

Monday Night Raw – December 25, 2017: I'm Dreaming Of A... Huh?

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 25, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

For reasons of "USA Told Us To Do It", WWE presents a three hour Monday Night Raw on Christmas night. As a bonus, the first hour will feature no commercials, because if there's one thing I think of when I watch Raw, it's that there's not enough material. John Cena is back for another one night shot so let's get to it.

Speaking of Cena, here he is to open things up. Actually hang on a second as Cena says there's something that needs to change. Cena goes outside and says someone is wearing the wrong colors. He takes off his hat and shirt and hands them to a kid with some sort of a disability who is wearing his old orange gear. And that is why Cena comes off as a superhero and is just flat out awesome to boot.

That earns a MERRY CHRISTMAS chant and Cena talks about how WWE is like a family. However, he wants to say cheers to the good and bad times, but cheers on a special day like today. Cue Elias to interrupt for his big spot of getting a rub from Cena. John actually agrees to walk with him but they get cut off by a CM Punk chant. Elias: "CM Punk ain't gonna interrupt me."

Cena says we need to have some fun tonight and grabs a chair so Elias can perform. The lights go down and Elias is about to play but the CM PUNK chants cut him off again. The song starts and of course it insults Chicago so Cena cuts him off and says hit the lights. Cena thinks Elias is the real jerk because he keeps insulting every city he's in.

Elias thinks Cena might be right and offers to do the song again if

Chicago will give him a second chance. He sings again and this time sings a rather nice version before handing it off to Cena for "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas". Cena starts off but gets punched in the face for his efforts. Elias goes to leave but comes back to stomp away and challenges Cena to a match right now. A referee is fine with this and we're ready to go.

John Cena vs. Elias

Cena, whose shorts look shorter than usual, gets hammered down to start but grabs a desperation headlock. Elias gets two off a release slam before tying Cena in the Tree of Woe. An Alberto Del Rio top rope double stomp gets another near fall but Cena avoids a second attempt.

Cena gets taken down again though and a Batista Bomb gives Elias another near fall. We hit the chinlock to eat up some more time with Elias even flipping forward to get Cena away from the rope. Back up and a hard clothesline gets two on Cena, which does so well that Elias does the same thing again for the same result.

Cena has to pull himself up using Elias' body, earning himself another right hand to the face for two more. A quick STF has Elias in trouble but Cena doesn't have it in full. Elias crawls to the ropes so Cena tries to grab it again, only to have Elias pop up for a jumping knee to the face.

That doesn't even get a cover as Cena rolls outside before grabbing the STF again. This time Elias makes the rope but the damage seems to have been done. Something like a slow motion Drift Away gets two but Elias takes his sweet time posing. Cena pops up and initiates his finishing sequence. The AA is good for the pin on Elias at 16:08.

Rating: C+. Elias got in most of the offense here and that's all you can ask for him here. No Elias shouldn't have won here as it's just a way to give the fans a feel good win and there's nothing wrong with that. You have to imagine Cena will be around for the Rumble and he's going to be a favorite so let him have a win to get some of his mojo back.

Cena salutes the kid in the crowd.

Samoa Joe video.

Jason Jordan comes in to see Kurt Angle but Seth Rollins cuts them off, saying he wants to face Samoa Joe tonight. In a repeat of the same thing he does every week, Jordan says he wants his match against Joe. Angle suggests that they team up to deal with the Bar first but neither seems interested. Kurt makes the match anyway and puts the titles on the line.

The two of them leave and Roman Reigns comes in. Angle gives him Joe tonight, with the Intercontinental Title on the line.

Brian Kendrick and Jack Gallagher are in the ring before Kendrick faces Hideo Itami. Kendrick laughs off the idea of being scared of Itami because the two of them are some of the finest competitors around.

Hideo Itami vs. Brian Kendrick

They forearm it out to start with Itami getting the better of it and demanding respect. Back up and a jumping knee to the face gives Kendrick two. We hit a cross arm choke on Itami but he's back up without much effort. The tornado DDT into the neck snap across the top has Kendrick in trouble and a running corner dropkick makes it even worse. The GTS ends Kendrick at 4:00.

Rating: C-. Itami is a great striker but he doesn't have the best fire in the world. Just shouting RESPECT ME over and over isn't exactly going to make him the most popular guy, but at least he's trying. Let him show off more of his strikes and see what he can do and maybe that'll get him somewhere. As it is though, nothing all that special here.

Video on the announcement of the Women's Royal Rumble, naturally with Stephanie getting most of the focus. Thankfully we do get some reactions from some of the women.

Mickie James, Sasha Banks and Bayley run into the very Christmas themed Miztourage. They sing some Miz themed Christmas carols. The ladies bail in a hurry.

Bayley/Mickie James/Sasha Banks vs. Absolution

Paige forearm Sasha in the face to start before it's off to Mandy. Mickie comes in for a running forearm and it's off to Bayley, who gets a heck of a reaction. It's off to Deville who gets in her hard strikes, only to have Bayley take her back into the corner. The fight heads outside with Sonya hitting a heck of a clothesline to drop Banks and take over. The fans are happy to have Paige back in but it's quickly back to Sonya for a hard knee.

We hit a bodyscissors for a bit before the villains take turns beating on Banks. The announcers continue to drool over Mandy (they have good taste) as she knocks Bayley and James off the apron to break up a hot tag attempt. As is so often the case though, Banks shoves her away a few seconds later, allowing the hot tag off to Bayley so house can be cleaned. Bayley starts throwing suplexes and even knocks Deville off the apron for good measure. A Bayley to Belly gets two on Paige as everything breaks down on the floor. Back in and the Rampaige ends Bayley at 10:14.

