

Smackdown – December 26, 2002: He's Got Guys

Smackdown

Date: December 26, 2002

Location: Tulsa Convention Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the final show of the year as we're getting ready to start the build towards the Royal Rumble. We also have Brock Lesnar vs. Paul Heyman/Big Show/Kurt Angle in a feud that is likely to lead to a major feud down the line, though Lesnar is likely going to need some help along the way. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Angle heel turn and the announcement of Angle vs. Big Show for the title this week.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie, who seems to be a face again, to open the show. She's not going to lie to us and say the World Title match is going to happen because it's been canceled. Last week, after Smackdown went off the air, Brock did something to Angle and now Kurt is out of action for a good while, potentially all the way until the Rumble. She won't tell us what happened but she'll show us later tonight. Since there's no reason given for the delay, here's Big Show to interrupt.

He's not happy with the idea of waiting until Royal Rumble but he's even more annoyed at the fact that Stephanie didn't name him #1 contender. She was just about to make that match though, RIGHT? Show tries to intimidate her and for once, Stephanie actually sounds scared as she threatens to suspend him. He'll have a chance to be #1 contender when he faces Chris Benoit in the main event. That's not cool with Show either but here's Benoit to interrupt. Benoit says he'll break Show's neck later tonight but Show plays the size card. That just earns him a low blow and Benoit leaves with a smile on his face.

Crash vs. Bill DeMott

DeMott is now all mean and angry, which the announcers tell you as often as they can. He works on Crash's arm before the match and

sends it into the post but of course the referee starts the match anyway. DeMott slaps on an armbar as Tazz praises his psychology. A powerbomb and the moonsault finish Crash in a hurry.

Al Wilson and Dawn Marie exchange gifts: a bottle of Viagra and a camera. Both are for the honeymoon. Again: why is this such a bad thing for Al? Can I get some clarification on that?

Here are Matt Hardy, who was MVP in the 1999 No Mercy ladder match and always sticks to his New Year's resolution, and a badly damaged Shannon Moore with something to say. They want to talk about something destroying WWE: Brock Lesnar. After that belly to belly injured Moore last week, Shannon didn't stop but someone must stop Lesnar. Next week, Hardy wants Brock one on one and has a special plan for him. Matt beats Shannon down, though it feels like a lesson instead of a turn.

Heyman and Angle arrive with the latter on crutches and with a big cast around his leg.

Tag Team Titles: Los Guerreros vs. Edge/Billy Kidman

Edge and Kidman, who seems to get a shot at these titles every other week, are challenging. Kidman hiptosses both champs to start before snapping off a headscissors on Chavo. The champs take over with some chicanery and it's Kidman in early trouble. Eddie's slingshot hilo connects but so does an enziguri, allowing the tag to Edge. A double missile dropkick puts both champs down and a flapjack to Chavo makes things even worse.

As usual though, Eddie is smart enough to go after the bad knee but Kidman breaks up the Lasso From El Paso. A quick spear gets two on Eddie and the champs tease leaving, only to have the referee say a countout will give us new champions. Back from a break with Edge missing a charge into the corner to put the champs back in control. Chavo's chinlock works as well as any other chinlock (aside from Kevin Owens' of course) and the Edge-0-Matic gets Edge out of trouble.

A double flapjack really gets him out of trouble and it's off to Kidman, who is suplexed down almost immediately. Eddie misses the Frog Splash and Kidman drops the shooting star on Chavo, only to have Eddie pull the referee out for the DQ. And again never mind as the referee is restarting this as a No DQ match.

Chavo is in trouble to start the second fall but Eddie breaks up another shooting star attempt. Edge hits Chavo with the belt (which Chavo brought in) for two and heads to the apron for a tag for some reason. Cue A-Train with the backbreaker on Edge though, allowing Eddie to Frog Splash Kidman to retain.

Rating: B. Gah they were rolling here until the A-Train interference. Edge vs. A-Train isn't interesting but these four going on for nearly twenty minutes certainly was with Los Guerreros' cheating not working for a change. I was digging this match as Kidman continues to show that cruiserweights are more than capable of hanging with the big guys, making the division kind of a waste of time.

Here's the footage from after last week's Smackdown. Angle talks trash and beat on Brock bit more until Lesnar fought back and beat up Kurt and Big Show. Kurt took a chair to the head and back to back F5's on the floor with his knee hitting the post both times. Trainers came out but Lesnar dropped Angle's knee onto the barricade just to be sure. This would be a way to write Angle off for knee surgery, which makes you wonder why they put the title on him in the first place. Then again, an injured Angle is probably worth more than Big Show at this point.

Back from a break with Heyman in the ring to blame Stephanie for Kurt's injuries. This brings out Angle on crutches to compare his rookie year to Lesnar. They both won the World Title in their first year but Angle did it without Heyman helping him out. Kurt: "AND I'M AN OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST! WHO SUCKS NOW???" Fans: "YOU SUCK!" Angle has an agent because he's a very important person. More importantly though, he's the kind of man that Lesnar could never be. He'll defend the title at the Royal Rumble and then he'll take Lesnar down like the punk that he is.

Heyman agrees, but he has a surprise for Kurt: Team Angle. That would be Charlie Haas and Shelton Benjamin, a pair of All-American wrestlers, with Shelton being Brock's former roommate at the University of Minnesota. Angle tells Lesnar that's checkmate. This is a great idea and something that could do a lot of good. If Team Angle is kept strong, they could be a great addition to the tag division, which suddenly needs a burst of energy. The segment was long but it did its job, which is far more important.

B-2 vs. Rikishi

Cena's rap says that B-2 is the physical version of R2-D2. Rikishi sends B-2 into the steps before the bell as Cena sits in on commentary. That lasts all of ten seconds until he gets up to break up the Stinkface. Back in and Buchanan (mostly) hits his top rope spinning clothesline. Cena tries to bring in a chair but uses the distraction to throw B-2 the chain. That just earns B-2 a superkick and the Rump Shaker for the pin.

Torrie Wilson isn't sure she'll be here for the wedding. Her dad comes up to yell at her for being selfish and says he's getting married next week no matter what. After the wedding, he and Dawn are going to have a child and he hopes it won't be a disappointment like her.

Los Guerreros celebrate their win when they run into Cena and B-2. Eddie and Chavo speak Spanish but Cena goes into a rap. Eddie mocks Cena's voice and says they still have the title. This was completely bizarre and yet still rather funny.

Benoit says he'll win and then go on to win the World Title that has always eluded him.

Angle fires Big Show up.

Chris Benoit vs. Big Show

The winner gets Angle at the Rumble. Show doesn't waste time by throwing Benoit into the corner, followed by a big boot to make things even worse. Benoit chops away and tries the Crossface but gets tossed away with ease. More power offense sends Benoit flying into the corner before Show pulls off a turnbuckle pad. Benoit goes for the knee for a breather, followed by muscling Show up for a German suplex. The Swan Dive (a splash this time as Show is too close to the corner) gets two but the chokeslam is countered into a rollup (with feet on the ropes, though it might not have been intentional) for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was as good as Big Show throwing Benoit around for a few minutes before getting caught at the end was going to be. Benoit as the #1 contender is a great thing and the story of him never winning the title is a strong story. The match wasn't bad and they made sure to keep it short to make sure Big Show didn't mess anything up.

Show tries a chokeslam but gets countered into the Crossface (I always love that counter). Cue Team Angle for the superkick into a German suplex and the debut of the Haas of Pain (kind of a Liontamer/Indian deathlock combo). Show adds a chokeslam as the fans don't get their requested Brock. Angle comes out to talk trash and chokes Benoit with a crutch to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. They were very heavy on the storylines this week with several long explanations about what's going on in the main event. However, we also got a long title match, a World Title match set up for a month away and the debut of a new team. They covered a lot of stuff tonight and that's the best thing you could have after the mess that Raw has become.

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Smackdown – December 19, 2002: They're Better Than This

Smackdown

Date: December 19, 2002

Location: St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're past the last pay per view of the year and that means we only have two Smackdowns left. The big story on the Smackdown side is Kurt Angle becoming the new Smackdown World Champion, having defeated Big Show in a match that was way better than it had any right to be. That puts us on the road to the Royal Rumble, where Chris Benoit might be the new #1 contender. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's tag match with Big Show pinning Angle and then Angle winning the title thanks to Brock Lesnar's help. This eats up over three minutes.

Opening sequence.

Here's Angle, with a belt that still says Big Show, to open things up. He lists off his accomplishments but this title win was different. Angle isn't sure if he could have won the title without Lesnar so he'd like Brock out here now. Cue Brock to one heck of a reaction. Angle agrees to give him a shot at the title anytime, any place. That's what Brock wanted to hear because he wants his shot tonight. Actually that doesn't work for Kurt though because he has a non-title match with Chris Benoit. Lesnar will get his title shot next week though, which Lesnar begrudgingly accepts.

Big Show is livid about Lesnar getting the first shot and rants to Paul Heyman about it. Don't worry though because Heyman has a fan. Again, this takes way too long to accomplish something very simple.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Billy Kidman

Non-title. Eddie goes right for him and grabs a belly to back suplex to take over. A very fast tilt-a-whirl backbreaker looks to set up the frog splash but Kidman bails away and hits an enziguri. The BK Bomb gets two and the shooting star connects, only to have Chavo pull Kidman away. That's not a DQ for no apparent reason though and Eddie grabs a Gory Bomb for the pin.

Matt Hardy walks into Stephanie's office to explain the concept of MF'ers (Mattitude Followers). She's worried that he won't be able to

face Lesnar tonight but Matt is ready to go.

John Cena vs. Chuck Palumbo

Cena's rap calls the Buccaneers a rather surprising slur which rhymes with beers. The announcers start talking about the Torrie/Dawn Marie footage as "Bling Bling Buchanan" gets in a few shots on the floor. Cena grabs a seated full nelson (it's better than the same old chinlock over and over) but Palumbo fights up for the comeback. A belly to belly sets up the discus punch and Chuck heads to the top, only to have Cena roll through a high crossbody and grab the trunks for the pin.

Chuck punches Cena out but gets hit by Buchanan's change. Cue Rikishi for the save because THIS STORY IS STILL GOING!

We get a long, LONG recap of the build to Torrie/Dawn in the hotel room (same as the one from Sunday I believe) and then see about ten seconds, all of which we saw at the pay per view.

We get a sitdown interview with Torrie at her mom's house in Idaho where she says she's more proud than anything else. She's willing to do anything for her father but he's the one person she's embarrassed her. As for being a sexual predator, she's certainly a sexual person, but Dawn is going to find out what kind of a predator she can be. Cue Dawn and Al as Cole suggests that Al has no idea what's going on. You mean getting to be with a woman WAY out of his league who doesn't seem to mind being with him in exchange for tormenting his daughter? I still don't quite get how Al is hurt in all this.

Anyway Dawn calls Torrie a nymphomaniac and says her relationship with Al is sacred. They never run out of things to say and enjoy their late night encounters. She's never seen a more handsome and virile man than her "Al-sy Wal-sy." The wedding will be here on Smackdown in two weeks. Torrie storms off because they deserve each other.

Raw Retro: Rock challenges Hogan. That's one heck of a moment.

Brock Lesnar vs. Matt Hardy

This is over Brock throwing Matt, who has wrestled in 44 states,

through a wall. However, Matt comes out holding his good eye and has Shannon Moore tagging along. We've got a substitution due to Matt getting something in his good eye, rendering him temporarily blind.

Brock Lesnar vs. Shannon Moore

Brock wastes no time in belly to bellying Shannon OVER THE TOP AND DOWN ONTO THE FLOOR in one of the sickest landings you'll ever see. Moore somehow doesn't have a broken leg as he takes the F5 for the pin in less than a minute. Great bump to go with the complete destruction.

Blind Matt gets beaten down as well.

Stephanie tells Angle to clear this up or she'll do it herself.

Here's Angle to explain whatever it is that Stephanie was talking about. Angle talks about having integrity and if it were up to him, he'd face Angle and Benoit in the same night. He has a lot on his plate though and he needs good representation. That's why he's now represented by.....Paul Heyman.

