

WWE Potentially Spoils Hall of Fame Inductee

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

Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode 38

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

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

Thunder – September 6, 2000: Goldberg Breaks Canada

Thunder

Date: September 6, 2000

Location: Reed Arena, College Station, Texas

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone, Stevie Ray

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

Opening sequence.

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

Kwee Wee vs. Lieutenant Loco

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

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

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

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

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

We go back to the Power Plant with the Thrillers returning to their old stomping grounds. They offer to give the guys in the ring some training

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

It's time for the sitdown interview with David Flair and Miss Hancock. Tenay gets right to the point by asking if Ric will be there. Didn't we cover that on Monday with Arn? David hasn't talked to his family but they're welcome to come if they like. Mike calls Hancock a gold digger (she was reaching into David's pockets for something) before asking if David will be a better father than Ric. They argue over whether that's personal or not (it kind of is Mike) and that's it. Mike gives them six months at most. So Gene's gimmick is that he's a dirty old man and Tenay's is that he's just a jerk while doing interviews? How does this help anything?

Goldberg is looking for Hart.

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

Kronik vs. 3 Count

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

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

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

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

It's time to make things even worse as we have the debut of the Lava Lamp

Lounge, as in Mike Awesome's 70s themed talk show. Apparently he isn't just into fat chicks anymore because there's enough Vitamin A to go around. His guest tonight: Paula Pamshock (exactly as he said it).

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

Crowbar vs. Shane Douglas

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

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

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

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

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

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

We see the Bret Killer Kick from Starrcade, which cost him millions of dollars. "I couldn't even buy that ranch I wanted." Goldberg claims to be some kind of animal activist but he treated Bret worse than any animal. Cue Goldberg to say if this was the normal version of him, he'd have already taken Bret's head off. Believe it or not, he has some remorse. There are times where he wishes it was him that got his head kicked off. Bret wishes that every day because all Goldberg cares about is his merchandise being on the shelf.

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

WCW Motorsports, with Vampiro completely out of character.

Steiner leaves the building.

Tag Team Titles: Filthy Animals vs. Harris Brothers

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

Rey finally gets the tag as everything breaks down, including Tygress

coming in for a Bronco Buster. Juvy gets kicked low but here's Kronik because we didn't have enough interference yet. Kronik lays out Disqo for no apparent reason before Clark throws Rey at one of the Brothers for the pin to retain.

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

Video on WarGames, which means the whole show.

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

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

Sting vs. Vampiro

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

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

Vampiro comes back with chops but we might have some stolen food stamps.

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

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

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

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

Team Canada vs. Goldberg

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

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

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

Smackdown

Date: January 28, 2016

Location: Amalie Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

Miz and Jey get things going with the Uso sending him into the corner for some dancing. Woods refers to Jey as a varmint as it's off to Titus vs. Kofi. Kingston dropkicks him down and it's off to Ziggler. Big E. gets in a slam but Ziggler dives away and makes the tag off to Jimmy as things pick up again. There's the running Umaga Attack (with Rinaldo actually mentioning Umaga) to Big E., who pops up and belly to bellies Jimmy into the corner.

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

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

US Title: Kalisto vs. Neville

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

Neville lifts him up into a fireman's carry and goes up top, only to have

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

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

They shake hands post match.

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

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

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

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

AJ Styles vs. Curtis Axel

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

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

Charlotte vs. Natalya

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

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

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

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

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

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

The bad idea results in Harper coming back with a suplex for two as we take a break. Back with Rowan putting on the head vice for a bit before a backbreaker gets two on Jericho. Harper comes in for a leg lock of all things, followed by a more traditional chinlock. Bray seems a bit disappointed that we didn't get a broken limb. A Michinoku Driver gets two for Harper but he's smart enough to kick Reigns off the apron. Jericho grabs a one knee Codebreaker for a breather, allowing the hot tag off to Ambrose.

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

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

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

Overall Rating: C-. There were a few good things here and there but above all else this show was lacking. Smackdown shows promise once in a while but then it gets stuck with this lame formula of tag matches and meaningless midcard stuff which is almost never mentioned again. It's

fine for a quick show but nothing necessary to remember by the time the next Raw airs.

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

Ring of Honor

Date: January 27, 2016

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

Commentators: Kevin Kelly, Mr. Wrestling 3

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

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

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

Cedric Alexander vs. Cheeseburger

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

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

Cedric Alexander vs. Jonathan Gresham

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jay Briscoe vs. Michael Elgin

Mark Briscoe is out for commentary but here's Moose to interrupt. If the

World Title can be a three way, why can't this match be one too? They do at least mention that Nigel signed off on the change.

Jay Briscoe vs. Michael Elgin vs. Moose

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

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

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

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

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

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New Column: The Object Of The Game

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

[The Object Of The Game](#)

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

NXT

Date: January 27, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

Tonight is a big night as we find out the #1 contender for the NXT Title

with the title shot potentially coming at Takeover: Dallas over Wrestlemania weekend. We have Baron Corbin vs. Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe in a triple threat match with the winner getting a shot at some point in the future. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

American Alpha vs. Blake and Murphy

The announcers accuse Bliss of staring at Jordan as he starts with Murphy. Jason gets his kick to the ribs caught but keeps jumping over the attempted legsweeps. It's off to Gable to start in on the arm but a hair pull stops his twisting. Blake comes in and is taken down just as fast as Gable is clearly just having fun with both of them in there. Chad dives over him a few times into some armdrags and throws, followed by a crucifix for two.

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

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

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

Stills of Sami Zayn entering the Royal Rumble.

