

# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania VI: Dig That Crowd Man

## Wrestlemania VI

Date: April 1, 1990

Location: SkyDome, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Attendance: 67,678

Commentators: Jesse Ventura, Gorilla Monsoon

Time for another historic main event and in this case it's probably Hogan's best match ever. After Hogan basically beat every heel in the company, the only thing left to do was to have someone new come into the main event. At the Royal Rumble, only Hogan and the Ultimate Warrior were left in the ring at one point. The fans erupted and we had Wrestlemania 6. That's the only match of note on the card so let's get to it.

The opening video is set in space with a bunch of constellations. Vince does a voiceover and talks about how the two strongest beings in the universe are Hogan and Warrior. That's different if nothing else.

Robert Goulet sings O Canada.

### Rick Martel vs. Koko B. Ware

Martel is now a model and THE RING CARTS ARE BACK!!! Rick jumps Koko to start things off and the beating is on fast. Koko comes out of the corner with a cross body for two and a dropkick to stagger Martel even more. Martel heads to the floor, only to be dragged right back in. He sends Koko to the floor though and things slow down a bit. Rick pounds away on the back and hits a middle rope shot to the back. A backbreaker looks to set up the Boston Crab but Koko makes the rope. Some rams into the corner don't work because Koko is black you see. A middle rope cross body misses and this time the Crab ends Ware.

**Rating:** D+. Not much of an opener here but it was decent enough I guess. This would have been a dark match today I would guess. The interesting thing here is what you got on the clipped version. On that edition, the first Boston Crab was clipped to the ending of the second one. See how dangerous that stuff can be?

Gene is with the tag team champions Haku and Andre (the Colossal Connection), calling the Colostomy Connection. Heenan: "Well if you want to talk evacuation...." They say they'll beat Demolition. Gene: "The Colossal Connection: they're anything but regular guys."

Demolition says they're going to take out the Connection and take the titles. Ax wants to chop them down like trees while Smash wants to put them in a tractor trailer and push them over a cliff. Our heroes ladies and gentlemen!

#### Tag Titles: Colossal Connection vs. Demolition

Only the challengers get an entrance. Andre is old and banged up here but they gave him a token title at the end of his career. The champions, the Connection, takes over to start as it's Haku vs. Smash to get us going. Off to Ax to pound away but Andre comes in to break it up. Smash will have none of that and the beating continues on Haku with the challengers taking turns on him.

Haku and Smash fight over a backslide for awhile until Andre breaks it up. Demolition keeps control though and Haku gets beaten on even more. Andre finally cheats enough to let the give the champions the advantage. The giant headbutts Ax from the apron for a very delayed two before Haku rams Ax's head into Andre's head for two more. This was during the time when Andre would be officially in for about 15 seconds which was all he was capable of anymore.

Off to the Tongan nerve hold by Haku for a bit before Andre chokes in the corner. Andre hasn't actually been in the match yet. A shoulder breaker gets two for Haku but he misses a charge into the corner. Hot tag brings in Smash to clean house and a flying forearm gets two. Everything breaks down and Andre is taken down by a double clothesline. Haku accidentally superkicks Andre into the ropes and the Decapitator gives Demolition their third tag titles.

**Rating:** C-. This was decent stuff but it was basically a handicap match. Andre was just too old to do much else after this and I don't think he ever had another match in the WWF. Demolition would go on to have a summer long reign before turning heel and losing the titles to the now face Hart Foundation. Decent stuff here and the fans loved it.

Heenan, ever the brilliant man, yells at Andre and SLAPS HIM IN THE FACE! Andre grabs him by the face and smacks him around, blocks Haku's superkick like it's a baby's hand, knocks Haku into the ring cart, changes his mind and kicks Haku out of the cart and leaves to a huge ovation. This was a good way to go out for Andre as he showed he could still beat up a lot of people with ease. Good stuff.

Jimmy Hart thinks there's going to be an earthquake in Toronto. Earthquake is ready for Hercules.

#### Hercules vs. Earthquake

Earthquake misses a charge into the corner to start and Hercules pounds away on him. The big man heads to the floor before coming back in for a test of strength. Hercules goes down almost immediately and Earthquake is in control. The non-disaster comes back with some clotheslines but for reasons of general stupidity, Hercules tries a torture rack which goes as well as you would expect on someone who weighs 468. Two Earthquakes end Hercules.

**Rating:** D. Quick and easy here as Earthquake was clearly being built up as a huge monster for either Hogan or Warrior. He could certainly move very quickly for a guy his size and he had the talking ability to back it up. Earthquake is often forgotten as a quality monster which is a shame because the guy was pretty awesome.

Some celebrity interviewer is with Liz who says she'll be around more often in the future from now on. Not really but whatever.

Brutus Beefcake thinks Mr. Perfect's record looks pretty good. Tonight, he's going to make it imperfect.

#### Brutus Beefcake vs. Mr. Perfect

This is one of the biggest matches on the card. Beefcake starts fast

and punches Perfect to the floor with a single right hand. Back in and another punch sends Perfect flying over the top rope again. Brutus pounds away some more and Perfect gets to do his over the top bumping. A running clothesline puts Perfect down and Beefcake calls for the sleeper as Mary Tyler Moore of all people is here.

Perfect's manager the Genius (the original Damien Sandow. They both even did cartwheels) slides in his metal scroll to Perfect and a shot to the head gives Mr. control. Perfect pounds away with some slow shots to the chest but the fans are staying into this. Beefcake comes back with the required slingshot into the required head first into the post bump by Perfect which is enough for the win out of nowhere.

**Rating:** C-. The crowd carried this one as Beefcake wasn't a great worker but he had more charisma than he knew what to do with. Perfect was a leading candidate to face Hogan here so he was certainly a top heel. The match wasn't great but it was more than enough to fire the crowd up again here. Granted the crowd is already white hot so no complaints here.

Post match Brutus goes to cut Perfect's hair but Genius steals the clippers. Beefcake chases down the worthless Genius for a sleeper and a haircut. Brutus' SWEET music is playing the whole time on top of that.

Now it's time for one of the weirdest matches you'll ever see. We recap Bad News Brown vs. Roddy Piper which started with a double elimination and a brawl at the Rumble. That's all well and good. We go to Piper in the back where Piper says some people call him Hot Rod but then he turns around to show that half of his body is painted black. That side is called Hot Scot and you can hear the racial issues building from here. Apparently it was something about Michael Jackson.

#### Roddy Piper vs. Bad News Brown

An interesting point here is that both guys are legit black belts in judo with Brown being an Olympic bronze medalist in the sport. They immediately take it to the mat in a fist fight until Piper gets two

off a cross body of all things. The referee (former heel wrestler Danny Davis) keeps separating them so Brown takes over by sending Piper's head into the buckle. He yells at Piper for trying to be black and it's off to a nerve hold.

Brown slugs him down a few times and drops an elbow for two. Somewhere in there a buckle pad is ripped off and it's Brown going chest first into said buckle. Piper pulls out a single white glove (Brown wore a single black one) and a bunch of punches send Brown to the floor. Piper swings a chair but hits the post and it's a double countout.

**Rating:** D. Instead of a brawl or something entertaining, this was much more of a bizarre spectacle than anything else. Brown would be gone soon after this while Piper would shift into the broadcast booth to take over for Jesse. The fight was a lot weaker because of how much stuff there was to distract from the action which is never a good thing.

Steve Allen, former host of the Tonight Show, is playing a piano in the bathroom as the Bolsheviks rehearse the Russian national anthem. Jokes are made and they're not that funny.

#### Hart Foundation vs. Bolsheviks

National anthem, Canadian assault, Hart Attack to Boris, pin in about 20 seconds.

Go to Mania 7 in Los Angeles where there will be over 100,000 fans! Or not because of "terrorism threats" so we're going to a smaller place! Pay no attention to the fact that it was reported that Vince couldn't sell the place out so they moved the event!

Tito is ready for Barbarian and Heenan.

#### The Barbarian vs. Tito Santana

This is Bobby Heenan's debut as Barbarian's manager. Barbarian takes him into the corner to start but Tito comes back with punches to send Barbie to the floor. Back in and a big hip toss puts Tito down but Santana comes back with right hands to the head for two. They run the ropes and Barbarian kicks Santana's head off to take over.

When all else fails, kick the other guy in the face.

Barbarian misses a middle rope elbow but Tito can't take him down with a dropkick. The flying forearm takes Barbarian down but Heenan puts his foot on the rope. Barbarian slugs him down and goes up top for a BIG clothesline off the top (and a SWEET bump from Tito) for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. The shot at the end makes up for most of the match sucking. Tito looked like he was dead out there and the flip backwards made it look even better. This was just a way to set up Barbarian as a singles guy which went absolutely nowhere. The guy stayed employed over the years if nothing else though so he's got something up on a lot of people. Tito was officially a jobber to the stars at this point.

We recap Dusty/Sapphire vs. Macho/Sherri. This started at the Rumble where Brother Love insulted Sapphire and a brawl broke out with Savage and Rhodes. Sherri started attacking Rhodes on TV and a fourway brawl broke out there too.

Rhodes and Sapphire are ready for the mixed tag and say they have the crown jewel, whatever that is.

#### Dusty Rhodes/Sapphire vs. Queen Sherri/Randy Savage

Savage is the King at this point. This is the first mixed tag in company history according to Fink. I don't know if that's true but I don't know of another preceding it. Dusty and Sapphire are introduced at 465lbs. Jesse: "Are you telling me Dusty only weighs 200?" Dusty says cut the music because he's got the crown jewel: Elizabeth. Savage FREAKS (I think. It's kind of hard to tell with him) and Jesse is on one of his famous rants.

The genders have to match here so the guys start things off. Sherri tries to interfere but Sapphire makes the save. Dusty throws Sherri into Savage and we're off to the women. Sapphire shakes her hips into Sherri and hooks an airplane spin for bad measure. Sherri tries a slam which goes as well as you would expect it to. Off to the men again with Sapphire getting in a few slaps from the apron.

The guys go to the floor but Savage runs back in for a top rope ax handle to the floor. He hits it again for good measure but Sapphire gets in the way of the third jump. Back in and Randy hits a suplex for two and drops Rhodes with a shot to the head with the scepter. Sherri hits a top rope splash for two on Dusty because the rules don't matter I guess. Everything breaks down with Sapphire taking over on Sherri. Liz sends Sherri back inside and it's a schoolgirl win for Sapphire on the Queen.

**Rating:** D. Another mess here that was there more for the spectacle than anything else. Most of this show isn't that good all around and this was another good example. Sapphire continues to be pretty much there as a sight gag but thankfully she would be gone later on in the summer. Not much to see here for the most part.

Liz, Sapphire and Dusty dance.

Another Mania 7 ad.

Bobby Heenan is nearly speechless over Andre beating him up.

Rona Barrett is your usual celebrity that is out of place on a wrestling show.

Savage and Sherri freak out a lot.

Demolition celebrates their title win. This must be intermission. They're ready for the Hart Foundation.

Now we get one of those famous interviews that is still talked about today. Hogan talks about getting energy from all of the Hulkamaniacs and says that THIS is where the power lies. He's going to get Warrior down on his knees and ask him if he wants to live forever. Apparently he and the Hulkamaniacs can bring all of the Little Warriors into the light. Hogan: "It doesn't matter whether you win or whether you lose." He's already setting the stage for the loss. Warrior throws Sean Mooney away, saying Sean doesn't deserve to breathe his air. He goes on one of his usual rants about how no one can live forever but Hogan's beliefs can live through him. He talks about darkness and beliefs that come with any and all challenges. Tonight is about merging the Hulkamaniacs and the Warriors together.

Warrior may be insane, but he's really not that much worse than Hogan when you think about it.

### Orient Express vs. Rockers

Jannetty and Tanaka start things off and the Rockers take over with their usual speed stuff. Double teaming sends the Express out to the floor before things settle down a bit. Mr. Fuji hooks the top rope, sending Marty out to the floor. Back in again and Jannetty escapes a backdrop and makes the tag off to Shawn. A double superkick puts Tanaka down so it's off to Sato. Tanaka kicks Shawn in the back and the Rockers are in trouble again.

A gutbuster gets two for Tanaka and a big kick to the face puts Shawn down again. Sato hits a top rope knee drop and it's off to a nerve hold. Shawn comes back with a big old clothesline and a diving tag to Marty. Things speed up and we get some heel miscommunication. A big backdrop puts Tanaka down but Fuji breaks up the double fist. Marty goes after him and gets salt in the eyes for his efforts. He stumbles into the barricade and that's a countout.

**Rating:** C+. Decent tag match here which would be topped by about a mile at the Rumble. These guys needed more time than this and a better finish to be awesome so this one was just ok. The Rockers would start getting awesome in a hurry after this with nearly two years before their famous split. The Express would only have a handful of PPV matches ever and this is the most recent that I've seen.

Rhythm and Blues are in the back with Steve Allen cracking jokes at their expense. Greg Valentine as a guitar playing rocker is just wrong.

### Dino Bravo vs. Jim Duggan

These two feuded for a long time. Earthquake is here with Dino, sending Gorilla into a rant about how you can't be a wrestler and a manager. Kazarian would disagree. Jesse brings up how stupid it is to bring an American flag to Canada (against a Canadian at that). This is power vs. power and AMERICAN power takes over early on,



sending Bravo out to the floor.

Back in and Duggan misses a charge into the buckle and Dino slugs him down. Jesse: "I don't like Hacksaw." Gorilla: "Why not?" Jesse: "He's so ugly." Jim comes back with three clotheslines but has to fight off Earthquake. In the distraction he hits Bravo with the board for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Another filler match, another match that sucked. Duggan was there to get crushed by Earthquake post match. Bravo was a decent lackey and midcard heel for people to beat up, but as usual he was going to lose no matter what he did out there. Except to Ronnie Garvin last year because Garvin sucks.

Duggan gets crushed by Earthquake post match.

We recap DiBiase vs. Roberts. Ted choked him out in MAY and then six months later Jake came after him. I've heard of slow builds but this is ridiculous. Roberts held up the belt and that's about it.

Roberts says he's going to make Ted beg for mercy.

Million Dollar Title: Ted DiBiase vs. Jake Roberts

DiBiase is quickly sent to the floor as Jesse criticizes Gorilla's hot dog consumption. The DDT is escaped twice and Ted takes a breather on the floor. Back in and Jake grabs a hammerlock before driving some knees into the arm. Off to another hammerlock as Gorilla starts talking anatomy. Jake has to chase off Virgil though and Ted gets in a shot as Roberts comes back in. Roberts misses a running knee lift and Ted takes over.

Off to a front facelock by DiBiase as the fans are doing The Wave. It goes on for a good while as Ted sends Roberts' arm into the post. A piledriver puts Jake down but DiBiase doesn't cover. Off to the Million Dollar Dream for a bit but Jake gets his foot on the ropes. Jake comes back with an atomic drop and a clothesline followed by a backdrop for no cover. The DDT is loaded up but Virgil makes a save, pulling Jake to the floor when the referee isn't looking. They head to the floor where the Million Dollar Dream is put on again. Jake sends DiBiase into the post but Ted gets back inside anyway to

retain.

**Rating:** C-. This match took a long time to get going but the crowd was into this match for the most part. Apparently DiBiase wins the title even on a countout because this is a non-sanctioned belt. Gorilla thinks DiBiase doesn't deserve the title because he didn't earn it, but Jesse says Ted does because Ted paid for it. Point to Jesse.

Jake beats up Virgil and DiBiase because he can with Ted taking a DDT. Roberts shoves some money in Ted's mouth for fun.

Slick says life is all about money so he's happy that DiBiase has paid off Akeem to take out Big Boss Man. DiBiase had asked Boss Man to get the belt back from Roberts but since there was no crime, Boss Man turned face for being offered a bribe.

Boss Man doesn't have much to say.

