

# Royal Rumble Pre-Show Matches: How Times Change

## Royal Rumble Pre-Show Matches

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross, Tazz, Kevin Kelly, Shane McMahon

That's the kind of collection that speaks for itself and there could be some interesting options in here. Granted most of these are probably going to be seen from various pre-shows over the years, but how many of those are memorable anyway? These things can be quite good so let's get to it.

From Royal Rumble 2014.

## Tag Team Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Goldust/Cody Rhodes

The Outlaws are challenging and the fact that the countdown clock shows us less than fifteen minutes before the show starts isn't instilling me with confidence here. Rhodes knocks Dogg into the corner to start and Dogg realizes that's not going to work. The snap jabs have some more success and Dogg ducks a springboard kick to the head. Dogg is sent outside though and the champs take out both Outlaws with dives as we take a break.

We come back with Dogg snapmaring Goldust into a chinlock, which is escaped just as fast. A Code Red drops Dogg but Gunn is right there to cut Goldust off again. Commentary ignores the match to make jokes about themselves until Goldust snaps off the powerslam. Rhodes comes back in to pick up the pace, including telling Gunn to suck it. A springboard double dropkick puts the Outlaws down and Cross Rhodes gets two on Dogg, with Gunn making the save. Gunn comes in off the blind tag and the Fameasser gives us new champions at 6:59.

**Rating:** C. While the Outlaws would only hold the titles for about a month, it was really jarring to see the Rhodes brothers lose the titles in such a weak fashion. They had the incredible moment of beating the Shield to win the titles and then we just get...this. There is something to be said about the nostalgia factor here, but it's not like the Outlaws were ever particularly good in the ring in the first place.

From Royal Rumble 2004.

### Victoria vs. Molly Holly

Holly's Women's Title isn't on the line. They go technical to start with Victoria taking her down into a quickly broken hammerlock. A headlock takeover puts Holly down again and Victoria grinds away. That's reversed into a headscissors and they fight over a backslide. A snapmare lets Holly hit a baseball slide as Lawler talks about hormones. Holly's handspring elbow in the corner gets two and she cranks on Victoria's neck. That's broken up with a jawbreaker and Victoria fires back with forearms. The standing moonsault gives Victoria two and they go up top, where Victoria pulls her down into the Widow's Peak to win at 4:58.

**Rating:** B-. It didn't get much time but this wound up being a pretty nice match. It's unfortunate that the women's division from this era doesn't have the best reputation as they were capable of doing more. This worked well as a way to warm up the crowd and the Widow's Peak looked great. I'd call this a heck of a nice surprise.

From Royal Rumble 2006.

### Finlay vs. Brian Kendrick

This could be interesting. Finlay backs him into the corner to start but Kendrick actually comes back out with a shove. That doesn't please Finlay, who knocks him out to the floor, with Kendrick favoring his arm. Kendrick gets tied up in the ring

skirt but fights back again, this time with some forearms. That's enough for Finlay, who grabs the Celtic Cross for the fast pin at 2:07. Ok so it wasn't interesting.

From Royal Rumble 2001.

### **Kaientai vs. Lo Down**

The winning team gets to pick a member to enter the Royal Rumble. Chaz jumps Funaki to start and gives him a slam but Funaki hits a quick dropkick. Michinoku comes in and walks into a spinebuster as Lawler teases entering the Rumble as a surprise. Some more dropkicks get Michinoku out of trouble and it's back to Funaki to clean house. That doesn't last long though as a double powerbomb gives Chaz the pin at 1:50. And then their spot went to Drew Carey anyway, which is a far better idea anyway.

From Royal Rumble 2005.

### **Maven vs. Rhyno**

Maven is a cocky heel here and we don't have commentary as this is an actual dark match rather than something from Heat. Maven works on the arm to start and shouts a lot as he cranks away even more. The fans get behind Rhyno, who is rather displeased with Maven slapping him in the face...and apparently this IS from Heat and just joined in progress. Well that's...really not overly noteworthy.

Maven sends him into the throat and hammers away, followed by an elbow for some near falls. Some choking in the corner gets two, even with the feet on the ropes, and Rhyno's neck gets bent around the ropes. A neckbreaker gets two and we're off to the chinlock. Rhyno fights up because, you know, it's Maven, and hits a northern lights suplex. Maven knocks him right back down as JR apologizes for some technical difficulties.

The chinlock goes on again to keep things slow as this is going a good bit too long. Rhyno fights up for the clothesline

comeback and a belly to belly drops Maven again. The threat of the Gore sends Maven bailing to the floor but they switch places. Rhyno tries a sunset flip of all things but Maven grabs the ropes for the pin at 7:01.

**Rating:** D+. Yeah there's a reason Maven is not overly well remembered for his time in the ring and this was a good illustration of why. He oddly worked better as a heel as he's easy to dislike, but there is nothing in the ring to build off of that. This was a nothing match and it felt way longer than just seven minutes, which isn't a good sign.

And we're out in a hurry, with the next match starting about a second after the pinfall. Come on man, Maven wasn't THAT bad.

From Royal Rumble 2015.

## Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Adam Rose, Natalya and Xavier Woods are here too. This is a weird case as it's actually HEEL New Day as they've only been around in their best known form for about two months. The fans do seem to like singing along with Woods though. Big E. and Kidd start things off as the fans are rather enthusiastic about Cesaro. Commentary hypes up the WWE Network and I can't help but shed a bit of a tear over its memory.

Some early backbreakers have Kidd down for two as commentary talks about the Rumble, which is a bit more acceptable here. Kingston comes in with a dropkick to Kidd and it's off to Cesaro, with the fans rather approving. Big E. comes back in for the running shoulders in the corner, allowing Kingston to get the blind tag for a middle rope crossbody. Lawler isn't sure where New Day will wind up as they seem to be evolving, which is the biggest understatement he could imagine.

A cheap shot from Cesaro drops Kingston and it's back to Kidd, with the Swing into the dropkick getting two. We take a break and come back with Kingston fighting out of Cesaro's chinlock.

Kidd kicks him right back down for two but it's back to Big E. to fire off the belly to belly suplexes. A not so great Rock Bottom out of the corner gives Big E. two and Kidd is catapulted over the top.

Big E. sends Kingston flying out to the floor, which gets commentary to stop talking about the WWE Network (thank goodness as I can't cry over it anymore). The spear through the ropes stops Cesaro but he escapes the Big Ending back inside. Kingston comes in but the referee says there was no tag, so we do indeed get a tag, with Kingston not looking pleased (in a rare sight).

Cesaro uppercuts the heck out of Kingston and a superplex into Kidd's top rope elbow gets two. The Sharpshooter attempt is kicked away so Kidd tries a sunset flip but Cesaro gets caught cheating. Kingston's rollup gets two more but Kidd is back with the Sharpshooter. That's broken up with a belly to belly so Cesaro drops Big E. again. Cesaro isn't done as it's an uppercut to Kingston, setting up Kidd's fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin at 11:06.

**Rating:** B. Kidd and Cesaro were one heck of a team and it's a shame they didn't get to do this a lot longer. They worked so well together and were a great example of power/speed meshing. On the other hand though you have New Day, who were starting to get popular as you couldn't get around that kind of talent for so long. It helps that they were rather good in the ring in their own right, which was starting to come out. Rather good match here and easily a PPV worthy match.

