

Monday Night Raw – September 14, 2015: Dance Fever And Scorpion Double Shots

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 14, 2015

Location FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Tonight is the season premier, as WWE throws whatever it can at Monday Night Football to try and not get completely decimated in the ratings. The big match tonight is Charlotte challenging Nikki Bella for the Divas Title in Nikki's first televised title defense in about two and a half months. Let's get to it.

We open with a full recap of the statue story because just having Cole explain it in fifteen seconds would be too complicated.

Here's the Authority walking down the ramp, which now has a Connor's Cure logo. HHH and Stephanie talk about all the new talent that have showed up in the last year and a half. That group will lead the WWE into the new generation, which will be lead by Seth Rollins. HHH explains the double title defense on Sunday and that's about it for Seth right now.

Stephanie explains the Divas Title situation and talks about how the Revolution has rocked everything. HHH has a major announcement for tonight: Sting will be wrestling his first match ever on Raw as he faces the Big Show. Stephanie introduces New Day for their title defense and the Authority dances with them.

So wait. They announced New Day vs. the Prime Time Players and the Divas Title in advance, but STING wrestling on Raw is announced with a few hours notice? These decisions continue to amaze me every single week, but at least they made sure to get Stephanie dancing to New Day's entrance because she's fun and cool that way. HHH dances a bit too.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Prime Time Players

New Day is defending with Woods on the floor as usual. Darren rolls Kofi up for a quick two before it's off to Titus for a slam on Big E. We see the Dudleyz looking on as E. comes back with a belly to belly, meaning it's time for some trombone playing. Back to the starters with Darren escaping the SOS and loading up the Gut Check, only to have Kofi tag out to Big E. The big guy sends Young into the post and it's time for the rotating stomps, accompanied by more tromboning as we take a break.

Back with New Day still in control and Woods tormenting him with the trombone. Titus comes after them but gets called back by the referee. Woods: "DO NOT TOUCH MY TROMBONE!" Back in and Kofi snaps Darren's throat across the top rope but he dives into some raised boots. Titus comes in off the tag to clean house and gives Kofi three straight backbreakers. A powerslam gets two on Big E. but Kofi gives Darren Trouble in Paradise on the floor. Woods offers a distraction and gets his trombone broken up, allowing the Midnight Hour to take Titus out for the pin at 12:15.

Rating: C. This was fine and a good way to set up New Day vs. the Dudleyz on Sunday. The Players have had their moment in the sun and it's time to move on to a more interesting team. Darren and Titus are fine for a midcard team, but I don't think anyone really bought them as a long term threat, which means they're left as a nice role team.

New Day celebrates but the Dudleyz come out for a staredown.

Video of Sting at Starrcade 1988, part of a series of clips of his career. Pay no attention to the fact that that was a pretty worthless match.

Seth Rollins comes in to see the Authority and after praising the dance moves, he's told to worry about Sunday. They do the New Day clap and that's about it. This is another good example of a segment that didn't need to be there.

We recap Charlotte making Nikki tap in a brawl last week.

Charlotte and Ric Flair are ready for the title match tonight and Ric praises the Divas division. They're doing a great job of making this feel like a big deal.

Paige vs. Sasha Banks

It's just Becky at ringside while Naomi and Tamina are out with Banks. Sasha snaps Paige's arm across the middle rope to start and bends it around to put Paige in early trouble. Banks stomps on the arm in the corner instead of dropping the double knees before putting on an armbar.

Paige comes back with a knee in the corner and some kicks to the face for two as the announcers debate women's tennis in an attempt to tie it into the Divas Revolution. A wicked German suplex sends Sasha down onto the back of her head and out to the floor in a heap. Paige tries to dive off the apron but Tamina pulls Sasha away, sending Paige crashing down as well. Back in and the Bank Statement puts Paige away at 5:15.

Rating: C. The potential for a Paige heel turn would seem to make sense and there's nothing wrong with a story that might be this obvious. Once this team thing is done they can actually get on to something else instead of just running around in circles like they have been for weeks. The match was fine with that German suplex looking awesome, but I've lost interest in seeing them fight four times in two weeks. As usual, the word overkill doesn't exist in WWE's world.

We recap the Wyatt Family taking out Jimmy Uso and Randy Orton last week.

Video on Connor's Cure.

It's time for MizTV with special guests the Wyatt Family. Miz tells them to sit down but Bray tells Miz to not sit because he's not safe here. After assuring Bray that he's not the partner at Hell in a Cell (yes Hell in a Cell), Miz tries to talk to Strowman but Braun doesn't say a word. Bray gets right in Miz's face and says they're coming to Night of Champions to show that no matter who comes at them, they all fall down. Cue Reigns and Ambrose in the crowd with Dean beating up Miz for trying

to talk. Bray sits down as the other four stare at each other. Reigns calls Wyatt out for the attacks last week and promises to make him pay.

If Wyatt really was the man, he could have beaten Roman one on one but he just can't do it. A real man wouldn't have to surround himself with monsters. Reigns and Ambrose have found a third man for Night of Champions and they're ready to win. Everyone stares each other down and the camera cuts out. This would be much better if they didn't go to the announcers, meaning they're sitting there talking while the guys are still in the ring.

Clip of Sting winning his first World Title at Great American Bash 1990.

John Cena vs. Sheamus

Sheamus' headlock doesn't get that far so he elbows Cena in the face instead. John is thrown to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Sheamus dropping a top rope knee for two before slapping on a sleeper. Cena pops up and hits the ProtoBomb followed by the Shuffle. A tornado DDT gets two on Sheamus but he comes back with an Edgeucator.

Cena grabs the ropes so Sheamus busts out the ten forearms instead. We get the same sequence with Cena using the STF and hitting some forearms of his own. The AA is blocked and Sheamus ax handles Cena in the face to take over again. Cena breaks up the Brogue Kick with a hard clothesline but can't follow up. A powerslam drops Cena again but he sidesteps the top rope shoulder. Sheamus charges but Cena powers him up into a powerbomb position, only to flip him over into an electric chair drop. Back up and Sheamus tries the Regal roll, only to have Cena roll over into the AA for the pin at 14:49.

Rating: B. Good match here and I believe the first time Cena has pinned Sheamus in a singles match on TV. This was harkening back to the days of the US Open Challenge (you know, all those weeks ago) and continues to show that Cena can work a very good match with anyone you throw out there against him. Good stuff here.

Here's Ryback with something to say. It's appropriate that we're in Memphis because Kevin Owens seems to have him all shook up. Ryback does a

little Elvis and the silence is so deafening that he has to acknowledge it. As he starts to talk about Kevin Owens not being a real man, Owens cuts him off. Owens comes out with a copy of The Secret, which Ryback has credited with his rise to success.

He calls the book a joke and throws it to the floor while calling it a travesty that Ryback is the Intercontinental Champion. Ryback talks about how positive he is and how he fell on his face after rocketing to the top of the company. Owens says he'd take the title the first chance he got, so Ryback offers him a shot at Night of Champions. Kevin leaves without accepting. I really like the idea of these two fighting, but Ryback crediting his success to a book really doesn't hold up for me.

The next Sting clip is Starrcade 1997, which is possibly the bullet that they never could recover from.

Stardust vs. Neville

The Lucha Dragons come out with Nevilel to counteract the Ascension. It's a huge brawl to start with the Dragons diving through the ropes to take Ascension out. Neville hurricanranas Stardust to the floor but Ascension drags him away before Neville can dive. No match.

Nikki Bella video where she takes credit for the Divas Revolution. This was....bad. Yeah that's the only way to put it. It was bad.

Divas Title: Charlotte vs. Nikki Bella

Nikki is defending in case that's not really clear. Charlotte takes her down to the mat and drops some knees. The figure four neck lock lets Charlotte rolls Nikki around the ring and tell her to bring it on. Nikki comes back by snapping Charlotte's arm across the top rope and wringing it down onto the apron as we take a break.

Back with Nikki staying on the arm but Charlotte lifts her out of an armbar into a powerbomb to break it up. A big boot gets two for Charlotte but a dropkick to the shoulder gets the same for the champ. Charlotte scores with the spear but Alicia gets on the apron for a distraction. It's Twin Magic time and Charlotte rolls Brie up for the pin at 10:02.

I'm not even going to bother rating it yet because here's Stephanie to say that doesn't count and Charlotte wins by DQ. Charlotte gets her rematch on Sunday and the title can change hands by any means.

