

Main Event – December 22, 2016: Why the Cruiserweights Don't Work

Main Event

Date: December 22, 2016

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Austin Aries

I'm curious to see what they're going to do with what should be a holiday show. I know we already had one of those last week but shouldn't that have been taking place this week instead? Either way we're at one of the last shows before the end of the year and it's hard to guess what we might get here, save for some uninteresting lower card matches. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Goldust vs. Curtis Axel

Goldust, who apparently debuted before Tom was born (according to Aries at least), works on the arm to start and grabs a powerslam to send Axel outside. Now it's time for Curtis to work on the arm as I guess he's a heel again this week. R-Truth plays cheerleader on the floor as Goldust comes back with a spinebuster to put both guys down. Ten right hands in the corner have Axel in more trouble and the Final Cut wraps Axel up at 5:21.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but that's what Main Event is for now that Jinder Mahal seems to be getting a small push on Raw. Why Mahal is the one getting that spot isn't clear but I'm sure general idiocy can be blamed on some level. That being said, what did Axel do to deserve all these losses? He can't even beat Goldust anymore?

Back to Raw for the first time.

Here's New Day to address their title loss. They're cool with losing the titles because Ric Flair couldn't become a sixteen time champion

without losing fifteen times. Big E.: "And that's Charlotte in a month." After declaring that they still rock, here are the new champions to interrupt. Sheamus and Cesaro are already bickering over who won last night so New Day insults Sheamus a bit more.

Cesaro on the other hand has catlike reflexes and is strong like a.....someone help Big E. out. Cesaro: "Like an ox?" Kofi was thinking more like a carpenter ant who can lift seven times his own weight. They bicker a lot with Woods talking about how much merchandise they have at the moment. Cue Anderson and Gallows to talk about how sick they are of the New Day nerds, only to be cut off by the Shining Stars. A brawl breaks out and you can book the eight man tag from here.

Shining Stars/Anderson and Gallows vs. Cesaro/Sheamus/New Day

This is joined in progress with Epico hitting a nice double underhook gutbuster on Kofi. Gallows and Anderson take turns on Kingston as Saxton thinks Cesaro and Sheamus had one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of the division last night. This is why people make fun of you Byron. Anderson spikes Kofi and we take a break.

Back with the Shining Stars diving onto the champs and the Boot of Doom getting two on Kofi. Big E. comes in to clean house but Sheamus tags himself in, setting up an assisted White Noise for two on Epico. Cesaro comes in and swings Primo into the Sharpshooter for the submission at 10:46.

Rating: C. That's your tag division people: the bickering champs, the bald guys who put "ski" at the end of random words, the jobbers and the team that is better than all of them put together. New Day is in a weird place now as they need something new to do but I'm not sure how they're going to go fight outside of the division.

From Raw again.

Here's Charlotte to address winning the title back last night. She goes into a big speech about how no one is on her level because she's a guaranteed win on pay per view. This brings out Bayley and

Charlotte isn't pleased. Bayley knows Sasha vs. Charlotte was the greatest rivalry of all time but now it's time for the Bayley vs. Charlotte rivalry to begin.

Last night was all about the scoreboard and Bayley is 2-0 against Charlotte, including at Survivor Series earlier this year. Charlotte put up four fingers last night for the Four Horsewomen but Bayley didn't come up with the rest of them because she just wasn't good enough. The challenge is issued and Charlotte actually agrees to fight right now.

Bayley vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Charlotte works the arm to start and puts Bayley in trouble with the figure four headscissors. A headlock gets Bayley out of trouble and she rides Charlotte on the mat. We even get a little strut before Charlotte is sent outside. Back from a break with Charlotte ramming Bayley face first into the mat over and over. A chinlock keeps Bayley in trouble but she fights out of the corner and gets in her sliding clothesline. Charlotte sends her into the corner again but the moonsault only gets two. Bayley reverses a chop into a backslide (with Charlotte's shoulder clearly up) to put Charlotte away at 14:45. Graves points out the shoulder being up and replays confirm it.

Rating: D+. This was actually one of the sloppier matches I've seen in a good while. Maybe it was nerves or Charlotte being a bit tired after last night but this really didn't work as well as I was expecting. I don't think Bayley gets the title at the Royal Rumble but the big match at Wrestlemania has a lot of potential.

Tony Nese vs. Lince Dorado

Dorado speeds things up to start and snaps off some armdrags into an armbar. Aries' suggestion: poke him in the eye. Nese finally powers him up into a backbreaker as we go to a break. Back with Dorado going hard into the buckle and Nese posing a bit. One heck of a clothesline gets two for Tony and it's off to a bodyscissors. Dorado fights up and hits the handspring Stunner, followed by the big dive

over the top for good measure. Back in and Lince kicks him on the top, only to get shoved away, setting up the 450 for the pin at 11:48.

Rating: C-. Nese's posing and power displays helped but this really wasn't the most interesting thing in the world. Dorado really doesn't do anything for me as he really is as generic of a luchador as you're going to find. In other words, this was the cruiserweight equivalent of power vs. speed and it didn't work all that well.

We see Jericho getting locked inside the shark cage on Monday.

We'll wrap it up with Monday's main event.

Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Rollins gets caught in the wrong corner to start and the Canadians take turns stomping him down. A quick Sling Blade puts Jericho down for two and the bad guys try to leave, only to get caught from behind. Back from a break with Reigns hitting his running clothesline on Owens, only to get decked so Jericho can take over.

The slow beating continues and we even get one of the suddenly favorite crowd reactions shots, showing a very bored looking girl. Owens puts on a chinlock of his own until Reigns gets free off a Samoan drop. Rollins comes in with a DDT/neckbreaker combo, earning himself two more crowd reaction shots. Jericho blocks a Pedigree and the frog splash to set up the Walls, sending Seth over to the ropes. Reigns gets in a Superman Punch and reaches for the hot tag, only to have Strowman run out to go after Roman for the DQ at 15:04.

Rating: D. Strowman getting involved is at least a little more interesting but DANG I'm bored with the main event scene right now. People were ready to cheer for Jericho, only to have the carpet pulled out from underneath them because SURPRISE, we're right back where we were when these matches were announced.

A powerslam plants Reigns as Jericho and Owens watch from the ramp.

Overall Rating: D. This was bad even by Main Event's standards and that's about as low as you're going to get in wrestling. The stuff from Raw wasn't very good, the original wrestling wasn't very good

and Byron Saxton still has a job. Aries was his usual entertaining self but you have to give him something to work with or it's going to be bad, like this one. Really lame show this week and that's not nice around the holidays.

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205 Live – December 20, 2016: The Night of Neville

205 Live

Date: December 20, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: Austin Aries, Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves

We've actually got a hot story around here as Neville returned on Sunday and turned full on heel for the first time in his WWE career. This included beating up Cruiserweight Champion Rich Swann, which set up a tag match on tonight's show. Neville will team with Brian Kendrick to face Swann and TJ Perkins. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sunday's title match and Neville's turn, including the tag match being set up last night on Raw.

Opening sequence.

