

Smackdown – July 23, 2015: See? You Can Do It

Smackdown

Date: July 23, 2015

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso

This is an interesting show as Raw went off the air with a closed story for a change. The big story is of course the announcement of Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar....we're probably at V or VI over the years now. There's no chance either guy is on this show so we should get some new stuff set up for Summerslam instead. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jerry Lawler isn't here tonight, possibly due to his brother passing away this week.

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Sheamus has seen Dean's insanity but thinks Dean is just wanting a way out. Well tonight there's no way around the beating that he's going to receive from the next World Champion. Dang man Cena is here? You don't expect that on a Smackdown. Dean thinks Sheamus looks stupid and those are fighting words.

It's a brawl to start with Sheamus getting knocked to the floor where he easily stops a dive with a forearm to the head. Sheamus goes after him again but eats a tornado DDT onto the floor. We take a break and come back with Sheamus breaking up another tornado DDT attempt and starting in on the knee, which was hurt a few weeks back so why not. A powerbomb gets two on Dean and it's time for a half crab.

Dean gets underneath Sheamus for the break and hits the rebound clothesline as the knee is suddenly fine. That stuff gets old fast but you get used to it after awhile. Now the suicide dive hits, followed by

the standing elbow drop but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Harper is standing on the announcers' table as well and Dean goes after him, only to walk into a Brogue Kick. Back in and another Brogue Kick gives Sheamus the pin at 11:33.

Rating: C. The match was your standard brawl but there's one thing I really liked: this opened the show. Not a promo to set up the main event, not the same long promo that we've heard a dozen times this month, not trying to figure out if we're supposed to hate the Authority or be so happy that a little ray of Stephanie's sunshine chased the blues away again, and not a five minute recap of what we saw last week. It was a wrestling match to open the show and that's a very nice change of pace.

We get a comic book style recap of Stardust vs. Neville from last week.

Neville doesn't think Stardust is a supervillain because Stardust is a coward. You can't stop what you can't contain and the Altitude Era is upon us. Neville leaves and Stardust pops up on the video screen to laugh.

Neville vs. Adam Rose

Feeling out process to start with Rose hitting a quick snap suplex and putting on an early chinlock. Adam busts out a middle rope hurricanrana to send Neville outside but his suicide dive is countered with a forearm to the face. Some kicks and a moonsault set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 3:05.

Rating: D+. There wasn't much here but it's always good to see Neville getting in the ring. I know a feud with Stardust isn't much but it's nice to see him having a feud at all. This could lead somewhere for him with the superhero idea as it's one of the easiest things in the world for a heel to go after. Rose looked decent there too.

Neville poses when Stardust comes on the screen with a party hat on and a noisemaker in his mouth. He says even the sharpest arrows come crashing down. His hand is touching your hand (Hard Times reference) so be his hero.

Video on Sasha Banks where she talks about being the Boss and debuting on Raw as part of the three way feud.

Here's King Barrett to say he's the most important thing in WWE. He defeated three names in less than 24 hours and then defeated R-Truth again this past Sunday. That win told everyone that you better hit him right between the eyes because he'll take your head off. This was an old school promo with Barrett just coming out and talking about who he is and why you should care about him. I'll take that over another loss or stupid feud any day.

Here's Kevin Owens to talk about people chanting TAP OWENS TAP at him. Yeah he tapped, but Owens gave Cena the fight of his entire career. However, he isn't the one with the motto of NEVER GIVE UP. His motto is more along the lines of "live to fight another day." Owens has no issues with turning on Rusev this Monday because Rusev was too busy trying to figure out which Lana he wants to get to second base with. Cue Rusev and it's time to fight.

Rusev vs. Kevin Owens

I'm digging these heel vs. heel matches because they make sense to the story and the heels aren't buddies just because they're heels. Summer is once again dressed as Lana. Rusev goes right after Owens to start and we take a break in about thirty seconds. Back with Owens elbowing him in the face and punching the Russian out of Rusev. Owens avoids a charge in the corner and nails a superkick, followed by the Cannonball for no cover.

Instead it's a Vader Bomb for two as Owens keeps adding new stuff to his arsenal. It's chinlock time before a Codebreaker of all things gets two more on Rusev. Another chinlock slows things down until Rusev fights back with strikes and a spinning belly to back suplex. The spinwheel kick stuns Owens again, all the way to the point that he sticks his chin out for the running superkick. Rusev loads up the Accolade but Owens rolls outside for the countout at 9:39.

Rating: C. This worked while it lasted and I like that Owens' character is now someone who doesn't want to fight after talking a big game. However, this goes against the formula that made him a big deal down in

NXT. He's talented enough to make it work, but I'd like to see him beat someone up again just because he can.

Cesaro is fired up about getting to face Seth Rollins tonight because it's all about loving this business. He would drive hundreds of miles for a handshake and missed his best friend's wedding but that's what this is all about. It's time to prove that the American dream is alive and well. Owens comes up to make fun of Cesaro, saying that Cesaro took Cena to the limit but Owens beat him. Kevin says Cesaro abandoned his family but Cesaro calls him the master of abandoning because of all the matches he's walked out on. Owens is on his way to catering so Cesaro warns him not to choke like he did against Cena. Good stuff here.

Naomi/Sasha Banks vs. Bella Twins

Nikki takes Naomi to the mat to start and I think the Bellas are actually faces here. It's off to Brie, who eats a clothesline from Naomi, allowing for a tag to Sasha. Nikki comes back in for a headscissors with pushups before Brie dropkicks Sasha for two. BRIE MODE is broken up by Tamina because the power of a scream can be devastating. Brie gets pulled outside for some stomping and we take a break.

Back with Naomi stomping a mudhole in Brie before Sasha sends her back into the corner. The double knees get two as this is a very standard formula Divas tag, which you really don't see that often. Naomi puts on a chinlock as Nikki plays cheerleader on the apron. To be fair I like the Bellas as faces more, but could we please get a reason why we're supposed to care about them now, especially when it was supposed to be such a huge moment when Brie tapped out on Sunday?

Back to Naomi for a Codebreaker (with feet instead of knees) for two before slapping on another chinlock. A BRIE MODE chant gets Brie to fight up and she finally dropkicks Naomi to the floor. Nikki comes in for her clotheslines and an Alabama Slam to Naomi. Sasha breaks up a Rack Attack as everything breaks down. Brie and Sasha fight outside, leaving Nikki to Rack Attack Naomi for the pin at 13:14.

Rating: C+. Considering this was a Bellas match, I was kind of shocked at how much I liked it. The key thing for me here: this didn't feel like a

Divas match but a match that Divas in it. I could see any male wrestlers having this same match and liking it just as much, which is a major change for this division. The Bellas turning again for no apparent reason (again) is annoying but you have to accept it at this point.

The Tough Enough cast talks about why Jake Gyllenhaal is tough.

Long recap of Undertaker vs. Lesnar on Raw.

Cesaro vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Rollins bails to the floor to start before easily countering a wristlock into a gorilla press. Back up and Seth kicks Cesaro to the floor for a suicide dive as we take a break. As you might expect, we come back to Rollins holding a chinlock but Cesaro powers out and throws some suplexes. A slam into a suplex (cool move) gets two more on Rollins as the announcers compare Cesaro to Chuck Norris.

Seth comes back again with a low superkick for two but Cesaro changes things up again with a running dropkick for a near fall. Saxton: "Is there anything Cesaro can't do?" Uh, get a pin? The buckle bomb (with a nice throw) staggers Cesaro again but he counters the Pedigree into the Sharpshooter. Rollins is too close to the ropes though so it's off to a Crossface in the middle of the ring. That doesn't work either so it's a VERY high Swiss Death for two more. The Swing is broken up by a poke to the eye though, setting up the Pedigree to give Seth the pin at 13:31.

Rating: B. Good match here and I like the idea of a heel doing something as simple as poking his opponent in the eye. It doesn't have to be this big ref bump and interference ending that we always get, especially when there's something simple they can do like a thumb to the eye. Cesaro continues to be awesome and hopefully he goes somewhere instead of just being considered bulletproof when he isn't yet.

Owens comes out and gives Cesaro a Pop Up Powerbomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I liked this more than I've liked a Smackdown in a long time for one reason: this felt like a wrestling heavy show instead of the usual Raw supplement we get most of the time. The Divas got time,

the main event was good, and the worst match was barely long enough to rate. It's a good, fun show that let the wrestlers wrestle and advanced some midcard storylines. That's what a show like Smackdown should be if it's not going to be anywhere near Raw's level. Good use of the blue show this week.