Rating: C-. Well that happened. The match was nothing special but I'm sure we'll hear for weeks about how awesome it was as the NXT fans point to Sasha vs. Bayley. You had to know they were going with the record because this is all about making the Bellas into some kind of pop culture icon in WWE's mind and they just had to get her the record, which is totally better than Trish holding the Women's Title for over a year because reasons.

Sting was at Survivor Series 2014.

Cesaro vs. Rusev

Rusev grabs a wristlock to start but Cesaro does four or five nips in a row to escape. A headscissors drops Rusev again and the delayed vertical suplex gets one. Rusev's spinwheel kick gets two but here's Dolph Ziggler with a present for Summer. The distraction lets Cesaro small package Rusev for the pin at 4:04.

Rating: C-. The booking here was a lot better as you had Cesaro get a win while Ziggler gets to cost Rusev a match. Everyone comes out looking the way they're supposed to look and Sunday's match gets some build. That's the kind of smart booking that WWE lacks so often and it's a nice touch.

Ziggler superkicks Rusev and Summer sneaks the present with her as they leave.

WWE was at a children's hospital earlier today.

Post break Rusev is livid and goes into his dressing room. Summer opens the present and it's.....something we can't see.

Recap of the Tag Team Title match and we run down the Night of Champions card. Owens vs. Ryback for the Intercontinental Title is confirmed, as is Neville/Lucha Dragons vs. Stardust/Ascension on the preshow.

Big Show promises the Authority that he'll knock Sting out.

Sting vs. Big Show

These two headlined Slamboree 1996 nearly twenty years ago. The Authority is ringside to watch. Sting hammers away to start and gets in ten right hands in the corner. Show tries a chokeslam out of the corner but gets DDT'd down instead. There's the Stinger Splash but Rollins runs in for the DQ at 1:45.

Cena comes out for the save and HHH makes it a tag match.

Sting/John Cena vs. Seth Rollins/Big Show

This is joined in progress after a break with Cena's shoulder block bouncing off Big Show. It's off to Rollins for some stomping but Cena backdrops him over the top to the floor for a big crash. Back in and Cena tries the AA but can't flip Show over, meaning the beating continues. Rollins and Big Show take turns beating on Cena while they both break up the tag attempts. The slow motion Vader Bomb gets two.

Cena turns Rollins inside out with a running clothesline but Show breaks up another hot tag attempt. Show misses the second Vader Bomb though and Cena dives over for the hot tag to Sting. It's showtime as Sting cleans house, only to be run over by Big Show. The giant takes the AA and Sting breaks up the Pedigree with a Scorpion Death Drop. The Scorpion Deathlock makes Rollins tap at 11:58.

Rating: C-. I don't like the ending but I get the idea. Sting isn't going to win the title on Sunday but it's still cool to see him in the ring on Raw, just for the novelty of it if nothing else. This could be another stake in HHH and Rollins' relationship as Rollins couldn't beat the man that HHH could, but they've been teasing the split for months now so I'll believe it when I see it.

Overall Rating: C+. This was FAR better than last week as you could feel an energy instead of the same boring show they did last week. It was also a good go home show for Night of Champions, which is looking like a pretty fun card on paper. I'm curious to see where some of the stuff goes and that's exactly what this show was supposed to accomplish. You had some big moments and a good match here so what else more can you ask for

out of a TV show? Well done this week.

Results

New Day b. Prime Time Players – Midnight Hour to O’Neil

Sasha Banks b. Paige – Bank Statement

John Cena b. Sheamus – Attitude Adjustment

Charlotte b. Nikki Bella via DQ when Brie Bella interfered

Cesaro b. Rusev – Small package

Sting b. Big Show via DQ when Seth Rollins interfered

Sting/John Cena b. Big Show/Seth Rollins – Scorpion Deathlock to Rollins

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Monday Night Raw – September 7, 2015: They Certainly Got

The Labor Part Right

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 7, 2015

Location: Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton, Michael Cole

It's a holiday show, which means we might not be in for the most action packed episode this week. Coming out of this weekend, the question is what does John Cena's potential injury mean for Seth Rollins and his double title defenses? WWE has said Cena isn't injured, but there's always a chance it's going to be addressed. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Seth Rollins gets things going this week and tells us about how special he is. Until he cashed in Money in the Bank at Wrestlemania, everyone believed Brock Lesnar was invincible. Then he knocked John Cena off the pedestal and became the first man to hold both the US and World Titles at the same time. Yes Seth we know. Much like everyone else in WWE, you feel the need to repeat the same lines over and over because it gets them talking on Facebook or something.

Anyway, he had a statue, Sting stole it, and now Rollins wants to crush Sting's legacy as a result. Seth can do that by beating Sting at Night of Champions, but then he has to deal with Cena, who has politicked his way into the title scene again. That presented a problem but then Rollins remembered who he was. This has been his year so he'll solve this problem just like any other.

Rollins wants his statue back so here's Sting on screen, standing next to the statue. Come and get it he says, so Rollins says he's not afraid. Cue Sheamus instead who asks if Seth is worried about Sunday. Seth is worried about his statue instead but he makes sure to call Sheamus Ronald McDonald with a bad haircut. Sheamus: "Leave my family out of this." Sheamus teases cashing in at Night of Champions.

Post break Seth goes to see Stephanie to ask if HHH has a plan. After

Stephanie gets annoyed at Seth for not thinking she can handle this (you have to get that Stephanie praise in there you see), HHH comes in and Rollins is relieved. HHH makes things even worse though as he makes Rollins vs. Ryback and Rollins/New Day vs. Prime Time Players/John Cena. Stephanie says she thought Rollins should go after Sting but Rollins wanted to hear HHH's idea.

Paige vs. Sasha Banks

Rematch from last week where Paige only had about a minute and a half to beat Sasha, meaning she came up short. Paige throws Sasha around to start and elbows her in the corner, only to have her kick caught, setting up Sasha's double knees in the corner for two. Back from a break with Sasha getting another near fall and throwing on a chinlock.

Paige quickly fights out but gets pulled off the middle rope to give Sasha another near fall. Sasha's cross body is nearly countered into the Rampaige but Banks gets to the floor. Back in and a quick wheelbarrow suplex gives Paige two but Naomi comes in for a distraction, allowing Paige to grab a small package for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. It's a nice match but the commentary suggests that the Divas Title match will indeed be at Night of Champions rather than next week as was hinted at on Smackdown. Therefore, this was another match that is meant to fill in time until we can get the big Nikki Bella moment that we've all been waiting for, meaning this has been another ten minutes of your time wasted.

Ascension vs. Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Now, on Smackdown, Ascension was made to look tough again when they beat up Neville. I'm sure WWE wouldn't totally waste that by having them get squashed here and act like Smackdown meant nothing. Dean beats Viktor up to start before it's off to Roman for more of the same. That's fine with Reigns who punches out both Ascension members with ease before Dean comes in with a suicide dive. The apron boot to Viktor sets up the Superman Punch and a Doomsday Device of all things, which sets up the spear. Dirty Deeds puts Viktor away at 2:53.

Post match the Wyatts come on screen to say the apocalypse is at Night of Champions.

That being said, SCREW YOU WWE! You set something up on Smackdown and you can't send out Los freaking Matadores do job here? No of course not, because why do that when Ascension is there? Geez they make Smackdown worthless by their own actions.

Ryback says Rollins whines a lot and is an architect but tonight, Ryback's plans are a Meathook and Shell Shock. Kevin Owens comes up to wish Ryback good luck and warns him not to bite off more than he can chew.

We recap Lana/Dolph Ziggler/Rusev/Summer Rae. There's even a narrator for this.

Ryback vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title and in a VERY cool thing, Ryback lets a kid hold the Intercontinental Title. The announcers are too busy getting in their talking points to notice of course. Rollins bails outside and hits the stall button to start. A shoulder sends Rollins right back to the floor but Ryback is patient enough to stay inside. Rollins gets rammed into the corner as the announcers argue over whether or not Sting stole the statue. As in the thing he doesn't own that he took.

Ryback stays on the arm before chopping Seth down with ease. The delayed vertical suplex, with Ryback walking around the ring, gets two on Seth. Rollins gets Ryback out to the floor and tries a suicide dive, only to have Ryback catch him in midair. Ryback is whipped into various metal objects and it's time for another break. Back with Seth getting two off a neckbreaker and putting on a chinlock.

Ryback punches him in the face and sends Seth flying with a backdrop. A powerbomb and the low superkick are both countered but the second attempt at the powerbomb connects for two. For some reason Ryback goes to the top but has to break up Seth's superplex attempt. The top rope splash misses and Rollins baseball slides Ryback outside.

