

Smackdown – February 28, 2017: That Was....A Lot

Smackdown

Date: February 28, 2017

Location: Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul Minnesota

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga.
Tom Phillips

It's a stacked card tonight and I assure you that has nothing to do with the President giving a speech to a joint session of Congress at the halfway point of the show. Tonight we have the fallout from AJ Styles and Luke Harper tying in a battle royal, a two out of three falls match between Becky Lynch and Mickie James and Dolph Ziggler vs. Apollo Crews in a chairs match. Let's get to it.

The bosses are in the back watching a clip of the ending of last week's battle royal. AJ comes in and laughs off the idea of having to face Harper tonight because Harper looks like the hair that clogs the shower. Of course Harper is behind him so AJ bails, leaving Harper to thank the bosses.

Opening sequence.

Here are Miz and Maryse to open things up with MizTV. Miz gets right to the point and brings out his guest: John Cena. However he also cuts Cena's mic and rants about how Cena has cost him ten years of misery. Cena spends all his time manipulating everyone he can find and Miz is sick and tired of it. A brief Cena chant cuts things off before Miz says he isn't just the other guy.

Two weeks ago, Miz was primed to main event Wrestlemania but Cena manipulated him out of the spot. The reason being: Cena is jealous of him. A few years back Cena went toe to toe with the Rock and went off about how Rock had gone Hollywood but now with all the movies and TV shows, we can't see Cena. The fans get in a quick YOU SOLD OUT chant as Miz talks about how Cena is a parody of himself. Miz: "You're not Super Cena anymore. You're barely decent Cena!"

Miz is the one that's here doing the media and making sure Smackdown is must see. Then Cena just comes back and gets a title shot at the Royal Rumble for a spot in the history books. Cena took the glory

away from Ric Flair (I'm still waiting on anyone to talk about Flair taking away Harley Race's glory by doubling the amount of title reigns he had. I doubt we'll be getting that though because NO ONE THINKS FLAIR TOOK ANYTHING AWAY FROM RACE, just like Cena took nothing from Flair.) and now it's time for Cena to talk.

John makes the jokes about how he's heard all of this before and held everyone back. Now it's time to prove Miz wrong though. If Cena was really this black arts manipulator, he would be standing toe to toe with the Undertaker. The fans really seem to like that idea but Cena talks about how half of this crowd, and sometimes more than half, is going to be chanting CENA SUCKS.

No matter what they chant though, everyone knows who Cena is. Miz is someone named Mike who shortened his name on the Real World because he thought it would steal Rock's electricity. Then he stole Chris Jericho's gimmick, Ric Flair's Figure Four Leglock (That was a gift!), Daniel Bryan's offense and the same thing that AJ Styles has been saying for the last six months. Miz is just someone playing someone playing someone playing someone else. If you ask any of the greats, they're just themselves with the volume turned WAY up.

That's why so many believe that Miz is where he is: he's a trend hopping shell of a WWE superstar. Cena says the next time they talk, don't bring a knife to a gun fight because Miz isn't the Undertaker. If he presses Cena again though, he's a dead man. Cena goes to leave but Maryse cuts him off and gets in a slap. Cena starts laughing and says that was the biggest mistake of her life. Cue Nikki Bella to chase Miz and Maryse off. Cena kisses Nikki, which I believe is the first time he's ever acknowledged their relationship on TV.

That's the easy frontrunner for promo of the year and is likely going to be one of the favorites in December. However, odds are this ends with Nikki hitting whatever her finish is on Maryse and Cena hitting an AA on Miz for the stereo pins so Nikki can have her big moment, which is the whole point of this nonsense. With Cena going away again, Miz should get his big moment but no, because we need a Total Divas highlight. At least this was great though and more proof that Miz is one of the most underrated talkers ever.

Becky Lynch vs. Mickie James

2/3 falls. They trade arm work to start until Mickie is sent outside and into the barricade as we go to a break. Back with Mickie in

control until she misses a legdrop. Not that it matters as the MickieDT gives James the first fall at 7:28. We take a second break and come back with Mickie getting two but missing something off the top, allowing Becky to roll her up and tie the score at 12:50 total. The Bexploder has Mickie in more trouble but here's Alexa Bliss to watch at ringside. Mickie misses her spinning kick and gets slammed for no count as Alexa has the referee. Bliss gets kicked off the apron and Mickie grabs a rollup, only to be reversed into the Disarm-Her to give Becky the pin at 14:14.

Rating: C. I appreciated the idea of making this 2/3 falls but it really could have been any regular match. It also doesn't help that about half of the match was lost in the commercials, at least one of which could have been cut. Bliss vs. Lynch in the final blowoff could be a great Wrestlemania match but I can't imagine those two getting the spot on their own.

Harper is around the light bulbs and says after tonight, Bray is going to be very afraid.

Bray says may the best man win tonight. Later this evening, the whole world will hear what he has to say but they'll also hear from Randy Orton. Bray is the keeper of the Holy Grail, meaning the championship.

Alexa is in the back and doesn't want to be asked about Becky because she just became the first two time Women's Champion. After some Oscar references, Natalya comes in and says she's taking the title. Bliss' laughing face is rather amusing.

AJ says he'll win.

AJ Styles vs. Luke Harper

The winner goes to the main event of Wrestlemania. AJ speeds things up to start but eats a running dropkick (not a great one but it was fine for Harper) to put him outside. Harper goes after him and gets caught with a Pele, allowing Styles to start in on the knee. That goes nowhere though as Luke elbows him in the jaw and scores with a slingshot hilo of all things. Styles is sent outside for a suicide shove and the Phenomenal Blitz is broken up with a half dragon suplex.

Back from a break with Harper getting two off a sitout powerbomb. AJ pops right back up and hits the Phenomenal Forearm for the pin at

10:50...but here's Shane McMahon to say not so fast because Harper's foot was on the rope (it clearly was). Harper grabs a rollup for two and they head outside with Harper accidentally superkicking Shane. Back in and the springboard 450 ends Harper at 12:55.

Rating: B. Good match but we were all waiting for the angle stuff which is fine. It's pretty clear that they're going to change something later but I'm not sure if they have time to get everywhere they want to go in four and a half Smackdowns (remember that the go home show is likely to be from Axxess). The story could be interesting and if they manage to avoid AJ vs. Shane, things can get much better.

The decision seems to stand.

Nikki and Cena are in the back when Carmella and James Ellsworth come up. Carmella: "Are you going to let him talk to me like that?" Ellsworth: "Well he's standing right there." Carmella thinks the show should be called Total Phonies so a mixed tag is set for next week.

Dean Ambrose vs. Curt Hawkins

Ambrose charges to the ring and hits Dirty Deeds with no bell. No match of course.

Dean talks about rollerblading during happy hour and learning how burrito bowls and roller coasters don't mix. The most important lesson he's learned is that when you're pushed, you have to push back. That's why he wants to fight Baron Corbin right now. Corbin pops up on screen and says he's not going to do that right now. Dean wants him to hurry up because he only has fifteen minutes left on the parking meter. Baron talks about how Dean is just a speed bump and they'll fight soon.

Apollo Crews vs. Dolph Ziggler

Chairs match so there are a bunch of chairs at ringside. Crews jumps him from behind and takes over to start, followed by a moonsault off the apron. We take a break and come back with Crews hitting a clothesline and enziguri. A standing moonsault onto a chair onto Dolph gets two and Ziggler is sent into a chair in the corner. That's fine with Ziggler who gets in a chair shot to the throat, followed by a crotching onto the chair for the pin at 8:53.

Rating: D. Holy sweet giggling carrots no one cares about this feud

and Ziggler doesn't really get anything out of this. Ziggler isn't anything interesting as a heel and I have no idea why I'm supposed to be impressed by a win over a guy like Crews. Apollo is fine enough but it's not like he's won anything of note. Nothing match and hopefully the end to a bad feud.

