

Elimination Chamber 2015 Preview

It's time for a "let's get people to watch the Network and hope they don't remember to cancel their free month in the hour they have after the show goes off the air" show that they're calling a pay per view. This is going to be an interesting show as they only have two weeks before Elimination Chamber, which means we might get something interesting short term to set up for a change down the road. Let's get to it.

There's no pre-show match this time but Daniel Bryan will be on MizTV. There's nothing to see here other than Miz returning and Bryan plugging the book/DVD/whatever else he has coming out. I can't imagine he's coming back to the ring already and he probably shouldn't yet either. I'll be glad to see Miz back as yes, I still like the guy.

Now we'll go with the bigger matches as we start with the Tag Team Title Elimination Chamber match. Given that it's under elimination rules, we'll look at each team and eliminate them one by one.

Los Matadores – Just no.

Ascension – I'd love to see these guys just massacre everyone in this thing and win the belts like they should have when they debuted before....I'm going to stop myself there because I'll rant all day on them all over again. Ascension won't win, even though they should be a force in this match.

Prime Time Players – They're funny and I dig the team, but I don't picture them winning the titles in one of their first matches back together.

Lucha Dragons – They're the dark horses to win here as they've been pushed strong since debuting and clearly have the offense to get the fans into any of their matches. Why Los Matadores still exist with these guys around is beyond me.

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – You would think these guys would have a good shot but I just don't see it happening again.

New Day – I've loved the team and it's hard not to, but there's only so long you can keep the joke going. These guys work well together to steal pins, but having them survive five other teams might be a bit too much to ask.

So who do I have winning? This might come as a surprise, but I'm going with the Dragons. I don't see New Day surviving that many teams without someone catching them and Cesaro/Kidd don't feel right. The other teams are filler so yeah, I'm actually picking the Dragons.

Off to the other Chamber for the vacant Intercontinental Title so let's do the same format.

R-Truth – I think I have a better chance of winning the title than he does.

Dolph Ziggler – He has Lana. Don't get greedy. Also there's nothing for him to win here as he's held the title a bunch of times before and doesn't gain anything by winning it again.

King Barrett – He's already jobbing to R-Truth clean in less than three minutes. Heaven help him if he wins the title back and is getting rolled up by El Torito next. Pass here and that's the best for everyone involved.

Ryback – I just can't see it. They're playing up that he hasn't won a title yet so maybe he chases the belt, but I can't see him winning it here.

Rusev/Bray Wyatt – This is in case Rusev can't go due to his leg injury, and it certainly seems that he can't. Wyatt would be a very good option here but again I don't see it. He'll take a Shell Shock to even the "feud" with Ryback and no one will care.

Sheamus – This has been the odds on pick for a while now and he probably does make the most sense. Sheamus has been doing well since he got back and throwing another title on him isn't the worst idea in the world. I'll

take him.

Neville defeats Dallas because there's really no reason for him not to.

I'm really tempted to go with Ambrose over Rollins for a two week title reign but I don't see it happening. I think they'll just go with the safe story of having the interference be too much for Dean to overcome and keep the title on Seth, even though Reigns has nothing to do and probably should come out and help his buddy.

Uh...Naomi takes the Divas Title and feuds with Paige for a bit, even though Tamina pinned Paige on Raw in another really dumb booking decision.

Now we get to the match I'm looking forward to the most and the match with the best build: John Cena vs. Kevin Owens in a non-title match. These two have been trading shots for two weeks now and it's going to be a huge moment if Owens somehow pulls off the win. Notice that I said somehow, as there's no need for him to win the match clean. All he has to do is survive it and hang on long enough to win by countout, DQ or maybe a fluke pin.

This is one of the very rare situations where I'm thrilled by the possibilities and really looking forward to the match for a change. Owens is a great bully character and having him win will instantly make everyone more credible. If Owens is sticking around on the main roster, give him the win here and let him become a star. Cena is going to be fine about ten seconds after the match so does it really matter? Just let Owens win and be done with it. Look at Mick Foley winning his first World Title: everyone remembers the win and no one remembers that he dropped it less than three weeks later because only the win matters.

Overall, I'm looking forward to this show, but there's a good chance it's going to be a massive disappointment. There's only so much you can expect from WWE without them rounding back into form, just like they did this past Monday on Raw. There's bound to be something good on the show though and if there's more than a few good things, Sunday could be really, really special.

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Smackdown – May 28, 2015: Padding With A Good Match

Smackdown

Date: May 28, 2015

Location: Mohegan Sun Arena, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

I've been saying this too often lately but it's the go home show for a pay per view. The big stories going into this Sunday are the two Elimination Chamber matches as well as the World Title match between champion Seth Rollins and challenger Dean Ambrose. They haven't really had time to put together a great story so I'm assuming tonight is going to have some hard selling. Or some lame matches that keep everything where it was coming out of Raw. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Dean Ambrose to recap the arrest angle from Raw that magically ended right before the show went off the air because that's how wrestling works these days and the words "TUNE IN NEXT WEEK TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED!" are all four letters long now. Ambrose was sitting in his cell

and thought he had one person to call: Roman Reigns. He asked Reigns to buy him some time so he could figure out a way out of the cell.

The help he needed came from WWE's Youtube channel because it was clear that Rollins shoved the cameraman into him. That was more than enough to clear his name and since he's been in a lot of metropolitan jails in this country, it only took some pictures and autographs to get a police escort to back to the arena on time. Tonight there's a rematch of Raw's tag match, but this Sunday there's going to be a fight for the finest prize in this industry. Stupid story on Monday aside, this was a good promo that got to the point for Sunday.

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. Lucha Dragons

The other four teams in the Chamber match are lumberjacks. Cara and Kidd get things going with Tyson bouncing off the ropes (upside down that is) to counter a wristlock into an armdrag to send Cara to the floor. Cesaro comes in off a blind tag for a European uppercut into a German suplex from his partner followed by a half crab to slow Sin down. That goes about as far as a half crab can go so it's off to Kalisto, who is launched into the air for a hurricanrana, sending Cesaro outside.

Back in and Kalisto tries a springboard cross body, only to be caught in a vertical suplex. Cesaro doesn't put him down though as he walks Kalisto around the ring, tags Kidd in and points to him for about ten seconds as Kidd goes up top for a cross body. The announcers completely undersell this freakish display of strength but it was amazing to see. Sin is quickly tagged in to throw Kidd outside for a but Los Matadores throw him back in without doing anything.

Tyson tries a monkey flip but Kalisto dives through Kidd's legs, lands on his hands and backflips into a headscissors of his own. Dang this guy is good. We take a break and come back with Kalisto fighting out of Cesaro's chinlock but being thrown to the floor. The Players don't get in any cheap shots before throwing him back in for a double tag to Kidd and Cara. Tyson makes a blind tag and tosses Sin into the corner for the running European uppercuts. Cara comes back with the La Mistica mat slam for two and Kalisto's corkscrew crossbody gets the same.

That's enough flipping for Cesaro as he just muscles Kalisto over with something like a belly to belly, setting up Kidd's springboard elbow for two more. Kalisto kicks Kidd in the head but Cesaro slides in with a headbutt for the save. That looked cool as he just slid in and let his head hit Kalisto.

Kidd reverses a hurricanrana into the Sharpshooter but Cara springboards in with a clothesline to break it up. Everything breaks down and Cesaro superkicks Kalisto, only to be backdropped onto a bunch of the lumberjacks. With his partner down, Kidd is distracted by Woods, setting up the Salida Del Sol to give Kalisto the pin at 13:19.

Rating: B+. I might be rating this a bit higher than some would but I had a blast watching this. Kalisto and Cara are so good as a high flying pair and maybe the best at that style since the Hardys. On the other hand you have Cesaro who is so freakishly strong it's unreal. The only issue here were the lumberjacks as they didn't really need to be there, but they hardly dragged the match down. Anyway this was a really, really fun match with both teams busting out some crazy spots. Check this out if you get the chance.

Rollins runs his mouth to Kane about Ambrose, prompting Noble to go into a story about his aunt hearing voices and being crazy, but her cobbler was good. The looks from everyone in the room are rather amusing. Kane is looking forward to having fun in the tag match tonight and promises a plan to make sure Rollins has nothing to worry about on Sunday.

R-Truth vs. King Barrett

Barrett kicks him right in the face to start and slugs Truth in the face for two. We're already in the chinlock before Barrett's kick to the ribs in the corner gets two more. Back up and Truth ducks the Bull Hammer and hits Little Jimmy for the completely clean pin at 2:26. Such is the life for someone like Barrett. I know the line is that no one remembers individual wins and losses (which I don't agree with for the most part) but they certainly do remember loss after loss after loss after loss.

Sheamus comes out and Brogue Kicks both guys.

We recap Lana and Rusev's big spat from Monday. The less said about this the better.

Lana seems sad about having to leave Rusev but she's happier with Dolph. Rusev comes up and says he doesn't need to throw another fit because he's already had his way with Ziggler. Whatever Lana and Dolph do, it doesn't bother him. If Ziggler has to suffer because of Lana, so be it. This was much better from Rusev as he was more condescending than pitiful.

Rusev vs. Ryback

Well, it's a few months later but at least we get to see it. Ryback grabs a waistlock to start but Rusev counters into a headlock. The Bulgarian's shoulders have no effect so Ryback lifts him up for a delayed vertical suplex for two. Ryback pounds on him with some forearms but a big clothesline changes control. Rusev slowly kicks Ryback around the ring but he gets distracted by a WE WANT LANA chant. There's a decent story in there if they can find a better way of presenting it.

A backdrop sends Rusev to the floor (probably where he injured his leg) but he's still able to hit the fallaway slam as we go to a break. Back with Rusev limping around before putting on a chinlock. They slug it out and Rusev hobbles from rope to rope. He can put very little weight on it and falls down when trying to slide out of a powerslam. Rusev posts him a few times and that's a DQ at 11:56, which was probably going home quickly due to the injury.

Rating: C-. It's hard to grade this one as the injury clearly changed where the match was going. The rumor is that if Rusev can't go then he'll be replaced by Bray Wyatt, which is probably the best possible option. The injury didn't seem to be Ryback's fault but it happened so fast that it was hard to tell. Not a bad power match until the injury but they didn't have time to go very far with it.

