

Monday Night Raw – August 15, 2016: Stop Me If You've Seen This Before Sunday

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 15, 2016

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's Summerslam week and Brock Lesnar is here. On top of that things should be back to normal with the full roster back after their Australia/New Zealand tour last week. We should get one last push on all of the big matches, including Seth Rollins vs. Finn Balor for the first ever Universal Title. Let's get to it.

Last week on Raw, Roman Reigns sent Lana into a cake and Seth Rollins didn't think much of Finn Balor.

Earlier today Rollins was outside waiting for his opponent Finn Balor, or the Demon King. He calls him out for a fight right then and there but no one showed up. Tonight he'll find Balor instead.

Lana and Rusev are in the ring with Lana saying they're not leaving the ring until everyone hears what they have to say. There will be no Raw until Reigns comes out here and apologizes. Instead he gets Mick Foley, now in a Have A Nice Raw shirt and with a beard that has its own zip code. Rusev yells a lot and says Foley sucks as a GM. He asks for Stephanie McMahon to come out here instead so here's the bigger boss to stick up for Foley.

Rusev threatens to call Vince or Shane but here's Roman to interrupt as well. They insult each other a bit (as heels and faces do) and a USA chant starts up, which is exactly what they were shooting for here. Rusev wants to defend Lana's honor so Mick makes the match tonight, albeit not for the title.

Sheamus vs. Sami Zayn

Before the match, Sheamus gets some promo time saying Sami is nothing to him because Sami talks a lot on Twitter but he's just a Sheamus knockoff. Sami throws his shirt at Sheamus and they're quickly brawling before the bell. Cesaro sits in on commentary as Sami forearm Sheamus in the corner. A headscissors only ticks Sheamus off and he sends Sami back first into the post as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus in control, as a heel should be when you come back from a break. A powerslam gets two on Sami as Cesaro talks about having an offer to go to Smackdown, which a talent like himself deserves. The ten forearms to the chest have Sami in trouble but he knocks Cesaro outside for the big flip dive.

Corey gets on Cesaro for talking about himself a lot and Cesaro brushes him off in a rather heelish manner. White Noise gets two for Sheamus and a Blue Thunder Bomb (Not Michinoku Driver Cole. Even Saxton can get that name right.) gets the same. Sheamus comes back with the Irish Curse but here's Cesaro for a distraction, setting up the Helluva Kick for the pin on Sheamus at 10:14.

Rating: B-. They were sticking with the basics here but these two doing the basics means a good match. Cesaro teasing the heel turn on commentary is interesting, though I have little reason to believe WWE isn't going to botch this as well. What's not interesting is Cesaro vs. Sheamus all over again after Cesaro beat him twice in a row in recent weeks. There's no logical reason to do the match again but that's what we're likely going to get anyway because that's that we're stuck with.

Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens say tonight's match between Owens and Big Cass isn't one on one because Jericho will have Kevin's back. Jericho wants to know who certified Enzo as a G. Does he even have a license to be a G? They're ready for their tag match at Summerslam too and tell Todd/Robert/Brian/Nathaniel so, despite the interviewer being named Tom. Now that was funny.

Post break Cesaro and Sheamus are brawling again when Foley comes in to break it up. Mick loves seeing them fight so we're getting a best of

seven series. AFTER CESARO HAS ALREADY BEATEN HIM TWICE. Egads this booking makes my head hurt.

Dudley Boyz vs. New Day

Non-title and there's no Big E. at ringside. Before the match, Gallows and Anderson pop up on screen to say they're trying to cure Ringpostitis. They're doing everything they can to make sure their results aren't tainted, including putting eggs in microwaves. They're well endowed with the right equipment and the ball is in their court. The distraction lets D-Von take over on Woods to start but D-Von clotheslines Bubba by mistake. Kofi hits Trouble in Paradise on D-Von for the pin at 1:38.

Post match the doctors' experiment was a failure and they need more test subjects. Kofi wants to know why these two think this is a game. Summerslam is their anniversary of being champions and there's no way Anderson and Gallows are getting their hands on New Day's rocks.

Rollins is still looking for Balor but no one has seen him. This includes Neville, who says Rollins isn't ready for the Demon King. Seth yells a lot.

Nia Jax vs. Rachel Weaby

Rachel has blue hair, bright green and pink attire and a lot of tattoos. She's been watching the Olympics and is ready to bring home the gold. Nia throws her around and knocks her off the top with a single shot to the face. Rachel is out cold but Nia brings her back in for the fireman's carry into a powerslam for the pin at 1:05.

Here are Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar for their big talk before Summerslam. We see Orton and Lesnar trading sneak attacks in recent weeks. Heyman starts his catchphrase...and here's Heath Slater to interrupt. Paul hopes that someone put Heath up to this because it's really stupid.

All Heyman can do is laugh as Slater talks about Raw understanding what Smackdown can't get. Apparently if Slater fights Lesnar tonight, he gets a job. Heyman just ignores him and goes into his promo about Orton but

Slater cuts them off again. Heath knows he's going to get hurt very badly but he has to do this for his kids. Brock actually talks because he can respect Slater fighting for his family. He actually wants to talk about Slater's kids...who he doesn't give a censored about.

Slater can walk out of here on his own two feet or stand here and keep ticking Brock off. Heath actually tries to fight and gets suplexed half to death, followed by the F5. Heyman puts on Heath's sunglasses and praises his courage before laughing at the idea of Orton being a viper. It's his job to hype up the match on Sunday but Lesnar won't believe a word Brock says about Orton being a real threat. Brock is the box office at Summerslam and you should buy it to see a once in a lifetime athlete. This FINALLY wraps up with Heyman saying Brock is dominant.

That's the problem with how Brock has been booked over the last year: if no one, including the reigning WWE World Champion, why in the world would I want to see him fight again? We know the ending because Brock can't be touched so it gets a little boring. Like Heyman's speech here, which just kept going and going as Heyman said the same thing he's said for over a year.

Big Cass vs. Kevin Owens

Before the match, Enzo talks about cooking zucchinis, sausage, burgers, frankfurters and those two pieces of Canadian bacon. Cass shoulders Owens down to start but Kevin knocks him off the apron and into the post as we take a break. Back with Cass breaking up the Cannonball with a boot to the face but getting sent outside again. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb and gets backdropped, only to have Jericho jump Cass for the DQ at 6:23. Not enough to rate but Cass looked competitive here and that's all he needed to do.

Enzo and Cass get beaten down post match.

Reigns is ready to fight no matter what Rusev has ready for him. Rusev jumps him from behind and sends Reigns into a steel wall.

Prime Time Players vs. Shining Stars

Yes they were feuding just a week ago but earlier tonight Titus apologized so they're back together for a third run. Darren and Epico get things going before it's quickly off to Titus for a slam. Primo comes in and dropkicks Titus in the knee to take over, only to have Titus splash him in the corner. We get Titus suplexing Darren onto Primo for two but Bob Backlund accidentally distracts Titus, who is knocked off the apron by Darren. The Clash of the Titus plants Young and Primo gets the pin at 2:42.

Jinder Mahal vs. Neville

Neville dropkicks him outside and hits a corkscrew moonsault to the floor. The Red Arrow doesn't work yet and Mahal kicks him in the face for two. A chinlock goes nowhere and Neville kicks him in the head to set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 2:57.

The bosses casually mention that Jon Stewart will be at Summerslam when Rollins comes in to find the Demon King. Mick suggests that he try it in the ring.

Here's Rollins to call out Balor and give him one more chance to show himself tonight. No one shows up so Rollins laughs it off and calls this match just another chapter in his book. He's the face of Balor's failure but something we can't see (maybe a fan jumping the barricade) cuts Seth off. Seth keeps laughing and the lights start flickering and go out. Red lights flash and here's Demon Balor for the first time in WWE.

The fans are getting into the arms pose now and that's a very good sign. Rollins has no idea what to think of this and Balor, now with writing all over the right side of his body, gets in his face. The fight is on and Balor cleans house as he should in this case. Balor misses the Coup de Grace but hits a flip dive over the top to take Rollins down. The more I think about it, the more I like the idea of them having Demon Balor show up here. This match needs some buzz and this is going to do it.

We look back at Lana being sent into the cake last week.

Golden Truth vs. Gallows and Anderson

Gallows and Anderson are in their doctors' coats. Truth gets kicked in the face to start but gets in the spinning forearm for a breather. It's a double tag to Goldust and Anderson with Goldust hitting his bulldog and powerslam. Not that it matters as the Magic Killer ends Goldust at 2:18.

New Day comes in for the beatdown post match and it's Gallows saving Anderson from a trombone to the testicles.

Charlotte talks down to Dana Brooke about wanting a taste of the spotlight. Dana failed her when it mattered the most but Charlotte will win the title anyway. Charlotte leaves Dana in tears.

Alicia Fox vs. Charlotte

Sasha Banks is on commentary. Fox hits some dropkicks to start but gets pulled off the middle rope for two. Natural Selection ends Fox at 1:25.

Charlotte calls Sasha to the ring but Dana takes out Sasha's knee, setting up the Figure Eight.

Video on Braun Strowman.

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Non-title. Roman goes right at him before the bell and kicks Rusev in the face. The apron boot makes it even worse for Rusev but he posts Reigns as we go to a break. We're joined in progress with Rusev working on Reigns' bad left arm. Reigns gets choked on the ropes but comes back with a Samoan Drop for a breather. They head outside with Reigns being sent into the steps a few times but Rusev has the US Title taken away from him as we take another break.

Back with Rusev grabbing the mic and saying we're all Russian wannabes. Rusev chokes Roman with his own ring gear, which isn't a DQ for reasons that aren't clear. Roman fights out and knocks Rusev off the top to set up a clothesline to put both guys down. The Superman Punch is countered and Rusev gets two off the spinwheel kick. Four straight middle rope headbutts get four straight near falls for Rusev.

The fifth finally misses and Reigns starts fighting back until a shot to

the ribs slows him down. Rusev's superkick is countered with a Superman Punch for a good near fall. The spear is countered with a few kicks to the head for two more but the Accolade is broken up as well. Another superkick to the back sets up the Accolade until Reigns basically collapses into the ropes. Back up and the spear pins Rusev at 20:39.

Rating: B. It was a solid match with both guys knowing how to do the power stuff but after seeing these two fight each other probably half a dozen times over the last year, I really don't need to see them fight for thirty minutes on Raw and then watch them in a big pay per view match at Summerslam. Then again I don't want to see Sheamus vs. Cesaro in four more matches (it'll be seven) after seeing Cesaro pin Sheamus twice already. At least this was good, but I'm not wild on seeing a champion get pinned clean to set up the title match.

Overall Rating: D+. I really wasn't feeling this one and a lot of that is due to how they're booking things anymore. Now I really like the idea of the short, squash matches but you can mix things up a little more than that. Maybe have some of these matches go six to seven minutes instead of having six of them go under three.

The bigger problem here is that, aside from Balor vs. Rollins, I don't care to see any of Sunday's matches more than I did coming into tonight. How many of these people won't be appearing on Sunday's show anyway? Sami, Strowman, Nia Jax, and Neville aren't likely to be at Summerslam but they get time (albeit very limited time) here because they need to fill in time. I'm hoping they get this stuff fixed soon because they really don't know how to put a three hour show together at this point.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Sheamus – Brogue Kick

New Day b. Dudley Boyz – Trouble in Paradise to D-Von

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

Big Cass b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Chris Jericho interfered

Shining Stars b. Prime Time Players – Primo pinned Young after a Clash of

the Titus from O'Neil

Neville b. Jinder Mahal – Red Arrow

Gallows and Anderson b. Goldust Truth – Magic Killer to Goldust

Charlotte b. Alicia Fox – Natural Selection

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

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Monday Night Raw – August 8, 2016: Point Being?

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 8, 2016

Location: Honda Center, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

Things are starting to pick back up as we have thirteen days before Summerslam. The big story coming out of last week saw Randy Orton and Brock Lesnar trade assaults though there's no word on Lesnar being back this week. Other than that we have a rematch between Sheamus and Cesaro

for reasons that aren't entirely clear. Let's get to it.

We open with a Last Week on Raw which covers Balor vs. Rollins, Reigns vs. Rusev, Lesnar getting RKO'ed and showing up on Smackdown to take out Orton. I like this idea but they need to speed it up a little.

Opening sequence.

Here are Enzo and Cass to open things up with Enzo saying Sasha Banks was smitten with him last week. There was as much chemistry as a science fair and he was hitting it to the track but Chris Gold Glove Jon Bon Jericho came out and pulled it back over the wall. Enzo and Cass are some Anaheim Angels on a Stairway to Heaven so welcome to the jungle you Axl Rose wannabe. Jericho comes out and calls them a couple of goofballs before Kevin Owens comes out.

Apparently Jimmin Marvinluter had a chat with them and now Owens has his back. They're closer than brothers, which Owens takes a few seconds to confirm. Cass thinks it's like Bert and Ernie where they're in the same bathtub scrubbing each others' backs. Owens calls Enzo a dead weight that Cass brought over to Raw with him so he doesn't like Cass anymore. Owens and Cass are about to fight but Jericho wasn't talking to the big mutton head Cass, even though he was looking right at him. Jericho: "I was talking to the hip hop hobbit." A brawl is teased but nothing happens as we go to a break.

