

# Smackdown – April 30, 2015: The Rivalry Of This Era

## Smackdown

Date: April 28, 2015

Location: iWireless Center, Moline, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tom Phillips, Jerry Lawler

We're four days removed from Extreme Rules, meaning we're two and a half weeks from Payback. Coming out of Raw, the big story is Rollins having to defend his title against Randy Orton and Roman Reigns in a three way at the next pay per view, which WWE had spoiled about a week in advance. Let's get to it.

This episode is dedicated to Verne Gagne.

We open in the back with Kane coming into Rollins' office. Seth yells about Kane screwing up on Monday and making decisions not best for business because they're not best for him. Kane tells him to cool it but Seth accuses him of being jealous. Kane promises to make a man out of him, so tonight it's Rollins vs. Ambrose because it's best for business. Seth thinks the Kane from 20 years ago would be best for business because this one has nothing to offer.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns for a chat. First up we have a shout out to his boy Dean Ambrose for his match tonight against their little brother Seth Rollins. That would be the guy that ripped down everything they had built and then cost him the World Title at Wrestlemania. Thanks to Seth, every fight he's had has been the biggest fight of his life, so wait until he gets his hands on him at Payback. This brings out Kane and it's time for a match.

## Roman Reigns vs. Kane

Slug out to start with Kane kicking him down into the corner before

planting him with a belly to back suplex. Roman low bridges him to the floor and sends Kane into the post but a side slam puts Reigns on the announcers' table. Back from a break with Kane holding Reigns in a bearhug before just stepping on his head. Roman gets back up and wins another slugout before suplexing Kane down. A middle rope clothesline puts him down again and Roman follows it up with more in the corner.

The Samoan drop looks to set up the Superman Punch but Kane catches him by the throat for a chokeslam for two. Reigns escapes the tombstone and hits a DDT (because it's just a transitional move), followed by the Superman Punch but the threat of a spear sends Kane running away for the countout at 9:59.

**Rating:** D+. I have no idea why I'm supposed to care about this potential Kane face turn but it's not working. Kane is decent enough as a power enforcer but he's the focus of the main event scene instead of the champion or either of the challengers. That's really the best idea they have?

Renee asks Seth about what just happened. Rollins says the difference between himself and Kane is he finds a way to win the fight instead of running away all the time. He doesn't need the help of the WWE, the Authority, or even the Stooges.

Cesaro/Kidd vs. New Day for the titles tonight. So much for building a match up.

#### Damien Sandow vs. Curtis Axel

Sandow has new generic rock music and mimics the ring announcer's introduction. This has all of a few weeks before it gets old in a hurry. Sandow introduces Axel as the village idiot of Minneapolis and the Pigeon Toed Disappointment. Axel does the shirt rip and gets caught in a headlock for his efforts. This time it's Damien ripping his own shirt off and throwing Curtis to the floor before sitting down next to him. Back in and Curtis stomps Damien down and chokes him in the corner. A corner splash misses though and Sandow Hulks Up with three punches and a big boot into You're Welcome (full nelson slam) for the pin at 2:30.

Ryback thinks the eater of worlds has bitten off more than he can chew. Tonight, he's dedicating his match to Bray Wyatt when he devours Bray's former disciple Luke Harper.

### Ryback vs. Luke Harper

They grapple around to start with both guys grabbing headlocks. That's not Harper's style though so he slugs Ryback down, only to get caught by the Thesz press and having his head rammed into the mat. Luke comes back with a snap suplex but Ryback one ups him with a delayed vertical suplex, complete with a few marching steps. Davey Boy pounds on Dynamite in the corner but gets powerbombed down as we take a break.

Back with Ryback getting Gator Rolled until he powers Harper off, dropping him face first onto the mat. A powerslam sets up the Warrior splash for two. Ryback plants him with the spinebuster but the Meat Hook is countered by a superkick. The discus lariat is blocked with a Meat Hook though and it's the Shell Shock for the pin at 9:39.

**Rating:** C. I liked this about as much as I thought I would as you have two big power guys beating on each other for ten minutes. Ryback has been treated very well since his return to form and it's nice to see him getting a strong push. There's always going to be room for a guy like him with the smashmouth style and putting him in there against Harper or Wyatt could make for some good power brawls.

Speaking of Bray, he appears and beats Ryback down post match.

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

New Day took the title with some cheating on Sunday. Fans: "NEW DAY SUCKS!" Woods: "NO WE DON'T!" Kofi and Kidd get things going with Kidd grabbing a quick rollup for one, putting a big smile on his face. Off to a chinlock from Tyson before Cesaro snaps off an uppercut for two. The gutwrench suplex gets the same so Kofi tries a small package. That makes Cesaro chuckle as he powers Kingston up into a suplex, walks him over to the corner and tags in Kidd for a high cross body. That's just scary strength.

Big E. comes in off a blind tag but walks into a German suplex to keep the challengers in control. We get the NEW DAY SUCKS rhythmic stomping in the corner but a Kofi distraction lets Big E. knock Kidd off the apron to finally take over. Kidd gets caught in the wrong corner for some stomping from Kofi, followed by stomping from Big E. and a dropkick from Kofi. Kingston goes to the middle rope but dives into a dropkick. Big E. runs in to break up the hot tag attempt and we take a break. Back with Big E. holding Kidd in a bearhug before planting him with a belly to belly.

The New Day Boom Drop connects but Tyson ducks Trouble in Paradise, finally allowing for the hot tag to Cesaro. European uppercuts a go-go in the corner get two for Cesaro before a gorilla press drop gets the same with Big E. making the save. Big E. speeds things up and cleans house as everything breaks down. Kidd dives through the ropes to take out Kofi before Cesaro's middle rope back elbow drops Big E., setting up the Swing into the dropkick but Woods runs in for the DQ at 13:35.

**Rating:** B. These four have awesome chemistry and this was no exception. Now if only they could have a match built up instead of just throwing it out there on a Smackdown five days after the title change. Earlier this week on Austin's podcast, Wade Keller suggested building it up as a big time Smackdown main event like a month out. Why not? The match would rock and WWE clearly doesn't care about Smackdown anyway.

Summer Rae and Cameron are catty about Brie and Naomi. Nikki comes out to run Summer off and stands up to Cameron for her sister's honor. A match is made for later.

Tough Enough videos.

### Cameron vs. Nikki Bella

Non-title. This is Nikki's chance to carry a match. Naomi gets an inset interview talking about all the good the Bellas think they can do in the world. What good have those two ever done other than paying for a plastic surgeon to have a new boat? Nikki throws her down and does some jumping jacks before cranking on an armbar.

Cameron fights out of an armbar and ducks the spinning kick out of the

corner. A running kick to Nikki's back gets two and the silence as Cameron shouts at the referee is disturbing. We hit the chinlock on Nikki for a bit before she fights up and hits the second attempt at the kick out of the corner for two. The big forearm sets up the Rack Attack for the pin on Cameron at 3:56.

**Rating:** D+. So here's the thing: Nikki isn't horrible in the ring. She can even have a totally passable match more often than not. However, whether it's "I WISH YOU DIED IN THE WOMB!" to "of course my sister forgave me for being horrible to her" to having to carry Cameron, she gets stuck with some of the worst booking I've ever seen. I don't think she's ever going to be anything special in the ring, but she's doing what she can with what she has.

The Prime Time Players ask about the New Day and hear crickets. They introduce the New Day Clap Away box, which disappears whenever you clap enough times. You should call to put the Prime Time Players on TV and get their shirts on [WWEshop.com](http://WWEshop.com) so they can make millions of dollars.

Rollins and the Stooges come in to see Ambrose and ask him to step down instead. HHH is going to be back soon and he'll take out his rage on anyone who was involved with this mess, including Ambrose. Dean says that sounds good but he means seeing Rollins get humiliated.

Long recap of Tuesday's King of the Ring special with Barrett coming out with the crown.

### Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Dean starts on the armbar early on, sending Rollins outside for a breather. Back in and Seth takes him down with a hammerlock but Dean reverses and kicks him in the back of the head for two. A clothesline puts Seth on the floor but Dean follows him out for a right hand to the head. The Stooges get in some cheap shots so here's Kane to even things out, at least in theory.

Back from a break with Dean kicking him in the face but getting stomped right back down. Dean finally scores with a big clothesline followed by a barrage of chops and punches. A bulldog out of the corner sets up the

standing elbow but Rollins kicks him out of the air, only to get dropkicked to the floor. Dean nails a suicide dive and takes Seth back inside for two off a faceplant. They head to the corner with Rollins pulling Dean down into the buckle bomb for two more.

Rollins and Kane are ready to get inside and celebrate but Kane stares at Seth on the kicking. A surprise rollup gets two for Dean and he backdrops Seth onto Kane. Back up and Dean dives on everyone not named Rollins, who sends Ambrose into the barricade. Kane grabs Dean and Seth by the throat, earning him a tongue lashing from the referee. Dean has to save the referee but gets sent into the steps for his efforts. That falling front DDT is enough to give Rollins the pin at 13:46.

**Rating:** B-. They went a different way than I was expecting here but it still worked. Kane vs. Rollins isn't an interesting feud but they seem dead set on running with it no matter how many people fall asleep watching them. Above all else though: Rollins' new finisher is horrible. It looks like a transitional move but it's the finisher of the WWE World Champion. There must be something better than that.

Kane stares Seth down post match but joins the Stooges for the big beatdown. Cue Roman Reigns (coming down the ramp for a change) for the save. A double spear drops the Stooges to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. Solid show this week with good wrestling almost all around and two really solid matches. They set up more of the Reigns vs. Rollins part of the title match while leaving Orton's part for Monday. Kane is still annoying but at least they kept it short. Anytime I get to see Ryback trading shots with another brute and New Day vs. Cesaro/Kidd, it's a good night. Solid show this week.

