

Roadblock: End of the Line

2016 Preview

It's time for Roadblock and that means....no that doesn't mean we're a month away from Wrestlemania. No actually it means WWE is really stupid for using the same name twice in a year when there are plenty of other names available for this show. I mean, was Vengeance taken? Or No Way Out? Or We Really Don't Need to Have This Show But We're Doing It Anyway? It's a Raw show and that means we're likely in for an annoying cameo from one or both of the bosses. Let's get to it.

We'll start with the pre-show match between Big Cass and Rusev. This is one of the few matches on the show I'm looking forward to as Cass is clearly on the rise but Rusev isn't the kind of guy that is going to lose to someone who is making his solo pay per view debut. The match springs from the usual: someone beat up Cass' buddy Enzo Amore and the big man is out for revenge. There was also something about Amore trying to sleep with Rusev's seemingly willing wife but that detail might make Rusev seem sympathetic again so we'll ignore that part.

As much as I want to go with Cass to start his rocket push, I really can't imagine Rusev losing another pay per view match. It's also a bit early for Cass to get a win like this, though I've heard of worse ideas. This really could go either way, though they would be better off having Rusev win via a Lana distraction or the threat of Amore getting hurt again. If nothing else, I want to see a mixed tag between these four down the line, assuming man vs. woman is allowed.

We'll knock out a title match next with New Day yet again defending the Tag Team Titles against Cesaro and Sheamus. New Day set the record on Monday (for all intent and purpose) and now they get to defend against these guys again because WE WILL RESPECT CESARO AND SHEAMUS!

I know the obvious move is to change the titles not but I think I'm going to say New Day retains yet again with the big change coming at

the Royal Rumble. There's no reason to keep the belts on them any longer save for breaking the 500 day mark, which means a grand total of nothing. Maybe it's just that I'm really not a fan of Cesaro and Sheamus but I have no desire to have them be the ones that finally get the belts off New Day. There's a good chance I'm wrong and I probably am but I'll say no title change here.

In another title match, Cruiserweight Champion Rich Swann is defending the title against TJ Perkins and Brian Kendrick in a triple threat match. Swann beat Kendrick for the title and both of them have gotten into it with Perkins, who is the only other man to hold this incarnation of the title.

It would seem that they're setting up Noam Dar as the next challenger for the title and he would seem to match up best against Swann. I'll go with another title being retained with Swann overcoming the odds. He's a more interesting champion than both former champions and it would be a really bad idea to take the title off of him already. Either that or turn Perkins heel like he should have been from day one, but for some reason that seems out of the question.

We'll jump towards the main events now with Chris Jericho facing Seth Rollins in a match that should be for the US Title. Jericho keeps costing Rollins World Title matches against Kevin Owens so Rollins Pedigreed him on top of a car. Instead of assault and battery charges, we get a pay per view match as a result.

I'm going to go with Rollins here, as the big match on the horizon seems to be Jericho facing Owens in some form. Therefore, with Jericho being more than ready to turn mega face for the match, the WWE is almost guaranteed to make him lose because that's how they get people to cheer for you. So yeah, Rollins goes over and it's Jericho vs. Owens, likely at the Rumble.

Now we'll move on to the first of two timed matches on the card with Sami Zayn facing the monster Braun Strowman in a ten minute time limit match. This is about Zayn wanting to be like Mick Foley (I'm still not sure how that works) and not wanting to have to be treated

like a baby because Strowman will crush him.

I think this goes to the draw with Zayn showing that he can hang in there with Strowman but barely surviving at the end of the match. Zayn certainly shouldn't beat Strowman, who could be ready for a huge match down the line, but at the same time you don't want Zayn to be completely destroyed. Strowman has Zayn done but the time runs out and it's officially a draw.

In the other timed match we have Sasha Banks defending the Women's Title against Charlotte in a thirty minute Iron Man match. This is being billed as the final match between the two of them but the stipulation sets up the prospect of a draw, meaning they get one more match.

That being said, I think they'll put the title on Charlotte again because the big pay per view winning streak ending at Wrestlemania would be a better way to go rather than ending it at a nothing show like this. I like the Iron Man idea but it also brings up the problem of there not being much of a point to watching the first twenty five minutes of the match unless the two of them tear the house down, which of course they're capable of doing.

We'll wrap it up with the main event as Universal Champion Kevin Owens is defending against United States Champion Roman Reigns. As much as I can't stand the idea of a double champion, I have a bad feeling WWE might pull the trigger on another Reigns title run for the sake of trying to be like the UFC with Conor McGregor.

That being said, I'll actually go for the long shot and say Owens retains to set up a major title defense against Jericho at the Royal Rumble. Unfortunately that match can be done with or without the title so there's no real need for Owens to hold the belt here. I really don't need to see Reigns as champion again this soon as it isn't exactly going to do much for making him into a bigger star.

Overall Roadblock is really just there, much like most Raw pay per views. The wrestling should be fine but WWE is going to manage to make it feel like it's overstaying its already limited welcome. The main event scene is ice cold right now as I can barely even remember

why Owens and Reigns are fighting in the first place. There will be some good stuff but this is just a filler show until we get to the important stuff in January.

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Vengeance 2002 (2016 Redo) : Serious Stephanie

Vengeance 2002

Date: July 21, 2002

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 12,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in an interesting place here as both shows have their first General Managers but the stories are hit and miss at best. The main event is the Rock, who has had one match since he came back, challenging Undertaker for the title in a triple threat also involving Kurt Angle. This is really just a pit stop before Summerslam though so let's get to it.

We open with a Biblical passage talking about being your brother's

keeper. Somehow this is supposed to be about the main event. I'm pretty sure this is the Samuel L. Jackson speech from Pulp Fiction.

The show's announcing will actually be divided in half with Smackdown commentary first and then Raw. I don't remember them doing that very often.

Dudley Boyz vs. Chris Benoit/Eddie Guerrero

Elimination tables match and the Smackdown commentary is already weird here as they have no connection to these guys. Benoit runs Spike over like he's Chris Benoit and he's wrestling Spike Dudley. A quick tag brings in Bubba, who can suddenly stick with Benoit and Guerrero.

Benoit quickly takes Bubba down and drops some running elbows, followed by the first German suplex. The heels take turns stomping away in the corner until it's time for the first table. Spike makes a quick save but doesn't make a tag, meaning Bubba's beating continues. Now the table is set up in the middle of the ring so Spike has to save Bubba from a double superplex. By that I mean he moves the table instead of breaking it up so Bubba goes flying. Spike is a really, really bad partner.

That's not cool with Benoit and Guerrero so they try to put Spike through the table, only to have Bubba tackle him down to prevent going through the table. So Bubba is a better partner too. Everything breaks down and Spike gives Benoit a top rope double stomp, followed by What's Up.

Bubba's middle rope splash only hits table, which doesn't count as an elimination because it wasn't an offensive move that put him through the table. Well yeah it was but it was Bubba's own offensive move. Spike actually does something right by giving Eddie the Dudley Dawg through a table. It bangs him up too much though and Benoit throws him through a table of his own, only to get Bubba Bombed onto a table to give the Dudleyz the win.

Rating: C+. Stupid decisions by Spike aside, this was entertaining stuff and a good way to open the show. Now of course it doesn't make

a lot of sense to have Eddie and Benoit lose to Bubba and Spike of all people but you can't expect WWE to get things right with them just yet.

Bischoff chases down HHH, who is going into Stephanie's office. See, HHH is always negotiating.

Cruiserweight Title: Jamie Noble vs. Billy Kidman

Kidman is challenging and they exchange some fast near falls to start. A hurricanrana has Noble staggered and a Fameasser with Jamie in the ropes makes it even worse. Like a good heel should though, Noble hides behind Nidia and takes Kidman's arm out to take over. The arm goes into the post but Kidman is still fine enough to dropkick his way out of trouble. Jamie takes him right back down into a Fujiwara armbar. The title has gone to Jamie's head though as he thinks he can powerbomb Kidman, earning himself a Sky High for two. The Shooting Star press misses and a tiger bomb gives Jamie the clean pin.

