

Impact Wrestling – February 2, 2016: Matt Hardy Isn't Interesting

Impact Wrestling

Date: February 2, 2016

Location: Sands Bethlehem Events Center, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

We're wrapping up the Bethlehem tapings here and the big story is Matt Hardy allowing his brother Jeff to be put out of action thanks to a piledriver through a table at the hands of Eric Young. We'll also be hearing from Ethan Carter III for the first time since he lost the title as well as Tyrus. Let's get to it.

Ethan tells the camera crew to be at a specific place at 4pm for their interview.

Here are Matt Hardy and company to open things up. Matt talks about working with people you hate and says it was karma that sent Jeff through that table. How dare Jeff accuse Matt of tarnishing the World Title? Reby and Matt never believed that Matt wasn't living in Jeff's shadow but it was Jeff' jealousy that caused his injury. This brings out Eric Young and Bram with the former shouting about how he took out Jeff and now the World Title goes through him.

Now it's Kurt Angle coming out to get straight to the point: he gets Hardy tonight for the title. A brawl is teased but here's Beer Money to back Angle up. Cue Abyss/Crazy Steve/the Wolves for a big brawl with the good guys clearing the ring. Roode announces a four on four hardcore fight. Why hardcore? No reason given, but that's the case with almost everything in the TNA main event scene.

I don't even know what to say about these things anymore. Matt Hardy is just out there no matter what anyone thinks of him, we're clearly just waiting around on Jeff Hardy because he's THE STAR and someone we all

care about and Eric Young is just there because he's Eric Young and is in the main event scene because of whatever residual fallout there is from that Daniel Bryan run nearly two years ago. I have no interest in any of these people but this is what we're getting because TNA has decided that Matt Hardy and Eric Young are stars because they've been around for a long time and TNA cannot make new talent.

We recap the Feast or Fired reveals from last week, including Bennett and Maria's interruption.

Drew feels like he's won the lottery. Tyrus comes up and tells him to walk away with the briefcase because it's a target on his chest. That sounds like a challenge.

Lashley vs. Aiden O'Shea

O'Shea pounds him down to start and here's that woman from a few weeks ago, now known as Raquel. How the announcers know that isn't clear but I'm sure I'm an idiot internet fan for wondering about that. A clothesline puts Aiden on the floor but Lashley goes over to ask Raquel who she is. Back in and Aiden's chinlock doesn't do much as Lashley hits a quick spear for the pin at 4:48.

Rating: D. It's nice that they're doing something with Lashley, but the same issue persists: why in the world are they using Lashley for something like this instead of having him in the main event, or at least somewhere higher up? I do like that there's an actual story there though instead of "Here's Lashley. He's really strong."

Post match Raquel says she can bring Lashley pain or pleasure.

Here's Maria to talk about women's wrestling. Women's wrestling may not need a savior but it needs a leader to point it in the right direction. She is the first lady of professional wrestling and she is the arrow and leader. The Knockouts division needs to be saved so out with the old and in with the new. This brings out Gail Kim to proclaim her respect for Maria, as is the custom throughout TNA. Maria says Gail is just a wrestler but that's not all she can be. Gail is even more serious because this division is about wrestling and nothing more. They can fight right

now but Maria leaves.

The Wolves know Beer Money is coming for the titles at some point. Storm shows off the Feast or Fired briefcase but they agree to worry about that later.

Wolves/Beer Money vs. Decay/Bram/Eric Young

This is a Hardcore War, meaning two people (Crazy Steve and Davey Richards) start and fight for two minutes before someone else comes down to make it two on one. Everyone brings a weapon of their choice and it's one fall to a finish. Davey's chair is easily dispatched by Steve's ball bat wrapped in chains but Richards uses the bat to knock the chair into Steve's face.

Bram is in third with a turnbuckle rod and the heels take over on the floor. It's James Storm in fourth with a beer keg that he takes forever to get to the ring. Eventually he puts it between Bram's legs and crushes it with a chair, which the fans implore him to do one more time. Eric Young is in fifth and cleans house with a kendo stick as we take a break.

Back with Eddie in as well and the good guys in control. Bram and Young take over until it's Abyss to complete the villains' team with Janice. Eddie dives on the monster before he can get anywhere but Storm is holding his leg. Pope wants to know how you win this match, which really should have been established before we were fifteen minutes in. Abyss cleans house as he is known to do and it's Bobby Roode to complete the field, though I wonder why there are such strict rules in a **HARDCORE WAR**.

Roode's hockey stick gives the good guys control again and we start the parade of secondary finishers. A seven man team suplex lets all four heroes do the **BEER MONEY** shout but that much time being wasted allows Abyss to get us and clothesline everyone. Davey takes a Black Hole Slam as Eddie and Bram fight to the back. Steve mists Davey, allowing Abyss to hit him with a title, allowing Steve to get the pin at 19:30.

Rating: D+. So it's Lethal Lockdown without the cage. The match was your usual example of a way to kill time on a show with no real substance to anything as control would change every time someone new came in. It's not

horrible or a total waste of time but this was way too long and lost any of its interest early on. At least the Wolves have some fresh challengers.

Angle and Galloway suck up to each other as only TNA upper midcarders can do.

Drew Galloway vs. Tyrus

Neither guy gets an entrance. Tyrus gets in a cheap shot to start but Drew hammers away in the corner. We're already in the nerve hold for a bit before Tyrus misses a charge into the post. Drew chops away and drops him with a top rope shot to the head. That earns him a Heart Punch from Tyrus and some BORING chants from the crowd, only to have Drew powerbomb the big man out of the corner. The lights go out and here's Mike Bennett with the briefcase to knock out Galloway for the DQ at 5:41.

Rating: D. The fans were right about that BORING chant. The problem here is how can you get something interesting out of a guy Tyrus' size when he wrestles such a big power style offense? Drew vs. Bennett should be fun enough but I could have gone for something more interesting to get us there.

Post match Bennett looks down at Drew and does his usual "do you believe in miracles" speech.

Angle talks about possibly retiring as champion when Lashley comes up to say how awesome it would be to win the title back from Angle in the same place Kurt took the title from him last year.

X-Division Title: Tigre Uno vs. Gregory Shane Helms

Not so fast actually as Helms never said the match was against him. Here's what we get instead.

X-Division Title: Tigre Uno vs. Trevor Lee

Lee is challenging of course and thank goodness it's someone fresh. Tigre is in early trouble but a dropkick sends Lee to the floor. A running clothesline drops the champ for two and it's time for some mask ripping.

Tigre comes back with a dropkick and dive over the top but that cool standing double stomp puts Uno down again. The fisherman's buster into a small packages gives Lee the title at 4:50.

Rating: C-. So after all that time with Tigre winning match after match, he loses clean in five minutes? I can actually live with that as the division has been dying for some fresh blood for years now. Also it's not like any of this matters until the main event guys remember the X-Divison is a thing at Destination X anyway so this doesn't mean a ton. Lee is rather different too so this is a bit better.

Up next is the World Title match. Or maybe Ethan's interview as they both say "up next".

The big interview with Ethan is a promo about being undefeated for two years and then realizing that he's kind of been a jerk. The winning got to him until Matt Hardy took everything to put him down. It took the thing he loved the most, the TNA World Title, to finally keep him down. He's coming back to be Matt's shadow and take back what belongs to him. Good stuff here as usual, but unfortunately we're likely stuck waiting for Jeff to be the big conquering hero because of reasons.