Rating: C. Absolution winning is the right call and they're starting to establish themselves with more defined characters. I could go for Rose as more than the eye candy character but to be fair, what else is she supposed to do? Paige is a good leader and Deville is made to be the tough one so it's not like the team needs many changes. Then again almost none of this matters until we get to the Rumble but at least the right team won.

We look at Dean Ambrose's arm being destroyed last week. The injury may keep him out up to nine months.

Renee Young isn't happy to interview Samoa Joe, who has no remorse for what he did to Dean last week. Joe is ready to take the Intercontinental Title when Reigns comes seeking vengeance.

Video on Kane and Braun Strowman becoming #1 contenders to Brock Lesnar at the Royal Rumble.

Kane vs. Heath Slater

Apparently Rhino got Slater this match to toughen him up a bit. Merry Christmas buddy. Kane takes him into the corner for some knees to the

ribs and there's the side slam for good measure. Slater bails to the floor for a breather and a pep talk from Rhyno. As you might expect, Kane throws him right back to the floor and it's time for more pep talking. Back in and Slater's offense is shrugged off, setting up the chokeslam for the pin at 2:13.

Kane goes after Rhyno post match and a quick flurry is cut off by a chokeslam.

Here's Curt Hawkins who has to tell himself to face the facts. 2017 hasn't been his best year but the year isn't over yet. How about a little Christmas miracle tonight? The open challenge is on.

Finn Balor vs. Curt Hawkins

Hawkins grabs a quick rollup for two and gets the same result off the same move. Balor calmly kicks him down and hits the Coup de Grace for the pin at 1:30.

The Miztourage sings to Goldust and throw in a DVD of Santa's Little Helper. Titus Worldwide comes up and Goldust gives them the DVD.

Bray Wyatt talks about how Sister Abigail always hated this time of year. He's ready to face the Woken Warrior because Matt Hardy is surrounded by the fireflies. Bray is here.

Wyatt heads to the ring but Matt runs in and the fight is on. A Twist of Fate misses and Bray bails to the floor. After threatening to DELETE Bray, Matt throws in some maniacal laughter.

The Bar isn't happy with having to defend their titles but they're ready to fight. Sheamus has a gift for Cesaro, including a char containing their catchphrase. The gift: a Dean Ambrose action figure with a missing arm! Cesaro has a gift for Sheamus as well: a Seth Rollins action figure which Sheamus can break just like the real one tonight. There's more in the box too as Cesaro has gotten him a Jason Jordan figure too. Sheamus: "I don't want this." Cesaro says no one wants Jordan so it's perfect.

Cedric Alexander gets his Cruiserweight Title shot next week.

Enzo Amore/Drew Gulak/Ariya Daivari vs. Akira Tozawa/Mustafa Ali/Cedric Alexander

Miracle on 34th Street Fight but first Enzo (as Santa, with the other two as his elves) has to run his mouth about Cedric not getting a present on Christmas morning. Even though it's a street fight, Daivari and Cedric start things off with Alexander cleaning house in short order. Tozawa and Ali take out Daivari and Gulak with dives as we take a break.

Back with Enzo whipping Tozawa back first into a Christmas tree. Tozawa remembers that he's only fighting Enzo though, meaning the hot tag brings in Ali a few seconds later. The rolling X Factor gets two and there's the 054 for two with Gulak making the save. Enzo's candy cane kendo stick is taken away from him and begging off ensues. Gulak runs into Enzo by mistake, setting up a few stick shots to his back. The Lumbar Check ends Daivari at 7:49.

Rating: D+. So, again, why were they tagging in a STREET FIGHT? The match was about what you would expect here and the wrestling really wasn't all that good. That being said, they did a decent enough job of setting up the title match with Alexander looking strong. This really didn't do much for me though and felt rather forced, which isn't the best idea during a comedy match.

Post break Enzo isn't happy but runs into Nia, now with red and blue hair. It turns out they're underneath the mistletoe and are about to kiss but Alexa Bliss runs in and needs Nia. Enzo doesn't look happy.

Reigns is ready to hurt Joe for what he did to Ambrose last week.

Intercontinental Title: Roman Reigns vs. Samoa Joe

Reigns is defending and punches Joe in the face at the bell. Joe gets knocked into the ropes and it's the apron boot for good measure. Back in and Joe grabs a belly to back suplex for two but Reigns snaps off the corner clotheslines. A big boot drops Joe again but he's right back up with right hands to take us to a break.

We come back with Reigns getting two off a Samoan drop but getting

punched in the face some more. It's already off to the Koquina Clutch but Reigns is just too close to the ropes for the break. Joe takes him outside and the suicide elbow drives Reigns into the barricade. Reigns comes up holding his elbow so we hit the armbar in a logical move. The hold is broken and Reigns unloads in the corner before shoving the referee for the DQ at 12:45.

Rating: C+. This feels like a way to set up a rematch at some point in the future, likely at the Royal Rumble. Joe vs. Reigns is a good feud and it's made even better when you have two people who can beat the heck out of each other. Working on the arm made sense and tying it back to Ambrose's injury is a nice idea. Good brawl here, but it's clear that they're setting up for something in the future.

Post match Reigns beats on Joe even more, including a steps shot to the arm. Joe avoids a heck of a chair shot and looks a bit shaken up while bailing.

Rollins tells Jordan to bring it tonight and Jordan is ready.

The Miztourage is in the ring to sing about their Secret Santa match. I think you know where this is going.

Braun Strowman vs. Miztourage

The goons are thrown around with ease and the running powerslam ends Dallas at 58 seconds.

Powerslam to Axel, powerslam to Dallas, powerslam to Axel.