There's the suicide dive but Ryback is still able to beat the count. Back in and Seth charges into a spinebuster but he escapes Shell Shock and nails an enziguri. This brings up Sting to say the statue is waiting for Rollins, allowing Ryback to grab a small package for the pin at 18:45, good for the second distraction into a small package finish of the night.

Rating: B-. This a better finish, this is a much higher grade. It's a bad sign when they're already reusing a finish less than an hour and twenty minutes into the show but you can't expect them to think of that much on their own. Ryback getting the pin is a nice surprise though as he's one of the best Intercontinental Champions in years.

Sting pops up again and puts a Sting mask on the statue.

Rollins (yes again with Rollins) is looking for his statue but here's New Day to interrupt with a trombone recital. Seth yells at them but runs into Edge and Christian who are here for the Steve Austin Show. Edge brings up Rollins threatening to kill him to get the Authority back and wants a fight right now. Rollins bails so Woods wants a musical battle. This means the return of the KAZOO!

Edge thinks New Day sucks but Big E. eats the kazoo. Well he stuck it in his mouth and threw it out but we'll say he ate it. The Dudleyz come up and tell New Day that the Prime Time Players get a title shot next week. The winners of that face the Dudleyz at Night of Champions. New Day freaks out but Bubba says now they can leave. Oh and the Dudleyz have a new song: GET! THE TABLES! GET! THE TABLES! With rhythmic clapping of course. Well that was awesome.

Here's Summer Rae, who is sad over everything that happened last week. We get the recap again, with Cole saying it "gripped the world." No Cole, it didn't. Also, Ziggler and Lana are WWE's power couple. Yes, he said power couple. Summer wants to apologize to the person who has been hurt so much in all this: Rusev.

This brings Rusev out so Summer can thank him for all of his inspiration. Last week when Ziggler invited her into his locker room, everything was just too much for her and she temporarily betrayed him. Rusev forgives her so Lana says "thank you Ru Ru." Rusev rips on Ziggler a bit, so

here's Dolph with a message from Lana (who is out with a broken wrist) in the form of a superkick. I hate myself for starting to love this story.

Randy Orton vs. Sheamus

Yes, AGAIN. Orton quickly takes him down in an armbar, likely because he's so bored by this pairing that he needs a rest. Back up and they're still in the feeling out process until a shoulder puts Sheamus on the floor. Sheamus gets back in and heads outside almost immediately (same idea as Rollins earlier). He yells at the fans on the mic but catches Orton coming out with the Irish Curse as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus holding a chinlock, followed by the Regal Roll. He demands that everyone respect the hawk and snaps Orton's throat across the top. The battering ram from the top gets two and the fans are really not interested here. The Cloverleaf doesn't work so Sheamus resurrects the Edgeucator (a Sharpshooter but with Sheamus pushing on the legs instead of pulling). Orton makes the ropes and comes back with the hanging DDT, only to charge into White Noise for two. The Brogue Kick misses though and the RK0 ends Sheamus at 15:49.

Rating: C-. Not only was it boring but it wasn't even that good. These two just do not have chemistry and they've bored the crowd so many times now that I'm sick of both of them. I'm a fan of both guys but it's not an interesting match. Never let these two fight again and the show will be a lot more entertaining.

Post match the Wyatts surround Orton, who was seen talking to Reigns and Orton earlier. Orton gets destroyed by all three monsters and Reigns/Ambrose aren't even nice enough to come out for a save.

Cole calls next week the season premiere, which of course is taking place on the show before a pay per view because THEY CAN'T EVEN GET A SCHEDULE RIGHT WHEN THEY MAKE UP THESE ARBITRARY DATES IN THE FIRST PLACE!!!

Los Matadores vs. Dudley Boyz

Diego takes Bubba down to start and the masked men get in some quick fast paced offense. That's the extent of the good for them though as D-Von

comes in to clean house and 3D ends Fernando at 1:38.

Post match Los Matadores blame El Torito so the Dudleyz make the save. Fernando goes through a table.

Cesaro vs. The Miz

This is fallout from earlier tonight when Cesaro turned down Miz's offer to help publicize the Cesaro Section. Cesaro takes him down to start and easily throws Miz to the floor for some more of the beating. The fans are behind Cesaro as you might expect but Miz kicks Cesaro in the still banged up ribs to take over. Cesaro flips over the top rope because he's athletic like that, only to get dropped ribs first onto the top rope. Miz kicks him to the floor and sends Cesaro into the barricade a few times but here's Big Show to chase Miz around, causing a double countout at 4:17.

Rating: D-. So now we're doing Miz vs. Big Show vs. Cesaro? As in they're doing the same story they just did but with Cesaro instead of Ryback? This show has been a mess so far and it's not getting any better as it goes on. Can we please get something interesting instead of this lame stuff all over again?

Back from a break and it's Bella time. Nikki shows off the Bellatron and invites us all to the Bellabration next week when she breaks the record. This brings out PCB, with Charlotte making the announcement that she'll be challenging Nikki for the title next week instead of at Night of Champions. A brawl ensues and Nikki taps to the Figure Eight.

John Cena/Prime Time Players vs. New Day/Seth Rollins

A fan tries to follow Rollins to the ring but he's quickly stopped by security. Cena and Rollins get things going but it's off to Big E. before anything can happen. The NEW DAY SUCKS headlock goes on as Woods plays the trombone. Woods: "Cena's gonna learn today what some tricep meat feels like!" E. shoves Cena around as JBL does his best JR impression by making some football analogy that doesn't go anywhere. The belly to belly gets two on Cena and it's off to Rollins for some stomps. Big E. tags himself back in for the rotating stomps and Seth doesn't get the idea.

Back from a break with Kofi getting two on Cena off a high cross body. The SOS gets two more and Rollins breaks up a hot tag attempt. It's back to Big E. as Woods sits on the steps for some tromboning. E. misses the Warrior Splash and Titus finally gets the tag to clean house. Everything breaks down and Darren gives Woods the Gut Check, only to have Big E. suplexes Titus down. Cena and Rollins get tags and the Pedigree is countered into the STF, only to have Rollins get to the corner for the tag to Kofi. The second high cross body is rolled through into the AA to put Kofi down at 13:08.

Rating: C. Yeah fine. It's one of the better things on the show and that's a nice improvement after everything else we've had to go through tonight. Cena pinning Kofi is fine as New Day is firmly in a spot where they can get their heat back with one set of antics and a loss means little.

Cena does the Millions of Dollars dance before leaving Rollins alone in the ring. Sting appears on screen in front of the statue. The lights come up and the statue is in front of a garbage truck. I think you can guess what happens. Rollins grabs his titles to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This was one of those shows where you were punished for being a fan. They didn't put in any effort on this one because no one. The worst part about this show is that it could have been good but they were clearly not trying. It was one of those shows where they were just here to fill in time before the real stuff starts up again next week on the season premiere, which can't be after Night of Champions because of reasons.

This show felt like it went on for about eight hours, but that's what you have to expect on a holiday. Of course they can't do something special here because they don't want to waste it, even though they never actually use these special ideas that they're allegedly saving. Not the worst show ever this week, but it was a LONG sit that would have been far better at two hours. I didn't say good, but at least better.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Paige – Small package

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns b. Ascension – Dirty Deeds to Viktor

Ryback b. Seth Rollins – Small package

Randy Orton b. Sheamus – RK0

Dudley Boyz b. Los Matadores – 3D to Fernando

Cesaro vs. The Miz went to a double countout

John Cena/Prime Time Players b. New Day/Seth Rollins – Attitude Adjustment to Kingston

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Smackdown – September 3, 2015: I Approve Of These Developments

Smackdown

Date: September 3, 2015

Location: American Airlines Arena, Miami, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Jerry Lawler, Jimmy Uso

This seems like it's going to be another midcard heavy episode as the main event players, save for the champion, who is arguably the lowest of the three people involved in the story, who is known to slum it here on Smackdown. The only major event announced is Lana and Dolph Ziggler appearing on MizTV. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's New Day to continue their SAVE THE TABLES campaign. Woods: "A table is a terrible thing to waste." Kofi calls tables the backbone of human achievement and thinks we wouldn't be here without hard working tables. The pilgrims and Indians had the first Thanksgiving at a table. The Declaration of Independence was written on a table. Walter Cronkite announced the moon landing while sitting at a table. Above all that though: New Day signed their WWE contracts at a table. Kofi: "I remember that!"

The Dudleyz don't respect tables but we can all change that. A Save-The-Tables clap starts up but here are the Dudleyz to interrupt. We see a clip of Woods going through a table and Bubba says history is going to repeat itself. This brings out the Prime Time Players who say the Dudleyz have to earn their keep. You mean like by beating the champs a few days ago? Bubba says they're here to put people through tables and win championships. Titus has two tickets to send them back to Dudleyville and it's time for a match.

