

Monday Night Raw – May 2, 2016: The New Era Of Greatest Hits

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 2, 2016

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're past Payback, meaning we have less than three weeks before Extreme Rules with a main event of AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns II for the World Title. The big story tonight though is the balance of power as Shane and Stephanie McMahon will be running the show together for the foreseeable future. I'm sure this will be fascinating. Let's get to it.

This week's recap, narrated for a change, talks about last night's main event and the announcement of Shane and Stephanie sharing power.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie, carrying a present, to get things going. Before she can get anywhere though, here's Shane with 100% less presents. The bickering starts early but Stephanie's gift is for Shane. It's....the the picture of Vince holding Shane as a child that was broken up before Wrestlemania.

Before Shane can talk about his ideas for the night, here's Kevin Owens to interrupt things. He has an idea of his own: a rematch for the Intercontinental Title. Owens appeals to Stephanie's business sense and mentions having a contractually obligated rematch. This brings out Cesaro to say that Owens and Zayn cost him the Intercontinental Title last night. Shane makes a #1 contenders match right now.

Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

Miz and Maryse are on commentary. Cesaro immediately starts with the uppercuts across the ring, followed by another big one on the floor. Back in and Cesaro gets two off the high cross body but Owens goes after the

shoulder to take over. The superkick and backsplash get two and it's time to work on the arm a bit more. A quick strike exchange drops Cesaro but he crotches Owens on top.

Kevin cuts him off again with a Stunner over the top rope, followed by a frog splash off the apron as we take a break. Back with Owens hitting the Cannonball but running into the springboard uppercut. They head outside with Owens grabbing the title but Miz takes it away. That earns Miz an uppercut and it's time for the champ to run in for the DQ at 11:30.

Rating: C. The match was fun while it lasted but at the same time there's only so much you can do when you pretty much have a big clock counting down until Miz runs in for the DQ. That kind of stuff gets old quick, especially when this had the potential to be a really fun match between two power guys.

Post match Cesaro gets double teamed until Sami Zayn runs in for the save before holding up the title. This sets up the four way, even though there's no logical reason for Sami to still be involved after losing last night. If they had gone with the logical move of Sami winning last night, you can still bring in Owens because of the required rematch. That's too simple for WWE though so we get more illogical storytelling.

Dean Ambrose is in the back with Stephanie, who volunteers to be the guest on the Ambrose Asylum.

R-Truth and Tyler Breeze are in the back talking about selfie sticks (Truth's has leaves) when Goldust comes in. Goldust insults Breeze a bit and a challenge is issued. Truth doesn't like Goldust insulting his friend so Fandango comes in to be Goldust's partner.

Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows say AJ was close to winning last night which makes AJ want it even more. They imply they'll help in the rematch but Roman Reigns comes in to say he respects AJ but not the other two. The Usos come in and a challenge is made for a six man.

Goldust vs. Tyler Breeze

Fandango and R-Truth are here as the seconds. Truth gives Breeze a

headband to start but Goldust knocks it off. Goldust: "WHY DIDN'T YOU EVER GIVE ME ONE OF THESE???" Truth doesn't notice as he's playing with the stick, which distracts Goldust enough for Tyler to get in a few shots. They start dancing at each other, allowing Breeze to grab a rollup for the pin at 1:49.

Here's New Day to talk about their upcoming title defense against the Vaudevillains, who were awarded the match last night after Enzo's injury. We see a clip of the injury, which seems to be just a concussion. If this wasn't such a serious moment, Woods would be showing us all the nasty things Beyonce sent to him on Twitter last night....but unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen though was Enzo being released from the hospital after all the other tests were negative.

This brings out the Vaudevillains with Aiden singing about how they're going to win the titles. Apparently Enzo was the realest guy in the emergency room....and here are the Dudley Boyz to interfere. They say they didn't see the Vaudevillains win anything last night after the match was ended fast. A fight is about to break out when Big Cass interrupts. He's tired of hearing about the Vaudevillains taking out his family and the brawl is quickly on.

Dudley Boyz/Vaudevillains vs. New Day/Colin Cassady

Joined in progress with Woods working over Gotch and bringing in Kofi for a kick to the chest. Big E. comes in for the splash before it's time for the Unicorn Stampede. Kofi gets in a running dropkick in the corner but Bubba kicks Woods in the face to take over. English comes in for a superkick as the heels start taking turns on Woods. A dropkick finally gets Xavier out of trouble, only to have D-Von drop an elbow on his back to stop the tag. The middle rope elbow misses though and there's the hot tag off to Kofi. Everything breaks down and Kofi gets sent out to the floor in a heap as we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Gotch holding him in place for a D-Von elbow drop. Kofi finally dropkicks the Vaudevillains down and it's off to Cass to clean house. English is sent flying off a fall away slam, followed by a big boot the face. Everything breaks down again with Bubba

suplexing Cass, only to have Kofi springboard in to break up 3D. Cass' East River Crossing puts D-Von away at 14:32.

Rating: B. These guys were actually rolling out there with eight people in a match that made sense. New Day continues to be awesome and should be in for a good match against the Vaudevillains, though I can't imagine they'll actually drop the titles. Enzo coming back will get an eruption and the injury makes them feel like even more of an underdog team, which fits in with them so perfectly.

We look back at the main event which set up Styles' rematch at Extreme Rules.

Now we look at the Montreal Screwjob finish to the Women's Title match. You all know the Montreal Screwjob. I mean, WWE certainly thinks you do because they're certainly not going to explain it because they know that every fan, including those under the age of 18, have gone back and looked at every bit of the company's history ever. We do however get a clip of Charles Robinson as Little Naitch from back in the day to actually explain the screwjob.

Emma vs. Becky Lynch

Apparently they've been arguing on Twitter lately. Becky quickly knocks her to the floor and does her head shaking dance, only to get pulled off the middle rope to change control. A butterfly suplex gets two on Becky and we hit a half nelson of all things. Emma sends her hard into the corner for the Emma Sandwich and a near fall. Becky gets all fired up and forearms her in the corner, followed by an exploder suplex for two. A quick poke to the eye slows Becky down though and a Michinoku Driver puts Becky away at 5:45.

Rating: C+. Would it be the worst idea in the world to let some of these other Four Horsewomen win something now and then? I mean, I know we have to wait on Sasha because of...uh, reasons, but do they also have to have Becky losing most of the time? At least it was someone like Emma getting the win and not one of the lower level women but we need to have Becky get a win here or there. Sasha actually wrestling would be nice too.

Greetings From Puerto Rico.

Here's Dean Ambrose for the Asylum with Stephanie as his guest. Stephanie talks about how happy she is so Dean shows us a shot from Wrestlemania where Reigns speared her. That was the result of Stephanie being overzealous and she does her corporate speech about how awesome WWE is because of loyalty.

Dean goes on a long rant about loyalty and asks how many sacrifices Stephanie has made. I mean, yeah she's made a ton but Shane has made all of the same sacrifices over the years. That must make Stephanie mad because now she and Shane are exactly the same. Stephanie isn't happy with this so she cancels the Asylum and brings out Jericho for the Highlight Reel once again. Dean gets in a brawl with him of course but walks into a Codebreaker. Jericho breaks Mitch over Dean's head in the ultimate act of evil.

Battle Royal

Apollo Crews, Darren Young, Alberto Del Rio, Damien Sandow, Stardust, Titus O'Neil, Zack Ryder, Sheamus, Curtis Axel, Rusev, Dolph Ziggler, Sin Cara, Baron Corbin, Viktor, Bo Dallas,

For the #1 contendership to the US Title and I think I have everyone involved. Kalisto is on commentary and it's Viktor quickly being eliminated. Sandow is sent out a few seconds later and Crews gets rid of Stardust. Darren gets eliminated and Sheamus Brogue Kicks Crews out for a bit of a surprise.

Someone puts Sheamus out off camera but he slides back in with no issue. Ziggler superkicks Corbin over the top for an elimination but Corbin pulls him outside under the ropes and beats the tar out of him. For a nice change of pace, Corbin is smart enough to throw the half dead Ziggler back in so Rusev can get the official elimination as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus eliminating Titus (great use of his comeback) and Del Rio hitting his double stomp on Axel for a quick elimination. Cara tosses Dallas and we're down to Cara, Rusev, Del Rio, Sheamus and Ryder. A

spinning cross body puts Rusev down and a springboard moonsault does the same to Sheamus and Del Rio.

There's an Irish Curse to Ryder but not enough for an elimination. Cara makes the eternally stupid mistake of going to the top, allowing Del Rio to shove him out and get us down to four. We've got the former League of Nations and Ryder, meaning Sheamus thinks they should join forces again. Ryder gets stomped down but hangs onto the top rope, leaving the League to fight each other.

Del Rio gets in a Backstabber on Rusev but walks into a Rough Ryder. Rusev spinwheel kicks Ryder down though and all four are still in it. The jumping superkick and a regular superkick are enough to get rid of Sheamus, followed by another superkick to send Del Rio to the floor. Ryder puts Alberto out and we're down to Ryder vs. Rusev, sending the fans into a short lived frenzy. Rusev charges into some knees in the corner and a missile dropkick puts Rusev down. The Broski Boot actually connects but Rusev no sells it and throws Ryder out for the win at 13:38.

Rating: C. This was actually awesome stuff (for a battle royal) with some great drama near the end, even though I'm sick of seeing the League of Nations guys in these spots. Putting the title back on Rusev would make sense as it was his best time ever in the company, but it really does feel like we're taking a big step back in time if he wins the belt again.

Here are Charlotte and Ric Flair to address the end of last night's title match. Charlotte really doesn't see the controversy in the decision so here's Charles Robinson to explain his actions. Charles says Natalya was screaming to stop it last night and that counts as a submission. Robinson gets a bit confused about whether his admiration for Ric had anything to do with his decision so here's a CHEATER chant for him.

That's enough from Charles so here's Natalya to say this is all about Ric. Well of course it is. I mean, he's RIC FLAIR. Whether he wants to admit it or not, Bret is the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be. Charlotte goes after Natalya but gets sent to the floor, leaving Ric to take off his gear. Natalya slaps him in the face and puts on a Sharpshooter before Charlotte gets her dad out of

there. The Flairs leave so Natalay grabs Ric's Hall of Fame ring and Rolex.

After the announcers shill for WWE, Stephanie makes Charlotte vs. Natalya in a submissions match at Extreme Rules. As a bonus, Ric is banned from ringside. Stephanie's request for a WOO is denied.

AJ Styles/Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows vs. Usos/Roman Reigns

AJ and Reigns get things going with Styles grabbing a headscissors but easily being thrown off. Some kicks to the leg have Reigns in trouble so it's off to Gallows for a battle of uppercuts. Jey comes in for his running forearm in the corner, only to dive into a big boot for two. It's time for the big standoff on the floor after Jey is thrown over the top and we take a break.

Back with Anderson hammering away on Jey before it's off to AJ. The beatdown is on and Styles doesn't seem to like the idea of his buddies breaking up a tag. The distraction lets Jey get in a superkick to set up the tag off to Reigns. House is quickly cleaned with Roman beating everyone away until Anderson kicks him in the face for two.

AJ gets a blind tag but eats a tilt-a-whirl slam for his efforts. There's a Superman punch to Gallows but Jimmy comes in off another blind tag with a high cross body for two on AJ. The Boot of Doom into the flapjack sends Reigns into the barricade, leaving AJ to hit the Phenomenal Forearm to the pin on Jimmy at 11:30.

Rating: B-. Another good match here as they let things break down a bit before the ending. I like the idea of the Usos being the lower level guys who can't keep up with Anderson and Gallows while Reigns is enough to take out any of them but not enough to take out everyone at once. It's a simple story and the feud is working well but I can't imagine it ending with anything other than Reigns standing tall again.

Post match Anderson and Gallows give AJ a chair before holding Reigns. AJ can't do it so the beatdown is on again. The Usos come in and get the chair to knock AJ down (it wasn't clear if they saw him throw it away). AJ gets back up and hits them with the chair, earning himself a Superman

punch. Reigns isn't done yet though and loads up the announcers' table for a powerbomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling was good tonight but it really feels like we're just heading to Payback II with more McMahons walking us through things. That's the difference between Shane and Stephanie: Shane seems like he's telling us what's going to happen and Stephanie has to explain every single thing to you because you're not that bright. The show was still entertaining and Extreme Rules is going to be fun but they really need to get to the point with the McMahon stuff, which means we're likely waiting at least another three months on any major developments.

Results

Cesaro b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Miz interfered

Tyler Breeze b. Goldust – Rollup

New Day/Colin Cassady b. Dudley Boyz/Vaudevillains – East River Crossing to D-Von

Emma b. Becky Lynch – Michinoku Driver

Rusev won a battle royal last eliminating Zack Ryder

AJ Styles/Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows b. Usos/Roman Reigns – Phenomenal Forearm to Jimmy

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Wrestlemania XXXII: Strap Yourselves In. This Is A Long One.

Wrestlemania XXXII

Date: April 3, 2016

Location: AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

Attendance: 101,763

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

America the Beautiful: Fifth Harmony

We've finally arrived at what might be the biggest show of all time. The attendance record is going to be set tonight (it just is) and the card is.....well did I mention that attendance? Yeah the build to this one hasn't been all that great with a double main event of Roman Reigns challenging HHH for the WWE World Title and Undertaker vs. Shane McMahon inside the Cell with Undertaker's future at Wrestlemania vs. Shane controlling Raw on the line in a story that stops making sense as soon as you start thinking about it too much. Let's get to it.

Again I was in the stadium for this so it's my second time seeing the show but first time seeing the produced version.

The stadium looks nothing short of amazing, despite being mostly empty for the pre-show due to a lot of issues with getting people inside.

Pre-Show: US Title: Kalisto vs. Ryback

Kalisto is defending in this basic big guy vs. little guy feud. We get a nice tale of the tape with Ryback having 4.5 shoe sizes and more than double the bench press. The GOLDBERG chants begin at the bell and Kalisto isn't sure how to start. A headlock proves to be a really bad idea as Ryback launches him away and easily sends him outside for a crash.

Kalisto comes back in with something like a top rope bulldog for two, followed by a nice fake out on a dive to set up double knees off the apron. Ryback will have none of that and LAUNCHES Kalisto into the air for a big crash as we take a break. Back with Ryback getting two off something we don't see and a hard back elbow to the jaw gets the same. A running sitout powerslam gets the third straight near fall but Ryback gets a bit too cocky on a very delayed superplex, allowing Kalisto to turn it into a cross body for two.

The champ's hurricanrana driver gets the same and there's the corkscrew cross body for good measure. A hard slam has Kalisto in trouble so he tries to head to the corner, only to be pulled back with the turnbuckle pad coming off. You can see the ending coming from here as Kalisto sends him head first into the exposed buckle, setting up the Salida Del Sol for the pin to retain at 8:53.

Rating: C+. Really good choice for the opener here as they did everything they needed to do to get the crowd (well what little crowd they had) going. It's such a simple idea to have someone smaller beat a big strong guy and they didn't try to over think things out there. The ending might have been a bit of a stretch but at least Ryback keeps a bit of face after the loss. He needs to win something eventually though and I'm really not wild on having the title match on the pre-show.

Pre-Show: Total Divas vs. Bad and Blonde

This would be Brie Bella/Alicia Fox/Paige/Eva Marie/Natalya vs. Lana/Naomi/Summer Rae/Tamina/Emma in a match with no story worth mentioning because these things never have stories of note. Summer elbows Alicia in the face to start before getting two off a DDT. A tag to Emma draws all ten of them in for a huge staredown as we take a break. Back with Eva coming in to some horrible booing to face Emma. A not bad headscissors puts Emma down but Eva slaps Natalya hard on the shoulder instead of tagging Paige.

