

Monday Night Raw – July 1, 1996: Of Course It's Shawn

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 1, 1996

Location: Brown County Expo, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Attendance: 4,660

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

It's Shawn-a-Mania running wild here as Shawn is the undisputed king of the company and rolling over anyone who dares challenge him.

Unfortunately this isn't exactly saving them in the ratings but there's only so much they can do against Nitro and the Outsiders at this point, especially with British Bulldog as his top challenger in the previous few months. Let's get to it.

Shawn Michaels vs. Marty Jannetty

Non-title. Shawn has the Kliq Cam with him to make sure he's even less interesting than he already was. Jim Cornette is on the floor with the New Rockers to help set up Shawn vs. Vader. They do the big lockup to start as Vince talks about Canada Day. Feeling out process to start with Shawn nipping back up off an early takedown. Some armdrags put Shawn down again and it's actually all Marty early on. You know Shawn isn't going to sell for that long though and he makes a quick comeback with a few armdrags of his own, followed by a clothesline.

Leif pulls his partner out of the way of Sweet Chin Music and offers a distraction so Marty can take over again. There's a backdrop to drop Shawn on his back but Marty spends too much time posing. Back from a break with Marty getting two off a snapmare (yes a snapmare) and putting on a chinlock. Shawn's comeback is cut off when his shoulder goes into the post. Marty lands on his feet to escape a monkey flip and nails a quick clothesline. Again Shawn will have none of that and hits the forearm but doesn't go straight for the superkick.

Instead he tries a powerbomb which is countered into a hurricanrana which

is countered into a sunset flip for two on Marty. We take another break and come back with Marty scoring with the Rocker Dropper but missing the top rope fist drop. Shawn goes old school with a piledriver (which, along with the teardrop suplex were completely abandoned once he went to the superkick) and the top rope elbow, followed by Sweet Chin Music for the pin.

Rating: B. These two always worked well together, dating back to their great feud in 1993 over the Intercontinental Title. Marty continues to be a very underrated performer who could have been much better remembered if he wasn't partnered with Shawn Michaels earlier in his career. Really good TV match here though which you could easily put on yet another Shawn DVD.

Leif tries to interfere and gets a superkick of his own. Shawn's manager Jose Lothario punches out Cornette, who did nothing here.

We look at Sunny suckering Phineas Godwinn in to admit he loved her before ripping him apart and sending the Smoking Gunns in for the beatdown. Hillbilly Jim and Henry Godwinn made the save, leaving Sunny to be slopped. Sunny looked great here, before the slopping that is.

Mankind vs. Duke Droese

Jake Roberts is on commentary, which isn't something you often hear. Lawler makes drunk jokes about Roberts as Mankind beats the heck out of Droese to start. We take a very early break and come back with Mankind cranking on the arm as the slow beating continues, only to be cut off by Jake asking what closet Lawler came out of. A quick spinebuster gives Duke a breather but Mankind grabs the Mandible Claw to break up...something that isn't important as Droese is out.

Rating: D. This was just a squash and it makes sense that Droese was gone after this, save for a few matches on Superstars. The guy was a wrestling garbageman though and he's only going to get so far in the company. At least things are starting to shift though and that's a really good thing for the WWF's future.

Lawler and Roberts get in an argument with Jerry slapping him, only to

have Mankind put Jake down with the Claw.

Marc Mero vs. Goldust

Steve Austin is on commentary before his match with Mero at In Your House IX. Goldust is feuding with Undertaker so a cameo isn't out of the question. During the entrances, Austin starts yelling at Vince for cutting him off and you can almost hear 1998 from here. Mero punches him out to the floor to start as Austin goes off on Roberts for being old. Goldust is sent outside again as the stalling continues.

We take a break and come back with Mero knocking Goldust around ringside before he gets caught in a chinlock. Make that three chinlocks as this just keeps going. Goldust drops a fist to the head and we hit ANOTHER chinlock as we go to a second break. Back with Mero missing an elbow drop and Goldust hammering away with right hands. That's enough excitement so it's off to a REVERSE chinlock.

Mero gets back up and charges into a back elbow, setting up a powerslam for two. A double clothesline puts both of them down because this match hasn't involved enough laying around. Marlena gets very close to Sable as Mero makes his comeback. The camera stays on the women and cuts back to see Goldust hitting the Curtain Call for the pin.

Rating: D-. Oh sweet goodness what a boring match. This was a bunch of sitting around waiting on anything interesting to happen and then not being surprised when nothing happened. These guys are better than this and I have no idea why they had such a horrible match with such little effort involved.

Overall Rating: C-. The opener is really good but it's not enough to save the rest of the show. This show went up against the go home show for Bash at the Beach 1996 (as in the Third Man) so the follow up from this mess is going against Hogan's big first appearance from this show. Well at least it should as Hogan didn't debut in the Black and White until the NEXT week for reasons of WCW is stupid. Either way, this show sucked, save for Shawn of course, which is just how things worked in 1996.

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Monday Night Raw – March 25, 2002 (First WWF Draft): This Might Be A Bad Idea

This seemed appropriate given what we're seeing now. Starting tonight, I'll be putting up alternating reviews from the original Brand Split with Raw going up on Wednesday and Smackdown/pay per views going up on Saturdays. There's no better place to start than on the original Draft so let's get to it.

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 25, 2002

Location: Bryce Jordan Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 15,550

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This seemed due for a second look since they're doing it all again this year. We're just after Wrestlemania XVIII and things are kind of in a lull. With so many wrestlers and no big evil for the WWF to fight (since the WCW/ECW Invasion just had to be started and wrapped up by

Thanksgiving), it was decided to split the rosters in two. This was a really cool idea at the time but it should be interesting to see how it worked when the initial Brand Extension isn't the most fondly remembered concept. Let's get to it.

Linda McMahon is in WWF Studios to welcome us to the show, telling us that only twenty picks will be made tonight for the sake of time. The changes won't officially take place until next week so everyone will be on Smackdown this week. As for tonight though, HHH, Chris Jericho and Stephanie McMahon can't be drafted because they're in a triple threat for the World Title (Yes Stephanie was getting a World Title shot and was a major focus fourteen years ago as well.). Steve Austin can't be drafted either due to a contractual stipulation (read as a real life contract dispute) and is therefore a free agent and can sign wherever he wants.

Opening sequence.

There are PODIUMS ON THE STAGE! YES I SAID PODIUMS!!!

Tazz vs. Mr. Perfect

Perfect wouldn't be around much longer due to a certain airplane ride (long and bad story). After promising to be a perfect pick, Perfect dropkicks him at the bell as we're told that the WWF and Women's Champion can compete on both shows. An early PerfectPlex gets two as Tazz is next to the ropes. Perfect charges into a boot and the Tazmission finishes quick. I wouldn't expect to see a lot of strong wrestling tonight.

Tazz says the perfect pick has become just another victim.

Ric Flair (Raw owner) and Arn Anderson are in their war room to go over their draft options.

Vince's war room is just an office. He has the first pick and a photo of Kurt Angle is visible on his desk.

Here's Vince for the first pick, which I'm sure will involve a speech. The first pick for Smackdown will be...the Rock. Well who else was it going to be? Rock leaves the locker room (walking past Undertaker and Hogan who are among the masses in a nice touch) as we see a quick graphic

showing his career highlights.

Vince tells Rock that he's not allowed to put his hands on him or threatening to put his boots in various places or saying IT DOESN'T MATTER ever again. The fans cut him off with a ROCKY chant so Vince says he made both Hogan and the Rock. The boss goes to leave but Rock isn't quite done yet. To be fair he hasn't said anything yet so he hasn't actually started.

Rock wants to go out on Raw with a bang because he won the WWF World Title here, formed the Rock and Sock Connection here and did various things to Vince. We hit some catchphrases before Rock has them do the Penn State chant (WE ARE...PENN STATE) and then alters it to insult Vince even more. This was just a Rock's greatest hits stretched over about ten minutes.

