

# Payback 2017: Thank You Strowman! And Reigns. Rollins Too. Throw in Joe. Maybe Jericho?

## Payback 2017

Date: April 30, 2017

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

And now, the most oddly booked, unnecessary and likely meaningless pay per view of the year! We're four weeks removed from Wrestlemania and somehow it seems like a far more distant memory. This was going to be your run of the mill rematch pay per view but the Superstar Shakeup has rendered a lot of the top matches worthless. Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt is now non-title while Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho haven't interacted in weeks. Fun for everyone you see. Let's get to it.

### Kickoff Show: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

Enzo and Cass talk about Chinese food and say that Anderson and Gallows' fortune cookie will call them sawft. Amore pounds on Anderson to start and hits a running kick to the ribs. The offense doesn't last long though as Gallows kicks him down and works on the arm until we go to a break.

Back with Anderson breaking up a hot tag attempt at the last minute, only to have the second attempt work a few seconds later. Cass starts cleaning house with the corner splashes, only to have Enzo make a blind tag. Gallows pulls him off the apron a second later for a big crash but Cass breaks up the Magic Killer. A small package finishes Gallows at 6:39.

**Rating:** D+. This was only there so Enzo and Cass could fire the crowd up and there's nothing wrong with that. What there is

something wrong with it is how lifeless this feud has been over the last few weeks that it's dragged along. Enzo and Cass really could have used the Revival for their next feud but instead we're stuck here thanks to injury. Not bad but really not interesting.

We're not done on the Kickoff Show as we have MizTV with special guest Finn Balor. Miz asks what the deal is with the long entrance and Finn says it's the Balor Club. That doesn't quite make sense as Miz wants to know what it takes to get into the Balor Club. Finn puts it up to the crowd who approve of Maryse but not so much of Miz.

We hear about Balor's success worldwide but Miz thinks Finn might feel like a failure. Balor mentions all the injuries he suffered in a match that he still managed to win and become the Universal Champion (my goodness imagine where his career would be if he didn't win that match). Miz mentions all the time away and asks what's next for Balor. Finn makes it simple: he wants his title back.

Miz brings up Lesnar being the Beast but Balor is ready to fight a bigger man, just like he has for his entire career. A fight is about to break out but Miz hides behind Maryse. Miz isn't worth the beating so Finn goes to leave, only to have Miz call him out. One Sling Blade later and Miz is quickly shut up as Finn destroys the set.

The opening video is a simple look at the matches with a theme of retribution. Nothing special but it's all it needed to be.

#### US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is defending after taking the title from Jericho at Wrestlemania. The story would call for a big violent gimmick here but nah, let's just let it be a standard rematch instead with IT'S RAW VS. SMACKDOWN serving as the gimmick instead. Kevin bails to the floor to start and gets sent into the announcers' table to let Jericho take over. Owens has to roll away from a Jericho dive to the floor but makes the stupid decision to roll back inside, allowing Jericho to hit a top rope elbow to the jaw.

The springboard dropkick is broken up (which should be attributed to Owens being such a big Jericho fan) and Owens nails the Cannonball against the barricade. We hit the chinlock (Owens: "ASK HIM!") as Cole continues running down both guys' resumes. One heck of a clothesline drops Jericho again and it's right back to the chinlock. Back up and Jericho misses a charge but gets in a quick enziguri for two of his own.

A superkick out of the corner gives Owens two more and the Cannonball is good for the same. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana into the Walls. Owens gets to the ropes by a finger again so Jericho crushes the hand beneath the steps. The bad hand means Owens can't hit the Pop Up Powerbomb so it's back to the Walls...for the tap out and the title at 14:06, sending Jericho over to Smackdown.

**Rating:** C. The ending helped it a lot (shock value can indeed do good things) but this felt like it was a long stretch of house show level stuff until Jericho started to go after the hand. Changing the title is a good idea though as they needed to do something to get off to a good start instead of having Owens beat a huge crowd favorite. Odds are Jericho loses on Smackdown anyway so it really doesn't mean that much.

Jericho signs a kid's List on the way up the ramp.

#### Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Austin Aries

Neville is defending in another Wrestlemania rematch where Neville raked the eyes to retain the title. An armdrag and a running shoulder in the corner have Neville flummoxed early on and it's time to lay on the top rope. It's way too early for the 450 though as Neville dropkicks the rope for the break.

We're already in the chinlock for a bit before Aries fights up and hits the middle rope elbow to the back. Aries sends him outside for a suicide dive, followed by a suplex back inside. A running forearm in the corner looks to set up the 450 but Neville bails out to the floor for safety. Not that it matters as Aries grabs a sunset bomb to set up the Last Chancery. Neville is in trouble but grabs the

referee for the DQ at 11:19.

**Rating:** C+. This was getting good until the ending. I'd assume this sets up a third match at Extreme Rules but they're to the point where Aries almost needs to win the belt. It's still a good feud but this one didn't have anywhere near the steam that the previous one did. I'm not sure they can really drag it out another month but that's never stopped WWE before.

Aries post-match protests don't get him anywhere.

#### Tag Team Titles: Sheamus/Cesaro vs. Hardys

The Hardys are defending after winning the titles at Wrestlemania in a ladder match. Cesaro and Matt start things off as an OBSOLETE chant starts up. Jeff comes in for a BROTHER NERO chant and it's almost immediately back to Matt. So much for that chant. Cesaro and Sheamus start in on the arm but it's right back to Jeff to speed things up. The legdrop between the legs and a seated dropkick set up the splash for two. Why does no one else ever do that?

Not that it matters as Sheamus sends him hard out to the floor and it's time for the heat segment. Sheamus' middle rope knee gets two and it's off to the chinlock. Back up and Sheamus kicks him in the face with Corey calling him the "alabaster gladiator". It's right back to the chinlock as Jeff seems to have lost a tooth somewhere in there. He's still able to kick Cesaro away and make the hot tag though as things pick up.

A DELETE middle rope elbow sets up the Side Effect for two. Matt's moonsault misses though and it's the Cesaro Swing into the Sharpshooter. A rope is quickly grabbed so Sheamus comes back in for a super White Noise in a great crash. Jeff makes a last second save but Sheamus breaks up the Twist of Fate. Sheamus powerslams Matt but Jeff makes a blind tag and hits the Swanton for the pin to retain at 12:48.

**Rating:** C. Another Raw match here with the Hardys still needing a real team to feud with, at least until Revival gets back to take the titles away. As has been the case both times tonight, the match was

fine though it's nothing that I'm going to remember tomorrow. Matt and Jeff are still good in the ring but they don't quite have the same spark from when they made their return. It's not early enough for a big change, but the Broken stuff needs to happen before it goes too long.

Post match the Hardys shake their hands, only to have Sheamus and Cesaro turn on them and beat them up. If that doesn't set up a rematch with the Broken Hardys at Extreme Rules, nothing is going to.

Braun Strowman promises to hurt Roman Reigns.

#### Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Bayley

Bayley is defending in her hometown. Bliss gets slammed to start and a knee drop gets two, followed by a long series of rams into the buckle. Alexa comes right back with a HARD shot to the head and the slow beating begins. As is normally the case, Alexa beats on Bayley and looks extra annoyed while doing so. She gets so much mileage out of her facial expressions. The chinlock is quickly broken so Bliss clotheslines her back down. Bliss spends a bit too much time trash talking though and gets caught in a Stunner over the ropes.

A belly to back suplex gives Bayley two but she takes too much time going to the ropes and gets sent hard into the buckle. Bayley can't get the super Bayley to Belly and gets pulled down with a Code Red for two. Bliss gets kneed in the face though and the Macho Elbow gets two more. A rollup gives Bayley two but the kickout sends her into the post. Bayley is so stunned that a DDT gives Bliss the pin and the title at 11:19.

**Rating:** C+. So to clarify, Bayley is NOT Naomi and is no better than anyone else that loses in their hometown. Bliss winning is fine but it really does seem that these hometown losses are just there to show that WWE is still in charge. The match was good enough and proof that playing a character well is far more important than what you can do in the ring. Bliss' in-ring work might not be the best but it's passable enough to be carried by her great mannerisms.

We recap the House of Horrors match, which means we'll finally get to know what the heck it is. The match is non-title due to the Superstar Shakeup but that gives Bray a slight chance of winning, perhaps due to some Jinder Mahal interference. Randy Orton beat Bray Wyatt at Wrestlemania for the title and this is the (meaningless) gimmick rematch.

#### Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt

Non-title. The match is going to start in Bray's House of Horrors and will wind up in the ring where it's pinfall, submission or forfeiture. We go to the inside of a limo where Orton is firing himself up and wearing pants. The House of Horrors is an actual house...and a tractor goes by with no one on it. The door is locked so Orton kicks his way in and we start the rapid camera cuts.

Bray's voice says run and he jumps Orton from behind. Randy is thrown into various things as the House of Horrors looks like a not great house that is being renovated. Bray disappears but reaches through a wall to choke Orton for a second and a half. The next room has baby dolls hanging from the ceiling in various mutilated forms and we hear babies talking.

Cue Wyatt for another attack but Orton throws him through a wall. They head to another room with more dolls and some weird structure made of sticks. That goes nowhere so it's off to a kitchen (the refrigerator says WE'RE HERE) with Orton getting the better of it. Bray tries to climb onto a counter and gets in a low blow. The refrigerator is shoved down onto Randy so Bray walks outside and steals Orton's limo. We'll come back to this later.

We recap Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe. Rollins was injured at Joe's hands earlier this year so tonight is really just about payback. As is often the case, the simpler ideas work best.

#### Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

Joe punches him up against the ropes to start and they're quickly on the floor with Rollins chopping away. Seth hits the big suicide dive and a second one does just as well. The big guy gets smart and goes

after the knee before hitting the suicide elbow to send Rollins over the announcers' table. Graves: "Like a flying school bus!"

A backslash onto the knee has Rollins screaming and his comeback is cut off almost immediately. The Knee Capper sets up the kneebars until Seth scrambles to the ropes. Joe grabs a powerbomb into a half crab into the Texas Cloverleaf but Joe is at the ropes again. Seth comes back with a Sling Blade, followed by a superkick to the neck for two of his own.

For some reason Seth tries the Buckle Bomb and the knee gives out, though it's fine enough for a Falcon Arrow a few seconds later. That great looking frog splash bangs the knee up even more so the cover is only good for a delayed two. The Koquina Clutch is countered with a quick rope climb but Joe grabs the hold again, only to have Seth roll over for a cradle and the pin at 16:03.

**Rating:** B+. It's definitely the match of the night so far which was what most people had coming in. Rollins winning is the right call as it would have been really stupid to give him the win last time and then job him here. Joe dominated the match until the ending where he got caught (ignore his shoulder being up) so this was about as well done as they were going to get.

Wyatt arrives back at the arena and stumbles into the ring. Cue Orton from behind with a chair (no word on how he got back) to start the beatdown, including sending Wyatt over the announcers' tables. There's the Elevated DDT off the table and Orton follows it up with another chair to the back. Back in and the RKO is loaded up but here are the Singh Brothers to go after Orton. They're dispatched just as quickly and there's the RKO to Wyatt. Now it's Jinder Mahal with the belt to Orton's head twice in a row, setting up Sister Abigail for the pin at 4:22 shown in the ring, not counting about ten minutes in the House.

