

Monday Night Raw – November 25, 2002: Boring Wrestling and Violent Illness

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 25, 2002

Location: North Charleston Coliseum, North Charleston, South, Carolina

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're still in the Shawn Michaels Era and he's actually defending the title this week against Rob Van Dam. Other than that we're still waiting on the return of HHH, who was injured at Survivor Series but probably needs to grace us with his presence again. Other than that, I'd assume we'll get a bunch of Testicle jokes. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Shawn winning the title and Van Dam earning the shot last week.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Christian/Chris Jericho vs. Dudley Boyz

Christian and Jericho are defending. D-Von drops Jericho with a clothesline to start and elbows Christian for the same result. We get some championship miscommunication and Chris gets pummeled in the corner. Christian finally scores with a backbreaker though and the champs take over for the first time.

The pace slows WAY down (as is the Canadian way) but Christian takes too much time yelling at Bubba, allowing D-Von to grab a neckbreaker. Bubba comes in and cleans house but misses the middle rope backplash. Everything breaks down (as is the tag team way) and D-Von gets two off a small package. Chris rams him into Christian though and a rollup retains the titles clean.

Actually hang on a second as here are Eric Bischoff and Sean Morely (the former Val Venis), who is now Chief of Staff. All four

shoulders were on the mat at the same time for the cover so there's no pin, meaning this match MUST continue. I'm assuming this is the "heel bosses act nice to start before going really evil" segment of the night.

The match continues after a break with Bubba slamming his way out of trouble and making the hot tag off to D-Von. Notice the crowd not being as thrilled, mainly because the good guys just got pinned about as clean as you can get but the match continues on a technicality. 3D gives Bubba the pin on Christian.....but Bubba wasn't legal, so Morely restarts the match again.

The third fall begins and you can hear the fans getting annoyed. Jericho nails D-Von from behind and sleeper drops Bubba for two. That earns him a Flip Flop and Fly with What's Up making things even worse. Since there haven't been enough shenanigans in this match, it's table time but Christian dropkicks it into D-Von's face. Bubba blocks the Lionsault but Christian hits him with a belt, setting up the Walls to retain the titles for real.

Rating: D+. WAY too much going on here when they could have done a regular match with some extra time or just done a 2/3 falls match, despite the lack of any reason for this to go longer than usual. If nothing else though, it's nice to have some fresh blood in the title scene and the Dudleys are hardly a stretch for the automatic #1 contendership.

Shawn Michaels is ready to face Van Dam in his first Raw match in five years. He leaves to go talk to Rob for some reason when Christian and Jericho show up with champagne to celebrate. Jericho isn't happy with Scott Steiner but Christian says "forget about his freaks, peaks and Iron Sheiks". Chris goes with it and suggests that they hit the town because they need some Vitamin C. Christian: "YEAH! My name starts with a C too!"

They head into the locker room when the Dudleys come up and want to go after the champs again. Bubba says wait, because he has a plan. I think I like this better than cutting to conveniently timed segments where people just happen to be ready to talk when someone else is

done but it was still really scripted.

Test vs. Steven Richards

This is fallout from Steven taking a Testicles shirt to the testicles. I think Test is a face now despite doing nothing new other than having the catchphrase. The threat of a big boot sends Steven bailing to the floor but he comes back in with some right hands. We're already off to a reverse chinlock so at least this is going to be short. Some clotheslines and a full nelson slam give Test two and he hammers away in the corner. A low blow (that the referee should have seen) sets up an X Factor for two, only to have Test Roll the Dice for the pin.

Rating: D. See, he has a catchphrase which a nine year old would find funny so I'm sure the writers are impressed enough to push Test again. Richards got in a lot of offense here, which probably isn't the best way to push Test, though then again neither is a bunch of testicle jokes. Stacy is gorgeous but that smile is only going to carry the act so far.

Christian and Jericho are in towels after their shower but the Dudleys have stolen their bags. Chase is given and the champs are locked out of the locker room. So how did the Dudleys know that the champs were getting in the shower when they turned the corner two seconds after Christian and Jericho decided to do that? I guess they overheard them but if that's the case, why didn't they jump the champs when they were standing there talking?

Test and Stacy are happy with the win and Test goes to take a shower (common theme tonight). As Stacy beams, Victoria jumps her from behind and says she'll be thinking of Stacy during the match. Instead of her long hair and long legs though, she'll be thinking of Stacy's fear. Victoria licks Stacy's ear and that's that.

Christopher Nowinski vs. Maven

Before we get going, Chris says this is the last time that anyone can say Maven is better than he is. Maven won Tough Enough because of politics when he mentioned his sick mother and that means it's

on. Nowinski hits him with a big book and Maven is out. No match.

Jericho and Christian are in a search for clothes and find 3 Minute Warning and Rico's gear. They're far from impressed (Jericho: "Do you get a free bowl of soup with this outfit?") but Rico and the Samoans come in to scare them off.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Victoria

Trish is challenging and looks very nice in blue. They slug it out to start with Victoria grabbing something like a Thesz press before hitting some awkward kicks to the ribs. A rollup gives Trish two and the knockout sends her outside. She lands hips first, with JR saying is like a stone bouncing across a river. Victoria's slingshot legdrop gets two as Lawler thinks there's something in these two's past before explaining the backstory.

We hit a seated full nelson (that could be a solid finisher) until Trish fights up and gets some rollups for two each. Trish gets sent hard into the steps as this is already starting to drag. Back in and Trish makes another comeback, including a Chick Kick for two. We get an awkward looking shove to send Trish throat first into the ropes but it's enough to set up the Widow's Peak to retain the title.

Rating: D. Despite them both looking better than they have in a long time (which covers a lot of ground), the match really did feel disjointed. It was pretty clear that they had no idea how to go from move to move later on in the match, which really makes for some awkward moments. The women were getting better but they weren't ready for something this long yet, which isn't a good sign.

Victoria bites Steven Richards' ear for reasons of general insanity, which he seems to like.

Shawn praises Van Dam's athleticism but says he's missing a little something. Rob slaps him and that's just what the champ was looking for.

Video on Eric Bischoff.

Christian is worried about shrinkage but a shot of the Dudleys in the ring sends the Canadians into the arena. In the ring, the

Dudleys are giving away Christian and Jericho's clothes, including a shirt and jeans. Bubba finds a jar of A** Cream, which has him very confused. Bubba: "WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A** CREAM???" The whole bag of clothes is sent into the crowd but they're not done yet. Cue Spike to steal the towels and we have unclothed champions.

Hurricane/Jeff Hardy vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

Jeff dives over the top to take out Storm before the bell and the good guys start fast. Some right hands have Regal staggered and it's off to Hurricane for a high crossbody. The Eye of the Hurricane is broken up so Hurricane has to settle for a chokeslam instead. Regal comes in for the save and starts working on Hurricane's back with a few knees. Storm adds some forearms, only to get caught with a Shining Wizard. It's not enough for the hot tag though as Hurricane tries his own half crab. Regal kicks him in the head for the break though and Storm grabs a Sharpshooter for the tap out.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but the ending was a nice touch as they went away from the standard formula for a change. You can only do the hot tag into the finish so many times so it was nice to see something get changed up. Regal and Storm aren't exactly a big upgrade but at least they're a regular team.

Jeff gets beaten down as well.

We look at Shawn's last match on Raw from December 1997 against Owen Hart.

Kane vs. Batista

Hang on a second as we have Ric Flair instead, telling Kane that he's not out of the woods for what he did to Ric last week. Batista comes in to jump Kane from behind and the beatdown is on. We do get a bell though and Batista gets to hammer on Kane in an actual match. Some clotheslines knock Kane around but he comes back with a big boot. The ref gets bumped so there's no one to count Kane's powerslam. Ric chairs him in the head and the Batista Bomb gives Dave the fast pin.

We get the official terms of the Big Show trade: Big Show for Ivory,

D-Von, Val Venis and Maven. That's a horrible trade. Anyway Bischoff tells Morely to bring Scott Steiner to Raw. Morely says he has a connection that can make something happen but RNN BREAKING NEWS. Randy talks about everything he's thankful for, including that good looking nurse at the rehab center.

Goldust vs. Rico

They trade some armdrags to start until Rico gets in a big kick to take over. A lot of stomping allows JR to list off some of Rico's accomplishments as they seem to be trying to make him into something. Rico grabs an armbar until Goldust makes a short comeback, including the powerslam for two. The Curtain Call gives Goldust the clean pin.

