

Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode #47, Plus A Request

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-47-join-kb-and-myself-for-brand-split-thoughts-smackdown-and-raw-review-plus-final-thoughts-rolling-in-to-clash-of-champions/>

NorCal and I are back (hopefully once a week now) to talk about the Brand Split thus far, along with the rollout of the Cruiserweight division. All this plus a lot more.

Also, we're looking for questions to answer on air. If there's something you'd like to hear us talk about or a topic you'd like to hear us cover, let me know in the comments and there's a good chance it'll be addressed on air next week.

Monday Night Raw – March 25, 2002 (First WWF Draft): This Might Be A Bad Idea

This seemed appropriate given what we're seeing now. Starting tonight, I'll be putting up alternating reviews from the original Brand Split with Raw going up on Wednesday and Smackdown/pay per views going up on Saturdays. There's no better place to start than on the original Draft so let's get to it.

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 25, 2002

Location: Bryce Jordan Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 15,550

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This seemed due for a second look since they're doing it all again this year. We're just after Wrestlemania XVIII and things are kind of in a lull. With so many wrestlers and no big evil for the WWF to fight (since the WCW/ECW Invasion just had to be started and wrapped up by Thanksgiving), it was decided to split the rosters in two. This was a really cool idea at the time but it should be interesting to see how it worked when the initial Brand Extension isn't the most fondly remembered concept. Let's get to it.

Linda McMahon is in WWF Studios to welcome us to the show, telling us that only twenty picks will be made tonight for the sake of time. The changes won't officially take place until next week so everyone will be on Smackdown this week. As for tonight though, HHH, Chris Jericho and Stephanie McMahon can't be drafted because they're in a triple threat for the World Title (Yes Stephanie was getting a World Title shot and was a major focus fourteen years ago as well.). Steve Austin can't be drafted either due to a contractual stipulation (read as a real life contract dispute) and is therefore a free agent and can sign wherever he wants.

Opening sequence.

There are PODIUMS ON THE STAGE! YES I SAID PODIUMS!!!

Tazz vs. Mr. Perfect

Perfect wouldn't be around much longer due to a certain airplane ride (long and bad story). After promising to be a perfect pick, Perfect dropkicks him at the bell as we're told that the WWF and Women's Champion can compete on both shows. An early PerfectPlex gets two as Tazz is next to the ropes. Perfect charges into a boot and the Tazmission finishes quick. I wouldn't expect to see a lot of strong wrestling tonight.

Tazz says the perfect pick has become just another victim.

Ric Flair (Raw owner) and Arn Anderson are in their war room to go over their draft options.

Vince's war room is just an office. He has the first pick and a photo of Kurt Angle is visible on his desk.

Here's Vince for the first pick, which I'm sure will involve a speech. The first pick for Smackdown will be....the Rock. Well who else was it going to be? Rock leaves the locker room (walking past Undertaker and Hogan who are among the masses in a nice touch) as we see a quick graphic showing his career highlights.

Vince tells Rock that he's not allowed to put his hands on him or threatening to put his boots in various places or saying IT DOESN'T MATTER ever again. The fans cut him off with a ROCKY chant so Vince says he made both Hogan and the Rock. The boss goes to leave but Rock isn't quite done yet. To be fair he hasn't said anything yet so he hasn't actually started.

Rock wants to go out on Raw with a bang because he won the WWF World Title here, formed the Rock and Sock Connection here and did various things to Vince. We hit some catchphrases before Rock has them do the Penn State chant (WE ARE....PENN STATE) and then alters it to insult Vince even more. This was just a Rock's greatest hits stretched over about ten minutes.

Ric comes out and picks Undertaker #1 overall despite hating him.

Kurt Angle comes in to yell at Vince for not picking him first. Vince talks about throwing Flair a swerve out there (By picking the Rock?) when Undertaker comes in to yell. The boss promises to make this right.

Edge/Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian/Booker T.

