

Lucha Underground – May 25, 2016: I Never Thought I'd See It Again

Lucha Underground

Date: May 25, 2016

Location: Lucha Underground Temple, Boyle Heights, California

Commentators: Vampiro, Matt Striker

Last week's show was uh....well not exactly up to Lucha Underground's normal standards. It did however give us a big match for tonight as Cage will be challenging Chavo Guerrero Jr. for the Gift of the Gods Title which Cage has a legitimate claim towards. Other than that you almost never can tell what you're going to get around here. Let's get to it.

The recap looks at Cortez Castro/Joey Ryan as cops, the Trios Titles and Cage helping Chavo win the Gift of the Gods Title last week.

Pentagon Jr. is on his feet and looks ready to go back to the Temple but Vampiro says he isn't ready. A quick wrench of his arm has Pentagon slowing back down but he still says no fear. Vampiro says Pentagon can return to the Temple, though he's not ready to face the monster.

Some Marines are here in an always cool move.

Matt Striker gets a phone call from someone who asks if he wants to be famous.

Joey Ryan vs. Mascarita Sagrada

The fans are WAY into Mascarita's entrance, though that might be due to Famous B. doing the announcing. Joey isn't interested though and kicks Sagrada in the head to take over fast. Mascarita sends him to the floor for the flip dive but Joey throws Sagrada down again. This sets up a trade as Joey gives B. his sucker for a business card. Back in and Mascarita throws him down and scores with a moonsault. Famous B. offers the referee a business card so Sagrada can kick Joey low....but that

doesn't work on him for reasons I won't go into. A tornado DDT puts Mascarita away at 3:14.

Rating: D. Just a comedy match here as Famous B. continues to screw up Sagrada's career, which wasn't exactly doing much in Lucha Underground to begin with. Joey is over with the crowd though and that's going to get him somewhere given where things are going with the undercover cop story.

Famous B. consoles Sagrada.

Taya video with her looking at herself in lingerie and then putting on a dress to beat up masked men. That's one thing I'll never get tired of around here: even the goons are luchadors.

King Cuerno is in his office (or whatever it is) talking about how Mil Muertes thought he was king of the jungle. He gets up and we see Muertes stood up in a glass coffin as Cuerno's ultimate trophy. Well that's a bit creepy.

Gift of the Gods Title: Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Cage

Cage is challenging and drops Chavo at the bell before firing off clotheslines in the corner. Vampiro doesn't buy Striker's claims of Chavo being one of the best in the world pound for pound. Vampiro: "When? When he was born and there were no other babies around?" Chavo's dive is plucked out of the air so Cage can drive him into the barricade a few times.

Back in and Chavo gets a headscissors to send Cage outside, followed by a suicide dive to actually put Cage in trouble. A middle rope cross body just goes badly but Cage bangs up his knee trying a moonsault. Chavo is smart enough to start in on the knee but Vampiro wants Chavo to kick him in the head instead. The champ goes to the top so Cage gets up for an apron superplex. Cage snaps off a sitout Alabama Slam for two, only to get caught in a tornado DDT for the same.

A Liger Kick doesn't do much for Chavo as Cage just blasts him with a discus lariat. Chavo gets up top again and sunset bombs Cage down, followed by the Frog Splash for two. Three Amigos are countered into a

suplex powerbomb (as in Cage lifts him up for a suplex and then slams him forward into a powerbomb). A buckle bomb sets up a STEINER SCREWDRIVER (I never thought I would see that move again but my goodness is still looks amazing) to give Cage the title at 8:05.

Rating: B-. This was much better than I was expecting as Chavo actually wrestled instead of running away like a coward. Cage continues to be what Ryback should have been and I can't imagine WWE won't bring him back at some point in the future. Above all else though, STEINER SCREWDRIVER!!!

Cage gets right to the point: he wants a title match next week.

Johnny Mundo has attacked Fenix and will be taking his place in the Trios Titles match alongside PJ Black and Jack Evans.

Cortez Castro and Joey Ryan raid Dario Cueto's office and find some cash, which Joey steals. Mr. Cisco comes in and isn't happy with not being invited to the robbery. This earns him an arrest as Joey holds a gun on him. Uh...on what charge?

Taya comes out to announce the replacement.

Trios Titles: Johnny Mundo/PJ Black/Jack Evans vs. Rey Mysterio Jr./Prince Puma/Dragon Azteca Jr.

Mundo's team is challenging. Jack and Dragon get things going with Dragon scoring off an early dropkick. Some very loud chops have Jack in even more trouble and a dropkick sends him into the corner for the tag off to Black. Puma comes in as well but gets elbowed down for two. Mundo and Black double backdrop Puma for two until the Prince channels his inner Davey Richards by throwing Evans into a DDT from Black and grabbing a neckbreaker to make the partners hurt each other. I've never liked that before and I still don't here.

The hot tag brings in Mysterio to clean house before Dragon's legdrop and Puma's springboard splash gets two on Mundo. Evans gets kicked in the face but he kicks Puma in the back to take over again. Mysterio comes back in to send Mundo outside, followed by a slingshot hurricanrana from Puma as this picks up in a hurry. Evans charges into a boot to the face

but is still able to cartwheel into a kick to Azteca's head.

This sets up what looked like a super hurricanrana to Dragon who would land in another hurricanrana on Black. It would have been an awesome spot if both halves of it hadn't been at least somewhat botched. The 619 on Black sets up the 630 but Johnny pulls the referee out. Mundo isn't done yet as he kicks Rey low, setting up a double superkick from Johnny and Taya. The other two champs are kicked low and a top rope double stomp into an AA on Azteca.

Black hits a brainbuster called the Wellness Policy (I'm not sure what to think about that one) as we have a second referee. Somehow Puma backflips out of a belly to back superplex and makes the tag to Dragon. Taya has the referee though as Johnny is caught in a sunset flip for two. The distraction lets Evans blast Dragon with a chair to give Johnny the pin and the titles at 10:50.

Rating: B. Good match here as they really fir in with the Lucha Underground mold for the most part. Just let everyone go insane and do high spots to pop the crowd and the rest will be just fine. I'm not wild on these titles changing hands so fast as there's really not much of a story in sight for them, though Mundo with a title will be fine.

Overall Rating: B. This was a bounce back show as they set up the big showdown between Cage and Matanza while also advancing some of the background stories. At some point they need to actually have these things start coming together so it's a good step to have something like this happen. It's not a blow away show but I'm looking forward to seeing where this goes.

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Comments

For some reason I'm not getting emails when someone posts a comment so I've been having to check each one on my own. Please bear with me if I can't get to them as fast as I normally do.

KB

Thunder – January 3, 2001: They Still Suck

Thunder

Date: January 3, 2001

Location: Mid-South Coliseum, Memphis, Tennessee

Attendance: 2,547

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone, Stevie Ray

Happy New Year everyone and welcome to some of the final months of WCW. It's been a little while since we've had anything to actually watch as a few shows were preempted by holidays. Even WCW wasn't stupid enough to try and have a show on Christmas night so this is a fresh start for them. Let's get to it.

We open with a rapid fire video of everything that has been happening

recently. It would be nice if they had more than five seconds per story but we need to get in and out of this in thirty seconds.

Mike Awesome has a Team Canada bus.

Opening sequence.

Tony calls this 2001: the Wrestling Odyssey. Well it certainly is a difficult journey.

Here's President Ric Flair to get things going. He has a few things to get through before we start the show. First of all, Goldberg's Streak is on the line in his tag match at Sin, as per Goldberg's request. Second, Scott Steiner will be defending his World Title in a three way dance against Jeff Jarrett and a mystery partner (Yes partner. Even Flair said it twice.). For now though, he's under a two week suspension because that's how you build up a World Champion for a pay per view title defense. That suspension ends on Monday, because having a two week suspension WHEN YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY SHOWS makes perfect sense.

