

Monday Night Raw – December 2, 2002 (2017 Redo): The Best In The World Because They Say So

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 2, 2002

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

So HHH is back and I'd assume that's about all you need to know for this show. That whole week without HHH around to really run the show must have scared the company as he interfered in last week's World Title match, seemingly setting up another pay per view showdown with Shawn Michaels. I'm as thrilled as you are. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about....well by George it's about HHH coming back last week! To be fair it's not like anything else was treated like it mattered last week.

Opening sequence.

Dudley Boyz vs. 3 Minute Warning

They don't waste time with the wrestling to start and Rosey gets dropped with a double belly to back. A double crossbody puts Bubba and Rosey down and we get down to Jamal getting knocked back and forth between the Dudleys. Rosey and Bubba chop it out with the latter taking him down into what can best be described as a cross armbreaker. D-Von stays on the arm as this is already more technical than I was expecting.

Rico gets involved for a distraction though and D-Von gets beaten down for a short while. For some reason a DDT stops Rosey but the referee doesn't see the tag. A neckbreaker puts Rosey down again and now the tag brings Bubba back in. House is cleaned but Rico gets in a kick to the back of the head. Cue Spike for the way too fast save, allowing the brothers to hit What's Up. After Rico's interference doesn't go anywhere, a 3D finishes Rosey.

Rating: C-. Well that happened. Really I'm not sure what else there is to say about the match as it just came and went. It's good to have the Dudleys back but it's very clear that there's nothing to the division at this point and if 3 Minute Warning is the best they have, they're in big trouble.

We come back from a break with all three Dudleys down, thanks to an off-camera attack at the hands of Chris Jericho and Christian and 3 Minute Warning. D-Von was put in the Walls for a Conchairto and Bubba was beaten down as well while Spike was already carried out. As much as I'd like to have seen it happen, I can greatly appreciate the idea of having stuff seem more realistic instead of having it so rigidly attached to the schedule.

Sean Morely tells Eric Bischoff that he's got this covered. Oh and call him Chief Morely. HHH to come in to say that he wrestled for thirty minutes in the Elimination Chamber but now he has to beat Rob Van Dam to become #1 contender. Bischoff doesn't want to hear it and demands great TV. Morely suggests a guest referee to be announced, likely as Shawn Michaels, so HHH can overcome even more odds.

We look at the Dudleys' beatdown again.

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

They hit the mat to start before trading arm cranks. Ivory gets two off a rollup as this isn't exactly thrilling so far. We hit the chinlock with Ivory pulling on Trish's face until she fights up for a neckbreaker. The Chick Kick gets two as the announcers debate who the guest referee is going to be. Trish hits a very assisted Stratusfaction for the pin.

Rating: D. I know Trish would get much better in the coming years but she really wasn't able to lift anything up the ladder at this point. It doesn't help that Ivory is someone who has been the same performer for years and isn't going to have a memorable match no matter what she does. They really need to bring in some exciting talent if they want this division to work as Trish vs. Victoria is only going to take them so far.

Speaking of dull women, Jackie yells at Victoria for going through her bag and a match is made. She doesn't even mind if it's not for the title, because why would she want that? Jackie beats her up because it's Texas and that means Jackie is all tough and awesome.

Jericho and Christian threaten violence against anyone who disrespect them. Christopher Nowinski instantly sucks up to them like the worm that he is. Of note: the champs' bags are chained to their lockers.

Jeff Hardy/Tommy Dreamer vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

This is the result of Regal dislocating Dreamer's jaw a few weeks back. They start fighting in the aisle with Jeff running around the ring to take both evil foreigners down. Dreamer grabs a half crab on Storm to start and gets his jaw broken again for the gimmick infringement. Regal comes in for a knee to the jaw as there's certainly a target so far. A front facelock allows Dreamer to get over for the tag to Jeff, which the referee naturally misses. With the referee dealing with Jeff, Regal gets a buckle pad off and Dreamer goes face first into the steal for the easy pin.

Rating: D. Jeff and Dreamer are a really lame low level team and having them waste Regal and Storm's time isn't that interesting. Then again, it's certainly better than the stupid hardcore feud with Nowinski. You really can tell that Jeff doesn't have any fire in him at the moment but at least he wasn't out there long enough to horribly botch anything.

Ric Flair talks about Batista's rough upbringing but Batista doesn't want to go into it. Flair doesn't seem to mind and brings up Batista bouncing from foster home to foster home. Now Batista gets to use the anger in the ring.

Batista vs. Hurricane

Spinebuster and Batista Bomb are good for the pin in under a minute. Sounds like Flair has a future as a teacher.

Kane comes out for the save because they were partners for like two weeks.

Shawn and Van Dam go face to face about how horrible HHH is. Bischoff comes in to officially make Shawn guest referee. That was ever in doubt? If Shawn doesn't play it fair, he loses the title.

Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho

Before the match, Booker makes jokes about Jericho being left without his clothes last week and makes jokes about size. Jericho throws some chops to start and dropkicks Booker out to the floor. The top rope back elbow to the jaw gets two and it's already off to

the chinlock. After a little dance (you always need a little dance), Booker catches him on top for a big crashing superplex.

A missile dropkick gives Booker two and Jericho gets catapulted into the corner for good measure. Christian and Goldust run in but quickly cancel each other out, leaving Booker to hit the ax kick. And never mind as Chief Morely comes out and makes this a tag match, minus any sort of Teddy Long's charisma.

Rating: C+. The match was just there to fill time before the ending but it's always helpful to have people this talented in the ring. Even if they have nothing to do and are only having a simple match, they're going to do it well enough that it's something you can watch without getting bored. I mean, it's not good enough to have them get the World Title or anything but that's just crazy talk.

Tag Team Titles: Christian/Chris Jericho vs. Booker T./Goldust

Christian and Jericho are defending and this is joined in progress with Christian in early trouble. It's off to Booker to hammer away on Jericho until the champs get in a cheap shot to take over. Jericho's running crotch shot to the back sets up more dancing but Christian's attempt earns himself a crotching.

Goldust comes in to clean house and gets two off a rollup for very hot reaction. Booker's snap spinebuster gets two and he ducks Christian's belt shot. The Book End gives Booker two more with Christian pulling the referee out. Now the belt shot works and Jericho adds the Lionsault for the pin to retain because the Texas guys have to job in their home state.

Rating: C+. Another solid outing here with all four working hard before the annoying ending that follows the WWE formula of humiliating the hometown favorites. I guess it's a good sign that Goldust didn't lose in his hometown and it's not like Booker has much more momentum to lose, even if the fans seem to love him. They really need to change the titles soon though as Goldust and Booker have been primed up for months now.

This week's Raw Retro is Austin with the cement truck destroying Vince's Corvette.

F-View shows us Test and Stacy making out on a couch, only to have her stop for the sake of a marketing idea.

Jackie vs. Victoria

Non-title. Victoria shoves her down to start and stomps a lot as the announcers make sure to talk about how tough Jackie is. Jackie gets in a hurricanrana for two but charges into a boot in the corner. The slingshot legdrop gets two but the Widow's Peak is countered with a backdrop. Jackie's spinning kick to the head gives her the clean pin and WOO TEXAS! I mean, Dallas and Austin are totally the same thing. They're only two hours apart and if you can have someone the fans don't care about win a non-title match it's completely the same as the popular team losing a title match right?

Steven Richards comes in to check on Victoria. They're still in the ring post match with Victoria demanding that Jackie come back out here. Instead it's Scott Steiner for some rhyming before destroying Steven. Cue a very smiling Bischoff to offer Steiner a contract pitch. The pitch is in the back though, where Bischoff has eight women waiting for him. Steiner says he already has a super freak tonight and opens his limo to reveal....Stephanie McMahon in a short skirt and low cut top. She has things to offer Steiner that Bischoff can't. So to sum this up: Stephanie is now hotter than eight good looking women combined.

We go to the World for RNN Breaking News....but we have breaking news in the arena, where HHH and Flair are looking for Shawn, who is in a referee shirt. Shawn is going to DQ HHH for any broken rule, which is totally going to happen because we're certainly NOT guaranteed to see HHH vs. Shawn for the title again.

HHH vs. Rob Van Dam

The winner gets Shawn, the guest referee here, at the pay per view. Actually hang on as Shawn needs to eject Flair before we get going. HHH isn't allowed to throw a closed fist so Rob springboard kicks him down for two. A slingshot dive drops HHH and there's the spinning kick to the back. Rob kicks him in the face for two more, followed by a small package for a fast counted near fall. HHH gets caught in a sleeper with Shawn sitting in front of the ropes for a nice touch.

Back up and Shawn gets bumped and since he's a referee here instead of a wrestler, a single clothesline keeps him down for a good twenty seconds. Shawn gets up to pull a chair away from HHH so Rob kicks him down by mistake. Rolling Thunder hits HHH but a chair shot knocks Rob silly for the slow counted pin.

Rating: D. Not only was it short and not very good but this felt like something Austin would have done in his day. His only support is sent outside, he has a guest referee that can't stand him and he can't use a right hand. The only cheating HHH did was swinging a chair after Rob hit the referee by mistake. I know HHH is amazing and the best thing ever (save for Stephanie) but this made him look like a face instead of the top heel.

They fight post match and Shawn gets in a superkick to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Between the two really bad women's matches, the HHH/Stephanie worship and Booker/Goldust losing in Texas in a title match they should have won months ago, this was a really bad show. The Tag Team Title match was fine until the end but the rest of the show was the standard problem this era has: bad wrestling, uninteresting storytelling and pushing people who are only there because WWE has decided they're the best things in the world.