Rating: D. This was more filler but you have to deal with that from time to time. JR mentioned that Booker was healing, which might have something to do with a rash of illness going around the locker room at this point (dehydration due to some issues on a tour of India). If nothing else that would explain some of the odd booking choices tonight, such as this match, which was only going to last so long.

Raw World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Rob Van Dam

Shawn, in what looks to be the early Sami Zayn collection of tights, is defending. The champ fires off a dropkick to start but gets kicked in the ribs a few times, followed by a clothesline to send him outside. Rob is smart enough to throw him back inside for a slingshot legdrop to the bad back. A monkey flip is countered into something like Snake Eyes and Shawn starts in on the leg.

We hit the Ric Flair playbook with the leg being crushed on the ropes, followed by a Figure Four. Rob makes the ropes so Shawn forearms him into the nipup, only to miss Sweet Chin Music. Rolling Thunder onto Shawn's back gets two so Shawn comes back with a DDT. Shawn's top rope elbow gets two more but it's another backbreaker to cut him off. Rob gets in the Five Star to the back....and here's HHH for the DQ.

Rating: C+. This was totally fine but you could tell that Shawn

wasn't able to hit that other gear. The knee vs. back stuff was fine and I'm glad they didn't go with a clean fall over Rob, who is still recovering from the HHH loss. Speaking of HHH, thank goodness he was back so quickly to save the show. I mean, it had been a whole week without him and now we're likely going to get him in another title match.

HHH goes after Shawn post match and shrugs off a comeback. A side slam puts Shawn through an open chair to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. I'd assume the rash of illnesses changed a lot of this show but that really doesn't make the show any more excusable. It's not a good show with all the lame matches and quick build towards Armageddon, which is already looking like a boring show with another HHH vs. Shawn match on top. This wasn't the worst show in the world but it was your standard 2002 dullness.

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New Column: The Repaired

Hardys

Looking at one of the most amazing comebacks in wrestling history.

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NXT – April 26, 2017: The (Latest) British Invasion

NXT

Date: April 26, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators; Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson, Tom Phillips

The British are here tonight as the big featured match will see WWE UK Champion Tyler Bate defending against Jack Gallagher. I like the idea of throwing those guys out there for some filler as it keeps the regular roster fresh and gives us a bit of a treat. That being said, I could go for a bit of a better story than “You’re British, here’s a title shot.” Let’s get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here’s the creepy Nikki Cross to call out Ruby Riot by leaning over and shouting into the microphone being held in the ring announcer’s lap. Riot comes out and the brawl is on with referees barely able to break it up.

We look back at Hideo Itami hitting Bobby Roode with a GTS.

Roode says Itami has to earn a title shot.

Andrade Cien Almas vs. Drew McIntyre

Drew doesn’t waste time by kicking Almas in the face as the

announcers accuse Andrade of not focusing on his wrestling enough. Back up and Almas takes him into the corner for the running slap to the face, only to have Drew unload on him with right hands. A top rope forearm to the head makes things even worse and they chop the heck out of each other. Drew gets the better of it and the running boot to the face gives him the pin at 3:54.

Rating: C+. McIntyre is a completely different worker than he was in his first run as he's wrestling like a 6'5 monster with one heck of a hard finisher. I'm surprise about Almas losing clean this fast but at least they beat the heck out of each other before the finish. Maybe they're setting up something with the story about him not taking things seriously enough but the quick loss doesn't bode well.

We get a feature on Roderick Strong, who grew up as an athletic prodigy and had no competition on almost any field. At the same time though, his family was a mess with his dad having substance issues and abusing his mom. One day she shot his dad though and that seemed to take care of some issues.

Strong walks around his mom's backyard as we hear about how she's been there for his entire career. Jim Neidhart of all people saw him wrestle as a kid and knew there was potential there. Strong had his own ring in the backyard, which actually looked like a (very crude) wrestling ring instead of something thrown together. More next week, though this already did Strong a lot of good.

Aleister Black vs. Kona Reeves

Kona charges into the corner and gets kicked in the ribs for his efforts. A series of strikes set up a kick to the head, followed by Black Mass for the pin on Reeves at 1:17.

Riot talks about how she goes against the norm. Tonight she's going to take her first step towards the NXT Women's Title. Next up, we start a riot.

Almas leaves with a host of good looking women and doesn't seem to mind his loss.

Ruby Riot vs. Nikki Cross

And never mind as Cross jumps her from behind and the brawl starts on the floor. A suplex onto the ramp has Cross in trouble until the referees try to break it up. Riot dives off the stage to take everyone out and referees literally drag Cross away. This made Riot look like a star and showed Cross' intensity all over again. The match is going to be a lot of fun and should give the division a shot of adrenaline.

William Regal tells Asuka that there will be a battle royal for the #1 contendership. This doesn't seem to sit well with the champ.

UK Title: Tyler Bate vs. Jack Gallagher

Bate is defending and has grown a bit of a beard to make him look like he's in his 20s for a change. Gallagher hand walks out of a headlock to start and Bate can only smile. Back up and Tyler does an interesting walking forward counter to a full nelson. They trade some near falls and a standoff takes us to a break.

Back with Gallagher taking him down with a wristlock and stomping on the hands. Gallagher keeps him on the mat with a variety of armbars and wristlocks, including pinning one arm down and stepping on the other arm to push it all the way down as well (a bit hard to describe but it looks like the shoulder is about to be torn apart).

Tyler finally gets in a few hard punches and a German suplex is good for two. Gallagher's Jim Breaks Special is reversed into a suplex for two but one heck of a headbutt knocks Bate silly. Another headbutt is good for two but a second Jim Breaks Special is countered, setting up the Tyler Driver 97 to retain the title at 13:31.

Rating: B. This is the kind of different style that makes the UK wrestlers valuable. We had McIntyre wrestling a hard hitting style earlier but this was mostly submission wrestling and arm work before the power finish. It felt like something different and that makes it stand out more, which is the whole point of something like this. Good match as Bate continues to perform beyond his years. They're also setting up a way to get the title off of him as he keeps getting outperformed but hits his one big move to win every time.

That's going to catch up to him eventually and it'll make the new champion look that much better.

Overall Rating: B-. It's a very easy to watch but entirely skippable show this week without any required viewing. The Strong video stands out as NXT is always good about setting something like that up to help you care about a performer. Overall the show felt like it was setting the table for later and there's nothing wrong with something like that.

Results

Drew McIntyre b. Andrade Cien Almas – Running boot to the face

Aleister Black b. Kona Reeves – Black Mass

Tyler Bate b. Jack Gallagher – Tyler Driver 97

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Smackdown – April 25, 2017: Stairway to Nothing

Smackdown

Date: April 25, 2017

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Can we call this a go home show? I mean, Payback is a Raw show but it feels like half of the major matches are built around Smackdown talent, or at least a combination of the two shows. Tonight is a packed show as well with three announced matches plus a Beat the Clock Challenge. Let's get to it.

Here's Shinsuke Nakamura (now billed as an artist) to open things up. In your first sign of WWE stupidity/being annoying, he loads up the signature pose and as he pulls the arm back, let's cut to a crowd shot for a reaction! Before he can say anything, here's Dolph Ziggler to interrupt.

Ziggler won't let him talk and says Nakamura is actually named Michael and he's from Gary, Indiana. We hear a bunch of Jackson Family stories and apparently Nakamura is Michael Jackson's alter ego. Nakamura takes the mic and insults Ziggler a bit, earning himself a kick to the ribs. That just means the exploder but Ziggler bails from Kinshasa.

Baron Corbin vs. AJ Styles

Kevin Owens is on commentary. AJ's headlock starts things off and stays on for a good while. Corbin gets bored waiting though and launches him out to the floor for a very early break. Back with Corbin holding a chinlock, followed by a chokebreaker (that's a good move for him) for two.

AJ slips out of a superplex and scores with the Pele as Owens says Saxton makes him miss Michael Cole. Owens: "Do you know how hard that is?" Styles' low running forearm gets two but the Calf Crusher is blocked. Instead he loads up the Phenomenal Forearm but has to kick Owens away. Corbin's powerbomb is countered into a quick sunset flip to give Styles the pin at 10:51.