Two feuds in one here but Edge is about to start a really good feud with Angle. Booker kicks Edge in the face to start and Christian gets two off a powerslam. A quick clothesline drops Christian though as the announcers talk about Austin having a clause in his contract to make sure he's a free agent. In case of a Brand Split you see. Booker eats the Diamond

Cutter but Christian gives him an Unprettier. A quick scissors kick puts Page away in a nothing match.

Angle reads off his resume until Vince makes him the #2 pick.

Ric picks the NWO (Hall/Nash/X-Pac) because that's something you can do. I can't wait for that Rock vs. Nash match. The NWO is uh....not in the locker room.

Vince yells at Angle for getting the NWO (who Vince brought in to poison the company) and promises to sign Austin. Angle suggests Chris Benoit (currently out with an injury but coming back soon.) with the next pick so Vince makes him #3. Benoit would return in July and just show up on Raw with no mention of being drafted to Smackdown. If nothing else it's a good idea to have some of these picks backstage as there's no reason to have them both come out here every time.

We see both brands' big boards and JR thinks Flair's strategy is, uh, strange.

The NWO threatens Ric so he picks Kane to keep an eye on them. Aside from X-Pac, Hall is now the second shortest member of the roster.

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

Ivory returned last week to start a feud with Trish. They start fast with Ivory hammering away and ducking a middle rope cross body. Trish fights out of a chinlock and grabs the Stratusphere, followed by the Stratusfaction for another nothing match.

Vince picks Hulk Hogan, whose graphic incorrectly lists him as a seven time WCW Champion.

After a break, Ric picks Intercontinental Champion Rob Van Dam.

Vince is ticked because he wanted the title so Angle suggests giving him an Intercontinental Title shot tonight so he can bring the title to Smackdown. Vince: "That's why you're the number two draft pick! Maybe he should have been #1."

Rock and Hogan have a bro moment where they praise the people. Ignoring the whole attempted murder thing from a few weeks ago, Rock agrees to team up against the NWO in a handicap match.

Vince picks Billy and Chuck as a unit.

The Rock/Hulk Hogan vs. NWO

The NWO powerbombed Rock through a table on Smackdown until Hogan made the save to set this up. Hogan and X-Pac get things going with a big shove sending the smaller one out to the floor. Hall gets pushed down with ease so it's off to Nash who can actually shove Hulk down.

Hogan cleans house with ease but he takes too long loading up a backdrop and gets kicked in the face. It's off to X-Pac for more kicks but Hogan knocks him away and makes the tag off to Rock. Things finally speed up and X-Pac is easily knocked to the floor. The Rock Bottom and legdrop get two on Nash with X-Pac making the save. It's a three on two beatdown until Kane comes out for the DQ.

Rating: F. Were you expecting anything else? It says a lot when the match lasts five minutes and is this boring with a screwy ending. I mean, X-Pac can't take a fall to the combined forces of Hulk Hogan and the Rock? I could go for an entertaining match at some point tonight but I'm not feeling confident at this point.

The NWO runs off.

Vince accuses Ric of sending Kane out there so Flair takes Booker T.
Vince: "Edge!" Ric: "Big Show!" Vince: "Rikishi!"

Jeff Hardy vs. Billy

Lita, Matt, Chuck and Rico are all at ringside. Billy fires off some right hands in the corner to start but misses a charge. The announcers talk about being drafted to different shows as Jeff hits a tornado DDT. The Swanton misses though as Lita completely botches a hurricanrana to Rico (her legs weren't around his head and he had to flip himself). Jeff grabs a rollup for a fluke pin in another nothing match.

Ric picks Bubba Ray Dudley so he can have "the most dominant tag team in WWF history." Vince: "Well Ric it looks like you're trying to get the most dominant tag team in WWF history." Did Stephanie write this segment? Vince picks D-Von to balance things out.

The Dudleys, realizing their careers are pretty much over for the time being, hug it out.

European Title: William Regal vs. Rikishi

Regal is defending. And never mind as Brock Lesnar runs out and flattens Rikishi with an F5.

Jazz wants to see where the Divas end up.

