

# Monday Night Raw – February 9, 2015: Everyone Loves A Loser

## Monday Night Raw

Date: February 9, 2015

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Booker T., Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We have a much better idea of what to expect at Fast Lane after last week and the Daniel Bryan fans have a lot more hope going forward. There are two weeks left before Fast Lane, meaning it's all about the build to the show. It's going to be interesting to see how Reigns handles his adversity last week going forward. Let's get to it.

We recap last week's events with the Authority making Bryan vs. Rollins for the shot at Reigns at Fast Lane.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns and we look at his events from last week. Roman says he stood in this ring last week as the #1 contender for the World Title at Wrestlemania, meaning the title was as good as his. Then the Authority showed up last week and made it clear that they don't want Reigns in that spot. That's fine with Reigns because he has more than enough spears to go around.

Cue Bryan who thanks Reigns for the help against Rollins and to say he's ready for Fast Lane. This brings out the Authority to bring up Reigns' lost last week and rip on Bryan for putting Kane in the casket. Bryan: "Given what your husband has done in caskets, I thought you would enjoy it." Stephanie makes Reigns/Bryan vs. Kane/Big Show right now. Now I know this sounds bad, but think of it this way: if they do this match, neither guy can wrestle again later. Just get it over with at the same time.

Roman Reigns/Daniel Bryan vs. Big Show/Kane

Bryan sends Kane to the floor to start for the Flying Goat and it's quickly off to Reigns vs. Big Show. The Authority takes over in the corner with their variety of right hands and forearms, followed by Kane's bad chinlock. Even the director gets bored with this one so they go to a clip of the spear to Big Show last week. Reigns fights out and suplexes Kane down, setting up the double tag to Bryan and Big Show.

Daniel busts out all the kicks and sends him to the floor with the big YES Kick. Kane and Show easily catch him in the air though and send Bryan back first into the ropes as we take a break. Am I missing something or did Bryan just go down to the equivalent of an Irish whip? Back with Big Show holding Bryan in a chinlock before it's off to Kane for a bearhug. STOP PUSHING THESE TWO ALREADY! Big Show misses the Vader Bomb elbow but Kane breaks up the hot tag attempt. That earns Kane a YES Lock but it's Show pulling Bryan to the floor. He throws Bryan into the timekeeper's area for a fast DQ at 12:00.

**Rating:** D. The match was boring but as usual, the main issue here is these feuds still going for no reason other than the script saying they have to. Big Show and Kane are as dull and uninteresting of a pair of guys as I've seen since Bundy and Studd, and this is a far different time than their era. And, to go back to an old standard, was there ANY REASON why Kane didn't tap out here? This just had to be a DQ?

Post match Reigns destroys Show with a chair but gets knocked into the corner by Kane. Bryan tries the running dropkick on Kane but hits Reigns by mistake. Roman shoves him down, so HHH makes Reigns/Bryan vs. Kane/Big Show/Mercury/Noble/Rollins. DEAR GOODNESS WHY DO I HAVE TO SIT THROUGH THIS AGAIN???

### Seth Rollins vs. Ryback

Rollins, the fifth guy to work two matches tonight so far, quickly knocks him onto the floor to start before putting on a front facelock back inside. Ryback shoves him to the floor and fights off the Stooges, only to have them break up the Shell Shock attempt for the DQ at 2:59.

Ryback gets curb stomped post match.

Sheamus is coming back.

### Paige vs. Brie Bella

Freaking BRIE MODE is back. I was told that was leaving and now I have to hear it again. I hate this company at times. Brie kicks her down for two to start and hits the running knee to chest (which is close enough to Bryan's finisher to make it a nice idea) for two more. The middle rope dropkick gets the same as Paige hasn't had any offense so far. A double slap staggers both girls but a Nikki distraction backfires, setting up Rampaige for the pin at 3:14.

**Rating:** D-. The Bellas are such a disaster on top of the division. They've actually gotten a bit better in the ring, but my goodness they're the least interesting act I've seen in years. This idea that they've fought so hard to get to the top of the division doesn't hold up and their matches are some of the worst messes I've seen in a long time. But they make the top stars happy and that's all that matters.

Here are Rusev and Lana to pay tribute to John Cena. After some microphone feedback, they agree that Cena has accomplished great things in WWE and just like the Oscars or Grammys, they want to acknowledge someone who has done so much. We get a quick montage of Cena winning before going to clips of some of his worst beatings. Lana wonders how Cena can keep going through all this punishment over the years. Rusev talks about how Cena is no longer full of ruthless aggression and is now just a weak nothing. He'll break Cena at Fast Lane and crush his spirit.

Cue Cena, sporting a black eye for a rebuttal. He says Rusev thinks he's already won the match at Fast Lane, so why bother having the match at all? It's because so many people are sick of hearing Rusev and Lana run their mouths all over the place. Yeah Cena has taken some beatings over the years and suffered a lot of injuries but he keeps getting back up. Cena is going to hit Rusev in the mouth at Fast Lane and adjust his attitude. Some more trash talking leads to a brawl with Cena getting the better of it until Rusev gets in a shot to the bad eye and sends him into the set. This was fine.

### Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler

Rematch from last week. Ziggler goes for the leg to start and the fans are split on who to cheer for, though Dolph's cheers are louder. A dropkick sends Bray into the ropes but he elbows Dolph in the jaw to take over. Dolph avoids a charge in the corner and scores with a neckbreaker before snapping Bray's throat over the top rope as we take a break.

Back with Bray holding a chinlock before hitting that running cross body. There's something to be said about someone just launching themselves at their opponent. Dolph ducks a big clothesline and nails another dropkick to put both guys down. The Fameasser and a superkick get two on Bray but he takes Ziggler's head off with the clothesline on the floor. Back in and the Spider Walk sets up Sister Abigail for the pin at 11:40.

**Rating:** C+. This was good, though the same thing as last week. Bray looked like his old monster self here though and it was one of the more entertaining things I've seen from him in a good while. Ziggler's push coming off Survivor Series has been a complete waste, but does that really surprise anyone?

Junkyard Dog Black History Month video.

Here are Lesnar and Heyman to address the Fast Lane situation. Heyman brings up the Brian Williams controversy and calls Reigns and Bryan the biggest liars in the land. Both of them say that they're fighting for a chance to go to Wrestlemania but they're just lying to themselves. Let's start with Roman Reigns: the most violent dude from the most violent tribe from the most violent island in all of Samoa. Heyman stood next to him and it was clear that Reigns was terrified of Lesnar.

Then there's Bryan, who clearly has no chance against Lesnar. It's not just the size difference because Bryan can back it up with ability and can pull off miracle after miracle, but do you really think he's the one to beat the one in twenty one and one? Let's get to the point: whoever wins the match at Fast Lane should jump in a helicopter with Brian Williams and subject themselves to enemy fire, because it will be less dangerous than the F5 waiting for them at Wrestlemania. Again, this was fine.

New Day vs. Goldust/Stardust

Woods is on the floor again. Kofi and Stardust get things going with the painted one scoring with a shoulder and cartwheeling. Goldust tags himself in and that's already enough for Stardust, who walks out. Kofi gets the pin off a rollup at 1:38.

We look back at Reigns and Bryan having issues earlier tonight.

Bryan says he probably would have done the same thing to Reigns in the heat of the moment. Roman comes in and says they should work together tonight so they can handle their business at Wrestlemania. Daniel doesn't react.

Post break Goldust says this is Dustin talking and says Cody is his brother. Stardust shoves him and says Cody is dead.

Here's HHH to address Sting. He's been around this company for twenty years to make this a better place. Now he has to deal with the face of WCW, a company he helped destroy fourteen years ago. Then at Survivor Series, Sting had to attack like a coward. That's why HHH is calling him out at Fast lane to meet him face to face so he can explain to Sting why he was right to wait. If Sting shows up, he'll be allowed to leave with his face intact and never come back again.

The lights dim and a crowd is heard. We go to a creepy video with HHH talking and Sting's paint superimposed over his face. The fans want Sting and we see someone in the ring (clearly not the real Sting) who scares HHH so badly that he falls down. The words I ACCEPT appear on the screen and the guy is gone.

### Usos vs. Tyson Kidd/Cesaro

Non-title again and Cole says the rumor is a win could get Kidd and Cesaro in the title hunt. Lines like those are what make me hate WWE commentary. Jimmy slams Kidd down to start and it's off to Jey as the announcers talk about the double date from Smackdown. Everyone falls out to the floor and the girls get in an argument as we take a break. Back with Jimmy suplexing Kidd but Cesaro breaks up the tag.

The heels take turns putting on chinlocks before Cesaro just hammers

Jimmy's face. Jimmy scores with an enziguri to knock Cesaro outside and the hot tag brings in Jey to face Kidd. Tyson blocks a dive but jumps into a superkick for a close two. The Running Umaga Attack misses and Cesaro shoves Jey off the top to give Kidd the pin at 10:37.

**Rating:** D+. GET. NEW. WRITERS! For the love of all things good and holy I'm so sick of seeing challengers beat the champions to get a title shot. Shut up with this nonsense about "getting a win to get in the title hunt" because THERE IS NO FREAKING TITLE HUNT! You have three teams having the same matches over and over again and see the division die more and more every single day. The Usos losing here makes the titles look even weaker, and now I'm supposed to want to see these teams fight again just because the worthless titles are on the line?

I would suggest that Kidd and Cesaro beat some teams to earn a title shot, but who are they supposed to beat? New Day? Los Matadores? As in the teams that have lost so many times that the wins mean nothing? We have probably ten people down in NXT spinning their wheels who have been ready for the big show for months but there's just no room for them on the main roster? Are you kidding me? Get someone new in there so we can stop doing these same stupid ideas over and over again.

Rikishi is announced for the Hall of Fame. The loser Usos dance to celebrate. Does no one think before they map out these shows?

#### Damien Mizdow vs. Sin Cara

Miz makes Mizdow take off the sunglasses because he isn't the stunt double anymore. Damien takes over but gets sent outside where Miz requests a water. That's not enough thought as Miz wants him to open the water. The distraction lets Cara hit a dive over the top to take over as Miz isn't very interested. The Reality Check puts Cara down but Miz freaks out over the Figure Four, allowing Cara to small package Mizdow for the pin at 3:43.

**Rating:** D+. This was story development more than a match, but instead of doing something like having Mizdow be better than Miz, we have Mizdow lose to give us yet another loser to cheer for, because, again, THE FREAKING WRITERS DON'T THINK THROUGH THIS NONSENSE BEFORE THEY THROW IT

ON TV!

Bray Wyatt asks where we go when we die. Some say we become part of the earth, but some say we go on to eternity. People like him and whoever he's talking about though are stuck on earth for the rest of time. They don't belong here but Bray doesn't fear him. He pities the man he speaks to because it's time for that man to go home.

Sheamus is still coming back. Nothing has changed in the last hour and a half.

#### Dean Ambrose vs. Curtis Axel

In case Axel getting squashed on Smackdown didn't get the idea through your head. Axel says no one is going to take this from him, not even Kanye West. Dean hammers him up against the ropes to start but Axel knees him in the face and rubs Dean into the mat. We hit the early chinlock but Dean fights up with the rebound clothesline and Dirty Deeds for the pin at 2:40. The match was nothing special, but they lost me when I was told Axel was a third generation sports entertainer.

Dean won't stop until he gets his Intercontinental Title shot. Barrett pops up and says the BNZ (Bad News Zone) still says Dean gets no shot.

#### Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Kane/Joey Mercury/Jamie Noble/Seth Rollins

Here's your "we have nothing else so here's a big mess" main event. The five rush the two before the bell and it's a big brawl to start. A double chokeslam plants Reigns and of course none of this warrants a DQ, meaning Bryan pulls himself up to start with Rollins. Seth talks a lot of trash and it's off to Big Show for a slam. Reigns is nowhere in sight after the pre-match attack.

Noble comes in and gets sent into the middle turnbuckle but Mercury comes in to keep control. Seth has to break up a YES Lock and it's off to Kane to continue the feud that will not die. Reigns finally gets up and starts beating people up but Big Show KO's him with ease. A buckle bomb gets two on Bryan and the giants load up the announcers' table.

Cue Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler for the save and the match....isn't thrown out despite three people interfering and fighting three legal men to the back. It's the Stooges vs. Bryan now with Reigns still down. The running knee is loaded up but Reigns tags himself in and spears Mercury for the pin at 7:38.

**Rating:** D. This was SUCH a great way to make me want to see Reigns vs. Bryan. I mean, I don't know about you, but seeing Kane and Big Show destroy everyone in their path is clearly the most interesting thing in the world. Boring match here and just a glorified squash because the Authority must look strong no matter what. To sum up this match, Bryan and Reigns can't combine to beat up Big Show/Kane/Rollins, but can beat up two Stooges. I'm so glad I sat through two matches tonight to establish that fact.

Bryan is upset at Reigns for trying to leave. He shoves Roman away and eats a spear to end the show with Reigns getting a heel reaction.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This show got a lot better after the first half hour, but my goodness a lot of the booking on here drove me insane. It's clear that this company either doesn't think these shows through before airing them or just doesn't care that people actually see them. I have no reason to care about a lot of the people I'm supposed to care about in so many of these stories for one simple reason: people don't cheer for losers. Why is that so hard to comprehend?

Another thing that should be easily comprehended: there is no need for a PPV between the Rumble and Wrestlemania. Just let us have a long build instead of this mess. You could easily do Reigns vs. Bryan as a major Raw match and then save the rest of the stuff either for Wrestlemania or just not do it because the stories aren't all that great. I get the Network business idea behind it, but that doesn't do much for the on screen product.

## Results

Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns b. Kane/Big Show via DQ when Show threw Bryan into the timekeeper's area



Ryback b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Joey Mercury and Jamie Noble interfered

Paige b. Brie Bella – Rampaige

Bray Wyatt b. Dolph Ziggler – Sister Abigail

New Day b. Goldust/Stardust – Rollup to Goldust

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro b. Usos – Kidd pinned Jey after Cesaro shoved him off the top rope

Sin Cara b. Damien Mizdow – Small package

Dean Ambrose b. Curtis Axel – Dirty Deeds

Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns b. Joey Mercury/Jamie Noble/Seth Rollins/Big Show/Kane – Spear to Mercury

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# Smackdown – February 5, 2015: Let It Go. Let It Go.

## **Smackdown**

Date: February 5, 2015

Location: World Arena, Colorado Spring, Colorado

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

This week's Raw changed a lot of things about the Fast Lane and potentially Wrestlemania cards. The big story was Daniel Bryan defeating Seth Rollins to earn a shot against Roman Reigns at Fast Lane with the winner facing Brock Lesnar for the World Title at Wrestlemania. This is due to the Rock interfering in the Royal Rumble when Rusev was still involved and somehow was announced without ever mentioning Rusev's name. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the "earth shaking" announcement from Raw. Rusev is still not mentioned by the Authority. That's downright impressive. Bryan pinning Rollins to earn the shot is shown as well.

Opening sequence.

It's time for MizTV with special guests Roman Reigns and Daniel Bryan. Miz has Mizdow sit at ringside to further his new role as assistant. The fans of course want Mizdow and Miz says they have him, sitting outside where he belongs. The guests come out and Reigns lays out Miz with a Superman Punch before anything can be said. Well that's one way to make fans like him. Reigns grabs the mic and says he went through 29 wrestlers to get here and he'll go through one more to go to Wrestlemania. Wouldn't it be one of them again since Bryan was in the Rumble?

Reigns is going to go to Wrestlemania by beating Bryan at Fast Lane but they should just do it right here. Bryan is game but here are Rollins and the Stooges to interrupt. Seth blames Reigns for taking his spot in the main event of Wrestlemania but he'll get there one day on his own, even though Reigns is scared to face him one on one. As per the Authority, Bryan will be in action tonight against himself and the Stooges.

Post break Miz says he should be in the main event of Wrestlemania instead and wants to fight Roman tonight.

Goldust/Stardust vs. Ryback/Dolph Ziggler

Thankfully they come out to Ziggler's music this time. An inset interview from Ziggler and Ryback says for Goldust and Stardust, it's too bad that

they're too good. Stardust jumps over Goldust to start for the team and is quickly slammed down by Ryback. Off to Ziggler who gets two off a dropkick and brings Ryback in again to hammer on Stardust even more. Ziggler drops the big elbow (after a quick strut) and Ryback follows with the splash for two. Stardust tells Goldust he has this and we take a break.

Back with Goldust choking Ryback on the ropes before it's back to Stardust for a front facelock. Ryback finally backdrops Goldust out to the floor and punches Stardust out of the air, allowing the hot tag to Ziggler. Things speed up and the running DDT gets two on Stardust. The Disaster Kick drops Ziggler and Goldust wants a tag, calling his brother Cody again. He tags in by smacking Stardust in the head, causing Cody to walk out. The solo Goldust walks into a Shell Shock for the pin at 9:14.

