

# Thunder – November 1, 2000: Much Like TNA

## Thunder

Date: November 1, 2000

Location: Bren Events Center, Irvine, California

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Mark Madden, Tony Schiavone

We're out of October and things are...well they certainly exist. For a few more months at least. Scott Steiner is still insane and chasing Booker T.'s World Title but more importantly WCW has made it very clear that Mike Awesome, the athletic freak, has no future as a main event player. It's a good thing they caught that problem before it became serious. Let's get to it.

## 3 Count vs. Jung Dragons

There's almost no way this can't be good. It won't mean anything but it should be entertaining at least. Shannon doesn't seem to like Evan hogging the mic but this point is dropped as we see Leia from behind to make the announcers way too happy. They don't even bother waiting on the dives this time with everyone going nuts to start.

Jamie-San accidentally takes out his partners though until things settle down to Shannon vs. Yang with the former dropping a nice backplash. It's off to Jamie who misses a springboard legdrop, allowing the tag to Evan. This is treated as a very sudden issue in the band because that's how plot devices work in wrestling. Yang pokes Evan in the eyes before Jamie accidentally clotheslines his partner. A double flapjack puts Jamie down but Evan tags himself in to steal the pin.

**Rating:** C. I can always watch these guys do their high spots and the storyline breakup is fine, but stop hammering it in like this. Would it have killed you to set this up over the course of a few weeks? I know it would have cut into Jeff Jarrett calling people Slappy but it might have worked a little better than inventing it in one night.

As you might expect, after the match 3 Count throws Evan out and Leia ejects Jamie-San. Jamie's mask is ripped off to reveal....Jamie Noble, who isn't a thing yet. Jamie and Evan look at each other, possibly setting up a third team. Why not at this point? It's not like they're doing anything else.

Nash and Palumbo say Stasiak couldn't cut it, suggesting that he's off the team. That's not a bad idea actually.

Bam Bam Bigelow attacks Crowbar, who just happened to be standing there waiting while a camera was on him.

### Elix Skipper vs. Lieutenant Loco

This is still fallout from the parody and has nothing to do with the Misfits getting back the US Title or Major Gunns. Loco starts fast with clotheslines and a dropkick because what else is a midcard cruiserweight supposed to do. A pumphandle suplex gets two on Skipper but the Matrix is enough to let him take Loco out to the floor.

We finally start flying around with Skipper hitting a corkscrew plancha, only to have Loco suplex him again inside. Gunns finally does something besides show off her shorts but gets caught trying a low blow. The distraction lets Skipper load up the ring which goes upside Loco's head during a sunset flip to give Elix the easy pin.

**Rating:** C-. This didn't have time to go anywhere but it's cool to see Chavo getting better and better every week. Skipper still doesn't quite get the finer points but he's more than athletic enough to make up for it. If nothing else though, I'll take a heel beating a face instead of doing all the insane and screwy stuff we're used to around here.

### Chuck Palumbo vs. Shawn Stasiak

Nash is on commentary of course and talks about how this is going to settle all of the issues in the Thrillers. Actually there's no match as we cut to the back and see Palumbo out cold. Nash is ticked but Stasiak claims innocence.

Post break, Palumbo gets checked out while the rest of the Thrillers

promise to take out Stasiak tonight.

Bigelow says he's back and wants Goldberg, only to have Crowbar attack him for earlier.

Video on Goldberg vs. Bigelow. First, did anyone want to see Goldberg vs. Bigelow again? Second, how convenient that they had this ready at a moment's notice.

Mayhem video.

### Boogie Knights vs. Rey Mysterio/Kidman

Konnan is on commentary. Kidman and Wright get things going with a pretty sweet technical sequence that you would expect from these two. A nice headscissors sends Wright down and it's off to the partners. For some reason Rey only throws a couple of kicks before it's back to Kidman who gets beaten down in the corner. The Knights work him over for a bit as Konnan babbles in what is supposed to be English.

Some knees to the back have Kidman in trouble and it's time for a surfboard. As usual that only lasts a few seconds so it's off to an abdominal stretch for some additional time. Kidman hiptosses out after Disco gets caught holding Wright's hand and it's off to Rey as things speed up. Everything breaks down and Disco gets crotched in the corner, setting up the Bronco Buster. The Kid Crusher puts Wright away.

**Rating:** C. As not great as the booking has been, WCW has actually been putting together a very nice tag division around this time. You have the Thrillers on top and Kronik as the monsters with teams like these two filling in the extra time. Now you even have the three teams from the opener and the thing is really stacking up. Factor in the Harris Twins disappearing again and everyone wins.

Crowbar wants to fight Bigelow tonight. I thought we had covered that already.

### Sgt. AWALL vs. Lance Storm

Actually never mind as Storm has found a replacement.

## Sgt. AWALL vs. Meng

Of course it's a brawl to start with only AWALL selling anything. Meng pounds him into the corner but gets taken down with a clothesline. For once Tony freaking out over this offense makes sense. A low blow stops AWALL again and it's already time for a table. AWALL pops back up and chokeslams Meng through it for a big upset.

Storm yells at Meng post match and gets the Tongan Death Grip.

Vampiro and Jeff Jarrett are ready for the main event.

This week's big interview is with Shawn Stasiak of all people because WCW has no idea what these things are supposed to be about. The interview is listed as from yesterday, which is either Sunday or Tuesday depending on how much you're expected to listen to the commentary. Stasiak gets right to the point by talking about how he didn't train at the Power Plant (thanks for finally acknowledging that) and was always the outcast. Nash may be a great talent (he is) but Stasiak doesn't like this stuff from Palumbo.

This week on Thunder, there's going to be a big surprise, which may or may not have been the attack which may or may not have been Stasiak in the first place. Stasiak wants to be the first former Thriller to be the World Champion. Given that none of them have yet, this isn't impossible actually. Ignore the fact that Stasiak isn't a wrestler anymore and hasn't been for fourteen years or so.

## Lance Storm vs. Norman Smiley

They better not screw this up. Storm can't do his usual yelling so it's National Anthem time. Storm starts with a full nelson for a nice series of reversals, capped off by the start of a Big Wiggle. Oh how I missed that one. Norman's sunset flip sets off a pinfall reversal sequence before Storm gets in a hot shot to really take over. Storm starts in with his usual well done stuff, including a suplex and legsweep before having his leg lock broken up with ease. There's something so cool about watching two guys who are this skilled on the mat trading holds.

Norman climbs the middle rope for a jumping back elbow and gets two off a rollup. That's enough wrestling though because IT'S WIGGLE TIME. Storm gets two off a northern lights suplex and they hit the mat for even more fast counters. A piledriver doesn't work as Smiley backdrops Storm off, only to get caught in the Maple Leaf for the submission out of nowhere.

**Rating:** B-. I'm a sucker for this kind of stuff as they kept it moving fast enough to avoid being boring but showed off a lot of technical stuff at the same time. It would be nice if this was setting up a match against someone Storm could work off of but why do that when we can have Hugh G. Rection instead? Also can we get Smiley some more TV time? Would that be asking too much?

Meng has to come out and break up the Maple Leaf. This would mean more if he hadn't gotten pinned in two minutes earlier tonight.

#### Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Crowbar

Bigelow drives him into the corner and blasts Crowbar with a hard clothesline. If there's one thing Bigelow can do, it's hit smaller people very hard. They head outside for dueling whips into the barricade with Crowbar actually getting the better of it. Something like a DDT gets two on Bigelow but he pops back up for Greetings From Asbury Park and the fast pin.

Booker isn't happy with never pinning Scott Steiner so he's willing to have another rematch at Mayhem with Steiner getting to pick the stipulation.

#### Jeff Jarrett/Vampiro vs. Mike Awesome/Sting

Jarrett doesn't get why Ric Flair has been named CEO when he's the only one with the stroke around here. Of course it's a brawl to start with Awesome throwing Vampiro over with a belly to belly while the other two fight on the floor. The pairings switch places with Sting getting the better of Jarrett off some right hands in the corner. Unfortunately the announcers make sure to bring up the Halloween Havoc match for reasons I'll never understand.

Jarrett backtracks up the aisle before sneaking back in for a cheap shot on Sting as a tag match breaks out amid the fighting. A double back elbow gets two on Sting and Vampiro kicks him in the face for two. The announcers bring up Sting flying off the video screen a few months back as it occurs to me that Nitro and Thunder are shot very differently.

On Thunder, the camera is mostly from ringside instead of the standard hard camera. It actually makes the shows feel different, aside from the fact that nothing happens on Thunder. Jarrett slaps on the required sleeper until Sting breaks free and makes the tag to Mike. Everything breaks down and Sting uses the ball bat to block a guitar shot. The Awesome Bomb is enough to pin Vampiro a few seconds later. STRIKE UP THAT 70s ELEVATOR MUSIC!

**Rating:** C+. This was about as good as a main event tag is going to get at this point and that's really not saying much. After Sunday's disaster it's clear that they need to go somewhere new with all four guys but here we are again combining two feuds that aren't interesting in the first place. At least the Awesome vs. Vampiro match was good but Sting vs. Jarrett needs to stop now.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Definitely a better show for the most part here as you can (in theory at least) see where they're going for Mayhem. I'm not wild on a lot of the booking but that's almost always the case with WCW. The important thing here is a lot of the action was good and a higher standard than what WCW had most of the time. Much like TNA today, when they cut out the nonsense and just wrestle, the shows are MUCH easier to sit through.

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# Wrestlemania Week Schedule

In case you haven't heard, the wife and I are heading down to Dallas for the weekend for Wrestlemania and associated acts.

We'll be taking in Takeover: Dallas, Axxess on Saturday, Axxess again on Sunday morning where we get to meet Shawn Michaels himself, then Wrestlemania and of course Raw the next night. Just like two years ago, things are going to be a bit slow around the weekend as I can only get in so much reviewing while I'm in the hotel. This is also our honeymoon so she's actually expecting me to spend time with her instead of something important.

Therefore, the reviews are all going to be a bit behind but I'll be making posts for discussion before we leave and I'll put up a quick live recap/thoughts on each show after we get back to the hotel each night. Once I get back home I'll be looking at the shows in full for the regular reviews.

