

Smackdown – August 28, 2003: One of the Best Moments in Smackdown History

Smackdown

Date: August 28, 2003

Location: Haskins Center, El Paso, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

Summerslam is over and done with and this show has to be better than Raw. I know Smackdown hasn't been great in recent weeks but this week's Raw was one of the worst shows I've ever seen. Kurt Angle could sit in the ring, read a newspaper and have a watercress sandwich and it would still beat Raw so they don't have much of a bar to defeat. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Eddie Guerrero, who parks his car outside to make the already rabid fans wait on him a little longer. Eddie comes in through the crowd and is the biggest face to face around here in a LONG time (which isn't much of a stretch as he's been the hottest act on the show for months now). In a funny bit, Eddie hugs Tazz but ignores Cole before putting a sombrero on him. Eddie's family is in the front row and my goodness this is one of the best receptions you'll see in wrestling. I know it's his hometown but the fans absolutely love Eddie. It gets even better when he greets them in Spanish and says he's at home.

This is where lying, cheating and stealing started and we hear the Guerrero family history of his great, great grandmother walking the streets of El Paso, possibly after illegally jumping the border. One day a cop stopped her and asked if she belonged there. That earned the cop a tongue lashing in Spanish but she was just saying of course she belonged in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

That was the first ever Guerrero lie but then she had to take the

citizenship test. It was all in English though so she looked over at the other grandmother....and beat the heck out of her before stealing the answers to become a citizen. Finally, as she was leaving the office, she saw a low rider. Eddie: "Ok they didn't have low riders back then. It was a donkey." This brings out John Cena, who is in WAY over his head here.

Cena makes his usual gay jokes and Eddie just smiles at him. He threatens to call border patrol and that's a bit too far for Guerrero. Cena thinks Eddie should be a citizen before being the US Champion. A fight with Cena would be a setback because he would leave him with a broken....well it rhymes with setback.

Eddie isn't about to have Cena talk about his raza like that and accuses Cena of thinking he's more of an American. Cena calms him down and talks Eddie into a US Title match later tonight. Cena implies he'll leave with Eddie's sister and the brawl is on. Eddie steals Cena's jersey before rapping at him about how Cena will taste defeat thanks to the Latino Heat.

This was a GREAT face turn as Eddie is one of the most charismatic guys on the roster and the fans have been begging to cheer him for months now. Doing this to open the show in Eddie's hometown was the perfect move and exactly how it should have gone. Oh and the stuff about the grandmother was hilarious.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Nunzio

Rey is def...hang on I need a minute. Rey is defending. Sorry I haven't had to say that in a long time and I was out of practice. Cole mentions that Rey defended the title last night on Heat, which wasn't important enough to mention in advance. The referee ejects the other Italians to make sure this is one on one. Nunzio takes him down without much effort to start and gets two off a harder clothesline than I thought Nunzio could pull off.

Back up and Rey sends him outside for a corkscrew dive over the top. A baseball slide is caught though and Nunzio drops him ribs first onto the barricade. Nunzio cranks on the arms for a bit but Rey fights up without much effort. Rey goes a little too fast though and the West Coast Pop is countered into a powerbomb (which Cole calls a gutbuster and a spinebuster) for two. A pinfall reversal sequence gets two each but Nunzio puts him on top. The belly to back superplex is reversed and Rey Drops the Dime to retain.

Rating: B-. Short match but they were rolling with the time they had. Nunzio is a talented guy and someone who can wrestle a surprisingly good match against a host of opponents. Mysterio is of course excellent but the Cruiserweight Title isn't doing him any good. The fact that there's no competition other than an occasional match doesn't help either, but that's the flaw with the title in general.

Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

A-Train has Sable in his corner, wearing a very short dress. Benoit gets thrown around with ease to start so of course he charges right at A-Train with more chops. A-Train throws him onto his shoulder to drive Benoit ribs first into the buckle and a single kick puts Benoit on the floor. The announcers make sex jokes about Sable as A-Train gets two off a double underhook gutbuster.

Instead of following up though, A-Train pulled a buckle pad off. Some chops and a German suplex give Benoit a breather and there's the Swan Dive for two. Benoit is sent back first into the exposed buckle so the Derailler can get two. That's fine with Benoit, who Crossfaces A-Train for the tap, despite A-Train's legs being underneath the ropes.

Rating: C. So their method for building A-Train up is by having him lose most of his big matches? Such is life in WWE and that gets a little tiring. I mean, I know it's just A-Train but if you want him to be a monster, I'd like to see more than him beating Stephanie in a "match". Of course WWE thinks that means the world but it's not exactly reality.

During the break, A-Train yelled at Benoit for not being able to beat him. A fight is about to break out but it's a ruse so Rhyno can Gore Benoit through a door. What did Benoit do to get stuck with these feuds?

Eddie's tire has been stolen and he accuses various people, eventually decking Johnny the Bull for smiling a bit too much.

Here's Brock Lesnar for a chat, but only after telling us to shut up and sit down because he has something to say. Since Summerslam, everywhere he goes, he's been told he tapped out. That's quite the list of places in four days. Brock accidentally starts the YOU TAPPED OUT chant and he's sick of it. Summerslam was a fluke, a mirage and a miracle because he's never tapped out in his life.

Brock is no quitter, unlike everyone here who quits looking for jobs after they don't find one immediately (kind of an odd choice of an insult but no one ever accused Brock of being a good talker). He's been told there's no shame in tapping out to an Olympic champion. Brock: "I'M BROCK LESNAR AND I'M SPECIAL!" He's demanding a title rematch and insults Angle's ears for not coming out here immediately.

Angle pops up on screen and says Brock sounds like a baby who lost his rattle. He thinks the fans want to see action....like when he beat Brock at Summerslam. Angle offers to come out here and make Brock tap again but here's Undertaker instead. It's time for Brock to go to the back of the line because Undertaker hasn't had a title shot in a long time. Now Brock is standing in Undertaker's yard but before anything can happen, here's Big Show to interrupt. Does he come with the show like parsley with a steak?

Show talks about hurting more people than anyone ever has but here's Angle to keep this segment going even longer. Angle talks about wanting to face any of these people, all of whom he would make tap. He wants someone to make a decision....so here's Stephanie, who is in charge tonight because Vince is gone. Isn't that always supposed to be the case? Anyway it's a triple threat for the #1 contendership later tonight. This was WAY longer than it needed to be and really only served to prove that Lesnar is a really bad talker.

During the break, Cena (now in a fresh jersey with a matching hat) denies any involvement with stealing Eddie's tire.

US Title: John Cena vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie is defending and Cena comes out carrying a tire. Cole: "If this isn't evidence, I don't know what is." You should need a license to be that stupid. Of course Cena stole it but unlike Eddie, he got away with it. That would be another stupid line. Eddie runs out and starts fast, busting Cena open in a hurry with some shots to the head.

The slingshot hilo connects and Eddie pounds at the cut in the corner. The ProtoBomb gets Cena out of trouble and a hard clothesline makes things even worse for the champ. Eddie gets in a few kicks and sends Cena outside but takes a bit too long, allowing Cena to hit him in the leg. That just earns him a ram into the announcers' table to draw a little more blood. Eddie brings his tire

in but it's just a ruse to get in a chair to Cena's back. The fans eat this up with a cuchara but the frog splash misses.

Back from an abrupt break with Cena holding a double chickenwing. A delayed vertical suplex gets two and Cena bearhugs him down for two arm drops. Eddie is back up with a suplex of his own and the FU is countered into a hurricanrana. The referee gets bumped and OF COURSE the frog splash connects a few seconds later. That means a delayed two, followed by the Three Amigos but Cena hits him low for the DQ.

Rating: B. Cena wasn't ready to hang with Eddie in a long match (to be fair, not many people were on their best day) but Eddie is more than capable of carrying him to a good match. The rematch could be better but for a first match, this was about as good as it was going to get. At least neither lost clean though.

Post match Cena hits him with the chain to bust Eddie open. An FU onto the tire and it's big rim makes it even worse.

We look back at Brock destroying Zach Gowen last week, making me a much bigger Lesnar fan in the process.

Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

The winner gets Angle next week. Angle comes out to join commentary and the match starts after a break. Better than having thirty seconds of action and then going into a break. Back with Undertaker getting double teamed, including Brock hitting some shoulders in the corner. Show throws Undertaker down with a suplex so Brock can steal a near fall. You can imagine how well this goes and it starts with Undertaker being sent out to the floor.

Brock suplexes Show for two with Undertaker making the quick save. Undertaker starts slugging away and hits a jumping clothesline on Show (Angle: "Undertaker would probably miss me on that one.") but Brock takes him down. Show decks Lesnar but Undertaker reverses a chokeslam into a Fujiwara armbar.

That's broken up as well (they're certainly not deviating from a pattern here) and Undertaker is knocked outside with his hands getting caught in the ropes. Show chairs Undertaker down and growls a lot as we take a break. Back with Brock on the floor and some right hands rocking Show. A triangle choke puts Show in trouble so Brock makes another save. The chokeslam gets two with Show pulling the referee out and then chokeslamming Undertaker for two of his

own.

An F5 lays out Undertaker and Show makes ANOTHER save. Show chokeslams Brock for two and the kickout sends him up top for what looks to be a super chokeslam. Undertaker saves the ring from being broken and everyone is down with Show crotched on top. Brock goes up for a superplex of his own but gets caught in the Last Ride, leaving Show to fall off the top as Undertaker pins Lesnar.

Rating: D+. The constant near falls weren't really dramatic or anything as you knew it was going to be something big to get to the finish. It was entertaining enough though and that's a lot more than you can say about a lot of these matches. That being said, was there ANY reason not to have Big Show take the pin here? I mean....it's Big Show. Suddenly we're protecting him?

Angle and Undertaker do the big staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. It was nowhere near perfect but this was an entertaining show. Swap out the horrible Lesnar promo with pretty much anything else and this show is a lot better but what we got was fine. Make no mistake about it though: this was the Eddie Guerrero Show with the hometown crowd loving their hero like no one I've seen in a long time. Some of the stories have me interested and that's a nice feeling, especially after the mess that was Raw.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the 2018 Updated Version of the History of the WWE Championship in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history-of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Takeover: Philadelphia Preview

It's time, once again, for everybody to come about the NXT train. This weekend WWE is doing another one of its big multi-night marathons in a single city and it all starts with NXT "Takeover: Philadelphia". As usual, there's a five match card with all three titles on the line and two other matches to fill out the card. If this thing can live up to the rest of NXT's Takeover efforts, this should be excellent. Let's get to it.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era(c) vs. Authors of Pain

I could have sworn that this was supposed to be a cage match. These teams (along with Sanity) have been feuding on and off for months with the Undisputed Era coming away with the titles for the time being. However, the Authors of Pain are arguably the most dominant team in the history of NXT so there's a real chance that they could get the titles back here.

That being said, I'm taking the Undisputed Era as there's no reason to keep the Authors of Pain in NXT any longer (save for a feud with the debuting War Machine). The champs retaining and finally establishing themselves as the best of the three teams is the way to go and makes whoever can take them down look that much better. The match should be fun with the Undisputed Era cheating to win like they're supposed to.

Women's Title: Ember Moon(c) vs. Shayna Baszler

This is an interesting one in that it's not the most interesting thing in the world. Baszler has only been around for a few weeks now and is already one of the best characters in all of NXT. She knows exactly how to play the outsider bully, mainly because it feels so natural for her.