**Rating:** D+. You know, I kind of wish these teams would just split in a hurry instead of doing these weeks long drawn out buildups to the big showdown. It should be an interesting match and feud, but again I'd like to know who else they have to fill out the division, which is currently about three teams deep. Maybe it's Ryback and Ziggler, who aren't the worst combination in the world and at least they have something in common.

Ernie Ladd Black History Month video.

### Curtis Axel vs. Dean Ambrose

Axel uses the "don't change the channel" line again, which is somewhere between brilliant and depressing. He wants everyone to join the movement and of course he has a hashtag for it. Curtis tries to jump Dean to start and gets stomped down into the corner for his efforts. He spins Dean around in the corner and hammers at the back but makes the mistake of sending Dean outside. As he throws Dean back in, Ambrose comes back out with a dropkick to the face, setting up the rebound lariat. Dirty Deeds is good for the pin at 2:44 after Axel got in far more offense than I was expecting.

Barrett pops up on screen with the BNZ: Bad News Zone. The bad news this week: Ambrose is much too insane to receive a title shot.

## Fandango vs. Adam Rose

The Trust Fall fails and Rose blames the Rosebuds for doing it on purpose. That earns the hot dog a right hand and kick to the knee in something I never thought I would have to type. Fandango pulls him inside and chops Rose in the corner, only to get stomped down in the corner for his efforts. A belly to back suplex onto the apron has Fandango in even more trouble. Back in and Fandango hits a spinwheel kick, yells to the crowd like a good guy would, and drops the guillotine legdrop (finally named the Last Dance) for the pin at 2:07. Fandango was wrestling entirely like a face here.

## Miz vs. Roman Reigns

They're flying through these matches tonight. Miz gets in a good line before the match with "You want to headline Wrestlemania? Come face someone who actually did it." That's Miz's "I beat the Rock and Austin in the same night." He knocks Reigns off the apron during the entrances and sends Reigns into the steps. Roman says ring the bell and Miz pounds away as soon as he can. Reigns ducks his head for a backdrop and gets kicked in the face, so he opts for just running Miz over with a shoulder.

After a quick beating on the floor, Miz comes back inside with even more left hands as he's come to play. Cole says a loss here would really hurt Roman Reigns. Like the one on Monday where Big Show beat him in less than three minutes? Or is that an exception because it's Big Show who is in fact big? Miz puts on a neck crank followed by a chinlock but charges into a big clothesline. The low DDT is countered into a bearhug and then a Samoan drop, setting up the spear to pin Miz at 5:47.

**Rating:** C-. This was much better than I was expecting with Miz having more fire in him than I've seen in years. It's also a good idea to have Reigns have to come from behind instead of just running people over, especially over former World Champions. Yeah Miz is on the low end of that list, but it's better than beating up jobbers or Kane all over again. Also at the end of the day, it's not Big Show, meaning it's a better match by definition.

## Rusev vs. Erick Rowan

Non-title. They slug it out to start with Rowan kicking him in the face as a huge USA chant starts up. A shoulder sends Rusev outside but he scores with a spinwheel kick back inside to take over. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Rowan clubs him down and beats Rusev across the ring. A middle rope back elbow to the jaw drops Rusev again but Rowan gets kicked off the ropes. The Accolade makes Rowan tap at 3:20.

**Rating:** D. Standard brawl here to make Rusev look good by beating up Cena's....buddy I guess? I mean who remembers Rowan helping to steal the souls of children last summer or whatever you call it? After all, they had a 45 second chat that one time on Raw and those things bury all hatchets. This was your run of the mill Rusev match.

We look at the Bellas putting spray tanner on Paige from Monday. Somehow this is the most interesting feud in the division in months.

Paige was actually embarrassed on Monday because she isn't your standard Diva. She's also not a conformist and the Bellas will be the embarrassed ones at Fast Lane. Not a bad thirty second promo, especially given what she has to work with.

### Paige vs. Alicia Fox

In case you didn't get enough of it on Raw. Paige erupts on her to start and hammers on Fox, only to walk into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The Bellas are watching in the back as Fox sends Paige outside. Back in and the northern lights suplex gets two on Paige and it's time for the chinlock.

Saxton says the Bellas have been the faces of the Divas division for the better part of seven years. That would make my soul hurt if it was actually true, but I think Laycool, Mickie James, Kelly, Melina, AJ and even Paige might have a bit to say about that, especially given that before this title reign, the Bellas had combined to hold titles for about two and a half months in those seven years. Anyway, Paige fights up and hits a dropkick, setting up PT0 for the win at 2:32.

We go to the double date with Jimmy Uso/Naomi and Natalya/Kidd, but Tyson thought he'd be coming with Cesaro because they're partners. Natalya

facepalms and eats at the same time while Cesaro and Kidd say FACT at the same time. Naomi yells at Natalya for being rude and letting her husband be a jerk. Jimmy doesn't like what Kidd says about Naomi and gets knocked out by Cesaro. Natalya blames Jimmy and Naomi.

Network/Fast Lane hype.

Bray Wyatt says a man is defined by his actions but he is no man. He is the reaper, so what makes you think your actions towards him mean nothing? You are blinded by your pride and the devil is knocking on your door. He just wants you to come home, so just let him in. Let him in. Let Bray in.

### Daniel Bryan vs. Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury/Seth Rollins

Mercury offers a test of strength to start but gets kicked in the leg instead. Daniel rides him on the mat with ease so it's off to Noble to get abused as well. A cross armbreaker sends Noble running to the ropes and it's off to Rollins for a smattering of applause before the YOU SOLD OUT chants begin. A dropkick puts Seth down but he gets Bryan into the corner for the triple team. Back to Noble as the announcers recap Wrestlemania from last year. Rollins takes Bryan outside and sends him into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Bryan getting German suplexed for no cover. Seth does Brock's bounce before throwing another German suplex. The Stooges take turns stomping away with Noble throwing some shadow punches. Mercury gets two off a dropkick (people might forget how young the Stooges really are. Noble is the older of the two and is only 38. This is hardly Patterson and Brisco II) before Seth comes in for some cocky stomping.

Daniel fights up for a double cross body to put both guys down. Back up and Seth sends him into the buckle to take over again but makes the mistake of setting up the Triple Bomb out of the corner. Bryan counters into a hurricanrana and Daniel speeds things up. A top rope double dropkick puts the Stooges down and it's time for rotating YES Kicks. Bryan clotheslines Rollins to the floor and throws Noble out with him, setting up the YES Lock for the submission on Mercury at 13:58.

**Rating:** C. This was fine and again it helps that the Stooges are still more than capable of having a passable match. Considering they're wrestling in business casual clothing, this wasn't too bad. Bryan winning here makes sense and there's no need to have him pin Rollins again. As I said in the Wyatts' feud against Cena (before it was resolved with one of those 45 second backstage chats), a good villain needs lackeys for situations like this one.

Post match Kane comes out and beats down Bryan because THIS FEUD WILL NOT FREAKING DIE ALREADY. Bryan gets a big beating to end the show, including a chokeslam and curb stomp. There is no reason for Kane and Bryan to keep fighting, especially after last week.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show was rolling along to a decent rating and then they do this stupid thing again where they can't just let a feud end and move on to ANYTHING else because for some reason, writers in WWE don't get that it's ok to end a story at some point. There's no reason for this thing to keep going but they're just going to keep it going because they have no idea where else to go with Kane.

Unfortunately, this show felt like an old Friday night episode of the show with nothing really interesting and a decent match here and there. It's not bad or anything, but at least they had the two most important names featured here. At the end of the day, any show that doesn't have Cena on it all the time doesn't feel like a major show. The company really does revolve around him and you can notice when he's gone.

### Results

Dolph Ziggler/Ryback b. Goldust/Stardust – Shell Shock to Goldust

Dean Ambrose b. Curtis Axel – Dirty Deeds

Fandango b. Adam Rose – Last Dance

Roman Reigns b. Miz – Spear

Rusev b. Erick Rowan – Accolade

Paige b. Alicia Fox – PT0

Daniel Bryan b. Seth Rollins/Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury – YES Lock to Mercury

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## Reviewing the Review: Royal Rumble 2015

We've finally arrived at one of the biggest shows of the year as we're almost to the Road to Wrestlemania. While it seems like there are multiple ways to get to the biggest show of the year, it seems like this is destined to end with Reigns vs. Lesnar as the match that not many people want to see. Let's get to it.

Cesaro and Tyson Kidd beat the New Day in a good pre-show match. It seems like New Day is already a lost cause and I can't say I'm shocked. There isn't much to the team other than a lot of sweating, but they're fine as the face version of 3MB. Kidd and Cesaro have potential but I don't see them being anything more than the challengers of the month.

Ascension beat the New Age Outlaws in the opener and it was exactly what it was supposed to be. I still like Ascension and it's clear where they're going with the team, but they went a long way around to get there. I'm also not sure what other veteran teams they can beat as the Dudleys don't seem to be a possibility and the APA is retired. I'm sure it ends with Usos vs. Ascension for the belts, maybe at Wrestlemania, and



the match could be good if they go with an old 80s formula. That being said, I'm not sure how much a win over the Outlaws is supposed to impress me in 2015. They were past their prime in 2000 and they're still kicking around?

Heyman offered the Authority the use of Lesnar to take out Sting. That's an odd choice as I don't want to see Sting ground into dust from Brock's stare, let alone what might happen if they had contact.

The Usos retained the Tag Team Titles over Miz/Mizdow in a match that no one wanted to see again. This feud died months ago, right around the time Naomi was forgotten. Why the writers will never understand that stories can save dull wrestling is beyond me but it's a lesson that would save us a lot of headaches.

The Bellas beat Paige/Natalya with a forearm in the fourth straight tag match of the night. This looked like filler, was wrestled like filler, and ended like filler. In other words, it was filler because they've blown through Natalya vs. Nikki about five times already.

The old school Rumble promos don't make me think anyone but Reigns has a chance.

Now we get to the real treat of the night as Brock Lesnar defended the World Title against John Cena and Seth Rollins. If there's one thing WWE can get right, it's carnage. That's exactly what we got here as these three guys just beat the tar out of each other for over twenty minutes and it became who could possibly survive.

Cena and Lesnar both got to throw around the Stooges in a power off, leaving Rollins to steal the show with his high spots. The biggest of said spots was a flying elbow from the top rope to drive Lesnar through the announcers' table. The idea here was that Lesnar broke a rib and was out of the match for a few minutes, which he sold like he was dead instead of just injured. However, this caused the lone problem of the match, which happens all the time in WWE main events.

With Lesnar down, Cena and Rollins traded finisher attempt and the fans weren't all that impressed. Yeah they popped some, but there was no

question about the kickouts. That's become a trope in WWE main events and it's something they need to change. Have them hit secondary moves here or something, but stop this whole "I hit a finisher and then you hit a finisher" sequence. It was stupid when Orton and Cena did it and it worked about as well this time. Even an STF attempt would work better than the AA, but that's the formula they keep sticking with for some reason.

Before we get to the ending, I have to give Rollins some praise. He's gone from the guy I thought would be the white Kofi Kingston to a guy who looks like he belongs in the World Title scene and stood toe to toe with John Cena and Brock Lesnar in a war. This guy is going to be a star someday and his face turn is going to blow the roof off the place. Just imagine the pop when he curb stomps some big time heel.

Anyway, Lesnar came back in and went into Beast Mode for the F5 and pin on Rollins. There is some serious money to be made with Lesnar as a face (assuming he isn't back in MMA right after Wrestlemania) and it would be the easiest turn in years. He really wouldn't have to change anything as he would just start fighting heels in the same way he is now, probably without Heyman to guide him, giving him an out to lose via DQ etc. It's not a necessary turn, but he's going to be the face at Wrestlemania anyway, so why fight it at this point?

That brings us to who he'll be the heel against at Wrestlemania...and of course it's Roman Reigns. I've spent far too much time talking about how Reigns isn't ready and the 8000 stories they could go through to make things better (and those ways do exist. This story isn't guaranteed to be the disaster people are sure it's going to be) so instead we'll look at the Rumble piece by piece.

First up we'll look at the returns. This wasn't the best part of the match as once you get past Bubba Ray's good return, which didn't lead anywhere as he wasn't even out there five minutes, the returns took a big hit. I mean, the Boogeyman, Zack Ryder and Diamond Dallas Page? They were out there about four minutes in total and the last one was gone about halfway through the match. This can be a major strong point for the match and it fell totally flat here.

Before we get to the really bad things, let's touch on the good stuff. Bray Wyatt had a REALLY strong stretch in there and looked like the monster he used to be. There's still a lot of potential for him and I'm interested in where he's going from here, even if it's fighting Undertaker (though that depends on what you do with Undertaker going forward. I'm sure I'll get to that at some point). Wyatt was the iron man at just under 47 minutes and made it to the final batch.

That gets us to the end of the really good/memorable parts (even Kofi's save wasn't anything special this year, though it was a matter of time until we got to the Rosebuds saving someone) so now we'll get on to the really big flaws. We'll start with what ended Wyatt's, as well as far many others', night: Big Show and Kane. This is where the Rumble went from being boring to just flat out bad.

At the end of the day, the Rumble set up a ton of potential with guys like Reigns, Rusev, Wyatt, Ziggler, Ambrose and Cesaro around near the end. That opened the door for a really hot ending in the same vein as Reigns vs. Rusev in the Money in the Bank qualifying battle royal back in July. What we got instead was the wrath of the Big Balds as Kane and Big Show threw out Ziggler, Wyatt and Ambrose in short order before getting in a quick fight with each other, allowing Reigns to dump them out at the same time.

So yeah, at the end of the day, it came down to Reigns vs. Big Show to end the Rumble, despite it being the least interesting story in years. I've yet to hear from anyone who actually cares about these two fighting but it closed the Royal Rumble to send Reigns to the biggest show (hardy har har) of the year. Why would we want to see these young and interesting guys when we can see Big Show being the same character he's been since 1999? I mean, it worked for the New Age Outlaws in the opener so it can work here in the main event. It's like bookends!

If that wasn't enough though, they had Kane and Big Show go after Reigns again, only to have the Rock make a return for the save. The fans weren't pleased even with one of the biggest stars ever out there, and can you really blame them? It didn't help that they seemed to mistime things as Rusev came back in after not being eliminated and was tossed with ease in

a final screw you to the fans with one more blast of false hope.

That brings us to the real problem of this match: the lack of doubt. Daniel Bryan came in at #10, eliminated Tyson Kidd, and was out in ten minutes, being eliminated between Adam Rose and Fandango. He was little more than a throwaway entrant as it seems WWE isn't interested in doing anything with him this year. Here's the thing: I can accept that. It may not be the most popular move, but Bryan is fresh off major neck surgery and has been back literally less than three weeks. I can understand WWE being hesitant to put the title on someone 33 years old and coming off a major injury, especially after they nailed his win last year.

What I can't understand though is the idea to put him out that early. At the end of the day, this Rumble was over the second Bryan's feet hit the floor. That elimination sealed every bit of doubt away forever as it was just a matter of time until Reigns showed up, cleaned house (by which I mean three guys. Quite the way to showcase your new star WWE) and won the match. It was right out of 1993 where Undertaker was thrown out and there was zero doubt that it was going to Yokozuna (who just happens to be related to Reigns).

All the drama was gone and it became really, really boring. There was some hope, but Big Show and Kane took away whatever chance there was of the match being interesting. Daniel Bryan didn't need to win, but he needed to be there to keep the crowd under control until the end. Having him lose clean, especially to Wyatt, is fine but don't have him get thrown out in ten minutes after barely doing anything that early on.

The overarching problem with this Rumble was the lack of drama. Much like many bad Rumbles, there was zero doubt as to who was winning. There can be fun stories to be told if you stack the deck against them, but the final three (excluding Rusev) had as much drama as Mr. Perfect and Rick Rude vs. Hulk Hogan in 1990. On top of that they threw out Bryan ala throwing out Hogan early in 1989 and the results were just as lame. It didn't help that the rest of the Rumble was horribly uninteresting with only one fun surprise and nothing else worth talking about. I could see it being the worst Rumble ever but 1999 is hard to top.

Overall, this show needs to be incredibly grateful for the classic World Title match because without that match, it's a bunch of lame tag matches and a dreadful Rumble. That being said, the World Title match is good enough to make me forget about the earlier weak stuff, which is a common case in wrestling (see also Wrestlemania VI, where the show is pretty fondly remembered due to one match alone). WWE can salvage Wrestlemania's main event, but this show left a horrible taste in a lot of mouths due to Reigns and Reigns alone being shoved down our unready throats.

