

Mixed Match Challenge – January 23, 2018: Too Cute For Wor...Well For Some Words

Mixed Match Challenge Episode #2

Date: January 23, 2018

Location: Capitol One Arena, Washington DC

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Beth Phoenix

Last week's show was acceptable but it's not exactly the kind of show where you can change up a lot of things. It's pretty much going to be a one off show every week until we get closer to the finals, which is fine, but it's not something that's going to blow the doors off from week to week. Let's get to it.

Before the teams come out for their matches, we see Carmella and New Day plugging their charity.

Miz and Asuka chant WE WILL WIN.

Raw and Smackdown GM's Kurt Angle and Daniel Bryan thank us for watching last week. They're not even hiding the fact that they're trying to fill in time to stretch this out to twenty minutes.

First Round: Carmella/Big E. vs. The Miz/Asuka

Carmella has changed into a different outfit from earlier on Smackdown. Kofi Kingston and Xavier Woods are with Carmella...and wearing the same one piece swimsuit style outfits. Big E. even has a mini Money in the Bank Briefcase. Before the match, Carmella and Big E. have a bite of a pancake and you can feel Carmella wanting to run to the gym from here. We also cut to the announcers at ringside where Corey has a stack of pancakes on his head, much to his annoyance.

The men start things off as Carmella plays cheerleader on the apron. Big E. gyrates his way out of a waistlock and we're off to an abdominal stretch with Big E. throwing in a spanking (as he did to Miz in last

year's Rumble). Corey isn't happy with Big E. goofing around but is a fan of Asuka coming in to face a seemingly terrified Carmella. With Carmella staying on the apron, Big E. goes to the floor and grabs a big L, so Carmella can give it to Asuka. You'll get that one in a second.

Asuka is touched by the gift...and then rips it apart. Carmella bails back to Big E. with no contact being made. Big E. wastes no time in sending Miz to the apron but the spear through the ropes is cut off with a kick to the head. A belly to belly takes Miz down though and let's look at the announcers who show us how to use social media. The Big Ending is countered into a DDT and everything breaks down on the save. Miz and Asuka drop both opponents and fire off alternating YES Kicks.

Miz's big one is of course countered into a powerbomb and let's cut to Rusev and Lana chatting with fans on Facebook. Big E. fights out of a chinlock but gets Reality Checked for two. A front facelock doesn't work either and it's off to Carmella, which goes about as well as you would expect with Asuka kicking the heck out of her. The hip attack has Carmella in trouble until she superkicks her way to freedom. The Staten Island Shuffle into the Bronco Buster has Asuka in trouble but for some reason Carmella decides to slap her in the face. A cross armbreaker makes Carmella tap in a hurry at 9:50.

Rating: C. This was more entertaining than good with Carmella being the perfect cheerleader (for all possible reasons) and then getting destroyed by Asuka in short order, as should have been the case. Big E. continues to show crazy levels of charisma and the whole thing was perfectly fun, even if I'm not sure the right team won.

Next week: Braun Strowman/Alexa Bliss vs. Sami Zayn/Becky Lynch. Strowman promises to destroy Sami and Bliss is ready for Lynch, earning herself a pat on the head.

Zayn and Lynch aren't sure who is going to be in charge but they'll fight together.

Asuka celebrates in Japanese and Miz translates to Miz has taught her more than anyone ever. Miz promises to win the tournament.

Overall Rating: C-. The time situation is kind of a positive and a negative. They certainly don't waste a ton of time here and you're in and out in about twenty minutes. On the downside though, this is definitely a show that doesn't feel important enough to watch. You really can just look at the results and maybe catch the finals, but until then there's just nothing worth seeing here.

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Survivor Series Count-Up – 2013: When It Reigns, It's Really, Really About Reigns.

Survivor Series 2013

Date: November 24, 2013

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 13,500

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

While those two matches aren't the most interesting in the world, there is one match that had people's interest. Daniel Bryan and CM Punk have

both been having issues with the bizarre cult leader Bray Wyatt and his Family. The two will pair up tonight to face the Family (Luke Harper and Erick Rowan), though the real story will pick up when Bray himself gets involved. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Kofi Kingston vs. The Miz

Miz turned on Kofi in a tag match on Raw to set this up. He offers a handshake to start but Kofi is too smart for that. We get a surprisingly fast start with Kofi trying to get a grip on Miz but settling for a rollup for two. They trade about three rollups each for three in a very nice chain wrestling sequence until we reach a stalemate. Miz goes for the Figure Four but has to duck Trouble in Paradise. Kofi sends him to the floor for a nice dive and we take a break. Back with Kofi holding a chinlock before getting two off a cross body.

Kingston pounds away in the corner but Miz sneaks underneath him and scores with a big boot to the face. Kofi fights out and hits a double stomp to the chest followed by some nice dropkicks. The Boom Drop looks to set up Trouble In Paradise but Miz ducks, only to get caught in the SOS for two. Another Figure Four attempt is countered into a small package for two and Kofi's high cross body gets the same. Two low knees to the face/chest put Miz down but he ducks the third and grabs a rollup for the pin.

Rating: B-. This was one of the better opening matches they've had in a long time. The reversal sequences were very fast paced and other than a few moments here and there, the action barely stopped. Kofi losing here doesn't hurt him at all and Miz gets a win to help boost his heel turn. Everybody wins. Well except Kofi but you get the idea.

The opening video talks about how survival is a must before transitioning to your usual hype video for the World Title matches.

Rey Mysterio/Usos/Goldust/Cody Rhodes vs. Real Americans/Shield

Elimination rules of course and the Real Americans are Jack Swagger and Cesaro. The Usos are twin Samoan high fliers. Ricardo Rodriguez is on Spanish commentary. Colter (a VERY proud American who wants all non-

Americans to leave the country) does his usual routine before the match before attempting to twerk because what would a wrestling show be without that?

Cody and Ambrose get things going as this is the anniversary of Shield's debut. They trade waistlocks to start but Cody takes over with some right hands, only to have Ambrose pound away in the corner. Rhodes comes back with even more punches as Cole tells us that Friday is Lawler, Colter and JBL's birthday. Ambrose pounds away in the corner but gets in an argument with the referee, allowing Cody to get a quick rollup for the elimination.

Everything breaks down with the Usos cleaning house and hitting dives to take out all of their opponents. We settle down with Goldust vs. Rollins but it's quickly off to Swagger to drive Goldust into the corner. Jack takes him down and Cesaro comes in with a knee drop for two. Cole messes up his history by saying Andre the Giant was the sole survivor of the first Survivor Series match (that would be the main event of the first Survivor Series and the fourth match ever).

Goldust gets a backslide for two on Cesaro and scores with a powerslam. A jawbreaker puts both guys down but Cesaro is able to tag first. Swagger comes in but misses the Vader Bomb, allowing for the hot tag off to Mysterio. He easily takes Swagger down to set up the 619 and it's a superkick from Jimmy followed by the Superfly Splash from Jey to eliminate Swagger.

Cesaro immediately comes in with an uppercut to Jey to set up the Cesaro Swing. The fans count along with the swings but it's only 15 revolutions. He must be tired tonight. Jimmy comes in without a tag and gets a swing of his own 19 revolution swing. Cody gets the tag and scores with a sunset flip out of nowhere for the elimination, leaving us with Rollins/Reigns vs. all five members of the other team.

Reigns comes in to work on Cody's arm but it's off to Jey instead. Roman easily tags him into the Shield corner and the two remaining members take over with the alternating tags. Rollins comes in with a top rope fist to Jey's jaw and we hit the chinlock. Jey fights up and backdrops Rollins

over the top rope, allowing for the tag off to Jimmy. A Samoan Drop gets two on Reigns and the running Umaga attack in the corner keeps him in trouble. Jimmy goes up top but has to headbutt Reigns down. He jumps down but the spear is enough for a quick elimination.

Cody comes in with a missile dropkick followed by the moonsault press for two on Rollins. Cross Rhodes connects but Reigns made a blind tag, allowing him to spear Cody in half for the elimination, leaving us at 3-2. Jey comes in and takes Reigns to the floor, sending him into the barricade and post. Back in and Rollins makes a quick tag to set up the Black Out (running one foot curb stomp) to eliminate Jey, leaving us with Reigns/Rollins vs. Goldust/Mysterio.

It's Rey vs. Rollins with Mysterio getting in a quick dropkick, only to go up top and get caught in the Tree of Woe. Back to Reigns who sends Mysterio out to the floor but Rey makes it back in at 9. Reigns' spear goes into the post by mistake but Rollins knocks Goldust to the floor to prevent the hot tag. Rey grabs a rollup out of nowhere to get rid of Rollins and make it 2-1.

