

# Monday Night Raw – March 24, 2014: Everything But Bryan

## Monday Night Raw

Date: March 24, 2014

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

We're just two weeks from the biggest show of the year but tonight is about the guest stars. Tonight we've got a double shot with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Scooby-Doo, the latter of whom is here because the WWE animated movie comes out tomorrow. Other than that we get the fallout from Bryan being attacked by the boss last week and a showdown between Undertaker and Lesnar. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's closing sequence with the fake cops and Stephanie ranting about respect and HHH destroying Bryan with a chair.

Here's Stephanie to get things going. She talks about how people on social media have been saying how what HHH did last week was disgusting. However, the Authority won't let the YES Movement steer this ship the wrong way. The WWE needs leadership through strong people like herself. The fans LOUDLY cheer for Punk but Stephanie just goes through them until it calms down. She lists off some of HHH's accolades but gets Randy Orton instead.

Randy respects HHH but if he beats Daniel Bryan earlier in the night (Stephanie: "You mean when he beats Daniel Bryan."), he'll do whatever he has to do to retain the title. The fans chant for Bryan and Stephanie acknowledges them by saying he's not coming out. Orton sucks up to Stephanie and suggests that HHH beat the tar out of Daniel Bryan, but let that be it for the night for HHH. The New York fans think this is boring but here's Batista to really fire them up.

Big Dave says the fans can chant and the two people in the ring can run their mouths all they want, but he's the next WWE Champion. The mic cuts out a bit as Batista tells us to DEAL WITH IT. Things stop a bit as we fix the mic until Batista points out that HHH has never beaten him. Batista calls Orton out for sucking up to everyone lately and drooling on Stephanie. "I think she's been drooled on before. Actually, make that a lot." Stephanie slaps Batista for the insult and Orton is nearly keeling over in what looks to be shock or laughter. Stephanie walks out and Batista spears Orton down to LOUD booing.

### Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Christian vs. Alberto Del Rio

Winner gets an Intercontinental Title shot tomorrow night on Main Event against Big E. It's one fall to a finish and anything goes. Sheamus and Christian fight on the floor to start until we get down to Sheamus vs. Ziggler in the ring. They trade strikes for a bit until the guys switch off again. Christian dives to the floor but gets caught by Sheamus, who launches him into the barricade with a fall away slam.

Sheamus loads up the ten forearms to Ziggler but has to duck a running enziguri from Del Rio. Dolph knocks Sheamus to the floor and gets two on Del Rio but Christian pulls Ziggler outside again. Sheamus hits a Cactus Clothesline on Christian, sending both of them into the timekeeper's area as we take a break.

Back with Ziggler and Christian in the ring as Sheamus hits the rolling fireman's carry to Del Rio on the floor. Christian hits a high cross body on Dolph but gets rolled through for two. A loud ZIGGLER chant starts up as Christian stands on Dolph's head for two. Ziggler gets knocked to the floor so Sheamus hits his ax handles and high knee to Christian. Alberto charges into the Irish Curse and Christian is sent to the floor. The ten forearms puts Alberto on the floor so Sheamus goes up for a dive, only to be taken down by a top rope X Factor for two from Ziggler.

The running DDT gets two on Del Rio but Christian snaps the back of

Dolph's neck across the top rope. The fans think this is awesome as Christian counters a Fameasser into a powerbomb for two. Del Rio breaks up the pin with a superkick but Sheamus breaks up the pin. There's the Cloverleaf on Del Rio but Sheamus breaks it up to powerslam Christian. Del Rio breaks up the Brogue Kick and puts Sheamus in the cross armbreaker. Sheamus powers up and lifts Alberto up but Zigler takes them both down with a Zig Zag. Christian comes back in with the Killswitch to Dolph for the pin out of nowhere at 12:00.

**Rating:** B. I had a great time with this one and I was wondering who was going to win in the end. That's the best thing you can ask for in a match most of the time and it worked very well here. Christian vs. Big E. is fine for a one off match and the other guys looked great as well.

Christian won't shake Big E.'s hand after the match.

The Wyatts pop up on screen and Bray talks about fans being interested in things they can't see. But they can see Cena everywhere because he's on billboards and t-shirts. Bray is someone you can't see because he is the key to the city of woe. He's everywhere but you can only feel him. Harper says they're coming to fight Cena. Run.

We get a clip of the Scooby-Doo movie and here's the Mystery Machine in the arena. Sin Cara (the second biggest wrestler in the movie. If it was based on the active roster, he would be the Daniel Bryan to John Cena) pops out and here's Scooby to go with him. It's a guy in a costume if that wasn't clear.

#### Sin Cara vs. Damien Sandow

The lighting is back. Sin avoids a charge in the corner and hits a springboard cross body and the Tajiri Elbow, followed by the Swanton for the pin at 1:07.

We look at Kane and the Outlaws beating down the Shield on Friday.

### Los Matadores vs. Curtis Axel/Ryback

Ryback and Axel are officially out of the battle royal and will be getting a Tag Team Title match at Wrestlemania. Curtis starts with Fernando but the Shield comes to the barricade for a distraction, allowing Fernando to get the pin at 1:05.

Shield destroys Ryback and Axel post match with the spear and Triple Bomb laying Ryback out.

Cole brings out HHH for a sitdown interview. We look at the attack from last week and Cole asks HHH to justify that. HHH wants to know if he wants an answer as the COO or a competitor. He goes on a short rant about taking advantage of an upcoming opponent before shifting towards Occupy Raw. Bryan and the fans tried to hijack Raw and the people were put in danger. HHH asks Cole why he chalked that up to a memorable moment but what HHH did was despicable.

What happened to this world since HHH stopped competing full time? He did horrible things to people and looked into their eyes, seeing the same lust for success that he had. People would fight the system but now he sees soft and pathetic people in the crowd. He sees a bunch of powerless people with no desire who cry when they don't get what they want. If they're mad, Tweet him about it. HHH is sick of the whole thing because the world has changed and he doesn't like it.

Maybe it's on him to decide where everything goes. This is the beginning of the Reality Era and the reality is this: at Wrestlemania, he ends Daniel Bryan's little run at the top and ends the YES Movement along with it. The reality is at Wrestlemania he'll beat Daniel Bryan and enter a triple threat match where he'll take the WWE Title for himself instead of living off past glory. Really solid stuff from the Game here.

## Fandango vs. Cody Rhodes

Goldust has a mask over his face paint now. Fandango takes over to start and a slingshot legdrop gets two. A snap suplex gets the same and Fandango cranks on the arm a bit. Cody comes back with a springboard dropkick but Summer and Goldust have a dance off. Summer hurts her ankle and Cody hits a quick Disaster Kick for the pin at 2:48.

Clip from the new Schwarzenegger movie Sabotage.

Here's Hogan with something to say but we have to wait for the big nostalgia chant. He doesn't want to be nostalgic but Wrestlemania is two weeks away. We might be in a different part of the city, but thirty years ago he and Mr. T. made history in New York. Hogan stops to point at the sign and says he's real psyched up for Wrestlemania. He's also excited about tonight's guest starts: Joe Maganeillo and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Joe is taller than Hogan so Arnold looks tiny out there. The fans love Arnold and give him a big ovation. A year ago Arnold got to induct Bruno Sammartino into the Hall of Fame with another great hero like Hulk Hogan. Arnold raves about Hogan's physique and asks the fans to cheer Joe. Maganeillo talks about how pumped he is to be in the ring with two icons like Hulk and Arnold. Arnold brings up the battle royal and talks about hanging out with Andre on a movie set. He asks if Hogan has room for two more athletes in the battle royal but here's Miz to interrupt.

Miz says he'll be going to see Sabotage, just like Arnold and Joe went to see his movies. He guarantees to win the battle royal but Hogan says he's in the wrong place. Joe says if Miz wants the three of them gone to get rid of them himself. All three guys get in a shot and Hogan throws Miz over the top.

## Big Show vs. Titus O'Neill

Titus kicks Big Show into the corner and stomps away to send Big Show to the mat. A legdrop gets two and a splash in the corner has Big Show in trouble again. The fans chant for Punk again as Titus drops Big Show with a flying shoulder for two. Big Show shrugs it off, spears Titus down and hits the WMD for the pin at 2:24.

Shield comes in to see the Authority and wants to know where the three of them stand in this whole thing. HHH says the business between Kane, the Outlaws and the Shield is between the six of them. Stephanie makes Shield vs. Real Americans for later and they can discuss things afterwards. Reigns gives HHH a bit of a look.

John Cena is in the bathroom and running water over his face. The sheep mask can be seen in the mirror.

#### John Cena vs. Luke Harper

Luke takes Cena into the corner to start and the fans are all over John here. Cena fights back but walks into a backbreaker for two. A loud LET'S GO HARPER chant starts up as Cena comes back with right hands in the corner. Something resembling a Stinger Splash crushes Harper in the corner but he walks into a pumphandle throw for two. Cena is thrown to the floor and Bray crouches in front of him but Harper comes out with a forearm to the back. We get a Fruity Pebbles chant as Harper hammers away even more.

Back with Cena fighting out of a chinlock but walking into a suplex to put him down again. The AA is countered and Harper gets two off a boot to the face. Cena counters the discus lariat into the ProtoBomb but Harper pops up and hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Luke tries a powerbomb but gets countered into what was supposed to be a hurricanrana. The STF is kicked away to send Cena to the floor and Harper hits a great looking suicide dive. Cena's head bounced off the barricade and Bray came out of his chair.

Back in and Cena grabs the STF but Harper pokes him in the eye. A DDT gets two on John and Harper puts him on the top rope. Cena powers out of a butterfly superplex attempt and hits the top rope Fameasser for two. A second ProtoBomb and the Shuffle connect but Harper escapes the AA and picks him up for a belly to back suplex, only to slam Cena face first into the mat.

Cena EXPLODES out of the corner with a clothesline but the lights go out as he loads up the AA. You can hear something in the ring and as the lights come back on, Cena is tied in the ropes with the sheep mask on. The Wyatts surround an unconscious Cena as the match is thrown out at about 14:00.

**Rating:** B. I was digging this match and I really liked the ending. Harper looked better tonight than he ever has before which gives me hope for his future. The ending with Cena being tied up and us not seeing what happened to him is creepy as there's something terrifying about having to imagine what those three monsters did to him.

Divas Title: Naomi vs. AJ Lee

AJ is defending. Naomi quickly sends her to the floor but AJ says she doesn't need this. She skips out and it's a countout at 1:12.

