

Monday Night Raw – September 5, 2016: A Labor Of Boredom

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 5, 2016

Location: Sprint Center Arena, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're in the Kevin Owens Era but the questions remain focused on HHH, who helped Owens win the title last week while also costing Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns at the same time. This almost has to set up a big match in the very near future though it's really not clear gets to fight whom. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the last five minutes of Raw and focuses on the big online reaction.

Earlier today Stephanie McMahon demanded a big celebration for Owens. Mick Foley came up and looked really upset. Last week, HHH made him look like a fool and Stephanie won't talk to him about it. Stephanie gets all serious when Foley accuses her of knowing what HHH was going to do. Stephanie: "Who do you think you're talking to?" Oh here we go.

Foley actually cuts her off and tells a story about meeting Stephanie just after he flew off the Cell in 1998 and thought she was an innocent girl. Stephanie almost sounds vulnerable as she asks how she can maintain a shred of dignity after what happened last week. Mick believes her but gives a thinly veiled threat if this is all a lie.

Opening sequence.

Mick and Stephanie are in the ring and welcome Owens (in a SUIT) as the balloons fall and pyro goes off. Owens agrees that he does deserve this before ripping into the fans for making it all about

themselves with the YOU DESERVE IT chants. He's known that since the day he set foot in this ring and doesn't need the fans to tell him that all over again. Last week he beat three superstars to win this title and yeah he got a little nudge from HHH.

Owens had already done 98% of the work though so tonight it's officially the Kevin Owens Show. This brings out a ticked off Rollins to say this isn't about Owens. Instead he goes off on Stephanie for letting him down last week. Owens says this isn't about Seth but Rollins keeps going on his rampage and says everyone is in Stephanie's pocket. Kevin has been HHH's chosen one since the day he debuted in NXT but Seth is here to burn the whole thing to the ground.

Owens thinks Rollins has only been making plans for failures so Seth punches him in the face. Stephanie suspends Seth indefinitely but Foley immediately overturns it, drawing him one of the loudest pops he's gotten in years. Instead of suspending him, Foley gives Seth (Foley to Seth: "I've never really liked you.") the title match at Clash of the Champions.

This was good stuff for the most part, assuming you can ignore HHH helping Rollins last week not being brought up. Rollins seemingly turning face (or at least starting it off) is a really good thing and WAY overdue but it certainly seems to be a slower burn than a full on version. Either way, Clash just got a lot better looking on paper.

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are yelling at each other (Stephanie's third appearance in twenty three minutes) when Owens comes up. Foley gives him a match against Sami Zayn, which draws in Jericho. Chris gets in a hilarious line by calling Owens the longest reigning Universal Champion in history. That earns him a match against Rollins later.

Charlotte vs. Bayley

Non-title and Charlotte has given Dana a clipboard to take notes. Bayley starts in on the arm and throws some Japanese armdrags, only to have Charlotte send her face first into the buckle. That just

fires Bayley up and she sends Charlotte into the buckles a few times instead. Charlotte heads outside and Bayley tries a dropkick under the ropes (think Sami's diving DDT) but leaves it way short, leaving her to just kick Charlotte in the chest instead. Bayley is favoring her knee as we go to a break.

Back with Charlotte holding the figure four neck lock and actually getting two off a rollup. Charlotte slams the bad leg into the corner and then wraps it around the leg. That sets up a half crab and DDT on the knee but Bayley grabs a rollup to break the momentum. Some limping ax handles to the chest have Charlotte in trouble but Dana pulls Charlotte out of the way of an elbow. Somehow that's not a DQ so Bayley kicks Charlotte into Dana and hits the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 12:40.

Rating: C+. The important thing here is the time. This match worked because it had some time to set up the leg injury and the ending made sense (save for ANOTHER lack of a disqualification) due to the extra focus it received. You can't do anything important in a four minute match and it helped so much to actually let this thing go somewhere for a change. Good stuff and the PPV rematch is obvious. Connor's Cure video for children's cancer awareness month.

Charlotte yells at Dana, who promises to make up for it. That earns her one heck of a slap in the face.

Bo Dallas vs. Kyle Roberts

Bo is all serious here despite holding up a BELIEVE IN B0 sign (please don't let this be ANOTHER political themed character) He takes Roberts down and hammers away before snapping off some knees to the face. A Roll of the Dice (as Cole described it) puts Roberts away in 38 seconds.

Owens and Jericho fire each other up.

Chris Jericho vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins starts fast with a dropkick and sends Jericho outside for a suicide dive. Oh yeah he's wrestling like a face. Back in and Jericho slaps him a few times as the fans aren't sure who to cheer

for. Jericho sends him face first into the buckle and we take a break. Back with Rollins hammering away and getting two off the Sling Blade. A Blockbuster gets the same and Rollins might as well have a big sign saying YEP I'M A FACE NOW around his neck.

Rollins dropkicks him out of the air but gets caught in the Walls. That goes as far as you would expect and Rollins' low superkick gets two. Rollins gets caught on top but still shoves Jericho off, only to miss the frog splash. The Lionsault gets a close two as this is really picking up. The Codebreaker is broken up and a Pedigree puts Jericho away at 13:47.

Rating: B. Anyone who has watched Rollins for years now has known he would be an awesome face and that's certainly what you got here. Rollins looked great out there and he's just so easy to cheer with this offense. I don't think he gets the title back at Clash but it's going to be fun watching him in this new role.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #3 in the series with Cesaro down 2-0 and coming in with a bad shoulder/back. Cesaro grabs some rollups for early near falls but a backdrop has him in trouble. Sheamus sends the back into the apron and drives in some knees. The Cloverleaf is blocked but Sheamus grabs four straight Irish Curses for a near fall. With that not working, Sheamus lifts him up for the Celtic Cross but drops it down into a backbreaker. The Brogue Kick makes it 3-0 to Sheamus at 4:06.

Rating: C. Well that happened and I really don't care. Thank goodness the fourth match is at a house show on Wednesday so I don't have to put up with seeing them again that many times. The back injury is fine but my goodness I've seen enough of these matches for my lifetime. It really feels like a way to give the writers a month off and that gets old in a hurry.

Shining Stars vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Before the match, Enzo thinks he's in labor so Cass, who has watched a lot of ER, performs Lamaze with HOW YOU DOING replacing the "hoo hoo" part. Enzo and Cass take over to start and it's off to a quick

break. Back with Enzo in trouble but avoiding a Primo charge and making the hot tag off to Cass. The Bada Boom Shaka Lacka is broken up and Epico rolls Enzo up with a handful of trunks at 7:05. Too much was in the break to rate but I'd again like to point out that NO ONE CARES ABOUT THE SHINING STARS.

Sami Zayn says his career has been stuck in place since he beat Owens, who is now the Universal Champion. Owens comes in and laughs at the idea that Sami is chasing him now. The race will never be over and Sami says he'll win the title on his own, without HHH handing it to him on a silver platter.

Nia Jax vs. Ann Esposito

Apparently Ann is friends Alicia Fox. Nia throws her around to start but gets caught in a sleeper to actually put her in trouble. That earns Ann a ram into the corner and a throw to the mat, followed by three straight Umaga attacks in the corner. A fireman's carry into a powerslam (with a pause before the powerslam) ends Ann at 1:38.

It's time for Anderson and Gallows to not be funny. Now they're retirement specialists who have already gotten rid of the Dudley Boyz, so now let's welcome the OLD DAY. Cue some New Day impersonators (one on a motorized scooter, one on a walker and one on a cane) to a slow motion version of their theme. The crowd is just silent for this as the Old Day says everything changed for them at Clash of Champions. We get every old person joke you can imagine, including Big E.'s hips going out as he does the swivel.

Cue the real New Day to ask which X-Man is their favorite. For some reason it's Cyclops....which isn't all that funny. Kofi thinks there's a paradox taking place here and if the New Day comes into contact with the Old Day, the WWE Universe will explode. Anderson and Gallows bail and dancing ensues, only to have Old Day's sneak attack completely fail. The old guys are beaten down to finally wrap this up. This went on WAY too long and it just wasn't very funny.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal

Titus O'Neil is on commentary for reasons of pure torture. Darren gets an early two off a swinging neckbreaker but has to fight out of a chinlock. Titus goes out to ringside as Darren hits the Gut Check for the pin at 2:15.

