

# Payback 2013: Are You People Happy Now? It's Up....And It Was Awesome

## Payback 2013

Date: June 16, 2013

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Attendance: 14,623

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

First of all, Happy Birthday Mom. This show doesn't look all that strong on paper. It's been built up well enough, but the main story is HHH who isn't even booked on the show. We have a main event of Ryback vs. Cena in a 3 Stages of Hell match for the world title but it's only gotten a decent build while other stuff (such as the Shield) has gotten most of the air time. Let's get to it.

### Pre-Show: Sheamus vs. Damien Sandow

Before the match we see R-Truth, Big Show (now a face apparently) and Cody Rhodes as our expert panel. This match is a result of Sandow testing Sheamus' mental strength in a series of challenges. Sheamus runs Damien over with a shoulder block to start but Sandow fires back with right hands in the corner. A powerslam stops Sandow's offense and the top rope shoulder gets two for Sheamus. Damien rolls to the floor to avoid the ten forearms to the chest and is sent into the barricade for his efforts.

Sandow comes back with a knee to the head and Sheamus is actually in trouble. We hit a chinlock back inside before Sandow goes up top, only to be slammed down. Sandow hits the Russian legsweep and Wind-Up Elbow for two before....we take a break? Yes, we're taking a break on the free pre-show. Back with Sandow pounding Sheamus down as the fans chant "You are welcome!". Sheamus stands up to drop Sandow with an electric chair with Cole talking about George Hackenschmidt vs. Frank Gotch in Chicago.

Sheamus tries to come back in and gets caught with a knee lift and a

neckbreaker for two. Sandow is sent to the apron for ten forearms followed by the Regal Roll for two. With Sandow down, Sheamus goes up top for what looks like a shoulder block, only to be crotched by Damien. A neckbreaker gets two for Sandow but the Terminus only gets two. Sandow charges into three straight Irish Curses and the Brogue Kick finishes him at 10:25.

**Rating:** C. This wasn't bad but it's the same problem that everyone predicted: Sheamus beats Sandow every time so why should this be any different? Sandow isn't on Sheamus' level and never has been, but now we're supposed to believe Damien can get a win? I don't think many people bought that leading up to the show, although the match wasn't terrible.

The opening video is about Chicago being run by gangsters back in the 1930s but the gangsters eventually received payback. We look at the main events with the voiceover talking about how you know when payback is coming.

#### Intercontinental Title: Curtis Axel vs. The Miz vs. Wade Barrett

Barrett is defending and Axel is a last minute substitute for a concussed Fandango. Miz and Barrett traded the title in April and had been feuding with Fandango for a few weeks. Miz pounds away on both guys to start with Axel being thrown out to the floor. Barrett gets in a sneak attack and Miz heads to the floor. The heels brawl for a few seconds before all three guys are back inside. Barrett gets two off a big boot to Miz as Axel is staying on the floor with Heyman.

Wade pounds Miz down and pulls Curtis to the apron for some knees to the face. Barrett crotches himself on the top rope as he misses a big boot, allowing Axel to take over on Miz. Axel rakes his boot across Miz's face before hitting a snap belly to back suplex for two. All three are back in now with Miz taking over on both guys and hitting the corner clothesline on Barrett in the corner. A kick to Axel's face gets two for Miz but he charges into the Winds of Change to stop him cold.

Axel escapes Wasteland and gets two off a PerfectPlex. The fans are getting into this now. Miz hits the Skull Crushing Finale on Axel but only gets two as Barrett delays the cover. Axel is sent to the floor and

Miz gets the Figure Four on Barrett, but Curtis slides back in and covers Barrett while he's still in the hold for the pin and the title at 10:38.

**Rating:** C+. Axel winning is as good as he can do at this point and the ending was pretty creative. Barrett losing the title is the right idea as his two reigns have made him look worthless. Hopefully Axel can do a bit better as there's no need to have the champion destroyed over and over again.

The announcers push the idea of Axel winning the title on Father's Day as a tribute to his dad.

Mark Henry is back tomorrow night. Word on the street is that he's retiring.

Axel and Heyman run into HHH in the back. HHH won't let Axel pass but here's Vince to congratulate the new champion. Axel leaves in fear of Vince so the boss can suggest Axel vs. HHH on Raw. HHH says he isn't feeling it after begging Vince for the match last week.

#### Divas Title: Kaitlyn vs. AJ Lee

Kaitlyn and AJ were best friends for like two months last fall and we're finally getting the match between them in June. AJ had Big E. Langston pretend to like Kaitlyn and then say it was a trick to make her feel worthless in a decent idea, but at the end of the day this is an eight month old story for the most worthless title in the company.

