

Elimination Chamber 2018 (2025 Edition): Get Me Out Of Here

Elimination Chamber 2018

Date: February 25, 2018

Location: T-Mobile Arena, Paradise, Nevada

Attendance: 15,126

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Jonathan Coachman

We're on the way to Wrestlemania XXXIV and that means we need to crown Roman Reigns as the #1 contender all over again. Brock Lesnar is waiting for the winner at Wrestlemania and you know how much WWE loves that match. Other than that, the Raw Women's Title is also on the line in the Elimination Chamber. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Gallows And Anderson vs. Miztourage

For those of you who have forgotten, that would be Curtis Axel/Bo Dallas. Axel grabs a headlock and then a front facelock on Anderson to start. Some right hands keep Anderson in trouble so it's off to Gallows, who dubs Axel a nerd and hammers away. It's back to Anderson, who gets punched by Dallas a few times to take over again. Anderson gets in his HI YAH kick but misses a blind tag, meaning he gets shoved off the top as we take a break.

Back with Anderson still in trouble with the Tourage taking turns pounding away in the corner. A belly to back suplex gets Anderson out of trouble though and it's...not enough to bring Gallows back in. The running boot to the face is though, with Gallows getting to clean house. It's already back to Anderson, who gets taken down, but manages to send Dallas into the ropes to crotch Axel on top. The Magic Killer finishes Axel at 8:50.

Rating: C. It was a total run of the mill match, but this is what I want in a Kickoff Show match. They got in, had one match, and then got out before they overstayed their welcome. Yeah it could have been on any given house show, but that also means you're just kind of warming the fans up rather than giving them some big match. Perfectly fine match, though it does show why the tag division isn't exactly memorable around this time.

The opening video looks at this show being one of the last major stops on the way to Wrestlemania, with the winners getting a guaranteed spot on the show. Normally I would mock the idea of wrestlers having no path to Wrestlemania, but that was exactly what they would wind up doing with John Cena this year.

We recap the Women's Elimination Chamber, which was announced by Stephanie McMahon (of course) as the next big thing the women are getting to do for the first time. There is also tension between Bayley and Sasha Banks, who are both in the match anyway. Mandy Rose and Sonya Deville are friends too, but they're on a bit better page.

Raw Women's Title: Women's Elimination Chamber

Alexa Bliss is defending and this is the first ever women's edition of the match. Sonya Deville is in at #1 and Bayley is in at #2 to get things going with five minute intervals. Deville wrestles her to the mat without much trouble to start as Bayley isn't quite on that level. Bayley gets smart by sending her into the buckles instead, even throwing in a glare at Bliss.

Deville gets in a shot of her own though and catapults Bayley into the Chamber wall, which Bayley manages to grab in a cool counter. Back in and Bayley misses an elbow and things get to reset a little bit. Bayley knocks her onto the floor for the big elbow and two before grabbing the chinlock.

Mandy Rose is in at #3 so Bayley goes after her, even managing to knock Deville back as well. The numbers game starts to get the better of Bayley though and Deville spears her down before a double ram into the wall gets two. Rose drops her for two more and Deville has to yell at the referee. Bayley gets sent into the cage again and it's Sasha Banks in at #4 to give us something of a tag match.

Banks starts fast by sending Rose into the pod over and over but Deville is back up. Deville drops Banks for two and is the only one left standing as Bliss is looking nervous in her pod. Bayley and Banks are back up to send Deville into various hard things but Rose drops Banks to even things up again. A faceplant drops Banks but for some reason Rose doesn't cover, allowing Banks to pull her into the Bank Statement for the elimination at 13:53.

Mickie James is in at #5 and cleans house, including a double clothesline to Bayley and Banks. Bayley gets dropped with a neckbreaker and then flapjacks Banks into a nipup. A hurricanrana takes Deville down on the outside and a heck of a kick to the face drops Banks. For some reason James climbs the cage and, after kicking Bayley down, hits a super Thesz press from the top of the pod to pin Deville at 17:34.

Banks is right back up with a Backstabber into the Bayley To Belly to plant James though and we're down to three at 17:59. Bliss panics in her pod as Bayley and Banks are fine with sitting around waiting for Bliss to come in. Bliss is in at #6 to complete the field so she tries to hide in the pod, then climbs up the Chamber wall. The other two go after her and all three wind up on top of a pod...where Banks kicks Bayley down (and the fans approve). Bliss tries to beg off from Banks, who is jumped by Bayley, allowing Bliss to jump Bayley for a change.

Bayley fights up with a suplex but gets tackled into the

corner by Banks in short order. Banks gets tied in the Tree Of Woe so Bayley can stomp away, only to get superplexed by Bliss. A frog splash to Bayley gives Banks two and everyone is down again. Back up and Banks sends Bayley into the buckle but takes too long, allowing Bayley to hit a super Bayley To Belly as there are way too many B's in this match. Bliss (See what I mean?) takes care of that by rolling Bayley up for the elimination at 25:32 and we're down to two.