Here's Wyatt to talk about the title match. He really didn't care who it was because Wyatt is bringing the evil to Wrestlemania. Wyatt comes from a world of evil and that's where Randy Orton is right now. Orton pops up on screen to say he's been given the keys to the kingdom and that's where he is now.

A few months ago, he said he was going to join the Wyatts but now that he's closer to them, it's time to screw the Family. Orton is in Bray's barn and says Sister Abigail is buried underneath this floor. That means we see a bunch of worms and dirt and Orton is holding a pickaxe. Orton promises to burn Abigail's spirit and take away Bray's power.

The rocking chair next to Orton is swaying with no one in it until he grabs its back...and pulls out a can of gasoline. Orton covers everything with gas and says he's coming for the title at Wrestlemania. He pours more gas into the hold (presumably Abigail's grave) as Bray seems to be near tears. Even more gas is poured out and Orton lights the house on fire. Bray freaks out and breaks down as Orton stares at the camera to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. That ending was a lot and I'm going to need some time to process things. Orton destroying Wyatt like that is certainly interesting and could make for a big Wrestlemania match but I'm not sure if it's the right idea to have Wyatt weakened so much before the biggest match of his life. AJ is of course the wildcard in the whole thing and I'm really, really hoping that the Shane match doesn't happen.

The rest of the show was great and I absolutely loved the opening promo. I know I'm one of its more vocal critics but if Cena and Miz are bringing the talking like that, I can live with hearing Nikki running her mouth about how she's worked SO hard and come SO far to finally make it. The wrestling wasn't the point tonight but you can tell they're setting up everything big for Wrestlemania and that's the most important thing they can do now. Good show, but not for the wrestling.

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Monday Night Raw – February 27, 2017: Undisguised Filler

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 27, 2017

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Fastlane and that could mean a few things. This show could range from entertaining to a mess and any point in between. Goldberg will be here tonight and there are rumors of Seth Rollins and Ric Flair making appearances as well. Either way it's the last Raw before we get to the pre-Wrestlemania season so let's get to it.

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.

Here's New Day for a chat. They've got a lot on their plates by hosting Wrestlemania, but we need to be concerned with what's in our bowls. New Day knows the fans want something else and that means ice cream. They even know what the name is going to be: New Day Pops. First though, they need to face the Shining Stars.

Cue Primo and Epico....but someone hands Woods an envelope. It turns out that the Shining Stars' match is later tonight against Big Show. Instead, the envelope says "Rusev and Jinder Mahal". Ok you knew this was coming and there was no real way around it. Ignore the fact that they really just recreated the idea and didn't actually do anything new here. In other words: standard WWE comedy.

New Day vs. Rusev/Jinder Mahal

Woods headscissors Mahal down and we hit the Honor Roll for good measure. Big E. gets in a splash as we take a break. Back with Woods not being able to get over Rusev for the hot tag. The slow beating continues and Woods' crossbody is easily caught. He does manage an enziguri though and there's the hot tag to Big E. Everything breaks down with Big E. cleaning house. A blind tag brings in Woods for a high crossbody but Rusev makes the save. Kofi and Lana get in an argument on the floor to distract Rusev, leaving Woods to grab a rollup for the pin on Mahal at 9:43.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but they're doing a good job of keeping the matches shorter. There's no real need to see these teams go much longer than this as it's hard to imagine Rusev and Mahal giving one of the best tag teams ever a real run for their money. New Day is in an interesting place here and I'm curious to see what they have for Wrestlemania.

Rusev and Mahal argue post match because the division is deep enough to split a team already.

We look back at Enzo Amore and Big Cass becoming #1 contenders.

Enzo is really fired up about the idea of becoming champions because he gets his name on the belt. Cass thinks he needs to chill a bit but says they'll win.

Cesaro and Sheamus want their titles back when Samoa Joe comes up to say Cesaro will never figure things out. Joe: "You mad bro?" Cesaro doesn't like the brass ring jokes and says all Joe does is carry HHH's jockstrap. A match seems to be made for later.

Stephanie is annoyed at someone for bad dictation when Mick Foley comes in. She wants to apologize but it turns into rant about how Foley doesn't live up to his old stature. That's how Foley will be remembered: as a shadow of his former self. Much like the Oscar joke, you had to know this was coming: Foley said something to Stephanie last week so tonight she had to burn him at the stake.

We look at Brian Kendrick beating Akira Tozawa last week and Kendrick talks about Tozawa rejecting his offer to be the newcomer's mentor.

Akira Tozawa vs. Noam Dar

Dar gets kicked in the chest to start and the backslash gets two. A good fake out lets Tozawa nail him again but Alicia Fox offers a distraction. That sets up some arm work but Tozawa sends him outside for a suicide headbutt. Back in and the snap German suplex puts Dar away at 2:59.

Post match Kendrick jumps Tozawa from behind and talks about how Tozawa needs to learn his lessons.

Mick Foley is upset when Samoa Joe comes in and needles him about not having a nice day. Foley doesn't want to hear it because he sees Joe as a puppet for HHH. Joe doesn't like that so Foley makes Joe vs. Cesaro for later tonight.

Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks

Before the match, Charlotte talks about how Bayley is willing to go to any degree to take what she wanted because she has everyone fooled. Charlotte calls Bayley a one hit wonder but here's Bayley to cut her off. Bayley talks about dreams and moving on from this one. Next up for her is walking into Wrestlemania as Women's Champion but Charlotte says there's a long way to go before then. Sasha Banks comes out to say Charlotte has a stupid face and is jealous of the champ. More importantly, there's a tag match tonight. Charlotte says there is but with a little change in the lineup.

Charlotte/Nia Jax vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks

Nia throws Sasha around to start and runs her over in the corner as a bonus. It's off to Bayley who can't do much with Nia either but some right hands in the corner do enough good. Nia clotheslines Bayley's head off though and the beating begins in the corner. That doesn't last much longer either and it's back to Banks vs. Charlotte with Sasha taking over. Dana tries to interfere on the floor and gets a Bayley to Belly for her efforts. Serves that cheater right. Back from a break with Sasha trying to fight back against Nia and getting headbutted away. Charlotte misses a charge though and the hot tag brings in Bayley to clean house. Everything breaks down again and Bayley tries a choke on Nia. That goes nowhere though and a Charlotte distraction lets Nia run Bayley over. Nia drops the big leg to pin the champ at 12:20.

Rating: C-. That seems to be the way to set up the much discussed four way at Wrestlemania whether it makes the most sense or not. I still don't know why they didn't just bring Becky Lynch over for the Four Horsewomen match in the place where they got started but my guess is WE CAN'T CHANGE THE ROSTERS EVER BECAUSE THE DRAFT SAYS SO. Braun Strowman demands Foley give him a contract signing with Roman Reigns tonight. Foley agrees but basically guarantees a fight will break out.

Luke Gallows vs. Big Cass

Gallows kicks him in the face to start and easily breaks out of a

chokeslam. Another kick puts Cass on one knee and Corey says he's not seven feet tall anymore. That line is always annoying because he's still that tall but he's not standing upright. Why is that so complicated? Cass makes his comeback and watches Enzo send Anderson into the steps. A big boot ends Gallows at 2:43.

The announcers hype the WWE Network turning three years old.

Earlier today, Titus O'Neil and Sheamus got in a fight at catering.

Titus O'Neil vs. Sheamus

Titus jumps Sheamus before the bell and throws him inside for the official start. The Brogue Kick ends O'Neil in 17 seconds.

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. This dragged a lot and just reenforces the idea that there isn't much of a need to have this match. The match should have happened at Night of Champions or HIAC or something but instead it's at Wrestlemania

because that's where HHH wrestles no matter what.