#### Big Boss Man vs. Akeem

Boss Man's face as he rides to the ring is almost scary. DiBiase is waiting at ringside and jumps Boss Man before the bell. Wait apparently it did ring but the referee didn't care. Good to know. Anyway Akeem pounds away on Boss Man but gets caught in an atomic drop out of the corner. The Boss Man Slam ends this in less than two minutes.

The fans don't care about Rhythm and Blues.

Mary Tyler Moore likes Wrestlemania.

Here's Rhythm and Blues to perform Hunka Hunka Hunka Honky Love. The only thing of note here is future WCW World Champion Diamond Dallas Page as the man driving the pink Cadillac into the arena. The Bushwhackers pop up in vendor costumes to beat up the band and break guitars.

The attendance record is announced: 67,678.

#### Rick Rude vs. Jimmy Snuka

Rude now has straight hair and is all tough instead of being a comedy guy. Steve Allen comes in to do commentary for no apparent

reason. Snuka takes over to start with some shots to the head, only to have Rude suplex him down with ease to take over. Jimmy comes back by ramming Rude's face into the mat, only to get poked in the eye for his efforts. Snuka misses something off the top and jumps into a punch to the ribs. The Rude Awakening ends this quick.

**Rating:** D. This was there to set up Rude as a threat to the new champion after the main event tonight. That would lead to Summerslam and a main event title match, but that would be about it for Rude in the WWF. Snuka wouldn't do much here at all and was a total jobber to the stars after this one.

We recap Hogan vs. Warrior. They wound up being the only two guys in the ring at one point in the Rumble and the reaction to their fight was great. They then had some run-ins on SNME and the Main Event and that's about it. This is much more about a battle of respect and they certainly don't hate each other.

#### WWF World Title/Intercontinental Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior

This is title for title. It's one of those matches where both guys are built up to the point that neither can lose and the fans are completely split on who they want to win. That's REALLY hard to pull off and I don't remember a better execution of something like this ever before. The shot of Warrior on the ropes doing his pose as Hogan comes to the ring still sends chills up my back.

They stare each other down and both guys shove the other into the corner. We get the famous test of strength with Warrior taking over to start. Jesse is STUNNED but Hogan fights back up and takes Warrior down to his knees, giving us one of the most popular .gif's in the history of the internet (implied oral sex if you're not familiar). Hogan trips Warrior down and drops an elbow for one but Warrior pops up and no sells a slam. Warrior slams Hogan down and clotheslines him to the floor where Hogan might have hurt his knee.

Back in and the brawl is on with Hogan's knee being fine and not ever mentioned again. Hulk takes over and pounds away at Warrior's head before getting two off a pair of elbow drops. Off to a front

facelock and a small package for two. Hogan hooks a chinlock and pounds away on Ultimate's head. After a brief break we're right back to the chinlock followed by a belly to back suplex for two for Hulk. There's chinlock #3 and you're not likely to ever hear the fans freak out as much from someone fighting out of a chinlock as you get here for Warrior. A double clothesline puts both guys down and Hebner counts VERY slowly, which is the right idea here. Warrior grabs the ropes and starts Warring Up before hitting some clotheslines. A suplex gets two for Warrior and it's off to a bearhug on Hulk.

Hogan fights out of the hold with some solid rights to the head but on the breakup, the referee is taken down. Warrior hits a pair of ax handles off the top and starts to get fired up. The shoulder block misses though and Hulk drives him head first into the mat, but there's no referee. Warrior suplexes Hogan down but there's still no count. A rollup gets a VERY close two for Hogan and it's time for the punches.

An elbow sends Warrior out to the floor and Hogan gets posted. Back in and Warrior snaps off some clotheslines followed by the gorilla press into the splash. That gets two and it's time to Hulk Up. Hogan pounds away and hits the big boot, but the legdrop misses. Warrior hits a fast splash for the surprise pin to win the title and shock the world.

**Rating:** A. That's likely high but the crowd here REALLY helps this one. This is a match that just works and there's almost no other way to put it. I don't think there's much of an argument over this not being Hogan's best match ever and it's easily Warrior's first or second best ever depending on your taste about next year's entry. Either way, this is a great match and one of those matches you have to see at some point as part of being a fan.

Hogan hands Warrior the belt and leaves in the cart, partially stealing the spotlight but it's not as bad as I remember.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This is one of those shows that is completely dependent on the main event. Other than that there's almost nothing

here at all, although there's nothing that horrible. It's mainly a big group of random(ish) matches with stories to most of them, but almost none of them are anything of note. Still though, it's pretty fun stuff overall and the main event is must see. It's not a great show or anything but it's worth checking out.

### Ratings Comparison

Rick Martel vs. Koko B. Ware

Original: D

Redo: D+

Demolition vs. Colossal Connection

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Earthquake vs. Hercules

Original: D-

Redo: D

Brutus Beefcake vs. Mr. Perfect

Original: C

Redo: C-

Roddy Piper vs. Bad News Brown

Original: A

Redo: D

Hart Foundation vs. Bolsheviks

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Barbarian vs. Tito Santana

Original: D

Redo: C-

Dusty Rhodes/Sapphire vs. Randy Savage/Sensational Sherri

Original: D-

Redo: D

Orient Express vs. Rockers

Original: C

Redo: C+

Jim Duggan vs. Dino Bravo

Original: D+

Redo: D

Ted Dibiase vs. Jake Roberts

Original: C

Redo: C-

Big Boss Man vs. Akeem

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Rick Rude vs. Jimmy Snuka

Original: C-

Redo: D

Ultimate Warrior vs. Hulk Hogan

Original: A+

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: C+

I'm surprised by that Bad News/Piper match more than anything else.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/13/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-6-epitome-of-a-one-match-show/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the History of the WWE's Big Four Pay Per Views, now in

PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/01/27/kbs-reviews-now-available-in-paperback/>

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania V: Let it Be Over

## Wrestlemania V

Date: April 2, 1989

Location: Trump Plaza, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Attendance: 18,946

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse Ventura

Given how this year's (2013) Wrestlemania is more or less a sequel to last year's, this is an appropriate show to get to. This is more or less the followup to Wrestlemania IV as Savage has snapped on Hogan, claiming that Hulk is jealous of the title and all that jazz. That's really all you need to know about this show as it's the only match that means anything at all. Let's get to it.

Rockin Robin, the reigning Women's Champion, sings America the Beautiful.

### Hercules vs. King Haku

The crown isn't on the line here. Haku jumps him from behind to start but Herc comes back with a hip toss and a slam followed by a

release flapjack. A clothesline puts Haku on the floor but Hercules suplexes him right back in. Some elbow drops keep Haku down but Hercules goes after Heenan like an idiot. Haku jumps him from behind and we head back inside for a pair of backbreakers for a pair of counts.

Since this is a power match we hit the bearhug as even Jesse says this isn't going to get a submission. Gorilla criticizes Haku's technique, prompting Jesse to ask what a gorilla would know about bearhugging. Herc breaks the hold and the King yells at the referee, only to get caught by a cross body. Hercules pounds away and hits a running knee lift followed by some clotheslines. A powerslam gets two but Hercules jumps off the top into most of a superkick. Haku misses a top rope headbutt and Hercules wins with the belly to back suplex with a last second shoulder raise.

**Rating:** C-. Nothing special here but it was a basic enough match to get things going. Hercules was a generic power guy so there wasn't much to get interested in with him. Haku would join up with Andre to win the tag titles by the end of the year. I'm not sure if there was much of a feud here other than Hercules vs. Heenan which was only touched on.

The Rockers say they can handle the Twin Towers.

#### Rockers vs. Twin Towers

That would be Big Boss Man/Akeem. Shawn makes his Wrestlemania debut by starting against Big Boss Man and the little guy takes over quickly. He also decks Akeem in the corner and gets to face the bigger man (Akeem, the former One Man Gang). The Rockers start flying in and out of the ring as they work over Akeem's arm. The arm cranking continues but Akeem makes a blind tag. Marty gets tossed into Boss Man's arms and crushed by both big men. This is back when Boss Man weighed about 400lbs so it's a big more painful than it sounds.

The Towers take their turns with fat man offense as Marty is in big trouble in a hurry. Akeem avalanches him in the corner and it's back to Boss Man. We get heel miscommunication though and Boss Man is



knocked to the floor by his own partner. Off to Shawn who pounds away in the corner before both Rockers hit a series of whips into the corner. A double middle rope shoulder finally takes Akeem down for two and it's back to Shawn on his own.

Akeem KILLS HIM with a clothesline (Jesse: "I think he irritated Akeem!") but Boss Man misses a top rope splash. The Rockers hit some double dropkicks (one of which sees Shawn completely missing Bossman) but a top rope rana is countered into a wicked powerbomb by Boss Man. Akeem crushes Shawn with a splash for the pin.

**Rating:** C. Considering how hungover the Rockers were in this match (as confirmed by Shawn), this came off pretty well. The Rockers sold the power offense like few others could, which made for some awesome visuals. They would get a lot better over the coming years but this wasn't their best performance.

Ted DiBiase talks about hanging out with Donald Trump and having them here to see him beat up Beefcake.

#### Ted DiBiase vs. Brutus Beefcake

This isn't for the Million Dollar Title which ticks Gorilla off. Brutus has his AWESOME music at this point. Beefcake jumps DiBiase to start to tick off Jesse as well. Ted bails to the floor and comes back in for some chops, only to be knocked right back to the floor by a right hand. Back in again and Brutus wins a slugout but Virgil trips him up to give DiBiase his first control.

DiBiase pounds away (there's a lot of punching in this match) and hits the falling punch for two. I love that move. A middle rope ax handle puts Brutus down again but Beefcake reverses a suplex to put DiBiase down right next to him. A double clothesline does the exact same thing but Ted is up first. He tries another suplex which actually works this time, followed by the Million Dollar Dream.

Brutus gets to the rope so they slug it out some more with the barber taking over. Now Beefcake throws on his own sleeper but gets sent out to the floor in a counter. Virgil interferes a bit to distract Beefcake but DiBiase stupidly goes out to the floor as

well. They brawl to a double countout to a big boo from the crowd.

**Rating:** C-. This was mainly a punching match as well as a pretty big fall for DiBiase. To go from the main event to the third match on the card in a year is a pretty big fall, which is saying a lot as DiBiase was still a very evil heel. Brutus was getting very popular very fast and would be paired with Hogan soon after this for a BIG rub.

Brutus beats up Virgil post match and chases them off with the hedge clippers. You know, assault with a deadly weapon as Jesse calls it.

We go to the Wrestlemania brunch with the Bushwhackers eating a lot and trying to talk about their match with the Rougeaus.

#### Bushwhackers vs. Fabulous Rougeau Brothers

ALL AMERICAN BOYS BABY! That would be the Rougeau's theme song and one of the most awesome entrances in company history. Seriously, go Youtube that thing. Jimmy Hart loses his jacket somehow but the Rougeaus save it in a humane act. Not that it matters as the Bushwhackers clear the ring a second later. Luke and Ray start things off and Ray quickly takes him down. I turn my head for a minute and come back to hearing Jesse say "So as far as you're concerned, tear down the Statue of Liberty?" Like I said, commentary was a bit different back then.

Luke and Butch clear the ring of Rougeaus again before it's down to Luke and Jacques. Butch tries to interfere for no apparent reason and Luke gets caught in a Boston Crab. In a sequence that has haunted me for years, Ray loads up Luke for a slam and while Luke is upside down, he rubs Ray's crotch. There's nothing more to it than that and to this day I don't know why he did that.

Anyway Ray puts on an abdominal stretch as a fan or two chants USA. In theory that would be for the Rougeaus here who are the All American Boys facing the guys from New Zealand. The Rougeaus prematurely hug and get caught by the Battering Ram and a double gutbuster is good for the pin on Ray out of nowhere.

**Rating:** D. It's a comedy match and not a very fun one. This is

called a big upset but I don't really see how you can call it that. It's not like either team is great or even good here and the Bushwhackers were still brand new here, so presumably they had won most of their matches up to this point. I don't get it but whatever. Sean Mooney is licked by the Bushwhackers and says words can't describe it. As someone who has been licked by one as well, that's very true.

#### Mr. Perfect vs. Blue Blazer

That would be Owen Hart in a kind of superhero gimmick that eventually led to his death. Perfect is pretty new here too and I believe is debuting his singlet look. Hennig hits a quick hiptoss that doesn't do much at all. Blazer blocks a slap and takes Perfect down to stagger Hennig a bit.

They slightly botch a flip out of a hiptoss and Blazer dropkicks Perfect to the floor. Blazer hits a quick hiptoss (why is that so popular here?) of his own and a dropkick for no cover. A modified northern lights suplex gets two for Blue but a top rope splash hits knees. Off to a reverse chinlock for a few moments by Perfect but Blazer fights up and hits a standing powerslam and a belly to belly for two each. A crucifix gets two more but Blazer spends too long arguing with the referee and the PerfectPlex ends this clean.

**Rating:** C+. This match is popular for some reason but it's only pretty good. Owen would get to show off a lot better later on and the Blazer gimmick didn't stick around that long. The ending here was clean too which is what Perfect would get quite often around this time. He wouldn't really do anything of note for about a year though until having a house show feud with Hogan.

Jesse is presented to the crowd again like last year.

Mr. Fuji allegedly runs a 5K run in a tuxedo.

To really make this show feel bloated, here's Run DMC with the Wrestlemania Rap.

We recap the double tag team turn at Survivor Series 1988 with Fuji leaving Demolition to hook up with the Powers of Pain.

Demolition says they're ready for Fuj the Stooge.

#### Tag Titles: Demolition vs. Powers of Pain/Mr. Fuji

Demolition is defending and this is a handicap match. Warlord and Ax get things going with Ax pounding him down quickly. Smash comes in for a double beatdown and it's off to a neck crank. Back to Ax for the same move and he yells at Fuji a bit. The Demolition beatdown ensues but Warlord powers Ax over to the corner for a tag to Barbarian. He shoves Smash into the corner and is immediately clotheslined down by a fresh Ax. The crowd is dead here.

Barbie gets double teamed by the champions and Ax hooks a neck crank. Back to Smash who gets chopped down before it's back to Warlord. The advantage lasts for all of three seconds before the Powers finally get some successful cheating going on. Off to Fuji for the first time for some old man offense that is far better than Heenan or Hart at least. Barbarian comes in again and the yet to be named Kick of Fear puts Ax down again for no cover.

The match continues to stay in second gear at best with both teams barely moving at all. Fuji tries the flashiest move of the match by going up top, only to miss Ax. Gorilla: "He hasn't wrestled in years, just like us." Jesse: "Us? For Fuji and I it's been years. For you many years." Barbarian gets clotheslined down again and it's off to Smash as everything breaks down. Fuji loads up his salt but hits Warlord by mistake. The Demolition Decapitator is enough to end Fuji and retain the titles.

**Rating:** D. I'm a fan of Demolition but this was a REALLY weak performance by both teams. The Powers would split soon after this which was the best idea for both guys as they were never going to break through the ceiling with Demolition on top. The title reign would continue to go on for another two months or so, reaching at nearly a year and a half.

Randy Savage has nothing to say other than he's ready for Hogan.

#### Ronnie Garvin vs. Dino Bravo

For absolutely no apparent reason, Jimmy Snuka is brought out after

the wrestlers' intros. Bravo jumps him from behind to open the match before it's off to a bearhug. That goes about three seconds do Dino loads up a powerbomb instead. Garvin escapes and starts a flurry of offense and gets two off a jackknife cover. A sleeper is easily broken up by Bravo and he breaks up a piledriver as well. Garvin tries to pound away in the corner but gets caught in an atomic drop and the side suplex for the pin by Bravo.

**Rating:** D. This didn't do anything to get the crowd going which is a big problem with this show: the crowd doesn't care about most of this stuff and why in the world would they? This is a random match between two guys that have no reason to fight and have no future as a main talent. Nothing to see here at all.