Bliss takes her time getting up and Twisted Bliss hits raised knees. Banks misses a running boot though and gets her leg caught in the wall, allowing Bliss to take her down again. That's not enough for Bliss, who goes up for Twisted Bliss from the top of the pod to the floor. The falls only count inside though and Banks is able to get a quick Bank Statement. That's broken up so Banks starts to climb, only to be sent into the pod. A top rope hanging DDT retains Bliss' title at 29:37.

Rating: B-. It took some time to get going but the three two person teams (James and Bliss were close enough) were a nice way to tie things together. Bliss surviving over both Banks and Bayley is believable with the two of them fighting, but she felt like she escaped rather than surviving. It's good enough, even if it never quite got into that next level. For a first edition though, it worked.

Post match Bliss can't believe she won and says the win means everything to her. She says this is about every girl and woman in the audience who ever dreamed big. This proves you can be whatever you want to be so dare to dream and dream big. She's looking out at the people and the reality is...none of them will ever accomplish their dreams. Tonight, she proved that no one is better than her and she just won, despite no one believing in her. Bliss was laying it on thick and it felt like the turn was coming, though it still

worked.

Braun Strowman is waiting to get inside the Chamber. Oh geez I had forgotten about the “wrestlers use their own phones for promos” period.

Raw Tag Team Titles: Titus Worldwide vs. The Bar

Titus Worldwide (Titus O’Neil and Apollo (hold the Crews) with Dana Brooke) is challenging after beating the Bar in a non-title match. The Bar jumps them before the bell but get clotheslined for their efforts. Apollo hits a big dive to the floor (thankfully not injuring himself on Sheamus’ mohawk as he’s in his Taxi Driver phase) and the match officially starts. Cesaro seems to be favoring his leg as Apollo hits a top rope splash for two. Back up and Apollo gets sent outside and we settle down a bit.

Cesaro grabs the chinlock before handing it back to Sheamus for an armbar. That’s broken up so Cesaro grabs a front facelock, which is broken up as well. Sheamus is right there to cut off the tag again though and the armbar goes on again (he’s nothing if not consistent). Cesaro grabs another chinlock, which is broken up, but Sheamus is right there to break up another tag attempt.

Sheamus cheap shots O’Neil off the apron but misses a charge into the post, allowing the diving tag off to O’Neil. Some big boots give O’Neil two but Cesaro leapfrogs him for a blind tag to Sheamus. That doesn’t work either as O’Neil pulls Sheamus out of the air for Clash Of The Titus. Apollo hits a dive onto the champs and a high crossbody gets two on Sheamus. Cesaro takes out Apollo’s knee though and it’s a White Noise/springboard spinning uppercut combination to retain the titles at 10:04.

Rating: C. This was little more than an extended Raw match as Titus Worldwide didn’t feel like the most serious challengers. They were a fun enough team, but that’s not enough to beat the rather serious Bar. The match was fine,

but I'm not sure how much drama there was about a title change.

We recap Asuka vs. Nia Jax. Asuka is going to Wrestlemania after winning the Royal Rumble but Jax is going after her. If Jax wins, she's added to the Wrestlemania title match.

Jax crushes an Asuka match in the back.

We look at Asuka's undefeated streak, which is now in danger. This gets a rather good deal of time, breaking down the streak in a Rumble By The Numbers style.

Nia Jax vs. Asuka

There is still something creepy about Asuka's match showing up on the Titantron at the start of her entrance. Asuka starts fast with a dropkick but gets dropped with a single headbutt. As tends to be her custom, Asuka is right back up to go after her again, only to be knocked down again. A knee to the back cuts Asuka down again and a backbreaker has her in more trouble. The running elbow gets a delayed two and Jax shrugs off a kneebar attempt. Asuka comes back with a quick guillotine, which is muscled up into a Jackhammer for another power counter.

Back up and Asuka fires off some kicks, only to get countered into the Samoan drop as this is one sided so far. The big legdrop misses though and a sliding kick gives Asuka two. Some more strikes put Jax on her knee, where she screams, only to be shut up by a running kick to the face. Jax catches her on top but Asuka grabs a sunset bomb for a huge crash. A missed charge sends Jax's shoulder into the post and we hit the cross armbreaker. That's broken up with a powerbomb into the corner as the fans are getting more into this. Jax picks her up for a powerbomb but Asuka reverses into a victory roll for the pin at 8:11.

Rating: B-. This was a good example of telling a story in a match as Asuka wasn't getting anywhere with her usual

stuff. She was up against a different kind of opponent and had to find openings where she could win. I liked the match a lot more than I was expecting to and that's always nice to see.

