

Wrestler of the Day – January 3: Chris Kanyon

Today we're looking at someone who actually did some new innovative stuff in the ring: Chris Kanyon.

As is becoming a tradition here, we'll look at a match from the jobbing days. This one is from WWF Superstars of Wrestling from December 10, 1994.

Owen Hart vs. Chris Kanyon

Owen is still one of the top heels in the company at this time. Hart cranks on the arm to start and hits a hard clothesline to take Kanyon down. Back to the wristlock before Owen avoids an elbow to stop Kanyon's comeback attempt. Kanyon rams him into the buckle a few times but misses a moonsault press. The missile dropkick sets up the Sharpshooter to give Owen the win. Standard squash.

Owen beats him up a bit more post match.

Kanyon would eventually get to WCW as a masked man named Mortis. He would have a mysterious backstory that was never fully explained but he had some connection to Glacier. This led to a feud, and I mean a LONG feud, with no one caring about either guy. During this time though, Kanyon gained a tag partner named Wrath. They never did much of note, but they did have a shockingly good match on the July 22, 1997 episode of Monday Nitro.

La Parka/Psychosis vs. Mortis/Wrath

Wrath and La Parka start things off with the skeleton man (La Parka) taking over with some kicks. He goes up but jumps into an elbow so it's off to Psychosis vs. Mortis. Mortis stomps away in the corner but Psychosis breaks free and goes up....and falls without being touched at all. Ah the perils of live TV.

Psychosis comes back with a dropkick and everyone falls to the floor,

where La Parka hits a big corkscrew plancha to the floor. Psychosis slides in to try to dive on Wrath, only to get caught and slammed onto the floor. Mortis suplexes Psychosis back in for two but misses a top rope backplash. Onoo and Vandenberg get in a fight, as do Wrath and La Parka. Psychosis rolls up Mortis for two but there's no referee to count. Wrath picks up Psychosis for a powerbomb and Mortis makes it a powerbomb/neckbreaker combo for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was WAY better than you would have expected and got pretty entertaining by the end. The botch was bad but it happens every now and then and there's almost nothing you can do about it. La Parka and Psychosis didn't look like jobbers here, but rather a tag team that got beat by a better one. This was a surprisingly fun match and I liked it way more than I was expecting to.

Mortis would eventually be unmasked and become known as Kanyon while involved in a long and confusing story with Raven and Saturn. Eventually he would turn on Saturn and join the Flock which mostly led nowhere. Kanyon would take a hiatus to work as a stuntman in Hollywood before returning as part of the Jersey Triad. They held the tag titles under the Freebird Rule and would defend the belts against Chris Benoit and Perry Saturn at Bash at the Beach 1999. The other part of the Triad is Bam Bam Bigelow and the three can swap in and out at any given time.

Tag Titles: Jersey Triad vs. Chris Benoit/Perry Saturn

This is the ONLY good thing about this entire show. Remember that the Freebird Rule is in effect but they can trade off who is in the match at any time, more or less making this a handicap match. The starters here are Bigelow and Page. As for the actual match it's Page vs. Saturn. All three members of the Triad are on the apron even though Kanyon was announced as accompanying them.

Saturn cleans house to start us off, knocking everyone to the floor. Off to Benoit vs. Bigelow and Page is on the floor now. Bigelow hammers him

down but Benoit gets a boot up in the corner. How often do you see a single clothesline drop Bigelow? The Triad hits the floor for a bit so now it's Saturn vs. Kanyon. Kanyon was the betrayer that cost Raven and Saturn the tag titles a few weeks ago to get them on the Triad.

Saturn tries a German on Kanyon but Kanyon grabs the referee to block it. Off to Benoit now who runs over Kanyon. There's that snap suplex and into a Liontamer. Benoit and Saturn clear the ring again and Saturn gets two on Kanyon. Benoit gets a backbreaker for two. Kanyon keeps getting beaten on as Saturn hits a top rope legdrop for two. Totally one sided so far.

Page comes back in without a tag and sends Saturn to the floor. Some heel shenanigans put Saturn down and we hit the floor for a bit. Silverman, the referee here, counts really slowly. Bigelow and Kanyon are beating on Saturn now as the fans are paying attention to something else. Bigelow hits a chinlock because the fans aren't paying attention. That's a veteran move there and proof of what experience can teach you.

Kanyon sits Saturn on the top rope and tries what looks like a Fameasser but crotches himself before he can hit it. Saturn hits a suplex off the top and it's off to Benoit. He cleans house but the numbers catch up to him. Page goes insane for a bit, jumping up on the ropes to yell at the fans. He goes outside and keeps yelling, even climbing on the barrier. Weird.

DDP and Bigelow are the "legal" Triad members now. We're told about how awesome Page is and how he's held every title. The only other people I can think of that did that are Sting and Luger (if you count the NWA versions as title reigns which I do). Flair technically did but his TV Title reigns were in the 70s when the title was more of a regional one. Eh not that it matters but I love stuff like that.

Kanyon gets a sunset flip on Benoit for two. Bigelow beats on him for awhile as the crowd pops for something. Page gets his turn now as Benoit is getting destroyed. It's to the point now where Saturn has to make saves. There's the hot tag but the referee doesn't see it. Page gets that WICKED helicopter bomb on Benoit for two. Love that move. Kanyon gets a middle rope legdrop for two.

Benoit suplexes Kanyon and Bigelow saves the tag again. Benoit is like screw it and suplexes Bigelow. The fans are distracted again as Bigelow counters a suplex into kind of a cross body. The moonsault that wouldn't have hit even if Benoit hadn't moved but he did move misses and there's Saturn finally. Saturn cleans house with suplexes and kicks and Benoit is back in already.

Bigelow and Benoit are the only ones in the ring. Saturn goes up top as does Benoit. Splash by Saturn is followed by the Swan Dive but Page makes the save. Northern Lights gets two on Page. Kanyon has powder as the referee goes down. Powder to Saturn but Page messes up and hits the Cutter on Kanyon but he gets the foot on the rope. Crowd is WAY into this. The Canadian hits a German on an American for two. There's a garbage can in the ring and the referee goes down again. Page cleans house with the can and Bigelow/Page hit a 3D on Saturn to retain.

Rating: B+. Like I said, this is the only reason to watch this show but it's a pretty awesome tag match. The Triad would lose the titles after Flair either fired them or lost power next month. This was really fun though and it ate up over twenty minutes so it had more than enough time to develop. Very fun stuff here and it's worth seeing.

After the Triad broke up, Kanyon would be called Positively Page in a parody of Diamond Dallas Page. This would eventually lead to a match that

doesn't need a backstory at all. It's from New Blood Rising against Buff Bagwell and that's all you'll need to know.

Buff Bagwell vs. Chris Kanyon

Yep it's Judy Bagwell on a pole. Kanyon is still imitating DDP here which must make Madden cringe. Bagwell isn't even on a pole but rather a forklift. Do you win by pin I suppose? Kanyon is POSITIVELY Kanyon here (Page's book was Positively Page) and if he wins then Judy has to be his Kimberly. The fans chant USA in Canada. I guess WCW managed to lower intelligences that fast.

