

# 205 Live – January 2, 2018: The Enzo P-A-R-A-D-O-X

## 205 Live

Date: January 2, 2018

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Vic Joseph

So this show's lull is somehow STILL GOING as Cruiserweight Champion Enzo Amore was hospitalized due to the flu, meaning the title match against Cedric Alexander was postponed yet again. There's really nothing going on at the moment because we're stuck waiting on the title match (and hopefully the title change) so there's a good chance this is going to be another lame duck show. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Amore being sick and Alexander teaming with Goldust of all people to defeat Ariya Daivari and Drew Gulak. If Goldust is this show's idea of a big deal, just turned the Mixed Match Challenge into an hour show and be done with it.

Opening sequence.

### Akira Tozawa vs. TJP

This is TJP's first match back in three months. Technical sequence to start until TJP hides in the ropes to avoid a charge. That's fine with Tozawa, who slams him head first into the mat twice in a row. Some overblown stomping in the corner keeps TJP down as this is quite the welcome back to the roster. A suicide dive is blocked by TJP's raised boot to the shoulder though, followed by said shoulder going into the post.

There's a slingshot hilo and TJP holsters the finger guns. I still like this guy no matter how much he's loathed more often than not. Tozawa's shoulder is cranked in various painful looking ways before TJP just stands on his face. The fans want Enzo (mark Miami down as one of the dumb cities) as TJP gets two off a hammerlock belly to back suplex. I

love it when they mix up the offense like that. It's better than five armbars.

A double arm crank doesn't get TJP very far but a kick to the head gets two. Tozawa is back up with a boot to the face of his own, followed by a snap Saito suplex. A suicide dive is good for two but the top rope backsplash is easily broken up. TJP sends him arm first into the post and the Detonation Kick is good for the pin at 9:55.

**Rating:** C. I still like TJP a lot and that's likely to be the case for a good while. He's smooth in the ring and is a good, cocky heel who can either be pushed or put someone over in almost any given circumstance. Unless he was injured, I'm not sure why he was on the shelf so long as he's someone who should be around more often. Hopefully Tozawa doesn't take his place on the list of talented people who are stuck on the sidelines for no logical reason.

Goldust comes up to Cedric Alexander in the back. After admitting that he's not under 205 pounds, Goldust talks about how he's here to help Cedric on his quest for gold. They could be a great team! Like Turner and Hooch! I know Enzo is out with the flu at the moment, but sweet goodness there was no one better than GOLDUST to replace him? That's really the best option they have? That's how much they think of this show?

Here's Jack Gallagher to demand a rematch with Hideo Itami. First though, we see a clip of Itami injuring Gallagher's friend Brian Kendrick. After looking at the clip multiple times, here's Itami for the match, only to have Gallagher beat him down with the umbrella. Itami falls down in short order and a pipe falls out of the umbrella. No match of course. That's quite the dastardly act and does the right thing here in getting Gallagher over more than anyone else in the whole thing.

The Zo Train says last night was an injustice because their open challenge was only for people on the 205 Live roster. Goldust comes up and insults their breath. Keep bringing that star power buddy.

[Ariya Daivari/Drew Gulak vs. Cedric Alexander/Goldust](#)

Cedric and Daivari feels each other out to start until Daivari pulls him

down by the hair. That earns him a dropkick though and it's off to an armbar. The fans want Goldust and get their wish as he cranks on Gulak's arm for a change. Goldust tries to run the ropes but stops for a second because he needs to catch his breath in a funny bit.

For some reason Daivari stands there before kneeling him in the ribs (Politeness maybe?) and hands it off to Gulak for an armbar. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Cedric sends Daivari into the buckle. There's no tag though and Cedric is sent face first in as well, cutting off whatever momentum he had built up.

It's back to the chinlock as Nigel sends well wishes to Enzo. Cedric is sent into the steps and let's hit that chinlock all over again. The Neutralizer finally gets Cedric out of trouble and the hot tag brings in Goldust. House is cleaned and Goldust powerslams both villains. A blind tag brings in Cedric with the springboard clothesline and Goldust helps him on a big flip dive. The Lumbar Check finishes Gulak at 11:55.

**Rating:** D. Didn't we pretty firmly establish this last night? It's no secret that Goldust and Cedric (or Cedric and a stuffed turtle at this point) can beat these goons but since WE MUST WAIT ON ENZO, this is all they can do anymore. It's almost like the NXT: Redemption season where they would just throw people out there (including Goldust actually) when they needed to extend a story. Pretty dull match, mainly because everything was already established the night before.

**Overall Rating:** D-. And that right there is why Enzo is a major, major problem on this show. There's really nothing else of value on the show and if he's gone, there's almost nothing important happening on the show. Due to multiple reasons now, we've been sitting around waiting on Cedric vs. Enzo, which will hopefully FINALLY get us back to a normal show around here. The problem though is if Enzo retains, we're stuck waiting on another challenger to rise up and take the title.

Without Enzo around, there's really no point in this show existing, and that's not even considering that it's become 2011 Smackdown: a place where you put Raw rematches for the sake of filling in TV time because there's nothing else to air. Bring some people up from NXT for some one

off appearances, have some crazy five way elimination match, do the freaking challenges from the original NXT or whatever. Just do SOMETHING more interesting than this waste of time.

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# Wrestle Kingdom XII: Aww Here It Goes

## Wrestle Kingdom XII

Date: January 4, 2018

Location: Tokyo Dome, Tokyo, Japan

Attendance: 34,995

Commentators: Kevin Kelly, Don Callis

It's that that day of the year (not even time for this show) as we're at New Japan's biggest show of the year. The main event is IWGP World Champion Kazuchika Okada defending against former champion Tetsuya Naito in what should be a pretty obvious ending, but the match that has gotten almost all of the attention is a dream match between Kenny Omega vs. Chris Jericho. Not only have they set the match up but they've actually

done some rather hot angles to help build the thing. Let's get to it.

Please note that I don't watch much New Japan. I have a decent idea of what's going on and do follow the stories and developments, but there's a good chance that I'm going to miss a thing or two.

### Pre-Show: New Japan Rumble

This is a Royal Rumble with one minute intervals and pin/submission/over the top eliminations. Katsuya Kitamura (the reigning Young Lions Cup winner who is in crazy shape) is in at #1 and Bushi is in at #2. Kitamura shakes the ropes to start and is quickly choked in the corner with a shirt. Delirious is in at #3 and comes in after a quick lap around the ring. Some chops have no effect on Kitamura so grunting ensues and Delirious is dropped in the corner. Leo Tonga, a 6'10 monster and the Guerrillas of Destiny's brother, is in at #4 and grabs a lifting Downward Spiral for two on Kitamura.

Delirious and Bushi trade some kicks until Manabu Nakanishi, a former IWGP World Champion, is in at #5. Nothing of note happens for not (standard battle royal in other words) and Chase Owens (an honorary Tongan) is in at #6 as the intervals are already way out of whack. Owens gives Delirious a quick package piledriver for the first elimination to clear the ring out a bit. Nakanishi has Bushi in a torture rack before tossing him out as Yuji Nagata is in at #7.

Nagata and Nakanishi, current partners, do the old man slugout with the latter getting the better of it. A double pin gets rid of Tonga, Nagata rolls Nakanishi up for a quick pin and Owens/Kitamura get together to pin Nagata in the span of thirty seconds. A package piledriver eliminates Kitamura and it's Taka Michinoku in at #8 to go one on one with Owens. Since Taka takes forever to get to the ring, Yoshinobu Kanemaru (Taka's stablemate in Suzuki-Gun) is in at #9 in short order. Owens is double teamed until Desperado, also of Suzuki-Gun, is in at #10.

Chase actually hangs on until a shot of booze to the face is good for an elimination to leave Suzuki-Gun alone in the ring. That should mean a big name coming in and it's Jushin Thunder Liger in at #11 (with the always awesome theme). Jushin gets in some palm strikes but tries the surfboard

for some reason, allowing the triple teaming to start all over. Suzuki-Gun goes for the mask but it's Tiger Mask in at #12.

Desperado goes for Mask's mask, only to have Tiger switch places and almost get Desperado's mask off instead. A tiger driver gets two on Desperado and it's Gino Gambino, a rather large Australian, is in at #13. Desperado and Tiger lose their masks, which seems to be a double elimination. Liger, Kanemaru and Taka are pinned in short order, leaving Gambino to face Toa Henare, another Young Lion, who is in at #14. A Samoan drop gets two on Gambino as Yoshi-Hashi is in at #15. Hashi chops at Henare for one (Were you expecting anything more off a chop?) and David Finlay is in at #16.

Finlay wastes no time in Stunning Gambino for an elimination. Henare is put out again, leaving Finlay to roll Hashi up for another pin (despite his shoulder being WAY off the mat). Yujiro Takahashi is in at #17 with a rather good looking woman in a leather bunny mask. A clothesline gets rid of Finlay in short order and Takahashi is all alone. Cheeseburger is in at #18 because of course he is. The tiny man gets in a bulldog and a stomp as Satoshi Kojima (quite a legend in his own right) is in at #19.

Yujiro grabs a fisherman's buster on Kojima but goes after Cheeseburger instead of following up. Hiroyoshi Tenzan, Kojima's longtime partner, is in at #20. The rapid Mongolian chops have Takahashi in trouble and it's Masahito Kakihara (a cancer survivor of UEFI fame) in at #21 for the last entrant. A 3D plants Yujiro and a lariat gets rid of him, leaving us with Kakihara, Cheeseburger, Kojima and Tenzan. Kojima shows Cheeseburger how to throw some machine gun chops but he's smart enough to roll away from a splash.

Back up and Cheeseburger and Kakihara try chops to the chest with Cheeseburger's having no effect (BECAUSE HE'S REALLY SMALL! LIKE MUCH SMALLER THAN EVERYONE ELSE BUT HE NEVER GIVES UP! DO YOU GET THE IDEA YET???) and a double low bridge eliminate Tenzan and Kojima. A quick STO ends Cheeseburger at 32:06 to give Kakihara the win.

**Rating:** D+. The ending was a nice touch with Kakihara being a feel good story after his illness. The rest of the match was the usual mess, though

this isn't the kind of match where you're looking for a big story. People got their stuff in and were able to appear at the show, which is all you can ask for. I wasn't wild on the multiple instances of people being eliminated in short order but again, that's not the point in a match like this. It accomplished its goal, despite not being the most thrilling thing in the world.

Post match Kakiyama puts on a shirt in honor of Yoshihiro Takayama, who was paralyzed in a match back in May. Cool moment there, especially for a cancer survivor like Kakiyama.

The opening video runs the card down. There's something cool about having the match order announced in advance. I like wondering what order some WWE shows go in but this does help a lot if you're looking for a single match.

As usual, the Dome looks great with attendance up pretty strongly from last year. That's always a good sign.

A female announcer seems to welcome us to the show.

#### IWGP Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Titles: Young Bucks vs. Roppongi 3K

3K (Ring of Honor's Tempura Boyz, Sho and Yoh) is defending and has Rocky Romero in their corner. Nick shoves Yoh around to start and it's already time for a Sharpshooter attempt (WWE did it so the Bucks can too!). Yoh actually grabs one of his own, drawing in the partners so Matt can put Sho in another Sharpshooter. That means a slap off for a unique spot, followed by 3K popping up for stereo dropkicks.

Romero actually calls a play (which is a further step than you see most managers take), leading to double flip dives to the floor. Yoh comes up with a bad back though and it's time for a glorified handicap match in the vein of the Bucks vs. Roppongi Vice from last year. Nick dropkicks Sho down and Romero gets powerbombed onto the ramp. Yoh gets thrown inside and then powerbombed onto the apron as the announcers go over the Bucks' history at the show.

Matt hurts his own back on a dive so it's Nick stomping on Yoh at a

fairly slow pace. A pretty weak backbreaker has Yoh in trouble so Nick takes Yoh to the ramp for a piledriver. Yoh backdrops his way to freedom and Nick dives onto his brother by mistake. The hot tag brings in Sho to clean house with kicks and suplexes. He even German suplexes both Bucks at once in a surprising display of power.

Nick's superkicks don't get him very far so it's a leg lariat which knocks Sho into the ropes, only to have him lariat Nick down. Yoh and Matt have matching back injuries but Matt is still able to powerbomb him into the corner. A hanging DDT with Nick flipping onto Yoh's back at the same time is good for two and it's off to the Sharpshooter. Yoh grabs the rope and More Bang For Your Buck is countered into a rollup for two.

We hit stereo half crabs from the champs with Nick having to hold his brother's arm up. Eventually Nick kicks his hold away to break up the one on Nick and everyone is down. The healthy guys take turns kicking at the bad backs before Nick superkicks Sho down, followed by a corkscrew dive to the floor. Back in and the Meltzer Driver into the Sharpshooter gives the Bucks the belts for the seventh time at 18:49.

**Rating:** B. I like this version of the Bucks, but unfortunately you don't see them that often. This team was a lot more crisp and with only a handful of superkicks throughout a nearly twenty minute match, it was far from the usual drek. What I could go for is something slightly fresher than the same stuff they did with Roppongi Vice in at least two matches I've seen. It's not lazy storytelling but rather long form storytelling and in this case they did change things up enough to make it work. A fresh idea is probably needed now, along with someone other than the Bucks and their opponents of the month in the title picture.

#### Never Openweight Six Man Tag Team Titles: Gauntlet Match

Bad Luck Fale/Guerrillas of Destiny are defending. Two teams start, the winning team keeps going, last team standing leaves with the belts. Suzuki-Gun (Zack Sabre Jr./Taichi/Takashi Iizuka with Desperado, Taka Michinoku and Yoshinobu Kanemaru) and War Machine/Michael Elgin start things off after Iizuka is lead to the ring on a leash. Suzuki-Gun jumps the simply named trio to start but run into the power of Elgin.



Somehow Elgin is still able to slingshot in with a splash for no cover. A not very delayed suplex on Iizuka is enough to bring in Hanson to rake the eyes a bit. Taichi gets in a few shots as well until a cartwheel gets Hanson over to the corner for the hot tag to Rowe. Everything breaks down in a hurry but Rowe misses a moonsault. Sabre grabs a quick triangle choke and Rowe is choked out at 6:05.