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## **Smackdown – January 29, 2015: And So It Ends. Please Dear Goodness Let It End.**

### **Smackdown**

Date: January 29, 2015

Location: XL Center, Hartford, Connecticut

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole

This is a rare live show due to the massive snow storm in the northeast that wiped out Tuesday's tapings. That might actually be the best thing they could have had happen to them after the negative reaction to the Royal Rumble. Tonight's main event is yet another Bryan vs. Kane showdown, this time in a casket match. Let's get to it.

Here's HHH to welcome us to Raw before realizing he's a bit shaken up. The one thing WWE doesn't like is being told what to do, which is why they did it. Just like they were told they would never have a million Network subscribers, which is exactly what they announced this week. He actually thanks the fans for subscribing in a rare genuine act. Then he was told they couldn't have a show in Hartford, so here they are for the live show.

WWE isn't the only one with a controversy right now because the NFL and Roger Goodell have a problem with their balls. Some like them hard and some like them soft, but WWE has never had a problem with balls. However, that's not something they have an issue with in WWE. HHH is the same way, because he has a problem with the man called Sting, and he'll be dealing with that face to face at Fast Lane.

That brings him back to the Royal Rumble which had its fair share of controversy. First of all there was an exceptional triple threat where Rollins proved that he is the future, Cena proved that he is the past and Brock Lesnar proved that he is the beast and World Heavyweight Champion.

However, that wasn't the major controversy. The controversy was due to the Royal Rumble itself, which everyone has been talking about. We see some clips with Cole talking about how the fans are upset that guys like Ziggler, Bryan and Wyatt have been eliminated, leaving Big Show and Kane in the end. Reigns eliminated Rusev to win and cemented his spot at Wrestlemania.

HHH promises to make an announcement on Raw that is going to end the controversy and shake the WWE to its core. That sounds like trying to fix the main event already, which might not be the worst idea in the world. This brings out Reigns, who says there was no controversy because he won the Rumble. HHH agrees that he won the match, so now Reigns can win this one.

### Big Show vs. Roman Reigns

Now let this be the FINAL match. They shove each other around to start with Big Show shoving him around to start. This is where Reigns is getting hurt more than anywhere else: he should be DESTROYING Big Show to

set up a major showdown with giant killer vs. ultimate giant Lesnar at Wrestlemania. Instead it's Big Show looking dominant and Reigns probably making a comeback to win in a surprise. Show throws him across the ring as we're waiting on Reigns' first offense. He slips out of a slam and sends Big Show into the buckle for a breather, followed by a clothesline out to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Show working on the knee and putting on something like an ankle lock. Reigns climbs up the ropes to escape and counters into an ankle scissors of all things to send Show over the top. There's the apron kick but of course Show pops back up. Some clotheslines have little effect but a third one finally puts Show down.

A Samoan drop plants Show again but he rolls outside. Another running clothesline off the apron puts Show down but the knee is banged up. Back in and the Superman Punch is countered into the chokeslam for two. Show goes up but gets Superman Punched twice. He still won't go down so Reigns slams him down, setting up the spear for the pin at 12:21.

**Rating:** D. AND THEY'RE DONE. Like NEVER AGAIN let these two fight. It's not even that Reigns is looking bad out there but Big Show just looks like nothing. And what does Reigns get out of this win? Nothing of course, because NO ONE CARES ABOUT BIG SHOW. Dull match here and it's almost infuriating after all the months of these two fighting.

Vince announces February as a free month for new subscribers on the WWE Network.

Here are Rollins and the Stogges with something to say. Rollins says he told us he would prove himself on Sunday and that's exactly what he did. He was a single count away from winning the WWE World Heavyweight Title and he stuck a dagger into Lesnar's heart when he broke his rib. He's feeling so good that he's going to issue an open challenge to anyone in this building that wants to face him.

Cue Ryback to go after Rollins but the Stogges get the better of him. This brings out Rowan to help but the Stogges and Rollins take him down as well. Zigler completes the trio but gets sent into the announcers' table. Rollins knees Rowan in the back and the Authority bails before

anything else happens. I smell a six man.

Kane is caressing a coffin and promises to lock Bryan inside tonight where the only thing he'll be able to hear is the beating of his heart. It's ashes to ashes and dust to dust, so may God have mercy on Bryan's soul tonight, because Kane will have none.

### Jey Uso vs. Tyson Kidd

They start fast with Jey going to the corner but getting kicked in the knee. Tyson immediately goes after the bad wheel and slaps on a leg lock like a smart heel (or wrestler in general) should. Jey kicks Kidd out to the floor and nails him in the head, setting up a charge (so much for selling the leg). Kidd kicks him in the head though and springboards back in, only to get caught in a Samoan drop. Jimmy and Cesaro go at it on the floor, allowing Kidd to hit the fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin at 2:30.

Here are Rusev and Lana to talk about this past Sunday. Rusev says he should have been the winner and Lana is so upset that she can't speak English. He's the US Champion and wants to challenge a man from the past: John Cena. Cena has no hunger or desire and he isn't a superstar anymore. This brings out Cena who looks shocked at what Rusev just said. Cena threatens to shut Rusev's mouth for him.

It sounds like Rusev has bought into his own hype because he thinks Cena is no challenge for him. He's John Cena, a fifteen time World Champion, a two time Royal Rumble winner and the face who runs this place. He had that US Title years ago and challenges Rusev to do the Hartford Hoedown. Rusev is ready to go but Lana calls him off. The Russians leave but Cena isn't done. He's fighting Rusev at Fast Lane and ending the undefeated streak because the champ is here. This really didn't accomplish much but Cena sounded good.

Paige vs. Nikki Bella for the Divas Title is official for Fast Lane. Paige is in the back when the Bellas come up to make fun of her for being pale. She elbows Brie in the face but takes a big forearm from Nikki.

### Goldust/Stardust vs. Ascension



The brothers aren't sure who is going to start until it's Stardust vs. Viktor. A hiptoss puts Viktor down and Stardust W00s. Stardust is shoved into a forearm to Konnor but Viktor nails him in the back to take over. Konnor comes in an\& stumps away and hammers away before it's quickly back to Viktor for a chinlock.

Ascension keeps hammering on Stardust in the corner as the Dusts are suddenly the faces in this match. Stardust finally gets over for a hot tag and Goldust comes in with a knee to Viktor's head as everything breaks down. Stardust tags himself back in and Goldust isn't pleased. Konnor shoves Stardust off the top and a quick Fall of Man is good for the pin at 4:33.

**Rating:** D+. This was more angle advancement than anything else but it also gave Ascension another win. It looks like they're splitting up the Dust Brothers and I can't say I blame them at this point. There's nothing left for them to do and they're starting to get stale as a team, so give the fans a feud that they've been wanting for a good while.

Kane is STILL looking at the casket and slams it shut.

A magician is entertaining some wrestlers in the back when Miz and Mizdow come up to shake his hand. Miz gets annoyed at Mizdow shaking his hand but the magician demonstrates a magic trick with a fake egg, only to mystify Miz by turning it into a reel egg. Miz doesn't believe it's real and gets it cracked on his head. R-Truth: The yoke's on you. Mizdow makes sure he isn't caught laughing. I'm a big fan of magic so this was more entertaining than it should have been.

Bray Wyatt asks us what makes us happy. Maybe it's money or a fond memory. He finds enjoyment in things that mommy and daddy hid from us as children. Bray is legion among men so he asks what makes us smile. When he's done, it will be hard for us to ever smile again. Run.

### Kane vs. Daniel Bryan

Casket match and they have a lot of time for this one. Cole talks about Bryan looking at the casket because he's never been in a casket match before. I'm sure this has nothing to do with the potential of being

locked inside a casket. Kane quickly goes for the casket but Bryan comes back with kicks to the leg while wearing what appear to be furry boots. Kane can't gorilla press him into the casket and runs away from an attempted baseball slide as we take a break.

Back with Kane putting Bryan's face in the ring skirt and hammering away at the covered head. A big boot almost knocks Bryan into the casket but he kicks Kane away for the save. Kane plants him with another side slam but has to fight out of a headscissors to put him into the casket. Bryan nails a high cross body on the floor but gets kicked into the casket, only to crawl out the other side. Kane still can't get him into the casket and we take another break.

We come back with Bryan holding Kane in a chinlock (you don't see that everyday) and hitting his running clothesline to put the giant down. Here come the YES kicks to send Kane outside, setting up the FLYING GOAT and more right hands from Daniel. Kane backdrops him over the barricade as the casket has been forgotten for the moment. They head over to the announcers' table with Bryan getting sent into the chairs, followed by a bunch of chair shots to the back.

They suddenly remember this is a casket match with Kane loading up Bryan for a tombstone off the apron, only to have Daniel slip out and dropkick him a few times. He tries a third dropkick but charges into a chokeslam. Kane loads him into the casket but eats a kick to the face followed by the YES Lock with Kane partially in the casket. Even though it looks terrible, it puts Kane into the casket but Bryan still can't close it. Kane gets out again and almost turns Bryan inside out with a clothesline. Bryan escapes another chokeslam and the running knee to the side of the head puts him in the casket for the win at 22:10.

**Rating:** D. WAY too long here with a boring match as they had another Bryan vs. Kane showdown that no one wanted to see. Much like earlier, I really hope this is going to be the end of the feud because there's no reason for these guys to fight ever again. It took too long for Kane to put put away here, but at least Bryan won. I'm not a fan of these matches though and it really gets annoying watching them having a dull match until they remember it's a casket match.

We see HHH teasing the announcement for Raw again to close the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. The promos carried this show and the show flew by but it really wasn't all that great. The casket match felt like it went on forever, much like the entire Bryan vs. Kane feud. Thankfully Big Show vs. Reigns should be done, which is why you can already see the gimmick rematch coming at Fast Lane. This was a passable show and felt like Raw cut down to two hours.

If they did this style show every Monday, I can't imagine how much more the fans would calm down. They didn't pack this show full of nonsense and there wasn't as much time being wasted. Keep the show moving and don't let it get repetitive and the show becomes much easier to sit through. That third hour really does cripple Raw and this show is proof. It wasn't good, but it was a lot easier to sit through.

### Results

Roman Reigns b. Big Show – Spear

Tyson Kidd b. Jey Uso – Fisherman's neckbreaker

Ascension b. Goldust/Stardust – Fall of Man to Stardust

Daniel Bryan b. Kane – Bryan closed Kane in the casket

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# Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: January 19, 2015

This was another special edition of the show called Raw Reunion, which is another way to have the old guys show up again for no real reason. It's also the go home show for Monday Night Raw, meaning we need to make sure everyone but Roman Reigns looks great because there's almost no doubt that he's going to Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We opened with, of course, a big in ring segment. This time though it was Brock ready to fight and wanting to get his hands on Rollins for what happened last week. Instead, HHH came out to basically blame the whole thing on Lesnar, meaning it was almost time for the boss to get beaten down. That is until STEPHANIE came out to calm things down, because no matter who you are, including Brock freaking Lesnar, can't do anything to Stephanie.

Of all the Authority, I get annoyed at her the most because of things like this. She's treated like this demigod and everyone is just in awe of her whenever she's around, likely because of that horrible rap song of hers. Even when she gets her comeuppance, it's usually with some stupid juvenile comedy moment and then she's all evil again the next week. Let someone yell at her or call her out on being annoying for a change. You know, like they do to everyone not named Stephanie.

Anyway, Rollins got on screen and talked smack, then Cena came out and talked even more, then Stephanie (praise be her name! And please don't let her hurt us with her terrifying yet oh so seductive eyes. And don't let us hear one of her horribly stupid and pointless interviews she gives to her charity of the month or to whatever low level media outlet will talk to her as she tries to be some polished businesswoman and talks about branding like it's the most important thing in the history of ever) talked a lot, then Cena made fun of Rollins for screwing up a line because no one ever does that.

They STILL WEREN'T FREAKING DONE THOUGH as HHH put Cena in a match later

on against an opponent to be named to get the three fired guys their jobs back. Of course that's not enough though because Cena had to put his spot in the title match on the line. ONE MORE THING! We're putting it up to the fans to vote because this segment didn't drag on long enough. They easily could have cut this down by fifteen minutes and dropped the stupid vote thing, but that would prevent their big idea (more on that later).

Bray Wyatt beat Daniel Bryan in a match that was longer than it needed to be. This was entertaining and Bray won thanks to Kane's help, but the important idea here is that Bray continues to be Daniel's Kryptonite. Daniel has never beaten him and just can't figure Wyatt out. Hogan didn't pin Piper (until the disasters they had in WCW) and Undertaker never pinned Bret. Having that one guy you can't solve is a good thing and a necessary element for a big character. Granted it's not likely going to last because we live in an era where everything has to go as fast as possible, but it's nice to have now.

We got the Kliq reunion in the back and Mizdow did a pretty excellent X-Pac imitation.

The Royal Rumble Legends Panel saw Hogan, Flair and Michaels do Rumble picks and tell generic stories about their wins. It all wound up being a way to have Big Show come out and look intimidating so Reigns could make the save. We're still on this story somehow and likely will be until Fast Lane. I've said this before about WCW decisions, but I'd love to hear Vince validate Big Show's position in the company. I mean....how can they possibly think he has an impact, even to newer fans?

The poll says Cena puts the shot on the line. From what I've heard, people who voted no were told they voted yes, as were people who downloaded the App and hadn't voted yet. This kind of chicanery doesn't really surprise me, but it's still very annoying to see. Yeah it was a way get people to download the App, but they should be able to find better ways than this. It was a stupid vote to have and the results should have been obvious. It made the opening segment even longer too and that's never a good thing.

Dean Ambrose pinned Bad News Barrett. I think I pinned him in a non-title

match a few weeks back.

Rumble by the Numbers. That's still cool.

New Day beat Cesaro and Tyson Kidd in a quick match. I still like the losers here.

The NWO came out and took credit for everything good ever (literally) until Ascension came out. This brought out the APA and New Age Outlaws to beat up the Ascension, because the tag team division is SO deep that you can have old guys beat them up like this. I mean, I could go for another six months of Miz/Mizdow or Dust Brothers vs. the Usos couldn't you?

Cena is facing Big Show/Kane/Rollins in the main event. As usual, just going through the motions.

Paige and Natayla won your weekly pointless Divas match, defeating Summer Rae and Alicia Fox.

Rusev, R-Truth, 46 seconds.

Lesnar scared Rollins because last week's big hero moment is totally forgotten.

Jey Uso beat the Miz. I don't care either.

The three villains destroyed Cena for most of the match until Sting came out and pointed (not at the sign of course. He hasn't earned that right yet), allowing Cena to roll Rollins up for the pin. Cena ran from the monsters and Lesnar came out to destroy everything in sight to end the show. Of note after the show, there was a kid crying that HHH wanted to hurt Cena so HHH broke character and told him it was ok. I love little things like that and it's not like it hurt anything. If nothing else he can say it's best for business to make sure everyone goes home happy.

Overall, Raw wasn't horrible this week but it really didn't do much for me. They're trying to hide that it's Reigns winning the Rumble, but at the end of the day it's about as clear as Stephanie's diamond eyes. Sorry just had to get in a bit more sucking up before she started talking again. The wrestling wasn't much this week and it was clear they were

filling in time, which unfortunately didn't make me want to see Sunday's show any more than I already did. Not a fan of this one for the most part, but it had some watchable moments.

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# Royal Rumble 2015: More Teasing Than A 15 Year Old On Prom Night

## Royal Rumble 2015

Date: January 25, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

It's the start of the Road to Wrestlemania and the top two contenders to challenge for the title at the biggest show of the year are Roman Reigns and Daniel Bryan. Both are in the Royal Rumble match tonight and there really isn't another major favorite to win. Other than that we have John Cena and Seth Rollins challenging Brock Lesnar for the WWE World Title in a triple threat. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: New Day vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

This was originally a six man elimination tag with Adam Rose and Xavier

Woods added. They may have been dropped due to Woods' ankle injury. The fans are entirely behind Cesaro to start as Big E. throws Kidd around. Some backbreakers get two on Kidd before Big E. launches Kidd into the air for a dropkick from Kofi. Off to Cesaro and the fans are thrilled. Big E. comes back in and hammers away on Cesaro, much to the crowd's chagrin. Oh yeah they're white hot tonight.

Kofi is dragged into the wrong corner for a double stomp with Kidd going much faster than his partner. Cesaro won't let Kofi tag but he does roll the Swiss man up for two. The Cesaro Swing into the dropkick gets two and we take a break. Back with Cesaro holding Kofi in a chinlock as the fans think New Day sucks. Big E. gets all fired up and wipes the sweat from his brow before slamming Cesaro down for two. Kidd is sent outside and Big E. launches Kofi onto him to almost no reaction. Big E. spears Cesaro through the ropes and off the apron to the floor. I miss that spot. Or any Big E. spot actually.