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**Monday Night Raw – May 1,
2017: The Two Fisted**

Problem

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 1, 2017

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

We're past Payback and that means things can finally start settling down around here. The big story continues to be Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman with Strowman beating the injured Reigns clean last night. Extreme Rules is in just over a month and an ambulance match would seem to be the next logical step. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The women's division is in the ring with a pedestal in the middle and here's Alexa Bliss for her coronation as the new champion. Bliss thanks everyone for being here tonight, even if Kurt Angle forced them to be here. The Queen is gone is gone but not to worry because the Goddess is here. These women are an inspiration, including Mickie James, despite her contemporaries Mae Young and Fabulous Moolah having moved on to a better place.

As for Sasha, she's the woman that Alexa beat to get where she is today. Sasha glares at her and Bliss backs into Nia. Bliss: "We're good. We're good." Alexa gets on the pedestal and laughs at Bayley for losing in front of all her family last night. At least now Bayley's nephews will have someone to look up to. The brawl starts in a hurry and we take a break.

Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax/Emma/Alicia Fox vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke/Mickie James

Alexa hides from Bayley to start so it's Emma forearming Bayley in the back instead. Mickie comes in and starts on the arm before it's off to Alicia vs. Dana with Brooke scoring off a running cartwheel splash. Bayley works on Alicia's arm as they're tagging in and out at a very fast pace.

Fox sends Banks outside and it's a big staredown on the floor. Back

with Nia throwing Sasha around and dropping an elbow for two. Bliss comes back in for some boot choking but Sasha avoids a charge. The hot tag brings in Bayley to take Alexa down and send her into the buckle ten straight times. Everything breaks down with everyone brawling to the floor, leaving Bliss to rake Bayley's eyes, setting up a DDT for the pin at 14:03.

Rating: C-. There's only so much you can do when you have eight people in there at the same time. With so many people floating around, especially people who don't have anything to do at the moment, you're not going to be able to really showcase anything other than a single feud. Bliss pinning Bayley is a good idea and I'm really glad they didn't go with the lame idea of the champion losing her first match after winning the title.

Enzo Amore vs. Luke Gallows

Enzo says they have bags underneath their eyes (they're Gucci) because their real life is better than their dreams. Anderson and Gallows jump them from behind though and we take a break before the bell. The match is joined in progress with Gallows working on the arm. Enzo avoids a charge in the corner though and scores with some kicks to the face, only to uppercut Amore's head off. Another shot staggers Gallows and Amore goes up, only to have Anderson offer a distraction. The flapjack gives Luke the pin at 5:30.

Rating: D. I am so bored with this feud as I can't even remember why they're fighting in the first place. Enzo and Cass aren't exactly the most thrilling team in the world at this point and I don't see that changing anytime soon. The Enzo schtick is starting to get old in a hurry as we have to wait a few minutes so he can say the exact same thing every single week. Then again the fans still react to it so at least it does serve a purpose, unlike this feud that doesn't seem like it's ever going to end.

Neville tells TJ Perkins to stay focused.

Here's Seth Rollins to talk about how he's persevered through everything and is doing everything he's wanted to do. Now though, he wants the Beast. Cue Finn Balor to say while Rollins has done a lot,

he's the one armed man who became the first ever Universal Champion. Remember that Seth?

Dean Ambrose comes out to say he wants part of the fight but here's Miz to say he's awesome and Balor is a coward. Miz talks about being a threat until all three tell him to shut up at the same time. Dean asks who wants to see someone beat up the Miz and pulls out his phone to call Kurt. With the call over, Dean says Kurt has made Miz vs. Balor vs. Rollins with the winner getting an Intercontinental Title match.

We look back at last night's main event.

Tony Nese/Brian Kendrick/Noam Dar vs. Rich Swann/Akira Tozawa/Jack Gallagher

The good guys all have umbrellas for their entrances. Tozawa kicks Kendrick in the face to start but Nese runs him over without much effort. Everything breaks down in a hurry and the villains are sent outside, leaving everyone else to pose. Back with Tozawa in trouble at the hands of all three heels.

Tozawa finally gets in a kick and makes the hot tag off to Swann. Rich speeds things way up and hits a running flip ax kick (Booker: "Like a Harlem Hangover!") followed by a running 450. Everything breaks down with Gallagher and Kendrick being left alone in the ring. The Captain's Hook is broken up and Jack hits the running dropkick for the pin at 10:34.

Rating: C+. This got MUCH better after the commercial and made me less annoyed after thinking it was the old "throw them into one match" concept. At this point 205 Live needs something to be built up other than the main event so having six guys go out there looking good is one of the best things that can be done.

We look back at Sheamus and Cesaro turning heel last night.

Here are Sheamus (who Graves correctly identifies as looking like Travis Bickle) and Cesaro for their explanation. Sheamus is tired of living in a fog where he had to pretend to like the fans. They were ready to take their titles back at Wrestlemania but then the Hardys

were thrown in for the nostalgia reaction.

That moment didn't last long though because it was just a novelty. Now they're ready to dominate again, as only they can. Cesaro and Sheamus go to leave but here are the Hardys to cut them off. Matt talks about being banged up from last night's post match ambush but their response is DELETE. The champs chase them off.

Miz is ready to get his Intercontinental Title back but Ambrose comes in to ask if Miz's hair gel gets in his eyes when he wrestles. Miz leaves so "Mean" Dean Ambrose throws it back to Bobby and Gene at ringside.

Heath Slater vs. Apollo Crews

This is over Titus being annoyed that Slater gave Crews advice on being a new father. Crews takes him to the mat to start and Slater is already in over his head. A headscissors doesn't get Heath anywhere as Crews nips up for a staredown. Crews misses a charge in the corner though and we get a Titus vs. Rhyno staredown (Perhaps over Main Event issues from last week? I know you know what I'm talking about.). Back in and Crews hits an enziguri, followed by the Toss Powerbomb for the pin at 3:46.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what you would expect from these two and that's not a good thing. I know Titus seems like a death sentence for Crews but you have to go somewhere with him so it's not like he has anywhere to go but up. Not a good match or anything but it's getting Crews on TV, which is a good thing for him.

Here's Angle to talk about Reigns vs. Strowman. Last night's matches had consequences with Reigns re-injuring his ribs and Strowman tearing his rotator cuff. Kurt has been thinking about this all day but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Bray is here as a savior after rising from his own ashes with burnt wings. Angle says this is his ring but Bray says it's his world.

Dean interviews Rollins because there are cameras in the locker room and therefore there must be an interview. After listing off some potential names, Dean asks if Rollins would like an Intercontinental

Title shot. Tensions are teased but Dean throws it back to Gorilla before it goes too far.

Austin Aries vs. TJ Perkins

They trade shots in the corner to start until Aries hits one heck of a shot to the jaw. Perkins comes right back by tying him in the Tree of Woe for a running dropkick to the knee to put Aries in trouble. Back from a break with Perkins putting on a butterfly lock, followed by a springboard spinning forearm for two. Aries' knee is too banged up to be thrown across the ring and his shoulder hits the post to make it even worse.

TJ doesn't even let him fall down before he grabs a half crab in the ropes. Aries comes right back though by kicking TJ to the floor for the suicide dive. The middle rope elbow to the back gets two but the knee gives out again. TJ tries the Detonation Kick, only to have Aries reverse into the Last Chancery for the tap at 11:20.

Rating: B-. The wrestling was good but the important thing was building up the Last Chancery as a potential finisher. If you're just going to have Aries use the move over and over, at some point it has to actually beat someone. Even if he only wins one or two matches with it, the idea is that he can do it again, which makes it an effective finisher.

Post match Perkins puts Aries in the kneebar to leave him laying.

Ambrose interviews Balor and suggests eating a carb. Balor takes a bite of a doughnut before heading to the ring but is replaced by the Drifter, who seems to confuse Ambrose.

Golden Truth's request for a Tag Team Title shot is turned down as they don't have the best win/loss record. Angle will however put them in a Tag Team Turmoil match next week, which seems to work fine.

Last night, Angle said goodbye to Chris Jericho after he won the US Title, sending him to Smackdown.

Seth Rollins vs. Finn Balor vs. The Miz

The winner is #1 contender to the Intercontinental Title. Miz heads

to the floor like the coward he is so it's Balor vs. Rollins to start. Neither of them seem that interested in fighting though as they keep looking at Miz before finally heading out after him. He finally gets caught and tries to fight, only to be kicked out to the floor.

We get Rollins vs. Balor again but Miz pulls Finn to the floor and hides Maryse so Seth can't hit a dive. All three get back inside, only to have Miz shove Seth off the top for a big crash as we take a break. Back with Balor elbowing out of Miz's chinlock until Rollins tries a high crossbody but lands on his head. Thankfully he's right back up but Miz sends him into Balor to put Finn down on the floor.

Both good guys take kicks to the chest until Finn throws Miz at Rollins for a DDT but dropkicks Seth down at the same time. They head outside with Balor hitting some HARD kicks to the face (Graves: "Who knew that in twenty four hours the Irish would revolutionize dentistry?"), followed by 1916 for a near fall on Rollins. Balor gets crotched against the post and Miz's low DDT gets two on Seth. Miz starts kicking at the bad knee to set up the Figure Four on Rollins but Balor makes the save.

