

Thought of the Day: The Boy Band Of Wrestling. No Not Three Count

Anybody remember them? Aside from Daniel Bryan, what did the original Nexus ever accomplish? Think about it. Of the main seven guys on the team, here are their career accomplishments:

4 Intercontinental Titles

5 Tag Titles

That's it. Of the original seven (Barrett, Sheffield, Young, Otunga, Tarver, Slater, Gabriel) plus Harris and McGillicutty that's all they've won in their entire WWE careers. Those guys debuted almost four years ago and have a resume that Chris Jericho probably accomplished in a two year stretch. They never won anything significant while they were a team and once Barrett lost his title shot they were done completely.

It's really kind of astounding that they were THE story for four to six months and had practically no lasting impact at all. Even once Punk took over the group they didn't do anything as Orton knocked them out one by one in about six weeks. Even the Dungeon of Doom had more accomplishments than this. At the end of the day, the fact that most of them sound like they belong in a cubicle at an accounting firm and had character traits that felt like they were pulled out of a fishbowl and assigned to each member (among other things) crippled them. It's a great lesson in what happens when you put no effort into characters at all.

They're the boy band of wrestling: big deal for awhile, people

kind of remember them, one guy means anything today.

Wrestler of the Day – February 22: Alberto Del Rio

My best option for today was Dos Caras, so here's his more famous (in America that is) son: Alberto Del Rio.

After a successful amateur wrestling career, Alberto would become a professional with AAA before moving on to CMLL. Here's one of his last CMLL matches against Shocker on June 12, 2009.

Dos Caras Jr. vs. Shocker

This is 2/3 falls and Shocker is the tecnico (good guy) coming in. Caras jumps Shocker during the entrances and blasts him with what looked like a pipe to gain the early advantage. I'm assuming it's part of a deviloutfit/gimmick, but I think Caras has a tail. He pulls it off and whips Shocker over the back before taking him outside for a suplex on the ramp. Shocker comes back with one of his own before taking him back inside and ripping off half of Caras' mask, which is a BIG deal in Mexico. There's a hard low blow from Shocker for a very quick DQ.

We take a break and come back with the second fall and I stare at the gorgeous girl holding up the Round 2 sign. Caras scores with a quick superkick and finally takes his shirt off. Shocker shrugs it off and grabs a cross armbreaker of all things for a very fast submission. The second fall didn't even last two minutes.

Back with round three (and an even hotter ring girl in even less

clothing) and both guys pose on the corners. Shocker comes back with a hard clothesline for two and a hurricanrana gets the same. Caras gets a very slow two count off a sunset flip out of the corner but misses a charge and falls to the floor. A nice flip dive by Shocker puts both guys down but it's Caras hooking a surfboard hold back inside.

Shocker counters into an STF but Caras quickly makes the rope and throws Shocker to the mat. A German suplex gets a very close two on Shocker but the referee gets bumped. As he gets back up, Shocker falls to the mat and feigns getting hit low for the DQ in an Eddi Guerrero special.

Rating: C+. I liked the match (though not as much as that second ring girl. My goodness.) but again it would help to know the story. Shocker is a guy I liked when he was in TNA but I haven't seen a ton of him since. You can see Del Rio's offense here and he really hasn't changed much, save for stealing the armbreaker from Shocker.

Caras would be in FCW less than a year later, wrestling under the name of Alberto Banderas.

Alberto Banderas vs. Heath Slater

No date given on this one but commentary references an alliance between Slater and Michael Tarver, which history seems to put in December 2009 or January 2010. This is also a rematch from last week where Banderas won. Alberto takes him to the mat to start and hits the hard kick to the back for two. A hiptoss gets two more on Slater but he pops up and stomps away in the corner. We hit the chinlock for a good while before Banderas comes back with a powerslam but Tarver runs out to shove him off the top for the DQ.

Rating: C-. Just like in 2013, I'm astounded by how much more interesting Del Rio is as a face. He has a charisma that makes me want to care about him which is never present in his heel character. The match was nothing special but the character stuff here was far more interesting than the

wrestling.

Alberto would make his main roster debut on the August 20, 2010 episode of Smackdown, convincing Rey Mysterio to face him later in the night.

AlbertoDelRiovs. ReyMysterio

Del Rio has his own announcer and comes out in a Rolls Royce. The announcer speaks Spanish of course to really hammer in the whole he's evil thing. There are clearly empty seats about 8 rows back from the ring. They couldn't fill those in? It's pretty even to start as Del Rio hits the floor and we take the last break of the show.

Del Rio works on the arm which is apparently a trait in the company as of late. He hits what I think was an enziguri but it was kind of hard to see. According to the replay it hit the arm, which is a very nice touch. Top rope back splash misses and we're back to even. 619 is caught as Del Rio has looked very good so far. Out of nowhere Del Rio gets a cross armbreaker and Rey actually taps out. I don't think a lot of people expected that. I certainly didn't.

Rating: B. Del Rio looked FAR better than I expected him to here. A clean win is far more than you would expect him to. The looks he gives for the whole match are a nice touch as well. This was a good match and a GREAT debut for Del Rio. I'm fairly impressed, though it's only a first impression.

Del Rio would catch fire in a hurry and win the Royal Rumble just four months later. He would face Edge for the World Heavyweight Championship at Wrestlemania 27.

Smackdown World Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Edge

Del Rio is challenging and comes out in a Rolls Royce. The video screen

is made to look like a driveway for Del Rio to be driving from in a cool sight. Also at ringside is Del Rio's bodyguard Brodus Clay. Does anyone even remember that association? Christian is of course here to second Edge. Alberto sends him into the corner to start but Edge comes back with some hard slaps. A backdrop puts Alberto down and a second one puts him on the floor.

Back in and Del Rio grabs an armbar to take over, only to be armdragged down. Alberto goes right back to the arm as Brodus talks trash. Back to the armbar but Del Rio misses a charge and falls out to the floor. Edge dives off the top to take Del Rio down again and we head back inside. The champion heads to the top but Alberto pulls him down with a top rope armdrag for two. Edge comes back with a big boot to get himself a breather but he can't follow up.

A running forearm puts Del Rio down again and a flapjack gets two. Alberto grabs a Codebreaker to the arm but the cross armbreaker is countered into an Edge-0-Matic for two. Del Rio rolls through a rollup and grabs the armbreaker but Edge gets his feet on the ropes to quickly escape. Edge snaps Alberto's neck on the top rope but as he goes up top, Del Rio hits the enziguri in the corner for two.

Brodus and Christian get in a fight on the floor but Del Rio kicks Christian down. There's the Edgecution to set up the spear but it hits post instead. The armbreaker goes on but Edge keeps his hands together...for a minute before Alberto gets the hold on full. Edge gets on top of Alberto to break it up and there's the Edgecator (modified Sharpshooter) but Del Rio rolls away. Not that it matters as Edge pops up and hits the spear to retain.

Rating: C+. For a world title match at Wrestlemania, this was a disappointment. For Edge's last match because his neck was REALLY messed up, this was pretty decent stuff. Edge would retire a few days later and vacate the title, which says to me that he should have put Del Rio over here. At the end of the day it makes Alberto look weak to lose to a guy

that banged up but it did give Edge a good moment to go out on. Nothing great though.

That didn't work out so well but Del Rio would stay in the title hunt, competing in the Smackdown Money in the Bank match.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Kofi Kingston vs. Jack Swagger vs. Evan Bourne vs. R-Truth vs. Alex Riley vs. The Miz vs. Rey Mysterio

Everyone grabs a mini ladder as they come into the ring. Rey comes out last and gets almost ZERO reaction. Everyone has a ladder and they surround Del Rio, beating him down rather easily. Booker picks Evan Bourne which Lawler is surprised at. Some of the guys are out of the ring now and Swagger is thrown out for the second time. Truth and Miz have a stand off and duel a bit.

Swagger takes them both out because that's just smart. He sets up a ladder but Kofi and Bourne run in at the same time for an attempt to go up. Now they team up and take out some heels. Rey gets a rana to take Swagger to the floor again and Truth takes Kofi out. Riley crotches him on a ladder and is the only one standing. Miz comes in for the save but all the ladders are too short anyway so it's not like it matters.

Riley dives over the top and takes out Swagger and Miz in a nice spot. Truth dives over to take out all three of them. Kofi and Rey do a double dive to take all of them out. Bourne goes up and everyone gasps. SHOOTING STAR PRESS ONTO ALL FIVE GUYS!!! Bourne goes up a big ladder but Miz makes the save. Bourne gets a hand on it but so does Miz. Del Rio pops up and shoves it down as Miz may have hurt his knee.

He landed on it coming down and may have jammed it. I think it's worked but it doesn't look right AT ALL. This might be legit actually. Miz is carried out but can't seem to put any weight on the knee. I think he might be actually hurt if the visual is any sign of it. Truth and Del Rio are both climbed over (literally) by Rey and Bourne. The faces hit stereo ranas to take out the heels. That looked SWEET.

Swagger is all alone but Kofi is like screw that and jumps over him onto

the ladder. Swagger puts an ankle lock on him instead and Riley tries to steal the case but fails. Rey vs. Truth at the moment with Rey taking a ladder to the ribs. He climbs onto a ladder but falls onto it face first. Kofi goes up and uses a ladder as a step down for a Boom Drop onto Truth. Booker of course criticizes him for dancing too much.

This match is a lot more choreographed and you can tell it a lot. Truth messes up a see-saw spot to Swagger. Good thing Swagger was nice enough to sit there and let Truth do it again. Rey and Riley slug it out on the ladder but Bourne and Del Rio get ladders of their own. Down goes Alberto and Rey has his hand on it. All seven guys are on ladders in what looks like a clothed orgy, which kind of defeats the purpose but you get the idea.

Down goes Del Rio and there goes Jack too. Bourne is tossed but the other four are all there still. Truth goes down and Kofi gets a swinging kick to knock Rey off. He's all alone but Swagger makes a last second stop. They both fall and it looked VERY bad as Kofi's knee landed on Swagger's throat. HERE'S MIZ! He literally hops down the aisle on one leg but Rey stops (to huge booing).

Rey and Del Rio fight a bit but down goes Del Rio. Never mind as he's coming back up again. Briefcase to Alberto's head but Rey still can't get it. REY'S MASK IS OFF! Everything falls down and Rey has to cover his face. Alberto goes up as Rey is all terrified. Alberto is all alone and it's over. Didn't see that one coming.

Rating: B. Good, but nowhere near as good as the SD one. The spots here were awesome to say the least but the sloppiness hurt it a good bit. Miz coming back in was great and an awesome false finish. Rey losing his mask was rather surprising and I'm seriously wondering how badly hurt Swagger is because that didn't look like a planned fall at all. Messy but fun, which is about par for the course in MITB to be honest.

Del Rio would cash in his title shot at Summerslam, lose it a month later, but then get a rematch at Hell in a Cell 2011.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Alberto Del Rio vs. CM Punk

After big match intros we're ready to go. There's a TON of time for this as it's only about 10 minutes after 10. They emphasize that the fall has to be in the ring. Fair enough. Alberto immediately hits the floor and runs a lot. Both guys chase him and they slide in to get in what they can and the Super Best Friends fight over who gets to beat up Del Rio. Punk tries to steal the title on a rollup but it only gets two.