Next up are Beretta, Toru Yano and Tomohiro Ishii and the brawl is on in the aisle. They get in with the beating only lasting a few seconds until Yano gets in a low blow and rolls Taichi for the pin at 9:12 (including the time between falls). Next up is Taguchi Japan, consisting of Togi Makabe, Ryusuke Taguchi and Juice Robinson.

The brawl is on in a hurry with Robinson firing off right hands but having to catch the turnbuckle pad that Yano unhooked. Makabe runs over Yano with a lariat for two and now it's everyone clotheslining Yano in the corner. A springboard hip attack gets two and Makabe runs more people over. Taguchi channels Shinsuke Nakamura with the gyrating before a running knee, only to charge into a rollup to give Yano his second straight pin at 14:06.

That leaves us with Bad Luck Fale and the Guerrillas of Destiny to complete the field and again the fight is on in a hurry. Tonga Loa gives Trent an AA on the apron but Fale misses a splash in the corner, meaning a hot tag can bring in Ishii to do what a monster is supposed to do. He can't lift the huge Fale though and that earns him a big splash in the corner. A chokeslam is broken up and Ishii headbutts him backwards, followed by an impressive suplex.

The Guerrillas come back in and hit Guerrilla Warfare on Beretta. Instead of covering though, they try a belly to back superplex but get elbowed away. Beretta isn't out of the woods yet though as he moonsaults right into a cutter for a very near fall. Fale and Ishii clothesline each other down but Beretta hits a quick Dudebuster to pin Loa for the titles at 21:46.

**Rating:** C-. I'm never a fan of gauntlet matches for the most part as there's too much going on in too little time, which mainly means nothing

has the chance to build or really go anywhere. They did manage to make Beretta look like a resilient fighter by making a comeback at the end, which helps push him up the heavyweight ranks, but that's really the only thing that made an impact here. It's not bad or anything but too much going on and too many people.

Ticket info for the Long Beach event is released tomorrow. That's cool to see but they still need to do a lot more if they want to really expand into America (which isn't exactly necessary).

### Cody vs. Kota Ibushi

Not much of a story here, though there's a good chance that it's designed to help build Ibushi for an eventual mega match against former partner Kenny Omega. Cody has Brandi (sweet goodness) with him and still has the bleach blond hair. After Cody puts his ring in a box, we're ready to go.

Cody's headlock is countered with a nip up so Cody flips him off. That's not the nicest gesture in the world and Ibushi is so disgusted that he gets caught in an American Nightmare lock. Ibushi makes the rope and Callis is wondering why he didn't have that better scouted. Fair question actually as Callis shows how to be an intelligent commentator.

Cody gets sent outside and Brandi is down so Ibushi checks on her, only to be suckered into a right hand. Back in and the Disaster Kick starts working on Ibushi's always bad neck and we hit a double underhook neck crank. Brandi takes Kevin's chair and distracts the referee so Cody can get in some shots to the neck.

Despite that likely KILLING IBUSHI, he's back up and hitting a moonsault press to the floor to take Cody down again. Back in and Kota's rapid strikes into a standing moonsault gets two. Brandi grabs the foot to break up a suplex though (Callis: "She's been watching her Bobby Heenan footage!") and Cody hits Cross Rhodes off the apron to drop Ibushi HARD onto his head in a great looking crash. Somehow Ibushi beats the count so Cody hits his own springboard hurricanrana for a very close two.

Cross Rhodes is countered though and Ibushi lawn darts him into the buckle. Ibushi can't follow up so they slap it out with Kota getting the

better of it, setting up the sitout Last Ride for two more. A hard lariat (staying on the neck) gives Cody two and a straitjacket German suplex gives Ibushi the same. He doesn't let go though, instead kneeling the heck out of Cody. The Phoenix splash is good for the academic pin on Cody at 16:08.

**Rating:** B. Another well done match here as Ibushi fought through the neck injury (with Cody focusing on the neck almost the entire time) and coming out on top at the end. That's a great way to set up the eventual match against Omega and hopefully Ibushi gets a great run out of this. He's incredibly smooth in the ring and that makes the matches very easy to watch. Good stuff here as you could get a sense of what they were going for, which is hard in any wrestling match.

#### IWGP Tag Team Titles: Evil/Sanada vs. Killer Elite Squad

Evil and Sanada are challenging after winning the World Tag League last year. Lance Archer (partner of Davey Boy Smith Jr.) is a cowboy so a lot of beer is sprayed over the crowd. The champs jump them to start and a Killer Bomb (full nelson slam into a sitout powerbomb) gets a very early two on Evil (as in less than fifteen seconds in). Evil is basically dead so Archer pounds away, allowing Davey to get two while posing.

That's enough for the Squad as they head outside and beat up the young boys for fun. Archer chokeslams Evil onto everyone else before taking Sanada back in for a headscissors of all things. A side slam/middle rope splash gets two and Archer just blasts Sanada with a clothesline. Sanada dropkicks Davey in the knee but it's still not enough for the hot tag off to Davey as Lance makes the save. The announcers declare this over so get the new nameplates ready for the belts.

Archer's Rock Bottom gets two but he charges into a hurricanrana. The hot tag FINALLY brings Evil in for some clotheslines with the third finally taking Archer down. Smith misses his middle rope moonsault (because of course he can do one of those and land on his feet) but Sanada gets chokeslammed for two. Another Killer Bomb gets the same but Evil breaks up a third attempt. Archer gets sent outside and the Magic Killer gets two on Davey. A quick moonsault press puts Davey away to give us new

champions at 13:17.

**Rating:** B-. Good come from behind win here as Evil (what a name for a face) and Sanada are good as the plucky rag dolls who get destroyed but still manage to come back in the end. The Squad looked awesome here and I was into their heel act, which really wasn't something I was expecting coming in. Good match here and while it's a step beneath some of the stuff on the show tonight, another solid performance and a title change that makes sense.

#### Never Openweight Title: Hirooki Goto vs. Minoru Suzuki

Suzuki is defending, no seconds allowed and hair/title vs. hair, which never sounds fair whatsoever. I've never gotten much out of Suzuki so hopefully this is an upgrade. Goto walks into a shot to the face to start but comes back with one of his own to get us back to even. An early standing choke doesn't get Suzuki very far so he grabs another while standing on the second rope. That's enough to bring the doctor in, only to have Suzuki clear the ring again.

Goto is sent outside which seems to wake him up, meaning Suzuki can hit him in the back with a chair because he feels like it. For some reason Goto decides to roll back in and a hard forearm to the head cuts him off again. A running knee in the corner rocks Goto but a running kick to the chest is caught...so Suzuki hits him in the head again. Goto does manage a spinwheel kick in the corner and a bulldog, followed by a Saito suplex for two.

Suzuki grabs his choke again but keeps trying the Gotch Style piledriver. Instead Goto reverses into a fireman's carry backbreaker so here's Suzuki-Gun to interfere (standard operating procedure). Goto fights them off but walks into a hard dropkick to keep Suzuki in control. A long series of rapid fire strikes to the face sets up the choke again but Suzuki again opts for the piledriver.

Goto reverses that as well but gets caught in a guillotine choke with Suzuki standing on the ropes. That's reversed into a super fireman's carry backbreaker for two (fair enough as the ropes didn't really add anything) so Goto headbutts the heck out of him. The GTR (an Eye of the

Hurricane onto the knee) is enough to end Suzuki at 18:04.

**Rating:** C+. I'm still not a fan of this beating each other up and hitting each other over and over until one of you can't stand up anymore style. It's never been my thing and it probably never will be. Goto is more interesting than Suzuki so I can get behind the title change, but at the same time I could have gone for a slightly different story than repeating what we saw in the previous match: champion completely overpowers the challenger until a few well timed shots give him an opening. It felt like the same layout in back to back matches and that's a bit annoying.

Suzuki is carried away by his guys but walks back to the ring for the haircut, which he does himself in humiliation.

Ads for upcoming shows.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title: Will Ospreay vs. Kushida vs. Hiromu Takahashi vs. Marty Scurll

One fall to a finish and Scurll is defending. These four have been the only champions since November 2016 so there are a lot of stories tied together in the whole thing. Scurll and Ospreay are mortal enemies, Takahashi had Kushida's number (though Kushida finally beat him to win the title back) and Ospreay took the title from Kushida a few months back. Marty comes out with WINGS for a heck of an entrance. The champ heads outside to start so it's Ospreay flipping over Kushida to start.

Kushida flips over into a dropkick for two with Marty running in for the save. Back up and Ospreay moonsaults in to kick Scurll and Kushida down at the same time. Everyone heads outside with Ospreay climbing the set and moonsaulting down onto the other three. Back in and Kushida catches Ospreay's springboard in a cross armbreaker but Ospreay comes back in to grab the chickenwing.

Kushida slaps the Hoverboard Lock on Takahashi at the same time and it's a game of chicken (Wing?). It's Scurll letting go of Ospreay to make the save with a superkick to Kushida. Back up and everyone hits everyone really hard for the four way knockdown. They strike it out from their knees until Ospreay kicks Scurll down, only to have the Oscutter

countered into the chickenwing.

That's broken up as well and Takahashi suplexes Kushida into the corner. Kushida gets caught upside down in the corner for a superkick (called the Chicky Nandos kick, a case where I doubt I want the backstory), followed by Ospreay going up. His shooting star is countered into a cutter though and Scurll gets two off a Last Shot. The Oscutter gets the same on Ospreay and Scurll heads outside to tape Takahashi to the barricade. He throws in a finger break, only to have Kushida and Ospreay break fingers on both of his hands.

Kushida triangles Ospreay but gets lifted up and powerbombed into the corner for his efforts. Now it's Scurll grabbing some powder to blind Kushida, who is still able to hit the small package driver for two with Ospreay diving off the top for the save. Takahashi has somehow gotten free and catches Ospreay in a German suplex, followed by running sunset bombs to Ospreay and Scurll. The Time Bomb gets two on Scurll but it's Ospreay coming in for the save.

Ospreay and Scurll take turns kicking the heck out of Takahashi and Kushida, only to have Takahashi missile dropkick Ospreay for two. Now it's Kushida back up with a running sunset bomb on Takahashi. Ospreay hits an imploding 450 for two on Takahashi but a Time Bomb gets the same with Scurll making the save. Some umbrella shots have the challengers in trouble but the Oscutter takes Scurll down for the pin and the title at 21:22.

**Rating:** A-. Like I said, there were a lot of stories in this match and Ospreay FINALLY beating Scurll was probably the biggest of them all. On top of that this was a heck of a fight with all four stealing the spotlight for at least a little while. Ospreay looked awesome here and was only a few steps ahead of the other three. There's not much to say here, other than they were rocking the house and that's what a match like this was supposed to do.

We recap (first time tonight) Hiroshi Tanahashi defending the Intercontinental Title against Jay White. Jay had been a Young Lion who left on his foreign excursion (mainly to Ring of Honor, where I was a big

fan) and returned in November at Power Struggle. White talked about watching Tanahashi for years and now he wants to prove himself against the best. He attacked Tanahashi and received a title shot, which is about as simple as you can get. Tanahashi is older now (41) and banged up but he's still one of the best the company has.

### Intercontinental Title: Hiroshi Tanahashi vs. Jay White

Tanahashi is defending. White has a cool entrance with a knife falling on the ground to play up his Switchblade moniker. They fight over arm control to start and it's an early standoff with Tanahashi throwing in some air guitar. Not only will he wrestle you, but he'll throw in some musical entertainment. Usually that costs more. A forearm White down but he gets in a shot to the knee to really take over for the first time.

The knee is wrapped around the barricade to make things even worse. Back in and Tanahashi has to fight from his back so White can pretty easily slap on something like an Indian deathlock. Kelly starts talking about Tanahashi's history at this show as the basic leg work continues. Tanahashi finally escapes and hits a dragon screw legwhip for a breather, followed by a middle rope Swanton for two.

The Sling Blade misses but Tanahashi is right back on the leg to keep White at bay. A high crossbody to the floor drops White again but he's right back up with a German suplex inside. White hits a brainbuster (not really) onto the apron before driving some knees into the corner (White: "Is this the Ace? Is this the Ace?"). Tanahashi's comeback is countered with a suplex into the corner for two as frustration is starting to set in.

A twist of White's knee takes him down this time but he catches Tanahashi on top. That just earns him a super swinging neckbreaker (Twist and Shout), followed by back to back Sling Blades for two. The High Fly Flow misses and the knee is banged up again. White's Kiwi Crusher gets two but the Switchblade (looked like Sister Abigail) is countered into a dragon suplex for two more. High Fly Flow is good enough to end White at 19:44.

**Rating:** B-. You kind of knew they weren't going to have Tanahashi lose three straight Wrestle Kingdom matches so the ending isn't the biggest

surprise. That being said, the idea of pulling the trigger on White seemed very, very intriguing though I get why they couldn't go through with the title change.

However, this was little more than average with White's offense not being anything impressive (he has a very solid look and presence though and the offense certainly wasn't bad) and Tanahashi never feeling like he was in any serious danger. The Crusher only getting two and barely being treated as a near fall didn't bode well and while the match was good, it was nothing compared to what Tanahashi has done in the past.

We recap the real main event of Chris Jericho vs. Kenny Omega. Basically Omega needed a top opponent and Jericho appeared in 2017, challenging him to a match. They've attacked each other in recent weeks and there's actually a lot of hype for the match. Jericho used to wrestle in New Japan before he went to WCW so this is a homecoming in a way. But yeah, the entire story here is "Jericho vs. Omega." Does it need to be anything else? Omega's US Title is on the line and it's about as important as Ric Flair's Intercontinental Title when he fought HHH in a cage at Taboo Tuesday 2005.

#### IWGP US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kenny Omega

No DQ, Jericho is challenging and he brought the light up jacket to Japan. His hair has also grown out a bit and is now close to what it was looking like back in 2004/5, which isn't the best idea in the world. Instead of the Terminator, Omega has what looks to be a Loki helmet and a big freaking gun, along with the Young Bucks at his side. Not that they matter as they're ejected almost immediately in a good idea.

Jericho jumps him during the entrances and shoves the young boys out of the way. They immediately slug it out with Omega getting the better of it and hammering away on the mat. Jericho grabs the referee for a cheap shot and chops away as Callis is WAY more excited than he...eh never mind. An early Walls attempt sends Omega to the ropes and for some reason the referee breaks it up. Know the rules chum.