Vince comes out to pick Brock but Ric says it's his pick and he'll select Brock instead. Vince: "Mark Henry!" Ric: "William Regal!" Vince: "Maven!" (Hardcore Champion). Ric: "Lita!" Vince gets on him for choosing a woman and thinks Ric just wants to sleep with her. Well duh.

Here are the picks:

Smackdown

1. The Rock
2. Kurt Angle
3. Chris Benoit
4. Hulk Hogan
5. Billy and Chuck
6. Edge
7. Rikishi
8. D-Von Dudley
9. Mark Henry

10. Maven

Raw

1. Undertaker

2. NWO

3. Kane

4. Rob Van Dam

5. Booker T.

6. Big Show

7. Bubba Ray Dudley

8. Brock Lesnar

9. William Regal

10. Lita

Riveting no?

Intercontinental Title: Kurt Angle vs. Rob Van Dam

Angle is challenging and grabs a German suplex for two as the bell rings. Van Dam gets stomped down as the fans chant USA. I'd assume for Angle, even though Michigan is just as American as Pennsylvania. Van Dam kicks him in the head and gets two off Rolling Thunder. Angle pulls the referee in the way of a top rope kick for the DQ.

Kurt puts on the ankle lock until Edge makes the save.

Stephanie is ready to win the title.

WWF World Title: HHH vs. Chris Jericho vs. Stephanie McMahon

HHH is defending and the challengers have a business relationship. I have no idea why they never had a romantic relationship as that could have been amazing. If HHH pins Stephanie, she's gone FOREVER. HHH backdrops

the real wrestler to start but has to look at Stephanie so Jericho can chop away. Stephanie lays down so Jericho can cover her for two but he has to save her from the Pedigree.

HHH catapults Jericho into Stephanie so we can have the falling low blow spot. Thankfully HHH kicks her to the floor so we can have an actual match for a bit. Of course Stephanie won't STAY AWAY FROM THE MATCH as she just has to come back in to screech about how Jericho needs to work on the leg. Stephanie gets run over by mistake so she slaps Jericho and demands that he get HHH. Jericho clotheslines her by mistake but gets sent to the floor, allowing HHH to tease another Pedigree. Naturally that can't happen because the fans love waiting on her getting her comeuppance instead of actually getting it.

Jericho grabs the belts (this was when there was no Undisputed Title belt yet) for a double knockout, meaning Stephanie can cover both of them. The Walls have HHH in trouble but Stephanie breaks them up by jumping on Jericho's back. A Pedigree gets rid of Jericho but THERE SHE IS AGAIN. HHH has finally had enough and hits a spinebuster (because we can't hurt her perfect face) to retain.

Rating: D-. They couldn't even do a good match (which these two are certainly capable of having) because that wasn't the point here. Yeah a Wrestlemania main event rematch for the title eight days later wasn't the focus. Instead, as I'm sure you can tell, this was ALL about Stephanie and there was no hiding it. Of course her being gone "forever" lasted less than four months as she was brought back as the completely face GM of Smackdown because she's just so darn loveable that we can forgive this along with the whole Alliance thing last year.

Here's the thing: what exactly did Stephanie add to this? Why couldn't this have just been HHH vs. Jericho with Stephanie leaving if Jericho lost? It's actually a good match, Jericho is fine with losing a fall to the champ and the guys don't have to keep stopping so often so she can catch up. Horrible match of course and completely not HHH and Jericho's fault, but since it can't be Stephanie's fault either (as nothing ever can be), we'll blame...uh...oh yeah the referee. HE RUINED IT!

Stephanie of course freaks out and tries to hang on to anything she can before security takes her away. HHH sings the Goodbye Song to end the show. This was a special bonus in case you didn't get that you were watching Monday Night Stephanie.

Overall Rating: F. Oh sweet goodness what a mess. First of all, the match of the night was.....uhhh....you know what it was actually Mr. Perfect against Tazz in a match lasting 1:53. That's not to say it was good but it didn't have a major botch, a stupid ending or the powers of Stephanie holding it back.