Darren and Titus fight again after the match.

Alicia Fox checks on her injured friend when Nia Jax, who just happened to be there, shows up and laughs. Total Divas is mentioned and Fox yells a lot while throwing things. Nia just leaves as she goes nuts.

Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Well it's better than jobber after jobber. Cara is fighting due to Braun ripping off the luchador's mask last week. A dropkick sends Braun into the corner but he explodes out with a shoulder. We hit the neck crank and nerve hold for a bit before Braun sends him outside. Cara is tossed into the steps but comes back with a dropkick, only to be whipped into the barricade for the countout at 2:11. Are we really going to have to watch this again next week? Really?

Strowman beats Cara up even worse post match.

Here's Sasha Banks for an announcement. She talks about how every story has an ending before talking about the Divas Revolution. Back in July 2015, Stephanie McMahon (oh yeah) introduced the Divas Revolution and it was a new era without bra and panties matches (which there hadn't been in YEARS) and no more butterfly title (not for about nine months actually).

This revolution was about every little girl and every person who has been told they're not enough. She used to collect soda cans to try to save up enough money to come to a WWE event. Sasha starts crying as she talks about being injured at Summerslam and she has an update on her condition. Cue Dana Brooke to say she's going to use Sasha's broken body to finish what Charlotte started at Summerslam. Dana goes after Sasha but gets caught in a Bank Statement. The bad news was for Charlotte, who will be facing Sasha at Clash of Champions.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They start slugging it out at the bell and it's quickly outside with Sami going shoulder first into the barricade. Sami does his moonsault off the barricade (and kicks Owens square in the face) as we take a break. Back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock and sending Owens to the floor for back to back flip dives.

The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two but Owens rolls to the apron before the Helluva Kick. A Stunner over the ropes has Sami in trouble but the half and half suplex gets two on the champ. Sami climbs the ropes but lands on a bad ankle. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb so Sami grabs another half and half to drop Kevin on his head. Back in and the ankle gives out again, setting up the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin on Sami at 13:05.

Rating: B-. This was their usual good match but you knew Owens wasn't going to lose his first match as the champion. Sami will probably get his title match at some point in the future and that's going to be one heck of a rollercoaster when they finally get there. Good stuff here though but this show is way past saving.

Post match here's Roman Reigns to a LOUD chorus of booing. Chris Jericho comes out to have Owens' back but Foley prevents the violence. Next week it's Roman vs. Owens and if Reigns wins, it's a triple threat at Clash of the Champions. They had that same booking idea recently on Smackdown and it's still overdone here. Reigns spears Jericho to let off some steam and end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This show hit a wall in the middle and it just never recovered. That being said, it's not like they had that much good going on in the first place. I liked the opening sequence and there was some good wrestling in the middle but pretty much everything from Cesaro vs. Sheamus until the main event was just death. Then again this is a holiday show and no one is going to watch it but it gets really tiring watching a badly bloated show with so little effort from the creative side of things.

Results

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Bo Dallas b. Kyle Roberts – Roll of the Dice

Seth Rollins b. Chris Jericho – Pedigree

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

Shining Stars b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Nia Jax b. Ann Esposito – Powerslam

Darren Young b. Jinder Mahal – Gut Check

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara via countout

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Monday Night Raw – February 26, 1996: There's Wrestlemania

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 26, 1996

Location: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati, Ohio

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

Hopefully things pick up a bit this week as there's going to be a showdown between Shawn Michaels and Bret Hart with a little over a month to go before their WWF World Title match at Wrestlemania XII. Other than that we get another Larry Fling Live skit because we're just that lucky. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Diesel and Undertaker playing mind games with each other. That's an underrated feud and it's cool to see it again.

Opening sequence.

Isaac Yankem D.D.S. vs. Jake Roberts

This is actually Jake's in ring Raw debut. Jake shoves him around to start and it's so weird to see Kane just in pants and with that curly hair. Isaac gets in a clothesline and drives some fists to the face, only to get caught in the DDT for the quick pin.

Rating: D. That DDT was Jake's only major offense in the entire (short) match. This was around the time when Jake was just a disaster in the ring and it was getting harder and harder to watch him out there. Yankem was long past his expiration date and would return as Fake Diesel a few months after this character finally died.

The Ultimate Warrior is coming back due to fan requests.

Bob Holly vs. Diesel

This is a match that Eric Bischoff actually talked about live on Nitro, spoiling it for the audience. You know, because this match needed to be spoiled. Bob's early offense lasts as long as you would expect it to but Diesel keeps looking around for Undertaker to pop up through the ring. Holly makes a comeback and we actually take a break, only to come back to see the Jackknife ending this.

Rating: D-. That's for the break because the post commercial stuff was all of ten seconds long. I can't stand it when they're clearly just stretching a match out for the sake of stretching it out and it happened way too often at this point. To be fair it happens today too and it's every bit as annoying.

Diesel goes to leave and the gong sounds. The lights go out and Undertaker is in the ring but he disappears when Diesel comes close.

Coward. They go out again and Undertaker is on the video screen, saying he can play mind games too.

Ahmed Johnson vs. Shinobi

Al Snow as a ninja. Ahmed throws him outside like the jobber with a stupid gimmick that he is and we get a phone call from Goldust, who has a poem for Roddy Piper. As we hear about Goldust wanting to play Piper's bag, Shinobi botches a springboard with Johnson just staring at him. The spinebuster and Pearl River Plunge wrap this up quick.

Mankind talks about playing the piano for his mommy and her friends.

Vince brings out Shawn and Bret for a big interview. Shawn says he has more respect for Bret than anyone in this building and Bret may be the best there was and ever will be, but right now there might be someone better. Bret knows that there's been a lot of time put into this title and he's shown how great he is. His job is to be champion but Shawn has one night to beat him.

They get into a debate about who is in the best condition so here's Roddy Piper with something to say. At Wrestlemania, Piper doesn't want to hear about any tights pulling or a DQ. Oh and he doesn't want to see Shawn's abs because they don't mean anything. Piper finally gets to the point and introduces the idea of the Iron Man match with the ONE HOUR time limit being the big sticking point.

British Bulldog/Owen Hart vs. Yokozuna

Vince actually says Yokozuna is facing his ex stablemates. Yokozuna elbows and slams Owen to start before doing the same to Bulldog. Double teaming works a bit better and we take a break because this show hasn't gone on long enough yet. Back with Owen missing an elbow drop but Vader comes out for the DQ.

Rating: D-. To be fair it had been a long time since we had a bad match. Yokozuna was just way beyond saving at this point and was little more than a freak show. Vader beating him up would have been fine at Wrestlemania but they were probably better off changing things up for the sake of the fans having to watch those two have a match on their own.

Ahmed Johnson and Jake Roberts come out for the save, albeit with Ahmed doing all the work and Jake walking in slow motion before bringing out the yellow snake. I've heard of worse Plan B's.

We wrap it up with Larry Fling Live with special guests Huckster and

Nacho Man. They immediately start with the jokes about Hogan being injured by Woman's shoe. Both of them seem to be involved with Liz and that doesn't go well. Oh and they're both too old to wrestle for the WWF, which is why Hogan would be champion in six years.

Billionaire Ted calls in and Hogan freaks out, hitting everyone with horrible chair shots (ala SuperBrawl VI) while Larry holds a woman's shoe. See, this was actually funny and making fun of WCW for doing stupid stuff, not for whatever Vince's latest issue was.

Overall Rating: F. Other than announcing Wrestlemania's main event gimmick, this was the most worthless show I can remember in a long time. There was nothing worth seeing throughout the show and the Hogan stuff at the end might have been the most entertaining part. On the other show, we had the Alliance to End Hulkamania. In other words, it was a horrible time to be a wrestling fan and it was only going to get worse.

