. They're way too young to win a match like this but they have to be brought to the main show again somehow and this was as good as anything else.

Post match Regal makes DIY vs. the Authors (who come out for the announcement) in a ladder match.

Kassius Ohno says he fell down against Bobby Roode and now he's in a bigger building. You take down a skyscraper brick by brick but here's Andrade Cien Almas to call Ohno a perro. NO! DON'T TRY TO BE LIKE ALBERTO! Ohno reads him the riot act about squandering his opportunities and a match is made for next week.

Video on Tyler Bate.

Strong says this match is why he's here. His music starts playing so he has to leave.

Itami respects Strong but tonight, Roderick is going to go to sleep.

Roderick Strong vs. Hideo Itami

The winner gets the shot at Roode at Takeover. Feeling out process to start with Itami working on an early headlock. The threat of a big kick sends Strong outside and we take a break. Back with Itami forearming him in the head and grabbing a chinlock that doesn't go anywhere. Strong gets in a shot to the ribs though and the first backbreaker gets two.

Strong starts in on the shoulder and another backbreaker gets the same. It's off to a bodyscissors with Strong cranking on the shoulder even more until they fall outside. Strong doesn't waste any

time by tossing Itami back first onto the apron. Back from a second break with a double clothesline putting both guys down. Itami gets his tornado DDT onto the top rope and a top rope boot gets two.

Strong is right back with an Angle Slam for two (SWEET! I can't stand that chant.) of his own but takes too long going up, allowing Itami to grab a super Falcon Arrow for a very near fall. The slugout actually goes to Strong but Itami gets all fired up and hits some running kicks in the corner to knock Strong senseless. The GTS sends Itami to Chicago at 22:59.

Rating: B+. I'm not sure what the point was in having Strong built up over the last two weeks to have him lose here but it was in a heck of a match. These guys beat the heck out of each other with Itami taking it to a level that Strong couldn't reach to finally put him away. Itami winning was the pretty obvious conclusion after the issues with Roode and the match should be really solid.

Itami helps Strong to his feet to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This show set up a lot of Takeover and that's a good thing with so little time beforehand. At the moment we have four matches announced with a fifth likely being set up next week (a four way between Strong, Black, Ohno and McIntyre for the #1 contendership would be a good option). They did a lot of advancing this week and that's where NXT shines, making this a good show.

Results

Aleister Black b. Cesaro Bononi – Black Mass

DIY b. Riddick Moss/Tino Sabbatelli – Meet in the Middle to Moss

Hideo Itami b. Roderick Strong – GTS

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Smackdown – May 9, 2017: The British Curse Turns Blue

Smackdown

Date: May 9, 2017

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're taped tonight from London as we have less than two weeks before Backlash. That means it's Jinder Mahal time tonight and we get to see more of his rapid fire build towards being a main eventer. Other than that we might get more of the Welcoming Committee, which is turning into one of the worst heel stables I can remember in years. Let's get to it.

We open with a clip of last month's Six Pack Challenge where Mahal became #1 contender. Has Mojo Rawley had a match since then? Mahal then cost Randy Orton the House of Horrors match and stole the title belt.

Opening sequence.

Here's Orton to get things going and he has the title back, thanks to Shane McMahon taking it from Jinder last week. Orton says he lost because of Mahal, not because of Wyatt or that refrigerator. Before Orton can get too far, here's Mahal to show off his promotional pictures with the title. Mahal promises to begin a new age at Backlash before speaking I believe Punjab.

Cue Kevin Owens to say no one cares about anything but him. Owens brags about ending Chris Jericho's career and, after he gets rid of AJ Styles, he wants the World Title. Now it's AJ coming out to quite the reaction to say he's the face that runs the place. Cue Baron Corbin but Sami Zayn jumps him from behind and the fights are on with the good guys cleaning house.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

Before the match, we get some generic "British people have bad teeth" jokes from James Ellsworth and Carmella. Naomi and Charlotte are here as Becky's seconds. The Welcoming Committee offers an early distraction so Natalya can send Becky to the floor and take over. We hit the abdominal stretch for a bit before the STRAIGHT FIRE forearm has Natalya reeling. The Bexploder looks to set up something on the top but the other women get in a fight, allowing Natalya to pull Becky off the top for the pin at 3:02. That's almost the same ending as Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James from last night.

Rating: D+. The time and the familiar ending hut this one but real problem was taking fifteen minutes to introduce everyone and start the match. I'm sure this sets up a six woman tag for the pay per view, which should be a good place for either someone to turn heel or at least for the Welcoming Committee to get a win. Therefore, look for Charlotte to pin Carmella.

Lana is coming soon.

Charlotte blames Naomi for Becky's loss but Lynch comes in to cool them down. A six woman tag is set for the pay per view.

It's Fashion Files time! They're at the 02 Arena this week and Fandango is dressed as Sherlock Holmes while Breeze is a standard British cop. Fandango: "Cheerio." Breeze: "No thanks. I've already had my breakfast." They find some spilled lead paint that would only be worn by Uggs. That must be a ruse so Breezango can't tell them apart but it doesn't really matter. The paint leads to a room where roaring is heard. They think something nefarious is going on in there but it's just the Ascension warming themselves up. Breeze: "I'm getting too old for this s***e." More funny stuff here as

Breezango continues to look good.

Luke Harper vs. Erick Rowan

Rowan throws him to the floor to start as the announcers talk about how these two are running amuck with no one to guide them. Back in and Rowan scores with a spinning kick to the face and a splash for two. Harper suplexes his way out of the head vice but the discus lariat is blocked. Instead Erick gets two off a Side Effect and grabs the mask. The distraction (as the referee tries to figure out what the mask is supposed to look like) allows Rowan to poke Harper in the eye and grab a reverse spinning powerslam for the pin at 4:23.

Rating: D. Just a power match here but they really need to either stop pushing Harper for a few weeks and then having him lose over and over again. I mean, do they really think there's value in Erick Rowan winning with a lame powerslam? This didn't work and the booking makes my head hurt so we'll move on.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to call out Shinsuke Nakamura. He's been here for eight years (How has it only been that long?) but the fans treat him like a disease. Who do the people cheer for now? That starts a Nakamura chant as this is starting to sound like Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles last year.

