

205 Live – November 29, 2016 (Debut Episode): It's All About the Presentation

205 Live

Date: November 29, 2016

Location: Colonial Life Arena, Columbia, South Carolina

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Austin Aries, Corey Graves

Remember the Cruiserweight Classic being all awesome? Now do you remember the cruiserweights being equally awesome on Monday Night Raw? Odds are you don't, because the division has floundered on Monday nights and it's already time for the show to have its own show on the WWE Network. This debut episode could range from good to a mess so let's get to it.

Also, these are probably not going to be done on Tuesday nights. I'll have them up as soon as possible every week though.

The opening sequence says tonight it's time to defy expectations. There are very few clips from Raw here with almost everything coming from the tournament. I'm as shocked as you are.

Opening sequence.

It should be interesting to see how the crowd looks as this was taped after Smackdown went off the air.

Austin Aries, currently out with an eye injury, is a surprise commentator. He teases winning the title once he's healthy.

The roster (or at least tonight's roster) is on stage for introductions. We have Rich Swann, TJ Perkins, Jack Gallagher (SWEET), Hoho Lun, the Bollywood Boyz, Noam Dar, Tony Nese, Drew Gulak, Ariya Daivari, Cedric Alexander, Lince Dorado, Akira Tozawa, Mustafa Ali, Gran Metalik and Brian Kendrick. This minute long series of introductions is already more than we got on Monday Night Raw and gives me some hope.

Video on the Bollywood Boyz, Harv and Gurv Sirah. They grew up watching Bret Hart and want to bring the Indian culture to America. Again, HUGE improvement over what we got on Mondays.

Bollywood Boyz vs. Drew Gulak/Tony Nese

The Boyz do a lot of dancing and are clearly the faces here. The fact that they're fighting heels was your second clue. Aries doesn't get the point of the handshakes and I still can't disagree. Gurv (who is in trunks instead of tights like his brother) works on Drew's arm to start before it's off to Harv for more of the same.

Drew takes Harv's head off with a running dropkick as Ranallo is, say it with me, a big improvement over what we've had in recent weeks. Harv gets taken down into the corner with Gulak working over his leg like a technical mat wrestler should do. Nese's chinlock doesn't last long and a neckbreaker gets Harv over to the corner for the hot tag to his brother.

Everything breaks down and we get the eternally stupid spot with Gulak being thrown into Nese, who DDT's his partner because he's incapable of letting go of his partner's head. Harv springboards into a crossbody to take Gulak down outside but Nese slams Gurv to take over again. Back in and a DDT sends Nese outside, setting up a double superkick to pin Gulak at 7:04.

Rating: C+. Let's see: characters, good action, defined faces and heels and a better reaction from the crowd. This is how you start a show and introduce some new talent, which seems to be more over with the crowd than almost anyone else has accomplished in the last few months.

Gulak and Nese say the Dancing with the Stars rejects won because of greasy ropes. That sounds like the start of a story, which again puts this one up on Raw.

Video on Noam Dar.

Kendrick says you should gamble on him tonight because he's going to capitalize on Swann's mistakes. Perkins comes in and wants his rematch so he wishes Kendrick luck.

Video on Gran Metalik. These are a bit long but you only have to air them once and people will catch on in a hurry.

Ariya Daivari vs. Jack Gallagher

Gallagher is a wrestling gentleman and got a very strong reaction in his Cruiserweight Classic run. Jack does his fancy spin to counter a wristlock before bending both arms around in ways other than nature intended. Even Graves has to appreciate how awesome Gallagher really is.

Gallagher handstands his way out of a headlock by walking on his hands. Another headstand in the corner has Aries freaked out and it's time to tie Daviari's limbs up in so much of a knot that Gallagher stands off to the side and smiles at him. A running kick to the back of the trunks annoys Aries because it wasn't great.

Daivari comes back with some basic wrestling, including a neckbreaker and chinlock, which finally slows Jack down. Some dropkicks have Daivari in trouble again and a headbutt knocks him into the corner. One of the hardest running dropkicks I've ever seen puts Daivari away at 5:28. Even Aries calls it impressive, partially because that's one of his signature moves.

Rating: B-. Here's the simple point: Gallagher works because he's unlike anyone else on the roster. As I've said for a long time: if you do the same thing over and over again with the only difference being the name attached, no one is going to notice. If you do something completely different, people are going to notice. That's what Gallagher did here and that's why people will be talking about him.

Ranallo: "Austin, what do you think of 205 Live so far?" Aries: "Well I'm here so it's great."

Lince Dorado video. He's your standard masked luchador.

Video on Rich Swann, who lost his parents young and has traveled the world wrestling anyone he can.

Cruiserweight Title: Rich Swann vs. Brian Kendrick

Swann, billed as outlandish for some reason, is challenging and they're absolutely insane if they don't change the title here. We're ready to go after the Big Match Intros and the standard handshake. They trade wristlocks to start before it's time to speed things up, including a hard dropkick for two on the champ. A tiger bomb drops Kendrick again and he bails to the floor for a breather.

Back in and the champ snaps off a hard belly to back suplex but it's too early for the Captain's Hook to really work. A similar suplex does the same to Kendrick but Swann takes too long going up and gets caught in a neckbreaker onto the buckle. Kendrick has a target now and a bridging dragon suplex makes things even worse. It's off to a straitjacket hold for a bit, only to have Swann grab something like a Michinoku Driver.

Brian's eyes are bugging out (great visual) but he gets the knees up to block the standing 450. The long form Captain's Hook gives us the dramatic crawl to the ropes and Kendrick's frustration continues. It only gets worse when Sliced Bread #2 gets two, allowing Swann to hit three straight spinning kicks to the head for the pin and the title at 13:31.

Rating: B. This felt like a big title change and that's exactly what it needed to be. There's no other way to put it: Brian Kendrick is one of the least interesting heels in a very long time. He was on a great nostalgia run in the tournament and the big idea was to turn him heel because...well I have no idea actually. Swann as the new face champion has potential and whoever beats him can actually be the big bad that this division needs. Good match here, which is what they needed.

Swann dedicates the win to his mother and Kendrick says you shouldn't get used to this.

A replay of the title change ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. As Paul Heyman said, it's all about the presentation. On Raw, the cruiserweights are wedged in on a show where they don't fit in the slightest. It's basically the new Divas match so people can go get nachos (Hopefully with barbecue sauce. Try it.) and that's not worth keeping around.

This show actually felt like it mattered and even if it's just a low level show for the sake of validating the talent being signed, it's WAY better than giving them ten minutes in front of a crowd that doesn't want to see them. On top of that, the talent was actually introduced to the fans so we can get to know them a bit.

Look at what we had here: two guys from India who like movies, a British wrestling gentleman and a fun guy who loves to dance winning the title. In other words, something other than a bunch of guys doing a similar style with no charisma (Perkins and Kendrick for example, meaning the top two names in the division).

I don't think this show is going to blow the doors off of anything but giving them their own show is the only possible option if they want the division to be a success. It's not a great show or anything but it's different enough to be entertaining and that's the important thing. I liked what I saw here as it felt like a weekly episode of the Cruiserweight Classic. If they just have to keep the division on Raw for awhile so be it, but their best bet is right here.

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Smackdown – November 29, 2016: Going Home With A Smile

Smackdown

Date: November 29, 2016

Location: Colonial Life Arena, Columbia, South Carolina

Commentators: Tom Phillips, David Otunga, Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the go home show for Tables, Ladders and Chairs 2016 and Smackdown has managed to put together a pretty decent build in such a small time frame. Tonight we've got Dean Ambrose hosting the Ambrose Asylum with James Ellsworth as his guest, meaning AJ Styles is bound to get involved. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

There are tables, ladders and chairs all over the arena.

Renee Young is in the ring for a contract signing for the Women's Title match. Alexa Bliss and Becky Lynch come out with Alexa telling Renee to get out of here because they need someone with better fashion sense. They recap the feud with Becky saying Bliss has the mentality of a four year old. The champ signs but Alexa keeps talking about Becky's accent and how this isn't the Disney Channel where you get further by being nice. Becky rips into her for not accomplishing anything in her time here other than having a loser mentality. Alexa signs as well and the fight is on with Becky actually being knocked through the table.