Frenchy Martin, Dino's manager, gets beaten down by Garvin post match just because.

#### Brain Busters vs. Strike Force

This is the return of Strike Force after Martel had a bad injury. Blanchard and Martel start things off and Rick almost immediately has to punch out of the wrong corner. Off to Anderson who gets rammed face first into the mat before being put in his own test of strength on the mat. Arn catches Martel in a body scissors but Rick turns it over into his signature Boston Crab.

Blanchard makes the save but Tito immediately comes in to put him in the Figure Four. Martel puts one on Anderson as well as things break down. We get some near falls by Tito but he accidentally hits the forearm on Martel to take him out. Rick gets ticked off as Tito is basically in a handicap match. The Busters get to take over on Tito but you know Santana can hang with either guy.

Arn goes up but gets slammed down, allowing Tito to set up a hot tag to....no one. Martel drops down to the floor and walks out on his partner, officially making it a handicap match. The yet to be named spinebuster from Anderson plants Tito and it's back to Blanchard. Tully blocks a monkey flip and the spike piledriver kills Tito dead for the pin.

**Rating:** B-. Best match of the night so far as all four guys were moving out there. Tito could go with the best of them and he had some of the best of them to do that with in this one. Martel and Santana would feud on and off for about a year until they just stopped fighting out of nowhere.

Martel says he's tired of carrying Tito and that's that.

It's time for the return of Roddy Piper in Piper's Pit, but after a long introduction by Fink, we get Brother Love in a kilt instead. You younguns might know him as Bruce Prichard from Gut Check. Love interviews "himself" and does one heck of a Roddy Piper impression in the process. Morton Downey Jr., a kind of forefather to Jerry Springer, is the actual guest. He runs to the ring and immediately lights up a cigarette and gay jokes abound about Love.

Now the real Piper comes out to make fun of Love for being feminine. Roddy won't let Love answer any questions by saying he doesn't really want to know that badly. Morton is on his fifth cigarette or so at this point. This goes on FOREVER until Love says he's a bit Scotch. You know, as in from Scotland. Piper rips off Love's kilt and the Brother sprints off. Finally we get to Downey who implies he slept with Piper's mom.

Morton keeps blowing smoke in Piper's face as Piper makes fun of Downey for having warts on his face. Piper gets annoyed with the smoke and Downey calls him a transvestite. Roddy asks for a smoke of his own and sprays Downey with a fire extinguisher. This took FIFTEEN MINUTES, as in longer than all but the main event tonight.

We get an ad for No Holds Barred, Hogan's acting debut.

Donald Trump likes hosting Wrestlemania.

Ventura goes into a hilarious rant against Hogan for invading Hollywood because Hogan needs a job after Savage beats him tonight. Jesse shouts that Hulk can drive his limo and storms off.

We recap the Megapowers feud as intermission continues. Basically Savage won the title at Mania 4 then teamed up with Hogan. Hogan kept getting the pins and finally at Main Event II, Savage

accidentally wiped out Elizabeth. Hogan took Liz to the back to get attention but it left Savage alone. Finally Savage slapped Hogan and turned heel again, leading to the heel promo of a lifetime as he ERUPTED on Hogan, letting out every bit of his pent up rage and jealousy before blasting Hogan with the title in the medical room. Hogan says it was Savage eaten alive by the jealousy and the title is coming home tonight. This somehow turns into a talk about destroying the Trump Plaza, which I think he touched on last year too.

### Andre the Giant vs. Jake Roberts

Big John Studd is referee and comes out to what would become Jim Duggan's music. This was supposed to set up Andre vs. Studd but Studd left before it went anywhere. Sometime before the match, Andre and Heenan get the turnbuckle pad off and Jake goes face first into the steel. Ventura and Gorilla talk about David vs. Goliath (Jesse: "He used a foreign object.") as Jake reaches for the snake bag. That goes nowhere so Studd crushes him in the corner.

Andre looks so different than he did two years ago. In Detroit he looked like a killing machine but here he looks like a lumbering oaf. Giant steps on Jake a few times but Roberts comes back with some strikes. He knocks Andre into the ropes and chokes away, only to see Andre get his arm loose and choke Jake right back.

In a moment that I've never seen explained, Andre fires some shoulders into Jake in the corner, only to stagger backwards. I'm guessing Jake was supposed to knee him (the announcers suggested he did) but Jake's legs never moved. Either way, Roberts pounds away a bit before being knocked to the floor. Studd and Andre get in a shoving match as Ted DiBiase runs out to steal the snake. Andre chokes Studd until Jake chases DiBiase down and gets the snake back. He slides Damien in and the giant runs from the smaller referee giant, giving Jake the DQ win.

**Rating:** D. ANOTHER match that didn't go anywhere here as it was hard to buy Jake as being a threat to Andre while at the same time it was hard to be intimidated by the Giant due to how old and banged up he

was. Nothing match here which was supposed to set up Andre vs. Studd, but instead Studd retired so Andre got a tag title reign instead.

Sensational Sherri wants to fight Rockin Robin and hopes Liz gets hurt today.

#### Greg Valentine/Honky Tonk Man vs. Hart Foundation

Valentine and Honky aren't Rhythm and Blues yet. Bret and Honky start and it's atomic drops all around. Honky sells his hilariously but Greg plays it a bit more serious. Off to Anvil for some power but Bret misses the middle rope elbow. The beating begins and you know Hart is going to sell things very well. Valentine gets to pound away as Gorilla says Greg isn't warmed up yet.

Honky hits the Shake Rattle and Roll but tags in Valentine for the Figure Four instead. Greg gets rolled up for two instead as Gorilla goes NUTS complaining about Honky not covering. The hot tag brings in Anvil again to clean house on both heels. A great clothesline gets two on the Hammer before it's back to Bret for the middle rope elbow. Everything breaks down and Bret gets Jimmy Hart's megaphon to drill Honky for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Enough filler matches already! This is probably the fourth match out of ten so far that have been there with no particular reason for it to happen. The show is already well over two and a half hours now and there are still four matches to go. That's one of the problems with the late 80s: they made the shows long for the sake of having them be long.

We recap Rude vs. Warrior which is basically just because Rude attacked Warrior at the Rumble Super Posedown and the champion wants revenge.

#### Intercontinental Title: Ultimate Warrior vs. Rick Rude

Warrior is defending but Rude has the belt imprinted on his tights. Rude tries a knee to the ribs but hits the belt by mistake. Warrior immediately takes over with the power game and LAUNCHES Rude into the corner. The champ throws on a bearhug for a bit until Rude



finally pokes him in the eyes to escape. Rude busts out a MISSILE DROPKICK for two but gets launched off Warrior on the kickout.

Back to the hearhug but Rude gets out the same way as he did the first time. Warrior responds by biting Rude in the face but the splash hits knees. A piledriver puts Warrior down but Rick can't immediately cover. It only gets two but the kickout is much weaker than earlier. Rude tries to swivel his hips but his back is too messed up. He cranks back on Warrior's arms but the champion gets to the ropes and starts shaking away.

Here come the shoulders from Warrior and he plants Rude face first into the mat a few times. Warrior tries a slam or something but drops Rude and almost puts him on the floor. Rude gets a boot up in the corner to stop a charging Warrior but the Rude Awakening is broken through pure power. Rick is clotheslined to the floor and Warrior suplexes him back in, only to have Heenan trip Warrior up and hold down his foot for the shocking upset and the title to Rude. This might have been Warrior's first televised loss but I don't think it was.

**Rating:** B. This is one of those pairings that just worked no matter what you had them do. You often hear about people having chemistry and that's what you had here: these two could just work well together for no apparent reason and this is a fine example. Warrior would get the title back later in the year before moving to the world title scene a few months later. Good match here.

Warrior beats up Heenan post match. Remember that for later.

#### Bad News Brown vs. Jim Duggan

This show MUST continue! Again no reason to this match and they're just fighting to fill in another five minutes on this already WAY too long card. They punch each other a lot and Duggan knocks him to the floor. Brown comes back in with his judo stuff but misses the Ghetto Blaster (running enziguri). Bad News gets annoyed and goes to the floor for a chair but Duggan hits it with the board for the double DQ.

**Rating:** D-. This is the twelfth match on this show and we're over three hours and three minutes into it already. There is no reason at all for this to be continuing but it is anyway just because. Duggan would go on to feud with whoever he could find as would Brown, showing why this match didn't need to happen at all.

Red Rooster says he'll beat Heenan and it'll be a great day in the barnyard.

#### Red Rooster vs. Bobby Heenan

There's actually a backstory: Heenan managed Rooster but said he was limited so Rooster dumped Heenan. Bobby is hurt so he brings the Brooklyn Brawler with him. Those sentences take as long to type as the match lasts as Rooster hits him once, Heenan misses a charge into the post, gets whipped into the buckle and the match is over in 30 seconds. To recap, Rooster beat him with an Irish whip.

Just to drag this out EVEN LONGER, the Brawler beats the Rooster up, because WE HAVE TO PUSH BROOKLN FREAKING BRAWLER.

Liz says she'll be in a neutral corner tonight and won't cheer for either guy in the main event.

Tony Schiavone and Sean Mooney fill in even MORE time.

#### WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Randy Savage

This is huge and Savage is on fire here. As I said Liz is in a neutral corner despite never being Hogan's manager as a singles guy ever. Savage comes out first for no apparent reason. Savage immediately heads to the floor to stall as you would expect him to do. The fans HATE him at this point after loving him like crazy a year earlier. Hogan finally shoves Savage down and it's time to stall some more.

Back up and Hogan shoulders him down again for the third trip to the floor for Savage. As Jesse and Gorilla get in an argument over the value of managers, Savage grabs a headlock. Hulk shoves him off and Randy heads outside, only to hide behind Liz in a truly evil move. Back in again and Hogan actually uses a nice amateur move and hooks a front facelock. That wasn't bad at all. Savage powers out of it

(surprising as well) and pokes Hogan in the eye to take over.

A top rope ax handle gets one on Hogan and it's off to an armbar. In something you don't often see, Hogan is pulled down to the mat by his hair. It feels weird even typing that. Hulk uses a handful of trunks to launch Randy out to the floor and Jesse freaks out. Back in and a clothesline puts Randy down, followed by a series of elbow drops. Hulk is bleeding above the eye.

Randy gets in a shot to the face and puts on a fast sleeper which is transitioned into a chinlock. Hulk comes back with an atomic drop but an elbow drop misses. A shot into the buckle sets up a rollup with trunks for two on Hulk. Savage stomps on his fingers which ticks Hogan off. Hogan slams Savage to the floor where the champion doesn't want Liz's help. Hulk follows him out and rams Randy's face into the barricade.

Savage escapes being posted and sends Hogan in by mistake. After sending Hulk back in, Randy yells at Liz a bit more and shoves her up the aisle. The referee ejects Liz, making the only interesting factor a nonfactor. Back to the floor and Savage drops the ax handle off the top to send Hogan throat first into the barricade. Savage goes after the throat with various evil measures but the elbow only gets two. Hulk Up, big boot, leg drop, new champion.

**Rating:** B-. It's Hogan vs. Savage so these two are always going to have at least a watchable match, but at the end of the day this was pretty much designed to be a Hogan win and that's what it wound up being. The smart move would be to have Savage keep the title by DQ or something, causing Hulk to chase the title until Summerslam for the title change. But instead we go with the easy (and not horrible) ending. It's a good match here but not great.

Hogan celebrates forever to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. This was pretty terrible. The main words you probably heard me say in here were things like "it keeps going" or "filler". That's the problem with this show: there's WAY too much stuff going on with 14 matches, that stupid rap, and the fifteen minute Piper segment. This show runs nearly three hours and forty

minutes which is WAY too much for a single show given what they had going on at this point. Probably five matches at minimum could be called filler here. That's WAY too much and I can see why this is considered such a lame show.

### Ratings Comparison

Hercules vs. King Haku

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Twin Towers vs. Rockers

Original: C

Redo: C

Brutus Beefcake vs. Ted DiBiase

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Bushwhackers vs. Fabulous Rougeau Brothers

Original: D-

Redo: D

Mr. Perfect vs. Blue Blazer

Original: B-

Redo: C+

Demolition vs. Powers of Pain/Mr. Fuji

Original: C-

Redo: D

Dino Bravo vs. Ronnie Garvin

Original: F

Redo: D

Brain Busters vs. Strike Force

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Jake Roberts vs. Andre the Giant

Original: D

Redo: D

Hart Foundation vs. Honky Tonk Man/Greg Valentine

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Rick Rude vs. Ultimate Warrior

Original: B

Redo: B

Jim Duggan vs. Bad News Brown

Original: F

Redo: D-

Red Rooster vs. Brooklyn Brawler

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Hulk Hogan vs. Randy Savage

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: D+

Redo: D

Wow that was a rather boring redo.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/12/history-of-wrestlemania-wit-h-kb-wrestlemania-5-hogan-vs-savage-and-thats-about-it/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the History of the WWE's Big Four Pay Per Views, now in

PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/01/27/kbs-reviews-now-available-in-paperback/>

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

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## Fastlane 2017: Yep

### **Fastlane 2017**

Date: March 5, 2017

Location: Bradley Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the final show before Wrestlemania XXXIII and it's fairly clear that this is just a way to fill in time before Orlando. The main event is Kevin Owens defending the Universal Title against Goldberg, which has a serious chance of being a squash. Of course it also has the chance of Chris Jericho interfering and costing his former friend the title. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Noam Dar/Brian Kendrick vs. Akira Tozawa/Rich Swann

Take two feuds (Kendrick vs. Tozawa/Swann vs. Dar) and throw them into one match. Tozawa starts firing off the kicks early on with Dar barely able to keep up. It's off to Swann for the stereo dives but Kendrick and Dar hide behind Alicia Fox before anything can happen to them.

Back from a break with Swann in trouble as Dar and Kendrick take turns working on the arm. Kendrick chokes in the corner with his boot before it's back to Dar for a more standard armbar. Swann finally sends Noam into the corner and it's time for the hot tag to

Tozawa. Now the double dives work just fine and Kendrick eats a Shining Wizard. Swann kicks Dar down and it's a snap German suplex into the Phoenix splash to put Noam away at 9:21.

**Rating:** C+. This was exactly what this pre-show match is supposed to be as the cruiserweights did their usual high spots and fast paced offense to wake the fans up. Dar taking the pin makes sense as he can just do one of his annoying promos to get back on the annoying side where he belongs.

The opening video talks about how important it is to have momentum on the way to Wrestlemania while looking at the major matches. Strowman vs. Reigns doesn't warrant a major mention though.

#### Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe

This has a lot of potential. Joe debuted a few weeks back and talked about earning his spot here instead of being all happy to be here like Zayn. Feeling out process to start with Sami avoiding for a few moments until a big kick to the chest puts him down. The kneebar doesn't work just yet but Joe does get in an enziguri in the corner to really knock Sami silly. A surfboard hold makes things even worse for Zayn but he flips over onto Joe for two. Sami tries to get all fired up so Joe spinwheel kicks the leg to put him right back down.

A quick (and better than expected) Blue Thunder Bomb gets two on Joe but the offense ends there as Joe boots him in the chest again. The backsplash gets two and Sami is all shaken up. He still manages a small package, only to have to escape a MuscleBuster. Not that it matters as Joe enziguris him again but can't get a superplex.

Instead Joe is sent face first into the buckle but he still Grabs Sami in the STO out of the corner. The Koquina Clutch ends Zayn at 9:13.

**Rating:** B. Sami passing out in the hold after fighting with everything he had was exactly what this needed to be. Joe is still establishing himself on the roster and a match where he's able to fight off everything Sami throws at him and then choke him out for the win is a great start. Sami will be just fine though as he always is and that's one of his major strengths: you can have him lose so

many times and just a single win gets him right back on track.