Now people are calling Nakamura an artist but Ziggler is the strongest man in WWE because he never needed the people. This brings out Nakamura to tell Ziggler to shut up. Nakamura is ready to show him so here's a referee but Ziggler says nope. Dolph says we do this on his time and wants the match at Backlash. The sneak attack earns Dolph a beating.

Sami is fired up to team with Orton and Styles. Zayn tries to run a strategy session but seems to just annoy his partners. By the time he announces their team as the winners, they've both left.

New Day is coming and we get a video game themed promo with every other team being listed on a character select screen.

Breezango vs. Ascension

Fandango chops at Konnor to start but it's off to Viktor who runs him over. A chinlock doesn't last long and it's off to Breeze for some house cleaning. Fandango makes a blind tag and it's an atomic drop into the Last Dance for the in at 2:39.

Post match the Usos come out to say twelve days over and over while listing off various things that Breezango can do to each others' backs (with Jimmy clearly trying not to crack up).

Mojo Rawley is giving some kids a tour of the backstage area but stops to tell them a story about Andre the Giant. Andre did a lot of things but Mojo switches to a story about a boy who was different growing up. He was bullied as a kid but then he used it as motivation to become a legend. Mojo pulls out the trophy and the kids are amazed. I've started to like Mojo more and more lately and I'd love to see him get some more TV time.

Rusev hasn't heard about his demand for a World Title shot but he'll be here next week to get an answer.

Randy Orton/Sami Zayn/AJ Styles vs. Jinder Mahal/Baron Corbin/Kevin Owens

Sami and Corbin get things started but a quick tag brings in Owens. There's no contact though as it's off to Mahal for some kicks to the chest. Sami grabs a headscissors and brings in Orton so Mahal tags out to Owens. The threat of an RKO sends Owens out to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Corbin working over Sami and handing it off to Owens as the eternal feud continues. Sami is tossed outside for a stomping from Mahal, drawing AJ over to stare him down. Corbin's chinlock keeps things slow so Jinder comes in for one of his own. The stomping keeps going and we take a break.

Back with AJ getting the hot tag to come in and clean house as everything breaks down. The running forearm drops a seated Corbin and Sami hits a big flip dive onto all three villains. Owens breaks up the Phenomenal Forearm though and Styles and Corbin are down. It's Mahal breaking up the tag though and dropping a knee for two on

Styles.

Owens comes back in for some very aggressive stomping and a chinlock of his own. That's quite the popular move tonight and in no way a method to stretch out a long main event. The backsplash hits knees though and the hot tag brings in Orton. Everything breaks down and Owens eats the RK0, only to have Jinder's cobra clutch slam put Orton away at 22:14.

Rating: C+. The match was more long than good and the ending extended the Mahal vs. Orton feud but this felt like a way to fill in TV time instead of a match that needed to go this long. I'm not sure how much people are going to buy Mahal's cobra clutch slam as a threat to beat Orton but at least they're setting it up as a possibility.

Overall Rating: D+. This was a rough one as it felt like a shortened version of Raw. The problem is I don't watch Smackdown for a shortened version of Raw but rather something far more interesting and exciting. To be fair though, I think we can blame that on the UK tour as those shows are almost always lifeless. Some stuff was set up for the pay per view though and that's important with just a show left beforehand.

Results

Natalya b. Becky Lynch – Natalya pulled her off the top rope

Erick Rowan b. Luke Harper – Spinning reverse powerslam

Breezango b. Ascension – Last Dance to Viktor

Jinder Mahal/Kevin Owens/Baron Corbin b. Sami Zayn/Randy Orton/AJ Styles – Cobra clutch slam to Orton

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Monday Night Raw – May 8, 2017: Wake Me When We're Back Home

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 8, 2017

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

We're over in the old country tonight for a taped show. It's roughly a month away from Extreme Rules and we don't have much of a card yet. However, you can pretty much pencil in Roman Reigns and Braun Strowman coming back from severe injuries to work the show because that's how WWE works. Let's get to it.

Here's Dean Ambrose to open the show who says Kurt Angle won't be here tonight. Dean: "I heard his dog is sick or something." For tonight though, Ambrose is in charge. Before we can hear his first act, here are Miz and Maryse to interrupt. While the idea of Ambrose in charge could only lead to chaos, he has something else in mind. Before the show, Stephanie McMahon called him to say that Miz is in charge this week instead.

Ambrose says Miz is in the first match tonight and offers a handshake but here's Strowman with his arm in a sling to interrupt. He wants Reigns as soon as possible and then he wants Brock Lesnar. This brings out.....Kalisto, to say he wants Strowman tonight. Ambrose makes the match but Braun says he's injured. Dean heard Strowman say

he could beat Kalisto with one arm though so the match is on. As for Miz, he can face Finn Balor next.

Miz vs. Finn Balor

Miz bails to the floor to start but comes back in to take a dropkick to the face. Another trip to the floor doesn't go as well for Miz as he gets dropkicked into the barricade. Maryse pulls her husband away from the Coup de Grace and we take a break. Back with Miz getting in a short DDT for two of his own and it's off to the chinlock. Balor comes back with the Pele, followed by another kick to the head to put Miz on the floor.

Miz is reeling but a Maryse distraction lets him shove Balor into the referee. As acting GM of the night, Miz can't tolerate referees being abused so that's a DQ at 9:57. Actually not so fast as Ambrose comes out and says we're not doing it like that. The match restarts and Balor hits a Sling Blade, followed by the Coup de Grace for the pin at 12:31 (counting the break in between the falls).

Rating: C-. I have a feeling we'll be seeing more of this going forward but it wasn't the strongest match in the world. Then again that's what you have to expect from Miz. While I'm not wild on having the #1 contender lose a match, you have to factor in the UK crowd. Not a bad match or anything and the more they build up Balor, the better things are for them.

Nia Jax scares Alexa Bliss again but they seem to be ok.

Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Non-title with Nia Jax and Bayley are the respective seconds. Cole actually mentions Bliss and James working together on Smackdown a few months back in a fact I didn't expect to hear. Bliss gets kicked around with ease to start and Bliss gets knocked out to the floor for an early break.