Rollins stomps on Mysterio a bit before leaving, giving Roman a big advantage. Rey slides through Reigns' legs and catches him with an enziguri before sending him into the corner with a drop toehold. There's the hot tag to Goldust who gets two off a spinebuster. He pounds down right hands to Roman in the corner before a powerslam gets two. Reigns comes right back by countering the bulldog into a spear and it's one on one. Rey tries the 619 but gets speared in half as well, giving Reigns his star making performance with his fourth elimination for the win.

Rating: B-. Total star making performance by Reigns as he was completely unstoppable out there. Save for a meaningless fall over an Uso, Reigns literally got every elimination for his team. They're clearly setting him up to be something special, though the results since have been very mixed.

Orton interrupts an Authority meeting and wants to make sure they're all on the same page to start. The Authority talks down to him before telling him to go prove his worth on his own.

Intercontinental Title: Curtis Axel vs. Big E. Langston

Langston, defending here, is a powerlifter and incredibly strong. This is the rematch from when Axel lost the title on Monday before why change the title here? Axel grabs a headlock to start but Langston easily powers out. They trade leapfrogs until Langston runs him over with ease. Axel sends him to the apron and forearms Langston down to the floor for his first advantage.

The fans chant You Can't Wrestle, presumably at Axel, though the same chant at Langston wouldn't surprise me. Axel hits a Hennig neck snap and puts on a chinlock only to have Langston power out and suplex Axel down. There's the Warrior Splash but Axel kicks the knee and gets two off a PerfectPlex. Not that it matters as Big E. grabs Curtis for the Big Ending to retain.

Rating: D+. Well at least it was short. This was one of the least important title matches I can think of in a long time as I don't even think Axel believed he was taking the title here. Nothing to see here and basically it was an extended squash for Langston. That's all it should have been too since they couldn't do the title change here due to reasons.

Post match Langston cuts a promo that would make Mick Foley proud, mentioning Boston three times in about 20 seconds.

AJ gives a semi-maniacal speech to her teammates which they take as her saying she's better than them. AJ says yeah she's better because they're just here because they're not good enough to be on Total Divas. The promo basically buries the entire division by pointing out how worthless all of them are. Rebellion is imminent even though AJ gets a great line: "Get your own show by stealing this one."

Team AJ vs. Total Divas

AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka/Summer Rae/Alicia Fox/Rosa Mendes/Kaitlyn/Aksana

Bella Twins/Funkadactyls/JoJo/Eva Marie/Natalya

This is the result of a reality show on the E Network called Total Divas.

The show resulted in Divas Champion AJ Lee going on an incredible rant about how she was a wrestler and not a reality star, setting up a feud. The Funkadactyls (Cameron and Naomi) are Brodus Clay's former dancers. Eva Marie and JoJo were hired only to be on Total Divas. Aksana is Lithuanian and not very good. Rosa Mendes is even worse, Summer Rae is the dance partner of a wrestler named Fandango and Kaitlyn is the anti-Diva.

The Total Divas come out in a big line to the show's theme song because they're SO close on that show. Naomi starts with Alicia and rolls her up for a pin in just over a minute. Rosa avoids a Rear View but gets caught in a double suplex by the Funkadactyls. Mendes comes back with a quick kick to the face to eliminate Cameron, only to be taken out by a Bella Buster from Naomi.

It's 6-5 now and here's Summer to dance a bit. Nikki does the Worm and we're in a dance off. Another Bella Buster gets rid of Summer and it's time for Eva Marie who is booed out of the building. Kaitlyn only needs the gutbuster to get rid of Eva and it's off to Naomi again. Another gutbuster takes Naomi out as we aren't even five minutes into the match. Brie avoids a spear from Kaitlyn and takes her out with a missile dropkick.

Aksana comes in and pins Brie after an AJ cheap shot and a spinebuster. Nikki comes in and puts Aksana in a Torture Rack backbreaker for a pin. I'm not skipping anything between these falls by the way. Tamina headbutts Nikki down a few times but the Bella comes back with an enziguri. Natalya was taken down by something the camera missed so it's off to JoJo vs. Tamina.

Snuka toys with her but gets rolled up for two, only to kick JoJo in the face. There's a Samoan drop for no cover because AJ wants and gets the pin. Natalya is driven into the corner by Tamina but the monster misses a charge and gets caught in the Sharpshooter. AJ tries a save but can't get there in time and Tamina taps. Natalya reverses a quick AJ rollup into the Sharpshooter for the submission, leaving her and Nikki as the dual sole survivors.

Rating: D-. Other than their looks, nothing was good about this. The whole thing was a way to show us that Total Divas are AWESOME while making it clear that most of them are models who look good in little outfits but have no business EVER being in a ring. AJ continues to be exactly right about everything she says but WWE has decided that the reality “stars” are the heroes, no matter what.

Orton tries to get Charles Robinson on his side to no avail.

The expert panel looks to talk a bit but Ryback cuts them off. He says he’s the talent here and issues an open challenge to anyone on the roster. Here’s his answer.

Mark Henry vs. Ryback

Henry is shaved bald now and shoves Ryback around with ease. Ryback is thrown around again but gets taken down by a shot to the knee. Henry shoves Ryback to the floor for a six count but Ryback comes back in with a headbutt. Some JYD all fours headbutts get two for Henry but Ryback takes the knee out again. We hit the chinlock on Mark before he fights up with relative ease. The World’s Strongest Slam is countered and Ryback spinebusters him down. The Meathook is countered with something resembling a cross body and the World’s Strongest Slam gets the pin.

Rating: D. This was as stereotypical of a power match as you could have ever asked for. Henry didn’t look good here and was way too aloof out there rather than being the monster that got him over for good. Ryback is desperately in need of a change after all these losses he’s suffered in the last year.

Now the panel talks a bit.

We recap Cena vs. Del Rio. Nothing special to say here: Cena won the title last month and this is the rematch. Cena opts for no arm brace despite having to take a few months off for elbow surgery.

World Heavyweight Championship: John Cena vs. Alberto Del Rio

Cena is defending. After some big match intros we’re ready to go. Cena grabs a waistlock which gets him nowhere so Del Rio puts on a headlock to

take him down to the mat. Del Rio fights free and gets two off a snap suplex before going to an armbar. They head outside for a bit with Cena going shoulder first into the steps. Back in and a top rope forearm to Cena's shoulder gets two and we hit the armbar again. This is a really slow pace so far with Del Rio talking a lot of trash and not following up on most of his offense.

Cena starts a comeback but misses a shoulder block to keep things right where they have been all match. They head outside again with Cena being sent into the steps again, allowing Del Rio to do You Can't See Me. Back inside and we hit the armbar again as we're somehow approaching ten minutes into this match. Cena tries a comeback with his finishing sequence but gets caught in the Backstabber for two.

Del Rio goes up top again but gets dropkicked out of the air to put both guys down again. Cena's finishing sequence is broken up again by a thumb to the eye and Alberto gets two off a DDT. Alberto is sent to the floor and has to dive in to beat the count. Cena does the finishing sequence at triple speed but the AA is countered into a German suplex for two but the corner enziguri misses.

The STF is countered so Cena grabs a tornado DDT for another near fall. Del Rio takes him down again and stands around a lot before putting John in the Tree of Woe. That goes nowhere as Cena avoids a charge to send Del Rio into the post. The top rope Fameasser gets two but the STF is broken by a rope. Del Rio's low superkick gets two and a neckbreaker from Cena gets the same. Del Rio grabs the armbreaker out of nowhere but Cena counters into a powerbomb to escape. Another armbreaker is countered and the AA retains Cena's title.

Rating: D+. The lack of drama crippled this one for me. There was zero doubt for me as to who was going to win and the only question was whether it would be the AA or the STF. Del Rio just isn't a threat to Cena at all and he never has been. Why WWE insists on going with that match time after time is beyond me. Put Alberto against Langston for a while to give Big E. a rub or whatever, but keep him away from Cena.

Santino and R-Truth play with toys. Los Matadores (Primo and Epico as

bullfighters), Fandango and John Laurinitis come in for some unfunny comedy. Ok Ace was funny at least.

We recap the Wyatts vs. Punk/Bryan. Not much to this one either. The good guys are heroes and that's not cool with Bray so he's sent his monsters to show the world that there are no heroes.

Wyatt Family vs. CM Punk/Daniel Bryan

Before the match Bray talks about Sister Abigail telling him how tough Bryan and Punk would be. They're the reapers though, so Punk and Bryan should run. Bray's promos have always been strange. Bryan and Rowan get things going with Daniel firing off kicks to the leg. Rowan easily throws him down but Daniel takes him into the corner for a tag off to Punk which doesn't get a huge reaction.

Harper comes in and charges into a boot in the corner, only to rip away at Punk's face and chop him down. Back to Rowan for a bearhug but Punk fights out very quickly. Punk escapes a suplex and Bryan comes in to try a double suplex, only to have Rowan suplex both guys down. Bryan drives Rowan into the corner for some double kicks to the ribs to put Erick down. The crowd doesn't seem interested in this match.