They trade kicks to the face with Seth getting a near fall of his own. A double Blockbuster sets up a frog splash on Balor and Seth can't believe the kickout. Rollins runs the corner for the superplex into the Falcon Arrow on Miz but here's Samoa Joe to Rock Bottom him on the floor. Not that it matters as Balor is up with the Sling Blade and Coup de Grace....but here's Wyatt to shove him off the top. Sister Abigail lays Finn out and Miz steals the pin at 22:25.

Rating: A-. Now that's how you book a match. With the World Title scene basically on hold until July, this set up the Intercontinental Title as a much bigger deal that three former World Champions are fighting over. It also helps set up Balor vs. Wyatt and Rollins vs. Joe, which should be two major headlining feuds over the next few weeks until Reigns and Strowman are back.

Overall Rating: C. This show suffered from two problems. First of

all is the lack of anything on top as the champion is gone and the two main eventers are both out selling injuries. While that's a good idea and necessary, it makes for a very, very long night. It's not helping when this is the night after a pay per view, which automatically makes things feel long. We're looking at seven plus hours of wrestling in two days and that's a bit much to take. Couple that with a show where they were clearly filling in a lot of time and it's still good enough but it felt like it went on for about four days.

Results

Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax/Alicia Fox/Emma b. Dana Brooke/Bayley/Sasha Banks/Mickie James – DDT to Bayley

Luke Gallows b. Enzo Amore – Flapjack

Rich Swann/Akira Tozawa/Jack Gallagher b. Tony Nese/Brian Kendrick/Noam Dar – Running dropkick to Kendrick

Apollo Crews b. Heath Slater – Toss Powerbomb

Austin Aries b. TJ Perkins – Last Chancery

Miz b. Seth Rollins and Finn Balor – Pin after Sister Abigail from Bray Wyatt

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Monday Night Raw – December 27, 1993: Maybe Undertaker Is Bad At His Job

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 27, 1993

Location: Mid-Hudson Civic Center, Poughkeepsie, New York

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jacques, Pierre

It's the final show of the year and that means...well nothing really as one of the major matches announced for this week is Marty Jannetty vs. Johnny Polo. I have no idea why that's supposed to make me want to stick around and watch the show but no one ever accused 1993 of making sense. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Yokozuna/Ludvig Borga vs. Lex Luger/Tatanka in what should have been a pretty hot house show feud. I don't think it ever happened on TV, even though it should have been a layup.

The announcers preview the show and it's as weird as it would seem to be.

Lex Luger vs. Barry Horowitz

Luger sends him into the ropes as the announcers speak a lot of French for the running joke of the show. I mean, it's not a funny joke but it is in fact a running joke. Barry pokes him in the eye to get out of some arm work as we hear about Bret and Owen Hart getting a Tag Team Title shot at the Royal Rumble. Horowitz actually gets in some offense as the Quebecers switch over to Spanish. Lex shrugs it off and grabs a powerslam before finishing with a superplex.

Rating: D+. Better than I was expecting here with Barry getting in a good amount of offense. The superplex was a good option for a finisher instead of the Rack, which I believe Borga was using at

this point. It's always cool to see a simple move used as a finisher and it's not like it's hard to do. Just let the move get some pins and it's instantly a finisher. Why is that so complicated?

We look back at Johnny Polo interfering in a match between the 1-2-3 Kid and Marty Jannetty, causing a double countout.

Polo brags about beating both the Kid and Jannetty at the same time so tonight it'll be easy to beat Jannetty on his own.

Marty Jannetty vs. Johnny Polo

Polo actually gets a takedown to start (Jacques: "Isn't that two points? Call the Steiners!") and scores with an armdrag for good measure. Marty comes back with an atomic drop for the funny selling and it's off to the arm. A missed charge sends Marty outside in a heap though and Johnny does a fairly scary scream into the camera. Back in and they collide as this is already going longer than I was expecting. Can you imagine Ricky Steamboat vs. Mr. Fuji going this long? Then again that was a Kung Fu Challenge and not a match so it's not the fairest comparison.

Marty's jumping back elbow sets up a high crossbody for two. Polo gets dropkicked outside so Pierre goes to check on him, earning himself a baseball slide. A second distraction fails and Marty gets in a superkick but opts to dive onto Pierre like a villain would do. Back in and Marty grabs a sunset flip but Pierre holds Polo's hands to give him the pin.

Rating: D+. That's quite the long match but I always like Polo as he was just having a blast making fun of everyone. It's always cool to have a manager who can wrestle a match if the need arises as it can add a lot of options to the stories. Not a terrible match here but WAY longer than it needed to be.

Pierre is ejected...from commentary. Can a referee do that? Isn't that taking your job a bit far? Especially when it's not even in a match.

Yokozuna dreams about being Santa Claus and wakes up, realizing it was only a nightmare.

Doink the Clown vs. Spike Gray

It's clearly no longer Matt Borne playing the character as he's taller and skinnier than he was a few weeks back. Before the match, Dink gives Doink some gum. Spike gets some as well but it's something like a mini-mousetrap. Dink kicks him in the shin, which isn't a DQ because the referee is probably too busy ejecting the popcorn vendor from section 138 because he's a power mad nutjob. Dink punches Gray in the face, setting up a German suplex for the pin. How in the world are these two supposed to be faces? I mean, clowns are evil by definition and now they cheat? Think this stuff through Vince.

The Royal Rumble Report fills up time. The only new stuff here is the Hart Brothers saying they'll win the Tag Team Titles.

Crush vs. Mike Moraldo

Crush knocks him down without much effort to start as the announcers talk about the Quebecers vs. the Hart Brothers. Talk about a match that would really set the company on fire down the road. The head vice ends Moraldo without too much effort.

Undertaker is still making that casket. I had no idea it took that much effort to put one of those things together. Or maybe Undertaker is just really bad at his job and should take up something else. Like motorcycle maintenance.

Bret tells us to not drink and drive.

We look at Alundra Blayze defeating Heidilee (yes it's one word) Morgan for the Women's Title. This looked like every bad women's match you would have seen in this era.

Kwang is coming. Hopefully he leaves even faster.

Razor Ramon vs. Derek Domino

Non-title and non-gold chains for Ramon. Razor start with the driving shoulders but Derek makes the mistake of slapping him in the face. Domino (whose singlet is half down for some reason) gets sat on the top rope for a super fall away slam. Razor slaps him in the back of the head a few times and grabs the abdominal stretch. That

goes nowhere so it's the super belly to back into the Razor's Edge for the pin.

Rating: D. Yeah fine as Razor continues to be one of the best midcard acts of all time. The belly to back superplex is something that doesn't get the credit it deserves as Razor just tosses people around with the thing. You can hear all the talk about Shawn Michaels and the Intercontinental Title and that's only going to lead to good things all around.

Overall Rating: D+. It wasn't the kindest month to Raw but since the show debuted less than a year ago, it's not like they have a lot to compare it to. The longer matches were a bit better this week though and there was no Men on a Mission or Jeff Jarrett so we'll call this a slight improvement over last week.

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Monday Night Raw – December 20, 1993: New York Isn't

Memphis

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 20, 1993

Location: Westchester County Civic Center, White Plains, New York

Attendance: 3,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Shawn Michaels

We're getting close to wrapping up the year and that means it's time to get ready for the Royal Rumble. Last week focused on setting up the casket match which will see Undertaker challenge Yokozuna for the WWF Title and we've heard rumblings of Bret Hart vs. his brother Owen. At least one of them is awesome. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Ludvig Borga beating Tatanka back in October, ending his two plus year undefeated streak. Borga then helped put him on the shelf so tonight it's all about revenge. Tatanka: "Tonight, I'm out for revenge!" Well that makes things pretty clear.

Vince and Shawn chat about tonight's show.

Jeff Jarrett vs. PJ Walker

Two future World Champions, which would have made the audience shake their heads in 1993. Now it makes me want to cry as my head shakes but that's just me. Jeff struts away from an Irish whip but gets hiptossed down. That's about it for Walker at the moment though as Jeff gets in a dropkick. The announcers talk about Jack Tunney being up for Secretary of Defense as Jeff misses a kneedrop, only to grab a running DDT for the pin.

Rating: D. Sweet goodness Jarrett was dull. I'm not a fan of country music and now I have to hear about it every single time Jarrett is in the ring. The running DDT was fine for a finisher but DANG the rest of him was someone who was only going to work in Memphis. It's such a simple style of offense and that's not going to make it on the main stage.

Spend your money to tell the WWF that Lex Luger should be in the Royal Rumble!

Men on a Mission vs. Duane Gill/Barry Hardy

Mo takes Gill (with hair here instead of his better known bald look)

down with an armbar and actually manages to avoid any major injuries. It must be a good night. Mabel comes in and drops the big fat elbow as the announcers talk about someone dying from eating pigs. Michael Cole doesn't even sound this awkward. Vince isn't done yet as he suggests that the Royal Rumble could come down to Mo vs. Mabel. Imagine that: Mabel as a main eventer. That'll be the day. More slow paced arm work continues as Shawn sounds a bit "under the weather". A reverse DDT and the middle rope splash end Hardy.

Rating: F. I used to love Men on a Mission but WOW they haven't aged well. Mabel was acceptable enough for the big fat monster but Mo might be the most worthless wrestler I can remember from this era. You could even say that Hardy and Gill were more valuable as they give me flashbacks to Gillberg and Barry gives me imagines of Broken Barry Horowitz.

The Royal Rumble Report runs down the card and the nine names in the Rumble.

Ludvig Borga is ready to crush Tatanka again.