Rating: C. This was fine as a coronation match to crown Rey Mysterio's first victim for the title. Kidman is still one of the best performers on the roster but he's stuck in the cruiserweight division again because everything that happened in the last year of WCW means nothing. I mean, it was worthless back then too but this just proves it even more.

Kurt Angle is ready to win the title when Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar come in for the dream match staredown. Brock wishes him luck and leaves. Kurt: "I hate pompous people."

European Title: Jeff Hardy vs. William Regal

Jeff is defending and gets shouldered down for three early near falls. The sitout jawbreaker puts Regal down for two and they head outside, only to have Jeff miss the barricade running clothesline. Back in and Jeff's Swanton (in case you had it confused with Regal's Swanton) hits knees, only to have Jeff roll him up to retain.

Rating: D. Well that happened. This might as well have been on Raw because the title means nothing more than a way to fill time. Hardy

retaining is fine and in theory should let him move on to his next feud but why would anyone want the thing at this point? It's just a worthless belt and at least Regal holding it made sense. Now it's a prop for Jeff, who is no more over now that he has the thing.

Hogan and Flair congratulate Jeff before shaking hands. Hulk thinks he might hit a Swanton of his own tonight. After that bizarre visual, Hogan wants to know what's up with the new GM's. Flair is worried about the young superstars getting caught up in the power struggle. I have no idea why this was added save for giving Flair a cameo and therefore a payday.

Chris Jericho vs. John Cena

Rematch from Smackdown where Jericho got disqualified. Jericho is all ticked off and grabs a chair before the bell, only to have Cena take it away and blast Jericho over the back. Now we get the bell because anything that happens before the bell only counts when it's important to the story. Cena gets in a few right hands until a shot shot slows him down and calms Canadian fans everywhere. A few more right hands put Cena down and he even throws in a little shuffle.

Chris takes too long going up and gets caught in a superplex but Cena can't follow up. Instead he misses a dropkick, only to roll away from the Lionsault. The second attempt works but Jericho doesn't want to cover. Chris tries the Walls and is quickly small packaged for the pin.

Rating: C-. Cena getting the win is a big deal for him but you can only give him so many flukes before he needs some kind of big offense of his own. At the moment he's just a tough rookie, which is fine for a start, but he needs something more substantial going forward. For now though it's fine as the long list of pins over Jericho begins.

Jericho has a fit after the match.

Bischoff fails to stop Stephanie's attorney from going into her locker room.

The commentary switches up.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar is challenging after defeating Van Dam in the King of the Ring final. Some quick strikes have Brock on the floor, followed by some kicks to the knee. Lesnar gets knocked outside a second time but he easily catches Rob diving through the air for a powerslam. Back in and it's suplex time but Rob escapes a second and kicks Brock in the face. Heyman: "THAT HAD TO HURT!" They're doing a good job here of showing that only strikes work on Brock as all of Rob's high flying has gotten in trouble.

An attempt at a monkey flip sends Rob over the top and into the steps, followed by the bearhug to keep things slow. Brock makes it even better with an abdominal stretch which lasts as long as your average abdominal stretch is going to last. The top rope kick to the chest sets up Rolling Thunder for two on Brock. Heyman's advice in this situation: "DON'T LOSE!" The F5 is countered into a tornado DDT and Rob adds the Five Star, causing Heyman to pull the referee for the DQ. Big pop for Van Dam retaining the title.

Rating: D+. There's just not much left to do with Brock other than put the title on him and hope for the best. He's dominating everyone he faces until Heyman has to save him at the end. Thankfully WWE wasn't stupid enough (yet) to set up a champion vs. champion match on pay per view because they still realized you could do two title matches and get twice the impact.

Post match Heyman breaks up the Van Terminator, allowing Lesnar to F5 Van Dam onto a chair.

Stephanie comes out of her office and says he signed in her intimidating voice. HHH comes out a second later and Bischoff yells at him. It turns out though that those were divorce papers and HHH hasn't made up his mind. Sweet goodness why am I supposed to care about this stupid stuff?

Big Show vs. Booker T.

No DQ and a rematch from Raw. In other words, the same story as Jericho vs. Cena from Smackdown plus the stipulation. Booker's early

kicks are pulled out of the air as Big Show sends him flying. An enziguri slows Show down but that's a bit too much selling so he clotheslines Booker outside.

A chair swing is punched out of the air but since this is Big Show, he screws up by clotheslining the post. They fight behind the announcers' table as this is finally starting to play towards the gimmick. A monitor shot to the head knocks Show down and we get the big spot of the match with an ax kick through the table. Back in and another ax kick sets up the Houston Hangover to give Booker the pin, which is treated like a huge upset.

Rating: C. The match wasn't anything great but the important thing here is Booker going over. Beating Big Show isn't going to change his career or anything but it's a sign that WWE is actually doing something with him. Not a great match of course as Big Show is mostly worthless at this point, though he's fine for a punching bag. Torrie Wilson and Dawn Marie argue over who is winning the main event.

Here's HHH for the big contract decision. Bischoff comes out for the first pitch and suggests making HHH a movie star because everything will be business., meaning there's no ex-wife to deal with on Raw. Talk of a sneaker deal brings out Stephanie with that horrendous "I'm all grown up" theme and Lawler saying she's hot.

Stephanie brings up their past successes and says it's all personal this time around. She even has an ace in the hole by bringing up Bischoff calling HHH a no talent back in the day. HHH insults them both and says he could say screw you to both of them, though Stephanie would like it. He'd rather go with the devil he knows (Stephanie)....and here's Shawn Michaels.

Shawn said he'd come out here but he doesn't want to get in the middle of all this. The NWO is out of business and Shawn wouldn't want to be in HHH's shoes. However he wants HHH to remember something. The two of them had more fun together than anyone else ever and it would be a blast to make Bischoff miserable. HHH hugs Shawn and goes to Raw, wrapping this up at just shy of sixteen

minutes, or longer than any match so far.

Actually we're still not done as Bischoff has to rub Stephanie's nose in it to make this even longer. Bischoff: "The one big difference between you and I? I've got testicles and you don't." Stephanie slaps him and leaves to her music to make sure we know she's tough. So yeah, Stephanie is all awesome and amazing but Raw got HHH because like he was going to stick around on Smackdown.

Now we go to Rikishi of all people to hear about HHH leaving Smackdown. He thinks it's bad.

Booker is glad HHH is coming to Raw. Are we really having a post announcement reaction show?

Tag Team Titles: Hulk Hogan/Edge vs. Un-Americans

Lance Storm and Christian are challenging here with no Test in sight. During the entrances, JR outdoes himself by saying Wrestlemania III was 15 years ago and saw Hogan face Ultimate Warrior. He then corrects himself by saying it was Wrestlemania VI because Wrestlemania III was here in Chicago.

Hogan dumps Christian out to the floor to start and there goes the bandana. Storm gets punched in the face as Lawler is talking about bra and panties. It's off to Edge for some right hands in the corner, only to have Christian offer some cheating to take over for the first time.

The fans want Hogan as Edge fights out of a chinlock. It's back to Hogan for the usual with the legdrop getting two on Christian as Storm saves. Hogan is sent outside for the superkick from Storm and the stomping begins. It ends just as quickly though with a double clothesline to drop Storm and Hogan.

The tag brings in Edge for a series of clotheslines and the ref gets bumped. Cue Test for the big boot to Edge, giving Storm two. They actually had me on that one for a second. Rikishi waddles down to deal with Test, allowing Jericho to come in and hit Edge with a belt for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D+. Not much to the match here but again they get the

booking right by using Hogan and Edge as a transitional team to get the belts on a regular team. The Un-Americans aren't the best act in the world but I'll take them over thrown together teams like Rikishi and Rico.

Bischoff tries to get Angle on Raw. Kurt says they'll talk later.

Stephanie promises to win the war because she's in contact with EVERY Raw superstar.

The announcers recap the show.

We recap the World Title match. Rock tried to cost Undertaker the title at King of the Ring so Undertaker wanted to fight him. Then Undertaker vs. Angle went to a draw so Angle was added to this match.