Bayley isn't worried about Dana Brooke having Charlotte's back tonight. If Charlotte is the champion she claims to be, she'll face Bayley one on one. Nia Jax comes up and says if Charlotte doesn't take the title, she will.

#### Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

Enzo and Cass beat Sheamus and Cesaro to earn this shot. Before the match we get some cheap pops from Enzo and Cass about the local sports teams (that will always work) and a few jabs at the champs' bald heads. Cass slugs away on Anderson to start before Amore does the big dive onto both champions. Anderson gets in a running knee to the head though and Gallows throws in a double Too Sweet to remind us of more entertaining groups gone by.

It's off to the chinlock before Amore manages to get Gallows outside. That's not enough for the hot tag though as Anderson knees him in the face. Anderson misses a charge in the corner though and it's the hot tag to Big Cass. House is quickly cleaned and the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka looks to finish, only to have Gallows make the last second save. A running knee to Enzo is enough for the pin to retain at 9:00 with Gallows shoving the boot off the ropes.

**Rating:** D+. Just a Raw match here as you almost had to expect from this one. It wasn't very entertaining but that's the standard for the tag division anymore. Why would I care about the match when the build has been almost non-existent and neither team is really all that interesting in the first place?

Stephanie's plane is stuck on the tarmac so Mick Foley is in charge tonight. She yells at him for telling her to relax. She's going to stay on the phone with him for the rest of the show but as luck would have it, Mick accidentally hangs up on her.

We recap Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks. Jax beat on Banks for a few months while exploiting Sasha's bad knee. This match is taking place because Banks said she would be in Bayley's corner later tonight, which wasn't cool with Stephanie.



### Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks

Banks tries some dropkicks to start but a hard whip into the corner cuts her off in a hurry. A backbreaker makes things even worse and Nia runs her over again for good measure. Nia cranks on both arms before getting kicked in the head for the break. It's off to a torture rack (great visual with Sasha bent bent around like that) and Nia even does some squats for good measure.

Banks spins out into most of a guillotine before a faceplant sets up the Bank Statement. The crowd gets WAY into this for a second but Jax easily powers free. A Faarooq style spinebuster sets up a legdrop to Banks' back and it's time to gloat. Nia gloats a bit too long though and a quick rollup into a bridge gives Sasha the pin at 9:21.

**Rating:** C+. This is the formula I was expecting out of Sami vs. Joe actually but the ending was a big surprise. I like the idea of Banks getting the win here as it gives her some momentum back while also making Jax look vulnerable for a change. I'm sure there's going to be a rematch and Jax can run her over there, presumably setting up the Wrestlemania match a bit more.

Earlier tonight, Mick Foley gave Jinder Mahal and Rusev singles matches because they want to end their team.

Mahal and Rusev come out for their matches but get in a fight with Mahal actually getting the better of things.

### Cesaro vs. Jinder Mahal

Mahal is in early trouble and a backbreaker gives Cesaro an early two. He seems to have hurt his back though and can't get the apron superplex. A dropkick to the back gets two on Cesaro and a running knee gets the same. The slow beating continues until Mahal's suplex is reversed to give Cesaro a breather. Cesaro hits the Uppercut Train and the Swiss 1 9 (oh give me a break) makes things even worse. Jinder breaks up the Swing but gets in a staredown with Rusev, allowing the pop up uppercut to end Mahal at 8:33.

**Rating:** D+. The wrestling was fine but my goodness this was one of

the least interesting ideas I could possibly think of. Mahal was never interesting either as a singles guy or as a tag wrestler but we're supposed to be interested in seeing him on a pay per view in a singles match? It's nice to see Cesaro win something for a change though.

Rusev beats Mahal up post match and here's his opponent.

#### Big Show vs. Rusev

You would have expected Sheamus here no? Rusev has gotten one heck of a haircut. The USA chants begin as Show chokes in the corner and then on the ropes. A headbutt makes things even worse and the Final Cut gets two on the Bulgarian. Show clotheslines him a few times as this has been completely one sided.

Rusev finally takes out the knee and it's off to a leglock as the fans keep chanting USA. A shot to Rusev's face breaks the hold (Graves: "This could be devastating to his handsome status!") and he bails to the floor. Back in and the chokeslam is broken up, followed by a trio of superkicks for two. The Accolade is broken up though and a chokeslam plants Rusev for no cover. There's a second and third chokeslam followed by the KO Punch for the pin on Rusev at 9:38.

**Rating:** D. I'm assuming this was a way to help set up Big Show vs. Shaquille O'Neal at Wrestlemania, even though they keep hinting that the match isn't happening for some reason. Rusev was completely squashed here, but what do you expect after he was attacked by the likes of Jinder Mahal earlier?

Kevin Owens doesn't think anything of Goldberg because Goldberg has won a single match in about ten years. He's not wrong you know. It doesn't matter who he faces because he'll keep the title as long as he wants.

Austin Aries package with Aries making some package jokes before and after.

#### Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville is defending after Jack won a five way for the shot.

Gallagher starts the mind games by doing the headstand in the corner a few times to really confuse the champ. A dropkick puts Neville on the floor but he snaps Gallagher throat first across the top rope to take over. Neville's reverse chinlock doesn't last long as Gallagher comes back with forearms to the head, followed by a suicide dive of all things. The announcers make sure to point out how rare that is for him in a rare nice job.

Back in and a superplex gets two on the champ but he comes back with something like a Stroke. Jack is sent chest first into the ropes though and a wicked snap German knocks Gallagher silly. A middle rope Phoenix splash is only good for two though and Jack gets in the headbutt.

Another headbutt puts Neville down and Gallagher falls on top for two. The running corner dropkick misses but Gallagher breaks up the superplex attempt. Another very, very hard headbutt knocks Neville down on the top but he throws Jack down in a huge crash. The Red Arrow retains the title at 12:08.

**Rating:** B. This was WAY better than I was expecting and this was by far and away the best match on the show. I had a lot of fun with it as Gallagher was doing his thing here and showing that he has the chops to hang in the ring. That being said, when Neville turns it on, no one can hang with him and it's really not even close. I loved this match and it was by far and away the best thing on the show so far.

Paul Heyman doesn't care if Goldberg or Owens wins tonight because Brock Lesnar wins no matter what. If Goldberg wins, their match is now a title match. If Owens wins, Lesnar will have a plan on how to beat Goldberg.

Here's New Day with a bicycle powered ice cream cart. When they had an idea for a cereal, all they had was a t-shirt and a dream. Then they heard the voices....Big E.: "I HEAR VOICES IN MY HEAD! THEY TALK TO ME.....". Now they stand before you again with a new t-shirt and a dream but Big E. starts trying to sing again. Woods and Kofi think he's been sipping on something but now there's an opportunity. The

fans have a chance to have their voices heard and it's all about this New Day bike. They're riding it all the way down the Road to Wrestlemania and...that's it. There's no followup to it and we're done.

We recap Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns. Strowman wants competition and has attacked Reigns a few times so here's the big showdown.

### Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns' shoes are white on the bottom and it's very distracting. Is he supposed to be a white feet babyface? Strowman shoves him into the corner to start but Reigns smiles at a shot to the mouth. A clothesline puts Strowman over the top but he pulls Reigns outside and sends him into the steps. Strowman gets in a spinebuster to start in on the ribs and a huge beal sends Reigns flying.

Roman can't get him in a fireman's carry so Strowman grabs his own Samoan drop. A splash sets up a chinlock and they head outside again with Strowman loading up the announcers' table. That goes nowhere and Strowman goes shoulder first into the post to give Reigns his first real opening. The Samoan drop gets two but Strowman pops back up with the powerbomb into a faceplant for two of his own. A missed charge sends Strowman outside though and he comes up holding his knee.

Reigns gives chase (he's got the shoes for it) and gets powerslammed through the table for his efforts. Strowman can't follow up because of the knee though and Reigns gets in a spear for two. Some Superman Punches stagger Braun again but he punches Reigns down (fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!"). Braun goes up (Cole: "GET DOWN FROM THERE STROWMAN!") but misses a top rope splash, setting up a spear to give Reigns the pin at 17:13.

**Rating:** B+. I'm very split on this one because it's a heck of a match but WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THE POINT IN BUILDING STROWMAN UP LIKE THAT TO HAVE HIM LOSE HERE??? That's the big shine taken away from Strowman for the sake of another chorus of groaning from the crowd because HAHA REIGNS WINS AGAIN. This actually sucked the life out of me and that's hard to do after a great match. Yes it was

great because they let Reigns be a superhero (with white shoes) but there was no reason for Reigns to win clean here, period.

Foley tells Samoa Joe to stay out of the main event or face the consequences.

We recap Bayley vs. Charlotte. Bayley won the title last month and Charlotte is getting her pay per view rematch. The idea is Bayley can win on Raw but Charlotte always wins when the lights are on bright.

#### Women's Title: Bayley vs. Charlotte

Bayley is defending and Charlotte steps in front of Dana Brooke, much to Dana's chagrin. Charlotte takes her to the mat for an early two and Bayley gets the same off La Majistral. They head outside with Bayley grabbing a hurricanrana off the apron, followed by a high crossbody for two. Bayley gets caught in the ropes though and Charlotte drops a knee to take over. We hit the figure four necklock followed by a legdrop to give Charlotte two.

We're in a rather slow pace here but Charlotte picks it up a bit with the moonsault for two. Bayley pops right back up and gets in a belly to back suplex for a near fall of her own. It's off to the Tree of Woe with Bayley COMPLETELY missing the springboard elbow to the point where neither the fans nor the announcers reacted to it. The thing really was that bad.

They both head to the corner and I don't see this ending well. Charlotte knocks her back into the ring but Bayley is right there with a forearm to the head to set up a much better looking hurricanrana. Now it's Bayley going up for a top rope elbow and another near fall as this is already starting to get better. Charlotte kicks the knee out but can't hook the Figure Four just yet.

Bayley is sent into the barricade but here's Sasha Banks to break up the moonsault. The distraction lets Bayley get in the Bayley to Belly on the floor (it's not clear if she saw Sasha) but Charlotte gets in a small package with a handful of tights. Sasha tells the

ref though and there's no count, allowing another Bayley to Belly to finish Charlotte off at 16:42.

**Rating:** C+. The tights thing is fine but there was no reason for Banks to be down there in the first place. It certainly feels like we're planting the seeds for a heel turn though as Banks came out there when she wasn't needed (it's not like Bayley was done or anything) and cheated. I'm not sure why it wasn't a DQ and it's a very lame way to have Charlotte lose her first pay per view title match.

Bayley points at the sign and Sasha cheers her on.

We recap Seth Rollins and HHH's segment on Raw.

We recap Goldberg vs. Kevin Owens. Goldberg beat Brock Lesnar at Survivor Series and now he's the #1 contender. Owens is just kind of there but he's cranked up the evil in recent weeks so there's some doubt to this one.

#### Universal Title: Kevin Owens vs. Goldberg

Owens is defending. Goldberg gets a nice pop but Owens gets a louder one when his music hits (though it dies very quickly). Owens bails to the floor before the bell and it's now 11:00, meaning a show with a JINDER MAHAL match added is getting an overrun. Kevin gets to the apron two more times and bails again both times. Owens finally gets in, Jericho comes out for a distraction, spear, Jackhammer, new champion in 22 seconds.

I'm not even mad really. Everyone and their mother knew Goldberg was getting the title here and defending it against Lesnar at Wrestlemania (because of course) but that makes it worse in a way. The whole "GOLDBERG IS STILL UNSTOPPABLE" thing was fun once but much like giving the Rock the title in 2013, it feels completely unnecessary. Tell me how Goldberg vs. Lesnar is better with the title on the line. If you can somehow make that work, this makes sense. Unfortunately, that's simply not the case and it makes for a very uninteresting Wrestlemania main event. At least there was a distraction though, which does help.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This is a great, great example of a show where the booking completely overshadows the wrestling (which ranged from Raw levels to very, very good). Look at the last hour and fifteen minutes. Reigns wins clean, Bayley wins in a booking decision that makes Charlotte the underdog and Goldberg is now World Champion after having wrestled less than two minutes in twelve years. I don't know if Goldberg is capable of wrestling a long match (it would honestly surprise me given the circumstances) but can you imagine if they do this at Wrestlemania with the prices people are paying for those seats? This could be your main event? Goldberg vs. Lesnar going 90 seconds?

The rest of the show really wasn't anything noteworthy and a lot of this felt like it could have happened on Raw. Other than that Charlotte's pay per view loss and the title change, what felt like it belonged on a pay per view? Fastlane really didn't need to be a pay per view but we have to have something to get those free subscriptions right? Bad night, though check out Reigns vs. Strowman and the Cruiserweight match.

### Results

Samoa Joe b. Sami Zayn – Koquina Clutch

Anderson and Gallows b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Running knee to Amore

Sasha Banks b. Nia Jax – Rollup

Cesaro b. Jinder Mahal – Pop up uppercut

Big Show b. Rusev – KO Punch

Neville b. Jack Gallagher – Red Arrow

Roman Reigns b. Braun Strowman – Spear

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Goldberg b. Kevin Owens – Jackhammer

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# Ring of Honor TV – March 1, 2017: Back on the Rails

## Ring of Honor

Date: March 1, 2017

Location: Stage AE, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commentator: Ian Riccabani

We're getting very close to the Fifteenth Anniversary Show and now we have a main event set in stone with Christopher Daniels getting his shot at ROH World Champion Adam Cole. Other than that we have the start of the Top Prospect Tournament, which is always a guaranteed look into the future but that could be either a big hit or a big miss. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick speech from Daniels about his tournament win.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniels to welcome Pittsburgh to Ring of Honor. From the day he stepped foot in this company as a long haired babyface named Christopher Daniels ("Well, I don't know about fresh faced or long haired but I was there!"). He knew it was his destiny to be the ROH World Champion and he has his chance on March 10 in Las Vegas.

Cue Adam Cole and it's STORYTIME BABY! Cole says he'll beat Fish in New York City (causing Fish to crack up on commentary) but Daniels



looks like he wants a fight with Bullet Club right now. Adam Page runs through the crowd to jump Daniels but Kazarian runs out for the save. Fish: "Take your time Frankie!" Make your own Teddy Long joke.

#### Adam Page/Adam Cole vs. Addiction

Kazarian and Page head to the floor as Fish accuses Kazarian of hanging his partner out to dry. Daniels doesn't seem to mind as he hits a good looking suicide dive to take out the Adams. A hurricanrana over the ropes doesn't quite work though and Cole superkicks Daniels into a commercial.

Back with Cole taking too much time posing and charging into an elbow. The STO is enough for the tag off to Kazarian and a Backstabber plants Cole. House is quickly cleaned and the champ dives into a cutter for two more. Cole and Daniels slug it out in the ring with Daniels planting him off an STO. Daniels loads up the BME but lands on a raised boot, allowing Cole to grab a rollup for the clean pin at 7:43.

**Rating:** C+. This was more entertaining than I was expecting and that's always fun. Addiction was a good heel team but I'm digging them even better as faces. The match wasn't long enough to mean much and I'm somewhat intrigued about the idea of Daniels losing instead of doing the cliched "pin the champ before the title match" bit. If nothing else, Fish was really entertaining on commentary and makes me think he has a prayer in New York, which I'd never buy otherwise. Kazarian yells at Daniels post match.

Fish cuts a quick promo about how Cole is playing checkers against a chess master. I know that's the common line but how would a chess player beat a checkers play? I've never gotten how that line is supposed to make sense (yes I get what they're going for).

Kazarian yells at Daniels again in the back.

Bob Evans replaces Fish on commentary, which is likely going to be a theme tonight.

