

Battleground 2015 Preview

Maybe it's just where I've been away for a bit but it doesn't feel like it's time for a pay per view. To be fair though, WWE doesn't seem to know either, because it's the day before the show and we've got a five match card. While I'm sure there will be some fixes made and matches added, Battleground feels like a show that doesn't need to exist, but there's some stuff worth looking at. Let's get to it.

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

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

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

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

goodness is there anything worse than seeing these two as such meaningless acts right now?

New Day gets the belts back. Word on the street is the Players got the belts because of Titus' dad of the year award and, shockingly enough, NO ONE CARED ABOUT THAT EITHER. New Day gets the titles back here and thankfully we're back to normal. The Players are a fine team and Titus is as professional as they get, but there's just no reason to care about them on top of the division.

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

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

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

At least there aren't currently any Authority members to bail Seth out, but whether he wins or loses, this is going to wind up being about the Authority one way or another. Why? Because that's how WWE works and

there's no way around it. I'll take Seth retaining through shenanigans to drag this out. Again.

And somehow that's it. We really don't have anything else on the card to talk about, though I'm pretty sure we're going to get something between Big Show vs. Miz and maybe Stardust vs. Neville. However, that leaves out Cesaro and Rusev, who both currently have rockets attached to their backs. I could easily see Cesaro added to the Intercontinental Title match for a vacated title, but I could also see him doing nothing more than a run-in during the US Title match.

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

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

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Smackdown – July 16, 2015: That Man Is Strong

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

Smackdown

Date: July 16, 2015

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler

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

Opening sequence.

Here's Reigns to open the show. This all started at Money in the Bank when Wyatt cost him the match, but Bray isn't in his head and Bray can't break his focus. Tonight we have Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus and it's time to start a fight, but here's Bray on screen to interrupt. He asks what gave Roman the right to go after him on Monday,

but Wyatt knew Reigns was there. For a moment, Bray was just like these people. For once, he saw Reigns being exactly what he should have been.

Bray saw him as a stone monument, but at Battleground, he will be the hammer that breaks the monument down. Reigns is ready to fight but Bray says this is what true fear feels like. Collect your roses gladiator because none of them are real. What is real though is that Bray is back here with everyone Reigns cares about. He's capable of some very evil things and this game has just begun. Wyatt has been trying to bring the fire out of Reigns and knows he'll get bitten by the big dog. One day though, he'll tell the dog to sit and the dog will obey. Roman needs to go kiss the people he cares about because anyone but him.

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

New Day vs. Lucha Dragons

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

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

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

award "hype" is over so there's no reason to have Titus as a champion anymore.

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

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

King Barrett vs. Jack Swagger

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

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

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

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

Rusev vs. Cesaro

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

A snap belly to back suplex drops Cesaro again but he rolls some quick Germans for a breather. Back from a break with Cesaro fighting out of a

chinlock and a clip of the slam into the spinout Rock Bottom from Rusev during the commercial. The uppercuts stagger Rusev and a nice dropkick puts him on the floor. There isn't much to talk about here as this is quite the back and forth power brawl so far.

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

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

Cesaro jumps into the crowd to celebrate.

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

Stardust vs. Neville

Rematch from Raw where Neville lost in what is being billed as a battle of comic book characters, complete with comic page backgrounds on the recap. Stardust drops him with a quick forearm, only to be sent to the

floor for the Asai moonsault. Back in and Stardust gets caught holding the ropes on a sunset flip, allowing to pop back up with a victory roll for the pin at 2:20. The good vs. evil concept works and I like Neville being treated as a superhero, but the matches aren't lighting anything on fire, let alone the world.

After a break, Neville says his strategy was just to wait for his window of opportunity to open and then strike. Stardust decks him and says prepare for turbulence during the Altitude Era.

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

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

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus

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

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

Rating: C-. Dull but fine match here as we were just waiting for Bray to

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

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

Results

New Day b. Lucha Dragons – Midnight Hour to Kalisto

King Barrett b. Jack Swagger – Bullhammer

Cesaro b. Rusev – Neutralizer

Neville b. Stardust – Victor roll

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

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Smackdown – July 9, 2015: I'll Have The Special

Same as last week as I won't be able to post the full thing tonight so here it is in advance.

Smackdown

Date: July 9, 2015

Location: Bradley Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler

We're back after this Monday's classic of Cena vs. Cesaro and Lesnar squashing a Cadillac with...maybe Cesaro and Rollins if we're lucky. My guess is we'll get more of a focus on Reigns vs. Wyatt, which is a far more interesting story than the World Title situation. Hopefully the wrestling will be good. Let's get to it.

The opening recap is a long video on Lesnar vs. Rollins, with Cena vs. Cesaro not warranting air time.

Here's Rollins to open things up by calling Lesnar a coward. Luckily we're treated to a JUSTIN BIEBER chant because that's a full time thing now. Rollins rants about the destroyed Cadillac but here's Paul Heyman with a tow truck hauling out the remnants. Heyman says you can't treat Lesnar like Rollins did and not expect to be taken to Suplex City.

Both say that the car is a metaphor for their opponent (or client's opponent) in a good exchange. Rollins brings up the whole destroying the Shield thing but Heyman promises Lesnar putting his foot on Seth's chest as he holds up his new title. Seth cuts him off again and promises to keep the title. This was basic stuff but it's why they have Heyman with Lesnar though. If Brock can't be around, just throw Heyman out there to do the talking.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bo Dallas

In case Monday's squash didn't do it for you I guess. Before the match, Bo takes credit for the success of Rock's new HBO series Ballers. Ambrose works on a hammerlock to start but Dallas sends him into the post three times in a row. Some choking with the ring skirt (that's something you don't see too often) sets up Bo's belly to belly (his old finisher) for two and we take a break. Back with Dean fighting out of a chinlock and firing away against the ropes. We get a big surprise as Bo runs the ropes for a belly to belly superplex, followed by a Downward Spiral for two. That goes nowhere so Dirty Deeds finishes Bo at 9:07.

Rating: C-. Bo surprised me here a bit and it's been cool to see him working extra hard lately, dating back to the match against Neville on pay per view. Ambrose is still looking for his next feud and you almost have to assume it's going to be against Reigns because, simply put, who else is there?

Big Show tells Rollins to take care of Lesnar and promises to take out Reigns tonight. Man I thought we were past that mess.

Recap of Rusev putting Ziggler out on Raw.

Fandango vs. Rusev

Rusev has shoes now, which is a very smart mandate for him. Fandango scores with a headscissors to start as Jimmy brings up Rusev wearing boots after Tom and Jerry spent thirty seconds talking about it during Rusev's entrance. This is every Rusev match before he feuded with Cena: a nerve hold, no selling Fandango's comeback, the superkick and the Accolade for the submission at 3:15.

Rating: D. Hey, Rusev is back. I think that sums up the whole thing here as it was just a quick squash with a bunch of shots of Summer Rae to make things a bit easier to sit through. Summer works fine as a gold digger, even if Rusev doesn't have a ton of gold at the moment. Make Rusev a monster again and he'll be fine.

Roman Reigns vs. Big Show

Remember what I said about being fine? Forget all of that here. Show is now in a sleeveless black shirt instead of the singlet top. Reigns gets thrown around to start and Show shoves him out to the floor. The giant gets posted for an eight count and it's time for Reigns' clotheslines, because where would we be without a series of clotheslines? The Superman Punch is loaded up but we've got a fake Wyatt on the stage. The real one gets punched off the apron but pulls Reigns down for the DQ at 4:00.

Rating: D+. This was barely a match as a good chunk of it was spent on the fake Wyatt and waiting on Big Show to beat the count back in. Thankfully we didn't have to sit through a long Reigns vs. Big Show match which would have killed the crowd and been a big bore all match long. Wyatt vs. Reigns should be a really fun power brawl when we get there though.

Bray hits a pair of Sister Abigails.

Titus O'Neil vs. Big E.

E. takes over to start and hammers Titus into the corner to start. That's a very common way to open matches these days. We hit the early abdominal stretch complete with slaps but Titus tosses E. out to the floor. A belly to belly stops Titus' comeback and the partners all try to interfere, earning them a mass ejection. Clash of the Titus ends E. at 2:49.

Austin WWE2K16 video.

Video on the Cadillac being crushed earlier this week. So what wrecked car was brought out earlier???

After a recap of what happened between them on Monday, here's Orton to talk about what happened with Sheamus earlier this week. He keeps it simple by saying he's going to attempt to make Sheamus entertaining by ripping off his mohawk, but here's the Ascension of all people for some reason. There was a time when this might have been interesting but instead it's RK0's all around.