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**Middle Kingdom Wrestling –**

# March 20, 2016 (Season 2 Premiere): When All Else Fails, Go Nintendo

## Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: March 20, 2016

Location: CWE Gym, Dongguan, China

Commentators: Eddie Strong, Cam Ferguson

This is a promotion that I looked at late last year and kind of got attached to. In a rare personal note, I've actually been chatting with the promoter and one of the wrestlers so I'm hoping that the second season is a step up over the first. There are a lot of improvements that could be made but I like the core they've got here. Let's get to it.

In case you missed it, one of the perks around here is the length of the episodes. For instance, this one clocks in at 16:18 total so it's a VERY quick sit.

We're already off to a good start as the opening is set up like an old NES Tecmo wrestling game, complete with the screen jumping.

We see some clips of what looks like a six man tag. No idea what the context is there.

Promoter Adrian Gomez is in the ring when Selfie King (apparently a parody of American culture) interrupts. That's not very nice as Gomez was talking about.....I have no idea actually as the announcers talk about Selfie King wanting to face Tyler Breeze. Either way, Selfie King gets a match.

## Selfie King vs. Candy Brother

Candy Brother is a guy who hands candy out to the fans, sending Ferguson into an amusing rant about how he's poisoning the teeth of our children. The graphics are set up like an NES game as well. I'm already sold. King jumps him from behind with the selfie stick but Brother (whose mask is



made of candy wrappers) throws him to the floor. Back in and we get some acceptable chain wrestling with Selfie King easily being taken down to the mat.

Candy Brother (I keep wanting to call him Candy Man but I'm too much of a Brad Armstrong fan.) sits on the arm and cranks away in something called a Snickers Sunrise. Strong says the MKW Universe loves this guy and it really doesn't work for a place with so few fans. Then again it doesn't work when WWE says it either. Candy Brother grabs a Tarantula of all things as Ferguson calls this season one. They botch a headscissors takeover so it's tried again (never a good idea) before it's off to a Black Widow on King.

Ferguson keeps making me laugh as he rails against Candy Brother's love of cavities. A DDT gets two on King but he comes back with a really awkward looking clothesline. Off to a full nelson (with a Masterlock Challenge reference) for a bit before King throws him down with a German suplex. He takes WAY too long going outside but still hits a frog splash for another near fall. It took long enough that Strong plugged every single one of the company's social media sites.

There's another delay because it's time for a quick picture and the distraction lets Brother get in a running kick to the chest. Another Black Widow is broken up (smart) and King puts him in a fireman's carry for some squats. Brother isn't all that big but that looked good, as did the Samoan drop. King's standing moonsault is actually enough for the pin, which I'd call a surprise.

**Rating:** D+. So here's the thing about Middle Kingdom Wrestling: for the most part, the wrestling isn't all that good. Some guys are better than others and it was clear that Brother was much better in the ring than King but this was still pretty low level looking stuff. It also didn't help that the match wasn't put together very well. Brother dominated for a long time at the beginning and then things started to come together but this could have used a few minutes cut off.

That being said, there's some stuff in here that I liked. Above all else, these two have very easily defined characters and you can tell who you're

supposed to cheer for. Brother wants to make fans happy (and give them diabetes but you can't win everything) and King only cares about himself. That may not be a great story or even a story at all but you have a good guy and a bad guy which is a bigger step than so many promotions can pull off.

King was a BIG improvement over last time as well where he felt like much more of a joke than an actual wrestler. He's nothing great or anything but it's cool to see him as an actual threat to something. The match wasn't terrible and some of the spots were decent enough but it's clear that these two haven't been in the ring at a very high level all that long.

A quick preview of next week's tag match takes us out.

**Overall Rating:** C. I know it's a bit weird to give a show with one match a rating other than that of the match but the production stuff was an important step up here. There were more cameras and better editing (though it was jumping around more than it needed to) here to make things feel a bit more important. It still looks very low level but at least they're moving in the right direction. Get some more stories and some more characters and this could be a more enjoyable promotion. Finally the commentary is still one sided as Ferguson makes me laugh and Strong is.....well he's there too.

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# Ring of Honor TV – March 23, 2016: Can I Sign Up For Old Japan?

## Ring of Honor

Date: March 23, 2015

Location: Sam's Town Hotel and Gambling Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Mr. Wrestling III, Kevin Kelly

It's a special show this time as we have a new taping cycle including the New Japan crew. These things can go a bunch of different ways and unfortunately a lot of those ways don't often go well for the normal Ring of Honor guys. It's also the fight show after the 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show so things can start moving forward. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

TV Title: BJ Whitmer vs. Tomohiro Ishii

Ishii is defending after taking the title in Japan because WE MUST PRAISE NEW JAPAN. The graphic says "Tomorhiro" but I can't find anything else that spells it that way. We're not quite ready to go yet though as Veda Scott and Cedric Alexander come out with Veda offering a check in exchange for the title shot. Whitmer is appalled at the suggestion that he could be bought off and then takes the check anyway.

TV Title: Cedric Alexander vs. Tomohiro Ishii

The match starts after a break with Ishii hitting a hard shoulder and throwing Alexander across the ring with ease. Ishii headbutts him down but Veda grabs the boot to finally give Cedric an opening. See, she's effective as well as gorgeous. Cedric starts stomping at the head before going with a far less painful chinlock.

That's enough for the champ though as he Hulks Up and scores with chops and a suplex. Cedric is up at two and climbs the corner for a spinning kick to the head. Back up and Ishii just headbutts the heck out of him, only to have the sliding lariat get countered into a crucifix for two. Ishii is done playing though and he brainbusts Alexander for the pin to retain at 6:32.

**Rating:** C. I'm really not a fan of the NEVER stuff that Ishii does over in New Japan but he's perfectly acceptable when he's doing more wrestling than all that strong style toughman nonsense. Alexander is way too generic for my tastes but at least Veda is awesome in her role and can carry anyone however far she needs to.

Here's the Addiction to complain about the reunion of the Motor City Machine Guns. Oh great that's a thing again. They take credit for bringing Chris Sabin back from the depths (I'd have cheered if they added "of TNA") and now they've been betrayed for a Machine Guns reunion. Kazarian gets in a few shots at Las Vegas being the land of bad decisions and thinks this was all one bad choice. Daniels thinks the fans are all thinking it's Christmas morning to see Sabin/Shelley back together again but it's time for an apology.

Cue the Guns, unfortunately without their rocking TNA theme. Before they get going, how in the world is Sabin the only former World Champion out of this group? Sabin has reached the conclusion that the Addiction are just delusional jerks. The brawl is teased but of course the Addiction bails. Daniels says they'll have a match but it's up to them, the adults, to decide when that happens.

Jay Lethal is ready to defend against Hirooki Goto next week.

### Reno Scum vs. Briscoes

Scum (Luster the Legend/Adam Thorestowe) is a team who has been around before but aren't that well known. Adam and Mark get things going with the former getting double teamed in a somewhat heelish attack by the Briscoes. Back in and Adam can't get anywhere with Mark so it's off to Luster for a running shoulder in the corner. Mark gets pounded down but finally comes back with some right hands to both Scum.

It's still not enough though as a catapult sends Mark into a Death Valley Driver for two. Not that it matters as Mark flips onto his feet and makes the tag off to Jay as house is cleaned. Everything breaks down and a powerbomb into a neckbreaker gets two on Luster. A German suplex followed by a double stomp gets the same on Mark, only to have him pop up with a Death Valley Driver. The Froggy Bow is enough to put Adam away at 6:55.

**Rating:** C-. Scum didn't do anything for me here and I'm really not sure who is supposed to benefit here. The Briscoes were fine enough but this had that Ring of Honor style to it that doesn't get me interested. There are more than enough teams in Ring of Honor already and Scum really wasn't needed here.

Dalton Castle is excited for his Fight Without Honor with Silas Young in three weeks but the Boys aren't old enough to know what he has planned.

#### Young Bucks vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi/Michael Elgin

The fans are far more behind Tanahashi than the Bucks here, which is a nice sign for the future of wrestling. Elgin and Nick start with Michael actually trying a test of strength. Now since no power guy has ever gotten a small heel to try a test of strength, I'll let you guess how this goes. The Bucks start speeding things up and a pair of dropkicks have the good guys (I think?) on the floor.

Matt dives over the top to take Tanahashi out and we take a break. Back with Elgin bicycle kicking Matt out to the floor before giving him a double suplex. Elgin and Tanahashi give Nick a double SUCK IT in a nice visual. There's a delayed vertical suplex with Nick trying a save, only to have Elgin suplex both of them at the same time. Tanahashi grabs an abdominal stretch and uses Matt's ribs as an air guitar. Eh that was amusing.

We hit the chinlock for a bit until Nick pulls Elgin to the floor for our first superkick. Nick gets in a regular SUCK IT and there's the slingshot X Factor. We take a break and come back with the Bucks still in control and getting cheered way too loudly. Tanahashi gets in a cross body though and the tag brings Elgin back in. Big Mike picks up the Bucks for a Samoan drop/fall away slam at the same time because he's got freaking

strength. The Falcon Arrow gets two on Matt but double superkicks set up a double 450 for two on Elgin.

Tanahashi no sells ANOTHER superkick and gets loaded up into kind of a reverse Alabama Slam from Elgin to send him onto...Matt's knees. Now you might think we just had enough double superkicks for a lifetime, but that's not how the Bucks roll. FIVE more superkicks have them in control but the Meltzer Driver is countered with Elgin's powerbomb. The Sling Blade and another powerbomb sets up the High Fly Flow to give Tanahashi the pin at 16:10.

**Rating:** B. Better match here but I've made my opinions on the Bucks pretty clear over the last year. I still don't get why they're faces in this or any other promotion (well maybe PWG would make sense) but the fans go nuts over them and that's the point of bringing in acts like this. Tanahashi continues to be amazing (I'm a bit late on that one) and Elgin has that freakish strength that only a handful of people ever have, making this a rather fun match. Not exactly the kind of match I'd like as I'm not big on the styles of either promotion, but at least it was a fun performance.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This was good enough but the New Japan shows can get annoying in a hurry. At least we had a good match and the Fight Without Honor offers some promise, especially if it gives Castle the boost that he's been needing for months. Unfortunately I have a feeling we're in for A LOT more New Japan before we get there and that's not the most entertaining thing in the world.