#### Top Prospect Tournament First Round: John Skyler vs. Sean Carr

Skyler has made a few NXT appearances and calls himself the Southern

Savior. Carr is always being asked why he's not on TV and now he gets the chance. Feeling out process to start as I'm trying to find a reason to care about either of these guys. Skyler wins a slugout and takes him to the mat for a backplash. It's off to a chinlock for a bit as Evans talks about how important the ROH seminars really are.

Carr comes back with a superkick (he's probably getting a job based on that alone) and a second sends Skyler to the floor. A suicide dive knocks John into the barricade. They head to the apron for a kick to the face that was so far from making contact that they had to cut the camera angle. Skyler spears him on the apron (looked cool) but gets caught in a middle rope Codebreaker for two. Back up and Skyler takes him to the middle rope for a super Regal Roll and the pin at 6:12.

**Rating:** C. Yeah I still don't know who either of these guys are (Skyler was never much in NXT) and I have next to no reason to care about any of them. That's always the problem with this tournament and it doesn't seem to be getting any better with this edition. The match was fine but nothing exceptional, which makes for a rather uninteresting match when I have no reason to care because there's no story.

The Kingdom thinks they'll keep the titles forever and haven't forgotten about Dalton Castle and the Boys. These titles continue to be the most worthless belts I've ever seen, including the Never Six Man Titles.

#### Tempura Boyz vs. Motor City Machine Guns

And never mind because the Guns have been attacked. No match.

We run down the Manhattan Mayhem card with Bobby Fish and Adam Cole giving some simple promos to set up their match. Cole has gotten much, much better on the mic.

Dalton Castle and the Boys are getting a Six Man Tag Team Title shot. They lost to the champs and the Rebellion but THEY'RE GETTING A TITLE SHOT??? I know I'd normally say they should have built a

division before they have champions but New Japan did it first so it must be ok.

### TV Title: Donovan Dijak vs. Marty Scurll

Marty is defending after Dijak won a big elimination match a few weeks back. The Code of Honor as Scurll throws a kick instead. Dijak knocks him outside instead and nails a suicide dive followed by a great looking springboard elbow for a near fall. Scurll knees his way out of a suplex attempt and we take a break.

Back with Scurll chopping away on the floor and Dijak getting kicked in the head for his efforts. Marty loads up a running kick so Dijak moonsaults off the apron to escape. That's just scary athleticism. Scurll doesn't really care as he kicks Dijak in the head for a near fall. Dijak is tired of getting kicked in the head (can't say I blame him) as he picks Scurll up for a suplex but just tosses him with ease.

The chokebreaker is broken up as we see Lio Rush (#1 contender) watching on the stage. A sitout spinebuster gets two on the champ and it's off to another break. Back again with Scurll elbowing his way out of another chokebreaker and kicking Dijak in the head. A piledriver gets two and Dijak is getting all fired up. Feast Your Eyes is only good for two and Scurll breaks the fingers to take over again. The crossface chickenwing and another broken finger (that sound never gets old) make Dijak tap at 13:39.

**Rating:** B+. This was all about the evil technician vs. the athletic freak but the fact that Dijak had already announced his exit from the promotion didn't do it any favors. Scurll is getting better and better in this role as he just feels like a villain no matter how you look at him. I could go for more Dijak though as he's just scary with the athleticism.

Rush comes to the ring and gets kicked in the head but the Rebellion comes out to chase Scurll off. The banged up Machine Guns and Jay White come out for another save and it's a staredown to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Good show here which ROH has been needing for a few weeks now. The wrestling was better but more importantly than that it felt like they were actually getting ready for a big show. Fish is a good choice for the Manhattan challenger but the money seems to be in having Daniels make a run at the belt. Finally, I'm still not much of a Riccabani fan but I'd gladly take him as a neutral commentator over someone trying to play a character.

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania IV: Macho Madness

## Wrestlemania IV

Date: March 27, 1988

Location: Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Attendance: 18,165

Commentators: Jesse Ventura, Gorilla Monsoon

Well the crowd is only about 1/5 the size of the one we had last year but there are even more matches this year. This is a one idea show: we've got a tournament. The WWF Title is vacant due to the

ending of Hogan vs. Andre II at The Main Event (for you ratings people, this show earned a 15 rating on NBC live on a Friday night. Wrestling used to be HUGE.) when there was a twin referee brought in to cost Hogan the title. The title is now vacant and will be decided tonight. Let's get to it.

Before I forget, it should be noted that as this aired, the NWA (WCW) was airing the first live Clash of the Champions for free on TBS. That show would have one of the best matches the company ever produced with Sting challenging Flair for the world title for the first time.

Here are the tournament brackets.

Hogan

BYE

Andre

BYE

Jim Duggan

Ted DiBiase

Don Muraco

Dino Bravo

Ricky Steamboat

Greg Valentine

Randy Savage

Butch Reed

Bam Bam Bigelow

One Man Gang

Rick Rude

Jake Roberts

Gene welcomes us to the show and presents Gladys Knight to sing America the Beautiful.

Battle Royal

Bret Hart, Jim Neidhart, Jim Powers, Paul Roma, Sika, Danny Davis, B. Brian Blair, Jim Brunzell, Bad News Brown, Sam Houston, Jacques Rougeau, Ray Rougeau, Ken Patera, Ron Bass, Junkyard Dog, Nikolai Volkoff, Boris Zhukov, Hillbilly Jim, Harley Race, George Steele

Just for a big trophy here. Steele chills on the floor and Bob Uecker is in on commentary here. Sam Houston is put out quick as is Sika. Brunzell is sent to the apron by Nikolai but he makes the save. Both Bee's are sent to the apron but Steele pulls Neidhart out to the floor. Both of the Bees are put out as is Ray Rougeau as the ring is thinning out a bit. Dog puts Bass out but has to fight off the Bolsheviks.

Hillbilly Jim is put out and Roma puts Davis out as well. We're down to nine and Powers is out too. We've got Volkoff, Zhukov, Hart, Roma, Jacques Rougeau, Race, Brown, Patera and Dog. Race and Dog headbutt each other with the canine man winning. Nikolai is dumped by Patera and Zukov gets the same treatment.

Patera is pulled to the floor by Volkoff as Race and Rougeau go out. So it's JYD, Hart and Brown to go. Dog gets on all fours to headbutt both heels but they finally catch up on him with some double teaming. He gets dumped out and Hart and Brown seem to be willing to split the win. Brown of course turns on Hart and dumps him out to win the trophy.

**Rating:** D+. This was nothing of note other than the potential beginning of Bret's first aborted singles push. The problem with battle royals is the same most of the time: there's no reason for most of them to happen and with no story, there's not much interest in the match. Sometimes you'll get a good one, but this wasn't it.

Brown stands next to the trophy (which stands about 6'0) but Bret jumps him and destroys the trophy.

Fink explains the tournament structure (mainly time limits and saying it's winners only advancing) and introduces Robin Leech (hosted a show called Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous) to read a proclamation.

### WWF World Title Tournament First Round: Ted DiBiase vs. Jim Duggan

DiBiase is one of the favorites here as he tried to buy the title which started the whole mess. Andre and Virgil are with him here. Ted immediately hides in the corner as the Battle of Mid-South begins. Duggan wins a slugout and an atomic drop puts DiBiase on the floor. I could watch DiBiase fall over the top all day. He was always great at falling over and made it look like a science.

Back in and Jim clotheslines him down before pounding away a bit more. DiBiase charges into a boot in the corner and hits a middle rope ax handle for two. Duggan comes back with a sunset flip of all things for two and to give Jesse a shock. A suplex puts DiBiase down and he jumps into a punch in the ribs to slow him down even more. Duggan slams him down but Andre trips him before the three point clothesline can be launched. Jim looks at Andre but gets caught in the back by a knee, sending DiBiase to the quarterfinals.

**Rating:** C-. DiBiase's flipping was a good touch and they got to do some decent stuff in less than five minutes. That's one of the problems with tonight's show: since there are so many matches they have to keep things short. Duggan would eventually feud with Andre in some surprisingly decent matches.

Gene is with Brutus and while looking him up and down says "Brutus this is incredible what a package." After that unintentional comedy, Gene asks Brutus if he's worried about Jimmy Hart interfering in the IC Title match tonight. Brutus says Hart will get a haircut if he intereferes.

### WWF World Title Tournament First Round: Dino Bravo vs. Don Muraco

Bravo shoves him back into the corner to start to win the first power battle of the match. Muraco hammers him down and tries something like a Vader Bomb but basically just lands next to Bravo instead. Dino comes back with an elbow to the face and a gutwrench suplex for no cover. A knee in the corner misses Muraco so he starts hammering on the knee.

A spinning toehold has Bravo in trouble but Don gets kicked away and

gets his head caught in the ropes. Dino uses Muraco's own piledriver to get two but a second attempt is countered with a backdrop. They clothesline each other but it's Muraco up first. He hits a flying forearm which works so well that he tries it again, but Bravo pulls the referee into Muraco for the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. this was slow and plodding but it wasn't horrible. Muraco was far better when he was less muscular and evil and this part of his career never quite worked that well. One very nice thing here is Jesse freaking out when Bravo got disqualified but then saying it was correct when seeing Bravo pull the referee on the replay. It's very refreshing to see something like that.

Bob Uecker warns Honky Tonk Man about getting beaten up by Brutus. Honky makes fun of Uecker's batting average and threatens to backstroke up the Mississippi River. Uecker: "You guys ain't never coming to my house!"

#### WWF World Title Tournament First Round: Greg Valentine vs. Ricky Steamboat

Should be good. Steamboat brings the future Richie Steamboat to the ring with him in matching outfits. Feeling out process to start with Steamboat taking him down via an armdrag. Gorilla says Ricky has excellence of execution to coin a phrase. A few shoulders get two on Valentine so he throws Steamboat over the top. That of course doesn't work on the Dragon so he comes back with a dropkick and a crucifix for two.

Valentine comes back with his usual elbows and forearms to put Steamboat down. He pulls Steamboat off the ropes so Ricky drops onto the back of his head. This allows Gorilla to bust out the term "external occipital protuberance", to which Jesse replies "THE WHAT?" The voice Ventura says that in is hilarious. Apparently it's that little bump on the back of your head. Steamboat reverses a suplex into one of his own and hooks an armbar. Jimmy Hart goes a rant of instructions to the Hammer which is such a lost art in wrestling.

Steamboat gets dropped on the back of his head, allowing for another



discussion of whatever that thing is called. Gorilla: "External occipital protuberance." Jesse: "Oh ok. Back of the head for all you normal people back there." Valentine pounds away with elbows as Gorilla says they're "right in the kisser, right between the eyes." His biology knowledge is all over the place. Donald Trump is in the front row. Steamboat comes back with some chops for two but Greg puts him right back down with a gutbuster.

Valentine goes after the leg but the Figure Four is broken up. They chop it out with Steamboat taking over, only to charge into a boot in the corner. Valentine hits a top rope forearm but still can't put the Figure Four on. Steamboat hits an elbow to the face and a top rope chop for two. He rams Valentine into the corner ten times and shoves the referee away when he tries to break it up. Ricky goes up and hits the cross body but Valentine rolls through to eliminate Steamboat.

**Rating:** C+. Like I said, decent stuff here although Steamboat would be gone pretty much immediately over wanting to take some time off. Vince said no so Ricky left wrestling for about nine months. Anyway, good stuff here from two guys that know how to work whatever kind of a match you ask them to. Valentine was great in a role like this where he wasn't going to win anything but he could fill in a spot and do just fine.

Steamboat waves goodbye to the crowd so yeah this was it for him.

The British Bulldogs with their recently returned dog Matilda declare her a weasel dog for their six man against the Islanders and Heenan. Oh and Koko is here too.

Bobby Heenan gets a package and actually tips the delivery guy. Ok then.

WWF World Title Tournament First Round: Randy Savage vs. Butch Reed

Macho and Liz come out in matching blue and Liz really is beautiful. She's also one of the few females in wrestling that stayed classy (until Russo got ahold of her) for almost her entire run. This is power vs. speed with Reed getting Savage in the corner early on.

Jesse asks Gorilla if he would buy a car from Slick (Reed's manager). Gorilla says no. Jesse: "Not even a bright blue Caddy?" These two are just freaking fun together. They knew how to work off each other so well and it made the late 80s a ton of fun.

Reed pounds away on Savage and guillotines him on the top rope and out to the floor. Back in and Butch stomps on Randy a bit before elbowing him right back down. Savage gets in a kick to the face and fires off some punches, only to get clotheslined down again. Reed goes up top but takes WAY too long to jaw at Liz, allowing Savage to slam him down and drop the elbow for the pin. The pop when Savage hits the elbow is HUGE. You could hear it starting last year in Detroit and now it's full fledged here.

**Rating:** C-. This was basically a squash until the very end. Savage was great at building up sympathy from the crowd which is why the pops were so huge when he won here. Reed would also head to the NWA soon after this to do nothing for a year before joining Doom. Not much to see here but again, the time crunch hurts things a lot.

Uecker talks about trying to get with Vanna White tonight when Heenan and the Islanders come in. Heenan: "You talk about writing letters. You had 700,000 votes for the Hall of Fame. You would have had more but you ran out of stamps. Heenan isn't worried about the six man later.

#### WWF World Title Tournament First Round: Bam Bam Bigelow vs. One Man Gang

Gang pounds away in the corner to start and Bigelow is in trouble. This is one of those big guys that pound away on each other with basic stuff but it looks better because they're huge matches. Bigelow comes back with a forearm and a low splash for two. Bam Bam pounds away and hits a headbutt and then about four more to take over. He hits the ropes and Slick pulls the rope down though and Gang pounds on him on the apron enough to cause a countout. Too short to rate but this was lame. I think Bigelow had a bad knee here too.

Hogan goes into one of his most bizarre and over the top promos

here. He talks about slamming Andre and breaking the United States in half, sending Andre and his next two opponents into the ocean. The rest is going to be nearly verbatim because a description won't do it justice. Talking about them falling into the ocean:

"And so will Donald Trump and all the Hulkamaniacs, but as Donald Trump hangs on to the top of the Trump Plaza with his family under his other arm, and as they sink to the bottom of the sea, THANK GOD Donald Trump is a Hulkamaniac. He'll know enough to let go of his materialistic possessions, hang onto the wife and kids and dog paddle all the way to safety. But Donald, if somehow you run out of gas, and all the Hulkamaniacs happen to run out of gas, just hang onto the largest back in the world and I'll dog paddle and backstroke (wouldn't the people on his back drown?) all of us to safety."

So Hogan has just declared himself Jesus. You knew it was coming eventually.

#### WWF World Title Tournament First Round: Rick Rude vs. Jake Roberts

This is part of a BIG feud over Rude trying to get with Jake's wife. Jake immediately goes for the part of Rude's body that would mess with Rude the most: his face. Rude comes back with a slam and some right hands so Jake comes back with some slams of his own. Rude winds up in the corner with the snake and bails right into an arm wringer by Jake. Try as he might, Rude can't fight out of the wristlock as it's pretty clear this is going to last for awhile.

The hold is finally broken by Rude putting him on the top rope but Jake comes off the middle rope with a jumping knee lift to send Rick to the outside. Rude gets slammed again but this time the knee lift misses and Rick stomps away. Rick drops a knee and gets a VERY slow two count. We hit the chinlock and I open a book because we're going to be here for a long time.

After about two minutes, Rude hits a token clothesline before hooking the chinlock all over again. Jake tries to fight back but gets launched into the head and dropped on his face. A top rope fist to a downed Jake gets two and it's back to the chinlock. You can

hear the fans booing now. Roberts tries a belly to back suplex but Rude still doesn't break the hold.

Now the boring chants begin so Jake FINALLY hits a jawbreaker to get out of the hold and get the crowd going a bit. The short clothesline looks to set up the DDT but Rude rams him into the corner. Jake is suplexed out of a headlock for two and both guys are down. Rude tries a pin with his feet on the ropes and the time runs out. The fans are NOT happy with that one.