It's quickly off to Naomi for those stupid dancing kicks but Paige comes in to play Bret to Natalya's Anvil in a Hart Attack. Naomi misses a cross body and crashes into the ropes but still tags Emma back in for a

wheelbarrow suplex. We finally get the tag to Lana, who started this whole thing by insulting Brie Bella. Somehow we wound up with this instead of whatever they were going for there and that's probably best for everyone. Lana wrestling with her hair down and wearing basically a one piece swimsuit isn't bad for anyone either.

Paige gets kicked down and Lana mocks the YES chants before bringing Tamina in. A lot of spot calling results in a broken up Tower of Doom and Paige diving onto the pile for a big crash. There's still no hot tag though as Emma keeps Paige in the corner and stomps away. Paige finally gets away from Naomi and makes the hot tag to Brie as everything breaks down.

We get the parade of finishers (including Eva's Sliced Bread #2 being booed halfway out of Texas) until the BRIE MODE knee is blocked by Naomi's raised boot. The split legged moonsault hits mat (called a knee by Byron), allowing Brie to grab the arm and roll forward into the YES Lock (that looked awesome) for the submission at 11:25.

Rating: D. What were you expecting here? It was a huge mess with a bunch of women who have no idea how to do anything besides spots and barely being able to do those. This probably would have been better as a four person tag or even better as a match between Brie and Lana so there could be an actual story. Lana was fine in the little bit she was in the ring, but you know she's a long term project. This was little more than a way to get them on the card though and that's fine all around.

Post match Nikki Bella comes out in ring gear and a neck brace for the big return celebration because we're supposed to cheer for Nikki and be impressed because of her injury.

Here's Lita to talk about the history of women's wrestling and to unveil the new Women's Title belt which will be awarded to the winner of tonight's triple threat. Also of note: she calls them superstars instead of Divas, which hopefully is a permanent name change. This is called the first title ever, even though the Women's Title existed less than eight years ago. Still though it gets rid of that butterfly thing so it's a step up.

Pre-Show: Usos vs. Dudley Boyz

This is over the Dudleyz not wanting to use tables anymore and trying to protect their legacies as a great team who don't need weapons. The Dudleyz jump the twins to start with D-Von cranking on Jimmy's neck and taking his head off with a clothesline. Bubba comes in to shout about beating up the Usos' dad Rikishi, which Lawler calls a history lesson.

There are the dancing punches but Jimmy superkicks him down, setting up the hot tag to Jimmy. The Dudleyz beat him down too and get in What's Up, only to have a double superkick break up the table grab. The reverse 3D gets two but Jimmy breaks up the 3D with a superkick. Another good looking superkick is enough to put D-Von away at 5:18.

Rating: C-. This was fine but it didn't have anywhere near enough time to mean anything. The Usos vs. the Dudleyz should be a very solid match but you can only get so far on five minutes. That being said, neither team has that much of an upside at this point and I really don't need to see them fight again, especially after this only decent effort.

Post match the Dudleyz get the tables, only to get superkicked again to set up double Superfly Splashes through the tables. The fans are NOT happy with that one.

It's finally time for the regular show with the crowd mostly filled in. That's such an amazing visual as the people just keep going and going.

Pop band Fifth Harmony sings a very nice America the Beautiful.

The opening video shows the Madison Square Garden microphone dropping to signify the start of a legend. Over the years this led to a group of legends such as giants, warriors and the dead rising. That brings us to the question of who becomes the next legend. This switches into a standard video about people rising up tonight to become legends in the usually awesome Wrestlemania style. Apparently this was narrated by Kelsey Grammer.

The camera pans around the stadium and that is just a sea of humanity.

Intercontinental Title: Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn vs. Dolph Ziggler vs.

Miz vs. Zack Ryder vs. Stardust vs. Sin Cara

Owens is defending and this is a ladder match. This started as Owens vs. Zayn but Ziggler and Miz got involved for no worthy reason. Then Owens insulted Stephanie McMahon and you just can't do that so she added the other three because she felt like it, and that of course trumps anything involving logic or storytelling. Stardust has Dusty inspired polka dots on his gear to make this feel special.

Everyone but Owens bails to the floor to start so it's time to pose, only to have Zayn come in with a ladder for the big showdown. Ziggler hits Sami in the back with another ladder to take over before slamming Cara onto the ladder for good measure. The ring is cleared out and it's Miz climbing up but for some reason he doesn't open it all the way, allowing Sami and Dolph to make the save.

Owens comes back in and backdrops Zayn onto the ladder before shouting at him to go back to NXT. Ryder and Ziggler go up but get shoved down into the ropes for the save. Everyone winds up on the floor (I'm barely skipping anything in between these spots but that's the case in most multi-man ladder matches.) and Zayn dives through the ladder for the big crash. Sami is right up with the diving DDT over the bottom rope to take out Owens for a huge reaction.

Cara gets back in and tries to go up, only to have Sami shove the ladder over, only to have Cara land on the top rope and flip dive onto everyone else. Ziggler starts busting out superkicks, including tuning up the band for one on Ryder. Owens is too smart enough for that though and it's a double superkick to put both guys down. Now Stardust pulls out a polka dot ladder for a DUSTY chant and the Terry Funk helicopter spot until Miz breaks it up and hits the Skull Crushing Finale onto said ladder.

Owens will have nothing to do with the goofy ladder but has to block the Helluva Kick. A frog splash onto Zayn onto a bridged ladder have both guys down. Owens is up first though and it's a Pop Up Powerbomb to drop Miz. Ryder sends Kevin into the ladder and hits a big old elbow drop off the ladder onto Miz for a huge crash.

That's not enough to get the belt though as Ziggler runs up the ladder

for a faceplant off the top to put himself and Ryder down. It's even worse than that though as Zigler comes up limping, allowing Owens to powerbomb him off the ladder. Stardust and Owens come back in and it's Stardust being knocked onto a ladder bridged between the apron and the ring.

After kicking Zayn away, Cara dives through Stardust and through the ladder for a spot we've seen way too many times but still works due to the carnage. Owens and Zayn go up top for the slugout on the ladder before falling down, only to have Zayn grab a half and half suplex (half nelson/half tiger) onto the ladder. Miz climbs up but takes forever to pull down the belt, allowing Ryder to shove him off and pull down the title at 15:23.

Rating: B. This was your usually good ladder match but there was a bit too much going on. In other words, there were too many people in the match at the same time and it dragged things down. Ryder winning was a good way to pop the crowd at first but it's pretty clear that this was supposed to be Neville. Even after the injury though, it certainly was nice of WWE to add even more people to this to make sure it was as messy as possible. Then again it's a total spot fest and that's all anyone was expecting it to be. Good choice for an opener at least.

Zack's dad comes in to help celebrate. Cole says that's Ryder's big moment after nearly ten years of futility. That would include a Tag Team Title and the US Title so well done on making your own belts sound worthless.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho. Styles debuted back in January and was immediately cheered by the fans. He then went on to defeat Jericho on Raw, setting up a series of matches between the two. They then formed a tag team but lost in their shot at the Tag Team Titles. Jericho snapped and turned heel on AJ, setting up their fourth match here.

Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles

They lock up around the ropes to start as the fans are split on who to cheer for. AJ nips up into a headscissors and Jericho throws a chair around in frustration. Back in and they slug it out but Jericho avoids

the drop down into the dropkick by holding the ropes. That's fine with AJ as he clotheslines Jericho outside but dives into a dropkick.

Now we get into the meat of the match as Jericho slows things down and stomps away before putting on a chinlock. That's quite heelish of him. A dragon sleeper is as well but AJ pops up and does his striking sequence, capped off by a dropkick. Jericho grabs the Walls but AJ is quickly in the ropes and back up with an elbow to the face. AJ goes up top and fights off a superplex attempt, setting up a huge super gordbuster to put both guys down. Now the Walls go on full but AJ crawls through the legs and grabs the calf Crusher to a fairly strong reaction.

That's escaped as well so AJ tries and failed at both finishers, only to walk into the Codebreaker for a delayed two. Nice job of protecting the finisher there, even though that concept stopped mattering years ago in WWE. A Teshhocker gets two for AJ so he grabs a rollup, only to flip backwards into the Styles Clash for two more (ROAR! THEY TOTALLY KILLED THE STYLES CLASH!!! EVERY TIME SOMEONE KICKS OUT OF A FINISHER IT CAN NEVER BE USED AGAIN!!! ROAR I SAY! Typical response I've seen to that near fall and as usual, wrestling fans need to calm down because it means nothing.).

The Lionsault hits knees so AJ gets in the springboard 450 for two. That means it's time for the Phenomenal Forearm (which is his finisher now, even though people have to keep raving over the Styles Clash, which isn't even all that great of a move) but Jericho counters into the Codebreaker for the pin at 17:10.

Rating: B. As in bamboozled, which I am over that ending. It was a solid wrestling match going into that last bit and then Jericho won. Why in the world would you have Jericho, who is older and nowhere near what he was before, beat a hot act like Styles here? The match was good but this needed to be the finale of the feud with AJ taking the final win but instead Jericho gets the pin. I really do not get this and I haven't seen anyone else who has either.

Some celebrities are here.

Maria Menunos is in the back with Zack Ryder, who says he can retire now

because this is the match of his life. He talks about meeting Razor Ramon when he was a kid and getting to hold Ramon's Intercontinental Title. Tonight they're taking a new picture but this time it's going to be Razor holding HIS title. That's a great line, though I can't imagine Ryder holding the title long.

New Day vs. League of Nations

Non-title and non-handicap due to non-Barrett, despite it being a handicap match on the pre-show. None of that matters though as New Day comes out of a giant box of Booty's dressed as Super Saiyans from Dragon Ball Z. Rusev is now in trunks instead of shorts and the look doesn't work as well. There isn't much of a story here other than New Day insulted the League a month or so ago and they've feuded ever since. No reason has been given for why this isn't a title match and I doubt one is ever coming.

Kofi cross bodies Sheamus down to start as Cole says New Day is like the Freebirds. Just...no Michael. Like....really no. Sheamus easily punches Woods down and it's off to Del Rio as JBL compares the League to the Horsemen. EVEN MORE NO JBL! Woods gets in a discus forearm to put Alberto down but the running enziguri allows for the tag off to Sheamus.

That means it's time for the forearms to the chest to the beat of NEW DAY ROCKS. Well to be fair everything else is done to that beat anymore. Woods finally sends Del Rio out to the floor but Sheamus is smart enough to break up the tag attempt. The other partners get in a brawl so Xavier DDTs Sheamus and makes the hot tag to Kofi.

Everything breaks down with Kingston cleaning house, only to have Rusev kick him in the head to break it up. Big E. suplexes Rusev over the apron so E. can spear all three members through the apron for a huge crash. Rusev laying on his back with his eyes open takes this up a step. A top rope double stomp gets two on Sheamus as Del Rio kicks away at Kofi. The double stomp drives Kingston into the floor (and it looks stupid outside too), leaving Barrett to Bull Hammer Woods into the Brogue Kick for the pin at 10:03.

Rating: C-. This is the point where Wrestlemania goes flying off the

cliff, leaving us with the hope that it can hang on by its fingertips. New Day is quite possibly the most popular act in wrestling but for some reason they're jobbing to the heatless wonders. Having AJ lose was one thing but for the life of me I have no idea what they were thinking here. New Day gets the big entrance and then they just lose? That's the best they've got? The match was acceptable enough but the booking just does not make sense.

Post match Barrett says no three men can beat then so here are Shawn Michaels, Mick Foley and Steve Austin (Who just doesn't fit here. Foley and Michaels are big names but they're nowhere near Austin in any regard. A third legend would have worked better, though I'm not sure who you would bring in here.) to easily clean house. New Day comes in post beatdown and tries to get the three of them to dance. Michaels is with it of course and Foley has a Dude Love flashback, leaving us with Austin. This goes as badly as you would expect until he dances just a bit, only to Stun Woods a few seconds later. Much beer is consumed.

This was called a burial of the League and I really don't know where to start with explaining why this is absurd. To begin with, it's the League of Nations. How far do they have to be put down to bury them? Second, those are three of the biggest names of all time coming in fresh to beat up a team that just had a match. This was a one off moment to give the fans something to cheer for and it's the highest profile thing the League has ever done. Stop overthinking this stuff every now and then and just enjoy a fun moment.

Ad for upcoming Network shows.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Dean Ambrose which is the latest in a series of challengers trying to fight Brock without much of a continuing story. In this case, Lesnar was involved in the triple threat at Fastlane where Reigns pinned Ambrose, setting up this match here so Dean can prove that Brock can't hurt him. It's also a street fight to give Dean a realistic (work with me here) chance.

Brock Lesnar vs. Dean Ambrose

Heyman, seemingly taken aback by the size of the crowd, handles Brock's

introduction for a nice touch. Brock drives him into the corner to start as is his traditional custom. We get the first suplex, which puts a big 1 on the huge video screens above the ring, which would continue counting throughout the match. We're already at #3 and it's all Brock so far. Dean grabs a kendo stick for some shots but Brock knees him away and hits two more Germans.

The fans are split on who to cheer for as Lesnar picks up the stick (JBL: "This is something you would see in Kilimanjaro." Sure JBL. Sure.) before throwing it away. There's another suplex before Brock stomps him down even more. Somehow this turns into a discussion of ice cubes in Puerto Rico because JBL and Byron can't stop having their stupid arguments.

Brock stands on the stick so Dean can't pick it up, followed by suplex number eight. Some forearms just tick Brock off even more, setting up number nine. Now Brock offers Dean a chance to come get the stick but Brock stands on it again, allowing Dean to hit him low for a hope spot. It never ceases to amuse me that a low blow is the only thing that can really hurt Brock.

Dean finds the chainsaw from Terry Funk which of course doesn't work because this is wrestling and not a slasher movie. Suplex number ten sends Dean flying on the floor, followed by a belly to belly superplex for number eleven. Dean finally gets in a fire extinguisher blast and some weak chair shots, including a dropkick to drive the chair into Lesnar.

The chair elbow drop gets two but Dean opts to throw in a bunch of chairs instead of, you know, hitting Brock with the one he has. The stupid delay allows Brock to suplex Dean over the chairs but the F5 is countered into a DDT (not) onto the chairs for two. Now it's time for the baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire but the swing misses (of course), allowing Brock to F5 him onto the chairs for the pin at 13:06.

Rating: D+. The more I think about this match the less I like it. This was just a step above a squash as Lesnar never felt like he was in any danger whatsoever and made Dean look like a very second class talent by comparison. I'm really not sure what the point of these Brock matches are

supposed to be these days as he's just a monster with no purpose other than coming in for the occasional squash. They don't lead anywhere and are just standalone matches so why is this supposed to be interesting? At least make Brock sweat or something because there was never any drama here.

Flair and Zack Ryder have a WOO off but it turns out to be a Snickers commercial where Ryder takes a bite and turns into Charlotte. So wait: Charlotte is the Intercontinental Champion?

Hall of Fame recap.

We get the Hall of Fame class presentation with Godfather (limited reaction but positive), Stan Hansen (about the same), Big Boss Man (better reaction), Jacqueline (surprisingly decent cheering), Joan Lunden (nothing of note), the Freebirds (roar), Snoop Dogg (reaction was there) and of course Sting with the full entrance and a roar. That's a solid class but Godfather looks so out of place.

We see Lita debuting the Women's Title earlier tonight.