### Results

Roman Reigns b. Kane via countout

Damien Sandow b. Curtis Axel – You're Welcome

Ryback b. Luke Harper – Shell Shock

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd b. New Day via DQ when Xavier Woods interfered

Nikki Bella b. Cameron – Rack Attack

Seth Rollins b. Dean Ambrose – Falling front DDT

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# WWE Releases King of the Ring Brackets

I've seen worse. Dean Ambrose  
Sheamus

Neville  
Luke Harper

R-Truth  
Stardust

Dolph Ziggler  
Bad News Barrett

Not bad other than basically giving Barrett/Ziggler a bye into the finals. I'm assuming it winds up with Sheamus vs. Ziggler again because WWE loves their rematches.

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# Extreme Rules 2015: Extremely... Something

## Extreme Rules 2015

Date: April 26, 2015

Location: Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's time for the night of Wrestlemania rematches, which often makes for a very entertaining card. The main event will see Seth Rollins defending the World Title against Randy Orton inside a cage with the RKO banned and Kane guarding the door. We also have Roman Reigns vs. Big Show in a last man standing match and Rusev vs. Cena III in a Russian chain match. Let's get to it.

Here's Bad News Barrett on the pre-show to tell us that Daniel Bryan isn't here tonight to defend the Intercontinental Title. Since Bryan can't be here, let's bring out Neville for a replacement so he can take the Bullhammer destined to go upside Bryan's head.

### Bad News Barrett vs. Neville

The fans are entirely behind Neville as Barrett grabs a headlock to start. Neville takes him to the mat and hooks a nice rollup for two before the front flips have Barrett even more confused. A dropkick sends him to the floor but Barrett trips Neville up to take over. Back from a break with Barrett holding a chinlock before throwing Neville into the air for a kick to the ribs and two. A big boot to the face gets the same on Neville and Barrett follows up with a nice slingshot backbreaker.

The second chinlock doesn't last as long, allowing Neville to fire off some kicks to the ribs to send Barrett outside, setting up the big spinning dive from Neville. Back in and Barrett catches him going up before planting Neville with Winds of Change for two. Wasteland gets a



VERY close two but the Bullhammer misses, allowing Neville to hit an enziguri. The Red Arrow is broken up but Barrett misses another Bullhammer. A second kick to the head sets up the Red Arrow from (Cole: "Adrian") Neville for the pin at 10:40.

**Rating:** C+. Well that's a surprise. Neville getting the win is a big deal as it's his biggest pin ever, even if everyone and their mother pin Barrett. In theory this sets up a feud between the two of them over who gets the title shot whenever Bryan comes back, if he does at all.

The opening video talks about how this is the most extreme night of the year and focuses on Rusev vs. Cena and Rollins vs. Orton. Again, it makes sense to add gimmicks so it's not just the same show as last month without the big stage.

#### Luke Harper vs. Dean Ambrose

Street fight, meaning the fall must take place in the ring. Dean takes over to start and knocks Harper to the floor for a suicide dive. Back in and we get the kendo sticks to Harper's back, followed by a chair being thrown inside. Dean sits down and licks his lips until Harper comes back and suplexes him through the chair. Luke starts going after the knee with the kendo stick before wedging a chair in the corner.

In a unique spot, Harper LAUNCHES Dean face first into the chair for two as the fans stay behind Ambrose. Back up and a tornado DDT gives Dean a breather as the fans want tables. Luke counters Dirty Deeds and the rebound clothesline before they head back to the floor. Dean's suicide dive is countered with a shove, so Dean does a kind of 619 and comes back with a clothesline in a cool spot.

They fight to the back with Luke being rammed into various things. Luke goes behind a wall and the camera has to run around to find him. THANK YOU! I can't remember the last time that happened but it drives me absolutely insane when there's a camera waiting on them. Harper and Dean get inside a car.....and drive away with the referee in the back. So I'm guessing the match is still going and continues later in the night?

HHH tells Kane to find that car before those two hurt someone. Rollins

comes in and tells them to calm down because this is a big night. Kane goes off on Rollins and calls him a punk, but HHH wants things calm head into the main event. Kane better not screw up though. The fans could be heard calling this boring and I can't say I disagree. Don't put this stuff on the pay per view. We know the story is boring by now so don't make it even worse.

### Dolph Ziggler vs. Sheamus

The winner has to kiss the winner's...uh yeah. Sheamus shoves him away to start but Ziggler comes back with forearms to the face. A dropkick staggers the big man and they fight to the floor. Ziggler is thrown at the steps but jumps on top of them for the slingshot DDT to stun Sheamus even more. Back in and Sheamus hits something like a Brogue Knee to take over. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Dolph fights up with another dropkick, only to get caught in a sitout powerbomb for two more.

Sheamus starts talking trash and follows it up with another devastating, yes DEVASTATING I say, chinlock. It's not devastating enough to prevent Ziggler from fighting up with right hands and a splash in the corner. The neckbreaker is countered and Sheamus nails a running ax handle, only to walk into a superkick for two. Sheamus plants him with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker as they're trading big shots here. The Brogue Kick misses and Ziggler rolls him up for two before a rolling cradle is enough to pin Sheamus at 9:25.

**Rating:** C+. This was just a TV match with a quick ending but the two worked pretty well together. The idea here was to have Ziggler bounce off Sheamus and make all the power moves look good, which he excels at. Solid enough match here, even if the gimmick was really stupid.

Post match Sheamus takes nearly five minutes to do what he's supposed to do but of course he hits Ziggler low and gives him a Brogue Kick before making Ziggler kiss up to him like a heel should.

Long video on what's coming on the Network.

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

Kidd/Cesaro are defending and are the default heels here. Cole says that it's Kofi and Big E. Langston for the New Day. Kofi takes Kidd to the mat to start but Tyson wraps the arm around the ropes to take over. Off to Big E. vs. Cesaro with Cesaro catching Big E.'s leapfrog in midair and throwing him into the corner. It's back to Kidd as the champions stomp Big E. to the tune of New Day Sucks in an awesome moment. Tyson sends both challengers to the floor for a suicide cannonball dive on Kofi, only to have Big E. clothesline him down. Fans: "NEW DAY! SUCKS!" Woods: "WHAT DID WE DO??? WE'RE WINNING!"

Back in and Kofi hits a basement dropkick in the corner before we hit the chinlock. Big E. misses the splash and gets low bridged to the floor, allowing for the hot tag to Cesaro. The Swing is teased but it's a catapult into the corner, where Kofi jumps to the top for a spinning cross body, but Cesaro catches him in mid air for a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. Cesaro's apron superplex sets up the springboard elbow from Kidd for two, only to have Big E. dive through the ropes to spear Kidd down.

Back in and the Midnight Hour gets two on Kidd with Cesaro making the save. Kofi gets caught in the Sharpshooter and this time it's E.'s turn to make the save. There's the Swing into the dropkick but Woods gets on the apron for a distraction, only to be taken out by Natalya. Kofi uses the distraction to slide in with a rollup and a handful of trunks for the pin and the titles at 9:37.

**Rating:** B+. I had a really good time with this as Cesaro and Kidd are one of the most polished teams for such a short amount of time together as you'll ever see. Hopefully these teams have several more matches together as they've got great chemistry and work together really well. Awesome match here and I'd love to see more of it.

The pre-show panel chats for a bit and talks about Neville vs. Barrett.

New Day celebrates their win as Ambrose and Harper return. They fight back to the arena and throw a bunch of weapons into the ring. Harper hits a quick powerbomb onto the chairs for two but takes too long putting Dean under the chairs, allowing Ambrose to toss him onto the steel. Dirty

Deeds connects for the pin at somewhere around 59:00.

**Rating:** D+. So uh...what the heck was the point of this? If they had done something like Mankind vs. HHH at In Your House XVI where they kept fighting all throughout the night this would have been fun but instead it was three fourths of a match, then a 50 minute break, then a quick finish. Were they just five minutes short or something?

Long recap of Cena vs. Rusev. They traded wins at the previous two pay per views but tonight Cena is defending the US Title in a Russian chain match.

US Title: John Cena vs. Rusev

Russian chain match of the four corners variety, meaning forward momentum has to be maintained or your streak of corners is erased. They start with a tug of war and Cena gets three quick buckles, followed by Rusev getting two of his own. Rusev sends him to the floor and suplexes him over the ropes for two buckles but Cena hits him with the chain to break it up. They head outside with Rusev being pulled into the post, knocking him half silly in the process.

Cena gets two buckles but Rusev wraps his legs around the ropes for the save. Rusev scores with the spinwheel kick and chains Cena in the back a few times but can only get two buckles. For some reason Rusev goes up top, only to get pulled down onto the chain. Cena starts his finishing sequence but gets caught in the fall away slam, setting up the jumping superkick. The fans want Lana so she gets on the apron, only to be ejected by Rusev. Cena hits his usual stuff but the AA is countered into the Alabama Slam.

The Accolade is reversed into the STF and the rope Rusev grabs means nothing. Rusev pulls him down and hooks the Accolade so Cena gets to his feet and drives Rusev into two corners. He collapses from the hold though and Rusev hits the third, only to walk into the AA to break the streak. Back up and they both quickly get three, setting up a tug of war over the fourth. Rusev rushes for it but Cena pulls him into the AA and slaps the fourth to retain at 13:35.