Enzo Amore vs. Chris Jericho

We actually wait to come back from commercial for the opening bell. Enzo starts fast with a dropkick and headscissors but gets run over by a shoulder. Owens, at ringside with Cass, runs his mouth as only he can. Jericho is sent to the floor with a baseball slide and a big staredown takes us to a break. Back with Jericho in control with chops in the corner, only to get caught with a middle rope DDT. Enzo tries another hurricanrana but gets caught in the Walls. The rope is grabbed but Jericho hits a quick Codebreaker. Cass and Owens get in a fight on the floor, ending with Cass coming in to boot Jericho for the DQ at 11:17.

Rating: C-. As far as a match whose only reason to exist was to set up a

tag match at Summerslam goes, this was perfectly fine. The more Enzo gets in the ring on his own the better it's going to be for him. The good thing about Jericho at this point is you could imagine him jobbing to anyone so Enzo wasn't out of the running here. That's a rare treat you don't get often enough.

Post match Cass issues the challenge for a tag match at Summerslam. The Canadians quickly accept.

Mick Foley is on the phone with Stephanie when Sasha Banks comes in. She wants to face Charlotte and Dana Brooke in a handicap match tonight. Instead Mick makes it Dana vs. Sasha tonight and if Sasha wins, it's one on one with Charlotte at Summerslam. Mick: "Good luck." Sasha: "You don't need luck when you're the Boss."

Braun Strowman vs. Jorel Nelson

Nelson is speechless about why he agreed to do this. Strowman kicks him off the apron and turns him inside out with a clothesline. The reverse chokeslam ends this at 1:00.

Mick Foley meets with Puff Daddy and receives front row tickets to his concert in Columbus, Ohio. New Day comes in and Puff eats some Booty0's. Big E. is out due to his injury from last week and Kofi makes rap jokes.

Titus O'Neil vs. Darren Young

This would be the first match we saw last week. Darren hits him in the face to start so Titus hammers away. He loads up a quick powerslam but gets rolled up with Darren grabbing the trunks this time for the pin at 2:00. Keeping this short is the best thing that could happen tonight.

Here's Seth Rollins to open the second hour. The last few weeks have been a learning experience for everyone, including learning about his Summerslam opponent Finn Balor. He's followed Finn's career for years now and thought he was just a knockoff. "The Jared Leto to his Heath Ledger if you will."

We see a clip from last week with Balor talking to Seth, which makes Rollins talk about how Finn Balor isn't even his real name. Apparently

it's a famous warrior and a demon king, which would be like Seth calling himself Rambo Apocalypse. Seth wants to know the real Finn Balor who came in here and insulted Seth in his ring. Balor has had two matches in WWE and now he thinks he's some big star.

The reason Seth is so arrogant is because he knows his place in WWE. He's not ignorant and doesn't need to surround himself with myths and legends because he knows who he is. One day parents will tell their kids stories about Rollins conquering people like Brock Lesnar, John Cena and Roman Reigns. His legend will be expanded at Summerslam when he adds Balor's name to that list. As has been the case lately, Rollins was on point here.

We look back at Orton hitting the RKO on Lesnar last week and Lesnar retaliating.

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

This is the other rematch from last week where Cesaro won. Apparently that wasn't enough to impress the bosses, which matters more than winning around here. Cesaro starts with a dropkick and scores with a suicide dive. Back in and Cesaro hits the running uppercut in the corner, only to get caught with the big ax handle as we take a break. We come back to Sheamus hitting a top rope shoulder for two and grabbing a chinlock.

White Noise is countered into a failed Swing attempt but the Brogue Kick misses as well. The Irish Curse and White Noise get two each and Sheamus is stunned. Sheamus goes up top but gets dropkicked down, setting up the uppercut train on the floor. The referee gets in the way of a right hand and doesn't see Sheamus rolling Cesaro up. Back up and Cesaro grabs a rollup of his own for the pin at 11:00.

Rating: C. This wasn't as good as last week's match but at least there's no reason to do a third match. That being said there was no reason to do a second match and we got one anyway. Above all else though the line from the announcers about how the bosses want to see physical dominance instead of people winning matches made me cringe. If it's not about winning, what's the point of being here?

We look at Lesnar attacking Orton on Smackdown. That's the third time in ninety minutes.

Long video on Randy Orton vs. Brock Lesnar, including sitdown interviews with each talking about their time together in Ohio Valley Wrestling. The talent level down there was unheard of with Orton, Lesnar, Cena, Shelton Benjamin and Batista all in the same place. They debuted in 2002 and both took their own paths to greatness though Lesnar reached his peak far faster.

Then Lesnar left because he didn't like people to pursue his fortunes elsewhere. Lesnar: "I became a megastar and he became just a star." Heyman says Orton is the best surfer on the beach, riding all those big waves. But then Lesnar is the shark. We see Lesnar laying Orton out on Smackdown for the fourth time tonight but Orton says it only takes one RKO. Good stuff here, even though they really don't have history together.

Lesnar is here next week.

Dudley Boyz vs. Sin Cara/Neville

This is due to the Bubba and D-Von doing their usual "you're new and therefore you suck" speech to Neville earlier in the day. Sin Cara is dressed like Black Panther tonight. Bubba pounds Neville into the corner to start and the old guys take turns in the corner. D-Von is in a regular t-shirt this week for a new look. Bubba goes after Neville and gets sent outside for a flip dive from Cara. Back in and D-Von takes over with a big elbow drop for two but misses a charge into the corner. It's off to Neville who ducks a D-Von clothesline to send it into Bubba, setting up the Red Arrow to pin D-Von at 5:18.

Rating: C-. Fine enough here and Neville/Cara are a passable selection for the new high flying team. I mean, it does make you wonder why they didn't just keep the Dragons together in the first place when Kalisto is just a warm body on Smackdown but I don't think they thought that through.

Bubba gives D-Von an angry glare post match. I blame the shirt change.

Here are Rusev and Lana in their wedding clothes with a wedding party set up. They're here to talk about their very special occasion and we get to experience their wedding day. We see a package of wedding photos and I flash back to last year when Lana was taken off TV for revealing the engagement. Yeah it's almost like that MADE NO DIFFERENCE WHATSOEVER. The fans call this boring which Rusev interprets as them wanting MORE MORE MORE. They're about to exchange their wedding vows again when Roman Reigns comes out to interrupt.

The fans boo because they have no idea how wrestling works or what they want out of their time here. Reigns was in the back watching and wondered why Rusev didn't have a best man. Maybe Roman can fill in that role and offers to give the newlyweds a toast. Rusev says no, so Reigns issues a challenge for Summerslam. Roman pours a drink and makes wedding night jokes, causing Rusev to go after him. A right hand knocks Rusev into Lana, sending her right into the wedding cake. Lana: "I HATE YOU!!!"

This is exactly the kind of thing that Reigns needs to do: simple stories that should get him cheered because he's doing something people want him to see. This was a really basic idea but it's going to set up the title match and gives people a reason to cheer Reigns and boo Rusev. Old school stories still work just fine and I have no idea why people hate them so much.

Sasha Banks vs. Dana Brooke

Non-title and if Sasha wins Dana is banned from ringside at Summerslam. Sasha takes her down to start but gets taken to the mat. Charlotte slaps Dana in the face by mistake and gets dropped by the champ. Back up and Dana misses a charge in the corner, setting up the double knees in the corner to give Sasha the pin at 2:17.

We get a sitdown talk from Finn Balor who talks about the origin of his name, including a famous warrior named Finn. Then there was the king of the demons: Balor. These aren't just stories but rather a source of power. When a warrior knows his power isn't enough, he can tap into these things and become greater than himself. Seth has never seen a demon like this but he'll meet the king at Summerslam.

Anderson and Gallows are dressed like doctors to discuss a condition called ringpostitis, which has been sweeping through the roster as of late. We see clips of Big E. getting crotched on the post last week and Anderson has a jar with ping pong balls inside. They recently performed surgery and the results were nuts. It makes you want to ball your eyes out and Gallows got a little testy. Tonight they collect another sample from Kofi Kingston. I love little vignettes like this, if nothing else just to spice things up a bit.

Kofi Kingston vs. Luke Gallows

Kofi starts fast and sends Gallows outside for a flip dive. Gallows takes over on the floor and muscles Kofi back in for a fireman's carry flapjack and the pin at 1:33. They're certainly not taking their time tonight.

Woods has to save Kofi from a post crotching.

Earlier today, Goldust met with Scooby-Doo and R-Truth thinks he's been replaced by man's best friend. A fight almost breaks out but Goldust suggests they go watch the new WWE Scooby-Doo movie together and eat some Scooby Snacks. The first movie was entertaining so I'm fine with this.

Here's Mick Foley for his big meeting with Daniel Bryan. They praise each other a bit before talking about Orton vs. Lesnar last week. Foley also isn't happy with Bryan degrading the Universal Title and wondering when the Milky Way Title was coming up. Mick says this isn't a joke and here's Rusev, in ring gear, to interrupt.

Rusev sucks up to Mick, which Bryan thinks is a way out of his match with Roman Reigns. This brings out Cesaro to say he's earned a championship match in his last two performances. Bryan: "Cesaro, I think you've been completely underutilized on Raw." Foley: "Stay out of this Daniel." Mick makes the title match right here, right now.

US Title: Cesaro vs. Rusev

Cesaro is challenging and the bell rings at 11:01pm. Rusev goes after the arm to start and Cesaro is in early trouble. A whip into the corner puts Cesaro down again but he comes back with the running uppercuts. Rusev

knocks him down again but the Accolade is countered into an electric chair drop. A slugout goes to Cesaro and the springboard uppercut drops the champ.

The Swing sets up the Sharpshooter and here's Sheamus to break it up. The distraction lets Rusev hit the superkick for two. I bought that as the finish. Sheamus gets up AGAIN and the distraction leads to a ref bump, meaning there's no count on the Neutralizer. Rusev pokes Cesaro in the eye to set up a Brogue Kick, followed by another kick to the head to retain the title at 9:50.

Rating: D. For the booking, not the wrestling. I actually groaned out loud at that ending because this is just dumb on so many levels. Let's take a quick look at why this was so dumb many levels.

1. It started after 11pm with zero announcement or build. Set this up instead of just doing it in such a hurry.
2. It only exists to set up Cesaro vs. Sheamus again, despite Cesaro beating Sheamus twice in a row, clean both times.
3. We now have Cesaro losing to set up a match against a two time loser.
4. Did I mention Cesaro loses again?
5. This felt like they ran out of ideas and threw in a taped house show match.
6. What was the point of Sheamus vs. Cesaro earlier tonight? Cesaro had already beaten him last week and all it did was set up a way to get us to this ending. Set up the match, perhaps by making last week's match a #1 contenders match instead of having it be a way to impress the bosses, and then have Sheamus interfere to set up the rematch. Don't have a rematch for no logical reason (the bosses wanting to see it again doesn't count) and then use it as a way to pay off another match later. That's stupid booking, but then again so is half the stuff WWE does at times.

Just a mess all around here and really stupid booking to get us to the next really stupid idea.

We're not done with the stupid as Rusev holds up the title and stares straight ahead for a good three seconds so Reigns can run down the aisle and spear him to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This show was much more boring than bad and that's not necessarily an improvement. The biggest problem here is that this wasn't an interesting show. Nothing really happened here, save for Reigns going after Lana and Rusev plus an ending that made my head hurt. They kept things quick all night and as a result none of the matches felt important. This felt like they were just burning off a show instead of building up to Summerslam, almost like they don't have enough stuff to fill in a three hour (plus) card. It just wasn't all that interesting though the Reigns, Rollins and Balor stuff was all good.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Enzo Amore via DQ when Big Cass interfered

Braun Strowman b. Jorel Nelson – Reverse chokeslam

Darren Young b. Titus O'Neil – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Sin Cara/Neville b. Dudley Boyz – Red Arrow to D-Von

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Double knees to the chest

Luke Gallows b. Kofi Kingston – Fireman's carry flapjack

Rusev b. Cesaro – Kick to the head

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Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – August 1, 2016

I hadn't planned for this to be a recurring feature but this week's show seemed like it deserved a second look. Last week's show was outstanding while this week's show felt like any old episode and that's not a good thing. I know things had to come back down to earth a little bit but there were some things here that really came off bad. Let's get to it.

The show opened with a voiceover saying Last Week On Monday Night Raw. I know they do these almost every week but this made it feel more like a special feature instead of something to fill in time. They also kept it shorter and more to the point for a big improvement.

Sasha Banks (with the Women's Title looking WAY too big) came out to open the show but was cut off by Charlotte (of course). They went back and forth a bit with the rematch being made, but Chris Jericho of all people interrupted. This turned into a back and forth between the Jericho and Sasha over which woman deserved to be champion more. The worst part about this was hearing Ric Flair's name brought up over and over, making me think he'll be back soon. You know, because last week's title change was begging for Ric Flair to be at ringside.

Anyway Enzo Amore came out on his own to defend Sasha and hit on her as only Enzo can. The result was some actually funny comedy between Jericho and Enzo (I say actually because Jericho's interactions with other big time comedy names often go badly) until Mick Foley came out to make it a mixed tag. The heels won with Charlotte pinning Sasha, which isn't a good idea a week into her reign. Yeah it's to set up the rematch but you couldn't have Sasha get knocked out with Natural Selection on the floor to make it a countout? Also of note: Kevin Owens was on commentary here

and didn't like Enzo at all.

Braun Strowman squashed a jobber. These matches have gotten me more interested in Strowman than anything since his debut.