Dudley Boyz vs. Prime Time Players

New Day is on commentary and Woods wants to know why Titus wants to send the Dudleyz back to where they live. That's not a great gift. D-Von slams Young down and hits that twisting elbow to the jaw of his. A lot of trash is talked and it's time for a break. Back with Big E. doing his reporter voice as it's off to Bubba vs. Young. Woods only sees half of Bubba due to all the camouflage and calls the Dudleyz table poachers. Soon New Day will have heavy heads because they'll be wearing the crown that makes them the greatest of all time.

The reverse 3D gets two on Young but he enziguris Bubba for a breather. New Day starts a SAVE THE TABLES dance as Titus comes in off the hot tag.

Titus cleans house as Woods describes him as a German Sheppard that ate too many stale potato chips. Bubba elbows O'Neil in the jaw and it's 3D for the pin at 9:07.

Rating: C. New Day continues to be one of the most entertaining things WWE has come up with in years. The key thing to their comedy: it's clearly not scripted. It's obviously the three of them just riffing on what they're seeing and having fun with it, which makes the whole thing that much funnier. The match itself was fine too as the story is simple yet effective. That's often better than something in depth where things get too bogged down by ideas.

Kofi slaps D-Von in the back of the head as New Day leaves.

Post break it's time for a New Day trombone dance party, but Renee Young tells them they're facing Roman Reigns and Dean Ambrose tonight. Woods immediately plays a sad note on the trombone.

Stardust vs. Neville

No match as the Ascension of all people jump Neville during his entrance. Stardust says Neville is flying too close to the sun and the Ascension are the new conniving cohorts. The Fall of Man leaves Neville laying. Welcome to the Cosmic Wasteland. I heartily approve of this development.

Cesaro is talking about his match with Sheamus tonight when Sheamus interrupts. Tonight, Cesaro will be good but not good enough, just like always as he disappoints the Cesaro section one more time. Cesaro's big comeback: Sheamus does look stupid up close.

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

Cesaro has taped up ribs from going into the announcers' table on Monday. Sheamus bails to the floor to start and tells the fans that he doesn't look stupid. It's quickly back inside with Cesaro clotheslining him down and MESSING WITH THE MOHAWK. A suplex drops Sheamus with the ribs having no sign of injury whatsoever. Sheamus sends him hard into the corner though and the ribs are suddenly in agony as we go to a break. Back with Sheamus cranking on a chinlock with a knee in Cesaro's back.

They slug it out from their knees and Cesaro takes over with European uppercuts. A dropkick knocks Sheamus off the top and out to the floor as Lawler isn't sure how the ribs are holding up. Cesaro's big running European uppercut knocks Sheamus into the barricade and Cesaro gets two off a high cross body. So much for the selling. The Irish Curse sets up the Cloverleaf but Cesaro is out before it can go on full. The Crossface is countered by elbows to the ribs and it's a Brogue Kick to give Sheamus the pin at 10:36.

Rating: C+. This was a hard one to grade as they beat each other up for a long time but the ribs weren't used for most of the match. The injury played into the ending though and that's a plus, but Cesaro casually hitting a high cross body for two and then just putting a hand on the ribs isn't enough for me. That being said, Sheamus is right: Cesaro comes up short again and it's been old for a long time.

It's time for MizTV. This past Monday, Raw turned into Days of Our Lives with everything happening between Ziggler, Lana and Summer Rae. Oh and Rusev is in there too somewhere. We get a long recap package, meaning we see almost the entire thing. Miz's first guest tonight is Summer Rae, complete with her CALL TO ME CALL TO ME song. That's going to be stuck in my head all day now.

Summer calls Monday unfortunate but admits that there's more to the story. Monday night, Dolph kissed her. Miz: "HE KISSED YOU???" It quickly turned from passion to guilt because she already has the most amazing man in the world. This brings out Dolph and Lana with Ziggler making fun of Miz despite things being kind of serious.

Summer accuses Dolph of having something going on with her for months now and we see a clip of Summer kissing Dolph in June 2014, though it seemed to be more to tick off Fandango. Yeah remember Fandango? WWE doesn't either. Summer says they've been together at hotels as recently as last week and Lana goes after her. Lana storms off and Summer shouts that she can't handle the truth.

Bo Dallas vs. R-Truth

Dallas takes him into the corner and slams Truth down before driving

knees into the head. Off to some chinlockery but Truth fights up and gets two off a side kick. That goes nowhere as Dallas drapes Truth's feet over the top rope and twist him down with a suplex spinning neckbreaker for the pin at 2:37.

Bo gives him another one post match and takes a victory lap.

We look back at Monday's Beat the Clock Challenge with Charlotte getting the Divas Title shot at Night of Champions.

Charlotte praises her teammates when the Bellas come up so Nikki can brag about the record. If there isn't at least a title defense before that night, this is going to reach an even lower level of stupid. Thankfully Charlotte says she's petitioned the Authority to have their match before the record is broken. If that is approved, the whole record comes crashing down. Tick tock Nikki.

Tamina vs. Charlotte

Tamina shoves Charlotte down to start but gets WOOed for her efforts. A test of strength goes nowhere so Tamina takes her head off with a clothesline for two. Charlotte comes back by kicking her in the face and a spear, followed by Natural Selection for the pin at 3:18.

Rating: D+. The match was just there to give Charlotte more momentum, but the idea of the title match taking place before the record could be the most interesting thing to happen to this division in a long time. That is, assuming they take the title off Nikki. Of course it would also make the first month of the Divas Revolution a total waste of time because the title was never mentioned, but did I mention how awesome Stephanie's introduction of it was? That makes up for the whole thing.

Team Bella comes out to pose.

Long recap of the Cena/Rollins/Sting issues from Monday.

Kevin Owens brags about beating Cesaro twice in a row to silence the Cesaro Section. That brings him to the next people he wants to be quiet: the people who are critical of his weight. He isn't going to change his diet though. Instead, feed him more. That's about as good of an idea as

there is for him right now.

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. New Day

Big E. and Kofi here and this is non-title. Ambrose and Kingston get things going with Kofi actually punching him into the New Day corner. Woods wants us to pay attention to the educated fists of one Big E. Reigns comes in for half of a double suplex on Big E. for two but gets sent down into the corner as well. It's time for some trombone playing, followed by a quickly broken chinlock. E. splashes him in the corner but eats a big clothesline, allowing the tag off to Ambrose.

Dean cleans house and feeds Kofi in to Reigns for a clothesline. New Day is knocked outside and Dean dives onto all three as we take a break. Back with Kofi kicking Dean in the chest and slapping on another chinlock. Woods: "I HAVE A TROMBONE!" The Big E. splash gets two but Dean avoids a charge in the corner. He blocks Big E.'s belly to belly superplex and hits a nice missile dropkick. The nip up doesn't work so well though in an unintentionally funny moment.

Reigns comes in to clean house and Jimmy is way too excited. Woods' distraction lets Kofi grab a rollup for two, earning him a big powerbomb for the same. Dean sends E. into the barricade as Kofi springboards into the Superman Punch, drawing in Xavier for the DQ at 12:07.

Rating: C+. This was fine and the ending is a lot better than having the Dudleyz beat them clean on Monday. New Day gets to hold up the titles and swear that Kofi was going to kick out while everyone knows they're lying. It's a simple formula, but unfortunately WWE doesn't know how to keep that formula from getting repetitive. I really like New Day moving up the ladder like this though as they're definitely more than just another tag team. I mean, can you imagine the Prime Time Players in this role? It only works with the right kind of act, like New Day.

New Day gets their clocks cleaned (you never want a dirty clock) but Dean wants more. He wants another shot at Strowman and the Wyatt Family RIGHT NOW. Bray pops up on screen and says let's do this at Night of Champions. Can you hear the footsteps of the apocalypse walking among them in the form of a black sheep? Run.

Overall Rating: C. Totally acceptable show here with the wrestling being fine, but above all else we actually got some storyline development for a change. Now granted it would be better if we had some major matches here instead of just the announcement of such matches, but I'll take what I can get where I can get it. Not a bad show here and that's more than you can say about Smackdown most of the time.