Post match Jax beats up Asuka again, including a spear through the barricade.

Alexa Bliss is happy with what just happened to Asuka. No one is ready for Alexa.

Asuka is helped out. It feels like there is a lot of time filler on this show.

Roman Reigns (mixed reaction) is asked about some recent comments. Reigns: "Do I look like the kind of guy who cares what Paul Heyman has to say?" He's not worried about Brock Lesnar, but tonight he's winning the Elimination Chamber and going to Wrestlemania to take Lesnar out.

We recap Bray Wyatt vs. Matt Hardy. Wyatt beat Hardy, who became Broken/Woken and started talking about various weird things, as they both tended to do. This gives us creepy Wyatt vs. Broken Matt, which is as odd as you can get.

Bray Wyatt vs. Matt Hardy

Hardy makes his entrance, then the lights go out and Wyatt appears in the ring...but only Hardy's robe is left. We get a Hardy voiceover promising to make Wyatt obsolete, with Hardy singing some of Jeff Hardy's Obsolete song. Wyatt goes looking for Hardy, who appears on the steps and the fight is on, including the opening bell.

Hardy wastes no time in knocking him down but Wyatt does his upside down lean in the corner. That earns Wyatt some applause, with the fans joining in. A DDT drops Hardy for two but Wyatt is back up for the running crossbody. Wyatt knocks him down again and we hit the chinlock as commentary makes various jokes to mostly ignore the match. The fans are clearly distracted by something else as the chinlock

continues.

The hold is broken up and they head to the apron for a slugout, with Hardy being knocked out to the floor. Wyatt plants him again out there for two back inside and he's....I guess frustrated? Hardy gets a boot up in the corner though and a tornado DDT drops Wyatt for two. The Side Effect connects for the same and the middle rope elbow to the back of the head staggers Wyatt again.

Wyatt is frustrated enough that he hits the release Rock Bottom into the backsplash for two of his own. The fans chant for Rusev as this match just keeps going, though Wyatt missing a middle rope backsplash brings them back to reality. Well as realistic as this is going to be. Sister Abigail is loaded up but Hardy reverses into the Twist Of Fate for the win at 9:56.

Rating: D. This was a great illustration of why the Broken/Woken stuff did not work in WWE. The appeal of this stuff in TNA was that everything was so low budget that it could be the focal point. Here though you have something as grand as the Elimination Chamber and bigger stars, which make this feel really low rent and, in short, stupid. The match wasn't very good either, making this quite the chore.

We recap Ronda Rousey debuting last month at the Royal Rumble in a pretty awesome moment. Well, minus all of the bad smiling and awkward sign pointing.

Various wrestlers talk about how tough and awesome Rousey really is.

Here is Raw General Manager Kurt Angle for Rousey's official contract signing, joined by Raw Commissioner (because each show needed TWO bosses) Stephanie McMahon and HHH. McMahon and HHH talk about how great Rousey is and how no one has been a bigger deal since Angle himself. Rousey comes out and looks more serious than in her debut, which is a nice upgrade.

Rousey says she can't believe she's here and talks about how much this means to her, only to have the fans' ROUSEY chants cut her off. She thanks Roddy Piper for being her inspiration and hopes she can make his family proud. HHH gets down to business and asks if Rousey wants any perks in her contract, but Rousey wants to be treated like anyone else. The only thing she wanted is an invite to Wrestlemania, but she'll also be having her first match at Wrestlemania.

Rousey is about to sign, but Angle says he's in awe of HHH and McMahon. They've been talking about Rousey for a long time now, because they wanted to manipulate and humiliate her after what she did to them at Wrestlemania 31. Angle: "Isn't that what you said Hunter? Three years in the making and now we own the b****?" HHH cuts that off in a hurry and tries to get Rousey back to her dreams while saying Angle has the flu.

With the guys gone, McMahon has Rousey almost ready to sign, but Angle pops up to say McMahon had been calling Rousey a has been. The death stare is back and so is HHH, who has to save his wife's life. McMahon leaves so Rousey puts HHH through the table, earning herself the big slap. Then...Rousey just lets her leave before signing. This was pretty long, but it set up the obvious mixed tag for Rousey's debut at Wrestlemania.

Commentary talks about what we just saw.

Fastlane rundown.

John Cena is worried about having no path to Wrestlemania, continuing one of the dumbest ideas in wrestling.

We recap the men's Elimination Chamber, which is all about getting to go to Wrestlemania and challenge Brock Lesnar. This year's edition has seven people, because a structure literally designed for six people has to be changed due to reasons of WWE being screwy. All of them want to win, but

there isn't much hiding that this is going to be Roman Reigns.