Kaitlyn takes it straight to the floor and throws AJ around before pounding on her in the ring. AJ takes it back to the floor and suckers Kaitlyn into a dropkick from the apron for two before putting on a cravate. Two straight neckbreakers get a near fall for AJ and it's off to a sleeper. Kaitlyn fights out and dropkicks AJ down, only for AJ to pop back up and hook a crucifix for two. Kaitlyn sits up and lifts AJ into a fireman's carry gutbuster for two of her own.

AJ plays possum and kicks Kaitlyn in the face for two. Lee goes up top but Kaitlyn catches her cross body in mid air. The champion spins her around but gets caught in the Black Widow, only to spin out of it into a

backbreaker to AJ. The spear puts AJ down again but Kaitlyn takes forever to cover and only gets two. Kaitlyn misses a charge into the corner and gets caught in the Black Widow to give AJ the title at 9:57.

**Rating:** C. Not bad here but the ending was obvious given the buildup. AJ winning the title is the right move but this should have happened about eight months ago with Kaitlyn being the big challenger for the title instead of the other way around. It's better than most Divas matches over the last few PPVs but it's not going to change the division in any major way.

The fans tell Kaitlyn that she tapped out.

After the replays Layla, Nattie and Alicia console AJ in the back.

We go back to the expert panel from the pre-show for predictions and a chat about Axel winning the title.

Video on the Wyatt Family.

#### US Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Kane

Ambrose is defending because Kane beat him via DQ recently. Dean goes after Kane to start but the big man keeps punching him down. A quick suplex gets two on Ambrose and we're already in a chinlock. There's the low dropkick by Kane but Ambrose takes out Kane's knee to block a second. Ambrose works on the knee before cranking on the neck. Kane fights out of a neckbreaker and goes up top but misses the top rope clothesline.

A jumping back elbow gets two for Dean and the champion hooks a dragon sleeper. Kane fights out of it and hooks the side slam for two. Dean ties him up in the ropes and slaps Kane in the face, earning himself a big boot to the jaw. Ambrose fights up and cranks on the arm before loading up Old School.

Kane breaks it up for his brother's honor and hits the top rope clothesline, only to have Dean stun him across the ropes. Ambrose is kicked to the floor and they slug it out for a bit with Kane taking The big man puts him down and loads up the announce table, only to have Dean catch him in a DDT on the floor for the countout at 9:30.

**Rating:** C-. This was ok but the countout finish was stupid. It's not like Kane is going to fall apart by being pinned by the US Champion on PPV. The DDT sounded great and Kane sold it well, but it should have been in the ring. At least Ambrose defended the title the first time out though, and maybe he can hold the thing more than a few months.

RVD is coming back at MITB. Nothing wrong with that but what was up with him being on TNA's website after being released?

#### Smackdown World Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Dolph Ziggler

This is the long awaited rematch after Ziggler won the title in a MITB cash-in back in April. Dolph was injured by Swagger and has been out for about five weeks since. The fans are totally behind Ziggler here. Ziggler bails to the floor in the first fifteen seconds and is out again in less than another minute. Back in and Del Rio takes him into the corner as a BIG RVD chant goes up.

Del Rio goes after the injured head with kicks in the corner and a running kick gets two. Ziggler comes back with a dropkick but is backdropped to the floor, hitting his head again. Alberto rams him head first into the announce table and Langston shoves the challenger around. That's good for an ejection and the distraction lets Ziggler ram Alberto face first into the announce table.

Back inside now but Dolph is shaken up. Del Rio hooks a chinlock as Ziggler is being treated like a face here. The cross armbreaker is countered into the sleeper from Ziggler but Del Rio sends him into the corner to escape. Ziggler is put into the ropes for the forearms to the back and the Backstabber for two. Del Rio is wrestling like a heel here. The armbreaker is countered into a neckbreaker for two for the champion. Cole is calling this like Dolph is a face. Ziggler gets back up and pounds away before mostly botching the Fameasser.

Dolph can barely stand up because of his head injuries but he climbs to the top anyway. Del Rio runs the ropes for the enziguri before hitting a reverse superplex for two. A baseball slide puts Ziggy on the floor and Del Rio kicks him square in the head from the apron. The doctor comes out to look at Ziggler but Dolph tries to get up. Del Rio hits a baseball

slide to the back of Ziggler's head and the champion is gone.

Ricardo is cheering Del Rio on as Alberto hits a running enziguri to a kneeling Ziggler for two. The fans are openly booing Del Rio and Cole is acknowledging it. Dolph pulls himself up on Del Rio's trunks and hits a Zig Zag out of nowhere. Ziggler has nothing left though and gets kicked in the head again, giving Del Rio the pin and the title at 13:55.