Post match here's Vickie Guerrero who AJ insulted on Smackdown. Vickie didn't care for what AJ said on Smackdown, so at Wrestlemania it will be the Vickie Guerrero Divas Championship Special. AJ will defend against the Funkadactyls, the Bella Twins, Natalya, Eva Marie, Emma, Aksana, Alicia Fox, Summer Rae, Rosa Mendes, Layla and Tamina.

Scott Hall is announced for the Hall of Fame.

We look at the opening segment again. Orton vs. Batista one on one next week.

### Real Americans vs. Shield

It's Rollins and Ambrose meeting the Americans in the aisle to start the big brawl. The fans chant WE THE PEOPLE as Ambrose throws Cesaro inside for the opening bell. Dean stomps him down in the corner and we get a Hart Attack with Rollins hitting a neckbreaker instead of a clothesline. Off to Swagger but Seth meets him with right hands and Three Amigos with Ambrose helping out on the third.

Shield takes their turns on Swagger until he drives Dean into the corner for the tag to Cesaro. The WE THE PEOPLE chants continue as Cesaro takes over and puts Dean in a chinlock. Back to Swagger for the Vader Bomb but Ambrose gets his feet up. A middle rope back elbow drops Swagger but Cesaro knocks Seth off the apron. Cesaro counters a backdrop into the Swing but Seth breaks up the cover. Ambrose is sent outside and the Americans swing him by his arms and legs into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro putting Dean in a front facelock but making the mistake of slapping him. Dean says bring it so Cesaro kicks him in the chest. Dean pops back up and clotheslines Cesaro down, finally allowing the hot tag to Seth. Rollins cleans house and hits the running forearm in the corner to set up a Downward Spiral into the middle buckle. Cesaro gets LAUNCHED over the top to the floor and Swagger gets clotheslined as well.

A suicide dive puts Cesaro into the crowd and Seth runs back in for a BIG flip dive to take Jack down as well. Back in and a top rope knee to the head drops Swagger but Cesaro makes the save. Ambrose runs in but gets backdropped to the floor. Rollins clotheslines Cesaro outside but gets caught in the Patriot Lock. He makes the rope and lands on his feet, setting up an enziguri and the Black Out (now called Peace of Mind) for the pin at 14:00.

**Rating:** B-. Seth Rollins is perfect for what he's doing at the moment and Ambrose continues to look awesome. Face Shield is totally working for me as they've transitioned perfectly in about a week. That's a sign of incredible talent and another reason why Shield is the best act in a long time.

Post match Reigns hits the Superman Punch and spear on Cesaro, setting up the Triple Bomb through the table. Shield poses but Kane and the Outlaws (all in suits) come to the stage. Kane announces the six man tag at Wrestlemania. The Outlaws just do not work for me in this role at all. Shield just tore the house down with two very talented guys. I'm not buying into seeing the Outlaws do their little shortcuts and the same jokes we've heard on a million reunion shows.

It just doesn't work for me and the minute I saw them come out on Smackdown I lost most of my interest in this story. What does Shield get out of this feud? A rub from a former World Champion? They've gotten that from far bigger stars than Kane. A match against former Tag Team Champions? They've destroyed every team they've fought and had a better match at Elimination Chamber than the Outlaws could ever dream of. This is a BIG step down for Shield and it doesn't interest me in the slightest.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar to close the show. Paul talks about how the Streak is the most impressive thing in WWE history, which is why Brock (sporting an Eat, Sleep, Break the Streak shirt) is going to end it. That doesn't take away from the 21 victories that Undertaker has and his legacy will still be great. John Cena couldn't go 21-0, Andre the Giant couldn't go 21-0 and even Brock Lesnar will never be able to be 21-0 at Wrestlemania.

Paul goes on about how important Wrestlemania is but Brock takes the mic. He says he's here to fight and since he and Undertaker are both here, let's do it right now. There's no gong but we've got druids. They bring a casket to ringside as the chanting plays through the arena. The druids

stand in the aisle and Brock is starting to look a bit nervous as he stares at the casket. Brock kicks at the lid as the chanting continues. He finally opens it but the casket is empty. Heyman isn't pleased as Brock asks if this is some kind of joke.

Brock goes to yell at the druids who start to walk away. He slowly stalks them but they get most of the way up the ramp. Brock walks back to the ring and closes the casket, drawing an Undertaker chant. Lesnar says he's not here to play games and Paul starts to talk, but Brock says he's leaving.

Heyman stops him because that's what Undertaker wants. Paul rants about Undertaker being a coward and says all Undertaker can do is an empty casket, so of course the casket opens up to reveal Undertaker. He sits up and Paul PANICS. The lights come on and Brock looks scared but doesn't bail. The fight is on with Undertaker hammering away and clotheslining Brock onto the casket. Paul says it's not worth it and begs Lesnar to leave. Lesnar points to the sign as Undertaker does the throat slit to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A-. The Wrestlemania build continues to rock as tonight they focused on Shield, Batista, Orton and HHH. Bryan wasn't there tonight but that's a good thing in a way. Yeah the odds are that Bryan leaves with the title, but they're doing a great job of planting even the slightest bit of doubt. Daniel Bryan vs. HHH is arguably the real main event, but they're making it seem like there's a chance that something else could happen, and that's the right move.

Other than that we had some great build for the show with the battle royal getting a nice focus and a solid main event segment as well. We also got some of the best in ring action we've had on this show in months with the long matches being good and the short matches being the uninteresting ones. Couple that with three new matches being announced to likely fill out the card and I was very pleased tonight. The company is clicking at the right time and that's all that matters.

## Results

Christian b. Sheamus, Alberto Del Rio and Dolph Ziggler – Killswitch to Ziggler

Sin Cara b. Damien Sandow – Swanton Bomb

Los Matadores b. Curtis Axel/Sin Cara – Rollup to Axel

Cody Rhodes b. Fandango – Disaster Kick

Big Show b. Titus O'Neil – WMD

John Cena vs. Luke Harper went to a no contest

Naomi b. AJ Lee via countout

Shield b. Real Americans – Peace of Mind to Swagger

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# **Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 18, 2014**

Last night's show was about driving these shows into the fans' hearts. The matches are mostly set but now we need a reason to care about what we're watching. The show did a good job of making you feel what the wrestlers were feeling and that's hard to do. Let's get to it.

The HHH/Batista/Orton argument to start things off was as good as it was going to be. Batista being acknowledged as a movie star and the No Paparazzi shirt were signs of a character change for him and of things to come. HHH getting so frustrated with both guys that he put himself into the match makes sense and offers some drama to the Bryan vs. HHH match.

Yeah it's obvious that Bryan makes the title match and gets the belt (in theory) but it's nice to see them adding something to it. There's nothing wrong with having an obvious ending, but adding some drama isn't a bad idea. This is the Mike Tyson as guest referee of Wrestlemania XXX.

It's also nice to see some animosity between Batista and Orton. Until now they've just been kind of there in the background of Daniel Bryan vs. HHH which didn't work as there was no actual guarantee either of them would make the title match leading into last night. I'm glad they haven't been forgotten because there's a natural history there if they'll just acknowledge it. Making it a three or even a fourway isn't my favorite thing in the world but it's the logical call this year.

The Real Americans beat the Usos to presumably earn a title shot. Because THERE ARE NO OTHER IDEAS IN THE HISTORY OF BOOKING OTHER THAN HAVING THE CHAMPIONS GET PINNED BY A CHALLENGER BECAUSE JUST HAVING A FREAKING #1 CONTENDERS MATCH IS TOO COMPLICATED FOR A BUNCH OF HOLLYWOOD HACKS WHO CAN'T GET A JOB OUTSIDE OF STEPHANIE MCMAHON'S OFFICE!!!

I wasn't big on the booking if that wasn't clear.

WWE has a new animated series called Slam City where the wrestlers all

get fired and have to get real jobs. It's an idea but can we get a Hulk's Rock And Wrestling channel on the Network?

Sheamus beat Titus O'Neil in the St. Patrick's Day thing. It's nothing of note but it looks like Titus is going to become a jobber to the stars. Titus, Sheamus and Christian are all in the battle royal which isn't a surprise.

Arnold Schwarzenegger and Scooby Doo will be guest stars next week. Yeah Arnold isn't a big deal anymore, but I sat through Florence Henderson as the guest star of a Raw I went to. I approve of Arnold.

Cena and Bray Wyatt had the segment of the night. Cena admitted to being afraid of Bray because Wyatt is something he's never faced before. Bray has accused Cena of being hollow and being afraid of what's coming to him after his career is over. There's a HUGE story to get into with that angle if they choose to but I have a feeling it's not happening. When I say huge, I mean that could culminate at like Wrestlemania 35.

Bray continues to be one of the best promo men in the business as I totally bought everything that he's saying. However, there was one thing during his promo that was incredibly interesting: a John Cena chant.

Think about that for a minute. Bray Wyatt is talking about getting rid of John Cena and the fans LOUDLY chant for John as a result. You often hear fans booing Cena and the "Let's Go Cena/Cena Sucks!" chants, but as soon as the idea of no more Cena comes up, it's "CENA! CENA! CENA!" I've said it before and I'll say it here again: so many fans aren't going to realize how truly great Cena is until the day he's gone.

I've mostly covered the Orton vs. Bryan stuff earlier, but the No DQ stipulation helped a lot here. Batista came out to help Bryan and they set up a nice shot at the end: Batista takes out Orton, Bryan steals the pin. Nice "what if" scenario for Wrestlemania.

Heyman's weekly promo was nothing special but the idea of Brock being able to destroy Undertaker's opponents far more easily than Undertaker could. The line of "Now he conquers death itself" line was excellent.

Goldust vs. Fandango was an interesting idea but the match wasn't much. I did really like having a random match though, just as a breather from the rest of the show.

Kane vs. Shield sounds like a way to bring Ascension up as the replacements for the Shield. There isn't much else to say than that. Lawler was just a catalyst for the story advancement.

Yet again a champion got pinned to set up a future match. It seems like we're getting Nikki vs. Naomi vs. AJ vs. Tamina for the title. It's so we can have a Total Divas season finale, but at least they didn't rush through AJ's title reign to get there.

Mr. T. goes into the Hall of Fame. No complaints from me on that one.

The battle royal match was nothing special and exactly what it needed to be. I'm sorry for all the short lines here but there isn't much to say about a lot of this stuff.

Bray squashed Kofi and looked awesome doing it.