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXIII: Now That's More Like It Dead Man

## Wrestlemania XXIII

Date: April 1, 2007

Location: Ford Field, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 80,103

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz, John Bradshaw Layfield, Joey Styles

To say this show was a success is an understatement. Until Rock vs. Cena, this show drew more PPV buys than any show in the history of the company, which says a lot when you consider what came before it. The main event here is Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga, which is the Battle of the Billionaires, as Donald Trump and Vince are backing the two respectively. The losing billionaire gets his head shaved. There's also Cena vs. Shawn in what should be awesome. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a montage of Wrestlemania logos which turns into your usual highlight reel.

We get a clip of the opening of Wrestlemania III before transitioning to Ford Field in the same city. Aretha Franklin is here again twenty years later to sing America the Beautiful again. That's a very nice touch, as are the clips from Tribute to the Troops.

Now we get the video for this year's show, which is the All Grown Up theme. It's a bunch of kids dressed like the stars who then turn into their adult selves.

Mr. Kennedy vs. CM Punk vs. Randy Orton vs. Finlay vs. Matt Hardy vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Edge

With this match, we start the tradition of having too many people in a single MITB match and overcrowding the thing. Everyone looks up at the case until Kennedy goes to get a ladder. Orton heads to the floor to stop him as the big brawl begins. Finlay DIVES on everyone not named Edge, allowing the Canadian to make a climb, only to be stopped by Matt. They head to the floor, allowing Orton and Finlay to head up top for a brawl on the ladder.

They topple to the floor so it's Jeff going up, only to be shoved down by Kennedy. Booker goes to pull out a ladder but it's Horny's, meaning it's only about two feet tall. Punk takes it away and pounds on people with it, only to have Edge take over again. This is one of those matches that moves too fast to really keep track of things. Punk is bleeding from the forehead as Edge bridges a ladder between the ring and barricade.

Back inside and Booker takes over with kicks and spinebusters for everyone in sight. Before climbing though, here's a Spinarooni. The distraction lets the Hardys crush Booker with some ladders before Matt and Edge go at it a bit. The Hardys set up a ladder seesaw but Jeff is sent off the top to break up whatever they were going to do to Edge. Instead Edge suplexes Matt onto the ladder, only to be sent to the floor by Kennedy.

Kennedy pounds away on Matt but the Kenton Bomb only hits ladder. Instead it's Jeff with a Swanton to Mr. before the brothers team up to drop everyone in sight with the ladder. Both Hardys go up and start slugging it out on top of the ladder, only to be shoved into the top rope by Finlay. Edge hits the spear on Finlay and one for Orton and Booker as well. Kennedy and Matt take spears too and there's one for Jeff to nearly complete the set. Punk jumps over Edge to send him into the corner and become the only man standing.

Punk puts the ladder around his head and spins around a bit to take everyone out until Edge thinks wisely and DUCKS, allowing him to take out Punk's vulnerable ribs. Edge gets the big ladder and makes a climb, only



to gets caught by Orton and shoved down to the floor. Jeff saves that though and climbs up on his own as Matt puts Edge on the ladder between the ring and the barricade. Jeff dives off the ladder THROUGH EDGE AND THROUGH THE LADDER! Needless to say, Edge and Jeff are DONE.

We're down to six people in the match now and it's Orton's turn to take over with RKOs all around. He picks up a regular sized ladder but Punk knocks him down and sets up a second ladder in the middle of the ring. Apparently Jeff is still on the floor despite Edge being taken out. Orton and Punk both climb up and it's an RKO off the top of the ladder to end Punk. Booker goes up but has to stop an RKO attempt with a Bookend off the ladder.

It's Matt vs. Booker on the ladder but Matt drops down and threatens to give Sharmell the Twist of Fate, drawing Booker down. There's the Twist to the King but Finlay (sporting a NASTY cut on the back of his head) shoves the ladder over. The Celtic Cross (White Noise) crushes Matt against the ladder but hurts Finlay's back in the process. Finlay is barely able to stand so here's Horny to climb for him.

Instead though Kennedy pops up the ladder...and gets smacked in the face by Horny. There's a fireman's carry roll off the ladder for the little guy's efforts. Finlay destroys Kennedy with the ladder but gets knocked off the ladder by Matt. Now it's Punk going up but Kennedy meets him on the ladder for a slugout. Punk shoves him off but Kennedy spears him in the ribs with another ladder, allowing Kennedy to climb up and win the case.

**Rating:** B. This was definitely the weakest of the matches so far as there were too many people in there and no one to have the big spots like Shelton. It's definitely good but this one lacked the pop that most of these matches had over the years. Kennedy would lose the case to Edge a few weeks later.

Video on the premiere of The Condemned so we can clear the ring out.

Kennedy warns every champion that he's coming for them and says he's Mr. Money in the Bank. Bank.

Batista is All Grown Up.

### Great Khali vs. Kane

This is when Khali is still a decent monster who could move a little bit. Kane is easily shoved down to start and then shoved to the floor for good measure. Back in and Kane slugs Khali, only to be chopped right back down. Off to the nerve hold before Khali slugs away in the corner. Kane comes back with punches of his own but is easily shoved down and across the ring.

Kane fires back with a right hand and tries the top rope clothesline but it only staggers Khali. Another shot sends Khali into the ropes and Kane has his opening. Kane heads to the floor and grabs a chain with a hook on the end which he used in the horror movie he was in around this time. Khali knocks him back and rips off the turnbuckle pad to distract the referee, allowing Kane to kick him low. In one of the big spots of the show, Kane slams Khali ala Hogan slamming Andre twenty years ago. That only gets two so they both grab chokeslams, but it's Khali hitting the Punjabi Plunge for the one footed pin.

**Rating:** D-. The slam was cool and the rest was completely horrible. Khali was nothing good and somehow he would get even worse. Kane was in that weird period for him where he was just kind of there and doing nothing of note. By period, I mean about a five year stretch of course. Terrible match but the slam was good.

Post match Khali chokes him out with the chain and no one makes the save.

The Divas say they're All Grown Up. The idea of taking them seriously is amusing.

Cryme Tyme tries to cheer up a now bald Eugene with an Extreme Expose dance party. That would be Kelly, Layla and Brooke (now Tessmacher) as a dance troupe. Instead Moolah and Mae Young show up and Eugene wants to dance with them. Cue REVEREND SLICK of all people to show us how it's done. This brings in Dusty Rhodes who says you can't have a dance party without him. The music comes back on and here are Sgt. Slaughter, Jimmy Hart and IRS to join in. Ricky Steamboat in full karate attire shows up

until we get the Ron Simmons payoff.

Some Detroit Tigers are here.

### US Title: MVP vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending and MVP is pretty new here. They head to the mat to start with MVP actually in control. Off to a headlock by the challenger but he has to shove Benoit to the floor to avoid the Crossface. Back in and Benoit can't hook the Crossface as MVP keeps it on the mat with the headlocks. Back up and MVP pounds Benoit into the corner but charges into an elbow. A superplex attempt is blocked and Benoit's arm is draped across the top rope to shift momentum again.

Back in and MVP works over the bad arm with some driving shoulder blocks. He misses a spinning kick though and Benoit busts out the Rolling Germans. The Swan Dive is broken up though and MVP goes back to the arm by sending it into the post. Off to an armbar again, followed by a running clothesline for two. Out of nowhere Benoit reverses a slam into a Crossface attempt but the arm is too weak to hook the hold. This time the slam works and there's the Ballin elbow for two. MVP misses a charge into the corner and it's time to roll some Germans. After four of those, Benoit hits the Swan Dive to retain.

**Rating:** C. Yeah that's it. The match really never got off the ground and could have used another four minutes or so. As always the scariest part is thinking that Benoit only had about two months left so he likely wasn't sane during this match. The match itself wasn't bad but as mentioned it never got off the ground. MVP would win the title at Backlash and hold it for almost a year.

Video on Undertaker who is All Grown Up...I think.

Donald Trump is in his dressing room and complaining about the lack of food and drinks backstage. Boogeyman comes in for no apparent reason and Trump doesn't seem impressed. Trump asks him for a sandwich. This uh...happened. Yeah we'll go with that.

Hall of Fame time. Mr. Perfect was one of the headliners here and gets a

pretty touching tribute. William Shatner inducted Lawler, which is kind of annoying as Lawler had wanted Lance Russell (announcer of Memphis Wrestling for like forty years) to do it but WWE said no and picked Shatner because of a forgotten segment on Raw back in like 1995. The other headliner was Dusty Rhodes who asked to be made an honorary Horseman. That's just wrong. No presentation to the crowd here which is weird.

The attendance is over 80,000, which is of course a new record.

Here's the Fink because what would Wrestlemania be without him? Oh ok he's doing the Hall of Fame live presentation to the crowd. JR gets easily the biggest pop of the entire class.

82% of the fans think Undertaker will win the title.

We recap Undertaker vs. Batista but there isn't much to say. Taker won the Rumble and picked Batista for an awesome power match. They had to team up at No Way Out and Batista turned on him to give us a one night only heel, even though that's not really too far out of Batista's normal behavior.

### Smackdown World Title: Batista vs. Undertaker

Teddy Long does the intros here for some reason. We also get the druids and the torches, which look AWESOME in the huge stadiums like this. The bell rings and Batista spears Taker down before pounding away in the corner. Undertaker fires off right hands of his own but Batista throws him right back into the corner. The fans are totally behind Undertaker here. They head to the floor with Undertaker being sent knees first into the steps as is his custom.

Back in and Batista hits a top rope shoulder for two. If you're listening to Cole, you would think he had hit a 450. A big clothesline puts Taker down for two but Undertaker comes back with right hands and a running charge in the corner. The Snake Eyes and big boot combo puts Batista down and a legdrop gets two. Old School connects but Big Dave powers out of the chokeslam to huge booring.

The jumping clothesline puts Batista down again but only for two. Taker puts him on the apron for the elbow and legdrops before busting out the Taker Dive as is his custom at Wrestlemania. Taker pounds away even more but Batista counters to throw him through part of the barricade to take over. With Undertaker dazed, Batista loads up a powerslam from one announce table through the other, which actually isn't countered.