Dolph Ziggler/Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin/The Miz

Corbin knocks Ziggler down to start and we take a break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Corbin whipping Dolph hard into the corner and doing that slide underneath the bottom rope to keep Dolph in trouble. It's off to Miz, who pulls out a ladder to lean up against the steps. Ziggler gets in the running DDT on the floor, followed by a superkick to Miz.

The hot tag brings in Kalisto for his usual, including the hurricanrana driver for two on Miz. A big suicide dive sends Miz into the announcers' table. Everyone is staggered and Maryse shoves the ladder onto Ziggler. Back in and the Salida Del Sol looks to finish, only to have Corbin use a chair for the DQ at 7:31.

Rating: B-. For a match this short, they packed in a lot of action into the time. Kalisto could be an interesting guy if they would stop cutting his legs out from underneath him. The same is true with Corbin, who certainly has the look but I'm not sure if he has enough in ring skills yet to hang at this level.

American Alpha isn't scared of the Wyatts and are ready to levitate the Wyatts with suplexes.

The Wyatts are ready for American Alpha and don't like their positivity. Orton gives Luke Harper a pep talk for his match with Kane but Harper doesn't seem to trust Randy.

Carmella comes out for her match but first of all she has a message for John Cena. She promises to hit Nikki with a chair so hard that the real Bella Twins pop out of her back. Nikki charges to the ring and the brawl is on, meaning no match. Carmella is easily cleaned out.

We recap last week's ladder match with Ellsworth earning his contract and a shot at Styles' World Title.

It's time for the Ambrose Asylum, complete with a single piece of carpet in the middle of the ring. Ambrose gets right to it by bringing out Ellsworth as the first guest. Dean asks how old James' boots are before letting James celebrate his win a little bit. Ellsworth offers to do anything Dean needs so Ambrose gives him money to pick up a six pack after the show. As far as James' future, he'd rather face AJ for the title after beating him three times in a row. Ambrose: "He's drunk with power ladies and gentlemen."

Cue AJ to stand on the announcers' table and make puppet jokes about Ellsworth. Dean: "So what you're saying is you lost to a dummy three times?" AJ gets in the ring and promises to get rid of Dean before

dealing with the new superstar, as long as James shows up on Sunday. The brawl is on with AJ shoving both guys through the furniture. Ellsworth is hung upside down for a chair shot to the back, followed by a Styles Clash onto the steps. That should get rid of him for awhile but odds are he'll be at the pay per view.

Post break, Ellsworth is taken out on a stretcher.

Kane vs. Luke Harper

Harper's headlock doesn't get him anywhere as Kane comes back with his own power offense. A big boot and clothesline puts Harper on the floor and we take a break. Back with Harper kicking him in the knee and head, only to get caught with the running DDT. Harper hammers away in the corner but gets powerbombed out for two more. The swinging Boss Man Slam gives Luke two of his own and a superkick drops Kane again. Back up and Harper misses the discus lariat, setting up the chokeslam to give Kane the pin at 11:05.

Rating: B-. What is with the good matches on here tonight? These two beat the heck out of each other in the only kind of match they should have had. Kane has taken a backseat since the Draft but he's still fine for something like this. You can tell they're doing something with Harper so maybe he'll wind up getting a push out of the thing.

We recap the contract signing.

Becky has a sore back but doesn't care what kind of match she has with Alexa. Again, and I can't emphasize this enough: they've taken a simple idea and ran with the thing, which can often make for something very entertaining.

Bray Wyatt/Randy Orton vs. American Alpha

The winners get the title shot on Sunday. Orton and Jordan get things going with Jason snapping off some armdrags and working an armbar. It's off to Wyatt who throws Jordan throat first into the ropes to take over. The beatdown begins with Orton draping him over the top rope and grabbing a chinlock.

Jordan fights up and makes the tag off to Gable, who cleans house for a bit until being sent hard to the floor as we take a break. Back with Gable getting DDT'ed onto the apron for two as the beating continues. Bray hits the release Rock Bottom and Orton's awesome looking superplex has both guys down.

Unfortunately it's actually enough for the hot tag to Jordan as everything breaks down. The suplexes begin on Bray but the lights go out, revealing Harper at ringside. Gable breaks up Sister Abigail but an RK0 breaks up the Grand Amplitude. Jordan's spear hits the post and Sister Abigail sends the Wyatts to the title match at 15:29.

Rating: B. Heck of a match here with the right team going over. Bray almost has to win a title soon and they even protected Alpha in the loss. There's something so cool about watching Jordan fighting for all he's worth as he does the big comeback as well as almost anyone in the company right now. This was better than I was expecting and I had a good time with it.

Slater and Rhyno are ready for the challenge when Styles comes up to say no one cares about the Tag Team Titles. Ambrose runs in and beats AJ up to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. Now THIS is how you go into a pay per view. Smackdown had a battle plan tonight and executed it to near perfection. I'm pretty sure every match on Sunday got some focus here and the wrestling was even good on top of that. You really can tell that there's a lot of effort put into the planning of these shows and they know exactly what they want to do on almost any given week. This was one of the better go home shows I've seen in a very long time and it was everything they needed to do and more.

Results

Dolph Ziggler/Kalisto b. The Miz/Baron Corbin via DQ when Corbin used a chair

Kane b. Luke Harper – Chokeslam

Randy Orton/Bray Wyatt b. American Alpha – Sister Abigail to Jordan

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Monday Night Raw – November 28, 2016: False Teeth, Short Cameos and Deja Vu

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 28, 2016

Location: Spectrum Center, Charlotte, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's another big week for Monday Night Raw as there are two title matches announced coming into the show. This week we have New Day coming down the home stretch to the Tag Team Title record with a defense against Anderson and Gallows, plus Charlotte defending the Women's Title against Sasha Banks (again). Let's get to it.

We open with a look at last week's main event.

Here's Chris Jericho to open us up with the Highlight Reel. This week's

guest is Kevin Owens, who is setting a record with his second consecutive appearance on the show. Owens rips on America in general for their actions on Thanksgiving and Black Friday, which you would never see from Canadians like them.

They're thankful for each other but Jericho is also thankful for Seth Rollins, who blew another title shot last week. People have been accusing Jericho of interfering last week but that was clearly Sin Cara wearing a Chris Jericho match. "He got the Mast of Jericho and he put it on maaaaan." Apparently Rollins isn't medically cleared to be here tonight so here's Roman Reigns instead. Jericho calls Reigns a joke but Roman thinks Owens being Universal Champion is the real joke.

Owens stumbles over the name of his title so Reigns says Owens would have lost that title in any of his recent defenses. That's enough for Jericho who asks if Reigns knows what that means but Owens tells Jericho to shut up because he's got this (smart move as YOU JUST MADE THE LIST would have gotten a face pop). Owens threatens to powerbomb on the apron just like Rollins, which sounds fine to Reigns. Roman thinks if he wins tonight, he should get a title shot at Roadblock. The match is made.

Post break, Kevin and Chris get in an argument over whether or not Owens needs him. They split up until Mick Foley comes in to say Jericho won't interfere in the match tonight. Jericho is more than willing to walk away on his own.

R-Truth vs. Braun Strowman

Truth gets in a few shots but the powerslam puts him away in 38 seconds.

Post match Goldust goes after Strowman until Sami Zayn runs in for some revenge after last week. This goes as badly as you would expect it to with Sami being put in the Tree of Woe again. Foley comes out to help break it up as we take a break. Back with Foley saying Sami is never going to quit, meaning he needs to be saved from himself.

That sets Sami off on a rant about Foley being bossed around by Stephanie. Foley says he saved Sami's job by making Zayn vs. Strowman because Stephanie was going to fire him for not winning the

Intercontinental Title (GOOD GRIEF PICK A SIDE WITH STEPHANIE ALREADY!). Sami wants Foley to be himself because he's a hero to these people. All Sami sees when he looks at Foley is a hypocrite. All I saw was Foley's teeth falling out as he talked for a very weird visual.

Charlotte is ready for her championship celebration and sends Dana off to get things ready.

Cedric Alexander vs. Tony Nese

Cedric is the hometown boy and starts fast with a monkey flip. We see Alicia Fox watching in the back and smiling rather heartily at Cedric. Drew Gulak trips Alexander up so Nese can get two off a moonsault. We hit a bodyscissors for a bit until Cedric knees him in the face. Gulak offers another distraction though and a pumphandle driver ends Alexander at 3:24.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but they're setting up people as the cruiserweights get their own show tomorrow night. If Rich Swann gets the title tomorrow, Nese could be a potential first challenger for the title, which would be an upgrade over Brian Kendrick's nothing character.