**Rating:** D. The house stuff was more stupid than bad and that's a major improvement. They would have been in big trouble if it had been stuff like they did at Wrestlemania so it was more just there instead of anything all that terrible. Wyatt winning might be a

stretch but I'd much rather him actually get a win than lose all over again with the RKO being the great vanquishing force. Not the best concept here but it's going to be a more forgettable idea than on a list of all time horrible concepts and that's a major victory. We recap Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns. Strowman destroyed Reigns in an incredible segment but has since gone 0-1-1 against Big Show and Kalisto for reasons that aren't clear. Tonight Reigns is back for revenge.

### Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman

Reigns is very banged up coming in. He goes right after Strowman and hits a clothesline off the steps to drop the monster on the floor. The apron kick is pulled out of the air and Strowman chokeslams him onto the announcers' table. A powerslam gets two and Reigns is getting some sympathy for FINALLY being an underdog.

The bad shoulder is sent hard into the steps and it's off to a waistlock back inside. Strowman misses a charge into the corner and Reigns somehow hits a Samoan drop for two. They head outside with Reigns charging at Strowman and managing to send him into the post twice in a row.

The spear gets two back inside (giving us a reaction from a young girl that we'll likely see weekly from now on) but the second attempt hits boot. Two Superman Punches drop Braun but a third is caught in that head and arm choke. The powerslam only gets two so Strowman does it again for the pin at 11:20.

**Rating:** B+. This was WAY better than I was expecting and Reigns losing is probably the right call. I mean, I really don't need to see him vs. Lesnar at Wrestlemania XXXIV but if that's where we just have to go, you have to take Reigns down a few pegs first. Really good power match here and that was easily the way to go.

Post match Strowman throws in some steps (Fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!") and drops Reigns ribs first onto the steel in a big crash. Braun lifts the steps over his head and brings them crashing down onto his ribs in a cringe inducing landing. Strowman is as over



as free beer in a frat house and Reigns is bleeding from the mouth (Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!") to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The really low expectations helped this a lot, as did having Jericho win and not having the House of Horrors match be a disaster. The ending was really good and Joe vs. Rollins was quite the match as well. Raw is looking strong, or at least it would if there was anything for these guys to be fighting over. Good show here, though I still wonder how long they can stretch things out with Lesnar not likely wrestling until July.

### Results

Chris Jericho b. Kevin Owens – Walls of Jericho

Austin Aries b. Neville via DQ when Neville grabbed the referee

Hardys b. Sheamus/Cesaro – Swanton Bomb to Sheamus

Alexa Bliss b. Bayley – DDT

Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe – Cradle

Bray Wyatt b. Randy Orton – Sister Abigail

Braun Strowman b. Roman Reigns – Powerslam

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# Payback 2017 Preview

I've seen every pay per view WWE has ever produced and this is one of the most worthless they've ever put on. The Superstar Shakeup has changed the entire company and that means we have a bunch of pointless matches due to either the title not being on the line, people potentially switching shows and feuds that already have their followups started. Let's get to it.

## Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton

Normally I do the Kickoff Show match first but I'm going with this just so we can get it out of the way and forget about it. Remember back in 2000 when Mike Awesome defended the ECW World Title against Tazz and it was a WCW wrestler facing a WWF wrestler at an ECW show? That might be less complicated than what we have here. Here we have the Smackdown World Champion facing off against a "Monday Night Raw" wrestler who had no chance of winning the belt back at first and now that this is non-title, the odds are even lower.

The winner here? The audience, as this feud is going to be OVER, meaning we can move on to....Jinder Mahal. Three months ago AJ Styles and John Cena were tearing the house down over this title and now we have Wyatt looking like the weakest champion in years, Orton drawing reactions of "Him AGAIN?" and Mahal wondering what kind of a saint he was in a past life to be in this spot. I'll go with Orton winning here, presumably by being the first person to figure out what a House of Horrors match is.

## Kickoff Show: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

These teams are somehow still feuding for reasons that I have no idea how to comprehend. There's really not much of a reason for them to be fighting anymore so here they are on pay per view. This is a feud where they started fighting at one point and are still fighting because that's all WWE knows how to do.

I'll go with Anderson and Gallows here, as WWE doesn't seem to like Amore and Cass winning. Then again they don't like Anderson and Gallows winning either, but the Hardys are likely going to need some more challengers going forward and the big balds have only lost to the champs once so far. This match really does belong on the Kickoff Show and it's very clear that there isn't much of a reason to have

it other than Amore warming the crowd up.

### **Women's Title: Bayley vs. Alexa Bliss**

This is a natural feud with Bliss looking down on everyone that she's in the ring with and Bayley as the hometown girl who is living the dream. The question here is how important the hometown aspect is going to be. Earlier this month Naomi won the Smackdown Women's Title at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" seemingly on the strength of being from Orlando, Florida. The show is in Bayley's hometown so the question is will they let the hometown girl win twice.

I think they will as it seems that the big match on the horizon is Bayley defending against Sasha Banks in a battle of (former by then) best friends. As good as Bliss is (and she's awesome), there's some real money in Bayley holding the title for several months before losing it to Banks in a big showdown. Bliss will have her day and she's still rolling on the momentum that came with her two Smackdown Women's Titles.

### **Cruiserweight Title: Austin Aries vs. Neville**

They had the Match of the Night at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" and it's not out of the question for them to do it again. These two have an amazing chemistry together and they're going with a different story this time around. In Orlando it was all about Aries being able to hang with and potentially beat Neville, but the last few weeks have been a much more personal feud built on Neville attacking Aries and the hunt for revenge.

This time around though, I think they'll switch the title. Neville hasn't lost a singles match since October and the company has been mentioning that far too often as of late. That suggests to me that they're about to have him lose, which is going to be a huge moment for Aries. He's been treated as the biggest star in the division save for Neville and it's time to bring him all the way to the top.

### **US Title: Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho**

Now we hit the first match with next to no drama. It also doesn't help that these two have barely interacted since "Wrestlemania XXXIII" due to the Superstar Shakeup sending Owens over to "Smackdown Live". These two had one of the hottest feuds in the company just a month ago and now it's nothing more than something that exists. Owens has completely moved on and is already looking at

a title defense against AJ Styles later in the month.

Of course I'm going with Owens as Jericho is already booked to head off with Fozzy again almost immediately. Barring a last minute switch to Jericho and then dropping it back to Owens two days later, there's no reason to believe that Owens is dropping the title here. This match feels like filler and that's a real shame given how much effort they put into the build to its predecessor.

### **Tag Team Titles: Hardys vs. Sheamus/Cesaro**

While Jericho vs. Owens feels like it has no steam because of a lack of build, this one feels like it has no steam because it was never anything special in the first place. The Hardys made their huge return earlier this month and...that's about it. Without the Broken characters they're really just a nostalgic act and that's not the most thrilling idea in the world, at least not for too long.

That being said, I'm certainly taking the Hardys to retain here. As much steam as they've lost, Sheamus and Cesaro have all the steam of a frozen lasagna. The only way I can see them winning here is through a good bit of cheating which would send Matt Hardy over the edge to set up a certain gimmick change to set the promotion on as much fire as it could possibly reach in the current environment.

### **Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe**

This is the Match of the Night if they're allowed to let it all hang out. I'd assume this match was scheduled for "Fastlane 2017" before Rollins got hurt (though I'm not sure he actually was, especially given how fast he's gone from nearly crippled to just fine) and now it's going to feel a bit bigger as Rollins actually got a big rub off his win over Triple H. Then again Samoa Joe has been on fire since his main roster debut and there's a real chance he could get the biggest win of his career here.

I think I'll go with Samoa Joe, likely thanks to some interference by a returning Triple H. Why would he return? Well that would be because STEPHANIE MCMAHON MUST BE AVENGED and that means the feud must continue for the next three months or so. So yeah, Rollins is about to win with the Rainmaker knee but Triple H interferes to give Samoa Joe the win, setting up a rematch at whatever the next "Monday Night Raw" pay per view is.

### **Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman**

The last two weeks have made this interesting as WWE has decided that the way to follow up on Strowman's amazing destruction of Reigns is to have him go 0-1-1 against Big Show and Kalisto. There was no way Reigns should have been on TV in the last two weeks and thankfully they've kept him away from TV, though I'm more amazed that him RETIRING THE UNDERTAKER has been forgotten a mere four weeks later.

I'll take Strowman as he seems to be the challenger at "Great Balls of Fire 2017" and...stop laughing at the pay per view name. Anyway, Strowman seems to be the next challenger for Lesnar because we need to wait for a year to set up Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar and that would suggest starting with a major loss here.

Overall.....I think you get the idea. I have no idea why they didn't do the Superstar Shakeup this coming week for the sake of avoiding all of the messes that have come from the whole thing happening eight days after "Wrestlemania XXXIII". Almost none of the matches on this show mean anything as we're already setting up everything for later, making this show all the less important. I'm going to have enough issues staying awake during this show, let alone actually making sense of it.

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# Smackdown – April 18, 2017: It Didn't Make Any More Sense Live

## Smackdown

Date: April 18, 2017

Location: KFC Yum! Center, Louisville, Kentucky

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Smackdown is in a weird place and is basically at the mercy of the upcoming Raw pay per view until we can settle things down. Randy Orton is the World Champion and has a lame duck challenger in the form of Bray Wyatt, who is now on Raw. Tonight we'll have a Six Pack Challenge to crown a new Smackdown #1 contender. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show so I'll have a bit of a different perspective.

In Memory of Rosey who passed away earlier in the day.

We open with a long recap of the Superstar Shakeup.

Here's Charlotte for an opening chat. She's been on Smackdown Live for seven days now and for some reason she hasn't received her shot at the Smackdown Women's Title. Maybe Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan have been watching Fast and the Furious but she's getting furious very fast. She wants her title shot now so here's Naomi to interrupt.

Naomi doesn't think we have queens on this show and she's never scared (I feel a Nikki Bella appearance coming, perhaps in the form of talking to a camera and a stupid, forced argument with Brie). The fight is on but here's Shane McMahon to say not so fast. They'll have a match tonight and if Charlotte wins, she gets a title match next week. The brawl is on again and Naomi clears the ring.

Natalya is in Shane's office and says she deserves the title match. Shane brings up the loss at Wrestlemania and says all she had to do

was ask for a one on one match. Cue Carmella and James Ellsworth to say Carmela should get the shot. Tamina comes in to ask about her shot. An argument ensues because that's what WWE thinks women do until Natalya says they should band together against Charlotte.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal vs. Erick Rowan vs. Luke Harper vs. Mojo Rawley

One fall to a finish and the winner gets a shot at the Smackdown World Title. Everyone pairs off to start with Harper and Rowan being the only two to stay in the ring. Sami replaces Rowan but charges into a Falcon's Arrow for two as we take a break. Back with Rowan, Ziggler and Zayn all about to be superplexed.

Dolph and Rowan crash to the mat but Sami sunset bombs Mahal for two. Ziggler superkicks Zayn but Harper blasts him with the discus lariat for a near fall of his own. Almost everyone winds up on the floor (Complete with those still stupid crowd shots, because we're not smart enough to know that something is exciting on our own. No, we NEED to see what some average fans think of a clothesline to really get the full feeling.) with Harper hitting a big dive.

Rowan's spinning kick gets two on Ziggler in a good false finish before Ziggler gets powerbombed onto the pile at ringside. We take a second break and come back with Rawley cleaning house and hitting the running punch to knock Ziggler out. Mahal dumps Rawley and steals a VERY close two, followed by Ziggler running back in for two off a Zig Zag on Rowan.

Harper's Batista Bomb gets two on Dolph but Mahal sends him into the steps. For some reason Sami dives onto Harper instead of going for a cover, followed by the springboard moonsault to Rawley. Back in and Sami hits the exploder on Mahal but two men (the Bollywood Boyz, though not announced by name) grab his feet, allowing Jinder to grab a cobra clutch slam for the pin and the title shot at 18:42.