**Rating:** C. I'm actually surprised but they did find a different way to end the thing. That being said, these matches can only be so good as the gimmick gets in the way of the match. Other than the match being called a Russian chain match, there's no distinct advantage here for Rusev and it makes for a pretty average match. Not bad or anything, but I'll never want to watch this again.

Roman Reigns talks about how he'll keep getting up and win the last man standing match tonight.

#### Divas Title: Nikki Bella vs. Naomi

Nikki is defending and Naomi got the shot after attacking Paige, who had won a battle royal to earn the title match. Naomi has new music, stupid looking glasses and shoes that light up. Nikki puts on an armbar to start but gets suplexed down for two. The shoes are already really distracting as Naomi hooks a chinlock. Back up and Nikki avoids the Rear View but Naomi stops to dance a bit.

Naomi charges into an elbow in the corner and the Alabama Slam gets two. Back up and Naomi gets the same off a falling reverse DDT. A quick Bubba Bomb into a rollup gets the same but Nikki comes back with something like a Beautiful Disaster from the middle rope for two. Brie gets in a cheap shot on Naomi, setting up the Rack Attack to retain the title at 7:17. Those are our new heroes?

**Rating:** C. The Bellas (they're a collective entity in my mind at this point) are acceptable in the ring and improving, but they're far too annoying to make me ever care about/like them, especially with the one not in the match shouting COME ON \*insert other sister's name here\* a dozen times a match. It also doesn't help that they might be the worst written characters I've seen in years with the stories starting and stopping and them suddenly being faces with no reason given. Also their Total Divas personas haven't done them any favors. Somehow this is going to wind up as the Funkadactyls vs. Bellas isn't it?

Rusev yells at Lana and storms off. Lana hangs her head and walks into the Authority's locker room. That's something I guess and the fans gasped

when they saw whose room it was.

We recap Reigns vs. Big Show, which exists to prove that there is a devil and his name is Vince McMahon.

### Roman Reigns vs. Big Show

Last man standing. They slug it out to start and Reigns knocks Show to the floor before getting an early table. Big Show shoves it back under the ring so Reigns posts him, setting up the apron kick for five. The table reappears and is set up at ringside but Big Show breaks it with his fists so Reigns can't put him through it.

Reigns opts for a kendo stick and nails Show with it a few times, only to have Show break it apart, saying he's a giant. Thanks for pointing that out. Show goes into his slow offense and the fans chant BORING, so Reigns gets a chair and blasts Show about ten times to put him down. A DDT on the chair stuns Show and allows Reigns to get two tables. The delay lets Show get back up for the KO Punch though, sending Reigns down for eight.

Show is annoyed so Roman hits a Samoan drop through the table. Back up and Big Show hits a spear, followed by the most polite, least impactful Vader Bomb you'll ever see. Reigns gets to his feet so Show goes up, only to get slammed down for almost no reaction. Two Superman Punches connect but Show catches the third and chokeslams Roman over the top and through the two tables Reigns set up earlier.

Naturally it only gets nine so Big Show leaves Reigns alone as he sets up the announcers' table. In a funny bit, Show sees the announcers' notes that say he needs to lose weight and yells at JBL. Back in and Reigns avoids a charge through a table in the corner, setting up a spear for eight.

Show rolls outside so Reigns spears him through the barricade for a spot we've seen before. It doesn't help that Show was motionless at seven and on his feet at nine. Show loads up a chokeslam on the table but Reigns escapes and runs the tables to spear Show through the Spanish table for eight. Reigns finally buries Show under the table for the win at 19:43.

**Rating:** C+. The worst part? The match wasn't really even that bad. Just too long though and the ending didn't do what they were hoping. Why did they need to have the table cover him when they could have done the spear for the win? In other words, it was a table that kept Show down instead of Reigns. Great way to make your next big star look awesome there guys. This could have been WAY worse, but the lack of crowd interest had them dead on arrival.

Randy Orton tells Kane that the Authority will turn on him.

We look at some Tough Enough applications.

Here's Bo Dallas, who wants to know why Chicago is the Second City when they're clearly #1! That would be #1 at rejecting someone trying to make their lives better. The people here shouldn't worry about how extreme the rules get because they should be worrying about bo-lieving. Cue Ryback and the obvious happens.

Rusev is annoyed about the loss when Lana comes in and says it's done. There will be one more match between Cena and Rusev at Payback and it's I Quit.

#### WWE World Title: Randy Orton vs. Seth Rollins

In a cage with Rollins defending, the RK0 banned and Kane guarding the cage door. Pinfall, submission or escape to win. Rollins goes for the cage twice early and Randy pulls him down on the second attempt. A third attempt goes just as badly so Rollins climbs one more time and sends Orton into the cage to take over for a change. Seth gets reversed into the cage again and the chase is on up the cage wall with Orton making a save.

Rollins almost escapes again and this time the Stooges come out to help, only to have Orton superplex him off the top for a big crash and two. Kane yells at the Stooges as Orton can't follow up. To change up the pace of the escape counters, Orton crotches him on the top rope instead. The Elevated DDT plants Rollins and Lawler is already proclaiming Orton the next champion.

Orton loads up the RKO but opts for a decent looking Pedigree for two instead. The fans chant YES as Orton loads up the Punt but Rollins ducks to the side and hits a quick enziguri. Kane is told to open the door and obeys the champ but Randy is right there with the backbreaker to stop Rollins again.

The door stays open so Orton stops to think about it, but the threat of Kane sends him back. That threat proves to be well founded as Kane slams the door when Orton tries to leave. Randy does the smart thing by kicking the door at Kane before it turns into a fight to escape. Kane slams the door on both men and takes off his jacket, so the Stooges send Kane into the cage. The monster chokeslams both guys and loads up a tombstone on Orton, only to have Randy escape and RKO Kane. Seth uses the distraction to RKO Orton, allowing him to escape and retain at 20:50.

**Rating:** C. This wasn't terrible but it took longer than it should have and ended with a pretty lame surprise. They were treating the RKO from Rollins like Austin siding with Vince when it was really just a technicality. The match was good enough but the gimmick continues to drag things down. Some of the early escape attempts were good though.

**Overall Rating:** C+. I liked this more than I thought I would but it still wasn't a blow away show. Unfortunately we seem to be heading for round 3 of multiple feuds at Payback, despite there being very little left for these people to fight over. Definitely a watchable show, but can we please get some fresh ideas on top? Like, even adding someone else to Orton vs. Rollins and no Kane doesn't count. Better than I was expecting but still not great.

### Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Sheamus – Rolling cradle

New Day b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Dean Ambrose b. Luke Harper – Dirty Deeds

John Cena b. Rusev – Cena touched the fourth buckle

Nikki Bella b. Naomi – Rack Attack



Roman Reigns b. Big Show – Show couldn't answer the ten count

Seth Rollins b. Randy Orton – Rollins escaped the cage

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# Smackdown – April 23, 2015: Why Go Extreme When You Can Go Better Than Average?

## **Smackdown**

Date: April 23, 2015

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

It's the final show before Extreme Rules and for some reason in 2015, one of the major stories is Kane seemingly about to turn on the Authority and becoming a bigger deal than he is now. Of course it's possible that it's all a swerve and Kane will cost Orton the title match on Sunday, making the last few weeks a big waste of time, much like Kane in general. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence opens, as is its custom.

Here are Rollins and the Stooges to open things up. After a recap of

everything that happened on Monday with the RK0's all around, Rollins mocks the RK0 OUTTA NOWHERE concept. It's a good thing Orton got all those out of his system because the RK0 is banned on Sunday. Speaking of Sunday, Rollins doesn't need anyone's help, including an aging former monster' like Kane.

Strike up the organ of course so Kane can come out and threaten to chokeslam Rollins right now. He can either keep the title on Rollins this Sunday or destroy him right now. Seth laughs it off and says Kane will be fired for crossing the Authority. HHH only gave Kane that job to make him feel better because Kane is just a suit these days. Kane obeying the Authority is what's best for business.

Seth brings up Kane laying down and says that's what he should be doing, but Kane thinks Seth should lay down for him right now. He'll even make it non-title. A referee comes down and we get a bell. Rollins says this isn't right but Kane says he's the Authority tonight. The threat of disembowelment convinces Seth to lay down but as Kane goes to cover him, he says he's just kidding and helps Seth up.

However, Kane isn't done yet as he makes Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose RIGHT NOW. Ambrose comes running out but Luke Harper follows, setting up a big beatdown on Dean. With things going bad, Roman Reigns comes out for the save, chasing off Rollins and Harper with Superman Punches.

#### Dolph Ziggler/Neville vs. Bad News Barrett/Sheamus

On the way to the ring, Sheamus says it's an insult to have underdogs like the men in the ring compared to real men like them. He even offers to bring Ziggler a stepladder to help Ziggler kiss up to him on Sunday. Neville starts with Sheamus and starts kicking away at the leg, followed by a running hurricanrana to send Sheamus outside. Barrett gets sent out as well and Neville hits a big running flip to take them both down.

Back from a break with Barrett holding Neville in a chinlock before Sheamus drops him with a release suplex. Neville finally fights up and kicks Sheamus in the head, allowing the hot tag to Ziggler. The jumping elbow and running DDT get two each on Barrett but a Sheamus distraction lets Barrett hit a quick Wasteland for two more. Ziggler spins around the

shoulders though, setting up a Zig Zag into the Red Arrow for the pin on Barrett at 8:39.

**Rating:** C. This was a nice way to set things up, but again, well done on having a guy who might be winning the Intercontinental Title in three days look bad. That being said, it's really nice to see Neville get yet another pin over a big name. Even though everyone pins Barrett, it's still the biggest fall of Neville's career.