Big Show vs. Shining Stars

Double teaming actually puts Show down for a bit before he shrugs the cousins off. A KO Punch and chokeslam wrap things up at 1:48.

Black History Month video on Martin Luther King Jr.

Neville tells Tony Nese that the purpose of tonight's tag match is to put Jack Gallagher in his place before Sunday. Nese basically says he's in this for himself.

Austin Aries video package.

Jack Gallagher/TJ Perkins vs. Tony Nese/Neville

Neville kicks TJ off the apron at the bell but gets bulldogged by TJ. Cole: "You're only going to see this kind of action on Monday Night Raw!" Yeah he doesn't watch 205 Live either. Nese gets rolled up for two and it's off to Gallagher as things speed up a bit. The headbutt puts Neville on the floor and it's the Detonation Kick into the running corner dropkick for Nese. Jack takes Nese down with something like a seated abdominal stretch while kicking Nese in the face for the tap out at 1:58. This was more filler on a show full of it.

Beth Phoenix Hall of Fame video. I miss the days when these were announced on Raw and now in a newspaper earlier in the day.

Bayley and Sasha are icing their injuries from earlier. Sasha is going to be in Bayley's corner on Sunday but Stephanie adds Banks vs. Jax to Fastlane.

Samoa Joe vs. Cesaro

They take turns driving each other into the corner and Cesaro tweaks his knee. He tries to muscle through it until Joe goes after the knee to take over as we take a break. Back with Cesaro muscling Joe up into a suplex and countering a kneebar attempt. Cesaro hits that reverse Angle Slam move of his and gets two off a double stomp. Uh, shouldn't he be in a bit more pain after stomping on someone with a bad knee? Joe breaks up the springboard uppercut though and kicks at

the knee, setting up the Rock Bottom for the pin at 7:45.

Rating: D+. What in the world was up with Cesaro's selling here? This was all about the knee injury but he was using his power stuff and did a freaking double stomp. You need WAY more selling than just that and I have no idea what was up with Cesaro in this case. He's smarter than that and I don't get it.

Post match Joe says it doesn't matter who comes against the Destroyer because he's taking them apart. This brings out Sami Zayn for the brawl until the referees break it up.

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. This show really enforced the idea that Fastlane doesn't need to exist. There were multiple matches with no story and even more that didn't last long enough to rate. I have a very low tolerance for undisguised filler and Sheamus vs. Titus O'Neil in a 17 second match over a fight at catering is nothing but a way to fill in time. Fastlane was almost half booked tonight and that's a really bad sign six days before the pay per view. I've seen worse shows but I just want to get to Wrestlemania and Fastlane is an annoyance we have to get through on the way there.

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Beth Phoenix to the Hall of Fame

No real surprise on this one but I'm starting to wonder how many more women they can put in without scraping the bottom of the barrel. That being said, Beth was really underrated as she was a big deal in a dead period for the company while also being a very beautiful woman.

Main Event – February 23, 2017: Keeping Me Guessing

Main Event

Date: February 23, 2017

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, R-Truth

I'm not even sure what to expect from this show anymore as it really could be anything from week to week. That's not exactly a good thing either as the show can be an entertaining hour but at the same time it can be something so uninteresting that I don't know how I survive

every week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sin Cara vs. Bo Dallas

Bo takes him down to start and poses a lot, as you would expect him to do. A clothesline sets up a chinlock before Bo hammers away in the corner. That earns him a monkey flip as Cara starts his comeback, including a headstand into a headscissors out of the corner. Dallas gets sent outside for a running Swanton off the apron but he rolls through a high crossbody and grabs the tights for the pin on Cara at 4:53.

Rating: D. It's going to be one of those weeks isn't it? I really don't know why Dallas isn't on the main roster. You really can't do something with that grin and the extra aggression that he's been showing from time to time? It's not like the main roster is flush with jobbers to the stars so throw him on there and let us have something fresh for a change.

We open with a long recap of the Festival of Friendship and Kevin Owens turning on Chris Jericho. Sweet popcorn baked into a pie that was an amazing segment.

Owens is sitting in the ring in the dark in a chair to get things going. When he was growing up, if anyone had told him he would be defending the World Title against Goldberg in the main event of a pay per view, he would have thought you were crazy. Of course he'd be in the main event of a pay per view, but against Goldberg? The Goldberg chants start up and Owens thinks that's exactly what he wanted to hear.

That's the chant that makes Goldberg think he's invincible as they head into their match at Fastlane. At the pay per view, all Owens has to do is outlast and outsmart Goldberg because the longer a Goldberg match goes, the weaker and weaker he gets. Owens is the master of outsmarting opponents and no one knows how to play the game like him.

Goldberg can say Owens is next all he wants but as far as Owens is concerned, Goldberg is nothing. As for what happened last week with Jericho...Owens drops the mic and walks out. This is the Owens that we've been waiting to see on the main roster for a long time and that's nothing but good as we head into the final stretch to

Wrestlemania. Owens was great here and that's awesome to see.

Our second Raw moment.

Cole is in the back for a sitdown interview with Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman. We get straight to the point with Goldberg but Heyman cuts Cole off and says Lesnar isn't interested in questions like this one. Heyman says Lesnar isn't interested in hearing about Goldberg winning the title so Lesnar scares Cole away and stares straight into the camera.

Paul talks about Owens attacking Jericho last week because Lesnar disagrees with Owens being the most violent champion in years. Lesnar isn't interested in hearing about Owens but Heyman talks about Kevin's greatness anyway. A lot of people want to see Owens pull it off but Lesnar disagrees because if Owens loses, it's Goldberg vs. Lesnar for the title. That's just one more thing for Lesnar to conquer at Wrestlemania and that's what he wants to do.

Diamond Dallas Page Hall of Fame announcement.

TJ Perkins/Cedric Alexander vs. Noam Dar/Tony Nese

Nese throws TJ around to start so Perkins grabs a headlock instead. With that not working, a jumping spinning kick to the face puts Nese into the corner, followed by the Detonation Kick to send him outside. Back from a break with Perkins snapping Noam's arm back but some heel double teaming takes over. Perkins fights out of a waistlock and hits a gutbuster to set up the hot tag to Cedric. Everything breaks down and a Lumbar Check ends Dar at 9:37.

Rating: C-. Still not good but at least there was some better action. You're still only going to get so much out of these random cruiserweight tags though and that's rather tiresome. I know Dar and Alexander were feuding a few weeks back but that hasn't really been the case recently. I need more than just a random tag match to keep my attention and I'm not getting that here.

We'll wrap it up here.

Braun Strowman vs. Big Show

And yes, this really is the main event. Show grabs a wristlock to start but Braun rolls around and nips up to escape. Now that's going to get him noticed. Show shoves him down but gets punched in the jaw and dropped for his efforts. Strowman charges into a choke but easily reverses into a DDT for two. A clothesline drops Show for two

and it's all Strowman so far.

Show reverses a suplex into one of his own and grabs the chokeslam for two. The powerslam doesn't work so Show puts him on top for the superplex. Strowman escapes that but dives into the KO Punch for two. Show loads up the Vader Bomb, only to have Strowman get up for the powerslam (doesn't look great) for two of his own. Not that it matters as Braun hits another powerslam for the pin at 12:10.

Rating: C. Right here is a great example of a match that doesn't need to be good to get the point across. Much like last week, this was about Strowman showing that he's the new star instead of the old guard like Show or Mark Henry. It's a very simple idea but they're telling the right story, which is all you can ask for.

Post match Reigns comes out and gets in a few Superman Punches but Strowman hits the powerslam to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was one of the weeks where the original stuff wasn't enough to carry the show, despite the fact that the Raw replays were much better. I still don't get why they can't throw in a bigger name for all of a match, even if they're appearing on the main show that week. I know there's a point to this show but they could at least try.