**Rating:** B. Choice of a winner aside, this was a heck of a match with some outstanding false finishes. There were multiple possible winners here and one major surprise ending, which is always going to help something like this. I had a lot of fun with the match, though

I could go with a regular match for a title shot instead of some multi-person circus, even an entertaining one like this.

As for Mahal.....yeah I'm not sure on this one. I get the idea of trying something fresh but is Jinder Mahal really the kind of guy you want to make the focal point when you're in a new era? Odds are Orton destroys him but that's going to make for a long four weeks as we get to Backlash. I'm sure Mahal looking like he swallowed a few boxes of ICO-PRO products has nothing to do with his push either.

Post match Mahal says people boo him because he's not your typical All-American and comes from a wealthy family. Americans don't accept diversity but they'll have to accept Jinder Mahal. Cue Randy Orton to say Mahal won the Jackpot with a prize of an RK0. First though, Orton has to burn down the House of Horrors (whatever that is).

Bray Wyatt pops up on screen to talk about torturing Randy and showing him what fear means. The show went to a break here, during which Rowan tried to sneak in and attack Orton, only to take the RK0. During the entire post match promo exchange, Zayn sat at ringside staring at the announcers, completely distraught.

New Day is coming, likely as soon as Kofi's ankle is healed up.

Video on Shinsuke Nakamura.

AJ Styles is ready to win the US Title when Baron Corbin interrupts. Corbin says AJ didn't pin him last week so none of it matters. Styles is more than willing to face Corbin tonight so the match is made.

Charlotte runs into Natalya, Tamina and Carmella, who completely fail to intimidate her.

#### Naomi vs. Charlotte

Non-title but if Charlotte wins, she gets a title shot next week. The Glow entrance is still insane and really cool in person. Charlotte sends her into the corner and grabs an early chinlock to slow Naomi down. The Figure Four necklock with the faceplants and front flips keep Naomi in trouble and it's right back to the chinlock. Naomi pops up for a slugout and hits those dancing kicks,



capped off by a big one to the head for two.

Back from a break with Charlotte grabbing a dragon sleeper of all things and getting two off a neckbreaker. A knee to the back of the head gets the same as this has been almost all Charlotte so far. She's just a few steps ahead of Naomi and there's no much the champ can do about it. Naomi makes her comeback with a clothesline and what looked like a sitout Stunner for two. The Rear View is easily blocked though as Charlotte kicks her in the back. Natural Selection gives Charlotte the pin at 12:51.

**Rating:** C+. This was an odd one as they could only do so much with the booking. The problem is Charlotte is so far above every active woman on the Smackdown roster that there's almost no point in having her beat anyone up. I'm not wild on the champion losing clean but in this case it was the only real option.

Charlotte W00s at her detractors.

#### Colons vs. American Alpha

They're Primo and Epico again, which is probably better for everyone involved. This is the result of the Colons attacking Alpha last week as they debuted on Smackdown. Chad takes Epico down with ease and it's time to work on the arm. A Primo distraction allows Epico to send him into the post though and things slow down. Epico gets two off a double underhook gutbuster, only to have Chad grab the armbar over the ropes. Jordan comes in off the hot tag but Primo kicks him in the face, sending Jordan into a rollup for the pin at 3:15.

**Rating:** D+. The time killed them here but the bigger issue is how far American Alpha has fallen. It seems that they received the WWE death sentence a few months back: they were declared bulletproof. If you're branded as such, you can forget about winning almost anything significant most of the time as WWE would rather have you put everyone over than keep you strong, which is about as bad as things can get. It also doesn't help that American Alpha hasn't been allowed to do any of the stuff that got them over in NXT but that's a very common problem in WWE.

Video on Lana, who likes to dance on chairs.

Video on Tye Dillinger.

### Kevin Owens vs. Gary Gandy

Non-title. This is a Face of America Open Challenge and Gandy is from Louisville. Pop Up Powerbomb ends Gandy at 34 seconds.

Post match Owens says he's the Face of America as long as he's the US Champion. No one can take that away from him and now he's going to sit in on commentary for the main event.

### AJ Styles vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin shoves him down as Kevin talks about AJ stealing his moniker from John Cena. Owens: "The only way he's taking this title from me is by stealing it too." AJ gets tossed outside and dropped face first onto the apron as we take a break. Back with Corbin holding a chinlock before sending him ribs first into the post.

Baron tries his slide under the ropes into the clothesline but gets sent into the post instead. A chokebreaker gives Baron two more but there's the Calf Crusher for the submission attempt that isn't going anywhere. One heck of a Deep Six gives Corbin a close near fall, only to have AJ hit him in the head a few times. They head outside again with AJ loading up the Clash but Corbin backdrops him onto Owens. One more forearm off the steps drops Corbin long enough for Styles to beat the count at 13:12.

**Rating:** C+. Not bad here but the time caught up to them again with the quick ending being designed to take care of Corbin while also advancing Styles vs. Owens. That's a pretty impressive list of things to accomplish in one match and they pulled it off well enough. They were really smart to keep Corbin from getting pinned though, which makes me think he might be next in line after Mahal.

**Overall Rating:** C. This was a good show with one MAJOR issue holding the rest of it back. As good as the rest of the show was, I don't think anyone is going to care about anything on here aside from Mahal becoming #1 contender. Honestly, is there anything else to talk about on here? Charlotte gets a title shot and has three pests

to deal with, the Colons are getting a push and we still have Styles vs. Owens to look forward to. Overall the show is going to be looked at for Mahal alone and that's not the best thing in the world.

### Results

Jinder Mahal b. Sami Zayn, Erick Rowan, Luke Harper, Dolph Ziggler and Mojo Rawley – Cobra clutch slam to Zayn

Charlotte b. Naomi – Natural Selection

Colons b. American Alpha – Rollup to Jordan

Kevin Owens b. Gary Gandy – Pop Up Powerbomb

AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin via countout

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# **Main Event – April 13, 2017: The Hometown Version**

### **Main Event**

Date: April 13, 2017

Location: Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

I've spent months asking for some kind of a shakeup around here and now that the rosters have been tossed around, WWE might actually have to offer us something fresh around here. It should be interesting to see who replaces Jinder Mahal, who was one of the Main Event regulars. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Big Cass vs. Titus O'Neil

Please don't let Titus be the new guy. Enzo does a big entrance, talking about how he and Cass came here from New Jersey by way of some New York roads. Titus goes straight for him and gets tossed to the floor off a fall away slam. A right hand staggers Enzo and Titus follows up with some running splashes in the corner. We're already in the chinlock before Cass pops up, hits the Empire Elbow and kicks Titus in the face for the pin at 3:22.

**Rating:** D+. The match was nothing to see but it was a really smart idea to have Enzo and Cass out there to start the night. The fans are going to go nuts for them every week but putting them out there in front of their hometown crowd is the best thing they could have done. Cass getting a singles win is nice too as that's probably his future.

First Raw moment.

Here's Seth Rollins for a chat. He didn't know if he would ever be in this ring again because he gave everything he had to get ready for Wrestlemania. Last week he woke up after a war with HHH and his knee had never been in so much pain. All he knew was that he had never felt so good because at Wrestlemania, he slayed the King.

There are a lot of things Rollins wants to do around here ("The name Samoa Joe comes to mind."), including wanting to get his hands on the Universal Title. However, something happened at Wrestlemania that might prevent it from happening. We see a clip of Stephanie being knocked through a table, which means she'll be out for a while. Then she'll be back though and Rollins becomes public enemy #1. Therefore, it's probably easier for him to go to Smackdown.

That's not what's going to happen though as Seth took the easy way out once and he's not doing it again.

Cue Angle to say that yes, Stephanie made it clear she wants him gone. Angle watched Wrestlemania though and saw Seth win a fight on one leg. Stephanie's opinion aside, as long as Angle is in charge, Seth has a home here on Raw. Angle goes to leave but Samoa Joe comes in for the fight. Rollins superkicks him to the floor though and Joe bails.

To Raw again.

In the back, Michael Cole has a sitdown interview with Roman Reigns. Roman says the win over Undertaker was the biggest win of his career but it was bittersweet. He's had great guidance but he's not sure how you retire someone you respect so much. Braun Strowman comes in and the fight is on with Reigns being destroyed.

Reigns gets powerslammed onto an anvil case and Braun crushes him by wheeling another case into Reigns' head. Fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!" Reigns is taken out on a stretcher. Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!" Strowman shoves the stretcher down a flight of stairs, drawing the pop of the night. Reigns is wheeled into the ambulance. Braun: "I'M NOT THROUGH WITH YOU YET BOY!" Strowman beats him up even more and TURNS THE AMBULANCE OVER with Reigns inside.

Post break Reigns is loaded into a new ambulance and finally gets to leave.

#### Gran Metalik/Lince Dorado vs. Drew Gulak/Tony Nese

Nese gets a very nice pop from his hometown crowd. Metalik does all of his flips on Gulak to start before getting pulled down into a dragon sleeper with a bodyscissors (Remember when that was a dangerous move in the Cruiserweight Classic?). We hit some dives before it's off to an early break.

Back with Gulak and Metalik trading chops in the corner until a springboard elbow drops Gulak. The hot tag brings in Dorado and everything breaks down. Dorado grabs a handspring double Stunner (cool), leaving Metalik to walk the top rope for a moonsault onto

Gulak. Nese crotches Dorado on top though and the running knee to the jaw is enough for the pin at 8:42.

**Rating:** C. Totally average cruiserweight tag here and that doesn't mean much. I still really like Metalik and the whole King of the Ropes thing has potential, though he's stuck here because of one botch and there's not much changing that. Nese continues to be just one step away from being awesome but I'm not sure what that step is. We'll wrap it up with this.

#### Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. An early Dirty Deeds attempt sends Owens bailing to the floor but Dean whips him into the barricade. Dean scores with a dive and we take a break. Back with Dean caught in a chinlock. Owens: "I could do this all night baby!" Dean fights up and gets sent outside in a crash, followed by a ram into the post. Back in and Ambrose gets in a good shot to knock Owens outside, setting up a suicide dive.

That's not enough for Dirty Deeds though but Owens misses a Cannonball. Dean clotheslines him down but Kevin bails outside. That's fine with Dean, who hits the top rope elbow. Back in and Owens hits the package piledriver slam for two as the fans want Jericho. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered but Owens escapes Dirty Deeds as well. A superkick blocks the rebound lariat but Dean rolls through into Dirty Deeds for the clean pin at 14:15.

**Rating:** B. Lack of caring from the crowd aside (yeah fans aren't that interested in a match with nothing on the line after a three and a half hour taping and no story in sight), this was a good back and forth fight between two people with underrated chemistry. I liked it more than I was expecting to but it was missing something to take it to the next level.

Post match Chris Jericho comes out to hit Owens with a Codebreaker to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. This show had the Braun Strowman segment and that alone makes it amazing. If WWE somehow doesn't capitalize on what

they did with that, they're actually more of a mess than I thought they were. On top of that, if Reigns is seen on TV at any point before Payback (and even then), they're fools. Good show this week, though it's mainly due to the Raw stuff.

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## **Smackdown – April 11, 2017: The Ugly Stepchild of WWE**

### **Smackdown**

Date: April 11, 2017

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the second night of the Superstar Shakeup which means we'll be seeing a lot of new names showing up tonight. That primarily means names from Monday Night Raw but there's also the chance of some people from NXT or maybe even the cruiserweights of 205 Live. Let's get to it.