Men's Elimination Chamber

Before we get going, Elias has to promise that he's going to Wrestlemania, albeit in song form. The fans do seem to like the WALK WITH ELIAS deal and he's entering last for an advantage. The song is dedicated to himself, because Las Vegas doesn't get a song. The fans aren't appreciative so Elias threatens to go sit in his pod. Then he sings anyway, because that's what a heel would do.

Braun Strowman FINALLY interrupts as the entrances continue, along with the filler. After a good ten minutes of entrances, including Strowman scaring Miz from inside his pod in a funny bit, Miz Rollins is in at #1, Seth Rollins is in at #2 and Finn Balor is in at #3 to actually start this off (in a Wrestlemania preview) with five minute intervals.

Miz suggests an early alliance with Rollins to go after Balor and gets nowhere. Balor isn't interested in teaming up with Miz either, but he'll team up with Rollins to go after Miz in a funny bit. Miz is quickly thrown over the top and the alliance ends with Rollins grabbing a rollup for two. A dropkick cuts Rollins down and a basement version drops Miz again. Rollins kicks Balor down for two and it's off to an exchange of rollups for two each. Balor gets caught in a backbreaker and a springboard clothesline takes Miz down again. There's the Falcon Arrow for two on Miz, who landed hard on his shoulder.

Rollins hits a double Blockbuster for two each and it's John Cena in at #4, even sticking his tongue out at Rollins in a weird look. They stare each other down before the fight is on, with Cena beating up Rollins and Miz at the same time. Balor gets back up but it's Rollins knocking all of them into a corner for a string of running forearms.

Cena isn't having that and fireman's Rollins and Balor at the same time. Both of them escape the AA though and Miz neckbreaks Rollins for two. Cena and Rollins both hit superplexes and everyone is down, with Roman Reigns coming in at #5.

Reigns gets to hammer away a bit before getting in a showdown with Rollins. They're rammed into each other though and Miz DDTs Rollins for a fast two. Miz is the only one standing and he eventually starts firing off YES Kicks to all of the others before focusing on Reigns. This goes as well as you might have expected but the comeback is cut off by Balor. Reigns powerbombs him straight down and gets in a Samoan drop for two on Cena.

Braun Strowman is in at #6 and it's a staredown with Reigns, only for Strowman to go after everyone else. Rollins and Cena get suplexed at the same time before Strowman literally throws Balor around. Miz climbs the Chamber wall...and Strowman goes right after him for some rams into the wall. Then Miz is thrown onto a pile in the ring for quite the visual. Everyone is down and Strowman is waiting on Elias, the only person left to enter. The running powerslam gets rid of the Miz for our first elimination at 20:18.

Elias comes in at #7 to complete the field but realizes that Strowman is waiting on him. Everyone but Elias goes after Strowman and they get together for a Shield Bomb for two. The AA gets one, followed by the spear, Stomp and Coup de Grace but everyone (save for the podded Elias) brawls, leaving Strowman down instead. Elias comes in to cover everyone not named Strowman and then takes turns beating on most of the people. A top rope elbow gets two on Rollins and the spinning powerbomb hits Reigns for the same.

Strowman misses a charge into the post but Elias can't electric chair him up. That means the powerslam can get rid

of Elias at 25:52. Rollins knees Strowman down and Cena goes up, only to dive into a powerslam to give Strowman another elimination at 27:23. Strowman and Balor slug it out, with Balor getting some boots up in the corner. Balor is back up with a Coup de Graces to Reigns but Strowman powerslams Balor at 30:40.

We're down to three so Reigns and Rollins agree to team up against the monster, which doesn't get the reaction you might expect. Strowman gets low bridged out to the floor for a ram into the Chamber wall. Then Rollins, like a schnook, turns on Reigns with a Buckle Bomb but Reigns Superman Punches him down. Strowman is back up and chases Rollins up a pod but gets pulled down with Reigns' Samoan drop. Ever the slightly crazy man, Rollins drops a frog splash off the pod for two and Reigns gets back in. That's fine with Strowman, who dropkicks him to the floor and powerslams Rollins for the pin at 36:33.

We're down to two and Strowman invites Reigns to "COME GET THESE HANDS BOY!" Reigns gets shoved out to the floor but escapes a powerslam and sends him into the wall. The big dive over the top hits Strowman, but it doesn't look as good when they're at the same height. Strowman gets knocked through the pod but doesn't stay down long, allowing Reigns to hit a Superman Punch as the fans aren't pleased. Another Superman Punch sets up a blocked spear so Reigns hits a third Superman Punch. Two spears finish Strowman to send Reigns to Wrestlemania at 40:11.

Rating: B-. And there it is. Strowman gets to be this big dominant force in the Chamber and has the all time performance, which would be a clean sweep in any other Chamber, but instead, Reigns wins AGAIN. That was the problem for WWE at this point as it was ALL about Reigns. John Cena was in this match and was a complete afterthought, along with other multiple former World Champions. But it sets up Reigns for another Lesnar match

and that's all that matters.