There isn't a pole that they could get to hold up Judy. They start by fighting next to the forklift and we're already in the audience. I don't think the match has actually started yet. Kanyon does his usual good stuff as no one cares about this. Seriously there's a woman on a forklift match. I can't believe I'm watching this. Kanyon gets the turnbuckle pad off and the referee is just fine with it.

Kanyon could do some solid stuff in the ring if nothing else. He really was innovative. Madden gets on DDP of course. Does he owe Madden money or something? Kanyon works on the neck of Bagwell which was broken like a year ago. Bagwell gets a hot shot onto the exposed buckle for two. Kanyon Kutter gets two and here comes the real DDP...never mind it's David Arquette.

He hits Bagwell in the back with a construction hat for two. Buff hits a double Blockbuster, which is a front flip neckbreaker off the middle rope on both guys, with Arquette just getting smashed in the face by a forearm instead of a neckbreaker. This ends it and Judy is saved off the forklift. Oh and this is sports entertainment, not wrestling. Kanyon hits the Kutter on Arquette after the match, getting cheered despite being a heel.

Rating: D+. As idiotic as this was, the wrestling was watchable I suppose. At this point you couldn't treat WCW as

realistic from a wrestling standpoint so this was about as good as the midcard stuff would get. For the rating I'm factoring out the whole insanity because it meant nothing anyway. I can't believe they brought Arquette back AGAIN. This was somehow watchable and I don't know why.

Kanyon would go to the WWF for a few years and do nothing of note. He would be awarded the US Title and won some tag titles during the InVasion but he was never more than a warm body. We'll skip that and go to a legends show which is the last match that I can find him competing in. Pay attention to the post match chat with Page, which gets a real answer from what I can find.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Kanyon

Well at least there's some history here. DDP goes through the crowd as he tended to but gets jumped by Kanyon. The announcers call this a dream match. That's kind of absurd but Kanyon is on a show called World Wrestling Legends so what do you expect here? They brawl in the crowd a bit and DDP dominates. And there's the bell. I love brawls before the bell for some reason.

This is far more of a brawl than a regular match but who cares. Discus Lariat from DDP gets two. There's a low blow that somehow the referee misses as he's looking straight at DDP who is going strong and then has the face of someone that just got hit in the balls. Referees are idiots. Kanyon gets a big piece of wood that they call a table. Ah it is a table but not the standard kind. Maybe these will actually hold some weight.

Kanyon tries to suplex him over the top onto the table which wasn't anywhere close to where DDP would have landed but who cares about something like that? Page comes back and pounds away but gets caught by more punches from the innovator of offense. Riveting stuff there. Sunset flip by Page gets two.

Sleeper by Kanyon with Page flailing all over the place to the extent that he looks like he's dancing badly. Page comes back and gets a suplex for two. Pretty back and forth match so far here. Kanyon goes out and grabs a chair but due to the laws of wrestling averages it goes into his face for two. Page is sent to the floor as this is going back and forth too fast with little being sold.

Kanyon channels his inner Bret Hart by playing possum and hitting Page in the throat with some foreign object for two. Page hits a back drop onto the ramp as Kanyon is in trouble. In a SICK bump, Page throws Kanyon off the stage and onto the table which Kanyon just bounces off of. FREAKING OW MAN! After a brief comeback from Kanyon the Diamond Cutter ends him.

Rating: C-. Again not bad considering these guys hadn't wrestled in years probably. The pacing was really weird here but the fans only wanted to see the Diamond Cutter to end it and that's exactly what they got. Having some history here helped a good bit. This wasn't good or anything but it worked fairly well I'd suppose.

Page gets on the mic and flat out asks Kanyon if he's gay. Well ok then. Does Page have ANY right to ask this? If he does I certainly don't see it. Kanyon affirms it and Page says rock on more or less. Well that came out of nowhere. I had no idea how ironic that wording was until after I typed it but whatever.

That's Kanyon's big claim to fame after his death: he claimed he was homosexual but wrestled in the closet his entire career. I say claimed because he said that it was both fake and real at different times (his last answer was that it was real) so there's a chance it was a gimmick.

Kanyon was a guy who did some actually innovative things in the ring. Not a lot of his moves stuck save for the downward spiral (which I don't think he innovated but I don't remember seeing anyone do it before him) but he was always fun to watch. There was a ton of potential there in

1998 but since he was in WCW, he never had a chance.

Also you often hear about people dying too young but it's true in Kanyon's case. He was only 40 when he died of what appeared to be suicide by drug overdose. To end this on a positive note, I'd recommend you check out some of his stuff as Kanyon (not Mortis) in WCW if you want to see someone who could mix things up out there. I've become a fan of his while watching old Nitros which doesn't happen often.

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Wrestler of the Day – January 2: Cody Rhodes and Goldust

I'm already having to stretch with this one as there's no one video of anyone born on January 2. Therefore, today's wrestlers are going to be the hottest second generation acts at the moment: Goldust and Cody Rhodes. We'll start with the elder of the pair.

Goldust is the more famous incarnation of Dustin Rhodes who made his national debut for all intents and purposes at the 1991 Royal Rumble, joining his father Dusty in a tag match against Ted DiBiase and Virgil.

Ted DiBiase/Virgil vs. Dustin Rhodes/Dusty Rhodes

Dustin is BRAND new here as this is his first WWF match. It's also Dusty's last in the WWF/E for over fifteen years. This is the blowoff to DiBiase vs. Dusty which started at Summerslam

with Ted buying Sapphire and taking her from Dusty. Sapphire left soon afterwards because she didn't want to be away from Dusty. Anyway the Rhodes Family takes over to start with elbows a go-go, sending the heels to a huddle on the floor.

Dustin, only 21 here, starts with Virgil who barely ever wrestled at this point. I mean it was like once every year or two. Dustin hits a clothesline and a dropkick to send Virgil (the real name of Dusty for you trivia geeks) to the floor as DiBiase is getting frustrated. Another clothesline puts Virgil on the floor again and Ted yells a lot. Off to DiBiase to backdrop the young gun but a second attempt results in a face jam.

The Rhodes dudes hammer DiBiase back and forth with elbows to send him to the floor as well. Here's Big Dust who puts on a sleeper but Virgil breaks it up. Back to Dustin for a dropkick for two, but a charging knee at Virgil misses to put Dustin down. Virgil stays on the knee and wraps it around the post, as does his boss. The heels try some double teaming, but Virgil accidentally clotheslines DiBiase. Ted beats the tar out of him, allowing Dustin to tag his dad. Said dad is rolled up for the pin almost immediately by DiBiase.

Rating: D+. Another dull match here but it was almost all for the ending and post match stuff. Like I said, the Rhodes guys were on their way out so they didn't have a chance at all in this one. Dusty stopped meaning anything months before this and it was the right move to go back to WCW for him where he could do what he wanted and book as well.