Ric comes out and picks Undertaker #1 overall despite hating him.

Kurt Angle comes in to yell at Vince for not picking him first. Vince talks about throwing Flair a swerve out there (By picking the Rock?) when Undertaker comes in to yell. The boss promises to make this right.

Edge/Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian/Booker T.

Two feuds in one here but Edge is about to start a really good feud with Angle. Booker kicks Edge in the face to start and Christian gets two off a powerslam. A quick clothesline drops Christian though as the announcers talk about Austin having a clause in his contract to make sure he's a free agent. In case of a Brand Split you see. Booker eats the Diamond Cutter but Christian gives him an Unprettier. A quick scissors kick puts Page away in a nothing match.

Angle reads off his resume until Vince makes him the #2 pick.

Ric picks the NWO (Hall/Nash/X-Pac) because that's something you can do. I can't wait for that Rock vs. Nash match. The NWO is uh...not in the locker room.

Vince yells at Angle for getting the NWO (who Vince brought in to poison the company) and promises to sign Austin. Angle suggests Chris Benoit

(currently out with an injury but coming back soon.) with the next pick so Vince makes him #3. Benoit would return in July and just show up on Raw with no mention of being drafted to Smackdown. If nothing else it's a good idea to have some of these picks backstage as there's no reason to have them both come out here every time.

We see both brands' big boards and JR thinks Flair's strategy is, uh, strange.

The NWO threatens Ric so he picks Kane to keep an eye on them. Aside from X-Pac, Hall is now the second shortest member of the roster.

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

Ivory returned last week to start a feud with Trish. They start fast with Ivory hammering away and ducking a middle rope cross body. Trish fights out of a chinlock and grabs the Stratusphere, followed by the Stratusfaction for another nothing match.

Vince picks Hulk Hogan, whose graphic incorrectly lists him as a seven time WCW Champion.

After a break, Ric picks Intercontinental Champion Rob Van Dam.

Vince is ticked because he wanted the title so Angle suggests giving him an Intercontinental Title shot tonight so he can bring the title to Smackdown. Vince: "That's why you're the number two draft pick! Maybe he should have been #1."

Rock and Hogan have a bro moment where they praise the people. Ignoring the whole attempted murder thing from a few weeks ago, Rock agrees to team up against the NWO in a handicap match.

Vince picks Billy and Chuck as a unit.

The Rock/Hulk Hogan vs. NWO

The NWO powerbombed Rock through a table on Smackdown until Hogan made the save to set this up. Hogan and X-Pac get things going with a big shove sending the smaller one out to the floor. Hall gets pushed down

with ease so it's off to Nash who can actually shove Hulk down.

Hogan cleans house with ease but he takes too long loading up a backdrop and gets kicked in the face. It's off to X-Pac for more kicks but Hogan knocks him away and makes the tag off to Rock. Things finally speed up and X-Pac is easily knocked to the floor. The Rock Bottom and legdrop get two on Nash with X-Pac making the save. It's a three on two beatdown until Kane comes out for the DQ.

Rating: F. Were you expecting anything else? It says a lot when the match lasts five minutes and is this boring with a screwy ending. I mean, X-Pac can't take a fall to the combined forces of Hulk Hogan and the Rock? I could go for an entertaining match at some point tonight but I'm not feeling confident at this point.

The NWO runs off.

Vince accuses Ric of sending Kane out there so Flair takes Booker T.
Vince: "Edge!" Ric: "Big Show!" Vince: "Rikishi!"

Jeff Hardy vs. Billy

Lita, Matt, Chuck and Rico are all at ringside. Billy fires off some right hands in the corner to start but misses a charge. The announcers talk about being drafted to different shows as Jeff hits a tornado DDT. The Swanton misses though as Lita completely botches a hurricanrana to Rico (her legs weren't around his head and he had to flip himself). Jeff grabs a rollup for a fluke pin in another nothing match.

Ric picks Bubba Ray Dudley so he can have "the most dominant tag team in WWF history." Vince: "Well Ric it looks like you're trying to get the most dominant tag team in WWF history." Did Stephanie write this segment? Vince picks D-Von to balance things out.

The Dudleys, realizing their careers are pretty much over for the time being, hug it out.

European Title: William Regal vs. Rikishi

Regal is defending. And never mind as Brock Lesnar runs out and flattens

Rikishi with an F5.

Jazz wants to see where the Divas end up.

Vince comes out to pick Brock but Ric says it's his pick and he'll select Brock instead. Vince: "Mark Henry!" Ric: "William Regal!" Vince: "Maven!" (Hardcore Champion). Ric: "Lita!" Vince gets on him for choosing a woman and thinks Ric just wants to sleep with her. Well duh.

Here are the picks:

Smackdown

1. The Rock
2. Kurt Angle
3. Chris Benoit
4. Hulk Hogan
5. Billy and Chuck
6. Edge
7. Rikishi
8. D-Von Dudley
9. Mark Henry
10. Maven

Raw

1. Undertaker
2. NWO
3. Kane
4. Rob Van Dam

5. Booker T.
6. Big Show
7. Bubba Ray Dudley
8. Brock Lesnar
9. William Regal
10. Lita

Riveting no?

Intercontinental Title: Kurt Angle vs. Rob Van Dam

Angle is challenging and grabs a German suplex for two as the bell rings. Van Dam gets stomped down as the fans chant USA. I'd assume for Angle, even though Michigan is just as American as Pennsylvania. Van Dam kicks him in the head and gets two off Rolling Thunder. Angle pulls the referee in the way of a top rope kick for the DQ.

Kurt puts on the ankle lock until Edge makes the save.

Stephanie is ready to win the title.

WWF World Title: HHH vs. Chris Jericho vs. Stephanie McMahon

HHH is defending and the challengers have a business relationship. I have no idea why they never had a romantic relationship as that could have been amazing. If HHH pins Stephanie, she's gone FOREVER. HHH backdrops the real wrestler to start but has to look at Stephanie so Jericho can chop away. Stephanie lays down so Jericho can cover her for two but he has to save her from the Pedigree.

HHH catapults Jericho into Stephanie so we can have the falling low blow spot. Thankfully HHH kicks her to the floor so we can have an actual match for a bit. Of course Stephanie won't STAY AWAY FROM THE MATCH as she just has to come back in to screech about how Jericho needs to work on the leg. Stephanie gets run over by mistake so she slaps Jericho and demands that he get HHH. Jericho clotheslines her by mistake but gets

sent to the floor, allowing HHH to tease another Pedigree. Naturally that can't happen because the fans love waiting on her getting her comeuppance instead of actually getting it.

Jericho grabs the belts (this was when there was no Undisputed Title belt yet) for a double knockout, meaning Stephanie can cover both of them. The Walls have HHH in trouble but Stephanie breaks them up by jumping on Jericho's back. A Pedigree gets rid of Jericho but THERE SHE IS AGAIN. HHH has finally had enough and hits a spinebuster (because we can't hurt her perfect face) to retain.

Rating: D-. They couldn't even do a good match (which these two are certainly capable of having) because that wasn't the point here. Yeah a Wrestlemania main event rematch for the title eight days later wasn't the focus. Instead, as I'm sure you can tell, this was ALL about Stephanie and there was no hiding it. Of course her being gone "forever" lasted less than four months as she was brought back as the completely face GM of Smackdown because she's just so darn loveable that we can forgive this along with the whole Alliance thing last year.

Here's the thing: what exactly did Stephanie add to this? Why couldn't this have just been HHH vs. Jericho with Stephanie leaving if Jericho lost? It's actually a good match, Jericho is fine with losing a fall to the champ and the guys don't have to keep stopping so often so she can catch up. Horrible match of course and completely not HHH and Jericho's fault, but since it can't be Stephanie's fault either (as nothing ever can be), we'll blame...uh...oh yeah the referee. HE RUINED IT!