TNA World Title: Kurt Angle vs. Matt Hardy

Hardy is defending and an early Reby distraction lets the champ get in a bulldog for two. Tyrus rakes the eyes to slow Kurt down again and Matt grabs a chinlock. Angle fights up and scores with an Angle Slam for two we as take a break. Back with the straps coming down and the ankle lock going on until Matt flips him out to the floor. Tyrus runs Kurt over and goes over to mess with Pope for some reason. Both finishers are countered and it's right back to the ankle lock until Matt rolls through into a cradle for two.

The Side Effect gets the same, followed by the Angle Slam for two more. It's time to roll some Germans, drawing the required SUPLEX CITY chant. Matt finally pulls the referee's shirt over his eyes, allowing a low blow to set up the Twist of Fate for two. More German suplexes allow Angle to go up, only to have Reby offer a distraction. A Twist of Fate (Diamond Cutter really) off the ropes allows Matt to retain at 14:00.

Rating: C+. It was good and a solid way to make Matt look like a bigger deal but there's a limit to how far he can go because, at the end of the day, it's Matt Hardy. To be fair, the wrestling is much better than the talking and thankfully this was a good enough match to make up for a lot of bad stuff earlier tonight.

Overall Rating: D+. The second hour was indeed much better but the first really made this a rough sit. Listening to Matt talk about how iconic he is and hearing about how Eric Young is such an important World Title player again and again is rapidly becoming some of the most ridiculous stuff I've heard in a long time.

As was my problem last year, there are so many people that TNA could use in their World Title scene but we're getting these guys who are "names" instead of people who might be interesting. It doesn't help that TNA is incapable of getting through something quickly so this is what we're likely stuck with for a few more very long months. Carter will help, but there's only so much he can do as a filler challenger.

Results

Lashley b. Aiden O'Shea – Spear

Decay/Bram/Eric Young b. Beer Money/Wolves – Title belt to Richards

Drew Galloway b. Tyrus via DQ when Mike Bennett interfered

Trevor Lee b. Tigre Uno – Fisherman's Buster

Matt Hardy b. Kurt Angle – Super Twist of Fate

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Monday Night Raw – February 1, 2016: It Takes Talent To Be This Shortsighted

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 1, 2016

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

We have a main event set for Fastlane and Brock Lesnar is back tonight to give us all three in the same building tonight. Other than that you can see most of the card from here, but the important questions are what happens between now and Wrestlemania and whether or not new stories will start after the February pay per view. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Brock and Heyman with the former in a new red Suplex City shirt. Heyman immediately talks about the Wyatts, whose plot to get rid of Brock from the Royal Rumble worked, but it isn't keeping him out of the main event of Wrestlemania. Now Lesnar is in a triple threat at Fastlane and that means it's time for Roman Reigns and Dean Ambrose to go to Suplex City. After that, Lesnar will conquer the billion dollar trophy husband to become the new WWE World Heavyweight Champion. Heyman goes back to the triple threat so here's Ambrose to interrupt.

Dean gets right in Brock's face and asks Heyman (or Porky) who he's calling a nutjob. Ambrose isn't stupid, crazy or scared right now because he respects Lesnar. That's why he wants to stand in front of Brock and tell him how much he wants the title. He's willing to fight his brother

and Lesnar at the same time, even though he knows the beating that's coming for him at Fastlane. It better be the best beating Lesnar has ever given though because Dean is going to do whatever it takes to go to Fastlane and take the title from HHH. Dean actually leaves with no violence and Lesnar smiles.

Kalisto vs. Rusev

Non-title and Alberto Del Rio is on commentary because he gets another title shot at Fastlane. Rusev (with Lana in his corner) shoves him around to start but Kalisto starts firing off the kicks that almost every small guy uses against a bigger opponent. A hurricanrana is blocked though, only to have Kalisto stay with it and take Rusev out to the floor. The champ's dive is countered by a kick to the head though and we take a break.

Back with Kalisto charging into a shot in the corner as some of the fans in the front rows are doing the Lucha Dragons dance. A tornado DDT sends Rusev down but he plants Kalisto with a release Rock Bottom for two of his own. As you might expect, Kalisto pops right back up with a dropkick to the knee and the hurricanrana driver.

Rusev obeys the referee's command to kick out but gets kicked to the floor. Kalisto's dive is caught but he escapes what looks like a fall away slam and dropkicks Rusev into the steps. Another hurricanrana sends Rusev into the barricade and Kalisto dives back in for the countout win at 10:11. That was one of the slowest ten counts I've ever seen.

Rating: D+. Yeah yeah we get the idea: Kalisto goes through the League before getting to face Del Rio again. This would be so much easier to watch if we didn't have to see five matches between the two of them in about two months. I'm just tired of seeing the two of them fight, even though the matches are watchable enough.

Stephanie and Reigns are in the back with the new HHH World Title belt when Ambrose comes in. Both guys are willing to do whatever it takes to get that title at Wrestlemania but Stephanie implies that they might turn on each other. She even says Ambrose is Reigns' sidekick but Dean thinks it's the other way around. That earns them a match against New Day in the

main event. Nothing we haven't seen on Smackdown a half dozen times, but WWE doesn't care about Smackdown either.

We look at Nikki Bella's neck surgery.

Brie Bella says her sister is in bed watching the WWE Network. Cue Charlotte and Ric to brag about beating Nikki for the Divas Title. Charlotte would be concerned about Nikki's injuries if she had any reason to. Brie is left looking sad and good night they're actually wanting to make me care about BRIE BELLA feeling bad? That's the point we've reached?

Usos vs. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose

The Usos are announced as the Grammy Award winning Tag Team of the Year. They even re-air it after the break to make fun of Lillian's flub. There's no Bo Dallas due to his dad being in the hospital, so Slater says he's in the studio after his battle with Flo Rida last week. Axel kicks Jey in the ribs to start and it's off to Rose, who comes in with a top rope knee to the chest. The announcers go on about Stephanie suggesting that absolute power corrupts absolutely because they exist to push her stupid lines.

Axel's chinlock keeps things slow and Rose's makes it even worse until Jimmy Enziguris him down. Jey comes in with a bunch of superkicks (including one where Axel telegraphed it worse than anything I've seen in years). At least four superkicks in a row set up a double superkick and the Superfly Splash for the pin on Rose at 5:11.

Rating: 0. For obnoxious. Yeah Lillian screwed up a line so let's spend the whole match going on and on because NO ONE IN WWE HAS EVER SCREWED UP A LINE BECAUSE THEY'RE TOTALLY PERFECT AND THE GREATEST THING EVER. It's stuff like that which makes the whole company seem so stuck up that it drives me insane. Get over yourselves already and call the match instead of making fun of Garcia (a woman that people like Kevin Dunn, who I would almost bet was behind that whole thing, could never get) or talking about how insightful Stephanie's stuff was. The match sucked by the way.

Back from a break with WWE bragging about being on American Airlines in-

flight magazine. Yeah that gets ten seconds but Lillian's flub gets a full match.

It's time for MizTV with special guest AJ Styles. Miz gets right to the point by cutting off AJ before he can say a word to every question. He lists off AJ's accomplishments such as being the smallest guy on the football team and coming from rural Georgia. AJ has gone all over the world and finally got to the WWE where he lasted nearly half an hour in the Royal Rumble. Then he defeated Chris Jericho in his debut match, which is a big reason why Miz sees a lot of Daniel Bryan in AJ.

Miz goes on another rant about how he fathered the YES Movement before telling the fans to be quiet. The fans think AJ (who hasn't said a word yet) can make it in the WWE without Miz's guidance but there's no chance of that happening. That's enough for AJ as he goes off on Miz in the corner and chases him off for the big hero moment. I get the idea here, but Miz actually gave AJ quite the introduction, which was probably the other intended purpose.