The big segment to end the show was HHH saying he respected Bryan but being sent back on Stephanie's orders. Cops came out and handcuffed Bryan before being revealed that they weren't really cops and it was all A RUSE. The huge beating ensued and HHH looked pure evil. That's what this story has needed and it worked like a charm here. I've heard complaints that HHH beat him up too long but I didn't get that feeling at all. I forgot to mention that Stephanie revealed she had the key all along. Why that's supposed to be a shock doesn't quite register to me.

Overall last night's show was excellent and there's nothing I can really add to it. It's really hard to go on and on about a show I really liked and it's even worse when it's just building up to the rest of the pay per view. Great episode this week and Wrestlemania is going to rock.

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# Monday Night Raw – March 17, 2014: The Pathos to Wrestlemania

## Monday Night Raw

Date: March 17, 2014

Location: AT&T Center, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

We're under three weeks to Wrestlemania now and we've got the biggest matches down now. The main story coming into tonight will be HHH retaliating against Daniel Bryan as he promised to do on Smackdown. Other than that we're likely going to get some more entrants into the Andre battle royal. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Occupy Raw last week.

HHH is in the ring and says what happens at Wrestlemania is all going to be our fault. He's had a week to think about what happened with Daniel Bryan and it doesn't sit well with him. At Wrestlemania, he's going to do what he always does in the ring, but we'll see that in twenty days. He tells us to enjoy the rest of the show but here's Batista to interrupt.

Batista says HHH has problems with Daniel Bryan but the real problems are with him. HHH has no right to add Bryan to Batista's main event because he's back to be WWE Champion. Batista wants to know what HHH is thinking, but HHH wants to know why Batista thinks Bryan has a chance to make it to the title match at all.

This brings out Randy Orton to throw in his two cents. Orton is worried about Bryan being added as well but HHH cuts him off and asks if Bryan is really that much in their heads. The fans chant YES and Batista says Bryan may be in their heads, but nowhere near as much as he's in HHH's.

Orton asks for and receives a No DQ match against Bryan tonight to prove he can do what Batista couldn't.

Orton and Batista argue with Batista saying the YES Movement exists is because Orton sucks. He calls Orton a paper champion who only has those belts because of HHH's support. HHH tries to hold them apart but gets shoved away so he just leaves. Batista says HHH has to fix this but HHH says he's sick of this.

He's sick of the little troll face Daniel Bryan, the fans chanting for him, of Hollywood movie stars telling HHH how to run this business, and of talented guys who need him to hold their hand to win a match. Maybe the old man was right: the only one you can trust in this world is yourself, so there's going to be a triple threat at Wrestlemania, but Daniel Bryan won't be in it. Instead, HHH is going to beat Daniel Bryan and go into the match himself. In other words, the winner goes to the title match. HHH leaves and Orton lays out Batista with an RKO.

Batista leaves and says coming back was a big mistake.

### Real Americans vs. Usos

Non-title and this is a result of the Usos saving Cody Rhodes and Goldust from a post match attack by the Real Americans on Smackdown. Jey runs over Swagger to start and catches him in a spinebuster. Cole screws up early this time and says a win for the Tag Team Champions could give the Real Americans a shot at the titles. Cesaro comes in and works over Jey in the corner but gets caught by a kick to the chest.

Off to Jimmy for an uppercut and a slam. Jey comes back in and tries a leapfrog but jumps into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. Off to Swagger again for a chinlock but Jimmy fights up and tags his brother back in to speed things up. A Cesaro distraction lets Jack kick Jimmy to the floor and we take a break. Back with Cesaro in control of Jimmy but he punches his way out of the corner.

Swagger catches him in a belly to belly suplex for two, followed by the Vader Bomb/Cesaro double stomp spot. The announcers praise the company for some awards the WWE App has won as Cesaro nails Jimmy with a European uppercut. Jimmy avoids a charge from Swagger and knocks Cesaro to the floor. A spinning kick to the back of Swagger's head is enough for the hot tag to Jey who shouts US a lot before the corner Umaga attack gets two.

Jimmy breaks up a Cesaro Swing attempt and throws Cesaro at Jey for a Samoan drop and a near fall. Swagger comes back in and gets caught by the double superkick to send him to the floor. Jimmy dives onto Jack but Cesaro blocks a Jey dive with the European uppercut, setting up the Neutralizer for the pin on Jey at 12:25.

**Rating:** C. The match was fun but at the same time can we PLEASE stop having new champions lose matches to set up a future Tag Title match, which will likely have the New Age Outlaws as well. Here's a simple way to do this instead: "The following contest is for the #1 contendership to the Tag Team Championship!" Throw Los Matadores out there and have a match, making both the champions and challengers look strong. Why do I have to give writing lessons to a WRITING TEAM?

We look at WWE Slam City, an animated series about what happens when the wrestlers all get fired and have to get day jobs. I've heard worse ideas actually.

Clip from Smackdown of the Shield costing Kane a match and leaving him laying after a Reigns spear to end the show.

Kane comes up to Shield in the back and says all four of them made mistakes on Friday. Ambrose doesn't seem to care but Kane says they have a mission. If he can't count on them then the Authority can't count on them, meaning they're a liability. Kane asks if he can count on them. Rollins says they're united and Reigns says believe it. Kane gets even more serious and calls them replaceable.

Hornswoggle hands out t-shirts to fans when Bad News Barrett rises up on his podium. He makes fun of the leprechaun celebrating St. Patrick's Day and talks about St. Patrick chasing the snakes out of Ireland. However, the bad news is the fans will spend all day getting drunk, have a hangover tomorrow and regret all the stupid things they've done.

### Sheamus vs. Titus O'Neil

Hornswoggle is still at ringside. Titus is officially in the battle royal and comes out with a big green and white hat and a bright orange beard painted on his face. Christian is on commentary and announces himself as an entrant as well. O'Neil hammers Sheamus into the corner to start but gets sent to the floor and shouldered off the apron. Titus rams him into the post as Christian says he's undefeated except for the losses he's caused himself.

Christian says JBL looks like David Spade in a fat suit and JBL nearly loses it. Titus slams Sheamus to the mat and then the floor before throwing Hornswoggle inside. He tries a fall away slam but Sheamus comes back in and catches the little guy before throwing him into Titus' ribs. There are the ten forearms to the chest and a powerslam setting up the Brogue Kick for the pin at 4:11.

**Rating:** C. Decent little power match here but Titus needs to win a match that matters instead of just being a jobber to the stars. He showed so much potential before the Darren Young match but this is his first appearance in weeks. It's better than having nothing to do though so it could be worse.

Sheamus enters the battle royal post match but Christian attacks him and hits the Killswitch on the floor because this feud just can't end.

Next week's guest star: Arnold Schwarzenegger. Scooby Doo and the Mystery Machine will be there as well.

Here's Cena to talk about the Wyatts. He says he's been here 12 years and has had over 3,500 matches which makes him like family to the WWE Universe. They're like an old married couple and he has a secret for them: he's afraid of Bray Wyatt. He's afraid of everything Bray stands for and what he is, because he's never fought anyone like Bray before.

Bray is trying to convince the people that what you see with John Cena isn't real. Cena won't take that because he believes in everything he's done and stands for because Wrestlemania is about fighting for every scar and injury he's been through. He'll fight for his legacy at Wrestlemania and here are the Wyatts on screen.

Bray is wearing a Cena shirt and says children believe in superheroes because they want to believe the world is good. They haven't learned the truth about life yet. Bray's childhood wasn't all rainbows and butterflies. He has scars of his own because the world gave them to him. Everything he loves in life is going to wither away and die.

The fans chant for Cena as Bray says he could be just like John. He could sign autographs and kiss babies to make sure people bought his merchandise and go home to his plastic girlfriend in his castle while making jokes about everything to make himself feel better. At Wrestlemania, Bray doesn't care if he dies as long as the world sees Cena the way he does. Follow the buzzards.

### Randy Orton vs. Daniel Bryan

No DQ and non-title. Orton hammers him into the corner to start but can't ram Bryan face first into the buckle. Daniel scores with a knee to the ribs and wraps Randy's leg around the post. Back in and Orton uppercuts Bryan down and heads to the floor for some forearms to the chest. Daniel comes back with a hard shot to knock Orton off the apron before nailing the FLYING GOAT. Orton pulls a kendo stick out from under the ring and says there's no bell to ring because it's No DQ. He belly to back suplexes Bryan onto the announce table and we take a break.

Back with Orton still in control and working over Bryan's back before crotching him against the post. He hits the backbreaker from the apron to the floor in a nice looking move as the announcers talk about HHH losing his cool earlier tonight. They head inside again with Orton throwing Bryan into the corner before stopping to do the YES motion. Bryan backflips over Orton out of the corner and hits the running clothesline.

Daniel hits the running dropkick in the corner to set up a top rope hurricanrana for two. It's kendo stick/YES KICK time with Daniel going off on Orton. The big kick to the head gets two more but Randy pops up and crotches Daniel on the top rope. A superplex gets two for the champion and he just stomps on Bryan out of frustration.

The Elevated DDT puts Daniel down but he rolls to the floor before the RKO. Orton comes outside and gets caught by the running dropkick, sending Orton into the timekeeper's area. Randy gets a chair and blasts Daniel in the ribs and back before heading back inside, only to have Batista spear Orton in half. Bryan dropkicks Batista outside and steals the pin on Batista at 14:32.

**Rating:** B-. These guys get better each time they're out there and this was their most entertaining match in awhile. The No DQ rule helped a lot and even though it was pretty obvious Batista was coming back, the stuff we got leading up to that was entertaining as well. Good match here.

Batista hits the Bomb on Orton post match.

How to get the WWE Network.

Here's Heyman with something to say. He says Undertaker has gotten a lot of wins at Wrestlemania but barely survived. Those same opponents have been easily beaten by Brock Lesnar and Heyman has proof. We get a video of Undertaker's Wrestlemania matches, showing how much more difficult each victory has been because Undertaker is getting older. On the other hand, Brock has destroyed HHH, Mark Henry and CM Punk. The video closes

with a great line: "Now he will conquer death itself." Heyman says the Streak will Rest in Peace at Wrestlemania.

HHH and Stephanie are in the back and Stephanie doesn't like the idea of HHH talking to Bryan tonight. She'll ignore him saying he wants to talk to Bryan "like a man" and goes on a rant about Bryan spitting on the McMahon legacy. HHH says it's just talking but Stephanie wants to know what happens when HHH wins the title and has to go on the road. What about their business or the family. HHH glares at her and says he's got this so don't worry about it. Stephanie says he better take care of things before storming out.