Stephanie of course freaks out and tries to hang on to anything she can before security takes her away. HHH sings the Goodbye Song to end the show. This was a special bonus in case you didn't get that you were watching Monday Night Stephanie.

Overall Rating: F. Oh sweet goodness what a mess. First of all, the match of the night was.....uhhh....you know what it was actually Mr. Perfect against Tazz in a match lasting 1:53. That's not to say it was good but it didn't have a major botch, a stupid ending or the powers of Stephanie holding it back.

Other than that though, this was a complete disaster with Smackdown being stacked, Raw basically begging Austin to come back and save the thing and the “wrestling” being little more than background noise. This was somehow worse than I remembered it, which is covering quite a bit of ground as I remember this show being horrible the last time I watched it.

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Monday Night Raw – May 29, 1995: Get The Flashlight!

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 29, 1995

Location: Broome County Arena, Binghamton, New York

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We’re wrap up the month here as the company is just getting worse and worse as the weeks go by. The Undertaker is back tonight though so maybe we can get a little relief. Unfortunately he’s facing Jeff Jarrett, who could somehow bring him right back down to reality. This tournament is showing how weak the heel side of this roster really is. Let’s get to it.

Jeff Jarrett is in the ring to say he’s ready to face Undertaker but he panics when the lights go out. Jeff: “GET THE FLASHLIGHT! GET THE

FLASHLIGHT!" Funny line, but what's even funnier is Vince and Jerry making little comments about Jeff's promo but you can see them sitting there in silence.

Opening sequence.

Sid vs. Mike Khoury

Sid has Tatanka and Ted DiBiase in his corner. Isn't that a bit excessive for a squash? Powerbomb ends this in about a minute.

We look at Diesel injuring his elbow at In Your House and having surgery to fix it up. He should be back soon and won't miss any significant time.

Adam Bomb vs. Bob Cook

Vince mentions that there will be a broadcast version of Wrestlemania this weekend and says he's proud as a peacock about it. I'm not sure why he can't say it's on NBC (whose logo is a peacock) as they're willing to air it but won't let him market it? Bomb starts in on the arm and punches away before scoring with the top rope clothesline to end it quick. He never recovered from that Mabel match.

King of the Ring Control Center with Diesel and Bigelow promising to bankrupt and close the Million Dollar Corporation.

Hakushi vs. John Snakowski

Hakushi comes out with a bag containing.....A BRET HART HEAD. You can hear the crowd freak out over that and I can't blame them. That was actually creepy. Hakushi chops a lot, hits a Vader Bomb and finishes with a running flip splash.

Antonino Rocca, Ernie Ladd and Ivan Putski will be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Alundra Blayze wants to fight Bertha Faye. For some reason this takes three minutes.

Men on a Mission vs. Aaron Ferguson/Gary Scott

Scott fires off kicks to Mo's fat gut to start but Mabel comes in and destroys him as you would expect. Aaron comes in to start on Mo's arm but gets punched in the face for his efforts. It's back to Scott so Mabel can splash him in the corner, setting up another splash for the pin.

Rating: D-. I'm running out of ways to describe these squashes. Mabel is huge and crushes people and Mo is just there because Mabel needed a partner. For the life of me I don't know what Vince saw in Mabel to push him like he did but maybe he thought it was another Yokozuna. You know, without the talent, intimidation factor or anything else positive.

We look at the incomplete King of the Ring brackets.

King of the Ring Qualifying Match: Jeff Jarrett vs. Undertaker

As you might expect, Jeff is terrified but tries some right hands to start. That earns him the jumping clothesline and Old School. Just like last time, Roadie's interference doesn't work and Jeff has to avoid an elbow drop. Another Roadie distraction actually does work though and Jeff starts stomping away with a dropkick getting two. Jarrett starts in on the leg and we take a break. Back with the Figure Four going on until Jeff gets caught holding the ropes. A swinging neckbreaker keeps Undertaker in trouble but he grabs Jeff out of the air for a chokeslam. The Tombstone sends Undertaker to the tournament.

Rating: C. For once I'm ok with a champion losing clean because despite not being a champion, Undertaker is a much bigger deal than Jarrett could ever hope to be. This was a totally watchable match as Jarrett is more than capable of wrestling a simple match and making it look fine. The problem is when he's asked to be interesting out of the ring because he's just boring otherwise.

A preview for next week's show and Bob Backlund raging against modern music wrap us up.

Overall Rating: D+. It's really interesting how much one match not being horrible can help a show. Jarrett vs. Undertaker certainly isn't great but it kept the show from leaving a bad taste in my mouth and that's more than you usually get from any given episode. The King of the Ring is

starting to take shape and that's probably why I'm desperate to get out of this month.

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Monday Night Raw – May 22, 1995: The Pre-Game

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 22, 1995

Location: Broome County Arena, Binghamton, New York

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

King of the Ring already can't get here soon enough and we're only eight days removed from the previous pay per view. There's just nothing interesting going on right now as Ted DiBiase and company aren't working as top heels. On the other hand, the top faces are Diesel, Shawn and Bam Bam Bigelow. This could be even worse than it sounds. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sid attacking Shawn Michaels a few months back to set up Shawn's big return tonight against King Kong Bundy.

Opening sequence.

Vince and Jerry have their opening chat.

Razor Ramon vs. Mike Bell

Razor has Savio Vega with him and has recently defeated Jacob Blu to qualify for the King of the Ring tournament. I know it's obvious that Razor would be involved but that's the best opponent they had for him? We actually hear about Razor and Jeff Jarrett trading the Intercontinental Title on a house show tour over the weekend, which isn't something you often hear mentioned on TV.

Bell takes him down for a surprising start but Razor comes right back with his driving shoulder blocks. There's the fall away slam and we hit something like an STF. Vince and Jerry argue about Lawler's mom at In Your House as the belly to back superplex sets up...nothing actually as Razor just shoves Bell down and pins him.

Rating: D. Standard squash here with Razor looking good. He should be making a strong run in the King of the Ring as he's certainly one of the best midcard acts in a long time and above all else he has creditability. I'm really not sure why they didn't give Razor a stronger push as he should have been more than capable of handling it, assuming his personal issues were under control.

Here's Bret Hart to get in Lawler's face. Bret can't believe he lost at In Your House and now he doesn't want to hear Jerry calling himself the better man. We even get some Canadian swearing before Bret challenges Lawler to one more match with any terms Lawler wants. So that's where Christian got the ONE MORE MATCH chant. Even more swearing (WAY intense for 1995) has Bret going after Lawler with Vince having to play defense. No gimmick is announced here but that just keeps you wanting to come back for more.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. John Crystal

This is Helmsley's Raw debut so we actually have some history on this show. Helmsley works on the arm to start before slapping Crystal in the face like a true blueblood should. A chinlock doesn't last long and Helmsley finishes this quickly with a cutter, though the Pedigree would

come soon enough. I'm always fascinated with these historical moments that no one knew would mean anything for years.

We go to Bob Backlund campaign headquarters for his first campaign ideas: children must purchase a dictionary, read one great American novel every week, ban calculators and computers and get rid of summer vacations. As a seven year old, this TERRIFIED me and I actually bought the whole thing.

The In Your House winner sees the inside for the first time and finds the Bushwhackers in a closet. I'm always stunned that they were still around at this point.

Allied Powers vs. Bill Payne/Tony DeVito

The match almost immediately goes to a split screen so we can see Bulldog electric chair Mabel. Bulldog throws DeVito around, Luger throws Payne around and the powerslam ends Bill in a hurry.

We recap Bam Bam Bigelow vs. I.R.S. from last week.

Kama Mustafa vs. Barry Horowitz

Kama is part of DiBiase's team. Barry swings away to start and has as much effect as you would expect, only to have Kama miss a charge and fall outside. Vince makes sure to mention that Barry has yet to win a match on Raw, which sounds like foreshadowing. Kama comes back with ease and finishes with a half crab.

Todd previews the Hall of Fame banquet, which is a really low level event at this point. Antonino Rocca is the first name announced for induction.