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Monday Night Raw – February 19, 1996: On The Road Again

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 19, 1996

Location: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati, Ohio

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're done with In Your House VI and the big story is that it's time for Wrestlemania. There's barely anything to talk about coming out of last night's show other than Bret is still champion, Diesel vs. Undertaker is pretty clear for Wrestlemania and it's a countdown until Shawn wins the title. Let's get to it.

Sunny, on the beach in a black swimsuit (my goodness) tells us that this show might not be appropriate for all fans.

We recap last night's main event with Undertaker pulling Diesel through the mat.

Intercontinental Title: Razor Ramon vs. Goldust

Goldust is defending and I had forgotten he was even champion at this point. Marlana tries to blow smoke in Razor's face to no effect (not clear how) and it's time to rip off Goldust's robe. A clothesline puts the champ on the floor for a breather as Lawler wonders if Goldust likes being manhandled. Goldust gets in a backdrop and we take a break. Back with Goldust grabbing a sleeper but getting crotched on top a few seconds later. Razor gives him a fall away slam over the top for a bad sounding crash. Jerry: "He probably broke his golden globes!" The belly to back superplex sends Goldust running up the aisle for the countout.

Rating: D. Nothing match here as it felt like they were out there for about two minutes worth of action. It's pretty clear that this is going to be setting up something in the future and probably would have had it not been for all of Razor's issues at the time. Bad match though and not a good way to start off a show.

Post match Razor grabs the mic and begs Roddy Piper to give him a fight with Goldust because he doesn't want his kids watching that stuff on TV.

Undertaker walks out of a casket.

Slam Jam recaps almost everything from last night and eats up a lot of time.

BodyDonnas vs. Aldo Montoya/Barry Horowitz

And never mind as Vader beats up the jobbers before the match starts.

The Ultimate Warrior is coming back.

Sunny sings Happy Birthday to Mr. President. I smell a stupid

impression.

Bob Backlund campaigns in the crowd.

Ringmaster vs. Marty Jannetty

Vince during Ringmaster's entrance: "You talk about a stone cold man." Austin isn't interested in having any of this wrestling stuff and sends Marty outside earlier. The Stun Gun sends us to a break and we come back with Austin driving a knee into the ribs. We hit the STF and get some LOUD spot calling, which is the kind of thing Austin would complain about today. We hit a neck crank as the fans aren't that thrilled with Austin as a submission guy. Marty makes his really simple comeback but gets caught in the Million Dollar Dream for the fast submission.

Rating: D+. Marty is a good choice to do a job here as the fans like him and he's certainly going to put on a solid performance in defeat. Austin really needed a feud though as this character is hardly interesting and isn't going anywhere at the moment. To be fair though he had to start somewhere and this is better than a lot of the nonsense that some characters got.

Mankind is coming and might even bring his rat.

Tatanka vs. Undertaker

Undertaker chokes Tatanka into the corner like he's the Undertaker and he's facing Tatanka. A Samoan drop gives Tatanka a breather but here's Diesel with an ax to steal a cameraman as we go to a break. Back with Diesel hacking up Undertaker's casket and Undertaker fighting out of a chinlock. Old School looks to set up the Tombstone but Tatanka counters into a DDT. Diesel is STILL breaking up the casket as the Tombstone puts Tatanka away.

Rating: D-. I'm almost never a fan of a match happening as a backdrop for the angle or whatever else you would call Diesel breaking up a casket. Tatanka can't be around much longer after this as he's certainly not around for Wrestlemania and it's not like he's been interesting in years at this point.

And now, a new twist on the Billionaire Ted skits: Larry Fling Live on BNN (Billionaire News Network). After some stupid jokes, Randy from Sarasota and Terry from Tampa call in. Huckster needs time off because of a shoe to the eye. The third caller is Jane from Hanoi (Ted Turner's wife) and this goes nowhere. Larry brings up the

predatory practices that Vince whined about for months and Turner suddenly can't speak about all the charges against him. More next week.

Undertaker and Paul Bearer are angry/distraught to end the show.

Overall Rating: F+. What am I even watching anymore? I know they're getting ready for Wrestlemania but that doesn't mean everything is all ok. The Billionaire Ted skits, which are closing the show almost every week now, just aren't funny. They're basically Vince's therapy airing on TV and that doesn't make for good TV for anyone other than him. The wrestling is the mess that you would expect and these shows get worse and worse every single week.

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Monday Night Raw – February 5, 1996: They're Having Fun

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 5, 1996

Location: Civic Auditorium, Stockton, California

Attendance: 2,904

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're coming up on In Your House VI but unfortunately we're starting this month at the end of a taping cycle, meaning a burned out crowd and weak writing. The big story at the moment is the upcoming Bret Hart vs. Diesel cage match for the WWF World Title but Undertaker is

looming as well. Let's get to it.

Shawn Michaels/Diesel vs. Yokozuna/British Bulldog

Vince and Jerry go out of their way to point out that Shawn and Diesel are undefeated as a team. Camp Cornette has been having problems of late so there are a few variables here. Shawn and the Bulldog have a posedown to start until they take turns sending each other to the floor. Yokozuna tries to sneak up on Shawn (as well as a 600+ man can sneak) so Diesel picks Shawn up and tosses him to knock Yokozuna down.

It's off to Diesel vs. Yokozuna as Vince plugs those stupid Billionaire Ted skits. A Samoan drop (You think Vince knows what to call that?) drops Diesel and Bulldog low bridges Shawn out to the floor. The delayed vertical suplex plants Shawn as the announcers play fantasy bookers about the World Title situation.

Back from a break with Shawn in more trouble (makes sense) and Yokozuna putting on a nerve hold. Shawn finally avoids the big splash and Diesel comes in to clean house. I know he's not the most popular booker but I've always enjoyed watching Nash do his big power stuff. Everything breaks down and Shawn superkicks Yokozuna to the floor for the countout.

Rating: C-. Not terrible here and for once I can completely get the idea of not having someone get pinned. If they're setting up Yokozuna as a loser, it's a stretch to complain about getting pinned by Shawn so having him get knocked out because he's too fast is a smart way to go about it.

Post match Cornette yells at Yokozuna, who beats him up to turn face.

Someone is coming and he's missing part of an ear.

Hakushi vs. 1-2-3 Kid

This could be good. Feeling out process to start as neither guy wants to go too fast. Kid tries to spin around a bit and gets caught by a superkick underneath the chin. A quick toss to the floor has Hakushi in trouble and a flip dive over the top draws absolutely no reaction. I don't know if the crowd is just bored or what but that was SILENCE. We take a break and come back with Kid getting dropkicked out of the air to put both guys down. Another kick to the face puts the Kid on the floor and Hakushi follows him out with a

nice dive. Back in and Hakushi goes up but gets butterfly superplexed back down for the pin.

Rating: B-. This got better near the end but that crowd reaction tells you a lot. You would think a match between two high fliers like these guys would have gotten at least some kind of a reaction, but when the Kid's feud is setting up a "loser wears a diaper" match, it's not the easiest thing in the world to get behind.

Clarence Mason is annoyed that Vader isn't reinstated and promises to sue the WWF.

Video of Vader attacking Gorilla Monsoon to earn himself a suspension.

Monsoon says his injuries will heal and apologizes to the fans for losing his cool. He knows Roddy Piper will be fine as interim boss.

WWF World Title: Undertaker vs. Bret Hart

If this doesn't wake them up, nothing will. Undertaker is challenging and throws Bret around to start before a headbutt gives us a stalemate. An uppercut puts Bret down and we hit the always stupid smother hold. Old School is loaded up but here's Diesel for a distraction to break it up. Bret takes over as Diesel sits in for some commentary as this is still going slowly. It's time to go after the leg with Bret dropping elbows and wrapping it around the post.

Back from a break with Undertaker hitting a belly to back suplex and sending Bret into the barricade. Old School connects the second time but the referee gets bumped on the Tombstone attempt. Bret escapes into a rollup for no count and it's time to go back to the leg.

That's enough for Diesel as he jumps Bret from behind and Jackknives Undertaker. We go to a second break and come back with....the match having ended during the break. Eh to be fair it was pretty much over already.

