

# Monday Night Raw – January 26, 2015: Episode IV: A New Hope

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 26, 2015

Location: WWE Studios, Stamford, Connecticut

Hosts: Michael Cole, Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield

This is going to be a special edition of the show as there won't be any new matches. Due to a very strong blizzard in the northeast, tonight's show was canceled and tomorrow's Smackdown has been postponed to a live show on Thursday night. I'd expect a lot of highlights and taped matches on this show so let's get to it.

We open with a look at the blizzard to explain why things are a bit different tonight.

Opening sequence.

Cole and Booker T. talk about what's coming, including last night's World Title match and the Royal Rumble in their entirety and an interview with Brock Lesnar.

JBL is on the roof of WWE Headquarters as the weatherman for the evening. He gets in a funny line about Sasquatches found frozen in ice dying warmer than he is right now. Points for a decent idea at least.

First up is last night's World Title match. Since I already did the play by play for this show last night, I'll be copying over the full version from last night, even though it may be clipped on this broadcast.

WWE World Heavyweight Title: Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Lesnar is defending and we get big match intros. Rollins immediately bails to the floor and Lesnar hits the first German suplex on Cena. There's the second German as Rollins comes in, only to get caught on

Brock's shoulders. The Stooges make the save so Brock suplexes them at the same time. Brock launches Seth back into the ring and Germans Cena again. All Lesnar so far.

Both challengers are easily suplexed again and there's the Kimura to Cena. Brock even climbs onto Cena but Seth makes the save with the springboard knee to the head and Lesnar is in trouble. A double suplex puts Lesnar down and there's an AA but Rollins throws Cena to the floor and only gets one on the champ. Both challengers are thrown to the floor and you can see everyone laying as Brock walks around the ring. Seth knocks Brock into the steps for a breather, leaving Cena to beat Rollins up inside.

The fans absolutely hate Cena and are thrilled to have Brock break up the Shuffle with rolling Germans. Rollins breaks it up for some reason though and knees Lesnar out to the floor. Now it's Cena getting all fired up and cleaning house, only to have Rollins knock him outside. Seth tries a springboard onto Lesnar but gets caught on Brock's shoulders for an F5. John has to make a save so Brock feels the need to throw him down with another German suplex.

That's not enough for Brock though as he loads up the announcers' table (and destroys a monitor), only to walk into the AA. Brock doesn't even stay down so Cena hits another, only to have Lesnar pop up again. A third AA gets two as Rollins makes the save, followed by the Curb Stomp for two with Cena making a save. Now the fans are impressed. Lesnar throws them both down again and goes outside, only to have Cena follow him out and spear the champ through the barricade.

Cena slams him hard into the steps and blasts him in the face with the same steps, knocking the champ onto the announcers' table. Seth kicks Cena down and goes up for a top rope elbow through the table to put everyone down. That was one heck of a crash as the war continues. Back in and Rollins hits the low superkick for two on Cena but John grabs a popup sitout powerbomb for the same. Lesnar is receiving medical attention as Rollins counters a superplex attempt into the running buckle bomb for two.

Everyone is down again but Cena grabs the STF, only to have the Stooges come in for the save. Rollins plays Reigns in a Triple Bomb as a stretcher comes out for Lesnar. Cena kicks out at two so Rollins grabs the briefcase, only to miss the charge and fly out to the floor. The Stooges take a double AA and Rollins gets the single version but kicks out at two. We cut back to Lesnar who says he wants to stay out here. Cole says Lesnar has at least a broken rib. Rollins enziguris Cena down and the Curb Stomp connects for another near fall.

Rollins busts out a Phoenix Splash but Lesnar CHARGES back in for some German suplexes as Beast Mode is on. Seth flips out of a German though and knocks Lesnar silly with the briefcase, only to have Lesnar pop up with an F5 to counter the Curb Stomp onto the briefcase to retain the title at 22:45.

**Rating:** A. If there's one thing WWE can do like no one else, it's organized carnage. These guys DESTROYED each other for twenty two minutes and I would have believed anyone could have won at any time. Lesnar going into that other level is absolutely terrifying and you believe he could beat anyone at that point. Great stuff here and well worth going out of your way to see. They're making Lesnar out to be unstoppable, meaning whoever gets to take the title off of him will be a huge star. You might even say they'll be Reign(s)ing. And yes that was as stupid as it sounded.

This Thursday, Daniel Bryan vs. Kane in a casket match on Smackdown.

Seth Rollins is live in studio for an exclusive interview. Rollins says he deserved to be in the title match at the Rumble because of his skills, not because he brought back the Authority. He did everything he was supposed to do to win the title, including Curb Stomping Lesnar. It's put him down before, but it didn't work last night.

The springboard elbow and Phoenix Splash should have won and Rollins was surprised that they didn't. Rollins even admits that he underestimated Lesnar last night, but Lesnar underestimated him as well. Lesnar may be the World Champion, but he doesn't have a Plan B. Brock will be here next, and Rollins says he can come take this chair from him. It's not

often that you hear someone admit their best wasn't good enough and this came off more like a face interview than anything else. I don't think it's a turn or anything but we'll call it shades of gray.

After a break, Lesnar comes up to the interview set and says Rollins has his chair. Rollins gets up and shoves the chair down before walking away. Brock sits down and confirms that he has a broken rib but it was time for him to win last night and that's what he did. Heyman says they're not at odds with the Authority because Lesnar is going to be headlining the biggest show of the year. If the Authority has a problem with someone, Brock Lesnar will be there to take them out as long as the Authority pays him what he's worth.

We look at a clip of Brock breaking the Streak and Lesnar says he won the match due to overcoming and conquering everything in his path, just like he has everything else. After that totally obvious piece of filler, Brock says he's happy for Reigns and hopes he's up for the challenge, because the champ is ready. When a steamroller has momentum going, get out of his way. Heyman says Reigns can't stop Lesnar. "Anything else?" Cole says Reigns will be here later tonight and Lesnar thinks he might stick around.

Lesnar vs. Reigns already sounds better. Not due to anything here as this was nothing special, but because it's not in the really boring Royal Rumble. I really do think that has more to do with it than anything else. When you get down to just Lesnar vs. Reigns as two monsters clashing, a lot of that hatred is going away and people will calm WAY down over it. Just thinking that it's Reigns vs. Lesnar at Wrestlemania and forgetting last night makes it feel a lot less annoying and dreadful. That's a big step forward.

### Royal Rumble

90 second intervals and it's Miz at #1 and R-Truth at #2. The fans immediately want Mizdow but get a headlock from R-Truth instead. Feeling out process to start until Truth gets crotched on top. In at #3 is BUBBA RAY DUDLEY, complete with taped up glasses. It's Miz getting the big beating and the wind-up elbow has Miz reeling. Truth (appropriately)

helps with What's Up and is even told to get the tables. You know the Philadelphia crowd is up for that. Miz gets back up and eats 3D, allowing Bubba to easily eliminate him.

Luke Harper is in at #4 as Bubba throws out Truth. They immediately start hammering on each other and Harper fights out of the Bubba Bomb before kicking Bubba in the jaw. A big lariat puts Harper down though and the ECW chants revive Dudley. Bray Wyatt is in at #5, complete with lantern. Bubba stares him down but Harper gives us a Wyatt Family reunion as the fans want D-Von. Harper throws Bubba out and it's time for the big staredown.

They stand in place until Curtis Axel is in at #6 but Erick Rowan (who didn't qualify for the Rumble) jumps him from behind though and whips him into the barricade, apparently stealing Axel's spot. Harper looks at Rowan and wants a team up, much to Bray's excitement. Bray and Harper join forces though and Rowan gets double teamed, only to have Bray dump both of them out to clear the ring.

The Boogeyman returns at #7 and Cole informs us that the guy coming out to I'M THE BOOGEYMAN is in fact named the Boogeyman. Bray smiles at him and stops a charge with a big clothesline, setting up the easy elimination. Sin Cara is in at #8 and Cole sounds bored out of his mind. Cara gets in a kick from the apron but Bray just decks him with a right hand. Sister Abigail connects and Bray is all alone again a few seconds later.

Bray grabs the mic and issues an open invitation because he has the whole world in his hands. Zack Ryder returns at #9, hits the Broski Boot, and is quickly Bray's fifth elimination. Daniel Bryan is in at #10 to really pick things up. He immediately starts the kicks and has Bray in trouble in the corner. Even more kicks put him down as Fandango is in at #11. Bryan busts out even more kicks and an old school airplane spin but doesn't throw Fandango out.

Tyson Kidd (complete with his addictive theme song) is in at #12 to slug it out with Bryan before a double cross body puts both guys down. Stardust is in at #13 as we're firmly in the midcard portion. Cole says

this is Stardust's first Rumble to split a few hairs. We currently have Wyatt, Bryan, Stardust, Fandango and Kidd in the ring. Stardust and Fandango trade skinning the cat saves before Bryan belly to back suplexes Kidd out.

Bray gets knocked through the middle rope and Bryan follows with the Flying Goat, meaning both guys are still in as Diamond Dallas Page is in at #14. Stardust jumps him upon entry but eats a Diamond Cutter. Fandango takes the middle rope version, followed by Wyatt missing a charge and taking one of his own. Rusev is in at #15 and it's time to clear out some space. He blocks a Diamond Cutter and dumps Page and Fandango, setting up a showdown between Rusev and Wyatt.

Daniel breaks it up with a top rope dropkick and unleashes more kicks, only to have Bray pop up and dump him out far earlier than I was expecting. Goldust is in at #16 as the crowd is just dead. Stardust tries to throw out Goldust (with Cole mentioning that Goldust was eliminated by his brother last year, despite saying Stardust was in his first Rumble. Like I said, splitting hairs) but Goldust saves himself. The fans start chanting for Bryan and then switch to booing.

Kofi Kingston is in at #17, giving us Kingston, Goldust, Stardust, Rusev and Wyatt. Bray catapults him over the top but Kofi skins the cat and comes back in with a springboard shot to the head. Everyone gets into one corner until Adam Rose is in at #18. You can hear every word of the songs now as the crowd just does not care at the moment. Kofi is thrown out but the Rosebuds catch him and walk him back to the apron. Rusev dumps Rose and Kofi a few seconds later and Roman Reigns is in at #19 to a lot less booing than I was expecting.

Roman starts cleaning house and dumps both Dust Brothers, only to get double teamed by Rusev and Wyatt. Big E. is in at #20 to clean house and give us a very powerful foursome of Big E., Rusev, Wyatt and Reigns. Mizdow is in at #21 but Miz runs out to say it's his spot. Damien finally stands up to Miz and goes in to a good reaction, only to be dumped by Rusev. Jack Swagger is in at #22 and everyone keeps brawling until Ryback is in at #23.

Ryback busts out everyone with spinebusters as JBL incorrectly says Lex Luger is the only man to win the Rumble but never win the WWE Title (Duggan). The fans chant for CM Punk but get Kane at #24, giving us Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Big E., Swagger, Ryback and Kane. Dean Ambrose wakes the crowd up again at #25 and goes right for Wyatt. We get more brawling around the ropes until Titus O'Neil is in at #26 and is dumped in about thirty seconds (counting intro) by Reigns and Rusev.

Ambrose dropkicks Wyatt up against the ropes and Bad News Barrett gets lucky #27. The ring is getting full but no one is in any real danger of being eliminated. Cesaro is in at #28 and joins the fray. Rusev sends Big E. to the apron and then kicks him out to clear the ring a bit. Big Show is in at #29 and everyone stops to stare him down. They all gang up on him but Show shoves everyone down as Kane chokeslams Ambrose. Show does the same to Reigns before the monsters dump Ryback with ease.

Swagger is dumped by the power team as well, tying Kane for the all time record at 39 eliminations. Dolph Ziggler is in at #30, giving us a final group of Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Kane, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro, Big Show and Ziggler. Dolph has to fight out of the chokeslam from Big Show and dumps Barrett. Cesaro swings Dolph around and gets him to the apron, only to be pulled out for the elimination. Ziggler goes up top and dives right into the KO Punch, allowing Kane and Show to easily dump him, giving Kane the all time eliminations record.

Big Show KO's Wyatt and dumps him as well, leaving us with Ambrose, Reigns, Big Show and Kane as the final four. Reigns is bleeding from the side of the mouth as the brawl is on. The Shield fights out of a double chokeslam but Ambrose's rebound clothesline has almost no effect on Show. Reigns knocks Show down and the fans just are not happy. Big Show and Kane double team Roman though before a chokeslam is enough to get rid of Ambrose.

So it's Kane and Big Show vs. Reigns and the fans are LIVID. Reigns gets sent to the apron but Show tries to dump Kane, triggering a fight that has been going on for over fifteen years now. Reigns sneaks up from behind them and eliminates both guys to go to Wrestlemania at 57:23.

**Rating:** D+. I'm surprised by this but I really shouldn't be. They actually went with Reigns vs. the giants to end the Royal Rumble? This match felt like a big tease from the company as they were setting up Wyatt, Cesaro, Rusev, Ambrose and Ziggler for this big showdown but then snatched it away to go with Kane and Big Show as the big monsters. That's really what they think is the smart idea? And you know we're getting Reigns vs. Big Show at Fast Lane, probably without Big Show doing a job for him because he doesn't get pinned you see.

As for the rest of the match....yeah I liked it, but man alive it was obvious where they were going with about twenty minutes to go. Bryan going out that early is a waste, though I'm fine with him not winning it. He had his big moment last year and it would be foolish to try and recreate it. Bryan can get the title later on in his other big moment and that's all he needs to do.

The returns were fine but there was no big surprise at the end (that's fine), and Reigns was just so obvious as a winner. Also, the commentary was getting REALLY annoying with all their stats, some of which just didn't make sense. I didn't hate this match, but Reigns is getting wedged into a spot he's just not ready for whatsoever. Wrestlemania better have an amazing undercard, because Reigns vs. Lesnar is not going to cut it on top.

Post match Kane and Big Show destroy Reigns until The Rock makes a surprise run in for the save. House is cleaned but Rusev is back in! He was never officially eliminated....so Reigns throws him out to officially win about three minutes after he won in the first place. Again, more teasing.

The Authority comes out as Rock poses with Reigns before letting Reigns point at the sign to end the show.

Reigns is in the studio for a live interview. After a quick question about how amazing last night was, Byron Saxton asks him what he thinks when people say he isn't ready. Reigns tells a story of his father Sika throwing him in the pool at the YMCA when he wasn't ready. When he went under, he scratched and clawed his way up and that's how he learned how

to swim, even though he wasn't ready. As for the crowd last night, yeah he was hoping for a warmer reception but those people paid their money and can say what they want.

