

Monday Night Raw – July 4, 2016: Half A Cheer For The Red Monday Night Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 4, 2016

Location: Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

Now this should be interesting as it's another show where almost no one is going to be watching, meaning WWE isn't likely to put much, if any, effort into the show. There's a US Title match between Rusev and Titus O'Neil plus a big US vs. The World elimination tag match which will likely get a lot of time. Let's get to it.

We open at the roster's Fourth of July party with Golden Truth rapping in the background. The Vaudevillains take their place with English singing the Declaration of Independence, only to have food thrown at him. Miz and Maryse (who should wear red more often) go into a rant about how this is why we can't celebrate holidays anymore, which turns into an ad for Smackdown going live in two weeks.

A massive food fight breaks out with Kane and Big Show getting into a chokeslam battle until Heath Slater throws something at them, earning himself a chokeslam through a table. Everyone else leaves with only Kevin Owens sitting at a table. Owens: "This would never happen on Canada Day." Someone hits him with a pie and Owens freaks out. Total filler but it's tradition at this point.

Opening sequence.

Lillian Garcia sings the National Anthem as we have red white and blue ropes again.

US Title: Rusev vs. Titus O'Neil

Rusev is defending and yes this is actually happening again. Titus is

dressed like Apollo Creed for a nice touch. This is joined in progress after a break with Titus throwing Rusev around with ease before being tossed/suplexed out to the floor. Back in and we hit the chinlock for a bit before Titus fights up for the slugout. Some shoulders and a big boot put Rusev down, followed by a powerslam for no cover. The Clash of the Titus gets two and the announcers basically admit that it's over. Rusev gets in some kicks to the head and the Accolade ends this at 5:53.

Rating: D+. Next. Like please, find ANYTHING to go with from here because this feud has been over from the second the match was announced in the first place. Titus was fine (ok that's a stretch) enough for a one off match but this is something like four times that we've seen Rusev beat up Titus, save for a lame countout. This needs to end the whole thing though because it's not interesting and never really was.

Miz vs. Ambrose tonight in your weekly Smackdown rematch.

Here are the Social Outcasts dressed as minutemen but are quickly cut off by Enzo and Big Cass. Enzo thinks we should have some star spangled banter because they're stars and take meteor showers. Amore lists off the Presidents in order and it's time for a match.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Social Outcasts

Bo and Curtis since Heath is still banged up from earlier. Enzo gets beaten down for all of a minute before Cass comes in to clean house with the usual. A big boot sets up the Bada Boom Shakalacka for the pin on Dallas at 2:03. In other words, the people dressed as the old school Americans get squashed.

Here are Charlotte and Dana Brooke with something to say. Charlotte talks about people being jealous of her and the proof is around her waist. It must be eating Sasha alive that Charlotte is the champ and all she has is a WE WANT SASHA chant. There is no one that has done more than Charlotte this year because Sasha is all hype.

Cue Sasha to say Charlotte can be champion but she'll never be Sasha. Charlotte doesn't want to be here but Sasha says she would be champion if not for Charlotte's daddy. We get the very good question of what it means

to be the boss. Charlotte has been champion for most of the time since they debuted in WWE a year ago so she's the legit boss. Sasha talks about how a boss fights all the time and is about to fight now but Dana's distraction lets Charlotte kick Sasha in the face. That earns her a Bank Statement with Dana making the save before Charlotte can tap.

Dean Ambrose vs. The Miz

Non-title and another Smackdown rematch that won't be billed as a rematch because Smackdown means nothing. Dean starts fast and clotheslines Miz out to the floor for a whip into the barricade. Miz reverses a whip and we take an early break. Back with Ambrose fighting back but getting dropkicked in the knee for his efforts.

We hit the Figure Four for a bit as JBL goes on his same rant about how you can't put Ambrose's face on billboards or have him on Jimmy Fallon, even though NO ONE BUT CENA (and occasionally Reigns) EVER DOES ANY OF THAT STUFF. Miz's top rope ax handle is countered and Dean sends him outside for the suicide dive. Ambrose is nice enough to hold his leg after the dive connects. Back in and Miz kicks him in the face, only to walk into Dirty Deeds for the pin at 9:42.

Rating: C-. The match was fine, albeit a shorter version of the exact same match that we saw back on Smackdown because that show is a dress rehearsal for whatever they're doing on Monday. JBL continues to get on my nerves with his whole HE CAN'T BE CHAMPION thing because as usual, it makes no sense.

Post match here's Seth Rollins for his match and a quick staredown with Ambrose that goes nowhere. Dean changes his mind and comes back to do commentary as it's time to rip off Dean Ambrose from a few months ago.

Seth Rollins vs. Dolph Ziggler

Non-title and Dean switches from Spanish commentary to English as they get started. They hit the mat to start with Ziggler sending Rollins outside. Seth comes back in for some stomps and an enziguri to knock Dolph to the floor as we take a break. Back with Dolph getting a faceplant off the top for two, followed by Rollins' low superkick getting

the same. Ziggler evens the superkick score for another near fall, only to have the Zig Zag countered into the Pedigree for the pin at 11:18.

Rating: C+. This was fine and a better use of Ziggler than you normally see. Ziggler is going to be fine no matter how many times he loses and it's a good idea to have Rollins win matches clean like this one. Rollins is a much bigger star so this really doesn't hurt anyone in the short or long run.

Post match Rollins gets on the announcers' table to rant about his legacy. He still thinks Reigns should be taken out of the triple threat because Reigns hasn't worked for anything a day in his life. Ambrose gets on the other announcers' table so Rollins can yell at him a bit before the fight is on. Rollins gets the worst of it though and it's Dirty Deeds onto the table, which doesn't break.

We get an old school Wyatt Family video with them talking about how New Day's reality doesn't really exist. They invite New Day into their world because the power of positivity is a myth believed only by fools and children. Join them.

Video on Baron Corbin. You don't see this kind of thing often enough.

Here's Vickie Guerrero to say she should be in charge of Smackdown. This goes on for a good while until security takes her away. Cole calls this very strange, despite it happening every week for the last month.

Big Show gives Team America (Zack Ryder, Kane, Dudley Boyz, Apollo Crews, Mark Henry and Jack Swagger) a pep talk about how it doesn't matter where you're from. Naturally the Battle Hymn of the Republic is playing in the background.

Vickie is being taken away when she runs into ex-boyfriend Dolph Ziggler...who says he's never seen her before so she should be taken away.

Golden Truth vs. Vaudevillains

Breezango is at ringside. Truth and Gotch start things off with Simon taking a kick to the face. A double tag brings in Goldust to work on

English, including a bulldog for no cover. Everything breaks down and Truth tags himself in, setting up a powerbomb/side slam combo (Solid Gold) for the pin on English at 1:31. I'm so glad they brought the Vaudevillains up for something like this. Breezango did nothing.

Bob Backlund wants Darren Young to live a problem free life. His advice is to make his problems bend to his will. Then he asks about Young's finisher, which is still the Gut Check. Backlund isn't cool with the fact that Darren doesn't have a submission hold so he suggests the Crossface Chickenwing, which he officially gives to Young. See, Backlund believes in Darren and wants him to be great again.

Here's John Cena to suggest that the crowd isn't as fired up as they normally are. They seem a little disappointed tonight but maybe they need to find that energy they had the first time he stood face to face with AJ Styles. We were waiting fifteen years for the big showdown but then AJ failed to stand on his own two feet. It wasn't a big surprise though as Cena always knew he'd have to fight all of the members of the Club if he wanted to fight one, which is why he got laid out last week.

Cue the Club with AJ talking about the Club making their return to Tokyo this past week but the posters were all about John Cena. The Club runs Tokyo and soon they'll run WWE, but first they have to get rid of Cena himself. AJ knows that Cena is loading up that shovel to get rid of him but last week there was no one out to save Cena when he was in trouble. It's because no one relates to him because he's this top star. Instead people relate to the Club, because they have the guts to get it done.

The Club is going to beat him up week after week, including on Labor Day and Halloween, even if it means dressing up like Bushwhacker Luke and Brutus Beefcake. Then on Christmas Day, Anderson is going to wrap presents with his hot Asian wife (his words) and then beat up John Cena. The Club comes down to the ring to beat him up now and the attack is on until Enzo and Big Cass of all people make the save. That's certainly better than the Usos.

The Shining Stars are actually still a thing.

Summer Rae vs. Becky Lynch

Natalya is watching from the back as Summer chokes in the corner to start. We hit the chinlock less than a minute in before Summer botches a suplex, basically dropping Becky on her head. Some clotheslines set up the Bexploder for two before the Disarm-Her makes Summer tap at 2:58.

Chris Jericho wishes the Multi-National Alliance (Yes really. That would be Jericho, Alberto Del Rio, Cesaro, Sami Zayn, Sheamus, Kevin Owens and the Lucha Dragons) a happy Canada Day but a multilingual argument breaks out.

Enzo and Cass shill Sonic.

Here's New Day to talk about the Wyatt Family. We get Deliverance jokes before New Day promises to bring them a bowl of Booty0's. The Wyatts pop up from their compound and say New Day's screams are music to their ears. Bray issues the challenge to come to the compound. Kofi accepts but Woods keeps looking worried. As Big E. promises to spread positivity from the window to the wall, Woods cuts them off and says Bray just knows about fear. This is a bad idea and it's no longer fun and games. If they can't see that, New Day can't survive.

John Cena/Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. The Club is set for Battleground.

Team USA vs. Multi-National Alliance

USA – Apollo Crews, Big Show, Kane, Dudley Boyz, Mark Henry, Jack Swagger, Zack Ryder

Multi-National Alliance – Chris Jericho, Kevin Owens, Sami Zayn, Cesaro, Sheamus, Alberto Del Rio, Lucha Dragons

Elimination rules and the foreigners (including Kalisto, who hails from the far off land of Chicago) come to the ring to their national anthems. Owens beats up Ryder to start before it's quickly off to D-Von vs. Cara. This is going to be really hard to keep track of early on. A quick 3D gets rid of Cara at 1:05 and the Brogue Kick does the same to Bubba at 1:12.

Back from a break with Cesaro swinging D-Von into the Sharpshooter for the submission at 5:45. Swagger comes in for the Patriot Lock but has to

fight out of the Sharpshooter attempt. Jericho comes in and the Vader Bomb hits raised boots, setting up the Codebreaker for the elimination at 7:53. Kane comes in but everything breaks down for a huge brawl as we take another break.

Back with Del Rio getting two on Crews off a Backstabber before getting dropkicked out of the air. The hot tag brings in Henry for some slow motion house cleaning, only to have Kalisto dive into the World's Strongest Slam for the elimination at 13:20. Owens comes in and GIVES HENRY A POP UP POWERBOMB for the elimination at 13:35.

That was insane and I was thinking there was no way he could do it but he just did anyway. Ryder is in next but Owens sends him into Sami, triggering the obvious brawl. Kane tags himself in but Owens hits Sami with a chair for the DQ at 14:55. As in Owens is disqualified, though it should really be Kane. Speaking of Kane, he hits Owens with the chair for another DQ at 15:24, despite Owens already being eliminated. Kane chokeslams Sami so Crews adds the standing moonsault for the elimination at 15:49. Sheamus Brogue Kicks Crews for the elimination at 15:53 and we're rapidly running out of people.

So it's down to Ryder/Big Show vs. Jericho/Sheamus/Del Rio/Cesaro with Jericho beating on Ryder. Cesaro tags himself in and it's time for the uppercut train on Cesaro's own teammates. He loads up the Neutralizer on Ryder but gets rolled up to eliminate Cesaro at 18:41. The announcers treat that way too lightly and it's Sheamus beating on Ryder, only to get caught with a neckbreaker. The hot tag brings in Big Show to start cleaning house with the KO Punch eliminating Jericho at 20:14. Del Rio's low superkick is blocked and a chokeslam gets rid of Alberto at 21:31.

We're down to Sheamus vs. Ryder/Big Show with Show pulling Sheamus back in over the top by the hair. The chokeslam doesn't work though and Sheamus is smart enough to go for the leg. Ryder comes in for his forearms in the corner, only to get caught in the powerslam for two. Show grabs Sheamus by the throat and shoves him into the Rough Ryder for the final pin at 22:18.

Rating: C-. Oh what else were you expecting here? You knew that a bazooka

blast to the chest wasn't going to defeat the Americans here and that's exactly how this should have gone. Ryder getting the win is a fun little moment and no one is going to remember this by the time it's the fifth of July so everything is fine. The match was nothing to see but it's not like any rational person was expecting anything else.

Old Glory is lowered and fireworks take us out.

Overall Rating: D+. Again I ask: what else were you expecting? It was mostly a skippable show with some decent wrestling and a grand total of nothing of note, save for a six man being announced twenty days before a pay per view. This is a good example of a throw away show that no one was going to watch in the first place but at least there was enough stuff on here to keep me entertained for three hours. We'll be back to serious next week and that's fine on a holiday like this.

Results

Rusev b. Titus O'Neil – Accolade

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. Social Outcasts – Bada Boom Shakalacka to Dallas

Dean Ambrose b. The Miz – Dirty Deeds

Seth Rollins b. Dolph Ziggler – Pedigree

Golden Truth b. Vaudevillains – Solid Gold to English

Becky Lynch b. Summer Rae – Disarm-Her

Team USA b. Multi-National Alliance – Rough Ryder to Sheamus

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Money in the Bank 2016: A Father's Day Miracle

Money in the Bank 2016

Date: June 19, 2016

Location: T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

You always hear about how any particular show is supposed to be the best ever but in this case they might actually have a chance at the best Money in the Bank of all time. There are three major matches tonight with AJ Styles vs. John Cena, Roman Reigns defending the WWE World Title against Seth Rollins and of course the Money in the Bank ladder match. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Breezango vs. Golden Truth

Breezango has severe sunburns due to some shenanigans before the match. Fandango and Truth start things off with Truth chopping at the very raw chest. It's off to Breeze vs. Goldust as the chop-a-thon continues. Fandango comes in and ducks a chop, only to have Truth slap him on the back. Breeze offers a distraction so Fandango can stomp away, much to his own severe pain. We hit a leg crank on Truth for a bit before it's back to Goldust for more chops and atomic drops. Everything breaks down and the Final Cut (suplex into a neckbreaker) puts Fandango away at 5:00.