Undisputed Title: Kurt Angle vs. The Rock vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is defending and comes to the ring without his bandana for a weird look. It's a three way staredown to start with Undertaker and Rock jawing at each other while Angle waves his arms behind them. That earns him a double right hand and a big clothesline to send him outside.

Undertaker gets the same treatment but Kurt slides back in for a belly to belly on Rock. The champ takes Angle's place and gives Rock a side slam for two. To really mix things up, Rock chokeslams Undertaker, which is pretty much just a release Rock Bottom anyway. All three are back in now and Rock grabs a horrible, HORRIBLE ankle lock on Kurt.

Angle gets out and Rock Bottoms Rock, only to get Angle Slammed by Undertaker. Cute sequence though Rock's ankle lock was worse than his Sharpshooter. The spinebuster sets up the People's Elbow with Angle pulling Rock to the floor and stealing the two count. Everyone heads outside with Rock being dropped onto the announcers' table and Kurt getting busted open.

Old School, with a right hand to the face instead of the shoulder, gets two on Angle. The running DDT gets the same on Rock, who doesn't even need help kicking out. Angle brings in a chair but gets

caught in the middle of alternating right hands. The ref gets bumped (of course) and one heck of a chair shot knocks Undertaker out. An Angle Slam drops Rock as the referee is back up (good) but he kicks out at two and puts Angle in the Sharpshooter.

Undertaker saves and gives Rock the Last Ride, only to have Angle break it up with the ankle lock. That's rolled through and now it's the triangle choke that made Undertaker tap a few weeks ago. Rock makes a save this time and gets ankle locked, which is quickly escaped as well. A Rock Bottom gets two on Undertaker but he walks into the Angle Slam. One more Rock Bottom puts Kurt away to give Rock another title.

Rating: B. The over hyping hurt this as JR made it sound like the greatest thing he had ever seen. It's certainly good and entertaining with the stolen spots sequence being one of the better parts but Rock winning the title by beating Angle isn't great. Then again that's how triple threats work most of the time and Rock is just holding it for Lesnar anyway.

Overall Rating: C-. This is such a forgettable show and there isn't much other way to put it. The main event was very good but that's really about it. Maybe they could have had a better match in the middle if we didn't need a fifteen minute HHH announcement but that's where the money is in this company, or so WWE would tell us. There's just not much to say about this one and it shows badly. Summerslam will be the bigger deal though and that's what really matters.

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Smackdown – July 18, 2002: And There It Is

Smackdown

Date: July 18, 2002

Location: First Union Arena, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Vengeance but the bigger story here is the in ring return of the Rock who will be facing Kurt Angle to warm up for his World Title match on Sunday. Other than that we get to meet the first Smackdown General Manager, who I'm sure won't be a huge disappointment and create a bunch of plot holes. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Eric Bischoff being announced as the Raw GM. Bischoff has promised to show up tonight and sign Rock, which apparently you can just do. The idea here is that he likes to steal talent, though I'm not sure why Vince would care since he owns both shows.

Opening sequence.

Chris Jericho vs. John Cena

Cena starts fast as has been his custom so far but misses a charge, sending him flying out to the floor. Back in and Jericho takes too long on top, allowing Cena to dropkick him down. A belly to belly and DDT get two each on Chris so he hits Cena low for the quick DQ.

Post match Jericho puts Cena in the Walls of Jericho and beats him down with a chair.

A smiling Bischoff arrives.

Bischoff goes looking for Hulk Hogan. Hint: it's the room with the HULK HOGAN sign on the door. Hulk doesn't seem interested and tells Eric that they're not down south anymore. Eric asks if Edge is really attached to Smackdown but Hulk still doesn't seem convinced.

Hurricane vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Chavo slaps the handshake away and gets taken down by a neckbreaker. Hurricane blows his knee out on a leapfrog though and Chavo wraps it around the post. The Tree of Woe makes things worse but Hurricane grabs him by the throat. Cole: "I think it might be the chokeslam!" That's enough of a tip off for Chavo to take the knee out again. The knee is fine enough for a Shining Wizard and Blockbuster for two each but Chavo gets all fired up. A Brock Lock with Chavo lifting Hurricane up for a kind of powerbomb sets up an STF to make Hurricane tap.

Rating: C. The match was fine though I'd still like to point out that Chavo isn't interesting on his own. He's someone who really needs a gimmick because there's just not enough there on his own. He looked extra vicious tonight though and the leg work was good stuff. Chavo can wrestle a totally acceptable match but that doesn't mean he's interesting.

Chavo is sick of these Rey Mysterio videos and challenges him to a match next week.

Vince arrives.

Rico offers Bischoff his services but Eric runs into Vince. Eric says he's off to see the Rock to show off ruthless aggression.

Undertaker had a sitdown interview earlier (that's not something you see every day) which he turns into a promo about how Rock and Angle are in for beatings. He and Angle could fight a thousand times and Kurt could never make him tap. This was a pretty rambling promo but Undertaker doesn't get a lot of practice.

Billy and Chuck vs. Hardcore Holly/Big Valbowski

Billy punches Holly down in the corner to start but Hardcore hits his kick to the very lower ribs (Tazz: "This might not even hurt Billy!") to take over. The partners come in with the veterans keeping Chuck in trouble. A belly to belly puts Hardcore down but the advantage lasts all of a few seconds until a double clothesline drops both of them. Venis gets a hot tag with what had to be a sweetened crowd pop. Everything breaks down and the Alabama Slam into the Money Shot finishes Billy.

Rating: D+. Sure why not. It's not like the tag division has anywhere to go but up so give a new team a win to make them players.

I know it's not much and Holly/Venis aren't going to be anything serious but it's better to try to do something instead of running the same teams over and over again. Also, you can almost guarantee a passable match from the veterans and that's better than taking a gamble on someone who won't go anywhere and could put on a disaster.

Edge/Hulk Hogan/Rikishi vs. Un-Americans

It's Edge and Storm to get things going and the other Canadians are quickly tripping Edge from the floor. The fans already want Hogan as we take an early break. Back with Edge still in trouble, including a chinlock from Test. The big boot misses though and Edge gets in the half nelson faceplant but Storm breaks up the tag. Do Canadian schools teach you how to cut off the ring? Edge powerslams Lance and brings Hogan in as everything breaks down. Storm's superkick triggers the Hulk Up but Test breaks up the Stinkface. Not that it matters as Edge spears Christian and hits the Edgecution for the pin on Storm.

Rating: C+. Totally fine six man here and, again, they kept Hogan's in ring time limited. The fans love him and want to see him do his stuff so why let him ruin a match due to age and physical limitations? This was exactly what it should have been, save for Rikishi being a bit of an odd fit with the champs.

Bischoff gives Rock his sales pitch and Rock says he'll be at Raw...because he'll be the new Undisputed Champion. See, Rock could go on any show and be a success. Rock could even show up on Frasier and make it electrifying. Bischoff thinks Rock would have been great on Nitro but Rock says he was too busy helping to put WCW out of business.

Here's Vince to announce the new GM. Before we get there though, Vince says any talent can negotiate with any show if they're interested. The Smackdown General Manager tried to put Vince out of business as well and has a history of ruthless aggression. The new boss is....Stephanie McMahon, because being banished FOREVER means less than four months. As expected, she takes WAY too long to get to the point while screeching a lot. Short version: HHH is signing with Smackdown and she's going to throw Bischoff out.

Stephanie goes to the back in full power walk mode to find Bischoff talking to the Un-Americans. We get the big staredown that a total of four people care about. Bischoff is willing to leave but says a

lot can happen in three days. He'll see her at Vengeance, assuming her AMAZING PRESENCE doesn't melt him before then.

So yeah....this isn't a surprise. Everyone knew Stephanie's banishment would never last because WWE exists as a way to make her look awesome. Ignore the fact that people don't care and Stephanie's angry voice is more funny than intimidating. This is the new version of Vince vs. Flair and Stephanie is a weaker talker than either of them, meaning things are already looking down.