Rating: C+. I'm not wild on Corbin getting pinned but Styles needed to dispatch him before the title shot. At least it was closer to a fluke win after a fairly dominant performance, which certainly helps

keep Corbin looking strong. I'm not sure what he'll be doing at the pay per view but I hope it's not a multi-man match.

The post match beatdown is on until Sami Zayn makes the save. That means a Helluva Kick for Corbin but Owens jumps Sami and powerbombs AJ.

Beat the Clock: American Alpha vs. Colons

There are four teams in the competition (another match later) and the winners get a future title shot. Alpha starts fast with the rollup attempts (makes sense) but Gable has to fight out of the wrong corner. The Colons send Gable into the corner though and the double teaming lets the cousins take over.

An armbar wastes some time before Primo grabs a chinlock at the three minute mark. Something like a reverse Koji Clutch keeps Gable in trouble before Primo drops Jordan off the apron. Back up and the powerbomb/Backstabber combination is broken up and a quick Grand Amplitude gives Alpha the pin, setting the time at 5:17.

Rating: C. JBL was right on during this match as he was yelling about the chinlocks and the wasting the time in a match built around winning as fast as possible. Alpha winning is good though I'm really hoping Breezango gets the title shot, if nothing else for the sake of not having to see the Usos vs. Alpha in another match. They're good but I've seen it enough already.

Rusev says he hasn't shown up yet because he doesn't like the Smackdown bosses. If he doesn't get a championship match at Money in the Bank, he's going back to Bulgaria.

Becky Lynch doesn't have much of an issue with what Charlotte did last week. The welcoming committee of Natalya/Carmella/Tamina/Ellsworth show up and say Becky is with them or against them.

Randy Orton vs. Erick Rowan

Non-title and No DQ. They head outside to start with Rowan being bounced off the post. The belly to back onto the table keeps Rowan in trouble but he comes right back with a bad looking running

dropkick. A few kendo stick shots get two on Orton and it's already table time. Orton makes his comeback and a few swings of the stick put Rowan through the table.

Back from a break with Rowan in control because tables aren't the big deal that they're made out to be. The elevated DDT cuts Rowan off but the RK0 is countered. Rowan hits him in the head with the steps but makes the mistake of wedging a chair in the corner. His head goes off of it all of fifteen seconds later and the RK0 gives Orton the pin at 12:13.

Rating: B-. So here's the thing: this was billed as a preview for the House of Horrors match but given that we have no idea what the House of Horrors is, how can we get a preview for it? For all we know, the House of Horrors is a turkey on a pole match. They really need to get this over with already and move on to anything else, which somehow includes Jinder Mahal.

Orton: "I don't know what a House of Horrors match is but I have a feeling I'll find out on Sunday." Orton promises to destroy Wyatt like he's done a million times but here's Jinder Mahal to interrupt. He's the real horror and has more wealth and class than Orton could ever hope to have. Mahal promises to win the title for his people and speaks some Punjabi before getting in a fight. Cue the Bollywood Boyz to slow Orton down, allowing Mahal to get in the cobra clutch slam. Mahal leaves with the title.

Post break Mahal and the Boyz leave in a Hummer limo.

Beat the Clock: Ascension vs. Breezango

The clock is set at 5:17 and Ascension doesn't get an entrance. Viktor shows some intelligence by hitting a running elbow to Breeze's jaw for two less than ten seconds in. Konnor comes in for some near falls of his own but Breeze escapes for the hot tag to Fandango. Everything breaks down and Fall of Man is broken up, allowing Breeze to superkick Viktor into the Falcon Arrow for the pin at 2:41. Good call here as Breezango is a popular enough team for a one off title shot.

Video on Wyatt vs. Orton.

Naomi doesn't want to hear about Charlotte talking about being the best. It's time to feel the Glow.

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is challenging after defeating Naomi last week. After the Big Match Intros, Charlotte is sent outside but pulls Naomi out for a crash. Back from a break with Naomi caught in a cravate, followed by some stomping in the corner. Naomi makes her comeback with a hurricanrana and a bulldog, followed by a Chick Kick for two.

The Rear View gives Naomi her real near fall before another hurricanrana is countered into a sitout powerbomb. Charlotte's moonsault hits knees, which JBL calls a turning point. And never mind as here's the Welcoming Committee (seems to be their official name) to pull Naomi to the floor for the DQ at 10:33.

Rating: C-. This match suffered from a common problem as we were just waiting on the ending. Making Charlotte a face (maybe) is interesting as you can only have her do the entitled heel character for so long. The Welcoming Committee is fine for a way to fill in time until someone new (Asuka) comes up to give Charlotte a real challenge. Not much to see here but it worked well enough.

Charlotte gets beaten down to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a show where the wrestling really doesn't tell the whole story. So many of the stories feel like they're setting up filler matches, which isn't a good thing when the pay per view is almost a month away. Payback is really messing things up but at the same time we have to deal with Jinder Mahal as the #1 contender. The worst part is that he's really not a horrible character (done before but not horrible). The problem is that it's Jinder Mahal playing it and there's no reason to believe he's ready for this level. This week flew by but without anything interesting, it's not much of a show.

Results

AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin – Sunset flip

American Alpha b. Colons – Grand Amplitude to Epico

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan – RKO

Breezango b. Ascension – Falcon Arrow to Viktor

Naomi b. Charlotte via DQ when the Welcoming Committee interfered

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Monday Night Raw – April 24, 2017: I Should Be Paid Back For This Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 24, 2017

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

It's the go home show for Payback and that means we're getting closer to knowing how the Superstar Shakeup will really be going. Last week we saw Braun Strowman break the ring when he superplexed Big Show and tonight he's facing Kalisto in a dumpster match. I'm

not sure that makes sense either but let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Braun Strowman destroying things for the last two weeks.

Opening sequence.

Here's Chris Jericho for the Highlight Reel. Jericho says this is the last Highlight Reel on Raw because he's winning the US Title and moving over to Smackdown. It doesn't matter if it's Raw, Smackdown or Southpaw Regional though because these people are the friends of Jericho and they'll cheer him on man. Tonight's guest is a real star and that would be....Chris Jericho! Cue Miz and Maryse to interrupt though with the former saying this show is about the it couple. Jericho says they better watch.....it couple.

Miz gets to the point and says MizTV is replacing the Highlight Reel, meaning it's time to replace the set. Now it's Dean Ambrose, who turns this into the Ambrose Asylum with all three as his guests. Dean wants Jericho to win on Sunday, despite their checkered past. Jericho broke a potted plant over his head and Dean broke his light up jacket. Jericho brings up the \$15,000 but Dean has a gift: a home made light up jacket! Dean says he should try it on man but Miz cuts them off.

We get a good rant about how Miz should be the only one getting gifts, which earns him Dirty Deeds. Dean leaves so Jericho asks what happens when you're married to a stupid idiot like Miz. After putting her on the list, Jericho leaves, wearing the new jacket (which is a sport coat with Christmas lights wrapped around).

Sheamus vs. Matt Hardy

Matt starts fast with a neckbreaker and three straight legdrops for two. The ten forearms are broken up and Matt hits the Side Effect on the apron as we take an early break. Back with the forearms working this time, only to have Sheamus miss a charge into the post. Matt's bulldog and a middle rope elbow get two but Matt gets sent outside. Sheamus follows and goes after Jeff, allowing Matt to hit the Twist of Fate for the clean pin at 10:02.

Rating: C-. I'm not sure how wise it is to have the Hardys wrestle singles matches as they really don't have the same fire that the tag matches do. The match wasn't much to see but there's only so much they can do in less than seven minutes of actual TV time. It's too early to take the belts off of them but I'd keep Matt out of a singles role.

Post match tempers seem to flare but they all shake hands.

Miz and Maryse cut off Kurt Angle's phone call to yell about Ambrose and Jericho. Angle doesn't want to hear about it and makes a tag match with Miz getting to pick his own partner.

Neville/TJ Perkins vs. Austin Aries/Jack Gallagher

The good guys clear the ring and we take a break before the opening bell. We're joined in progress with Gallagher in trouble until he slips over for the hot tag to Aries. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Aries cleaning house, including clapping his hands around Neville's ears. Both villains are sent outside for a double suicide dive and it's Perkins getting caught in the Last Chancery. Gallagher comes in to take care of Neville and it's a discus Fivearm to put Perkins away at 3:06 shown.