Results

Dudley Boyz b. Prime Time Players – 3D to O'Neil

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

Bo Dallas b. R-Truth – Draping suplex neckbreaker

Charlotte b. Tamina – Natural Selection

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. New Day when Xavier Woods interfered

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Smackdown – August 13, 2015:

Two Big Guys Hitting Each Other

Smackdown

Date: August 13, 2015

Location: Moda Center, Portland, Oregon

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jimmy Uso, Tom Phillips

With Summerslam closing in, there's little more than window dressing to go. John Cena is officially in the main event as confirmed on Tough Enough, meaning we're going to be getting that title for title match against Seth Rollins. Smackdown is getting harder and harder to predict, but Summerslam could use some more midcard buildup. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Seth Rollins to open things up as we look at the end of his match with Randy Orton on Monday and the near cash-in from Sheamus. The champ thinks we need to settle down a bit because we all live very fast paced lives. We're getting to see something like Babe Ruth hitting 1,000 home runs or Michael Jordan winning 20 MVPs or the Rolling Stones and the Beatles reaching levels of genius never before seen.

We're getting to see....Seth Rollins at the top of his game. We've been seeing Rollins escape Randy Orton, bring Neville back to earth, and break Cena's nose into a million pieces. Someday the fans here will be telling their grandchildren that they saw Seth Rollins in his prime.

However, people like John Cena don't get it, and we see a clip from Tough Enough of Cena, now with a nose resembling a human's, confirming that he'll be in the ring at Summerslam (complete with Daniel Bryan leading a YES chant). The champ would like to have Cena at Raw this week, so he can see what it's like to fail. Orton failed, Lesnar failed, Neville failed....and here's Neville, now with his own shirt, to interrupt.

Rollins asks if Neville has a kitten up a tree to rescue. Neville thinks it's going to take a superhero to shut Rollins up. Seth has left out a

lot of details, such as the fact that he lost to Cena in the broken nose match, or Orton preventing the cash-in on Monday. Or maybe Rollins not being able to kick out of the Red Arrow. Rollins thinks Neville is less of a superhero and more like a Mouseketeer with a Napoleon Complex.

Neville accuses Rollins of going on and on so here's Cesaro to assist in the shutting up process. The WWE Universe, including the Cesaro Section, is sick of it. So is Kevin Owens, who attacks Cesaro from behind as Rollins lays Neville out with the buckle bomb. I think you know what's coming.

Charlotte vs. Naomi

Becky is with Charlotte but the rest of Team BAD is here as well. An early WOO get Charlotte a slap in the face but Charlotte gets in a shot of her own. We get a clarification on Sunday's match: it's basically a three way elimination match and one fall per team, not individual Divas. So much for that being fun. Naomi shoves Charlotte into the corner and we take a break.

Back with Charlotte fighting out of a chinlock, only to get crotched (just go with it) down and put right back in the chinlock. A nice dropkick and split legged legdrop get two on Charlotte and there's chinlock number three. Charlotte's rollup doesn't work very well so Naomi kicks her in the face. She takes her rollups seriously. Some chops from Charlotte set up a spear for two before she throws Naomi onto Sasha and Tamina. Back inside and the Figure Eight makes Naomi tap at 8:30.

Rating: C-. This was one of the weaker efforts in the new Divas era but it wasn't terrible. Like I've said roughly every week since the thing started, there's no reason for these random matches to be taking place if there's nothing to fight over. At this point they're all just standing around as Nikki gets closer to the record, which really doesn't do anything for anyone.

Video on Stephen Amell on Raw, setting up Amell/Neville vs. King Barrett/Stardust at Summerslam. Amell looks to be one of the best celebrities they've had, but I'm skeptical about the match. If nothing else, I have no reason to want to see Barrett after his loss this past

week. If only there was, I don't know, ANYONE ELSE who could have taken that loss.

Here's Ryback with something to say. After some clips of him destroying various people on MizTV and posing with Daniel Bryan Monday, Ryback says the Big Guy is back. Well that clears up a few questions, such as who is the guy, who happens to be big, in the ring. The night he won the Intercontinental Title was the greatest night of his career because he finally achieved one of his goals.

Then he had a horrible staph infection (complete with a picture), but he shell shocked that too and came out here to Portland. While he was at home, he heard a lot of calls for him to forfeit the title, but all the positive messages and get well wishes made him want to come back even more. It's feeding time at Summerslam and Big Show and Miz could make quite a good meal. No one interrupts here and as usual, Ryback does well with his mic time. From reports I've found, Bo Dallas came out and asked to be added to the title match but got laid out. I guess that was cut for whatever reason.

Here are the Wyatts with something to say. Harper says he was born evil and wants to know our excuses. Bray talks about Harper having an evil stare and tonight it's set on Roman Reigns. Wyatt is going to bring his brother for the family war at Summerslam, but here's Ambrose to cut him off. Why don't more people do that? Dean doesn't have anything to say because he just wants to watch Reigns punch faces.

Roman Reigns vs. Luke Harper

Roman starts slugging away with right hands (Dean must be happy) and a clothesline knocks Luke to the floor for a break. Back with Harper getting in some big shots of his own until Reigns just muscles him over like a Samoan Superman. Harper comes back with something like a Michinoku Driver for two before just standing on Reigns' head. A catapult into the middle rope gets two more for Luke as we're firmly in the power brawl stage.

There's a chinlock but Dean offers advice: "MOVE BABY!" The Gator Roll takes us to another chinlock before Reigns fights up and sends a charging

Harper into the post. Reigns wins a slugout but eats a dropkick, which surprised Lawler, even though Luke has done it multiple times. Then again I don't remember him doing it on Smackdown that often so maybe Jerry doesn't see it.

Roman drops Harper back first onto the apron and hits the apron boot, drawing over Dean and Bray for a staredown. The fight breaks out on the floor but Harper takes Reigns' head off to put both guys down. Another slugout goes to Roman until the referee pulls him off, allowing Harper to nail a superkick for a close two. The Superman Punch connects but Bray comes in for the DQ at 12:07.

Rating: B. That might be high but I had a really good time with this. It was two big power guys just beating the tar out of each other and making each shot sound harder than the previous one. The ending brings it down a bit but I'd rather have that than either guy taking another fall this close to Summerslam.

It's a huge brawl post match with the Wyatts being knocked into the crowd. Uso getting all hyped up is perfect here.

Sheamus doesn't want to talk about Monday night because people are tired of the same things over and over again. He was about to give them what they craved on Monday but Orton ruined everything. It was almost time for the age of the warriors but Orton knew he couldn't hang in that world so he broke it up like he was in a Terminator movie. Well on Monday, Sheamus will be back to Brogue Kick Orton until he's ground into dirt and erased from existence. Then it'll be just him and Rollins, when the future is just a Brogue Kick away. I liked this as Sheamus had a theme and stuck with it to keep things grounded for a change.

Neville and Cesaro talk strategy. Or maybe they swap banana bread recipes. The volume is off so I can't tell.

New Day vs. Prime Time Players

Non-title and Kofi is on the floor for a change. An inset promo from the Players say they're the big deal in the division because they have these titles. Darren: "Like an afro! Big round hair!" Big E. powers Titus down

to start but that's fine with O'Neil who picks E. up and throws him to the mat. Titus gets tossed to the floor so Kofi can get in a cheap shot, setting up the revolving stomps. That's such a simple yet effective spot. A running dropkick from Woods takes us to a break.

We come back with Titus in E.'s abdominal stretch but O'Neil quickly fights out and it's off to Young to clean house. The belly to back on the apron (as stolen by Reigns earlier in the night) drops Woods but E. breaks up the Gut Check. New Day goes to leave but Los Matadores and the Lucha Dragons cut off the escape route. E. gets dropped and it's Woods all alone with the champs, setting up a quick Gut Check for the pin at 8:27.

Rating: C-. Nothing great here but my goodness I hope they haven't put New Day on the bullet proof list. They barely ever win a big match anymore (no beating Los Matadores isn't big) and just stay over because of how awesome they are at talking. I'm really hoping they get better treatment than that because they've worked hard enough to deserve it.

Dancing ensues post match.

We get the long video from Raw on Undertaker vs. Lesnar.

Cesaro/Neville vs. Seth Rollins/Kevin Owens

Cesaro starts with the champ and holds him in the air for a delayed vertical suplex. He holds him up so long that Neville can take Owens down, followed by a quick splash as we take a break. Back with Owens holding Neville in a chinlock, which unfortunately has lost a lot of the spark Owens had put into it. I'm sure it's just because he's overweight though and has nothing to do with his push being stopped cold.

It's back to Rollins for a chinlock of his own but Neville grabs a jawbreaker to escape. Not that it matters as Owens comes back in for another chinlock as this is already getting dull. Another jawbreaker gets Neville out again but Rollins knocks Cesaro off the apron to break up a tag. The Cannonball gets two on Neville but he finally flips over for the tag in a nice move. Cesaro comes in and starts cleaning house with the running uppercuts to Rollins, totally rocking the champ.