Enzo and Big Cass shill merchandise for Cyber Monday.

We recap the Jericho/Owens issues.

Jericho is offended at being asked if this argument is real. He goes to his car and the limo driver knocks the List out of his hands, only to have Rollins appear and beat Jericho down, including a big Pedigree on top of a car.

Raw Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is defending and we get Big Match Intros. Sasha gets in the Banks Statement about thirty seconds in but Charlotte is no Lesnar and makes the ropes. They're quickly on the floor with Sasha being sent into the barricade to set up some chops. It's actually a double countout at 3:09.

Rating: D+. What am I even supposed to say about this? I know WWE loves

to keep these two fighting forever but I'm getting a little tired of it, especially when this is almost a guaranteed way to set up something else between them down the line. Of course this didn't have time to go anywhere but what we got was the usual goodness between them.

Hang on a second as here's Foley to say they're restarting this match later tonight with no countouts, no disqualifications and falls count anywhere.

Rusev vs. Enzo Amore

Enzo says Rusev had the luckiest day of his life last week and it came on the luckiest day of his wife's life because she got to see why Enzo is the realest guy in the room. We hear what Rusev and Lana might have had for Thanksgiving dinner but Enzo thinks she was thinking about him stuffing her turkey. A low blow DQ's Rusev at 30 seconds.

Mark Henry is in a new movie and shoves Titus O'Neil down for saying it should have been his part.

Rich Swann vs. Noam Dar

Brian Kendrick is on commentary to yell about how he's the champ and won't be going anywhere because he needs to take care of his family. Swann starts fast as is his custom but Dar sends him throat first into the bottom rope to take over. A neck crank goes nowhere and it's Swann's spinning kick to the head ending Dar at 3:29.

Rating: C-. Words cannot express how much anything associated with Kendrick sucks the life out of a show. The guy is one of the least interesting heels in a long time and is really just there. You know what he reminds me of? Chavo Guerrero as ECW Champion. Yeah he can have watchable matches but there's no energy to him at all and no one is looking forward to his matches.

Post match Swann calls Kendrick out and promises to win the title.

Sheamus and Cesaro are in a bar and talk about being the best team in WWE, even though they can't stand each other. Various drunk guys come up and make fun of them, triggering a bar fight with the wrestlers cleaning

house. They celebrate with a drink and seem to be on the same page.

Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. Owens jumps him before the bell but Reigns says ring the bell anyway (WAY too common anymore). The beating is on in a hurry with Owens knocking him to the floor before a backslash gets two inside. Back with Reigns hitting a clothesline but having to put the brakes on to avoid hitting the referee.

That means a chinlock and Cannonball, followed by a long chinlock to keep Reigns down. Another backslash hits knees though and they trade big forearms. A superkick gets two for Owens but he takes so long going up that Reigns nails a Superman Punch. Another one off the steps knocks Kevin silly and the spear finishes clean at 14:33.

Rating: C. Of course that's the only way they can set up the pay per view rematch. It's not like they could have had Owens get counted out or something (because we just HAD TO DO THAT FINISH earlier) because the solution was to just pin one of the weakest booked champions in recent years.

Owens is annoyed at being asked about the match. He blames Foley for the loss because he should have been at Jericho's side. They're still best friends you see.

We get a sitdown interview with Paul Heyman, who says he and Brock Lesnar screwed up by underestimating Goldberg. After twelve years on the sidelines, Goldberg stepped into the ring and cracked Lesnar's ribs with a spear. This is now part of Lesnar's legacy and it's an embarrassment. The loss makes Lesnar think he has something to prove, which really scares Heyman, who doesn't know what it's going to turn Lesnar into. If Goldberg is in the Royal Rumble, so is Brock, which means there will be one conqueror, 28 losers, and one victim.

Emmalina video.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending of course. An early powerbomb gets two on Woods and

a fireman's carry flapjack gets the same. With Big E. down on the floor, Gallows kicks Woods in the head as we go to a break. Back with Big E. coming in off the hot tag to clean house. A belly to belly suplex drops Anderson but a Gallows distraction lets Karl get in a kick to the chest.

That earns Anderson the spear through the ropes but the Midnight Hour is broken up with a boot to the head. The Magic Killer doesn't work either so Woods blasts Anderson with forearms to the face. Karl tries a rollup with a handful of trunks but Woods reverses into one of his own to retain at 9:58.

Rating: C. The match was fine but there was no way the titles were changing with two weeks to go before the record. If they're going to do that (and I'm not sure who it would be against unless we get Cesaro and Sheamus again), it's not going to be until two days before the record is broken. New Day still cheated again but it felt more like the fun cheating instead of the evil version last week.

Bayley gives Sasha a pep talk and it turns into a speech about the greatness of Ric Flair.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks

Charlotte is defending and this is anything goes with falls counting anywhere. Sasha starts fast by knocking the champ outside and scoring with a suicide dive. A double clothesline puts both women down as we take a break. Back with Sasha fighting out of a bodyscissors and kneeling Charlotte in the face.

The double knees in the corner miss though and a big boot knocks Sasha off the apron for two on the floor. Natural Selection on the floor gets the same and the champ is annoyed. The annoyance takes so long that Sasha pulls out a kendo stick and swings away, drawing the ECW chants. Charlotte knocks her down again and grabs the Figure Eight, only to have a stick shot break it up.

They fight towards the announcers' table where Charlotte moonsaults onto Sasha...or at least a few feet to Sasha's right, for a near fall. Sasha gets in a Thesz press off the barricade for two more and both of them are

down. They head into the crowd and Sasha ties her up in a handrail, setting up the Bank Statement to make Charlotte tap at 16:28.

Rating: B. I'm not sure how many more times I can put this the same way: the match was good, Charlotte missed the big spot, and Sasha gets the title back. She's held the title twice before with both reigns lasting twenty seven days. It's really hard to care again when we've seen this multiple times and it's ended in less than a month both times. Still though, good stuff.

Ric Flair comes out, raises Sasha's hand, and is gone in less than thirty seconds. Banks celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was an awkward show as it had good wrestling but the stories felt slapped together. It's really amazing how fast Smackdown turned around to be ready for Tables, Ladders and Chairs but Raw seems to be scrambling with twice as much time before Roadblock. I liked the show but they need to tighten things up a bit, which doesn't mean threatening us with more Stephanie anger.

Results

Braun Strowman b. R-Truth – Running powerslam

Tony Nese b. Cedric Alexander – Pumphandle driver

Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks went to a double countout

Enzo Amore b. Rusev via DQ when Rusev hit him low

Rich Swann b. Noam Dar – Spinning kick to the head

Roman Reigns b. Kevin Owens – Spear

New Day b. Anderson and Gallows – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Bank Statement

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Smackdown – November 18, 2005: Viva La Legacy

Smackdown

Date: November 18, 2005

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This is another request and it's the Smackdown version of the Eddie Guerrero Tribute Show. On top of that, it was also taped the same night as the Raw version (double taping on a Sunday due to the European trip) which was the day Eddie passed away. I've grown to respect Eddie a bit more over the years so it should be interesting to see how this goes. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Smackdown World Champion Batista in a low rider to Eddie's music for a perfect opening. Batista immediately starts crying and says he's not sure he's the right man to be out here. All he knows is that Eddie loved his family and loved this business. He had a lot of demons to deal with but the pain went away when he walked through that curtain. Batista has to pause a bit to fight back the tears and you can feel the real

emotion here. Eddie is with God now and Batista isn't going to let anyone ever forget him.

Eddie video set to 3 Doors Down's Here Without You. They're my favorite band so this is about as perfect as it's going to get. Above all else though: that frog splash was a thing of beauty.

Clip from the Eddie documentary focusing on his childhood and family. It's kind of weird to hear Eddie talking about his brothers and sister.

The low rider, with Batista's title on the hood, will be in the aisle all night.

Matt Hardy vs. Carlito

This is interpromotional as Carlito is from Raw. As you're probably going to guess, these matches aren't going to mean a thing. Matt is freshly on Smackdown after losing the feud with Edge on Raw. It's so strange to see Matt looking absolutely svelte. He's probably 30 pounds lighter than he is today and looks great. Matt grabs the afro to start but gets sent outside to give Carlito control.