Cue Jeff Jarrett to interrupt because he's tired of hearing about Steiner and the Mystery Man because he's the other one in the match. Ric really doesn't like being threatened so he gives Jarrett a match with Sid with the three way dance spot on the line. His opponent is Sid, whose music starts playing before Ric can even introduce him. It's a taped show and they still can't pull this off. We see a clip of Sid having Steiner pinned at Starrcade, which is enough to warrant another title shot. Shouldn't that be a guaranteed title shot and not a match with Jarrett? Sid says it bees that way so the beating is on tonight.

Post break, Ric asks Mike Sanders why the Insiders aren't on the show. Sanders says they were given a night off. Ric isn't convinced but Sanders insists he's not up to anything.

The Thrillers are in their office when Sanders comes in to say that yeah, he's the reason the Insiders aren't here tonight. Reno is given a match with Johnny the Bull later tonight.

Crowbar has a chair match with Meng tonight before he gets to face his

idol again. Terry Funk was the man Crowbar looked up to before he bound Crowbar's hands together and hit him in the head with a chair over and over. Crowbar swears revenge and to receive the hardcore torch at Sin. This was a really impassioned promo, which is why Crowbar isn't going anywhere.

Buy a Cat T-Shirt!

Shane Helms vs. Jamie Noble

This should be good. They run the ropes to start until Shane shoulders him down, followed by Shane pulling on a double underhook and bending Jamie around like an abdominal stretch. A middle rope fist drop (remember that we're in Memphis) gets two on Noble. Shane takes too much time posing though and the Nightmare on Helm Street (that dragon sleeper into a standing elbow drop) is countered into a northern lights suplex for two. The Vertebreaker plants Jamie but again Shane won't cover. Now the Nightmare on Helm Street is enough for the pin in a bit of excess violence.

Rating: C+. Nice little match here with Shane looking good before he heads into his title shot. The Cruiserweights has been one of the few bright spots in these last months as there's a story here and a talented champion defending against a bunch of guys who want the belt and personal revenge at the same time.

Post match Evan Karagias comes out to go after Shane but Shannon Moore runs in for the save. Jamie tombstones Shannon but takes another Nightmare. Now it's Chavo running out to hit Shannon with the belt, making him the last man standing.

We see Konnan beating Elix Skipper for reasons I still don't understand other than stupid politics.

Konnan and Elix get in an argument in the back but it's a Canadian trap with Konnan getting beaten down.

Cat wants to be the Commissioner again and suggests that Gene Okerlund watch Lassie. Gene thinks he could do things to Miss Jones.

The Harris Twins have been laid out.

Corporal Cajun/Sgt. AWALL vs. Sean O'Haire/Chuck Palumbo

O'Haire and Palumbo are surprise opponents as this was supposed to be a six man. Sanders publicly says that he's the reason the Insiders aren't here tonight. The rest of the Thrillers lay out the Misfits to give the team an early advantage with Cajun taking the early beating. It's a shame the Thrillers can't beat these stupid names out of them. Stevie makes a Hogan's Heroes reference which actually breaks Tony up a little bit.

AWALL comes in and punches Palumbo a few times, allowing Cajun to powerslam him for two. Cajun gets two more off a back elbow, only to have Chuck do the Chris Jericho springboard dropkick to knock him off the apron. Of course the Thrillers get in some cheap shots on the outside and AWALL is knocked to the floor. The Seanton Bomb puts Cajun away.

Rating: D. Quite the messy match here but it establishes O'Haire and Palumbo as a good team for the future. Odds are they'll be the pair that faces the Insiders for the belts at Sin, which is the best possible option due to the level of talent there. The Misfits on the other hand just need to go away. They're not interesting, the joke is long past over and there's just nothing left for them to do.

The Thrillers lay out the Misfits post match until Chavo tries to make a save. Shane Douglas comes in through the crowd and beats on Rection.

Post break Shane says he's going to keep tormenting Rection until he gets the US Title as revenge for him taking away Torrie Wilson. Sin is going to be a chain on a pole match, which makes me think Russo is back. Rection runs in and beats Shane down.

On the bus, Jim Duggan sneaks up on Skipper and attacks because HE NEVER WALKS AWAY FROM A FIGHT. No, apparently he starts them by sneaking up on someone and telling the camera to stay quiet.

The Filthy Animals need to regroup after Konnan got attacked.

Johnny the Bull and Big Vito are talking about their priest when Cat comes up to say he wants to take out Reno tonight so he can put him in

soup.

Buff Bagwell doesn't understand why Sarge has issues with him. Someone who can turn a goof like Goldberg into a wrestler must be talented. Lex Luger has an "autographed copy" of Goldberg's book and apparently Goldberg can't spell.

Video on Sarge running the Power Plant.

Lance Storm gives Mike Awesome a match with Duggan tonight, which apparently he can just do.

Rey Mysterio has a plan.

Flair comes in to see the Thrillers and gives Reno a match with the Cat. So Reno has a night off? Jindrak will have a match too but his opponent isn't named.

Sid, in different clothes than earlier, is ready for Jeff and is very thankful for his spot.

That's about nine straight minutes of backstage segments. Maybe next up they can have someone hold up a sign that says "YEP! WE'RE STALLING!"

Crowbar vs. Meng

Chair on a pole match, making me even more convinced that Russo is back. Of note: there isn't an actual pole as the chair is just in the corner. They slug it out to start as Daffney breaks some glass with the screeches. It's already time for the chair with Meng getting his hands on it, only to have Crowbar dive over the top to take him out. Meng is whipped into the barricade but comes right back with his normal Tongan insanity. A drop toehold sends Meng head first into the steps and for some reason it actually works.

Daffney and Paisley get in a fight over the chair (you remember the chair) as Crowbar slows Meng down with a reverse DDT. That's not enough for a cover though as Crowbar charges at Meng, only to be flapjacked into the chair on the top turnbuckle. The Death Grip puts Crowbar out.

Rating: D+. For some reason the announcers were stunned by the win, even though this feels like your standard way to build Meng back up before having him get taken down again. I'm assuming we'll be having another three way for the Hardcore Title at Sin, which makes me think this should have been a standard hardcore match but why do that when you can have a (non-existent) pole.

Flair shakes Bagwell and Luger's hands but nothing is heard.

Mark Jindrak vs. Goldberg

Jindrak actually gets in some offense but gets beaten in just over a minute with the usual.

Goldberg is ready for Luger and Bagwell.

Jeff Jarrett calls out the Mystery Man tonight because the Mystery Man can choose who he's facing at Sin.

Luger and Bagwell talk to Kronik.

The Cat vs. Reno

Before the match, Cat says he wants Sanders out here because he has no issue with Igor (his name for Reno, which he's used at least five times tonight). Reno jumps him from behind and chokes a lot to start, only to get knocked out to the floor. Miss Jones fires off some kicks, which certainly isn't an excuse to showcase how she looks in chaps. Back in and Reno stomps away but his t-bone suplex is countered into a small package for two. Stevie: "Is that a brainbuster?" Cat pops up, does the crotch chop, and the Feliner ends Reno quick. I have no idea what this is supposed to accomplish but Cat is winning a lot lately.