Quick recap of Paige vs. Naomi.

Paige vs. Naomi

Naomi throws some leg kicks to start so Paige shoves her into the corner

for forearms to the jaw. Some knees to the chest send Naomi to the floor, because THIS IS MY HOUSE! From the floor, Naomi sends the arm into the post and starts working over the arm in the corner. Ignore the fact that it's not the arm she sent into the post but at least she's trying. Paige comes back with some clotheslines and a kick to Tamina before catching a cross body in midair and countering it into the Rampaige for the pin at 3:12.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but the time didn't let them go anywhere. That's the problem with so many of the Divas' stories: they're supposed to tell full stories in about a third of the amount of time that their male counterparts receive. That being said, there's only so much time you can give to them when the division's top heel can't remember right from left.

The Bellas come to the stage to pose.

Tough Enough package.

Michael Cole brings Kevin Owens to the ring for a chat. Owens cuts Cole off when he says that Kevin has been in WWE for two years because he's been around the world for fifteen years. Now he can be on the WWE Network for just \$9.99. He knows Cena's numbers: fifteen World Titles, two Royal Rumble, fifty seven different t-shirt designs and over a thousand ways to suck.

Cole asks about Cena saying Owens has to finish the fight on Sunday so Owens shows us a clip of him destroying Sami Zayn at Takeover last week. If he'll do that to his best friend, what will he do to John Cena? Just watch Sunday and you'll see it first hand. After you do that, you'll see that the champ is here.

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Kane/Seth Rollins

Rematch from Raw. Ambrose passes by Owens on his way to the ring and doesn't pay him a bit of attention. Rollins gets in a cheap shot on Reigns to start, allowing Kane to get the early advantage. Seth quickly comes in and stomps Roman down in the corner where he sits on his chest for an odd choice of offense. It's back to Kane who gets suplexed down

for the tag to Ambrose as we're still in the first minute.

Reigns and Ambrose chases them to the floor and we take a break. Back with Rollins tagging in Kane to keep Ambrose in trouble. We hit the nerve hold on Ambrose for a bit before Kane pulls him off the middle rope for a big crash. Dean gets beaten down in the corner even more and Rollins hits a running back elbow for two. Back to the reverse chinlock for a bit until Dean fights back and takes out the Stooges, only to have to break up a Rollins superplex attempt.

A tornado DDT plants Kane and that's enough for the hot tag to Reigns. Kane blocks a Superman Punch like he always blocks a Superman Punch, but Dean takes him down with the standing top rope elbow. A rollup by Rollins is countered into a powerbomb but Seth slips out, only to eat the Superman Punch, drawing in the Stooges for the DQ at 12:03.

Rating: C-. There was nothing to talk about here because I saw almost this exact same match with a different ending on Monday. I'm not a fan of having these rematches so soon as this is exactly what happens: what are they supposed to do that they didn't do on Monday other than how the match ends? Not bad or anything but really dull.

Ambrose and Reigns clean house until the New Day of all people come out to beat on Ambrose, only to have Reigns hit his big over the top rope dive to take everyone out. Woods eats Dirty Deeds and Kofi gets Superman Punched out of the air. Kane and Rollins get back in though and Rollins Pedigrees Ambrose to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Not a bad go home show but as usual, there's not much to see here other than a really good tag match to start things off. However, with that great match comes a headache inducing R-Truth win over King Barrett. I was sold on the Chamber from the minute the matches were announced though so this was really just padding with a good match included.

Results

Lucha Dragons b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – Salida Del Sol to Kidd

R-Truth b. King Barrett – Little Jimmy

Ryback b. Rusev via DQ when Rusev sent Ryback into the post

Paige b. Naomi – Rampaige

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Kane/Seth Rollins via DQ when Joey Mercury and Jamie Noble interfered

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: May 18, 2015

We're done with Payback and therefore it's time to race towards the Elimination Chamber show because we must get it in before people have to start paying for the Network again. The big story here is Rollins retaining the World Title over his former Shield teammates and Orton in a good four way last night, but now everything is about getting to Elimination Chamber.

The Authority was back, complete with HHH's slow talking and Stephanie dropping in every proper name that she could in a manner that no one uses in the real world. They don't have much to say here (thank goodness)

other than All Hail Rollins and that he's getting a tribute later in the night.

This brought them to the Elimination Chamber, which led to interruptions from Ryback and Sheamus. Both of them are announced for the match but of course they'll be fighting tonight too. The match was nothing out of the ordinary with Sheamus Brogue Kicking a distracted Ryback for the pin. I'm glad it's only a two week build to the Chamber as you can only have the people in the match do these simple matches for so long before they lose their effectiveness. The match was fine and I like Sheamus winning, but I think Ryback's push is in major trouble after back to back losses.

Kane was put in charge of the celebration tonight and didn't seem to mind. Ambrose came in and asked for a title shot but was given a match against Bray Wyatt tonight. This was a great example of people being in the right place at the right time saying the right things to move the show forward, making it feel very unnatural.

Neville was being interviewed when Bo Dallas came out. This seems to be the next feud as Dallas isn't cool with Neville bringing up their history in NXT. Dallas attacked Neville's previously injured knee, allowing Barrett to take Neville down pretty easily. This wasn't much of a match due to the time, but I'm getting worried about Neville doing the same things every time. He's going to be over due to his high flying abilities for a long time, but some of that heat is going to wear off and he needs to have something to build himself back up. The knee injury and a feud with Dallas are a good start though and there's no reason to panic.

Rusev yelled at Lana a lot and broke up with her. Later that night, Lana came out and kissed Ziggler. I'm not wild on pairing her with Ziggler, but I'm even less wild about how fast this turn started and wrapped up. One week she was Fandangoing and then she's being dumped by Rusev? That's because here in WWE, we have to get the next story set up before the pay per view because Heaven forbid we wait more than a few weeks to set something up.

Bray Wyatt beat Dean Ambrose in a match built around a ton of interference and cheating, which is the only way to have that result.

This was the usual good brawl between these guys but did you really expect anything else?

Cesaro and Kidd failed to win the Tag Team Titles again after a no contest with New Day. This didn't have the time to go anywhere and was really just a way to extend the feud yet another week as we're getting closer and closer to Elimination Chamber, where this time FOR SURE we're getting new champions. The feud and matches are still fun, but they're running out of ways to have New Day survive without getting repetitive.

After the match, Ascension, the Lucha Dragons, Los Matadores and the Prime Time Players came out to confirm that it's going to be six teams in the Chamber instead of just three. This makes for a very interesting match where it's possible that several teams could walk out with the titles. Well other than Los Matadores or Prime Time Players of course but the other four all have at least a chance. I'm not sure who wins there and I love that feeling.

Now we get to the money part of the show: the US Open Challenge. This week's was answered by NXT Champion Kevin Owens, who gave one of the best debut promos that I've ever seen, as he talked about the NXT Title being the real prize to fight for and how Cena doesn't get to give him advice or pick the time where they fight. I've spent a lot of time on the podcasts on how much I loved this segment and Owens comes off like one of the best villains in a long time. He can back it up in the ring too and he'll get to show that at Elimination Chamber. That's a non-title match too, which a lot of people seem to be overlooking.

Dolph Ziggler beat Stardust in a very short match to set up Lana kissing him. I'm really not wild on that move but it's what we're stuck with for the time being, meaning Dolph is right back where he was a few years ago.

The Wyatts crushed Ryder/Fandango in a match designed to say "yo, we're monsters."

Nikki beat Naomi via DQ when Tamina interfered. Paige returned for the save and laid out Nikki in what wasn't a heel turn.

The big ending segment was a long, drawn out exchange with Rollins making

Kane praise him before Dean came out and threatened to put him through some cinder blocks until he was given a title shot. A bunch of brawling ensued and Rollins hit a Pedigree to stand tall to end the show.

I tried really hard to get into this one but it didn't leave much for me to care about. The main event stuff has too many people floating around it right now. You have the Authority bosses, Kane, the Stooges (ok they don't count as much) and the two guys in the match. They need to just let Ambrose and Rollins carry this instead of just putting everyone they can in there and making it a big mess all over again.

The rest of the show was an improvement over the main event with the Chamber matches both looking good and Owens vs. Cena making me all tingly. If they can keep the HHH/Stephanie involvement to a minimum, we could be looking at a very hot card at Elimination Chamber. Or we could be looking at the same lazy stuff WWE does over and over to waste their potential.

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Reviewing the Review: Payback

2015

We continue to marathon these pay per views and the big question here is can Payback continue to be the most unlikely good series in wrestling? The main event is a well enough built up fatal fourway with Rollins defending against Reigns, Ambrose and Orton, basically making it a Shield triple threat with Orton on the side. Let's get to it.

I'm getting through the pre-show matches as fast as I can so I never have to think about them again. R-Truth beat Stardust in a bonus match with all the charm of a bad infection. These two have fought two or three times now and it's gotten less and less interesting every single time. Therefore, look for them to fight again in the future.

In the other pre-show match, Ascension beat the Mega (changed from Meta for reasons of good taste) Powers in a short match. I would praise WWE for not going with the comedy act here, but I have some issues giving them credit for upgrading from a horrible move to common sense. Yeah they put Ascension over a newly formed comedy team. Am I supposed to be impressed? Finally, does anyone else feel dirty about calling them the Mega Powers?

The opener was a good back and forth match between Dolph Ziggler in Sheamus to seemingly blow off their feud. The key here was the end of the match where Ziggler headbutted Sheamus and busted himself open hardway, which caused the match to end in a hurry. Now granted they didn't have to cut off much time as the match ran twelve minutes, but it always makes me curious to know what they were going to do otherwise.

Sheamus getting a nice win is the right idea though as he needs the push more than Ziggler. I'm pretty much over Dolph at the moment as he's been the same guy for the better part of ever now. Yeah his matches are still good enough, but I haven't been excited to see a Ziggler match in years now.

For reasons I don't quite get, Kane and Rollins argued even more. On pay per view. I'm going to be really surprised if they set up a Kane face turn as that would be so far out of the realm of common sense these days

for WWE. Rollins is almost going to have to turn face eventually though, as it's the nature of being a heel in wrestling.