From Royal Rumble 1999.

## **JOB Squad vs. Too Much**

Too Much (Cool) jump them to start but Scorpio flips out of a double backdrop attempt. A powerbomb puts Taylor down but Christopher breaks up the moonsault. Christopher accidentally sends Taylor crashing outside, leaving Scorpio to kick

Christopher in the face. Holly comes in and fights off some double teaming, followed by a clothesline to Taylor. Scorpio's spinning top rope splash hits Taylor as well but he holds Scorpio for Christopher's missile dropkick. Everything breaks down and Holly grabs a Falcon Arrow to pin Taylor at 3:53.

**Rating:** C-. Yeah what were you expecting here? One of the teams was the heel version of Too Cool, without the charisma that made them stars, and the other team was literally built around the idea of being losers. They weren't going to be able to do anything overly impressive, but that was the point. In other words, it was a fine idea for a warmup match but this was about as good as it was getting.

From Royal Rumble 2003.

### **Spike Dudley vs. Stevie Richards**

Jacqueline is referee and shouts a lot as Spike jumps Richards to start. Richards' friend Victoria grabs Spike's leg though and a neckbreaker puts him down. A seated full nelson (always liked that one) has Spike in more trouble but he fights up rather quickly. Richards catches him on top but gets knocked down, setting up a top rope double stomp for two. Jacqueline isn't going to have Richards stomping in the corner but Victoria's interference doesn't work. Instead, Spike uses Victoria to set up a Dudley Dog for the pin at 3:35.

**Rating:** C+. Spike is someone who doesn't get the credit that he deserved, as he was able to take one heck of a beating and keep going while getting people behind him. At the same time, Richards was a fine villain who was better than people remember. As was the case with a lot of these matches, they did what they could in the time they had, but there wasn't a ton of time in the first place.

**Overall Rating:** B-. I had fun with this, as they did a nice job of throwing together some matches that you probably haven't seen in a good while. Pre-show matches got a lot

better in latter years as they were basically pay per view matches airing earlier. You mix that with some simple stuff like Spike vs. Richards and it gives you a nice idea of how things have gone over the years. This was short and to the point, which is kind of the idea with the concept in the first place. As usual, nice job.

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# **Survivor Series Count-Up – 2014 (2015 Redo): He Actually Showed Up**

## **Survivor Series 2014**

Date: November 23, 2014

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Attendance: 12,000

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

Now this is going to be an interesting one as the whole show is built around one match and that one match's big surprise. Last year they made no secret about the show being entirely built around one single match, which wound up making the way to make the whole thing work. That one match is Team Cena vs. Team Authority for Cena and company's jobs vs. the Authority having power. The jobs were thrown in at the last minute to

really hammer home who was going to win but that's not always the worst thing. Let's get to it.

#### Pre-Show: Fandango vs. Justin Gabriel

This is the NEW AND IMPROVED Fandango, meaning he has Rosa Mendes and now wears a white shirt. We're ready to go after the dance sequence that kills even more time. They slowly punch each other to start with Gabriel, who has skeleton tights for no apparent reason (JBL: "The leftovers from Giant Gonzalez."), getting knocked to the floor.

Back in and Justin breaks out of a chinlock and gets two off a springboard kick to the face. For someone who flies around as much as Gabriel, the fans are almost totally silent. A suplex slam (as in a suplex where Fandango never left his feet) takes Gabriel down and the guillotine legdrop is good enough to put Justin away at 3:10.

**Rating:** D-. You know how Fandango still hasn't done anything since his "rebirth" here? After this match it really surprises me that he still has a job as this was so horribly boring. Naturally they did the same match again the next night on Raw because maybe they just didn't get the point across here. Really boring match.

#### Pre-Show: Cesaro vs. Jack Swagger

The battle of the former Real Americans. On the way to the ring, Cesaro talks about the history of Swiss neutrality before picking Team Authority. He proclaims his allegiance in various languages (which is NOTHING that could ever be capitalized in around the world) until Swagger and Colter come in to pick Team Cena. Swagger gets a quick rollup for two to start, earning himself a gutwrench suplex.

The Patriot Lock has Cesaro in early trouble but he's still able to throw Swagger down with a German suplex. More suplexes set up a chinlock. Back up and Swagger grabs a German of his own, followed by a chop block to stay on the leg. The Vader Bomb is blocked but Swagger grabs the Patriot Lock. That goes nowhere and more Germans are rolled, only to have Swagger counter into the Patriot Lock again for the submission at 5:23.

**Rating:** C-. They crammed a lot of suplexes into just five minutes. This also shows you how much better a match can be if you have interesting people in there. Swagger isn't the best in the world but there's at least a reason to care about him and more than one note to his character. I'll take Cesaro being all serious and speaking different languages over HE'S A DANCER IN A WHITE SHIRT any day.

The opening video recaps the main event, which was set up on Vince's whim. That's the problem with so much of what the Authority does: whatever happens can be changed by either the two of them or Vince because they're the ultimate powers. No matter how the story goes, someone with power can come in and change anything at the drop of a hat. Why hasn't Vince come back and changed something else on a whim? Eh no real reason other than the plot hasn't called for it. That's really bad writing.

Here's Vince to open things up with talking. Vince talks (see, I told you that's what he was going to do) about how epic this is really going to be and brings out the Authority because we haven't heard from them in the first five minutes. The sucking up begins immediately but Vince cuts them off to bring out Cena.

Vince recaps the main event as we're just burning through pay per view time here. Cena asks if the Authority will leave on their own accord if they lose tonight. HHH says that Cena is going to have a bad holiday because four men's responsibilities will be on his head after tonight. Those four men are going to be forgotten about because they're the ones with everything to lose. Cena will keep his job because he's such a big star, but he'll have that on his head forever.

Stephanie suggests that someone on Team Cena will turn on him because they have to think of themselves. She says the Authority will still have their jobs at headquarters and run things from afar, but Vince says not so fast. They'll still have desk jobs and be in charge of different departments but they'll have no authority on screen.

One more thing: if the Authority does lose tonight, only Cena can bring them back. That's the moment where they gave away the ending and everyone

knew the Authority would be back by the end of the year at the latest. Stephanie goes into full STEPHANIE IS SHOUTING mode but Cena says the Authority will lose tonight.

So to recap the recap (which took us to fifteen minutes into the show): the Authority will still have jobs and huge salaries but they just don't have to deal with the headaches of running the show. On top of that, Cena can bring them back because FOREVER means until Cena says otherwise. This is all stuff that could have been done on Raw but why not waste pay per view time on it. I know their line is "But it's a free month on the Network!" That's not an excuse to do something stupid like this as it's a really bad way to get the show going when this could have been done in five minutes on any given TV show.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Miz/Damien Mizdow vs. Los Matadores vs. Goldust/Stardust

Goldust and Stardust (villains here) are defending and Mizdow is one of the most popular guys on the roster because of how hard he's been working with the stunt double character. Diego and Stardust start things off as Cole reads Stardust's latest riddle. A quick rollup gets two on Stardust before it's off to Miz who is stopped by OLE! Mizdow does his stunt double stuff on the floor as JBL talks about Papa Shango putting a curse on Mizdow years ago. This isn't a rousing start to the commentary tonight.