Video on Cesaro vs. Cena from Raw. This deserved any attention it could get.

Naomi/Tamina vs. Brie Bella/Alicia Fox

Brie shoves Naomi into the corner to start before it's off to Tamina, who takes some kicks to the ribs as well. All hail the Bellas right? Tamina makes a comeback so it's off to Alicia and Naomi with the latter still having no luck. Everything breaks down and a Nikki distraction lets Alicia hit the ax kick for the pin on Tamina at 2:55.

Ryback doesn't like how Seth Rollins has been acting as champion, including how he ran away on Monday. Tonight, Ryback will show Rollins how a champion acts because there is no running and hiding.

Ryback vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title and both guys come out alone. Ryback shoves him out to the floor with ease to start and Rollins is already frustrated. Back in and some knees to the chest only earn Rollins a thirty second delayed vertical suplex. Seth kicks him off the apron though and nails a nice suicide dive, only to come back in using Brock's jump to the apron. Man this guy has some guts.

Seth's chinlock is quickly countered into a Backpack Stunner and the low superkick is countered into a powerbomb. It's Rollins' turn to counter though as he escapes Shell Shock and kicks Ryback in the head. Instead of covering though he walks out, but Ryback throws him onto the floor a few times. The threat of a Shell Shock on the floor is enough to make Seth run into the crowd for the countout at 8:11.

Rating: C-. I've seen worse. Ryback is really starting to find his groove as the upper midcard guy who can dabble in the main event when he needs to. He's already a solid Intercontinental Champion and a good power guy so why not see how far out he can swim? This was more about the story and there's nothing wrong with that.

Post match here's Big Show to double team Ryback but Reigns makes the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. I'm getting really tired of these not terrible yet still totally skippable shows. This is another example of a show that you

do not need to watch but won't hate yourself if you sat through it. In other words, meh. That's Smackdown in a nutshell: it exists and mostly doesn't suck. That's hardly a ringing endorsement but what else is there to say about it?

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Bo Dallas – Dirty Deeds

Rusev b. Fandango – Accolade

Roman Reigns b. Big Show via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

Titus O'Neil b. Big E. – Clash of the Titus

Alicia Fox/Brie Bella b. Naomi/Tamina – Ax kick to Tamina

Ryback b. Seth Rollins via countout

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Smackdown – June 25, 2015:

This Match. Again.

Smackdown

Date: June 25, 2015

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler, Tom Phillips

Well Lesnar is back and a full on hero now, complete with a knee injury and Kane attacking him. We're still a few weeks away from Battleground though and Seth Rollins needs something to do before he has to face the Beast. Other than that we have Bray Wyatt being creepy about Roman Reigns' daughter. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Lesnar and Heyman promising to hurt Rollins on Monday, followed by Rollins trying to get the Authority to help him again. This led to the team reforming for no obvious reason and Lesnar being beaten down to end Raw.

Here are Rollins, Kane and Joey Mercury (Jamie Noble was injured at the end of Raw as Brock rammed him into the barricade) to open things up. What an odd looking trio. The band is back together and they took a little road trip to Suplex City on Monday, but they burned it to the ground. Good line.

Things change in this business, such as Rollins going from a member of the Shield to the WWE World Heavyweight Champion in just about a year. Here he is now with a geniuslike Joey Mercury (the grin on his face from that line is awesome), but unfortunately they're missing a member of their family due to Noble having three broken ribs from Lesnar ramming him into the barricade. Tonight's show is dedicated to Jamie, who would want the Authority to celebrate.

No one in the Authority has more to celebrate than Kane, who got to beat up both Lesnar and Dean Ambrose on Monday because he is forever the Devil's Favorite Demon. Off to a completely different subject, Kane blames Ryback for Big Show not being here tonight. After a clip of Ryback laying Big Show out, here's Ryback himself. He defends his actions but Rollins criticizes him for not acting as a champion is supposed to.

Ryback calls Rollins a sellout, earning himself a match with Kane tonight. That's some punishment.

The music plays but Rollins says cut it. He's sick of the lack of respect he's receiving as World Champion, so Kane can take care of Ryback tonight. Rollins isn't happy with Dean Ambrose though, as Ambrose is still walking. Let's remedy that tonight with a one on one match tonight. Ambrose will learn that the Authority always wins.

Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler knocks him to the floor with an early dropkick but here comes Rusev. He begs Lana to come back to him because he'll "kiss her the right way." Lana, with her hair down in a ponytail, walks towards the ring, as the match just stopped so Rusev could talk. A big knee puts Ziggler on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Ziggler in a chinlock before Sheamus takes his sweet time going to the top, allowing Dolph to run the ropes for a faceplant. A superkick is blocked but Ziggler is able to crawl over Sheamus into a sunset flip for two. Back up and the superkick connects this time (Uso: "SUPERKICK PARTY!") for two, followed by a sleeper from Ziggler. Sheamus shrugs it off and puts Ziggler on the top rope, setting up the Brogue Kick for the pin at 9:26.

Rating: C. Run of the mill match between these two but it's nice to see Sheamus racking up some wins like this. They're actually treating him as something important instead of just letting him lose all the time so he can hold up the briefcase and beg us to believe that he still matters.

Rusev freaks out in the back until Summer Rae comes up and tells him that Lana isn't worth it.

Here's a clip of Rollins breaking up the Shield last year.

Alicia Fox vs. Naomi

Fox has the Bellas with her and remember that Jimmy is married to Naomi. Alicia gets kicked in the head and taken down with a nice hurricanrana, followed by a legdrop for two. They fall out to the floor with Naomi

yelling at the Bellas, allowing Tamina to superkick both of them. Back in and Fox hits her reverse Fameasser for the pin at 3:10.

Rating: D. This was just a way to set up I'm assuming Naomi as Paige's new partner against the Bellas, which is about as uninteresting an idea as you could have. The match was your standard Divas fair: no time to go anywhere and too much other than the wrestling being packed into just a few minutes.

Recap of Cena vs. Owens, including everything that happened on Monday.

New Day says you can't live a positive life if you focus on the individual losses. They'll overcome all of their trials and tribulations at Battleground, but here are the Prime Time Players to interrupt and do their version of the clap. They laugh at the idea that New Day will be down a man at Battleground but here's Bo Dallas for a pretty obvious pairing. Dallas has been allowed to join the New Day against the Players and any two other partners. New Day likes him but Dallas can't get the clap down. This has potential to be funny stuff.

Kane vs. Ryback

Non-title. Not so fast though as Big Show attacks Ryback during his entrance and beats on him for a very long time. Show chops him, kicks him, whips him into the barricade, steps on his throat, and finally throws him in for the match against Kane. Somehow this is totally fine and the bell rings with Kane quickly covering for two. Ryback tries some shoulders in the corner but gets stomped back down with ease. Kane is sent shoulder first into the post and the Meat Hook connects, only to have Big Show come in for the DQ at 2:25.

Ryback gets beaten down and chokeslammed a few times but keeps trying to pull himself up. I like the idea they're going for here, but it still ends with Big Show and Kane dominating, just like they have for over fifteen years now.

Clip of Rollins vs. Ambrose from Elimination Chamber.

Recap of this week's Tough Enough.

New Day/Bo Dallas vs. Lucha Dragons/Prime Time Players

Kofi and Titus get things going with O'Neil hitting some very loud chops in the corner. It's off to Young who doesn't do as well, with Kofi driving him into the corner for a tag to Dallas. I miss Jesse Ventura criticizing teams for tagging their normal partners and praising heels for tagging anyone on their team. Darren headlocks Bo to the mat but the threat of a Gutcheck has the heels on the floor as we take a break.

Back with Kofi dancing a bit before diving into a Sin Cara dropkick for two. Woods has some better luck by stomping away, followed by all three of his partners getting turns. It always amuses me to see someone get stomped about forty times total and just stagger to their feet. Off to Big E. for his abdominal stretch before handing it off to Kofi for a superbomb, only to be countered into a hurricanrana. The hot tag brings in Kalisto for his hurricanrana DDT to Woods but everything breaks down. It's down to Kalisto vs. Woods again with the masked man hitting a handspring kick to the head and a springboard 450 for the pin at 10:30.

Rating: C. This was fine with the New Day losing again, though I'm not sure if I want to see them get a title shot after all these losses. That being said, you also don't want to have the champions lose so soon after winning the titles. In other words, it would have made sense here to have New Day just beat Lucha Dragons in a regular match, but why do that when you can have something like this?