Post match Strowman powerslams Reigns and sends him through a pod to end the show. Now in theory this would set up some kind of Reigns vs. Strowman showdown, but nah, as Strowman would spend a few weeks beating up Elias before going to Wrestlemania where he would pick a ten year old out of the crowd to win the Tag Team Titles. Which he would then forfeit. Then he would win Money In The Bank. And lose the cash-in when Lesnar interfered. Then he would lose to Lesnar for the vacant title. But at least he ALMOST got to beat Reigns here right?

Overall Rating: C-. I was kind of looking forward to seeing this show again as this period isn't the most fondly remembered. After a few years away, I was wondering if it really was as bad as remembered and...it's really just dull. There is nothing on here that is must see, with the two Chamber matches being the highlights. Even those matches were just ok, as Bliss keeps the title and Reigns gets to move on to his next destiny Wrestlemania main event. The rest of the show is completely skippable (save for MAYBE the contract signing) with nothing you need to see. I'm glad to be away from this era, as it lives down to its legacy.

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Monday Night Raw – January 16, 2017: The Champ Is Acting Like The Champ

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 16, 2017

Location: Verizon Arena, Little Rock, Arkansas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

We're less than two weeks away from the Royal Rumble and that means we're getting closer and closer to finding out a lot of things for Wrestlemania season. The big story this week is the first announcement for the Hall of Fame and then probably finding out some more names for the Royal Rumble. Let's get to it.

Martin Luther King Day video.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns to some of the loudest booing I've ever heard outside of a major city. Reigns can't complain about getting beaten down when he's outnumbered in a fight. He knows he lost the US Title but now he's off to get the Universal Title at the Royal Rumble. Just in case you needed more proof that the US Title meant nothing on Roman. This brings out Paul Heyman who is almost immediately cut off by the GOLDBERG chants. Heyman gives us a spoiler for the Rumble but here are Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho to interrupt.

Jericho loves the idea of the Royal Rumble because no matter who wins, they'll both wind up at Wrestlemania with both titles. Owens seems to agree but here's Seth Rollins to cut them off. That means more promises of winning before Braun Strowman comes and stares Reigns down.

Strowman doesn't say a word before Lesnar himself comes out. Sami Zayn runs in through the crowd and cleans house, including a Helluva Kick to put Braun outside. Brock throws everyone else down and is

left alone with Sami, meaning it's another German suplex for Zayn. Lesnar tells Braun to bring it on but Strowman drops to the floor, leaving Reigns to Superman Punch Brock. That earns him an F5 and Lesnar stands tall.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Rusev/Jinder Mahal

Enzo goes after Mahal to start but an elbow to the jaw takes him down. Mahal is sent outside and we take an early break. Back with Mahal dropping a knee on Enzo and Rusev grabbing a bearhug. Enzo slips out and the hot tag brings in Cass to clean house. Everything breaks down and the big boot to Mahal sets up the Bada Boom Shaka Laka for the pin at 8:35.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here as is so often the case with Enzo and Cass matches. We need to get to the Rusev vs. Cass match, assuming we're still getting it. Enzo being back in the ring really doesn't do much for me and I'd be glad to have him stay outside full time while Cass does the work.

Ariya Daivari vs. Lince Dorado

Jack Gallagher is on commentary. Feeling out process to start with Lince getting in some strikes and the springboard Stunner for two. Dorado completely misses a high crossbody and a wind up lariat (Rainmaker) sets up a cobra clutch to make Lince tap at 2:18.

We look back at Undertaker announcing that he would be in the Royal Rumble.

Video on the UK Title Tournament.

Earlier today, Nia Jax attacked Sasha Banks during a knee injury evaluation.

Tag Team Titles: Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Anderson and Gallows

Cesaro and Sheamus are defending as this feud just keeps going. Anderson starts with Cesaro but Sheamus makes a quick blind tag as his partner hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The champs start speeding things up until Cesaro misses a charge into the corner so Gallows can drop an elbow for two. It's off to an armbar on Cesaro's shoulder which has been taped up since he returned back in April. A

slingshot shoulder brings Sheamus back in as things pick up all over again.

Everything breaks down with Gallows kicking Sheamus off the apron as we take a break. Back with Cesaro coming in off the hot tag as everything breaks down. The spinning elbow gets two on Anderson and Gallows' boot to the face gets the same. Sheamus comes in and punches the referee by mistake, leaving no count off the Magic Killer. The fans think it's awesome as another referee comes in to count the pin at 13:00.

Rating: B. I liked the match but the story is just doing nothing for me. There's no reason for me to care about either of these teams and that makes for a really hard sit whenever these guys come out to the ring. It's just not interesting as there's no reason for them to be fighting other than "well, we don't really have any other options." I'm sure this sets up a Rumble rematch because that's what we're stuck with for a title feud.