Throw in the good looking choke and it's hard to argue against her. On the other hand though, Moon doesn't really have a character. She has intense eyes and that's really about it, but she's Asuka's successor.

I'm going to take Moon retaining via DQ here, though seeing Baszler choke her out for the title wouldn't shock me. More than likely though, Baszler chokes her out but won't let go and loses the title as a result. The problem right now is that aside from Kairi Sane, there isn't another face to put the title on so Moon is probably the best option. Baszler will get the title one day though.

Kassius Ohno vs. Velveteen Dream

Ohno is a very valuable thing to have on the roster: the grizzled veteran who can wrestle a solid match while putting someone young over and making them look good at the same time. Dream is in need of a big win at the moment, having lost at "Takeover: WarGames" to Aleister Black and last week on "NXT" to Johnny Gargano. I think you get where I'm going with this.

Of course it's going to be Dream winning and there's really no doubt about this one. Throw him out there in the opener and let him take a bunch of big forearm to the head before hitting the Purple Rainmaker for the pin. It's a simple idea and the fans are going to eat up Dream's stuff, especially after his previous two great performances. Easy winner here though.

Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole

Extreme Rules. This might be the most interesting match on the show and there's a very good chance that it's going to be the best as well. Black is one of the best acts in NXT at the moment with one of the best finishers but Black is more of an acquired taste. He's a great talker, but at the same time he needs to be able to do something in the ring to back that up.

I'm going to take Black here but Cole winning is a possibility, especially with Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly available to run interference if necessary. I could see Black getting screwed out of the title, but Black getting an NXT Title shot in New Orleans makes a lot of sense as well, meaning he should win here. I'll take Black in a match that really could go either way.

NXT Title: Andrade Cien Almas(c) vs. Johnny Gargano

This is a different kind of story as they have a past together and there's a future for both guys but at the same time there isn't much going on between them at the moment. Gargano won a competition to become #1 contender and is in the middle of a huge redemption story and Almas feels more like a transitional champion, even though he's kind of redeeming himself at the same time.

That being said, Almas retains here when Tommaso Ciampa runs in for the interference and costs Gargano his chance at becoming champion. That sets up the mother of all grudge matches in New Orleans while Almas retains the title and gets to face Black, who can kick his head off and win the title....I think. It should be a fun match as they surprised me in Brooklyn, but I'm not sure they can top what they did there.

Overall, "Takeover: Philadelphia" doesn't seem like the best show on paper. Nothing really jumps off the page at me but that's been the case before and NXT has blown me away almost every time. Almas' time on top hasn't been the most thrilling in the world but they'll set something up to get things going soon enough, because that's how NXT does things. Let them show what they can do and everything will be fine.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the 2018 Updated Version of the History of the WWE Championship

in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history-of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Thought of the Day: Mankind Wasn't That Bright

This is what I think about at midnight.

So nineteen years ago, Mick Foley got his brains scrambled at Royal Rumble 1999 via about two dozen chair shots to the head. This allowed someone to play a tape of him saying I QUIT, which he would never say, thereby guaranteeing that he would defeat Rock. Well, in theory at least, but this isn't the brightest idea in the world.

They made it very clear that the only way to win would be to say I QUIT. They even made it clear that it had to be those words, even down to having Foley spell it out and count the letters. But given that Rock has never said "I" in his life, how was he supposed to get Rock to lose either? Saying THE ROCK QUITTS wouldn't do it, so how was Foley supposed to win? I know he's not exactly smart, but isn't he making this harder than he needed to?

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2016: This Was Their BEST Idea?

Royal Rumble 2016

Date: January 24, 2016

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 15,170

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Now this one actually has my interest for a change. A year ago, WWE decided that the right idea was to have WWE World Champion Roman Reigns fight everyone in a single match for the title. This is completely different as now he fights everyone for the US Title. Anyway, the whole thing is about the main event, as it should be, so let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Mark Henry/Jack Swagger vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Darren Young/Damien Sandow vs. Ascension

One fall to a finish and the winners go to the Rumble. I can't help but call JBL cute for suggesting that any of these four have a chance to win the Rumble. The fans want Sandow and just EXPLODE when he actually gets the tag. The Wind-Up Elbow gets two on Swagger before it's off to Young so the crowd can die all over again. Konnor tags himself in and it's a big eight way standoff as we take a break.

Back with Swagger powerslamming Konnor as we hear about the fans wanting some Sandow. D-Von gets crotched against the post so the fans change up to wanting Sexual Chocolate. Henry obliges with a hip swivel, which will probably get him fined for not focusing enough or some jazz like that. A D-VON chant gets him back to his feet because we need a long chinlock in a match that doesn't break eight minutes and has eight participants. Bubba comes in off the hot tag and cleans house with Young taking Wazzup. 3D gets two on Viktor but Henry steals the pin at 7:58.

Rating: D. This wasn't great but it did everything it needed to do. At the end of the day, other than MAYBE the Dudleyz, Swagger and

Henry were the only pairing that made sense here. Just let us have two former World Champions in there to fill in a few spots. It's not like anyone wanted to see Young or Ascension (a sign in the crowd called them today's joke and I can't say I disagree) in there so go with what makes sense.

Vince and Stephanie McMahon show up in a limo (So they're good at this point. Got it.) and talk about how awesome tonight is going to be and how fair it is to Reigns. Vince loves the idea, almost as much as he loves himself.

The opening video recaps the only thing that matters here with the tagline of One vs. All. I liked that last year and I still do.

Intercontinental Title: Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose is defending and this is last man standing. They go right after each other to start with Dean hammering away and biting Owens' head before scoring with the bulldog out of the corner. What looks like a tablet to the head gives Owens a breather and a superkick sets up the Cannonball through the barricade. A few chair shots keep Dean in trouble and Owens has a seat as the champ gets up.

Two chairs are set up in the middle of the ring but, just like putting a chair in the corner, whoever sets them up goes through them, meaning Ambrose backdrops him through the chairs. A suicide dive is countered into a ram into the apron followed by a whip into the steps for about a seven. With Ambrose getting up again, Owens loads up two tables on top of each other but the superplex is blocked, meaning we'll get back to the big crash later.

Dirty Deeds gets eight on Owens and another one onto a chair sends Owens rolling to the floor to land on his feet at nine. Eh that's kind of clever. The fans want Owens to fight (multiple times even) but Dean elbows him through a table. That's still not enough so Dean says he hates Owens. Kevin: "I hate you too!" Back in and Owens' swinging fisherman's superplex sends Dean through another table to give Kevin a nine count. Owens lays Dean on a set of chairs but the champ pops up and shoves him through the double tables to retain at 20:50.

Rating: B+. It's no masterpiece but this is the kind of show that only needs one great match to be a classic, making this a bonus. The big spot at the end was a good choice and I kind of like that over a finisher onto something made of metal. It's a good match and a good

way to open things up since the rest of the card is just a way to get to the main event.

We recap heel New Day (what a weird concept, though they're rapidly turning face here) vs. the Usos, which has involved Chris Jericho destroying Francesca to freak Woods out.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Usos

New Day is defending (of course) and there's no Woods. Kofi asks for a moment of silence for Francesca but here's Woods with a new trombone named Francesca II. See, he's in mourning but a man has, ahem, needs. This isn't it for them tonight though as New Day wants the World Title so 2016 can be all gold everything. Kofi: "GOLDEN UNICORNS!" Woods: "Stay golden pony boy."

The twins take over to start and the fans aren't all that thrilled. A jawbreaker puts Jimmy down and it's off to Big E. for some hip swiveling, only to have Jey dropkick him into the barricade. Woods proves his worth to the team by dropping Jey to take over again. Sometimes it's a bit harder to get rid of those old heel tendencies you see. The fans demand a Francesca performance but Woods plays when he wants to, which isn't while Kofi has Jey in a chinlock.

The Warrior Splash gives Big E. two as JBL talks about NFL coin flips. A spinning enziguiri drops Kofi and there's the hot tag to Jimmy so house can be cleaned. Normally the fans are a bit more enthusiastic about that but New Day is just WAY too popular here for fans to get behind the Usos.

Everything breaks down and a Whisper in the Wind gets two on Big E. A belly to belly gets the same on Jey but the spear through the ropes is blocked by a raised knee. Why not just step to the side? The second attempt works a bit better but it's too early for the Midnight Hour. Jey superkicks Kofi into the Superfly Splash for two as a foot goes on the rope. Kofi eats another superkick but a blind tag brings in Big E. for the Big Ending to retain at 10:52.

Rating: B-. This took some time to get rolling but once everything broke down, it was as good as you would expect from these teams. New Day is clearly the future of the division despite being champs for nearly five months at this point. Catching a top rope splash out of the air is really impressive as the champs continue to show that they have the ring work to back up their charisma.

We look back at Brock Lesnar beating up the League of Nations, followed by Reigns spearing Brock. The Wyatts then beat Reigns and Brock up to make themselves a threat for later tonight.

The Wyatts say they'll win the title for Bray tonight. Singing ensues.

US Title: Kalisto vs. Alberto Del Rio

Kalisto is challenging and they've been trading the title for a few weeks now. Kalisto starts fast with the strikes to send him outside for a suicide dive. Now you might think this is competitive, but JBL is right there to hammer in the ideas that David NEVER beats Goliath and that Kalisto is going to get destroyed. You know, in case you're dumb enough to not get the idea here.

Back in and Del Rio kicks him down, followed by a top rope ax handle for two. That means JBL gets to talk about how fun it is to beat up luchadors. Two knees to the ribs have Kalisto in more trouble and it's time to go after the mask. There's some good heel psychology in there about someone with Del Rio knowing the tradition of the mask and going after it anyway but the announcers gloss over it.

Del Rio's low superkick gets two and Kalisto gets the same off a springboard tornado DDT. Kalisto goes up top but gets caught in a reverse superplex. They HORRIBLY botch a Code Red (the sunset bomb) so Kalisto goes straight to the Salida Del Sol for two. Del Rio unhooks a turnbuckle pad and of course he goes into it, setting up another Salida Del Sol for the pin and the title at 11:32.

Rating: C+. Not bad here but the commentary was driving me crazy here. JBL kept talking about how there was NO WAY the smaller guy could win and that's exactly what we saw happening. There's a difference between setting up an idea and just hammering it into the ground, which is what we had here. The match itself was fine but I do wonder how they screwed up Kalisto. He might not have been a future World Champion but he's someone that could have been a fixture in the midcard. Instead, he's just a guy on the roster because we needed to feed him to Rusev down the line. You know, to feed him to Reigns.

Pre-show recap.

Paul Heyman comes up to Stephanie and says they can renegotiate Lesnar's contract after he wins the Rumble. Stephanie is cool with

that as long as Reigns is taken to Suplex City. Why she hates Reigns isn't clear but I'd assume it's because she just feels like it at the moment.

Recap of Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch. They were best friends but Charlotte won the title and realized she didn't need Becky anymore. Becky talked Ric Flair into accepting the title shot for his daughter and we're ready to roll.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Charlotte is defending and has her dad with her. Feeling out process to start with Charlotte shouldering her down. Becky goes right for the arm and the fans are entirely behind her. The announcers explain the Figure Eight as Charlotte grabs an armbar of her own. Back up and a kick to the chest puts Charlotte on the floor where Ric gets in Becky's way. A clothesline drops the champ again so Flair kisses Becky for your weekly case of sexual assault (edited off the Network).

Charlotte takes over and grabs a cravate as the fans are WAY behind Becky here. Like moreso than usual. Thankfully Charlotte mocks the chants before doing the headscissor faceplants followed by the Figure Four necklock. Becky gets out and starts firing off dropkicks to take over but a neckbreaker puts Charlotte right back in control.