We get the Tough Enough announcement and see some of the best/worst video submissions so far. Yeah fine. Just let me know when the winner (other than John Morrison) means anything.

Bray Wyatt says someone's strength is an illusion, just like anyone else. He sees right through this person because fear is the same for every man. Bray will expose him as a weakling very soon. How does life work for a butterfly with no wings?

#### Naomi vs. Natalya

I guess Natalya is a face again. Naomi slugs her down to start and catapults Natayla throat first into the bottom rope for two. A chinlock doesn't last long so Naomi drops an elbow, only to miss a legdrop. Natalya does the stepover into the dropkick, only to walk into the Rear View for the pin at 2:28. As usual, the week to week continuity dominates the Divas.

The next target for the Prime Time Players is the Tag Team Champions. Kidd is whipped and Cesaro is interesting. Why is he interesting? Well....uh....you see.....he's German! Uh I mean Swiss, but it's the same thing.

#### Ryback vs. Rusev

Jobber entrance for Rusev but Lana gives a speech about the strength of the Russian chain, which has protected the greatest of Russia for years. Rusev says the chain is his weapon and a burden to Cena, to whom no mercy will be shown. They stare each other down to start before locking up with Rusev shoving him into the corner. Ryback nails a running clothesline for

two and the Russian is stunned. A delayed suplex puts Rusev down again but he rolls to the floor before Ryback can stay on him.

Back in and Ryback misses a charge into the post, sending us to a break. We come back with Rusev putting on a quickly broken bearhug. Ryback fires off some right hands and gets two off a belly to belly, only to splash legs. The Meat Hook and jumping superkick are countered but the second Meat Hook connects. Rusev slips out of a Shell Shock though and heads outside, where he hits Ryback in the ribs with the chain for the DQ at 9:57.

**Rating:** C-. Take two guys and let them beat on each other for a few minutes. It's a strategy that has worked for years and it worked well enough here. This was a pretty good way to make Rusev look like a killer again, even if it's just a way to set him up again to be destroyed by Cena.

Ryback gets the Accolade with the chain around the face.

Jamie Noble isn't worried about Harper because it turns out they're cousins. Harper comes up in his usual trance and Noble tries to get his attention, but Harper is annoyed that they broke his concentration. He was thinking of all the ways he can hurt people you see.

### Kofi Kingston vs. Cesaro

Before the match, the New Day blames the lack of positivity in WWE on the lack of clapping. Have no fear because New Day is here! Woods says they're like medicine: they may not taste good going down, but they're the right thing for you. Kofi goes on a rant about how the WWE isn't listening to them but soon enough they will embrace the New Day. They're kind of awesome at this.

The fans aren't pleased and chant their version of the catchphrase. A dropkick puts Cesaro down to start but he uppercuts Kofi into the Swing, only to have everyone else brawl on the floor. Trouble in Paradise hits out of nowhere for the pin at 1:30. That's not as bad as it's not a tag match loss.

Big Show has had enough of Roman Reigns and is ready to expose him for what he is.

### Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins/Luke Harper

Kane is at ringside. Ambrose and Harper get things going with Dean taking him down to the mat and ripping at Harper's face. Off to Reigns for a stomping in the corner before Dean gets another tag and hits a basement clothesline. Harper finally gets Ambrose into the corner for a tag to the champ to take over. A headlock into a front facelock keep Dean in trouble before Rollins throws him to the floor for a big boot from Harper.

We take a break and come back with Dean fighting out of a chinlock but having to DDT Harper instead of tagging. Seth comes back in to break up the hot tag attempt with a clothesline before both guys try cross bodies. The double tag brings in the power guys with Roman cleaning house but having to Superman Punch the Stooges off the apron. Harper takes one as well before Dean nails Rollins with the top rope standing elbow.

Luke partially blocks Dean's suicide dive and sends him over the timekeeper's area, only to eat a clothesline from Reigns. Rollins comes back in with the springboard knee for two and it's the discus lariat for two. Dean comes in off the hot tag to clean house. The rebound clothesline puts Rollins down and Dean low bridges Harper to the floor. Dean dives on the pile at ringside, only to have Kane throw Rollins back inside, allowing Reigns to hit the spear on Rollins for the pin at 16:44.

**Rating:** B. This was a much better main event tag than I was expecting. I'm not wild on the champion getting pinned but that's one of those things you learn to live with in WWE. It's also par for the course for this title reign but that's another story for another time. Anyway, good, long tag match here which was better than I was expecting.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Pretty fun show tonight with a good main event to carry things. Extreme Rules isn't the most interesting card in the world but a lot of that is due to the show just being a bunch of Wrestlemania rematches. The direction of a lot of things is still questionable but at least we had a fun two hour show to get us to the pay per view.

## Results

Dolph Ziggler/Neville b. Bad News Barrett/Sheamus – Red Arrow to Barrett

Naomi b. Natalya – Rear View

Ryback b. Rusev via DQ when Rusev hit him with a chain

Kofi Kingston b. Cesaro – Trouble in Paradise

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Seth Rollins/Luke Harper – Spear to Rollins

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# John Cena's "Gimmick Infringement" of Steve Austin

Are we really this bored these days?

So let me get this straight: Cena started using a springboard Stunner (allegedly due to Austin filming Broken Skull Challenge instead of Tough Enough and Vince being a vindictive old man that was annoyed at Austin for having a career outside of WWE, though that's still pretty much speculation) and the response is that it's gimmick infringement. I for one certainly agree.

It's the same as Randy Orton and Diamond Dallas Page, Dean Ambrose and Mick Foley, Fandango and John Cena (who cares which way the guy is facing? It's still a top rope legdrop) and the probably dozen guys who have used a superkick over the years and Shawn Michaels. I mean, Tyler Breeze and Alberto Del Rio are clearly ripping off Shawn Michaels.

Calling this gimmick infringement shows that wrestling fans continue to type before they think for ten seconds, as for one thing it's not gimmick infringement but move somewhat, kind of, almost, maybe, sort of move borrowing. On the other hand, it's not even the same move. The moves are the same as the RKO and Diamond Cutter or Drew McIntyre's Future Shock and Jake Roberts' DDT. If you want to talk about gimmick infringement, talk about Orton being named after a snake and posing with two arms in the air on the ropes a few years back.

This is a non-story but for some reason people are bored and trying to make it into a thing because they're not thinking, as is so often the case. It's on par with the dust up of Michelle McCool using the Styles Clash a few years ago when TNA fans complained about it and then McCool said something along the lines of "Uh, it's not a big deal" and that was the end of it. This isn't a big deal and the fact that it was talked about so much makes my head hurt.

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## **Thought of the Day: It's Deja Vu All Over Again**

Let's see if this one makes your skin crawl.

So I got to thinking about Seth Rollins tonight and the path he took to the World Title. In case you've forgotten, here's a flashback.

He starts by winning a developmental title. That's nice people say, but what can he do with the big boys? Well he makes it to the main roster and

gets in a team. That's nice too, but he's being outshined by his partner. The other guy has the look, the skills, and the charisma and is going to be the star.

Well then they win the Tag Team Titles and it's time for the guys to shine. The title reign goes well enough and they put on some good performances, but once they lost the titles, it was time to move on up. They started fighting bigger names and it all went well, but, as happens with every team, they split. As is the obvious move, they started feuding and the heel won, despite the fans thinking the other guy was the natural. Somewhere along the way the heel also won the Money in the Bank briefcase.

Then he got his big break and became captain of an elimination tag team. Despite looking like the guy that was going to be forgotten, he was suddenly the star and someone you could see as the future, even though his old partner seemed like the better option in some fans' eyes.

Then he cashed in Money in the Bank, won the World Title and walked out of Wrestlemania in one of the biggest shocks of all time, despite one of the hottest stars in the world and the guy fans were sure was going to take the title (his former Tag Team Championship partner) were in the same ring. Some people were scared, some people were stunned, some people were pleased, but he walked out with the title and is going to brag about it for the rest of time.

Oh wait I've gotten my notes crossed. I meant to be talking about [THIS GUY](#).

But I was talking about [THIS GUY](#).

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# Monday Night Raw – April 13, 2015: Show and Tell

## Monday Night Raw

Date: April 13, 2015

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

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

We're taped from England tonight as the build to Extreme Rules continues. Coming off last week, we know Randy Orton is going to be challenging Seth Rollins for the World Title at the next pay per view but we don't have much more set up than that. The only match announced so far is a Divas battle royal for the title shot against Nikki Bella. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with John Cena to a very loud JOHN CENA SUCKS to the tune of his music. Even Cena seems a bit blown away by how intense it is tonight. Cena brings up the London crowd not liking him all that much but it means they have more energy than any crowd WWE performs for.

He gets them on his side by saying London deserves Wrestlemania and has to pause for the YES chant. Those in charge have decided to wait for a London Wrestlemania, much like Rusev waiting to challenge for the US Title. The open challenge is on right now so here's Bad News Barrett to a nice reaction to accept. Why wait for his Intercontinental Title shot at Extreme Rules?

## US Title: Bad News Barrett vs. John Cena

The fans are almost entirely behind Barrett as he shrugs off a headlock and kicks Cena to the floor. Back in and the champ puts on another headlock so Bad News kicks him in the face again. The knees to the head in the ropes have Cena in even more trouble and Barrett hits another big boot to knock Cena to the floor one more time. Cena comes back with a dropkick and a high cross body for two. He's been adding more moves lately and it's always nice to see.