Rating: D+. Sure it was stupid but I've got a soft spot for this angle as they're just having goofy fun. The wrestling obviously wasn't the point here and that's ok when the entire point of this match is to fill in some time before we get to the actual pay per view. It's nothing worth watching again but it's funny enough to do its job.

Pre-Show: Lucha Dragons vs. Dudley Boyz

Bubba and Kalisto start things off before Cara comes in for a dive, followed by a double dive to take the Dudleyz down. Back from a break with Bubba working on Cara's arm as the fans want tables. D-Von's big elbow drop gets two before it's back to Bubba who threatens to rip Cara's mask off. The jab sequence is countered by a dropkick from Cara and the hot tag brings in Kalisto. The hurricanrana driver and kick to the head have the Dudleyz rocked and we get some heel miscommunication for good measure. A 3D is broken up and it's the Salida Del Sol and the Dragon Bomb (swanton) for the pin on Bubba at 8:50.

Rating: C+. This was WAY better than I was expecting and a rather snappy little tag match. The Dragons never getting the titles is actually a bit surprising but at least we get a few nice matches like this every now and then. I'd still like to see Kalisto get an extended singles run but if this is the best I can get, so be it.

The opening video looks at the history of Las Vegas and the idea of chasing the dream. Everyone here tonight is going all in for the sake of reaching their goal, whatever that may cost.

Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Vaudevillains vs. The Club vs. New Day

New Day is defending. Enzo's attire looks like it's covered with a bunch of miniature license plates. He's sorry but he's a bit tired tonight because he and Lady Luck were up all night. New Day does some impressions on the way to the ring, including calling Enzo and Cass a sawed off Han Solo and a hairless Chewbacca. The Vaudevillains are the Monopoly Men and the Club is being sent back to Japan to cure their male pattern baldness.

One fall to a finish here and it's Kofi vs. Karl to start things off. It's quickly off to Gallows who eats a quick pendulum kick in the corner before Enzo comes in to help clean house. Kofi grabs a rollup for two on Amore and that's not quite cool. We get the big showdown between Cass and E. but Gotch tags himself in instead. Everything breaks down and all eight stare each other down in a cool visual.

The heels are sent outside and it's Enzo/Cass vs. New Day, only to have the Vaudevillains jump Kofi from behind to take over. Gallows tags himself in but a double clothesline drops both Luke and Kofi. A double tag brings in English and Enzo (odd choices for tags) but it's quickly back to Gallows, who low bridges Enzo to the floor. Amore grabs a tornado DDT on Luke and another double tag brings in Cass and Anderson. Cass cleans house and throws Enzo onto a pile at ringside.

The Rocket Launcher gets two on Anderson with Gallows pulling Enzo out at the last possible second (or maybe a bit too late). Kofi tags himself in but misses Trouble in Paradise. The Whirling Dervish gets a very close two on Kofi (I bought that as the finish for a second) and Big E. spears Gotch to the floor. Kofi grabs a DDT on English but Karl makes a blind tag. There's a Magic Killer to English, only to have Big E. make a quick save. The Midnight Hour connects on Anderson and Kofi pins English at 11:47.

Rating: B+. It's not quite the four way from last month but sweet goodness they were on fire here. This was a great back and forth match where I actually bought that all four teams could have gotten the belts at any time. In theory this sets up the Club vs. New Day for the titles at Battleground after New Day sets the record for the longest title reign.

Kevin Owens is in the back and brags about being awesome when he powerbombed John Cena on the apron last year. See, you have to specify what he does because everything he does is special. Owens: "That's what my mom tells me." Jericho comes in and does his usual speech about inventing Money in the Bank but Owens calls him out for never winning the thing.

Alberto comes in (Owens: "Most likely to speak some Spanish.") and they discuss the meaning of perro. Del Rio brags about being the only one to win Money in the Bank but Owens cuts him off to say he needs new material, like Owens, who is always doing cool stuff. Jericho: "The only perros I see here are this pair-o idiots." Jericho offers them the gift of Jericho but both guys leave, allowing Jericho to call them stupid idiots. If Owens was any more golden, he'd be a prize in the Olympics.

Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

Because this won't die. The threat of a superkick sends Corbin backing off so he pops Dolph with a right hand to take over. Ziggler tries to send him under the ropes but Corbin swings around the post and comes in with a hard clothesline. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Corbin just stomps away. The fans call this boring so Corbin takes a bit of a bow and picks Ziggler up even slower.

Dolph comes back with some dropkicks but can't follow up. The Fameasser and superkick are both broken up and Corbin blasts him with another clothesline for two. Back up and Ziggler avoids a charge to send him shoulder first into the post, setting up the Fameasser for two. The fans alternate between Bayley and Ryback chants as Corbin bails to the floor to avoid the superkick. That thing better hit at some point.

A Deep Six on the floor gets a nine count. Back in again and End of Days is countered into the superkick for two. Ziggler heads up top but gets caught by a running right hand. Well that's a bit more simple. Ziggler jumps back down and tries another superkick, only to run into End of Days for the pin at 12:24.

Rating: B-. This is a good example of a quality match where the fans just weren't interested and I really can't blame them. These two have fought so many times and there's no reason to want to see them again. That's where WWE gets in trouble so many times: they get something interesting and then don't know when to stop, leaving us with crowd reactions like this. It was good with the nice little story of teasing the superkick but I had no interest in watching them.

Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch/Natalya

The announcers point out Natalya losing title match after title match this year. Natalya shoves Dana to the ropes a few times to start so Dana shouts a lot. Becky comes in and we get a Hart Attack on Dana, followed by a baseball slide to put Charlotte on the floor as well. Back in and Natalya gets beaten down as the announcers push the idea that Charlotte has been teaching Dana to get better. Apparently she needs to do more teaching as Natalya gets over for the tag off to Becky for the house

cleaning.

The Bexploder sends Charlotte flying and a double missile dropkick drops the villains. Natalya comes in for the discus lariat on Charlotte, who comes back with a rollup for two with her feet on the ropes. The Sharpshooter has Charlotte in trouble but Dana makes the save, only to have Natalya and Becky collide. Natural Selection ends Natalya at 7:00.

Rating: C. Much like the previous match, I never want to see Charlotte vs. Natalya again. That's like five straight losses for Natalya and there's no reason to see them go at it again. Just let Sasha come up and get the title in a better match like everyone wants to see instead of just doing the same stuff over and over again. Why can't WWE get that simple logic?

Post match Becky apologizes but Natalya blasts her with a forearm for a heel turn. Yeah because that's going to make her interesting. Again, if you want us to care about a character more, DON'T HAVE THEM JOB IN EVERY SINGLE MATCH BEFORE YOU TURN THEM.

Dean Ambrose says we're in the jungle tonight and he's walking out with the title. He doesn't have a comment on the main event other than Reigns is going to have fun beating on Rollins. "Beating up Seth is fun."

Sheamus vs. Apollo Crews

Veteran vs. newcomer. Sheamus jumps him to start and headlocks Crews down. Back up and Crews sends him out to the floor, only to get caught in Irish Curse off the apron and out to the floor. Back in and we hit the chinlock as the fans break out the YOU LOOK STUPID chants again.

The ten forearms to the chest get two for Sheamus and we hit another chinlock. Crews pops back up for his running clotheslines and an enziguri before belly to belly suplexing Sheamus over the top. A moonsault from the apron gets two but Sheamus runs him over again. Sheamus takes it to the top for a super White Noise and two but an argument with the referee allows Crews to grab a rollup for the pin at 8:44.

Rating: C+. I liked this more than I was expecting to as Crews got the

win after hanging in there long enough. It's kind of a fluke but Crews kicked out after a big move and got to show off enough to make it look like a big win. This is what people like Sheamus and Ziggler are good for: having quality matches and putting people over while it still means something.

We recap AJ Styles vs. John Cena. This has been billed as a dream match and that's not too far from the truth. Styles attacked Cena a few weeks back like so many others have done but Cena was more impressed by a moment when the fans were chanting LET'S GO CENA/AJ STYLES. Tonight AJ has his chance to prove that he belongs and has agreed to have the Club barred from ringside.

AJ Styles vs. John Cena

The fans are just coming unglued for this before the bell. They trade takedowns to start and AJ is all fired up. Cena comes right back with some armdrags and a monkey flip of all things but it's way too early for the AA. You Can't See Me is answered with a forearm to the face and AJ starts sticking and moving. That earns him a belly to belly before they head outside. Cena tries to send him into the steps but AJ jumps over them in a sweet counter that leaves Cena shocked.

Back in and a knee drop gets two for AJ, followed by a suplex. AJ: "Is this all he's got?" Cena keeps going simple with a stiff right hand and a backdrop but the flying shoulders are countered with a dropkick. We hit the chinlock for a bit before another comeback is countered by an enziguri.

The Protobomb plants AJ but the Shuffle is broken up as well with Cena being knocked outside. A big flip dive misses though and Cena finally has an opening. Back in and the AA is countered again with AJ hitting the strike rush, only to get caught in the STF. A rope is grabbed so Cena tries a top rope AA but Styles reverses into something like Snake Eyes. Cena tries it again (with some LOUD spot calling, which has been an issue all night) but AJ escapes one more time.

The Phenomenal Forearm is countered into the AA but Cena takes too much time turning to face the camera, allowing AJ to reverse into the Calf

Crusher. John gets to the ropes and hits that big running clothesline to make the comeback when he needs to hit a big move to make a comeback. The AA is countered AGAIN but Cena just muscled him up, only to have AJ kick out again.

Cena is shocked so he goes up top, only to have the Fameasser countered into a powerbomb to put both guys down. That's only good for two as well so it's a Pele into the Styles Clash for two more with the fans getting more and more into the kickouts. The springboard 450 only hits knees though and both guys are down. Neither can hit finishers with AJ landing on his feet to escape the AA but missing the Pele. The Forearm misses and Cena tries another AA, only to have the ref get bumped. Now the AA connects but there's no one to count. Cue the Club for the Magic Killer to give AJ the pin at 24:09.

Rating: A-. I was hoping for a clean finish here as they were nailing it near the end. They were working the big match formula here and the key thing is AJ looking like he belonged in there and even frustrating Cena like few others have been able to. I don't know if I'd say it lived up to the expectations but I don't think anything really could have. Still though, excellent stuff as you had to know was coming..

JBL calls this a cheap victory but it's not clear if AJ knew what happened. I mean, him looking up while the Club ran in would suggest otherwise but I've heard worse storyline explanations. As expected, JBL drives the point into the ground like no one else can.

We get a really cool video on the ladder match with a theme of what the briefcase can mean for you and how it means the world to someone's career.

Chris Jericho vs. Alberto Del Rio vs. Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn vs. Cesaro vs. Dean Ambrose

The fans seem split between Owens and Ambrose. Huge brawl to start as you would expect with Ambrose taking Owens down, followed by Sami hitting a big flip dive to take out most of his opponents. Owens kicks Sami in the face though and it's Jericho with a front suplex to send Cesaro ribs first into the ladder. Dean gets back in but gets suplexed onto the

ladder for his efforts. Jericho tries to crush him 69 times with the ladder but Del Rio comes in for the save.

That means it's time for an uppercut party until Owens makes the save and busts out the Cannonballs. Sami comes back in and makes the first real climb but Del Rio makes the save and ties him in the Tree of Woe. Del Rio gives Cesaro the top rope double stomp onto a ladder but makes the slow climb, allowing Jericho to come in for a save. Chris gets pulled down and might have hurt his knee.

Del Rio goes up again but Cesaro makes a save this time, only to get caught in the cross armbreaker on the ladder. Kevin superkicks Del Rio but eats the spinning uppercut. Now it's Ambrose and Jericho back inside with Jericho hitting a Codebreaker but only getting his hand on the briefcase as Sami makes a save.

They're both knocked onto the ropes by an intervening Owens, who is taken down just as quickly with a Backstabber. There's a Cesaro Swing for Del Rio and one for Jericho as a bonus with Cesaro letting him fly into the ladder for a big crash. Ambrose hits the elbow drop on Cesaro but Owens makes another save and crushes Dean with a frog splash onto the ladder.

Sami's Michinoku Driver onto the side of an overturned ladder freaks the fans out all over again and breaks Owens at the same time. Del Rio hits Sami with a ladder over and over for the save before bridging one ladder into the other and draping the end on the middle turnbuckle. Cesaro does the same thing on the other side to make two platforms and all six are on ladders at the same time.

Cesaro and Del Rio fall off and the four others climb the middle ladder at once, only to have Del Rio and Cesaro set up another ladder. That results in a huge crash with Del Rio taking a very nasty fall. Everyone else falls down and Sami goes up, only to have Jericho run across the platform and make a save. Now it's Dean stopping that one and planting Jericho with Dirty Deeds. Owens pulls Sami down and powerbombs him onto the platform. Dean and Kevin fight on the ladder with Owens falling backwards through the ladder and Ambrose gets the briefcase at 21:36 as JBL goes ballistic.