Back to Harper who is taken into the hero corner as well before a double dropkick puts both guys down. Bryan fires off the kicks and plays Bret to Punk's Neidhart in a Hart Attack. Rowan tries to come in and the distraction lets Harper kick Punk's head off for two. Rowan cranks on Punk's neck for a bit before getting two off a backbreaker. Back to Harper for an uppercut followed by a quickly released Gator Roll. Rowan gets caught talking to the sheep mask which Cole finds strange for some reason.

Harper gets two off a Michinoku Driver before it's back to Erick for some more neck cranking. Punk gets a boot up in the corner to stagger Rowan and a running DDT puts both guys down. A double tag brings in Bryan to face Harper and Daniel starts up his usual sequence. Luke gets low bridged to the floor and the FLYING GOAT (suicide dive) takes Harper out, possibly injuring the monster's knee.

A missile dropkick gets two and there are the YES Kicks. The running dropkick in the corner staggers the big man but Harper counters a top rope hurricanrana into a super sitout powerbomb for two. The fans think this is awesome as Bray yells at the Family. Rowan splashes Bryan for two and the second heat segment begins. Harper comes in with some forearms to the back but Punk kicks him in the back of the head to give Bryan a breather.

There's the hot tag off to Punk who takes Harper down but he dives on Rowan and Bray instead of Luke. Now the Macho Elbow connects on Harper for two and everything breaks down. The running knee takes Rowan down and Punk counters the discus lariat into the GTS for the pin on Harper.

Rating: B. This was the old school tag team formula and it worked perfectly well. Punk and Bryan are good choices for matches like this and there's nothing wrong with the Wyatts getting pinned. The money in the feud is Bray in the ring with either of them and that's certainly coming in the future.

Bray teases getting in but stays on the floor.

Cena is talking to the Authority about something when Orton comes in to glare at them. The Viper sounds jealous.

We recap Big Show vs. Randy Orton. Orton is supposed to be the face of the WWE but the Authority isn't very confident in him. Big Show has weaseled his way into a title match tonight due to the threat of a lawsuit which could take over the entire company because that's what heroes do. They've been brawling for a few weeks and Big Show looks dominant while Orton has no backup tonight. I wonder what's going to happen.

WWE Championship: Randy Orton vs. Big Show

Orton is defending and is on the floor about a second after the bell rings. He trips getting back inside to show how confused he is tonight and gets chopped LOUDLY by Big Show. More slow offense sets up more chops by Big Show but Orton comes back with a dropkick and some kicks to the head. A knee drop gets two for the champion and we hit a sleeper. Big

Show loudly says “two clotheslines” before hitting two clotheslines and calling for the chokeslam, sending Orton running to the floor.

Back in and Big Show slams him down before going to the top rope, only to be crotched on the top rope. The Elevated DDT out of the corner puts Big Show down and Orton poses a lot. Show grabs a chokeslam out of nowhere for two and loads up the KO punch but Orton bails to the floor. The big man follows him to the floor and throws Orton at the ropes, taking out the referee in the process. Randy finds a chair but gets it slapped out of his hands before they go into the crowd.

That goes nowhere so they head back to ringside where Orton tries the Elevated DDT again, only to have Show escape and hit the KO punch. Back inside and the Authority comes out for a distraction, allowing Orton to hit a quick RK0. The annoying crowd chants for Daniel Bryan as Orton hits the Punt to retain.

Rating: D-. What the heck was that? Unfortunately, it was exactly what most people were expecting. Big Show was trying but there’s only so much you can do when Orton spends a third of an eleven minute match running, not counting the interference at the end. Horrid main event but I guess it sets up HHH vs. Big Show.

Post match here’s Cena to hold up the World Heavyweight Championship while Orton holds up the WWE Championship. That’s Wrestlemania it would seem, but it would actually be next month.

Overall Rating: D+. This show had its moments but they totally lost me around the time of the Henry match. The card was about the same as it felt like it was going to be with a few good matches but little to care about in the main event scenes. Orton vs. Big Show was as nothing of a match as it could have been and the interference was just predictable. This show just didn’t feel necessary though it wasn’t the worst effort ever.

Ratings Comparison

The Miz vs. Kofi Kingston

Original:B-

Redo: C

Real Americans/Shield vs. Cody Rhodes/Goldust/Rey
Mysterio/Usos

Original:B-

Redo: C

Curtis Axel vs. Big E. Langston

Original:D+

Redo: D+

Total Divas vs. True Divas

Original:D-

Redo: F

Mark Henry vs. Ryback

Original:D

Redo: D

Alberto Del Rio vs. John Cena

Original:D+

Redo: B

Wyatt Family vs. CM Punk/Daniel Bryan

Original:B

Redo: B-

Big Show vs. Randy Orton

Original:D-

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original:D+

Redo: C-

Dang I hated Del Rio back then.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/11/24/survivor-series-2013-they-had-me-for-a-bit/>

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Wrestlemania XXXII Preview: New Day vs. League of Nations

And something I don't understand.

For reasons that I absolutely cannot fathom, this seems to have been changed to just a match instead of a title match. The only possible reason for this would be the League going over and since that might be

the dumbest idea I've ever heard, it's probably what we're going to be seeing.

New Day is on such a roll right now that they deserve a major win on a major stage to continue their long title reign. The League is in the midcard spot that they belonged in and were destined to reach as soon as they formed. There was no reason to turn this into a title match and then make it a regular match but somehow that seems to be where we are. Oh and how amazing is New Day's entrance going to be? Just think about that for a second. New Day's entrance at Wrestlemania in front of 100,000 people. How is that not going to be one of the coolest things ever?

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of the Intercontinental Title at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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New Column: It's A New Way, Yes It Is

Subtitle: Chris Masters Should Have Been A Unicorn.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-its-a-new-way-yes-it>

Monday Night Raw – October 26, 2015: Something To Look Forward To

Monday Night Raw

Date: October 26, 2015

Location: Valley View Casino, San Diego, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the night after Hell in a Cell and a few things have been wrapped up. Above all, we need a new #1 contender for Rollins after he beat Kane to retain the title last night. We also need a new Director of Operations/boss because where would we be without three bosses? On top of that, we also need to find out what happened to Undertaker after he was abducted by the Wyatts last night, which is likely setting up an elimination tag at Survivor Series. There are a lot of people missing due to injuries/time off so this could be interesting. Let's get to it.

The Authority gets us going and Stephanie talks about the legends that were made last night. Normally I would ask what she's talking about but I've been advised to not drive my blood pressure up that high ever again. She introduces "the man who is simply known as the man", Seth Rollins. Seth is all happy and celebrates with the Authority, who says he proved them right as he ran over everyone they put in front of him. Stephanie is very relieved because their reputations were on the line. That line made me cringe but it's very clear that those reputations are the most important things in this company.

They're proud of Rollins and he has to hug them both. HHH talks about the problem of Rollins cleaning out the roster. Starting tonight, people have

to prove themselves all over again, so tonight the winners from last night are going to compete in qualifying matches. Those winners will compete in a fatal four way for the right to be defeated by Seth Rollins.

Seth thinks that's best for business but here's Roman Reigns to interrupt. Reigns says this has been making him feel sick (amen brother) because Rollins doesn't belong in the WWE Hall of Fame. He's winning tonight and then taking that title. Believe that. Stephanie: "LET THE GAMES BEGIN!" Let's start with a game of SHUT UP STEPHANIE!

Roman Reigns vs. Kofi Kingston

Before the match, Big E. mocks Reigns' hair and fashion sense (it hasn't changed in three years!). Kofi says that New Day is putting the Dudleyz in the past, Woods in their hearts ("Let's throw up a unicorn horn right now!") and Reigns on the ground. "Just call me Harry Potter because I'm about to make some magic!" Kofi starts fast but Reigns is ready for him and grabs a neckbreaker to send Kingston outside. JBL's hat gets knocked away and we take a break. Back with Reigns suplexing Kofi in as Big E. shouts various things.

One of the distractions work as Kofi gets in a shot from behind to take over. We hit a sleeper for a bit before a nice top rope ax handle keeps Reigns in trouble. For some reason Kofi goes to an armbar (you don't often see bad psychology from him like that) and Reigns slams him down with his old NXT finisher (similar to the Protobomb). The corner clotheslines have Kofi in trouble a missed top rope dive makes things even worse as Reigns grabs a rollup into a powerbomb for two. Big E. gets on the apron but eats a Superman Punch, setting up a spear to give Reigns the pin at 12:49.

Rating: B-. This was a lot better than I was expecting as Kofi got in some good offense and got to control for a long time. Kofi is a great asset as he can be funny but also work a good match like this at any given moment. People often forget how great of a resume he really does have as he's the modern day Tito Santana with all those titles. Good match here.

Miz has an audience to watch him play WWE2K16.

Stills of Del Rio returning and winning the US Title last night.