Back with Bliss working on an armbar and twisting Mickie down by said arm for two. Naturally Bliss gets in some trash talk but misses a knee drop onto the arm, allowing Mickie to start the comeback. The chokeslave is countered into a flapjack as Bayley and Nia get in a

fight. Not that it matters as Bliss pulls Mickie off the top for a crash and the pin at 9:15.

Rating: D+. As usual Bliss' mannerisms and heel work outshine her in-ring abilities and that's a good thing. She's absolutely nailing the character right now and that's much more important than being able to do thirty different holds. Bliss vs. Bayley II should be good as they're such a natural rivalry, though you can't keep Nia away from the title forever.

Nia destroys Bayley and James post match.

Miz yells at Ambrose, who tells Miz he can go home tonight. That's not cool with Miz, who has a special MizTV later. As a bonus, Ambrose can fight Bray Wyatt.

Samoa Joe says Seth Rollins is now living on his terms. Cue Rollins for the big brawl.

Kalisto vs. Braun Strowman

Braun says he's not wrestling this match and then kicks Kalisto in the face. Cue Roman Reigns though and we'll say it's a no contest at thirty seconds.

Three straight Superman Punches put Strowman on the floor but he still manages to kick a charging Reigns in the chest. Reigns gets the sling off the bad arm and sends it into the post over and over. A bunch of chair shots knock Strowman into the crowd. What a hero that Reigns is. I mean, assuming you believe WWE still sees him as a major face and aren't just trolling the heck out of us anymore.

Goldust fires R-Truth up before their Tag Team Turmoil match. It seems that Goldust isn't sure about the team's future.

Tag Team Turmoil

It's basically a gauntlet match with two teams starting and the winning team advancing to face a new team. The last team standing faces the Hardys at Extreme Rules. Enzo Amore and Big Cass start with Cesaro and Sheamus and it's Cass vs. Sheamus to get things going. An early Empire Elbow has Sheamus in trouble and Cass throws Enzo at both guys for good measure. A quick Irish Curse drops Enzo

though (Enzo: "OW OW OW!") and we take a break. Back with Enzo catching Cesaro with an enziguri, only to have Sheamus pull Cass off the apron. A Sharpshooter makes Enzo tap at 6:45 and it's Heath Slater and Rhyno in third.

The brawl starts in the aisle with Slater and Rhyno getting the worse of it. Slater is thrown inside for a top rope clothesline from Sheamus, who also kicks Rhyno off the apron. A Brogue Kick ends Slater at 10:35. Anderson and Gallows are in fourth as we take a second break. Back again with Cesaro muscling Gallows up for a delayed suplex. Sheamus gives up the hot tag though and everything breaks down with all four being dropped in just a few seconds. White Noise gets two on Gallows and we take a third break. Back with Sheamus hitting Gallows with the Brogue Kick for the elimination at 22:33.

Golden Truth comes out as the last team and Goldust hammers on Sheamus to start. That doesn't last long though as Sheamus takes him down and works on the leg, leaving Cesaro to grab the Sharpshooter. R-Truth makes the save and hits a quick Lie Detector on Cesaro. The ax kick gets two but Truth misses a charge and gets rolled up for the pin at 27:48.

Rating: D+. This was much more long than good and showed how dull the tag division is on Mondays. Sheamus and Cesaro are talented and WAY better than I was expecting them to be but this made them feel like faces instead of the big time heels they're supposed to be. The big problem here though is I had a hard time buying the idea that ANYONE other than Sheamus and Cesaro getting the win, especially after their interactions with the Hardys over the last few weeks. Golden Truth gets beaten down post match but the Hardys come out for the staredown.

Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

They head straight to the floor to start the brawl with Joe throwing him around, only to have Seth catch him with a clothesline off the steps. The fight heads back inside with Joe taking over and grabbing a suplex for two. Joe gets in a hard shot to the knee though and

Rollins crumbles to the floor as we take a break. Back with Joe dropping a big knee and telling Rollins not to listen to the fans.

The Koquina Clutch is broken up with a jawbreaker and Joe is sent outside for back to back suicide dives. A springboard clothesline gives Seth two but he walks into the snap powerslam for two. Joe can't powerbomb him though and gets caught in the falcon's arrow. A turnbuckle pad is pulled off but Seth gets two off a superkick anyway. It's Rollins being sent chest first into the buckle behind the referee's back. Joe does it again in front of the referee's back for the DQ at 14:12.

Rating: C+. The ending hurts this a lot but these two definitely have chemistry. You can likely pencil in the third match for Extreme Rules and that could be quite the fight if they're given the right gimmick. I like that they didn't have the match end clean and after the first one ended on a fluke, there's a good chance that the third match is the real payoff.

Joe chokes him out after the match.

TJP vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville is on commentary. TJP chills on the corner to start so Jack headbutts the heck out of him. Back in and TJP starts in on the leg but gets dropkicked in the face for his efforts. The Detonation Kick is broken up though and TJP grabs a rollup with a handful of trunks for the pin at 3:03.

Rating: C. It was nice while it lasted but you can see how far Gallagher has fallen. He's barely getting a reaction in his home country where he should look like a star. When you lose almost every match you have though, there's only so much that the home country crowd can do for you.

TJP goes after Jack again and puts him in the kneebar until Austin Aries makes the save.

Sasha Banks vs. Alicia Fox

They slap each other in the face to start before Fox gets two off her northern lights suplex. We hit the chinlock and the fans start

looking at something in the crowd. Back up and Banks hits her running knees for the pin at 2:57.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Miz and Maryse on commentary. Bray punches Dean in the head to start as Miz talks about wanting to return prestige to the Intercontinental Title. Dirty Deeds doesn't work so Bray suplexes him on the floor instead. Back with Bray getting two off a DDT until Dean hits a hard clothesline. Ambrose sends him outside for the running clothesline off the barricade and here are Miz and Maryse to ringside.

Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two and Dean hits the top rope elbow. Miz grabs the Intercontinental Title for a distraction so Dean suicide dives onto him. Bray is smart enough to go after the distracted Dean, allowing Miz to hit Ambrose in the back with the title. Sister Abigail finishes Ambrose at 15:12.