The recap video for the Women's Title match is rather cool as it has a theme of searching for things on the WWE Network, showing the history of the women's division back in the day, which brought us here to the Divas Revolution. You have Charlotte defending against her former Four Horsewomen partners Becky Lynch, who Charlotte has never defeated and Sasha Banks, who no one has ever beaten. There's a chance that this could steal the show if they let it be an NXT style match.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch

Charlotte, in a robe made from the robe Ric wore in his retirement match, has her dad with her. Sasha, the overwhelming crowd favorite is in Eddie Guerrero style gear here and is introduced by her cousin Snoop Dogg with a custom rap. Charlotte gets chopped down to start but the challengers start trading near falls instead of following up. A nice pinfall reversal sequence ensues until Becky is sent outside, leaving the fans to cheer for Sasha as she stares Charlotte down. An Eddie style armdrag out of the corner sets up the dance but Becky is back in. They botch what was

supposed to be a Sasha sunset flip to make Becky suplex Charlotte (hard spot to be fair) so the champ goes outside for a bit. That goes nowhere so Charlotte takes Sasha's place, only to eat a reverse DDT for two. Charlotte rams Becky's head into the mat a few times before going in on the knee.

Sasha comes back in but can't get the double knees in the corner. Instead it's Becky slapping an armbar on Charlotte until Sasha makes the save, only to have Charlotte send her outside and slap the Figure Eight on Becky. This brings Sasha back in with a frog splash for the save and a nice ovation.

Becky comes back in to suplex Sasha but gets kneed in the chest, only to have her send Sasha through the ropes for a flip dive (Which seemed to be a botch as it looked like her foot caught the top rope.) to take out Charlotte. Becky dives onto Ric for no good reason but the fans lose their minds at the old man getting dropped.

Charlotte is up first and moonsaults down onto both challengers to really get the crowd into it. The announcers are really trying to push this as the dawning of a new era and while I don't know if I'd go that far, it's definitely awesome so far. Back in and a double Natural Selection gets two each for Charlotte but Sasha winds up on her shoulders, followed by a missile dropkick from Becky.

The Disarm-Her has Charlotte in trouble but Sasha comes over with the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte put Sasha in the Figure Four (not Eight). That's turned over as well but Charlotte reverses the reversal into the Figure Eight. Of course that's broken up by Becky and all three are down. Charlotte chops both of them from their knees so they pound her down, only to have Becky and Sasha punch each other in the face.

A wicked spear cuts Sasha in half though and Charlotte goes up. That quickly backfires as well though as Sasha gets up, allowing Becky to tie her in the Tree of Woe. A superplex sends Charlotte flying but Sasha gets Becky (and her BADLY bruised eye) in the Bank Statement. Charlotte is right back in for the save though and the Figure Eight makes Becky tap at 16:03 while Flair holds Sasha back.

Rating: B+. They were rocking here and a blown spot or two less would have made this a classic. Above all else this felt like an NXT women's match instead of a main roster Divas match, which is exactly what the point of this was supposed to be. Hopefully this becomes the focal point of the division instead of all the lame action you get more often than not.

The big criticism here is simple though: it should have been Sasha. If there has ever been a moment perfectly set up for a title change, it was right here. Sasha had the custom entrance, the special tights and the crowd entirely behind her....and it's Flair interfering to keep the title on Charlotte, just like it always is. I don't get this mentality of setting something up for down the road when you're at Wrestlemania. It didn't make sense when Lawler lost to Cole and it doesn't make sense here. Great match though.

Charlotte gets a ton of pyro, including a series of fireworks outside the stadium. That really did make it feel like a bigger moment, just like it should be.

The Cell is lowered.

We recap Shane vs. Undertaker and I still get lost in this whole thing. So Shane apparently had dirt on Vince and kept holding it over his head so Shane tried to get control of Raw. Vince agreed to put Raw up in exchange for whatever proof Shane had of what Vince did (the specifics of which have still not been explained and likely never will be). Shane has to fight the Undertaker inside the Cell tonight and unfortunately no one gives Shane much of a chance due to his age, time away from the ring, and HIS OPPONENT IS THE UNDERTAKER. Oh and Undertaker is done at Wrestlemania if he loses just in case you thought Shane could win.

This story has been a mess from the start and it's not really clear who you're supposed to cheer for. Do you go for Shane who is up against Vince and the evil Authority (after saying how much Raw has sucked in recent years) or against Undertaker who is the legend fighting for Vince because.....well it's not really clear but in theory it's because Vince is Vince. The idea is that Shane is in WAY over his head, which he certainly

is, making this whole thing a mess. To be fair though there's a good chance that Shane was supposed to be John Cena before the injury took him off the card. Unfortunately, this is the best thing we can get.

I know Shane being back has given a lot of fans a bunch of nostalgia but that doesn't mean he's capable of having a long match with anyone, let alone an old Undertaker. This has the potential to be a bunch of fun spots but having it be an actual quality match is almost completely out of the question.

Shane McMahon vs. Undertaker

Inside the Cell of course. Of course the entrances take forever with Shane's going long as well due to having his children (Vince's grandchildren) dance out with him as Shane dollars fall from the ceiling. As usual, this creates an issue as the bills are everywhere, including sticking to the side of the Cell. Shane throws a kick to start for no effect before they start jabbing at the air in front of each other.

They head outside with Undertaker in control and "methodically taking his time" according to Cole because he doesn't get that they mean the same thing. Back in and a single right hand puts Shane down but he back elbows Undertaker in the jaw to block a big boot. Cole follows up by saying this is a cat and mouse game, making sure to point out that Undertaker is indeed the cat.

Undertaker messes with some steps but gets caught with kicks as he comes back in, earning Shane a whip into the cage wall. The apron legdrop sets up the Last Ride for two and I'm done with this match five and a half minutes in. That move can give Undertaker World Titles and major wins but it can't beat Shane McMahon when Undertaker has barely been touched? I just can't buy that no matter how much of an athlete Shane is.

Undertaker brings the steps in but gets caught in a long triangle choke, which would be laughed off and broken in ten seconds from any other opponent but since it's Shane it's hard to counter for some reason. Undertaker gets Shane on his back for a cover and the hold is broken, allowing Undertaker to chokeslam him onto the steps for another two.

Oh come on now. Neither of those moves are enough to put Shane away? That's what I'm supposed to buy? Based on those moves, this match shouldn't have made it ten minutes but they seem to just be starting up. Undertaker misses an elbow and hits the steps so Shane says bring it on. That's actually enough to sucker Undertaker in for a DDT onto the steps for two and the actual wrestler is WAY more out of it than he should be after one or maybe two big moves in ten minutes.

Undertaker sits up so Shane punches him in the face, earning himself a Hell's Gate. Shane somehow escapes that (as in the move that put HHH away at a Wrestlemania) for a bad Sharpshooter, with the referee telling him to take his time. Thankfully Undertaker powers out pretty easily but he can't handle Shane hitting him in the face a few times. Undertaker can take punches from BROCK LESNAR but Shane takes a few weeks of MMA training and he can punch Undertaker down?

Shane hits Coast to Coast and it's only good for two because one foot driving a trashcan into Undertaker's chest (more like stomach as the can didn't seem to make any actual contact) actually isn't enough to put him away. Shocking I know but we keep going. Shane gets up and finds boltcutters under the ring to break open part of the cage wall. Undertaker is quickly to his feet though and drives Shane through the wall and up against the German announcers' table, which really isn't a huge impact as the wall only goes a few feet before being stopped.

It's time to load up the announcers' table and Undertaker calls for the Tombstone, only to have Shane counter into a sleeper. Not a special MMA choke, but a run of the mill sleeper. Instead of like, countering by easily flipping Shane over, Undertaker just stands there for a bit before driving both of them through the table for a good looking crash.

Shane comes up with a toolbox to knock Undertaker silly though....and Shane looks at the top of the Cell. A monitor shot to the head keeps Undertaker down and it's time to go up. Shane takes forever to finally dive off, driving himself through the table and right onto the visible crash pad.

I was genuinely scared when he was up there and seeing the pad helps a

good bit as that thing is HUGE. I get that they had to have it but couldn't they find a better way to hide it? After a lot of sitting around so Shane can be checked out, Shane says bring it on. Back in and Shane pulls himself onto the steps where Undertaker tells him to bring it. The Tombstone finally puts Shane away at 30:05.

Rating: D. Nope. You can take the nostalgia, you can take Shane fighting for his legacy (whatever that means this year) and you can pretend that Shane can get through this with pure heart and it doesn't matter. This flat out did not work for me and it didn't work for several reasons.

First and foremost, I do not buy that Shane McMahon is a threat to the Undertaker, nor do I buy that he could kick out of a Last Ride and chokeslam onto the steps before getting out of Hell's Gate. They lost me as soon as that happened because, as has been established, Shane isn't a wrestler and therefore shouldn't be able to survive that kind of stuff. I know you can stretch a lot of the time but this was too much for me to believe.

Second, this was WAY too long at over half an hour. This went longer than Shawn vs. Undertaker inside the Cell and was the fifth longest Cell match in history. The elbow was cool (terrifying but cool) but that's not enough to warrant this match going longer than Undertaker vs. Mankind or HHH vs. Cactus Jack. This should have been cut in half and had the time given to other stuff or maybe cut off so the show isn't pushing five hours.

Third, it was barely a match. This was a bunch of stretches of Undertaker beats on Shane then misses a big move so Shane can get in some garbage stuff. That's entertaining for a little while but then it gets to be the same stuff over and over. I know Shane isn't a wrestler, but that's the problem: you need someone more capable to have a match that lasts half an hour.

Finally, there was barely any reason to have this in the Cell other than "it's a Cell match." Other than the big spot at the end, the cage was barely used and there was next to no reason for these two to hate each other. Vince decided we were having this match and they tried to work in

some hated or anger later but it never clicked. This easily could have been no holds barred or something and just had Shane dive off the stage or something but instead we had the Cell, which took even more time to get ready and hype up.

Overall it's certainly not the worst match I've ever seen for the gimmick and I was entertained at times but it was just too long with too many leaps in realism. This is a match where Shane should have brought people in to help him and maybe set something up for Undertaker later.

Instead it was like when Vince and Shane fought DX with no help: no one believes it because the wrestler is just too good for the businessman who wrestles on occasion. This could have worked at about fifteen minutes but it was dragging at twelve and only came close to picking up near the end. I wasn't a fan here and it was worse on a second viewing.

Shane is wheeled out on a stretcher to eat up even more time. He throws a thumbs up and pounds his chest for the crowd.

Here's the pre-show panel while the ring is cleaned up.

Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Fandango, Damien Sandow, Shaquille O'Neal, Big Show, Viktor, Diamond Dallas Page, Konnor, Tatanka, Jack Swagger, R-Truth, Goldust, Baron Corbin, Curtis Axel, Adam Rose, Heath Slater, Tyler Breeze, Mark Henry, Bo Dallas, Darren Young, Kane

Page was a cool surprise with the music getting a strong pop. Put the guy in the Hall of Fame already. Tatanka was at Axxess earlier in the day but I have no idea why he's in this. O'Neal was a surprise, even though his TapOut graphic flashed during Big Show's entrance. Show and Shaq have the staredown but Kane interrupts it, only to have everyone get knocked down to the floor so we can have the real showdown.

Fandango tries to dance but gets tossed by the giants. Shaq eliminates Sandow as well before it's time for the big choke off, only to have everyone come in and eliminate Shaq and Show. The match turns into a regular battle royal now, minus all of the interest because....well look

at the lineup. Page Diamond Cuts Viktor for an easy elimination but Konor actually gets rid of the yoga guy.

Truth dumps Konor and it's time for the Tatanka warpath. That lasts as long as you would expect it to before Corbin dumps Tatanka. Kane gets rid of Swagger and it's time for the Social Outcasts to clean house, including eliminating Truth. Goldust follows Truth to the floor and it's time for the BO TRAIN!

Kane quickly derailed it (duh) and Corbin cuts off the other exit. Axel and Rose are quickly out but Kane chokeslams Corbin. Henry gets back in and easily throws out Slater. Breeze follows them as the ring is suddenly mostly empty. Kane and Young (now there's a pair) eliminates Henry. Darren celebrates and gets dumped at the same time as Dallas, only to have Corbin throw Kane out for the BIG surprise win at 9:41.

Rating: D. The match sucked but Corbin winning was the perfect call. It instantly gives him a path to running up the main roster and that's all this was supposed to be. Kane being the last man out is fine but I'm really annoyed that the battle royal has taken such a fall in the last two years. It's now just another battle royal with lower card and midcard goons, but at least two of the first three winners have been people in need of a push.

Wrestlemania XXXIII will be in Orlando.

Here are the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders for a completely unnecessary (yet very visually appealing) dance number. Yeah it's just an excuse to have good looking women in glorified swimsuits but here's the Rock to spice things up. Oh wait he can't walk through the cheerleader tunnel yet because.....he's got a flamethrower. He plays with it a bit before lighting up a big ROCK sign, which is put out a few moments later.

Rock FINALLY comes down to the ring, making sure to show off the bicep to one of the cheerleaders along the way. A mere SEVEN AND A HALF MINUTES after the cheerleaders came out, Rock says his first word. Rock talks about seeing smiling faces on all four sides of the stadium, which means there are going to be a lot of Wrestlemania babies in nine months. He talks about how awesome it is to be here with the millions (which he

keeps saying) before FINALLY getting to the point: announcing the new Wrestlemania attendance record. Rock says it's about to get good....and we've got Wyatts.

Seeing the fireflies in the stadium really was one of the coolest things I got to see all night and was definitely worth seeing in person. Bray introduces himself and his brothers before saying he chose Rock. See, Rock represents success, greatness and a lie. This moment doesn't belong to the Rock or to the people but to Bray Wyatt himself. Rock looks a bit nervous but immediately starts mocking Bray for saying he would eviscerate Rock right now. "You come out here and talk like you've been hitting the bong for about eight days straight jack."

Rowan's parents are clearly related and Strowman looks like he's been breast fed since he was 26 years old. As for Bray though, Rock has had his eye on him since Bray got to the WWE. Bray has the ability and the charisma (nice applause for that) and when his music hit, 100,000 people put their phones in the air. Then Bray said he wanted to eviscerate the Rock but that's knocking on a door that he doesn't want answered. Bray can say he's the eater of worlds but Rock thinks he's just the eater of Hot Pockets.

Rock is wrong though because Bray is here to kick a door down because he has no idea who he's fooling with right now. There goes the shirt but Rock doesn't think we're going to have a Wrestlemania fight. No, we're going to have a Wrestlemania MATCH. We've got a referee out here and there go the tear away pants. This is actually happening and the fans are WAY into it.

The Rock vs. Erick Rowan

Bell, Rock Bottom, six seconds. Well it was indeed a match and a Wrestlemania record.

The Wyatts surround the ring....and here's John Cena for the save. Rowan and Strowman take finishers and it's a spinebuster into the Rock Bottom for Bray. Rock grabs a mic, says welcome back to Cena, and wraps it up after twenty eight minutes, or longer than anything all night but the Cell.

Oh and no this wasn't a burial of the Wyatts. This was the Wyatts interacting with one of the biggest stars of all time and having him beat their lackey whose entire job is to take the fall in losses. The segment is going to set up the Wyatts turning face and maybe going somewhere for a change. Also it was Rock praising Bray, which of course buries him like it buried Rusev back in the day, before Rusev won the US Title and then beat John Cena on pay per view. You know, after crawling out of the grave that Rock put him in and all that. This was fine for the Wyatts and not a burial. Well other than being WAY too long of course.