The other qualifying matches are:

Neville vs. Alberto Del Rio

Big E. vs. Dolph Ziggler

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Non-title. In an inset promo, Owens says the greatest moment in WWE hasn't happened yet because he hasn't been Intercontinental Champion and WWE World Champion at the same time yet. I love it when people who aren't going to be anywhere near the main event talk about wanting to be the World Champion. Even if it's not realistic, it sounds good. Cesaro grabs a few rollups to start before sending him face first into the apron. A big delayed vertical suplex gets two on Kevin and it's already back to the floor for a double clothesline. Both guys beat the count back in at nine and we take a break.

Back with Cesaro hitting the running uppercuts to send Owens outside to run, but Cesaro blasts him with another running uppercut. The cannonball off the apron puts Owens down again and a high cross body gets two. The Swing is countered into a DDT for two but Cesaro comes off the middle rope with a spinning uppercut. Sweet goodness that looked awesome. The referee tells Cesaro to get off the ropes, allowing Kevin to get in a superkick and the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 10:23.

Rating: B-. Gah I was hoping for Cesaro to win here but I know I would have been annoyed if Owens got pinned clean. This is the logical ending but it's a shame that Cesaro's latest awesome run looks to be going nowhere. Good match here though as Raw is already on fire and a better show than it's been in weeks.

Paige is in the back on the phone when Becky and Charlotte come in. She tells them to hang on for a second because everyone is interested in her after she was on Conan. Becky and Charlotte aren't pleased but Paige promises she had nothing to do with attacking Natalya and it's a new

version of her. They do the pinky swear and things are cool for now.

Team PCB vs. Team Bella

So yeah, this revolution is another way to go with rematch after rematch. Byron says this is about being the BTB: the brand to beat. I'm going to ignore how stupid that sounds and watch Paige armdrag Nikki for two to start. Nikki forearms Charlotte off the apron and brings in Alicia, who walks right into a double dropkick from Charlotte and Paige.

The fans want Becky but get Brie taking over on Charlotte by kicking her in the leg instead. The YES Kicks are broken up by a neckbreaker and it's finally off to Becky, who feels like she hasn't been in a match in forever. Everything breaks down and Nikki hits the forearm and Rack Attack for the pin on Becky at 5:27.

Rating: C-. Raise your hand if this surprises you in any way. Becky is getting popular and the fans want to see her so it's time to give the Bellas another win over them because that's how this division works. Nikki and Brie are the chosen ones and they're going to get wins no matter how many times we've seen them fight everyone or how much fire the division has been given by these new additions.

Post match Paige goes full heel and lays out Charlotte and Becky with Rampaiges before putting Charlotte in the PTO.

We see Lesnar vs. Undertaker inside the Cell. In WWE2K16 that is.

Now we get a stills package from the real match, including the post match attack by the Wyatts.

Zeb Colter quotes John Lennon's Imagine and talks about there being no countries. Starting tonight, he and Del Rio are the only citizens of a new country like MexAmerica (uh.....). Del Rio says he isn't going to let an immigrant like Neville take away his chance to be WWE World Champion again.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Neville

Non-title again. Del Rio goes after the arm to start, sends Neville out

to the floor, then cranks on another armbar back inside. You can't say he makes things too complicated. A quick headscissors sends Alberto to the floor and we take a break. Back with Del Rio's chinlock being broken but he settles for a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. Del Rio puts on the chinlock again as JBL actually mentions being managed by Colter early in his WWE run (when Colter was known as Uncle Zebekiah).

Neville fights up again and sends Alberto to the floor for a big flip dive. The running enziguiri knocks Neville off the top rope but Neville counters the armbreaker into a rollup for two. Neville tries to go up too fast though, allowing Del Rio to crotch him into the Tree of Woe, setting up the top rope double stomp. That always looks sick and it puts Neville away at 12:08.

Rating: C-. Del Rio is still a little dull but his psychology is right there. I also like that they're not going with just the armbreaker. That's an established finisher for him and it's a good thing that they're letting him win by pinfall instead of just the submissions. Neville is getting pretty firmly into his jobber to the stars role but at least he won a match last night to keep him relevant.

Ryback/Dudley Boyz vs. King Barrett/Sheamus/Rusev

It's a big brawl to start until we get down to D-Von dropping a headbutt on Sheamus for two. Rusev comes in and pounds D-Von into the mat before bringing Barrett in for some kicks to the ribs. Sheamus gets another turn with the forearms to the back and a chinlock. The Irish Curse doesn't do much good as D-Von scores with a clothesline and makes the tag off to Ryback.

A BIG clothesline knocks Barrett off the apron and Bubba comes back in for a release Rock Bottom. All three of the good guys do FEED ME MORE and it's a triple Meathook. Barrett takes What's Up but a Sheamus distraction lets him roll D-Von up with a handful of tights for the pin at 6:13.

Rating: D. This was just there and I never got into it once. As JBL pointed out, this was the losers bracket and that's really not something a lot of fans are going to want to see. I do like that they're pushing the foreigners as something to be reckoned with and they actually haven't

lost a match yet, but they need to actually do something.

After another look at the ending of the show, Bray Wyatt is in the ring in his rocking chair. He talks about the twenty five years of the Undertaker and how scared people have been of him for all that time. Last night was war inside a Cell and the red horse of the apocalypse rode in. After promising to dance with Roman Reigns again later, Bray declares the demise of the Undertaker as his resurrection.

Right now Bray is feasting on the soul of the Undertaker but he needs more. He won't stop until there is nothing left of the Undertaker and Bray has ascended to his throne. Undertaker's soul is being destroyed bit by bit so Bray asks everyone here to bow their heads for a moment of silence. Is it that time of year again? Bray says rest in peace and here's Kane to interrupt.

Kane gets on the apron but the rest of the Wyatts show up. Strowman comes in for the showdown but Kane actually cleans house until just Bray is left. Kane goes for a chokeslam but there are too many Wyatts. The real beatdown is on and Bray looks to the stage for Undertaker. No one comes out though and Kane is carried away like Undertaker was last night.

Post break the Wyatts drag Kane off into the shadows as Bray sings.

Big E. vs. Dolph Ziggler

Well this should pick things up a bit. Before the match, here are Tyler Breeze and Summer Rae, complete with camera view on the Titantron. Ziggler is so distracted that he tries a cross body on a power guy. That's like lesson one of wrestling school. A dropkick works a bit better and Kofi tells Dolph to stop cheating. With Kofi proclaiming that the hips don't like, Big E. comes back with an abdominal stretch until Ziggler Cactus Clotheslines both of them out to the floor.

Back in and Big E. runs Ziggler over for two and we take a break. Back with Breeze and Summer eating popcorn behind their velvet ropes as Big E. is still in control. Ziggler finally slips out of a slam and grabs a sleeper but Big E. sends him hard into the corner. Back to the abdominal stretch for a big but Dolph makes his comeback to silence.

A hard catapult sends Dolph into the post but Big E. goes to steal some of Summer's beverage, allowing Ziggler to grab a Fameasser for two. Big E.'s Warrior Splash gets the same but Ziggler superkicks him back down. The running DDT is easily countered but Big E. misses a charge into the post, setting up the Zig Zag for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: C+. Obvious ending but this was entertaining enough. Again it helps when these guys get a chance to space out their matches instead of having to fly through everything in five minutes. Big E.'s power looked great here but it didn't make sense for him to beat someone on Dolph's level. Good surprise here.

The four way will be Reigns vs. Owens vs. Del Rio vs. Ziggler.

Ambrose reminds Reigns that he's been this close time after time. Tonight it's time for him to take it. Reigns says he's got this.

It's breast cancer time with a bunch of cancer survivors in the ring and a big chunk of the roster standing behind them. Titus O'Neil is actually doing the talking here as he goes over the basic idea of the campaign and leads the women in the Million Dollar Dance.

Miz is still playing the game, as Steve Austin for some reason. Miz wins and loads up the catchphrase but Austin's voice comes out. Austin himself shows up and Miz says Austin's catchphrases with a WWE2K16 theme. Austin might have been on screen for fifteen seconds and I wouldn't be surprised if this wasn't filmed last week.

Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens vs. Alberto Del Rio vs. Dolph Ziggler

Rollins is on commentary and there's no Colter at ringside. It's a brawl to start with all four heading outside, only to have Owens take over on Reigns. Del Rio jumps off the barricade to take Ziggler out and the champions double team Reigns back inside. Reigns fights back and clotheslines Alberto to the floor, followed by the apron boot to Owens. Del Rio gets one as well but Ziggler kicks Reigns' head off as we take a break.

Back with Ziggler getting double teamed for a change but we get the

obvious problem of who gets the pin. Del Rio gets the better of it and superkicks Owens to the floor, only to turn around and get laid out by Reigns. Ziggler comes back in for the staredown with Reigns, who Rollins points out has had a much longer rest than anyone else. The running DDT (you knew he was getting that in at some point tonight) gets two but Reigns gets the same off a Batista Bomb.