Reigns doesn't know if he's been handpicked as the next guy, but if he has, it's an opportunity. He has to lace up his boots and get in that ring by himself to grasp the opportunity. After the match last night, the Rock came down to help him because Rock is family. Reigns hasn't mentioned that Rock is his family too often but now he goes into the Samoan family tree. The WWE put food on his table when he was a kid and now he wants to thank them by meeting Brock Lesnar face to face both at Wrestlemania, but here tonight.

This was a good performance from Reigns as he sounded FAR more natural here and you could tell he wasn't reading from a cheesy script. It's interesting that they're addressing all the big questions being asked about him instead of just going with whatever lame story they had. I'm not saying it's going to save things but it's more interesting than what it sounded like we were getting.

From last night on the post show, Cena was doing an interview when Rusev charged in and took the microphone from him. They got in each other's faces and the match is on for Fast Lane. Cole acknowledges that it was going to be at Wrestlemania but they're moving it up.

We look back at Sting returning to help Cena win the main event last week. HHH will call out Sting at Fast Lane.

We get the announcement for the latest inductee into the Hall of Fame: Arnold Schwarzenegger. Some wrestlers do some Arnold impressions. Ryback is actually appropriate as he played a Terminator character in OVW, complete with the Terminator theme as his music.

Dean Ambrose is walking in the snow and comes inside. After a break, Dean is messing with the heater and says it isn't even that cold here. This morning, he walked through a blizzard and hitchhiked all the way here, got in a fight on a gas station, stole some hiking boots and got here. It's not unlike the Road to Wrestlemania because he loves dangerous conditions. No matter who or what is in front of him, he's going to make

it to Wrestlemania. He goes off to find out if anyone has any posters of him around here.

The next sitdown interview is with Daniel Bryan, who recaps the start of the YES Movement and his rise to the top of the company, followed by being put out of action by Kane. He feels like he let down the fans because they had supported him to get where he was. It feels like he has to win the title again, just for the people. As for being eliminated early last night, he went into the match thinking that it was the perfect opportunity to go to face the ultimate dragon and get his title back.

But he failed and Reigns rose up and made the most of the situation. Now Bryan never had WWE feed him as a kid but he's sure Reigns can have a great match at Wrestlemania and do the company proud. He's going to end Kane in the casket match on Thursday and move on to become champion. This was definitely the weakest of the interviews so far, mainly because Bryan vs. Kane again interests absolutely no one.

Reigns and Lesnar have their big sitdown meeting but Heyman takes over the questions. He's known Reigns' family longer than Reigns has known them, all the way back to when he (Heyman) was a kid. He took Yokozuna's first publicity pictures and managed Rikishi before he was Rikishi, and saw Rikishi's kids, now known as the Usos, messing around in the ring before a WCW show. Heyman knew Reigns as a boy in Pensacola when his father was wrestling down there.

Paul also knows the Rock, but more importantly, the Rock knows Brock Lesnar. Back in 2002, the Rock ruled the roost around here, but then he met Brock Lesnar. Now Reigns wants to be the next big thing, just like Lesnar was back in 2002. However, that's not going to happen. The Rock never asked for a rematch with Brock Lesnar because just one match was enough for him. That's what Rock never told Reigns, because he doesn't want Reigns to know the truth. Lesnar is the 1 in 21-1, so how is Roman going to handle disappointing his family when he loses at Wrestlemania because he can't beat Brock?

Reigns stares Heyman down and says he'll answer that to Brock's face. He turns to face the champ and says he knows what he signed up for, but

Brock doesn't know what he signed up for. Roman is going to take the title at Wrestlemania, but if he can't, he's going to take a piece of Lesnar with him. Lesnar gets right in his face and Reigns stands up. They shake hands and Brock says unlike Heyman, he doesn't respect Reigns. Roman: "But you will."

**Overall Rating:** B. This was exactly the kind of show WWE needed after last night. One of the biggest problems with WWE is they have the most scripted, stuck in a rut feeling to them. Instead, this felt completely different and allowed them to slow down rather than cramming everything into three hours with all the WACKY COMEDY and twenty minute promos all over the place. This show was far more entertaining than I was expecting and gave me new hope for the future.

The Lesnar vs. Reigns stuff was absolutely mind blowing with both guys more than holding their own under Heyman's masterful direction. Reigns kept this simple and sounded like a gladiator with short lines instead of doing all the scripted nonsense. A simple story about learning to swim made me care about him more than a year and a half of Shield matches. Overall, this was a great show and exactly what WWE needed. It's also amazing how much better last night's results feel when you get away from the dull Rumble. That's a great sign for the future.

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# Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: January 19, 2015

This was another special edition of the show called Raw Reunion, which is another way to have the old guys show up again for no real reason. It's also the go home show for Monday Night Raw, meaning we need to make sure everyone but Roman Reigns looks great because there's almost no doubt that he's going to Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We opened with, of course, a big in ring segment. This time though it was Brock ready to fight and wanting to get his hands on Rollins for what happened last week. Instead, HHH came out to basically blame the whole thing on Lesnar, meaning it was almost time for the boss to get beaten down. That is until STEPHANIE came out to calm things down, because no matter who you are, including Brock freaking Lesnar, can't do anything to Stephanie.

Of all the Authority, I get annoyed at her the most because of things like this. She's treated like this demigod and everyone is just in awe of her whenever she's around, likely because of that horrible rap song of hers. Even when she gets her comeuppance, it's usually with some stupid juvenile comedy moment and then she's all evil again the next week. Let someone yell at her or call her out on being annoying for a change. You know, like they do to everyone not named Stephanie.

Anyway, Rollins got on screen and talked smack, then Cena came out and talked even more, then Stephanie (praise be her name! And please don't let her hurt us with her terrifying yet oh so seductive eyes. And don't let us hear one of her horribly stupid and pointless interviews she gives to her charity of the month or to whatever low level media outlet will talk to her as she tries to be some polished businesswoman and talks about branding like it's the most important thing in the history of ever) talked a lot, then Cena made fun of Rollins for screwing up a line because no one ever does that.

They STILL WEREN'T FREAKING DONE THOUGH as HHH put Cena in a match later

on against an opponent to be named to get the three fired guys their jobs back. Of course that's not enough though because Cena had to put his spot in the title match on the line. ONE MORE THING! We're putting it up to the fans to vote because this segment didn't drag on long enough. They easily could have cut this down by fifteen minutes and dropped the stupid vote thing, but that would prevent their big idea (more on that later).

Bray Wyatt beat Daniel Bryan in a match that was longer than it needed to be. This was entertaining and Bray won thanks to Kane's help, but the important idea here is that Bray continues to be Daniel's Kryptonite. Daniel has never beaten him and just can't figure Wyatt out. Hogan didn't pin Piper (until the disasters they had in WCW) and Undertaker never pinned Bret. Having that one guy you can't solve is a good thing and a necessary element for a big character. Granted it's not likely going to last because we live in an era where everything has to go as fast as possible, but it's nice to have now.

We got the Kliq reunion in the back and Mizdow did a pretty excellent X-Pac imitation.

The Royal Rumble Legends Panel saw Hogan, Flair and Michaels do Rumble picks and tell generic stories about their wins. It all wound up being a way to have Big Show come out and look intimidating so Reigns could make the save. We're still on this story somehow and likely will be until Fast Lane. I've said this before about WCW decisions, but I'd love to hear Vince validate Big Show's position in the company. I mean....how can they possibly think he has an impact, even to newer fans?

The poll says Cena puts the shot on the line. From what I've heard, people who voted no were told they voted yes, as were people who downloaded the App and hadn't voted yet. This kind of chicanery doesn't really surprise me, but it's still very annoying to see. Yeah it was a way get people to download the App, but they should be able to find better ways than this. It was a stupid vote to have and the results should have been obvious. It made the opening segment even longer too and that's never a good thing.

Dean Ambrose pinned Bad News Barrett. I think I pinned him in a non-title

match a few weeks back.

Rumble by the Numbers. That's still cool.

New Day beat Cesaro and Tyson Kidd in a quick match. I still like the losers here.

The NWO came out and took credit for everything good ever (literally) until Ascension came out. This brought out the APA and New Age Outlaws to beat up the Ascension, because the tag team division is SO deep that you can have old guys beat them up like this. I mean, I could go for another six months of Miz/Mizdow or Dust Brothers vs. the Usos couldn't you?

Cena is facing Big Show/Kane/Rollins in the main event. As usual, just going through the motions.

Paige and Natayla won your weekly pointless Divas match, defeating Summer Rae and Alicia Fox.

Rusev, R-Truth, 46 seconds.

Lesnar scared Rollins because last week's big hero moment is totally forgotten.

Jey Uso beat the Miz. I don't care either.

The three villains destroyed Cena for most of the match until Sting came out and pointed (not at the sign of course. He hasn't earned that right yet), allowing Cena to roll Rollins up for the pin. Cena ran from the monsters and Lesnar came out to destroy everything in sight to end the show. Of note after the show, there was a kid crying that HHH wanted to hurt Cena so HHH broke character and told him it was ok. I love little things like that and it's not like it hurt anything. If nothing else he can say it's best for business to make sure everyone goes home happy.

Overall, Raw wasn't horrible this week but it really didn't do much for me. They're trying to hide that it's Reigns winning the Rumble, but at the end of the day it's about as clear as Stephanie's diamond eyes. Sorry just had to get in a bit more sucking up before she started talking again. The wrestling wasn't much this week and it was clear they were

filling in time, which unfortunately didn't make me want to see Sunday's show any more than I already did. Not a fan of this one for the most part, but it had some watchable moments.

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# Royal Rumble 2015: More Teasing Than A 15 Year Old On Prom Night

## Royal Rumble 2015

Date: January 25, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

It's the start of the Road to Wrestlemania and the top two contenders to challenge for the title at the biggest show of the year are Roman Reigns and Daniel Bryan. Both are in the Royal Rumble match tonight and there really isn't another major favorite to win. Other than that we have John Cena and Seth Rollins challenging Brock Lesnar for the WWE World Title in a triple threat. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

This was originally a six man elimination tag with Adam Rose and Xavier

Woods added. They may have been dropped due to Woods' ankle injury. The fans are entirely behind Cesaro to start as Big E. throws Kidd around. Some backbreakers get two on Kidd before Big E. launches Kidd into the air for a dropkick from Kofi. Off to Cesaro and the fans are thrilled. Big E. comes back in and hammers away on Cesaro, much to the crowd's chagrin. Oh yeah they're white hot tonight.

Kofi is dragged into the wrong corner for a double stomp with Kidd going much faster than his partner. Cesaro won't let Kofi tag but he does roll the Swiss man up for two. The Cesaro Swing into the dropkick gets two and we take a break. Back with Cesaro holding Kofi in a chinlock as the fans think New Day sucks. Big E. gets all fired up and wipes the sweat from his brow before slamming Cesaro down for two. Kidd is sent outside and Big E. launches Kofi onto him to almost no reaction. Big E. spears Cesaro through the ropes and off the apron to the floor. I miss that spot. Or any Big E. spot actually.

The referee doesn't see a tag to Kofi at first but Cesaro backdrops Big E. over the top for a big crash. Cesaro superplexes Kofi for a springboard elbow from Kidd for a very close two. Kofi kicks Kidd to the floor to break up a Sharpshooter attempt but Cesaro gets caught cheating on a sunset flip attempt. Trouble in Paradise is countered into the Sharpshooter on Kofi but Big E. makes the save with a belly to belly. Cesaro knocks the big man to the floor and pops Kofi in the face with a European uppercut, setting up a swinging fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin on Kofi at 11:00.

**Rating:** B. This got a lot better near the end but the match and commentary really tells you everything you need to know about the tag division at this point. With that one win, after about five losses, JBL thinks Cesaro and Kidd are in line for a title shot. Have we really sunk that low again? Win two matches and you should be the Tag Team Champions? Yet people still don't want Ascension around? The near falls here were good and I wasn't sure who was winning until the end, but that's the first loss for New Day? Really?

The opening video talks about wanting to have your moment and being the one. We transition into a video on the triple threat and how everyone is

fighting for the title.

### New Age Outlaws vs. Ascension

Ascension needs some steps to come down during their entrance. Cole points out that this isn't for the Tag Team Titles. That could be because neither team is champions. The fans think Billy still has it as he armdrags Viktor down. Off to Dogg vs. Konnor with the big man driving Dogg into the corner. Viktor's chinlock doesn't have much effect so it's off to Konnor for one of his own. Dogg finally gets up and dives over for the tag to Billy as everything speeds up. The Fameasser misses though and Fall of Man ends Gunn at 5:23.

**Rating:** D+. This was exactly what it was supposed to be as they're setting up Ascension against various legendary teams, meaning we're likely to see Too Cool and maybe the APA laying down for them in the future, setting up the title showdown against Ascension. Granted it's not like beating the New Age Outlaws means much at this point.

We recap Sting debuting on Raw and staring down the Authority, allowing Cena to pin Rollins to save his spot in the title match tonight and get Dolph Ziggler, Erick Rowan and Ryback their jobs back.

HHH and Stephanie are annoyed that they weren't told about Sting debuting. If he walks in here again, HHH is going to destroy him. Heyman comes in and the ECW chants begin. His solution to the Sting problem: Brock Lesnar.

### Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Miz/Damien Mizdow

The Usos are defending and these teams have been trading the titles for the last few months. Mizdow is just ridiculously over. Miz shoves Jimmy into the corner but eats a shot to the face. The corner clothesline puts Jey down but he's able to crotch Miz on the top. Mizdow does the same but in slow motion for a funny bit. He one ups it by diving into an invisible punch to the ribs before Miz throws Jimmy throat first into the ropes. The Reality Check gets two but Miz still won't tag out.

The not very hot tag brings in Jey but Miz takes him down for the figure

four as everything breaks down. Miz and Mizdow head outside and Jimmy dives on Mizdow with Jey taking out Miz a few seconds later. Back in and Miz hits the Skull Crushing Finale for two on Jimmy. Jey comes back in for a double superkick and the Superfly Splash but Mizdow makes the save. He follows it up with the Skull Crushing Finale to give Miz two on Jey. Miz's superplex attempt is broken up for a sunset bomb from Jey, followed by the Superfly Splash from Jimmy to retain at 8:22. Mizdow didn't seem interested in making the save.

**Rating:** C-. Not much to see here as these teams have run out of things to do to each other. Miz and Mizdow's split seems imminent and I can't imagine they make it out of the Rumble without a major showdown. It wasn't a great match though and they would have been better off with this on the pre-show and the New Day vs. Kidd/Cesaro on the main show.

The expert panel (Booker T., Corey Graves and Alex Riley) talk about the show so far.

We look at the pre-show match.

The Stooges are playing the new WWE Immortals game when Seth Rollins comes in to ask why they're not helping him get ready. He's tired of being called the future and wants to be the present.

### Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

This is the Total Divas match over who are the real stars of the show. Paige throws Nikki down to start as JBL says the Bellas have been twins their whole life. Off to Brie who walks into a double suplex, allowing the slow crawling cover from Paige. Natalya comes back in and slams Brie down before the Bellas start choking to take over.

The Brie Mode running knee to the chest gets two but Natalya fights out of a headscissors by lifting Nikki into an electric chair. Nikki misses a clothesline in the corner but Brie breaks up the hot tag to Paige. A big forearm to Natalya's jaw is enough for the pin at 8:06 to end this far too long match.

**Rating:** D-. Oh come on now. A FOREARM??? They can't even have Nikki hit

her finisher for the pin? If you're going to have Nikki pin Natalya, at least make this a title match. Oh wait that would be stupid because we've seen that match like 19 times now. Again, stop running through matches and save them for shows like this.

Roman Reigns says last year's elimination record was cool but it's nothing compared to this.

Stardust talks about the Cosmic Key and Goldust breathes a lot.

Rusev will crush everyone at Wrestlemania.

Miz says he'll win and Mizdow agrees, but accidentally says he'll win instead.

Big Show says he's an angry and motivated giant. Roman Reigns and everyone else in the match will find that out for real.

Fandango says everyone underestimates the power of the tango.

Daniel Bryan thinks he can make it back to the main event of Wrestlemania this year. YES he does.

We recap Lesnar vs. Cena vs. Rollins. Cena had defeated Orton to earn a title shot against Lesnar but the Authority added Rollins to the match to thank him for bringing them back. Rollins has started to stand up to Lesnar and even Curb Stomped him, meaning Lesnar wants to kill him too.

WWE World Heavyweight Title: Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Lesnar is defending and we get big match intros. Rollins immediately bails to the floor and Lesnar hits the first German suplex on Cena. There's the second German as Rollins comes in, only to get caught on Brock's shoulders. The Stooges make the save so Brock suplexes them at the same time. Brock launches Seth back into the ring and Germans Cena again. All Lesnar so far.

Both challengers are easily suplexed again and there's the Kimura to Cena. Brock even climbs onto Cena but Seth makes the save with the springboard knee to the head and Lesnar is in trouble. A double suplex

puts Lesnar down and there's an AA but Rollins throws Cena to the floor and only gets one on the champ. Both challengers are thrown to the floor and you can see everyone laying as Brock walks around the ring. Seth knocks Brock into the steps for a breather, leaving Cena to beat Rollins up inside.

The fans absolutely hate Cena, only to have Brock break up the Shuffle with rolling Germans. Rollins breaks it up for some reason though and knees Lesnar out to the floor. Now it's Cena getting all fired up and cleaning house, only to have Rollins knock him outside. Seth tries a springboard onto Lesnar, only to get caught on Brock's shoulders for an F5. John has to make a save so Brock feels the need to throw him down with another German suplex.

That's not enough for Brock though as he loads up the announcers' table (and destroys a monitor), only to walk into the AA. Brock doesn't even stay down so Cena hits another, only to have Lesnar pop up again. A third AA gets two as Rollins makes the save, followed by the Curb Stomp for two with Cena making a save. Now the fans are impressed. Lesnar throws them both down again and goes outside, only to have Cena follow him out and spear the champ through the barricade.

Cena slams him hard into the steps and blasts him in the face with the same steps, knocking the champ onto the announcers' table. Seth kicks Cena down and goes up for a top rope elbow through the table to put everyone down. That was one heck of a crash as the war continues. Back in and Rollins hits the low superkick for two on Cena but John grabs a popup sitout powerbomb for the same. Lesnar is receiving medical attention as Rollins counters a superplex attempt into the running buckle bomb for two.

Everyone is down again but Cena grabs the STF, only to have the Stooges come in for the save. Rollins plays Reigns in a Triple Bomb as a stretcher comes out for Lesnar. Cena kicks out at two so Rollins grabs the briefcase, only to miss the charge and fly out to the floor. The Stooges take a double AA and Rollins gets the single version but kicks out at two. We cut back to Lesnar who says he wants to stay out here. Cole says Lesnar has at least a broken rib. Rollins enziguris Cena down

and the Curb Stomp connects for another near fall.

Rollins busts out a Phoenix Splash but Lesnar CHARGES back in for some German suplexes as Beast Mode is on. Seth flips out of a German though and knocks Lesnar silly with the briefcase, only to have Lesnar pop up with an F5 to counter the Curb Stomp onto the briefcase to retain the title at 22:45.

**Rating:** A. If there's one thing WWE can do like no one else, it's organized carnage. These guys DESTROYED each other for twenty two minutes and I would have believed anyone could have won at any time. Lesnar going into that other level is absolutely terrifying and you believe he could beat anyone at that point. Great stuff here and well worth going out of your way to see. They're making Lesnar out to be unstoppable, meaning whoever gets to take the title off of him will be a huge star. You might even say they'll be Reign(s)ing. And yes that was as stupid as it sounded.

Rumble by the numbers.

### Royal Rumble

90 second intervals and it's Miz at #1 and R-Truth at #2. The fans immediately want Mizdow but get a headlock from R-Truth instead. Feeling out process to start until Truth gets crotched on top. In at #3 is BUBBA RAY DUDLEY, complete with taped up glasses. It's Miz getting the big beating and the wind-up elbow has Miz reeling. Truth (appropriately) helps with What's Up and is even told to get the tables. You know the Philadelphia crowd is up for that. Miz gets back up and eats 3D, allowing Bubba to easily eliminate him.

Luke Harper is in at #4 as Bubba throws out Truth. They immediately start hammering on each other and Harper fights out of the Bubba Bomb before kicking Bubba in the jaw. A big lariat puts Harper down though and the ECW chants revive Dudley. Bray Wyatt is in at #5, complete with lantern. Bubba stares him down but Harper gives us a Wyatt Family reunion as the fans want D-Von. Harper throws Bubba out and it's time for the big staredown.

They stand in place until Curtis Axel is in at #6 but Erick Rowan (who didn't qualify for the Rumble) jumps him from behind though and whips him into the barricade, apparently stealing Axel's spot. Harper looks at Rowan and wants a team up, much to Bray's excitement. Bray and Harper join forces though and Rowan gets double teamed, only to have Bray dump both of them out to clear the ring.

The Boogeyman returns at #7 and Cole informs us that the guy coming out to I'M THE BOOGEYMAN is in fact named the Boogeyman. Bray smiles at him and stops a charge with a big clothesline, setting up the easy elimination. Sin Cara is in at #8 and Cole sounds bored out of his mind. Cara gets in a kick from the apron but Bray just decks him with a right hand. Sister Abigail connects and Bray is all alone again a few seconds later.

Bray grabs the mic and issues an open invitation because he has the whole world in his hands. Zack Ryder returns at #9, hits the Broski Boot, and is quickly Bray's fifth elimination. Daniel Bryan is in at #10 to really pick things up. He immediately starts the kicks and has Bray in trouble in the corner. Even more kicks put him down as Fandango is in at #11. Bryan busts out even more kicks and an old school airplane spin but doesn't throw Fandango out.

Tyson Kidd (complete with his addictive theme song) is in at #12 to slug it out with Bryan before a double cross body puts both guys down. Stardust is in at #13 as we're firmly in the midcard portion. Cole says this is Stardust's first Rumble to split a few hairs. We currently have Wyatt, Bryan, Stardust, Fandango and Kidd in the ring. Stardust and Fandango trade skinning the cat saves before Bryan belly to back suplexes Kidd out.

Bray gets knocked through the middle rope and Bryan follows with the Flying Goat, meaning both guys are still in as Diamond Dallas Page is in at #14. Stardust jumps him upon entry but eats a Diamond Cutter. Fandango takes the middle rope version, followed by Wyatt missing a charge and taking one of his own. Rusev is in at #15 and it's time to clear out some space. He blocks a Diamond Cutter and dumps Page and Fandango, setting up a showdown between Rusev and Wyatt.

Daniel breaks it up with a top rope dropkick and unleashes more kicks, only to have Bray pop up and dump him out far earlier than I was expecting. Goldust is in at #16 as the crowd is just dead. Stardust tries to throw out Goldust (with Cole mentioning that Goldust was eliminated by his brother last year, despite saying Stardust was in his first Rumble. Like I said, splitting hairs) but Goldust saves himself. The fans start chanting for Bryan and then switch to booing.

Kofi Kingston is in at #17, giving us Kingston, Goldust, Stardust, Rusev and Wyatt. Bray catapults him over the top but Kofi skins the cat and comes back in with a springboard shot to the head. Everyone gets into one corner until Adam Rose is in at #18. You can hear every word of the songs now as the crowd just does not care at the moment. Kofi is thrown out but the Rosebuds catch him and walk him back to the apron. Rusev dumps Rose and Kofi a few seconds later and Roman Reigns is in at #19 to a lot less booing than I was expecting.

Roman starts cleaning house and dumps both Dust Brothers, only to get double teamed by Rusev and Wyatt. Big E. is in at #20 to clean house and give us a very powerful foursome of Big E., Rusev, Wyatt and Reigns. Mizdow is in at #21 but Miz runs out to say it's his spot. Damien finally stands up to Miz and goes in to a good reaction, only to be dumped by Rusev. Jack Swagger is in at #22 and everyone keeps brawling until Ryback is in at #23.

Ryback busts out everyone with spinebusters as JBL incorrectly says Lex Luger is the only man to win the Rumble but never win the WWE Title (Duggan). The fans chant for CM Punk but get Kane at #24, giving us Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Big E., Swagger, Ryback and Kane. Dean Ambrose wakes the crowd up again at #25 and goes right for Wyatt. We get more brawling around the ropes until Titus O'Neil is in at #26 and is dumped in about thirty seconds (counting intro) by Reigns and Rusev.

Ambrose dropkicks Wyatt up against the ropes and Bad News Barrett gets lucky #27. The ring is getting full but no one is in any real danger of being eliminated. Cesaro is in at #28 and joins the fray. Rusev sends Big E. to the apron and then kicks him out to clear the ring a bit. Big Show is in at #29 and everyone stops to stare him down. They all gang up on

him but Show shoves everyone down as Kane chokeslams Ambrose. Show does the same to Reigns before the monsters dump Ryback with ease.

Swagger is dumped by the power team as well, tying Kane for the all time record at 39 eliminations. Dolph Ziggler is in at #30, giving us a final group of Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Kane, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro, Big Show and Ziggler. Dolph has to fight out of the chokeslam from Big Show and dumps Barrett. Cesaro swings Dolph around and gets him to the apron, only to be pulled out for the elimination. Ziggler goes up top and dives right into the KO Punch, allowing Kane and Show to easily dump him, giving Kane the all time eliminations record.

Big Show KO's Wyatt and dumps him as well, leaving us with Ambrose, Reigns, Big Show and Kane as the final four. Reigns is bleeding from the side of the mouth as the brawl is on. The Shield fights out of a double chokeslam but Ambrose's rebound clothesline has almost no effect on Show. Reigns knocks Show down and the fans just are not happy. Big Show and Kane double team Roman though before a chokeslam is enough to get rid of Ambrose.

So it's Kane and Big Show vs. Reigns and the fans are LIVID. Reigns gets sent to the apron but Show tries to dump Kane, triggering a fight that has been going on for over fifteen years now. Reigns sneaks up from behind them and eliminates both guys to go to Wrestlemania at 57:23.

**Rating:** D+. I'm surprised by this but I really shouldn't be. They actually went with Reigns vs. the giants to end the Royal Rumble? This match felt like a big tease from the company as they were setting up Wyatt, Cesaro, Rusev, Ambrose and Ziggler for this big showdown but then snatched it away to go with Kane and Big Show as the big monsters. That's really what they think is the smart idea? And you know we're getting Reigns vs. Big Show at Fast Lane, probably without Big Show doing a job for him because he doesn't get pinned you see.

As for the rest of the match....yeah I liked it, but man alive it was obvious where they were going with about twenty minutes to go. Bryan going out that early is a waste, though I'm fine with him not winning it. He had his big moment last year and it would be foolish to try and

recreate it. Bryan can get the title later on in his other big moment and that's all he needs to do.

The returns were fine but there was no big surprise at the end (that's fine), and Reigns was just so obvious as a winner. Also, the commentary was getting REALLY annoying with all their stats, some of which just didn't make sense. I didn't hate this match, but Reigns is getting wedged into a spot he's just not ready for whatsoever. Wrestlemania better have an amazing undercard, because Reigns vs. Lesnar is not going to cut it on top.

Post match Kane and Big Show destroy Reigns until The Rock makes a surprise run in for the save. House is cleaned but Rusev is back in! He was never officially eliminated...so Reigns throws him out to officially win about three minutes after he won in the first place. Again, more teasing.

The Authority comes out as Rock poses with Reigns before letting Reigns point at the sign to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This could have been far worse and the Rumble isn't even very bad, but good grief it felt like they looked at all the cool possibilities they had here and ran away from them as fast as they could to go with the status quo. The World Title match more than saves the show and the Rumble has its moments (some of them at least), but that last ten minutes or so just crippled anything they possibly had out of this match. I actually liked last year's Rumble better if you can believe that. Just.....stop deciding your outcome before you think for two seconds WWE. It would make your fans so much happier.

I'm not even mad at this ending. It's just...there. WWE decided months ago that Reigns was going to be the guy because of whatever reasons they have and that's what we're getting, no matter what else is out there. It's very dull when you know what's coming and there's nothing you can do about it. I can live with that when there's no better option, but there are indeed better, or at least far more interesting and prepared options, than Reigns here.

Results

Ascension b. New Age Outlaws – Fall of Man to Gunn

Usos b. Miz/Damien Mizdow – Superfly Splash to Miz

Bella Twins b. Paige/Natalya – Forearm to the face

Brock Lesnar b. Seth Rollins and John Cena – F5 to Rollins

Roman Reigns won the Royal Rumble last eliminating Big Show and Kane

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## Royal Rumble 2015 Preview

If the Royal Rumble isn't my favorite show of the year, it beats anything else for second place. The namesake match is so insane and all over the place that it's hard not to love. In addition to that this year though, there's an interesting triple threat which could throw a major curve into the Wrestlemania picture. In other words, it's really hard to predict what's coming and it's making things that much more interesting. Let's get to it.

As usual we'll start with the pre-show match. I'll take the New Day to win the six man elimination tag over Rose/Cesaro/Kidd with Woods being the only elimination. There's no reason to have New Day lose yet, even though they're just not that interesting. I don't mind them as much as most people, but there's no reason to care about them yet. Cesaro and Kidd are a good option as a team but they're stuck in this role because

that's how WWE works.