Ambrose tells Reigns to not worry about Bray Wyatt because they can look through every inch of this building until they find him. Dean: "Cincinnati style!" Roman: "We're not even in Cincinnati." Reigns says he'll take care of Wyatt at Battleground and he'll have his back out there tonight. Dean leaves and Reigns finds a picture of himself in his jacket with the words ANYONE BUT YOU written in red.

After a break, Reigns searches for Wyatt but finds Kane instead. Kane won't tolerate Reigns yelling at a production guy so he's banned from the building tonight. Reigns was far more interesting here due to having something personal to deal with and I'm digging this feud a lot.

Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Dean starts with some armdrags into an armbar, followed by a clothesline to put Rollins on the floor. Back from a break with Rollins starting to go after the knee. Rollins puts on a complicated leg lock with Ambrose on his stomach but Seth laying like he's putting on a Figure Four. Either way Dean makes the ropes and Rollins is way too cocky. He's cocky enough to take forever getting to the top, allowing Dean to slam him down for a breather.

The tornado DDT is countered so Dean settles for a swinging neckbreaker instead. Dean gets all fired up but opts for a suicide dive to take out Kane instead. Back in and the standing elbow looks to finish but Mercury offers a distraction to earn his paycheck for the night. Scratch that actually as the look he gave earlier was more than worth it. A DDT gets two on Seth but Dean can't follow up. The rebound clothesline is countered into a buckle bomb which is countered into a hurricanrana to put them both on the floor. Dean dives on everyone but gets distracted again, allowing Rollins to Pedigree him for the pin at 13:03.

Rating: B-. They accomplished the goal of showing that the reunited Authority is capable of beating anyone on the roster, but Lesnar isn't exactly the same as a guy that Rollins has drawn about even with over the last few weeks. That's the problem here: they've done this match so many times recently that they're running the risk of taking away its effectiveness. Reigns not being there to help Ambrose could lead somewhere, but I really, really hope it's not to an Ambrose heel turn.

Overall Rating: C. This was a totally fine show and the best part was it flew by. The show never dragged like so many Smackdowns have done over the last few years, but at least they had some decent matches and advanced a few stories, even though we're not likely to see those advancements until Monday. Totally acceptable show here but as usual, it's nothing you need to see.

Results

Sheamus b. Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick

Alicia Fox b. Naomi – Reverse Fameasser

Ryback b. Kane via DQ when Big Show interfered

Lucha Dragons/Prime Time Players b. New Day/Bo Dallas – Springfield 450 to Woods

Seth Rollins b. Dean Ambrose – Pedigree

Monday Night Raw – June 15, 2015: Exit F5

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 15, 2015

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's time to start the build towards Summerslam as a lot of stuff was wrapped up last night. Rollins successfully defended his World Title against Dean Ambrose in a very close ladder match and John Cena evened the score against Kevin Owens, only to be powerbombed on the apron after the match. With Sheamus as Mr. Money in the Bank, it's going to be interesting to see where things go from here. Let's get to it.

We open with the ceremony from last night in Dusty's memory, followed by the video tribute.

Opening sequence.

Here's Seth Rollins with something to say. After a break, he thanks us all for coming out here tonight to Monday Night Rollins. He gets right to it and talks about Dean Ambrose coming so close to winning the title last night but coming up just a bit short. Ambrose's A game is very good, but it's not as good as Seth's. Last night he took back what was his but it

took a great team to get him where he needed to be.

Rollins has a list of people to thank, starting with Seth Rollins, followed by Seth Rollins and Seth Rollins. Oh wait and just so he doesn't leave them off: Seth Rollins, Seth Rollins and Seth Rollins. He didn't need Dumb and Dumber or the devil's favorite dinosaur or HHH and Stephanie, because that's how good he is. After last night, he's a lock for the Hall of Fame and parents all over the world are going to be naming their children after him.

He holds up the title and says Johnny idiot face over there (Cleveland Browns quarterback Johnny Manziel in the front row) isn't bringing this city a title and neither is LeBron James. He didn't even acknowledge the Indians, and as a big Indians fan.....I can't say I blame him. Cue Ambrose for a brawl in the aisle but Dean is limping badly. Seth goes for the knee but winds up leaving when Dean won't go down. Dean gets a chair and the mic and says he isn't leaving until Rollins gets back out here to fight him like a man.

We come back with Dean still sitting in the ring and Rollins talking to the Authority in the back. Rollins asks if they're just going to let Ambrose sit out there all night but Stephanie doesn't like that Rollins seems to think he's still in the loop. HHH says that the next challenger for the title will be determined by the end of the night and it very well could be Ambrose.

Back in the arena with Sheamus coming out to talk to Ambrose. Both of them made bold predictions last night and Sheamus actually lived up to his promises. That's enough to make Dean throw the chair away and it's time for a match.

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Dean is ready to fight but gets taken into the corner where Sheamus wisely goes for the knee to start. The knee is slammed into the apron to put Dean in even more trouble but he just dives at Sheamus and hammers away, only to be knocked back to the floor as we take a break. Back with Sheamus holding a Brock Lock to stay on the knee but Ambrose fights up with chops and punches against the ropes. There's no way he can run the

ropes though and Sheamus chop blocks him down.

Back up and Dean's bulldog out of the corner gets him a breather and it's time to go up top. Again it takes too long and Sheamus slams him down, setting up the Cloverleaf. Dean gets a rope to annoy Sheamus but he takes too long on the ropes, allowing Dean to hit some forearms to the chest of his own. Now the top rope elbow drop connects for two but Dirty Deeds sends Sheamus running to the floor. Cue Orton for a distraction, allowing Ambrose to grab a rollup for the pin at 10:50.

Rating: C. Logical match but my goodness I don't want to see Sheamus vs. Orton again. Having a match twice isn't a good way to make me want to see it at third time, at least not when the first two matches weren't very good. Also, who thought it was a good idea to have Mr. Money in the Bank get pinned in his first match with the briefcase?

Orton beats Sheamus up but can't hit the RKO.

Rollins brags to the Stooges about the win last night but asks if they know who the Authority is picking for him. Noble says they haven't heard but wouldn't say anything if they did. He thinks it should be Joey Mercury though, which Rollins laughs off. Mercury thinks Seth is afraid of him because Rollins is all alone.

Video of Dusty pinning Harley Race to win the NWA World Title in 1979.

R-Truth vs. King Barrett

Truth comes out in a homemade king outfit, consisting of a paper crown, a bed sheet and a plunger. He sits in on commentary but JBL tells him that he has a match to get to. Truth: "What you talking about Willis?" Barrett slugs him down and gets rolled up for a pin in 21 seconds.

Barrett lays Truth out and says this is serious. All hail King Barrett.

The Divas and some low level guys talk to Machine Gun Kelly before his performance later.

Here's Kevin Owens to brag about John Cena not being here tonight. The only man to blame for that is John Cena himself because Cena forced him

to do what he did last night. When Cena offered him a handshake last night, Cena said Owens belonged in this ring. How dare Cena tell him something he already knows and talk down to him like that. Cena was a bad winner last night because Cena always has to be the big man. Owens deserves one more match, but this time he wants the US Title. As for tonight though, how about an open challenge?

NXT Title: Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Ziggler gets a kiss from Lana to motivate him before we get going. Before the match, Dolph says he's going to be the one to give Cleveland a championship right here and right now. We get the big match intros but Owens cuts Lillian off and says he never made this a title match. Ziggler goes right for him to start and gets thrown to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Ziggler fighting out of a chinlock but getting draped ribs first over the top rope. Owens talks some trash until Ziggler comes back with a Cactus Clothesline (popular move recently) and they slug it out on the floor. Dolph is thrown over the barricade (with a very nice jump) but crawls over everyone to dive back in at nine. Back in and the backsplash misses, setting up the running DDT to send Owens outside and us to a second break.

Just like last time we come back with Ziggler fighting out of a chinlock and nailing a superkick for two (with Dolph laying on the legs for a cover). The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered and the Fameasser gets two. A wicked release German gets two for the champ but Ziggler escapes another Pop Up Powerbomb and hits the Zig Zag. He can't cover immediately though, allowing Owens to finally hit the powerbomb for the pin at 15:35.

Rating: C+. Dolph has to change. There is nothing here that we haven't seen a dozen times before and it stopped being interesting a long time ago. I have no idea why Lana being with him is supposed to help him, but Ziggler needs to change something up or there's little need to have him around.

Paige tries to rally the Divas against the Bellas but they can't trust her. She has a handicap match against the Bellas tonight but no one will

team with her. The twins come up and Nikki implies she's champ because she's friends with Stephanie. None of these other Divas would want to fight against the Authority would they? Everyone leaves and Paige is all by herself.

