

Backlash 2002 (2016 Redo): Feel The Sleeping Power Of Hulkamania!

Backlash 2002

Date: April 21, 2002

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Attendance: 12,489

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the first pay per view after the Brand Split and it really is a tale of two shows at this point. Raw is absolutely horrendous at the moment with an unmotivated Undertaker vs. Steve Austin as the main feud (and the Raw main event here) for the next WWF World Title match. That would be your Smackdown main event here as HHH is defending against Hulk Hogan for reasons of pure nostalgia. Let's get to it.

The opening video is all about HHH vs. Hogan with Hulk talking about how he needs the title one more time to validate his career after being away for so long. HHH says that was then and this is now, meaning it's no longer Hogan's time.

Cruiserweight Title: Kidman vs. Tajiri

Kidman is defending after taking the title from Tajiri a few weeks back. Tajiri also has Torrie in the geisha outfit. Standard cruiserweight style to start with an exchange of armdrags as Lawler complains about Torrie being covered up. Tajiri goes with the kicks and choking to take over, including the required chinlock. A baseball slide dropkick in the Tree of Woe makes it even worse and Tajiri starts in on the back. That means the Tarantula goes on but Tajiri can't hit the Buzzsaw Kick.

Instead he gets two off a bridging German suplex as the crowd is already dying. A big kick to the head gets two on the champ but for some reason Tajiri tries a powerbomb. The shooting star misses and

Tajiri's Buzzsaw gets two. That actually earns a KIDMAN chant as the fans can get behind someone who keeps fighting through adversity. Tajiri loads up something off the top but gets pulled down with a sitout powerbomb. Kidman tries a powerbomb of his own but KIDMAN CAN'T POWERBOMB YOU as Tajiri mists him in the eyes for the pin and the title.

Rating: C. The back and forth action was fine but there wasn't much heart to this one. The fans got behind Kidman for all of ten seconds before Tajiri misted him to take the title back. It's not a bad choice for an opener but this felt like something out of WCW: give them a little time and have the fans forget about it so the real stars can take over. It's no wonder Kidman did that "no one knows who I am" promo on Smackdown.

The APA have a very quick reunion.

Scott Hall vs. Bradshaw

Remember a month ago when Hall was fighting Austin at Wrestlemania? The NWO (as in X-Pac) is at ringside so here's Faarooq to have Bradshaw's back. Bradshaw punches Scott in the jaw to start and a DDT sends him outside. That means a beating from Faarooq, followed by something like a right hand to X-Pac who can barely sell that properly. Back in and Hall does his discus punch with almost no pop behind it.

An APA chant doesn't do much for Bradshaw but he gets in a shoulder to put both guys down. We get the Bowling Shoe line from JR as Hall is stumbling around, leaving Bradshaw of all people to carry this mess. The Clothesline knocks Hall's head off but X-Pac puts the foot on the ropes. Faarooq takes care of X-Pac, leaving Hall to hit a horrible low blow to set up a rollup for the pin.

Rating: D-. I can't believe I'm saying this but I'm feeling very sorry for Bradshaw around this time. The guy is stuck taking care of the veteran star and Hall has no business being on a major show at this point. It's very clear he doesn't care and is just out there for a paycheck and that leaves Bradshaw in over his head (not his fault) against someone who can't help him through the match. The

result is a disaster, save for the fans being VERY excited for an APA reunion. You know, less than a month after their split.

Vince laughs at Flair for screwing up Raw so far but Ric says he'll never be like Vince at the helm of the show. Hands are NOT shaken and this goes nowhere.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Trish is challenging and I keep forgetting how great she looked around this time. Actually hang on a second as here's Molly Holly instead of Jazz. Molly says the Women's Champion shouldn't have to flaunt her body and hits Trish in the face with the mic. A whip sends Trish into the steps and here's Jazz to get things going.

Trish is ready to go and drops Jazz throat first across the top rope. Jazz starts punching and we get some Mike Tyson comparisons. The Stratusphere puts Jazz down again but since that's just a glorified hurricanrana, a sitout powerbomb gets two on Trish. The Stratusfaction is broken up (because it's a bulldog) and a dragon screw legwhip sets up an STF to retain Jazz's title.

Rating: D+. Time hurt them here but the story before the match really didn't help. Yeah Molly did some damage but Trish tried her signature move and Jazz did the leg damage that set up the STF. Jazz really doesn't serve much of a purpose here other than being a dragon for Trish to slay at some point in the future and that's really not interesting. It was better than the previous match though so things are looking up.

We recap Jeff Hardy vs. Brock Lesnar, which is mainly over Paul Heyman stealing Lita's underwear on Raw.

Heyman gives Lesnar an unnecessary pep talk.

Jeff Hardy vs. Brock Lesnar

Lita is in Jeff's corner and this is Brock's in ring debut. Jeff goes after him to start and is thrown outside like a fly. A high crossbody gives Jeff two and it's time for the beating to begin. We go to the yet to be built Suplex City before some backbreakers make it even worse for Jeff.

A pair of Irish whips have Jeff reeling but he comes back with a Whisper in the Wind to put Brock down. JR calls that a rare occasion, which is technical true due to Brock having about three minutes of ring time in the WWF at this point. The Swanton only gets two and that's about it for Jeff. Hardy gets a chair so Brock scoops him up for an F5 onto the steel. Heyman: "DON'T PIN HIM! HURT HIM!" Lesnar gives him three straight powerbombs and the referee stops it.

Rating: D+. That's all Lesnar needed to do here though you could argue it should have been against Matt and Jeff at the same time. Heyman telling Lesnar to hurt him was the perfect line and Brock looks like an unstoppable monster. On top of it all though is Jeff's selling as he makes you think he's been shot every time he takes another big shot.

We recap Kurt Angle vs. Edge in a rematch after Edge beat Angle in their first match. That's not cool with Kurt so it's time for revenge. This is a way for Edge to look great and move up the ladder and almost no one can help him better than Angle.

Kurt Angle vs. Edge

I love those big pieces of metal that swing back and forth to go with the Backlash name. You don't see that kind of stuff enough anymore. Angle makes the mistake of charging at Edge to start and runs into some right hands. A flapjack sends Kurt outside and he's rather upset by these circumstances.

Back in and a wicked German suplex sends Edge flying and an overhead belly to belly gets two. It's already off to the chinlock and things slow down a bit. Edge fights back again and gets in a belly to belly of his own to buy a breather. The yet to be named Edgecution gets two on Angle but Edge takes too long on top, allowing Angle to run the corner for the superplex. That always looks great.

Some rolling Germans give Angle more near falls but Edge gets in something like a release German suplex of his own. A backdrop puts Angle on the floor again (Why is that floor so shiny?) and Edge dives down onto him for a lighter pop than I was expecting. Back in and an Angle Slam sets up a quick ankle lock but Edge rolls through

for a near fall. Angle brings in a chair (Why does the referee never even try to stop that?) but walks into an Edge-o-Matic. The spear is blocked by a knee to the face and the Angle Slam gives Kurt the clean pin.

Rating: B. I know he's run a lot of his legacy into the ground but dang Angle was good back in the day. It's crazy to think that he had only been in the WWF about two and a half years at this point because he's been great for so long. Edge is getting a heck of a rub out of this feud and it's doing a lot to make him into a bigger deal. That's such an important key to his career: they didn't go nuts and hot shot Edge because they knew he was going to be something special. Let him season in this role and then move him up when he's ready.

Here's Chris Jericho who doesn't have a match tonight. Just thirty days ago he was the WWF Champion but now he doesn't have a match. Billy Kidman, Trish Stratus and MAVEN can get matches but he's left off the show? JR: "What a bitter young man." Actually what a person with a point. It's ok though because Jericho knows he's better than Hulk Hogan. Since he doesn't have a match tonight, he's out of here. Standard "hey I'm here and I'll be back" segment.

Undertaker comes in to see Flair (and Arn Anderson) but just stares at him.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie is challenging after returning recently and this is a battle of the frog splashes. Van Dam tries the kicks but gets taken down by the leg in a smart move. Rob's shoulders in the corner don't do much good either so he kicks Eddie down for two. It's way too early for a splash though as Eddie crotches him down. Eddie can't get a superplex though and Van Dam drapes him throat first across the top rope to really take over.

They head outside with Van Dam moonsaulting off the apron to set up the spinning kick to the back. Rolling Thunder is blocked, probably because it involves so much time and noise. A surfboard with Eddie bending Van Dam back into a dragon sleeper makes things even worse

for the champ. That's playing to Rob's natural assets as most people can't bend that way.

The Gory Stretch is countered into a sunset flip but Eddie stomps him down all over again. Eddie takes too long setting up his own frog splash so he sunset bombs Van Dam off the top for two instead. The near fall makes Eddie bring in the title and a neckbreaker onto the belt sets up the frog splash to give us a new champion.

Rating: B-. Oh yeah Eddie is back and that's a great thing. Eddie looked awesome here and was obviously way ahead of Van Dam in the ring which had to be expected. Van Dam is always one of those guys who was there to drop the title to a better option as champion and that's a role he played as well as anyone else. Good match here and most of that is due to Guerrero.

We recap Austin vs. Undertaker which is somehow mostly about Ric Flair. Undertaker beat Flair up at Wrestlemania so Undertaker wanted to make him miserable. Austin doesn't like authority figures in general so Flair has made himself guest referee for this #1 contenders match.

Steve Austin vs. Undertaker

Flair is guest referee and has on red shoes that probably cost more than Nikita Koloff's house. They start with technical stuff which means this is probably going to have a lot of time for reasons I don't want to comprehend. A shoulder puts Austin on the floor for an early breather before doing that weird checking his watch thing.

We stop for some Austin push-ups (I don't get it either.) before a clothesline drops Undertaker. An armdrag (???) and drop toehold (?!?) put Undertaker down into a Fujiwara armbar as we flash back to 1992 for some reason. Back up and Undertaker's big boot takes over but we slow it down with a wristlock. Old School is broken up and Undertaker is knocked outside to finally makes this the brawl people expected to see.

Austin sends him into the announcers' table but we have to stop for a knee brace adjustment. A slugout sends Undertaker into the crowd

and here's the NWO to help validate their contracts. Undertaker takes over again and hits the apron legdrop. It's time to work on Austin's leg as this is just dying. A Figure One Leglock sends Austin over to the ropes but I can't stop looking at Flair's stupid red shoes. Really you have two guys in all black and a referee in a striped shirt, black pants, and bright red shoes. Who let him get away with that?

A chinlock keeps Austin in trouble and a belly to back suplex gets two. In case that's too exciting for you, here's another chinlock and a forearm rubbed across Austin's face. The announcers keep talking about the NWO, who haven't done anything in the six or seven minutes they've been out here. Austin comes back with right hands so weak he'd criticize them on the podcast when he's being all picky about a match but the jumping clothesline puts him down again.

Undertaker takes off a turnbuckle pad but gets whipped into it, followed by a double clothesline to put both guys down AGAIN. Geez end this nonsense already and bring Van Dam and Guerrero out here for round two. Some WHAT right hands have Undertaker in trouble but the referee, as in RIC FLAIR gets bumped off a collision. The Stunner connects but Flair is down for over thirty seconds.