Long recap of Roman Reigns vs. HHH, which is basically HHH wanting to hold Reigns down because Reigns didn't want to join the Authority. This turned into a really watered down story with HHH wanting to prove that he still had it with the feud dying more and more every week. Reigns has been more aggressive lately which has made things better, but this is still just a step above a disaster coming in.

We see a bunch of men with white heads and metal plates over their faces. As in thousands of them, all standing in a huge group. Stephanie is shown in the HHH skull mask standing in front of a throne looking like a witch. She wants us to rise in their presence because we all exist to serve them. They are the leaders and the power because they own all of us. After tonight, all hope will be gone because only HHH can stand in the coliseum of the immortals. Here's a quick translation: "WE'RE HEELS! BOO US AND NOT REIGNS!"

WWE World Title: Roman Reigns vs. HHH

HHH comes to the ring flanked by an army of the white headed guys (all from NXT in theory), all carrying WWE Titles. Reigns is loudly booed but it's not quite as bad as I was expecting. HHH grabs a headlock to start and slaps Reigns in the back of the head. Remember that they hate each other and keep wanting to hurt the other as much as possible.

Reigns gets sent over the top and out to the floor before HHH starts in on his arm. There's a right hand to send HHH into the corner and Reigns throws in a crotch chop. That earns HHH a whip across the ring but he avoids a charge and hits Reigns in the back of the head. Some pretty loud

spot calling sets up a knee to the back of the head, followed by a stiff punch to Roman's face.

Reigns comes back with the running clothesline and apron boot, only to have Stephanie offer a distraction so HHH can get in a low blow. I guess it's not enough that she takes everyone's balls but now she's helping get her husband some balls too. A slugout goes to Reigns but a spinebuster gives HHH two. They head outside with Reigns being rammed face first into the table and then being thrown over it for good measure.

You can hear the fans groaning at the slow pace, especially over six hours into the evening. Back in and a middle rope knee gets two for the champ but he tries again and gets punched out of the air. A Samoan drop gets two and has Stephanie panicking but HHH avoids the Superman punch by rolling to the outside. This is dragging BADLY here as HHH still can't work an epic style match to save his life.

Reigns sends him into the steps and followed with a huge spear through the barricade. Good thing the security guards had already cleared out that part of the crowd. Reigns' left arm is hanging as they get back inside, only to have the Superman punch countered into an armbar because this hasn't gone long enough yet.

Reigns rolls out of another armbar and lifts HHH up into the sitout powerbomb for two as this just keeps going. HHH is right back with the cross armbreaker but Reigns counters exactly the same way. The spear is blocked and HHH tries a Pedigree, which is quickly countered with a backdrop over the top. Back in and the spear gets two as Stephanie pulls the referee out.

That means another spear but Stephanie takes it instead....and suddenly Reigns is as popular as free beer in a frat house. I mean the place is suddenly WAY into him all for finally giving Stephanie what she had coming to her. HHH is livid and gets two off a Pedigree. The Superman punch connects but the spear eats knee. Stephanie hands him the sledgehammer but it's another Superman punch and the spear for the title at 27:11.

Rating: D. HHH needs to stop trying to go big because he just can't pull

it off. I don't know how else to put it but he just can't do it. This was yet another match that didn't fit the story in the slightest as it was more like HHH was trying to outsmart Reigns instead of beating on each other like two men out for blood. It was a boring match and a really weak way to wrap up this show. The spear to Stephanie was PERFECT though and something long overdue. I don't need her to get beaten up every single week or anything but taking a bump every now and then isn't going to kill her or her all important heat.

Reigns celebrates a lot.

A five minute highlight package ends the show.

Overall Rating: C-. We'll get to the elephant in the stadium later and start off by saying there's a lot of good stuff on here. The wrestling is strong almost throughout save for the double main event with the women's match and the ladder match standing out as very entertaining stuff. If the two big matches hadn't been so horrible, this show would shoot up the charts.

Then there's the booking. Oh yes then there's the booking. From Ryder (who was clearly supposed to be Neville) winning the title after winning two matches on Raw in a year to AJ and New Day losing to Dean practically getting squashed to Sasha not winning, it was a big night for the heels with very little to cheer for. Just a bad night of decision making which seemed to be nothing more than a way to get on the fans' nerves.

However, that leaves us with the big problem: counting the pre-show, this was just under seven hours long, or TRIPLE what Takeover: Dallas was. I get that Wrestlemania is bigger than anything all year but they went WAY too far this year. Looking back at the show, the Cell could have been cut in half, Rock's promo could have lost five to ten minutes and the main event could have been ten minutes shorter. That's not much but it gets you down over half an hour, which is getting closer to manageable.

That's where the show loses it for me and for most people. If you can get this down to under six hours (counting the pre-show, which could have been chopped down too), you have a much better show. If you can fix the booking issues (which could have been mostly solved by having AJ and New

Day win), this show is instantly higher up on the list of great shows.

Overall, Wrestlemania was really starting to feel like a chore near the end. You shouldn't be sitting there thinking "we've got this and this left to get through and then we can leave". At a show like this, or really any show actually, you should be excitedly waiting for the main event. However, it really doesn't matter what that match is when it's six hours into a show. It's just too long and it really hurt things.

There's a lot of good on this show and the surprises really helped it out, but in any wrestling show you can reach a point where the decisions being made outweigh anything that can go on in the ring. So many things at the show held back the good stuff and there wasn't much of a way around that, which is why this show fell as far as it did. It's an entertaining show, but it really needs a good shaking while someone pulls back on the booker's reins.

Results

Zack Ryder b. Kevin Owens, Miz, Dolph Ziggler, Sami Zayn, Stardust and Sin Cara – Ryder pulled down the title

Chris Jericho b. AJ Styles – Codebreaker

League of Nations b. New Day – Brogue Kick to Woods

Brock Lesnar b. Dean Ambrose – F5 onto a pile of chairs

Charlotte b. Becky Lynch and Sasha Banks – Figure Eight to Lynch

Undertaker b. Shane McMahon – Tombstone

Baron Corbin won the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal last eliminating Kane

The Rock b. Erick Rowan – Rock Bottom

Roman Reigns b. HHH – Spear

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Wrestlemania XXXII Preview: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Pick a Horsewoman.

Now this one could go multiple ways, and by that I mean Charlotte or Sasha walking out with the title. Becky is my current favorite Diva (hopefully this is the last night that term is used) but there's no reason for her to win the title here. Charlotte and Sasha are flat out better than Becky and I really can't imagine anything her getting the belt.

That brings us to the question of who wins and likely feuds with Bayley as she makes her main roster debut this coming Monday. If WWE is smart they'll have the Horsewomen in the ring together on Raw and go from there, but I think I'll go with Sasha getting the belt. It's going to be a big reaction and an awesome moment, but more importantly it needs to be a great match.

The Divas Revolution has stumbled all over the place and a big reason for it is due to the way the matches have been booked. If WWE wants this to go somewhere they need to have it be an NXT style match instead of a WWE

style match. In other words, DON'T HAVE THEM SPEND HALF THE MATCH IN A CHINLOCK. We know these three can go as hard as you want them to so let them show off their talents and pop the crowd instead of sending them off to the concession stands. This could be something special but more than that it could be something important.

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Smackdown – March 24, 2016: Smackdown And Such

Smackdown

Date: March 24, 2016

Location: TD Banknorth Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

Brock is here for a rare Smackdown appearance so you know we're getting closer and closer to Wrestlemania. There are two shows left before the biggest show of the year and things are ranging from hot to lukewarm at best so it should be interesting to see which one we get here tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Non-title and Becky Lynch is on commentary. We're not quite ready to go though as Charlotte promises to lead the WOO Revolution over Sasha and Becky in front of a record setting crowd in Dallas. Simple speech but rather efficient. Like any good heel champion, Charlotte is on the floor before anything can happen to her. Back in and Sasha flips her over for two before slapping the champ in the face.

Charlotte comes back with a kick to the face and a neckbreaker, giving us a good old fashioned WOO. We hit the chinlock before a big chop puts Banks down again. A Thesz press gets two on the champ but the double knees in the corner miss. They head outside for a minute and it's Sasha being whipped into Becky. Charlotte takes her back inside for the Figure Eight, only to be small packaged to give Sasha the surprise pin at 4:56.

Rating: C. Not a great match as they didn't have time but hopefully the intensity shown here is a good indication of what we're going to be seeing in Dallas. They're doing a good job of setting this up as a match where anyone can win, even though I can't imagine Becky having much of a chance. Good TV match here though and that's how you build to the big stuff.

Post match Becky gets in the ring for a Bex Plex to both of them, followed by Sasha giving Charlotte a Backstabber.

Here's New Day for their weekly chat. We're just ten days away from Wrestlemania XXXII and they'll be having a match against the League of Nations. The League is so boring that they're like the going to the DMV of WWE. If they were a Star Wars character, they would be the Jar Jar Binks of WWE. Or if they were another sports star they would be the Michael Jordan of baseball. As usual, this was all about how strong New Day sells the material instead of whatever they're actually saying.

Kofi Kingston vs. Sheamus

No Del Rio for some reason. Sheamus isn't playing around here and throws

Kofi into the corner for an early stomping. It's not quite the Unicorn Stampede but Sheamus is hardly trained for such combat. Kofi gets back up for some stomping of his own to send Sheamus to the floor. A big standoff is teased but the power of Francesca II calms things down. Kofi gets tripped off the apron though and we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Rusev shouting in some insults. We hit the chinlock with Sheamus clearly calling some spots, one of which seems to be missing a middle rope knee drop. Things get even worse for Sheamus as he misses a charge into the post to start Kofi's comeback. There's the Boom Drop and Kofi follows with a flip dive over the top to take out Sheamus again. Back in and Sheamus grabs a suplex slam for two before going for a turnbuckle pad. Rusev offers a distraction so New Day chases him off, only to have Barrett's distraction set up the Brogue Kick for the pin on Kofi at 10:28.

Rating: C-. Kofi is getting better and better every week, to the point where I could easily see him going up to the main event after the New Day run is over. You have to give the League something before they get to the pay per view though and this was as fine as anything else, especially with them playing up the numbers advantage for the League.

Usos vs. Ascension

Viktor runs Jey over to start and it's off to Konnor for a chinlock. That goes as far as a first minute chinlock is going to go as Jey fights up and sends Konnor into the corner. Everything breaks down and a double superkick puts Viktor away at 1:37.

Post match the Usos put Viktor through a table.

The Dudley Boyz don't think much of the Usos as they're only two time Tag Team Champions. They've beaten up Rikishi and they could beat up the Wild Samoans, but here's Roman Reigns to interrupt. Reigns doesn't like the way Bubba is disrespecting his family so let's have a fight tonight.

Long video on Shane vs. Undertaker, the same one from Raw.

Dolph Ziggler/Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens/The Miz

Sami and Miz get things going as we have to hear about the other three guys being added to the Intercontinental Title match for the sake of making it way more of a mess than it needs to be. Sami works on the arm to start (there's a safe idea) before it's off to Ziggler for a rollup. Owens: "WE GET IT! YOU WENT TO COLLEGE!" Dolph's headlock slows things down but Miz puts a knee into his ribs to take over.

Owens comes in and eats a dropkick, only to run away from Zayn. He teases leaving again but this time Miz will have nothing to do with that and grabs Kevin's arm, allowing Zayn to get in a dive to take them out. Some elbows to the head have Owens in trouble and that's about it for this dream match. I would say save it for Wrestlemania but apparently we wanted a seven way ladder match including a guy who has won one match in nearly two years. Ziggler comes in and gets stomped in the corner before a catapult puts him on the floor.

We take a break and come back with Ziggler blocking the backplash with the only counter that people use for that move. The hot tag brings in Sami for his running clotheslines and a high cross body to Miz. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two as everything breaks down. Owens breaks up the Helluva Kick and a victory roll gets two on Miz. Both guys are down but now it's time for Owens to walk out, only to have Sin Cara, Zack Ryder and Stardust stop him. Back in and Miz gives Owens a Skull Crushing Finale, setting up a superkick and Helluva Kick for the pin on Miz at 13:57.

Rating: C+. That scene with Ryder, Cara and Stardust coming out to stop Owens from leaving sums up every problem this title match has. If for whatever reason we can't have Zayn vs. Owens, the best solution is to just add Miz and Ziggler to the mix. I'm not wild on it but it's as good of a story as we can get. The other three can't even get into a match on Smackdown and really do come off as people just there for the sake of being there. As usual, if you can eliminate something entirely and tell the same story, they're really not necessary.

Post match Stardust comes in with the Queen's Crossbow to Zayn. Ryder and Cara come in for the big brawl and it's Ryder of all people standing tall.

Recap of Roman Reigns vs. HHH/Stephanie on Raw.

Roman Reigns vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Reigns comes through the entrance again. Bubba immediately hits the floor to yell at the fans which is why he's such a great heel. Back in and a Superman Punch sends Ray right back out to the floor. The brawl heads outside and Ray is in even more trouble as Reigns slams him into the table over and over for a DQ at 1:52.

D-Von's save attempt earns him a Superman Punch and some steps to the shoulder. Reigns spears Bubba for good measure.

Goldust is painting his face in the bathroom when R-Truth comes in to call him partner. They're still not partners but Goldust denies coming down to help him on Monday. Somehow Truth knows that Goldust sleeps without clothes on so Goldust paints NO on Truth's forehead. Truth looks in the mirror. "ON! IT'S ON!"

The Lucha Dragons are in the back to talk about how they can leave Wrestlemania with a title each. Cara leaves and Ryback comes in to talk about how much bigger and stronger he is than Kalisto. He can bench press Kalisto with one arm and ate that much weight for breakfast this morning. Ryback deserves the Wrestlemania spotlight and Kalisto can settle for a flashlight. Kalisto says he'll win and leaves.

Tyler Breeze vs. AJ Styles

AJ starts with his striking sequence to send Breeze outside, setting up a springboard forearm. Breeze, who is announced for the Andre battle royal, knees AJ in the face but his superplex is broken up. Another Phenomenal Forearm is enough to pin Breeze at 2:03.

Here are Brock and Heyman to wrap things up. Heyman cuts off the speech by saying that his name is Paul Heyman and this is your main event of the evening. Brock is going to be your Wrestlemania moment, just like when he conquered the Streak. That still gets people to boo. That brings Heyman to the no holds barred street fight at Wrestlemania, which means Dean can use anything he can get his hands on against BROCK LESNAR.

It can be a chair, a table or a kendo stick but it won't be enough. Now we have Mick Foley and Terry Funk handing Dean various weapons to use against Lesnar too. To shoot from the hip a bit, the only reason Funk and Foley are still alive is because Heyman's prayers continue to go unanswered. What Ambrose doesn't understand is that if Dean can get his hands on something, Brock can get his hands on as well. However, Brock can also get his hands on Dean and that's just going to end badly.

Heyman invites Dean out to fight right now but he gets the Wyatt Family (minus Harper) instead. Brock seems to like the idea of being surrounded but here's Dean to interrupt. Lesnar gets in a quick suplex to Rowan as Dean gets in, only to have Strowman take Brock's head off with a clothesline. Dean's distraction lets Brock suplex Strowman (first time for that I believe) before beating Lesnar down with the kendo stick. That's fine with Brock who pops up and gives him an F5 to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling wasn't great here but this was all about helping to set the stage for Wrestlemania. Things are really starting to shape up for the big night and they're doing a better job of setting it up than they did last year. There are still some major issues on the pay per view of course but they're doing what they can to fix some of them as fast as they can. This was a good enough building show and that's exactly what it needed to be.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Small package

Sheamus b. Kofi Kingston – Brogue Kick

Usos b. Ascension – Double superkick to Viktor

Sami Zayn/Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens/The Miz – Helluva Kick to Miz

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Reigns sent him into the announcers' table

AJ Styles b. Tyler Breeze – Phenomenal Forearm

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book of the History of the Intercontinental Title at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Smackdown – March 17, 2016: Why Can't Raw Do That?