Jim Duggan vs. Mike Awesome

There's a big blurred out area behind the Canadians during their pre-match speech due to fans flipping them off. Duggan is back in the blue trunks here. They slug it out to start with Awesome being knocked to the floor for a change. Back in and Awesome slowly beats him down as the match loses the little interest it had coming in. Duggan comes back with

a running clothesline as Stevie name drops Bronco Lubich. Skipper does....something from the floor though, allowing Mike to hit a quick Awesome Splash for the pin in a hurry.

Post match the beatdown is on until the Filthy Animals come in for the save. Konnan grabs the mic and tells them to look at the screen, where we see the Team Canada bus covered in graffiti.

After a break, Team Canada says they want to deal with the Animals at Sin instead of calling the cops.

The Mystery Man's gear is shown in the back.

Buff Bagwell vs. DeWayne Bruce

Buff turns his back to pose to start (and it's hard to blame him), allowing Bruce to get in a shot from behind. They take it to the floor with Bruce in control and walking around the ring with Buff being dragged behind. Back in and Buff gets two off a neckbreaker before we hit the choking. Bruce fights up and makes his comeback so here's Luger with a chair. We cut to Goldberg running out of his locker room but Kronik jumps him, throws him in a box and carries him away on a forklift. Back in the arena, Luger Pillmanizes Bruce's arm for the DQ.

Rating: F. Leave it to two moronic heels to attack a career jobber and injure him instead of going after GOLDBERG. This is such a stupid story as we've already had Goldberg go over Luger twice and now they're going to use Bruce to stretch it out to a third pay per view. Why this is happening while Sid, Jarrett, and whoever is under that mask get a title shot isn't clear, but I'd chalk it up to "WCW is stupid."

Jeff Jarrett vs. Sid Vicious

The winner is in the three way dance at Sin. Before the match, Jarrett wants to talk (of course) to the Mystery Man. Jeff rambles on for a long time about how he and Sid both want momentum coming towards Sin but the audio keeps cutting out, likely trying to censor some chants. Sid won't let him bail though and the brawl is on in front of a dead crowd with Jeff being dropped throat first across the barricade.

Back in and Jeff stomps away before a dropkick gets two. We hit the sleeper (of course) until Sid fights back and gets in a chokeslam. The powerbomb is loaded up but the Mystery Man comes in and hits Sid in the back, but since this is WCW we'll call that a no contest, meaning neither has advanced to Sin.

Rating: D. Naturally two former World Champions can only get four minutes before a run-in finish that didn't even go the way it was supposed to. As usual, Sid didn't quite look great in the ring and Jeff was doing nothing other than his signature stuff. I'm sure you know where this is going for Sin and I really wish they could have just gone with that in the first place.

Sid gets double teamed and of course it's Scott Steiner under the mask to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. There's just so much stupid on this show with the main event scene being the biggest issue. I can't get over the fact that it's freaking Buddy Lee Parker getting the spotlight in a story. Yeah he trained Goldberg, but you can't just make up a story to get someone in there with a slightly better win/loss record? As in with any wins on his record? The rest of the show was the usual mess, not made any better by the fact that Sin is next week. Bad show here and a really horrible way to start the new year.

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Ring of Honor TV – May 25, 2016: OBNOXIOUS YELLING!

Ring of Honor

Date: May 25, 2016

Host: Kevin Kelly

It's another special show, this time focusing on the Bullet Club. In other words, yes again we're looking at something that is going to be centered in Japan and will likely feature something from Honor Rising. I don't know when Ring of Honor plans to go back to normal but ANYTIME SOON would be appreciated. Let's get to it.

Since most of these matches are heavily clipped, I won't be rating them unless most of the match is shown.

Kevin Kelly opens things up and promises to show us some clips from Global Wars, which could actually be something pertaining to the current storylines.

We look at Bullet Club showing up in Ring of Honor and one of their first major matches from War of the Worlds 2014.

IWGP Tag Team Titles: Briscoe Brothers vs. Doc Gallows/Karl Anderson

Anderson and Gallows are defending and we're joined in progress with Jay and Anderson slugging it out in the ring. Jay kicks Anderson in the face as Mark is backdropped on the floor. Gallows splashes Jay and the Boot of Doom (not named here) gets two. Mark gets back in to break up the Magic Killer and chops away at Doc. Now it's Jay back up with a discus forearm on Karl, followed by the Froggy Bow for a close two. Jay gets knocked to the floor and Mark dives into a Gun Stun (Diamond Cutter). Now the Magic Killer puts Mark away at 3:14 shown of 10:40.

From Global Wars 2015.

Bullet Club vs. ROH All-Stars

AJ Styles/Doc Gallows/Karl Anderson/Young Bucks

War Machine/Briscoe Brothers/Roderick Strong

Joined in progress (of course) with Ray Rowe diving off the top onto everyone. Strong superplexes Matt and AJ in succession before Nick breaks up another one on Gallows. Instead Strong superplexes Nick onto a big pile on the floor. Back in and Gallows hits his choke bomb on Hanson, followed by Bloody Sunday from AJ. Styles swears and Corino is shocked. Strong breaks up the Styles Clash and Jay superkicks Matt into a jumping knee, followed by the Jay Driller. Mark's Froggy Bow puts Matt away at 3:49 shown of 17:25.

TIME FOR MORE HONOR RISING!!! You didn't think they were forgetting about this one did you?

Never Openweight Six Man Tag Team Titles: Elite vs. Briscoe Brothers/Toru Yano

Elite, challenging here, is a subset of the Club comprised of the Young Bucks and Kenny Omega. Fellow Club member Cody Hall jumps the Briscoes before the bell and Yano is triple teamed, which draws little more than a hard stare from the referee. The Briscoes get back in to clean house with Nick being thrown over the top and onto Hall for a big crash.

Yano leans against the ropes until Hall grabs his legs, allowing the Bucks to hit a double superkick. A triple dive from the Elite keeps the champions in trouble and it's time to choke Yano in the corner. We take a break and come back with Omega holding Yano in an abdominal stretch. Nick cartwheels into a backflip into a...backrake. Eh that's no running into a Kevin Owens chinlock.

With nothing else working, Yano pulls the buckle pad off (remember that it's a big column instead of individual pads) to block superkicks and then nail Matt. The tag brings in Mark as things speed up. The threat of Redneck Kung Fu deters Nick for a bit but Omega superkicks Mark down. Mark gets powerbombed into an enziguri in the corner, followed by the

Swanton Bomb while Mark was hanging from the ropes for two. A triple superkick (Are you getting the concept yet?) gets two with Jay making the save.

Yano gets the tag for some low blows, though this time the referee just didn't see them. Omega hair sprays Hall by mistake and gets low blowed and rolled up for two. The Briscoes come back in and it's a double Indytaker, followed by More Bang For Your Buck for the pin on Yano at 12:55.

Rating: C+. The match was entertaining enough, assuming you can tolerate all the superkicks. If there's one thing that the Club (and ROH in general) don't get, it's the concept of less is more. These titles don't really mean anything either as they were introduced in January and we're already on the sixth reign.

Here's MORE from Honor Rising with the final match from Anderson and Gallows before they head to WWE.

Bullet Club vs. ReDRagon/Hirooki Goto/Katsuyori Shibata

It's Bad Luck Fale (a monster), Tama Tonga, Anderson and Gallows for the Club here. The Club attacks to start (of course) until we settle down to Kyle firing off kicks at Karl. Goto comes in and we take a break. Back with Fale pounding on Goto in the corner before it's back to Karl for a chinlock.

Tonga comes in for a running splash and dropkick with Shibata making the save. He even kicks his partner for some motivation, which actually drives Goto to clothesline Tama. Instead of tagging though, Goto would rather yell at Shibata. Fish is smart enough to tag himself in as everything breaks down. Tonga gets kicked down but still comes back with a fireman's carry flapjack to plant Fish.