King of the Ring Qualifying Match: Shawn Michaels vs. King Kong Bundy

Bundy goes right after him to start so Michaels knees him in the back to put the big man on the floor. We take an early break and come back with Shawn hammering away, including some right hands in the corner. Michaels makes the mistake of going outside to mess with DiBiase though, allowing Bundy to hit him from behind and get in a slam on the floor.

We hit the fat man offense that you've come to expect from Bundy over the

last ten years or so. It's off to a bearhug (a must have for any big man match) followed by a chinlock (a must have for almost any match longer than two minutes). We see Diesel and Bigelow watching in the back as Shawn avoids a splash and we take a break. Back with Shawn hitting the superkick for the pin. The post break part was less than thirty seconds.

Rating: D+. You know, this wasn't horrible. Bundy was fine for a monster for Shawn to slay, despite there being almost no chance for him to win in the first place. Michaels might be the shot in the arm this company needs as they're dying for star power and Shawn was one of the hottest acts on the roster.

Diesel and Bigelow come out to congratulate Shawn, who gives Diesel the jumping Too Sweet to show that they're cool.

Lawler won't pick a stipulation due to a dry throat.

Undertaker is ready for his King of the Ring qualifying match against Jeff Jarrett.

Overall Rating: D. Historic Raw debut aside, this was another boring show though not as boring as some of them. Shawn coming back is a really good thing for the promotion and another Lawler vs. Bret match should help them along. Above all else though they need a big bad and there really doesn't seem to be anyone capable of filling that role, including Sid. The roster is killing them right now and a big name turning heel would be the best possible option.

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Monday Night Raw – May 15, 1995: They're Already Dying

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 15, 1995

Location: Broome County Arena, Binghamton, New York

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're past In Your House and that means it's time to go towards.....towards.....dang it we're going towards King of the Ring 1995. Diesel is still WWF World Champion as Sid still can't win a singles title. Other than that, we still have Jerry Lawler vs. Bret Hart because why stop at two years? Let's get to it.

We open with dueling IRS and Bam Bam Bigelow promos with both saying they're ready.

Lawler is VERY happy after beating Bret Hart last night. That's quite the accomplishment for him actually.

Owen Hart/Yokozuna vs. Nick Barbarry/Bill Weaver

Non-title of course. Cornette yells that a fan didn't get enough oxygen as a fetus. I've asked this before but WHERE DOES HE COME UP WITH THIS STUFF??? A double clothesline drops the jobbers and it's off to Hart to beat on Weaver. Barbarry actually gets in a hiptoss and they take turns working on Owen's arm. Yokozuna will have none of that and finishes Owen with a Rock Bottom.

Rating: D. Just a squash here though I'm not sure what the need was after a successful title defense on pay per view the night before. Owen and Yokozuna were a good oddball tag team and held the belts for a good long

reign, possibly due to a lack of any real competition. They weren't a great team or anything really close to it but when there were almost no other teams of worth around, it wasn't hard to stand out.

We look at some stills of Lawler and his mom (a twenty-something year old model) beating Bret last night.

The latest ad campaign: aliens want to destroy the world but spare it for the sake of the WWF. Ok then.

Man Mountain Rock vs. Iron Mike Sharpe

That WWF guitar is still one of the coolest things in the history of the world. Like, up there with Tang. Sharpe (How is he still around?) bounces off the huge Rock and gets crushed with an elbow. A Fujiwara Armbar (thankfully not on Sharpe's bad arm) ends Mike in a hurry.

We see the house being given away last night and an 11 year old actually won the thing.

Stills of Jeff Jarrett/The Roadie beating on Razor Ramon until Savio Vega debuted for the save.

Savio speaks Spanish and I think says he's here to work. Vince calms him down enough to speak English and say no one is going to hurt his friends when he's around.

King of the Ring Qualifying Match: Mantaaur vs. Bob Holly

Oh...dang man. Mantaaur shoves Bob outside like he's nothing and shrugs off some dropkicks back inside. We hit the choking on the ropes as it's very clear that Mantaaur isn't very good. Mantaaur slowly forearm Bob in the chest and gets two off a suplex. A rollup and missile dropkick give Holly two each and a high cross body is enough for the pin.

Rating: D-. Oh yeah this was bad and that really can't be a surprise. Mantaaur was as bad of a big man as there's been since the last time Mabel had a match (so last night) but Holly isn't exactly the most thrilling guy in the world. There was just no depth to the roster at this point and it's showing more and more every single week.

Bob Backlund has a big announcement. Back at Wrestlemania XI he saw a sign and now everything has ionized. Backlund talks about the Olympics starting in 1776 and John F. Kennedy being shot in December 1963. Then there's February 20, 1978, when he won the WWF World Title, which brings us to his announcement: he's running for President of the United States and that means a marching band. Vince is STUNNED for a great visual. I'm actually stunned this hasn't been referenced in 2016 when Backlund is around again.

Stills of last night's main event and post match brawl with Tatanka and Bam Bam Bigelow getting involved.

Ted DiBiase wants a tag match with Diesel/Bigelow vs. Sid/Tatanka for King of the Ring.

I.R.S. vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Bigelow, now a fire enthusiast, brings out Diesel to be in his corner and sounds like he accepts the challenge. Diesel chases DiBiase off and we're ready to go, despite that not being fair to I.R.S. Bigelow sends the tax man outside early on and it's time for an early break. Back with Bigelow dropping a headbutt but missing its top rope cousin. Vince mentions Bigelow having a bad knee, which A, should have been brought up earlier and B, should have been noticed earlier.

We hit the chinlock for a bit, followed by an abdominal stretch to really spice things up. I.R.S. takes a buckle pad off (Uh, Diesel? Help?) and sends Bigelow into the steel for two, only to have Bigelow do the same (with the head clearly not making contact) and dropping a headbutt for the pin.

Rating: D-. Egads they're actually getting worse. You would think a leg injury coming into the match would warrant an actual attack on the leg but instead it was a chinlock and an abdominal stretch. Also I hope this isn't their way to launch Bigelow to the next level as a main event face because he just had to cheat to beat a career midcarder.

Shawn Michaels is coming back next week so here's a video to get you fired up.

Overall Rating: F. Oh yeah they're already dying and this is coming off a pay per view. I have no idea how they could have thought this was going to be a good idea and pushing Bigelow as a main event face, at least like this, is only going to make things worse. Now we've got tournament qualifiers on top of the bad matches, but maybe Shawn can do them some good. It certainly can't make things worse.

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Monday Night Raw – August 22, 2016: Turn It Up

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 22, 2016

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the night after Summerslam and there's a lot to talk about, but first and foremost we have no Universal Champion. Finn Balor won the inaugural title last night but was forced to vacate it due to a shoulder injury suffered during the match. Odds are tonight we'll find out what happens with the title so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last night's Universal Title match. Nothing else is mentioned.

Opening sequence.

The announcers tell us about Finn's injury and the title being vacated. He'll be out at least SIX months.

The bosses bring out Finn with his arm in a sling. Balor says this title represents a lifetime of sacrifice, including one last night. He has to vacate the title tonight but when he comes back, this title is the first thing he's coming for. Balor gets a hero's sendoff but Seth Rollins cuts him off with a huge grin on his face. Rollins calls himself the real winner last night but here's Sami Zayn to cut him off.

Nothing is said as Chris Jericho comes out as well. He's followed by Owens, Enzo and Cass (before this segment started I said I'd take a flier and put the belt on Cass) and Reigns. Foley says there's going to be a series of matches to determine the champion next week. You can imagine how well that's going over.

Seth Rollins vs. Sami Zayn

Before the bell, Sami looks over at Owens and gets jumped from behind to send us to a break. The match is joined in progress with Sami snapping off a headscissors to put Rollins outside, only to have him start stomping at Zayn in the corner. Back up and Sami springboards off the bottom rope and twists his ankle. Sami says he can keep going and low bridges to the floor, setting up a slingshot flip dive over the top. Seth comes back with the top rope knee to the head and we take a break.