Brie Bella vs. Charlotte

Non-title, mainly because Brie never wins anything and therefore probably shouldn't be in this story. Brie starts fast but the BRIE MODE knee is countered with Charlotte sending her to the floor. The figure four neck lock keeps Brie in trouble but she makes the required clothesline comeback. Now the BRIE MODE knee (minus the shouting of BRIE MODE) connects and it's off to a sleeper, only to have Ric get up on the apron. Amazingly enough the powers of Alicia Fox aren't enough to do anything, allowing Charlotte to use something like a Stunner to escape. Charlotte slaps on the Figure Four but gets rolled up for the pin at 4:45.

Rating: F. GAH THIS STUPID FREAKING COMPANY!!! So we already have the triple threat set up at Fastlane with the three NXT women but now we get the addition of BRIE BELLA so the spirit of Nikki can be upon us. I'm sure Brie will be fighting for her sister's honor or some nonsense like that because Brie and Nikki are now faces after being heels for like ever because of reasons that aren't important enough to explain. Didn't they learn anything in the Divas Revolution when Brie was dragging down every

freaking match she was in with the NXT women? And it was a clean pin. On the champion. Live on Raw. Just so much dumb.

We look back at Big Show saving Reigns and Ambrose from the Wyatts on Smackdown.

Erick Rowan vs. Big Show

Show grabs the stairs to hold off Strowman and the announcers somehow don't bring up the stairs match these two had a few years back. Rowan can't suplex Show (because he's a big bad show tonight) and after spearing Strowman off the apron, the chokeslam puts Rowan away at 1:20.

Post match the Wyatts (minus Bray who is in Florida with his dad as well) beat Show down and slam him onto the steps.

Titus O'Neil vs. Tyler Breeze

At least Breeze has his full entrance back. Titus throws him into the corner to start but Breeze is smart enough to take out the knee, which is quickly wrapped around the post. We hit the half crab on Titus before he throws Tyler across the ring all the way from his back. A HUGE clothesline drops Breeze and the Clash of the Titus is good for the pin at 2:49.

HHH comes in to see Brock and asks why Dean was allowed to live. Brock says he'll see HHH at Wrestlemania.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Owens won last week and that's got me very worried here. It's a brawl to start with Owens naturally getting the better of it. Ziggler gets thrown over the top and into the timekeeper's area as we take a break. Back with Ziggler jawbreaking his way out of a chinlock but getting crushed by the Cannonball for two. A hard elbow drops Ziggler again but he avoids a charge in the corner and hits three straight Stinger Splashes.

Thankfully Kevin will have none of that and clotheslines Dolph's head off, only to get dumped out to the floor. Back in and Owens superkicks Dolph's head off for two but takes too long going up. Ziggler's superplex

is blocked though, allowing Owens to get him into the Tree of Woe. Another Cannonball connects (that looked great) and now the Pop Up Powerbomb is...countered into the Zig Zag for the pin at 10:35.

Rating: D+. That's mostly for the ending because WWE is going out of their way to screw themselves over. Kevin Owens has the potential to be something fun and fresh as a heel but we need the 50/50 booking with DOLPH ZIGGLER. Owens could be a World Champion (and if there has EVER been a time when they need someone to step up and be a big deal, it might be before Wrestlemania with Rollins and Cena both hurt) by the end of the year but he's losing here because of whatever stupid philosophy they have. This actually made me mad and what makes it even worse is that you knew it was coming the whole way.

Video on Mark Henry for Black History Month.

Here's Sasha Banks for a match but first she has something to say. Sasha says she's on her own and no one is going to stop her from winning the title. This brings out Naomi and Tamina because the world was waiting for the Team BAD blowoff. Naomi says she knew this was coming but Sasha wants them to still be friends. They do the UNITY pose and everything seems cool. Of course.

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

They trade rollups to start with Sasha getting the better of it and hitting the double knees in the corner. Becky gets knocked to the floor but Sasha doesn't want Tamina and Naomi to help. She says she doesn't need the help so Tamina and Naomi pull her to the floor for the DQ 3:40.

Rating: D+. No time of course because the NXT women never get a chance to do anything. I'd like to repeat though: no one cares about Tamina and Naomi and they're clearly just doing this (possibly a tag feud for Fastlane) so we can get BRIE BELLA as a title contender. Yeah it's a fill in challenger, but why not spend the extra time setting up your big Wrestlemania match instead of wasting your time on a nothing feud with no drama?

Post match Becky saves Sasha from the beatdown.

We get a clip of JBL interviewing Ron Simmons on the Network.

Chris Jericho says everyone has been talking about AJ Styles...except for him. Everything about their match last week was tremendous except for the outcome. AJ showed that he's a tenacious pitbull and Jericho is going to be watching AJ's match with Miz on Smackdown.

R-Truth goes into the bathroom and finds Goldust crouching on the toilet. Goldust still won't take no for an answer on the team but Truth thinks Goldust is a weirdo. That means it's time to bring up Little Jimmy, which seems to get to Truth a bit. Remember like eight days ago when Truth was still crazy and not the straight man in these vignettes?

New Day vs. Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Non-title because the champions need to lose again and Heyman is on commentary. Before the match, Woods talks about how the comments from Rock have Francesca so upset that she can't sleep at night. Rocky needs to think of the children, like the one they point at in the front row doing the New Day dance. Tonight they're taking care of Rock's cousin and they'll throw in Dean too.

Reigns and Kofi get things going with Kingston having to get out of a Samoan Drop, earning himself a right hand to the head. It's off to Dean for a basement clothesline as Heyman is already frustrated with Cole's talk about Ambrose staring Lesnar down earlier. The threat of the Superman Punch causes Woods and Big E. to pull Kofi to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Big E. missing the Apron Splash but Ambrose is kept in trouble with a whip into the steps. Kofi kicks him in the head for two as Woods jumps in on commentary to yell about how awesome they are. Ambrose stays in trouble and Big E. gets two off a splash. Heyman is trying to get in on this but there's only so much you can do with Woods blasting that trombone.

We hit the abdominal stretch (Woods: "Stretch the abs!") but Dean doesn't like the spanking and bites Big E.'s nose. A suplex allows the hot tag to Reigns and it's time for some corner clotheslines. The other hot tag

brings in Ambrose as everything breaks down. The Superman Punch sets up Dirty Deeds on Big E. for the pin at 17:22.

Rating: D+. Hey look: champions lose again clean. This is how things work in WWE this time of year and they really don't care how obvious they make it coming in. The match was fine but they made it clear that New Day was losing here for the sake of pushing Reigns and Ambrose. Pushing the two of them is fine, but it's really sad that they had no one else to lose to Reigns and Ambrose. Can you imagine sitting through another League "showdown"?

Post match Brock comes out for the showdown but New Day attacks Reigns, allowing Brock to F5 Ambrose to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Oh man this one was rough. This was a show where they made it clear that they don't care what's going on until the night after Fastlane, which makes me wonder why I'm going to watch until then. We're getting stuff like Brie Bella fighting for the spirit of her sister, whose goal in life is to get John Cena to marry and impregnate her. That's my hero in the Divas division.

On top of that, there's the nonsense with the 50/50 booking. Again: the roster is so depleted right now and tonight we saw Dolph Ziggler, the definition of career midcarder, is beating Kevin Owens clean. Why? Just because Owens won last week and we need to set up something at Fastlane. Instead of having Owens look like a killer and setting up something big at Wrestlemania, we need to see this nothing feud and story that is only taking place to fill in time before we get to Wrestlemania.

Then why have Fastlane? Why not just give us a ten week build to Wrestlemania? That's where WWE loses me. It's clear that they're just having a filler show at Fastlane, so why should I bother paying attention for the next three weeks? They're resetting again after the show and we've got a month before the biggest show of all time. Well done on making it feel special WWE. Really, it takes talent to be this shortsighted.