The big stars face off and both escape the other's finishers. Del Rio tries to take Cena out but gets caught in an AA attempt on the floor. Punk dives onto Del Rio and Cena to break it up for some reason and back in the ring a neckbreaker gets two on Del Rio. The dueling chants begin but after being a CM Punk/Let's Go Cena chant it's turned into Cena Sucks very quickly. See the issue? It's not so much pro Punk but rather anti-Cena.

Del Rio gets back into this and sends Punk into the cage. Cena is down also and Punk is the only one left standing after he takes out Alberto. He loads up a table on the floor but Cena shoves him into the cage to avoid a bulldog. Alberto gets a chair in and hits a belly to back onto the chair with Cena slowing breaking the chair down. That looked good. There are the chants again.

Cena is in the Tree of Woe and Del Rio misses a charge, sending his shoulder into the post. Off to Punk vs. Del Rio and with Punk in trouble, Cena dives off the top with the legdrop and gets two on both guys. This is good so far. AA is escaped by Alberto and he goes for the ribs/back of Cena. Del Rio is sent to the floor and Ricardo fans him off. Cena and Punk slug it out and it's boo/yay time. GTS is broken up by a chair swung by Del Rio.

He picks up the chair and comes off the top with it to land on both of the Super Best Friends, getting two on each. Del Rio charges at Punk in the corner but is dropped over the top and hits the stairs on the way out. You couldn't see it but you could hear it. AA out of nowhere gets two on Punk with Alberto saving. Del Rio is sent to the floor again and this time it's the GTS to Cena for two. Del Rio saves again and sends Punk into the steps. He's been the wild card in this so far and it's working.

Cena is sent into the cage again so it's Punk vs. Del Rio in the ring. Punk fights back and the Macho Elbow gets two. Cena comes back in and sends Punk through the table at ringside. Cena grabs the STF and Ricardo takes down the referee and breaks into the Cell. Ricardo has a pipe with him but Cena takes him down and throws him out of the Cell. Del Rio gets the pipe and bashes Cena with it. He throws Cena out and locks him outside with the key inside. Ok this is interesting.

The Mexican hits a German on the American for two. Punk goes up and Del Rio hits the running enziguiri for two. Cross armbreaker is broken up and Punk fires off the kicks. Leg lariat puts Del Rio down and Cena is just now getting up and figures out that he's locked out. Punk hits the bulldog as Cena looks for the key. Springboard clothesline gets two and Cena is trying to break the chain and the lock open. Alberto goes to the floor and grabs the pipe. It's only about 10:30 so there's plenty of time here. Two pipe shots put Punk down and Del Rio wins it at 24:12. I guess there isn't a lot of time left.

Rating: B+. Good match here as they had time to work with and made it violent. You can have good stuff like this without blood and this was one of the better ones ever. The ending came much earlier than I was expecting and the championship changing is a nice surprise. Also it gives Del Rio a more legitimate title reign which is something he needed. I'm sure Cena vs. Del Rio is booked for Vengeance though.

It's not much of a match and the story means nothing, but here's the main event from the first Raw in Mexico.

John Cena/Jim Ross vs. Alberto Del Rio/Michael Cole

The announcers start us off and Cole talks a lot of trash until JR clocks him. Off to the wrestlers for a wrestling match. What a concept. Alberto and Cena smirk at each other and speed things up. The fans are booing Cena...I think. Off to a chinlock by the champ and the fans are cheering for Cena. Now it's Cena with the chinlock as Josh says Cena weighs 251lbs. That means he gained 20 pounds since his entrance.

Del Rio takes over and we're waiting on the hot tag to Ross it seems. Cole gets some pikes in at Cena and Del Rio gets two. Alberto hits a top rope shot to the head and some kicks. Cena can't see Alberto. Back to the chinlock and the fans cheer Cena but aren't really booing Alberto. The Mexican gets a German on the American for two. Cena fires off some stuff but a running enziguri in the corner stops him for two.

Alberto goes up but misses a senton back splash and Cena engages his finishing sequence. Del Rio runs from the AA and tags in Cole. Cena gives him kind of a belly to belly to bring him in and makes the hot tag to JR. Is JR a big deal in Mexico? I mean, wouldn't he be on the English commentary team which most people in Mexico don't hear? An AA ends Cole and JR gets the win with an ankle lock at 11:40.

Rating: D+. Man this was boring. The Spanish/English/JR thing is still confusing but again it's WWE which at the moment is pretty stupid. I wasn't into this match for the most part because it was just Del Rio vs. Cena and then a screwy ending. Not much to see here and another weak main event from Raw, which is becoming a tradition.

Del Rio would turn face later in the year and receive a surprise title match against Big Show on the January 11, 2013 episode of Smackdown in a last man standing match.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Alberto Del Rio

Last man standing and Show is defending. Show starts with a hard chop and a slam to put Del Rio down for a short count. Del Rio comes back with a superkick to the stomach but gets chopped right back down again. Show pulls out a table but sets it up between the announcers' table and the ring instead of putting it inside. Rather than saving it for later Show pulls Del Rio to the floor and casually slams him through the table for a

six count.

Back in and Del Rio kicks Show in the ribs to knock a chair out of his hands. Del Rio GOES OFF on Show with some chair shots, showing more emotion in a ten second stretch than he's shown in the last two years combined. He goes for the cross armbreaker but Show picks him up and carries him to the ropes. Show tries to throw him to the floor but Del Rio hooks the armbreaker over the ropes for a few moments before finally dropping him.

The fall from the apron gets a seven count on Del Rio as Show rests his arm. We take a break and come back with Alberto hitting a running kick to Show's arm on the floor. Show gets in a shot to break the momentum and slides in another table. Del Rio fires off more kicks to the ribs and dropkicks Show through the table to a big reaction. I'll give Alberto this: he isn't backing down.

That only gets a seven as well so Del Rio jumps on Show's back. After about thirty seconds Show flips Del Rio over but Alberto fires off whatever strikes he can get off to stagger the big man, including a pair of boots in the corner. Del Rio charges into a chokeslam though, drawing an eight count. A headbutt puts Del Rio on the floor and there's the spear through the barricade as Show is known to do.

Alberto gets up AGAIN at nine this time so Show sends him into the ring again. The WMD connects clean....but Del Rio gets up at eight AGAIN. The crowd is losing it in a hurry. Del Rio is down at nine but he was up enough to stop the count. Show picks up the steps but misses a charge into the post and drives the steps into his own head.

Alberto blasts Show with the steps and then hits him with them again in the bad shoulder. A THIRD shot finally puts Show down behind the announce table and in a brilliant move, Del Rio turns the announce table over on top of Show. Show can't escape and Del Rio wins the title at 14:08 shown of 17:38. Ricardo can barely even make the announcement from being so excited.

Rating: B. This wasn't much of a match, but man alive did they put Del Rio over STRONG here. I don't think he'll make it to Mania or even

through Elimination Chamber with the title, but this was a great moment and the place legitimately seemed thrilled that Del Rio won the title. To say they're pushing him as a big deal is an understatement. One thing though: JBL said Alberto survived two KO punches and I read the same in a spoiler, but I only saw one here. Not that it matters much but that was curious.

Del Rio would hold the title going into Wrestlemania 29 where he would defend against the winner of the Elimination Chamber, Jack Swagger.

Smackdown World Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Jack Swagger

Swagger's entrance is cut off as he and Colter are in the ring after the video package. Colter goes on his usual rant about how awful New York is because of all the non-English languages being spoken. Apparently those foreigners are plotting something. Swagger pounds away to start but Del Rio sends him to the floor for a baseball slide. Alberto pounds on Jack on the floor for a bit before heading inside again. Colter starts distracting the champion immediately and Jack takes over.

A hard clothesline gets two for Swagger and it's off to an armbar, which Del Rio rolls up for two. Swagger comes back with the Vader Bomb for two but as he tries to wrap the champion's legs around the post, Alberto pulls Jack's shoulder into the post. Back in and Swagger charges into a boot to the face and there are some clotheslines from the champion. Both Swagger and Colter get kicked in the face with the actual wrestler getting covered for two as a result.

The armbreaker is countered and Swagger hits a high belly to belly suplex for two. Jack goes after the leg but the Patriot Lock is quickly broken up. The Vader Bomb is broken up as well and Del Rio hits the ten forearms to the back followed by the Backstabber for two. The champion hits a hard German suplex for two but the armbreaker is countered into the gutwrench powerbomb for two.

There's another Patriot Lock but as Swagger tries the grapevine, Del Rio slides over into the armbreaker in a sweet counter. Jack powers out of that into the Patriot Lock again but Alberto makes the rope. Another gutwrench powerbomb is countered and Del Rio fires off a kick to the head, only to hurt his ankle even more.

The corner enziguri hits Swagger but Colter puts the foot on the ropes at two. Ricardo goes after Zeb but gets kicked in the ankle. Del Rio and Colter both have a crutch but the distraction lets Swagger deck Alberto. They head back in and there's the cross armbreaker out of nowhere for the tap out at 10:37. It was as sudden as it sounds.

Rating: C+. That ending came out of nowhere and cut short what was looking to be a good match. Thankfully they kept this a mat based match which is where both of these guys shine. The counters were pretty sweet out there and both guys looked good, but at the end of the day that ending stopped this dead in its tracks, which is a shame.

Alberto would trade the title with Dolph Ziggler over the summer before heading into Summerslam to defend against Christian.

Smackdown World Title: Christian vs. Alberto Del Rio

Christian won a three way to get the shot and has pinned Del Rio twice in the last few weeks. Alberto makes Lillian do his intro in Spanish in a nice touch. Christian quickly sends Del Rio out to the floor but misses a baseball slide. Back in and Del Rio escapes a top rope rana attempt and hits an enziguri to send Christian into the Tree of Woe. Alberto fires off kicks to the chest and a running one somewhere near the shoulder.

Del Rio sends the shoulder into the barricade, meaning he has his psychology boots on tonight. Alberto sends Christian crashing down to the mat and hits a dropkick to the shoulder. King: "That'll shake your maracas." A top rope stomp to the shoulder gets two but Christian avoids a running crotch attack in the ropes to send the champion to the floor.

Christian hits a BIG dive off the top to take Del Rio down again and Christian pounds away back inside.

Del Rio misses a top rope enziguri and takes a high cross body for two. Alberto begs for a breather but suckers Christian in for a headbutt to the ribs. Christian flips out of a belly to back but can't hit the Killswitch. The sunset flip out of the corner is countered into the Backstabber (the knees clearly slid off to the side and never hit the back) for two. A rollup gets two for Christian but he gets caught by the corner enziguri for another near fall. This is MUCH better than I was expecting coming in.