The Bexploder gets two and Charlotte's spear gets the same. You can hear Flair freaking out as only he can and it wouldn't be the same without that screaming. Becky gets a cross armbreaker out of the corner and the fans get right back into this, only to have a powerbomb break the hold to give Charlotte two. The Disarm-Her goes on but Flair throws his jacket at Becky for the distraction, allowing Charlotte to get another spear to retain at 11:34.

Rating: B. Another good match between the two of them but I'm really starting to roll my eyes at Flair's interference. We get the concept already and there's no need to keep doing it over and over. At some point Charlotte needs to drop him and once that happens, she's going to go through the roof, which would turn out to be in a bigger way than anyone could have expected.

Charlotte beats on Becky post match but here's Sasha Banks for the save and Bank Statement on the champ. Cole: "Sasha Banks making a statement with the Bank Statement!" I bet he spent two weeks coming up with that one.

Some fans went to the Performance Center under the ruse of being part of a focus group. They wound up getting to meet a full tour of the facility and met most of the NXT roster. Note to self: sign up for focus groups.

Rumble By the Numbers video, which is still one of my favorite annual traditions. This is tied in with the stats that Reigns, who is entering at #1, has to overcome to retain the title.

WWE World Title: Royal Rumble

Reigns is defending and comes in at #1, making the tagline One vs. All. We have 90 second intervals here and that's rarely a good thing. I had forgotten about Reigns' through the crowd entrance and how unfitting it was. Can you imagine him trying to pull that today without getting pummeled? Anyway Reigns is in at #2 and Rusev is in at #2, which is smart as they had an awesome final section to a battle royal on Smackdown back in 2015. They start slugging it out and even JBL knows they can't keep up this pace. Rusev gets in a spinwheel kick but can't throw him out. Well not over the top at least as he sends Roman through the ropes instead. The spear however is enough to put Rusev out as the clock begins.

And then, in perhaps the dumbest production decision I've ever seen in WWE, the camera stays on Reigns' face as AJ STYLES makes his debut at #3. Like literally, the camera just locks in on Reigns as the crowd freaks out. They even posted a different cut of this on the WWE YouTube page because it was such a stupid visual. Thanks to the entrance taking forever, we only have time for AJ to not be able to hit the Styles Clash and a Samoan drop planting AJ.

Tyler Breeze is in at #4 and the fans are COMPLETELY behind AJ, which isn't all that surprising. Breeze scores with a few right hands before a pretty unnecessary double team gets rid of him. Curtis Axel (with the WAY too over Social Outcasts) is in at #5 to send AJ into the buckle, earning himself some forearms to the face. Reigns gets back up and the Outcasts are beaten down until AJ clotheslines Axel out (JBL: "The chains are back on."). Chris Jericho is in at #6 and we've got a snappy triple threat going here.

AJ gets knocked down and Reigns is sent into the post, leaving Styles to have to fight out of the Walls. Kane is in at #7 and Cole is WAY too fast to call him the greatest performer in the Rumble's history. Wouldn't it have helped if he had actually WON THE THING a

time or two Cole? Styles goes right after the monster but gets kicked down and all four head to a corner until Goldust is in at #8. Not a lot happens here other than the fans chanting for AJ even more because he debuted as a star, which only a handful of people get to do. Ryback is in at #9 and gets to clean house without eliminating anyone.

AJ clotheslines Reigns in the corner to another big pop and it's Kofi Kingston in at #10 (with New Day staying at ringside) so we can just start the clock for the big save. At the moment we have Reigns, Styles, Jericho, Kane, Goldust, Ryback and Kingston. AJ comes off the top to hit Jericho and it's Titus O'Neil in at #11. Styles and Jericho take backbreakers and Goldust is tossed. Kofi almost gets rid of Reigns and is somehow even more popular than he's been all night.

R-Truth is in at #12 and of course he pulls out a ladder and climbs up to retrieve...nothing. I forgot how much I enjoyed Truth's confused gimmick. Kane pulls him down and tosses him out before throwing the ladder out as a bonus. A clothesline puts Kofi over the top and right onto Big E.'s shoulders for the big save. Eh not as good as some I've seen but you can't have a classic every year. Luke Harper is in at #13 and here are Vince and the League of Nations to pull Roman to the floor (under the ropes of course). The champ is sent into the steps and kicked in the face by multiple members of the team.

This goes on so long that Stardust comes in at #14. Rusev splashes Reigns through the table as we have NO IDEA what is going on in the ring during all this. While we were gone, Jericho eliminated Kingston which was of course ignored by the announcers. Now for the stupid part: Vince and the Nation JUST LEAVES.

Like, they don't throw him inside and then back out. They don't pay someone off to get rid of Reigns. They don't do anything but leave while Reigns is taken out on a stretcher. You would think Vince would have learned his lesson from Steve Austin in 1999 but he's a heel so this is just really stupid instead of head caving in stupid. Big Show comes in at #15 and eliminates Titus and Ryback, giving us a lineup of Reigns (being taken out), Styles, Jericho, Kane, Harper, Stardust and Show. Reigns is now walking in front of the stretcher, making this even less of a good idea.

Styles escapes a chokeslam and it's Neville in at #16. The rapid fire kicks stagger some people as Reigns is shown WALKING TO THE BACK UNDER HIS OWN POWER. What a hero he certainly is. Braun Strowman is in at #17 and hopefully some people are about to be tossed. Strowman casually eliminates Kane and has the showdown with Big Show. The standing choke (what a stupid move) knocks Show out and Strowman eliminates him a few seconds later.

A limping Kevin Owens is in at #18 and that's good for one heck of a pop. Styles is there to meet him and you know the fans are into that. Neville throws AJ to the apron and Kevin adds a superkick to get rid of Styles, making himself a full on heel once again. Dean Ambrose is in at #19 and Owens is waiting on him to keep up the brawl from earlier. Since there's nothing like a Royal Rumble for the World Title going on, let's look at the Reigns beatdown from earlier.

Sami Zayn is in at #20 for a main roster cameo and of course he goes after Owens in a slugout. Kevin is gone in a hurry and we've got Reigns (not in the ring), Harper, Stardust, Jericho, Zayn, Ambrose, Neville and Strowman. Erick Rowan joins the field at #21 as the Wyatts are strong in this one. Harper and Rowan get together to get rid of Stardust and Neville as Strowman chokes Jericho out.

Mark Henry is in at #22 and is eliminated by the Wyatts in less than a minute. Strowman tosses Sami leaving Ambrose and Jericho to fight the monsters. Cole: "I don't see any help coming anytime soon." The clock is ticking down as he says this so you know it's going to be someone big. As you might expect, Brock Lesnar is in at #23 and the place just goes NUTS.

It's time for some suplexes with Harper and Rowan flying across the ring (not eliminated). It takes three clotheslines to drop Strowman and there goes Rowan. Harper takes a German suplex but Brock can't suplex Strowman. Now THAT is a rub. Braun goes shoulder first into the post and another clothesline puts him down. Jack Swagger is in at #24 and lasts about fifteen seconds before Lesnar gets rid of him. More suplexes abound as Lesnar is rapidly running out of things to do.

The Miz is in at #25, giving us Reigns (you know the drill by now), Jericho, Harper, Strowman, Ambrose, Lesnar and Miz, who walks around for a bit before going in to face Brock. He actually gets on

commentary and threatens to turn Disney World into Mizney World. Harper takes another German suplex and Strowman gets shouldered in the corner. That's enough to get rid of Harper and Alberto Del Rio is in at #26. Alberto and Dean double team Lesnar in the corner and are promptly launched across the ring. Some clotheslines get rid of Strowman and the fans are VERY pleased.

Bray Wyatt gets lucky #27 and the other three Wyatts all get back in to pummel Brock. Brock tosses the three eliminated guys out again and suplexes Bray but Harper saves the F5 with a kick to the chest (or face if you're Cole). Unlike Vince and the League (who did almost the same thing earlier), Bray is smart enough to ELIMINATE BROCK, who responds by.....calmly walking away instead of, you know, breaking people in half and making a throw rug out of their entrails.

Dolph Ziggler is in at #28 and it's FINALLY time for Miz to get in. A Skull Crushing Finale plants Dolph but Miz can't put him out. Sheamus is in at #29 but Reigns jumps him in the aisle, over twenty four minutes after he left and over HALF AN HOUR after the beatdown started. Naturally he's booed out of the building but still manages to get rid of Del Rio. I get that they're trying to repeat the 1999 Royal Rumble and ignoring the fact that they're copying the worst Rumble of all time, but there's a big stretch between the biggest star of all time and Roman Reigns.

Anyway Roman fights Bray for a bit and it's HHH in at #30 for one of the most obvious "swerves" in recent history. The final group is Reigns, Jericho, Ambrose, Wyatt, Ziggler, Sheamus and HHH, who gets a HUGE pop because the fans have a way out of Reigns winning the whole thing. Why the announcers have HHH stats despite him being A COMPLETE SURPRISE isn't clear but we'll chalk it up to the regular way of making it clear that this is entirely staged.

HHH and Reigns do the big staredown and the top heel is suddenly the big hero because that's how little people care about Reigns. Ziggler charges into a Pedigree like a goof and Wyatt takes a spear so Reigns can have equal power. The facebuster looks to set up a Pedigree on Reigns but Sheamus and Ambrose throw them both to the apron. Jericho bulldogs Bray down and hits a Lionsault but takes a Zig Zag. A superkick can't knock HHH off the apron and he gets back in to eliminate Ziggler a few seconds later.

Bray and HHH have a very interesting staredown which isn't likely to go anywhere. Sheamus saves HHH from Sister Abigail and Bray is tossed. Dean and Sheamus fight for a bit until Jericho dives on Ambrose. A Codebreaker puts HHH down but Dean eliminates Jericho to get us down to four. Dean eats a Brogue Kick but sidesteps a charge to get rid of Sheamus, followed by HHH eliminating Reigns to the pop of the night.

So we're down to Ambrose vs. HHH and Reigns stays on the floor instead of helping his buddy due to a combination of stupidity, honor and plot convenience. The rebound lariat (which Cole calls, I kid you not, the Wacky Line) has HHH in trouble and Dean sends him to the apron, only to be backdropped to the floor to make HHH the winner and champion at 1:01:42.

Rating: A-. This one took a good while to get going but once Reigns left, everything picked up. That's where everything starts falling apart. This match is all about Reigns and the problem is very simple: people don't seem to like him. It says a lot that Jericho lasted 51 minutes and Reigns officially went 58 though only one of them needed half an hour of rest. That right there is proof positive that Reigns probably isn't going to be get cheered most of the time. This made him look very lame and that's one of the worst things you can do to a star. Having him WALK OUT OF THE ARENA was just horrible and the worst possible idea.

The rest of the match was pretty awesome though as you had everyone fighting over the title. Unfortunately there are some major holes, such as Brock just walking away and having to wait for Reigns to come back. It's not the best Rumble of all time as Reigns loomed over the whole thing but having the title on the line was a great idea and something I wish they did more often than every twenty four years. Give us some better options for the possible winner and ANYTHING other than Reigns vs. HHH as the big story and this is one of the best of all time.

HHH and family celebrate as fireworks take us out.