We open with the debuting Kevin Owens(in a suit), who declares this the new Kevin Owens Show. Now some people might be confused about how a Canadian can be the face of the United States but it makes

perfect sense. Canadians are just better athletes than Americans and there's no denying it. Just look at the Montreal Canadiens defeating the Boston Bruins all the time. There's no one in the back that can beat him because he is the new face of America.

Cue Baron Corbin of all people to say that Owens can't beat him up. Last week Corbin beat Dean Ambrose up so badly that he ran off to Raw. Last night, Ambrose beat Owens up so badly that he came here so that means Corbin should get a US Title shot. Owens says no but here's the debuting Sami Zayn (JUST LET HIM STAY AWAY FROM OWENS FOR FIVE MINUTES!) to send Owens into a near fit because he can never escape. Sami wants a shot as well but here's AJ Styles, who is actually still on Smackdown.

AJ gets a huge face reception and says this place is still about him. This brings out Daniel Bryan to say Owens vs. Chris Jericho is still on for Payback and the winner will officially be on Smackdown. The title can't be defended until then though, but tonight we're going to crown a new #1 contender for the US Title. Tonight it's Styles vs. Corbin vs. Zayn for the future shot.

#### Randy Orton vs. Erick Rowan

Non-title. Orton hammers away to start but gets shoved into the corner. Erick rains down right hands until Orton grabs the powerslam and does the Garvin Stomp. They head outside with Rowan getting sent into the steps, followed by the elevated DDT. The RKO is loaded up but Bray appears on screen, already making the Superstar Shakeup seem worthless. Seriously it hasn't even been twenty four hours. Wyatt says he's everywhere and will see Orton in the House of Horrors. The lights come back up and Rowan hits Orton with the steps for the DQ at 3:50.

**Rating:** D-. I was tempted to not rate this one as a minute and a half of it was spent on watching Orton listen to Bray. Hopefully things are all square after Payback as these show vs. show matches defeat the point of the Shakeup (just do the Shakeup later). The match was a squash until the ending and I'm kind of glad they didn't have Rowan just lose clean again.



Rowan gives Orton a full nelson slam.

### Tag Team Titles; Usos vs. American Alpha

Alpha is defending in their rematch after losing the belts last month. The Usos don't even get an entrance. Jimmy and Chad start things off with Alpha using some early double teaming to take over. Both champs are sent to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Jimmy kicking Jason in the face but getting sent hard into the corner. The hot tag brings in Chad to clean house, including a great looking moonsault for two on Jimmy.

Some double teaming puts Gable in trouble but the Superfly Splash hits knees for two. The Steiner Bulldog gets a very close two with Jey making a save. Alpha is sent outside for stereo suicide dives but you don't dive at suplexers as Alpha grabs stereo belly to belly suplexes. Back in and Jey makes a blind tag, setting up a superkick into the Superfly Splash to retain at 8:51.

**Rating:** B. Good stuff here as you would expect but can we PLEASE have someone show up to bolster the division a little bit? Right now it's these two and whomever else we can find as jobbers that week. With a roster as deep as WWE has, there's really no excuse to not be able to put four teams together for a regular division.

Post match the Shining Stars run in and leave American Alpha laying.

### Mojo Rawley vs. Jinder Mahal

Rob Gronkowski is in the front row again. Mahal starts fast and takes Rawley down for a kneedrop and armbar. Jinder makes the mistake of going after Gronkowski though and gets a cup thrown on him, allowing Mojo to take him back inside. The running right hand puts Jinder away at 2:41. At least it was short.

Mojo celebrates with some New England Patriots.

Here's Shane McMahon to address the Women's Division. They've acquired some new talent but he'd like to have the entire division come out here. This brings out Naomi, Natalya, Carmella (with James Ellsworth) and Becky Lynch. Since that's the entire division so far, Shane stops to congratulate Naomi but Ellsworth takes the mic to say

Naomi is horrible.

Naomi threatens violence and says bring out the new talent. That would mean a long introduction for a second generation star and the daughter of a Hall of Famer: Tamina! I don't think that really counts as a new talent as she was out injured and never officially on Raw. Shane isn't done though and brings out Charlotte for the real big surprise.

Sin Cara and Rusev (no mention of Lana) are coming to Smackdown.

Here's Aiden English on his own to ask for a spotlight. In a callback to his NXT days, English sings a song about himself, only to be cut off.

#### Aiden English vs. Tye Dillinger

Tye gets the important things out of the way first with a snapmare and cartwheel into TEN. English takes him into the corner and sings that this is his show. The Tyebreaker is good for the pin on English at 2:20.

Video on AJ Styles.

Video on Lana dancing around a chair in a very revealing red dress. She's on Smackdown too and seems to be her own act instead of with Rusev.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to talk about how awesome he is and how the Superstar Shakeup doesn't matter. Cue Shinsuke Nakamura for his full entrance. Ziggler asks who Nakamura thinks he is so the fans sing his song. Nakamura says his name and blocks a superkick, setting up the BRING IT pose. Ziggler bails of course.

Video on Baron Corbin.

New Day is coming to Smackdown. Now that helps things a lot.

Video on Sami Zayn.

#### Sami Zayn vs. AJ Styles vs. Baron Corbin

The winner gets a US Title shot at some point after Payback. Styles and Zayn go after Corbin to start but he suplexes both of them at once without much effort. A double clothesline sends Corbin outside,

leaving us with a Zayn vs. Styles showdown. Corbin pulls Styles to the floor but Sami moonsaults onto both of them as we take a break. Back with Corbin in full control, hitting a side slam and big boot for two on Styles.

AJ grabs the Hoshi Geroshi on Sami but gets blasted by a clothesline from Corbin to put all three down. Corbin takes a knee to the face and Sami grabs the Blue Thunder Bomb for two on AJ. Baron gets back up for one heck of a Deep Six on Sami with AJ making the save. The springboard 450 gets two on Corbin with Sami making a last second save this time around. That earns him a Pele kick but the Clash is backdropped to the apron. The Helluva Kick drops Corbin, only to have AJ hit the Phenomenal Forearm for the pin on Sami at 16:42.

**Rating:** B. Corbin is getting better and better every single week and working with people like AJ and Sami is only going to help him even more. AJ winning is a bit of a surprise but he immediately elevates the US Title. I do wonder who is next for Orton after this as you would think AJ would have been a good choice for the next challenger after Wyatt.

**Overall Rating:** B-. While I'm going to need some more time to figure out how much I liked the second half of the Superstar Shakeup, the first instinct would be to think that it went a lot better for the red show. The big names here are New Day, Charlotte and Owens, but the problem is a lot of the names are nothing. I mean, Sin Cara? The Shining Stars? Jinder Mahal? Those aren't exactly exciting names. Then again, did anyone really expect WWE to put a focus on Smackdown?

The show itself was good enough with a good Tag Team Title match and main event but we still don't really have a feel for how things are going to go on this show. The problem is we won't until after Payback, which makes things a bit more complicated than they need to be. Smackdown has potential but they're lacking a top level star (remember that Cena is going to be gone for well over a month), which is a problem they've had for a long time.

Results

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan via DQ when Rowan used the steps  
Usos b. American Alpha – Superfly Splash to Gable  
Mojo Rawley b. Jinder Mahal – Running punch  
Tye Dillinger b. Aiden English – Tyebreaker  
AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin and Sami Zayn – Phenomenal Forearm to Zayn

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# Monday Night Raw – April 10, 2017: Shake Shake Shake

## **Monday Night Raw**

Date: April 10, 2017

Location: Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

In case last week's post-Wrestlemania show wasn't enough for you, this week we have the first half of the Superstar Shakeup, which will see various talents going to the other shows. In other words, it's whatever they can call the Draft this time around. We're also less than three weeks away from Payback so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here are Miz and Maryse as Cena and Nikki for their return to Raw. Miz knows they said they were going to Hollywood but it turns out they sucked as actors. So what better way to revamp their careers than come back here? Cue Dean Ambrose, who is so glad to see John and Nikki and congratulates them on their engagement.

Miz tries to explain this to him but Dean cuts them off and congratulates them on beating the horrible Miz and Maryse at Wrestlemania. Dean loved Cena's commercial as an elephant but warns against doing something stupid like making Marine 5. Miz reveals their real identities....and gets taken down by Dirty Deeds.

Kurt Angle is on the phone when Sami Zayn comes in to ask if he's going to Smackdown. Does being here tonight mean he's staying on Raw? Angle cuts him off and says there's a lot of interest from Smackdown, which Sami asks him to quantify. Miz and Maryse come in to cut him off to trigger an argument, which sets up a match between the two. Angle looks like he's about to snap after being here two weeks.

### New Day vs. Revival

Woods and Big E. here as Kofi is out after Revival severely hurt his ankle. Not to worry though as Big E. has a Kofi blowup doll as a replacement. Revival mocks Kofi's injury via some custom t-shirts and are quickly taken down for their efforts. New Day works on Wilder until we take an early break. Back with Dawson working on Woods' ribs as we hear more about Kofi's ankle injury and subsequent surgery. The hot tag brings in Big E. to clean house with belly to bellies and a Warrior splash on Wilder.

Dawson gets in a cheap shot to give Dash two, only to have Woods hit a ridiculous springboard elbow (who was less than a foot from the opposite rope) for two on Scott. Revival makes a blind tag and breaks up the Midnight Hour, only to have Woods dive right into the Shatter Machine for the pin at 7:56.

**Rating:** B-. The last two weeks have been EXACTLY how Revival should

have been debuted. Revival has beaten an all time great team twice in a row and it's not like New Day is going to lose anything as a result. They've been bulletproof for a long time now so putting Revival over like this isn't going to cause them any harm.

Neville isn't worried about facing Austin Aries again when TJ Perkins comes up. TJ threatens to make Neville eat his words but Neville calls him a joke. Perkins won the Cruiserweight Classic but once 205 Live debuted, TJ's career has gone nowhere. Now all of TJ's opportunities are being taken by people like Aries. The only person with any respect for Perkins is Neville, which seems to get TJ's attention. Cue Aries to say he's earned all these opportunities but TJ doesn't seem to buy it.

Curt Hawkins is here to call himself the biggest acquisition since the Louisiana Purchase. This brings out Big Show to knock him out with one punch. For some reason this makes Cole speculate that Big Show is going to Smackdown.

#### Austin Aries vs. TJ Perkins

Aries' title shot will officially come at Payback. Neville is on commentary and Cole asks if he can play journalist for a minute. Neville: "Nope." Perkins takes Aries down with a headscissors but stops to check his hair and dab a bit. They run the ropes with Aries cartwheeling away and catching Perkins with a basement dropkick.

That earns Aries a quick rest on top and some mocking of Perkins' taunting. TJ misses his pendulum dropkick and gets taken down by a neckbreaker across the middle rope. Aries dives off the top and that's too much for Neville, who comes down the ramp for a staredown. The distraction lets Perkins grab a small package for the pin at 3:36.

**Rating:** C. This has me interested as Aries vs. Neville II sounds good but Perkins is one of the only names that could hang on their level if he's on top of his game. If nothing else it could mean Perkins turning heel, which he should have done about six months ago. Good enough match here but the angle is more important.

Aries stares Neville down but Perkins comes in and gives Aries the Detonation Kick, seemingly turning full heel.

Here's Seth Rollins for a chat. He didn't know if he would ever be in this ring again because he gave everything he had to get ready for Wrestlemania. Last week he woke up after a war with HHH and his knee had never been in so much pain. All he knew was that he had never felt so good because at Wrestlemania, he slayed the King.