Rating: C+. It's a shame that triple threats weren't a thing in this company yet as this three way feud really deserved everyone fighting at the same time. It's interesting stuff and I get why they didn't want to have Undertaker do a job here, especially on a TV match. I can't complain much about a non-finish on Raw, though the fans might when Nitro had a title change two weeks earlier.

And now, a Billionaire Ted sketch to wrap things up. It's a press conference with Ted saying he'll do anything to put the WWF out of

business while Nacho Man and Huckster try to fight each other. Ted doesn't care about losing millions of dollars of stockholders' money because he's just having fun. Maggle! These things are so petty and such an embarrassment.

The show was pre-empted on February 12 so next up is February 19.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling was better here but this was actually the go home show for the pay per view due to the show not being on next week. In that sense this was a pretty strong show with four out of the five pay per view matches getting some time, which is a lot better than you would normally expect from Raw. The three way feud continues to have my attention but it's all just filling in time until Shawn gets the belt anyway.

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New Column: The Kevin Owens and Triple H and Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns Show

A column about the last five minutes of Raw.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-kevin-owens-and-triple-h-and-seth-rollins-and-roman-reigns-show/>

Monday Night Raw – April 1, 2002: The Fools In Red

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 1, 2002

Location: Pepsi Arena, Albany, New York

Attendance: 9,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's time for the first show of a new generation as Ric Flair is officially in charge of Raw with a roster all its own. I'm really not sure what to expect here as almost all of the stories are restarting, save for Kane vs. the NWO for reasons that I don't want to understand. Oh and Raven won the Hardcore Title to bring that "division" to Raw. Let's get to it.

Ric Flair joins us with the new WWF Undisputed Title and promises to make everything new. That includes signing Steve Austin to a new contract, which is indeed new and not someone we've seen for years who is way past his prime.

Opening sequence, including the debut of Across the Nation. I always liked that one.

We'll see Kane vs. someone apparently named X-Pac. I say apparently because he doesn't have a graphic.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Booker T.

Van Dam is defending and the big idea here is that we're starting with a match. You know, aside from that promo that started the show. A hurricanrana puts Booker down to start and my goodness Van Dam is over. As usual, anything that lets the fans participate (such as the finger point) is almost a guaranteed way to get fans behind you.

Booker forearms him down and puts on two chinlocks less than four

minutes in. You don't often see Booker being that lazy and it's rather surprising. Van Dam comes back with the usual but misses Rolling Thunder. The Spinarooni gets a huge pop and Booker nails a superkick, only to have JR distract me by saying "he's not Buckwheat on crack." There's a line you would never hear today. Booker's superplex is broken up and the Five Star retains the title.

Rating: C. Just a basic wrestling match here which isn't exactly a rousing start to the new era. I like the idea of starting the show with wrestling and the match was fine but nothing we haven't seen before. Van Dam always felt like the guy you put the title on so someone bigger can take it off him and Booker isn't that person.

Post match Eddie Guerrero runs out for his return and beats Van Dam down. Now that makes things feel more important.

Here's Vince McMahon as the Brand Split is already feeling unimportant. He's here to sign Austin but let's go to a break before Steve comes out. Back with security around the ring Lawler: "What are they out here for?" JR: "Security reasons." Here's Ric Flair to threaten to throw Vince out, arguing ensues and time is wasted until Ric sends out Big Show to carry Vince to the back. This took up WAY too much time and accomplished nothing.

During the break, Show literally threw Vince out of the arena.

William Regal vs. Spike Dudley

Regal's European Title isn't on the line. The evil referee takes away Regal's hidden brass knuckles to start but Regal beats Spike into the ground anyway, including a sweet diving drop toehold. A half nelson suplex sends Spike outside as the announcers discussing folding similies. Spike comes back with some headbutts to the ribs and a quick Dudley Dog for the fluke pin.

Rating: D. I'm assuming this sets up a rematch for the title next week though just having Spike pin Regal doesn't have me the most interested in them fighting for the title. Then again there's very little that's going to make me care about the European Title in the first place so they didn't have the best chances in the world.

The NWO takes over the APA's office, which has been moved from Smackdown to Raw despite the team being split up. Even the trash and table are in the same state after the brawl.

Post break, Crash tells Bradshaw what the NWO did. Bradshaw goes off to take care of it and Crash chuckles.

Terri yells at Trish for being all snooty now that she's on the cover of the Divas Magazine. Flair comes up and makes a paddle on a pole match.

Debra won't let Coach into Austin's dressing room.

The NWO spray paints the APA's door and beats up Bradshaw, who comes through the door like a gentleman, without much effort.

Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Bubba is challenging and they get right to the weapons, drawing the required ECW chants. Some elbows have Raven in trouble and it's time to throw oranges (JR: "Not the citrus.") at the champ, but not before Bubba does some juggling. Back in and Raven grabs a sleeper in a hardcore match so the announcers talk about the upcoming paddle match. A trashcan lid to the head puts Raven down for the middle rope backsplash and IT ACTUALLY HITS. Bubba looks stunned for a second before covering for two. The Bubba Bomb gives him the title a few seconds later.

Rating: D. So that's the start of Bubba's face run and I actually bought into it at the time. Looking back it might not be the best idea in the world but at least they're trying to make new stars with Bubba and Bradshaw. As I typed that, the reality set in all over again and it's clear that this was destined to fail but at least they were trying.

Vince is still in the parking lot (with a camera in his limo for no logical reason) and says he's sent someone to get Austin for the signing.

Here's Flair to present HHH with the new title. Flair praises HHH for his comeback but gets cut off by the Undertaker, who says Flair drafted him here to embarrass him. Undertaker brings up beating

Flair at Wrestlemania XVIII. The fans keep up the WHAT'S so Undertaker it says if you keep saying WHAT you sleep with your own sister.

Back on point, Undertaker says he beat HHH the same way at the previous Wrestlemania so it sounds like Flair is trying to show him up. Violence is teased but here's HHH to be the big hero. At least we get one last look at the awesome Attitude Era title. HHH, in that slow voice that only he can do, says he's the Undisputed WWF Champion and that big belt says Undertaker can't beat him again. A match is made for Backlash and Undertaker isn't interested in fighting before then.

Hardy Boyz vs. Boss Man/Mr. Perfect

I guess Wrestlemania VII is all forgiven. Apparently the solution to Boss Man being the same character who hasn't been over in years is to get rid of the "big". A way too early Twist of Fate is broken up and Matt is in trouble. The veterans start taking over as JR sounds miserable talking about the upcoming women's match. As is almost always the case in these TV matches, the beating only lasts for a few moments before the tag brings in Jeff. The Twist of Fate and Swanton are enough for the quick pin.

Rating: D+. So you know how the Hardys are one of the best tag teams of all time? Well they still are and they're capable of beating a makeshift team who had only teamed together a few times before this. Boss Man and Perfect aren't the most interesting guys in the world at this point and neither would be around much longer.

Post match Brock Lesnar comes out and destroys the Hardys to set up his first feud.

Terri vs. Trish Stratus

Paddle on a pole and they're in bikinis. Thong jokes are made, puppies are requested and a bulldog allows Trish to get the paddle in just over a minute.

Before the paddling can occur, Molly Holly comes out and destroys Trish to give her a real match. Trish gets the paddle broken over

her head to make it serious.

Vince promises he'll get this done tonight. Like he promised last week was his last night on Raw.

Austin is here and tells Flair to let Vince inside so they can handle this after the main event.

We look at Kane's amazing promo with Rock and Hogan. Rock being confused by Kaneannites is still great stuff.

Kane vs. X-Pac

X-Pac has Hall and Nash at ringside but Kane beats him up to start. Some kicks send Kane outside though Hall pulling the ropes down might have helped too. Nash adds in a big boot and X-Pac does his spinning heel kick, only to be launched out to the floor. Back in and the Bronco Buster has gets no reaction so Kane powerslams him for no cover. Kane finally has enough of the interference and punches Hall in the face, drawing the Outsiders in for the DQ.

Rating: D. I've been watching some Raw's from 1996 lately and it's amazing how different X-Pac became in the years since then. There was no fire here and it was a bunch of greatest hits, or as great as X-Pac ever got. I have no idea who thought Kane vs. the NWO was going to be entertaining and so far they're being proven wrong.