Now it's time for the match people were drooling over: New Day defending the Tag Team Titles against Cesaro/Tyson Kidd in a 2/3 falls match. This had the potential to be one of the most entertaining matches in a very long time if they set it up right, but unfortunately that's not exactly the way they went about it. Cesaro/Kidd won the first fall in less than three minutes (off a mostly botched Swing into the dropkick). This never sits well with me as the champions just got pinned in almost no time. Let the thing stretch out a bit or have them win the first fall by cheating so it doesn't look that easy.

A bad looking Midnight Hour (with Kofi's arm hitting Kidd's back instead of being a DDT) tied things up in less than nine minutes total and NOW we could pick things up. This is where they get into the insanity with the hot near falls and all the good stuff...and it was about five minutes long.

That's where the match lost me a bit as the majority of the match was done in the first two falls instead of the really hot ending. This needed to be more of a bottom heavy match, setting up the really smart finish of having Woods pretend to be Kofi to steal the final pin. Yeah it's borderline racist, but it was a really smart and even funny way to keep the belts on New Day. I would have liked more time here though and more offense from the challengers, but entertaining stuff all around.

Bray Wyatt and Ryback had a good power brawl built around the idea that Ryback had busted up ribs due to a backsplash off the apron from Wyatt. Granted it didn't work as well as when Ryback hit a top rope splash and didn't sell the ribs all that well. Either way, this was a fun enough match with Ryback going down at the end as he should have. Wyatt needed the win a lot more than Ryback did, but neither guy really needed a major loss at this point. Both guys are in need of a direction though, and that's way too common a problem at this <http://onhealthy.net/product-category/adhd/> level of the card.

Now we had the most entertaining and probably divisive match of the night

as John Cena defended the US Title against Rusev in their final battle with an I Quit match. These two beat the living tar out of each other for nearly half an hour with the spots getting bigger and bigger. I had a great time here as they kept building up to the big ending, but the key was I wound up forgetting that it was an I Quit match other than the constant DO YOU QUIT. I know a lot of people have found this annoying, but I really didn't have a big problem with it. Yeah they said it a lot, but that's kind of the point of the match no?

This was exactly what this match should have been with both guys beating the living tar out of each other until Lana submitted for Rusev, which is likely going to trigger their split. It's not the beat match in the world, but it was more than entertaining enough which is the right way to go with something like this. Rusev can get right back on track by beating like, anyone in a big match, so this didn't hurt him all that bad. At the end of the day, he was destined to lose this feud, though I could have done with cutting the chain match and just going with this as the finale at Extreme Rules.

We'll follow that up with my favorite part of the night: a quick New Day promo where they drink milk out of champagne glasses, brag about not complaining or swearing....and of course do a spot take, complain and swear upon hearing that they'll be defending their titles inside the Elimination Chamber. That's the perfect moment for these three and I laughed just as much as I expected to. These guys can do no wrong at the moment and they're a major highlight for me.

Naomi and Tamina beat the Bellas in the worst match of the night, which had some bad looking botches, bad timing and the least time of any match on the main card. This was nothing more than a way to set up Nikki vs. Naomi for the title, which really should have just been here instead of the next night on Raw but WWE doesn't have the best logic at times anyway.

Neville beat King Barrett via countout in a good but short match. This was designed to introduce Neville's knee injury, which seems to be his major story going forward. It doesn't really change much about his offense, but at least they're giving him some attention instead of just

letting him be the same guy week after week until the crowd gets bored with him.

That brings us to the main event which is your standard wild brawl with all four getting in their big stuff with a bunch of near falls to tease a title change that was never coming. The big deal here was a very short Shield reunion, which blew the roof off the place for just a few moments. That's all the validation they need to pull the trigger on a real reunion for the trio one day, as those three are going to be a force going forward.

The match itself was fun and that's all it really needed to be. Thankfully Orton ate the pin because he's a made man who can do whatever he wants and keep popping back up without any real damage being done to him. The ending came when Rollins Pedigreed Orton for the pin, which I'm assuming is to fuel Rollins vs. HHH down the line, but it comes off as more like Rollins screaming for his daddy's attention. Good match, not my favorite ending though. I didn't mind all the brawling like some have though. Rollins is a heel who cheated. Why is this some big surprise?

Overall, Payback was another big surprise as they had no reason for this to be much of anything, but it wound up being a more than entertaining show with some really solid matches in there. I don't know if it's due to the really low expectations or the really hard work, but for a show with nothing important going on, Payback was really fun and a great surprise.

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Smackdown – May 21, 2015: At Least It's Not That Long

Smackdown

Date: May 21, 2015

Location: Norfolk Scope Arena, Norfolk, Virginia

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

We're already coming up on Elimination Chamber and the top of the card is already set. It's pretty clear that we're getting Rollins vs. Ambrose for the title. However, tonight is more about Payback fallout as we'll hear from Roman Reigns for the first time since he lost yet another main event. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of Raw with Ambrose fighting the Authority and coming up a bit short.

Opening sequence.

Here's Reigns to open things up. Reigns has some bad news and some good news: he lost at Payback but he had a great time. Anytime you punch Seth Rollins in the mouth, it's a great night. The Shield Triplebombed Orton through a table and he got to go toe to toe with his brother. However, Payback is gone so it's time for some big news: he's entering the Money in the Bank ladder match and you can believe he's going to win.

This brings out Dean Ambrose, who heard Payback mentioned so his ears started burning. After finding a bucket of ice to dunk his head in and making a wrong turn at catering, here he is. He heard Reigns mention something about Money in the Bank though, and that doesn't sound like a bad idea. Reigns saw what happened Monday and wants Ambrose to have an exit strategy against the Authority next time.

Kane comes out before this can go anywhere, but Reigns says he barely

recognized Kane off his back. Kane chuckles but says Reigns isn't in the Money in the Bank ladder match, because Reigns has lost his last two title shots. If Roman wants another title shot, he has to prove his worth to Kane. Ambrose calls Kane the Authority's redheaded stepchild and wants to know if Kane eats from a bowl like the lapdog he is. That's not cool with Kane, who makes Ambrose vs. Wyatt again tonight. Reigns can have the night off.

Los Matadores vs. Lucha Dragons vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd vs. Ascension

Prime Time Players/New Day are all on commentary (with only Woods talking) and the Players get Lawler to do the Millions of Dollars dance. New Day has some special clapping gloves for the commentators. Could these guys be any more awesome? Cara and Kidd get things going with Tyson trying some kind of a double arm hold but getting lifted up into a powerbomb for his efforts.

We look at the commentators for about fifteen seconds before cutting back to Viktor slugging Tyson down. Fernando replaces Viktor and almost gets caught in the Sharpshooter but Torito and Natalya get in a fight to distract Kidd. Off to Konnor for a Dominator into a DDT and we take a break. Back with Konnor keeping Tyson in trouble but Kidd stumbles over for a tag to Cara. Things speed up as Titus promises sweaty and musky guys in the Chamber. Cara wristdrags Konnor down but Viktor comes in and stomps Cara into the mat.

A nice tiger bomb plants Kalisto but Diego tags himself in for the cover. Everything breaks down and Woods is way too excited. Cesaro comes in for the first time to a very nice reaction, setting up the running European uppercuts to Viktor. Kidd comes in with a dropkick but Cesaro has to stop Diego from stealing the cover. Kalisto gets a quick two off the hurricanrana driver but Ascension makes the save. A big series of dives is capped off by Cara corkscrew diving onto a bunch of people, only to have Kalisto jump backwards into hurricanrana to Fernando for the pin at 8:41.

Rating: B-. Total insanity here and that's exactly what it should have been. I'm digging the Dragons a lot lately as they're exactly what's

advertised: high flying and fast paced offense where you can actually tell them apart. However, the more interesting thing here was the commentary. Titus and Woods were GREAT at hyping up the Chamber match here as they spent the whole match talking about how they can't wait to get to the match and all the violence and carnage that's coming in less than two weeks. That's exactly what guest commentators are supposed to be doing here and they nailed it.

We look back at Rusev dumping Lana and her hooking up with Ziggler later in the night.

We get a clip from WWE.com where Rusev promises to eat Ziggler's American heart.

Ziggler is used to girls kissing him and dealing with ex-boyfriends, but he's never been locked in a Chamber with one of them. Tonight he has King Barrett...and here's Lana to wish him good luck. Dolph asks Renee to give them a minute and tells Lana that he knows the game she's playing. He's fine with it because she's good at the kissing thing.

King Barrett vs. Dolph Ziggler

No entrance for the King. Dolph tries to take him to the mat to start and gets a boot and headbutt to the face for his efforts. The Stinger Splash and neckbreaker put Barrett down and the bit elbow drop gets two. Barrett comes right back with his spinning suplex out of the corner for two and Dolph is in trouble.

Back from a break with Ziggler fighting out of a chinlock but missing another Stinger Splash. Wasteland gets two and Barrett takes Dolph outside for a toss into the barricade. They head back inside and a boot to the face gets two but the Bull Hammer is countered by a superkick to the arm. The Zig Zag connects on the staggered Barrett for the pin at 8:02. Another day, another clean loss for Barrett.

Rating: C. Nothing to see here but it was a way to set up more of the Chamber match. At the end of the day, you can only watch so many of these matches that mean nothing before we get to another big match later on. It doesn't help that the same midcarders have been fighting each other for

years now and the matches are almost interchangeable.

Lana comes out to watch, drawing speculation that she's trying to get inside Ziggler's head for Rusev's sake.

We look back at Paige coming out to help the Bellas, only to nail Nikki with a Rampaige. Thankfully that doesn't come off as a heel turn.

Here's Paige with something to say. Paige says the last time she saw us, it was in her hometown of England...of London! She won a battle royal to become #1 contender to the Divas Title, but then this happened. We see a clip of Naomi attacking Paige after Paige won a battle royal last month, and that's when Naomi finally became relevant.

Then Naomi found herself a boyfriend in Tamina, but isn't she competing in the wrong division? This is Paige's division, this is her ring and this is her house. Cue Tamina and Naomi, with the latter saying she deserves the top spot in this division because of her natural talents. All Paige can do is scream a lot. Naomi says you have to take opportunities when you can and it's her turn now.