Other than that though, this was a complete disaster with Smackdown being stacked, Raw basically begging Austin to come back and save the thing and the "wrestling" being little more than background noise. This was somehow worse than I remembered it, which is covering quite a bit of ground as I remember this show being horrible the last time I watched it.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IH70904>

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

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

Possible New WWE Pay Per View Schedule Leaks

Of course take this with a big bag of salt but there's a chance that this is legit. Click on the picture for a better

image.



2016 PAY-PER-VIEW SCHEDULE*

PPV EVENTS	DATES	VENUE	CITY/STATE	EVENT TIME	BRAND
Royal Rumble®	1/24/2016	Amway Center	Orlando, FL	8p/5p	RAW/SD
WWE Fast Lane	2/21/2016	Quicken Loans Arena	Cleveland, OH	8p/5p	
WrestleMania® III	4/1/2016	AT&T Stadium	Dallas, TX	7p/5p	RAW/SD
Payback™	5/1/2016	Allstate Arena	Chicago, IL	8p/5p	
Extreme Rules™	5/24/2016	Prudential Center	Newark, NJ	8p/5p	
Money in the Bank™	6/15/2016	Las Vegas Arena	Las Vegas, NV	8p/5p	
Backlash™	7/2/2016	Verizon Center	Washington, DC	8p/5p	
SummerSlam®	8/21/2016	Barclays Center	Brooklyn, NY	7p/5p	RAW/SD
Backlash™ (Network Exclusive)	9/13/2016	TBD	Richmond, VA	8p/5p	SmackDown
Clash of Champions™	9/26/2016	Bankers Life Fieldhouse	Indianapolis, IN	8p/5p	RAW
No Mercy™	10/24/2016	Golden 1 Center	Sacramento, CA	8p/5p	SmackDown
Hell in a Cell™	10/29/2016	TD Garden	Boston, MA	8p/5p	RAW
Survivor Series®	11/28/2016	TBD	Toronto, ON	7p/5p	RAW/SD
WWE TLC™	12/16/2016	TBD	Dallas, TX	8p/5p	SmackDown
WWE Roadblock™	12/28/2016	Consol Energy Center	Pittsburgh, PA	8p/5p	RAW

The first thing I think is SWEET GOODNESS THAT'S A LOT OF SHOWS and that's going to be the take away from this schedule. You're looking at basically two shows a month with two or three weeks between them. I can go with that if they cut some of the times down but a lot of people are going to get burned out in a hurry if they're running a three hour (potentially plus if Money in the Bank is the first of its kind) show with an hour pre-show. I can watch wrestling all day every day but even I think that's a lot.

Now for the good: WAY better names. Stuff like Backlash, No Mercy and Clash of the Champions are improvements over a lot of the goofy names we have to put up with so often. It's also going to be nice if the wrestlers are allowed to have some more time but the worst thing they could do is the old formula of making so many matches filler. I'm talking about airing stuff like Mordecai vs. Hardcore Holly on pay per view. Fans aren't going to put up with that and it could get old in a hurry.

It might help a lot if some of these shows are two hours instead of three. Look at Money in the Bank. You could have cut off at least two matches (meaning keep them on the pre-show where they were scheduled in the first place) and trimmed the thing down a bit. If you're paying the same price for it on the Network (I'm aware some people are going to get it on regular pay per view still), it's ok to trim off some of the fat and let the shows actually work for a change.

It's too early to tell but I'm skeptical about this. Knowing WWE, whose new philosophy seems to be CRAM AS MUCH AS YOU CAN IN, I'm worried about what we might be going through with them burning through everything they can as fast as they can.

New Column: Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

Looking at some of the potential perils of the new Brand Split.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-breaking-up-is-hard-to-do/>

They're Really Doing Another Brand Split

And Smackdown is going live starting July 19.

<http://www.wwe.com/shows/smackdown/article/smackdown-live-usa-network-july-19>

This is uh.....well it's certainly something. For one thing it's going to prove that just having Smackdown live isn't going to change things, though with the announcement that a McMahon is going to be in charge of the show, maybe things get a little more interesting. Anything that makes WWE care about Smackdown and pay more attention to it is a good thing, but I'm going to need a lot more details before I consider this the saving grace for the blue show.