The Superman Punch connects but Del Rio knocks Reigns to the floor and steals the cover for two. I actually bought that for a second. Del Rio misses the corner enziguri and the Fameasser is good for two. You can hear Rollins having a blast with this on commentary. Reigns breaks up a Domsday Device with a Superman Punch but Owens superkicks him down.

Del Rio and Ziggler both eat Cannonballs but Reigns adds an apron kick to Del Rio for good measure. It's Reigns vs. Owens and the fans REALLY like this one. Owens hits a superkick but the Pop Up Powerbomb is broken up by a Superman Punch and the spear gives Roman the title shot at 15:01.

Rating: A-. Well that rocked (save for the champion getting pinned but I can live with it in this case). Reigns winning is the right call but it opens a lot of doors for Undertaker's partners against the Wyatts. I'm hoping Reigns wins the title at Survivor Series because it seems to be a much better idea to have him win his first title ANYWHERE else but Wrestlemania and another big pay per view sounds like a great place. The fans were on fire for this and they did a good job of making it seem like anyone could win, even though Reigns was the pretty clear choice. Awesome match here and it makes a good show even better.

Reigns and Rollins stare each other down to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. This show avoided one of WWE's biggest problems: it stopped trying to cram so much stuff into three hours. That's one of the things that amazes me about WWE: they have so much time to fill yet somehow they manage to overload the show almost every week. This was a good example of letting things take their time and breathe for a minute, which made for a much more entertaining show.

Combine that to actually building to a title match that people might want to see instead of Kane's split personalities and you have a better

result. I liked this a lot better than most shows and I have stuff to look forward to for once. Maybe all these people being gone is a good thing as it lets the show breathe. In a perfect world they would be back and WWE would push some of the stuff that clogs up the show to Smackdown but that's never going to happen for reasons that I'll never understand. Anyway, good show tonight with a MUCH better pace.

Results

Roman Reigns b. Kofi Kingston – Spear

Kevin Owens b. Cesaro – Pop Up Powerbomb

Team Bella b. Team PCB – Rack Attack to Lynch

Alberto Del Rio b. Neville – Top rope double stomp

Rusev/King Barrett/Sheamus b. Dudley Boyz/Ryback – Rollup with a handful of tights to D-Von

Dolph Ziggler b. Big E. – Zig Zag

Roman Reigns b. Dolph Ziggler, Alberto Del Rio and Kevin Owens – Spear to Owens

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Smackdown – October 8, 2015: The A-List Superstars

Smackdown

Date: October 8, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Booker T., Jerry Lawler

Things look a bit different coming out of Raw as New Day got all aggressive and violent to end the show. They even left John Cena and a few others laying in their first real display of dominance. It should be interesting to see where they go from here as they've been so goofy but now they have a new edge. Let's get to it.

Here's New Day to brag about what they did on Monday. No one has ever dominated like they did. Not the Shield, the Wyatts, the NWO, the Dungeon of Doom or Los Boricuas. Philadelphia doesn't know what it's like to win and Eagles head coach Chip Kelly (Big E: "Chip?" Woods: "Yes. Grown man and his name is Chip.") even called them for some tips after they lost to the Washington Redskins this past week. However, now they have to deal with the Dudleys, who have politicked their way into ANOTHER title shot at Hell in a Cell.

It's time for the chants but here's Ziggler (in trunks again) to interrupt. Normally Dolph would be out there one upping every single one of New Day's jokes but tonight is about revenge. The Authority has allowed him a match against any member of New Day he wants so he picks Big E., who cost him a US Title shot on Monday. Dolph even has a way to guarantee it's a fair fight: John and Juan Cena! Actually it's just the Dudleyz. You think a star like Juan would work this show?

Big E. vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler dropkicks him down and hits the running DDT as we take a quick break. Back with Big E. running him over with a clothesline (Woods: "TRICEP MEAT! WE TOLD YOU THE STOCK WAS RISING! HE IS THE CEO OF TRICEP MEAT INC.!") before choking on the ropes. Woods of course gets an

interview with Ziggler before throwing it back to Kofi in the studio. Ziggler fights back but his cross body is countered into a backbreaker for two. We hit that trombone with Woods playing Ziggler's music and Big E. slaps on a chinlock.

It's off to a bearhug instead before E. drops him face first onto the buckle. E.'s charge hits the post though and a Fameasser gets two. A belly to belly from E. sets up the Warrior splash for two but Dolph's superkick gets the same. New Day and the Dudleyz get in a fight on the floor and Kofi snaps Ziggler's neck across the top. That's not enough though as he holds Ziggler's foot down so Big E. can pin him at 9:51.

Rating: D+. Not a great match here but it was more about the New Day's antics than anything else. I like the idea of the team having some singles success but I'm more interested in seeing how they write Cena off TV in just a few weeks. Unless they just go with "I'm going home for a few months", something big is going to have to change.

Stills of Lesnar vs. Big Show on Saturday.

We recap Heyman's promo and Lesnar beating up Show on Monday.

We look at Summer proposing to Rusev on Monday.

Summer is wedding planning but Rusev comes up and asks why she's telling everyone about their engagement. You mean the one that was announced in front of millions on Monday? His Russian accent is almost completely gone at this point. Summer has gotten him a match with Ryback tonight and if he wins, he'll probably be #1 contender to the Intercontinental Title.

Team Bella vs. Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Natalya

Becky armbars Fox down to start and it's quickly off to Charlotte for a double elbow into a double nipup. It's off to Natalya vs. Nikki, meaning Brie has to get in the first batch of "COME ON's!". Becky comes in but eats a middle rope dropkick from Brie as we take a break. Back with Fox chinlocking Banks as Booker talks about how beautiful they all look. Brie throws Becky away from her corner but the BRIE MODE (minus shouting BRIE MODE thank goodness) knee misses.

Nikki breaks up the tag but gets sent into the corner, allowing the tag off to Charlotte. The champ cleans house for a bit until Nikki comes back with a Disaster Kick for two. The Rack Attack is broken up though and a spear sets up the Figure Eight. Brie makes a save and helps Nikki roll it over but Becky switches it right back and Nikki taps at 11:07.

Rating: C-. Not bad if you ignore the fact that this is the Wyatts vs. the Shield Boys with Natalya currently playing the third man to help in the war. I'm hoping they add Sasha to this feud as it's finally starting to get interesting. There's really no wrong way to go with the title unless it's back to the Bellas, but NXT can only have these awesome matches for so long before everyone realizes the Bellas are in way over their heads.

Paige thinks Natalya is trying to steal her spot.

Rusev vs. Ryback

Owens is on commentary and he's officially defending against Ryback at the pay per view. Ryback takes him into the corner to start as Owens calls Lawler stupid. Owens: "With all due respect of course. Now that I said that you can't be mad at me." Rusev throws him through the ropes and Ryback gets his hand caught in the ropes to give Rusev a target.

The hand is rammed into the steps and post but amazingly enough that's not enough for a pin. Rusev switches up to just going after the arm as Brennan asks Owens about Renee Young saying he isn't a real Canadian.

Owens: "Has anyone ever told you that you look like Millhouse from the Simpsons?" Brennan: "Only you Kevin." Owens: "Well there you go."

Ryback's comeback is quickly stopped and it's off to an armbar. A belly to belly gets Ryback out of trouble and he stops a charging Rusev with a boot.

Rusev counters what looked to be a powerbomb and gets two off an Alabama Slam. Off to a sleeper of all things but Ryback escapes with an over the shoulder Stunner. Shell Shock is broken up and Rusev's jumping superkick gets two (with Summer shoving the boot off the ropes). Back up and the Meat Hook and Shell Shock end Rusev at 8:25.

Rating: C-. You can see Rusev's star falling from here as he's now regular losing matches on Smackdown. There's a chance that they're going with Summer costing Rusev matches (not that she did but Rusev is the kind of guy who would blame her for his troubles) and they split as a result. Ryback doesn't really gain anything here but a win is always helpful.

Recap of Kane attacking Rollins again on Raw.

Bray asks if he'll be locked inside the Cell with Roman or will Roman be trapped inside with him. Not that it matters as the result is the same. Tonight, Reigns and Orton face the wrath of the black sheep. Strowman used to catch rabbits and then squeeze them until they crossed over. Run little rabbits.

Video on King Barrett.

King Barrett vs. Neville

Neville flips out of the corner to start but gets slammed into the mat via a hair pull. We take an early break and come back with Barrett tossing him into a boot to the chest for two. Barrett hooks a bow and arrow as the announcers give us a quick history of King of the Ring. An enziguri puts Barrett on the floor and a moonsault to the floor takes him down again. This is almost every match we've ever seen between these two. Neville gets two off the German suplex but Barrett gets away before he can launch the Red Arrow. The Bull Hammer gives Barrett the in at 8:32.

Rating: D+. Neville loses again and while I could usually get behind the idea of him putting someone else over, it's Barrett. He'll probably be losing to a mascot or an actor or the returning Hornswoggle soon enough. The match was watchable enough but Neville is really in need of some momentum.