She removed Paige from the equation, quite easily she might add. Paige says she did more in one year than Tamina and the dancing dinosaur have done in their careers. Being a Diva means you have to have personality and good grief enough of the whining. Naomi needs to get over herself but she threatens to clean Paige's house. The beatdown is on and here's Nikki Bella for the save. Paige loads up the Rampaige on Naomi but Nikki forearm her down and hits the Rack Attack. I like the story here, but my goodness never let Naomi talk again.

Bray Wyatt talks about people thinking Dean Ambrose was possessed by demons. People used to talk that way and you know what? They were right. Tonight, Bray is going to prove that Ambrose has his inner demons. Dean is in his way so run.

Nikki vs. Naomi vs. Paige for the Divas Title at Elimination Chamber.

R-Truth vs. Stardust

Gah stop having these two fight already. No entrance for Stardust, which

at least saves some time. Stardust jumps him to start and scores with a springboard dropkick for two. We're already in the chinlock which is quickly broken, followed by another chinlock. Truth fights up but gets sent into the buckle for two. Dark Matter gets the same so Stardust takes off a glove, which Truth throws into the air, setting up Little Jimmy for the pin at 3:30.

Rating: D-. This gets a hearty helping of "well at least it was short." These two are stuck in the vortex of having nothing else to do so they're thrown into the same match over and over again with no one getting anywhere. At least there isn't a bag of plastic spiders deciding the finish this time.

Ryback talks about being in the Chamber the first time and promises to devour anyone who stands in the way of him and the Intercontinental Title. Oh and he has some high protein vegan recipes for Renee because the Big Guy is quite the cook. That sounded like a line that wasn't meant to make air.

We recap Cena and Owens from Monday.

We look at Owens vs. Zayn from NXT last night

Tough Enough videos.

Mega Powers vs. Adam Rose/Heath Slater

Madow and Slater get things going with Heath being sent face first into the buckle but Adam and Heath hit a double suplex in the name of good taste. Madow finally suplexes out and tags in Axel for the big boot and legdrop to pin Slater at 3:22.

Rating: D. It's not funny, it's not interesting, it's not creative, it's not getting either guy anywhere and my goodness I don't care. At least it's over a pair of nothing guys like Slater and Rose and the Ascension got to beat these guys. It's another case where the guys are doing the best they can but they're in a dead gimmick that isn't going to help anyone.

Bo Dallas isn't pleased with Neville bringing up the NXT Title loss but

he's amused about attacking Neville on Monday. He tells a story about a colorful bird flying around his yard when he was a kid, but one day that bird hit a power line. Bo nursed it back to health because he Bo-lieved. Neville has a broken wing, but with Bo's help, he can fly right.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dean Ambrose

Dean takes him down by the leg to start and wraps the leg around the ropes. Bray gets out in just a few seconds though and nails a running right hand to stagger Dean. That doesn't last long as Ambrose knocks him to the floor for a suicide dive, only to get sent hard into the barricade as we take a break. Back with Dean fighting out of a reverse chinlock and having to avoid the backsplash. Dean counters the hanging suplex to the floor into a tornado DDT. For some reason that doesn't knock Bray cold so Dean clotheslines him back inside and fires off those back and forth punches of his.

Bray is draped over the middle rope and knocked to the floor, where he has to escape Sister Abigail into the barricade. Back in and the release Rock Bottom plants Ambrose for no cover but Dean dropkicks the knee out. Cue the Stooges for an attempt at the same ending from Monday, but Dean is ready for them this time. A double clothesline puts Dean and Bray down so here's Rollins. Before he can get to the ring though, Roman Reigns comes through the crowd for some Superman Punches. Bray gets one of his own and Dirty Deeds is enough for the pin at 11:47.

Rating: C-. I wasn't feeling this one for the most part, but a lot of that is due to there being no real reason for these two to be fighting again. However, it seems to set up Reigns vs. Wyatt, which could be a good feud for Roman. He needs someone to conquer, but unfortunately it means Bray gets another big loss.

Overall Rating: D+. This show died about halfway through and never recovered. The Elimination Chamber build is similar to the Royal Rumble build: once you establish the people involved, there's not much to do other than have matches between the participants that have no bearing on the big match itself. That's the point WWE has hit here, but thankfully there isn't a lot of time before the pay per view.

Results

Lucha Dragons b. Los Matadores, Tyson Kidd/Cesaro and Ascension –
Hurricanrana to Fernando

Dolph Ziggler b. King Barrett – Zig Zag

R-Truth b. Stardust – Little Jimmy

Mega Powers b. Adam Rose/Heath Slater – Legdrop to Slater

Dean Ambrose b. Bray Wyatt – Dirty Deeds

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Monday Night Raw – May 18, 2015: Must Go Faster, Must Go Faster

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 18, 2015

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

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

Payback is done and that means we have less than two weeks to go before Elimination Chamber and less than four weeks to go before Money in the Bank. Rollins retained the World Title last night with help from Kane and the Stooges, meaning Kane keeps his job. Now it's time to find out who is next for the champ so let's get to it.

We open with the stills from last night's main event.

Here's the Authority to open things up. Stephanie says she knows we all missed her and the sweet sound of her voice, but don't worry because she's back. HHH hates to be the one that told you so, but he told you so. Rollins is still World Champion because he got the job done over all of his challengers. Therefore tonight, we're going to be paying tribute to Rollins in something called Seth Rollins: Architect of a Dream, which will include comments from all three men that Rollins defeated last night.

This brings us to tonight, and something hidden behind them. HHH unveils the Intercontinental Title, which will be decided for the first time ever inside the Elimination Chamber. After a quick package on the Chamber, here's Sheamus to interrupt. Why are we having this Chamber match, when this happened? We see a clip of Sheamus destroying Bryan a few weeks back and possibly putting him out of action.

Sheamus wants the title right now, but here's Ryback to interrupt. Ryback defends Bryan by saying he's more of a man than Sheamus will ever be by fighting to become the Intercontinental Champion. If Sheamus likes picking on little guys so much, why not try picking on the Big Guy? Stephanie says they're both in the Chamber but they're going to fight each other right now.

Sheamus vs. Ryback

Ryback, with bad ribs coming in, bangs on his chest to start and takes Sheamus down with a Thesz press. A powerslam gets two on Sheamus and they head outside with Ryback and the bad ribs being knocked into the barricade as we take a break. Back with the two of them slugging it out from their knees as Cole thinks Ryback insulting Stephanie told him that Ryback had bad ribs. You know, instead of the tape. Sheamus kicks him in

the ribs and hits five of the ten forearms until Ryback pulls him over the ropes.

A powerbomb puts Sheamus down but Ryback can't cover. Ryback gets two off a spinebuster but Sheamus wants to take it outside. That's fine with Ryback as he gorilla presses him onto the table for a big bounce. After sending him into the post, Ryback takes him into the corner where Sheamus claims something in his eye. The referee breaks it up and Sheamus nails a Brogue Kick for the pin at 10:06.

Rating: C+. This was about what I was expecting as they're both the kind of big power brawlers who can pull off this kind of a match very well. Much like last night, WWE is nailing the idea of keeping the losers strong as the referee shoving Ryback away set up the Brogue instead of anything Sheamus did on his own. That's a nice touch and helps a lot.

Stephanie puts Kane in charge of the celebration tonight. Rollins and the Stooges come in with champagne and give Kane a glass for finally having something to celebrate. This brings in Dean Ambrose to say he's willing to give Seth a rematch for the title at Elimination Chamber. The Authority says no and leaves with Kane saying the champion gets to decide his own fate. Dean mocks Kane for being their lapdog and asks what Paul Bearer or Undertaker would think of Kane now. That earns him a match against Bray Wyatt tonight and a glass of champagne. Dean: "You shouldn't drink on the clock."

Renee Young brings out Neville for a chat. She asks about Neville having to face so much adversity, which Neville says makes him feel ten feet tall. He was the longest reigning NXT Champion of all time.....and here's Bo Dallas to interrupt. Dallas says this is like a fairy tale but in Neville's case, it's going to be the little engine that couldn't. Neville brings up beating Dallas to start his NXT title reign and the fight is on with Dallas going after Neville's tweaked knee. Neville knocks him to the floor but it's time for his match.

Neville vs. King Barrett

Dallas is on commentary and says that going after Neville's knee was a good thing, as it will make a victory mean all the more. Neville fights

out of the corner as Booker and Dallas have a battle of wits on commentary. The King starts going after the knee as we take a break. Back with a chop block getting two for Barrett but he misses a running big boot in the corner. Neville hurts his knee on a kick to the ribs and can't hit the German suplex. The knee buckles one more time and it's the Bull Hammer for the pin at 7:35. Cole makes sure to remind us of the pre-match attack to keep Neville looking strong.

Rating: C-. This didn't have the time to go anywhere but it gives Neville his next feud and Dallas his first feud in the better part of ever. Taking away Neville's ability to fly is an interesting idea as well as it's going to make him have to show what he can do otherwise. Good storyline development in a not great match.

Post match Dallas comes in and goes after the knee again by wrapping it around the post.

Titus O'Neil has been named Celebrity Father of the Year.

Here's Rusev for his explanation of last night but with no Lana in sight. Rusev says there is no Lana here and that he didn't say he quit when he was ranting in Bulgarian last night. Therefore, he wants to restart the match against Cena right now. Instead he gets a leggy blonde who he told to not come out here again. Rusev isn't just the Bulgarian brute because he's misunderstood.

She believes in him and has believed in him every step of the way. The accent is starting to break as she speaks. Rusev calls her pathetic but she tells him enough because she just wants what's best for the two of them. Lana couldn't watch him in all this pain but Rusev says he doesn't need her so get out. Lana walks away as Rusev screams at her even more.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray puts him down to start but misses a backsplash, allowing Dean to tie up the legs and rip at Bray's face. Back up and Bray hits a big clothesline followed by a kick to the back and a kick to the chest. We hit the chinlock for a few seconds before Bray knocks him into the ropes. Instead of pulling him back in, Bray slides outside and pulls him from

the ropes and into a suplex. Think Orton's DDT but a suplex to the floor instead.