Overall Rating: A. This was a one match show and anything else worth watching on the show (such as the opener) was going to be more than enough to make this awesome. While it wound up setting the stage for the worst Wrestlemania in a long time, at least we have an awesome Royal Rumble to get us there. WWE had a lot of potential at this

point, especially considering all the injuries they had at the time. It's a strong Rumble, assuming you ignore the completely backwards reactions for Reigns.

Ratings Comparison

Mark Henry/Jack Swagger vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Darren Young/Damien Sandow vs. Ascension

Original: D+

Redo: D

Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Original: B

Redo: B+

New Day vs. Usos

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Alberto Del Rio vs. Kalisto

Original: C

Redo: C+

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch:

Original: C-

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: A-

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

What was up with me hating the women like that?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2016/01/24/royal-rumble-2016-this-rumble-game-thing/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the 2018 Updated Version of the History of the WWE Championship in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history-of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

On the Big Royal Rumble Matches

We're almost to one of my favorite matches of the year as the Royal Rumble is almost upon us. Well the double Royal Rumble in this case but you get the idea. The interesting thing this time around is either Royal Rumble could go in multiple directions and that makes things a lot more fun. So what to do with each one? Or the title matches for that matter?

We'll start with the men's Rumble, which is probably the hardest of the four top matches to pick. You really could go in several different ways, but the best option would [seem to be either Roman Reigns or Shinsuke Nakamura](#), who are the favorites on at least one betting site. The more I think about it the more I'm leaning towards Reigns, as you can imagine WWE wanting to "get it right" in Philadelphia this time around.

As for the women's Rumble....dang again. While it's hard to imagine anyone not named Asuka winning this, the fun part [might be guessing who is going to be in the thing](#). We already know eighteen names announced, leaving twelve in the air for either legends or NXT

talent. I can't imagine we see Ronda Rousey but after this week's Raw, Trish Stratus and the Bella Twins are all strong possibilities. Asuka will win, but the fun part is seeing who she defeats to get there.

Then we have the World Title matches with one of them being a little easier to predict than the other. That would be the WWE Championship match as I can't imagine Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens taking the title from AJ Styles and becoming the co-champions. AJ should retain here, and then we can figure out an opponent for him down the road (likely at Fastlane).

Finally there's the Universal Title match and really, there isn't a ton of doubt here either. Roman Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar is all but chiseled into stone for Wrestlemania XXXIV in New Orleans. With Kane around, they can easily keep the title on Lesnar without taking anything away from Braun Strowman. That's especially important with Strowman [having a pretty big match on the Wrestlemania card](#).

The show should be a lot of fun, but those Rumble matches alone should make the card worth seeing. They're much more interesting than the two World Title matches, mainly due to the wide open fields. It's one of my favorite nights of the year and this time around the best part is doubled.

Main Event – January 25, 2018: They Picked A Side

Main Event

Date: January 25, 2018

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

And you thought the Manhattan Center was going to be forgotten. With one of the biggest episodes in the history of Monday Night Raw and the go home show for the Royal Rumble, this show could look very

different compared to the regular weeks. That's not to say it'll be bad, but expect some flashbacks to nostalgia. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Goldust vs. Curt Hawkins

Hawkins hides in the ropes to start but Goldust takes his deep breath and spits it back out in Hawkins' face. Just like last week, Hawkins lays down and offers a pin, even raising his own leg. The small package attempt has Nigel SHOCKED at Curt's attempt at cheating because Nigel is good on that front. A chinlock doesn't get Hawkins very far as Goldust hits his uppercut from the knees into a rollup for the pin at 3:28.

Rating: D. What in the world does it mean when you're losing to an uppercut into a rollup? Hawkins is finding new ways to lose but he's around so often that he's kind of grown on me. There almost has to be a payoff of some sort and that could be a very fun moment when it finally happens. Nothing match of course, but it's just Main Event.

Here's the big history package from Raw 25. Still awesome.

From Raw.

Back in the arena, Stephanie introduces Vince, who absolutely has to be here for the opening sequence. Vince nearly dances in the ring and says twenty five years is quite the accomplishment. The fans chant THANK YOU VINCE (which Stephanie explains to him) but Vince says enough of that and we're off to the festivities. Vince goes to leave but Stephanie and Shane have a present for him.

They have a plaque commemorating his twenty five years of Raw...and he's not happy. Vince goes on a rant about it being cheap and how plaque is the horrible stuff on the people of Brooklyn's teeth. There's only one person who should be thanked for all of this and that's Vince himself. As he goes off about how great he is.....the glass shatters.

After Austin does his usual entrance, Vince praises Austin's look but says he's had his own share of health problems. His bones are broken and brittle and he has arthritis and he even lives in a

retirement home. Vince: "But my son Shane is in his prime!" Austin raises Shane's hand and gives him a Stunner to the delight of the fans. Vince produces beers and the fans chant ONE MORE TIME! Vince: "I don't think Shane can take another one!" They drink their beer and hug but Austin looks at Vince, followed by one more Stunner for old times' sake. For some reason Shane gets up and takes one more Stunner.

From Raw again.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Roman Reigns

Miz is challenging. They take their time to start until Reigns pops him with a right hand. The Miztourage offers a distraction though and Miz sends him into the steps as we take a break. Back with Reigns hitting the corner clotheslines, followed by a running big boot. The apron dropkick connects but the spear is countered into a rollup for two with the feet on the ropes. The YES Kicks keep Roman in trouble but the big kick is countered into a sitout powerbomb for two.

Another apron dropkick takes the Miztourage out and Reigns slips out of the Skull Crushing Finale for another Superman Punch. Bo Dallas grabs the foot though and Miz hits his corner clothesline. That means a double ejection but Reigns hits them one more time, allowing the Skull Crushing Finale to connect for two. Back up and Reigns tries the spear but hits an exposed turnbuckle pad. The Skull Crushing Finale makes Miz an eight time champion at 13:13. A replay shows that Miz got the pad off when Reigns was beating up the Miztourage for a nice surprise.

Rating: C. This was a booking decision more than anything else and there's nothing wrong with that. The loss lets Reigns drop the title before he wins the Universal Title at Wrestlemania (THIS TIME FOR SURE!) and the win gives Miz something else to do, especially now that he's less than three months away from the most combined days as champion (and only one reign behind Chris Jericho's record).

Kalisto/Gran Metalik vs. TJP/Jack Gallagher

TJP charges at Metalik to start and gets chopped in the chest. A springboard armdrag is enough to sent TJP crawling over to Jack ala Eddie Guerrero. Jack sends Metalik into the corner and we take a break. REALLY? Back with Kalisto coming in for a hurricanrana driver on TJP. Metalik drops the elbow and the Metalik Driver is good for the pin at 6:04. Not enough shown to rate but they were REALLY rushing here.

We get some quick clips of AJ Styles vs. Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens from Smackdown.

We'll close it out from Raw.

Angle brings out all of the legends and people from the poker game to surround the ring for the closing segment as we go to a break at 11:03. Back with Angle bringing out Braun Strowman and Kane, who are held apart by a lot of the wrestlers. Paul Heyman comes out and introduces Brock Lesnar for a fight. Here's Brock...and everyone but Kane and Strowman bail in fear. Brock runs over Strowman and hits an F5 on Kane but Strowman is back in to knock Lesnar to the floor. The running powerslam through the announcers' table plants Lesnar to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was the VERY shortened version of Monday's show and seemed to focus a lot more on Sunday than this past week's show. That's not a bad thing as it seemed a lot more focused than the big show on Monday. It's still not good or anything due to the lame original matches, but the stuff from Monday, especially the video package, is worth seeing.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2015: They Need To Wake Up

Royal Rumble 2015

Date: January 25, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 17,164

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

Now this is one I've been looking forward to and dreading at the same time. I actually didn't mind the main event the first time around but ever since then I haven't been able to think of a single good thing that match did. It should be interesting (hopefully) to see how far this thing has fallen in just a year. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Talk about a year making a big difference. Cesaro and Kidd looked to be the hottest team in years and now they're both out while New Day, who looked to be a horrible disaster, actually IS the hottest team in years. As usual, time can change so much in wrestling. As usual, Woods is the odd man out here. Adam Rose is here with Kidd/Cesaro for no adequately explained reason but the fans would rather cheer for Cesaro anyway.

Kidd and Big E. get things going as the announcers talk about the Rumble instead. Ok to be fair, it's a pre-show tag match with nothing on the line so I can live with it here. Big E. grabs a few backbreakers to start before it's off to Kofi for two off a dropkick. Cesaro comes in for a BIG reaction and you can tell who the star of this match is going to be.

It's quickly back to Big E. who takes over with a shoulder in the corner, followed by a middle rope cross body from Kofi. Lawler: "I like New Day but I'm excited to see what they're going to evolve into." Cesaro and Kidd take Kofi into the corner and I still don't

get why Rose is on the floor. Like, I don't remember that in the slightest and it's bizarre to see a year later. The Cesaro Swing into the dropkick (still awesome) gets two and we take a break.

Back with Cesaro holding Kofi in a chinlock but Kingston comes back with a dropkick to Kidd. Big E. starts cleaning house with clotheslines and the fans are REALLY not pleased. Cesaro charges into a Rock Bottom (well close enough to one) out of the corner for two. Kidd is sent to the floor for a flip dive from Kofi, followed by Big E. spearing Cesaro through the ropes for a big crash.

It's Cesaro on his own against both guys but Big E. is sent outside and Kofi gets kicked in the head, setting up a superplex into a springboard elbow from Kidd for a VERY close two. A sunset flip gets two on Kofi with Cesaro holding Kidd in place for a smart move. Trouble in Paradise is countered into the Sharpshooter but Big E. makes the save with a belly to belly. Rose gets on the apron and gets kicked in the head, only to have Kidd grab a fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin on Kofi at 11:03.

Rating: B-. Well that worked. This is why having a hot tag division is so important: you can wake up the crowd in a match that really doesn't matter either way because both teams looked great. New Day could clearly go in the ring but it would still be a few months before they really figured it out. Well that and until they were allowed to have some personality, which was the cure all along.

The opening video is about finding the moment that cements what you are. However, there can only be one. Tonight, someone's moment becomes a reality. The triple threat gets a little attention as well.

New Age Outlaws vs. Ascension

This is fallout from the Outlaws, the NWO and Acolytes beating down the Ascension for not respecting the veterans enough or something. Yeah it ruined another act that was built up for over a year in NXT but HHH's buddies got a pay per view appearance out of it. Gunn and Viktor get things going and all it takes is a hiptoss to draw the YOU STILL GOT IT chant. Fans get easier to impress every year. Dogg comes in for the shaky knee drop on Konnor but the young guys take over with a chinlock.

As the match slows down (likely so the Outlaws can breathe), JBL regales us with tales of Bullet Bob Armstrong vs. Buddy Colt. Konnor

puts on a chinlock and Dogg taps, likely because tapping out wasn't a thing when he started. The match keeps going anyway with Dogg avoiding an elbow drop, only to be chinlocked down by Viktor. That goes nowhere and the hot tag brings in Billy to clean house, only to miss the Fameasser and walk into the Fall of Man for the pin at 5:26.

Rating: D. And of course this launched the Ascension up the card and into the Tag Team Title scene forevermore. Yeah of course they never recovered after getting beaten down by a bunch of old retired guys and then winning a meaningless match against a long past retired team because....yeah I think you know why this didn't work, or at least you should.

We look at Sting saving Cena from Big Show/Kane/Seth Rollins on Raw. Sting isn't on the show or anything but he had a cameo there of course. Cena winning however did get Dolph Ziggler, Ryback and Erick Rowan their jobs back but Rowan didn't qualify for the Rumble. At least the match meant something.