Miz won't tag out, again missing the point of having a stunt double. Jey comes in to chop Diego but Goldust tags himself in and chinlocks the Samoan. The fans continue to want Mizdow but Stardust waves them off and uppercuts Jey instead. This time it's Miz tagging himself in but Fernando tags Jey and flips off the top and onto Miz.

It's FINALLY off to Mizdow, only to have Goldust tag himself in ten seconds later to bring the crowd back to silence. Lawler brings up a great point: if Mizdow comes in and Miz is on the apron, shouldn't Mizdow just stand there? Stardust comes in and stomps Fernando before cranking on both arms to slow things down a bit. Goldust stomps Fernando on the floor (brothers think alike) and we hit the chinlock. Things stay slow as

we hear about Grumpy Cat appearing on Raw. I had been trying to forget that guys.

Stardust loads up what looks like a Tombstone but Fernando spins out into a tornado DDT (good one too) and it's off to Jimmy. Now we pick things up a bit with the Usos cleaning house with Umaga attacks and superkicks (and a shaking camera, which has happened multiple times tonight). Goldust powerslams Jimmy down for two but the double Uso dive takes down a few people.

There's the Falling Star from Stardust, giving us this brilliant exchange: Cole: "That's the Falling Star!" JBL: "I have no idea what that is!" Cole: "It's the Falling Star!" JBL: "I know!" Torito gets thrown onto the pile and Diego does the same. Back in and a quadruple Tower of Doom takes down Los Matadores and the champs, allowing Mizdow to tag himself in and pin Goldust for the titles at 15:25.

**Rating:** C. This was a big longer than it needed to be but the payoff was exactly what it needed to be. There was no reason to wait any longer on giving Mizdow something and this opens the door for some new possibilities in the story. The match was fun but they could have cut out a few minutes to make it flow better. It's fun enough though (annoying commentary aside) and a good way to open the show, after the long talking of course.

Miz takes both titles and Mizdow keeps posing.

Larry the Cable Guy is guest hosting Raw. As usual, WWE is about ten years behind the pop culture times.

Vince will be on the Steve Austin Show. Now that could be entertaining and it kind of was if I remember correctly.

Adam Rose and the Bunny do a toy commercial until Heath Slater and Titus O'Neil come in to set up a match for later. Fans: "NO! NO! NO!" Is it bad that I miss the Bunny and wanted to see more of him?

Team Paige vs. Team Team Fox

Paige, Cameron, Summer Rae, Layla

Alicia Fox, Natalya, Emma, Naomi

Natalya is accompanied by Tyson Kidd, who clearly doesn't care in a great short run character. Paige and Natalya start things off on the mat and we hit the King's Court reference which turns into a discussion of Lawler having a foursome. Paige is sent to the floor for a quick spank from Natalya (because of course) before it's off to Layla vs. Emma, neither of whom are still on the main roster. Lawler: "Emma could trip over cordless phones." That's not very hard to do King.

It's back to Paige for a headbutt and THIS IS MY HOUSE. How can she afford this many houses? Cameron comes in to break up a tag attempt and this could go badly. The fans want Mizdow again and good grief it's the Daniel Bryan story all over again. You just had him for fifteen minutes when he won a title. Be happy with what you got and shut up already. Emma rolls over and tags Naomi for the big showdown that no one wanted to see. Naomi runs through Cameron and a bad looking wheelbarrow Stunner gets two.

Everything breaks down and Cameron does an awful bulldog, allowing Naomi to roll her up for the elimination at 6:12. Summer kicks Naomi down to take over, only to miss a splash. Fox comes in as the announcers ignore the match to talk about old Survivor Series teams. The heels bail so Fox tries to get a CHICKEN chant started. It's off to Layla for her bouncy cross body but a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker gives Alicia the elimination at 9:29.

Summer comes in and misses a charge, allowing Natalya to dropkick her down. It's off to Paige who takes over, only to have Summer do Paige's scream and get decked as a result. Emma comes in for the Dilemma, a forearm to Paige on the apron and the Emma Lock for the submission on Summer at 12:04. So Paige is all alone and starts with Emma, who quickly faceplants her down. Natalya eats a superkick so it's off to Naomi for the Rear View and the headscissors DDT for the final pin at 14:16.

**Rating:** D-. Oh sweet goodness the Divas Revolution needed to happen soon. This match felt like it was going on forever with almost none of them looking like they should have been out there this long. Between "CHICKEN!

CHICKEN!" and Layla's face offense under the guise of a heel and Cameron being the disaster that only she can be, this was horrible with Paige and Natalya not being able to hold it together.

Kidd, who didn't do a thing all match, celebrates more than anyone else in a great touch. That's the highlight of the last fifteen minutes.

We recap the pre-show, which also included the return of Bad News Barrett. As usual, Cesaro gets left out. The best part: Renee Young with long hair. I had forgotten about that and it says a lot that she's just as beautiful with her hair hacked off.

The panel talks for a bit.

We recap Bray Wyatt vs. Dean Ambrose, which started when Wyatt targeted Ambrose in October for whatever reason Bray picks his next target. There was something about Dean's dad being in prison but it was never really explained. Ambrose said he didn't care why Wyatt did it anyway so it didn't really matter. Tonight is the first match.

#### Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

They slug it out to start (shocking) before heading outside (even more shocking) where Dean takes over with some clotheslines. Back in and Bray runs Dean over before knocking a dive out of the air with a right hand. I can never get used to Bray's blood red tattoos as they always fool me. We hit a seated full nelson on Dean (always nice to see them mix up the rest holds) before he fights up for a double cross body.

They go outside for the third time for a double clothesline and both guys are down again. Back in and Dean takes over before doing Bray's lean upside down out of the corner in a nice touch. Dean ties him in the ropes and kisses Bray on the head before a dropkick and legdrop get two. Bray counters the Rebound Lariat into a release Rock Bottom for two as this match really hasn't taken off yet.

The middle rope backsplash misses because it would have killed Dean and the top rope elbow gets two for Ambrose. Back up and Bray EXPLODES with a clothesline and he makes it even worse with another Rock Bottom onto the

steps. That's only good for two so Bray grabs a mic and says they could have ruled the world together. Dean has chosen his path though so Bray grabs a chair and drops to his knees like he did with Cena at Wrestlemania. Dean isn't Cena though and he hits Bray with the chair for the DQ at 14:00.

**Rating:** C+. Much like the Cena match at Wrestlemania, this felt a lot more like it was designed to set up something else (which it was) instead of being a big showdown. Bray's babbling gets to the point where you stop caring what he's talking about and that doesn't make for the most interesting matches. No matter how you look at it, the whole thing always feels like you're waiting on the next big thing, which gets repetitive in a hurry. It's still a fun brawl though and got going after the first few minutes.

Post match Dean lays Bray out and elbows him through a table. That's not enough for him as he buries Bray under another table and a pile of chairs. That's only T and C though so why not pull out a ladder? Dean climbs the ladder but is all like "this is the free month so you have to pay to see me dive off." Referees won't let him shove the ladder onto the pile either.

The Authority gives their team a long pep talk, including Stephanie crying at the thought of only having a huge salary and working in an office. This is one of the problems of having such a big main event: there's so much time to fill which certainly couldn't have been filled with another Survivor Series match. This talk eats up WAY too much time and is summed up as "we're betting everything we have tonight so win or else."