Ascension over the Outlaws of course. I like the story it seems they're going with as Ascension can defeat legendary teams to prove their statements right before they go after the belts, but at the end of the day they're just going to be beating old guys who barely ever wrestle. This is where you need the commentary team to step up and get the story over, but this commentary team isn't capable of stepping up and getting a lunch order over.

The worst part about Ascension is they're a fresh idea for a team, but they were ripped apart so fast coming out of the gate that they weren't given a fair shake. Look at what Ryback did just a few years ago squashing jobbers: he was challenging for the World Title in the main event of a pay per view just a few months later. The commentary team was in awe of him but they jumped all over Ascension and now the fans want the team gone already. Unless they get to prove the commentators wrong, it's a waste of their time in NXT and a way to get back to the boring tag division we've had for years.

Speaking of the Tag Team Titles, I see no reason for them to change hands tonight. It's not that the Usos are the most interesting team in the world, but the imminent split of Miz and Mizdow would mean there's no reason to put the belts back on them. After that though, who else could go after them but the Ascension? Cody and Goldust vs. Usos has been done to death so there's....New Day? Is that the point we've reached already?

Again, I have to wonder why there's such a lame tag division when there's such a deep roster. Could it be that they treat tag teams like such jokes and people aren't interested in seeing two guys randomly paired together with each other without any effort being put in, ala Kidd and Cesaro? The short version of this way too long statement: bring back tag team names.

The other tag match is an unnecessary Total Divas match between the Bellas and Paige/Natalya. I'll actually go with Paige/Natalya here to set up the next challenger to Nikki's title, but it wouldn't shock me to see the Bellas win again to make sure we don't forget that they're the greatest, toughest, most dominant and interesting Divas in the history of

the world. I mean, what other Divas go to brunch together and are so amazing that they can't even keep arguing with each other because they're so awesome they forget it happened and give us a lame explanation of "we're sisters"?

Now we get to the two main events, which are both wide open but the more I think about them, the more I think they're going with the most obvious winners. We'll start with the World Title match with Lesnar defending (yes really) against Rollins and Cena. The addition of Rollins has breathed new life into the long past done Lesnar vs. Cena feud. I really didn't need to see Cena dying and then leveling up again to fight the final boss one more time. It may not lead to a different ending, but at least it's something we haven't seen before.

On top of that, the buildup of Rollins into a main event guy was great, even though he stopped standing up to Lesnar and ran like anyone else would this past Monday. The image of the two of them staring each other down was awesome though and I totally bought Rollins as a top level player.

As for the pick, I'm taking Lesnar with no cash-in. Unfortunately I think WWE is fine with having no title match from now until Wrestlemania with the thinking being they've gone this far with the idea so don't worry about it screwing up Wrestlemania either. My first reaction to this would be to point you to both the Network numbers as well as Wrestlemania XX and SuperBrawl II. Wrestlemania XX is of course Lesnar leaving and having a HORRIBLE match against Goldberg, but SuperBrawl II is a bit more interesting, as well as pertinent to what we're looking at here.

Back in 1991, it was clear that Sting was the top man in WCW and the uncrowned World Champion. His first run with the belt hadn't gone that well but now the people were ready to accept him as the star (that's quite the lesson: Just because a first reign doesn't work, the second can be much better. See also Bret Hart and Daniel Bryan) when he won the title at SuperBrawl II. Unfortunately it was Lex Luger's last match with the promotion and he hadn't been wrestling that much due to already fulfilling all of his contractually obligated dates. Is this ringing any bells?

Luger went out and put in the minimal effort imaginable for someone actually alive and dropped the belt to Sting in a horrible match. Now this was at SuperBrawl, which was an upper tier show but not the biggest. Can you imagine if this happened in the main event of Wrestlemania? I can accept that Bryan could save the match, but can you imagine Reigns in this spot with only his signature moves to save him? The word disaster isn't nearly strong enough.

That brings us to who Lesnar will be facing, and I think it's going to be Reigns. We've covered everything possibly wrong with Reigns getting this spot this early in his career, but if that's what WWE is going to force on us then so be it. I still think it could ruin whatever he has going for him, but it looks like that's what we're getting whether we like it or not. I'll take Reigns coming in around #25 or so and cleaning house to win, likely knocking out Big Show for the final elimination ala Shawn in 1996.

As for the other possible winner in Daniel Bryan, I'm guessing they have someone from the Authority take him out, setting up Bryan vs. Authority II with him facing.....Rollins I suppose at Wrestlemania. That would be one heck of a match, but it's yet another reason why Lesnar vs. Reigns would be a disaster to have on top. Can you imagine those two trying to follow Bryan vs. Rollins if that's what we get?

As for surprise entrants, I'll go with Orton (should be obvious) and.....eh sure why not the Dudleys. It's in Philadelphia and they'll take some of the pressure off the fans who are going to explode if Bryan doesn't win again. Oh and Rob Van Dam and/or because you can't have a Royal Rumble without one of them making a SHOCKING return.

This show feels like it could be very entertaining, but man alive does it feel like it could explode in their faces. This show is going to set the stage for Wrestlemania and that could be the biggest disaster in years if they go with the wrong selections. Unfortunately it seems like that's where they're going with it and the fans could rip this show apart if they're not happy. I don't think it's going to be nearly as bad of a reaction as last year's (primarily due to Bryan at least having a chance), but they're walking a very tight rope.

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## **New Column: The Lesnar Error**

Looking back at Brock's second WWE run and breaking down all of the mistakes and problems with it so far.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-lesnar-error/33412/>

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## **Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: January 12, 2015**

Raw was back in New Orleans for the first time since the night after Wrestlemania last year, meaning the fans are going to be hot all night. The big story is the return of Daniel Bryan and how serious he seems to be about winning the Rumble and main eventing Wrestlemania again. The key thing is this gives us a new option other than Reigns for the top spot, which is far more interesting than just having the long choice. Let's get to it.

To the shock of no one paying attention, we opened with a long promo between Cena and the Authority, talking about things that happened back

at Survivor Series. Basically Cena thinks the Authority sucks (and he has a HASHTAG for it) and he's going to win the WWE Title to get Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler their jobs back. See, he's going to win the title and then leave, because that's going to make the Authority miss him. I'm not sure if this was supposed to be a jab at Lesnar, but it came off as more of a stupid idea than anything else.

HHH and Stephanie came out and offered Cena a deal: the trio can have their jobs back if Cena can beat Rollins in a lumberjack match right now. So to recap, in the span of a month, Cena and Rollins have had a regular match, a tables match, a (really good) cage match and a lumberjack match.

In a logical world, that should be months and months of matches, not a single month. It shows how WWE feels desperate to keep people watching with quick fixes instead of setting this stuff up. As usual, I'll point you to NXT. You know what you don't see a lot of there? Gimmick matches. The gimmick matches, when they happen, are to blow off a feud. Neville fought Dallas in a ladder match and you see a few 2/3 falls matches in there. They let the regular stories build up to the gimmicks instead of just throwing them all out there at once, which makes them mean more.

In NXT, you hear the words "ladder match" and gasp because it's something very rare and therefore special. In WWE you hear the words ladder match and roll your eyes because they have at least three a year between MITB and TLC. The same is true of cage matches, which happen WAY too often on Raw and with almost no build.

That's another issue with the lumberjack match on Monday: they had all of five minutes' notice. How are the fans that might want to see it supposed to know? Hope that they read Twitter? Is that really what you're hoping for? It's a bad idea and amazingly enough, it doesn't seem to be anything successful.

As for the match itself, of course Rollins won with interference. It was entertaining enough and a good match, but I'm tired of seeing them fight. You know they're just waiting on a reason to bring the trio back and I'd be shocked if they weren't in the Rumble, making this entire storyline a waste of time. You know, like so many other things you see in WWE

anymore, which is really getting old.

Due to their comments about the trio being fired on Smackdown, Stephanie punished the Usos by making Naomi wrestle with an arm tied behind her and Ambrose has to see a psychiatrist or he's out of the Rumble. Simple idea, but the Naomi thing sounds destined to fall flat.

Dean's evaluation was of course a comedy segment with him freaking out over the doctor's clock, calling Stephanie a HO in a funny bit and switching roles with the doctor. Other than the Stephanie bit, there really wasn't much to see in this and I really wish they had done something more with it. It's a very good sign that Dean is still getting a focus, even though he was completely and totally buried by losing in pay per view main events right? That's how it works no?

The New Day beat Kidd and Cesaro in an average match. I really like Kidd and Cesaro as a team, even though they seem to be little more than jobbers at this point. Why are they jobbers you ask? It's because that's the role they were given when the team was put together and screw you if you think they should rise up the card, because that's the role they're given and nothing is going to change that. That seems to be the mentality in WWE way too often and unfortunately it rarely changes.

Big Show came out, talked about being an awesome giant and ran away from Reigns and his horrible scripted promos. They've been doing this FOREVER now and I really hope they blow this off at the Rumble instead of taking it all the way out to Fast Lane. As for Reigns' promos, his delivery is fine but Steve Austin on his best day would have trouble getting over this horrible material.

Now the interesting part for Reigns came when he had a really entertaining match against Luke Harper. The key here though was Harper, who looked absolutely awesome. The stuff that he can do at his size is incredible and he looks like one of the best guys on the roster today. Why can't he and Reigns be having a great feud and beat the tar out of each other for weeks on end? Instead we have Big Show because he was a big deal like, years ago. I really hope Harper gets a push in the future because he's more than earned it at this point.

Mizdow reveals that he's been filming Miz in his home, much to Miz's chagrin. They need to split them eventually and this might work. As usual, I like that it's something interesting and unique to the characters. It's actual writing for the characters instead of writing for the story and putting the characters in. Those are two very, very different things. One is good and the other is what makes wrestling hard to sit through.

Alicia Fox beat Naomi in a dull match with Naomi's arm tied behind her back. See, it's Total Divas AND the Authority stories combined! HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY TOP THIS???

Lesnar and Heyman came out and said they're awesome. This is basically a way to say Lesnar is coming for Rollins too. I really don't care about Lesnar at this point because he's been gone for so long and it's ruined so much of the main event scene.

Miz beat Jey Uso to continue a feud that is long since over. Once the Naomi Goes Hollywood stuff went away, the feud died in a hurry.

Daniel Bryan and Stephanie (because she isn't on this show enough) came out and did their usual thing. They really are just doing the same story over again...and I'm not sure how to feel about that. If Bryan wins again, it's Bret Hart winning at Wrestlemania X. If Bryan doesn't get there.....I'm really interested to see where he goes from there. I'd be fine seeing him win though. Kane came out and got beaten up for his efforts, setting up their match on Smackdown.

Now we get to the part of the show I liked best. Rollins was in the back when Heyman and Lesnar came up to him. Lesnar simply threatened him and Rollins didn't blink. Instead he looked Lesnar in the eye said he's the future. Heyman was a key here as he sounded worried and offered an alliance to take out Cena. Seth stood there and the camera stayed on their faces the whole time for a great visual.

For the first time ever, I completely buy Rollins as a main event player, but the key here is he has the resume to back it up. Look back to Royal Rumble 2008 when Jeff Hardy was pushed against Randy Orton. That entire show was built around the idea that Hardy could win and it sold like

nothing had in years.

However, at the end of the day, it was all hype because Hardy didn't have the resume to be a believable World Champion. Now though, Rollins has both the resume and the skill to take the title at the Rumble and that little sliver of a chance makes the whole thing that much more interesting. This felt like a turning point and it couldn't come at a better time.

Brie Bella beat Paige in a nothing match.

Bray Wyatt is in the Rumble and Randy Savage is in the Hall of Fame. Guess which one of these things gave me the biggest and most genuine smile I've had in wrestling in years.

Ascension destroyed more jobbers.

Rusev beat Ambrose via referee stoppage. Again, a loss due to an existing knee injury isn't going to cripple Ambrose's push and I continue to chuckle when people insist he's being shoved down the card.

The Authority moderated a three way contract signing between Lesnar, Rollins and Cena. Again, Seth stood toe to toe with both of them and looked on their level. I can't emphasize enough how important it is that Rollins has this kind of star power already. I'll give you two guesses how this went. Thankfully it was Seth standing tall.

Oh yeah we're in Rumble season and it's working just as it's supposed to. Rollins being added to that title match has made the whole thing feel so much more interesting and fresh, which is exactly what it's been missing. I'm not sure who is coming out of that match with the title but I really want to see where it goes. The same is true of the Rumble itself, as suddenly it's gone from the Roman Reigns show to "can Bryan do it again?" Adding something to the mix makes things that much better.

On the other hand you have the midcard, where things are stagnant again. Big Show vs. Reigns, Usos vs. Miz/Mizdow, Mizdow going solo, Rusev beating up various people and winning or escaping every time and Total Divas in general have all felt like they've been going on for months and

it's really hard to care at this point. Hopefully things shake up in the Rumble and it couldn't happen at a at a better time. This week was a good show, mainly because they're adding stuff into the main event scene to freshen it up.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKw>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2004: A Performance For The Forgotten Ages

## Royal Rumble 2004

Date: January 25, 2004

Location: Wachovia Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 17,289

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

This is the show where you can really see the next generation rising up. The main events other than the Rumble are Lesnar vs. Holly and HBK vs. HHH. Ok so maybe the next generation only comes up in the Rumble. Other than that we don't have much going on here but this show is all about Benoit in the Rumble. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about Shawn vs. HHH because that's what people

are watching the ROYAL RUMBLE for right? The theme of the video is that things can change in the blink of an eye.

### Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. Evolution

Flair and Batista are defending here and this is a tables match. Coach is ticked off at the Dudleys for putting him through a table six nights ago on Raw, because if there's one man you need to give a reason to be a heel, it's COACH. Batista makes fun of the Eagles because he hasn't broken through to the other side of the glass ceiling yet. The fight starts in the aisle as you would expect. This is one table to a finish, meaning only one guy has to go through to end it.

Bubba slides in a table but shoves it hard enough that it slides across the ring and hits Batista in the ribs on the other side of the floor. Flair gets double teamed to start and caught in a powerslam by D-Von. There's a table set up in the ring but Batista moves it before Flair gets suplexed through it. D-Von hits a Cactus Clothesline on Batista as Flair chops Bubba against a table in the corner.

Big Dave comes back in with some clotheslines to clean house but misses a charge into the post. The belly to back neckbreaker from the Dudleys puts him down and it's Flair getting double teamed again. According to JR, the Dudleys are the only team to win the (non-vacant) world tag team titles at the Rumble. Coach heads to the ring to distract the Dudleys and prevent a 3D to Flair. Flair saves Coach and Batista hits a spinebuster to put D-Von through a table to retain.