Undertaker gets in a low blow and the chokeslam as Flair is on his feet after a minute. A slow two count ticks Undertaker off and a snap spinebuster gets the same for Austin. The Stunner is broken up and Flair is bumped again, leaving Undertaker to crack Austin with a chair for another slow two. Austin stomps a mudhole and grabs the chair, which is kicked into his face for the pin to make Undertaker #1 contender, despite Austin's foot being on the rope.

Rating: D. Once we got past the point where they were obviously stalling for time, this got into the regularly not great Undertaker vs. Austin match. These two just don't work that well together and they never have. Unfortunately this was much more about Austin than either wrestler and that's almost never a good sign. This went on for twenty seven minutes but Van Dam and Guerrero couldn't even get twelve. That sums up so many of Raw's problems in one match. Oh and

the NWO never did a thing and really just came out to take attention away from the match.

Austin Stuns Undertaker again.

Flair is shown the footage of Austin's boot on the ropes and swears.

Tag Team Titles: Billy and Chuck vs. Al Snow/Maven

Snow and Eyebrows Huffman are challenging. The champs jump them at the bell as JR makes gay jokes. The fight heads to the floor and Maven whips Billy into Snow to knock him off the apron. That means nothing though as the tag brings Snow in for some right hands until Chuck punches him down.

As expected, the announcers talk about Tough Enough instead of the match. That's closer than they usually get at least. Snow gets in a drop toehold and it's time for wacky unintentional sexually suggestive poses. Everything breaks down again and Rico kicks Chuck by mistake. Maven's high crossbody gets two but another Rico distraction sets up the Jungle Kick to retain the titles.

Rating: D+. This was fine for what it was as they were only supposed to bridge the gap between the main events. You're only going to get so much out of this student/teacher team and now it's time to go somewhere else for the title shot. Unfortunately I have no idea who gets that shot as there really isn't a division at the moment.

We recap HHH vs. Hulk Hogan which is the big finale to the Hogan nostalgia train. Vince gave Hogan the title shot for no real reason other than Hogan is popular and there's nothing wrong with that. What has been wrong has been the horribly dull feud with HHH being serious and Hogan being Hogan. They really don't have a reason to hate each other and the lame attempts to build up issues haven't worked.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. HHH

HHH is defending and the graphic still has both belts for some reason. They do the big shoving match to start so I guess HHH is Ultimate Warrior in some weird revenge for Wrestlemania XII. Now it's the lockup as JR keeps reminding us what a physical matchup

this is. Like, did you know that HHH is really strong too?

Now it's a fight over a top wristlock and then a headlock from Hogan. It would be nice if they approached first gear any time now. Hogan loses the bandana and presumably his strength as HHH hammers away in the corner. A backdrop and clotheslines give Hogan some offense and it's time for brawling on the floor. HHH gets the better of it as a weak chant for the champ starts up.

A catapult sets up a rollup to give Hogan two and in the only moment of this match that I remember, Hogan uses a Diamond Cutter for two more. Of all the moves Hogan can use (and by that I mean about five), a Diamond Cutter? HHH starts in on the knee and gets booted out of the ring for it. Well to be fair would you want to start another phase of this match? As expected HHH turns into Ric Flair, who always had so much success against Hogan.

We hit a leg lock for a bit until Hogan kicks off the Figure Four. It's right back to the knee though as the boring continues with some choking from the champ. The Figure Four goes on to make this match go on even longer in some form of torture. Like really, who was putting this show together and though "Hogan should get twenty minutes! That's the ticket!"?

The hold is turned over and broken so we hit a sleeper as JR keeps trying to push the idea that the fans are the only thing keeping Hogan alive here. Two arm drops later, Hogan starts fighting up and gets in a belly to back suplex so he can have another rest. A running ax handle (Holy Japan!) sets up the big boot but here's Jericho (duh) to take out the referee.

Jericho hits a loud chair shot to Hogan's head but HHH would rather beat on Jericho instead of covering. It's Hulk Up time and Hogan does the usual, only to miss the legdrop. There's a Pedigree but here's Undertaker to take out the referee. A chair to HHH's head looks to finish but we get ANOTHER Hulk Up so Hogan can beat on Undertaker. With the big man dispatched, Hogan drops the leg to get the title back.

Rating: D-. While not as bad as some of Hogan's WCW stuff (Mainly

because of HHH. Ok all because of HHH.), this was REALLY boring as it went on probably ten minutes longer than it should have. Hogan is pure nostalgia and everyone in the company (save for him of course) knows it but for some reason we're stuck watching him go out there for the better part of half an hour like he's done...maybe twice ever? Oh and well done on having HHH's big title run last about a month. I'm so glad we spent months building that up for this kind of a reign.

A bloody HHH shakes Hogan's hand so posing can take us out. Ignore the belt being nowhere in sight.

Overall Rating: D. There's only so much you can do to get past the double main event. Angle vs. Edge and Van Dam vs. Guerrero are both good but they don't combine to go as long as Austin vs. Undertaker. The rest of the show isn't great either and there's nothing worth going out of your way to see, save for maybe Angle vs. Edge. They really need a breath of fresh air on top and Hogan going out there and resting for more than half of an already too long match isn't going to do it. There's good stuff down the card but there's no way around that double main event.

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Smackdown – April 18, 2002: The Hogan Problem

Smackdown

Date: April 18, 2002

Location: Compaq Center, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Tazz, Michael Cole

It's the go home show for Backlash and since this is Smackdown, we have a tag team main event which doesn't have a lot to do with the pay per view. In this case it's HHH/Hulk Hogan vs. Chris Jericho/Kurt Angle as Jericho doesn't actually have a match on Sunday. Then again I'm not sure who he could fight save for Rock, who wasn't around last week and probably won't be again this week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Billy and Chuck/Albert vs. Maven/Al Snow/Rikishi

Chuck punches Snow in the face to start in what is probably his best offensive move. Something close to a low blow has Chuck in trouble so it's off to Maven for his really bad offense. We hit the armbars on Chuck as Tazz argues that he was Maven's real trainer. I'd be careful bragging about that buddy. Albert comes in and throws Al around but Snow finds a way around Billy's amazing offense and brings in Rikishi, who is suddenly an offensive juggernaut.

Rico comes in and is almost caught in a Stinkface (along with Chuck) but Albert makes the save. We get the big slam spot that isn't as impressive as WWE would like us to be. The hot tag gives us Maven for some reason as everything breaks down. Rico kicks Snow down but Maven comes off the top with a high cross body for the pin on Chuck to set up Sunday's title match.

Rating: C+. I think we've found the winner for biggest surprise of the night as this was actually good. Maven is still hard to take seriously with his dropkick and crossbody offense but giving him the pin was the best idea after Snow won last week. Albert vs. Rikishi is just a thing that exists but I've seen worse. Nice choice for an opener here.

Stacy Keibler, looking very good in blue, bends over just as Hulk

Hogan opens his door. Vince wants to see Hogan right now so Hulk follows her with his eyes clearly panning down.

Kidman and Hurricane make fun of Planet Stasiak but Kidman says no one knows who he is. Hurricane has an idea: CHEAP POPS! So now the writers are making fun of the fact that no one cares about the Cruiserweight Title? I mean, no one does but still.

Hogan comes in to see Vince but Stacy finds Hulk a bit too attractive and gets sent away. Vince thinks he's experienced this feeling of fan support for Hogan before. Back in 1984, nothing could stop this kind of momentum but it's not going to be enough on Sunday. Naturally this takes WAY longer than it should.

Chavo Guerrero Jr./Tajiri vs. Kidman/Hurricane

Kidman armdrags Chavo to dead silence to get us going. A headscissors and dropkick do a bit better but it's off to Hurricane and you can hear the crowd wake up. Tajiri walks into a headlock before hitting a perfect looking superkick to drop Hurricane. The announcers completely ignore the match to talk about Vince and Hogan's issues despite Vince having very little to do with Hogan at the moment.

Kidman takes a quick beating before it's back to Hurricane for a jumping clothesline. Everything breaks down and Chavo sends Hurricane to the floor, only to have Tajiri come back in with a high crossbody for two. Tazz: "What is going on in this match?" It's almost like he doesn't pay attention. A big kick to the head gives Tajiri the pin on Hurricane.

Rating: B-. If there's one thing that drives me crazier than the announcers not paying attention, it's the announcers acknowledging that they're not paying attention. It's a nothing match but I miss the days of Gorilla Monsoon and Jesse Ventura where the match going on in front of them was the most important thing in the world. You can plug other stuff but don't laugh off the fact that you have no idea what's going on in front of you.

Post match Tajiri kicks Kidman in the head and yells at Torrie in Japanese.

We look back at Test trying to hurt Mark Henry during last week's feat of strength.

Here's Mark to lift a car off the ground. Wrestlers take bets and

Test doesn't buy that this is real. He can't lift it but Mark can, only to have Test cheat on the bets and beat Faarooq up.

Hulk Hogan comes out to talk about how people think he's crazy for trying this one more time. He believes that he can do it one more time because, as Vince says, perception is reality. Hogan used to take the title for granted and now he wants to just be champion one more time. We get the big HULKING UP line but here's Chris Jericho to interrupt.

Jericho goes on for a LONG time about how old Hogan is and about how HHH stole the title from him. Ever since he got back, Hogan has only had one singles match and he lost. True actually but ignore that part of course. Hogan finally tells him to shut up and come fight so here's Kurt Angle to help him out. Edge comes out for the save to finally end this.

Here's the problem: the fans absolutely love to cheer Hogan's comeback and old nostalgia stuff because Hogan can still do it well enough to make the schtick work. The problem is that only works during the matches. In between them, Hogan has almost nothing to talk about other than how he wants to be a star one more time. That lost its steam about two days after Wrestlemania and it's getting close to impossible to sit through, especially when he talks for ten minutes a week.

Vince throws Edge out but Edge thinks it's Vince being afraid of what's going to happen to Angle on Sunday. Edge leaves and Stacy comes up to offer her, ahem, services to calm Vince down. Vince wants HHH instead.

Test vs. Faarooq

Faarooq goes right after him but makes the mistake of sliding in, allowing Test to take over. Faarooq's comeback goes nowhere and Test rolls him up with his feet on the ropes for two. The pumphandle slam doesn't work so Faarooq avoids a charge and grabs a rollup with his feet on the ropes for the pin.

Test kicks Faarooq in the face.

Stacy goes to get HHH but is distracted when he takes off the shirt. She finally gets the line out but HHH says she can't make him come just by telling him to.

Hardcore Holly wants to beat Page up because he likes destroying

positivity. Page comes in and smiles but says the anger is ticking him off.

HHH comes in to see Vince so Stacy is quickly sent out. Vince asks if HHH is ready to "dampen the fires of the greatest fire in sports entertainment." If HHH loses, he's on Smackdown. Now THAT'S a punishment.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Hardcore Holly

Page starts fast with a clothesline and neckbreaker before hammering away in the corner. Holly gets in a hard clothesline of his own, only to get crotched on top. A superplex brings them down but Page lands on his head, injuring his neck in the process. Thankfully Page is able to walk and tries the Diamond Cutter but Holly shoves him away and hits the dropkick for the pin. According to Holly's book, the ending was originally going to be the Alabama Slam but Page asked for it to be changed due to Page having some injuries. For some reason this was considered rude and Holly was punished as a result.