The announcers aren't even bothering with the match as they're just telling Eddie stories for a nice touch. Carlito loads up the middle rope legdrop but dives into a raised boot (still hate that spot). The Side Effect gives Matt two but Carlito grabs the Backstabber for the same. Matt comes right back with the real middle rope legdrop and the Twist of Fate is good for the win.

Rating: C. This is a good indication of how this night is going and there's nothing wrong with that. There's no need to try and make this show mean anything storyline wise so just go out there, have decent matches, and give the fans something to smile about. Good little match here too.

Vince gives a tribute to Eddie, who was a true craftsman. He actually tears up talking about how much Eddie loved his family, both blood and co-workers.

Another documentary clip talking about Eddie meeting Vickie then

marrying, losing and getting her back.

Road Warrior Animal/Heidenreich vs. Lance Cade/Trevor Murdoch

I still have issues calling Animal and Heidenreich the LOD. This is another interpromotional match, which is probably going to be a trend all night. Cade and Heidenreich start things off with the cowboy being taken down off a hard clothesline. The announcers get in a debate over which Tag Team Titles belong on which show (which is why I just go with the show's name and ignore the official names) as a cheap shot puts Heidenreich in trouble. That goes nowhere as he spears the villains down and makes the hot tag. Everything breaks down and the Doomsday Device ends Cade.

Rating: D+. I'm going a bit lighter on the matches tonight as there's no reason to go crazy with the ratings, especially when the wrestlers probably aren't all there mentally. This version of the LOD never worked as Heidenreich didn't feel like Hawk at all. It didn't help that the tag divisions were such a mess at this point and even interpromotional stuff wasn't interesting.

Booker T. and Sharmell miss Eddie with Booker telling a story about getting in a fist fight with Eddie back in WCW.

Documentary stuff on the Lie, Cheat and Steal vignettes. These were some of the first things that really made me appreciate Eddie as a character instead of just a performer. This transitions into a look at all the cheating over the years, which really was hilarious at times.

A sweaty Big Show is glad Eddie isn't in pain anymore.

Eddie talks about playing other sports but giving them up because he only cared about wrestling. We also hear about his childhood growing up around wrestling because his dad was a promoter.

Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Chavo still has blonde hair from the Kerwin White gimmick, which was completely done after Eddie passed away. JBL has image consultant Jillian Hall with him. Some forearms in the corner have Chavo in early trouble so

he snaps off a headlock takeover. We hit the cheating, including a thumb to the eye to send JBL outside. That's quite the selling for a basic move.

Back in and the crossbody is caught in a fall away slam to put JBL in control like he should be. The heavy right hands in the corner are accompanied by stories of sewage and burritos. We hit the sleeper, which looks really weird from someone so big on someone so much smaller. Or maybe it's just that JBL isn't good at using that move.

Chavo comes back with a dropkick and a DDT to break up another fall away slam. It's time for a few chairs and of course Chavo throws one to JBL and falls down just like Eddie did so many times. Ok I smiled at that one. The distraction lets Chavo get in a low blow, followed by Three Amigos and a frog splash for the pin.

Rating: C-. The result here means nothing at all as this was all about paying tribute to Eddie. Chavo winning was the only possible option here as he was basically Eddie's little brother and could wrestle the same style so well. It's not a good match (fine enough though) but it was exactly what it was supposed to be.

Video of Eddie's mom talking about his childhood.

The announcers talk about Eddie a bit.

Video on Eddie at Wrestlemania XX. That was the rather awesome match against Kurt Angle where Eddie took his boot off, which they played up in the Summerslam rematch. This leads to the ending of the show which is really hard to watch now.

JBL was Eddie's arch nemesis but he was lucky enough to be his friend.

Video on Eddie winning the World Title from Brock Lesnar at No Way Out 2004.

Cruiserweight Battle Royal

Tajiri, Gregory Helms, Paul London, Kid Kash, Brian Kendrick, Scotty 2 Hotty, Nunzio, Funaki, Psychosis, Super Crazy, Juventud

Nothing on the line as Juventud is already Cruiserweight Champion. Everybody gangs up on Helms and Tajiri (the Raw guys) but don't bother to actually eliminate either of them. Kendrick gets kicked out for the first elimination and Super Crazy goes out as well. Tajiri and Funaki follow them, leaving London to do a bunch of springboard kicks to the back. Helms and Nunzio take a double Worm.

Scotty dumps Kash and London does the same to Helms to get us down to five. Make that three as Nunzio gets rid of Scotty, leaving us with Nunzio, Juventud and London. Nunzio's attempts at alliances don't work and the Italian is sent out. Both guys wind up on the apron for a kicking battle until they both crawl back inside. Juventud dropkicks London out for the win.

Rating: D+. I've seen worse battle royals but few that were more pointless. The champ is entered into a match and then wins the thing? The division wasn't the most interesting in the world at this point and other than having some cruiserweight stuff involved on the show, I have no idea what this has to do with Eddie.

Video on Eddie and Chyna, which was pretty awesome stuff. His kids try to figure out what Latino Heat means.

We look at Eddie's last match, a DQ win over Mr. Anderson.

Shane McMahon talks about how cool it is to have major families like the Guerreros (and the Jarretts). He talks about what Eddie meant and breaks down in tears.

Video of the end of Wrestlemania XX with JR's voice giving out.

Chris Benoit vs. HHH

HHH is a heel here but plays to the crowd during the entrances. Given the circumstances, that's totally fine. An early Crossface attempt sends HHH to the ropes and we take a breather. Back in and Crossface attempt the sequel gives us the same plot (but likely fewer laughs). This time Benoit follows him out and sends HHH head first into the steps, only to get sent crashing outside as well.

Back from a break with HHH hitting some forearms to the back and getting two off a spinebuster. We hit the abdominal stretch but the powers of an EDDIE chant....don't really do much as HHH throws Benoit down. Your standard sleeper reversal sequence is followed by an exchange of failed finishers. That means it's time for the rolling Germans on HHH and a Swan Dive for two. The Pedigree is countered into the Crossface, which Benoit lets go in favor of a rollup for the pin.

Rating: B. Even the announcers said this was just about having a good match and that's what we got here. When HHH gets rid of the whole "I'm amazing and one of the best ever" stuff, he can put on some outstanding performances because he really is that talented. I liked this match for different reasons than I usually would have but it was still good stuff.

Benoit chants Eddie's name and Dean Malenko comes out for the big hug ala Wrestlemania XX to wrap things up.

Overall Rating: A. This is a weird one to grade as the wrestling was actually good but it had nothing to do with the show's quality. This was about celebrating Eddie's life and nothing else. I had a lot of fun watching it and actually started missing Eddie as the show went on. I've never been the biggest Eddie fan but things like this, where you look back at his career and life, really show how special he truly was. I may not be a huge fan but I certainly respect him, which is probably more important.

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:

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

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

Picked Up Post-Wrestlemania Raw/Smackdown Tickets

They're doing a combo deal next year so I could get tickets for both shows in one shot. Also, Orlando has gone WAY better than Dallas so far as I paid 150 for a nosebleed seat at Wrestlemania XXXII and now I've got upper deck for XXXIII, Raw and Smackdown for 193. Indy shows/Axxess tickets upcoming.

As usual, thank you all for letting me be able to do this. You're basically paying for this stuff (well, along with the wife needing to find something for Christmas/my birthday) and it's the most fun I can have as a wrestling fan.

KB

Monday Night Raw – November 29, 1999: The Wedding

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 29, 1999

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 13,222

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This was a special request for one specific reason: Test and Stephanie McMahon are getting married. Oh how I remember this and how I remember how you could feel the Russo effect, even though he's already left the promotion. Test was one of Russo's big projects and this is pretty much the high point of his career, which should tell you everything you need to know about him. Let's get to it.

Big Show/Kane vs. Viscera/Big Boss Man

This is during Big Show's original WWF World Title reign and it's still odd to see this version of him with the title. Kane has Tori in his corner. Big Show and Boss Man immediately fight to the floor so we're down to Kane vs. Viscera inside. The masked man takes over but here's X-Pac to hit Kane in the back with a chair. An X-Factor onto the chair sets up a Viscera splash for the pin in less than two minutes.

X-Pac spits at Tori and kicks her in the head.