The double tag brings in Shibata to forearm Gallows down in the corner but Doc comes out with a hard uppercut. Everything breaks down again and a reverse 3D gets two on Shibata. Goto saves Shibata from the Magic Killer and escapes the Gun Stun. The Gallows Pole gets two on Shibata but he comes back with a quick choke, followed by a running kick to Doc's

chest for the pin at 10:22.

Rating: C. As usual, this was fine though I have no reason to care about who wins and who loses. It's a three and a half month old match with people I might have heard of if I watch enough New Japan. Nothing to see here other than some watchable action, which isn't enough after a show of nothing but that.

We go back to this year's Global Wars with Colt Cabana holding Jay Lethal in the Billy Goat's Curse. Cue the Young Bucks to superkick the referee and Taeler Hendrix before getting in the ring to hand Lethal and Cabana shirts. Then the lights go out and come back up with Adam Cole in the ring, of course sporting the shirt. More superkicks (with Mr. Wrestling 3 doing his obnoxious yelling every time) drop Lethal and Cabana and Cole says this is their house. Security runs in and eats a bunch of superkicks, meaning it's time for some crotch chops (Wrestling 3: "THAT'S HOT!").

Tama Loa and Tama Tonga (fellow Club members) come out and more security is beaten up with superkick after superkick. We cut forward to a security member being powerbombed through a table, which of course has been spray painted BC. The announcers eat superkicks so the Bucks take their places and do what sound like Jim Ross/Jerry Lawler impressions. Lethal is tied to the ropes as Cole picks up the ROH World Title. That means EVEN MORE SUPERKICKS before Cole runs around with the belt. The cameraman gets superkicked and the Club talks into the camera to end things.

Cole says this is a long time coming because this isn't about little kids like the Kingdom anymore. Lethal has been saying he has no challengers but everyone knows that Cole is the man around here. He's coming to take the title because he can.

Overall Rating: D. Uh....yeah. The last little bit was good because it actually addressed something going on in Ring of Honor but the rest felt like more "WE LOVE NEW JAPAN" stuff, which has been going on for months now. I'm sure you've heard all my standard issues at this point so I won't bother doing it again, but they need to get back to regular stuff and soon. This is just making me care even less about ROH and I'm already

forgetting most of the stories they're doing. There was no indication that next week is another special but it's almost too late to get back there, especially if the Club is going to be the focus now.

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Smackdown – May 26, 2016: The Wrestlemania Show Sequel

Smackdown

Date: May 26, 2016

Location: Norfolk Scope Arena, Norfolk, Virginia

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo

It's actually a big night here as we have two title matches on a single show. First of all we have Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Cesaro after the champion lost a non-title match this past Monday on Raw. The second title match will see the new US Champion Rusev defending against Kalisto in the masked man's rematch. Let's get to it.

The opening video recaps Monday's Money in the Bank qualifying matches.

Opening sequence.

Michael Cole is in the ring with the Money in the Bank briefcase and brings out Dean Ambrose for a chat. Dean says he loves getting violent and the idea of being in a seven man ladder match sounds great to him. This brings out Kevin Owens to tell Cole to get out of the ring because Owens is sick enough of him on Raw. Owens says there's no way Dean is winning that briefcase because he's ready to climb the ladder, just like he did at Wrestlemania.

Cue Sami Zayn (Lawler: "The man with the stupid hat.") to say this isn't a joke because he's going after everything at Money in the Bank. Now it's Alberto Del Rio (who hasn't qualified) to say he's cashed in before and he'll do it again here tonight. Sami turns to yell at him and gets decked by Owens. The three in the ring start brawling and Sami vs. Dean is teased.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Zack Ryder vs. Alberto Del Rio

Beating Ryder is almost a running joke at this point. Alberto kicks him down and chokes on the ropes to start, only to get kicked into the barricade as we take an early break. Back with Del Rio working on a chinlock and a clip of Del Rio hitting the double stomp on the floor during the break. Ryder fights up but misses his middle rope dropkick.

The low superkick gets two for Alberto, only to have Zack grab a jawbreaker. The Broski Boot gives Ryder a near fall of his own but Del Rio counters the Rough Ryder. He can't the top rope double stomp though and walks into the Rough Ryder for no cover as Del Rio gets outside. Back in and the cross armbreaker makes Ryder tap at 9:35. Well that could have been shorter.

Rating: D+. Does beating Ryder really mean anything anymore? Alberto is another name that really doesn't need to be in the match but can be there to fill in a spot. It's another case of just having people in the match for the sake of having them in the match as no one buys Del Rio as a realistic winner but he can clutter things up even more.

Video on Sunday's main event and Seth Rollins' return, including the announcement of the Money in the Bank title match.

Here are Enzo and Cass with something to say but before Enzo can get anywhere, here are the Dudleyz to interrupt (Lawler: "WOOHOO! Thank goodness."). Enzo says he isn't Willy Wonka so he won't sugar coat anything. The Dudleyz are as sweet as a Cinnabon and he isn't biting his tongue when he's chewing someone out. Cass offers to throw them a beatdown right now but the Dudleyz say not tonight. Instead, we'll do this on Raw but for now, Bubba asks D-Von if they can please get out of this town.

Rusev says after tonight, Kalisto will never be able to fly again.

Video on Cesaro making Miz tap at Extreme Rules and then pinning him the next night on Raw.

US Title: Kalisto vs. Rusev

Rusev is defending after defeating Kalisto on Sunday. During Kalisto's entrance, Byron almost casually mentions the impending Brand Split. Kalisto goes right after him to start and sends Rusev to the ropes with a headscissors. A springboard is knocked out of the air though and we take a break about thirty seconds in. Back with Kalisto being sent hard into the corner and actually trying to slam the champion. This works as well as you would expect and Rusev stomps away to stay in control.

Kalisto pops up again and gets the slam, which shocks the way too confident Rusev. A rollup gets two on Rusev and the corkscrew cross body gets the same. Kalisto follows up with a springboard moonsault to the floor for two as Lana looks....well she looks normal actually. Rusev blocks the Salida Del Sol, only to miss a running headbutt in the corner. He's fine enough to raise his knees to block a 450 though and it's the jumping superkick and Accolade to retain the title at 8:53.

Rating: C+. I don't think there was any doubt here but at least Kalisto got in some offense. They're trying to make Rusev into a big time champion but I'll need to see him get a few more big wins before I can buy this as anything more than a run destined to put over a bigger name.

Rusev goes after Kalisto again post match until Titus O'Neil of all people comes in for the save. This is either a curve ball to make us

think it's not going to be the start of Cena vs. Rusev on Monday or a very odd choice.

Video on Charlotte retaining on Sunday and then turning her back on her dad the next night. This is accompanied by clips of wrestlers talking about how horrible this was and how big of a mistake Charlotte really made, because how could she be good without Ric Flair? That look from Ric when he said nothing was wrong and left actually got to me a bit.

Natalya vs. Dana Brooke

Charlotte is on commentary. Natalya fires off some forearms in the corner but gets knocked down and put in the Sharpshooter, only to have Charlotte come in for the DQ at 45. This isn't exactly a wrestling heavy show tonight.

Natalya puts Charlotte in the Sharpshooter and then throws the villains together. Charlotte gets back up though and Natalya gets beaten down. They're really continuing this feud after Charlotte has beaten her twice?

Stills of Sunday's main event and video of the Club breaking up on Monday plus Owens pinning AJ Styles to qualify.

Styles doesn't know what he's doing next.