The Authority isn't pleased with Sting doing that WCW nonsense around here. Cue Paul Heyman who says Brock can help with their problems, whatever those are.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Damien Mizdow/Miz

The Usos are defending but Mizdow is the most over guy in the match. Speaking of things that have changed a lot in a year. The Usos took the titles from Miz/Mizdow to close out 2014 so this is the rematch. Jey and Miz get things going and the fans already want Mizdow. Something like a top rope Demolition Decapitator gets two on Miz as Cole recap Miz trying to get Naomi on their side with promises of Hollywood fame.

Miz gets crotched on top so Mizdow (gently) does the same, continuing the one idea act that somehow had fans cheering for him. Miz's top rope ax handle is punched out of the air so Mizdow goes up and dives into a punch from no one. The fans think Mizdow is awesome, meaning it's time for a chinlock from Miz himself. The Reality Check gets two but Miz won't tag Mizdow in. Again, this doesn't make a ton of sense as Miz is making himself wrestle the whole match by himself.

Anyway, Jimmy gets away and tags in Jey to take over with the running Umaga Attack in the corner but Miz grabs a DDT for two.

Everything breaks down and both Usos hit a dive to take out both challengers, though Jey almost misses Miz, drawing a rather rude chant from the fans.

Back in and Jey misses the Superfly Splash, allowing Miz to get two off the Skull Crushing Finale. The second attempt at the Splash connects but Mizdow breaks it up, drawing the loudest pop you will EVER hear for a heel breaking up a cover. Mizdow's Skull Crushing Finale gets two on Jimmy, who superkicks Miz into a powerbomb from Jey. Jimmy's Superfly Splash retains the titles at 9:20.

Rating: C-. Nothing special here as Miz/Mizdow's one joke is long past its point of interest and we're just waiting on Mizdow to turn, which would of course take too long to mean anything as WWE would screw it up again. It really is amazing how far the tag division has fallen in just a year as all the injuries and screwiness have turned the division on its head. The Usos are still the Usos though and that's all that matters.

The pre-show panel chats a bit and we look at the pre-show match.

J&J Security play the new WWE mobile game until Seth Rollins comes in to yell at them for not being serious enough. Rollins says he's been called the future but he's the right now.

Wrestlemania ad. I had forgotten how much I hated that theme song.

Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

No idea what the story here is but I'm sure it's Total Divas related. Nikki and Paige get things going with Paige not being able to Irish whip her. It's off to Natalya who gets two off a kick to the back of the head. Brie comes in to work on the arm as the announcers joke about which twin is older. I'm not sure why this is supposed to be funny but they certainly think it is. A double suplex puts Brie down and Paige does her slow, crawling cover for two.

Natalya comes in and covers as well but for some reason she isn't legal. Even Paige is confused as she grabs Brie again and now tags Natalya in all legal like. Brie gets two off a quick slam and it's back to Nikki for a Hennig neck snap. Lawler: "Name two countries and then a state." Cole: "It was a joke." It's as random as it sounds. Now it's off to Lawler approving of the Bellas' looks as they take turns on Natalya for some near falls.

Brie puts on a chinlock for a bit before both Bellas grab a leg and

roll forward to flip Natalya onto the back of her head. Nikki puts on a headscissors and does push-ups to drive Natalya's face mere inches away from the mat. Natalya powers up and drops Nikki on her back for the break and avoids a clothesline, only to have Brie pull Paige off the apron. Nikki's big forearm puts Natalya away at 8:02.

Rating: D. We don't even have time for a hot tag? This wasn't much to see but again, it's all about the Bellas because they're the stars on Total Divas and know how to act like the Kardashians or whatever. Nikki would get a lot better after another six months on top of the division or so, but that would be a very long six months.

Roman Reigns says he'll beat his performance from last year.

Stardust does his usual and Goldust says he's right.

Rusev says he'll win and promises to crush whoever wins.

Miz says this is his year and Mizdow repeats everything. Again: that's not what a stunt double does.

Big Show says he's not mortal because he's a giant.

Fandango says no one understands the power of the tango.

YES, Daniel Bryan thinks he can get back to the main event of Wrestlemania.

We recap the triple threat for the World Title. Rollins tried to cash in Money in the Bank on Lesnar at Night of Champions while Cena was challenging, triggering a feud between Rollins and Cena. Tonight they both get their shot in what should be awesome.

WWE World Title: John Cena vs. Seth Rollins vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar is defending and this is one fall to a finish. The fans just explode on Cena with the JOHN CENA SUCKS song making its return. I was there when it debuted and that's a pure thing of brilliance. Lesnar on the other hand is treated....well about how you would expect Philadelphia to react to him. Rollins bails to start and there's the first German suplex to Cena. Another one drops Cena again so J&J come in, only to get a German of their own.

Rollins kicks Cena in the head but gets pulled inside to face Brock all alone. It's time for more German suplexes and the fans loudly applaud. There's a regular suplex to Rollins and we get an ECW chant. Brock grabs a Kimura on Cena but John lifts him up, allowing Seth to springboard in with a knee to the champ. Cena and Rollins

get smart and double team Lesnar, only to have Seth throw John to the floor for one off an AA.

Brock pops up like a daisy and sends both of them outside, only to have Rollins knock him into the steps. As J&J are in a heap next to the barricade, Cena starts his usual finishing sequence on Rollins but Lesnar breaks up the Shuffle with another German suplex. Seth breaks up the rolling Germans though as he needs Cena to help fight against Brock. Makes sense. A knee to the back puts Brock on the floor but the champ is right back in for the save as Seth covers Cena.

Back up and Cena throws Rollins to the floor and actually drops Brock with some clotheslines. Seth pulls Cena outside and tries a springboard, only to get caught in a big F5. That is some terrifying strength. Brock loads up a table for some reason so Cena gives him three straight AA's for two with Rollins making a last second save. There's a Curb Stomp from Seth and this time Cena has to dive in and break up the cover. The fans think this is awesome (indeed) as everyone heads outside, where Cena spears Lesnar through the barricade.

Brock keeps getting up so Cena throws him into the steps and blasts him in the face for good measure, knocking the champ onto the announcers' table. Rollins feels left out so he drives Brock through with a HUGE top rope elbow and Cena is the only one standing. The non-Lesnars head back inside and Seth hits a quick low superkick for two. The AA doesn't work so Cena Batista Bombs him for a VERY near fall.

Not to be outdone, Rollins reverses a superplex attempt into a running Buckle Bomb for two more. Both guys are spent so Rollins tries a Curb Stomp, only to get caught in the STF. Cue J&J from their comas for the save as a stretcher comes out for Brock. There's a TripleBomb for two on Cena but he ducks a briefcase shot and AA's both J's at the same time. He should not be able to do that twenty minutes into a match this physical. Or any match for that matter.

Another AA gets two on Rollins and the Curb Stomp gets the same on Cena as the fans are freaking out on these kickouts. We're told Brock has at least a broken rib as Rollins busts out the Phoenix Splash on Cena. Not that it matters as a TICKED OFF Brock gets back in for some German suplexes, only to have Seth hit him in the face

with the briefcase. Rollins loads up a Curb Stomp onto the case but you don't try that on Lesnar, as he counters with a HUGE F5 to retain at 22:42.

Rating: A. Good grief what a battle. This was the night where Rollins became a star and people knew that he was going to be champion soon. Cena put in his normal amazing performance here as well, but good night Brock looked like a monster. This is the beast that WWE wanted to build up for someone to take down and it worked perfectly here. Just outstanding action here with all three looking like they had been through a war. This was the instant match of the year leader and it would take something special to knock it off.

Brock walks off as the medics are stunned.

Rumble By The Numbers video.

Royal Rumble

Good luck following that. Miz is #1 and R-Truth is #2 with 90 second intervals. They start slowly (smart here) until Truth gets in a few pelvic thrusts. Truth is sent to the apron a few times and gets crotched on the top until Bubba Ray Dudley makes a big surprise return at #3. You think that might wake the Philadelphia fans up a bit? Bubba is fired up to start and gives Miz the Dusty punches before R-Truth plays D-Von (I'm not touching that one) on What's Up.

Now it's table time but Miz gets up, only to be put back down with a 3D. There go Miz and Truth as Luke Harper is in at #4 for a hoss fight. They slug it out boo/yay style but Harper elbows out of a Bubba Bomb. A big clothesline drops Harper but Bray Wyatt is in at #5. Bubba isn't sure what to make of him and Bray does his big freaky smile. The fans want D-Von (fair enough idea) but Bray sends Bubba into a clothesline and dumps him a few seconds later.

Harper and Wyatt stare at each other and Curtis Axel is in at #6, only to have Erick Rowan jump him from behind and destroy him, kicking off Axelmania because Axel was never officially eliminated. Rowan (not part of the Family at this point) gets in and teases a reunion against Bray, only to be quickly double teamed. Erick almost gets Harper out but Bray dumps them both and points to the sign. In another surprise return, the Boogeyman is in at #7. Cole: "It's the eater of worlds against the eater of worms!" His entrance takes forever and Bray dumps him like the jobber that he is.

Sin Cara is in at #8 and gets in a few shots, only to get punched out of the air. Sister Abigail sets up another elimination and Bray is on a roll. With no one to fight, Bray grabs a mic and issues an open challenge to everyone in the back because this is his year. It's time to sing until Zack Ryder is in at #9 (apparently returning from shoulder surgery), only to be eliminated even faster than Cara.

NOW things get interesting as Daniel Bryan is in at #10 to one of the loudest reactions you'll hear since....well since the last time Bryan was in a big match probably. Daniel speeds things up a lot with some running dropkicks in the corner as JBL tells Bryan not to go so hard because he needs to pace himself. Preach it JBL. A middle rope hurricanrana puts Bray down and it's Fandango in at #11. Well that's quite the drop in star power. He goes after Bryan but stops to dance, allowing Bryan to flip out of a belly to back suplex.

We go old school (way old school actually) with an airplane spin until Tyson Kidd (with his sweet theme song) is in at #12. A springboard missile dropkick drops Bryan and Fandango is quickly dropped into the corner, leaving Kidd and Bryan to slug it out in what could rock with about fifteen minutes. Stardust is in at #13, with Cole saying it's his Rumble debut. No Cole, no it's not. I get what he's going for and no Cole, no it's not.

Fandango and Stardust take turns skinning the cat before Stardust takes out the knee to get Fandango in trouble. Bryan eliminates Kidd but Bray is back up, only to be knocked through the ropes and out to the floor. You know that means a suicide dive from Daniel, followed by Diamond Dallas Page in at #14 for another surprise. Stardust is right on him but there's the first Diamond Cutter. JBL: "Do they teach that in yoga class?"

Fandango takes Page down but gets crotched on top, setting up a super Diamond Cutter for a very nice pop. Bray pounds on Page but takes a Diamond Cutter of his own, which is one step too far. The guy is a monster and shouldn't get dropped by a retired legend. Rusev comes in at #15 and superkicks Page before eliminating him. Side note: put Page in the Hall of Fame already. He has the resume and he's worthy of canonization after what he accomplished with Roberts and Hall.

Rusev dumps Fandango and puts Bryan on the apron, allowing Bray to knock Daniel out. That right there is pretty much it for this Rumble

meaning anything as we now know it's all about Reigns, even though the fans aren't going to be interested no matter what. I know you can't have Bryan win here, but you could at least give him a run near the end. This was a bad idea and the DANIEL BRYAN chants starting up a minute after he's gone don't bode well for the rest of the show.