Back with Sami hitting his big clothesline and a sunset bomb out of the corner. The Pedigree doesn't work as Sami hits the exploder suplex. The Helluva Kick doesn't work though and Seth stomps on the foot before grabbing a leg lock for...actually not a submission. Sami gets to the ropes but can't grab a suplex, setting up the Pedigree to give Rollins the pin at 11:53.

Rating: C+. I'm fairly sure that was a fake ankle injury and it's a

testament to what Sami can do with his selling that I'm really not positive. Rollins advancing is fine but it would be nice if Sami could have a story that isn't Kevin Owens related. The selling worked really well and I love Rollins trying a leg lock instead of just instantly using his regular move. It shows thinking during the match, which is something Rollins should always be doing.

Kevin Owens vs. Neville

So there are going to be some named added. Neville sends him outside to start and hits a 450 off the apron. Another big running flip dive takes Owens down but here's Chris Jericho for a distraction so Kevin can (not) hit a clothesline to turn Neville inside out. Back with Neville avoiding a frog splash and hitting a middle rope phoenix splash, followed by the deadlift German suplex for two. The Red Arrow misses but Neville enziguris him right back into position. Jericho distracts the referee though and Owens hits the torture rack neckbreaker for the pin at 8:31.

Rating: C+. Oh how I love secondary finishers. It gets so tiring waiting on the one move that can finish a match so switching it up like this is a really nice change of pace. Owens winning here was obvious and there's nothing wrong with that. The match was fine for the time they had and Neville flying around is always fun.

The title match next week will be a fatal fourway. Is this surprising in the slightest?

Here's New Day to celebrate holding the Tag Team Titles for 365 days. They thank the fans for the year and it's time for a unicorn pinata. As I continue to try to understand the concept of a pinata, here are Anderson and Gallows to call this stupid. They point out that New Day lost last night so there needs to be a rematch. Anderson asks Kofi about taking the Magic Killer last night. Kofi: "BIG E! DEFEND ME!" Big E.: "Uh, I got nothing." It's Anderson vs. Big E. tonight and that means trombone time.

Karl Anderson vs. Big E.

Joined in progress again with Big E. putting on the abdominal stretch and some rhythmic spanking. Anderson sends him into the corner and starts

kicking at the leg, including a running kick to the back of the knee. Big E. powers him up again and throws Anderson over the top. The spear through the ropes is broken up by a knee as the rest of New Day beats on Gallows. Back in and the Big Ending puts Anderson away at 3:34.

Rating: D+. Well that happened. I'm not sure how the champion winning is better than having the challengers get some wins to build momentum but the New Day merchandise is all that matters. New Day holding the titles for a year is amazing but I'm not sure how much longer they can go before it stops being entertaining. Then again I was saying that six months ago.

The Dudley Boyz are saying goodbye tonight so we see a clip of their debut in 1999.

Here's Titus O'Neil for a chat. Ok ok we'll stop booing your belt. Titus talks about how New Day beat the Prime Time Players for the belts and rips on Darren Young for holding him out of the main event. People have been blaming Bob Backlund but Titus wants to blame Darren for not being in the main event. No one comes out so the fans ask for Slater again. Cue Bob Backlund at a run to put Titus in a cross face pectoral grab before Titus slams him. Darren runs out (Was he watching the Little League World Series?) and takes the Clash of the Titus while Backlund looks dead.

Video on Lesnar vs. Orton.

Earlier today, Shane said Brock crossed a line. Stephanie says she agrees. End of segment.

We look at Balor vacating the title.

Rusev vs. Big Cass

Non-title, Rusev has bruised ribs and the winner advances to next week. Before the match, Enzo tries to figure out which part of New York City Bulgaria is in. An early clothesline puts Rusev on the floor and we take a break. Back with Cass fighting out of a chinlock before Rusev takes out the leg. Rusev misses the splash though, allowing Cass to hit one of his own in the corner. That sends Rusev outside for a superkick to Enzo, sending Cass into a rage of right hands to the ribs. The bad ribs go into

the steps and they trade kicks to the face with Cass getting the better. Rusev falls to the floor and walks out for the countout at 8:23.

Rating: C. Not much to the match here but I'm really pleased with the way they did the booking here. Rusev doesn't get pinned and they still send Cass on to next week's title match. Everything works out just fine here and we get a nice hope spot for the title. Oh and they didn't have Reigns interfere for the obvious ending. Well done again.

Owens and Jericho argue over who can be the next Universal Champion. They do however manage to get Tom's name wrong over and over.

Here are Charlotte and Dana Brooke to gloat about Charlotte getting the Women's Title back. Dana does a one woman YOU DESERVE IT chant and Charlotte has to agree. Charlotte says you can forget about Sasha Banks because she did it all by herself last night. Sasha is out with a back injury and now the queen has reclaimed her throne. That's it but here's Mick Foley to interrupt.

The boss (Foley, not Sasha), praises Charlotte last night but we have to stop for a WE WANT BAYLEY chant. Mick says Sasha will be back and will get a rematch for the title. That's fine with Charlotte but there's no one left for her to face tonight. Foley says not so fast because there are parts of this match that are heartbreaking. There are great moments too though, like signing free agents.....like BAYLEY!

We get the big introduction and the HUGGER SECTION signs are out in full force. Bayley can't believe this is happening but she's cut off by a YOU DESERVE IT chant. She thanks Mick for the moment and has an idea: how about we seal the deal with a hug, right here in Brooklyn, New York? You know Mick isn't going to turn that down.

Charlotte laughs this off and plugs Mick's reality show before saying there's a reason Bayley stayed in NXT during the Divas Revolution. Bayley says she won't try to upstage Charlotte but she will challenge her for the Women's Title. That's not cool with Charlotte, who says Bayley has to earn it. Unfortunately Charlotte isn't ready so Dana can face Bayley instead. Mick agrees and the match is on.

Bayley vs. Dana Brooke

Bayley starts fast by sending Dana into the buckle for a near fall but Dana knocks her outside and into the barricade. Back in and Dana works on the leg before just slugging away. Bayley comes back with her variety of elbows and the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 4:32.

Rating: C. The match was unimportant here compared to the pop for her debut which worked as well as they could have imagined. Bayley has long since deserved this spot and while it's a shame that an injury might have caused her to get to the main roster, she's a welcome fit here and much better suited to Raw than Smackdown.

Roman Reigns isn't worried about Kevin Owens.

The cruiserweights arrive September 19.

Sheamus is ready for his next match with Cesaro next week and insults New York sports teams.

Bruan Strowman vs. Johnny Knockout

Knockout says he's doing this because, and I quote, he likes big sweaty men. Strowman throws him around to start and the reverse chokeslam cut off the LET'S GO JOBBER chants with the pin at 1:19.

Strowman beats him up again and makes the referee count another pin. Ever the professional, the referee waits until Knockout's shoulder is down.

Here are the Dudley Boyz for their retirement speech. Bubba says they returned a year ago in this ring and it's been a heck of a year. They've had some wins and some losses but now things are changing. D-Von says it's been a great career with twenty years going up and down the roads with this man here. They had some great matches with teams like Edge and Christian and the Hardys and D-Von would take every one of those shots and falls again tonight.

Bubba has the fans give themselves a round of applause and it's time to go but here are the Shining Stars to interrupt. They have a going away present for Bubba and D-Von: two tickets (economy class) to Puerto Rico!

That alone earns them a beating and we get one last 3D and WAZZUP.....before Bubba tells him to get the table. Cue Anderson and Gallows to beat down the Dudleys. D-Von goes through the table via a Magic Killer. I'm actually surprised as I would have bet on that Ray turn.

Roman Reigns vs. Chris Jericho

Final qualifying match. Jericho gets into a chase to start but stops to poke Reigns in the eye as we take a break. Back with Jericho putting the ASK HIM chinlock. Reigns fights back and sends him into the buckle but the Superman Punch is blocked. It's too early for the Walls so Jericho settles for two off the enziguri instead.