The referee doesn't see a tag to Kofi at first but Cesaro backdrops Big E. over the top for a big crash. Cesaro superplexes Kofi for a springboard elbow from Kidd for a very close two. Kofi kicks Kidd to the floor to break up a Sharpshooter attempt but Cesaro gets caught cheating on a sunset flip attempt. Trouble in Paradise is countered into the Sharpshooter on Kofi but Big E. makes the save with a belly to belly. Cesaro knocks the big man to the floor and pops Kofi in the face with a European uppercut, setting up a swinging fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin on Kofi at 11:00.

**Rating:** B. This got a lot better near the end but the match and commentary really tells you everything you need to know about the tag division at this point. With that one win, after about five losses, JBL thinks Cesaro and Kidd are in line for a title shot. Have we really sunk that low again? Win two matches and you should be the Tag Team Champions? Yet people still don't want Ascension around? The near falls here were good and I wasn't sure who was winning until the end, but that's the first loss for New Day? Really?

The opening video talks about wanting to have your moment and being the one. We transition into a video on the triple threat and how everyone is



fighting for the title.

### New Age Outlaws vs. Ascension

Ascension needs some steps to come down during their entrance. Cole points out that this isn't for the Tag Team Titles. That could be because neither team is champions. The fans think Billy still has it as he armdrags Viktor down. Off to Dogg vs. Konnor with the big man driving Dogg into the corner. Viktor's chinlock doesn't have much effect so it's off to Konnor for one of his own. Dogg finally gets up and dives over for the tag to Billy as everything speeds up. The Fameasser misses though and Fall of Man ends Gunn at 5:23.

**Rating:** D+. This was exactly what it was supposed to be as they're setting up Ascension against various legendary teams, meaning we're likely to see Too Cool and maybe the APA laying down for them in the future, setting up the title showdown against Ascension. Granted it's not like beating the New Age Outlaws means much at this point.

We recap Sting debuting on Raw and staring down the Authority, allowing Cena to pin Rollins to save his spot in the title match tonight and get Dolph Ziggler, Erick Rowan and Ryback their jobs back.

HHH and Stephanie are annoyed that they weren't told about Sting debuting. If he walks in here again, HHH is going to destroy him. Heyman comes in and the ECW chants begin. His solution to the Sting problem: Brock Lesnar.

### Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Miz/Damien Mizdow

The Usos are defending and these teams have been trading the titles for the last few months. Mizdow is just ridiculously over. Miz shoves Jimmy into the corner but eats a shot to the face. The corner clothesline puts Jey down but he's able to crotch Miz on the top. Mizdow does the same but in slow motion for a funny bit. He one ups it by diving into an invisible punch to the ribs before Miz throws Jimmy throat first into the ropes. The Reality Check gets two but Miz still won't tag out.

The not very hot tag brings in Jey but Miz takes him down for the figure

four as everything breaks down. Miz and Mizdow head outside and Jimmy dives on Mizdow with Jey taking out Miz a few seconds later. Back in and Miz hits the Skull Crushing Finale for two on Jimmy. Jey comes back in for a double superkick and the Superfly Splash but Mizdow makes the save. He follows it up with the Skull Crushing Finale to give Miz two on Jey. Miz's superplex attempt is broken up for a sunset bomb from Jey, followed by the Superfly Splash from Jimmy to retain at 8:22. Mizdow didn't seem interested in making the save.

**Rating:** C-. Not much to see here as these teams have run out of things to do to each other. Miz and Mizdow's split seems imminent and I can't imagine they make it out of the Rumble without a major showdown. It wasn't a great match though and they would have been better off with this on the pre-show and the New Day vs. Kidd/Cesaro on the main show.

The expert panel (Booker T., Corey Graves and Alex Riley) talk about the show so far.

We look at the pre-show match.

The Stooges are playing the new WWE Immortals game when Seth Rollins comes in to ask why they're not helping him get ready. He's tired of being called the future and wants to be the present.

### Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

This is the Total Divas match over who are the real stars of the show. Paige throws Nikki down to start as JBL says the Bellas have been twins their whole life. Off to Brie who walks into a double suplex, allowing the slow crawling cover from Paige. Natalya comes back in and slams Brie down before the Bellas start choking to take over.

The Brie Mode running knee to the chest gets two but Natalya fights out of a headscissors by lifting Nikki into an electric chair. Nikki misses a clothesline in the corner but Brie breaks up the hot tag to Paige. A big forearm to Natalya's jaw is enough for the pin at 8:06 to end this far too long match.

**Rating:** D-. Oh come on now. A FOREARM??? They can't even have Nikki hit

her finisher for the pin? If you're going to have Nikki pin Natalya, at least make this a title match. Oh wait that would be stupid because we've seen that match like 19 times now. Again, stop running through matches and save them for shows like this.

Roman Reigns says last year's elimination record was cool but it's nothing compared to this.

Stardust talks about the Cosmic Key and Goldust breathes a lot.

Rusev will crush everyone at Wrestlemania.

Miz says he'll win and Mizdow agrees, but accidentally says he'll win instead.

Big Show says he's an angry and motivated giant. Roman Reigns and everyone else in the match will find that out for real.

Fandango says everyone underestimates the power of the tango.

Daniel Bryan thinks he can make it back to the main event of Wrestlemania this year. YES he does.

We recap Lesnar vs. Cena vs. Rollins. Cena had defeated Orton to earn a title shot against Lesnar but the Authority added Rollins to the match to thank him for bringing them back. Rollins has started to stand up to Lesnar and even Curb Stomped him, meaning Lesnar wants to kill him too.

WWE World Heavyweight Title: Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Lesnar is defending and we get big match intros. Rollins immediately bails to the floor and Lesnar hits the first German suplex on Cena. There's the second German as Rollins comes in, only to get caught on Brock's shoulders. The Stooges make the save so Brock suplexes them at the same time. Brock launches Seth back into the ring and Germans Cena again. All Lesnar so far.

Both challengers are easily suplexed again and there's the Kimura to Cena. Brock even climbs onto Cena but Seth makes the save with the springboard knee to the head and Lesnar is in trouble. A double suplex

puts Lesnar down and there's an AA but Rollins throws Cena to the floor and only gets one on the champ. Both challengers are thrown to the floor and you can see everyone laying as Brock walks around the ring. Seth knocks Brock into the steps for a breather, leaving Cena to beat Rollins up inside.

The fans absolutely hate Cena, only to have Brock break up the Shuffle with rolling Germans. Rollins breaks it up for some reason though and knees Lesnar out to the floor. Now it's Cena getting all fired up and cleaning house, only to have Rollins knock him outside. Seth tries a springboard onto Lesnar, only to get caught on Brock's shoulders for an F5. John has to make a save so Brock feels the need to throw him down with another German suplex.

That's not enough for Brock though as he loads up the announcers' table (and destroys a monitor), only to walk into the AA. Brock doesn't even stay down so Cena hits another, only to have Lesnar pop up again. A third AA gets two as Rollins makes the save, followed by the Curb Stomp for two with Cena making a save. Now the fans are impressed. Lesnar throws them both down again and goes outside, only to have Cena follow him out and spear the champ through the barricade.

Cena slams him hard into the steps and blasts him in the face with the same steps, knocking the champ onto the announcers' table. Seth kicks Cena down and goes up for a top rope elbow through the table to put everyone down. That was one heck of a crash as the war continues. Back in and Rollins hits the low superkick for two on Cena but John grabs a popup sitout powerbomb for the same. Lesnar is receiving medical attention as Rollins counters a superplex attempt into the running buckle bomb for two.

Everyone is down again but Cena grabs the STF, only to have the Stooges come in for the save. Rollins plays Reigns in a Triple Bomb as a stretcher comes out for Lesnar. Cena kicks out at two so Rollins grabs the briefcase, only to miss the charge and fly out to the floor. The Stooges take a double AA and Rollins gets the single version but kicks out at two. We cut back to Lesnar who says he wants to stay out here. Cole says Lesnar has at least a broken rib. Rollins enziguris Cena down

and the Curb Stomp connects for another near fall.

Rollins busts out a Phoenix Splash but Lesnar CHARGES back in for some German suplexes as Beast Mode is on. Seth flips out of a German though and knocks Lesnar silly with the briefcase, only to have Lesnar pop up with an F5 to counter the Curb Stomp onto the briefcase to retain the title at 22:45.

**Rating:** A. If there's one thing WWE can do like no one else, it's organized carnage. These guys DESTROYED each other for twenty two minutes and I would have believed anyone could have won at any time. Lesnar going into that other level is absolutely terrifying and you believe he could beat anyone at that point. Great stuff here and well worth going out of your way to see. They're making Lesnar out to be unstoppable, meaning whoever gets to take the title off of him will be a huge star. You might even say they'll be Reign(s)ing. And yes that was as stupid as it sounded.

Rumble by the numbers.

### Royal Rumble

90 second intervals and it's Miz at #1 and R-Truth at #2. The fans immediately want Mizdow but get a headlock from R-Truth instead. Feeling out process to start until Truth gets crotched on top. In at #3 is BUBBA RAY DUDLEY, complete with taped up glasses. It's Miz getting the big beating and the wind-up elbow has Miz reeling. Truth (appropriately) helps with What's Up and is even told to get the tables. You know the Philadelphia crowd is up for that. Miz gets back up and eats 3D, allowing Bubba to easily eliminate him.

Luke Harper is in at #4 as Bubba throws out Truth. They immediately start hammering on each other and Harper fights out of the Bubba Bomb before kicking Bubba in the jaw. A big lariat puts Harper down though and the ECW chants revive Dudley. Bray Wyatt is in at #5, complete with lantern. Bubba stares him down but Harper gives us a Wyatt Family reunion as the fans want D-Von. Harper throws Bubba out and it's time for the big staredown.

They stand in place until Curtis Axel is in at #6 but Erick Rowan (who didn't qualify for the Rumble) jumps him from behind though and whips him into the barricade, apparently stealing Axel's spot. Harper looks at Rowan and wants a team up, much to Bray's excitement. Bray and Harper join forces though and Rowan gets double teamed, only to have Bray dump both of them out to clear the ring.

The Boogeyman returns at #7 and Cole informs us that the guy coming out to I'M THE BOOGEYMAN is in fact named the Boogeyman. Bray smiles at him and stops a charge with a big clothesline, setting up the easy elimination. Sin Cara is in at #8 and Cole sounds bored out of his mind. Cara gets in a kick from the apron but Bray just decks him with a right hand. Sister Abigail connects and Bray is all alone again a few seconds later.

Bray grabs the mic and issues an open invitation because he has the whole world in his hands. Zack Ryder returns at #9, hits the Broski Boot, and is quickly Bray's fifth elimination. Daniel Bryan is in at #10 to really pick things up. He immediately starts the kicks and has Bray in trouble in the corner. Even more kicks put him down as Fandango is in at #11. Bryan busts out even more kicks and an old school airplane spin but doesn't throw Fandango out.

Tyson Kidd (complete with his addictive theme song) is in at #12 to slug it out with Bryan before a double cross body puts both guys down. Stardust is in at #13 as we're firmly in the midcard portion. Cole says this is Stardust's first Rumble to split a few hairs. We currently have Wyatt, Bryan, Stardust, Fandango and Kidd in the ring. Stardust and Fandango trade skinning the cat saves before Bryan belly to back suplexes Kidd out.

Bray gets knocked through the middle rope and Bryan follows with the Flying Goat, meaning both guys are still in as Diamond Dallas Page is in at #14. Stardust jumps him upon entry but eats a Diamond Cutter. Fandango takes the middle rope version, followed by Wyatt missing a charge and taking one of his own. Rusev is in at #15 and it's time to clear out some space. He blocks a Diamond Cutter and dumps Page and Fandango, setting up a showdown between Rusev and Wyatt.

Daniel breaks it up with a top rope dropkick and unleashes more kicks, only to have Bray pop up and dump him out far earlier than I was expecting. Goldust is in at #16 as the crowd is just dead. Stardust tries to throw out Goldust (with Cole mentioning that Goldust was eliminated by his brother last year, despite saying Stardust was in his first Rumble. Like I said, splitting hairs) but Goldust saves himself. The fans start chanting for Bryan and then switch to booing.

Kofi Kingston is in at #17, giving us Kingston, Goldust, Stardust, Rusev and Wyatt. Bray catapults him over the top but Kofi skins the cat and comes back in with a springboard shot to the head. Everyone gets into one corner until Adam Rose is in at #18. You can hear every word of the songs now as the crowd just does not care at the moment. Kofi is thrown out but the Rosebuds catch him and walk him back to the apron. Rusev dumps Rose and Kofi a few seconds later and Roman Reigns is in at #19 to a lot less booing than I was expecting.

Roman starts cleaning house and dumps both Dust Brothers, only to get double teamed by Rusev and Wyatt. Big E. is in at #20 to clean house and give us a very powerful foursome of Big E., Rusev, Wyatt and Reigns. Mizdow is in at #21 but Miz runs out to say it's his spot. Damien finally stands up to Miz and goes in to a good reaction, only to be dumped by Rusev. Jack Swagger is in at #22 and everyone keeps brawling until Ryback is in at #23.

Ryback busts out everyone with spinebusters as JBL incorrectly says Lex Luger is the only man to win the Rumble but never win the WWE Title (Duggan). The fans chant for CM Punk but get Kane at #24, giving us Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Big E., Swagger, Ryback and Kane. Dean Ambrose wakes the crowd up again at #25 and goes right for Wyatt. We get more brawling around the ropes until Titus O'Neil is in at #26 and is dumped in about thirty seconds (counting intro) by Reigns and Rusev.

Ambrose dropkicks Wyatt up against the ropes and Bad News Barrett gets lucky #27. The ring is getting full but no one is in any real danger of being eliminated. Cesaro is in at #28 and joins the fray. Rusev sends Big E. to the apron and then kicks him out to clear the ring a bit. Big Show is in at #29 and everyone stops to stare him down. They all gang up on

him but Show shoves everyone down as Kane chokeslams Ambrose. Show does the same to Reigns before the monsters dump Ryback with ease.

Swagger is dumped by the power team as well, tying Kane for the all time record at 39 eliminations. Dolph Ziggler is in at #30, giving us a final group of Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Kane, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro, Big Show and Ziggler. Dolph has to fight out of the chokeslam from Big Show and dumps Barrett. Cesaro swings Dolph around and gets him to the apron, only to be pulled out for the elimination. Ziggler goes up top and dives right into the KO Punch, allowing Kane and Show to easily dump him, giving Kane the all time eliminations record.

Big Show KO's Wyatt and dumps him as well, leaving us with Ambrose, Reigns, Big Show and Kane as the final four. Reigns is bleeding from the side of the mouth as the brawl is on. The Shield fights out of a double chokeslam but Ambrose's rebound clothesline has almost no effect on Show. Reigns knocks Show down and the fans just are not happy. Big Show and Kane double team Roman though before a chokeslam is enough to get rid of Ambrose.

So it's Kane and Big Show vs. Reigns and the fans are LIVID. Reigns gets sent to the apron but Show tries to dump Kane, triggering a fight that has been going on for over fifteen years now. Reigns sneaks up from behind them and eliminates both guys to go to Wrestlemania at 57:23.

**Rating:** D+. I'm surprised by this but I really shouldn't be. They actually went with Reigns vs. the giants to end the Royal Rumble? This match felt like a big tease from the company as they were setting up Wyatt, Cesaro, Rusev, Ambrose and Ziggler for this big showdown but then snatched it away to go with Kane and Big Show as the big monsters. That's really what they think is the smart idea? And you know we're getting Reigns vs. Big Show at Fast Lane, probably without Big Show doing a job for him because he doesn't get pinned you see.

As for the rest of the match....yeah I liked it, but man alive it was obvious where they were going with about twenty minutes to go. Bryan going out that early is a waste, though I'm fine with him not winning it. He had his big moment last year and it would be foolish to try and



recreate it. Bryan can get the title later on in his other big moment and that's all he needs to do.

The returns were fine but there was no big surprise at the end (that's fine), and Reigns was just so obvious as a winner. Also, the commentary was getting REALLY annoying with all their stats, some of which just didn't make sense. I didn't hate this match, but Reigns is getting wedged into a spot he's just not ready for whatsoever. Wrestlemania better have an amazing undercard, because Reigns vs. Lesnar is not going to cut it on top.

Post match Kane and Big Show destroy Reigns until The Rock makes a surprise run in for the save. House is cleaned but Rusev is back in! He was never officially eliminated...so Reigns throws him out to officially win about three minutes after he won in the first place. Again, more teasing.

The Authority comes out as Rock poses with Reigns before letting Reigns point at the sign to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This could have been far worse and the Rumble isn't even very bad, but good grief it felt like they looked at all the cool possibilities they had here and ran away from them as fast as they could to go with the status quo. The World Title match more than saves the show and the Rumble has its moments (some of them at least), but that last ten minutes or so just crippled anything they possibly had out of this match. I actually liked last year's Rumble better if you can believe that. Just.....stop deciding your outcome before you think for two seconds WWE. It would make your fans so much happier.