#### Adam Rose/The Bunny vs. Heath Slater/Titus O'Neil

Slater and the Bunny get things going but Rose tags himself in quickly. Heath gets him on the mat before it's off to Titus for some forearms to the back. Rose dives over and makes the tag. Lawler: "Maybe we should explain why there's a bunny in the ring." Cole: "Well it's actually a man in a bunny suit." Good grief just start speaking gibberish to us since they clearly think we're that stupid. The Bunny pins Slater off a middle

rope dropkick.

The Rosebuds leave with the Bunny.

More commercials. Counting the opener, the pep talk and all these commercials, there's probably been seventeen minutes wasted, or about the same amount of time spent on a quick Survivor Series match.

The injured Roman Reigns has a satellite interview where he talks about wanting to be here punching people. We'll make it nineteen minutes of filler. Reigns will be back in a month.

Team Cena says they're ready.

#### Divas Title: Nikki Bella vs. AJ Lee

AJ is defending and Nikki has Brie as her unwilling assistant. After the big match intros and Brie gets on the apron for a distraction, followed by kissing AJ (and launching a thousand fanfics). The Rack Attack gives us a new champion at 38 seconds in the Daniel Bryan vs. Sheamus finish. Allegedly this was the way the match was going the entire time and it wasn't cut down, making me shake my head even more.

Of course the sisters are back together with an eventual explanation of "we're sisters."

Ambrose vs. Wyatt is announced for TLC in the namesake match.

We recap the main event. The Authority is all corrupt so Vince came in and said let's put their power up against Team Cena. John put together a team of the few people who would fight with him so the Authority made them as miserable as they could. It's a simple story but they've made this feel like a legitimately huge match.

#### Team Cena vs. Team Authority

John Cena, Big Show, Ryback, Dolph Ziggler, Erick Rowan

Seth Rollins, Kane, Rusev, Mark Henry, Luke Harper

Cena's partners' jobs vs. the Authority's authority. Harper is

Intercontinental Champion and Rusev is the undefeated US Champion. The eleven entrances eat up even more time but in a good way this time. They've done a really good job at making this feel like a big deal and it's working well here. Henry and Show start but HHH has to get in one last pep talk, allowing Show to knock him out for the elimination at 50 seconds.

It's Rollins in next but Show chops him down to the floor. Kane comes in but Show drags him into the corner for the tag off to Cena, who pounds on Kane even more. Now we get a showdown that the fans find bigger than it probably is with Rowan vs. Harper. This was during that short period where Rowan was a genius, which has been completely forgotten since. Rollins tags himself back in before anything can happen and is immediately caught in the wrong corner.

Ryback comes in to join in on the fun but Rollins tags out to Harper. That's fine with Ryback as he grabs a vertical suplex, only to get punched in the face by Kane. The big bald is beaten down as well so we'll try Rusev. A spinebuster ends the slugout but Shell Shock is broken up. Everything breaks down and it's a Curb Stomp from Rollins and the jumping superkick from Rusev to eliminate Ryback and tie us up.

Show comes back in but Rusev escapes a quick chokeslam attempt and brings in Harper. A dropkick of all things puts Show down and it's back to Kane for some stomping. Kane follows Harper's suit with a (basement) dropkick, followed by the Gator Roll (he's stopped using that) from Harper. Show throws Harper away too so it's off to Ziggler, who Harper beat (through some shenanigans) to win the title.

The heels start taking over on Ziggler with Kane's sidewalk slam getting two. A comeback is stopped by a boot to the face and it's off to Rusev for some knees to the ribs. Ziggler tries to punch Rollins in the face but gets caught in a downward spiral into the corner. We hit the chinlock for a bit before the running DDT plants Rusev. Everything breaks down again and we hit the parade of finishers (always a favorite).

Rollins is thrown onto a pile but Rusev throws Ziggler onto that pile. It's time to load up the announcers' table but Rusev misses Ziggler and

splashes through the table instead, leading to a countout at 21:02 to make it 4-3. Cole: "COUNTOUTS ARE A FACTOR! COUNTOUTS ARE A FACTOR! COME ON DOLPH! COME ON DOLPH! ZIGGLER'S IN! ZIGGLER'S IN! RUSEV IS OUT! RUSEV IS OUT!" Get the parrot a cracker and shut him up already.

Back in and the exhausted Ziggler tags Cena for a quick AA to Kane. Rollins makes the save with a Curb Stomp and everyone is down. A double tag brings in Harper and Rowan with Erick cleaning house. Kane's chokeslam is broken up but the springboard knee from Rollins sets up Harper's discus lariat to put Rowan out at 24:14. So it's Show/Cena/Ziggler vs. Rollins/Kane/Harper and we get a big six man staredown...until Show KO's Cena, turning heel again to fill his quota for the year. Rollins steals the pin to eliminate Cena at 25:11. Now THAT is a shock.

Show stares down at the Authority and then walks out at 26:30, leaving Ziggler down 3-1. Ziggler can barely stand after the long beating he took but it's now the Shawn formula in 2005. The fans want Orton (who was put out by Rollins a few weeks ago but why have the hometown boy here to make the save when you can have him on a movie set instead? To make it worse, Stephanie chants "OH YEAH! OH YEAH! OH YEAH!" in what was supposed to be cheerleading.

Kane throws Ziggler into the barricade and Rollins drags him over to the corner for some tags to the eliminated partners. Kane's superplex is broken up though and a quick superkick and Zig Zag make it 2-1 at 29:35. Harper is right in though and kicks Ziggler's head off to send him outside, followed by a nice suicide shove. A great sounding superkick gets two on Ziggler and the sitout powerbomb amazingly only gets the same. Ziggler somehow grabs a rollup (and jeans) for a fast elimination at 31:35, leaving us one on one.

Dolph can barely stand but he still grabs a DDT for two. Rollins has way more gas though and hammers Ziggler down, only to miss a top rope knee. The Fameasser gets two out of nowhere as HHH and Stephanie are losing their minds on the outside. Noble and Mercury are dispatched and the Zig Zag connects but HHH pulls the referee out at two.

The J's are dispatched again and Stephanie is knocked off the apron (onto HHH of course because Heaven forbid she not have a soft landing). Another Curb Stomp misses and there's a second Zig Zag for two with HHH breaking up the pin one more time. HHH beats on Ziggler for a bit and hits a Pedigree....and there's a crow.

In one of the biggest surprises of all time, STING makes his WWE debut (with JBL listing off his resume to make sure you know this was planned in advance) and HHH is in shock. Sting decks HHH's crooked referee and does the big staredown with HHH, setting up the Death Drop (sold really well too). Sting pulls Ziggler on top of Rollins (who hasn't moved in over six minutes) for the final pin at 44:07.

**Rating:** A. I liked this even better knowing what was coming. They did a really good job of setting up the story here as both teams were in enough trouble at different points to keep it interesting with the Cena elimination being the biggest of them all. I was genuinely surprised when that happened and it holds up well enough as a moment today. The near falls near the end were great as well, making this a really great match. This should have been a total star making performance for Ziggler but since WWE is in charge, it was pretty much forgotten in about a month.