Rating: B+. See, this is what I was hoping for when they announced a six man match. Instead of fighting to get time, this was all about everyone going for the briefcase and surviving until the end when someone could get the briefcase. The ending isn't a shock as you had two main options with Ambrose and Owens and it's hard to argue with Dean winning. Really fun brawl though with some awesome spots, though nothing we haven't seen before.

Long pre-show recap.

US Title: Rusev vs. Titus O'Neil

Rusev is defending and Titus' kids are in the crowd. Rusev goes straight outside and gets in their faces, setting up a double clothesline on the floor. Titus just erupts on Rusev against the barricade before throwing him into said barricade. Rusev sends him into the post for a seven count before getting two off a spinwheel kick back inside. A hard knee has Titus' ribs in trouble and we hit the chinlock.

Titus fights back with elbows to the ribs and a shoulder. Something like a reverse slam gets two but Titus has to get out of the Accolade. A pumphandle powerslam gets two more on the champ, who comes right back with the jumping superkick. Now the Accolade retains the title at 8:15.

Rating: D+. It's almost like the idea of crushing the former champion over and over left Rusev with no one credible to defend against here. Oh wait Titus won some dad award a year or so ago so now he's supposed to be interesting. Boring match here with zero doubt about the end result but that's what midcard titles mean these days.

Rusev laughs at Titus' kids and PLEASE don't mean we get a rematch.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Seth Rollins with 15 minutes left in the show. They've been involved forever and things were made even worse when Rollins cashed in Money in the Bank to end Wrestlemania XXXI. Then Rollins hurt his knee and Reigns took the title in Seth's absence, setting up this showdown.

WWE World Title: Seth Rollins vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending and the bell rings at 10:54 EST. Feeling out process to start until Reigns drops him with a shoulder. A second shoulder does the same but a third is blocked with a dropkick. Reigns is sent outside for a suicide dive but comes right back with a Samoan Drop for two. The fans don't give Roman an inch as he hits that running clothesline and pounds away in the corner.

It's past 11pm as regular pay per views now have overruns. Roman asks if Seth is ready for this so Rollins slaps him in the face. The comeback is stopped with a right hand and Roman sends him over the announcers' table. Seth whips the champ into the steps but Roman comes right back with a Razor's Edge into a sitout powerbomb for two. The Superman Punch is avoided though and Seth dropkicks him outside for another suicide dive. A big flip dive over the top is followed by a Sling Blade for two back inside.

The Pedigree doesn't work though and the Superman Punch gets two for the champ. Seth enziguris Reigns away and hits the springboard knee to the head. A frog splash gets two on Reigns, allowing JBL to get in his second Eddie Guerrero reference of the night. Rollins is scared to go for the sunset bomb so he switches to a buckle bomb and low superkick for two instead.

Seth has to try three times for a superplex before getting him down, setting up a Falcon's Arrow for two. The Pedigree is broken up again and Rollins gets two more off a powerbomb. The slugout goes to Rollins and there's another buckle bomb, only to have Reigns come out with a Superman Punch for two. Since this hasn't gone on long enough, Rollins goes outside, only to avoid the spear into the barricade.

Medics come out to check on Reigns until Rollins throws him back inside for the Pedigree. That's countered as well and we get a ref bump, followed by the spear for a delayed near fall. The spear is countered into a Pedigree for two and Rollins is stunned. There's a second Pedigree and Rollins is champion at 26:04.

Rating: B+. It was long but the end was a surprise and a good way to wrap things up with Reigns getting pinned clean. This sets up a lot of

interesting stuff with the potential Shield triple threat that should headline Summerslam but more importantly...I hear music so we'll cut this short.

We're not done yet! Ambrose comes in through the crowd and hits Rollins with the briefcase for the cash-in.

WWE World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Ambrose is champion off Dirty Deeds in 9 seconds. More importantly: NO MONEY IN THE BANK FOR A YEAR!!!

JBL sounds like he wants to cry as Ambrose celebrates to take us off the air.

Overall Rating: A-. If not for some of the midcard stuff not exactly living up to the same standards and what seems to be the introduction of overruns on a pay per view (because ten matches over four hours and then three hours and ten minutes tomorrow night isn't enough), this would have been a classic. As it is it's just great and a bit beneath the 2011 edition, though still very good.

That being said, if WWE actually runs the Shield triple threat at freaking Battleground and not on the big stage of say Summerslam's main event, I think my head might explode. That's a Wrestlemania main event level match and there's a chance they'll waste it on the nothing July pay per view. Either way, it's a really good show worth watching, but have your fast forward button ready.

Results

New Day b. The Club, Vaudevillains and Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Kofi pinned English after a Magic Killer

Baron Corbin b. Dolph Ziggler – End of Days

Charlotte/Dana Brooke b. Natalya/Becky Lynch – Natural Selection to Natalya

Apollo Crews b. Sheamus – Rollup

AJ Styles b. John Cena – Pin after a Magic Killer from the Club

Dean Ambrose b. Cesaro, Sami Zayn, Alberto Del Rio, Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho – Ambrose pulled down the briefcase

Rusev b. Titus O’Neil – Accolade

Seth Rollins b. Roman Reigns – Pedigree

Dean Ambrose b. Seth Rollins – Dirty Deeds

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Money in the Bank 2016 Preview

It’s another big time pay per view but more interestingly it might be the last pay per view of this era with the Brand Split changing everything a month after this show airs. They’re building this up as the greatest Money in the Bank of all time and while I have a really hard time believing they can top the 2011 edition, it could be interesting to see what they could do here. Let’s get to it.

The card has actually undergone a few changes so we’ll start with the new

pre-show matches, beginning with Golden Truth vs. Breezango. I know it's not the most popular feud in the world but I've been digging this story as it's gone on for months. The interesting thing here though is I'm not sure who wins goes over. They could finally have Golden Truth get a win but that kind of wraps up the feud. On the other hand they could go with Breezango winning and further the split between Truth and Goldust.

I actually think Breezango goes over as Golden Truth doesn't exactly have much of a future while Breezango could actually be built into a low level team of some value. Yeah I'll take Breezango but I wouldn't be surprised if I was wrong. Either way, this is a good example of how to get WAY more than should be gotten out of a stupid comedy story and I could actually go with these teams going somewhere else.

The other pre-show match is the definition of "here's a match thrown together for the sake of making this show even longer" as the Dudley Boys face the Lucha Dragons. It's really sad to see the Dragons thrown back together after Kalisto lost his US Title and the writers threw him out of their crib like they do with all of their new toys.

I guess we'll go with the Dragons here because....well because they were heads when I flipped a coin in my head. There's really no reason for either team to go over the other so yeah we'll pick the Dragons with at least a 50% confidence rate. This really feels like background noise while you're getting your pizza ready for the main show and that really doesn't need to happen, especially when you already have a pre-show match with so little importance.

Now on to the main card and we'll start with the four way for the Tag Team Titles as New Day defends against the Vaudevillains, the Club and Enzo Amore/Big Cass. In theory this is the Club's match to lose but the more I think about it, the more I think that they're going to let New Day break the record for the titles, which they would by the time Battleground rolls around.

So yeah I think New Day escapes here to set up the big showdown with the Club, though again Club could wind up pulling it off here. I think we can forget the idea of Enzo/Cass or the Vaudevillains getting the titles here

though I can go with the idea of the other two teams being added on to save the big showdown for later. As easily as I could see the Club getting the belts, I'll go with New Day surviving one more month and getting the record before dropping them at Battleground.

I'm sorry for being so back and forth with the picks here but it's that kind of a card. That's not a bad thing either.

In another match that doesn't need to exist, we have Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler yet again because this is what you do with a young name after you bring him up and give him a big win at Wrestlemania: give him the exact same match over and over again with no one getting anywhere as a result.

In theory this should go to Corbin in what better be this final match of the feud. I can barely remember why they're fighting at this point because they're in the horrible trap of "well we've been fighting for a long time now so let's just keep fighting". Ziggler has nothing to lose at this point but Corbin could move on to fighting for a midcard title after this feud so there's really no reason to not go with Corbin. Yeah Corbin and I'm moving on to the next match before I can change my mind again.

Next up we have what should be a squash in a title match with Rusev beating the barks out of Titus O'Neil. I know he's like the best father ever or whatever that nothing award they gave him was and the show is on Father's Day but I can't imagine they put Titus, who hasn't actually won a match on Raw or Smackdown since February. Of course that's enough for a title shot, mainly because Jack Swagger is too busy in theory.

So yeah, Rusev wins here and absolutely crushes Titus while Lana stands around looking hot. I'm not looking forward to this but it's better than watching Rusev squash Kalisto all over again. They really need to actually have someone built up to challenge him instead of just picking someone off the roster and letting Rusev crush them on pay per view. Still though, at least Titus' energy should help carry some of the match.

In a match I'm actually looking forward to, Apollo Crews will be facing Sheamus in his first major match in the company. This is your standard

“I’m big and you’re small” match and that’s a style that is almost always going to work no matter what you do. Again there’s no reason for Crews to lose as Sheamus has the ability and the resume to pop back up after anything that happens to him. Crews wins here and there’s no reason for Sheamus to even be considered.

One more match before we get to the big stuff as we look at the women’s tag match. What in the world has happened to this division since Wrestlemania? The triple threat there was an absolute spectacle but this never ending Charlotte vs. Natalya feud while the fans are just waiting for Sasha to come out there and take the title has completely burned through all of the momentum they had built up. The wrestling is definitely better and it’s a lot more entertaining than it was but there’s no fire to the matches and that’s not a good thing.

I’ll go with Charlotte/Dana over Becky/Natalya because the latter two are just not allowed to win a big match no matter what they do. There’s no need for this feud to continue but it seems like we’re waiting for August to actually have Sasha come in and win the title she should have gotten at Wrestlemania in the first place. Either way it’s time for some fresh energy (not blood, which is a different thing) in the division, which shouldn’t be the case after one of the best women’s matches in American history just two and a half months ago.

Now we get to the important stuff and we’ll start with probably the least important of the three main events as Seth Rollins faces Roman Reigns. To say this one is confusing is an understatement as Rollins was built up as the sympathetic face with the big documentary and returned to the big face pop at Extreme Rules. On the other hand you have Roman Reigns who certainly does have his fans but is being pushed as one of the awkward faces in history despite being a natural heel while getting booed out of several buildings around the country.

The thing is, there’s almost no way this is going to be the last match between the two, but possibly more importantly it’s going to be the last time they might be on pay per view on the same brand. I’m almost sure there’s not going to be a cash-in but I’d bet on a DQ or countout finish here with Reigns holding onto the belt. Rollins will probably need some

more seasoning before being put back on top of the card, but this should be one heck of a match as Reigns is always good to great once the bell rings.

Next up we have the namesake match with Dean Ambrose, Cesaro, Sami Zayn, Kevin Owens, Chris Jericho and Alberto Del Rio in the Money in the Bank ladder match. In another instance of me having almost no idea who is winning here, this match is basically a pick em save for Alberto who should have as much chance of winning this match as I do of winning Miss Nevada 1973.

I think I'm going with Owens, who would be the best choice for the briefcase long term for the promos alone. Ambrose is a real option too but I can't really picture them going with him actually winning a big match. The same is true of Cesaro and it's too early for Sami. There's a slight chance to get it on Jericho, who they've talked about as never winning the match he's created. Of course that would be ridiculous and not really help anyone but that didn't stop them at Wrestlemania. I'll stick with Owens here but Jericho is a dark horse. Oh and one last thing: well done on keeping it at six. For once I can remember everyone involved.

That leaves us with the main event and sweet goodness this should be fun. There aren't many actual dream matches out there but AJ vs. Cena really is one of them. The buildup has been excellent with that contract signing more than pushing me over the top, which really wasn't hard after the setup.

I'm not sure what else there is to say here as it's AJ Styles vs. John Cena in a featured match on a WWE pay per view. I'll take AJ to win in a masterpiece to set up a bunch of rematches down the line which is fine. Yeah Cena would lose in his big comeback match but it makes the most sense here, meaning it's more than likely to be wrong. The thing is there's no wrong answer here and that's a good sign going into tomorrow night.

It's a rare thing but I actually got more excited for the show going through the preview. This really is one of the most stacked cards I've

seen in a very long time and it has the potential to be some incredible stuff. Maybe not the best Money in the Bank ever but it's going to be a heck of a night of wrestling and that's what these shows should be. Pay per views are almost always awesome these days and I see no reason why that trend won't continue here.

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Smackdown – June 16, 2016: Happy Birthday Mom

Smackdown

Date: June 16, 2016

Location: Mississippi Coast Coliseum, Biloxi, Mississippi

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

It's the final show before Money in the Bank so just set up the big six man main event already. This week's Raw had some strong story building moments for the coming pay per view but the go home Smackdowns can be all over the place quality wise. Hopefully they don't just bore us with nothing matches that don't fire up the fans for Sunday. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Chris Jericho in the ring for the Highlight Reel. Jericho says quiet about seventeen times and unveils the new Jeritron 6500 and the new \$2000 carpet. He promises to win Money in the Bank because he created it ("You're welcome."). Tonight his guest is Dean Ambrose, even though Jericho hates him. Dean comes out with a cup of coffee but first we have to look at the clip of the Ambrose Asylum on Monday. Jericho isn't cool with the coffee because this carpet is made of Serengeti yak hair. Dean's coffee is like the Gift of Jericho man. He's just drinking it in.