That was it for the Rhodes Family in the WWF as they moved back to WCW almost immediately. Dustin would get a lot better over time and become known as the Natural. He would win the US Title in 1993 and defend it against Steve Austin at Starrcade 1993.

US Title: Steve Austin vs. Dustin Rhodes

"The Natural" Rhodes is defending but Austin is rapidly becoming the character that would make him the legend that he was destined to be. He also has Colonel Robert Parker as his manager and this is 2/3 falls. Jesse entertains himself by making fun of the Hooters girl ("You can't call her the Natural.") as they fight on the mat for basic control. The champion puts on a headscissors but Austin quickly makes a rope. An elbow to the head puts Austin on the floor and we take a breather.

Rhodes pounds in knees to Steve's arm but Austin rolls right back to the floor. Back in again with Dustin taking him down to the mat with a headlock. Austin fights up and kicks him in the ribs, only to be caught in a backslide for two. Austin bails right back to the floor as the match stops all over again. This time though Austin pulls him to the mat and hits an elbow on Dustin's chest to take over.

Now Rhodes knocks Austin into the crowd before heading back inside. Steve looks very frustrated and a big right hand frustrates him even more. Back to the headlock because we haven't spent enough time in that hold yet. Austin escapes and drops some knees, only to be popped in the jaw again. Rhodes is thrown to the floor but he comes back in with a sunset flip for two. A belly to back suplex puts the champion down and Austin gets a lazy two.

They ram heads and yet again we lay around. This has been another dull match in a series of them tonight. Back up and Rhodes hits an elbow to the head but Austin falls on top during a slam attempt, getting another near fall. Austin misses a middle rope knee drop and Dustin connects with a lariat. A powerslam gets two as Parker is up on the apron. Dustin throws Austin int Parker but Steve goes over the top, giving him the first fall in a DQ.

Austin is busted open and Parker has to be taken to the back after being attacked by Dustin. The second fall starts and there go the lights. Thankfully we have a spotlight ready as Dustin hits a suplex for no cover. They head to the corner with Rhodes pounding away and the lights are back. In a quick ending, Austin shoves him off the ropes and grabs the trunks for the pin, the second fall, and the title.

Rating: D. I'm getting tired of these lame matches. Austin and Rhodes are WAY too talented to have such a bad match, but the majority of this match was spent doing very basic stuff which had no excitement to it at all. There's nothing to see here at all, as is the case with all of the matches so far tonight.

Dustin would eventually jump to the WWF again and would undergo one of the most radical changes in history. Instead of being the Natural, he would become a man in a gold suit with gold hair and covered in gold paint named Goldust. He was obsessed with the movies and quoted film nonstop. After doing little of note for a few months, he would challenge Razor Ramon for the Intercontinental Title at Royal Rumble 1996.

Intercontinental Title: Razor Ramon vs. Goldust

The yet to be named Marlena debuts with Goldie here. Razor is defending as is his custom. Feeling out process to start with Goldust playing his usual mind games, which means rubbing himself. Razor cranks on the arm before grabbing a headlock which goes nowhere. Goldust goes behind Razor and molests him a bit to psych Razor out even more. They head to the corner with Razor having his head rubbed a bit, ticking him off even more.

Razor goes for the arm so Goldust slaps him in the face. Perfect keeps making sex jokes as Razor slaps Goldust right

back in the face. He spans Goldie once as well, but the painted dude likes it. We head to the floor where Goldust hides behind Marlana as the stalling continues. Back in and Razor tries three straight headscissors before punching Goldust to the floor with a single shot.

We get more stalling which is called playing mind games before Ramon clotheslines him right back to the outside. Razor has to move Marlana out of the way, allowing Goldust to FINALLY do something, taking over with a shot to the ribs. Back in and Goldust focuses on the ribs, but not too much because that might mean we have some speed to this match. A bulldog gets two for Goldust as does a slingshot belly to back suplex.

Off to a sleeper, which Perfect suggests Goldust could use to do "whatever he wants" to Goldust. Much like everything else in the match, this goes on way too long until Razor fights up and kicks Goldust low. He's so spent though that Goldie gets a two count, causing Razor to start his comeback. He fires off his usual punches and the chokeslam gets two. A belly to back superplex hit but Marlene distracts the referee, allowing the 1-2-3 Kid to come in and kick Razor's head off. Goldust gets the easy pin and the title.

Rating: D-. Sweet freaking goodness this was dull. It went on WAY too long and had a bad ending on top of that, plus the stupid "psychology" from Goldust which wound up being more unpleasant than interesting or intelligent. Goldust would get WAY better when he became more of a comedy/parody character rather than this freaky dude that he was to start his WWF run. The matches got a lot better as a result too.

Goldust would stick around for years to come but would mainly be a midcarder who was strange in name only. We're going to skip ahead to December of 2002 when Goldust was part of a very funny tag team with Booker T. This is from Armageddon 2002 in a four way tag team title match with Booker T/Goldust as one set of challengers.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. Chris Jericho/Christian vs. Booker T/Goldust vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

The Canadians are champions and this is under elimination rules. The Dudleys are only 15 time tag champions here. They're also recently reunited, having gotten back together at Survivor Series. The Dudleys and Unamericans (Regal/Storm) were pre-determined to start the match in a four way coin toss somehow. Storm and Bubba get us going here with Storm hammering away.

Ray channels the POWER OF AMERICA and beats down Storm with a corner splash and it's off to Christian vs. D-Von. We get a rundown of the city structure of Dudleyville as Regal comes in now. Goldust vs. the British dude with the British dude hitting a suplex for no cover. Christian tagged himself in, ticking Regal off. Is there a reason why you would want to come in? I'd chill on the apron until it's down to two teams.

Jericho comes in and is sent right back out again by Goldie. Back in Jericho reminds Goldust that he's THE KING OF THE WORLD and it's off to Christian as Goldie is in trouble. What's Up to Christian as some Dudleys are here in case you didn't get that one. Everything breaks down and we have Christian vs. D-Von left in the ring. 3D to Christian but Regal got a blind tag. After a weird confusion, Regal gets two on Ray (illegal man) but it's called a pin anyway. Five seconds later Goldust gets a powerslam (seriously?) to Regal to get us down to two teams. That was an incredibly confusing sequence.

Ok so it's Christian/Jericho vs. Booker/Goldust. The good guys (Booker/Goldust) hammer on Jericho with Booker being legal. Hook kick gets two for Booker and it's off to the armbar. Christian is down on the floor I guess. Maybe he's off finding a good deal on Turtle Wax. Either way he's not in the corner but he pops up in time to break up a pin attempt on Jericho.

Off to Christian who avoids a forearm, sending Goldust to the floor. Jericho gets a British flag to Goldust's back to take over again. Back in Christian gets an abdominal stretch and a chant saying he sucks. Jericho comes in and goes down quickly but Christian makes a nice save to break up the tag. I would have thought that would have worked. In a surprising moment, Goldust wakes up and beats the champions down with ease. Ross calls a chokeslam (kind of) a sidewalk slam. Ok then.