Paul comes out for a hug and says no one should be surprised by this. There was no way Lesnar was ever getting close to the title again and Heyman made sure of it. The plan started when Angle suggested he could get Lesnar's suspension lifted and Heyman convinced Stephanie to let Brock come back. Angle played Lesnar like a violin (How?) and now the Angle vs. Lesnar match is postponed indefinitely.

Cue a livid Big Show to yell at Heyman and glare at Angle. Heyman says Show isn't dumped because Show is still his favorite client. To make it up to him, Show can have a shot next week. Kurt isn't happy but Heyman says it's cool as long as either of them is champion. Just keep it away from Lesnar you see.

Ok.....I need a minute on this one. So Heyman worked together with Show to get the title off of Lesnar and then signed Angle as an insurance policy to give him more leverage to keep the title away from Brock? Ok, fine. And Angle had to get Lesnar's suspension lifted because Angle couldn't beat Show on his own? If that's not it, I have no

idea why Lesnar had to be reinstated. Why would Heyman want him back in the first place?

I'm not really sure I get the idea. I guess Heyman thought Angle could beat Big Show so he bought Kurt off before he could, but Angle could only do it with Lesnar's help? Show can beat an injured Lesnar with Heyman's help but it takes Angle/Lesnar to beat Big Show? I'm probably missing something in there because this is already far beyond how complicated it needs to be. Just have Show vs. Lesnar go to a double DQ at Survivor Series and then do a triple threat so Angle can take the title from Show and announce Heyman's plan after. Either way, it sets up an eventual Angle vs. Lesnar match and that's just glorious sounding.

Bill DeMott/Crash vs. Jamie Noble/Nunzio

DeMott is teaming with Crash because he respects Hardcore Holly. Bill beats on Nunzio and then pulls Jamie in to beat on him as well. A release German suplex sends Noble flying and DeMott makes him tag Nunzio back in. Noble is thrown into Nunzio in the corner and a powerbomb sets up the moonsault to put Jamie away. Crash was never in. So Nunzio debuts one week and gets squashed the next by BILL DEMOTT. I'm so glad to know this show has a plan for everyone.

DeMott beats Crash down as well.

Edge is ready to beat up A-Train again tonight.

Edge vs. A-Train

A-Train charges straight at him to start but Edge slips out of a gorilla press. It's already time to go after the knee though as A-Train lays on it and then grabs a half crab. Back up and Edge hits an enziguri followed by a missile dropkick due to the bad knee. The bicycle kick gives A-Train two and it's right back to the half crab. The chokebomb is broken up and Edge spears him for the pin.

Rating: D. This was as good as A-Train doing half crabs for five minutes was going to be. I still don't get the idea behind pushing him like this but it seems to be time for the big guys to get their pushes. Edge sold the leg well enough but there's only so much he

can do in a story like this.

Josh Matthews recaps Angle vs. Lesnar and it still doesn't make a lot of sense. Lesnar comes in and says his state of mind is a good question.

Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit

Non-title. Benoit takes him to the mat for an early hammerlock and a very fast armdrag. They head outside with Benoit chasing him back inside for the first suplex. Angle gets in his own overhead belly to belly as the announcers marvel at Heyman's brainwashing abilities. Heyman even gets in a belt shot to Benoit for two and it's time to trade some chops. A chinlock keeps Benoit down for a bit and a release German suplex drops him again.

Angle is right backup but a double clothesline puts both guys down. It's Benoit up first with the seven rolling German suplexes, causing Heyman to put his head in his hand, as if he knows there's nothing that can be done at this point. The Swan Dive sets up the Crossface but Big Show lumbers down for the DQ.

Rating: C+. Good match as usual but you could see the ending coming from a mile away. They've done this match too often lately though and it's starting to get tiresome. It's still entertaining but there are other options out there. Put Angle in there with Edge (because Heaven forbid we don't get the A-Train match in there) or anyone else to save Benoit for later.

Lesnar runs in for some suplexes but gets beaten down as well to end the show. My only other thought here: Heyman reminds me of Louie De Palma in far too many ways.

Overall Rating: D. Really big step down here as this whole thing was about two stories with a few other matches filling in the rest of the time. The Heyman stuff is more complicated than it needs to be and the Dawn/Torrie stuff is clearly going nowhere. If you're over fourteen years old here, you know you're never going to see more than you saw at the pay per view and after that you have whatever disaster the wedding and ensuing match are going to be. This really

wasn't a good show and Smackdown should be better than what they did here.

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Armageddon 2002: Nine H's and a Not So Secret Video

Armageddon 2002

Date: December 15, 2002

Location: National Car Rental Center, Sunrise, Florida

Attendance: 9,000

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

In case you didn't get this from the Raw's leading up to this show, this is ALL about HHH vs. Shawn Michaels. It's so much about them that we're seeing them fight three times so HHH can win the title for the second time in just over three months. Oh and we might see Torrie Wilson and Dawn Marie's, ahem, home movie. Let's get to it.

The opening video has Freddie Blassie quoting the Bible about

Armageddon, followed by The End Is Here playing over shots of bombs and missiles. And various wrestlers of course. That's not disturbing whatsoever.

Raw Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. William Regal/Lance Storm vs. Goldust/Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho/Christian

Jericho and Christian are defending, Booker/Goldust are having issues believing they should keep teaming, the Dudleys are REALLY fired up to be here, Regal and Storm are on a roll and this is under elimination rules. Got all that? Storm forearmms Bubba down and actually gets the better of a quick slugout, only to have Bubba shout DIE CANADIAN SCUM and hit a corner splash.

Goldust comes in to uppercut Regal but the champs take over in the corner. That goes nowhere either so Bubba comes in for some stereo Flip Flop and Flying into the Bionic elbows in a somewhat odd visual. Everything breaks down and Christian eats 3D but Regal tags himself in. A small package (and an ugly one at that) gets rid of the Dudleys (with JR not being clear on what happened), followed by a Goldust rollup to get rid of Storm and Regal to put us down to two. Or what it should have been in the first place without the extra five minutes being a waste of time.

The Hart Attack with the side kick instead of a clothesline drops Jericho with Christian making the save. Goldust misses a crossbody and falls to the floor, where Jericho sends him into the steps. We settle into the regular tag formula with Christian putting on an abdominal stretch, followed by a double stomping in the corner. JR explains the concept of cutting the ring off, which isn't something you hear explained that often. Perhaps because it's rarely done outside of a Revival match anymore.

Goldust finally catches christian in a sidewalk slam and it's off to Booker with a very nice pop. The Walls are countered into a small package for two but the second attempt works better with Booker in a lot of trouble. Goldust comes in with a bulldog for the save, followed by crotching Christian on the top. A missile dropkick gives Booker two but Jericho gets in a belt shot. The Lionsault is good

for two but Booker grabs the Book End for the pin and the titles.

Rating: B-. So the first two eliminations really didn't need to happen and those teams could have been added to the show in their own match. Goldust and Booker FINALLY winning the titles is the right call and they went about as far as they could before getting the belts. I would have had Goldust get the win to prove he's not the weak link but just getting the win is all they needed to do.

Booker tells Goldust that he's not a weak link.

Brock Lesnar asks Josh Matthews who he is and says he'll make an impact in the Big Show vs. Kurt Angle match.

Edge vs. A-Train

Edge has a bad knee coming in and is here to defend Rey Mysterio's honor. A-Train shoves him into the corner to start before catching a crossbody with ease. Thankfully Edge tries to speed things up, only to get shoved into the barricade for his efforts. A charge only hits post though as the fast start continues. Back in and A-Train gets two off a powerslam before it's off to the chinlock less than four minutes in. Edge makes his comeback as this is feeling more and more like a TV match every second.

The half nelson faceplant gives Edge two and the announcers keep calling A-Train Albert. A super spinning Edge-o-Matic gets two (with Edge pulling the trunks WAY too far up in the front) but A-Train bicycle kicks him out of the air for two. It's chair time but Edge gets in a baseball slide to knock it away. The chokebomb gives A-Train two and the spear gives Edge the same, only to have A-Train chair Edge in the knee for the pitiful DQ.

Rating: D-. I really need more from this on a pay per view as this felt like the match to set up the pay per view rematch. A-Train just hitting him in the knee for the ending doesn't work and certainly doesn't help him. Unless Edge is taking time off thanks to a big post match attack, I really don't get this one.

There's a post match attack, but it's Edge unloading on A-Train with the chair as his knee looks fine. What in the world was the point of

this?

Big Show wants to go yell at Stephanie but Heyman talks him out of it, making Stephanie sound like a mob boss who would have Show sleeping with the fishes if he dared cross her. Heyman promises to take care of things.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Chris Benoit

The announcers basically call this a #1 contenders match though that's not official. Eddie takes him to the mat and works on the leg as we hear about their very long history together. It's off to a headlock on Benoit, who manages to tie their legs together to keep Eddie in check. A suplex sets up a chinlock on Guerrero but he reverses into a shortarm scissors as they're keeping it on the mat so far.

Benoit powers out in that Bob Backlund display that looks less impressive every time a smaller guy does it. Eddie keeps it on the mat with a headscissors and the fans think it's boring. I'm sorry they're not big, bald and hairy but try to let something fresh into your wrestling minds people. Eddie sends him outside for a good looking dive before working on Benoit's knee back inside.

A variety of leglocks have Benoit screaming in pain but he finally pops up for the rolling German suplexes. Benoit gets all the way to seven before Eddie reverses into four German suplexes of his own. The frog splash is good for two and Eddie gives a great stunned look. They both fall out to the floor with Eddie getting back in first, allowing Chavo to run out with a belt shot to the back of Benoit's head. That's only good for two as well, more or less guaranteeing that Benoit is winning here.

A modified Lasso From El Paso sends Benoit straight to the ropes, allowing him to pop up with a heck of a powerbomb. More Chavo interference fails and Benoit hits the Swan Dive, which Eddie mostly no sells for another Lasso. Benoit will have none of that though and reverses into the Crossface. Eddie goes for the ropes so Benoit switches arms and rolls into the middle of the ring to make Guerrero tap.

Rating: A-. Were you expecting this to be anything other than great? You have two guys this talented and this familiar with each other with over sixteen minutes on pay per view so of course it's the likely match of the night. I know they can do this stuff in tag matches but it's refreshing to have them just do a great singles match. Benoit was the pretty clear winner here but Eddie was more than up to the task here. That switching of arms at the end made Benoit look even better though and he more than deserves a title shot at this point.

Paul Heyman comes in to Stephanie's office and talks about how much he'd love to sign Benoit. Stephanie doesn't want to hear it because Lesnar's suspension is already lifted. They talk about the integrity of the title with Stephanie saying we'll have to wait and see what Lesnar does tonight. This has been a commercial for the show you've already paid for.

Long recap of Dawn Marie vs. Torrie Wilson. Dawn decided to marry Torrie's dad, presumably to get to Torrie. It turned out that she just wanted to sleep with Torrie so she offered to call off the marriage for one night for her. Of course it was filmed and Dawn is threatening to show the tape tonight because Torrie enjoyed it. That would be the worst thing ever for some reason you see.

Here are Dawn and Al, who has no issue with any of this for some reason. Or maybe he's miserable. You never can tell with him. Anyway Dawn recaps things again and says Torrie isn't here tonight before showing the footage. After seeing everything we saw on Smackdown (twice now) before we get to the new stuff. Dawn gives her champagne and eats a strawberry before unzipping Torrie's leather jacket revealing....pretty much the same kind of outfit Torrie would wrestle in.

Dawn takes off Torrie's skirt to leave Torrie in her lingerie before taking off her own robe. She whispers that men can't give Torrie what she can. They kiss and Torrie seems to be getting into it but Dawn says freeze the footage. She tells Al that we're going to keep going so we see more kissing before Al stops it for good. Dawn

promises they can make their own tape to make up for it and we're done. This ate up about ten minutes and was every bit the waste of time you would expect it to be.