Video on Asuka.

Nia Jax vs. Liv Morgan

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

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

Video on Baron Corbin.

We get the same sinister Vaudevillains vignette from last week.

Bull Dempsey vs. Alex Riley

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

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

Elias Samson vs. John Skyler

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

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

Video on Samoa Joe.

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

Baron Corbin vs. Samoa Joe vs. Sami Zayn

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

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

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

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

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

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

Results

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

Nia Jax b. Liv Morgan – Legdrop

Alex Riley b. Bull Dempsey – Knee to the jaw

Elias Samson b. John Skyler – Swinging neckbreaker

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

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Monday Nitro – September 4, 2000 (2016 Redo): Russo Does WarGames

Monday Nitro #256

Date: September 4, 2000

Location: Reunion Arena, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Jeremy Borash, Mark Madden

This is a special (kind of) show for me as I remembered hearing about WarGames 2000 on Thunder and wanting to see it. Being a moron of twelve at the time, I stayed home to watch that while Monday Night Raw was taking place ten minutes from my house and a buddy of mine had an extra ticket. To this day I can't explain what I was thinking. Let's get to it.

On a side note: this is five years to the day that Nitro debuted.

We open with a video on tonight's big triple cage match with the teams announced. It's a four on four match with the World Title on the line, which already gives us a lapse in logic. The match is also called Russo's Revenge because WARGAMES isn't MANLY enough.

Team Russo (Russo/Nash/Jarrett/Steiner) are coming to the ring.

New opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Insane Clown Posse vs. Juventud Guerrera/Rey Mysterio Jr.

The Clowns are challenging for reasons I'll never understand. Konnan does his intro but gets jumped from behind to get things going. It's a brawl to start with Rey dropkicking Violent J to the floor for a double dive from the champs. Back in and Shaggy dropkicks Juvy out of the air to let the Clowns take over.

Borash to Konnan and Disqo on commentary: "Do the ICP have it like that?" Somehow this turns into a discussion of Richard Gere as Shaggy takes Air Juvy (Poetry in Motion) and a Bronco Buster from Rey, only to have the Clowns pop up like it was nothing. J presses Rey over his head but gets dropkicked down, setting up a double dropkick from the champs. What's Up with a legdrop instead of a headbutt puts J down to retain the titles.

Rating: C. Not a bad match here as the Clowns were kept to a minimum and mainly just had Rey and Juvy do all the work. The Clowns aren't the worst in the ring but they definitely need someone to walk them through the match. I'm still not sure why the Animals turned face but at least Rey and Juvy, the most natural underdog team ever, aren't supposed to be intimidating anymore.

Team Canada is in the gym and Storm is putting Major Gunns through boot camp. Gunns has to be taught to work as hard as a Canadian, which is nothing more than a reason to have her running on a treadmill.

Booker T., The Cat and Ms. Jones (in a neck brace) leave their hotel.

The triple cage is lowered way too early because here's Russo, flanked by the Thrillers, with something to say. In case you've never seen it, the structure is the Cell with a hardcore (weapons cage) on top with a one man cage on top of that for one of the biggest things you'll see in wrestling. Russo takes a quick shot at the Dallas Cowboys before explaining the idea of how you win this mess. Unlike Slamboree, you have to climb the ladder and get the belt at the top of the cage and then bring it back down and go out the door.

Tonight it's going to be the babyface team against the heel team (his words), though he claims that Team Russo will be the babyfaces. Also there's been an injunction that means Cat has no power. Therefore, the heels (as in Goldberg/Sting/Cat/Booker T.), all have to win qualifying matches to get into WarGames. If Goldberg actually wins, Russo will waive the no contact clause. It's going to be so big that Nash is going to hand Russo the World Title on a plate. This brings out Nash who doesn't look pleased. Yeah I'm sure.

Nash says this isn't how things work because his title isn't on the line unless he says it's on the line. He only has to defend it once a month and maybe he'll do it on the 29th day at the 11th hour if he feels like it. Russo says he's the boss but Nash says in this cage, he's Russo's daddy. The lights go out and here's Sting coming through a hole in the ring. Nash flips Russo off and leaves, allowing Sting to get in Russo's face and say it's showtime. No contact of course because that's Vince Russo but whatever.

Sting turns back around so Russo climbs a ladder to get to the second cage. Sting chases him up but Scott Steiner and Jeff Jarrett come in. The Thrillers come in and move the ladder so here are Booker and the Cat to take them out. Russo uses the numbers game to get down but here's Goldberg (fresh out of the desert, which hasn't been mentioned yet) to

chase him off. Geez people. You're having an eight person triple cage match later and you felt the need to have a big segment inside the cage as well? On five days' notice? Really?

Post break (and recap), Steiner and Jarrett yell at Russo for ticking Nash off.

Jeremy Borash is bald and we actually get a video of the Nitro Girls shaving his head. This was something about a ratings bet with Russo that isn't elaborated on, thank goodness.

Here are the Harris Brothers with some footage to show us. It's a clip of them going to a bar where Kronik is drinking and starting a fight. This has nothing on the Friendly Tap.

Shane Douglas wants Goldberg in a qualifying match so Russo grants the wish to get rid of him. The catch is Shane wants the Thrillers but Torrie says he doesn't need them. Torrie and Shane leave so Russo sends the Thrillers out to keep an eye on him.