The sunset flip out of the corner is blocked by Alberto but Christian hits a running enziguri of his own. A top rope hurricanrana gets a VERY close two for the challenger as the fans are way into these near falls. The spear is countered by a fast dropkick for two for the champion and the low superkick gets the same. Del Rio lowers his knee pad but another shot to the head is countered into a rollup for two. There's the spear but Christian's arm gives out (THANK YOU! Edge did the same spot in 2001 but pinned Lance Storm like it was nothing). Del Rio grabs the armbreaker out of nowhere and Christian TAPS at 12:34.

Rating: B+. I REALLY liked this match but the 50/50 booking is so stupid. Christian beat Del Rio twice clean in a few weeks but now Del Rio gets a win so we're supposed to be impressed? It doesn't work that way no matter what WWE thinks. Enough of the bad stuff though as this was a great match with both guys looking awesome out there. The crowd was totally into it and the ending was a surprise. Really good stuff here.

We'll wrap it up with a match against the hottest star in wrestling right now.

Daniel Bryan vs. Alberto Del Rio

Non-title of course. Daniel is aggressive to start but gets caught in a

quick suplex and chinlock less than two minutes into the match. Bryan suplexes out of it and fires off the kicks, only to get caught in a Backstabber for two. Del Rio avoids a running dropkick in the corner and stomps away as we take a break. Back with Bryan missing the headbutt but almost getting the YES Lock, only to have Del Rio make the ropes. Del Rio comes back with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two as he's bleeding from the lip a bit.

Bryan explodes out of the corner with a clothesline but Del Rio hits a Codebreaker on the arm for two. A middle rope dropkick gets two for Del Rio and he avoids a charge, sending Bryan shoulder first into the post. The corner enziguri misses though and both guys are down. Bryan fires off the kicks to the chest and the running dropkick in the corner followed by the top rope hurricanrana for two.

Del Rio is kicked to the floor and hit by the FLYING GOAT. Back inside and the missile dropkick has Del Rio in trouble but here's Orton on the big screen. He apologizes for what happened to Brie earlier but says he'll go check on her. Orton goes into the trainer's room and Brie can be heard screaming after the door shuts. Bryan gets rolled up for two but kicks Del Rio in the head and runs to the back for the countout at 16:29.

Rating: C+. The match was ok but this show is so far beyond saving at this point that it doesn't matter. At least they didn't do the same distraction leads to a pin sequence and they didn't job the champion again. This Orton vs. Bryan feud is just not working though and I think everyone knows it.

Alberto is a very talented guy who can work a great match at times, but at the same time his character in WWE has crippled him for years now. There's just nothing there that we haven't seen before and it's really become a problem. His in ring psychology is always great and he's fine once the bell rings, but unfortunately that's nowhere near as important.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of on the History of Summerslam at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00HY4NV7Y>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Wrestler of the Day – February 21: Carlito

We'll switch from Canada to Puerto Rico today with Carlito.

Carlito is of course the son of legendary Puerto Rican wrestler Carlos Colon and got his start in his dad's promotion, the World Wrestling Council. To be clear, I don't know a ton about Puerto Rican wrestling so I'll keep it simpler with them. From what I can tell, one of Carlito's (Carly Colon in the WWC) biggest rivals is Ray Gonzales, so here's their first meeting from January 6, 2000.

Carly Colon vs. Ray Gonzalez

Carlito has almost no hair here and is in a white undershirt and black pants. It's actually a FAR better look than he had in the WWE. Gonzalez shoves him down to start and slams him for good measure as we're still in first gear. Carlito comes back with a hiptoss and slam of his own, sending Ray out to the floor. A backdrop puts Gonzalez down and the stalling continues. Since when is Puerto Rico in south Memphis? Carlito hammers away in the corner before jumping over Gonzalez and trying what looked to be a Stunner, sending Ray running to the floor.

The fans are firmly behind Carlito here and he takes Gonzalez down with a headlock. Gonzalez fights up and is sent outside as the very slow pace continues. I think we take a break and come back with Carlito getting two off a rollup. Carlito hammers away in the corner and goes for the legs but Gonzales rolls outside AGAIN. Back in and Carlito counters a backbreaker attempt with a headscissors but Gonzalez slams him down to take over.

Ray pounds away at Carlito's head but Carlito comes back with left hands of his own. A nice TKO puts Carlito down again but Gonzalez puts on a chinlock instead of covering. This goes on for a LONG while as the announcers freak out about something. Back up and Carlito gets a delayed sunset flip for two but Ray takes his head off with a clothesline and it's back to the chinlock. Gonzalez elbows him down and goes up but Carlito slams him down with ease.

A rollup gets two for Carlito as things speed WAY up. Ray loads up a foreign object but Carlito kicks it away and avoids a charge. The referee goes down as Carlito puts on a figure four, drawing in a second referee. Ray makes the ropes and kicks Carlito low before going outside to get a shovel. Carlito throws powder in his face though and blasts Gonzalez in the face with the shovel for the pin. A bunch of fans swarm Carlito after the match to celebrate.

Rating: C-. I have a feeling there's a big story here that I didn't get at all. I liked Carlito here as his look was FAR easier to take seriously, but at the same time it was clear he didn't know how to get through a long match. Gonzalez would get the Universal Title a few days after this and drop it to Carlito before the end of the month. Not bad but the story would help a lot.

Carlito stuck around for a few more years before heading to OVW in 2003. After about a year there, he debuted on Smackdown on October 7, 2004. He would actually get a US Title match that night after talking his way onto champion John Cena's bad side.

US Title: John Cena vs. Carlito Caribbean Cool

They would shorten the name later. Carlito bails to the floor from a ticked off Cena and we're off fast. A clothesline puts the challenger down on the floor and Cena blasts him in the face with an inflatable hand. Back in and Cena takes him up for a suplex and does squats while holding Carlito in the air. A big backdrop takes Carlito down again and a legdrop gets two. There's a side slam to send Carlito outside and John whips him into the steps for good measure.

Back in and Cena gets low bridged to the floor and Carlito rams him into the announce table. Carlito rakes the eyes and loads up a piledriver, only to be catapulted into the crowd. We take a break and come back with Cena ramming Carlito into the buckle but missing a middle rope cross body. A suplex gets two on the champion and a slingshot elbow drop gets the same.

We hit the chinlock on John but he fights back with a backdrop. Cena makes his comeback and gets two off the Shuffle but Carlito counters the AA. He bails to the floor and brings in the title belt but it's only a distraction. The referee takes it away so Carlito gets Cena's chain and knocks him out cold for the pin and the title.

Rating: C-. That's quite the debut but it doesn't make him look like anything impressive. I remember watching this live and not getting the appeal of Carlito at all. He looked different but he didn't do anything to impress me at all. This feud never worked for me either and I'm afraid that's mainly on Carlito.

Carlito would hold the title for a few months before dropping it to a ticked off Cena in about 30 seconds. He would then pick up a bodyguard in Matt Morgan and face Big Show at Judgment Day 2005.

Big Show vs. Carlito

After a quick Carlito promo running down Minnesota we're ready to go. Carlito runs a lot until Show finally gets his hands on him. Show chops away as Cole says that's like hitting yourself in the chest with a frying pan. One, why would you know what that feels like? Two, why would you hit yourself with a frying pan? Three, wouldn't it be like someone hitting you with a frying pan? Four, why am I paying attention to Michael Cole?

Anyway, Show dominates because Carlito has nothing to fight him with. Morgan interferes and gets in some offense on the floor but Show kicks out of the covers from Carlito with ease. Cole says Show's head is like a typewriter. How in the world does his head remind you of a typewriter? Show keeps hammering away but accidentally elbows the referee. Low blow puts Show down and Morgan pops in for a big boot and an F5 (bad execution, awesome setup) for Carlito to get the pin.

Rating: D. This probably should have been on Smackdown to set up Morgan vs. Show which is a more interesting match. No one was really interested in Show vs. Carlito as Carlito had no real threat to Show at all as you saw here. Pretty boring match but Morgan looked very impressive.

Soon after this Carlito would be sent to Raw and receive an Intercontinental Title shot in his first match on Mondays, facing Shelton Benjamin on June 20, 2005.

Intercontinental Title: Shelton Benjamin vs. Carlito

Carlito hammers away to start but runs to the floor when Shelton looks up at him. Shelton tries a dive over the ropes but doesn't get a running start and hooks his toe on the ropes, leaving him short of Carlito and crashing down onto the floor. That wasn't on Carlito as he was in place but Shelton didn't get far enough. We take a break and come back with Carlito getting two off some kicks to the back.

Shelton fights out of a front facelock and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Benjamin goes up top for a top rope clothesline and a two count. He looks very shaky out there after crashing on the floor. A northern lights suplex gets two for the champion but he walks into a DDT for two. Shelton comes out of the corner with a sunset flip for two and a Samoan drop for the same off a very sloppy looking cover. Even JR points out how bad it looked. Carlito grabs a rollup out of nowhere for the pin with a grab of the ropes.

Rating: D+. The match was pretty bad but a lot of that was due to the botch and subsequent injuries. Shelton just did not look right at all after that and it was really messing things up out there. Carlito was getting more into a groove at this point but it still didn't work all that well.

That win means Carlito won titles in his debut matches as a member of the Raw and Smackdown rosters. After losing the title he would eventually hook up with the newcomer Chris Masters, eventually receiving a Tag Team Title shot at Wrestlemania 22.

Raw Tag Titles: Carlito/Chris Masters vs. Big Show/Kane

The monsters are defending here. Kane and Masters start stuff out and the 6'5 Masters looks tiny by comparison. Show headbutts him from the apron before coming in legally for some chops. A poke to Big Show's eye slows him down and here's Carlito who is immediately chopped down. Masters is slammed down as well with Show throwing Carlito over the top and out onto Chris.

Kane goes up top and dives onto both guys as the challengers are in trouble. Somewhere in between there the turnbuckle pad has been removed and Show misses a charge, going head first into said buckle. It doesn't seem to have much effect though as Show suplexes both guys down with ease. Off to Kane as everything breaks down. Kane pounds away on Carlito in the corner and hits the side slam for no cover.

The top rope clothesline misses Masters though and there's the Masterlock to Kane. Show breaks it up seconds later but there's the Backstabber to Kane. The chokeslam is broken up by Masters and Show is sent to the floor. Kane's double chokeslam attempt is broken up but after causing some heel miscommunication, a solo version to Carlito retains the titles.

Rating: C. Not bad here but this is one of the matches that probably could have been cut for the sake of trimming the show a bit. The match was a squash and not a very interesting one either. That's the problem with a pair of giants like Big Show and Kane: there's no one that can stop them and the resulting matches are dull at times. Not bad but it felt like a Raw match.

Carlito would turn face over the summer by hooking up with Trish Stratus. Evil Randy Orton would go after Trish, setting up a quick feud with a match at Unforgiven 2006.

Randy Orton vs. Carlito

I still like Burn in My Light better than Voices. This is more or less the apex of Carlito's WWE push. Standard stuff to start which is fine. Randy takes over and we get an RK0 chant. I love Canadian crowds. So much for that Randy takes over aspect as Carlito hits some nice springboard splashes. Both guys have nice dropkicks also. Orton's mouth is busted, which today would bring a match to a screeching halt.