Results

Sheamus b. Dean Ambrose – Brogue Kick

Neville b. Adam Rose – Red Arrow

Rusev b. Kevin Owens via countout

Bella Twins b. Naomi/Sasha Banks – Rack Attack to Naomi

Seth Rollins b. Cesaro – Pedigree

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Battleground 2015 Preview

Maybe it's just where I've been away for a bit but it doesn't feel like it's time for a pay per view. To be fair though, WWE doesn't seem to know either, because it's the day before the show and we've got a five match

card. While I'm sure there will be some fixes made and matches added, Battleground feels like a show that doesn't need to exist, but there's some stuff worth looking at. Let's get to it.

Starting with the preshow, we have King Barrett vs. R-Truth for the Crown. Now you may be asking, why is this match happening. Well that's because Vince has again fallen in love with a comedy character and thinks that it's just SO FREAKING FUNNY that it's worth putting Barrett through another mess for a story that no one cares about.

Barrett summed up the problems on Raw: why should I care if he beats Truth again when he already beat him in the King of the Ring tournament in the first place? These two have traded wins since then and the story just isn't working. Let's say Barrett wins Sunday. Where is he then? Right back where he was when he won the tournament: King, having beaten R-Truth to get there.

That is of course after all the weeks of having bad matches and stupid promos about R-Truth being KING WHAT'S UP because it's funny that Truth is crazy. This has been such a waste of Barrett and the entire tournament, but then again the whole thing was thrown together as a Network audience builder. This was a huge waste of time and I guess Barrett wins, because there's no point to putting it on Truth other than to make Vince lau....Truth is probably winning isn't he? I'll stick with Barrett but be ready to throw my remote at the TV.

I'll take Reigns and Wyatt going to a DQ to set up another Raw match. My guess is we eventually get Reigns vs. Ambrose at Summerslam, but at this point I'm thinking it's a double DQ or double countout, because Reigns hasn't failed in enough big matches yet. Wyatt needs the win, but he's needed a big win since.....December? I don't think you can count Ryback as a major win, not back then at least. I'll take the draw here, but my goodness is there anything worse than seeing these two as such meaningless acts right now?

New Day gets the belts back. Word on the street is the Players got the belts because of Titus' dad of the year award and, shockingly enough, NO ONE CARED ABOUT THAT EITHER. New Day gets the titles back here and

thankfully we're back to normal. The Players are a fine team and Titus is as professional as they get, but there's just no reason to care about them on top of the division.

It's taken me a while to write this out but I'll take Orton to win over Sheamus. Not that it's a complicated decision or anything, but it took me three or four tries to stay awake to write this out. There's no reason for this match to be happening aside from they both need something to do. Neither guy feels like anything more than an overgrown midcard act right now, even though they're both former World Champions and legitimate big stars. There's nothing to this story and the match has no heat, especially considering how many times these two have bored the fans to death. Orton wins as Sheamus has the MITB curse at the moment.

I'll go with the obvious and have Owens take the US Title. As strange as it would be to have the US Champion fighting for the NXT Title, it's clear that Owens thinks the NXT Title means something. If that's not where they go with it, there's always the option of Owens saying the US Title is more important and saying he'll do the rematch because he signed and a loss means nothing to him. Still though, Cena has nothing left to do with the title so put it on Owens, the best heel going today.

That leaves us with the main event and....just dang man. This should have been the easiest feud in the world ("You stole the Beast's title and now it is time to pay."). That's where they've kind of gone with it, but for the most part it's been about beating up the Stooges and a car for product placement. I certainly don't hate this one, but it hasn't made itself stand out.

At least there aren't currently any Authority members to bail Seth out, but whether he wins or loses, this is going to wind up being about the Authority one way or another. Why? Because that's how WWE works and there's no way around it. I'll take Seth retaining through shenanigans to drag this out. Again.

And somehow that's it. We really don't have anything else on the card to talk about, though I'm pretty sure we're going to get something between Big Show vs. Miz and maybe Stardust vs. Neville. However, that leaves out

Cesaro and Rusev, who both currently have rockets attached to their backs. I could easily see Cesaro added to the Intercontinental Title match for a vacated title, but I could also see him doing nothing more than a run-in during the US Title match.

Throw in a Divas match/segment, but there's something interesting here: yeah the NXT girls are here, but we're counting down the days until Nikki sets the record. This is where the problem: at some point she's going to have to fight one of them, and I'm not sure they can come up with two months of stalling before either A, the NXT girls lose or B, Nikki drags them down and no one cares. In other words, that whole record thing is going to threaten the entire story, but WWE would rather destroy their entire division to get rid of AJ Lee from the history books, unless they grow up and stop Nikki's reign early.

Overall, Battleground could be fun if the matches overachieve, but at some point WWE needs to be running on more than just that. There isn't a lot going on here and the big draws are the third match of a trilogy and Lesnar, who probably doesn't get the title back. Then again, this show doesn't really mean much as we're gearing up for Summerslam, where the real fun takes place.

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Smackdown – July 16, 2015: That Man Is Strong

I'll be back to the normal schedule next week so just one more early Smackdown, unless you like them early. I normally have them done before the show is on the air and could easily post them early if you prefer. Let me know which way you like me doing them.

Smackdown

Date: July 16, 2015

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Battleground and this past Monday's show saw the destruction of Kane at the hands of Brock Lesnar, meaning Seth Rollins is all alone on Sunday. My guess is that this week's show will focus on Wyatt vs. Reigns, which is all but set yet still needs a few more details. Like why Wyatt is doing anything and why he just dropped the stuff with Reigns' daughter. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Reigns to open the show. This all started at Money in the Bank when Wyatt cost him the match, but Bray isn't in his head and Bray can't break his focus. Tonight we have Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus and it's time to start a fight, but here's Bray on screen to interrupt. He asks what gave Roman the right to go after him on Monday, but Wyatt knew Reigns was there. For a moment, Bray was just like these people. For once, he saw Reigns being exactly what he should have been.

Bray saw him as a stone monument, but at Battleground, he will be the hammer that breaks the monument down. Reigns is ready to fight but Bray says this is what true fear feels like. Collect your roses gladiator

because none of them are real. What is real though is that Bray is back here with everyone Reigns cares about. He's capable of some very evil things and this game has just begun. Wyatt has been trying to bring the fire out of Reigns and knows he'll get bitten by the big dog. One day though, he'll tell the dog to sit and the dog will obey. Roman needs to go kiss the people he cares about because anyone but him.

This helped and is probably as clear of a reason as we're going to get as to why Wyatt has targeted Reigns. I'm still not clear on why his daughter is involved, but maybe the idea is that Reigns isn't what he seems and Wyatt wants to expose him as a fraud? It all started with Reigns in an ad for being a great father so maybe Bray thinks that's not the real Reigns?

New Day vs. Lucha Dragons

The champs are on commentary of course with Woods as the odd man out. Kofi flips over Cara to start but Cara does the exact same thing. Off to E. vs. Kalisto, with the latter hitting a nice springboard wristdrag/headscissors to take New Day down and we take an early break.

Back with New Day stomping in the corner and Titus thinking this would be a fun triple threat match on Sunday. Kofi hurricanranas Cara down and Kalisto gets knocked off the apron for not paying attention. The abdominal stretch keeps Cara in trouble but he finally dives over Big E. and makes the hot tag to Kalisto. Everything breaks down and the Salida Del Sol plants Big E., only to have Kofi break up Cara's swanton. The Midnight Hour ends Kalisto at 10:06.

Rating: C-. Phillips saying that the New Day is on a roll tells you how lame the division has become again in recent weeks. Assuming they win on Sunday, New Day is stuck sitting around waiting on the Usos to come back and then.....well then I have no idea where they're going. I see no reason to believe the Players keep the titles as the lame father of the year award "hype" is over so there's no reason to have Titus as a champion anymore.

New Day says they'll win on Sunday and change the chant up to "NEW! TAG CHAMPS!" The Players chase them off without violence. At least they made the match feel a little more important.

Reigns and Ambrose are ready to take care of Sheamus and Big Show because they both want to get rid of Wyatt. Dean says he hates everyone.

King Barrett vs. Jack Swagger

This is how far Barrett has fallen. Swagger rides him to the mat to start but Barrett punches him in the face a few times. The announcers of course treat this match as a joke by talking about Barrett's nose, because that's what Barrett is these days. An attempt at the Vader Bomb doesn't get to launch so Swagger slams him into the apron, only to get kicked in the ribs. The Bullhammer ends Swagger at 2:35.