WarGames Qualifying Match: Sting vs. Great Muta/Vampiro

I'm assuming Muta and Vampiro can get into the cage if they win. Muta and Vampiro double team him to start but Sting clotheslines Vampiro to the floor. Back in and Vampiro grabs Sting but takes the Mist to the face by mistake. Muta is sent outside and a Death Drop pins Vampiro in just over a minute.

Post match the Clowns come out to yell at Muta but nothing happens.

Major Gunns, now drenched in sweat, is on another exercise machine and the camera just happens to be looking down at her in a low cut top.

Russo makes Stevie Ray wrestle tonight by threatening to take away his Thunder commentary job.

Jarrett tells Nash to get over his issues with Russo. Nash threatens to switch teams tonight.

WarGames Qualifying Match: Booker T. vs. Stevie Ray

Stevie says this is for the fans instead of Russo. Booker gives Russo his catchphrase and Stevie jumps him from behind to take over early on. Ray sends him face first into the steps for two before bending Booker's arms back to slow things down. Back up and Booker hits a quick forearm to set up the ax kick. The Harlem Side Kick is caught in a kind of powerbomb but the Slap Jack is countered with a backdrop. The Book End sends Booker to the main event in a hurry.

Post match Booker yells at Stevie for jumping him. The explanation: suckas gotta know and a hug. Ok then.

Kronik asks the Jung Dragons where the Harris Brothers are but beats them up for not speaking English. Totally not a Kai En Tai knockoff.

Back from a break and Kronik triple chokeslams 3 Count for fun. They want the Harris Brothers right now but get Jeff Jarrett instead. The tag match isn't happening tonight but here's a handicap match for them instead.

WarGames Qualifying Match: The Cat vs. Kronik

Cat says they should be getting together to fight Russo and company. Clark agrees and goes after Jeff, leaving Cat to roll Adams up for two. The beatdown is on but Cat drops to the floor to save Ms. Jones from Jarrett. Kronik pulls Cat back inside for High Times and the pin in less than a minute and a half. So Kronik is in the match instead.

Russo and Steiner are thrilled by the result.....until it's announced that Kronik advances instead. YOU MADE THE MATCH AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW THE RULES??? You can't make this stuff up.

WarGames Qualifying Match: Shane Douglas vs. Goldberg

Torrie, really not very good on the mic yet, yells about being stuck in Dallas for the night. Shane gets shoved down to start and a quick legbar sends him out to the floor. Goldberg fires off a forearm but hits the post instead of Shane, giving Douglas a target. Back in and Shane works on a wristlock which goes as well as you would expect it to go. A clothesline with the bar arm drops Shane (no selling of course) and here are the Thrillers. They're beaten down just as quickly with Reno taking a

Roll the Dice. Douglas loads up the chain but gets speared down to set up the Jackhammer for the pin.

Rating: D. For an evil genius, Russo does some really stupid stuff. With that win, Goldberg is in the cage and can beat on Russo, all because of Russo's doing. The match itself was as good as Shane Douglas vs. Goldberg in an overbooked match was going to be though at least we could look at Torrie.

Russo panics because he doesn't think thinks through. Nash tells him he has an agenda tonight and Russo is foiled again.

Major Gunns is swimming for her final test to become Canadian. Well they might have been too subtle earlier so just put her in a swimsuit and be done with it. The Misfits are watching with binoculars from all of twenty feet away. Pamela Paulshock is thrown in as well so here are the Misfits to fight the Canadians in the pool.

Russo puts Vito in a gauntlet match against the Thrillers. That's their final chance.

Arn Anderson is asked about whether he'll show up for David's wedding next week. After saying Pamela looks good soaking wet (he has a point), he wonders why someone like David would want to get married anyway. It's in Horsemen country though so sure they'll show up. The fact that the only thing they build up for weeks is likely another chance to humiliate Ric Flair is very telling about WCW.

Big Vito vs. Natural Born Thrillers

Vito says he doesn't sweat anyone so bring it on. The Thrillers do their catchphrases so Vito turns it into gay jokes. After even more filler yelling at each other, Sanders says the five of them (there are six) will fight at the same time. Vito fights with the stick ball bat for as long as he can until Jindrak and O'Haire kick him in the face. The beating is on as you would expect and it's a parade of finishers, capped off with the Seanton Bomb for the easy pin.

The Thrillers beat him down even more post match.

The teams have meetings in the back.

The good guys, minus Goldberg, are ready.

WCW World Title: WarGames 2000: Vince Russo/Kevin Nash/Scott Steiner/Jeff Jarrett vs. Sting/Kronik/Booker T./Goldberg

Nash is defending and the teams are only a thing for the timed interval (two minutes) entrances. The match can end at anytime and it's Jarrett vs. Sting to start. They fight on the floor next to the ladder (needed to climb to the second cage) before throwing the ladder inside. Sting sends him into the ladder and it's Scott Steiner in because the heels won the coin toss. Wait didn't Russo say his team was the babyface team? So officially, the faces won the coin toss? Leave it to Russo to screw up the easiest idea in wrestling (which I believe he did in TNA's Lethal Lockdown match as well).

Steiner hits Sting in the ribs to take over and brings in a bigger ladder but stops to beat on Sting even more. Kronik, meaning both of them, come in to "even" things up. Steiner heads up to the second cage, leaving Jarrett to take High Times, allowing Kronik to follow Steiner up top. A double gorilla press drops Steiner as the question becomes if Adams or Clark wins the title for themselves since they entered the match as a unit.