Tatanka vs. Ludvig Borga

Tatanka chops away and we get a graphic listing the announcers. In case you're flipping through and hoping to avoid Rio Rogers I guess. Borga is in early trouble and gets sent into the post, meaning it's WAR PATH time. A high crossbody gets two but Borga gets in a clothesline for his first offense over two minutes in. The former boxer starts hammering away in the corner and gets two off a bad looking powerslam. Tatanka starts the comeback but here's Yokozuna for the DQ.

Rating: D+. I always liked Borga but time haven't been the nicest to him. He has a good enough look and was a solid character but the in-ring work wasn't exactly strong. On the other hand, Tatanka is a good example of someone who lived WAY beyond his expiration date and turned a one note character into a pretty nice career.

Tatanka gets double teamed but Lex Luger makes the save with a slam on Yokozuna.

The announcers bicker about what we just saw. Shawn doesn't like Luger using the forearm, which sounds like the start of a feud that never happened.

Lou Albano is presented to the crowd for no apparent reason.

Adam Bomb vs. Mark Thomas

Bomb shoves him around and rips at Thomas' face. Vince: "Thomas is a big Barney fan!" That's the topic of the match with Shawn accusing Barney of charging 427% interest for a personal appearance. As you digest that brilliance, Thomas is powerbombed for the pin.

Thurman Plugg is coming.

We look at Owen Hart challenging his brother last week.

Bret says no way.

Owen Hart vs. Mike Bell

Bell actually wins a fight over the arm to start so Owen hits something like a headscissors driver (he does have a tendency to drive people's heads into the mat) to take over. Shawn accuses Bret of getting more Christmas presents than Owen as Hart drops a middle rope elbow. A belly to belly sets up the Sharpshooter to make Bell tap.

Rating: D+. Bell got in WAY more offense than I was expecting to see here and that makes Hart's win mean just a bit more. The announcers also made sure to point out the fact that Owen got in a lot of original offense instead of just using Bret's stuff. They're trying to show the difference between the two and that's going to set up the feud even better.

We go to Undertaker's shop (complete with a sign, meaning it's an official registered business, which is quite the departure from what you would expect from Undertaker) where he's working on Yokozuna's double sized casket.

Headshrinkers vs. Phil Apollo/Jerry Seavey

Apollo would wind up playing Doink a few years later. Samu hammers away on everyone as we hear about Donald Trump's upcoming wedding. Their conclusion: Trump is no Heart Break Kid. Seavey gets beaten from one side of the ring to the other and a double Stroke sets up a top rope splash for the pin.

Overall Rating: D. Nothing to see here but it's a long way towards the Royal Rumble. The Bret vs. Owen stuff is starting to go somewhere though and that's one of the best feuds the company has ever put together. Unfortunately the rest of the stuff was as boring as you could imagine with Jarrett being a major low point for the

show.

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Monday Night Raw – December 13, 1993: The Savage Stereotype

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 13, 1993

Location: Mid-Hudson Civic Center, Poughkeepsie, New York

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Cornette

With Bobby Heenan gone, it's probably time to start the very long running tradition of rotating commentators to go with Vince. Other than that we're getting close to the start of the build to the Royal Rumble, which means we're in for a long six weeks or so. If nothing else there's Randy Savage vs. Fatu. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We look at the end of last week's show with Heenan being thrown out of the building.

Vince brings in Cornette, with a Santa Claus cover on the tennis racket. That's so corny that it works perfectly for him.

Randy Savage vs. Fatu

After Afa finally gets out of the ring, Savage charges into an elbow. I wonder if that's harder than his head. Randy does that one spot that you only do to a Samoan where he slams him head first into the mat. The ensuing superkick puts Savage on the floor where he tries to send Fatu head first into the steps. To paraphrase Savage at Wrestlemania IX: wrong again Slim Jim breath.

Back in and the beating continues as I have a feeling we're in the "Savage gets beaten up for five minutes and then hits the elbow for the pin" formula. Savage gets sent outside so Afa can get in a few shots, followed by a shrunken head (just go with it) shot for two. Fatu goes up but gets crotched, allowing Savage to hit the top rope ax handle to the floor. Back in and a clothesline sets up the elbow to put the Samoan away.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here until we got to the ending, which really didn't make Savage look all that great. Then again that formula got Savage a few World Titles in WCW so maybe there was something for it. Also, how weird is it to think that Fatu got into the Hall of Fame on his own and not in a tag team? It's a stretch to have him in there at all but it goes to show you that you never know what you might get out of the right gimmick.

Todd Pettengill makes an appeal to the fans to vote for Savage to be allowed back on WWF Mania. Gee I wonder if they will. Well I wouldn't for 99 cents a call.

Lex Luger says don't do drugs and I begin to laugh, albeit in a sad way.

Smoking Gunns vs. Steve Smyth/Jim Messenger

We'll say Jim gets beaten up first with a double legsweep putting him down as Cornette talks about going to Toronto to beg Jack Tunney to keep Luger out of the Royal Rumble. Lou Albano comes out to scout with Vince talking about Lou managing more Tag Team Champions in WWF history. Cornette: "Give me time! Give me time!" Bart dropkicks Messenger down, followed by a top rope bulldog to give Billy the pin. Total squash.

We look back at Shawn Michaels vs. the 1-2-3 Kid last week with Razor Ramon's failed save attempt. Shawn gave him two (fairly bad for the sake of safety) Razor's Edges on the floor. Good angle to

advance a good feud.

IRS vs. Todd Mata

Before the match, IRS opens the briefcase and shows off Razor's stolen jewelry. IRS throws him into the corner and grabs a backbreaker as Cornette comes up with a variety of excuses for what was really in the briefcase. Oh and he's dating Princess Diana. IRS grabs a belly to back suplex of all things for the pin. To be fair his finisher was a clothesline so that's hardly a stretch.

And now, Yokozuna as Santa Claus! Don't worry though as it was just a nightmare. Why was Mr. Fuji right next to Yokozuna's bed? Is that in your standard manager contract?

Undertaker vs. JS Storm

That's one heck of a pop for Undertaker, who was one of the few hot acts even at this point. Undertaker throws him outside and into the steps as Cornette rants about the upcoming casket match. The chokeslam and Tombstone keep this one short.

Undertaker puts him in a bodybag for fun.

Jeff Jarrett debuts next week.

Rick Martel vs. Tim McNeany

I always forget that Martel existed after about 1990. A crossbody gives Tim two and he gets the same off a sunset flip. Martel elbows him in the jaw and grabs a front facelock. Tim actually makes a quick comeback but misses a dropkick, setting up the Boston crab for the submission. Better than I was expecting for a change.

On Superstars, Owen Hart was sick of hearing about Bret and challenged him to a match.

Bret Hart vs. Brooklyn Brawler

Hart starts with a hiptoss before going after the arm. The arm work continues as you can tell Bret isn't exactly interested in working hard here. Brawler chokes in the corner a bit but gets slammed off the top, leaving Cornette to compare the Brawler to Rush Limbaugh. Bret starts in with the Five Moves of Doom and finishes with the Sharpshooter.

Rating: D. This was exactly what you would expect from a five minute Bret vs. Brawler match. If nothing else it gave the announcers a chance to hype up Bret vs. Owen, which sounds like a very solid

match on paper alone when you ignore the good story behind it. Bret wasn't exactly energized out there but it's hard to blame him for being a bit lethargic.

Overall Rating: D-. Watching this episode felt like the stereotype that comes with the older shows: the longer matches are bad and the squash matches aren't long enough to care about. The Royal Rumble and Wrestlemania are starting to shape up though and one of those is outstanding so at least I have something to look forward to.

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Monday Night Raw – December 6, 1993: Come Back Bobby

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 6, 1993

Location: Westchester County Civic Center, White Plains, New York

Attendance: 3,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Bobby Heenan

Dang I just finished the January 1994 shows and now I get to see how we got there. We're just past the Survivor Series where Lex Luger and AMERICA defeated the evil foreigners (one of them all the way from Hawaii) but more importantly, Bret and Owen Hart took their first steps towards an amazing feud. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks back at Shawn Michaels attacking Razor Ramon during a match against Diesel. The 1-2-3 Kid made the save and we've got a match tonight. This was around the time when Shawn was suspended for a steroids violation while still Intercontinental Champion. He returned and claimed to still be champion, setting up a huge feud.

Vince and Bobby preview the show.

Shawn Michaels vs. 1-2-3 Kid

Shawn has the Intercontinental Title but isn't champion. They start fast with Kid firing off the kicks to send Shawn outside for a springboard dive. We hit a long headlock until Kid makes the mistake of trying to climb the corner, allowing Shawn to suplex him down for the break. That's fine with Kidd who sends Shawn shoulder first into the post, only to dive into a powerslam on the floor.

We take a break and come back with Shawn working on the ribs to keep things slow, which isn't something you often see Michaels do.

Another suplex gives Shawn two and it's off to a backbreaker. Back up and a spinning kick sets up even more kicks (to be fair, kids don't have the most varied offense), only to miss something like a Swanton as we take a second break.

Just like earlier we come back to Shawn in control and hitting a Razor's Edge, only to pull the Kid up at two. Vince thinks that should be a DQ because Vince has some weird ideas at times. A second Razor's Edge brings out Razor Ramon to chase Shawn up the aisle. Shawn trips but Diesel gets in a cheap shot from the curtain as I'm guessing the match was thrown out somewhere in there, even though it should have been a countout win for the Kid.

Rating: B. Good match here as the Kliq (not yet formed of course) continues to be the best workers in the company and are always more than willing to work with each other. This was much better than your average match around this time, which isn't exactly shocking given who was in there.