Randy Orton vs. Kane

Kane takes Randy down to start and slaps on an early chinlock, followed by the side slam for two. Back up and Orton nails a clothesline but here's Sheamus before the elevated DDT can connect. Kane grabs a mic and makes it no holds barred. Sheamus comes in to make it 2-1, allowing a Brogue Kick to give Kane the pin at 4:19.

Rating: D. Given that the match was just four minutes long and a good chunk of that was spent on Sheamus coming out and Kane's announcement. At least they kept it quick instead of letting this drag out when it was almost a guarantee that Sheamus was going to come out there. Oh and now we get a feud between two losers. Nice job guys.

In the back, Rollins flags Kane down and brags about winning last night but Kane reminds him that he has to win night after night after night, all on his own. If Rollins doesn't understand that, he isn't an architect but rather an idiot. Rollins says Kane has always had someone holding his hand, but a mention of Paul Bearer and Undertaker gets Kane all fired up. Rollins wants Kane to be the next opponent.

Clip of the Dust Brothers inducting Dusty into the Hall of Fame.

Big Show vs. The Miz

Ryback is on commentary. The sunglasses removal is broken up by a charging Big Show but Miz gets in a boot as they get back in. That sends Miz running away again as there isn't much to do against a guy that big. Back in and Show is limping, but it's all a ruse so he can chop Miz's chest in half. Show charges into a boot in the corner, only to casually throw Miz outside again for another loud chop. He throws Miz at Ryback and the staredown allows Miz to beat the count back in for the countout win at 2:55.

Big Show runs from a Meat Hook post match.

Here's Roman Reigns to find out what happened last night. He wants to fight Wyatt right now but gets Bray on screen instead. Bray talks about one star telling the truth and the other telling lies. Roman: "Shut your mouth and get out here right now." Bray says the briefcase should have been his so he could be the beacon of hope that the world needed but Reigns took it away from it. It's Reigns' ego that makes him so dangerous and it reminds Bray of someone he knew. It was someone who believed he would be the chosen one to lead his people.

That man had been chosen but the other was cast aside, and it was clear that the people were wrong. Just look outside and you'll see that they made the wrong choice. The two of them are opposites who balance everything out. They need each other and last night Bray was the justice that Reigns always promised to be. Bray will ultimately destroy Reigns, but not tonight. What sort of an example would that be with Father's Day right around the corner? Bray holds up a picture of Roman playing with his daughter, saying their fun is just getting started. Run.

Bella Twins vs. Paige

Handicap match. Nikki does the jumping jacks but gets punched in the face. Some knees to the chest on the ropes have Nikki in trouble until Brie trips Paige up to take over. It's off to Brie for a chinlock followed by the BRIE MODE knee for two. Back to Nikki for a kick to the back and figure four headscissors, complete with pushups to put Paige face first into the mat.

Paige sends the Bellas into each other and does her clotheslines spot to Brie before kicking her in the head in the corner. Brie is sent into her sister again and the Rampaige gets two with Nikki diving in for the save. The big forearm and the Rack Attack finally put Paige away at 5:33.

Rating: D+. As JBL put it: the Bellas win again. This is almost all we see these days and I have no idea why I'm supposed to care anymore. We know that they're going to hang on for a few more months to make Nikki the greatest Diva of all time so they can have another storyline on Total Divas, so just get us there already.

Machine Gun Kelly performs for a long, long time. Kevin Owens comes out to congratulate him but Kelly's offer of a handshake earns him a powerbomb off the stage. Like two feet off the stage but still. The fans don't seem that upset.

Here's a clip from Terminator: Genisys.

New Day vs. Neville/Prime Time Players

The New Day is positive that they'll get the titles back because, after all, today is a new day. Woods and Young get things going by running the ropes until Darren just hits him in the face. A neckbreaker gets two and it's off to Kofi, who has some very taped ribs. A single kick to the bandages sends Kofi over for a tag to Woods, who is knocked down just as quickly. Titus comes in and suplexes Darren onto Woods before a big backbreaker plants Kofi. Neville adds a big flip dive to take New Day out and we go to a break.

Back with Woods holding Young in a cobra clutch before it's off to Big E. as New Day keeps cutting off the ring. Darren pops up and dives over for the tag off to Neville, who turns on the jets and kicks away at Woods. Xavier escapes the German but charges into a boot to the face. The Red Arrow is loaded up but Neville dives at Kofi instead, allowing Titus to plant Big E. with a spinebuster. Kofi offers a distraction and Woods hits a Downward Spiral on Neville with Darren making the save. Kofi's reverse suplex is countered and Young hits the double knee gutbuster, setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 9:39.

Rating: C. This was fine and I love that the champions didn't just lose immediately after getting the belts. Also, nice touch on having Young's finisher play into the rib injuries. New Day can be back with a simple promo and cheating to win so there's little lost here. It's also nice to see Neville continuing to be pushed as something special, even though he's probably going to slip into the midcard where he belongs.

We look at Owen's actions over the last 24 hours.

Ambrose is throwing darts at a picture of Rollins when Kane comes in. Dean laughs at the idea of Kane being the #1 contender and brings up

Kane's days as the monster. It's just a job for Kane but this is Ambrose's life. Dean says he needs the title and walks away.

One last batch of Dusty clips.

Here's the Authority to say that Owens will be disciplined because it's best for business. It's time for the #1 contender though, and it's not going to be Noble, Mercury, Kane or Ambrose. Rollins comes out to say there's no one on the roster that can beat him. HHH agrees that Seth has beaten everyone put in front of him. Stephanie thinks Rollins has something left to prove because Seth has pushed them a bit too far.

They've invested a lot in the future and now they need to take a step back and look at the investment they've made. Is the investment worth it, or is it just another cost? The real test is to see if a lump of coal turns into a diamond when you put it under pressure. I believe that's what HHH said to Orton back in the Evolution days. The pressure is on.....and HERE'S BROCK, complete with a Suplex City (Cleveland, Ohio, Exit F5) license plate shirt.

Heyman shakes hands with the Authority and everyone leaves. Rollins looks as terrified as you would expect and Brock very slowly backs him up against the ropes. The champ wisely leaves and walks away to end the show. Maybe he's off to try to figure out why Cole has completely forgotten that he was suing Lesnar for breaking his neck or whatever it was.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked the show for the most part but again they really need to cut this down to two hours. It's cool to see Owens hurting lame rappers but do we really need to sit through a five minute performance to get there? They're firmly into the summer season though and it should be cool to see how we get from here to Summerslam. Lesnar being back immediately picks things up though and we should be solid going forward. Good show but man alive it needed to be trimmed down.

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Sheamus – Rollup

R-Truth b. King Barrett – Rollup

Kevin Owens b. Dolph Ziggler – Pop Up Powerbomb

Kane b. Randy Orton – Pin after a Brogue Kick from Sheamus

Miz b. Big Show via countout

Bella Twins b. Paige – Rack Attack

Prime Time Players/Neville b. New Day – Red Arrow to Kingston

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Monday Night Raw – June 8, 2015: Half A Billion Ways To Get On My Nerves

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 8, 2015

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Money in the Bank and the ladder match is set

with all seven of its competitors. As announced on WWE.com, six of the participants will be in singles matches tonight, including a rematch from last week with Orton vs. Sheamus. Hopefully we get more solid mic work from Ambrose and Rollins as well. Let's get to it.

Before we get started, on a completely unrelated note: thanks for everything Unc. I'll always remember you.

Here's Cena, with a broken nose, to open things up. Cena talks about some of the biggest events in WWE: Hogan vs. Rock, the Streak and the Money in the Bank ladder match. That's uh, quite the collection. Those in the ladder match are fighting for an opportunity on the same night two people will be fighting in the same ring with one getting an opportunity of his own.

Kevin Owens thinks Cena's time is up and his time is now but this Sunday Cena will be fighting for everyone that believes in him as well as those people who think he sucks. This Sunday he proves that he is still the face that runs this place because he is John Cena. Cue Owens who says that Cena is just proving his point. Cena is delusional if he thinks he's winning on Sunday or if the fans are interested in seeing an open challenge for the US Title.

People have been watching Cena come out to open Raw for ten years now and some people must be sick of it. Instead, let's have an NXT Title Open Challenge instead. Cena loves the idea and says he accepts. Owens says no because Cena is already facing him on Sunday so no match tonight. They accuse each other of being delusional and Cena issues his own Open Challenge and looks right at Owens as he says come get some.