Omega baseball slides him over the barricade but the big springboard dive only hits table for a great looking crash. Jericho grabs the Walls on the



floor and shoves the referee before putting a young boy (referee's son for a nice touch) in the Walls as well. A monitor shot cuts Jericho off but he knocks Omega again. Jericho: "ALPHA!" Nice touch to play up that Alpha vs. Omega idea.

Speaking of Omega, he puts a table on top of Jericho and climbs a structure for a double stomp as the announcers try to figure out if they're on the air. Both guys beat the count back in and Jericho's springboard dropkick to the knee cuts off Omega's springboard. Jericho heads back outside and sets up a table. The powerbomb is initially blocked so Jericho powerbombs him on the floor instead. Hang on as Jericho stops to grab a camera for some shots (as in photos), including some of his flipping off the fans.

Back in and a chair is wedged in the corner but Jericho goes with the Lionsault for a delayed two instead. One heck of a clothesline puts Jericho back on the floor and there's the big flip dive to take Jericho down again. Omega scores with the V Trigger but the snap dragon is reversed into the ropes. This time Omega goes to the corner but grabs the cold spray stored there to blind Jericho for the escape. The blind Jericho is still able to send Omega head first into the corner, meaning it's time to stop for some posing. That gets some great heat from the crowd and Jericho sending Omega into the chair again makes things even better.

Omega is busted and you know Jericho is going to follow up on that. A snap dragon gets Omega out of trouble but it's way too early (despite being twenty two minutes in) for the One Winged Angel. Another chair shot puts Omega down and some not great shots to the back keep him in trouble. Omega has to pull himself up and Jericho is nearly reveling in his pain. Jericho takes too long going up though and a V Trigger knocks Jericho off the top and through the table.

Back in and Omega knees the heck out of him, followed by a double underhook piledriver for a close two. The One Winged Angel is countered into another Walls and then the Liantamer for some extra mustard. Omega crawls over to the ropes and Jericho lets go with no orders from the ref. Two more V Triggers into the One Winged Angel is good for two with

Jericho grabbing the rope.

Back up and Jericho is dropped face first onto the top turnbuckle but comes back with a Codebreaker for a delayed near fall. For some reason Jericho decides to lay a chair on Omega, who pops up with a shot to the back. The One Winged Angel onto the chair is enough to finish Jericho off at 34:36.

**Rating:** C-. And that didn't work. Between the really stupid rope breaks (Jericho yelled about them earlier and then just let it happen twenty five minutes later), the lack of any, you know, wrestling, the V Triggers going all over the place and Omega not knowing how to do more than about five moves while being treated as some kind of wrestling deity, this was nowhere near as good as it should have been. I'm sure the "real" wrestling fans will drool over the whole thing without seeing what's right in front of them because they don't want to look at the actual details. Maybe Jericho can have one more WWE run, but this didn't help things.

To really sum up the problem with the whole thing, you had Kevin Kelly telling the critics of Kenny Omega where they could go. It's the standard slurping of the overrated guy who really isn't as great as he's built up to be, but that's almost the case for Japan. Let me guess: 94.75 stars, which will be debated for years because some people saw it as 94.25 stars while King Dave chuckles the whole time? I give it four toasters out of ten lobster specials. Does that count?

Omega is helped out and looked happier than he ever has been over his win.

We recap the IWGP World Title match. Tetsuya Naito won the 2017 G1 Climax Tournament to earn this shot and I think I've typed enough now to sell the idea that I gave my actual thoughts on the previous match and wasn't just putting that to see how many heads I could get to explode. Jericho vs. Omega was an A- with two guys beating the heck out of each other for about five minutes longer than they should have but it was still a blast. They hid Jericho's physical limitations very well (dude is 47) and had a great match with some nuclear heat (almost Lana levels) from the crowd.

Anyway, to continue the charade for those who don't pay attention: Okada has held the title for a year and the guard needs changing.

### IWGP World Title: Kazuchika Okada vs. Tetsuya Naito

Okada is defending but Naito comes out rocking that white suit as only he can. The champ's entrance shows him flipping a gold coin and walking away, though I'm more curious about why the Japanese title has English writing on its plates. Okada is also wrestling in long pants (not tights) which is a look I've never seen from him before. The fans are WAY into this from the bell and the dueling chants begin.

No contact in the first minute and Naito backs up from a lockup attempt. Okada finally gets to him just under two minutes in but Naito dropkicks the knee. Some armdrags have Naito in trouble but he lands in his signature pose for a nice touch. We hit the stall button as you have to guess they have a ton of time here.

Kelly talks about betting sites having the over/under for this match at five stars. As my eyes roll back into my head, I catch a glimpse of Naito elbowing him in the head to take over but getting dropkicked off the top and out to the floor. Ok so my eyes roll rather slowly. Naito comes right back with a neckbreaker over the barricade (Okada has had a bad neck for the better part of a year) but the champ is back in before the twenty count. A missile dropkick gets two and Naito hammers on the head to work over the neck some more.

We hit the cravate to keep the champ in trouble but Okada throws him down and nips up. Okada nails a hanging DDT off the barricade but charges into a reverse DDT onto the knee. A flapjack cuts Naito off again as they're kind of doing the Bret vs. Shawn formula from Wrestlemania XII with Bret having a planned offense to pick Shawn apart but Shawn making up whatever he's doing on the fly because he's just that naturally talented.

It's WAY too early for the Rainmaker so Okada settles for a cobra clutch instead. Naito can't flip him away but he can get his foot on the ropes (and now, it actually makes sense). Back up and Naito hits a hanging neckbreaker, followed by a super reverse hurricanrana for the first near fall. A corkscrew moonsault only hits mat though and both guys are down.

The battle of the forearms goes to Naito and a Liger kick staggers the champ.

There's a flying forearm (hey Naito is supposed to be Shawn) but Okada breaks up a superplex. He misses a missile dropkick though and Naito has another opening...which is rapidly closed by a Rainmaker for two. Kelly: "Naito kicked out of the Rainmaker!" Well duh. I mean, it's the Wrestle Kingdom main event and there's the whole it's just a clothesline issue. The tombstone is countered into Destino but Naito is too spent to cover. The slow slugout from their knees goes to a draw so they slug it out on their feet instead.

A hard slap puts Okada down and something like a swinging neckbreaker gets two. Destino is countered into another Rainmaker but Okada picks him up instead of covering. That means another Destino for another two and we keep going. The dropkick into the tombstone looks to set up another Rainmaker but Naito reverses into Destino. He won't cover though and tries another Destino, only to be reversed into the tombstone. Another Rainmaker actually retains the title at 36:37.

**Rating:** B+. Uh...ok then. I would have thought this was the biggest layup of the show but Okada winning does have some potential. The key thing here is that while Omega and Naito have failed, whoever finally DOES beat Okada is going to be the biggest kingslayer of all time. It's an interesting way to go, though it's also quite risky.

The match itself was quite good, though I really wasn't feeling some of the drama near the end. I think given how much it seemed Naito was a lock to take the title here, a lot of the near falls didn't really get me interested. There were some good counters and Naito's neck stuff all made sense, but it wasn't up to the highest level in the world. That doesn't mean it's not great (it's just barely into the great level but it's there) but it needed a little more to get there. Very good match, just lacking some of the emotion that it needed.

Gedo yells at Naito as he stumbles up the ramp. Okada says something to Naito, which seems to be about respect. The champ addresses the fans and since I have no idea what's being said and since no one translates it,

we'll wrap things up here with me assuming Gedo gave a recipe for Mexican spaghetti while telling Okada they need to buy Christmas ribbons while they're on sale. Okada likely sang the Kenan and Kel theme song.

**Overall Rating:** A-. As usual, it's a heck of a show but this one felt like it was lacking something here and there. The main events were both very strong and there were some other outstanding matches up and down the card. The energy was great throughout and above all else (maybe), the show really didn't feel that long. This might be the first time I've ever knocked the whole thing out in a day and I never felt like it was going on forever, which is almost always the case.

There are some minor problems with the show, including a lack of much feeling like it mattered. The three top titles all stayed with their original holders and there's really no one fresh left to challenge Okada (you can imagine Omega and Naito getting more shots but we've covered both of them rather recently). Ospreay is probably the biggest title change and he held the title as recently as November. Bushi and Evil winning was a cool moment, though I'd hope you can have something a bit more impactful than new Tag Team Champions. Have one of those three big titles change hands and the show feels more important.

Overall, the show was a lot of fun but I don't think it's going to be up there on the list of all time greatest Wrestle Kingdoms. There's a lot of stuff that felt like it was built up to be big but was there to move us forward to something else. That's not to say it's a bad idea, though I'd kind of like something to actually feel important at the biggest show of the year. It's worth seeing, as long as you realize that it's been done better before.

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# 2017 Awards: News Story of the Year

There's a lot more to wrestling than just wrestling.

I know most of the focus in wrestling goes on wrestling (kind of makes sense if you think about it) but there's other stuff going on around the wrestling world. While some of these might not be the most thrilling stories in the world, a lot of them could have quite the impact on the wrestling world, either short or long term.

In no order, which shouldn't be news to you.

We'll start down in Mexico where Sexy Star apparently went into full on shoot mode on Rosemary in a match. While Star went into a variety of explanations for what happened, I'm not sure how many people actually bought what she said. Star is a big name in Lucha Underground but at the same time she's not exactly big outside of there. However, anytime something like this happens, it's a big deal almost by definition.

Sticking with the women, WWE ran the Mae Young Classic. The Women's Revolution has been in full swing for well over a year now but the idea of running an all women's special was rather unique stuff. It might not have been the most eventful tournament in the world but that doesn't mean that it wasn't a big deal. At the end of the day, this was being held by WWE.

Not Stardom, not Shimmer, not Ring of Honor, but the biggest wrestling company in the world. Imagine that three years or so ago and you'll see why it's a big deal.

In something that may not be guaranteed but seems to be as close as you can get to it, Vince McMahon might be bringing back the XFL. While this has very little to do with actual wrestling, it does have to do with the WWE. Vince is going to be distracted by another outside project and that could mean a lot of different things for the promotion. Odds are they won't be good ones either, but this is the chance to see what happens when so many fans scream about how much they want Vince gone. Be careful what you wish for people.

Then we'll go up north, along with TNA. Yeah, at least for a little while, TNA seemed to become a Canadian promotion (and not a very good one at that). It begs the question of how much lower can they get, because at the moment they're the Prairie Wrestling Alliance with a TV deal. It's lead to stuff like Petey Williams as a featured player and I'm not sure how well that's going to go over with the masses (or at least the people who actually watch TNA). They already seem to be heading back to Orlando, but it's hard to say what's after that for these people.

Speaking of going foreign, we have the proposed expansion of WWE into the United Kingdom. This one has kind of happened and kind of not happened, as we have a United Kingdom Champion but we don't have the weekly United Kingdom TV show that was mentioned multiple times. Maybe it's WWE's anti-cost crusade (just give us pyro at Wrestlemania at least) but for now, this is just the start of something. It's worked while it's lasted, but for now it doesn't mean much.

Finally, and probably by default, we have the winner (or at least the one that had the biggest impact at the time): the illnesses that plagued the locker room around Tables, Ladders and Chairs. This sent the entire card into upheaval and gave

us some pretty big matches in the process while also keeping a ton of talent off the shows for weeks. It's not the biggest long term deal in the world, but for a week or so this was the update to watch.

So yeah, nothing exactly bombshell level yet, but that XFL thing could get big in a hurry.

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# Impact Wrestling – January 4, 2018: They Need To Get Out Of The Infield

## Impact Wrestling

Date: January 4, 2018

Location: Aberdeen Pavilion, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Jeremy Borash, Josh Matthews

We're back to the regular shows after two weeks of Best of 2017 episodes drew higher audiences than the standard ones. This is a big week as well with multiple title matches, including Eli Drake defending the World Title against Alberto El Patron in a match which might be taped from a WrestlePro event. Let's get to it.

Dan Lambert tells the American Top Team guys that he has this tonight.

We preview tonight's big tag match and four title matches. This is a stacked show but it really, really needs to draw.

Opening sequence.

X-Division Title: Taiji Ishimori vs. Trevor Lee

Lee is defending and has Caleb Konley in his corner. They fight over arm



control to start because that's the kind of exciting stuff this division is built on. Giving this match the level of attention it has earned, the announcers talk about every other big match taking place tonight. Ishimori dropkicks him out to the floor and moonsaults into a pose. Konley trips him up though and the champ takes over with a running kick on the apron.

Back in and a whip into the corner gets two more as the announcers are now going with silence instead of talking about something else. Uh...improvement? Ishimori comes back with running knees in the corner and takes his shirt off. Not quite TAKING OFF HIS PANTS but close enough. A handspring into a crossbody looks to take Lee down but he flips it over into a belly to belly for a sweet counter as we take a break.

Back with Ishimori scoring off a handspring kick to the face but missing the 450. Like a finisher is going to hit on the first attempt. Lee backslides him down but picks Ishimori up into a sitout powerbomb for two instead. Destino (Tetsuya Naito's finisher) gives Ishimori two and the 450 is enough to get the title off of Lee at 13:16.

**Rating:** C+. There's no secret that Ishimori is the best in the division but that's not exactly saying much. The division barely means anything around here anymore and Ishimori isn't going to be able to do anything on his own. It also doesn't help that there's not much setting the division apart. Ishimori has a good looking 450 but most of the division isn't exactly known for flying around the ring. Give us something that makes them stand out aside from the label of being in the X-Division.

Alberto and Eli are ready to fight at WrestlePro. I know they need more content but this always feels like it's cheap.

Dezmond Xavier wants a shot at Ishimori's title. Makes sense after the Super X Cup and it's better than nothing else.

LAX isn't happy.

James Storm says tonight is a little different because he's standing up for Impact Wrestling. I'm a big Storm fan but his "I've been here since the beginning" promo is getting old.

## Grand Championship: Ethan Carter III vs. Fallah Bahh vs. Matt Sydal

Carter is defending and this is under the same round and scoring system as a standard one on one match. Yes they're finding new ways to make this title stupid. Everyone brawls to start until Bahh clotheslines both of them down and slams Matt onto Eli. Bahh rolls onto both of them to break up a cover and chops the heck out of Carter in the corner. Carter gets run over again but he rolls away before a Banzai Drop. The first round ends and of course goes to Bahh.