Mark Henry was given a US Title shot against Rusev later in the show. The match was exactly what you would expect from the two of them fighting with Rusev winning via the Accolade. There were two interesting parts here though. First of all, Lana was in her wedding dress and dear goodness that woman is gorgeous.

In the more interesting part though, Roman Reigns came out for the save post match and seemed to set up what seems like a feud against Rusev for the US Title. Punishment over the drug test aside, this is the kind of thing Reigns needs to do: fight in the midcard in a feud where people are going to cheer for him in a simple story so he can build more love from the fans. This is what he needed to do years ago to get himself over instead of getting one third of the Shield over but for some reason REIGNS MUST HAVE BEEN THE STAR AT WRESTLEMANIA XXXI NO MATTER IF HE WAS READY OR NOT.

Golden Truth seems to be breaking up over Pokemon Go. It's not like Smackdown needs tag teams or anything. No instead let's break them up for the sake of a lame comedy bit after spending months setting them up in the first place.

Now for the big speech of the night as Finn Balor came out for a chat and was cut off by Seth Rollins. Seth kept to the idea that he's done everything Balor has done over the years but did it first. Balor talked about how there's always someone talking down to him and everywhere he's gone he's taken their spot because he's the better man before kicking Rollins out to the floor.

For some reason people have been saying Balor looked bad here but I liked the exchange. Balor definitely isn't the most comfortable talker in the world but that's where modern WWE gets in trouble: they seem to think that if everyone doesn't fit their idea of what a big star is then that person has no value. Balor is going to get over because of his in ring ability, his look, his in ring work and his overall cool factor. But no,

for some reason he's doomed to never make it in the main event because he can't stand in the ring and exchange with someone on the mic.

Look back at some of the biggest stars ever. How much did someone like Austin, Rock, Hogan or Sting get over based on their look and how you had to see what they were doing? Balor has the same appeal. There's the leather jacket and the cool music and the posing and the Demon and all the other intangibles he brings to the act. No he isn't the best talker in the world but what people don't get is that he doesn't need to be.

The same thing played a big role in bringing Reigns down: he was bad at talking in the middle of the ring but he didn't need to be doing that in the first place. How over did Balor get in NXT while barely ever talking? The reaction to this seemed to be that Balor was stumbling over his words and having no business being there. I'm not sure what they were watching but I saw Balor looking just fine (different than excelling) in an area he really shouldn't need to be great in.

Titus O'Neil beat Darren Young in a bad match. Afterwards they seemed to set up something more with Titus yelling at Bob Backlund and getting laid out by Young. I don't want to see this continue but they have to fill those three hours somehow.

Now we get to the thing that actually made me want to do this again this week, though unfortunately I can't take credit for pointing this out in the first place. Stephanie and Foley were backstage (They were on the show a lot more this week but it wasn't annoying. Yet.) when Sheamus came in wanting to know why he didn't get the US Title shot. Cesaro came in and asked the same thing. Foley said a lot of Cesaro's issues are due to his Draft spot, which was lower due to that shoulder injury.

Here's where we get to the big issue: Cesaro is drafted lower because he's three months removed from a shoulder injury but less than half an hour earlier Rollins was talking about his near career ending knee injury that he returned from about a month ago. Rollins was the #1 pick in the Draft but that knee injury hasn't been mentioned once by Stephanie or Foley or any other boss.

This is a great case of WWE picking and choosing their storylines and not

paying attention to continuity. A simple "but he's Seth Rollins and we believe how great he can be" from Stephanie would solve this but odds are we're never going to hear about it because the writers either A, didn't notice or B, think/have been told that it's not important enough to mention. It's inconsistency that should be solved so simply but instead it's just left sitting there because Heaven forbid you close a small plot hole with a quick statement.

Oh and one more thing: Cesaro and Sheamus' match isn't for the #1 contendership or a future title shot. Well it kind of was but not directly. See, instead of the WINNER getting the prize, it was whoever would impress the bosses more. In other words: wrestling doesn't matter because it's all about making the bosses happy. I've never liked that idea and I was really hoping it would go away but that's not the case just yet.

Nia Jax squashed another jobber. Same idea here as Strowman and the same positive result.

New Day beat Gallows and Anderson (which seems to be their official name) in less than ninety seconds to set up a post match beatdown. Big E. was crotched against the post to potentially injure him. I'm really not sure what the point is in having Gallows and Anderson lose so quickly is, unless their rematch will see them get serious and win the titles. Stupid again, but that's WWE for you.

Cesaro and Sheamus had a good power brawl with Cesaro winning clean off the Neutralizer. I've seen these two fight before and they didn't do anything we haven't seen a dozen times but at least it was entertaining. Unfortunately this match further illustrated the problem with someone like Cesaro or Dolph Ziggler.

Yes, Cesaro has a lot of cool moves that are going to pop the crowd but he does them EVERY SINGLE MATCH. It's kind of hard to get fired up over the same cool stuff week after week. They just stop having the same impact when they're out there every single time but they have to do them to get the crowd going. Save that stuff for the bigger matches and find some basic stuff to get you through the regular matches.

Jinder Mahal and Heath Slater came to the ring to say they wanted jobs, Foley came out to make a match for said job and Mahal won in 14 seconds. Next.

Owens said he had Jericho's back. Fine enough, especially if it leads to Kevin turning face.

Rollins beat Sami Zayn in a good enough main event. The idea here was to have Rollins beat someone similar to Finn with all the NXT experience to set up the Summerslam match and it worked just fine, though hearing the announcers brag about this being on Raw for the first time ever made me cringe.

The other reason I wanted to do this again was the closing segment, which I completely undersold in the live review. Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar came out to do their usual speech with a focus on Randy Orton not being able to hit the RKO on Lesnar. Now anyone who has watched wrestling before knew what was coming here but it was still awesome to see Orton run through the crowd and lay Lesnar out with an RKO to end the show. I really liked this and it was pulled off perfectly.

Of course that's assuming you don't mind Raw and Smackdown already invading each other less than two weeks after the Draft. I really, really don't need to see this already as it defeats the point of the Draft in the first place. If you want these shows to be separate then be separate. If you want them to be the same then let them be the same. There's a very good chance that this is just because the match was announced before the Draft but I have a feeling that this is going to be the norm going forward.

Overall this show was up and down but the biggest issue was a lack of energy. Aside from the opener and one or two other things, most of the show felt like any given show that you might see in the middle of May instead of with just a few weeks to go before Summerslam. Hopefully they can make things better once they work the kinks of the Brand Split out but this was a letdown after last week's great show.

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book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Monday Night Raw – August 1, 2016: One Week

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 1, 2016

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

After last week's well received show, it should be interesting to see where everything goes with the full time Monday Night Raw roster. Last week Finn Balor made his main roster debut and earned himself a shot in the first ever Universal Title match at the upcoming Summerslam. On top of that, Brock Lesnar is going to be making his first appearance since Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We open with a "Last Week On Raw" video, which is a really good idea that I'd love to see become a regular feature, as long as they keep it short.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sasha Banks to open things up and that belt looks ridiculous on her tiny waist. We have to wait for the YOU DESERVE IT chant to die down before Sasha can talk about herself and Bayley stealing the show last

year over Summerslam weekend. That's going to be the case again this year when she defends against Charlotte at Summerslam. Cue Charlotte who is walking much faster than usual.

That means we get the YOU TAPPED OUT chants before Sasha says she can't put her finger on what's different about Charlotte this week. Charlotte says it was a fluke because she was champion for over 300 days. Sasha thanks Charlotte would never have been champion without her dad and here's.....Chris Jericho to interrupt? Jericho calls Charlotte royalty and thinks she's done more than Flair ever did. Now we get to the important point: what makes Sasha his boss?

Jericho brings up the Snoop Dogg connection and calls Sasha a brat. Now it's Enzo Amore coming out without Big Cass to kiss Sasha's hand. Sasha doesn't seem to mind the ensuing flirting but Charlotte has heard bad things about Enzo's love life. This turns into a surreal scene of Jericho impersonating Cass and Sasha impersonating Enzo before it turns into Enzo saying Jericho is like a messed up iPhone.

Jericho calls Enzo a hip hop hobbit so the fans call Jericho a stupid idiot. Enzo talks about going back in time and warning Jericho to not buy that scarf but here's Foley to cut them all off. Foley: "Enzo is a certified G and I'm a certified GM." After a cheap plug for Holy Foley, Mick makes a mixed tag for right now.

Enzo Amore/Sasha Banks vs. Chris Jericho/Charlotte

To keep things odd, Kevin Owens is on commentary with Byron's tie around his neck. The guys start with Enzo scoring off some armdrags before it's off to Sasha for a quick rollup on Charlotte. Sasha's chop hurts her own hand so she wristdrags Charlotte down instead. A double clothesline puts the bad people on the floor as Owens talks about wanting to knock Enzo out for interrupting him on Draft night. The double dive puts everyone down and we take a break.

Back with Jericho in control of Enzo until Amore gets two off a cross body and a faceplant to the knee. Jericho dropkicks him out of the air but bangs up his knee in the process, allowing the double tag to the women. Sasha kicks her in the face but here's Dana Brooke for a

distraction. Jericho offers another distraction, setting up Natural Selection for the pin at 9:58.

Rating: C-. I like the match being a very fresh mix but at the same time I REALLY don't like the new champion getting pinned in her first match as champion. It weakens the new title reign, which is the last thing you want to do, especially when the champion is as on fire as Sasha is right now.

Post match Enzo takes a Codebreaker but Big Cass comes down for the save.

Braun Strowman vs. Evan Anderhold

When asked why he's here, Evan (better known as Corey Hollis from NXT) says it's because he gets \$1000 and \$5000 if he wins. Those numbers serve as great joke material for the announcers during Evan's massacre, capped off by the reverse chokeslam for the pin at 59 seconds.

Stephanie and Mick talk about how awesome each others' ideas have been when Mark Henry comes in. Henry thinks it's time to reopen the Hall of Pain but Stephanie thinks he would be better in a mentorship role. All Mark needs is one more chance so Foley gives him a US Title shot against Rusev.

Golden Truth is still looking for Pokemon but Goldust thinks they should focus on their match instead.

Golden Truth vs. Shining Stars

Goldust and Primo start things off as Truth is still playing Pokemon Go on the apron. Graves mistakenly says Truth is playing inside the ring as Goldust gets in a powerslam to change control. Truth has apparently caught a Pokemon and misses a tag. On top of that he drops his phone and actually goes out to get it as Goldust is waiting for a tag. Epico grabs a sunset flip for the pin at 2:00. Cole: "Pokemon no for Golden Truth tonight."

Truth finds another Pokemon post match.

Michael Cole brings out Finn Balor for a chat. Finn says he's here to

prove his draft status but Seth Rollins cuts him off. Seth tells us about Balor being a former NXT Champion, though he wasn't the first NXT Champion because that was Rollins. Balor was also a first round pick but he wasn't the #1 overall pick because that was Rollins too. Last week Balor pinned Roman Reigns, even though Rollins did the same thing in his first match back after a career threatening injury.

Balor is just like a bad Hollywood remake like the new Ghostbusters. The idea of Balor beating Seth for the title is like the Atlanta Braves winning the World Series. Balor says everywhere he's gone, there has been someone like Seth, saying they're the man until Balor comes in and takes that spot. They may have a lot of things in common, but at least Finn earned his spot in the title match instead of having it handed to him. The brawl is about to start but Balor easily kicks him out to the floor to send Seth running. Balor looked like an underdog here, though an underdog that belonged in this spot.

US Title: Mark Henry vs. Rusev

Rusev is defending and Lana is here in her wedding dress. Saxton: "What is she wearing?" Henry throws him around a few times to start and snapping his throat across the middle rope. Back from a break with Henry blocking the Accolade and kicking Henry in the face. Now the Accolade goes on and Henry taps at 6:35. Too much time spent during the break but this was every Henry vs. Rusev match you've ever seen.

Post match Rusev rips on the American Olympic teams for not having to face the superior Russian and Bulgarian athletes. This brings out Roman Reigns to a very distinct face pop. Rusev is chased off with a Superman Punch. That face pop has to be a big relief too, because if Reigns can't get over by standing up for AMERICA, he might as well be running a doughnut shop.

Video on Nia Jax.

Darren Young vs. Titus O'Neil

Earlier today Titus asked the same question everyone has been asking: when was Darren great in the first place? Darren's chops don't have much

effect and Titus hits a few backbreakers. The splash in the corner gets two and we hit the armbars. A slam gets two on Darren but he comes back with a kick to the face. Both finishers are broken up and Titus grabs a rollup with a handful of trunks for the pin at 3:58.

Rating: D-. Who in the world thought this was a good idea in any way? Neither guy is interesting and it was another spur of the moment heel turn that does nothing for either guy. The fact that it was a boring match because Titus has some of the worst offense in recent memory doesn't help either.

Stephanie presents Foley with his own tablet when Sheamus comes in to complain about getting overlooked for that US Title shot. Cesaro cuts him off though and says the fans want to see him. Foley says the only reason Cesaro wasn't drafted so highly was due to that shoulder. Sheamus on the other hand hasn't had his head in the game since cashing in Money in the Bank. Tonight they'll have a match and whoever impresses them the most (not whoever wins because that would make too much sense) gets a future title shot.

Backlund yells at Titus for cheating so O'Neil threatens to knock him out. Darren jumps Titus from behind and puts him down with one punch.