Ariya Daivari vs. Lince Dorado

Dorado flips around a lot with Aries accurately saying it's wasting

energy. Daivari grabs a neckbreaker for two and drives a running knee into the back. We hit the chinlock as this isn't the most interesting match so far. Dorado gets up and hits a Tajiri handspring into a Stunner, sending Daivari outside for a big flip dive. A springboard hurricanrana puts Daivari down but Dorado gets shoved off the top, setting up a frog splash to give Ariya the pin at 5:37.

Rating: D+. As interested as I am in the main event tag (which has a limit), this is a good example of everything wrong with the division. There's almost no interest in the match, the wrestling was nothing all that special and Daivari is a rather dull character. Dorado is the most generic luchador in a long time and it doesn't make for a strong match as a result.

Daivari says Jack Gallagher is a scoundrel.

Kendrick comes up to Neville in the back but Neville wants nothing to do with him until they're out in the ring.

Tajiri is coming.

Cedric Alexander vs. Drew Gulak

Speaking of uninteresting characters. Cedric, with Alicia Fox in his corner, works on Gulak's arm to start and knees him in the face for good measure. Gulak sends him throat first into the middle rope and does something like a curb stomp with the shin instead of the foot. A chinlock doesn't last long and it's Cedric coming back with his springboard clothesline for two.

In a pretty scary bump, Alexander grabs a vertical suplex and takes Gulak over the top for a crash to the floor. They're lucky they landed right there. Gulak shoves Cedric into Fox and we've got a bad ankle. Cue Noam Dar to carry Fox off, leaving Cedric to hit the Lumbar Check for the pin at 5:35.

Rating: C. The wrestling was better here and both guys were trying but Gulak just isn't interesting in the slightest. Cedric has the talent and there's something there with the Fox story but it's still fairly low level by comparison to a few of the others in the division. Alexander could make the jump up the division ladder but he's going to need a stronger story.

Cedric runs off to find Fox. Gulak blames Fox for the loss because women do not belong on 205 Live.

Video on Jack Gallagher.

Fox is getting her ankle iced and thanks Dar for having her back.

Neville/Brian Kendrick vs. TJ Perkins/Rich Swann

Neville blasts Swann in the face to start and the aggression is really flowing early on. Swann gives a look that suggests he can't handle this as the announcers talk about how awesome Neville has been since Roadblock. You know, the show TWO DAYS AGO. Kendrick smiles as Neville forearm Rich in the corner but a forearm allows a blind tag to Perkins.

TJ actually gets in some offense before Kendrick comes in, stares at Neville, and chokes on the mat. A good looking spinning kick to the face puts Kendrick down, followed by a slingshot hilo for two. There's an interesting story here with Neville being the scariest thing in the match and Kendrick being the only one the good guys can beat.

The still banged up Swann tags himself in and manages a few clotheslines on Kendrick. A Flatliner cuts Swann off again though and Neville deadlifts him into a German suplex for two. Some weak rights and lefts have little effect on Neville but a superkick gives the champ a near fall (though the replay shows the lack of contact).

Neville pops right back up and clotheslines Swann inside out but the champ gets over for the hot tag. Perkins fires away on Perkins and the Detonation Kick sets up the kneebar. It's Neville making another save but Swann tags himself in and kicks Neville in the head. A double superkick gets two on Kendrick as everything breaks down.

Perkins and Neville wind up on the floor, leaving Sliced Bread #2 to set up the Captain's Hook on Rich. This time it's Perkins making a save, leaving Neville to kick Swann in the head and talk a lot of trash. TJ tags himself back in and dives into an enziguri, setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 14:09.

Rating: B. The wrestling was good here but this was completely about the storytelling. Neville looks about 900 miles ahead of the rest of the division and the beatdown of Swann was the perfect way to make that come alive. I completely got into the story here and Neville pinning Perkins and covering him like it's an annoyance instead of a victory is great. Neville is just killing the character so far and that's some great potential for this division.

Overall Rating: C+. The opening two matches didn't do much for me but that main event saved the show. Unfortunately this brings up the obvious problem: there's not enough (at the moment) for a whole show but this stuff doesn't work on Raw. Since putting it on Smackdown is COMPLETELY OUT OF THE QUESTION AND WE SHOULDN'T EVEN ASK ABOUT IT EVER AGAIN for some reason, this is probably the best of the remaining option.

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205 Live – December 13, 2016: You Can Feel the Vince

205 Live

Date: December 14, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves, Austin Aries

This is turning into a more traditional WWE show week by week. Tonight's main event is focusing on setting up Sunday's triple threat match for the Cruiserweight Title instead of tonight's match standing on its own. The main event here is Rich Swann vs. TJ Perkins in a non-title match so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's main event where Swann defeated

Brian Kendrick to retain the title. Perkins was on commentary during the match and got into it with Swann to end the show.

The announcers preview tonight's main event and Sunday's title match.

Jack Gallagher vs. Drew Gulak

Gulak accepts the handshake and they hit the mat to start, meaning Gallagher can do his handstand to escape a headlock. After rolling around for some near falls, Gulak gets tied up in the Windsor Knot for the running kick to the back of the trunks. Drew's answer is to kick Jack in the jaw and then start in on the bad knee. Jack will have none of that though and blasts Gulak with that headbutt. The running dropkick in the corner puts Gulak away at 5:52.

Rating: C. I know Gallagher does the same stuff almost every match but he's just so darn likeable. How can you not smile when you see someone this into his gimmick? Pushing him towards the title and putting him in a feud with someone whose personality he can bounce off of will be a great springboard for his character. Good enough here though and that's all it needs to be.

Perkins tells Swann that the luck is about to run out.

Tajiri is coming.

Gallagher is talking about his victory when Ariya Daivari comes up. Jack is willing to call it even but Daivari says no way and starts speaking his native language before leaving.

Mustafa Ali vs. Lince Dorado

Ali says he won't be defined by our ignorance. A great looking springboard hurricanrana takes Ali down to start but a hard kick to the head puts Dorado down. We're already in a chinlock before a dropkick sends Ali into the corner. They're certainly moving out there. A Tajiri handspring into a Stunner...uh, stuns Ali and Dorado sends him outside. An Asai moonsault crushes Ali again and both guys are down long enough for the double countout at 3:35.

Rating: C+. Now that was more like it with a standard cruiserweight style. It's cool to have Gallagher and Gulak doing their mat work but sometimes you need two guys to fly around and look impressive. I liked this more than I was expecting to and it's a good idea to establish as much talent as they can.

Ali goes for a post match cheap shot but gets kicked out to the floor.

Noam Dar hits on Alicia Fox but she isn't interested.

Long video on TJ Perkins.

Rich Swann vs. TJ Perkins

Non-title and as you might expect, Kendrick comes out to join commentary. They trade wristlocks to start with both guys flipping out of the others offense. A double dropkick means a double miss into a double nip up and a standoff. Swann finally kicks him in the jaw to take over but Perkins tosses the champ outside for a slingshot dropkick.

Back in and Swann scores with Rolling Thunder for two but another trip to the floor sees Swann tweak his knee. Perkins is no fool and dropkicks the knee out for a near fall of his own. A kick to the head puts TJ down but the knee is too banged up for Swann to capitalize. Perkins' Detonation Kick is countered into a tiger bomb for two, only to have the knee give out again. The kneebar makes Swann tap at 10:01.