Goldust is in at #16, giving us Goldust, Stardust, Rusev and Wyatt. The brothers go after each other for a bit until Kofi Kingston is in at #17. Kofi goes after Bray as the fans are booing everything presented to them no matter how watchable it is. All five wind up in one corner for some reason with no eliminations until Adam Rose is in at #18. The Rosebuds do the full entrance and catch Kofi as he's launched over the top for his annual save. Rusev dumps Rose with ease and kicks Kofi out a few seconds later to get us back to four. Roman Reigns is in at #19 and oh man this is going to be good.

The fans go nuts on Reigns as he fires off the running corner clotheslines and gets rid of Goldust and Stardust in rapid succession. Big E. is in at #20 and only gets kind of booed. Rusev is right on him and that gets booed loudly out of pure spite. Rusev hits a quick Cannonball on Big E. and it's Damien Mizdow in at #21 for a bit of relief from the fans. Miz cuts him off and wants the spot but Reigns shoves him down and Damien, egged on by the crowd, goes in as well.

Mizdow cleans some house but is thrown out by Rusev in less than twenty seconds. Dang they really don't want the fans to cheer anything tonight do they? Well other than Reigns of course. Jack Swagger is in at #22 and gets in a few nice shots until Bray cuts him off. We've got Wyatt, Swagger, Reigns, Big E. and Rusev at the moment until Ryback is in at #23. That means more power brawling with Meat Hooks and suplexes all around. Bray and Rusev continue their loose alliance to to get Ryback in trouble and there's a CM Punk chant for the latest false hope.

Kane is in at #24 and you know the people aren't happy with that. The match slows down a bit with Kane putting Ryback on the apron and Big E. doing the same thing to Swagger. Those attempts go as far as you would expect and it's Dean Ambrose in at #25 to give the fans something to actually cheer for. Dean goes for Rusev to start but has to stop a charging Kane. The fans are WAY into Ambrose as he's the first guy they've wanted to cheer for in about fifteen minutes.

Titus O'Neil is in at #26 and put out in four seconds by Ambrose and Reigns. So much for that one. The ring is getting too full and Intercontinental Champion Bad News Barrett makes it even worse at lucky #27. Everyone brawls against the ropes until it's Cesaro in at #28. Cesaro fires off a bunch of European uppercuts but he can only get Ambrose to the apron. Rusev dropkicks Big E. out to clear a little room but Big Show takes his place at #29.

Everyone goes after him but Show throws them away before starting a chokeslam contest with Kane. There goes Ryback thanks to both giants and Show dumps Swagger. A chokeslam sends Rusev rolling out under the ropes and it's Dolph Ziggler in at #30 (Remember when "who is #30" was the big question every year? Now it's just another entrant. It's kind of sad really.), giving us a final grouping of Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Kane, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro, Big Show and Ziggler.

Here's the thing: that's actually a stacked final set of people. Wyatt, Rusev, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro and Ziggler are crowd favorites, Big Show and Kane are at least good monsters to conquer and Reigns is....well that other group is really popular. The problem here is NO ONE but Reigns has a chance and the entire audience knows it, making this inevitable rather than anything interesting.

Ziggler superkicks the giants and takes them both down with the running DDT. Barrett is sent to the apron and superkicked out but Ziggler gets caught in the Cesaro Swing. Cesaro sends him to the apron but Dolph gets him to the apron for a superkick and an elimination, only to have Big Show and Kane put Ziggler out. That also gives Kane the all time record for Rumble eliminations.

The giants throw Bray out like he's no one (thanks for the 47 minutes Bray) and the fans are getting even angrier than they already were. So it's Ambrose/Reigns vs. Big Show/Kane with Rusev forgotten on the floor. Roman is bleeding from the mouth as he clotheslines Show down but he and Dean can't get rid of the bigger giant. Kane boots Roman in the face and the KO Punch knocks Dean silly, giving the giants an easy elimination. Reigns is suddenly even less popular as the inevitability gets that much closer. Even Cole acknowledges that the fans hate this.

Reigns fights back and the booing gets even louder until Kane and Show start fighting, because the last SIXTEEN YEARS of these two fighting isn't enough. They fight next to the ropes and Reigns gets

up for a double elimination, actually sending the fans into silence for the win.

Kane and Big Show get back in and beat Roman down even more, complete with a double chokeslam. The fans remember that Rusev is still in but here's the Rock to help save his cousin. He cleans house and drops both giants to a nice reaction until Reigns Superman Punches Show into a Rock Bottom. Rock leaves and Rusev gets back in, only to get speared and eliminated to really give Roman the win at 59:31.

Rating: D-. WOW. This is somehow so much worse than I remember it as WWE was clearly going out of its way to clear the path for Roman but the fans were having none of it. The problem here is a simple one: there was never any drama. Look back at 2012 for a second. The final two were Chris Jericho and Sheamus, neither of whom were interesting choices to win. However, the final three minutes of that match are AWESOME as you really didn't know who was going to win and both guys had a real chance. That's the easiest way to get fans to like the Rumble, or really most matches.

This Rumble is really more like 1993 than anything else. That was the year of Yokozuna and everyone knew it, though there was the slightest chance of the Undertaker winning it. However, Undertaker went out in the middle of the match and the rest was just a waiting game to see who was on Yokozuna's victim list.

That's exactly what happened here. Everyone knew Reigns was the heavy favorite no matter who they wanted to win and the ONLY person with a real chance of beating him was Bryan. This year Bryan was the twelfth man eliminated, leaving about thirty five minutes left in the match. That's a long time for the fans to sit around with little to no hope as things get worse and worse. The best false hope they had for the rest of the match was Ambrose and that just wasn't going to happen.

On top of that, you have Big Show and Kane as the big bads for Reigns to conquer. That's fine on paper, until you look at all the papers labeled "Raw Results" where you see how many times he and everyone else has beaten both of them. Instead of some group of the popular guys at the end, it was Kane and Big Show for the first ending. Then there's Rusev for the false hope spot but Reigns destroyed him too before winning.

So yeah, this was one big mess all designed for Reigns to look like a hero and it failed miserably. It boils down to a simple concept that actually takes me back to the Russo days to a degree: you have to earn it. The problem here is Reigns hasn't really accomplished anything to earn this spot and the fans are rejecting him. Austin dominating the 1998 Rumble worked because the fans had seen Austin go through a lot of wars to earn the right to be the top dog. Reigns' big moment was a win over Randy Orton at Summerslam 2014. That's not exactly huge and the fans hadn't forgotten.

Ignoring the Reigns part for a minute, this was a really dull match. Bubba was a cool surprise and Page was good for a Diamond Cutter, but Boogeyman? Other than that and Bray's dominance (which went nowhere), this was really dull stuff. Kofi being caught by the Rosebuds was a good quick chuckle but really low on his list of saves. Just a horrible Rumble from start to finish with only a few bright spots throughout.

Rock poses with Reigns and the fans STILL boo. The Authority comes out to glare a lot as Reigns celebrates and points at the sign to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Oh yeah this was bad. The triple threat is the only thing keeping this from being a disaster as the rest of the card is a bunch of nothing tags and then a disaster of a Rumble for the last third. The Rumble itself really is that bad and drags an already bad show down even lower. It's balanced out a bit by the triple threat but twenty two minutes of awesome can't make up for an hour of horrible. Terrible show here and thankfully WWE finally figured out that Reigns wasn't ready yet, because he just wasn't here.

Ratings Comparison

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Original: B

Redo: B-

Ascension vs. New Age Outlaws

Original: D+

Redo: D

Miz/Damien Mizdow vs. Usos

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

Original: D-

Redo: D

Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Original: A

Redo: A

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D-

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: D

How in the world did I add that one up last year?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2015/01/25/royal-rumble-2015-more-teasing-than-a-15-year-old-on-prom-night/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Impact Wrestling – January 25, 2018: The Beginning of the Good?

Impact Wrestling

Date: January 25, 2018

Location: Aberdeen Pavilion, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Josh Matthews, Jeremy Borash

So apparently this is one of their big shows, which was only first mentioned last week. Most of the titles are on the line tonight, including a triple threat match inside a cage with Eli Drake defending against Johnny Impact and Alberto El Patron. It's hard to say what else they might throw out here so let's get to it.

The opening video is your standard look at the bigger names talking about what their matches mean. It might help if this show had some more build, or if I could tell you what this show had to offer. What we get here is good though as it's a stylish way to put out a simple concept.

Opening sequence.

Grand Championship: Matt Sydal vs. Ethan Carter III

Carter is defending and there are no judges, rounds or scoring, but rather a standard match. Sydal dropkicks him at the bell and the champ is knocked outside early on. Back in and a pair of basement dropkicks give Sydal two but Carter gets a breather off a running clothesline. A cravate doesn't work very well for the champ so he whips Sydal into the corner a few times.

Carter can't hit a Stinger Splash though and the double knees from the top give Matt two. Back up and Sydal's super hurricanrana misses with Matt's face slamming straight into the turnbuckle. We take a break to make sure Sydal's head isn't broken and come back with Carter hitting a cutter for two. A TK3 over the top rope connects

but Sydal is right back up with a spinwheel kick.

They head to the apron with Carter grabbing a DDT, only to have Sydal pop right back up again. That's getting a bit annoying as he's barely staying down off these big shots to the head. Sydal knees him in the face but can't hit the shooting star press. For some reason Carter takes him to the top for a super TK3, only to get shoved down for the shooting star to give Sydal the title at 15:59.

Rating: C. Sydal's selling issues aside, this was the right call. Sydal has been called a choker who can never win the big match so he got things down to a regular one on one match and won the title here. I'm really hoping the title shifts towards a regular title full time as there's just no need for the round system. This made for a fine match with a good story and that's all you could want out of this. It's a TV Title and that's all it should be.

Stills on the Barbed Wire Massacre mess from last week.

We look at the still awesome XXX vs. AMW cage match from Turning Point 2004. That cage walk is still pretty easily the greatest spot in the company's history and it's never been approached since. To be fair though, how can you follow that?

We recap the Knockouts Title match. Laurel Van Ness won the title a few weeks back but Gail Kim (take a shot) wanted Allie to win. Allie started talking about wanting the shot so here we go, with Allie being a lot more serious.

Knockouts Title: Laurel Van Ness vs. Allie

Allie is challenging and Laurel leaves the belt on the steps, which is quite the Chekov's Gun. They lock up and fight to the floor without breaking the lock until Allie takes her back inside for some clotheslines. That's enough inside as they go to the floor again with Allie being sent into the apron as we take a break.

Back with Laurel in control inside, sending Allie into three straight buckles. A running flip neckbreaker gets two and the counts are getting on the champ's nerves. Laurel's chinlock doesn't do much so it's a clothesline instead, allowing Josh to plug his podcast.

Allie avoids a charge and suplexes Van Ness into the corner for two. A Codebreaker gets the same and a superkick is even closer with Laurel having to put her foot on the ropes. The ref is bumped and a quick belt shot lets Laurel retain the title at 14:03.

Rating: D+. Well that ending was terrible. I know they set it up at the beginning but it felt like the cheapest ending they could come up with as a way to keep things going. Why do I have a feeling that it means we'll be seeing Gail give Allie another pep talk to really get her ready? It might make Gail look more important and you know that's what this promotion is all about.

We recap American Top Team vs. Moose, in case you haven't gotten this story yet. The MMA guys are here to prove that wrestling is fake and they've already gotten rid of James Storm. Moose is ready to try his luck again.