Post match Truth comes out so they can shout over each other. Barrett says this has gone on long enough (amen) because he's the real King of the Ring. Truth on the other hand is just another guy who lost in the same tournament, which really isn't helping me care about this feud. Barrett promises to make Truth bow on Sunday.

Recap of Lesnar vs. Rollins, focusing on various beatdowns of both Lesnar and the car.

Cesaro runs into Kevin Owens, who wishes him luck in his match.

Rusev vs. Cesaro

This should be on pay per view but that's what Smackdown is for these days. They shove each other around to start with Cesaro getting the better of it, only to have Rusev punch him in the face to take over. Rusev loads up a suplex but Cesaro will have none of that as he reverses into one of his own. I could watch Cesaro throw people around all day.

A snap belly to back suplex drops Cesaro again but he rolls some quick Germans for a breather. Back from a break with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock and a clip of the slam into the spinout Rock Bottom from Rusev during the commercial. The uppercuts stagger Rusev and a nice dropkick puts him on the floor. There isn't much to talk about here as this is quite the back and forth power brawl so far.

Back in and the spinwheel kick stops Cesaro cold but he comes right back with a Neutralizer attempt. Rusev backdrops him down though and nails a

superkick. The Accolade doesn't work either though, setting up a USA chant. Jimmy: "I know what's about to happen King!" They head outside again where Cesaro charges into another superkick. Jimmy: "I didn't know that was about to happen King!" Rusev goes up top but dives into an "uppercut" (barely connected and looked awkward), setting up the Neutralizer to give Cesaro the pin at 12:40. Cesaro is the second person to ever pin Rusev in WWE.

Rating: B. Now THAT is more like it. This was treated as a big deal and actually felt like one with the commentators pointing out that Rusev has never been pinned on Smackdown (or on TV ever I believe). Cesaro comes off like a big deal, but at the moment he isn't scheduled to be in action at the pay per view. It's a shame that another bald power guy who happens to hold a title isn't injured, leaving a spot open for a title match that Cesaro could say, win on Sunday, leaving him to do this every week on Smackdown like Daniel Bryan was scheduled to do.

Cesaro jumps into the crowd to celebrate.

Sheamus says Sunday is just another day at the office. Tonight he gets to team with a giant and he hopes Orton is watching the beating that Ambrose and Reigns receive. What is WWE's obsession with Sheamus vs. Orton? They've never had anything resembling a good match so they keep getting pushed because they look like a good match on paper? To be fair it wouldn't be the first time WWE has done something because it sounded good and continued to do so after it failed time after time.

Stardust vs. Neville

Rematch from Raw where Neville lost in what is being billed as a battle of comic book characters, complete with comic page backgrounds on the recap. Stardust drops him with a quick forearm, only to be sent to the floor for the Asai moonsault. Back in and Stardust gets caught holding the ropes on a sunset flip, allowing to pop back up with a victory roll for the pin at 2:20. The good vs. evil concept works and I like Neville being treated as a superhero, but the matches aren't lighting anything on fire, let alone the world.

After a break, Neville says his strategy was just to wait for his window

of opportunity to open and then strike. Stardust decks him and says prepare for turbulence during the Altitude Era.

Long recap of the Divas' segment from Raw. It still focuses on Stephanie and therefore it's still not as good as it could be. It's still great, but it shouldn't have been about her.

Sasha/Tamina/Naomi say it's finally fair because the odds are even. Sasha says it's their time to run this division. Naomi: "We bad." They're the trifecta and they're not here to make friends or play nice.

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus

Dean rides Sheamus to the mat to start but Sheamus knees him in the back to take over. That goes nowhere as Dean runs Sheamus over and knocks Show to the floor, setting up the standing elbow drop to both. We come back from a break with Reigns coming in to face off with Big Show because IT WILL NEVER DIE! It's quickly back to Dean to hammer on Big Show in the corner but Sheamus gets in a shot to take over as we're firmly in the Smackdown main event formula.

Show punches him in the ribs a few times, which the announcers equate to drowning. The Final Cut gets two and makes me remember that the Final Cut used to be a move. An elbow finally misses and it's a double tag to Reigns and Sheamus with the former cleaning house as you would expect. Big Show offers a distraction though, allowing Sheamus to get two off White Noise. Dean's suicide dive is caught by Big Show but the chokeslam through the table is countered into a DDT to put everyone down again. Reigns wins a slugout with Sheamus and hits the Superman Punch but Wyatt comes in for the DQ at 13:52.

Rating: C-. Dull but fine match here as we were just waiting for Bray to run in. I do however like that no one actually jobbed three days before a pay per view because there's no logical reason to have someone get pinned going into a major match. Also, how nice was it to see someone stay down from a DDT for a change? It was a big spot and they treated it like one for a change. That's a rare delicacy, as sad as that really is.

Overall Rating: C+. This is the kind of show they needed to shore things

up before Battleground. The World Title match has long since been set so tonight was mostly about setting up everything else, but I'm curious to see where they go with the Intercontinental Title situation. You would think Neville vs. Stardust would be added to the pre-show, but I can't accept the idea of Cesaro not being on the main card. He's earned a spot doing something there and if he's left off for something stupid, it's going to be a shame. The Divas have to get something in there too so Sunday could look very interesting.

Results

New Day b. Lucha Dragons – Midnight Hour to Kalisto

King Barrett b. Jack Swagger – Bullhammer

Cesaro b. Rusev – Neutralizer

Neville b. Stardust – Victor roll

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Sheamus/Big Show via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

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Beast in the East: The Land of the Wrong Main Event

Beast in the East

Date: July 4, 2015

Location: Ryugoku Sumo Hall, Tokyo, Japan

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

This is one of those times where the WWE Network shows how amazing it really is. Instead of a pay per view or TV show, they've basically sent cameras to film a major house show and we get to watch it because we're lucky that we have the Network in our lives. The main draw is of course Brock Lesnar in a rare match as he faces Kofi Kingston in what could be a lot of fun. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the only two things that matter: Finn Balor vs. Kevin Owens and Brock Lesnar. Does anything else matter?

It's a really basic set with a short aisle and a square Titantron. I like that.

Neville vs. Chris Jericho

That's quite the opener. The fans are mainly behind Jericho but the LET'S GO NEVILLE chants sneak in there. Feeling out process to start with Jericho working on a wristlock but getting sent out to the floor for his efforts. Back in and we hit a bow and arrow hold on Neville, only to have him flip over into a cover for two.

They're working a nice technical style to start here. Cole talks about their histories and my mind is blown as we hear about Dragon Gate and FMW on WWE programming. Back up and Neville tries some flips, only to be sent out to the floor. The springboard dropkick puts him down again and the fans are eating up some Canadian hero.

We hit the chinlock back inside as Jericho is working a very simple heel style while still being a face for the crowd. An enziguri gets two on

Neville. Cole: "And now Neville may be the one heading back to the locker room." So is Jericho just going to stand out there if he wins? It's not the worst idea in the world but as usual, Cole doesn't think before he speaks. Neville fights back up and goes to the top but Jericho is right there waiting to knock him down. Very nicely done there as you can see the story they're telling here.

Jericho's superplex is countered but he has to roll through a Red Arrow attempt. A try at a hurricanrana goes even worse as Jericho counters into the Walls for a very solid reaction from the crowd. The ropes are quickly grabbed though and Neville hits a quick dropkick and standing shooting star for two. Jericho forearm him down and hits the Lionsault for the same. The Codebreaker connects but Jericho takes his time covering so we keep going. Neville pops back up with the delayed German and a superkick but the Red Arrow hits knees, setting up the Liantamer (yes Liantamer) for the submission at 16:13.

Rating: B. Huh? They spent the entire match setting up Neville's big comeback to beat Jericho and then they have him win? I'm not sure on that one but at least Neville looked great in there. I was really digging the story they were going with here Jericho being one step ahead of Neville and cutting him off at every turn while treating him as someone beneath him with all of his cockiness. Good match with a questionable result but the fans dug the heck out of the Liantamer so points for giving them something to cheer for. Jericho was the heel here, but it was very basic at best.

Brock is here.