### Goldust vs. Fandango

Goldust looks at Summer Rae and still catches Fandango coming after him. A few atomic drops have the dancer in trouble and Goldust does a few steps of his own. Summer gets on the apron as Goldust does some disco dancing. He barks at Summer but Cody catches her, only to have Fandango get in some cheap shots.

Summer doesn't mind being caught by Cody but Fandango isn't pleased. We hit the chinlock for a few moments before Goldust fights up, only to get caught in the chinlock again. Goldust has a bit of blood next to his right eye. A suplex gets two on Goldust but Fandango misses the top rope legdrop. Goldust hits a quick Final Cut for the pin at 5:13. Goldust looked angry about the cut.

**Rating:** C-. You know what? I kind of liked this. No story, no reason for the match, nothing after. Just two guys having a match for about five minutes and the bigger star getting a clean pin. Everything has a point most of the time and it gets a bit tiring at times. I rather enjoyed just having a quick match with no meaning to it at all. Not a bad match either.

Here's Kane to address the Shield. He talks about all the safety codes

that were broken last week in the Occupy Raw movement and blames someone for causing it. Jerry Lawler of all people was apparently responsible for getting those fans into the ring, which JBL accused him of doing last week. Lawler won't get up so here's Shield to deal with the problem. Kane unbuttons his shirt and says he's known Jerry for a long time. Lawler isn't in fighting shape so Kane is only going to enjoy this a little. Jerry is given the chance to speak on his own behalf as Shield surrounds him.

Instead it's Rollins saying he sees the look in Lawler's eyes and has a good feeling Daniel Bryan isn't coming to save him. The Shield however, always does what's best for business. They slowly turn to face Kane and Lawler takes the opportunity to run for his life. Kane stares the three of them down and shakes his head. He says Reigns doesn't know what he's about to do and the beating is on. Kane fights them off for awhile but Rollins kicks his head off and the spear drops him. There's the Triple Bomb and Kane is left laying. This still didn't feel like a face turn but rather an anti-Kane turn.

#### Funkadactyls vs. AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka

Naomi is back with a patch over her eye (and of course it has glitter) and the Bellas are on commentary. Nikki thinks she should get a Divas Title shot, even though Naomi is #1 contender. Cameron hammers away on Tamina to start but gets her head taken off by a clothesline. AJ comes in and puts on a chinlock as the Bellas tease JBL with talk of tattoos. Back to Tamina but Cameron makes the tag off to Naomi. Everything breaks down and AJ grabs a guillotine choke on Naomi, only to be slammed down, followed by the split legged moonsault for the pin at 3:42.

**Rating:** C. For commercial for Total Divas. Multi-Diva match at the PPV. Next.

AJ yells at Tamina post match and gets shoved down. Tamina walks off.

The latest inductee into the Hall of Fame is Mr. T., which was announced earlier today.

We look back at Hogan announcing the battle royal last week.

Big E./Big Show/Dolph Ziggler/Mark Henry vs. Alberto Del Rio/Damien Sandow/Curtis Axel/Ryback

All eight of these guys are in the battle royal. Big E. and Ryback start things out and a weak Goldberg chant begins. Ryback shoves him into the corner but Big E. runs him over with a big shoulder. Off to Henry vs. Axel with Mark kicking Curtis' face off. Ziggler gets the tag to a high pitched pop and grabs a neckbreaker on Ryback. A dropkick sends the power guy to the floor and it's a standoff as we go to a break.

Back with Sandow working over Ziggler before it's off to Ryback for a delayed vertical suplex. He takes a bit too long though and Dolph counters into a small package for two. Back to Axel for some elbows to the head but Ziggler comes back with a DDT. Sandow breaks up the hot tag attempt and sends Dolph head first into the buckle. He misses a charge though and goes head first into the buckle as well, allowing the hot tag to Big Show. Everything breaks down and people are thrown up and over the top rope. Big Show and Sandow are left alone and it's a chokeslam for the pin at approximately 12:00.

**Rating:** C-. This was just a preview for the battle royal and there's nothing wrong with that. Much like everything else tonight, the wrestling wasn't the point here and it really didn't need to be. The battle royal is going to be a big part of the show and it's going to be a fun match so points for actually building it a big.

We look back at the Bryan/Batista/Orton situation from earlier.

Batista tries to leave again and says he's never quit anything

in his life. He's leaving Wrestlemania with the title no matter who the third man is.

### Bray Wyatt vs. Kofi Kingston

Before the match we get a video on Bray vs. Cena set to a rap song about a guy being strange since birth and talking about legacy with clips of Bray's original backwoods videos, comparing them to Cena's mainstream appeal. This is really starting to work. The match is a total squash with Bray destroying Kofi while singing about having the joy down in his heart. He runs Kofi over with a clothesline and drives in right hands before dropping him with a gutbuster. Sister Abigail ends this squash at 2:55.

Trailer for Oculus, a new movie from WWE Studios. It's a horror movie about an evil mirror.

Here's HHH for the big talk with Bryan. Daniel accepts his invitation down to the ring and HHH says this has never been personal. It's always been about what's best for business whether Daniel can understand that or not. Somehow this has been where it's always led and they're going to fight in three weeks at Wrestlemania. HHH won't apologize for what he does to Bryan in that ring and he wouldn't expect an apology from Bryan either. Bryan has crossed a line and HHH has to put an end to it at Wrestlemania because he has no choice.

HHH has to end the YES Movement and end the uprising and shut everything down. He has to do that and if he has to destroy Daniel to do that, then so be it. There are no hard feelings in all of this and may the best man win. HHH sticks out his hand but Bryan shakes his head no. That's cool with HHH because he would do the exact same thing. HHH has tried to stop Bryan since Summerslam and dumped a world on top of him, but Bryan is still standing here. The fans chant for Daniel Bryan because he hasn't folded under the pressure. Now the fans try a CM Punk chant as HHH says Bryan has earned his respect.

He goes to leave but here's Stephanie to rant about respect. Bryan endangered people's lives last week including HHH's, so she's pressing formal charges. Cops come out to arrest Bryan, though I'm not sure they have jurisdiction over something that happened in Tennessee. The cops surround Bryan and forcibly take him to the ground with nightsticks. They don't beat him, but HHH has that evil smile on his face. He calls the cops as Bryan's hands are bound behind his back.

HHH says this isn't what he wants because these aren't even real cops. They leave the ring and Stephanie is smiling as well. HHH is looking forward to this and goes after a defenseless Bryan. They head outside with HHH sending him into the steps and announce table as Stephanie cheers him on. Bryan comes back with some headbutts, only to be dropped on the announce table again.

He screams about his arm before HHH throws him into the barricade and punches even more. The beating keeps going with Bryan just getting destroyed. HHH lays him on the table one more time and Stephanie mocks the YES motion. She gets in a few slaps for good measure. Bryan: "YOU HIT LIKE A GIRL!" HHH lay him against the post and cracks Bryan in the head with a chair like a Concharito. Daniel is out cold so HHH adds a Pedigree and kisses Stephanie. He says this belongs to them and there is no YES Movement.

**Overall Rating:** B+. Tonight was all about the emotions leading up to Wrestlemania. We saw it in the triple threat story, heard about it with Cena being afraid of Bray Wyatt, heard it from Big Show when he talked about what the battle royal meant to him and saw it with Kane being angry at the Shield.

The matches are all set but tonight was a big step in making us care. Having a good match is one thing, but making the fans CARE about it is a different story entirely. The latter is very rare but they're going for it with this Wrestlemania. That's the right way to go about a big show

and they're giving it the effort it needs. Tonight made me want to see these matches on a different level than I did before and that's exactly what these shows are supposed to do.

### Results

Real Americans b. Usos – Neutralizer to Jey

Sheamus b. Titus O'Neil – Brogue Kick

Daniel Bryan b. Randy Orton – Pin after a spear from Batista

Goldust b. Fandango – Final Cut

Funkadactyls b. Tamina Snuka/AJ Lee – Split legged moonsault to AJ

Big E./Big Show/Dolph Ziggler/Mark Henry b. Alberto Del Rio/Damien Sandow/Curtis Axel/Ryback – Chokeslam to Sandow

Bray Wyatt b. Kofi Kingston – Sister Abigail

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# **Wrestlemania Main Event Changed Again, Triple Threat**

# Guaranteed

HHH made a change. Now it's the winner of HHH vs. Bryan going into the main event, meaning there will not be a singles match no matter what. That opens the door for a fourway.

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## Thought of the Day: WWE Has NO Idea What They're Doing

That seems to be the general consensus I get. Today I saw yet another article talking about how WWE needs to stop using part timers. This year's Wrestlemania will be headlined by matches including HHH, Undertaker, Brock Lesnar, HHH and Batista (not a part timer but that's the general consensus). Yeah Wrestlemania has been making a fortune with Wrestlemania, they're going to make a fortune on the TV rights, they're making a fortune off the Network and they're giving the fans what they want with Bryan more than likely walking out of Wrestlemania as WWE Champion, but they clearly need to plan for their future because they're headed for a cliff because of the part timers.

Why do people think WWE is blind to this idea? Yeah, these guys are part timers now but here's the thing: the current roster isn't going to be around forever. One day John Cena, Randy Orton, CM Punk, Daniel Bryan, Sheamus and so on will be part timers and they'll be headlining Wrestlemania just like the previous generation is now. It'll make money, WWE will continue to reign on high and crush whatever "competition" comes against them.

Now go and tell me that I can't prove that and write three paragraphs explaining why so I can poke holes in it using logic and common sense to counter the argument of "I think it might go this way because I say so."

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of on the History of Summerslam at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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## **I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Triple H**

If you've followed me over the years, you know I'm not incredibly fond of HHH. He's done a lot of things over the years that drive both myself and several other fans insane but that's not all there is to him at all. While also being an infuriating person at times, HHH is also one of the most talented and decorated names in wrestling history. Today we're going to take a look at his career and the good and bad over the years and look at why people need to calm down about him. Let's get to it.

HHH has been around the WWE for going on twenty years now and there has definitely been a lot of good and bad. First off let's take a look at the bad in HHH, which will be the shorter of these lists.

One of the biggest criticism of HHH is a fair one: he's not as good as he

thinks he is. HHH has never been one to shy away from lumping himself in there with Rock and Austin, despite there being no real justification for this. Jim Cornette once called HHH the guy that worked with the guy that drew money. There's no denying that HHH isn't great, but he's at the top of the second tier of wrestlers like Bret, Shawn, Orton and Savage. There's nothing wrong with being on that level, but there's a big gap between it and the next level.