Kane vs. Batista

Batista has Ric Flair in his corner but gets dropped by an early neckbreaker. An elbow gives Kane two but Batista hot shots him onto the ropes. Kane fights back but gets sent outside where he beats up Flair for fun. Back in and Kane boots the rookie down but the top rope clothesline misses. The Batista Bomb doesn't work though and Kane hits him low for a rather heelish move. The spinebuster gives Batista two but he walks into a chokeslam. Flair comes in for a distraction though, allowing the Batista Bomb to put Kane away.

Rating: D-. This wasn't just a bad match but it felt like it belonged on a TV show instead of a pay per view. Batista looked lost for the most part with the fans giving up on the match after he couldn't pick Kane up for the powerbomb. On top of that it was basically a handicap match with Flair involved, which makes for a really bad use of time.

Here are John Cena and B Squared (yes Squared again instead of Two) to rap about how awesome they are and how it doesn't matter who they tick off. Marcia Brady is mentioned as well. This took less than two minutes.

We recap the women's triple threat match. Victoria took the title from Trish Stratus at Survivor Series and then Jacqueline beat Victoria in a non-title match on Raw because SHE'S FROM TEXAS AND ALL TOUGH AND STUFF LIKE THAT. Now we're having a triple threat for the title.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jacqueline vs. Victoria

Victoria is defending. It's a brawl to start with Jackie being sent outside as Jerry wonders if Victoria is horizontally accessible. A superplex drops Trish with Jackie stealing two as you can hear JR getting annoyed at Lawler's jokes. The challengers make a wish on Victoria's legs and send her outside, leaving Trish to hit a

neckbreaker on Jackie. The Chick Kick drops Jackie again but Trish takes WAY too long covering, followed by a slow count, which really screams blown save. Victoria grabs the title and hits Trish, setting up the pin on Jackie to retain.

Rating: D+. They were trying here but Jackie didn't need to be involved and the timing really hurt things here. Trish vs. Victoria is one of the better feuds they've had in a long time but they've pretty much reached the peak of the feud. We're pretty much just waiting for Lita to come back at this point and that makes things a bit hard to sit through.

Victoria steals Trish's hat.

Angle keeps trying to convince Lesnar to be in his corner, including promising him retribution if Brock joins him. We see the end of the Survivor Series title match but Lesnar still won't say anything.

We recap Big Show vs. Kurt Angle. There isn't much to talk about though as Show won the title four weeks ago and Angle won a four way to earn the title shot. Lesnar was suspended for a few weeks in a side angle that added absolutely nothing to this, aside from giving us more Stephanie TV time.

Smackdown World Title: Kurt Angle vs. Big Show

Angle is challenging and there's no Brock to start, meaning he'll be the official run-in. Show easily tosses him down to start so Angle tries a front facelock. That just earns him a toss over the top and right onto Heyman, but the distraction allows Angle to dump Show out to the floor. Back in and Show continues his dominance with a clothesline and suplex as Angle can't get anything going so far.

The match is so one sided that Cole gets to list off all of Big Show's measurements that you've probably memorized over the years. The Final Cut gets two as the fans chant USA with Tazz pointing out that Big Show is an American too. We hit the bearhug that you knew was coming until Angle bites his way out. Angle chokes him down and gets most of a tornado DDT to put both guys down. Tazz: "Big Show is the same size as Kurt Angle right now!". That line still drives me

crazy and it's even worse when they're both down.

Angle dropkicks the leg out and a good looking missile dropkick gives Kurt two. The moonsault press only has Angle's feet hit Show in the head and the Angle Slam is good for two. The ankle lock goes on in the middle of the ring and the kickoff sends Angle into the referee. You can see a lot of the crowd looking towards the entrance as the Brock chants start up. Heyman throws in a chair which goes upside Show's head for two with the kickoff wiping the referee out again. Cue A-Train to break up the ankle lock but here's Brock to F5 Show to give Angle the pin and the title.

Rating: D+. This was watchable because they had Big Show laying around for about a third of the match but it could have been FAR worse. At least they did the smart thing by giving the title to one of the hot acts who can have a great match with just about anyone, thereby opening the doors to a ton of fresh opponents, including Lesnar down the line. It's not good but this could have been a disaster, so we'll call this a success.

Rob Van Dam is at the World and picks Shawn to win.

Long recap of HHH vs. Shawn Michaels. They hate each other, they beat each other up, now it's three matches for the price of one because we need that much HHH in our lives. This is 2/3 falls with the first fall being a street fight, the second being a cage match and the third being a ladder match.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Michaels is defending and HHH's right quad, as in the leg that he didn't tear, is taped up. Shawn has that weird sleeves made of mirrors thing that he wore at the 1997 Royal Rumble. To be fair he's the only one who could pull that off. Before the bell, the referee ejects Flair because THIS IS THE KIND OF IMPORTANT MATCH THAT NEEDS TO BE FAIR!

Shawn hammers away to start and skins the cat before baseball sliding HHH into the barricade. A plancha misses though (with HHH not really moving so I'm not sure what Shawn was aiming at, save for

maybe a trashcan that HHH had pulled out) and HHH is limping less than two minutes in. Shawn's second dive hits the trashcan (at least it was from the ropes instead of over them so it was a different spot) but HHH can't follow up.

Instead Shawn grabs a table but has a trashcan kicked into his face. HHH's limping is getting worse and since this is getting AT LEAST half an hour, we could be in for a very long night. HHH sets up a second table next to the one Shawn loaded up but gets suplexed back inside for two. The jumping knee with the bad leg knocks HHH down as well and I get more and more worried about how bad this could get.

It's time to start in on Shawn's back but Shawn gets in a side slam to drive HHH through the chair in a smart counter. They head outside again with Shawn working on the back despite THE BIG BANDAGE ON HHH'S LEG. Even Lawler is pointing out the lapse in thinking so you know it's bad. HHH blocks the superkick and twists the knee around, meaning they're both working on the others injured body part. A chop block sets up the standing Flair working on the leg package, capped off by the Figure Four.

Shawn turns it over after nearly two minutes in the hold so HHH goes with a trashcan lid to the head for two instead. They head up the aisle with HHH sending him into the set before finding the barbed wire 2x4. HHH isn't done though as he lights it on fire first. Shawn takes it away though and hits HHH with it, drawing some blood. It had better given that it's a flaming 2x4 wrapped in barbed wire.

Back to the ring with HHH on his feet despite being hit in the head with something that should have killed him. HHH plays Raven with a drop toehold to send Shawn into an open chair but the Pedigree is countered with a low blow. Not that it matters as HHH hits the bad knee and gets the Pedigree for the first fall.

The cage is lowered and it's pinfall or escape (I'm assuming Fink forgot to say submission but JR doesn't say it either). Before the cage is all the way down, HHH throws in some more weapons, including a table and chair. One heck of a chair shot knocks Shawn sillier and the table is set up in the corner. Shawn gets catapulted into the

cage and both guys are busted. The pace gets even slower and Shawn hammers away with right hands. They fight up to the top of the cage and here's Flair back at ringside because why not.

Ric sets up two more tables on top of the original two as they slug it out on the top without much going on. There's no big crash though as they go back inside with HHH getting crotched on the ropes. The top rope elbow seems to suggest that Shawn's knee is much better in a hurry...and Flair is in the cage because the referee is incompetent. Shawn cuts him off and chairs both guys in the head, naturally making Flair bleed as well.

With Shawn beating up Flair, HHH walks away from the open door (some cerebral assassin) and it's back to back superkicks to drop the villains. The stupidity continues as Shawn doesn't cover or run out of the cage but rather sets up another table (that would be five I believe). A splash off the top of the cage drives HHH through the wood and ties things up. So now it's a ladder match with both guys basically dead.

A very bloody Flair is helped out as the cage is raised and Shawn gets a ladder. Various ladder shots (which Lawler says is like being hit by a car) have HHH in even more trouble and Shawn suplexes him onto the ladder for good measure. The ladder is set up in the corner but Shawn misses the huge splash, landing right on his face.

HHH gets in a weird Pedigree as he has to stretch the bad leg out so it doesn't slam into the mat. The fans are busy looking at something in the crowd as HHH makes the slow climb. That's broken up but Shawn's slow climb is countered with a shove through the tables, allowing HHH to climb up and regain the title.

Rating: C-. This is a really, really hard one to grade but let's get the big problem out of the way first: there was no reason to have this be more than one fall. Either do a street fight (which was boring but watchable) or one of the other two but the whole three falls thing was ridiculous with the ladder match not even breaking eight minutes. The cage match was basically a continuation of the street fight with just one attempt at escaping, plus Flair just

walking into the cage, making it a complete waste of time. HHH looked horrible out there but Heaven forbid we don't cater to him, bad leg or not.

There's a good match in there somewhere, but it only works with HHH on two good legs. On top of that, this needed to be cut in half. It's just under forty minutes total and easily could have been about twenty with every bit as much effect. Shawn looked passable but old, which isn't exactly the best combination in the world. The match could have been better but with what they were going for here, it's a pretty hard disappointment. In other words, cut out HHH's ego and it's probably far better.

Overall Rating: C-. This was a pretty solid surprise with a few good matches (and one great one) but there's also a lot of really bad stuff dragging that right back down. The Dawn and Torrie stuff really started bringing the show down as it's not only stupid but fairly worthless to anyone with the internet at that point. You can see almost anything you want so two women in lingerie isn't quite enough.

The problem is the rest of the show takes a big dip after that with the best match probably being Angle vs. Big Show, mainly due to it not being forty five minutes counting intros. The first half of the show is better but it hits a hard wall and there's really no recovering from that point on. I was expecting a disaster though so this was a good bit better than I thought I'd get.

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Smackdown – December 12, 2002: It's Like NXT But Not

Smackdown

Date: December 12, 2002

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the final stop before the final pay per view of the year and there are two major stories at the moment. First up we have Kurt Angle becoming the new #1 contender to Big Show's Smackdown World Title, meaning the hopes of most of the fans are on his Olympic shoulders. Other than that we have the sports entertainment shock value of Dawn Marie and Torrie Wilson. Let's get to it.

The opening video recaps the Torrie/Dawn stuff from last week with Torrie agreeing to spend a night with Dawn to keep Dawn from marrying her dad. They're really not hiding the soap opera nonsense are they?

Opening sequence.

Rikishi vs. B2

Now it's B Two instead of B Squared. Sounds like a vitamin. Either way he poses at Rikishi and gets punched in the face but it's way too early for the Stinkface. Bull's chinlock doesn't go anywhere but Cena offers a distraction and gets kicked in the face. The second distraction works a bit better though as Bull hits him low, allowing Cena to chain Rikishi in the head for the cheap pin.

Torrie Wilson arrives and Jan the Makeup Lady says she's been hearing rumors about what happened in the hotel room last week. I thought it was pretty obvious given how things started but maybe we need to spell it out: they did a Jungle Book jigsaw puzzle and watched the Facts of Life.

Earlier today, Kurt Angle interrupted a Brock Lesnar autograph signing and offered to get the suspension lifted in exchange for

Lesnar being in his corner on Sunday. If Brock helps him, he'll get the first title shot. Lesnar says if the suspension is lifted, he'll think about it.

Big Show is with Albert, who is now named A-Train (certainly an improvement), and Paul Heyman. New interviewer Josh Matthews (shoot me now) comes in to ask about the Lesnar/Angle situation and the champ is livid. For reasons that I don't even want to be able to fathom, these two segments were edited off the WWE Network version. The only way to know about them is Cole's recap in the next match. Show and Heyman yell at Stephanie, who throws them out.

Bill DeMott vs. Shannon Moore

DeMott is now an official bully, meaning he and Ryback should go out for soup and grape juice. Moore tries to hammer away but gets thrown around and smashed with a clothesline. A powerslam sets up a heck of a moonsault to give Bill the pin.

Now Stephanie will hear from Heyman and Show, the former of whom doesn't want to hear about Scott Steiner. As for Lesnar, he makes Smackdown money so the suspension is lifted. Then why did she suspend him in the first place? To prove that he'll get a week off if he breaks the rules? This was Stephanie showing off her power side with the hands on the hips and lethal sneer. To be fair the look works for her.