Shawn gives Razor the Edge on the floor, albeit nearly in slow motion to prevent a bad case of death. A second Edge keeps Razor in trouble as Vince is LOSING IT on commentary.

Quebecers vs. Bert Centeno/Mike Walsh

Non-title. Centeno starts with Jacques and slaps him in the face

before bailing out to the floor. Walsh comes in and is sent hard into the corner as the beating begins. A backdrop sends Pierre onto Centeno and the Cannonball ends a long squash.

Rating: D. It's not a good sign when the best part of the match was Johnny Polo sitting in a chair with his feet up reading a magazine. Then again, Polo was often the best part of the Quebecers' matches. These squashes are only going to get you so far and the Quebecers weren't the best option in the first place.

Post match Centeno is put in Polo's chair and clotheslined out.
Royal Rumble ad.

Owen Hart doesn't want to hear about Bret winning Superstar of the Year. He has a surprise coming.

Doink the Clown vs. Tony DeVito

DeVito is nice enough to let Doink stroll Dink around before we get going. Dink gets on the apron for no apparent reason as DeVito gets caught in an armbar. Another takedown keeps Tony in trouble as you can hear the crowd going very quiet for this, which isn't the biggest surprise. Dink is still on the apron and being rather annoying but that's standard for him.

A German suplex drops DeVito and we hit a headlock as we hear about Star Wars airing on USA. Another takedown has Vince complaining about how many times Doink has done pretty much the same thing. The Whoopee Cushion ends a squash that has me longing for the Quebecers match.

Rating: D-. WAY too long here as Doink has lost everything after turning heel. This was a really boring match and Dink continues to be far more annoying than he really should have been. Given that he's a small clown, that's quite a bit of an accomplishment. Bad squash with the five minute runtime being ridiculous.

Jeff Jarrett and his unnamed friend (with his awesome hat) walk the streets of Nashville and complain about never getting a break.

We look back at Crush attacking Randy Savage, which somehow got Savage suspended.

Crush vs. Tony Roy

Heenan says Mr. Fuji is very happy because tomorrow is the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. This is the regular phone call match

with Savage calling in from the United Kingdom. Crush shrugs off the offense and hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker as we hear about Savage's time as a macho baby. The slow beating continues as Savage's reception cutting in and out. I think he's giving us a salad recipe though. A gorilla press onto the top rope puts Tony away.

Rating: D. This was all about the phone call which was all to set up Savage making his in-ring return next week to face Fatu. The best part though was Vince telling Bobby that Gorilla Monsoon called in earlier today but it was a LOCAL call. The fear in Heenan's voice was perfect and I think that might be leading somewhere.

We run down next week's card and heeeeeere's Gorilla. Monsoon has good news and bad news for Heenan. The good news is he's won a free trip. Heenan: "I don't care to go anywhere!" The bad news is Monsoon grabs him by the jacket and literally drags him out of the arena. Heenan's luggage is waiting next to the door as Gorilla throws both him and it out of the building (and the company as he was off to WCW). Heenan looks close to tears as he salutes the building and leaves.

Overall Rating: C+. That one match really is enough to carry the whole show but the ending is actually a little sad. Heenan never was his old self in WCW and it's a shame to see him go. At least it was in a funny moment with Monsoon getting to do it. Those two had some of the best chemistry ever and Heenan's line of "I wish Monsoon was here" at the Hall of Fame gets me every time. Not a good show, but check out that opener.

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Monday Night Raw – November 25, 2002: Boring Wrestling and Violent Illness

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 25, 2002

Location: North Charleston Coliseum, North Charleston, South, Carolina

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're still in the Shawn Michaels Era and he's actually defending the title this week against Rob Van Dam. Other than that we're still waiting on the return of HHH, who was injured at Survivor Series but probably needs to grace us with his presence again. Other than that, I'd assume we'll get a bunch of Testicle jokes. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Shawn winning the title and Van Dam earning the shot last week.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Christian/Chris Jericho vs. Dudley Boyz

Christian and Jericho are defending. D-Von drops Jericho with a clothesline to start and elbows Christian for the same result. We get some championship miscommunication and Chris gets pummeled in the corner. Christian finally scores with a backbreaker though and the champs take over for the first time.

The pace slows WAY down (as is the Canadian way) but Christian takes too much time yelling at Bubba, allowing D-Von to grab a neckbreaker. Bubba comes in and cleans house but misses the middle rope backplash. Everything breaks down (as is the tag team way) and D-Von gets two off a small package. Chris rams him into Christian though and a rollup retains the titles clean.

Actually hang on a second as here are Eric Bischoff and Sean Morely (the former Val Venis), who is now Chief of Staff. All four shoulders were on the mat at the same time for the cover so there's no pin, meaning this match MUST continue. I'm assuming this is the "heel bosses act nice to start before going really evil" segment of the night.

The match continues after a break with Bubba slamming his way out of trouble and making the hot tag off to D-Von. Notice the crowd not being as thrilled, mainly because the good guys just got pinned about as clean as you can get but the match continues on a technicality. 3D gives Bubba the pin on Christian.....but Bubba wasn't legal, so Morely restarts the match again.

The third fall begins and you can hear the fans getting annoyed. Jericho nails D-Von from behind and sleeper drops Bubba for two. That earns him a Flip Flop and Fly with What's Up making things even worse. Since there haven't been enough shenanigans in this match, it's table time but Christian dropkicks it into D-Von's face. Bubba blocks the Lionsault but Christian hits him with a belt, setting up the Walls to retain the titles for real.

Rating: D+. WAY too much going on here when they could have done a regular match with some extra time or just done a 2/3 falls match, despite the lack of any reason for this to go longer than usual. If nothing else though, it's nice to have some fresh blood in the title scene and the Dudleys are hardly a stretch for the automatic #1 contendership.

Shawn Michaels is ready to face Van Dam in his first Raw match in five years. He leaves to go talk to Rob for some reason when Christian and Jericho show up with champagne to celebrate. Jericho isn't happy with Scott Steiner but Christian says "forget about his freaks, peaks and Iron Sheiks". Chris goes with it and suggests that they hit the town because they need some Vitamin C. Christian: "YEAH! My name starts with a C too!"

They head into the locker room when the Dudleys come up and want to go after the champs again. Bubba says wait, because he has a plan. I

think I like this better than cutting to conveniently timed segments where people just happen to be ready to talk when someone else is done but it was still really scripted.

Test vs. Steven Richards

This is fallout from Steven taking a Testicles shirt to the testicles. I think Test is a face now despite doing nothing new other than having the catchphrase. The threat of a big boot sends Steven bailing to the floor but he comes back in with some right hands. We're already off to a reverse chinlock so at least this is going to be short. Some clotheslines and a full nelson slam give Test two and he hammers away in the corner. A low blow (that the referee should have seen) sets up an X Factor for two, only to have Test Roll the Dice for the pin.

Rating: D. See, he has a catchphrase which a nine year old would find funny so I'm sure the writers are impressed enough to push Test again. Richards got in a lot of offense here, which probably isn't the best way to push Test, though then again neither is a bunch of testicle jokes. Stacy is gorgeous but that smile is only going to carry the act so far.

Christian and Jericho are in towels after their shower but the Dudleys have stolen their bags. Chase is given and the champs are locked out of the locker room. So how did the Dudleys know that the champs were getting in the shower when they turned the corner two seconds after Christian and Jericho decided to do that? I guess they overheard them but if that's the case, why didn't they jump the champs when they were standing there talking?

Test and Stacy are happy with the win and Test goes to take a shower (common theme tonight). As Stacy beams, Victoria jumps her from behind and says she'll be thinking of Stacy during the match. Instead of her long hair and long legs though, she'll be thinking of Stacy's fear. Victoria licks Stacy's ear and that's that.

Christopher Nowinski vs. Maven

Before we get going, Chris says this is the last time that anyone

can say Maven is better than he is. Maven won Tough Enough because of politics when he mentioned his sick mother and that means it's on. Nowinski hits him with a big book and Maven is out. No match.

Jericho and Christian are in a search for clothes and find 3 Minute Warning and Rico's gear. They're far from impressed (Jericho: "Do you get a free bowl of soup with this outfit?") but Rico and the Samoans come in to scare them off.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Victoria

Trish is challenging and looks very nice in blue. They slug it out to start with Victoria grabbing something like a Thesz press before hitting some awkward kicks to the ribs. A rollup gives Trish two and the kickout sends her outside. She lands hips first, with JR saying is like a stone bouncing across a river. Victoria's slingshot legdrop gets two as Lawler thinks there's something in these two's past before explaining the backstory.

We hit a seated full nelson (that could be a solid finisher) until Trish fights up and gets some rollups for two each. Trish gets sent hard into the steps as this is already starting to drag. Back in and Trish makes another comeback, including a Chick Kick for two. We get an awkward looking shove to send Trish throat first into the ropes but it's enough to set up the Widow's Peak to retain the title.

Rating: D. Despite them both looking better than they have in a long time (which covers a lot of ground), the match really did feel disjointed. It was pretty clear that they had no idea how to go from move to move later on in the match, which really makes for some awkward moments. The women were getting better but they weren't ready for something this long yet, which isn't a good sign.

Victoria bites Steven Richards' ear for reasons of general insanity, which he seems to like.

Shawn praises Van Dam's athleticism but says he's missing a little something. Rob slaps him and that's just what the champ was looking for.

Video on Eric Bischoff.

