

# Summerslam 2013 Preview

This show feels like it could be big which is rare for Summerslam anymore. Starting on the pre-show, Shield causes the DQ, triggering Show and Henry to come in to make it a tag match, perhaps for the titles. Shield leaves with all the gold either way.

As for the main stuff we'll start with the obvious: Bryan wins the title. There is zero reason to not put it on him other than to advance the HHH vs. Vince story. If they go that way, fans are going to be MAD. Cena is taking time off for his elbow soon so there is no reason for him to walk out with the title. Bryan wins by countering the AA into a small package for the title.

My biggest worry is that this turns into an Attitude Era style brawl with HHH in there, but if that's what they have to do for Cena's injury so be it. HHH flat out does not need to be there otherwise and this match doesn't deserve to be a stop on the road to HHH vs. Vince at Wrestlemania. Unfortunately that's what it's likely to be and we'll have to spend a few months hearing about the screwjob that cost Bryan the title, because that's what fans want to see.

Now for the big question: will there be a cash in by Orton. All signs point to yes, but I think they'll pull the trigger on something brilliant: have Bryan retain the title. Can you imagine how big a deal Bryan will be if he beats Cena and Orton in the same night? The Attitude Era version gave Jericho something to talk about for twelve years. I doubt it happens due to me being terrible at stuff like that, but it's almost too obvious that Orton cashes in and wins the title.

Brock vs. Punk is the real wildcard on this show. I could easily see this going either way but I can't pick which one. You have Punk needing a big win to get momentum back but you

need Brock to win so he doesn't start looking like some monster who can't finish the job. I'll take Punk but there will definitely be a rematch.

Del Rio retains. It's WWE 101: the challenger dominates leading up to the match and beats the champion multiple times, the champion retains at the PPV and WWE doesn't understand why no one is impressed.

Sandow over Cody, though it doesn't help him as there's nothing to Cody after all the damage to his character over the last year.

Bray Wyatt beats Kane. The question here isn't who wins, but what creepy thing does Bray do. I've heard ideas ranging from he controls the fire and Kane sees it as a miracle and follows Wyatt to Bray lights himself on fire because it's fun to Rowan jumps through the flames to save his master. Either way it's a good start for Bray, but they should keep his wrestling to a minimum. If he wrestles all the time he'll become watered down. Save him for important stuff and let his monsters do the work for him.

Langston and AJ beat Kaitlyn and Ziggler. Dolph has cooled WAY off lately as this feud has been all about AJ.

Brie beats Natalya. Is it Brie or Nikki wrestling? If you think I actually care about the answer, you get extra homework.

Overall Summerslam looks good but it's a two match show. That's definitely not a bad thing though as those two matches are both huge. The show should be fun and the Ring of Fire has potential to be a nice boost. They might add another match to the card to flesh it out a bit, but overall it should be good. Just don't expect much outside of the main events.

Thoughts/predictions?

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# NXT – August 14, 2013: The Old Shield Ways

## NXT

Date: August 14, 2013

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tony Dawson, William Regal

Things are getting better in NXT as we now have a heel champion instead of a face champion that no one can stand. Other than that we have Shield vs. Xavier Woods/Corey Graves/Adrian Neville in what has the potential to be a solid six man tag. The crowd should love the Shield if nothing else. Let's get to it.

After the usual opening, here's Paul Heyman to get us going. He's here to look for a new Paul Heyman Guy and is thrilled by what he sees in NXT. Heyman appreciates the ECW chants but he's here to look for the future rather than to live off the past. In the back, there is the next Paul Heyman, or the next Brock Lesnar, or the next Curtis Axel, the latter of whom comes out to a mixed reaction. Paul talks about how awesome Curtis is and says there's no one in Florida who can be the next Axel.

This brings out Big E. Langston to a HUGE reaction. He says he's man enough to take down Axel for the Intercontinental Title but Heyman isn't pleased. Axel says he's got this one and agrees to face Langston at say....Thanksgiving? Or maybe Christmas? Langston cuts him off and says defend it tonight or Axel proves that he's not good enough to hang here in NXT. That's enough for Axel to accept the challenge and we're on.

Intercontinental Title: Curtis Axel vs. Big E. Langston

Axel pounds away at Langston's head and speeds things up, only to be caught in a nice looking belly to belly suplex. Curtis is sent to the floor and we take a break with Heyman yelling OH MY GOD at Langston's strength. Back with Big E. holding a chinlock and hitting five big punches to the ribs.

Axel gets in a kick to the gut and a clothesline to the back of the head to put Langston down. A quick dropkick gets no cover and a big THANK YOU PAUL chant breaks out. Another dropkick gets two and we hit the front facelock. Langston easily powers out and fires off a series of clotheslines and knee lifts before running Axel over. There go the straps but Heyman comes in for the DQ at 4:38 shown of 8:08.

**Rating:** C-. This was fine. We certainly won't going to get a title change here but the crowd was WAY into Langston and Axel got in enough offense to not look like a joke. Big E. can hold his own in the ring and is looking like a more well rounded worker every time he's out there. That's very impressive given that he's only 27 and has only been in wrestling for a few years.

Post match Langston goes after Heyman but Axel makes the save. Curtis loads up a belt shot but walks into the Big Ending for the five count.

Sami Zayn says he's got a long running issue with Bo Dallas but now he's got to deal with Cesaro and Colter accusing him of being an Arab or an evil French Canadian. He thinks the moment that tipped them off was when he spoke Arabic or when he announced himself as being from Montreal. At the same time though, he challenged Cesaro to a match over a month ago but hasn't heard back. Zayn will up the ante though: we can make it 2/3 falls.

#### Mason Ryan vs. Scott Dawson

Dawson gets in his face to start but gets crushed into the corner. As the beating continues here are Enzo Amore and Colin Cassidy for a distraction, allowing Dawson to get in some cheap shots. Not that it matters as Mason's cobra clutch slam is good for the pin at 1:30.

Ryan cleans house after the match.

## Women's Title: Paige vs. Summer Rae

This was supposed to be Emma's title shot but Summer beat her down last week and gets the shot instead. They fight over a lockup to start and Paige gets a quick two off a cross body. Paige throws her across the ring and stomps Summer down in the corner, only to be slammed face first onto the mat via a caught boot.

In a unique move, Summer puts Paige's head between her (Summer's) legs with Paige on her knees (think a victory roll position but on the mat) and slams Paige face first into the mat before turning her over into a rollup for two. A monkey flip gets two for the challenger and Summer cranks on a headlock. Paige drives her into the corner to escape and catches Summer's boot in a nice callback. The Paige Turner is good for the pin at 3:43.

**Rating:** C-. This was short but it worked well enough. I'm assuming they're setting up for Emma vs. Paige as a big match which is fine, but the bait and switch isn't NXT's normal style. Summer's in ring work isn't all that great but she's far better in the ring than someone like Aksana. Paige was her usual good self here.

AJ says she's defending the title against someone next week but she isn't sure who it's going to be. It could be anyone from the boom mic operator to her mom to Renee Young. Bayley comes up behind her and gives her a big hug. She's REALLY excited to see AJ and apparently has been following her all day. Bayley would like the title shot and thinks they're friends, but they'll be even BETTER friends after the title match. AJ gets another big hug and gives a look that says she's admitting defeat in the battle of the crazies.

Dolph Ziggler will be here next week.

During the break Emma attacked Summer Rae. A ticked off Emma could be interesting.

## Shield vs. Corey Graves/Adrian Neville/Xavier Woods

Graves vs. Rollins gets us going with Corey sending him right back into

the corner for a meeting with the Shield. Seth charges in for an armdrag but Graves keeps rolling through and armdrags Corey down instead. Off to Neville for a dropkick to the knee and one to the chest for two before the tag is made to Woods. Things speed up a bit and Woods snaps off a headscissors for two. The NXT guys keep up the frequent tags with Graves cranking away on Seth's arm. The arm is quickly dropped in favor of the leg but Rollins bails to the floor, allowing Woods and Neville to hit stereo dives on Shield as we take a break.

Back with Reigns headbutting Woods down and stomping him down in the Shield corner. Off to the US Champion for some trash talk and right hands to Woods' afro. Xavier backflips out of a belly to back suplex and there's the not yet hot tag to Graves. A quick chop block sets up Lucky 13 but Rollins makes the save. Reigns comes in to pound away and hits a great standing falcon's arrow for two. Back to Seth to crank on the arm for a bit before making a blind tag off to Reigns. Graves doesn't see the tag and tries a sunset flip on Rollins, allowing Roman to get in a hard cheap shot.