Page has to fight Holly off and gets in a quick Diamond Cutter. That's it for Page in the WWF and really it's for the best. Page never quite fit in the WWF but that's to be expected when a lot of his WCW appeal came from fans watching him rise up the card. That and signing at 45 years old. He had a nice little run though and that's more than a lot of people get.

Angle and Jericho are in the back and Kurt gets annoyed at Jericho saying Angle would suck the life out of Hogan. Kurt is so mad that he keeps leaving and coming back to yell more.

Here's Reverend D-Von to say Vince is a prophet and go on like your standard enthusiastic preacher. He even takes up a collection and the fans give him a nice wad of cash.

Chris Jericho/Kurt Angle vs. HHH/Hulk Hogan

HHH and Angle start with the champ hammering away, just in case you didn't realize HHH is better than Kurt. That doesn't go anywhere so it's off to Hogan for a change. Jericho comes in and tries a posedown before Angle comes in for the double teaming. Two simple villains are no match for Hogan of course so it's HHH coming in to help stomp Jericho in the corner.

A catapult sends Jericho into Angle and a spinebuster gets two. For

some reason the good guys get in an argument, allowing Jericho to hit HHH low and finally take over. We hit the sleeper because that's going to get the fans to care. As usual, Hogan is awesome at playing cheerleader on the apron, which really is something so many people miss. Watch someone like Hogan or Cena when they're on the apron in a tag match. They're almost always doing something, even if it's just slapping the turnbuckle. The energy helps a match so much.

Angle misses a charge into the post and the tag brings in Hogan for the 1986 offense. Jericho breaks up the legdrop and grabs a chair but stops to throw the referee out. HHH gets up but Jericho breaks up a Pedigree. Dang Kurt is going to owe him forever now. Hogan comes back and takes the chair away, setting up the chair shot to HHH's head that everyone saw coming. Edge comes in to save Hogan (again) and the match is a no contest.

Rating: D+. Just angle advancement here and that's fine. I still have no idea why Jericho doesn't have a match on the pay per view when he's in such a featured role on this show. Hogan vs. HHH can't end fast enough and these matches aren't making me want to see them fight on Sunday. The wrestling, which means HHH and Hogan making it clear that they're miles ahead of their opponents, was watchable enough if you can ignore the boring stories.

Edge fights Jericho and Angle off, leaving HHH to chair Hogan to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I know the show wasn't great but this was so far and away better than Raw. Maybe it's the younger talent around here or maybe it's the lack of thirty second matches but this is easily more entertaining. There's still a lot of bad stuff here though as they need to get rid of Hogan as fast as they can. It's really not working at the moment and that's only going to get worse as time goes on. This was a completely watchable show though and that puts it leaps and bounds above Raw.

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Monday Night Raw – September 12, 2016: Third Hour Blues

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 12, 2016

Location: Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Corey Graves

Raw's woes begin again this week as there's a double header of Monday Night Football tonight. The company is countering with Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens and if Reigns wins, he's added to the Raw World Title match at Clash of Champions. In theory this should involve some Rusev interference but that might be a bit too much common sense. Let's get to it.

We open with Last Week on Raw with Seth Rollins turning face and getting a title shot at the pay per view.

Opening sequence.

Mick Foley is in the ring to talk about the main event and to introduce Charlotte with Dana Brooke. Charlotte brow beats Dana for the loss to Bayley and is trying to get the records change to say that Dana lost last week. Dana tries to apologize but Mick cuts them off to talk about Clash of Champions. This brings out Sasha to say she's taking the title at the pay per view.

Before that can go anywhere, here's Bayley to interrupt as well. She would love to see Sasha get a title shot tonight but Bayley beat the champ last week so maybe she should get a title shot instead.

Charlotte laughs this off and says Sasha doesn't get to pick when

the title is defended.

Mick does though and suggests that we need a #1 contender. Dana suggests another best of seven series but Charlotte threatens to slap the taste out of her mouth. That goes nowhere though as Mick makes Sasha vs. Bayley for the #1 contendership tonight. Dana slaps Charlotte before anyone can realize how stupid it is to waste Sasha vs. Bayley here, earning her a spot in the #1 contenders match as well.

Bayley vs. Sasha Banks vs. Dana Brooke

The winner gets the title shot at Clash of Champions and Charlotte is on commentary. Bayley is quickly sent outside and Sasha is sent outside to follow, allowing Bayley to roll Dana up for two. Dana gets beaten down and pulled to the floor, leaving us with a showdown as we take a break. Back with Dana cranking on Bayley's arms as you can really see that they're protecting Sasha by letting the other two do the bulk of the work.

Sasha comes back in and loads up the double knees, only to put Bayley underneath her. Bayley moves and Dana takes the full thing, leaving Bayley to go up top for the high crossbody. The Tower of Doom plants Dana and it's off to the Bank Statement. Bayley makes the save and hits the Bayley to Belly on Dana, only to have Sasha roll Bayley up for the pin at 12:14. Ignore Sasha's shoulders being down on the rollup and Bayley's feet being on top of her.

Rating: C+. Sasha hiding and bad ending aside, this was about what you would want out of these three in a triple threat. Well aside from Bayley getting pinned of course. You know maybe I have more problems with this match than I was thinking. I'm not sure why you don't have Dana take the fall here but at least it wasn't Sasha vs. Bayley one on one.

Post break Dana apologizes to Charlotte but the champ just tells her to get the bags. Was that slap already erased from existence?

The Shining Stars offer R-Truth a time share in Puerto Rico. Truth: "YAHTZEE!" Goldust comes in before the payment goes through though and here are Enzo and Cass to say last week's loss wasn't fair. Spanish is spoken and I think the challenge is accepted.

Kevin Owens calls HHH his mentor and says Roman Reigns doesn't belong in the same ring as the champ. Tonight he'll make sure Seth

Rollins is all alone at Clash of Champions. Chris Jericho comes in to say he'll be having Sami Zayn on the Highlight Reel tonight, even though he's a stupid idiot.

Bo Dallas vs. Brandon Scott

Bo says he can only believe in himself. Brandon is sent into the corner and taken down by three straight gutbusters. A Roll of the Dice ends Scott at 1:13. Why are they making Bo better than he's been since he debuted after that big ordeal a few weeks back?

It's time for the Highlight Reel with promises of some hard hitting journalism. Jericho was excited about the idea of interviewing Kevin Owens, who is so handsome that Tom Cruise and/or Brad Pitt could play him in their life story movie. Instead he gets Sami Zayn, who is the lowest of the low. Jericho laughs at Sami for not even having Owens' new phone number but Sami is amazed that Jericho brought him out here to talk about Owens. Zayn loves the idea that Jericho buys into what Owens says and he only cares about that Universal Title.

That doesn't fly with Jericho so he takes credit for Sami and Owens wanting to be where they are today. Sami goes into a rant about how it was people like Eddie Guerrero who paved the way for him and now Jericho, a former World Champion, is just Kevin's lackey. Jericho offers to show Sami a text from Kevin but breaks his phone over Sami's head, likely setting up a match at the Clash.

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

Match #5 in the Best of 7 Series with Cesaro down 3-1. Sheamus hits him in the bad back to start and sends Cesaro into the corner a few times. A quick running uppercut looks to set up the Sharpshooter but Sheamus bails to the floor. More uppercuts give Cesaro two and we take a break. Back with Cesaro having to fight out of an over the shoulder backbreaker and hitting the high crossbody for two.

It's too early for the Cloverleaf so Cesaro comes back with the springboard corkscrew uppercut for another near fall. White Noise is countered into the Sharpshooter but Cesaro's back won't let him get the hold on full. The Swing doesn't work either and Sheamus gets two off the Irish Curse. The High Cross is broken up and Cesaro grabs a rollup with his foot on the ropes for the pin at 9:57.

Rating: C-. I'm not even going to bother complaining about how long this feud has been going. The cheating really doesn't do anything

for Cesaro other than keeping this thing going even longer but of course no one is going to say anything about it because that would make too much sense. The matches aren't even bad as much as they're just there at this point and that's a lot bigger of a problem.

Seth Rollins comes in to see Mick Foley and accuses him of just being there to do whatever Stephanie wants him to do. Mick is really not happy with that and yells about it, only to have Rollins suggest that Mick is lost in all this.

Alicia Fox vs. Nia Jax

This is over Nia hurting Alicia's friend last week. Nia says she doesn't do crazy. Fox is sent into the corner for the required shoulders to the ribs and they head outside. Nia drives her back first into the post and then tosses her into the barricade a few times. A spear sends Alicia through the barricade and the match is stopped at about 2:00.

Here's New Day to say that last week Gallows and Anderson tried to be entertaining. Woods: "DO NOT TOUCH OUR THING!" They load up the Old Day footage but say there's no way we're showing that again. That skit was so bad that it made everyone lose five minutes and thirty seven seconds of their lives. That time could have been spent watching Baltimore Ravens highlights (Big E: "Are we pandering now?") or poured a big old bowl of Booty0's. Anderson and Gallows come out to say they'll win the titles and that's about it. If WWE is telling you that one of their segments bombed, you can really tell it was bad.

Anderson and Gallows vs. New Day

Non-title with Kofi and Woods for the champs. This is joined in progress with Woods working on Anderson's arm before it's off to Kofi for a top rope stomp. Thankfully that lets us ignore the stupid line with the commentators comparing Anderson and Gallows to Demolition. Gallows comes I and throws Kofi to the floor before just kicking him in the face.

We hit the chinlock from Anderson as the announcers say the Smackdown Tag Team Champions aren't in the same league as these teams. True but I wish they wouldn't try to set up a brand vs. brand story yet. Kofi finally kicks away and makes the tag to Woods for some house cleaning, including the Honor Roll for two on Karl. The slugout actually goes to Xavier and the bottom rope tornado DDT sets

up a top rope elbow. Gallows remembers he's in the match and makes the save, setting up the Magic Killer to end Woods at 9:29.

Rating: C. This was 100% course correction for Anderson and Gallows as they turn into exactly what they should have been the whole time instead of whatever unfunny comedy they've been doing over the last few weeks. Nothing to see here for the most part but they're going with a simple story instead of something that was embarrassing everyone involved.

Roman Reigns is ready to fight and wants to be at Clash of Champions.

Jinder Mahal vs. Jack Swagger

Mahal is now The Man That Comes In Peace and talks about spending time in monasteries to get rid of his hatred. They slug it out to start with Mahal actually getting the better of it until they head outside with Swagger fighting back. Back in and a running knee to the face gets two on Jack. Swagger runs the ropes a few times before just stopping and elbowing Mahal in the face. The Vader Bomb misses and a running neckbreaker ends Swagger at 3:20.

Rating: D-. I'm trying to figure out if this was a bigger waste of time than last week's Anderson and Gallows segment. The definition of "we hired him because he's a warm body" just beat the least intimidating former World Champion this side of Vince Russo and WWE actually thinks we're going to be interested in seeing where this goes. The cruiserweights can't get here fast enough.

Connor's Cure video.

Tom Phillips asks Swagger about his soon to expire contract but Jack walks away.

Enzo Amore vs. Epico

Enzo offers to plant some flowers in Epico's, ahem, soil, after he knocks Epico out. We hear more about the Puerto Rico resort, which Graves has been able to visit. Sure the hotel is under construction and his room only had three walls but the beaches were nice. Epico rolls some suplexes and gets two off a delayed vertical. Enzo comes back and goes to the top, only to spend too much time dancing. Cass kicks Primo in the face but gets taken down by a suicide dive. That allows Enzo to come off the top with a dive but a suplex over the apron sets up the Bobby Heenan finish with Primo holding the foot so

Epico can get the pin at 3:20.