Round two starts after a break with Bahh getting double teamed and knocked out to the floor. Sydal kicks Carter down for two but Eli gorilla presses him onto Bahh. Josh thinks Carter should try to win the match. Keep it up Josh and you'll get up to Byron Saxton territory in no time. Carter throws Drake into the corner to end the round.

As you might expect, Carter wins the second round but Bahh runs them both over to start round three. Bahh sits on Carter's chest for two with Sydal having to make a save. The TK3 plants Sydal and Carter breaks up another Banzai Drop attempt. Bahh is back up and slows down the shooting star press, which Sydal hits just as time expires at 9:00. Carter wins round three and retains the title.

**Rating:** B-. As usual, the more fun I have with this match, the less interest I have in the whole concept. You could do the exact same thing with a ten minute time limit, which at least makes more sense than a nine minute time limit. I know I harp on these same issues over and over but sweet goodness they just do not learn with this thing. I'm not sure what they see in the whole concept but I don't think anyone would be complaining if it was just dropped already.

Video on Johnny Impact. He really needs a fresh feud after all this stuff with Alberto, who hasn't done much for Johnny's status around here.

KM arrived and jumped Moose. Somehow, this has been quite the upgrade for him as of late.

Allie can't believe she's here but Gail Kim (take a freaking shot) told her she'd be here. Crazy Laurel Van Ness attacks her from behind.

## Dan Lambert vs. James Storm

Loser leaves town and no holds barred. Lambert talks a lot of trash and here are the American Top Team guys for the beatdown. Lashley's spinebuster gets two but Storm manages to Last Call everyone down. He hadn't taken much damage but sweet goodness that's quite the comeback. KM comes in with a beer bottle to Storm's head for two. Lashley holds Lambert back, allowing a double beer bottle shot to put Storm away at 3:36.

**Rating:** F. And that's it for Storm, who has been one of the longest standing stars of Impact for years now. It does kind of seem appropriate that he goes out putting someone else over, which is always the case for Storm. I could go for him putting over WRESTLERS on his way out but this American Top Team thing is out of hand at this point. It really would have been nice for Storm to get in any kind of important offense but this is how Impact is going to let someone go, because that's what matters to them.

Post break, Storm gets an ovation from the locker room. Storm calls his family to say he's coming home and you can barely hear him over the LAX chants while the other match is being taped at the same time. So he gets squashed and beaten down by non-wrestlers and then you can't even hear his goodbye speech. As mentioned: such is life in Impact.

Video on the debut of Joseph Park, who started off looking for his brother Abyss. I was actually surprised that he was Abyss as I never would have recognized him. The fact that he looks like Penn Jillette made things more complicated.

We see the last few minutes of Joseph Park vs. Bully Ray from Slammiversary 2012.

## Chandler Park vs. Jon Bolen

Park is indy mainstay Ethan Page. Bolen drops Park to start and runs him over with a shoulder for two. Josh plugs the upcoming Orlando tapings which will feature a miniature golf tournament. Well it's better than a match from 2012. Joseph manages to get some cheers going and Bolen misses

a charge in the corner. Chandler celebrates a bit too long though and gets the ropes kicked between his legs. For some reason Jon decides to insult Joseph's Grandma Jenny and gets knocked into a rollup for the pin at 2:39. Park has a good look but this slip on a banana peel winning isn't going to work for very long.

So to recap: they aired a video package which showed that they're basically repeating the same idea with one of the participants being the same just five years later. Am I missing something here?

Sydal wants Carter one on one and says tonight's defeat felt like a victory. He has a radical idea: a REGULAR MATCH for the title. I could certainly go for that idea, which is why I think they'll manage to botch the thing.

Video on Alberto vs. Eli. Alberto is still mad about being abandoned by the company and makes threats in Spanish. Drake is a paper champion of course but says that the only paper involved with his title is all the paper money he makes. As usual, Eli is the best promo in this company.

From Rahway, New Jersey this past Saturday at a WrestlePro event.

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

Eli is defending and it's a brawl before the bell. Jeremy tries to explain the low attendance on the horrible snowstorm over the weekend, even though this was taped nearly a month ago. Alberto gets an early two off a dropkick to the back and sends him into the barricade a few times. Drake is rammed into the buckles over and over but we're clipped (on a show with a MATCH FROM NEARLY SIX YEARS AGO) to Drake choking on the ramp.

They take turns sending each other into the barricade with Drake getting the better of it for two inside. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Alberto gets the cross armbreaker over the ropes. Clipped again to the Gravy Train giving Drake two. Drake misses a belt shot and gets faceplanted onto the title for two more. The ref gets bumped though and a belt shot retains the title at 6:19.

**Rating:** D-. Oh sweet goodness no. In addition to the lack of the time (six minutes for a World Title match is almost inexcusable in the first place), the clipping of the match (maybe they could only air so much of it) and the REALLY lame ending, there's the fact that it wasn't even held under their own brand. If the match being under the WrestlePro banner necessitated the clipping, maybe don't have the thing under another banner and tape the match at your own tapings. Why is this stuff so freaking complicated for just this company? I've seen indy promotions that run once every month that are put together WAY better than this.

Here's a clip from a Team Canada match in case you had gotten enough of this modern stuff.

Drake brags about his win and says the belt shot was a receipt for the DDT onto the title belt a few weeks back.

#### Tag Team Titles: LAX vs. OVE

OVE is defending and this is titles vs. careers. The champs jump LAX during the entrances and the weapons beatdown is on. If this is anything goes, there was no announcement saying such in the arena. The lights finally come up and we get an opening bell with Santana getting superkicked down for two.

We settle down to Dave choking Santana in the corner before it's off to Jake to choke on the ropes. Santana fights back up but has no partner, meaning Jake can kick him back down for two. The stomping and choking based offense continues with Santana's right hands having little effect as we take a break. Back with Santana still on his own but managing a cutter on Dave. Ortiz finally manages to get back to the ring, only to be knocked down to the floor again.

Santana has to slap his way to freedom as Ortiz is up on the apron. A DDT finally gets Santana over to the corner for the hot tag so Ortiz can Death Valley Drive Jake into Dave in the corner. Ortiz heads up top for a superplex but Dave reverses it into the Street Sweeper (stealing the finisher) for two more. Santana breaks up the All Seeing Eye and looks for something off the top onto Dave, only to dive into a cutter from Jake in a sweet looking visual. Jake and Ortiz are left to slug it out with

Ortiz getting the better of it, setting up the Street Sweeper for the pin and the titles at 14:42.

**Rating:** B. The story was solid here as you have LAX winning when all the interference goes away despite OVE getting an early advantage. They did this the way they needed to but hokey smoke it's time for some fresh challengers. I know there aren't a lot of teams to go around this company but these four can't feud together much longer, just for the sake of people getting burned out on the match.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This one depends on how you look at it. The good wrestling outweighed the bad wrestling but egads why can't this company get the most basic stuff down? I know I mentioned it multiple times but they aired part of a match from 2012 and clipped the World Title match (which aired in another promotion). This is their big return show with FOUR title matches on one show and a gimmick match and it felt like they stumbled to the ground and then crawled over the finish line.

This company doesn't seem to understand the basics and those major issues are making it very difficult to make any real progress. They built up Alberto vs. Drake and for whatever reason it's taking place in a small arena in front of a lot of empty bleachers and we don't even get to see the whole thing. That makes this company seem low level and makes the casual viewers go to another promotion. You need to knock something out of the park once in awhile but I don't remember the last time they even hit a stand up triple. This was a watchable show but it should have been so much more, which is the case way too often.

### Results

Taiji Ishimori b. Trevor Lee – 450 splash

Ethan Carter III b. Matt Sydal and Fallah Bahh via judges' decision

Dan Lambert b. James Storm – Double beer bottle to the head

Chandler Park b. Jon Bolen – Rollup

Eli Drake b. Alberto El Patron – Title shot to the head

LAX b. OVE – Street Sweeper to Jake

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## **2017 Awards: Surprise of the Year**

I bet you didn't see this one coming.

As you might have guessed, I've watched quite a bit of wrestling in my day. Over the years, you eventually get a pretty good idea of what to expect from a lot of wrestling shows. I mean, there's only so much that can be done to surprise you when you've been around for a long time, which is what makes this such a hard category to pull off. There were actually a lot of options though and that's always a lot of fun.

In no order, as usual.

We'll start with one of the options that is going to get the most attention and for good reason: Tommaso Ciampa turns on

Johnny Gargano. This one worked far better than I would have expected and I'd be shocked if their match doesn't headline at least one Takeover in the coming year. My only issue is they kind of telegraphed it by having the match go on last and leaving the camera on the team for so long. It felt like they were teasing the going away segment but it went the other way. In other words it felt like they were going somewhere, which takes away a bit of the impact.

Given that this is being written as Wrestle Kingdom is taking place, it seems appropriate to put in Chris Jericho appearing in New Japan to challenge Kenny Omega. I know it might not be the best in-ring match but my goodness people: it's CHRIS JERICH0 in New Japan. There were rumors of a surprise at the show but I thought it was going to be a full show in America over Wrestlemania weekend or something. This was a heck of a deal and my eyebrows went up when I saw the announcement.

Everybody needs a Clarence P. Oddbody ASC (Look it up you heathens.) and Kevin Owens got one in the form of Sami Zayn. While Shane McMahon was on top of the Cell (again) for an elbow drop that missed (again), Zayn came out and saved his longtime rival and sometimes best friend in a heck of a heel turn. It might not have been the biggest surprise, but I'm not sure how many people actually thought they would go this way. It was quite the success though and that's what matters most.

In another moment where I was actually in the house, we have the Hardys return. Now, I really don't know how much doubt there was that the Hardys would wind up back in the company someday and that's normal. Almost everyone winds up back in WWE at some point and the Hardys were on fire. The thing is, even with all that, as soon as New Day came out and said there was another team, I stood up and said out loud "They wouldn't. There's no way." Then I couldn't hear myself anymore because the fans were going so cookaloo. This was a great moment and I could easily see this getting the vote.



Back in May, Jinder Mahal won the WWE World Title. It was shocking, it was something people never saw coming, and it was Jinder Mahal winning the WWE World Title. This deserves no awards so we'll move on to the winner.

Like I said, it takes a lot to surprise me. There's very little that hasn't been done in wrestling but in this case, WWE actually pulled it off. Back in February, Chris Jericho promised to show his best friend Kevin Owens what he really meant to him. Jericho set up the most over the top display of friendship in wrestling history, though it didn't quite go as well as he had hoped. At the end, Owens, looking a bit annoyed, said he had a present for Jericho. Chris opened the box and found a new list! With his name on it! Jericho dropped the box and the back of the list said "The List Of KO". A huge beatdown ensued and the team was done.

They got me with this one and that's quite the feat. Jericho sold the heck out of the thing and it was the absolute perfect way to split the team up. The List of Jericho had been one of the coolest ideas I had seen in a long time and tying the split all back into that concept was the perfect way to do this whole thing. It's hard to get this right but I bought into it all the way so well done indeed.

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## **2017 Awards: Entrance of the Year**

Kind of a perfect way to get started no?

It's that time of year again and this time around, I'm going to make sure to get these up in a much, much more realistic amount of time. Hopefully it's going to be one a day for

twenty one days but I'll throw in a bonus this time around (which might be more often if I can remember to do them. There are a few new categories this year and we're starting with one of those today.

Entrances really are one of the more important things in wrestling. Whether it's Hulk Hogan firing the crowd up or Undertaker just being creepy and chilling, you need someone to come out looking awesome to really sell what's going on. That's what we're looking at today, though in this case it's going to be looking at individual entrances instead of general ones.

These are in no order.

First up is one I was there for in person for: Aleister Black rising from the shadows at Takeover: Orlando. Keep in mind that this was his debut and tell me how it could have been any cooler. The guy literally rises from the blackness and is instantly ready to go. You knew it was something cool and you knew it was something that was in the vein of the Undertaker, which is as awesome as it gets.

Next up is something a little more glorious with Bobby Roode at Takeover: San Antonio. This was straight out of the Ric Rude playbook as Roode made his full entrance but came out with eight good looking women because he's just that big of a star. Roode was great at making himself look bigger than anyone else on the roster and that's what this entrance did. You really could pick any of Roode's entrances from the year and the song alone is more than enough to carry him as high as he needed to go.

Speaking of that song, we'll move on to the person it was originally intended for. It was no secret that Shinsuke Nakamura was getting the call up to the main roster after Wrestlemania, but the question was where would he go from there. That question was answered on the April 4 Smackdown

when he made his main roster debut by interrupting Miz and Maryse as John Cena and Nikki Bella. I mean, counting Maryse as Nikki (just...dang that look worked for her) and then cutting to the violinist to play Nakamura's theme and this was completely awesome.

I'm going to break my own rule a bit here and pick a more general entrance (kind of). Sami Zayn turned heel earlier this year and that opened up a bunch of questions. Was he going to be able to pull off a heel character? Would the fans cheer him anyway? Where can I get one of those snappy hats? It turns out that he can rock the heel run and that was never more evident than his dancing around Kevin Owens during the entrances, looking like the biggest jerk of a heel in years. I'm digging the heel character and the dancing entrance is probably the top reason.

That leaves us with the winner, which is one I never would have guessed. I'm going with Naomi at Wrestlemania XXXIII just for the pure spectacle of it all. I'm not a big Naomi fan (and her winning the title still isn't a big deal, just like her winning the title back in her hometown) but that entrance is something else. Putting it in a massive stadium in front of 75,000 people was one of the coolest experiences I've ever had at a wrestling show and it more than does the trick. I wasn't expecting to pick this but the more I thought about it, the more blown away I really was.

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## **Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1993: Not Even Undertaker Can Stop**

# Him

## Royal Rumble 1993

Date: January 24, 1993

Location: ARCO Arena, Sacramento, California

Attendance: 16,000

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Bobby Heenan

This is a pretty forgotten show for reasons that should be obvious. First of all, this is 1993, one of the worst years in company history from a creative standpoint. Bret is defending the title against Razor Ramon (his only world title shot ever) and we've got the Rumble for the title shot at Wrestlemania for the first time. I don't know if that's official here, but the winner did indeed get the shot at the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

Historical note: this is 13 days after the debut of Monday Night Raw.