Bradshaw comes in for the save and house is cleaned. For some reason Kane's pyro fails, meaning two things had no heat here.

Here's Flair for the Austin contract pitch. Before he can get very far, here's Vince (JR: "No one walks like that.") to say his intellectual sperm (Vince: "Yes I said intellectual sperm.") that brought us here today. Vince takes credit for pay per view and growing the WWF to an international level. He also knew the Ringmaster wasn't going to cut it and invented the Stone Cold character. This brings out Austin to ask Vince about the contract and play the WHAT game for a bit.

Austin reminds Vince of their history together and does some WHATING with Flair too. Austin asks if Vince had a chance to see this and flips him off. He's intrigued by both offers because of both men's

success and agrees to sign with Smackdown. Austin tells Flair it was just business and asks where he signs. Before he does, there's one more thing: April Fools. Vince gets a Stunner and Flair freaks out. Beer is served and Flair gets a Stunner of his own, followed by Steve signing with Raw to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This Brand Split is in trouble early and there's really no way around it. Raw has almost nothing going for it with the highlight of Austin who clearly isn't all that fired up to be here. Most of the young talent is over on Smackdown and everyone knows it but Raw is the flagship and gets all the attention. There's very little to talk about here and it wasn't an entertaining night, which is hardly how you want to start things off.

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Monday Night Raw – August 29, 2016: It's His Show And We're Just Watching It

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 29, 2016

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's a big night this week as we're guaranteed a new Raw World Champion in a fatal fourway with Kevin Owens, Big Cass, Roman Reigns and Seth Rollins facing off for the title. It's hard to say what we're going to get at Clash of the Champions in about a month so hopefully we can start setting some stuff up tonight. Let's get to it.

In Memory of Mr. Fuji.

We recap Balor's shoulder injury and the setup for tonight's title match.

All four World Title participants for the title are in the ring with Corey Graves moderating. Rollins cuts him off and says they're all here because of him so he'll cede his time to someone else. Owens talks about how he's a prize fighter and tonight he's fighting for a prize. That leaves Reigns, who Owens just allows to be booed.

Cass is tall...and that's about it. Cass: "Did Jericho write that for you?" Cass says he's the biggest dog in this fight, causing Owens to point to Reigns. Seth is glad that this is an elimination match so he can beat up all of them in one night. A brawl breaks out with Reigns and Cass having a staredown before the ring is cleared. I'm glad they kept this short since no one said anything important and it was just hype for the main event.

Neville vs. Chris Jericho

Before the match, Jericho says Owens will win tonight but promises everyone the Gift of Jericho. This is their first match since Neville broke his ankle back in the spring. A catapult puts Jericho on the floor early but he hides behind the ref to get in a cheap shot and send us to a break. Back with Jericho putting on a chinlock but diving into a kick to the ribs.

Neville moonsaults out to the floor and avoids a charge into the corner, setting up a small package for two. A superkick drops Jericho and I'm very surprised at how hot the crowd is despite such a big main event. The Red Arrow misses and the Liontamer make

Neville tap at 10:50.

Rating: C+. I continue to be very glad that Neville can do more things than just the Red Arrow as those one spot guys can get lost in the shuffle quickly. Neville being a main eventer was a long shot at best but he's fine in the midcard where he could pull off an upset and most people wouldn't be that shocked.

Earlier today Bayley met the New Day and dancing ensues until Dana Brooke comes up, setting up a six person tag along with Gallows and Anderson. The key here: it didn't feel scripted. Instead it seems like the producer said "Bayley runs into the New Day and you've got two minutes. Go." That works so much better than scripting out the jokes and gives you entertaining things like this.

Nia Jax vs. Haion

Jax runs her over and finishes with an AA into a powerslam at 1:15. Anderson and Gallows now run a retirement home and suggest that New Day will be joining Team 3D. Nurse Dana Brooke comes in and puts on a rubber glove.

Video on Seth Rollins.

Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Sami has a bad ankle coming in and he tweaks it early on, allowing Mahal to smack him in the back of the head for two. A chinlock doesn't go very far and Sami comes back with the Helluva Kick for the pin at 3:06.

Rating: C. I'm still waiting for an explanation of why they brought Mahal back. He's fine enough for a warm body but of all people, Jinder Mahal? Anyway I'm assuming this is the start of something for Sami as the announcers kept talking about how he wanted the title. If Owens wins it tonight, there's no logical reason to not do Sami vs. Owens at Clash of the Champions.

Earlier tonight Sasha Banks was on the pre-show, saying that Charlotte was trying to injure her and end her career. Sasha will be back for revenge and the title.

New Day/Bayley vs. Dana Brooke/Anderson and Gallows

Charlotte is on commentary and doesn't think much of Bayley putting on a unicorn horn and eating Booty0's. The women start with Bayley getting some quick two counts before working on the arm. It's quickly off to Big E. for a belly to belly (gimmick infringer) on Anderson as the champs take over. That lasts all of a few seconds before the villains beat him down in the corner. The hot (or at least moderately warm) tag brings in Kofi for the Unicorn Stampede, including a running dropkick from Bayley. Some dancing sends us to a break.

Back with the camera on the commentators as the match is going on behind them. I smell Kevin Dunn's fingers all over this. We actually look at the match to see Kofi in trouble and getting elbowed in the face. Kofi gets in a double stomp and makes the tag to Big E. for the house cleaning. Everything breaks down and Kofi does an insane dive over the top, nearly breaking his arm in the process. Back in and Dana gets two off a rollup, only to have the Bayley to Belly wrap it up at 12:28.

Rating: C+. The crowd was digging the heck out of this and I can't blame them a bit. This was the perfect match for Bayley as New Day is over by definition and she fits in perfectly with them. Bayley gets another win to help set up her title match at Clash of the Champions and Anderson and Gallows save face. Good stuff all around and a fun match.

Cesaro says no one likes Sheamus so he'll spin him around and around and around.

Video on Big Cass.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #2 in a best of seven series with Sheamus up 1-0. Before the match, Sheamus says he'll prove that he's just the better man. Cesaro takes him down to the mat to start and gets two off a double stomp. Sheamus' arm is banged up and the announcers want the match stopped to check it. Thankfully it's a dropkick to send Sheamus

outside and we take a break.

Back with the Irish Curse getting two but Cesaro comes right back by hitting the springboard corkscrew uppercut. The high cross body connects (check your Bingo card) and Cesaro sends it outside. That goes well for Sheamus who backdrops him back first into the post, setting up the Cloverleaf for the submission at 11:15.

Rating: C+. Points for putting a story into the series with Cesaro's back injury though I'm still having issues getting interested in even more of these matches. WWE has a real problem of just having the same match over and over and then wondering why it stops being interesting in the process. Make it best of three or just do a 2/3 falls match or something but having it go twice that long doesn't seem like the best move.

Tribute video to Mr. Fuji and it's as good as you would expect from WWE.

Video on Kevin Owens.

Braun Strowman vs. Americo

Standard masked luchador. It's the squash you would expect with Strowman throwing him around and tossing him into the air for a faceplant and the pin at 58 seconds.

Strowman unmaskes him post match.

Here's Stephanie McMahon to address Shane McMahon getting F5'd at Summerslam, but first she has to say we're about to crown the "first" Universal Champion. Paul Heyman cuts her off but Stephanie is right there to cut his balls off by demanding an apology. Heyman talks about how Lesnar provides value to Raw and is here to pay Lesnar's \$500 fine. He pulls out a pile of \$1 bills but Stephanie throws them onto the floor. Stephanie wants to know what value Heyman offers to Raw and warns him of a coming storm.

Heyman goes into a rant about the board of directors and how Stephanie can control everyone but Lesnar. For some reason this turns into a discussion on female empowerment with Stephanie saying Heyman is staring at the women's revolution. Heyman apologizes to

her and she accepts before dropping the mic and leaving. With Stephanie gone, Heyman chuckles and smirks.

Video on Balor's injury and surgery.

Video on Roman Reigns.