Post match Stardust, wearing a card dealer's hat, says it won't be a king, a champion, or Stardust's lady fair. He picks up another card and likes what he sees but doesn't tell us what it is. Lawler's easiest line in a month: "He's not playing with a full deck."

Breast cancer is bad moment of the week.

Roman Reigns/Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt/Braun Strowman

No Harper or Ambrose at ringside. Orton and Wyatt get things going with Bray being sent to the apron but escaping the hanging DDT. Back in and Bray hands it off to Strowman who runs Orton over like he's not even there. It's off to Reigns for the big showdown and a shoulder puts Roman down like he's one of the Ding Dongs. Orton makes a blind tag but Strowman shoulders both opponents down with ease. It's back to Bray to stomp away in the corner until Orton scores with his backbreaker. Braun misses a charge into the corner and there's the tag to Reigns.

Roman slugs away and lifts Braun for a Samoan drop but can't get it over. Instead Roman gets him in the ropes and kicks Strowman in the face, eventually Superman punching him to the floor. The camera zoomed in on Roman to make sure we couldn't see Braun down on the floor though. That's a very nice touch as they've done a great job of keeping Strowman looking like an unstoppable monster and he still hasn't been down. Why waste that on Smackdown? Roman goes after Bray on the floor but Wyatt hits him in the ribs with a chair for the DQ at 7:50.

Rating: C-. Another average match here that felt like it was cut really short. I still love how they're booking Strowman as he's going to get beaten one day but they need to build him up as long as they can before finally having someone take him down. The match was just another step towards the Cell match and I'm assuming Ambrose and Harper will be in part of a tag match at the pay per view.

Post match Orton saves Roman from Wyatt but gets choked out, only to have Reigns score with a Superman punch. Bray can't hit Sister Abigail and it's an RKO to Wyatt, followed by the spear to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. It was another worthless edition of Smackdown this week and those are getting more and more annoying to sit through. None of the matches felt important and the whole show felt like a way to kill two hours. I've been saying that WAY too often lately and it's even worse when it's something that could be remedied. If no one is watching, give us some nice long matches every week instead of the endless recaps and 8-10 minute matches that change nothing. It's even less effort for the

writers as all they have to do is let the wrestlers do their thing. Is that too much to ask for?

Results

Big E. b. Dolph Ziggler – Pin after Kofi Kingston guillotined Ziggler across the top rope

Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Natalya b. Team Bella – Figure Eight to Nikki

Ryback b. Rusev – Shell Shock

King Barrett b. Neville – Bull Hammer

Roman Reigns/Randy Orton b. Braun Strowman/Bray Wyatt via DQ when Wyatt used a chair

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Required Viewing #16: Here Comes The Cavalry

They don't happen often, but they're some of the most exciting things in wrestling.

I'm talking about the surprise challenger. This usually happens when all hope is lost and you're left wondering who can save us now. I'm sure there are more of them, but here are four of the best I've ever seen and moments that I still smile at no matter how many times I watch them.

We'll start at Uncensored 1997. After winning one of the most unique matches of all time (a three way, twelve man battle royal/elimination match), the NWO stood tall again. Hogan and company had cleaned house and there was no one left to fight for WCW. The show was about to go off the air, and then this happened (it's after the match is over but check out the whole thing if you have time).

Notice the crowd just coming unglued as Sting shows which side he's on. He was the hero WCW had been waiting for and the one man that could stop the NWO. The other thing to notice: Heenan's last line. The show is going off the air and Sting is standing tall, but Heenan gets in one more thing: "HE CAN BEAT HOGAN! HE CAN BEAT HOGAN!" For the first time in a long time, there was hope.

Speaking of hope, in 2001, there wasn't much for the WWF. With Vince McMahon in their corner, the Two Man Power Trip of Steve Austin and HHH had both major singles titles and had just gotten done destroying the Hardy Boyz. Lita was all alone, and we needed some saviors. This includes the end of the match where HHH won the Intercontinental Title back from Jeff Hardy.

Austin and HHH's heads snapping back when the fire went off is good stuff. The match sucked but this was the challenge they needed.

In September 2012, John Cena hurt his shoulder (or something related to his arm) and was in jeopardy of not making it into the Hell in a Cell main event against CM Punk. Punk was also feuding with Mick Foley (kind of) at the time. Here's the

promo with Punk ripping into the injured Cena and going backstage, where he ran into someone. Yeah this is a stretch, but I still really love the character.

Yeah I liked it.

Now we get to the moment that changed an entire promotion. On January 2, 2013, NXT Champion Seth Rollins successfully defended his title against Corey Graves. This led to the locker room coming out to try and fight off the Shield, but the three men beat up about fifteen guys with ease. With nothing left, NXT Commissioner Dusty Rhodes looked defeated. I said out loud "in a good wrestling promotion, the unstoppable monster would come out for a big showdown with these guys." Then this happened (best video I could find).

That's when I knew NXT was something special, and it hasn't let me down yet.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Monday Night Raw – April 7, 2014 (2015 Redo): How To Do This Right

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 7, 2014

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Attendance: 12,500

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

I figured I'd throw this one in as a bonus, plus I kind of wanted to watch this show again. This is of course the big fallout show from Wrestlemania, which is usually a huge mix of storytelling, debuts, turns and an INSANE crowd that will take over the show. These things can be all over the place and it's always fun to see where things go. Let's get to it.

We open with the Daniel Bryan Monster video from last night. That's still awesome stuff. This one includes him posing with the belts after the main event last night to really cap it off.

Here's Daniel Bryan, because what else could have opened the show? I can forgive his magically healed shoulder here. The fans go insane of course and even JBL admits that he's wrong. They won't let him talk with the DANIEL BRYAN chants. "You guys never get tired do you?" He doesn't think the fans know how hard it is to do the YES chant with two titles.

The fans try it without two titles and Bryan leads them one more time before his shoulders start hurting. Bryan talks about how the fans are united under behind one word, but the fans cut him off with a YOU DESERVE IT chant. Bryan: "I might deserve it a little bit, but I think you guys deserve it." He thanks the fans for being behind him and it's YES time again but here are HHH and Stephanie.

They stand on the apron because HHH doesn't want to get in the ring and do something he'll regret. Bryan takes the title off his waist, gets

right in HHH's face, and does the YES pose for a funny spot. HHH says this ends tonight because this is his show. Therefore, he's booked himself into a title shot against Bryan tonight and the YES movement ends. This was the only way to start the show and Bryan vs. HHH is a fine main event, especially given that you know it's a big angle.

A graphic of Lesnar standing over Undertaker with the caption "streak conquered" got the loudest heat of the night.

Batista comes in to yell at HHH but the boss says Batista was the one tapping. Orton comes in and says he should get the title match tonight because he has a rematch clause. HHH says he's the COO so they get rematches at a later date because tonight he's taking care of Bryan. That's not cool with them so Stephanie gives them a Tag Team Title shot. HHH says historically, the three of them are unstoppable when they're on the same page. That's called planting a seed.

Wyatt Family vs. Sheamus/John Cena/Big E.

Oh here we go. The fans are WAY into the Wyatts but debut singing "John Cena Sucks" to the tune of his theme song. I really wish that one had caught on as it's just glorious. The good guys charge the ring and the brawl is on with Cena eventually starting against Bray. The fans are almost universally behind Bray here as the nutty crowd is starting fast. Cena's right hands are booed out of the building and Sheamus comes in with a slingshot shoulder.

Off to Rowan for a slugout and he just shoves a punching Sheamus out of the corner. Big E. comes in for a running shoulder to the ribs before lifting Rowan up for three straight backbreakers, finally winning some respect from the fans. "THAT WAS GOOD!" Harper comes in, accidentally knocks Rowan off the apron, and runs into a shoulder from Big E. It's back to Cena as the fans get annoyed again but Harper slams him down.

We take a break and come back with Harper holding Cena in a headlock and earning a LET'S GO HARPER chant. Cena loads up an AA but eats a DDT for two instead. Back to Rowan as the fans start singing. Bray comes in again for some frenzied stomping but Cena hits that running clothesline to get a breather. Now the fans sing that Cena sucks but a release Rock Bottom

makes them cheer Bray instead.

Cena finally throws Harper down and makes the hot tag to Sheamus to clean house. A top rope double shoulder puts the Family down and Sheamus mocks Bray's pose. Rowan decks Sheamus with a clothesline (POP) and it's off to Big E. vs. Wyatt. The Warrior Splash looks to set up the Big Ending but the Family comes back in to clean house, setting up a suicide dive to take out Sheamus. The spider walk ("WYATT'S GONNA KILL YOU!") sets up Sister Abigail's Kiss to pin Big E and end the madness.

Rating: C. The match was fine but you know this is all about the crowd. The post Wrestlemania crowd is more of an attraction than the wrestling itself a lot of the time and that's exactly what happened here. I could have gone for Sheamus taking the pin instead of the Intercontinental Champion, but this is one of those shows where it really doesn't matter that much.