Divas Title: Nikki Bella vs. Tamina vs. Paige

Nikki is defending and it could be interesting to hear how the fans treat this one. Cole, ever the genius, calls the former Women's Champion Bull Nakana (it's Nakano, as Byron Saxton corrects him. Yes, Byron Saxton is the smart one on this team). Paige takes over to start but actually works with Nikki to suplex Tamina. You know, because Tamina is so big that you can't suplex her.

Nikki takes over as you can hear some very loud spots being called. The

champ loads up a superplex but the referee is nice enough to tell Tamina to get back in so she can do the Tower of Doom. Tamina gets sent outside again though because she really has no reason to be here other than likely taking the fall later. The Rampaige gets two on Nikki because she killed that move during one of their title matches. It's Tamina in again though with a superkick to Paige but Nikki rolls away from the Superfly Splash, setting up the forearm to retain at 7:13.

Rating: C-. This was fine and basically a Raw Divas match. Nikki is pretty clearly getting the Divas Title record because it's going to make us forget about AJ Lee or something like that, because only WWE really cares about these things. You can see the other Divas having to take it back a notch to let her keep up, but Nikki is a lot better than she used to be.

Brock Lesnar video, which might as well be Kofi's last rites.

Kofi Kingston vs. Brock Lesnar

Just Kofi here and surprisingly no Heyman. For some reason I don't see him as being a big deal in Japan. Kofi is smart enough to bail to the floor to start and we're told that New Day's tag match took place before the show went on the air. I was wondering how they were going to be able to fit the whole seven match card in two hours, but did anyone really need to see New Day vs. Lucha Dragons? Cole mentions Brock being the IWGP Heavyweight Champion, which is always interesting to hear in WWE.

The chase is on for a few seconds but the inevitable beating quickly begins. Kofi's cross body works as well as you would expect it to work and a dropkick to the back just annoys Brock even more. Kofi flips out of a German and goes after the knee for as much effect as it's going to have. There's the first German though and the Japanese fans chant SUPLEX CITY. German #2 makes Kofi's hair bounce in a good bit. The fans try to cheer for Kingston so Brock just destroys him with the F5 for the pin at 2:58. This was exactly what it should have been.

Brock throws in a few more Germans because he can, followed by some F5's to an invading New Day. Again, this is exactly what it should have been.

In case you're wondering about the other two advertised matches, Cesaro beat Diego by submission and the Lucha Dragons pinned the New Day in dark matches.

Quick recap of the NXT Title match, which should be main eventing but instead we're getting a lame tag match because that's how WWE works. Anyway, Finn Balor made his name in Japan and is coming back home as the Demon to take the title from NXT Champion Kevin Owens. Kevin simply said it's not going to happen.

NXT Title: Finn Balor vs. Kevin Owens

We get the Demon entrance and oh yes it's still glorious. For a bonus, the camera changes to an arena shot at the crescendos of the music. To make it feel even more special, we get the full on flower presentation from geisha girls (Owens throws his into the crowd of course) and streamers for both guys. Get this through your head ROH: doing the same thing for every match doesn't make it feel more special. Hideo Itami is shown in the front row and we're ready to start. Balor has more paint than ever with his face, torso and left leg covered.

Balor charges at the bell and loads up the Coup de Grace in the first ten seconds. Owens rolls outside so Balor nails a big dive as the NXT chants start up. He tries to bail again and eats a baseball slide as Balor is all over him. Back in and Owens hammers away to take over for the first time. Owens: "AND THAT'S WHY I'M THE CHAMP!" We hear more of Balor's accomplishments in New Japan as Owens takes some bows.

It's off to Chinlock City before a forearm breaks up Balor's springboard. The slow pace is working for Kevin here and it fits him very well. Finn beats the count back in but takes the backplash for two. Back in and Owens snapmares him down and runs the ropes...before stopping for a chinlock. Owens: "Are you not impressed? I don't care. I hate this country and all its stupid people!" Balor fights back again with a middle rope forearm for two so Owens does Cena's finishing sequence, complete with an attempted AA.

Balor is afraid of a lawsuit over gimmick infringement (only Kurt Angle can steal that many finishers) and slips out twice in a row. Bloody

Sunday is teased (and the fans gasp) but it's a Pele Kick to put Owens down instead. Owens takes a big flip dive and a top rope double stomp to the back, followed by a reverse Bloody Sunday (not called that of course) for a VERY close two. The Coup de Grace misses though and Owens' Cannonball gets two. The package piledriver slam gets the same but Balor hits a quick Sling Blade.

Another Coup de Grace is countered so Balor kicks him in the head and FINALLY connects with the stomp...for two. Dang I thought that was it. Owens can't hit the swinging fisherman's superplex so he settles for a middle rope Regal Roll for two. That looked great. Kevin's Swanton hits knees and the real Bloody Sunday gets an even closer two. They're trading bombs here and it's getting awesome. Owens makes the eternal mistake of slapping a hero in the face and saying the hero can't beat him. Balor dropkicks him into the corner, hits a running corner dropkick and a second Coup de Grace for the title at 19:30.

Rating: B+. Was there ever any doubt that this was going to be awesome? Owens is one of the best heels that I've seen in years and he does everything he can do to make you hate him. The fact that he can go as well as he does in the ring makes him even better, which is saying quite a bit as he's that good as a character.

Tatsumi Fujinami comes in to congratulate the new champion. Owens of course refuses a handshake because he's a true heel.

Kane/King Barrett vs. John Cena/Dolph Ziggler

Here's a match that no one wants to see because it's lame even by house show standards and WWE didn't think this stuff through. And Lana isn't even here, though to be fair she wouldn't make sense out there with Cena. Ziggler shoulders Barrett down to start so it's off to the power guys, meaning Kane gets to bore main event crowds in a new country. Cole: "Cena has restored credibility to what many would admit was a rather stagnant United States Title." Oh yeah Vince isn't listening.

Cena slugs away at Kane for no effect, just as he's done about 194 times over the years. Maybe if we're lucky Kane will break a hole in the ring and be a demon/monster again. Barrett chinlocks Cena before it's back to

Kane, who bores the announcers so much that they start name dropping Japanese wrestlers and co-promoted shows. Cole: "It's amazing to know that COO HHH is watching this show live." No Cole, it isn't.

Barrett comes back in for some big right hands as the announcers keep trying to find ANYTHING to talk about here. Another Barrett chinlock slows things down even more but Cena comes back with an AA to a very limited reaction. Kane breaks up the tag but can't hit a chokeslam, so Cena, ever the genius, tries an AA. Since it's against Kane though, the powers of history and Cena's strength don't work because Cena can usually do that on Henry and Big Show but can't handle the 100lb lighter man.

ANOTHER chinlock makes the match drag on even further but Barrett misses an elbow to finally allow Ziggler to get the hot tag. Dolph cleans house...and gets taken down again so this match can keep going for reasons I do not understand. Just let Cena AA Barrett for the pin already. We hit the double arm stretch on Dolph before Winds of Changes is countered into a crucifix for two. The FIFTH chinlock of this match is followed by Barrett's apron knees and yet another chinlock.

Winds of Change stops Ziggler again and Kane does the old Arn Anderson drop down onto the back until he crotches himself. Now usually that would mean a hot tag, but why do that when you can have Kane hit a big boot and a double back elbow from the heels to keep this going? The chokeslam is countered and Ziggler finally hits the jumping DDT for the hot tag. Cena AA's Kane with ease (because this match has erased the last ten minutes from history) and hits another on Barrett for the pin at a mind numbing 23:52.

Rating: D. The match wasn't even horrible but you could have cut out at least ten minutes of this and done the exact same match. Rusev would have made a lot more sense than Barrett but for some reason they didn't change this match to ANYTHING else. The time was the real problem here as it went on forever and the chinlocks killed any interest there might have been here.

A big celebration ends the show. Cole: "You and I actually trended on Twitter tonight!" Is there really any other way to end this? Thankfully

the last shot of the show is Balor holding up the title.

Overall Rating: B. Here's the thing: this show had two goals to take care of: Brock Lesnar being all destructive and a good NXT Title match with Balor getting the belt. They nailed those two things to near perfection, so anything else was a bonus. Luckily there was a good opener and a fine Divas match, but that main event killed a lot of the energy the show had. They really should have aired one of the other matches in its place, because that was the completely wrong choice to end the show. This should have ended with Balor pinning Owens, not a lame tag match. Still though, really fun stuff for a glorified house show.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Neville – Red Arrow

Nikki Bella b. Paige and Tamina – Forearm to Tamina

Brock Lesnar b. Kofi Kingston – F5

Finn Balor b. Kevin Owens – Coup de Grace

John Cena/Dolph Ziggler b. Kane/King Barrett – AA to Barrett

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New Column: From Days Gone By

I ramble about character development for a few pages.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-days-gone/36486/>

WWE Airing Fourth of July Tokyo Show On WWE Network

And the card is STACKED. This might be better than Payback.