Back to Ambrose for more trash talk as the fast Shield tags continue. A snap suplex puts Graves back in the wrong corner before Reigns comes back in. Corey kicks away at Roman's knee from the mat but there's almost no effect. Graves is shoved into the corner and gets a burst of energy to fight his way out.

The hot tag brings in Neville to speed things up and an enziguri puts Dean down. He gets the knees up to block the Red Arrow though and makes a tag off to Rollins. Adrian flips out of a German suplex and tags in Woods who gets two off a high cross body. A kick to Seth's head and a quick downward spiral gets two. The It's Morphin Time clothesline gets two as well but Reigns makes the diving save.

Neville hurricanranas Reigns to the floor and Ambrose suplexes Graves to the floor. Woods loads up a superplex but Rollins counters into a sunset bomb. Xavier holds the ropes but Reigns makes a blind tag and punches Woods to break his grip on the ropes. Rollins hits the Buckle Bomb and the spear from Reigns is enough to pin Woods at 14:07 shown of 16:52.

**Rating:** B+. Cut two minutes or so out of the middle and this is a classic. This was in the old vein of Shield matches with the last second saves and perfectly planned out insanity and it's still awesome. The NXT guys got a solid rub here as they got to put Shield to a good test. The ending never really was in doubt, but they had me wondering there for a few seconds, which is a sign of a good match.

Cesaro accepts Zayn's challenge for the 2/3 falls match next week. He promises to beat Zayn so bad but Sami jumps him to start a brawl. They're pulled apart and Cesaro channels his inner James Kirk by shouting ZAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAYN to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. Solid show here with a great main event and some good stuff leading up to it. NXT does a great job at incorporating the main show guys into the fold and the shows benefit a lot from it. At the end of the day though, the NXT guys are the stars of the show and that's the important idea. The Zayn vs. Cesaro match has the potential to be amazing so things are looking up for next week.

### Results

Big E. Langston b. Curtis Axel via DQ when Paul Heyman interfered

Mason Ryan b. Scott Dawson – Cobra clutch slam

Paige b. Summer Rae – Paige Turner

Shield b. Xavier Woods/Corey Graves/Adrian Neville – Spear to Woods

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# Monday Night Raw – August 12, 2013: The HHH Jokes Write Themselves

## Monday Night Raw

Date: August 12, 2013

Location: Sleeptrain Arena, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the final show before Summerslam and things are finally in focus. The main story tonight is Punk getting a one on one shot with Heyman. As Punk said at Chicago Comic Con over the weekend, he'd be stupid to think Axel or Lesnar won't get involved. Other than that we have a little bit of storytelling to go before we get to Sunday so let's get to it.

No intro this week in a change of pace.

## Daniel Bryan vs. Wade Barrett

Brad Maddox is guest referee for no apparent reason. A quick dropkick puts Barrett down and Daniel goes after the leg. Bryan hooks a quick dragon screw leg whip before cannonballing down on the legs a few times. Barrett is sent to the floor with a baseball slide but Bryan misses the running knee off the apron and gets caught with a big boot to the face. Back in and Bryan is knocked to the floor with ease and sent into the steps.

Back in the sequel sees Barrett have a chinlock quickly broken. Bryan speeds things up and hits the running clothesline before knocking Barrett to the floor again. There's the FLYING GOAT followed by a missile dropkick. The hard kicks to the chest have Wade in trouble but he ducks a big one and rolls Bryan up for a fast count at 5:24.

**Rating:** C-. So we built up Bryan for MONTHS, only to have him lose via a fast count to WADE BARRETT six days before Summerslam? This seems like more WWE overbooking which continues to drive me crazy. We flat out do not need this addition to the Cena vs. Bryan match but I'm sure it'll wind up being focused on the McMahons because that's what matters at the end of the day.

### Randy Orton vs. Damien Sandow

Sandow ties his case to the post so Cody, on commentary here, can't steal it. Damien grabs a quick headlock to start but gets dropped by an elbow to the jaw. Orton pounds down right hands in the corner and gets two off a snap suplex. A clothesline gets the same and we hit the chinlock. Nothing to see so far here. Damien comes back with a belly to back suplex but gets dropkicked off the apron as we take a break.

Back with Sandow escaping a superplex but charging into a boot in the corner. Orton goes back up top and positions himself so Sandow can shove him out to the floor. Back in and we hit the chinlock followed by a knee to Orton's ribs for two. There's the Wind-Up Elbow for two more and we're back in the chinlock.

Orton finally suplexes out of it and hits his clotheslines but Sandow avoids the powerslam and hits a running flip neckbreaker for a near fall. Orton sends him to the apron and hits the Elevated DDT but Sandow bails from the RKO. Damien sends him into the post for two and Cody goes after the briefcase, allowing for the RKO to connect for the pin at 13:45.

**Rating:** D+. STOP PUTTING THEM AGAINST EACH OTHER! My goodness this gets annoying to sit through as we have to wait for nearly 14 minutes until Sandow loses like he always does. Then a few months from now we're supposed to buy him as a world champion because that's what MITB does. The match wasn't bad but it was just a waiting game until Sandow lost and there was never any doubt as to that being the finish. That's why I can't stand watching Damien matches: we're just waiting for him to lose and there's no point in watching anything else in the match.

There's a battle royal for a US Title shot on Sunday.

Shield says they're awesome and Ambrose will beat the winner of the battle royal on Sunday. He says he's the best in the world and Cena just has a trophy. PLEASE let that be foreshadowing.

Video on Brock vs. Punk, the same one from Smackdown.

Punk says no one is afraid of Paul Heyman but Heyman is doing this for a reason. Paul hasn't lost his mind or grown a set because it's all a big chess game. The best is the best.

### Natalya/Great Khali vs. Big E. Langston/AJ Lee

In an inset interview, Langston says no one has Dolph's back now other than Kaitlyn and that's not enough. The guys start but AJ wants to fight Khali. She slaps the big man but Natalya comes in to take over. Natalya drives AJ into the corner but gets rammed face first into the buckle to stop her cold. AJ hooks a cravate to no effect but a dropkick gets two. She shouts at Hornswoggle a lot but gets caught in the Sharpshooter as a result. Natalya starts letting go and AJ taps...but the referee doesn't ring the bell. Natalya puts it on again and AJ taps at 3:45.

**Rating:** D. So horribly botched ending aside, this wasn't much to see at all. The Khali/Horny/Natalya joke is done and wasn't funny in the first place. I don't get the point in having AJ tap here other than to set up a feud with Natalya for the title, even though her feud with Kaitlyn isn't done yet.

Post match Langston goes after Horny but gets chopped down by Khali.

Here's Vince McMahon to talk about what happened with Bryan vs. Barrett. He calls out Brad and asks him why he appointed himself guest referee. Brad says Bryan's matches tend to get out of hands, so the fans would appreciate a referee capable of keeping things calm. The fast count wasn't intentional and Maddox wants to be guest referee for Cena vs. Bryan at Summerslam. Vince asks if Brad would call it right down the line and Brad says of course he was. McMahon brings up all of insulting names you could call Bryan but Brad swears he won't do it. Brad crosses his heart that he won't cheat but here's HHH to interrupt.

HHH thinks there should be a guest referee on Sunday to keep things calm and sane. However, it shouldn't be Brad Maddox. The guest referee should of course be HHH himself. There's a Pedigree to Maddox and Vince leaves before he has to get one himself. What this adds to the main event on Sunday isn't clear but I'm sure Vince and HHH can explain it to us.

Video on Kane vs. Bray Wyatt so far.

### Kane vs. Titus O'Neil

Kane slugs him down to start and takes Titus into the corner for more punishment. A side slam puts O'Neil down and the chokeslam is good for the pin at 1:51. Total squash.

Post match here are the Wyatts but when the lights come back on, Kane is on the stage. He lights the corners up and Bray drops to his knees and smiles.

The Bellas look at a clip of Eva Marie (from Total Divas) making fun of Natalya. They talk about how awesome they are when Natalya comes up. She challenges Brie to a match at Summerslam and here's Eva Marie to respond to an insult. The Funkadactyls come in and we have a six Diva tag on Sunday. Joy.

### Alberto Del Rio vs. Kofi Kingston

Kofi takes over to start and pounds down right hands in the corner for two. He loads up the spinning cross body out of the corner but Del Rio knocks him into the Tree of Woe. The reverse superplex is good for two for Alberto and it's off to a hard chinlock. Kofi comes back with a horrible looking dropkick and the Boom Drop but Trouble in Paradise misses.