Tajiri vs. Billy Kidman

The announcers hit the "let's praise Stephanie" button in a hurry as the match is easily ignored. Tajiri fires off some chops in the corner but the reversal is enough to make the announcers acknowledge the match, only 54 seconds after the bell. Kidman gets caught in the Tarantula and we hit a chinlock to keep things slow. A good superkick drops Kidman but he bulldogs Tajiri down and drops the Shooting Star for the pin.

Rating: C. This was a victim of time as there's only so much you can do in about 3:45 with a chinlock in the middle and a crowd that is still annoyed at the Stephanie announcement. The cruiserweights are starting to get somewhere and it's only going to get better with Mysterio coming in as the division's star.

Jamie Noble comes after Kidman and, with the help of Tajiri's mist, powerbomb him down.

Jericho goes to see Stephanie and is given a match with Edge next week. Swearing ensues after he leaves.

Rey Mysterio is here next week.

The announcers run down the Vengeance card.

Kurt Angle vs. The Rock

Before the match, Angle promises to make Rock tap. Undertaker comes out to watch so just pencil in the post match brawl now. Rock charges to the ring and does those one punch knockdowns. They head outside with Rock suplexing him on the ramp but getting catapulted into the post for one of those awesome bumps.

Angle stomps him down and gets two off a clothesline, only to walk into a belly to belly. There will be no suplexing our American hero though and the rolling German suplexes get two on Rock. Angle spends

a bit too much time talking to Undertaker but is perfectly fine with more suplexes.

A long chinlock fills in some time before the Angle Slam, with Rock bumping so hard it almost looked like a reverse AA, gets two. Rock pops back up and grabs the quickly broken Sharpshooter. They head outside with Rock going after Undertaker, only to catch Angle in the spinebuster without much effort. The People's Elbow is loaded up but Undertaker comes in for the DQ.

Rating: B-. Not a great match or anything but perfectly acceptable as a big time TV main event, especially with Rock making his big comeback here. The triple threat will be fine and as long as it gets the title off of Undertaker, everything will be fine. Angle and Rock always have chemistry together and this was good, especially given the circumstances.

Post match Angle chairs Undertaker down and puts Rock in the ankle lock.

HHH is going to his limo (Was he even on the show?) when Stephanie comes up to him. She wants to have a professional discussion with him but HHH only asks if she's gaining weight. He gets in the limo and Bischoff is waiting for him. Stephanie shouts a lot (I'm shocked) to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I really can't emphasize how much that Stephanie announcement sucked the life out of this show. It really does make you realize how much none of this show or company matter because it's all about the McMahons. Even the Rock, who might be the most charismatic wrestler of all time, could barely make a dent in what Stephanie brings to this show. It's an entertaining night but you can really feel where things change all at once.

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Main Event – December 16, 2016: Making My Christmas Merry

Main Event

Date: December 15, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, Corey Graves

The dates on these shows continue to be all over the place as you hear about the show being on Friday but it's already available, making me wonder why I care about these things in the first place. It's been firmly established that this show has been taken over by the unstoppable force that is Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

SWEET! IT'S ANOTHER SPECIAL EPISODE! I'm assuming nothing was taped due to 205 Live being moved to Monday this week as Tuesday was Tribute to the Troops.

We'll start with a match from Raw.

TJ Perkins vs. Brian Kendrick

An early wristlock doesn't get Kendrick very far and he has to bail from the kneebar. The Wrecking Ball dropkick knocks Brian outside and we take a break. Back with Perkins hitting a jumping spin kick to the head and a springboard missile dropkick for two. The Captain's Hook is countered into the kneebar so Kendrick dives over to the ropes. Back up and Sliced Bread #2 gives Kendrick the pin at 8:24.

Rating: C-. So flash back to any time these two have fought in the last few months and update the details as necessary. This wasn't interesting because neither of the wrestlers are interesting. The triple threat has some potential but for the life of me I never need

to see these two fight again.

Our first flashback shows Kane and Daniel Bryan exchanging presents. Bryan gets a Slammy and Kane gets....a puppy! Kane: "Thanks. I'm starving!" Bryan: "NO! NO! NO!" I miss these two together.

And now, Ebenezer Piper. Oh this could be glorious. Jacob Marley comes to visit and tells him that three guests will be visiting the rotten Piper tonight. First up is the Ghost of Christmas Past and Piper makes jokes about his shoes. This goes nowhere so the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Piper how bad the Cratchits have things this year. Piper won't give up his Scotch tape (it doesn't make much more sense in context) so the Ghost leaves.

Finally we have the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come (Piper: "You don't shave under your arms do you?") and of course he shows Piper his grave. Roddy throws him out and that's it. This really wasn't funny and it's just the standard Christmas Carol with Piper doing some of his standard jokes.

Long video on Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte.

We go back to December 2001 with the Rock in the ring talking about Test. Rock likes Test so much that he's going to sing a little rendition of the 12 Days of Christmas. He lists off some things that Test is going to go through, including five seconds of the people chanting the Rock's name. This was really fast but I'd completely buy Rock doing this off the cuff.

Back in 2012, Alberto Del Rio hit Santa with his car. This set up Cena vs. Del Rio in a Miracle on 34th Street Fight and I think you can get the idea. During the match, Santa took a turn for the worse but, with his heart rate monitor to the beat of Jingle Bells, he came out to help Cena get the win. It turned out that Santa had a sock in his belt and a certain Mandible Claw was used.

Back in 1990, Bobby Heenan gave Gorilla Monsoon a banana. Heenan got some tools, which he used to break the janitor's present. It turns out he got things a bit backwards though and broke his own present: a Rolex. Cue the wah wah wah music.

In 1997, a kid told Santa he wasn't real so Steve Austin came out and Stunned the imposter for not knowing what Austin wanted when he was six. Jim Cornette: "He cracked Kris' Kringle!"

We see the last ten seconds of New Day's first triple threat win,

plus the events that set up the main event. Only the last few minutes of the main event airs but New Day breaks the record. We also get the post match spear to Kevin Owens.

A rundown of Sunday's card wraps up the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a situation where your individual tastes will vary wildly. This show wasn't about much other than filling in time because they didn't tape anything new. I'd much rather see something like this than just Raw matches though and it's always cool to crack open the video library. Other than that pretty bad Piper thing, all of the clips were either short enough to not be bad or funny enough on their own. Good show this week and instantly more entertaining than two jobbers having a dull match.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

The WWE UK Tournament

As you've probably heard by now, WWE is going to be holding a UK wrestling tournament in early 2017 which is likely leading to a regular TV series. Now if you listen to WWE, this is for the sake of expanding their international brand. If you pay attention, it's to crush ITV's attempt at reviving World of Sport. This isn't the first time WWE has done something like this and it certainly won't be the last.

I'm sure the tournament is going to be entertaining as they know how

to do these things really well, especially with Nigel McGuinness on commentary. They're going to crush ITV's stuff with pure star power and that's all they need to do. If this is anything like the Cruiserweight Classic or the potential upcoming women's tournament, this is going to be a blast.

There isn't much to say about this because it pretty much is what it is: WWE is buying up a lot more talent and giving us cool wrestling with it. I don't know what is left for WWE to do unless they invade Japan next but I'm sure they would find a way to do it well. Odds are this doesn't last long but at least it's a cool concept and should be fun while it lasts.

Daily News Update – December 16, 2016

We Hope This Slammy Awards Rumor Isn't True. December 14, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/we-sure-hope-this-slammy-rumor-isnt-true/>

Which Big Name is in Talks to Return to TNA? December 14, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/big-name-talks-tna/>

Which Former TNA Champion Has Caught WWE's Eye? December 15, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/former-tna-champion-caught-wwes-eye/>

WWE Signs Three New Female Talents. December 15, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/wwe-signs-three-new-female-talents/>

When is Big Show Planning on Retiring? December 15, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/big-show-planning-retiring/>

Randy Orton Talks Eventual Retirement and Winning More World Titles. December 16, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/randy-orton-talks-eventual-retirement-winning-world-titles/>

Impact Wrestling – December 15, 2016 (Total Nonstop Deletion): I Knew They Wouldn't Come

Impact Wrestling

Date: December 15, 2016

Location: Hardy Compound, Cameron, North Carolina

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Jeremy Borash

I knew it would come. Tonight is Total Nonstop Deletion, meaning the entire show is taking place at the Hardy Compound in North Carolina. The big draw for the show is Tag Team Apocalypso with teams from “throughout time and space” showing up for one huge match with the Tag Team Titles on the line. There have been next to no spoilers leaked for this so I’m coming in blind. Let’s get to it.