Russo comes in next but has the Harris Brothers climb the Cell and go inside the second cage after Kronik. As you might expect, Sting beats Russo down with ease and puts him in the Scorpion (of course Russo never taps). Now it's Nash coming in as the heel/face order is thrown out. Nash goes after everyone and grabs Russo (standing with no issues after being in the Scorpion) by the throat but Steiner breaks it up. The Harris Brothers and Kronik are brawling in the crowd, apparently with Kronik having been eliminated. In WarGames.

Now Steiner breaks up Nash's choke on Jarrett as Booker comes in. Booker ax kicks Steiner so Russo hits him from behind like a moron, earning himself an ax kick to the helmet. Yeah he's wearing a helmet. Nash decks Booker and everyone still in the match is in the bottom cage. The heels all beat down Booker and Sting until Goldberg comes out to complete the

field. Jarrett and Steiner take the bullets for Russo, leaving him to hit Goldberg in the back with the ball bat to drop Goldberg.

Booker goes up top for the belt (Yeah remember that?) as Nash stands next to the door. Well that's smart, even though you could conceivably just climb down the side of the cage to get to the floor. Somewhere in there Goldberg was handcuffed to the corner. You would think they would have pointed that out earlier. Sting, Jarrett and Steiner go up to the second cage, leaving Booker to go up and get the belt. Booker starts hitting people with the belt to get down but Sting has been handcuffed to the weapons cage, allowing Steiner to take the belt away from Booker and blast him in the face.

Madden admits there are no teams in this mess as the belt falls through the hole. Russo picks it up and taunts Goldberg, allowing the Cat to come in and kick Russo in the head. Nash lays out Cat with a Jackknife but Goldberg breaks the handcuffs and cleans house. He picks up the belt and goes to leave but Bret Hart appears and slams the door on his face. Russo has the belt free and clear until Nash grabs him by the shirt. They hug, it was a swerve, and Nash retains.

Rating: D+. Let's get this out of the way to start: this wasn't WarGames. Russo can call it that all he wants but this had as much to do with WarGames as the set of collectable plates that McDonalds put out in 1998 to promote Hercules. This was a big cage match with timed intervals and that's about it for WarGames connections.

That being said, the match was enough of a mess that it wasn't boring and at least presented something that could be interesting if someone competent was booking the thing. It would have been a lot better if it had been just going up and getting the belt without having to get back down but you knew Nash wasn't going up that high. It's total insanity of course, but were you expecting anything else?

Here's the thing though: it's a huge waste of time. Think about it: this match was announced last Wednesday, had its main story set up earlier in the night, and the match happened tonight. Nothing changes in the storylines, Nash is still facing Booker at the pay per view, and it was

all a big swerve for a few hours. At least it was memorable though, which is Russo's definition of good.

Overall Rating: D. The main event helped a bit but an hour and a half of nothing matches before the main event isn't the best idea with one more Nitro before the pay per view. However, I'd rather watch a somewhat interesting one off show than the traditional insanity that I have to put up with when they try to do multiple storylines. On a sidenote: where was Mike Awesome? He was part of the team on Thunder and I don't think he was even mentioned here. That's probably best for him actually.

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Impact Wrestling – January 26, 2016: The Annual Jeff Hardy Injury Show

Impact Wrestling

Date: January 26, 2016

Location: Sands Bethlehem Events Center, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

Tonight is a special show with the annual Feast or Fired match. In other words, there are four briefcases hung above the ring. You climb a corner and grab a briefcase and try your luck. Three cases contain title shots (World Title, Tag Team Title and King of the Mountain Title) and one pink slip. The big moment is then finding out who has what. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the last man standing match with Matt Hardy beating Ethan Carter III for the World Title in a double turn.

Here's Jeff Hardy to open things up. He saw what happened last week and it made him sick. That's why he needs answers right now so the new World Champion needs to get out here right now. Matt's new music starts off with him saying "I AM ICONIC." Oh sweet goodness this is going to be a long day. Matt comes out with his wife Reby Sky and Tyrus, who is carrying Matt's son. Jeff says this is a family issue so it needs to be just the two of them.

Reby laughs that off because she and Matt are a real family. Where was Jeff when the world was turning their back on Matt? It's time for Matt to stop giving and start taking. Jeff calls all of them some rather rude names and starts a WHY MATT WHY chant. Matt laughs off the fans and says it's not his fault that Jeff is a cripple. Now Jeff is just the other Hardy and that's not something he's going to be able to understand. However, Jeff is now cleared to wrestle so what about a title match tonight? Matt shakes his head and says he washes his hands of everything that happens tonight.

The roster talks about Feast or Fired and explains the basic concept.

Matt vs. Jeff is announced for later with the title on the line.

Feast or Fired

James Storm, Robert Roode, Aiden O'Shea, Bram, Drew Galloway, Chris Melendez, Eric Young, Grado, Jesse Godderz, Robbie E., Eli Drake, Rockstar Spud

Eric is King of the Mountain Champion so he might get a shot at his own title. It's a huge brawl to start with various people trying to go up

after the briefcases but being pulled back down. Robbie dives over the top to dive onto Jesse. Melendez, now in long pants to hide his metal leg, clotheslines Aiden to the floor but gets suplexed by Eric. Roode hits a Blockbuster on Bram but Spud escapes the Roode Bomb. The second attempt sends Spud flying over the top onto a pile of people and the ring is cleared out. Grado crotches O'Shea to make a save and goes up to pull down the first briefcase as we take a break.

Back with everyone still brawling, including Drew clotheslining Bram and Eric down at the same time. Drake ties Galloway in the Tree of Woe, only to have Drew sit up into a German suplex to throw Eli down and grab another briefcase. Young and Spud go up but O'Shea pulls Spud down. Eric goes after Robbie instead and we get a Tower of Power (no longer Doom for some reason) with Melendez powerbombing the two of them down. A bad looking hurricanrana from Storm puts O'Shea down and Roode adds a top rope splash.