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Smackdown – September 26, 2002 (2017 Redo): The Best Smackdown of All Time

Smackdown

Date: September 26, 2002

Location: San Diego Sports Arena, San Diego, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

Well Brock retained the title but they basically ruined the end of the pay per view with a double DQ finish. That almost guarantees that we're setting up a rematch at No Mercy in a month because that's how WWE main events work. Other than that we don't have much of note on Smackdown because Unforgiven wasn't a very important show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Stephanie McMahon's BRILLIANT (and highly illogical) plan to have Rikishi humiliate Eric Bischoff at the pay per view.

Opening sequence.

Rikishi vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

This is over Chavo hitting Rikishi with a camera last week. Chavo wisely gets him to give chase early on but Rikishi grabs him by the head and then throws Chavo into the corner by the throat. Something like a Scotty 2 Hotty style bulldog drops the big guy though and Rikishi is sent shoulder first into the post.

In the unfunny comedy portion of the match, Chavo loads up a Stinkface of his own but gets shoved away, meaning it's time to back it up in the corner. The Rump Shaker is countered though and Chavo goes for the camera, which is superkicked back into his face. That's enough for the Rump Shaker to connect and put Chavo away.

Rating: C. This was MUCH better than I was expecting and Chavo got to show off a bit. Rikishi is fine in a role like this where he beats up a midcarder and stays away from the bigger stories. It's easy to like someone as fun as Rikishi but it's a lot more difficult to take him seriously.

Rikishi dances post match.

It's time for a bikini contest between Torrie Wilson and Nidia with Billy and Chuck as the judges. I guess it's time to rehabilitate their masculinity or something. Nidia gets a 6 and a 9 (it's funny you see) and Torrie gets a double 10. Billy and Chuck get in the ring and here come Tajiri and Jamie Noble, giving us an impromptu tag match.

Billy and Chuck vs. Tajiri/Jamie Noble

Chuck gets sent to the floor so it's a series of kicks to put Billy down. Torrie is on the apron in a neutral corner for no apparent reason but it makes for some better scenery. The always great looking Tajiri superkick drops Billy again and Jamie starts in on the knee. Noble wraps it around the post as you can see the Cruiserweight Title on the floor. At least put it on the apron so it looks somewhat important.

Billy can't even stand on the banged up leg so Jamie puts on a leglock as the world's only WE WANT CHUCK chant starts up. A flapjack finally puts Jamie down though and there's the hot tag to Chuck. House is cleaned and Billy manages to get up top for the Code Red (bit of a stretch there) for the pin on Tajiri (who was on Chuck's shoulders for a LONG time before Billy was ready).

Rating: C+. That's your standard tag team formula and it's going to work no matter how many times we see it. They managed to get Chuck Palumbo a chant with the most basic tag team match you can put together. There's a reason it's a classic and it's going to work as long as wrestling is around.

Post match the women get into it again and Torrie spanks Nidia.

Funaki interviews Brock Lesnar and asks him if he's going to give Undertaker a rematch. Brock will give him an answer in the ring. Funaki is thrilled with getting a scoop and doesn't realize he's likely about to die.

Kurt Angle comes in to see Stephanie and they reminisce about the Stinkface. Angle would like a rematch against Chris Benoit but Stephanie has something else in mind. Rey Mysterio pops up and Angle asks if this is a violation of child labor laws. Stephanie's big idea: a triple threat match between Mysterio, Angle and Benoit. Angle says he'll get the 1-2-3 but Rey says it's more like the

6-1-9, which the fans certainly approve of.

Here's Funaki with the chair that was dented over Lesnar's head at Unforgiven. After Funaki actually gets one heck of a pop (I'm as shocked as you are), Lesnar comes out and doesn't want to hear about the Undertaker. Brock shoves him into the corner and for reasons of general stupidity, Funaki comes out swinging. A running right hand is easily countered into an STO, followed by a few throws and an F5 for good measure.

Dawn Marie offers Torrie some insincere praise for the win, though everyone knows Dawn would have beaten her with ease.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

No DQ. Eddie starts hammering away until a monkey flip puts him down. The fans are all over Eddie as he easily breaks up a keylock. An elbow to the head drops Edge and Eddie hits some rather hard right hands. We hit a chinlock for a bit before Edge snaps off a powerslam, only to take too long getting to the top.

That means a huge superplex to give Eddie two and it's time to head outside. Unfortunately it's also time for a ladder and that means a ref bump as the ladder goes straight into his face (looked great actually). Back in and Eddie unloads on him with a chair but misses the frog splash to put both guys down.

We come back from a break with a new referee and the second only now being taken to the back. That's really not a good response time. Edge gets in the half nelson faceplant but takes too much time going up, allowing Eddie to snap off a hurricanrana for a close two. A springboard hurricanrana is countered into a sitout powerbomb with Eddie's head bouncing off the mat in a scary visual.

The ladder is brought in but it's also knocked into Edge's face to drop the Canadian again. That means Eddie needs a second ladder so he can sandwich Edge together, setting up the slingshot hilo. Guerrero gets one heck of a cheer from the crowd and it's really hard to blame him with how hard they're beating each other up out there.

Eddie goes up the ladder but Edge is there to slug it out....so Eddie sunset powerbombs him off with one of the biggest bumps you'll see on regular TV. Edge just got folded up and it looked awesome. That's good for another respectful round of applause and somehow only two.

In almost any other match, that should have been the fall.

Back up again and Edge backdrops him into the ladder in the corner before they climb the second ladder a second time. You know, because it ended so well earlier. This time Edge rams him face first into the top a few times and grabs an Edgecution off the ladder (looked a bit more like a superplex for the sake of clearing the ladder but the landing still looked great) for the pin and one last big reaction from the crowd.

Rating: A. Sometimes you need a great story with all kinds of intricacies and plot details. Sometimes you need a big climax to a major story. Then sometimes you need two incredibly talented wrestlers doing crazy things to each other involving a ladder. This was spectacular with both guys absolutely destroying each other with one more big spot after another. Nothing was topping that sunset powerbomb though and I think everyone knew it. Edge winning the match (and in theory the feud) is the right call and Eddie didn't lose a thing here. Aside from the match of course. This is on multiple DVDs and it's easy to see why.

A bloody Eddie gets the big respectful ovation, which he more than earned.

Marc Lloyd comes up to ask Benoit about the main event. Benoit: "YOU SUCK!" That got a good laugh. Anyway Benoit is ready.

Matt Hardy talks about running Hurricane off and suggests he'll do the same thing to Undertaker tonight. Shannon Moore isn't convinced and thinks it might have had something to do with Brock. Hardy pshaw's him and leaves with Lesnar looking on. Good thing he was watching the show on a monitor and knew where Matt's locker room was in relation to his.

Wrestlemania XIX press conference video. It's very, very odd to see Undertaker in a collared shirt and pants.

Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy

I always liked the version of Undertaker's song with lyrics. Matt's handshake doesn't go how he'd hope it would and the beating is on early. Hardy gets up an elbow in the corner though and starts in on the knee but the Twist of Fate is countered into a chokeslam. The Last Ride finishes Matt in less than two minutes.

Post match Lesnar runs out and busts Undertaker open again with a belt shot. During the break, Undertaker couldn't stand up and EGADS he's covered in blood. That's one heck of a blade job for a TV show.

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Before the match, Angle accuses Rey's fans of being illegal immigrants. The real threat in this match isn't the toothless weirdo or the lost member of Menudo because it's your Olympic hero. Rey takes over to start and hits the sitout bulldog on Benoit while kicking Angle in the face at the same time.