What I do consider my own saving grace though: Impact is screwed to the wall.

WWE Ending Single Branded House Shows

That's the big news of the day. Apparently the Raw and Smackdown brand names will be phased out of the live events but they'll still be running two tours. This is how it was back in the 80s and that means.... That I like this idea. Back in the day you didn't know who was going to be on a show other than the top matches, so having a nice mix of people underneath the main events is a good idea. It gives you an incentive to go because even if you don't like just Raw or just Smackdown, you might see someone from another show that you like. That's a smart move.

Monday Night Raw – August 29, 2011: It's Really (Half) Over???

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 29, 2011

Location: BOK Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Commentators: Jim Ross, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

It's officially Alberto vs. Cena at the PPV but the bigger story at the moment is the conspiracy that Punk thinks is going on against him. According to him, someone wants Alberto to be champion. This opens a lot of doors because the questions of who sent the text message, was Alberto in on it and who is lying to who and who knows what are all in play. Let's get to it.

The boss opens the show as is the custom recently. He says that for the foreseeable future, Raw and Smackdown will be combined to form Raw Supershows. Did the Brand Split just end? I very well may have misunderstood it but that's what it sounded like. Anyway HHH now wants to talk about the bad part of the job, which in this case is people lying to him which he thinks Nash has done. He calls Nash to the ring but gets someone else instead.

Here's Punk who is still getting a decent response. He wants to be told that HHH and Nash have been together all along. Cue Nash to the NWO music. Nash admits that he lied about the car wreck last week. Nash yells about Stephanie. For all the references to her, shouldn't she be here soon? He asks HHH what kind of man HHH is and HHH says the kind that shouldn't be lied to by his best friend.

HHH can't trust him anymore and tells Nash to leave now and not come back. Nash doesn't leave and says he wasn't lying

about the text. While HHH was gone last week, Nash was signed to a contract by Johnny Ace so he has to be fired to be gone. It's a guaranteed paycheck too so Nash gets paid even if he's just sitting at home. HHH says he's not fired but no more lying.

Punk has a sudden viral stomach attack and begins to dry heave all over the ring as he's sickened by this. He says he's just acting, exactly like those two are. Punk references the Clique, which is the sound of remotes changing the channel every time Nash is on screen. Also it's the sound Nash's knees make when he walks.

Nash says since he's under contract now, Hunter should book the match everyone wants to see. Punk says let's do it at NOC and then makes sure the Board, and by that he means Stephanie, is cool with it. HHH may not wear the pants, but he wears Stephanie's panties. HHH says the match is on for NOC and they can both suck it.

HHH leaves but with Punk and Nash in the ring...here's Orton? He doesn't say anything but it's Orton vs. Ziggler later. In a nice touch we get a little highlight reel of Ziggler with JR narrating about how good he is. That's EXACTLY what they need to do to save time and still get these guys some mention.

Randy Orton vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ok so it seems it's just Smackdown guys being on Raw and not vice versa. Well it's a step in the right direction at least. Vickie is compared to great managers who had a diverse stable. I'd like to see that come back because it gives people some fallback storylines if they're bored. Orton keeps up the advantage and Ziggler has a noticeable tan line. Vickie gets involved and Ziggler counters the elevated DDT to send Orton to the floor.

Zig Zag on the floor has Orton in trouble. It gets a close 8 count on the floor but Randy gets back in, allowing Dolph to

stomp away as we take a break. We're back on the floor with Orton being rammed into the steps. Swagger is watching in the back. Something resembling a crossface chickenwing by Ziggler and he keeps Randy down even longer.

Dolph goes up and they slug it out with Orton taking over. Superplex by Orton puts both guys down but Randy gets two. Here come the clotheslines and Orton is all fired up. Belly to belly gets two. Ziggler gets a Fameasser out of nowhere for a near fall. What might have been a sleeper attempt is countered into a rollup for two. Ziggler channels his inner Hennig and is catapulted into the corner.