Rating: D. This show always suffers from a really bad stretch in the third hour and this is no exception. We've had back to back bad matches featuring stories of people who don't belong on this show being pushed for the simple reason of the show is three hours long and they don't have enough talent to fill everything in. A lot of these people need to be repackaged or replaced because this stuff isn't going to save them against football.

Rollins cuts Owens off in the back and says he hopes this stays a one on one match because he'd love nothing more than to beat up HHH's little golden boy. Owens thinks that's funny because Seth probably wants someone to do the work so he can steal the pin. Seth has always had a bunch of people doing his work for him, including HHH. All Seth has done is fail since he came back (Always remember: winning the title doesn't matter. DEFENDING THE TITLE MATTERS!) while Owens won the title in his first chance.

Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. Owens takes it outside to start so Reigns hits him in the face a few times. A slingshot kick to the jaw makes things worse for the champ but he takes Reigns down and slaps on a chinlock. Reigns fights up and gets booted some more, only to have Owens bail outside to avoid the Superman Punch. The Punch off the apron is blocked with a superkick and Owens sends him into the post as we go to a break.

Back with Owens holding another chinlock as this show somehow loses even more energy. Reigns finally fights out of it and they head outside again, only to have Rollins come out to attack Owens for the DQ at 13:14. Foley sends out the referees to get rid of Rollins but THE MATCH MUST CONTINUE! Back in and they slug it out with Reigns taking over off a Samoan drop. A bite under the arm (that's a new one) breaks up a superplex and the spinning superplex gets two for the champ.

The Cannonball misses as this match just keeps going. Roman gets two off the Superman Punch but stops to send Owens into the post. The champ comes back with a pair of Cannonballs but Reigns jumps over the Pop Up Powerbomb. Cue Rusev for a distraction though (it's about time) and the Pop Up Powerbomb ends Reigns at 23:21 (including the time between the DQ and the restart).

Rating: B. The ending was the exactly right call and it made me feel

a lot better after not enjoying the match nearly as much as I should have. This was a good back and forth brawl but they were out there too long at the end of an already long show. Rusev vs. Reigns and Owens vs. Rollins are the right calls though and that makes a lot of things better.

Rusev beats Roman up to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The main event did this show a lot of favors as it rolled over and died at the start of the third hour. I don't know who thought it was a good idea to have Jinder Mahal and the Shining Stars in back to back segments but the show lost everything it had built up in the previous two hours. This wasn't the worst show in the world but it's the Raw Special: it would have been a good two hour show but the extra hour ruined whatever it could have been.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Bayley and Dana Brooke – Rollup to Bayley

Bo Dallas b. Brandon Scott – Roll of the Dice

Cesaro b. Sheamus – Rollup with foot on the ropes

Nia Jax vs. Alicia Fox went to a no content when Jax speared Fox through the barricade

Anderson and Gallows b. New Day – Magic Killer to Woods

Jinder Mahal b. Jack Swagger – Running neckbreaker

Epico b. Enzo Amore – Pin with Primo holding Amore's foot

Kevin Owens b. Roman Reigns – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Smackdown – April 11, 2002 (2016 Redo): It's A Start

Smackdown

Date: April 11, 2002

Location: Tucson Convention Center, Tucson, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This has to be better than Raw right? I'm almost convinced that it has to be just based on the law of nearly anything would be better than the mess that I sat through earlier this week. The big story continues to be the build towards Hulk Hogan vs. HHH for reasons of pure nostalgia. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to get things going with his continued complaining about Hogan getting the title shot. He's beaten Russians and Iranians much tougher than Nikolai Volkoff and the Iron Sheik so how can Hogan be better than him? Then on Raw, Ric Flair made Undertaker vs. Steve Austin for the title shot after that so Kurt is out in the cold for a long time. Tonight he has a non-title match against HHH so he could prove what happened had Vince McMahon not gone mental.

The WHAT chants finally make Angle snap but here's Edge to calm things down a bit. Edge agrees that Angle's medal win was inspiring but IT WAS SIX YEARS AGO. Since Angle isn't getting a title shot soon, maybe he'd like to face Edge at Backlash. The match is accepted so Edge has one last thing: the fans need to shout YOU SUCK instead of WHAT whenever Kurt talks. And that's the rest of Angle's career. Angle freaks out as only he can and demands his music plays, only to have the fans chant to the tune.

Chris Jericho tells Angle that he'll take care of Edge tonight. So there's your heel alliance. Angle doesn't like loudmouthed Canadians with long blond hair who dress like a rock star. Angle: "Well not you of course. You're cool."

Tajiri vs. Hurricane

Hurricane has hacked off his hair. Tajiri drags Torrie Wilson out in a geisha girl outfit and you can just pencil in the big stripping scene from here. An armdrag sends Tajiri outside and Hurricane uses a rare over the top flip dive to take him down. Torrie looks miserable as Tazz says she's lucky to have someone like Tajiri. For once Cole has it right by saying it's the other way around. Hurricane gets in a hurricanrana but gets kicked in the head for the fast pin.

Rating: C+. This was a good way to set up Tajiri's rematch for the Cruiserweight Title at Backlash and treating Torrie like garbage is a classic, simple way to get him over as a heel. It's nice to have some actual characters in the Cruiserweight division instead of just giving them little time and having them do spots.

Tajiri berates Torrie until Kidman makes the save.

Stacy Keibler, in Miss Hancock attire, lays on Vince's couch until he shows up.

Albert vs. Scotty 2 Hotty

We get the debut of Albert in trunks here because we needed to see that chest hair. Albert jumps him during the entrances as Cole talks about Albert beating Scotty up last week and yelling about Scotty holding him down and making him do all the dancing. Cole: "But we still haven't heard why Albert did what he did." That's vintage Cole stupidity. Scotty stops a charge with a boot and gets two off a middle rope dropkick. The Worm is broken up by a bicycle kick and a Baldo Bomb ends Scotty in a hurry.

Albert beats him up some more after the match until Rikishi makes the save. You mean their big idea is Rikishi vs. Albert? As in the future Hall of Famer vs. future head trainer of developmental?

Vince arrives to find Stacy and says he's considering her for a position. There are a few more candidates though and he'll be interviewing them in the ring. Stacy promises to give him an offer that he can't refuse.

Rico makes fun of Maven's clothes and eyebrows. Al Snow comes in and a tag match against Billy and Chuck is made for later.

Hogan wants to be the WWF Champion one more time. Jericho comes up and warns Hogan about the dangers of HHH. I'd pay to see a Battle of the Bands between Fozzy and the Wrestling Boot Band.

Edge vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho gets caught by an early spinwheel kick and flapjack before Edge sends him outside. There's a baseball slide over the announcers' table as it's all young Canadian so far. Jericho hides behind the referee and rakes Edge's eyes, earning himself a HAS BEEN chant. It amazes me that Jericho had been wrestling for over ten years at this point and he'd still be around over fourteen years later. That's almost as long as Austin's entire career and it's not even half of what Jericho did.

Edge fights back with some chops and avoids a charge to send Chris into the post. A rollup gets two on Jericho and you can hear the fans getting fired up off the near falls. Cue Angle but Edge spears him down, only to walk into a bulldog. The Edge-0-Matic gets two but the referee stupidly gets in the way of a catapult. You know, because referees are dumb.

The Edgecator makes Jericho tap but there's no one to see it so of course Edge lets go. You know, because wrestlers are dumb. Jericho tries to bring in a chair but gets speared for two. Angle snaps Edge's neck across the top and that's enough for a rollup with tights to give Jericho the pin.

Rating: B-. That's probably the best match since the Brand Extension, assuming you ignore the nonsense with the referee and all the interference. Unfortunately that's how big matches go at this point in the WWF because they don't want anyone to lose even remotely clean. It's fine every now and then but that's what countouts and disqualifications should be for.

Edge goes after Angle but gets beaten down until Hogan makes the save.

Here's Vince for his job interviews or whatever they're calling them this week. There's a desk in the ring and it's really not that hard to guess what they're setting up with Stacy. First up we have a professional looking woman with horn rimmed glasses named Sylvia Johnson. She can type 95 words a minute, can speak three languages and most computer languages. Vince says no because she's not his type. "Don't let the door hit you on the...oh yeah we don't have doors on the ring."

Next up is a guy who looks like Steve from Blue's Clues. Vince tells him to get out before anyone can say a word. The third option is a decent looking woman who is a bit more Vince's type. She can type fast and takes dictation but the fans want puppies. Vince thinks he's found his personal assistant but wonders if there's one more applicant.

Cue Stacy and Vince's eyes bug out despite knowing it was coming. Ok to be fair the Hancock outfit can have that effect. Stacy throws the other woman out and dances on the desk to get the job. Vince falling out of his chair when she pulls up her skirt is great, unlike this HUGE waste of time. Yeah Stacy looked great but this was nothing other than a way for Vince to have some fun.

D-Von, now in a suit comes in to see Vince and tells him to testify. See, now he's a preacher. His mission is to save the sinners of the world but he needs a benefactor. Vince agrees, despite the fact that it's D-Von. At least this is something different though and that's what someone like D-Von needs, which is what TNA never understood.

Mark Henry holds a limo (driven by Test) back with his legs. Test cranks it up and hurts Henry's legs (which you never actually see touching the limo of course). So we're going to get Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry?

Chuck vs. Al Snow

Everyone is at ringside. I'd rather they have this match instead of giving Snow and Maven a Tag Team Title shot out of the blue. Snow kicks him into the corner to start as Tazz yells at Cole for getting a town's name wrong. A belly to belly sends Snow flying as the

announcers debate weed whackers. Snow gets two off a sitout spinebuster but Rico gets in the ring. Maven chases him into the crowd, leaving Chuck to hit the Jungle Kick for two. A quick Snowplow gives Al the pin.

Rating: D. I'm fine with setting up some challengers for the titles as it's not like there are many teams on either show at the moment. Snow and Maven aren't exactly doing anything else and it can plug the second season of Tough Enough at the same time. Nothing to see here but at least the booking makes sense. Unfortunately that doesn't make it interesting but that's what you get when WE HAVE TO SPLIT UP THE TAG TEAMS BECAUSE REASONS!

HHH is getting taped up when Hogan comes in to talk about Jericho and Angle. The face alliance is offered but HHH will have nothing to do with it because they're going to fight at Backlash. Just like last week, Hogan being everybody's favorite grandpa and HHH being all serious really doesn't work. HHH holds up the title and talks about it like his secret girlfriend for when Stephanie throws him out for not respecting the lady balls enough. Finally, as is custom for HHH, I have time to drywall my house by the time he finishes his really simple point.

Kurt Angle vs. HHH

Non-title. Angle's top wristlock goes nowhere as HHH shoves him into the corner. Cole again tries to push the "HHH grew up idolizing Hogan" schtick, which only works if you ignore the fact that he was a teenager when Hogan first won the title. A sunset flip with tights gives us a two count and an Angle thong shot. We're lucky enough to have Angle not realize that they're down so HHH gives him a hard spank. Angle finally figures out what's going on and throws some German suplexes for two.