Results

Kalisto b. Rusev via countout

Usos b. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose – Superfly Splash to Rose

Brie Bella b. Charlotte – Small package

Big Show b. Erick Rowan – Chokeslam

Titus O'Neil b. Tyler Breeze – Clash of the Titus

Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens – Zig Zag

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. New Day – Dirty Deeds to Big E.

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WWE Potentially Spoils Hall of Fame Inductee

Or maybe I'm overthinking this. So over on WWE.com, there's an article on stars' first Raw matches. The caption asks if this "future Hall of Famer" looks familiar. The picture is of JBL, who hasn't been announced as a member of this year's class but it's certainly possible in Texas.

Wrestling Wars Podcast

Episode 38

Royal Rumble review with KB and NorCal, plus a Bastion Booger retrospective.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-38-royal-rumble-and-rumble-aftermath-review-with-kb/>

Thunder – September 6, 2000: Goldberg Breaks Canada

Thunder

Date: September 6, 2000

Location: Reed Arena, College Station, Texas

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone, Stevie Ray

We're getting closer to Fall Brawl and we're now past the big waste of time known as WarGames 2000. In theory that means it's time to crank up the storylines but who knows what that could mean around here. To be fair though Thunder was actually a really good show last week so maybe I have some hope here. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

MI Smooth takes the Natural Born Thrillers to the Power Plant.

Kwee Wee vs. Lieutenant Loco

This has potential and is a #1 contenders match. Before they can get anything going, here are Elix Skipper and Major Gunns for commentary. Kwee Wee grabs a slam to start and stomps Chavo in the corner before throwing him down with a quick suplex. That's fine with Chavo as he comes back with a quick brainbuster but can't get the tornado DDT. They're flying through this. Instead he shoves Kwee Wee away, only to get crotched by Paisley, allowing Kwee Wee to drop him with a hanging DDT for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: C. As usual, letting the wrestlers wrestle is the best idea they can have around here. Kwee Wee is still working hard in the ring but there's no way around this stupid gimmick. I mean, what is he supposed to do with a gimmick that is destined to stay a goofy comedy guy instead of anything serious?

Post match the three women (Tygress as the third) get in a fight, only to have Skipper pull Gunns away before the MIA can save her.

The announcers talk about the history between Goldberg and Bret Hart. I don't know if WCW knew that Hart wasn't going to be able to get in the ring again but this is pretty close to false advertising by implying that this was leading to a match.

The sitdown interview is with David Flair and Miss Hancock before their wedding on Monday. It's about time they built that thing up.

We go back to the Power Plant with the Thrillers returning to their old stomping grounds. They offer to give the guys in the ring some training but Mike Graham actually gets Sanders in a Figure Four. The beatdown is on and the Thrillers leave them laying. A guy cleaning the floor gets beaten up too and it's time for the big showdown with Paul Orndorff. They let themselves into his office and Paul tries to throw them out to no avail. Orndorff asks what happened to them but the Thrillers beat him down as well. Security finally breaks it up but this did its job.

It's time for the sitdown interview with David Flair and Miss Hancock. Tenay gets right to the point by asking if Ric will be there. Didn't we cover that on Monday with Arn? David hasn't talked to his family but they're welcome to come if they like. Mike calls Hancock a gold digger

(she was reaching into David's pockets for something) before asking if David will be a better father than Ric. They argue over whether that's personal or not (it kind of is Mike) and that's it. Mike gives them six months at most. So Gene's gimmick is that he's a dirty old man and Tenay's is that he's just a jerk while doing interviews? How does this help anything?

Goldberg is looking for Hart.

Clip from before Nitro of the Harris Twins beating Kronik down in a bar.

Kronik vs. 3 Count

Well last week the Dragons were beaten down so I guess it's 3 Count's turn. The band calls out the big guys and the beating is quickly on. Helms gets in a quick superkick on Clark but Karagias eats the full nelson slam. Not that it matters as the Harris Twins appear, drawing Kronik up the ramp for a countout. After destroying 3 Count of course.

Post match Tank Abbott comes out and pummels 3 Count to make sure they get nothing out of this show.

Bret is here and has security guarding his locker room. Smart.

Crowbar says he's ready for Troy Martin (Shane Douglas). Again I ask: how does this help anything? Yeah that's his real name and how does that make me want to see their match any more?

It's time to make things even worse as we have the debut of the Lava Lamp Lounge, as in Mike Awesome's 70s themed talk show. Apparently he isn't just into fat chicks anymore because there's enough Vitamin A to go around. His guest tonight: Paula Pamshock (exactly as he said it).

As expected Awesome hits on her with some of the worst lines you've ever heard until Jeff Jarrett comes out for the interruption. Jarrett: "You look like a cross between John Travolta in Saturday Night Live and Austin Powers." That might be worse than Paula Pamshock. It's the big brawl with the set being destroyed but Okerlund runs out to save Pamela from the guitar shot, which takes Awesome out instead. Predictable but fine, save for the horrible screwing up lines.

Crowbar vs. Shane Douglas

Now remember: real names were used so this is a big deal. Before the match, Shane rips on Goldberg because that's still supposed to be a thing. Crowbar has taped ribs so Shane goes after them before the bell, only to get punched and bitten in the corner. A baseball slide sends Shane to the floor and Crowbar, with the bad ribs, does his splash off the apron. Maybe it's because he's crazy?

Shane gets smart and sends Crowbar ribs first into the barricade a few times before throwing on an abdominal stretch back inside. The hold is broken as quickly as most other abdominal stretches are after 1958 and Crowbar starts whipping him with a belt. The northern lights suplex and Death Valley Driver get two each on Shane but Crowbar goes after Torrie (for interfering) and walks into the Franchiser for the pin.

Rating: D. This could have been good had Crowbar remembered he had bad ribs to start and if I didn't have to listen to Shane doing his really weak heel stuff before the match. I'm really not sure what they're going for with Shane at the moment as the feud with Kidman hasn't been mentioned in a week, though I'm sure it's supposed to be a big enough deal that we just go with it.

Post match Daffney comes out to brawl with Torrie. Ozzy (the boyfriend) comes out but gets beaten down by Shane. This brings out Madusa of all people to drop Shane with an enziguri.

Goldberg beats up the security guards and there's no Bret inside.

Here's Bret with something to say. He wants to know what happened to wrestling with people like Mike Awesome being wasted in stuff like that segment he was just in. Vince Russo has the stroke around here but everyone knows he's the best in the world. Bret has beaten everyone in the WWF and now he's beaten everyone here too, including Goldberg. The only person that ever gave him a chance was Vince Russo, who gave him title shots the second he got here.

We see the Bret Killer Kick from Starrcade, which cost him millions of dollars. "I couldn't even buy that ranch I wanted." Goldberg claims to be

some kind of animal activist but he treated Bret worse than any animal. Cue Goldberg to say if this was the normal version of him, he'd have already taken Bret's head off. Believe it or not, he has some remorse. There are times where he wishes it was him that got his head kicked off. Bret wishes that every day because all Goldberg cares about is his merchandise being on the shelf.

Goldberg says he was doing his job but every night he has to wonder. When Goldberg was growing up, Bret was one of the people he looked up to. Goldberg is 34 here so the timing doesn't work here, but he tries to leave because Bret isn't worth it anymore. Bret says Goldberg isn't the real thing and that's enough to get him back in the ring. Cue Scott Steiner with a pipe to lay Goldberg out and put him in the Recliner.

WCW Motorsports, with Vampiro completely out of character.

Steiner leaves the building.