Back in and that only gets two so the champion pounds away more for good measure. Batista loads up the Bomb but Taker plows him into the corner to counter. Dave comes right back with a belly to belly suplex for two. He pounds on Taker in the corner like a schmuck and of course there's the Last Ride for two. Taker has a breather but walks right into the spinebuster.

Batista doesn't cover though and gets caught in a chokeslam for a VERY close two. The Tombstone is countered and Batista hits the spear and Batista Bomb for an even closer two, shocking the champion. Batista loads up another Bomb but Taker backdrops out of it and avoids a spear, setting up the Tombstone for the title.

**Rating:** A. The idea is that these two were annoyed and decided to have an awesome match to show everyone up. These two would go on to have more great matches on shows where Batista actually had a chance to win. This was the feud of the year and it's hard to argue as they could both work the power game like few others.

Lashley is All Grown Up.

Vince is in the back looking in a mirror when Stephanie comes in with a stroller. Vince goes off on Stephanie before playing with his granddaughter. Naturally there's a camera from inside the stroller looking up at Vince. He promises to fracture Trump's skull.

Joey tries to talk about the ECW Originals vs. the New Breed but we need to get this along.

New Breed vs. ECW Originals

It's Elijah Burke/Matt Striker/Kevin Thron/Marcus Cor Van vs. Rob Van

Dam/Tommy Dreamer/Sabu and for no reason whatsoever this is a regular eight man tag instead of the Extreme Rules match we would get on ECW a few days later. Striker starts with Sabu and Matt is in early trouble. It's quickly off to Sandman vs. Burke but before Sandy does much he brings in Dreamer. Cor Von hits Dreamer in the back and comes in to pound away a bit.

It's quickly back to Burke (the New Breed's leader and more famous as D'Angelo Dinero) for the running knees to the back for two. Thorn comes in to crush Dreamer into the corner and put on a chinlock. Back up and a sitout powerbomb gets two for Thorn and here's Cor Von again. Burke comes in as well but Dreamer takes them down with a simultaneous neckbreaker/reverse DDT combo. The hot tag brings in Van Dam and there's the top rope kick to Thorn. Rolling Thunder lands on Striker as everything breaks down. With everyone else on the floor, Van Dam Five Stars Striker for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Seriously, why wasn't this the Extreme Rules match? The whole point of ECW is to be extreme but we got a seven minute tag match which went nowhere at all. The theory was to finally let these guys get on Wrestlemania, but Van Dam had been on it before and won a title here. Nothing to see here at all.

Austin is All Grown Up.

Wrestlemania 24 is in Orlando.

We recap the real main event for tonight's show and the reason why this show was the highest drawing show ever for the next five years. Vince and Donald Trump both agreed to back a guy into a match and the losing billionaire would get their head shaved. This was when Trump was still a big deal and EVERYONE was backing Umaga because they wanted to see Trump bald. Oh except for Rock who actually cut a promo about wanting to see Vince bald.

Trump picked the ECW World Champion Bobby Lashley. Steve Austin was brought in to referee because this is Wrestlemania. The best part of the build was Lashley in a cage with Umaga on the floor. To escape, Lashley shoulder blocked the cage wall, knocking it down to the floor and nearly

crushing Umaga in the process.

### Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

The barber's chair gets its own entrance complete with some snappy music. Oh and Umaga is IC Champion. Trump coming out to a song with the only word being MONEY is perfect. Real money rains down from the ceiling, including \$100 bills. To be fair this show brought in like 50 million dollars in PPV alone so they can afford a bit. They collide to start and slug it out with Lashley pounding him into the corner. Austin pulls Lashley off of Umaga since they're in the ropes and Umaga gets in some shots of his own. Lashley goes up to the middle rope for a shoulder for two.

Umaga's manager Armando Estrada is dragged in by Lashley and powerslammed down with ease. Lashley throws him out to the floor and low bridges Umaga to send him to the floor as well. Back in and Lashley misses a spear, sending him out to the floor this time. We head inside again and Umaga chokes away, only to be pulled off at four and a half by Austin. Austin has to do it again, this time by the hair for good measure.

A BIG clothesline puts Lashley down again and Umaga cannonballs down onto his chest for good measure. The Samoan drop puts Lashley down again as does a failed slam attempt. Vince gets up on the apron and gets dropped down by an elbow from Lashley, only to walk into a shot from Umaga to take over again. Umaga goes up and gets slammed down before being clotheslined down. Both guys down and Austin gets to nine before stopping so it doesn't end in a draw.

Shane McMahon comes out to check on Vince as Umaga hits an uppercut to drop Lashley again. Austin has to pull Umaga out of the corner, earning him a Samoan Spike. Shane comes in and pounds away on Lashley until Umaga is back into things. The running hip attack crushes Bobby's face and Vince throws in some trashcans. Shane hits the Coast to Coast to drive the can into Lashley's face. A top rope splash from Umaga crushes Lashley and Shane has a referee's shirt on now.

Austin breaks up the pin and beats up Shane for good measure, only to walk into another Samoan Spike. Trump isn't sure what to do and shows off

those great acting skills of his. Vince comes over to taunt him and TRUMP CLOTHESLINES VINCE! Umaga tries another Spike on Austin but gets countered into the Stunner. The spear from Lashley connects and it's time for Vince to be bald.

**Rating:** D. This match sucked for the most part until Austin got going. The problem at the end of the day was no one on the planet with any idea what was going on here thought Vince was going to win. It also didn't help that no one cared about Lashley because no one had ever given us a reason to. He was just kind of there for the most part and there was nothing more to him than he used to be a college wrestler and he's muscular. Seriously, that's Lashley's story almost in full.

Post match they take FOREVER to Stun Vince and cut his hair. Austin Stuns him because that's what Austin does to Vince. To their credit though, they SHAVE his head, not just trim it. Vince's face during this whole thing is great as he goes from shock to the patented Vince rage in a few seconds. This led to three months of Vince/Shane/Umaga vs. Lashley which didn't work for the most part. Austin, Lashley and Trump share beers and Trump gets Stunned. I'll give the guy this: he has a soft spot for wrestling. He hosted two Wrestlemanias, was in the crowd for two more and did this.

John Cena is All Grown Up.

For no apparent reason other than we have nothing else to talk about, we look at the dark match with Flair/Carlito vs. Gregory Helms/Chavo Guerrero in a lumberjack match.

Womens Title: Melina vs. Ashley

It's a lumberjill match and all of the other Divas are introduced. Melina is defending here because thank goodness Ashley never got the title. Ashley, who isn't a wrestler, takes Melina down and pounds away. The crowd is audibly quiet for this match and can you blame them? Ashley pounds away in the corner and does some bad choking but Melina comes back by SCREAMING. Off to a bow and arrow for a bit as I have no interest in watching this match at all. Ashley misses an elbow and thankfully Melina reverses a rollup into one of her own to retain.



**Rating:** M. As in Mickie James, who was on the floor during this match instead of in the ring. Point blank, Ashley cannot wrestle. She was decent looking, but other than that she had nothing going for her at all. This was a popcorn break match and thankfully it was barely three minutes long as I couldn't sit through much longer.

Shawn Michaels is All Grown Up.

We recap Michaels vs. Cena. Shawn won a triple threat to set this up and then won the tag titles with Cena. The idea is Shawn has turned on every one of his partners in his career and he'll do it again here. No music video here for some reason.

### Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Remember that they're tag champions here but neither guy wears the belt. I can't say I blame them of course. Cena's special entrance this year is driving a muscle car from "the parking lot" into the arena due to being in Detroit. They circle each other to start before Shawn slaps him in the face. A quick headlock doesn't do much for Shawn so he uses his speed advantage to pop John with some right hands. Back to the headlock and it works a bit better this time as Shawn takes Cena down to the mat.

Cena has had enough of this defense thing and rings Shawn's bell with a clothesline. Shawn is sent to the apron but he tosses Cena from the ring and out to the floor. A BIG chop staggers Cena but Shawn's Asai Moonsault hits mostly table and Shawn is hurt. Luckily for him though Cena is even more hurt as they head back inside. Shawn chops away in the corner before going after Cena's knee. The leg is wrapped around the post and Cena is in trouble. The referee asks Cena if he can continue and of course Cena says yes.

Shawn keeps kicking at the leg before wrapping it around the ring rope. With Cena down in the corner, Shawn stares straight at him to play even more mind games. Back up and John hits a big right hand to send Shawn flying across the ring. Shawn charges straight back at him with a shoulder into the ribs in the corner to keep control. Michaels charges again but Cena's leg gives out and Shawn goes head first into the post, busting him open.

Cena has had enough of getting beaten up so he punches Shawn down before firing off some mounted right hands. The ProtoBomb and Shuffle hit but Shawn punches his way out of the FU. Cena is sent into the corner but manages to duck Sweet Chin Music. The referee isn't so lucky though and is knocked senseless. Cena tries the FU but is countered into a DDT to put both guys down.

With no referee in sight, Shawn rolls to the floor and hits a sick piledriver onto the steps. The THUD when Cena's head hit was a little scary. The back of Cena's head is cut open BAD on top of that. Back in and here's a second referee but the count only gets two. There are the forearm and nip-up as the blood flows down Shawn's face. The top rope elbow connects but Cena blocks Chin Music with a big clothesline to put both guys down again.

They slug it out in the middle of the ring but the FU is countered again into a sunset flip for two. Shawn's leap frog is caught in the FU but Cena is too banged up to cover. The very delayed cover gets two and the champ is getting frustrated. With nothing else to do he tries an FU off the top, only to be shoved off by Shawn. Michaels dives at Cena but gets caught in the FU position. He counters that as well though by landing on his feet, only to miss the superkick and have Cena try for the STFU. Cena keeps trying for it but gets small packaged down for two instead.

Shawn misses an enziguri attempt and now the STFU is on. Cena cranks back on it but Shawn is only a few inches away from the rope. As Shawn starts to black out he grabs the rope and Cena has to break. He takes a bit too long though and gets in an argument with the referee, allowing Shawn to kick Cena's head off. Another delayed cover gets two and both guys are down. In a cool spot, both guys have to lean on the other to get up. The FU is countered again but Shawn can't avoid the STFU again. Cena cranks back on it and Shawn has no choice but to tap out.