Barrett rolls to the floor to avoid the Shuffle and sends Cena into the steps. A missed top rope elbow lets Cena hit the Shuffle this time but the AA is countered into Winds of Change for two. Cena grabs the STF out of nowhere but Barrett is too close to the ropes. A low superkick gets two for Bad News and both guys are down. Barrett throws him into the corner for another kick to the face, setting up Wasteland for another near fall.

The AA gets two (when was the last time the first one of those pinned someone not named Stardust?) and the Bull Hammer gets the same (when was the last time Cena didn't kick out of a finisher?), followed by the springboard Stunner into the second AA to retain Cena's title at 9:55.

**Rating:** C+. Not bad but it felt like they were going through the motions here more than having a naturally good match. It doesn't help that it's clear that Cena is retaining until Extreme Rules, but could you at least make it feel like Barrett has a better chance? Also, stop kicking out of the finisher and having the AA only get two. We get the concept now.

Post match Lana comes out to distract Cena so Rusev can come in and get a cheap shot with a chain. The rematch is officially a Russian chain match.

We recap Orton winning the triple threat last week to get the pay per view title shot.

Orton vs. Cesaro and Rollins vs. Ziggler tonight. If Rollins and/or Orton win, they get to pick the stipulations for Extreme Rules.

### Battle Royal

Rosa Mendes, Paige, Naomi, Natalya, Cameron, Summer Rae, Alicia Fox, Emma

Winner gets Nikki Bella at Extreme Rules and the Bellas are on commentary. Everyone pairs off and Rosa actually dropkicks Summer and Natalya, only to get dropkicked out a few seconds later. Another dropkick, this time from Fox, gets rid of Emma. Cameron and Alicia team up to go after Paige and get loudly booed, only to have Paige slide back in. A double Rear View puts Cameron down and Alicia gets rid of Paige, leaving her with Naomi as the final two. They fight to the apron with

both coming close to elimination, only to have Paige avoid the Rear View, allowing her to superkick her to the floor at 3:50.

**Rating:** D-. Well that sucked, just like most Divas battle royals. The Bellas are great at getting on my nerves, but unfortunately they have to get in the ring at some point and that makes things even worse. They're more annoying than anything else and that's not what you want as the face of a division. Hopefully Naomi gets back in this as she belongs in the title scene.

Post break Paige reminds us of her success in WWE so far but says nothing feels better than to win this match in England. She remembers getting paid five pounds for a match when she was wrestling in high school gyms but now she's in front of her family and friends on the biggest stage of them all. Naomi comes back in and lays out Paige before driving her into the barricade.

Bray talks about a certain someone he's becoming obsessed with and it's becoming a sin. Love can blind everything and whoever he's talking about is in luck. Bray has decided to reach inside himself and pull out the love that is growing like a cancer. Fear is stronger than any love can be because it can take away what you care about. Still no word on who he's talking about.

### Lucha Dragons vs. Ascension

These teams just can't get away from each other. Ascension doesn't get an entrance but they do share an NXT chant. The big guys throw Cara around to start but a quick hot tag brings in Kalisto to hit his springboard twisting cross body. Cara hits Konnor with a suicide dive, setting up the Salida Del Sol and the Swanton Bomb to pin Viktor at 2:18.

Here's Roman Reigns for his first interview since Wrestlemania. The fans chant SUPLEX CITY and Reigns remembers going there. He busted Brock up though and gave the fans the fight he and Brock had promised them. This brings interviewer Booker T to Seth Rollins, who Reigns was about to face had it not been for Big Show. Reigns thinks Show has just been following Rollins around lately and the fans seem to agree.

This brings Big Show onto the screen to say he's loved making Reigns into the biggest failure in WWE history. He's going to turn him into a football league? It was his pleasure to stop Reigns every week and he's going to keep doing it every chance he gets. Reigns says Show should come out here and say that to his face so Reigns can shove the trophy down his throat.

Reigns goes to leave but Big Show jumps him, throwing Reigns into parts of the set and against the door of the cab. He adds a chokeslam on top of the cab, which doesn't give way.

### Randy Orton vs. Cesaro

If Orton wins, he gets to pick a stipulation for the World Title match at Extreme Rules. Cesaro takes over with some European uppercuts in the corner and a double stomp for no cover. Kidd is enjoying the match so much that he's taken his headphones off. We hit the chinlock on Randy but Orton fights up and comes back, only to have Kidd grab his leg for the DQ at 2:19.

Post match Kane comes out and says he's still in charge because the Authority is back from vacation but don't want to be in London. He can't let this match end in a DQ so he's restarting it as a handicap match.

### Cesaro/Tyson Kidd vs. Randy Orton

Orton gets double teamed and we quickly take a break. Back with Cesaro hammering away in the corner before it's off to Kidd, who launches Orton into a European uppercut for two. Orton fights back but Cesaro pulls his partner to the floor to avoid an RKO. That's fine with Orton who drops Cesaro back first onto the barricade, only to eat Tyson's knee to the face. Back in and Kidd's springboard elbow (love that move) gets two, but Cesaro gets throw to the floor, allowing Orton to catch another springboard in an RKO for the pin on Kidd at 6:46.

**Rating:** D+. Well Cesaro and Kidd, it was nice while it lasted but you're now the victims of being Tag Team Champions. I have no idea why we needed to see Orton beat both of them at once, when having him beat either Cesaro or both of them in back to back singles matches would have

accomplished the same basic result. But then again, why not have the champions look like losers if you can?

Rollins gets on Kane's back for Orton winning but Kane tells him to beat Ziggler tonight. Rollins thinks that's too dangerous, so he's facing Jamie Noble instead. Noble doesn't like the idea of laying down when Kane got them into this mess. Kane has another idea involving Jamie's testicles and a car battery. Rollins backs Noble up and says Kane's job is to protect the title. Maybe Kane should be the one laying down tonight. If Kane doesn't like that, maybe they should just call HHH. Notice something here: Seth is emasculating Kane to set up a face turn. Stephanie emasculates people and we never see a comeback.

#### Adam Rose vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose goes right at him to start but Rose takes it to the mat for a chinlock. That goes nowhere as Dean fights back up with chops and punches before hitting some running forearms. He follows up with a suicide dive and Rose is in big trouble. Back inside and Rose knocks him into the ropes for the rebound clothesline, followed by Dirty Deeds for the pin at 2:08. Nothing match but when was the last time Ambrose won a match clean?

Big Show reminds Kane of Survivor Series where he turned on John Cena. He knows the Authority is the winning side and warns Kane about crossing the Authority. Kane understands and says he'll do what's best for business against Rollins.

#### Fandango vs. Stardust

Well this is....something. Stardust runs him over to start and tells the fans his name. Fandango goes up but Stardust rolls away and hits the Disaster Kick for the pin at 1:10.

Post match Fandango blames Rosa for the loss and dances on the table to his old music, sending the crowd into a HUGE Fandangoing dance. See, why do this after a loss? Why not have him beat like, Heath Slater without having Rosa out there and say that's why he hasn't been winning? Same result, no loss.

Daniel Bryan can't believe Kane is going to lay down and brings up the Fingerpoke of Doom of all things to say how stupid it was. Kane finally snaps but Bryan tells him to go out there and be a man. For goodness' sake STOP TALKING ABOUT WCW LIKE IT WAS TRASH. We get it: fourteen years ago you beat a show that wasn't even on the air six years. LET THE THING DIE ALREADY.

Rusev vs. Cena is officially a Russian chain match.

### Seth Rollins vs. Kane

If Rollins wins, he gets to pick a stipulation for the match vs. Rollins at Extreme Rules. Kane is out in a suit but starts disrobing after the bell rings. He gets in Seth's face but hears that it's best for business. Kane slowly lays down but stands up, drawing in the Stooges. They're both thrown to the floor so Rollins yells at him, only to get smacked in the face. Rollins tells him to lay down but eventually eats a chokeslam. Kane signals for the tombstone but stops mid throat slit. He lays down again and pulls Rollins on top of him for the pin at 4:35.

**Rating:** C+. Well they started slow but that second batch of staring was straight out of Funk vs. Brisco back in 68. Just great stuff there. Unfortunately it was downhill from there and the Stooges interfering ruined what was otherwise great stuff. Still though, that 18 seconds of staring made it work. Good enough match.

### Miz vs. Damien Mizdow

Mizdow has Summer Rae with him after kissing her on Smackdown. After spending a minute on the disrobing, Miz jumps Mizdow to get going. A quick Reality Check puts Miz down but neither can hit the Skull Crushing Finale. Instead, Mizdow rolls him up for the pin at 2:10.

This week, the Prime Time Players make fun of Los Matadores by pulling out a stuffed rainbow bear to represent Torito. Young: "Rainbow is my favorite color!" Titus asks why two guys from Puerto Rico are bullfighters. Cue the Millions of Dollars dance. These promos are nothing special, but man alive they've actually got me liking the Players a bit. Imagine that: you get to know a wrestler a bit better and you actually

have a bit of a connection to them.

Cole calls the announcements of the stipulations the Extreme Decisions and says people have been calling it by that name tonight. WHO IS CALLING IT THAT COLE??? WHO BESIDES YOU HAS CALLED IT THAT IN THE LAST FIFTEEN MINUTES???

### Ryback vs. Luke Harper

Ryback hammers away to start but Harper shoves him out of the corner. A superkick drops Ryback though and it's Gator Roll time. Back up and Harper has to roll away from the Meat Hook so he heads outside, where he nails Ryback with a piece of the announcers' table for the DQ at 1:50.