Owens has another idea: whoever comes down the ramp next gets to pick which title they want to fight for. Cue Neville, who says he would love to fight John Cena....one day. Owens is a prize fighter, but Neville knows what it takes to hold that prize. Therefore, Neville will take that NXT Title shot right now.

NXT Title: Kevin Owens vs. Neville

Owens is defending of course and John Cena is making a rare appearance on

commentary. The champ goes right to the floor but Neville follows him out for some kicks to the ribs. Back in and a nice running hurricanrana sends Owens back to the floor for the big moonsault dive. They get back in again and Owens just slugs Neville down and hits a wicked Cannonball for two.

We hit the chinlock and Cena gets in a great line by saying no one talks about the minor league home run champion because they'd rather talk about Babe Ruth. A backsplash gets two for Kevin and a belly to back gets the same as Cena is coming off as one of the most polished commentators I've ever heard. Back with Neville countering an AA into a DDT to get a breather.

The big Asai moonsault barely grazes Kevin's arm (it wasn't clear who screwed up) so Neville has to settle for a middle rope dropkick for two. Back up and Owens ducks a kick and grabs the arm, lifting Neville up into something like a brainbuster onto the knee. Owens doesn't use that one often but it looked great. Neville comes back with the delayed German but Owens crotches him to break up the Red Arrow. The Pop Up Powerbomb retains the title at 14:00.

Rating: B. This was as good as you would have expected and I'm looking forward to seeing Cena and Owens tear the house down again on Sunday. Owens plays a great power brawler and we've been lacking a good powerbomb for a long time now. Fun match here and it's awesome to see the NXT guys getting their shot on the main roster.

Video on Rollins vs. Neville at Elimination Chamber and the resulting aftermath that set up Sunday's ladder match.

WWE praises itself for having a half billion social media followers because that means they're awesome and TOTALLY EQUAL TO EVERY OTHER MAJOR ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY EVER.

Rollins comes up to the Authority and implies they're all in trouble on Sunday but Stephanie brings up what Rollins said last week about not needing the two of them. They'll be there on Sunday but not at ringside. However, tonight Seth can pick his own opponent.

We recap Paige getting screwed by Twin Magic last week and her ensuing promo ripping into the Bellas dominating the Divas division for way too long. She's promised to change the division forever.

Nikki Bella says Paige is projecting her frustration onto the twins and is sure the Bellas have never held anyone back. Maybe this is Paige's house, but it's the Bellas' world.

Summer Rae vs. Nikki Bella

Non-title. A quick rollup gets two for Nikki but it's time for some pushups. Summer comes back with a cobra clutch for a bit before Nikki fights up and hits the Rack Attack for the pin at 2:19.

We recap Reigns having to win three times last week to retain his Money in the Bank spot.

Here's Reigns with something to say. He talks about hating that briefcase for so long because of who it was attached to. Now it doesn't sound so bad though because he's going to pull it down and cash in against Dean Ambrose some day down the line. Cue Kane who says he's in the ladder match on Sunday to protect the Authority's interests. Reigns offers Kane a chance to come in right now for a demonstration in breaking jaws but here's Dolph Ziggler to interrupt.

Kane isn't getting in the ring right now because the Authority hasn't pulled his strings. After taking forever to call Kane a tool, Ziggler says he's going to win on Sunday. Kane reminds Dolph about the dangers of certain tools and reminds him that everyone is in singles matches against each other tonight. Well minus Neville of course. This brings out R-Truth for some reason but a confused Kane tells him that he isn't in the match. R-Truth: "Are you sure?" Kane: "Yeah." Truth: "My bad." And he's gone.

Kane tries to continue but gets cut off by New Day. They promise that Kofi will pull the briefcase down using the power of positivity, making all of them Mr. Money in the Bank because NEW DAY ROCKS! This brings out Sheamus, who laughs at the idea of anyone else winning this Sunday. He'll be one Brogue Kick away from becoming champion all over again. Kane finally gets to introduce Orton, who comes out as scheduled. This was

basically just a way to remind us of who is in on Sunday.

Randy Orton vs. Sheamus

Rematch from last week where Sheamus was disqualified. Orton quickly takes it to the floor for some shots tot he ribs before hitting the Stomp back inside. Sheamus bails outside again and is whipped hard into the barricade for his efforts. Back in and a neck snap across the top rope gives Sheamus control so he slaps on an armbar. Quite the power brawler indeed. Orton fights back but gets knocked to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus driving a knee into the ribs and slapping on a chinlock to slow things down again. Sheamus slowly walks around so Orton slugs away and hits the t-bone suplex. The elevated DDT connects but both guys miss finishers. Instead it's a clothesline to send Sheamus outside, only to have Sheamus throw him over the table. Just like last week, Sheamus busts out a chair but eats a right hand to the ribs. Orton throws the chair at Sheamus' ribs and that's a DQ at 13:13.

Rating: C-. Bleh. I still cannot find a way to care about these two having a match. They're two of my favorites but they're just not a pairing I want to see. It didn't help that the ending was the same thing they did last week to cap off doing almost the entire same match from last week. Was there no one else you could put in there? Like, Ziggler vs. Orton perhaps?

Post match Orton stomps Sheamus' head on the steps (insert your own Curb Stomp joke here) and hits an RKO.

The Stooges annoy Rollins as they ask to be in his corner on Sunday. They're huge morons and he doesn't need them on Sunday, so Jamie says screw you. They're Shield 2.0 with Mercury as an upgrade over Reigns and Noble being better than Ambrose. Rollins is a son of a gun and would be nothing without the Authority. That's enough to earn the Stooges a match against the champ tonight. Jamie and Rollins slap each other and Mercury has to break it up before threatening Rollins for later.

Kane vs. Dolph Ziggler

Neither guy gets an entrance and it's Zigler starting fast, only to be uppercut out of the air. With Lana looking on we hit the chinlock to slow the match down again. Kane slugs him down in the corner as the crowd gets even quieter with every Kane right hand. A side slam gets two and we stop to look at Lana again. Kane boots Dolph's head off for two and we take a break. Back with Zigler fighting out of a bearhug and nailing a superkick to put both guys down. Lana applauds and here's Rusev to distract her, causing Lana to fall off the ramp and hurt her ankle. The distraction lets Kane nail a chokeslam for the pin at 9:46.

Rating: D. I had forgotten how much I hated these singles matches leading up to a big multi-man match, even though it was driving me crazy just a few weeks back. It doesn't help that it's more of Rusev getting on my nerves with the whole broken man thing. At least he didn't seem upset when he hurt Lana.

Lana gets her ankle checked and is prescribed ice.

It's time for MizTV, starting with a clip of Ryback and Big Show getting into it last week. Naturally Ryback and Big Show are the guests tonight, starting with Ryback who interrupts Miz's introduction. Miz lists off his resume and Ryback cuts him off again because he's sick of hearing all these lines over and over again. They argue a bit until Big Show cuts them off as only he can.

Show talks about how he can take everything he wants anytime he wants so Ryback says come get this title. They stare each other down and Big Show yells at Miz, who jumps the giant. Miz is thrown down so Ryback Shell Shocks Show. Why they didn't SAVE THAT FOR THE FREAKING MATCH is beyond me but then again Big Show and Kane are featured in big matches in 2015 so I shouldn't be that surprised.

We recap the makings of the handicap match.

Luke Harper/Erick Rowan vs. Los Matadores

Rowan throws Diego around to start and brings in Harper to run over Fernando. Back to Rowan to knock Torito off the apron, meaning there's no one for Fernando to tag. A 3D (The Way) ends Fernando at 2:15.

Harper gets a mic and says tick tock tick tock because the time to pay for your sins is coming. The judgment is waiting at your door. Rowan says it's ok to be afraid because you should be.

Kane comes in to see Rollins and laughs about the Instagram photos Ambrose has been posting of himself with the title all around New Orleans. Yeah I've ignored these stupid things all night but they're little more than WWE saying HEY! DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE A LOT OF FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA??? BECAUSE WE TOTALLY DO! Kane threatens to cash in on Sunday and they bicker. Again.

More social media stats and another Ambrose picture. These are now being used to announce that Dean will be here tonight. Ignore that the ticket in the picture clearly says COMP.

Trailer for Ted 2.

Big E. vs. Titus O'Neil

Woods calls Big E. the Minister of Mass. E. gets a quick two off a belly to belly and hammers away at the bald head. An abdominal stretch lets Big E. slap Titus' stomach for the NEW DAY ROCKS clap. Titus fights back with some chops in the corner and an old Pounce ala Monty Brown, only to have the partners get in a fight on the floor. That distraction lets Big E. hit the Big Ending for the pin at 3:13.