It's chinlock time, which was more prevalent back in the day if you can believe that. Carlito hits a Downward Spiral which is a required move in this company I think. RK0 is countered into the Backcracker and is told they have two minutes left. To end it, Carlito does a double springboard into a spinning clothesline. It doesn't hit though as Orton pulls him into the RK0 in a SWEET counter. Awesome ending to a bad match.

Rating: D+. This was rather boring. It's nothing great at all as the whole thing was about the ending. Carlito was a rather

odd worker as he had such a different style but it just never clicked for more than like one match in a row. This was rather short and didn't really ever get off the ground, but after the long celebration with Trish they're likely short on time.

Carlito wouldn't do much at all for the next year though he would get back into the title scene at Summerslam 2007 in a triple threat match for the Intercontinental Title with champion Umaga and Mr. Kennedy.

Intercontinental Title: Mr. Kennedy vs. Carlito vs. Umaga

No real story here other than Umaga is defending and these two are at the Intercontinental level. Kennedy tries to negotiate and gets punched in the face by Umaga. Carlito loads up the apple but gets punched as well, giving the champion complete control so far. The challengers fall out to the floor and finally start going after Umaga at the same time, though it has the same result. Carlito gets in a cheap shot from behind to send Umaga to the floor and Kennedy rams the champion into the steps.

Back in and Carlito gets two off a rollup but gets caught using the ropes. Everyone in this is either a heel or close enough to call them one. Carlito hits a springboard back elbow to the jaw for two on Kennedy but gets caught in a Stroke for no cover. Instead Kennedy goes after Umaga but gets pulled to the floor instead of getting in a cheap shot. Umaga hits a middle rope headbutt on Carlito but Kennedy saves Carlito from a charging Samoan.

Carlito knocks Kennedy to the floor and gets two on the champion before asking for an alliance with Kennedy. The champion won't be double suplexed but easily hits one on the other guys. Umaga is back up first to clean house and a spinning Rock Bottom gets two on Kennedy. A superkick puts Carlito in the corner and a running hip attack crushes him again. Kennedy sends Umaga to the floor and hits a rolling senton on Carlito, only to have Umaga come back in with the Samoan Spike on Kennedy for the pin.

Rating: D+. The match wasn't bad but this could have been on any given episode of Raw. Umaga was fine for a monster and would soon be slain by Jeff Hardy. Kennedy was supposed to be in a huge story coming up but a Wellness violation derailed those plans. As for Carlito....there's just nothing interesting to say about him. He exists and that's about it.

It would be another year before Carlito would do anything else of note when he hooked up with his cousin Primo. The two received a Smackdown Tag Title shot on September 26, 2008.

Smackdown Tag Titles: Primo/Epico vs. Edgeheads

That would be Zack Ryder/Curt Hawkins defending the titles. Hawkins and Primo get things going with Primo grabbing a quick flying headscissors for two. Off to Carlito for a slam before he drops Primo on top of Hawkins for two. Ryder offers a distraction and Hawkins sends Carlito shoulder first into the post.

Off to Zack who works on the injured arm with a hammerlock before it's back to Hawkins for some kicks to the back. Armbars a go-go continue as Carlito keeps trying to get over for a tag. We take a quick break and come back with Primo coming in and cleaning house as everything breaks down. Carlito gets a quick tag and a Backstabber to Ryder is enough for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much to see either as they didn't have time to go anywhere and the arm work was completely forgotten after the break. Hawkins and Ryder weren't much of a tag team and the division was pretty clearly not going to last much longer. Thankfully that would change soon.

The two Tag Titles would be unified at Wrestlemania 25 with the Colons winning the belts. Here's a title defense in a triple threat from The Bash.

Unified Tag Titles: Edge/Chris Jericho vs. Colons vs. Legacy

The original two teams won't let Jericho and Edge in to start which is a nice bit of thinking. Carlito and Ted start and Carlito does a gorgeous moonsault off the top. The team that speaks Spanish has the belts here. They're trying to keep Edge and Jericho out of the ring, I'm assuming betting they'll win if they get in, which is kind of odd for faces to be all scared like that. I think the fans are chanting for Christian of all people.

This is similar to the Horsemen/Dungeon of Doom match from Bash at the Beach 96 where Benoit and Anderson knew the Giant would destroy them if he came in so they wouldn't let him in. It made sense and this does as well. Primo gets a nice rollup on Rhodes for two. It's so strange hearing Orton talked about as being so hated a mere year ago and 9 months before he was the hottest thing in the world. Cody hooks an inverted Gory Special that looks awesome.

The fans love Edge here which is rather odd indeed. Jericho takes Primo out with a Codebreaker and we have Edge vs. fired guy. Carlito misses it though and Rhodes gets a backstabber. A spear gives the Canadians the belts after being in the match all of 20 seconds combined. As I type that, Lawler says it. At least I wasn't imagining it.

Rating: B. While the wrestling wasn't anything spectacular, the thought process here was perfect. They planned this one out very well and it made perfect sense which is a great thing in my eyes. They knew they couldn't stop Edge or Jericho so they kept them out as long as they could. That's smart booking and it worked just fine.

Carlito would be gone by early 2011 and it was back to Puerto Rico. We'll wrap this up with a match against Savio Vega at Summer Madness 2013.

Carlito vs. Savio Vega

Again I'm not sure what's going on here but I think it's some kind of a power struggle. Vega jumps him to start and the brawl starts on the floor. Carlito gets choked up against the steps and they head inside for the first time. Carlito avoids a charge into the post and DEAR GOODNESS SOMEONE KILL THE FAN WITH THE HORN!!! Vega comes back in but gets stomped down as Carlito walks around a lot.

Back up and Vega scores with some right hands, only to get dropped by a big one from Carlito. Vega still has his vest on and we're nearly seven minutes into this. Carlito slowly sends him into the corner before scoring with a suplex. Vega tries to get up but gets pummeled with punches and slaps. That guy is still honking his horn. Is that a thing in Puerto Rico or something? Savio misses a splash in the corner and Carlito stands around even more. You could cut out ten minutes of standing there and the match would have the same amount of action.

An elbow to the jaw puts Savio down again for a very delayed two count and we hit the chinlock. Back up and Carlito charges into a boot to the jaw followed by some right hands. Carlito tries a springboard but lands on his feet and gets kicked in the jaw as Savio mistimed the landing. Vega misses a spinwheel kick but kicks out at two as both guys are spent.

Carlito heads outside and pulls out a chair, only to have the referee try to take it away. Savio scores with a nice superkick for two and picks up the chair, only to get into a pulling match with the referee (who seems to be a special guest). Savio lets go and Carlito gets blasted in the head but kicks out at two. A superkick by Carlito gets two for him as well so he loads up the apple. Savio ducks and fires off green mist which misses as well, but Vega grabs a rollup for the fast pin.

Rating: C+. I liked this far better than the Gonzalez match as they were telling a story in the ring rather than something you needed a backstory to understand. Vega seemed to be the face here and made the classic

comeback before countering Carlito spit for spit and winning with a rollup. Nice touch.

Overall....I just don't get Carlito. I didn't care for him when he was in WWE and I haven't cared for anything else he's done before or since. The hair was a big problem for him as he looks more like Sideshow Bob than a tough guy and the purple trunks made it even worse. Give him the skills he had with the look he was using back in 2000 and he's WAY easier to buy. Not my favorite guy to put it mildly.

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More In Depth Thoughts On Monday Night Raw – February 24, 2014

This was one of those special shows that sticks with you for awhile after it's over and that's exactly what WWE needed right now.

To begin with, Hulk Hogan returned to announce that he will be hosting Wrestlemania XXX. I know a lot of people haven't been pleased with Hogan

due to all of the nonsense in TNA, but at the end of the day he has to be at a major Wrestlemania. Yes he's old, not in ring shape and can't remember a basic line like WWE Network, but HE'S HULK HOGAN. He was the hero to a lot of children over a generation including myself. He'll be around in the coming weeks and will probably use his powers before then so things will be fine. It's a great moment and just felt right.

Next up we had the first of the How To guides for the Network. There were several of them last night but they were far less obnoxious than the WWE Apps ones. Also you have to expect these as it's actually a big deal for a change instead of the stupid App. This was fine and they'll be fine over the upcoming months.

Batista and Del Rio had a rematch from Sunday and surprisingly enough, Batista got pinned. Yeah it was off a distraction, but it was his second singles match back in the company. The crowd still didn't want to see Batista, but at least the promo after the match gave signs of hope. Batista isn't going to work as a face and at least the company seems to have caught on to that idea. They're not going to do a heel vs. heel title match though, leaving a few distinct possibilities for Wrestlemania.

They could turn Orton, but he's come off as such a spineless coward when dealing with the Authority that I don't think it's going to work. The other big option is to add someone else to the match to make it a triple threat. The only two serious options are Punk and Bryan, but Daniel seems to be locked into a HHH match and Punk might not even be on the show. For the life of me I can't imagine Batista and Orton getting a one on one match, but stranger things have happened. I can't think of any at the moment but I'm sure they have.

Big E. survived against Cesaro but it was a good example of a match where both guys looked good. It also looked to set up the Real Americans split due to Swagger costing Cesaro a potential win (emphasis on the word potential, as Cesaro was going to set up the Neutralizer but hadn't knocked Big E. out yet). Cesaro needs to beat Swagger at Wrestlemania and split from Colter, but it would only destroy Swagger even more. He needs to do something but that's been the case for years.

Cena and the Wyatts were up next in a match that we've known was coming for at least a month now. The storyline coming in seems to be a (fake) knee injury for Cena which is a basic idea that has been done before but still works wonders if done right. Cena vs. the Wyatts is going to depend on how serious John takes it. If he treats them like the monsters they are and acts cautious but serious he'll be fine. On the other hand, if he treats them as goofy guys who wear weird close and have insane hair, the feud is going to come off as a joke, even if Wyatt wins. Thankfully it was Serious Cena on Monday so I'm cautiously optimistic.

The interesting thing here though is how the WWE has kind of booked themselves into a corner. After Sunday, the logical match would seem to be Shield vs. Wyatts II in a gimmick match (elimination tag maybe?) but instead we're getting Cena vs. Wyatt. Now that being said, the singles match will be fine but it's not the match that the people seem to be clamoring for. Wyatt beating Cena on the biggest stage of them all will be great for his career but it's not great for short term booking.

Christian vs. Sheamus was fine, but it's clear that Christian is not going to be anything more than he is right now and that his time is winding down. The match wasn't bad but Sheamus was carrying him for the most part. I'm not sure where these two go at Wrestlemania, but there's a chance the two of them will have a match that no one wants to see.

Ambrose and Reigns having an argument would seem to foreshadow a match at Wrestlemania, but I'm hoping Reigns doesn't get the title. He's too good for that kind of a burial.