Nia Jax vs. Ariel Monroe

Ariel actually laughs at Nia to start and is pulled around the ring by her hair as a result. A fireman's carry into a powerslam is enough to flatten Monroe at 1:12. That's a much better finisher than the legdrop.

Post match Saxton asks Nia how it feels to be here so she runs Ariel over again. Nia: "Why don't you ask her?"

Sami is ready to face Rollins tonight.

New Day vs. Gallows and Anderson

Non-title and Woods is banned from ringside due to drawing a banana out of a bag instead of one of the two oranges. The obvious joke is about to be made but New Day says that's too serious. Big E. throws Anderson around to start but Karl gets in a cheap shot to take over. We get some

Too Sweet but Big E. rolls Anderson up for the pin at 1:19.

Post match the brawl is on with Woods coming out, only to have New Day get destroyed and left laying. Big E. is crotched against the post to really hammer the point home.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

They trade uppercuts to start with Sheamus getting the better of it. The fans don't seem entertained though and it's Cesaro coming back with more uppercuts. Cesaro sends him outside for the cannonball off the apron, only to have the bad shoulder go into the post. Back in and Sheamus hits the ten forearms to the chest, only to be deadlifted into a suplex because Cesaro is freakishly strong. The springboard corkscrew uppercut sets up the Neutralizer to put Sheamus away at 5:58.

Rating: C. How many times do we need to see these two fight each other? Cesaro vs. the winner of Rusev vs. Reigns should be a fun power brawl either way they go, despite Cesaro having next to no chance against either of them. Sheamus really is in need of ANYTHING new at this point as he's really just a guy in trunks with weird hair.

Cesaro and Sheamus are still brawling after a break, leaving Heath Slater and Jinder Mahal of all people to show up in the ring. Slater promises that 2MB is going to set Raw on fire but here's Foley to interrupt. Tonight they're going to have a match and the winner gets a job.

Jinder Mahal vs. Heath Slater

Mahal kicks him in the face for the pin at 14 seconds.

We look back at the mixed tag.

Jericho rants about how Enzo and Cass made fun of him earlier tonight and promises some revenge, you dig? He has someone in mind to watch his back and it's....Jimin Marvinluter, a Canadian shot put champion? Kevin Owens comes in to say he has Jericho's back instead because Jimin Marvinluter isn't a real person. Oh and Tom Phillips is a stupid idiot for saying his name isn't Tim.

Sami Zayn vs. Seth Rollins

The big attraction here: they've never fought on Raw before, making this completely different than the match they had on Smackdown about six weeks ago. They're quickly on the floor with Sami hitting his moonsault off the barricade to take over. Rollins sends him into the barricade and then into the corner with a hard whip. Sami is sent outside again and we take a break.

Back with Sami getting caught in the Buckle Bomb, followed by an enziguri to keep him in trouble. That's not enough for the Pedigree though as Sami climbs the turnbuckle for the tornado DDT, only to have Seth bail to the floor to avoid the Helluva Kick. That's fine with Sami who hits his flip dive to the floor instead. Back in and the Helluva Kick misses again, setting up the Pedigree for the pin at 11:40.

Rating: C+. I can't emphasize enough how lame of a finisher the Pedigree is for Rollins. I know that's become his thing now but it feels like they're just doing it to set up a match with HHH that really doesn't have the highest level of interest. It's a good idea to have Rollins go over various NXT stars to get ready for Balor, but I'm really hoping it doesn't end with Rollins going over Finn himself. We've been there and it's just not that interesting.

Puff Daddy guest stars next week.

Here's Paul Heyman to introduce Brock. At Summerslam, Brock is going to entertain the fans. Yes entertain, because his form of entertainment isn't what you see promoted in WWE. Instead it's something violent, which isn't something he should be saying but he can because he's standing next to Brock. Good point actually. That brings Heyman to Randy Orton, who has this great equalizer called the RKO. All Orton has to do is hit one RKO at Summerslam to shock the world, just like when Brock conquered the Streak at Wrestlemania XXX. Heyman: "If that still bothers you, GET OVER IT ALREADY!"

Paul's advise for Orton is to take it from the wise old Jew (his words): Lesnar is going to drag him down to Suplex City. Maybe Orton can stay out of the hospital though and can fight again in 2016. Maybe he can do it if

he can hit one RKO, but that's never gonna....and here's Orton with an RKO to lay Lesnar out. Yes indeed they made it a whole ONE WEEK before a Smackdown wrestler was on Raw. Orton bails through the crowd to end the show. I'll give them this: that one RKO with Lesnar being down for a few seconds is better than anything Ambrose got in his buildup.

Overall Rating: C-. So much for Raw being awesome. This was every episode of the show you've seen for years with a few more squashes thrown in. It wasn't terrible by any stretch and the ending segment was a good idea but there was just so much stuff on here that felt like a nothing episode.

The opening gave me some hope that they really were mixing it up but then a match was lost due to Pokemon, Jinder Mahal was back, Rusev squashed Mark Henry AGAIN, a champion got pinned and we were supposed to be excited about a match taking place on this show for the first time ever. Oh and Smackdown invaded. Welcome to the new era.

Results

Charlotte/Chris Jericho b. Sasha Banks/Enzo Amore – Natural Selection to Banks

Braun Strowman b. Evan Anderhold – Reverse chokeslam

Shining Stars b. Golden Truth – Sunset flip to Goldust

Rusev b. Mark Henry – Accolade

New Day b. Anderson and Gallows – Rollup to Anderson

Cesaro b. Sheamus – Neutralizer

Jinder Mahal b. Heath Slater – Kick to the face

Seth Rollins b. Sami Zayn – Pedigree

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Battleground 2016: It's Battleground!

Battleground 2016

Date: July 24, 2016

Location: Verizon Center, Washington D.C.

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

This is an interesting show as the Draft has made what was just a pit stop before Summerslam into a nearly meaningless show which happens to have something that could have been a co-main event of Wrestlemania. Other than that we have some nothing midcard matches, six man tags where two of the teams will be split starting tomorrow and a mystery partner. You might call this a mixed bag. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Usos vs. Breezango

Just a thrown together match. Jimmy hits a backbreaker on Fandango to start before it's quickly off to Breeze. Some double teaming lets Breeze snap Jey's throat across the top rope and we hit the chinlock. A few kicks to the face/head drop Breezango and it's off to Jimmy via the hot tag.

Everything breaks down and it's a series of kicks to put Breeze on the floor. Tyler comes back in to save Fandango from an electric chair, only to have Jey cross body both of them. The Superfly Splash gets two on Tyler before another superkick puts Fandango outside. A running superkick

looks to set up the Superfly Splash again but Breeze gets his knees up, allowing him to grab a small package for the pin at 5:28.

Rating: C+. This was a very fast paced match and above all else the right team won. The Usos don't need to win matches like this one while Breezango needs to get some wins under their belts to actually become an important team. I still like Breezango and they're a great example of making something out of nothing. Why can that almost never happen otherwise?

The opening video shows everyone holding their flags before going to a package on the Shield imploding to set up this match.

Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Sasha Banks/???

So Sasha has been going for Charlotte's title but keeps having to deal with Dana, hence bringing in a mystery partner. The mystery partner is....Bayley, in one of the worst kept secrets in a long time. Like, since Tuesday. The place goes insane for Bayley so that's certainly the solid debut.

Charlotte and Dana jump them from behind before the bell and Bayley is sent into the barricade. We get the official start with Charlotte hammering away in the corner until Bayley gets in the jumping middle rope elbow. It's off to Sasha who botches a hurricanrana before Charlotte sends her into the middle buckle.

Dana's chinlock doesn't go anywhere so it's off to Bayley who is taken down just as quickly. Bayley and Dana collide as JBL talks about this being a one off appearance for Bayley on the main roster. I really, really can't imagine that's true. Sasha comes in off the tag and everything breaks down with Charlotte hitting Natural Selection for two on Banks. Dana saves the Bank Statement but Bayley takes her to the floor, setting up the second Bank Statement to make Charlotte tap at 7:24.

Rating: C+. This was much more about the crowd reaction than anything else and that worked like a charm. What won't work like a charm is having Bayley just go back to NXT at this point. Is there any real reason to not

have her on the main roster full time at this point? She can do the build to Takeover and still do this stuff just fine but for some reason they want to just have this be a one off. Maybe it's to keep Sasha hot, but then again maybe they should have thought of that THREE MONTHS AGO WHEN SHE WAS THE HOTTEST THING IN THE DIVISION AND WE DIDN'T DO THE WAY TOO LONG NATALYA FEUD.

Sasha and Bayley hug post match.

We recap the Wyatt Family vs. New Day. The Wyatts returned with Bray's face turn completely forgotten and went after New Day and their power of positivity message. Bray got in Xavier Woods' head and started to psych him out but with the Wyatts being split by the Draft, most of that has been dropped.

Wyatt Family vs. New Day

Before the match, New Day says they're just not scared. Woods and Strowman start but it's off to Bray to really scare Xavier. Actually make that Kofi, who dropkicks Wyatt while Woods is frozen in the corner. Rowan comes in with a slam and grabs a head vice before Bray drops his running backplash. A clothesline turns Kofi inside out and Woods has to drop down to the floor in fear. Kofi gets away from Braun and makes the hot tag to Big E. as everything breaks down.

Braun gets kicked to the floor and taken down by a Kofi dive (less than a year ago Dean Ambrose's dive bounced off of him). Woods saves Kofi from Sister Abigail but it's time for the big psychic staredown. It takes Kofi coming in off the top to wake Woods up and he goes off on Bray with a running forearm and right hands in the corner. A top rope splash crushes Bray and a superkick (SHOT!) puts Erick on the floor. Big E. spears Rowan off the apron but Bray's spider walk freaks Woods out and sets up Sister Abigail for the pin at 8:50.

Rating: B. Well that happened. I have no idea what the point is in having these guys win unless they're either splitting up the New Day (stupid) or having....actually that's it for their options. I mean, there's always the chance that this loss means nothing and they'll just have New Day go on like it's nothing, which is probably the direction they're going with for

the sake of stupidity.

US Title: Rusev vs. Zack Ryder

Rusev is defending after Ryder won a few matches (ignore the clean loss to Sheamus in two minutes of course) and challenged for the title. Lana, now in a tiara, introduces the champ. Ryder is in red, white and blue to really hammer this home. Rusev throws him into the corner to start but Ryder comes back with a middle rope dropkick...which completely misses.

A low superkick drops Ryder and it's time for heavy right hands. Ryder elbows out of a waistlock and fires off some forearms in the corner. A neckbreaker stuns the champ as we're firmly in the false hope portion of the match. Rusev knocks him to the floor but Ryder hits a dropkick off the barricade. Back in and the Rough Ryder sets up the Elbro but Rusev gets the knees up. The jumping superkick and the Accolade put Ryder away at 7:03.

Rating: D+. Zack Ryder loses to Rusev because that's what Zack Ryder does. Ryder is getting better at losing to Rusev as he finally broke five minutes against him. I really don't think anyone believed this was going to happen and there was no reason to assume anything else. Ryder isn't going to beat someone like Rusev and it's foolish to think he would.

Post match the beating continues until Mojo Rawley debuts to make the save, thereby setting up nothing at all since he's on Smackdown while Rusev is on Raw.

Seth Rollins comes in to see Mick Foley and Stephanie McMahon (GET SETH AWAY FROM HER! NOW!) and the bosses tell him to bring the title back to Raw. Rollins isn't worried because he's just that awesome and promises that there will be a bunch of Rollins babies in about nine months.

We recap Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens who are fighting because they're Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens. They've hated each other for years now and they still are, though this was supposed to be the final fight until the Draft put them on the same show, negating the purposes of the idea.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Zayn's attempted Helluva Kick sends Owens to the floor and they immediately start the brawl. Back in and Owens sends him into the corner for two off the Cannonball. Owens even stomps on Sami's hand as we hit the OLE chants. We hit the chinlock with Owens mocking the SAMI chants because he's just that awesome. Back up and the Michinoku Driver gets two on Owens but he's able to break up the flip dive before Sami can dive.

Instead Sami tries the slingshot moonsault but slips up and lands shoulder first on the apron. The shoulder is fine enough for Owens to work it over so you know he's ok. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two back inside so I'm going to assume Sami is fine. Owens can't get a superplex so he settles for a superkick and Crossface. Sami finally crawls over to the rope and grabs the exploder into the corner. He gets caught on top though and has to escape a Death Valley Driver on the apron, meaning it's the closest thing we'll see to the BRAINBUSTAHHHHHH in WWE.

Owens beats the count by a few seconds and they slug it out to dueling chants. The diving DDT is broken up and Owens hits a Cannonball with Sami still draped over the bottom rope. I love it when they tweak moves like that. The Bullfrog splash gets two on Sami but he counters the Pop Up Powerbomb into the tornado DDT. Yet another Helluva Kick is countered with another superkick as they keep countering each others' big moves due to being so familiar with one another.

Sami escapes another powerbomb attempt and hits back to back half and half suplexes for two and a standing ovation. The Pop Up Powerbomb connects but Sami gets his foot on the ropes. Owens starts slapping him as Sami says bring it, setting up another exploder into the corner. The Helluva Kick sends Owens falling into Sami's arms, setting up a second Helluva Kick for the clean pin at 18:26.