Moose vs. Bobby Lashley

Lashley has Dan Lambert and KM in his corner. After some early stalling, Lashley sends him into the corner and stomps away as the announcers talk about various other places you can watch Impact. So yeah, go there and watch that now because this show doesn't matter. Moose's comeback doesn't get him anywhere and it's a snap suplex for two. Some shoulders in the corner don't get Lashley anywhere as Moose scores with a spinning middle rope crossbody. KM offers a distraction though and Lashley clotheslines him down as we take a break.

Back with Lashley stomping on the arm and seemingly unsure which hold to try. Instead he throws Moose outside to ram him into various things, only to start in on the other arm. Moose dropkicks him off the top and out to the floor but Lashley calmly whips him into the steps as the dominance continues. KM pulls out a completely unnecessary table and Lashley isn't happy, allowing Moose to crush him in the corner.

The middle rope chokebomb gets two but Lashley is right back with a running hurricanrana. Well of course he is. Seriously that's not normal. The spear gets two with Moose throwing a boot on the ropes

and Lashley is stunned. KM gets on the apron for no logical reason (how typical of him), allowing Moose to ram them together and hit the discus lariat for two. The Game Changer gives Moose the pin at 16:43, making that previous kickout rather dumb.

Rating: C+. It's nice to see Moose get the pin, even if this should have been months ago at Bound For Glory. I'm sure this story will keep going because this company has never understood how or when to stop an angle but hopefully we move past this already. It's not like it has much of a shelf life and we've proven that many times over now.

Post match Moose FINALLY lays Lambert out and Lashley does the same to KM. Lashley spears Lambert through a table and they both beat up the MMA guy who is all bandaged up. Did we really just spend all those months setting up a Lashley face turn? That was their big goal?

The announcers recap the show so far.

X-Division Title: Taiji Ishimori vs. Andrew Everett

This is from Pro Wrestling Noah with Everett challenging. Joined in progress with Ishimori hitting some running knees to the chest in the corner. Everett comes back with an enziguri and a Lionsault for two but a shooting star gets two. Back up and one heck of a clothesline takes Everett down for two more and a suplex into a gutbuster gets the same. The 450 retains the title at 4:38 shown.

Rating: C-. The time was a problem here as there's only so much you can do with so little time. Then again, it's hard to say how good the match was with all the time it was given. Ishimori is a good champion, but he needs more than just under five minutes shown to have much of an impact. Well that and a more interesting opponent.

Impact Wrestling World Title: Eli Drake vs. Alberto El Patron vs. Johnny Impact

Drake is defending inside a cage with pinfall, submission or escape to win. If Drake retains, neither ever gets a title shot at Drake again. Johnny gets stomped down in the corner to start as we have

our first soon to be broken alliance. A double ram into the cage drops Johnny and the villains are already slugging it out. Neither can get over the top so Impact is back up for the save.

Drake gets catapulted into the cage and the flip neckbreaker gives Johnny two. Alberto, wrestling in a shirt for some reason, pulls Johnny off the cage and sends Drake into the steel. Impact is tied up in the Tree of Woe with Alberto missing the double stomp off the cage (likely to avoid a bad case of death), only to have Drake drop Johnny with that backwards Big Ending of his. Everyone is down and we take a break after a pretty good start.

Back with Drake low blowing both of them and sending them into the cage. Johnny of course walks the cage wall and sends Drake into the cage for the coolest spot of the match, which gets no reaction. Alberto is back up with a kick to Johnny's ribs before whipping Drake into the cage over and over. A DDT gets two on the champ and Alberto knocks Johnny into the Tree of Woe.

This time the stomp works but Johnny is still able to break up the armbreaker on Drake. Everyone goes up in the same corner but Johnny knocks them down and hits a double high crossbody....to no reaction. I even rewound it in hopes that I had just missed it but the sound just isn't there and that's very sad. That's a big time move and the fans just did not care. Like at all.

The Gravy Train gets two on Johnny so Drake climbs with Impact right behind him. Johnny drops down to catch Alberto but an enziguri cuts him off. Alberto tries to go out the door but Chris Adonis slams it on his head. Johnny JUMPS up and sprints over the top of the cage, somehow beating Drake down, only to have Adonis catch him in the air. The delay allows Drake to drop down and retain at 18:05.

Rating: B-. And they're DONE. I'm tired of this three way feud and it's long past time to have some fresh talent challenging for the title. Drake looks good and gets his big win (even one in front of the actual Impact fans) but this story wasn't interesting going into Bound For Glory and waiting several months didn't make things even better. The blowoff match was solid enough but the story didn't do

anything for me.

Overall Rating: C+. Well that certainly was a big time show. I'm not sure what else to say about it but it is certainly a big time show. The matches had been built up for a while now but they haven't been done all that well. The Grand Championship match was the best told story and felt like closure, but everything else felt like it was just there or existed to set up something else in the future. It's fine enough, but I really need more than a week to get excited for a big show.

Results

Matt Sydal b. Ethan Carter III – Shooting star press

Laurel Van Ness b. Allie – Title to the face

Moose b. Lashley – Game Changer

Taiji Isimori b. Andrew Everett – 450 splash

Eli Drake b. Alberto El Patron and Johnny Impact – Drake escaped the cage

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

New Column: Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw 25th Anniversary

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-reviewing-review-monday-night-raw-25th-anniversary/>

There's some stuff in here that needed a closer look.

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2014: They've Lost

Royal Rumble 2014

Date: January 26, 2014

Location: Consol Energy Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

The big story here is the rise of Daniel Bryan, who has gone from solid midcard guy to the people's choice to win the Rumble. However, Batista has returned and is basically the guaranteed winner of the Rumble, no matter what the fans want to see. I can't imagine this ends well. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Tag Team Titles: Goldust/Cody Rhodes vs. New Age Outlaws

The Outlaws reunited as a nostalgia act and pinned the champs to earn this shot. Dogg and Cody get things going with Dogg hammering away, only to miss his Shake Rattle and Roll punch. Cody misses the Disaster Kick but sends both Outlaws to the floor. The champs hit dives on the Outlaws as we take a break. Back with Goldust in trouble as Dogg puts on a chinlock.

The Outlaws double team Goldust for a bit until he hits a jumping sunset flip for two on Dogg. Gunn charges into a powerslam and

there's the hot tag to Cody. A missile dropkick drops both Outlaws and Cross Rhodes plants Dogg for two with Billy making the save. Gunn makes a blind tag and hits a Fameasser on Cody for the big upset win.

Rating: C. This was fine for an opener and the fans were into the nostalgia. The Outlaws were only transitional champions anyway as the Usos would get the belts before Wrestlemania. Cody and Goldust had them back before the year was over too so no one was really hurt by this.

The opening video talks about working to achieve your dreams. Sometimes there's a very thin line between almost getting there and getting everything you want. We also focus on Orton vs. Cena because that's the real main event here. The Rumble itself gets a quick mention too.

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Daniel joined the Wyatt Family on the last Raw of the year but then rejected them a few weeks later, leading to one of the loudest YES chants you'll ever hear. Bryan punches out of the corner to start but Bray drives knees into his ribs and blasts him with an elbow. That's fine with Bryan as he kicks the knee out but has to go after Bray's followers Luke Harper and Erick Rowan. A suicide dive drops Harper but the referee ejects both monsters.

Bray huddles with his Family on the floor, allowing Daniel to take him down with a plancha. Back in and a high cross body gets two on Wyatt but he chops Daniel off the middle rope and out to the floor. Bray charges at Daniel but drives the bad knee into the steps to put him back down again. Back in and Daniel starts kicking at the leg before snapping off a dragon screw leg whip. A modified curb stomp gets two for Bryan but Bray drives him back into the corner.

They slug it out to the apron with Wyatt snapping Daniel's shoulder down in a big crash. Back in and Bray hits his release suplex slam and we hit the chinlock. Bray puts Daniel's head against the post and drives in forearms to follow up on Bryan's recent concussion. Back in again and a kick to the face gives Bray a few near falls. A big release Rock Bottom plants him again and Bray does his Spider Walk out of the corner. Bryan finally avoids an elbow drop and hits a running clothesline.

Some kicks stagger Bray and a drop toehold sends him into the middle

buckle. Daniel kicks away in the corner and nails a top rope hurricanrana for two. Another running clothesline is countered by a running elbow to the chest as Bray takes over again. Bryan low bridges him to the floor and hits a running tornado DDT off the apron. A running dropkick sends Bray into the barricade and a missile dropkick puts Wyatt down in the ring.

The YES Kicks get two but Bray turns him inside out with a clothesline for two. Sister Abigail is countered but Bray bites his way out of the YES Lock. Daniel scores with more kicks and hits a top rope splash but Bray ducks to the floor to avoid the running knee. The Flying Goat is blocked though and Bray hits Sister Abigail into the barricade to knock Bryan silly. Back in and another Sister Abigail is good for the pin.

Rating: A. This was considered a match of the year contender and it's easy to see why. These two beat the tar out of each other with each move getting harder and harder than the previous. Bryan lost here but came out looking like a star. Bray on the other hand looks like a killer and that's exactly what he's supposed to be.

Paul Heyman says Brock Lesnar is going to challenge the winner of Orton vs. Cena for the World Title. However, first he has to make an example out of Big Show.

Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is here.

The expert panel of Jim Duggan, Shawn Michaels and Ric Flair aren't sure who to pick between Lesnar and Big Show.

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

These two have had a feud for years and this time Big Show has been getting the better of it through pure power. Lesnar takes Show down before the bell and pounds on him with fists and then a chair. As Big Show is down, Lawler says Big Show gave Lesnar his first loss at the 2002 Royal Rumble, which would be three months before Lesnar debuted. We get the opening bell with Lesnar getting another chair but Show nails him with the KO Punch. Lesnar is rocked and Show takes him outside for a whip into the barricade. Back in and Big Show loads up another KO but Lesnar ducks and throws him up for the F5 for the easy pin.

Lesnar beats on him with the chair even more after the match. He's broken two chairs over Show's back.

Shield says they have 27 enemies tonight and it'll be the three of them left standing. Only one of them can stand tall at the end but Reigns thinks he has the winning number. He won't say what it is though. Dean offers to tell him his if Reigns tells his. Dean: "What if I have two numbers? I have ALL the numbers!" They agree to believe in the Shield.

Orton says he's going to beat Cena and put him to the back of the line. Renee Young asks about Batista, Brock Lesnar and Bray Wyatt wanting title shots but Orton laughs it off and calls Wyatt a deranged hillbilly Duck Dynasty reject.

We recap Orton vs. Cena. This is more about their short term history, focusing on the titles being unified back in December. Orton seems to be cracking under the pressure of being champion and even attacked Cena's father at Raw recently.

WWE World Title: Randy Orton vs. John Cena

No countout and no DQ with Orton defending.. The fans loudly chant for Daniel Bryan before and after the bell. They hit the mat and the fans are already bored less than twenty seconds in. Cena fights up and gets two off a bulldog but charges into an elbow in the corner. Now a Randy Savage chant starts up and Orton stops for a second before kicking Cena even more.

Off to a chinlock as the fans chant for Y2J. After fighting out, Cena catches on and tries a Boston crab. Orton kicks him to the floor during a brief Undertaker chant and now it's just the standard boring chant. A clothesline puts Orton back outside but he sends Cena into the steps. Back in and a DDT gets two for Orton as the fans just say both guys suck. Cena comes back with shoulder blocks and the ProtoBomb, only to take too long jawing and walk into a powerslam for two.