I'm glad we got Bryan vs. Kane out of the way. Those two have been in a story for over a year and a half now and they needed to have a blowoff match. I didn't buy the idea that it was happening at Wrestlemania and having it here on Raw was the right call. Bryan got the pin with the running knee and then challenged HHH to a match at Wrestlemania. No it isn't the title match, but it makes the most sense with the story they've been telling. Believe it or not the best move would actually be Bryan beating HHH for the title, but that's opening up a can of worms that isn't worth the payoff.

One more note: get the undershirt off Kane. He looks like Marlon Brando from Streetcar Named Desire.

Emma and Summer Rae...happened. That's really the only way to describe it. Emma is getting better but Santino continues to take the focus off of her. Why is she stuck in this dancers feud when AJ is desperate for ANY competition? If nothing else they've got Emma in her ring gear, which is always going to get a better pop than being mostly covered up like she's been since debuting.

As I saw in another review: the Usos and Outlaws need to watch the Hart Foundation vs. the Bolsheviks from Wrestlemania VI. Thankfully the Usos getting the titles seems to still be happening.

Bray and Roman had their singles match and it ended the only way it could have. It wasn't a classic or anything but it was a match in the last hour

of a huge show in Wisconsin. Give them a build with an atmosphere on a bigger stage and the quality goes up. Reigns needs more ring time on his own though.

That brings us to the big ending of the show. Again, Lesnar vs. Undertaker was pretty much set in stone months ago but the match was still awesome. I'd like to remind you of something: HE STABBED HIM WITH THE PEN. For the first time in years Undertaker is the aggressor in a feud and that's an idea I can get behind. It might have been seventeen years ago, but go back and watch his stuff from the Attitude Era. Undertaker is at his best when he just starts breaking stuff and it's even better when he breaks them with people's bodies. I'm not sure if Undertaker can keep up with Lesnar's physical style, but the build is going to be fun.

Raw this week was supposed to be a big show and it worked like a charm. At the end of the show I was ready for Wrestlemania for the first time this year and that's exactly what it was supposed to do. There are still five weeks to adjust some things and the main event is still up in the air, but the rest of the card looks solid from here. It looks more like Wrestlemania XIX than Wrestlemania XVII, but that's not the worst thing in the world.

One of the most interesting things last night was the amount of ring time the matches got. We had four matches break fourteen minutes and another that got ten. There were almost no recaps or stupid backstage segments and the show worked far better. I'm not saying there's no place for a backstage bit here and there, but we don't need to see these long drawn out segments to reenforce stuff that's already been made.

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More In Depth Thoughts On Elimination Chamber 2014

This is a bit late but it's been a busy few days.

The pre-show match was nothing special but it was nice to see Cody and Goldust get a win. They're too talented to be wasted jobbing to guys like Ryback and Axel. Their run at the top of the division is long over but at least they can still do stuff like this.

Swagger vs. Langston was WAY better than I was expecting. Jack needs to change something up though as his character is just so damaged. It's almost impossible to shake that stigma when you're the same character with the same moves and look every single night. It also doesn't help that he's in there with Cesaro who is getting a huge push at the moment and looking like a star. There's talent in Swagger but he needs to be repackaged like two years ago.

Langston looked good and there's always going to be a spot for someone who can just run people over and throw them across the ring.

I'll look at all the Bad News Barrett bits at once. The idea is good but the execution hasn't worked for me. Just telling people that they're fat and that Europeans are better isn't going to get him anywhere. Have him do actual bad news like "chant all you want, Bryan isn't getting the match" or "the fans don't care about you" and the character serves a purpose other than just randomly appearing for ten seconds.

The Outlaws retaining the titles is fine if they actually drop the things at Wrestlemania. At the end of the day though, it doesn't help that they keep winning the matches clean, thereby looking better than the challengers. The Outlaws got over by using every possible method of cheating known to man and then inventing some of their own back in the 90s. Since then the power of nostalgia has made them into great workers and people are acting like that actually happened. It would work for the Hardy Boys or a team like that, but this is getting more and more bizarre every week.

Titus vs. Darren was exactly what I thought it would be. The crowd didn't care for most of the match so thankfully the guys went home in a hurry. Titus will be good when he gets a better opponent. I feel sorry for Young as he's not terrible but there's just nothing special to him and it's showing.

I don't know what I can say about Shield vs. the Wyatts. The match was amazing and everyone looked like a star. The booking was great too with Reigns getting caught 3-1, thereby protecting him from taking a big loss. Yeah he got pinned, but no one is going to look down on him for not being able to fight off all three Wyatts at once.

AJ vs. Cameron was what it was. Cameron looks good in the shorts and

tight top but there's just nothing there in the ring. Thankfully it looks like we're moving towards AJ vs. Tamina who can go in the ring.

That brings us to one of the more interesting match of the night. Batista had his first singles match since his comeback and looked pretty horrible. The match was basically a squash until the very end, but the more interesting part though was the crowd. They flat out do not care about Batista at all and do not want to see him in the ring. A heel turn will help, but he needs to do something more than that at this point.

Del Rio wasn't bad out there but he might as well have been anyone on the roster. He looked fine in the ring like he always did, but he was little more than Del Rio being sacrificed to Batista to set up a match that almost no one wants to see. The wrestling was fine but the crowd was the story here and it's a story that needs to be fixed sooner rather than later.

The Chamber was about what everyone was expecting but it was still very entertaining. Sheamus and Cesaro having a brawl throughout the entire match worked very well and I could see the two of them having a match at Wrestlemania as a result. Sheamus never had a chance to win but that Brogue Kick through the pod was as good looking of a spot as you were going to get. Cesaro didn't really get to show off that much but the win over Orton and showcase match against Cena were more important than looking good in a match he wasn't going to win anyway.

The rest of the match was fine as well with Orton taking a beating but surviving long enough to keep the title. Kane and the Wyatts interfering was predictable but it still worked quite well. Bryan getting screwed over sets up HHH vs. Bryan at Wrestlemania (in theory) and Cena vs. Bray is ready to go as well. Good match to end a very good show.

The main story coming out of Elimination Chamber was that WWE being on the road to Wrestlemania. Things have cranked up again this year and the next six weeks are going to be a very fun time. I could even live with the Network stuff as it's certainly a huge moment that deserves the hype it received. Great show here with Shield vs. Wyatts being must see stuff.

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Cena's Knee Injury A Work

Pretty much confirmed at this point. The refusal to accept further treatment was kind of a giveaway.

Monday Night Raw – February 24, 2014: That Old Feeling

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 24, 2014

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

To say tonight is a stacked card is an understatement. First and foremost we have a slew of returning stars, including Hulk Hogan, Brock Lesnar, Shawn Michaels and potentially Undertaker. It's also the night after Elimination Chamber which saw a masterpiece between Shield and the Wyatt Family and Randy Orton retaining the WWE Title inside the Chamber. The interesting thing is what happens with Daniel Bryan, who was screwed out of the title again, leading to a tirade from Michael Cole about how it has to stop. Let's get to it.

We open with the return of Hulk Hogan to a very nice reaction. He soaks it in...and almost immediately screws up his lines, saying the WWE Universe has officially launched. Hogan almost saves it by saying the Universe launched the Network. He talks about his career making a turn as he's coming home to be the official host of Wrestlemania XXX. So whatcha gonna do when Hulkamania runs wild on you brother?

The announcers show us how to use the Network on various platforms.

Batista vs. Alberto Del Rio

The reaction is somehow even worse than last night. Batista points out one of the Boo-Tista signs in the crowd with a little smirk. Dave pounds him into the corner with right hands to start and a clothesline sends Del Rio outside. Alberto goes back first into the apron before being sent back inside for a suplex. Batista clotheslines him back to the floor but Del Rio trips him up and drops him on the apron. Del Rio sends him into the steps as Lawler talks about the reaction at the Rumble, coming to the logical conclusion of the fans just wanted to see Bryan.

Back from a break with Del Rio stomping on Batista in the ring. Batista comes back with some shots of his own and takes Del Rio down with some clotheslines. A Codebreaker on the arm puts Batista on the mat but he ducks the low superkick and avoids the charge in the corner. There's the spinebuster but here's Randy Orton as well, allowing Del Rio to roll Batista up for the pin at 10:17.

Rating: D+. This felt more like an angle than a match and at this point that's the best thing that can happen to Batista. Del Rio hasn't been bad lately but the fans are going to cheer anyone that's against Batista right now. The match didn't have time to go anywhere with most of it being in a commercial.

Randy calls that one of the funniest things he's ever seen before talking about the fans rejecting Batista ever since he came back. He thinks Batista must regret returning but Batista says Orton couldn't be more wrong. Batista loves this business and the fans have their own voice. However, he has his own voice too and will boo them right back. He'll be going to Wrestlemania to fight one of his former friends and taking the title, so deal with it.

Cesaro vs. Big E.

Non-title. Big E. quickly runs him over with a shoulder but Cesaro comes back with a series of knees to the ribs. A very nice overhead belly to belly sends Cesaro flying and some running shoulders in the corner are good for two. Back up and they collide before Cesaro kicks Big E. in the face to take over. We hit the chinlock for a bit before a series of backbreakers put Cesaro down. Cesaro puts him down with a headlock as JBL and Cole have an unfunny conversation about what the E. stands for. Cesaro catches a charging Big E. in a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro holding a chinlock but Big E. fights up for a gorilla press. He misses a charge into the post though and Cesaro pounds away in the corner before putting on a chinlock. A big powerslam gets two on E. and Cesaro tells Colter he's got it. We hit the chinlock again but Big E. fights up, only to get caught in a sleeper. He rolls free and slams Cesaro down before taking off the straps.

Cesaro escapes the Big Ending and somehow hits Swiss Death for a VERY close two. The Swing is countered and Big E. hits something like a Rock Bottom out of the corner. Big E. is sent to the floor but he has to run over Swagger, allowing Cesaro to Swing the champion. Cesaro looks to set up the Neutralizer but Swagger comes in for the DQ at 15:50.

Rating: C+. This was a match with two big guys beating the tar out of each other for fifteen minutes and you can't screw something like that up. Cesaro is an absolute freak but Big E. was more than holding his own out there. The Real Americans need to split already as Cesaro is ready to make a big jump but Swagger is holding him down.

Post match Big E. goes after Jack but Cesaro jumps him from behind and hits the Neutralizer.

Stills of the Chamber and the Wyatts costing Cena the match.

Here's Cena to finally address the Wyatts. First off though, he says how great it is to see Hulk Hogan back where he belongs. Over the last few weeks Cena has been saying that anyone who wants to get to the top of the WWE has to go through him. The fans are of course split and Cena is of course cool with that idea. This brings him to Bray Wyatt, who has caused quite a stir since he showed up around here.

Last night Cena came face to face with Bray Wyatt and Bray cost him a championship match. That was a bold move and John Cena is right here if Bray wants to make another bold move. Here's the whole Family to respond but Bray sits in his chair in the aisle. He says this world has an infection and a virus known as the human race. Through all of these times it makes sense that Cena would put himself right in the middle of all of them. What would the world be without its hero or its knight in shining hero?