Rating: D+. The time factor caught up with them again but it's a good idea to build Aries up more and more as he gets closer to his title shot. Perkins is a good choice for Neville's buddy and I could see him getting the title back down the line. Gallagher....dang what happened to him? They just stopped featuring him and let him be that guy who does the same collection of spots over and over, which is quite the shame.

Braun Strowman vs. Kalisto

It's a dumpster match, which means you have to put them inside but don't have to close the lid. Before the match, Braun says everyone here is trash and putting Kalisto in the dumpster will be like putting everyone in there too, including Roman Reigns. In the back, Kalisto tells Angle he has to fight like a man.

Kalisto starts with some kicks but his flip dive is caught in a

suplex, only to have Strowman throw him across the ring. A front facelock over the ropes has Strowman in some trouble but he throws Kalisto down again. Strowman loads up a press slam but Kalisto slips out and dropkicks him into the dumpster for the win at 6:13.

Rating: F. I know WWE's official line is that wins and losses don't matter but you're trying to build Strowman up as an opponent for Lesnar. Two weeks ago, Strowman absolutely destroyed Reigns in one of the coolest segments in years. In the two weeks since, he's gone to a draw with Big Show (But he stood up and that makes up for it!) and now he's lost to Kalisto. He'll probably beat Reigns on Sunday and that's supposed to make up for this right? I'm sure no one will EVER reference this loss again and Strowman will be forever awesome.

Post match Strowman destroys Kalisto and puts him in the dumpster. He locks it shut and pushes the dumpster off the stage for what must have been a full two and a half foot fall. If this is how they want to build up Strowman, they have a LONG way to go.

After a break, Kalisto is stretchered out.

Video on Roman Reigns.

Bray Wyatt wants to make Randy Orton suffer.

Dana Brooke vs. Alicia Fox

This is over Emma stirring up some issues between them. Cue Emma less than thirty seconds in as Dana's cartwheel splash hits knees. Fox misses the ax kick though and a Samoan Driver ends Alicia at 1:12.

Emma hugs Dana, who shoves her away.

We run down the pay per view card and get the first details on the House of Horrors match: the match will start in the House of Horrors and end in the ring. That's a lot more than we knew before.

Samoa Joe and Anderson and Gallows are ready to torture Enzo Amore/Big Cass and Seth Rollins.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Anderson and Gallows

Enzo does his full entrance but the villains jump him from the

crowd. Rollins runs out for the save but Enzo is laid out as we go to a break. Back with Angle announcing a replacement for the injured Enzo.

Finn Balor/Big Cass/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Anderson and Gallows

It's a big brawl to start (of course) with Balor kicking Anderson in the head a few times before it's off to Joe for the heavy forearms. Anderson comes back in for an armbar and a side slam. Gallows comes in and kicks Cass off the apron but misses an elbow drop. The hot tag brings in Rollins for the Sling Blade and everyone is knocked to the floor.

Seth loads up the springboard knee to Anderson but Joe kicks him in the knee. Cue Balor to take care of Joe, leaving Rollins to hit a springboard clothesline on Anderson. Seth loads up the Pedigree but opts for a hammerlock jumping knee to the face (think the Rainmaker) for the pin at 5:58.

Rating: C. The Club loses again and I can't say I'm all that surprised. Ever since they split from AJ Styles last year it's been one horrible loss after another, even when they won the Tag Team Titles. I'm not sure what Balor is going to do next but Rollins vs. Joe has serious potential, especially if Rollins has dropped the Pedigree for good.

Sheamus and Cesaro aren't willing to team with Miz.

Here's Alexa Bliss to talk about how people come out here to talk. Some of them want to become a champion but some of them talk about how much they want to become a WWE superstar. It's all sunshine and rainbows and she nearly vomits in her mouth a bit. She's here to fight so here's Bayley to call Bliss out for talking about people behind their backs. Bayley holds up the title and says she'll do whatever it takes to walk out of her hometown with the title on Sunday.

Bliss loves the idea of beating Bayley up in front of her father but has another question: has Bayley ever even kissed a boy? Not that it matters as Bliss can't wait to destroy her. Cue Sasha Banks with

Bliss saying it's time for part 3000 of the Banks and Bayley side show. Bliss asks if Banks puts love letters in the lunches she makes for Bayley. Banks is ready to shut Bliss up but Alexa says not now because Banks is unhinged. That earns her a punch to the face and it seems that the match is on.

Sasha Banks vs. Alexa Bliss

Bayley is on commentary and is immediately grilled about how she keeps coming close to losing the title. Banks forearms Bliss to start but can't hit the double knees in the corner. Bliss stomps away but gets sent into the corner again. That's enough for Alexa as she walks out at 2:38.

Bayley goes after Bliss but Alexa runs away, only to turn around and get in a cheap shot. Sasha chases her off.

Ambrose tries to mend fences with Jericho and asks if he can be taken off the list. That's too far for Jericho because it's in pen. The \$15,000 is brought up again so Dean shows off the replacement jacket. Jericho also brings up the powerbomb onto the tacks but Dean says he wouldn't do it again. He likes the jacket though and Dean JUST UNMADE THE LIST! Dean is fired up and slaps Jericho on the back, earning him another spot on the list.

Heath Slater and Curtis Axel are ready to talk about being in Marine 5 when Miz and Maryse show up (good thing there were two extra chairs there). Neither want to be his partner so Miz says they'll never work in this town again. Axel: "Kansas City?" Miz gets a note delivered and apparently he has a partner, who he describes as awesome.

Curt Hawkins issues an open challenge to his "Star Factory".

Curt Hawkins vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is looking bigger tonight. They trade some shots to start until Crews hits a running boot to the face. A jumping clothesline sets up an enziguiri, followed by the Toss Powerbomb for the pin on Hawkins at 2:09.

Titus O'Neil comes out to celebrate with Crews and Apollo seems a

bit more interested this week.

We look back at Kalisto and Strowman. Kalisto has suffered hip and cervical trauma.

Roman Reigns has issued a statement saying he's banged up but he'll fight.

Long video on Strowman vs. Reigns.

Austin Aries pitches an idea to Angle for the main event of 205 Live. Kurt says he'll think about it so Aries gives him a banana. The Drifter walks by and Kurt makes sure to point out that he's not the partner.

Dean Ambrose/Chris Jericho vs. The Miz/???

And it's....someone who has some issues with being on time as he's not here. Miz says the match is canceled and goes to leave but here's Angle to say the match is on. Jericho takes off the replacement jacket and chops Miz in the corner, setting up some double teaming. Miz gets clotheslined out to the floor and we take a break.

The match is joined in progress with Miz still alone and Jericho's arrogant cover getting one. Ambrose comes in and Miz begs off, earning himself a chase on the floor. Maryse offers a distraction though and Miz gets in a boot to the face to take over for the first time. Back in and the Reality Check gets two but the YES Kick is countered into a rollup. Jericho comes in with the Lionsault but the Codebreaker is blocked.

Miz goes to leave so Ambrose follows him up the ramp. Dirty Deeds is loaded up on the stage but here's Bray Wyatt to knock Dean off. Sister Abigail sends Dean into the wall and a second one plants Jericho in the ring. Miz poses with Wyatt...and takes Sister Abigail as well. Bray kneels down to end the show and we'll say the match was thrown out at about 8:30.

Rating: D. So that happened. I'm assuming this was just a way to set up Orton vs. Wyatt as Miz and Ambrose have nothing to do on Sunday, save for hosting a talking segment on the Kickoff Show. Wyatt is an

interesting choice for a partner and it's nice to have him actually show up but....yeah this didn't work.

Overall Rating: F+. I'm trying to think of a highlight tonight and the best I've got is Alexa's promo about how Bayley made her sick. Other than that, this was one heck of a bomb with Strowman's loss and the ridiculous dumpster thing being the low point. I don't know if creative was told to punt until after Payback or what but this REALLY didn't work and I haven't been left scratching my head so many times over the course of a night since probably something TNA did. This was really, really bad and that's about as nice as I can go with it.

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Main Event – April 20, 2017: The Main Event Brand

Main Event

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're back to the recap show with wrestling attached and odds are that means more Titus O'Neil. Now that one of the main players on

this show is now #1 contender to the Smackdown World Title, maybe now O'Neil is ready to take his place. You can almost guess what's going to be on this show so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Curtis Axel vs. Titus O'Neil

Axel gets thrown into the corner but comes right back out and unloads with right hands and forearms. That earns him a big chop to the chest for two and Titus grabs a chinlock. Curtis makes his comeback including a dropkick and the Hennig necksnap for two, only to get caught in a quick Clash of the Titus for the pin at 4:23.