Back from a break with Bray kicking Ambrose down before they both head outside for a double clothesline. The fans want tables because a good wrestling match isn't enough for them. Dean fights back with his punches and chops before tying Bray in the ropes for the running dropkick. Bray is hung over the ropes for a middle rope Fameasser for two. A low bridge sends Wyatt to the floor but he partially blocks the suicide dive.

Back in and both finishers are countered before Bray nails Dean to block the rebound lariat. Now the rebound lariat connects and Dean loads up a superplex. Bray shoves him off but the middle rope backsplash only hits mat. Dean goes up but here are the Stooges to interfere with Noble shoving Dean into Sister Abigail for the pin at 13:30.

Rating: B-. Fun brawl here which is exactly what it needed to be. Bray is starting to get his feet back under him after the waste of a loss against Undertaker at Wrestlemania. Ambrose is likely getting the title shot at Elimination Chamber, which may be repetitive but at least it's not the Kane vs. Rollins showdown that 18 people might want to see.

Tough Enough videos. We have over a month of these things to go?

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

Woods is banned from ringside so it's Kofi/Big E. here. Before the match, New Day thinks it's unfair that they have to defend their titles against FIVE other teams inside the Elimination Chamber. Even the simple illiterate people here can understand why this is unfair. Cesaro and E. start with Cesaro being dropped out of a gorilla press, Ultimate Warrior style. That's fine with Cesaro as he hits a delayed vertical suplex to put New Day on the floor, setting up Kidd for a hurricanrana off the apron as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro uppercutting Big E. but getting taken down in a belly to belly. Kidd comes in off the hot tag to clean house as Cole announces R-Truth, Rusev and King Barrett for the Intercontinental Title Chamber match. Kidd puts Kofi in the Sharpshooter but E. makes the save. Cesaro

comes in to slug it out with E. and the match is thrown out at 5:54. Not enough of the match was shown but it was just a way to extend the feud.

Woods comes out to keep up the brawl post match but here are the Lucha Dragons, Los Matadores, Ascension and the Prime Time Players to give us our six teams. The Dragons dive on everyone not named Woods (or Sin Cara/Kalisto) and the Players beat up Woods. Cole confirms that these are the six teams for the Chamber in case it's not clear.

It's Open Challenge time. Cena says last night's win can be summed up in three letters: USA. He has the honor to carry the red, white and blue into battle every night. Men like the soldiers in the crowd are the reason that make this title mean more than anything else in this company. Everyone has a shot at this title and this is our championship. It's time to give someone a shot,

US Title: John Cena vs. Kevin Owens

Oh my. Oh my indeed. Owens is the defending NXT Champion and brings the belt with him. He congratulates Cena on his win last night before saying there's no need for an introduction. If you don't know who he is, then Owens just doesn't have time for you. Owens is here to give Cena some peace of mind.

Cena may think that he injured Sami Zayn, but Owens was the one that injured him a long time ago. This Wednesday at Takeover: Unstoppable, Owens is going to finish what he started with Sami months ago. Cena isn't cool with Owens saying the people don't matter because there's no WWE without them. He has some veteran advice for Owens, but Kevin says he's been doing this longer than Cena. The difference is that he just didn't get a break until now, so Cena doesn't get to give him advice.

Cena warns him instead. Sami Zayn blew out his shoulder and said give me everything you got. Owens doesn't have that fire in his eyes and he's in way over his head right now. Cena is ready to go but Owens says he already has a prize in the NXT Title. Therefore, no match tonight but they'll fight one day on Owens' terms. Kevin kicks Cena in the ribs and nails the Pop Up Powerbomb before picking up both titles, only to throw the US Title down and stomp on it. Good grief how amazing do the next

five or so years sound in WWE?

We look back at Bryan vacating the title last week.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Stardust

Uh...sure. Ziggler gets taken down to start so Stardust can stomp on the ribs before hitting a hard clothesline to go after the bad eye (busted open last night). Back up and a Zig Zag gives Dolph the pin at 1:28.

Post match Ziggler says his eye hurts but the loss hurts more. It's hockey time though and chicks dig scars so here you go. Cole tells him that he's the last entrant in the Elimination Chamber. So other than Rusev and Ryback, everyone else is a standard Intercontinental Title level guy. Great way to elevate the title.

Ziggler says he'll go through anyone to get the title and here's a very smiling Lana to kiss Dolph. He doesn't seem to mind so she does it again for a big smile. Cue a livid Rusev to beat Ziggler down and stare at Lana. She slaps Rusev in the face and draws a huge LANA chant, followed by the Zig Zag from Dolph. Well so much for Lana meaning anything.

Kane glares at Adam Rose and Rosa for kissing in the back.

Luke Harper/Erick Rowan vs. Fandango/Zack Ryder

Harper headlocks Fandango to start but walks into a dropkick. They head outside with Harper kicking him in the face before handing it off to Rowan for a splash. The fans want Ryder but get a tornado DDT from Fandango to Harper, setting up the hot tag to Ryder. Zack starts to clean house but walks into a spinning Boss Man Slam, setting up the hot tag to Rowan. Luke superkicks Ryder right into a full nelson slam for the pin at 3:25.

Rating: D+. Just a way to establish that Harper and Rowan are back together to destroy people. I'm not sure why they're not in the Chamber over, say, Los Matadores, but at least there's a team around to destroy everyone. Nice squash here and at least they kept it short instead of keeping up the false hope.

Stephanie cuts the Bellas off in the back and does her condescending talk to Brie about her emotions over Bryan. She's scheduled some counseling sessions for Brie over her issues, and therefore Brie isn't allowed at ringside with Nikki.

Divas Title: Naomi vs. Nikki Bella

Naomi is challenging after pinning Nikki last night. After some big match intros, Nikki pulls her in from the apron and nails a big clothesline to send Naomi out to the floor. A suicide dive takes out Naomi and Tamina as we take a break. Back with Naomi putting on a chinlock as trainers are checking on an injured Tamina. Nikki comes back with a forearm and dropkicks, followed by a backdrop. There's the Rack Attack but Tamina comes in with a superkick for the DQ at 6:29. Again not enough seen to rate but this wasn't much to see.

Post match Paige comes in for the save but lays out Nikki with the Rampaige because she wants the title.

We look back at Owens laying Cena out earlier.

HHH shakes Owens' hand. Renee comes up and asks what that was all about. Owens says the Authority liked what he did so much that they're giving him a match against Cena at Elimination Chamber.

The cast of the Entourage movie will be here next week.

It's time for The Architect of a Dream celebration with the Authority and Kane hosting. Stephanie introduces Rollins, flanked by the Stooges. HHH praises the champ and says everyone is going to get to praise him individually. It's Kane up first for his usual mention of Rollins being short but he's proud of Rollins for still being champion because Seth is best for business. Rollins: "That's all you have to say?" Kane begrudgingly thanks Rollins for saving his job and has a video ready for Seth.

After a nice video on Seth's days with the Authority, Noble says there's a saying in West Virginia: cream rises to the top. It's been an honor to protect Rollins and the most important title in WWE. Mercury is about to

speak when Dean Ambrose comes out to interrupt.

Stephanie goes into her evil voice but Dean says he was busy looking for the perfect Justin Bieber outfit for Rollins. He's here to give Seth one more chance for a match with him, as long as the title is on the line. Seth says Dean needs to go to the back of the line with Roman Reigns and Randy Orton, but Ambrose calls himself a notorious line jumper. Stephanie tells Rollins to get him so there goes the jacket and the brawl is on.

The Stooges immediately intervene but Dean cleans house. They fight to the floor with Seth being backdropped onto the announcers' table and Dean unveiling a batch of cinder blocks. He loads up a Conchairto on the blocks but Stephanie says let Seth go and he'll get a title match.

Dean doesn't answer but the Stooges take the chair away from him. Ambrose easily fights them off and dives onto the Stooges and Kane before heading inside to go after Rollins. HHH saves the champ and Kane gets in a kick to Dean's face. The chokeslam is countered but Rollins saves Kane from Dirty Deeds. A Pedigree leaves Dean laying to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I had a good time with this show as they're hitting the ground running to get to Elimination Chamber. Owens stole the show though as he had one of the best main roster debuts I can remember in a good while. I'm not wild on having the next pay per view so soon, but at least they're getting us through the rushed build as fast as they can. Good show this week as they're moving things forward for a change.

Results

Sheamus b. Ryback – Brogue Kick

King Barrett b. Neville – Bullhammer

Bray Wyatt b. Dean Ambrose – Sister Abigail

New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd went to a double DQ when all four fought in the ring

Dolph Ziggler b. Stardust – Zig Zag

Luke Harper/Erick Rowan b. Fandango/Zack Ryder – Full nelson slam to Ryder

Nikki Bella b. Naomi via DQ when Tamina interfered

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Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – May 11, 2015

It's the final show before Payback and there have been some notable changes in the last few weeks. To begin with, the show has felt a lot tighter lately as there has been a lot less talking and a lot more fighting, which makes for a better run show. We need to wrap things up before the four way and the fact that we're in Ambrose' hometown should help. Let's get to it.

We open with HHH saying that daddy is home to straighten things out. This has been my biggest issue with Rollins and HHH: why in the world is Rollins acting like he's HHH's four year old son and trying to please him all the time? He's the WWE World Champion and he's still cowering in fear of HHH. Just let him be a man for once. You can still have him be a heel and everything will be fine, but let him have a backbone around the Authority for a change. You can do that without having him rebel.

Anyway, HHH is here to put an end to Kane vs. Rollins. For some reason, HHH implies that he and Kane have been friends for years and this isn't the Kane he knew. As I said last week, when were they EVER friends? Just because something happened in the past doesn't mean they're friends now. Look back at Wrestlemania XXX where Piper and Hogan were about to fight all over again. The big reveal of this: if Rollins doesn't keep the title on Sunday, Kane is out of a job. In other words, it's all about Kane. Again.

Kane put all of the participants in the title match on Sunday in action tonight, starting with Ambrose squashing the Stooges.