- * Lucha Dragons vs. Los Matadores
- * **Divas Title Match:** Nikki Bella vs. Paige vs. Naomi
- * **Tag Team Title Match:** New Day vs. Tyson Kidd & Cesaro (this may have to be changed due to Tyson Kidd's injury)
- * Chris Jericho vs. Neville
- * Brock Lesnar vs. Kofi Kingston
- * John Cena & Dolph Ziggler vs. Kane & King Barrett
- * **NXT Title Match:** Champion Kevin Owens vs. Fin Balor

This should rock, though I wouldn't be surprised if they changed Lesnar's opponent to Jericho.

On top of that, how awesome is the Network? WWE can just throw this kind of thing on there as a special with no clearance or anything like that. They're doing it because they can and we get a cool show. That's so awesome.

Elimination Chamber 2015: The Future Is Here

Elimination Chamber 2015

Date: May 29, 2015

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Jerry Lawler

It's another pay per view just two weeks after Payback but the card has been put together fairly well this time. The main event this time is WWE World Champion Seth Rollins defending against Dean Ambrose, plus the Tag Team Titles and Intercontinental Title being decided inside the Chamber, both for the first time ever. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Zack Ryder vs. Stardust

Bonus match. Ryder had a decent match against Cena on Monday so it's nice to see him get a PPV spot, even if it's something like this. Stardust hits some shoulders to start but Zack punches him to the floor for a quick baseball slide. Back in and the announcers talk about the World Title match as Stardust cranks on the arm. That goes nowhere so let's talk about Love Boat.

Ryder fights back up as the announcers transition into a discussion of Arrow's Stephen Amell wanting to fight Stardust at some point. JBL promises us a new move from Stardust called the Queen's Crossbow (Arrow reference), which winds up being Cross Rhodes and it puts Ryder out at 5:53.

Rating: D. Well so much for Ryder. He had a nice little comeback and the fans liked him, but we need to keep Stardust strong for a match with a celebrity which is probably coming at Summerslam. Nothing match here and that's the problem with pre-show matches. Ryder could be very good in a midcard role but this is what we're stuck with instead. Joy indeed.

It's time for MizTV with special guest Daniel Bryan. We look at Bryan vacating the title and Miz said that was hard even for him. In his time away, Bryan has written a book but his career isn't over. Miz thinks he can help Bryan with marketing and merchandising and it's only going to cost him 10% of the profit.

Bryan passes but promises he'll be back. Miz wants to slap him in the face but knows he can't so he has some advice for Bryan....which we don't hear as Bryan thinks it's going to be boring. Therefore, he's brought someone who also thinks Miz is boring: Axelmania and Macho Mandow. House is quickly cleaned and the good guys celebrate. Nothing to see here as it was just a big commercial for Bryan's book.

The opening video sets up both Chamber matches with a focus on the structure itself. Owens vs. Cena gets some hype as well.

Tag Team Titles: Lucha Dragons vs. Ascension vs. Los Matadores vs. Prime Time Players vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd vs. New Day

Inside the Elimination Chamber, no tags required, New Day is defending, all three champions will be allowed in and we have four minute intervals. Two teams start and one more enters every minute. As the name suggests, it's elimination rules and the last team standing wins the titles. Lucha Dragons and Ascension get things going (these teams can never escape each other) with the Dragons hammering on the power guys as fast as they can but Ascension starts slugging Cara down in the corner.

Sin escapes and throws Kalisto up onto the New Day pod but they try to pull him down inside. Cara gets slammed down but Kalisto kicks both Ascension members down, allowing Sin Cara to get up and hit a HUGE Swanton off a pod to crush Viktor. Kalisto loads up a dive of his own but New Day pulls him down to break it up, giving us New Day doing the LUCHA dance. Cesaro and Kidd are in next and Cesaro starts busting out the European uppercuts, including Tyson launching Konnor into Swiss Death for two.

Kalisto is still on top of the pod until Cesaro superplexes him down and Kidd adds a springboard elbow drop for two with Cara having to dive in for a save. Only Kidd and Cesaro are on their feet and Kidd slaps the

Sharpshooter on Viktor but Konnor breaks it up. The La Mistica mat slam plants Konnor as Lawler calls JBL JR by mistake. Cara powerbombs Kidd as Kalisto is on top of the Prime Time Players' pod.

Los Matadores, with Torito on top of their pod, are in third with the bull hitting a good looking hurricanrana on Konnor. During the entrance, Kalisto has climbed to the top of the Chamber itself and drops down onto everyone for one of the biggest crashes (or at least the highest) I've ever seen.

Torito gets thrown into Fernando, setting up the Fall of Man on Diego for the first elimination. Did anyone buy Los Matadores as a real threat anyway? Kalisto, thankfully able to walk, climbs the corner but gets pulled down as well for another Fall of Man to get rid of the Dragons. There goes my pick of course. So we have Ascension vs. Kidd/Cesaro at the moment but the Prime Time Players are added...with Ascension nailing them as soon as their pod opens.

Titus fights back and throws both guys into the ring so Young can hit his gutbuster on Viktor for a quick elimination. Things settle down a bit with Titus suplexing Young onto both guys for two, but Cesaro pops up and drills O'Neal with a clothesline. Cesaro loads Young up for a gutwrench superplex but Titus adds a powerbomb to make it a Tower of Doom for two. New Day comes in to complete the field but Cesaro and Kidd are all over them with a triple suplex.

Things get smart in a hurry as Cesaro and Kidd throw Woods into the pod and shut the door to even things up. The Swing into the dropkick knocks Kofi silly but Young sneaks in to roll Cesaro up for the elimination. It's the Prime Time Players vs. New Day for the titles and Big E. gets Woods out of the pod to make it 3-2. New Day stomps Titus against the chamber wall and get his head through the chain.

Young fights back and sends Big E shoulder first into the pod with his head hitting the pod for good measure. Everyone is down but Titus frees himself and starts throwing Big E. into the wall. Xavier gets the same treatment and the gutbuster takes out Kofi for two. Big E. is back up and suplexes Darren on the cage floor, only to walk into a powerslam from

Titus. Not that it matters though as Trouble in Paradise sets up a triple pin to retain the titles at 19:34.

Rating: B. This was a lot of fun and the best choice they had on the card for an opener. New Day winning will be worth it for the victory promo alone and the more I think about it, the more I like the booking. Any team can say they haven't gotten a fair shot at them since it was 3-2 so this doesn't close all the doors for challengers. I love this protecting the losers booking they've had lately and it helps so much in places like this.

Rusev is out of the Chamber with a broken foot. No replacement has been announced yet.

Ziggler is getting ready when Lana comes up. Tonight isn't about showing Rusev up but about getting the title around Ziggler's waist. Dolph says that after he wins the title, maybe it can be about them.

Divas Title: Nikki Bella vs. Naomi vs. Paige

No one is allowed at ringside. Nikki is defending after Paige won a battle royal a few months back but was laid out by Naomi. The champ is quickly taken to the floor and thrown into the announcers' table, leaving Paige to hit her clotheslines on Naomi. Nikki is quickly back in with a facebuster for two on Paige. The Alabama Slam plants Paige again but Naomi rolls Nikki up for two.

Naomi starts cleaning house and loads Paige up for a belly to back superplex, only to have Nikki come in for a Tower of Doom. The Rack Attack to Paige is broken up with a Rear View for a near fall with Paige making the save. Naomi heads to the corner but gets caught in an electric chair from Paige, only to be countered into a reverse hurricanrana. It didn't go smoothly but it could have been a lot worse. Not that it matters as Nikki Rack Attacks Naomi to retain at 6:05.

Rating: C. What was I thinking to question Nikki's title reign of awesomeness that is TOTALLY better than Trish and Lita's reigns combined? The match was fairly good but again, there's only so much you can do other than cram in spots with just six minutes. I have no idea where they

can go next with Nikki aside from another Brie feud or facing an NXT callup.

We recap Kevin Owens vs. John Cena. Owens answered a Cena open challenge a few weeks back but said he already had the prize he wanted in the NXT Title. He got in a surprise powerbomb on Cena and stepped on the US Title to show how big of a jerk he was. This set up a showdown tonight in a champion vs. champion match.