**Rating:** D-. What in this is supposed to be appealing? We don't get a DDT, we don't get any comeuppance for Rude, we don't get a winner, and we don't even get a beating for Heenan. This was long and very dull with at least five minutes out of fifteen being spent in a chinlock. If you need to have two guys get eliminated to prevent another match later, wouldn't it make sense to have this one go fast instead of going the time limit?

Gene and Vanna White look at the brackets so we'll do that too.

Hogan

Andre

DiBiase

Muraco

Savage

Valentine

One Man Gang

BYE

Vanna has no idea who Bob Uecker is but she wants Hogan to win.

#### Hercules vs. Ultimate Warrior

They collide to start as the announcers recap the tournament. Hercules hits three straight clotheslines to put Warrior down to Jesse's amazement. Warrior fires off some chops but gets backdropped out to the floor. They brawl on the floor for a bit as Heenan is reaching in his pockets. Both guys head back inside and pound on

each other a little bit more with Warrior hitting the ten punches in the corner. Hercules comes out of the corner with an atomic drop and sends Warrior into the corner chest first. He puts on the full nelson but Warrior climbs the corner and falls back ala Bret and Austin at Survivor Series 96 for the fast pin.

**Rating:** D+. Warrior was rapidly becoming a force but it wouldn't be another six months before he finally hit something special. Hercules would be around for a few more years but would never do anything of note. This was just a filler match to bridge the gap between the first and second rounds of the tournament.

We recap Hogan vs. Andre, which I'm sure you know the story of, at least up to Mania III. After that, Andre disappeared for the summer until leading his team to victory over Hogan's team at the first Survivor Series (Hogan was counted out). So anyway DiBiase debuted and wanted to buy the world title but Hogan of course said no. DiBiase instead bought Andre from Heenan and said go get me the belt.

This led us to Indianapolis and the first Main Event, which completely destroyed every ratings record ever for wrestling, drawing a mind blowing 15 rating and 33 million viewers live on NBC on a Friday night. Today, 5 million people watching Raw is reasons for a celebration for Raw. Anyway, there was a screwjob finish with Dave Hebner's twin brother Earl debuting as an imposter and counting a pin while Hogan's shoulder was clearly up. Andre gave the title to DiBiase which didn't fly with President Jack Tunney, so the title was held up and we got the tournament to settle things.

#### WWF World Title Tournament Quarterfinals: Andre the Giant vs. Hulk Hogan

Hulk charges into the ring but gets stomped down. DiBiase and Virgil are here in Andre's corner. Hogan gets rammed into the corner and punched down by the giant but Hogan comes back with some forearms. He has to stop to beat up DiBiase and ram Ted and Andre's heads together. Hogan chops Andre into the ropes and gets him tied up. DiBiase frees the arms but Hogan punches Andre down and drops some

elbows, but the giant grabs him by the throat from the mat and takes over again.

Some standing choking ensues and Hogan goes down to his knees. That gets shifted into a nerve hold but Hogan fights up and fires away on Andre even more but can't drop him. Hogan goes for a slam but DiBiase hits him in the back as Virgil distracts the referee. Hulk gets the chair away and hits Andre with the chair. Andre gets the chair away and hits Hulk with it, somehow drawing a double DQ despite Hogan clearly hitting Andre first.

**Rating:** C-. The match wasn't much from a quality standpoint but they were at a far faster pace than they were last year. That's probably the right idea given how messed up Andre's body was at this point though. Anyway, this is all part of the Master Plan which we'll hear more about later on. Not a terrible match but it's really just there to say it happened.

Hogan chases Virgil and DiBiase down with the former getting suplexed in the aisle. Hulk goes back in and slams Andre before posing for a few minutes despite not winning the match. It's still going. He didn't pose this much at last year's show.

Savage and Liz (now in pink) say that Hogan was cheated and that he's never been defeated. Oh and Macho is going to win.

#### WWF World Title Tournament Quarterfinals: Don Muraco vs. Ted DiBiase

The winner goes to the finals because of the double DQ. Ted comes out alone here for the first time tonight. Muraco pulls him into the ring by the hair and we're ready to go. A quick powerslam gets two and Ted is reeling. There's a clothesline for another two and Ted tries to bail. DiBiase finally gets to the floor and Billy Graham (Muraco's manager) tries to hit him with his cane. Back in and Don tries to pull him out of the corner but gets pulled into the corner himself instead. DiBiase finally has some control but misses a falling reverse elbow off the middle rope. Muraco makes a quick comeback but walks into a hotshot for the pin.

**Rating:** C. Not bad here but yet again the time hurts them a lot.

There's only so much you can do in about five minutes, although it was good to show that DiBiase could get a win on his own which he did here. Muraco would be gone pretty soon if I remember correctly. Not much of a match here but it wasn't bad.

Demolition talks about hitting people over the head with ball bats and say they'll win the titles.

One Man Gang's bye is announced.

### WWF World Title Tournament Quarterfinals: Randy Savage vs. Greg Valentine

Savage takes over quickly with a slam and a knee drop for two but Valentine comes back with a pair of forearms, the second from the top rope. A shoulderbreaker gets two for Valentine and it's time for some more elbows. Greg throws him to the floor and rams Randy into the barricade a few times. More elbows to the head and chest follow as Savage is in a lot of trouble.

Back in and Valentine starts in on the leg but Savage quickly grabs a rope. A suplex gets two for Valentine and Randy is in trouble. All of a sudden Savage goes NUTS (he's fine then) and pounds away on Hammer with the top rope ax handle. He loads up another one but they kind of collide instead. Savage misses a charge at the ropes and Valentine tries the Figure Four again, only to get rolled up for the pin to advance Savage.

**Rating:** B-. It's the best match of the tournament so far but that's not saying much. Also it's one of the longer matches of the tournament at just over six minutes so that probably has something to do with it. Savage took a beating in this but managed to sneak out with a win which is always cool to see. The fans continue to pop huge for him too which is a great sign.

Vanna White has no idea who Bob Uecker is. We look at the updated brackets:

Ted DiBiase

BYE

Randy Savage

## One Man Gang

### Intercontinental Title: Honky Tonk Man vs. Brutus Beefcake

Sherri Martel is with Honky as Peggy Sue here which is a pretty amazing character change for her. This is during Honky's insanely long run that drew a ton of money and is pretty awesome all around. Brutus hits a quick atomic drop and messes with Honky's hair to play with his mind a bit. Honky bails to the floor as Jesse and Gorilla debate crooked referees. Back in and Beefcake rams Honky's head into the buckle a few times as this is one sided so far.

A high knee sends the champion back to the floor but once back in, Beefcake gets caught by a shot to the stomach. Honky takes over and stomps away which is about the extent of his offense. He loads up the Shake Rattle and Roll but drops it and goes back to stomping. Honky tries it again but Brutus grabs the rope to block it. Beefcake pounds away a bit and grabs his sleeper but Jimmy knocks out the referee. Honky gets knocked but there's no referee so Brutus celebrates like an idiot. Brutus cuts Jimmy Hart's hair for fun and Honky walks out. It's a DQ I think.

**Rating:** D+. Nothing to see here as this show is just going WAY too long at this point. We're only about two and a half hours into it and we've got four matches left. Brutus was just another guy in there to not get the title off Honky, which adds him to a list of about 10 guys who couldn't do it. Honky would get his soon enough though.

In a semi-famous bit, Andre talks about DiBiase paying him to eliminate Hogan (not really a surprise) and then chokes Bob Uecker.

### Islanders/Bobby Heenan vs. British Bulldogs/Koko B. Ware

There's actually a story here. Heenan comes to the ring in a dog handlers' outfit (remember the package from earlier?) because Matilda, the dog mascot of the Bulldogs, is back from being dognapped, presumably by the Islanders. Koko is there because when you need a filler, you call Koko B. Ware. We start with Dynamite vs. Tama but it's quickly off to Haku vs. Davey Boy for a nice power



match.

Davey slams him down a few times and it's off to a quickly broken chinlock. Back to Tama who is gorilla pressed up and down and it's back to Haku. Jesse: "Heenan seems to be saving himself." Gorilla: "Yeah for the senior prom." Did Gorilla just make a sex joke? I can feel my childhood crumbling as I type this. Koko comes in for some quick shots but it's back to Dynamite for the clothesline that Benoit copied from him.

The Kid charges into a kick in the corner and here's Heenan for the first time. He stomps on Dynamite, gets hit once in his padded suit, and runs away. That's about what I expected. Tama tries a Vader Bomb but hits knees, allowing for another tag to Koko. He pounds on both Islanders but Haku takes him right back down. Tama comes in with a top rope chop and Heenan gets his second tag. Heenan chokes a bit but misses a charge into the post. Everything breaks down and the Islanders drop Heenan onto Koko for the pin.

**Rating:** C. I told you Koko was worthless in this. The stuff with the tag teams was pretty solid but the rest of it was as dull as you would expect. These six man tags with the Bulldogs in there don't go that well for them but this was their last try at it. This was basically a comedy match and it was only kind of funny.

Jesse Ventura is introduced to the crowd for some posing.

Ted DiBiase's bye is announced.

WWF World Title Tournament Semifinals: One Man Gang vs. Randy Savage

Savage and Liz are in black for this one. Randy tries to lock up with him to start which isn't his best play here. Gang shoves him into the corner and pounds him down then does it again for a few more minutes. A pair of splashes miss and an elbow sends Gang into the ropes and out to the floor. Savage tries a slam but gets choked down instead. Liz gets on the apron for no apparent reason as Slick throws in the cane, but Gang gets caught swinging it for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here and Savage on defense can't save most of a match. This is the second win over a Slick client of the night

and he would spend the summer feuding with more of them. Gang was a decent big man but at the end of the day he was just another monster for a hero to vanquish. Not that there's anything wrong with that as people can make a great living like that, especially in the 80s.

Savage gets hit with the cane anyway but he still comes back and sends Gang into Slick.

The finals are DiBiase vs. Savage.

Bob Uecker can't catch up with Vanna.

#### Tag Titles: Demolition vs. Strike Force

Strike Force is one of my favorite teams ever and is comprised of Rick Martel and Tito Santana. They had been champions for something like five months and are still considered transitional champions. Smash and Martel start things off and the former lives up to his namesake by beating Rick down. Everything breaks down quickly for a bit and the result is the champions in control. Tito comes in to work over the arm of Ax before it's off to Smash for more arm cranking.

Demolition comes back with a standing Hart Attack before it's back to Ax for a powerslam. Smash suplexes Tito down for two but an elbow drop misses. Ax comes back in and gets caught out of nowhere by the flying forearm (Jesse: "He learned that in the Mexican Football League."). There's the hot tag to Martel and it's dropkicks a go-go. The Boston Crab goes on Smash but Tito goes after Ax. The forearm takes him down but Fuji slides in the cane. Rick gets blasted in the back of the head, giving Demolition their first titles. They would hold those belts for over a year and a half.

**Rating:** C+. Power vs. speed is always a good combination and that's what you got here. Demolition was a pair of guys who beat the tar out of everyone they fought and that's what they did here. It took a pair of Horsemen to get the belts off of them if that tells you anything about how awesome they were.

Robin Leech brings out the WWF Title belt.

Bob Uecker is guest ring announcer. Vanna White is guest timekeeper

and she gives Bob a kiss.

### WWF World Title: Randy Savage vs. Ted DiBiase

Savage and Liz are now in white and Andre is with DiBiase. Macho blocks some punches in the corner but Andre trips him up like a jerk. Andre does it again and Savage is catching on that he's got a problem. They trade some cranking on the arm and DiBiase's sunset flip doesn't work. A clothesline gets two for Randy and he sends DiBiase to the floor where Andre says go ahead and jump.

Realizing he's in trouble, Savage sends Liz to the back the obvious reason (hint: the fans are chanting HOGAN). DiBiase hooks a chinlock and heeeeeeeeeere's Hulk. The look on Hogan's face and his jaws going all over the place make him look high as a kite. Ted pounds away in the corner and Andre pulls Savage to the outside. Hogan jumps the giant but Savage is in big trouble.

A gutwrench suplex gets two for Ted but he goes up top for reasons of general stupidity, earning that slam off the top by Savage. Randy tries a quick elbow but only hits the mat. DiBiase puts on the Million Dollar Dream but Hogan, ever the hero, comes in and whacks DiBiase in the back with a chair. Savage runs to the top and the big elbow gives him his first world title.

**Rating:** B-. This was a decent match and the place went NUTS for the win, but they were both really tired and it slowed them down a lot. The Hogan cheating wasn't really necessary and it made Savage look a bit weak, but at the end of the day it didn't make that big of a difference. Still though, huge moment here.

Hogan insists on being in the ring for the celebration which really takes something away from it. The three celebrate to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. The moment at the end is huge, but the time it took getting there isn't worth it. The problem with this show is that it's WAY too long and there aren't that many good matches on it. Sixteen matches are WAY too many to have on a single show and the fans were really burned out by the end. This should have been an eight man tournament with some slightly longer matches. Also this

show is almost four hours long and the talent pool just wasn't deep enough to support that back then. Nostalgia is really all that helps this show for most modern fans, but that's not a terrible thing.

### Ratings Comparison

Battle Royal

Original: C

Redo: D+

Ted DiBiase vs. Jim Duggan

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Don Muraco vs. Dino Bravo

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Greg Valentine vs. Ricky Steamboat

Original: C

Redo: C+

Randy Savage vs. Butch Reed

Original: D

Redo: C-

One Man Gang vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Rick Rude vs. Jake Roberts

Original: D

Redo: D-

Ultimate Warrior vs. Hercules

Original: D

Redo: D+

Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant

Original: C

Redo: C-

Ted DiBiase vs. Don Muraco

Original: C+

Redo: C

Randy Savage vs. Greg Valentine

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Brutus Beefcake vs. Honky Tonk Man

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Islanders/Bobby Heenan vs. British Bulldogs/Koko B. Ware

Original: D+

Redo: C

Randy Savage vs. One Man Gang

Original: D

Redo: D

Demolition vs. Strike Force

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Randy Savage vs. Ted DiBiase

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: D+

Redo: D

About the same more or less.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/11/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-4-one-big-tournament-and-thats-it/>

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## Fastlane 2017 Preview

It's time for the final pit stop on the Road to Wrestlemania because "Monday Night Raw" has to have its own pay per view because "Smackdown Live" did as well. I've made no secret of the fact that I have little interest in seeing this show and I'm worried about how the main event is going to go. There's some interesting stuff on the card though so hopefully that outweighs the bad. Let's get to it.

**Pre-Show: Akira Tozawa/Rich Swann vs. Brian Kendrick/Noam Dar**

It's a double feud match and there's nothing wrong with that. The "205 Live" crew has taken a hit in recent weeks as there just isn't much going on aside from whatever Neville is doing that week. However, there's some hope in the Tozawa vs. Kendrick feud and Swann is still one of the

most entertaining people on the roster so maybe he and Dar/Alicia Fox can do something entertaining soon enough.

As for the winners, I'll take Swann pinning Dar but this isn't a case where the winners really matter that much. This match is about getting the crowd ready for the show and the cruiserweights are some of the best possible options to do just that. It probably won't be a classic or anything but it really doesn't need to be, which is perfectly fine.

### **Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Jack Gallagher**

We'll stick with the cruiserweight them as Neville defends against his fellow countryman. Neville has turned into one of the best performers on the roster with this new King of the Cruiserweights character as he's just channeling the hatred and anger so well. Gallagher is a scrappy guy who has looked very solid in the ring at times, though he's much more over for his character and abilities with an umbrella.

That being said, I don't buy Gallagher as having a chance in this one. Neville is just on a different level than anyone else in the division and Gallagher is only a step above a comedy character. In theory we'll be seeing Austin Aries making his cruiserweight division debut and facing Neville for the title at "Wrestlemania XXXIII", making this match little more than just a warmup for Neville.