Titus O'Neil vs. Darren Young

The aggressive Young knocks Titus to the floor where he asks for a timeout. Back in and a hard whip sends Darren over the corner where he lands on a camera to break it into pieces. Some neck cranks don't go anywhere so Young crucifixes him for the pin at 4:04.

Rating: D-. Can ANYONE explain why this feud is still going or why I'm supposed to care about them fighting over and over again?

Neither guy is interesting and it seems like a character that exists for the sake of the Presidential elections and nothing more. Total filler here and it's getting more and more annoying every match.

Backlund and Young celebrate so Titus beats them both up.

Mick Foley apologizes for not being out there for Stephanie but she didn't need him. He suggests that everyone is barred from ringside tonight and again Stephanie says it's the first Universal Title match. Rollins comes in and Stephanie wishes him luck.

Raw World Title: Big Cass vs. Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns vs. Seth Rollins

The title is vacant coming in and this is under elimination rules. Mick and Stephanie are at ringside as they should be. Cass says he's shocking the world tonight. The bell rings after a break (THANK YOU!) and Owens immediately heads outside. The Cass vs. Reigns showdown is delayed again as the villains go after the big men and it's time to pair off.

Seth and Kevin are knocked outside and we get the big showdown with Cass blocking the Superman Punch. A running big boot knocks Reigns outside with Cass falling out as well. Rollins dives onto Cass but Owens drops him onto the barricade, only to have Reigns dive onto Owens and Cass as we take a break. Back with Owens in control and getting two off the backslash to Cass.

Reigns fights back with his string of clotheslines until Cass kicks his head off. They've done a really good job of making Cass look like he belongs here in the first ten minutes. A big boot puts Owens on the floor and the Empire Elbow hits Rollins. The East River Crossing is broken up by a Superman Punch and the low superkick gets two. Owens adds the Frog Splash to get rid of Cass at 13:46. I'm sure Saxton saying he thinks Cass can pull it off a minute earlier didn't give that away for anyone. Also, I believe that's the first time Cass has been pinned on the main roster.

Back from a second break with Reigns powerbombing Owens and Rollins for a Tower of Doom. Rollins' falcon arrow gets two on Roman but the Superman Punch knocks Rollins out of the air for two more. Cole describes this as incredible action for the second time in about a minute.

Owens comes back in with a superkick to Rollins, setting up back to back Cannonballs for another big reaction. The crowd has somehow stayed hot all night and that's a really good sign. The Superman Punch gets two on Owens and you can hear the crowd's sigh of relief on the kickout. Owens' Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with another Superman Punch and Reigns hits a quick sitout powerbomb for two on Seth.

A spear drops Rollins on the floor but here's HHH of all people to Pedigree Reigns on the floor. HHH throws Rollins back inside for the pin on Reigns at 23:48 (POP!), meaning Rollins needs HHH's help yet again. HHH throws Owens inside, Pedigrees Rollins and gives a shocked Owens the title at 25:05.

Rating: B+. This is a hard one to grade as they nailed the near falls and the drama to near perfection but I really don't care for HHH being back AGAIN and presumably setting up HHH vs. Rollins and/or Reigns. That's the standard problem with HHH: even if someone new is getting a big title win, it's still about HHH for a long time. However, let's get to the good part: KEVIN OWENS IS WORLD CHAMPION! Yeah that hasn't quite sunk in yet but it's actually happened and that is most certainly a good thing.

HHH leaves and Owens celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Make no mistake about it: the main event is the ONLY thing on this show that mattered in the slightest. The only other thing of note was the really awkward Stephanie vs. Heyman promo and I'm still not sure what happened there. They did a really good job with the title match though (HHH involvement aside) and that's all that matters on this show. A lot of this stuff is going to depend on the fallout but I'm very happy with Owens winning as he's definitely the most logical option. Good show with a red hot crowd throughout helping it along.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Neville – Lontamer

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

Sami Zayn b. Jinder Mahal – Helluva Kick

New Day/Bayley b. Dana Brooke/Anderson and Gallows – Bayley to Belly to Brooke

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Cloverleaf

Braun Strowman b. Americano – Faceplant

Darren Young b. Titus O'Neil – Crucifix

Kevin Owens b. Seth Rollins, Roman Reigns and Big Cass – Pedigree to Rollins

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Monday Night Raw – July 29, 1996: And Then There Was Summerslam

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 29, 1996

Location: Key Arena, Seattle, Washington

Attendance: 6,755

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

It's time to wrap up the month and that can't come soon enough, despite the marginally better show last week. Summerslam is still a few weeks away and above all else we've got a big time main event with Vader vs. Shawn, which has the potential to be something special. I'm sure we'll get something to go with it soon enough though and that's where things get better. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Faarooq debuting to end last week's show, putting Ahmed on the shelf with a kidney injury.

Opening sequence.

Sycho Sid vs. Justin Hawk Bradshaw

Sid gets an awesome face reaction. They slug it out to start and a chokeslam plants Bradshaw so fast that they're already plugging the other matches instead of paying attention. Bradshaw hits him with the cowbell and we're done in about a minute.

Sid fights off a post match beating and powerbombs Bradshaw. So why in the world did they do the DQ if Bradshaw is going to be left laying anyway? It's not like he's doing anything so just do the pin and give the crowd the pop they want.

Sunny officially introduces Faarooq Asad (first time the name is officially used), who thinks Ahmed is disrespectful to women.

Faarooq talks about the streets and wants a shot at the Intercontinental Title at Summerslam. Simple and effective, as I

often like it.

Vader vs. Marc Mero

Vader isn't quite the Goon or T.L. Hopper but I'll take it. Sable is looking great tonight too. Cornette sits in on commentary as an extra bonus. Vader powers him into the corner to start and spits in Mero's eyes. Some clotheslines actually stagger Vader and something like a running Cannonball puts him down. A crucifix doesn't quite work on someone Vader's size but Mero gets two anyway. Vader comes right back with a wheelbarrow slam and wins a slugout, which is something of an upset when you remember Mero's Golden Gloves success.

Things slow down a bit with Vader headbutting him down and then just punching Mero in the face over and over. Mero gets right back up and hits a cross body before knocking Vader to the floor for a flip dive. A top rope sunset flip doesn't work as Mero WAY overshoots him and Vader has to walk backwards. Thankfully he tries to sit down, only to crash onto the mat. Mero heads up top again but dives into a powerslam for the pin.

Rating: B-. This was a heck of a match with Mero being game against the unstoppable monster. People forget how great Vader was at selling as this straight out of the great Dustin Rhodes vs. Vader match at Clash of the Champions XXIX with the non-monster doing everything he could and Vader making him look like a million bucks. It's a formula that always works and this was no exception. Really fun match.

More from the Crush (not yet named or identified) litigation from last week.

Shawn's mentor Jose Lothario comes out for a face to face showdown with Cornette. After asking Jose to not pull out his switchblade, Cornette goes into a bit of history with a story of Shawn looking up to Jose and seeing him as a father figure. We see Shawn watching in the back, basically guaranteeing that this gets physical.

The ranting (as only Cornette can do) continues with Cornette going on about Lothario sitting on a back porch in San Antonio until Shawn wanted his help at Wrestlemania XII. After Vader gets done with Shawn, Jose will be right back on that porch. Jose punches Cornette out and we see Shawn in Mankind's Mandible Claw. That's quite the random attack.

We recap Aldo Montoya (Justin Credible as a Portuguese wrestler) beating Jerry Lawler on Superstars in a big upset, which is a bigger deal since Aldo is suddenly Jake Roberts' protege. Montoya (with that thick Portuguese/Connecticut accent) accepts a rematch for next week.

British Bulldog vs. Henry Godwinn

Owen Hart is on commentary and doesn't want his Slammy anywhere near the bucket of slop. The guys in the ring trade power shots as we get a crawl across the bottom of the screen advertising Sunny in an AOL chat. A wheelbarrow slam (popular move tonight) plants Bulldog and Henry hammers away with some big forearms to the back. Bulldog sends him outside as Owen snaps after Vince asks him about Bret one too many times.