Rating: D. This show has drained me of any interest in any more mini versions of matches I'm going to see on Sunday. Also, nice job of having the challenger lose to make sure I buy into his team having a chance going into their title match on Sunday. It's already not a great match in the first place and this didn't help.

Roman Reigns vs. Kofi Kingston

Kofi's wristlock doesn't work very well and Reigns wristlocks him to the floor. The other New Day members offer a distraction to let Kofi take over but Reigns fights back again and sends Kofi outside one more time. The apron kick looks to set up Reigns' big dive but he has to settle for a running clothesline off the steps to take out Woods. Kofi slides back

in for a nice baseball slide and we take a break.

Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock so it's right back to another chinlock. Kofi goes up for a nice top rope ax handle as Woods will not shut up (in a good way). Reigns makes his comeback with a bunch of clotheslines and a tilt-a-whirl slam for two. The SOS is countered into a sitout powerbomb for two more but he has to take out Woods and Big E. A rollup gets two for Kofi but he dives into the Superman Punch for the pin at 12:07.

Rating: C+. I liked this more than I thought I would as Kofi is more than capable of making a match like this look good. Reigns fighting off the trio works fine as they're not losing in a tag match so it's no real loss. Fun match here, even though the ending wasn't ever really in any doubt.

Reigns grabs a chair and Ambrose comes to sit down, carrying popcorn and a Pepsi.

Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury vs. Seth Rollins

Kane is out with the Stooges. Mercury spins out of a wristlock to start but Seth does the same thing and sends Joey into the mat. The Stooges take a breather on the floor but Kane offers a distraction to let them get in some double teaming. Ambrose pours popcorn on Seth's head, allowing Joey to nail a nice dropkick for one, followed by an armdrag into an armbar. Seth throws him outside and laughs at Dean a bit before putting on a chinlock at 11:08pm.

Rollins misses a charge in the corner and the hot tag brings in Noble to clean house, completel with his little dance. The swinging neckbreaker gets two and the Stooges try the Rick Rude Wrestlemania V pin for a VERY close two, but Jamie eats a low superkick to change control again. Mercury gets buckle bombed into his partner and Seth loads up the Pedigree, only for Dean to get up and throw the title in. The distraction lets Joey get a rollup for the pin at 9:00. Yes, this match that started in the overrun got NINE MINUTES.

Rating: D+. Yeah the match was entertaining enough and I get the point

but maybe they could have been done with this earlier if they hadn't had to spend half an hour patting themselves on the back for their win. Not a bad match here but it just kept going when it could have been done in about half the time.

Dean hits Dirty Deeds to take the title back and climbs a ladder to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This show wasn't great but unlike the disaster of two weeks ago, there isn't one (or two) major problems bringing it down. Instead this was like death by 1000 stab wounds as so much of the show was about the stupid Instagram/social media stats and most of the people in Money in the Bank having singles matches that mean nothing. That's the big problem with matches like these: there's nothing important and you know the ladder match is down to at most two people. Cut the thing down and make it more interesting instead of having this big of a mess. Not a good show this week but it did have some fun parts.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Neville – Pop Up Powerbomb

Nikki Bella b. Summer Rae – Rack Attack

Sheamus b. Randy Orton via DQ when Orton threw a chair

Kane b. Dolph Ziggler – Chokeslam

Luke Harper/Erick Rowan b. Los Matadores – The Way to Fernando

Big E. b. Titus O'Neil – Big Ending

Roman Reigns b. Kofi Kingston – Superman Punch

Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury b. Seth Rollins – Rollup

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Elimination Chamber 2015: The Future Is Here

Elimination Chamber 2015

Date: May 29, 2015

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Jerry Lawler

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

Pre-Show: Zack Ryder vs. Stardust

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

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

5:53.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sin escapes and throws Kalisto up onto the New Day pod but they try to pull him down inside. Cara gets slammed down but Kalisto kicks both Ascension members down, allowing Sin Cara to get up and hit a HUGE Swanton off a pod to crush Viktor. Kalisto loads up a dive of his own but

New Day pulls him down to break it up, giving us New Day doing the LUCHA dance. Cesaro and Kidd are in next and Cesaro starts busting out the European uppercuts, including Tyson launching Konnor into Swiss Death for two.

Kalisto is still on top of the pod until Cesaro superplexes him down and Kidd adds a springboard elbow drop for two with Cara having to dive in for a save. Only Kidd and Cesaro are on their feet and Kidd slaps the Sharpshooter on Viktor but Konnor breaks it up. The La Mistica mat slam plants Konnor as Lawler calls JBL JR by mistake. Cara powerbombs Kidd as Kalisto is on top of the Prime Time Players' pod.

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

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

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

Things get smart in a hurry as Cesaro and Kidd throw Woods into the pod and shut the door to even things up. The Swing into the dropkick knocks Kofi silly but Young sneaks in to roll Cesaro up for the elimination. It's the Prime Time Players vs. New Day for the titles and Big E. gets

Woods out of the pod to make it 3-2. New Day stomps Titus against the chamber wall and get his head through the chain.

Young fights back and sends Big E shoulder first into the pod with his head hitting the pod for good measure. Everyone is down but Titus frees himself and starts throwing Big E. into the wall. Xavier gets the same treatment and the gutbuster takes out Kofi for two. Big E. is back up and suplexes Darren on the cage floor, only to walk into a powerslam from Titus. Not that it matters though as Trouble in Paradise sets up a triple pin to retain the titles at 19:34.

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

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

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

Divas Title: Nikki Bella vs. Naomi vs. Paige

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

Naomi starts cleaning house and loads Paige up for a belly to back superplex, only to have Nikki come in for a Tower of Doom. The Rack Attack to Paige is broken up with a Rear View for a near fall with Paige making the save. Naomi heads to the corner but gets caught in an electric

chair from Paige, only to be countered into a reverse hurricanrana. It didn't go smoothly but it could have been a lot worse. Not that it matters as Nikki Rack Attacks Naomi to retain at 6:05.

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

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

Kevin Owens vs. John Cena

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

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

The pop up powerbomb is countered with a leapfrog and Cena initiates his finishing sequence. Cena loads up the AA but gets countered into the pop up powerbomb for a close two, stunning Owens. Kevin gets crotches on top but headbutts Cena down, only to miss a moonsault of all things. The AA

gets two (take a shot!) and both guys are down. Owens nails a superkick and tries his own Five Knuckle Shuffle (because he's that awesome) but Cena pulls him down into the STF.

Cena tries to pull him back to the middle but Owens kicks him away and hits an AA of his own (good one too) for another near fall. Both guys are down again and it's Cena up first for the two off the top rope Fameasser. Cole calls that patented, but I'm not sure Cena ever filed that paperwork. Back up again and Owens loads up the package piledriver (his pre-WWE finisher) but slams Cena to the side instead of dropping him on his head.

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

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

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

Pre-show panel chat.

Bo Dallas vs. Neville

Neville has a bad knee coming in, partially thanks to Dallas. The knee is fine enough for Neville to do his flips out of the corner before sending Bo to the floor to avoid a Red Arrow attempt. That's fine with Neville as

he hits a huge moonsault to the floor. Back in and Neville puts on a chinlock (rare sight for a good guy) but Bo gets to the ropes ("LET ME GO!"). He offers peace but starts elbowing Neville in the face and gets two off a running forearm.

Off to a cravate on Neville to slow things way down as the announcers talk about football from the 1960s. Back up and Bo elbows him in the head, only to be sent out to the floor. Bo's stunned look is great. Neville comes back with kicks to the head and a running forearm, followed by a standing shooting star for two. The Bodog is countered and the Red Arrow connects for the pin at 9:07.

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

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

The Chamber is lowered.

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

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

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

Ziggler in the face to keep control but Truth gets back up for the spinning forearm and ax kick.

Barrett rolls away from the cover but Ziggler is back up with a kick to the face for two. Back up and Barrett drives Ziggler through a pod wall, freeing Mark Henry to come in before his entrance. There's nothing the referee can do because it's no disqualification, and likely because the show is threatening to run long and they need to save some time. Ryback comes in a few seconds later and runs Henry over for two. Henry stands around as Barrett plants Ziggler with Wasteland, only to break it up at two like the schmuck that he is.

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

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

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

Rating: C+. Well that was a surprise. I didn't like the action as well as I liked the first one but it was still a fun match. They've set up Ryback

as never having won a title so this was a good way to pay that story off. Ryback has been pushed pretty strong since returning (ignore the loss at Payback) and this was the right call for a step up.

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

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

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

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

WWE World Title: Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose

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

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

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

and the flying standing elbow gets the same.