That earns Rey a trip out to the floor so Angle and Benoit can hit the match for their usual fast paced sequence. Kurt can't get the ankle but settles for a two count with his feet on the ropes. Rey comes back in and avoids a charge to send Kurt shoulder first into the post. Not that it matters as Benoit is right there for a German suplex.

Chris throws Rey to the floor but gets chopped n the corner by a fresh Angle. We hit the rolling German suplexes and an Angle Slam on Benoit but Rey dropkicks Kurt for two. Benoit is sent outside this time and Rey scores with a dive, only to have Angle send him into the barricade.

Back in and Benoit gets his ankle locked until he grabs the rope, setting up a double 619. Angle blocks the West Coast Pop but gets rolled up for two more. Now it's Kurt getting caught in the Crossface but Rey breaks it up by Dropping the Time for a VERY close two on Benoit. Angle gets suplexed to the floor and Benoit throws Rey over his head and onto the ropes, only to have Rey springboard into the West Coast Pop for the pin to blow the roof off the place.

Rating: A-. I'm exhausted after watching that. I didn't skip more than a few moves here and there and all three guys came off looking outstanding. It's a great example of just letting people do crazy sequences and look awesome all over the place. I'm going to need a little time to get over the idea that Mysterio won in his hometown. When was that concept banned? Anyway, check this one out after you see Eddie vs. Edge.

Overall Rating: A+. That's probably the best Smackdown of all time and I'd be surprised if anything ever topped it. The worst match of the night was either Undertaker destroying Matt Hardy or a surprisingly good Rikishi vs. Chavo match. Even if you're not

impressed with that one, it didn't even break five minutes. Throw in two classics and Torrie in a rather nice looking swimsuit and I don't know what else you could ask for. Check this show out and have a great time with it because it might be the best Smackdown I've ever seen.

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Impact Wrestling – February 23, 2017: They Got One Thing Right

Impact Wrestling

Date: February 23, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

Time for a wedding! It's one of the last nights of the TNA tapings and we're getting a major angle in the form of Braxton Sutter being forced to marry Laurel Van Ness for reasons that still aren't clear. Other than that we have Bobby Lashley defending the TNA World Title against newcomer Josh Barnett at some point in the near future. Let's get to it.

In memory of George Steele, Ivan Koloff Nicole Bass and Chavo

Guerrero Sr.

Matt Hardy is at House Hardy where he talks to George Washington (the giraffe), who is worried about Vanguard I's drinking issues. The Seven Deities are going to teleport Matt somewhere for his transformation into the King of Gold. However, he might lose some of his abilities so therefore he has to transfer them into Jeff's body. Jeff has a pre-mo-nition which tells him that Matt is going to Egypt. Vanguard I takes Matt away.

Wedding video.

Here are Cody and Brandi Rhodes for a chat. Cody doesn't like the idea that his wife was dubbed Mini Moose (still a dumb name) last week so he'd like Moose out here right now. This brings out Moose and Cody gets straight to the point by asking if they're going to sleep together soon. Brandi isn't cool with that and asks if Cody is telling the truth. Cody says he was kidding but lays Moose out while shouting to Brandi that it's a joke. Cross Rhodes leaves Moose laying.

Post break, Cody has no comment.

Eli Drake thinks Tyrus stepped way over the line and tonight he has to take a beating.

Tyrus never liked Drake.

Eli Drake vs. Tyrus

Before he gets in the ring, we get a little more Drake trash talk which is basically a way to plug the fact that Tyrus is a Fox News contributor. A single shoulder puts Drake on the floor so he offers Tyrus more money. Tyrus growls at him so Drake lays out the referee for the DQ at 2:35.

Post match Drake offers Tyrus a raise and they hug. In other words: "I hate you!" "I hate you too!" "Want more money?" "Yeah we're cool." Pope says this won't happen when the new management takes over. The Anthem Owl told him so.

Maria and company are getting ready for the wedding but can't find Allie.

Matt comes back from his quest and now has a regal robe. He's learned what it's going to take to make the Expedition of Gold a success. That means Skarrsgard is no longer a dilapidated boat but

rather the Ark of Gold, where all the title belts will be stored.

Here's Jade to say her rivalry with Rosemary ("Red vs. Blue") is far from over. Jade wants to take the division back from the sick freak (Why does it feel like 80% of TNA storylines are about getting us back to what something is supposed to be? Sting had that feud roughly 485 times.) so here's Rosemary, who I barely remember being champion.

Josh and Pope get in an argument during the entrance and Pope hints that changes are coming to the booth. Rosemary wants the Knockouts to decay so Jade talks about going through Monster's Ball and coming out standing. We get a challenge for a Last Knockouts Standing match with Rosemary accepting. This felt really forced and Jade is far from a smooth talker.

Mike Bennett tries to give an annoyed Braxton Sutter a pep talk. Champagne is consumed and Bennett doesn't seem thrilled with his own marriage. Sutter brings up Allie but Maria has that covered.

Bram vs. Jesse Godderz

They slug it out to start as Pope keeps hinting that Josh is going to be gone soon. Godderz plants him with a belly to back suplex and a Blockbuster to set up the Adonis Lock. Kingston gets on the apron for a distraction so Jesse catapults Bram into him, setting up the rollup for the pin on Bram at 3:57.

Rating: D. Good grief TNA. If you were just going to treat the DCC like a bunch of goofs, why did you bother putting them together in the first place? At this point the guys are the Job Squad as they can never win a match and there's still not exactly a clear point to why they're together in the first place. Nothing to see here.

Godderz cleans house and bails before he gets beaten down.

The Hardys teleport to the Mid-Atlantic territory where they say they want the Tag Team Titles. A team called the Mid-Atlantic Outlaws say they're the #1 contenders so a challenge is issued but another guy says this is their way to get out of this territory and on to a better life. Apparently this means anyone winning the Tag Team Titles so they're all off to find the champions.

The Lady Squad is getting ready for the wedding when Allie finally shows up. They yell at her a bit and tell her to make sure the hotel room is ready. Allie leaves and runs into Braxton, who can't explain

why he's doing this. If that's not what he wants to do, then don't do it.

Back to Mid-Atlantic where a locker room brawl breaks out and the Hardys get a title shot. Just like last week, it's a clipped up match with the Hardys beating Mathis and Rage to become champions.

Josh Barnett hasn't been impressed by Lashley and thinks he needs to show Lashley how to be a champion. I still have no idea why I'm supposed to be impressed by/care about Barnett but that's never stopped TNA before.

Bad Bones vs. Josh Barnett

Bad Bones is a tough looking guy from Germany and Lashley is on commentary. Barnett takes him to the mat and tries a chinlock but let's look at Lashley talking instead of the debuting #1 contender. A bunch of strikes have Bones in trouble but he gets in a spear through the ropes. Barnett suplexes him and gets in a nasty Jackknife followed by a keylock for the submission at 2:43. Lashley is impressed.

X-Division Title: DJZ vs. Trevor Lee

DJZ is getting his rema ch and has a bad ankle coming in. That doesn't stop him from diving over the top onto the champion to start. A hurricanrana off the apron bangs up the ankle again so Lee goes after it in a smart move. The slow beating continues until an enziguri staggers Lee again. That means a Schitt's Creek plug as DJZ grabs a reverse hurricanrana. DJZ loads up the ZDT but Helms grabs the leg, allowing Lee to get in a rollup with a handful of tights to retain at 4:31.

Rating: D+. Standard X-Division match here, meaning no chance to go anywhere, high spots that were more interesting the first thousand or so times we've seen them and little surprise to the ending because you only get one change of this title every five months or so. Nothing to see here, as expected.

Post match Lee loads up the Pillmanizing but Andrew Everett comes in for the save.

Maria comes up to see Sutter and offers to remind him why this is happening. Sutter says he knows and Maria threatens him with consequences if there's no wedding. We still don't know what those consequences are.