Christian is worried about shrinkage but a shot of the Dudleys in the ring sends the Canadians into the arena. In the ring, the Dudleys are giving away Christian and Jericho's clothes, including a shirt and jeans. Bubba finds a jar of A** Cream, which has him very confused. Bubba: "WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A** CREAM???" The whole bag of clothes is sent into the crowd but they're not done yet. Cue Spike to steal the towels and we have unclothed champions.

Hurricane/Jeff Hardy vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

Jeff dives over the top to take out Storm before the bell and the good guys start fast. Some right hands have Regal staggered and it's off to Hurricane for a high crossbody. The Eye of the Hurricane is broken up so Hurricane has to settle for a chokeslam instead. Regal comes in for the save and starts working on Hurricane's back with a few knees. Storm adds some forearms, only to get caught with a Shining Wizard. It's not enough for the hot tag though as Hurricane tries his own half crab. Regal kicks him in the head for the break though and Storm grabs a Sharpshooter for the tap out.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but the ending was a nice touch as they went away from the standard formula for a change. You can only do the hot tag into the finish so many times so it was nice to see something get changed up. Regal and Storm aren't exactly a big upgrade but at least they're a regular team.

Jeff gets beaten down as well.

We look at Shawn's last match on Raw from December 1997 against Owen Hart.

Kane vs. Batista

Hang on a second as we have Ric Flair instead, telling Kane that he's not out of the woods for what he did to Ric last week. Batista comes in to jump Kane from behind and the beatdown is on. We do get a bell though and Batista gets to hammer on Kane in an actual match. Some clotheslines knock Kane around but he comes back with a big boot. The ref gets bumped so there's no one to count Kane's powerslam. Ric chairs him in the head and the Batista Bomb gives

Dave the fast pin.

We get the official terms of the Big Show trade: Big Show for Ivory, D-Von, Val Venis and Maven. That's a horrible trade. Anyway Bischoff tells Morely to bring Scott Steiner to Raw. Morely says he has a connection that can make something happen but RNN BREAKING NEWS. Randy talks about everything he's thankful for, including that good looking nurse at the rehab center.

Goldust vs. Rico

They trade some armdrags to start until Rico gets in a big kick to take over. A lot of stomping allows JR to list off some of Rico's accomplishments as they seem to be trying to make him into something. Rico grabs an armbar until Goldust makes a short comeback, including the powerslam for two. The Curtain Call gives Goldust the clean pin.

Rating: D. This was more filler but you have to deal with that from time to time. JR mentioned that Booker was healing, which might have something to do with a rash of illness going around the locker room at this point (dehydration due to some issues on a tour of India). If nothing else that would explain some of the odd booking choices tonight, such as this match, which was only going to last so long.

Raw World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Rob Van Dam

Shawn, in what looks to be the early Sami Zayn collection of tights, is defending. The champ fires off a dropkick to start but gets kicked in the ribs a few times, followed by a clothesline to send him outside. Rob is smart enough to throw him back inside for a slingshot legdrop to the bad back. A monkey flip is countered into something like Snake Eyes and Shawn starts in on the leg.

We hit the Ric Flair playbook with the leg being crushed on the ropes, followed by a Figure Four. Rob makes the ropes so Shawn forearms him into the nipup, only to miss Sweet Chin Music. Rolling Thunder onto Shawn's back gets two so Shawn comes back with a DDT. Shawn's top rope elbow gets two more but it's another backbreaker to cut him off. Rob gets in the Five Star to the back...and here's HHH

for the DQ.

Rating: C+. This was totally fine but you could tell that Shawn wasn't able to hit that other gear. The knee vs. back stuff was fine and I'm glad they didn't go with a clean fall over Rob, who is still recovering from the HHH loss. Speaking of HHH, thank goodness he was back so quickly to save the show. I mean, it had been a whole week without him and now we're likely going to get him in another title match.

HHH goes after Shawn post match and shrugs off a comeback. A side slam puts Shawn through an open chair to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. I'd assume the rash of illnesses changed a lot of this show but that really doesn't make the show any more excusable. It's not a good show with all the lame matches and quick build towards Armageddon, which is already looking like a boring show with another HHH vs. Shawn match on top. This wasn't the worst show in the world but it was your standard 2002 dullness.

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Monday Night Raw – April 24, 2017: I Should Be Paid Back For This Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 24, 2017

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

It's the go home show for Payback and that means we're getting closer to knowing how the Superstar Shakeup will really be going. Last week we saw Braun Strowman break the ring when he superplexed Big Show and tonight he's facing Kalisto in a dumpster match. I'm not sure that makes sense either but let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Braun Strowman destroying things for the last two weeks.

Opening sequence.

Here's Chris Jericho for the Highlight Reel. Jericho says this is the last Highlight Reel on Raw because he's winning the US Title and moving over to Smackdown. It doesn't matter if it's Raw, Smackdown or Southpaw Regional though because these people are the friends of Jericho and they'll cheer him on man. Tonight's guest is a real star and that would be....Chris Jericho! Cue Miz and Maryse to interrupt though with the former saying this show is about the it couple. Jericho says they better watch.....it couple.

Miz gets to the point and says MizTV is replacing the Highlight Reel, meaning it's time to replace the set. Now it's Dean Ambrose, who turns this into the Ambrose Asylum with all three as his guests. Dean wants Jericho to win on Sunday, despite their checkered past. Jericho broke a potted plant over his head and Dean broke his light up jacket. Jericho brings up the \$15,000 but Dean has a gift: a home made light up jacket! Dean says he should try it on man but Miz cuts them off.

We get a good rant about how Miz should be the only one getting gifts, which earns him Dirty Deeds. Dean leaves so Jericho asks what happens when you're married to a stupid idiot like Miz. After putting her on the list, Jericho leaves, wearing the new jacket (which is a sport coat with Christmas lights wrapped around).

Sheamus vs. Matt Hardy

Matt starts fast with a neckbreaker and three straight legdrops for two. The ten forearms are broken up and Matt hits the Side Effect on the apron as we take an early break. Back with the forearms working this time, only to have Sheamus miss a charge into the post. Matt's bulldog and a middle rope elbow get two but Matt gets sent outside. Sheamus follows and goes after Jeff, allowing Matt to hit the Twist of Fate for the clean pin at 10:02.

Rating: C-. I'm not sure how wise it is to have the Hardys wrestle singles matches as they really don't have the same fire that the tag matches do. The match wasn't much to see but there's only so much they can do in less than seven minutes of actual TV time. It's too early to take the belts off of them but I'd keep Matt out of a singles role.

Post match tempers seem to flare but they all shake hands.

Miz and Maryse cut off Kurt Angle's phone call to yell about Ambrose and Jericho. Angle doesn't want to hear about it and makes a tag match with Miz getting to pick his own partner.

Neville/TJ Perkins vs. Austin Aries/Jack Gallagher

The good guys clear the ring and we take a break before the opening bell. We're joined in progress with Gallagher in trouble until he slips over for the hot tag to Aries. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Aries cleaning house, including clapping his hands around Neville's ears. Both villains are sent outside for a double suicide dive and it's Perkins getting caught in the Last Chancery. Gallagher comes in to take care of Neville and it's a discus Fivearm to put Perkins away at 3:06 shown.

Rating: D+. The time factor caught up with them again but it's a

good idea to build Aries up more and more as he gets closer to his title shot. Perkins is a good choice for Neville's buddy and I could see him getting the title back down the line. Gallagher....dang what happened to him? They just stopped featuring him and let him be that guy who does the same collection of spots over and over, which is quite the shame.

Braun Strowman vs. Kalisto

It's a dumpster match, which means you have to put them inside but don't have to close the lid. Before the match, Braun says everyone here is trash and putting Kalisto in the dumpster will be like putting everyone in there too, including Roman Reigns. In the back, Kalisto tells Angle he has to fight like a man.

Kalisto starts with some kicks but his flip dive is caught in a suplex, only to have Strowman throw him across the ring. A front facelock over the ropes has Strowman in some trouble but he throws Kalisto down again. Strowman loads up a press slam but Kalisto slips out and dropkicks him into the dumpster for the win at 6:13.

Rating: F. I know WWE's official line is that wins and losses don't matter but you're trying to build Strowman up as an opponent for Lesnar. Two weeks ago, Strowman absolutely destroyed Reigns in one of the coolest segments in years. In the two weeks since, he's gone to a draw with Big Show (But he stood up and that makes up for it!) and now he's lost to Kalisto. He'll probably beat Reigns on Sunday and that's supposed to make up for this right? I'm sure no one will EVER reference this loss again and Strowman will be forever awesome.

Post match Strowman destroys Kalisto and puts him in the dumpster. He locks it shut and pushes the dumpster off the stage for what must have been a full two and a half foot fall. If this is how they want to build up Strowman, they have a LONG way to go.

After a break, Kalisto is stretchered out.

Video on Roman Reigns.

Bray Wyatt wants to make Randy Orton suffer.

Dana Brooke vs. Alicia Fox

This is over Emma stirring up some issues between them. Cue Emma less than thirty seconds in as Dana's cartwheel splash hits knees. Fox misses the ax kick though and a Samoan Driver ends Alicia at 1:12.

Emma hugs Dana, who shoves her away.

We run down the pay per view card and get the first details on the House of Horrors match: the match will start in the House of Horrors and end in the ring. That's a lot more than we knew before.

Samoa Joe and Anderson and Gallows are ready to torture Enzo Amore/Big Cass and Seth Rollins.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Anderson and Gallows

Enzo does his full entrance but the villains jump him from the crowd. Rollins runs out for the save but Enzo is laid out as we go to a break. Back with Angle announcing a replacement for the injured Enzo.

