

Monday Night Raw – April 22, 2013: That's One EVIL Skull Cap

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 22, 2013

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

This is a taped episode from England, which usually makes for a less interesting show. The main event tonight is HELL NO/Undertaker vs. Shield in a very rare appearance by the Dead Man on the red show. Other than that we've got some issues with the roster as there's a house show in Wales at the same time this was taped, so a lot of people aren't here tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with recaps of the issues between Shield and HELL NO/Undertaker and Ryback and Cena.

Here's Heyman in the ring who says that he's acting as advocate for Brock Lesnar tonight. Everyone is wondering about what Brock did to 3MB last week but they're also wondering about Brock's challenge to HHH. Tonight we're going to get HHH's answer....via e-mail as he's not here tonight. Heyman talks about how HHH is a coward...and here's HHH in the arena. Heyman says he got the e-mail but HHH says he was lying about not being here tonight. He says he accepts and there's a Pedigree to Heyman.

Jericho vs. Ziggler tonight.

R-Truth vs. Antonio Cesaro

Cole shouts WHAT'S UP and kind of dances during the entrance. Cesaro yodels as his humiliating depush continues. Cesaro takes over to start with a forearm to the back of the head and a hard clothesline. The fans start an OLE chant as Cesaro hits a double stomp for two. Truth blocks a kick to the ribs and gets two off a front suplex. Little Jimmy hits a

second later for the pin on Antonio at 2:19.

Shield arrives via helicopter. That's rather awesome.

Damien Sandow vs. Brodus Clay

Sandow takes Brodus to the corner as the fans chant for Cody's mustache. Brodus comes back with a slam and an elbow drop for two but Sandow hits a kind of Edge-0-Matic and the Wind-Up Elbow for two of his own. Off to a chinlock for a bit but Brodus fights up and hits a corner splash and the t-bone suplex. A Cody distraction lets Sandow roll up Brodus for the pin with a handful of trunks at 3:23.

Rating: D. This was a nothing match as they just went back and forth for a few minutes until we got to the lame ending. That's likely because the feud and story between these groups is over but it's continuing because there's nothing at all to do with any of the guys and they're locked into these tag teams because the writers can't think of anything else.

We look at Dolph winning the title again before we see him hitting on the title in the back (I said that correctly). AJ comes up and they make fun of Kaitlyn before sending Langston away so they can make out. Vickie and Brad show up to interrupt and say that if Dolph loses tonight, Jericho is in the title match at the PPV, making it a fatal fourway.

We look at Punk walking out last week.

Shield is here and talks about how no one has made them rest in peace yet but now they're the judge, jury and executioner.

Chris Jericho vs. Dolph Ziggler

Non-title here. Jericho gets a quick rollup for two and puts on a headlock. Ziggler comes back with a headscissors on the mat but Jericho fights up and hits a quick dropkick. Dolph slides to the floor for a kiss from AJ but Jericho hits a suicide dive to take Ziggler out as we go to a break. Back with Jericho missing a charge into the corner and hitting his head on the post before falling to the floor.

Back in and Ziggler dances around a bit before gyrating his hips. Jericho

reverses a neckbreaker into a backslide but gets clotheslined down almost immediately. Off to a reverse chinlock by Ziggler which transitions into a sleeper, only to have Jericho escape and speed things up. A top rope ax handle "connects" but Ziggler avoids the bulldog.

The Walls can't go on but an enziguri gets two for Jericho. Chris loads up the Lionsault but Big E. pops him in the head, giving Ziggler a near fall. Back to the sleeper by Dolph followed by a jumping DDT for two on Jericho. The fans of course do the Wave because they're apparently bored by the match. Jericho gets up first and hits a back elbow before getting in on the Wave as well.

The Lionsault hits knees though and the Fameasser gets two on Jericho. Ziggler sends him into the corner and goes up top, only to get crotched and superplexed down for two. The Codebreaker connects for a VERY delayed two as Dolph gets a foot on the rope. Jericho dropkicks Langston down and puts the Lontamer on Ziggler...but here's Fandango. Well at least his entrance as the fans go NUTS. The distraction lets Dolph hit the Zig Zag for the pin at 16:46.

Rating: B-. Good long match here and it's nice to see Ziggler get a win over a big name, but not having Fandango show up was a mistake. I know he was on another show tonight, but so was Shield and they're here. Anyway, not bad for the most part but it's nothing memorable and they've done far better before.

We look at the end of Raw last week with Shield beating down Cena as Ryback watched. Ryback vs. Cena is official for the PPV.

Mick Foley is here and says that it's human nature for people to look in the mirror and blame someone else, much like Ryback is doing.

Tensai vs. Cody Rhodes

Tensai throws Cody around to start and drops him with a right hand to the face. A delayed double underhook suplex gets two for Tensai but Cody comes back with a neckbreaker and a front facelock. The Disaster Kick gets two and it's back to the front facelock for a bit. Tensai fights back and pounds away before hitting the rolling cannonball attack in the

corner. Sandow gets on the apron for a distraction but gets crushed by Brodus. A Baldo Bomb puts Cody down and the running backslash gets the pin at 3:34.