Tag Team Titles: Los Guerreros vs. Billy Kidman/Chris Benoit

Eddie and Chavo are defending and it's Benoit vs. Eddie to start in a preview of their match on Sunday. An early Crossface attempt doesn't work but a backdrop has Eddie in trouble. It's a double tag to bring in Kidman, only to have Eddie cheap shot him a few times to take over. The slow stomping begins and a spinebuster gives Chavo two.

Even Eddie can't powerbomb Kidman but it's still not enough for the hot tag. Kidman starts wildly swinging to slow Eddie down and a powerbomb is enough for the hot tag to Benoit. Eddie gets caught in the Crossface and we take an abrupt break (just like on Raw). We come back with Kidman holding Chavo in a chinlock as we see Eddie tapping during the break, albeit behind the referee's back.

The champs take over with Eddie legbarring Kidman very close to the corner. He really should know better than that and I don't have much

sympathy for him when Benoit comes in and kicks Eddie in the head. Eddie blocks the tag though and grabs a keylock. Some good old fashioned cheating sees Chavo switch places for a keylock of his own. Chavo decks Benoit off the apron but Kidman gets in an ankle scissors.

The referee doesn't see a tag but Benoit comes in with the rolling German suplexes anyway. Chris Swan Dives onto Eddie for two (with Cole asking why there's a count) as everything breaks down. Benoit Crossfaces Chavo for the tap but the referee is looking at Kidman, who misses the Shooting Star. Eddie grabs a rollup and puts his feet on the ropes to retain. So he watches Benoit cover but not when he has the Crossface? Biased jerk.

Rating: B. It's almost like the tag team formula works very well when you let it have the time to go somewhere. These four work very well together and, as usual, Kidman proves that the cruiserweights can easily hang with the heavyweights, thereby proving that the weight divisions are stupid in wrestling. Great match, as you would expect.

Torrie goes to yell at Dawn and says what happened in the hotel room was personal and just between them. Dawn can't believe what she's hearing and takes off her robe to reveal lingerie. Torrie doesn't seem to mind it at first before yelling at Dawn to cut it out. There hasn't been one lie though and Torrie doesn't deny it. She does however demand that the wedding be called off tonight. Torrie leaves and Dawn smiles.

Raw Retro: HHH interrupts Stephanie and Test's wedding. Again, edited off the Network but it could be because the Motorhead theme is edited over My Time.

Here's Dawn, after the fastest change into a dress in recorded history, for a chat. She asks Al to come out here and confirms that everything he's heard about her and Torrie is true. Al doesn't seem to care so Dawn talks about looking into Torrie's eyes and seeing Al in them. If that's not creepy enough, every time she kissed Torrie's lips, it was like she was kissing him.

Dawn knows Al will never find a woman like her and he wants to marry her anyway. Torrie comes out for some of the most violent slapping you'll ever see so Dawn promises to show the full tape on Sunday to prove how much Torrie enjoyed it. This is pure trash but Al's

“acting” is so bad that it’s hard not to laugh. He just stands there with no reactions, even to the fact that his fiance slept with his daughter and they kiss alike.

Tazz immediately starts basically promising various adult material on Sunday as we look at replays. This really is the second biggest Smackdown story (and not that far from first). On a show with the Smackdown Six mind you.

Jamie Noble vs. Crash

Tazz thinks Jamie’s cousin Nunzio is 6’11 and 320lbs and works for the mob. Jamie elbows Crash in the face to start and they slug it out with Crash getting the better of it. A faceplant gives Crash two and it’s Crash Landing time, only to have Nunzio (ECW’s Little Guido, who Tazz suddenly doesn’t recognize despite the ECW chants) come in for the DQ.

The double beatdown ensues but Nidia doesn’t look pleased.

Scott Steiner arrives.

Stephanie comes to the ring to sign Steiner as Tazz and Cole look at WWE Magazine, naturally featuring their boss. Steiner takes the pen but won’t sign because last week, after the cameras stopped rolling in the limo, nothing happened. See, Stephanie didn’t put out for him because she’s wholesome, unlike that Torrie Wilson. Now why would you think Stephanie was on her level in the second story based on sex in exchange for a deal on this show?

Anyway, Stephanie suggests that she’ll do it if he signs so Scott puts her on the table and wants to go right now. Stephanie goes on a rant about her moral standards but Scott doesn’t want to hear it. If he can’t trust her in his personal life, he can’t trust her in his business life. Therefore, he’s signing with Raw. Eric Bischoff comes out to gloat and Stephanie throws a fit.

We get an update on Rey Mysterio’s knee injury, which is worse than they thought. There’s no word on his return time.

Edge has a knee injury of his own but he’s ready to focus on his tag match tonight. Angle comes in and agrees to have Edge’s back in the tag.

PPV rundown. Tazz says Eddie vs. Benoit has five stars written all over it.

Edge/Kurt Angle vs. Big Show/A-Train

Good thing the production team had a new song with a train whistle ready in case someone changed their name. Edge and Big Show start things off as Cole goes over Angle and Edge's history together. A chop staggers the Canadian so it's off to Angle, who gets A-Train. One heck of a shoulder drops Kurt and it's back to Edge, who unloads on A-Train in the corner.

A-Train throws Edge hard into the corner and it's time for Heyman to start the trash talk. For reasons of general large headedness, A-Train takes his sweet time getting around to Edge's bad knee before handing it off to Big Show for some knee work of his own. The slow beating begins with Show laying on the leg.

After more lifeless offense from the giants, Edge gets in a tornado DDT to stun A-Train and the hot tag brings in Angle. A German suplex actually sends A-Train flying as everything breaks down. Edge spears A-Train down instead of Big Show but the big bald pops up and chairs Edge in the back. The Angle Slam drops both monsters but a Heyman distraction lets Show chokeslam Kurt for the pin.

Rating: D+. They did what they could here but with Edge on a bad wheel and Big Show/A-Train as the heel team, you're only going to get so far. The match wasn't bad but this better lead to Angle winning the title on Sunday as it's clear Show can only do the bare basics at this point. A-Train was trying but calling him limited would be an understatement.

Overall Rating: C-. You know what this felt like? An early 2017 episode of NXT. You know there's talent there and the people behind the scenes know what they're doing but there's only so much you can do when you're this limited. We've done the Smackdown Six matches so many times and since Lesnar is suspended, you have to come up with something fresh.

That means you're pretty much stuck with short matches to build up new talent without exposing how bad they really are. This show wasn't the worst but it's clear that they're trying something new, which isn't the easiest thing in the world. They need more time and better talent but things could be rough for the time being.

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Smackdown – December 5, 2002: One of My Favorite Matches

Smackdown

Date: December 5, 2002

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're getting close to the end of the year and thankfully there are no turkeys involved this week. However there's still Big Show, who can indeed be put in the F5 and chokeslams people through tables. Hopefully we get to see some more of the young guys being pushed, which would do Smackdown a lot of good. Let's get to it.

The opening video points out that Stephanie McMahon is in charge and you better understand that. She suspended Brock Lesnar last week but he screwed himself you see.

Opening sequence.

Albert vs. Rey Mysterio

Albert has been stuck on Velocity lately and is ready to turn some heads. Fair enough, but will those heads be 8 3/8 inches? Mysterio kicks at the leg to start but gets caught in a good looking sitout

gorilla press slam. Back up and Albert charges into a boot, followed by a springboard bulldog for two. The 619 connects but the West Coast Pop is countered into an over the shoulder backbreaker to give Albert the huge upset. Well....I know they need new stars but ALBERT? They couldn't have Benoit or Angle do this and then move on to face Lesnar? They use Albert for it instead? Uh....yeah.

Post match Alberto beats Rey's knee with chair, likely writing him off TV to repair an injury, until Edge makes a save.

Bill DeMott rants about being interviewed by Funaki, who can barely speak English.

Edge yells at the medics for not taking care of Mysterio fast enough.

Here's Stephanie to brag about throwing herself at Scott Steiner in the name of getting him to sign with Smackdown. It's worked though as Steiner will be here next week to sign. As for tonight, Lesnar is still suspended but he'll get to appear via satellite to give his side of the story. At least Stephanie is now a heel and supposed to be obnoxious and mean.

Jamie Noble vs. Crash

Nidia jumps in on commentary as Jamie takes Crash down for an early two. Noble works him over in the corner and Nidia doesn't want to talk about Jamie's cousin Nunzio. Crash comes back with a clothesline and Bodog but stops to kiss Nidia. The distraction lets Jamie load up the Tiger Bomb, only to be reversed into the Crash Landing (Styles Clash) for the pin. Now that's how you make a losing streak stick: a clean loss to a low level contender.

Jamie says Nunzio gets here next week.

Chris Benoit gives one heck of an interview about how his whole life has been about becoming World Champion but the broken neck held him back. This is edited off the Network, which is understandable, though annoying if you really want everything.

Dawn Marie comes up to Torrie and gets straight to the point: she wants Torrie instead of her dad. If she comes to Dawn's hotel room

tonight, the wedding is over. Torrie looks disturbed and says no way. Dawn asks how much Torrie loves her father and the wheels seem to be turning. This would have worked better if the acting was a bit higher and if it came off as sexy rather than stalkerish.

One thing here: what exactly is hurt by Al marrying Dawn? He'll be with someone WAY out of his league and seems to be happy. Is she going to take what is likely very limited money? Or just leave him? Or is it just to torment Torrie into sleeping with her? I really don't see how Al is hurt in this whole thing, assuming Dawn doesn't try to swindle him somehow.

Funaki vs. Bill DeMott

DeMott has Marc Mero's music. Funaki gets taken down and stomped a lot as the announcers recap how horrible DeMott's career has been. Choking with some screaming has Funaki in trouble, followed by a powerslam and the moonsault for the pin. Just a squash with DeMott basically having the same character and motivation as Albert.

Los Guerreros are ready to win their matches tonight and make Grandma Guerrero proud. That should be everyone's mission in life really.

We get the Lesnar sitdown interview and he got what he deserved for working with Paul Heyman. He heard Stephanie say that Lesnar screwed himself....and here are Heyman and Big Show to interrupt. Heyman compares Lesnar to a child that needed a spanking and who better than Big Show to administer one? The two of them screwed Lesnar and loved it. If they could go back in time to the week before Survivor Series, they would do it all over again. After some plugs of tonight's four way #1 contenders match, Lesnar promises to be at Armageddon.

Cruiserweight Title: Billy Kidman vs. Chavo Guerrero

Kidman is defending. A fan in the crowd has a sign saying the Guerreros will mow your lawn for a green card. As stupid as that is, Cole tops it by saying "Brock Lesnar has said he'll be at Armageddon in person, whatever that means." Kidman grabs a hurricanrana to

start but gets caught in a gutbuster to give Chavo the real early control. Some shots to the kidneys set up an abdominal stretch but a Gory Bomb is countered into a rollup.

Kidman's fireman's carry into a backbreaker gets two and the BK Bomb is good for the same. They head up top at the same time for the big crash out to the floor and we have a bit of a breather. Back in and Kidman misses the Shooting Star, setting up the Gory Bomb to give Chavo two. Kidman comes right back with something like a reverse implant DDT, followed by the Shooting Star to retain.

Rating: C+. The rib work didn't go anywhere but it was nice to see Kidman getting some time instead of being thrown out there for three minutes before finishing with his one big move. Kidman can be a fine champion and a good choice for someone to take the title from later on so this is the right way to build him up.

Edge wants to become #1 contender but wants to get his hands on Albert too. He's not entirely focused you see. Edge charges across the backstage and goes after Albert until referees break it up.

And now, a hip hop challenge between John Cena and Rikishi. They both rap and Rikishi wins the fan vote. An attack ensues but Rikishi and Tazz (hosting) easily fight off Cena and B Two. Dancing ensues and I have no idea how this helps anyone other than Rikishi.

Angle is ready for the main event.

Edge vs. Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Eddie Guerrero

Elimination rules and the winner gets Big Show at Armageddon. Before we're ready to go though, Albert jumps Edge and takes out his knee. After everyone else is ready to go, Edge slowly limps down to the ring to have all four in the ring at once. The match is joined in progress after a break with Edge backdropping and flapjacking anyone he sees (save for the referee, commentators and fans of course) until Benoit and Angle start going after the leg.