Finn Balor/Big Cass/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Anderson and Gallows

It's a big brawl to start (of course) with Balor kicking Anderson in the head a few times before it's off to Joe for the heavy forearms. Anderson comes back in for an armbar and a side slam. Gallows comes in and kicks Cass off the apron but misses an elbow drop. The hot tag brings in Rollins for the Sling Blade and everyone is knocked to the floor.

Seth loads up the springboard knee to Anderson but Joe kicks him in the knee. Cue Balor to take care of Joe, leaving Rollins to hit a springboard clothesline on Anderson. Seth loads up the Pedigree but opts for a hammerlock jumping knee to the face (think the Rainmaker) for the pin at 5:58.

Rating: C. The Club loses again and I can't say I'm all that surprised. Ever since they split from AJ Styles last year it's been one horrible loss after another, even when they won the Tag Team Titles. I'm not sure what Balor is going to do next but Rollins vs. Joe has serious potential, especially if Rollins has dropped the Pedigree for good.

Sheamus and Cesaro aren't willing to team with Miz.

Here's Alexa Bliss to talk about how people come out here to talk. Some of them want to become a champion but some of them talk about how much they want to become a WWE superstar. It's all sunshine and rainbows and she nearly vomits in her mouth a bit. She's here to fight so here's Bayley to call Bliss out for talking about people behind their backs. Bayley holds up the title and says she'll do whatever it takes to walk out of her hometown with the title on Sunday.

Bliss loves the idea of beating Bayley up in front of her father but has another question: has Bayley ever even kissed a boy? Not that it matters as Bliss can't wait to destroy her. Cue Sasha Banks with Bliss saying it's time for part 3000 of the Banks and Bayley side show. Bliss asks if Banks puts love letters in the lunches she makes for Bayley. Banks is ready to shut Bliss up but Alexa says not now because Banks is unhinged. That earns her a punch to the face and it seems that the match is on.

Sasha Banks vs. Alexa Bliss

Bayley is on commentary and is immediately grilled about how she keeps coming close to losing the title. Banks forearm Bliss to start but can't hit the double knees in the corner. Bliss stomps away but gets sent into the corner again. That's enough for Alexa as she walks out at 2:38.

Bayley goes after Bliss but Alexa runs away, only to turn around and get in a cheap shot. Sasha chases her off.

Ambrose tries to mend fences with Jericho and asks if he can be taken off the list. That's too far for Jericho because it's in pen. The \$15,000 is brought up again so Dean shows off the replacement jacket. Jericho also brings up the powerbomb onto the tacks but Dean says he wouldn't do it again. He likes the jacket though and Dean JUST UNMADE THE LIST! Dean is fired up and slaps Jericho on the back, earning him another spot on the list.

Heath Slater and Curtis Axel are ready to talk about being in Marine

5 when Miz and Maryse show up (good thing there were two extra chairs there). Neither want to be his partner so Miz says they'll never work in this town again. Axel: "Kansas City?" Miz gets a note delivered and apparently he has a partner, who he describes as awesome.

Curt Hawkins issues an open challenge to his "Star Factory".

Curt Hawkins vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is looking bigger tonight. They trade some shots to start until Crews hits a running boot to the face. A jumping clothesline sets up an enziguri, followed by the Toss Powerbomb for the pin on Hawkins at 2:09.

Titus O'Neil comes out to celebrate with Crews and Apollo seems a bit more interested this week.

We look back at Kalisto and Strowman. Kalisto has suffered hip and cervical trauma.

Roman Reigns has issued a statement saying he's banged up but he'll fight.

Long video on Strowman vs. Reigns.

Austin Aries pitches an idea to Angle for the main event of 205 Live. Kurt says he'll think about it so Aries gives him a banana. The Drifter walks by and Kurt makes sure to point out that he's not the partner.

Dean Ambrose/Chris Jericho vs. The Miz/???

And it's....someone who has some issues with being on time as he's not here. Miz says the match is canceled and goes to leave but here's Angle to say the match is on. Jericho takes off the replacement jacket and chops Miz in the corner, setting up some double teaming. Miz gets clotheslined out to the floor and we take a break.

The match is joined in progress with Miz still alone and Jericho's arrogant cover getting one. Ambrose comes in and Miz begs off, earning himself a chase on the floor. Maryse offers a distraction

though and Miz gets in a boot to the face to take over for the first time. Back in and the Reality Check gets two but the YES Kick is countered into a rollup. Jericho comes in with the Lionsault but the Codebreaker is blocked.

Miz goes to leave so Ambrose follows him up the ramp. Dirty Deeds is loaded up on the stage but here's Bray Wyatt to knock Dean off. Sister Abigail sends Dean into the wall and a second one plants Jericho in the ring. Miz poses with Wyatt...and takes Sister Abigail as well. Bray kneels down to end the show and we'll say the match was thrown out at about 8:30.

Rating: D. So that happened. I'm assuming this was just a way to set up Orton vs. Wyatt as Miz and Ambrose have nothing to do on Sunday, save for hosting a talking segment on the Kickoff Show. Wyatt is an interesting choice for a partner and it's nice to have him actually show up but....yeah this didn't work.

Overall Rating: F+. I'm trying to think of a highlight tonight and the best I've got is Alexa's promo about how Bayley made her sick. Other than that, this was one heck of a bomb with Strowman's loss and the ridiculous dumpster thing being the low point. I don't know if creative was told to punt until after Payback or what but this REALLY didn't work and I haven't been left scratching my head so many times over the course of a night since probably something TNA did. This was really, really bad and that's about as nice as I can go with it.

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Monday Night Raw – November 18, 2002: I'd Rather Talk About Anthology

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 18, 2002

Location: Webster Bank Arena, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're past Survivor Series and that means Shawn Michaels gets to keep HHH's World Title warm for the next few weeks. That's really all that matters from the Raw side as the show was almost all about the Elimination Chamber, which makes sense for the most part. We're less than four weeks away from the next pay per view so let's get to it.

Eric Bischoff is in the parking lot waiting on someone unnamed but gets Ric Flair instead. There's no HHH but Bischoff has him in a #1 contenders match tonight so he better be here soon. Flair gets in Bischoff's face, talking about how HHH had a crushed trachea last night but kept fighting anyway. Ric thinks Bischoff only cares about the show so Eric gives him a match against Kane. That doesn't seem to bother Ric because he'll show Kane how it used to be done.

Opening sequence.

Here's Shawn to get things going. After declaring himself the NEW World Heavyweight Champion, he talks about not being able to believe this is real. Last night he accomplished his goal of becoming the NEW World Heavyweight Champion but now he's not sure what to do. Does he want to be someone who keeps going way after his prime or be someone who knows when to hang it up?

Walking away now would be the smart, logical thing but he's never been the most logical guy. He'd love to come out here and see what he can do against all that young talent in the back so let's just see what this old, beat up body has left in it. Cue Rob Van Dam to

talk about what an inspiration Shawn was when Rob was growing up. If Shawn wants to meet some new faces, how about his first title defense is against Rob Van Dam? Shawn sounds ready to accept but here's Bischoff to cut them off.

If Van Dam wants to be the #1 contender, he can win a triple threat match also involving Booker T. and Chris Jericho for a shot at the title next week. That sounds fine but Shawn has a bone to pick with Eric. He's not going to represent a show that features necrophilia because it offends him as a wrestling fan. That's about it on that subject so Shawn gets in one more shot at HHH before wrapping things up.

We're coming up on the 10th anniversary of Monday Night Raw so here's a look at the first episode.

3 Minute Warning/Rico vs. Dudley Boyz

D-Von is back on the team, thank goodness. Bubba hammers on Rico to start but a little heel distraction lets Jamal deck Bubba from behind. That's not enough for Rico to hit a (great looking) moonsault though and Bubba drops him with a clothesline. D-Von comes in to almost no reaction and starts to clean house with Rosey being sent outside. What's Up hits Rico low but Jamal actually hits a dropkick. Spike gets kicked to the floor, leaving Rico to take 3D for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was basically "hey the Dudleys are back" and there's nothing wrong with that. The team really needed to be put back together after the pretty horrible face runs (though I'll miss Reverend D-Von's music) so let them go back to something you know will work. It's not like the tag division is overflowing with talent or anything.

Stacy makes testicle jokes and is going to unveil Test's new shirt tonight.

HHH is on the way.

Recap of the Chamber.

Scott Steiner, who seems to be the person Bischoff was waiting for earlier, arrives to Bischoff's delight. Steiner still hasn't signed yet.

Here's Stacy with a bunch of lame testicles shirts, which are just

puns in white text on a black shirt. She puts them in a t-shirt gun and launches some into the crowd until Steven Richards comes out to interrupt. He complains about this being stupid and takes a shirt to the groin. Crazy Victoria comes out and bites Victoria's nails off before leaving with Steven.

Post break Stacy freaks out so Eric gives her a title match against Victoria.

Lance Storm/William Regal vs. Tommy Dreamer/Jeff Hardy

The brawl starts in the aisle for no apparent reason and it's the evil foreigners taking over on Dreamer. Jeff dives off the apron to take Regal down but William kicks Dreamer in the head to give Lance the pin.

Dreamer gets beaten down post match with Storm doing Raven's drop toehold onto a chair.

We look back at Steiner beating up Matt Hardy and Christopher Nowinski at Survivor Series.