Jesse clotheslines Beer Money down but gets caught going up. The distraction lets Drake go up and pull down a third case. Bram and Young are the only ones left in the ring but beat up Melendez and Spud instead of climbing. The delay allows Beer Money to come in and clean house but Roode gets knocked off the top by Eric. Storm hits a Backstabber to pull Young off the top, followed by a Last Call to Bram. Roode gets back in and tells Storm to go get the case to end the match at 16:05.

Rating: D+. I never know how to rate this thing as it's so all over the place and you only kind of have winners since eight people don't win and a fourth is out of the company. The match didn't have any major high spots because we're just kind of waiting around until the last case is brought down by the fourth winner.

Kurt Angle checks on Jeff Hardy, who says he's tired of Reby being in Matt's ear lately. Yeah screw that wife nonsense.

X-Division Title: Tigre Uno vs. Mandrews vs. DJZ

Tigre is defending. It's all over the place to start with the champ being sent outside, leaving Mandrews to backflip away from a charge and knock DJZ down with a dropkick. Tigre comes back in and rolls up DJZ while he's

backsliding Mandrews. That's followed by an Indian Deathlock on DJZ and a Gory Stretch on Mandrews at the same time, only to have the champ sent outside again.

DJZ dropkicks Tigre off the apron and scores with a big flip dive, followed by Mandrews' skateboarding down the ramp into a headscissors spot. Back in and DJZ gets two off a reverse hurricanrana on Mandrews. Tigre gets up and throws DJZ out, setting up a Spanish Fly (top rope C4) for the pin on Mandrews at 6:26.

Rating: C. DO SOMETHING NEW! I've lost track of how many times I've seen these people fight and I never need to see it again. They've reached the point where you can call the spots because they've done them so many times. From what I can find, Tigre has had one singles title defense since July. Everything else has been a multi-man title defense and each one has had DJZ involved. Bring in some jobbers or something but find a way to make this more interesting.

Post match Gregory Helms comes out to say this company was built on the X-Division but Tigre's time as champion is over. Apparently that means a title match next week.

Awesome Kong tells the Dollhouse to stay in the back while she takes someone to school.

Eli Drake is worried about what's in his briefcase. Godderz tells him not to worry so Drake unlocks the case and teases looking inside.

Angle comes up to see Tyrus and Matt to ask what's going on. Matt says he's building a brand but Angle says that brand is tearing this company down. That's not cool with Matt because Kurt is one of the two people he respects so don't ruin that.

Awesome Kong vs. Velvet Sky

Sky hits a quick jawbreaker and starts kicking away at the leg because that's what everyone does to giants. A clothesline drops Velvet to the floor and the ring skirt is pulled off on the way down. Back in and Velvet fires off more kicks to the leg but has to avoid a splash. Sky

gets two off a running bulldog but gets run over with ease. Now the splash connects, followed by the Implant Buster for the pin at 3:40.

Rating: D. Just a squash here, even though Kong already lost the big showdown with Kim. As usual, this division is little more than a stable war with Gail Kim on top because she's almost always Knockouts Champion. It feels like we've seen this same stuff for years now and I have no idea what I'm supposed to get out of all this stuff all over again.

Post match Kong goes after Sky even more but Madison Rayne runs in. This brings out the Dollhouse for the real beatdown, capped off by Kong's middle rope splash to Sky.

The Wolves want to fight Abyss/Crazy Steve for the sneak attack last week.

It's time for the Feast or Fired reveal because waiting until next week is a bad idea around here. Before we get the openings, Michael Bennett and Maria come in and say one of these guys is going to need a miracle. He's always in for a good train wreck though so he's going to sit back and watch. Drew isn't cool with that because he's not the kind of a guy who is going to stand around waiting on something to happen. Galloway says Maria is the brains of the outfit and a fight is teased but Mike and Maria leave. Back to the reveals with Drake volunteering to go first. Inside his case: King of the Mountain Title shot. We'll finish this later.

The Wolves want Crazy Steve out here right now to get their title back from Crazy Steve and whoever helped him steal them last week (it was pretty clearly Abyss). A woman comes out in something like a Harley Quinn outfit saying everything will decay. This brings out Crazy Steve, followed by Abyss as we take a break.

Wolves vs. Abyss/Crazy Steve

This is joined in progress and it's not clear if the titles are on the line. Abyss splashes Eddie in the corner and brings in Steve to fishhook the jaws. It's quickly back to Abyss who allows the tag to Davey but takes him down just as fast. Steve comes back in and bites Davey's boot,

which apparently hurts.

Not that it matters as Davey kicks him off and brings in Eddie to clean house. Steve bites his way out of the Backpack Stunner but gets thrown into the air for the kick to the chest. The creepy woman appears on the stage with the titles though to distract Davey, leaving Eddie to take the Black Hole Slam. Steve mists Davey and that's a DQ at 6:03.

Rating: D+. Well I guess it's better than nothing. They have to build up someone to feud with the Wolves after most of the other teams have left. However, it's pretty clear that we're going to see Beer Money vs. the Wolves in the big showdown at some point so this is really just a filler. At least it's better than two generic guys though.

Post match Steve puts Davey in the crossface chickenwing while the woman bites Richards' shoulder.