**Rating:** A-. This was a much better match than the HHH match from the year before for a few reasons. First of all, there was a story behind the match. As simple as it was, Shawn being Cena's partner gave them a bond and seeing them fight was something interesting to see. Second, the drama was better here. Cena felt like he was in real trouble and that the title

was in danger, which I never felt last year. It's a better match overall and they would have even better ones in the future.

A highlight package ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** B+. This is a show where the stuff that is bad is really bad but the stuff that is good is REALLY good. There are only eight matches on the card and three of them are very good to great. The best part about that though is the bad matches (other than one) were all short and pretty easy to get through. The show is completely forgettable other than Trump vs. Vince and maybe Undertaker vs. Batista, but it's worth seeing. I would however recommend fast forwarding through some of the weaker parts.

### Ratings Comparison

CM Punk vs. Mr. Kennedy vs. Finlay vs. Randy Orton vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Booker T vs. Edge

Original: B+

Redo: B

Great Khali vs. Kane

Original: D

Redo: D-

Chris Benoit vs. MVP

Original: B

Redo: C

Undertaker vs. Batista

Original: B+

Redo: A

ECW Originals vs. New Breed

Original: D+

Redo: D

Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

Original: C-

Redo: D

Melina vs. Ashley

Original: F

Redo: M (for Mickie James)

John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: B+

Almost everything goes down and the rating goes up. I'm a complex guy sometimes.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/30/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-23-over-80000-people/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of the Intercontinental Title at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01D4D3EGQ>

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXII: The New Dark Days

## Wrestlemania XXII

Date: April 2, 2006

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Attendance: 17,159

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

We head to the midwest here for a pretty forgotten show. The main events here are Cena defending against HHH and Angle defending against Guerrero and Orton. No that isn't a typo. The triple threat has nothing to do with Rey Mysterio but rather is there to milk every dime possible out of Eddie's corpse. Seriously, that's it. Other than that we have Shawn vs. Vince and Edge vs. Foley in a match that allegedly made Edge a bigger deal. Let's get to it.

Michelle Williams of Destiny's Child sings America the Beautiful.

The opening video is a Wrestlemania montage set to I Dare You by Shinedown. Awesome song and an awesome video.

We also get the usual kind of opening video with hype for the major matches.

Raw Tag Titles: Carlito/Chris Masters vs. Big Show/Kane

The monsters are defending here. Kane and Masters start stuff out and the 6'5 Masters looks tiny by comparison. Show headbutts him from the apron before coming in legally for some chops. A poke to Big Show's eye slows him down and here's Carlito who is immediately chopped down. Masters is slammed down as well with Show throwing Carlito over the top and out onto Chris.

Kane goes up top and dives onto both guys as the challengers are in trouble. Somewhere in between there the turnbuckle pad has been removed and Show misses a charge, going head first into said buckle. It doesn't seem to have much effect though as Show suplexes both guys down with ease. Off to Kane as everything breaks down. Kane pounds away on Carlito in the corner and hits the side slam for no cover.

The top rope clothesline misses Masters though and there's the Masterlock to Kane. Show breaks it up seconds later but there's the Backstabber to Kane. The chokeslam is broken up by Masters and Show is sent to the floor. Kane's double chokeslam attempt is broken up but after causing some heel miscommunication, a solo version to Carlito retains the titles.

**Rating:** C. Not bad here but this is one of the matches that probably could have been cut for the sake of trimming the show a bit. The match was a squash and not a very interesting one either. That's the problem with a pair of giants like Big Show and Kane: there's no one that can stop them and the resulting matches are dull at times. Not bad but it felt like a Raw match.

The losers argue post match.

Shawn says that when he told Vince to grow up, he was telling the truth. It's pretty funny that a year ago Shawn and Angle stole the show and a year before that he stole the show with Benoit and HHH. This year though it's going to be about violence, not the five star classic. Shawn tells Vince to pray tonight because he'll be enduring quite a bit.

Shelton Benjamin vs. Finlay vs. Ric Flair vs. Rob Van Dam vs. Matt Hardy vs. Bobby Lashley

Money in the Bank here. Shelton is Intercontinental Champion and Matt is

arguably the favorite. It's a big brawl to start with Lashley cleaning house. The crowd favors RVD. Benjamin hits a BIG kick to Lashley's head to put him down as Matt tries to bring in the first ladder. Instead it's Van Dam with a baseball slide to take Matt down, followed by a big flip dive to put him down again. Shelton brings in a ladder of his own and after laying out Finlay with it, he sets the ladder up as a ramp for a springboard flip dive to take out everyone under the age of 40.

Finlay sets up a ladder but here's Flair for the save. Naitch tries to climb but Matt superplexes him off the ladder which is good enough to hurt Flair's back and knock him out of the match. As Flair is taken out, Van Dam lays out Shelton on the ladder but misses Rolling Thunder, hitting only the ladder. Lashley goes for a climb but Benjamin goes up to stop him. Shelton tries a sunset bomb over the top of the ladder but it takes Matt and Finlay helping to complete the move.

Matt gets a running start at Finlay but has a ladder pelted at him to put Hardy right back down. Finlay sets up the ladder but here's Flair hobbling down the aisle. Instead of climbing up the ladder though, Finlay goes into the aisle and gets chopped back down. Ric fights off Shelton and Hardy and goes up, getting his hand on the case. Finlay goes up the ladder though and blasts him with the club to put him back down.

Shelton and Finlay fight on top of the ladder but here's Lashley with another ladder to knock the ladder with two people on it down to the mat. Now Lashley goes up but Van Dam comes off the top rope and dropkicks a chair into Lashley's back to break up the climb. Matt, ever the bright guy, goes up top on the ladder but drops a leg instead of going for the case. Matt goes up and gets his hand on the ladder, only to have Finlay make a save. Hardy takes Finlay down with a Side Effect off the ladder to put everyone down.

Van Dam, also not the brightest guy in the world, comes off the ladder with a splash on Finlay, leaving everyone down again. In the spot of the match, Van Dam goes for a climb but Shelton springboards off the top rope and lands on the ladder to punch Rob down. That looked AWESOME but he has to stop Matt instead of getting the briefcase. Matt and Shelton's ladder fall down though and it's Van Dam pulling down the case to win the match

and the title shot.

**Rating:** B. Shelton's spot was INSANE but this match was a bit too short. Also the match wasn't as big with the spots as it was last year but the spots that were big certainly did look good. It's not quite as good as last year, but it still lived up to the hype. A better roster would have helped this one too, as Finlay didn't fit in a match like this and Flair didn't exactly either.

Randy Orton interrupts Gene Okerlund and insults the idea of Okerlund being inducted into the Hall of Fame. Gene isn't impressed and says he'll be in the Hall of Fame one day because of nights like tonight. Batista, still injured at this point, comes up and says he's coming for the winner of the triple threat tonight. Batista vs. Orton was the match that never got to have on the big stage they wanted to.

Here's the Hal of Fame (minus Bret because pigs haven't grown wings yet): Okerlund, Sherri Martel, Tony Atlas, Verne Gagne, William Perry (in barely fitting street clothes), The Blackjacks (with a drool inducing Maria) and the co-headliner, Eddie Guerrero (biggest ovation and accepted by Vickie).

#### US Title: Chris Benoit vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

JBL is challenging and takes over with a quick headlock. Benoit comes back with a drop toehold but can't get the Crossface this early. Back to the headlock by JBL but Benoit gets his back and pounds on the challenger's neck. The Sharpshooter is broken up very quickly and Jibbles heads to the floor. Back in and Benoit avoids a charge in the corner and lays out Bradshaw with the Rolling Germans. The champion loads up the Swan Dive but JBL crotches him to escape.

JBL cranks up the heel by doing Eddie's chest slap. A superplex puts Benoit down but only gets a very delayed two. There's the Eddie dance and JBL hits Three Amigos to HUGE heat. Benoit knees his way out of the third Amigo and pounds away, only to get kicked in the face for two. Off to a lame chinlock (his hands aren't even locked) by JBL but Benoit suplexes his way out. Now Chris hits Three Amigos to a solid ovation before doing the chest slap. Now the Swan Dive hits for two and Benoit counters the



Clothesline into a Crossface attempt, but JBL rolls onto his back and grabs the rope for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** C+. Just like the opener this was pretty meh but JBL was an awesome heel here. The part of this that sticks in my mind though is Benoit hitting that headbutt. After it hit he was grabbing his skull and was clearly in pain. Every time I see him hit something like that I cringe a little bit more and wonder if that was the point of no return.

We recap Foley vs. Edge. Edge cashed in MITB at New Year's Revolution and Mick was guest referee for the title change for no apparent reason. Foley got beaten up as Edge accused Foley of losing his edge so to speak.

Joey Styles jumps in on commentary for the next match.

### Mick Foley vs. Edge

This is a hardcore match and DEAR GOODNESS I forgot how hot Lita looked in this match. Edge comes out in a vest with a ball bat but Foley comes out in....gray flannel? There's a Cactus shirt under it but I didn't come to Wrestlemania to see Foley in GRAY flannel. Edge swings with the bat but only hits buckle. Foley slams him into the mat and puts Edge upside down in the Tree of Woe for the running fist to the face.

Edge comes back with a forearm and tells Lita to send him something. We get various flat metal objects like cookie sheets and stop signs which are smashed against Foley's head. Edge loses the vest and hits the spear before falling to the side and writhing in pain. Foley opens up the flannel and reveals a ring of barbed wire wrapped around his stomach and A RED FLANNEL SHIRT! Edge's arm is hacked open so Foley whips him with the barbed wire and drives it into the arm cut.

Edge is tied up in the ropes and Foley pulls out a barbed wire ball bat. Lita tries to interfere but a Cactus Clothesline to Edge puts all three on the floor. A swinging neckbreaker on the floor gets two for Foley but as he charges at Edge he gets hiptossed into the steps, leg first. Edge whips Foley HARD into the steps, destroying the knees even further. Mick is put on a table on the floor but rolls off before Edge can dive. Edge slams Mick's head into the steel ramp for two and another sick thud.