Naomi is disappointed in herself for attacking Paige out there but cracks up and says she couldn't care less. See, it's all about her not being Divas Champion. Why did they have to have a battle royal tonight after she pinned Nikki twice? She was in the same season of NXT as AJ Lee but AJ is gone and Naomi hasn't had her chance yet. Why is AJ considered a legend already? It's time for her to get her shot. Thank goodness it wasn't another "it's all about me" character.

Dolph Ziggler questions Kane laying down for Rollins as being best for business. Tonight though, he wants to compete in this ring so it's open challenge time.

### Neville vs. Dolph Ziggler

Good pop for Neville, as usual. A quick wristdrag takes Dolph down and Neville flips into the corner. He takes Dolph down and hits a standing shooting star before slapping on a chinlock. The running DDT plants him for two though and we take a break. Back with Neville throwing Ziggler into the air for a big crash. Dolph makes the mistake of rolling to the floor for a HUGE springboard moonsault and it's all Neville so far.

Neville slides in but slides right back out, walks the barricade and hits a 450 onto Dolph to really get the crowd into things (with good reason. That looked GREAT). Back in and Neville hits a standing enziguri but charges into a superkick for two. Neville comes back with another kick

but can't hit the Red Arrow. He misses a charge too and the Zig Zag gives Dolph the pin at 9:09.

**Rating:** B-. Neville is a great guy to have on the roster as he has a good look and can fly all over the place to pop the crowd. The key thing to him is that he doesn't wrestle like a small guy, but rather a guy who happens to be small. As long as they don't acknowledge his size too much, it's never going to be a detriment against him.

Ziggler checks on Neville post match but gets run over by Sheamus. Neville takes a Brogue Kick but Ziggler fights back, only to be taken to the floor for a Brogue Kick of his own.

It's time for the announcement of the stipulations and Rollins has a La-Z-Boy. The Stooges have their own leather chairs but Orton isn't impressed. Orton wants to fight right now but Rollins would rather just announce his stipulation: at Extreme Rules, the RKO is banned. Orton likes that thinking and wants to take away Rollins' best weapon as well. That's not his speed or intelligence, but rather the Authority. Therefore, it's a cage match at Extreme Rules, which takes away some of Rollins' smirk. Orton wants to fight now and cleans house but Rollins runs from a DDT attempt, leaving Mercury to take the RKO to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. I liked this show and I'm really liking where things seem to be going at the moment. There's some questionable stuff for sure, but we're getting better motivation from wrestlers than we've had in a long time. The key to that change: they're telling us. If there are two things that drives me crazy in wrestling it's getting no explanation or being told we don't deserve one. Just something simple like "I don't like small people" or "I beat the champ twice and should be #1 contender" tell us more than enough to warrant a feud. Keep that up and things will get better every week.

## Results

John Cena b. Bad News Barrett – Attitude Adjustment

Paige won a battle royal last eliminating Naomi



Lucha Dragons b. Ascension – Swanton Bomb to Viktor

Randy Orton b. Cesaro via DQ when Tyson Kidd interfered

Randy Orton b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – RKO to Kidd

Dean Ambrose b. Adam Rose – Dirty Deeds

Stardust b. Fandango – Disaster Kick

Seth Rollins b. Kane – Kane laid down

Damien Mizdow b. Miz – Rollup

Ryback b. Luke Harper via DQ when Harper hit Ryback with the announcers' table

Dolph Ziggler b. Neville – Zig Zag

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## **Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 30, 2015**

I really don't think this show needs an in depth preview. It's the Raw after Wrestlemania and the expectations are all through the roof for tonight. We're going to see debuts, big storyline development and fallout

from Wrestlemania. This is my favorite show of the year and it has a lot to live up to after last year's edition. Let's get to it.

We open with the only real option we had: Lesnar and Heyman, with one wanting blood and the other likely wanting to find catering. They bragged about the big title match last night and how Lesnar did exactly what he said he would but then Seth Rollins had to interfere and steal Brock's title. Heyman threatened litigation, but Brock would rather have his rematch tonight instead. This brings out Stephanie, who actually sells the arm injury from Rousey last night, and says Rollins is on his way here and will fight when he arrives. This was basically HHH wanting a match with Bryan last year but not as memorable.

Daniel Bryan beat Dolph Ziggler to retain the Intercontinental Title with the running knee in a match the live crowd thought was FAR more entertaining than it really was. Yeah it was entertaining, but they gave the guys a standing ovation near the end. That was way more than they deserved, especially in a match that didn't last twelve minutes. Post match Barrett came in but Sheamus returned for the save, only to turn heel and lay out Bryan and Barrett.

One of the things discussed most since last week has been Sheamus' new mohawk haircut and braided beard. I get the idea of wanting to change things up for someone who has become as dull as Sheamus (love the in ring work, bored by the character but I still really like him overall), but dear goodness man. You can't expect to have anyone hate this guy if they're too busy laughing at him for his stupid haircut. I can't imagine that lasts until even Extreme Rules, but it didn't exactly have the intended effect. At least I hope it didn't.

The first callup of the night was the Lucha Dragons, who stole the eight man tag also involving the New Day, Cesaro/Kidd and Ascension. Kalisto was all over the place and is definitely being tooled as the new Rey Mysterio. I dig the guy and there's nothing wrong with having a small guy that flies all over the place and does a bunch of cool flips. Ascension is dead in the water and New Day is getting ready to go for an ill fated swim.

Now we get to the big story of the night as Brock Lesnar came out for his match with Rollins, but Seth said he was too jetlagged to fight. Brock didn't quite care for that and beat up the Stooges and Cole, the latter of whom had a bad neck (of course he'll be back on Raw this week because we NEED Michael Cole). He also turned over the announcers' table, which for some reason wasn't turned back over all night, even once Byron Saxton and Jerry Lawler came out to replace the announcers.

The big thing here though was Brock screen refreshing a cameraman and being suspended by Stephanie, whose arm is totally fine now because of course it is. This was a way to get Brock off TV for the summer, which is fine, especially considering how big of a face pop he's going to get when he finally returns. Post break, Stephanie went into full screech mode to say Brock will be her censored, which is EXACTLY what this segment needed: Stephanie looking strong and Brock not being able to retaliate. I was getting scared there for a minute.

Damien Mizdow beat Stardust in a quick match which only existed so Miz could come out and attack Mizdow to continue their feud.

Not Adrian Neville had his big debut and beat Curtis Axel in less than eighty seconds. This was all it needed to be and Neville looks like a great high flier. Put the Adrian back though as just Neville is kind of an odd name.

Now we get to one of my favorite parts of the night: the first weekly John Cena Open Challenge for the US Title. This could open up a lot of doors with Cena possibly putting over one guy after another week after week. Now for those of you who don't get the meaning of wrestling terms, putting someone over doesn't mean losing to them. The best example for Cena is Damien Sandow last year. Yeah Sandow lost the match, but he never looked like a bigger deal in his career. Being paired with Cena is like being paired with Undertaker at Wrestlemania: you're automatically a bigger deal because you get to rub elbows with him.

This week's challenger was Dean Ambrose, who had a really good match against Cena but came up short, eventually getting caught in the AA. This was one of the longer match of the night and while it took some time to

get going, once they hit the third gear with the finishing moves, I was totally into the match and bought the Dirty Deeds as a near finisher for Ambrose. Dean teased a heel turn post match but it didn't come. I could easily see a rematch and wouldn't complain about watching it. Good stuff here and I'm really looking forward to seeing who challenges Cena in the future. Some NXT people would be very nice choices.

Rollins bragged, Orton stared, Big Show and Kane continued to exist for reasons I don't quite get. Well at least not this level. A six man is teased for later with Orton having to get some partners. We knew Reigns, but the question was who else.

AJ/Paige/Naomi beat the Bella Twins/Natalya in a match I already forgot about when I did the Reviewing the Review for Wrestlemania XXXI as I thought AJ's last match was at the big show. This match is noteworthy for two things: Naomi hitting the Rear View to pin Nikki and a bunch of fans chanting some very derogatory things at the Bellas and Naomi.

Here's the thing: yeah those chants are unnecessary and insulting, but I wouldn't worry about them yet. You can't base anything long term off the post Wrestlemania crowd as they exist to get themselves over. It doesn't help that the Bellas are treated as nothing but idiotic, money obsessed sex objects on Total Divas. WWE keeps telling us to watch the show and the fans see the Divas presented that way. No they shouldn't insult the Divas on national TV, but those ideas wouldn't be in the fans' heads if we didn't head the Bellas bragging about it all the time. If this keeps going it's a problem but I wouldn't worry at the moment.

Ryback offers to be Orton's partner, cementing the main event in stone.

Rusev squashed Goldust without Lana. This was just to get him back on track.

In one of the worst choices for a main event they could have picked, Reigns/Orton/Ryback beat Big Show/Kane/Rollins when Reigns speared Kane. Having Reigns out there was fine, but who in the world thought putting Big Show and Kane in front of that crowd was a good idea? I mean.....WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT? With this crowd and just a year after the Shield turned face to end the show last time, they go with a six man that could

have main evented any given Raw or even Smackdown? That's their big idea?

The show was a step down from last year but that's really not a fair comparison to make. You can't have a top level show every single year, especially when there's no Bryan title celebration to carry the show. Reigns is going to be fine long term but he needs to do something to get back on track. Beating up Kane and Big Show even more isn't that thing, but it seems like that's where we're going for the moment.

I like where things are going at the moment, but they're running the risk of getting repetitive with the main event matches. Orton vs. Rollins makes sense for Extreme Rules, but I'm really not sure where they can go for Rollins' next challenger. Reigns is going to be in there soon, but after those two I don't know where they're going.