Smackdown

Date: March 17, 2016

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton

This is one of the three final episodes before Wrestlemania XXXII in April and things are...interesting. This past Monday saw the return of Roman Reigns, who showed some of the fire that made him a success near the end of the year. The question now though is how much of that will stick around and how much will be a return to his not so successful form. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Reign returning to attack HHH, resulting in the champ needing six staples to close the gash in his head.

Here's Reigns, again down the ramp which seems to be his new norm, to open things up. The fans aren't sure what to think of him to start but says that footage shows what HHH gets for running his mouth. Reigns believes in the big fight, which is what knocked HHH into next week. It's a good thing that HHH isn't in the building tonight because Reigns would

beat him again just as badly. Not because he wants to you see, but because he can. At Wrestlemania in Dallas, Reigns is going to hold the title over HHH's body because he can and HHH needs to believe that.

This wasn't a great promo but above all else it was short. That's been Roman's big downfall: they leave him out there for so long that Reigns gets lost because he's just not that great of a talker. However, showing how strong of a fighter he is on Monday and then having him talk about it here in a three minute speech is the best path they can go with. If they can just avoid him being booed out of the building (remember that the next two Raw's are in Philadelphia and New York) before Wrestlemania, things will be as good as they can be.

We look back at Chris Jericho splitting up the partnership with AJ Styles and then getting laid out by Styles on Monday (in what was apparently an improvised segment due to the Neville injury).

Styles says the fans can chant for whoever they want because this is WWE. This Monday felt so good...and here's Kevin Owens. Kevin thinks AJ sounds just like Sami Zayn with all this whining. Maybe they can have their own show on the WWE Network where they hold each other and cry. AJ talks about how Owens is just like Jericho with their insecurity. Owens says the easiest answer would be they're both from Canada but that's not what matters. It's the Intercontinental Title that really matters but AJ thinks it's more important that they're having a match tonight (BIG pop for that).

The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ranallo brings up the horribly tired Battle of Ohio idea for this match. Ziggler takes it to the mat for an early front facelock but Miz reverses into a small package. They fight over headlocks because there's almost nothing left for these two to fight over these days. Ranallo keeps up the lame references by bringing up Donald Trump and Rosie O'Donnell. Of all the people Trump is associated with and feuding with these days, the best he's got it Rosie O'Donnell?

Ziggler pulls Miz to the mat again and drops some elbows but gets sent chest first into the buckle as we take a break. Back with Miz getting two

off a top rope ax handle and slapping on a body scissors. Ziggler fights up again with his running clotheslines and a neckbreaker, followed by a sunset flip for two. He takes too much time getting up though and it's time for the Figure Four. Ziggler is quickly in the ropes though and a superkick puts Miz away at 10:40.

Rating: C. These guys are on that dreaded list of people I do not need to see fight ever again. If the Battle of Ohio is really the best thing they can come up with for a quick story then it's clear that they need to move on with both guys. Hopefully the two of them are in the battle royal instead of squeezed into the Intercontinental Title match as has been rumored as neither is interesting enough for that spot at the moment.

We look at Ryback challenging Kalisto for a US Title match at Wrestlemania.

Kalisto accepted the challenge.

We look back at Mick Foley giving Dean Ambrose the barbed wire baseball bat.

Earlier today, Dean was here in his hometown of Cincinnati and loves every bit of it. Brock Lesnar may have been trained to fight in the UFC but on the streets of this city, every day is Wrestlemania because you fight every day and night. Pressure like that makes diamonds and Brock better be ready because nothing hurts like an education. I love these on location promos as they give things such a sense of importance and realism.

Jackie Moore Hall of Fame video.

Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Goldust

D-Von gets a table out just a few seconds after the bell, drawing a very nice reaction from the crowd. The distraction lets Bubba send Goldust into the buckle a few times, all while calling Goldust a freak. After Bubba shouts about Goldust having face paint just like the Usos, Goldust starts a comeback with right hands, only to run into an elbow to the jaw. Goldust hammers away in the corner and scores with the bulldog for two. A

quick D-Von distraction pays off though and Bubba kicks Goldust in the face for the pin at 3:23.

Rating: D. What are you expecting from a match that seems designed to just set up the Usos vs. Dudley Boyz match? Goldust and Bubba Ray Dudley being around in 2016 is some combination of amazing and sad, though the fact that they certainly didn't embarrass themselves out there is a good sign.

Post match R-Truth comes out for the save but gets beaten down as well. The Usos come out for the real save.

Here's Charlotte (dressing more like Nikki Bella every day) for a face to face to face meeting with Becky Lynch and Sasha Banks. Charlotte gets right to the point by saying she's known the two of them (not out here yet) for most of her adult life. They've done it all together but she wouldn't be standing here today if not for the two of them. Becky comes out on her own and Charlotte isn't sure what to think of it, so here's Sasha a few seconds later. Well that was kind of pointless. Charlotte: "You finally showed up." Sasha: "Child please, I am not on your schedule."

Charlotte brings up their past in NXT and tells a story about calling her dad when she met the two of them. Ric thought they sounded like the Horsemen but Charlotte thought they were the Horsewomen. Over time she started to accept the idea but now she owes Ric an apology because these two could NEVER be the Horsewomen.

That's enough for Becky, who goes on a rant about how you can call her whatever she wants but at Wrestlemania she's going to be the one ripping Charlotte's arm off and becoming Divas Champion. Sasha says sorry boo boos (yes boo boos) but she's the one who took the NXT Women's Title from Charlotte and the only one who hasn't been beaten in WWE. Charlotte watches as Becky and Sasha argue over jewelry but they quickly go after the champ, sending her running off. Another good segment here as I want to see the match more than I did coming in.

Here's New Day for Kofi Kingston's match but they're swinging trash bags. After looking at a video of their beatdown, Woods says they're fine after

that beatdown because they've been eating their Booty's. Now some people might think that they couldn't do anything after a beating like that, which sends Big E. into a perfect 1980s style over the top promo that you see when someone is pretending to be pretending to be a wrestler.

That brings them to the trash bags, which represent a member of the League of Nations each. Each one is punted out of the ring, accompanied by a good imitation of each member. The challenge for a three on two Tag Team Title match is accepted for Wrestlemania, which certainly should be interesting to see.

Kofi Kingston vs. King Barrett

Kofi takes him straight into the corner for a one man Unicorn Stampede, meaning it's time for a seven man staredown as we take a way too early break. Back with Kofi firing off the kicks to the legs but getting distracted by the League, allowing Barrett to kick him in the face to take over.

We get some clubbing (yes clubbing I say) forearms to the back for two, only to have Kofi come back with a spinning cross body for the same. Winds of Change is countered with a backflip into a DDT (sweet move) but Woods and Del Rio get on the apron. Everything breaks down on the floor and it's Kofi grabbing a rollup (and trunks) for the pin on Barrett at 7:51.

Rating: C. Another simple match here and it's amazing to see how easily New Day is slipping into their face role. They haven't officially turned yet but you know it's going to come the night after Wrestlemania at the very latest. Kofi is so smooth in the ring and I'd love to see him get a strong singles run after New Day breaks up one day.

Dean is in a bar and talks how much you grow up here. You start thinking about the fights you've won and the fights you've lost, but above all else you start thinking about fighting for pride. At Wrestlemania, he's bringing Cincinnati with him and Lesnar better be ready.

Long recap of Vince, Shane and Undertaker from Raw.

The Social Outcasts are sitting on the apron and promise to be the first team to win the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal together. That idea lasts all of three seconds (the amount of time between Dallas saying it and Slater starting to talk) before they argue over who will be winning.

Cue Dean with a kendo stick to hammer all four of them (drawing your required Cincinnati Reds reference), sending the Outcasts running. Dean has heard that Brock is going to be in Boston next week for Smackdown because everyone knew he wasn't coming to Cincinnati. If Brock is going to be here next week, Dean will be right there with him for the fight that Brock walked away from on Raw. More good stuff here.

AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. We start fast with AJ's drop down into the dropkick as Lawler makes fun of Ranallo calling everything AJ does phenomenal. The springboard forearm is countered into a gutbuster and the backsplash crushes Styles. We take a break and come back with fighting out of Chinlock City and blocking another backsplash with raised knees. Owens: "Ranallo shut up! I can hear you from here you idiot!"

AJ gets in the running forearm to a seated Owens and sends him outside for a slingshot forearm. Back in and Owens' package piledriver slam (called a Blue Thunder Bomb by Ranallo, which isn't exactly what I would call the move) gets two but AJ kicks him in the head. They slug it out with AJ getting the best of it until he misses a spinning backfist and eats a superkick.

The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered and AJ actually torture racks him into a spinning powerbomb for two. I always love seeing a surprise move like that as it keeps you from getting bored with the same stuff over and over. AJ heads up but has to knock Owens off the top, only to have Jericho come out to break up the Phenomenal Forearm. Styles takes WAY too long getting back inside and it's the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 11:43.

Rating: B. This was getting really good until the ending but that worked well too. Styles losing is fine here as Jericho cost him the fall to make sure it wasn't clean. They've done a very good job of making AJ look like

a big deal and it's even better when Owens gets a nice win as well. Really nice main event here and I'd love to see them get more time in a big match later.

Post match Jericho gives AJ a Codebreaker and mocks the AJ STYLES chants to end the show. Jericho continues to nail this heel run like he hasn't in years.

Overall Rating: B-. YES. This is the kind of show that WWE has been needing for a long time now as it actually felt like they were setting up something special at Wrestlemania. You had nearly every match get a strong build (save for the Cell and they're messing that enough up on Raw every single week) and now I want to see more of the matches than I did coming in. This might not have been the highest quality show but it was an important one given how horrible the build has been to this point.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. The Miz – Superkick

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Goldust – Big boot

Kofi Kingston b. King Barrett – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Monday Night Raw – March 7, 2016: Going Home For The Show After The Show Before The Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 7, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Now this could be interesting as the company is hardly on a creative roll at the moment and we're in one of the biggest smark havens in the world. We're also five days away from Roadblock which suddenly has the potential to change the entire Wrestlemania card with less than a month before the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Vince vowing to renounce Shane as his son after Wrestlemania. I still have no idea why this is supposed to be interesting or a major plot point as the McMahons are always arguing.

Here's Shane to get things going. Shane sucks up to the Chicago crowd and it's clear that they're excited to see him. He was watching Raw last week and heard what Undertaker was saying about his match. Shane respects Undertaker completely but he wasn't surprised by what Vince said about him after the fact. Vince has lost touch with both his reality and his grandsons but Shane is ready to stop it all. At Wrestlemania, he stops all the backstage politics and all the authority. Shane is tired of seeing all the talent being held back with no breaks and all the breaks given to people with no talent.

The gong goes off but it's a strutting Vince instead. Vince laughs at the fans for not being happy to see him so the CM PUNK chants start up. The

boss lets it die off and talks about how Stephanie is getting everything. Earlier today Vince was looking at a picture of Shane at his first wrestling show and of course we get to see it on the screen. Vince pulls the actual photo from somewhere and crushes the frame like he'll do at Wrestlemania.

After Shane loses, Vince will be able to wrap his arms around his grandsons and prove to them that their family isn't a bunch of losers because his greatest creation is going to destroy his greatest failure. Vince sends out the security but Shane actually beats them up to a HUGE ovation, most of which isn't deserved.

The segment was better than most of anything we saw last week but I'm still really not sure what the heck they're fighting about. Thankfully they've seemed to drop the whole lockbox concept which wasn't working to say the least but Shane having a proxy would work better as an idea.

Kevin Owens vs. Neville

Non-title so look for another upset. Owens drives him into the corner to start and stomps away, meaning he survives longer than he did against Neville a few weeks back. Kevin: "Come on mate!" Neville comes back with kicks to send Owens to the floor but misses a dive, allowing Kevin to send him into the steps as we take a break. Back with Neville fighting out of a chinlock, only to be flipped over with a German suplex.

The Cannonball is countered with a nice enziguri to knock Owens to the floor, setting up a great looking shooting star off the top to the outside. The fans REALLY like that one but don't care as much for the standing shooting star press for two back inside. Neville charges into a boot to the face but rolls away from a springboard moonsault. A superkick sets up the middle rope Phoenix Splash for a very, very close two. Thankfully Neville stays on him but Owens grabs a rollup with the trunks for the pin at 10:25.

Rating: C+. Those high spots from Neville helped carry this, leading us to the more important ending of Owens winning. The cheating helps but I was worried that they would job him AGAIN here to set up something at Wrestlemania. It's also nice to see Neville getting some prominent spots

instead of just in a nothing six man tag.

Post match Owens loads up the apron powerbomb but SAMI ZAYN runs in and cleans house, likely setting up a big Intercontinental Title match at Wrestlemania.

Video from the Rock saying Wrestlemania is free for new WWE Network subscribers.

Long recap of HHH and Ambrose from last week.

Dolph Ziggler and Zack Ryder (with a beard) are in the back when Stephanie comes up. Stephanie thanks Ziggler for taking down a tweet about the Authority earlier today but Dolph mentions taking down the Authority a few years back. Stephanie doesn't remember that and reminds Ziggler that she's his boss. As if we could forget as that's pretty much her whole character. Stephanie likes these flashbacks and gives Ziggler an elimination tag against three members of the League of Nations. Oh and Ziggler won't have any partners.

Brie Bella vs. Summer Rae

Total Divas match, meaning we get a clip from tomorrow's show with Nikki telling Brie how to live. Summer takes her down to start but Brie comes right back with the YES Kicks and a horrible looking BRIE MODE knee. Brie misses a middle rope cross body but here's Lana for a distraction, allowing Summer to grab a rollup for the pin at 2:05. They haven't used that finish as much lately so it's not as annoying here.

Post match Lana comes to the ring and gives Brie a Bella Buster for some of her first ever physicality.

Here's Dean Ambrose to open the second hour. He gets right to the point: this Saturday he's hijacking the car on the road to Wrestlemania by being HHH to win the title. Dean talks about all the things he's going to get to do like being on the cover of People Magazine and throwing out the first pitch at baseball games.

After Wrestlemania, HHH is going to have to buy Dean a new suit and lapel pins....which he doesn't know how to work. Actually Dean isn't going to do

any of these things that come along with being WWE Champion but he loves the idea of being WWE Champion and getting to come out here and fight everyone every single night.

Cue HHH who threatens to beat Ambrose up again. Dean says he'll take another trip to the announcers' table and hold that WWE Championship up high. Dean: "When I do that, you can suck it." HHH calls Roadblock a clever name that marketing came up with because Dean is at best a speed bump or a pothole. Dean wants to fight right now but HHH fights on his own time. As for tonight, Dean gets to face Bray Wyatt. That gives him a preview of Sunday where he learns that the Authority always wins.

Dolph Ziggler vs. League of Nations

Elimination rules with Del Rio as the odd man out. Barrett gets things going with the King pounding away and getting two off the Winds of Change. The knees in the ropes (which are similar to the ones Shane threw earlier tonight) set up the ten forearms from Sheamus, even though Ziggler started to fall down in the ropes. Rusev comes in for a running splash against the ropes for two. At least he isn't talking about how much he loves Summer or Lana at the time as that feud (which wasn't as bad as people made it out to be) is best forgotten.