### **Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax**

This one depends on what you think they're going to be doing later on in the show with Bayley vs. Charlotte. On paper, this seems to be a way to set up Banks' heel turn on Bayley later in the night, which would suggest that Jax beats her and Banks gets upset that Bayley wasn't there in her corner. This would certainly follow the theory that if you're about to turn heel, you must lose every match beforehand.

Yeah Banks loses here and WWE continues to sit around wondering why the pops get weaker every time. In theory this helps to set up the four way at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" for the title but that means we have three heels and Bayley for the title. Banks seems primed for a heel turn and since WWE is rather odd at times (read as almost all the time), she's likely to lose in a huge way on pay per view.

### **Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Gallows and Anderson**

Is anyone else starting to get a little tired of Amore's schtick? He's described himself as a heel character and it's starting to show more and more. Unfortunately along with that goes a lot of the spark the team has to offer, which means there's less and less value in them winning the belts. It seems that we're getting ready for a Big Cass singles push and that might be better for everyone.

Considering that, PLEASE LET ANDERSON AND GALLOWES LOSE THE BELTS. They're one of the least interesting teams I've seen in a long time as they're really just there every week and offer almost nothing. The entire division is a mess right now and that makes for some very agonizing segments. As annoyed as I'm getting of Amore and Big Cass, they would be WAY better as champions than more of the Anderson and Gallows mess.

### **Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe**

Now this has potential. If you have a need for a new monster (or any monster for that matter) to destroy someone and make it look good, you call on Zayn. These two have been feuding for a bit over the last few weeks and there's a good chance that this match is going to steal the show. There isn't much doubt on the ending but there's some serious potential.

In case it's not clear, Samoa Joe is going to wreck Zayn here and that's exactly what should happen. Zayn is the



kind of guy who can put up a great fight and come this close before falling victim to one heck of a Rock Bottom and maybe the Koquina Clutch. It's what Zayn does and he does it as well as almost anyone ever has. Samoa Joe should be coming up on a major match at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" but he has to smash Zayn first.

### **Women's Title: Bayley vs. Charlotte**

As mentioned earlier, this one is going to be dependent on the Banks match, which I think goes to Jax to set up Banks costing Bayley the title here. If that's not the case, I still don't think Charlotte gets the belt back here but I do think she wins. The big sales pitch is that Charlotte has never lost a title match on pay per view and there's a chance that they could avoid taking the title off of Bayley just yet while keeping the streak alive.

Or, since this is WWE, we'll go with the reality that is Charlotte becoming six time Women's Champion because WWE wants to recreate Ric Flair's record in female form. I have no idea why I should care about Charlotte winning the title again but it seems that we're heading in that direction. Then, once we've gotten the worthless first title reign out of the way, Bayley can start the REAL title reign because that's how WWE logic goes. Charlotte wins though, no matter how little sense it makes.

### **Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman**

This is a weird one as there isn't really a good option for the ending. First of all, there's absolutely no logical reason to have Strowman lose to Reigns via pin. He's been treated as an unstoppable monster and there's no reason for Reigns (or anyone) to beat him this soon. Unfortunately, that's where WWE manages to screw up more often than not. Reigns winning would be the WWE answer and that's the last thing that needs to happen.

Or there's option C: Undertaker interferes and costs Reigns

the match in retaliation for Reigns eliminating him from the Royal Rumble. That would set up one heck of a showdown at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" and Strowman goes on to do....well probably to win the battle royal because that's the best they can think of him for now. I can live with that as long as Strowman doesn't get pinned by Reigns, who really doesn't need to get this win.

### **Universal Title: Kevin Owens vs. Goldberg**

This match terrifies me. Owens has recently rediscovered what made him great in the first place but there's a buzzsaw called Goldberg waiting on him. I know there's the option of Chris Jericho interfering to cost Owens the title and while that would make things MUCH better than Goldberg just hitting his finishers to win, Goldberg and Goldberg vs. Lesnar DOES NOT NEED to be for the title. The idea of Jericho taking the title from Owens in Orlando is great but Lesnar vs. Goldberg being for the title? Not so much.

Of course Goldberg wins the title here though because WWE has decided that Goldberg vs. Lesnar MUST be for the title for reasons I don't even want to comprehend. Like I said, if Jericho interferes and costs Owens the match it's much better, but words cannot describe how mad I'll be if it's "Survivor Series 2016" all over again with a match that lasts less than five minutes because Goldberg can't do anything longer than that again.

Overall, "Fastlane 2017" just doesn't need to exist. Other than the main event, you could easily see a lot of this show taking place on a few episodes of "Monday Night Raw" and that's not good for a pay per view. The show has some potentially excellent matches but there are some that are likely to feel like they're going to drag like a Stephanie McMahon promo marathon. Just please don't squash Owens. It doesn't help anyone but Goldberg and I could easily see WWE doing just that.

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## **Main Event – March 2, 2017: Take a Lesson From TNA**

### **Main Event**

Date: March 2, 2017

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, R-Truth

It's a month away from Wrestlemania and that means it's time to watch some of the talent who has little chance of making it to the main shows more often than not. Raw has been up and down lately and I'm not sure why some of the bigger names from around here (work with me) hasn't been bumped up to jobbers to the stars status on the big show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### **Sin Cara vs. Bo Dallas**

They trade some quick takedowns to start until Cara scores with his springboard elbow to the jaw. It's WAY too early for the Swanton

though and Cara has to settle for a running flip dive off the apron. Dallas sends him into the apron for a near countout, followed by his elevated swinging neckbreaker for two. He charges into raised boots in the corner though and the Swanton gives Cara the pin at 3:59.

**Rating:** D+. So much for Dallas being ready to move up to the main roster. I really don't get how they decide the winners on this show as it really does feel like there's no particular rhyme or reason to almost anything they do. Dallas is one of the regular big winners on this show and now he's losing clean to Sin Cara in just a few minutes. TNA's bad days had more consistent booking than this show.

To Raw!

Here's Goldberg to get things going. He thanks the fans for their chants but gets straight to the point: he's winning the title at Fastlane with his son cheering him on. This brings out Kevin Owens to say what he really thinks about Goldberg. When he got to this company, Owens promised to grab this company by the throat and show WWE what he was really about.

Then he beat John Cena in his first match, followed by beating Dean Ambrose, AJ Styles, Seth Rollins and the Big Dog himself, Roman Reigns. Now why should Goldberg be any different? Goldberg likes the speech and wants to fight right now but Owens doesn't think Green Bay deserves to see him fight. They'll fight on Sunday and the Goldberg chants die.

Back to Raw, which we never left!

We get a long video on the long history of HHH making Seth Rollins. They've been together for years but then Rollins hurt his knee which HHH referred to as dropping the ball. Rollins is injured but the question is can he get back in time.

Here's Rollins, on crutches, for a sitdown interview with Corey Graves. He doesn't know where he is mentally now but it seems that he's in Chicago because we get a freaking CM PUNK chant. Thankfully it's loudly booed and Seth can get back to the point. He's not sure if he can continue at this point and as of right now, the doctors

haven't cleared him for Wrestlemania.

This brings out HHH and Samoa Joe with the former talking about how Rollins has no idea what he's doing here. HHH knows Rollins isn't going to Wrestlemania because that's how he is. It was HHH who handed him the title and then Rollins bit the hand that feeds him. Rollins didn't mind reaping the benefits along the way but now he's treating HHH like this.

Seth needs to make the right decision and not come to Wrestlemania because HHH is done playing with him. If Rollins shows up there, it's the last thing he'll ever do in a WWE ring. HHH goes to leave but Seth cuts him off and says he'll be in Orlando and it's going to be the last thing HHH ever does.

#### Ariya Daivari vs. Gran Metalik

Daivari takes him down by the arm and we're off to a break thirty seconds in. Back with Ariya missing a splash in the corner and getting caught with a middle rope hurricanrana. They trade some hard strikes to the face before Daivari grabs a Rainmaker of all things for two. Why is it for two? BECAUSE THE RAINMAKER IS JUST A CLOTHESLINE! Not that it matters as the Metalik Driver is good for the pin at 6:38. Not enough to rate but this was nothing too special anyway. I do like Metalik though.

And now, the grand finale.

It's time for the contract signing with Mick Foley running the show. Strowman doesn't think much of him and says he would have respected him back in the day when Foley was competition. Foley finally snaps and yells at Strowman, basically threatening to get physical because he's still a legend, even if he won't be the General Manager that much longer.

Cue Reigns to start the fight, which quickly heads into the crowd. Strowman beats on him even more until Reigns spears him through the barricade and a security guard in the process. Back in and Reigns stops to sign the contract but gets sent into the corner so hard that the top rope breaks. Strowman leaves and Reigns signs to end

the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. If you ignore the Main Event exclusive stuff, this was a good go home show for Fastlane. Unfortunately that's only kind of what this show is supposed to be, though I'm assuming the short second break was there for the sake of the long HHH vs. Rollins segment. This really does serve as a good recap of Raw but if you've already watched that show, there's no need to ever watch Main Event.

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# Smackdown – October 3, 2002: This is the Good Half

## **Smackdown**

Date: October 3, 2002

Location: CajunDome, Lafayette, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

I don't know what lit the fire underneath Smackdown as of late but they've been on fire. Last week was one of the best episodes of TV I've ever seen and while there's a good chance things will go downhill tonight, at least things are on a roll coming in. We've got

about three weeks before No Mercy and it should be time to announce a Smackdown match or two. Let's get to it.

Stephanie McMahon does the seizure inducing intro to talk about tonight's card, including Edge vs. Kurt Angle, Matt Hardy vs. Undertaker in a falls count anywhere match and the start of a tournament for the Smackdown Tag Team Titles with the finals at No Mercy. This is your first (of many) ways to put Stephanie on screen and remind us that she's just so darn cool.

#### Smackdown Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Rikishi/Mark Henry vs. Eddie Guerrero/Chavo Guerrero

The cousins try to get in a sneak attack to start but the big guys throw Chavo onto Eddie. That goes nowhere though as it's basically a high crossbody, meaning Eddie pops back up and hammers on Rikishi. Cole: "You've got to take your hat off to Smackdown GM Stephanie McMahon!"

Eddie comes in and walks into a Samoan drop, followed by a superkick to Chavo. It's time to start in on Mark's knee with both Guerreros taking a few shots, only to have Mark keep kicking them away. Rikishi comes in and is immediately forced out by the referee, allowing Chavo to hit Henry in the knee with a chair. Eddie slaps on a leglock for the tap out.

**Rating:** C-. You can see the greatness in Eddie and Chavo as a team and the monsters were a fine choice for some monsters they needed to cheat. This was a good way to get around one of the nothing teams and advance the talented guys, which is exactly how this should have gone. When you get the right opponents, there's going to be a classic for the Guerreros somewhere in this tournament.

Torrie Wilson arrives...with her dad Al. Oh geez it's this mess. They run into Billy and Chuck when Dawn Marie comes in and hits on Al.

Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar are watching a clip of Lesnar attacking Undertaker when Heyman says Stephanie has made a rematch at No Mercy. The thing is she won't tell him the stipulation and Heyman is worried. Lesnar laughs it off when Matt Hardy comes in to say it won't be falls count anywhere.

#### Matt Hardy vs. Undertaker

Falls count anywhere. Undertaker slugs him into the corner to start and takes it outside to throw Matt into various things. A low blow

breaks up a chokeslam through the table but Undertaker shoves him into the barricade for a breather. More right hands send Matt through the crowd and Undertaker gets a soda thrown in his face. They head to the back with Matt getting in a cheap shot so Undertaker rams him into a wall. Matt runs off while shouting that they'll meet again and here's Lesnar to jump Undertaker. An F5 sends Undertaker onto what looks like popcorn (seriously) to give Matt the easy pin.

**Rating:** F. Unless I'm missing something, Undertaker took a total of some right hands, a low blow, forearms from Lesnar and an F5 onto a glorified stack of pillows. That's enough for him to do a job for Matt Hardy but the fight he and Lesnar had wasn't enough to do a job to Brock on pay per view? Horrible stuff here as Hardy got squashed until the stupid ending.

Post match Lesnar crushes Undertaker's hand with a propane tank. Survivor Series ad.

Undertaker's hand is being iced and he walks away from an interview attempt. The trainer thinks the hand is broken.

#### Cruiserweight Title: Crash vs. Jamie Noble

Jamie is defending and they start with a fight over a wristlock. The announcers are of course more interested in talking about Undertaker's hand injury, which isn't all that surprising given how worthless the title has become in the last few months. Noble takes him into the corner before cranking on a camel clutch. Crash fights up with some basic stuff, including an O'Connor roll to knock Nidia off the apron. The Crash Landing (Styles Clash) is countered into a rollup and Noble grabs the rope to retain.

**Rating:** C-. Crash made this better with a nice comeback but unfortunately the fans really didn't care. Like I said though, the division is just nothing at this point and there's no reason to care about Jamie Noble vs. Crash in a four minute match serving as a backdrop for all the Undertaker vs. Lesnar talk. That switch from Raw really did wonders for Crash's career though.

Kurt Angle brags about how awesome he is and thinks Chris Benoit will lose to Rey Mysterio tonight. Angle says he's awesome when Edge comes in and makes bald jokes but at least ties it back to their hair vs. hair match. A sucker punch puts Edge down.



## Edge vs. Kurt Angle

We get a replay of the sucker punch from five minutes ago during Kurt's entrance. Angle takes him down by the arm to start and kicks Edge off the leg without much effort. Back up and Edge goes after an arm as well, this time with a hammerlock, both standing and laying down. See that's versatility. Angle finally gets tired of the beating and hammers away in the corner, only to have Edge reverse into the same.

They head outside with Angle's arm going into the post as Edge is in a lot more control than you would expect. Back in and Edge is thrown over the top for a big crash to the floor. A drop onto the barricade makes things even worse and an overhead belly to belly gives Kurt two. We hit a chinlock with a bodyscissors for a bit before Angle knees him in the banged up ribs.

Since Angle is smarter than the average wrestler, he grabs an abdominal stretch to keep Edge in trouble. Edge fights up and hits an overhead belly to belly (good one too) to set up some clotheslines. The half nelson faceplant gets two but the spear hits the referee. The Edgecution should get the finish but there's no count. Therefore, the Angle Slam connects as well, only to have another referee come in for the two.

The ankle lock sends Edge bailing to the ropes and he goes up top, only to have Angle superplex him down. They interlock their legs into a small package though and it's a double pin. Naturally the referees disagree (with Mike Chioda nailing Mike Sparks) to send us to a break and a restart. Cole: "Don't adjust your sets! This match has been restarted!" Does Cole think that adjusting the sharpness is going to rewind a video or something? Angle misses a charge and flies out to the floor, leaving Edge to dive off the top for a big crash.

Back in and a missile dropkick gets two on Kurt as the crowd is losing their minds on these near falls. A very hard German suplex drops Edge and Angle rolls some more for good measure. Cue Chris Benoit for a distraction, allowing Edge to cradle Angle for two. That would have been the finish in today's WWE. The ankle lock is easily broken up and Angle grabs a chair. Benoit offers a distraction though, causing the chair shot to hit the top rope and bounce back into Kurt's head. The spear gives Edge the pin.

**Rating:** A-. This was one less referee fight and false finish away from being a classic. As it is, this was just another great match to be added to the recent string of them on this show. Edge is getting hotter and hotter every single week and thankfully seems to be getting somewhere as a result. I love it when you see someone work hard and get rewarded for it, which is far rarer than it should be. Benoit thinks it's hilarious.

Rey Mysterio video.