Del Rio gets two off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker but gets caught in the SOS for two more. Another spin kick misses and Del Rio rolls to the floor, only to be cradled for two back inside. In an AWESOME counter, Del Rio catches the springboard cross body in a gutbuster. The cross armbreaker is good for the submission from Kofi at 6:10.

**Rating:** C+. This took awhile to get going but it picked WAY up at the

end. Del Rio badly needed this win but at the same time his stock is way down after the losses last week. At least he beat Kofi, who is now 1-2 after his return from a few weeks ago. I'm sure he'll be IC Champion in a few weeks.

Christian looks at a video of his career and says he'll win on Sunday.

Colter and the Real Americans say they want to see California split off from America to make the country a better place.

### Real Americans vs. Usos

Jey starts with Cesaro and the Usos look like they have taped up feet. Off to Swagger for a high/low for two on Jey before driving him into the corner. The Vader Bomb crushes Jey and Cesaro jumps over Jack's shoulders for a double stomp, getting two. Jey comes back with some uppercuts but Swagger gets the tag before a sunset flip can cover Cesaro. Jack takes him down with a double chicken wing and it's back to Cesaro.

There's the standing chinlock but Jey takes him into the corner to break it up. Double tag brings in Jimmy to face Swagger as everything breaks down. The Usos hit stereo over the top rope dives to take the Real Americans out but Cesaro tries to break up the Superfly. The distraction is broken up and Jey makes a blind tag so he can roll up Swagger for the pin at 4:55.

**Rating:** C. Nice match here with the Usos continuing to look awesome. I'm still not sure why the Usos never got a title shot as they would be good transitional champions before dropping them to some strong team, ala Strike Force back in 1988. The match was entertaining though and that's all it needed to be.

It's time for MizTV with Cena and Bryan. Miz brings both guys down and Cena gets right to the point: he's the WWE Champion and Bryan wants to be. Cena respects him and Bryan is going to put up a heck of a fight on Sunday. Miz tries to stir the pot by saying Cena is implying Bryan loses Sunday, but Bryan will have none of it. He goes after Cena for saying Bryan is going to lose and points out the fans booing Cena a lot of the time. Bryan talks about Cena being more style than substance and not

being in this business for the wrestling.

Bryan says his shirt is a parody of Cena's because Cena is a parody of wrestling. He doesn't want to be a parody though but rather to be WWE Champion because it means he's the best in the world. Cena takes off his shirt and is ready to go but stops himself. Cena says he's out here for the same reason Bryan is out here: because they believe in Daniel Bryan. Bryan wants to be out here and prove that he believes in the fans as much as they believe in him.

That's what WWE is about: picking your favorite wrestler and cheering them all the way to the end. Saying these are just shirts is like saying the American flag is just a cloth; it's about what it means. Cena is loyal to the fans no matter what and he is not a parody. People have come here before and said Cena needs to go and Five Moves of Doom and all that jazz. Bryan may not be smart but he's not deaf. Cena has shown up every day for the last twelve years and he's out here every night for the fans and for the Make-A-Wish kids who say Never Give Up because Cena wears it on a t-shirt.

He's proud of what he's become: a man who has wrestled around the world for twelve years and has fought the biggest names in wrestling while holding the WWE Championship. So please think of him as a joke on Sunday because he's beaten everyone who has thought of him like that: everyone from HHH to HBK to Orton to CM Punk to Rock. Bryan says he talks about those guys like they're better than he is. Cena says Bryan is on his way but doesn't belong there yet. If Bryan wants respect, earn it on Sunday. Bryan says that sums it up: Cena doesn't respect him and isn't treating him like a serious threat.

This is just another big title match for Cena but this is the biggest match of Bryan's life. Bryan talks about a custom he learned in Japan: to fire someone up for a match they slap the other competitor in the face. He wishes he could do that to Cena but he can't because Cena isn't a wrestler and doesn't deserve it. Cena says go ahead and slap him but slaps Bryan first. He says to slap him...but here's HHH to kill the segment dead. Before he says anything, here's Orton as well to hold up the case to end it. Great segment, stupid overbooking.

It's time for a dance off between R-Truth and Fandango. Both guys dance and Fandango jumps Truth, only to be knocked to the floor where he pronounces his name. No match.

Heyman is getting ready but is having second thoughts about having the match.

### Battle Royal

Rob Van Dam, Brodus Clay, Tensai, Heath Slater, Drew McIntyre, Jinder Mahal, Ryback, Titus O'Neil, Jey Uso, Darren Young, Jimmy Uso, Antonio Cesaro, Justin Gabriel, Kofi Kingston, Great Khali, Jack Swagger, R-Truth, Wade Barrett, Mark Henry, Fandango

The winner gets a shot at Dean Ambrose and the US Title on Sunday's preshow. I can't tell who all is in there but Ryback throws out Gabriel and Young before running over Tensai for an elimination. Jimmy Uso is tossed by the Band as things slow down a lot. The fans chant for Sexual Chocolate as we have a lot of standing around doing nothing. Kofi nearly puts Mahal out as the match is dragging a lot. There's almost nothing talk about in battle royals given how little happens most of the time.

R-Truth puts on Fandango but he comes back in and dumps R-Truth. Van Dam throws Fandango out and the ring is still way too full as we take a break. Back with far fewer people in the ring. The Real Americans put out Jey Uso before working on Mark Henry. We still have Kofi, Barrett, Ryback, Titus, RVD, the Real Americans and Henry. Van Dam clotheslines Titus out and we're down to seven. Kofi is sent to the apron by Swagger but uses Cesaro to pull himself back in with a cool spot. Think of it as skinning the Cesaro. Not that it matters as Jack puts him out immediately thereafter.

RVD runs over the Real Americans with kick after kick but Ryback hits the Meat Hook to knock Rob out cold. The Real Americans pick up Henry but he shoves them away and knocks both guys out to get us to four. Henry picks up the pace and throws Barrett out. Rob is down but not out in the corner so the bulls go at it. Henry gets Ryback onto the apron where a kick from Ryback and a charge from Henry puts him out. Down to two and the fans go NUTS. Rob is crushed into the corner but comes back with a great kick. He

goes up top but gets crotched to the apron, only to low bridge Henry out to win at 13:27.

**Rating:** C. This was more entertaining than mots battle royals but it still wasn't all that great. Van Dam and Henry were the only real options in there so it was nice that the two of them were the last guys out there. Putting Ambrose over Van Dam on Sunday is a good rub for the champion, which is what Rob should be around for anymore. Nice stuff here in the real main event.

Post match Henry respects Van Dam...but here comes Shield. They surround the ring as Henry gets back in. Cue the returning Big Show to make the save. The camera cuts away from Rollins who clearly mouths "Oh Sh....". Shield bails, presumably setting up a tag match with the big guys vs. Show/Henry on Sunday.

Here's Heyman for his fight with Punk. Heyman is in a shirt, vest and gloves. He's in pants too if that wasn't clear. Heyman says Punk's fans are calling for their hero. He doesn't blame Punk for what happened but rather all of the fans. Punk used to live for Heyman's blessing but now he lives for the fans. Heyman admits this is a trap but he had a co-conspirator. He brings out Brock and shows him a video package of Lesnar's history with Punk.

Here's Heyman's trap: he'll fight Punk right here and now but it's 2-1 instead of one on one. All Punk has to do is play the hero, which is the stupidest thing he could do. Punk has an option: either play the hero tonight or disappoint everyone in the arena here tonight. Cue Punk but instead he comes from behind and blasts Lesnar in the face with a TV camera. A HARD shot to the back has Lesnar in trouble and Heyman is panicking.

Punk hits a suicide dive to put Lesnar down before grabbing a chair. Punk appears to be limping a bit. A series of chair shots puts Lesnar down and it's just Punk vs. Paul now. Heyman: "OH MY GOD!" Punk chases Lesnar to the back but has to stop an invading Curtis Axel. Punk rams him into the video screen and hits the GTS on the stage before staring down at Lesnar to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This was a back and forth show all night. The earlier stuff really bored me but later on things picked WAY up as we started focusing on Sunday. HHH being added to the main event does NOTHING for me but it's all about Vince vs. HHH at the end of the day so what are you supposed to expect? If you cut an hour or so off this show, it's WAY better but that's how WWE works today. Good stuff here, but I could easily see if different people see it completely differently.