Seth gets launched to the floor and both good guys hit suicide dives to take everyone out. Another running uppercut knocks Rollins onto the announcers' table and Cesaro gets two off a high cross body back inside. Owens comes back in and is promptly thrown to the floor again, but the distraction sets up the Buckle Bomb from Seth. The Pedigree is countered into the Sharpshooter though and Seth is dragged back to the middle of the ring. Owens comes in for the save again and has to fight off a Swing, allowing Rollins to grab a rollup with a handful of trunks for the pin at 11:46.

Rating: C+. Once they got past the never ending chinlocks (because people who look like Owens aren't allowed to be exciting in the ring. They tried it a few times against Cena but they got too close to great matches with someone who doesn't look like they were carved out of stone and WWE doesn't know how to handle that), this turned into the fun tag match they were shooting for. At least Cesaro got pinned with cheating and by someone higher up than him, but he needs to actually win something soon.

Seth bails so Owens gets slammed down, setting up the Red Arrow to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. There was enough good stuff on this show to make it work but it had too much filler. Two long videos really shouldn't be necessary on a two hour show, especially when it only had four matches. Still though, fun stuff this week and a good building show for Summerslam, which is all Smackdown needs to be for now.

Results

Charlotte b. Naomi – Figure Eight

Roman Reigns b. Luke Harper via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

Prime Time Players b. New Day – Gut Check to Woods

Kevin Owens/Seth Rollins b. Cesaro/Neville – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new

book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Smackdown – August 6, 2015: The Lamé Duck Can Kind Of Fly

Smackdown

Date: August 5, 2015

Location: Sleep Train Arena, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Jimmy Uso, Tom Phillips, Jerry Lawler

Summerslam is mostly set at this point so it's time for another supplemental show that can help firm up the midcard a little bit. We aren't likely to see much in the main event scene tonight after everything we saw on Monday, but that's what Smackdown does these days. The show has been fun lately so hopefully that keeps going. Let's get to it.

We get the Piper tribute video and a nice chant from the crowd.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns to get things going. After a quick sucking up to the crowd, Reigns says he wants to talk about Bray Wyatt. He thought Battleground was going to be a one on one match but that wasn't quite what happened. Instead it was a family reunion with Luke Harper, and

Reigns only has one family member. Reigns asks if the fans want to see a family war, and shockingly enough, they're more than up for it. That's a challenge for Summerslam and you can believe....fans: "THAT!" So he's got a catchphrase.

Cue Rusev and Summer Rae, as Rusev has Reigns later tonight. Rusev tells Reigns to get out of the ring right now because he has more interesting things to talk about. Reigns thinks this sounds important but Rusev tells him to be worried about their match later tonight.

Roman wants to know what Rusev has to talk about and wonders if it's about turning Summer into a Lana clone. Reigns: "She's not a Barbie." Uh....yeah she kind of is actually. Rusev rants in Russian but Reigns is one step ahead of him again. "This is America baby. We have NO idea what you just said." Rusev is welcome to come down here and have a chat with Reigns in a language that everyone understands but Rusev just walks away.

New Day vs. Mark Henry/Prime Time Players

Didn't we see this a few weeks back? Well to be fair we saw a rematch from last week's show on this week's Raw so I guess this is payback. Kind of? Big E.: "RETIRE ALREADY!" Woods hides from Darren in the corner to start before going right after Young with right hands and headbutts. We get a nice little back and forth wrestling sequence with Darren getting two off an atomic drop and boot to the head.

It's off to Kofi but he's quickly taken to the apron for a belly to back suplex. A big staredown takes us to a break. Back with Titus chopping the skin off Kofi's chest (Jimmy: "THERE GO THE NIPPLE!") before it's off to Henry for a right hand to the ribs. Kofi makes a blind tag to Big E. as Jimmy says he thinks the Lucha Dragons should be #1 contenders. How rare is it to hear someone make an actual pick instead of just saying "oh it could be anyone."?

Big E. sneaks in and takes Darren down as the New Day finally takes over. Woods whips Darren into a kick from Kofi, followed by a superkick. Big E. adds a Warrior splash for two but Young drops him with an enziguri, allowing for the hot tag to Titus. A powerslam plants Kofi but everything breaks down, allowing Henry to tag himself in. Titus catches Woods diving

at him and fall away slams him into the World's Strongest Slam for the pin at 10:56.

Rating: C. Well the ending was cool and I'm hoping this drops New Day out of the title match at Summerslam, or at least opens the doors for another team to get a chance. We've seen the Players vs. New Day twice already and it's really not that interesting. This was a fine match though with everyone doing their thing and even some nice wrestling sequences to fill in the holes between spots.

Clip of Swerved.

Post break New Day says Mark Henry just beat them, not the Prime Time Players. Henry should have retired a long time ago and they will NOT stand for this negativity. They are clean and pristine and the next Tag Team Champions. There's a new chant: "HEY! WE WANT SOME NEW DAY!"

Video on Charlotte.

Charlotte vs. Naomi

Feeling out process to start until Charlotte is taken into the corner for Naomi's headscissors shake, which is still really stupid. Charlotte doesn't take kindly to it either and slaps Naomi in the face, setting up an early Figure Eight but also drawing in Sasha Banks for the DQ at 1:56.

Time for a tag match playa! Who knew Mike Chioda was Teddy Long in disguise?

Charlotte/Becky Lynch vs. Naomi/Sasha Banks

Charlotte takes Sasha down to start before it's off to Becky for a double elbow. Naomi comes in and elbows Becky in the head to take over but Lynch grabs some nice rollups for two each. Some snap legdrops from Becky set up a kneedrop from Charlotte for another two, followed by the rolling headscissors. Tamina offers a distraction because she's still a thing, setting up a superkick to knock Charlotte out to the floor as B.A.D. takes over.

Naomi scores with a basement clothesline for two of her own and it's

chinlock time. Jimmy brings up Nikki being the Divas Champion and says until then, Team Bella is the winning team. I'm digging the stable wars idea, but Nikki needs to defend the thing already. Give her a squash win or something but she hasn't defended the thing since Beast in the East. Sasha's Backstabber sets up a double arm choke with her knees in the back instead of the Bank Statement, allowing Charlotte to roll free and flip Sasha backwards.

The tag brings in Becky for a bouncing kick to Naomi's face, followed by a t-bone suplex for a near fall. That earns her a superkick and legdrop from Naomi and it's time for another chinlock. We take a break and come back with Sasha kneeing Becky in the back and Naomi taunting Becky by making her look at Charlotte. Nice touch there.

Back to Sasha for a double arm choke until Becky is able to dive over for the tag off to Charlotte. A quick spear gets two on Sasha but Naomi comes in without a tag and takes Sasha's place. They fight over a small package and Naomi gets the clean (well as clean as you can be while being in there illegally) pin at 14:58.

Rating: C+. Treat them seriously, get a good match. That's one of the major things about this whole Divas Revolution idea: they're treating the Divas seriously for a change and it's become a much better division. This was another quality match which was given the time to get somewhere, which helps quite a bit. However, GET TO THE TITLE STUFF ALREADY.

Clips of Neville vs. Rollins on Raw.

Stardust vs. Zack Ryder

Before the match we get clips of Stardust calling out Stephen Amell on Raw, setting up a showdown on next week's show. Ryder works on the arm to start but Stardust does a kind of handstand to kick Zack in the head. Off to a bow and arrow hold on Ryder but Zack flips out and scores with a flapjack. A middle rope missile dropkick sets up the Broski Boot but the Rough Ryder is countered, setting up the Queen's Crossbow for the pin on Zack at 3:55.

Rating: D+. I'm not sure where this Stardust/Neville/Amell feud is going

(though in theory it's just a match at Summerslam with Amell in the corner) but I'm getting into this more and more every week. Then again it could be that I'm a comic book geek and really like Arrow and both guys are pretty awesome in their roles.

Stardust is thrilled that Amell is coming to Raw on Monday.

We see Heyman's last rites promo from Raw. The line of "the match bigger than Wrestlemania" is a great touch.

Big Show is throwing punches in the back and says Ryback is like Rocky. The idea is fine, but Show's Rocky voice is horrible. As for Miz, he's trying to turn this part time role into a full time role, and if he doesn't drop it, Big Show is going to turn his face into a Halloween mask.