Rating: D. This is the new reality people: Titus O'Neil is being treated as a star on this show. I really don't know why they're pushing this schnook when it's pretty clear that we've reached the apex of his potential, which really wasn't all that good in the first place. Axel continues to languish and that makes me rather sad as he had so much potential.

From Raw.

Here are Miz and Maryse for MizTV. Miz starts talking about the Superstar Shakeup but gets cut off by Dean Ambrose, the scheduled guest, before he can get very far. Ambrose sucks up to the Ohio crowd before ripping on Miz's gear. Miz doesn't want to hear it because he's done everything he can to make the people in that locker room look like superstars while Ambrose makes them look like regular wrestlers.

It doesn't matter though because people love Ambrose, who was #1 pick in the Draft and was WWE Champion at Summerslam. Then Dean wasted all that momentum when he was on the Kickoff Show six months later. Ambrose doesn't care what he looks like because he loves coming out here in front of twenty people or a hundred thousand.

That's why he's the Intercontinental Champion, which he beat Miz for in the first place. Maryse says the title doesn't make the man so Dean asks her to hold the mic. As Miz goes on another rant, Dean empties his pockets and takes his jacket off before hammering Miz down. Dirty Deeds doesn't work though and Miz and Maryse run.

Again with the Raw.

Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Winner gets Bayley at Payback. Nia cleans house to start but Bliss bails to the floor, allowing Mickie and Sasha to dropkick Nia outside. Sasha gets the better of it and sends Mickie outside for a dive onto all three as we take a break. Back with Alexa in control until she charges into a slam from Nia.

Jax slams all three on top of each other before swinging Mickie around in a cobra clutch. It's off to a bearhug on Banks with Nia easily suplexing her way out of Sasha's guillotine counter. Mickie armbars her way out of a choke but Nia throws her at Sasha in the corner. Alexa goes up top to try a dropkick but thinks twice when Nia stares her down. A missed charge sends Nia into the post, allowing everyone else to hammer on each other.

The double knees in the corner get two on Bliss with Nia making the save. Mickie gets pulled outside as well and it's down to Sasha vs. Alexa. James has to break up a Bank Statement but here's Nia to knock Mickie off the top. The Samoan drop plants Banks but Bliss runs in for the 13:44.

Rating: C+. The time brings this one down a bit though it was a lot of fun until the end. Bliss winning, especially in her hometown, is a nice touch though they need to stop having Jax get THIS close, only to slip up after dominating everything in sight. It's the right call though as Banks vs. Bayley is still going to be a major showdown one day in the future.

Gran Metalik/Lince Dorado vs. Tony Nese/Ariya Daivari

Dorado climbs over Ariya to start and grabs a sunset flip for two before it's off to both partners. Metalik does his rope walking into a top rope elbow for two of his own, only to get taken down and sent into the barricade. Back from a break with Metalik in trouble off a neck crank.

Metalik fights up and grabs a tornado DDT to set up the hot tag. Daivari cuts Dorado off with a spinebuster but eats a handspring Stunner. The masked ones get creative with stereo moonsaults to the floor, dropping Nese and Daivari in a big crash. Back in and Dorado is shoved off the top, setting up the hammerlock clothesline to give Daivari the pin at 10:11.

Rating: C. Pretty standard cruiserweight tag which is all you can expect around here. Some combination of about six cruiserweights are always filling in the second match on this show and that gets very

tiring. At least the matches are usually entertaining, which is more than you can say for a lot of the Main Event stuff.

We look back at Braun Strowman's amazing destruction of Roman Reigns, including the ambulance spot.

We wrap it up with the end of Strowman vs. Big Show with the ring imploding.

Overall Rating: C-. Very skippable show here as the Superstar Shakeup is just starting to take effect. As is the case 90% of the time, the Raw highlights mean far more than the wrestling, which really needs a shakeup of its own. A few weeks back we had New Day and then Big Cass on some shows. Would it really kill them to let a midcard act show up every week or two? It can't be that hard. Anyway, pretty standard Main Event this week, which could mean different things for different viewers.

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Ring of Honor TV – April 19, 2017: Are We Ready Yet?

Ring of Honor

Date: April 19, 2017

Location: Sam's Town Live, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Ian Riccaboni, Kevin Kelly

We finally wrap up the Las Vegas tapings here as we get closer to only being a month behind. This time it's about the World Title again as we have a randomly drawn eight man tag. The winning team will face off next week in a four way with the winner getting a World Title shot at some point in the future. Let's get to it.

The opening video explains what I just told you. I doubt people read those things but come on now.

Opening sequence.

Chris Sabin vs. Caprice Coleman

Feeling out process to start with Sabin doing the nip up out of the wristlock, only to have Coleman drop him because he's smart enough to not stand there while Sabin does his movements. And never mind as Sabin does it again while Coleman just stands there. It was nice while it lasted.

Sabin gets in an enziguri and something like a spinning Big Ending for two. The running kick from the apron (that almost everyone seems to do anymore) drops Coleman, only to have Kenny King offer a distraction. Cue Lio Rush as Coleman gets two off a springboard dropkick.

Back from a break with Coleman rolling northern lights suplexes for two, only to eat a running boot in the corner. A Falcon's Arrow gets two but Coleman grabs something like a running Diamond Cutter for the same. Sabin ducks the Sky Splitter and goes outside to take out King because he's the kind of face who feels overly aggressive. A sunset flip (with Rush breaking up King's cheating) gives Sabin the pin at 9:19.

Rating: C-. I really can't stand Chris Sabin. He's not interesting and so many of his matches feel incredibly choreographed. The match was fine enough and helped advance the feud between the two groups but it's still not something that I really care about watching. The name Search and Destroy doesn't help Sabin's stable either.

Watchable match with no interest.

We look back at the Briscoes and Bully Ray winning the Six Man Tag Team Titles last week.

Silas Young plugs Unauthorized in Milwaukee with the same promo from last week.

Cheeseburger/Will Ferrara vs. Roppongi Vice

Vice throws their gear to the announcers, who put them on for reasons of unfunny comedy. Trent and Ferrara start things off but the fans want a double tag. They immediately do the forearms with Cheeseburger telling him to bring it before dropping Romero with a shoulder. Everything breaks down for a bit with Trent picking Romero up and ramming him into both guys.

We take a break and come back with Romero doing his forever clotheslines (exactly what it sounds like) until Cheeseburger gets in one of his own. Everything breaks down again with Ferrara hitting his suicide dive but getting dropped by Romero's running knee. Strong Zero is broken up and Cheeseburger does his running palm strike into a crucifix for two on Trent. Cheeseburger dives onto Romero and Ferrara hits a German suplex on Trent. Not that it matters though as a tornado DDT is countered into Strong Zero for the pin at 9:14.

Rating: C+. Better match than I was expecting but I'm still really tired of hearing about how great a team is in Japan. Yeah Vice has won a bunch of stuff in Japan but they haven't done much in ROH, making it seem like I'm missing something. That gets old in a hurry and it happens far too often around here.

Ferrara shoves Cheeseburger away and walks off on his own.

Quick preview of next week's Top Prospect Tournament final. Thank goodness we can be done with that thing.

Silas Young/Hangman Page/Jay White/Jay Lethal vs. Colt Cabana/Lio Rush/Hanson/Bobby Fish

The winning team advances to a four way for a World Title shot. White and Rush start things off with more spinning out of a wristlock, as in what we saw in the first match. Rush flips away a

lot more, misses a few legsweeps, and grabs a rollup for two. Young is really not impressed and tells White to do better. Lethal's team gets in a brawl and we take a break.

Back with Lethal vs. Cabana with Colt telling the other team to start fighting again. Hanson comes in and rubs his beard over Lethal's face before it's off to Page to work over Fish in the corner. Lethal's team gets in another fight over who gets to stay on Fish with Silas eventually getting the call.

Back from another break with Fish being sent outside so Page can hit a good looking shooting star off the apron. Young and Page keep refusing to tag in either Jay so Fish suplexes Silas into Adam, allowing the tag to Hanson. That means it's time for a bunch of clotheslines with two opponents in each corner. Hanson probably runs across the ring ten times before handing it back to Rush for a slam onto Page.