Off to Booker who gets the Jack Brisco sunset flip out of the corner for two. He hammers on Jericho but the falling sleeper (looked awful) takes down Booker for two. Here come the Walls but Jericho gets rolled up for two. Axe kick misses and there are the Walls. Goldie pops up out of nowhere and hits a bulldog to take Jericho down.

A belt shot by Christian doesn't work and a missile dropkick gets two on Jericho. Lionsault misses so Booker stops for the Spinarooni. Axe kick gets two and everything breaks down again. Belt shot and Lionsault get two on Booker and Jericho is ticked. So ticked that he walks into the Bookend and we're done with new comedic champions.

Rating: B-. Pretty fun match here as they sped through the first two eliminations so we could get to the two top teams. Goldie and Booker were funny but they lost the titles in like three weeks to the Unamericans. They knew how to have a fast paced tag match out there and the whole thing worked rather well. This was somehow almost 17 minutes long and it feels like about seven, which is a great thing.

The new champions would lose the titles a month later and Goldust would become little more than a jobber. He went to TNA for a few years and was a monster named Black Reign before pretty much fading away. Finally in 2013 he was brought back as part of a storyline war between the Rhodes and McMahon families, culminating in a tag match at Battleground where he teamed with his brother Cody against the Shield for the Rhodes

Family's jobs.

Cody Rhodes/Goldust vs. Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns

If the Rhodes Family wins, they get their jobs back. If Shield wins, Cody and Goldust are gone forever and Dusty loses his job too. This is also non-title. Dusty is at ringside to counter act Dean Ambrose and Goldust looks like Darth Maul. Cody pounds away on Seth to start and it's quickly off to Roman who gets pounded down in the corner. Shield bails to the floor and stalks Dusty, setting up a cool looking six man standoff with the brothers protecting their dad.

Back in and Roman knees Cody down as the champions take over. Seth comes in but walks into an elbow to the jaw and a stomping in the corner. Rollins sends him into the buckle to escape and it's off to Roman for some power. After an easy pounding it's quickly back to Rollins to crank on the shoulder a bit. Cody gets caught in the Tree of Woe but frees up a leg to kick Seth down. The moonsault press hits Rollins perfectly and the hot tag brings in Goldust.

An atomic drop slows Reigns down and Goldust pounds him down in the corner. Goldust hits a spinning cross body off the top for two but misses a regular cross body, sending him out to the floor. Goldie dives back in at nine but gets caught in a body scissors from Rollins. Back to Reigns for a good looking clothesline for two before it's back to Rollins who gets the same off a hilo. Goldust comes back by avoiding a dropkick and powerslamming Seth down.

There's the hot tag off to Cody for an Alabama Slam to Rollins for a very near fall. Something like a Muscle Buster gets two on Rollins and everything breaks down. The Disaster Kick staggers Reigns and Cody clotheslines him to the floor but an Ambrose distraction allows Seth to come back in for the save. Dusty elbows Ambrose down and Seth rolls up Cody for two. Rhodes comes pops back up and hits Cross Rhodes for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: B. This was ALL about emotion coming in but the match was good stuff on top of that. Again, this match worked because we were given a reason to care about the underdogs and wanted to see them win instead of being told we wanted to see them win. That's how you make a good story and it worked perfectly well here.

That brings us to Cody Rhodes, who is far different from his dad and brother but still very talented. We'll start with his time down in OVW as he teams up with CM Punk to face Jay Bradley (occasionally seen in TNA) and Shawn Spears who appeared in WWECW a few times. I'm not 100% sure on the date here but I'm pretty sure it's June 23, 2007.

Cody Runnels/CM Punk vs. Shawn Spears/Jay Bradley

Bradley is OVW Champion and Spears is TV Champion. Cody has half polka dot half goldu trunks to honor his family. If Punk and Cody (the good guys here) win, Cody gets Spears in a strap match this coming week and Punk gets a title match with Bradley next week on TV. Cody decks Bradley in the face with a string of forearms but keeps looking over at Spears. Bradley catches him in a fallaway slam and it's off to Spears who immediately runs to the floor.

It's back to Bradley who runs from Punk and tags Spears back in. Cody gets an immediate tag to send Spears running again but Bradley makes another save. Bradley hits Cody with some forearms to the back and like a good heel, Spears finally comes in when Cody is down. Cody shrugs off everything Spears has to throw at him, sending Shawn to the corner for another tag. Announcer Dean Hill talks about Spears and Cody being former partner until Spears turned on him. Simple but effective story.

Bradley puts Cody in a chinlock and drags him to the corner for another tag off to Shawn. Spears plays a nice cocky heel until Cody punches him in the face. Punk comes in sans tag but only gets his partner in more trouble. The heels stay in control until Spears ducks his head and gets

punched in the face. Cody FINALLY makes the tag off to Punk and everything breaks down, sending the heels running off for the countout.

Rating: C-. This was about setting up stuff for later and there's nothing wrong with that. Cody had the look and some natural skills but he needed a lot of seasoning at this point. Punk was barely in the match at all but he was just a special attraction in OVW here. Cody would win the title in just a few days.

Post match Cody pulls out a strap and cleans house on everyone that comes from the locker room to help the heels.

Cody would debut on Raw less than a month later. He would go on to feud with Hardcore Holly and eventually get a tag team title shot at the Raw 15th Anniversary special on December 10, 2007.

Raw Tag Titles: Hardcore Holly/Cody Rhodes vs. Lance Cade/Trevor Murdoch

Dusty is out here too so you know this is going to be a title change. Cody's team is challenging. Cade and Cody start us off as Dusty is at home talking a lot. He really was good at what he did and the one biggest thing about him: you can never say he was boring. He paid attention and had insight about EVERYTHING. Cody is very much a rookie here and after he gets beaten up for awhile it's a double tag and Holly cleans house. Everything breaks down and the Alabama Slam gives Rhodes and Holly the titles. Dusty comes in to celebrate with them.

They would hold the titles for over seven months despite few people seeming interested. Cody would turn heel and join up with Randy Orton and Ted DiBiase Jr. as part of Legacy. The trio would dominate Raw for a good while and eventually feud with DX, leading to a submissions only match at Breaking Point.

DX vs. Legacy

This is submissions count anywhere. We get the obligatory Montreal reference from DX which makes sense as we're in Montreal tonight. HHH says it was all Shawn's fault in a rather funny bit. There are in essence no rules in this to speak of. Shawn is famous for the figure four? Since when? We're already into the crowd so at least they're not trying that hard to make this look like a normal match. That's always a perk.

Shawn has DiBiase in a choke on a railing in the audience and HHH and Rhodes are back in the concourse I think. We were in the ring for all of 8 seconds in case you were wondering. They're brawling all over the place but of course we're heading back to the ring now. Rhodes is put onto a chair and HHH gets a Boston Crab at the same time that Shawn gets a camel clutch. Good to know. After that is broken up we get a crossface from HHH.