HHH looks like reality sets in while Stephanie shows her horrible acting skills one more time. For once I'm fine with the focus being on them but good grief that screeching is killing it. On top of that, everyone knew they would be back sooner than later and it didn't even last a month.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This is the definition of a one match show and thankfully that one match delivered because the rest of this show was pretty horrible. Everything from the end of Ambrose vs. Wyatt to the start of the main event was a waste of time or boring, as was so often the case in WWE at this point. The main event bails the show out, but that's the ONLY thing worth watching on here.

### Ratings Comparison

Fandango vs. Justin Gabriel

Original: D

2015 Redo: D-

Cesaro vs. Jack Swagger

Original: C-

2015 Redo: C-

Usos vs. Miz/Damien Mizdow vs. Goldust/Stardust vs. Los Matadores

Original: C+

2015 Redo: C

Team Paige vs. Team Fox

Original: D-

2015 Redo: D-

Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

Original: B-

2015 Redo: C+

Slater Gator vs. Adam Rose/The Bunny

Original: N/A

2015 Redo: N/A

AJ Lee vs. Nikki Bella

Original: N/A

2015 Redo: N/A

Team Cena vs. Team Authority

Original: B+

2015 Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: C

2015 Redo: B-

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/11/23/survivor-series-2014-i-believe-it/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and head over to my Amazon author page with 30 different cheap wrestling books at:

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

AND

[Remember to check out Wrestlingrumors.net](http://wrestlingrumors.net) for all of your [wrestling headline needs](http://wrestlingrumors.net).

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## Adam Rose Released

<http://www.wwe.com/article/adam-rose-released>

We'll go with "well duh" for this one. It does note that Rose requested his own release and you can't really blame him for that.

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# Adam Rose Arrested

For alleged domestic violence.

Oh yeah he's done.

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## NXT – January 20, 2016: The Other Way

### NXT

Date: January 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're in a bit of a weird point in NXT as it's still a few months before the next announced Takeover and we're just starting to set up the big feuds before we get to the really big feuds. Next week it's Baron Corbin vs. Samoa Joe vs. Sami Zayn for the #1 contendership so odds are they'll get some focus tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Sami Zayn vs. Adam Rose

Sami works on a wristlock to start and spins around into an armbar. We're already well into the OLE chants but Rose cuts them off with a kick to the head. Some elbow drops set up a chinlock on Sami but he's quickly on his feet. Rose chops him right back down though and drops a top rope headbutt for two before choking on the ropes. Sami shrugs those off as well though and grabs a Koji Clutch out of nowhere for the submission at

5:27.

**Rating:** D+. If there's one thing Sami Zayn does better than almost anyone, it's taking a beating and making a quick comeback to win while keeping it realistic. Bringing Rose back for a loss like this is the right way to use veterans here because having the big stars come down and treating them like a bigger deal than the NXT roster isn't going to be accepted. That and Sami is a bigger deal than Rose anyway.

Johnny Gargano says he isn't intimidated by a bully like Samoa Joe. His solution: punch Joe in the mouth. As long as his heart is beating, Johnny Wrestling will not back down.

Chad Gable and Jason Jordan talk about not being nominated for Tag Team of the Year while Blake and Murphy were on the list. They know they're getting better and they're going to the top. Another word for top is alpha and they're both Americans, so they might as well be called American Alpha.

#### Tye Dillinger vs. Apollo Crews

Dillinger's entrance is even more energetic than usual here. They circle each other a bit to start until Dillinger takes him down with a wristlock. A headlock puts Crews on the mat and it's time for a quick victory lap with Tye giving himself a ten. That earns him a delayed vertical suplex with Crews only slipping a bit as Dillinger knees him in the head. It's a bit more impressive than when Lashley does it. Dillinger rolls outside but slide back in to hit a dive on Crews. Something like a Codebreaker gets two on Apollo but he pops back up and hits his lifting sitout powerbomb for the pin at 4:35.

**Rating:** C+. Better match than I was expecting here with Dillinger putting in more effort than I've seen from him in a long time. Crews continues to be an amazing athlete but I still haven't found a reason to connect with him yet. He's just a guy out there doing a bunch of cool looking stuff with nothing more to him. Talented for sure, but he needs some fine tuning.

Post match Crews says he's had something on his mind for a few weeks now.

He isn't one to have a match end in a disqualification. Now he knows he hasn't earned a title shot, but he'd love to face Finn Balor one more time, even in a non-title match.

Alexa Bliss isn't happy with Blake and Murphy losing in London but she's going to lead by example tonight when she teams with Emma and beats up Bayley and Carmella.

We get a Vaudevillains vignette with the two of them looking very angry.

Stills of Kevin Owens appearing at the NXT Milwaukee house show.

### Baron Corbin vs. Rich Swann

Swann is a longtime indy talent who recently signed with NXT. Corbin throws him into the corner to start and backdrops him into a 450. Off to something like a Tazmission from Corbin before Rich starts using some speed to avoid a few charges. A spinning kick to the face gets two on Corbin but Rich misses something off the top and charges into a big swinging Rock Bottom (called Deep Six) for the pin at 3:14.

**Rating:** C. Again a better match than I was expecting here with Swann looking solid in his debut. This isn't a match to judge him off though as he didn't have a character or anything like that. Then again that's how a lot of people have started down in NXT and turned out just fine so I wouldn't be worried. Corbin having a secondary finisher is a good idea as End of Days only works so well.

Bayley and Carmella are ready for their tag match tonight when Dawson and Wilder come in to say Carmella is a loser just like Enzo and Cass. Carmella is so upset that she's being driven bananas (her words) but Bayley says save it for the match.

### Carmella/Bayley vs. Emma/Alexa Bliss

Dana is here with Emma/Bliss. Emma gets in a cheap shot on Bayley and the champ's ribs are damaged before the opening bell. Bayley starts anyway but is quickly dragged into the corner and stomped in the corner with the villains staying on the bad ribs. We take an early break and come back with Bliss holding Bayley in an armbar. Bayley gets up and hits a quick

middle rope dropkick which only hurts her ribs even more. Emma breaks up the hot tag attempt and gets suplexed as a result, only to have Dana offer a distraction to prevent another tag attempt.

The Emma Sandwich (called a cross body in the corner) stays on the ribs and it's back to Bliss for another armbar, even though Bayley's hand is grabbing the ropes. Bliss drags her away and that's good enough for the referee for some reason. Bayley fights out of the corner though and tags in Carmella to take over on Bliss as things speed up. Carmella's little dance sets up a Bronco Buster and the leg crossface makes Bliss tap at 9:26.

**Rating:** C+. Standard formula tag match here with Bayley playing the perfect face in peril until Carmella gets to make the comeback for the win. It makes a lot more sense to have Carmella get the win here as she needs to be built up before the title match and what better way to do that than by beating one of the many midcard heels?

Balor agrees to give Crews a non-title match.

### Johnny Gargano vs. Samoa Joe

The fans start a JOHNNY WRESTLING chant which is such an awesome name. Joe drives him into the corner to start and grinds his forearm over Johnny's face before elbowing him in the jaw. Gargano snaps off a quick enziguri to put Joe on the floor, only to have him kick Johnny's leg out to take over again. The snap jabs have Gargano in trouble again and Joe kicks the leg out one more time, sending Gargano into a near 360.