There's more on here to like than not like, with stuff like Sheamus returning as a heel and Cena's upcoming open challenges are good things to see. They could build a lot off that and I'd love to see another NXT callup or two. Finally, Lesnar returning to eventually take down the Authority is going to blow the roof off the place. I can't wait to see where they go to challenge him, but it's going to be entertaining. Fun show this week but I'm hoping the crash back down to earth isn't a disaster.

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# Monday Night Raw – March 30, 2015: Title This Whatever Mr. Lesnar Prefers It To Be Called

## Monday Night Raw

Date: March 30, 2015

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

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

Things have certainly changed last night as we have a new WWE World Champion in Seth Rollins, who cashed in his Money in the Bank contract and made the main event a triple threat, allowing him to pin Reigns and win the title. Tonight is always one of the most eventful nights of the year and it's always interesting to see where things go from here. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence with no recap from last night.

Here are a livid Heyman and Lesnar, with the beast in his fighting gear and cuts on his face. Something I noticed last night: for a guy as terrifying as he looks, Brock Lesnar has some skinny legs. Heyman says he's the advocate for the most non-PG killer of the PG Era. Last night Brock laid a beating on Roman Reigns, just like they promised they would. Heyman's voice sounds like it's about to go out. He talks about all the suplexes and has to stop for the Suplex City chant.

Last night, Reigns almost gained Lesnar's respect but the kid still has a long way to go. Lesnar got bored last night and wanted to go to dinner, so he hit the fourth F5, but here came Seth Rollins (big reaction for that). Seth came out and stole the title by pinning the challenger instead of the champion. Heyman talks about his father being a prominent New York attorney and says he can have the decision reversed in court with the title being held up, but Brock thinks all lawyers are scumbags. He doesn't want litigation, because he wants his rematch clause.

That rematch will not happen at Summerslam, Wrestlemania XXXII, Extreme Rules or Payback, but it's being invoked RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW. Cue Stephanie and she's as popular as John Cena was in New Orleans last year. She praises Brock for a great main event but the fans chant for Ronda Rousey as Stephanie's arm is held close to her ribs.

The fans won't get what they want if they make her angry and they calm down. Rollins got on a plane to go to New York for the Today Show and he's not here yet. Once he gets here though, he'll be up for the challenge. Heyman says Lesnar wrestles live tonight on Raw for the first time in over ten years. Tonight there's going to be a new World Champion.

John Cena has issued an open challenge for the US Title and Daniel Bryan is defending the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler.

#### Intercontinental Title: Daniel Bryan vs. Dolph Ziggler

Bryan won the title last night in a ladder match and both guys get jobber entrances here. Ziggler has a new jean jacket vest and Barrett is on commentary. Feeling out process to start as the fans are split. Bryan cranks on the arm as Barrett talks about getting the title back when it's convenient for him.

Daniel wrestles him to the mat for some hard forearms but Ziggler changes control and hammers away, only to get kicked in the face to break it up. This is starting to get physical. They head into the corner with Bryan firing off some kicks and a hard forearm to the face, setting up the surfboard. Back up and Ziggler fires off a cross body to put both guys on the floor as we take a break. We come back to Bryan fighting out of a chinlock and hitting the running dropkicks in the corner. Those things just look good.

Both guys crotch themselves on top and Bryan nails a belly to back superplex for two. The YES Kicks look to set up the YES Lock but Ziggler counters into a pinfall reversal sequence, followed by sending Bryan shoulder first into the post. The running knee is countered by a superkick for two and the fans give them a standing ovation. It was good but a standing ovation? Really? They slug it out from their knees before turning to headbutts, only to have Bryan get knocked backed and come back

with the running knee to retain at 11:53.

**Rating:** B-. Good match but a standing ovation? I'm fine if this is the kind of match we'll be getting in the future but I really need more long term proof before I believe the title is back to meaning something. Bryan winning his first title defense is a good sign and it's nice to see a match not getting interrupted for a change.

Post match Barrett goes after Bryan but Sheamus, with a mohawk and a braided beard, runs out for the save. Barrett leaves but Sheamus Brogue Kicks Bryan and White Noise to Zigler. Fans: "YOU LOOK STUPID!" Oh that's an understatement. Sheamus: "I'm back."

Seth Rollins has arrived.

We recap the Hall of Fame inductions.

#### Cesaro/Tyson Kidd/Ascension vs. New Day/Lucha Dragons

Woods is the odd man out here. We have our first NXT callup of the night with the Lucha Dragons of Sin Cara and Kalisto. The fans of course chant NXT as Cara and Cesaro get things going with the fans switching to Cesaro. He takes Cara down to start but gets caught in La Mistica for two. Off to Kalisto for some kicks at the arm before a HUGE backflip into a multi-spin headscissors, sending Cesaro out to the floor.

Big E. comes in to a "New Day sucks" chant as he gets to face Konnor. Kofi quickly tags in for a middle rope clothesline before it's already back to Cara to work on the arm. Ascension gets their act together and slams Cara down as we take a break. Back with Cesaro swinging Cara into the dropkick from Kidd but Cara is able to dive over for the hot tag to Kofi. House is cleaned but the fans still hate the New Day.

The Boom Drop and a spinning cross body get two as the announcers acknowledge the chants. Kidd throws Kofi into a European uppercut but Viktor tags himself in. The real hot tag brings in Kalisto to clean house with a rolling kick to Viktor's face and a headscissors faceplant. Everything breaks down with Big E. belly to belly suplexing everyone he sees. Cara backdrops Kofi onto the champs and Konnor, setting up Salida



Del Sol on Viktor for the pin at 10:08. Booker: "We may have to get every talent from NXT on this roster right now!"

**Rating:** C+. Total star making performance from Kalisto as he was flying all over the place and making everyone forget Rey Mysterio ever existed. I wish Ascension hadn't been crushed so much but it's nice to see the Dragons still having their number as they're both on the main roster. Hopefully this is just the first of a few debuts tonight.

Heyman tells Lesnar that he's here.

Video on Neville (no Adrian) but no date for his debut.

### WWE World Heavyweight Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins

The belt looks huge on Rollins. We get big match intros and Rollins goes over to get in front of Brock as he holds up the title. Seth doesn't hand over the title and the opening bell never rings. Instead he drops to the floor and says he's too jetlagged. Plus he has a sore foot from Curb Stomping Lesnar last night so the rematch isn't happening tonight.

Lesnar goes after him and throws Rollins down before blasting him with a clothesline. They get inside but Rollins flips out of the German suplex. The kick to the face just ticks Brock off though so Rollins tries to bail again, only to get caught in the F5. The Stooges' save doesn't work as they get clotheslined and send Rollins running to the crowd. No match as the bell never rang.

Brock throws the announcers' table over to crush all three of them and beats up the Stooges as a consolation prize and F5's Cole to a huge reaction. Heyman thinks Brock has gone too far so Brock takes out a cameraman until Stephanie comes out to tell him to stop (her arm seemingly fine already) but Brock hits another F5. That earns him a suspension and he's out of the building. Brock F5's the cameraman one more time and finally leaves.

Back with a replay of Lesnar's rampage and still no commentary. Stephanie says she'll fine Brock because he's signed long term so she owns him.

### Stardust vs. Damien Mizdow

Byron Saxton is a one man booth now and the table still overturned. Mizdow comes out to the same entrance and music he had with Miz but alone this time. Stardust jumps him to start but Mizdow explodes with a clothesline out of the corner and hits the Reality Check. That's fine with Stardust who hits a release gordbuster and cranks on a cravate, only to get annoyed at the CODY chants. Back up and a Skull Crushing Finale is good enough to give Mizdow the pin at 2:24.

Miz runs in and hits the Finale on Mizdow before talking a lot of trash.

Video on how Wrestlemania took over the Bay Area and the media appearances last week.

Curtis Axel says the entire roster is jealous of Axelmania. It took 29 men to eliminate him from the battle royal, but the road to Axtreme Rules stars right now.

#### Neville vs. Curtis Axel

Neville now has a hooded cape and is billed as the Man That Gravity Forgot. Axel goes right for him before the bell and gets a HUGE springboard moonsault to the floor. Back in and we get the opening bell as Neville starts speeding things way up with the front flips and some running forearms. Kicks to the ribs and a running kick to the face set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 1:13. Total squash.

We recap Lesnar attacking the announcers.

Here's John Cena for an open challenge for the US Title. The fans chant John Cena Sucks in time with the music so Cena does the entrance twice with a smirk on his face. Cena says you're going to hear about Wrestlemania moments all night but stops to praise the crowd for being so vocal. He mentions them singing and the fans strike up the band again. That means the fans aren't going to like this: THE CHAMP IS HERE! The challenge is open so come get some.

#### US Title: John Cena vs. Dean Ambrose

Oh now that's a surprise. Saxton thought it would be Rusev and even said his name before Dean came out. Ambrose gets taken down with a headlock to

start as the fans are all over Cena. Back up and Dean hiptosses him down for one and Cena bails outside as we take a break. We come back with Dean fighting out of a chinlock and Jerry Lawler joining Saxton on commentary. Cena slams Dean down but a kick to the face breaks up the Shuffle. A big boot sets up the rebound clothesline but Cena ducks into the ProtoBomb.

Now the Shuffle connects but the AA is countered into a sunset flip for two. The second attempt at the rebound clothesline gets two and a tornado DDT gets the same on Cena. The champ bails outside and gets taken down by the top rope standing elbow (that's still cool looking). Back in and a quick AA gets two and a nice reaction from the crowd on the kickout. A top rope AA is countered as Dean hammers away, only to botch a sunset bomb. Instead it's a Batista Bomb but Cena rolls out and puts on the STF but Dean makes the long crawl to the ropes.