Angle and Eddie head outside, leaving Benoit to stay on the bad knee. The half nelson faceplant gives Edge a breather but Eddie throws both of them outside. Eddie misses the frog splash and gets

hit by the Swan Dive for two. The Edgecution gets two on Benoit, who pops up and Crossfaces Eddie for the elimination.

Angle is right there with the rolling German suplexes on Benoit but Edge comes back with the missile dropkick on Kurt. The knee is banged up again though and it's Angle on his feet first. The Angle Slam is countered into an Edge-0-Matic but Benoit breaks it up with a Crossface on Edge which is broken up by an ankle lock. We get a ref bump so here's Eddie with a belt shot to Benoit. Edge adds a spear to get rid of Chris and we're down to two.

Kurt is right back up with the ankle lock though and Edge somehow lasts the better part of a minute. They both fall to the floor in a crash and we take a break. Back with Angle clotheslining a bloody Edge, who hammers away with right hands in the corner. That just earns him an overhead belly to belly as Angle turns it up one more notch. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Edge comes back with his own belly to belly.

Another Edge-0-Matic gets two as the announcers are selling the heck out of that bad knee. Angle rolls some more German suplexes but Edge, with his thong sticking out, gets a spear for two more. The Edgecution gets another near fall as the fans are losing their minds on these kickouts.

Edge actually blocks the corner running superplex and hits another missile dropkick. The Angle Slam gets two and the kickout only makes Kurt more angry. Edge rolls through the ankle lock for a hot two and it's right back to the ankle lock. A rope is finally grabbed and Edge hits his own Angle Slam for two more. He takes too long getting up top though and the running Angle Slam FINALLY puts Edge away to give Angle the title shot.

Rating: A. I remember watching this match when it aired live and thinking it was amazing. While I remember it differently (I would have sworn that Edge came out halfway through the match and that the first two eliminations took the better part of fifteen minutes), it's still an outstanding back and forth battle with the last seven or eight minutes being incredible. Angle and Edge were trading bomb

after bomb with Edge finally getting caught at the end. Edge looked like a star here and...is going to be facing Albert at the pay per view. But that's for another time as this was a great match and well worth checking out.

Big Show is IMMEDIATELY there to chokeslam Angle and stand tall.

We cut to Torrie going into Dawn's hotel room. Dawn is waiting on her wearing a robe and sipping a glass of wine. Torrie looks very uncomfortable as Dawn tucks back her hair and says how much Torrie must love her father. If Torrie does everything Dawn wants, the wedding is off. Torrie goes to leave but Dawn says that means Torrie doesn't love her father. That's enough to get Torrie to stay and we're out. I was rather intrigued by this when I was younger for obvious reasons but now....egads. The fact that you know nothing is going to make TV and the payoff is Dawn vs. Torrie tells you everything you need to know.

Overall Rating: B-. The main event more than carries the week but we're looking down the barrel of Albert, Rikishi, Bill DeMott and Big Show as some of the top stars of this show. I'm not sure why they would go that route when they have Edge, Benoit and Los Guerreros sitting there but WWE never was one to go with what people seemed interested in seeing. Above all else though, this show toned the Stephanie stuff down by a few thousand notches and it was much easier watch as a result. Good show this week but the future is looking scary.

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Smackdown – November 28, 2002: Thank You For Stephanie, Wrestling, Stephanie, Brock Lesnar and Stephanie

Smackdown

Date: November 28, 2002

Location: Carolina Center, Columbia, South Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Ernest Miller

It's time for a special Thanksgiving show with guest star Scott Steiner. I'm not sure how wrestling is supposed to have guest stars but in theory it's because Steiner isn't on the Smackdown roster. I mean, he's not on the Raw roster and wasn't guest starring there but continuity isn't WWE's strong suit. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar from last week, which somehow focuses on Stephanie McMahon. WWE could produce a documentary on the tag team scene in the Nebraska territory back in the 1940s and somehow she would be there to comment on it.

Opening sequence, still prominently featuring the Rock, who hasn't been here in....six months?

Speaking of the devil in a sweater, here's Stephanie to open things up. She's not sure if she should suspend Brock Lesnar and actually says she doesn't speak to hear herself talk. That must be her attempts at comedy. See, she's multi-talented. We know she can dance

so maybe we'll get a song later on.

We do get Lesnar's song as he comes out to get in Stephanie's face because he should be here while she talks about his career.

Stephanie bails to the ramp and has security escort Brock out.

Lesnar is officially suspended indefinitely and Stephanie orders him out of her arena. So was that a heel turn? Not that it matters as Stephanie plays a villain on TV, as per her Twitter page.

Post break, here's Stephanie's announcement again. Not that she likes hearing herself talk of course.

Lesnar is escorted out and drives away.

Edge/Rey Mysterio vs. John Cena/Matt Hardy

Matt has been to Plymouth Rock and thinks Thanksgiving is boring. Cena now has B Squared with him and the announcers make Vanilla Ice jokes. Edge and Mysterio dropkick Cena down to start and Edge adds a flapjack to make things even better. A missed charge gives Cena two though and it's time to stomp away. The Side Effect gives Matt two and we hit the cravate. B Squared: "COME ON DAWG!"

Edge fights back and hits a middle rope dropkick on Cena and it's Rey time. Things speed way up with the springboard seated senton to Matt and a drop toehold to send Matt's head between Cena's legs. Sounds like something Stephanie would find funny. Matt takes the 619 and Edge dives onto the rap duo. Rey tries a hurricanrana but Matt powerbombs him down and grabs the ropes for the pin.

Rating: C. Is there a reason Hardy was in this and not just Cena and Buchanan? I like the idea of making a new team and having two guys who have been working hard in the last few weeks get a win is always a good thing. Edge and Mysterio are a made team for the moment, though I'm not sure how much longer they're actually going to be together. Not a bad little match.

Kurt Angle asks Stephanie if she's ok. So she's funny, a song and dance woman, bossy and in need of attention? Anyway she doesn't like this town and thinks they should love her for bringing them Scott Steiner. Angle brings up his Tag Team Title match tonight when he

teams with Chris Benoit. Stephanie asks if everything has to be about him and then brings up her monthly issues (Aunt Flo is mentioned). Kurt doesn't get it and, again, THIS WASN'T FUNNY.

Lesnar has been rumored to be seen coming back to the arena. He left in an SUV so Marc Lloyd goes up to a limo, thinking it's Brock. It's actually Steiner, who flexes instead of talking.

Tajiri vs. Chuck Palumbo

Uh...sure. Tajiri kicks him in the head as Miller talks about his Aunt Flo visiting as well. Chuck's right hand has no effect so Tajiri kicks him in the head again. A chinlock doesn't get Tajiri very far and the handspring is countered into something like a belly to back suplex. Why has no one ever tried just stepping to the side and letting him crash? Palumbo gets smart and takes the knee out before grabbing a reverse Boston crab. Tajiri makes the rope and uses the mist, setting up the Buzzsaw Kick for the pin.

Rating: D. I always liked Palumbo and the reverse Boston crab could have been a decent finisher but you're only going to get so far as Chuck Palumbo: guy in trunks. This was one heck of a random match but maybe there's a big chunk of the roster gone due to the holiday. Nothing match but at least Tajiri won.

Stephanie fixes herself up for Steiner but gets the Fabulous Moolah again. The boss insults Columbia until Moolah, who Stephanie calls Lil, comes in. I guess this is like when she was BEST FRIENDS with Andre the Giant and she made sure to tell us about it. Why do I have a feeling she was front and center in anything they put out about Andre too? For reasons of something stupid later on, Stephanie puts Moolah in a match.

Lloyd asks a ticket scalper if he sold Lesnar a ticket but can't get anywhere. This show is really, really stupid so far.

Matt stops Paul Heyman and Big Show and says he's the reason Lesnar got suspended.

Torrie Wilson is dressed as an Indian for a fashion show when she runs into Kidman. She doesn't know what a pilgrim fashion show is

but will do whatever it takes to get closer to hurting Dawn Marie.

Miller emcees the fashion show in the role that would usually be filled by Tazz (off due to a family emergency). There's a table of food behind him and I might as well hit fast forward already. Torrie is dressed as an Indian and Dawn is....a stereotypical hot secretary who is supposed to look like a pilgrim because her outfit is black with white trim. A person in a turkey suit comes out and of course it's Al Wilson. Al starts talking about how much he loves Thanksgiving so Cole literally screams for help. Wilson talks about "my little pookins" but Miller calls him a jive turkey.

Torrie takes off her coat to reveal a bikini and Dawn just dances. The catfight ensues and food goes into various faces. Torrie puts a pumpkin on Dawn's head and we get a REALLY obvious fake Torrie chant. You know, it's impressive but they've managed to make a feud involving gorgeous women in swimsuits/lingerie a nightmare to watch. I'm not sure who could possibly make that happen but it's certainly not Stephanie.

Tag Team Titles: Kurt Angle/Chris Benoit vs. Los Guerreros

Eddie and Chavo are defending. Benoit starts with Chavo and elbows him into the corner as they seem to have a lot of time. The champs bail to the floor but Angle and Benoit argue instead of following up. Eddie comes back in to headlock Angle, who snaps off a powerslam. Benoit grabs a German suplex on Chavo but Angle doesn't like him getting in the ring. With the argument ensuing, the champs walk up the ramp for the countout, only to have the referee say the match isn't ending that way. How dare he take the match into his own hands like that. What a maverick.

Back from a break with Eddie putting Benoit in a seated abdominal stretch as the pace has slowed a lot. Benoit sends Chavo into his uncle and grabs a Crossface, only to have Eddie make a quick save. We hit the chinlock The fans want Angle as the champs hit a double suplex. Eddie's slingshot hilo doesn't quite work as Benoit throws him to the side and suplexes Chavo. Now it's off to Angle for the suplexes, only to have Benoit tag himself back in for some rolling

German suplexes of his own.

The Swan Dive only gets two but Eddie hits Angle low. The frog splash only hits mat and it's back to back Angle Slams to drop the champs. Benoit Crossfaces Eddie but Angle breaks it up and puts on the ankle lock instead. Finally they compromise and put on a double submission, which is broken up by the overzealous referee. That means a ref bump, allowing Chavo to put Benoit down. Chavo's frog splash gives Eddie two so he belts Benoit in the head for the pin to retain.

Rating: B+. This is still the go to match for Smackdown and that's still a very good thing. Benoit and Angle bickering needs to go somewhere soon though as you can only have them fight so many times before it stops meaning anything. Eddie and Chavo stealing another win fits them so well, though I could go for something other than the belt shot for the pin.

Nidia is glad Jamie Noble didn't call his cousin Nunzio when Scott Steiner comes up. Scott won't shake his hands but will grab a good sized piece of Nidia's, shall we say, hip area.

Post break Nidia and Noble are in the ring with Jamie calling out Steiner. A posedown ensues and Noble is subsequently destroyed. Steiner makes sure to get another grab of Nidia before saying he hasn't decided on Raw or Smackdown.

It's time for MORE STEPHANIE with Heyman coming in to say Show will defend against Lesnar tonight. Stephanie already has a title defense for Show tonight though, against someone of championship status. Normally that would interest me but tonight it means he'll be facing Moolah because that would be the dumbest thing they could do.

Cruiserweight Title: Billy Kidman vs. Crash

Billy is defending but gets pulled to the floor to start for an elbow to the face. Back in and Kidman scores with the fireman's carry into a backbreaker, only to have Crash roll through a high crossbody for two. Kidman's headscissors is countered into a reverse powerbomb (always thought that could be a solid finisher) and a

Bodog gets two. Not that it matters as Kidman pops back up with a quick BK Bomb. The shooting star retains the title.

Rating: C+. I liked the match but not so much on the booking. Crash looked better than he has in a long time, which really doesn't do much for Kidman. This was your standard "let them do moves to each other for a few minutes because we don't have time to let them have a longer match", which isn't exactly the most thrilling thing in the world. Good enough match but as usual, it doesn't mean anything for either guy.