### Steiner Brothers vs. Beverly Brothers

For you ECW freaks, Bill Alfonso is the referee. Scott and I think Blake start things off. This is the Steiners' first major match and the fans seem to love them right off the bat. Scott immediately takes him to the mat with a top wristlock, causing Blake to freak out with a claim of tights being pulled. That sequence worked so well that they do it again. Heenan is very excited about the debut of Narcissist, which is Lex Luger as a guy obsessed with his muscles. In other words, Lex Luger debuts tonight.

After Blake stalls some more, here's Beau to taunt the not legal Rick. There's the tag to Rick who chases Beau around and hits Blake in the process. A powerslam puts Rick down and I don't think Gorilla knows which Beverly is which. Since this is a Steiners match, it's time for suplexes! Scott nearly kills Beau with a belly to belly and everything breaks down for a bit, allowing the Beverlies to take over on Scotty.

We get into a standard formula with Scott having his back worked on by both villains. Blake chokes with a tag rope in the corner for two.

Heenan: "Gotta hook the tights." Gorilla: "WHAT?" I love how shocked he sounds every time Heenan says something like that. Beau puts on a Boston Crab but Scott easily pushes out of it. Blake blocks a tag and let's make sure that we're LIVE still. What was WWF's obsession with that?

Scott avoids an elbow drop but Blake breaks up the hot tag again. The crowd is silent when the Beverlies are on offense. Scott comes back with a butterfly powerbomb to put Blake down and Scott actually dives through the ropes and tags at the same time. Rick cleans house and there are Steiner Lines for both Beverlies. Scott pounds on Blake in the corner and counters a Doomsday Device with a victory roll for two. The Frankensteiner to Beau gets the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Pretty dull match here as the Steiners were clearly going to dominate the entire time. The Beverlies never got above lower midcard status and their biggest feud was against the Bushwhackers. What were you going to expect them to do against the freaking STEINER BROTHERS? Nothing here but a squash.

We recap the Rockers' time together and their split. If my eyesight is correct, you can see Shane Douglas as a jobber. After the Barber Shop incident, Jannetty was out for months. He finally returned on Superstars, setting up the match tonight for Shawn's Intercontinental Title. During his return, Jannetty accidentally hit Sheri with a mirror, which is important to know for the match.

#### Intercontinental Title: Marty Jannetty vs. Shawn Michaels

Sherri is at ringside with the question being who would she side with? Why would she side with Marty anyway? I never got that. Apparently it's because Shawn never called her while she was in the hospital...which she was in because of Marty. So why would she ever go with Jannetty? Apparently Jannetty was drunk during this match. That might make things a bit funnier if nothing else.

Jannetty controls to start, sending Shawn to the floor twice with a knee lift and a clothesline. Marty punches Shawn down on the floor and poses in the ring. He tries a punch off the top but gets caught in the ribs on the way down. Shawn loads Marty up on his shoulder and in one of the only

times I can ever remember it working, rams Marty shoulder first into the post.

The champ rams the other shoulder into the post because he hit the right one the first time, and you just don't do that. Back in and Shawn hits a shoulderbreaker before sending Marty to the floor again. Back in and the shoulder goes into the buckle, followed by a double ax right down onto it as well. We hit the armbar but Marty fights out quickly. He tries a comeback but walks into a DDT on the arm for two.

Quick sidebar: why is that move called a single arm DDT? It's a hold used on the arm, but the double arm DDT is used to hurt the head. Also a regular DDT uses just one arm, so why is this called a single arm DDT instead of the regular one? These are the kinds of things I think about when I'm bored by a match.

Anyway, Shawn does the always stupid looking jump into the boot spot. I mean he jumped RIGHT AT Marty's feet. What could he possibly have been trying there? Marty avoids a charge in the corner, sending Shawn's shoulder into the post instead. Marty speeds things up and pounds away, only to have Shawn slingshot him out to the floor. Shawn goes to pick him up but Marty suplexes him out to the floor.

Sherri finally does something by slapping Shawn, who gets belly to back suplexed into the ring. Shawn gets launched to the floor again as the pace picks up a bit. A powerslam puts the champ down but Shawn avoids the top rope punch. Marty stops himself before crashing and gets two off a DDT. Shawn misses a superkick and gets caught by one of his own for two. The crowd is getting into this.

Marty slingshots Shawn so he gets to do his big bump onto the post. There goes the referee via an elbow to the face and Sherri comes in. She swings her shoe but hits Marty by mistake of course. Shawn yells at her a lot and then superkicks Marty in the chest for the pin to retain.

**Rating:** C+. This started slow, picked up a good bit during Marty's comeback, and then had a horribly uninteresting ending. Seriously, that's it? These two would have a rematch soon after on Raw which won Match of the Year in a contest for least bad match of the year for all intents and

purposes.

In the back, Gene yells at Sherri to calm down. Marty comes to the back for some more brawling.

Heenan and Gorilla argue a bit.

### Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Big Boss Man

Bigelow jumps Boss Man in the corner to start and Boss is in trouble early. He gets whipped into the corner and a Bigelow forearm knocks him to the outside. This is one of those "do one move then stand around for awhile" matches. Boss Man comes back with some clotheslines and some punches to the "face" in the corner. Another right hand and a bulldog puts Bigelow down but Boss Man's charge is countered by a backdrop to the floor.

Off to a body vice by Bigelow which is a rather dull move as usual. A hot shot puts Boss Man down for two and some shots to his back keeps him down. We hit the body vice again but Boss Man comes back with a suplex. It hurts him more than Bigelow though, as Bam is up first. Boss Man starts his real comeback with a punch to the face and a running crotch attack to Bigelow's back. Bigelow gets a boot up in the corner and clotheslines Boss Man down. The flying headbutt gets the pin.

**Rating:** D. This was pure filler and not even entertaining filler. Bigelow was on the rise at this point while Boss Man would be gone in less than two months. On top of that, the match was really dull with Bigelow laying around and working on Boss Man's back most of the time, which doesn't make for an interesting match at all.

We get a clip from WWF Mania (Saturday morning show) of Razor beating up Owen to hype the world title match.

Razor says he's got gold around his fingers and neck and now he wants it around his waist.

Bret says he's ready.

### WWF World Title: Razor Ramon vs. Bret Hart

Feeling out process to start with Razor getting the early advantage with some right hands. A knee in the corner misses and Bret has on the Figure Four in less than 90 seconds. Razor gets the rope so Bret drops elbows on the knee instead. The leg gets wrapped around the post before Bret goes after the other leg in the corner for some reason. Ramon comes back with a whip to send Bret ribs first into the post.

Now we get to the best part of any Bret Hart match: him getting the tar beaten out of him. Some backbreakers on the floor keep Bret down and we head inside again. Razor pounds on the ribs some more and hits the fallaway slam for two. Helen Hart (Bret's mom) is in the front row. There's the chest first into the buckle bump from Bret for two more and it's off to the abdominal stretch, another Razor trademark.

As always, Bret reverses Hall's hold into one of his own before getting hiptossed over. Bret is sent to the floor on a kickout and gets two on a sunset flip. We hit the reverse chinlock by Razor, followed quickly by a bearhug. Bret bites his way out of it and sends Razor to the outside in a quick move. The champion follows it up with a suicide dive and the comeback is on.

Bret pounds away in the corner over and over as we hit the brawl. For a guy known as a technical master, Bret brawled an awful lot. Not that he's bad at it or anything but it happens really often. There are the Five Moves of Doom but Razor gets to the rope before the Sharpshooter is on. The second attempt doesn't work either as Razor pulls the referee into a pile with the two of them.

Ramon goes right back to the ribs and Bret's momentum is stopped dead. A belly to back superplex is blocked by Bret into a belly to back suplex for two for the champ. Razor clotheslines Bret down but Bret escapes the Razor's Edge into a backslide for two. In a pretty awesome ending, Bret counters a test of strength into a sunset flip in a sweet flip counter, followed by grapevining the legs together on the mat and turning Razor over into the Sharpshooter for the submission.

**Rating:** B. Good match here and again, why did Razor never get more title matches? I know he wasn't the kind of guy to make the world champion, but



are you telling me that when the company was falling apart at times they couldn't throw him in there as a token challenger? I would have bought him as legit threat to any champion, but it never happened. I've never gotten that. Anyway, solid match here as you would expect from these two.

Heenan unveils Narcissist, which is Lex Luger in front of a bunch of mirrors. Lots of posing commences and Heenan sounds like he's in love. Well at least extreme lust. Luger says he'll be dominant. Not much here. A curtain is lowered over Luger and Heenan actually gets on his knees, begging to see more. I've heard of overtones but this is ridiculous.

Here are Caesar and Cleopatra to hype up Wrestlemania. They read a proclamation about it and this is really stupid.

### Royal Rumble

Ric Flair is #1 and Bob Backlund, going through a career resurgence at the time, is #2. Backlund drops Flair with a shoulder and does his little dance. Flair pounds him into the corner but Bob backdrops him down. Papa Shango is #3 and is dumped out by Flair in less than thirty seconds. Backlund is sent to the apron and Flair stomps away. They chop it out until Ted DiBiase, I believe half of the tag champions here, is #4.

Heenan makes fun of Backlund as the double teaming ensues, prompting Gorilla to threaten to knock Bobby out. Backlund is beaten on even more until Brian Knobs is #5. The Nasties are good guys at this point and happen to be feuding with Money Inc. Guess who he starts swinging at. Knobs almost dumps Flair but only gets him to the apron. Things slow down for a bit until Virgil is #6. The faces team up to fight the heels as not a lot is going on at this point.

DiBiase tosses out Knobs and we're down to four in the ring again. Here's the pretty new Jerry Lawler at #7 in a HUGE cape. I think he's a heel here but Flair grabs him for some chops almost immediately. Flair goes to the floor through the middle ropes so Virgil goes after Lawler. Flair gets back in and Jerry immediately goes after him. Oh never mind as Heenan is praising Lawler. He's a heel alright.

Max Moon (presumably played by Konnan) is #8. He hits a few moves and is

dumped by Lawler before anyone else shows up. Lawler's attire is really intricate here with lots of writing on it instead of the usual two color design. I kind of like it for a change. Japanese legend Genichiro Tenryu is #9 and he starts a chop-off with Flair as you would expect them to do.

Things slow down a bit until Mr. Perfect is #9 at a full sprint. Heenan: "OH NO! OH DEAR GOD NO!!!" Perfect immediately goes after Flair so Ric goes to the top. There's the slam off the top and the Hennig Neck Snap as Heenan is having a heart attack. We hear about the loser leaves the WWF match tomorrow on Raw between the two of them, which is a very rare match for some reason.

Skinner is #11 and he does nothing before Perfect shoves Flair out to a HUGE pop. Lawler (looking very different here for some reason that I can't place) pounds away on Hennig as we're back down to six people in there. That's usually the right amount so thankfully they've gotten through the first third without things getting too hectic. Koko B. Ware and those big green pants of his are #12. Heenan: "Koko B. Ware could go to Wrestlemania to face Bret Hart. Gorilla: "What's wrong with that?" Heenan: "IT SHOULD BE RIC FLAIR!!!"

Perfect dropkicks Skinner out and not a lot is going on again. Here's Samu at #13, giving us a group of Backlund, DiBiase, Tenryu, Virgil, Perfect, DiBiase, Lawler and Ware. Lawler and Perfect keep going at it in a feud that could have been AMAZING in Memphis. Berzerker is #14 as we need to get rid of some people in there. Lawler misses a charging punch on Perfect and there he goes. With Perfect distracted, DiBiase and Ware team up (you'll NEVER hear that again) to kick him out with an assist from Lawler. Virgil was thrown out during that melee, getting us down to just six again.

The Undertaker is #15 to a BIG pop. Gorilla calls him the odds on favorite. I'm not sure I'd go that far but whatever. Berzerker goes to the floor and beats up Backlund (not eliminated) with a chair. Taker puts Samu out and no sells a lot of Tenryu's stuff before dumping him as well. We've got Backlund (mostly dead on the floor), Taker, Berzerker, DiBiase and Ware in at the moment. Terry Taylor (he still had a job at this point?) is in at #16 and he's gone in less than thirty seconds thanks to

DiBiase, as is Ware.

There's a chokeslam to DiBiase and Taker dumps him, leaving Berzerker against Taker. In one of the biggest "oh great it's this guy" moments ever, Giant Gonzales debuts as Taker dumps Berzerker. Gonzales, a legit 7'7 tall, stares down at Taker as Damien Demento (don't ask) is #17. Gonzales chops Taker out for an illegal elimination. In case you're not familiar, Gonzales is a monster who makes Great Khali look like Lou Thesz. Speaking of Khali, he was literally the same character as Gonzales in a repeat of the same exact story the Undertaker was involved in in 1992. In short, both of them sucked and were really tall.

Gonzales destroys Taker for a bit as Demento still won't get in. IRS is #18 as the Giant is still beating up Taker. It's IRS, Backlund and Demento at the moment with Taker out cold in the corner. Tatanka is #19 as Paul Bearer uses the Urn to revive Taker. This of course is all the fans focus on, making the match in the ring look even less interesting than it already is, which is saying a lot when you think about it. Lots of choking ensues until Jerry Sags is #20.

There is NOTHING going on here and I don't think Typhoon at #21 is going to help things at all. Fatu is #22 and my goodness I have never heard more silence for an entrance. NOTHING is going on here and Earthquake is #23. He immediately goes after...Typhoon, his partner. They have a fat man brawl for a bit until Quake dumps him out. Carlos Colon, aged 44 and called a youngster by Monsoon is #24.

Colon dumps Demento as the eliminations are keeping the crowd on life support. Quake can't put Backlund out as Tito Santana is #25. Fatu misses a charge at Backlund and eliminates himself. We've got Quake, Backlund, Santana, IRS, Tatanka, Colon and Sags in there at the moment. Rick Martel is #26 who is STILL feuding with Santana. Why did they never have a big match to blow off that feud? It went on for like four years or so.