Here's Alexa Bliss for a chat. She's here tonight to give us the Gift of a Goddess because this has been her year. Bliss has dominated his year like a Jedi from Star Wars (unlike one from the DMV). That brings us to the announcement of the Women's Royal Rumble, which Bliss takes credit for taking place. Cue Asuka to say she's entering the Rumble because no one is ready for her. Bliss gets kicked down.

Brock Lesnar is back next week.

Tag Team Titles: The Bar vs. Seth Rollins/Jason Jordan

Cesaro and Sheamus are defending. Jordan wrestles Sheamus to the mat to start but the champs take him down with a double hiptoss. Rollins comes in off the hot tag and hits a suicide dive as we take a break. Back with Rollins in trouble as the champs take turns beating him down.

We hit the chinlock for a good while until Rollins fights up with some forearms to Cesaro's head. That's not enough for the hot tag though as it's Sheamus cutting him off. A middle rope legdrop gives Sheamus two and we're back in chinlock. Sheamus gets frustrated at Rollins fighting up again so Seth is sent outside for a clothesline from Cesaro. Jordan actually makes a save, earning himself a hard trip into the barricade.

Seth gets in a few shots but there's no one to tag. Instead it's the Irish Curse for two on Seth, followed by a hard knee to the face for the same. Jordan charges in for a save and the hot tag brings him back in. Everything breaks down and a pair of something like the Demolition Decapitators get two on Jason.

Cesaro unloads with right hands and a Brogue Kick takes Rollins down. The Cloverleaf sends Jordan scurrying over to the ropes and the champs are frustrated. Super White Noise is broken up though and Rollins takes Cesaro out to the floor. Back in, Jordan's wheelbarrow neckbreaker is good for the pin and the title at 15:24.

Rating: C+. Well that was unexpected. I get the idea that it's the first Christmas episode in twenty five years but that's still not exactly something I would have guessed. It's interesting to see where it's going though and Jordan FINALLY has a win, albeit as a tag wrestler again (it's almost like he shouldn't have been moved out of his team in the first place). This is one of those things where I'm going to need more information, but at least it worked at the moment.

Overall Rating: C+. This show was a weird hybrid between a stand alone show that felt like something special and a show that actually advanced the stories. Then again, we have to get ready for the Rumble and they really don't have time to burn off a show, even if it's something like this. Hopefully people actually watched the show, but they're going to be in a stretch to get much of an audience. Not a bad show though and better

than I was expecting.

Results

John Cena b. Elias – Attitude Adjustment

Hideo Itami b. Brian Kendrick – GTS

Absolution b. Bayley/Mickie James/Sasha Banks – Rampaige to Bayley

Kane b. Heath Slater – Chokeslam

Finn Balor b. Curt Hawkins – Coup de Grace

Akira Tozawa/Cedric Alexander/Mustafa Ali b. Enzo Amore/Drew Gulak/Ariya Daivari – Lumbar Check to Daivari

Samoa Joe b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Reigns shoved the referee

Braun Strowman b. Miztourage – Running powerslam to Dallas

Seth Rollins/Jason Jordan b. The Bar – Wheelbarrow neckbreaker to Cesaro

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Main Event – November 30, 2017: The New Normal

Main Event

Date: November 30, 2017

Location: Thompson-Boling Arena, Knoxville, Tennessee

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

Things have been changing around here lately with both Raw and Smackdown clips airing instead of just the ones from the red show that had been the case for so long. We're also back to a normal week in WWE after the huge Survivor Series weekend last time around. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Apollo Crews vs. Curt Hawkins

Crews shoves him down a few times to start and grabs a headlock takeover for good measure. A slingshot hilo gets two but Hawkins sends him throat first into the ropes. We hit the reverse chinlock with a knee in the back until Hawkins heads outside to yell at Titus O'Neil. Hawkins gets two off a top rope elbow, only to get caught with an enziguri. The Toss Powerbomb gives Apollo the pin at 5:15.

Rating: D. I'm not sure how many times you can watch this match and still get anything out of it. We get the idea already but that's not going to stop WWE from running the thing over and over again around here. Now that being said, it's just Hawkins so does it really matter that much? I can't imagine there was that much thought put into the thing, which should be the case.

From Raw.

Here's Reigns to open things up. Last week was a big week for him as he and the Shield beat up New Day. Then he had an opportunity and we see a clip of him winning the Intercontinental Title. After the show was over, Shield came back out and put Miz through a table. This is his yard and

this is the title so if you want it, come get it. Cue the Miztourage to say they know someone who wants the title. This brings out Elias of all people to say he wants the title. Reigns thinks it sounds like Elias wants to walk with the big dog, but after tonight he might have a neck brace like Curtis Axel.

And from later in the night.

Intercontinental Title: Roman Reigns vs. Elias

Elias is challenging. They trade shoulders to start with Elias getting the better of it and slapping on a reverse chinlock. Elias gets two off a clothesline and we hit a regular chinlock. Back up and the Miztourage offers a distraction so Elias can get in a hard knee for a near fall.

We come back from a break with Elias getting kicked in the face, only to have Reigns stop and take out the Miztourage instead of following up. The distraction lets Elias take Reigns down and drop a top rope elbow for a rather near fall. A sitout powerbomb gets the same but Reigns is right back with a Superman Punch for two of his own. Back up and the spear retains the title at 14:48.

Rating: B-. While the ending wasn't exactly in doubt here, it was still a good, hard hitting match. They're certainly protecting Elias at the moment and I'm not sure what to make of that. It would be nice if they had him actually win something but with the Intercontinental Title now basically the show's World Title, he's kind of stuck. But at least it was a good match.

Post match Samoa Joe sneaks in and chokes Reigns out. No Rollins for the save either, mainly because this was a Reigns singles match and not a Shield match. That determines who comes out for a save you see.