**Rating:** B-. This was all about the story instead of the wrestling which made for an interesting match. It came off like the ultra-rare double turn as Ziggler was wrestling like an underdog while Del Rio was being vicious with the kicks and showing no mercy on Ziggler's head injuries. That's very interesting and probably the right idea for a guy like Dolph.

Del Rio celebrates to some VERY moderate applause but most people are either in shock or angry.

The expert panel talks about what we just saw.

The fans LOUDLY chant for Ziggler as Del Rio thanks the people in a slightly condescending way. He asks for cheers because he deserves to be champion.

We recap Chris Jericho vs. CM Punk. Jericho questioned Punk still being the best in the world when he hadn't been around in nearly two months. Heyman disagreed and signed Punk up for the match in Punk's return in his hometown.

The panel previews the match.

### CM Punk vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho comes out to CM PUNK chants but it's not anti-Jericho. Punk gets a big reaction but it's not thunderous. I'm thinking the fans don't love his mutton chops. Cole lists off some famous wrestlers from Chicago including One Man Gang (not exactly a big deal) and the Crusher (from Milwaukee) but nothing about the LOD or Lex Luger. They trade control on the mat with Jericho being booed out of the building. Back up and Jericho grabs a headlock for very early control.

Punk counters into a headlock of his own and they chop it out. Jericho stomps Punk down into the corner and is booed for the first time in years. Punk is sent to the outside for a baseball slide but he counters the springboard dropkick with a guillotine. Back in and Punk hits a top rope ax handle and hooks a top wristlock. Off to a shortarm scissors as it seems like they've got a lot of time to work with here.

Back up and Punk is sent into the buckle to give Jericho a breather. Some shoulders put Punk down as does an ax handle but he avoids the Lionsault. A swinging neckbreaker gets two for CM and the fans are cheering for both guys. The corner bulldog is shoved away to give the Canadian two and there are the Walls of Jericho. Punk crawls through and hooks the Anaconda Vice but Jericho gets his feet onto the ropes.

Punk calls for the GTS but Jericho counters into the Walls which are countered into a GTS which is countered into a rollup for two. A Codebreaker gets two for Chris and it's time for the main event strike off. Punk kicks away at Jericho's head and hits a leg lariat to put Jericho down. The knee in the corner sets up the Macho Elbow but the GTS is only good for two. Another Codebreaker is broken up and Jericho is sent to the outside. Punk hits the suicide dive but Punk counters the springboard clothesline into the Codebreaker....for two. The place is going NUTS on these kickouts now.

Jericho pins back the arms and drives in elbows to the face as the fans chant THIS IS AWESOME. Jericho hits a good 25 elbows and Punk is in big trouble. The Walls are countered into a small package for two more and they slug it out with Punk getting the better of it. A standing hurricanrana is countered into the Walls so Heyman begins to pray. Punk punches Jericho's sore arm to make it a half crab before fighting up and hitting a pair of GTS's for the pin at 21:27.

**Rating:** A-. This was the kind of match that Punk needed to have in his return. The fans weren't completely hating Jericho but he was clearly the heel in the match, pretty much by default. Punk is going to be a huge face by fan response alone so turning him wouldn't be a problem at all. This was the great match you would expect from these two on this stage.

## Tag Titles: Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins vs. Randy Orton/Daniel Bryan

Same story as before: the challengers beat Shield in a non-title match and earned a shot here. Bryan starts things off and moonsaults over Reigns, only to have his head taken off by a clothesline for two. Off to Rollins as Cole screws up the result of the Shield loss on Smackdown. Reigns throws Seth into Bryan for two before Roman comes in for a chinlock. An elbow to the face gets two for Reigns and it's back to the chinlock.

Bryan fights back with a running clothesline and makes the hot tag off to Randy. Reigns takes the Elevated DDT and the fans are barely responding to this at all. Rollins gets one as well but he rolls to the floor before Orton can load up the RK0. Reigns punches Orton out to the floor. Orton gets to play Ricky Morton for awhile as the fans chant for RVD. Randy tries to fight out of the corner but gets caught in a Downward Spiral into the middle buckle to slow him down.

Reigns gets two off a kick to the head and it's back to Rollins to stomp him down. Off to a reverse chinlock on Orton but Randy quickly fights up. Reigns' charge goes into the post and Bryan finally gets the hot tag. A missile dropkick puts both Shield members down and Bryan fires off the kicks to Reigns' chest. Bryan low bridges Roman to the floor before throwing Rollins on top of him.