And never mind as it's a Dusty Finish as the champs are disqualified and retain the titles.

We look back at the opening segment. Tonight it's a six man main tag with Reigns/Rollins/Zayn vs. Owens/Jericho/Strowman.

Tribute video to Jimmy Snuka.

Emmalina video.

Sami, Rollins and Reigns talk strategy. Zayn sticks his fist out for the Shield pose and the other two leave. Rollins' eyes were hilarious.

Tony Nese vs. Rich Swann

Non-title and a 205 Live rematch. And no match as Neville comes in through the crowd and attacks Swann.

Post break Neville yells at an interviewer for not having enough respect and promises to beat Swann for the title at the Rumble.

Here's New Day to talk about the Rumble. The royal rumblings say that it's going to be foe vs. foe but Big E. thinks that if one of

them wins the Rumble, they all win and go on to be in the main event of Wrestlemania. Cue Titus O'Neil and even the announcers are saying enough already. Titus thinks he could replace one of them and take their spot in the Rumble. That's a no of course so Titus will just take it instead. Big E. agrees to put his spot on the line if Titus agrees to leave New Day alone for good.

Titus O'Neil vs. Big E.

Joined in progress with Big E. putting on an abdominal stretch. Titus comes back with a Dominator to set up a chinlock followed by his own abdominal stretch. The spanking is enough to tick Big E. off and he runs Titus down with ease. The Warrior Splash sets up the Big Ending for the pin at 4:56.

Rating: F. Now NEVER LET TITUS NEAR THEM AGAIN! Move on to ANYTHING else!

Jim Duggan talks about winning the first Royal Rumble.

Here's Charlotte to discuss the winning strategy that has kept her undefeated on pay per view. By that she means laughing at the idea of Bayley beating her at the Royal Rumble. We see some pictures of Bayley as a kid meeting people like John Cena, Ivory, Rob Van Dam and Bret Hart from years ago.

Charlotte even has some poetry from what looks like middle school while Charlotte was training and getting scholarship offers. We even get a video of Bayley reading her essay on wanting to be a professional wrestler. Charlotte cuts the video and reads it herself until Bayley runs out to chase her off. Bayley calls this unnecessary so Charlotte says she's just like the average fan.

If Charlotte wants to bring up all these stories, Bayley has a story for her. She didn't have a father who could just make a phone call and get her into WWE. What she did have is a father who would spend everything he had to get her a ticket to every show in San Jose because that was all she ever wanted to do. Bayley even has a new poem for Charlotte: Roses are red, violets are blue, at Royal Rumble, I will defeat you.

Another look back at the opening sequence.

Strowman isn't interested in talking strategy with his partners tonight.

Cedric Alexander vs. Brian Kendrick

They start fast with Cedric knocking him outside for a moonsault off the apron, only to get pulled down into a full nelson on the mat. Both guys take elbows to the face but it's Cedric taking over off a springboard clothesline. Kendrick counters what looked like a belly to back suplex into the Captain's hook as Alicia Fox runs out to play cheerleader. Cedric makes the ropes as we see Noam Dar watching from the back. The distraction lets Kendrick get in a baseball slide to the back before telling Fox to beat it toots. Back in and the Captain's Hook is countered into the Lumbar Check for the pin on Brian at 4:42.

Rating: C. Cedric is one of the smoothest in ring performers going today and Kendrick..well he's there too. I'm interested in this idea of the Alicia Fox being crazy story but that might just be because Fox is on my TV more often. Other than that though, this was your usual cruiserweight match, meaning it wasn't the worst match in the world but it didn't do much for me.

Cedric walks off with Fox in the ring.

We look at Nia attacking Banks again.

Nia laughs at the idea of Sasha being the Boss and loved seeing Sasha holding her knee in agony. The hype was over and the Boss was broken.

Fox doesn't want to talk about it.

Kurt Angle is announced for the Hall of Fame. That's LONG, LONG overdue.

Roman Reigns/Sami Zayn/Seth Rollins vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho/Braun Strowman

It's a brawl before the bell and Strowman throws Reigns over the top as we take a break. Back with the match joined in progress with

Jericho coming in and taking a beating from Reigns and Zayn. Owens gets the tag and chinlocks Sami down, followed by an enziguri for two. The backplash hits knees though and the diving tag brings in Reigns to clean house. Rollins and Jericho go at it on the floor, leaving Strowman to choke Reigns down for two.

Back from another break with Owens cutting Seth off so the beating on Reigns can continue. Owens' chinlock is countered into a Samoan drop and the hot tag brings in Rollins. Everything breaks down again and it's Sami and Seth with back to back dives. Rollins' springboard knee to the face gets two on Jericho but Braun shrugs everything off. The trio gangs up on him though and Sami's high crossbody gets two. The Helluva Kick is easily blocked though the powerslam wraps Zayn up at 14:22.