And again from Raw.

Paige/Mandy Rose/Sonya DeVille vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks/Mickie James

Alexa Bliss is on commentary.....and there's no Mickie or Bayley. Paige and company come out and laugh off the idea of Sasha having no partners. We cut to the back where Mickie is holding her shin and Bayley is holding

her neck. Paige laughs this off and says she's tired of hearing about her interfering last week. Last year, she was THE woman in WWE and helped erase the word Diva from WWE (we could have a tournament for everyone who takes credit for anything like this).

Now she and her friends, named Absolution (sounds like a bad perfume) are here to take things back. Rose and DeVille talk about how everyone has tried to be the next big thing but they remember how Paige started all of this. Paige offers Sasha a spot on the team but she forearmms Paige off the apron. The beatdown is on in a hurry with everyone hitting a finisher. No match of course.

Now from the Smackdown counterparts.

Charlotte/Natalya/Naomi vs. Riott Squad

Yes Riott and no I don't know why. During Charlotte's entrance we see clips from Starrcade, WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN FREAKING BROADCAST ON THE NETWORK! Logan takes Natalya into the corner to start and scores with a clothesline. It's off to Charlotte but that's enough for Natalya, who walks out on the match less than a minute in. Back from a break with Charlotte fighting off the trio but getting caught by the numbers game on the floor. Morgan gets two off a floatover suplex and it's off to Ruby for a chinlock. That leaves the other two Squad members to take Naomi down on the floor.

They send her hard into the steps and then bridge them over the barricade, catapulting Naomi face first into the steel. The best the referee can do is glare at them, making me wonder HOW IN THE WORLD THIS ISN'T A DQ. Seriously do they need to break out a pair of nunchuks and beat the stuffing out of Naomi before the match is called off? So it's now three on one with Charlotte actually managing to fight them off for a bit. A spear hits Morgan in those impressive abs but Logan hits a knee from the apron, setting up the Riot Kick to the face for the pin at 9:12.

Rating: D+. The beatdown was impressive enough though none of them seemed capable of hanging with Charlotte or Naomi on their own. That already puts them a few steps back of Absolution (I can feel my brain melting as I write these names over and over) but at least they're looking a bit

more polished than people like Mandy Rose. Not a great match or anything but the divide and conquer strategy worked just fine.

Kalisto/Gran Metalik vs. Brian Kendrick/Jack Gallagher

Metalik headlocks Kendrick to start but gets kicked in the face for his efforts. Kalisto comes in and cranks on the arm so it's off to Gallagher. A whip sends Metalik outside in a heap and we take a break. Back with Metalik breaking away for the hot tag as everything breaks down. The Salida Del Sol is broken up but Metalik tags himself in and kicks Gallagher in the head. The rope walk elbow is enough to end Jack at 3:34.

Rating: D+. There's not much to say about these things, though I still like Metalik more often than not. They have entertaining matches, even if it's a match you can write out before it even starts. It's also the standard Main Event idea: Gallagher and Kendrick would win this 9/10 times on 205 Live but they're dead in the water on this show. Again it's predictable but not the worst thing in the world.

Back to Smackdown.

Singh Brothers vs. AJ Styles

Before the match, Jinder Mahal attacks AJ, sending him ribs first into the post. After a break (and Mahal doing his standard promo), the match is on with AJ getting double teamed. The Brothers get in some shoulders to the ribs in the corner but AJ kicks them away without much effort. AJ knocks the two off them off the top, kicks Mahal in the face, and blocks a super hurricanrana attempt. He's not done yet though as it's a SUPER STYLES CLASH with one Singh landing on the other for the easy pin at 3:56.

Rating: D. This wasn't much to see but it was exactly what it needed to be, especially with an awesome ending like that. Really, what else was AJ supposed to do against a couple of goons like this? Styles vs. Mahal isn't an interesting story but at least Mahal has goons to send out there instead of having us watch the same match over and over.

Post match Mahal lays out the Singh's, including a TERRIBLE looking

Khallas to the second one. The guy's head and back never came close to the mat as he basically bounced off his elbow (it looked even worse in slow motion). As I've said many times: Mahal just isn't very good and that finisher makes things even worse.

And then to Raw to wrap things up.

Jason Jordan vs. Kane

Before the match, Jordan talks about how he's an athlete and knew his knee was banged up last week. Kane actually gets powered into the corner a few times to start but the suplex is broken up. A hard toss sends Jordan outside where he comes up holding the knee again. That's enough for a countout at 1:42.

Post match Kane stays on the knee until Finn Balor comes out for the save. They stare each other down and we take a break.

Finn Balor vs. Kane

Kane wastes no time in whipping Balor into the corner and we're into an early chinlock. Balor dropkicks him outside and hits a dive as the announcers talk about what a big deal a win over Kane would be. Kane hits him in the ribs with a chair for the DQ at 2:44.

Kane beats on him with the chair and wraps it around Balor's throat until Braun Strowman comes out for the save. A chair to the back has no effect on Strowman and the beatdown is on. Strowman destroys him with the steps and a chair, including a powerslam onto the steps. Kane gets his throat crushed on the chair and staggers into the crowd (probably looking for registered voters) to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. All this show did was make you remember how hit and miss some of these shows can be. Raw and Smackdown weren't exactly great this week and cutting them down to the clipped versions of the matches and ignoring some of the better stuff (Rollins vs. Cesaro from Raw for instance) isn't the best idea. I do like them adding in more stories though as it makes the show feel more like a full on recap than anything else, which is a good idea. It really might be better to cut out one of

the original matches though, just so the recaps don't feel as crammed together.