**Rating:** D. This match fell into the same trap that all bad tables matches fall into: the dull set of spots that fail until one works for the win. You rarely get something that gets around this through sheer carnage such as the match at the 2000 Rumble, but this was just terrible. I have no idea what they were going for here as the fans were disappointed and they only had four and a half minutes to get into it. Also: real smart WWE. This is the right way to start a show in Philadelphia: have some of the most famous ECW guys ever lose.

Cena raps about winning the Rumble when RVD comes in to steal the joke. Weed jokes are made. Josh Matthews looks like the king of all tools here.

There's an empty seat for Mick Foley in the front row.

### Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Rey is defending. This is during the Nidia is Blind phase which didn't do anything for anyone. They speed things WAY up to start with Jamie avoiding the 619 and launching Rey into the air to take over. The champ gets draped over the top rope for two and a hard kick to the back gets the same.

Jamie hooks a chinlock which shifts into a seated abdominal stretch. Rey fights up and hits a dropkick and a springboard rana followed by the sitout bulldog for two. He springboards into a gutbuster from Noble for two though and momentum shifts again. Nidia accidentally grabs Noble's foot, allowing Rey to hit the 619 and springboard legdrop....for the pin? Huh?

**Rating:** D+. This was fast paced while it lasted, but those three words are the key: while it lasted. This barely broke three minutes which simply isn't enough for a PPV title match. Unless I was missing it there was no sign of an injury or anything like that, but the match ends that fast. I have no idea what they were going for here but it didn't work in any way at all. That's a shame too because they were going well while it lasted.

Noble yells at Nidia post match.

We recap the battle of the Guerreros. Eddie was clearly the bigger star which was fine while they were champions, but once they lost the belts to the Bashams, Chavo blamed Eddie and turned on his uncle for losing his title. The Guerreros almost made up but they lost the rematch, after which Chavo let Eddie get double teamed by the Bashams. This was actually a pretty solid story despite how basic it was. Sometimes less is more. Oh and Kurt Angle was playing peacemaker and Chavo Guerrero Senior is in his son's corner.

### Eddie Guerrero vs. Chavo Guerrero

Chavo bails to the floor before the bell and the fans are totally behind

Eddie here. They fight over a lockup to start with no one being able to get an advantage. Chavo slaps Eddie in the face and now we're ready to go. We hit the mat for a bit before Eddie starts snapping off chops in the corner. Chavo shoulders him down and we have a standoff. They chop it out again and Eddie goes to the eye like a true Guerrero.

Back to the mat with Eddie working on the arm before Chavo nips up and hooks a rana to send them both to the floor. Chavo sends Eddie into the announce table to finally take over and get some of the aggression going. Back in and they get into a kind of MMA style brawl on the mat until Eddie hooks a cross armbreaker of all things. That goes nowhere so Chavo suplexes Eddie down for two, followed by the Three Amigos. Eddie counters a tornado DDT and hits Three Amigos of his own. Chavo is down so Eddie goes up and hits the Frog Splash for the pin. ANOTHER quick ending tonight.

**Rating:** C+. This was way better than the other matches, but this felt like it was missing fifteen minutes or so. Three matches so far have combined to be about fifteen minutes long which is pretty lame for a modern PPV, even for the Rumble. This could have been a lot more, but the feud was completely done after tonight. Eddie would become #1 contender on the following Smackdown.

Eddie destroys Chavo post match in a pretty heelish display. Chavo gets busted open.

Ad for Mick Foley's Greatest Hits and Misses. That's the most entertaining part of the show so far.

Benoit likes his odds even though he's #1 in the Rumble. Evolution comes up and says Orton is going to win the Rumble. Flair says Benoit may be great, but this is about Evolution tonight.

We recap Hardcore Holly vs. Lesnar. Brock broke Holly's neck (legit) and Holly gets a world title shot out of it a year later. This is the textbook definition of the Rumble title shot where no one buys the champion as being in any danger whatsoever.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Holly jumps Lesnar in the aisle and sends him into the post because he wants to break Lesnar's neck. We get a bell and Holly misses an elbow off the top to give Brock control. They head to the floor where Holly's back is rammed into the apron and Lesnar hooks a reverse body vice back inside. That goes nowhere so Brock hits a Shell Shock for two and it's right back to the hold.

We shift to a bearhug and then one of the most wicked overhead belly to belly suplexes you'll ever see. Off to a kind of rear naked choke by Lesnar to keep things dull. Holly makes his comeback with the dropkick and hits the Alabama Slam but goes for a full nelson and revenge instead of the title. Holly hooks the hold and goes to the floor with it but has to break the count. The F5 hits a few seconds later to complete the inevitable.

**Rating:** D. This was Brock Lesnar defending the world title against Hardcore Holly on pay per view. If you can't figure out why this got the rating it got, I can't help you.

We recap HHH vs. HBK which is allegedly seven years in the making. I'm guessing THIS is supposed to be the FINAL blowoff to their feud instead of the classic in 2002.

#### Raw World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

HHH is defending and this is a last man standing match. They chop it out to start and punch each other in the corner a lot. Shawn tries a backslide before realizing that makes no sense here, so it's back to the chops. Michaels gets caught in a facebuster as things slow down a bit. A HARD whip into the corner has Shawn's back in trouble and a backbreaker makes it even worse.

Out of nowhere Shawn takes out the leg and hooks a Figure Four, because where would we be without a Flair tribute? That gets a five count so Shawn hits a chop block for a four. HHH low bridges Shawn and we head to the floor for a bit. HHH loads up the announce table but Shawn blocks a Pedigree attempt. They slug it out on the table with HHH getting knocked to the floor, drawing a bunch of booing from the bloodthirsty Philadelphia fans.

Back in and Shawn counters a Pedigree with a backdrop to the floor but he injures his back in the process. Shawn tries a springboard cross body to the floor but crashes through the table instead as only he can. Instead of letting the now busted open Shawn get counted out, HHH throws him back in for the count, which reaches seven. The champ pounds Shawn down a few times for a few counts, most of which don't get that far.

A fast spinebuster (literally, as Shawn was flying at HHH and it almost looked like a belly to belly instead of a spinebuster) gets about six. That's the problem with most last man standing matches: it's a big move then standing around for the count. That makes it very hard to get any kind of flow going to the match. HHH cracks Shawn in the back with a chair but Shawn gets up again. A Pedigree onto the chair is countered into a slingshot into the post, busting HHH open as well.

Now Shawn cracks HHH in the head with a chair, allowing HHH to do his weird "my head hurts and I'm not sure where I am" face. There's the forearm followed by the nipup from Shawn, followed by an atomic drop and the top rope elbow. That gets about seven so Shawn tunes up the band, only to walk into a low blow to put both guys down. Shawn hooks a sleeper which eventually gets an eight count before walking into a DDT to put both guys down.

That gets a double eight count before we head to the corner. HHH tries a belly to back superplex but Shawn counters into a cross body for another double eight count. The Pedigree hits but it's only good for a nine. Shawn pops up out of nowhere with some more Sweet Chin Music, putting both guys down for ten which keeps the title on HHH.

**Rating:** C-. The problem here is exactly what I said earlier: this was a lot of lying around. The last seven minutes or so had about five moves combined, as most of the match was "move, lay down, move, lay down, move, lay down." The idea is supposed to be a ton of drama, but that didn't happen here. Shawn would turn into a jerk in the next few weeks and insert himself in the Mania main event because of this ending.

Rumble video with a focus on Benoit.

The Fink is ready to start the Rumble but here's Bischoff to run his

mouth. He says that a Raw guy is going to win the Rumble because he's respected as a GM. He runs down ECW, which brings out Heyman for a brawl. Cue Austin on his ATV to say that these two are both in violation of the law (he was called Sheriff Austin at this point) and wants to know who started it. Heyman and Bischoff: "HE DID!" Both guys get Stunners and the fans love it.

Goldberg, #30 in the Rumble, doesn't get to talk because Lesnar comes in to interrupt him. Lesnar is called a coward, which will come into play later.

JR has to admit Foley is a coward because he isn't here yet.

### Royal Rumble

Benoit is #1 and the Intercontinental Champion Randy Orton is #2. Two minute intervals here again. They pound away on each other to start with Benoit taking him to the mat to stomp away. Mark Henry is #3 when he was a fat power guy with no direction at all. Allow me to be more specific: he's still with Teddy Long. Benoit gets double teamed for awhile until Tajiri is #4. These intervals don't seem to be two minutes or anywhere close to it.

The handspring elbow takes Orton down but Benoit rolls some Germans on Tajiri to take him down. Tajiri only gets two as I guess Benoit is conserving strength. Henry throws Orton to the apron but stops looking like an idiot. Bradshaw is #5 and he immediately clotheslines down everyone not named Benoit. Benoit takes offense to being left out and puts Bradshaw in the Crossface before pulling Bradshaw out. Eh he would get a nine month title reign starting in the summer so I feel no sympathy for him.

Rhyno is #6 as we're flying through this so far. He goes after the two starters as Tajiri fires off kicks on Henry. Tajiri gets a half Tarantula on Henry but Henry gets Gored, knocking Tajiri out in the process. Benoit clotheslines Henry out and we're down to three again. Matt Hardy is #7 and Benoit throws him to the apron almost immediately. In FAR less than two minutes, here's Scott Steiner at #8. Oh dear it's Scott Steiner at the Royal Rumble. This could be a disaster.

He starts firing off suplexes immediately but at least this time there are some t-bones to go with the belly to bellies. Benoit rolls some Germans on him as if to say THIS IS HOW YOU SUPLEX SOMEBODY. Things slow down a bit and here's Matt Morgan at #9. He takes Benoit down with a Batista Bomb takes Benoit down and pounds away on Orton in the corner.

The Hurricane is #10 and comes in off the top with a cross body to Hardy. He goes after Morgan for no apparent reason and is thrown out in less than twenty seconds. Morgan throws Hardy to the apron again but can't get him out. Booker T, complete with the stupid remix of his theme music with Booker singing, is #11. Booker immediately goes after Steiner in a revisiting of their WCW feud that no one was asking for.

Nothing of note happens until Kane is #12. This is after he buried Taker alive. For the first time. Steiner gets dumped by Booker during Kane's entrance. Kane starts firing off chokeslams and other various power moves for which he is well known. The clock runs down at #13 and there go the lights. A gong goes off and Kane PANICS. Booker uses the distraction to dump Kane and here's Spike Dudley at #13. He never makes it to the ring as Kane destroys him for setting off the gong.

Everyone tries to throw each other out while laying on the ropes until Rikishi is #14. Benoit dumps Rhyno to keep us at six people (Benoit, Orton, Rikishi, Booker, Morgan, Hardy) in the ring. Morgan gets a Stinkface and nothing else happens for a bit. Renee Dupree with the French Tickler is #15. In a surprising moment, Dupree actually knocks Matt out, only to be superkicked out by Rikishi a second later.

A-Train is #16 and goes right for Rikishi. Benoit avoids the yet to be named Carbon Footprint and dumps Morgan. I love that they're keeping the ring from getting full. Orton dumps Rikishi and Booker as Shelton Benjamin is #17. Benoit dumps A-Train during his entrance and Orton dumps Shelton a few seconds later to get us back to two. Orton pounds on him a bit but they crack heads to put both guys down.

Lamont, the announcer for Ernest Miller (complete with the music that would go to Brodus Clay eight years later), runs out to introduce the Cat at #18. After some dancing (and singing by Tazz), Orton dumps him out.

Miller would be released in like two weeks. Kurt Angle is #19 and he might be a bit harder to get out. He's fighting for AMERICA here so the fans tell him he sucks.

Benoit and Angle destroy each other with chops and punches as only they can while Orton is content to chill in the corner. Rico, now in his Adrian Street phase, is #20. He fires off some kicks but lasts about as long as you would expect him to in a match with Orton, Angle and Benoit. The RKO takes care of Rico as Benoit rolls a ton of Germans on Angle. Test is #21....and is nowhere in sight.

Orton RKO's Angle and we cut to the back to see Test unconscious. Austin sees someone off camera and says they're #21. The off camera man and presumable attacker: MICK FREAKING FOLEY! Orton, the guy who spat in Foley's face and called him a coward, PANICS. The place goes nuts and Foley explodes on Orton, beating him half to death and hitting a Cactus Clothesline to put both of them out. This would lead to some AWESOME matches at Mania and Backlash which put Orton up to the world title in August.

Foley keeps beating on Orton as Christian is #22. Mick picks up the steps and BLASTS a security guy who tries to stop him. Orton comes back with two chair shots and fires back at Mick. They brawl up the ramp and Foley pulls out Socko, only to put it on Nunzio who comes in at #23. We haven't seen anything of the match for a while but I can live with that for a hot brawl like this. Orton kicks Foley low and runs as we go back to the ring.

Angle is getting double teamed as Nunzio is down on the floor. Big Show is #24 and apparently that's Tazz's pick. Thankfully he's in the singlet and shorts again instead of the one piece swimsuit. Angle immediately goes after him but Show throws everyone around. Jericho is #25 as he's in a weird phase of his career. He wasn't a main event guy anymore but he had feuded with everyone in the midcard already so he just kind of hung around and filled in spots on the card.

All four guys go after Big Show (who has a head like a typewriter according to Tazz) but they can't get him out. Charlie Haas is #26 but

gets double teamed by Jericho and Christian. Currently we have Benoit, Angle, Jericho, Christian, Haas, Big Show and Nunzio who is on the floor. Jericho backdrops Christian out for the second year in a row as Billy Gunn is #27. Apparently this is a return for him. It's Fameassers all around and then things slow down again.

John Cena is #28 and that pop is growing at an alarming rate. Show stares him down so Cena throws Nunzio in to kill some time. Nunzio goes after Show for some reason but Cena takes over for him to make it fair. RVD is #29 to a big pop of his own. It's spin kicks all around until things settle down a bit. There's an FU to Angle and Goldberg is #30. The final group: Benoit, Angle, Big Show, Jericho, Nunzio, Haas, Gunn, Cena, RVD and Goldberg. At least the ring didn't fill up until the end so that's not too bad.

Goldie spears a lot of people down to start before Nunzio jumps on his back like an idiot. Haas is put out and Nunzio takes a HUGE spear. Gunn is out as is Nunzio to get us down to seven. Goldberg loads up a Jackhammer on Show but Lesnar runs in with an F5 to break it up. Goldberg stares down Brock, allowing Angle to dump him out. All five remaining guys not named Big Show go after the one named Big Show but it still doesn't work.

Everyone hits their finishers on Show instead with Cena (Show's feud at the time) hitting the Shuffle instead of the FU, which I'm assuming they were saving for Mania. They try to dead lift Show and realize they screwed up by knocking a giant unconscious. Show shoves them all off and dumps Cena followed by Van Dam a few seconds later.