I'm not sure if this is a good match or not. Rhodes hooks a Gory Special of all things. The formula of this match more or less is one guy puts a hold on another and the partner makes the save. It's ok but there's not much to it really. HHH and DiBiase are in the ring and Rhodes and Shawn are fighting in the production area. They fight into the stands and Shawn falls from there down to a perfectly placed empty area.

Basically HHH has to fight both guys off to keep them away from Shawn. Hmm...HHH having to face very big odds and do something no other normal person could pull off? Where's the challenge? They're in the back and beating the heck out of HHH. The crowd reaction would suggest Shawn is up. Oh wait it's Montreal so maybe he died or something. Never mind. He's up. It's back to 1-2 now though as HHH got smacked in the head and is down.

Rhodes busts out an ankle lock on Shawn. You know, the guy with a bad back that just hurt his back a few minutes ago. I can't stand stupid wrestlers at times. So Shawn was down for

maybe two minutes from FALLING OFF A BALCONY and HHH is down much longer from a garbage can shot? Good freaking night.

Shawn gets that reverse figure four that he used like twice but he's a master off all of a sudden anyway. Rhodes just goes off on Shawn and hooks the figure four on the post. DiBiase adds in the Million Dollar Dream. And Shawn taps out with HHH crawling on the floor. Talk about an EPIC win. Match kind of sucked but kind of didn't.

Rating: B-. I liked it, but there were a LOT of problems here. For one thing, it got to the point where it was just the same stuff happening but with different people. That's rather boring indeed. However, VERY happy that Legacy won as they actually needed a win as opposed to DX all over again. It was good but far from great. I'll give it the benefit of the doubt though.

Once Legacy broke up, Cody eventually became obsessed with his looks and going by the name Dashing Cody Rhodes. He would offer tips on self-grooming and stuff like candles while still putting on good matches. Eventually he would have his face injured in a match against Rey Mysterio and wear a mask that made him look like Dr. Doom from Marvel Comics. The interesting aspect of the character was that Cody's face looked exactly the same but in his head he was convinced he was hideous. This led to a match with Mysterio at Wrestlemania 27.

Cody Rhodes vs. Rey Mysterio

Cody used to be Dashing but then Rey hit him with the 619 and the knee brace hit Cody in the face, scarring him and requiring facial surgery. Cody basically became Dr. Doom but in reality his face was fine. However he wanted Rey's mask for retribution. This was an AWESOME character but of course WWE would wind up wasting the entire thing and make Cody a

jobber because they got bored with him after a few months. Still though, this part was awesome.

Oh yeah the match. Rey comes out as Captain America this year which is an awesome looking costume for him. Rey is almost immediately sent to the apron but comes in off the top with a dropkick to take over. A forearm to Rey's face takes over and Cody goes after the knee brace which caused the initial injury. Rey kicks his way out of the corner but Cody headbutts him in the face to take over again because of the hard mask.

The Disaster Kick to the head puts Rey down again and it's off to a chinlock. Cody charges into a boot in the corner but comes right back with the Alabama Slam for two. Back to the knee brace for a second before Cody hits a running knee to the back of Rey's head to keep him down. Mysterio is sent to the apron again and goes up top, only to be sent down in a delayed superplex. Cody stomps away and talks about how Rey hurt his face.

Rey escapes Cross Rhodes and sends Cody out to the floor for a baseball slide to the face. A headscissors sends Cody into the apron and we head back inside to speed things up. Rey hooks a quick quick rollup for two and fires off a kick to the face. Cody charges into a kick to the ribs but comes back with a release German suplex for two. A springboard headscissors puts Cody down but the 619 is caught in mid kick. Cody slingshots Rey's throat into the middle rope for two more and now the knee brace is removed.

Rey comes right back with a moonsault press for two of his own and Cody loses his mask. The 619 hits and a hard kick to Cody's head gets two more. Now Mysterio puts Cody's mask on and hits a few headbutts with it before hitting a top rope headbutt to the chest for two. Cody rolls to the floor and sneaks in a shot to the face with the knee brace, followed up by Cross Rhodes for the upset pin.

Rating: B-. Good match here and pretty easily Cody's biggest win ever to

this point. Cody needed this win a lot more than Mysterio and it made him even more awesome than he already was before this match. Mysterio had nothing to gain here and it was a pleasant sight to see the hotter star go over like that.

Cody would go on to win the Intercontinental Title and hold it for several months. After losing it for the second time, things would go down in a hurry for Rhodes as he would be stuck in midcard and tag team feuds that went nowhere. It wouldn't be until Fall of 2013 when Cody got a match with WWE Champion Randy Orton for his job that he would show the potential he had again.

Cody Rhodes vs. Randy Orton

If Cody loses he's gone. Orton pounds away in the corner to start and takes him down with a clothesline. Rhodes is draped over the top rope and sent out to the floor, but he sends Randy into the steps for a breather. Cody cranks on the arm and gets two off a dropkick before pounding away in the corner. Orton gets choked on the ropes but comes back with a poke to the eye for two. More right hands have Randy in control but Cody comes back with a release front suplex and right hands of his own in the corner. Orton hits the backbreaker out of said corner to send Cody to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Orton throwing Cody back inside for two but Cody comes back with an elbow to the jaw and an uppercut to put Rhodes down. A springboard missile dropkick gets a close two and the Disaster Kick gets the same. Orton sidesteps the moonsault press and puts Cody down with the Elevated DDT. The RKO is countered into the Cross Rhodes out of nowhere for a VERY close two. I thought that was it. The fans are WAY into Cody here but Orton snaps his throat across the top rope. Back in and Rhodes gets two off a rollup but another Disaster Kick misses and the RKO

connects for the pin at 13:35.

Rating: B. When you have me believing that Cody Rhodes could beat Randy Orton, you're doing something right. I'm not sure where they're going to go with Cody now as he got a good rub here but apparently he's gone for a bit due to the loss. Either they're going back on what they said or he's really taking time off for some reason. Still though, good match here.

Overall, the Rhodes children are the polar opposite of their dad. Dusty was all about promos and usually couldn't have a good match if his life depended on it. Cody and Goldust can both talk but are much more athletic in the ring. At this point Goldust is having one of the best career comebacks you'll ever see while Cody could be an upper midcard fixture for years to come.

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Wrestler of the Day – January 1: Bobby Roode

This is the sequel to On This Day and is something I've been planning on doing for awhile now. The idea is simple: every day for the year I'll be selecting a wrestler and posting

reviews of some major matches from his career in a kind of timeline format. I'll also include my thoughts on the person as a whole. I won't bother with a bio or anything unless it's someone not very familiar. I'm not sure how many matches there will be but it should be at least three a day. The primary way I'll be picking them is by birthday, though of course this won't always work. I'll also do two guys or a tag team if a particular day doesn't have a good option. Hope you enjoy and let's get to it.

We start with the It Factor of Professional Wrestling: Bobby Roode.