We recap Test proposing to Stephanie and Vince making Test's life a nightmare as a result. This includes Stephanie taking a bump on the head and getting amnesia. She's marrying Test anyway.

Here's D-Generation X (heels here) for a chat. After some random music cuts off, HHH wants to talk to Vince. It's Vince's fault that this has escalated so much, leaving DX no choice but to get a temporary order of protection (I'm really not a fan of that idea but it keeps coming up in wrestling). We see a clip of Vince ramming DX's limo with his own car and HHH says there will be NO wedding here tonight.

Cue Vince to laugh at the idea that DX needs protection from him. As for tonight, Vince is giving Test a special wedding present: a one on one match with HHH. The rest of DX gets a six man tag against Rock/Mankind/a partner of their choosing just because the boss is feeling generous. Finally, if anyone interferes in the wedding tonight, they'll be fired.

Al Snow talks to Head, guaranteeing that he'll be Rock and Mankind's mystery partner in the six man.

Edge vs. Matt Hardy

Matt has Terri in his corner. Edge charges into an elbow in the corner to start and a bad looking tornado DDT puts the Canadian down. Since this match is going to be lucky to get two and a half minutes, Edge picks up the pace by grabbing an atomic drop. A German suplex gets two on Matt but he comes right back with a superplex for the same. The cameraman gets decked and the partners get involved, leading to a spear ending Matt.

Rating: C. These guys always have chemistry together but, as usual, you need more time than just a few minutes to get anywhere. The interference didn't need to exist but you can see another big match coming because that's all these guys were allowed to be. Things would get a bit better once Lita would replace Terri as well.

We go to Stephanie's bachelorette party last night, complete with Fabulous Moolah, Mae Young and Truth or Dare. This goes nowhere, yet.

Here's Intercontinental Champion Chyna with her bad thumb for a chat. Her thumb has been feeling better since hitting Chris Jericho in the head with a hammer (this is WAY too causal of a line) so he needs to get out here so she can finish the job. Cue Jericho to show us a clip of the hammer shot(s), which COMPLETELY ruined his Thanksgiving. He'll be ready for their match at the pay per view but here's Miss Kitty (Chyna's semi-lesbian servant) to blast him with a fire extinguisher.

Back to the party where more drinking ensues.

Godfather vs. Steve Blackman

They trade kicks to start and Godfather's spinning legdrop gets two. A bicycle kick ends Godfather in a minute.

The Acolytes and the freshly debuted Dudley Boyz play cards and insults are exchanged.

Dance time at the party.

Snow tries to get Mankind to accept him as his partner, even though Al hates Rock.

Too Cool vs. Hollys

Before the match, Hardcore makes unoriginal fat jokes about Rikishi. Crash starts, gets caught with the Worm and is finished by the Trash Compactor in less than a minute.

Rikishi gives Hardcore a Banzai Drop, followed by the required dancing.

It's striptease time!

HHH vs. Test

Someone in a Vince McMahon mask comes out to referee. Ok then. Anyway Test slugs away to start as the announcers immediately start talking about the angle instead of the match because that's what matters around here. The Stooges are in the back, shouting to Vince that he needs to see this. HHH comes back with right hands and his kneedrop for no cover.

Instead HHH starts pounding in right hands to the face before choking away. A sleeper slows things down even more but the referee pulls HHH off. That always good looking gutwrench powerbomb plants HHH but he escapes the pumphandle powerslam. The referee won't count a cover off a facebuster so HHH goes for the mask. Cue Shane McMahon with a chair to HHH's head, setting up Test's top rope elbow for the pin.

Rating: D. I was waiting on Vince to come out and reveal Shane as the referee so well done on not going with the obvious. This is the high point of Test's in ring career and it means a grand total of nothing because it's a match in 1999. As usual it was all about the angle, which is only going to have something resembling a payoff because there's so much other stuff to cover.

Someone sends Stephanie a shot, which she downs like a pro.

HHH orders the cops to arrest Vince.

We look at last week's gravy bowl match with Miss Kitty needing the Heimlick Manuever to remove a mushroom from her throat. The EMT who saved her was attacked by Ivory and Michael Cole (looking even more like a goon than he does today) brings her out for a chat. The EMT, named B.B., was humiliated by Ivory ripping her shirt off...and wants an evening gown match. Ivory comes out with some insults before clothing is removed. This

was some of the most awkward exchanges I've ever seen, even by WWF standards.

Patterson and Briscoe say Vince was with them the entire time.

Val Venis vs. Kurt Angle

After Val does his regular schtick (something about scoring like Shaq), Angle rips on this town for having no values. Venis jumps him from behind but is sent outside to turn this into a bit of a brawl. Back in and Angle's sleeper is countered into a Blue Thunder Bomb for two (of course). Cue the British Bulldog (feuding with Val) to break up the Money Shot, allowing Angle to get two of his own off a superplex. Bulldog hits Val in the back with a chair to set up the Olympic Slam for the pin.

Rating: D. More of the same problems here as we're actually setting up British Bulldog vs. Val Venis for reasons that aren't important enough to explain. At the same time, KURT ANGLE, who debuted less than a month ago, can't even get any attention because we're setting up some low level midcard match? Really? That's the best they can do?

Snow is STILL trying to get on the team and keeps insulting Rock. Cue Rock of course, who can't believe he's talking about someone named Al. Rock's advice is for Snow to dress up like a Los Angeles King and do a certain something with the hockey stick. Rock leaves but Snow and Foley are still on for Disneyland tomorrow. The fans were eating Rock up here.

D-Generation X vs. The Rock/Mankind/???

The mystery partner is....Kane. Makes sense. Kane and Gunn start things off with Billy's arm being twisted around. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Foley taking a beating while the announcers rip on literary critics for not reading his book. Back in and Gunn spits at Rock so the triple teaming can continue. Someone needs to teach DX how to do the Unicorn Stampede. A low blow gets Mankind out of trouble and everything breaks down off the hot tag to Rock. The Rock Bottom looks to finish Gunn but it's Snow running in with a Head shot to Dogg, drawing the DQ.

Rating: D+. Slightly better here due to the charisma involved but the

lack of time or really anything all that interesting brings it right back down. The Rock N Sock Connection was a funny team but they were another good example of the titles being turned into a prop instead of being used as something important.

Rock beats Snow up.

Back to the poker game where the Acolytes cheat. Bubba: "You sure ain't the Public Enemy."

Linda sees Stephanie in the wedding dress and nearly loses it.

Test is nervous.

Bubba bets all of his money because he has six aces in five card draw. The fight is on with the Dudleyz getting the better of things until it's broken up.

DX is very happy about something.

It's time for the wedding with the bridesmaids and groomsmen (various wrestlers). After Shane escorts Linda out, here's Test to his theme music. Eh I like the song so it's cool. Stupid but cool. Thankfully Stephanie doesn't have music yet so she comes out to Here Comes the Bride. It's better than that stupid rap song she has now. The minister says a blessing and two people sing a song.

The main issue here is Stephanie's face as she doesn't know how to convey more than about two emotions. Therefore, while it's supposed to be the happiest day of her life, she looks like she's about to slap everyone in the ring. We get to the all important "speak now or forever hold their peace"....and here's HHH.

Test puts on his mad face as HHH shows us a video. With the camera in the backseat, HHH drives his car into the Little White Chapel and of course picks the cheapest option. HHH talks to....I guess the minister and reveals the unconscious Stephanie in the front seat (Audience: "GASP!").

HHH does a falsetto voice because THIS WEDDING PERSON IS A FREAKING MORON WHO DOESN'T REALIZE STEPHANIE IS OUT COLD and somehow they're married.

The guy who brought Stephanie the shot earlier is revealed as the cameraman as the couple drives away. Back in the arena, HHH says he's now a member of the immediate family. That leaves one question for DAD: "How many times did we consummate the marriage?" The McMahons are in tears to end the show.

DANG. I haven't seen this in full in a long time but my goodness this was amazing. Everyone knew HHH was going to do something big but I don't think anyone had any idea that it could actually be this big. This is the moment that turned HHH from a top heel to THE heel and Stephanie turning on her dad the next month would make it even better. Couple that with the Rock rising up the card to fight HHH and there's no wonder why the next year would be some of the best stuff the company has ever done.