It's time for the wedding with an already drunk Bennett as the best man. Spud is flower man and Aron Rex comes out in his gear. Maria and Sienna are the bridal party and after a break, here's Laurel as the fans chant for ODB. Maria does her signature stuff and brings out Allie, who looks stunning in her bridesmaid's dress and causes Braxton's jaw to drop.

Laurel reads her own vows, talking about how your bank account is what matters and promising to buy Braxton a new wardrobe. The fans drown this out with DELETE chants and Sutter says he forgot to bring his vows. We get to the "any objections" part and Maria shouts the fans down before Allie can say anything. Maria trips her and yells when the rings fall because that's what Maria and Allie do.

Laurel says I Do but Braxton can't get the second word out. Fans: "JUST SAY NO!" Braxton says no because he can't stand being around Laurel. There's a guy out there for Laurel to make completely miserable but it's just not him. Braxton says he loves Allie and for once the fans seem to genuinely freak out over this (It couldn't be because these are characters the fans can relate to and get behind because they can't stand the villain could it?).

He knows Maria is going to fire Allie for this and he'll never see her again but he loves her and that's all that matters. Maria fires Allie but she quits instead. This might have been more effective if they hadn't had the big split moment two or three times already. Sutter punches Bennett down and Brooke comes out to help Allie. Robbie E. goes after Aron and the big kiss ends the show as Pope teases the changes AGAIN.

The big angle was good because I have a reason to care about the characters but as usual, TNA screwed themselves over by hyping this as the "most controversial wedding in wrestling history". Not only does that basically say they know what's coming but also...this was exactly what people were expecting. It's not like this was anything that we haven't seen a half dozen times before. The Brooke wedding a few years back where Tazz joined Aces and 8's was a bigger surprise than this one. Again though, that's TNA in a nutshell: make something bigger than it is and be disappointing because Josh can't shut up about it.

Overall Rating: D. Assuming you even count the first "match" as wrestling, this show didn't even have fourteen minutes of actual

bell time (not counting the Hardys which was a bunch of clips instead of a match). The Hardys are still running around doing whatever they want, despite it not seeming to lead to anything (other than Ring of Honor) at the moment. Everything else is just there with no particular rhyme or reason, which doesn't make for a good show. The wedding was entertaining for what it was but that's not enough to carry a show.

I know none of this really matters as they're resetting everything (AGAIN) in two weeks but they better knock it out of the park with the new stuff because this has been really dull lately. They're certainly teasing some new stuff and that's a good thing, though if there's one thing TNA knows how to do, it's underwhelm on their bragging.

Results

Tyrus b. Eli Drake via DQ when Tyrus hit the referee

Jesse Godderz b. Bram – Rollup

Josh Barnett b. Bad Bones – Keylock

Trevor Lee b. DJZ – Rollup with a handful of tights

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205 Live – February 21, 2017: The Supplemental Show

205 Live

Date: February 21, 2017

Location: Citizens Business Bank Arena, Ontario, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves, Austin Aries

We're less than two weeks away from Fastlane and that means it's time for some of the more basic build towards the Cruiserweight Title match. There are three matches announced for tonight, all of which suggest that this is going to be a much more wrestling heavy show than one built around angles. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of last night's contract signing.

Opening sequence.

The announcers chat for a bit.

Akira Tozawa vs. Brian Kendrick

This almost took place on Raw but Kendrick laid him out instead. Tozawa goes off on him with forearms and a running kick to the chest. Some mounted right hands have Kendrick in even more trouble and Tozawa shouts that he doesn't need him. Tozawa chokes with the boot in the corner as this is completely one sided so far.

Kendrick finally manages to post him to take over and it's time to work on Tozawa's neck. A big boot sets up the Captain's Hook but Tozawa gets a hand between the arms for the block. Tozawa sends him outside for a suicide dive and the crowd is getting into this. With nothing else working, Kendrick sends him into the apron and ties Tozawa's foot into the cables underneath the ring for the countout at 5:42.

Rating: C+. This was a way to set up something else down the line and there's nothing wrong with that. Tozawa has the potential to be a big star in the division and I can actually get behind the idea of Kendrick as a gatekeeper. He isn't exactly great as a top heel but this role is fitting him a bit better. I'm still not sure why he carries that flag but whatever.

Kendrick says that was another lesson for Tozawa. More lessons are

coming.

Noam Dar didn't like Rich Swann dedicating a match to Alicia Foxxxx last week so tonight, Dar is going to do the same thing. Fox is a bit under the weather this week but worry not because she would NEVER leave him.

Noam Dar vs. Mustafa Ali

They trade wristlocks to start until Ali backflips away and dropkicks him to the floor. That means a big flip dive (Aries: "MAMA BELLOMO!") with Ali jumping over the referee for a nice touch. Dar kicks him in the leg on the way back in though and things slow down again. Back in and Dar starts working on the arm for a change, only to eat a dropkick to the face.

Dar uppercuts him into the corner but gets caught in a tornado DDT to put both guys down. It's Ali up first though and he takes Dar over to the corner, only to have Noam get to the apron before the reverse 450 can launch. That's enough to have Ali go head first into the post, setting up a running knee to the head for the pin at 7:34.

Rating: C. Dar continues to be fine in the ring but he's still missing a certain fire that would carry him up towards the top of the division. I'm curious to see who Fox could leave him for (it's pretty clear that's where they're going) and where Dar can go from there so it's far from hopeless. Ali should be higher up on the food chain than he is too but for some reason he's cooled off a lot in recent weeks.

Austin Aries introduces a video on...himself, as he's getting back in the ring soon. That would have been better as a surprise attack but Neville vs. Aries for the title at Wrestlemania would have me drooling.

Neville wasn't pleased with the attack during the contract signing and has his sights focused on Gallagher.

Jack calls tonight's match a preview for Fastlane.

Jack Gallagher vs. Tony Nese

The idea here is that Nese is the most comparable person to Neville on the roster. Nese throws him down to start and we hit the pose. That earns him a takedown into a SICK looking armbars with Gallagher tweaking the mustache and making sure his hair stays straight. Back up (thankfully without a torn pectoral), Nese elbows him in the face

and tosses Jack over the top for a breather. One heck of a superkick drops Gallagher again and we hit a bodyscissors.

A legdrop gets two but also seems to start Jack's comeback. Gallagher gets two off a crossbody and a sunset flip before headbutting the heck out of Nese. It's too early for the running dropkick but Jack puts him in the Tree of Woe. That's fine with Nese though as he pulls himself up into a super German suplex. Nese goes up top again, allowing Gallagher to catch him in a top rope belly to back superplex. The running corner dropkick puts Nese away at 10:05.

Rating: C+. This was a very simple idea and it worked as well as it was going to be able to. Gallagher was in trouble but used his technique and footwork (which he talked about earlier) to come back and win, which is what they'll be aiming for at Fastlane. Then again I don't buy Neville as being in any real danger but at least they're getting the story right.

Overall Rating: C+. They basically took a week off for a filler show here but it was still entertaining enough to work. Gallagher is being built up as the best possible challenger for a nothing pay per view and they're already setting up a few things for the future, including Aries' in ring return. You didn't need to see this show but it did exactly what it was supposed to do.

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New Column: So Long and Farewell

Four in one week. That's hard.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-long-farewell/>

Please give us any stories you might have of any of them. They're always worth it.

NXT – February 22, 2017: The Wrestling Version

NXT

Date: February 22, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

We're getting closer and closer to Orlando as we're...well we're still in Orlando but it's not the big show yet. Tonight's big deal is a triple threat match for the #1 contendership to the Women's Title as Asuka is in need of some more competition. It's hard to say what else we've got coming up around here and that's a good thing as you could be in for a good surprise. Let's get to it.