We'll start REAL old school here with a match from Roode's jobbing days on Sunday Night Heat. Yes, Roode wrestled in WWE for a handful of matches.

Sunday Night Heat

Date: March 2, 2003

Location: Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Jonathan Coachman, Lita

Bobby Rood vs. Al Snow

It's so old he doesn't even have the E. Snow takes him down with a fireman's carry as Coach talks about Limp Bizkit performing at Wrestlemania. Rood fights out of a hammerlock with an elbow to the face, only to be taken down by an armbar. Bobby comes back with that running lariat of his and sells the arm as he should. A rollup gets two for Snow but he gets caught in a backbreaker for a near fall for Bobby. Snow fires off right and lefts before hitting the trapped headbutts. A northern lights suplex puts Rood down and the Snow Plow is good for the pin.

Rating: C-. It's just a squash to put Snow over but it's always interesting to see someone like this thrown in there. I really liked how

Roode sold the arm as so many wrestlers, including veterans, would just ignore something like that. Obviously he was still young, but there's clearly potential there.

On to TNA and the first PPV, Victory Road. Roode is part of Team Canada and defending the tag titles along with Eric Young against 3 Live Kru.

Victory Road 2004

Date: November 7, 2004

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 700

Commentators: Don West, Mike Tenay

Tag Titles: 3 Live Kru vs. Team Canada

Team Canada here is Bobby (Robert) Roode and Eric Young while 3LK is Konnan and Road Dogg. They use the Freebird rule to fight and will use it if they win the belts here, along with Ron Killings. Anyway, this is the finale of a long feud between them which of course didn't end here. We start with Roadie and Roode. For the life of me I do not get the hype on this guy. He's ok and that's it.

People to this day think he could be a main event guy. Why? Tell me one thing that he could do that would validate him as a main event guy. And I don't mean a line like just watch him or how can't you see it. Pretend I'm stupid and tell me what it is that this guy has that makes him a big star. Konnan is in now with Young and these two just amuse me to no end.

We have a guy that no one cares about that tries desperately to play up the gimmick of being from another country which makes him interesting when he's just bland otherwise and no one cares about him, and then we have Eric Young. We hit the formula portion of our event with the heels working over Roadie to build up Konnan for the hot tag.

Does anyone else see this sucking harder than a Diva wanting to get a job? I miss Scott D'Amore. The guy was a fat waste of oxygen but he was a decent talker and heel manager. Nothing great here but it's kind of like the first Mania where the tag titles changed: it allows you to have a title change so the show is memorable and has some impact to steal a pun from myself.

Konnor finally gets the tag after a heel miscommunication (remember folks: TNA is breaking NEW ground!) spot and cleans house. It of course turns into a brawl with Roadie being fine after getting taken out for about 4 minutes. D'Amore tries to use the hockey stick but Killings comes in for the save and a BAD looking X-Factor gives the Kru the titles.

Rating: C. It was average, plain and simple. This match could have been on any TV or house show or PPV and it would have been fine. At seven minutes long they didn't have much time to get anything substantial going but still, this wasn't much but it was fine for what it was I suppose.

After this Roode would stay in Team Canada for another few years before becoming a solo act for awhile. I never found Robert Roode: Rich Guy to be interesting at all so we'll skip over that and jump to something much more fun: Beer Money. This was one of the best teams to ever exist in TNA with Roode teaming up with James Storm to form a country/city tandem. Their biggest rivals were arguably the Motor City Machine Guns so let's take a look at I believe their first meeting with Beer Money defending. This is REALLY old so please bear with my horrible writing skills.

TurningPoint 2008

Date: November 9, 2008

Location: ImpactZone, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 1,100

Commentators: DonWest, MikeTenay

Tag Titles: Beer Money vs. Motor City Machine Guns

One of the taglines things is will the Guns finally get the titles. Oh that's rich. Neither team has their current music so things are just ridiculously bland. Again they mention the Guns possibly winning the titles. Wow that's funny. So despite acting like heels in the back, they of course act like faces here. Could the psychology have been more messed up in TNA around this time?

The challengers of course are all over the place and getting a ton of damage in on Storm. Shelley reminds me of Miz a bit looks wise. ALL Guns here as Shelley hits a Lionsault for two. The champions take over as I think we're going to be in for a long while here. Storm puts on his hat which of course makes him fail.

I love the missing the tag thing which is as basic as possible of a tag cheating tactic but it works every time and is perfectly legal. Shelley hits a combination Downward Spiral/DDT to get enough time for the hot tag to Sabin. The crowd is uncommonly quiet here. Dang the Guns are fun to watch.

Storm has been gone for a LONG time. It's a double team clinic from the Guns here and they're completely dominating. Storm comes back in and botches what is now Madison Rayne's move. The big Tower of Doom spot does nothing special at all as they kind of just fall backwards. ASCS Rush to Roode but here's Jackie of course because we have to have the annoying pest in there once at least. Storm spits Beer in Sabin's eyes so that DWI can keep the belts for Beer Money. Yes the Guns lose again. Film at 11.

Rating: B-. Not bad here. This was another one of those matches where they let them do their thing and it worked for the most part, but at times the Guns' offense gets so ridiculous that it's a waste of time and takes away the point

of it. The Guns have to win the titles eventually. Not bad, but nothing classic.

Eventually Beer Money broke up, and things got REALLY fun. Roode became the #1 contender for the world title by winning the 2011 BFG Series, only to lose the title match to Kurt Angle. James Storm would go on to pin Angle in about a minute on Impact less than a week later, setting up Roode vs. Storm for the title on Impact.

Impact Wrestling

Date: November 3, 2011

Location: Macon Coliseum, Macon, Georgia

Commentators: Taz, Mike Tenay

TNA World Title: James Storm vs. Bobby Roode

Feeling out process to start as they're playing up the idea that they know each other very well. Off to a test of strength which doesn't last long. Neither guy has an advantage as we go to a break. Back with Storm ramming shoulders into Roode in the corner. They keep countering each other and Roode can't get much of an advantage. Storm stays ahead with a superplex but both guys are down.

They slug it out and Storm takes over with some running shots. Blockbuster gets two for Roode. Backstabber gets two for the champ. Eye of the Storm is countered into a spinebuster for two. They head to the floor and both guys barely get back inside in time. Storm tries an Orton DDT but gets countered into a Crossface. Storm makes a rope and Roode is frustrated. Roode tries a superplex but Storm counters into a top rope elbow for two.

This is getting good. Last Call misses as Roode grabs the fisherman's suplex. Storm counters that and is almost sent into the referee. The referee avoids the contact but twists his knee in the process as Roode is sent to the floor. Roode

succumbs to the demons inside and grabs the beer bottle which he breaks over Storm's head to BIG heat. It gives him the world title at 17:40.

Rating: B. This was a very solid match that could have easily main evented a PPV with about five minutes extra. Still though, good stuff here and that's what they needed to do. I'm really not sure I like the ending but it's TNA after all so how good can it get? The heel turn was needed, but Roode is going to have to step up his emotions as a heel to deserve this spot. Good match though.