Jericho takes too much time on the top though and gets punched out of the air, setting up the apron boot. Now the Superman Punch connects for two and Jericho's Codebreaker is easily countered into a sitout powerbomb. Kevin Owens runs out for a distraction to break up the spear but it just earns Jericho another Superman Punch.

The spear is countered into the Walls but Reigns makes the rope. Owens adds a superkick to set up the Codebreaker for two with Saxton telegraphing the near fall by saying Jericho was the fourth man. Can we PLEASE stop doing that? Back up and they trade slaps until Owens has to be punched off the apron. Now the spear connects to send Reigns to the title match at 15:03.

Rating: C+. Again this was fine but you would think Rusev might make an appearance here. Reigns getting in was the only option as you can't have Cass as the only face in the title match. That being said, Jericho is always a great choice to make anyone look good and that's what he did here. Fine enough main event here but nothing memorable.

Overall Rating: C. This show was all over the place. I had fun with Bayley debuting and their reaction to the title situation was fine, but there's basically no reaction to Brock last night and Rusev not interfering in the main event doesn't make sense. The wrestling wasn't anything special either, leaving this show square in the middle. Hopefully we get something on Lesnar soon though, because people aren't going to be pleased with just leaving the main event of Summerslam

hanging while we wait for Lesnar to grace us with his presence again.

Results

Seth Rollins b. Sami Zayn – Pedigree

Kevin Owens b. Neville – Torture rack neckbreaker

Big E. b. Karl Anderson – Big Ending

Big Cass b. Rusev via countout

Bayley b. Dana Brooke – Bayley to Belly

Braun Strowman b. Johnny Knockout – Reverse chokeslam

Roman Reigns b. Chris Jericho – Spear

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Finn Balor Relinquishes Universal Title

<http://411mania.com/wrestling/finn-balor-relinquishes-the-wwe->

[universal-title/](#)

WOW. I mean WOW. Balor separated/dislocated his shoulder taking the buckle bomb against the barricade last night and word on the street is he might be out three months. On top of that though: how important is it that he won last night? If Balor lost last night, the Demon looks like a joke and he's sent scurrying away after his first pay per view match. Now he fought through an injury and can come back as the uncrowned champion.

Odds are we get champion Rollins again, but dang this is bad.

Edit: According to Cole on Raw, he's going to be out SIX MONTHS. That means no Rumble and barely getting back for Wrestlemania.

Monday Night Raw – May 8, 1995: Bart Gunn Saved This Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 8, 1995

Location: Civic Auditorium, Omaha, Nebraska

Attendance: 5,800

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

This is a bad time as it's the go home show for In Your House but that means we're coming up on King of the Ring 1995, which is one of the worst shows of all time. We have two matches announced for tonight: Bob Holly vs. Doink the Clown and Bart Gunn vs. Owen Hart. I think you can see the

problems from here. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Sid and Razor from last week. This takes 45 seconds, not five minutes.

Opening sequence.

Lawler is WAY too happy that Bret Hart is having two matches at Summerslam.

Jeff Jarrett vs. Doink the Clown

Jeff's Intercontinental Title isn't on the line and Dink is in the big clown's corner. Doink starts fast but Roadie grabs his foot, only to have Doink stomp on Roadie's fingers. Roadie reaches for Jeff's hand to break up a wristlock but Doink kicks the hand away. It's not like the referee was going to do anything. Roadie's cheating fails AGAIN as he can't hold Doink up against the ropes, earning himself a Stunner. Just fire this goon already. Jeff finally takes over on his own as the announcers start making book references. Doink comes right back with a sunset flip for two and we take a break.

Back with Doink's leg in trouble and Jeff slowly kicking away as the match slow down (not the worst thing). We hit the half crab but Roadie somehow screws up for a fourth time with the referee catching him holding Jeff's hand. Doink grabs a DDT and a powerslam for two, followed by Dink taking a bite out of Jeff's tights. It's time for the Stump Puller (an odd leg submission) on Jeff but the referee is with Jarrett, allowing Roadie to get in a chop block for the save. Jeff slaps on the Figure Four for the submission.

Rating: C+. Odds are that was Steve Lombardi under the mask and it's very clear that he was a better choice if you need a good match. Jarrett was more than fine in a role like this where you have him in a midcard match instead of having any kind of attention. There's nothing wrong with just having a good wrestling match like this one, especially in the land of squashes that is 1995 Monday Night Raw.

The BodyDonnas are coming. This is Sunny's national TV debut and she's

instantly a star with more charisma than any woman has ever had in the company to date and possibly ever.

Bam Bam Bigelow is sorry for all the things he's done over the last few months and wants to get his hands on the Million Dollar Team.

Video on Sid vs. Diesel.

Vince brings out Sid and DiBiase for a chat. DiBiase was the one that told Shawn Michaels to hire Sid as his bodyguard because he knew Sid would turn his back on Shawn and draw Diesel into a WWF World Title match. There's a great slap in Shawn's face there as Ted is basically saying there was no way Shawn would win the title at Wrestlemania. Ted is ready to send Diesel to a rest home and Sid talks about an African lion. Promises of a powerbomb wrap this up.

Hakushi vs. Gary Scott

Hakushi starts fast with chops and kicks (because of course) followed by a gordbuster, all with Lawler drooling over the thoughts of this happening to Bret on Sunday. An abdominal stretch of all things sets up a springboard splash to put Scott away.

In Your House Control Center doesn't tell us much. As for storyline stuff, Diesel says he's ready for Sid and that's about it. Todd runs down the card and that's that. Other than that, there's no replay. Unless that's a pay per view company decree, I have no idea why the WWF would go with that move. Maybe they can't make enough money due to the lowered price but it sounds like giving away money.

Owen Hart vs. Bart Gunn

A main event anywhere in the country, or maybe just on a Raw in Omaha. Bart quickly knocks him outside to start but Owen forearm him in the back because it's just Bart Gunn. Owen is taken down again and it's time to start in on the arm. Mr. Fuji offers a trip (it's not like he can do anything else) and Owen takes it outside to send Bart into the post.

The enziguri gets two on Bart and we take a break. Back with Bart stopping a charge by raising a boot in the corner. That's it for his

offense (Or was it defense?) as Owen gets two off a clothesline. Cornette breaks up a superplex but Billy Gunn crotches Owen on the top, allowing Bart to grab a rollup for the fluke pin.

Rating: C. Bart Gunn of all people pinning Owen Hart aside, this was a fine way to set up the Tag Team Title match on Sunday as it's not like they need much of a story since it's just a rematch. The Gunns aren't the most interesting team in the world but this gave them some momentum, which is really all they need here.

Todd and Stephanie (not that Stephanie) tour the house they're giving away and it's...a house.

Vince and Jerry, in front of a green screen of fans for some reason, wrap us up with Jerry promising that his mom will be at ringside.

Overall Rating: C. Now this was entertaining with two totally watchable matches and a build towards a few of Sunday's matches. Above all else they let us have some wrestling instead of four squashes in forty five minutes. It's certainly nothing great and no one would have thought much of it at the time but this was way better than most of the shows I've been sitting through in recent weeks.

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Monday Night Raw – May 1, 1995: It Just Keeps Going

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 1, 1995

Location: Civic Auditorium, Omaha, Nebraska

Attendance: 5,800

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

Sweet goodness I might as well just do the rest of 1995 at this rate. We're just past Wrestlemania XI (close enough) and we're about two weeks away from the first In Your House, meaning it's time for Diesel vs. Sid. Yeah like I've said many times, this really isn't a good period for the company. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Tatanka costing Bam Bam Bigelow the WWF World Title last week, causing Ted DiBiase to fire him. Bigelow fought back and said he quit, earning himself a big beatdown including a horrible powerbomb from Sid. Diesel ran out for the save and a Jackknife on Tatanka. Bigelow and Diesel shook hands to end the show.