Sheamus was on commentary as Barrett beat Ziggler in a short match, followed by a Brogue Kick. I like this loose association between Sheamus and Barrett as they would make a decent on/off tag team.

Erick Rowan squashed Fandango because....well why do you think he did?

Cena's speech before the Open Challenge was about how important the US Title is because anyone can have a chance at taking it from him. That's a great line and very true. The match against Neville was as awesome as you would expect with Neville hitting the Red Arrow until Rusev interfered because that feud MUST continue.

These Open Challenges have been one of the best things to happen to Cena in years. You might have noticed that the fans have been saying LET'S GO CENA more and more recently and there's a reason for that: he's been treating us to some great wrestling every single week. At the end of the day, that's what it boils down to: the fans want to see good wrestling and Cena lets things open up a bit instead of doing the same stuff over and over again. Let Cena, one of the best of all time, wrestle someone new every week and this is what you get.

Rusev knocked Cena out with the Accolade post match to appeal to the false hope demographic.

Kane and Reigns brawled instead of having a match, setting up a rematch on Friday.

Tamina beat Brie Bella to set up the tag match Sunday. Nikki is so far and away better than Brie in the ring that it's unreal.

Curtis Axel and Macho Mandow beat up the Ascension instead of having their match. The pain this brings me knows no bounds and I hope the real team breaks them into more pieces than Brutus Beefcake's face.

Daniel Bryan has to vacate the Intercontinental Title due to his injuries. I know it's sad but this really shouldn't surprise anyone at this point. Bryan needs to go away until he's ready, then find another 15 doctors to say he's really ready.

Cesaro beat Big E. in a decent power match. Just a setup for Sunday.

Elimination Chamber is coming back two weeks after Payback. That's four weeks before Monday In The Bank. To translate, here's how the WWE is thinking these days:

"LET'S GIVE THEM A LOT OF COOL FREE STUFF!!! THEN THEY'LL PAY FOR THE UNCOOL STUFF!"

Also they won't promote the old wrestling stuff for whatever reason. Instead it's Jerry Springer's horrible show, their animated stuff (including that one episode of Hulk Hogan's Rock and Wrestling they put up) and the podcasts. Mention the old wrestling and it would get pushed too.

Bray Wyatt said what Bray Wyatt says and Ryback leveled him. I still have no idea why they're fighting but Wyatt needs a point again soon.

Orton and Rollins had the same match they've had over and over again until the Stooges came in for the DQ. This was one of those matches where you were just waiting for the DQ and they didn't hide the fact whatsoever. Everyone came in for the show ending brawl with Ambrose standing tall.

This wasn't a great stand alone show but it was a really fun go home show. Most of the matches for Sunday got time and the fans were hot all night. Throw in a good Cena open challenge and there's not much more you could ask for. Fun stuff here and everyone looks good going into Sunday.

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Payback 2015: They Did It Again!

Payback 2015

Date: May 17, 2015

Location: Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

We continue the rapid fire pay per views with one of the lower level yet often surprising shows of the year. The main event tonight is Seth Rollins defending the World Title in a four way against Dean Ambrose, Roman Reigns and Randy Orton with Director of Operations Kane's job on the line. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Stardust vs. R-Truth

Bonus match because we're just that lucky. Truth slaps him in the face to start as the fans chant for Cody and the announcers talk about the main event. Back up and Truth knocks him out to the apron as Cole isn't sure if Truth says he'll "make you disappear like your favorite" magician or

mortician. Truth gets two off a jackknife cover but Stardust hits him in the face. Stardust eats the release gordbuster but nails a knee to the head for two. Off to a cravate on Truth followed by Matt Hardy's Side Effect for two. We get a slap to the face with a glove to set off a duel before Little Jimmy ends Stardust at 6:49.

Rating: D. What a boring match. There was no reason for this to take place other than "Hey, let's have another match!" Neither guy has anything going for them at the moment and thankfully this didn't have any plastic spiders involved. Nothing to see here but to be fair it was a bonus so it's not like anything is taken away.

There will be a new Steve Austin Podcast with Paul Heyman on June 1.

Pre-Show: Mega Powers vs. Ascension

That would be Curtis Axel as Hulk Hogan and Damien Sandow as Macho Mandow in case it's Thursday and this gimmick is already dead. They were listed as the Meta Powers until tonight's show. JBL thinks they look like Nacho Man and the Huckster for you mid-90s fans out there. Konnor kicks Axel in the ribs to start but it's already time for HULKING UP. Curtis gets two off a legdrop and it's off to Viktor for a chinlock. That goes nowhere so the hot tag brings in Mandow as the Powers clean house. The big elbow doesn't work though and it's the Fall of Man for the pin at 2:55. Thank goodness.

The opening video talks about Rollins trying to keep the title and Cena vs. Rusev in their final battle.

Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler looks utterly ridiculous in his cutoff jean vest and pink bandana. He goes right after Sheamus to start and knocks him to the floor where Sheamus comes up holding his knee. Back in and a cross body gets two but Sheamus takes his head off with a running ax handle. A suplex puts Ziggler down again and we hit the chinlock. Back up and Ziggler sidesteps a charge to send Sheamus into the post. Some forearms and a cross body put Sheamus in the corner and the jumping DDT gets two.

Ziggler sends him back to the corner and there's something resembling a Stink Face to make up for Sheamus bailing on the stipulations last month. A livid Sheamus misses the Brogue and eats the Fameasser for two. Now Sheamus gets all fired up and slugs Ziggler down for some two counts and White Noise sets up the Cloverleaf. Ziggler makes it to the ropes and Sheamus is livid again, demanding that Ziggler give up. Instead Dolph headbutts Sheamus (busting himself WAY open) and superkicks him down for two. Ziggler is dizzy from the blood loss though and the Brogue Kick ends this at 12:27.

Rating: B-. I had a good time with this and that blood came out of nowhere. Sheamus needed this win more than Ziggler did as Dolph can bounce back no matter what. Maybe that kick can knock Ziggler out of the 80s and into the late 90s for a change because he looks ridiculous in that attire.

Kane and Rollins bicker some more with Kane implying he wants Rollins to lose the title and doesn't mind getting fired. Rollins threatens Stogge violence and gets laughed off. There was zero reason for this to be on pay per view.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

2/3 falls with New Day defending after taking the belts from Cesaro/Kidd at Extreme Rules. New Day comes out and suggests positive thinking for everyone here, including the Baltimore Orioles in the audience because they haven't won a World Series in over 30 years. Kidd slams Kofi (teaming with Big E. here) down to start and it's quickly off to the power guys.

A powerslam gets two on E. but he comes back with a gorilla press to put Cesaro down. Back to Kofi who gets caught in a delayed vertical suplex with Kidd coming off the top to drive him down. Kidd catapults Kofi into a spinebuster and the Swing into a dropkick mostly misses but gets the pin and the first fall at 2:50.

Woods wants in via the Freebird Rule but eats a cannonball off the apron for his efforts. Kofi and Big E. officially start the second fall but Big E. misses a spear through the apron for a big crash. Kidd gets greedy

though and dives over the top into a release overhead belly to belly to give the champions control. We hit the bearhug on Tyson as Woods shouts that he's the mastermind of the team.

Kidd escapes and makes the hot tag, but Big E. spears Cesaro through the ropes and into the barricade for a big crash. Fans: "THIS IS AWESOME!" Woods: "WE KNOW THAT!" Kofi goes up top but dives into a dropkick. Kidd kicks as fast as he can but gets caught in a mostly missed (notice the trend) Midnight Hour (Kofi's DDT was more like an elbow to the back) to tie it up at 8:14 total.

We start the third fall with Cesaro finally getting back on the apron to take another hot tag. He starts cleaning house but can't get Big E. up for the tiger bomb and just drops him in a bad looking spot. Instead he hits a running European uppercut followed by a kind of Demolition Decapitation with Kidd springboarding into the elbow drop. Big E. is whipped over the announcers' table. A huge uppercut drops Kofi again but E. dives in for the save. In the melee, Woods sneaks in and small packages Kidd for the pin to retain at 13:20.

Rating: B. Good stuff here but the botches hurt it for me a bit. Still though, this was the awesome stuff you would expect from both teams. They even left the door open to continue it, as one day Kidd and Cesaro will get a clean shot against these two, which is exactly what they're shooting for here. Also this could have been five minutes longer for three falls.

Elimination Chamber ad.

Ryback promises to prove himself to Bray Wyatt tonight.

We recap Wyatt vs. Ryback. This still doesn't explain why they're fighting.

Ryback vs. Bray Wyatt

Ryback stomps him down to start and easily clotheslines Bray out to the floor. He grabs him by the beard to bring him back in but Bray hits his running cross body to take over. We hit a bad looking chinlock (Bray's

arm is nowhere near Ryback's throat) before he sidesteps a charging Ryback to send him into the post.

Bray sends him into the apron and hits a nice backplash off the apron to crush Ryback's ribs. The countout is barely beaten so Bray hits a running charge in the corner, only to get powerbombed off the middle rope. They both head to the floor with Ryback circling around, only to walk into a hard clothesline.

Back in again and Ryback kicks the arm away to block another clothesline. A spinebuster has Bray in trouble but he pops up and sets Ryback on the ropes for a superplex. Ryback headbutts him down and hits a top rope splash of all things, causing his injured ribs (from the backplash) to flare up. Both finishers are countered and Bray pulls the turnbuckle pad off. The referee looks at the pad, allowing Bray to drive the bad ribs into the exposed buckle, setting up Sister Abigail for the pin at 10:29.

Rating: B-. They're rolling with these matches so far tonight. This was the power brawl they needed to go with and the ribs helped them out a lot. Bray getting the pin is a nice touch for him and Ryback has a complaint for a rematch (notice the trend tonight). Good stuff here and I had a better time with it than I was expecting.

Money in the Bank ad, with a Home Shopping Network theme. The show is June 14, which is two weeks after Elimination Chamber, which is two weeks after Payback.

We recap Rusev vs. Cena. Rusev won at Fast Lane but Cena won the title at Wrestlemania XXXI and the rematch at Extreme Rules. Tonight is the final battle in an I Quit match.