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

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

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

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

Results

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

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

Kevin Owens b. John Cena – Pop up powerbomb

Neville b. Bo Dallas – Red Arrow

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

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

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: May 25, 2015

Oh boy it's this show. I've been putting this off for as long as I can because this show drove me up the walls, down the walls, to the grocery store and then halfway to Oklahoma. It's very rare to find a show with two different parts that get under my skin this badly but this show managed to pull it off. Let's get to it.

I'm going to do this one a little bit differently as there are two major pieces I'll be spending far more of my time on. Therefore, I'll get those out of the way and then cover the rest of the show. You can probably

guess what these two major segments were (hint: I wrote a column about one of them) so we'll start with the one that went on longer: the Dean Ambrose arrest story.

The basic idea is simple: Ambrose has until the end of the show to sign the contract for the match with Rollins on Sunday (why the Authority didn't say "you have four seconds to get out here and sign this starting now" isn't clear) so the Authority ran some trickierations and had Dean arrested for punching an innocent cameraman. Later in the show, it was revealed that Rollins shoved the cameraman into Dean so he wouldn't make it back to the show in time. Naturally, with the Authority celebrating at the end of the show, Dean came back (in a police van) and signed the contract just as the show ended (complete with overrun of course).

Now let's stop for a minute and think about this. Monday Night Raw is a wrestling show. We have to accept that a lot of really, really questionable things happen, but WWE has built a universe where it's plausible that these things could happen. In other words, fans are willing to suspend their disbelief to accept that we're watching crazy people do crazy things because the show has made it possible for that to happen.

Look at it from a comic book perspective. I can believe that Superman can fly because he's an alien under a yellow sun. Those are the rules that DC comics have established and as long as they play by those rules, I can go along with them. However, if one day Superman can suddenly turn people into chickens and the justification is "well he's an alien and has powers", it's unacceptable because this comes out of left field and doesn't gel with the story of the character.

This past Monday with Dean just happening to make it out of jail on time and just happening to be there at the very end of the show to sign the contract was WWE suddenly being able to turn people into chickens. There were WAY too many coincidences and perfect timing for me to accept that this was going to be the case. It didn't help that they were basically saying "yeah you know he's getting back and signing" and it was just a matter of time before the big evidence showed up to save Dean.

I said this in the review but it felt like the end of any given sitcom episode. Our hero is in big trouble for doing whatever and he can't prove his innocence, but here's some deus ex machina to save him and give us all a happy ending while the villains are left kicking and screaming and promising to get Ambrose next time Gadget, NEXT TIME!

The word to sum it up was staged. This felt like it was designed to be completely fake and set up the whole way through instead of trying to be realistic. Look at Lucha Underground for a counter example. They have some completely over the top stories (including a man who was the spirit of a dragon and a monster killing a wrestler) but they play it totally seriously and it never fails to work. This story felt like WWE was winking at the camera the entire time and making it as clear as they could that Ambrose was going to be there at the last second to save the day, making the entire three hour story a big waste of time.

That's the other big deal for me: what did this whole thing change? Ambrose came into the show with a title shot and left with a title shot. All that happened in between was the Authority looks bad and Rollins doesn't really do anything else. Instead of a serious promo exchange or making me want to see the match more, the show was a big stand alone story that changed nothing and got on my nerves. It's bad writing and bad booking and something that really didn't need to happen.

Now on to the other stupid idea of the night: Rusev turning into a big, emotional goon instead of the brute that he's been for over a year now. I understand the idea that he would be upset over Lana leaving him for an American, but the reaction was all wrong. Rusev should have been stomping and raving and FIGHTING ZIGGLER but instead he was asking to hold Lana's hand and talking about all the dreams they had in Bulgaria.

As I ranted about in the column I wrote (which I know you've all read of course), this was missing the point of the character. Rusev is a monster and they're trying to give him emotions. It's all wrong for him and doesn't fit anything that they've set up over the past year plus for him. It goes back to the Superman example earlier: you can't just throw in a polar opposite set of characteristics for someone without any sort of foundation for them. Rusev getting all emotional has no background, Lana

or no Lana.

Oh and now Rusev is injured and could be out for more than a month, so the last thing people are going to remember from him is the big change scene with the song from the trailer from every bad romantic comedy ever. What a great followup to the four pay per view series with Cena. But hey, at least Rusev is a more three dimensional character, because a guy named the Bulgarian Brute was just dying for a soft side right?

As for the rest of the show, Ambrose pinned Rollins in a tag match, which should have ended the show and been the main focal point of their feud that night. I'll stop myself there.

Rusev squashed R-Truth in 59 seconds. Again, I'll stop myself there.

The other major story of the night was a trio of matches between the six participants in the Elimination Chamber match for the Intercontinental Title. In addition to Truth vs. Rusev, we had Ryback beating Barrett (shocking!) and Sheamus Brogue Kicking Ziggler. This is another example of tired booking ideas that need to be replaced. Only Sheamus vs. Ziggler broke four minutes, making these matches, which really change nothing for Sunday's match, more like a waste of time than anything else. Consolidate these into a long six man instead of three singles or have a tag match or two three ways or ANYTHING but this boring idea.

The cast of Entourage was here to fill in time, including a segment where they mentioned Ronda Rousey in front of Stephanie. That's something of note was well: notice that a lot of the bad writing and bad structuring take place when Stephanie is back full time. We had a bunch of bad filler segments and more of her talking with proper nouns (you don't have to say the exact name of the title, wrestlers or pay per view every ten seconds Stephanie. We're not going to care more or start Tweeting about it because WE'RE ALREADY WATCHING THE SHOW).

Neville beat Stardust (who had a pre match staredown with Stephen Amell of Arrow, allegedly setting up a showdown at Summerslam. Seriously. To his credit though, Amell is in great shape so it could be passable) and was beaten down by Bo Dallas post match. They're still playing up the knee injury which is fine for a quick story.

Cena's Open Challenge speech was talking about the fans who boo him and want someone to knock him down for good. Kevin Owens has his chance on Sunday but it's not going to happen. As usual, this was Cena owning the fans as only he can and chuckling as they think they own him.

Zack Ryder answered the challenge and had a very fun four minute match (complete with Ryder missing a 450 of all things) before Cena pinned him. This was the right call as Ryder is a Long Island guy and this was the last show in Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, which was played up a lot during the match. As usual, this was the best part of the show as Cena continues to be amazing when they just let him go out there and do his thing. Post match Owens, now in more proper gear, laid Cena out again. They better not screw this up on Sunday, but I'm sure they will.

Tamina, the bodyguard for one of the challengers for the Divas Title on Sunday, pinned the other challenger for the Divas Title on Sunday. The stupidity was flowing through this entire show.

To cap it off, let's throw all psychology out the window and have Kane (for no apparent reason) book New Day in a 3 on 11 handicap match, because the way to get heels booed is to put them against impossible odds. This lasted less than a minute before the big brawl.

Do I need to sum this one up for you?

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Elimination Chamber 2015 Preview

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

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

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

Los Matadores – Just no.

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

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

Lucha Dragons – They're the dark horses to win here as they've been pushed strong since debuting and clearly have the offense to get the fans

into any of their matches. Why Los Matadores still exist with these guys around is beyond me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

King Barrett – He's already jobbing to R-Truth clean in less than three minutes. Heaven help him if he wins the title back and is getting rolled up by El Torito next. Pass here and that's the best for everyone involved.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and if there's more than a few good things, Sunday could be really, really special.

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Smackdown – May 28, 2015: Padding With A Good Match

Smackdown

Date: May 28, 2015

Location: Mohegan Sun Arena, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

I've been saying this too often lately but it's the go home show for a pay per view. The big stories going into this Sunday are the two Elimination Chamber matches as well as the World Title match between champion Seth Rollins and challenger Dean Ambrose. They haven't really had time to put together a great story so I'm assuming tonight is going to have some hard selling. Or some lame matches that keep everything where it was coming out of Raw. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Dean Ambrose to recap the arrest angle from Raw that magically

ended right before the show went off the air because that's how wrestling works these days and the words "TUNE IN NEXT WEEK TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED!" are all four letters long now. Ambrose was sitting in his cell and thought he had one person to call: Roman Reigns. He asked Reigns to buy him some time so he could figure out a way out of the cell.

The help he needed came from WWE's Youtube channel because it was clear that Rollins shoved the cameraman into him. That was more than enough to clear his name and since he's been in a lot of metropolitan jails in this country, it only took some pictures and autographs to get a police escort to back to the arena on time. Tonight there's a rematch of Raw's tag match, but this Sunday there's going to be a fight for the finest prize in this industry. Stupid story on Monday aside, this was a good promo that got to the point for Sunday.