Rating: B-. It's a good sign that these guys are showing themselves capable of wrestling a match instead of just doing a few minutes of high spots. Perkins needed a big win heading into the pay per view but I can't imagine they would actually change the title. Swann was fine here and while I'm rarely a fan of champions losing, the knee injury gives him an out.

Kendrick comes to the ring but eats a superkick.

Overall Rating: C+. This was better and having something to build towards is a really positive step. However, the same problem as last week persists: I don't know how long they can keep this show going with just one set of talent. It works in NXT with a revolving door but this is a bit more limited and it's going to start showing in a hurry. Still though, they're in the very early days and this was an entertaining way to spend about forty minutes.

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Superstars – October 28, 2016: The Kickoff Preview

Superstars

Date: October 28, 2016

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

I can get through this. I can get through Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal IV. Normally I wouldn't believe they would actually go there but I said that after their first match and again after their second match. At least my therapy has been going well since then. Mahal was on Raw this week though so he's at least in the building. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Neville vs. Titus O'Neil

This could be a disaster as Titus was one of the only people who could drag Neville down when they were in NXT. Neville wisely gets the crowd going by moonsaulting over Titus to start and kicking him in the face to actually do something to him. A good looking flip dive takes Titus down again but he kicks Neville in the face with a bit more force. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Titus tries to start a LET'S GO NEVILLE chant. Back up and Titus charges into raised boots in the corner and the Red Arrow finishes him at 4:30.

Rating: D. It takes a lot to mess up a power heel vs. a speed face but they managed to make it boring. I don't know how someone with

Titus' look can be this bad but he pulls it off every single time. Above all else though, Neville is going to get a pop from the crowd no matter what because that Red Arrow just works every time.

We go back to Raw for the first time.

Here are Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman with something to say. Heyman does his usual schtick about how Lesnar will smash Goldberg, only to have the Goldberg chants cut him off. Heyman calls out the fan that started them and says they're getting on Brock's nerves. After their match, all of the chants in the world won't be able to put Goldberg back together again.

Suplexes are promised and the fans go back and forth with SUPLEX CITY/GOLDBERG chants. Heyman rips on them and the chant turns into GOLDBERG SUCKS....to wrap this up. Ok then. There was NOTHING here and it didn't need Brock at all. Even Heyman looked rattled by the reaction.

Back to Raw again.

Mick Foley is in the ring for the contract signing between Sasha Banks and Charlotte. They talk about how big of a moment this is going to be, only to have Foley go into his annual rant about how evil the Cell is. Charlotte calls Sasha an entitled second rate talent who will learn respect from the Queen this Sunday. Sasha is ready to crawl up the ramp broken and bloodied as long as she has the Women's Title. They trade insults but Foley cuts them both off to say he's their future. Dude if the Cell is going to turn them into 6'4 men with long beards, maybe we should cancel the match.

As expected, the fans chant for Foley, thereby completely missing the point of this segment. Foley met Charlotte as a child and his kids gave Sasha their signed photo of Eddie Guerrero. More insults and a double signing FINALLY wrap this up. Charlotte vs. Sasha in a major gimmick match is fine but no one, like NO ONE, buys that the match is going to be all violent and career threatening like Foley is pushing and that kills the idea.

Sin Cara/Lince Dorado/Cedric Alexander vs. Tony Nese/Ariya

Daivari/Drew Gulak

Cara and Nese start things off with the masked one starting in on Tony's arm. A facebuster puts Cara down and it's off to Gulak as the fans get a lot more quiet. Daivari of all people gets a reaction so Cara armdrags both Drew and Ariya at the same time. Dorado comes in and gets knocked off the apron and into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Lince still in trouble thanks to a chinlock and armbar. Gulak misses a charge though and it's off to Alexander to really wake the crowd up. Everything breaks down with Cara knocking Nese and Gulak to the floor for a big dive. Back inside, the Lumbar Check knocks Daivari out for the pin at 8:09.

Rating: C. This was your run of the mill cruiserweight six man and it's about as good as you're going to get with no story or reason for them to be fighting. The match was fine enough and hopefully they can improve it when they do the same match again as the Kickoff match on Sunday.

We wrap the show up with Monday's main event.

Seth Rollins vs. Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They play keep away to start until Owens gets kicked out to the floor. A Blockbuster gets two on Jericho but Owens pulls Seth outside. The champ is sent into the barricade but Jericho throws Seth into the crowd. Back in and Owens scores with a clothesline, only to have Rollins avoid the Cannonball. The Pedigree doesn't work on either Canadian but the Lionsault hits Seth's knees.

Owens saves his buddy from a Pedigree and it's time for the double teaming. The handicap portion continues until Owens is low bridged to the floor. Jericho eats the low superkick and Rollins dives onto Kevin. Seth misses the frog splash and eats a Codebreaker for two. Owens comes back in and slaps Rollins a lot as the STUPID IDIOT chants kick in. Rollins escapes a double superplex and pins both guys at the same time with a double rollup at 10:00.

Rating: C+. The match was fun but it's WAY too late in the night to

really matter. Rollins pinning the champ is appropriate as Owens has been a huge afterthought in this entire story. That also makes four straight times that Rollins has pinned Jericho so you certainly can't say he's getting too many wins.

Post match Owens and Jericho destroy Rollins by sending him hard into the steps. We're still not done though as Rollins runs up the ramp and dives at Owens, only to get beaten down again. Owens gives him the Apron Bomb and walks back up the ramp to get his title so some posing can end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Yeah this was fine. Aside from Rusev vs. Reigns, this was a solid preview for Sunday's show. I would have gone with ANYTHING other than the Lesnar/Heyman promo though and I really don't get why they decided to air that mess again. The exclusive wrestling was fine for a pair of glorified dark matches and that's all Superstars is supposed to be.

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NXT – October 26, 2016: My Kind of Show

NXT

Date: October 26, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's the final night for the first round of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic. We're also less than a month away from Takeover: Toronto and that means it's time to start firming up a lot of the card. We already know a few of the matches so there won't be many surprises but NXT is great at putting pepper on the steak. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic: DIY vs. Hoho Lun/Tian Bing

Bing is the recently signed Chinese wrestler Bin Wang. Ciampa and Bing get things going with Wang looking good as he runs Ciampa over to start. A PSYCHO KILLER chant breaks out but switches to a Johnny Wrestling version as Gargano comes in to kick Lun in the head. Hoho gets in a dropkick and brings Tian back in for some strikes to the chest. A chinlock doesn't last long as Gargano kicks Bing's head off and brings Ciampa right back in. Johnny tags himself back in though and cuts Lun in half with the spear through the ropes. The double strike puts Lun away at 4:15.

Rating: B-. Lun and Bing were just speed bumps on the way to DIY (I really hope that doesn't catch on) vs. Revival III and that's the kind of thing that makes this tournament awesome. Bing looked good here and certainly has some experience. I don't know if he's ready for a full NXT run but I've seen far worse.

Kota Ibushi and TJ Perkins are ready for their first round match. Perkins says if this was high school, the cool table would be Ibushi times five. Ibushi thinks his overall rating is a 99. I don't understand what Ibushi just said. Can I get that translated to stars?