So it's Big Show, Benoit, Angle and Jericho as the final four. Jericho gets sent to the apron twice and manages to hang on before bulldogging Show down. The Walls go on Show and he taps but Angle breaks the hold up for no apparent reason. Show chokeslams Benoit down but chokeslams Jericho even further, sending him to the floor to get us to three. A side slam puts Angle down and there's another chokeslam to Benoit.

Show breaks up a German attempt from Angle but can't block an Angle Slam. There's a Slam to Benoit (it was a belly to back suplex but whatever) and

the ankle lock to Show. Show taps again, but again it doesn't mean anything. The big guy rolls through the hold and eliminates Angle in the process, getting us down to two.

Benoit dropkicks Show but knocks him back into the ring by mistake. A chokeslam is countered into the Crossface and Show taps again, but you know the drill by now. Show shrugs it off and picks Benoit up in a chokeslam. Benoit grabs a front chancery though and pulls Show to the apron....then has him teetering on the ropes....AND BENOIT WINS! The crowd kept getting louder as Benoit pulled further and further. Awesome sequence there.

**Rating:** A. There were some slow spots but this was ALL about Benoit and I can't complain about that at all. The ending sequence here with all three submission guys making Show tap was a cool idea and different from the ending to any other Rumble. They didn't throw a stupid curve here and made Benoit look like a star here, which is exactly what he was supposed to do. Great Rumble.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The Rumble is really REALLY good but the rest is horrible. Don't watch the rest of the show, but if you're a Benoit fan and can still sit through a long match of his, this is absolutely required viewing. Things would change a bit more the next year as two REALLY big names would be the stars of the Rumble, but that's not for another year. For now, this was all about Benoit and he nailed it.

### Ratings Comparison

Evolution vs. Dudley Boys

Original: C

Redo: D

Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Original: N/A

Redo: D+

Chavo Guerrero vs. Eddie Guerrero

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Original: D-

Redo: D

HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: C+

Redo: C-

Royal Rumble

Original: A

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Just as last time, the Rumble is the only thing worth seeing.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/23/royal-rumble-count-up-2004-he-who-must-not-be-named/>

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

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2003: I'll See Your Disaster And Raise You A Masterpiece

## Royal Rumble 2003

Date: January 19, 2003

Location: Fleet Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,338

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

To say a lot has changed in the last year is a huge understatement. We have the Brand Split now and there are two world titles. That brings us to the part of this show that is most remembered: the world title matches. We have HHH defending the Raw Title in one of the worst matches ever, followed by Angle defending the Smackdown Title in one of the best matches ever. Also Brock Lesnar is here and has taken Smackdown by storm. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about what you would expect it to be: thirty men wanting to go to Wrestlemania.

## Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

The loser is out of the Rumble. Big Show has Heyman with him, which I'm sure makes him the best wrestler EVER right? Show won the title from Lesnar at Survivor Series after Heyman turned on Brock in one of those matches where they were backed into a corner out of their own stupidity. Show shoves him around to start so Brock snaps off a belly to belly

suplex to fire up the crowd.

There's a second suplex and Show is in trouble early. Lesnar loads up a third but Show grabs him by the throat and shoves him to the floor. Show throws Lesnar around the ring which looks awesome when you consider Brock is a massive dude. Lesnar avoids a charge in the corner and hits a release German suplex for two.

A big boot slows Brock down and a side slam looks to set up the chokeslam. Brock kind of rolls through it into a two count, followed by another belly to belly. Heyman gets dragged in but Show saves him from an F5. The chokeslam gets two as Heyman is losing his mind. Show gets rammed into Heyman and the F5 sends Brock to the Rumble.

**Rating:** C+. As intricate as modern wrestling has become, there's something to be said about having two big guys get out there and throw each other around for five minutes. The power displays here made the fans gasp which is the right idea. At the end of the day, wrestling is a spectacle and having larger than life characters doing larger than life things is a surefire idea. This wasn't so much good as it was fun, which is the right choice for an opener.

Jericho says he'll win the Rumble.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Regal and Storm are defending and Regal is STILL doing the brass knuckles thing. Storm and Ray get things going with Lance working on the arm, only to get powered down with ease. Bubba hits one of his LOUD chops in the corner and takes Storm down with a kind of chokebomb. In something I've never seen him do otherwise, Bubba hooks a standing Figure Four. Actually I can't think of anyone who has ever used that.

Off to D-Von for a dropkick (what's gotten into the Dudleys tonight?) and here's Regal to get slammed down immediately. The champs double team D-Von down and we get into the standard tag team formula. Storm takes D-Von to the mat and it's off to Regal for a front facelock. Lance comes back in with a cravate into a sleeper as this continues to meander along.

D-Von rolls Storm away and makes the tag to Bubba who speeds things up. The guy has emotion if nothing else. A big running splash in the corner crushes both champions and a side slam gets two on Storm. The American hits a German on the Canadian for two, followed by a spear to the Englishman. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Lance and Regal takes What's Up. A double flapjack (stupid fans: "3D!") gets two on Storm and here's Chief of Staff Sean Morely. Regal finds the brass knuckles but walks into the 3D. D-Von hits Storm with the knuckles for the pin and the titles.

**Rating:** D. This didn't work for me. It felt like a Raw match that was trying to be a PPV match but never got near the hump they were trying to get over. The ending was stupid on top of that, as they had Regal beaten with the 3D, so why use the knuckles? Also it didn't help that Bubba single handedly beat up the tag champions for about two minutes straight. Bad match.

Lawler on that match: "I'm as confused as a baby in a topless bar." What is WITH the announcers and their similies/metaphors in this company?

Nathan Jones is coming. Oh geez.

We recap the Torrie vs. Dawn feud. This is one of those stories where you look at it in awe and wonder what they were thinking. Dawn Marie (a gorgeous Diva) fell in love with and married Torrie's fifty something year old dad Al Wilson, then screwed him to death (literally) on their honeymoon. There was some lesbianism (as in kissing on screen and unfilmed other stuff) involved which was there to tease the audience and wasn't bad at all. This is supposed to be a stepmother vs. stepdaughter match. Again, I have no idea what this was supposed to accomplish.

#### Dawn Marie vs. Torrie Wilson

Dawn comes to the ring in a veil because she's in mourning. Torrie gets blasted in the face to start before spearing Dawn down and things get sloppy. Marie tries an armbar because we need some wrestling in this I guess. Torrie gets beaten on for a bit until they collide and hit the mat. Dawn hits a springboard spinning clothesline for no cover, giving us the highlight of the match. Torrie hits a neckbreaker out of nowhere for the win.

**Rating:** D-. Anything with these two in those outfits can't be considered a failure, but at the end of the day, there is no real defending this match in the slightest. It was HORRIBLE and the story was borderline insulting to my intelligence, but the girls looked good and I guess that was the whole point. Why not just have a regular match if you want to is beyond me, but it's 2003 so what do you expect?

Stephanie seems to hit on some young guy in the back when Eric comes up to trade some weak trash talk. They're both GM's at this point. Stephanie has a bombshell for Smackdown which would wind up being Hogan. They argue over money or blood being more important and nothing goes anywhere. That young guy by the way? Randy Orton.

House show ads, including one for 7pm on a Monday night.

Sean O'Haire as the Devil's Advocate promo. Sweet goodness this could have been HUGE.

Nathan Jones is STILL coming. Seriously did we need that twice in 30 minutes?

We recap HHH vs. Scott Steiner as I begin to take deep breaths. HHH was giving a promo about how awesome he was when Steiner interrupted and demanded a title shot. This led to a series of contests like pushups and bench presses which went nowhere. Note that Steiner hadn't actually had a match in WWE up to this point. I wonder why.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Scott Steiner

HHH has red trunks on here for some reason. He mixed them up every now and then and rarely did the other colors work. Stick with basic black Game. Hebner brings them to the middle for instructions which is ultra rare stuff. Steiner wins an early slugout and pounds on the champion in the corner. A gorilla press sends HHH to the floor and Steiner pounds away with those weird looking overhand punches of his.

Steiner suplexes him back in for two and works on the back some more. An elbow to the face puts HHH down and there's an appropriate Boston Crab. HHH powers out of it and hits the facebuster but Steiner no sells it.

There's a bear hug which is quickly broken but Steiner snaps off an overhead belly to belly (1) for two. Flair saves HHH from being put in the Steiner Recliner and Steiner charges into a boot in the corner to finally change the momentum.

We head to the floor again where Scott goes into the steps. The fans aren't exactly thrilled with this so far but they've still got time to crank it up a bit. Flair chokes away with his jacket and HHH hits his second neckbreaker in about 30 seconds for two. Since we didn't allido it properly the first time, Flair chokes away even more. A Pedigree attempt is countered into a slingshot into the buckle. Steiner looks like he's going through labor.

An overhead suplex (2) puts HHH down and I kid you not: Steiner FALLS DOWN due to exhaustion. He's clearly sucking wind and HHH didn't touch him at all. Speaking of HHH, he counters a tombstone attempt into a...I think it was supposed to be the third neckbreaker in about 90 seconds but Steiner took it wrong, causing it to look like a cutter where he fell backwards instead of forwards. That gets two and the fans are starting to boo.

HHH is loudly calling spots to try to salvage this before he hits a vertical suplex. For no apparent reason he goes up and jumps into a belly to belly (3). Steiner can barely punch so he settles for some clotheslines. There's an overhead belly to belly (4) and an overhead belly to belly (5) and an overhead belly to belly (6). The fans are openly booing Steiner now. His response? To hold HHH's hair while HHH rams his own head into the buckles (seriously, Steiner clearly isn't even pushing) and to hit a spinning belly to belly (7) for two and even more booing.

Steiner tries a butterfly powerbomb and literally falls backwards as he does it, causing HHH to land on Steiner's knees. The fans groan at the sight of this so HHH goes up top to get superplexed down. He's handing these spots to Steiner. THANKFULLY HHH tries to walk out but Steiner won't have it, because WE HAVE TO KEEP GOING. Steiner blasts HHH with the belt to bust him open to try to get the fans to care but the match is long past salvageable at this point.

Back in and Steiner hits ANOTHER belly to belly (8), causing the fans to get MAD. They're not annoyed, they're not wanting a new champion, they want Steiner to get out of their ring now. HHH tries to get counted out but Steiner goes after him AGAIN. Back in and Steiner does the pushups to tick off the fans even more as Flair is BEGGING the referee to stop the match.

Now HHH throws the referee to the floor but HEBNER WON'T STOP IT. I mean he pulls his arm up to ring the bell but stops and says keep it going. Steiner hits the NINTH belly to belly suplex (9) of the match for two so HHH hits him low and grabs a fast rollup for two. HHH finally gives up and hits Steiner with the sledgehammer for the DQ.

**Rating:** H. As in HHH, who I feel sorry for here. Now everyone knows I'm no fan of the guy in 2003, but he was in a HORRIBLE situation here. HHH was trying to keep this a coherent match, but Steiner was beyond worthless here, causing the match to sink to levels far below what any other main event "talent" would be capable of. After about seven minutes (out of eighteen), Steiner stopped doing anything resembling trying to have a match and was just doing suplexes.

Remember that back stuff he did at the beginning? Completely forgotten. Did you see him try his finisher? Not even once. He somehow managed a belly to belly suplex every two minutes, despite being on defense for a good third of the match. This was absolutely horrible and quite possibly the worst world title match I can EVER remember, which is covering a lot of ground.

Post match, Steiner beats up HHH and Flair with the hammer, which gets SYMPATHY from the fans. HHH is getting SYMPATHY from a crowd. Think about that for a minute. And what's worse: THEY HAD A REMATCH! Oh and there's the Steiner Recliner to absolutely nothing positive from the crowd at all. Bischoff has to come get Steiner off HHH.

We cut to Cole and Tazz and even MICHAEL FREAKING COLE has a look on his face as if to say "WOW that was an abomination."

We recap Benoit vs. Angle. Angle won the title from Big Show at Armageddon thanks to Lesnar before revealing that he hired Paul Heyman to

be his new manager. Heyman said anyone could get a shot other than Brock Lesnar and brought in Team Angle (Haas and Benjamin) to protect Kurt during a knee injury. Benoit won a title shot over Big Show to set this up.

### Smackdown World Title: Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Team Angle is immediately ejected to make sure it's one on one. Benoit grabs a headlock to start before trying the Sharpshooter to send Angle to the floor. Back in and Angle goes for the ankle but gets dropkicked away. Benoit grabs a kind up reverse Figure Four but Angle grabs the rope. This is all holds/counter holds so far. Benoit gets sent shoulder first into the post followed by an Angle suplex for two.

They chop it out with Benoit taking over and hitting a reverse clothesline to take Angle down. Angle drops Benoit across the top rope but gets guillotined down by the Canadian. They head to the apron with Benoit DDTing him down onto the side of the ring. The champion has a busted nose now. Back in and the Swan Dive misses but Benoit rolls out of the Angle Slam. There's the Sharpshooter to Angle who eventually gets to a rope. A belly to back suplex gets two for Chris but Angle snaps off an overhead belly to belly (just one so far).

Back to the floor where Benoit gets dropped onto the barricade to further mess with his head. Off to a rear naked choke back inside so Kurt can overly loudly call some spots. Angle catches Benoit in another belly to belly followed by a belly to back for two. Back to the chinlock for a bit until a double clothesline puts both guys down. Benoit rolls some Germans but so does Angle. And people wonder why their necks were held together by tape.

Benoit gets the final German but Angle runs the ropes to hit the belly to belly off the top to put both guys down. That gets two but the Angle Slam is countered into the Crossface. Angle gets the rope, so Benoit shifts to an ankle lock. Angle reverses into one of his own and now Benoit is in trouble. Benoit goes to kick off but instead grabs another Crossface. Kurt counters into a rollup but Benoit put the Crossface on the other (right) arm this time. Angle stands up and hits the Angle Slam but can't

immediately cover.

Angle takes the straps down but another German attempt is countered into a rollup for two. They trade HARD Germans until Benoit hooks a release German to put both guys down. Before anyone asks, the difference between this and the previous match with the suplexes is how hard these are. Steiner looked like he was at a dance recital but here they look like they're trying to kill one another. Not to mention there's OTHER STUFF in between the suplexes.

Benoit hits the longest diving headbutt you'll EVER see, but he can't cover because of his head getting jarred like that. Angle counters the Crossface into a reverse powerbomb onto the buckle. The Angle Slam gets a VERY close two as the crowd is losing their minds. Back to the Crossface but Angle rolls through into the ankle lock. Benoit rolls over but can't break the hold. He kicks Kurt off but Angle goes right back to the hold. Benoit keeps trying to kick him off but Angle hooks the grapevine and Benoit has to tap.