Slam City ad.

We get a video of people doing a bunch of outdoor sports with the word impossible. It really says I'm Possible though, and you can be too, if you just BOLIEVE.

Fandango/Summer Rae vs. Santino Marella/Emma

Summer is looking especially fetching tonight. Emma was just so wasted with Santino. The guys start with a dance off but Santino quickly loads up the Cobra, meaning it's off to the girls. Emma grabs a quick Dilemma followed by the Emma Sandwich before the Emma Lock gets a very fast submission. This was just filler.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar for the mother of all victory laps. Brock shows off his EAT SLEEP BREAK THE STREAK shirt. Heyman says it's his privilege to represent the conqueror of the Streak. It lasted nearly a quarter of a century but Brock ended it in three seconds. The fans' shock shows their lack of intelligence, because THEY TOLD YOU SO. Heyman reads the shirt because we're too stupid to do it ourselves.

Brock isn't here to put smiles o your face, but rather to shock the WWE

Universe and put tears in the eyes of children. Heyman is on fire tonight. Let's go off page a bit and shoot from the hip shall we? Five seconds after walking through the curtains at Wrestlemania, Undertaker collapsed and was taken to the hospital with Vince himself riding with him. The greatest thing Undertaker ever did was stay down after the third F5 because he would have had a broken neck and a cracked skull. Brock's evil smile here is glorious.

Here's what amazes Heyman: "After the match, John Bradshaw Layfield and those two other things that call themselves announcers" applauded the Undertaker, along with 80,000 other people in the Superdome ("Not Silverdome Hogan"). So why weren't people cheering for the winner? The fans should all feel empowered because they're all wannabes, just like the rest of that locker room. Everyone was looking down when Lesnar came through the curtain last night because Brock doesn't respect anyone. "HE BARELY LIKES ME!"

There are a lot of people back there who say they could have fought in an octagon, but Daniel Bryan, John Cena and Undertaker never did that, because they're all wannabes. A lot of people wanted to be the NCAA Heavyweight Champion, UFC Heavyweight Champion and WWE World Heavyweight Champion, but Rock, Hogan and Austin didn't do it because they're all wannabes. And now, for the line of the year. "Last night a lot of people were coming up to me and saying they could have broken the Streak. So why didn't you?"

We get the debut of "Brock Lesnar is the 1 in 21-1" and Heyman makes sure to say it even slower for the WHAT crowd. There are Hall of Famers, there are legends, there are superstars, but those are all plural. Then there is only one Brock Lesnar. If you don't understand why this was absolutely amazing, I don't know what to tell you.

Adam Rose is coming. That should have opened house shows for years but why not just turn him heel and completely miss the point of the character? Or we could have a bunny upstage him.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Randy Orton/Batista

Usos are defending of course. Jimmy slugs away at Batista to start but

gets powered into the corner. The fans of course reminds Dave that he tapped out. Jey tags himself in to punch Orton in the face as the fans want Y2J and then CM Punk. Jey gets beaten down in the corner and both champions are sent outside. The fans switch to JBL as Orton DDT's Jey off the barricade for the double countout. I'm really glad they didn't change the belts here because it would have been such a stupid move.

A SICK powerbomb onto the steps crushes Jimmy.

Rob Van Dam vs. Damien Sandow

This is Van Dam's latest return and you know he's getting a great reaction. Sandow is quickly sent to the floor but he pulls Rob's leg out and drives some knees into the chest. The Wind-Up elbow connects and YOU'RE WELCOME for that. It's amazing how completely different Sandow has become in just a year. Some kicks put Sandow on the floor and the spinning kick from the apron knocks him silly. Back in and Rolling Thunder sets up the Five Star for the pin. Just a "welcome back" match.

Rey Mysterio vs. Bad News Barrett

This is Barrett's return as well and I believe his first match as Bad News. The fans are entirely behind Barrett and did you really expect anything else? Rey hammers away during the catchphrase and becomes the littlest heel on the roster. He quickly sends Barrett to the floor for a sliding splash but takes a hard kick to the ribs back inside. Barrett pounds away at the back and gets two off Winds of Change. He hits a running knee to the ribs, only to have his superplex broken up. A top rope seated senton gets two for Rey and the 619 connects, but he gets crotched on top and Bull Hammered for the pin.

Rating: D+. Another nothing match here but the wrestling isn't the point on a show like this. It's good to see Barrett back from his nine millionth injury and Mysterio is expendable for something like this. Unless I'm mistaken, this was Mysterio's last match with the company before he finally got to go back to Mexico.

Video on Rusev, who debuts next.

Alexander Rusev vs. Zack Ryder

Rusev quickly takes him into the corner before holding him against the ropes for the knees to the ribs. The jumping superkick and a spinning slam sets up the Accolade for the first win of many.

Hall of Fame video.

Here's Ultimate Warrior for the first time on Raw in about eighteen years. He puts on a Warrior coat and shakes the ropes, making his face very red in the process. Warrior hasn't been sure what to say, so he puts on a Warrior mask and lets his other persona (or whatever it is) take over. He talks about how every man's heart will beat its final beat and if the work he has done in his life means something, his story will never die. There are people in the back with his spirit and it will run forever. This is one of the most disturbing things you'll ever hear given what happened tomorrow, as it's a good farewell speech.

We get the very cool "Thank You Fans" video. I didn't know what that was at first but it made me smile at the end.

Here are AJ and Tamina so the former can brag about being Divas Champion for 295 days now. She gave all of them a chance to prove her wrong and every single one of them has failed. She's the hero of this story and the savior of the Divas division. Scratch that. She IS the Divas division, but here's the debuting Paige to disagree. Paige is here to do what no one else would: congratulate AJ on her accomplishments. AJ tells her to go back to NXT and offers Paige a beating to send her there. Paige isn't ready but AJ slaps her in the face and says let's make it a title match. The fans are happy because they all know what's coming.

Divas Title: AJ Lee vs. Paige

The champ jumps her to start and drops Paige with a running elbow. The Black Widow goes on but Paige powers out, hits a horrible looking Paige Turner and wins the title in a shock. Well as much of a shock as it can be given how obvious it was.

Bolieve!

Here's Hulk Hogan to present the Andre battle royal trophy to Cesaro. Sign in the crowd: "Hogan's Cue Card: SMOOTHIE KING CENTER!" He gets the building right and says his favorite Wrestlemania moment last night was the battle royal. The fans cut him off with a CESARO chant and Hogan talks about how cool it was to see Big Show lifted into the air and slammed out because Andre himself was watching from Heaven. He brings out the thirty first man in the battle royal who just happened to be the winner.

Cesaro comes out with Zeb Colter in tow. To my great shock, Hogan shakes Cesaro's hand, says congratulations and walks out. Zeb takes the mic and says he'll handle it from here because he's a real American. He talks about making Cesaro an American and a Zeb Colter guy, but Cesaro says that's not quite true, because he's a Paul Heyman Guy. Heyman comes out and says he's the advocate for the King of Swing, sending Zeb into a frenzy. Heyman goes outside to tell the announcers how to talk about his new guy, allowing Swagger to come in and deck Cesaro and break the trophy (SHOCK AND AWE!).

Jack Swagger vs. Cesaro

Joined in progress after a break with Cesaro getting two off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. They head outside with Cesaro staying in control and Heyman holding the broken trophy. Back in and Jack runs the ropes for the belly to belly throw. Knees to the ribs set up a WE THE PEOPLE shout before Jack cranks on both arms. A powerslam gets two but Cesaro raises his boots to stop the Vader Bomb. Cesaro comes back with the apron superplex and some running European uppercuts, but Swagger bails to the floor for the Swing and it's a countout.

Rating: D+. Cesaro's year is one of the biggest disappointments since last year as he should have been launched to the main event but he wound up doing nothing for the better part of a year. It's nice to see him getting a push now, even though he's cooled WAY off in the last year. Seeing him with a title makes me smile though as he certainly earned it.

We recap the opening sequence that set up the main event.

Stephanie tells Shield and Kane to cool it because what happened last

night doesn't matter. All that matters tonight is HHH winning the World Title match but Shield asks Kane where the Outlaws have gone. That's too much for Kane who says HHH thinks the Shield are expendable pawns and lets it slip that HHH told him to beat Shield down a few weeks ago on Smackdown. Stephanie calls this an injustice and instantly has Shield's attention. Oh this is going to be good.

WWE World Title: Daniel Bryan vs. HHH

There's no HHH just yet though as Batista and Orton come to the ring. Both guys lay out Bryan with their respective finishers and here's Kane to add a chokeslam. The fans are already chanting HOUNDS OF JUSTICE but they get Batista mocking the YES chant. Instead the fans chant for 3MB of all people but instead here's HHH to start the match. HHH demands that the bell ring but, just like any villain, takes his sweet time doing anything, allowing the Shield to come out. The match is done at this point so we'll get to what everyone wants to see.