Rating: D+. This was a long match to end a very long show. I can live with a dirty finish to set up a title match next week and Miz is someone you can buy as a threat to the title. I'm surprised Ambrose has held the thing as long as he has but it's time for him to lose it. Adding Bray to the mix could be interesting as well.

Miz poses over Ambrose and hits the catchphrase to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. I know this show isn't going to get glowing reviews and I certainly see why. The show really wasn't terrible but it was VERY long and drawn out. You could tell that this was all about setting stuff up for next week instead of doing anything interesting here. I was bored more than once tonight but I can always give the wrestlers a bit of a break based on the jet lag and being thrown off their games like this. It's not a bad show but it's really, really sluggish and that's not good.

Results

Finn Balor b. Miz – Coup de Grace

Alexa Bliss b. Mickie James – Bliss pulled James off the top

Kalisto vs. Braun Strowman went to a no contest when Roman Reigns

interfered

Sheamus and Cesaro won Tag Team Turmoil last eliminating Golden Truth

Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe via DQ when Rollins was sent into the exposed turnbuckle

TJP b. Jack Gallagher – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Sasha Banks b. Alicia Fox – Double knees to the chest

Bray Wyatt b. Dean Ambrose – Sister Abigail

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Ring of Honor TV – May 3, 2017: Lethal Japanese Kingdoms Are Going To War

Ring of Honor

Date: May 3, 2017

Location: William J. Myers Pavilion, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Colt Cabana, Ian Riccaboni

It's World Title time again as we need to find out who will be joining Champion Christopher Daniels and Cody in the triple threat

match (because of course it's a triple threat match) at War of the Worlds. Other than that it's time to build up some Ring of Honor guys to be fed to the New Japan crew so let's get to it.

We recap the eight man tag that set up tonight's #1 contenders four way. I've still heard worse ideas.

Opening sequence.

Coast to Coast vs. The Kingdom

The Kingdom jumps Ali and St. Giovanni to start but a double belly to back slam sets up a pair of flip dives to the floor. Back from a very early break with St. Giovanni getting a hot tag to clean house. Vinny is put in the Tree of Woe for the double missile dropkicks but Taven makes the save. Marseglia's Swanton gets two but he pulls Ali up, allowing Taven to hit Angel's Wings for the pin on St. Giovanni for the pin at 6:29. Too much in the break to rate but it was fun while it lasted.

Package on the Hardys vs. the Young Bucks.

Here are the Young Bucks with something to say. Matt is very happy about getting their belts back but Nick wants to talk about Adam Cole. Everything is cool with the Bullet Club so let's have an open challenge for next week. Matt is ready to face Demolition, the Rock N Roll Express or Billy and Chuck but certainly not the Revival. Instead here's the Spirit Squad of all people...to take stereo superkicks. Eh good for a chuckle.

Matt Sydal vs. Flip Gordon

I saw Gordon down in Orlando and thought something of him so hopefully he does well here. They trade flips (you would think Gordon would have the advantage there) to start with Gordon nipping up about ten times in a row for a standoff. Sydal grabs a rollup for two and there's a spinwheel kick to put Gordon down. Back up and Gordon gets in a kick of his own and a standing moonsault gets two. Another kick to the head doesn't do much good as Sydal scores with his own kick, followed by the Shooting Star for the pin at 5:34.

Rating: C. I haven't liked Sydal this much since his Evan Bourne singles run, which is quite the surprise after all the time I spent being bored with his ROH stuff. Gordon looked good here and I'd have much rather seen him in the Top Prospect Tournament instead of half the schmucks they had in there.

Post match Marty Scurll comes in but can't get the chickenwing.

Here's Adam Cole for a chat. The Bullet Club is the greatest faction of all time and they'll prove it again next week when Cole teams with Hangman Page to face Dalton Castle and Christopher Daniels.

We look back at Daniels vs. Cody.

Silas Young vs. Hangman Page vs. Jay White vs. Jay Lethal

Daniels is on commentary. No tags and one fall to a finish with the winner being added to the World Title match at War of the Worlds. It's a big brawl to start with everyone going after some rollups as Daniels talks about wanting to face any of them. White takes over early on and throws everyone into a pile in the corner.

Lethal comes back but it's WAY too early for the Injection, allowing Young to make a save. One heck of a clothesline drops White with Page taking over. Everyone goes to the corner for a Tower of Doom with Lethal getting the worst of it as we take a break. Back with White in control but making the rookie mistake of smacking Lethal in the back of the head. Lethal can't do anything though and we're down to White vs. Young.

Page takes White's place though and Cabana is STUNNED for some reason. A superplex drops White again and it's Young slugging it out with Lethal on the apron. That means it's time for everyone to head outside, leaving White to flip dive onto everyone. We take another break and come back with the Lethal Combination getting two on White. Young makes another save though, only to have Lethal hit the Lethal Injection for the pin and the title shot at 15:41.

Rating: C+. This was a lot of quick one on one matches and the ending really felt like it came out of nowhere. Lethal adds some star power to the main event though and that's the best thing they could have done. Daniels vs. Cody isn't exactly thrilling so Lethal adds some much needed help and interest to the title match.

Cody comes out for the three way staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Given that we're less than two weeks away from the pay per view, there's only so much you can do to set up a pay per view. The New Japan guys sound interesting now as they've been away long enough to be an attraction again. Why that's so complicated isn't clear but at least we should have a fun pay per view. Good enough show here but it was a one match episode. At least

the one match meant something though. And we've got the Spirit Squad so you know things are picking up.

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Main Event – May 4, 2017: We Need More Jinder

Main Event

Date: May 4, 2017

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We could be in for a better Main Event this week after a better episode of Raw. Things are starting to pick up despite most of the main event scene being off for a variety of reasons. That means we've gotten a fresh set of ideas for Raw, though the question is how different can things be on Main Event. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Lince Dorado vs. Drew Gulak

Dorado headscissors and armdrags Gulak down to start, followed by another headscissors on the floor. Drew gets in a kick to the chest and works on the arm. A hard whip sends Lince into the corner but he comes right back with a moonsault press. Dorado's moonsault is blocked by some raised boots though and Gulak grabs a dragon sleeper

for the tap out at 5:01.