### Results

Wade Barrett b. Daniel Bryan – Rollup

Randy Orton b. Damien Sandow – RKO

Great Khali/Natalya b. AJ Lee/Big E. Langston – Sharpshooter to AJ

Kane b. Titus O'Neil – Chokeslam

Usos b. Real Americans – Rollup to Swagger

Rob Van Dam won a battle royal last eliminating Mark Henry

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# **On This Day: July 9, 2001 – Monday Night Raw: My Favorite**

# Raw

## Monday Night Raw

Date: July 9, 2001

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Jim Ross, Paul Heyman

We're in WCW territory tonight and this is one of my all time favorite Raws, if not my favorite ever period. We'll get to why later, but I remember watching this and absolutely losing it, which doesn't happen often. Anyway, this absolutely has to be better than last week's show. Also tonight, we get our first taste of an official WCW vs. WWF match. Let's get to it.

We open with a rematch from Smackdown where they actually did ANOTHER WCW Title match with Booker facing Page. Angle came in again but Booker escaped the Angle Slam and beat Angle down. Taker and Page fought to the back and about 6 guys beat Taker down. Shane called them off, so Page beat up Shane and Booker.

Tonight it's Taker vs. Storm/Awesome. That would be changed.

### Shane McMahon vs. Diamond Dallas Page

This is a street fight. And never mind because Undertaker comes out instead of Page. Taker says tonight Page is his. Shane is ok with this so here's Page.

### Undertaker vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Page starts fast and pounds Taker in the corner but Taker counters that easily and beats on Page. Here come the chokeslam but Shane turns on Taker (was he with him in the first place?) and saves DDP. This was like a minute long.

Taker fights on the kendo stick shots and fires away on Shane in the corner. Page saves Shane with a chair and Taker is double teamed. Sara comes in with a kendo stick and gets in some shots on Shane but walks into a Diamond Cutter to kill

her dead. She gets taken out on a stretcher. What does it say when Sara is better at taking a Diamond Cutter than Kane does?

DDP steals Taker's motorcycle and Shane gives him the night off.

Taker promises Sara he'll get Page.

### Tag Titles: APA vs. Dudley Boys

Apparently Spike is going to be out for awhile with a broken leg. The APA clears the ring to start and we get down to Bubba vs. Farroq. Off to Bradshaw as the Dudleys take over. The reverse 3D gets two. D-Von pounds on him and it's off to Bubba. He goes to the corner for the ten punches but gets powerbombed out and both guys are down. Off to Farroq and D-Von with Simmons getting a spinebuster for two. 3D doesn't work but What's Up does to Farroq. Bubba goes for a table but Spike comes out, hits Bubba with the crutch and throws him in where Bradshaw's Clothesline gives the APA their third tag title.

**Rating:** D+. Pretty boring match but I guess the idea here is that if the APA is leading the WWF's army so give them something to make them seem important. That's not a terrible idea actually and it's better than another boring Hardys vs. Dudleys feud for the 7000th time. Not a terrible match and it did its job I guess.

Off to Austin and Vince with Austin repeating everything Vince says. Even the audience is laughing now which is a good thing. Angle comes in wearing a cowboy hat that Austin gave him on Thursday. Angle has presets for everyone except Debra of course. They're big boxes but they have small sheriff badges in them. Angle's is a lot bigger and golden to match his medal. Austin goes on a huge rant, quoting The Treasure of Sierra Madre to a nice pop. He calls Kurt a jackass and says that the hat was a joke. Austin tells Kurt to go beat up Booker T for the WCW Title.

Kane is just getting here.

### Intercontinental Title: Rhyno vs. Albert

Slugout to start (I'm as shocked as you are) with Rhyno stomping the champ down into the corner. Pac runs in while Albert has the referee and superkicks Rhyno for two. Rhyno manages to get in a shot to buy himself some time and they slug it out for a bit. Belly to back suplex and a top rope splash combine for two. The Gore misses though and the Baldo Bomb is countered. Pac comes in and gets Gored. The distraction lets a bicycle kick keep the title on Albert.

**Rating:** D+. Back to back power matches probably isn't a good idea but it wasn't all that bad. Albert is a guy that was on the roll of his life at this point but soon enough he'd be just another guy in the Alliance war. Not much to see here but they were at least trying to make a new star with him as he beat up various power guys.

Angle goes to talk to Booker. He yells at Book and Mr. T. doesn't seem that interested or upset by it. Angle challenges him and Booker agrees. Kurt says yippee kay yay Mother Hubbard. Good stuff and I had to listen twice.

Kane goes into Regal's office so Tajiri hides behind the suit of armor. Regal says that Sara is ok but is being held for observations. Kane says he'll take Taker's place in the handicap match against Awesome and Storm.

### Jeff Hardy vs. Big Show

Boy this would be a different match today. Show runs him over and we go outside. Here comes Trish and Show accidentally runs into the post. Jeff runs the rail to get in a shot and a missile dropkick puts Show down. Trish is cheering for Jeff. Jeff goes up again but jumps into a powerbomb position. Instead Show drops him back so he lands face first on the mat which is good for the pin. This was nothing again.

Trish kisses Jeff post match.

Kurt is getting ready for Booker and is bent over in front of Austin's face which is kind of funny. Austin volunteers to be the leader of Team WWF at Invasion. Angle says if he wins the WCW Title, he should be leader. This turns into a discussion of Gilligan's Island and who gets to be Skipper. Austin goes Bugs Bunny on him to get Angle to say that he (Angle) is Gilligan and Austin is Skipper.

Vince finally asks the question we're all thinking: what does this have to do with the WCW Title or the Inaugural Brawl??? Speaking of which, Austin and Angle are both in it and Undertaker probably will be also. Jericho comes in to a big pop and says he's WWF for live. He wants to be on Team WWF. Vince seems intrigued but Austin laughs him off.

Some Atlanta Falcons are here.

At Invasion, it's Trish/Lita vs. Stacy/Torrie in a tag team bra and panties match.

Matt and Lita are at WWF New York. They don't know if they can trust Trish but this is for the WWF and she can follow the Lita. Oh geez. They kiss to end this.

Shane fires Booker up.

Vince and Austin fire Kurt up. Austin repeats everything Vince says again. Angle says this is Atlanta and he won with no one in his corner in 1996 so he'll go alone tonight.

WCW World Title: Booker T vs. Kurt Angle

Booker hammers him into the corner to start and hits a side kick. Kurt knocks him to the floor with a clothesline and Booker goes into the table. Booker sends him into the post and a missile dropkick gets two back in the ring. Back to the floor and Booker keeps control. Angle reverses an Irish whip back inside and a belly to back suplex slows Booker down but

he comes back with a spinning kick for two.

Angle starts snapping off suplexes and a belly to belly looks to set up the Slam. Booker rolls out though and hits the scissors kick. The fans are against Booker now which is a good thing. Kurt charges and they ram heads. Booker gets the advantage and hits a spinebuster for two. Kurt grabs the ankle and there's the ankle lock. Shane gets the referee so Booker's tap doesn't mean anything. Now the Slam hits and Earl Hebner runs in to count two. Now the referees fight and the distraction lets Booker get a belt shot. A seconds WCW referee runs in and Booker retains.

**Rating:** B-. This is the best match on Raw in weeks and it's only just above average. Booker and Angle could do some good stuff together with some more time. Amazing what happens when you give two talented guys time and a face and heel combination to work with isn't it? Good stuff and the referee fight was kind of funny.

Angle rants to Austin and Vince which makes Austin say he's the leader at Invasion.

Torrie and Stacy say they'll win at the PPV. Torrie bashes Vince and calls him a dirty old man.

The APA says they don't want the titles like that and tell the Dudleys they can have another shot as soon as Smackdown. Right now though, cold beers on the APA. The Dudleys say not right now but ask them at the end of the night.

#### Kane vs. Lance Storm/Mike Awesome

I thought this match was earlier in the show. I guess not as we're into the second hour. Before we get started though, here's Jericho. He doesn't say anything but comes in and we have a tag match.

#### Kane/Chris Jericho vs. Lance Storm/Mike Awesome

The 24/7 Rule has been waived until after Invasion. Why? Kane vs. Awesome starts us off with the bigger man taking over. Jericho comes in and chops away but gets caught by the power of Awesome (how was that never a t-shirt?). Off to Storm and the Thrillseekers get a nice reunion. Awesome hits a knee to the back and Storm clotheslines Jericho down to take over.