Golden Truth vs. Breezango

Truth and Breeze get things off but it's quickly off to Fandango who gets two off a dropkick. Fandango goes after Goldust to get him off the apron though, allowing Breeze to sneak in a Supermodel Kick to give give Fandango the pin at 1:40.

Post break Goldust tries to convince Truth that the team needs to stick together. Breezango comes in and laughs at them so Truth agrees to keep going.

Here's Seth Rollins for a talk. In case you missed it, he's back and couldn't be better. Unfortunately he can't say the same for the fans and that's that.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Cesaro

Miz is defending. Cesaro dropkicks him out to the floor to start and cannonballs down onto the champ as we take another early break. Back with Miz going after the shoulder and sending it into the post and barricade. The champ slaps on an armbar until Cesaro fights up with the uppercuts. Miz gets two off a Reality Check before distracting the referee so Maryse can rip off the turnbuckle pad.

Cesaro blocks the steel though and gets two off a small package. The Sharpshooter doesn't work either as Miz gets to the rope and tries to leave with the title. Instead he eats the running European uppercut for two. The Swing is kicked away though and Cesaro goes shoulder first into the buckle. Miz grabs the Skull Crushing Finale for the pin to retain at 10:31.

Rating: B-. More 50/50 booking of course. This was ok but the lack of time didn't really help things. Unfortunately this is Cesaro 101 as he comes so close most of the time but can never have the trigger pulled. I'm fine with Miz as champion and thankfully they made sure that it wasn't a clean pin, but this was still a lot less entertaining than I was hoping for after Sunday.

Overall Rating: D. This show felt like the nothing episodes that they air before Wrestlemania when they know no one is watching and they want to set up the pay per view. We had about half an hour of wrestling tonight and most of the matches ranged from ok to something most people would have no interest in seeing. Extreme Rules was a good show but it's nothing that I really wanted to see again. I'm really not sure what they were going for tonight but it missed and it missed badly.

Results

Alberto Del Rio b. Zack Ryder – Cross armbreaker

Rusev b. Kalisto – Accolade

Natalya b. Dana Brooke via DQ when Charlotte interfered

Breezango b. Golden Truth – Supermodel Kick to R-Truth

The Miz b. Cesaro – Skull Crushing Finale

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on NXT: The Full Sail Years Volume II at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FWZZ2UA>

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

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

NXT – May 25, 2016: A Surprise You Would Expect

NXT

Date: May 25, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're two weeks out from Takeover and after last week, most of the card is set. The big story is the announcement of the first ever steel cage match around these parts as NXT Champion Samoa Joe is defending against former champion Finn Balor. Other than that it looks like we'll be getting Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Austin Aries as well. Let's get to it.

William Regal tells us that Bayley is injured and unable to face Asuka for the Women's Title. Therefore tonight there will be a triple threat for the #1 contendership between Nia Jax, Alexa Bliss and Carmella.

Opening sequence.

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa vs. TM61

TM61 is the recently signed The Mighty Don't Kneel, comprised of Shane Thorn and Nick Miller. In a quick pre-match inset promo, TM61 says they're here for the titles because they're mighty and don't kneel. Miller and Ciampa hit the mat to start before it's off to Thorn, who gyrates and sticks his chest out as he walks around. Gargano gets pulled down in the corner for a double wishbone as things settle down a bit. Johnny crawls through Nick's legs for the hot tag, only to have Ciampa eat a double elbow to the jaw. TM61 actually stands tall as we go to a break.

Back with Miller holding Ciampa in a headlock until an elbow to the jaw allows Gargano to get the tag and spear Miller through the ropes. Thorn comes in but gets caught in something like an Anaconda Vice with Gargano using his legs as a crucifix. Ciampa is back in and elbows Thorn again, only to eat a dropkick for the tag off to Miller. Nick comes in and starts cleaning house, capped off by a delayed backdrop into a neckbreaker from Thorn. Gargano dives onto Miller, leaving Thorn to take the knee to the head/superkick combo for the pin at 13:13.

Rating: B. This was a different kind of tag match with all four working hard and far less of a formula as all four are faces for a change. TM61 looked very polished here and should be ready for a big push once they get in a few wins over teams like the Hype Bros and the Revival. Really solid, long match here and that's how you debut a team like this.

Gargano and Ciampa applaud TM61.

Video on Samoa Joe winning the title and his new found aggression.

Bayley is upset that she can't compete when Nia Jax comes in to say that she's broken Bayley, who will never be the same again. Carmella runs in to defend her friend but Nia laughs it off. Alexa Bliss comes in and gets the same treatment.

Andrade "Cien" Almas takes off his mask while watching old lucha libre.

Here's Austin Aries with something to say. Aries is tired of hearing

people talk about how someone is the best. You're only the best until someone better comes along, so he's always called himself great. But how do you define greatness? Maybe by proving your talent over ten years? Or by having great matches everywhere you go? Or by being a champion in every promotion you've ever been? See, he's done all those things but he's tired of being overlooked. The fans chant for Nakamura but Aries wants a shot at the winner of the cage match. There go the lights and here comes Nakamura.

Shinsuke starts in Japanese then corrects himself because Aries doesn't understand. Nakamura: "You don't speak Japanese?" Aries: "I don't understand you." Nakamura: "Yeah me either." Shinsuke says the title isn't coming to greatness because it's coming to the King of Strong Style. Cue Regal, which draws a TAKEOVER chant. The match is made though nothing is mentioned about being #1 contender.

American Alpha is ready for the Revival because there's more to wrestling than punching people in the face. It doesn't matter if it's in Dallas or at Full Sail, they'll be ready, willing and Gable.

No Way Jose vs. Jonathan Ortagun

Jose dances out of a waistlock to start and it's already time for an airplane spin, which goes both ways for a little extra fun. A clothesline in the corner just annoys Jose and things get serious, including an atomic drop and the baseball punch. The cobra clutch slam gives Jose the pin at 3:21.

Rating: D+. Jose is fun but he's basically a new version of Adam Rose. If they keep him in that style of a character everything will be fine, but given WWE's track record with characters like him, I really wouldn't give him a great chance long term. The dancing is fun though and he serves his purpose just fine.

Jose dances with the announcers post match.

Video on Finn Balor, who wants the title back.

Asuka doesn't care who she faces at Takeover because she will defeat

them.

Carmella vs. Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss

For the #1 contendership at Takeover. Bayley hugs Carmella before her entrance. Nia has a new entrance where the camera cuts to an extreme closeup of her eyes before she starts walking. Bliss bails to the floor to start so Carmella, the fan favorite, tries and fails at a headlock. Alexa's attempt at coming in off the top goes horribly as Nia is waiting on her and it's time for a break.

Back with Carmella headscissoring Nia into the post, which brings Alexa back in to slam Carmella's head off the mat for two. Bliss yells a lot and knocks Nia outside, followed by a Vader Bomb for two. The backflip into the knees to the chest get two on Carmella and Bliss drives two knees into Nia for good measure. The Sparkle Splash gets two on Jax with Bliss making the save. Nia has had enough of this being in trouble and gets up to shove both of them down like they're nothing.

The blondes send a charging Nia out to the floor but Carmella's dive is easily caught by the monster. Bliss makes the save though and it's Carmella diving onto Nia again with a lot more success this time. Back in and Carmella snapmares Bliss into the corner for the Bronco Buster. The leg crossface brings Nia back in for the save, only to have Carmella get two off a middle rope Thesz press. Graves actually says he's never seen that before. Nia breaks up the Bronco Buster though and drops the leg on Carmella for the pin at 12:30.