Tag Team Titles: Filthy Animals vs. Harris Brothers

The Brothers are challenging while Konnan/Disco do commentary. Juvy starts fast with a springboard dropkick to we'll say Ron before it's off to Don for some no selling and power beating. A sideslam gets two and it's already Juvy in trouble. It's back to Ron (like it matters) who gets kicked in the face and taken down by a springboard bulldog.

Rey finally gets the tag as everything breaks down, including Tygress coming in for a Bronco Buster. Juvy gets kicked low but here's Kronik because we didn't have enough interference yet. Kronik lays out Disco for no apparent reason before Clark throws Rey at one of the Brothers for the pin to retain.

Rating: D. I'd still love to hear the pitch meeting where the Harris Brothers got jobs for so long. Was there really any good reason to go with the other than they're big and look alike? I'm really not sure what the appeal is of them looking alike as they wrestle the same style anyway. At least with a team like the Usos you get something entertaining more often than not. The Harris Brothers are just big generic power guys who happen to be identical. That warrants employment for some reason.

Video on WarGames, which means the whole show.

After the show, Booker and his friends/family promised to get the title back at Fall Brawl. Cool moment, which is why it wasn't on Nitro but Russo got to talk about 18 times.

Video on Sting vs. Vampiro, which is continuing for whatever reason.

Sting vs. Vampiro

Anything goes and we're getting the Clowns on commentary to make this show so much better. The Clowns introduce themselves and offer "Tony Zimbabwe" three dollars to shill for JCW. This is also NOT for the JCW Title because Sting hasn't beaten Mad Man Pondo. They head outside to start with Vampiro sending him into the barricade before taking it into the crowd.

We get the usual punching and walking until Sting takes it back to ringside for a whip into the barricade of his own. Sting goes face first into the announcers' table so J can get in a right hand to the head. The Iranian Judo Attack (a clothesline) puts Sting down but he pops up and sends the Clowns running away. A lame chair to the head drops Vampiro and they head back inside as the Clowns freak out that Tony has lost his coloring book.

Vampiro comes back with chops but we might have some stolen food stamps. The Olive Loaf Chop staggers Sting but he slams Vampiro off the top for a comeback. Vampiro starts in on the leg (with the Saline Sam Coconut Crunch Lock) before kicking Sting in the face. There's the Stinger Splash but but Shaggy throws the JCW Title at Sting's leg. Not that it matters as the Death Drop knocks Vampiro silly for the pin. However, JCW rules say the loser wins and \$5 of your ticket cost will go into Violent J's pockets.

Rating: D+. The commentary was absolutely hilarious and the wrestling was really just there as a backdrop. The Clowns may not be the best wrestlers in the world (or really even close) but at least they're good for something around here. I really wish we could get past this Sting vs. Vampiro nonsense, but what in the world could they have for either guy

next?

Post match Sting gets beaten down until Great Muta makes the save.

Goldberg is in the ring and calls out Bret Hart for a fight right here. Instead he gets Team Canada because they're all the same right?

Team Canada vs. Goldberg

Goldberg yawns through the Canadian national anthem and the Canadians argue over who has to start. Storm throws Skipper at Goldberg and it's a spear to the Cruiserweight Champion in about ten seconds. There goes Storm up the ramp but General Rection cuts him off. Back in and the spear into the Jackhammer ends Storm with ease. So much for the titles meaning anything around here.

Overall Rating: D+. This was a story heavy show but not in the stupid way that Nitro tends to go. I can live with a show that focuses on talking and setting up things for later, but it really doesn't matter if the stories don't have the chance to go anywhere when every Monday gets more and more insane. We've actually reached the point where Thunder is the bright spot in WCW and I'm not sure how to handle that.

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Lucha Underground – January 27, 2016 (Season 2 Premiere): This Is Going To Be Fun

Lucha Underground

Date: January 27, 2016

Location: Lucha Underground Temple, Boyle Heights, California

Commentators: Matt Striker, Vampiro

It's FINALLY back. This is one of the most interesting wrestling shows you'll ever see with some long form storytelling that can only be rivaled by companies like Chikara which are just as out there as this one. The first season ended with Mil Muertes and Catrina dominating everyone else and Dario Cueto running away from the temple, meaning we're likely to start with some fallout. Let's get to it.

We open in a psychiatric ward with Vampiro (called Ian here) having violent flashbacks to his match with Pentagon Jr. from Ultima Lucha, though denying that he has them anymore. The doctor gives him anti-psychotic pills which he promises that he'll take. He's also told to avoid the people and places that trigger these episodes, prompting him to fantasize about beating up the medical staff. That's enough to warrant a release...into the desert, where Matt Striker picks him up in a vintage convertible (under a sheet for some reason). There's an invitation for them to return to the Temple, but it's a much darker place.

This is an AWESOME way to start the new season as it felt like a teaser scene instead of just another opening sequence. The production values feel like something out of a studio TV show instead of the run of the mill wrestling style that has been the same for going on twenty years now. I don't know if it's the Robert Rodriguez influence or what but as Randy Savage said about all the robes he bought: if you look like something important, people will think you're something important.

We go to Cueto's former office which has been taken over by Catrina. Fenix comes in with the Gift of the Gods Title, which he plans to cash in

tonight. Catrina says wait until next week (which was the rule) because tonight, he defends it against King Cuerno. "Run along now little birdie."

Mil Muertes now sits on a throne above the temple (where the band used to be, which is a welcome subtraction) in an awesome visual.

Gift of the Gods Title: King Cuerno vs. Fenix

Fenix is defending. They trade some armdrags to start with Fenix snapping off a standing moonsault for no cover. Striker: "THIS IS LUCHA UNDERGROUND!" Oh man it's going to be a long season. Cuerno bails to the floor but catches a baseball slide for a hanging DDT. Well that accelerated quickly. The big suicide dive sends Fenix into the barricade for two but the champ comes right back with a springboard dropkick.

Another springboard into an armdrag sets up a Lethal Injection (still hate that move) and Cuerno heads outside again, only to get taken down by a huge corkscrew plancha. Back in and a Helluva Kick staggers Cuerno, only to have him come back with a running forearm to the jaw. A second Lethal Injection into a dragon sleeper (top that Jay) has Cuerno in trouble but he escapes into a surfboard.

That's not it either though as he pulls Fenix down into a dragon sleeper of his own before kicking Fenix face first into the middle buckle. Back up and Fenix loads up a superplex, only to get behind Cuerno for a top rope double stomp to the back of the head. Cuerno's Thrill of the Hunt gets two and he stomps a mudhole in the corner. Fenix pops up again and misses a springboard 450, allowing Cuerno to debut a package tombstone piledriver for the pin and the title.

Rating: B. Oh yeah they're back. I know the style (and the severe lack of selling) can be an issue if you're not used to it but these matches are some of the most fun you'll have watching wrestling. The piledriver is a great finisher for Cuerno, though I'm not sure he can use it on everyone, including Muertes. Really good start to the season though.

Son of Havoc, Angelico and Ivelisse arrive on their motorcycles, presumably fresh from White Castle.

We get a quick look at Johnny Mundo's workout. I love little segments like that as they make the show feel bigger.

Catrina tells Ivelisse/Havoc/Angelico that Muertes wants to see them fight....each other. Havoc isn't happy but it's for a shot at Muertes' title. Ivelisse accepts for the team because she wants to beat up Katrina after she wins.

Catrina comes to the ring and whispers something in Melissa Santos' ear.

Cuerno (looking ridiculous in a cowboy shirt and hat) is leaving when Katrina comes in and says to remember their deal. The new champion says she and Katrina have nothing to worry about.

Prince Puma is the luchador of the week (complete with a sponsor). Again, nice touch that makes the place look more professional and important. We get a quick profile and some highlights.