The suicide dive only hits Orton though and the challengers are in trouble. Back in and Bryan hits a butterfly superplex for two on Rollins and there's the NO Lock. Reigns makes the save but Bryan throws the hold on one more time, only to have Reigns break it up again. Orton shoves Bryan into the spear by mistake, allowing Rollins to hit a running knee to the back of Bryan's head for the pin at 12:10.

**Rating:** C+. This wasn't a great match but it did everything they needed to do. I'm guessing this sets up Bryan and Orton down the line (probably on Raw tomorrow night) but Bryan needs a world title push given how hot he is at the moment. Shield retaining the titles is fine but the match was only good compared to their usual great stuff.

We recap the main event. Ryback fought Cena to a no contest at Extreme



Rules but Cena wouldn't go into an ambulance. The result: a 3 Stages of Hell match with the first fall being a lumberjack match, the second being a tables match and the third being an ambulance match. Ryback went on a path of rage, powerbombing a lot of people through tables over the last few weeks.

#### Raw World Title: Ryback vs. John Cena

The first fall is a lumberjack match with pretty much any wrestler you would name at ringside. Ryback powers Cena into the corner to start and counters the bulldog into a belly to back slam for two. Cena comes back with a fisherman's suplex and some elbow drops as Cole talks about the "historic" extreme lumberjack match in 2006. Who even remembered that thing back in like 2007? It was against Sabu at Vengeance 2006 if I remember correctly but dear goodness who thought of that match and thought Cole should bring it up?

The AA is countered into the over the shoulder Stunner for two for Ryback. Cena is thrown to the outside and pummeled by the lumberjacks (JTG still has a job. Who knew?) before Ryback gets to destroy him a bit more. The lumberjacks get another crack at Cena but he gets back in fast enough to send Ryback to the lumberjacks as well. Ryback gets back in unscathed so Cena can initiate his finishing sequence, only to be sent into the other lumberjacks this time. Back in and Ryback is sent to the floor again but not touched this time either.

We get the required lumberjack brawl but Cena DIVES onto all of them at the same time in a huge crash. Back in and Cena hooks the STF but Ryback powers out and gets the Shell Shock for the first fall at 7:32. We're at the tables match now with the lumberjacks all gone. Ryback immediately tackles Cena down and has early control of the second fall. Here's the first table of the night but Cena escapes the powerslam. A spinebuster puts Cena down and the fans chant Goldberg.

Cena escapes a gorilla press into the AA but Ryback reaches down and flips the table over while still on Cena's shoulders. We head to the floor and Cena is whipped into the steps to give Ryback control again. Ryback sets up the table in the corner before knocking Cena down with the

steps in the ring. Cena staggers up next to the table but the steps go through the table instead of the champion.

Cena puts Ryback down with a belly to belly suplex and some steps to the head to put Ryback down. Here's another table in the ring but Cena is placed onto it instead, only to get back off of it when Ryback drops the steps through the table. Ryback launches the steps at Cena but they go out to the floor, allowing Cena to hit the shoulder blocks and the Shuffle. Ryback comes back with a spinebuster and the Meat Hook before getting another table. The Shell Shock is loaded up but Cena counters into a quick AA to tie it up at 16:10.

The third fall is an ambulance match, meaning the first person to be placed inside an ambulance to the doors shut loses. Ryback takes Cena down 25 seconds after the AA and loads up the announce table. More Goldberg chants abound as Cena is powerbombed through a table. The third fall officially begins with Ryback dragging Cena to the ambulance, only to be shoved into it by the champion.

Cena pulls a crutch from the ambulance but Ryback knocks it out of his hands. A punch misses Cena and goes through the glass but Ryback doesn't seem to mind. Cena rams him back first into the ambulance doors but can't follow up. They open the driver's door so Cena can whip Ryback into it so hard that the door breaks off. An ambulance door to the face staggers Ryback but he throws Cena into the front of the ambulance.

The bumper is ripped off the front of the ambulance and Ryback wraps it around Cena's back. Cena blocks a powerbomb into a backdrop onto the hood and starts climbing up to the top. An emergency light to Ryback's shoulder knocks him back to the floor but Ryback is right back up. Cena stares down at him and they brawl on top of the ambulance until Cena hits an AA through the roof to retain at 24:38.

**Rating:** B-. This was good but by the end it was a spot fest. It was certainly entertaining but I don't think anyone bought Ryback as a real threat to the belt. The fact that he hasn't won a major PPV match since at least August might have something to do with it but I'm not quite sure. It's good stuff but nothing I'll remember three days from now.