Kane, Orton and Batista get on the apron and Shield stands on the floor looking at them. HHH looks scared to death in the ring as Bryan is still down in the corner. Now Shield gets on the apron but HHH says this isn't happening. This isn't breaking down into a war. The fans think this is awesome and all six get in the ring.

Kane is ready to fight but HHH sends him back to the ropes, only to turn around for a spear from Reigns. The fight is on and Ambrose and Rollins hit a great looking double dive to take down Batista and Orton. A Superman Punch puts Kane down and HHH is surrounded. Bryan gets back up for the running knee and the Authority runs to fight another day to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. The wrestling sucked and if you think that's the point of the show, you don't understand how this Raw thing works. This was a great show as it moved so many things forward, debuted new wrestlers, gave us some major plot advancements and felt important for the first time in a very long time. In other words, this show actually did stuff and had some fun instead of beating everything into our heads all night long. It's one of the best post Wrestlemania shows of all time, which

says a lot as this might be the second most important night of the year.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/04/09/monday-night-raw-april-7-2014-playing-to-the-crowd/>

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Smackdown – March 26, 2015: Ladies' Night

Smackdown

Date: March 26, 2015

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 17,540

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole

It's the final show before the big one and that means we're in for a very different kind of Smackdown. This is likely to be a studio heavy show with a lot of video packages, but it's not like Smackdown means much in the first place. The main event is a big eight man tag with most of the people in some of the bigger matches. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jimmy Uso vs. Cesaro vs. Fernando vs. Big E.

One fall to a finish and no tags. It's a big brawl to start with Jimmy hitting the running Umaga attack on Cesaro but Big E. suplexes Jimmy and Fernando down. Big E. keeps going by throwing them all into the same corner and driving in shoulders. Fernando is left alone with Big E. and the Warrior Splash gets two. Jimmy comes back in to kick Big E. in the head and Fernando hits a big dive to take out E. and Cesaro. That's not enough for Jimmy as he dives on all three for a huge crash.

Back in and Cesaro loads up the apron superplex on Fernando but Jimmy gets in to help him, only to have Big E. German suplex both guys to put all four down in something like a Tower of Doom. Cool stuff indeed. Cesaro and Fernando gets back up with the masked man diving into the Swing. A Backstabber breaks up the Neutralizer but Jimmy kicks Big E. down, allowing E. to hit the Big Ending on Cesaro. Jimmy nails the Superfly Splash on Cesaro for the pin at 4:53. Well that was....short.

Rating: C. Total insanity here with nothing resembling structure. That being said, what else can you ask for in a match like this? The fourway match on Sunday is going to be nothing but a big spotfest so why not just have the half sized version here? That Tower of Doom was cool stuff though and one big spot is more than enough in a five minute match.

We go live to Axxess with Byron Saxton and Renee Young. After talking about all the autographs that will be signed there, we go to a clip from ESPN on Monday where Brock Lesnar officially announced that he re-signed with WWE.

Long video on Reigns vs. Lesnar with Reigns saying he has to rise to the occasion and beat his biggest test.

Another video on the Intercontinental Title ladder match but with a different focus, as it looks back at some classics for the title at Wrestlemania. Some of the other ladder matches get a focus as well.

We look back at AJ and Paige brawling on Monday after the Bellas got under their skin.

We get a cool video of Rusev talking about how he's broken Cena and how it means he's broken America. By contrast, Cena promises to fight back

for America and we see him getting a lot more intense to get the rematch at Wrestlemania, only to get laid out again on Raw.

Video on Rollins vs. Orton which focuses on Orton being the future ten years ago and Rollins being today's future. Unfortunately it also talks about Orton infiltrating the Authority and beating Rollins down. It didn't make sense then, it didn't make sense when he explained it, and it doesn't make sense now.

Here's AJ for the big showdown with Paige. She says we've seen her as everything from the GM to everyone's girlfriend to the longest reigning Divas Champion of all time. Paige and AJ both love being Divas Champion but at Wrestlemania, AJ is going to stand up to the Bellas and give them what they deserve. The question is whether AJ will be doing it alone.

Cue Paige who says AJ can't just skip past what happened on Raw. It's been almost a year since Paige debuted and took the Divas Title from AJ, which is why AJ doesn't want her to have it back. AJ says she gets what she wants and she knows Paige is out of her mind too. At Wrestlemania, they can't let the Kardashians win. They shake hands but here are the Bellas with a rebuttal.

Nikki calls them the compulsive liar and the backstabber but AJ's ability to make everyone believe her doesn't work on the Bellas. AJ doesn't seem to care but Nikki says Brock Lesnar has worked more days in the last year than AJ has. Nikki has been running the division for a year and the two girls in the ring are just like every other girl in the back. "Who doesn't want to be a Bella?" Paige: "Who wants to be a D-list celebrity and a failed actress?" Paige says they like being the freaks and geeks and the girls that beat the Bellas at Wrestlemania. The Bellas are ready for Sunday. Good promo, but why isn't the title on the line?

Video on HHH's rise to the top of WWE and how he's come to dominate the company. Sting on the other hand is the face of WCW and the one guy that has never been in WWE, making it a huge dream match. I really wish they had decided on the story. It seemed like a rehash of WCW vs. WWE but the interesting story is that HHH and the Authority can't use their bullying tactics on Sting because he's the one guy pure enough and a big enough

legend for it to have no effect. Sting tried to get away from the WCW thing and even called it ridiculous, but Stephanie decided that's what it should be about and she runs this place right?

The next recap is on Undertaker vs. Bray Wyatt, with Undertaker finally coming off a loss at Wrestlemania and Bray wanting to replace him as the new face of fear. This is a really easy story but Bryan can only say the same thing so many times without Undertaker showing up. That same problem has plagued this show in multiple matches.

John Cena/Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns/Mark Henry vs. Seth Rollins/Bray Wyatt/Big Show/Kane

Time for the token main event to make it clear that we're watching a wrestling show. Isn't Wyatt as part of the Authority kind of against what his character stands for? Reigns shoves Rollins around to start and explodes out of the corner with a clothesline. He adds eight more clotheslines in the corner and a nice tilt-a-whirl slam for no cover as Rollins is in early trouble.

Wyatt comes in but eats a right hand as well and gets Stunned over the top rope. Reigns brings back the Apron Kick and it's all good guys so far. Off to Kane, who I guess is supposed to be more intimidating. He charges into Reigns' boot in the corner and a middle rope clothesline gets two so it's off to Big Show.

Henry wants in and gets the tag, giving us the battle of the giants. As expected, this goes badly for Henry and the heels stomp away on the fallen strongman. He looks like a fat turtle on the mat. Back to Kane for more stomping and the tall men take turns chopping Henry down. A superkick stops Mark's comeback and we take a break.

Back with Cena coming in to clean house but Bray does his flying body block to put him down. The giants take turns on Cena this time as the dueling chants start up. Wyatt gets in a cheap shot as Rollins comes in to keep the bad guys in control. John wins a slugout with Rollins but Seth flips out of the AA and kicks Cena down again. The backslash hits but a second attempt misses for Bray.

Rollins breaks up another tag attempt with a sleeper and jumps on Cena's back for good measure. That's fine with Cena as he drives Rollins into the corner, only to get caught with a Blockbuster for two. Big Show comes in (Big Show vs. Cena!) but misses the Vader Bomb, meaning it's already back to Rollins. He doesn't have the same luck this time as Cena backdrops him to the floor and it's hot tag to Bryan.

Things speed way up and Bryan hits the top rope hurricanrana, followed by the YES Kick. He has to go after the Stooges though and Rollins gets in a kick of his own. Time for more Big Show but Reigns comes in with the Superman Punch. Sister Abigail is countered with a spear and Kane gets one as well. Henry and Reigns splash Show in the corner and the AA sets up the running knee to pin Big Show at 19:31.

Rating: D+. This was long, dull and completely unimportant as the only people in the same Wrestlemania match were Kane, Big Show and Henry who aren't even on the main show anymore. Like I said, this was total filler and I'm really not a fan of having a match just to waste time. They did a decent job of making Reigns look good, but does beating up Kane and Big Show really mean much at this point?

Overall Rating: C. Yeah whatever. This is one of the shows I dread every year because it's just a big commercial for Sunday and much more for people who aren't watching the last few weeks. The wrestling here was just to remind us that it was a wrestling show and somehow I wound up liking the Divas stuff more than anything else, despite the match at Sunday not even being for the title. Dull show but that's a tradition for this episode.

Results

Jimmy Uso b. Cesaro, Big E. and Fernando – Superfly Splash to Cesaro

John Cena/Daniel Bryan/Mark Henry/Roman Reigns b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins/Bray Wyatt – Running knee to Big Show

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New Column: What Is This Thing You Call NXT?

I've been wanting to do this one for awhile.

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