Rating: C+. Nice six man here and a good upgrade over some of the stuff on this show. Strowman getting another big pin is a smart move and it made for a good way to wrap up the night. There was enough action to make the match work and the ending was much better than having a champion get pinned.

Strowman takes Sami up to the announcers' table but Seth comes up with a chair and Reigns adds a spear. The evil Canadians return from whatever hole they fell into and go for the table but Jericho takes a Pedigree on the stage. Owens cleans house with the chair and powerbombs Reigns through the table to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. I really wasn't feeling this one as it seems that they're running out of ways to push the Royal Rumble over this many weeks. The show could have been much worse but stuff like New Day vs. Titus and the Tag Team Title feud (good match, boring feud) are dragging this show way down. The main event was better with someone exciting like Sami involved but it still wasn't all that great.

Results

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. Jinder Mahal/Rusev – Bada Boom Shaka Laka to Mahal

Ariya Daivari b. Lince Dorado – Cobra clutch

Anderson and Gallows b. Cesaro/Sheamus via DQ when Sheamus punched the referee

Big E. b. Titus O'Neil – Big Ending

Cedric Alexander b. Brian Kendrick – Lumbar Check

Braun Strowman/Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho b. Sami Zayn/Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns – Powerslam to Zayn

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 5, 2016

Location: Sprint Center Arena, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're in the Kevin Owens Era but the questions remain focused on HHH, who helped Owens win the title last week while also costing Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns at the same time. This almost has to

set up a big match in the very near future though it's really not clear gets to fight whom. Let's get to it.

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

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

Foley actually cuts her off and tells a story about meeting Stephanie just after he flew off the Cell in 1998 and thought she was an innocent girl. Stephanie almost sounds vulnerable as she asks how she can maintain a shred of dignity after what happened last week. Mick believes her but gives a thinly veiled threat if this is all a lie.

Opening sequence.

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

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

Owens thinks Rollins has only been making plans for failures so Seth

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

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

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are yelling at each other (Stephanie's third appearance in twenty three minutes) when Owens comes up. Foley gives him a match against Sami Zayn, which draws in Jericho. Chris gets in a hilarious line by calling Owens the longest reigning Universal Champion in history. That earns him a match against Rollins later.

Charlotte vs. Bayley

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

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

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

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

Bo Dallas vs. Kyle Roberts

Bo is all serious here despite holding up a BELIEVE IN B0 sign (please don't let this be ANOTHER political themed character) He takes Roberts down and hammers away before snapping off some knees to the face. A Roll of the Dice (as Cole described it) puts Roberts away in 38 seconds.

Owens and Jericho fire each other up.

Chris Jericho vs. Seth Rollins

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

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

Rating: B. Anyone who has watched Rollins for years now has known he would be an awesome face and that's certainly what you got here. Rollins looked great out there and he's just so easy to cheer with

this offense. I don't think he gets the title back at Clash but it's going to be fun watching him in this new role.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

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

Rating: C. Well that happened and I really don't care. Thank goodness the fourth match is at a house show on Wednesday so I don't have to put up with seeing them again that many times. The back injury is fine but my goodness I've seen enough of these matches for my lifetime. It really feels like a way to give the writers a month off and that gets old in a hurry.

Shining Stars vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

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

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

Nia Jax vs. Ann Esposito

Apparently Ann is friends Alicia Fox. Nia throws her around to start but gets caught in a sleeper to actually put her in trouble. That

earns Ann a ram into the corner and a throw to the mat, followed by three straight Umaga attacks in the corner. A fireman's carry into a powerslam (with a pause before the powerslam) ends Ann at 1:38.

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

Cue the real New Day to ask which X-Man is their favorite. For some reason it's Cyclops....which isn't all that funny. Kofi thinks there's a paradox taking place here and if the New Day comes into contact with the Old Day, the WWE Universe will explode. Anderson and Gallows bail and dancing ensues, only to have Old Day's sneak attack completely fail. The old guys are beaten down to finally wrap this up. This went on WAY too long and it just wasn't very funny.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal

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

Darren and Titus fight again after the match.

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

Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Well it's better than jobber after jobber. Cara is fighting due to Braun ripping off the luchador's mask last week. A dropkick sends Braun into the corner but he explodes out with a shoulder. We hit

the neck crank and nerve hold for a bit before Braun sends him outside. Cara is tossed into the steps but comes back with a dropkick, only to be whipped into the barricade for the countout at 2:11. Are we really going to have to watch this again next week? Really?

Strowman beats Cara up even worse post match.

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

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

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

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

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

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

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

Overall Rating: D. This show hit a wall in the middle and it just never recovered. That being said, it's not like they had that much good going on in the first place. I liked the opening sequence and there was some good wrestling in the middle but pretty much everything from Cesaro vs. Sheamus until the main event was just death. Then again this is a holiday show and no one is going to watch it but it gets really tiring watching a badly bloated show with so little effort from the creative side of things.