Another AA is countered into the STF on Cena with John's face being far more shocked than in pain. Dean lets go as Cena is getting close to the ropes and another AA is countered into Dirty Deeds for two. This is getting good with the drama and near falls. Cena wins a slugout and they trade finisher counters until Dean hits a cross body, only to have Cena rolls through into an AA for the pin at 14:23.

**Rating:** B. This took its time to get going but once they started trading finishers you actually believed Ambrose could pull off the upset. It's a good sign that he's in a match like this after all those big losses in recent months. He's still way over and that's more important than any win or loss he can have.

Post match Cena stands over Dean, who is shaking his head. They slap hands and there's no heel turn.

Stills of last night's main event.

Rollins says he earned the right to cash in at any time and that's exactly what he did last night, when no one expected it. Let's forget about Lesnar, because he walked out of Wrestlemania as the new World Heavyweight Champion. Orton comes up and says he wants the title, so here are Kane and Big Show to stand behind Rollins. Seth gives Randy until the end of the night to find two partners.

## AJ Lee/Paige/Naomi vs. Bella Twins/Natalya

AJ is wearing a Bayley shirt. Natayla headlocks Naomi down to start before firing off some forearms. Naomi comes back with a running dropkick, only to have Natalya take her down for a basement dropkick. Off to Brie for the third dropkick of the match as the fans want Bayley. Brie takes her down with a fireman's carry into an armbar, followed by taking her down with a fireman's carry into an armbar. Back up and the tag brings in Paige for some headbutts. Brie calls her a loser and gets speared to the floor as we take a break. IN THIS MATCH???

Back with Brie holding AJ in a chinlock before it's off to Natalya for some suplexes for two. Nikki puts on a chinlock of her own and keeps AJ from diving over for the tag. A hard forearm puts Paige down and we keep the match going with a modified Indian deathlock. AJ finally gets free and sends Nikki into the buckle for the hot tag to Naomi. Nikki plants her with an Alabama Slam but Paige comes in as everything breaks down. Bella miscommunication sees Nikki hit Brie by mistake, setting up the Rear View to pin Nikki at 13:35.

**Rating:** C. This was a good example of the problem with the Divas: most of them have a horrible lack of presence. The Bellas are really bad about this. They're good at doing heel stuff, but the charisma isn't there and they feel like they're just playing characters. Yeah they're playing those characters well enough, but I don't buy it as anything more than them doing what they're told to do. Natalya can have that presence, or at least can be good enough in the ring to make up for it. I don't buy that from the Bellas and I never have. Hopefully this leads to Naomi getting a title run.

We look at Lesnar's destruction again.

Ryback offers to be Orton's partner and Randy shakes his hand.

Sheamus/Barrett vs. Bryan/Ziggler on Smackdown. Cena, Orton and Reigns will be there in some capacity as well.

## Rusev vs. Goldust

No Lana or tank tonight. The announcers bring up Rusev not answering the open challenge earlier if he's here. Cole might need neck surgery after the attack earlier. That sounds like a way to write him off TV for a bit. Rusev catches Goldust coming out of the corner and the beating is on early. Some slow stomps set up a knee to the back of the head The jumping superkick and the Accolade end Goldust quick at 2:16.

### Ryback/Randy Orton/??? vs. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins

In a very obvious choice, the third man is Roman Reigns. Kane and Ryback get things going with Ryback shrugging off some right hands and hitting the spinebuster. An early Meat Hook attempt sends the Authority to the floor but Reigns dives on all three of them for a huge crash (beating from Brock Lesnar anyone?) as we take a break. Back with Kane getting stomped in the corner before Ryback suplexes him for two. Off to Rollins vs. Orton with the new champ getting uppercutted in the corner. A spinning kick to the face gets two on Randy as the fans chant HOW YOU DOIN.

Big Show comes in and gets a PLEASE RETIRE chant. Back to Kane for a chinlock followed by a big boot for two. The Wave breaks out and the camera actually follows it around. Rollins tells the crowd to suck it but Orton counters what looked to be a tornado DDT into a superplex. Fans: "WE ARE AWESOME!"

The hot tag brings in Reigns and he's booed out of the building as he cleans house. In a cool spot, Big Show intercepts a Superman Punch (fans LOVE that) and throws Reigns at Kane, only to have the Superman Punch connect out of midair. Ryback picks Big Show up in a dead lift for the Shell Shock but eats a Curb Stomp. Rollins bails from Reigns and the RKO into a spear is enough to pin Kane at 13:00.

**Rating:** C-. This was the match where the crowd gave up and I can't say I blame them. Of all the people they can put in the main event of THIS SHOW, they picked the two old giants? That was the best idea they had? This felt like the end of any given Raw and that's not how you want to end this show. Last year it ended with Shield's face turn, here it ends with a generic six man tag. That's kind of stupid but the rest of the

show was good enough that I can forgive it.

**Overall Rating:** B+. I had a good time with this show and they focused a lot more on the wrestling this year than last. The show completely ran out of gas with the main event as it went out with nothing instead of something big, but at least we had some good debuts, Lesnar just massacring people and a hot crowd. Stephanie continues to be the most annoying person on the roster but that's something you just have to live with. Also, no HHH? Still though, really fun show which has become the standard for the night after Wrestlemania.

### Results

Daniel Bryan b. Dolph Ziggler – Running knee

New Day/Lucha Dragons b. Ascension/Tyson Kidd/Cesaro – Salida Del Sol to Viktor

Damien Mizdow b. Stardust – Skull Crushing Finale

Neville b. Curtis Axel – Red Arrow

John Cena b. Dean Ambrose – Attitude Adjustment

Paige/AJ Lee/Naomi b. Bella Twins/Natalya – Rear View to Nikki

Rusev b. Goldust – Accolade

Roman Reigns/Randy Orton/Ryback b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins – Spear to Kane

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# Wrestlemania XXXI Preview: Intercontinental Title

Reach for the sky.

I'm not a fan of these matches. They take away the entire idea of having a wrestling match and throw everything together into one big mess for the title. Yeah it's going to be a lot of fun and has the potential to steal the show, but I really would have preferred a straight match or even a multiman match to this big mess.

Second complaint: I know I've ranted on this already, but I really didn't like having the title being passed around. What was that supposed to accomplish? It's better than having the champion lose every week, but why am I supposed to care that someone keeps taking the belt itself away? As Barrett kept saying, that's his title and he shouldn't have to keep taking it back from people. It's like when Hogan thought he had won the Tag Team Titles at Wrestlemania IX when Jimmy Hart counted the pin: he REALLY should know better than that.

Just like in the Tag Team Title match, let's take an individual look at each guy before I get to my pick.

Stardust – Why is he in this? He lost last month and now he's in a big time title match because the belt is his precious? This is a name you could have easily left out of things and no one would have noticed a difference. If nothing else just cut his spot and let the match have fewer people in it so things can breathe a bit more.

R-Truth – He's here for the comedy and nothing more. No one buys him as having a chance at winning the belt and I can't really see why he needed to be in here. He's the guy you throw out there to give the champion a fluke loss (which happens WAY too often) and not someone you put in a title match at Wrestlemania.

Luke Harper – Former champion, had a great ladder match with Dolph Ziggler and deserves a push where he DOESN'T LOSE EVERY MATCH AS CHAMPION. I don't see him as having much of a chance, but you always need someone in there as a power guy to throw the small guys around and make them look good.

Dean Ambrose – He's finally finding a niche for himself in the midcard and is the one that started this whole thing in the first place. I really liked what he said when he talked about wanting to be the Intercontinental Champion because it meant something back in the day. Then he started walking off with the belt like it was a ball on the playground because that's how you make a title legitimate right? I'd love to see Dean win and become the midcard star, but given his track record, he probably gets lost coming to ringside and winds up fighting Torito or something.

Daniel Bryan – Boy what a difference a year makes doesn't it? It really is amazing what a simple broken neck (or whatever it was) can do to mess up your career. Bryan would be the most logical pick to win here but for some reason I don't see him doing it. For one thing, he's a bit too popular to give a win in back to back years because the WWE knows who we should be cheering for. Side note about Bryan: this is the fifth different title he's fought for in five Wrestlemanias.

Wrestlemania XXVII: US Title

Wrestlemania XXVIII: World Heavyweight Title

Wrestlemania XXIX: Tag Team Titles

Wrestlemania XXX: WWE World Heavyweight Title

Wrestlemania XXXI: Intercontinental Title

He might be the only guy to ever do that.

Dolph Ziggler – You have to have a guy like Ziggler in a match like this and there's nothing wrong with being that guy. He'll have some big spots, get close to winning the title, get the second biggest reaction of the match and come up just a bit short, because WWE is totally cool with



having him get nowhere after making him the star of the Survivor Series main event.

Bad News Barrett – My goodness what is their problem with this guy? It seems like every time he gets the title he goes on the biggest losing streak ever but gets to hold his head high and win the big match at the end, meaning we're supposed to forget about all those losses. That would be fine in theory if Cole wasn't reminding us of the losses every 18 seconds, but that's too much logic for them to follow.

Overall though, I don't think Barrett gets the big win this time. It's probably what we're getting from the whole thing, but I'm going on a limb and picking Ambrose. He's over with the fans, could be made into a main event guy one day and started this whole thing. WWE owes him a big win anyway after all the stupid endings with the Rollins and Wyatt matches. They'll probably go with Barrett to make me want to drive my head through a wall, but I want to see Ambrose take it.

Oh and Sheamus could be added as the eighth guy. If he does, I'll go with him again.

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