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Monday Night Raw – November 27, 2017: The Monster Among The Mayor

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 27, 2017

Location: Thompson-Boling Arena, Knoxville, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

We're finally out of Houston and on the road to the Royal Rumble. The big story coming out of last week is Roman Reigns winning the Intercontinental Title for the first time and issuing an open challenge after the show went off the air. Other than that we have the continuing issues with Kurt Angle, HHH and Stephanie McMahon as we flash back about seventeen years. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Kane vs. Braun Strowman, including Kane injuring Strowman's throat last week.

Here's Reigns to open things up. Last week was a big week for him as he and the Shield beat up New Day. Then he had an opportunity and we see a clip of him winning the Intercontinental Title. After the show was over, Shield came back out and put Miz through a table. This is his yard and this is the title so if you want it, come get it. Cue the Miztourage to say they know someone who wants the title. This brings out Elias of all people to say he wants the title. Reigns thinks it sounds like Elias wants to walk with the big dog, but after tonight he might have a neck brace like Curtis Axel.

Seth Rollins vs. Cesaro

Dean Ambrose is on his honeymoon so Rollins is on his own. It's not like he has a buddy who happens to be Intercontinental Champion around or anything. Cesaro works on a wristlock to start but gets stomped down into the corner without much effort. Seth gets sent outside though and we take a break.

Back with Cesaro working on the ribs by dropping some knees for two. Seth's high crossbody is countered into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker and we hit a waistlock. Rollins tries an abdominal stretch of his own but gets hiptossed down without much effort. The Blockbuster works a bit better and Cesaro falls outside for a suicide dive.

Back from a second break with Rollins getting two off a Falcon Arrow. A poke to the eye sets up a small package for two on Seth and it's off to the Sharpshooter. Rollins makes the rope though and gets two of his own off the low superkick. The wind-up knee is enough to end Cesaro at 18:23.

Rating: B. Nice long match here with Rollins getting a win to hopefully set up a title match next week. That being said, I have no idea how they're supposed to keep doing these one on one matches. There really should be a better way to set up a title match than having the singles wrestlers fight over and over again, but that might mean building up more teams.

Post match Seth says the Shield isn't going their separate ways because it's time to invoke the rematch for the Tag Team Titles.

We look at the end of last week's 205 Live with the Zo Train losing but beating down the good guys anyway.

Kurt Angle is with the four good cruiserweights and says it's time to determine who gets the shot. Tonight there's going to be a four way and next week there's going to be another one. The winners of those matches will face off for the next title shot.

Titus O'Neil vs. Samoa Joe

Titus charge at him in the corner but gets headbutted away without much effort. An early Koquina Clutch is broken up and it turns into a chop off. A kick to the shoulder gives Titus two but a right hand takes him down. The Clutch makes Titus tap at 2:30.

Apollo Crews tries to go after Joe and gets choked out too. I have no idea why this is what Samoa Joe is stuck doing.

We recap Paige and company invading last week.

Paige/Mandy Rose/Sonya DeVille vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks/Mickie James

Alexa Bliss is on commentary.....and there's no Mickie or Bayley. Paige and company come out and laugh off the idea of Sasha having no partners. We cut to the back where Mickie is holding her shin and Bayley is holding her neck. Paige laughs this off and says she's tired of hearing about her interfering last week. Last year, she was THE woman in WWE and helped erase the word Diva from WWE (we could have a tournament for everyone who takes credit for anything like this).

Now she and her friends, named Absolution (sounds like a bad perfume) are here to take things back. Rose and DeVille talk about how everyone has tried to be the next big thing but they remember how Paige started all of this. Paige offers Sasha a spot on the team but she forearms Paige off the apron. The beatdown is on in a hurry with everyone hitting a finisher. No match of course.

Bray Wyatt is here. Post break he's in the ring for a chat. Bray talks about never having a childhood. He never got to do all the usual things that children do. Your entire world exists inside the confines of a cardboard box. They tell you what to do and who to love. It's pathetic really, just like everyone here. Their suffering brings him joy and he can see them for who they truly are. Bray says we're all dead and starts cackling.

Bray Wyatt vs. Matt Hardy

Joined in progress with Bray running Matt over without much effort. The backsplash gets two but Matt drops him without too much effort. The middle rope elbow doesn't work so Matt settles for the Side Effect for two. Matt's moonsault misses and Bray spider walks up, followed by Sister Abigail to give Bray the pin at 3:30.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here, though that's usually the case with Matt's matches anymore. They're not very interesting and the big story with him tends to be when is Jeff getting back. I'd love it if this losing streak started moving him towards the Broken Matt character, as I can't imagine WWE not getting their hands on it eventually.

Post match Matt sits in the corner and starts screaming while doing the DELETE motion. Cole: "Are we witnessing the beginning of a Matt Hardy...breakdown?"

We look at Strowman getting hurt last week.

Jason Jordan wants to face Strowman again this week but since Braun is hurt, he'll face Kane instead.

Rich Swann vs. Akira Tozawa vs. Ariya Daivari vs. Noam Dar

One fall to a finish and winner goes on to a one on one #1 contenders match in two weeks. It's a brawl to start with Tozawa fighting off a double teaming but Swann flips over him. They trade some rollups for two each until the villains take him outside. Swann hits a big flip dive onto all of them with his knee hitting Tozawa square in the face. He seems ok though as Swann heads back inside for Rolling Thunder, only to be caught

by Daivari's spinebuster.

Tozawa comes back in and is double whipped into the corner. A double suplex drops Swann on the floor and we take a break. Back with Swann still on the floor as Tozawa hits the standing backplash on Daivari. The top rope version is broken up but Swann comes back in for the Tower of Doom. Dar breaks up the Phoenix splash but Tozawa takes him out with a dive.