Storm comes in and misses a dropkick but he gets the knees up for the Lionsault. Awesome comes in and hooks a chinlock. Jericho fights back but jumps into a belly to belly for two. Back to Storm who stomps away. Was there a reason for him to stomp like that? He always had that little hop to it. Jericho gets an enziguri which is good for the hot tag.

Everything breaks down and Storm is sent to the floor. A powerslam puts Awesome down and there's the top rope clothesline for two. A missile dropkick takes Storm down but Chris can't get the Walls on Awesome. He does get them on Storm though, and I'm going to stop the match review there. Storm didn't tap and the match is still going on, but the next part needs its own attention.

**Rating:** C+. This was a pretty decent formula tag match between Team Canada and Team Name That Has To Do With Kane And Jericho. Jericho and Storm always have great chemistry together and this was a fine example of it. Also, how in the world did both companies manage to screw up Mike Awesome? Let him be a mulletted killing machine. Why is that so hard?

Kane sets to chokeslam Awesome but Tommy Dreamer and Rob Van Dam jump the railing and it's a 4-2 beatdown. Here come the Dudleys, Taz, Raven, Justin Credible and Rhyno. It's a showdown but the six WWF guys that ran in all turn around and destroy Jericho and Kane. Jericho takes a Death Valley Driver and Kane gets a Van Daminator. The fans are loving this. JR asks Heyman what's going on so Heyman says listen up.

Heyman gets into the ring with the Dudleys holding the ropes

open for him. All of the guys celebrate and Heyman says here's the truth. He's been sitting there like a sellout for months and talking about WWF vs. WCW. It seems to him like these men were too extreme for WWF vs. WCW so it seems like Storm and Awesome have left WCW. The other six have left WWF and they all have joined ECW. Heyman says either Vince or Shane can come get some at any time. This Invasion has been taken to the EXTREME. When I saw this, my jaw dropped.

After a break, JR turns into Eric Bischoff and wonders how long he's had this planned.

Shane and Vince bump into each other and Shane is kind of panicking, saying that their guys should team up for tonight only to crush ECW before it spreads. A twenty man tag is set for later.

#### Light Heavyweight Title: Scotty 2 Hotty vs. X-Pac

This is what we call a filler. Pac is defending and they speed things up to start. Scotty dances around a lot and works on the arm. They go to the floor and Scotty misses a dive. Pac stays on offense for about twenty seconds and Scotty comes back and hits a superkick for two. X-Factor is countered but Pac avoids the Worm. Scotty tries a sunset flip but Pac grabs the rope for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Scotty was actually pretty entertaining around this time when he dropped the whole dancing and Cool aspect of his personality. X-Pac on the other hand was just kind of there and doing his own thing which no one really wanted to see. Nothing to see here and all they were doing was filling time.

Vince and Shane try to fire up their boys but can't get along. Shane is officially put in charge and the agreement is that once ECW is gone, all bets are off. WCW leaves and Vince says ignore Shane and just do it.

## Team WWF/WCW vs. Team ECW

It's the 10 ECW guys listed earlier for their side. WWF is Big Show/Billy Gunn/Hardcore Holly/APA and WCW is Jindrak/Stasiak/O'Haire/Palumbo/Kanyon. WWF and WCW get in a fight before the ECW guys even get here. WCW is sent to the floor and here comes ECW. The ECW guys fight the WWF team and WCW stays on the floor. ECW clears the ring and calls out the WCW guys. And they all hug, officially forming the Alliance. No match obviously.

Vince comes out and wants to know what's going on. Shane says watch the WWF guys get destroyed. Each one is thrown in and takes various finishing moves (including an F5 to Bradshaw from O'Haire). Shane says he can't outspend Vince but he can outsmart him. Vince told Shane he was personally responsible for what happens out here and that's true.

He's responsible for ECW being here tonight and for the merger of WCW and ECW. Vince's jaw is further into the Earth's crust with every word. At Invasion, it's the two companies against WWF. Oh, and here's the new owner of ECW: Daddy's Little Girl, Stephanie McMahon. The place ERUPTS at that. Vince's eyes roll back in his head and here's Stephanie, looking drop dead gorgeous in a pink dress. I think that's why I loved this show when I was 13. Shane and Stephanie pose to end the show. Now THAT is how you end a TV show.

**Overall Rating:** B. This show depends on what you're looking for. If it's wrestling, you'll probably be a bit disappointed. If you're in it for drama and something that makes you want to watch next week, this is the show for you! When I was a kid this was an awesome moment and I loved it, but unfortunately it didn't quite live up to the hype. Still though, I was glued to the screen on Thursday and Monday for awhile, which is the idea. Good stuff here.

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book on the History of Starrcade from Amazon for just \$4 at:

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# Smackdown – July 5, 2013: Daniel Bryan Really Does Liven Things Up

## Smackdown

Date: July 5, 2013

Location: Landon Arena, Topeka, Kansas

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We now know everyone in the MITB matches at the PPV so tonight is likely to be all about building towards the match, much like on Raw. Other than that we're likely to get more between Ziggler and Del Rio after Dolph cost the champ a match against Cena. If we're lucky we'll even get more Daniel Bryan goodness. Let's get to it.

The opening airs for the second week in a row. It's better than the voiceover.

Here's Punk to get us going. We get a clip of him getting annoyed at Curtis Axel for stealing the pin in their tag match on Raw. Punk says if he was Cena, he'd come out here and make a big speech about the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and how awesome it is, but thankfully for the fans, his name is CM Punk. To him, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July is about independence. A group of like minded guys got together and decided to not live by someone else's rules. They were willing to die for what they believed in and that's something Punk can get behind.

If Punk is given rules to follow, odds are he's going to break them. When someone tells him to do something one way, odds are he's going to run in the other direction. When he was told he was going to be the big thing after Wrestlemania, he walked away. When someone told him that his chances at winning another MITB match were really low, he decided to line them up and yell at them. He has two goals: get his hands on Brock Lesnar and become WWE Champion again.

Cue Alberto (Punk: "I wasn't done.") who says he was expecting more from Punk. Punk says he was expecting a cool car instead of just a guy in a cheap suit. Del Rio brags about being world champion and says this is his show. Alberto makes fun of Americans for stuffing themselves with hamburgers and hot dogs on Independence Day and then spending the rest of the year getting fatter and fatter. Then they come to Smackdown and cheer for Dolph Ziggler while chanting USA.

Punk wants to know why Del Rio has changed his tune so quickly. Just a few weeks ago Del Rio was bragging about being born in Mexico and made in the USA, but then everyone saw through him. Del Rio says Punk is a little chihuahua and someone like the world heavyweight champion needs to teach him some manners. Punk: "That just makes you the #1 contender to my title: Best in the world." Nice line. Del Rio orders Punk out of his ring right now but remember Punk doesn't like being told what to do. Teddy, main event made, moving on. This was a solid opening segment but unfortunately it results in a Del Rio main event.

Post break Heyman asks Punk if he can get the match canceled because Punk has nothing to gain. Punk says he wants to fight so Heyman offers to be in Punk's corner at MITB. Punk declines again and Heyman looks annoyed.

### Usos vs. Rhodes Scholars

The Scholars brag about winning MITB in nine days but the fans don't seem to buy it. Cody starts with Jimmy but ramming the Samoan's head into the buckle has no effect. I miss racial stereotypes in wrestling. Cody

dropkicks Jimmy down and brings in Sandow to stomp away for a few seconds. The Russian legsweep sets up the Wind-Up Elbow for two before it's back to Rhodes. Things quickly break down and both Scholars get superkicked, setting up a double Superfly Splash for the pin on Sandow at 2:17.

Post match the Shield pops up on screen and says the loss on Raw isn't derailing their mission of justice. At Money in the Bank, the Usos are going to need more than luck. Ambrose says that Monday was Christian's one chance out of 100 to get lucky. Prepare to live in a world where Dean Ambrose is waiting in the shadows with a Money in the Bank briefcase.

### Alicia Fox vs. Kaitlyn

Fox drives Kaitlyn into the corner to start and gets two off a quick suplex. We hit the chinlock thirty seconds into the match before Alicia slams Kaitlyn head first into the mat. Back to the chinlock but Kaitlyn fights up...and here's AJ to skip around the ring. Kaitlyn fights the urge to stare at AJ for a bit but finally knocks her off the apron, allowing Alicia to hit the most devastating move in all of wrestling: the ROLLUP OF DISTRACTION, for the pin at 2:45.