It should also be noted that this was NOT Russo's story. This was one of the first big stories of a guy named Chris Kreski, who had this boneheaded idea of planning stories out and slowly building towards the big payoffs instead of the tried and true method of making this nonsense up as he went with 34 different twists in a two hour show. Clearly that's how wrestling works and not this "storytelling" thing.

Overall Rating: D. The transition between Russo and sanity wasn't kind as there were still all the bad matches with no time (two matches lasted less than Goldberg vs. Lesnar II) and the angles all over the place didn't help things. However, as bad as those were, the star power on the show was more than enough to carry a lot of the dead weight and that's why 2000 was so great.

With Rock as the undisputed #1 face in the world, Mankind as the perfect comedy buffoon sidekick and HHH as the biggest heel since Vince, the sky was the limit going into the new year. Unfortunately we weren't there yet and needed a Radical change in the midcard to really make things work. It's still a work in progress but also the start of a great lesson of what you can do when the effort is put in. Check out the wedding in full if you've never seen it though as it's some of HHH's best work ever.

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Superstars – November 25, 2016: Is It So Much To Ask?

Superstars

Date: November 25, 2016

Location: Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're past Survivor Series and that could mean some changes for WWE and Superstars in particular. You never know what you're going to get on here, and by that I mean you never know what you're going to get to go with Jinder Mahal vs. Darren Young. Those two are destined to fight for all eternity it seems so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sin Cara vs. Jinder Mahal

The fans seem confused as to why Mahal is here and I can't say I disagree. Feeling out process to start with Cara's backdrop drawing a smattering of applause. Mahal gets in a shot of his own and does that stupid peace pose. A kneedrop sets up the required chinlock and there's that peace pose again because that's Mahal's entire character, if you can

call it that. Mahal gets dropkicked out of the air and Cara's Swanton Bomb is enough for the pin at 5:02.

Rating: D-. I know I've made this comparison time after time but it's really annoying to see the difference between Superstars and Main Event. Every week it feels like Superstars is just having a match because they have to while Main Event comes off like they're at least trying. It helps so much and can actually be entertaining. Why be boring when you don't have to be?

Video on Goldberg vs. Brock Lesnar.

From Monday.

Here's Goldberg getting the full entrance to open things up. Goldberg thanks the fans for letting him be Goldberg again. He also thanks his wife and son for putting up with him and he got to be a star again one more time. Last night he ran into Stephanie McMahon who said he did have one more spear and Jackhammer in him (three spears and two Jackhammers if you're counting) but the question is does he have one more title run left in him. The fans go NUTS over that prospect and Goldberg says he's in the Royal Rumble.

And from Monday again.

Raw Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Sheamus/Cesaro

New Day is defending and talk about breaking Demolition's record for longest Tag Team Title reign in just 23 days. A powerslam gives Cesaro two on Big E. to start but Kofi escapes an early Swing attempt. Instead Cesaro sends him into the barricade and we take a break. Back with Kofi dropkicking Sheamus out of the air but getting Irish Cursed for two.

Sheamus won't tag out though and we get some heel (I think?) miscommunication with Cesaro being knocked off the apron. The hot tag brings in Big E. to clean house as everything breaks down. The Warrior Splash gets two on Sheamus but he rakes Big E.'s eyes to set up White Noise for the same.

It's back to Cesaro vs. Kofi with the Uppercut Train taking off, only to

have an SOS get two. Trouble in Paradise is countered into a Cesaro Swing which goes into the Sharpshooter. The Brogue Kick puts Big E. down but Woods gets on the apron for the distraction as Kofi taps. Ever the moron, Cesaro lets the hold go and gets small packaged for the pin at 12:18.

Rating: C+. So they seem to be turning New Day heel. I think I can actually go with that as I'd much rather go there than have Cesaro and Sheamus stop them just before the record. Obviously they haven't gotten there yet and there's always the possibility that they'll switch the titles with two days to go, but at least they didn't do it here.

Bo Dallas vs. Curtis Axel

We actually get a video showing their breakup from last month. Dallas goes after the knee to start and we hit an early cravate. Back up and a few clotheslines set up a Hennig necksnap on Bo as we go to a break. We come back with the Axehole getting two on Bo as this just keeps going. Dallas blocks a suplex to the floor and hits an elevated Final Cut of all things for two. The PerfectPlex gives Curtis the same but he can't grab a super PerfectPlex. Axel settles for a neckbreaker out of the corner, only to walk into the Roll of the Dice for the pin at 11:54.

Rating: D. This just KEPT GOING with Axel hitting and trying everything he had and getting shut down every time. I really don't know why Dallas is getting such a strong push but it's getting annoying to see Axel lose every single time. This show really didn't do much for Superstars' reputation though as it was boring to start and never got any better.

We'll wrap it up with Raw's main event.

Raw World Title: Kevin Owens vs. Seth Rollins

Owens is defending and there are no disqualifications with Jericho and Reigns barred from ringside. Kevin tries to bail to the floor and gets kicked in the face for his efforts. The springboard knee to the head gets two inside thirty seconds so it's already table time. Owens grabs the package piledriver slam and we take an early break.

Back with Owens in full control and hammering Seth in the head. A Sling

Blade and suicide dive take Owens out, leading to another commercial. Back again with an exchange of strikes to the face putting both guys down. The frog splash misses Owens and it's a Cannonball into a chair onto Rollins for a close two. Owens sets up a pair of chairs for a powerbomb and you can see the backdrop counter coming before it happens.

Another table is set up in the corner and the Buckle Bomb drives Owens through it for a very close two. They fight into the crowd with Rollins getting the better of it by throwing a trashcan at the champ. Owens tries the powerbomb but Seth grabs the balcony wall and pulls himself up for a big dive. They make it back to ringside but a masked man shoves Rollins off the barricade. Of course it's Jericho and of course he gets a Pedigree on the floor. The Apron Powerbomb wipes Rollins out though and Owens throws him back in to retain at 23:07.

Rating: B+. Really good stuff here as it felt like a full on pay per view main event with high spots and near falls. The Jericho interference was a stretch and I'm kind of hoping it isn't used to set up another rematch at Roadblock as I'm pretty much over Rollins vs. Owens after this one. Really good main event though and I bought Rollins as a title threat.

Overall Rating: D. Sweet goodness this show doesn't make it easy. Well ok so I'd never call this difficult to sit through but they make no secret about the fact that the original matches are just there for the sake of requiring original matches. They don't seem to even be trying out there and it gets really annoying to sit through week after week. Mix up the lineup or put in some kind of effort. That's not too much to ask.

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Smackdown – June 27, 2002: And Now, Wrestling History

Smackdown

Date: June 27, 2002

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in the big city tonight and it's time for a new challenger to face Undertaker. I know Jeff Hardy is getting a title shot on Raw next week but it's fairly clear that we're getting some combination of Rock/HHH/Undertaker for the title at Vengeance. Why Smackdown is getting back to back pay per view title shots isn't immediately clear. Let's get to it.

Vince is in the ring and brings out Kurt Angle before leaving. Thanks for showing up boss. At least it was short though. Angle says he might as well be the poster boy for ruthless aggression and goes into his big victory speech for making Hogan tap. The wig is finally removed for good and Angle issues an open challenge to anyone he's never faced before.

And now, wrestling history. Cole: "Tazz I know this kid. That's John Cena." Angle asks why Cena thinks he can come out here and face him like this. Cena says ruthless aggression and slaps the taste out of Angle's match to start things off in a hurry. You can feel the intensity in him though of course no one knew how big he was based off those ten seconds.

Kurt Angle vs. John Cena

Cena takes him outside and keeps hammering away before a running splash gets two. Kurt picks the ankle and snaps off the first German suplex to

put both guys down. A rollup gets two for Cena but Angle blasts him down with a clothesline. They're certainly going hard out there and it's working so far.

Cena throws him off to break a front facelock and gets two off a good looking spinebuster. The Angle Slam is countered into a DDT for some near falls (Taz: "RUTHLESS AGGRESSION! THERE IT IS!" Is that what it is? Multiple pinfall attempts?) and a powerslam gets the same. Kurt finally has enough and grabs a double chickenwing rollup for the pin.

Rating: B. For a rookie making his debut against a top star, this was a heck of a match as, save for that front facelock, they were going at top speed for the entire match. You can see something in Cena but it takes more than a five minute match to make a career. The presence is there though and that's something you either have or you don't.