In Memory of George Steele.

Quick video on the triple threat.

Opening sequence.

Liv Morgan vs. Peyton Royce vs. Ember Moon

#1 contenders match and Morgan is in Space Jam Tune Squad inspired gear. Moon gets sent to the floor to start and Morgan does a Matrix

move to avoid the a spinning kick. The two of them head outside and Ember hits a dive over the top to take Morgan down. We take an early break and come back with Morgan taking Peyton's long legged choke in the corner.

Peyton sends her to the apron and puts on something like a full nelson with her legs before letting it go to put Ember back on the floor. Morgan comes back with an ankle scissors out of the corner for one but can't follow up because it's just an ankle scissors. The real comeback starts with a kick in the corner and a bulldog, finally drawing Ember in for the save.

A headscissors puts Moon right back outside though and it's time for a superplex. Peyton isn't fast enough though as Ember sneaks in to make it a Tower of Doom and all three are down. Moon loads up the Eclipse but Billie Kay takes it instead of Morgan, leaving Peyton to knee Ember in the face. A fisherman's suplex to Morgan is good for the pin and the title shot at 11:54.

Rating: C+. That's really the only option as Morgan has already been destroyed by Asuka and I'd assume they're keeping Moon for a big showdown. The idea here was to keep Moon on the floor because otherwise it would have been her dominating the other two and slipping on a banana peel to lose in the end. Royce winning is the right call though I can't imagine that title shot comes before Takeover.

Video on Pete Dunne and Mark Andrews.

Kassius Ohno is coming back.

Shinsuke Nakamura is healing up.

Mark Andrews vs. Pete Dunne

Rematch from the tournament where Dunne beat Andrews. Dunne goes straight for the fingers to start and then rips at the nose like a true heel. Andrews pops back up and sends him to the floor for a moonsault armdrag to take over. A second attempt doesn't work though and Dunne forearm him in the jaw, followed by stomping the fingers onto the steps.

We take a break and come back with Andrews flipping Dunne over and grabbing a springboard hurricanrana. Dunne is ready for the shooting star though and forearms Andrews out of the air. The X Plex gets two but Andrews gets out of the Bitter End. A reverse hurricanrana of all things puts Dunne down again. Another Bitter End is reversed into a small package for two and the X Plex is countered into the Stundog Millionaire. Dunne gets the knees up on the shooting star though and the Bitter End wraps Andrews up at 13:52.

Rating: B+. This was very good stuff and the wrestling was enough to overcome the lack of a story coming in. In theory this sets up Dunne as the first real challenger to Bate but it's not clear if anyone from outside the UK can challenge for the UK Title. You can also add Andrews to the list of people TNA screwed up horribly.

Kay and Royce are ready to take the Women's Title back to Australia. Patrick Clark is in action next week.

Tye Dillinger is ready for Sanity, no matter what they throw at him.

No Way Jose vs. Bobby Roode

Non-title and Roode's entrance is reaching Undertaker lengths. Roode takes him to the mat to start and slaps the afro a bit. Back up and it's dance time with a clothesline freaking Roode out a bit. The big spinebuster plants Jose again though and we take a break. Back with Roode striking the pose and grabbing a chinlock. Jose makes his comeback and cleans house with chops and a cobra clutch slam. The big right hand puts Roode on the floor but he comes back in and hits the Glorious DDT for the pin at 10:39.

Rating: C+. This was the kind of match that Roode needed. Jose is going to be fine with a loss to the champ and Roode gets a win over someone with some credibility. That being said, the credibility isn't going to last all that long if he never wins a match anytime soon. Good enough though and a third solid match on a good show.

Post match Roode goes after the knee until Kassius Ohno makes a big return for the save. Roode asks who Ohno is so Kassius talks about how he's been around the world. Now Ohno wants what Roode has, so

Bobby is willing to put the title on the line right now. Roode gets in a cheap shot and starts in on the knee, only to get knocked out to the floor for his efforts. Ohno poses to end the show. Ohno got a strong reaction (not quite Nakamura but still a star level reception) and that's a good thing as he's likely going to be in the title scene very soon.

Overall Rating: A-. This was the pure wrestling show with almost no storyline development but three strong matches in the span of an hour. Sometimes you just need a long show with a lot of good wrestling and that's what took place here. I had a good time with this and it went by fast, especially with the big angle to end the show. NXT needed a show like this and it worked very well.

Results

Peyton Royce b. Ember Moon and Liv Morgan – Fisherman's suplex to Morgan

Pete Dunne b. Mark Andrews – Bitter End

Bobby Roode b. No Way Jose – Glorious DDT

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Monday Night Raw – September 23, 2002: The Bad Times Are Here

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 23, 2002

Location: Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after Unforgiven and the big story on the Raw side is Ric Flair joining forces with HHH to form...well to form nothing at the moment but that's the only noteworthy thing that happened last night. I'm worried about what we'll be getting going forward but that's so often the case around here. Let's get to it.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Molly Holly vs. Victoria

Trish is defending after winning the title last night. Victoria goes after the champ before Molly even gets to the ring and the fight is on in a hurry. As Lawler asks if Trish is the hottest Women's Champion ever, the challengers start double teaming Trish as you might expect them to do. That earns them a double clothesline and some signature stuff but Molly lifts her up for a toss out to the floor (and one heck of a bump). Back in and Molly avoids Victoria's moonsault, setting up a collision to knock Molly into Trish's rollup to retain the title.

Rating: D+. The match was nothing to see (save for that nasty crash to the floor) but this was quick enough to not overstay its welcome. The women just aren't good enough at this point to work a long match so it's a good idea to keep things short here. Victoria looked a lot more aggressive here and that's the best thing possible for Trish and the title.

Booker T. and Goldust show some of the roster clips of last night with Eric Bischoff getting humiliated. Goldust: "I haven't seen anything that bad since Chris Jericho's last Fozzy concert." As a bonus, Goldust has a picture of Bischoff with Rikishi's thong replacing the face. Rico: "That's disgusting! I'M TELLING ERIC!"

Bischoff welcomes an unnamed face to the Raw side when Rico comes

in. Eric wants to know where Rico was last night but it was Bischoff who sent them out on the town. Anyway Rico tells him what Booker and Goldust were up to and Eric is ticked.

After a break, here's a ticked off Bischoff in the arena. Bischoff isn't cool with the fans booing him but more importantly, Vince McMahon has issued a new decree: there's a freeze on all contracts and no one gets to jump between shows unless there is an official trade. However he made a few last minute deals before the deadline with details coming later.

For now though, Booker needs to come out here RIGHT NOW. Bischoff wants an explanation but Booker calls him a skippy hippie. Booker keeps making jokes about last night and says Bischoff's breath is heinous like a fat man's anus. Cue 3 Minute Warning and Rico for the beatdown with Goldust's save going nowhere.

Post break, Rico offers to face Booker tonight and Chris Jericho comes up to demand a shot at Goldust for the Fozzy insult. Eric agrees but makes it an Intercontinental Title shot. That's a very face move for a heel boss.

Jeff Hardy vs. Big Show

Jeff goes right after him to start and actually hits something like a suicide dive. That's not what you do to a giant though and he tosses Jeff over the top so we can have the opening bell. Back in and Jeff dropkicks him in the knee and hits the Swanton across Show's back for what is likely his only near fall. Show just blasts him with the overhand chop to bust open Jeff's shirt. That's enough for Show as he plants Jeff with the chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: D. I'm so glad we're getting the renewed Big Show push because I just don't want to imagine a WWE without it. Allegedly Hardy was rather, ahem, unable to perform last week so this might have been punishment as a result. I'd rather have that instead of "comedy" but Big Show might not be the best choice to push.

We look back at Tommy Dreamer beating up Christopher Nowinski two weeks back.