Rating: C-. This was nothing great but I'm liking Gulak's character more every time I see him. It's a good idea and makes for a natural heel, especially when you compare it to the much more straightforward Neville style heel. Gulak could go somewhere if he's given the chance and I never would have believed that just three months ago.

And now, to Raw.

The women's division is in the ring with a pedestal in the middle and here's Alexa Bliss for her coronation as the new champion. Bliss thanks everyone for being here tonight, even if Kurt Angle forced them to be here. The Queen is gone is gone but not to worry because the Goddess is here. These women are an inspiration, including Mickie James, despite her contemporaries Mae Young and Fabulous Moolah having moved on to a better place.

As for Sasha, she's the woman that Alexa beat to get where she is today. Sasha glares at her and Bliss backs into Nia. Bliss: "We're good. We're good." Alexa gets on the pedestal and laughs at Bayley for losing in front of all her family last night. At least now Bayley's nephews will have someone to look up to. The brawl starts in a hurry and we take a break.

Video on Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns.

From Raw again.

Here's Angle to talk about Reigns vs. Strowman. Last night's matches had consequences with Reigns re-injuring his ribs and Strowman tearing his rotator cuff. Kurt has been thinking about this all day but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Bray is here as a savior after rising from his own ashes with burnt wings. Angle says this is his ring but Bray says it's his world.

Curt Hawkins vs. Curtis Axel

Hawkins is now calling himself the Star Factory because of all the big names that have beaten him over the years. A headscissors takes Axel to the mat but he whips Hawkins hard into the corner. It's way too early for the PerfectPlex though and Hawkins bails to the floor. A backdrop actually sends Axel outside as well and it's off to a break. Back with Hawkins getting two off an elbow drop and grabbing a chinlock as this probably isn't even exciting enough to be a nacho

break match. Axel's comeback is cut off by a kick to the face but he charges into the PerfectPlex for the pin at 10:15.

Rating: D. You can only get so far with a Curtis Axel match and I think we've hit that ceiling. The fans seem to be into him but it's clear that he's going nowhere fast. Now that was the case with Jinder Mahal as well but I don't think Axel has enough unique qualities to get him anywhere. He's just a third generation wrestler with a good look and solid in-ring abilities.

We wrap things up with the last few minutes of Monday's triple threat main event.

Overall Rating: C-. As usual the hot stuff from Raw helped this one a lot but there's only so much that can be done with this show no matter what. It was nice to have Gulak advance his character a bit instead of having yet another tag match but the ship sailed on Axel a very long time ago. Not bad here but nothing the show hasn't done for months (if not years) now.

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Smackdown – December 5, 2002: One of My Favorite

Matches

Smackdown

Date: December 5, 2002

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're getting close to the end of the year and thankfully there are no turkeys involved this week. However there's still Big Show, who can indeed be put in the F5 and chokeslams people through tables. Hopefully we get to see some more of the young guys being pushed, which would do Smackdown a lot of good. Let's get to it.

The opening video points out that Stephanie McMahon is in charge and you better understand that. She suspended Brock Lesnar last week but he screwed himself you see.

Opening sequence.

Albert vs. Rey Mysterio

Albert has been stuck on Velocity lately and is ready to turn some heads. Fair enough, but will those heads be 8 3/8 inches? Mysterio kicks at the leg to start but gets caught in a good looking sitout gorilla press slam. Back up and Albert charges into a boot, followed by a springboard bulldog for two. The 619 connects but the West Coast Pop is countered into an over the shoulder backbreaker to give Albert the huge upset. Well....I know they need new stars but ALBERT? They couldn't have Benoit or Angle do this and then move on to face Lesnar? They use Albert for it instead? Uh....yeah.

Post match Alberto beats Rey's knee with chair, likely writing him off TV to repair an injury, until Edge makes a save.

Bill DeMott rants about being interviewed by Funaki, who can barely speak English.

Edge yells at the medics for not taking care of Mysterio fast enough.

Here's Stephanie to brag about throwing herself at Scott Steiner in

the name of getting him to sign with Smackdown. It's worked though as Steiner will be here next week to sign. As for tonight, Lesnar is still suspended but he'll get to appear via satellite to give his side of the story. At least Stephanie is now a heel and supposed to be obnoxious and mean.

Jamie Noble vs. Crash

Nidia jumps in on commentary as Jamie takes Crash down for an early two. Noble works him over in the corner and Nidia doesn't want to talk about Jamie's cousin Nunzio. Crash comes back with a clothesline and Bodog but stops to kiss Nidia. The distraction lets Jamie load up the Tiger Bomb, only to be reversed into the Crash Landing (Styles Clash) for the pin. Now that's how you make a losing streak stick: a clean loss to a low level contender.

Jamie says Nunzio gets here next week.

Chris Benoit gives one heck of an interview about how his whole life has been about becoming World Champion but the broken neck held him back. This is edited off the Network, which is understandable, though annoying if you really want everything.

Dawn Marie comes up to Torrie and gets straight to the point: she wants Torrie instead of her dad. If she comes to Dawn's hotel room tonight, the wedding is over. Torrie looks disturbed and says no way. Dawn asks how much Torrie loves her father and the wheels seem to be turning. This would have worked better if the acting was a bit higher and if it came off as sexy rather than stalkerish.

One thing here: what exactly is hurt by Al marrying Dawn? He'll be with someone WAY out of his league and seems to be happy. Is she going to take what is likely very limited money? Or just leave him? Or is it just to torment Torrie into sleeping with her? I really don't see how Al is hurt in this whole thing, assuming Dawn doesn't try to swindle him somehow.

Funaki vs. Bill DeMott

DeMott has Marc Mero's music. Funaki gets taken down and stomped a lot as the announcers recap how horrible DeMott's career has been.

Choking with some screaming has Funaki in trouble, followed by a powerslam and the moonsault for the pin. Just a squash with DeMott basically having the same character and motivation as Albert.

Los Guerreros are ready to win their matches tonight and make Grandma Guerrero proud. That should be everyone's mission in life really.

We get the Lesnar sitdown interview and he got what he deserved for working with Paul Heyman. He heard Stephanie say that Lesnar screwed himself....and here are Heyman and Big Show to interrupt. Heyman compares Lesnar to a child that needed a spanking and who better than Big Show to administer one? The two of them screwed Lesnar and loved it. If they could go back in time to the week before Survivor Series, they would do it all over again. After some plugs of tonight's four way #1 contenders match, Lesnar promises to be at Armageddon.