Big Show and Moolah (good thing she brought her gear) are coming to the ring because OF COURSE this is what they're doing.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Fabulous Moolah

Moolah, challenging here (in case you're REALLY slow) and hides in the corner to start. Heyman jumps on the apron and talks about how awesome Moolah is before saying Show sees her as Brock Lesnar. Moolah is grabbed by the throat but Lesnar comes through the crowd for the save. An F5 through the table knocks Show cold so Lesnar can go after Heyman. Actually never mind because STEPHANIE IS HERE AGAIN, this time with security to stop the suspended Lesnar to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. The tag match and Torrie in her costume alone save this thing as they were clearly putting it in the deep freeze due to the holiday. Big Show vs. Lesnar is a really weird feud as they're still feuding but can't actually have a match together due to whatever their reason is at the moment. Somehow that leaves us with Big Show vs. Moolah because that's as good as it gets around here.

That leaves us with the major problem: WAY too much Stephanie. I have no idea who thinks we need to see this much of her, let alone hear about her various physical issues. How does that make me want to watch next week, buy a pay per view, or go to a show? This felt more like Stephanie vs. Brock which went to a draw at worst. Really weak show this week and just being Thanksgiving isn't enough of an excuse.

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Main Event – April 20, 2017: The Main Event Brand

Main Event

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're back to the recap show with wrestling attached and odds are that means more Titus O'Neil. Now that one of the main players on this show is now #1 contender to the Smackdown World Title, maybe now O'Neil is ready to take his place. You can almost guess what's going to be on this show so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Curtis Axel vs. Titus O'Neil

Axel gets thrown into the corner but comes right back out and unloads with right hands and forearms. That earns him a big chop to the chest for two and Titus grabs a chinlock. Curtis makes his comeback including a dropkick and the Hennig necksnap for two, only to get caught in a quick Clash of the Titus for the pin at 4:23.

Rating: D. This is the new reality people: Titus O'Neil is being treated as a star on this show. I really don't know why they're pushing this schnook when it's pretty clear that we've reached the apex of his potential, which really wasn't all that good in the first place. Axel continues to languish and that makes me rather sad as he had so much potential.

From Raw.

Here are Miz and Maryse for MizTV. Miz starts talking about the Superstar Shakeup but gets cut off by Dean Ambrose, the scheduled guest, before he can get very far. Ambrose sucks up to the Ohio crowd before ripping on Miz's gear. Miz doesn't want to hear it because he's done everything he can to make the people in that locker room look like superstars while Ambrose makes them look like regular wrestlers.

It doesn't matter though because people love Ambrose, who was #1 pick in the Draft and was WWE Champion at Summerslam. Then Dean wasted all that momentum when he was on the Kickoff Show six months later. Ambrose doesn't care what he looks like because he loves coming out here in front of twenty people or a hundred thousand.

That's why he's the Intercontinental Champion, which he beat Miz for in the first place. Maryse says the title doesn't make the man so Dean asks her to hold the mic. As Miz goes on another rant, Dean empties his pockets and takes his jacket off before hammering Miz down. Dirty Deeds doesn't work though and Miz and Maryse run.

Again with the Raw.

Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Winner gets Bayley at Payback. Nia cleans house to start but Bliss bails to the floor, allowing Mickie and Sasha to dropkick Nia outside. Sasha gets the better of it and sends Mickie outside for a dive onto all three as we take a break. Back with Alexa in control until she charges into a slam from Nia.

Jax slams all three on top of each other before swinging Mickie around in a cobra clutch. It's off to a bearhug on Banks with Nia easily suplexing her way out of Sasha's guillotine counter. Mickie armbars her way out of a choke but Nia throws her at Sasha in the corner. Alexa goes up top to try a dropkick but thinks twice when Nia stares her down. A missed charge sends Nia into the post,

allowing everyone else to hammer on each other.

The double knees in the corner get two on Bliss with Nia making the save. Mickie gets pulled outside as well and it's down to Sasha vs. Alexa. James has to break up a Bank Statement but here's Nia to knock Mickie off the top. The Samoan drop plants Banks but Bliss runs in for the 13:44.

Rating: C+. The time brings this one down a bit though it was a lot of fun until the end. Bliss winning, especially in her hometown, is a nice touch though they need to stop having Jax get THIS close, only to slip up after dominating everything in sight. It's the right call though as Banks vs. Bayley is still going to be a major showdown one day in the future.

Gran Metalik/Lince Dorado vs. Tony Nese/Ariya Daivari

Dorado climbs over Ariya to start and grabs a sunset flip for two before it's off to both partners. Metalik does his rope walking into a top rope elbow for two of his own, only to get taken down and sent into the barricade. Back from a break with Metalik in trouble off a neck crank.

Metalik fights up and grabs a tornado DDT to set up the hot tag. Daivari cuts Dorado off with a spinebuster but eats a handspring Stunner. The masked ones get creative with stereo moonsaults to the floor, dropping Nese and Daivari in a big crash. Back in and Dorado is shoved off the top, setting up the hammerlock clothesline to give Daivari the pin at 10:11.

Rating: C. Pretty standard cruiserweight tag which is all you can expect around here. Some combination of about six cruiserweights are always filling in the second match on this show and that gets very tiring. At least the matches are usually entertaining, which is more than you can say for a lot of the Main Event stuff.

We look back at Braun Strowman's amazing destruction of Roman Reigns, including the ambulance spot.

We wrap it up with the end of Strowman vs. Big Show with the ring imploding.

Overall Rating: C-. Very skippable show here as the Superstar Shakeup is just starting to take effect. As is the case 90% of the time, the Raw highlights mean far more than the wrestling, which really needs a shakeup of its own. A few weeks back we had New Day

and then Big Cass on some shows. Would it really kill them to let a midcard act show up every week or two? It can't be that hard. Anyway, pretty standard Main Event this week, which could mean different things for different viewers.

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Smackdown – November 21, 2002: The Big Stupid Coward

Smackdown

Date: November 21, 2002

Location: Hartford Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in the Big Show era now as he defeated Brock Lesnar to win the Smackdown World Title at Survivor Series. Hopefully this one doesn't last too long as I'm not sure I can handle sitting through it.

Unless Lesnar gets a rematch, it would make sense to have one of those tag guys get the next shot as they've been the hottest thing in the company for months. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Brock Lesnar's WWE career leading into his feud with Big Show. Paul Heyman is prominently featured, setting up his heel turn at the pay per view.

Lesnar is waiting for Big Show. What is with wrestlers always arriving late? It seems to happen every week.

Opening sequence.

Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Mysterio starts fast with the dropkicks and a headscissors for good measure. A trip to the floor seems to clear Jamie's head as he sends Rey into the buckle and dropkicks him in the back of the mask. Rey keeps up the trend with a dropkick and a flapjack for two. The 619 looks to set up the West Coast Pop but Rey has to go after an interfering Nidia.

Back in and Jamie throws Rey into the air, only to have Mysterio springboard right into the hurricanrana for the pin. I remember taping this show and thinking that was so cool I actually showed it to a friend. Jamie standing there waiting on Mysterio to bounce back and looking up so he can take the hurricanrana doesn't help but it's still cool enough.

Lesnar is still angrily waiting and goes into the locker room. For some reason Matt Hardy thinks it's a good idea to give him some criticism. Maybe if Brock had a few more Mattributes, he wouldn't have suffered such an unfortunate twist of fate. Matt is then thrown through a wall, leaving a hole so big that Crash Holly can be seen on the other side.

Post break, Stephanie comes to check on Matt. Eddie Guerrero tells her that Brock did it, which surprises Stephanie. So wait: not only is she not watching the show but she sees a grown man thrown through a wall and doesn't ask WHAT HAPPENED HERE? Basically everyone is scared of Lesnar so Stephanie will take care of him. Eddie asks if Brock will listen to a woman, setting Stephanie up for exactly the response you would expect from her.

Noble doesn't know what to do but decides to call his crazy cousin Nunzio. Nidia is very worried about this choice.

Stephanie says Lesnar can have a rematch when he's healed up but he's suspended if he attacks anyone else. Somehow this takes a

minute and a half because of that weird way Stephanie speaks.

Cruiserweight Title: Billy Kidman vs. Tajiri

Maybe the winner gets Torrie. Kidman is defending and offers an early handshake, earning himself a hard kick to the head. More kicks get more two counts before Tajiri mixes it up with the Tarantula. Kidman seems to hurt his head on a hurricanrana so Tajiri makes it worse with another kick to the head. The announcers find ways to praise Stephanie as Kidman gets in a spinebuster, followed by the shooting star to retain.

Rating: C. My head is hurting from those kicks as Tajiri was blasting Kidman every time. That's why I like Tajiri so much: he's not going to shift from that one idea very often but he does that thing very well. He doesn't try to do anything out of his wheelhouse and it still works. It's like Rhyno, which is why they've both had such long careers.

Chris Benoit vs. Chavo Guerrero

Eddie is ejected before the bell, just in case Chavo thought he had any chance. Benoit starts fast by sending Chavo chest first into the corner but can only hit one German suplex. A gutbuster drops Benoit and his shoulder goes into the post as Chavo takes his pick of the body parts.

Not that it matters as Benoit SNAPS him down into a Crossface attempt but Chavo makes the ropes. Back in and Benoit rolls three straight German suplexes to set up the Swan Dive for two. Benoit is so annoyed that he allows Chavo to fire some shoulders into the ribs. Chavo tries a springboard clothesline but dives straight into the Crossface for the tap.

Rating: C+. This made perfect sense as Chavo tried everything he could but just wasn't in Benoit's league. Seeing Benoit grab the suplexes and the Crossface from pretty much wherever he wanted made him look awesome with the hold looking better than it has in a long time. Chavo tried here but was in over his head, which made for a good story.

Stephanie tells Lesnar to stay in the back while Heyman and Show go to the ring. If Lesnar goes to the ring, she'll suspend him.

Here's Heyman, coming out to Lesnar's music and wearing the title, complete with the bounce on the stage. Cole: "I think Heyman is mocking Lesnar." Heyman talks about having the it factor that separates you from the rest of the locker room, which applies to himself of course. He prepared Lesnar for everything he was going to do and is responsible for all of his successes.

Then the monster stopped listening to Dr. Frankenstein because it takes more than physical attributes to be on top of the mountain. He orchestrated the greatest inside job in sports entertainment history (How can anyone hear that wording and think it sounds good?) and look at the success he's created.

Here's Big Show, with Heyman kneeling down to hand him the title. Show thanks Lesnar for the opportunity and heaps praise on Heyman. Edge has a shot later tonight but there's no way he's losing the title just yet. Oh and one more thing: Lesnar is officially fired and there's a no rematch clause in the contract. As they go to leave, here's Lesnar with a chair to lay Show out. The worst part is Lesnar running right at him and Show turning around to run. So he's big, stupid, and a coward. Sounds like your typical heel champion.

During the break, Stephanie yells at Lesnar some more because that's what she gets to do.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Kurt Angle

During the entrances, Cole announces next week as "an all new Smackdown with special guest star Scott Steiner." Just in case you thought it was a rerun with Milton Berle. Chavo is ejected as well so we can have consistent refereeing for once. An early headlock sends Eddie outside as thinks slow down.

Back in and Angle busts out a monkey flip of all things before a suplex puts Eddie outside again. Angle follows this time and gets sent back first into the steps as Eddie cheats to take over. Eddie does the old "grab two chairs so the stupid referee only sees one",

allowing him to smack Angle in the back with the other. A northern lights suplex gets two as the dumb fans chant USA. Thankfully Cole points out that Eddie is from Texas as we hit the camel clutch.

Angle gets a DDT for a breather and here's Chavo to watch from the stage. We hit the rolling German suplexes until a low blow breaks Angle's momentum. As I wonder how the referee didn't see that, Chavo comes down and gets in a few stomps. Cue Benoit to just stare at Chavo, even as he goes down to stomp on Angle some more. They trade submission attempts until Angle throws him with a release German suplex. Chavo gets forearmed off the apron, leaving Angle to run the corner for a super Angle Slam and the pin.

Rating: B. Like these two aren't going to have a really good match. The Benoit stuff adds a new layer to the story and you can feel the big Angle vs. Benoit feud building very nicely. Eddie and Chavo getting beaten up like this is fine as all they have to do is hold up the belts again and everything will be back to normal. Good match here, filling the quota for the week.