John Cena is full of empty promises because he can't save these people from this terrible world. Cena says the future has to come through him and Bray couldn't agree more. Wyatt introduces himself to Cena and they are the reapers who bring death to this era of lies. Cena introduces himself as well and says if one of them comes into this ring, they're starting something they might not be able to finish.

The monsters storm the ring and the numbers are too much for Cena. Bray pulls the Family back as Cena is favoring his left leg. Cena charges at them anyway but they're just too bit. He's holding that knee almost the entire time. John gets up again and the Family walks away but Cena can barely walk. He has to chase off Rowan, allowing Bray to run Cena over

again. Follow the buzzards.

Cena was stretchered out during the break.

Christian vs. Sheamus

This was set up on the pre-show by Brad Maddox due to the two of them having issues since Smackdown on Friday. Christian is quickly sent to the floor but he comes back in with some right hands. Sheamus is fine with that and takes Christian into the corner for some clubbing forearms. A clothesline gets two on the Canadian and we hit a chinlock. Christian tries to wrap Sheamus' leg around the post but Sheamus pull him face first into the steel instead. Christian counters the ten forearms to the chest and scores with a missile dropkick for two. Sheamus backdrops him to the floor and hits a shoulder off the apron as we take a break.

Back with Christian shoving Sheamus off the top and to the floor before ramming him into the steps. Christian stomps away in the corner before putting on a body vice to work over Sheamus' bad ribs. Cole tells us that Cena's injury is to his knee and it's swollen pretty badly. Christian puts on an abdominal stretch but Sheamus elbows his way out and avoids a cross body.

Sheamus is sent to the floor but he catches a charging Christian with a knee lift and hits the ten forearms to the chest. A slingshot shoulder gets two and Sheamus busts out the Cloverleaf but Christian is quickly in the ropes. White Noise is countered into a sunset flip for two but the Brogue Kick misses. Christian goes up top but jumps into the Brogue Kick for the pin at 15:50.

Rating: B-. Another nice long match tonight with Christian getting to do what he does best: look good in a losing effort. Sheamus is still in a weird place as the fans like him and always pop for the Brogue (hard not to) but he really needs something to do. Good match here and that's all you can ask for at times.

Earlier tonight the Authority called today the biggest night since the first Wrestlemania when Bryan came up screaming, saying that he'll fight HHH right now or at Wrestlemania but HHH laughed it off.

Black History Month video on the Soul Patrol of Tony Atlas and Rocky Johnson.

Dean Ambrose is tired of explaining himself to Rollins and Reigns. They don't trust him so he's out of here. Rollins and Reigns are left alone when the Wyatts come in. Reigns challenges them to a fight right now, but says he'd love to fight Bray one on one tonight, with the Family and the dogs staying in the back. Bray accepts and laughs.

Ric Flair and Booker T were on the Raw pre-show panel to talk about the show. Flair starts a YES chant to take us to the next match.

Daniel Bryan vs. Kane

Kane slugs away to start but Bryan comes back with kicks to the leg. A running dropkick to the knee has Kane in trouble and some chop blocks put him down. Kane fights out of a half crab and stomps away but Bryan fights back like the plucky hero he is. A shot to the shoulder puts him back down though and we hit the armbar, only to have Bryan send Kane to the floor. The FLYING GOAT is blocked by an uppercut and we take a break.

Back with Kane stomping away and putting on an armbar, only to have Bryan quickly punch his way out. Bryan hits the moonsault out of the corner and takes Kane down with the running clothesline. There are the YES Kicks but the big one is countered and a side slam gets two. Bryan fights back again and gets two of his own off a top rope hurricanrana before hitting the running corner dropkicks.

Kane charges over the top to the floor and there's the FLYING GOAT! Another running dropkick knocks Kane against the barricade and a missile dropkick connects back inside. A big kick to the head gets two but Kane counters the top rope headbutt with a chokeslam for a close two. Bryan can't get the YES Lock the first or second time so he hits a quick running knee for the pin at 15:40.

Rating: C+. This was the match that the two needed to have and it gets rid of the idea of Bryan vs. Kane at Wrestlemania. It's pretty clear that we're heading towards HHH vs. Bryan in the showdown and there's nothing wrong with that at all. Not a great match or anything but it was a good

performance by both guys. Kane needs to lose the shirt though.

Bryan calls HHH a coward for running from a challenge and hiding behind Stephaine's skirt. Ever since HHH put on the suit, he's ignored the people's wishes, even when they make their voices heard. The YES chant starts up and Bryan asks HHH if he's listening. There's an entire arena of people here in Green Bay, Wisconsin chanting YES so give them what they want: HHH vs. Daniel Bryan at Wrestlemania XXX.

Emma vs. Summer Rae

Emma gets her full entrance with the bubbles and dancing but the people still don't care. Emma grabs a small package for an early two but Summer kicks her head off to take over. Summer puts on a chinlock as the match slows quite a bit. The fans actually cheer for Emma to fight up and she counters another spinwheel kick into the Emma Lock (bridging Indian deathlock) for the win at 3:24.

Rating: D+. Emma still isn't working due to the Santino factor but that's WWE for you. Just let her be goofy and adorable and the fans will get into her. The lack of the long pants and shirt helped her here but she still needs to be herself instead of Santino's latest chick. Seriously he's had like four Divas now.

We look back at Hogan's return earlier.

Usos vs. New Age Outlaws

Non-title. Dogg gets on the mic and says we know how this ends so the young kids need to get out of the ring. The Usos actually do it so the Outlaws can do their schtick but the twins come in and clean house with Jimmy superkicking and splashing Road Dogg for the pin at 1:13.

Bray Wyatt vs. Roman Reigns

They trade right hands to start and Bray rolls to the floor. Back in and Reigns shoves Bray around before a finger to the eye sends Wyatt outside again. Bray comes back in again and takes over with a boot to the head followed by a hard clothesline for two. Roman will have none of this

selling stuff and takes Bray outside for an even harder clothesline as we take a break.

Back with Bray hitting a running backplash and drawing what sounds like a SCARY chant. We hit the headlock on the mat as the fans are already bored because this hasn't been going a thousand miles an hour. Bray hits his running cross body and a splash in the corner but Reigns avoids another charge. The dropkick from the floor to the apron sets up a belly to back slam (similar to Cena's ProtoBomb) for two....and here are the other Wyatts.

They're just on the floor but Rollins sprints in from the crowd and DIVES on both of them, giving Bray a rollup for two. Reigns misses a charge into the post as Rollins is beaten down. Ambrose finally charges in from the back to join the fight but Reigns scores with the Superman Punch. He has to go after Harper though and Ambrose comes in for the DQ at 14:00 though.

Rating: C+. This was the only way to go here and the ending was about as good as it could have been. They clearly couldn't job either guy and it advances Dean's split. It helped that Ambrose was caught up in the moment rather than doing something stupid so Reigns has a reason to believe him when he says it wasn't intentional.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar to close the show with a table in the ring. Paul calls Brock the undisputed #1 contender but apparently HHH won't let him in the title match. He's offered Brock an open contract at Wrestlemania but that's just not good enough. What Brock wants is to conquer history, just like he's done with every single thing he's done in his life. The only reason Brock Lesnar can't conquer the WWE Championship is the Authority won't give him the chance.

That's how they get you in WWE, so Paul has advised Brock to turn down the open contract and demand the title match. If not, there's no Lesnar at Wrestlemania....and there's the gong. Brock isn't sure what to think because apparently the lightning, thunder, smoke, organ music and UNDERTAKER BEING ON THE SCREEN AREN'T CLEAR ENOUGH. Undertaker comes through the curtain (with black Ministry beard of course) and Brock still

isn't sure what to do.

Taker turns to Brock and stares him down as a LOUD Undertaker chant starts up. He looks over Brock at the sign and we get the big staredown. Paul gets the idea and open the contract for Brock. Lesnar immediately signs and hands Taker the pen. Heyman offers Taker the match so Taker STABS BROCK'S HAND WITH THE PEN and chokeslams him through the table. The hood comes off and he's got a little mohawk going to make him look even more evil. Brock is left laying to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. I had a blast with tonight's show as it feels like we're getting to Wrestlemania season. We've got three major matches practically penciled in and a lot of stuff got nice build as well. Couple that with four matches going 14+ minutes and you can't go wrong here. The ending was the high point of course but I can't shake that feeling I got from Hogan. It just felt right seeing him back on Raw and I can't help but smile.

Results

Alberto Del Rio b. Baitsta – Rollup

Big E. b. Cesaro via DQ when Jack Swagger interfered

Sheamus b. Christian – Brogue Kick

Daniel Bryan b. Kane – Running Knee

Emma b. Summer Rae – Emma Lock

Bray Wyatt b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Dean Ambrose interfered

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And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

John Cena Possibly Injured At Raw

May or may not be a story. The Wyatts attacked Cena on Raw and John came up favoring his left leg. Early word is it's legit but there's no word on the severity. The match at Wrestlemania is pretty much already set so they could let Cena heal for the next month and a half. Or the knee could be fine tomorrow.

More updates when they're available of course.

Elimination Chamber 2014: Believe In The Wyatts

Elimination Chamber 2014

Date: February 23, 2014

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole

Tonight is the final big stop on the Road to Wrestlemania with six men possibly leaving with the WWE Championship. It's actually a wide open field tonight with at least three people having a realistic shot at walking out with the belt. However there might be an even more interesting match on the card with the Wyatt Family vs. the Shield in a very well built story. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Cody Rhodes/Goldust vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel

Axel comes out with his grandfather Larry the Ax Hennig. Goldust and Curtis get things going with the painted one taking over with some armdrags. Off to Cody vs. Ryback with the big guy throwing him around like it's nothing. Axel comes in again and but gets sent to the floor. Ryback is tossed out as well and the brothers dive on both guys as we take a break.

Back with Ryback stomping away on Goldust and there's a tag off to Curtis as his grandfather looks very pleased. A delayed vertical suplex gets two for Ryback and Goldust rolls Axel up for the same. Goldust and Axel clothesline each other but Ryback breaks up a tag.

Ryback charges at Goldust but gets backdropped to the floor, finally allowing for the hot tag to Cody. Rhodes takes Axel down with a knee to the face and the moonsault press gets two. Cody's springboard dropkick is countered into a powerbomb for two as Goldust and Ryback fight to the floor. Curtis tries his neckbreaker but gets countered into Cross Rhodes for the pin at 8:58.

Rating: C-. This could have been any match on any given Smackdown. As has been the issue for the division since it was resurrected: it doesn't matter how many teams you have if they're all just trading wins back and forth with no one getting anywhere as a result. It's nice to see Goldust and Cody get a win though.

The opening video talks about being willing to fight anyone in order to achieve your dream.

Intercontinental Title: Big E. vs. Jack Swagger

Swagger is challenging and Colter does his usual schtick before the match. Big E. shoves him into the corner to start and runs him over with

a hard shoulder block, sending Swagger to the outside. Back in and some overhead belly to belly suplexes put Jack down but he bails to the floor again to avoid a charging champion. This time Big E. follows him outside and sends him into the steps but the champion goes after Colter.