There are a lot of things Rollins wants to do around here ("The name Samoa Joe comes to mind."), including wanting to get his hands on the Universal Title. However, something happened at Wrestlemania that might prevent it from happening. We see a clip of Stephanie being knocked through a table, which means she'll be out for a while. Then she'll be back though and Rollins becomes public enemy #1. Therefore, it's probably easier for him to go to Smackdown. That's not what's going to happen though as Seth took the easy way out once and he's not doing it again.

Cue Angle to say that yes, Stephanie made it clear she wants him gone. Angle watched Wrestlemania though and saw Seth win a fight on one leg. Stephanie's opinion aside, as long as Angle is in charge, Seth has a home here on Raw. Angle goes to leave but Samoa Joe comes in for the fight. Rollins superkicks him to the floor though and Joe bails.

Kevin Owens doesn't care about the Superstar Shakeup because he'll be on top of either brand. He says go find Chris Jericho and ask him about the Shakeup because he'd love to go to Smackdown and find some success. Owens is the top champion on Raw and doesn't want to hear about Dean Ambrose.

### Charlotte vs. Nia Jax

Nia runs her over to start and scores with a shoulder breaker to really take over. Some elbows to the back have Charlotte reeling and it's off to a chinlock. The fans look at something in the crowd as Nia throws Charlotte down but some shots to the ribs give Charlotte an opening. A chop block sets up Natural Selection for two and Nia goes shoulder first into the post. Charlotte hits the moonsault to

the floor with her boot hitting Nia square in the head. Nia barely makes it back inside and the Figure Four is easily blocked. A Samoan Drop crushes Charlotte for the pin at 5:58.

**Rating:** C. This was sloppy at times but it completely got the point across. Nia looks like a much bigger deal now as beating Charlotte is still a huge accomplishment with only a handful of people being able to do it on occasion. Jax still needs experience but once she gets that under her belt, she's going to be something very special.

Video on Finn Balor.

#### Jinder Mahal vs. Finn Balor

Balor starts fast with some kicks until Mahal blasts him with a forearm to the jaw. Not that it matters as he kicks Mahal in the head and scores with the Sling Blade. The running corner dropkick sets up the Coup de Grace to put Jinder away at 2:48.

With Balor still in the ring, Bray Wyatt pops up on screen to say he's here on Raw. In three weeks, the entire world will be able to see him torture Randy Orton at Payback in a House of Horrors match. On the other hand, Balor needs to watch himself because Bray will be watching him.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Apollo Crews, Kalisto, Heath Slater and Rhyno are all coming to Raw.

#### The Miz vs. Sami Zayn

Sami does his springboard leapfrog to set up the armdrags, followed by a clothesline to send Miz outside. Miz hides behind Maryse to prevent the dive though and we take a break. Back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock but getting caught in a DDT for two. Miz does the YES Kicks but Sami reverses into the Blue Thunder Bomb for its traditional near fall. Maryse makes the save by pulling Miz away from the Helluva Kick but Sami grabs a rollup for the pin at 7:39.

**Rating:** C+. Not bad here and it's always nice to see Sami get a win like this. I'd still like to see Sami head over to Smackdown and now he might even go over with some fresh momentum. At the moment, Smackdown is running very low on talent so hopefully someone goes



over to the blue show to balance things out a bit.

In the back, Michael Cole has a sitdown interview with Roman Reigns. Roman says the win over Undertaker was the biggest win of his career but it was bittersweet. He's had great guidance but he's not sure how you retire someone you respect so much. Braun Strowman comes in and the fight is on with Reigns being destroyed.

Reigns gets powerlssammed onto an anvil case and Braun crushes him by wheeling another case into Reigns' head. Fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!" Reigns is taken out on a stretcher. Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!" Strowman shoves the stretcher down a flight of stairs, drawing the pop of the night. Reigns is wheeled into the ambulance. Braun: "I'M NOT THROUGH WITH YOU YET BOY!" Strowman beats him up even more and TURNS THE AMBULANCE OVER with Reigns inside.

Post break Reigns is loaded into a new ambulance, which unfortunately isn't being driven by Strowman.

#### Hardys/Sheamus/Cesaro vs. Shining Stars/Anderson and Gallows

Before the bell, Elias Samson wanders out onto the stage, sending Graves through the roof due to his long standing hatred of all things Samson. Anderson gets taken down to start with Sheamus dropping a knee. Back from a break with Cesaro in trouble and Sheamus having to make a save. That earns him a Backstabber from Prim but allows Cesaro to dive over for the hot tag to Matt. Everything breaks down and Gallows breaks up a Side Effect. Sheamus and Cesaro send Anderson and Gallows to the floor, leaving Jeff to hit a Poetry in Motion flip dive onto the floor. Back inside, Primo takes the Twist and Swanton for the pin at 7:48.

**Rating:** C-. This match had no chance of following the Strowman and Reigns segment and I think everyone knew it. The Hardys are still a great nostalgia act but if they're just Matt and Jeff, I'm not sure how long they're going to be able to last at this level. Then again, I'm not sure how long they're supposed to last.

The winners pose for a good while.

Dana Brooke is reading "How to Be Your Own Protege" when Emma comes

in. She seems to think Dana still works for her but Dana says that was last year and things have changed.

Here's Sasha Banks to introduce Bayley for a chat. Bayley thanks everyone for their support because she's still the same 12 year old girl that loved this so much. Sasha congratulates Bayley for her win but now she wants a title shot of her own. Cue Alexa Bliss to say the two of them are nauseating.

She's the two time Smackdown Women's Champion and now wants to add the Raw Women's Title. This brings out Mickie James to say Bayley's nightmare is just beginning. Before she can go any further, here's Nia Jax to run her over. Bliss pushes Banks into Nia, who sends her outside. Bayley gets planted with the Samoan drop and Nia says the title is hers.

Reigns has cracked ribs, internal injuries and a possible separated shoulder.

#### Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. An early Dirty Deeds attempt sends Owens bailing to the floor but Dean whips him into the barricade. Dean scores with a dive and we take a break. Back with Dean caught in a chinlock. Owens: "I could do this all night baby!" Dean fights up and gets sent outside in a crash, followed by a ram into the post. Back in and Ambrose gets in a good shot to knock Owens outside, setting up a suicide dive.

That's not enough for Dirty Deeds though but Owens misses a Cannonball. Dean clotheslines him down but Kevin bails outside. That's fine with Dean, who hits the top rope elbow. Back in and Owens hits the package piledriver slam for two as the fans want Jericho. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered but Owens escapes Dirty Deeds as well. A superkick blocks the rebound lariat but Dean rolls through into Dirty Deeds for the clean pin at 14:15.

**Rating:** B. Lack of caring from the crowd aside (yeah fans aren't that interested in a match with nothing on the line after a three and a half hour taping and no story in sight), this was a good back

and forth fight between two people with underrated chemistry. I liked it more than I was expecting to but it was missing something to take it to the next level.

Post match Chris Jericho comes out to hit Owens with a Codebreaker to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The wrestling was much better than usual here and they added some big names to the Raw roster, which should really freshen things up a lot. They still need to get rid of some of the excess names because the roster is rather bloated (getting rid of the Cruiserweights would be a good place to start) and I'm sure five or six names will be heading to Smackdown otherwise. Good show here as they kept the energy up, complete with some hilariously unintentional comedy (I think?) with Strowman vs. Reigns.

### Results

Revival b. New Day – Shatter Machine to Woods

TJ Perkins b. Austin Aries – Small package

Nia Jax b. Charlotte – Samoan Drop

Finn Balor b. Jinder Mahal – Coup de Grace

Sami Zayn b. The Miz – Rollup

Hardys/Sheamus/Cesaro b. Anderson and Gallows/Shining Stars – Swanton Bomb to Primo

Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens – Codebreaker

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# Main Event – April 6, 2017: I'm Sorry Curtis

## Main Event

Date: April 6, 2017

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Can the Wrestlemania edition of this show be an upgrade? Am I asking too much for something like that? Yeah probably, as this is almost bound to be the same people having the same dark matches because that's how this show works. At least Raw was fun this week so the highlights should be good. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Akira Tozawa vs. Drew Gulak

Gulak has been trying to move 205 Live and the cruiserweights closer to a mat based style in recent weeks. They do go to the mat to start but it involves a kick to Drew's chest and a backsplash for two. Drew bails for a breather and hides on the ramp to avoid a big dive, which just earns him a series of chops and a right hand to the face. A baseball slide drops Tozawa and a backbreaker sets up a chinlock. Tozawa shouts a lot, fights up, and grabs the snap German suplex for the pin at 4:34.

**Rating:** C+. This was better than I was expecting as Tozawa continues to look like a machine out there almost every time. There's a good chance he'll get a title match in the near future, especially if Neville retains over Aries again. Gulak has something with this anti-205 Live stuff if he can get a few people to side with him.

From Raw for the first time.

Here's Vince for the start of the second hour. Naturally the fans sing his song, drawing a big grin from the boss. A ROMAN SUCKS chant starts up but Vince talks over it (and it goes away), thanking the fans for being so passionate. Wrestlemania may be over but next week

we're having a Superstar Shake Up because it's time to shake things up. We have some very sad footage from last night, which shows Stephanie going through a table.

That's going to put Stephanie out for awhile and since we have no General Manager, it's time to hire someone new. The new GM was inducted into the Hall of Fame over the weekend...and here's Teddy Long. Teddy starts dancing until Vince shouts that it's not him. Vince: "TEDDY STOP DANCING!" It's not you!" Teddy: "It's not me?" Vince: "It's not you!" Teddy: "Well...my bad! Holla holla holla!" It's Kurt Angle of course and that's as good of an option as they really had. Angle hits the catchphrase and is already out.

Raw Part Two!

Here are Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar for a chat. Brock is a little happier than normal tonight and has allowed Heyman to tell us a bedtime story that both of their children hear. There once was a superhero named Goldberg who stood for honor and valor and all that good stuff. Then he took the Universal Title but went on a little side trip through south central Suplex City where the Beast beat him up and took his title. The happy ending: there's no more Goldberg around here ever again. Fans: "THANK YOU BROCK!"

That means Brock needs new challengers. Fans: "FINN! FINN! FINN!" Heyman suggests Seth Rollins, either Hardys or even both Hardys but let's talk about the 2 in 23-2. Yes he means Roman Reigns and history says that these two must meet. If Reigns is the big dog then Lesnar is animal cruelty. Heyman wants to do it tonight but here's Braun Strowman instead to not much of a reaction (not that surprising). Strowman wants Lesnar's attention because Brock already has his. Lesnar lays the title down in front of Strowman and says bring it but Strowman leaves instead.

Titus O'Neil vs. Curtis Axel

Of all the people you can add to the Main Event regulars, freaking TITUS??? O'Neil runs him over to start but won't do the dog bark here in Florida. A clothesline puts Titus on the floor and we take an early break. Back with Axel's comeback being stopped via a hard whip into the corner. That means it's bearhug time, followed by a suplex for two. Axel fights back with right hands and a running knee for two of his own. The PerfectPlex is easily countered though and the Clash of the Titus is good for the pin at 8:02.

**Rating:** C-. That's one of Axel's better matches ever, which is really depressing. You would think that someone would get better just by being around wrestling for so many years but it's not the case here. Axel is trying as hard as he can but it's rather hard to run with an anchor tied around your legs.

We wrap it up with a very shortened version of Finn Balor/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Kevin Owens.