Senor Benjamin tells us that we shouldn’t try this at home. In Spanish of course.

No drones were harmed in the making of this presentation.

We go to Gilbert Corsey (former OVW interviewer) who says there is seismic activity in Cameron, North Carolina.

At the scene of the Hardy volcano, Itchweed (yes I spelled that right) runs up to the volcano with a weed whacker and shouts a lot of unintelligible words.

We go to the Dome of Deletion, a mini arena set up with a live crowd, a ring and an entrance shaped like Matt’s open mouth. The Hardys come out with Matt promising fifty of his followers appearing tonight. If they don’t prove their greatness tonight, the Seven Deities will remove the powers of deletion.

Cue Rockstar Spud to say he's sick of all this, including King Maxel. The infant gets a chant so Spud wants to be his first opponent because the kid hasn't had a match yet and he's more over than Spud has ever been. Spud promises to stretch Maxel and make him a loser like his father. Matt actually sanctions the match and makes it No DQ.

King Maxel vs. Rockstar Spud

Maxel drives to the ring in a mini Mercedes because of course he does. The bell rings, Benjamin tases Spud and Maxel gets the pin in 19 seconds. Cool moment, though Kevin Owens basically did the same thing in PWG a few years back.

Disco Inferno is watching from the back and asks if anyone wants to play some poker. It should be noted that Inferno was once arrested for involvement in an illegal poker game.

The news anchor and reporter talk about how the city has been locked down. Shane Helms and the Helms Dynasty roll up in a truck because they're local roughnecks and ready to fight.

The Rock N Roll Express arrived earlier today. They are PERFECT for something like this and it wouldn't have felt right if they weren't around. Matt offers them green beans or meat and invites them inside.

Corsey is taking bets on the match.

Sienna names herself #1 contender for the Knockouts Title and is willing to put that spot up against anyone or anything. Then the following happens.

Sienna vs. Vanguard I

Actually never mind as the referee won't let this happen so Vanguard I is ejected. We have a replacement though.

Sienna vs. ODB

ODB starts fast and runs Sienna over, setting up a Bronco Buster. A middle rope Thesz press gets two and Sienna is rather disgusted. The referee gets bumped so there's no count when ODB knocks a chair into

her face. Vanguard I comes out to count (with the numbers appearing over his (His?) head) until the referee pulls him out. The Silencer puts ODB away at 4:15.

Rating: D. I've never been a fan of ODB but I'll take her over Grado in some intergender non-comedy. They had to do something like this because you can't just have some big mess all night long. Some actual wrestling has to take place and if it just has to be ODB, so be it I guess.

ODB rubs Vanguard I on her chest.

The Helms Dynasty wants to fight but Matt has a pre-mo-nition. Tonight, we will see an appalling reincarnation.

If you order ANYTHING off ShopTNA.com, you get a free download of Dixie Carter's new song. So they're literally just giving it away. That's probably the only way anyone would take it.

Itchweed vs. Chet Sterling

This is under House Hardy Rules and the announcers aren't sure what that means. The announcers talk about how the land will be destroyed if the Hardys lose Apocalypso as Itchweed puts on a sleeper....and falls asleep himself. Itchweed is up at seven and puts Sterling through a table. The Pesticide Elbow finishes Sterling off at 3:33.

Rating: D. This is another good example of what happens when you let the Hardys loose without their medication. Itchweed is one of those characters who isn't really funny but I'm sure it means something to Jeff. Where else is he going to get to do some nonsense like this?

We get a flashback to Matt talking to a giraffe named George Washington and Jeff boxing a kangaroo named Smoking Joe.

TNA World Title: Lashley vs. Eddie Edwards

Lashley is challenging and shoulders the champ in the corner to start. They head outside with Lashley shoving a fan, causing the audience (who might be the 50 followers Matt was referring to earlier) to hold him back so Eddie can snap off some chops. We take a break and come back with Eddie grabbing a neckbreaker. Lashley sends him face first into the buckle with some Snake Eyes before

cranking on the ribs. Fans: "YOU CAN'T BEAT HIM!" Except for the time he did of course.

Eddie saves himself from a superplex and scores with a missile dropkick. The Shining Wizard gets two but Lashley gets in the Dominator for the same. Back to the floor with a powerbomb sending Eddie into the crowd. Looked cool but not much pain involved. Lashley picks things up a bit and spears Eddie through the wall as we take a second break.

Back again with the warnings that opened the show. Edwards and Lashley have fought into the woods and the match keeps going....but we don't have cameras. I guess we'll come back to that later.

Tag Team Titles: Tag Team Apocalypto

The Hardys are defending and this is under elimination rules with eliminations coming via pinfall or submission. The match starts in the arena so we get to see who is in at the start. Here's the lineup:

Hardys, Helms Dynasty, Rock N Roll Express, Decay

That's it for now as smoke fills the arena and everyone has to evacuate the building. We see Lashley and Edwards still fighting before cutting back to the teams. Everything goes insane and the teams are outside with firework guns. Abyss: "NO! NOT AGAIN!" The fireworks going into the air and Helms tells his boys to get out. Matt appears in the back of their truck and attacks Lee so Jeff tells the referee to get on the back of his motorcycle to chase after them.

A bunch of teams are at the entrance to the Compound and Decay lets them in because this is going to be beautiful. Matt throws Everett into the Cameron City Limits sign for two (yes there are counts in this) with Helms making the save. It's a huge fight as some of the teams get in, though none of them are introduced. Crazy Steve snaps one of their necks for a pin on someone never identified.

Another team is allowed in as Spud is shown waiting on his partner. The Bravado Brothers (Harlem and Lance) show up as the Dynasty and

Hardys fight in front of an antique store. Where did the Express go? Back at the entrance, a team called the Ugly Ducklings (maybe) enter and are eliminated in just a few seconds via Abyss' chokeslam.

The Hardys and Dynasty keep fighting as Abyss beats up a team called Showtime. The Bravado Brothers sneak in as Showtime is quickly dispatched by way of a rock to the head. I'm almost certain we're not supposed to know who any of those teams were though it's not like we got a good shot at almost any of their faces. Spud's partner finally arrives and we take a break.

Back with Spud's partner being revealed as.....Hornswoggle. Decay lets them pass so we cut back to the brawl taking place by the Lake of Reincarnation. A jumping knee to Jeff's face gets two as Matt makes the save by moving the boat with his mind. The Dynasty starts stomping on the boat until Jeff makes the save with a double noggin knocker.

Matt shoves Helms into the Lake and it's time for a 3 Count reunion, by which I mean Shane being part of 3 Count and yelling that Everett and Lee are no Evan Karagias and Shannon Moore. They superkick Helms into the Lake as the Bravados show up to roll them up for two each. The Express are in another ring (four sided this time) nearby and call the Hardys in for a fight.

This goes as well as it's going to go in 2016 but now we cut back to Edwards and Lashley because that's still going. Wait now it's back to the Dynasty vs. the Bravados with the referee coming out of a portable toilet to do his job. Everett hits a standing moonsault onto I believe Lance, leaving Harlem to be sent into a wall. They head inside the arena to keep brawling as we cut back to the other ring. Ricky and Jeff are in the kind of machines used to get people to the top of telephone poles and it's time for another break.

Back with the cranes coming together so Ricky can work on the arm. The volcano is going off in the background as Robert works on a spinning toehold. Matt grabs one of the crane's controls to send Morton flying through the air. We go back to the other arena where Everett is covered for two. We're back to the cranes though with

Jeff Swanton going out and missing Robert, only to have Matt hit a Twist of Fate to get rid of the Express.