Kevin Owens vs. John Cena

Alright WWE. This is your chance. You can elevate someone or go with the same old stuff. Owens is very fired up to be in there and actually doesn't drop to the floor at the bell as is his custom in NXT. A quick shoulder puts Owens down but he takes Cena into the corner and puts a boot in his face. Cena gets punched to the apron so Kevin can rip at his face like a villain should.

The fans chant for NXT and we hit the chinlock. Cena powers up into an AA attempt but Owens calmly escapes and hits a DDT for two. Owens opts to just punch Cena in the face (I love it when people do that) for a bit before a backsplash connects for two more. Back up and Kevin tries a swinging Rock Bottom but Cena counters into a crucifix, only to have Owens slam him down in a kind of Samoan drop for another near fall. The Cannonball gets the same and Owens says it's time for Johnny boy to give up.

The pop up powerbomb is countered with a leapfrog and Cena initiates his finishing sequence. Cena loads up the AA but gets countered into the pop up powerbomb for a close two, stunning Owens. Kevin gets crotches on top but headbutts Cena down, only to miss a moonsault of all things. The AA gets two (take a shot!) and both guys are down. Owens nails a superkick and tries his own Five Knuckle Shuffle (because he's that awesome) but Cena pulls him down into the STF.

Cena tries to pull him back to the middle but Owens kicks him away and hits an AA of his own (good one too) for another near fall. Both guys are down again and it's Cena up first for the two off the top rope Fameasser. Cole calls that patented, but I'm not sure Cena ever filed that

paperwork. Back up again and Owens loads up the package piledriver (his pre-WWE finisher) but slams Cena to the side instead of dropping him on his head.

Kevin starts talking more trash before winning a slugout, only to get caught in the springboard Stunner for two. Frustration is setting in so Cena takes him up top for a superplex, only to have Owens counter into a spinning superplex of his own for two. Owens runs to the top for a Swanton for two more and now Kevin is frustrated. Cena nails that big running clothesline and Owens is rocked. John goes for another but walks into the pop up powerbomb for the completely clean pin at 20:03.

Rating: A. My jaw dropped on the pin. This is EXACTLY the way they should have gone as Cena hit him with the best and Owens pinned him in the middle of the ring. The key thing here is Cena isn't going to lose a thing out of this as he'll be fine in about two minutes. Owens on the other hand looks like the biggest new deal in years and couldn't get a bigger rub if they tried. Great, great stuff here and I loved the booking so much.

Owens says he debuted on Raw a few weeks back and started a fight, but tonight he finished it. He has some veteran advice for Cena: it's time for him to go because his time is way up and THE CHAMP IS HERE!

Pre-show panel chat.

Bo Dallas vs. Neville

Neville has a bad knee coming in, partially thanks to Dallas. The knee is fine enough for Neville to do his flips out of the corner before sending Bo to the floor to avoid a Red Arrow attempt. That's fine with Neville as he hits a huge moonsault to the floor. Back in and Neville puts on a chinlock (rare sight for a good guy) but Bo gets to the ropes ("LET ME GO!"). He offers peace but starts elbowing Neville in the face and gets two off a running forearm.

Off to a cravate on Neville to slow things way down as the announcers talk about football from the 1960s. Back up and Bo elbows him in the head, only to be sent out to the floor. Bo's stunned look is great.

Neville comes back with kicks to the head and a running forearm, followed by a standing shooting star for two. The Bodog is countered and the Red Arrow connects for the pin at 9:07.

Rating: C-. Nothing great here as it was basically a long TV match. Neville winning was the right call as Bo can be back off another cheesy promo, but Neville gets a nice push with a win he should have gotten. The knee didn't go anywhere, but at least there was a story coming into the match.

Reigns and Ambrose are in the back when HHH comes in and bans Reigns from ringside. If Reigns interferes, Ambrose will be disqualified. You mean like in any match?

The Chamber is lowered.

Intercontinental Title: Sheamus vs. Ryback vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. King Barrett vs. R-Truth vs. ???

The title is vacant coming in due to Daniel Bryan vacating it due to injury. There are four minute intervals again and Rusev's replacement is.....Mark Henry. Bray Wyatt had been rumored but I like this better as Wyatt isn't likely winning so why give him another loss? Ziggler and Barrett get things going. They trade rollups to start but Barrett shrugs him down and puts Dolph on the top rope for a kick to the ribs.

We hit a chinlock on Dolph for a bit before he realizes this is the freaking Elimination Chamber and fights back with his dropkick and neckbreaker for two. Barrett sends him into the cage and talks a lot of trash until R-Truth is in third. The King is smart enough to jump Truth before he can get out of the pod and stomps him down. He kicks Truth and Ziggler in the face to keep control but Truth gets back up for the spinning forearm and ax kick.

Barrett rolls away from the cover but Ziggler is back up with a kick to the face for two. Back up and Barrett drives Ziggler through a pod wall, freeing Mark Henry to come in before his entrance. There's nothing the referee can do because it's no disqualification, and likely because the show is threatening to run long and they need to save some time. Ryback

comes in a few seconds later and runs Henry over for two. Henry stands around as Barrett plants Ziggler with Wasteland, only to break it up at two like the schmuck that he is.

Back up and the parade of finishers eliminates Barrett first because OF COURSE IT DOES! The four in the ring pair off with Ryback stomping Ziggler into the corner and Henry doing the same to Truth. Sheamus is supposed to be in last but the door won't open. Ryback, Truth and Ziggler trade rollups as they try to fix the door before Henry gets triple teamed. Shell Shock gets rid of Truth and a very delayed suplex plants Ziggler.

Ryback's Meat Hook is countered by a superkick and all three are down. With all three down, Sheamus takes out the Celtic cross that he had put in the door to keep the door stuck shut. Well that was smart. A Brogue Kick gets rid of Henry in a hurry and we're down to three. Ziggler counters a suplex into a small package for two but Sheamus counters the running DDT. The second attempt gets two but a quick Brogue Kick gets us down to Sheamus vs. Ryback.

They trade powerslams with Ryback getting the better of it and driving shoulders to the ribs in the corner. The Meat Hook doesn't work and Sheamus tries to get back in his pod. Ryback picks him up before he can get in, only to have Sheamus counter into White Noise on the cage floor for two. The ten forearms are countered but Sheamus hits the Regal Roll on the cage again. A Brogue Kick is countered into a powerbomb into the ring and Shell Shock gives Ryback his first title at 25:06.

Rating: C+. Well that was a surprise. I didn't like the action as well as I liked the first one but it was still a fun match. They've set up Ryback as never having won a title so this was a good way to pay that story off. Ryback has been pushed pretty strong since returning (ignore the loss at Payback) and this was the right call for a step up.

Daniel Bryan congratulates Ryback and presents him with his new title.

We look at Owens pinning Cena earlier tonight. The rematch is official for Money in the Bank.

Dolph Ziggler, Neville, Roman Reigns, Randy Orton, Kofi Kingston and Sheamus are official for the Money in the Bank ladder match. More will be announced later.

We recap Ambrose vs. Rollins. The theme is that Ambrose made a bad decision by trusting Rollins in the Shield but tonight no one can help him, including his mommy and daddy.

WWE World Title: Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose

Dean is challenging but has to deal with Kane and the Stooges at ringside. Rollins grabs a headlock to start but Dean counters into an armbar. Back up and the champ stomps away in the corner until Dean goes back to the arm to take over again. Dean drapes him over the middle rope for a Fameasser but the Stooges offer a distraction so Seth can crotch him into the Tree of Woe.

A huge top rope double stomps gets two on the challenger and Rollins takes over. We hit the chinlock for a bit followed by a clothesline to put Dean back down. Dean comes back with a sitout Tesshocker (belly to back suplex but he slams Rollins face first instead of dropping him back) for two. The Stooges pull Rollins to the floor but Dean dives through the ropes to take everyone out. Back in and Rollins tries to counter a superplex into a sunset bomb, only to have Dean nail a Cactus Clothesline to put both guys outside again.

More Stooges interference lets Rollins take over again and the top rope knee (really a shin) to the head gets two. Dean finally comes back with a tornado DDT (second person tonight to use that) and the running dropkick against the ropes. A clothesline turns Rollins inside out for two more and the flying standing elbow gets the same.