Back inside the ring they go and Edge covers Foley with lighter fluid. Well that's certainly stepping things up. A piledriver out of nowhere gets two for Foley and he loads up the Conchairto, only to have Lita make a save. Edge hits a DDT "onto" the chair before getting the barbed wire bat for some midsection shots. There's a shot to the face for good measure and Foley is busted open. Edge gets in some psychology by ripping the barbed wire of Foley's forehead like Foley did to HHH in 2000.

Since nothing else has worked, Edge busts out the thumbtacks. Foley blocks a facial damaging bulldog with a belly to back suplex into the tacks to send Edge into shock. It's Socko time but Foley wraps it in barbed wire for good measure. Foley gets in a barbed wire bat shot to Edge's ribs and one to the head as well, cutting his head open something fierce. Now Foley gets the lighter fluid to cover the table, but Lita slows him down with a bat shot to the ribs. The table is lit and Edge SPEARS FOLEY THROUGH THE ROPES AND THE FLAMING TABLE for the pin.

**Rating:** A. Oh yeah this worked. This was about blood and violence which is something you never get anymore. It helped that you had Foley and Edge out there, as in guys that knew how to wrestle a match and make a wrestling crowd care. That's the difference between this and ECW: this was well built and about emotion and hatred instead of a freak show. Also it's ONCE, not every match on the card.

The look of shock on Edge's face as he goes to the back is amazing.

Booker and Sharmell want to know why Boogeyman wants them. They go to the ring for their match and see Pirate Paul Burchill practicing his sword play. Then it's DiBiase offering Eugene money for dribbling a ball 100 times in a row, only to kick it away at 99. Snitsky is licking Mae Young's foot with Moolah watching.

Goldust is dressed like Oprah (they used to be partners remember) and is apparently the leader of this group of freaks. He tells Booker to embrace his inner freak or he can't beat the Boogeyman tonight. Goldust suggests putting worms somewhere and Booker freaks out. Booker and Sharmell leave and unfortunately there's no Wrestlemania dance party.

Backlash ad. Hey I was there.

Some celebrities are here.

### Booker T/Sharmell vs. Boogeyman

The idea here is that Booker and Sharmell are terrified. Booker makes Sharmell start but jumps Boogeyman to get things going. There's a bunch of smoke in the arena from Boogeyman's entrance and you can barely see anything. Boogeyman starts no selling stuff including the Book End which doesn't even get a cover. The ax kick misses and a forearm puts Booker down. Boogey eats a big handful of worms but Sharmell picks up his staff. She tries to sneak up on him but SCREAMS to make sure Boogey hears her. A wormy kiss sends Sharmell running and the chokebomb ends Booker for the pin.

**Rating:** F. Do I really need to explain this? Booker would somehow be world champion in four months. I don't get the idea behind Boogeyman and it never worked at all. This match didn't need to be a handicap match either as Sharmell didn't add a thing to the entire match. The stupid smoke was annoying too.

We recap Trish vs. Mickie. Mickie showed up as the psycho (and HOT) Trish stalker/lesbian luster. Trish turned her down so Mickie snapped and kicked her in the head. Mickie then kidnapped Trish's friend Ashley and laid out Trish as she tried to save Ashley. Mickie kissed the unconscious Trish, sending 12 year olds everywhere into a frenzy.

### Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Mickie James

Mickie is challenging and has those awesome skirts that go all over the place. Trish is looking great too with the usual attire but showing her stomach as well. Trish is all aggressive here and chops Mickie down into the splits. They head to the floor but the Chick Kick hits the post. Mickie wraps the leg around the post and is still looking very psycho. Back in and a dropkick to the knee takes Trish down again, as does a dragon screw leg whip for two.

The fans chant for Mickie and I can't say I blame them. Mickie wraps the leg around the ropes before driving it down into the mat for good measure. Off to a half crab followed by a knee crank but Trish power up

and hooks a spinning headscissors to put James down. Trish comes back with the forearms and a spinebuster of all things for two. Trish's corner splash hits feet but as Mickie goes up, Stratus tries the Stratusphere but gets slammed down for a sexy two. A rana is countered into a powerbomb for two and Trish is TICKED.

Trish tries the Matrish but the knee gives out. Instead she tries Stratusfaction but Mickie gropes Trish's crotch to break it up. It's exactly what it sounds like. Mickie licks her fingers so Trish DRILLS HER with a forearm. Trish keeps firing away but the knee gives out, and then the match falls off the rails. Mickie tries the Stratusfaction but COMPLETELY misses the rope, making it almost look like a botched atomic drop by Trish. Instead Mickie hits a lame Chick Kick to end Trish's reign. JR sums it up perfectly: "The nutjob won the title!"

**Rating:** B-. This was one of the best Divas matches ever but the ending cripples it. The idea here was that it wasn't a women's match but rather a match featuring women in it. These two were beating each other up and Trish had real emotion out there. Mickie was PERFECT for this character and you really felt like she had a screw loose. The sexuality was there but it wasn't the focus which is nice for a change. It's nice to see a real story and a real fight between two people who happen to be gorgeous women. Good stuff here.

Vince leads his family in a prayer before his match with Shawn. Vince: "God, I don't like you and you don't like me." That's where it starts and I think you get the idea.

### Undertaker vs. Mark Henry

This is a casket match and WAY before Henry got awesome. Druids bring out the casket surrounded by torches. Basically Henry has beaten up Undertaker and isn't scared of the dark. No one on the planet thought Henry had a chance here. I'd bet even his mama didn't. Henry pounds away to start and no sells a few clotheslines before running Taker over. They trade shots into the steps with Henry taking control before heading back inside. Back in and Henry chokes Undertaker down like he's not even there.

Taker fights back but has Old School broken up with ease. The casket is opened but Taker kicked his way to safety. The Dead Man gets back to his feet and manages to hit Old School this time but it doesn't drop Henry. A Downward Spiral is easily blocked and Henry controls again by choking on the ropes. Henry misses a charge though and lands in the casket, only to pull Taker down in with him.

They fight out of the casket and head back into the ring where Taker charges into the World's Strongest Slam but Henry covers on instinct instead of carrying Taker to the casket. Henry makes the incredibly stupid yet eternally made mistake of pounding down on Taker in the corner, only to be powerbombed out of the corner. Mark is knocked out to the floor where Taker hits hit HUGE Taker Dive to put Henry down again. Back in and there's the Tombstone, allowing Taker to put Henry in the casket to win.

**Rating:** D+. It's Mark Henry and this is long before the career resurgence he had in 2011. There was never any doubt that Taker would win his signature match against a guy who just wasn't on his level. Not a good Mania match here for Taker, but he would win the world title at the next two editions so he would be ok soon.

We recap Vince vs. Shawn. Back in December, Vince had been talking about Montreal again and Shawn finally said let it go before nearly superkicking Vince. This led to Vince basically declaring war on Shawn, eventually leading to a street fight here tonight.

### Vince McMahon vs. Shawn Michaels

Oh wait actually this is no holds barred rather than a street fight because they're such different things. Before the match Vince unveils a poster version of his cover of Muscle and Fitness magazine, which is indeed pretty impressive. Shawn will have none of this though and goes after the boss, pounding away at him and throwing him over the announce table for good measure. Vince gets choked out with a cable as the commentators lose their equipment.

Shawn cracks Vince over the head with his poster and here's the Spirit Squad to try to save Vince. They're five cheerleaders (one of them being

Dolph Ziggler) who beat up Shawn with their five man lifting slam, but Kenny misses a guillotine legdrop. Shawn gets their megaphone and beats all of them up while Vince is getting a breather. The breather allows Vince to get in a clothesline and take over for a bit.

McMahon rips off his own belt to whip and choke Shawn but his attempt at Sweet Chin Music is easily blocked. The forearm puts Vince down and there's a whipping for Vince. There's the top rope elbow but as Shawn tunes up the band, here's Shane to blast him with a kendo stick. Shane pulls out handcuffs but before they tie Shawn up, Vince takes down his pants. Yeah they're doing this at Wrestlemania. Shane tries to send Shawn's face in but Michaels reverses and we get a very disturbing father/son bonding moment.

Shawn hits Vince low and handcuffs Shane to the ropes. After throwing the key into the crowd and doing Shane's dance, Shawn pounds him with the kendo stick and pulls out a chair. A BIG chair shot cracks Vince's head open even more than it already was. Instead of kicking Vince's head off though, Shawn pulls out a ladder. After ramming that into Vince's head too, Shawn pulls out some trashcans to beat on Vince with as well.

There's a table thrown in too and this can't end well. Vince is placed on the table but Shawn isn't pleased with the ladder he's got. Instead he gets the jumbo ladder and puts the trashcan over Vince's head. Shawn climbs the jumbo ladder and drops the BIGGEST ELBOW EVER through Vince through the table. The Sweet Chin Music is the icing on the carnage and it's finally over.

**Rating:** C+. This is a hard one to grade as it's really closer to a long segment than a match. Shawn DESTROYED Vince here and that's what the whole thing was supposed to be. Unfortunately this feud would keep going for about six more months with DX reuniting to fight Vince and all his cronies. Still though, it was certainly entertaining and that's all it was supposed to be.

Vince is wheeled out on a stretcher but still manages to flip off Shawn. That's so Vince.

Wrestlemania 23 is coming to Detroit.

We recap the Smackdown World Title match, or the Eddie Guerrero Tribute match. You can call it either thing really as they're the same thing. Guerrero died five months ago and Rey dedicated his Royal Rumble performance to Eddie, so of course he won. Randy Orton told Rey that Eddie was burning, which was enough to get Rey to put his title shot on the line at No Way Out.

Rey lost, but Teddy Long made it a triple threat with Rey involved, even though Rey lost a fair bet to Orton. This gets the music video, set to I Dare You by Shinedown. Oh and Kurt Angle is world champion coming into this and couldn't be more of an afterthought. He was in Wrestling Machine mode at this point though and was completely made of awesome.

### Smackdown World Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Kurt Angle vs. Randy Orton

P.O.D. plays Rey to the ring. Rey comes out in some freaky looking eagle headdress which I guess is a Mexican thing. During Angle's entrance, Orton grabs the belt from the referee and blasts Kurt in the face to send him to the floor. Rey tries a springboard cross body but Orton dropkicks him out of the air for two. Angle is back in now for a German suplex on Orton before suplexing BOTH GUYS AT ONCE. Angle is amazing, period.