So I believe we're down to Decay, Spud/Hornswoggle, the Bravados and the Dynasty, assuming no one else arrives. Back in the other arena, Spud and Hornswoggle go after the two downed teams with Hornswoggle swinging a chair. Spud eliminates the Bravados but gets powerbombed by Hornswoggle, setting up the Tadpole Splash. Everett pins Spud to get rid of another team.

Back to Lashley choking Edwards with a cord of some kind as Morton is still stuck on the crane, demanding to be let down. Road Warrior Animal of all people is here, asking how Morton got stuck up there. Decay finds James Storm in a mask but multiple other DCC members show up. One of them takes off his mask and Storm has no idea who it is. Whoever it is gets knocked out with Abyss getting the pin, which eliminates the entire DCC. Storm gets in a superkick for good measure. Steve wants to go add to this pile of bones and we take another break.

We come back again with the Hardys and Decay fighting near the volcano and Lashley and Edwards fighting nearby. The volcano erupts violently and we've got the Hurricane rising from the Lake. That means it's time for breaking news with Corsey saying Cameron's fate is in the Hardys' hands.

Back to the outside ring with Decay and the Dynasty each picking a Hardy to beat on. Matt is taken to a graveyard of Hardy logos as Jeff fights back on Decay. Janice is brought in and Jeff's comeback is cut off by a low blow. Vanguard I comes in and that means another fireworks war. Abyss takes one to the eye and Vanguard celebrates.

To the other teams as Hurricane saves Matt from a shovel to the head. Apparently the Dynasty is broken and a double pin (Can Hurricane do that?) gets rid of Everett and Lee. Matt and Hurricane bury them, which Matt says would make even the man with three H's proud. Lashley throws Eddie onto the house's porch and then no sells a Hornswoggle spear.

Abyss is back up but a huge Hardy symbol catches on fire around him.

A lot of brawling ends with Abyss taking Matt back into the ring. Matt gets Janice though and a shot to the ribs (with some quick edits) means Matt can make his weird noises. Steve and Jeff fight near the volcano with a Twisting Stunner sending Steve into the mouth. A big explosion sends Steve's charred body flying into the ring so Matt can get the pin to retain at 44:10.

Rating: N/A. You think I have any idea how to rate this? As I've said many times, I rate wrestling, not a bunch of people running around a big field with a few wrestling rings involved. I know there's an audience for this and I was excited about what it might be, but you knew they were over hyping this to death.

All that talk about teams breaking contracts and such to show up turned out to be the nonsense that it was expected to be, leaving us with a joke like the Rock N Roll Express, an indy team in the Bravados, Spud and Hornswoggle as another joke (I think?) and three TNA teams. Oh and the jobbers. Don't forget the jobbers.

No one really bought that any WWE names were going to show up here and the match was a big mess of standing around waiting for the bigger names to show up. The big moment here (I guess) was the Hurricane return and that's really nothing special. If you knew you weren't going to be able to get anyone here (Young Bucks? Maybe?), don't hype it up like it's a done deal. No they never said it, but if it's nothing outlandish, mentioning a name in wrestling means THEY'RE GOING TO SHOW UP.

I was really, really disappointed in this as I bought into the hype of the whole thing. But, of course, TNA manages to let me down and thinks that I'm going to be entertained by a joke about HHH burying people when the Hardys (combined age of 81) just beat almost the entire tag team division in less than an hour. There was no big moment, there was no big surprise and there was no big difference between this and the rest of the Hardy specials.

Reby reveals that she's pregnant to end the show, meaning the World Title match ends without a finish at 1:11:17.

Rating: C-. This is for the World Title match, which actually did

something before it turned into a bunch of cameos. Lashley vs. Edwards has been done so many times now that it's really hard to care about it anymore, especially when we're waiting on the conclusion to Carter vs. Edwards. Hey, maybe we can have a triple threat! That would be something new!

Overall Rating: D. Yeah this didn't do it for me. Basically they took a few camera crews and told the Hardys to do whatever they wanted. In other words, it's a big Hardys special and if you don't like it, you're just not up to their level. This wasn't really interesting and, much like the rest of their big matches, didn't add anything new. We've seen the Lake of Reincarnation done to death and the fireworks look cool but don't add much.

What we really saw tonight was how limited TNA is. If the best they can do is bring in the Bravado Brothers and Hornswoggle plus a few old guys who will probably do anything for a payday, you really can see their limited influence. On December 2, Ring of Honor brought in the Hardys, Jushin Thunder Liger and some big named from England. Tonight, it was some big names from the 80s who haven't been on the big stage in years. Which of those do you think is more impressive?

Overall, this felt like a big way to give Matt and Jeff whatever they want. We've seen the Broken gimmick for so long now and while Matt's acting and quirks are still entertaining, they need to either do something fresh with this or wind it down already. The show and big match kept my attention but by the end I was getting tired of it. It's AMAZING production work as the camera cuts were all solid but it's a case of not knowing when to say that's enough, which has been one of TNA's biggest issues for years.

I get why a lot of people will like it though and this isn't a case where I'm going to really harp on how wrong they are for thinking that way. It really is a situation where you either get it or you don't and I think I fall into the latter. There were entertaining moments but that's not enough for a two hour show. Much like back in the Immortal days, if you don't like this one idea, you're better off not watching. That's a really risky way to run TV and TNA does

it far too often.

Results

King Maxel b. Rockstar Spud – Spud was shocked with a taser

Sienna b. ODB – Silencer

Itchweeed b. Chet Sterling – Pesticide Elbow

Eddie Edwards vs. Lashley went to a no contest

The Hardys won Tag Team Apocalypto last eliminating Decay

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Got My Takeover: Orlando Ticket

I'll be in the upper deck again but I'm going.

On top of that I'll be taking in the Wrestlecon Supershow and Rev Pro from England. I'll probably be adding a few more shows as this is going to be the biggest wrestling weekend I've ever done.

As always, and I do mean always, thank you all for helping

me get here. The site has been doing so well lately between the ad revenue, the e-books and doing the news coverage over at Wrestlingrumors.net that I'm at a financial point I never thought was possible. I'm far from rich but I'm at the point where this I'm making a living watching and writing about professional wrestling. Every time something like this happens and I can just grab my wallet and pay for something I love to do because of what you all have allowed me to do, I feel like my head is about to fall off.

I started trying to make money off of this in March 2013 and made a grand total of \$30 that month. To be here now and in this place is something I never, ever thought possible. I know I say this a lot but you have no idea how grateful I am to all of you who come here so often, be it to agree with me, tell me I'm an idiot or just talk to me about wrestling. I make a living doing this now and it's because you all have been so helpful to me. You have no idea how much happiness you've given me and I can never thank you all enough.

KB

Monday Night Raw – July 15, 2002 (2016 Redo): Back to the Beginning

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 15, 2002

Location: Continental Airlines Arena, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is a big one. Last week it was clear that something had to change around here after one of the most dreadful nights in the history of this show. It's not so much that the wrestling was bad (save for the mixed tag) but there was almost nothing worth watching and one boring match after another. Things really do need to change and change they will. Let's get to it.

Undertaker is in his locker room with....Paul Heyman? Maybe a Mean Mark reunion? Heyman takes credit for tonight's main event (Undertaker/Brock Lesnar vs. Ric Flair/Rob Van Dam) because he's looking forward to Undertaker vs. Brock at Summerslam. Undertaker is ready to make Brock famous and Heyman gets out as fast as he can.

Opening sequence.

Here's the NWO to open things up. Actually it's just their music as Vince McMahon comes out instead. Why did he do that you ask? It's because the NWO is gone for good, no matter what. That's certainly an improvement and it's not like those that story was doing anything for anyone other than Shawn and the now injured Nash.

Vince goes over some of the World Champions in the company's history (omitting some big names and getting some major reactions to some others) but says it's time for a new era. The shake up of both shows begins right here because both show will have a General Manager. Vince says "General Manager" about ten times and kind of threatens the audience with what's going to happen. The roster is sitting in the back watching the announcement because that's what wrestlers do. Flair thinks the new boss will be a McMahon.