Post break Angle goes into the locker room to go after Benoit but Stephanie is RIGHT THERE to break it up and put them together as partners in the tournament. If they fight while they're partners, they're suspended without pay for a year. Angle sucker punches Benoit (that's two tonight) but Stephanie SCREECHES at them to shake hands right now. Lesnar gives Heyman another pep talk when Matt Hardy interrupts. Since Undertaker is injured and Matt just beat him, he should probably be #1 contender. Makes sense actually. Matt leaves and Heyman whispers to Lesnar: "I'd be careful. He could kill you." Laughter ensues.

Raw Roulette is coming. That has way less potential than they're building it up to have here, though to be fair that's kind of the point.

Smackdown Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Billy and Chuck vs. Faarooq/Reverend D-Von

Billy asks Faarooq if he's actually associating with D-Von and gets mic'd in the head for his efforts. Chuck gets jumped from behind but manages a butterfly suplex on D-Von. Faarooq beats him down again though until Chuck gets in a shot and makes the hot tag to Gunn. Everything breaks down and Faarooq gets in a spinebuster on Billy to give D-Von the upset pin.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here and that's not really surprising. I'm not sure why you have Billy and Chuck lose here as I can't imagine anyone is thinking much of D-Von and Faarooq. You're trying to establish some new titles and it might help to have a multiple time Tag Team Championship combination in the later rounds.

Dawn shows Al her bikini.

It's time for the bikini contest and let's see how fast we can get this over with: Dawn looks great but Torrie looks better and has a

sucker so she wins. Dawn offers a handshake and throws Torrie outside.

Stephanie gets to tell Heyman and Lesnar that Undertaker's hand is broken. Undertaker is insisting to fight at No Mercy though and it's going to be Hell in a Cell. That's quite a speedy trip to the hospital (when you remember Undertaker refused treatment), x-ray, diagnosis, phone call to Stephanie and decision since Undertaker got hurt all of an hour and fifteen minutes ago. Heyman looks nervous but Brock looks eerily pleased.

### Chris Benoit vs. Rey Mysterio

Benoit wastes no time and sends Mysterio into the corner, followed by what looks to be a Razor's Edge attempt, only to have Rey reverse into a hurricanrana. Chris is sent outside for a big flip dive but comes right back with those hard suplexes that only he can throw. A cross arm choke keeps Rey down until a sunset flip gives him two. Back up and Benoit sends him into the corner over and over before grabbing a surfboard hold.

Rey fights up and slips out of a dragon suplex, only to get caught in a wicked wheelbarrow suplex instead. A dropkick gives Rey a breather and a springboard split legged moonsault gives him a near fall. The 619 is countered into a shoulder breaker though and the Swan Dive gives Benoit two more. Rey is quickly out of the Crossface and a springboard Fameasser sets up the 619. Cue Angle to snap Benoit's throat across the top so Rey can grab a hurricanrana for the pin.

**Rating:** B. Were you really expecting this to be anything but solid? Smackdown has figured out the secret to an exciting in-ring product: stop trying to do anything too complicated and just let us have a fun match with some minor angle advancement. You can see these two plus Angle and someone else (probably Edge) in the tournament and that's going to be awesome. Talented wrestlers can do something like this when given the chance and that's what we got here.

Benoit Crossfaces Angle until security breaks it up to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B+. What does it say when this is one heck of a downgrade over the previous week? Those two matches more than made up for the horrible Undertaker stuff and the fact that it's setting up a Cell match does make things a little easier to sit through. I'm having a blast watching these shows every week and it's amazing that

Raw is such a polar opposite from this. How can one company be so totally different? Either way, great stuff here, again.

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## **205 Live – February 28, 2017: The B Plot**

### **205 Live**

Date: February 28, 2017

Location: Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul Minnesota

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves, Austin Aries

We're five days away from Fastlane and Neville defending the Cruiserweight Title against Jack Gallagher. There's really not much else going on though and that's not a good thing. This show needs some more stories to really get going but at least we have a great champion on top. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Jack Gallagher vs. Neville. This feud needs to end in a hurry as it feels like little more than filler, which to be fair, it is.

Gallagher is ready for Neville's Fastlane address and thinks he'll be brooding about the title reign and say that his reign will never end. We'll see about that on Sunday.

Opening sequence.

### Noam Dar vs. Lince Dorado

Before we get going, someone brings Alicia Fox a bouquet of flowers, much to Dar's annoyance. Dar tries to take him to the mat but Dorado speeds things up and hits a Lionsault press for two. As Dar takes him to the mat and works on the arm, Alicia is actually eating the flowers. We hit a chinlock as Rich Swann is watching in the back. Now the fans want flowers as Dorado gets in a hurricanrana and a belly to belly suplex. Dorado springboards into a Stunner for two but misses a dive off the top. One heck of a kick to the head gives Dar the pin at 4:01.

**Rating:** C-. This was fine as a way to push a midcard angle (good idea) and the flowers thing could likely set up Dar's next feud. I'm not sure how interesting that's going to be as there's a good chance Fox is going to leave him anyway. Of course Fox eats flowers so it might not be the most easy to predict person in the world.

Post match Dar says he sent the flowers but I sense a ruse.

Austin Aries is in the ring to interview Akira Tozawa. Regarding turning down Brian Kendrick's offer of being a mentor, Tozawa wants to be his own man. We get a look back at Kendrick's "lessons" and Tozawa wants to fight right now. This is followed by a series of weird noises, which Graves calls a war cry.

Cue Kendrick (with some buggy eyes) to say he has a plan and no desire to fight. What makes Tozawa think that Kendrick is already willing to get in the ring with him? Who does Tozawa think he is? Tozawa starts to talk but Kendrick tells him to learn English first, like these Minnesotans need to do. This feud started off as nothing with someone I really don't care about but I'm actually getting into it. Well done.

### Tony Nese/Drew Gulak/Ariya Daivari vs. Mustafa Ali/TJ Perkins/Cedric Alexander

Nese slams Mustafa to start but it's off to Cedric for a bit better luck. The good guys start working on the arm with TJ bending it back like a slot machine (thanks for the analogy Mauro). Nese gets pulled down into a cross armbreaker and it's a stream of people being sent outside so the good guys can load up their dives. TJ gets pulled outside for a beating and we settle down to Daivari (from nearby Minneapolis) grabbing a neckbreaker. It's off to Gulak for a Gory Stretch before Daivari adds one heck of a clothesline.

TJ finally gets out and makes the hot tag to Ali but Gulak grabs him in a torture rack for a slam. Everything breaks down and everyone but Ali and Gulak wind up on the floor. Mustafa hits the inverted 450 for two as Ariya puts the boot on the ropes. Nese comes back in for the German suplex into the corner but can't follow up. The Detonation Kick rocks Daivari, only to have Gulak crotch Perkins on the top. Nese adds the running knee in the corner for the pin on Perkins at 10:16.

**Rating:** C+. So Nese is on the good list again? We can push him again now? This was fun but a bit too sloppy for my taste. These guys don't really have anything going on right now and are now more like flashbacks to the original cruiserweight division on Raw, which really isn't a good thing. They could go for some more mic time to give us a reason to care about them too.

Austin Aries video.

Here's Neville for an extended chat. Neville takes credit for all the good things on 205 Live but the fans are completely ungrateful. The fans would rather cheer for a sideshow act like Gallagher. They're the reason for his upcoming destruction on Sunday and there's nothing that can stop that.

Cue Gallagher to say this sounds like a meltdown. He offers Neville some tea and biscuits so you know what the fans are going to be chanting now. Neville says this is his ring but Gallagher thinks it belongs to the people. That means it's time for Neville to leave so the fight is on. The headbutt and some dropkicks both in and out of the ring send Neville into the crowd to wrap things up.

**Overall Rating:** C+. I really like Gallagher but he's just not on this level yet. It's pretty clear that Aries is getting the Wrestlemania title shot (or at least he certainly should) and that makes for some rather dull shows leading up to the announcement. Neville is a great champion and a win over Aries would look great but it's not easy to watch Gallagher, who is very talented, have no chance in the upcoming match. The rest of the show was fine but the only other interesting story is Kendrick vs. Tozawa. An extra story is a good step though and things could be getting better, albeit somewhat slowly.

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# Middle Kingdom Wrestling – February 17, 2017: Big Sam and Others

## Middle Kingdom Wrestling

Date: February 17, 2017

Location: Pattaya Boxing Stadium, Pattaya, Chon Buri, Thailand

Commentator: Al Leung

We're going to wrap up this very abbreviated season and hopefully head back to China where things are a bit better. The first show was a pretty mixed bag with one horrible match and one that was quite entertaining so it's hard to guess what's coming this time around. Let's get to it.

Same opening sequence as last time, which isn't the worst thing in the world given some of the eye candy in there.

We hear more of Dalton Bragg's conversation. It's true that he can't wrestle but he's found a replacement named Hayden Pearce, who is something called the Kingdom Wrestling Federation (no idea what/where that is) Champion. Tonight, he'll defend against the Slam, though the graphic lists Pearce as Hayden Zenith. That's the kind of thing that needs to be tightened up as I'm not even two

minutes into the show and it's already an issue.

### Black Mamba/Big Sam vs. Maxim Risky/Malkeet Brawler

Maxim and Brawler are from India and one of them charges to the ring early, earning a good looking powerbomb from Sam. A boot to the chest drops Brawler but it's Risky and Mamba starting things off as we hear the second bell. The commentator says this is in China, which doesn't quite work after the whole point of this show is being in Thailand.

A suplex gets two on Mamba and Sam comes in...for some jumping jacks of course. Well you can't do those on the apron. Sam comes in again for a regular save before distracting the referee so Mamba can choke. That second one threw the idea off a bit and it would have been a lot better if he had said it was a cramp or he was stretching or something like that. If you do it before and after but not in the middle, it weakens what you did in the first place (which was good).

Back to Sam for a clothesline on Brawler and what looks like a Sid Vicious pose. A gorilla press drop keeps showing off the power (smart) and it's off to a camel clutch. Brawler makes the ropes so it's another slam into a one finger cover. Mamba comes in again and plays Bret on something like a top rope Hart Attack but the referee is putting Sam out of the ring instead of counting. What would Danny Davis think of something like that?

Brawler gets in a TKO (love that move) and it's a double tag to Sam and Risky. Sam takes a DDT and Risky gets in some really, really bad looking right hands in the corner. Follow through with those things. Brawler hits a running Fameasser (called XYZ) on Mamba and a slam on Sam in a fairly impressive power display.

A double suplex is another power display and Risky gets two off a superkick. I'm not sure how wise is it to have your monster getting beaten up and thrown around like this. Mamba sneaks in a low blow (second of the match but the first one meant and changed nothing) and Sam grabs a chokeslam on Risky. Mamba adds a frog splash for the pin at 10:39.

**Rating:** D+. There's a LOT to talk about in this one. This is the best example I can think of to show how important psychology and match layout are to making something a success. Let's look at Sam. He has the most unique look in this promotion (much bigger and Caucasian instead of the mostly Asian roster) and in this match he



was acting like the opponents were beneath him (the one finger pin and various times where he acted like he didn't even need to try). That's playing to his character and very good. Sam is different and he should act like he is.

His move set made sense too. It was a lot of power stuff like the powerbomb, gorilla press and chokeslam. Back at Wrestlemania XIII, Shawn Michaels said there was no reason for Sid Vicious to deviate from his power game because the power was going to take him wherever he needed to go. That makes a lot of sense for someone like Sid/Sam as their offense is going to be more devastating due to their power so it should be the majority of what they do.

That brings us to the rest of the match, which had some issues. As I mentioned, Mamba hit two low blows. The first one just slowed his opponent down for a bit and then it was right back to where they were going before. Something like a low blow should be a match changer, not something on the same level as a clothesline or a few right hands. If you're going to do those big spots, use them sparingly. Otherwise they're just a regular move and people won't care when they're used in important spots. If you need proof, look at WWE's main event style of spamming finishers.

There were good things in the match but there's also a lot that needs to be tightened up. I didn't really feel a flow to the match. One team was in control, then the other was in control, then the heels won. The ending felt like it came out of nowhere and the match just ended instead of building up to something. I'd also like to know a bit more about Risky and Brawler. All I know is they're "stars in India". How long have they been wrestling? Should I cheer for them? How long have they been teaming? Stuff like that can go a long way.

A big guy covered in tattoos whose name sounded like Humungous says he's bringing underground wrestling to China.

#### Eurasian Dragon vs. Humungous

Dragon is the Singapore Champion and Humungous wants to make it a title shot. The request is accepted and we're ready to go. This was another example of the disappearing and reappearing subtitles.

#### Singapore Title: Eurasian Dragon vs. Humungous

Dragon is defending and gets driven into the corner as we hear about

Humungous wrestling around the world. A few forearms sends Humungous into the ropes like a cowardly heel and he flips Dragon off after teasing a handshake. Dragon misses a Flip Flop and Fly but grabs La Majistral for the pin to retain at 2:28.

Humungous hits him from behind and says he wants a rematch. I'm not sure if debuting someone and having them job immediately is a good idea but Humungous had a good look.

#### KWF Title: Hayden Zenith vs. The Slam

Slam is challenging and his CWE Title isn't on the line. One side note here: all of the titles that I've seen around here look really good. There are a lot of ugly belts in wrestling but these are all very nice. Granted part of that might be due to the fact that the KWF Title is a WWF Attitude Era World Title replica. Eh if you're going to use a replica, use one of the best looking of all time.

They start fast (a rarity around here) with Slam sweeping the leg but stopping to pose, allowing Zenith to pull him off the ropes and hammer away. Some loud chops set up a hard Saito suplex on Slam and we get a cocky cover. A hard kick to Slam's back sends some sweat flying (always a good visual) and we hit an octopus hold. Zenith switches over to a few more submission attempts as this is already by far and away the most polished match of the two shows.

Slam fights up but eats a pair of superkicks (giving us a Superkick Party reference) and they head out to the ramp. Some rather hard forearms knock Hayden back in and Slam's top rope forearm gets...no cover. Instead Zenith slips out of a Jackhammer and we get a ref bump. Cue Bragg to check on the referee as Slam hits a suplex into a cutter (not a Jackhammer as the announcer puts it). It's a ruse though and Bragg hits Slam in the head with the crutch so Zenith can retain at 8:33.

**Rating:** C+. This was the first time I really felt like I got an angle this promotion has tried to run. It's a very simple idea and I got the point without having to figure anything out. Zenith and Slam were some of the more polished guys and Bragg as the champion who is scared of Slam is a good enough story. Throw in Bragg having a #1 contender in Selfie King and you have the makings for something interesting. I haven't felt that around here too often and it's very nice change of pace.

Bragg beats on Slam with the crutch to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. Much like the tag, there's good and bad on here. Let's get to the good first: this felt like a more complete show. There were three matches here and each one felt like it served a purpose. The tag match was good and made Sam look like a threat to someone down the line. Dragon vs. Humungous looks to be the start of a feud and Humungous has some charisma to him. Finally you have the main event which felt like a good angle. I'm pleased here and while the show had some quality issues, it had a good structure, which might be more important.

On the other hand, the promotion is still lacking in character development. Let's take a look at the two shows combined. Other than having Sam in his corner, what separates Ash, Jason and Black Mamba? They have a similar look and wrestle a similar style. I barely know anything about them and they really lose me when I'm trying to remember which is which.

Finally, the offenses need to be varied up a bit. In the first three matches of these two shows, three people used a frog splash. There are a ton of moves to use from the top and just because a frog splash is cool, you can use something else. Drop an elbow, drop a knee, do a spinning splash. Just don't do the same thing that so many people have done. It was annoying in the Cruiserweight Classic and it's the same here.

I liked enough of the show and this episode showed some promise but they need to find a way to keep that momentum going. Maybe it was just a lucky night with an angle to help tie things together at the end but they need to build on that instead of having a bunch of one off shows before advancing the story. Have people cut a thirty second promo (throw in subtitles if necessary) and keep things moving. It'll keep people coming back and that's the key at this point.

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