Rating: B. This was MUCH better than I was expecting as you can really see the long strides that Carmella has made in her abilities. She's certainly the most complete performer of these three as you have Bliss and Jax as more role players (Bliss as the calculating one who steals shots where she can and Jax as the monster), which are fine for both of them. This was a lot of fun though and a far better match than I would have thought.

Post match Asuka comes out to stare Nia down. The champ comes down to the ring and Nia threatens to drop her where she stands to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. In less than an hour, NXT has hyped up the two matches already set for Takeover and added two more, including a title match. This upcoming show doesn't have the best buzz around it, but if there's one thing NXT is great at it's making you believe that something is a lot better than it probably should be. This show did a great job of building that show and making me want to see it, which is exactly what they were shooting for here.

Results

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa b. TM61 – Running knee/superkick to Thorn

No Way Jose b. Jonathan Ortagun – Cobra clutch slam

Nia Jax b. Carmella and Alexa Bliss – Legdrop to Carmella

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FWZZ2UA>

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

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

New Column: The Two Man Midcard Exodus

As promised, thoughts on Ryback and Cody Rhodes leaving. Also note that this was written before the announcement of the new Brand Split, which would change a lot of what I say in here.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-two-man-midcard-exodus/>

They're Really Doing Another Brand Split

And Smackdown is going live starting July 19.

<http://www.wwe.com/shows/smackdown/article/smackdown-live-usa-network-july-19>

This is uh.....well it's certainly something. For one thing it's going to prove that just having Smackdown live isn't going to change things, though with the announcement that a McMahon is going to be in charge of the show, maybe things get a little more interesting. Anything that makes WWE care about Smackdown and pay more attention to it is a good thing, but I'm going to need a lot more details before I consider this the saving grace for the blue show.

What I do consider my own saving grace though: Impact is screwed to the wall.

Impact Wrestling – May 24, 2016: Ultimatum

Impact Wrestling

Date: May 24, 2016

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

It's a big show tonight with May Mayhem, meaning things are a bit more violent than the regular shows. As you might guess, this is a show that was announced a week ago with almost no other build. The big match tonight is Matt Hardy vs. Ethan Carter III as Carter tries to get his rematch with Mike Bennett. Let's get to it.

The opening video focuses on everything we're getting to see tonight.

Here's Matt Hardy for a chat before his match with Ethan. Matt now has half black and half white hair (divided down the middle) which looks like Bozo the Clown's. Before the match Matt talks about how he has evolved into something more dangerous. He sees this match as nothing more than a warmup for his match with Jeff at Slammiversary.

With something like a weak British accent, Matt says he has a contract for the match with his brother Nero, which brings out Rockstar Spud and Tyrus. Spud says he's dedicated his life to Matt Hardy. Matt: "As you should." That accent is REALLY weird and comes off like Matt trying to be all intelligent and brilliant and it's really just creepy.

Spud blames the fans for this going too far but Tyrus really doesn't care. Matt says it's ok to say he looks like a psychotic lunatic. He has a deal for Nero tonight: if Nero can beat Spud and Tyrus in a ladder match, there will be a match between the brothers at Slammiversary. If Jeff loses though, there's no match. Also if Jeff wins, Spud and Tyrus are done associating with Matt. This felt like someone shouting LOOK AT ME LOOK AT ME and trying to be all interesting but coming off as a guy who is more sad than anything else. As usual, Matt is in over his head and is nowhere near as brilliant as he thinks he is.

Ethan Carter III vs. Matt Hardy

Matt pounds away in the corner as we hear about how amazing a transformation he's undergone to become this lunatic. Carter charges into a boot to the face and gets elbowed in the jaw to keep him down. A bulldog out of the corner gets two for Matt and he whips Carter into the

corner.

The slow pace continues with a legdrop until Carter comes back with a jawbreaker, only to miss a splash in the corner. Here's Mike Bennett to watch as Matt gets two off a Side Effect. The Twist of Fate is countered into a cobra clutch but Bennett comes in for the DQ at 6:40. The stipulation said that Carter had to win by pin/submission to get his shot so Ethan gets nothing.

Rating: D+. Can we take up a collection to get rid of Matt Hardy? Like, how much would it cost for us to never have to sit through one of his speeches or matches again? His character is confusing/stupid, his promos are annoying, he gets WAY too much TV time and his matches aren't even good. What are he and Jeff going to do at Slammiversary? Jump off something really high like they've done for nearly twenty years? I'm sure TNA fans will call it brilliant but this is moving into Hogan/Flair levels of sad.

Mike lays Carter out post match and says that he has failed. There will be no rematch at Slammiversary.

Post break Bennett says what he just did was art and you don't have to explain art. A few weeks ago he had a vision for EC3's Road to Redemption. Well now Ethan has failed because he didn't get the job done, meaning no match at Slammiversary. This was just repeating what was said earlier.

Here's Allie to introduce Maria for a speech. Maria talks about how she's taking over the new future for the Knockouts and Velvet Sky is part of the past. This brings out Gail Kim, who says Maria manipulated her way to the top of the division. They argue over Velvet being fired with Maria saying she put on her boots just like Gail told her to and she attained power. Gail offers to beat her up right now but Maria threatens to have her fired. This results in Gail being put in a match with her career on the line, which brings in Sienna for a cheap shot from behind. Who is actually begging to see Gail vs. Maria in a straight match?

Grado promises Mahabali Shera that he'll take care of Al Snow tonight. Grado has a chain wrapped around his fist while Shera eats what looks

like a drumstick.

The BroMans call each other from about a foot away. Robbie thinks they need to move up a few levels while Jesse keeps stopping to talk to people. Apparently Robbie has found them a guru to take it to another level. A woman comes up to point out that they're right next to each other and Robbie blames Jesse for not paying attention.

Gail rants about how angry she is.

We recap Al Snow vs. Grado in your standard "I'm old and grizzled and you're not serious enough" feud. Snow claims to be a pure athlete and keeps cheating to win matches.

Al Snow vs. Grado

Street fight. Before the match, Snow asks if the fans want violence, chairs and tables. Well even if they do, they're not going to get it because he's a wrestler. Snow: "I'm your mom's favorite wrestler!" Naturally he hides behind the set and jumps Grado from behind to start things off. The bell hasn't rung yet as Snow slams Grado's hand into the steps. They head inside for the bell with Snow slamming him down but missing the moonsault.

Snow's powder is thrown back into his face as Shera brings in a trashcan full of weapons. Grado spans him with a cookie sheet and it's time for the drumstick (as in a bone with meat on it) for a low blow. A chain punch hits Grado in the jaw but here are two newcomers (NXT's Marcus Louis and Sylvester LeFort) to pull the referee out. The distraction lets Snow hit the Snow Plow for the pin at 3:39.

Rating: D-. Yes this is continuing and Snow is going to have a stable. This really does feel like it's 1999 but for some reason we're getting an Al Snow win instead of any....you know what? I don't care. We're reaching the point with TNA where I can't even get mad about it anymore. This is what we're stuck with because of all the people they have on their roster, it's best to have Al Snow do this instead of ANYONE else.

I'm so sorry that TNA has no money because no one watches their shows and

they're stuck on a third rate network with no audience but it's the kind of nonsense like pushing Matt Hardy as some psycho genius for the "real" main event of Slammiversary against his brother because Darlin Dixie is too thickheaded to realize that this nonsense doesn't draw a thing anymore. This match and this show are such a waste of time anymore and they have no one to blame but themselves.

Matt Hardy (of course) is sitting in the dark when Reby comes in to ask what's wrong. We get another monologue about how Matt needs to get rid of Nero for his life to continue. Reby talks about how he's alienating everyone but Matt doesn't care because it's all about Nero.