A surprisingly good dropkick gets two for Rusev and it's back to Barrett for some forearms to the back in the corner. Sheamus comes in and slowly stomps away, followed by the knee to the ribs. Barrett charges into the running DDT and goes shoulder first into the post, setting up a superkick for the first elimination. Sheamus takes a superkick as well but Rusev breaks it up. The Brogue Kick misses but Rusev kicks Ziggler in the head, setting up the Brogue for the pin 6:39.

Rating: C-. This could have been much worse as I can live with Ziggler getting one pin, especially since the League didn't have to make an immediate save given how the rules were set up. The League is good as the enforcers for the Authority and roles like this but I'm not sure how much longer they can survive given how they've been treated lately.

We look back at Shane and Vince from earlier.

Video on Shane McMahon's in-ring career.

Becky Lynch and Sasha Banks bicker about who would have won last week.

Naomi/Tamina vs. Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks

Can't they bring up Blue Pants and Deonna Purrazzo instead of making us watch these four again? Charlotte and Ric are at ringside because Flair needs a paycheck this badly. Cole talks about how we've seen this match before. At least they're just acknowledging that their matches are repetitive now. Becky gets thrown into the heel corner to start and a right hand puts her down again. Tamina misses a charge in the corner and it's off to Sasha as everything breaks down. The Bank Statement (Cole: "THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO MCGREGGOR!") puts Tamina away at 2:00.

Post match Charlotte comes in and beats down the winners.

R-Truth is delivering a pizza to Goldust (who thankfully was just right there when Truth came in) and asks to be his partner again. Goldust says a good partner would know that he was lactose intolerant and slams the pizza down. Mark Henry comes up and takes the pizza.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. AJ Styles/Chris Jericho

New Day is defending. Before the match, Big E. wants to talk about the matching tattoos they've gotten but apparently only he got the blue and purple unicorn. Of course Big E. was just joking until Jericho cuts him off and saves some face. Jericho and Styles now have Y2AJ shirts. Kofi gets sent to the floor to start and the challengers hit a nice double plancha to take us to an early break.

Back with Jericho in trouble but nailing a dropkick to Big E. An enziguri drops Kingston and there's the hot tag to AJ. The moonsault reverse DDT hits as close to seamlessly as I've ever seen but AJ springboards into the Midnight Hour for two as Chris saves. The Lionsault crushes Kofi and AJ adds the springboard 450 for two with Big E. pulling Kingston to the floor. AJ drops Big E. with a slingshot forearm but misses the backfist to Kofi.

Back to Jericho who counters Trouble in Paradise into the Walls. AJ stops

Woods from making the save but gets driven hard into the barricade. Big E. gets back up for the tag so Jericho tries the Walls on him, which doesn't quite work. Instead Jericho sends Big E. into the post but the Codebreaker is countered into the Big Ending for the clean pin to retain at 11:38.

Rating: B+. They had me a few times in this one and the action after the hot tag to AJ never really stopped. This was more of a showcase for AJ than anything else with the springboards looking as smooth as they have yet in WWE. Jericho getting pinned clean opens up a few doors but I'm not sure where New Day goes at Wrestlemania, unless Bullet Club gets a very fast callup. AJ and Jericho could go various places as well.

Post match AJ and Jericho get an ovation but Jericho turns heel with a Codebreaker to Styles. That might have worked better if Jericho hadn't just lost clean but at least we get a FOURTH match between these two. I mean, just a thought but maybe you shouldn't do a (potential) Wrestlemania match three times before Wrestlemania. Jericho gives him two more Codebreakers for good measure before stuffing the Y2AJ shirt in AJ's mouth.

Back from a break with Jericho complaining about the fans chanting for AJ. They can enjoy it while they can because they won't be chanting for AJ Styles anymore.

Tyler Breeze vs. Kalisto

Non-title. Breeze blasts him in the face to start as the announcers talk about Jericho. A chinlock doesn't go very far and it's the corkscrew cross body into the Salida Del Sol for the pin on Breeze at 2:17.

Big Boss Man Hall of Fame announcement. I'm so happy over this one.

Kalisto is in the back and talks about idolizing people like Rey Mysterio and Eddie Guerrero at Wrestlemania. Cue Ryback to ask why he doesn't have a Wrestlemania match yet. Kalisto might be one of the best pound for pound wrestlers in WWE today but that's not what we're talking about here. Ryback says Kalisto has a mask just like a superhero but that's not how things work in the real world. Kalisto needs to be the US Champion on

his own instead of as one half of the Lucha Dragons. Watch him do this on his own tonight. No match was made here and it felt more like a way to split up the Dragons (thank goodness).

Here are the Social Outcasts to talk about how sad it is that Ryback doesn't want to be part of a team. He can't play team dodgeball (like on Heath Slater's new show Game Night on WWE.com) or be a Ghostbuster, but above all that he can't be a Social Outcast. Tonight the Axeman cometh, which means they all start making strange noises and chopping the air with their hand.

Ryback vs. Curtis Axel

This is joined in progress after a break (because reasons) with Axel getting in his jobber offense until the Thesz press allows Ryback to slam Axel head first into the mat. A CM Punk style running knee in the corner (complete with a Go To Sleep motion) sends Axel to the floor but an Outcasts distraction lets Axel get in a cheap shot for two. Just like last week, Ryback pounds him down into near unconsciousness, setting up the Shell Shock for the pin at 2:08. Again, no reason for this to go to a break before the match.

We recap the opening again.

Stephanie comes in to see Vince and asks what happens if Shane wins.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray still has nothing to do at Wrestlemania but he does talk about conquering the conqueror this Saturday. Tonight he'll use Dean as an example. No Family with Bray this week. Some early elbows put Bray in trouble and Dean cranks on both legs at the same time. Dean drives in even more elbows to Bray's head in the corner until Bray runs him over with the cross body as we take a break.

Back with Bray suplexing Dean to keep control before taking him outside for a double clothesline. They get back in with Dean hammering away and trying the rebound lariat, only to have Bray take Dean's head off because he's smart enough to figure out that Dean is doing the exact same thing

he always does. Dean knocks him out to the floor but the suicide dive is countered into Sister Abigail. That's countered as well so Bray Rock Bottoms him onto the barricade. Back in again and Dean scores with the rebound lariat followed by the top rope elbow, only to have the Wyatts come in for the DQ at 11:50.

Rating: C+. I was digging this one until the ending that you kind of had to know was coming. At least they didn't have either of them doing a clean job here as I was kind of expecting them to. Bray countering the rebound lariat was a nice touch too because wrestlers being smart is always cool to see. Good main event though it's more of a storytelling device than anything else.

Post match the Wyatts destroy Dean until HHH comes out. Bray stares at HHH and even touches the title (fans: "YES!") before the Family leaves. HHH loads up the announcers' table but walks into Dirty Deeds. Dean holds up the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. While still not a very good show, this was WAY better than what they did last week. It's amazing how much better a show is when you have anything besides Stephanie reminding us (AGAIN) that she's the most amazing thing since that time Randy Savage woke up Hulk Hogan with a top rope elbow because Hogan only Hulked Up from finishers. The problem here though is that this Wrestlemania really isn't very strong and there's only so much they can do to build that up, especially with the lack of people actually appearing.

I can't imagine anything big happens at Roadblock but maybe they'll throw in a big (and possibly much needed) curve ball. That being said, the idea of Reigns not appearing until Wrestlemania (as Raw is in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Brooklyn before then) might not be out of the question either. It really is a weird build to Wrestlemania and I'm not sure what's going to happen before we get there. In this case though, I'm not liking that feeling.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Neville – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Summer Rae b. Brie Bella – Rollup

League of Nations b. Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick

Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks b. Tamina/Naomi – Bank Statement to Tamina

New Day b. Chris Jericho/AJ Styles – Big Ending to Jericho

Kalisto b. Tyler Breeze – Salida Del Sol

Ryback b. Curtis Axel – Shell Shock

Dean Ambrose b. Bray Wyatt via DQ when the Wyatt Family interfered

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Monday Night Raw – February 29, 2016: We Waited 23 Years For This

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 29, 2016

Location: Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the first Raw ever on February 29 and the big story would seem to be Undertaker showing up to address his match with Shane McMahon. Other than that we should get more between HHH and Roman Reigns, assuming Reigns is back from his nose injury at HHH's hands last week. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of HHH beating Reigns down last week to end the show.

Opening sequence.

Here's HHH to get things going. HHH talks about how only a handful of us actually have any authority and the rest of us all have an authority figure in their lives. Every single one of us hate it (much like opening Raw with a long promo that isn't likely to lead anywhere) and want to fight back but we're all afraid. That fear keeps everything in line but people like Reigns decided to not listen to that fear.

Now Reigns is sitting at home breathing through his mouth and hoping he can still go to Wrestlemania. Cue Ambrose to a nice reaction from the fans as things slow down. Dean just got off the phone with Reigns, who says hi but he's also coming for HHH. They make some Oscar references to recap Ambrose challenging Lesnar last week and Shane having to fight Undertaker at Wrestlemania.

Ambrose asks who HHH wanted to win the match at Fastlane but the champ brushes it off by saying Dean wasn't a factor in that match. Dean gets right in HHH's face and says he's the last person HHH wants to face at Wrestlemania. The boss finally gets that Dean really is crazy but Ambrose can see it in him: HHH is scared.

HHH thinks that's the smell of clean clothes and power that Dean isn't familiar with, which draws a YOU CAN'T BEAT HIM chant. Dean gets right to the point and asks for a title shot but HHH says that shouting RIGHT NOW doesn't earn you a title shot. He'll give Dean an answer at the end of the night (with Dean clarifying that HHH means by the end of the show) but first of all, Dean has to fight Alberto Del Rio.

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

The winner gets Charlotte (at ringside with Ric Flair) for the title at Wrestlemania. Just get to the double pin now. They start fast with some pinfall reversal sequences and get some near falls each. Neither submission works and we've got a stalemate as both of them are trying for their Wrestlemania moment. Not the title or anything, but a Wrestlemania moment.

Becky is sent outside and taken down with a baseball slide, allowing Sasha to send her into the post as we take a break. Back with Sasha driving two knees into Becky's chest for another near fall as JBL keeps up the line of it all being about going to Wrestlemania. Becky grabs an exploder suplex and stops a charge with a boot to the face. A missile dropkick gets two for Lynch but Sasha is up first and heads up top. Becky is right there though and tries a superplex, only to get countered into a sunset flip. Sasha lays back for no apparent reason and it's a double pin at 9:54.

Rating: C+. This was much more like the NXT format for a women's match and it was better as a result. Instead of having them sit around and do chinlocks for three minutes, these two were actually telling a story and making things work far better. The ending was predictable but I'd rather have all three of them in the match instead of just Sasha.

We don't have a winner and Charlotte is happy.

The Wyatts come on screen with Bray talking about insanity meaning to try something more than once and expecting different results. Well maybe he's insane then because he wants to save us all. He had an idea which is turning into a plan and can be used to save us all. Run.

Dolph Ziggler vs. The Miz

This is over an argument on the pre-show last week over Ziggler asking what Miz has done lately. Let me repeat that. DOLPH ZIGGLER is asking what someone has done lately. Ziggler starts punching away in the corner but gets whipped hard into the corner to set up a rollup....for the pin at 1:05. Well that's surprising. Nice but surprising.

Long recap of last week's opening segment with Shane McMahon returning.

Here's Stephanie for her acceptance speech for the Vincent J. McMahon Award. We get some classic heel tactics as she asks for the respect that she deserves during her speech. The fans chant for Shane but apparently he's not here tonight, just like he won't be here after Wrestlemania. Stephanie holds the trophy like a baby and talks about all the sacrifices she makes, only to be greeted with more WE WANT SHANE chants.

She turns the podium over and goes on a rant about how horrible Shane is and what it means that people cheer for him. Stephanie goes on about how Shane has been gone for years, which proves how little he cares about this whole place. This is a speech you could have said about the Rock before he returned in 2011 with some of the exact same lines.

Apparently it eats Shane alive that Stephanie and Hunter are married and that she has so much power. Shane's kids can be in charge later on but they'll have to fight to earn that power. She hits the screeching voice and talks about how we all need to show her respect and bow down to the queen before leaving. To recap: no Shane, no interruption and no one getting anything in on Stephanie as she hypes up....herself. Oh yeah everything is normal again.

Lucha Dragons vs. Rusev/Sheamus

Of course this is still going. JBL: "The League is like the Four Horsemen. They just need a JJ Dillon." Cara sunset flips Sheamus for two to start but charges into an Irish Curse. Rusev comes in to crush Cara's head before Sheamus comes back in for an armbar. I'm not sure on having a power guy like Sheamus using an arm hold. That doesn't feel right.

Cara comes back with a tornado DDT and the hot tag brings in Kalisto to clean house with his bouncing offense. The hurricanrana driver (minus most of the drive) gets two on Rusev and Cara dives onto Barrett. That earns Cara a Brogue Kick though and Kalisto takes Sheamus down with a flip dive. Back in and Rusev kicks Kalisto in the head for the pin at 5:05.

Rating: D+. You can't make this stuff up. I mean, as soon as the Dragons came out you knew Kalisto was going to take the pin if his team lost because we need to protect SIN CARA for some reason. I'm really not sure

what we're going with the League as they're just floating, so yeah of course let one of them pin the US Champion.

Del Rio gives Kalisto the top rope double stomp post match.

Immediately after the match, Cole: "Of course Total Divas airs every Tuesday night on E!" I'm glad they're not even bothering to hide the fact that the show is more important than the US Title.

Renee Young and Natalya do a commercial for Subway. Eh it's a big check for WWE for thirty seconds of Raw. It's hard to complain about something like that.

We recap the opening segment.

Ryback vs. Adam Rose

Before the match, Ryback talks about wanting the spotlight and promises to take it for himself. Ryback throws him around the ring to start but Rose gets in a running kick to the chest for two. Normally I would say there's no way WWE is going to have Ryback lose a week after a heel turn but you never can tell these days. The Backpack Stunner breaks up a chinlock and Ryback pounds away on the mat until Rose is out cold. The Shell Shock is good for the pin at 2:04.

We recap Brock's antics last week, including laying out Ambrose and accepting his challenge for Wrestlemania.

New Day vs. AJ Styles/Chris Jericho

Non-title. After a break, New Day says they're the greatest three man team of all time and will fight anyone who disagrees. They aren't a loose collection of talents like the League of Nations and are better than any great team like Sonic and Tails, Snoop and Dr. Dre, Edge and Christian or Cheerios and milk. Jericho and Kofi get things going with Chris nailing a nice dropkick. Stereo dives to the champs take us to a break.

Back with Styles in trouble and taking the Unicorn Stampede thanks to some Woods interference. AJ gets dropped onto the barricade and Kofi pulls out a card to show that he has AJ's number. Back in and the Pele

drops Kofi long enough for the hot tag to bring in Jericho. Everything breaks down with Jericho destroying the champs but having to kick out of a rollup. The Lionsault gets two on Kofi with Big E. making the save, only to get taken down by the springboard forearm. Trouble in Paradise is countered into the Walls of Jericho to make Kofi tag at 8:59.

Rating: C. It's been a bad night for champions. I'm so glad they're putting Jericho and AJ together for a title program because having AJ face, say, Kevin Owens for the Intercontinental Title at Wrestlemania and letting them go nuts for fifteen minutes would just be a disaster. Normally I would complain about Jericho and Styles winning like two matches and suddenly being a top team, but that's the extent of the division these days so it's not the biggest problem.

Post match Jericho and Styles say they're officially a thing and want a title shot next week on Raw.