Earthquake dumps IRS and now we get to the first interesting part of the match in WAY too long: Backlund is sent to the apron and the crowd collectively gasps until he gets back in. Gorilla actually swears at how big the reaction is. Yokozuna is #27 and it's time to clear some space.

Yoko and Tatanka chop it out and there goes the guy with red hair (figure out which is which).

Colon is out and it's time for the fat man showdown with Quake vs. Yoko. They collide a few times and no one moves so Quake pounds him into the corner. Owen Hart is #28. Quake splashes Yoko in the corner but the second attempt misses. Yoko suplexes Quake out and that more or less seals the winner. Repo Man is #29 and is immediately dropped by Yoko. Everybody gangs up on Yoko and it doesn't work at all.

Randy Savage is #30, giving us a final group of Savage, Yokozuna, Repo Man, Owen, Martel, Santana, Sags and Backlund. They're not even trying to hide the winner at this point. Yoko dumps Tito as Owen dropkicks Sags out. Owen skins the cat to save himself before being dumped by Yoko and possibly injuring his knee. Repo is out and we're down to four. Backlund actually picks up Martel to sit him on top and punches him out. The place is WAY into Backlund here, so he goes after Yoko. A pair of dropkick put Yoko against the ropes but Backlund charges into the elimination, drawing a standing ovation.

So it's Savage vs. Yoko and the beating of the small man begins. Yoko flattens him over and over again until Savage fires off a bunch of kicks out of the corner. The fans are trying to get behind Savage and there's a top rope ax handle. One to the back gets Yoko down to one knee. Uh...why would you want to knock a guy this big DOWN in a battle royal?

Either way he superkicks Savage to knock him down again and there's the belly to belly. The legdrop crushes Savage but the Banzai Drop misses. In one of the STUPIDEST endings ever to the Rumble, Savage hits the elbow and COVERS, getting launched over the top rope on the kickout to send Yoko to Las Vegas for the title shot.

**Rating:** D. This was one of the worst Rumbles of all time. The main problem here is the period after Taker, the only guy you could actually see eliminating Yoko, was eliminated. From then until the time Backlund got close to the longevity record (which he got), there's NOTHING. It's a bunch of lame midcarders standing around lifting each others' legs in the air. Why would I want to see that at all? Anyway, nothing to see here and

a BAD Rumble.

**Overall Rating:** D+. There's a reason no one cares at all about 1993 WWF: it's really not very good. The title matches here aren't bad but other than that, this show is pretty freaking terrible. The Rumble sucks the life out of the show, as the highlights are a two minute segment between Flair and Perfect and the Backlund part at the end. When the whole match is 65 minutes long, that doesn't hold up. Weak show here.

### Ratings Comparison

Steiner Brothers vs. Beverly Brothers

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Shawn Michaels vs. Marty Jannetty

Original: C

Redo: C+

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Big Boss Man

Original: D+

Redo: D

Bret Hart vs. Razor Ramon

Original: B

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: D

Redo: D+

Not much change here.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/12/royal-rumble-count-up-1993/>

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/>

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1992: This Is Flair Country

## Royal Rumble 1992

Date: January 19, 1992

Location: Knickerbocker Arena, Albany, New York

Attendance: 17,000

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Bobby Heenan

This year's Rumble is often called the greatest ever, but I wonder how much of that is because of Bobby Heenan's masterful commentary. The WWF

Title is on the line in the Rumble, which to date (2012) is the only time this has ever happened. I could see that being a really good stipulation again, but for some reason it never has again. I remember loving this show so let's get to it.

We start with the usual listing of most of the people in the Rumble, all of whom are #1 contenders I suppose.

Heenan is betting on Flair for tonight's Rumble. Also we've got a NEW Intercontinental Champion as Mountie has beaten Bret Hart over the weekend. Now there's something you don't see everyday.

### Orient Express vs. New Foundation

It's Owen/Neidhart as the Foundation here. Owen and Kato start thing off here. All four guys look like they're in pajamas here. Owen takes him down to the mat by the arm before climbing up the ropes (not in the corner mind you but just the ropes) to backflip into the ring for an armdrag. A rana puts Kato down and it's off to Neidhart vs. Tanaka. Tanaka gets run over as well, so here's Owen to beat him up.

Tanaka gets caught by an enziguri and it's back to Neidhart. The Express gets clotheslined down by Jim and Owen adds a double cross body for two. A spinwheel kick gets the same for Hart so Kato tries to come in sans tag. The distraction lets Fuji hit Owen with the cane to finally give the Express control. Tanaka hooks a chinlock as this isn't exactly as fast paced as last year's opener.

Owen gets to do Bret's chest to the buckle bump before charging into a superkick in the other corner for two. After Kato comes in and does nothing, here's Tanaka again for a headbutt to the abdomen. A chinlock goes nowhere but a headbutt gets two on Owen. Neidhart gets the tag but the referee doesn't see it of course. The distraction allows Fuji to put the cane on the corner and Owen's shoulder goes through it in a loud crunch.

It only gets two though as Owen gets a leg over the rope. Kato channels his inner Anderson with a hammerlock slam before it's back to Tanaka. Owen finally escapes and things break down for a bit, resulting in a

double clothesline for two on Hart. A superkick to the chest doesn't put Owen down, but Tanaka jumping over Kato to land on Hart's back does. Hart comes back with a dropkick to take out both members of the Express at once. There's the hot tag to Neidhart and house is cleaned. Owen dives onto Kato before a Rocket Launcher gets the pin on Tanaka.

**Rating:** B-. Decent match here but it felt like they were trying to do the same match that worked so well in 1991. The problem was the Express wasn't anything that good anymore and the team was gone almost immediately after this. Either way, the match wasn't bad and it's fine for an opener. The New Foundation never quite did anything until 1994 when Owen was a heel.

We get a clip from the house show where Mountie won the IC Title from Bret. Post match he kept beating on Bret but Roddy Piper came out for the save.

Jimmy and Mountie brag about winning the title. Mountie is ready for Piper tonight.

Piper is ready for Mountie and tells Mountie to just try to take his manhood.

#### Intercontinental Title: Roddy Piper vs. The Mountie

Piper slowly removes his kilt and Mountie cracks jokes. When the champ turns his head, Piper shoves the kilt in his face and takes over quickly. We head to the floor with Mountie quickly reeling. Back in the ring and Mountie chokes a bit before getting punched in the face. A very delayed bulldog puts Mountie down and Piper easily wins a slugout. He misses a dropkick though and Mountie puts on a half nelson. A jumping back elbow gets two for Mountie as does a sunset flip for Piper. Piper atomic drops him to the apron but Mountie skins the cat. He also collides with Jimmy Hart and the sleeper gives Piper the title.

**Rating:** D. The match itself sucked but there was never any doubt about this match at all. Mountie is about as textbook a definition of a transitional champion as you'll ever see and the place went NUTS when Piper won the title. This would be Piper's only singles title in the WWF



and his only title period (other than those before he got to the WWF in the first place) until he won the US Title in WCW for less than two weeks.

Hogan says he has no friends in the Rumble tonight. He talks to Lord Alfred Hayes about tea because Hayes is British and that's about it.

The Bushwhackers and Jamison....oh geez it's him. This is one of the most annoying characters in wrestling history. He's supposed to be the ultimate nerd, with a nasal voice, taped up glasses, a suit that doesn't fit, and every other stereotype you can think of. Oh and he smells like sardines apparently. Let's get this over with.

### Beverly Brothers vs. Bushwhackers

This is more about the managers (Genius and Jamison respectively) more than the teams. Jamison chews on his tie as the Whackers do their arm thing to the audience. The Whackers lick each other and Jamison pulls out a roll for a snack. One of the Beverlies slaps Butch in the head so the Beverlies get chased to the floor. We FINALLY get started with Blake vs. Luke with the blonde (the Beverlies) in control.

The Beverly gets bitten on the tights and the Whackers clear the ring again. Jamison throws bread at Genius as the match stalls again. Now Jamison blows his nose in his sock. The fans don't care at all here. Beau comes in now to beat on Butch but for the third time in like five minutes the Whackers clear the ring again. The Beverlies try to sneak up on the Whackers but keep getting chased off.

Double teaming to Luke's back finally gets us down to a match, but let's keep the camera on Jamison. Jamison keeps chewing on his tie as this keeps up the dullness. A guillotine gets two on Luke as we hit the highlight of the match. No seriously, other than that it's been "comedy" and punching. Genius slaps Jamison to no reaction from anyone at all. A neckbreaker and legdrop hit Luke for no cover. Luke gets away with a move that I'm too bored to remember and it's off to Butch. Things break down and Beau hits a top rope ax handle on Butch for the pin.

**Rating:** T. As in The Worst Match In Rumble History. Literally. Up to this

point the Rumble has had some dull matches but this was absolutely horrible. There's nothing of value here at all and it went on for FIFTEEN MINUTES. The Beverlies weren't even over so this just kept going and going without ever getting anywhere. Absolutely terrible.

Jamison kicks Genius in the shin post match in another moment that gets no reaction.

The LOD says they'll still have the belts after tonight and the Disasters' tongues will be hanging out like dead deer. Did I mention Hawk was pretty insane at this point?

Tag Titles: Legion of Doom vs. Natural Disasters

LOD is defending here. Typhoon (formerly Tugboat) and Hawk start things off. They collide a few times with no one going anywhere so Hawk goes up and takes Typhoon down with a top rope clothesline. Off to Quake who Hawk can't hurt either. A dropkick doesn't have any effect so Hawk convinces Quake to try one of his own. Guess how well that one goes. Off to Animal for a slugout which is a draw.

Animal starts hitting the ropes and speeds WAY up before they hit a double clothesline to put both guys down. Animal picks up Quake for a slam but can't turn him over, giving Quake two. Off to Typhoon who gets kicked in the face and clotheslined down. Back to the Bird Man as we get a lot more of the collisions that went over so well earlier. Typhoon finally takes him down and Hawk is in trouble via a lot of back pain.

It's time for the hallmark of any power match: the bearhug. Quake comes back in and walks over Hawk a few times. Back to the bearhug for a little more time killing until it's finally back to Animal. Everybody brawls to the floor and it's a lame double countout. Oh wait Typhoon got back in so the Disasters win. Sure why not.

**Rating:** D. I love the LOD but this match sucked. At the end of the day, this was the totally wrong matchup for them as their entire offense revolved around throwing people around. This was around the time when Hawk was literally on the verge of a breakdown every day but Vince couldn't quite convince them to drop the titles, until they did it on a

house show which was never aired because LOD didn't want to lose their heat. It was a different time to say the least.

The Disasters and Hart yell in the back a lot.

Roddy Piper is all fired up about winning the title and dedicates the win to his son Colt. He wants the world title now.

We get a clip from the Barber Shop incident where Shawn turned heel, igniting his singles push in the greatest team split ever.

Ric Flair says he drew #3 but when your name is Ric Flair, that's not a problem. This is a Coliseum Video exclusive so Heenan doesn't know yet.

Time for the interviews from people in the Rumble: Savage, Sid, Repo Man, Bulldog, Roberts, Flair (with Perfect talking with him too. You know, because Flair needs someone to talk for him), Undertaker (Bearer talks for him a bit too) and Hogan.

We get a statement from the biggest waste of oxygen that has ever been a boss in wrestling, Jack Tunney. He basically says the winner of this (he forgets the name of the Rumble) is the world champion. As he's talking, here's a recap of the title situation. Taker beat Hogan for the title at Survivor Series but Flair interfered. Hogan got a rematch about a week later but also kind of cheated to win it back. The title was vacated and put up for grabs in this year's Rumble, making it by far the biggest Rumble of all time up to that point.

### Royal Rumble

Davey Boy Smith is #1 and DiBiase is #2. The slugout is on quickly with Bulldog pounding away but getting sent to the apron. DiBiase stops paying attention and doesn't realize that Smith didn't hit the floor. A clothesline is enough to get rid of DiBiase and leave Bulldog alone in the ring. In at #3: Ric Flair. Heenan: "N00000000000000000000!!!!!!!" Gorilla starts listing off stats about how Flair has no chance and Heenan explodes. He says he can't be objective and you can hear Gorilla roll his eyes.

The gorilla press puts Flair down but he pokes Smith in the eyes to get a

breather. It's only temporary though as Davey clotheslines him down. Jerry Sags is #4 and HE BE CLUBBERIN TONY!!! Smith gets double teamed as Heenan is trying to figure out how long Flair would have to be in the match. Smith comes back with a double clothesline and knocks Sags out. Notice how they're keeping the ring emptier here, which is a very good change from the 1991 version.

Haku is #5 and he immediately goes after Smith. Flair goes after Haku, sending Heenan into another fit. "HAVE YOU GONE NUTS???" Flair heads to the floor under the rope as Haku hits a piledriver on Smith. Flair goes after Haku again and hits the knee drop. Haku pounds on Ric in the corner but Smith tosses the Tongan. Shawn Michaels is #6 and he starts firing away punches to Flair. A superkick drops Flair and a gorilla press drops Shawn. I'll let you guess who slammed Michaels.

Flair comes back to drop both guys as Heenan wants a drink. His panic in every line he says is great stuff. Shawn gets caught on the ropes and crotched, followed by Davey throwing him to the apron. Tito Santana is #7 as we get down to a decent tag match, another Rumble tradition. Flair gets Smith to the apron but Tito saves. In far less than two minutes, it's Barbarian at #8. Heenan: "He doesn't like anybody. When I managed him he barely liked me!"

Things slow down a bit as Davey keeps getting sent to the apron. Flair tries to dump Tito and Shawn at the same time but can't get either guy out. Texas Tornado is #9 and Heenan is losing it. "THEY JUST KEEP GETTING BIGGER!" Von Erich goes right after Flair before shifting over to Michaels. Smith slingshots Michaels, who has to jump a LONG way to get to the buckle.

Santana stomps on Flair as Repo Man is #10. Santana hits a cross body on Barbarian and Flair hits Tornado with LOUD chops. Valentine is #11 and he gets in a chopping match with Flair. Shawn is literally hanging on by his feet. Nikolai Volkoff is #12 (Heenan: "A 320lb Lithuanian!" but Repo Man dumps him in about a minute. Apparently he was a sub for Jannetty after the window thing. That makes more sense. While that's going on, Valentine has Flair in the Figure Four to send Heenan into a new level of panic.