We hit the chinlock as Owen keeps going, likely due to all that time around Cornette. As for Owen's broken wrist, he's still a few months away from being healthy. Vince doesn't buy it but Lawler and Owen will have none of his naysaying. Henry muscles Bulldog up into a suplex and we take a break. Back with Owen suggesting that Austin vs. Bret would be a great match. The Slop Drop looks to finish Bulldog but Owen turns over the slop bucket (he dropped the slop you might say) for a distraction to set up the powerslam to put Henry away.

Rating: C. I'm a sucker for two power guys beating the heck out of each other and that's what we had here, plus Owen cracking me up with his angry rants on commentary. Henry was just a big old strong guy who could hit you really hard and there's always going to be a place for that. Bulldog was the same way but with a bit more finesse and that's why he was a much bigger star. Well that and he wasn't a hog farmer.

Some guy named Mark Henry is really strong.

We get a quick interview from In Your House IX with Mankind in the boiler room with Goldust and Marlina. Mankind rants about an incident when he was a kid and says destruction can be beautiful. Vince mentions the Boiler Room Brawl at Summerslam and my goodness that would change a lot of things.

Undertaker vs. Steve Austin

Two years from here, this would be the biggest Summerslam main event

of all time. Wrestling is funny that way. Speaking of weird, it's still odd seeing Austin with anything on his trunks. Austin breaks out of a chokeslam attempt and wrenches the wrist, only to annoy Undertaker in the process. A right hand sends Austin into the corner so he tries one of his own and IMMEDIATELY backs away when Undertaker gives him a death stare.

Old School is broken up and Austin kicks him low, causing Vince to scream about how that should be a DQ. He's right but that's never stopped a referee before. Austin drives some shoulders into the ribs so Undertaker ties him up in the ropes for a running boot to the face. That's a bit better than shoulders to the ribs. Austin slugs him in the jaw and goes back to the shoulders as we take a break.

Back with Austin cranking on a chinlock until Undertaker rakes his eyes. You don't often see that from a face but it still works. Some more right hands stagger Austin even more but he comes back with a quick piledriver, only to get crotched on top. A chokeslam brings him back down but here's Mankind for a distraction, leading to Undertaker get counted out.

Rating: C+. You could see the fire in Austin and all he needed was a big opponent to make him. Say, a Canadian who wore pink and black in Madison Square Garden. Undertaker vs. Mankind on the other hand is already a great feud and by far the best thing Undertaker had done to this point. They just worked well against each other and you can't teach something like that.

Undertaker Tombstones Austin post match and promises to make Mankind rest in peace to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. You could feel the energy here and the star power helped that a lot. Austin vs. Undertaker is always worth seeing and it's cool to see a bunch of matches that actually affect some storylines. Things are, at least for now, starting to look a little bit better though they're far from turning things around. This was better though and that's a really good thing after all these dreadful shows.

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Monday Night Raw – July 15, 1996: I Need Some Nitro

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 15, 1996

Location: Brown County Expo, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Attendance: 4,660

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

It's FINALLY time to wrap up this horrible cycle as it's the go home show for the dreadful In Your House IX. The big story coming out of last week is Sid joining forces with Shawn Michaels and Ahmed Johnson in their fight against Camp Cornette, leading to a main event that serves no purpose other than to set up Summerslam. Let's get to it.

Sunday's main event participants almost got in a fight earlier today but were cut off by an opening sequence. You never know when one of those things might save you.

Intercontinental Title: Bart Gunn vs. Ahmed Johnson

It's going to be a very long night. Ahmed is defending because he was talented enough to get a singles title. Bart is half of the Tag Team Champions and has Sunny as a cowgirl so I'm thinking advantage Gunn. Ahmed starts with the power by throwing Bart over off a hiptoss. A clothesline drops Ahmed and it's time to stomp a lot. Bart starts working on the arm with some slow cranking and a wrap around the post.

We hit an armbar on the mat before Bart puts on a hammerlock with his feet. The referee finally catches Sunny cheating but Ahmed

charges shoulder first into the post. That means a cross armbreaker as Vince goes into a mini tirade about Warrior walking out and not being above the rest of the roster. The arm goes into the buckle and we take a break. Geez Vince we're already watching this horrible show. What more do you need? Back with Ahmed crotching Bart on top and Ahmed knocking him off the ropes for a big crash. A spinebuster and the Pearl River Plunge retain the title.

Rating: F. You could hear the crowd more and more every time Bart worked on the arm. This was WAY too long and boring with Bart Gunn being as uninteresting of a challenger that they could find. It was a horrible idea all around and I can't imagine anyone actually thought this would work.

Shawn Michaels says he'll win tonight and again on Sunday.

Marc Mero vs. T.L. Hopper

So last week we got rid of the wrestling garbageman but tonight we have the wrestling plumber. On the way to the ring, Goldust's usher runs out and gives Sable a gold package but she throws it down. To celebrate the passing of the torch, we get a look at Hopper pinning Droese over the weekend. Oh and plumbing videos. Why would those be recorded?

Mero takes him down and works on a headlock, followed by a dropkick that made no contact, even with the camera cutting away. We go to a split screen with Camp Cornette celebrating something we can't hear because the audio doesn't work. Hopper takes him down for a headscissors on the mat as the crowd is just GONE.

Can you blame them after the last few weeks of this show? I'm sure the empty seats are just a coincidence. There are long stretches of this match going on and there's just nothing to talk about. They're just slowly punching each other as Lawler and Vince make every stupid plumber joke you can imagine.

We take a break and the silence when we come back is eerie. Steve Austin joins us and I really don't care what he says (he's ready for Mero on Sunday in case you're wondering) because it's instantly more interesting than whatever these two are doing in the ring. Lawler starts turning into a sexist as there are even more empty seats. Mero hits a running knee lift and FINALLY finishes him with the big left hand.

Rating: F-. Earlier today I was reading Chris Jericho's first book and he talked about being offered a chance to join the WWF in one of these roster filling spots with the stupid gimmicks. If Jericho has ever made a better career move I'd love to hear what it was because these things are absolutely death for these people's careers and it's no wonder you never hear from them again. I don't remember being this bored in a match for a long time and that includes Gunn vs. Johnson, which I didn't think would be topped for years.

Camp Cornette says they'll win.

Here's a three minute Undertaker video. Do they just want everyone to switch over to Nitro? I'd be glad to at this point. You know what? That's not a bad idea. Here's a match from the same week's Nitro for the sake of keeping you awake.

Chris Benoit vs. Eddie Guerrero

Think this will be good? Benoit is a Horseman and Eddie is starting to get a pretty solid push which would result in a US Title reign by the end of the year. Even Heenan knows this is going to be a great match. This is one of those combinations that is going to be awesome due to them knowing each other so well. Those are always fun as they don't have to waste time figuring each other out.

Benoit jumps him to start and pounds Eddie down in the corner. Hard whip into the corner and Benoit goes into Wolverine mode. And let's talk about Hogan now. Eddie gets draped over the top as Benoit keeps the advantage. Off to the chinlock rather quickly and thankfully it ends quickly. Reverse suplex is countered by Eddie and he sends Benoit to the floor with an armdrag. Big dive off the top takes both guys down.

Back inside Eddie busts out the hilo but doesn't cover. Tilt-a-whirl backbreaker puts Benoit down again. Eddie vs. Flair at the PPV is announced. Benoit gets a shot in and let's look at the NWO sign again because the Outsiders are gone. Benoit shows off those steroid muscles with a gorilla press. There's a camel clutch despite Eddie not really resembling a camel at all. They show the crowd again and this time I can live with it because we're in a hold. There's nothing to see here so it's not as stupid of a move here.

Eddie gets up and fires off a belly to back suplex to break Benoit's momentum. Benoit is like screw that and hits a hard chop and the

snap suplex gets two. Eric loves talking about the fact that he's taking a motorcycle to Sturgis for the PPV. Liontamer goes on before Jericho had copyrighted it. BIG powerbomb plants Eddie but a delay in the cover lets Eddie get out of it. Benoit works on the back with a backbreaker and then holds Eddie over the knee for a bit to add in some more pain. The guy knew how to hurt people.