Recap of Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura.

Joe sees a scared man in Nakamura because he knows Joe could knock him out at any time. Nakamura knows the next NXT Champion is coming for him.

Aliyah vs. Billie Kay

Kay goes right after her to start and Aliyah's early jawbreaker has almost no effect. A seated Blockbuster works a bit better though and an enziguri staggers Billie. Kay comes right back with a discus forearm but here's Liv Morgan for a distraction, allowing Aliyah to grab a rollup for the pin at 1:48.

Post match the brawl is on and the Aussies leave both of them laying.

Tye Dillinger vs. Noah Potjes

Tye snapmares him down to start and that's a ten. That's not cool with Noah, who takes Tye into the corner for some kicks to the ribs. Tye turns it on and stomps Noah down, setting up the Tyebreaker for the pin at 1:38.

Post match, Tye says his opportunity is to get his hands on Bobby Roode, who jumps him from behind. The inverted DDT sends Tye head first into the stage.

TM61 is ready for their match with Austin Aries/Roderick Strong because they trust each other. They're also mighty and the mighty don't kneel.

Asuka vs. Thea Trinidad

Non-title. Asuka doesn't waste time and starts kicking at the legs before stopping for a little dance. Thea makes the mistake of hitting Asuka with a forearm and the champ is ticked off. A kick to the chest is easily caught and a German suplex into a Fujiwara armbar makes Trinidad tap at 1:45.

William Regal comes out post match and says he's found Asuka's latest opponent: MICKIE JAMES! You can hear the fans gasp when she comes on screen to cut a fairly lame promo about coming to face the next star in the Women's Revolution. Asuka is very pleased with this announcement. Mickie was a last minute replacement for Trish Stratus, who had to back out due to announcing she was pregnant, hence why Mickie wasn't in the building.

Paul Ellering and the Authors of Pain think No Way Jose and Rich

Swann will have fine futures in NXT but those futures will have to wait until after their destruction in the second round of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic. That match is next week.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Mustafa Ali/Lince Dorado vs. TJ Perkins/Kota Ibushi

The winners face Sanity in the second round. Perkins is announced as the Cruiserweight Champion but doesn't have his belt for some reason. Dorado and Perkins kick us off and it's time to flip around the ring without making much contact. A standoff gets us nowhere as Graves offers the following Michael Cole style gem: "Most of the teams that have been successful so far have been tag teams."

Ibushi and Ali come in and the fans give Kota the kind of welcome you would expect. Ali is taken down in a test of strength but Kota can't break his bridge. They trade some kicks to the face with Ibushi getting the better of it as we take a break. Back with Perkins rolling suplexes on Ali and grabbing the kneebar. As is custom though, the first kneebar only results in the grabbing of a rope.

Perkins heads outside and that means a big flip dive from Dorado. Back in and Ali gets two off a neckbreaker but a faceplant allows the tag off to Ibushi so things can speed up. A moonsault from Kota and a frog splash from TJ combine for two. TJ dropkicks Dorado into the ropes to set up the Wrecking Ball dropkick. The kneebar makes Ali tap at 11:39.

Rating: B. This is the kind of match that you don't see on Raw because they have to cram in so much other stuff that there's no time for the cruiserweights to do their thing. Well that and the Raw crowds don't care for this stuff like the NXT fans do (just a different style of audience). Kota and Perkins are good for a dream team but I'm not sure they're getting by Sanity.

Overall Rating: B. Of everything NXT does, this is my favorite kind of show: an hour of getting things done. This wrapped up the first round of the tournament, advanced some stories and set up some matches for next week. There's no wasted time and everything goes so

smoothly from one segment to the next. Good show here and Toronto is looking better every week.

Results

DIY b. Hoho Lun/Tian Bing – Superkick/running knee combination to Lun

Aliyah b. Billie Kay – Rollup

Tye Dillinger b. Noah Potjes – Tyebreaker

Asuka b. Thea Trinidad – Fujiwara armbar

Kota Ibushi/TJ Perkins b. Mustafa Ali/Lince Dorado – Kneebar to Ali

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Monday Night Raw – September 26, 2016: I Didn't Want It To Be This Way

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 26, 2016

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're past Clash of Champions and this is going to be an interesting show. The key here is Raw's competition as they're up against Monday Night Football and a Presidential debate that is likely going to break a lot of viewership records. Kevin Owens is still Raw World Champion and Roman Reigns picked up the US Title from Rusev last night it's time to start looking towards the Cell. Let's get to it. One more note: I was in the arena for the show last night so this is my second time seeing this.

There's no intro as we're heading straight for the opening match. Translation: PLEASE DON'T CHANGE THE CHANNEL YET! I can completely accept this.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Rematch from last night with Reigns defending. The fans want Lana as Rusev takes him down with a front facelock. That's going to keep the people from watching the debate. Reigns is cheered quite strongly as he kips out of a headscissors but gets double legged back to the mat.

Rusev gets one off a suplex and starts in on Reigns' back. The nine corner clotheslines get Reigns out of trouble but he can't lift Rusev up for the powerbomb because of the back injury. We take a break and come back with Rusev putting on a bearhug to keep up the simple psychology. A dropkick hits Reigns in the mouth and some gutwrench suplexes get two. Back to the waistlock as the match slows down again.

Reigns fights up with more clotheslines and a big boot but the Superman Punch is countered, sending them both falling out to the floor. We come back from another break with Reigns headbutting him off the top and hitting a middle rope clothesline. Geez man enough with the Lex Luger style offense.

Reigns still can't powerbomb him so Rusev gets in a spinwheel kick. More headbutts and another kick to the head give Rusev another two. Reigns' latest comeback is stopped with a superkick and the fans are really getting into this in a way you almost never hear for a Reigns match. The Accolade is broken up but Lana offers a distraction to break up the Superman Punch. The apron kick staggers Rusev (and gets a great reaction from the crowd) and they fight into the crowd for a double countout at 25:38.

Rating: B. The match was another good outing for the two of them and the ending sets up a rematch in the Cell, which is going to receive a divided reception depending on your taste in Cell matches. Maybe it was just the Cincinnati crowd or maybe it's because he's in the midcard instead of the main event but Reigns was getting a great reaction here. This is the kind of role he's made for: an athletic freak who can take a beating and give out one of his own. Good match here.

Post match Rusev gets a chair and hits Reigns over the back. They get inside and Reigns gets in a spear to put Rusev down. Reigns sits in the chair and poses with the belt before hitting Rusev with the chair to even things up.

WWE2K17 ad with Ambrose's appearance getting a huge pop.

Here's Mick Foley for a chat about last night's Cesaro vs. Sheamus match. The thought of the series ending in a draw seemed to be a mathematical impossibility (not really) but that's what's happened. Foley brings out Sheamus and Cesaro with Sheamus almost immediately cutting him off to say this was about physical dominance.

Cesaro talks about doctors holding Sheamus back last night and an argument breaks out over who was more dominant. Foley cuts them off to say they're both right and they're both getting a championship opportunity....which they're getting together as they're fighting for the Tag Team Titles. Cesaro: "SAY WHAT???" Foley tells them to get over it and just team together because that's his decision.