Orton busts out his sweet over the shoulder powerbomb into a neckbreaker for two. He loads up the punt but Ziggler NAILS him with a superkick for a very close two. This is starting to get good. Orton teases throwing Ziggler to the floor but stops him at the apron so he can hit the elevated DDT. That was kind of cool. RK0 time but Ziggler counters into the sleeper. Orton escapes and tosses him into the air and Ziggler bounces to his feet and a kind of botched RK0 (Ziggler didn't fall fast enough so it was closer to a Stunner) ends this at 12:30.

Rating: B. Solid stuff here as these two continue to have some pretty decent chemistry together. Orton was on his game tonight and had some nice variations on his usual stuff, making it a far better match than he's used to having. I really liked that toss being caught into the elevated DDT. Good match here and I was really getting into it near the end.

We get a clip of Cena getting beaten down last week and Josh asks him about it, but Cena just walks away and is all mad.

Here's Cena (saying that you should come see this on his way through the curtain) to talk about Alberto. Cena says that Alberto talks about having honor as a champion but last week he got jumped by the champ in a dishonorable fashion. He calls out Del Rio but gets Mark Henry instead. Henry talks about how

he's hurt everyone in his sight and now he's going to make Cena join that list. Oh and he'll win the title at Night of Champions after he beats whoever wins the cage match.

Cue Christian who says he'll be facing Henry at Night of Champions. But we'll deal with that later. Right now he wants to tell Cena that he's tired of John's whining. Cena says that hasn't been whining and makes fun of both of them. If they want some, come get some. Christian says let's do this but here's Sheamus for the save.

Cena pulls his fist back to punch Sheamus because he's not sure if he can trust him. That's BRILLIANT as Sheamus hasn't had a big change of heart and it wouldn't be much of a turn for him to beat up Cena too. Christian bails and Henry, realizing he's outnumbered, thinks better of it and leaves. He doesn't come off like a coward, keeping his monster levels high. Nice touch again. Man they're thinking tonight and it's improving the show massively.

Johnny Ace says the match should be made and HHH comes in and is like dude, I got this covered and says the match is made.

Punk vs. Miz next. I'm DIGGING this brand split ending thing.

CM Punk vs. The Miz

Punk is in the ring post break which is kind of weird. Miz has a mic. Oh I'm liking this. Miz says that he was dropping pipe bombs way before Punk was and he's much more must see than Punk. Punk takes over early on with his usual assortment of strikes but the Macho Man elbow is broken up. Miz hits his running boot to the head for two.

He hammers away with left hands so Punk fires off some kicks. Short DDT gets two for Miz. Off to the chinlock before a neckbreaker gets two for Miz. Corner clothesline and a double axe off the top get two. Big boot gets two for Miz. This is a much better performance from Miz than I was expecting. After a

few more minutes with almost nothing from Punk, Miz sends him to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Miz holding his third chinlock of the night. Punk starts his comeback as Cole is blasting JR and Lawler for every word he says. Punk hits the top rope elbow and loads up the GTS. And never mind as here's R-Truth for the DQ at 14:00. Man I wish this could have gotten some more time and a proper ending.

Rating: B-. Not as good as the other match but still it was pretty good all things considered. Miz isn't the kind of guy you want to have long matches but they're trying at least. Truth coming in is kind of annoying but that fits the story they've got going on. Not bad at all and I liked it for the most part.

Punk beats them down but here's Nash for the distraction so that Miz can take over. Jackknife leaves Punk laying.

Sin Cara vs. Jack Swagger

BIG pop for Cara. No Vickie with Swaggs. The lights start out as normal and then go out a few seconds into it. Cara sends him to the floor and this an Asai Moonsault to take Swagger down. Here comes Vickie as Swagger hits a Vader Bomb and legdrop for a cocky one count. Swagger is in control and here's Dolph to yell. He goes to the ring and calls Jack a loser. Swagger charges but gets caught by a springboard dornado DDT and the swanton/Lionsault combo for the pin at 2:51. Hunico is WAY more coordinated than Mistico out there.