We hit the sleeper on the champ but HHH flips him over and grabs a DDT. HHH starts choking for no real apparent reason before a spinebuster gets two more with Jericho coming out to pull the referee to the floor. A Lionsault gives Angle two so Jericho decks the ref and the beatdown is on. Hogan comes out for the save and

beats down Angle...to set up a Pedigree for the pin. WHAT??? Jericho pulled the referee out, hit a Lionsault and beat the referee up before Hogan came in and beat up both bad guys AND THE REFEREE DIDN'T NOTICE??? Are you kidding me?

Rating: C+. The match was what you would expect from these two but WOW that ending was ridiculous. It's not like HHH absolutely had to pin Angle here as he was getting double teamed by two former World Champions and...oh wait it was HHH. How did I miss that when I was saying all this made no sense? Of course he had to beat Angle. It means so much after having Hogan come in for the save and all.

Post match HHH yells at Hogan for coming out. They get in each others faces and HHH tells him to stay out of his business until Backlash. Hogan says HHH is his business until Backlash (Shouldn't that be until after Backlash?) and goes to leave but Angle hits HHH from behind, knocking him into HHH. Hulk hits the usual and holds up the title. Jericho and Angle beat the good guys down and stand...well about average height to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Let's get this out of the way at the start: this was WAY better than any of the other single brand shows from either Raw or Smackdown to date. There was good, longer wrestling and story advancement with characters that people care about. Really lame main event feud aside (especially with the Hogan nostalgia not working as well as it was a few weeks ago, likely due to a lack of the Rock's charisma helping things), a lot of the show made more sense.

However, we still have a lot of major problems. You have Maven and Al Snow as the only challengers to the Tag Team Titles, Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry looming and the regular "Vince gets a gorgeous woman" storyline. They're starting to come around on top but the midcard and lower card are both death right now and that's going to last for a long time until we get some new characters over. It's a better show but they really need to fix some things.

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Monday Night Raw – September 5, 2016: A Labor Of Boredom

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 5, 2016

Location: Sprint Center Arena, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're in the Kevin Owens Era but the questions remain focused on HHH, who helped Owens win the title last week while also costing Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns at the same time. This almost has to set up a big match in the very near future though it's really not clear gets to fight whom. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the last five minutes of Raw and focuses on the big online reaction.

Earlier today Stephanie McMahon demanded a big celebration for Owens. Mick Foley came up and looked really upset. Last week, HHH made him look like a fool and Stephanie won't talk to him about it. Stephanie gets all serious when Foley accuses her of knowing what HHH was going to do. Stephanie: "Who do you think you're talking to?" Oh here we go.

Foley actually cuts her off and tells a story about meeting Stephanie just after he flew off the Cell in 1998 and thought she was an innocent girl. Stephanie almost sounds vulnerable as she asks

how she can maintain a shred of dignity after what happened last week. Mick believes her but gives a thinly veiled threat if this is all a lie.

Opening sequence.

Mick and Stephanie are in the ring and welcome Owens (in a SUIT) as the balloons fall and pyro goes off. Owens agrees that he does deserve this before ripping into the fans for making it all about themselves with the YOU DESERVE IT chants. He's known that since the day he set foot in this ring and doesn't need the fans to tell him that all over again. Last week he beat three superstars to win this title and yeah he got a little nudge from HHH.

Owens had already done 98% of the work though so tonight it's officially the Kevin Owens Show. This brings out a ticked off Rollins to say this isn't about Owens. Instead he goes off on Stephanie for letting him down last week. Owens says this isn't about Seth but Rollins keeps going on his rampage and says everyone is in Stephanie's pocket. Kevin has been HHH's chosen one since the day he debuted in NXT but Seth is here to burn the whole thing to the ground.

Owens thinks Rollins has only been making plans for failures so Seth punches him in the face. Stephanie suspends Seth indefinitely but Foley immediately overturns it, drawing him one of the loudest pops he's gotten in years. Instead of suspending him, Foley gives Seth (Foley to Seth: "I've never really liked you.") the title match at Clash of the Champions.

This was good stuff for the most part, assuming you can ignore HHH helping Rollins last week not being brought up. Rollins seemingly turning face (or at least starting it off) is a really good thing and WAY overdue but it certainly seems to be a slower burn than a full on version. Either way, Clash just got a lot better looking on paper.

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are yelling at each other (Stephanie's third appearance in twenty three minutes) when Owens comes up. Foley gives him a match against Sami Zayn, which draws in

Jericho. Chris gets in a hilarious line by calling Owens the longest reigning Universal Champion in history. That earns him a match against Rollins later.

Charlotte vs. Bayley

Non-title and Charlotte has given Dana a clipboard to take notes. Bayley starts in on the arm and throws some Japanese armdrags, only to have Charlotte send her face first into the buckle. That just fires Bayley up and she sends Charlotte into the buckles a few times instead. Charlotte heads outside and Bayley tries a dropkick under the ropes (think Sami's diving DDT) but leaves it way short, leaving her to just kick Charlotte in the chest instead. Bayley is favoring her knee as we go to a break.

Back with Charlotte holding the figure four neck lock and actually getting two off a rollup. Charlotte slams the bad leg into the corner and then wraps it around the leg. That sets up a half crab and DDT on the knee but Bayley grabs a rollup to break the momentum. Some limping ax handles to the chest have Charlotte in trouble but Dana pulls Charlotte out of the way of an elbow. Somehow that's not a DQ so Bayley kicks Charlotte into Dana and hits the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 12:40.

Rating: C+. The important thing here is the time. This match worked because it had some time to set up the leg injury and the ending made sense (save for ANOTHER lack of a disqualification) due to the extra focus it received. You can't do anything important in a four minute match and it helped so much to actually let this thing go somewhere for a change. Good stuff and the PPV rematch is obvious. Connor's Cure video for children's cancer awareness month.

Charlotte yells at Dana, who promises to make up for it. That earns her one heck of a slap in the face.

Bo Dallas vs. Kyle Roberts

Bo is all serious here despite holding up a BELIEVE IN B0 sign (please don't let this be ANOTHER political themed character) He takes Roberts down and hammers away before snapping off some knees

to the face. A Roll of the Dice (as Cole described it) puts Roberts away in 38 seconds.

Owens and Jericho fire each other up.

Chris Jericho vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins starts fast with a dropkick and sends Jericho outside for a suicide dive. Oh yeah he's wrestling like a face. Back in and Jericho slaps him a few times as the fans aren't sure who to cheer for. Jericho sends him face first into the buckle and we take a break. Back with Rollins hammering away and getting two off the Sling Blade. A Blockbuster gets the same and Rollins might as well have a big sign saying YEP I'M A FACE NOW around his neck.

Rollins dropkicks him out of the air but gets caught in the Walls. That goes as far as you would expect and Rollins' low superkick gets two. Rollins gets caught on top but still shoves Jericho off, only to miss the frog splash. The Lionsault gets a close two as this is really picking up. The Codebreaker is broken up and a Pedigree puts Jericho away at 13:47.

Rating: B. Anyone who has watched Rollins for years now has known he would be an awesome face and that's certainly what you got here. Rollins looked great out there and he's just so easy to cheer with this offense. I don't think he gets the title back at Clash but it's going to be fun watching him in this new role.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #3 in the series with Cesaro down 2-0 and coming in with a bad shoulder/back. Cesaro grabs some rollups for early near falls but a backdrop has him in trouble. Sheamus sends the back into the apron and drives in some knees. The Cloverleaf is blocked but Sheamus grabs four straight Irish Curses for a near fall. With that not working, Sheamus lifts him up for the Celtic Cross but drops it down into a backbreaker. The Brogue Kick makes it 3-0 to Sheamus at 4:06.

Rating: C. Well that happened and I really don't care. Thank goodness the fourth match is at a house show on Wednesday so I don't have to put up with seeing them again that many times. The back

injury is fine but my goodness I've seen enough of these matches for my lifetime. It really feels like a way to give the writers a month off and that gets old in a hurry.

Shining Stars vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Before the match, Enzo thinks he's in labor so Cass, who has watched a lot of ER, performs Lamaze with HOW YOU DOING replacing the "hoo hoo" part. Enzo and Cass take over to start and it's off to a quick break. Back with Enzo in trouble but avoiding a Primo charge and making the hot tag off to Cass. The Bada Boom Shaka Lacka is broken up and Epico rolls Enzo up with a handful of trunks at 7:05. Too much was in the break to rate but I'd again like to point out that NO ONE CARES ABOUT THE SHINING STARS.

Sami Zayn says his career has been stuck in place since he beat Owens, who is now the Universal Champion. Owens comes in and laughs at the idea that Sami is chasing him now. The race will never be over and Sami says he'll win the title on his own, without HHH handing it to him on a silver platter.

Nia Jax vs. Ann Esposito

Apparently Ann is friends Alicia Fox. Nia throws her around to start but gets caught in a sleeper to actually put her in trouble. That earns Ann a ram into the corner and a throw to the mat, followed by three straight Umaga attacks in the corner. A fireman's carry into a powerslam (with a pause before the powerslam) ends Ann at 1:38.

It's time for Anderson and Gallows to not be funny. Now they're retirement specialists who have already gotten rid of the Dudley Boyz, so now let's welcome the OLD DAY. Cue some New Day impersonators (one on a motorized scooter, one on a walker and one on a cane) to a slow motion version of their theme. The crowd is just silent for this as the Old Day says everything changed for them at Clash of Champions. We get every old person joke you can imagine, including Big E.'s hips going out as he does the swivel.

Cue the real New Day to ask which X-Man is their favorite. For some reason it's Cyclops....which isn't all that funny. Kofi thinks

there's a paradox taking place here and if the New Day comes into contact with the Old Day, the WWE Universe will explode. Anderson and Gallows bail and dancing ensues, only to have Old Day's sneak attack completely fail. The old guys are beaten down to finally wrap this up. This went on WAY too long and it just wasn't very funny.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal

Titus O'Neil is on commentary for reasons of pure torture. Darren gets an early two off a swinging neckbreaker but has to fight out of a chinlock. Titus goes out to ringside as Darren hits the Gut Check for the pin at 2:15.

Darren and Titus fight again after the match.

Alicia Fox checks on her injured friend when Nia Jax, who just happened to be there, shows up and laughs. Total Divas is mentioned and Fox yells a lot while throwing things. Nia just leaves as she goes nuts.

Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Well it's better than jobber after jobber. Cara is fighting due to Braun ripping off the luchador's mask last week. A dropkick sends Braun into the corner but he explodes out with a shoulder. We hit the neck crank and nerve hold for a bit before Braun sends him outside. Cara is tossed into the steps but comes back with a dropkick, only to be whipped into the barricade for the countout at 2:11. Are we really going to have to watch this again next week? Really?

Strowman beats Cara up even worse post match.

Here's Sasha Banks for an announcement. She talks about how every story has an ending before talking about the Divas Revolution. Back in July 2015, Stephanie McMahon (oh yeah) introduced the Divas Revolution and it was a new era without bra and panties matches (which there hadn't been in YEARS) and no more butterfly title (not for about nine months actually).