Here's Vince for a chat before Undertaker comes out. Vince talks about how the stars would have to align to have Shane come out here in charge on Raw the night after Wrestlemania. None of that is going to happen though because only fools believe in miracles. Vince introduces Undertaker and after three more Wrestlemanias have passed, he finally gets down to the ring.

Vince talks about how Undertaker is his destroyer but Undertaker grabs him by the throat. Once that door closes, Shane's blood is going to be on Vince's hands, not Undertaker's. That's it, after Undertaker might have been in the ring for ninety seconds. Vince isn't done yet though, as he says Shane has lost his inheritance and is out of his will. All of Vince's money is now going to Stephanie and Shane is no longer his son.

We look back at the Dudley Boyz beating up the Usos three weeks back.

Jey Uso vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Jey goes right after him with right hands and drives Bubba up against the ropes for some shoulders to the ribs. A superkick puts Bubba down but D-Von pulls out a table to blast Jimmy in the face. Jey superkicks D-Von but eats a Bubba Bomb for the pin at 2:11.

Goldust comes up to R-Truth in the back but Truth cuts him off to say this isn't happening. He doesn't want to see what costume Goldust has or what song he has to sing because he's done with all this. Goldust walks away sad.

Kevin Owens vs. Big Show

Non-title and a rematch from Smackdown where Owens won by countout. They're quickly on the floor with Owens hitting a superkick, followed by a tornado DDT off the apron for nine. Show slides back in but has to kick out of the backplash at two. Owens goes up top but gets crotched, setting up a countout to give Big Show the win at 2:36.

Brie Bella is here and talking about Bryan when Lana of all people interrupts. Lana talks about how she's a real woman with a real figure while Brie is married to a tiny goat man. A match is actually teased.

Brie Bella vs. Naomi

I'm so glad they teased this. Brie starts in on the arm to start and works on an armbar until Tamina trips her up. Back in and a legdrop gets two for Naomi and we hit the double arm crank. The split legged moonsault misses but Naomi is able to hit the dancing kicks. She misses the big kick to the head though and Brie is able to come back with the YES Kicks. Tamina offers another distraction though and Naomi puts on a crucifix to pull back on Brie's arms while cranking on the neck for the submission at 4:07.

Rating: D-. They're just not very good. I really don't know how else to put it but these women really aren't very good. Naomi is an athletic freak with no idea how to use her athleticism and Brie....well she's....there's no other way to put it other than she isn't a good wrestler. As in she fails at almost every aspect in the ring and it's getting harder to sit through her matches while she sponges off Bryan's head.

Lana comes out to shake her head at Brie.

Fabulous Freebirds Hall of Fame video.

We look back at Becky vs. Sasha from earlier.

Sasha and Becky argue in the back until Charlotte comes up to say there's going to be a rematch on Smackdown. Charlotte makes fun of them for being so excited.

We recap Vince cutting Shane out of his will and saying he won't be his son anymore. How many times has Vince done that over the years?

Dean Ambrose vs. Alberto Del Rio

Ambrose is all bandaged up so Del Rio sends him out to the floor and into the barricade. Back in and Alberto rams shoulders into the buckle, followed by a DDT for two. The armbreaker over the top rope cranks on the bad arm even more but Dean counters the top rope double stomp. The Backstabber sends Dean outside again and now the double stomp connects from the apron. Dean beats the count back in at nine (because of course he does) so Alberto fires off kicks to the ribs.

Dirty Deeds is broken up but Dean settles for a bulldog and missile dropkick. Back up and Ambrose goes shoulder first into the post, allowing Alberto to hit the corner enziguri. Alberto misses a charge and hits the floor, allowing Dean to dive on all four of them. The referee starts counting but here's HHH to interrupt. The distraction lets the League sneak in for the DQ at 9:40.

Rating: D+. This was a squash with Dean getting in some hope spots near the end but you knew HHH was going to get involved somehow. I can go for the League as a bunch of goons who do HHH's bidding instead of being a featured act. It's a good enough idea but the difference here is there's a reason to care about someone like Ambrose. Reigns is just a guy who happens to be there and it's a big part of why this isn't working.

Post match HHH says Ambrose will never beat the Authority so Dean punches him in the jaw. Ambrose gets in some shots in the corner but eats a Pedigree. HHH says the match is on and leaves, because why have the match now when your opponent is done? Ah, yes, plot convenience. Ambrose crawls over to the mic and says thanks but HHH takes the jacket off and unbuttons his sleeves. HHH comes back and throws Dean to the floor,

setting up the required whip over the announcers' table. Referees come out to break it up and one actually shouts "THIS IS UNPROFESSIONAL!" HHH leaves Dean laying to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Save for the last five minutes, this was a disaster. The problem here is simple: I watched last week's show. For some reason though WWE has decided to just keep showing us the same clips over and over because that's enough to make us keep watching. The main event scene still has the same problem: Ambrose is someone people can relate to but Reigns is someone who isn't even on the show but we're supposed to want to see him fight in the biggest match of the year? The title shot could change things but I'd be stunned if they actually do a title change this close to Wrestlemania.

The rest of the show was horrible though with almost no good matches and the feeling that we're somewhere in October instead of having less than five weeks before Wrestlemania. The top three matches at Wrestlemania seem to be set in stone and if that's the case, it's going to be a very long night in Dallas. There's still time to shake things up and there's a reason to hope but good night we could be in for some trouble.

Results

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks went to a double pin

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Rollup

Rusev/Sheamus b. Lucha Dragons – Kick to Kalisto's head

Ryback b. Adam Rose – Shell Shock

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles b. New Day – Walls of Jericho to Kingston

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Jey Uso – Bubba Bomb

Big Show b. Kevin Owens via countout

Naomi b. Brie Bella – Crucifix neck crank

Dean Ambrose b. Alberto Del Rio via DQ when the League of Nations interfered

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Smackdown – February 25, 2016: Get Used To It

Smackdown

Date: February 25, 2016

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

We're getting close to Wrestlemania in a hurry and things are really starting to change. This past Monday saw the return of Shane McMahon and the announcement of his match against Undertaker of all people inside the Cell at the biggest show of the year. Other than that we have what seems like the face HHH vs. the heel Roman Reigns for the World Title coming up. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the main event of Fastlane and the post match staredown with Reigns vs. HHH.

Here's HHH for a rare Smackdown appearance to open things up. He gets things going by quoting some Rolling Stones with a little Sympathy for the Devil. HHH talks about how Monday left no doubt in Roman Reigns' mind about what's coming for him at Wrestlemania and we see a long clip of the

attack on Reigns to end the show.

We see a picture of Reigns after his surgery, which HHH says is a man who has been humbled. You see HHH in a suit right now but make no mistake about it: he is the authority. Everyone wants to rebel and HHH has even been there himself but there's no point to it. Instead you bow your head and you go to work to do your job. Either accept the authority or let your soul go to waste.

HHH has had to walk over a lot of people to get where he is. Reigns has the sweat part down and HHH knows Roman is good. He saw the blood on Monday, which just leaves the tears. HHH will save those for Wrestlemania when he humbles Roman once and for all because he's the Game and that's what he does as the Game, the Cerebral Assassin and the WWE World Heavyweight Champion. This didn't fix everything but it's the best promo these guys have done for their match so far.

League of Nations vs. Lucha Dragons/Neville/Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler and Barrett get things going with the King making his first actual in ring appearance in weeks. Everything breaks down less than a minute in with the Dragons diving on Del Rio and Rusev. Alberto kicks them both down as Ziggler DDT's Barrett, only to get taken down by Sheamus and Rusev as we take a break.

Back with Del Rio giving Ziggler a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. Rusev mocks Ziggler's attempts to tag his partners before bringing Sheamus back in for a suplex. Ziggler comes back with a superkick (of course) and Lawler is suddenly a League fan. The hot tag brings in Neville to clean house with a running clothesline and a basement dropkick to Barrett before heading up top. Sheamus tries to make a save so Neville dives over him with a 450 for a near fall. The Dragons take out Rusev as Neville hits a Red Arrow on Barrett. Del Rio makes the save but eats a superkick, followed by the Brogue Kick to put Neville away at 8:22.

Rating: C+. I liked this because they didn't bother stretching the match out for the sake of stretching it out. That's something you see so often on Raw and it makes matches feel longer and longer every single week. This was just as long as it needed to be and didn't feel like it was

missing anything they would have done in a match five minutes longer. Good little match here and it's nice to see Barrett back in the ring.

Kevin Owens talks about seeing Dean Ambrose take a beating on Monday and then come back to face Brock Lesnar again. It inspired him so much that Ambrose deserves an Intercontinental Title shot. However, Ambrose isn't here tonight so that's just too bad. There's no one left for Owens to beat so he has the night off, which brings in Big Show. Owens makes some retirement jokes until Show grabs him by the shirt and threatens to KO KO.

D-Von Dudley vs. Jimmy Uso

Before the match, Bubba goes on his same rant about not being a nostalgia act because they're the nine time WWE Tag Team Champions. D-Von promises that they'll be doing whatever they have to do to prove that they're the greatest tag team of all time whether you like it or not. Jimmy starts fast with a series of kicks before going up top. Bubba distracts the referee with a table though, allowing him to shove Jimmy off the top. D-Von gets a rollup for the pin at 53 seconds in a storyline segment.

Long recap of Shane McMahon returning on Monday.

Undertaker will be on Raw to address everything.

Chris Jericho talks to AJ Styles about being being partners and potentially Tag Team Champions. They need a third man for a six man tag against New Day later, so here's Mark Henry to say he'd love to teach those three clowns a lesson.

Godfather Hall of Fame announcement.

Video of Ryback walking out on his partners on Monday, saying it was time for things to be about him.

Big Show vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. Owens goes right after him to start and is promptly knocked into the corner. A shot to the throat puts Show down and the backsplash gets two. The near fall ticks Show off and he chops away in the corner,

sending Owens out to the floor for a breather. Back in and a chokeslam sends Kevin right back to the floor. For some reason Show goes up, only to get crotched out to the floor for a countout at 3:05.

Rating: C. I liked this far better than I was expecting as they actually packed some good intensity into a short match. Show can work quite well in a role like this instead of being in main events over and over. It's also nice to see Owens winning again instead of losing matches to schnooks like Dolph Ziggler.

Natalya vs. Becky Lynch

They shake hands to start and Natalya takes her down with a headlock. Becky fights up with a dropkick but she misses the spinning legdrop. A suplex sends Becky outside but here are Naomi and Tamina to lay Natalya out for the DQ at 1:58.

Sasha Banks runs out for the save and the villains are cleared out. Cue Charlotte to laugh about Becky vs. Sasha for the #1 contendership taking place on Monday. She'll be in the front row and wishes both of them the best of luck.

R-Truth vs. Heath Slater

Before the match, Goldust comes out to stand in a neutral corner despite the GOLDEN TRUTH chants. They start with some basic stuff until Truth puts the brakes on and thrusts his hips. Some forearms give Truth the first advantage but Slater comes back with a running knee. Truth gets pulled to the mat by the hair, only to catch Slater with a jumping side kick to the head. Dallas offers a quick distraction but Goldust punches Slater into a backslide to give Truth the pin at 3:10.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but I'm still hoping they don't go with Golden Truth. There's a better story with Truth rejecting him and Goldust not reacting well instead of "yeah sure let's just be a team." The segments have been fun but the story doesn't do much for me if it's the same thing Goldust did back in 2002.

Post match Truth still doesn't want help but is a bit nicer about it.

Video on Brock and Ambrose from Raw.

New Day vs. Mark Henry/AJ Styles/Chris Jericho

Before the match, New Day rips on the League of Nations a bit more but then switches over to Y2AJ. As for tonight though, Kofi is stunned that Mark Henry still thinks he's the World's Strongest Man. They jump back to insulting Jericho and Styles, who will never be the WWE Tag Team Champions (dance time) because NEW DAY ROCKS.

Big E. shoulders Jericho down to start but it's quickly off to Henry for a staredown. Some headbutts stagger Big E. and a shoulder puts him down. Henry clotheslines Woods and Kingston out to the floor and his partners add dives. The heroes dance (nice to see AJ getting to show some personality) and we take a break.

Back with Jericho chopping Woods to draw some screams. AJ hits a backbreaker and brings Jericho in again for the springboard dropkick. The distraction lets Big E. take over though as he drops Jericho face first onto the buckle for two. The Unicorn Stampede sets up some tromboning and we get a dance from Big E. Saxton: "When Big E. dances it looks like a penguin in a hula hoop contest."

Kofi puts Jericho in a chinlock and avoids a dropkick to keep Chris in trouble. Big E.'s Warrior Splash and a Woods legdrop get two, followed by the abdominal stretch. The Big Ending doesn't work though and Jericho makes the tag to Styles as everything speeds up. The moonsault into the reverse DDT (still botched a bit but it was closer this time) drops Woods and everything breaks down. Trouble in Paradise hits Henry but Jericho takes a bullet for AJ in a nice moment of friendship. AJ grabs the Calf Crusher to make Woods tap at 11:19.

Rating: C-. Standard six man Smackdown main event here but it was little more than a way to set up Jericho and Styles as a regular team. Henry could have been anyone else here and the story would have been the same. AJ and Jericho were the stars here and it's pretty clear that we're going to see the two of them getting a shot at the belts in Dallas.

Overall Rating: C-. This was far more about the video packages than

anything else and you can almost guarantee that is the norm going into Wrestlemania season. The wrestling was nothing to see here but we got some decent storyline development. Above all else it's nice to see the stories flow from Raw to Smackdown and then back to Raw instead of Raw, then Smackdown as bonus material before we get back to Monday. Not a good show or anything here but it got some stuff done.

Results

League of Nations b. Lucha Dragons/Neville/Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick to Neville

D-Von Dudley b. Jimmy Uso – Rollup

Kevin Owens b. Big Show via countout

Natalya b. Becky Lynch via DQ when Tamina and Naomi interfered

R-Truth b. Heath Slater – Backslide

AJ Styles/Chris Jericho/Mark Henry b. New Day – Calf Crusher to Woods

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Smackdown – February 18, 2016: The Go Home Exit

Smackdown

Date: February 18, 2016

Location: Citizens Bank Business Arena, Ontario, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

We're three days away from Fastlane and the big story tonight is Brock Lesnar making a very rare Smackdown appearance. There's no word on what he'll be doing but you can assume it might have something to do with Dean Ambrose and Roman Reigns, who are teaming together to face the Dudley Boyz tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Ambrose losing the Intercontinental Title on Monday thanks to Stephanie's influence.

Opening sequence.

No Mauro Ranallo tonight due to a bout with the flu.

League of Nations vs. Dolph Ziggler/Lucha Dragons

Kevin Owens is on commentary. Kalisto and Rusev get things going with the masked man firing off kicks to the meaty Bulgarian thighs. Alberto comes in and gets taken down with a standing Lionsault for two. An old Jack Brisco spinning sunset flip out of the corner looks to get two for Cara but he tagged Kalisto by mistake. Everything breaks down for a bit and the Dragons dive through the ropes to take down Sheamus and Del Rio, followed by Ziggler coming off the top to elbow all three of them as we take a break.

Back with Rusev holding Cara in a chinlock before it's off to Del Rio for a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. That means it's time for another chinlock from Alberto, followed by some Irish Curses from Sheamus for two. Owens goes on a funny bit about not liking idiots but having other reasons to not like Cole.

Cara finally kicks Del Rio down and tags in Ziggler to speed things up. Dolph's superkick to Sheamus is broken up but the running DDT works a bit better. Everything breaks down and Del Rio kicks Cara in the mask, followed by throwing Kalisto hard into the barricade. Back inside, Ziggler hits a quick Fameasser for two on Sheamus, which draws Owens off commentary. The distraction lets Sheamus nail a Brogue Kick for the pin on Dolph at 11:27.