Back to the briefcase reveals as JB explains the rules for probably the fifth time. Storm goes next and promises to give Roode the World Title shot if he finds it. James is distraught by what he finds but it's a Tag Team Title shot. Drew opens his case and finds the World Title shot, meaning Grado is fired, which takes a second to kick in. A lot of sadness ensues until Grado leaves the room.

TNA World Title: Matt Hardy vs. Jeff Hardy

Matt is defending and is now named Big Money Matt during the big match intros. The bell rings but here's Eric freaking Young to yell about how he should get the title shot. As he yells, Bram comes in from behind and the beatdown is on. Officially the "match" ended at 39 seconds but there was never any contact.

Matt leaves Jeff to get beaten down and Young pulls out a chair. Beer Money makes the save but Steve and Abyss run in to keep the villains in control. Roode and Storm clear them out as well but the four of them head up the ramp, leaving Matt to stand over Jeff. Cue Kurt Angle but Tyrus decks him from behind. Matt and company leave, allowing Eric to piledrive Jeff through the table to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. Well they certainly didn't bore me tonight. The Hardys fighting isn't interesting to me in the slightest and you could tell it wasn't going anywhere tonight because they're coming up on the European tour, meaning it's time for Jeff to go away for a little while. The rest of the show was all over the place and they did a good enough job with Feast or Fired, though again one of the same issues comes through: TNA doesn't know how to take their time.

Matt vs. Jeff and Feast or Fired could have been built up for weeks but instead they're both blown off in the span of a single night. Slow things down for a bit and let these stories build up so there's a bit more, forgive me, impact. This happens way too often around here and it gets annoying as almost nothing has the chance to build up and give you a big payoff.

Results

Grado, Drew Galloway, Eli Drake and James Storm won Feast or Fired

Tigre Uno b. DJZ and Mandrews – Spanish Fly to Mandrews

Awesome Kong b. Velvet Sky – Implant Buster

Wolves b. Abyss/Crazy Steve via DQ when Steve sprayed mist in Davey's face

Jeff Hardy b. Matt Hardy via DQ when Bram interfered

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Monday Night Raw – January 25, 2016: They're Always Watching

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 25, 2016

Location: American Airlines Arena, Miami, Florida

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're officially on the Road to Wrestlemania with a new WWE World Champion in HHH, who entered the Royal Rumble as the surprise #30 entrant. There's a lot of time for changes in the next few weeks though as Fastlane is in less than a month. Also, WWE has advertised a major star making his return tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Reigns in the Rumble and the ending. I do love the fact that the League beat him down but was too busy carrying off a TV monitor (What was that anyway?) to bother THROWING HIM IN AND OVER THE TOP for an elimination but cocky heels will be cocky heels.

Vince and Stephanie strut to the ring to open things up. They're very happy because it's the night after the Royal Rumble and they've broken Roman Reigns. Just like everyone here, Reigns is going to tuck his tail between his legs and run away hiding because he's a broken man with no title. Vince confesses to take joy in the misery of others and Reigns is now more miserable than everyone.

Last night they had the fans eating out of the palm of their hands because all the false hope about Brock Lesnar, AJ Styles and Roman Reigns was a waste of time because they knew who #30 was going to be. This brings out HHH (after a huge batch of praise from Stephanie of course) who says it's good to be the king. Roman isn't champion today because he lacks respect. HHH can put up with everything from Reigns but he can't

put up with Reigns disrespecting Vince McMahon in the place he created.

As for people who say he doesn't need to be champion again, they're right. With the career he's had, he doesn't need this again. However, he's champion again because he wants to be and people like Reigns don't deserve to be. The fans chant for Reigns but it's time to figure out who is going to face HHH for the title at Wrestlemania. Tonight though, they're going to evaluate the talent and announce the main event of Fastlane. The winner of that match will go on to face HHH for the title at Wrestlemania.

This was really, really lame, even by opening Raw promo standards. I still have no idea why I'm supposed to want to see Reigns come back and win the title again. Between him having a half hour nap during the Rumble last night and not really having a character in the first place, I have no idea why I'm supposed to want to see him fight the odds and overcome. Last night really wasn't a good sign for him going forward, at least not as the very top guy on the roster. He'll be fine as a main event player, but he needs a lot of work before he's that guy.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Ziggler superkicks him at the bell for a fast two and Owens bails out to the floor. Back in and Dolph scores with a dropkick as we head to a break. Back with Dolph's superkick being blocked, meaning he has to settle for a Fameasser instead. We hit the sleeper for a bit until Owens drops him into the buckle. The Cannonball misses so Owens grabs a German Suplex, only to charge into another superkick. Ziggler stomps away in the corner but gets crotched on top, setting up the Pop Up Powerbomb to give Owens the pin at 8:45.

Rating: C-. This was fine but I'm going to get really sick of this "IMPRESS THE AUTHORITY" stuff all night long. I understand that this show is all about them and making sure they look as awesome as possible but could we please go more than a week without having to pound it into the fans' heads? Owens looked better here, which to be fair isn't hard against Ziggler, who has wrestled the exact same match for years now.

Reigns arrives and laughs off the idea that he's miserable. He sends JoJo

to tell Vince and HHH that he's here.

Here are the Social Outcasts with something to say, including Heath Slater going outside to get in rapper Flo Rida's face. Rose calls Slater Red Dragon and Axel doesn't get it. Dallas calls Rida into the ring for a showdown, but it's going to be a rap battle. Bo Rida (seriously) puts on a hat, sunglasses and gold chain before calling Flo very disrespectful. "You need to express yourself in a more discerning manner. All you have is ace high but I have a full house like I'm Danny Tanner." Flo Rida does his own rap and the fans aren't really responding until he introduces the Dudley Boyz for a tag match.