These two would feud for months, eventually culminating in Roode vs. Storm inside a cage at Lockdown 2012.

Lockdown 2012

Date: April 15, 2012

Location: Nashville Municipal Auditorium, Nashville, Tennessee

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tazz

TNA World Title: James Storm vs. Bobby Roode

Storm drives a truck into the arena. He has something resembling the AMW trenchcoat but it's not quite the same. Storm jumps him on the floor before the bell rings and takes the fight to him. He rams Roode into the cage and drops an elbow from a table. The bell hasn't rung yet and they have over half an hour. Storm blocks a cage shot and they fight up the entrance. All Storm so far.

Storm swings a chair at the cage but misses, allowing Roode to hit a clothesline to the back of the head to drive Storm's head into the steel. Roode gets a beer bottle and Storm is busted. The beer is put on the steps as Roode hammers away. Montgomery Gentry and Storm's wife are here. They go into the cage and there's the bell. Roode is in full control and rams Storm into the cage again.

Roode yells a lot and the crowd is quiet enough that you can

hear most of it. Suplex and knee drop get two. That cut is opening more and more. Storm Hulks Up and wins a slugout but a running elbow takes him right back down. Storm gets a boot up in the corner but Roode takes him down with a big clothesline for two. Roode does the cheese grater spot on the cage and the tape on Storm's wrists are all covered in blood.

Roode is still shouting in Storm's face and has Storm's blood on his face. We cut to Storm's wife and she looks as interested as parents when their kid isn't on stage in a third grade school play. Storm comes back with a bunch of punches and clotheslines. Here's the Eye of the Storm but Roode escapes. A catapult sends Roode into the cage and the Eye of the Storm gets two.

James walks into a spinebuster for two. Roode is busted also. Closing Time (Codebreaker/Backstabber combo) gets two. Now Roode gets the cheese grater treatment. Roode ducks a dive and Storm eats cage, allowing Roode to hook the Crossface. Storm manages to roll to the ropes but both guys are spent. They go to the corner and Storm fights out of a superplex but gets his head rammed into the cage.

Roode climbs on Storm to try to get out and he kicks Storm down to the mat. Storm climbs up and gets Roode dangling on the top of the cage. He's back in now and they slug it out on the top rope some more. Storm pulls him down and loads up the Last Call but it hits the referee flush on the jaw.

Roode takes him down and has the door wide open but he wants the beer bottle. He busts it over Storm's head and demands that Hebner come in for the cover but it only gets two. Instead of sprinting out the door, Roode walks into the Last Call but Storm can't follow up. Storm superkicks Roode out the door, AND HE KEEPS THE TITLE at 17:39.

Rating: B. This company amazes me. If there was EVER, I mean EVER, a more perfect setup than this, I'd love to see it

because this was as perfect as you could get and they go the other way. On top of that, they do it TONIGHT, with the crowd being as uninterested as they've ever been. The match was great, the ending....oh dear.

We could keep going with this all day so I'll cut it off there. Roode is a guy who everyone talks about but I've never seen the massive appeal. He's definitely got talent, but I don't see him as the be all and end all for TNA. I had no problem with him as world champion and his reign went well, other than a far too long feud with Sting. For as basic of a look as he has, Roode has come a long way and is definitely a success.

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2013 Awards: Wrestler of the Year

A quick one to close us out. There's no real point to nominees here as this comes down to two people.

The winner is.....John Cena.

As well as Daniel Bryan. At the end of the day I simply can't pick one over the other so it's a tie. Let's look at both guys.

First up we have Bryan, who got the rocket push of this generation over the course of the summer. Bryan went from being in a very successful tag team to flying up the card, culminating in something that happens once a year at best: pinning John Cena 100% clean in the middle of the ring. That flat out does not happen most o the time and it's a huge deal. After that Bryan won another world title and main evented several PPVs to close out the year. That's something that's hard to top.

However, when you look at kayfabe accomplishments, Cena had a dominant year. He won the Royal Rumble, he won the world title in the main event of Wrestlemania, he held world titles for over half the year, he main evented Summerslam and TLC plus brought the WHC its most prestige in years. That's a great year by anyone's standards and a very good one for Cena.

I just can't pick one guy over the other and they both deserve to be called the best wrestler of the year. Now go ahead and call me biased.

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2013 Awards: Match of the Year

There were some great matches in 2013 and several of them were available for free.

One honorable mention: Sami Zayn vs. Antonio Cesaro from NXT. It's a 2/3 falls match and an outstanding fight. Zayn is as good of an underdog character as you'll find in wrestling today but Cesaro in Beast Mode is going to put down anyone he's against.

Now to the nominees:

Rhodes Brothers vs. Shield – Battleground. It's the worst show of the year but this match brought out so much emotion for reasons we've already covered. The main story here is the Brothers trying to get their jobs back after losing them to the Authority. The match was all about the emotion and that's better than action every single time. Great match but it didn't save the show.

CM Punk vs. John Cena – February 26 Raw. This was the match for Cena's Wrestlemania title shot and these guys tore the house down. I called it the best TV match I've ever seen and I still think it ranks right up there with anything I've ever seen. The one thing that holds it back is the lack of drama at the end. Everyone knew Cena was going to win, but the question was how. That's very good but not perfect.

Daniel Bryan Runs The Gauntlet – July 22 Raw. If a match told a better story on TV this year, I didn't see it. Bryan had to face Jack Swagger, Antonio Cesaro and then Ryback in succession. Swagger didn't even last three minutes, but the Cesaro section is a war between two different styles. After that it was Ryback where Bryan gave it his all but couldn't overcome the power. The key here though: Ryback lost via DQ,

thereby giving us a logical conclusion that doesn't damage anyone. Outstanding stuff.

That brings us to the two real contenders.

Daniel Bryan vs. John Cena – Summerslam. What else can I say about this match? It was long, it was exciting, it had great action, it had an ending that came out of nowhere. The one thing that holds it back: there was no way Cena was winning with that baseball growing out of his elbow. Just like Cena vs. Punk, there was only one possible winner to this and that was Daniel Bryan. Still though, excellent match.

The winner:

CM Punk vs. Brock Lesnar – Summerslam. My goodness what a match this was. In something I don't say that often, I was completely wrong about this one. I didn't think Punk could be a realistic threat to Lesnar but he went move for move with the beast and had me wondering who was going to win the entire time. It's an amazing match with both guys beating the tar out of each other. On top of that, it was more proof that HHH had no business hogging Lesnar for a year as Brock has had masterpieces with Punk and Cena but three only good matches with HHH.

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2013 Awards: Surprise of the Year

Another one with more options than I was expecting. It's rare for me to be surprised in wrestling but this year it happened several times.

First up, a note about TNA. This is usually a category where they can pull off some good entries but there's nothing this year. It's seemed like you can predict just about everything that happens every time they have a big show. That's a really bad sign and something they need to work at.