Ivelisse vs. Son of Havoc vs. Angelico

The winner gets the title shot. It seems that Katrina came out to tell Melissa the match because the announcers didn't know what they were about to see. Sweet goodness THAT ACTUALLY MAKES SENSE! They trade rollups to start and it's a three way standoff to some nice applause. Ivelisse starts striking and knocks both guys into different corners, only to have Angelico blast her with a running knee.

Now it's Havoc getting hit in the face over and over for two but Ivelisse comes back with a high cross body for two on Angelico. Ivelisse sends both guys together but Havoc drops her again. Angelico and Ivelisse are both sent outside for back to back suicide dives (a VERY popular move around here) before Havoc's standing moonsault gets two on Angelico back inside. Ivelisse crotches Havoc on top though and grabs a quick rollup on Angelico for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: C+. Another fun match here as Ivelisse gets to show off a bit without having a broken ankle. It's also quite the surprise as you really wouldn't have expected her to get the win and actually set up a man vs. woman title shot, especially in Muertes' first title defense. This was

more fun than good, but that's Lucha Underground in a nutshell.

Three guys are 375 miles from Boyle Heights when they run into Black Lotus. They're looking for the Temple (of course) and she tells them to follow her.

Lucha Underground Title: Mil Muertes vs. Ivelisse

Muertes is defending of course. Before the match, cue the Disciples of Death to carry off Angelico and Son of Havoc to keep this one on one. Muertes shoves her down to start as Striker tries to explain how Ivelisse can win. A backbreaker has Ivelisse in trouble and a kick to the chest drops her again.

Back up and Ivelisse tries a guillotine for as much success as you would expect before being thrown down. She stays at it with an armbreaker over the ropes and Muertes actually holds his wrist for a second. A tornado DDT gets two and sends Striker through the roof. Catrina gets in with the rock but gets speared by mistake, giving Ivelisse a VERY hot two count. Not that it matters as the Flatliner retains the title a few seconds later.

Rating: C+. For a less than five minute match, this was as fun and close to making you believe something was going to happen as it was going to be. There was no way they were changing the title on the first show but at least we had a great near fall and Muertes showing the slightest bit of vulnerability. That helps set things up going forward and keeps Ivelisse, who was weakened coming in, looking strong. Well done.

Post match Catrina teases the Lick of Death but opts for more punishment from Muertes instead. Cue Prince Puma for the big staredown but he saves Ivelisse instead of fighting like a true hero. Puma bails so here's Pentagon Jr. (sending Vampiro into a near trance), now clearly a cult hero and BIG face, to drop Muertes with a Backstabber and break his arm. You knew this was coming but it was actually more awesome than I was expecting.

Post credits, Lotus and the three guys arrive. Before they get inside, they run into Dario Cueto. The guys don't believe the hype so Lotus beats

one of them up without looking at him. They have to pay \$20 each to get in and Cueto unlocks the door. He lets them in and you can hear Matanza slaughtering all three of them to wrap things up.

Overall Rating: A-. Oh yeah it's back. One of the biggest worries I had about this season was a big letdown coming off the awesome first season. However, this was full speed ahead and felt like they really did just pick up six months later. Everything is bigger and better this season and I'm really curious to see where they're going. You have to assume that Pentagon vs. Muertes is the first title program but I can't imagine they stretch that all the way out to Ultima Lucha. Throw in all the Muertes/Catrina stuff and Cuerno possibly being on the evil side and I'm really looking forward to where this stuff goes.

It's a true alternative to WWE, unlike so many companies which claim to be and are really just another wrestling show like so many others you can find. Now that they have a bigger budget (in theory) and A TON of hype coming into this season, it should be interesting to see how far they can go. It's an excellent start to the second season and this should be excellent going forward.

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Smackdown – January 28, 2016: But He Hit It Here

Smackdown

Date: January 28, 2016

Location: Amalie Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

We've got a main event for Fastlane now, which means we'll have a main event for Wrestlemania in just a few weeks. This past Monday on Raw, it was announced that Roman Reigns, Dean Ambrose and Brock Lesnar will face off for the World Title shot at Wrestlemania against HHH, which doesn't make a ton of sense but should be a good match. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of the Royal Rumble and Monday's fallout.

Opening sequence.

Here's the New Day who shame the Rock after seeing a recap of his surprise appearance on Monday. Rock is clearly just jealous of their gold (it's bronze actually) because he insulted the unicorn horns. This brings out the Miz of all people, who says he feels their pain. How dare Rock insult one of his fellow movie stars? Miz deserves respect but here are the Usos to interrupt as well.

They get on him for still talking about main eventing Wrestlemania, but maybe that's where he got the money to buy that dress. Woods: "Miz has the best mouth in the business." Big E. laughs at the Usos for never winning any gold and Kofi says the Usos' cousin Dewey isn't here for the rescue. The Usos aren't worried because here are Titus O'Neil and Dolph Ziggler to help with the brawl.

New Day/Miz vs. Usos/Titus O'Neil/Dolph Ziggler

Miz and Jey get things going with the Uso sending him into the corner for some dancing. Woods refers to Jey as a varmint as it's off to Titus vs. Kofi. Kingston dropkicks him down and it's off to Ziggler. Big E. gets in

a slam but Ziggler dives away and makes the tag off to Jimmy as things pick up again. There's the running Umaga Attack (with Ranallo actually mentioning Umaga) to Big E., who pops up and belly to bellies Jimmy into the corner.

The Unicorn Stampede has Jimmy in more trouble and we get some sweet Francesca II. Jimmy finally knocks Woods down and makes the tag off to Titus for some house cleaning. A powerslam gets two on Miz and everything breaks down. The Usos hit stereo dives on Big E. and Kofi and Ziggler superkicks Miz into the Clash of the Titus for the pin at 7:54.

Rating: C-. What is up with the Titus push lately? I know it's not likely to go anywhere but he's getting pins on TV and actually looking like something of note. It might be due to the charity stuff he's been doing lately but it's cool to see someone getting a mini push. The match was fine and at least Miz took the fall.

US Title: Kalisto vs. Neville

Kalisto is defending and we get some Big Match Intros. They hit the ropes to start and Kalisto does a walking handstand to show off. Neville is sent to the floor and Kalisto snaps off a hurricanrana into the barricade. They get back inside and we take an early break. Back with Kalisto springboarding into a sitout powerbomb for two as Neville is having to wrestle as the default heel.

Neville lifts him up into a fireman's carry and goes up top, only to have Kalisto reverse into a top rope hurricanrana for a huge crash. Back up and Neville fires off the kicks to the ribs but the lifting German suplex is countered into a rollup for two. Neville tries it again and gets countered into something like a Salida Del Sol to retain Kalisto's title at 8:54.

Rating: C+. Botches aside, this was a fun match with Kalisto getting to show off against someone who can wrestle a similar style. I know the ending wasn't the smoothest in the world but it's cool to see Kalisto hitting that move from almost any angle. It makes it that much more dangerous and that's going to give him a lot more mileage.

They shake hands post match.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with Jericho talking about having a great run in the Royal Rumble, only to have HHH come in and win in the end. That win helped set up the main event of Fastlane with the triple threat for the #1 contendership. Therefore, his guests tonight are Roman Reigns and Dean Ambrose.

After presenting Jericho with a potted plant and a stool to help replace some of the often destroyed set, they say they're not jealous people so they aren't going to lose their friendship over this match. Dean says he's going to punch Reigns in the face and kick him in the ribs as soon as the bell rings and that's just fine with Roman.

Jericho brings up Brock, who Dean has never faced before. Ambrose says Brock is the most destructive force but that doesn't matter when you're indestructible. Reigns doesn't think it's that simple, but Dean points out that he can just beat Roman to get the shot. Reigns: "Well it would be the first time because you never have before." Cue the Wyatts to say they slayed the Beast but Reigns says he doesn't get what they're talking about. A challenge is issued but Bray says patience. This seems to be the main event.