Another kick puts Gargano on the floor but he dives in at nine with Graves ripping on him for going back to the beating. Back in and a quick enziguri and DDT stagger Joe but he kicks Gargano out of the air on a slingshot attempt. Gargano is already knocked silly so the Koquina Clutch puts him out of his misery at 4:30.

**Rating:** C+. Joe is the kind of guy who can work this physical ROH style and make it look good in short bursts. The Ciampa match was better but this was another hard hitting match where both guys came out looking good, even though this was pretty one sided for the most part. Gargano is

another name that should be fine.

**Overall Rating:** B. This is where NXT continues to amaze me. They can have a week of nothing but storytelling and then the next week they do almost nothing but solid wrestling. The triple threat is looking better and you have another big match to build towards with Crews vs. Balor, even though it's non-title. As usual, they set up a goal and then they accomplish it, usually in the span of just a week. That's unheard of in today's wrestling and NXT does it nearly every single time. Well done, as usual.

### Results

Sami Zayn b. Adam Rose – Koji Clutch

Apollo Crews b. Tye Dillinger – Lifting sitout powerbomb

Baron Corbin b. Rich Swann – Deep Six

Carmella/Bayley b. Emma/Alexa Bliss – Leg crossface to Bliss

Samoa Joe b. Johnny Gargano – Koquina Clutch

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

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

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

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# New Column: Heaven Help Whoever Is NXT

Looking at the problems with some of the callups and how stupid WWE looks with some of their booking.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-heaven-help-whoever-is-next/46393/>

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## NXT – December 2, 2015: I Believe In A Thing Called Joe

### **NXT**

Date: December 2, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Rich Brennan

Takeover: London is in two weeks and the card is mostly set. That leaves us with two shows to firm up the build, which means we could be in for some entertaining nights leading up to the next big show. The cliffhanger from last week saw Nia Jax throw her hand in to the ring for the Women's Title shot and Bayley doesn't have an opponent for London yet. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Baron Corbin vs. Tye Dillinger

Some chops earn Dillinger a throw across the ring and Corbin chokes on the mat. Corbin is in his full slow mode here and it's working as always.

Dillinger comes back with a clothesline and a superkick for two, only to come off the middle rope and right into the End of Days for the pin at 2:52.

Apollo Crews is ready for Corbin at Takeover and is ready to team up with Finn Balor to face Corbin and Samoa Joe next week.

Tommaso Ciampa says Joe is dangerous, but Ciampa is even more dangerous because he has nothing to lose. When he pins Joe tonight, everything changes.

### Nia Jax vs. Blue Pants

Pants has a modified version of the Price is Right theme. Jax takes her down by the arm to start and stomps on the hand. A toss by the head keeps Blue in trouble and her kicks have no effect. Some elbow drops and a Samoan drop set up the big leg to squash Pants for the pin at 2:10.

Dash and Dawson don't want to talk about Enzo and Cass because they'd rather just hurt people. If the consequences of hurting people are the Tag Team Titles, they don't have much to worry about. Last week Enzo and Cass jumped them because those two can just talk the talk instead of walking the way. Dash really doesn't get why Enzo and Cass are getting the title shot in London when they haven't beaten anyone. That's fine with them because Cass has a good leg that they haven't broken yet.

### Adam Rose vs. James Storm

Rose orders his music cut off because this is serious business. Storm starts with a shoulder but Rose gets in some shots to the back to take over. A chinlock doesn't get Adam anywhere as Storm comes back with his forearms and running neckbreaker, followed by the Last Call for the quick pin at 2:38.

The Vaudevillains are disappointed that they lost last week but they're going to win here tonight. Cue Jason Jordan and Chad Gable to disagree. Really quick and to the point promos here.

Video on Sami Zayn winning the NXT Title last year at Takeover: R-Evolution.

## Vaudevillains vs. Jason Jordan/Chad Gable

Gable takes Gotch to the mat to start but Simon grabs the arm, only to have Chad easily flip out. It's off to Jordan to take English to the mat with ease and Aiden's leapfrog is countered into an atomic drop. The fans say this is wrestling as English counters an Irish whip into the corner by standing on the middle rope and posing. Gable comes back in and goes after English's bad leg but gets backdropped out to the floor for a big crash. Not that it matters as Chad slides over and makes the tag off to Jason for a bunch of dropkicks. The Grand Amplitude puts Gotch away at 5:28.

**Rating:** C. This was just a step ahead of a squash as Gable was barely in trouble for a minute before making the comeback for the hot tag. Those two could be something special in the future as Gable is getting quicker every week. Jordan has come out of his shell by bouncing off Gable, which has been the big trick they've needed for over a year now.

Gable and Jordan offer a handshake but the Vaudevillains walk away. Well it fits their name a lot better.

Emma and Dana Brooke are ready for Asuka in London.

We get another song from what seems to be Elias Sampson.

## Liv Morgan vs. Emma

Morgan is formerly known as Marley and Gionna Daddio. Emma doesn't seem impressed and grabs the Dilemma followed by the Emma Sandwich. Morgan comes back with a quick guillotine choke and a dropkick. That's it for the jobber offense as Emma drops her again and gets the win with the Emma Lock at 3:48.

**Rating:** D+. Morgan has some good charisma and the fans like her but she's still in the early stages of her NXT run, meaning these losses don't mean much. This was clearly just a warmup for Emma before she gets ripped into 14 evenly divided pieces by Asuka in London. At least it wasn't a total squash.

Emma is in the ring when Asuka pops up on screen, beating the fire out of

a punching bag. She'll see Emma in London.

Bayley says she's ready for all challengers, including Nia Jax. This brings up Nia, who stares at the title. Bayley says she'll accept anyone who comes at her, so Jax knocks her through a door.

### Tommaso Ciampa vs. Samoa Joe

Ciampa isn't scared as Joe drives him into the corner and works on a wristlock before not selling a chop. Joe stays on the arm until Ciampa tries another chop. That just ticks Joe off so he forearm smashes Ciampa's head half off. They start slapping the taste out of each others' mouths with Joe getting the better of it until Ciampa grabs a rollup and stomps on Joe's arm.

More hard strikes stagger Joe and a guillotine choke has him in even more trouble. Make that a Kimura but Joe drives him into the corner again for the break. The enziguiri knocks Ciampa half cold and a scoop powerslam makes it even worse. Joe Facewashes him in the corner and the release Rock Bottom drops Ciampa again. The fans are behind Joe until the Muscle Buster and Koquina Clutch end Ciampa at 6:37.

**Rating:** B. That might be a bit high but dang these two were beating the tar out of each other. Those were some incredibly hard strikes with Joe absorbing everything Ciampa threw at him and looking like a real killer for the first time with London looming. This has me even more ready for the title match and was a really, really fun surprise. Good stuff.

**Overall Rating:** B+. NXT is getting in six matches an hour. Can you imagine most other wrestling shows pulling that off? This is straight out of the old school WCW shows as they're flying through squash matches to set up the big show with the showdowns you want to see. Awesome show this week and one of the best they've done in a while.