Rating: D. This just kept going and going with nothing interesting at all. Again, the feud was over weeks ago but it's an England show tonight so we need to have the same guys fight even though no one is really interested in seeing it anymore. This is one of those matches that could be cut to get this show down to two hours again.

Bryan is freaking out because Undertaker isn't here yet and wants Kane to call him. Kane: "He's not the kind of guy to carry a cell phone." Bryan wants a hug and to show Undertaker diagrams. Kane: "Whatever you do, DO NOT TRY TO GIVE HIM A HUG!" As they're talking someone jumps them but we only see one pair of boots.

We look at the main event of Smackdown with Big Show/Henry beating Orton/Sheamus when Show chokeslammed Orton.

Ryback asks Cena how it felt to be jumped by the Shield. Maybe he and Foley should have a discussion in the ring tonight.

Big E. Langston vs. Zack Ryder

This is exactly what you would expect: Ryder gets in a few shots but gets run over with a clothesline. The Big Ending ends this at 1:43.

Undertaker/HELL NO vs. Shield

Surprisingly enough Undertaker comes out first. Shield surrounds him and the fight is on, only to have HELL NO come out for the save. The brawl is on and we take a break before the bell. Bryan and Ambrose start with Dean getting his arm cranked on over and over. Kane comes in and does the same before it's off to Undertaker to a big pop. Taker works on the arm as well with some driving shoulders before having Old School broken up. Ambrose charges into a boot in the corner and now Old School connects for two more.

Back to Bryan who gets to fight Reigns. After a hard kick in the corner by Daniel it's off to Kane for an elbow drop for two. Shield finally uses

the numbers game to get Kane down in the corner and pound away on him with everyone getting in a shot. Rollins comes in and goes up top, only to jump into an uppercut from Kane. Hot tag brings in Bryan who immediately speeds things up and moonsaults out of the corner.

A clothesline puts Rollins on his knees and there are the NO kicks to the chest and a big one to the head. Rollins is sent to the floor and there's the suicide dive to take him down. Back in and the missile dropkick puts Rollins into the corner but a running dropkick from Bryan misses. Back with Bryan being hit in the throat by Reigns for two. Off to Rollins as Bryan is in big trouble.

Rollins talks trash so Taker does the throat slit and has a bit of a fit on the apron. Bryan finally gets in a shot on Ambrose and it's hot tag to Taker. Ambrose gets the Snake Eyes into the big boot and legdrop (brother!) for two. Taker loads up the double chokeslam on Ambrose and Rollins but Reigns spears Taker down for two. Off to Kane for a chokeslam to Ambrose and there's another hot tag to Bryan. Daniel goes up but gets crotched by Reigns. Bryan still manages to launch the Swan Dive but only hits mat, allowing Ambrose to pin him at 18:58.

Rating: B. Again this was good but it didn't reach the level that they were shooting for. This was a great moment for Shield though as they get a win over Undertaker which is a big name to add to their list. Odds are they take the tag belts off HELL NO at Extreme Rules, which puts the company in a bind unless they do a triple threat to get the belts off Shield. Anyway, good match here.

Foley is with Cena and says he's going out there tonight to confront Ryback. Cena gives him a chair to take with him just in case.

Fandango vs. William Regal

BIG ovation for both guys here. Regal signals for the dancing girl to call him. We start with a dance off and Regal takes over with some hard forearm to the face. They trade right hands but Fandango hits a quick Downward Spiral for the pin at 1:43. The dancing girl might be Summer Rae from NXT.

Post match Jericho jumps Fandango and dances with the girl.

Divas Battle Royal

AJ vs. Aksana vs. Naomi vs. Tamina Snuka vs. Layla

Kaitlyn is at ringside and the winner of this gets a title shot. The Bellas have been disqualified from this because of the Twin Magic last week. Tamina immediately superkicks AJ down and she's out cold. Naomi and Layla clean house as AJ lays on the mat. Aksana is eliminated and Naomi hits a Rear View on Tamina. Snuka eliminates Naomi from the apron but Layla dropkicks her to the floor. It's Layla and AJ left but AJ is still out cold. Layla tries to lift the dead weight that is AJ but she pops up and kicks Layla out to win at 3:19.

Rating: N. As in next, because I don't care about this at all and neither did the audience.

Trailer for No One Lives, which is the latest WE Film starring Brodus Clay. By starring they likely mean featuring for about 18 seconds.

Here's Foley to call out Ryback. After the cheap pop here's the monster, now with a skull cap which makes him edgy I guess. Foley talks about how it used to be him standing against every monster and getting back up, but now he can't do that anymore. Foley shows Ryback the Shield beatdown of Cena last week in case he didn't see it in any of the three other times it's aired tonight. Ryback says he loved it so Foley wants to know what happened to the Ryback that debuted last year.

Foley says that it's inevitable that Ryback is going to be WWE Champion someday and he doesn't want it to be on a technicality. Ryback goes off on Foley for coming out here year after year and sticking his nose in everyone else's business when no one wants to hear it. Ryback knows what he's doing and he doesn't care about anyone anymore and only wants the title.