Rush manages to slam the 200lbs heavier Hanson onto Page as well but a tornado DDT only gets two on Lethal. Everyone keeps brawling on the floor until Rush dives onto the pile. Lethal gets the Lethal Combination on Cabana but Page refuses to take the tag. He goes to leave but gets caught by Kazarian, who throws Page to the back. Rush gets one heck of a powerbomb on Lethal but his frog splash hits knees. The Lethal Injection puts Lio away at 17:45.

Rating: B-. The psychology here made a lot of sense as you had so many people wanting to be the one to win that they didn't see the bigger prize. I'm assuming Page didn't want Lethal to win as the Bullet Club is scared of having to deal with him again. Other than that almost everyone was just there and that's fine for a match like this. It's a strong match and a good way to make things feel a bit more important.

Overall Rating: C. This show illustrated a problem that a lot of Ring of Honor shows have: a good chunk of it feels like it doesn't matter and then there's one major match that feels important. Look at the first two matches here. We had a match involving the Rebellion (the poster child for useless stables) and then a match

that felt like it was designed to set up a team for a run in Japan/to break up a lower card team. Neither of those things really need to be taking up TV time, especially when it feels like so much time passes between some major stories.

It feels like ROH has so much going on but they take so long to get to a lot of those things. When you have an hour a week, you really shouldn't be putting in filler. The second match certainly felt like filler while the first match just wasn't all that interesting. They need to tighten this stuff up but I've been making those complaints for years now and it's pretty clear that they're not going to be changed anytime soon.

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Smackdown – November 21, 2002: The Big Stupid Coward

Smackdown

Date: November 21, 2002

Location: Hartford Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in the Big Show era now as he defeated Brock Lesnar to win the

Smackdown World Title at Survivor Series. Hopefully this one doesn't last too long as I'm not sure I can handle sitting through it. Unless Lesnar gets a rematch, it would make sense to have one of those tag guys get the next shot as they've been the hottest thing in the company for months. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Brock Lesnar's WWE career leading into his feud with Big Show. Paul Heyman is prominently featured, setting up his heel turn at the pay per view.

Lesnar is waiting for Big Show. What is with wrestlers always arriving late? It seems to happen every week.

Opening sequence.

Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Mysterio starts fast with the dropkicks and a headscissors for good measure. A trip to the floor seems to clear Jamie's head as he sends Rey into the buckle and dropkicks him in the back of the mask. Rey keeps up the trend with a dropkick and a flapjack for two. The 619 looks to set up the West Coast Pop but Rey has to go after an interfering Nidia.

Back in and Jamie throws Rey into the air, only to have Mysterio springboard right into the hurricanrana for the pin. I remember taping this show and thinking that was so cool I actually showed it to a friend. Jamie standing there waiting on Mysterio to bounce back and looking up so he can take the hurricanrana doesn't help but it's still cool enough.

Lesnar is still angrily waiting and goes into the locker room. For some reason Matt Hardy thinks it's a good idea to give him some criticism. Maybe if Brock had a few more Mattributes, he wouldn't have suffered such an unfortunate twist of fate. Matt is then thrown through a wall, leaving a hole so big that Crash Holly can be seen on the other side.

Post break, Stephanie comes to check on Matt. Eddie Guerrero tells her that Brock did it, which surprises Stephanie. So wait: not only is she not watching the show but she sees a grown man thrown through

a wall and doesn't ask WHAT HAPPENED HERE? Basically everyone is scared of Lesnar so Stephanie will take care of him. Eddie asks if Brock will listen to a woman, setting Stephanie up for exactly the response you would expect from her.

Noble doesn't know what to do but decides to call his crazy cousin Nunzio. Nidia is very worried about this choice.

Stephanie says Lesnar can have a rematch when he's healed up but he's suspended if he attacks anyone else. Somehow this takes a minute and a half because of that weird way Stephanie speaks.

Cruiserweight Title: Billy Kidman vs. Tajiri

Maybe the winner gets Torrie. Kidman is defending and offers an early handshake, earning himself a hard kick to the head. More kicks get more two counts before Tajiri mixes it up with the Tarantula. Kidman seems to hurt his head on a hurricanrana so Tajiri makes it worse with another kick to the head. The announcers find ways to praise Stephanie as Kidman gets in a spinebuster, followed by the shooting star to retain.

Rating: C. My head is hurting from those kicks as Tajiri was blasting Kidman every time. That's why I like Tajiri so much: he's not going to shift from that one idea very often but he does that thing very well. He doesn't try to do anything out of his wheelhouse and it still works. It's like Rhyno, which is why they've both had such long careers.

Chris Benoit vs. Chavo Guerrero

Eddie is ejected before the bell, just in case Chavo thought he had any chance. Benoit starts fast by sending Chavo chest first into the corner but can only hit one German suplex. A gutbuster drops Benoit and his shoulder goes into the post as Chavo takes his pick of the body parts.

Not that it matters as Benoit SNAPS him down into a Crossface attempt but Chavo makes the ropes. Back in and Benoit rolls three straight German suplexes to set up the Swan Dive for two. Benoit is so annoyed that he allows Chavo to fire some shoulders into the

ribs. Chavo tries a springboard clothesline but dives straight into the Crossface for the tap.

Rating: C+. This made perfect sense as Chavo tried everything he could but just wasn't in Benoit's league. Seeing Benoit grab the suplexes and the Crossface from pretty much wherever he wanted made him look awesome with the hold looking better than it has in a long time. Chavo tried here but was in over his head, which made for a good story.

Stephanie tells Lesnar to stay in the back while Heyman and Show go to the ring. If Lesnar goes to the ring, she'll suspend him.

Here's Heyman, coming out to Lesnar's music and wearing the title, complete with the bounce on the stage. Cole: "I think Heyman is mocking Lesnar." Heyman talks about having the it factor that separates you from the rest of the locker room, which applies to himself of course. He prepared Lesnar for everything he was going to do and is responsible for all of his successes.

Then the monster stopped listening to Dr. Frankenstein because it takes more than physical attributes to be on top of the mountain. He orchestrated the greatest inside job in sports entertainment history (How can anyone hear that wording and think it sounds good?) and look at the success he's created.

Here's Big Show, with Heyman kneeling down to hand him the title. Show thanks Lesnar for the opportunity and heaps praise on Heyman. Edge has a shot later tonight but there's no way he's losing the title just yet. Oh and one more thing: Lesnar is officially fired and there's a no rematch clause in the contract. As they go to leave, here's Lesnar with a chair to lay Show out. The worst part is Lesnar running right at him and Show turning around to run. So he's big, stupid, and a coward. Sounds like your typical heel champion.

During the break, Stephanie yells at Lesnar some more because that's what she gets to do.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Kurt Angle

During the entrances, Cole announces next week as "an all new

Smackdown with special guest star Scott Steiner." Just in case you thought it was a rerun with Milton Berle. Chavo is ejected as well so we can have consistent refereeing for once. An early headlock sends Eddie outside as thinks slow down.

Back in and Angle busts out a monkey flip of all things before a suplex puts Eddie outside again. Angle follows this time and gets sent back first into the steps as Eddie cheats to take over. Eddie does the old "grab two chairs so the stupid referee only sees one", allowing him to smack Angle in the back with the other. A northern lights suplex gets two as the dumb fans chant USA. Thankfully Cole points out that Eddie is from Texas as we hit the camel clutch.

Angle gets a DDT for a breather and here's Chavo to watch from the stage. We hit the rolling German suplexes until a low blow breaks Angle's momentum. As I wonder how the referee didn't see that, Chavo comes down and gets in a few stomps. Cue Benoit to just stare at Chavo, even as he goes down to stomp on Angle some more. They trade submission attempts until Angle throws him with a release German suplex. Chavo gets forearmed off the apron, leaving Angle to run the corner for a super Angle Slam and the pin.

Rating: B. Like these two aren't going to have a really good match. The Benoit stuff adds a new layer to the story and you can feel the big Angle vs. Benoit feud building very nicely. Eddie and Chavo getting beaten up like this is fine as all they have to do is hold up the belts again and everything will be back to normal. Good match here, filling the quota for the week.

Angle gives Chavo the ankle lock post match as the champs are easily dispatched. Benoit offers Kurt some applause.

We look at Scott Steiner beating up Christopher Nowinski and Matt Hardy. Nowinski is one thing but Hardy's role in that segment is just dumb.

Edge is ready for Big Show but Funaki thinks Show is like Godzilla. That makes Edge King Kong but he's willing to fight for the title.