**Overall Rating:** C. Like I said, thank goodness Raw was there to bail this one out. There's only so much you can do when your main event features Titus O'Neil and this show didn't know the way around that problem. There's only so much you're going to get out of this show and this week's episode was all the proof you need.

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# Monday Night Raw – April 3, 2017: HEY WE WANT.....PRETTY MUCH ALL OF THIS!

## **Monday Night Raw**

Date: April 3, 2017

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

IT'S CRAZY NIGHT! This show has a reputation for being the most over the top and often completely ridiculous show with the crowd making the night all about them. It's hard to say what we might see on here but odds are it's going to be some debuts and other major announcements, as is often the case on this show. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show, sitting in the upper deck and looking almost straight at the screen with the hard cameras on my left. On a personal note, while I was getting food before the show, for the first time ever, a fan recognized me. I'm not sure who you were but thank you very much as that made my night.

The opening video looks at the end of Wrestlemania with Roman Reigns outlasting Undertaker and spearing him over and over for Undertaker's second loss at Wrestlemania. This seemed to signal Undertaker's retirement after the match, marking the end of a nearly four DECADE career in WWE.

We open with the fans chanting for Undertaker and not letting up on it, which is the only way this should go. Some ROMAN SUCKS chants start up and slowly get louder than the pro-Undertaker crowd. Here's Roman, which is the best way they can possibly start something like this. Cole says last night might have been the last ride for Undertaker and calls him the greatest performer ever in WWE. I know he just retired but that's some strong hyperbole.

The chants start up as soon as the music stops with DELETE, F\*\*\* YOU ROMAN, DELETE, YOU SUCK, A\*\*HOLE, RO-MAN SUCKS, DELETE, SHUT THE F\*\*\* UP and GO AWAY. Reigns finally gets in five words with "This is my yard now" before dropping the mic and walking out after nearly eight minutes on screen. This was MASTERFUL with Reigns cashing in on all the hatred the fans have for him after he destroyed one of their heroes. It's not clear if this was a heel turn but if it's not, they're actually dumber than I thought.

The announcers do their standard "yeah it's weird but WE TOTALLY LOVE IT!" spiel.

Ad for Wrestlemania XXXIV in New Orleans. This probably aired seven times in two days with people getting sick of it by the end.

## Tag Team Titles: Anderson and Gallows vs. Hardy Boyz

Matt and Jeff are defending and this is one of the best things they could put on so early. The fans are going to cheer for the Hardys all night so let them get it out of their system here instead of giving them the focus all night. Anderson and Jeff start things off with the champs quickly shifting to Matt, who gets two off the Side Effect. It's WAY too early for the Twist of Fate so the champs settle for sending the bald guys to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Matt in trouble and the second WELCOME BACK chant of the match. I think we know they're back by this point. Now it's the F\*\*\* THAT OWL chant and I'm really not liking these fans turning a PG show into something this vulgar. Yeah I know there's the whole "I bought a ticket and I can say what I want" defense but what would your response be to someone going to a Disney movie and then loudly swearing the whole time?

Anderson holds Matt open for a kick to the ribs but Matt gets over for the hot tag, triggering the DELETE chants. A basement dropkick and splash of all things gets two but Gallows crotches Jeff on the top. The Boot of Doom gets two (with Cole spoiling the kickout by saying we're going to have new champions) but Matt breaks up the Magic Killer. The Twist of Fate into the Swanton retains the titles at 10:38.

**Rating:** C. Nothing all that special here but this was the absolute right call. Let Matt and Jeff go out there, soak in the cheers, and get them a clean win in a TV match. Speaking of wins, do you know when was the last time the Hardys lost a non-ladder two on two tag match? As best I can tell, it would be the WrestleCon Supershow in 2015, or over two years ago. That's an INCREDIBLE winning streak in modern wrestling and could go on for several more months.

Stills of HHH vs. Seth Rollins.

Here's Neville to basically say "HAHA I TOLD YOU SO!" There's going to be a full celebration tomorrow night on 205 Live...but here's Mustafa Ali to interrupt.



## Mustafa Ali vs. Neville

Non-title. A quick hurricanrana puts Neville down and a kick to the head puts him on the floor. Naturally that means a big dive, only to have Neville toss him into the air for a big crash down to the mat. Back from a break with the fans chanting for the beach balls, which were ALL OVER the arena at this point. There were at least ten going around at various points, which is why a headlock on the mat is getting the loudest reaction in history.

Neville stops to glare at the crowd but Ali kicks him in the face during the distraction. The rolling neckbreaker gives Ali two as the fans are chanting BEACH BALL MANIA. Graves tries to keep the focus on the match, saying the crowd is just going to make Neville even angrier. The fans boo when a security guard takes one away, which is just a second before Neville hits a hard clothesline.

With the frustration growing, Cole actually explains the BEACH BALL MANIA concept. In an attempt to get the fans watching what they actually paid for, Ali grabs a top rope Spanish Fly to put both guys down. Fans: "HEY! WE WANT SOME BEACH BALL!" Ali hits a superkick and a reverse hurricanrana, followed by a hard tornado DDT for two. The inverted 450 misses and Neville goes up, looks at the crowd, and jumps down for the Rings of Saturn and the submission instead at 10:31.

**Rating:** B. This is a great example of why I can't stand this crowd. I paid to watch wrestling and of course all the beach balls flying around are going to be a distraction. Having fun is one thing but taking over the show with something that has NOTHING to do with what you're watching is something else. If you're that bored, go spend your money on something else.

The match was great stuff though with Ali continuing to show just how awesome he can be. Give him a bit of a character upgrade and he'll be a future champion. I really liked Neville here too as instead of ignoring the beach ball nonsense, he tied it into his character who was tired of being disrespected. It's very tiresome to watch a match when something big is going on and the wrestlers have

to ignore it. Tie it into the match so things can seem a bit more real.

Vince arrives. You had to know that was going to happen.

Here's Vince for the start of the second hour. Naturally the fans sing his song, drawing a big grin from the boss. A ROMAN SUCKS chant starts up but Vince talks over it (and it goes away), thanking the fans for being so passionate. Wrestlemania may be over but next week we're having a Superstar Shake Up because it's time to shake things up. We have some very sad footage from last night, which shows Stephanie going through a table.

That's going to put Stephanie out for awhile and since we have no General Manager, it's time to hire someone new. The new GM was inducted into the Hall of Fame over the weekend...and here's Teddy Long. Teddy starts dancing until Vince shouts that it's not him. Vince: "TEDDY STOP DANCING!" It's not you!" Teddy: "It's not me?" Vince: "It's not you!" Teddy: "Well...my bad! Holla holla holla!" It's Kurt Angle of course and that's as good of an option as they really had. Angle hits the catchphrase and is already out.

Stills of Kevin Owens beating Chris Jericho for the US Title.

Here's New Day, still with no New Day Pops for purchase. Kofi and Xavier do have what appear to be ice cream cone shoulder pads though. Woods issues an open challenge and CUE TOP GUYS!

### New Day vs. Revival

Oh you know they're getting the pop of the night on this show. Dawson SHOVES THE CART OVER so you know it's serious. Woods and Dawson start things off as the beach balls are completely forgotten. Revival starts in on Xavier's arm with Dawson getting in a nasty looking crank. Graves: "That won't separate your shoulder. It'll divorce it!" The arm work continues after the break but Woods sneaks over and gets in the tag to Big E. Suplexes abound as everything breaks down. Big E. is sent outside, leaving Woods to try the Honor Roll...right into a Shatter Machine for the pin at 8:04.

**Rating:** C+. Now that's more like it! This was the debut that the

fans wanted to see and Revival got the clean pin over the biggest team WWE has produced in at least ten years. They did it in classic Revival style and it was as entertaining as it could have been given the short time frame. Woods even took the fall, which is pretty much his only in-ring role. It's also nice to have something actually happen on this show.

Post match Revival takes out Kofi's ankle.

Angle is getting his office ready (with a box of gold medals) when Enzo and Big Cass come in. Enzo: "And you can't teach that!" Angle: "Not in any college I've ever heard of." Enzo on Big Cass being tall: "And you can't teach that!" Angle looks up: "You sure can't!" Enzo: "How you doin'?" Angle: "I'm doing great! I was just inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame and now I'm the new General Manager of Monday Night Raw. How are you guys doing?"

Not too well apparently because they want a title shot. Enzo also wants to know why Goofy is treated like a human and Pluto is treated like a dog. Angle: "I have no idea what you're talking about right now." As for their title issues, Kurt gives them a #1 contenders match against Sheamus/Cesaro tonight so Cass promises to prove the two of them are S-A-W-F-T. Enzo and Cass leave as Angle realizes that's not how you spell soft. This was HILARIOUS and one of the first things I wanted to see when Angle was announced as the new GM.

Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke vs. Nia Jax/Charlotte/Emma

Yes Emma instead of Emmalina. Emma does her pose on the announcers' table and is all fired up with Graves suddenly being a huge fan. Charlotte and Dana start things off but Emma tags herself in. A low dropkick puts Dana down and it's off to Bayley for a showdown. The announcers keep talking about how Emma doesn't know who she is but thankfully shift over to her new found aggression. Bayley takes her down and rolls around Emma's back as we take a break.

Back with Bayley in trouble as the announcers talk about Nia being unstoppable at Wrestlemania. You know, until she was stopped. Bayley gets caught in the Tree of Woe for some choking but she's able to send Charlotte to the floor. The hot tag brings in Sasha for the

house cleaning, including the double knees in the corner for two on Charlotte. Everything breaks down and Bayley dives on Nia, leaving Sasha to grab the Bank Statement to make Charlotte tap at 9:14.

**Rating:** C-. I wouldn't be surprised if that was Charlotte's last match before being shipped over the Smackdown. There's nothing else for her to do on Raw and it would make Bayley look more like a conquering hero. Charlotte has dominated the roster for so long that she needs some fresh challenges and Smackdown would be just the place.

Post match Charlotte yells at Nia and is promptly laid out in what feels like a face turn for Jax. Emma gets stared down and immediately bails in a smart move.

Sami Zayn is in Angle's office and talks about wanting to cultivate a relationship with him like the one Sami had with Foley. Angle says Zayn demonstrates the three I's and thinks he'll be fine. Jinder Mahal comes in to complain about the battle royal. Kurt gets tired of the arguing and puts them in a match tonight.

Here are Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar for a chat. Brock is a little happier than normal tonight and has allowed Heyman to tell us a bedtime story that both of their children hear. There once was a superhero named Goldberg who stood for honor and valor and all that good stuff. Then he took the Universal Title but went on a little side trip through south central Suplex City where the Beast beat him up and took his title. The happy ending: there's no more Goldberg around here ever again. Fans: "THANK YOU BROCK!"

That means Brock needs new challengers. Fans: "FINN! FINN! FINN!" Heyman suggests Seth Rollins, either Hardys or even both Hardys but let's talk about the 2 in 23-2. Yes he means Roman Reigns and history says that these two must meet. If Reigns is the big dog then Lesnar is animal cruelty. Heyman wants to do it tonight but here's Braun Strowman instead to not much of a reaction (not that surprising). Strowman wants Lesnar's attention because Brock already has his. Lesnar lays the title down in front of Strowman and says bring it but Strowman leaves instead.

So that happened. I know we're getting Lesnar vs. Reigns in New Orleans whether we like it or not but I really, REALLY hope they don't announce it in advance as it makes everything until then seem like a waste of time. Let the story get there on its own and things will likely be a lot better. As far as Strowman....in theory he's next for Reigns but I don't see how you have Strowman lose to Reigns to set up Strowman vs. Lesnar, nor do I see how you have Reigns lose to Strowman for any reason at all.