Dudley Boyz vs. Bo Dallas/Curtis Axel

Joined in progress with Dallas (now in a singlet) fighting out of a headlock until it's off to Axel for some shots to Bubba's jaw. That means it's time for the Bo-Train victory lap around the ring in a funny bit. Back in and D-Von takes over on Axel with a running clothesline in the corner for two. Bubba comes in off a blind tag and the reverse 3D drops Axel again. Slater gets on the apron but Rida shoves him over the top, meaning it's time for What's Up. 3D puts Axel away at 4:48.

Rating: D. Hey did you know that Flo Rida is a celebrity? Because he really is. Like, he's someone people know and pay money to see and such. If you didn't, you certainly do after watching this match because that's all this match existed to accomplish. This was nothing more than "hey we've got someone you might have heard of on our show!" and that makes for another waste of time.

AJ Styles is about to introduce himself to the WWE but Chris Jericho, his opponent tonight, interrupts. Jericho talks about AJ's success around the world but he's never done it here. Good luck tonight and welcome to the big leagues.

Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles

The fans are entirely behind AJ as Jericho chops away to start. AJ flips over him and goes to the apron, only to get dropkicked out to the floor in a good looking shot. Back in and Styles grabs a headlock as the

announcers try to talk about AJ's pre-WWE run without mentioning companies by name. The drop down into the dropkick sends Jericho to the floor but Chris trips him face first onto the apron as we take a break.

Back with Jericho holding a chinlock before both guys try cross bodies at the same time. AJ is up first with some quick strikes to the face and a running clothesline in the corner. The Walls don't work so Chris settle with a northern lights suplex for two, followed by the running enziguri for the same. AJ stops a charge with a raised boot and hits the springboard forearm for two of his own. The Walls are broken up but AJ misses a top rope splash. The Lionsault hits knees but AJ can't quite get the Clash. Jericho rolls into a cradle but AJ pushes forward into a sunset flip for the pin at 13:47.

Rating: B. This was exactly what AJ's singles debut needed to be as he hung with one of the better in ring workers on the roster and pinned him with a counter. Really good stuff here and AJ looks like a major player. They're saving that Clash for a big moment though and it's going to blow the roof off the place when it hits.

Post match AJ offers a handshake and Jericho accepts before pulling AJ in. Jericho says something we can't hear before leaving with no violence.

Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch

Becky goes right after her to start but Sasha takes it to the mat and hits a running slap to the face of all things for two. We hit a neck crank on Lynch for a bit before she grabs a t-bone for two of her own. The double knees in the corner gets the same for Sasha and there's the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte come in for the DQ at 3:33.

Rating: C. It was working while it lasted but the DQ makes the most sense. You don't want to have Becky get screwed over one night and then have her lose clean the next night, even if it's to Sasha. It's also nice to see Sasha get to be herself for a change instead of being the weird female New Day member or whatever the heck that was supposed to be.

Charlotte beats Becky down and gives Sasha the Natural Selection before posing with the title. Three way seems likely.

Goldust puts on R-Truth's headphones for some reason. R-Truth comes in and thinks Goldust is gay but it turns out that Goldust just wants to be a team. Uh...yeah.

Kane vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray pounds him into the corner to start as Cole actually has the nerve to bring up the stuff around Survivor Series. That feels so long ago but it was only two months. A running forearm to the back of the head puts Kane down as we take a break about a minute into the match. Back with Bray missing the backplash and what sounds like a RANDY SAVAGE chant. Kane drops an elbow for two and the fans go crazy with the booing. A release Rock Bottom gets two for Bray and a Harper distraction lets Sister Abigail put Kane away at 7:03.

Rating: D. I can't blame the fans for booing this one out of the building. We've covered Kane vs. Wyatt so many times now that I have no idea why anyone would be interested in seeing them fight again. Kane has been around for so long now that there's nothing left for him to do, especially when he's just been Kane: midcard monster for so many years now. Why do you think the Daniel Bryan stuff went so well for him? It's because it was so completely different and out of character for him that it was hard not to enjoy. Kane is talented, but we've covered it.

The Wyatts beat Kane down post match.

There's a long black limo here which might have the big star inside. Post break Rich Brennan knocks on the door and it's...Miz. He hasn't been around in three weeks so ratings are spiking as we speak. As he's talking (and ratings are spiking), a black truck pulls up and it's the Rock, who tells Miz to park the truck.

Rock runs into Rick Ross (just hanging around) and then Big Show. After a chat about how Big Show actually should have won (which Rock agrees with), Rock says he was cast as the Scorpion King because he won that match. Show looks like he's about to cry and breaks the laptop he's holding.

Next up Rock sees Lana and brings up that night in Brooklyn with Rusev on

Raw. What people don't know is that Lana came to Rock's hotel room for some wine and "special exercises" that night, including the one legged Russian vacuum. Lana smiles quite a bit until Rusev comes up and sneers quite a bit. The engagement is brought up and Rusev congratulates him for having such a flexible fiancée. Rock talks to the camera as he's walking towards the gorilla position (which he actually names) before saying he's FINALLY back home.

Now in the ring, Rock asks if the people are ready for Wrestlemania. "JBL is ready. Michael Cole is ready. That other black dude that I don't know is ready." The fans chant for the Randy Savage lookalike in the front row so Rock says it's time to go off script. He asks who the Savage/Hogan/Undertaker impersonators are ("The weed must be good in Miami tonight.") but doesn't have much to say to them. Cool little moment though. Wrestlemania is in a few months but it's time to talk about tonight....and here's New Day.