Jericho says Dean won't be Shawn Michaels tonight and shove his head through the screen so Dean's Jeritron privileges are revoked. Actually everyone has so raise the screen. Chris brings up the thumbtacks and says the holes don't combine to equal the hole left in Dean's spirit by never being World Heavyweight Champion. Dean isn't winning the briefcase or the title on Sunday but here's Kevin Owens to interrupt. That case is HIS and he might cash in at any time.

Cue Del Rio to speak Spanish and say no one understands how this works except for him but here's Cesaro to interrupt as well. Nothing is said before Sami cuts them off and announces tonight's six man, triggering an argument with Cesaro over the interruption. Jericho calls them stupid idiots and says they'll win tonight so Dean pours the coffee on the carpet to start the brawl.

Kofi Kingston vs. Aiden English vs. Luke Gallows vs. Big Cass

Enzo's entrance is cut off by New Day and that's not cool. I guess New Day are haters now? Other than Kofi riding in on Big E.'s shoulders, there's no special entrance from New Day. Enzo and Woods are sitting in on commentary. Gallows powerbombs Kofi to start but Cass clotheslines Luke down and knocks Aiden outside as well. The Club gets Cass to the floor and sends him into the barricade as the guest commentators both get up and we take a break.

Back with Aiden and Gallows taking turns beating on Kofi before naturally fighting over who gets the pin. Cass breaks up what looks like a Doomsday Device with big boots and clotheslines all around. Gotch tries to

interfere but Gallows pulls Cass to the floor. Kingston dives off the top to take out Gallows and Cass, followed by Big E. running over Gotch. Back inside it's Kofi hitting Trouble in Paradise for the pin on English at 7:44.

Rating: C. This didn't have time to go anywhere and Kofi winning isn't exactly a great sign for New Day's reign going forward. The Club winning the titles makes the most sense which is probably why the Vaudevillains will win the titles. I'm really hoping they don't split up New Day or Enzo/Cass in the Draft but leave it to WWE to go with the worst possible choices.

Natalya and Becky Lynch are ready for their tag match on Sunday and insist that the truth is out there: Charlotte can't win a match on her own. Dana and Charlotte come in so bickering can ensue.

Baron Corbin vs. Zack Ryder

Dolph Ziggler is on commentary. Corbin chokes to start but goes outside to yell at Ziggler, allowing Ryder to get in a dropkick off the apron. The Broski Boot gets two (on Baron if that wasn't clear) but End of Days wraps Ryder up at 1:46.

Corbin walks away from a fight with Ziggler post match.

Rusev vs. Kalisto

Non-title and Lana does Rusev's intro. They show Rusev beating Titus O'Neal down on Raw to basically guarantee the post match shenanigans. Kalisto gets jumped during the entrances and put in the Accolade. No match.

Sin Cara tries to make a save and gets the same treatment. Titus runs in for the save and cleans house.

Recap of the Styles vs. Cena contract signing.

AJ Styles says he'll prove he can win on his own this Sunday. New Day comes in to laugh at AJ's lack of style and a match is set up between Woods vs. Styles.

Xavier Woods vs. AJ Styles

No seconds at ringside. Feeling out process to start with AJ sending Woods off the ropes and saying Xavier can't see him. AJ cranks on a wristlock and says he does this better than Cena. Woods comes back with a strike to the forehead, only to have AJ chop block him down. AJ takes his time to let the referee check on Woods, who catches AJ with a jumping knee to the head. The Pele drops Woods for two though and it's off to the chinlock.

Woods finally gets up and grabs an O'Connor Roll for two, only to get caught in a backbreaker. We take a break and come back with Xavier punching his way out of a superplex and getting two off a high cross body. A reverse suplex drops Styles and a discus forearm puts him on the floor. Woods follows him out with a big flip dive before walking across the top rope for a LONG elbow drop and a near fall. AJ escapes a superplex and scores with the Phenomenal Forearm setting up the Calf Crusher (Styles: "THIS IS WHAT I'M GOING TO DO TO JOHN CENA!") for the tap out at 12:21.

Rating: B-. Woods can go when he wants to but most of the time he's just there for comic relief. Granted it might have helped that the match was against AJ Styles and Woods only had to do the basics to get through this one. The ending made perfect sense as they set up the injury at the beginning and then paid it off at the end. Why is that so complicated?

Post match AJ says that's just a taste of what Cena is getting when his time is up.

This week's lesson with Bob Backlund is about Darren Young reading more. Bob says they're like dumbbells for the brain but Backlund doesn't like the idea of Darren taking advice from anyone, including Backlund himself. That's because Backlund doesn't give advice. Instead he gives orders, like 100 high knees right now.

Natalya vs. Charlotte

Non-title with Becky and Dana at ringside. Charlotte takes it to the mat with a headlock which is countered into a headscissors. The hold is

quickly broken but Natalya breaks up the strut. Charlotte gets caught in a surfboard but it's too early for the Sharpshooter. Natalya will have none of this waiting on the floor and takes Charlotte out with a baseball slide. Dana offers a distraction though, allowing Charlotte to kick Natalya in the face to take over. The advantage doesn't last long though as Natalya throws her over with a German suplex for two.

Nattie By Nature gets two as the announcers talk about video games. Lawler: "The only video game you should be talking about is WWE2K16." That's some veteran shilling. Charlotte goes up for the moonsault but gets caught in a sitout powerbomb for two, only to have Dana hold up the title as a distraction. Becky and Dana slug it out and Charlotte chop blocks Natalya, setting up the Figure Eight for the submission at 5:48.

Rating: C+. I'm not sure how this is supposed to help set up Sunday but I'm not really sure why these women are still fighting. You would think Natalya losing like five matches to Charlotte would be enough to end the feud but let's just keep it going anyway. It's not like there's anyone else around to challenge for the title. One last note: I'd like to point out that the loss to Paige on Monday seems to mean absolutely nothing, barring a surprise Paige title shot coming up after Money in the Bank.

Long video on Roman vs. Rollins.

Dean Ambrose/Sami Zayn/Cesaro vs. Alberto Del Rio/Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

It's a big brawl to start until Del Rio and Cesaro are left alone in the ring. Alberto misses the corner enziguri but still lands on Cesaro's back. That means it's time for the uppercut train (and Mauro's uppercut party line) before Del Rio avoids the Codebreaker to the arm. Cesaro can't hook the Swing though and has to settle for a flip dive off the apron. The running European uppercut sends Jericho into the timekeeper's area.

Del Rio gets one as well and Cesaro stays on him with a high cross body for two. Cesaro Swings all three heels with Jericho getting the last one and a Sharpshooter to go with it. Jericho taps but isn't legal, allowing Del Rio to superkick Cesaro down for two as we take a break. Back with

Jericho posing over a fallen Cesaro before handing it off to Owens for a stomping in the corner. Del Rio tags himself in to hammer Cesaro even more, only to get dropkicked off the top and out to the floor.

The hot tag brings in Sami to take on Jericho as everything breaks down. Sami's high cross body gets two but Owens gets in a cheap shot to let Jericho take over. That means a long and obvious spot call in the corner until Sami gets in a clothesline to set up the hot tag to Dean. Everything breaks down again and Dean sends Del Rio to the floor for the suicide dive.

The standing elbow misses though and Alberto gets two off a Backstabber. Dirty Deeds is broken up and it's Cesaro cleaning house with uppercuts, including one to Ambrose. Del Rio tags out to Owens, earning himself a superkick. Jericho gets one from Owens as well, setting up Dirty Deeds for the pin on Kevin at 13:50.

Rating: C+. This was exactly what I was expecting but that's to be expected when you do the same building process year after year. It's a fine Smackdown main event with enough good action and a grand total of almost no storyline advancement. In other words: a big part of why no one watches Smackdown at the moment.

Overall Rating: C. You can feel the show being stuck in a holding pattern until we get to the Brand Split and Smackdown possibly starts meaning anything again. This didn't do anything to make me want to see Sunday's show but Raw already took care of most of that. The show wasn't bad or anything but it was so horribly average with nothing memorable whatsoever. If this doesn't change after the split, this show is in major trouble.

Results

Kofi Kingston b. Big Cass, Aiden English and Luke Gallows – Trouble in Paradise to English

Baron Corbin b. Zack Ryder – End of Days

AJ Styles b. Xavier Woods – Calf Crusher

Charlotte b. Natalya – Figure Eight

Dean Ambrose/Cesaro/Sami Zayn b. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens/Alberto Del Rio – Dirty Deeds to Owens

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Monday Night Raw – June 13, 2016: Someone Give Me A Good Title For A Strong Go Home Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 13, 2016

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton, Michael Cole

It's the go home show for Money in the Bank so it's hard to say how much will actually happen this week. In this case we'll have the buildup to the actual ladder match but one of the participants will be crossing over to the main event as well as Dean Ambrose hosts a special Ambrose Asylum

with Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We have a moment of silence for Orlando.

Here's New Day to get things going. During their entrance we see a sign in the crowd reading "The guy behind me can't see." That actually made me groan and furthers my loathing of most wrestling fans. They talk about the upcoming four way but stop to make fun of Kofi for wearing the new Steph Curry shoes, which apparently look old. Kofi: "These shoes are hot on the streets!" Woods: "What streets? The streets of Greenwich, Connecticut?" Kofi: "Those are some mean streets." They promise to keep the titles but here are Enzo and Big Cass to interrupt.

Cass says they're going all in on Sunday and walking out with the titles. He implies that the unicorn horns are made for her pleasure and asks if Kofi is serious with the Jerry Seinfeld shoes. After New Day makes fun of the shoes as well, Cass wants to talk about Francesca. Woods: "That's my girl." Cass: "Well where was your girl last night?" Apparently she was with Enzo, who had his lips all over her like Satchmo.

Woods gets very serious and says he's the only one who blows his girl. Kofi introduces the verbal joust of wits between New Day and Enzo/Big Cass but the Vaudevillains interrupt. English sings about how the new era but Anderson and Gallows cut them off. Gallows makes fun of the New Orleans Saints so Cass calls them S-A-W-F-T.

New Day/Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. The Club/Vaudevillains

This is joined in progress with Kofi working over Gotch before bringing in Big E. for the Unicorn Stampede. Cass throws in some elbows before Enzo tags himself in so Cass can throw him at Gotch. English shoves Gotch out of the way of a high cross body, only to have Gotch run Amore over. It's time for Enzo to take a beating as all of the villains take a shot at him. English gets kicked out to the floor though and a kick to the chest is enough for the hot tag off to Cass as everything breaks down. Kofi dives on everyone and we take a break.

Back with Big E. in trouble but countering a sunset flip and dropping Gotch with an elbow to the jaw. Gallows gets in a clothesline though and Big E. is in trouble again. The Vaudevillains chop away before it's off to Karl for a kick to the face in the corner. Big E. gets in a shot to the ribs though and it's off to Kofi as things speed up again. A high cross body gets two on Anderson as Enzo and Gotch are sent out to the floor. English does the same to Cass, only to have Big E. LAUNCH him with a belly to belly. Gallows comes in off a blind tag and the Magic Killer puts Kingston away at 13:26.

Rating: C+. That break in the middle hurt this a lot as it felt like nothing more than a way to fill in time rather than something that the match actually needed. That being said, Kofi was on fire here, which is why he just had to take the pin. Big E. or Enzo were available, though they were smart to keep Cass looking strong as he's possibly the biggest prospect in the whole match.

We look back at the debut of the Shield at Survivor Series 2012 to help set up the Ambrose Asylum later tonight.

Bob Backlund/Darren Young segment from Smackdown with Backlund telling him to save money, including only having one pair of clothes.

Shane and Stephanie are bickering over who should run Raw and/or Smackdown when Kane comes in to offer his services. He has a resume and a letter of recommendation from Undertaker so Stephanie lets Shane handle this one.

Zack Ryder is laughing with some random people about Apollo Crews knocking Sheamus down on Smackdown. Sheamus comes in and says he'll beat Ryder up tonight, just like he'll do to Crews on Sunday. Ryder says hi to Crews....who isn't there, allowing Ryder to run away like any former United States and Intercontinental Champion would do.

Clip of Shield's face turn.

The Shining Stars brag about Puerto Rico's water. How is this supposed to make money?

Titus O'Neil comes out for a match but Rusev jumps him from behind and beats him down on the stage. The referees have to come out and break the Accolade.

Clip of Shield breaking up. So to recap: they arrived, they turned face, and they split with nothing in between.

It's time for the Ambrose Asylum with special guests Roman Reigns and Seth Rollins. Before they come out though, Ambrose says he feels like he's just woken up from a coma because this Sunday feels like Wrestlemania. There are two major matches and we're focusing on one of them here. Therefore, let's bring out his first guest, the scum of the Earth, Seth Rollins.

Reigns is brought out as well and we get the big visual of the three of them standing there. Ambrose: "This is great huh?" He asks Rollins about the knee and Rollins is stunned that Ambrose hasn't watched his special on the WWE Network (he should because it's awesome). Dean thinks Seth's face must be hurt because it's killing him. Reigns on the other hand had a great time on Bourbon Street last night.

Dean wants Rollins to calm down and stop being a party pooper. After the party pooper chant dies off, Rollins lists off some fun moments they've had like Wrestlemania XXX, flying in on a helicopter to fight Undertaker and HELL NO in London and finding Dean unconscious next to a dumpster in....what town was that? Seth brings up the matches against Evolution and we get a BLUETISTA chant.

Rollins gets to the Wrestlemania XXXI cash-in and violence starts boiling over. Dean breaks it up and says Reigns beat Ambrose for that title in the first place. Yeah Reigns accomplished a lot in Rollins' absence but he's never beaten Seth one on one. Rollins rants about how he's going to get the title back on his own but Dean laughs the idea off. Reigns actually says Rollins is right because it's going to be one on one Sunday and then they'll call him the guy because he beat Seth. Dean asks the fans which one it's going to be but offers a third option: he wins the Money in the Bank contract and cashes in on either of them.