Part of the reason why he isn't on that level is how badly he collapses in attempts to have the big match or big story. Now HHH has had his share of classics which we'll get to later, but far too often he tries to have THE match and it just doesn't work. Let's take a look at his match against Randy Orton from Wrestlemania 25.

The story coming into the match was Orton tormenting HHH and terrorizing his family to get the WWE Title. The match wound up having a stipulation saying that if HHH was disqualified, he lost the title. This went completely against the story they had been telling and took away what the match should have been. On top of that, the match ended with HHH just beating the tar out of Orton, hitting the Pedigree and retaining. He stood over Orton like a beast over its prey and the show ended. The general reaction seemed to be "that's it?" There was no big comeback, there was no big brutal spot, there was no real conclusion. It was just HHH standing over him in a symbolic ending which just didn't work.

Speaking of endings, another problem with HHH is his feuds go on WAY too long. We'll start with Orton again. These two feuded for over a year and the matches just didn't work. Orton may have been one of HHH's projects but the whole thing just didn't work. The matches weren't very good, the story just kept going and was eventually going in circles. Over the course of the feud, they managed to have three last man standing matches. As you would expect, people got tired of the story just continuing, especially with the same stuff happening over and over again.

Another good example of this and the big epic moment problems came in his feud with Brock Lesnar. The feud started the night after Brock lost in a great match to John Cena at Extreme Rules 2012 in April. The two didn't fight until Summerslam in August with Brock winning conclusively. How did the show end? With a shot of HHH looking to the crowd and apologizing for not being able to get it done.

The feud would continue at Wrestlemania, where HHH got the win before moving on to Extreme Rules 2013 where Brock won the final match inside of a cage. After three matches, the series felt like a bad movie series: the first match was good but not great, the second match wasn't necessary but was watchable, and the third match just didn't need to happen but did anyway. HHH getting the win at Wrestlemania was the only logical way to do the trilogy, but it also drew criticisms that HHH had to get the win on the biggest stage in the match the most people would remember.

This brings us to 2003 and Wrestlemania XIX. HHH came into the match as World Heavyweight Champion and defended against Booker T. The story was that "someone like Booker T" didn't deserve to be champion. While the storyline explanation was that HHH meant Booker's criminal past, there were heavy racial overtones to what HHH was saying. What happened at Wrestlemania? HHH won with a Pedigree to retain the title.

That scene is a great representation of the biggest thing holding HHH back: late 2002-2004. This was an AWFUL period for both HHH and the WWE in general with HHH's title reigns being major factors. Ignoring the creation of the World Heavyweight Championship and the splitting of the titles, HHH had some of the worst matches of his career in this stretch.

His 3 Stages of Hell match with Shawn, the matches with Nash, the

Goldberg series, the Scott Steiner feud and some of the Orton matches are just dreadful but HHH just kept the title for months on end with the same matches with the same story ("I'm the best." "No I'm the best." Flair interfered, HHH keeps the title) and nothing ever changing despite the talent pool on Raw. HHH would finally break out of this period, but man alive was it hard to sit through.

We'll wrap it up with something else difficult to sit through: HHH's promos. There are times when they're very solid, but some of those things go on long enough to plant a farm and grow your own dinner. He takes about nine breaths between sentences and drones on about THIS BUSINESS, how he is THE GAME and how he'll prove he's the best in the world. Long heel promos can work, but you should want to see the villain get beaten up, not change the channel out of boredom.

Now that we've gotten all that bad stuff out of the way, let's take a look at the good side of HHH's career, because there's a lot to get to. Since there's more good than bad, we'll be going through it with more of a timeline format.

He arrived as the blue blood (basically the same gimmick he had in WCW when they said he had no future as a singles guy) named Hunter Hearst Helmsley and hooked up with Mr. Perfect before feuding with Marc Mero. The character can best be described as a pompous snob who looked down on everyone for not having as much money or power as he had. He was also obsessed with people's family history and how much better his was than yours. In other words, he was obsessed with his pedigree. His theme music was Ode to Joy by Beethoven and it was the perfect addition to his character.

The character was absolutely perfect for HHH at that time as he could

play a perfect snob. With the curtsying, the huge nose in the air, the classical music and the "I'm better than you" attitude, it was nearly impossible to not punch this guy in the face. He nailed the character and was slowly pushed up the card and won the Intercontinental Title, holding it for about four months.

Next up was DX which is the character that changed everything for HHH. All of a sudden he was being able to act like the sophomoric jerk that he was but on camera and with millions of people watching him. The group turned face after Wrestlemania XIV and was put into a feud with the Nation of Domination, triggering a personal rivalry with the Rock (who happened to be the man that took the Intercontinental Title from him).

HHH's time as the face leader of DX was some very entertaining stuff and one of the biggest reasons the Attitude Era worked. Instead of just having clean cut faces and heels, all of a sudden the faces were making adult jokes and being over the top funny. Aside from Steve Austin vs. Vince, DX was the biggest deal in the company and HHH was a huge part of that.

By late 1999, DX was all but done and HHH was moving into singles competition. He started talking about it being his time and how he would be the next WWF Champion. While that wasn't exactly right, he would be take the title from the next WWF Champion, winning the belt the night after Summerslam 1999.

This didn't quite work as HHH was still viewed as a glorified midcarder. He would be champion a few times around this point, starting his third reign in January 2000 (remember that, as it becomes important later). However, the most important thing for him was his on screen marriage to Stephanie McMahon, who he kidnapped, married and raped before she turned

on her father and joined HHH at Armageddon 1999.

The McMahon-Helmsley Faction was born through this union and would dominate the company for the next few months. This would be HHH's first time as a brutal dictator who ran the company with an iron fist. It would also be perfect for him as HHH became one of the best heel characters ever, with the fans absolutely dying to see him get what was coming to him. HHH became the Cerebral Assassin, a man who could fight but would rather out think his opponents to beat them.

One of the most important moments during this time was his match against Cactus Jack at the 2000 Royal Rumble. We'll go into that match more later, but the most important thing about the match was HHH's evolution beyond the Cerebral Assassin. For once in his career he had no way to keep his title other than to stand up and fight, which he did in one of the best matches ever.

This run went on for awhile until HHH was revealed as the man behind Steve Austin being run over by a car. The two feuded for months until they fought in a 3 Stages of Hell match at No Way Out, which happened to be another of the best matches ever. The two would form a questionable bond a few months later until HHH tore his quad in another great match with Austin against Chris Benoit/Chris Jericho.

HHH would be gone for the rest of 2001 (luckily missing the Invasion) and returning in January 2002 with one of the loudest pops ever heard in Madison Square Garden. He later turned heel and attacked Shawn Michaels, leading to a nearly two year on again/off again feud. Not all of the matches were great, but the first one at Summerslam 2002 is as good of a fight as you'll be able to find for a long time.

We're going to jump forward to the end of Evolution as Batista wins the 2005 Royal Rumble and chooses to fight HHH at Wrestlemania XXI. After ruining Randy Orton's face turn (more on that later as well), HHH put Batista over on three straight pay per views, including once inside the Cell. He then took some time off and returned to feud with Ric Flair, culminating in a great old school cage match at Taboo Tuesday 2005.

Next up was a DX reunion with Shawn Michaels and I'm really not sure if I should put it in with the good or the bad. The story dominated 2006 and saw HHH and Shawn torture Vince McMahon who fought back with his handpicked associated. The matches weren't all that good but it was more harmless than anything else. This was followed by a feud with Rated RK0 which was cut short as HHH tore his quad again.

After returning in 2007, HHH would win the WWE Title again that fall and enter a long feud with Randy Orton. Again we'll skip that and get to Summerslam 2008, where HHH worked what can almost be described as a miracle: he got a good match out of Great Khali. Many have tried but he's the only person to really pull it off. He followed it up with a very solid feud against Jeff Hardy, eventually being in the match where Hardy FINALLY won the title.

We'll jump ahead to February of 2011 where HHH challenged Undertaker to a match at Wrestlemania. The match was good but I never bought HHH as a real threat to the Streak. Their rematch a year later inside the Cell was FAR better though and was a contender for match of the year. Soon after HHH started a feud with Brock Lesnar, leading to a match at Summerslam 2011. Again it was good but not all that great.

Our last jump brings us to modern times with HHH and Stephanie as the Authority, the on-screen owners of the company. After months of going

back and forth as a face or a heel, HHH would finally establish himself as a heel and set up his match with Daniel Bryan at Wrestlemania XXX, which will take place about three weeks after this is being written. I can't imagine it not being great though.

Now let's take a look at the major good themes of HHH's career.

First of all, HHH can play one heck of a villain. As I said, that run he had in 2000 as the WWF Champion when he feuded with the Rock is right up there with Hollywood Hogan in 1996/1997 and Ted DiBiase in 1988 as the greatest heel runs ever. There's just something about HHH talking down to people that makes you want to see a hero get his teeth kicked in which is exactly what you want in a heel.

Think about this for a minute. HHH kidnapped a woman, forced her to marry him, then got her on his side and took over the company. If that isn't evil, I don't know what more you could be expecting. The key to it though was he got what was coming to him at the hands of both The Rock and Steve Austin who beat his teeth in over the second half of 2000. The same thing is likely to happen when he faces Bryan at Wrestlemania. I can't imagine the match ending with anything other than Bryan taking HHH's head off with a running knee or making him tap out.

Speaking of matches, I can barely count how many classics HHH has had. Let's look at this for a second. There are the two street fights and the Cell match with Cactus Jack, almost any big match he had with Rock with the ladder match in particular, his wars with Steve Austin, the triple threats with Shawn and Benoit, the unsanctioned match with Shawn at Summerslam 2002, the miracle against Great Khali, his three Wrestlemania matches with Undertaker and some very solid stuff with Cena and Flair. I'm sure I'm missing a bunch but the reality is clear: the guy has been

having great matches for over 15 years now. That just doesn't happen in wrestling.

He's also had a natural evolution to his character. HHH started off as a blue blood who thought he was better than everyone else before switching over to saying screw that, I want to have fun. However he eventually abandoned the goofiness and embraced the core of his character: a man obsessed with power who would do whatever it took to take over the company. Now he's in charge of the company and is trying to be civilized but occasionally loses control and agrees to do something that gets him in trouble.

Before we wrap this up, let's bust up a few myths about HHH.