Jeremy Borash is in the ring to talk about the end of last week's show when Lashley interrupts. Lashley rants about how many fights he's had without twenty idiots interrupting but here's Drew Galloway to cut him off. Drew says Lashley can lay claim to being the only real fighter on the roster but he'll stick to the title of World Heavyweight Champion. Last week he saw fear in Lashley's eyes but Lashley doesn't want to hear it.

Drew comes to the ring for a fight but Dixie Carter comes out to say this is ridiculous. Yeah we need to cut out this action on a wrestling show. I for one would love another Matt Hardy monologue right about now. Dixie makes the rematch for Slammiversary with only submissions or knockouts for the win. If I'm Drew, I'd be rather ticked off by that but of course he's fine with everything.

Lashley calls him out and the fight is on again with Drew hitting a Claymore and pounding away. Security's intervention only slows Drew down, allowing Lashley to get in a spear and hammer away. A referee gets speared and Lashley chokes Drew out with a belt. Lashley isn't done yet and takes off his shirt but does nothing.

X-Division Title: Andrew Everett vs. Eddie Edwards vs. DJZ vs. Trevor Lee

Lee is defending and this is Ultimate X with the belt hung at the intersection of two cables. The first person to climb up and pull it down is champion. We come back from a break after Eddie's entrance with the rest of the entrances because we haven't wasted enough time on this show

yet. Shane Helms is out with Lee and Everett, who are introduced as a team. Eddie dives over the top to take out Everett before the bell rings.

It's a huge brawl to start of course until Everett dropkicks everyone down and goes for the belt, only to have Lee pull him down and swear a bit. Helms tells his boys to calm down and Everett lets Lee get on his shoulders to help him get to the belt. Eddie and DJZ come in for the save (why this isn't a tag match and non-title is beyond me) with DJZ elbowing both heels in the jaw.

Edwards hurricanranas both of them down at the same time but Lee knees him in the face. DJZ pops up and rolls forward into a DDT on Trevor to knock the champ silly. Eddie goes up and pulls down the title, only to have Shane distract the referee so Trevor can steal the belt to retain at 5:59.

Rating: D. I mean, why wait and have the big gimmick match at Slammiversary when you can have it here in a nothing match that doesn't even last six minutes and somehow includes a false finish? It's nice of them to throw a bone to the X-Division but the title is still having the same issues that everything else does: not enough focus because other big stories get the time, stories that just keep going because there's nothing else going on, and of course an older guy who is treated as being above the current stars.

Maria has chosen Sienna to take out Gail Kim by ripping out her heart.

Ethan talks about playing rigged games all his life. There is no honor in what Bennett did but the rematch is going to happen no matter what. Ethan is about to make a phone call he's going to regret. Bennett was comparing himself to artists but those people had a life's work. After Ethan is done, Mike isn't even going to have a life. As usual, really good stuff here from Ethan as he kept it simple and responded to everything Mike said while advancing the story.

Sienna vs. Gail Kim

Allie and Maria are at ringside and Gail's career is on the line. Sienna jumps Gail from behind but gets knocked away, allowing Gail to hit a

quick high cross body for two. A hurricanrana takes both of them outside but Maria helps Sienna up, allowing her to send Gail into the barricade. Back in and a Samoan drop gets two for Sienna but Gail comes back with a reverse DDT. Maria shoves Gail off the ropes, only to have her reverse the spinning faceplant into a sunset flip to pin Sienna at 4:13.

Rating: C-. That's about as good as a four minute match with two people interfering is going to get. I know the end game of this is Gail vs. Maria but how is that going to be anything other than a squash or Gail having to slow things WAY down to make the match work? The story makes sense here but it's asking us to be interested in Gail Kim which just isn't going to happen.

Sienna drops Gail post match and Maria pounds away.

Rockstar Spud begs Tyrus to win tonight for Matt's sake. Reby comes in and says do it for her sake because Matt is insane over this Jeff stuff. Spud says having Matt back to normal is worth anything.

The BroMans go to meet their guru and it's...actually a woman, who has purple hair and is in great shape. Her name is Raquel (Gabi from last year's Tough Enough) and apparently she's the guru they've been looking for. After a hard workout, she says she'll see them in the pool.

Lashley and Drew Galloway will pick each other's opponents next week.

Rockstar Spud/Tyrus vs. Jeff Hardy

Ladder match. If Jeff wins, he faces Matt at Slammiversary in a Full Metal Mayhem match and Spud/Tyrus are done associating with Matt. If Jeff loses, there's no match and Matt is happy anyway. Jeff hands out what looks like CDs during his entrance, which is actually not a horrible idea. Spud jumps Jeff before the bell (because we haven't seen that tonight) but Tyrus posts himself and gets a chair thrown at his back. Jeff throws in a ladder and we go to a break without the match actually starting.

The match is joined in progress with Tyrus pulling a ladder to send Jeff throat first into the ropes. A legdrop between Jeff's legs should allow

Tyrus to just sit on him so Spud can climb but instead Tyrus picks him up. Spud drops a top rope elbow and goes to get a ladder as Tyrus lifts Jeff up again.

Tyrus splashes Spud by mistake but Jeff can't follow up. Spud is sent out to the floor and Tyrus tries to climb, only to be too heavy and break the rungs. Jeff laughs at him as Spud comes back in, only to have Tyrus get knocked outside. Spud goes up but gets caught in a Twist of Fate onto the top of the ladder, allowing Jeff to pull down the contract at 5:10.

Rating: F. A five minute ladder match with Tyrus being entirely stupid (just sit on him man) and an obvious ending.

Overall Rating: D-. If Slammiversary isn't an upgrade (read as the Hardys don't main event for one thing), I'm taking a break from this company. I've sat through years of this place's nonsense but it's never been so much of an effort to stick with them. This company has just never learned and it's the same problem time after time: too much of a focus on stories with only short term value and far less importance being placed on things that could help them.

In other words, I've had it with Matt vs. Jeff. This feud has gone on forever (dating back to their WWE days) and TNA doesn't understand that there is nothing to gain from these two fighting each other. They've taken over the show and pushed things like the World Title and the legitimately great Carter vs. Bennett feud (one of the only reasons I'm sticking around) so Matt can be a crazy genius or whatever moniker he's giving himself this week.

TNA is never going to get entirely better but the least I can ask is for them to be watchable. I've given TNA my patience, my time and my money but I've had enough. This show had less than twenty six minutes of wrestling in two hours and nearly twelve of those were Matt and Jeff matches. If that's what TNA cares about, I'm not going to be around to watch them screw this place up even more. I'm not flat out quitting but if Slammiversary isn't at least a decent show (and I'll be flexible with that), I'm done.

Results

Ethan Carter III b. Matt Hardy via DQ when Mike Bennett interfered

Al Snow b. Grado – Snow Plow

Trevor Lee b. Eddie Edwards, Andrew Everett and DJZ – Lee pulled down the title

Gail Kim b. Sienna – Sunset flip

Jeff Hardy b. Tyrus/Rockstar Spud – Jeff pulled down the contract

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FWZZ2UA>

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

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

The Roman Reigns Problem, Now Featuring Seth Rollins

Kind of a bonus column this week.

So this past Sunday at Extreme Rules, Seth Rollins made his return and attacked WWE World Champion Roman Reigns, seemingly becoming the new top face to take down the rapidly heel turning Reigns. However, the next night on Raw, it was clear that Rollins was in fact still heel and Reigns was in fact still the big dog face that fans are getting very tired of in a hurry. Today we're going to take a quick look at why this continues to

make people scratch their heads.