A half nelson slam into a neckbreaker gets two for Cena but he gets caught on top. He headbutts his way out though and hits the top rope Fameasser for two. Orton counters the AA attempt into his backbreaker for two as the fans have calmed down a bit. The Elevated DDT off the apron to the floor gets two more on John. Orton's RKO is countered into the STF but Randy is too close to the ropes. He grabs the ropes to block an AA as well but the referee gets bumped.

There's the STF again and Orton taps but there's no referee. Orton uses the opportunity to nail Cena with a title belt for two. He

stands around too long again though and takes an AA for two more. The RKO gets the same and now the fans want Divas. Orton misses the Punt but pulls Cena down into an STF. John counters that into a Crossface but Orton rolls into a cover for two.

Back up and Orton hits Cena with an AA, followed by Cena grabbing an RKO for another near fall. With nothing left to do, Cena loads up a middle rope AA but has to settle for a tornado DDT. The STF goes on in the middle of the ring...we've got Wyatts. The lights go out and come back on to reveal all three on the apron. Cena goes after them but walks into an RKO to keep the title on Orton.

Rating: B. This matchup has suffered from brand damage. We've seen it so many times over the years that even if the match is good, like it was here, people just do not want to see it. The guys got the crowd to calm down a bit about halfway through the match, but there's just nothing left to see from these two. They're both hard workers and try every time they're out there but the interest is just gone.

The fans chant for Bryan as the Wyatts destroy Cena even more.

Tribute video to the recently passed away Mae Young.

The New Age Outlaws celebrate but tell Renee that she isn't invited to the party.

We get some classic Rumble promos.

Miz will win because he'll do whatever it takes to headline Wrestlemania again.

The Usos are cool with having to fight each other.

Intercontinental Champion Big E. says headlining Wrestlemania is where it's at.

Fandango thinks he's the only one worthy to headline the big dance.

Batista just says exactly.

Damien Sandow says it's insane to try the same thing and expect different results. He won't make the same mistake again.

Ryback says there are 29 superstars and one Human Wrecking Ball.

Mysterio will shock the world again.

The expert panel makes their picks. Duggan likes Ziggler, Shawn goes with Shield or Punk and Flair takes Batista.

Royal Rumble

90 second intervals with Punk at #1 (as ordered by Kane) and Seth Rollins at #2. Punk takes him into the corner to start for some shoulders to the ribs. Some kicks stagger Rollins but he comes back with a big kick of his own. A clothesline drops Rollins again but he pops back up with an enziguri. Both guys are down as Damien Sandow is in at #3. The fans loudly chant for Punk as he DDTs Sandow and drops Rollins with a neckbreaker at the same time.

The heels stomp Punk down until Cody Rhodes is in at #4. Cross Rhodes plants Sandow but Rollins stops an elimination attempt. Punk dumps Damien a few seconds later though and it's time for Rollins to get double teamed. Kane comes in at #5 and cleans Punk's clock. He loads up the chokeslam but Punk kicks him in the head for a surprise elimination. The debuting Alexander Rusev is in at #6.

Rusev kicks Rollins and Rhodes in the face but can't eliminate either guy. Instead he just beats everyone up until Jack Swagger is in at #7. It's Swagger vs. Rusev now but everyone opts to gang up on Rusev instead. Cody and Swagger break off and Kofi Kingston is in at #8. Everyone fights by the ropes until Jimmy Uso is in at #9. The announcers are noticing how fast the clock is going by.

Jimmy goes after Kofi in the corner as Rusev works on Swagger. Punk puts Rusev in a sleeper and Goldust is in at #10, giving us a group of Punk, Rollins, Goldust, Cody, Jimmy, Swagger, Kingston and Rusev. Goldust hammers away until Rusev nails him in the jaw. A group of people gang up on Rusev and dump him out, which isn't quite a great debut for him. Kofi gets thrown out as well but Rusev catches him in mid air. He drops Kofi on the barricade and it's time for the great return. Kingston stands up, uses the barricade as a balance beam and jumps back to the apron in a pretty cool save.

US Champion Dean Ambrose is in at #11 and goes right after Punk. Things slow down again and Dolph Ziggler is in at #12. The fans are entirely behind Dolph as the ring is getting too full. Punk has to hang onto the apron as R-Truth comes in at #13, only to be dumped in about thirty seconds by Ambrose. Rollins knocks out Jimmy and Kofi steals Swagger's boot while literally hanging on by his feet. Jack comes over to him but gets nailed by the boot as Kofi gets back in.

Kevin Nash makes a required return at #14. He eliminates Swagger with ease and goes after Ambrose and Rollins. Punk has Ziggler

dangling but Dolph gets his feet back in. Roman Reigns completes the Shield at #15, giving us Punk, Rollins, Rhodes, Kingston, Goldust, Ambrose, Ziggler, Nash and Reigns. Roman cleans house with punches and spears before launching Kofi out.

Ziggler puts Roman down with a DDT but eats a spear to cut him in half. Reigns throws Ziggler out with ease and the fans suddenly hate him. Nash gets the same treatment as Reigns now has three eliminations in less than two minutes. Great Khali is in at #16 and goes after the Shield but gets tossed by Reigns. Goldust eliminates Cody to make up for the last two years but Reigns gets rid of Goldust a second later. That leaves the Shield alone with Punk but Sheamus returns after being out six months with an injury at #17.

Sheamus cleans house and gives Dean the ten forearms followed by an Irish Curse to Rollins. Reigns eats a Brogue Kick as Miz is in at #18. Punk is just laying in the corner and making almost no effort to get back up. Miz hammers away on Reigns in the corner and Fandango is in at #19. The entire crowd starts doing his dance but Miz sends him to the apron in just a few seconds. Fandango gets back in though as Shield slowly takes over again. Reigns motions to Punk in the corner but doesn't go after him. Punk hasn't moved from there in at least five minutes now.

El Torito is in at #20, giving us Punk, Rollins, Ambrose, Reigns, Sheamus, Miz, Fandango and Torito. Of course the bull cleans house until Punk stands up. Punk grabs him by the head but takes a headscissors, only to have Fandango run Torito over. The referee checks on Punk as Torito dropkicks Fandango out. Reigns catches Torito with ease and dumps him out for his sixth elimination. Punk gets back up as Cesaro is in at #21. He immediately starts swinging Miz but Shield breaks up a Swing attempt on Punk. Instead Rollins gets swung a ridiculous THIRTY TIMES. Luke Harper is in at #22 as Reigns spears Cesaro down.

Rollins and Cesaro slug it out until Jey Uso is in at #23. The brawling slows down a bit now and JBL is in at #24. Cole: "The JBL character has never entered the Royal Rumble." Good grief. JBL wears his full suit into the ring but asks Cole to go get his jacket, allowing Reigns to dump him out. Fans: "YOU STILL GOT IT!" Erick Rowan is in at #25 as JBL tries to talk about ANYTHING but being in the Rumble. Rowan kicks Miz out to clear things up a bit but everything slows back down again.

Harper tosses Jey Uso but the Wyatts turn around to see the Shield. Ryback is in at #26 and goes right for Cesaro as the fans chant Goldberg. Alberto Del Rio gets lucky #27 and things slow down yet again. Batista is in at #28 and the fans just rip him apart. He quickly dumps Rowan and has a staredown with Ryback before dumping him as well. Del Rio, the man who has been going after Batista since he returned, superkicks him down but gets lifted into the air and dumped with ease.

Intercontinental Champion Big E. is in at #29 to almost no reaction but the fans like him for suplexing Batista. The fans are chanting for Bryan and get even louder as the countdown clock comes on. The clock runs out...and it's Rey Mysterio. To say the fans aren't pleased with this is the understatement of the year. We're going to pause for a second here and look at this.

First of all, Rey Mysterio is a fine choice for #30 in the Royal Rumble. He's a multiple time World Champion, he's held nearly every title in WWE history, he's going to be in the Hall of Fame one day, he's the most successful cruiserweight of all time, he's won the Royal Rumble before and he's one of the most popular wrestlers ever. However, he's not the right choice for this spot.

There are two schools of thought here. The first and more prominent is that WWE just did not understand the fans and thought they would accept Batista as the big star making his return and embrace him with open arms. Then they heard the reaction and changed course to make Wrestlemania all about Daniel Bryan. The other school of thought is Bryan not being in the Rumble was planned from the beginning, they knew where they were going at Wrestlemania the entire time and the stories about Orton vs. Batista headlining the show were false rumors. I'm in the middle on that but I lean more towards the second.

Now Bryan didn't have to win the Rumble here. You could have had a bunch of different ways to get rid of him, even down to having Kane run out and eliminate him if need be. However, he should have been in the main event. It makes sense that he at least has a chance to be in there, even if it's just to get screwed over again.

Anyway, we have a final grouping of Punk, Rollins, Ambrose, Reigns, Sheamus, Cesaro, Harper, Batista, Langston and Mysterio. Rey hurricanranas Punk to the apron as the fans are booing the heck out

of the match. Sheamus clotheslines Langston out to end his worthless Rumble. Cesaro hammers on everyone in sight and Rey hits the 619 on Rollins just to make everyone even madder. Rollins enziguris Rey out for a nice pop and we're down to eight.

Dean and Seth put Harper on the apron but Reigns Superman Punches him out to give him eight eliminations. Ambrose tries to put out his Shield mates but Cesaro jumps he and Rollins. That's fine with Reigns who dumps Cesaro, Rollins and Ambrose all at once to tie Kane's record for eliminations in a single Rumble.

We're down to four now and everyone hits a finisher. Reigns takes the GTS but Kane sneaks in to eliminate Punk. That would be Punk's last WWE match to date. Kane goes off on Punk outside and chokeslams him through the announcers' table. We're down to Sheamus, Batista and Reigns but all three are down. Another Daniel Bryan chant starts up as Batista takes over, turning it into a NO chant.

Sheamus cleans house and points at the sign before loading up a Brogue Kick. He misses Batista though and gets backdropped to the apron. Reigns elbows Sheamus out to set a new Rumble record for eliminations with twelve. That leaves Reigns vs. Batista and all of a sudden everyone is a Reigns fan. Reigns wins a slugout and clotheslines Batista down as the people chant for Roman. Batista comes back with his own horrible spear, only to have Reigns show him how it's done...and then get thrown out a few seconds later to send Batista to Wrestlemania.

Rating: D. This just wasn't a very good Rumble though its moments. Batista came in at the wrong time and it killed any kind of comeback he could have had. The fans did not want to see what the company was offering them at this point and they let them know about it. In their defense though, this Rumble was kind of awful. The comedy and returns felt forced, Rusev's debut went nowhere and they might as well have given it to Batista and put on an hour of Mighty Mouse cartoons to save everyone's time. It's not a good match but the crowd reaction is certainly interesting.

Batista is booed out of the building as we see a highlight package ends the show.

Overall Rating: D+. The Rumble really hurts this show as it drags down two good matches and an entertaining Lesnar squash. The problem is that's the lasting memory of this show: the fans booing the heck

out of Batista as WWE seemed to think he was exactly what WWE wanted. The show isn't horrible but it leaves a really bad taste in your mouth.

Ratings Comparison

New Age Outlaws vs. Goldust/Cody Rhodes

Original: C

Redo: C

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Original:A

Redo: A

Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

John Cena vs. Randy Orton

Original:B

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original:B

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original:A

Redo: D+

Hokey smoke that's quite the drop.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/01/26/royal-rumble-2014-the-night-the-crowd-died/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>