### Results

Baron Corbin b. Tye Dillinger – End of Days

Nia Jax b. Blue Pants – Legdrop

James Storm b. Adam Rose – Last Call

Jason Jordan/Chad Gable b. Vaudevillains – Grand Amplitude to Gotch

Emma b. Liv Morgan – Emma Lock

Samoa Joe b. Tommaso Ciampa – Koquina Clutch

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# Smackdown – July 23, 2015: See? You Can Do It

## Smackdown

Date: July 23, 2015

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso

This is an interesting show as Raw went off the air with a closed story for a change. The big story is of course the announcement of Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar....we're probably at V or VI over the years now. There's no chance either guy is on this show so we should get some new stuff set up for Summerslam instead. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jerry Lawler isn't here tonight, possibly due to his brother passing away this week.

### Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Sheamus has seen Dean's insanity but thinks Dean is just wanting a way out. Well tonight there's no way around the beating that he's going to receive from the next World Champion. Dang man Cena is here? You don't expect that on a Smackdown. Dean thinks Sheamus looks stupid and those are fighting words.

It's a brawl to start with Sheamus getting knocked to the floor where he easily stops a dive with a forearm to the head. Sheamus goes after him again but eats a tornado DDT onto the floor. We take a break and come back with Sheamus breaking up another tornado DDT attempt and starting in on the knee, which was hurt a few weeks back so why not. A powerbomb gets two on Dean and it's time for a half crab.

Dean gets underneath Sheamus for the break and hits the rebound clothesline as the knee is suddenly fine. That stuff gets old fast but you get used to it after awhile. Now the suicide dive hits, followed by the standing elbow drop but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Harper is standing on the announcers' table as well and Dean goes after him, only to walk into a Brogue Kick. Back in and another Brogue Kick gives Sheamus the pin at 11:33.

**Rating:** C. The match was your standard brawl but there's one thing I really liked: this opened the show. Not a promo to set up the main event, not the same long promo that we've heard a dozen times this month, not trying to figure out if we're supposed to hate the Authority or be so happy that a little ray of Stephanie's sunshine chased the blues away again, and not a five minute recap of what we saw last week. It was a wrestling match to open the show and that's a very nice change of pace.

We get a comic book style recap of Stardust vs. Neville from last week.

Neville doesn't think Stardust is a supervillain because Stardust is a

coward. You can't stop what you can't contain and the Altitude Era is upon us. Neville leaves and Stardust pops up on the video screen to laugh.

### Neville vs. Adam Rose

Feeling out process to start with Rose hitting a quick snap suplex and putting on an early chinlock. Adam busts out a middle rope hurricanrana to send Neville outside but his suicide dive is countered with a forearm to the face. Some kicks and a moonsault set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 3:05.

**Rating:** D+. There wasn't much here but it's always good to see Neville getting in the ring. I know a feud with Stardust isn't much but it's nice to see him having a feud at all. This could lead somewhere for him with the superhero idea as it's one of the easiest things in the world for a heel to go after. Rose looked decent there too.

Neville poses when Stardust comes on the screen with a party hat on and a noisemaker in his mouth. He says even the sharpest arrows come crashing down. His hand is touching your hand (Hard Times reference) so be his hero.

Video on Sasha Banks where she talks about being the Boss and debuting on Raw as part of the three way feud.

Here's King Barrett to say he's the most important thing in WWE. He defeated three names in less than 24 hours and then defeated R-Truth again this past Sunday. That win told everyone that you better hit him right between the eyes because he'll take your head off. This was an old school promo with Barrett just coming out and talking about who he is and why you should care about him. I'll take that over another loss or stupid feud any day.

Here's Kevin Owens to talk about people chanting TAP OWENS TAP at him. Yeah he tapped, but Owens gave Cena the fight of his entire career. However, he isn't the one with the motto of NEVER GIVE UP. His motto is more along the lines of "live to fight another day." Owens has no issues with turning on Rusev this Monday because Rusev was too busy trying to

figure out which Lana he wants to get to second base with. Cue Rusev and it's time to fight.

### Rusev vs. Kevin Owens

I'm digging these heel vs. heel matches because they make sense to the story and the heels aren't buddies just because they're heels. Summer is once again dressed as Lana. Rusev goes right after Owens to start and we take a break in about thirty seconds. Back with Owens elbowing him in the face and punching the Russian out of Rusev. Owens avoids a charge in the corner and nails a superkick, followed by the Cannonball for no cover.

Instead it's a Vader Bomb for two as Owens keeps adding new stuff to his arsenal. It's chinlock time before a Codebreaker of all things gets two more on Rusev. Another chinlock slows things down until Rusev fights back with strikes and a spinning belly to back suplex. The spinwheel kick stuns Owens again, all the way to the point that he sticks his chin out for the running superkick. Rusev loads up the Accolade but Owens rolls outside for the countout at 9:39.

**Rating:** C. This worked while it lasted and I like that Owens' character is now someone who doesn't want to fight after talking a big game. However, this goes against the formula that made him a big deal down in NXT. He's talented enough to make it work, but I'd like to see him beat someone up again just because he can.

Cesaro is fired up about getting to face Seth Rollins tonight because it's all about loving this business. He would drive hundreds of miles for a handshake and missed his best friend's wedding but that's what this is all about. It's time to prove that the American dream is alive and well. Owens comes up to make fun of Cesaro, saying that Cesaro took Cena to the limit but Owens beat him. Kevin says Cesaro abandoned his family but Cesaro calls him the master of abandoning because of all the matches he's walked out on. Owens is on his way to catering so Cesaro warns him not to choke like he did against Cena. Good stuff here.

### Naomi/Sasha Banks vs. Bella Twins

Nikki takes Naomi to the mat to start and I think the Bellas are actually

faces here. It's off to Brie, who eats a clothesline from Naomi, allowing for a tag to Sasha. Nikki comes back in for a headscissors with pushups before Brie dropkicks Sasha for two. BRIE MODE is broken up by Tamina because the power of a scream can be devastating. Brie gets pulled outside for some stomping and we take a break.

Back with Naomi stomping a mudhole in Brie before Sasha sends her back into the corner. The double knees get two as this is a very standard formula Divas tag, which you really don't see that often. Naomi puts on a chinlock as Nikki plays cheerleader on the apron. To be fair I like the Bellas as faces more, but could we please get a reason why we're supposed to care about them now, especially when it was supposed to be such a huge moment when Brie tapped out on Sunday?

Back to Naomi for a Codebreaker (with feet instead of knees) for two before slapping on another chinlock. A BRIE MODE chant gets Brie to fight up and she finally dropkicks Naomi to the floor. Nikki comes in for her clotheslines and an Alabama Slam to Naomi. Sasha breaks up a Rack Attack as everything breaks down. Brie and Sasha fight outside, leaving Nikki to Rack Attack Naomi for the pin at 13:14.

**Rating:** C+. Considering this was a Bellas match, I was kind of shocked at how much I liked it. The key thing for me here: this didn't feel like a Divas match but a match that Divas in it. I could see any male wrestlers having this same match and liking it just as much, which is a major change for this division. The Bellas turning again for no apparent reason (again) is annoying but you have to accept it at this point.

The Tough Enough cast talks about why Jake Gyllenhaal is tough.

Long recap of Undertaker vs. Lesnar on Raw.

### Cesaro vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Rollins bails to the floor to start before easily countering a wristlock into a gorilla press. Back up and Seth kicks Cesaro to the floor for a suicide dive as we take a break. As you might expect, we come back to Rollins holding a chinlock but Cesaro powers out and throws some suplexes. A slam into a suplex (cool move) gets two more on Rollins as

the announcers compare Cesaro to Chuck Norris.