Chris Jericho is confirmed to have a rematch with Kevin Owens at Payback. As for tonight though, he loves this raucous crowd and BEACH BALL MANIA IS RUNNING WILD BABY! These people are the friends of Jericho, los amigos de Jericho or the mates of Jericho. CHEER HIM ON MAN! Tonight he's starting his revenge against Kevin Owens and he'll start with the tip of Owens' finger. Last night the tip of Owens' finger saved him and do you know what that means? THE TIP OF OWENS' FINGER JUST MADE THE LIST!

Cue Owens and Samoa Joe to beat Jericho down and put him through a table. I'm sure this won't result in Jericho being pulled out of tonight's tag team match (Rollins/Jericho vs. Owens/Joe). Even if it does, that's totally different than last year's post-Wrestlemania Raw where Owens powerbombed Sami through a table to take him out of the main event. See, that took Sami out of a four way and this year is a tag match. Totally different story.

Jericho is out of the main event but Angle promises to find Rollins a new tag partner. Just start the FINN chants now.

#### Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Sheamus/Cesaro

The winners get the Hardys, presumably at Payback. Enzo is in Orlando Magic themed gear and gets an early two on Cesaro. Now we get the catchy chant of the night with "SHEAMUS AND CESARO! HEY HEY HEY!" I couldn't make it out from the stands (I heard "SHEAMUS IS AWESOME") but Cesaro chants it for a bit as well. Cass avoids a charge in the corner but gets the back of his neck snapped across the top rope.

Cesaro tries to come in for a save so Cass launches Enzo at him

instead. It works so well that he launches him at both of them again, sending us to a break. Back with Enzo getting thrown around as the Sheamus and Cesaro chants continue. Cass gets dropkicked through the ropes and it's time for Enzo to go swinging. The Sharpshooter is broken up though and it's time for the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka, only to have a Brogue Kick drop Cass. Sheamus launches Enzo into an uppercut from Cesaro for the pin and the title shot at 9:47.

**Rating:** D+. Cesaro and Sheamus have grown on me in recent weeks and a lot of that is just getting away from the Best of Seven series and the annoyance of what they were forcing us to sit through. They're actually a decent power team and this was the right call as putting the Hardys vs. Enzo and Cass would pretty easily make Enzo and Cass the heels, which is the last thing you want to do before they win the titles for the first time.

We see some Tweets from wrestlers on Undertaker's retirement.

#### Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Jinder jumps him before the bell and the referee actually bothers to ask if Sami can go. Mahal takes him down for a kneedrop and grabs an early chinlock as the OLE's start up in a hurry. Sami fights up, hits the exploder into the corner and finishes with the Helluva Kick at 2:21.

#### Samoa Joe/Kevin Owens vs. Seth Rollins/???

You know it's going to be Finn Balor, I know it's going to be Finn Balor and the crowd knows it's going to be Finn Balor, all of which I type during the entrances, capped off by.....hey look it's Finn Balor. Other than maybe Nakamura, this was the only realistic option they had and it's the right call. Thankfully the commentators are smart enough to keep quiet until Balor has been able to get in four poses. Rollins and Owens start things off with Kevin ducking a low superkick for a standoff, meaning it's off to Joe for a slugout with Seth. A quick trip to the corner is enough for the hot tag to Balor as the NXT chants start up. The fact that four former NXT Champions

(and three former WWE World Champions) are main eventing this show is an amazing sign. Owens bails from the threat of a double team but gets taken down by a suicide dive.

That's not enough for Seth as he hits a big flip dive onto both villains, only to bang up the knee and get caught by a DDT back inside. The STUPID IDIOT chants start (I would have expected them earlier) as Owens grabs a chinlock. It's back to Joe to crush the knee again as those gold tights are making me think of Savage's bad knee at Wrestlemania VIII.

Joe misses a backplash though and Rollins enziguris his way into a hot tag to Balor. Chops and kicks a go-go ensue but Owens catches him in something like a swinging White Noise for two. Rollins breaks up the Koquina Clutch and the running dropkick into the corner sets up the Coup de Grace to put Owens away at 12:12.

**Rating:** B-. Standard main event tag in front of a hot crowd. This did exactly what it needed to do as I'd assume Balor will get the shot at Owens if Jericho is off touring. You could put the title on Balor without much of an issue as Jericho vs. Owens II is about revenge instead of the title anyway. Joe vs. Rollins should be a lot of fun too.

Rollins and Balor pose to end the show, apparently burying the hatchet over Balor's wrecked shoulder.

**Overall Rating:** B+. First and foremost, this show is NOT about the wrestling and it never has been. This show is about moving things forward and surviving an insane crowd. The opening half hour was almost perfect with the Reigns stuff being as great as it could have been and the Hardys fired up the crowd even more, if that was possible. The Angle announcement and Revival debut were both very strong, as was Balor returning at the end.

All in all, the surprises worked very well, even though we knew most of them in advance. Almost nothing on here was a major surprise but that's not exactly a bad thing. WWE hit almost all of the big ideas on the checklist and gave us a really fun show. Nothing on here was really bad, Reigns was confined to the opening twelve minutes and

Angle meeting Enzo and Cass certainly didn't disappoint.

The big problem though was the announcement of the Superstar Shakeup. Basically that said "none of this matters so we'll just wait for the important stuff next week." That kept hanging in my mind all night and while it didn't kill the show, it did hold things back a good bit. Raw was a lot of fun this week though and that's what matters here.

### Results

Hardys b. Anderson and Gallows – Swanton Bomb to Gallows

Neville b. Mustafa Ali – Rings of Saturn

Revival b. New Day – Shatter Machine to Woods

Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke b. Nia Jax/Charlotte/Emma – Bank Statement to Charlotte

Cesaro/Sheamus b. Enzo Amore and Big Cass – Uppercut to Amore

Sami Zayn b. Jinder Mahal – Helluva Kick

Finn Balor/Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe/Kevin Owens – Coup de Grace to Owens

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# Monday Night Raw – April 4, 2016 (2017 Redo): Travel Packages

Since I'm ridiculously backed up due to being in Orlando, I needed something to fill in the space. Here's a fresh version of last year's post-Wrestlemania Raw to bridge the gap a bit.

## Monday Night Raw

Date: April 4, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We'll wrap up the redos with this one as I was in the building for the post-Wrestlemania XXXII Raw as well. After the previous night's exhausting Wrestlemania, it was off to the smark show of the year which kind of serves as the company's season premiere. There aren't a ton of loose ends to tie up after last night but Roman Reigns is the new World Champion. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at....oh come on you can figure this one out. If nothing else that My House song is insanely catchy. Don't let the shortness of the video fool you: the show sucked.

Cole and the announcers let us know that this show's audience is "non-traditional" but THEY'RE HAVING FUN! Which is why so many chants are called stupid! One chant that was stupid: a group of fans chanting about TRAVEL PACKAGES before the show started.

Here's Vince McMahon (in case you thought it was Vince Russo) to open things up. The fans sing No Chance along with the music, which Vince says was the same chance that Shane had last night against Undertaker. As of this morning, there is no more lockbox over his head (it doesn't make a difference as we still don't know what was in there) and no one controls him.

Last night he watched his son take a beating but only one moment really got to him: watching Shane dive off that Cell to prove a

point. After a Shane-O-Mac chant, Vince tells us to enjoy the show...and here's Shane. With Vince looking concerned, Shane calls himself the only man in the family. Shane thanks the fans and says he'll never forget last night. Naturally that means a YOU STILL GOT IT chant because the fans only have a limited set of choices.

Shane goes to leave but Vince says no one upstages him. Let the idiocy begin. Vince has often thought about how crazy it would be if Shane ran Monday Night Raw (I guess he forgot Shane running the show, albeit with Stephanie, back in 2008). The fans tell Vince to LET HIM RUN IT so the boss actually gives in, making EVERYTHING WITH THE UNDERTAKER COMPLETELY WORTHLESS.

I've heard that Shane was supposed to win until Undertaker nixed the idea, which would line up with what we're seeing here. This was stupid back then and looking back on it, this really was one of the dumbest things they've done in a long time. At least wait a few weeks and come up with something better than "eh screw the stipulations". That's some Russo level nonsense and it just so dumb.

Here's New Day for a title defense and a chat as the place just EXPLODES for them. New Day merchandise was by far and away the most popular during the weekend so it makes sense to have them here. Things didn't go well last night but Kofi got to dance with Shawn Michaels but Xavier (who now has a smaller trombone for some reason) didn't have so much luck. He took a Stunner from Steve Austin and, upon further review of the tape, Woods admits it was entirely his fault.

On a more positive note, they have the final piece of Wrestlemania Booty0's, which Woods holds up before singing Lion King's Circle of Life. The place sings along with him (as they should, though me being a diehard Disney fan has nothing to do with this opinion) before we hit all the catchphrases.

#### Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. League of Nations

New Day is defending against Sheamus and Wade Barrett. The champs easily clean house to start (as you should against losers like the League) and Kofi is tossed onto Sheamus with an accompaniment on trombone. Sheamus eventually shoves Kofi off the top so Woods runs over with the cereal for comfort. Barrett gets in a good kick to the ribs and we take a break with Kofi fighting out of a chinlock and the fans doing the Wave.

Even Sheamus joins in on it so Woods grabs the mic and says if you do the Wave, you like Sheamus. And so much for the Wave. This was the second time Woods had to do something like that as he used the same method to cut off a WE WANT ROCKSTEADY chant during the break. The fans call themselves awesome as Kofi drops Barrett and gets over for the hot tag to Big E. That means a bunch of belly to belly suplexes and the Warrior Splash for no cover. The League is knocked off the apron and a quick Midnight Hour retains the titles at 8:44.

**Rating:** C-. It's kind of amazing to think that New Day had EIGHT MORE MONTHS with the titles after holding them since Summerslam. In another note, Sheamus would be one of the people to take them off New Day and with another international partner. Not that there's any connection but I don't have anything else to talk about here.

Post match Sheamus says he's sick of losing and there's something wrong. Fans: "HOW YOU DOIN?" With an Enzo Amore chant breaking out, Sheamus Brogue Kicks Barrett off the team and out of the company. The whole team would be done in less than a month. Of course ignore the whole complaints about losing when they just won at Wrestlemania. Again, it's almost like that result was to just screw with the fans, which is the worst kind of booking.

The three members stand alone...and we've got Wyatts. An easy beatdown ensues as the fans sing about having the Whole World in His Hands. This would be the start of Bray's quickly canceled (due to injury) face turn. Why that turn has never been tried again isn't clear, but the fans are DYING to cheer for Bray and have been since he debuted. When you perform that well, it's hard to argue against them.

Vince leaves because he knows this is going to be a disaster.

#### Summer Rae vs. Sasha Banks

Before the match, Summer says her team lost but at least she didn't fail like Sasha. The place again goes nuts for Sasha's entrance, who says she's Sasha and Summer isn't. Summer gets in an early shot to set up a chinlock, only to have Sasha fight up with running knees in the corner. The Bank Statment wraps Rae up at 1:40.

#### Apollo Crews vs. Tyler Breeze

This is Crews' main roster debut and the NXT chants are out in full force. Crews speeds things up to start but eats a hard superkick for

two. Not that it matters as Crews hits the gorilla press into the standing moonsault, followed by a Toss Powerbomb for the pin at 1:57. Just a squash, but Crews is a REALLY weird callup as he doesn't really have a character. He's insanely athletic and has a great look but there's no character to him and he doesn't really have anything for people to care about. That's not his fault of course as he just needed more development.