Cruiserweight Title: Billy Kidman vs. Chavo Guerrero

Kidman is defending. A fan in the crowd has a sign saying the Guerreros will mow your lawn for a green card. As stupid as that is, Cole tops it by saying "Brock Lesnar has said he'll be at Armageddon in person, whatever that means." Kidman grabs a hurricanrana to start but gets caught in a gutbuster to give Chavo the real early control. Some shots to the kidneys set up an abdominal stretch but a Gory Bomb is countered into a rollup.

Kidman's fireman's carry into a backbreaker gets two and the BK Bomb is good for the same. They head up top at the same time for the big crash out to the floor and we have a bit of a breather. Back in and Kidman misses the Shooting Star, setting up the Gory Bomb to give Chavo two. Kidman comes right back with something like a reverse implant DDT, followed by the Shooting Star to retain.

Rating: C+. The rib work didn't go anywhere but it was nice to see Kidman getting some time instead of being thrown out there for three minutes before finishing with his one big move. Kidman can be a fine champion and a good choice for someone to take the title from later on so this is the right way to build him up.

Edge wants to become #1 contender but wants to get his hands on Albert too. He's not entirely focused you see. Edge charges across the backstage and goes after Albert until referees break it up.

And now, a hip hop challenge between John Cena and Rikishi. They both rap and Rikishi wins the fan vote. An attack ensues but Rikishi and Tazz (hosting) easily fight off Cena and B Two. Dancing ensues and I have no idea how this helps anyone other than Rikishi.

Angle is ready for the main event.

Edge vs. Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Eddie Guerrero

Elimination rules and the winner gets Big Show at Armageddon. Before we're ready to go though, Albert jumps Edge and takes out his knee. After everyone else is ready to go, Edge slowly limps down to the ring to have all four in the ring at once. The match is joined in progress after a break with Edge backdropping and flapjacking anyone he sees (save for the referee, commentators and fans of course) until Benoit and Angle start going after the leg.

Angle and Eddie head outside, leaving Benoit to stay on the bad knee. The half nelson faceplant gives Edge a breather but Eddie throws both of them outside. Eddie misses the frog splash and gets hit by the Swan Dive for two. The Edgecution gets two on Benoit, who pops up and Crossfaces Eddie for the elimination.

Angle is right there with the rolling German suplexes on Benoit but Edge comes back with the missile dropkick on Kurt. The knee is banged up again though and it's Angle on his feet first. The Angle Slam is countered into an Edge-0-Matic but Benoit breaks it up with a Crossface on Edge which is broken up by an ankle lock. We get a ref bump so here's Eddie with a belt shot to Benoit. Edge adds a spear to get rid of Chris and we're down to two.

Kurt is right back up with the ankle lock though and Edge somehow lasts the better part of a minute. They both fall to the floor in a crash and we take a break. Back with Angle clotheslining a bloody Edge, who hammers away with right hands in the corner. That just earns him an overhead belly to belly as Angle turns it up one more

notch. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Edge comes back with his own belly to belly.

Another Edge-O-Matic gets two as the announcers are selling the heck out of that bad knee. Angle rolls some more German suplexes but Edge, with his thong sticking out, gets a spear for two more. The Edgecution gets another near fall as the fans are losing their minds on these kickouts.

Edge actually blocks the corner running superplex and hits another missile dropkick. The Angle Slam gets two and the kickout only makes Kurt more angry. Edge rolls through the ankle lock for a hot two and it's right back to the ankle lock. A rope is finally grabbed and Edge hits his own Angle Slam for two more. He takes too long getting up top though and the running Angle Slam FINALLY puts Edge away to give Angle the title shot.

Rating: A. I remember watching this match when it aired live and thinking it was amazing. While I remember it differently (I would have sworn that Edge came out halfway through the match and that the first two eliminations took the better part of fifteen minutes), it's still an outstanding back and forth battle with the last seven or eight minutes being incredible. Angle and Edge were trading bomb after bomb with Edge finally getting caught at the end. Edge looked like a star here and....is going to be facing Albert at the pay per view. But that's for another time as this was a great match and well worth checking out.

Big Show is IMMEDIATELY there to chokeslam Angle and stand tall.

We cut to Torrie going into Dawn's hotel room. Dawn is waiting on her wearing a robe and sipping a glass of wine. Torrie looks very uncomfortable as Dawn tucks back her hair and says how much Torrie must love her father. If Torrie does everything Dawn wants, the wedding is off. Torrie goes to leave but Dawn says that means Torrie doesn't love her father. That's enough to get Torrie to stay and we're out. I was rather intrigued by this when I was younger for obvious reasons but now....egads. The fact that you know nothing is going to make TV and the payoff is Dawn vs. Torrie tells you

everything you need to know.

Overall Rating: B-. The main event more than carries the week but we're looking down the barrel of Albert, Rikishi, Bill DeMott and Big Show as some of the top stars of this show. I'm not sure why they would go that route when they have Edge, Benoit and Los Guerreros sitting there but WWE never was one to go with what people seemed interested in seeing. Above all else though, this show toned the Stephanie stuff down by a few thousand notches and it was much easier watch as a result. Good show this week but the future is looking scary.

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205 Live – May 2, 2017: Nice and Polite

205 Live

Date: May 2, 2017

Location: Save Mart Center, Fresno, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's a new month and that means we're still in the Neville vs.

Austin Aries world as Neville got himself disqualified to retain the Cruiserweight Title on Sunday, meaning we're likely seeing a third match. Other than that we have some midcard feuds, including another round in the Brian Kendrick vs. Akira Tozawa story. Let's get to it.

We open with some post-Smackdown video of Chris Jericho being taken to the back. I like that a lot more than rushing him out for the sake of starting the far less important show. At least it adds some realism.

The traditional opening recap looks at the Cruiserweight Title match and Neville telling TJ Perkins that Austin Aries is their problem. Aries then defeated Perkins with the Last Chancery.

Opening sequence.