US Title: John Cena vs. Rusev

Cena is defending in an I Quit match. Rusev gives Cena a chance to quit before the match to please half the fans but Cena wants to get on with it, earning him a kick to the ribs. The fans want Lana so Rusev makes her sit in a chair near Lawler. Back in and Rusev stomps away as the fans carry on the dueling chants. Rusev dropkicks him into the corner for a no and a spinwheel kick puts Cena down again.

The fans chant for Lana so Rusev goes outside to yell at her. Cena has had no offense so far. It's time to wave the Russian flag before a fall away slam sends Cena out to the floor. Cena goes into the steps but won't quit so Rusev puts the steps in the corner for two more hard whips. The steps go down and Cena finally hits a backdrop for his first offensive move. Then, like a schmuck, he tries a cross body and gets caught in a swinging Rock Bottom onto the steps.

The big stomp hits the steps though and Cena nails a quick AA onto them as well but Rusev can't speak. Cena sends him into the post for a no and then threatens to put him through the barricade if he doesn't quit. Rusev says no so Cena does what he promised. That's another no so they fight up to the technical area with Rusev gently laying Cena on a table with an Alabama Slam.

Cena pops up and puts the table against the wall before hitting Rusev with a monitor. Still no from the Russian so Cena hits him with a laptop for the same result. The AA is countered into a better Alabama Slam through the table but Cena still says no. Rusev finds the pyro controls but Cena AA's him onto the fireworks, causing them to go off. Somehow that's still a no so Cena finds a piece of a barricade and nails Rusev in the face.

The barricade is put up against the apron but Rusev suplexes Cena halfway through it for another no. The stunned look on Rusev's face is perfect. Back inside the ring and we hit the Accolade but Cena is out cold, meaning he can't say he quits. With nothing left to do, Rusev unhooks the top rope and pours water over Cena to wake him up. Rusev pulls back the hook but Cena takes him down into the STF with the rope over Rusev's face. He rants in Russian and Lana quits for him at 28:49.

Rating: A. Oh yeah this was awesome. They had built up Rusev as never quitting but you knew Lana was going to be involved somewhere in there. Really fun stuff here though as they just let the guys beat the tar out of each other. This should have been the match they did last month and cut out the chain match as this was WAY more extreme than anything last month.

The kickoff panel chats while the ring is repaired.

The New Day toasts their win (with milk!) and ask who are the five greatest teams of all time. "New Day! New Day! New Day! New Day! New Day!" They're role models who don't curse, spit or complain. Kofi: "Toast, toast. Oh pinkies!" Byron tells them that they're defending the Tag Team Titles inside the Elimination Chamber and Big E. spits out his milk while Woods curses.

Bella Twins vs. Tamina/Naomi

Nikki takes Naomi down to start and it's off to Brie for the BRIE MODE running knee. Tamina superkicks Brie onto the apron to take over before standing on the hair. Back to Naomi for a front facelock but Brie crawls away (falling on her head in the process) for the hot tag. Everything breaks down and Nikki cleans house but takes the Rear View for a near fall. Tamina drives Brie into the barricade to distract Nikki on the top, allowing Naomi to slam her off the top for the pin at 6:13.

Rating: D+. This didn't have time to go anywhere and it was one of the most obvious endings you could have imagined. Allegedly this gets Naomi into the title hunt, despite the fact that there are eight active Divas on the roster (not counting Rosa, who is nowhere near the title and shouldn't be), including the Bellas. Nothing you wouldn't see on Raw here but Nikki looked good, as always.

Ad for the WWE prank show. They can advertise this, but not "YOU CAN WATCH EVERY PAY PER VIEW EVER!" Such are the priorities in WWE.

Rusev throws Lana out.

We look back at Daniel Bryan vacating the Intercontinental Title on Raw.

King Barrett vs. Neville

Neville starts fast with the front flip out of the corner into a cross body off the middle rope to send Barrett to the floor. He loads up the headstand into the headscissors but Barrett throws the feet into the air for the kick to the ribs. I love it when they adapt like that instead of just doing the same spots in the same places. Back in and we hit the

chinlock for a bit before Barrett hits the knees and big boot in the ropes.

Neville comes back with his own kicks and a standing shooting star press for two. The Bull Hammer misses but Winds of Change gets two. Neville heads to the apron for a springboard but has to turn it into an armdrag and cradle to counter another Bull Hammer. Barrett rolls away to avoid to avoid the Red Arrow so Neville dives on him, only to come up holding his knee. He gets back inside but Barrett intentionally takes the countout at 7:26. Neville is able to stand on his own so the knee doesn't seem that bad.

Rating: C+. I had a good time with this as these two have chemistry together. Neville's strong push continues as he even gets to win a pay per view match this time. They're developing a nice midcard these days and it's actually working really well. The countout was another good idea as they've really tightened up the booking tonight for the losers.

Post match Barrett comes back in and decks Neville before putting on the robe and crown. He misses a scepter shot though and eats a German suplex, followed by the Red Arrow.

Tough Enough videos.

Kane wishes Rollins good luck.

We recap the World Title match. Kane set up a fan vote which made the match a triple threat, but when Rollins complained, Kane made it a four way with Ambrose involved as well. If Rollins loses, Kane is out of a job.

WWE World Title: Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose vs. Roman Reigns vs. Randy Orton

Rollins is defending and it's one fall to a finish. Kane comes down to watch from the beginning. Everyone zeroes in on Rollins to start but the Stooges are here to save the day. Ambrose dives onto Orton and Rollins but Reigns dives onto all of them plus the Stooges. Reigns and Rollins are the only ones in the ring for a bit and the champ hits a quick

Downward Spiral into the middle buckle.

Ambrose and Orton take their places and the slug it out with Dean getting two off a powerslam. Reigns comes back in and counters an RKO before Randy and Dean fall to the floor. The champ stomps Reigns down in the corner but Dean comes back in to help his buddy. Kane finally gets involved (a full five minutes into the match) by decking Ambrose and throwing him back in to Rollins.

The springboard knee to the head gets two on Dean but Ambrose fights back with an attempt at Dirty Deeds, drawing in Kane for a chokeslam to break it up. Orton pulls Kane to the floor and slugs away at him before going back inside to t-bone suplex Rollins for two. They head outside with Randy loading up the table....and eating a TripleBomb for a quick Shield reunion. Note the MONSTER pop for that.

Rollins puts his arms around Reigns and Dean before putting out his fist. We'll skip ahead a few seconds to Ambrose loading up Rollins for another powerbomb with Kane having to make a save. Rollins is laid on the table for a DoubleBomb to Kane but the table doesn't break. Fans: "ONE MORE TIME!" They get their wish here and now Kane is driven through Rollins through the table. Reigns: "Not much else to do." Ambrose: "No there's not." Reigns: "Loser buys the beers?"

They slug it out in the ring with Reigns missing the clothesline and eating a cross body for two. Reigns gets a rollup of his own but lifts Dean up into a sitout powerbomb for two of his own. The Superman Punch connects for a very close two but the spear hits knee. Reigns spins out of Dirty Deeds though and nails the spear, only to have Rollins dive in for the save.

There's a Superman Punch to Rollins but Dean clotheslines Roman down. Dirty Deeds lays out Seth but Kane pulls him to the floor. Kane chokeslams Reigns onto the stairs but Orton is back up to lay Kane out. Mercury breaks up the elevated DDT so both Stooges get RKOs. Now the DDT works but Kane has to eat an RKO, allowing Rollins to hit a Pedigree of all things to retain the title at 20:52.

Rating: A-. Loved the match but can we please have Rollins stop acting

like HHH is his great and mighty father who must be pleased at all times? It's beyond old already. Anyway, they made the exactly right call by having this be pure chaos and the Shield tease was awesome. Those three are going to headline a show someday and it's going to be a huge deal. Really funny stuff here and a great way to cap off the show. Hopefully this doesn't set up Rollins vs. Kane though.

HHH comes out to celebrate with Rollins to close the show.

Overall Rating: A. Why is Payback always so awesome? I'd really like an answer to this. It's clearly meant to be a B show and has a stupid name but this is the third year in a row that it's been one of the best shows all year. Only the Bellas match was kind of lame but other than that, this show was really fun match after really fun match. I had a blast with this and somehow that's becoming less and less of a surprise every year, which is a very good thing.

Results

Sheamus b. Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick

New Day b. Tyson Kidd/Cesaro – Small package to Kidd

Bray Wyatt b. Ryback – Sister Abigail

John Cena b. Rusev – Lana quit for Rusev while Rusev was in the STF

Naomi/Tamina b. Bella Twins – Slam off the top

Neville b. King Barrett via countout

Seth Rollins b. Roman Reigns, Randy Orton and Dean Ambrose – Pedigree to Orton

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Thought of the Day: Wrestlemania XXXI Didn't Mean Much

Think about it: what from that show still matters less than two months removed?

Other than Rollins and Cena winning their titles, almost nothing that happened there matters.

Bryan – Vacated his title

Kidd/Cesaro – Lost the titles they were defending

Sting – Hasn't been mentioned

Lesnar – Appeared once

Undertaker – Hasn't been mentioned

Wyatt – Basically no sold the loss

AJ/Paige – Both gone

Bellas – Now faces

Big Show – Nothing changed after winning the battle royal

Cena is still feuding with Rusev and Rollins is still feuding with Orton. Other than that, it's almost like Wrestlemania just came and went.

Smackdown – May 14, 2015: I Need A New Watch

Smackdown

Date: May 14, 2015

Location: Ford Center, Evansville, Indiana

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton, Michael Cole

It's the final show before Payback and we're pretty much all set up. Raw ended with Ambrose standing tall over his three opponents, meaning tonight is likely going to end with one of the other three doing the same, albeit not over the other three people in the match. Raw has been good lately so Smackdown has a lot to live up to. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Bray Wyatt talking about Ryback coming face to face with him on Monday. Ryback is a very strong man, but he has an Achilles heel. Bray is going to prove that the Garden of Eden does exist and tonight he'll scratch an itch. Ryback's dreams will be turned into nightmares. Resist the itch and run. Why are these two even fighting?