Opening sequence.

We look at Sid powerbombing various people to send him into the main event.

Lawler has a contract for Bret Hart.

Allied Powers vs. George Anderson/Tom Hagan

That would be British Bulldog/Lex Luger. Anderson starts with Lex and gets hiptossed for trying to run the ropes. Bulldog comes in and eats a forearm to the face so it's off to Hagan. As Bulldog beats on Hagan, I have to describe Tom's attire, which looks like a birthday party store exploded. Anderson misses a charge and gets powerslammed for the squash pin.

We look at Jeff Jarrett cheating to retain the Intercontinental Title

over Bob Holly on the Action Zone, resulting in the match being restarted. Holly got the pin but Jeff's foot was on the ropes. Bob was named the new champion but the title was held up. Holly's win isn't considered an official title reign.

Bob Holly vs. Butler Stevens

Stevens takes him into the corner to start but gets armdragged and hiptossed for his efforts. A few knees to Bob's ribs don't do much and Holly's high cross body is good for the pin.

We go to the In Your House Control Center with Todd Pettengill plugging the idea that the show is only \$15. That really should be the selling point for this show: it's 2/3 the length of a regular pay per view but only half the price. The big story here: Razor Ramon will be facing Jeff Jarrett/the Roadie in a handicap match due to a very real neck injury to the 1-2-3 Kid. Oh and they're giving away a house in Orlando.

Mantaur vs. Sonny Rogers

Mantaur, the half man/half bull, has Jim Cornette with him. It's the squash you would expect with Mantaur throwing him around, hammering away in the corner, shrugging off a comeback attempt and winning with a World's Strongest Slam. They were just so lost at this point and Mantaur is a great example.

A cop from NYDP Blue accuses Man Mountain Rock of pretending to be a wrestler. Hey now he wasn't horrible.

Sycho Sid vs. Razor Ramon

And no match as Sid jumps him through the pyro and destroys Razor in fantastic fashion. I remember watching this as a kid and thinking Sid was amazing for jumping through the pyro. Like, that's crazy. Diesel makes the save.

Adam Bomb vs. Dave Sigfried

Bomb throws him around as you would expect and grabs a snap suplex. A clothesline breaks up Dave's hiptoss attempt and Bomb lets this go a bit

longer. Some really basic offense (clothesline, hiptoss, right hands) keep Sigfried in trouble and a top rope clothesline ends the goof.

Rating: D. I always liked Bomb so we'll call this a little better than the normal dull jobber squash. He was a horrible talker or otherwise he might have been a good choice for a midcard power guy. But then he got squashed by Mabel at In Your House because KING MABEL could not be stopped.

Bomb throws his toy footballs into the crowd. That's always going to work.

Razor gets medical treatment.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley is snooty and rich.

Men on a Mission vs. Bill Duke/Kevin Kruger

Mabel throws Kruger around (way too common tonight) and chokes him in the air. The jobbers' double dropkick has no effect so it's off to Mo for a change. A knee to the ribs drops Duke but Mo misses an elbow drop. It's back to Duke as this squash just keeps going. We actually hit a chinlock for a bit before Mabel finally ends it with a belly to belly.

Rating: F. WAY too long here as it took the better part of five minutes to get rid of these goofs. Men on a Mission just wasn't interesting as a heel team (or anything more than a comedy face team for that matter) but it was even worse when they turned Mabel into a monster heel for reasons of genuine stupidity.

Here's Bret Hart to answer Lawler's contract offer. Vince does Bret's pose for a funny visual. Apparently Lawler thinks Bret signed to face Hakushi to get out of a match against Jerry at In Your House. Bret will fight Hakushi at In Your House but he'll fight Lawler on the same night as a bonus. Pyro goes off to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. This was the kind of horrible show that you grew to expect around this time, which should tell you why no one talks about this era. I was bored out of my mind with most of these matches and it's all building towards Mabel vs. Adam Bomb? That's my big reward after all

this? Nitro can't come around to light a fire under Vince soon enough.

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Monday Night Raw – August 15, 2016: Stop Me If You've Seen This Before Sunday

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 15, 2016

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's Summerslam week and Brock Lesnar is here. On top of that things should be back to normal with the full roster back after their Australia/New Zealand tour last week. We should get one last push on all of the big matches, including Seth Rollins vs. Finn Balor for the first ever Universal Title. Let's get to it.

Last week on Raw, Roman Reigns sent Lana into a cake and Seth Rollins didn't think much of Finn Balor.

Earlier today Rollins was outside waiting for his opponent Finn Balor, or the Demon King. He calls him out for a fight right then and there but no one showed up. Tonight he'll find Balor instead.

Lana and Rusev are in the ring with Lana saying they're not leaving the ring until everyone hears what they have to say. There will be no Raw until Reigns comes out here and apologizes. Instead he gets Mick Foley, now in a Have A Nice Raw shirt and with a beard that has its own zip code. Rusev yells a lot and says Foley sucks as a GM. He asks for Stephanie McMahon to come out here instead so here's the bigger boss to stick up for Foley.

Rusev threatens to call Vince or Shane but here's Roman to interrupt as well. They insult each other a bit (as heels and faces do) and a USA chant starts up, which is exactly what they were shooting for here. Rusev wants to defend Lana's honor so Mick makes the match tonight, albeit not for the title.

Sheamus vs. Sami Zayn

Before the match, Sheamus gets some promo time saying Sami is nothing to him because Sami talks a lot on Twitter but he's just a Sheamus knockoff. Sami throws his shirt at Sheamus and they're quickly brawling before the bell. Cesaro sits in on commentary as Sami forearm Sheamus in the corner. A headscissors only ticks Sheamus off and he sends Sami back first into the post as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus in control, as a heel should be when you come back from a break. A powerslam gets two on Sami as Cesaro talks about having an offer to go to Smackdown, which a talent like himself deserves. The ten forearms to the chest have Sami in trouble but he knocks Cesaro outside for the big flip dive.

Corey gets on Cesaro for talking about himself a lot and Cesaro brushes him off in a rather heelish manner. White Noise gets two for Sheamus and a Blue Thunder Bomb (Not Michinoku Driver Cole. Even Saxton can get that name right.) gets the same. Sheamus comes back with the Irish Curse but here's Cesaro for a distraction, setting up the Helluva Kick for the pin on Sheamus at 10:14.

Rating: B-. They were sticking with the basics here but these two doing the basics means a good match. Cesaro teasing the heel turn on commentary is interesting, though I have little reason to believe WWE isn't going to botch this as well. What's not interesting is Cesaro vs. Sheamus all over again after Cesaro beat him twice in a row in recent weeks. There's no logical reason to do the match again but that's what we're likely going to get anyway because that's that we're stuck with.

Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens say tonight's match between Owens and Big Cass isn't one on one because Jericho will have Kevin's back. Jericho wants to know who certified Enzo as a G. Does he even have a license to be a G? They're ready for their tag match at Summerslam too and tell Todd/Robert/Brian/Nathaniel so, despite the interviewer being named Tom. Now that was funny.

Post break Cesaro and Sheamus are brawling again when Foley comes in to break it up. Mick loves seeing them fight so we're getting a best of seven series. AFTER CESARO HAS ALREADY BEATEN HIM TWICE. Egads this booking makes my head hurt.

Dudley Boyz vs. New Day

Non-title and there's no Big E. at ringside. Before the match, Gallows and Anderson pop up on screen to say they're trying to cure Ringpostitis. They're doing everything they can to make sure their results aren't tainted, including putting eggs in microwaves. They're well endowed with the right equipment and the ball is in their court. The distraction lets D-Von take over on Woods to start but D-Von clotheslines Bubba by mistake. Kofi hits Trouble in Paradise on D-Von for the pin at 1:38.

Post match the doctors' experiment was a failure and they need more test subjects. Kofi wants to know why these two think this is a game. Summerslam is their anniversary of being champions and there's no way Anderson and Gallows are getting their hands on New Day's rocks.