Another Raw moment: This is Your Life Rock. That's still amazing.

John Cena vs. Rikishi

Actually hang on a second as Dawn Marie and Al Wilson come out to invite us to their wedding. The match is joined in progress with Cena hitting a belly to back suplex, followed by sitting on Rikishi's chest. That earns him a toss to the floor and a Samoan Drop, followed by a belly to belly for the pin.

Post match Rikishi loads up the Rump Shaker but Bull Buchanan comes in to save Cena. I might be thinking about this too hard but it might have been better to have Cena WIN THE MATCH and then have Buchanan show up.

Show says he can't wrestle tonight because of Lesnar's attack. Heyman isn't about to go anywhere with Lesnar around.

We recap Lesnar and Show's night.

Heyman is in Stephanie's office but can't get Show out of the main event. If Lesnar gets involved, she'll suspend him. Heyman: "Like you did before?" Lawsuits against Stephanie and company are threatened so she throws him out. In case you haven't figured it out, this was the 14th or so segment tonight to show you that Stephanie RUNS SMACKDOWN. Let's say it together shall we? Stephanie runs Smackdown. Now don't you forget it or more lectures will ensue.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Edge

Edge is challenging and is thrown into the corner almost immediately. Show launches him with ease and stands on Edge's head (not to be confused with the Edgeheads) as this is already in slow motion. An Edgecution attempt is countered as easily as you would expect it to be and Show posts edge to keep the pace. We hit the bearhug as Heyman tells Edge he'd be good representation.

A turnbuckle pad was removed somewhere in there and Edge sends him face first into the buckle, followed by a low blow for good measure. Edge gets two off a tornado DDT and three spears finally drop Show. Heyman breaks up the pin though, allowing Show to grab the chokeslam. We're not done yet though as Heyman wants Show to treat Edge like he's Lesnar. That means a second chokeslam but here's

Lesnar for an F5 before a third can connect. I guess the match was thrown out.

Rating: D+. Edge's comeback was good but when you watch him tear the house down with everyone else, it's really hard to sit through Big Show's eight mile an hour offense. He's the current monster champion and hopefully that means his days with the title are numbered. This really wasn't interesting and I have no interest in watching him doing his "hey, I'm big" promos and bad matches while I know the roster is capable of so much more.

Lesnar chases Heyman through the crowd to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. There's nothing terrible here and they kept the bad stuff short but there's nothing that really offers a spark to make me want to keep watching. The tag stuff seems to be coming to an end and that leaves Rikishi, Big Show, Al/Dawn and whatever Los Guerreros are doing. Now the latter of that list is fine but the rest...egads the rest. The show was still fun but this didn't really leave me optimistic.

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205 Live – April 18, 2017: A Scheduling Error

205 Live

Date: April 18, 2017

Location: KFC Yum! Center, Louisville, Kentucky

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

For once, we're actually addressing one of the major problems around here as TJ Perkins has become a third major name in the division. Perkins has also turned heel, which gives Austin Aries something to do as he gets ready for his Cruiserweight Title shot against Neville. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show.

We open with a recap of Neville getting inside TJ Perkins' head and turning him to the dark side in his feud against Austin Aries.

Opening sequence.

Akira Tozawa vs. Tony Nese

Feeling out process to start until Tozawa is sent outside. That only seems to tick him off so he scares Nese out to the floor as things slow down a bit. Back in and Nese elbows him in the face to take over for the first time. We're off to an early neck crank and here's Brian Kendrick. A suplex sets up another chinlock but Tozawa knees his way out of a second suplex.

Tozawa sends him outside again for another suicide dive but gets sent throat first into the ropes to slow him down. With the referee distracted, Kendrick tries a kick to the head. Thankfully the referee actually catches him and says no, allowing Tozawa to grab a rollup for the pin at 6:02.

Rating: C. I'm liking the Kendrick vs. Tozawa feud but they're reaching a point where it's just continuing for the sake of continuing. Adding Nese to the mix could help things out a bit as you can only have the two of them fight for so long before it stops

doing anything for anyone. Good little match here though with the ending making sense.

Nese isn't cool with that and decks Kendrick. Tozawa says that's lesson #3: always have eyes in the back of your head.

Here's Rich Swann for a chat (complete with an unnecessary bell) about giving Alicia Fox all the gifts. This brings out Noam Dar and Alicia Fox (with separate entrances) with the latter saying that she thought Dar was the future face of 205 Live. He's young and talented but then she saw the other side of him: he's annoying, his cologne smells terrible and he thinks he can cook ("Just not in every room."). She's been using him and if she hears that ALICIA F00000X one more time, she's going to snap.

Fox tells him to get out of here before switching her attention to Swann. She thanks him for the gifts, which Swann says all game from the heart. Now Swann wants to give her what she deserves. Cedric Alexander is one of Swann's best friends and she broke his heart. There's a word for people like Fox but Swann won't say it. The world knows what she is though and that's his real gift. Fox SNAPS over the WHAT treatment and screams a lot, which she really does very well.

Mustafa Ali vs. Ariya Daivari

Earlier today, Ariya Daivari arrived in a very nice car. So he's rich now. Ali grabs the arm but Daivari looks disgusted by being touched. Some flips don't get Mustafa very far so he sends Ali outside for a flip dive over the ropes. Back in and Daivari grabs a belly to back suplex onto the apron, followed by a spinebuster for two.

Ali comes back with some knees to the ribs and a dropkick....but we've got feedback. Cue Drew Gulak with a bullhorn to shout "I AM NOT LYING! NO HIGH FLYING!" The distraction lets Daivari pull Ali off the top and hit a hammerlock clothesline (the Rainmaker, which is still just a clothesline) for the pin at 6:50.

Rating: D+. I've watched this match twice now and I really didn't

remember a thing of it until Gulak came out. It's a very forgettable match as Daivari continues to become more and more of a stereotype, which is almost never a good thing. The match isn't even bad and it helps set up Gulak vs. Ali but there's nothing to remember here.

Gulak says he sees a bright future around here and has nothing against Ali but his style needs to change.

TJ Perkins vs. Austin Aries

Perkins bails to the floor to start so Aries has a seat in the ring. Back in and it's already time for the armdrags into the armbar as it seems they have a lot of time here. Perkins reverses into the headscissors and, of course, dabs. The threat of a Last Chancery puts TJ outside again but Aries gets crotched on top to slow things down again. A dropkick gets two with TJ putting one foot on the chest for a dabbing cover.

Now it's off to something like a standing figure four with a butterfly lock on the arms. Perkins misses a standing flip splash though and gets dropped by an ST0. A side slam gives Aries two but it's too early for the 450. Aries jams his knee on the landing and there's the kneebar. It's only the first attempt though and Aries makes the rope. Aries slugs away but gets caught in a strike rush.

The discus Fivearm misses and they botch the double chickenwing gutbuster, basically turning it into a low blow for two instead. Now the forearm connects to set up the 450 but Perkins gets his feet on the ropes. The Last Chancery (with Aries crossing his legs to avoid putting pressure on the bad knee) sends TJ to the ropes again and Aries isn't sure what to do. The Detonation Kick doesn't work so Aries claps his hands around TJ's ears, setting up the Fivearm for the pin at 11:48.

Rating: B-. Perkins is rapidly improving with this heel character and his in-ring work has gotten better too. I'm not wild on having him lose here but at least it was in a match with some time that went back and forth instead of being mostly one sided. Good main event here and Aries looks strong going into the pay per view.

Post match here's Neville for the brawl with Aries and it's a quick Last Chancery. Perkins makes the save though and the double beatdown ensues. Neville grabs the Rings of Saturn with TJ taunting Aries to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I know you hear it a lot but the scheduling of this show really, really hurts it. Smackdown ended it at 10pm and by 10:15, the arena was probably 1/3 empty. By the time the show ended, it was probably close to 1/3 full. This show was entertaining but the fans just do not care to stick around and watch it. Move it before Smackdown and just air it on tape delay. I really don't know why the show MUST go on at 10pm but that's what WWE seems to go with and it doesn't seem to be changing anytime soon.

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Impact Wrestling – April 20, 2017: More Tapings, More Problems

Impact Wrestling

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Jeremy Borash, D'Angelo Dinero

It's a fresh batch of tapings with this episode being billed as live, even though it was taped a few hours ago. The big story coming into tonight is the lack of Josh Matthews on commentary after his team lost the eight man tag last week. In other news, Lashley will defend the World Title against James Storm after a fan vote. Let's get to it.