Quite often you'll hear people say that he became the star that he is because he married the boss' daughter. Here's the thing: by the time they started dating, allegedly in early 2000, HHH was a two time WWF Champion (he won his third title on January 3, 2000 so it was three reigns unless they started dating on the first two days of the year), a two time Intercontinental Champion and the King of the Ring. Marry Stephanie was definitely a boost, but HHH was going to be a big star no matter what.

Another story you hear about HHH is that he invented his own world title. I've heard multiple versions of this, with the main story being that the Intercontinental Title was to be the top title on Raw with HHH dominating that belt. Think about that for a second and you'll see that it doesn't make sense. At the end of the day, Raw is THE show for WWE and having a glorified midcard title as its centerpiece just wasn't going to work. WWE making another title made sense and HHH just happened to be the guy that got it. To suggest that it was all his idea is illogical.

Next up is the theory that he pushed his buddies (Shawn, Sheamus, Batista etc) to the moon. Does anyone really want to argue that those three weren't going to get pushed anyway? Sheamus gets some of the loudest pops on the show, Shawn is as talented a guy as you'll ever hear, and Batista has been a big star every time WWE has used him. Yeah HHH pushed his buddies, and they'll all turned out fine.

Sticking with the buddy thing for a minute, why is this something that HHH gets bashed for so much? It's a common practice in wrestling to push your friends and HHH is really one of the weakest offenders. Ole Anderson nearly put WCW under by pushing his buddies in the early 90s. Hulk Hogan had BRUTUS BEEFCAKE in the main event of Starrcade. Back when Vince took over the WWF, how many of the people that got pushed were people who were loyal to him? There are multiple other instances but the point is clear: HHH isn't the first guy with power to push his friends and he won't be the last. It happens all the time and it's been FAR worse over the years.

Let's look at one last thing: HHH dominated the world title. If HHH gets blasted for this, he's fourth worst at best. Since the time the titles were split, HHH has won eight world titles. This puts him fourth in that span after Edge with eleven, Randy Orton with twelve and John Cena with fourteen. Edge won eleven world titles in the span of just over five years, or over two titles a year. HHH might have held the belt longer than Orton and Edge, but HHH didn't win and lose it as often for as many cheap title reigns. While they're boring, I'd take one of HHH's long reigns over five of Edge's month long reigns any day.

Overall, the good outweighs the bad with HHH. There are just so many outstanding matches and segments (I could have gone on for several more pages breaking down his matches and why they're as awesome as they are) that they overshadow the bad stuff. The problem is the bad stuff is REALLY bad with 2003 being one of the roughest years I can ever remember in wrestling. That run he had in 2000/2001 is as good a stretch as you'll

ever find in wrestling and his period where he was the veteran who was seeing how much he had left is quite a run as well. There's just so much to rave about there and it's unfair to criticize him as much as people (including myself) do.

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## **Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 11, 2014**

We've got a lot to cover this week after a huge Raw last night.

First up was Hogan making his announcement that he could rip the bumper off a Cadillac (jack) and wanting to wrestle the whole neighborhood. Other than that the big announcement was the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal which is a great way to put thirty names on the card. That's the best way they can go about doing so as the roster is huge and they couldn't fit everyone in without having about thirteen matches with a bunch of multi-man matches. The battle royal also opens up the possibilities of some new faces, hopefully from NXT.

After the announcement, John Cena showed up to praise Hogan and throw his

name in the battle royal. While a lot of people may not like them, Cena and Hogan are two of the biggest stars of all time and seeing them together for a glorified photo-op is worth seeing. After the usual speeches, the Wyatts showed up with Bray making an incredible speech with the great line of if Cena looks up at him he'll see a friend, if he looks down at Bray he'll see an enemy but if he looks Bray in the eye, he'll see a god.

Cena responded with the usual jokes and a Jimmy Buffett song. You knew this was coming and thankfully it was just a quick blast of jokes before he went on to challenging Wyatt for a match at Wrestlemania. Later in the night Bray accepted the challenge after saying he saw Cena's future in Hogan. There's probably a lot of truth in that and an interesting look at where we could be moving with Cena's character. At some point Cena is going to start facing the end of his career and it's going to be interesting considering how WWE is his life. That's a very interesting idea and something we haven't ever really gotten to see.

Oh and Cena beat Rowan after getting destroyed (just like he was by Cesaro) before getting a quick pin. Rowan has a future and has looked very good in his two matches with Cena and Bryan.

Moving on we had the Authority demanding an apology from Daniel Bryan. I'll save the rest for later as it's a huge moment.

The Usos beat up Ryback and Curtis Axel in a quick match and it's pretty clear the Outlaws are getting a rematch at Wrestlemania. Not much else to say here.

Kane made Shield vs. the Rhodes Brothers, saying their problems started

when they lost the Tag Titles. The Shield said that Kane was deflecting his anger from losing two straight matches last week on them. It seems like a way for Kane to leave the Authority by giving into the inner hate and losing his corporate image. It makes sense and is the logical progression for the character, assuming they go there.

Big E. beat Swagger with the second rollup finish in under three and a half minutes of the night. The story here though was the Real Americans being forced to shake hands after Cesaro refused to help Swagger cheat. Again it implies a face turn for someone which is interesting given how strong he's been pushed lately.

We got Undertaker doing his usual Wrestlemania promo on Brock Lesnar after being interrupted by Paul Heyman. There isn't much to say here as it was the same stuff we've always heard: Brock will dominate, Undertaker is unbeatable, the match will be a way. The most intriguing part here was the commentators saying Brock had almost no chance at Wrestlemania. That's not something you hear that often and it's another interesting twist to the match.

One other note: Paul Heyman mentioned that Shawn Michaels had never won two straight matches at Wrestlemania. Incorrect, as he won at Wrestlemanias VII and VIII. Yeah VII was the Rockers but Undertaker won a handicap/tag match at Wrestlemania XIX so pick one or the other.

Shield vs. Rhodes Brothers was exactly what you would expect after these teams fighting over and over. Cody and Goldust are pretty much done as a top tag team but it's nice to see that they haven't split. The Black Out from Rollins was awesome looking though and is a good finishing move for him.

Next up was the Divas match which continues to prove one simple truth: the Bella Twins are not very good in the ring. You can see them making sure to go through every single spot step by step without being natural about it at all. They're basically wrestling in swimsuits (nothing wrong with that) but treating them like they can keep up with the traditional wrestlers is just wrong. Nikki pinned AJ and held up the title while looking at Natalya. I'm thinking a multi-woman match at Wrestlemania for the belt.

This brings us to the big segment of the night. Daniel Bryan came out for the apology but said tonight he was getting what the fans wanted by occupying Raw. The show went to a break and came back to see probably over 100 fans in and around the ring, all in Daniel Bryan shirts and chanting YES. Bryan stayed on the corner and said the show wasn't going anywhere until he got his match at Wrestlemania with HHH. The Authority came out and said no way, but security walked away from trying to clear the ring.

After a LONG back and forth segment, HHH finally agreed to the match. That still wasn't enough for Bryan though because he knew the fans wanted to see him wrestling for the WWE Championship at Wrestlemania. Therefore he threw out an idea: if he defeats HHH, Bryan gets inserted into the title match in the main event. HHH said it would destroy Bryan but finally agreed.

This was quite the spectacle but it wasn't perfect. For one thing, the segment went on too long and HHH looked like he just snapped instead of letting this build up over time. On top of that, the Authority just can't act. Stephanie's acting has always been a joke but HHH sounds like he's trying to take it too far. The segment felt a bit forced but it didn't go terribly.

That being said, it got the job done. There was really no other option to get the results that were needed at Wrestlemania short of a fourway which I don't think would have worked at all. It seems obvious that Bryan wins the title after beating HHH, but I can't shake a feeling that Batista walks out with the title. I don't think Bryan loses to HHH of course, but for some reason I think he loses the main event, probably setting up a rematch at Extreme Rules.

Sheamus vs. Christian was good and a nice blowoff to their feud. I could have done without the musical instruments stuff, but it was a good brawl with some nice false finishes. Sheamus still does need to lose once in awhile, but at least the match wasn't a squash. Christian is falling apart before our eyes though and I can't picture him being around much longer.

That brings us to the main event which didn't mean anything at all. Occupy Raw should have closed out the night and the match just didn't work as a result. It was basically a reason to get Bryan in there with the title contenders and there's nothing wrong with that, but the match was a letdown after the bigger moments earlier in the night.

Raw last night was all about the heavy lifting for Wrestlemania. We got Bryan vs. HHH, Cena vs. Wyatt and a thirty man battle royal all set up for the PPV. It solved a lot of the problems the show had been facing and gave us some awesome moments in the process. It was a show that needed to happen for awhile now and a lot of things look better. Wrestlemania is a stacked show now with almost everything of note set up. That's what these shows need to do and they're doing it quite well.

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# Wrestler of the Day – March 5: Big E. Langston

Today we enter the world of power lifting with Big E. Langston.

Big E. started down in FCW back in late 2009 so we'll pick up his career on February 14, 2010 in a tag team match.

Big E. Langston/Skip Sheffield vs. Vance Archer/Alex Riley

Sheffield is now known as Ryback and is a cowboy here. The announcers sound like they've never seen Langston before so maybe this is his debut. Langston runs Riley over to start and it's quickly off to Sheffield for some shoulders of his own. Archer comes in and is easily slammed for Langston gets the tag to do nothing at all. Vance kicks Sheffield in the face for two and it's back to Riley as the cowboy is in trouble. We hit the chinlock for a bit before both guys try cross bodies and fall to the floor. Langston comes in off the hot tag to clean house but Riley escapes the Big Ending and hits a powerbomb into a neckbreaker for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. Nice idea for the debut here with Langston looking good but the ending stoppe Langston cold. Langston would get better but you can't teach raw power like he has and displayed here. Riley also had so much

potential but allegedly reacted badly to a rib from Cena in the Raw locker room and lost his push.

We'll jump ahead about a year to March 27, 2011 with Langston having grown up a bit and facing Leo Kruger.

### Leo Kruger vs. Big E. Langston

Langston shoves him around with ease to start and Leo bails to the floor. A headlock is countered with an easy lift into the air before Langston casually trips him to the mat in a nice touch. Kruger rolls to the apron and snaps Big E.'s throat across the top rope to take over. The referee gets bumped but pops back up to see Kruger hit a neckbreaker to send Langston outside. Back in and Langston shoves Kruger away before scoring with some hard clotheslines. A belly to belly suplex gets two but Kruger rolls him up and grabs the ropes for a pin.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to see here but Kruger has almost always been a better character than a worker. Langston was starting to look more and more like his more familiar version but he's still not completely rounded into form. Also I didn't realize how often he got pinned in FCW as it's quite different from his win/loss record on Raw.