Back to the chinlock which I can understand now as they've been out there for a bit and probably need some air. Benoit puts him down again and goes up but Guerrero pops up and nails a superplex to put Chris down. Solid stuff so far. Benoit gets up first as both guys were down for a bit. Eddie fires away in the corner and they slug it out. Apparently every big name is in Japan tonight.

Benoit wins the chop fest but Eddie knocks him down in the corner. Eddie tries a hurricanrana which Benoit mostly blocks as he walks to the rope. The hurricanrana hits anyway and it takes both guys over the top to the floor. Malenko pops up for no apparent reason as does Jimmy Hart. Malenko sends Benoit's head into the post and Eddie just barely beats the count back in. This led to a thirty minute or so war between Malenko and Benoit at the PPV.

Rating: B. This was your typical great match between the two but I'm not huge on the ending. It did however set up a match at the PPV which is all you can ask for. Also you don't want Benoit losing clean nor do you want Eddie losing before they get to a PPV title match. The decision was really all that they could do and thankfully we got a very good match until that point.

By the time I went into my flash drive, found that show and pulled up the review, this Undertaker video is STILL GOING.

WWF World Title: Billy Gunn vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn is defending as we complete the Smoking Gunns two step. Billy headlocks him to start and a shoulder puts the champ (the WWF World Champ that is) down. We go to a chat with Ahmed who guarantees victory on Sunday. Billy is sent outside so Shawn kisses Sunny and sunset flips Billy for two. The yet to be named Fameasser (minus the jump) gets two on Shawn so he crotches Billy against the post. Sunny offers a distraction so Billy can slam Shawn off the top to take over.

We take a break with Vince shouting "WHAT DOES SEX HAVE TO DO WITH THE WWF CHAMPIONSHIP???" I'll leave the context out for the sake of

preventing boredom. Back with Billy putting on a chinlock and the slow beating continues. Lawler freaks out as Sunny leans over and brags about Billy winning the title. We see Camp Cornette leaving and it's time for another break. Back again with Shawn nipping up, dropping the elbow and hitting Sweet Chin Music to retain.

Rating: D. Somehow that's the best thing of the night and I assure you it has nothing to do with Sunny running all over the place. Shawn was much better than anyone else on this show but that's hardly a great accomplishment. I still don't know what anyone saw in Billy as a singles run but at least he was better than Bart.

Cornette throws coffee at Shawn to lure he and Ahmed into a beatdown. Sid drives up seconds later, nearly crashes his car, and runs over towards the brawl to end the show.

Overall Rating: Agoobwa. This might be the worst episode of Monday Night Raw that I've ever seen, and I've seen every episode in the show's history. It's very clear that they were out of gas at this point and there was no one wanting to put in any effort before we get to the worthless pay per view this weekend. Just a miserable show here which felt like it would never end, as was the case way too often around this time.

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Monday Night Raw – July 8,

1996: The Other Third Man

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 8, 1996

Location: Brown County Expo, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Attendance: 4,660

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're coming up on In Your House IX, which was barely mentioned last week. To be fair though, it's not like anyone cared about that waste of a show so they might as well just punt for the next two weeks and be done with it. The big deal this week is Ultimate Warrior's last appearance for nearly 18 years due to him leaving the company (again) before this was taped, meaning he's making "one last special appearance" here. Let's get to it.

WWF President Gorilla Monsoon suspends Ultimate Warrior indefinitely for not appearing at house shows. He can come back if he posts an appearance bond to guarantee that he'll show up as advertised in the future. Oh but he's here tonight to face Owen Hart.

Opening sequence.

Ultimate Warrior vs. Owen Hart

Owen is sent outside to start and let's go to Shawn Michaels and Ahmed Johnson to ask who they'll be teaming with on Sunday. We'll find that out later so we'll look at Warrior slamming Owen instead and then clotheslining him out to the floor. A side slam plants Owen before Warrior no sells a spinwheel kick. Owen stomps away and we take a break. Back with Owen stomping even more and hitting a loud enziguri for no cover. A missile dropkick (Owen really likes using his feet) gets two and the kickout sends Owen out to the floor. Here's the British Bulldog as Warrior Hulks Up, only to have Bulldog come in for the DQ.

Rating: C+. So that's it for the Warrior, who left because his dad died, despite not really having anything to do with his dad for years. This got really nasty between Warrior and the company and led to them having no relationship for the better part of twenty years. Yeah Warrior was basically nuts but they completely buried him on the way out, which is rather petty.

Camp Cornette destroys Warrior post match and that's that.

Shawn and Ahmed promise to reveal the third man. This has to be a bit of a rib or something at Hogan's expense right? I mean it's not funny (nor is it meant to be) but I'm sure there's something there.

Savio Vega vs. Justin Hawk Bradshaw

Brian Pillman tries to jump Savio but gets held back. They slug it out to start with Savio hitting a spinwheel kick over the corner, only to get caught in a bulldog (required move for almost all Texans, or at least cowboys). Another slugout goes nowhere until Uncle Zebekiah punches Savio in the ribs. Lawler thinks John Travolta is the third man and Vince's reaction is exactly what you would expect.

We hit the sleeper on Savio but Bradshaw switches over to a chinlock to really mix things up. The discussion moves on to the third man, which turns into an Abbott and Costello routine. It's back to the sleeper for a long time so now let's have a phone call from Mr. Perfect to give the announcers ANYTHING else to talk about. We take a break and come back with Mr. Perfect gone and Bradshaw hitting a pumphandle slam. This match just keeps going as Savio avoids a charge and gets in a suplex to put both guys down. Zebekiah grabs the wrong foot and Savio hits a leg lariat to FINALLY end this.

Rating: D-. Sweet goodness what a mess. This is the definition of a match that just keeps going and serves no purpose other than filling in time on a show that isn't interesting in the first place. That's the major problem around this time: there's nothing interesting about these two fighting because there's no reason for them to have a fifteen minute match. Why would I want to sit and watch a long match with no story between uninteresting characters?

Zebekiah and Bradshaw use various cowboy instruments to beat Savio down.

Shawn and Ahmed still won't say who it is.

Clips from a rally before a show.

British Bulldog/Yokozuna vs. Godwinns

Jim Cornette sits in on commentary and promises a lawsuit due to the Godwinns' animals. Henry runs Bulldog over to start but Vader comes in to destroy him. Cornette tries to figure out the Warrior suspension angle and says Warrior is running from Camp Cornette but it didn't work either. Henry actually suplexes Vader before

shouldering the monster down. It's off to Phineas for a horrible looking splash so Vader takes his head off with a clothesline.

Bulldog comes in and gets caught in a bulldog (make your own joke) as the slow brawling continues. We hit a chinlock on Henry before Bulldog just hits him in the back a few times. This match just keeps going as Vader hits a splash for two as Vince tells us that we can't get a promised Undertaker video. Maybe you should cut down on fifteen minute Bradshaw vs. Vega match. The Vader Bomb crushes Henry and we take a break. You know, because Vader's finisher can't beat HENRY GODWINN.

Back with Bulldog suplexing Henry for two and bringing Vader back in to keep this going. Henry actually catches a charging Vader in a powerslam, drawing Cornette off commentary and into his manager's role. The un-hot tag brings in Phineas as Cornette is back on commentary and calling his team idiots. Everything breaks down and Bulldog hits the powerslam (without even running) for the pin on Phineas.

Rating: D. Again just long here in a match that could have wrapped up about ten minutes earlier than it should have. Somehow this was an upgrade over the previous match though, perhaps due to Bulldog and Vader being a lot more entertaining than Vega or Bradshaw. This really could have been better if they just cut off about five minutes but this is what we're stuck with because Raw sucks.

Jim Cornette isn't worried about the new partner so Shawn and Ahmed bring in Sid to send Cornette through the roof to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Another way too long and boring show with a bunch of matches that fans weren't interested in seeing and a really bad way of sending Warrior off. The Sid idea was about as good as they were going to get and I'm fine with the WHO IS THE THIRD MAN thing as they did it for one night and made it fine enough to work. This cycle can't end soon enough though so we can get on to the Summerslam build.

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