**Overall Rating:** B+. While it isn't as great as some people have said it was, this falls into the category of very pleasant surprise. Granted when the level of interest coming into this was somewhere between a root canal and butter, it's not that hard to be better than expected. There's nothing bad on the show though and a lot of interesting stuff happened. Good show here and hopefully the start of something new for WWE.

### Results

Curtis Axel b. Wade Barrett and The Miz – Axel pinned Barrett while Barrett was in the Figure Four

AJ Lee b. Kaitlyn – Black Widow

Dean Ambrose b. Kane via countout

Alberto Del Rio b. Dolph Ziggler – Kick to the head

CM Punk b. Chris Jericho – GTS

Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins b. Randy Orton/Daniel Bryan – Knee to the back of Bryan's head

John Cena b. Ryback – AA through the top of an ambulance

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# No Way Out 2001: Austin's Best Match Ever? Maybe.

## No Way Out 2001

Date: February 25, 2001

Location: Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas, Nevada

Attendance: 15, 223

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is a more or less forgotten show in WWF history which is a shame because it really is a good one. The problem it has is that it's stuck between a great Rumble and the best PPV of all time. This is most certainly a two match show as there are only two that I remember at all and only two that mean anything. The first is Angle vs. Rock for the title, and I think you know how that's going to go.

The other match, and the reason I get this requested a lot, is why this show is so popular. It's Austin vs. HHH in a 2 out of three falls match. The first is a regular match, the second is a street fight and the third is a cage match. This is Austin's first major one on one match since his neck surgery so we're really seeing if he's back. HHH is the guy that was behind his attack so this is a huge revenge match. It's been called the best match of Austin's career and there may be something to that. That would include the I Quit match, so let's get to it.

The opening video is about the two matches. At least they're not pretending to be something they're not here.

Hardcore Title: Big Show vs. Raven

Raven has the belt and the better music here. He brings his own weapons as was his custom. Raven's ninja (Tori, a girl, in a black suit) jumps Show on the ramp and it goes nowhere as you would expect. Show is in his one piece women's swimsuit here and I still hate it. Show misses a splash against the post and is rocked.

Raven jumps on his back which works about as well as every diet Show goes on. The required fire extinguisher is used by the bird man. Ross suggests a blunt object to the head. And now a popcorn vendor is jumping Raven. He looks like Elroy Jetson and Show more or less kills him (It's Crash). Show

beats up Raven and Blackman and Holly come out to beat up Show.

Billy Gunn slips in from behind and messes up a Fameasser on Raven to steal the title. Naturally he sticks around instead of RUNNING, resulting in taking a Sidewinder, which is his old finishing move in the Smoking Guns. Show clears the ring and Raven steals the title back. Crash gets two but a chokeslam onto a trashcan gets the title. Oh and Molly and the Ninja came down and fought too. Show beats Billy up as he leaves for fun.

**Rating:** C. This wasn't supposed to be serious and it wasn't. This was just a fun little match and sequence that was designed to make things comedic. Show vs. Kane vs. Raven would be the Hardcore Title match at Mania and was far better, but it's a different kind of match. This was fine though.

Angle gets here and is still a happy go lucky jerk who can be awesome in the ring.

Benoit and Eddie are with Lillian. They say only the title matters tonight.

Intercontinental Title: Chris Jericho vs. X-Pac vs. Eddie Guerrero vs. Chris Benoit

Jericho took the title from Benoit at the Rumble. He also put Pac out with an injury as well as Eddie. So there are your reasons for people to be in there. The Radicalz jump the ring and it's immediately on. Pac vs. Benoit and Eddie vs. Jericho to start. One fall to a finish here. Everybody gets in the ring and it's a big slugout.

Benoit and Eddie team up but Benoit tries to steal the win with the Crossface on X-Pac. Jericho takes forever to break it up but just makes it. Frog Splash to Pac for two. Bronco Buster on Benoit doesn't hit as Jericho kicks his head off. The Radicalz slug it out to a big reaction. Benoit covers

Eddie and Jericho covers Pac but both get two.

We get down to Benoit and Jericho for a bit which is probably the most entertaining combination here. Liontamer goes on but Eddie comes in for the save. He winds up in them instead. Ok make that Pac is in them. Justin Credible of all people runs out for the save and Benoit hits a Dragon Suplex for two. Pac and Credible beat up Benoit with a double superkick.

Lionsault gets two on Eddie as Pac gets a low blow and X Factor on Jericho. Very fast paced and exciting stuff here. Crossface on Pac but Eddie with a SWEET running front flip neckbreaker to break it up. Swan Dive to Eddie's arm and then Benoit gets his head kicked off by Pac. Jericho slides in from nowhere and steals the pin to retain on X-Pac. Sweet match.