This revolution was about every little girl and every person who has

been told they're not enough. She used to collect soda cans to try to save up enough money to come to a WWE event. Sasha starts crying as she talks about being injured at Summerslam and she has an update on her condition. Cue Dana Brooke to say she's going to use Sasha's broken body to finish what Charlotte started at Summerslam. Dana goes after Sasha but gets caught in a Bank Statement. The bad news was for Charlotte, who will be facing Sasha at Clash of Champions.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They start slugging it out at the bell and it's quickly outside with Sami going shoulder first into the barricade. Sami does his moonsault off the barricade (and kicks Owens square in the face) as we take a break. Back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock and sending Owens to the floor for back to back flip dives.

The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two but Owens rolls to the apron before the Helluva Kick. A Stunner over the ropes has Sami in trouble but the half and half suplex gets two on the champ. Sami climbs the ropes but lands on a bad ankle. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb so Sami grabs another half and half to drop Kevin on his head. Back in and the ankle gives out again, setting up the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin on Sami at 13:05.

Rating: B-. This was their usual good match but you knew Owens wasn't going to lose his first match as the champion. Sami will probably get his title match at some point in the future and that's going to be one heck of a rollercoaster when they finally get there. Good stuff here though but this show is way past saving.

Post match here's Roman Reigns to a LOUD chorus of booing. Chris Jericho comes out to have Owens' back but Foley prevents the violence. Next week it's Roman vs. Owens and if Reigns wins, it's a triple threat at Clash of the Champions. They had that same booking idea recently on Smackdown and it's still overdone here. Reigns spears Jericho to let off some steam and end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This show hit a wall in the middle and it just never recovered. That being said, it's not like they had that much good going on in the first place. I liked the opening sequence and

there was some good wrestling in the middle but pretty much everything from Cesaro vs. Sheamus until the main event was just death. Then again this is a holiday show and no one is going to watch it but it gets really tiring watching a badly bloated show with so little effort from the creative side of things.

Results

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Bo Dallas b. Kyle Roberts – Roll of the Dice

Seth Rollins b. Chris Jericho – Pedigree

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

Shining Stars b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Nia Jax b. Ann Esposito – Powerslam

Darren Young b. Jinder Mahal – Gut Check

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara via countout

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Smackdown – August 4, 2002: Just Like Raw

Smackdown

Date: April 4, 2002

Location: Blue Cross Arena, Rochester, New York

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

After Monday's less than amazing debut for Raw, it's time to see if Smackdown can save the opening week of the Brand Split. This show has its share of stars including The Rock, Chris Jericho, Hulk Hogan and Kurt Angle. Those names alone should be enough to help carry this past Raw but this company has managed to disappoint me with less. Let's get to it.

Vince (dang I thought this was Smackdown) wishes us good evening. On Raw, Ric Flair picked Undertaker as #1 contender but that wasn't his right. Vince won the coin toss and the right to name the #1 contender, which he'll do tonight. It's really not a good sign that they're changing matches that fast.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to say he'd love to be #1 contender. That would make sense given how things have been going lately. Since the fans keep "dissing" him, he has a list of reasons why he should get the title shot.

1. He OWNS HHH.
2. He won an Olympic gold medal.
3. He is adored by children and senior citizens worldwide!

Before he can list off his other twenty six reasons, here's Chris Jericho to interrupt. Jericho's only rematch has been in a stupid triple threat match where Stephanie lost (true) and despite what the people here think, he is NOT a has been. Jericho suggests a match for the #1 contendership and Kurt shakes his hand but the Rock comes out with something to say. There's only one man, AND THE ROCK MEANS ONE MAN who should face HHH for the title at Backlash. Rock doesn't actually say who that is because he thinks there might be someone

else.

One day Rock will be WWF Champion but until then, no one deserves the shot more than Hulk Hogan. I know they're friends and all, but Rock saying Hogan should get a title shot after he beat Hogan at Wrestlemania and was drafted higher really doesn't feel right. Find another way to get Hogan in the title picture though as Rock saying it isn't working for me. After a double IT DOESN'T MATTER to Angle and Jericho and a poll from the crowd, Rock implores Vince to give Hogan the shot.

Earlier tonight, Albert confirmed that he was with Scotty for the Tag Team Title match.

Tag Team Titles: Billy and Chuck vs. Scotty 2 Hotty/Albert

Billy and Chuck are defending of course. We look at Rico talking to the announcers for some reason before Hotty takes Chuck down to start. Scotty takes things to another level by sending Chuck head first into Billy's....we'll say stomach. Chuck's offense doesn't last long as he eats a superkick and there's the hot tag to the Hip Hop Hippo (just go with it) to clean house. Albert gets distracted by Rico (never look directly at the sideburns) and the chase lets Rico sneak in and kick Scotty in the face so Billy can get the pin.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but you can almost see the post match heel turn from heel. It's not like they have a ton of midcard acts at the moment so one less nothing tag team isn't going to hurt anything. Albert is a former Intercontinental Champion so just let him beat up goons for a bit.

Post match, as expected, Albert beats the heck out of Scotty and says he put up with the dancing for six months.

Vince grabs Hogan the title shot.

Jericho freaks out and yells at Rock for getting Hogan the title shot. He brings up the great point that Hogan couldn't even win at Wrestlemania and Jericho beat Rock over and over. Rock suggests Jericho try to beat him tonight and an exchange of fisticuffs is agreed upon.

Video on Christian's losing streak and ensuing tantrums. Diamond Dallas Page helped Christian break the streak but Christian attacked him after the match. Page then beat him at Wrestlemania and the biggest fit yet ensued.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian

Page monkey flips him to start as the announcers are already talking about Backlash. Christian gets in an elbow to the face and grabs a chinlock so this is probably going to be a short match. The reverse DDT gets two and Christian throws a fit, only to sucker Page in for the Unprettier and the pin.

Rating: D+. Who would have thought a match involving Christian freaking out would have psychology? Hopefully this moves Christian on to something else as Page really doesn't have much of a future due to his age and people not really caring about him in the WWF in the first place. The match was fine but I could go for something lasting a bit longer.

Kurt Angle thinks Hillbilly Jim should be President if Hogan gets the title shot. Edge comes up and says he feels bad about their recent problems. He's found some pictures of their good old days but of course there are jokes on the back, such as "You Suck", "Yes I Do Suck" and "And I'm A Dork." It's true, though thank goodness Edge was on the right side and Angle took the pictures when he did or this could have been embarrassing for Edge.

Here's HHH for his bi-weekly chat, this time about the new #1 contender. The more I look at that Undisputed Title, the less I like it by comparison to the original two belts. If nothing else the other two were bigger, as World Titles should be. HHH doesn't care if he's fighting Hogan because he'll fight Undertaker next. Cue Hogan in the red and yellow (first time in almost ten years in the WWF) to talk about...Wrestlemania I?

Then he moves on to Wrestlemania III (now with 94,000 people there) and Wrestlemania XVIII, both of which he thought would never be topped. Nothing is bigger than the title though (not exactly, as it wasn't even the biggest match at Wrestlemania) and HHH says it would be an honor to be in the ring with Hulk Hogan (Like he is now?).

In a bit of a twist, HHH says he's looked up to Hogan his whole life. At Backlash though, he won't hesitate to hurt Hogan every way he can. Hogan thinks it's funny that everyone keeps declaring Hulkamania dead because it's going to rise up again at Backlash. A lot of posing takes us out as the serious HHH awkwardly leaves. Again: I get why they have to do something with Hogan while they can but this feels really forced.

Edge vs. Kurt Angle

I miss Never Gonna Stop. Kurt stomps him down and throws a good looking German suplex to start as the announcers talk about how amazing the previous segment was. In other words, they're probably putting it on the same level as the Rock vs. Hogan promo the previous month because in the WWF, HHH and Rock are total equals. Edge's half nelson facebuster gets him out of trouble for a bit and Angle gets tied in the ropes. Some spears (which still look lame coming from Edge) have him in even more trouble so he chairs Edge for the DQ.

Rating: D. Anytime this show wants to deliver a match that breaks four minutes, please let me know. This is a problem that the modern Brand Split is running into as well (Raw more than Smackdown): you don't have to put everything on every week. It's ok to alternate back and forth for a bit and let something get a little focus.

Edge fights Angle off.

Billy Kidman wishes luck to his ex-Torrie Wilson and her boyfriend Tajiri in their match later. Tajiri comes up and rants in Japanese. Just do the heel turn/split.

Cruiserweight Title: Kidman vs. Tajiri

Tajiri is defending. Kidman dropkicks him down to start and seems to be going fast, likely due to another lack of time. A kick to the head puts Kidman on the floor and there's an Asai moonsault for a very weak ECW chant. Back in and the tornado DDT is countered into a sitout powerbomb (nice counter) but Kidman can't hit the shooting star. The frustrated champion grabs his title and puts it in the corner, only to have Torrie take it away. Kidman uses the distraction to roll Tajiri up for the pin and the title.

Rating: D+. This felt like an Alliance era title change with the action having no meaning other than the forced angle at the end. Kidman winning the title doesn't really change anything but it's not like the Cruiserweight Title means anything at this point. Splitting Torrie and Tajiri (pretty obvious at this point) probably won't lead anywhere and it's another story to add to the pile tonight.

Tajiri berates Torrie and leaves.

Vince is mad at Maven for costing Smackdown the Hardcore Title last week. His solution: send Hardcore Holly after him. Bob leaves and

here's Stacy Keibler, ("Just call me Vince.") to offer the boss his services, which includes bending over in front of the camera.

Wouldn't it make sense to bend over where Vince can see it?

Stacy loved Vince's talk about intellectual sperm and he likes the way she walks. They sit down and we go to a break, coming back with Vince fixing his clothes. Stacy is gone so here's D-Von to yell about splitting up the Dudley Boyz. He demands an explanation so Vince tells him to get out until he's ready to be a star. Did we just get three Vince segments in one? That's excessive even by his standards.

Al Snow gives Maven a pep talk by saying he would have had to get mugged to get the kind of beating Hardcore Holly is going to give him.

Hardcore Holly vs. Maven

Cole hypes up Rock vs. Jericho, which will have no titles on the line. Could that be because neither is a champion? Holly punches in the corner and does his kick to the "lower abdomen", only to miss a high cross body. Maven gets two off a missile dropkick but the Alabama Slam ends him in a hurry. I'm sure there was a point to this one somewhere.

We look at Rock challenging Jericho earlier in the night.

The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

They slug it out in the aisle to start and I'll let you guess who gets the better of it. Rock gets catapulted into the post for the great looking bump and they head inside for the opening bell. Right hands and a spinwheel kick get two for Chris as the announcers say Rock was just showing Hogan respect earlier. A Walls attempt is broken up and Jericho gets crotched on top to set up a superplex for Rock's first real offense.

Some of Rock's usual stuff gets a few near falls but there goes the referee. Rock grabs the Sharpshooter but here's Angle for the interference. Not that it matters as Rock kicks out of the Angle Slam, Edge comes out to take care of Angle, and the Rock Bottom ends Jericho as a match finally breaks seven minutes.

Rating: C. The time and talent in the ring helped carry this but it felt like a way to get to the interference which likely sets up a tag match next week. Rock is in a weird place where he's so much

better than anyone else that it's hard to imagine someone giving him a real challenge. That HHH feud just crippled Jericho as he feels like a glorified midcarder instead of a guy who was World Champion a month ago.

Overall Rating: D. Put very simply, there's too much here. This could have been spread out over two weeks if not more, including too many turns and splits for a single show. I really don't get why wrestling companies feel the need to do this. It's not like there's a big season finale coming up. Just let these already established characters (keep in mind that they weren't anything new but rather just exclusive to one show or the other) act as they normally would instead of changing so suddenly. It doesn't feel right and makes for an overly packed show.