Here's Steiner for presumably his big signing announcement. Steiner talks about only caring for his freaks and his peaks before saying he's been watching both shows a lot lately. People have been talking about being the best of all time but the best of all time is standing right here. Cue Chris Jericho to say he's the King of the World so Steiner needs to shush. If you want to talk bodies, look at this gorgeous piece of meat. A brawl is teased but Jericho declines because he has a #1 contenders match later. Scott says he'll stick around. Having Steiner not wrestle is probably the best for everyone at the moment.

Women's Title: Victoria vs. Stacy Keibler

Stacy is challenging. Victoria chokes her a lot, Stacy does her horrible looking leg based offense and the Widow's Peak retains the title in just over a minute.

Victoria stays on her but Trish Stratus comes out for the save. Richards comes out and lays Trish out.

Hurricane talks about his song to promote the Anthology CD set. I loved that thing.

Maven is at the World.

Al Snow vs. Christopher Nowinski

Nowinski is in a suit with a backpack and this is a "School of Hard Knocks" match because WE DON'T DO HARDCORE ANYMORE. Snow hits him with a small blackboard and knocks Chris into the crowd. That means it's time for the bowling ball but Nowinski gets in a spinebuster before anything can be done. More weapons, including a freaking skeleton, are brought in with Chris talking to the skull. Snow hits him in the ribs with a femur before switching over to a chair. We get the bowling ball to the crotch spot as Chris is bleeding from the mouth. The moonsault only hits a pile of chairs though and Chris gets the easy pin.

Rating: F. It's not funny, it's nothing we haven't seen a hundred times before, Nowinski isn't getting anywhere out of this and the whole thing is just a major waste of time. Just do the Hardcore Title again if it's that important to you. Either that or put Nowinski in a tag team or something else where he's not on his own because this is a bunch of stupid stuff week after week.

Val Venis doesn't want to be known by that name anymore and now works for Bischoff.

Kane vs. Ric Flair

Ric is in a suit but says he's not going to fight. Cue Batista to lay Kane out instead.

Jericho can't get Christian to help him tonight.

Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho vs. Kane

The winner gets Shawn next week. Before the match, Booker isn't cool with not being mentioned as a potential title contender. JR says that the research staff says Shawn hasn't wrestled on Raw since October 1997. The internet research staff (and a decent knowledge of Raw) says WWE needs a new research staff. Jericho gets double teamed to start but, as usual, the double teamers argue over who gets to go for the cover.

Rob's standing moonsault gets two as the announcers keep bringing up the fact that there are no disqualifications. Jericho hits Booker in the head with the Tag Team Title for two but Rob gives him the monkey flip out of the corner. Van Dam is sent outside so Booker pops back up for some chops and a Walls of Jericho on Chris. In case you didn't get the idea, Van Dam makes the save and gives Booker an ax kick, only to have Jericho add a Five Star (good one too) on Rob.

Booker kicks Jericho down but gets dropkicked down by Van Dam. The snap spinebuster gets two on Jericho, only to have Christian come out and chair Booker in the back. Jericho grabs the Walls but here's Steiner for the save. The beatdown ensues and Rob adds the Five Star for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: B-. Good match here, or at least it was until we had to get two people interfering. This felt like three guys trying to get their heat back, which they certainly have to do after everything has been shifted to HHH vs. Shawn. It's also nice to see a good match get some time, though it might be that the match was good because it got time. Sometimes it's hard to tell which it actually is.

Shawn comes out to shake Rob's hand to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. Bad show with some good highlights, which means it's a big upgrade over most of what we see from Raw anymore. The main difference is the lack of HHH (who they said was coming here tonight and was then never mentioned again), who really does drag down almost everything that happens on this show. While Shawn doesn't even wrestle, it already feels like a breath of fresh air, which is one of the best things that could have happened to the show at the moment.

Now, that being said, Stacy was a major focal point on this show and that's not a good thing. Other than the World Title situation, Stacy being destroyed by crazy Victoria was the biggest thing on this show. The lack of a midcard title is really hurting this show as there's the World Title, the meaningless Tag Team Titles (because there are all of three teams on the roster) and then it's a bunch of nothing stories that are there to give people something to do without putting much effort into them.

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Monday Night Raw – January 31, 1994: The Tax And Coin Toss Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 31, 1994

Location: Fernwood Resort, Bushkill, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 1,600

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Irwin R. Schyster

We're finally on a new taping cycle and that means we're getting ready to start the build towards Wrestlemania X. In that case we need to have some clarification on the World Title situation, which is one heck of a mess at this point. As for tonight though, it's the 1-2-3 Kid vs. Johnny Polo, which would be one heck of a drug conversation. Let's get to it.

We take a quick look at the Bret Hart vs. Lex Luger situation. They tied in the Royal Rumble so we need to know who faces Yokozuna for the title first. The solution? A coin toss! I know face vs. face was rare back then but a coin toss? Really?

Opening sequence.

For reasons I don't even want to comprehend, IRS is on commentary. He offers the loser of the coin toss a pair of Buffalo Bills t-shirts. Luger is originally from Buffalo so he might be happy with those.

Marty Jannetty vs. Johnny Polo

Jannetty is replacing an injured Kid who is relegated to commentary. Here's what I don't get: the Kid injured his leg on January 17 and

the commentary that announced his match vs. Polo was recorded after the Rumble on January 22. So why in the world did they even bother announcing the match in the first place? The 1-2-3 Kid vs. Johnny Polo isn't exactly a masterpiece so how does Marty being in there instead make any difference?

Anyway Polo insults the crowd and the Kid so Marty ties him up with the microphone cord and laughs at him a lot. Polo is sent outside and teases leaving but gets slammed in the aisle instead. Hey now, he might have had a reservation at Cracker Barrel. Back in and Marty takes a shot to the face and seems a bit, ahem.....oh you know what I mean. Back from a break with Marty botching his half of a backdrop (dude it's a simple front flip) and getting caught in a chinlock. Normally I'd say he can't botch anything out of there but you never can tell. Marty fights up and a bad looking collision sends Polo outside.

Back in and we hit the pinfall reversal sequence before Johnny slows things back down with a headlock. Polo goes up to for the "I'm only going up top so I can dive onto your raised boot" spot and it's time for the comeback. Marty crotches him on top but charges into the post. The Rocker Dropper finishes Polo a few seconds later.

Rating: D+. Thank goodness Polo was trying here because it was clear that Marty was in no condition to do anything. I still don't get how anyone could ever make it back on TV when they look like that. It's clear that Marty, who could wrestle circles around a lot of people when he's clean, is in bad shape when he can't take a backdrop. Why was he allowed to go back out there without getting in some real trouble?

IRS goes after the Kid post match and loses his briefcase somewhere in between. Cue Razor Ramon, who has recovered his gold chains which IRS stole. It seems that Kid took it, which makes me wonder how IRS couldn't catch a guy on a broken leg.

After a break, IRS blames Marty for the chains being stolen.

Jack Tunney explains the World Title situation and the weird coin toss/mini tournament idea (there are brackets for this thing) for Wrestlemania. There will be guest referees for both matches. Of note: a Videocassette of the Year Award on the wall featuring Survivor Series 1987. Can we watch that instead? This whole thing is actually rather complicated, or at least moreso than it probably

should have been. Today it would just be a triple threat so it's better in a way....I think?

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Miguel Rosado

IRS officially challenges Marty for next week, which he'll accept if he has any guts. Normally those would be fighting words but in Marty's condition, he'll probably build a swing set shaped like a goldfish. Bigelow beats on him, beats on him some more, shrugs off a lame comeback and finishes with a falling headbutt.

It's coin toss time, which includes another explanation of the rules for the live crowd. I have no idea why Tony Garea, Blackjack Lanza and various other yes men are there too. Luger wins and gets to face Yokozuna first (he would have faced Crush otherwise) and can't wait to wrestle twice at Wrestlemania. Bret is upset about having to face Owen but there's no way around it.

Kwang vs. Rich Myers

Kwang is Savio Vega in a masked Japanese gimmick. Some chops and a spinwheel kick in the corner stagger Myers as we go to Owen Hart on the phone. Owen is the real winner of the coin toss because he gets to prove that he's better than Bret. The fans are doing the Wave in the tiny arena as this boring squash continues, complete with martial arts posing. Kwang ducks a middle rope crossbody and finishes with a superkick.

Rating: D-. It says a lot when a phone call is the highlight of the match. Normally I get annoyed at fans for doing something like the Wave but.....yeah it must get a bit boring with all of these squashes in a row. Kwang was a goofy gimmick and it's pretty clear you're done when your name might come on screen during an Adam West Batman fight.

Time for the Wrestlemania Report and we recap the World Title situation for a ridiculous third time. It REALLY shouldn't be that hard.

Paul Bearer knows the Undertaker is coming back.

Earthquake vs. Corey Student

That's a horrible name, even by jobber standards. Student goes after him to start and is thrown down even faster than you would expect him to be. An over the shoulder backbreaker makes things even worse, even with IRS saying it's an illegal hold. A slam sets up the

Earthquake to finish the squash, which Vince actually called it earlier on.

Rating: D. Of all the people they could pick to push as a face, it's Earthquake? If nothing else it's kind of amazing that it was only three and a half years ago that Earthquake was the top heel in the company. Nothing to see here, other than that really horrible jobber's name. Seriously: Corey Student?

Marty and Razor accept IRS' challenge with Marty going on an anti-government rant.

We run down next week's card to wrap it up.

Overall Rating: D. It wasn't a good show or anything but above all else it felt like something important was actually going on here. That's a problem that plagues so many of the shows from this era (and a lot of them today as well) but when things feel important, even a series of jobber matches are a bit easier to sit through.

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