The announcers talk for a bit because WE NEED DISTINCT COLORS FOR EVERY SHOW OR THE COMPANY WILL FALL APART!

TJP vs. Lince Dorado

No more Perkins apparently. They hit the mat running to start and it's a double nipup into a standoff. Dorado sends him to the floor and the Asai moonsault makes things even worse. Back in and TJP stomps away in the corner, drawing threats of disqualification. Only if the storyline calls for it of course.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before TJP puts him on the top and starts going after the mask. Dorado elbows him back and mostly hits what I think was supposed to be a moonsault double stomp to the back with TJP still on his feet. That sounds like a fairly dangerous spot but it could have been a mistimed moonsault press. Dorado's high crossbody gets two, followed by a superkick for the same. TJP goes after the mask again though, allowing him to get the kneebar and the submission at 7:04.

Rating: C+. This was a better match than I was expecting from Dorado, who rarely does much for me. TJP (I'm not wild on the new name) could be a major player in the division and the heel turn really has done him a lot of good. Having him win a hard fought match like this one is what he needs, though a win over Aries would

help even more.

We get a sitdown interview with Brian Kendrick on his feud with Akira Tozawa. They were friends for a long time but now Tozawa thinks he's too good for Kendrick to be his protege. Tozawa is paying attention to the fans when he needs to be winning matches. Kendrick says he's done playing.....and then he gets his head kicked off by Tozawa, who says lesson #5 is to always end an interview with impact.

Mustafa Ali vs. Drew Gulak

Before the match, Gulak promises to bring true change to 205 Live. Gulak headlocks him to start and yells about how Ali needs to get smart. Ali apparently does just that with an armdrag and hurricanrana, only to have Gulak hide in the ropes. Another flip only seems to annoy Gulak as he blasts Ali with a clothesline for two, followed by a camel clutch. Ali fights up and grabs his neckbreaker but his top rope splash hits raised knees, giving Gulak the pin at 5:03.

Rating: C+. I liked the story here more than the first match and that's a good sign. This fit the story they were going for quite well with the clear ending, though I'm curious to see where they're going. Gulak probably needs to gain a follower in the future but he's doing well enough on his own for now. Getting wins is the next important step as he has to be proven right for this to mean anything.

Post match Gulak says this is proof that his message works and he's the future around here.

We get a long recap of Alicia Fox breaking up with Noam Dar thanks to Rich Swann, setting up a feud between the two of them.

Rich Swann vs. Noam Dar

Swann's trunks have little wings on the hips. The bell rings and Graves says that it was a lot longer than a four hour flight for Dar. The announcers stop to chuckle as this is a reference to Phillips' extramarital affair that came out on Instagram. That's

quite the risque line but Phillips seemed ok with it.

Swann headlocks Dar to the mat to start and a dropkick takes us right into the chinlock. Dar finally gets up and crotches him on the top, followed by a clothesline out to the floor. Back in Dar starts in on the arm with an armbar and some cranking. We hit the slow heel offense, including a chinlock and a belly to back suplex. Swann makes his comeback but a kick to the leg puts him on the floor again.

Noam's arm work goes nowhere as Swann runs back inside for a running flip dive. The Phoenix splash connects but Swann's arm bangs onto the mat and it's a delayed cover for two. Back up and Dar CRANKS on the arm, only to have Swann kick him upside the head. Rich dives into a Fujiwara armbar until a rope is grabbed. Not that it matters as Dar hits a running kick to the face for the pin at 13:07.

Rating: B-. The match worked but I'm not sure how much sense it makes to have a match built around destroying a relationship be built around arm work. That being said, Swann sold the arm well and the match was solid enough. I'm not sure how they can keep the feud going after a clean loss like this but they've pulled it off before. Post match Alicia comes out and reunites with Dar.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a night of good wrestling and storyline advancement, which is a positive sign considering there were no title implications all night. That's the right idea as you can only do the Neville vs. Aries stuff so many times before it gets boring in a hurry. Good show though as 205 Live continues to be an inoffensive, easy to watch show.

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Impact Wrestling – May 4, 2017: GFW Finally Gets Its Own TV Show

Impact Wrestling

Date: May 4, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

We're starting to get close to Slammiversary and that means we need to start lining up some title matches. There isn't a lot announced for this week's show as things are moving at a somewhat slow pace right now. Then again we have about two months before the next pay per view so they can take their time. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week. Thank goodness as I had to pull up last week's review to remember anything about that show.

Opening sequence.

Dave Penzer is now doing ring announcing, which hopefully means the Swoggle vs. Spud is done.

Matt Sydal vs. Eddie Edwards

Josh says Sydal made his debut in the six sided ring last week, which means Josh doesn't know his TNA history. Feeling out process to start with a technical sequence leading to a standoff. Sydal gets in a few kicks to the legs for the first advantage before countering a slam off the top with an ankle scissors. Now why didn't Flair ever think of that? Eddie elbows his way out of a Muta Lock and grabs a Blue Thunder Bomb for two.

A sitout F5 sets up a spinwheel kick but Eddie can't follow up. Matt hurricanranas him off the top for two but gets sent outside for the suicide dive. Back from a break with Sydal getting two off a powerbomb, only to get caught with a middle rope Codebreaker. As good as this has been, let's pause for Josh to rant about JB a bit. Eddie slips out of a powerbomb but the Boston Knee Party is blocked with a jumping knee to the face. The shooting star press gives Matt the clean pin at 14:51.

Rating: B+. Where in the world did that come from? This was one of the best matches the company has put on in a long time and even Josh couldn't make ruin it for me. Eddie losing clean aside, it's cool to see a very good, long, clean match, especially opening a show. Good stuff here and Sydal looks like a star coming out of it.

They shake hands post match. Sydal leaves but here are Angelina Love and Davey Richards to beat Edwards down. Eddie gets laid out with a chair until Alisha dives off the stage to take Angelina down.

Magnus thinks he should be in the main event of Slammiversary but now he has to face Alberto El Patron. If that's what he has to do then so be it, but here's Matt Morgan to say he should get the shot. Bruce Prichard comes in and makes a GFW Title match for later tonight.