The Rebound clothesline is countered by a clothesline from the champ and a suicide dive puts Dean down again. Back in and the buckle bomb is countered with a clothesline (we get it) out of the corner but Dean opts to dive on Kane and the Stooges. The referee gets bumped and Dean nails Dirty Deeds, drawing in another official for the pin at 21:48. Lawler: "This may start a new Attitude Era." Oh shut up.

Rating: C. I don't buy for a second that this is going to stand so I'm not going to bother treating this very seriously. This felt like a long Raw match instead of something worth watching, and the ending is clearly there to set up a rematch at Money in the Bank. The match was decent but it had the recurring problem of all WWE pay per views: you don't bother caring about the meat of the match because you're just waiting on the wacky finish.

And of course it doesn't count because the first referee says the Stooges pulled him to the floor for a DQ. Dean gets beaten down but Reigns comes down the ramp for a surprise and beats everyone up. Dean and Roman leave with the belt to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked the show for the most part but this could have been put in a different order to make things flow better. Swapping the Chamber matches would have helped a lot and having Owens vs. Cena later in the card would have been a good move. Still though, for a thrown together show to get people to watch for free and then hope they forget to cancel in the next hour so you get some bonus buys is a decent enough idea. Owens vs. Cena II doesn't need to happen but you know it's going to and will likely set up a big showdown at Battleground. Good enough show but mostly nothing worth seeing again.

Results

New Day b. Prime Time Players, Ascension, Los Matadores, Lucha Dragons and Tyson Kidd/Cesaro – Trouble in Paradise to O'Neal

Nikki Bella b. Paige and Naomi – Rack Attack to Naomi

Kevin Owens b. John Cena – Pop up powerbomb

Neville b. Bo Dallas – Red Arrow

Ryback b. Mark Henry, King Barrett, Dolph Ziggler, R-Truth and Sheamus – Shell Shock to Sheamus

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

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Elimination Chamber 2015 Preview

It's time for a "let's get people to watch the Network and hope they don't remember to cancel their free month in the hour they have after the show goes off the air" show that they're calling a pay per view. This is going to be an interesting show as they only have two weeks before Elimination Chamber, which means we might get something interesting short term to set up for a change down the road. Let's get to it.

There's no pre-show match this time but Daniel Bryan will be on MizTV. There's nothing to see here other than Miz returning and Bryan plugging the book/DVD/whatever else he has coming out. I can't imagine he's coming back to the ring already and he probably shouldn't yet either. I'll be glad to see Miz back as yes, I still like the guy.

Now we'll go with the bigger matches as we start with the Tag Team Title Elimination Chamber match. Given that it's under elimination rules, we'll look at each team and eliminate them one by one.

Los Matadores – Just no.

Ascension – I'd love to see these guys just massacre everyone in this thing and win the belts like they should have when they debuted before....I'm going to stop myself there because I'll rant all day on them all over again. Ascension won't win, even though they should be a force in this match.

Prime Time Players – They're funny and I dig the team, but I don't picture them winning the titles in one of their first matches back together.

Lucha Dragons – They're the dark horses to win here as they've been pushed strong since debuting and clearly have the offense to get the fans into any of their matches. Why Los Matadores still exist with these guys around is beyond me.

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – You would think these guys would have a good shot but I just don't see it happening again.

New Day – I've loved the team and it's hard not to, but there's only so long you can keep the joke going. These guys work well together to steal pins, but having them survive five other teams might be a bit too much to ask.

So who do I have winning? This might come as a surprise, but I'm going with the Dragons. I don't see New Day surviving that many teams without someone catching them and Cesaro/Kidd don't feel right. The other teams are filler so yeah, I'm actually picking the Dragons.

Off to the other Chamber for the vacant Intercontinental Title so let's do the same format.

R-Truth – I think I have a better chance of winning the title than he does.

Dolph Ziggler – He has Lana. Don't get greedy. Also there's nothing for him to win here as he's held the title a bunch of times before and doesn't gain anything by winning it again.

King Barrett – He's already jobbing to R-Truth clean in less than three minutes. Heaven help him if he wins the title back and is getting rolled

up by El Torito next. Pass here and that's the best for everyone involved.

Ryback – I just can't see it. They're playing up that he hasn't won a title yet so maybe he chases the belt, but I can't see him winning it here.

Rusev/Bray Wyatt – This is in case Rusev can't go due to his leg injury, and it certainly seems that he can't. Wyatt would be a very good option here but again I don't see it. He'll take a Shell Shock to even the "feud" with Ryback and no one will care.

Sheamus – This has been the odds on pick for a while now and he probably does make the most sense. Sheamus has been doing well since he got back and throwing another title on him isn't the worst idea in the world. I'll take him.

Neville defeats Dallas because there's really no reason for him not to.

I'm really tempted to go with Ambrose over Rollins for a two week title reign but I don't see it happening. I think they'll just go with the safe story of having the interference be too much for Dean to overcome and keep the title on Seth, even though Reigns has nothing to do and probably should come out and help his buddy.

Uh...Naomi takes the Divas Title and feuds with Paige for a bit, even though Tamina pinned Paige on Raw in another really dumb booking decision.

Now we get to the match I'm looking forward to the most and the match with the best build: John Cena vs. Kevin Owens in a non-title match. These two have been trading shots for two weeks now and it's going to be a huge moment if Owens somehow pulls off the win. Notice that I said somehow, as there's no need for him to win the match clean. All he has to do is survive it and hang on long enough to win by countout, DQ or maybe a fluke pin.

This is one of the very rare situations where I'm thrilled by the possibilities and really looking forward to the match for a change. Owens

is a great bully character and having him win will instantly make everyone more credible. If Owens is sticking around on the main roster, give him the win here and let him become a star. Cena is going to be fine about ten seconds after the match so does it really matter? Just let Owens win and be done with it. Look at Mick Foley winning his first World Title: everyone remembers the win and no one remembers that he dropped it less than three weeks later because only the win matters.

Overall, I'm looking forward to this show, but there's a good chance it's going to be a massive disappointment. There's only so much you can expect from WWE without them rounding back into form, just like they did this past Monday on Raw. There's bound to be something good on the show though and if there's more than a few good things, Sunday could be really, really special.

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: May 18, 2015

We're done with Payback and therefore it's time to race towards the Elimination Chamber show because we must get it in before people have to start paying for the Network again. The big story here is Rollins

retaining the World Title over his former Shield teammates and Orton in a good four way last night, but now everything is about getting to Elimination Chamber.

The Authority was back, complete with HHH's slow talking and Stephanie dropping in every proper name that she could in a manner that no one uses in the real world. They don't have much to say here (thank goodness) other than All Hail Rollins and that he's getting a tribute later in the night.

This brought them to the Elimination Chamber, which led to interruptions from Ryback and Sheamus. Both of them are announced for the match but of course they'll be fighting tonight too. The match was nothing out of the ordinary with Sheamus Brogue Kicking a distracted Ryback for the pin. I'm glad it's only a two week build to the Chamber as you can only have the people in the match do these simple matches for so long before they lose their effectiveness. The match was fine and I like Sheamus winning, but I think Ryback's push is in major trouble after back to back losses.

Kane was put in charge of the celebration tonight and didn't seem to mind. Ambrose came in and asked for a title shot but was given a match against Bray Wyatt tonight. This was a great example of people being in the right place at the right time saying the right things to move the show forward, making it feel very unnatural.

Neville was being interviewed when Bo Dallas came out. This seems to be the next feud as Dallas isn't cool with Neville bringing up their history in NXT. Dallas attacked Neville's previously injured knee, allowing Barrett to take Neville down pretty easily. This wasn't much of a match due to the time, but I'm getting worried about Neville doing the same things every time. He's going to be over due to his high flying abilities for a long time, but some of that heat is going to wear off and he needs to have something to build himself back up. The knee injury and a feud with Dallas are a good start though and there's no reason to panic.

Rusev yelled at Lana a lot and broke up with her. Later that night, Lana came out and kissed Ziggler. I'm not wild on pairing her with Ziggler, but I'm even less wild about how fast this turn started and wrapped up.

One week she was Fandangoing and then she's being dumped by Rusev? That's because here in WWE, we have to get the next story set up before the pay per view because Heaven forbid we wait more than a few weeks to set something up.

Bray Wyatt beat Dean Ambrose in a match built around a ton of interference and cheating, which is the only way to have that result. This was the usual good brawl between these guys but did you really expect anything else?

Cesaro and Kidd failed to win the Tag Team Titles again after a no contest with New Day. This didn't have the time to go anywhere and was really just a way to extend the feud yet another week as we're getting closer and closer to Elimination Chamber, where this time FOR SURE we're getting new champions. The feud and matches are still fun, but they're running out of ways to have New Day survive without getting repetitive.