Let's get this out of the way first: Roman Reigns has an audience. Allegedly he's rather handsome and there's something about his arms and hair that appeals to women. If you read most house show results, Reigns gets one of the loudest pops of the night but for some reason that doesn't translate to TV. You can claim that it's the new cool thing to do (which I can completely buy) or whatever, but the fact of the matter is that these reactions are happening and there's no way around them at the moment.

Reigns has a big value to WWE. He has a good look, he can more than hold his own in the ring and he's getting better on the mic. I don't think anyone would suggest that he's worthless or doesn't belong in WWE and if they did, they're just flat out wrong. However, there's a difference between having a spot on the card and having THE spot.

Here's the thing: there's not much that sets Reigns apart. Yeah he has a good look but so do a lot of people. Yeah he can wrestle a good match but others can do it better. Yeah his talking is improving but that's still not saying much given how bad it was in the first place. Reigns is better than he used to be and has improved by leaps and bounds from just a year ago but he's still missing the big thing: a connection.

Why should I care about Roman Reigns? After everything he's said and done over the years, I have no reason to feel a connection to him. He debuted as part of this elite group where he almost never talked, then became the monster of the team who set a bunch of records and finally became the top dog after the team split, leading to his main event run where he kept beating up everyone in sight because HE IS THE CHOSEN ONE. We don't really have a reason for him getting this spot but he's getting it, he's winning the title at Wrestlemania and there's nothing that's changing that because it's been decided months in advance.

In other words, Reigns is basically Superman: he barely has any weaknesses and he's better than you because everyone is beneath him. There's no personality there and it makes for some really dull exchanges and feuds because Reigns is just going to win no matter what happens. How

am I supposed to get interested in something like that?

This is why someone like Daniel Bryan worked. While he was very talented in the ring, he faced a lot of adversity and was held down because of his size, look etc. How many times did you hear the Authority tell him that he didn't have any right to be near the World Title because he belonged somewhere else? In other words, WWE set it up so that people WANTED to see Bryan get this spot. Compare this to Reigns where it was more "Reigns is awesome and is getting the title. You like him!"

Now let's jump back to Rollins. Seth has been presented as the smart one of the Shield, often being referred to as the Architect and an all around mastermind who keeps figuring out a way to escape, normally with the title at the same time. Rollins never lost the World Title and had a reason to immediately challenge his old nemesis Reigns. It helps that Rollins can wrestle one of the most exciting in ring styles of anyone on the roster. This really should have been one of the biggest and easiest layups that WWE could do for a very long time.

And then they just didn't do it. Rollins came out on Raw last night acting like a face and then went right back to heeling it up on the audience, no matter what the fans were begging to see. At the end of the day, a lot of the fans want to see something else on top of the company. Whether or not that's Rollins isn't what matters. What matters is that Reigns just is not working as the undisputed face of the company.

But for some reason that only Vince himself can explain, we're getting Roman Reigns as the star of the company. Now a lot of these problems could be changed by a big heel turn, which really seems like what a lot of the fans want to see. I have no idea what WWE is waiting for as there's an army of names ready to challenge a heel Reigns (imagine Sami Zayn as the underdog vs. the big dog for the title) but this is what we're stuck with whether we like it or not.

Rollins is just another name added to that list. The fans were more than ready to cheer him before he got hurt and then they had the face turn set up for them even stronger than before Rollins was hurt. I can more than accept the idea that Rollins is a better heel than a face but this is

another case of someone who looks ready to be the good to Reigns' bad, only to have it be the same thing all over again.

At this point Reigns is just in a really weird place. Look back at the AJ Styles feud and tell me who I was supposed to cheer for there. Anderson and Gallows were certainly acting like heels while AJ was getting more aggressive but the Usos lost their big face entrance and generally acted exactly the same way as the newcomers. I really wasn't sure who I was supposed to be for in that feud as Reigns continues to act like a tweener/heel while being presented as the undisputed top face of the company.

So what can be done about all this? I really have no idea. Basically we're stuck in this same holding pattern of the fans rejecting Reigns as this star until he either changes things up a lot (read as a heel turn to make him the guy that everyone wants to boo) or Vince changes his mind. Really at this point it seems that Reigns is at the top because Vince says so and that's just not going to work for the fans who have rejected him.

The worst part of this is that a lot of the criticism can't be placed on Reigns. It wasn't him that set up this push or had him walk out of the Royal Rumble for half an hour (What was that anyway? Of all the things they could do like having him taken out on a stretcher or just left him there unconscious, they had him get on his feet and walk to the back like a heel. Who thought that was a good idea?) or give the main event of Wrestlemania twenty seven minutes.

Let's talk about that match for a second. What could they possibly have been thinking there? After the show had already gone on for six hours, we got a Mad Max style speech from Stephanie which can be loosely translated as "BOO US! WE'RE EVIL!" to try and get the fans away from booing Reigns out of Texas. As you might have guessed, this really didn't work because that's not what the fans wanted to see.

Then the fans were treated to a match that ran nearly half an hour with a meaningless story of working on a shoulder and capped off by a spear to give Reigns the title (again). Yeah I'm not sure why this third title

reign is supposed to be more interesting than the other two times where he won the title clean but apparently this is a much bigger deal.

In that whole big mess of a match, there was one moment that changed the whole thing. At one point, Reigns went for a spear on HHH but hit Stephanie instead. The entire audience suddenly went insane and wanted to cheer him because he did something the fans wanted to see. Stephanie had been the most annoying character in the company for years but never got anything that was coming to her. Then Reigns cut her in half with a spear and he was the most popular thing in the company (for all of five minutes).

This isn't even the first time this has happened. At TLC 2015, Reigns was up against ridiculous odds as he had to face the League of Nations and the Authority at the same time. There was a moment where Reigns just started firing off Superman Punch after Superman Punch to keep the League at bay as long as he could. It made him feel like a superhero and again, the crowd ate it up and treated Reigns like WWE wants him to be treated. Then Sheamus retained the title anyway because that's what WWE felt was the right idea.

After the match, Reigns completely snapped and annihilated HHH with a bunch of power moves and a powerbomb onto but not through the table (because we needed one more moment to define Reigns' career). Again, this worked PERFECTLY as the fans wanted to see Reigns break away from this mold that he had been stuck in and just act like a 6'4 monster with insane power and some good natural charisma. You know, EXACTLY WHAT MADE HIM COOL WHEN HE WAS IN THE SHIELD. Things got even better the next night when Reigns beat the heck out of Sheamus, Superman Punched Vince in the face and won the title clean.

But after all that and all the face pops we got as a result, it was HHH winning the title at the Royal Rumble, setting up the mess of a title match. All the while, Reigns was back to his cookie cutter self that people didn't want to see but WWE had decided they knew how Reigns should be pushed and the crowd didn't know what they really wanted.

That's where we are now: Reigns has the tools to make the fans cheer him

(or boo the heck out of him) but instead WWE is still having him tread water as a lukewarm face while the booing gets louder and louder. There's an army of names waiting to face him (AJ Styles, Sami Zayn, Cesaro, a bunch of people in NXT and I could probably go on) but instead it's the same Rollins vs. Reigns feud that we've seen before (they used to be in the Shield together you know).

Reigns has a big future in front of him and at age 30 (31 tomorrow), he's going to be around for a very long time. I have no idea why WWE is insisting on pushing him this way but as soon as he turns heel (or does something that people want to see), he's going to explode on WWE and be a much bigger deal. Until then though, this is going to be the same kind of thing we're stuck with for months because WWE has decided that's what we're getting. Rollins is just the latest name on a long list of people that the fans want to see take out Reigns but nah, let's just keep going with what hasn't worked because that's what Vince wants.

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