Seth comes back again with a low superkick for two but Cesaro changes things up again with a running dropkick for a near fall. Saxton: "Is there anything Cesaro can't do?" Uh, get a pin? The buckle bomb (with a nice throw) staggers Cesaro again but he counters the Pedigree into the Sharpshooter. Rollins is too close to the ropes though so it's off to a Crossface in the middle of the ring. That doesn't work either so it's a VERY high Swiss Death for two more. The Swing is broken up by a poke to the eye though, setting up the Pedigree to give Seth the pin at 13:31.

**Rating:** B. Good match here and I like the idea of a heel doing something as simple as poking his opponent in the eye. It doesn't have to be this big ref bump and interference ending that we always get, especially when there's something simple they can do like a thumb to the eye. Cesaro continues to be awesome and hopefully he goes somewhere instead of just being considered bulletproof when he isn't yet.

Owens comes out and gives Cesaro a Pop Up Powerbomb to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. I liked this more than I've liked a Smackdown in a long time for one reason: this felt like a wrestling heavy show instead of the usual Raw supplement we get most of the time. The Divas got time, the main event was good, and the worst match was barely long enough to rate. It's a good, fun show that let the wrestlers wrestle and advanced some midcard storylines. That's what a show like Smackdown should be if it's not going to be anywhere near Raw's level. Good use of the blue show this week.

## Results

Sheamus b. Dean Ambrose – Brogue Kick

Neville b. Adam Rose – Red Arrow

Rusev b. Kevin Owens via countout

Bella Twins b. Naomi/Sasha Banks – Rack Attack to Naomi

Seth Rollins b. Cesaro – Pedigree

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

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

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## **New Column: From Days Gone By**

I ramble about character development for a few pages.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-days-gone/36486/>

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## **NXT – June 3, 2015: Recharging**

### **NXT**

Date: June 3, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

This is an interesting time for NXT as one of their biggest stories isn't taking place on NXT. Instead, NXT Champion Kevin Owens has been called up

to the main roster and even defeated John Cena clean on pay per view in his debut match. It doesn't help that he's feuding with a bunch of people here in NXT as well. Let's get to it.

The opening video is all about Owens beating Cena at Elimination Chamber.

General Manager William Regal has an announcement tonight.

### Tyler Breeze vs. Adam Rose

Fans: "WE WANT KRUGER!" Rose takes him into the corner to start and nails some loud chops, followed by a headlock takeover: rest hold. Back up and Breeze nails a great dropkick to put Rose on the floor. That goes nowhere as Rose backdrops him to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Rose putting on a sleeper for a good while until Breeze fights out and kicks him in the chest. Breeze, wrestling like a face here, nails some running forearms in the corner but gets caught in a spinebuster, which Rose transitions into a Boston crab for a nice spot. Breeze crawls over to the ropes and comes back with the Beauty Shot for the pin at 12:01.

**Rating:** C+. Breeze is one of those characters who is going to be turned face just due to how well he works in the ring and there isn't much NXT can do to stop it. This was a much better match than I was expecting, especially considering Rose is way past his expiration date at this point.

Solomon Crowe is glad Joe was there last week and promises to be back and better than ever.

Dana Brooke has been at the Arnold Classic and will be back soon.

Eva Marie is brought to the stage for a chat and MY GOODNESS the fans do not want to see her. The YOU CAN'T WRESTLE chants stop her cold but she says she'll wait. Eva was at Takeover to watch the great women's wrestling and that's why she's here now. She wants to compete with the best and they're right here in NXT. I know she's been training more, but she has a huge hill to overcome to get anywhere.

Regal's announcement is that on the big 4<sup>th</sup> of July show with Brock Lesnar in action, Balor will challenge Kevin Owens for the NXT Title in Japan, and it will air live on the WWE Network. Oh man that could be awesome if they air the whole show but it sounds like just the NXT Title match.

### Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss

Carmella goes right at her with three straight takedowns and right hands every time. Bliss manages to drop her face first onto the buckle for two before cranking on a cravate. Back up and Carmella hits some running forearms, only to get caught in a rollup with a hand grabbing the ropes to give Bliss the pin at 3:34.

**Rating:** D+. This is where NXT's logical booking shines. It's clear that they're setting up a six person tag and what better way to set it up than to have the girls getting there for a bit? Bliss has transitioned into this new role perfectly and the character change is so jarring that it works very well.

Rhyno says he's back to go after the top contender in Finn Balor. Tonight he's a Gore away from being one step closer to being NXT Champion.

Video on Sami Zayn's shoulder surgery, which fixed a torn rotator cuff.

### Vaudevillains vs. Jason Jordan/Marcus Louis

I had been wondering what happened to Louis. The crazy Louis starts with Gotch as the fans are very happy to have the Vaudevillains back. It's quickly off to English for a manly knee to the ribs (Fans: "THAT WAS MANLY!") but Jordan comes in for a suplex to take over. We hit the reverse chinlock on English to slow things down. Louis tags himself in, much to Jordan's annoyance, and puts on a chinlock of his own. English fights up and makes the hot tag to Gotch for a quick Whirling Dervish and the pin on Marcus at 5:16.

**Rating:** D+. So the Vaudevillains seem to be faces as well. That's not the worst idea in the world as you can put them against Blake and Murphy when Enzo and Cass are done with them. That's one of the places where NXT

shines: they set something up for when the current feud is done and they can transition right into the new feud. I miss that kind of well done and planned out booking. The match was nothing special and was mostly spent in a chinlock. I'm assuming Jordan will go partner hunting for the next few weeks.

Video on Sasha Banks being all Bossy.

Finn Balor is ready for Rhyno.

### Finn Balor vs. Rhyno

Feeling out process to start until Rhyno just runs Balor over with a shoulder. Rhyno goes up top but gets kicked out to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Rhyno putting on a body scissors to slow Balor down. Rhyno mocks Balor's signature pose before putting on a chinlock.

That goes nowhere as Finn comes back with a middle rope forearm but the reverse lifting DDT is countered into a spinebuster for two. Frustration is setting in for Rhyno and the Pele makes it even worse. The Sling Blade connects but the Coup de Grace misses. The Gore misses as well though and Balor grabs a quick rollup for the surprise pin at 12:10.

**Rating:** C+. I liked this better than I was expecting to with Balor being able to adapt to Rhyno's simple yet effective power style. That's the perk of having someone like Rhyno around: he can work well with anyone and you can easily build him back up by having him squash jobbers, only to lose again to someone like Balor. Nice little match here.

Rhyno Gores Balor on the stage to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show would best be summed up as recharging. You have the Vaudevillains returning and Breeze acting more like a face, along with setting up some feuds for the future. This is something you come to expect from NXT as they hit Takeover, have a week off, and then start getting back on track to the middle of the road feuds. Owens vs. Balor in Tokyo should be awesome and the fans are going to eat it up.

### Results

Tyler Breeze b. Adam Rose – Beauty Shot

Alexa Bliss b. Carmella – Rollup while holding the ropes

Vaudevillains b. Jason Jordan/Marcus Louis – Whirling Dervish to Louis

Finn Balor b. Rhyno – Rollup

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