Video of Roman Reigns and Charlotte on the Today Show.

Here's Roman Reigns and MY GOODNESS the booing is louder than it was at Wrestlemania. The announcers are right there to try and write it off as a weird crowd thing but JBL gets even worse by saying Roman FINALLY made it to the top of the mountain. You know, the three time World Champion. Not that it matters though as Reigns gets in what might be the worst line of the year: "I'm not a good guy. I'm not a bad guy. I'm THE guy." Reigns gives an open challenge for the title and here's Chris Jericho.

Chris gets straight to the point by demanding that he get the title shot after defeating the internet darling AJ Styles. Speaking of Styles, he's up next on the interruption list, only to have Kevin Owens limp out before AJ can speak. Cue Sami Zayn to fight with Owens, leaving AJ to be sent outside. A big spear drops Jericho and Reigns smiles in the boos. Of note, Sami immediately grabbed his shoulder and RAN to the back under the cover of darkness. This went nowhere but was rather scary live.

We look back at Shane being put in charge of the show.

Shane makes AJ vs. Jericho vs. Owens vs. Zayn for the #1 contendership. Reigns approves.

The announcers recap the show and tell us about last night's Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal.

#### Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

This is Corbin's main roster singles debut after winning last night's battle royal. Before the match, Corbin says the trophy is the only thing you need to know about him. Fair enough actually and the way you use a battle royal like the Andre version. Ziggler tries to duck away to start until Corbin sends him to the apron. One heck of a boot puts Dolph on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Ziggler fighting out of a nerve hold as the fans have

dueling chants about.....a beach ball. Yeah a fan brought one in and it was being batted around, completely taking the focus off of the match. You know, because that's what matters when a brand new talent is brought up and making their Raw debut. I'm sure most of them will be chanting for NXT all night long too.

Now it's a YOU SOLD OUT chant because a security guard took the ball. Ziggler makes his comeback with a Stinger Splash and the running DDT, only to charge into a massive Deep Six. They head outside with Corbin booting him into the crowd for the double countout at 11:03.

**Rating:** D. Not only did the beach ball chants waste a lot of time but THIS is how you use a Raw debut? I get that they're setting up a match later on but you can't have Corbin beat up some goof and do this on Smackdown? Ziggler getting beaten up is fine but let Corbin get a pinfall first you know?

Corbin beats Ziggler up even more and hits End of Days on the floor. Stills of Lesnar vs. Ambrose from last night.

Here's Zack Ryder for a chat, which Lillian introduces as a match. That's what would happen in a bit but the producers EXPLODED on Lillian (off camera of course) with Garcia yelling right back. On the broadcast, Cole wrote it off as Lillian being excited and thrown off by Ryder shocking the world, which is all it needs to be. Just say she assumed it was a title match but got ahead of herself. Why does that require yelling at her?

Anyway, Ryder tells the amazing story of meeting Razor Ramon as a kid and getting to hold Razor's Intercontinental Title. Last night they took another picture with Razor holding HIS Intercontinental Title. That's just awesome and was one of my favorite parts of the whole show. On top of that Ryder thanks his father, who is sitting in the front row (and is in better shape than 90% of the roster). Cue Miz to call Ryder a one hit wonder who got lucky last night. Miz yells about how that was supposed to be his night with his wife watching from the crowd. Ryder: "Sucks to be you bro." Miz issues a challenge for a title match and we're on.

Intercontinental Title: Zack Ryder vs. The Miz

Ryder is defending. Miz can only get half of the Reality Check before Ryder gets in a dropkick. A middle rope dropkick is good for

two and Ryder one ups himself with a middle rope hurricanrana. Back from a break with Ryder being sent to the floor for a big crash before Miz unloads with left hands. Ryder fights back with a middle rope dropkick (again) but gets caught with a short DDT for two.

Zack counters a suplex into a neckbreaker and the Elbro is good for two. The Broski Boot isn't allowed to connect of course so Miz drops him face first on the barricade, right in front of Papa Ryder. Oh yeah you know where this is going. Trash is talked and Zack's dad pushes him down. It's not a DQ for some reason but here's Maryse coming over the barricade to slap dad in the face. The distraction lets the Skull Crushing Finale give Miz the title at 10:58.

**Rating:** C+. Better match than I was expecting with the obvious ending. Maryse coming back turned out to be the greatest thing that could have happened to Miz, who really needed a boost just like this. They really are perfect for the roles and the fact that they're really married makes it even better. That was pretty much it for Ryder as a singles guy and really...it's not that surprising.

A lot of gloating ensues.

Owens says Sami won't leave him alone but he's on to bigger and better things. Like destroying the Roman Empire and becoming the new World Champion. Sami isn't costing him the WWE Title because tonight, the road to KO Mania II begins.

The Vaudevillains are coming. On Smackdown!

Here's the women's division with Lita standing next to the new Women's Title. She wants to do this right, which means Charlotte needs to come out here to be presented with her title. The fans immediately cut her off with HEY! WE WANT SOME BAYLEY but Cole says Bayley isn't here. You know, in case you had a reason to be interested in this segment. Charlotte actually thanks the fans for getting her here but the fans keep singing for Bayley.

It turns into a WOMEN'S WRESTLING chant which Charlotte actually seems to enjoy. Charlotte starts talking about how great her dad is and how much he helped as this turns into the heel speech you would expect. She mocks a lot of the women for being here so long while she's dominated in less than a year. Sasha and Becky walk out (Charlotte: "I didn't bank on you leaving!" with the rest of the ladies following.

Natalya is the only one left and goes into a speech about how Charlotte needs to learn respect. It was Natalya who gave Charlotte a great match at Roadblock and she has the heart of a champion. Charlotte laughs it off because the title proves that she has the better family. The fight is on and Sharpshooting ensues.

So at this point we had about ten women in the ring at once and somehow, WWE decided that we had enough for two divisions. On top of that though, NATALYA, the least interesting woman on the roster, gets the first shot at the new champ? That was a huge blow for the division and I think everyone knew it. The segment was good other than that but sweet goodness that was a bad ending. Oh and finally: can we PLEASE stop with the "my family is better than yours" stuff? It puts too much focus on the old guys, which defeats the purpose of the whole thing.

AJ says he's here to be World Champion.

The Shining Stars are coming and somehow they're still here a year later.

#### Usos vs. Dudley Boyz

Tables match. It's a huge brawl to start and in theory there are no DQ's here, as there certainly shouldn't be given how violent the match is supposed to be. JBL flat out says there's no strategy here, which means there's really not much of a point for commentary either. Or a referee. Or the match in general really.

Bubba takes over on Jey and it's What's Up, only to have Bubba say SCREW YOU instead of ordering D-Von around again. Double dives put the Dudleyz up against the announcers' table and we take a break. Back with Bubba getting superkicked onto a table as a NAKAMURA chant breaks out. I know it's the big show of the year for this nonsense but it was old five minutes into the show.

Double powerbombs are countered into a double superkick (you can guess who did what), followed by double clotheslines off the barricade. The double Superfly Splashes through the tables miss and the bell rings, which is a bit premature. Bubba throws Jey through a table for the real win at 8:57.

**Rating:** D-. This was really boring and I have no idea why this even needed to happen. The Usos beat them clean at Wrestlemania so now they lose a gimmick match the next night on Raw? Nothing to see here

and the match went on FAR longer than it really needed to. This could have been done on any other show and it really held things back here.

Sami Zayn is ready to prove everyone wrong and get to the main event when Owens comes in and powerbombs him through a table.

The Dudleyz are still out here (after yelling at fans while the lights were down for Sami's interview) but they're interrupted by the debuting Enzo Amore and Big Cass to a MEGA pop. We hit the usual catchphrases with the fans eating them up like a big bowl of.....oh if only there was a WWE themed food eaten from a bowl. Enzo thinks the Dudleyz are jealous because they're just ugly. He's even willing to punch D-Von's lazy eye straight. More insults ensue but no violence follows. Cass' spelling lesson takes us out.

More Wrestlemania stills.

Zack Ryder gets his rematch on Smackdown.

Dr. Phil is guest host next week. The place went SILENT when that was announced, as it should.

AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho vs. ???

One fall to a finish. Sami is officially out due to injury and is replaced by.....the returning Cesaro! That's your big surprise for the end of the show and I've certainly heard far worse ideas. He's a popular guy so let him come out there and give the fans something to cheer about. If nothing else we get the debut of the tearaway suit. It's a brawl to start (duh) with the Canadians being sent outside, leaving Style vs. Cesaro for a pop inducing showdown.

A big dropkick staggers Cesaro but he grabs a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to put Styles down and the show on a commercial. Back with a KO MANIA chant as Jericho works over Styles in the ring. Chris spends a bit too much time posing though and Owens has to save him from the Cesaro Swing. The greatest friendship that ever lived hadn't begun yet though so I'm not sure why Kevin would do that.

Since it's a four way match, we hit the Tower of Doom with Cesaro getting to do the powerbomb, meaning we HIT THAT CROWD SHOT BABY! Yeah they were even doing it back then. Swiss Death drops AJ for a close two and Owens gives Jericho the package piledriver slam for the same. AJ is back up for a springboard 450 for two more on Chris as Cesaro makes the save.



It's time for the Uppercut Train and you know the fans are getting behind that thing. Even Jericho comes back in to make it a three stop train. The Swing makes its return as Jericho goes spinning until Owens makes the save. Kevin's Pop Up Powerbomb gets two on Styles but Jericho gives Owens a Codebreaker for a near fall of his own.

The fans cheer for Cesaro as he and Jericho slug it out (you know you've made it if a smark crowd is cheering for you over Jericho) but Chris grabs the Walls. Cesaro fights out and reverses into a Sharpshooter but it's AJ's turn for the save via the Phenomenal Forearm. Another Codebreaker gets another two on Styles but he comes back with his Strike Rush into the Styles Clash for the pin on Jericho at 16:44.

**Rating:** B+. Yeah this is still great with the near falls and a lot of doubt about who is actually going to pull off the win. Styles getting the title shot was a great way to bring him back to the forefront after the interesting loss at Wrestlemania. Cesaro not being involved in the fall was a good idea as you don't want to kill off his momentum right off the bat. Owens vs. Sami will be fine too so this was a very well booked match.

Styles can't believe it and celebrates to end the show. This went on for a good while to really end the night.

**Overall Rating:** C. This really doesn't hold up all that well with the lack of drama for the debuts and surprises. It also reinforces the issues with the crowd, who are just never going to shut up no matter what they do. There's good stuff on here, such as Shane not coming back out for a long speech (keep the people wanting him) and the main event, but stuff like that tables match and a lot of the short matches don't work too well. It's still watchable but the big reason to care about it is gone, which makes it a louder show with an obnoxious crowd that has to be saved by a great main event. Still though, it was fun which is what matters.

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# **Wrestlemania XXXIII**

## **Preview: US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens**

All this over a list.

I want to buy this feud a sandwich. They've built this up so, so well with the List of Owens reveal being one of the best turns I've seen since.....oh geez since Batista turned on Rey Mysterio, and this was much better than that. The fact that they waited until this past week to have Jericho put Owens on the List was a great bonus for the whole thing and made it even more awesome. I don't remember the last time I liked a feud this much but it's blown everything else away as far as storytelling.

I'll take Owens to win here in the logical conclusion before they do a big, violent rematch with Owens winning again to send Jericho off to tour with Fozzy. Either way, this match has the potential to really steal the show and should be one of the better things on it, just due to how good both of them are in the first place.

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