The music plays and the brawl is on with Reigns throwing Dean away so he

can beat Seth up himself. That earns Seth a Superman Punch but Dean gives Reigns Dirty Deeds because that's what friends do to each other. Ambrose looks up at the briefcase and the fans seem to like the idea.

Back from a break and Stephanie makes Ambrose vs. Jericho for the main event. Over the weekend I made a comment about how Smackdown is worthless because the matches mean nothing and there's a good chance that they'll just repeat a match on Monday anyway and I had a feeling it would be this one because it's the one that didn't need to happen again.

Paige vs. Charlotte

Natalya and Becky Lynch are at ringside. Non-title and the second match of the show starts an hour and twenty one minutes in. Paige runs her over with a knee to start but gets small packaged for two. Charlotte yells at Natalya and walks into the Rampaige for the pin at 2:31. I'm not even going to bother getting mad about this.

Cesaro is about to talk about Money in the Bank when Sami Zayn comes in to give the real answers. Cesaro is ticked off and says Sami is acting like a child but Sami says Cesaro can't talk down to him like this. Apparently they're in the same match tonight so Cesaro says he'll see him out there.

Charlotte yells at Dana for failing and implies that Dana is her assistant. Dana is of course mad but Charlotte says her payment is to be part of Charlotte's legacy.

Sheamus vs. Zack Ryder

This is the second match in a row with no entrances, likely for the sake of more backstage stuff. Sheamus attacks early to start but gets caught by a quick dropkick and the Broski Boot. The Elbro gets two but the Rough Ryder is easily blocked. The Brogue Kick puts Ryder away at 1:53.

Sheamus beats him up even more until Crews runs out for the save.

We get a video of Kane winning Money in the Bank in 2010 and cashing in the same night.

Kevin Owens interrupts Kane and Shane's talk but he wants to talk to Stephanie. Apparently Alberto Del Rio just arrived twenty minutes ago and should be taken out of the Money in the Bank match as a punishment. Del Rio, already in his gear, comes in to blame Owens for calling airport security to get him delayed for five hours. They start yelling in Spanish and French until Kane cuts them off with an idea. How about a tag match against the Lucha Dragons with the winners getting the spot in the ladder match? Shane likes the idea and makes the match.

Sami Zayn vs. Cesaro

Feeling out process to start with Cesaro nipping up out of a wristlock but getting armdragged right back down. A nice tilt-a-whirl backbreaker plants Sami for and Cesaro sends him into the post as we take a break. Back with Cesaro hitting a corner uppercut and stomping on Sami's chest for two. A quick Michinoku Driver gets two for Sami but he takes too long going to the top, allowing Cesaro to power through the apron superplex for another near fall. Back up and the Blue Thunder Bomb gets two, followed by the sunset bomb for....actually for three on Cesaro at 8:06.

Rating: C+. That's one of the few booking ideas I've seen tonight that I really like. Sami (and a lot of other people) have those big moves that never win anything so it's a really good idea to have one get a pin every now and then to make you believe that it could get another one later. The loss doesn't hurt Cesaro either as none of these wins really mean anything heading into the big gimmick match.

It's time for the contract signing between John Cena and AJ Styles as moderated by Michael Cole. Cena hypes up Money in the Bank as a show bigger than Wrestlemania with a match fifteen years in the making. For years, the WWE bosses had told AJ Styles that he didn't belong here. That's nonsense because from PWG to New Japan to Ring of Honor, AJ Styles has been the best everywhere he's gone. Sidebar: Is there any real reason why they won't say TNA? Ring of Honor is arguably bigger and New Japan is definitely bigger but TNA isn't allowed? Unless there's some legal reason, I see no logical justification for not saying it.

Anyway Cena tells Cole to leave because this is going to get rowdy. AJ

comes out and says he's turned Cena's world upside down. Cena agrees that it's been done but there's something up his sleeve. There are two contracts here, one of which says John Cena vs. AJ Styles and the other which says John Cena vs. AJ Styles w/The Club. Cena would love to sign the first one so we can have one heck of a fight on Sunday but if they sign the second one, AJ will win on Sunday and then start complaining the very next night when he doesn't get the same respect.

AJ thinks Cena is so confident because of all the things he's won but Styles wants to know what would have happened if AJ had been here fifteen years ago. My guess is not much because he still would have been a nothing tag guy but I get his point. AJ says he would have been the one on the covers of magazines and in all the movies. Cena cuts him off and says he's heard this before and AJ doesn't get it because he has the chance to prove it on Sunday.

AJ can sign one contract and prove how great he is or sign the other one and be put on a bullet train back to Japan because that's where he left his balls. AJ grabs a pen and looks at the contracts before signing the one on one version. Styles says after Sunday, Cena's time is up. As usual, this was AWESOME stuff.

We see Randy Orton winning Money in the Bank in 2013 and cashing in on Daniel Bryan at Summerslam.

Kevin Owens/Alberto Del Rio vs. Lucha Dragons

The winners are in Money in the Bank. Del Rio beats on Kalisto to start before it's off to Owens who isn't happy with the way Alberto is acting, only to calm down at the threat of a DQ. Owens teases walking out but comes back in when Alberto is rolled up for two. Kevin and Alberto get in a shoving match and get dropkicked to the floor, setting up a double dive from the Dragons as we take a break.

Back with Kalisto eating a clothesline but Del Rio won't tag out. Owens and Alberto get in another argument, allowing Kalisto to hit a quick Salida Del Sol to send Del Rio outside. Kevin throws his partner back in and it's off to Sin Cara for the Swanton, only to have Owens breaks it up at two. The Pop Up Powerbomb ends Cara at 8:15.

Rating: C. I liked the idea of having something on the line here. Of course it wasn't going to happen but it was nice to have a reason to care about the match. The Dragons are just so nothing these days and it's sad to see the promise that Kalisto showed wasted as much as it has been.

Del Rio superkicks Owens post match.

Back from a break with Owens telling Stephanie that Sami Zayn is going to be on commentary for the main event. Stephanie is furious because that's something so horrible so she makes Owens a commentator as well. Del Rio comes in and says he wants to be out there too so Stephanie makes him guest timekeeper.

Stephanie yells at Shane about his decisions so Shane makes Cesaro guest ring announcer. On another note, Kane isn't getting the job running Smackdown. Kane comes in and asks if this is about electrocuting Shane's testicles with a car battery. Shane tells Stephanie they'll keep running Raw but he'll run Smackdown on his own. This is getting old in a hurry and it's only going to get worse.

Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose

All of the other Money in the Bank participants are at ringside. Dean chops him down to start and scores with a quick suplex. Jericho is sent to the floor for a suicide dive before Dean knocks Owens' headset off. Back in and Dean flips out of a Walls attempt but eats an enziguri. The corner dropkick puts Dean on the floor and it's time for the announcers, timekeeper and ring announcer to stare at each other.

We come back from a break with Dean fighting out of a chinlock. Some clotheslines stun Jericho but he counters the top rope standing elbow drop into the Walls. Owens: "I taught him that!" Dean grabs the ropes but can't get Dirty Deeds. Instead Jericho takes him down for two off the Lionsault, only to have Dean get up top for the elbow.

Byron asks how Kevin would handle not winning Sunday. Owens: "I would handle it the same way: I would come out here and slap your face." Dean tries to put on the Walls but settles for a catapult out to the apron. Jericho runs to the top but dives into a kick, only to have the

Codebreaker countered into Dirty Deeds for the pin at 11:58.

Rating: C. This would be the standard reversal of the match we saw on Smackdown because that's what Smackdown is for: a dry run for the following Raw without any mention of the first match. It doesn't help that these two have fought WAY too many times and it's getting less and less interesting every single time.

Everyone brawls after the match with Owens bringing in a ladder, only to have Sami flip dive off the top onto the pile of people. Jericho wasn't in that group though and goes up the ladder to pull down the briefcase to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling (and lack thereof at times) brings down what was an otherwise very strong show with two excellent talking segments. I'm more invested in the pay per view than I was coming in and that's the point of a go home show. The Cena vs. AJ stuff was excellent as Cena is still the best hard seller in the business and the Shield segment made things feel more personal, especially with Dean at the end to add some flavor. As has been the case so many times, if this was a two hour show, it would have been one of the best in a long time. As it is though, it's still good enough.

Results

The Club/Vaudevillains b. New Day/Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Magic Killer to Kingston

Paige b. Charlotte – Rampaige

Sheamus b. Zack Ryder – Brogue Kick

Sami Zayn b. Cesaro – Sunset Bomb

Kevin Owens/Alberto Del Rio b. Lucha Dragons – Pop Up Powerbomb to Cara

Dean Ambrose b. Chris Jericho – Dirty Deeds

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Smackdown – June 9, 2016: Keeping The Standard

Smackdown

Date: June 9, 2016

Location: Intrust Bank Arena, Wichita, Kansas

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton

We're pretty much at business as usual here as Money in the Bank is a week from Sunday and most of the big stories are starting to round into form. AJ Styles is going after John Cena, the Tag Team Titles are in a big mess of a match and we'll see yet another combination of the six Money in the Bank participants tonight because just having them be announced over time isn't an option for whatever reason. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's the Club to get things going. AJ talks about how this Money in the Bank may be the best ever with the Club winning the Tag Team Titles and AJ himself taking care of John Cena. For ten years it's been the John Cena Era and the New Era can't really get started until he takes Cena out. When he came to WWE in the first place, he made it clear that the Club was a package deal. The Club has transcended countries, continents and companies. As for Cena, you can't beat him.

Cue Enzo and Big Cass with the latter reminding AJ that there are two other teams going after the Tag Team Titles. The Mr. Clean Dream Team isn't taking those belts but Karl says they've been traveling the world for ten years while Enzo was managing a Hooters. Enzo basically says "Well yeah. What's wrong with that?" before saying the Club has wrestled everywhere but Antarctica.

Enzo would love to walk a mile in Karl's shoes because then he'd be a mile away from him. The last time Enzo and Cass had a big match, Enzo fell asleep on the job. Enzo thinks that makes them a couple of haters so in Vegas, money will talk and money will walk. That makes Anderson and Gallows S-A-W-F-T.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows

New Day is on commentary with Woods eating Booty0's and Big E. holding a broom. Anderson runs Cass over a few times to start before it's off to Gallows for a big boot. For some reason this makes New Day talk about pasta. The Enzo beating continues as Kofi puts Byron on grape duty, meaning he has to feed Kofi grapes on demand. Anderson throws him down to stop a tag attempt, making Kofi think Enzo should switch to Alfredo instead of the marinara.

Big E. does his nerdy commentator voice as Enzo Stuns Anderson over the top rope. A diving tag attempt is stopped by a running boot to the head as the Vaudevillains come out to watch. Back from a break with Gallows suplexing Enzo for two as the fans chant for Cass. Amore punches away but is shoved away, only to get caught by the jumping DDT. Now it's the hot tag to Cass as house is quickly cleaned. A very big boot puts Gallows on the floor as New Day gets up to cut off the Vaudevillains. They all get in the ring and that's a no contest at 10:54.

Rating: C. Cass continues to look like the biggest star out of all these guys and that big boot was awesome. I really can't imagine the New Day keeps the titles after Money in the Bank and the Club would be the logical way to go with the belts. Enzo and Cass are hot right now though and you would have to expect Cass to get a big singles push soon.

Enzo and Cass clear the ring post match.

We recap Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho, who will be facing each other tonight, focusing on the battle over the talk shows.

Muhammad Ali tribute.

The announcers talk about the Money in the Bank card.

Lana and Rusev aren't worried about Titus O'Neil because Rusev is the real greatest of all time instead of Muhammad Ali. Titus comes in and says he'll take the title at Money in the Bank by floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee.

Cesaro/Sami Zayn vs. Alberto Del Rio/Kevin Owens

Sami and Owens start things off with Zayn spinning him around and sending him into the corner for a tag off to Del Rio. That's fine with Alberto who kicks Sami's leg out but lets the tag bring in Cesaro. Alberto takes over and asks Owens for a tag but Kevin says Del Rio is doing fine by himself and walks out. Sami chases him up the ramp so we're down to a singles match.

A shot to the back puts Del Rio on the floor and it's time for a break. Back with Del Rio getting two off a Backstabber. We hit the chinlock but Cesaro is up in less than five seconds. Well he's certainly not lazy at least. Cesaro muscles him up into a suplex as Sami and Kevin fight back down the aisle. Del Rio isn't cool with Owens walking out on him and now it's Alberto walking out. Owens won't let that happen so Sami dives over the top to take him out, leaving Cesaro to suplex Del Rio on the floor.

Back in and Del Rio starts in on the arm but can't get the armbreaker. Everything breaks down and Swiss Death drops Del Rio again. Owens and Zayn are sent outside again, leaving Del Rio to take the Swing. Owens breaks up the Sharpshooter and crotches Cesaro on top, setting up the top rope double stomp from Del Rio, only to have Owens throw his partner out and steal the pin at 13:29.

Rating: C+. I'm normally not a fan of the way the build towards Money in the Bank goes but this was kind of a creative way to do more than just another tag match. I'm sure we'll see something else like that next week

because there's almost no way around seeing those matches over and over but at least this was something fresher. The wrestling is all fine and having only six people keeps the match from being such a mess but a change to the build could be an improvement.

We look at Jericho destroying Mitch.

Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch

Natalya and Charlotte are at ringside. Dana immediately bails to the ropes but Becky snaps off some armdrags to send her outside. Back in and Lynch misses a charge, allowing Charlotte to get in a forearm like a good heel should. Becky comes back with a kick to the ribs but she has to go after Charlotte, triggering a brawl between Charlotte and Natalya on the floor. That earns them both an ejection, leaving Becky to make Dana tap with the Disarm-Her at 3:04.

Rating: C-. You know, I wouldn't be opposed to them actually announcing the women's match for the pay per view. I'm assuming it's going to be a fatal fourway or a non-title tag match (which actually fits for a change) but anything is better than another Natalya title shot. Whatever gets us past this and on to Sasha FINALLY getting her title shot would be a good idea though.

Bob Backlund asks to see Darren Young's victory celebration. Young starts doing the Millions of Dollars dance but Bob tells him to bring it back down to earth. Backlund tells him to save money, which Darren interprets as not going to the movies and no popcorn. Darren asks how Bob saves so much money, which apparently is all about wearing only one set of clothes. Young agrees to cut down on the shopping. Backlund: "How do you feel about a bow tie?"

Baron Corbin vs. Kalisto

Dolph Ziggler is on commentary because this thing just won't die. Kalisto is still listed as one half of the Lucha Dragons despite them almost never teaming together anymore. Some quick kicks put Corbin on the floor to start but he shrugs off even more kicks and tosses Kalisto onto the barricade to take over.

We get the staredown with Ziggler, who says he'd love to take off his jeggings and get right in there. Back in and we hit the chinlock on Kalisto for a bit before he comes back with the corkscrew cross body. The headscissors driver gets two but Corbin just blasts him in the back of the head. End of Days puts Kalisto away at 3:45.

Rating: C. You can definitely add Kalisto to the long list of people who started fast until the company got bored with him and threw him to the side for their new favorite toy. The match was your normal boring stuff as Ziggler vs. Corbin is a feud that needed to wrap up two months ago but for some reason the thing just keeps going.

We look at Ambrose ripping up Jericho's jacket. This feud really isn't big enough to warrant this kind of attention.

Another chat about AJ Styles vs. John Cena with Lawler telling a story about having to face the top ten contenders in order to get a shot at NWA World Champion Jack Brisco. Why can't we hear those stories more often?

Sheamus brags about the success of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Zack Ryder/Golden Truth aren't all that impressed. Apollo Crews (Remember him?) comes in and Sheamus suggests that Crews get him a latte. Sheamus gets knocked through some well placed boxes.

Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose

Ranallo says this is the first time these two have ever fought on Smackdown. Why is that supposed to be something interesting or appealing? I've never gotten that concept. Jericho shouts about the thumb tacks Dean put into his back and the chase is on outside. Back in and Dean strikes away, only to get clotheslined down. That means it's time to yell about the tacks even more but a clothesline puts Jericho outside for the suicide shove.

Dean loads up the announcers' table for Dirty Deeds but gets catapulted onto the floor for a big crash as we take a break. Back with Jericho suplexing him for an arrogant two, followed by the chinlock. Dean's comeback is stopped with a clothesline and it's time to choke on the ropes. Another comeback attempt works a bit better as Dean scores with a

clothesline and elbows but Dirty Deeds is countered into a failed Walls attempt.

Jericho dives into a forearm to the jaw for two but comes back with a middle rope enziguri (looked like a missed dropkick) for two of his own. Dean breaks up a superplex attempt and grabs la majistral for two more before both guys collide to put them down. The Codebreaker and Dirty Deeds are broken up but Dean has to stop himself from running into the referee, allowing Jericho to grab a one legged Codebreaker for the pin at 13:46.

Rating: B-. Well so much for Dean's hot streak. The match was fine but that cage match destroyed a lot of my interest in this feud. Jericho only has so much interest these days and it makes sense to have him win a match here or there since he has almost no chance of winning the ladder match. Then again that's what people were saying before he fought AJ at Wrestlemania.

Post match Jericho grabs a ladder but gets sent face first into it for his efforts. The standing elbow drop from the ladder crushes Jericho to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Totally run of the mill Smackdown here as it was missing most of what I liked about the show last week. Most of the Money in the Bank card (which is looking stacked) is set so this was a bunch of supplemental material. To be fair though, we're five weeks away from the end of Smackdown before it gets turned into something new, which hopefully turns the thing around for a change.

Results

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Luke Gallows/Karl Anderson went to a no contest when New Day and the Vaudevillains interfered

Kevin Owens/Alberto Del Rio b. Sami Zayn/Cesaro – Top rope double stomp to Cesaro

Becky Lynch b. Dana Brooke – Disarm-Her

Baron Corbin b. Kalisto – End of Days

Chris Jericho b. Dean Ambrose – Codebreaker

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Smackdown – May 26, 2016: The Wrestlemania Show Sequel

Smackdown

Date: May 26, 2016

Location: Norfolk Scope Arena, Norfolk, Virginia

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo

It's actually a big night here as we have two title matches on a single show. First of all we have Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Cesaro after the champion lost a non-title match this past Monday on Raw. The second title match will see the new US Champion Rusev defending against Kalisto in the masked man's rematch. Let's get to it.

The opening video recaps Monday's Money in the Bank qualifying matches.

Opening sequence.

Michael Cole is in the ring with the Money in the Bank briefcase and brings out Dean Ambrose for a chat. Dean says he loves getting violent

and the idea of being in a seven man ladder match sounds great to him. This brings out Kevin Owens to tell Cole to get out of the ring because Owens is sick enough of him on Raw. Owens says there's no way Dean is winning that briefcase because he's ready to climb the ladder, just like he did at Wrestlemania.

Cue Sami Zayn (Lawler: "The man with the stupid hat.") to say this isn't a joke because he's going after everything at Money in the Bank. Now it's Alberto Del Rio (who hasn't qualified) to say he's cashed in before and he'll do it again here tonight. Sami turns to yell at him and gets decked by Owens. The three in the ring start brawling and Sami vs. Dean is teased.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Zack Ryder vs. Alberto Del Rio

Beating Ryder is almost a running joke at this point. Alberto kicks him down and chokes on the ropes to start, only to get kicked into the barricade as we take an early break. Back with Del Rio working on a chinlock and a clip of Del Rio hitting the double stomp on the floor during the break. Ryder fights up but misses his middle rope dropkick.

The low superkick gets two for Alberto, only to have Zack grab a jawbreaker. The Broski Boot gives Ryder a near fall of his own but Del Rio counters the Rough Ryder. He can't the top rope double stomp though and walks into the Rough Ryder for no cover as Del Rio gets outside. Back in and the cross armbreaker makes Ryder tap at 9:35. Well that could have been shorter.

Rating: D+. Does beating Ryder really mean anything anymore? Alberto is another name that really doesn't need to be in the match but can be there to fill in a spot. It's another case of just having people in the match for the sake of having them in the match as no one buys Del Rio as a realistic winner but he can clutter things up even more.

Video on Sunday's main event and Seth Rollins' return, including the announcement of the Money in the Bank title match.

Here are Enzo and Cass with something to say but before Enzo can get anywhere, here are the Dudleyz to interrupt (Lawler: "WOOHOO! Thank

goodness.”). Enzo says he isn’t Willy Wonka so he won’t sugar coat anything. The Dudleyz are as sweet as a Cinnabon and he isn’t biting his tongue when he’s chewing someone out. Cass offers to throw them a beatdown right now but the Dudleyz say not tonight. Instead, we’ll do this on Raw but for now, Bubba asks D-Von if they can please get out of this town.

Rusev says after tonight, Kalisto will never be able to fly again.

Video on Cesaro making Miz tap at Extreme Rules and then pinning him the next night on Raw.

US Title: Kalisto vs. Rusev

Rusev is defending after defeating Kalisto on Sunday. During Kalisto’s entrance, Byron almost casually mentions the impending Brand Split. Kalisto goes right after him to start and sends Rusev to the ropes with a headscissors. A springboard is knocked out of the air though and we take a break about thirty seconds in. Back with Kalisto being sent hard into the corner and actually trying to slam the champion. This works as well as you would expect and Rusev stomps away to stay in control.

Kalisto pops up again and gets the slam, which shocks the way too confident Rusev. A rollup gets two on Rusev and the corkscrew cross body gets the same. Kalisto follows up with a springboard moonsault to the floor for two as Lana looks....well she looks normal actually. Rusev blocks the Salida Del Sol, only to miss a running headbutt in the corner. He’s fine enough to raise his knees to block a 450 though and it’s the jumping superkick and Accolade to retain the title at 8:53.

Rating: C+. I don’t think there was any doubt here but at least Kalisto got in some offense. They’re trying to make Rusev into a big time champion but I’ll need to see him get a few more big wins before I can buy this as anything more than a run destined to put over a bigger name.

Rusev goes after Kalisto again post match until Titus O’Neil of all people comes in for the save. This is either a curve ball to make us think it’s not going to be the start of Cena vs. Rusev on Monday or a very odd choice.

Video on Charlotte retaining on Sunday and then turning her back on her dad the next night. This is accompanied by clips of wrestlers talking about how horrible this was and how big of a mistake Charlotte really made, because how could she be good without Ric Flair? That look from Ric when he said nothing was wrong and left actually got to me a bit.

Natalya vs. Dana Brooke

Charlotte is on commentary. Natalya fires off some forearms in the corner but gets knocked down and put in the Sharpshooter, only to have Charlotte come in for the DQ at 45. This isn't exactly a wrestling heavy show tonight.

Natalya puts Charlotte in the Sharpshooter and then throws the villains together. Charlotte gets back up though and Natalya gets beaten down. They're really continuing this feud after Charlotte has beaten her twice?

Stills of Sunday's main event and video of the Club breaking up on Monday plus Owens pinning AJ Styles to qualify.

Styles doesn't know what he's doing next.

Golden Truth vs. Breezango

Truth and Breeze get things off but it's quickly off to Fandango who gets two off a dropkick. Fandango goes after Goldust to get him off the apron though, allowing Breeze to sneak in a Supermodel Kick to give give Fandango the pin at 1:40.

Post break Goldust tries to convince Truth that the team needs to stick together. Breezango comes in and laughs at them so Truth agrees to keep going.

Here's Seth Rollins for a talk. In case you missed it, he's back and couldn't be better. Unfortunately he can't say the same for the fans and that's that.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Cesaro

Miz is defending. Cesaro dropkicks him out to the floor to start and

cannonballs down onto the champ as we take another early break. Back with Miz going after the shoulder and sending it into the post and barricade. The champ slaps on an armbar until Cesaro fights up with the uppercuts. Miz gets two off a Reality Check before distracting the referee so Maryse can rip off the turnbuckle pad.

Cesaro blocks the steel though and gets two off a small package. The Sharpshooter doesn't work either as Miz gets to the rope and tries to leave with the title. Instead he eats the running European uppercut for two. The Swing is kicked away though and Cesaro goes shoulder first into the buckle. Miz grabs the Skull Crushing Finale for the pin to retain at 10:31.

Rating: B-. More 50/50 booking of course. This was ok but the lack of time didn't really help things. Unfortunately this is Cesaro 101 as he comes so close most of the time but can never have the trigger pulled. I'm fine with Miz as champion and thankfully they made sure that it wasn't a clean pin, but this was still a lot less entertaining than I was hoping for after Sunday.

Overall Rating: D. This show felt like the nothing episodes that they air before Wrestlemania when they know no one is watching and they want to set up the pay per view. We had about half an hour of wrestling tonight and most of the matches ranged from ok to something most people would have no interest in seeing. Extreme Rules was a good show but it's nothing that I really wanted to see again. I'm really not sure what they were going for tonight but it missed and it missed badly.

Results

Alberto Del Rio b. Zack Ryder – Cross armbreaker

Rusev b. Kalisto – Accolade

Natalya b. Dana Brooke via DQ when Charlotte interfered

Breezango b. Golden Truth – Supermodel Kick to R-Truth

The Miz b. Cesaro – Skull Crushing Finale

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Monday Night Raw – May 23, 2016: Crying All The Way To The Bank

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 23, 2016

Location: Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're past Extreme Rules and now on to Money in the Bank season, meaning we might start tonight with some qualifying matches. However, the bigger story coming out of last night is the return of Seth Rollins, who attacked WWE World Champion Roman Reigns after Reigns retained over AJ Styles. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the main event and Rollins making his return.

Opening sequence.

Here's Seth to get things going, complete with a new graphic that says "Redesign, Rebuild, Reclaim." He certainly looks like a face to start

though I wouldn't put money on that one. Rollins gets a nice WELCOME BACK chant before smiling at the crowd and saying it's been 200 days since he's been in this ring. In case you've been living under a rock (or in case you're really not paying attention), he's back. He's here to get back the title that he never lost and last night he fired the first shot with the Pedigree on Reigns.

The fans keep freaking out so Rollins asks if they missed him. Fans: "YES! YES! YES!" Rollins brings up some of the dastardly things he's done over the years and about how the fans didn't buy him by calling him a coward who hid behind the Authority. Then his knee went out from all the weight of carrying this company. Over the last few months he's gotten so many fan letters but he put every one of them in a garbage can and set them on fire.

None of these fans were here with him when he was rehabbing his knee twice a day. Now he's back on his own to get the title back but here's Reigns to interrupt. Rollins of course bails and says it's happening on his time. This brings out Shane to invite Rollins back inside for an adult conversation. This conversation consists of Shane making Roman vs. Seth for the title at Money in the Bank.