KM is exercising when a custodian comes in to clean. He sweeps up trash and leaves but KM throws a piece of paper on the floor and yells at the guy for missing it. KM does it again and the custodian says it wasn't there ten seconds ago. That doesn't sit well with KM, who doesn't like being called a liar.

GFW Women's Title: Sienna vs. Christina Von Eerie

Von Eerie is defending. Sienna grabs a suplex for two to start and Von Eerie is in trouble early on. Another suplex sets up a neck crank and Von Eerie is dumped outside in a big crash. Christina tries a Pedigree on the apron but gets backdropped back onto the floor as this has been completely one sided. Back in and a Pounce completes the squash to give us a new champion at 3:56. The announcers' biggest concern: Sienna has no respect for the Jarretts.

Rating: D. Here's the big problem with this whole GFW thing: what is GFW and why should the fans care? Unless you were watching for about four to six weeks worth of shows two years ago, it's just a collection of belts from a promotion that ran a bunch of house shows and hasn't been heard from since. I get that the hardcore fans are going to know what's going on but catering to that audience when you're drawing 300,000 fans a week and wanting to expand is a really bad idea.

As for the match itself, Von Eerie beat a jobber last week and that's the grand total of her exposure here until she got squashed to lose her title. Get rid of these belts as soon as possible or just drop them already. It's clear that Impact Wrestling isn't going to bother to explain ANY of this so get rid of them as soon as possible.

Eli Drake tells Bruce Prichard he wants in on the title picture. Instead he gets Alberto El Patron later tonight, but it's for a shot at the GFW Title.

ODB wants to make Impact great.

JB is behind Josh and mocks his over the top mannerisms. This is still your top story.

Karen Jarrett makes Alisha vs. Angelina Love for some point in the future. Sienna comes up to brag about being champion but Karen says the target is on Sienna's back. I still have no idea why this is supposed to be interesting.

Ethan Carter III vs. John Bolen

Carter kicks him in the face to start and chokes on the ropes. A running knee to the back sends Bolen outside. Back in and the TK3 sets up the 1%er for the pin on Bolen at 2:33.

Carter puts the new bosses on notice.

Remember how JB had a sign earlier? He still does and Josh is getting annoyed.

GFW World Title: Magnus vs. Matt Morgan

Morgan is challenging and uses the size to take over early on. A big boot sends Magnus outside but he posts Morgan for a breather. Back in and the Carbon Footprint misses so Morgan bangs up a leg to give Magnus a target. A kick to the leg sets up the Figure Four with Morgan making the ropes without too much effort.

Morgan pops up for his revolving elbows in the corner, followed by a side slam. A chokeslam gets two on the champ and the Carbon Footprint puts him on the floor. Morgan's knee gives out so Magnus can grab the title. The distraction lets Magnus get in a low blow, followed by a Michinoku Driver and the top rope elbow to retain at 9:20.

Rating: C. Technically fine, though I'm not sure if that was a heel turn from Magnus. That right there is the big problem: these guys have had maybe a match each since returning and we really don't know anything about them. Yeah they were here before but what are they now? They helped JB in his match so I guess they're faces but there's no real way to know for sure, especially given how they're fighting over a title that just appeared with Magnus. Decent match but the booking continues to be a problem.

Lashley doesn't care about the GFW Title because that's the title people can win.

More JB sign stuff.

LAX wants to hurt more people.

James Storm wants to make Impact great.

Spud, in a neck brace and with his leg in a cast, stares at a picture of Swoggle. So yes this is still going. So now we have a ring announcer feud to go with the commentator feud.

Kongo Kong vs. William Weeks

Kong throws him into the corner to start and stands on Weeks' chest. Three straight chokeslams into backbreakers (at Laurel Van Ness' orders) set up a Cannonball and a top rope splash to put Weeks away at 2:47.

Post match Braxton Sutter comes out to go after Kong. Some right

hands and a clothesline put the monster on the floor so Sutter and Allie can stand tall.

Eli Drake wants to make Impact great.

We look back at Sonjay Dutt getting hurt in the X-Division Title match two weeks ago. Dutt isn't sure if he should have come back. If they don't give him the title at Slammiversary, I have no idea what they're thinking. It's not the most interesting story but they've set it up.

Eli Drake vs. Alberto El Patron

The winner gets a shot at Magnus at some point in the future. Drake runs away but gets pulled back to ringside, where the referee ejects Tyrus. Eli is fine enough to suplex him on the ramp but Alberto shakes it off and hits a suicide dive. Back from a break with Drake suplexing him onto the apron and choking on the floor.

Drake's chinlock doesn't work but Alberto misses a charge and both people are down. Drake gets back up and grabs a torture rack neckbreaker for a close two, only to have Alberto nail a low superkick for the same. The cross armbreaker is countered into a twisting throw for another near fall as this is far more competitive than I was expecting.

Drake can't get a superplex and of course he winds up in the Tree of Woe. For once someone is actually smart enough to sit up and pull El Patron down. A springboard moonsault gives Drake two but he gets caught in the cross armbreaker. That's countered as well but Drake gets caught in the ropes, setting up the double stomp (from the mat instead of the stomp) to give Alberto the pin at 17:56.

Rating: B-. Good match here as Drake's in-ring abilities are starting to match his incredible talking skills. The same problem still remains though: they're fighting over titles that have no meaning to the Impact Wrestling fans, which becomes a problem. The story would be exactly the same if they were all just fighting for a shot at Lashley. Just say Magnus is in this spot because he's a former World Champion and thinks he's entitled. It's the same story

advancement and the same ending. Why is that so complicated?

Overall Rating: C+. This is a REALLY tricky one to grade as the opener and main events were both very good but everything in the middle was just there for the most part. The booking continues to cater to the fans who are already here and the stupid battling announcers are now being joined by a former wrestler/manservant vs. a former leprechaun who is the illegitimate son of the owner the biggest wrestling company in the world. You need a lot more than that to make a company work and Impact really doesn't seem to get that.

Results

Matt Sydal b. Eddie Edwards – Shooting star press

Sienna b. Christina Von Eerie – Pounce

Ethan Carter III b. John Bolen – 1%er

Magnus b. Matt Morgan – Top rope elbow

Kongo Kong b. William Weeks – Top rope splash

Alberto El Patron b. Eli Drake – Double stomp

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