Rating: C-. So the League gets a pin on the #1 contender despite none of them having a match on Sunday's pay per view card. It wasn't anything out of the ordinary here though and that's pretty good for the most part. The wrestling was fine and they went with the formula that they've perfected on Smackdown, meaning this was acceptable but nothing I'll remember in about an hour.

Owens leaves with Ziggler's vest.

Tamina vs. Sasha Banks

Sasha gets slammed head first into the mat to start but flips out of a belly to back suplex to get away for a bit. The running knees in the corner have Tamina in trouble and Naomi gets knocked off the apron. A sitout bulldog sets up the Bank Statement to make Tamina tap at 2:22.

Sasha gets beaten down post match until Becky makes the save, only to be shoved away by her partner. This continues a simple story but it's been booked well.

Post break Becky wants to know what that was. They're coming up on Wrestlemania and it's going to take a win at Fastlane to give them momentum. If Sasha wants to let her ego get in the way of their Wrestlemania moment, Becky is done right now. They agree to fight together on Sunday.

Here's Chris Jericho to address AJ Styles' challenge to him from Monday. Jericho is ready to answer but he wants AJ to be here face to face. Instead here's the Miz to interrupt with an announcement of his own. Jericho hopes that it's Miz quitting the business because everyone has been begging for it for years. Miz says he isn't quitting but he

certainly wouldn't do it here. The announcement is that he's ready to fight Jericho here and now, which earns him a throw to the floor.

Chris Jericho vs. The Miz

Thankfully this starts after a break instead of that stupid ring the bell and go to a break thirty seconds later. A suplex puts Miz down and it's time for some right hands in the corner. Miz sends him into the post as the announcers debate what celebrity lists these two are on. The fans want AJ but get a knee to Jericho's back and a chinlock. That goes nowhere so Jericho dropkicks him and goes up, only to get punched in the face. A trip to the floor doesn't do much as Miz takes him back inside for more left hands to the face. We take a break and come back with Miz holding a chinlock.

The Reality Check gets two and it's right back to the chinlockery. Jericho fights back again with an ax handle and counters another Reality Check (like any signature move, it's only one per midcard match) into a failed Walls attempt. Miz's short DDT and big boot get two each so he starts ripping at Jericho's face in the corner. The running corner clothesline is easily countered into the Walls though and Miz taps at 12:22.

Rating: C+. As has been the case lately, Miz is on a roll and having a string of good matches. Now maybe that's due to having matches against Chris Jericho and AJ Styles but at least it's been better than the usual five minute nothings that he does every week. He's been a good cog for this feud and kept things from being the normal tropes. Good stuff here as Miz continues to be a pleasant surprise lately.

Post match Jericho calls out AJ for the big answer. AJ comes out but Jericho doesn't seem interested in wrestling him again. He respects Styles but doesn't really like him, which is why there won't be a third match. AJ blasts him in the face with his striking sequence and that's enough for Jericho to change his mind. That's rather heelish of AJ, who lost clean last week and now uses violence to get what he wants.

We look back at Heyman and Reigns' exchange on Monday.

Ambrose says he's fine after losing the title on Monday but tonight he just wants to go fight. That's fine with Reigns, but Dean better not try that Dirty Deeds stuff again. Reigns leaves and Dean runs into Heyman. Paul shakes off Ambrose's threats by saying Brock is here and he wants a piece of Dean. That's freaks Ambrose out so badly that he asks Heyman for advice before deciding to deal with Brock on his own later.

New Day says they can't wait to be on the Cutting Edge Peep Show because they're real musicians. On Sunday they're ready to get in their stretch limousine and make their way to the Hall of Fame. Edge and Christian are out of style because it's not the 1990s again. Tromboning and dancing (a LOT of dancing) take us out.

Video on Charlotte, as sponsored by Geico.

Charlotte vs. Natalya

Non-title and Natalya gets the jobber entrance. Charlotte's early headscissors attempt doesn't work so Natalya grabs a headlock and hits a quick basement dropkick to send Charlotte outside. Ric tries to give some advice and we take a break before coming back to see Charlotte spinning out of a leg lock. Charlotte bails to the floor and a Ric distraction lets her kick Natalya in the face. Back in and it's off to the bodyscissors for a bit before Natalya fights up and sends her outside with a German suplex. Charlotte pulls the ring skirt away though to tweak Natalya's knee, setting up the Figure Eight for the submission at 7:40.

Rating: C-. This was fine as Natalya continues to be fine as the veteran jobber. I mean, I still don't buy for a second that Brie is going to win the title on Sunday, even for a feel good title change to cash in on Daniel Bryan. Charlotte is getting the hang of the main roster now that she has a character but Ric needs to go as there's really no need for him.

Post match Charlotte does the YES chants to draw Brie out. The YES Kicks send Charlotte running and a YES chant starts.

This week, Goldust is Dusta Rhymes and has some bad rap. Truth likes it to start but eventually turns him down with a rap of his own. Goldust

looks sad, which makes me think they might not wind up teaming after all. At least it's different than the Booker T. formula.

We look back at the Wyatts going even crazier and the ending of Monday's show.

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. Dudley Boyz

They take their sweet time on the entrances until Ambrose and D-Von get things going. Dean gets early near falls of a cross body and bulldog before it's off to Bubba. A lot of shouting is enough to bring Reigns in and the crowd...doesn't seem to care. Bubba wins a slugout and elbows Reigns in the back of the head but charges into a Samoan Drop. D-Von gets double suplexed and Bubba is sent to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Bubba cranking on Dean's neck and the reverse 3D getting two. D-Von slaps on a chinlock (despite not actually grabbing the chin) and it's back to Bubba for some stomping. The slow paced (and mostly ineffective) offense continues with another D-Von chinlock. It doesn't help that we're just waiting for Brock to come out here. Bubba tries to start a LET'S GO AMBROSE chant but it's a Reigns distraction allowing Dean to knock Bubba down on the top rope.

Thankfully a few right hands aren't enough to even things up and Bubba knocks him off, only to miss the backsplash. The hot tag brings in Reigns to clean house with the usual but he loads up the Superman Punch right before Brock's music hits. The Dudleys use the entrance for a sneak attack but Reigns blocks the 3D. Dean dives onto D-Von but Brock decks him for the DQ at 13:08.

Rating: D+. This really didn't work as most of it was the Dudleys doing slow offense until Brock came out. It wasn't even a secret as we got a BROCK LESNAR TONIGHT graphic before the match. At least they did something besides the League of Nations to put the Shield boys over for a change though, which they've been getting better at in recent weeks.

Brock cleans house post match until Reigns gets in a Superman Punch. The spear almost hits Ambrose though and Dean tries Dirty Deeds, earning himself a Samoan Drop. Brock F5's Reigns but here's HHH (how nice of him

to make an appearance as his title has been the main focus lately) to stare Brock down to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. They've been picking things up lately around here and it's been a nice change of pace. This has felt a lot more like the wrestling show that Raw just isn't and that's the best thing Smackdown can really be. If nothing else this was a good way to help set up Fastlane, which had a good build all night, even if it's for a weak pay per view.

Results

League of Nations b. Dolph Ziggler/Lucha Dragons – Brogue Kick to Ziggler

Sasha Banks b. Tamina – Bank Statement

Chris Jericho b. The Miz – Walls of Jericho

Charlotte b. Natalya – Figure Eight

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Dudley Boyz via DQ when Brock Lesnar interfered

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Smackdown – February 11, 2016: Every So Often

Smackdown

Date: February 11, 2016

Location: Moda Center, Portland, Oregon

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

It's a rare occurrence but we actually have a major match for tonight with a strong build to go with it. In this case we have AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho II after Styles won his first major match in WWE by defeating Jericho a few weeks back, which has gotten in Jericho's head. This could be high quality stuff if they're given enough time so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Chris Jericho for a chat to get things going. Jericho gets right to the point: he doesn't think much of AJ because Styles debuted and started calling himself phenomenal. You have to earn something like that, just like Jericho earned it in this arena during his ladder match against Shawn Michaels. That means it's time for AJ to take his beating right now because the match is opening things up.

AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho

Scratch that actually as the Social Outcasts come out to interrupt.

AJ may be the Phenomenal One, but this is the Phenomenal Four. "Well three tonight because Bo is still in the studio." The Outcasts argue over whether the team is called Axel Rose or the Social House Cats but Jericho punches Slater in the face and the good guys clear the ring.

AJ Styles/Chris Jericho vs. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose

This is joined in progress after a break with AJ dropkicking Axel before it's back to Jericho for a suplex. Jericho doesn't seem happy with having to tag AJ back in so Styles can't show off as much. A delayed suplex

drops Axel and Jericho still doesn't want to bring AJ in again. Axel continues to get beaten around the ring with the good guys dropping him off a double chop.

Rose finally gets in a knee to AJ's back from the apron so Curtis can slap on a chinlock. One might think he would tag but who am I to question him? A Pele Kick drops Axel and AJ punches Rose in the face, allowing the tag off to Jericho. Chris cleans house and dropkicks Slater off the apron, followed by the Lionsault on Rose. AJ tags himself in though and the springboard forearm puts Adam away at 5:16 shown.

Rating: C. This was much more of a story than a match and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm not sure I needed a quick match to set up a match that was already set up but at least they didn't linger on this too long and it did help things a bit. AJ really does look like an equal with Jericho, which is more important than anything else.

Jericho gives AJ a Codebreaker post match.

We look at some of the reactions to Bryan's retirement.

Long recap of Lesnar/Ambrose/Reigns from Raw. Lesnar is promised for Smackdown next week, but wasn't he promised for this week too?

Here are the freshly heel Dudley Boyz with something to say. Bubba, now looking more like Bully Ray, talks about how everyone is talking about Daniel Bryan when people should be talking about them. D-Von thinks people are forgetting that they're the baddest team of all time. That's what the Usos forgot and that's what the Dudley Boyz had to remind them on Monday.

There are a lot of tables around ringside and it's the last time you're going to see them around here. Bubba orders the stagehands to get rid of these tables because the tables didn't win all those titles. Instead of wanting tables, the fans should be chanting for Bubba and D-Von. There's one table left in the ring but Bubba only gets as far as "D-Von, GET THE" before dropping the mic and carrying out the last table.

Sasha Banks vs. Naomi

Becky is on commentary. Banks quickly takes it to the mat and hammers on Naomi's face. Becky talks about wanting to win on her own but still respecting Sasha as Naomi gets in some shots to the ribs to take over. The fans are behind Banks as she trips Naomi up for the double knees to the ribs for two. Back with Naomi missing a good looking jumping kick to the head, allowing Sasha to get in a crucifix for two.

Sasha throws her to the floor and out onto Tamina as Lawler eggs Becky on about Sasha jumping her at the Rumble. That causes a bit too much smirking though and Naomi drives her back first into the apron with a Russian legsweep to take over. Back in and Naomi goes nuts with some rapid fire kicks (almost looking like she was dancing), capped off by an enziguri to knock Sasha silly.

We hit a chinlock for a bit before Sasha snaps off a headscissors to put both women down. Some clotheslines and another headscissors drop Naomi and a pair of knees in the corner get two. Tamina trips Sasha up to change control again, drawing Becky out of her chair. Naomi misses the split legged moonsault but Sasha goes outside to kick Tamina in the face. Back in and Naomi grabs a rollup, only to have Sasha reverse it into the Bank Statement for the tap out at 12:34.

Rating: B-. Becky and Sasha can't get more than five minutes but Naomi gets close to thirteen? Such is life in WWE of course. Either way, at least we got a good match out of it with a nice build towards the tag match at Fastlane. I could go for something else besides this quick stop before they head on to Wrestlemania where the title gets involved but at least we got a good TV match in the meantime.

AJ agrees that he's a redneck (and proud of it) but he's certainly not a rookie. Tonight he's showing Chris Jericho why he's known as the Phenomenal One.

Here are the Wyatts with something to say. Bray talks about sending people forward, only to have the bodies sent back in an urn. In Greek mythology, the titans fought the new gods but were conquered by Zeus. Today, their mythology is now our reality. Bray is now the king of the gods and these men are his army. You have seen what they have done to

Kane, Big Show and Ryback but they have their sights set on ridding WWE of its titans.

Harper says that the largest titans can be turned to mere mortals. Rowan thinks there's no point in resisting so bow your heads and accept your fate. Finally Strowman (who makes me think Harper needs a mask as it's strange to see just two of the guys wearing them) says the seas will boil because everything is changing. Bray is the angel of the dirt and the eater of worlds. This war has only just begun so follow the buzzards.

Neville/Lucha Dragons vs. Stardust/Ascension

I've been wondering where Neville was. The heels jump the heroes from behind to start and it's Stardust kicking Neville very close to low as we get going. Ascension takes turns slowly stomping in the corner before Viktor slaps on a chinlock. The Dragons are chased off the apron, allowing Neville to snap off an enziguri. The hot tag brings in Kalisto to speed things way up. Cara launches Kalisto into a dropkick on Viktor and it's a Salida Del Sol into a Swanton into the Red Arrow to put Konnor away at 2:59. That was a lot of fun for a short match and they didn't do anything we've been stuck watching for months now. Well done.

We see more Tweets on Bryan with Stephanie's getting the most focus. Were you expecting anything else?

We get a long, very well done recap on Bryan's retirement, including clips of his mainstream coverage, the retirement speech and his career, set to a song called Streets of Gold.

Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles

Take two. Or is it three? AJ drives him into the corner to start and the fans think Styles is awesome. The drop down into the dropkick staggers Jericho but he trips AJ to the mat. That's fine with Styles as he nips up into a hurricanrana to drop Jericho again. A big chop puts AJ down though and the springboard dropkick knocks him to the floor as we take a break.

Back with AJ fighting out of a chinlock (what a coincidence as we're just coming back from a break) and sending Jericho into the corner to break up

a bulldog attempt. It's time to get creative as AJ hits the running forearm to a seated Jericho, only to have Chris blast him in the face to take over again.

Jericho tries to go up but gets caught with a Pele to put him back on the mat. A butterfly backbreaker and an enziguri get two for Jericho but he gets dropkicked out of the air. Lawler thinks that young whippersnapper AJ's undoing will be his long hair getting in his face and causing him to miss something. Chris grabs the rope to block a dropkick and the Lionsault gets two more.

Back up and AJ grabs a fireman's carry into a backbreaker but Chris slips out of the Clash and gets the Walls. The hold has to be dragged back to the middle though and AJ counters into the Calf Crusher. After some very close near taps, Jericho makes the ropes for the break. Chris heads outside so AJ takes him down with a slingshot dive. Back in and Jericho breaks up another springboard, setting up the Codebreaker for the pin at 15:57.

Rating: B+. This was more what I was expecting from the match on Raw as both guys got to show off. Styles is almost already turning that forearm into a signature spot that he can hit from anywhere, which is more than a lot of wrestlers can say. Jericho can still go and I'm almost sure this is going to set up the big blowoff match, maybe a 2/3 falls match at Fastlane.

Overall Rating: A-. Every so often this show just does a bunch of good wrestling matches and you get an entertaining night because of it. The main event was good and actually helped set up something going forward with the pay per view match between Jericho and Styles, while also giving us some good action throughout. If this is what Smackdown can become, I'd be more than happy every week.

Results

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles b. Adam Rose/Curtis Axel – Springboard forearm to Rose

Sasha Banks b. Naomi – Bank Statement

Neville/Lucha Dragons b. Stardust/Ascension – Red Arrow to Konnor

Chris Jericho b. AJ Styles – Codebreaker

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