On top of that, you need some more wrestling. Like I mentioned multiple times, until the main event, nothing broke three and a half minutes. There really isn't a defense for something like that happening on a show with this much talent. Just Rock vs. Jericho alone could have eaten up twelve to fifteen minutes and you could have gut out something like Maven vs. Holly, which basically existed to say "hey, we're here too". Things will likely get better going forward but this was a big mess, somehow being just as bad as Raw.

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New Column: The Kevin Owens and Triple H and Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns Show

A column about the last five minutes of Raw.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-kevin-owens-and-triple-h-and-seth-rollins-and-roman-reigns-show/>

Monday Night Raw – August 29, 2016: It's His Show And We're Just Watching It

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 29, 2016

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's a big night this week as we're guaranteed a new Raw World Champion in a fatal fourway with Kevin Owens, Big Cass, Roman Reigns and Seth Rollins facing off for the title. It's hard to say what we're going to get at Clash of the Champions in about a month so hopefully we can start setting some stuff up tonight. Let's get to it.

In Memory of Mr. Fuji.

We recap Balor's shoulder injury and the setup for tonight's title match.

All four World Title participants for the title are in the ring with Corey Graves moderating. Rollins cuts him off and says they're all here because of him so he'll cede his time to someone else. Owens talks about how he's a prize fighter and tonight he's fighting for a prize. That leaves Reigns, who Owens just allows to be booted.

Cass is tall...and that's about it. Cass: "Did Jericho write that for you?" Cass says he's the biggest dog in this fight, causing Owens to point to Reigns. Seth is glad that this is an elimination match so he can beat up all of them in one night. A brawl breaks out with Reigns and Cass having a staredown before the ring is cleared. I'm glad they kept this short since no one said anything important and it was just hype for the main event.

Neville vs. Chris Jericho

Before the match, Jericho says Owens will win tonight but promises everyone the Gift of Jericho. This is their first match since Neville broke his ankle back in the spring. A catapult puts Jericho on the floor early but he hides behind the ref to get in a cheap shot and send us to a break. Back with Jericho putting on a chinlock but diving into a kick to the ribs.

Neville moonsaults out to the floor and avoids a charge into the corner, setting up a small package for two. A superkick drops Jericho and I'm very surprised at how hot the crowd is despite such a big main event. The Red Arrow misses and the Liontamer make Neville tap at 10:50.

Rating: C+. I continue to be very glad that Neville can do more things than just the Red Arrow as those one spot guys can get lost in the shuffle quickly. Neville being a main eventer was a long shot at best but he's fine in the midcard where he could pull off an upset and most people wouldn't be that shocked.

Earlier today Bayley met the New Day and dancing ensues until Dana Brooke comes up, setting up a six person tag along with Gallows and Anderson. The key here: it didn't feel scripted. Instead it seems like the producer said "Bayley runs into the New Day and you've got two minutes. Go." That works so much better than scripting out the

jokes and gives you entertaining things like this.

Nia Jax vs. Haion

Jax runs her over and finishes with an AA into a powerslam at 1:15. Anderson and Gallows now run a retirement home and suggest that New Day will be joining Team 3D. Nurse Dana Brooke comes in and puts on a rubber glove.

Video on Seth Rollins.

Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Sami has a bad ankle coming in and he tweaks it early on, allowing Mahal to smack him in the back of the head for two. A chinlock doesn't go very far and Sami comes back with the Helluva Kick for the pin at 3:06.

Rating: C. I'm still waiting for an explanation of why they brought Mahal back. He's fine enough for a warm body but of all people, Jinder Mahal? Anyway I'm assuming this is the start of something for Sami as the announcers kept talking about how he wanted the title. If Owens wins it tonight, there's no logical reason to not do Sami vs. Owens at Clash of the Champions.

Earlier tonight Sasha Banks was on the pre-show, saying that Charlotte was trying to injure her and end her career. Sasha will be back for revenge and the title.

New Day/Bayley vs. Dana Brooke/Anderson and Gallows

Charlotte is on commentary and doesn't think much of Bayley putting on a unicorn horn and eating Booty0's. The women start with Bayley getting some quick two counts before working on the arm. It's quickly off to Big E. for a belly to belly (gimmick infringer) on Anderson as the champs take over. That lasts all of a few seconds before the villains beat him down in the corner. The hot (or at least moderately warm) tag brings in Kofi for the Unicorn Stampede, including a running dropkick from Bayley. Some dancing sends us to a break.

Back with the camera on the commentators as the match is going on

behind them. I smell Kevin Dunn's fingers all over this. We actually look at the match to see Kofi in trouble and getting elbowed in the face. Kofi gets in a double stomp and makes the tag to Big E. for the house cleaning. Everything breaks down and Kofi does an insane dive over the top, nearly breaking his arm in the process. Back in and Dana gets two off a rollup, only to have the Bayley to Belly wrap it up at 12:28.

Rating: C+. The crowd was digging the heck out of this and I can't blame them a bit. This was the perfect match for Bayley as New Day is over by definition and she fits in perfectly with them. Bayley gets another win to help set up her title match at Clash of the Champions and Anderson and Gallows save face. Good stuff all around and a fun match.

Cesaro says no one likes Sheamus so he'll spin him around and around and around.

Video on Big Cass.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #2 in a best of seven series with Sheamus up 1-0. Before the match, Sheamus says he'll prove that he's just the better man. Cesaro takes him down to the mat to start and gets two off a double stomp. Sheamus' arm is banged up and the announcers want the match stopped to check it. Thankfully it's a dropkick to send Sheamus outside and we take a break.

Back with the Irish Curse getting two but Cesaro comes right back by hitting the springboard corkscrew uppercut. The high cross body connects (check your Bingo card) and Cesaro sends it outside. That goes well for Sheamus who backdrops him back first into the post, setting up the Cloverleaf for the submission at 11:15.

Rating: C+. Points for putting a story into the series with Cesaro's back injury though I'm still having issues getting interested in even more of these matches. WWE has a real problem of just having the same match over and over and then wondering why it stops being interesting in the process. Make it best of three or just do a 2/3

falls match or something but having it go twice that long doesn't seem like the best move.

Tribute video to Mr. Fuji and it's as good as you would expect from WWE.

Video on Kevin Owens.

Braun Strowman vs. Americo

Standard masked luchador. It's the squash you would expect with Strowman throwing him around and tossing him into the air for a faceplant and the pin at 58 seconds.

Strowman unmaskes him post match.

Here's Stephanie McMahon to address Shane McMahon getting F5'd at Summerslam, but first she has to say we're about to crown the "first" Universal Champion. Paul Heyman cuts her off but Stephanie is right there to cut his balls off by demanding an apology. Heyman talks about how Lesnar provides value to Raw and is here to pay Lesnar's \$500 fine. He pulls out a pile of \$1 bills but Stephanie throws them onto the floor. Stephanie wants to know what value Heyman offers to Raw and warns him of a coming storm.

Heyman goes into a rant about the board of directors and how Stephanie can control everyone but Lesnar. For some reason this turns into a discussion on female empowerment with Stephanie saying Heyman is staring at the women's revolution. Heyman apologizes to her and she accepts before dropping the mic and leaving. With Stephanie gone, Heyman chuckles and smirks.

Video on Balor's injury and surgery.

Video on Roman Reigns.

Titus O'Neil vs. Darren Young

The aggressive Young knocks Titus to the floor where he asks for a timeout. Back in and a hard whip sends Darren over the corner where he lands on a camera to break it into pieces. Some neck cranks don't go anywhere so Young crucifixes him for the pin at 4:04.

Rating: D-. Can ANYONE explain why this feud is still going or why

I'm supposed to care about them fighting over and over again?
Neither guy is interesting and it seems like a character that exists for the sake of the Presidential elections and nothing more. Total filler here and it's getting more and more annoying every match.

Backlund and Young celebrate so Titus beats them both up.

Mick Foley apologizes for not being out there for Stephanie but she didn't need him. He suggests that everyone is barred from ringside tonight and again Stephanie says it's the first Universal Title match. Rollins comes in and Stephanie wishes him luck.

Raw World Title: Big Cass vs. Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns vs. Seth Rollins

The title is vacant coming in and this is under elimination rules. Mick and Stephanie are at ringside as they should be. Cass says he's shocking the world tonight. The bell rings after a break (THANK YOU!) and Owens immediately heads outside. The Cass vs. Reigns showdown is delayed again as the villains go after the big men and it's time to pair off.

Seth and Kevin are knocked outside and we get the big showdown with Cass blocking the Superman Punch. A running big boot knocks Reigns outside with Cass falling out as well. Rollins dives onto Cass but Owens drops him onto the barricade, only to have Reigns dive onto Owens and Cass as we take a break. Back with Owens in control and getting two off the backslash to Cass.

Reigns fights back with his string of clotheslines until Cass kicks his head off. They've done a really good job of making Cass look like he belongs here in the first ten minutes. A big boot puts Owens on the floor and the Empire Elbow hits Rollins. The East River Crossing is broken up by a Superman Punch and the low superkick gets two. Owens adds the Frog Splash to get rid of Cass at 13:46. I'm sure Saxton saying he thinks Cass can pull it off a minute earlier didn't give that away for anyone. Also, I believe that's the first time Cass has been pinned on the main roster.

Back from a second break with Reigns powerbombing Owens and Rollins

for a Tower of Doom. Rollins' falcon arrow gets two on Roman but the Superman Punch knocks Rollins out of the air for two more. Cole describes this as incredible action for the second time in about a minute.

Owens comes back in with a superkick to Rollins, setting up back to back Cannonballs for another big reaction. The crowd has somehow stayed hot all night and that's a really good sign. The Superman Punch gets two on Owens and you can hear the crowd's sigh of relief on the kickout. Owens' Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with another Superman Punch and Reigns hits a quick sitout powerbomb for two on Seth.

A spear drops Rollins on the floor but here's HHH of all people to Pedigree Reigns on the floor. HHH throws Rollins back inside for the pin on Reigns at 23:48 (POP!), meaning Rollins needs HHH's help yet again. HHH throws Owens inside, Pedigrees Rollins and gives a shocked Owens the title at 25:05.

Rating: B+. This is a hard one to grade as they nailed the near falls and the drama to near perfection but I really don't care for HHH being back AGAIN and presumably setting up HHH vs. Rollins and/or Reigns. That's the standard problem with HHH: even if someone new is getting a big title win, it's still about HHH for a long time. However, let's get to the good part: KEVIN OWENS IS WORLD CHAMPION! Yeah that hasn't quite sunk in yet but it's actually happened and that is most certainly a good thing.

HHH leaves and Owens celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Make no mistake about it: the main event is the ONLY thing on this show that mattered in the slightest. The only other thing of note was the really awkward Stephanie vs. Heyman promo and I'm still not sure what happened there. They did a really good job with the title match though (HHH involvement aside) and that's all that matters on this show. A lot of this stuff is going to depend on the fallout but I'm very happy with Owens winning as he's definitely the most logical option. Good show with a red hot crowd throughout helping it along.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Neville – Liontamer

Nia Jax b. Haion – Fireman's carry into a powerslam

Sami Zayn b. Jinder Mahal – Helluva Kick

New Day/Bayley b. Dana Brooke/Anderson and Gallows – Bayley to Belly to Brooke

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Cloverleaf

Braun Strowman b. Americano – Faceplant

Darren Young b. Titus O'Neil – Crucifix

Kevin Owens b. Seth Rollins, Roman Reigns and Big Cass – Pedigree to Rollins

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Smackdown – March 28, 2002: It's Important!