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

We get a big staredown to start in a vain attempt to recreate the awesome ending to the battle royal last year. They shove each other around to start with Rusev running Roman over, only to have Reigns do the same, followed by a headlock. Back up and Reigns is flipped over to the apron, where he punches and kicks Rusev in the face like a good gladiator should. Rusev is able to post him though and it's off to a commercial.

We come back with Rusev holding a nerve hold to kill some time. A spinning belly to back suplex gets two on Reigns but he avoids a middle rope headbutt. Reigns finally scores with a clothesline, followed by another clothesline and then a series of clotheslines in the corner. After hitting the apron boot and spitting a bit, Reigns charges into what's called a spinning heel kick but looked more like a flying hip to the face.

Rusev hammers away in the corner until Reigns powerbombs him down for two more. The Superman Punch connects but Summer starts lurking. Cue Lana for a catfight but Rusev nails Reigns with the superkick for two. Rusev freaks out over Reigns getting up at two and walks around long enough for Reigns to spear him down for the pin at 15:30.

Rating: C. Remember when pinning Rusev was a big deal? Well now it's happened twice in a few weeks with Cesaro and Reigns both getting three on him. It's not the biggest shock in the world as that's the nature of undefeated monsters but it's still a bit disappointing to see. This was fine for a Smackdown main event but not much more.

The show looks to be over but Bray Wyatt's clapping hands appear on screen. He tried to warn Roman that Bray's hands would be the ones that would tear down the Roman Empire. The challenge for Summerslam is accepted. Roman can bring his lunatic because Bray will bring his brother, because Bray welcomes this war.

Overall Rating: C+. This was fine. That's about as much as I can think of for it though. The show had some good wrestling, some story advancement and absolutely nothing that is really going to matter once the next Raw comes and goes. It's the nature of Smackdown: they can do whatever they want and it means nothing, which is likely going to be the case after they move to USA as well, but I can hope at least.

Results

Prime Time Players/Mark Henry b. New Day – World's Strongest Slam to Woods

Charlotte b. Naomi via DQ when Sasha Banks interfered

Naomi/Sasha Banks b. Charlotte/Becky Lynch – Small package to Charlotte

Stardust b. Zack Ryder – Queen's Crossbow

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

Battleground 2015: Burn It To The Ground

Battleground 2015

Date: July 19, 2015

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

It's time for the show that is here to fill time until it's Summerslam, which usually isn't the most interesting thing in the world. The main event tonight is Seth Rollins defending the World Title against Brock Lesnar in Brock's return title match after Rollins stole the title at Wrestlemania. We also have Owens vs. Cena III for Cena's US Title which has the potential to steal the show again. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: King Barrett vs. R-Truth

For the crown in one of the worst feuds I can remember in a long time. Truth takes him into the corner to start and bunny hops out as we hear a very brief history of the King's Crown Title from the 1980s. Barrett shoves him away but gets a pelvic thrust and dropkick. A slingshot dive drops Barrett as Lawler makes big nose jokes. The announcers babble about BB King, Stephen King and Burger King as we take a break.

Back with Barrett stretching the arms and JBL talking about working on a rap album with Truth. This goes about as far as you would expect until Truth fights back and gets two off an ax kick. Lawler: "He's got the whole world in his nose!" Winds of Change gets two on Truth and the Bull Hammer FINALLY gives Barrett the pin at 9:10.

Rating: F. The wrestling sucked, but this fails due to the jokes and the

story. This has been a lame story since the beginning and they've made no secret about the fact that no one cares what happens here. Barrett is right back where he started and that's not something you want from someone who is supposed to be a big deal after winning the tournament. Awful stuff and please let him do anything new, as long as it's serious.

The opening video talks about how the matches tonight have led to a battleground to decide their final fate. This isn't exactly making up for the lame build.

Randy Orton vs. Sheamus

This is due to Sheamus helping Kane beat Orton a few weeks back, triggering a feud that most people aren't all that interested in seeing. Big pop for the hometown Orton, even though he isn't billed from St. Louis here. Feeling out process to start with Sheamus bailing to the floor, only to have Randy follow him outside to start the beating. The fans get behind Orton but the match immediately gets back to its boring pace.

Sheamus comes back with a kick to the ribs and Orton is in trouble. Three straight Irish Curses put Orton down again for two and a knee drop gets the same. It's time to hit that chinlock as this is normally the time where we would be coming back from a commercial. Back up and they slug it out with Orton getting the better of it (duh) before they head outside to keep up the fight.

Orton drops him onto the table and snaps off the powerslam for two more back inside. The elevated DDT is countered with a necksnap across the top and a tilt-a-whirl powerslam gets another two. Can we please get to the pay per view level stuff and drop this TV style? I know it's the most important thing but it's still nothing I want to see. Both finishers are countered so Sheamus plants him with White Noise for two.

Sheamus goes up but eats a bunch of right hands, setting up the superplex for, say it with me, two. The elevated DDT connects this time and the place goes nuts for the RKD set up but Sheamus rolls him up for two. The Brogue Kick connects out of nowhere but Sheamus can't cover. Instead it's the Cloverleaf with Orton having to crawl to the ropes twice. Not that it

matters as the RK0 finishes Sheamus at 16:46.

Rating: C+. This took its time to get going but the second half was far better than the first. In other words, it was another good TV match formula transferred over to pay per view. Orton going over here, while annoying in a way, was the right choice for an opener, even though I hate Sheamus losing as Mr. Money in the Bank. Good back and forth stuff here though and I got a lot more into it after that chinlock.

Cole talks about the revolution in the Divas' division setting social media on fire. Therefore, it's time to recap the Stephanie segment from Raw because that was the focus of the entire thing. Stephanie saying she set the table was horrible and made Paige's whole story look worthless because Stephanie had to be there to get the credit for everything.

Stephanie, playing a total face instead of the heel authority figure, sucks up to the live crowd. Tonight there's a triple threat match between each Divas' trio and Stephanie will accept nothing less than the house being torn down.

Tag Team Titles: Prime Time Players vs. New Day

New Day is challenging after losing the belts to the Players at Money in the Bank. Before the match, New Day talks about staying positive because they know they have to reap the rewards of their sacrifices soon. Woods is on the floor as Kofi starts with Darren. Kofi is a bit too fast for Young so it's off to Titus for some VERY loud chops in the corner. A New Day conference leads to a tag to Big E., who eats a legdrop from Titus. Woods: "WORST LEGDROP EVER!"

It's back to Darren who gets thrown outside as the champs take over, allowing Xavier to be an even more obnoxious (meaning AWESOME) cheerleader. We get the alternating stomps, capped off by a running basement dropkick. Woods: "OH IT'S SO GOOD!" An apron splash gets two on Young (that looked good) and we hit the abdominal stretch.

Woods shouts about tricep meat and Darren scores with an enziguri, setting up the hot tag to Titus so house can be cleaned. Titus' dominance doesn't last long though as it's quickly back to Young. The Midnight Hour

is broken up and the Gut Check sends Kofi to the floor. O'Neil comes back in for the Clash of the Titus on Big E. to retain at 8:53.

Rating: D+. Well that's a surprise. I'm not sure how I feel about the result as the Players are little more than adequate and New Day is still one of the funniest acts in wrestling. The match was nothing to see but the Players retaining is an acceptable result. It's more of a surprise than anything else, and that's not the worst thing in the world.

Paige is with Charlotte and Becky Lynch in the back and makes sure to praise Stephanie for starting the revolution. They're going to tear the house down tonight and rebuild the division brick by brick.

We recap Reigns vs. Wyatt, which started with Bray using Reigns' daughter to get inside his head, before saying anyone but Reigns. The idea seems to be that Reigns hasn't earned the hero role and Wyatt wants anyone else there, but as usual it isn't clear with Bray.

Bray Wyatt vs. Roman Reigns

The fireflies continue to look awesome. They lock up to start with Bray hammering him down in the corner for a bit of a surprise. The fans are WAY into Wyatt here, though it might be more anti-Roman instead. An uppercut sends Wyatt to the floor but he pops Reigns with one of his own to take over again. The cross body block takes Reigns down again but Reigns Samoan drops him out to the floor.

Wyatt is fine with the violence of course and sends Reigns into the steps as this has been almost all Bray so far. They slug it out on the apron for something different, setting up a Wyatt DDT on the apron for something painful. We hit the chinlock and get a creepy Wyatt smile as he pulls back. That's the kind of thing Wyatt does very well and it's a great addition to the whole package. Reigns finally powers up with a belly to back suplex to break the hold.