Nowinski is in a classroom and wants to fight dreamer. Post break Dreamer shows up and gets caned down. Dreamer puts him through the ceiling and the beating just keeps going because we NEED hardcore stuff around here without actually having hardcore matches.

Randy Orton vs. Steven Richards

Here's one of the talent jumps but it's not clear if he was the mystery man earlier. Orton hits his quick dropkick as the crowd is just silent for this. Richards slows things down and gets two off a side slam. The rather slow pace continues until Orton slips out of a neckbreaker and grabs a belly to back suplex.

Commentary would suggest that the company wants Orton to be the next Rocky Maivia but it's not quite working. How can Orton be considered a blue chipper without a Jheri Curl? Orton's backbreaker and powerslam get two each, only to walk into the Stevie Kick for two. That means a freak out session and choking from Richards, only to eat the high crossbody to give Orton the pin. Lawler: "THIS KID IS PHENOMENAL!" Just...no Jerry.

Rating: D-. Above all else this was incredibly boring. Orton has no character at this point and there's only so much you're going to be able to do in a match against a low level nothing like Richards. It's a really boring match and that doesn't make Orton seem like the bright star that the announcers are pushing him to be.

The Union Underground performs Across the Nation (Raw's theme) while some Divas dance. Lillian looks like she's just enjoying the song, Terri looks like she has no idea what she's doing (might not be her kind of music) and Jackie is having a great time while barely staying in her top. Stacy is miles ahead of all of them as she looks amazing and clearly has done this kind of dancing for a long time.

Here's Flair for the big explanation. Last week, HHH yelled at him and said Flair was pathetic. HHH was right and it's because Flair was too busy listening to the fans. When he was a kid, HHH wanted to be Ric Flair (or Hulk Hogan if you listen to the story from back in April) and now Flair is going to try to pull that off.

If HHH is willing, Flair is going to teach him how to get to another level. Flair's payment is very simple: he gets to be by the champ's side and spend the twilight of his career on top where he belongs. Rob Van Dam tries to interfere but HHH beats him down from behind. The double team is on until Bubba Ray Dudley makes the save.

Two notes here: first of all, they kept this short but covered the point. We know why Flair did it and we know what he gets out of it. Simple yet effective, as promos often need to be.

Second, this is a great example of how important it is to have the right character in the right role. I can accept the idea that HHH is a huge Flair fan and wants to be just like him. There's no specific reason but it's something I could accept at face value. For an example of it going bad, look back at AJ Styles doing the same thing in 2010. I can imagine AJ being a Flair fan but I absolutely can't believe one of the most natural faces ever being a Nature Boy clone. You need to have the right kind of character for any given role and it works very well here, which is why the angle should work as well as it's going to.

Post break Bubba and Van Dam say this is the people's show and demand a tag match tonight. Bischoff comes up to say it's his show but allows the match anyway.

Intercontinental Title: Chris Jericho vs. Goldust

Jericho is defending and these two are somehow still active fifteen years later. Goldust gets in a quick hiptoss and catapult to send him into the buckle. The champ comes right back with a bulldog and cranks on the neck as we hear about how big a band Fozzy really is. With that going nowhere, Jericho hits an extended trash talk sequence. It's enough for Goldust to fight back with something like a Boss Man Slam/chokeslam but the Curtain Call is broken up. Goldust will settle for a powerslam but the referee breaks up Shattered Dreams. Jericho gets in the enziguri and the Walls retain the title.

Rating: C. Not bad here, as you might expect. I don't think anyone was going to buy Goldust as a full fledged threat to win the title but you're going to get a completely watchable match out of him. I'm still not entirely sure why Jericho has the title again but he's far from the worst choice.

Tag Team Titles: Un-Americans vs. Kane/???

Kane is challenging along with his partner....the Hurricane? Again it's not clear if he was the one who was in Bischoff's office or not but it doesn't really matter. An early Blockbuster puts Christian down but the rest of the team jumps Hurricane on the floor. Kane does his best angry stare for the save and it's Christian getting in a few stomps of his own. We hit the chinlock for a bit until a clothesline puts both guys down.

Hurricane dives over for the hot tag and the fans react as strongly as they can. House is quickly cleaned until Regal gets in a title

shot to Kane's head. Er, mask. Either way, it only gets two and Regal and Test are both ejected for their efforts. Charles Robinson trying to be intimidating is one of the best comedy spots of the year. Hurricane gets a sloppy hurricanrana on Christian and heel miscommunication sets up a double chokeslam (eh cute) for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C-. I'm so glad we had the Un-Americans all over the show for so many weeks to have them lose to the latest thrown together team. I've seen worse matches though and Hurricane is always entertaining, at least for a quick laugh. Not bad here and the fans got into the American victory, which is the whole point here.

Post break Hurricane says he and Kane are perfect together because they both wear masks and both use chokeslams. Tonight it's time to celebrate and Kane says freaks are cool. Hurricane is ready to go to the Hurricave but Kane stops to kiss Terri before leaving with his partner.

Regal isn't happy but says the team will regroup.

Booker T. vs. Rico

Booker hammers away in the corner until Rico reverses and fires off some kicks to the head. That springboard version always looks good. A kneelift only seems to fire Booker up and it's the forearm into the Spinarooni. The scissors kick ends Rico in short order.

Post match it's 3 Minute Warning for the beatdown and Goldust for the failed save. The difference is Booker is in gear instead of street clothes like earlier and Goldust actually hits Shattered Dreams on Rico before getting taken apart. Totally different idea you see.

Bischoff makes 3 Minute Warning vs. Goldust/Booker T. for next week. Again, not exactly a heel move. It's putting them on square footing and taking away the Samoans' advantage. How is that a heel boss?

Van Dam says he's at peace with HHH and Flair but isn't impassionate despite his bad ribs.

Bubba Ray Dudley/Rob Van Dam vs. HHH/Ric Flair

After some long entrances, HHH jumps Bubba from behind and gets backdropped for his efforts. The fans want tables but get Flair, who has no issues with Bubba, making this kind of pointless. Some shoulders put Flair down as JR thinks Ric is going through "the

change of life”.

It's right back to HHH as Bubba seems a bit hesitant to tag in the injured RVD. Bubba gets the better of a chop off with Flair before it's off to Rob for a series of kicks. Rolling Thunder isn't the best idea and HHH doesn't stay down long enough to really validate the pain on the bad ribs. HHH gets in a belly to back suplex but the hot tag brings in Bubba a few seconds later.

The fans react like they're watching an Orton match and only pick up a bit as Bubba hammers on Flair. House is quickly cleaned and Van Dam plays D-Von on What's Up. It's table time but HHH shoves Van Dam off the top. A throat snap across the top knocks Bubba into a Flair rollup (with tights) for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was awkward with the wrestling not being great and the story being sort of all over the place. It's clear that they're setting up Bubba as the next challenger (which is likely only going to be short term) and I'm really not sure how that's going to work. The story makes sense but I'm not sure if Bubba Ray Dudley is going to work in that role no matter what. Van Dam really does look like a one off challenger and that's a really bad thing given how second rate he looked next to HHH.

Bubba saves Van Dam from a low blow and almost completely misses the table when powerbombing HHH. The champ hit the corner and the table didn't even break, causing the crowd to go almost silent. Van Dam legdrops him through the table (makes sense due to the bad ribs) instead to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. The bad times are here and that's got me worried going forward. There was WAY too much 3 Minute Warning vs. Goldust/Booker T. (a fine feud on its own but it was a lot of overkill here) and too many nothing matches (the opener, Orton and Hardy vs. Big Show) to fill out a two hour show. Cut out some of the filler (like the concert, which felt completely tacked on) and turn it into some better stories and the show will improve. As for now though, Raw is back to its normal horrible.

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