Rating: A. Can we just give these two the match of the night honors whenever they're on the card? There's such a chemistry here and I'd love to see them as partners who can't stand each other. Owens is almost being turned face by sheer force of the crowd but it's almost impossible to go against someone as loveable as Sami. Either way, great match with a great story and outstanding action to go with it.

Cole says Sami has exorcized his demons by beating Owens. Those must be quick rise demons as he pinned Owens about a month ago on Raw in a singles match.

Pre-show recap.

Natalya vs. Becky Lynch

Fallout from Natalya vs. Charlotte when Natalya turned on Becky. Natalya tries to bail to start but she's just suckering Becky in and scoring with a dropkick. It's already time to go after the knee with a side leg lock but she has to get out of a quick Disarm-Her. A stomp onto the leg sets up another leglock and Natalya gets in a quick nipup. An enziguri with the good leg gives Becky a breather before the Bexploder gets two. Becky gets two more off a missile dropkick but it bangs up the leg, setting up the Sharpshooter for the submission at 9:00.

Rating: C-. I wasn't feeling this one, especially after the classic beforehand. Natalya winning is fine and they did a good story with the leg and such but it's still just a match with a pretty lame story. I have no idea what they're going to do with the women on Smackdown but PLEASE don't bring in a second title at this point, especially with how much the talent falls off after these two.

Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan give Dean Ambrose a pep talk.

Intercontinental Title: Darren Young vs. The Miz

Young is challenging after winning a battle royal. He also has Bob Backlund in his corner in an attempt to make Young great again. Ignore the lack of preceding greatness. Young wrestles him down to the mat before getting two off a neckbreaker. Miz shoves him off the top to take over and then grabs a headlock.

Miz's corner clothesline is cut off with another clothesline. The Crossface Chickenwing sends Miz bailing to the floor but Backlund won't let him leave. Maryse slaps Backlund and they both go down, only to have Backlund rip his shirt off. Miz goes after Backlund so Young grabs a cobra clutch on the floor as the bell rings (I think for a DQ?) at 8:40.

Rating: D. Well that happened and we can add another entry to the list of things that seem to be setting up a rematch but there's no logical way to have the rematch happen under the current rules because HAHA DRAFT. Young shouldn't have won the title here and it wouldn't have made sense for him to, though the Backlund thing has some more mileage in it, especially if it gives Young a personality.

Young chokes Miz out and looks at his hands ala Backlund in 1994.

We recap Cena/Amore/Cass vs. the Club. Cena was tired of getting beaten down by the trio so Enzo and Big Cass came out to help him, setting this up. Again though, the Club was split up so this doesn't exactly have the same meaning.

The Club vs. John Cena/Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Enzo says his team is 4G and they're very well connected. He keeps going on a rant with life advice (always lie on your resume and never make eye contact with someone while eating a banana) and also suggests a good dentist and therapist. Cena is dying in the corner listening to this and Cass tells the crowd to give it up for Enzo after that performance. Cass insults AJ's haircut and suggests that he make a lunch like a soccer mom ("Make sure to cut the crust off."). Then he can take the kids to Raw and remember the time they took a beating in Washington D.C.

Enzo and AJ start things off and we hit the SOCCER MOM chants. That earns Enzo a dropkick to the face so it's off to Cass to face Anderson. We get the standard Cass throws Enzo at people spot as Cena isn't sure what to think. Cass tosses Styles out as well before slamming Enzo onto Anderson, leaving Cena wondering why he can't get a tag. Things settle down to Gallows working on Enzo with his heavy offense. Anderson comes in with a bicycle kick to the head (Karl: "HI YAH!") to set up a chinlock.

The beating continues until Gallows misses a splash, setting up the hot tag to Cena. A very quick AA attempt on Styles is countered into a Pele as everything breaks down. Gallows hits a chokebomb on Cass before Cena and Luke play pass the Enzo, only to have AJ hit the forearm on Gallows by mistake. The AA gets two on AJ with Karl making the save, setting up a spinebuster onto the table.

Cena dives back in at nine and the Styles Clash gets another near fall with Cass making the save. The Club takes out Cass so Enzo volunteers to fight them himself. Karl is sent into the post but Gallows kicks Enzo in the face, only to have Cena come back in and take Luke out. Styles comes back in but gets caught in a super AA for the pin at 14:23.

Rating: B. So that's your setup for Cena vs. AJ II which probably should be for the Smackdown World Title if such a thing exists. Cena pinning AJ in a tag match is fine and sets things moving forward a bit more but the bigger thing here is Enzo and Cass looking like they're on a much higher level than they were just a few weeks ago. These guys are looking like something important, which you never expect to see for people who debuted just three and a half months ago.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with the returning Randy Orton. Randy really seems happy to be back and is definitely here as a face. He talks about being gone for nine months to get back to this point and he's stuck here with this loser. Jericho says Orton being in this ring with him puts Orton on a different level. That makes Orton think he should drop Jericho with an RKO out of nowhere so Jericho sums up the last few months for him, including the tacks going into his back a little while ago.

Jericho offers the Gift of Jericho and Orton walks up to him, shaking Jericho up a bit. Orton says it was just to see the hair because it looks like Ellen DeGeneres'. We see a clip of Lesnar talking about hurting people but Orton is ready to go to Suplex City. See, it takes twenty suplexes to get there but it only takes one RKO to go to Viperville, NO ENHANCEMENT NEEDED. Even the crowd gasps at that one. Jericho suggests that Orton is in trouble and teases Orton about the RKO, which eventually hits, albeit not out of nowhere. This took WAY longer than it should have but that enhancement line was great.

We recap the Shield triple threat which is well over a few years in the making. The short version consists of Rollins returning from knee surgery and taking the title from Reigns, only to have Ambrose take it away that same night. This set up the triple threat but Reigns has been suspended for a month due to a Wellness violation.

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

Ambrose is defending but before we can get going, here are all four authority figures (because there are four authority figures in WWE). We get the big match intros and the three way staredown before Rollins is knocked to the floor. Ambrose rolls Reigns up for two and eats a big clothesline for his efforts.

Rollins gets caught in a Samoan Drop but Ambrose takes them both down as they're only just out of first gear. Roman is sent outside and we get Rollins vs. Ambrose for the third time this week. They head to the floor as well with Ambrose going into the steps and Roman going into the barricade. This is the rather dull part of the match where they haven't cranked it up yet and there's clearly at least another ten minutes in the match so we're kind of stuck waiting.

All three wind up in the timekeeper's area for a bit before Ambrose missile dropkicks Reigns for two. The standing elbow drop gets two but Rollins comes back in to break up the cover. Roman gets in a Superman Punch to Rollins but Ambrose runs him over to put all three down. Now it's Reigns getting double teamed with both guys scoring off running dives to the floor. We see the locker rooms watching (I'm sure that's completely authentic) as Reigns is powerbombed through the announcers' table.

Back in and the Buckle Bomb is countered with a hurricanrana into the corner to put both guys down. Rollins is still able to run up the corner for the superplex into the falcon's arrow for the first near fall. Reigns comes back in to break up a superplex on Rollins, setting up a sitout powerbomb for two on Seth. The champ ducks the Superman Punch but can't hit Dirty Deeds, allowing the Punch to knock Dean outside. Rollins gets a very close fall off a Pedigree to Reigns, only to have the spear cut him in half. Ambrose scores with a quick Dirty Deeds to pin Reigns at 18:05.

Rating: B+. This started slowly but got a lot better as things went on. I'm really hoping that's not it for the Reigns punishment as just losing in a pay per view main event isn't exactly the worst thing in the world. Ambrose winning makes sense as Smackdown needs something to fight over

and I'm sure Raw will still get their shots in the future. This would have been better served on a bigger stage but it really did need to happen.

JBL goes NUTS with a big rant about how great Smackdown is, completely forgetting how much he can't stand Ambrose. The Smackdown locker room comes out because this allegedly means something.

Overall Rating: B+. As is so often the case anymore, strong wrestling by the younger guys brings these shows up a few notches. The main event was solid and you had a classic in the middle of the show plus a very fun moment in the opener. The midcard stuff really holds this back though as there's a stretch in there of Natalya vs. Lynch which should have been on the pre-show to help keep this from ending at 11:15.

I'm fine with extra wrestling but there was really no need for the bonus tag when you could move something to the pre-show instead to free up some time. Still though, good stuff as WWE's PPVs continue to be better than they have any right to be. Check out Zayn vs. Owens though, in case you somehow haven't seen them fight before.

Results

Sasha Banks/Bayley b. Charlotte/Dana Brooke – Bank Statement to Charlotte

Wyatt Family b. New Day – Sister Abigail to Woods

Rusev b. Zack Ryder – Accolade

Sami Zayn b. Kevin Owens – Helluva Kick

Natalya b. Becky Lynch – Sharpshooter

The Miz b. Darren Young via DQ when Bob Backlund interfered

John Cena/Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. The Club – Super AA to Styles

Dean Ambrose b. Roman Reigns and Seth Rollins – Dirty Deeds to Reigns

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Battleground 2016 Preview

This show has gone from one of the most B level shows ever to one of the least important shows in a very long time. It's still definitely just a filler show before we get to Summerslam but then the Draft has made the whole thing even more of a mess. You could tell things were all over the place when basically two matches were hyped up during the TV shows leading up to the pay per view. Let's get to it.

We'll open with the quick pre-show match between the Usos and Breezango. The Usos are the definition of "just there" and it's getting harder and harder to care about them. Breezango may not be the most exciting team in the world but it's still cool to see them getting even the most moderate push. There's no reason to have the Usos, who haven't done a thing in a long time, win here so we'll go with Breezango getting their biggest win ever.

Let's get this one out of the way: Rusev squashes Zack Ryder and no sells his comeback because that's what happens to Ryder. The mini push means nothing and they made that very clear as soon as they had Sheamus beat him clean in two minutes. Ryder loses to Rusev like he always does as we continue to wait for a serious challenger to the title.

We'll continue the midcard title theme with Miz beating Darren Young. I

love the Backlund segments but I just can't imagine them actually giving him the title. He won the battle royal almost by mistake and hasn't won anything of note on his own. Why would I buy him as a midcard champion already? Miz holding the title longer is fine as the big win over him is going to mean even more when he's been built up that long.

In another match that's just kind of there, we'll go with Becky Lynch over Natalya. I barely remember why they're fighting at this point and I can't imagine WWE really cares either way. This might as well be for the Smackdown Women's Title as the division is basically these two and everyone else, which really does show why there's no need to either bring up all the new women or to put the women on both shows. Becky wins here because it's not like Natalya needs much to restore her to her eternal spot on the card.

While we're here we'll knock out the other women's match as Sasha Banks and a mystery partner team up to face Charlotte and Dana Brooke. This is basically Sasha needing help after all the weeks of Charlotte and Dana beating her up so it's time for her to get some backup. There are some new women on the Raw roster but there's almost no way it's not going to be Bayley. If there's ever been a bigger layup for a mystery partner on a pay per view five days after the latest WWE Draft to debut in a women's tag, I can't think of it off the top of my head.

That being said, Bayley isn't going to be a factor here because this whole thing exists for Sasha to make Charlotte tap in the middle of the ring and set up their big showdown at Summerslam. It's still a great way to debut Bayley as she'll get her own big moment instead of being yet another name being brought up on Draft night. She'll be one of the first challengers to Sasha's new title and the debut should be fun.

In the first of two matches that don't mean much now that everything has changed, New Day faces the Wyatt Family in a six man tag with no titles on the line. The Wyatts have been split up by the Draft while New Day gets to keep going on their longest (modern) reign ever as Tag Team Champions. The whole Xavier Woods is terrified thing has gone nowhere so and I'd be interested in seeing where they were going to go had it not been for the split. Hopefully this wraps it up and we see New Day vs. the

Club for the titles at Summerslam. But yeah, New Day wins here with ease.

The other match is basically the same story as John Cena teams up with Enzo Amore/Big Cass to face the soon to be split Club. In theory this is designed to set up AJ vs. Cena for Summerslam in their big rematch so we'll say the Club pins Enzo here. Above all else I love the idea that they're not going to just have the rematch here and then burn through the feud even faster. There are other ways to keep the feud going and I'll never understand why they have to just keep doing the same match over and over again. At least this is working for not though.

Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens are having their FINAL match against each other despite them being on the same roster for reasons that I still don't understand. My hope is that they eventually team up and fight New Day (or the Club) for the titles as teammates who are forced to work together and happen to have great chemistry despite not being able to stand each other. I'll take Sami winning here in a fluke but it's probably my least confident pick of the show.

That leaves us with the main event and egads where do I even start. So it's the big Shield triple threat that people have wanted to see for years and not only are they throwing it on this show instead of Summerslam but it's less than a week after the Draft so everything is thrown apart and it's not clear how things go after this. Oh and Reigns has been suspended for freaking Adderall of all things so he hasn't been around to help build things up. It's almost like this is a mess and should have been postponed for a bigger show.

I'll take Rollins to win the title after the rather pointless double title matches from earlier in the week. Ambrose has been taking the ratings and Reigns would just be destroyed (like more than usual) if he wins the title back already so there's just Rollins left. Now the key for him would be to stay FAR away from HHH and Stephanie as they destroyed his first title reign, but given who runs Raw I can't imagine she won't have her fingers all over the new reign. I'll go with Rollins to get the title back though and Ambrose to drop right back to where he was before.