Daivari's frog splash gets two on Swann, only to have Tozawa catch him with a Shining Wizard. The top rope backplash crushes Daivari with Dar sending Tozawa into the post. Dar's running kick to the head drops Tozawa so Swann pulls Tozawa outside. A regular kick to the head sets up the Phoenix splash to give Swann the pin and the spot in the #1 contenders match at 12:37.

Rating: C+. This was longer than it needed to be but the right guy won. Nothing here felt like anything you couldn't see on a regular episode of 205 Live, which is a big part of the problem. Hopefully this sets up Swann vs. Cedric Alexander for the title shot with Cedric eventually getting the win, as he's long overdue for a run as champion.

Here's Elias for his Intercontinental Title shot but first, a song about how sad the Miztourage is to not have their leader around. Dallas and Axel join in on harmonica and do give quite a performance. Elias offers them some praise but the fans cut him off with a WE WANT ROMAN chant. That's cut off by a NO WE DON'T chant and we're FINALLY ready to go.

Intercontinental Title: Roman Reigns vs. Elias

Elias is challenging. They trade shoulders to start with Elias getting the better of it and slapping on a reverse chinlock. Elias gets two off a clothesline and we hit a regular chinlock. Back up and the Miztourage offers a distraction so Elias can get in a hard knee for a near fall.

We come back from a break with Elias getting kicked in the face, only to have Reigns stop and take out the Miztourage instead of following up. The distraction lets Elias take Reigns down and drop a top rope elbow for a rather near fall. A sitout powerbomb gets the same but Reigns is right

back with a Superman Punch for two of his own. Back up and the spear retains the title at 14:48.

Rating: B-. While the ending wasn't exactly in doubt here, it was still a good, hard hitting match. They're certainly protecting Elias at the moment and I'm not sure what to make of that. It would be nice if they had him actually win something but with the Intercontinental Title now basically the show's World Title, he's kind of stuck. But at least it was a good match.

Post match Samoa Joe sneaks in and chokes Reigns out. No Rollins for the save either, mainly because this was a Reigns singles match and not a Shield match. That determines who comes out for a save you see.

Asuka vs. Dana Brooke

Brooke says she'll be all over Asuka at the bell. A cross armbreaker makes Dana tap at five seconds.

Post match Absolution comes out and surrounds the ring, only to let Asuka leave in peace.

Jason Jordan vs. Kane

Before the match, Jordan talks about how he's an athlete and knew his knee was banged up last week. Kane actually gets powered into the corner a few times to start but the suplex is broken up. A hard toss sends Jordan outside where he comes up holding the knee again. That's enough for a countout at 1:42.

Post match Kane stays on the knee until Finn Balor comes out for the save. They stare each other down and we take a break.

Finn Balor vs. Kane

Kane wastes no time in whipping Balor into the corner and we're into an early chinlock. Balor dropkicks him outside and hits a dive as the announcers talk about what a big deal a win over Kane would be. Kane hits him in the ribs with a chair for the DQ at 2:44.

Kane beats on him with the chair and wraps it around Balor's throat until Braun Strowman comes out for the save. A chair to the back has no effect on Strowman and the beatdown is on. Strowman destroys him with the steps and a chair, including a powerslam onto the steps. Kane gets his throat crushed on the chair and staggers into the crowd (probably looking for registered voters) to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The good, long matches worked but I have no idea what that ending was supposed to be. So Jordan is trying to be all gutsy and get over his knee injury, Balor is dealing with Kane (and getting destroyed by him over and over) and Kane vs. Strowman is over who the real monster is. Ignoring the fact that Kane hasn't been viewed as much of a monster in at least ten years and WHY IS THIS THE TOP STORY OF THE SHOW??? Like, is this supposed to set up Kane vs. Strowman, after Strowman has beaten Kane down multiple times now? That's their big draw?

Other than that, the show actually wasn't half bad with Asuka's win being a high point. Sometimes there's no need to have the match be anything other than a glorified joke and that's what we had there. Asuka is just better than Brooke and there was no need to watch it go for three minutes to prove such a thing. As mentioned, the wrestling was good but the booking of the last thirty minutes or so...not so much. Have Reigns vs. Elias and the Samoa Joe attack close the show and it's far, far better. Still good though.

Results

Seth Rollins b. Cesaro – Wind-up knee

Samoa Joe b. Titus O'Neil – Koquina Clutch

Bray Wyatt b. Matt Hardy – Sister Abigail

Rich Swann b. Ariya Daivari, Akira Tozawa and Noam Dar – Phoenix splash to Dar

Roman Reigns b. Elias – Spear

Asuka b. Dana Brooke – Cross armbreaker

Kane b. Jason Jordan via countout

Finn Balor b. Kane via DQ when Kane used a chair

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Main Event – September 7, 2017: I'll Walk With You

Main Event

Date: September 7, 2017

Location: CenturyLink Center, Omaha, Nebraska

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

We're in a new era here because a change in the commentary team is enough to warrant calling it a new era. Corey Graves has moved up to Smackdown so this show falls to Joseph and McGuinness, who probably aren't going to change all that much. Hopefully the show is good, though as usual it depends on what you get from Monday. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

TJP/Brian Kendrick vs. Mustafa Ali/Lince Dorado

Dorado enziguris Kendrick to start and gets two off a dropkick. Ali comes in with a neckbreaker for the same but it's off to TJP for a headscissors into some dabbing. A double slam drops TJP and Kendrick charges into a double flapjack. TJP gets in a clothesline from the apron to drop Ali and the villains take over for the first time.

It's off to Brian for an armbar with a neck crank but TJP can't get the kneebar. Kendrick can get a superkick to his jaw though and the hot tag brings in Dorado. A moonsault press gets two on TJP and everything breaks down. Dorado dives onto Kendrick and it's the 054 from Ali to put TJP away at 6:32.