Orton hits his backbreaker on Angle for two of his own as this is very fast paced to start. A belly to belly puts Orton down and Kurt puts Randy on the top for something, but Rey charges at Angle to break it up. Angle instead launches Rey up at Randy who is taken down in a SWEET hurricanrana by the masked dude. The ankle lock to Orton is quickly broken up by Rey and a big kick to Kurt's head gets two. The fans chant for the 619 but as Rey loads it up, Kurt grabs the legs into the ankle lock with the grapevine.

Orton distracts the referee as Rey taps before finally breaking up the hold. Angle starts busting out the Germans and an Angle Slam puts Rey on the floor. The ankle lock goes on Randy and there's a grapevine for good measure. Orton taps but now Rey pulls the referee out and covers his eyes in a pretty brilliant move. Back to the ankle lock but Rey drops the dime on Angle to break it up. The fans are booing Rey for some reason.

Mysterio misses a charge into the corner and slams his shoulder into the

corner. The Angle Slam to Orton is countered into an RK0 but since this is Wrestlemania it only gets two. Randy limps to the top rope for some reason and you just don't do that with Kurt Angle in the ring. There's the running up the corner suplex but Rey tries the 619 around the post. I say try because he slips off the apron and has to just kick Angle in the head for two.

Angle is kicked to the floor and there's an over the shoulder backbreaker into a neckbreaker for two on Rey. I love that move. Randy loads up the RK0 but gets Angle Slammed for two for Kurt. The Angle Slam to Rey is escaped and an armdrag sends Angle to the floor. The 619 and West Coast Pop to Orton give Mysterio the title.

**Rating:** C-. Uh....what? No seriously, where's the rest of this match? The Smackdown World Title match with a new champion gets less than nine and a half minutes at Wrestlemania? It was entertaining while it lasted, but there are Smackdown main events that get twice the amount of time this got. Was Rey ever even in trouble in this match? I'm guessing the match got cut short, but we had nearly 20 minutes for Vince to get beaten up? This is a head scratcher if there's ever been one.

Chavo and Vickie celebrate with Rey.

Cena and HHH are getting ready in the back.

#### Candace Michelle vs. Torrie Wilson

This is your Playboy match of the year. Lillian screwing up the hometowns is the most entertaining thing about this match. They're in their underwear and this is a pillow fight. Torrie coming out to what would become Laycool's music is rather odd. What do you want here? There's a bed in the ring, stuff is turned over, Torrie wins after like FOUR MINUTES. Remember that: this got four minutes, the Smackdown World Title got nine.

**Rating:** F. Were you expecting more here? Next.

Video on the Wrestlemania press conference.

#### Raw World Title: HHH vs. John Cena



HHH, known as the King of Kings, is in what can best be described as viking attire and rises up out of the stage on a throne. He had Thor's hammer next to him and a bottle of water in his hand which doesn't quite fit. Before Cena comes out we get a newsreel about Chicago in the Great Depression. The stage raises up and a car from the 30s drives out, complete with machine gun toting gangsters (one of which was played by future WWE Champion and Cena rival CM Punk who we'll get back to later).

Cena comes out in a fedora and the shorts shooting a Tommy gun. After the big match intros (the announcer introducing them when they're in opposite corners) we're ready to go. HHH grabs a quick hammerlock and takes Cena down to frustrate him a bit. Cena gets caught in a wristlock and sent into the corner again as the fans tell Cena that he sucks. All HHH so far. With nothing else working, Cena tries a quick FU but gets punched in the face. After about four minutes of nothing significant, Cena is thrown to the floor, only to come back in with right hands.

A quick fisherman's suplex gets two for Cena and it's off to a chinlock by the champ. The fans tell Cena that he can't wrestle and HHH fights up. A hard whip sends HHH over the corner and out to the floor but he pokes Cena in the eye to break Cena's momentum. HHH can't piledrive Cena on the floor though and gets backdropped onto the steel instead. Back in and HHH hits the jumping knee to the face to a big reaction.

Back to the floor we go and Cena is whipped hard into the steps. They head inside again for a facebuster from the challenger and a big old clothesline for two. A neckbreaker gets the same as the fans alternate between "screw you Cena" and "Cena sucks." Off to a neck crank by the Game which is transitioned into a sleeper and then a chinlock. The champ shoves him off and hits a clothesline to put both guys down again. Back up and Cena fires off some more clotheslines followed by a powerslam for no cover.

The spinning mat slam puts HHH down but the Game pops up for a spinebuster to block the Shuffle. Back to the sleeper but Cena almost immediately suplexes his way out of it. Now the Shuffle hits and there's Cena's new submission hold the STFU. HHH grabs a rope but Cena is in the zone now. The FU is countered but Cena is shoved into the referee.

HHH hits both of them low and gets the sledgehammer which goes upside Cena's head. Since this is Wrestlemania though it only gets two instead of putting Cena in need of perpetual care. Back up and HHH charges into the FU for two so Cena goes up top. A cross body misses and HHH tries the Pedigree, only to be countered into the STF. With nowhere else to go, HHH taps out and keeps the title on Cena.

**Rating:** B-. This is one of the recurring problems with HHH matches: when he tries to have a big epic match it rarely works. Cena got a solid rub out of beating him here but at the same time the match wasn't all that great. It felt like a way to make Cena a big deal rather than have a match between the two of them. It also didn't help that there was no real issue between the two of them.

A highlight package ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This is one of the most forgettable Wrestlemanias in history. There's nothing of note on here, none of the matches are great other than a middle of the show hardcore match which led to some great stuff. Batista being gone hurt this show a lot as Cena wasn't quite ready to shoulder the weight of Wrestlemania yet. It's not horrible, but it's totally forgettable and not required viewing at all.

### Ratings Comparison

Big Show/Kane vs. Carlito/Chris Masters

Original: D+

Redo: C

Rob Van Dam vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. Ric Flair vs. Finlay vs. Matt Hardy vs. Bobby Lashley

Original: B

Redo: B

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Chris Benoit

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Edge vs. Mick Foley

Original: A

Redo: A

Boogeyman vs. Booker T/Sharmell

Original: F

Redo: F

Mickie James vs. Trish Stratus

Original: B

Redo: B-

Undertaker vs. Mark Henry

Original: D

Redo: D+

Shawn Michaels vs. Vince McMahon

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Rey Mysterio vs. Kurt Angle vs. Randy Orton

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Torrie Wilson vs. Candice Michelle

Original: F

Redo: F

HHH vs. John Cena

Original: A-

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: D+

In the first one I said it wasn't something I'd want to see again. Apparently that was accurate as the rating PLUNGED on a second viewing.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/29/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-22-i-barely-remember-this-show/>

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# Monday Night Raw – June 26, 1995: The Dentist Makes Sense

## Monday Night Raw

Date: June 26, 1995

Location: Danville High School, Danville, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 2,700

Commentators: Shawn Michaels, Vince McMahon

We're FINALLY past King of the Ring and the big story is the rise of King Mabel. For reasons that I'll just never understand, Shawn Michaels and Undertaker were taken out in the first round, leaving us with one of the worst tournaments of all time. Ok to be fair the tournament was always going to be one of the worst ever but that didn't help things. Let's get to it.

We open with stills of the Kiss My Foot match and the post match destruction of Lawler.

Shawn Michaels comes out to do commentary in Lawler's place as Lawler is the kind of guy who would take a week off to sell a beating like that. Today, he would have been back before the end of the show.

Opening sequence.

## Smoking Gunns vs. Black Phantom/Jason Arndt

Billy takes Jason down to start and the Gunns start double teaming in the corner. The Sidewinder puts him away in less than two minutes with Phantom never getting in.

Earlier today, Lawler was at his dentist's office. That would of course be Isaac Yankem DDS, who would eventually become Kane. Lawler swears vengeance with Yankem (not shown yet) helping him along the way. The key here: Lawler says Yankem used to be a wrestler under a different name. That's EXACTLY the kind of thing you never get and the simple key to make the whole story make sense.

Recap video of last night's show.

### Skip vs. Scott Taylor

Scotty 2 Hotty that is. Skip does his exercises to start but gets knocked out to the floor with a nice dropkick. Scotty gets pulled to the floor for a slam and Skip drops a top rope headbutt. Back in and a top rope hurricanrana gives Skip the pin. Total squash and again this is all about Sunny, as it should be.

Diesel was in a celebrity softball game over the weekend.

Todd Pettengill recaps last night's show because we haven't done that enough yet so far. Apparently this is supposed to make us want the encore, though you would think they might lower the price a bit when the ending could be spoiled by Raw. Anyway Sid walking out on the match (because SID is so cowardly) set up Sid vs. Diesel for the title at In Your House II in a lumberjack match.

Savio Vega, not banged up in the slightest after having three matches last night, is ready to win the Intercontinental Title.

Sid vs. Bam Bam Bigelow next week.

### Man Mountain Rock vs. Phil Apollo

Rock has a new WWF logo guitar and Apollo would play Doink at various times in his career. A belly to belly sets up a slam which sets up the Fujiwara Armbar to make Phil tap.

### King Mabel vs. Kenny Kendall

You can hear the groans as soon as the throne makes its appearance. Mabel shouts about being the king and stomps away in the corner as the fans die more and more every second. A release northern lights suplex sends Kenny flying and Mabel throws him outside. Back in and Kenny's comeback earns him a belly to belly for the pin.

Waylon Mercy is coming next week. He's also a lifeguard this week.

Shawn declares Sid as all bark and no bite.

Hall of Fame recap eats up a good amount of time. It's really strange to see this in a hotel instead of an arena like it is today. For reasons that aren't clear, Bill Murray inducted George Steele from atop an elephant on the set of a movie called Larger Than Life. I actually saw that in theaters.

### Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Savio Vega

Jarrett is defending of course. Roadie tries to get in a cheap shot from behind (therefore earning his pay), only to have Vega catch him coming in and knock Jeff down for his efforts. A slam sets up even more right hands before Jarrett accidentally knocks Roadie off the apron. There's a clothesline to put Jeff on the floor next to his employee but Jeff stops to shout at Shawn on commentary for no apparent reason.