Cena offers a handshake but Angle walks away. Kurt teases coming back for more but decides it's not worth it. One important point here: Angle gives a big sigh of relief when he knows Cena can't see him anymore. Little things like that sell moments like this so much more.

Kidman, Faarooq and Rikishi are congratulating Cena when Undertaker comes up. The champ asks his name and extends his hand for a good job. I know I said they need to make new stars but Angle and Undertaker in less than half an hour? That's a rub that you don't see very often, if ever.

Tag Team Titles: Hardcore Holly/Big Valbowski vs. Billy and Chuck

Hard Val is challenging, apparently after wanting to team up for years. Why they didn't do so isn't explained, nor is the fact that they're making their debut and are apparently the second best tag team on Smackdown on arrival. Chuck charges into a right hand to start but Val does the same, suggesting that he isn't the best student in the world.

Holly gets beaten down in the corner as Cole praises Billy and Chuck for being surprisingly good. They're two time Tag Team Champions at this point and you're still surprised that they're a good team? That's slow even for Cole. A belly to back suplex is enough for the hot tag to Val but Rico offers a distraction, setting up the Fameasser to retain.

Rating: C-. Here's the thing: Venis and Holly are fine for a veteran team and could be perfectly fine as eventual challengers if you give them some promos and a few wins over jobbers. However, since there's no tag division to speak of, they're thrown out there against the champs and already lose. Where are they supposed to go from here? Take the time and build a division as you have a bunch of people sitting around (Kidman, Faarooq and Rikishi come to mind) doing nothing. Make something up and give them a reason to team. The rest can take care of itself.

Here's Torrie Wilson to preview the Divas Undressed special. She takes off her robe, walks around in lingerie and that's it. No angle, no talking, nothing at all. At least it was short.

Tajiri likes looking at Nidia so Jamie Noble offers her to him if they win their tag match later.

HHH has been fighting through an elbow injury and is all tough but had to have it fixed in the operating room. After this deadly operation he'll be out.....FOR TWO TO THREE WEEKS!!! Taz teases he'll be back next week actually. This got way too much time for something like that, especially when you could just say he was banged up after the pay per view or something.

Mark Henry vs. Lance Storm

Storm is here to prove how unfair American referees really are. We're not ready yet though as we need to look at Mark Henry lifting some 100+ year old 172lb dumbbell. Henry throws him around to start but a rake of the eyes breaks up a press slam. Storm gets tossed outside and then thrown back in because Henry is really strong. Another eye rake gets Storm out of a bearhug and Henry misses a Vader Bomb, setting up the superkick to give Lance the pin. Again: Henry is STRONG. We get it already.

Here's Undertaker for a chat. He recaps the pay per view main event and takes credit for HHH undergoing elbow surgery. Cole: "HHH is actually OUT of the hospital now!" Undertaker wants to know where Rock thinks he fits into that match and here's a clip of Sunday's fighting. Rock will be back here on July 11 (the FULL TIME Rock of course because he doesn't do this part time nonsense) and Undertaker will make him pay for King of the

Ring.

This brings out Kurt Angle of all people, who wants a title shot next week, assuming Undertaker gets by Jeff Hardy on Raw. Undertaker eventually agrees, even though Angle had trouble getting by a rookie tonight. That's cool with Kurt, but he asks to touch the title. The champ actually lets him do it (moron) and is in the ankle lock almost immediately. You don't see Undertaker acting that stupid very often and, along with that handshake earlier, suggests a face/tweener turn.

Torrie models more lingerie. Yeah she looks amazing but this is the kind of thing that makes people criticize wrestling.

Test vs. Rikishi

They take turns beating on each other in the corner but the referee won't let Test throw a punch. Rikishi hits a superkick but gets slowed down by a low blow. The Test Drive is broken up and the ref is bumped, earning Test a DQ loss even though Rikishi shoved him into the ref. I don't know why wrestling can never learn that no one cares about referee stories.

Test gets a Stinkface before Christian and Storm can come out for the late save.

Vince calls Hogan into his office and the boss is really, really happy about Hogan tapping out on Sunday. Hogan implies that they'll fight one day and Vince is aghast.

Test rants about how much America sucks.

Billy Kidman/Hurricane vs. Tajiri/Jamie Noble

The bad guys take over to start and Noble has to bail from the threat of a chokeslam. That's fine with Hurricane as he tries a double chokeslam, only to shove them both down instead. Kidman hiptosses his partner onto Noble but walks into the Tajiri elbow. The Tarantula makes things even worse but a tornado DDT is countered into a sitout powerbomb. Now the chokeslam works for Hurricane and the shooting star puts Tajiri away.

Rating: C+. They're getting close to having something with this division

as it's slowly building after being nothing interesting for weeks on end. Add a few more names to the thing, perhaps one being the King of Mystery, and they really could have something special. Imagine that: a division works when you have distinct characters instead of people who look, act and work the same.

Torrie and Stacy Keibler are catty to each other because that's what women in wrestling do. While wearing lingerie of course.

Torrie, now billed as appetizing, wears a third outfit. Stacy comes out in a schoolgirl outfit and gets a far bigger pop. We're not done yet as Dawn Marie comes out as well and the blondes get in a catfight. This is so beyond a waste of time.

Chris Jericho isn't sure what he'll use to beat Hogan tonight but he'd love to make him tap.

Rey Mysterio is coming.

Reverend D-Von/Deacon Batista vs. Faarooq/Randy Orton

This is Batista's in ring debut and the first time he's been seen without a shirt. Orton does his rookie offense on D-Von to start until a dropkick of all things puts Randy down. A superplex is broken up and Orton scores with a middle rope bulldog. Faarooq comes in to clean house but the Dominator is countered with a DDT. It's already back to Orton for a high crossbody, only to have Batista come in off the blind tag. That wicked clothesline blasts Orton and a spinebuster (with multiple camera cuts, suggesting a botch or an edit) finishes Randy in a hurry.

Rating: C-. They were smart to have Batista only come in at the end for the big power display, making this an effective debut. The thing is you have two teams right here plus the champs and Venis/Holly. These are three teams thrown together in the span of a few weeks and you're getting close to a division. Simple ideas (gimmick/enforcer, two veterans, veteran/rookie) are fine and can grow into something else until the next big team can be put together. Why is that so complicated?

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Hulk Hogan vs. Chris Jericho

The fans are WAY into Hogan here (hardly shocking in a town like Chicago) as Jericho is backdropped to start. It's too early for the big elbow though (always seems weird to be anything but a big leg or boot) and Jericho gets in a low blow to take over. The fans are all over Jericho so he does the hand to the ear before going way old school with the abdominal stretch.

Just in case the words ABDOMINAL STRETCH aren't clear enough, Cole points out that it hurts your gut. Hogan's comeback is countered as Jericho slides under the big boot (that's what happens when you stop fighting giants) and hits the bulldog into the Lionsault for two. Jericho has had enough of the HULKING UP and hits Hogan with a chair for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Not the worst match in the world here with Jericho doing the work and letting Hogan do all of his spots. This isn't a case of Hogan showing anyone up and the match was actually fine, all things considered. There's value in Hogan giving people rubs like this, but he can only do it for so long before it stops mattering.

Jericho loads up a Conchair to the arm but his own countdown comes up. Cue the returning Edge (who Cole can't recognize from behind despite him having a pretty easy shape to recognize) for the save and beatdown. Posing ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The wrestling was up and down here but this was ALL about the new talent. That might not always mean new people but it did a lot of good for setting things up for the future. There are skeletons of tag and cruiserweight divisions though that's not what matters the most.

Tonight we saw a focus on John Cena, Batista and Randy Orton with Rey Mysterio debuting soon. While none of them are stars yet, those four are fresh ideas who could mean something to the company, which isn't what you get around here. They're actually setting something up and that's what matters more than anything else. I liked the show a lot and there's stuff I want to see instead of all the nonsense that keeps going on around here for so long. Good show here (with the least Vince in a LONG time) and a lot of hope for the future.

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Lucha Underground – November 23, 2016: They're Better Than This

Lucha Underground

Date: November 23, 2016

Location: Lucha Underground Temple, Boyle Heights, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

We're in a new stretch for Lucha Underground as Sexy Star dethroned the Monster Matanza last week and became the new Lucha Underground Champion. However there's no rest for the new champ as Johnny Mundo is cashing in his Gift of the Gods Title to get a shot at Star tonight. Let's get to it.