We'll wrap up his FCW run with this stacked six man tag from sometime in June 2011.

### Big E. Langston/Calvin Raines/Alexander Rusev vs. Bo Rotundo/Leakee/Richie Steamboat

Raines is a big guy and Langston's FCW Tag Team Championship partner. FCW Champion Rotundo is now known as Bo Dallas and Leakee is Roman Reigns. Rusev and Richie get things going with Steamboat going after Alexander's huge calves. Rusev easily throws him away and scores with a shoulder but it's quickly off to Bo and then Leakee (pronounced Lay Ah Key) to stay on

the arm. Alexander easily runs over Leakee before it's off to Langston for more power offense as we take a break.

Back with Raines running over Leakee for two and putting on something resembling a seated full nelson. Leakee comes back with a sunset flip before running over for the tag to Steamboat. Richie cleans house for a bit until Rusev slams him off the top with ease. Back to Langston who stomps away and hits a spinning belly to belly for two. Rusev comes in again for a bearhug and an overhead belly to belly.

A double tag brings in Raines vs. Steamboat and Ricky is caught in an abdominal stretch. Back to Langston who isn't hurt by Steamboat chops but a kick to the face has some more effect. The hot tag brings in Bo to clean house as everything breaks down. Bo and Langston are left alone in the ring and a spear is enough to pin Big E.

**Rating:** B-. I liked this a lot more than I expected to. They followed the six man formula very well here and the whole thing worked quite well. These guys knew how to work together and everything flowed well. That being said, I need to pick better matches the next time I do one of these things. Langston is now 0-3.

Langston made his Raw debut in December as an enforcer for Dolph Ziggler, but around this time he was still a monster in NXT. One night the Shield cleaned out the NXT locker room and stood tall in the ring. Now in a good promotion, the unstoppable monster would come out for a big showdown. Thankfully NXT is a good promotion and Langston made his way to the ring for a faceoff with Roman Reigns. The next week, Langston got a title shot at NXT Champion Seth Rollins.

NXT Title: Seth Rollins vs. Big E. Langston

No DQ and Rollins is defending. Rollins doesn't have music yet. After the big match intros we're ready to go. Langston grabs a kick and shoves Rollins down to start, freaking Seth out. The champion grabs a front

facelock and gets shoved into the corner for some shoulder blocks. Langston misses a charge into the corner and hits the post, but immediately comes back with a gorilla press to send Rollins to the floor.

Langston goes after him but here are Reigns and Ambrose for the triple beatdown. Big E. gets sent into the steps as we take a break. Back with both guys in the ring again with Rollins firing off kicks to the ribs. Rollins hooks a triangle choke but Langston fights up and hits an electric chair drop to escape. The crowd is ENTIRELY behind Langston here as he fires off clotheslines. A double clothesline takes down Ambrose and Reigns but they run in again to break up the Big Ending.

Some guys from the locker room come out to try to stop the non-champions of the Shield but are quickly dispatched. Eventually about 15 guys come out and FINALLY clear them out, leaving it one on one. Rollins hits the standing Sliced Bread for two and the kickout scares him to death. He loads it up again, but Langston catches him on his shoulder and the Big Ending gives Langston the title at 6:38 shown of 10:08.

**Rating:** C+. The match itself wasn't much, but the run-ins were handled perfectly, making this feel like a huge moment and a nearly Attitude Era style main event. I also really like the idea of not having Langston beat up the Shield on his own as it keeps things a bit more realistic given how strong Shield has been pushed. Not a great match, but really good booking of a title change.

After having debuted on the 2013 Slammies, Langston would make his in ring debut in a Tag Team Title match at Wrestlemania XXIX.

Tag Titles: Big E. Langston/Dolph Ziggler vs. HELL NO

HELL NO is defending. This was set up by Ziggler beating Kane and Bryan in singles matches and wanting a title match as a result. This is also Langston's debut. We get a funny bit to start with Ziggler kissing AJ to taunt Bryan and getting kicked in the head for a VERY close two ala last

year. Ziggler bails to the floor and gets caught with a suicide dive. Back in and Bryan fires off the hard kicks to the chest but the big one to the head misses.

Ziggler dives off to tag in Langston and he gets Kane. Big E. easily catches a charging Kane and hits three straight backbreakers to take over. Kane gets a boot up in the corner to stop a charging Langston but the chokeslam is easily broken up. Langston runs over Kane and it's back to Ziggler for some quick choking. Langston comes in again for more shots to Kane's chest and ribs. He lowers his head though and there's a DDT from Kane to put Langston down.

Back to Dolph who breaks up a tag to Bryan, only to miss a splash in the corner. Kane's side slam gets two but the top rope clothesline misses. The Fameasser kind of misses but Bryan comes in for the save anyway. Ziggler jumps into an uppercut from Kane but Langston splashes Kane for the save at two. The Big Ending is broken up and Kane sends Big E. to the floor for the knee from Bryan. The Zig Zag gets two on Kane and Dolph is frustrated. AJ slides in the briefcase but Kane ducks Ziggler's swing. The chokeslam connects and Kane takes out Langston. The Swan Dive from Bryan retains the titles at 6:30.

**Rating:** C. My predictions are taking a pounding tonight. I would assume this means Ziggler cashes in tonight, because we should totally buy him as world champion after he loses to Bryan here right? The match was fine, but at this point there's no need to see HELL NO with the belts anymore. It's just dull at this point and they stopped being funny a long time ago.

Dolph Ziggler won the World Heavyweight Championship the next night on Raw but got injured soon thereafter. With Dolph out, Langston started a feud with Alberto Del Rio and faced him about five times in three weeks, including May 31, 2013 on Smackdown.

Big E. Langston vs. Alberto Del Rio

Langston pounds him into the corner to start and fires off some shoulders, but Del Rio comes back with a kick to the ribs. Big E. drapes him across the top rope and Del Rio is right back down. Del Rio comes back with more kicks and a running clothesline, only to walk into a belly to belly for two. The Backstabber staggers Langston and a German suplex puts him down again.

A hard kick to the face gets two more for Alberto and there's the armbreaker but Langston picks Alberto up to escape. Langston runs him over for two but gets caught in the armbreaker over the ropes. Del Rio falls to the floor and gets posted after an AJ distraction, allowing the Big Ending to finish Albert back inside at 4:50.

**Rating:** D+. This match is firmly in the category of matches we don't need to see for a good while. They've fought something like four times in two weeks now, which is way more than any pair should be going at it. The match was nothing special either as they didn't have time to go anywhere with it.

Langston went on a tear through the midcard, earning himself an Intercontinental Title shot on Raw on November 18, 2013.

#### Intercontinental Title: Big E. Langston vs. Curtis Axel

They treat this as a big deal with full entrances and the big match intros. Axel, the champion, is officially no longer a Paul Heyman guy. Langston easily takes him to the mat but gets elbowed in the face to give Axel a breather. Big E. easily tosses Axel around and sends him to the floor to start a chase. Back in and Langston clotheslines him down like it's nothing as this is one sided so far.

A standing backdrop gets two on the champion but he hits a quick hot shot to get a breather. Axel pounds on his back a bit and we take a break. Back with Axel getting two off a dropkick and hooking a front facelock. Langston finally gets up and just throws Curtis off of him before scoring

with some clotheslines. A belly to belly puts Axel down and there's the Warrior Splash for two. The straps come down and the Big Ending gives Langston the title at 8:50.

**Rating:** C-. This wasn't bad but it does beg the question: if they want to make Langston into a big deal, why in the world would you job him clean to Del Rio last week in four minutes? Either way, it was definitely the right idea to switch the belt here as Axel is long past the point of mattering. A gimmick change could help him a lot at the moment because the potential is definitely there.

Around this time WWE started making up challengers of the month for Langston, including this one against Damien Sandow at TLC 2013.

#### Intercontinental Title: Big E. Langston vs. Damien Sandow

Before the match, Sandow tells the Texas crowd some assorted phrases that are worthless: y'all, ye if followed by haw, and Big E. Langston: Intercontinental Champion. Nice touch. Langston throws the challenger into the corner to start and hits a corner splash to keep Damien in trouble. They head outside with Langston in trouble, only to miss a charge into the post to change momentum.

Back in and Damien pounds away at Big E.'s head before putting on a chinlock. The Wind-Up Elbow gets two for Sandow and we're back to the chinlock again. Langston powers out of the hold and drops Damien with an electric chair. A belly to belly sets up the Warrior Splash for two but the Big Ending is countered into an Edge-0-Matic for two by Sandow. Another Big Ending attempt is countered into a small package for two but Langston is done messing around. He runs Sandow over with ease and the Big Ending is enough to retain the title at 6:25.

**Rating:** D+. The match was nothing you wouldn't see on Smackdown. These two did virtually the same match with the same story earlier this year for Langston's NXT Title so there was some practice coming in. Langston

has a bright future and a title defense on PPV isn't going to hurt him at all.

Having destroyed the midcard, Langston was given a non-title match against WWE Champion Randy Orton on January 10, 2014's Smackdown.

### Randy Orton vs. Big E. Langston

Non-title of course. Langston takes him down with a shoulder block but Orton rolls to the floor before a cover. Back in and a headlock sets up another shoulder block sends Orton to the floor again. Orton comes in again and punches Big E. down, only to walk into a headbutt for two. Langston sends Orton to the mat with a single right hand to the ribs before slapping on an armbar.

Orton fights up again and pounds on Big E., only to get caught in a backbreaker. A second backbreaker gets two and Langston is getting in a zone. Randy escapes the Big Ending and bails to the floor as we take a break. Back with the chinlock until Big E. powers out, only to get kneed in the ribs for two. Back to the chinlock but Big E. fights up again.

The comeback is short lived again though as Orton sends him through the ropes to the floor. Langston is sent into the steps twice in a row for two before we hit the chinlock again. Big E. fights up one more time and runs Orton over twice in a row, followed by a belly to belly suplex. The Warrior Splash gets two but Orton hits his backbreaker to get a breather. The RKO is countered with a splash in the corner but Orton pokes Big E. in the eye, setting up the RKO for the pin at 14:28.

**Rating;** C+. I missed pokes to the eyes. They're such a simple heel move but they can be just what you need to get a heel through an ending. This match worked for the most part but it could have had a few minutes of chinlocks taken out. It's good that Langston gets to look like he can hang in there against top guys. There's a future there if he's used properly.