I'm not even mad at this ending. It's just...there. WWE decided months ago that Reigns was going to be the guy because of whatever reasons they have and that's what we're getting, no matter what else is out there. It's very dull when you know what's coming and there's nothing you can do about it. I can live with that when there's no better option, but there are indeed better, or at least far more interesting and prepared options, than Reigns here.

Results

Ascension b. New Age Outlaws – Fall of Man to Gunn

Usos b. Miz/Damien Mizdow – Superfly Splash to Miz

Bella Twins b. Paige/Natalya – Forearm to the face

Brock Lesnar b. Seth Rollins and John Cena – F5 to Rollins

Roman Reigns won the Royal Rumble last eliminating Big Show and Kane

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<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

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

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2012: Sheamus Can Fight

## Royal Rumble 2012

Date: January 29, 2012

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Attendance: 18,121

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Booker T

We wrap things up here with last year's show. The Rumble is back to the thirty entrant variety which is probably the best move all around. The odds on favorite is Jericho who returned very recently before this show. Other than that we've got Daniel Bryan defending his newly won world title against Big Show and Henry in a cage, along with Punk defending against Ziggler. Let's get to it.

The opening video is of course about going to Wrestlemania.

### Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry

Bryan is champion and beat Show at TLC by cashing in his MITB case in 45 seconds. Show beat Henry at the same show and ran over Bryan's girlfriend AJ on Raw to set all this up. This is one fall to a finish and it's pin/submission/escape. Bryan immediately goes for the corner but Henry pulls him down and Show runs Bryan over for two. Show crushes Henry against the cage wall but has to stop to pull Bryan back inside. Bryan tries to run up again but Show catches him by the ankle and slams him back in.

Show loads up the WMD but hits the cage wall instead. The champion fires off some kicks but gets headbutted right back down. Bryan kicks the knee out even harder and fires off some kicks to Henry to keep the other monster down. He goes for the door but you know this isn't ending that quickly. Henry makes the stop and demands that the referee CLOSE THAT DOOR. Show superkicks Henry down and it's his turn to take over for awhile.

Bryan gets slammed down but Henry is back up again. A few punches put Show down because a dozen chair shots usually can't, but a few punches can. Actually that's a great way to keep Henry looking strong. The fans are cheering for Bryan as Henry and Show collide to put all three guys down. Show gets back up and clotheslines Bryan down a few times before superkicking him in the face. The chokeslam is countered and Bryan hits a tornado DDT on Show for two.

The LeBell (NO!) Lock is put on Show but Henry breaks it up in about a second. The WMD gets two on Henry but Bryan makes the save, which ticks Show off. Bryan SPRINTS up the cage but Show chases after him and grabs Bryan before he can get out. Bryan sits on the top of the cage and pounds away, only to be caught again. The champion is literally hanging from Show's wrist before finally letting go and falling to the floor to retain the title.

**Rating:** D+. This really wasn't all that great. At the end of the day, it was a lot of the same sequence over and over again with Show and Henry

not having a ton of interaction at all. The ending didn't look great either and I'm not sure why Show would just hold him out over the floor like that. This falls under the category of "...really?" as it's hard to buy Bryan keeping the belt here.

Long video on Cena and all the stuff he does for WWE. The man is insanely committed to that company.

### Divas of Doom/Bella Twins vs. Eve Torres/Alicia Fox/Tamina/Kelly Kelly

The Divas of Doom are Beth and Natalya. Natalya and Tamina start things off and they collide a few times. Tamina slaps her in the face before chopping Nattie down for two. Off to Eve for that bouncing moonsault for two. Since that's a pretty lame move, Natalya charges her into the corner and brings in Beth who blocks a rolling splash with knees to Eve's back.

Off to let's say Nikki for some basic stomps to the back and a quickly broken chinlock. Jerry is asked what he likes about the Bellas and he can't even get an answer out. Not hot tag brings in Alicia who is immediately sent into the corner and chinlocked as well. Alicia finally counters by flipping Nikki forward and makes the actual hot tag to Kelly. There's the screaming headscissors and a faceplant for two. Everything breaks down and almost everyone heads to the floor, where Kelly hits a HUGE dive to take everyone out. Back in and Beth SLAPS herself in to hit the Glam Slam on Kelly for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. This was your usual Divas match: they did their "sexy" spots, they had barely there outfits, Kelly screamed a lot, Beth beat up Kelly to end things. One interesting note from a year later: would they even be able to put together an eight Divas tag now? I'm thinking through the roster and I don't know if I can name eight girls on the main shows right now.

We recap Ryder getting hurt at the hands of Kane. This was during the period where Ryder went from one of the hottest things in the company and US Champion to a rag doll that Kane destroyed over and over and over in the span of a few weeks until his push was completely destroyed. Eve blamed Cena for Ryder having his back broken for some reason.

Ryder is wheeled in and patronized by Johnny Ace (remember him?). Ace has a private room set up for Ryder but Eve comes up to yell at Ace first. Not much here but it's setting up stuff later on tonight.

### Kane vs. John Cena

This is when Kane had the welder's mask look. Brawl to start with Kane beating Cena down into the corner as the fans are split on Johnny. A clothesline puts them both on the floor where Kane is sent knees first into the steps. Back in and Cena can't hit the AA on Kane. That makes sense as after all, Kane is probably 175lbs lighter than Show who Cena throws around with near ease most of the time.

Kane kicks Cena down and gets two off an uppercut. A suplex gets the same and it's off to a chinlock. Cena fights up and is sent into the buckle for his efforts followed by Kane's stupid smother hold. John tries to counter into a Crossface but Kane comes out with a side slam. The idea here is that Cena can't get anything going at all. The top rope clothesline takes Cena's head off but Cena pops up and hits his shoulder block.

The Shuffle is countered by a grab of Cena's throat and a big boot gets two. Cena blocks a superplex and hits the Shuffle off the top. That's certainly a new one. The AA is countered by an elbow to the face and Kane kicks Cena out to the floor. Booker talks about how Cena is a good kid. I don't think I ever recall Cena being called a kid since like 2004. Kane pounds on Cena in the aisle and that's a double countout so we can do this match again next month.

**Rating:** D+. I know that's a common theme tonight but it fits here again. These two didn't work all that well together and the story was even worse. Then again, this was nothing more than giving Cena something to do for a few months until he could get ready for the biggest match of his career. This didn't work for the most part.

The fight continues into the back where Kane finds a chair to lay to lay out Cena. To the shock of no one paying attention, Kane finds the door to Ryder's private room and kicks the door in. Ryder is taken to the ring and tombstoned as Eve screams. Cena comes out to try to save Eve but gets

chokeslammed by Kane who walks away. Ryder does a stretcher job, but somehow it would get even worse for him in the coming weeks.

BE A STAR!

Zack is wheeled out and Cena is booed for it. That's the part of this story that never held up for me: why is this Cena's responsibility? Ryder was the United States Champion. He should be able to defend himself.

We get a video on the Rock just like Cena got earlier. It's shot in the back of Rock's car and is more like a mini documentary. It focuses on how insane Rock's life is and all of the stuff he does around the world.

### Drew McIntyre vs. Brodus Clay

This is right after Brodus re-debuted as the Funkasaurus so he was still a new character at this point. Brodus dances a lot, Drew punches him in the corner, Brodus headbutts him and hits the cross body (called WHAT THE FUNK) for the pin in about a minute.

Buy Slim Jims! For the troops!

We recap Punk vs. Ziggler who is challenging Punk on Ace's behalf. This is during the "Ace is boring" phase where Punk made fun of him no matter what he did, so Ace helped Ziggler get a win over Punk to earn a title shot. Ace is also guest referee tonight just because. He's openly admitted he's going to screw Punk out of the title tonight, so HHH is going to evaluate his job status the next night on Raw, meaning Ace has to play nice.

### Raw World Title: CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Punk is defending and Ace is referee. Johnny Ace is John Laurinitis but that's a hard name to spell. Before the match, Ace says he'll be the outside referee. Ok then. Wait we're still not ready to go as Ace throws Vickie out as well. We finally get going and Ziggler tries a quick Fameasser which is countered into a failed GTS attempt. Punk tells Dolph it was that close. They feel each other out a bit longer until Ziggler starts strutting.

Punk finally gets his hands on Ziggler and puts on an abdominal stretch, complete with a wrapped toe and slicking back his hair ala Ziggler. Dolph heads to the floor and gets taken out by a suicide dive but shoves Punk off the top rope once they get back inside. Ziggler drops about eight elbows in a row and a jumping version gets two. We hit the chinlock with Ziggler cranking on the head way more than necessary.

The champ starts firing off chops and strikes before getting caught in the sleeper. That goes nowhere but neither does Punk's Anaconda Vice attempt. Back to the sleeper but Dolph can't get it on all the way. Instead there's a perfect dropkick for two on Punk but the Fameasser is countered into a helicopter bomb for two. A swinging neckbreaker by the champ puts Dolph into the corner where the knee/bulldog combination actually works.

The GTS is countered into a slingshot but Punk lands on the middle rope. He comes off with a spinning cross body but Ziggler rolls through for a near fall in a cool sequence. The high kick gets two for Punk as does the Macho Elbow, drawing a Randy Savage chant. The GTS is countered again and the referee goes down as per the requirement in a world title mach. Punk hooks the Vice but Ace is checking on the down referee. Then Punk gets a rollup and there's STILL no referee.

Ace sends the referee back in as Punk loads up the GTS, but Ziggler's legs knock Ace to the floor. Ace sees the pin but refuses to count because he thinks Punk did it on purpose. Ziggler counters another GTS attempt into the Fameasser for two before pounding away a bit. The champ comes back with a slingshot and the GTS gets a pin from both referees to retain the title.

**Rating:** B+. This took awhile to get going as we were all waiting on the Ace stuff. The feud would go on for weeks until Jericho finally showed up to give Punk someone with charisma to feud with. The near falls at the end were a lot better than Ace, but it occurs to me that this was pretty much the same match he had last year. Good stuff though.

Rumble by the Numbers:

30 Superstars

1 winner

31 Hall of Famers in the Rumble

21 main events those Hall of Famers have been in at Wrestlemania

695 entrants who have been eliminated

39 entrants eliminated by Michaels, a record (Kane is second at 35)

13 consecutive Rumbles for Kane

11 eliminations for Kane in 2001

194,107lbs that have been in the Rumble, or over 97 tons, or 430 Big Show

421,883 people who have attended the Rumble

62:12 Rey Mysterio spent in the Rumble in 2006, a record

3 wins for Austin

1 second that Santino lasted in 2009

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

1, the entrant that has produced the same amount of winners as #30 at two each

27, the entrant with more winners than any other at four

55 percent of winners that have won the title at Wrestlemania

### Royal Rumble

The Miz is #1 and talks about how he's going back to the main event of Wrestlemania this year. His former apprentice Alex Riley is #2 which isn't really surprising given how RANDOM these draws are. I always liked Riley and he always got a good reaction, which is clearly why he doesn't get on TV more. Riley pounds away to start and runs Miz over with a forearm but walks into a big boot. Maybe it's the old school fan in me but I don't like a 6'0 guy using a big boot. Miz talks trash and low



bridges Riley out with ease.

R-Truth, Miz's former partner, is #3. Truth fires off some kicks and avoids the Finale before hitting a kind of powerslam. Miz gets sent to the apron for the second time but Truth turns his back to watch Cody come out at #4. A quick Disaster Kick puts Truth down (Cole says it hits Miz because those two are so hard to tell apart) and Truth gets double teamed for awhile. He manages to send Cody to the apron but gets caught in the Reality Check as the clock seems to be speeding up.

Justin Gabriel is #5 and things speed WAY up. A big spinwheel kick puts Miz down before Cody goes nuts on Gabriel in the corner. Primo is #6 to keep things low key to start. Actually he speeds things up as well and hits a sweet headscissors out of the corner to take Gabriel down. Truth hits the spinning forearm on Cody, only to be dumped out by Miz a second later. Since he's still crazy, Truth pulls Miz to the floor and lays him out on the outside.

Mick Foley is #7 to fire up the crowd a little bit. He dumps Primo almost immediately before getting beaten on by Cody. Foley looks really old and slow here but to be fair, he is in fact old and slow. In a HILARIOUS bit, Ricardo Rodriguez is #8 but comes out in an old banged up, rusted out rental car. He's even got the Del Rio scarf to hide some of his hideous pale body. We get a HUGE Ricardo chant as Foley and Gabriel have no idea what to do here.

Ricardo takes Cody down and pounds away before proposing an alliance with Foley of all people. They actually do team up and toss Gabriel, allowing Ricardo to do a CM Punk knee slide. We keep the comedy going with Santino at #9 and Ricardo runs from the Cobra. Santino beats on Ricardo and literally rolls him around the ring before pulling his trunks up and tossing Rodriguez.

Now we get my favorite spot of the match as Santino puts on the Cobra and Mick puts on Socko and it's TIME FOR A DUEL!!! Before they can collide though it's Epico at #10 but he falls to the powers of the socks and is out almost immediately. The socks COLLIDE until Miz and Cody pop back in (neither was eliminated) and dump Santino. Miz gets Socko but Cody dumps

Mick. Fun comedy bit here to give us a good first act to the match.

Kofi Kingston is #11 and hits a double springboard clothesline before hitting a double Boom Drop. In at #12 is Jerry Lawler (Cole: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING???" ) and he causes Miz to hit Cody by mistake. Lawler speeds things up and hits the middle rope punch with the lowered strap, only to be put out by Cody. Ezekiel Jackson is #13 and gets to do the usual power moves on each guy while the others lay around.

Jinder Mahal is #14 and the fans start chanting USA, even though the only two Americans in this match are Rhodes and Miz. Great Khali comes in at #15 and Mahal panics. Everyone gets chops and Mahal is out in just a few seconds. Jackson tries to pound away and is put out almost immediately as well. Hunico is #16 on that stupid bicycle of his and hits a spinning cross body on Miz and his Angle Slam on Cody.

Khali chops Hunico down as the ring is staying relatively empty. Booker T is #17 to surprise Cole. You would think he would have noticed that the man sitting next to him for over two hours wasn't wearing pants but he never was considered that bright. Now we get the spot of the match as Miz shoves Kofi to the floor but Kofi holds himself up by his hands. Miz shoves Kofi into a handstand but Kingston WALKS ON HIS HANDS ACROSS THE FLOOR TO THE STEPS to get back in. FREAKING AWESOME MAN!

Dolph Ziggler is #18 as the ring is starting to get full. Hacksaw Jim Duggan makes his annual return at #19 to pop the crowd huge. He cleans house for a bit and we get a DOUBLE NOGGIN KNOCKER on Miz and Rhodes. Cody avoids a charge in the corner though and dumps Duggan in less than a minute. That's the best idea at the end of the day. Miz and Cody team up to put out Booker and Khali at the same time.

We complete the trio with Michael Cole at #20. At the moment we've got Cole, Miz, Rhodes, Kingston, Hunico and Ziggler in the ring. Kharma returns at #21 in her only WWE match ever. She hits Cole so hard she knocks his headgear off so Cole eliminates himself. Well he gets to the apron where King and Booker eliminate him. Ziggler tells Kharma to get out so she DRILLS him. Kharma dumps Hunico but Ziggler sneaks up and eliminates her (Booker calls this doing the impossible. Not really Book.)

to a ton of heat.

Sheamus is #22 to give us some A level star power. Well maybe B+ level. Things speed up with Sheamus destroying everyone and tossing Kofi out. There are the ten forearms in the ropes to Cody and ten to Miz as well. The Zig Zag is countered and Road Dogg is another surprise return at #23. He gets to clean house for a bit and earns a "you still got it" chant. In far less than 90 seconds, Jey Uso is #24.

Everyone pairs off until Jack Swagger is #25. After a few suplexes everything settles down into its usual brawling phase until Barrett is #26. He throws out Roadie and stomps away on a lot of people. David Otunga gets the lucky spot at #27 and poses a lot before he comes out. Not a lot happens so Orton comes in at #28 to pick things up a bit. Remember we're in his hometown so everyone goes nuts.

Cody breaks up the RK0 on Barrett so Randy hits the Elevated DDT on both Cody and Ziggler at the same time because he can. There's an RK0 to Barrett and he's out. Chris Jericho, complete with a blackout of the arena, makes his return at #29. He's still a face at this point and dumps Otunga to a good reaction. Big Show is #30 which was considered a letdown at the time. Dude, he was world champion a month ago. That's hardly Darren Young coming out.