Here are the Social Outcasts to talk about how they should be trending. Instead people are talking about AJ Styles, who they call the phenomenal anomaly. Axel yells about being eliminated for over a year until AJ jumped him from behind.

AJ Styles vs. Curtis Axel

Styles starts fast with the drop down into the dropkick as Lawler goes on a rant about how AJ's past accomplishments don't mean a thing around here. Axel knocks him down in the corner and scores with a backbreaker, only to miss a middle rope elbow. Styles misses the middle rope moonsault into the reverse DDT but it looked enough like a Pele to count. A flip dive takes out Slater and Dallas and it's the Pele into the Styles Clash to pin Axel at 3:20.

Rating: D+. So he can't hit it in the Royal Rumble and he can't hit it in

the match against Jericho but he can hit it against Axel in a nothing match on Smackdown? That's their thinking here? At least they haven't stopped his push yet, which is actually a relief after all the other people this company has screwed up.

Charlotte vs. Natalya

Non-title and Natalya says the Queen of Harts is back. Charlotte gets rolled up for an early two and the basement dropkick sends the champ into the corner. Natalya follows her in and gets kicked in the face for her efforts, followed by an abdominal stretch to slow things down. A dropkick and some chops have Natalya in even more trouble but she sends Charlotte to the floor. Some WOOing distracts Natalya though and Charlotte gets in a chop block, setting up the Figure Eight for the submission at 3:53.

Rating: C-. They're firmly in the Evolution formula now with Flair causing all the distractions and setting up the endings. At some point they need to change things up because that formula got old back in the day and it's already getting boring here. Natalya being back in the ring is a good thing as the division can always use talented veterans.

Charlotte puts the hold on again but Becky Lynch runs in for the save.

R-Truth is getting ready for a run when Goldust comes up. Jokes about stretching and massaging a groin strain ensue, though this time R-Truth seems intrigued by the idea of a team.

Wyatt Family vs. Chris Jericho/Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Strowman is the odd man out here. Rowan chops Jericho into the corner to start but it's quickly off to Dean for a kick to the ribs. Reigns gets in a quick turn before it's back to Jericho, who is dragged into the corner for the tag off to Harper. Some shots to the throat have Chris in trouble but he comes back with a dropkick and enziguri. No tag though as he pounds in right hands instead.

The bad idea results in Harper coming back with a suplex for two as we take a break. Back with Rowan putting on the head vice for a bit before a backbreaker gets two on Jericho. Harper comes in for a leg lock of all

things, followed by a more traditional chinlock. Bray seems a bit disappointed that we didn't get a broken limb. A Michinoku Driver gets two for Harper but he's smart enough to kick Reigns off the apron. Jericho grabs a one knee Codebreaker for a breather, allowing the hot tag off to Ambrose.

The top rope elbow gets two on Rowan and everything breaks down with Dean diving onto Bray. Dean goes up again but dives into a spinwheel kick from Rowan, allowing Bray to come in for the backsplash. The rebound lariat drops Wyatt though and the hot tag brings in Roman to clean house. Everything breaks down again and the good guys take over, setting up the Superman Punch for two on Harper with Strowman pulling Roman to the floor for the DQ at 13:41.

Rating: C. Totally run of the mill six man tag here and that's not the most interesting thing in the world. I like that they didn't feel the need to give the Wyatts another clean loss and went with the DQ instead. Hopefully Bray can be kept strong leading into his match Brock, though I'm still not sure how strong that's going to be.

Post match the Wyatts destroy the good guys until Big Show of all people comes out for the save. Show is beaten down as well but the good guys get up and help clean house to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. There were a few good things here and there but above all else this show was lacking. Smackdown shows promise once in a while but then it gets stuck with this lame formula of tag matches and meaningless midcard stuff which is almost never mentioned again. It's fine for a quick show but nothing necessary to remember by the time the next Raw airs.

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Ring of Honor TV – January 27, 2016: Prospects Jumping Into Japanese Lawsuits About Burgers

Ring of Honor

Date: January 27, 2016

Location: Cabarrus Arena and Events Center, Concord, North Carolina

Commentators: Kevin Kelly, Mr. Wrestling 3

It's a new taping cycle as we're out of Philadelphia and now moving towards the Anniversary Show pay per view. However, we've got something interesting for tonight as well with the start of the Top Prospect Tournament. This is an annual competition for newcomers (not necessarily rookies) and has led to the rises of names like Mike Bennett, Matt Taven and Donovan Dijak. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Top Prospect Tournament First Round: Brian Fury vs. Shaheem Ali

Fury is a seventeen year veteran and trained Sasha Banks. Ali shrugs off some headlocks to start as Kelly recaps both guys' injury histories. A wristlock doesn't get Ali anywhere so he knees Fury in the head and gets two off a basement dropkick. Back up and Fury rolls him into the corner (because in today's wrestling, it's all about doing something to send someone into the corner), followed by a belly to back for two.

Ali comes back with a gutwrench sitout powerbomb for two of his own before taking Fury outside for a t-bone suplex on the floor. Back in and Fury grabs the referee's foot for a distraction to bring Ali's head off the top, setting up a Pop Up Sitout Powerbomb for the pin on Ali at 5:55.

Rating: C. You can see the problem with the tournament from here: there's no reason for these people to be fighting and I have almost no idea who any of them are. It might be cool if someone stands out over the rest but this was two guys doing moves to each other for a few minutes before one of them got a pin. I need more than that to care about a match and especially a tournament.

Here are Veda Scott and Cedric Alexander to brag about their victory in their lawsuit against Ring of Honor. Jonathan Gresham got lucky to beat Alexander, who deserves shots at the best talent in the world. That means an open challenge.

Cedric Alexander vs. Cheeseburger

Cheeseburger goes right for him to start and actually gets two off a quick rollup. Alexander's fireman's carry is broken up and a victory roll gets another near fall. A springboard knee to the head drops Cedric but the running palm strike is countered into the Lumbar Check for the easy pin on Cheeseburger at 1:42.

Post match Cedric keeps beating on Cheeseburger until Jonathan Gresham comes out for the save. Veda sets up an impromptu match, which she can just do.

Cedric Alexander vs. Jonathan Gresham

Gresham follows the Cheeseburger plan by trying an early rollup, sending Cedric out to the floor. Back in and Cedric quickly bails again as this is barely a match. Cedric comes in again but walks into an Octopus Hold, drawing in Veda for the DQ at 1:45.

Alexander beats up Gresham after the match until referees make the save.

Here's the House of Truth to find out who Jay Lethal will be defending against at the Anniversary Show. Nigel McGuinness is in the ring and

talks about how many big wins Lethal has had in recent months, including AJ Styles and Michael Elgin. That brings him to the next challenger, which makes Nigel thinking of Kyle O'Reilly. That's fine with Lethal because he's beaten Kyle already but Nigel wasn't finished. Kyle is indeed great, but he was defeated by Adam Cole at Final Battle, which makes Cole the new #1 contender.

This brings out Cole who says it's Story Time. He knows his battles with Kyle are over and that means O'Reilly will never be challenging for the World Title again. Lethal may have some great victories as champion but Cole isn't on that list. Cole promises to win the title in Las Vegas but Nigel isn't done. It's true that Cole is the #1 contender, but Kyle isn't done with Cole yet. Unless Adam is scared, there's no reason to not make this a triple threat match.

Cue Kyle who is thankful for the title shot at the end of February, but what about the time between now and then? He wants a piece of both guys in Charlotte (the show is in Concord but close enough) so Nigel makes it ReDRagon vs. Jay Lethal/Adam Cole for some point in the near future.