Smackdown

Date: March 28, 2002

Location: First Union Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 13,600

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

With the Draft out of the way, this is the final regular episode of Smackdown with the full roster before things split up next week. That means it's also the last chance for the wrestlers to make one last good impression against their interpromotional rivals. In other words it's a lame duck show that they're trying to pass off as something important. Let's get to it.

Booker T. vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Of course this show starts with two guys from WCW. Fallout from Monday's tag match. Booker stomps him into the corner to start so Page chops away. The Draft picks start running along the bottom as Page hits a helicopter bomb for two. Not that it matters as Brock Lesnar comes in to take out Page for the DQ.

Here's Kurt Angle with something to say but we have to wait on the YOU SUCK WHAT chants because that's how wrestling fans like their comedy. Angle thinks the people are pathetic, but not as pathetic as what happened to Stephanie on Raw. Kurt would like a special moment of silence and you can imagine his reaction when he's booed out of the building. This brings out Vince to insult the fans and talk about HHH being the kind of model citizen that seduced and then humiliated his daughter. Then on Monday he beat her up!

Vince promises to take care of HHH and here's the champ so Vince can make threats to his face. HHH promises to make Vince's life miserable if Vince screws with him but decides Kurt is right: we should honor Stephanie, perhaps by looking at the end of Raw. That's enough to make Kurt want a match against HHH tonight but Vince has a better idea: the two of them against HHH. This brings out Ric Flair to make it a tag match.

D-Von gives Bubba some exposition about the team splitting up if they don't win the titles tonight.

Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Billy and Chuck

Billy and Chuck are defending and if the Dudleys lose they're split up. On the other hand, if Billy and Chuck lose then they stay together, in theory at least. The questions I'll never have answered. Bubba and Chuck start things off with Chuck being sent into the corner for some loud chops to the chest. D-Von comes in for some shoulders to Billy and it's back to Bubba for some house cleaning. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Chuck and Rico offers a quick distraction, only to have the Doomsday Device plant Chuck. Rico's

second distraction works though and leaves Bubba to hit a Fameasser to retain the titles.

Rating: D+. So that's it for the Dudleys in one of the most questionable moves I've seen in a long time. I get the idea of splitting up Edge and Christian and maybe the Hardys but who thought Bubba and D-Von could survive on their own? For the life of me I still don't get the thinking behind that one and it's yet another casualty of the Draft.

Bubba and D-Von destroy the champs with all the usual stuff one more time. There has to be a joke about Billy taking What's Up. I don't know if he had it coming in but Bubba's eye (as in the eyeball itself) is full of blood. That's quite the scary look.

The APA is splitting up and aren't happy about it. Since it's their last night together, they're going to have a farewell bash. Tajiri is in charge of telling everyone and Torrie Wilson is in charge of playing strip poker.

Matt and Lita (interviewed by Lillian Garcia, who actually looked much better in her 40s) are so happy that they're on the same show. Chris Jericho comes up and says no one should be happy since he can't be champion again. Matt calls him a has been and gets jumped, likely setting up something for later tonight.

The Rock and Hogan call each other brother before talking about whether or not they can trust Kane in their six man tag tonight. Rock imitates King Kong Bundy and Kamala in a way to say yes. Dang it I was hoping for some more of those as there are multiple other Hogan monsters he could have done.

Anyway, Kane comes in and says it doesn't matter if Rock is ready. In the most bizarre thing I've ever seen from Kane (and that's covering A LOT), he does an amazing Hogan-style promo, saying it doesn't matter if it's 20,000 Hulkamaniacs, 20,000 of the millions or 20,000 screaming Kaneannites (Rock: "Kaneannites?") because the three of them are going to run wild on the NWO. He even does the posing and the hand to his ear with the fans absolutely losing their minds over this. This was HILARIOUS with Rock looking somewhere between amazed, terrified and stunned.

Hulk Hogan/The Rock/Kane vs. NWO

Apparently Flair drafted the NWO so he could "keep an eye on the

poison." Wouldn't it be smarter to get rid of the poison? Rock and X-Pac get things going with X-Pac in early trouble before it's off to Hall. The bad guys (as in the team with the Bad Guy) take over with Nash hitting the knees in the corner but Rock shrugs them off and tags in Hogan. I know he's considered lazy but he can do a hot tag like almost no one ever.

Nash gets in a side slam (no hair flip yet) and Hogan gets beaten down. Wait so Kane is getting the house cleaning spot? That's an odd choice but I'm willing to go with it due to that pre-match promo alone. A belly to back suplex breaks up Hall's sleeper and the real hot tag brings in Kane. The Fake Diesel hits the real Diesel as everything breaks down. Well most of it does at least as Hogan is just standing on the apron while his partners fight 3-2. It turns out fine though as Kane chokeslams X-Pac for the pin.

Rating: C+. This would have been a good house show main event and there's nothing wrong with that. Hogan was looking energetic here (believe that one if you want to) and X-Pac was the only one with any kind of fire on his team. I know he gets a lot of flack for good reason but when X-Pac had his head on straight, he was one of the better workers on the roster. Did the NWO ever actually win a major match? They debuted at No Way Out, won a few TV matches and then lost both Wrestlemania matches. What a great stable.

Matt Hardy vs. Chris Jericho

They start fast, likely due to a lack of time. Matt sends him into the corner to start but gets crotched on top to slow him down again. Cue Lita for a top rope hurricanrana, setting up the Twist of Fate for two. Lita gets knocked off the apron and a low blow sets up the Walls to make Matt tap. Nothing match.

Jericho puts Lita in the Walls on the floor.

The APA party is going on and Torrie takes off a belly chain for her stripping. Christian freaks out over losing and destroys stuff.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Test

Van Dam is defending and gets dropped throat first across the top rope to start. A full nelson slam gets two on Van Dam as Lawler tries to figure out which brand has better looking women. Test grabs the ropes to avoid a sunset flip but we get the referee kicking his arms spot to give Rob a near fall. That earns Earl Hebner a good

talking to so he does a fast count on Van Dam's sunset flip to retain the title. Ok then.

Raven doesn't care who he's wrestling for because he's destroying the things he loves.

Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Maven

Maven is defending and I forgot how much I liked his theme. Raven starts fast with the alternating trashcan lid shots to the head. Maven loses his balance on the ropes but gets two off a missile dropkick anyway. Here's Tommy Dreamer to try to win the title but the distraction lets Raven grab the Raven Effect for the pin and the title, which now moves to Raw.

Angle tells Vince that he'll help get Austin to Smackdown.

We look over the Draft lottery results, almost none of which are worth mentioning.

William Regal crashes the party to say the APA is out of business. A fight breaks out because it wouldn't be right otherwise. Bradshaw puts up the "sorry, we're closed" sign and they go their separate ways to what sounds like a standing ovation.

HHH/Ric Flair vs. Kurt Angle/Vince McMahon

Flair is in business pants. Vince and HHH start things off and I won't even bother explaining why Angle and Flair come in a few seconds later. Kurt takes him into the corner to start and gets a thumb in the eye before it's off to HHH. A quick belly to belly sends the champ flying but Flair comes back in with a sleeper. Kurt starts working on the knee and of course Vince is willing to get involved. Cole tries to explain the reason behind the Brand Split and it's really getting worse with every word he says.

A few wraps around the post have the leg in trouble but there's no way he's going to get Flair in a Figure Four. I mean, he's not Shawn or anything. Flair kicks Kurt low but the Figure Four is reversed into an ankle lock. Now Vince can get in the Figure Four, only to have Ric turn it over in a hurry. Angle is smart enough to make a very fast save before it's off to the guys under 50. A spinebuster gets two on Kurt, only to have Vince hit HHH in the face with a belt for two. Flair actually hits the top rope shot to Vince's head and goes for the real Figure Four but here's Undertaker to lay Ric out and give Vince the pin.

Rating: D. Much like almost anything else HHH did around this time, this was slow, not very good, and could have been done better in less time. Vince pinning Flair doesn't mean much and it's not like Undertaker is going after anyone other than Ric, so this was pretty much the definition of "well, here's a main event".

Overall Rating: D. Hulk Hogan just had the runaway match of the night in 2002. This was a big commercial for the Brand Split as none of this matters (including a new Hardcore Champion) heading into the new WWF. Since there are almost no storylines here, everything other than Kane vs. the NWO and everything in the main event was filler. That's not the way to make an interesting show but at least a lot of the matches were short.

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

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 25, 2002

Location: Bryce Jordan Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 15,550

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

Tazz vs. Mr. Perfect

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

Tazz says the perfect pick has become just another victim.

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

Vince's war room is just an office. He has the first pick and a

photo of Kurt Angle is visible on his desk.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Two feuds in one here but Edge is about to start a really good feud with Angle. Booker kicks Edge in the face to start and Christian gets two off a powerslam. A quick clothesline drops Christian though as the announcers talk about Austin having a clause in his contract to make sure he's a free agent. In case of a Brand Split you see. Booker eats the Diamond Cutter but Christian gives him an Unprettier. A quick scissors kick puts Page away in a nothing match. Angle reads off his resume until Vince makes him the #2 pick.

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

Vince yells at Angle for getting the NWO (who Vince brought in to poison the company) and promises to sign Austin. Angle suggests

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

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

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

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

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

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

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

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

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

Vince picks Billy and Chuck as a unit.

The Rock/Hulk Hogan vs. NWO

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

Hogan cleans house with ease but he takes too long loading up a backdrop and gets kicked in the face. It's off to X-Pac for more kicks but Hogan knocks him away and makes the tag off to Rock. Things finally speed up and X-Pac is easily knocked to the floor.

The Rock Bottom and legdrop get two on Nash with X-Pac making the save. It's a three on two beatdown until Kane comes out for the DQ.

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

The NWO runs off.

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

Jeff Hardy vs. Billy

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

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

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

European Title: William Regal vs. Rikishi

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

Jazz wants to see where the Divas end up.

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

Here are the picks:

Smackdown

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

Raw

1. Undertaker
2. NWO
3. Kane
4. Rob Van Dam
5. Booker T.
6. Big Show
7. Bubba Ray Dudley
8. Brock Lesnar
9. William Regal
10. Lita

Riveting no?

Intercontinental Title: Kurt Angle vs. Rob Van Dam

Angle is challenging and grabs a German suplex for two as the bell rings. Van Dam gets stomped down as the fans chant USA. I'd assume for Angle, even though Michigan is just as American as Pennsylvania. Van Dam kicks him in the head and gets two off Rolling Thunder. Angle pulls the referee in the way of a top rope kick for the DQ. Kurt puts on the ankle lock until Edge makes the save. Stephanie is ready to win the title.

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

HHH is defending and the challengers have a business relationship. I have no idea why they never had a romantic relationship as that could have been amazing. If HHH pins Stephanie, she's gone FOREVER. HHH backdrops the real wrestler to start but has to look at Stephanie so Jericho can chop away. Stephanie lays down so Jericho can cover her for two but he has to save her from the Pedigree.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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