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. Lucha Dragons

The other four teams in the Chamber match are lumberjacks. Cara and Kidd get things going with Tyson bouncing off the ropes (upside down that is) to counter a wristlock into an armdrag to send Cara to the floor. Cesaro comes in off a blind tag for a European uppercut into a German suplex from his partner followed by a half crab to slow Sin down. That goes about as far as a half crab can go so it's off to Kalisto, who is launched into the air for a hurricanrana, sending Cesaro outside.

Back in and Kalisto tries a springboard cross body, only to be caught in a vertical suplex. Cesaro doesn't put him down though as he walks Kalisto around the ring, tags Kidd in and points to him for about ten seconds as Kidd goes up top for a cross body. The announcers completely undersell this freakish display of strength but it was amazing to see. Sin is quickly tagged in to throw Kidd outside for a but Los Matadores throw him back in without doing anything.

Tyson tries a monkey flip but Kalisto dives through Kidd's legs, lands on his hands and backflips into a headscissors of his own. Dang this guy is good. We take a break and come back with Kalisto fighting out of Cesaro's chinlock but being thrown to the floor. The Players don't get in any cheap shots before throwing him back in for a double tag to Kidd and

Cara. Tyson makes a blind tag and tosses Sin into the corner for the running European uppercuts. Cara comes back with the La Mistica mat slam for two and Kalisto's corkscrew crossbody gets the same.

That's enough flipping for Cesaro as he just muscles Kalisto over with something like a belly to belly, setting up Kidd's springboard elbow for two more. Kalisto kicks Kidd in the head but Cesaro slides in with a headbutt for the save. That looked cool as he just slid in and let his head hit Kalisto.

Kidd reverses a hurricanrana into the Sharpshooter but Cara springboards in with a clothesline to break it up. Everything breaks down and Cesaro superkicks Kalisto, only to be backdropped onto a bunch of the lumberjacks. With his partner down, Kidd is distracted by Woods, setting up the Salida Del Sol to give Kalisto the pin at 13:19.

Rating: B+. I might be rating this a bit higher than some would but I had a blast watching this. Kalisto and Cara are so good as a high flying pair and maybe the best at that style since the Hardys. On the other hand you have Cesaro who is so freakishly strong it's unreal. The only issue here were the lumberjacks as they didn't really need to be there, but they hardly dragged the match down. Anyway this was a really, really fun match with both teams busting out some crazy spots. Check this out if you get the chance.

Rollins runs his mouth to Kane about Ambrose, prompting Noble to go into a story about his aunt hearing voices and being crazy, but her cobbler was good. The looks from everyone in the room are rather amusing. Kane is looking forward to having fun in the tag match tonight and promises a plan to make sure Rollins has nothing to worry about on Sunday.

R-Truth vs. King Barrett

Barrett kicks him right in the face to start and slugs Truth in the face for two. We're already in the chinlock before Barrett's kick to the ribs in the corner gets two more. Back up and Truth ducks the Bull Hammer and hits Little Jimmy for the completely clean pin at 2:26. Such is the life for someone like Barrett. I know the line is that no one remembers individual wins and losses (which I don't agree with for the most part)

but they certainly do remember loss after loss after loss after loss.

Sheamus comes out and Brogue Kicks both guys.

We recap Lana and Rusev's big spat from Monday. The less said about this the better.

Lana seems sad about having to leave Rusev but she's happier with Dolph. Rusev comes up and says he doesn't need to throw another fit because he's already had his way with Ziggler. Whatever Lana and Dolph do, it doesn't bother him. If Ziggler has to suffer because of Lana, so be it. This was much better from Rusev as he was more condescending than pitiful.

Rusev vs. Ryback

Well, it's a few months later but at least we get to see it. Ryback grabs a waistlock to start but Rusev counters into a headlock. The Bulgarian's shoulders have no effect so Ryback lifts him up for a delayed vertical suplex for two. Ryback pounds on him with some forearms but a big clothesline changes control. Rusev slowly kicks Ryback around the ring but he gets distracted by a WE WANT LANA chant. There's a decent story in there if they can find a better way of presenting it.

A backdrop sends Rusev to the floor (probably where he injured his leg) but he's still able to hit the fallaway slam as we go to a break. Back with Rusev limping around before putting on a chinlock. They slug it out and Rusev hobbles from rope to rope. He can put very little weight on it and falls down when trying to slide out of a powerslam. Rusev posts him a few times and that's a DQ at 11:56, which was probably going home quickly due to the injury.

Rating: C-. It's hard to grade this one as the injury clearly changed where the match was going. The rumor is that if Rusev can't go then he'll be replaced by Bray Wyatt, which is probably the best possible option. The injury didn't seem to be Ryback's fault but it happened so fast that it was hard to tell. Not a bad power match until the injury but they didn't have time to go very far with it.

Quick recap of Paige vs. Naomi.

Paige vs. Naomi

Naomi throws some leg kicks to start so Paige shoves her into the corner for forearms to the jaw. Some knees to the chest send Naomi to the floor, because THIS IS MY HOUSE! From the floor, Naomi sends the arm into the post and starts working over the arm in the corner. Ignore the fact that it's not the arm she sent into the post but at least she's trying. Paige comes back with some clotheslines and a kick to Tamina before catching a cross body in midair and countering it into the Rampaige for the pin at 3:12.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but the time didn't let them go anywhere. That's the problem with so many of the Divas' stories: they're supposed to tell full stories in about a third of the amount of time that their male counterparts receive. That being said, there's only so much time you can give to them when the division's top heel can't remember right from left.

The Bellas come to the stage to pose.

Tough Enough package.

Michael Cole brings Kevin Owens to the ring for a chat. Owens cuts Cole off when he says that Kevin has been in WWE for two years because he's been around the world for fifteen years. Now he can be on the WWE Network for just \$9.99. He knows Cena's numbers: fifteen World Titles, two Royal Rumble, fifty seven different t-shirt designs and over a thousand ways to suck.

Cole asks about Cena saying Owens has to finish the fight on Sunday so Owens shows us a clip of him destroying Sami Zayn at Takeover last week. If he'll do that to his best friend, what will he do to John Cena? Just watch Sunday and you'll see it first hand. After you do that, you'll see that the champ is here.

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Kane/Seth Rollins

Rematch from Raw. Ambrose passes by Owens on his way to the ring and doesn't pay him a bit of attention. Rollins gets in a cheap shot on

Reigns to start, allowing Kane to get the early advantage. Seth quickly comes in and stomps Roman down in the corner where he sits on his chest for an odd choice of offense. It's back to Kane who gets suplexed down for the tag to Ambrose as we're still in the first minute.

Reigns and Ambrose chases them to the floor and we take a break. Back with Rollins tagging in Kane to keep Ambrose in trouble. We hit the nerve hold on Ambrose for a bit before Kane pulls him off the middle rope for a big crash. Dean gets beaten down in the corner even more and Rollins hits a running back elbow for two. Back to the reverse chinlock for a bit until Dean fights back and takes out the Stooges, only to have to break up a Rollins superplex attempt.

A tornado DDT plants Kane and that's enough for the hot tag to Reigns. Kane blocks a Superman Punch like he always blocks a Superman Punch, but Dean takes him down with the standing top rope elbow. A rollup by Rollins is countered into a powerbomb but Seth slips out, only to eat the Superman Punch, drawing in the Stooges for the DQ at 12:03.

Rating: C-. There was nothing to talk about here because I saw almost this exact same match with a different ending on Monday. I'm not a fan of having these rematches so soon as this is exactly what happens: what are they supposed to do that they didn't do on Monday other than how the match ends? Not bad or anything but really dull.

Ambrose and Reigns clean house until the New Day of all people come out to beat on Ambrose, only to have Reigns hit his big over the top rope dive to take everyone out. Woods eats Dirty Deeds and Kofi gets Superman Punched out of the air. Kane and Rollins get back in though and Rollins Pedigrees Ambrose to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Not a bad go home show but as usual, there's not much to see here other than a really good tag match to start things off. However, with that great match comes a headache inducing R-Truth win over King Barrett. I was sold on the Chamber from the minute the matches were announced though so this was really just padding with a good match included.

Results

Lucha Dragons b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – Salida Del Sol to Kidd

R-Truth b. King Barrett – Little Jimmy

Ryback b. Rusev via DQ when Rusev sent Ryback into the post

Paige b. Naomi – Rampaige

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Kane/Seth Rollins via DQ when Joey Mercury and Jamie Noble interfered

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