We'll wrap it up with what has become too rare anymore: an Intercontinental Title defense on PPV against Jack Swagger, who won a four way on Smackdown to earn the shot.

### Intercontinental Title: Big E. vs. Jack Swagger

Swagger is challenging and Colter does his usual schtick before the match. Big E. shoves him into the corner to start and runs him over with a hard shoulder block, sending Swagger to the outside. Back in and some overhead belly to belly suplexes put Jack down but he bails to the floor again to avoid a charging champion. This time Big E. follows him outside and sends him into the steps but the champion goes after Colter.

The distraction doesn't work though as he spears Jack into the steps in a painful looking spot. Back inside and Jack low bridges Big E. out to the floor and takes over with some running knees in the corner. After a WE THE PEOPLE it's off to a front facelock for a few moments. Big E. fights up and a double clothesline puts both guys down again. Swagger avoids a charge and Big E. goes shoulder first into the post, drawing a WE THE PEOPLE chant from the crowd.

Back up and Big E. runs Swagger over with clotheslines and a belly to belly suplex but the champion charges into a powerslam for two. The running Vader Bomb is caught in the Big Ending but Jack makes it to the apron. That's fine with Big E. as he spears him through the ropes in a big crash. Back in and the Warrior Splash gets two so Big E....goes up top? Jack catches him with a right hand and runs the ropes for a belly to belly superplex and a VERY close two.

Swagger takes out the leg and puts on the Patriot Lock but Big E. kicks his way out. The gutwrench is countered but Big E. runs him over and takes down the straps. Jack grabs another Patriot Lock but Big E. fights up and hits an enziguri of all things, setting up the Big Ending to retain the title at 11:50.

**Rating:** B. I liked this far better than I was expecting with Swagger putting up a great fight and making it much closer than he had any right to. It's nice to see Big E. get a win on PPV and a successful title defense over a former World Champion never hurt anyone. It should be interesting to see where the Real Americans go from here.

Overall Langston is a guy with a ton of potential and the fact that he only started about five years ago is astounding. He's incredibly strong but there's far more to him than most power guys. Langston once said on Twitter that "When you look like I do, people don't expect you to think that much." I love it when people think like that and his career has shown the same promise ever since. He'll be a big deal one day and he's been very solid so far in his career.

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## **Bryan's Match At Wrestlemania**

It's one of the options people thought might happen. HHH vs. Bryan is set, and if he wins he's in the title match. It's official, but the moment was AWESOME. I won't spoil it here so make sure you check it out.

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# Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: March 3, 2014

It's better than any other title I could come up with.

The Punk music to open the show was a brilliant move. You had to let those fans let off some steam and putting one of their idols in Paul Heyman out there was one of their best options. Paul talking about Punk like a Paul Heyman Guy again was the best way they were going to calm the fans down because Heyman is capable of taking an audience into his hands and make them do whatever he wants. The reaction when Heyman said that Punk wasn't there was a great moment with the fans being calmed down but then getting angry all over again.

Then they one upped that by transitioning the heat over from Punk to Lesnar vs. Undertaker by tying the stories together. It didn't do as well as they would have liked, but the fans weren't freaking out as much about Punk and got into another idea. I wasn't wild on Mark Henry coming out to confront Lesnar again as it's just getting old, but that shot with the steps made me cringe.

The Usos FINALLY won the Tag Titles and I can't complain about much here. I wasn't wild on the Outlaws winning the belts but I said I didn't care as long as they were transitional champions. I could have waited for Wrestlemania for this but they had to do something to keep the crowd calm. The moment worked well and felt like it was a long time in the making. That plancha with a tag in the middle is freaking cool.

I'll combine the Big E./Real Americans segments into one. It's getting clear that the team isn't long for this WWE but I'm not sure how they're going to get there. Cesaro is getting way too popular to be in a jobbing tag team much longer but I'm not sure how they go about breaking the team up. Big E. has nothing else to do so you would have to assume he's involved with them at Wrestlemania, but I can't imagine they're doing a triple threat. Cesaro winning makes more sense, but at the same time Swagger seems to be the more likely winner. Good developments last night

though and the first real sign of a split between the team.

Next up was Shield vs. Wyatts II as the fans continue to be appeased. The match was nowhere near as good as their first encounter but it wasn't a fair comparison to make. This match was all about the storytelling with Rollins going INSANE and then breaking away from the team. He was clearly upset by what he did but the team had to split someday. You would think Shield vs. Wyatts in a street fight would be as easy of a layup as you could have and there's a chance it happens at Extreme Rules but it doesn't look all that likely right now.

Rollins bailing from the team makes sense given how he's been presented as the glue that holds the team together. That being said, the other two played their roles perfectly. The Wyatts kept Reigns out of the match for as long as they could, similar to what the Horsemen did to the Giant when they feuded with the Dungeon of Doom back in 1996. Ambrose looked INSANE last night when he was diving on people and punching the tar out of them. That's the Ambrose that got over huge and the Ambrose that the Undertaker picked for a singles match last year in England. Also, he put on a better Figure Four than Miz could ever dream of.

Batista had a quick promo about Daniel Bryan. "Deal With It" grows on me more and more every time I hear it.

The dancing match happened and that's really all there is to say. Emma is slowly winning the crowd over as she's allowed to be herself and not Santino's latest conquest. Imagine that: you let someone do the stuff that got her to the main roster and it works better.

So then there was that segment where Stephanie talked about showing her daughters great moments in McMahon history which showed the problem with WWE's "Real Talk" moments. That segment felt endearing, sweet and kind and served as a good ad for the Network. Yeah, it's a cool idea for parents to be able to show their kids the stuff they grew up watching and I'd do that if I had kids who were into wrestling, but it's coming from Stephanie McMahon.

That would be the same Stephanie McMahon who is currently one of the top heels in the company and would be ripping Daniel Bryan apart just an hour

later. Last night I was waiting for that segment to turn into a heel promo against someone, but it was one of those moments that was supposed to be serious. You don't have heels do sweet stuff like that because it gets them sympathy, which defeats the purpose. Have ANY face with kids do that same speech and it works just fine. But this is WWE, where Stephanie and HHH are heels but also the kind of people we're supposed to relate to and admire because....why is that actually?

Sheamus and Christian had another match, then they set up yet another match. Again, there seems to be no idea how to book Sheamus and it's getting more and more tiresome each time. At least the match wasn't bad though.

The Divas....yeah.

This brings us to the big showdown between HHH and Bryan. In theory they're setting up Bryan vs. HHH, but later in the night they seemed to be setting up Bryan in the triple threat for the title. That being said, the Bryan speech worked well and got the crowd into them again, but there's one key thing to this: HHH AND STEPHANIE ACTED LIKE HEELS. I could get behind this version of the Authority being evil to the fans and then getting their comeuppance down the line. The problem is will they ever get that comeuppance.

It's clear that they're going towards one of those two matches, but at the same time it seems like they're heading to both of them at the same time. For the life of me I can't imagine Bryan beating HHH to qualify for the title match later in the night. They need to pick one: either Bryan knees HHH's head into the Gulf of Mexico or pinning Batista to win the title. The idea of doing both just doesn't quite work, but the triple threat makes more sense. At the end of the day they're just not going to go with heel Orton vs. heel Batista to close out Wrestlemania and they'd be crazy to have the match at all. I think they're going with the triple threat but it's still up in the air.

Aaron Paul's guest star segment was fine. There's only so much you can do with stuff like that and it worked as well as it could have.

Paul Bearer going into the Hall of Fame works and was going to happen one

day. I do like that the class this year is far smaller as they're looking at 5-6 entrants at this point.

The Cena promo was good stuff. He acknowledged the fans' chants (which is all they're really wanting) and tied it in to the Wyatt feud, which is the best possible thing he could have done. Bray talking about Cena being lonely on top is an interesting way to go as Bray could get psychological on Cena, who is as well guarded a character as there is. Also: Cena continues to take Wyatt seriously, which is the most important thing he could do.

I've pretty much covered the main event already and there isn't much else to say on it. Bryan won but the story was the post match stuff, as is almost the case every single time.

Now that leaves us with the big story from last night: the crowd. There's only one way to explain this crowd, so join me in 1979.

Odds are a lot of you have seen the movie The Jerk. In the movie, Steve Martin goes on a rant about how he doesn't need anybody or anything....except for this. And this. Plus this. Maybe this too. And a few other things.

The Chicago crowd last night absolutely hated WWE and Raw in general. Except for Undertaker. Brock Lesnar. Dolph Ziggler and Aaron Paul because they're just cool. Shield vs. Wyatts because they're all awesome. Uh....Cena isn't bad. Heyman is of course a genius. Daniel Bryan isn't even worth bringing up because he's the best in the world. Oh the Usos winning the titles was a cool moment. Christian is awesome so we can't boo him. You can't boo the Divas because they look good. Cesaro is freaking STRONG. But yeah, WWE sucks right now and they're holding everyone down and we need to protest!

The fans came off like spoiled children who get 14 out of the 15 items on their Christmas lists and throw a fit because they didn't get that ONE last thing.....until their parents open the closet and find a surprise package. That's the catch to this whole thing about Bryan: HE DOESN'T HAVE A MATCH YET. If you were just listening to people talking about Bryan, you would think he's on the preshow against Heath Slater. He's

going to be in one of the main events and there's a very real chance he's walking out as WWE Champion. The card is going to rock (Taker vs. Lesnar, Shield explodes, Cena vs. Wyatt, Cesaro swinging someone around for an hour. How is that not going to be AMAZING?) but because ONE THING isn't there, the fans think it's time for a revolution.

Actually there are two things they might not be getting in Bryan and the biggest name from last night, CM Punk. As has been said about a million times, Punk isn't a martyr. He's a guy who wasn't getting what he wanted in WWE and walked out two months before their biggest show of the year. The fans can act like this is all WWE's fault because fans aren't realistic (and shouldn't be), but at the end of the day CM Punk walked out because he didn't want anything but the main event at Wrestlemania. If he comes back and gets into the title picture then cool, but don't act like he's doing this for some cause, because it's pretty clear he isn't.

Overall the show was more story advancement for the most part, which is interesting stuff given that there are still so many loose ends. There are still two options, but both of them are looking less and less likely, leaving us with one of two weak options. There's still a month before the show but they need to pick something already so they can build the thing up. Maybe that's what Hogan's announcement next week will be? Good show overall but they need to pick something already.

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