**Rating:** B+. This was great stuff as everyone was flying all over the place and stealing covers and breaking up pins. Jericho coming in to steal the pin made sense as he was probably the most impressive guy out there. It was a great match which was high impact and incredibly fast paced. The guys got to show off and it worked like a charm. Very good match.

HHH is getting taped up for the match.

Regal is with Vince who tells him to do the right thing in the Stephanie vs. Trish match. He has no idea what that is.

We recap Trish vs. Stephanie. This is in the middle of the Vince wants a divorce and Linda is in a sanitarium and Trish is screwing Vince and Stephanie hates Trish and wants to be the top girl in the company angle. I can't stand those simple and basic angles that are a dime a dozen.

Busta Rhymes is at WWF New York, as is Test. He wants the girls to beat each other to death.

Regal tries to talk to Trish but she has someone to slap.

Stephanie looks AWESOME in her outfit here.

Ad for WWF the Music Volume 5. Wow that sounds forever ago.

### Trish Stratus vs. Stephanie McMahon

Trish is curvy with a gorgeous face at this point. She has no talent as far as we know in the ring so Stephanie is probably the ring general in this match. She has the awesome old school HHH music though so I can't complain. It's nice to see one of the girls in a t-shirt though instead of their traditional stuff. Spear and a slap fight start us off.

We're in the crowd in like a minute as this is a big fight. Stephanie dives off the barricade with a big punch to the chest. Granted it's hard to miss so there we are. Bulldog by Trish but it means nothing yet so it only gets two. They do the smart thing here and don't try to make this into a wrestling match, opting instead for a fight. Water gets involved, making Lawler freak out.

Trish with wet hair and a wet chest: win. A powerbomb from Stephanie gets two and down come Trish's shorts for a spanking. Trish in a thong wins also. The girls both go down (lucky) as does the referee. Cue Regal, who puts Trish on top (works for me) but then saves Stephanie from getting pinned since he doesn't know what the right thing is. Trish slaps him so he takes her down with a neckbreaker for the pin.

**Rating:** B-. This is considering who was in there and the level of their talent. It's no classic, but considering who was in there, this was AWESOME. They didn't bother trying to have a match and just beat each other up, which was without a doubt the right way to go. Trish would of course get FAR better, but this was pretty good considering what they had to work with. Regal saving us from the attempt at a finishing sequence was a nice break too.

Vince is mad at Regal for what he just did. Vince/Stephanie

vs. Trish/Vince tomorrow, which I think led to the Vince's Club.

Ad for Mania, which is made of awesome. If you cut it's arm off and looked down at it, the part that has blood it in would say AWESOME.

We recap HHH vs. Austin, if you need it. In short, HHH paid off Rikishi to run over Austin so he had to take a year off. They hate each other in general also if they need any additional reasons. Like I said, I doubt you need an explanation on this one. If you do, why are you reading this? There was a very clever thing done by HHH: After they signed the contract, Vince had said if they touched each other before No Way Out, Austin would lose his title shot at Mania and HHH would be suspended for six months. Austin signed and HHH blasted him. Vince said what are you doing? HHH only signed the first H. Austin beat up Stephanie and HHH beat up JR the previous week.

Cole, with his stupid blonde highlights, gets a blank stare from Austin.

### Steve Austin vs. HHH

First is a regular match, second is street fight, third is cage. MASSIVE pop for Austin, but the crowd has been white hot all night. I'm surprised that this is in the middle of the card but you know it's going to get some time. Maybe they want to do this so the crowd isn't spent at the end? Naturally it's a slugfest to start. Mudhole is stomped 30 seconds in. Big old AUSTIN chant as he dominates early on.

Modified hot shot to take down Austin though as this is fast paced for the most part. Pedigree is blocked into a DDT on the arm which I need to learn the name of. We head to the floor as Austin works the arm. This is a regular match but Austin ramming HHH's arm into a post about 6 times is perfectly fine? HHH can't do the Pedigree because of his arm, which is



SELLING! Simply shaking your arm is passable, but having it prevent you from doing your moves is SELLING.

Thesz Press and Austin is dominant so far. HHH gets his foot up when Austin is coming off the ropes, but for once Austin actually has his arms up to look like he's doing a move. I hate when people just jump into it for the sake of jumping into it. Neckbreaker takes HHH down but it doesn't do much due to the weak arm.

HHH goes after the knee which is Austin's weak point as well. He goes for the leg into the post thing but Austin counters and HHH and the nose of doom hit the post. Back to the knee as HHH takes over with a figure four. Austin gets out and does a nice move where he gets HHH on the mat and beats on him with his leg. Cooler than it sounds. Thesz Press and the elbow get two.