I had a very bad feeling that this was where they were going and while it's not the worst idea in the world (Raw is dying for tag teams at the moment), it feels like the TNA way of getting here: a bunch of matches that did nothing but fill time until we get to the end result. Sheamus and Cesaro had some good matches (even one very good one) but they drove the feud into the ground to the point where I didn't care how good the matches were since I had absolutely no desire to watch them.

And now, none of that matters because they're basically saying the whole thing was a tie and we're just going to do something different. It comes off as lazy booking and a way to fill in time, which is one of the worst things you can do in wrestling. I'm sure they'll be a decent team but they better not cut New Day's title reign off this close to the record.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending in a rematch from last night after Xavier Woods used Francesca II. The match starts fast with Kofi having to dodge a diving Anderson. It's off to Big E. for the Unicorn Stampede with Woods blowing the trombone in time with the stomps. Gallows, apparently not a music fan, pulls Big E. out to the floor and superkicks him in the face.

Anderson adds a running kick to the face for two and the champs are in quick trouble. Gallows gets in a chokeslam and we take a break. Anderson's powerbomb gets two and we hear about Demolition's title reign being in reach. A kick to the head finally allows the hot tag to Big E. for the suplexes. Big E. misses a charge into the post though and a running boot to the face gets two.

That's enough of being on defense for Big E. so he spears Anderson through the ropes, setting up the Midnight Hour for two with Gallows making the save. Kofi is sent shoulder first into the steps and the Magic Killer gets a very close two on Big E. They had me on that near fall. A VERY bloody Kofi comes back in and hits Trouble in Paradise to pin Anderson and retain the titles at 11:03.

Rating: C+. They're doing really well at making me buy into the title changes here and that's hard to do when it comes to a regular TV title defense. Anderson and Gallows are done as challengers now and I'm really not sure where they go from here. Sheamus and Cesaro are fine for placeholder challengers but New Day really should break the record when they're this close. It would be a waste of time not to.

We look at Kevin Owens injuring Seth Rollins' ribs in their match at Clash of Champions. Stephanie McMahon sent a second referee down for the count, seconds after Rollins would have had the title won. After the show ended, HHH arrived and asked Stephanie how it went ("Great.").

Sheamus and Cesaro (back in his suit) are bickering when Foley comes in. Mick starts yelling about how much potential these two have together because they could shake up the tag division. He'll even give them a chance tonight in a tag match. Foley showed a lot of fire here, as is his custom. Remember that.

Bayley vs. Anna Fields

Fields chokes her on the ropes to start and we hit an early chinlock. Bayley comes back with her elbows and clotheslines, setting up a quick Bayley to Belly for the pin at 2:04.

Post match Bayley says she's not done with Sasha and Charlotte after that triple threat because she wants to hug that Women's Title.

And now, the bad part of the show. Foley goes in to see Stephanie and asks about the referee issue in last night's main event and telling HHH it was great. Stephanie ERUPTS on Foley, talking about how it should have been his responsibility to get a new referee out there. Instead, he was probably with Sheamus and Cesaro because he thinks with his heart instead of his head. She hired him because of his mind as a businessman (Huh?) and wants him to be more like her. Instead of showing the fire he had earlier, Foley just stands there and takes this because she's Stephanie.

This is every problem with Stephanie rolled into one promo. Not only is it part of a story that is taking WAY too long to go anywhere (I'd be shocked if we get any real resolution before the Royal Rumble) but this is Mick Foley, a three time WWE World Champion and a WWE Hall of Famer. He's one of the best talkers with some of the best fire of all time but he's standing here cowering in front of Stephanie because that's what happens to people around her.

Brock Lesnar, Charlotte, Sting, Roman Reigns and now Mick Foley all have nothing to say back to her because she's Stephanie and the most intimidating presence of all time. Oh except for when she's fun Stephanie who dances with kids and is just a regular soccer mom. This has been going on for years now (keep in mind that Stephanie debuted SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO and first became an authority figure in 2000) and if we're lucky she gets one bit of comeuppance a year. Other than that it's all Stephanie browbeating everyone else and if you don't like it, deal with it because she's Stephanie.

Rich Swann/Cedric Alexander vs. Drew Gulak/Lince Dorado

Swann and Alexander get an inset promo talking about how they're here to have fun but they're not underestimating their opponents. This didn't air in the arena and it would have helped quite a bit. Gulak and Dorado get their Cruiserweight Classic videos and again they're better than nothing. We get the big handshake to start for a compliment to the purple ropes, which take forever to set up and take down.

Dorado and Swann trade headscissors to start and nip into a stalemate. Everything breaks down and Dorado moonsaults onto all three as we take an early break. Back with Drew holding Swann in a chinlock before it's back to Dorado for some chops. The hot tag bring in Alexander for some forearms and a running kick to Gulak's head. A Lumbar Check sends Dorado to the floor and Swann sunset flips Gulak for the pin at 8:25.

Rating: C. This was the big popcorn break match of the night and it's still not hard to see why. Again, the wrestling is fine but the whole division is being wedged into a show that is already bloated. Swann and Alexander have some personality but Dorado and Gulak are just warm bodies in the eyes of the fans. It's better than last week but they still need some adjustments to make people care.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Nick Cutler/Willis Williams

Cesaro takes Cutler over with a one armed delayed vertical suplex but Sheamus drops to the floor instead of tagging in. For some reason he gets on the apron with his back to the ring so Cesaro can tag him in with a slap. The ten forearms make it even worse for Cutler and it's off to Williams, who is taken down with a hard clothesline. The jobbers actually start working on Cesaro's arm for a few seconds before Sheamus Brogue Kicks both guys. Cesaro pins the unconscious Williams at 3:33.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what it needed to be, though it's still forced and something that should have come months ago without the long feud in the first place. We haven't had a wacky partnership that went somewhere important since Kane and Daniel Bryan so this is as good as anything else they have.

Video on TJ Perkins.

TJ talks about wanting to be here for eighteen years but here's Brian Kendrick to interrupt. Kendrick says it's his title to win because Perkins owes him for his career. A brawl is teased and they'll fight at some point in the future.

Here are Charlotte and Dana Brooke for a chat. Charlotte says last night was another chance for everyone to be disappointed because that's what she does time after time. She's not the huggable Bayley or the internet darling Sasha Banks. Cue Sasha to say that's her title because Charlotte didn't beat her last night. Sasha is owed a one on one match and she wants it right now. Charlotte tells the

YESing fans to be quiet so she can tell Sasha that she'll get her rematch...next week. Sasha cleans house and the villains leave.

Rollins is on his way to the ring to interrupt the upcoming Highlight Reel but Foley cuts him off because Seth isn't medically cleared. All Rollins can hear are Stephanie's words coming out of Mick's mouth.

TJ Perkins vs. Tony Nese

Non-title with both guys being TNA castoffs because they're dumb that way. The much stronger Nese throws Perkins around to start and he cartwheels out of TJ's ankle scissors to show off. An early kneebar attempt doesn't work for TJ as Nese sends him outside for a superkick and a big dive to take us to a break. Back with Perkins grabbing a Black Widow but getting planted with a reverse gutwrench suplex.