Angle gives Chavo the ankle lock post match as the champs are easily dispatched. Benoit offers Kurt some applause.

We look at Scott Steiner beating up Christopher Nowinski and Matt Hardy. Nowinski is one thing but Hardy's role in that segment is just dumb.

Edge is ready for Big Show but Funaki thinks Show is like Godzilla. That makes Edge King Kong but he's willing to fight for the title.

Another Raw moment: This is Your Life Rock. That's still amazing.

John Cena vs. Rikishi

Actually hang on a second as Dawn Marie and Al Wilson come out to invite us to their wedding. The match is joined in progress with Cena hitting a belly to back suplex, followed by sitting on Rikishi's chest. That earns him a toss to the floor and a Samoan Drop, followed by a belly to belly for the pin.

Post match Rikishi loads up the Rump Shaker but Bull Buchanan comes in to save Cena. I might be thinking about this too hard but it

might have been better to have Cena WIN THE MATCH and then have Buchanan show up.

Show says he can't wrestle tonight because of Lesnar's attack. Heyman isn't about to go anywhere with Lesnar around.

We recap Lesnar and Show's night.

Heyman is in Stephanie's office but can't get Show out of the main event. If Lesnar gets involved, she'll suspend him. Heyman: "Like you did before?" Lawsuits against Stephanie and company are threatened so she throws him out. In case you haven't figured it out, this was the 14th or so segment tonight to show you that Stephanie RUNS SMACKDOWN. Let's say it together shall we? Stephanie runs Smackdown. Now don't you forget it or more lectures will ensue.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Edge

Edge is challenging and is thrown into the corner almost immediately. Show launches him with ease and stands on Edge's head (not to be confused with the Edgeheads) as this is already in slow motion. An Edgecution attempt is countered as easily as you would expect it to be and Show posts edge to keep the pace. We hit the bearhug as Heyman tells Edge he'd be good representation.

A turnbuckle pad was removed somewhere in there and Edge sends him face first into the buckle, followed by a low blow for good measure. Edge gets two off a tornado DDT and three spears finally drop Show. Heyman breaks up the pin though, allowing Show to grab the chokeslam. We're not done yet though as Heyman wants Show to treat Edge like he's Lesnar. That means a second chokeslam but here's Lesnar for an F5 before a third can connect. I guess the match was thrown out.

Rating: D+. Edge's comeback was good but when you watch him tear the house down with everyone else, it's really hard to sit through Big Show's eight mile an hour offense. He's the current monster champion and hopefully that means his days with the title are numbered. This really wasn't interesting and I have no interest in watching him doing his "hey, I'm big" promos and bad matches while I know the

roster is capable of so much more.

Lesnar chases Heyman through the crowd to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. There's nothing terrible here and they kept the bad stuff short but there's nothing that really offers a spark to make me want to keep watching. The tag stuff seems to be coming to an end and that leaves Rikishi, Big Show, Al/Dawn and whatever Los Guerreros are doing. Now the latter of that list is fine but the rest...egads the rest. The show was still fun but this didn't really leave me optimistic.

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Monday Night Raw – April 17, 2017: That Ambulance Died in Vain

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 17, 2017

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

Just in case we haven't had enough going on of late, this is kind of a relaunch for Raw as we have a fresh roster at full strength for the first time. In addition to all the new names, the interesting question is will Roman Reigns be here. After Braun Strowman basically killed him last week, it should be interesting to see if he'll be here tonight. If so, WWE is missing a major opportunity. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Strowman destroying Reigns last week, turning himself into the biggest unintentional face on the roster as a result.

Here's Strowman to open things up. Strowman is proud of the beating he gave Roman last week, which saw Reigns have a separated shoulder and cracked ribs. Reigns will NOT be here tonight and that earns one heck of a YES chant. Strowman says he's ready to tear through the locker room but here's General Manager Kurt Angle to interrupt. The boss gets right to the point and makes Strowman vs. Reigns for Payback. As for tonight, Strowman has the night off but Braun wants more competition. That sounds like a threat.

Samoa Joe vs. Chris Jericho

Seth Rollins, who faces Joe at Payback, is on commentary. Joe goes right after Jericho to start but gets dropkicked out to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Joe in control and hitting his chop to the shoulder blades. We hit the nerve hold for a bit, followed by the scoop powerslam for two. The crowd sounds rather energized tonight, which I'm sure has nothing to do with the lack of Reigns and Stephanie tonight.

Joe misses a middle rope backplash (though his leg landed on the back of Jericho's head), allowing Chris to grab the Walls. That doesn't last long though as Jericho escapes and grabs the Koquina Clutch. Jericho tries the Bret Hart/Roddy Piper counter but Joe turns over and keeps the hold for the tap out at 9:08.

Rating: C+. They're making Joe out to be a killer and that's a great sign for his future. The fact that he just beat Jericho clean by submission shows that there's something to him and WWE knows it. I'd love to see Joe vs. Lesnar way down the line and they've built him as the kind of guy who could give him a run for his money.

Post match Joe says he remembers the night he debuts and the noise the fans made. Joe worked for HHH and since he cares about his

clients, he'll take care of Seth at Payback. Seth says of course it was personal and Joe is going to learn that Payback is a b****.

Anderson and Gallows are on the way to the ring when they pass by the Drifter playing his guitar. They'll be facing Golden Truth tonight but Strowman runs Golden Truth over and beats the heck out of them.

Strowman won't leave.

Anderson and Gallows are in the ring with Anderson saying Golden Truth just got the United Airlines treatment. They came here for a fight so get someone out here.

Anderson and Gallows vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

After Enzo calls this the realest night of the week, Cass hammers on Anderson with a right hand to the ribs putting Karl down. Cass keeps things up by throwing Enzo at both bald guys as we take a break. Back with Enzo in trouble (some things never change), including a DDT on the arm and an armbar from Gallows. A spinebuster makes things even worse but Enzo comes off the middle rope with the jumping DDT.

Cass comes in and cleans house with the usual, including a big boot to knock Gallows outside. It takes Cass outside as well though, leaving Enzo to try another jumping DDT. Anderson is ready this time though and catches him in midair before throwing him knees first at the top rope. That's some rather unique offense but it's enough to put Enzo away at 10:48.

Rating: C-. Well Anderson and Gallows certainly needed the win, especially with Wilder (and presumably the Revival as a whole) on the shelf for a few months. The match was good enough though that ending was a big odd. You would expect Anderson to use that as a setup for the finish but it got the pin so it doesn't make a huge difference.

Video on Mickie James.

Video on Nia Jax.

Here are Miz and Maryse for MizTV. Miz starts talking about the Superstar Shakeup but gets cut off by Dean Ambrose, the scheduled guest, before he can get very far. Ambrose sucks up to the Ohio crowd before ripping on Miz's gear. Miz doesn't want to hear it because he's done everything he can to make the people in that

locker room look like superstars while Ambrose makes them look like regular wrestlers.

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That's why he's the Intercontinental Champion, which he beat Miz for in the first place. Maryse says the title doesn't make the man so Dean asks her to hold the mic. As Miz goes on another rant, Dean empties his pockets and takes his jacket off before hammering Miz down. Dirty Deeds doesn't work though and Miz and Maryse run.

Strowman drags Kalisto through the back and throws him in a trashcan. Big Show runs Strowman over and says pick on someone your own size.

TJ Perkins vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville comes out to watch in what is billed as a special appearance. This brings out Austin Aries for "an even more special appearance". They trade wristlocks to start with Gallagher taking him to the mat and cranking on both arms at the same time. Perkins does a bit of dabbing but can't handle the fact that Gallagher pops up. William III is sent to the floor to Gallagher's dismay but he misses a charge to the floor for a heck of a crash.

Back from a break with Gallagher flipping out of a suplex and grabbing a t-bone suplex of his own. The headbutt sends Perkins outside but it allows Jack to reclaim his trusty umbrella. That means the Mary Poppins dive but Perkins throws Gallagher into Aries. Austin is about to go inside, only to have Neville break it up. The distraction lets TJ kick the rope into Gallagher, setting up the Detonation Kick for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. This is what 205 Live had needed to do for months now: build up some other stop stars aside from just the champion and his #1 contender. Odds are this sets up a tag match, which should be rather entertaining if it's given enough time to go somewhere. I liked this match more than I was expecting to and I'm glad they're giving Perkins more of a push.

Titus O'Neil congratulates Apollo Crews on his impending fatherhood

but Titus wants to know how Apollo is going to make an impact. The best idea Titus has is joining the Titus Brand. Maybe Crews could get into travel with the Apollo Cruise where they'll dance to Apollo Blues. If that goes badly, they can go to the new law firm: Apollo Sues. Titus gives him a card but Crews doesn't seem convinced.

The Hardys are glad to be back and look forward to working with the new talent. Sheamus and Cesaro come up to talk about how much they respect the Hardys but it'll be an honor to win the titles from such legends.

Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Winner gets Bayley at Payback. Nia cleans house to start but Bliss bails to the floor, allowing Mickie and Sasha to dropkick Nia outside. Sasha gets the better of it and sends Mickie outside for a dive onto all three as we take a break. Back with Alexa in control until she charges into a slam from Nia.

Jax slams all three on top of each other before swinging Mickie around in a cobra clutch. It's off to a bearhug on Banks with Nia easily suplexing her way out of Sasha's guillotine counter. Mickie armbars her way out of a choke but Nia throws her at Sasha in the corner. Alexa goes up top to try a dropkick but thinks twice when Nia stares her down. A missed charge sends Nia into the post, allowing everyone else to hammer on each other.

The double knees in the corner get two on Bliss with Nia making the save. Mickie gets pulled outside as well and it's down to Sasha vs. Alexa. James has to break up a Bank Statement but here's Nia to knock Mickie off the top. The Samoan drop plants Banks but Bliss runs in for the 13:44.

Rating: C+. The time brings this one down a bit though it was a lot of fun until the end. Bliss winning, especially in her hometown, is a nice touch though they need to stop having Jax get THIS close, only to slip up after dominating everything in sight. It's the right call though as Banks vs. Bayley is still going to be a major showdown one day in the future.

Show says he'll beat up Strowman.

Finn Balor vs. Curt Hawkins

Coup de Grace finishes Hawkins in 36 seconds. Balor isn't even sweating.

Chris Jericho can't stop thinking about his rematch with Kevin Owens and thinks America deserves a better face. If he wins the title back he heads to Smackdown, but it doesn't matter if it's Smackdown, Velocity, Sunday Night Heat or Nitro: the Friends of Jericho will follow him anywhere. Chris: "You hear them Tom?" Mike Rome: "It's Mike, Chris." We get the Bugs Bunny/Daffy Duck routine as Mike forgets his own name. Chris: "You know what happens when you don't know your own name?" Elias Samson wanders up and plays his guitar so Jericho lets Mike/Tom off the list and puts Samson on instead.

Bray Wyatt asks what we're afraid of. Maybe the unknown? The dark? Or the monster underneath our bed. Fear lives in his house and we hear about how much Bray wants to hear Randy Orton scream. I love Bray but these things are getting really tiresome as there's no reason to believe he has a chance of winning and he'll just keep plugging along like the loss means nothing.

Alicia Fox and Dana Brooke are watching clips from 205 Live when Emma comes up to say Dana was laughing at Alicia getting powder thrown in her face all week long. Fox doesn't want to be Dana's friend anymore. Dana calls Emma out for lying but Emma says that's what she gets for standing on her own two feet.

Jeff Hardy vs. Cesaro

Cesaro takes him down to start but gets sent to the floor for a clothesline from the apron. Jeff seems to be banged up on the floor and gets caught with the running uppercut. Back from a break with Cesaro getting two and having his chinlock broken in a hurry. Jeff's knee seems to be fine but Cesaro nails him with the springboard corkscrew elbow for two.

Jeff fights up and gets the same off the Whisper in the Wind, followed by the Twisting Stunner, which isn't the Twist of Fate but you can't expect the announcers to be able to really call the moves properly. I mean, it might run them afoul of JBL and that just sounds scary. Anyway, the Swanton is good for the pin at 13:01.