The distraction doesn't work though as he spears Jack into the steps in a painful looking spot. Back inside and Jack low bridges Big E. out to the floor and takes over with some running knees in the corner. After a WE THE PEOPLE it's off to a front facelock for a few moments. Big E. fights up and a double clothesline puts both guys down again. Swagger avoids a charge and Big E. goes shoulder first into the post, drawing a WE THE PEOPLE chant from the crowd.

Back up and Big E. runs Swagger over with clotheslines and a belly to belly suplex but the champion charges into a powerslam for two. The running Vader Bomb is caught in the Big Ending but Jack makes it to the apron. That's fine with Big E. as he spears him through the ropes in a big crash. Back in and the Warrior Splash gets two so Big E....goes up top? Jack catches him with a right hand and runs the ropes for a belly to belly superplex and a VERY close two.

Swagger takes out the leg and puts on the Patriot Lock but Big E. kicks his way out. The gutwrench is countered but Big E. runs him over and takes down the straps. Jack grabs another Patriot Lock but Big E. fights up and hits an enziguiri of all things, setting up the Big Ending to retain the title at 11:50.

Rating: B. I liked this far better than I was expecting with Swagger putting up a great fight and making it much closer than he had any right to. It's nice to see Big E. get a win on PPV and a successful title defense over a former World Champion never hurt anyone. It should be interesting to see where the Real Americans go from here.

Bad News Barrett pops up and talks about Russia winning more medals at the Olympics, further proving European dominance. Is this character ever

going anywhere?

We look back at Daniel Bryan's shoulder injury from Raw at the hands of Kane.

Daniel Bryan asks some questions about the Chamber, such as will his opponents go after his shoulder and will he give this everything he has to become WWE Champion. Take a guess as to what the answer is.

Tag Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Usos

The Usos are challenging. Jimmy shoves Billy around to start and some armdrags and hiptosses send Gunn outside. The Usos load up their double dive but the Outlaws move before the jump. Back in for Dogg vs. Jey with the champion's headbutt hurting him instead of Jey. A hiptoss sends Jey into the corner and he looked to injure his knee or leg. The shaky kneedrop gets two and it's back to Gunn for a two count.

The CM Punk chants start up as Dogg shrugs off some right hands and knees Jey down again. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Jey fights up and superkicks Jey back down. Hot tag brings in Jimmy to speed things up leaving Jimmy vs. Gunn in the ring. Road Dogg pulls his partner away from the running Umaga attack but Jimmy dives onto Roadie. Back in and a superkick gets two on Gunn but Jimmy has to go after Road Dogg, allowing Billy to grab a rollup for the pin at 8:34.

Rating: D+. This is more about frustrating booking than a bad match but the wrestling was nothing great either. I'm not sure if the Outlaws are holding the belts because they're friends of HHH or because this company thinks there's more to nostalgia than anyone else, but I don't get the appeal of the Outlaws getting clean pins on top tag teams.

Bad News Barrett pops up again without the raised podium to say Daniel Bryan's shoulder will keep him from winning the title.

Time to hype the Network. Apparently there will be over 50 documentaries in addition to the PPVs. Nice addition.

Darren Young vs. Titus O'Neil

Basic story here of a team losing and splitting due to a heel turn by Titus. Darren gets in Titus' face to start but is knocked down by a hard forearm. The fans want Lesnar as Titus works on a headlock. Titus bails to the floor and Darren is right on his heels as the fans chant Fruity Pebbles. Darren charges into the corner but gets backdropped out to the floor followed by having his back rammed into the post.

Back in and it's time for a bearhug, backbreakers and an abdominal stretch. Titus slaps Darren in the ribs before charging into a boot as the announcers talk about JBL being cheap. Darren comes back with some basic offense for two as the fans boo the kickout. Thankfully they get the hint and a quick Clash of the Titans ends Darren at 6:17.

Rating: D. This was about what I was expecting and it showed the problem with Young. He's basically the modern day Scotty Riggs, meaning a guy who was in a tag team with a much more charismatic guy and then had nothing interesting once he was on his own. Titus looked good here though and won clean in the right ending. Thankfully they went home quickly like they did.

MORE Bad News Barrett who talks about being more talented than Hulk Hogan.

We look at the pre-show match and the rest of the show with the expert panel.

Recap of Shield vs. Wyatt Family. The Family cost Shield a spot in the Elimination Chamber and the feud has spiraled into a battle over who is the greatest faction in WWE today. Ambrose and Reigns have been having

issues lately as well.

Wyatt Family vs. Shield

The Wyatts take their sweet time as is their custom and we get a long staredown as the fans think this is awesome before busting out the dueling chants. This is what you get when you actually build up a feud to the point where you can't imagine either team going down clean. Ambrose jumps the Family and the Shield clears out the ring before the opening bell.

Rowan vs. Rollins gets things going with Erick being drokicked into the Shield corner before it's off to Reigns for a pop. He's out just as quickly as it's back to Rollins who gets his head taken off with a clothesline. Harper comes in for some hard right hands before it's off to the boss for some knees in the corner. Rollins is thrown into the corner and the tag brings in Reigns. You can feel the fans get excited for this showdown.

They trade right hands with Bray getting the worst of it so a tag brings in Harper. Luke can't suplex Reigns so Roman counters into one of his own and brings in Dean. Ambrose pounds away in the corner before it's back to Reigns for two off a HARD right hand. Dean gets two off the dropkick against the ropes and it's back to Seth for a headbutt to Luke's back. The Shield starts their fasttagging with Dean coming in to rake his forearm over Luke's face. A middle rope elbow to the jaw puts Luke down but Rowan offers a distraction, allowing Harper to hit a dropkick of all things.

Bray gets the tag to pound away on Dean as the Family takes over again. A running splash in the corner crushes Dean and it's back to Rowan for the head vice with two fists. Rowan gets two off a side slam and brings Harper back in, only to have Dean grab a swinging neckbreaker to get a breather.

Rollins comes back in with a nice running dropkick but he gets caught on the top rope. Luke loads up a reverse superplex but Seth lands on his feet and sends Harper to the floor for a suicide dive. Back inside and the top rope knee to the side of the head puts Harper down again and Seth has a fired up look in his eyes. Harper kicks his head off for a very close two and it's back to Bray after the best sequence Rollins has ever had in WWE.

Bray sends Rollins outside and hits the running backplash on the floor before it's back to Rowan. The dueling chants begin again before the fans say they want tables. Back to Harper who hammers away in the corner and scores with a running clothesline. Wyatt demands to be tagged in but runs into a boot in the corner. Rollins goes to the middle rope, only to dive into a chokeslam of all things for two. Ambrose tries to make the save but Harper kicks his head off, sending him to the floor.

Rollins finally gets in a shot to Harper's head and the hot tag brings in Reigns to clean house. A Samoan drop puts Rowan down but Harper saves his partner. There's the dropkick from the floor for two on Erick as everything breaks down. Dean takes Bray down and hammers away before dropkicking him out to the floor. Harper dives through the floor to take out Ambrose but Rollins hits a swanton dive over the top to take Luke out. Reigns rolls up Erick for a VERY close two but they clothesline each other down.

Seth loads up the Spanish announce table but Bray decks him from behind. Ambrose saves Rollins from being sent through the table and takes Bray into the crowd with another charge. AWESOME stuff here. Rowan and Reigns slug it out and Roman goes shoulder first into the post, only to come back with a running clothesline for two. Rollins hits Harper with a monitor to the ribs but Bray comes back and loads up the other announce table. Rowan takes Reigns down in the ring and sends him to the floor with a fallaway slam.

The Family has Rollins surrounded and the monsters double chokeslam him

through the announce table. Ambrose is still gone so it's pretty much Reigns vs. all three Family members. They slowly get back in the ring and Roman sees what he's up against. He goes right for Bray but the numbers are too much for him.

Harper kicks Reigns' head off and drops to his knees for the tag off to Wyatt. Bray does his upside down thing in the corner but Reigns powers out of Sister Abigail and Bray is terrified. Reigns goes into Beast Mode and Samoan drops Bray before hitting Rowan and Bray with Superman Punches. The spear puts Harper down but Wyatt runs Reigns over, setting up Sister Abigail for the pin at 22:45.

Rating: A+. When you expect a match to be one of the best match you've seen in a long time and get blown away, you've seen something special. This was outstanding stuff and had me glued to the screen which doesn't happen every day. Outstanding match where neither team looked bad at all. Find this match if you didn't catch it tonight.

Network ad with Hogan and Cena schilling its awesomeness. No they're not on camera together.

Christian says his losses make him dangerous and dares us to underestimate him.

Divas Title: AJ Lee vs. Cameron

This is a bonus match due to fill in some time and let the crowd catch their breath. AJ is defending of course and says this was supposed to be Naomi's match but she broke her face. Cameron gets in a quick shot to the face but gets taken down by a neckbreaker for two.

AJ puts on a modified dragon sleeper but spends too much time skipping around and gets rolled up for two. Cameron is quickly sent outside and AJ steals her pompoms for a little dance. Tamina screws up by kicking AJ in

the face but still breaks up the pin attempt at two. That's not enough for Tamina as she pulls Cameron outside and takes her head off for the DQ at 4:00.

Rating: D. This was a necessary step down after the masterpiece we saw a few minutes ago. Cameron was the logical choice for the replacement here but at the end of the day, no one cares about her at all. She's a whiny little pest on Total Divas and there's no reason to care about her.

Bad News Barrett says everyone is going to lose their jobs, children will be expelled from schools, rats will move into homes and the government will condemn the houses. Why? BECAUSE EVERYONE WILL BE MESMERIZED BY THE WWE NETWORK!

Santino, Emma, Khali and Los Matadores play with the new toys.

Batista vs. Alberto Del Rio

Batista is back to black trunks instead of the shorts from the Rumble. He gets a decent reaction here and nowhere near what it was last month. It seems more like indifference than anything else. Del Rio comes to the ring in workout clothes, wearing a neck brace and using a crutch. Sign in the crowd: "Batista = ZZZ". Del Rio says he can't compete and of course jumps Batista with the crutch. Fans: "SI! SI! SI!"

Del Rio of course has his trunks underneath and goes after Batista's knee. He says ring the bell and Batista comes back with right hands as the booing begins. We might as well be in Mexico City right now. Fans: "Boo-Tista! Boo-Tista!" Even Lawler has to acknowledge the chants. Batista is sent shoulder first into the post and Del Rio puts on the armbreaker in the ropes. We hit the hammerlock as the fans chant for Bryan and Punk.

The Codebreaker to the arm puts Batista down again and it's a Y2J chant.

Del Rio misses a charge into the post and the BORING chants begin. Del Rio gets in another shot to the arm to take over and the corner enziguri gets two. Batista is knocked to the floor as the chants go from RVD to Lesnar. The announcers are acknowledging most of them at this point.

Del Rio throws him back inside and gets speared down for two (face pop). A powerslam is countered into the Backstabber for two but Alberto misses a top rope backsplash. Del Rio escapes the powerbomb and takes out the knee before the low superkick gets two. The armbreaker is countered and Del Rio is sent into an exposed buckle (when did that happen?) and the Batista Bomb is good the pin at 7:13.