After the match, Ascension, the Lucha Dragons, Los Matadores and the Prime Time Players came out to confirm that it's going to be six teams in the Chamber instead of just three. This makes for a very interesting match where it's possible that several teams could walk out with the titles. Well other than Los Matadores or Prime Time Players of course but the other four all have at least a chance. I'm not sure who wins there and I love that feeling.

Now we get to the money part of the show: the US Open Challenge. This week's was answered by NXT Champion Kevin Owens, who gave one of the best debut promos that I've ever seen, as he talked about the NXT Title being the real prize to fight for and how Cena doesn't get to give him advice or pick the time where they fight. I've spent a lot of time on the podcasts on how much I loved this segment and Owens comes off like one of the best villains in a long time. He can back it up in the ring too and he'll get to show that at Elimination Chamber. That's a non-title match too, which a lot of people seem to be overlooking.

Dolph Ziggler beat Stardust in a very short match to set up Lana kissing him. I'm really not wild on that move but it's what we're stuck with for the time being, meaning Dolph is right back where he was a few years ago.

The Wyatts crushed Ryder/Fandango in a match designed to say “yo, we’re monsters.”

Nikki beat Naomi via DQ when Tamina interfered. Paige returned for the save and laid out Nikki in what wasn’t a heel turn.

The big ending segment was a long, drawn out exchange with Rollins making Kane praise him before Dean came out and threatened to put him through some cinder blocks until he was given a title shot. A bunch of brawling ensued and Rollins hit a Pedigree to stand tall to end the show.

I tried really hard to get into this one but it didn’t leave much for me to care about. The main event stuff has too many people floating around it right now. You have the Authority bosses, Kane, the Stooges (ok they don’t count as much) and the two guys in the match. They need to just let Ambrose and Rollins carry this instead of just putting everyone they can in there and making it a big mess all over again.

The rest of the show was an improvement over the main event with the Chamber matches both looking good and Owens vs. Cena making me all tingly. If they can keep the HHH/Stephanie involvement to a minimum, we could be looking at a very hot card at Elimination Chamber. Or we could be looking at the same lazy stuff WWE does over and over to waste their potential.

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Reviewing the Review: Payback 2015

We continue to marathon these pay per views and the big question here is can Payback continue to be the most unlikely good series in wrestling? The main event is a well enough built up fatal fourway with Rollins defending against Reigns, Ambrose and Orton, basically making it a Shield triple threat with Orton on the side. Let's get to it.

I'm getting through the pre-show matches as fast as I can so I never have to think about them again. R-Truth beat Stardust in a bonus match with all the charm of a bad infection. These two have fought two or three times now and it's gotten less and less interesting every single time. Therefore, look for them to fight again in the future.

In the other pre-show match, Ascension beat the Mega (changed from Meta for reasons of good taste) Powers in a short match. I would praise WWE for not going with the comedy act here, but I have some issues giving them credit for upgrading from a horrible move to common sense. Yeah they put Ascension over a newly formed comedy team. Am I supposed to be impressed? Finally, does anyone else feel dirty about calling them the Mega Powers?

The opener was a good back and forth match between Dolph Ziggler in Sheamus to seemingly blow off their feud. The key here was the end of the match where Ziggler headbutted Sheamus and busted himself open hardway, which caused the match to end in a hurry. Now granted they didn't have to cut off much time as the match ran twelve minutes, but it always makes me curious to know what they were going to do otherwise.

Sheamus getting a nice win is the right idea though as he needs the push more than Ziggler. I'm pretty much over Dolph at the moment as he's been the same guy for the better part of ever now. Yeah his matches are still good enough, but I haven't been excited to see a Ziggler match in years

now.

For reasons I don't quite get, Kane and Rollins argued even more. On pay per view. I'm going to be really surprised if they set up a Kane face turn as that would be so far out of the realm of common sense these days for WWE. Rollins is almost going to have to turn face eventually though, as it's the nature of being a heel in wrestling.

Now it's time for the match people were drooling over: New Day defending the Tag Team Titles against Cesaro/Tyson Kidd in a 2/3 falls match. This had the potential to be one of the most entertaining matches in a very long time if they set it up right, but unfortunately that's not exactly the way they went about it. Cesaro/Kidd won the first fall in less than three minutes (off a mostly botched Swing into the dropkick). This never sits well with me as the champions just got pinned in almost no time. Let the thing stretch out a bit or have them win the first fall by cheating so it doesn't look that easy.

A bad looking Midnight Hour (with Kofi's arm hitting Kidd's back instead of being a DDT) tied things up in less than nine minutes total and NOW we could pick things up. This is where they get into the insanity with the hot near falls and all the good stuff...and it was about five minutes long.

That's where the match lost me a bit as the majority of the match was done in the first two falls instead of the really hot ending. This needed to be more of a bottom heavy match, setting up the really smart finish of having Woods pretend to be Kofi to steal the final pin. Yeah it's borderline racist, but it was a really smart and even funny way to keep the belts on New Day. I would have liked more time here though and more offense from the challengers, but entertaining stuff all around.

Bray Wyatt and Ryback had a good power brawl built around the idea that Ryback had busted up ribs due to a backsplash off the apron from Wyatt. Granted it didn't work as well as when Ryback hit a top rope splash and didn't sell the ribs all that well. Either way, this was a fun enough match with Ryback going down at the end as he should have. Wyatt needed the win a lot more than Ryback did, but neither guy really needed a major

loss at this point. Both guys are in need of a direction though, and that's way too common a problem at this <http://onhealthy.net/product-category/adhd/> level of the card.

Now we had the most entertaining and probably divisive match of the night as John Cena defended the US Title against Rusev in their final battle with an I Quit match. These two beat the living tar out of each other for nearly half an hour with the spots getting bigger and bigger. I had a great time here as they kept building up to the big ending, but the key was I wound up forgetting that it was an I Quit match other than the constant DO YOU QUIT. I know a lot of people have found this annoying, but I really didn't have a big problem with it. Yeah they said it a lot, but that's kind of the point of the match no?

This was exactly what this match should have been with both guys beating the living tar out of each other until Lana submitted for Rusev, which is likely going to trigger their split. It's not the best match in the world, but it was more than entertaining enough which is the right way to go with something like this. Rusev can get right back on track by beating like, anyone in a big match, so this didn't hurt him all that bad. At the end of the day, he was destined to lose this feud, though I could have done with cutting the chain match and just going with this as the finale at Extreme Rules.

We'll follow that up with my favorite part of the night: a quick New Day promo where they drink milk out of champagne glasses, brag about not complaining or swearing....and of course do a spot take, complain and swear upon hearing that they'll be defending their titles inside the Elimination Chamber. That's the perfect moment for these three and I laughed just as much as I expected to. These guys can do no wrong at the moment and they're a major highlight for me.

Naomi and Tamina beat the Bellas in the worst match of the night, which had some bad looking botches, bad timing and the least time of any match on the main card. This was nothing more than a way to set up Nikki vs. Naomi for the title, which really should have just been here instead of the next night on Raw but WWE doesn't have the best logic at times anyway.

Neville beat King Barrett via countout in a good but short match. This was designed to introduce Neville's knee injury, which seems to be his major story going forward. It doesn't really change much about his offense, but at least they're giving him some attention instead of just letting him be the same guy week after week until the crowd gets bored with him.

That brings us to the main event which is your standard wild brawl with all four getting in their big stuff with a bunch of near falls to tease a title change that was never coming. The big deal here was a very short Shield reunion, which blew the roof off the place for just a few moments. That's all the validation they need to pull the trigger on a real reunion for the trio one day, as those three are going to be a force going forward.

The match itself was fun and that's all it really needed to be. Thankfully Orton ate the pin because he's a made man who can do whatever he wants and keep popping back up without any real damage being done to him. The ending came when Rollins Pedigreed Orton for the pin, which I'm assuming is to fuel Rollins vs. HHH down the line, but it comes off as more like Rollins screaming for his daddy's attention. Good match, not my favorite ending though. I didn't mind all the brawling like some have though. Rollins is a heel who cheated. Why is this some big surprise?

Overall, Payback was another big surprise as they had no reason for this to be much of anything, but it wound up being a more than entertaining show with some really solid matches in there. I don't know if it's due to the really low expectations or the really hard work, but for a show with nothing important going on, Payback was really fun and a great surprise.

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