Anyway, on to the nominees. There are two of these that happened in the span of about five minutes.

First up, Daniel Bryan pinning John Cena clean. The question here wasn't would Bryan win, but rather how he would do it. People had been expecting to see something like a rollup or a cradle, but to debut a brand new move and cave John Cena's chest in with a running knee was a big surprise. I had the words "for two" written but had to backspace furiously.

Orton cashes in. Yeah people thought it might happen, but the way they executed it was nearly perfect. That delay before Orton's music hit was the perfect way to sucker the fans into believing nothing was happening. I snapped up when the music hit, which is the sign of a good surprise.

This brings us to the winner, which ironically is kind of

obvious.

Mark Henry fakes retirement. it led to a one off match, it doesn't hold up incredibly well when you look at the details, but it was AWESOME live. I completely bought that Henry was retiring and that this was the end for him. The speech was great, the reaction was great, and the turn was great. I loved this and it was another example of why Mark Henry is underrated.

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2013 Awards: Title Reign of the Year

I believe this has the most options. I'll go through some nominees as usual.

Bully Ray. Ray won the title in a moment that didn't surprise many people, but his title reign went well for the most part. The biggest thing lacking was major title defenses, though it's not fair to blame that on Ray. On top of that, it was pretty clear that he was losing the belt at BFG no matter what.

Dean Ambrose. This started off promisingly but turned into the same midcard title reign you see every time.

Shield. Now we get into some of the interesting stuff. This is a good example of a title reign that started and ended well, with Shield looking dominant up until their reign, looking dominant in their reign, and losing the titles in an awesome match. This is probably second on my list.

Rhodes Brothers. The problem here is similar to Ambrose: too many losses. Despite an amazing title win and some great defenses, the Brothers keep losing matches that they shouldn't be losing, presumably leading to a split and Goldust vs. Cody match at Wrestlemania because someone said that was a good idea years ago and that's what we're getting, great tag team or not.

I'm going to leave out Del Rio and Orton's reigns as neither of them did anything for me at all. Del Rio is just dull and Orton spent his time being handed the title back over and over. Cena's title reigns were really nothing all that special either.

Actually I'm going with AJ Lee. This is a rare occurrence of someone cleaning out of a division and having no one left to challenge her. She even has her moment with the Total Divas promo and has made me cheer for her every time she's made one of those nitwits (or Natalya) tap out. She's closing in on the record for longest Divas Title reign and has looked dominant (and cute) while doing so. It's AJ by a few touchdowns.

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2013 Awards: Most Improved

This one took some time. One of the most common choices I see for this is Magnus and I really don't get why. He's improved somewhat but it's really more that he's been pushed more than gotten better. The same holds true for Roman Reigns, who has been the explosive power guy of Shield the entire time but has been pushed as a major force over the last few months.

If we're talking about someone who got much better, look no further than NXT Champion Bo Dallas. This guy started off the year as one of the only acts on NXT that made me want to fast forward but the heel turn changed everything. Now that Dallas is just 50 over the top that it's hard not to love him. The reaction when he loses the title is going to be off the charts and that's why the character works so well. Also getting rid of that spear and switching to the bulldog was a great change.

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2013 Awards: Angle of the

Year

Make your own Kurt jokes.

This one comes down to two options as most angles either aren't all that entertaining or get on my nerves with stupid twists.

I'll throw in an honorable mention to Angle vs. Roode since TNA has had a really bad year. This started off as a makeshift match for Angle but it's turned into one of the few bright spots in TNA in the last few months. Roode is looking like a killer for the first time in a long time and Angle is Angle. Good stuff all around there.

Now to the real contenders.

First up: Heyman vs. Punk. The premise was great, the beginning was great, the stuff with Lesnar was great, the ending...was that the ending? That's where they lose me as the ending just kind of happened instead of building up to a big conclusion. When I hear Punk talking about wanting to destroy Heyman for months, I need more than him just beating on Paul with a kendo stick on top of the Cell. It didn't help that Ryback and Axel are a long jump down from Lesnar.

The only other option is the winner: the rise of Daniel Bryan. If anyone has had a hotter year in recent memory than Bryan, I can't remember him. He starts out the year as part of one of the best teams in years before moving up to beating everyone in sight. Bryan got the rub of a lifetime with Cena selecting him as the Summerslam opponent and he capitalized on it with the running knee (that was awesome) to pin Cena 100% clean for the title. I say rise of Daniel Bryan because everything after that was pretty horrible for Daniel, so much like Total Divas, we'll just pretend none of that happened and

that Daniel is still WWE Champion.

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2013 Awards: Rookie of the Year

Part one of a double shot today as I forgot to put anything up yesterday.

Rookie of the year is a tricky award in wrestling. What do you classify as a rookie? Bray Wyatt debuted in WWE in 2013, but Husky Harris was around years ago. There's little argument that Shield has been a force in WWE, but they had one match in 2012. It's hard to come up with official criteria, but for the sake of these we'll go with any new character in 2013. I'll leave Shield off because they'll win enough this year. Based on that, there are a lot of nominees this year.

A few honorable mentions:

Sami Zayn. If you watch NXT, you get this one immediately. Sami Zayn is the former El Generico and is currently chasing Bo Dallas' NXT Title. He is about as perfect an underdog as you can ask for and has put on some outstanding matches against guys like Antonio Cesaro and Jack Swagger. He's going to move to WWE one day and will fit like a glove.

Ethan Carter III. He's the Rick Rude of modern wrestling. Now before you old school fans jump down my throat, think about this for a minute. Rude was a glorified comedy wrestler in the WWF but once he jumped to WCW, he became a killer and the top heel in the company for over a year. Carter was as goofy as you could ask a wrestler to be in WWE but he jumped over to TNA and is now playing a solid heel. The guy is going to be a big deal in TNA and is a rare instance of TNA getting a good steal from WWE.

Now for some actual nominees.

Wyatt Family. These guys are CREEPY. If you watch Survivor Series 1990, the crowd goes silent for Undertaker's debut. Not because they're bored, but because they have no idea what to make of the guy in front of them. That's the vibe I get from these guys. Wyatt is so perfect for the character it's unreal as well as a good sign. Instead of letting him be Husky Harris and having him lose for a year before cutting him, they realized the talent that was there and found something that fit him perfectly.

However, he might not have the most potential out of all of them. I dig Luke Harper more and more every time he's out there. That discus clothesline of his is AWESOME and looks like it could take anyone out. The look in his eyes is just disturbing and he's got a great finisher to top it off. What more can you ask for from a guy? He's got a future once the Family breaks up and the gimmick change is so easy too.

Now for the winner: Big E. Langston. This guy is actually a rookie by WWE's standards and looks like he's going to be a big deal for a long time. He's been treated like a monster (save for that stupid loss to Del Rio) and is already in the main event scene. They're actually protecting this guy and he

has the promo skills to back it up. Considering he only started wrestling about four years ago and is just 27 years old, that's remarkable.

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