Everyone counters everything and we slug it out. HHH gets a kick to the knee and goes to the middle rope. He jumps into the boot though and Austin hits the Stunner for the completely clean pinfall.

No rest period between falls and we're right back at it again. It's a street fight now and we hit the floor. Austin's knee is ok I guess as he hits some suplexes on the floor. Monitor connects with HHH's head and apparently it's broken. Naturally we head into the crowd and it's all Austin. Back in the ring and Austin destroys HHH Rock-Style with a chair.

After nearly murdering HHH we head back to the floor where Austin finds a 2x4 wrapped in barbed wire for no apparent reason. A low blow allows HHH to blast him in the face with it though and Austin is bleeding. HHH sets for the Pedigree on the table but Austin counters and sends him through the other table which EXPLODES. Awesome stuff so far if you can't tell.

Back in the ring a bell shot (Austin brought it in earlier) gets two for HHH. This is a war with both guys hitting all

these big shots out of desperation. Back to the neck with a neckbreaker onto the chair for two. Backdrop by Austin sends HHH free falling over the top. Cool looking drop. More weapons stuff on the floor but the intensity and selling is making it work.

You can barely hear Lawler here as his mic is messed up or something. HHH finds a sledgehammer and Lawler accuses JR for putting it there. Back in the ring again and a Stunner is blocked by a sledgehammer shot to Austin's head. Pedigree follows that and thankfully that ties us up at 1-1. I would have rolled my eyes very heavily if Austin had kicked out of that.

The cage is lowered as we get a quick break. It's been about 30 minutes so far and nothing but awesome. Austin is more or less dead and eats the cage again. HHH gets the barbed wire 2x4 and rips Austin's face open a bit more with it. The sledgehammer and at least one chair are also in there with them. Make that two chairs, one of which saves Austin as he blasts HHH in the head with it.

HHH gets it in the face (I would have thought that would have been Stephanie but whatever) for a long time but gets a DDT out of desperation onto the chair but it only gets two. The crowd is a bit silent but it's pretty clear that the fans know nothing is going to end without something huge. Austin comes back and goes OFF on HHH who just collapses face first out of the corner.

Game tries to bale but he Austin makes two saves, culminating with an old school slam off the top rope. Stunner is blocked but the Pedigree hits for TWO. The place erupts on the kickout and HHH is shocked. Another is blocked and HHH gets hit with a slingshot into the cage. Stunner hits and both guys are out. After the break Austin covers for two as this is awesome. HHH gets the hammer and Austin gets the 2x4. Both swing with everything they've got and connect, but HHH falls on Austin

for the pin. I think I need a cigarette.

**Rating:** A+. Without question, this is awesome. Any of the three falls is great to say the least and the ending was perfect. Both guys are protected but not in a way that makes it look like they're being protected. HHH got lucky and won it, as Lawler says that it's not fair to say either guy really won. Just an absolute WAR with these two beating the living tar out of each other and making the crowd love every minute of it. With 40 minutes of these two beating each other to death, how is it not a perfect match?

Austin stuns HHH afterwards for fun.

On Smackdown, the RTC tried to beat up Kat so Lawler made the save, setting up a match tonight.

Stevie gives the RTC a pep talk.

Kat has a shirt on and nothing else. She wanted to be allowed to wear less than that on TV.

### Jerry Lawler vs. Steven Richards

Tazz does commentary in Lawler's place. He's still a wrestler so this is a new thing for him. He's a bit like his normal commentating self but not all the way yet. Lawler makes a full entrance despite being at the commentary desk not 2 minutes ago. We see a clip of the RTC stopping the (XFL's) Las Vegas Outlaws cheerleaders last night. RTC was a parody of the Parents Television Council who got on Vince every 9 seconds for something he did.

This is the walking definition of a catch your breath match as the fans need something worthless to bridge the gap from the war they just saw to the last two matches. Lawler expands his offense from just punches by adding in rapid fire punches. This is why it's great to have someone like Lawler around: you can throw him in there for something like this and you know

he's going to at least be passable, especially since he only wrestles like twice a year so his expectations are very low.

Kat and Ivory go at it for a bit but the distraction allows Richards to take over. Richards misses a splash in the corner and Lawler takes over for a bit. Apparently if he wins Kat gets to be naked. Ivory comes in and Teddy Long takes FOREVER to get rid of her. Kat tries to hit Richards with Ivory's belt but she nails Lawler by mistake for the pin. Kat has to join RTC now, but she was released in like two weeks, resulting in Lawler quitting. They were married at the time.