Post match the Bellas stop AJ and say that she needs to watch out because they'll be taking the Divas Title soon. Langston runs them off but AJ is scared of Kaitlyn coming to get her. It isn't that bad though because Kaitlyn is less aerodynamic because of those big man arms. Langston wants to know what AJ is going to do for Dolph's match later but she'll just text him and it'll be all cool.

We recap the events between Bryan, Kane and Orton in their match on Monday.

Christian says that he's beaten Orton before and he can do it again tonight. Orton says he's beaten Christian before and he'll do it again tonight in one more match.

Wyatt Family promo.

### Randy Orton vs. Christian

Feeling out process to start with Orton taking Christian down with a shoulder. A clothesline gets two for Randy but Christian sends him throat first into the middle rope. Christian tries the uppercut from the floor but Orton ducks away and tries the Elevated DDT, only to have Christian counter with a backdrop to the floor. We take a break and come back with Orton getting up from a missed knee drop but coming back with the Thesz Press.

Christian snaps Orton's throat across the top rope and gets two off the high cross before putting on a chinlock. Randy escapes and they slug it out again with Orton dropkicking Christian down. He tries the powerslam but Christian puts on the brakes to send Orton down. Instead Randy drives down punches in the corner and gets two off the falling powerbomb (think the Big Ending but with Christian facing up).

Christian avoids an RKO out of the corner but gets caught in a rolling cradle for two. Both finishers are countered and Christian puts Orton down with a belly to back suplex. The spear gets two but the Killswitch is countered into the Elevated DDT but Christian counters the RKO yet again. Christian jumps over Orton but walks into the RKO for the pin at 9:48 shown of 12:48.

**Rating:** B-. I loved the idea of both guys knowing each other so well that they can counter all the signature stuff. It worked two years ago in their big feud and it still works very well here. Both guys looked good out there, but why put Orton over Christian when the Canadian is already an underdog in the ladder match?

Teddy Long tells Heyman to do commentary on the main event tonight.

We get a clip from the App with Ziggler telling AJ to see the big picture: forget Kaitlyn and become a power couple.

### Dolph Ziggler vs. Drew McIntyre

Before the match Ziggler talks about how fast the last few months have gone. He won the world title from Alberto Del Rio and then Del Rio was trying as hard as he could to make people like him. Ziggler may be cocky, but he's never claimed to be something he's not. At MITB, he's taking back his world title.

Dolph fires off right hands in the corner but a hurricanrana attempt is countered into a buckle bomb for two. Drew stomps him in the corner and gets two off a snap suplex. A chinlock is quickly broken so Drew puts him down with a pair of backbreakers. Ziggler comes back with the corner splash and a dropkick before countering a tilt-a-whirl into the Zig Zag for the pin at 3:11.

**Rating:** D+. There isn't much you can get out of a three minute match, but it's nice to see the jobbers being used like they're supposed to be. Ziggler gets an easy win and the jobbers don't lose anything as a result. There wasn't much to see here but it makes sense given the post match stuff from Raw.

Ziggler bails to avoid a three on one attack. He charges back in, gets in a few shots and then bails again to mess with the Band.

We get the career retrospective on Mark Henry from Raw.

### Fandango vs. Justin Gabriel

Fandango quickly takes him down and dances a bit, only to have Gabriel kick his head off. Justin sends him face first into the apron but charges into a knee to the face. The top rope legdrop is good for the pin on

Justin at 1:36.

We The People talk about how many Americans don't appreciate the Fourth of July.

### Alberto Del Rio vs. CM Punk

Heyman is on commentary. They take turns shoving each other into the corner with Punk snapmaring him down and hitting a dropkick to the back of Alberto's head. Del Rio fires off right hands in the corner but misses a charge to put him down. Alberto rolls to the floor to avoid the Macho Elbow and we take a break. Back with Del Rio hitting a running kick to the arm in the corner before putting on an armbar. The low superkick gets two on Punk as Heyman talks about Cole being a Paul Heyman guy back in the day.

The armbar is countered into a GTS attempt but Del Rio escapes into the Codebreaker to the arm for two. A kick to the head gets two more and it's back to the armbar. Del Rio may be boring but his psychology is sound. If your finishing move is an arm hold, why focus on anything but softening up the arm? Punk slams him down and goes up top but Alberto hits a nasty running enziguri for two.

Punk comes back with some kicks and clotheslines but charges into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. A baseball slide sends him to the floor and Del Rio whips him shoulder first into the barricade. Alberto loads up the announce table and punches Heyman down, sending Punk into a rage. It's a double countout at 7:40 shown of 10:40. Lillian calls it a no contest by way of a double countout. Are we not allowed to say draw anymore?

**Rating:** D+. This was dull stuff with a long stretch of the match being spent in the same armbar. Del Rio's psychology may be sound, but man alive can his matches be dull a lot of the time. The ending makes sense as you want to keep both guys looking strong and Del Rio can't lose two matches in a week.

Del Rio takes the GTS and Punk checks on Heyman to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show did a good job of building up the PPV matches but it wasn't great on its own. The problem with the episode was they spent a lot of time focusing on the All-Star ladder match which left the Smackdown ladder match in the cold. It's not all that strong on its own and needs all the build it can get, but the show's main event and featured match were about the other ladder match. Not a bad show this week but it needed better prioritizing.

### Results

Usos b. Rhodes Scholars – Double Superfly Splash to Sandow

Alicia Fox b. Kaitlyn – Rollup

Randy Orton b. Christian – RKO

Dolph Ziggler b. Drew McIntyre – Zig Zag

Fandango b. Justin Gabriel – Top rope legdrop

CM Punk vs. Alberto Del Rio went to a double countout

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# More On HHH/Curtis Axel

So this was kind of a big deal but I didn't have the chance to really talk about it in detail. It's now two days later so here are some more thoughts on it. I'm still very much the same on it as I was before: I love the idea of pushing Axel, but I can't stand the way they ended the show.

McGillicutty had been a guy who clearly had skill and looked very poised in the ring but he never got a chance to shine on his own. The biggest reason of all was his stupid name: Michael McGillicutty. I don't know if you're a fan of the show I Love Lucy, but Lucy's maiden name was McGillicuddy, which is the first thing that comes to my mind whenever I heard Axel's old name. The name sounds like a low level dinner theater actor, not the name of a talented wrestler. Again I'm not sure why they can't just call him Joe Hennig, but I'm sure it's some high concept idea that doesn't make sense once you think about it for more than two minutes.

The idea of putting him with Heyman is a great move, especially given the amount of success Heyman has had lately. Heyman putting his seal of approval on you is usually a good sign (Heidenreich aside) and it's hard to argue against the theory that putting someone with Heyman is going to mean success for them. Axel has the look, the skills, the poise, and everything else that he needs to win. It was a good debut for the character and all that jazz. Good move here.

Then we get to the problem.

The second HHH's music hit, he became the focus of the whole thing. Axel stopped mattering, with HHH even saying move away so the adults can talk. What's even worse is that Axel actually did step away as Heyman and HHH talked in the middle of the ring. Then HHH slaps him in the face and Axel...does nothing. He falls down and just sits there as HHH smirks and says that they're having a match later tonight. Again, it's all about HHH and Axel is just some new guy for him to beat up later in the night.

Then we get to the match and HHH beats up Axel like he's any other guy. He stomps Axel into the corner and then pounds on him outside as well. Axel comes back in and gets in some shots to the jaw, but they're nothing special: a dropkick, a middle rope punch and that's about it. HHH comes back, hits two of his signature moves (facebuster and spinebuster) and knocks Axel to the floor. They start to head back in, HHH can't get back in, the show ends with the focus entirely on HHH.

Based on what we saw, Axel was either completely destroyed after about five minutes of action with him being in control for about two of those minutes, or he's just too nice a guy to follow up on HHH. The idea of the match was that HHH was so banged up from his match with Brock that he couldn't finish off Axel. There-in lies the problem: it wasn't Axel who did this. Axel could have been any other guy in the match on Raw and HHH still would have been hurt. That's the same problem that has plagued the HHH vs. Brock feud. Brock Lesnar could have been any other heel and now Curtis could have been any other guy who could hit a dropkick and throw right hands. It wasn't some big move from Axel that caused HHH to not be able to continue, but rather Lesnar's actions the night before.

That's what this boils down to: Lesnar and Axel are both just people who happen to be involved in a HHH story. It has nothing to do with either of them specifically, but rather they're just around and doing various things while HHH gets the glory (side note: Brock Lesnar has beaten HHH twice now. The night after both of those victories, HHH gets promos in the middle of the ring. Lesnar hasn't been live on either show) and the attention. This seems to be the start of some big long concussion angle with HHH and if we can get to Axel and Lesnar later on that's cool, but the focus is ALL going to be on HHH.