As Show comes in he pulls Swagger out from the floor, giving us a final grouping of Miz, Rhodes, Ziggler, Sheamus, Orton, Jericho and Big Show. That's a pretty solid grouping. Show dumps Cody and Miz at the same time to get us down to five. Show tosses Ziggler as well to get us down to four. The big man cleans house but walks into an RK0, allowing Orton and Sheamus to pick him up and Randy clotheslines him out. Jericho dumps Orton immediately thereafter and we're down to two.

The fans are entirely behind Jericho here so Sheamus runs him over a few times. Jericho's bulldog is countered but Sheamus can't throw him over the corner. Jericho charges into the Irish Curse but Sheamus can't hit the High Cross. We get a great false finish with Jericho clotheslining Sheamus to the apron and then knocking him down to the point where Sheamus is hanging on by his leg. Sheamus comes back in with the

slingshot shoulder but the Brogue Kick is countered into the Walls.

After the hold is broken Jericho gets knocked to the apron where he BARELY hangs on. They go to the top rope and both fall to the apron, meaning if they hit the floor they're out. Both guys get back in and there's the Codebreaker to Sheamus. Jericho gets Sheamus upside down but can't get him out. A shot to the face ticks Sheamus off and he catches a Codebreaker attempt to put Jericho on the apron. The Brogue Kick sends Sheamus to Wrestlemania.

**Rating:** A-. This is one of those Rumbles that is great fun as you watch it live but it loses some steam on a second viewing. They spent a bit too much time on nostalgia and funny ideas here but they were still really good ideas. The ending with Sheamus and Jericho ROCKED and I have no idea why they never got to have a long PPV match. This is a really good Rumble but it never reaches that excellent level that some of them get to.

Sheamus celebrates a lot to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. The Rumble is a unique show as it has a way to save itself from a bad first half. That's what happened here as the last two matches were certainly good enough to save it from the horrible first few matches. As usual the last two guys would both get world title shots with the winner getting the opening match instead of the real main event, but going on before Rock vs. Cena is hardly torture.

### Ratings Comparison

Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry vs. Big Show

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Bella Twins/Divas of Doom vs. Alicia Fox/Kelly Kelly/Eve Torres/Tamina

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Kane vs. John Cena

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Brodus Clay vs. Drew McIntyre

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: B

Redo: B+

Royal Rumble

Original: B+

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B

Just like last year, not much difference here.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/01/29/royal-rumble-2012/>

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# Smackdown – January 22, 2015: The Goat Face Of Thursdays

## **Smackdown**

Date: January 22, 2015

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

Much like last week, this actually feels like a big show. The main event for tonight is again Bryan vs. Kane, now in a No DQ match with Bryan's Rumble spot on the line. The show had a significantly bigger audience last week compared to the normal audiences on Fridays, so maybe we're in for more big time shows. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of Raw with Sting helping Cena win the 3-1 handicap match to save Cena's spot in the Sunday's title match but more importantly getting Ziggler, Rowan and Ryback's jobs back.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to get things going. He's excited to get on the Road to Wrestlemania and would love to talk about his No DQ match tonight and how he won't let anything stop him from winning the Royal Rumble. He could talk about how obsessed he is with getting the WWE World Heavyweight Championship back. Or he could talk about Sting's first ever appearance on Raw and how it ruined the Authority's night.

However, there's something more important than that, and it's what John Cena accomplished on Raw. There are three people with something to say about it, so here are Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler for their big returns. Well as big as they can be after just getting a few weeks off. It's

really hard to care about them being fired when they're back in just a few weeks.

The fans chant FEED ME MORE at Ryback before he compares his firing to Bryan's injury. The Big Guy is back but doesn't have much more to say other than catchphrases. Rowan says being gone was sort of a blessing because he had a lot of time to sit back and think. Believe it or not, he used to be a different person. He was naive and someone's puppet, but these last few weeks have let them (as in he and the sheep mask) know who he really is.

That leaves us with Ziggler, who of course gets the biggest reaction of the three. Ziggler set around eating stuffed crust pizza and watched the HHH and Stephanie fitness DVDs. He's joking of course and brings up all the momentum he had before getting fired (because WWE loves to build people up and then take them off TV). But the Authority tried to take it away because they're a threat. He would rather stay here and take a beating like never before than going home sitting on his couch and complaining on a podcast (it had been too long since the last Punk cheap shot).

Cue the Authority minus the actual authority with Rollins saying this is a Survivor Series reunion with a garden gnome replacing Bryan. Ziggler wants to beat Rollins up right now but Rollins has more important things to do than deal with someone who sits on a couch eating stuffed crust pizza. Oh and the fitness DVDs are AWESOME! Ziggler says Rollins must enjoy them because he's never seen anyone run away from Lesnar that fast.

Kane tells Bryan to calm down because he still has to survive tonight to get into the Rumble. Bryan responds by showing a clip of Lesnar destroying Kane and Big Show to close Raw. That's not cool with Big Show who promises to win the Rumble on Sunday because the four people in the ring are all losers. Kane promises to go to depraved levels to destroy Bryan but turns his attention to Ziggler. Since he's a new employee, Ziggler has to start back at the bottom of the ladder and work his way back to the Intercontinental Title. However, Kane is willing to give Ziggler a match against Barrett right now.

## Royal Rumble Qualifying Match: Bad News Barrett vs. Dolph Ziggler

Non-title and only Ziggler can qualify with a win. Barrett easily takes him down to start but gets caught in a headlock. A nice dropkick gets two for Dolph but a headscissors is countered with a kick to the ribs. They head outside where Barrett sends him into the apron before cranking on the arm back inside. This is the kind of stuff I'd like to see more of: someone grabbing a body part and cranking on it for the middle part of the match.

A top wristlock has Ziggler in trouble but he avoids a charge in the corner. The running DDT gets two for Dolph and we take a break. Back with Barrett going back to the arm but Ziggler rolls through to send Barrett shoulder first into the post. Dolph nails a big superkick for two more and both guys are down. Back up and the champ kicks him in the ribs but the Bull Hammer is blocked, setting up the Zig Zag for the pin at 10:54.

**Rating:** D+. Barrett losing all the time is officially a running joke. I mean, it has to be. There's no way they can think this is the logical way to book anything. The match was actually pretty dull with neither guy going out of the ordinary. I'm not sure what the solution is for Barrett, but this stuff is turning him into more and more of a waste every week.

We recap Ascension getting beaten down by the legends on Raw.

Reigns looks at the footage of Big Show going after the legends from Raw and knocking out Flair until Reigns made the save. Roman doesn't know if Renee Young has heard, but Big Show is a giant. If you haven't heard, just listen because it's all he ever talks about. Andre never had to do that because his actions did the talking.

Show also always talks about Reigns wanting his spot, but Reigns wants his own spot. In the Rumble, everyone is all over the place and his fist is cocked, locked and ready to rock. He's the one vs. all and he's the one standing at the end. Believe that. This was FAR better than his usual stuff and felt much more natural.

Fandango draws his Rumble number and seems very pleased. As he dances with Rosa, Ambrose sneaks in and steals his number. The referee



monitoring the drawing has no issue with this.

### Ryback vs. Rusev

Non-title again and only Ryback can qualify. Ryback hits a hard shoulder but Rusev frantically rolls outside before the cover. Back in and Ryback hits a nice suplex, sending Rusev's legs into the ropes in the process. The champ bails to the floor again but is able to dropkick a charging Ryback to take over. We take a break and come back with Rusev getting two off a DDT.

Rusev wraps the leg around the post, hoping Ryback actually sells it unlike he did in the Big Show match a few weeks back. Ryback takes advantage of Rusev's trash talking and hits a slingshot belly to back suplex and a powerslam for two. A Backpack Stunner gets two more and Ryback stops to hold his knee (to be fair Rusev didn't do much to the knee so it's not as annoying this time).

Ryback's powerbomb is countered into an Alabama Slam (Siberia Slam?) for two but he just runs Rusev over. For some reason Ryback goes up top, only to be quickly crotched down for two. Rusev tells himself to crush but Ryback fights out of the Accolade and loads up the Meathook, sending Rusev running again. Ryback follows and hammers away before beating the count at 13:47.

**Rating:** C+. Who would have thought these two would be better than Ziggler and Barrett? There was even a bit of a story told with Rusev running a lot in the beginning and then losing when he tried it once too often. Ryback can do a decent power match and Rusev is finding ways to keep the unpinned streak alive without looking stupid. I'll call this a pleasant surprise.

Rusev goes after him again but gets dispatched one more time.

### Brie Bella vs. Naomi

Paige and Natalya are on commentary. Thankfully the BRIE MODE is gone. The Bellas mock Natalya for loving cats and call Paige a vampire. Paige corrects them by saying she's a glampire and a black heart. Naomi kicks

at Brie's leg as Paige and Natalya debate if they're friends or not. Paige calls Tyson Kidd an idiot as Naomi gets her throat snapped across the top rope for two. Brie misses her running knee but hits a jawbreaker on the knee, setting up the Bella Buster for the pin at 2:20. So much for Naomi meaning anything.

Luke Harper says you can send anyone into the Royal Rumble, but don't send in anyone you want back. Rowan better not blink or the monsters will get him. Are you scared yet?

Goldust and Stardust draw their numbers and hiss at each other.

### Erick Rowan vs. Luke Harper

Only Rowan can qualify. They slug it out to start and Rowan runs him over with a shoulder for an early two. Harper busts out a freaking hurricanrana to counter a powerbomb. This guy is not normal. Rowan just throws him into the corner and gets two more off a spin kick. Luke bites the fingers to block I think a full nelson but this time Rowan's powerbomb connects for two. Erick misses a top rope splash though and a superkick and discus lariat gives Harper the pin at 3:20.

**Rating:** C. The more I see Harper the more I wonder why he isn't being pushed to the moon and back. On the other hand, the more I see Rowan, the more I wonder why they even bothered pushing him in the first place. He's fine in the ring and I like his potential, but he's just a big jobber at this point and it seems like that's all he was ever meant to be.

Kane borrows the Stooges for his match with Bryan.

Rumble by the numbers video.

Miz is annoyed at Mizdow for imitating X-Pac without his permission. Mizdow says the fans liked it but Miz says no one cheers for him because they're all cheering for Miz. Miz also rejects the pumpkin latte for having the wrong amount of foam. He leaves and the Usos come up and tell Mizdow that he can get his hands on Miz in the Rumble. The idea intrigues Mizdow but he still looks conflicted.

### Kane vs. Daniel Bryan

No DQ with Bryan's Rumble spot on the line and the Stooges in Kane's corner. A cross body gets one on Kane but Bryan has to go after the Stooges, allowing Kane to kick him down to the floor. He stays on the neck with a neckbreaker on the floor before dropping him onto the barricade. It's kendo stick time with Bryan getting cracked over the back a few times before they head back inside.

Daniel gets the cane to cane Kane before alternating between kicks and cane shots to the back. A big kick to the head is only good for two and Kane knocks him out of the air as we go to a break. Back with Kane holding a chinlock (what else would he be doing?) and cracking Bryan in the back with a chair for two. The chair gets wedged into the corner but Kane low bridges him to the floor. The Flying Goat is countered with an uppercut and Kane takes over on the floor. Bryan gets whipped into the steps and the Stooges load up the announcers' table. They're already more useful than Patterson and Brisco.

The torestone and chokeslam are both countered and Kane gets sent into the post to give Daniel a breather. Back in and a bad looking YES Lock has Kane in trouble but the Stooges come in to break it up. Lawler and Cole are incensed but Saxton correctly point out that they're not breaking any rules. Bryan fights them off but eats a chokeslam for two. Kane is livid and gets another chair, only to be sent into the one he wedged in the corner, setting up the running knee to send Bryan to the Rumble at 12:18.

**Rating:** B-. This was as good as you can expect from Bryan vs. Kane, but the feud needs to end here. Kane as the monster hunting Bryan is only going to get you so far and we passed that point back in April. Having Bryan overcome a small set of odds is the right way to use him and getting the big win off his finisher is the right way to go. I can more than live with Kane in roles like this, with him getting pinned by a bigger star who slays a monster. Why can't we get there with Big Show?

Speaking of Big Show, he drags Bryan back to the ring but Zigler, Rowan and Ryback come in for the save. The big Rumble brawl is on until Ambrose and Reigns come out to make it serious. Roman cleans house, even though most of the guys were already gone by the time he got in. It gets down to

all of the big heroes in the ring (minus Rowan. They're not even hiding it now) and Kane and Big Show on the apron to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. It's still not a great show, but the important part of this show is stuff happened. Instead of spending a big segment on Raw bringing back the three fired guys, it was saved for here and we even saw two of them qualify for the Rumble. It's not exactly Lesnar and Rollins having a showdown, but I'll take this over the weekly big tag match every day. If WWE can build up momentum for Smackdown, it might get even bigger in the future. Good show this week that felt important.

### Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Bad News Barrett – Zig Zag

Ryback b. Rusev via countout

Brie Bella b. Naomi – Bella Buster

Luke Harper b. Erick Rowan – Discus lariat

Daniel Bryan b. Kane – Running knee

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# Monday Night Raw – January 19, 2015: Old School Never Dies. It Just Keeps Going.

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 19, 2015

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Booker T., Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

This is a special episode as it's not only the go home show for the Royal Rumble but also the Raw Reunion with some big names being brought back in for an appearance. Those are almost always at least somewhat interesting, though there are other times where the legends are just there without doing anything special. Let's get to it.

We open with a tribute to Martin Luther King, which WWE airs in some form every year.

Opening sequence.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar to get things going. Brock cuts off Heyman's intro and says he's here to fight Seth Rollins. He gives Rollins ten seconds and the crowd is nice enough to count it down for him. Instead, here's HHH to address the champ. He understands that Brock is upset about getting Curb Stomped into the ground. However, wouldn't Brock have done that if he had the chance?

After all, he suplexed Rollins first, so maybe Seth's actions are understandable. Maybe we should just go to the back and get Brock a steak while he and Heyman talk about things. Brock isn't pleased and asks if HHH is here to fix this or fight. Heyman loses his mind but here are Stephanie with Big Show and Kane to intervene. Lesnar and the Authority have a standoff but Rollins pops up on screen (prompting Heyman to grab his own head and shout OH NO).

He'll be getting his shot at Lesnar soon enough, right before he takes

Brock's title. Heyman says let the adults talk about things and wants the Authority to put a leash on their puppy. If they don't fix things, the roster is going to be destroyed and Lesnar is walking out Sunday with the champion. Cue Cena (now in a blue shirt and hat) to say that they're going to beat each other up on Sunday. However, he's here to talk to the Authority.

They offered him a spot on the team a few months back but he politely declined. Every week, the Authority tries to make him quit, but he wants them to keep it up. Every single thing they say and do lights a new fire in him that he's taking to the Rumble this Sunday to get the title back. The Authority used their power and politics to get three people fired, so he's going to enjoy sticking it to them this Sunday.

Stephanie cuts off his exit and says Cena reached a turning point when he brought back the Authority. Now he's a loser and a liar and no one wants to cheer that. Rollins says Cena will fail again on Sunday because Cena's time is up. He should just duck out of the match on Sunday and walk off with whatever dignity he has left.

Cena of course mocks Rollins for saying "tuck his legs between his legs" before saying everyone will respect him after Sunday. Cena offers to sweeten the pot: if he wins the title Sunday, Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler get their jobs back. HHH seems intrigued but wants one more stipulation: Cena has to have a match tonight and if he wins, all three of them get their jobs back. If he loses though, they stay fired and he's out of the triple threat. We're still not done though because HHH wants to make it an App poll.

How to download the App.

This opening segment was ridiculous. First of all, you bring out Stephanie as the mediator? Of course, because Stephanie is the greatest thing in the history of ever and her mere presence can soothe the savage beast. Then you have even more of Cena vs. the Authority because it worked with Austin vs. McMahon and.....well it worked well enough with Austin vs. McMahon to mention it twice.

The stipulations are stupid and make sure you know Lesnar isn't walking

out, but it does leave the door open for a Rollins cash-in after the match. Thankfully they've changed it up so those guys can get their jobs back tonight, thereby making the last two weeks totally pointless. I'm so glad we saw the Authority make those three people mildly annoyed and inconvenienced instead of destroying their lives.

### Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

Cole says it's been nearly a year since Bryan wrestled on Raw. More like eight and a half months but close enough. Cole never has been very good at counting. Bryan starts fast by knocking Bray to the floor and hitting a huge dive...and here's Kane, leading to a break less than two minutes into the match. Stephanie wants to talk? All the time in the world. Rematch of a Match of the Year candidate? Two minutes and we NEED a break.

Back with Bray missing a charge into the middle buckle but still being able to knock Bryan off the top rope. Bray puts on a nerve hold before hitting his flying body block to put Daniel down again. The announcers start speculating about Bryan's potential Rumble spot and him not having the cardio to get through the whole match as Bray drops knees and goes to a chinlock. Back up and Bray hits a HARD clothesline, sending Daniel out to the floor, holding his neck.