The fans chant for Harambe (the gorilla who was shot at the Cincinnati Zoo, which was a recurring trend all night long) and CM Punk as TJ fights back with uppercuts and a jumping neckbreaker out of the corner. A gutbuster looks to set up a tornado DDT but Perkins is draped over the top rope instead. TJ is right back up with the fireman's carry into an enziguri (Fans: "RANDY SAVAGE!") and the kneebar makes Nese tap at 8:50.

Rating: C+. I know the fans don't care but this was entertaining stuff, partially because we have a reason to care about Perkins. Something as simple as being the champion tells us more about him than we know about anyone else and the announcers did a good job of building Nese up as the perfect athlete who could take down the champ. Good little match here, though the fans really didn't care.

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Pedro Morales.

Sasha vs. Charlotte and Perkins vs. Kendrick for the respective titles next week.

Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson are going to be in Los Angeles next week to take care of Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens.

It's time for the Highlight Reel. Jericho tells us to be quiet about a dozen times because this is the most anticipated Highlight Reel in WWE history. Before Owens comes out here though, Jericho has a bone to pick with Masterson and Kutchner, who have the nerve to claim that they're better friends. Jericho: "THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!" That's so

unthinkable that they're both about to make the List of Jericho.

It's almost time for Owens to come out but Jericho yells at the cameraman for shooting him from the wrong side, which means HE MADE THE LIST! Rollins is on there too because he got hurt again last night. Owens comes out and praises the Jeritron 5000 but says he's not about to wear a suit for a place like Cincinnati, Ohio. What kind of town can this be when it created Dean Ambrose? Jericho: "HE STILL OWES ME \$17,000!"

Owens moves on to Rollins and says the rib injury is karma after all the people Seth injured over the last year and a half. Cue Rollins but security and Foley pull him back. Instead here are Enzo Amore and Big Cass to interrupt and ask Jericho how they're doing. Jericho says they're just fine but Enzo and Cass ARE ON THE LIST.

After Owens corrects Jericho's spelling, Cass accuses Jericho of being Santa Claus. Jericho: "Maybe I am Santa Claus! Maybe I'll come down there and sit on your lap!" Cass points out that people sit on Santa's lap but Jericho said he was going to punch Cass in the face. A fan poll makes Jericho even angrier but as it turns out, Foley just made a match between these four.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

Jericho and Enzo start us off but first we need to pause for the scarf removal. An armdrag has Jericho so frustrated that he crawls over for a hug from Owens. Kevin comes in and gets dropped by Cass so it's time to launch another human being over the top rope as a projectile. Sidewalk slams have the Canadians in trouble but Jericho sidesteps a charge to send Cass outside as we take a break.

Back with Enzo pounding on Jericho in the corner and getting two off a high crossbody. Owens offers a quick distraction though and it's time for the villains to take over. Thankfully that means Owens doing Enzo's dance across the apron because he knows how to mock a crowd. Jericho and Owens take turns beating on Enzo with Owens handling the trash talking ("THAT'S THE LEAD SINGER OF FOZZY!").

Enzo blocks a superplex but dives into a dropkick, setting up Owens' backplash for two. Owens to the referee: "I'm the Universal Champion!" Referee: "It was two!" Owens: "But he shouldn't even be out of NXT yet!" Enzo finally gets in a right hand to make the tag off to Cass for the house cleaning. For some reason Jericho decides to slap Cass, earning himself a boot to the face. The two of them

head outside and it's Enzo hitting his middle rope DDT for two on Owens. The powerbomb puts Amore away at 16:37.

Rating: C. Owens' trash talking aside, this was just your standard main event tag. Enzo and Cass are fine for this role and it's already more entertaining than seeing them talk about buying a timeshare in Puerto Rico. They're still making sure to protect Cass and it's way too early to even think about a split so this is about as good as it's going to get for them at the moment.

The show wraps up just after the match ends. Post show, Owens and Jericho kept beating on Enzo until Sami Zayn came out for the save. Posing ensued to close out the night.

Overall Rating: D+. This show suffered had the same problem as so many others: burnout. The first half hour was a good, hard hitting match, followed by an entertaining Tag Team Title match. Then it was Stephanie treating Foley like a dog who tracked mud into her house and a cruiserweight tag match that didn't need to be on the show.

The main event was a nice pick up but they really need something to fire the crowd up in the middle. Maybe a Sami Zayn match instead of putting him on Superstars? At the end of the day, three hours is too much on TV and it's even worse when you're watching it live. The show has good stuff on it but that good stuff is dragged down by so many other things, the biggest of which is just time itself. It wasn't a horrible show but you could tell when the debate came on because the show just gave up.

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NXT – September 28, 2016: Dusting Off the Classic

NXT

Date: September 28, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

This is an interesting time for NXT as we're still moving closer to Toronto but it's still too early to really know a lot of the card. We do however have a new #1 contender to the Women's Title in Liv Morgan, who Asuka agreed to face without seeming that worried about it. We've also got some cruiserweights around so maybe they'll make an appearance tonight. Let's get to it.

General Manager William Regal announces the second annual Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Tournament, comprised of sixteen teams with the finals coming in Toronto. First round matches begin next week.

Opening sequence. Total time taken on Then, Now and Forever plus Regal's announcement: seventy two seconds.

Tye Dillinger vs. Angelo Dawkins

Dillinger does his cartwheel to start and says that's a ten. He mocks Dawkins' mixing bowl thing (Has that EVER been explained?) and avoids a spinning splash in the corner. A flying forearm and Russian legsweep set up the Tyebreaker for the pin on Dawkins at 2:25.

Post match here's Bobby Roode to say that was.....impressive. Roode came here to propose a tag team to enter the Dusty Classic.

Dillinger shakes on it and Perfectly Glorious is formed. Graves: "HALLELUJAH!"

Connor's Cure video.

Hideo Itami is ready to face an athlete like Lince Dorado, who has the heart Austin Aries is lacking. Maybe Aries needs to be put to sleep, again.

Ealy Brothers vs. Revival

Non-title and the Ealy Brothers are identical twins named Gabriel and Uriel. Actually never mind as here's Samoa Joe to beat up the brothers. Revival slowly backs away and applauds Joe as they leave.

Joe puts this on Regal and gets in a few more shots on the twins for fun.

Dan Matha arrives next week.

Mandy Rose vs. Ember Moon

Rose actually hits a heck of a forearm to start but gets kicked in the ribs for her efforts. A springboard crossbody gets two and Mandy is already in big trouble. Something like an abdominal stretch slows Moon down and a clothesline gets two. A tilt-a-whirl into a facebuster (Dalton Castle's Bang A Rang) gives Mandy another near fall but Ember sends her into the buckle, setting up the Eclipse for the pin on Mandy at 3:09.

Rating: C-. If Rose can dye her hair red, Eva Marie is out of a job. Mandy has a comparable look and can actually wrestle a coherent match, putting her light years ahead of Eva, whose whole gimmick is that she can't even be trusted to actually, you know, wrestle. Moon is almost guaranteed to be the next big challenger to Asuka and that's just fine.

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa want to win the Dusty Classic and then get the Tag Team Titles from the Revival.

Authors of Pain vs. Jesus Yurnet/Jonathan Cruz

Yurnet is slightly better known as Mr. 450. The Authors go right after them to start and Cruz is gorilla pressed out to the floor. The Russian legsweep/clothesline wraps Cruz up at 1:10.