I'm fine with HHH having a storyline, but the thing is he's going to be around and likely on camera in WWE for the next twenty five to thirty years. Brock probably has a year or two left and Axel is just getting started. Do we really need to have HHH's big story NOW? Do we need to put him ahead of Lesnar and some new guy that apparently you're going to push as a big deal? From past experience with HHH stories, that's by far the biggest thing you're going to hear about over the next few weeks, because in HHH's WWE, he can't just be the big story. He has to be the ENTIRE story and Heaven help you if you disagree with him on it, because he has no problem telling you why it should be about him in a 20 minute promo.

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**Monday Night Raw – May 20,**

# 2013: What's In A Name? Not Much Unless It's HHH.

## Monday Night Raw

Date: May 20, 2013

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after Extreme Rules and we have some major developments. First and foremost, Shield has possession of the US and Tag Team Titles, giving them their first gold and making them look even more dominant than they did before. Cena vs. Ryback went to a no contest after Ryback knocked Cena through the set and neither guy could continue. Also to the shock of no one, Lesnar was made to look like he survived his match against HHH instead of destroying the Game. Tonight we should be able to find out where things are going until Payback. Let's get to it.

We open with an ambulance driving into the arena with its sirens blaring. Inside of the ambulance is Ryback, now with a Ryback Rules vest. Ryback says that last night he had a no decision in the last man standing match which is unfair. We get a clip of Cena refusing to be placed inside an ambulance, but next time he won't be able to do that because the rematch at Payback is an ambulance match. Ryback goes on a rant about how the fans have no self discipline and that he'll win the title next month. This only took like three minutes which was a nice surprise.

Tonight we find out who Paul Heyman's newest client is.

## Wade Barrett/Fandango vs. The Miz/Chris Jericho

Barrett has new music and I guess is still feuding with Miz because he has to feud with someone. Jericho and Barrett start things off with the Englishman being taken down by a dropkick. Chris charges into an elbow to the face and it's off to Fandango with a clothesline. As Jericho fights back, we get a clip of Road Dogg talking to Kaitlyn on the WWE App. Seriously, WHY DO WE NEED TO SEE THAT? Fandango and Barrett have a small disagreement and we take a break.

Back with Miz fighting out of a chinlock before hitting a hard boot to the head. Miz loads up the figure four but Fandango grabs a mic to say his own name. There's his music and it's time to dance. Barrett yells at Fandango as Jericho gets rolling with a top rope shot to the head. A bulldog sets up the Lionsault for no cover. The Codebreaker takes Barrett down again and it's off to Miz for the figure four and the submission at 8:20.

**Rating:** N/A. It was long enough to rate but most of that was in a commercial or spent with Fandango dancing. There's nothing to see here (almost literally) other than Summer's legs, but at least Barrett was beaten in just a few minutes again right? That's the important thing at the end of the day.

Post match Jericho and Miz chase Fandango off. Jericho takes Summer's hand and dips her back before laughing at her and walking off.

Here's Vickie to tell us that we can vote for who Swagger faces on the WWE App: Great Khali, R-Truth or Randy Orton.

Bryan is ticked off in the back when Kane comes in. Daniel realizes that neither of them are the Tag Team Champions anymore but Kane says calm down. That's from the guy that said embrace the hate so Bryan doesn't care. He says he feels lost without his title, but Kane thinks it's because Bryan isn't wearing a shirt or pants. They get a rematch with Shield but they have to show no weakness. Bryan thinks that's an insult to him and an argument nearly breaks out. Kofi pops in to break it up.

### Sheamus vs. Titus O'Neil

Before the match, we get a clip from last night of Mark Henry saying he's going home. They lock up to start with Sheamus shoving Titus down. A shoulder block puts Sheamus down as well though as Titus shows off some power. Sheamus throws him to the apron for the ten forearms before sending Darren Young into the barricade. The distraction lets Titus take Sheamus' head off with a clothesline and we head back inside.

A standing fallaway slam puts Sheamus down for two and it's off to a chinlock. Sheamus fights up and tries White Noise, only to be sent to the

floor. He loads up the slingshot shoulder but Darren Young trips him up, giving Titus two. Titus misses a charge in the corner and now White Noise connects. The Brogue Kick finishes O'Neil at 6:29.

**Rating:** C. This is the kind of stuff they need to do more often. Instead of having Sheamus beat up one of the Rhodes Scholars for the 95<sup>th</sup> time, you can give Titus a chance to show what he can do while not wasting someone like Cody or Damien. This way we get a fresh match which was a lot better than I was expecting.

Here's Heyman to unveil his newest client. Heyman says that the fans are powerless with their booing because last night Brock Lesnar beat HHH inside a cage. HHH will go down in history as a loser to Lesnar so neither of them are here tonight, only it's Lesnar enjoying the victory. However, it's now time to do something new. This is something that is going to make the fans set their DVRs and remember this moment fifteen years from now. The newest Paul Heyman guy is Michael McGillicutty, now known as Curtis Axel.

Heyman talks about how this is the same as Brock Lesnar debuting in 2002 and CM Punk being a Paul Heyman guy. He talks about Axel being a third generation guy and being held back by politics so why isn't he a main event superstar? His name is Curtis after his father and Axel after his grandfather, Larry the Ax Hennig. Heyman introduces him to the crowd but here's HHH with a rebuttal.

HHH looks at Axel and Heyman while talking about the Kool-Aid that Heyman has whipped up. He tells Axel to let the adults talk and says that he isn't embarrassed. HHH talks about going to war with Lesnar and how Brock limped away from their fight. It would make HHH really happy to beat up Paul Heyman right now but Axel steps between them. Axel says the game around here has changed and if HHH wants to talk to Heyman, he has to talk to Axel first. HHH slaps him in the face and says it's Curtis vs. HHH later tonight.

#### Alberto Del Rio vs. Big E. Langston

Del Rio sends Langston shoulder first into the post and tries for a quick

cross armbreaker, only to have Big E. lift him up and slam him down. The hold isn't broken though and Big E. makes it to the ropes. Del Rio gets it on again from the apron but Langston lifts him up and slams him into the post in an impressive power display.

Back in and Langston bends Del Rio's back over his knee, only to get caught in a tornado DDT. Del Rio hits the low superkick for two but is sent to the floor when loading up the armbreaker. Back in and the enziguri puts Langston down, only to have AJ throw in the bucket. The distraction lets Langston poke Alberto in the eye and hit the Big Ending for the pin at 4:37.

**Rating:** D+. And the stupid booking continues. Del Rio wins the #1 contenders match last night and gets pinned in less than five minutes here. How this makes me want to see Ziggler vs. Del Rio again is beyond me, but I'm sure I'm just not smart enough to get it. It's good for Langston but there was zero need for Del Rio to lose here.

#### AJ Lee vs. Layla

The Bellas are watching in the back as AJ takes Layla down. Apparently AJ is a rat in stupid looking shorts. Layla kicks AJ down and makes fun of the skipping. A low dropkick puts AJ down but after AJ hides in the corner, she comes out with the Black Widow for the tap out at 1:43.

#### Cody Rhodes vs. Zack Ryder

This is joined in progress after a bell although it doesn't seem like we've missed much. Rhodes goes after the arm to start as we see Ryback watching in the back for no apparent reason. The release suplex gets two on Ryder but Zack hits his knees in the corner and a middle rope dropkick. Ryder's Broski Boot gets two but he gets caught by the Disaster Kick for the pin at 2:37.

Post match here's Ryback to destroy Ryder because he can. He hits a nice powerbomb which could be a new finisher for him. Ryder gets Shell Shocked and thrown into the ambulance for good measure.

#### Kofi Kingston/HELL NO vs. Shield

Before the match, Shield brags about all the victories they've accumulated and how their new titles are proof of how amazing they are. The opening bell is after a break of course. Kofi and Dean get things going with Ambrose taking him down, only to be slapped in the face. A monkey flip and armdrag take Dean down and ew hit a quick armbar. Off to Bryan for some knee drops and a hammerlock. Tag off to Rollins who gets caught in a surfboard position, only to have Bryan stomp down on the legs.