Sheamus talks about how much he can't stand Sami Zayn and this New Era. Tonight he's going to give Sami a beating for all the people who are sick of this foreigner coming in with his stupid hat. Nothing wrong with a simple, old school pre-match promo.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Sheamus vs. Sami Zayn

Sheamus takes him down into a wristlock to start, followed by a legdrop of all things. Sami sends it outside with a hurricanrana, only to have Sheamus put a knee in his ribs to send us to a break. Back with Sheamus getting two off the Irish Curse but Sami BLASTS him with a clothesline and gets two off the Michinoku Driver. The Brogue Kick misses and Sami clotheslines him to the floor, only to have the flip dive blocked by a forearm. Sheamus gets back in and eats a quick Helluva Kick for the pin at 10:00.

Rating: C. Well that's a pleasant surprise, even though there was little

doubt that Sami was going to win here. Sami winning is a good option as he's the epitome of someone who you believe could pull off the big surprise, even though he's likely only there to take big bumps and sell like no one else can.

Post match Sheamus is furious.

After a break, Apollo Crews is talking about how this is the biggest match of his life when Sheamus jumps him from behind and lays him out.

Here's New Day for a six man tag and they've got a birthday cake. Tonight is the 1,200th episode of Monday Night Raw and that means it's time to celebrate. However, since cakes in wrestling rings always end up in someone's face, Big E. picks up the cake and takes it outside to get things out of the way. As he threatens Byron Saxton, cue the Social Outcasts to jump New Day from behind and take us to a break.

New Day vs. Social Outcasts

Joined in progress with Kofi hurricanranaing Slater out of the corner and stomping him down in the corner. Slater is sent to the floor for a Bo Train but Heath collapses, leaving the other two to take a flip dive from Woods. The Midnight Hour puts Slater away at 2:00.

Slater takes the cake post match.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Cesaro vs. The Miz

Non-title. Before the match, Miz and Maryse celebrate their win and promise to win the briefcase again, setting up Miz's biopic. Cesaro starts fast with the uppercuts in the corner for two before diving over the top to take Miz out again. He even tells Maryse to talk to the hand, taking us back to about 1997.

Back in and Cesaro gets two more off a delayed suplex to send Miz outside as we take a break. We come back with Miz hitting the Reality Check but charging into the uppercut. The Swing doesn't work because of the shoulder but Miz can't hit the Skull Crushing Finale. Instead it's another uppercut and the Neutralizer for the pin on Miz (of course) at 11:24.

Rating: C+. Yo Miz! Thanks for stealing the show last night. Here's a clean loss to the guy that made you tap out last night. I'm getting to the point where I can't even complain about these losses anymore. They're just a fact of life in WWE and nothing is going to change that because WWE doesn't know any better.

We recap the opening segment.

Rollins talks about how Money in the Bank is his thing when Stephanie comes in. Rollins is all nice to her but she says things have changed around here.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Chris Jericho vs. Apollo Crews

Crews seems just fine after the beatdown earlier tonight while Jericho's back is covered in bandages from the thumbtacks. Jericho throws a t-shirt in Crews' face to start and hammers away, only to have Crews just hit him in the bandages because Crews has an IQ above butter. Jericho's dropkick and chinlock don't do much as Apollo elbows him in the jaw and avoids the dropkick out of the corner to send Jericho outside.

There's a moonsault from the apron (mostly missed) to drop Jericho again but Jericho counters the toss powerbomb into the Walls. A rope is grabbed and Crews tries to nip up, only to have Jericho Lionsault onto him for two. Another Walls attempt is countered into a small package, only to have the Codebreaker puts Apollo away at 7:46.

Rating: C+. I'm so glad they brought Crews up for this spot. It's not like they have a small army of people who can take this loss and not lose a thing as a result. The match was fine, even though Crews didn't sell a thing from the beatdown earlier. He can't even hold his back or something? Jericho going to the ladder match is fine but Crews is already looking like another failed call up.

Sheamus laughs at the result.

Life Lesson with Bob Backlund from Smackdown.

Baron Corbin beat Dolph Ziggler last night because he can. This brings in Ziggler, to say Corbin can't beat him in a straight match. Corbin agrees

but doesn't want to see Zigler again after. Zigler promises to steal the show tonight.

Here's Big Cass, who points to the entrance for the returning Enzo Amore. Enzo is VERY fired up to be back and talks about how he's back because if he had a dime for every time he got knocked down and didn't get back up, he would have ZERO DIMES. Cass is ready to kick Bubba Ray Dudley in the head and send him into a pool like a basketball.

Big Cass vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Feeling out process to start until D-Von goes after Enzo, allowing Bubba to get in a belly to back suplex. He spends too much time shouting though, allowing Cass to take over with a clothesline. A Stinger Splash has Bubba in trouble and we keep up the Sting treatment with Cass slamming him off the top. Cass' big boot and the empire Elbow put Bubba away at 3:11.

Rating: D. Now this is the kind of thing they need to be doing. Enzo is fine as the guy that gets in trouble so Cass can come in and clean house later on. Enzo can be in a match here or there and that's fine, but the last few weeks have shown that Cass is the real star of the team and the guy who could get one heck of a push.

Here are Charlotte, Ric Flair and Dana Brooke to talk about their win last night. Ric...oh my goodness he is BOMBED. Anyway, Ric talks about how Charlotte has earned her way to the top and been amazing at everything she's done. As for Dana, she doesn't exist without Charlotte, which Dana seems to agree with. Charlotte talks about how her dad was never there for her on Christmas and birthdays because Flair was off being the man. Now Charlotte gets it though because now she's the woman.

That power makes her be able to say it to him: get out of her ring. Charlotte goes on a rant about how she doesn't need her dad anymore and how she's going to be better than the sixteen time World Champion has ever been. She's tired of having everyone look at her and ask how Ric is doing so now he is dead to her. Charlotte doesn't want to talk and tells Ric to get out because he can watch her on TV like she did with him for thirty years. Ric leaves in tears while Charlotte and Dana pose.

Charlotte still needs practice talking but this worked exactly as it was supposed to.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler headlocks him to the mat to start but Dean slams him with ease and throws Dolph out to the floor. The dive doesn't get to launch as Ziggler steps to the side as we take a break. Back with Ziggler getting butterfly superplexed for two but missing a dive. Dean's top rope elbow is countered into a rollup for two, followed by the Fameasser for the same.

Both guys try cross bodies at the same time and we get a quick breather. Dean gets superkicked to little effect as he bounces off the ropes with the rebound lariat for two. Ambrose goes for the elbow again but gets dropkicked out of the air this time. The Zig Zag is countered though and Dirty Deeds sends Dean to the ladder match at 12:09.

Rating: B-. Dean winning a bunch of matches in a row is the way to help him get over the Lesnar loss, as well as keep him from looking like such a big loser in general. Ziggler losing is fine and I'm glad it was clean, though I would have been fine with Corbin interfering to cost him the match.

Ric is leaving and even Arn Anderson can't make him feel better. Renee Young asks if he has anything to say but Ric gives a very sad forced smile and leaves. That was one of the best scenes I've seen in wrestling in a long time. Ric genuinely looked devastated and had nothing to say. It was quiet, it was emotional and it felt real.

The Shining Stars want us to visit Puerto Rico.

Here's AJ Styles with something to say before his match. AJ talks about how he would have been WWE Champion if not for Anderson and Gallows. This brings the big balds to the ring, where they question what he just said. AJ didn't bring these guys to the WWE to take out everyone in his way but the way they see it, if this was in Japan, Styles would have been buying them a round of drinks after what happened last night.

AJ thinks it's time for them to go their separate ways but Anderson and Gallows suggest that AJ never would have made it out of Japan (or a bunch of bar fights for that matter) without them. Styles says they're still brothers and friends but not on the same team. Gallows says no way because they're not even friends anymore. That seems to be fine with AJ as the two of them leave.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

They slug it out to start until Owens grabs a headlock ("HEADLOCK MASTER!"), only to eat a good dropkick for two. Owens gets in a dropkick of his own but AJ bails to the apron. AJ is pulled face first into the apron with Owens heading back inside but rolling under the ropes instead of diving over the top like he was teasing. As usual he's the best troll in wrestling.

Back from a break with AJ fighting out of a sleeper and hammering away on the floor. They slug it out inside with AJ getting the better of it, only to be pulled off the ropes and sent into the corner with a German suplex. The Cannonball is followed by Owens telling Cole to shut up but AJ gets in a jumping enziguri. That's fine with Owens who comes back with his brainbuster onto the knee for two but misses the moonsault.

AJ sends him outside and knees him in the jaw, only to eat the Pop Up Powerbomb onto the steps. Somehow AJ beats the count back in (that's a bit much) and gets in a quick Pele. He really shouldn't be up that fast after a finisher onto the steps but finishers haven't meant anything in WWE in forever. The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up though and the Pop Up Powerbomb gives Owens the pin at 16:20.

Rating: B. That was quite the surprise as I was thinking they might go to a double countout to send both guys in instead. Owens certainly deserves the spot and I would LOVE to see what he could do as a Mr. Money in the Bank. Good match here, but would you have expected anything else from these two?

Overall Rating: B-. This was a wrestling focused episode that actually moved some stuff forward. It's always a nice sign and a good idea to have a fresh set of stories that give fans things they've been wanting, save

for ANYONE else as the top face of course. I was really liking Charlotte turning on Ric as it's long overdue and also a well done segment. The show being all about wrestling helped a lot though, as did the extreme lack of McMahons. It was about moving things forward and the show went by quickly as a result. Good stuff here and I'm glad they went this way for a change.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Sheamus – Helluva Kick

New Day b. Social Outcasts – Midnight Hour to Slater

Cesaro b. The Miz – Neutralizer

Chris Jericho b. Apollo Crews – Codebreaker

Big Cass b. Bubba Ray Dudley – Empire Elbow

Dean Ambrose b. Dolph Ziggler – Dirty Deeds

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Payback 2016: The Booking Anchor

Payback 2016

Date: May 1, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're off to the first pay per view after Wrestlemania and things are kind of on a roll around here. The main event is Roman Reigns defending the WWE World Title against AJ Styles with the question of whether or not Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows will be interfering on AJ's behalf. Other than that we find out who will be in control of Monday Night Raw going forward between the Authority and Shane McMahon. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

This was bumped from the main card earlier today. Corbin tosses him around to start and gets two off a hard right hand. Ziggler's comeback is easily cut off with a modified hot shot as Corbin keeps casually walking around. A heavy clothesline sets up the chinlock to keep Corbin on Ziggler's neck.

Ziggler gets out and grabs a sleeper for a bit, followed by a Fameasser for two. They head outside with Ziggler loading up a dive but getting kicked out of the air. Corbin loads up a powerbomb but it's the old Big Show Alley Oop to send Ziggler face first into the post for a good looking crash. For some reason Baron takes way too much time getting back in, allowing Ziggler to roll Corbin up for the pin at 7:43.

Rating: C-. The match was a nicely done big man beatdown for the most part and then they do THAT ending? I don't know how to make this any clearer to WWE but Dolph Ziggler isn't going anywhere and it's long past due to stop giving him wins like this. Corbin could be something on the main roster but now he's losing his first major match less than a month after debuting. I'm sure it's a surprise though and that's what WWE must be going for, along with annoying the NXT fans who think they understand

wrestling.

Pre-Show: US Title: Kalisto vs. Ryback

Kalisto is defending after Ryback beat him in a non-title match a few weeks back on Smackdown. The crowd is really not pleased to see Ryback here and bust out the tried and true GOLDBERG chants. Ryback blasts him with a right hand to start (that sounds so familiar) but Kalisto gets in a monkey flip to send Ryback outside.

A suicide dive sets up a springboard corkscrew plancha with Ryback barely getting underneath him in time to keep Kalisto from bouncing off the apron. Back in and a tornado DDT is countered into a suplex for two as we take a break. We come back to see Ryback sending him shoulder first into the post, only to grab a spinning DDT to put both guys down.

They head to the apron with Kalisto hitting a nice enziguri and another DDT to send Ryback onto the apron (Mauro: "MAMA MIA!"). Ryback comes up holding his shoulder but Kalisto goes with a spinning kick to the face and the hurricanrana driver for two. The Salida Del Sol is countered into a Shell Shock attempt but Kalisto flips out of that as well, only to eat a spinebuster for two. Ryback goes up for some reason but gets kicked in the head again to slow him down. Kalisto goes up as well and is promptly gorilla pressed face first onto the mat. The top rope splash misses though and the Salida Del Sol retains the title at 9:28.

Rating: B. That was an AWESOME match with both guys working very hard throughout. Now the problem here is WHAT WERE THEY THINKING??? Kalisto is another name on a long list of lame duck champions who never get to do anything with the title because they either never defend the thing or lose their non-title matches. At the same time, Ryback continues to flounder in his latest heel run because WWE keeps cutting his legs off in matches like this. Still though, awesome match and one of the best pre-show matches they've ever done.

The opening video is Bray Wyatt talking about how payback is the first thing we think of every day and how much it consumes all of us. This must have been made weeks ago.

Here's the New Day to open things up. They'll be down at ringside watching and sipping on some lemonade like Becky with the good hair. Woods offers his services to help Beyonce get back at Jay-Z for cheating on her and Big E. hits the catchphrases.

Now we get a normal opening video with the standard highlight packages on the big stuff.

Tag Team Tournament Finals: Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Vaudevillains

The winners get a title shot at some point in the future. Enzo: "If my aunt had hair on her back, she'd be my uncle." The Vaudevillains need to get in their DeLorean and go back to the future and Cass thinks they're posing like Hey Arnold. Cass: "You never should have gotten off the stoop!" After saying they never should have left their stoop (another Hey Arnold reference), Cass calls the SAWFT to get us going.