Here's Dean Ambrose to get things going. Dean says he works best alone, fights alone and drinks alone. It felt good on Monday to stand alone because this Sunday it's every man for himself. You have Seth Rollins and his Lollipop Guild Goon Squad. Randy Orton was last seen eating a spear. That leaves Roman Reigns, who is Dean's only friend in the world. Dean has one thing to say to Roman, but he'll get to say it to his face as here comes Reigns.

Dean isn't going to apologize but Reigns wasn't expecting one. This past Monday, Dean hit him with Dirty Deeds and that's all he's going to get. There's no grudge between them because they're brothers but this Sunday, Reigns is bringing the big guns. They're about to shake hands when Kane comes out.

Dean should be less concerned with winning the Slammy Award for Bromance of the Year and be worried about what he has to do. Ambrose brings up HHH's decree that Kane is out of a job if Rollins doesn't win on Monday. This might be the last night we see Corporate Kane. That's not cool with Kane, who makes Ambrose vs. Sheamus RIGHT NOW. Ambrose: "Is that the only time you know?"

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

This match starts after a break. They fight up against the ropes with neither getting an advantage so it's time to go basic. Ambrose grabs a top wristlock but gets taken down with a headlock. Dean ties his legs up though and grabs the mohawk for a kick to the back. Sheamus gets a boot up in the corner but Dean bulldogs him down to take over again. The running dropkick against the ropes is countered and Sheamus knees him out to the floor.

We take a break and come back with Dean slugging away but getting caught in the Cloverleaf. Dean makes the ropes like any good rebellious hero should do, only to charge into White Noise. To be fair he deserves that after not selling the hold. The threat of the Brogue Kick sends Dean to the floor and he nails a hard clothesline to take over again.

Back in and it's a missed Brogue Kick, a clothesline to the floor and a suicide dive to take Sheamus out again. Back in again and Sheamus' tilt-a-whirl backbreaker gets two. He takes too long to follow up though and eats a clothesline, sending Dean to the top. Sheamus tries what looks to be a top rope powerslam (facing the floor instead of the ring though) but Dean slips out to avoid the whole broken back thing and sends Sheamus face first onto the post, followed by a rollup to give Dean the pin at 12:42.

Rating: B. This was the fun power brawl that you would expect between

these two. Ambrose is one of those guys that can work well against anyone regardless of their size or style. Unfortunately it came at the expense of Sheamus, who has lost almost all of his momentum since returning with the really good bully character. Therefore, he's likely getting the title in the Chamber.

Rollins channels his inner Stephanie by repeating the stipulations of Sunday's match to Kane in a way that no normal person would ever actually speak. Kane says he's set for life and doesn't need the Authority's money. Oh and Rollins gets Ryback tonight.

Here are Rusev and Lana with something to say. The fans chant USA but Rusev says the woman wants to talk. Lana reads a prepared statement, apologizing for Fandangoing on Raw last week. It should all be about Rusev, who shows us a clip from Raw where Rusev interrupted Neville vs. Cena and beat John up post match. I can't wait for this feud to be over already so the writers have to wake their lazy brains up for a change.

Rusev knows Cena was quitting in his head when he passed out, but this Sunday everyone will hear him quit. We get a loop of Cena saying he quits (out of context) from Raw and no big followup line to end this. Lawler however does think that video was doctored because Cena never gives up.

Ryback says he's no meat head. He saw fear in Wyatt's eyes on Monday but tonight, he's hungry.

Tough Enough videos, including one from Gabriel Iglesias.

Here's Rollins with something to say before his match with Ryback. He continues the trend of showing clips from Raw by giving us his big beatdown, but promises that's the last time anything like that will happen.

Ryback vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title but that might not matter as Wyatt jumps Ryback on his way to the ring. Back from a break and Ryback says he can go because he's tough that way and the idea of calling a DQ for someone attacking before the match is unheard of in this company. Ryback tries a suplex to start but

Seth knees him in the head to escape and knocks Ryback out to the floor. He dives back in at nine and eats a DDT for two. We see a clip of Bray's attack, which was just a shoulder block. Ryback is that banged up off a single shoulder?

A neckbreaker gets two for Seth and he slaps on a front facelock. Ryback counters exactly how you would expect him to and plants Seth with a tilt-a-whirl powerslam to put both guys down. The big guy gets all fired up and nails a not great spinebuster for two. The Meat Hook connects but Rollins rakes the eyes (a rare sight these days) to break up the Shell Shock. Seth hits the top rope knee to the head and the a pair of low superkicks for the pin at 8:23.

Rating: C. So to recap, a shoulder block is enough to knock Ryback silly and give him a huge disadvantage? I love the idea of not having Ryback lose clean, but couldn't they have had Bray send him into the steps or give him a big beatdown or something more than a simple shoulder? The match was fine and actually had a story to it of Rollins focusing on the head with the low superkicks getting the pin. It's not as good as the curb stomp but I'll take a high impact move over that lame falling DDT.

Here's what you missed on the WWE Network this week. So the news broke this week that the classic content wasn't getting a lot of views. Now I'm just thinking out loud but maybe people might watch it if it was advertised, say, once. That's just nutty though as WWE thinks eight minute interviews with the stars of a movie that is bombing or Wiz Khalifa is what really draws in the viewers.

It's the Bellas vs. Naomi/Tamina on Sunday. That makes sense but can we please stop finding ways to keep the title on Nikki? It's just not going to be seen as epic no matter how WWE tries to spin it.

Naomi brags about how strong Tamina is and says they're tired of walking around empty handed. The Bellas get all the opportunities around here, even though Nikki is overrated and Brie is more worthless than her quitting husband.

Tyson Kidd vs. Kofi Kingston

Before the match, Woods informs us that Cesaro/Kidd are cheaters but the New Day is giving them one more title shot on Payback. Big E. tells us just how bad Cesaro/Kidd are: they don't recycle, the double dip and they buy one ticket at the movies and go see two! The New Day is the change you need to see in this world and the fans should sing with them. Instead it's a siren and we're ready to go.

Kofi kicks him in the ribs to start as Woods is cheering even harder than usual this week. Tyson fights back and knocks Kofi to the floor for a big flip dive (Woods: "KOFI MOVE!"). The New Day distraction prevents the Sharpshooter but Tyson gets it on a few seconds later for the submission at 2:06.

Elimination Chamber preview.

We see Bryan's speech from Raw as he vacates the title. This seems to be the promised health update.

Here's Bo Dallas with something to say. He saw Daniel Bryan vacate the title on Monday but he sees it as an opportunity. There are five stages of grief and Dallas can help you through them all. First up is denial, but there is no denying that Bryan let all the fans down. Next is anger, which the fans should feel towards Bryan for letting you down.

Third is bargaining. You'll get one heck of a bargain on those Daniel Bryan t-shirts now that he's gone. Depression is going to completely engulf Bryan when he realizes everyone has forgotten him. Finally there's acceptance and Dallas can help us all accept that Daniel is gone. All you have to do to accept it is Bo-lieve! Dallas will have a job for years with promos like this.

Neville vs. Bo Dallas

This is joined in progress after a break with King Barrett on commentary and Neville flipping forward out of the corner. Neville sends him to the floor but gets pulled down onto the apron to give Bo an opening. Back in and we hit the chinlock for a bit but Neville fights back with those running kicks to the head. A longer Red Arrow than usual is good for the pin at 2:17. I believe this is Neville's first match against anyone who

has never held a WWE Title.

Post match Barrett mocks Neville for wearing a stupid costume every week. This Sunday Neville is in for some corporal punishment in the form of a royal Bull Hammer.

The Rosebuds ask Adam Rose when they're going to be paid. Rose doesn't take kindly to this and says they're just like the Bunny. The hot dog gets pushed down and the party is officially over. Rosa kisses him and Kane walks by them on his way to the ring. So the Rosebuds are officially gone. That's probably for the best, but Rose really needs to get away from Rosa as she's possibly the most worthless Diva in years.

More Tough Enough hype.

Kane vs. Roman Reigns

Pin or submission only, making this a glorified street fight. Kane goes after Reigns during the entrance again and they slug it out on the floor before the bell. Neither guy can get the better of it until Kane sends him into the steps. We finally get a bell and Kane punches Reigns back to the floor, only to miss a stairs shot against the post.

It's kendo stick time (because there must be kendo sticks under the ring at all times for reasons that aren't entirely clear) but Kane takes it away from Roman and pounds him down. A kendo stick to the face gets two and we take a break. Back with Reigns taking a big boot to the face for two more before Kane throws him outside.

Kane loads up the table but Reigns punches him down and nails a clothesline off the table. It's time to bring the steps back in as Reigns drives them into Kane's head to put him down again. Roman throws in a pair of tables but Kane takes his head off with a big boot for two. The chokeslam through the table is blocked but Kane catches the Superman Punch in a chokeslam through the table for two. Thanks for coming Kane and if you would kindly stand in front of that table in the corner for the spear please. A Superman Punch puts Kane in perfect position and the spear through the wood is good for the pin at 11:16.

Rating: C. Decent enough brawl but it felt like they were filling in time until the obvious ending. Kane is still capable of having a power brawl but my limited interest in him is killed by the long promos with HHH and Rollins, plus a story that almost no one cares about. Good enough here though and Reigns kicking out of a big finisher keeps up the idea that he never quits.

Seth isn't worried about Reigns but it's going to take more than that to get this belt off him on Sunday. That's true for anyone that wants to take the title off of him, including Ambrose....who is behind the Stooges. For some reason he has a plate of cookies to throw at them but the numbers catch up with him. This brings in Roman Reigns for the save and they stare each other down. The camera pans down to show the belt on the ground. Roman extends his hand but Dean reaches down and picks up the belt. He puts it on Reigns' shoulder, saying he'll take it back on Sunday.

Overall Rating: C-. How was this possibly a two hour show? It feels like we should just be at the halfway mark and somehow the whole thing is already done. This show did as well as it could have with what it had though, as Payback just isn't that interesting. I don't have much of a reason to care about seeing the same stuff that's been boring me for five hours a week for another three hours this Sunday. Passable episode this week but nothing past that.

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Sheamus – Rollup

Seth Rollins b. Ryback – Low superkick

Tyson Kidd b. Kofi Kingston – Sharpshooter

Roman Reigns b. Kane – Spear through a table

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