Kane gets the tag and a near fall off the low dropkick. Back to Kofi for an armbar but Seth drives him into the corner for the tag off to Reigns. He powers Kofi down in a kind of suplex for two and it's back to Ambrose for a dropkick and the same result. The Shield keeps tagging quickly as it's back to Rollins who drops Kofi again, only to be caught in a headscissors.

Kofi makes the hot tag to Bryan who moonsaults out of the corner and hits a running clothesline. Bryan goes up but gets crotched down, but he still manages to block a superplex by Ambrose. The missile dropkick puts Dean down for two and it's off to the NO Lock. Ambrose gets to the rope very quickly and heads to the floor as we take a break.

Back with the tag off to Dean to continue the beating on Kofi, only for Kingston to fight out and make the tag to Bryan. Ambrose is put in the Tree of Woe and kicked in the ribs, followed by a baseball slide for good measure. Back to Rollins for a buckle bomb in the corner but Bryan is out at two again. Reigns comes back in and runs over Bryan with a clothesline before it's back to Ambrose for some stomps to the ribs. Dean talks a lot of trash to Bryan but gets punched in the face for his efforts.

Reigns breaks up a tag attempt, only to be kicked away, allowing for the hot tag to Kane. The side slam gets two on Roman as everything breaks down. Kofi and Bryan hit stereo suicide dives on Dean and Seth before Kane hits a running DDT for tow on Reigns. Ambrose suplexes Bryan down on the floor and Seth puts Kofi into the post. Dean tries to jump on Kane but gets caught by an uppercut. Seth breaks up the chokeslam on Reigns with the top rope knee, allowing Roman to spear Kane down for the pin at 22:55.

**Rating:** B. Good long tag match here which did exactly what it was supposed to do: keep the Shield looking strong heading into the rematches. Seeing them with the gold around them is a great sight as it shows even more how dominant they are. The fact that champions are actually winning is a good sign as well.

We recap the HHH/Axel/Heyman stuff from earlier.

Kaitlyn gets a phone number from the secret admirer but there's no voicemail on it. Natalya offers to have Khali go sneak around but Kaitlyn says no. Cody walks by with a phone and Natalya steals it, thinking he's the admirer. Apparently it's not him as he's posting pictures of himself on the internet. Didn't we already eliminate Cody recently?

HHH says he can compete tonight despite the doctor saying he can't.

### Jack Swagger vs. Randy Orton

Lawler announces the result and Orton wins with only 72% of the vote. I was expecting a lot higher. Swagger quickly takes him to the mat with a top wristlock but Orton fights up and dropkicks him out to the floor. A clothesline keeps Swagger down and Orton pounds away at his head back inside. Jack fires back with some shoulders in the corner but Randy kicks him in the ribs and hits a Thesz Press.

Swagger takes the knee out with a chop block and hits a DDT on the leg before putting on a standing leg lock. Orton fights up and sends Swagger out to the floor, only to have the Elevated DDT broke up with a drive into the barricade. Back in and it's the same leg lock, only to have Orton punch his way out. He heads up top but gets shoved to the floor as we take a break. Back with Orton escaping the leg lock again and sending a charging Swagger shoulder first into the post.

Orton superplexes Swagger down for two and blocks the Vader Bomb with a kick to the ribs. The powerslam sets up the Elevated DDT, but Jack escapes and hits a high angle belly to belly for two. There's the Patriot Lock but Orton easily rolls out and hits the backbreaker for two. Now the Elevated DDT connects but the RKO is countered into the Patriot Lock. Orton finally breaks the hold and hits the RKO for the pin at 16:12.

**Rating:** C+. This got better towards the end but it was more long than good. The problem at the end of the day is Orton isn't tapping out to the ankle lock so we were just waiting for him to hit the RKO to end this. It's a decent match, but man alive they could have cut five minutes out of this with ease.

We look at Ryback's promo earlier in the night, as well as him throwing Ryder in the ambulance.

### Curtis Axel vs. Triple H

Feeling out process to start with HHH shoving Axel into the corner and clotheslining him down. HHH throws him to the floor and Curtis is looking like a jobber so far. Back in and Axel gets in some shots in the corner, stomping the Game down. A dropkick gets one on HHH and an elbow to the face keeps HHH down. Curtis is working on the jaw that was hit by the sledgehammer last night. A middle rope elbow gets two and we hit the chinlock. HHH fights up and hits some shoulder blocks in the corner to take over.

The facebuster sets up the spinebuster but instead of the Pedigree, HHH clotheslines him to the floor. Another clothesline puts Curtis down and HHH throws him back in...before not getting back in himself. HHH shakes his head and sits down at the timekeeper's table, saying that he needs water. Earlier tonight the doctors told him he couldn't compete because of what happened last night. HHH tries to get up but the doctor comes out and says the match is over at roughly 7:30.

**Rating:** D+. Erg. Yet again, it's all about HHH. It couldn't be something that Axel did to him, but rather HHH overdoing it because THAT'S WHAT HE DOES. Axel looked like a complete afterthought here other than some decent stuff in the beginning. At least HHH didn't crush him. That's something....right?

**Overall Rating:** C+. There was some good stuff on here including a very good six man tag. However, a lot of the stuff made you want to ram your head into a wall as you wonder what WWE is possibly thinking. I don't know why they can't just have Ryback vs. Cena in a wrestling match, but hey at least we

can have one of the all time lame gimmicks of the ambulance match.

For fun tonight, I clocked the amount of time spent on recaps and commercials, not counting stuff done during the actual show (such as WWE App nonsense). In total, over a full hour was spent hyping something or recapping stuff from earlier in the show. I understand the commercials, but do we really need to spend almost ten minutes watching stuff we already saw? Good stuff for the most part but there was too much bad mixed in bringing it down.

### Results

Chris Jericho/The Miz vs. Fandango/Wade Barrett – Figure four to Barrett

Sheamus b. Titus O'Neil – Brogue Kick

Big E. Langston b. Alberto Del Rio – Big Ending

AJ Lee b. Layla – Black Widow

Shield b. HELL NO/Kofi Kingston – Spear to Kane

Randy Orton b. Jack Swagger – RKO

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my book on the History of the WWE Championship from Amazon for just \$5 at:

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# The Newest Paul Heyman Guy

Is..... Michael McGillicutty, now named Curt Axel. Oh I REALLY like this.

And his theme music is a remixed Mr. Perfect theme!

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## Wrestlemania 29 Preview – No Holds Barred Career Match: Brock Lesnar vs. HHH

Now stop me if you've heard this one before. Brock Lesnar debuted a year ago and this is his second feud. He's spent roughly eleven months feuding with HHH over something that I'm still not entirely clear on. I think Lesnar started this because he was mad about HHH running the show and then beat him up at Summerslam, but now it's about revenge for Vince. Or something. Anyway, we saw these two have a No DQ match at Summerslam which was nothing all that exciting at all.

On top of that, the stipulation of HHH's career being on the line really doesn't add much because HHH is already retired for all intents and purposes. He wrestled twice last year and I think four times on TV the year before. Putting his career on the line is nowhere near the same as when Flair or Michaels did it as they were both active competitors. I get what they're going for with the added stipulation, but at the end of the day the match isn't very exciting at all. It's the same thing we saw and were bored by eight months ago with HHH

trying and likely failing to have the big epic showdown he's hoping for.

As for Lesnar, the problem is very simple: what does he gain from this match? He's already beaten HHH once and has done nothing else for the rest of his time in the company other than lose to Cena. Why in the world would you have someone like that with that much money being spent on him in the same feud for the better part of a year with the match not being great? It seems like such a waste, but given the millions he's making a match, can you blame Brock for doing stupid matches like these?

The build has been nothing special either as it feels like they're trying to recreate what happened last year with Taker vs. HHH. The idea of the feud is that Brock beat up HHH last summer and now HHH wants a rematch to prove how awesome he is. The idea of HHH fighting for Vince's honor doesn't do much for me and neither does Shawn being in his heterosexual life mate's corner. It's going to be a lot of what we saw before with Shawn likely superkicking Heyman at some point. I wouldn't be surprised to see Stephanie and Vince make appearances during the match as well.

As for the match itself, I can't imagine HHH losing. He's 43 years old and can still put on good matches which give younger guys a solid rub as a result. As stupid of an idea as it would be to have Lesnar go 1-2 in his first year back with the company and waste two of those matches on HHH of all people, I can't picture it going any other way. HHH is going to get back in the ring again which is the right move, but at this price I'm not sure if it's worth it. Either way the match will be very physical but likely not live up to the standards they've set for the match, as HHH's "epic" matches rarely work at all.