Rating: C. They billed this as a dream match which is quite the stretch, though I do appreciate WWE treating Jeff like a legend. I know it's been nearly ten years but Jeff is a former three time World Champion. You have to treat someone like that as something special and it's a good sign that WWE is doing just that.

Golden Truth and Kalisto are injured but here are Heath Slater and

Rhyno, the latter of whom is eating cheese whiz and crackers. Slater is VERY excited about being back on Raw but they both hide when Strowman comes by. Rhyno even dropped his crackers!

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman

The brawl starts in the aisle with Strowman tossing him into the barricade. Show sends him into it as well and we actually start the match. A baseball slide of all things puts Strowman on the floor but he comes back with a running dropkick of his own. Strowman gets in a suplex and drops an elbow as they're moving in very slow motion here.

Show escapes the powerslam and hits a splash in the corner. The chokeslam gets two and Strowman's powerslam is good for the same. Braun gets crotched on top but knocks Show away, only to dive into the KO Punch for two. With nothing else working, Show goes up top but gets superplexed down.....and they break the ring for the no contest 12:36.

Rating: D. Nope. I know the ring breaking spot is going to get a lot of attention but this COMPLETELY missed the point of the match and did nothing to push Strowman. You know who looked good here? Show, who hung move for move with a guy who TURNED OVER AN AMBULANCE LAST WEEK.

We've already established that Strowman, who didn't even win here, can beat Show and be the bigger monster but that wasn't even shown here. No, what we saw was Big Show getting to prove that he's on equal footing with Strowman, which doesn't make Strowman look unique. That makes Strowman look like he has an equal, which completely misses the point.

Strowman gets up and poses, which I guess is WWE's version of a follow up, to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This was a bit of a rough one as they certainly did a lot of stuff but the Strowman stuff felt really bad. Beating up Kalisto and Golden Truth and then going to a draw with Big Show doesn't exactly make me think he can beat Reigns or Brock Lesnar (the guy that regularly destroys Show).

The wrestling wasn't great but the show definitely felt like it was moving around at a faster pace, which is an upgrade over some weeks.

There's good stuff to be seen here, but Payback is really holding things up. You have one of the new Raw guys being stuck waiting to face the Smackdown Champion in a match he has almost no chance of winning and Jericho teasing going to Smackdown while losing to Joe. There's enough stuff on here to make me look forward to the pay per view but I'm not wild on some of the directions. Strowman's booking made my head hurt and Hardy vs. Cesaro wasn't the most thrilling thing in the world but I like Bliss getting the title shot and Joe being treated like a monster. Overall though, Strowman was the focus here and that REALLY bombed, but at least Big Show looks like an equal to the unstoppable monster.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Chris Jericho – Koquina Clutch

Anderson and Gallows b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Anderson threw Amore knees first into the corner

TJ Perkins b. Jack Gallagher – Devastation Kick

Alexa Bliss b. Nia Jax, Mickie James and Sasha Banks – Samoan Drop to James

Finn Balor b. Curt Hawkins – Coup de Grace

Jeff Hardy b. Cesaro – Swanton Bomb

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman went to a no contest when the ring broke

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Smackdown – November 14, 2002: Two Layups

Smackdown

Date: November 14, 2002

Location: Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Survivor Series and that means it's time for more Big Show. One of the big stories coming out of this week came on Super Tuesday when Stephanie McMahon announced that the Smackdown Tag Team Titles will be decided in a triple threat match, which should be an amazing spectacle. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar with Show dominating for weeks and Paul Heyman being at his wits' end.

Heyman says Lesnar has a broken rib and is off the show by doctors' orders. Big Show pops up and says he'll call Lesnar out anyway. It's nice to see someone knowing the cliches and ignoring them.

Opening sequence.

Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Edge

Both guys are on their own and Sunday's triple threat is officially an elimination match. Edge armdrags him into an armbar before elbowing Chavo in the face. Chavo sidesteps a charge to put Edge on the apron but gets flapjacked for his efforts. A kick to the ropes hits Edge low though and Chavo takes over for real this time. We hit an armbar on the Canadian until Chavo goes up top, only to get dropkicked out of the air. The Edge-O-Matic gets two but Edge spears the buckle, allowing Chavo to get in a spear of his own for two. Not that it matters as the tornado DDT is countered into the Edgecution for the pin.

Rating: B-. I'm not surprised that this was good as Chavo really was a solid hand in the ring. He gets a bad reputation for his horribly dull stuff later in his career but when you just let him work a good

match, he's a rather entertaining watch. Nice match here and a really strong opener.

Rey Mysterio is talking about the match when he runs over to see the arriving Brock, sounding like a ten year old fan. Brock basically tells him to buzz off.

Dawn Marie comes up to see Al Wilson and is ready to invite Torrie to the wedding. Al isn't sure but she talks him into it. As enjoyable of a visual as it is, I do like the fact that we're supposed to believe Dawn (and Torrie for that matter) walk around on the streets in the outfits they were on the show. Dawn was just casually strolling around in a top that showed off half her chest and went all the way down to her waist. Totally normal travel gear right?

Heyman wants to know why Lesnar is here and Brock says it's because that's what the title is all about. Paul goes on a rant about the injuries Lesnar has suffered and how it's going to go badly if Lesnar stops doing what the team should do. If Lesnar doesn't leave now, there's nothing Heyman can do to protect Brock from Big Show. Paul has an idea though. I'll give them credit for this: they're making Big Show sound like a threat. You know, assuming you forget that he's Big Show.

Matt Hardy/John Cena vs. Rikishi/Tajiri

What a completely different team that first one would be today. Matt was the Fear Factor Champion and loves guacamole. Cole describes Cena as being "lost in the 80s". Like that's a bad thing. Tajiri and Matt start things off with a quick hurricanrana sending the Fear Factor Champion down.

It's off to Rikishi to take care of both Matt and Cena until a Side Effect gives Cena two. Matt hammers away in the corner as the fans want Jeff. Rikishi drives Cena over to the corner for the hot tag to Tajiri and things speed up. Tajiri gets a running start and grabs a running faceplant which sends both guys into the mat (picture fighting over a vertical suplex but both guys jump up and swing around, landing face first). Matt's hand is on Tajiri's chest for the pin.

Rating: D+. I have no idea what they were going for with that ending. First of all, a faceplant for the ending? I'm glad Matt and Cena got the win but it felt like a fluke (with the announcers

talking about how Matt's hand just happened to land on Tajiri's chest) and I really don't get this one. Oh and make sure Tajiri loses and not Rikishi because he's the star power.

Hardy makes Cena put him on his shoulders to celebrate.

Angle and Benoit yell over the title loss last week. Benoit brings up winning their last two singles matches. Angle: "YOU WATCH YOUR MOUTH YOUNG MAN!" Benoit: "I have more hair than you!" This goes back and forth until Angle mentioned that he's an Olympic gold medalist.

Scott Steiner video. Can he debut already so I can endlessly mock him?

Heyman asks Big Show to not call Lesnar out tonight but doesn't get an answer. I'd like an answer as to why Show has his own locker room and there are at least ten large suitcases visible. Does he carry his snacks in there?

Los Guerreros run into Edge and Rey Mysterio. Eddie wants a match with Rey later and promises to win the titles on Sunday. Spanish is spoken and Eddie hides behind Chavo, only to have Edge speak some Spanish and tell them to shut up.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Rey Mysterio

Partners are banned from ringside. Eddie takes him down into a headlock to start but gets armdragged into an armbar. The tilt-a-whirl backbreaker plants Rey though and Eddie takes over for real. The arm work continues until Rey monkey flips him into the ropes. It's already 619 time but Eddie pulls the referee in the way, knocking him nearly unconscious.

Chavo runs out for a Gory Bomb on Rey, allowing Eddie to add a powerbomb. Edge comes out to spear Eddie, drawing out the rest of the referees to drag them off. We take a break and come back with Rey hitting the Bronco Buster but getting tossed off the ropes. Eddie follows him out with a dive but takes too much time going up again, allowing Rey to grab a superplex.

A hard knee to Mysterio's ribs sets up another armbar until Eddie lets him up for no logical reason. Rey springboards into an armdrag to send Eddie outside, followed by a slingshot hilo. Back in and Rey scores with the 619 but the West Coast Pop is reversed into the Lasso From El Paso (with something edited out). Eddie makes sure to

grab the ropes, forcing Rey to tap.

Rating: B. I wouldn't really consider that to be the biggest surprise. These two are capable of having good matches in their sleep and this was no exception, though Eddie working on the arm for a good chunk of the match didn't make a lot of sense. Also, it was nice to have them do all the run-ins early on and then have a long stretch of the match follow them up. Good match here, as expected. Torrie can't talk to her dad but he follows her anyway. Eventually she says Dawn is just using him. Al just wanted to invite her to the wedding but she won't go. She calls her dad an old fool.

Billy Kidman vs. Jamie Noble

Non-title. Jamie goes straight after the arm by wrapping it around the ropes. A keylock doesn't get Noble very far either so Kidman gets in a dropkick for two. The tiger bomb gives Noble two but Kidman reverses the cover into a rollup for two more. Kidman flips over him out of the corner and gets in the BK Bomb for no cover. That looks to set up the shooting star press but Nidia offers a distraction. Jamie pops back up and tries a superplex, only to have Kidman tie the legs up for a small package and the pin.

Rating: C-. This didn't have time to go anywhere but it set up Sunday's match, thankfully without having Kidman hit his finisher. Instead he won off a quick pin, making it look like he can beat Noble without completely destroying him. As little as I don't like having the champ lose, it's about all they could do in the three and a half minutes they had out there.

Dawn consoles Al, who she loves. He puts his head on her shoulder and she gives a bit of an evil smile. This is the THIRD SEGMENT this story has gotten.

Heyman tells Lesnar about going to see Big Show. Lesnar isn't happy and says he's going to call Show out this time.

Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit

Before the match, Angle laughs off the idea of either other team being a challenge to him. He's a better athlete than Benoit, is better looking than Edge and has actually grown, unlike Mysterio. Cue Los Guerreros and the champs to watch from ringside. Angle starts fast by snapping off the suplexes but Benoit comes back by just hitting him in the face. A backbreaker gives Benoit two before

Angle sends him outside, leading to a whip into the champs.

Back in and Kurt rolls the German suplexes for two but the Angle Slam is countered into the Crossface. That's reversed into the ankle lock until Benoit rolls out, only to get caught in the Slam. Kurt grabs the Lasso From El Paso, drawing Eddie into the ring. It doesn't last long as he's launched out to the floor, triggering a brawl between Los Guerreros and the champs. Everyone comes in and that's a no contest.

Rating: B-. The time killed it but much like Mysterio vs. Guerrero, these two are almost a guaranteed awesome match. They're building the heck out of the triple threat tag, which is pretty easily bigger than Lesnar vs. Big Show, at least in the amount of hype it has. Let those six guys tear the house down and the extra build here helped.

Edge and Mysterio clean house and put Kurt in a double ankle lock. Eddie and Chavo make the save so it's an ankle lock to Eddie and a Crossface to Edge. Benoit and Angle shake hands but Kurt hugs him instead, giving us a hilarious look from Benoit when it goes too long.

Lesnar yells at Heyman for telling him to stay out of the ring.

We run down Sunday's card.

Here are Lesnar and Heyman with Brock calling out Big Show. Heyman tries to take the mic away and is told to shut up. Show finally comes out and Lesnar spears him into the steps, puncturing Show's forearm with the blood flowing out like a fountain. Two big chair shots to the head bust open Show's head and the chair is bent over his back. I remember watching this live and thinking it was the first time I thought Lesnar was awesome. If this was meant to be his full face turn, it worked quite well.

Overall Rating: B+. Survivor Series is certainly going to be interesting at this rate. The Tag Team Title match looks great on paper, Show vs. Lesnar could be good if Brock gets to be the Beast, the Elimination Chamber.....well I think we all know where that's going. This was the big hard sell show and it did make me want to watch the pay per view again, though it certainly seems to be walking a tightrope, which almost never works. Still though, three quite good matches and some other passable stuff sprinkled in (save for the Dawn/Torrie stuff which won't end) makes this another high quality Smackdown.

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