Jeff Hardy/Dudley Boyz vs. William Regal/Eddie Guerrero/Chris Benoit

Elimination rules so this has a lot of potential. It's a big brawl to start with Spike forearming Eddie for a way too early two count. Spike tries a sunset flip but gets small packaged to get us down to 3-2. Bubba gives Eddie a Bubba Bomb but Regal breaks up the cover and drags his partner into the corner for the tag off to Benoit.

The beating goes on for a bit until some Dudleyville right hands take Benoit down. Jeff comes in off the hot tag so house can be

cleaned, only to have Eddie pull him down from the floor. The fast pace continues with Eddie taking Jeff's head off with a clothesline and Regal hitting his weird jumping knees. A butterfly suplex gets two and the fans are staying right there with Hardy (Odd pink/white shirt aside. It looks like he poured paint over his head.).

Bubba makes a save and everything breaks down into the huge brawl. Eddie throws in the European Title with Bubba nailing Regal in the head for the DQ. A Swanton Bomb gets rid of Regal and we take a break with Benoit/Guerrero vs. Hardy to go. Back with Jeff grabbing his double legdrop rollup to get rid of Guerrero. Benoit snaps off a German suplex but gets caught by the Whisper in the Wind. Cue Eddie for another distraction so Regal can get in a brass knuckles shot to knock Jeff silly. The Crossface on the unconscious Hardy gives Benoit the win.

Rating: B. Now this is more like it. They were beating the heck out of each other at a frantic pace which is the kind of opening match you never get around here. To top it off they even managed to keep a champion strong as it took three people and a brass knuckles shot to put Hardy down. Well done all around here and a really good opener.

Bubba and Spike save Jeff from going through a table.

Coach speculates that the new GM could be Mick Foley or Vince's brother (there's a name you almost never hear about) but Heyman thinks it's him. Paul goes up to see Vince but a woman comes in to tell Vince that the new GM just arrived. After a break the new GM comes in and it's....Shane McMahon, who isn't the GM. Well so much for that. Shane is here to make sure Vince doesn't screw things up. Vince: "You tried to put me out of business and now you have this concern?" Remember that line when we get to Smackdown. Shane knows who it is and thinks the new GM is a parasite.

Tommy Dreamer and Van Dam don't know who the GM is but Rob had fun beating Heyman up last week. Rob leaves and Steven Richards comes in to set up a Singapore Cane match for later. Stevie canes Dreamer for a little preview.

Tommy Dreamer vs. Steven Richards

Canes are legal. The brawl heads outside early on with Dreamer picking up the steps (dude follow the rules) and getting caned in the jaw for his efforts. It's a strong enough shot to draw some blood and Stevie suplexes him onto the ramp. Back in and Richards hits him a few more times as there's only so much you can do with Singapore canes. Dreamer says bring it on and unloads on him with the cane. The DDT gets two but Richards' superkick gets the same. Dreamer grabs the damaged stick and SHATTERS IT over Steven's head for the pin.

Rating: D. The match was an excuse to do violent stuff to each other and that's fine enough for something this short. It wasn't the worst match in the world or anything and this was just over a year since ECW went under, meaning it doesn't feel as pitiful as some of the nostalgia pushes like we've seen over the years.

Booker T. says that even though the NWO is dead, he still has issues with the Big Show. He wants to see a Coacharooni because Rock isn't the only one who can mess with the Coach. The dancing isn't that impressive and Lawler wants to know if Coach is Caucasian. Booker is all fired up...and here's Eric Bischoff. Yes seriously, THIS is where they decided to debut him.

Here's Vince in the arena to introduce the new General Manager: ERIC BISCHOFF! It doesn't have quite the impact since we just saw him before the commercial. I've never understood that thinking and it really does hurt what should have been a huge moment. Bischoff talks about running the real WCW, meaning not the watered down version that invaded this company.

We hear about all the signings he made to show off his ruthless aggression. Next up are the Raw spoilers as the crowd is just dying listening to this speech which has NOTHING to do with what's going on here. Nitro changed the face of sports entertainment forever and Bischoff made Vince keep up with him.

Bischoff was THIS CLOSE to putting the WWF out of business (not quite) and now it's time to turn this show around. Eric says we'll start things on Vengeance when he'll sign the one piece of talent he

never could get his hands on: HHH. So we're just supposed to forget the Jean-Paul Levesque days? Bischoff promises to put the E back in WWE to FINALLY wrap this up.

Post break Bischoff sucks up to Undertaker despite him never coming to WCW ("I guess loyalty meant more to you than money.") but Bradshaw scares the new boss off.

Women's Title: Molly Holly vs. Trish Stratus

Molly is defending and I have no idea why this isn't on Sunday's pay per view. Lawler's monitor goes out and the thought of not being able to see Trish terrifies him. Why he can't just LOOK UP isn't clear but I guess it's a Bischoff rule. A running flip neckbreaker gets two for the champ and Trish trips trying a clothesline. Molly gets two more off a backbreaker and easily counters Stratusfaction into a rollup with feet on the ropes to retain.

Ric Flair isn't interested in Bischoff.

Big Show vs. Booker T.

Show easily takes over to start and gets in an impressive looking suplex. A whip sends Booker into the corner and Show casually leans into a raised boot. Booker Cactus Clotheslines him to the floor but misses a chair shot. Show grabs the chair instead, shoves the referee and chairs Booker for the DQ.

Rating: D. So wait. They split up the NWO and NOW they make Show tough again? As usual Booker gets to look like nothing for the sake of another Big Show push because the real money is in Big Show and his bad fitting singlet. I really don't get this but if Booker wins the rematch via pin, it makes up for a lot.

Show chokeslams Booker through the announcers' table.

Heyman talks about Bischoff while Brock Lesnar lifts a piece of the set. You know, as monsters do. Paul has a plan for the tag match and Lesnar is pleased.

The announcers pay tribute to Jimmy Miranda, the head of the merchandise stands. I've heard Austin and Jericho speak very highly of him.

Hardcore Title: Christopher Nowinski vs. Bradshaw

The title now has a Texas flag design and I actually kind of like it. Nowinski is challenging of course and tries to get out of the match. Chris offers to lay down so Bradshaw can get the pin but IT'S A SWERVE! I mean, the SWERVE doesn't work but at least he tried. The beating takes Chris into the back where Johnny the Bull jumps Bradshaw and wins the title.

Show comes in to see Bischoff and gets a match with Booker on Sunday.

Johnny the Bull thanks Eric for the chance and gets clotheslined so Bradshaw can get the title back.

Undertaker and Lesnar have a showdown.

Undertaker/Brock Lesnar vs. Rob Van Dam/Ric Flair

Flair and Undertaker start things off with some early chops actually setting up a WAY too early Figure Four. Undertaker will have none of that so Flair hits him low, only to have the champ get in a chokeslam for two. It's off to Lesnar who throws Ric all over the place and gives him the triple backbreaker. Undertaker gets a thumb to the eye but you don't need to be able to see to superplex Flair into a big crash.

A great looking powerslam plants Ric again but Flair is able to get over for the hot tag. Van Dam kicks Brock down and gets two off Rolling Thunder to Undertaker. Everything breaks down and Brock gives Flair the F5. A kick to the chest sets up the Five Star hits on Lesnar, only to have Undertaker plant Rob with the Last Ride for the pin.

Rating: C. This started off slow but a hot ending really helped pick it up. I'm really not sure why they didn't just have Flair lose here as you would think he was the perfect option to do the job. But hey, that's the point of the Intercontinental Champion right? Lesnar continues to not look great but putting him in there with people like Flair and Van Dam should do him some good.

Bischoff calls Rock and says he'll be at Smackdown to sign him.

Overall Rating: C+. The show worked well enough but the Bischoff speech in the middle just crippled the whole thing. I liked the wrestling better this time around but there are still a lot of things in their way. We're now pretty much back to where we were with the two owners (or at least we will be after Smackdown) and that's....not the most interesting idea in the world. Raw can be good if it can get out of its own way but given the way things have been going in recent weeks, I don't see that happening anytime soon.