Rating: C+. These cruiserweight tag matches have been getting a lot better in recent weeks. They're flying all over the place and showing what they're capable of doing, which makes them great choices for opening matches like this one. TJP has grown on me considerably and Ali is getting better every single time. Good, fun match here.

From Raw.

John Cena vs. Jason Jordan

Before the match, we look at Cena answering an open challenge from Kurt Angle fifteen years ago in his debut match. The fans are actually behind Cena, which should tell you a lot about Jordan's future. Jason grabs an early takedown and grabs a waistlock. Cena can't do much with him to start until a hard clothesline drops Jason without much effort. A suplex gets two on Jordan, followed by a hard whip into the corner for the same as we take a break.

Back with Jordan hitting his own suplexes and that's enough for Cena, who initiates the finishing sequence. Jordan's rollup is countered into the STF but he reverses into something like a Crossface. Cena powers out (because he's Cena) and reverses another suplex into a crossbody. That's enough for Cena though as he grabs the AA for the pin at 11:38.

Rating: B-. These performances make Jordan look like a star but the whole

being Angle's son thing is really not doing him any favors. It's not an effective story and I think WWE is starting to get that. Hopefully they build Jordan up and then do something to get rid of the Angle connection because it's not doing much for him.

Post match Roman Reigns comes out for a chat. Back from a break with Roman asking why it took a veteran twenty minutes to beat a rookie. I don't think Reigns knows A, what a rookie is or B, how to tell time. Cena says Roman is starting to ask questions and that's the worst thing he could do. They're distracting him and he's out here with his zipper down. Reigns: "I busted it actually. Big dog."

Cena promises that Reigns will get his answers at No Mercy, either by a guy who has lost his steps or someone who has been stringing Roman along. Roman is going to learn that he's an entitled golden boy while people like Chad Gable, Jason Jordan and even the Miz have had to fight and claw their way to get where they are. Point being, Cena doesn't respect Reigns because Roman is the only one living a lie. Reigns wants to fight right now but Cena doesn't seem interested. That makes Roman think he's all talk, which is why Reigns doesn't respect him.

From Raw again.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Jeff Hardy

Miz is defending. Jeff gets three near falls in the first minute before a clothesline puts Miz on the floor. A dive is teased but Jeff pulls back as Miz moves, sending us to a break. Back with Jeff getting two off his sitout gordbuster but mostly missing the Whisper in the Wind. Dallas offers a distraction so Axel can break up the Swanton, leaving Matt to take care of both of them. All three are ejected and it's Jeff grabbing a rollup for two.

Miz's DDT gets the same but he misses the running clothesline in the corner. Miz hits a running knee ala Daniel Bryan for two and we hit the YES Kicks. Jeff is right back with a dropkick but his dive off the apron is broken up. We hit the Figure Four for a bit with Jeff getting out without too much trouble.

The Twisting Stunner has Miz in trouble so he heads outside, only to get caught by Poetry in Motion against the barricade. Back in and the Swanton misses thanks to Maryse telling her husband it was coming. Another Twist of Fate is countered into the Skull Crushing Finale to retain the title at 13:02.

Rating: B. Better match than I was expecting and Miz retaining clean (the Maryse thing wasn't interference) is a good idea. The fact that they're pushing Miz's total days as champion is interesting too as he's only about six months away from setting the all time record for combined days with the title. That's easily something he could reach, along with most title reigns. They would be crazy not to push the heck out of that and it seems to have started.

Elias vs. Kalisto

The fans seem interested in walking with Elias. After a little ditty about how there's nothing cool about Omaha, we're ready to go. Kalisto starts fast with a bunch of kicks to the leg and we take an early break. Back with more kicks, followed by the hurricanrana driver. Not that it matters as Elias nails Drift Away at 5:55. Not enough shown to rate but it felt like they were very rushed.

Video on Big Show and Strowman breaking the ring back in April.

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman

Inside a cage with pinfall/submission/escape to win. Strowman splashes him up against the cage to start but runs into the KO punch as we go to a break. Back with both guys down again until Show slams him into the cage over and over. Show tries to climb for some reason and gets crotched, only to shove Strowman off again.

That means a top rope elbow for two and a THIS IS AWESOME chant. Show goes for the door but gets pulled back, only to have Strowman get the door slammed on his head. A double shoulder puts both of them down but Show's chokeslam is countered into a DDT for two. The chokeslam is good for two and Show escapes the powerslam. Strowman misses a charge and goes into the cage wall but is still able to catch Big Show escaping. The big

old superplex plants Show and it's the running powerslam for the pin at 16:58.

Rating: B. These two continue to surprise me as they haven't actually had a bad match. WWE has a bad tendency to turn these battles of the big men into really boring matches but this was another great power match with both guys looking good. It's also proof that having an obvious winner isn't the worst thing in the world. Strowman was obviously winning (Big Show isn't Kalisto after all) and it didn't make the match any less entertaining.

Post match Strowman says that's nothing compared to what he'll do to Lesnar. Now it's time to put Big Show out to pasture, so Strowman powerslams him through the cage (a section of which breaks and falls to the floor) to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Pretty standard episode this week, though I really like that cage match. The Reigns vs. Cena stuff is still entertaining and I remain stunned by how well they're treating Elias. He's barely lost aside from Finn Balor and that's quite the record for someone who shouldn't be that big of a deal. Hopefully things go well for him and he can get back on Raw soon enough.