Overall Battleground is.....well it certainly exists. This is one of those

shows that doesn't need to be there and is pretty clearly just a way to promote Summerslam in a few weeks. I'm not really looking forward to the show but that might be more due to the fact that we're in for four hours tonight, three tomorrow and two each on Tuesday and Wednesday. Tonight is going to be all about matches exceeding expectations though and while that's possible, I don't have the greatest hope in the world.

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Monday Night Raw – July 18, 2016: The Lame Duck Go Home Game Changing Show (Updated)

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 18, 2016

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

This is a unique show as it's kind of a big night but also kind of a lame duck show while also being the go home show for a pay per view. The Draft is tomorrow night but there's also a World Title match as champion Dean Ambrose defends against Seth Rollins. The show is also going to open with the announcement of the new General Managers for both shows. Let's get to

it.

Opening sequence.

Here are Shane and Stephanie to open things up. They have their standard bickering that makes award show presenters seem like Bogart and Bergman before arguing over testicles vs. lady balls. Stephanie's big announcement: there's going to be a new Cruiserweight division on Raw. Shane mentions his General Manager and the YES chants begin. That's cut off just as quickly though as Stephanie Raw's General Manager: Mick Foley. I wouldn't have bet on that one but I'd be shocked if he's still around by TLC.

After Stephanie awkwardly dances to his music. Foley compares the feeling here to the Attitude Era because IT'S THE GREATEST THING EVER and feels like the MONDAY NIGHT WARS ALL OVER AGAIN BABY! Stephanie calling him made the little embers turned into a fire. He's ready to bring Raw to new heights and all that jazz.

Shane brings out his own General Manager with the worst kept secret in wrestling this year: Daniel Bryan. Daniel won't shake Stephanie's hand before he talks about how much he missed the people. Naturally Stephanie cuts him off to suggest he pander to the fans. See she doesn't get it because they've never cheered for her. Stephanie: "They did once!"

Bryan talks about how he heard Shane's ideas for a show where wrestlers are put first and he wanted to come back. When he beat HHH at Wrestlemania XXX (Stephanie: "Technicality.") and won the WWE World Title, he and the fans did that together. Stephanie gets in her B+ jokes and Shane says Stephanie can only stay relevant by marrying a WWE superstar. One last YES chant takes us out.

Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn/Cesaro

Cesaro gutwrenches Jericho to start before it's off to Sami so things can speed up a bit. An Owens distraction lets Jericho get in a shot though and we take a break. Back with Jericho still in control over Sami and sending him out to the floor. Sami gets in a few shots of his own though and the hot tag brings in Cesaro.

That means it's time for the uppercut train and the springboard spinning uppercut for two on Jericho. Owens and Sami come in off the double tags but Jericho breaks up the Helluva Kick. Cesaro's high cross body gets two on Chris and the Swing makes it even worse. Everything breaks down and Sami tornado DDTs Owens before small packaging Jericho for the pin at 12:02.

Rating: C. In case you didn't get enough of these guys during the Money in the Bank build. I love Sami getting a pin here though it should be interesting to see what happens with all four of these guys tomorrow night. Jericho and Cesaro not having matches on Sunday doesn't say much for either of them but that's their norm all around.

Golden Truth, Titus O'Neil and Jack Swagger try to get on Daniel Bryan's good side until Stephanie interrupts. They insult each other (with jabs about Daniel and Brie planting peaches) for a bit until Daniel says she ruined Raw.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Darren Young

Miz is on commentary. Del Rio sends him into the corner to start and works on the arm as Miz gets in his second plug for Bob Backlund's book. Young comes back with a backdrop and atomic drop as we flash back to the 70s. A Miz distraction earns himself a forearm to the face, allowing Darren to roll up Del Rio (with a Backlund style bridge) for the pin at 2:33.

It's time for a twelve man tag but Cena comes out first and says it's an interesting time in WWE with Battleground being the icing on the cake. The Club is going to try to beat up Cena on Sunday but he has the Certified G's. Enzo says the term "don't take this the wrong way" has a 0% success rate so don't take this the wrong way but the Club is like a bunch of herbs.

Without ugliness in the world there can be no beauty so thanks for your sacrifice Gallows. AJ has a haircut like a soccer mom and Anderson is as generic as Times New Roman. Cena thinks Enzo is just a catchphrase machine but Cass says that's what he does. That's what makes them the best trio in the world like Nirvana, Destiny's Child or the Wu Tang Clan.

Enzo: "How you doin?" Cena: "I don't know how I'm doing!" He thinks they need to get serious but the Club cuts off the S-A-W-F-T line. AJ accuses them of meeting a few weeks ago over a bowl of candy at catering and thinks they can beat up everyone on the team tonight. Cue New Day to talk about going to the Wyatts' compound but AJ makes fun of Woods for being scared.

That goes nowhere so New Day explains How You Doin to Cena. Naturally this turns into a Pokemon Go reference with Woods listing off the ones he's captured but Cena cuts him off, only to be cut off with a NEW DAY ROCKS chant. This brings out the Wyatts as it turns out we actually have a match to get to.

John Cena/Enzo Amore/Big Cass/New Day vs. The Club/Wyatt Family

This is joined in progress after a break with Gallows coming in to shoulder Cena down. That brings in Big E. for a power showdown, only to have a little gyrating first. Now we get Strowman coming in to run Big E. over but Enzo tags himself in. Woods plays some trombone and Enzo bounces off Strowman so it's time for Cass to try his luck. A shove to Cena triggers a huge brawl until it's back to Strowman and Cass with the big boot staggering Braun. Kofi tries to dive in but gets slammed down by Braun as we take a break.

While we're on commercial, it deserves to be pointed out how good of a job they've done with Cass. Him staring down Strowman felt more like a big deal than anytime Lesnar did it and I actually bought Cass as a threat to hurt him. That's very impressive and a great sign for him to come.

Back with Bray charging into Kofi's pendulum kick and a diving tag to bring in Cena. The finishing sequence is initiated but Bray brings the spider walk out of mothballs to shut him down. Rowan grabs a chinlock and the heels start taking turns on Cena. Gallows misses a splash and we take another break.

We come back again with Bray missing his backsplash to Cena, allowing the hot tag to Cass. Everything breaks down again and New Day cleans house on the Wyatts. Woods hits a big flip dive to take them all out but Gallows

breaks up Bada Book Shakalacka. New Day and the Wyatts fight up the ramp, leaving Enzo to clothesline Cena by mistake. The Styles Clash ends Amore at 18:58.

Rating: B+. This is even more impressive when you consider how many people had to be incorporated here. The ending really pushes the idea that Cena/Enzo/Cass don't know each other well enough to fight off a well oiled machine like the Club which is a really logical point to make. New Day vs. Wyatts could be a lot of fun and this was a nice preview. Really good stuff here with the pre-match promo being just as great.

Earlier today, Seth Rollins was in the empty arena (well save for the cameramen) to talk about how they came through so many stands to fight. He was the brilliant mind and kept Ambrose around to take the beatings and Reigns around to dish them out. After Sunday, Reigns will never be the same again. Ambrose on the other hand is a coward who is running out of places to hide. This Sunday, Rollins will prove he was always the man.

We recap the opening segment.

Shane comes up to Foley in the back and suggests that Stephanie just hired him because he'll connect with the fans while being manipulated. Foley appreciates the caring but thinks Stephanie has fire and drive. This would be another beloved face trying to put Stephanie over.

Baron Corbin vs. Sin Cara

This is Cara's first match after the Lucha Dragons officially split. Corbin sends him into the corner to start but gets kicked away. A springboard elbow to the jaw staggers him but End of Days gives Baron the pin at 1:15.

Kalisto comes out for the post match save but gets beaten down as well.

Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks

Dana gets taken into the corner to start and it's time for Becky's early armbar. The spinning legdrop gets two on Dana but here's Natalya to attack Lynch for the DQ at 2:22.

Sasha gets beaten down post match.

Rusev/Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler/Zack Ryder

Sheamus headlocks Ryder down to start and cuts off his comeback by hitting him in the face a few times. Rusev sends him into the barricade and it's back to Sheamus for the slow beating. Sheamus won't tag for some reason though and we hit the chinlock. Ryder dropkicks him down and makes the hot tag off to Ziggler as everything breaks down. Rusev kicks Ziggler in the back and it's the Accolade for the submission at 3:45.

Rating: D+. Just a quick way to show off the idea that Rusev is awesome because we didn't know that yet. Ryder needed a win here after that mess last week against Sheamus. Ryder is going to get destroyed on Sunday and I'm not sure where things go after that. Sheamus on the other hand continues to float, just like Ziggler. And no WWE, that's not a hint about a bonus match for Sunday.

Video on Randy Orton.

Video on Cena hosting the ESPYs.

Daniel suggests a peace treaty with Mick Foley because they're so much alike. Foley has no issue with Bryan but the battle is on.

Raw World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins is challenging and all the bosses are at ringside. Dean headlocks him to start and Seth bails out to the floor. The champ sends him into the barricade and we take a break. Back with Seth in control and putting on a chinlock. A hard right hand gives Seth some near falls before both try cross bodies at the same time. Dean fights up first and hammers on Seth a bit, including a forearm to put him on the floor.

There's a big suicide dive but Rollins powerbombs him into the barricade. Back in and a frog splash gets two as we take another break. Back with Seth still in control and hitting his springboard knee to the head. Another frog splash misses though and Dean has an opening. It sounds like the fans are cheering for Rollins here.

Dirty Deeds gets two with Rollins putting his foot on the ropes. Seth rolls outside but comes right back in and counters the top rope clothesline into the Pedigree for two. With nothing else working, Seth loads up a superplex but Dean ties up the legs and it's a double pin at 24:18.

Rating: B+. More really good stuff from these two but the ending comes off as a cheap way to have Sunday's title match be for the vacant title. You knew they weren't sticking with Ambrose on top for long because he's not the "star" kind of guy and that's the excuse they're sticking with. I mean, Rollins may be a ratings disaster but he's a STAR ratings disaster. Really good match here though and a big feeling title match.

Stephanie (of course) declares Rollins the new champion and Shane doesn't say anything to close the show. You know you'll see more of this on Sunday.

Overall Rating: A-. Like I said at the beginning, this was a very odd show without anything actually mattering until the ending but even that was odd. I'm sure there's going to be an update tomorrow night but this comes off as a way to either set up a new World Title or to just give the belt back to Reigns like nothing ever happened. There are two great wrestling matches on here though and they were more than enough to make this show awesome, questionable ending aside.

So apparently after the show went off the air, a bonus clip aired on the Network where Ambrose was declared champion because it was a screwy finish. You know, because THREE HOURS AND EIGHT MINUTES isn't enough content.

Results

Sami Zayn/Cesaro b. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho – Small package to Jericho

Darren Young b. Alberto Del Rio – Rollup

Wyatt Family/The Club b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass/John Cena/New Day – Styles Clash to Amore

Baron Corbin b. Sin Cara – End of Days

Sasha Banks/Becky Lynch b. Charlotte/Dana Brooke via DQ when Natalya interfered

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Smackdown – July 14, 2016: Going Out Smackdown Style

Smackdown

Date: July 14, 2016

Location: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

This is the end of an era as we're at the final taped episode of Smackdown before it moves over to the live world of Tuesday nights on USA. We're also closing in on Battleground but we can't actually do much about the main event since Roman Reigns is still suspended. That sounds like fodder for a tag match. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, Kevin Owens found a birthday card for his son from Sami Zayn. All Sami gave his son was \$20 Canadian. That money goes in Kevin's pocket and tonight Dean Ambrose is going into the hospital.

Charlotte and Dana Brooke get out of a limo and promise to have Dana take

care of Sasha Banks tonight.

Miz is ready to make Darren Young great Again on MizTV.

Dean Ambrose might be leaving Smackdown due to the Draft but tonight he's going out by destroying Kevin Owens one last time.

Sasha Banks vs. Dana Brooke

Sasha has already beaten Dana once but she has to do it again to get a title shot at Charlotte, who is in Dana's corner. Banks starts fast with a rollup for two before being sent outside where a Charlotte distraction lets Dana take over. The Samoan Driver (still needs a name) is broken up and Sasha's high cross body gets two. Dana tries a rollup but gets caught in the Bank Statement for the tap at 3:48.

Rating: D+. This was mainly rollups and uninspired brawling though Sasha's high cross body looked good. I'm not quite sure what's gained by having Sasha beat her twice in a week but at least we're not heading for a rubber match or anything ridiculous like that. I'd assume we get Sasha vs. Charlotte at Summerslam as Sasha in Brooklyn is going to work so well.

We see Shane McMahon being named Smackdown Commissioner. He's already picked his General Manager.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Rusev

Non-title. Ziggler takes it to the mat to start but Rusev runs him over and we take a break. Back with Ziggler fighting back with right hands but getting dropped with ease all over again. A powerbomb gets two on Ziggler and it's time to stand around a bit. Ziggler grabs a sleeper for a few moments before realizing that his running DDT and the Fameasser might do some more damage. Rusev gets in his superkick but here's Zack Ryder for a distraction, allowing Ziggler to roll Rusev up for the pin at 8:57.

Rating: C. This would be your weekly meaningless midcard champion loss unless there's a big surprise with Ziggler being added to the title match, though I can't picture that happening. Above all else though, it makes me wonder what the point was in having Sheamus beat Ryder clean on

Monday. Who does that benefit and how does it make me want to see Ryder get a title shot at Battleground? Either don't do the match or have Ryder win again, especially if there's nothing for Sheamus to do.