It's time for the comeback, thankfully with only one standing clothesline. Another belly to back drops Wyatt but he clotheslines Reigns out of the air to break up the apron kick (now the Drive By apparently). Bray adds a backsplash on the floor but takes too long putting Reigns on

top, allowing Roman to Batista Bomb him out of the corner for a very close two. The Superman Punch misses but Reigns drops him on the apron again.

The apron boot (screw that Drive By nonsense) connects but Bray shakes it off and Rock Bottoms Reigns (appropriate) for two. Fans: "THAT WAS THREE!" I know they've been talking about making Wyatt face for a long time now and the fan support seems to be there. Sister Abigail is countered into the Superman Punch (with Bray falling before it connected) for two. This is surprising, despite that almost never being a finisher. Reigns gets all fired up and tries the spear but eats a boot, followed by getting all fired up again but charging into a right hand. You have to change it up a bit you see.

Sister Abigail is broken up (obvious due to being a slow kiss) so Reigns hits ten clotheslines in the corner and another Samoan drop. Both guys are spent so Bray grabs some chairs. Reigns knocks them away just as quickly though and grabs chairs of his own. All four chairs wind up in the ring but someone in a hood superkicks Reigns, allowing Bray to hit Sister Abigail for the pin at 22:10.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I thought I would and Bray getting the win is a very nice sign. Reigns is going to be a big deal and Wyatt could be as well, but at some point you need to win matches like this one. The interference is a good sign as well with Bray's best days being as a cult leader, so why not let him try it again?

The guy gets in the ring and it's....Luke Harper, so maybe the reunion is on.

Naomi, Tamina and Sasha Banks (collectively known as B.A.D., meaning Beautiful and Dangerous, as well as the fact that they're doomed because that's a horrible name) are ready for the triple threat.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte vs. Nikki Bella

All nine are here. Nikki and Sasha have a staredown before the match and it's going to be Brie instead. Oh yay.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte vs. Brie Bella

Thankfully Brie is sent outside early on, leaving the two that know what they're doing in the ring. Charlotte gets her throat snapped across the top rope, leaving Brie to come in with her catfight style Thesz press. That's fine with Sasha, who sends both of them to the corner for the double knees to the ribs for two each. It seems that they're keeping Brie out of the action for the most part here and it's no secret that that's a good idea.

Sasha headscissors Charlotte down for two and hits a pair of running knees in the corner for the same. Brie makes a save as the fans want Becky. Charlotte clotheslines both of them down but Brie comes back with her own screaming clotheslines. A double bulldog kind of works but Brie just gets two on both. Back up and Sasha sidesteps a charge, sending Charlotte into Brie instead. They're doing a really good job of keeping Brie limited here while the talented ones do their thing.

Brie comes back in with a double missile dropkick (with the camera barely catching it), setting up the BRIE MODE running knees to the chest. The Bellas huddle on the floor but are quickly surrounded, setting up a BIG staredown. Sasha dives through the ropes to take out a lot of them, followed by Charlotte diving on the rest. Back in and Brie breaks up the Bank Statement on Charlotte, only to have the Bella Buster countered into the Figure Eight for the submission at 11:31. Cole: "TEAM BELLA IS MORTAL!" Oh shut up Michael.

Rating: C+. This was as well booked as they could have made it. You want to keep Nikki away from these newcomers as long as you can and Brie is about as perfect of a sacrifice as there is. It was clear that Brie couldn't hang with the other two and it would have been crazy to imply she could. This was better than I was expecting and it's clear that they want the Divas to mean something, which is a great sign.

The preshow panel recaps the night, including Barrett beating Truth.

Long recap of Cena vs. Owens. They traded wins in their first two classics but tonight Cena's US Title is on the line. Owens claims that Cena keeps disrespecting him but Owens has never been the kind of guy

that says what he really means.

US Title: John Cena vs. Kevin Owens

Cena is defending and gets the JOHN CENA SUCKS song. Cena: "RAIN IT DOWN!" Owens gets in the first big shot to start and slugs Cena down with forearms to the back. More big shots put Cena down and the backsplash (just wait until Owens or Bray have to drop that one) gets two. Cena tries a comeback with a dropkick but Owens puts him down one more time, only to miss a swanton. It's really impressive that a guy his size can do something like that.

Owens busts out Cena's finishing sequence but the AA is countered into Cena's STF. The rope is quickly grabbed as Cena starts his comeback, only to Kevin catch the top rope legdrop into a sitout powerbomb for two more. An AA gets two for the champ, thereby fulfilling the quota for the match. The sunset bomb gets the same but Owens busts out the swinging superplex for the same.

Back up and the Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana, setting up an AA to Cena, followed by an STF to really fire up the crowd. John finally makes the ropes and dives for a tornado DDT, which still doesn't put Owens away. The Springboard Stunner does better than usual but Owens stays going and takes Cena's head off with a clothesline. No cover though, as Owens goes with the brainbuster onto the knee for two instead.

Another AA gets another two on Kevin and the Pop Up Powerbomb gets the same on the champ. Owens heads up top again and gets caught one more time, setting up the super AA for two. I don't think anyone has ever kicked out of that one before so well done. Cena has the same face he had when the Rock beat him at Wrestlemania so it's off to a rematch that no one wanted to see. Actually it's the STF instead and Owens taps at 22:14.

Rating: B+. I didn't like this one quite as much as the other two and I have no idea why you don't put the title on Owens here. Owens kicked out of the super finisher and then just taps out to the regular finish? That's some backwards booking to put it mildly, despite a great match to get there. Owens will be fine, but this really should have been his big

moment. As a sidebar, they really didn't put Cesaro and/or Rusev on this show somewhere? Really?

Here's Miz for a chat instead of the Intercontinental Title match. Miz rips on Ryback for bailing on the match because it's messed up his branding team's plans for talk show appearances as the new champion. He knows he's the toughest man in St. Louis and thinks Big Show should retire like everyone wants him to do. Big Show comes out and lays Miz out with one punch as you would expect him to do.

Long recap of Rollins vs. Lesnar. Seth stole the World Title by cashing in Money in the Bank at Wrestlemania, but tonight Lesnar is out for revenge and his title. Brock has also broken Kane's ankle and put the Stooges out of action to make this one on one. Also something about breaking a car for some product placement.

WWE World Heavyweight Title: Seth Rollins vs. Brock Lesnar

Seth is defending of course but Brock drives him into the corner for some shoulders to the ribs. An early German attempt sends Seth outside and the champ gets Brock to chase him. Back in and some kicks to the leg have Brock staggered, but Rollins dives into the first German. Three more send Rollins flying and it's out to the floor. He tries to run but Brock just hurdles the barricade and throws him back to ringside. Well that's one way to get him back.

German #6 has Rollins in even more trouble and Brock looks livid. Rollins backflips out of #7 and hits a superkick (way too common a move tonight), followed by three straight low superkicks. Another regular superkick means Rollins can apply to be a Young Buck, but the Pedigree is easily countered. Rollins hits a pair of suicide dives but Brock charges in and throws Rollins with a belly to belly.

Brock rolls three more Germans (10), followed by a release for #11. We're up to thirteen and Rollins looks dead. The F5 connects.....and we've got Undertaker. Brock looks terrified but escapes a chokeslam. The F5 is countered and Undertaker kicks him in the face. We'll say the match was thrown out at 9:00.

Rating: C+. I really didn't like this one as I'm getting tired of all the suplexes. I know Brock is capable of doing other stuff but he's basically a popular Royal Rumble 2003 Scott Steiner in this formula. It's still entertaining enough but Brock can do more stuff than just throw Germans everywhere all the time. This was probably their best idea, but I'm not sure who goes after the belt next.

The chokeslam works the second time and Brock gets tombstoned for good measure. Rollins is nowhere in sight during any of this. A second Tombstone has Heyman freaking out and Undertaker poses to end the show. The fans were behind him so I think it's face vs. face at Summerslam.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a really tricky one to grade as it's much more a collection of good to quite good matches instead of a great show. The Undertaker stuff could go a bunch of ways, but it's cool to see him doing ANYTHING other than his usual Wrestlemania appearance. The show was better than I was expecting and for a Summerslam warmup, I'll call it a big success. Just keep the scale in mind when you consider that big success.

Results

Randy Orton b. Sheamus – RKO

Prime Time Players b. New Day – Clash of the Titus to Big E.

Bray Wyatt b. Roman Reigns – Sister Abigail

Charlotte b. Brie Bella and Sasha Banks – Figure Eight to Bella

John Cena b. Kevin Owens – STF

Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins went to a no contest when Undertaker interfered

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume III at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00XOUNBEA>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books

at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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 genius like 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

New Column: From Days Gone By

I ramble about character development for a few pages.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-days-gone/36486/>