Woods says that the black guy Rock didn't know is named Byron Saxton and he's the best commentator at that table. Kofi: "How about we talk about the black guys that you do know?" Woods brings up beating the Usos so badly that when they walk north, they're looking south. As for Rock though, if he's the People's Champion, where's his gold? I mean, New Day has gold around their waists as well as in the form of Francesca II. Big E. rips on Miami for losing LeBron James but says Rock did the same thing when he went to Hollywood. Was that for the people or for the paycheck? Either way, New Day rocks.

Rock says he does know who New Day is. They're the Tag Team Champions, extremely entertaining, and wearing llama anatomy on their heads. New Day: "YOU CAN'T SAY THAT ON TV!" Woods corrects him so Rock calls Big E. a she. "Big mama didn't like that!" Rock thinks Big E. is strong and nerdy. It's like the Incredible Hulk banged Urkel. Woods drops his trombone and asks if he did that. 90's TV fans will find that line funny.

Rock offers to stick Francesca II somewhere but New Day calls for a huddle. They decline and start to leave but Rock says not so fast because he has a plan B. Cue the Usos to go after New Day with Big E. getting a Rock Bottom. Woods is left alone with Rock and it's a double superkick

into the spinebuster to set up the People's Elbow.

Paige/Natalya vs. Brie Bella/Alicia Fox

Natalya and Alicia get things going but it's quickly off to Brie for the seated abdominal stretch. The YES Kicks have Natalya in trouble but Brie Mode misses, allowing Paige to come in for the PT0. Alicia makes the save so Paige puts Brie away with the Rampaige for the pin at 2:45.

WWE is working with the Boys and Girls Club for anti-bullying stuff.

Miz is in the ring to complain about being interrupted but his opponent's music cuts him off.

Kalisto vs. The Miz

Non-title. Miz stomps him down in the corner but a headscissors sends him to the floor for a suicide dive from the champ. Back in and Kalisto rolls over Miz's back into a front facelock. A springboard cross body gets two for Kalisto and we take a break. THIS MATCH gets a break? I had the finish written out as soon as Kalisto's music hit and we take a break?

Back with Miz getting two off a clothesline and dropping a top rope ax handle for the same. He stops to yell at the fans though, allowing Kalisto to kick him in the head and hit the corkscrew cross body for two of his own. Miz's short DDT gets the same and he loads up the Skull Crushing Finale, only to have Kalisto kick off the ropes into the Salida Del Sol for the pin at 9:33.

Rating: C-. Nothing much to see here with a pretty easy to guess finish. If nothing else though, it's nice to see Kalisto getting a win and not losing the title three days after he wins it in the first place. Hopefully he's done with Del Rio as there's only so much you can do with that feud and they passed it after their second match.

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. Rusev/Sheamus

Rusev and Reigns slug it out to start but the League is quickly sent to the floor, allowing Ambrose to dive on both guys as we take an early break. Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and diving over for

the hot tag. Ambrose goes nuts as is his custom and cleans house, only to miss a dive over the barricade and coming up with a bad knee. Rusev drags him back to ringside and sends him back first into the barricade a few times.

Back in and Rusev gets two off some gutwrench suplexes before it's off to Sheamus. Three straight Irish Curses have Dean's back in even more trouble and we hit the chinlock. Rusev drops some elbows and puts on a chinlock of his own. Back to Sheamus for the forearms to the chest and back to send Dean outside, only to have Ambrose do his apron 619 and score with a clothesline.

That's enough for the hot tag to Reigns as everything breaks down. Sheamus gets a Samoan Drop on the floor and Rusev takes the apron boot. Del Rio and Barrett have to be chased off though and Rusev hits two straight superkicks, followed by the Brogue Kick for two with Dean making the save. Ambrose dives off the apron to take out Rusev and Reigns spears Sheamus for the pin at 15:18.

Rating: B-. This was a step above your standard Smackdown main event tag match, even though it's something like the 948th time that Reigns has beaten the League. I can't even remember the group last thing they actually pulled off aside from taking the US Title back from Kalisto. Then again this is exactly what we were expecting them to become and there's nothing wrong with that.

Post match Reigns and Ambrose set up the announcers' tables and Double Bomb Rusev through the English version. Reigns' music plays for all of ten seconds before Stephanie power walks out. The main event at Fastlane is....Ambrose vs. Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar. Interesting, but so much for the stipulations meaning anything tonight.

Overall Rating: C+. This is a really good example of a show that was good at three hours but would have been great at two hours. As usual, there's too much filler weighing down an otherwise good show. On top of that, I'm really not a fan of the "Authority evaluation" stuff as it makes me think the roster isn't trying the rest of the time. Or that the wrestlers are stupid enough to believe that they might have a fair chance instead of

whoever the Authority wants to get the shot. Still though, good enough and we have a PPV main event set to get us to Wrestlemania so there's at least an idea now.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Dolph Ziggler – Pop Up Powerbomb

Dudley Boyz b. Bo Dallas/Curtis Axel – 3D to Axel

AJ Styles b. Chris Jericho – Sunset flip

Sasha Banks b. Becky Lynch via DQ when Charlotte interfered

Bray Wyatt b. Kane – Sister Abigail

Paige/Natalya b. Brie Bella/Alicia Fox – Rampaige to Bella

Kalisto b. The Miz – Salida Del Sol

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Rusev/Sheamus – Spear to Sheamus

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