**Rating:** D. This was pretty weak but at the same time it was about as good as it was going to get. It was on the level of a pretty bad TV match but like I said this was designed to just fill in about 10 minutes so that the fans could breathe a bit. Nothing special at all but it did its job I guess.

We recap the tag title stuff which is another three way feud. Edge and Christian gave Kane a Conchairto on Monday night.

Taker says a lot of basic stuff.

Chyna's book is popular. Random to say the least.

Tag Titles: Undertaker/Kane vs. Edge/Christian vs. Dudley Boyz

This is a tables match but not elimination style. Uh sure. The Brothers go after Edge and Christian in the aisle but stop when the Dudleys come out and corner them. Dudleys are champions here. The Canadians hide and it's on early. It's a massive brawl of course. Tazz is still on commentary here. The table HHH went through is still just in pieces on the floor which is funny for some reason as it always is.

The Dudleys are down and the Brothers beat up the Canadians. The champs make the save from a double powerbomb but Bubba slips on a chair and falls on his back. For the first time we get in the ring and Bubba gets his crotch stepped on. What's

up to Edge makes up for that though. This is just a big mess of course but it's fun. Taker and Kane stop the getting of tables and Christian hits Unprettier on Bubba in the ring.

Stereo powerslams by the big men and then they both go up. Taker goes airborne which isn't something you see that often really. We get some near endings but a bunch of saves are made including a low blow to Taker. A pair of chokeslams hit but there aren't any tables. The Dudleys get chokeslammed too and the Brothers stand very tall.

They set for stereo powerbombs but Rikishi and Haku waddle down to stop it and brawl with the monsters. Have we ever had a generation without an evil Samoan team? For some reason Vince thought these Samoans would be a good choice for a team, even though Haku wasn't Samoan. The monsters all go up the ramp to tick off the crowd. 3D on Christian ends it.

**Rating:** C+. Just a fun match here but somehow this was supposed to set up monsters vs. monsters, even though the ethnic monsters were gone very soon. This wasn't much but it definitely wasn't bad. The constant double teaming got pretty stupid after awhile but it wasn't horrible. Passable match for what it was, but with TLC 2 next month, it's hard to stay underwhelmed.

We recap Rock vs. Angle. Rock beat Big Show to get the shot. That's it. Rock says tick tock a lot also.

Rock says the same stuff we heard in the video package.

#### WWF Title: The Rock vs. Kurt Angle

It's pretty much one sided as to who is going to win here and even Ross and Tazz acknowledge it. Long staredown to start and we're on. The straps are down before we even start as we hear about him using some hold called an ankle lock. Rock hits a jumping Russian leg sweep for two. Ankle lock goes on about a minute in but Rock makes the ropes. These two always have had

good chemistry together so this should be solid stuff.

A pair of belly to bellies but Rock almost gets dropped on his head the first time. He clearly tucks his head more on the second one so at least he can learn on the fly. Sharpshooter goes on and Angle is in trouble. This is very fast paced so far. A belly to back suplex from Kurt but he didn't spin slightly so it's not the Angle Slam. Second rope suplex gets two for Rock.

I'm not sure if I like Rock's DDT or not. He does it oddly for some reason. And here's Big Show for no apparent reason. Chokeslams for everyone including the referee. Show's music plays him out as I expect us to cut to a commercial or something. Angle covers Rock but there's no referee. He pops Angle with the title as there's another referee. What a heelish thing to do but Angle gets up anyway.

Ankle lock out of nowhere and Angle drops some nice cursing in there. Rock gets the counter and initiates his ending sequence. The elbow gets two to a huge reaction as everyone thought it was over. Rock Bottom is blocked and there's the Olympic Slam for two and a freaking ROAR. Rock starts his punches but Angle kicks him in the ankle in a nice counter.

Angle gets rammed into the buckle chest first and walks into the Rock Bottom for....two? Angle did not move at all and the announcers sound very confused. The referee seemingly just stopped counting instead of doing the three. Either that was a botch or there's something I'm missing here. The fans boo the heck out of it as Rock picks him up and hits another Rock Bottom for the clean pin. That had to be a botch on the first one.

**Rating:** B. Solid match here, but the Big Show thing was just totally pointless. The ending was just weird though as that had to be a botch though as it just made no sense at all. These two always worked well together and this was no

exception. Solid match and definitely worthy of a main event on a PPV.

**Overall Rating:** A. This was an AWESOME show with two great matches and only one that wasn't much, which was 5 minutes long. This was one of the best periods for the company and you can see why right here. They know they're on top of the world and all roads lead to Houston and Wrestlemania, which is the undisputed crowning moment for the company. Great show and highly worth checking out from top to bottom.

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