Rollins is still looking for Balor but no one has seen him. This includes Neville, who says Rollins isn't ready for the Demon King. Seth yells a lot.

Nia Jax vs. Rachel Weaby

Rachel has blue hair, bright green and pink attire and a lot of tattoos. She's been watching the Olympics and is ready to bring home the gold. Nia throws her around and knocks her off the top with a single shot to the face. Rachel is out cold but Nia brings her back in for the fireman's carry into a powerslam for the pin at 1:05.

Here are Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar for their big talk before Summerslam. We see Orton and Lesnar trading sneak attacks in recent weeks. Heyman starts his catchphrase...and here's Heath Slater to interrupt. Paul hopes that someone put Heath up to this because it's really stupid.

All Heyman can do is laugh as Slater talks about Raw understanding what Smackdown can't get. Apparently if Slater fights Lesnar tonight, he gets a job. Heyman just ignores him and goes into his promo about Orton but Slater cuts them off again. Heath knows he's going to get hurt very badly but he has to do this for his kids. Brock actually talks because he can respect Slater fighting for his family. He actually wants to talk about Slater's kids...who he doesn't give a censored about.

Slater can walk out of here on his own two feet or stand here and keep ticking Brock off. Heath actually tries to fight and gets suplexed half to death, followed by the F5. Heyman puts on Heath's sunglasses and praises his courage before laughing at the idea of Orton being a viper. It's his job to hype up the match on Sunday but Lesnar won't believe a word Brock says about Orton being a real threat. Brock is the box office at Summerslam and you should buy it to see a once in a lifetime athlete. This FINALLY wraps up with Heyman saying Brock is dominant.

That's the problem with how Brock has been booked over the last year: if no one, including the reigning WWE World Champion, why in the world would I want to see him fight again? We know the ending because Brock can't be touched so it gets a little boring. Like Heyman's speech here, which just kept going and going as Heyman said the same thing he's said for over a year.

Big Cass vs. Kevin Owens

Before the match, Enzo talks about cooking zucchinis, sausage, burgers, frankfurters and those two pieces of Canadian bacon. Cass shoulders Owens down to start but Kevin knocks him off the apron and into the post as we take a break. Back with Cass breaking up the Cannonball with a boot to the face but getting sent outside again. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb and gets backdropped, only to have Jericho jump Cass for the DQ at 6:23. Not enough to rate but Cass looked competitive here and that's all he needed to do.

Enzo and Cass get beaten down post match.

Reigns is ready to fight no matter what Rusev has ready for him. Rusev jumps him from behind and sends Reigns into a steel wall.

Prime Time Players vs. Shining Stars

Yes they were feuding just a week ago but earlier tonight Titus apologized so they're back together for a third run. Darren and Epico get things going before it's quickly off to Titus for a slam. Primo comes in and dropkicks Titus in the knee to take over, only to have Titus splash him in the corner. We get Titus suplexing Darren onto Primo for two but Bob Backlund accidentally distracts Titus, who is knocked off the apron by Darren. The Clash of the Titus plants Young and Primo gets the pin at 2:42.

Jinder Mahal vs. Neville

Neville dropkicks him outside and hits a corkscrew moonsault to the floor. The Red Arrow doesn't work yet and Mahal kicks him in the face for two. A chinlock goes nowhere and Neville kicks him in the head to set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 2:57.

The bosses casually mention that Jon Stewart will be at Summerslam when Rollins comes in to find the Demon King. Mick suggests that he try it in the ring.

Here's Rollins to call out Balor and give him one more chance to show himself tonight. No one shows up so Rollins laughs it off and calls this match just another chapter in his book. He's the face of Balor's failure

but something we can't see (maybe a fan jumping the barricade) cuts Seth off. Seth keeps laughing and the lights start flickering and go out. Red lights flash and here's Demon Balor for the first time in WWE.

The fans are getting into the arms pose now and that's a very good sign. Rollins has no idea what to think of this and Balor, now with writing all over the right side of his body, gets in his face. The fight is on and Balor cleans house as he should in this case. Balor misses the Coup de Grace but hits a flip dive over the top to take Rollins down. The more I think about it, the more I like the idea of them having Demon Balor show up here. This match needs some buzz and this is going to do it.

We look back at Lana being sent into the cake last week.

Golden Truth vs. Gallows and Anderson

Gallows and Anderson are in their doctors' coats. Truth gets kicked in the face to start but gets in the spinning forearm for a breather. It's a double tag to Goldust and Anderson with Goldust hitting his bulldog and powerslam. Not that it matters as the Magic Killer ends Goldust at 2:18.

New Day comes in for the beatdown post match and it's Gallows saving Anderson from a trombone to the testicles.

Charlotte talks down to Dana Brooke about wanting a taste of the spotlight. Dana failed her when it mattered the most but Charlotte will win the title anyway. Charlotte leaves Dana in tears.

Alicia Fox vs. Charlotte

Sasha Banks is on commentary. Fox hits some dropkicks to start but gets pulled off the middle rope for two. Natural Selection ends Fox at 1:25.

Charlotte calls Sasha to the ring but Dana takes out Sasha's knee, setting up the Figure Eight.

Video on Braun Strowman.

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Non-title. Roman goes right at him before the bell and kicks Rusev in the

face. The apron boot makes it even worse for Rusev but he posts Reigns as we go to a break. We're joined in progress with Rusev working on Reigns' bad left arm. Reigns gets choked on the ropes but comes back with a Samoan Drop for a breather. They head outside with Reigns being sent into the steps a few times but Rusev has the US Title taken away from him as we take another break.

Back with Rusev grabbing the mic and saying we're all Russian wannabes. Rusev chokes Roman with his own ring gear, which isn't a DQ for reasons that aren't clear. Roman fights out and knocks Rusev off the top to set up a clothesline to put both guys down. The Superman Punch is countered and Rusev gets two off the spinwheel kick. Four straight middle rope headbutts get four straight near falls for Rusev.

The fifth finally misses and Reigns starts fighting back until a shot to the ribs slows him down. Rusev's superkick is countered with a Superman Punch for a good near fall. The spear is countered with a few kicks to the head for two more but the Accolade is broken up as well. Another superkick to the back sets up the Accolade until Reigns basically collapses into the ropes. Back up and the spear pins Rusev at 20:39.

Rating: B. It was a solid match with both guys knowing how to do the power stuff but after seeing these two fight each other probably half a dozen times over the last year, I really don't need to see them fight for thirty minutes on Raw and then watch them in a big pay per view match at Summerslam. Then again I don't want to see Sheamus vs. Cesaro in four more matches (it'll be seven) after seeing Cesaro pin Sheamus twice already. At least this was good, but I'm not wild on seeing a champion get pinned clean to set up the title match.

Overall Rating: D+. I really wasn't feeling this one and a lot of that is due to how they're booking things anymore. Now I really like the idea of the short, squash matches but you can mix things up a little more than that. Maybe have some of these matches go six to seven minutes instead of having six of them go under three.

The bigger problem here is that, aside from Balor vs. Rollins, I don't care to see any of Sunday's matches more than I did coming into tonight.

How many of these people won't be appearing on Sunday's show anyway? Sami, Strowman, Nia Jax, and Neville aren't likely to be at Summerslam but they get time (albeit very limited time) here because they need to fill in time. I'm hoping they get this stuff fixed soon because they really don't know how to put a three hour show together at this point.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Sheamus – Brogue Kick

New Day b. Dudley Boyz – Trouble in Paradise to D-Von

Nia Jax b. Rachel Weaby – Fireman's carry into a powerslam

Big Cass b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Chris Jericho interfered

Shining Stars b. Prime Time Players – Primo pinned Young after a Clash of the Titus from O'Neil

Neville b. Jinder Mahal – Red Arrow

Gallows and Anderson b. Goldust Truth – Magic Killer to Goldust

Charlotte b. Alicia Fox – Natural Selection

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

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