We return from another break with Bray getting two off a backsplash. Bryan scores with a running clot, followed by the running dropkick in the corner. A top rope hurricanrana gets two and it's time to unleash the kicks. Wyatt gets clotheslined to the floor and the Flying Goat takes him down again. Kane gets in a cheap shot on the way back in though, allowing Bray to send him into the buckle, followed by Sister Abigail for the pin at 16:13.

**Rating:** C+. The match was physical and violent...at least what we saw of it was. You knew Kane was going to interfere and cost Bryan the win, but it doesn't really matter as long as Daniel beats him on Smackdown. Bray winning is a nice moment for him and it's cool that Bryan has a big name he's never been able to beat. You could bring that up at a later date for a major match.

Kane chokeslams Bryan post match and hits some bad looking right hands.

HHH is on the phone when Scott Hall and Kevin Nash (in NWO shirts) come into his office. They mock him for wearing a suit and ask him to come out with them tonight. Shawn Michaels pops in and offers HHH a spot on the legends panel. HHH should drop the suit, bring back the three fired guys and make their lives miserable here. HHH: "I don't tell you how to shoot defenseless animals."

Nash wonders where X-Pac is and here's Damien Mizdow in X-Pac attire. The real one comes in and they do the poses until Miz comes in to take Mizdow away. Nash: "What kind of show are you running?" You knew this was coming and it was fine. Mizdow's history with DX wasn't mentioned, even though it was the high point of his career back then.

We recap HHH putting the Cena match to a fan vote.

It's time for the Royal Rumble Legends Panel with guests Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair and Shawn Michaels. The first question is should Cena put his title shot on the line to get the three jobs back. Only Flair says no and only Hogan's answer is more than one word long with "definitely yes." Ric says winning the Rumble was still the greatest night of his career and defeating people like Shawn Michaels, Undertaker, Roddy Piper and Randy Savage made it even better.

Shawn is asked about winning back to back Rumbles and the famous shot of his foot dangling above the ground. He talks about the Rumble being the future and the winner's future being Wrestlemania. Shawn says the two men next to him wouldn't be where they are now without the Rumble and there wouldn't be a Mr. Wrestlemania without the Royal Rumble. Hogan goes last and says he remembers the competition in the Rumble and defeating super talent after super talent to win the matches. Thankfully he had Hulkamania in his corner to help him survive.

As for this year's picks, Shawn goes with Bray Wyatt and Hogan isn't pleased. Shawn gets annoyed and wants a rematch of Summerslam 2005. Hogan: "You don't want any of that again do you?" Shawn: "Nah probably not." Hogan picks Daniel Bryan and Flair goes with Ambrose, but here's Big Show because where would we be without him. He says all three of them



are jealous of him and brings up beating Hogan at Halloween Havoc 1995. Then he beat Flair for the World Title on Nitro a few months later. Then he showed up in the WWF and Shawn retired (not quite) because he knew Big Show would eat him alive.

Now the three of them are washed up has been out here begging for a bit of attention. He's going to win on Sunday and no one in the back can stop him. The fans are already looking up for Reigns. Show threatens to beat them all up so Flair takes his jacket off and starts throwing punches, only to take the KO Punch. Cue Reigns to check on the legends and clothesline Big Show out to the floor. Show comes up favoring his arm and bails.

The votes are in and Cena is going to put his title shot on the line to save the jobs by a vote of 85% to 15%. Cena says the most important part of the WWE is the WWE Universe and tonight he's fighting for his friends.

#### Bad News Barrett vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title. Dean takes him to the mat to start before running Barrett over with an elbow and clothesline. A power drive elbow gets two but Barrett comes back with a kick to the throat and another to the jaw. Ambrose comes back by knocking Barrett to the floor as we take a break. Of note here, the bottom line said that the series finale of Rivalries is airing tomorrow night on the Network. There have been six episodes and they're already canceling it? It's a good idea for a show and they can only come up with six shows, but they can have twenty Monday Night Wars shows? Really?

Back with Dean laid across the top rope and getting forearmed in the back for two. It's already off to the chinlock until Dean fights up with a bulldog out of the corner. The standing elbow drop gets two but the knee gives out, meaning Dean can't hit the running dropkick. He can however hit the rebounding clothesline and goes up top, only to get caught in the Wasteland. Dean fights out of that and Dirty Deeds pins Barrett at 8:16.

**Rating:** C-. There was no possible outcome here where the fans were going to be pleased. The champ loses but Dean gets a win back, even though his career was completely crippled or whatever shortsighted fans said after

he lost the Wyatt feud. The match wasn't anything to see but I really wonder what Barrett did to get this role as the champion that always loses. I know it's a running joke, but no one has it as bad as Barrett.

It's time for Rumble by the numbers.

30 men

782 entrants eliminated

2 feet must hit the floor

39 eliminations for Shawn Michaels, the all time record

38 eliminations for Kane, second place

15 years that Kane has eliminated someone

11 eliminations in 2001 to give Kane the record for a single matching

12 eliminations in 2014 for Roman Reigns to break the record

216,577 or 108 tons in the Rumble over the years

9 won in Rumble debut

43 Hall of Famers have competed

26 nations have been represented

1 time the Rumble has broadcasted on the Network

170 countries have the Network

170,822 people in attendance

3 Steve Austin victories

1 second that Santino Marella lasted to set the record

62:12 that Rey Mysterio lasted to set the record

3:51:32 that HHH has spent in the Rumble, the longest all time

2 winners from both #1 and #30

Here's the New Day to say they're always positive to keep the rage under control. They're here to make sure everyone has a smile on their face and they're doing it for the day. Woods is out with an ankle injury so it's just a tag here.

### Kofi Kingston/Big E. vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

Rose is on the floor as well because he feels forgotten by WWE, just like Kidd and Cesaro. Big E. throws Kidd into the air for a dropkick from Kofi, but Rose offers a distraction so Cesaro can sneak in an uppercut. A suplex/side slam combo (called a Blockbuster by Booker) gets two on Kofi and the Cesaro Swing into the dropkick gets the same with Big E. having to make a save. Cesaro picks Kofi up to drive him into the corner but Kofi kicks off of Kidd and rolls up Cesaro for the pin out of nowhere at 2:59. It's nice to see them change the formula up for once instead of the same thing over and over. It keeps it a bit exciting.

Here's the NWO (Hall, Nash and Waltman) for a chat. The fact that Hall is allowed on live TV is proof that DDP should be canonized. Nash says the NWO created the Monday Night Wars, which you can relive on the WWE Network. "You're welcome Hunter." They're responsible for Austin, DX and the Attitude Era. Nash acknowledges they have egos, but you have to admit they created every single good thing ever. Waltman gets the mic but here's Ascension to interrupt.

They see the NWO as three dogs ready to be put out of their misery, because Ascension was born and bred to rip and shred. No team from the past, present or future is better than they are, especially not one from WCW. The NWO is ready to fight but JBL won't have any of this. He takes off the jacket and tie and says wearing spikes doesn't make you a legend any more than painting yourself green makes you a frog. He was afraid this would happen, so he made a phone call. JBL takes off his shirt to reveal an APA shirt and here's Ron Simmons.

Before anything happens though, here are the New Age Outlaws in Dallas Cowboys jerseys to interrupt. Dogg says an old school party doesn't stop and the brawl is on with only the Outlaws getting physical. Billy hits a

nice tilt-a-whirl slam and JBL starts stretching his arm. The Clothesline knocks Viktor silly and Waltman pulls off the NWO shirt to reveal the DX colors. This was every bit as fun as I thought it was going to be and was one of the better old school reunion segments. Also, anyone for JBL in the Hall of Fame?

The Authority announces Cena's opponent for later tonight. Complete with a drum roll, it's Cena vs. Seth Rollins, Big Show and Kane. A bugler comes up to play Taps.

#### Paige/Natalya vs. Summer Rae/Alicia Fox

The Bellas are on commentary and will be facing Paige/Natalya at the Rumble. A double suplex gets two on Summer but Natalya goes after Alicia, allowing Rae to spin kick her for two. Natalya gets over for the hot tag to Paige and things speed up with Alicia eating a superkick for two. Everything breaks down and another superkick sets up the PTO for the submission at 2:55. I'm glad they're not doing the Nikki vs. Natalya title match as we've seen it so many times already that whatever appeal it had is long gone.

The Kickoff match this Sunday is New Day vs. Cesaro/Kidd/Rose in an elimination tag.

#### Rusev vs. R-Truth

Only Truth gets an entrance and he's a step off on his rap. Truth says everyone is coming for Rusev on Sunday and that's the whole truth. "Whomp there it is." Truth quickly knocks him over the top but eats the jumping superkick. The Accolade makes him tap at 46 seconds.

Rollins and Lesnar meet up in the back and Brock suggests that Seth take Cena out tonight. Then Brock can take Rollins out on Sunday. Unlike last week, Rollins looks shaken.

#### Jey Uso vs. Miz

Gah do something else already. Miz spends too much time looking at Mizdow and gets rolled up for two. Some choking sets up the Reality Check for two and we hit the chinlock. The top rope ax handle drops Jey but he

avoids a charge, sending Miz into the post. A superkick and the Superfly Splash are good for the pin on Miz at 2:56. I can't imagine Miz and Mizdow are still together this time next week.

Hogan says it can only get better for Cena from here.

The New Age Outlaws vs. the Ascension has been added to Sunday.

### John Cena vs. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins

One fall to a finish and it's Cena vs. Big Show to start but John wants to go after Rollins. Show scores with a big chop and it's off to Rollins to hammer Cena down. Rollins gets in some stomps in the corner but Cena's bulldog sends him rolling out to the floor. Kane gets the top and sends Cena into Big Show's boot before the bigger giant comes in for a corner splash. Cena's slam attempt fails (of course it did this early on) and we take a break.

Back with Rollins putting Cena in a sleeper before a Blockbuster gets two. Rollins misses the top rope knee though and Cena scores with the shoulders. The ProtoBomb puts Rollins down again but the Stooges break up the AA attempt. Rollins blasts him with a low superkick for two but the AA connects, only to have Kane pulls Cena outside. Big Show adds a spear and the Authority is literally standing over Cena gloating. He dives in at nine though and gets chokeslammed for two. Rollins loads up the Curb Stomp....and STING shows up on the screen. He walks into the arena and Cena rolls up Rollins for the pin at 13:08.

**Rating:** D+. Sting just showed up on Raw for the first time ever. I still need a minute. Ok I'm good now. I really liked this better than having the trio show up because there's no reason for them to be there other than storyline, but Sting showing up is an awesome surprise. I'd keep going but we're not done.

Cena goes into the crowd and HHH shouts that Sting doesn't belong here. Cue Lesnar for right hands to Rollins, an F5 to Kane and an AA (yes an AA) to Big Show. Heyman holds up the title as Rollins runs away to end the show. Lesnar looked like and was received like a superhero here.

**Overall Rating:** C-. I know I'm going to catch flack for this but I really didn't hate this show. They kept things moving fast enough that I was stunned when it was nearly 10pm. The reunion stuff was fine and they beefed up the card for Sunday. The lack of wrestling is by far the biggest thing holding this show back though and it was really telling when there had been one match an hour in. I know a lot of people wouldn't like this one, but it was nice to see a show that didn't drag for a change.

## Results

Bray Wyatt b. Daniel Bryan – Sister Abigail

Dean Ambrose b. Bad News Barrett – Dirty Deeds

New Day b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – Rollup to Cesaro

Natalya/Paige b. Alicia Fox/Summer Rae – PT0 to Fox

Rusev b. R-Truth – Accolade

Jey Uso b. Miz – Superfly Splash

John Cena b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins – Rollup to Rollins

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

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2003: I'll See Your Disaster And Raise You A Masterpiece

## Royal Rumble 2003

Date: January 19, 2003

Location: Fleet Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,338

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

To say a lot has changed in the last year is a huge understatement. We have the Brand Split now and there are two world titles. That brings us to the part of this show that is most remembered: the world title matches. We have HHH defending the Raw Title in one of the worst matches ever, followed by Angle defending the Smackdown Title in one of the best matches ever. Also Brock Lesnar is here and has taken Smackdown by storm. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about what you would expect it to be: thirty men wanting to go to Wrestlemania.

## Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

The loser is out of the Rumble. Big Show has Heyman with him, which I'm sure makes him the best wrestler EVER right? Show won the title from Lesnar at Survivor Series after Heyman turned on Brock in one of those matches where they were backed into a corner out of their own stupidity. Show shoves him around to start so Brock snaps off a belly to belly suplex to fire up the crowd.

There's a second suplex and Show is in trouble early. Lesnar loads up a third but Show grabs him by the throat and shoves him to the floor. Show throws Lesnar around the ring which looks awesome when you consider Brock is a massive dude. Lesnar avoids a charge in the corner and hits a release German suplex for two.

A big boot slows Brock down and a side slam looks to set up the chokeslam. Brock kind of rolls through it into a two count, followed by another belly to belly. Heyman gets dragged in but Show saves him from an F5. The chokeslam gets two as Heyman is losing his mind. Show gets rammed into Heyman and the F5 sends Brock to the Rumble.

**Rating:** C+. As intricate as modern wrestling has become, there's something to be said about having two big guys get out there and throw each other around for five minutes. The power displays here made the fans gasp which is the right idea. At the end of the day, wrestling is a spectacle and having larger than life characters doing larger than life things is a surefire idea. This wasn't so much good as it was fun, which is the right choice for an opener.

Jericho says he'll win the Rumble.

#### Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Regal and Storm are defending and Regal is STILL doing the brass knuckles thing. Storm and Ray get things going with Lance working on the arm, only to get powered down with ease. Bubba hits one of his LOUD chops in the corner and takes Storm down with a kind of chokebomb. In something I've never seen him do otherwise, Bubba hooks a standing Figure Four. Actually I can't think of anyone who has ever used that.

Off to D-Von for a dropkick (what's gotten into the Dudleys tonight?) and here's Regal to get slammed down immediately. The champs double team D-Von down and we get into the standard tag team formula. Storm takes D-Von to the mat and it's off to Regal for a front facelock. Lance comes back in with a cravate into a sleeper as this continues to meander along.

D-Von rolls Storm away and makes the tag to Bubba who speeds things up. The guy has emotion if nothing else. A big running splash in the corner crushes both champions and a side slam gets two on Storm. The American hits a German on the Canadian for two, followed by a spear to the Englishman. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Lance and Regal takes What's Up. A double flapjack (stupid fans: "3D!") gets two on Storm and here's Chief of Staff Sean Morely. Regal finds the brass knuckles but walks into the 3D. D-Von hits Storm with the knuckles for the pin and the titles.



**Rating:** D. This didn't work for me. It felt like a Raw match that was trying to be a PPV match but never got near the hump they were trying to get over. The ending was stupid on top of that, as they had Regal beaten with the 3D, so why use the knuckles? Also it didn't help that Bubba single handedly beat up the tag champions for about two minutes straight. Bad match.

Lawler on that match: "I'm as confused as a baby in a topless bar." What is WITH the announcers and their similies/metaphors in this company?

Nathan Jones is coming. Oh geez.

We recap the Torrie vs. Dawn feud. This is one of those stories where you look at it in awe and wonder what they were thinking. Dawn Marie (a gorgeous Diva) fell in love with and married Torrie's fifty something year old dad Al Wilson, then screwed him to death (literally) on their honeymoon. There was some lesbianism (as in kissing on screen and unfilmed other stuff) involved which was there to tease the audience and wasn't bad at all. This is supposed to be a stepmother vs. stepdaughter match. Again, I have no idea what this was supposed to accomplish.

#### Dawn Marie vs. Torrie Wilson

Dawn comes to the ring in a veil because she's in mourning. Torrie gets blasted in the face to start before spearing Dawn down and things get sloppy. Marie tries an armbar because we need some wrestling in this I guess. Torrie gets beaten on for a bit until they collide and hit the mat. Dawn hits a springboard spinning clothesline for no cover, giving us the highlight of the match. Torrie hits a neckbreaker out of nowhere for the win.

**Rating:** D-. Anything with these two in those outfits can't be considered a failure, but at the end of the day, there is no real defending this match in the slightest. It was HORRIBLE and the story was borderline insulting to my intelligence, but the girls looked good and I guess that was the whole point. Why not just have a regular match if you want to is beyond me, but it's 2003 so what do you expect?

Stephanie seems to hit on some young guy in the back when Eric comes up

to trade some weak trash talk. They're both GM's at this point. Stephanie has a bombshell for Smackdown which would wind up being Hogan. They argue over money or blood being more important and nothing goes anywhere. That young guy by the way? Randy Orton.

House show ads, including one for 7pm on a Monday night.

Sean O'Haire as the Devil's Advocate promo. Sweet goodness this could have been HUGE.

Nathan Jones is STILL coming. Seriously did we need that twice in 30 minutes?