The Boss Man is #13 and he punches everyone in sight. Valentine is out and Shawn starts his goofy selling. Boss Man throws out Repo Man, giving us a current grouping of Von Erich, Michaels, Boss Man, Haku, Santana, Smith and Flair. Flair backdrops Smith out and does the same to Von Erich in just a few seconds. Hercules is #14 as Santana and Shawn eliminate each other.

Barbarian helps Flair with Boss Man, so Flair turns on Barbarian because he, you know, Flair. Hercules dumps Barbarian so Flair dumps Hercules. It's Boss Man and Flair alone now as Heenan needs oxygen. Boss Man hits a spin kick of all things and a right hand, but misses a charge and eliminates himself. Heenan: "FLAIR WINS!"

Piper is #15 and the crowd is right back into this. We're clearly into the second stage now and Heenan LOSES IT. Piper backdrops him down and they head to the floor for a bit. Back in and Piper goes old school with an airplane spin, making Bobby want to cry. There's the sleeper but Jake Roberts is #16. This is when he's pure evil so the crowd goes into a hush. Jake sits in the corner as Flair is still in the sleeper.

Roberts finally breaks up the hold and works over Piper before hitting the short clothesline o Flair. Piper breaks up the DDT (Heenan: "Oh thank you Piper. It's not a skirt, it's a kilt!") and Flair puts Jake in the Figure Four, only to have Piper stomp away on Ric (Heenan: "YOU NO GOOD DIRTY SKUNK! IT IS A SKIRT!"). Jim Duggan is #17 and he immediately goes after Flair in the corner.

Jake atomic drops Duggan to put all four guys on the mat for a breather. IRS is #18 and he too goes after Flair. Duggan grabs IRS by the tie (Heenan: "He's got him by the tongue!") and pounds away. Duggan saves Piper for no apparent reason and Flair gets beaten up some more. Snuka is #19 and for some reason he saves Flair. Snuka headbutts Duggan which has no effect on either guy of course. Flair, ever the grateful guy, pokes Snuka in the eye.

Piper chops Flair half to death in the corner and the Undertaker is #20. At the moment we've got Taker, Flair, Piper, Snuka, IRS, Roberts and Duggan in the ring. Taker immediately knocks out Snuka, so Flair goes

after the Dead Man. Heenan: "WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU???" Duggan goes over to Taker and is immediately kicked in the balls. We get one of the major clock issues that would happen throughout the match, as Gorilla says Flair has been in there over 42 minutes. The whole match hasn't even gone 38 yet and Flair didn't even start. This will get stretched even farther later.

IRS goes to the middle rope for some reason but hops down a few seconds later. Taker grabs Duggan and Flair by the throat as Randy Savage is #21. Roberts immediately hides on the floor until Taker decks Savage. Randy ducks Jake's short clothesline and ERUPTS on him, eliminating Roberts via a high knee. Savage screws up by jumping over the top to get to Roberts. Taker goes to the floor and throws him back in, but Savage goes after Jake again. The ruling is that Savage wasn't thrown to the floor so he's still in. Ignore Andre eliminating himself in 1989 of course.

Flair comes back with a low blow on Taker which has zero effect at all. Berzerker is #22 and we've got IRS, Berzerker, Duggan, Savage, Flair, Piper and Undertaker. Berzerker hits a choke bomb on Savage as Virgil is #23. Everyone goes into one corner of the ring for some reason, with Flair chopping at Taker like a schmuck. Colonel Mustafa (Iron Sheik) is #24. Things slow down a bit as we need someone to come in and clear things out. Rick Martel is #25 and he pounds on the other Ric in the corner.

Savage dumps Mustafa and gets chokes by Taker for his efforts. Hogan is #26 (does he EVER get a bad number?) and he goes right for Taker and Flair. Heenan starts bargaining with God as Martel is sent through the ropes to the floor. Hogan clotheslines Taker out and dumps Berzerker as well. Duggan and Virgil put each other out as the ring clears up a lot. Skinner is #27, giving us Skinner, Hogan, Flair, Piper, Savage, Martel and IRS.

Hogan puts Flair on the apron as Heenan wants another drink. A clothesline puts Flair down again and Sgt. Slaughter is #28. Someone dumps Skinner as Flair officially gets the Rumble record. Sure why not. Sid Justice is #29 and he goes for IRS. Flair pounds on Hogan before shifting over to Sid. Flair pulls Sid to the mat but Sid nips up and

clotheslines him down. Warlord is #30, giving us a final grouping of Martel, Piper, Hogan, Flair, Savage, Sid, Slaughter, IRS and Warlord.

Hogan and Flair fight on the floor with Flair getting suplexed. Slaughter gets eliminated by Sid and Hogan kicks Flair down. Piper is sent to the apron by IRS but Piper grabs the tie to eliminate the tax dude. Hogan Hulks Up on Flair but stops to eliminate Warlord with Sid's help. Justice dumps Martel and Piper, giving us a final four of Savage, Flair, Hogan and Sid. That's quite a group.

Sid tosses Savage and Flair tries to chop Hogan in the corner because that's what Ric Flair does. In a famous ending, Hogan punches Flair to the apron but as he's dumping Ric out, Sid comes up from behind to dump Hulk. Hogan grabs Sid's arm, allowing Flair to come up from behind and dump Justice, giving Flair the title and send Bobby into orgasmic bliss.

**Rating:** A. This is Ric Flair's coming out party in the WWF and it worked perfectly. There are a few down parts to it and while the 1990 edition was more consistently exciting and had a better overall structure, this was all about drama. It also helps that the match actually meant something, as the title was officially on the line. Excellent Rumble and a true surprise to see Flair win the title.

Sid and Hogan have a shoving match post match, setting up their match at Wrestlemania.

Jack Tunney presents an exhausted Flair with the title in the back. Flair gives a victory speech, saying this is the greatest moment in his life. He says this is the only title that means you're the best in the world and Heenan gushes some more.

**Overall Rating:** B. This is a hard one to grade because the stuff before the Rumble is HORRIBLE. The Rumble however is a masterpiece with Flair and it more than saves the show. There's nothing else on the card that you would want to watch, other than maybe the Piper title win if you're a big fan of the guy. Other than that though, there's nothing to see here other than the Rumble itself.

Ratings Comparison

New Foundation vs. Orient Express

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Roddy Piper vs. Mountie

Original: B

Redo: D

Beverly Brothers vs. Bushwhackers

Original: F-

Redo: T (For The Worst Match In Rumble History)

Natural Disasters vs. Legion of Doom

Original: D

Redo: D

Royal Rumble

Original: A+

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: B

Other than Piper, this is almost the same set of ratings.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/11/royal-rumble-count-up-1992/>

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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/>

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# Monday Night Raw – August 4, 2003: They Thought This Was A Good Idea

## Monday Night Raw

Date: August 4, 2003

Location: PNE Coliseum, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Commentators: Jonathan Coachman, Jerry Lawler

We're coming up on Summerslam and as luck would have it, there's a fresh McMahon to dominate the show! Last week Shane made his big return to stand up for his mother after Kane attacked her the previous week. This was of course the only logical choice instead of Kane's former partner Rob Van Dam, who was already attacked by Kane a few weeks back. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Kane's rampage last week, which was capped off by Shane's return.

Opening sequence.

Here's Shane to open things up. Shane is here to finish what he started with Kane because he wants to know how big and bad Kane is. As long as he's able to walk, he's going to be wherever Kane goes. Cue Eric Bischoff to say he's appalled by what happened to Linda two weeks ago. Bischoff hates Kane as much as Shane does and he'd love to see Shane get some revenge. He teases Shane vs. Kane tonight and Shane is more than ready but Eric says not so fast.

That's not what Vince wants though. Instead he wants Kane vs. Rob Van Dam at Summerslam. Shane can't wait to see Van Dam give Kane a beating at Summerslam but he wants Kane tonight. On the other hand, Shane has to leave right now. Shane rips into Bischoff and says he won't be leaving tonight, unless Eric wants to make him.

This brings out Austin who tells Shane to get out of the ring because Bischoff is a black belt. Austin brings up Bischoff saying he loved Linda McMahon and makes Bischoff vs. Shane in a no holds barred match for tonight. Bischoff says no way because he can't face a WWE Superstar. Shane points out that he doesn't have a contract though and the match is on. Eric panics but smiles and brings up the no holds barred part. Lawler: "THIS IS LIKE A DREAM MATCH!"

On what planet is this a dream match? And on what show should making Shane vs. Bischoff take SEVENTEEN MINUTES? I know this show doesn't like to actually have wrestling on it a lot of the time but egads just do this in like five minutes or even in a backstage segment. Or better yet, HAVE ACTUAL WRESTLERS IN YOUR MATCH INSTEAD OF THESE TWO!

#### Rene Dupree vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Lawler is still raving about how awesome Shane vs. Bischoff is going to be. I know Vince vs. Bischoff would be a dream match but have Shane and Eric ever even spoken on TV before? Dupree dances to start so Bubba sends him into the corner for the loud overhead chop. D-Von gets on the apron for some reason, allowing a quick double team behind the stupid referee's back.

A neckbreaker gets Bubba out of trouble and a running clothesline gets two. Bubba even goes aerial for a middle rope crossbody but walks into a

spinebuster for two more. Rene brings in the French flag but Sylvan comes in, only to clothesline his partner by mistake. That's not a DQ either, so D-Von hits Rene in the head with the flag pole. The Bubba Bomb is good for the pin on a busted open Dupree. Not long enough to rate but my goodness how much overbooking do you need in a two and a half minute match? How much is there going to be in an actually important (work with me here) Tag Team Title match?

Evolution is in the back and HHH has a badly pulled groin. A panicked Bischoff comes in and has a proposition for HHH.

Video on the Australia tour. Seems to have been some good crowds, which isn't the most surprising thing in the world.

### Scott Steiner vs. Randy Orton

This really isn't a good idea for a rookie like Orton (or a veteran like HHH actually). Stacy's outfit is a bit of a better idea but that kind of goes without saying. No Flair with Orton as he has to worry about Goldberg. Before the match, Orton says he can feel the tension in this arena tonight. Orton, and I quote: "It seems that more people came to see Randy Orton's nipples than Stacy Keibler's." Steiner will have none of that besmirchment (such a great word) and stomps away in the corner. He's so mad that he lets Orton clothesline him twice before a dropkick takes him down. So he's strong against shoulders but weak against feet.

The fans chant for Stacy as Steiner grabs a spinning belly to belly to put Orton on the floor. An accidental Stacy distraction lets Orton hammer away, only to charge into something like a powerslam for two. Some double ax handles to the chest (more people should use that) set up the push up elbow as Steiner goes through his regular routine. Cue Test for the most obvious finish ever, setting up the RKO to give Orton the pin.

**Rating:** D. Steiner is still a name and this is the best thing that he can do at this point. I mean, the Test feud is killing him but a clean pin for Orton helps him out well enough. What does it say that though that he was nearly unstoppable back in January and now he's losing in about four minutes while feuding with Test? That's some all time levels of falling down the card and yet it's still not all that surprising.

HHH tells a nervous Bischoff that they have a deal, much to Eric's relief.

Rosey, in street clothes, tells Hurricane that he's ready to be a superhero. Christian comes in to brag about taking Booker out in Australia and promises to beat Hurricane tonight. Rosey pulls out a box labeled S.H.I.T. Hurricane: "HOLY S\*\*\*!" Apparently Rosey made it himself.

Bischoff has recruited Rodney Mack of all people to help him with Shane but Austin comes up. Mack leaves so Bischoff can brag about having Evolution in his corner (What difference does it make if it's anything goes?) in exchange for Goldberg vs. HHH at Summerslam being No DQ. Austin: "I think it sucks." So Steve Austin thinks the main event of Summerslam sucks. Good to know.

#### Hurricane vs. Christian

The fans are behind their countryman, even as Hurricane elbows him down. A trip to the floor has Christian in more trouble and the high crossbody gets two. Christian slips out of the chokeslam though and a rollup with a handful of tights is good for the pin. Just there for the sake of setting up something after the match.

Post match Christian keeps up the beating until Rosey, now in the Superhero in Training garb makes the save. You can imagine the chant. Rosey poses in front of Hurricane, who taps him on the shoulder so they can change places. Not quite Shawn and Diesel but it works.

Kane arrives in the police van. As questionable as this is, having Kane in the role is probably better than anyone else as he can at least look intimidating.

#### Ric Flair vs. Goldberg

HHH is on commentary again. Goldberg shoves shoves Flair around to start and drops him with a shoulder...as we go over to a shot of HHH talking about his groin. Goldberg's press slam is loudly booed (as Goldberg wasn't exactly popular in Canada ever, which was made even worse when he

kicked Bret Hart's head off) and an awkward looking toss (with almost no height) doesn't make things any better.

A shot to the knee slows Goldberg down as HHH asks Coach if he'll massage the bad groin. HHH: "It's the best offer you've ever had". Back up and Flair's shot to the face have no effect so Goldberg hits a good looking backdrop. Flair pokes him in the eye but gets slammed off the top, only to have Orton come in with a chair for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. This was basically a Goldberg squash until the ending and the ending is fine. It makes sense for Evolution to take as much out of Goldberg as they could before Summerslam. Goldberg in the ring in Canada just wasn't a good idea, though to be fair I'm not sure how much time they would have to know that just yet. Storyline advancement here though and I can go with Orton getting to put Goldberg down with the chair shot.

Post match the beatdown is on but Shawn, then Jericho, then Nash come in for the respective saves. Cue Austin to make the Summerslam main event into an Elimination Chamber between HHH, Goldberg, Jericho, Nash, Shawn and Orton. Everyone is stunned and Goldberg spears Flair down. If Austin doesn't think it, I certainly will: that sounds like it's going to suck, mainly because HHH is hurt, Nash is Nash and Orton is WAY too young to be in this spot.

Post break everyone is still in the ring as Terri interviews Slamball (I remember that being awesome, though I was a stupid teenager) founder Pat Croche about the season two premiere. Jericho and Nash get in a fight with Nash easily getting the better of it.

HHH wants everything changed but Bischoff says that technically, this is out of his hands. Then technically, Bischoff is on his own tonight. Why not go get Rodney Mack back? Or just buy some other heel? Or find the person Shane is feuding with to advance their story? Would that be against Vince's will either?