**Rating:** A+. That's your match of the year right there people. Oh wait according to Meltzer there was some match in Japan that no one but him ever saw and that has to be better than this right? Anyway, these two DESTROYED each other with some absolutely amazing counters and awesome sequences out there while suplexing the tar out of each other. This both guy's best match ever, and that's saying A LOT.

Benoit gets a standing ovation, showing that he was ready to be world champion. Naturally that's why he had to wait fifteen months to get the title, because the world was BEGGING for another Steiner match, the Nash feud with HHH, and the Goldberg run of doom. Ok Goldberg I can live with but the other two? Screw that.

Van Dam and Kane say they'll knock each other out to win the Rumble.

### Royal Rumble

The intervals are two minutes if you listen to Fink and 90 seconds if you listen to JR. There are fifteen Raw guys and fifteen Smackdown guys this year which would be the norm for a few years to come. Shawn gets #1 and

Jericho gets #2, but it's Christian playing the role of Jericho at the entrance, allowing Jericho to sneak in from behind and jump Shawn. Jericho hits Shawn low and starts the beat down before getting a chair to crack Shawn open.

Chris Nowitski is #3 and he's perfectly fine with letting Jericho maul Shawn. Jericho easily dumps Shawn, setting up their classic at Wrestlemania. Nowitski isn't in the ring yet. Rey Mysterio (still pretty new here) is #4 as things speed up a lot. A springboard dropkick and rana take Jericho down but Nowitski gets in as well...or not as he slid back out. Rey escapes a gorilla press and dropkicks Jericho into the ropes, only to get jumped by Nowitski.

Edge is #5 for a big pop. He would have been world champion by summer if he hadn't hurt his neck. Jericho is sent into the post and Nowitski is knocked down, allowing the two good guys to pound away on each other while both miss finishers. A springboard rana by Rey is countered into a sitout powerbomb and Christian is #6. He hugs his brother but Edge spears him down out of common sense. Nowitski tries to dump Edge and Rey but gets caught by a "double" dropkick (read as Mysterio hit him but Edge completely missed and landed on Chris after he was already down).

The Bronco Buster hits Nowitski and Chavo is #7. He immediately takes Rey down but gets caught in a 619. Rey drops the dime on Chavo and hits a 619 on Christian. He tries a springboard rana on Christian but lands on Nowitski and takes him to the floor in the process. Jericho puts Mysterio out, leaving us with Jericho, Edge, Christian and Chavo at the moment. You can add Tajiri at #8 to that list.

Christian gets the tar kicked out of him and Chavo gets put in a spinning backbreaker. Not bad for the first twenty seconds for Tajiri. Bill DeMott is #9 and no one cares. At this point, he had been a Tough Enough trainer and his gimmick was that the rookies had ticked him off so much that he was basically a sociopath. I've heard of worse. Tommy Dreamer is #10 and he brings some toys with him.

There are too many people in the ring at the moment. Edge gets in some kendo stick shots on DeMott for an elimination. Christian and Jericho hit

Dreamer with trashcan lids in a modified Conchairto for another elimination. Tajiri elbows both guys down but tries the Tarantula on Jericho and gets dumped as a result. B2, as in Bull Buchanan as Cena's ex-lackey, is #11. Edge knocks out Chavo as the ring is thinning out nicely.

Jericho gets sent over the top but skins the cat and pulls out Edge and Christian in the process. Jericho is busted open but he's left all alone in the ring. RVD is #12 and man alive do the fans love him. They slug it out for a bit with Van Dam hitting a slingshot to send Jericho to the apron but not out. Matt Hardy (who strongly dislikes mustard) is #13. The heels (as in those not named RVD) double team the good guy (as in those named RVD) but Jericho is too weak to do much and Matt kind of sucks so Van Dam takes them down.

There's a Five Star to Jericho and Eddie is #14. He pounds away on Van Dam as well and hits a Frog Splash of his own, only to walk into a Twist of Fate from Matt. Jeff Hardy is #15 and Matt tries an alliance, only to get kicked in the gut. Jeff throws Matt to the apron but Matt's MF'er Shannon Moore prevents the elimination. There's the Twist of Fate to Matt but Shannon covers up Matt from the Swanton. Jeff just dives on both of them and Rosey of 3 Minute Warning is #16.

Absolutely nothing of note happens here so Test with Stacy is #17. He cleans house until John Cena is #18 with a rap for us. He manages to rhyme "Explain it to ya" with Wrestlemania so I'm impressed. He spends forever rapping until Van Dam throws him inside. The ring is way too full again. After Cena is in the ring for about eight seconds, Charlie Haas is #19. Van Dam and Jeff slug it out until Jeff goes up top like an IDIOT and gets shoved out. He would burn out and leave the company in about three months anyway.

Eddie walks the buckles and hits a rana on Jericho as Rikishi is #20, giving us Jericho, Van Dam, Matt, Eddie, Rosey, Test, Cena, Haas and Rikishi. Again that's too many people. Rosey and Rikishi square off but nothing happens. Instead they team up and beat up Matt and Shannon because they can, until Rosey clotheslines the heck out of Rikishi. Jamal of 3 Minute Warning (you know him better as Umaga) is #21.

Rikishi superkicks Jamal down almost immediately and there's a Stinkface for him. Kane is #22 and I think we have eleven people in there at the moment. He cleans as much house as you can clean with that many people in there before FINALLY putting someone out in the form of Rosey. Jericho gets thrown to the apron but hangs on. Shelton Benjamin is #23 and Team Angle starts taking over. Booker T is #24 and we DESPERATELY need someone to clear some guys out.

Booker immediately kicks Kane down and fires up a Spinarooni to a BIG pop. Eddie gets backdropped out and Booker pounds on Rikishi. A-Train (Albert/Tensai) is #25 and the hometown boy gets to beat up a lot of people in a hurry. Shawn Michaels runs in with a bandage on his head and goes after Jericho, causing Test to dump Jericho out. See, that way it's legal.

Maven from Tough Enough (finally with actual trunks) is #26. He goes right for Kane like an idiot and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Goldust is #27 and he barely makes it 45 seconds before Haas and Benjamin put him out. Booker goes off on Haas in the corner but gets thrown out by Team Angle as well. He would get the world title shot at HHH as a consolation prize.

Big Dave Batista is #28 and you can hear the fans react to him. The first guy he hits? John Cena. It's always cool to see the future in there like that. Test takes him down with a full nelson slam but Batista low bridges him for the elimination. Batista takes down Rikishi with a spinebuster before clotheslining him out. At least the ring is clearing out a bit. Brock Lesnar is #29 and is the odds on favorite to win this thing.

Brock immediately eliminates Team Angle by himself before F5ing Matt on top of them. A-Train hits a bicycle kick to take Batista down as Undertaker is #30 to a big ovation. The final grouping: Van Dam, Cena, Jamal, Kane, A-Train, Maven, Batista, Lesnar and Undertaker. Drop Maven and A-Train and that's a pretty stacked field. To the shock of no one paying attention, Taker is returning here. There's a 9 hour DVD of matches and moments where Undertaker returns easily.

Taker punches everyone and dumps Cena and Jamal with ease. Maven

dropkicks Taker in the back and celebrates, earning himself a chokeslam. The elimination is academic. A-Train hits the chokebomb on Taker to finally slow him down as Kane chokeslams Lesnar. Kane and Van Dam, the Raw tag champions, start teaming up to beat people up but A-Train takes them both down. Van Dam saves Kane from a backbreaker and the champs double clothesline Albert out.

Kane tells Van Dam to let him pick Van Dam up and drop him on Batista, but Kane turns (not heel) on Van Dam to throw RVD out. We're down to Lesnar, Undertaker, Kane and Batista which is awesome by today's standards. Taker and Lesnar have a showdown but the other two guys break it up. Taker pounds away on Batista in a preview of the feud of the year in 2007.

A big spinebuster puts Taker down and Lesnar fights off the two Raw (Batista/Kane) guys. There's an F5 for Kane and NOW we get Taker vs. Brock. They slug it out and after Taker says big boot, he hits a big boot to take Brock's head off. The F5 is escaped but there's a tombstone for Brock. A clothesline casually puts Batista out to get us down to three. Taker teases an alliance with Kane but dumps him as well. He has to knock away an invading Batista and Brock dumps Undertaker to go to Wrestlemania.

**Rating:** B-. Good but definitely not great Rumble here. You could see the next generation in the blocks but the problem is they were just that: the NEXT generation. Taker was the only possible winner here other than Brock and that's a recipe for a bad Rumble. You need more than one candidate for the Rumble and as soon as Lesnar's music hit, it was clear who was winning this.

Taker says go win the title but he wants the first shot. Brock says ok to end the show. Did we need that?

**Overall Rating:** C-. The problem with this show is that the excellent match on the card is brought down by the HORRENDOUS match just before it. The Rumble is good but it isn't good enough to save an otherwise bad card. The show isn't terrible, but it's a sign of things to come for this year, especially with HHH on the Raw side. Not much to see here other

than Benoit vs. Angle of course. HHH vs. Steiner is only worth seeing if you want to see a trainwreck.

### Ratings Comparison

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: D

Redo: C+

Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Original: C

Redo: D

Torrie Wilson vs. Dawn Marie

Original: DD

Redo: D-

Scott Steiner vs. HHH

Original: G-

Redo: H (As in HHH)

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C-

I'm not sure what I was thinking the first time. The show just isn't that good.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/22/royal-rumble-count-up-2003-best-match-ever/>

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

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# Monday Night Raw – January 12, 2015: I Saw The Future

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 12, 2015

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

We're back in the same building as the excellent post Wrestlemania Raw and the big story is what happens to the three guys (Ziggler, Ryback and Rowan) who were fired last week. The Authority is running roughshod on the company all over again and the question is will Cena be able to focus on his war against the team and get the title back from Lesnar at the Royal Rumble. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the Authority's return to Raw last week (after being on the show the previous week) and firing Erick Rowan, Dolph Ziggler and Ryback to end the show, followed by a major celebration for John Cena.

Here's Cena to open the show. He doesn't seem all that upset after costing three people their jobs last week. Cena talks about how New Orleans is about having a good time, even though the Authority is back in power. He can't believe he works for two people who got their jobs back because their whipping boy held a Hall of Famer hostage and made Cena gamble with his health. That's the same decision he would make every time though because it's the right thing.

HHH is a first ballot Hall of Famer and one of the best of all time but he's only going to be remembered as a slimy villain who wants to make us all miserable. Last week the Authority fired three men so Cena has to appeal to the audience. Did any of them deserve to be fired? Do the fans want to see them back tonight? Cena asks us to go on social media and use the hashtag Authoritysucks to voice their opinions.

However, Cena has a backup plan: win the WWE World Heavyweight Title at the Royal Rumble. As soon as he can say THE CHAMP IS HERE, is the very moment that he can say you can't see me. He'll win the championship and go home until those three guys are rehired, or else this show's most coveted prize is going away and won't be at Wrestlemania.

This brings out the Authority with smirks on their faces. Stephanie laughs off the Authoritysucks bit and says the three guys will be thrilled to see Cena win the title and walk away. HHH expected more than seeing Cena take his ball and go home. He recaps Survivor Series again and talks about how the Authority was gone, but now they've found a way back in. A hero wouldn't turn his back on WWE, but the Authority is going to give Cena another chance.

HHH polls the audience about bringing the three guys back and, upon hearing an affirmative reply, asks Cena how much he wants those three back. All Cena has to do to get their jobs back is win his match tonight. Cena asks how many guys he's up against tonight but HHH says it's nothing

that complicated. It's a one on one match with Seth Rollins but they're going to make it a lumberjack match to keep things fair. Here come the lumberjacks because the match starts right now.

### John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

We have Big Show, Kane, Cesaro and pretty much every other heel on the roster as lumberjacks. Rollins stomps him down to start and throws Cena to the floor for the traditional beating. A clothesline puts Rollins on the floor and he isn't touched as we go to a break. Exactly as you would expect so far, meaning it's time to crank it up in a few minutes when the NCAA National Championship game starts.

Back with Cena in trouble after Barrett tripped him during the break. Booker is calling this whole situation unfair as he's the good guy commentator. The ProtoBomb sets up the Shuffle and the AA but the Stooges get on the apron, allowing Rollins to get outside. Cena dives onto the pile of lumberjacks and Fandango is holding his knee. I'll let you make your own dancing jokes. Back in and Cena covers for two, only to eat the low superkick for the same. Seth goes up top and counters a superplex attempt into an across the ring buckle bomb for two. That kind of power out of Rollins always surprises me.

Cena tries a pop up powerbomb but doesn't get under Rollins enough, making it look more like a spinebuster. Seth flips out of the AA and hits a standing Sliced Bread #2 for another near fall. There's another AA but the lumberjacks (including Fandango who seems to be fine) pull Cena to the floor for a beating, including the Cesaro Swing into the barricade. Back in and the Curb Stomp is countered into the STF but Kane pulls Rollins' arm towards the ropes. It turns into a tug of war over Rollins but Big Show pulls Cena to the floor for the KO Punch, giving Rollins the pin at 13:50.

**Rating:** B. This worked well but I'm really tired of seeing these two fight. In the span of less than a month, they've now had a regular match, a tables match, a cage match and a lumberjack match. That should be at least four months worth of matches but we're getting it in four weeks. They've done the same thing with Ambrose vs. Wyatt and it's having the

same result: it's really hard to care about what we're seeing because they just had another big match a week or so ago.

The Usos are in Stephanie's office when Dean Ambrose comes in. All three of them had some negative things to say on Smackdown about the firings. That's fine and there are no firings. The Usos go to leave, but Stephanie stops them and asks Jimmy to tell Naomi that she's competing with one arm behind her back tonight. As for Dean, he checked himself out of the hospital last week so he might be a danger to himself. Therefore, tonight he has to pass a psychiatric evaluation or he's out of the Rumble. This has some potential if they do it right.

Miz talks about his close friend George Clooney winning the Cecil B. DeMille Award last night at the Golden Globes. Keep it up and he'll win a Slammy.

It's already time for the evaluation. Dean thinks he's here because he's been a "bad widdle boy." Ambrose is freaked out by the doctor's ticking clock and we go to a break. I love watching Dean be one step off and being all twitchy. It makes him seem like a more well rounded character instead of someone who was created in a board room to make sure he's the best corporate character they can put together.

#### New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

It's Kofi and Woods in action here with Big E. and Adam Rose on the floor. Cesaro and Kidd attacked Big E. last week because New Day is just too positive all the time. So they're just curmudgeons? I approve of this gimmick. Kofi starts with Cesaro but Kidd gets a blind tag and kicks Kofi in the chest.