We see the New Day at the Wyatt Compound from Monday.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. AJ Styles/Karl Anderson

Enzo and AJ get things going but it's quickly off to Cass to clean house. AJ gets backdropped and a running clothesline puts Karl on the floor. The big toss sends Enzo over the top and onto the Club as we take a break. Back with Anderson getting a shot to Enzo's throat and it's time for the beatdown to begin.

AJ starts going after AJ's knee with a springboard stomp as the leg is over the ropes. Amore breaks up a springboard but Karl dives over to break up the hot tag attempt to Cass. A shot to the face drops AJ but it's Gallows breaking up the tag on the floor. That earns him a big boot to the face from Cass, only to have AJ grab a Calf Crusher for the submission on Enzo at 10:53.

Rating: C+. Just a glorified preview for the six man at the pay per view and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm really glad that they went with Styles instead of Gallows here as it can get really tiring seeing the same match over and over again, especially with Gallows and Anderson who were run into the ground against the Usos. Finally, it's a really good sign that Cass has Enzo around to take the losses. Cass has potential and a bunch of tag team losses would hinder that.

According to spoilers, there was supposed to be a Zack Ryder vs. Alberto Del Rio match at this point but there's no mention of such a match.

Kalisto vs. Tyler Breeze

Kalisto starts fast of course but a Fandango distraction lets Breeze drop him throat first across the top rope. We hit the chinlock on Kalisto for a bit before he makes his quick comeback with the kicks to the chest and the corkscrew cross body. Tyler gets two off a kick but the Salida Del Sol is good enough to put Tyler away at 3:15.

Rating: D+. I'm not entirely sure where this is going and I'm glad Kalisto got a pin, even though I'm a Breeze fan and would love to see him go somewhere. At least the tag team has given him something to do, even if it's a low level act. A feud with the Lucha Dragons, who are just as worthless, is at least a step up over Golden Truth.

It's time for MizTV with guests Bob Backlund and Darren Young. Miz shows us some Backlund clips from the Network. The fans give him an ovation so Miz is ready with a Darren Young video package. That would be a test pattern though because Darren hasn't had any highlights. Darren is fine with that because his highlight will be winning the Intercontinental Title. Backlund says Miz can never be a great champion because he isn't a role model. Miz rips on Backlund for sounding like Forrest Gump but Darren won't stand for someone disrespecting his life coach. A brawl is teased but doesn't go anywhere.

Sasha Banks is getting a concussion test (an hour and a half after her match) when Charlotte and Dana come in. Charlotte says not yet on the title shot so Sasha should find a partner if she can.

Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Seth Rollins on commentary. And pretty much never mind as Rollins interferes for the DQ at 33 seconds.

Sami Zayn runs out and I smell a tag match.

Kevin Owens/Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose/Sami Zayn

The match has been announced during the break by someone not mentioned. But then again we need a GM/Commissioner/whatever else they're going to change the name to a few months after the Draft. Owens attacks Ambrose at the bell and takes him outside for a beating. Back in and Rollins cranks on the neck before it's off to Owens to miss the backsplash. Sami gets in a tag and we have a double dive to take the villains out.

Back from a break with Sami in trouble in the corner but he pretty easily gets away for the tag off to Ambrose. The standing elbow drop gets two on Owens and everything breaks down. Seth misses his springboard knee and

gets taken down with a neckbreaker for two. Sami chases Owens to the floor with the threat of a Helluva Kick but Kevin catches Dean's suicide dive. Back in and Sami counters the Pedigree into a good looking tornado DDT. The Helluva Kick misses though and now the Pedigree is enough for the pin on Zayn at 13:18.

Rating: B-. Well that's a perfect way to go out for Smackdown if there ever was one. The match doesn't really change anything but it was a fun little match with the best possible combination for the pin. Sami losing doesn't change anything and it keeps the World Champion from taking a pin.

Ambrose saves Sami from an apron powerbomb and brawls with Rollins to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I would tell Smackdown to never change but that seems a bit stupid at this point. If nothing else, Smackdown went out like it always does: with nothing too bad and enough good wrestling to warrant glancing at it while it's background noise the rest of the time. Not too bad for the final taped show, but hopefully it gets some better treatment live.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Bank Statement

Dolph Ziggler b. Rusev – Rollup

AJ Styles/Karl Anderson b. Enzo Amore/Karl Anderson – Calf Crusher to Amore

Kalisto b. Tyler Breeze – Salida Del Sol

Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Seth Rollins interfered

Kevin Owens/Seth Rollins b. Dean Ambrose/Sami Zayn – Pedigree to Zayn

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Monday Night Raw – July 11, 2016: This Close To Interesting

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 11, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

Things are back to normal this week, or at least as back to normal as they're going to be with just one more Raw after this before the Draft takes place. The only major event announced for tonight is Zack Ryder challenging Rusev for the United States Title after beating Sheamus twice last week. Let's get to it.

First of all, on a personal note, Happy Anniversary Becca. Thanks for an amazing year and I love you.

Opening sequence.

Battle Royal

Goldust, Darren Young, Apollo Crews, Viktor, Konnor, Bubba Ray Dudley, D-Von Dudley, Dolph Ziggler, Bo Dallas, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, R-

Truth, Baron Corbin, Jimmy Uso, Jey Uso, Jack Swagger, Alberto Del Rio, Curtis Axel

Winner gets an Intercontinental Title shot at Battleground so Miz and Maryse are on commentary. English is put out early and he lands near Bob Backlund, who is managing Young. R-Truth puts out Viktor and Bubba (Not D-Von, Cole.) gets rid of Axel. There goes Truth and Konnor follows him out. One Uso tries to eliminate the other but they settle with a double superkick to get rid of D-Von as we go to a break.

Back with Gotch and Jey having been eliminated during the break. Del Rio gets rid of Goldust and Crews eliminates Dallas as the ring is emptying out. Jimmy and Swagger are thrown out so we're down to Crews, Bubba, Young, Del Rio, Corbin and Ziggler. Crews low bridges Bubba out and Del Rio is the only one left standing. Ziggler drops him with a Fameasser and goes for a cover out of instinct. That's not enough to eliminate him though as Alberto comes back with a tilt-a-whirl gutbuster.

Alberto misses a charge and goes through the ropes, allowing Ziggler to superkick him to the floor which isn't an elimination. Corbin sends Dolph to the apron but can't get him out. Del Rio comes back in and gets backdropped out by Crews to put us down to four. Corbin gets rid of Ziggler but Crews gets rid of himself and Corbin, leaving Young to win the thing at 13:20.

Rating: D. You know what, why not? That's certainly a unique way to win the match and it's a nice way to have Young go somewhere after all those vignettes. I would have gone with Crews here but this could have been a lot worse. I mean, at least it's not another battle of Cleveland with Ziggler vs. Miz. It was a pretty standard battle royal though, which is only going to be so entertaining.

Backlund picks Young up to celebrate.

Shane and Stephanie McMahon are talking about why Vince McMahon is going to be here tonight. Maybe it's to give one of them a promotion. Seth Rollins comes in and thinks Vince is here to see about him as the face of the WWE. Rollins has footage for tonight and Shane thinks it should be on the Ambrose Asylum. Stephanie says no because she hates Dean (Have we

ever gotten a reason other than he's apparently an embarrassment to the company?) so Seth will get to debut the Rollins Report. Great. EVEN MORE talking.

Quick look at Brock Lesnar winning his return to the UFC on Saturday before he faces Randy Orton at Summerslam. Orton will be on the Highlight Reel at Battleground.

Zack Ryder comes up to challenge Rusev again but Sheamus jumps him from behind. Apparently there's no title match tonight because Ryder will be facing Sheamus next. Three WOO's for false advertising!

Sheamus vs. Zack Ryder

Ryder goes right after him to start and knocks Sheamus to the floor for a dropkick off the apron. Back in and a running boot to the face gets two for Zack as the announcers ignore the match to play fantasy draft. Not that it matters as the Brogue Kick ends Ryder at 2:22. I knew this was coming because this is how WWE works but thanks for YET ANOTHER waste of potential for the sake of a nothing match on Smackdown.

Rusev comes out and beats up Ryder as well while shouting that he accepts Ryder's challenge. Wait, so Ryder is getting the title shot after Sheamus just beat him clean? SERIOUSLY? This is the kind of stuff you suggest in sarcasm because it's the dumbest thing you could possibly do, not what you actually do on Raw.

Breezango vs. Lucha Dragons

This is due to the Dragons messing up Breeze's vest on the pre-show. Fandango and Cara start things off and it's time for more Draft talk. Cara headscissors him down but gets caught in the wrong corner to put him in trouble. Fandango is sent into the corner as well and the hot tag brings in Kalisto, who almost immediately botches a springboard. A few kicks to Breeze go better and the hurricanrana driver makes it worse. The numbers get the better of him though and Breeze gets in a superkick for the pin on Kalisto at 4:20.

Rating: D+. I can't help it but I like Breezango. They're just a goofy

little midcard heel team but it's not like there's anything better for either of them to do. If nothing else it means we're getting something out of that Golden Truth story, which went on forever and deserves to actually go somewhere. Also it's not like the Dragons mean anything at this point anyway so them losing doesn't exactly matter.

Here's Seth Rollins for the Rollins Report. Tonight he has something special for us: footage from a special sitdown interview with Roman Reigns. Please tell me this isn't going to be one of those things where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to sound embarrassing.

We see the footage and it's....one of those things where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to sound embarrassing. Basically Reigns "admits" he did it and says he should be out of the triple threat because he's no role model. Oh and he hates Dean being champion.

Back in the arena, Rollins says Ambrose should be out of the triple threat because he deserves his rematch for the title, one on one. Cue Ambrose but Rollins yells at him for being a coward and stealing the title from him at Money in the Bank. Dean says he loves to come out here and have a good time but he's the top man in this industry. He's more than just a joke and a utility player because he's the only one still standing and the king of this company. Dean goes on about Rollins wanting another shot and offers a title shot anywhere any place. Rollins is ready right now but nah, not tonight. He'll see Dean next week.

We get a quick preview of New Day fighting the Wyatt Family at their compound. This DEFINITELY looks like the Final Deletion.

Ambrose vs. Rollins for the title is confirmed for next week.

Kevin Owens vs. ???

Sami Zayn is on commentary but Kevin won't come out until he's gone. Stephanie comes in to say get rid of Sami because she's all about solutions. Sami starts to leave but gets in a fight with Owens on the ramp. No match.

Vince arrives and says he's here to name the Commissioner of Smackdown.

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Time for more Draft talk! I know it's a big deal but could you please talk about the actual match for more than two seconds first? Cesaro gutwrenches him over for two to start before they trade headlocks. A hurricanrana puts Owens down but he makes the ropes to break up the Swing. Owens takes over with a whip into the barricade as the announcers talk about where John Cena will be drafted. Cesaro's suplex doesn't break their focus but Owens knocks him into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock and avoiding the Cannonball in the corner. The Pop Up Powerbomb is blocked and the springboard spinning uppercut gets two for Cesaro. Another running uppercut on the floor (with Cesaro wearing JBL's hat) but Cesaro gets crotched on top to slow him down. Owens busts out a torture rack neckbreaker for the clean pin at 12:24.

Rating: C+. I like the finisher but I could go without Cesaro losing all over again. I mean to be fair he had that awesome run against Miz and came up short, which is his standard operating procedure. It's still working, but at some point you're just wasting a lot of potential and acting like Cesaro isn't being hurt by all the losses.

Post match Owens grabs a headset to brag about how awesome he is until Sami Zayn jumps him from behind. Cesaro swings Owens in a meaningless gesture. Maybe he should, I don't know, be upset about the loss?

The Club thinks John Cena is abandoning Enzo and Big Cass by hosting the ESPYs and not being here tonight. Maybe after the win they could hop on a plane and crash the awards so they can beat up John Cena.

Heath Slater vs. Titus O'Neil

We actually get a Slater Gator reference for a name I never thought (or hoped to) I'd hear again. Titus throws him around to start but runs into a raised boot in the corner. That means it's time for a quick Bo-Train, followed by Slater getting two off a DDT. Titus starts powering back and

catches a diving Heath in three straight backbreakers. The Clash of the Titus puts Heath away at 3:12.

Rating: D. Well that happened and I'm not sure what else there is to say about it. This is another short match that doesn't seem to mean much but maybe that's going to be the norm going forward. Titus winning is fine but I'm not sure where he's going after losing to Rusev so decisively.

Sasha has been waiting to shut Dana Brooke up all weekend now and wants the title after that. Tonight, she gets real.

We look back at the Wyatt Family challenging the New Day to come to their compound last week.

Now we go to the compound, where a bunch of cars turn their lights on and try to crush New Day as they get out of their truck. The editing makes this look like it's being played in fast motion so it's almost impossible to keep track of. The Wyatts arrive in a car and the brawl is on with New Day being beaten down with a variety of weapons. Woods hides behind a tree until Bray swings an ax at him and rams him into the tree trunk.

Kofi is shoved into some mud until Big E. suplexes Rowan. Strowman (who looks even more frightening with his shirt off) and Big E. hit each other a few times until Bray comes back and drops the unconscious Woods by the car. Kofi and Big E. are beaten down again as the editing gets even faster. Woods gets back up with a trashcan lid for a save but Bray beats everyone down and asks where the power of positivity is now.