We recap HHH vs. Scott Steiner as I begin to take deep breaths. HHH was giving a promo about how awesome he was when Steiner interrupted and demanded a title shot. This led to a series of contests like pushups and bench presses which went nowhere. Note that Steiner hadn't actually had a match in WWE up to this point. I wonder why.

#### Raw World Title: HHH vs. Scott Steiner

HHH has red trunks on here for some reason. He mixed them up every now and then and rarely did the other colors work. Stick with basic black Game. Hebner brings them to the middle for instructions which is ultra rare stuff. Steiner wins an early slugout and pounds on the champion in the corner. A gorilla press sends HHH to the floor and Steiner pounds away with those weird looking overhand punches of his.

Steiner suplexes him back in for two and works on the back some more. An elbow to the face puts HHH down and there's an appropriate Boston Crab. HHH powers out of it and hits the facebuster but Steiner no sells it. There's a bear hug which is quickly broken but Steiner snaps off an overhead belly to belly (1) for two. Flair saves HHH from being put in the Steiner Recliner and Steiner charges into a boot in the corner to finally change the momentum.

We head to the floor again where Scott goes into the steps. The fans aren't exactly thrilled with this so far but they've still got time to crank it up a bit. Flair chokes away with his jacket and HHH hits his

second neckbreaker in about 30 seconds for two. Since we didn't allido it properly the first time, Flair chokes away even more. A Pedigree attempt is countered into a slingshot into the buckle. Steiner looks like he's going through labor.

An overhead suplex (2) puts HHH down and I kid you not: Steiner FALLS DOWN due to exhaustion. He's clearly sucking wind and HHH didn't touch him at all. Speaking of HHH, he counters a tombstone attempt into a...I think it was supposed to be the third neckbreaker in about 90 seconds but Steiner took it wrong, causing it to look like a cutter where he fell backwards instead of forwards. That gets two and the fans are starting to boo.

HHH is loudly calling spots to try to salvage this before he hits a vertical suplex. For no apparent reason he goes up and jumps into a belly to belly (3). Steiner can barely punch so he settles for some clotheslines. There's an overhead belly to belly (4) and an overhead belly to belly (5) and an overhead belly to belly (6). The fans are openly booing Steiner now. His response? To hold HHH's hair while HHH rams his own head into the buckles (seriously, Steiner clearly isn't even pushing) and to hit a spinning belly to belly (7) for two and even more booing.

Steiner tries a butterfly powerbomb and literally falls backwards as he does it, causing HHH to land on Steiner's knees. The fans groan at the sight of this so HHH goes up top to get superplexed down. He's handing these spots to Steiner. THANKFULLY HHH tries to walk out but Steiner won't have it, because WE HAVE TO KEEP GOING. Steiner blasts HHH with the belt to bust him open to try to get the fans to care but the match is long past salvageable at this point.

Back in and Steiner hits ANOTHER belly to belly (8), causing the fans to get MAD. They're not annoyed, they're not wanting a new champion, they want Steiner to get out of their ring now. HHH tries to get counted out but Steiner goes after him AGAIN. Back in and Steiner does the pushups to tick off the fans even more as Flair is BEGGING the referee to stop the match.

Now HHH throws the referee to the floor but HEBNER WON'T STOP IT. I mean he pulls his arm up to ring the bell but stops and says keep it going. Steiner hits the NINTH belly to belly suplex (9) of the match for two so HHH hits him low and grabs a fast rollup for two. HHH finally gives up and hits Steiner with the sledgehammer for the DQ.

**Rating:** H. As in HHH, who I feel sorry for here. Now everyone knows I'm no fan of the guy in 2003, but he was in a HORRIBLE situation here. HHH was trying to keep this a coherent match, but Steiner was beyond worthless here, causing the match to sink to levels far below what any other main event "talent" would be capable of. After about seven minutes (out of eighteen), Steiner stopped doing anything resembling trying to have a match and was just doing suplexes.

Remember that back stuff he did at the beginning? Completely forgotten. Did you see him try his finisher? Not even once. He somehow managed a belly to belly suplex every two minutes, despite being on defense for a good third of the match. This was absolutely horrible and quite possibly the worst world title match I can EVER remember, which is covering a lot of ground.

Post match, Steiner beats up HHH and Flair with the hammer, which gets SYMPATHY from the fans. HHH is getting SYMPATHY from a crowd. Think about that for a minute. And what's worse: THEY HAD A REMATCH! Oh and there's the Steiner Recliner to absolutely nothing positive from the crowd at all. Bischoff has to come get Steiner off HHH.

We cut to Cole and Tazz and even MICHAEL FREAKING COLE has a look on his face as if to say "WOW that was an abomination."

We recap Benoit vs. Angle. Angle won the title from Big Show at Armageddon thanks to Lesnar before revealing that he hired Paul Heyman to be his new manager. Heyman said anyone could get a shot other than Brock Lesnar and brought in Team Angle (Haas and Benjamin) to protect Kurt during a knee injury. Benoit won a title shot over Big Show to set this up.

Smackdown World Title: Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Team Angle is immediately ejected to make sure it's one on one. Benoit grabs a headlock to start before trying the Sharpshooter to send Angle to the floor. Back in and Angle goes for the ankle but gets dropkicked away. Benoit grabs a kind up reverse Figure Four but Angle grabs the rope. This is all holds/counter holds so far. Benoit gets sent shoulder first into the post followed by an Angle suplex for two.

They chop it out with Benoit taking over and hitting a reverse clothesline to take Angle down. Angle drops Benoit across the top rope but gets guillotined down by the Canadian. They head to the apron with Benoit DDTing him down onto the side of the ring. The champion has a busted nose now. Back in and the Swan Dive misses but Benoit rolls out of the Angle Slam. There's the Sharpshooter to Angle who eventually gets to a rope. A belly to back suplex gets two for Chris but Angle snaps off an overhead belly to belly (just one so far).

Back to the floor where Benoit gets dropped onto the barricade to further mess with his head. Off to a rear naked choke back inside so Kurt can overly loudly call some spots. Angle catches Benoit in another belly to belly followed by a belly to back for two. Back to the chinlock for a bit until a double clothesline puts both guys down. Benoit rolls some Germans but so does Angle. And people wonder why their necks were held together by tape.

Benoit gets the final German but Angle runs the ropes to hit the belly to belly off the top to put both guys down. That gets two but the Angle Slam is countered into the Crossface. Angle gets the rope, so Benoit shifts to an ankle lock. Angle reverses into one of his own and now Benoit is in trouble. Benoit goes to kick off but instead grabs another Crossface. Kurt counters into a rollup but Benoit put the Crossface on the other (right) arm this time. Angle stands up and hits the Angle Slam but can't immediately cover.

Angle takes the straps down but another German attempt is countered into a rollup for two. They trade HARD Germans until Benoit hooks a release German to put both guys down. Before anyone asks, the difference between this and the previous match with the suplexes is how hard these are. Steiner looked like he was at a dance recital but here they look like

they're trying to kill one another. Not to mention there's OTHER STUFF in between the suplexes.

Benoit hits the longest diving headbutt you'll EVER see, but he can't cover because of his head getting jarred like that. Angle counters the Crossface into a reverse powerbomb onto the buckle. The Angle Slam gets a VERY close two as the crowd is losing their minds. Back to the Crossface but Angle rolls through into the ankle lock. Benoit rolls over but can't break the hold. He kicks Kurt off but Angle goes right back to the hold. Benoit keeps trying to kick him off but Angle hooks the grapevine and Benoit has to tap.

**Rating:** A+. That's your match of the year right there people. Oh wait according to Meltzer there was some match in Japan that no one but him ever saw and that has to be better than this right? Anyway, these two DESTROYED each other with some absolutely amazing counters and awesome sequences out there while suplexing the tar out of each other. This both guy's best match ever, and that's saying A LOT.

Benoit gets a standing ovation, showing that he was ready to be world champion. Naturally that's why he had to wait fifteen months to get the title, because the world was BEGGING for another Steiner match, the Nash feud with HHH, and the Goldberg run of doom. Ok Goldberg I can live with but the other two? Screw that.

Van Dam and Kane say they'll knock each other out to win the Rumble.

### Royal Rumble

The intervals are two minutes if you listen to Fink and 90 seconds if you listen to JR. There are fifteen Raw guys and fifteen Smackdown guys this year which would be the norm for a few years to come. Shawn gets #1 and Jericho gets #2, but it's Christian playing the role of Jericho at the entrance, allowing Jericho to sneak in from behind and jump Shawn. Jericho hits Shawn low and starts the beat down before getting a chair to crack Shawn open.

Chris Nowitski is #3 and he's perfectly fine with letting Jericho maul Shawn. Jericho easily dumps Shawn, setting up their classic at

Wrestlemania. Nowitski isn't in the ring yet. Rey Mysterio (still pretty new here) is #4 as things speed up a lot. A springboard dropkick and rana take Jericho down but Nowitski gets in as well...or not as he slid back out. Rey escapes a gorilla press and dropkicks Jericho into the ropes, only to get jumped by Nowitski.

Edge is #5 for a big pop. He would have been world champion by summer if he hadn't hurt his neck. Jericho is sent into the post and Nowitski is knocked down, allowing the two good guys to pound away on each other while both miss finishers. A springboard rana by Rey is countered into a sitout powerbomb and Christian is #6. He hugs his brother but Edge spears him down out of common sense. Nowitski tries to dump Edge and Rey but gets caught by a "double" dropkick (read as Mysterio hit him but Edge completely missed and landed on Chris after he was already down).

The Bronco Buster hits Nowitski and Chavo is #7. He immediately takes Rey down but gets caught in a 619. Rey drops the dime on Chavo and hits a 619 on Christian. He tries a springboard rana on Christian but lands on Nowitski and takes him to the floor in the process. Jericho puts Mysterio out, leaving us with Jericho, Edge, Christian and Chavo at the moment. You can add Tajiri at #8 to that list.

Christian gets the tar kicked out of him and Chavo gets put in a spinning backbreaker. Not bad for the first twenty seconds for Tajiri. Bill DeMott is #9 and no one cares. At this point, he had been a Tough Enough trainer and his gimmick was that the rookies had ticked him off so much that he was basically a sociopath. I've heard of worse. Tommy Dreamer is #10 and he brings some toys with him.

There are too many people in the ring at the moment. Edge gets in some kendo stick shots on DeMott for an elimination. Christian and Jericho hit Dreamer with trashcan lids in a modified Conchairto for another elimination. Tajiri elbows both guys down but tries the Tarantula on Jericho and gets dumped as a result. B2, as in Bull Buchanan as Cena's ex-lackey, is #11. Edge knocks out Chavo as the ring is thinning out nicely.

Jericho gets sent over the top but skins the cat and pulls out Edge and

Christian in the process. Jericho is busted open but he's left all alone in the ring. RVD is #12 and man alive do the fans love him. They slug it out for a bit with Van Dam hitting a slingshot to send Jericho to the apron but not out. Matt Hardy (who strongly dislikes mustard) is #13. The heels (as in those not named RVD) double team the good guy (as in those named RVD) but Jericho is too weak to do much and Matt kind of sucks so Van Dam takes them down.

There's a Five Star to Jericho and Eddie is #14. He pounds away on Van Dam as well and hits a Frog Splash of his own, only to walk into a Twist of Fate from Matt. Jeff Hardy is #15 and Matt tries an alliance, only to get kicked in the gut. Jeff throws Matt to the apron but Matt's MF'er Shannon Moore prevents the elimination. There's the Twist of Fate to Matt but Shannon covers up Matt from the Swanton. Jeff just dives on both of them and Rosey of 3 Minute Warning is #16.

Absolutely nothing of note happens here so Test with Stacy is #17. He cleans house until John Cena is #18 with a rap for us. He manages to rhyme "Explain it to ya" with Wrestlemania so I'm impressed. He spends forever rapping until Van Dam throws him inside. The ring is way too full again. After Cena is in the ring for about eight seconds, Charlie Haas is #19. Van Dam and Jeff slug it out until Jeff goes up top like an IDIOT and gets shoved out. He would burn out and leave the company in about three months anyway.

Eddie walks the buckles and hits a rana on Jericho as Rikishi is #20, giving us Jericho, Van Dam, Matt, Eddie, Rosey, Test, Cena, Haas and Rikishi. Again that's too many people. Rosey and Rikishi square off but nothing happens. Instead they team up and beat up Matt and Shannon because they can, until Rosey clotheslines the heck out of Rikishi. Jamal of 3 Minute Warning (you know him better as Umaga) is #21.

Rikishi superkicks Jamal down almost immediately and there's a Stinkface for him. Kane is #22 and I think we have eleven people in there at the moment. He cleans as much house as you can clean with that many people in there before FINALLY putting someone out in the form of Rosey. Jericho gets thrown to the apron but hangs on. Shelton Benjamin is #23 and Team Angle starts taking over. Booker T is #24 and we DESPERATELY need someone



to clear some guys out.

Booker immediately kicks Kane down and fires up a Spinarooni to a BIG pop. Eddie gets backdropped out and Booker pounds on Rikishi. A-Train (Albert/Tensai) is #25 and the hometown boy gets to beat up a lot of people in a hurry. Shawn Michaels runs in with a bandage on his head and goes after Jericho, causing Test to dump Jericho out. See, that way it's legal.

Maven from Tough Enough (finally with actual trunks) is #26. He goes right for Kane like an idiot and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Goldust is #27 and he barely makes it 45 seconds before Haas and Benjamin put him out. Booker goes off on Haas in the corner but gets thrown out by Team Angle as well. He would get the world title shot at HHH as a consolation prize.

Big Dave Batista is #28 and you can hear the fans react to him. The first guy he hits? John Cena. It's always cool to see the future in there like that. Test takes him down with a full nelson slam but Batista low bridges him for the elimination. Batista takes down Rikishi with a spinebuster before clotheslining him out. At least the ring is clearing out a bit. Brock Lesnar is #29 and is the odds on favorite to win this thing.

Brock immediately eliminates Team Angle by himself before F5ing Matt on top of them. A-Train hits a bicycle kick to take Batista down as Undertaker is #30 to a big ovation. The final grouping: Van Dam, Cena, Jamal, Kane, A-Train, Maven, Batista, Lesnar and Undertaker. Drop Maven and A-Train and that's a pretty stacked field. To the shock of no one paying attention, Taker is returning here. There's a 9 hour DVD of matches and moments where Undertaker returns easily.

Taker punches everyone and dumps Cena and Jamal with ease. Maven dropkicks Taker in the back and celebrates, earning himself a chokeslam. The elimination is academic. A-Train hits the chokebomb on Taker to finally slow him down as Kane chokeslams Lesnar. Kane and Van Dam, the Raw tag champions, start teaming up to beat people up but A-Train takes them both down. Van Dam saves Kane from a backbreaker and the champs double clothesline Albert out.

Kane tells Van Dam to let him pick Van Dam up and drop him on Batista, but Kane turns (not heel) on Van Dam to throw RVD out. We're down to Lesnar, Undertaker, Kane and Batista which is awesome by today's standards. Taker and Lesnar have a showdown but the other two guys break it up. Taker pounds away on Batista in a preview of the feud of the year in 2007.

A big spinebuster puts Taker down and Lesnar fights off the two Raw (Batista/Kane) guys. There's an F5 for Kane and NOW we get Taker vs. Brock. They slug it out and after Taker says big boot, he hits a big boot to take Brock's head off. The F5 is escaped but there's a tombstone for Brock. A clothesline casually puts Batista out to get us down to three. Taker teases an alliance with Kane but dumps him as well. He has to knock away an invading Batista and Brock dumps Undertaker to go to Wrestlemania.

**Rating:** B-. Good but definitely not great Rumble here. You could see the next generation in the blocks but the problem is they were just that: the NEXT generation. Taker was the only possible winner here other than Brock and that's a recipe for a bad Rumble. You need more than one candidate for the Rumble and as soon as Lesnar's music hit, it was clear who was winning this.

Taker says go win the title but he wants the first shot. Brock says ok to end the show. Did we need that?

**Overall Rating:** C-. The problem with this show is that the excellent match on the card is brought down by the HORRENDOUS match just before it. The Rumble is good but it isn't good enough to save an otherwise bad card. The show isn't terrible, but it's a sign of things to come for this year, especially with HHH on the Raw side. Not much to see here other than Benoit vs. Angle of course. HHH vs. Steiner is only worth seeing if you want to see a trainwreck.

### Ratings Comparison

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: D

Redo: C+

Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Original: C

Redo: D

Torrie Wilson vs. Dawn Marie

Original: DD

Redo: D-

Scott Steiner vs. HHH

Original: G-

Redo: H (As in HHH)

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C-

I'm not sure what I was thinking the first time. The show just isn't that good.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/22/royal-rumble-count-up-2003-best->

[match-ever/](#)

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