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Molly Holly

Molly is defending and starts fast with a snap suplex for two. A northern lights suplex (back bridge, according to Coach) gets the same as the fans

want puppies. Odds are they mean the Canadian puppies, because Heaven forbid anyone find Molly attractive (even though she's rather pretty at this point with the short brown hair). A headscissors out of the corner gets Trish out of trouble and the Matrish sends Molly flying out to the floor. Trish hammers away on the floor but here's Victoria for the quick DQ. Yeah make sure to beat down those Canadians.

Gail Kim runs in for the save but turns on Trish anyway. Then the point for the save was....? Writers trying to be smarter than they really are perhaps?

Shane attacks the police van because he has no respect for government property.

Lance Storm needs help being boring and asks Goldust for help. This is not going to end well, but hopefully it ends soon.

Bischoff sends the cops off after Austin but uses the distraction to unlock the van.

#### Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Jericho

Rob starts fast with a dropkick and monkey flip, only to miss a dive off the top, sending him into the barricade. Back in and Jericho drops some elbows as the announcers talk about the Elimination Chamber. A knee to the ribs cuts Rob down for two more and Jericho elbows him in the head. This isn't exactly thrilling stuff and the announcers talking about ANYTHING else isn't helping things.

Rob manages to suplex him over the ropes onto the floor but can't follow up. Back in and a dropkick drops Van Dam, only to have him come back with a springboard kick to the face. A jumping enziguri continues the battle of kicks to the head and gives Jericho two more. Rob's stepover kick to the face looks to set up Rolling Thunder but Jericho rolls away just in time.

The Lionsault misses as well but Rob misses a Five Star splash (there was nothing froggy about it). They botch a hurricanrana with Jericho trying a quick Walls, only to have Rob next to the ropes. He's right back up with

another kick to the face and the split legged moonsault to put Jericho away.

**Rating:** D. Where do you even start? The botches? The REALLY dull first half? The announcers not caring? Giving Van Dam a pin over a World Title contender before he gets squashed by Kane at the pay per view? They had an interesting idea here with both guys mirroring each others' moves (the kicks, the missed flip attacks) but the execution was much, much worse than you would have expected from these two.

Post match Jericho says there's a conspiracy against him so he wants Nash in a hair vs. hair match. This would have made a lot more sense after the earlier segment between the two and without the clean loss to Van Dam in between but this show has far bigger problems to get around.

Bischoff is smiling.

Kane is out of his van. Coach: "Is this why Bischoff is smiling???" And people think JR misses the obvious sometimes?

#### Eric Bischoff vs. Shane McMahon

Anything goes and Bischoff comes out carrying a kick pad for a karate demonstration. After that waste of time, we're ready to go with both guys in street clothes. Actually hang on again because Shane has to dance. Bischoff kicks him down three times in a row without much effort but gets speared down for the famous Shane punches. Cue Kane for the brawl in the aisle with Shane getting the better of it because he's a better fighter than Rob Van Dam or STEVE AUSTIN you see. Kane fights back and kicks Shane in the face, followed by a Tombstone on the steps to give Bischoff the pin.

**Rating:** F. Somehow this was an official match and somehow it was long enough to rate because of course it was. I'm really not sure why we're not getting Shane vs. Kane at the pay per view because that's clearly what makes sense here. I mean, I know you can't just have Kane take Van Dam out again or something (or just have Van Dam not come back yet) because that's just too complicated. Not a match of course but that's best for everyone.

Lawler acts like Bischoff just won the World Title because this was a dream match remember. Bischoff celebrates forever (including getting two more three counts) to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** F. This was awful with nothing really good all night long. Between putting WAY too much emphasis on Shane vs. Eric, the completely illogical mess of the Van Dam/Kane/Shane stuff and the rather dumb changes to the main event (I know HHH was injured but I'm thinking he was healthy enough to take a spear and Jackhammer, then have the real match when he's back to full strength), I have no idea what they think they accomplished here. Absolutely awful and one of the worst they've done in several months.

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/>

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# NXT – January 3, 2018: I Have An Eye For Talent

**NXT**

Date: January 3, 2018

Hosts: Kayla Braxton, Mike Rome



It's the first show of the year but as a special, we're looking at the Best Of 2017 in a double length episode. These are always fun to look at as there's nearly a guarantee that you've forgotten at least something that you'll see tonight. There's been a lot of good throughout the year for NXT so let's get to it.

As usual, even if the versions presented on the broadcast are clipped, I'll be posting the full review of each match.

Opening sequence.

We look at Bobby Roode defeating Shinsuke Nakamura for the NXT Title in January.

We look at the rematch from Takeover: Orlando with the full entrances, albeit with some different camera angles during the entrances. Roode retained and Nakamura got the big sendoff.

Video on Shinsuke Nakamura's NXT career from William Regal announcing his debut all the way to his farewell in April.

Video on Drew McIntyre coming to NXT.

From Takeover: San Antonio.

### Tag Team Titles: DIY vs. Authors of Pain

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa are defending and unfortunately the Authors take off their jackets, meaning the name tags go away. Razar takes Ciampa into the corner and shouts at him a lot, drawing a PSYCHO KILLER chant from the crowd. Gargano tries the spear through the ropes and is casually swatted away. Everything breaks down and the champs just can't do anything with rights and lefts.

Some running knees work a bit better though and the monsters are knocked to the floor for a suicide dive and running knee from the apron. Back in and Akam casually slams Gargano over the top and the beating is on. It's off to an over the shoulder backbreaker until Johnny slips down into an enziguri....which has no effect whatsoever.

Gargano finally slips away and makes the hot tag off to Ciampa so house can be cleaned as well as possible. Some German suplexes take the Authors down and Paul Ellering is losing it on the floor. The referee tells Ciampa "six minutes left" as he chops away at Akam, who takes Ciampa's head off for two. The champs get two of their own off a double spear but Johnny gets knocked to the floor again, leaving Ciampa to get caught in a powerbomb/neckbreaker combination for two.

Johnny is back in to break up the Last Chapter and it's off to the double arm submission. Akam powers out of Johnny's crossface though and slams Gargano onto Tommaso to break the other hold. That's a really effective spot as the champs took their best shot and couldn't stop the raw power. They slug it out from their knees but the double strike is countered into the Authors' double powerbomb. The Last Chapter on Ciampa give us new champions at 14:27.

**Rating:** B. I'm kind of surprised here but at the same time not exactly. Coming in I didn't think this would happen but now that it has, it makes the most sense. That being said, I was very, very pleasantly surprised here as I was expecting a big drop off and got the best match the Authors have ever had. It's a good match though and that's all you could ask for out of these guys.

We look at Drew McIntyre winning the NXT Title at Takeover: Brooklyn. Again it's just a few minutes of highlights from a long match. Post match, the yet to be named Undisputed Era ran in and attacked McIntyre.

Video on the Undisputed Era, focusing on Adam Cole.

We look at the Undisputed Era stealing the Tag Team Titles two weeks ago.

Here are some of the tag teams to watch in 2018: the Undisputed Era, the Street Profits, Tino Sabbatelli and Riddick Moss, Heavy Machinery and TM61 (returning from injury in two weeks).

Video on Aleister Black vs. Velveteen Dream. I underrated the heck out of that match.

From Takeover: WarGames.

## Aleister Black vs. Velveteen Dream

Black does his still awesome rising up entrance. Dream debuts some custom made tights with himself on one leg and Black on the other ala Rick Rude back in the day. The fans are rather pleased with Dream, even as he slaps Black in the face. They hit the mat to start with Black working on an armbar before grabbing something like an Octopus hold. Dream slips out and actually tries to turn it into a striking match, earning himself a trip to the floor.

That allows Black to backflip into his sitting pose, right in front of Dream. A hip swivel doesn't seem to get on Black's nerves, but he does look away a bit. Dream sits down as well as the fans chant SAY HIS NAME. Black crawls forward like Dream did a few weeks back, freaking Dream out for a change. Dream actually snaps his throat across the ropes to send Black outside, meaning it's time for more posing.

Back in and Dream gets two off a good looking superkick before we hit a reverse chinlock (Dream: "SAY IT! SAY IT!"). Black gets tied up in the ropes as the fans really want him to say it. Dream slaps him though and that's just not a good idea. Black speeds things up with some strikes and a springboard moonsault press for two (SWEET, according to the annoying fans).

A quick Death Valley Driver gives Dream two so he tries a super version, only to get kicked down. Black knees him in the face for a close two, only to get caught in a Sister Abigail into a DDT for a delayed two. The Purple Rainmaker lands on a raised boot though, sending Dream into the ropes. Black kicks him in the face but walks into a superkick. That's enough for Black though and it's Black Mass for the pin at 14:41.

**Rating:** B+. Who knew Dream had that in him? This was all about the mind games at first but at the end of the day, you (mostly) knew it was going to be Black Mass wrapping this up. Black seems ready to become a huge deal around here and Dream...I'm not sure where he goes from here actually. Really good match though.

Post match Black takes the mic and says "enjoy infamy...Velveteen Dream." I'm not sure what to make of that. Sign of respect maybe?

Video on the build to Andrade Cien Almas vs. Drew McIntyre.

From November 17, the night before Takeover: WarGames.

NXT Title: Drew McIntyre vs. Adam Cole

Date: November 17, 2017

Location: Aztec Theater, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

Drew is defending, Cole has Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly with him and Shawn Michaels is guest referee. McIntyre takes him down with almost no effort and Cole seems to need a fresh plan. Cole gets tossed off a headlock and bails to the floor as the stalling begins. Back in and a jawbreaker staggers Drew, allowing Fish to grab his foot. Fish and O'Reilly get on the apron so Shawn ejects them both.

That earns a SWEET CHIN MUSIC chant as reality sets in for Cole. One heck of a backdrop puts Cole down (well up and then down) and a poke to the eye has no effect on Drew. Shawn calls Drew off of Cole in the corner and McIntyre isn't exactly happy. Cole takes the knee out though and it's time for a break. Back with Cole getting powerbombed down and a super Celtic Cross getting two.

Cole is right back by kicking the knee out and hitting a Shining Wizard for two of his own. Sweet Chin Music (well you knew that was coming) is loaded up but Drew drops Cole with the Futureshock. Back up and Cole superkicks Shawn by mistake, meaning the Claymore gets a very delayed two. Cue Fish and O'Reilly to stomp Drew down for a bit but the comeback bumps Shawn again. Shawn is up fast enough to superkick O'Reilly and it's a swinging Futureshock (cool) into the Claymore to retain the title at 15:12.

**Rating:** B. This was almost more about Shawn than anything else and that's just fine. Shawn was a special attraction in this one and really, he's more interesting than a house show title match. I'm sure Cole is going to be back in the title hunt eventually (around Brooklyn against Gargano would be a nice choice) and Drew should be on the main roster once he

gets back from injury. There's nothing left for him to do in NXT and his size is way too much for the rest of the roster.

Quick look at Almas winning the title the next night, during which Drew suffered a bad arm injury.

Almas is ready to face Johnny Gargano, who he insulted after Gargano won the title shot last week.

We look back at Asuka's NXT career from her debut to vacating the title.

Package on the women's division, including looks at the Iconic Duo, Lacey Evans, Kairi Sane, Bianca Belair, Vanessa Bourne, Shayna Baszler and Nikki Cross.

Last week, Sane made it clear that she wants the title but got choked out by Baszler.

Baszler debuts next week.

Video on WarGames, which really was the carnage that it should have been. I know it wasn't quite the match that a lot of people were expecting but it was still a heck of a performance with some rather memorable spots. Let the WWE have its own version rather than a watered down version of the WCW style, which wouldn't work today anyway.

We look back at the injured Tommaso Ciampa explaining why he turned on Gargano at Takeover: Chicago. DIY was supposed to have a moment but Ciampa hurt his knee during a match. Fans started talking about Johnny wrestling on his own and that's not what Ciampa wanted, hence the betrayal. However, during the ladder match, Ciampa tore his ACL in the match and would be out for the rest of the year.

Video on last week's fatal four way with Gargano becoming #1 contender, earning a shot at Takeover: Philadelphia.

Also set for Philadelphia: Adam Cole vs. Aleister Black. I'm not sure Black wins that one and that makes things more interesting.

Gargano talks about his rough 2017, which started at such a high but then

came crashing down around him, including the DIY split and all the losses that followed. He always knew he could do it though and 2018 is going to be the best year of his life. It makes sense to give Gargano this kind of focus as there's no doubt that he's going to be one of the top stars in NXT in 2018, likely holding the title at some point. He had a rocky 2017 but the performances were always there.

Here are the categories for NXT's End of the Year Awards

Takeover of the Year

Match of the Year

Tag Team of the Year

Breakout Star of the Year

Male Competitor of the Year

Female Competitor of the Year

Future Star of NXT

Rivalry of the Year

Overall Competitor of the Year

We get a long profile on Ember Moon, which started with her growing up in Texas watching wrestling with her grandfather. She went to train with Booker T. but got shot down in her first WWE tryout. WWE told her she didn't have the Diva look (read as: she's not a blonde model more than likely) but Norman Smiley say something in her. She stuck with Booker's Reality of Wrestling promotion and developed a following, eventually earning herself a job after a second tryout.

Moon debuted with her crazy entrance and the Eclipse and was off to the races. Eventually she lost to Asuka though and it crippled some of her confidence, only to win the vacant title a few months later. Moon talks about knowing she can do it and being ready for anything to end the show. I remember watching an episode of the Reality of Wrestling show and thinking she was the standout star of the show. It turned out that she

had already been signed by the time I saw it so maybe I have an eye for talent.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Normally I never know what to do for a Best Of show but this actually had some effort put in, which is a nice touch. They covered a lot here and I can appreciate the extra time being spent on something like this instead of just throwing a bunch of matches out there to fill in time. They even managed to add in extra stuff for next week and hype the Takeover because that's what NXT knows how to do.

The exclusive match was fun and made the show feel special, but I really liked the profile on Moon. We really don't know much about her and if there's one thing WWE knows how to nail, it's introducing you to a character and making them feel important. That's what I got out of Moon and that's what WWE needed to do more than anything else with her. Good show here, and the new year should be off to a hot start.

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