Post match Paul Ellering says the next chapter will bring pain and that is all we need to know.

Regal can't get hold of Shinsuke Nakamura so he can't give us an update. He can however tell us about some Dusty Classic teams, or at least he could if Blake and Murphy didn't come in and start bickering some more. Regal tells them to go argue elsewhere.

Women's Title: Asuka vs. Liv Morgan

Asuka is defending and we get dueling LET'S GO LIV/ASUKA'S GONNA KILL YOU chants. They lock up to start and Liv's dropkick has no effect as Asuka takes her down and puts on something like the Rings of Saturn for the tap out at 55 seconds. This is EXACTLY what it should have been and is probably a record of some sort.

Asuka says no one is ready for her.

Next week: Cedric Alexander/Andrade Cien Almas vs. Revival in a first round Dusty Classic match.

Lince Dorado vs. Hideo Itami

They shake hands to start. Dorado misses an early charge into the corner but backflips away from one of Hideo's kicks. A jumping knee to the back of Hideo's neck doesn't do much good as an even harder kick to the chest drops Dorado. Lince comes right back with a dropkick to send Itami outside, setting up an Asai moonsault to drive Itami onto the ramp.

Back from a break with Itami getting kicked again, only to get in the tornado DDT neck snap across the top. Dorado's Tajiri handspring is almost countered into the GTS but Dorado reversed into a crucifix for two. Lince misses a shooting star press and that means it's time for the running kicks. The GTS puts Dorado away at 10:22.

Rating: B. This summed up so many of the problems with the cruiserweight division in a ten minute match. First of all, it wouldn't be a stretch to have Itami as a cruiserweight but because of who he generally fights, he's a heavyweight. Even though he is a heavyweight though, he had issues dealing with Dorado here.

Ignoring that though, it's not a big deal for the cruiserweight to be fighting the heavyweight. Over on Raw, so far at least, it's been cruiserweights vs. cruiserweights and that's almost all it can be. Once that stops, why should a cruiserweight go after their own title if they can fight for the heavyweight title? Now that we've seen people like Daniel Bryan, CM Punk, Seth Rollins and Finn Balor win the top titles in the company, it's pretty ridiculous to have them fight over a weight class title. The match was good though as Itami has gotten a lot better since coming back.

Post match here's Austin Aries to jump Itami but has to run away when Itami gets back up. Hideo tells him to get back in here to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. As is so often the case, the wrestling wasn't the point here. They managed to fit in five matches (and introduce a sixth) while also announcing a tournament and doing a run-in after the main event in fifty two minutes, including commercials. There's something so fun about watching a show when they know exactly what they want to do and then go out and do it so well. This show is quick and easy to watch but also entertaining and well put together

at the same time. You can feel the Ryan Ward effect on here and that's a good thing.

Results

Tye Dillinger b. Angelo Dawkins – Tyebreaker

Ember Moon b. Mandy Rose – Eclipse

Authors of Pain b. Jesus Yurnet/Jonathan Cruz – Russian
legsweep/clothesline combo to Cruz

Asuka b. Liv Morgan – Double armbar

Hideo Itami b. Lince Dorado – GTS

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Cruiserweight Classic – August 24, 2016: A Surprise

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: August 24, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

We're wrapping up the second round tonight and after this show we'll have the final eight competitors. There are only three weeks left before the finale and it's hard to imagine that this isn't going to be around much longer. The wrestling has gotten even better as the

tournament goes on, which really is amazing given where they started. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the tournament via a HHH voiceover as well as seeing the (really simple) trophy being unveiled.

Look back at last week's show.

Preview of tonight's three matches.

Opening sequence.

The announcers talk about last week and tonight.

Lince Dorado is here because it's all he's ever wanted to do and he's a hybrid wrestler.

Rich Swann says wrestling saved his life.

Second Round: Lince Dorado vs. Rich Swann

Puerto Rico vs. USA here. The goofy Swann gets his traditional ALL NIGHT LONG chant to start us off. They start fast with some nice early near falls and neither guy being able to pull off a headscissors. Dorado keeps cutting off Rich's dancing so he can do an Alex Wright style dance.

Swann sends him outside and does some dancing of his own until a springboard missile dropkick knocks Rich outside as well. A HUGE dive from Dorado takes Swann down again but he comes right back with a neckbreaker. That means more dancing before he lifts Dorado up for a suplex but kneels down and bends Dorado over his neck for a hold. That's certainly new.

Unfortunately it can't last long due to the laws of physics so it's time to strike it out. Dorado blocks a top rope hurricanrana and they hit bicycle kicks at the same time for a double knock down. Back up and Dorado gets in a few kicks to take over until Rich gets two off a DDT. The standing 450 only hits Dorado's raised knees and Swann is planted with a reverse hurricanrana. Lince misses his shooting star press though and Swann's Phoenix Splash lands on Dorado's face to send him to the final eight at 8:15.

Rating: C+. Swann is an NXT guy and almost guaranteed to make a run

in this thing and the lighthearted character is starting to grow on me. Not everything needs to be this big serious moment so throwing a dancing guy who can wrestle so well in there helps a lot. Good enough match here but nothing compared to some of the other stuff they've done.

We look at Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa losing to the Revival at Takeover.

Gargano, with Ciampa next to him, says he doesn't want to lose again.

Drew Gulak likes to hurt people.

Zack Sabre Jr. knows how to wrestle and can escape anything.

Drew Gulak vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

USA vs. England. Gulak won't shake hands to start and tries to take it to the mat early on. Drew actually gets the better of it with a straitjacket choke, only to have Zack take him to the mat and crank on both arms at the same time. The more aggressive Gulak chops him in the corner and works on a double arm hold of his own. Sabre tells him to come on so Gulak slaps him in the face. Gulak's top rope clothesline is countered into a Fujiwara armbar but it's reversed into a Gory Special with Sabre's arms being bent so far backwards that they cross behind his back.

Sabre gets out and puts on an octopus hold which is quickly reversed into an ankle lock. Drew can't hang on to an electric chair so Sabre reverses into a Kimura with a bodyscissors. Gulak slams him down to escape until a penalty kick to the chest gets two for Zack. A slap to the face knocks Sabre silly but the dragon scissors is countered into rollup to pin Gulak at 8:28.

Rating: B. Now that's more like it as they were just countering everything and turning it into one hold after another until someone finally got caught. That's an important word as Gulak didn't so much get defeated as much as he got caught in the end. It's good to see Sabre get tested like this after looking so dominant in the first round. Good stuff here and really fun to watch.

Drew shakes hands after the match.

TJ Perkins is a high flier and one of the best in the world.

Johnny Gargano is one of the best in the world period and had a great match against Tommaso Ciampa to get to the second round.

Second Round: TJ Perkins vs. Johnny Gargano

Philippines vs. USA. They're playing up the idea that Gargano is four days removed from Takeover so he might not be 100% coming in. Perkins takes him to the mat to start and grabs a Muta Lock for a bit. Back up and Gargano sends TJ outside for a suicide dive but his knee is banged up again. Perkins comes right back with that rocking horse hold of his, followed by a surfboard for good measure.