Rating: D. I'm at a loss for words here as the fans are clearly not accepting Batista, but it's not just because he's a face. He literally had less than ten offensive moves here and was getting squashed until the very end. They expect him to be able to work a 20+ minute match in just six weeks? I can't imagine that at all.

Network ad.

Expert panel predictions. Miz can't make up his mind, Henry picks Sheamus and Mysterio picks Cesaro.

The Chamber is lowered.

Video on the Chamber.

WWE Title: John Cena vs. Randy Orton vs. Christian vs. Cesaro vs. Daniel Bryan vs. Sheamus

Orton is defending and of course it's two people for five minutes to start and a new one is added out of a pod every five minutes. Last man surviving wins. Sheamus and Cesaro will be starting which is quite a way to get things going. Cesaro quickly dropkicks Sheamus out to the steel

but can't ram him into the wall. Back inside but it's a quick backdrop to send Sheamus onto the steel again. Cesaro loads up a charge but Sheamus slingshots in with a shoulder for two.

Now it's Cesaro being sent onto the steel and they fight over a suplex but Sheamus lands on his feet. Cesaro quickly puts him down and a middle rope double stomp crushes Sheamus' ribs as Orton casually watches from the pod. They brawl into the corner and Sheamus tells him to bring it on. That's fine with Cesaro as he uppercuts Sheamus down, but Sheamus pulls himself to the top rope. Another uppercut staggers the Irishman but he comes back with the flying shoulder.

Daniel Bryan is in third and the fans are fired up. Bryan has a bad shoulder coming in but starts fast with his usual stuff, including the running clothesline and YES kicks to Sheamus. Cesaro gets some kicks as well and the roundhouse kick sends him to the steel. Daniel puts Sheamus in an Indian deathlock and manages to suplex Cesaro for two without breaking the hold. Cesaro catches a diving Bryan in a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two and things slow down a bit.

Sheamus is sent over the ropes again and Cesaro just rakes Sheamus' head against the steel with a knee. Bryan is sent shoulder first through the pod and looks to be more in shock than pin. Cesaro and Sheamus slug it out until Sheamus hits the rolling fireman's carry on the steel. Bryan is back in the ring as the dueling Cena chants begin. The clock speeds up a bit so Christian can come in fourth.

Christian goes right after Bryan's shoulder by sending it into the cage wall over and over. He rips the tape off and slams the pod door on the shoulder for two. Sheamus is back up now and slams Christian's back into the post a few times, only to be countered into the reverse DDT on the steel. Cesaro loads up Swiss Death on the outside but Christian grabs the cage to avoid massive amounts of pain. Instead Cesaro pulls him down and powerbombs him against the pod glass for two.

Cesaro sends Sheamus into the broken pod and it's Cena in fifth. He immediately cleans house but gets taken down by a top rope hurricanrana from Bryan. There are the YES Kicks but Christian breaks up the big one with the Killswitch for a very close two. Cesaro loads up the Swing on Christian but Cena breaks it up with a cross body, sending Christian into the buckle off a slingshot. White Noise gets two on John and it's back to Cesaro vs. Sheamus. Christian catches Sheamus with a kick to the face but Sheamus backdrops out of the Neutralizer.

A tornado DDT gets two on Cesaro but Cena sends Christian into the steel. Cena goes after Cesaro but gets caught in Swiss Death for two. Bryan, Cena and Cesaro have a three way fight until Cena loads Cesaro up in the AA. Daniel kicks John down before kicking Cesaro in the corner which the announcers call a mistake. Sheamus sends Bryan into the cage wall but Cesaro does his awesome superplex from the cage floor. Orton comes in to give us all six at once, which might be a first.

The fans chant BORING so Orton stops to pose and point at the sign like a good heel should. Bryan avoids the Punt and Orton is suddenly cornered by all five guys. Orton wisely hides in the pod, drawing a certain feline insult from the crowd. Sheamus yells through the glass before Brogue Kicking through the pod and sending Orton into the cage wall over and over. Cesaro sends Sheamus in as well and Cena initiates his finishing sequence on the champion. Cesaro breaks it up and Swings Orton THIRTY TIMES. Bryan grabs a Rolling Chaos Theory suplex on Cesaro but there's no cover.

Sheamus powerslams Christian down and loads up the Brogue Kick on Christian but hits Cena square in the jaw. Christian rolls up both guys for two and Sheamus is TICKED. He loads up the High Cross (running Razor's Edge) into the pod but Christian escapes to the top of a pod. Orton catches Sheamus in a superplex and Christian adds a top rope splash to eliminate the Irishman. Orton tries the Elevated DDT on Christian but the Canadian escapes, only to get caught by the running knee for the pin and the elimination.

We get a fourway standoff until Orton and Cesaro are knocked down. Cena and Bryan have their long awaited rematch with Bryan trying a quick YES Lock but Cena easily powers out. The AA is loaded up but Cesaro Germans Cena as he's STILL HOLDING BRYAN but can only get two. Cena can't get the STF on Cesaro but he counters the gutwrench into what was supposed to be a hurricanrana. An AA onto the steel sets up the STF and Cesaro taps in an awkward looking moment. There might have been an injury there.

Cena catches Orton in the STF and we've got Wyatts. The lights go out and Orton is out of the hold somehow as the Wyatts are in the Chamber. Harper kicks Bryan in the face but all three go after Cena. John is laid out (Fans: "THANK YOU WYATTS!") and the Wyatts leave, giving Orton an easy pin. We're down to Orton vs. Bryan and Randy wisely crawls out of the ring.

Kane comes out to eject the Wyatts but the Chamber door is still open. He comes in to check on Cena but Bryan comes off the top with a knee to Kane's head. Orton sends Bryan into the broken pod but Daniel escapes a superplex and ties Orton in the Tree of Woe for some kicks to the chest. A baseball slide to the face has Orton in trouble a belly to back superplex gets two.

Randy grabs him by the beard (why has that not been done more often) and hits the Elevated DDT out of the corner. The RK0 is countered and there's the running knee but Kane grabs the referee. Kane gets kicked in the head but the RK0 is enough....for TWO on Bryan. I totally bought that as the finish. Bryan gets another close two on a small package and a big kick to the head puts Orton down. Kane gets in another shot from behind though and the RK0 retains the title at 36:50.

Rating: A. Another awesome match to wrap up the show here with all six guys looking good. Orton winning was kind of expected after he lost almost every match in the last few weeks because that's how WWE booking works. I'm really hoping we don't get Kane vs. Bryan at Wrestlemania as it would come off as a huge letdown for him, but it would work as a big

Raw match.

Cole goes on a rant about how unfair this is to Bryan. This was the focal point of the end of the show.

Overall Rating: A-. This was a two match show and both matches hit it out of the park. WWE is on a roll right now with their PPVs but none of them matter with Wrestlemania just a few weeks away. The ending wasn't a huge surprise but there are still a lot shows to go before we get to the big one. Hopefully a few things change but if Wrestlemania is this good, it's going to be a success.

Results

Big E. b. Jack Swagger – Big Ending

New Age Outlaws b. Usos – Rollup to Jimmy

Titus O'Neil b. Darren Young – Clash of the Titus

Wyatt Family b. Shield – Sister Abigail to Reigns

Cameron b. AJ Lee via DQ when Tamina interfered

Batista b. Alberto Del Rio – Batista Bomb

Randy Orton b. Christian, Sheamus, Daniel Bryan, John Cena and Cesaro – RKO to Bryan

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Elimination Chamber 2014

Preview

Wrestlemania is six weeks away and tomorrow will determine a lot of what we'll be seeing at the biggest show of them all. The kickoff match is a meaningless tag between Cody Rhodes/Goldust vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel. It's kind of amazing that the Brothers have fallen as far as they have in just a month. They were the hottest act the tag division has seen in months and then it's been thrown away for the sake of the New Age Outlaws. In 2014. Anyway there is zero reason for Ryback and Axel to win, which is why I think they will so we can get closer to Goldust vs. Cody which is allegedly a match everyone needs to see.

We'll start the main card with the most obvious win ever: Batista beats Del Rio and you really shouldn't need an explanation why. One thing though: We're supposed to cheer a guy who put Del Rio in a neck brace and then attacked him while he was still injured after Del Rio was angry that Batista hadn't earned any of his recent success. Why is WWE surprised people aren't interested in Batista?

I'm going with the Outlaws to keep the titles. I have a bad feeling they'll keep them on the old guys until Wrestlemania where they'll be in some multi team match where the Usos will get them, because a team like the Outlaws just couldn't lose a clean one on one match. Perish the thought. Sidebar on the Outlaws: I have no idea where the team is supposed to be going. The idea was supposed to be HHH pushing his friends, but the Outlaws won the match and rematch clean and have acted like faces the entire time. How does this benefit anyone but Gunn and Road Dogg?

Langston should beat Swagger, but I have a feeling he won't. The Real Americans should be splitting, but there has to be a way to get Colter on Swagger's side and away from Cesaro. Having Jack win a title while Cesaro comes up short would be a decent enough way, but I don't want Cesaro being wasted on Swagger at Wrestlemania. We'll go with Langston retaining to keep things from getting too messy.

Titus over Darren. Young is a decent enough wrestler, but there's just nothing interesting about him. It's refreshing to get a basic heel turn and blowoff match as a result though.

The big match of the evening is inside the Chamber and the most anticipated could be as well if there was ever a rematch. The Wyatts vs. Shield has the potential to steal the first half of the year and the build has been excellent. Bray vs. Reigns could be an outstanding collision which goes to show you what happens when you take two guys and build them up to the point where neither could conceivably lose. I'll go with the Wyatts here in what should be more obvious that it is. One more note that I've been saying for the previous week: Bray vs. Reigns at Wrestlemania. Any takers?

That brings us to the big one. I think we can safely write off Sheamus, Cesaro and Christian (more on this later). Cena isn't a likely winner due to the Wyatts as Bray vs. Cena seems to be set in stone. That leaves us with Orton vs. Bryan and Daniel is coming in with a bad shoulder courtesy of the Authority. Couple that with Orton losing most of his matches leading up to it and Orton is almost a layup to win.

However there's one thing to remember: the Network launching on Monday. That leaves the door open for the very rare one night title reign or a surprise title change on Raw. I don't think it's going to happen, but if it does I'll go with Cesaro on a very long shot.

Overall Elimination Chamber has the chance to be a solid show

with the six man tag looking to be as easy of a great match as you'll find. That being said, the show also has me worried about where things are going. For the life of me I cannot imagine Batista getting a one on one title shot against Orton at Wrestlemania. There's a chance we might see that match on Monday instead, but something has to stop that match from happening. Bryan doesn't have to be in the title match and facing HHH would be fine, but man alive Orton vs. Batista is just not going to do it for the main event of Wrestlemania. We'll find out a lot tomorrow, but we'll find out even more on Monday.

Thoughts/predictions?

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