We recap Silas Young vs. Dalton Castle and the saga over the Boys.

Silas talks about teaching the Boys to be like men for three months, but then along comes Dalton Castle to manipulate them into changing back. The Boys have one more chance to become men and that's it for them.

Jay Briscoe vs. Michael Elgin

Mark Briscoe is out for commentary but here's Moose to interrupt. If the World Title can be a three way, why can't this match be one too? They do at least mention that Nigel signed off on the change.

Jay Briscoe vs. Michael Elgin vs. Moose

Briscoe Cactus Clotheslines Moose out to the floor so Elgin follows them out with a flip dive. Moose is left on the floor as Elgin puts Jay up in a delayed vertical. Elgin doesn't even drop him when Moose kicks him in the ribs so Moose waits until Jay is down before bicycle kicking Elgin in the jaw. Moose and Jay slug it out until Briscoe kicks him in the face

for two as we take a break.

Back with Elgin apron superplexing Briscoe until Moose breaks it up. That's not cool with Elgin so he turns Moose's superplex attempt into a slingshot Tower of Power to put everyone down. Elgin slips off Moose's shoulders and lifts him up into a powerbomb for two as Jay makes the save. Briscoe gets two on Elgin off a Death Valley Driver, only to have Moose spear Briscoe down. That leaves Elgin and Moose to clothesline each other until Elgin clotheslines Jay instead. Elgin goes after Moose though, allowing Jay to backslide Michael for the pin at 9:37.

Rating: C+. Nice hard hitting match here though it was really just three alternating singles matches with the occasional big spot thrown in. Still though, that's all you need a lot of the time as everyone was beating on everyone with bigger and bigger shots. Moose really didn't need to be there but at least it protects Elgin a bit.

Post match Elgin says Mark was out here backing up his brother mentally, so why not make it a tag match at the Anniversary Show with Elgin teaming up with Hiroshi Tanahashi? That's quite the jump to get to the match but the Briscoes agree to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I liked the show but the Cedric Alexander stuff in the middle really didn't do anything for me, much like that whole story. I'm still not sure where it's supposed to go but beating Cheeseburger didn't make me care about Alexander. It's still an entertaining show though and goes by quickly, which is all you can ask for.

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New Column: The Object Of The Game

Explaining why HHH was one of the best options to win the Rumble.

[The Object Of The Game](#)

NXT – January 27, 2016: The Road To More Good Wrestling

NXT

Date: January 27, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

Tonight is a big night as we find out the #1 contender for the NXT Title with the title shot potentially coming at Takeover: Dallas over Wrestlemania weekend. We have Baron Corbin vs. Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe in a triple threat match with the winner getting a shot at some point in the future. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

American Alpha vs. Blake and Murphy

The announcers accuse Bliss of staring at Jordan as he starts with Murphy. Jason gets his kick to the ribs caught but keeps jumping over the attempted legsweeps. It's off to Gable to start in on the arm but a hair

pull stops his twisting. Blake comes in and is taken down just as fast as Gable is clearly just having fun with both of them in there. Chad dives over him a few times into some armdrags and throws, followed by a crucifix for two.

We get the GABLE chants to the Kurt Angle tune until Murphy claims a knee injury. Of course it's a gold bricking job as he waves Murphy over for a distraction to set up a chop block on Gable. It's time to start in on the leg until Gable kicks Murphy over the top and out to the floor for a crash. The hot tag brings in Jordan for suplexes all around, capped off by Grand Amplitude on Blake at 7:23.

Rating: C+. It's clear that American Alpha is about five steps ahead of everyone else in the division but we're likely going to wait a bit before they get to go after the titles. At least we get to be entertained while we wait for them to go for the titles though as this was a clinic on dismantling a lower level team. Fun stuff here.

Emma is ready for Carmella next week because Bayley carried the team last week. Carmella has never actually done anything around here and she even lost to Blue Pants.

Stills of Sami Zayn entering the Royal Rumble.

Video on Asuka.

Nia Jax vs. Liv Morgan

Eva Marie is out with Jax as we still wait to know why they're associated. Morgan tries to power Jax around to start and gets caught in an easy cobra clutch. A jawbreaker staggers Jax a bit, only to have a side slam set up the legdrop for the pin at 2:10.

Carmella is ready for Emma next week and promises to beat her all alone. Enzo and Cass aren't impressed by Dash and Dawson either and promises to take care of them as soon as they can.

Video on Baron Corbin.

We get the same sinister Vaudevillains vignette from last week.

Bull Dempsey vs. Alex Riley

The fans chant WELCOME BACK as Bull does jumping jacks. Riley takes him down to start and we're in an early chinlock. Bull pops up with left hands but walks into a spinebuster, followed by a knee to the face to give Riley the pin at 2:07.

After a break, Riley says he's tired of watching NXT and never hearing his name mentioned.

Elias Samson vs. John Skyler

Samson whips him into the corner to start and scores with a quick dropkick. A right hand drops Skyler and Samson sits in the corner ala Raven. Back up and Samson grabs a very fast swinging neckbreaker for the pin at 1:57.

The Hype Bros aren't impressed by the Vaudevillains' new videos. This turns into a discussion of Mojo watching Ryder sleep.

Video on Samoa Joe.

We look at Finn Balor vs. Apollo Crews from a few months back where Corbin interfered to break it up. They fight again in a non-title match next week.

Baron Corbin vs. Samoa Joe vs. Sami Zayn

Winner is #1 contender. They circle each other to start until Corbin hits Joe in the face for a bit of a surprise. Sami low bridges Baron to the floor but Joe breaks up the dive and pulls Zayn to the floor. Baron gets a boot to the chest to keep Joe in control and Sami gets punched down in the corner. A knee drop misses Sami but Corbin comes back in to jump Sami from behind.

We take a break and come back with Joe still on the floor and Corbin charging into an elbow in the corner. That means it's time for Joe to come back in, only to be taken down by Sami. Corbin and Joe are knocked outside and it's finally time to connect with the running flip dive. Back in and Corbin grabs a quick Deep Six for two on Sami, only to get kicked

in the face by Joe. Sami fights out of the Muscle Buster and grabs the Blue Thunder Bomb for two on Corbin.

The knockout lets Joe pull Sami to the floor for a quick Koquina Clutch before walking into End of Days. Sami dives back in to break up the cover and Corbin is livid. He pounds on Sami in the corner but runs into the exploder, followed by the Helluva Kick with Joe making the save this time. Joe gets sent to the floor so Sami puts Corbin in a Sharpshooter with Joe coming back in to add a Crossface. Corbin taps at 15:33 and we've got two winners.

Rating: B. If this means we get Joe vs. Sami down the line, I have zero issues with this finish. Corbin gets to save some face by getting caught in a double submission which would make almost anyone tap so everyone comes out looking strong. Really solid main event here and another good story being told.

Both guys say they won so here's GM William Regal to say he'll have to review the tape and make a decision on this controversy.

Overall Rating: B. Another good week here and again we have more stuff to look forward to next week. They're really nailing these ideas as we get ready for the big show down in Dallas. The ending has been looking forward to the fallout which should be another awesome match between Sami and Joe. As usual, building to good wrestling is the right idea and NXT keeps nailing it.

Results

America Alpha b. Blake and Murphy – Grand Amplitude to Blake

Nia Jax b. Liv Morgan – Legdrop

Alex Riley b. Bull Dempsey – Knee to the jaw

Elias Samson b. John Skyler – Swinging neckbreaker

Sami Zayn and Samoa Joe b. Baron Corbin – Sharpshooter and Crossface at the same time

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