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Tribute to the Troops 2016: It's Just Getting Worse

Tribute to the Troops 2016

Date: December 14, 2016

Location: Verizon Center, Washington D.C.

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

I try so hard to care about this show but it feels like WWE puts in less of an effort every single year. This is the annual show for the members of the United States military, meaning almost nothing of consequence will happen and the big main event will be Americans vs. foreigners. Let's get to it.

Shane and Stephanie McMahon welcome us to the show.

Video on the history of the series with a look back at all of the shows. The ones where they went overseas just feel so much more important.

Lillian Garcia is back to sing the National Anthem.

Cole says this is a rare occasion when the Raw, Smackdown and cruiserweight rosters are on the same show. You mean like Survivor Series?

Here's Roman Reigns to get things going. Reigns says the people in this arena are the real champions of the United States but here's Kevin Owens to cut him off. Kevin thinks he should get the praise around here because he's the longest reigning Universal Champion in history. Trash talk is exchanged with Owens saying he would take the US Title and put a maple leaf sticker on it to turn it into the Canadian Heavyweight Title. So he's a Lance Storm fan. I admire the cut of this Canadian's jib.

A challenge is issued but here's Rusev to interrupt. We get a rare kiss with Lana but Reigns wants a soldier to come out here and show Rusev how to do that properly. A brawl is about to go down but Big Cass comes out to even things up. Mick Foley comes out to make the main event, even though it's not Raw and he shouldn't have any authority.

Package on wrestlers visiting troops.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Shining Stars vs. Anderson and Gallows vs. Golden Truth

The winners get New Day on Sunday with one fall to a finish. Anderson punches Goldust to start before it's off to Epico who gets beaten up as well. The Shining Stars get together to put Goldust on the floor and we take a break. Back with Gallows kicking Goldust in the face because it's beat on the old man night.

An elbow drop gets two with Sheamus making the save. The hot tag brings in R-Truth to clean house with an ax kick getting two on Primo. Cesaro comes in to clean house with his usual stuff,

including the high crossbody for two more on Primo. Epico saves his cousin from the Swing but gets Brogue Kicked for the pin at 9:28.

Rating: D+. If they just have to give Cesaro and Sheamus the titles so be it, as long as New Day has the record once and for all. I'm still not a fan of the team but they're probably the only option out of these four. The tag division means nothing at the moment so they're as good an option as there is otherwise. Also, how weird is it to see storyline development on one of these shows?

More wrestlers meeting troops.

Here are Miz and Maryse for a chat with Miz calling himself an inspiration due to his role in the Marine movies. Anyway it's open challenge time so here's comedian Gabriel Iglesias to answer. They argue about who is out of their element until Iglesias brings out a friend to answer the challenge.

Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Non-title. Miz starts with the Daniel Bryan mockery fast by doing the YES pose and hitting the running corner dropkick. The running corner clothesline is countered into a belly to belly suplex as Iglesias starts taking pictures with Maryse. Neither Miz nor Maryse are pleased so Crews kicks Miz in the face, meaning another picture can be taken. The distraction lets Crews grab a rollup for the pin at 2:30.

Some troops say hello to their families.

Dolph Ziggler/American Alpha vs. Wyatt Family

Jordan immediately goes for the belly to belly on Harper but gets headlocked for his efforts. Luke is knocked out to the floor and we take a break. Back with Ziggler coming in to clothesline Orton and dropping him with a neckbreaker. The triple teaming puts Ziggler down in a hurry though and Orton's snap powerslam gets two. Ziggler gets away for the hot tag without too much effort and everything breaks down. That's fine with the Wyatts who clean house off a release Rock Bottom to Gable. The RK0 finishes Chad at 10:55.

Rating: C-. Well that was rather squashy. The Wyatts completely

destroyed the three of them here and that's not a good sign for Alpha's title hopes going forward. You would think they would be the best option to eventually take the belts from the Wyatts but that really doesn't seem to be the case, at least not yet. At least they're keeping the Family strong for a change.

Bayley, Charlotte and Dana Brooke meet a rescue dog. Dana isn't impressed and a match is made for later.

Bayley vs. Dana Brooke

Charlotte and the dog are at ringside. Dana takes her down and cranks on an arm and a leg at the same time. Bayley comes back with her spinning elbow in the corner but Charlotte grabs the leg to break up the suplex. The fans want Sasha but have to settle for Bayley throwing Dana into Charlotte. Back in and the Bayley to Belly wraps Dana up at 2:24.

Bayley celebrates with the dog just in case she's not adorable enough yet.

TJ Perkins/Jack Gallagher/Rich Swann vs. Brian Kendrick/Tony Nese/Drew Gulak

Perkins and Kendrick speed things up to start with TJ sending him outside, meaning it's time for all the dives. Gallagher goes last but opts to climb through the ropes and hit an ax handle from the apron for the pop of the night. Back in and Gulak puts Perkins in something like the Edgecator to take over for the first time.

Perkins cross bodies Nese but it's not enough for the hot tag. Gulak gets kicked away and it's off to Swann as things speed up.

Everything breaks down with Jack headbutting Nese out to the floor but shaking himself up in the process. A double superkick drops Kendrick and the spinning kick to the jaw ends Gulak at 5:33.

Rating: C. This was exactly what this match needed to be with the right ending. I liked the fact that they didn't do much to set up the triple threat here as this was much more an exhibition than anything involving storylines. They need to find some better heel jobbers than Gulak and Nese though as they've lost so many times now

that it's starting to lose meaning.

HHH and Stephanie went to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for a ceremony.

More wrestlers in Afghanistan.

New Day talks about their title defense on Sunday but instead opt to dance over breaking the record. Big E. thinks they're the greatest trio of all time when the Club comes in to laugh at the thought. They throw up the too sweet sign and here's the Shield to stare all six of them down. Reigns: "Nah." Well that worked.

Big Cass/Roman Reigns vs. Rusev/Kevin Owens

Enzo is back and we hear about how the Americans are going to beat down the bad guys for every branch of the military. Rusev and Reigns get things started with the Bulgarian actually taking over. The running splash misses though and Rusev has to bail from the threat of the Superman Punch. Instead it's the apron dropkick and the good guys stand tall as we take a break.

Back with Owens getting in a cheap shot on Reigns to give the bad guys control. Owens gets all angry with the trash talk and drops a backplash on the floor. Reigns finally throws Rusev down and a big uppercut to Owens allows the hot tag to Cass. Everything breaks down but Lana shoves Enzo into the steps. The distraction lets Rusev get in a superkick to set up the frog splash for two. Another hot tag brings in Reigns for the spear and pin on Rusev at 12:55.

Rating: C-. Totally standard main event to end a totally standard show. Lana laying out Enzo was the highlight of the match here and actually makes me want to see them have a wacky comedy match. I'm really happy with the idea of Cass moving higher up the card and while I don't see him beating Rusev, it's a good sign to have him in that spot on a pay per view.

A quick thank you to the troops wraps us up.

Overall Rating: D. Is that really what they think of the troops? This was basically an extra hour for Raw and Smackdown with nothing interesting whatsoever going on. In two hours we had maybe ten

combined minutes of stuff on the troops, making this one of the lamest tributes ever. It used to be a show in the Middle East. Then it was a show at a military base. Then it was a glorified house show. Now it's something thrown in as a bonus when you went to Smackdown. To suggest this was about the troop is a joke and you almost have to know that just by paying attention. Totally unnecessary show, as it's been for years.

Results

Cesaro/Sheamus b. Shining Stars, Anderson and Gallows and Golden Truth – Brogue Kick to Epico

Apollo Crews b. Miz – Rollup

Wyatt Family b. Dolph Ziggler/American Alpha – RK0 to Gable

Bayley b. Dana Brooke – Bayley to Belly

Jack Gallagher/Rich Swann/TJ Perkins b. Drew Gulak/Tony Nese/Brian Kendrick – Spinning kick to Gulak's head

Roman Reigns/Big Cass b. Kevin Owens/Rusev – Spear to Rusev

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