Back from a break with Jeff grabbing a swinging neckbreaker before Roadie adds in some choking on the middle rope. Jeff crotches himself on said rope though, allowing Vega to grab a belly to back suplex. A Rock Bottom plants the champ again but Vega has to dropkick Roadie, sending him into Shawn again. That triggers a fight between Shawn and Roadie, drawing Jarrett out to go after Shawn. For some reason that's not a DQ but Roadie coming in and clotheslining Vega is.

**Rating:** C. Still good stuff here with Vega being more than capable of helping Jarrett have a watchable match. The ending was clearly there to set up a bigger match down the line though as Shawn is ready to come back from his various injuries. Shawn vs. Jarrett should be fine and Vega gets to keep looking strong after his run to the tournament finals the night before.

Shawn dances (sans shirt of course) on the announcers' table until Jarrett and Roadie come out to yell some more to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. Best show they've had in a few weeks but a lot of that is due to the lack of foot issues. Jarrett vs. Vega was fine enough and offered a nice break but there's only so much you can do when you're building towards Diesel vs. Sid AGAIN. They just have no idea what's going on right now and the Mabel super push is going to make it even worse.

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# Smackdown – March 24, 2016: Smackdown And Such

## Smackdown

Date: March 24, 2016

Location: TD Banknorth Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

Brock is here for a rare Smackdown appearance so you know we're getting closer and closer to Wrestlemania. There are two shows left before the biggest show of the year and things are ranging from hot to lukewarm at best so it should be interesting to see which one we get here tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Non-title and Becky Lynch is on commentary. We're not quite ready to go though as Charlotte promises to lead the WOO Revolution over Sasha and Becky in front of a record setting crowd in Dallas. Simple speech but rather efficient. Like any good heel champion, Charlotte is on the floor



before anything can happen to her. Back in and Sasha flips her over for two before slapping the champ in the face.

Charlotte comes back with a kick to the face and a neckbreaker, giving us a good old fashioned WOO. We hit the chinlock before a big chop puts Banks down again. A Thesz press gets two on the champ but the double knees in the corner miss. They head outside for a minute and it's Sasha being whipped into Becky. Charlotte takes her back inside for the Figure Eight, only to be small packaged to give Sasha the surprise pin at 4:56.

**Rating:** C. Not a great match as they didn't have time but hopefully the intensity shown here is a good indication of what we're going to be seeing in Dallas. They're doing a good job of setting this up as a match where anyone can win, even though I can't imagine Becky having much of a chance. Good TV match here though and that's how you build to the big stuff.

Post match Becky gets in the ring for a Bex Plex to both of them, followed by Sasha giving Charlotte a Backstabber.

Here's New Day for their weekly chat. We're just ten days away from Wrestlemania XXXII and they'll be having a match against the League of Nations. The League is so boring that they're like the going to the DMV of WWE. If they were a Star Wars character, they would be the Jar Jar Binks of WWE. Or if they were another sports star they would be the Michael Jordan of baseball. As usual, this was all about how strong New Day sells the material instead of whatever they're actually saying.

### Kofi Kingston vs. Sheamus

No Del Rio for some reason. Sheamus isn't playing around here and throws Kofi into the corner for an early stomping. It's not quite the Unicorn Stampede but Sheamus is hardly trained for such combat. Kofi gets back up for some stomping of his own to send Sheamus to the floor. A big standoff is teased but the power of Francesca II calms things down. Kofi gets tripped off the apron though and we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Rusev shouting in some insults. We hit the chinlock with Sheamus clearly calling some spots, one of which

seems to be missing a middle rope knee drop. Things get even worse for Sheamus as he misses a charge into the post to start Kofi's comeback. There's the Boom Drop and Kofi follows with a flip dive over the top to take out Sheamus again. Back in and Sheamus grabs a suplex slam for two before going for a turnbuckle pad. Rusev offers a distraction so New Day chases him off, only to have Barrett's distraction set up the Brogue Kick for the pin on Kofi at 10:28.

**Rating:** C-. Kofi is getting better and better every week, to the point where I could easily see him going up to the main event after the New Day run is over. You have to give the League something before they get to the pay per view though and this was as fine as anything else, especially with them playing up the numbers advantage for the League.

### Usos vs. Ascension

Viktor runs Jey over to start and it's off to Konnor for a chinlock. That goes as far as a first minute chinlock is going to go as Jey fights up and sends Konnor into the corner. Everything breaks down and a double superkick puts Viktor away at 1:37.

Post match the Usos put Viktor through a table.

The Dudley Boyz don't think much of the Usos as they're only two time Tag Team Champions. They've beaten up Rikishi and they could beat up the Wild Samoans, but here's Roman Reigns to interrupt. Reigns doesn't like the way Bubba is disrespecting his family so let's have a fight tonight.

Long video on Shane vs. Undertaker, the same one from Raw.

### Dolph Ziggler/Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens/The Miz

Sami and Miz get things going as we have to hear about the other three guys being added to the Intercontinental Title match for the sake of making it way more of a mess than it needs to be. Sami works on the arm to start (there's a safe idea) before it's off to Ziggler for a rollup. Owens: "WE GET IT! YOU WENT TO COLLEGE!" Dolph's headlock slows things down but Miz puts a knee into his ribs to take over.

Owens comes in and eats a dropkick, only to run away from Zayn. He teases

leaving again but this time Miz will have nothing to do with that and grabs Kevin's arm, allowing Zayn to get in a dive to take them out. Some elbows to the head have Owens in trouble and that's about it for this dream match. I would say save it for Wrestlemania but apparently we wanted a seven way ladder match including a guy who has won one match in nearly two years. Ziggler comes in and gets stomped in the corner before a catapult puts him on the floor.

We take a break and come back with Ziggler blocking the backplash with the only counter that people use for that move. The hot tag brings in Sami for his running clotheslines and a high cross body to Miz. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two as everything breaks down. Owens breaks up the Helluva Kick and a victory roll gets two on Miz. Both guys are down but now it's time for Owens to walk out, only to have Sin Cara, Zack Ryder and Stardust stop him. Back in and Miz gives Owens a Skull Crushing Finale, setting up a superkick and Helluva Kick for the pin on Miz at 13:57.

**Rating:** C+. That scene with Ryder, Cara and Stardust coming out to stop Owens from leaving sums up every problem this title match has. If for whatever reason we can't have Zayn vs. Owens, the best solution is to just add Miz and Ziggler to the mix. I'm not wild on it but it's as good of a story as we can get. The other three can't even get into a match on Smackdown and really do come off as people just there for the sake of being there. As usual, if you can eliminate something entirely and tell the same story, they're really not necessary.

Post match Stardust comes in with the Queen's Crossbow to Zayn. Ryder and Cara come in for the big brawl and it's Ryder of all people standing tall.

Recap of Roman Reigns vs. HHH/Stephanie on Raw.

#### Roman Reigns vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Reigns comes through the entrance again. Bubba immediately hits the floor to yell at the fans which is why he's such a great heel. Back in and a Superman Punch sends Ray right back out to the floor. The brawl heads outside and Ray is in even more trouble as Reigns slams him into the

table over and over for a DQ at 1:52.

D-Von's save attempt earns him a Superman Punch and some steps to the shoulder. Reigns spears Bubba for good measure.

Goldust is painting his face in the bathroom when R-Truth comes in to call him partner. They're still not partners but Goldust denies coming down to help him on Monday. Somehow Truth knows that Goldust sleeps without clothes on so Goldust paints NO on Truth's forehead. Truth looks in the mirror. "ON! IT'S ON!"

The Lucha Dragons are in the back to talk about how they can leave Wrestlemania with a title each. Cara leaves and Ryback comes in to talk about how much bigger and stronger he is than Kalisto. He can bench press Kalisto with one arm and ate that much weight for breakfast this morning. Ryback deserves the Wrestlemania spotlight and Kalisto can settle for a flashlight. Kalisto says he'll win and leaves.

#### Tyler Breeze vs. AJ Styles

AJ starts with his striking sequence to send Breeze outside, setting up a springboard forearm. Breeze, who is announced for the Andre battle royal, knees AJ in the face but his superplex is broken up. Another Phenomenal Forearm is enough to pin Breeze at 2:03.

Here are Brock and Heyman to wrap things up. Heyman cuts off the speech by saying that his name is Paul Heyman and this is your main event of the evening. Brock is going to be your Wrestlemania moment, just like when he conquered the Streak. That still gets people to boo. That brings Heyman to the no holds barred street fight at Wrestlemania, which means Dean can use anything he can get his hands on against BROCK LESNAR.

It can be a chair, a table or a kendo stick but it won't be enough. Now we have Mick Foley and Terry Funk handing Dean various weapons to use against Lesnar too. To shoot from the hip a bit, the only reason Funk and Foley are still alive is because Heyman's prayers continue to go unanswered. What Ambrose doesn't understand is that if Dean can get his hands on something, Brock can get his hands on as well. However, Brock can also get his hands on Dean and that's just going to end badly.

Heyman invites Dean out to fight right now but he gets the Wyatt Family (minus Harper) instead. Brock seems to like the idea of being surrounded but here's Dean to interrupt. Lesnar gets in a quick suplex to Rowan as Dean gets in, only to have Strowman take Brock's head off with a clothesline. Dean's distraction lets Brock suplex Strowman (first time for that I believe) before beating Lesnar down with the kendo stick. That's fine with Brock who pops up and gives him an F5 to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The wrestling wasn't great here but this was all about helping to set the stage for Wrestlemania. Things are really starting to shape up for the big night and they're doing a better job of setting it up than they did last year. There are still some major issues on the pay per view of course but they're doing what they can to fix some of them as fast as they can. This was a good enough building show and that's exactly what it needed to be.

### Results

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Small package

Sheamus b. Kofi Kingston – Brogue Kick

Usos b. Ascension – Double superkick to Viktor

Sami Zayn/Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens/The Miz – Helluva Kick to Miz

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Reigns sent him into the announcers' table

AJ Styles b. Tyler Breeze – Phenomenal Forearm

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# **Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode 42**

The Wrestlemania preview.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-42-kb-and-myself-head-home-to-wrestlemania/>

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# **New Column: The Other Other Mr. Wrestlemania**

On one of my all time favorites.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-other-other-mr-wrestlemania/>