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Main Event – August 10, 2017: The Chris Jericho Tribute Match

Main Event

Date: August 10, 2017

Location: Air Canada Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

The show heads north of the border this week and there are some options for this show. Monday's Raw didn't feature several names and since no one works twice around here, there's a good chance we could be seeing some bigger names around here. Oh and Curt Hawkins. Never forget Hawkins. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Apollo Crews vs. Curt Hawkins

See, I told you there would be a Hawkins sighting. They pose at each other to start but Crews pops off a dropkick to take over. Hawkins is smart enough to choke on the ropes and grabs a belly to back suplex for two. A regular suplex gets two and we hit the chinlock. Back up and Crews hits a running kick to the face, followed by the enziguri and standing moonsault for two. Hawkins comes back with an enziguri of his own but what looks like a running right hand is countered into the Toss Powerbomb to give Crews the pin at 4:29.

Rating: D+. As usual, the best thing about a Hawkins match is his awesome entrance. It's a shame that something so funny is being wasted on someone who is nothing but a jobber to the stars. Crews continues to be insanely athletic but he still needs charisma and a character, which is only going to be done so well by Titus International.

From Raw, part one.

We start fast this week as Miz and company are in the ring for MizTV. Miz is tired of being blindsided on his own show so he wants Jason Jordan out here right now. It's Kurt Angle instead, who has his own guest for the show: Brock Lesnar. The place goes coconuts for Lesnar and Paul Heyman, but Miz cuts Paul off because this is his show. Miz talks about how it's almost a guarantee that Lesnar is losing the title because all three challengers are going to gang up on Lesnar. And remember, if Brock loses, he's gone for good. If Miz is a betting man, he's picking one of the challengers to leave as champion.

It's time for Heyman to talk and he gets straight to the point: "Do you and your wife ever role play?" Heyman loves the idea of role play so let's have Miz play Roman Reigns, Bo Dallas play Samoa Joe and Curtis Axel play Braun Strowman. Now let's preview Summerslam. Three F5's later, Lesnar calmly leaves.

And the sequel.

Here's Finn Balor for a chat. After some required T00 SWEET chanting, Balor talks about kicking Bray's teeth down his neck last week. If there's one thing Finn knows, it's that you have to kick fear in the face...and here's Wyatt to interrupt. Bray appears in the ring but Balor is on the top. They fight for a bit until Bray disappears, only to reappear on screen to say he enjoys Balor's bravery.

Before the next match, we're graced with a song from Elias about how horrible Canada is with all of its ugly citizens. Cue a well known Canadian for the save.

Elias vs. Kalisto

Kalisto says he wants to walk with Elias but settles for sending him outside for a hurricanrana off the apron. We take an early break and come back with Elias pulling Kalisto's arm down onto the apron, earning them both a series of TEN counts. The arm goes into the apron again and it's time for an armbar.

Kalisto reverses into a rollup for a quick breather but Elias kicks him in the shoulder again. A hammerlock belly to back suplex gets two and we hit the third armbar. An armdrag gets Kalisto out of trouble and he rolls over to kick Elias in the head, only to have the Salida Del Sol reversed into Drift Away for the pin at 10:02.

Rating: D-. It's hard to find a really bad Main Event match but they pulled it off here. How in the world can you have a ten minute match with three armbars included? Elias is going to be used as something special in WWE though I still have no idea what that's going to be. Kalisto is a good jobber to the stars, though I still have no idea why he beat Braun Strowman earlier in the year.

Quick look at Bayley's injury.

Finally from Raw again.

Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns

Last Man Standing. Reigns meets him in the aisle but gets thrown from the floor into the ring. It's too early for a Samoan drop as Strowman pounds Reigns down for an early five count. Reigns is sent outside and we take a break. Back with Strowman throwing the steps inside but Reigns slugs away for a breather. A pair of big boots stagger Strowman and a shot with the steps puts Strowman on a knee.

Reigns hits him in the face with the steps and Strowman goes down, allowing Reigns to hit him in the chest with the steps over and over. Back up at seven and Strowman blocks the Superman Punch by sending Reigns into the corner. That spinning Big Ending gives Braun a breather but Roman gets in a quick Superman Punch to put both guys down. Strowman is back up with a dropkick of all things but he misses a charge and hits the post, knocking him out to the floor.

Reigns gets in the apron dropkick and it's table time. He takes too long with it though as Strowman clotheslines him down again and sets up the table in the ring. Again it takes too long though and Reigns hits a Samoan drop through the table, only to have Strowman roll outside to get on his feet. Reigns goes after him so Strowman LAUNCHES the timekeeper's

chair at him, knocking Reigns completely silly for nine. Great visual and if Strowman doesn't win, I have no idea why he didn't do it there.

They fight into the crowd and up to the announcers' table with Reigns hitting another running dropkick. Strowman is up again and throws Roman into the screen. The announcers' table is loaded up but Reigns gets to his feet for two Superman Punches. The spear is blocked with a big boot, only to have Reigns pop back up and hit the spear. Reigns pulls himself up...and Samoa Joe reaches out from the crowd to put Reigns in the Koquina Clutch. The THANK YOU JOE chant starts up and Strowman is up at nine for the win at 22:00.

Rating: B-. This got going once they brought the table in and I REALLY like that ending. Strowman wouldn't have gotten up without the delay in the count thanks to Joe and Joe himself looks like the real winner, which makes sense considering he wasn't even on the show so far. It's not a classic or anything but the ending was the perfect call, outside of MAYBE a double knockout.

Overall Rating: D. Pretty weak show this time around and that's not the biggest surprise in the world. MizTV was fun, the Last Man Standing match was brutal, the Balor segment was stupid and the original matches ranged from "we've seen this before" to a tribute to Chris Jericho's ARMBAR list. This was one of the worst shows they've done in a good while and that's hard to do for Main Event.

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KB 's Review: Wrestling Prospectus

Who might be the stars of the future? Here are eleven of them. Why eleven? Eh no reason.

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