Of course we open with a recap of Aztec Warfare. Also covered is the Black Lotus Tribe vs. Pentagon Dark and the Gift of the Gods Title being cashed in.

The White Rabbit Tribe is here.

Trios Titles: Rabbit Tribe vs. Fenix/Drago/Aerostar

The Rabbit Tribe is Paul London, Mala Suerte (Bad Luck) and Saltador (guy in a checker suit). Basically they're all tripped out on drugs and acting weird. They're also challenging because they're making their debut here and are neither fabulous nor kangaroos. It's a brawl to start as Striker says London's reputation got the team this early title shot. London does a big backwards dive onto the champs as Vampiro suggests getting Striker high for a trip down the rabbit hole.

Back in and Suerte tells his partners to back Fenix up before hopping off the top and running across the ring for a dropkick. Fenix kicks Suerte in the head but crawls over to the wrong corner as the Rabbits changed places. The champs finally get tired of these antics and hit stereo kicks to the Rabbits' heads. They unleash the dives as we see Kobra Moon watching from the top of Dario's office. Back in and Fenix rolls Saltador up to retain at 5:43.

Rating: C-. Just in case the 1938 different references from the announcers didn't make it clear, the Rabbits are all on drugs and tripping out. I can go for some characters with simple concepts but I can't handle these characters where they beat you over the head with their gimmick time after time. At least they didn't get the titles in their debut.

Moon says she'll make Drago bow.

The Mack congratulates Sexy Star on her win but she politely declines his offer to help against the Worldwide Underground. See, she's all independent and has to prove that she's awesome because of bullying or something.

Dante Fox vs. Killshot

I would have expected this to come a lot later. They talk a lot of trash to start with Killshot not wanting to do this. He's willing to defend himself though and it's a dropkick to put Dante down. A springboard dropkick sends Killshot to the floor and that means a suicide dive. Fox shows off his skills with a shooting star off the apron, only to have

Killshot grab a neckbreaker from the apron to the floor.

Back in and the slug it out, which seems to freak Fox out. Fox tries another roll but flips right into a cutter to freak the crowd out. A cross armbreaker is countered and Fox puts him on the top, only to get caught in a Death Valley Driver onto the apron for a sick crash. Selling really isn't a thing around here though as Killshot comes back with something like an inverted fisherman's buster for the pin at 8:15.

Rating: C+. One guy hits the other really hard and then reverse it. Fox is a fun guy and should fit right in around here, much like so many other people who debut with a backstory and just happen to be a fully trained wrestler. Killshot is still one of the better performers in Lucha Underground and this was no exception. He'll be fine after a loss like this.

Johnny Mundo comes in to see Dario and tells him that Angelico has been barred from the building via a restraining order.

After a break, Dario comes back into his office and runs into Black Lotus. She wants Pentagon Dark and gets her wish....in a gauntlet match, including the rest of the women who attacked Dark last week.

Lucha Underground Title: Sexy Star vs. Johnny Mundo

Star is defending as Johnny is cashing in the Gift of the Gods Title, meaning it's officially vacant. Johnny takes her down into a chinlock to start and kicks away for two. A rollup gets two for the champ but she gets caught in something like a YES Lock. Mundo really doesn't seem to be trying here as Star is way beneath him.

Johnny hammers away and puts her in the Tree of Woe for a bit to keep up the destruction. The comeback is knocked away with ease but Star hits a few dropkicks for two. A neckbreaker cuts Star off again though and we hit the chinlock. Star finally gets in a Backstabber for two but a Russian legsweep puts Johnny in control again.

The same comeback and cutoff kills off another minute or so as this is getting boring in a hurry. Johnny misses a baseball slide and gets kicked

into the barricade for more false hope. Star stomps away until Johnny steals a fan's crutch. The champ goes over to check on the fan and gets laid out with a brass knuckles shot. Back in and the End of the World changes the title at 11:12.

Rating: D. What a boring match. Star is the most transitional champion in the history of transitional champions and that whole standing up to the bullies idea went less than nowhere. Mundo is a better choice as champion but sweet goodness could they have made this any less interesting? Star never had a chance and they didn't even try to hide it. Really disappointing here but that was the case when Star won the title in the first place.

The fan was Taya of course and the Worldwide Underground celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. I know it doesn't sound right to say this but putting the title on Star, even for a week, was a big setback. It was a great last few minutes of Aztec Warfare but egads that was the end of the line for her usefulness on top of the promotion. I stopped caring about her as soon as the title match was announced and the main event made that very clear. Fox vs. Killshot is good but it's the lone bright spot here. Maybe this was just a necessary evil but I really didn't care about anything on here as the energy was just gone.

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Main Event – November 22, 2016: Please Let It Be Here To Stay

Main Event

Date: November 22, 2016

Location: Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Tom Phillips, David Otunga

I'm hoping that being past Survivor Series isn't going to change this show's rather entertaining run. A lot of acts weren't on Smackdown this week so it should be interesting to see what we get for original content. The tag teams almost all performed on the big show, which doesn't leave me with the best options. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with...Cathy Kelly in the studios. This isn't going to be the normal Main Event is it?

We see the last few minutes of Seth Rollins vs. Kevin Owens on Monday.

Charlotte is thankful for all her peasants.

With the Gobbledy Gooker walking behind Kelly, she throws us to a clip from the Thanksgiving Smackdown from November 23, 2000 with William Regal ripping on Thanksgiving for being everything wrong with America. Cue the Rock, who is back home here in Fort Lauderdale. Rock sees nothing wrong with unbuttoning your pants after eating Thanksgiving dinner and thinks Regal is something censored. After telling Regal that it doesn't matter if he's being besmirched, Rock offers to stick a drumstick in a certain place to wrap this up. This was basically "I'm the Rock and I'm awesome."

Package on Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg.

Here's Goldberg's opening speech from Monday.

Here's Goldberg getting the full entrance to open things up. Goldberg thanks the fans for letting him be Goldberg again. He also thanks his wife and son for putting up with him and he got to be a star again one more time. Last night he ran into Stephanie McMahon who said he did have one more spear and Jackhammer in him (three spears and two Jackhammers if you're counting) but the question is does he have one more title run left in him. The fans go NUTS over that prospect and Goldberg says he's in the Royal Rumble.

Bayley is thankful for the hugs, her best friend Sasha Banks, being on Raw, her New Day sweater and all the fans. She's just so freaking adorable.

Back to Prime Time Wrestling for Thanksgiving 1986 with Gorilla Monsoon on his own....and here's Bobby Heenan as a pilgrim. Heenan, with a graphic listing him as John Smith, talks about planning a Thanksgiving party but Gorilla brings in a turkey named Tommy. Bobby (er...John) is quickly chased off.

Video on the debut of the Gobbledy Gooker, which I believe first aired on an episode of Countdown. After the video, Cathy keeps talking about the Gooker and you can still see him in the control room behind her.

Video on various Thanksgiving feasts over the years and their associated food fights.

Alexa Bliss vs. Naomi

Bliss gets in her face to start and can't believe Naomi would shove her down. That earns her another takedown and Naomi grabs a front facelock. Bliss gets knocked to the floor and kicked in the face, only to have a trip take Naomi down as we take a break. Back with Bliss standing on the yellow/green hair before stomping away for a bit.

The moonsault double knees get two and we get Alexa's crazy eyes. Alexa runs into some boots in the corner and we get the high speed comeback. Those dancing kicks set up a high crossbody for two on Bliss but she

sends Naomi very hard into the buckle. A DDT sets up Twisted Bliss for the pin at 12:05.

Rating: C-. The crowd wasn't all that interested but this was actually taped after Smackdown went off the air so there's a good chance that a lot of the fans were leaving. I'd be curious to see if that's the case going forward with the impending debut of 205 Live. Bliss is great at being a villain and has a ton of charisma but there's only so much you can do in front of an uninterested crowd.

Overall Rating: B. I really, really hope this is how Main Event starts going as I had a great time with the old school segments. WWE has such an amazing video vault and it's really annoying when they roll out the same handful of clips over and over without changing a thing.

You can do more than the same Gobbledy Gooker and various Survivor Series clips and that's what they actually did here. Have some fun instead of just taking the easy way out over and over again. Hopefully this is how things keep going in the future because it was a lot of fun.

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