Enzo and Gotch start things off with Simon working on the arm before it's off to the partners. The tag to Cass is treated as a big deal but everything breaks down with Cass throwing Enzo at both guys. Enzo gets sent hard out to the floor with his head hitting the bottom rope in an ugly crash. He isn't moving and a stretcher is brought out as the match is called off at about four minutes. I won't be rating this due to the time and the injury but it was fine while it lasted.

The announcers talk for a good while with the camera only showing Enzo for a few moments at a time.

Long video on Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens, the same one that aired on Raw and Smackdown.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

They slug it out immediately and Kevin is sent outside for a big flip dive. JBL starts talking about a tiger attacking Roy of Siegfried and Roy, including ripping off Chris Rock's line of "that tiger went tiger." Back in and Owens gets in a hard shot before dropping Sami face first onto the apron. Zayn is sent hard into the steps as Cole tells us that Enzo is talking and moving his extremities. That's such a relief.

Back in and Owens poses a lot while asking why Sami isn't getting payback yet. A chinlock slows things down and it's Sami slugging away with forearms. The hard clothesline puts Kevin down but Sami can't follow up. Referee: "YOU GUYS GOOD?" Owens: "Shut up!" Sami hammers away in the corner before a Michinoku Driver (called the Blue Thunder Bomb by Cole) gets two.

The real Blue Thunder Bomb gets two more and Owens' brainbuster onto the knee gets the same. Kevin drops a frog splash and a couple of Cannonballs (JBL: "He may roll a perfect game!") but the Pop Up powerbomb is countered with a dropkick. The half and half suplex sends Kevin flying but he pops up and clotheslines Sami inside out. Another powerbomb is countered into a rollup as you can feel the chemistry here. These two just know each other so well and there's nothing that can replace that.

Sami's tornado DDT is countered into a backbreaker and Kevin's face turns evil. A third powerbomb, this time onto the apron, is countered again with a backdrop to send Kevin spine first onto the apron and then the floor. The diving tornado DDT plants Kevin again but Kevin superkicks his head off and finally gets the powerbomb for the pin at 14:28.

Rating: A-. I was really feeling this one as both guys beat the tar out of each other for a long time and told an awesome story of knowing each other so well. I would have had Sami go over here but you really can't go wrong with either guy winning. Both of them will be fine and Sami is the one who can lose most of his matches and be fine at the end.

Post match Kevin beats him up some more and demands that Byron bring him a mic. Kevin: "Ask me about beating Sami Zayn right now!" Byron, who is taller than Owens, asks if the rivalry is over. Owens: "THAT'S NOT WHAT I TOLD YOU TO SAY!" Kevin says he finally proved that he's the better man between the two of them and now he can refocus on getting back his Intercontinental Title. Byron asks if Kevin thinks Miz will retain the title, which Kevin takes as an invitation to do commentary on the next match.

Intercontinental Title: Cesaro vs. The Miz

Miz is defending and there isn't much of a story here other than Cesaro

wants the title. Miz goes for the shoulder to start but Cesaro shoves him away and shakes a finger at him. The delayed vertical suplex gets two (Owens: "He can keep him up for awhile but he can't keep him down for three.") followed by a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for the same.

Miz gets in a shot on the arm and cranks away on the shoulder as Owens is asked who he would rather face for the title. Owens: "I would rather face you but that's not going to happen." Back up and Miz poses a bit before hitting the sleeper. Cesaro gets caught in a bodyscissors but casually picks Miz up and throws him off for the break.

We hit the uppercuts with Owens saying he never wants to take another one of those. Cole: "Well if Cesaro wins you'll have to..." Owens: "COLE STOP TELLING ME WHAT I'LL HAVE TO DO!" A running dropkick gets two on Miz as Owens calls Miz Mike by mistake. Byron interprets this as Owens cheering for his friend. Owens: "Byron go call your mom or something because no one else wants to listen to you."

The spinning uppercut sets up Swiss Death for a very close two but Cesaro goes shoulder first into the post. Miz gets the Finale for two but here's Sami Zayn to go after Owens and fight him into the crowd. Cesaro swings Miz for a long time and puts on a Crossface but Owens and Zayn get on the apron to distract the referee as Miz taps. The distraction lets Miz roll Cesaro up for the pin at 10:26.

Rating: C+. DANG IT WWE STOP DOING STUPID THINGS! This should have been the biggest layup on the card but instead they'll keep the title on Miz because we haven't waited long enough to give Cesaro a major win. This is up there with the League of Nations beating New Day at Wrestlemania on the scale of stupid booking decisions. I'm a big Miz fan but they should have changed the title here and moved on to Owens vs. Cesaro vs. Zayn. On a more positive note, this was some of the funniest commentary I've ever heard as Owens is one of the best jerk heels in years.

Owens and Zayn keep fighting and Sami takes another Pop Up Powerbomb. Maryse has to save Miz from a powerbomb of his own.

We recap Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho which started when Ambrose took over the Highlight Reel and turned it into the Ambrose Asylum. Jericho

doesn't like the idea of someone upstaging him and the match was set up as a result.

Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose

Jericho bails to the floor to start so Dean chases him back inside and hits an early cross body. Chris crawls over to the referee for protection before dropping Dean ribs first across the top rope. We hit the chinlock on Dean for a bit but Jericho's bulldog is countered with a shove into the corner. Byron talks about both guys' documented careers, prompting JBL to say that it's documented because he and Cole have talked about him. Your lesson for this match: JBL needs to let Kevin Owens do the heel commentary.

Dean gets two off a bulldog of his own but the top rope elbow is countered into the Walls. A rope is eventually grabbed and Jericho is sent to the floor for the suicide dive. They head to the announcers' table with Jericho trying the Walls but settling for a catapult over the barricade for a big crash. As expected, Dean dives back in at nine before escaping the Codebreaker.

The rebound lariat puts both guys down for a breather. Now the top rope elbow gets two but Jericho grabs the Walls again, only to have Dean make the ropes again. The enziguri and butterfly backbreaker get two each for Chris but Dean gets the knees up to block the Lionsault. An awkward sequence (with Jericho laying on Dean's knees) sets up Dirty Deeds for the pin on Chris at 18:18.

Rating: C. It really is amazing how much damage that loss to Lesnar did to Ambrose as I just do not care about him anymore. This match went on for a LONG time and didn't go anywhere other than two people doing moves (and missing a lot of them) for the better part of twenty minutes. Dean winning is the right call, even if it makes Jericho going over AJ last month all the more confusing.

Jericho throws a fit post match.

Sasha Banks is talking to Shane McMahon.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Natalya

Charlotte is defending and has Ric Flair in her corner while Natalya has her uncle Bret Hart in hers. Charlotte W00s at her to start but Natalya grabs the Sharpshooter. That's flipped away so Natalya nips up to scare the champ a bit. Another takedown sets up a leg lock for a bit before Charlotte bails to the floor. A chase results in Natalya getting kicked on the way back in but the fans would rather have Sasha.

They trade some chops until Natalya sends her flying with a release German suplex. Charlotte starts in on the leg ("Hey Bret, you want to learn something?") but takes too much time bragging and gets caught in an armbar. Natalya shoves her off the top for a big crash, allowing Flair to tell some fans to keep their mouths shut. Charlotte loads up a powerbomb onto the apron but Natalya counters into something resembling a hurricanrana on the floor.

Back in and a boot to the face stops Natalya's discus lariat, only to have a slap (yes a slap) break up the Figure Eight. A quick Natural Selection gets two for the champ, followed by that great looking moonsault for the same. The Figure Four is put on but quickly reversed so Charlotte puts on Natalya....AND IT'S FREAKING MONTREAL with Charles Robinson (a noted Flair megafan) ringing the bell without Natalya tapping to retain the title at 13:04.

Rating: C+. MONTREAL. It's been nearly twenty years and they're STILL doing that thing again? Would it freaking kill them to just put Sasha in the title hunt instead of giving us Natalya vs. Charlotte IV or whatever it's going to be at Extreme Rules? Bret did absolutely nothing here and the whole thing feels like a huge waste of time and effort.

Bret and Natalya put on matching Sharpshooters post match. I'm so glad Natalya got over that loss in all of 14 seconds.

Here's Vince for his decision on the control of Raw but the fans cut him off with a CM PUNK chant. Vince talks about how amazing Raw is but gets cut off again, prompting him to ask how long it can go. Vince: "COME ON! YOU'VE GOT MORE THAN THAT!" He talks about all the different eras Raw has gone through and thinks it's time for a new visionary. Vince brings out

Stephanie to even more booing.

The fans are pleased with the idea of Reigns spearing Stephanie at Wrestlemania but she doesn't want their support or sympathy. Stephanie brags about her success, including the debut of the Shield and the Divas Revolution. Their biggest success was the launch of the WWE Network which went from an idea to 1.8 million subscribers. That brings her to Shane, whose only qualification to run Raw is being a man. After the better part of five minutes, Stephanie brings up Shane blackmailing Vince to get back into the company after leaving for seven years. Cue Shane to break up the BORING chants.

Shane shows a bunch of media clips about how he's made wrestling cool again. That brings him back to the WWE Network comment, which was Vince's idea. Of those 1.8 million subscribers, we've got about 18,000 of them in the house tonight. Oddly enough, a lot of those people came on board around Wrestlemania XXXII, which was probably due to one match in particular. Fans: "YOU STILL GOT IT!" Stephanie: "Thank you, yes I do!"

Shane brings up the departure in 2007 and says it was due to his voice being ignored. In the void he left, the Authority took over and promptly ran the company into the ground. Shane came back to save the company's future for all of the future McMahon generations. The fans are entirely behind Shane of course but Vince says Shane shouldn't be here after the loss to Undertaker.

Then Shane came out the night after Wrestlemania and was handed Raw because he would fall on his face. However, Vince didn't think Shane failed that badly but he doesn't listen to these people. Vince wants to see them slit each others' throats and disembowel each other....so they'll both be running the show together. Shane and Stephanie shake hands before leaving.

Pre-show recap.

We recap the World Title match. Reigns won the title at Wrestlemania and AJ became #1 contender the next night at Raw. The twist has been the debut of Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows, AJ's former partners in the Bullet Club in New Japan, who attacked Reigns multiple times. AJ has

denied being behind it but Reigns doesn't buy it.

Enzo has been diagnosed with a concussion but all other tests have come back negative.

WWE World Title: AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending. AJ cranks on a headlock to start but is easily shoved away. Styles starts kicking at the legs but it's still a standoff in the early going. They do a quick chase around ringside and AJ gets in a few kicks to briefly take over. A hard clothesline turns AJ inside out and a big old sitout powerbomb gets two. The Superman punch is countered with a quick enziguri (cool visual there) and AJ's strike rush sets up the low forearm for two on the champ.

AJ elbows out of a Samoan drop and gets the Calf Crusher, sending Roman crawling to the ropes. Reigns bails to the floor and eats a GREAT looking Phenomenal Forearm to send both guys through the table in a big crash. AJ tries to throw Reigns back in but it's a countout win for Styles...until Shane comes out to make this match no countouts. Ignore the fact that he runs RAW and not pay per views of course.

They get back in with AJ not being able to hit anything off the top. Another strike rush sets up a 450 but Reigns gets the knees up for two. AJ is up first but dives into a right hand below the belt for a DQ. As you might expect, here's Stephanie to say not so fast because we're restarting it with no disqualifications. Oh yeah it's going to be all about the McMahons.

Reigns takes him outside and sends AJ into the steps before kicking him over the barricade and into the crowd. Thankfully Reigns doesn't follow him to avoid being murdered. AJ kicks him again and they head back inside, only to have another Phenomenal Forearm countered with a Superman punch. Again, that looked GREAT. A second Superman punch drops AJ but here are Gallows and Anderson to go after Roman.

The champ is beaten down and another Phenomenal Forearm gets two with Reigns putting his foot on the ropes. Cue the Usos to go after Anderson and Gallows but Reigns shoves AJ onto all four of them to break up the

fight. Now Reigns does his own big dive to take out the pile so AJ throws him inside for a springboard 450 (Not a shooting star Cole. Come on now that's not even close.) and another near fall. Another Forearm misses and the spear puts AJ down at 24:58.

Rating: A. Oh yeah this was awesome with Reigns being the perfect foil for someone like AJ and his high flying offense. It's clear that we're getting a big gimmick rematch in three weeks at Extreme Rules but at least the first match was excellent stuff. Shane and Stephanie interfering was really annoying but that's exactly what you have to expect going forward because they're like interesting or something. Great match here though and better than I was expecting.

Reigns poses until we cut to the back where Shane and Stephanie make AJ vs. Reigns II in an Extreme Rules match for the title. Shane supports Stephanie's decision to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Well that was....something indeed. There was a lot of good action but the booking decisions (Miz and Montreal) really brought things down. AJ vs. Reigns and Owens vs. Zayn were both excellent but my goodness the McMahon drama feels like something that is going to go on for the better part of ever. I had a good enough time watching it though and the wrestling in the two big matches really brought things up. Find a way to fix the booking (read as STOP DOING STUPID THINGS) and this show goes through the roof.

Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Vaudevillains went to a no contest when Amore was injured

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

Miz b. Cesaro – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Dean Ambrose b. Chris Jericho – Dirty Deeds

Charlotte b. Natalya – Sharpshooter

Roman Reigns b. AJ Styles – Spear

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Enzo Amore Injured At Payback (Updated)

He was being sent outside and went neck first into the middle rope, causing his head to slam into the mat/apron. The match was almost immediately stopped and Enzo was taken out on a stretcher. This clearly wasn't storyline and looked very bad. The camera wasn't on him so no word on if his limbs were working or not.

Update: Cole says Enzo is talking and moving his extremities. That's such a huge relief.