Cesaro stomps away and swings Kofi into the dropkick for two. Back up and Kofi kicks everyone down to the floor before diving over to Woods for the hot tag. The Honor Roll (flipping clothesline) drops Kidd and Cesaro gets low bridged to the floor. Rose gets on the apron but his distraction doesn't work, allowing Woods to plant him with a backbreaker, followed by a top rope double stomp from Kofi for the pin at 3:48.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to see here and I'm liking the fact that New Day

keeps winning, as long as their first loss isn't something totally meaningless that ends with "oh, they lost." Speaking of losing, it's very frustrating to see Cesaro and Kidd put together for a team, just to see them job every time. Have they actually won a match yet?

We get a barrage of wrestlers doing their best OH YEAH in honor of Randy Savage being "expected" to be inducted into the Hall of Fame tonight. Above all else, I want Xavier Woods' NES controller hat.

The Indianapolis Colts celebrates their win yesterday like Ric Flair.

Here's Big Show for a chat. Whoever said that all men are created equal was obviously not a giant. Most of you were probably scared on your first day of work. On his first day, he beat Hulk Hogan for the World Title. The fans chant boring but Big Show laughs them off and calls everyone losers. Competition is supposed to be good for America, but no one wants competition at work. Everyone here would stab someone in the back for job security, just like he did to Cena.

That brings him to Roman Reigns, who he doesn't see as competition. He sees Reigns like the New York Knicks, currently on a 15 game losing streak. Show is going to knock him into the front row next to Spike Lee (longtime Knicks fan) and make him a loser. Therefore, if you like Roman Reigns, you're a loser as well.

Cue Reigns for the big brawl but Show walks out. Reigns thought he wasn't a threat so why is Show leaving? Roman says he doesn't want Show's spot, but he does remember that first title win over Hogan. He was twelve years old or so and that makes him think of a story. A long time ago in a land far away, there was a little boy named Roman Reigns. It's the story of Jack and the Beanstalk but Roman hit the giant in the mouth. The giant ran away, and that's why Big Show is the loser.

### Roman Reigns vs. Luke Harper

This has potential. Harper hammers away in the corner to start but Reigns knocks him to the floor as we take a break less than a minute in. Back with Reigns hitting a knee lift and raking Harper's face across the rope. Three straight suplex attempts are blocked and Roman counters into a kind

of Jackhammer. Someone really should use that as their finisher again. Harper dropkicks him out to the floor and sends Reigns hard into the steps. Back in and Harper busts out a freaking slingshot hilo for two. That's not something a guy his size should be able to do.

Reigns comes back with a neckbreaker but Harper rips the face to break up the Samoan drop. Luke's powerbomb is countered into something like the ProtoBomb. The Superman Punch is loaded up but Big Show throws a chair at Reigns. Naturally, that isn't a DQ because wrestling rules as made up depending on the situation. A Boss Man Slam gets two for Harper but he turns into the Superman Punch. Show interferes again and Harper nails a superkick for two. The discus lariat misses though and a spear puts Harper away at 10:46.

**Rating:** B-. Luke Harper is a freaking STAR. He wrestles like someone Shawn Michaels' size but has the look and size of a monster. Why aren't we gearing up for a showdown between Harper and Reigns with Big Show being the cannon fodder? For reasons I will never understand, it looks like we're not getting Show vs. Reigns (well, the blowoff at least as we've seen them fight twice already) until Fast Lane. That's our reward for sticking with this show.

We recap the lumberjack match.

Miz talks about Boyhood winning Best Picture at the Golden Globes. It was filmed over several years with the same actors. Mizdow has been doing the same thing at Miz's house, allowing him to film a movie called Manhood. Both guys shudder a bit.

### Naomi vs. Alicia Fox

Naomi has one arm behind her back. Fox makes fun of her by trying a test of strength before getting two off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. She cranks on the good arm until Naomi takes her to the floor for some rams into the apron. Back in and the ax kick gives Fox the pin at 2:37. This would be the match where you're hit over the head with how mean the Authority is because you're not smart enough to understand a concept without it being shown to you over and over.

Back to the evaluation, where Dean is going to look at pictures and saying the first word that comes to his mind. "THURSDAY!"

HHH – Irritable bowel syndrome

Rollins – Scumbag

Reigns – Brotha

Kane – Toothpaste

Duggan – H0!

Stephanie – H0!

Minor note here: Ambrose was bouncing up and down during the interview. It's the little stuff like that which takes people to a new level. Instead of just sitting there waiting for his line, he's actually doing something and staying in character. It feels so much more natural than the stiff and scripted stuff we usually get.

Here are Lesnar and Heyman for the first time in a few weeks. Heyman talks about being in New Orleans several months back, where we witnessed the Streak dying. Lesnar isn't one to live in the past, but if he was, he would list off all of his accomplishments. No man has ever been NCAA, UFC and WWE Champion, but one beast has. Heyman however loves to live in the past and runs down the fans for being crushed when the Streak ended.

On the other hand, you have this fantasy in WWE of "then, now and forever." The fantasy was the Streak running forever or that the Ce-Nation will rise above Lesnar at the Royal Rumble. Now the idea is that Rollins is the future of the WWE, but tonight Lesnar will see both challengers face to face.

More people give us their OH YEAHS with Miz knocking it out of the park and Nikki trying to make it sexy.

Jey Uso vs. Miz

Miz hits his running clothesline in the corner to start but jumps into a shot to the ribs. Jey loads up a slam and Mizdow comes in to slam himself

off the top. The partners get involved in a tug of war, allowing Miz to grab a quick Skull Crushing Finale for the pin at 2:09. This feud needs to end like a month ago.

Here's Daniel Bryan in the city where he won the World Title at Wrestlemania XXX. Bryan thinks something big happened here the last time he was in New Orleans. It slowly starts coming back to him that he won the main event of Wrestlemania XXX, which isn't bad for a lumberjack looking B+ player. Since this is the city of his greatest accomplishment, he should declare his intention to do it all over again and win the main event of Wrestlemania XXXI.

This brings out Stephanie with a copy of her fitness DVD for Bryan, complete with a mini commercial. Bryan isn't interested so Stephanie talks about making history at Wrestlemania XXX a couple of miles from here (the buildings are actually adjacent), but this is what she remembers. We see a clip of Kane tombstoning Bryan on the floor, steps and table. Stephanie says an A+ player not only wins the big one but stays on top.

She isn't sure if he's ready to do this again, but YES of course he is. Bryan: "Go ahead and raise your arms. I bet it's a better workout than you get on that DVD. HO!" He's an average Joe who will never stop fighting. They will never stop fighting. We will never stop fighting and go through Wrestlemania XXXI until they prove the Authority wrong again. Stephanie says Bryan's first match back will be on Smackdown (this was already announced) against Kane. The monster comes out and the fight is on, but Bryan fights out of a tombstone on the steps and hammers away on Kane. He even busts out the Flying Goat.

Rollins is in the back when Lesnar comes up to mock the idea of Rollins winning the title. Seth stares him down and says he's the future, but Lesnar says the future starts when he says it does. Heyman thinks maybe they can get rid of Cena together and then the best man wins. He looks very nervous about Rollins, who has stared Lesnar down the entire time. For the first time, I saw that real star power in Rollins from this one exchange. Simple but perfect.

## Brie Bella vs. Paige

Natalya, Kidd and Nikki are at ringside. Paige goes right at her to start but gets sent into the buckle, allowing Brie to hit the middle rope dropkick. Paige fights out of a chinock but Kidd gets on the apron for a distraction, allowing Brie to roll her up for the pin at 2:10.

After the match, Paige slaps Kidd and Natalya doesn't seem to mind. I love Paige, but I fully support anyone wearing a cat shirt.

We look back at last week's ambulance match.

Bray Wyatt says thirty souls enter the Royal Rumble and 29 will have to realize that they're not in Wonerland any longer. Some will laugh, some will cry but some will sit in silence at how Bray changes the world. No one on earth will be immune to his wrath. Run.

We finally have it confirmed: Randy Savage is the first entrant of the Hall of Fame Class of 2015. He will be inducted by Hulk Hogan.

## Ascension vs. ???/???

Konor takes #1 into the corner to start as JBL is ripping on the jobbers again. Booker and Cole are a bit nicer and say they have to fight whoever they're put up against and that they've won every match they've had so far. Fall of Man ends #2 at 1:20.

Ambrose is now counciling the doctor and gets his approval on the papers to stay in the Rumble. As soon as the papers are signed and the doctor is still crying, Ambrose calls him a spineless, gutless pile of cow waste. This really could have been a better comedy idea but it wasn't bad.

Here are Lana and Rusev to thank the Authority for firing Ryback before the showdown tonight. They also thank Cena for failing to save his friends like any American would. Maybe Ryback can get a job in a deli like he had in that stupid story a few weeks back. Rusev calls Ryback lucky for being fired and because the super American John Cena couldn't get his job back. He was going to throw Ryback and twenty eight other men out of the Rumble, so here's Ambrose to easily knock him to the floor.

## Rusev vs. Dean Ambrose

Joined in progress after a break with Ambrose bulldogging Rusev. The Russian kicks at the knee (injured in the ambulance match) to take over and wraps it around the ropes. Dean counters the jumping superkick into a rollup for two and the Macho Elbow gets the same. The referee tries to stop the match due to the knee and has no choice after Dean is tied in the Tree of Woe at 4:38.

**Rating:** C. This was more of an angle than anything else and Ambrose loses again, like he almost always does. At least in this case it wasn't through another pin or submission and the loss can be blamed on the referee more than Ambrose. I did like them planting the seeds of Cena vs. Rusev though because that's the big match at Wrestlemania, especially if Rusev wins.

Here's the Authority to moderate the contract signing. After everyone comes out, Heyman says he can't take credit for bringing back the Authority because it was all Rollins' plan. The plan was endorsed by Heyman and desperately needed by John Cena. What's bad for Cena is good for Lesnar and best for business. Heyman doesn't like the idea of a triple threat match because it could mean a double cross where Lesnar doesn't have to lose to drop the title.

Rollins thanks Heyman for reciting the rules of ever triple threat match ever and asks if Lesnar is scared of a triple threat. Paul gets cut off because Rollins isn't done. Seth doesn't have the list of accomplishments that Lesnar have, but Lesnar doesn't have the list that Seth has. He built and destroyed the Shield, won Money in the Bank, and pinned John Cena's shoulders to the mat. Either by plan A (the match) or plan B (the briefcase), Rollins is is leaving with the title. Lesnar says he conquered Undertaker, HHH and Cena, so he'll conquer Rollins at the Rumble.

Cena says it's time for a beating and he's walking out champion before signing. Rollins lists off all the plans that Cena has had but failed before the fight is on. Seth is knocked to the floor and Lesnar takes the AA through the table, only to have Rollins Curb Stomp Cena. There's a

Curb Stomp to Brock to end the show. More importantly than all else: Rollins looked like an equal. That cannot be understated.

**Overall Rating:** B. Yes that's probably high but man was this show easier to sit through. They actually had some good matches and set up some stuff for the future, but most importantly of all they had a chance to breathe. Instead of just packing every thing they possibly could into the show, there were a few breaks in there and it makes things so much easier.

On top of that though, the best moments were from Harper and Rollins. Those two looked AWESOME tonight and they gave me new hopes for both of them. Harper can move like almost no one else in the company and Rollins looked like a star standing there in front of Lesnar. I had a really good time with this show (save for a bit too much Stephanie) and didn't once feel like it was dragging on forever. That's the most important step in the right direction they could have.

### Results

Seth Rollins b. John Cena – Pin after a KO Punch from Big Show

New Day b. Tyson Kidd/Cesaro – Backbreaker/top rope double stomp combo

Roman Reigns b. Luke Harper – Spear

Alicia Fox b. Naomi – Ax kick

Miz b. Jey Uso – Skull Crushing Finale

Brie Bella b. Paige – Rollup

Ascension b. ???/??? – Fall of Man to #2

Rusev b. Dean Ambrose via referee stoppage

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

# 2014 Awards: Show of the Year

We'll wrap it up with another few horses race.

To begin with, I have to skip the ROH shows because I didn't see most of them. I've heard they were good to really good, but I haven't seen them.

We'll start things off with a show that gets a lot of hate: the Royal Rumble. Unfortunately the only thing people remember about this show is the really questionable ending, along with the crowd's reaction to it. What they forget is a great opener between Bryan and Wyatt, Brock Lesnar just DESTROYING Big Show and not even going down from the KO Punch and a good Cena vs. Orton match that the fans didn't want to see.

What people also forget is a good Rumble for about 95% of the match before Mysterio's music hit. Those last three or so minutes crippled what was going to be a good to very good match with Reigns breaking what was seen as a fairly untouchable record and some other entertaining parts. All people remember about it is no Bryan and Batista winning though and that ruins the memory of an otherwise great show.

Before we head down to developmental, I have to at least mention the post Wrestlemania Raw. It didn't have the best wrestling, but the moments on that show carried it to greatness. You have the fans singing JOHN CENA SUCKS to the tune of his theme song to get the show going. That alone should tell you that we're in for something special. Rob Van Dam returned, Rusev had his real debut, Warrior had his incredible farewell promo, Paige debuted and won the title and Shield turned face to end the show. The wrestling wasn't great, but it was such a fun show that it warrants a mention.

That brings us to NXT, which set one heck of a standard this year with

the Takeover shows. We'll start at the beginning with the beginning at Arrival. This was back when we didn't know what was coming with these shows and had our minds blown. Cesaro vs. Zayn was a classic and showed what Zayn and this promotion in general were capable of. You couple that with a really good ladder match main event where Adrian Neville took the title from Bo Dallas. This show would be up there for surprise of the year but it's worth mentioning here too.

Now we get to the big shows, including Takeover: R-Evolution which blew the doors, roof, windows and pretty much everything else off the house. The show went from Kevin Owens being somehow even better than we were expecting to Finn Balor being a freaky dragon thing to Charlotte and Sasha Banks continuing the tradition of great women's matches on these shows. Somehow that all paled in comparison to the main event though, as Sami Zayn defeated Adrian Neville for the NXT Title in my Match of the Year. Couple all that with the excellent surprise ending of Owens turning on Zayn and you have one of the best shows of the year.

I think the winner should be obvious at this point. When WWE actually puts an effort into the big shows, they know how to hit them out of the park. Well this year, they put a lot of effort into Wrestlemania XXX and the show was one of the best of all time. After an excellent pre-show match for the Tag Team Titles, Hulk Hogan, Steve Austin and The Rock appeared in the ring at the same time. I remember saying to a fan next to me that I could go home now and get my money's worth.

This was followed by some excellent music video packages for the major matches, Daniel Bryan having the performance of a lifetime, Cesaro having what should have been a career changing performance, an incredible entrance for Bray Wyatt and the Streak coming to an end. What else could you possibly ask for from a major show? It was outstanding stuff and one of the best shows I've ever seen.