Tag Titles: Evan Bourne/Kofi Kingston vs. David Otunga/Michael McGillicutty

Kofi's pyro doesn't go off for some reason. There was a poll online and the new champions are going to be known as Air Boom. I've heard worse. McGillicutty takes over to start on Bourne and hammers away. Bourne gets beaten down as we're

waiting on the hot tag to Kofi and it connects before I can finish typing that sentence. Kofi comes in with a huge springboard chop and things speed up. SOS is countered by Michael but Kofi hits a spinning springboard cross body for two as everything breaks down. Big dive takes out Otunga and Trouble in Paradise ends McGillicutty at 2:25. This was fine.

Post match Otunga gets in Lawler's face and Daivd takes the headset off him. They stare each other down but nothing else happens.

Kelly Kelly vs. Brie Bella

Oh joy, it's this match again. Kelly hammers away to start and we cut to Beth and Natalya complaining about someone else that are causing the problems. They should be in the ring, not Kelly. The twins switch places and Nikki gets the pin with an X-Factor at 1:18.

Trailer for HHH's new movie Inside Out. So how many times are we going to see this over the next few weeks? It's an action movie about a guy that is trying to reform or is out of prison or something like that. Again though, does anyone care?

Mark Henry/Christian vs. John Cena/Sheamus

Sheamus vs. Henry to start at 11:01. Sheamus pounds him down to a nice reaction but Henry runs him over with a clothesline. The tape on Sheamus' ribs is taken off and the Great White (yes they're really calling him that in a feud with a big angry black man) is in trouble. Off to Christian as this is one sided. The not great and not white (I'm just going off what they're calling his opponent) Henry comes back in and works on the ribs even more.

Christian is back in but he jumps into the Irish Curse and is down. We're waiting on the hot tag to Cena and are also waiting on Alberto to run in because we haven't see him all night. Off to Cena who cleans house and the young ones begin

to cheer. Christian escapes the AA but can't get the tornado DDT.

Powerslam puts Christian down but he tries his cross body out of the corner and jumps into the AA which is blocked again. Henry breaks up the STF but misses a charge at Sheamus and they hit the floor. A running shoulder block off the apron takes Henry down and Christian gets a spear for two on Cena for two. Killswitch is countered and Christian is shoved into a Brogue Kick and the AA for the pin at 6:40.

Rating: C. It's a main event tag and that's it. There's nothing too great here but they were trying. It was very reminiscent of a Smackdown main event and that's fine. With only 7 minutes to work with at the very end of the show there's only so much that they can do. This wasn't bad but it worked pretty well.

To end the show, Punk comes in to HHH's office and the match with Nash is off. Instead, it's Punk vs. HHH. Oh my.

Overall Rating: B. This was back and forth. The first hour has some HUGE stuff going on including the big white elephant in the room: the brand split being over on Mondays. That breathed a lot of life into this show as you got interactions with guys that haven't been around each other in awhile. It makes things a lot more fresh and keeps us from having to sit through the same set of matches week in and week out. Definitely a plus there.

The wrestling was great in the first hour with two rather good matches. After that it kept being good but it was a step down. The drama is good stuff right now and the whole show is clicking in a way it hasn't in a very long time. With the injection of some fresh blood with the Smackdown guys, I'm hyped up for Raw in the future. Good show.

Results

Randy Orton b. Dolph Ziggler – RK0

CM Punk b. The Miz via DQ when R-Truth interfered

Sin Cara b. Jack Swagger – Lionsault

Kofi Kingston/Evan Bourne b. Michael McGillicutty/David Otunga

Brie Bella b. Kelly Kelly – Pin after a facejam from Nikki Bella

John Cena/Sheamus b. Christian/Mark Henry – AA to Christian

Brand Split Ending?

At least a little bit it seems as according to HHH on Raw tonight SD guys will be appearing on Raw now.

Thoughts on this?