Results

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Bo Dallas b. Kyle Roberts – Roll of the Dice

Seth Rollins b. Chris Jericho – Pedigree

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

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

Nia Jax b. Ann Esposito – Powerslam

Darren Young b. Jinder Mahal – Gut Check

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara via countout

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 15, 2016

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

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

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

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

Lana and Rusev are in the ring with Lana saying they're not leaving the ring until everyone hears what they have to say. There will be no Raw until Reigns comes out here and apologizes. Instead he gets

Mick Foley, now in a Have A Nice Raw shirt and with a beard that has its own zip code. Rusev yells a lot and says Foley sucks as a GM. He asks for Stephanie McMahon to come out here instead so here's the bigger boss to stick up for Foley.

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

Sheamus vs. Sami Zayn

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

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

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

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

but that's what we're likely going to get anyway because that's that we're stuck with.

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

Post break Cesaro and Sheamus are brawling again when Foley comes in to break it up. Mick loves seeing them fight so we're getting a best of seven series. AFTER CESARO HAS ALREADY BEATEN HIM TWICE. Egads this booking makes my head hurt.

Dudley Boyz vs. New Day

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

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

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

Nia Jax vs. Rachel Weaby

Rachel has blue hair, bright green and pink attire and a lot of tattoos. She's been watching the Olympics and is ready to bring home the gold. Nia throws her around and knocks her off the top with a

single shot to the face. Rachel is out cold but Nia brings her back in for the fireman's carry into a powerslam for the pin at 1:05.

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

All Heyman can do is laugh as Slater talks about Raw understanding what Smackdown can't get. Apparently if Slater fights Lesnar tonight, he gets a job. Heyman just ignores him and goes into his promo about Orton but Slater cuts them off again. Heath knows he's going to get hurt very badly but he has to do this for his kids. Brock actually talks because he can respect Slater fighting for his family. He actually wants to talk about Slater's kids...who he doesn't give a censored about.

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

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

Big Cass vs. Kevin Owens

Before the match, Enzo talks about cooking zucchinis, sausage, burgers, frankfurters and those two pieces of Canadian bacon. Cass shouldered Owens down to start but Kevin knocks him off the apron and

into the post as we take a break. Back with Cass breaking up the Cannonball with a boot to the face but getting sent outside again. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb and gets backdropped, only to have Jericho jump Cass for the DQ at 6:23. Not enough to rate but Cass looked competitive here and that's all he needed to do.

Enzo and Cass get beaten down post match.

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

Prime Time Players vs. Shining Stars

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

Jinder Mahal vs. Neville

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

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

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

The fans are getting into the arms pose now and that's a very good

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

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

Golden Truth vs. Gallows and Anderson

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

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

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

Alicia Fox vs. Charlotte

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

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

Video on Braun Strowman.

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Non-title. Roman goes right at him before the bell and kicks Rusev in the face. The apron boot makes it even worse for Rusev but he posts Reigns as we go to a break. We're joined in progress with Rusev working on Reigns' bad left arm. Reigns gets choked on the ropes but comes back with a Samoan Drop for a breather. They head

outside with Reigns being sent into the steps a few times but Rusev has the US Title taken away from him as we take another break.

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

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

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

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

The bigger problem here is that, aside from Balor vs. Rollins, I don't care to see any of Sunday's matches more than I did coming into tonight. How many of these people won't be appearing on Sunday's show anyway? Sami, Strowman, Nia Jax, and Neville aren't

likely to be at Summerslam but they get time (albeit very limited time) here because they need to fill in time. I'm hoping they get this stuff fixed soon because they really don't know how to put a three hour show together at this point.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Sheamus – Brogue Kick

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

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

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

Shining Stars b. Prime Time Players – Primo pinned Young after a Clash of the Titus from O'Neil

Neville b. Jinder Mahal – Red Arrow

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

Charlotte b. Alicia Fox – Natural Selection

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

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Reviewing the Review:

Monday Night Raw – August 1, 2016

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

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

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

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

Braun Strowman squashed a jobber. These matches have gotten me more

interested in Strowman than anything since his debut.

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

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

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

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

For some reason people have been saying Balor looked bad here but I liked the exchange. Balor definitely isn't the most comfortable talker in the world but that's where modern WWE gets in trouble: they seem to think that if everyone doesn't fit their idea of what a big star is then that person has no value. Balor is going to get over because of his in ring ability, his look, his in ring work and his overall cool factor. But no, for some reason he's doomed to never make it in the main event because he can't stand in the ring and exchange with someone on the mic.

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

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

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

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

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

This is a great case of WWE picking and choosing their storylines

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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