In Memory of Rosey.

We look at James Storm winning the title nearly six years ago. Now it's time for him to get the title back though Lashley doesn't think much of it. Lashley: "I'm not good, I'm not bad. I'm me."

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Joel Coleman/Jake Holmes vs. LAX

LAX is defending. Ortiz takes over on Coleman to start and it's a suplex/high crossbody combination for two. Holmes comes in but is quickly sent into the corner for Poetry in Motion into a cannonball. The Street Sweeper (powerbomb/Blockbuster combo) is enough to put Holmes away at 2:36.

Konnan talks about how awesome the team is and mentions everyone by name. Cue Decay for the brawl and we take a break.

Here's Karen Jarrett for a chat. Karen introduces herself and makes a major announcement: Global Force Wrestling and Impact Wrestling have officially merged. After a very weak "thank you Jarretts" chant, Karen declares this the Night of Champions with three title matches (not counting the Tag Team Titles).

She's ready to bring someone out but here's Sonjay Dutt to interrupt. He used to be a big deal in the X-Division so let's make the X-Division Title match tonight's main event. Oh and let's throw him in there and make it a three way so he can win the title for the first time. This brings out Andrew Everett (the original challenger) to say it's his shot tonight alone. Now it's Gregory Helms and Trevor Lee interrupting, saying Helms runs the division. As for Dutt, if he never won anything around here, maybe it's because he

sucks.

Bruce Prichard comes out and says, on behalf of Karen and Dutch Mantel (So they all officially have power? Got it.) that the main event will be for the X-Division Title. We can also add three more people to the match to make it a six way. A brawl breaks out with Dutt and Everett standing tall but getting into an argument over the belt.

Anthony Mayweather (better known as Crimson) talks about growing up in a single parent household. He's lived recklessly but now he's changing because of his five year old son. He joined the US Army after dropping of college and that helped bring him here.

Knockouts Title: ODB vs. Rosemary

Rosemary is defending. ODB starts fast with a discus forearm but it's way too early for the Bam. They head outside with Rosemary clotheslining her onto the ramp, only to miss a top rope backsplash inside. ODB's rams into almost her crotch sets up a middle rope Thesz press for two but another Bam is broken up. The Bronco Buster doesn't work either and it's the Red Wedding to retain the title at 3:44.

Rating: D+. No time to do anything here but Rosemary winning is probably the best option as they seem to be trying to turn her into something special. She's held the title for six months already and there's a good chance that she'll hold it at least until Slammiversary. ODB isn't the most interesting character in the world so having her lose makes the most sense.

LAX defends against Decay in a street fight next week.

Bruce and Karen say Suicide has been added to the main event. Sienna comes up to Karen and asks where the GFW Women's Champion is. Karen doesn't think Sienna should be that excited to see the champ because she's coming. No name is given.

Long recap of Laurel Van Ness and company vs. Allie/Braxton Sutter.

Chris Silvio vs. Kongo Kong

Kong suplexes him to start and hits the cannonball. A top rope

splash ends Silvio at 1:18.

James Storm is ready to leave Lashley flat on his back.

Alberto El Patron is in Arizona and is going to be watching the World Title match.

Magnus says he should be #1 contender because he's the GFW Champion and he got the fall in last week's eight man tag.

Impact Wrestling World Title: James Storm vs. Lashley

Lashley is defending and has Josh Matthews in his corner. Josh sits in on commentary while JB does the ring announcing, much to Borash's dismay. Storm gets backed into the corner to start as we hear about James being here for the first day. Well that's what JB is talking about at least. Josh on the other hand is saying he's the Jim Ross to Lashley's Steve Austin.

Now it's a talk about upcoming house shows (no dates mentioned) as Storm clotheslines Lashley outside. Cue Ethan Carter III so Josh grabs a beer bottle, only to have James hit Lashley from behind. A suplex onto the steps slows Storm down as we take a break. Back with Lashley still in control until Storm fights out of a chinlock. Storm gets in a few clotheslines and a running neckbreaker for two. Lashley heads up top but gets pulled back down, setting up an ugly top rope elbow.

Closing Time looks to set up the Last Call but Storm settles for two off a powerbomb instead. Lashley's Dominator gets the same and there goes the referee (of course). Two Last Calls get no count so Storm goes outside and grabs the aforementioned beer bottle. Carter gets in as well though and blasts Storm with the bottle. The spear retains Lashley's title at 17:07.

Rating: B. Overbooked (of course) but still good with Carter turning like he needed to and Josh switching over to a managerial role, which is easily the best call for him. I'm assuming we'll now get Magnus vs. Alberto for the #1 contendership and we're likely heading towards a triple threat match at Slammiversary.

Josh is very happy with the result.

Dutch Mantel says Dezmond Xavier is the fifth man in the X-Division match.

We look at Chris Adonis attacking Moose at a Border City Wrestling show.

Moose is all fired up but here's Adonis with his arm in a sling. Davey Richards jumps Moose from behind and will be challenging for the title next week.

Josh is still on commentary.

Quick recap of the main event.

X-Division Title: Trevor Lee vs. Dezmond Xavier vs. Suicide vs. Andrew Everett vs. Sonjay Dutt vs. ???

Lee is defending and this is one fall to a finish. The last entrant is....Low Ki, who hasn't been around here for about two years. Low Ki is in the suit and there are no tags here, as is usually the custom. Dutt grabs a tornado DDT on Xavier while walking across everyone else's chest in something out of the Matrix. A six way standoff sees Lee get dropkicked out to the floor.

Dutt moonsaults onto Suicide and Everett before sending Lee face first into the apron. Xavier avoids a Low Ki charge and moonsaults onto the pile as we take a break. Back with Everett taking the standing chest stomp from Lee. Trevor throws everyone out as Dutt seems to have an eye injury.

Things slow down a bit as Josh clarifies his status: "I said I'd leave. I left for a week and now I'm back." Lee keeps throwing people out until Everett Pele's him. We get a parade of kicks, including Xavier hitting a 619 around the post to Ki's ribs. Dutt's top rope splash gets two and Suicide does the fall onto everyone else. We're officially in an overrun because we're "LIVE" and you don't know what's going to happen.

Everett dives onto everyone but Xavier breaks up the shooting star. With Xavier on top, Everett tries a springboard reverse hurricanrana but only gets his legs on Xavier's back. Thankfully Xavier lands on his feet instead of actually taking the move. Everett hits the

Frankendriver on Lee, only to have Ki kick him to the floor. A top rope double stomp to Trevor gives Ki the title at 19:00.

Rating: C+. That would be annual "See, we care about the X-Division" match. I've never been a Low Ki fan and I'm even less of a fan of these multi-man cluster matches as they're just a bunch of people doing spots until the final spot. On top of that, while it's very nice to see some fresh blood, I'm so glad TNA wasted our time with the Everett vs. Lee story because HERE'S A BIG MULTI-MAN MATCH INSTEAD! The match was fun but it felt like a longer version of something we've seen many times before, which isn't what the X-Division needs.

The announcers bicker again and Pope walks off. JB punches Josh to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This is a really tricky one as they addressed some of the issues (needing fresh blood, better focus on the X-Division, some better matches) but ran into some new issues (the fresh blood isn't interesting/very good, going with the short term over the long term and thinking a big multi-person match is good because it's long and messy).

The big story of the night, the GFW merger, means nothing because GFW means nothing. Coming into tonight they were slightly below the NWA, which at least runs some regular events. GFW and Impact merging doesn't mean anything and is really just a way to add in some new names who weren't going to be signed by anyone else. It's nice to get rid of the GFW (likely with a bunch of unification matches down the line) but it really didn't need to be treated like a big moment.

All those problems aside, there was a definite energy around here and that's a very welcome addition. Impact has felt stale and dull for a long time now and hopefully this energy keeps up over the taping cycle. It's a better show than they've done in a long time, though I'm not sure I like a lot of the ideas they seem to be going with for the future.

Results

LAX b. Jake Holmes/Joe Coleman – Street Sweeper to Holmes

Rosemary b. ODB – Red Wedding

Kongo Kong b. Chris Silvio – Top rope splash

Lashley b. James Storm – Spear

Low Ki b. Dezmond Xavier, Sonjay Dutt, Trevor Lee, Andrew Everett
and Suicide – Top rope double stomp to Lee

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