New Day is sent into a car which is quickly beaten down but they escaped somewhere in there. Bray is left alone but smiles at New Day, who are freaked out by his laughter. Rowan and Strowman come back but a bunch of people in sheep masks appear, all holding lanterns. That's enough for New Day as they bail, leaving Bray to say follow the buzzards.

Yes it's clearly a takeoff from the Final Deletion and I'm sure I'll hear about how much better TNA's version was, though this was the serious version and exactly the kind of thing that made the Wyatts creepy in the first place. This really is something that has to be seen though as words really don't do it justice. It worked though.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. The Club

Enzo and Cass say they want Cena's spot but they're willing to earn it. The Club on the other hand think they can take it by beating Cena up 3-1. AJ tells them to walk away but Enzo says the only place they're walking is into that ring right now. This is joined in progress after a break with Enzo trying to hold Anderson with a headlock. It's quickly off to Gallows who headbutts Enzo back into the corner as the beatdown begins.

Karl comes back in for a headlock but Cass comes in and slams Enzo onto Anderson for two. To be fair Enzo might as well just be a projectile as I don't think he's entirely human. Gallows kicks Enzo in the face and sends him shoulder first into the post as we take a break. Back with Anderson and Gallows taking turns on Enzo. Anderson finally lets Enzo get away for the hot tag to Cass (Enzo's signature) and a fall away slam sets up the Bada Boom Shakalacka. AJ low bridges Gallows to the floor though and it's a DQ at 10:48.

Rating: C. This was just a long beating on Enzo and to be fair that's almost all he's good for in a situation like this one. I like how much they're protecting Cass though as I don't think he's been pinned yet and the Club actually lost here. The match was fine, albeit pretty basic for the most part. It's acceptable though as you don't want to burn the fans out on this match like they did with the Club vs. the Usos.

Post match the beating is almost on but here's Cena, who was in Los Angeles earlier today, for the save. Well at least he's not live via satellite. That earns him a big CENA chant which you really don't hear that often.

Dana Brooke vs. Sasha Banks

Sasha shoves her outside to start and things instantly slow down. Back in and Dana talks a lot of trash before kneeing Sasha in the ribs. Banks is sent outside so Charlotte can brag us to a break. Back with Sasha in a chinlock (Charlotte: "Very good Dana.") before stomping away in the corner. The announcers continue to talk about ANYTHING other than this match as Dana grabs another chinlock to keep things slow. Sasha fights out again and hits the double knees in the corner. Dana crotches her on

top but Sasha pops right back up and grabs the Bank Statement for the win at 12:00.

Rating: C-. This was fine and another win for Sasha as that Natalya feud looks more and more pointless every single week. Dana is getting better in the ring as she's not botching everything she tries but she still is on the main roster far sooner than she probably should have been.

Post match Charlotte says that's not good enough so Sasha has to beat Dana again on Smackdown.

Here are Shane, Stephanie and Vince for the Smackdown Commissioner announcement. Vince thinks they've been doing a fair job but wonders how they could be his kids. Where's the violence and anger? How could they not have stabbed each other in the back yet? What's up with Stephanie being all passive aggressive and Shane having no ruthless aggression?

The kids are given a chance to convince their dad that they should be in charge of Smackdown and Stephanie goes first. Stephanie goes on a rant about what Shane said on the Mick Foley podcast about how he left when he wasn't congratulated enough. That's nothing compared to what he says behind Vince's back because he's all crazy and needing to be praised.

Shane says he came back in this arena five months ago and he's eternally thankful. He's ready to change everything about Smackdown and shatter the glass ceilings that Vince and Stephanie have set up. We get a quick fan poll with Shane easily winning which Stephanie attributes to crowd manipulation.

Vince doesn't care what the people think but one of them has to run Smackdown. That will be.....Shane, while Stephanie runs Raw. Ah that's better. For a second there I thought they might actually do something interesting. Vince wants them to compete for who gets the keys to the kingdom but they'll both be naming General Managers. Great. MORE power struggles and double bosses for each show.

Vince leaves and Stephanie tells Shane she's going to make him wish he was never born. Shane thinks Stephanie is hiding something and it's fear. It's game on, but Stephanie says she's married to the only game in this

business. She slaps him in the face so he kisses her on the cheek, only to have Stephanie slip off the steps as she leaves to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I actually liked this show more than I was expecting to as it absolutely flew by. Even though it was just a big preview for the Draft next week (as it should have been), they kept it entertaining enough and set some stuff up going forward, which is all it was supposed to do. Unfortunately the ending really hurt things as it's going to be all about the McMahons even longer, which is really the last thing they needed to go with but that's how WWE works. Anyway, not a good show or anything but it was good enough for a show in a vacuum like everything else is around here at the moment.

Results

Darren Young won a battle royal after Baron Corbin and Apollo Crews eliminated each other

Sheamus b. Zack Ryder – Brogue Kick

Breezango b. Lucha Dragons – Superkick to Kalisto

Kevin Owens b. Cesaro – Torture rack neckbreaker

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. The Club via DQ when AJ Styles interfered

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Bank Statement

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Smackdown – July 7, 2016: Pre-Draft Momentum

Smackdown

Date: July 7, 2016

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

This is a fresh start for a change as Monday was a completely worthless show thanks to the Fourth of July. We're getting closer to Battleground but more importantly we're less than two weeks away from the Draft which resets everything anyway. In other words there's no way of knowing how good this will be so let's get to it.

The Club is conferencing.

Chris Jericho is trying to find his blue scarf.

Sami Zayn is ready to beat Jericho tonight and make him second best.

Seth Rollins arrives and runs into Jey Uso. Some Samoan family insults are made and a match gets the same treatment. I could go for these quick vignettes becoming a regular thing. It worked for Saturday Night's Main Event and it works here too.

Opening sequence.

Here's Dean Ambrose to say he wants to try his hand as a ring announcer because he could be a taller Howard Finkel.

Jey Uso vs. Seth Rollins

Seth is apparently from a place where he didn't get enough hugs as a child. That's sad. Jey takes over with an early armbar as the fans (or at least the canned versions) are behind the Samoan. Seth gets two off a

backbreaker as Dean plugs his new t-shirt and the Seth Rollins ice cream bars but apparently they don't taste very good. A high crossbody gets two on Rollins and there's a suicide dive to take Rollins out again. Dean says that's five minutes (not quite) and asks Seth if it's time to go to a commercial.

Back with Seth hitting his running knee off the apron and throwing on a chinlock. Seth goes to the middle rope but Dean makes an announcement that a 1997 Ford is about to be towed for being in the fire lane. This one doesn't work as well as Seth scores with an enziguri, only to run into a Samoan Drop. The Superfly Splash hits knees though and the Pedigree puts Jey away at 10:25.

Rating: C. Dean was amusing enough here and it's better than just having him do guest commentary for the tenth time Rollins has a match. It's also a good sign that the Usos can work as singles wrestlers and do well enough as so many teams can't do anything without their partner around.

Dean: "The winner of the match, the human equivalent of a root canal."
Seth bails at the threat of a fight so Ambrose can't raise his hand.
Dean: "I'll just raise this instead." And he holds up the title.

We look back at Sami and Kevin Owens beating Jericho up two weeks ago.

Zack Ryder vs. Sheamus

Ryder has a new rock version of his music and it's actually working for me. Sheamus pounds him down with forearms and clotheslines to start, followed by the forearms to the chest. A slam onto the apron makes things even worse but Ryder kicks him in the face and comes back with more forearms. That just earns him an Irish Curse before Sheamus loads up a superplex. Ryder knocks him off and drops the Elbro for the completely clean pin at 2:43. I know Sheamus isn't what he used to be but this is a big drop off. At least Ryder is getting a push though and that's a good thing.

Ryder wants to get his US Title back and issues the challenge to Rusev.

Baron Corbin video.

Rusev accepts the challenge.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

No match as Natalya jumps Becky from behind and puts her in the Sharpshooter. Naturally she tells Becky to tap, which always makes me chuckle.

We recap the Wyatt Family and New Day from Monday.

Xavier Woods is worried about going to the Wyatt Compound because they have no idea what's going to happen there. Woods isn't happy with what his brothers have decided but he'll stand by them. Did the Wyatts send them directions to get there? Otherwise we could be in for a long scavenger hunt.

Here are Enzo and Big Cass to talk about deciding to help John Cena on Raw. That wasn't about them saving Cena or any personal issue with the Club. Monday was about sending a message to the Club to tell them that they can't beat down anyone they want. This brings out the Club with AJ saying they owe the Club an apology for interrupting them as they beat up John Cena.

Anderson thinks they should beat up Enzo and Cass, then hit some golf balls, have some strawberry shortcake and then BEAT UP JOHN CENA. AJ wants to fight Enzo, who says they're not a good original or a good remix. After one round with Sugar Ray Amore, they'll walk out a diabetic.

AJ Styles vs. Enzo Amore

AJ wrestles him down and smirks a lot, only to have Enzo do the same right back. Enzo sends him outside for a big dive but trips on the top for a big crash onto the floor. Thankfully he gets up and is fine this time with AJ hammering away in the corner. Enzo gets in a dropkick but AJ easily takes him down for a chinlock. Back up and the tornado DDT is countered into a suplex to send Amore crashing into the corner. The big guys get in a fight on the floor as AJ crotches Enzo, setting up the Styles Clash for the pin at 5:37.

Rating: C-. This was fine despite the ending not being the biggest

surprise in the world. Enzo is fine for a spot like this as he isn't expected to beat almost anyone on his own but he can do such an effective job of talking that he can get back whatever he lost in all of ten seconds. The six man could be a lot of fun.

Apparently Owens stole Jericho's scarf because he wanted to see if he could get one for his wife. Owens had some popcorn earlier and got the thing all greasy so Jericho demands money to have it cleaned. Kevin drops some change into Jericho's hand but Owens makes sure to get the button back. Jericho wants one more quarter but Owens gives him a Jolly Rancher. Oh and he'll be ringside for Jericho vs. Sami later. Jericho thinks it smells like soup. This was a completely face promo from Owens and he was just as good as always.

The Miz vs. Kalisto

Non-title. This is the result of Kalisto being the one to throw potato salad at Maryse on Monday. Apparently she's allergic so this could have been an international incident. Kalisto starts fast with a top rope corkscrew armdrag to send Miz outside where Maryse prevents a dive. Miz sends him into the steps and we take an early break. Back with Miz working on the back with some forearms before he charges into Kalisto's raised boots. Miz comes right back with a slingshot powerbomb for two before sidestepping the corkscrew forearm. The Skull Crushing Finale puts Kalisto away at 7:54.

Rating: D+. So much for the Kalisto experiment as he's gone from defending the US Title at Wrestlemania to losing a match started over potato salad. He's just the latest victim of the writers throwing a toy out of the crib and it's still pretty sad to see. They had something there but so much for that because it's time to go with....well nothing actually.

Sasha Banks talks about how awesome she is when Charlotte comes in dressed as Banks. Insults are exchanged and Sasha vs. Dana is set for Monday. Charlotte throws down her Sasha gear because it's not her look.

We get Monday's Darren Young/Bob Backlund segment. This has to be close to the last one.

Brock Lesnar's official opponent for Summerslam is.....Randy Orton. Scott Stanford, Booker T., and Corey Graves preview the match a bit from WWE world headquarters.

Golden Truth plugs Sonic with Truth putting the food on top of a ladder to get ready for Money in the Bank. This was no "we got a couple of taters" from Monday.

Sami Zayn vs. Chris Jericho

Kevin Owens is at ringside and starts ripping on Byron before his music even ends. Owens: "Hi Sami! Hope you have a good match! I hope you break your ankle." Jericho wristlocks him down for a bit until Sami scores with three straight armdrags. They head outside with Sami hitting his barricade moonsault but Jericho punches him in the face and mocks the OLE chants as we take a break.

Back with the Lionsault (Owens: "I taught him how to do that.") connecting for two before we hit the chinlock. Jericho: "WHERE'S THE OLE??" Sami comes back but Jericho bails to the floor, only to take one of those running clotheslines. Back in and Owens talks about wanting to see Jericho kick Sami in the face, which is exactly what Chris does a second later.

Sami tornado DDTs Jericho to the floor for the big flip dive but Sami goes to take out Owens so Jericho can take over again. The exploder suplex sends Jericho into the corner but the Helluva Kick has to take Owens down. Jericho's Walls attempt is countered into a quick rollup to give Sami the upset pin at 12:12.

Rating: B-. This is exactly the kind of match you have Jericho around for. He's been built up for the last few months and now you have a young guy like Sami get a big win that makes him seem important. Owens interfering was a nice touch but the key here was Sami having Jericho beat with the Helluva Kick before having to recover and then win with the rollup. In other words, Sami was the better man and didn't just win off a fluke.

Jericho lays Sami out and Owens comes in for a Pop Up Powerbomb to leave

Sami laying as the show ends.

Overall Rating: C. There was an energy to this show that has been missing in the last few weeks and that's a good sign going into the Draft. Above all else though they actually had some stuff happen here with the Lesnar announcement and Ryder challenging Rusev for the title. It's the start of making people feel like they need to see Smackdown instead of it just being a show that they'll stop on if they flip over to USA by mistake. There's a long way to go but hopefully this was a first step.

Results

Seth Rollins b. Jey Uso – Pedigree

Zack Ryder b. Sheamus – Elbro

AJ Styles b. Enzo Amore – Styles Clash

Miz b. Kalisto – Skull Crushing Finale

Sami Zayn b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

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