Gargano gets out of a headscissors and spears Perkins through the ropes for no cover. A big sitout powerbomb plants Johnny and we get a BOTH THESE GUYS chant. They head outside with Johnny hitting a running flip dive but his leg crashing into a table. Back in and they slug it out even more with Perkins hitting a springboard dropkick to the face. A kneebar doesn't work as Gargano reverses into a modified crossface. Perkins is sent face first into the middle buckle with authority for two more and both guys are spent. TJ is smart enough to kick the leg out and roll into a kneebar for the submission at 12:18.

Rating: B. Now THAT is a surprise as Gargano was probably one of the major favorites to win this whole thing. I really like the storytelling here though as they set up the knee injury from a show that hadn't even taken place yet and tied it together here. Gargano giving up because of the knee makes sense and it made for a great story as a result. That kind of thing amazes me and they pulled it off really well here.

Here are the quarterfinal matchups:

Akira Tozawa

Gran Metalik

Zack Sabre Jr.

Noam Dar

Brian Kendrick

Kota Ibushi

TJ Perkins

Rich Swann

Overall Rating: B+. Another night of great wrestling with a huge surprise to wrap things up. Those last eight names should make for an amazing final three weeks and I'm really looking forward to whatever they have planned going forward. There's almost no way the next few rounds won't be great as this show has proven that they can pull off almost anything in the ring.

Results

Rich Swann b. Lince Dorado – Phoenix Splash

Zack Sabre Jr. b. Drew Gulak – Rollup

TJ Perkins b. Johnny Gargano – Kneebar

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Cruiserweight Classic –

July 20, 2016: More Classic

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: July 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Daniel Bryan

It's week two and therefore time for more first round matches. Last week's show was entertaining stuff as they're going with a very different vibe this time around. It's rather cool to see a lot of the unknowns getting shots, even if a lot of them have almost no chance of winning the thing. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Mauro welcomes us to the show and congratulates Bryan on his new role in WWE, though no specific spot is mentioned.

Corey Graves introduces a recap of last week's show and introduces tonight's matches.

First Round: Tajiri vs. Damien Slater

Japan vs. Australia. Tajiri starts fast and sends Slater into the ropes as they're still feeling each other out in the early going. Slater kicks him in the ribs and Bryan is right there to say kicking with Tajiri is a bad idea. Instead they fight over some wristlocks with Tajiri hammering him down with some elbows.

More kicks sets up an armbar on Slater but he makes the ropes and sends Tajiri outside for a slingshot corkscrew dive. Back in and Tajiri grabs a wristlock to slow down Slater's offense. That's so simple but actually smart at the same time. I mean it didn't work but it was smart. A running knee to the head gets two for Slater. Tajiri gets in even more kicks and grabs a quick Tarantula, followed by the handspring elbow. The Buzzsaw Kick puts Slater away at 5:49.

Rating: C. Tajiri was one of my favorites in ECW and it's a good sign that he's basically the same wrestler that he was back in the day (albeit a bit slower). Sometimes it's easier to just kick someone in the head over and over. Slater wasn't the flashiest guy out there but he looked very confident in the basic stuff he was doing.

TJ Perkins is the wrestler who makes everything look good.

Da Mack wants to be the Michael Jackson of professional wrestling. Take that for what it's worth.

First Round: Da Mack vs. TJ Perkins

Germany vs. Philippines and both guys seem cocky. Mack's dancing draws an Alex Wright reference. Perkins takes him down with a dropkick and a headscissors with some dancing that Bryan (nor myself) can identify. Mack catches him with a palm strike but Perkins dances into a Boston crab with Perkins lifting him up by the arms. The threat of a Muta Lock (bridging Indian Deathlock with a chinlock) sends Mack over to the ropes and he's able to pull TJ to the floor.

Naturally that means a big flip dive, followed by some dancing stomps back inside. Now the Muta Lock has Mack in trouble but he's right in front of the ropes. Mack is back up and runs the corner for a spinning kick to the face, only to have the landing delay the cover. Perkins is right back up with a slingshot dropkick but he misses a 450. Not that it matters as some kicks to the head set up a kneebar to make Mack tap at 6:30.

Rating: B-. They packed a lot into a short amount of time and it was a much different style than the first match. This was all about the high flying with some submission stuff thrown in for some flavor. Mack looked like almost any high flying indy name but Perkins looked like a much more versatile and polished wrestler. Not great but entertaining enough.

Mustafa Ali says he's the most well rounded wrestler in the tournament.

Lince Dorado, a masked man, talks about wrestling around the world and being ready to face anyone.

First Round: Mustafa Ali vs. Lince Dorado

Pakistan vs. Puerto Rico. Ali doesn't want to shake hands but eventually does so to get us going. Dorado headscissors him out to the floor but gets pulled outside as well, setting up a running knee from the apron. A knee to the back gets two on Dorado but he kicks Ali in the face. Dorado isn't done as he headscissors Ali to the floor, setting up the longest Asai Moonsault I've ever seen. Back in and a springboard reverse hurricanrana (it sounds better than it looks) gets two on Ali, who comes right back with a springboard

Spanish Fly for the same. Ali misses a 450 though and a shooting star gives Dorado the pin at 5:53.

Rating: B+. Take two guys and let them fly all over the place for a few minutes. It worked back in WCW and it's still going to work today. This was easily the most entertaining thing so far with two guys who both got to show off a lot. I've seen Dorado before but Ali looked a lot better than I was expecting. Really fun match here and the kind I've been waiting for.

Akira Tozawa is excited to be here.

Kenneth Johnson thinks it's his time.

First Round: Akira Tozawa vs. Kenneth Johnson

Japan vs. USA. Again they fight over a wristlock to start until Johnson actually takes him to the mat and works on the leg. A headlock into a headscissors gives us a standoff. Tozawa, the heavy favorite coming in, finally starts getting serious and wins a chop off before just punching Johnson in the jaw.

Johnson takes a hard roaring elbow but comes right back with a dropkick for no cover. There's a double clothesline to put both guys down until Tozawa goes nuts with some forearms to the jaw. Johnson stops him cold with knees to the face and a jackknife cover for two. Kenneth misses a middle rope spinning legdrop though and Tozawa snaps off a hard German suplex for two, followed by a bridging German for the pin at 10:00.

Rating: B. Tozawa cranked it up in the end and looked like one of the favorites to win the whole thing. Johnson was the definition of a guy in tights but he held his own here against someone with a lot more experience and skill. There was even a good story here with Tozawa underestimating him and Johnson trying to make the most of it until he was overcome by all the skill and experience. The match was shockingly good and far better than the squash I was expecting.

Overall Rating: B+. The last two matches were definitely upgrades over the first two with two flashy, high flying cruiserweight styles matches which is more what I was looking for here. I do however like the multiple styles because they keep the thing from getting stale with the same stuff over and over. Mixing it up is always an appreciated touch and it made the show much more entertaining this week.

Results

Tajiri b. Damien Slater – Buzzsaw Kick

TJ Perkins b. Da Mack – Kneebar

Lince Dorado b. Mustafa Ali – Shooting Star Press

Akira Tozawa b. Kenneth Johnson – German suplex

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