Foley pulls the chair back and Ryback slaps him before throwing the chair out. Cena runs out for the save....and here's Shield. Cena immediately gets on the apron and Shield goes after Ryback, but Cena makes the save

with a chair. They stare each other down and Cena hits the AA to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The two feature matches delivered so that's more than enough to give it a good grade, but, say it with me, the extra hour drags it down. The stuff like the Divas battle royal and the Tons of Funk/Rhodes Scholars stuff just dragged the show down because they were clearly there just to fill in five minutes each.

That's the problem with Raw and WWE in general anymore: there's good stuff in there, but by the time you get to it you're so exhausted by the other stuff that it loses its appeal. The lack of the extra guys helped a lot though as they didn't have to pack in so much stuff tonight, meaning stuff got more time. In other words, the Brand Split would have helped this show a lot.

Results

R-Truth b. Antonio Cesaro – Little Jimmy

Damien Sandow b. Brodus Clay – Rollup

Dolph Ziggler b. Chris Jericho – Zig Zag

Tensai b. Cody Rhodes – Backsplash

Big E. Langston b. Zack Ryder – Big Ending

Shield b. Undertaker/HELL NO – Ambrose pinned Bryan after a missed flying headbutt

Fandango b. William Regal – Downward Spiral

AJ won a battle royal by last eliminating Layla

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On This Day: April 21, 2008 – Monday Night Raw 2008: King Me

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 21, 2008

Location: BI-LO Center, Greenville, South Carolina

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is another request and since it's taking forever to download some TNA shows, I figured I might as well knock some of these off in the meantime. This is the King of the Ring tournament so it's a three hour special. Almost everything you have here is a tournament match, plus an eight man tag and a REALLY stupid other match. Let's get to it.

Theme song gets us going. It's still Papa Roach.

We open with Lillian telling us that the tournament is back tonight.

King of the Ring First Round: Chris Jericho vs. MVP

Jericho is IC Champion and MVP is US Champion. There's no bracket yet and even JR and Lawler haven't seen them. I don't mind a champion losing so much here as one of them gets to look stronger. This is also the go home show for Backlash, which is a show I haven't done yet. MVP takes him to the mat to start but Jericho comes back with some knees to the head and a kick to the same area.

MVP punches him in the corner as this is off to a hot start. Jericho drapes him over the top rope and mostly misses a baseball slide to the floor. MVP catches him coming back in with a knee lift and a kind of clothesline for two. He hooks kind of a modified abdominal stretch on the mat but Jericho gets up pretty quickly. Overhead belly to belly puts Jericho down for two. They do the Flair bridge up into a backslide spot which gets a good reaction in Horsemen country. Big boot gets two for MVP. Jericho comes back with a clothesline but the Lionsault misses. Play of the Day is countered into the Walls and Jericho advances.

Rating: C. Very basic match here but with a one night tournament you have to keep things that way. Again I don't mind MVP losing clean here because it was to another champion and on top of that he would drop the title on Sunday anyway. Not much to see here but it was fine all things considered.

Jericho sits on the throne post match.

King of the Ring First Round: CM Punk vs. Matt Hardy

Punk has the MITB case. Feeling out process to start but it turns into a strike off, won by Punk. He takes Matt down for two and hooks a quick chinlock. Matt comes back with some headbutts and drives an elbow into Punk's back off the middle rope. Matt's bulldog is countered into the clothesline and bulldog out of the corner for two. Punk's springboard clothesline is caught in the Side Effect for two. Twist of Fate is countered into a GTS which is countered into a sunset flip which is countered by Punk sitting on Hardy for the pin. Nice ending.

Rating: C+. Another short match here but this one was a little more fun than the previous one. The ending was pretty quick and that's a good thing as it was certainly entertaining for a four minute match. Punk was on a roll at this point and he would win the world title in about two months. Matt would get

the US Title on Sunday.

All we have as far as a bracket is Jericho vs. Punk in the semi-finals.

Tonight it's Barack Obama vs. Hilary Clinton. That's the really stupid match I warned you about. We see it in Smackdown vs. Raw 2008 for a preview.

We get a clip from Raw last week of HHH vs. JBL when Orton ran in and HHH got double teamed. The fatal fourway on Sunday (those three plus Cena) is now an elimination match.

JBL says this Sunday he'll take his place on top of the WWE. He was in the New York Times today.

King of the Ring First Round: Finlay vs. Great Khali

Khali is having issues with Big Show around this time. Horny is at ringside of course. Finlay charges at Khali but gets shoved down almost immediately. Khali shoves him down but misses a legdrop. Finlay pounds away but Khali shrugs him off and sends him to the corner. Horny comes in with the club but Finlay saves him. The chop puts Finlay down and Khali wraps Finlay's leg around the post....for a DQ? Apparently so. Too short to rate but this was nothing of note.

Big Show comes out but Khali won't go for him until Sunday.

Finlay is helped out because of the knee attack.

King of the Ring First Round: William Regal vs. Hornswoggle

Twenty seconds, Regal Stretch. Finlay comes in to help but Regal beats him down and attacks the knee. Regal is GM at this point so shenanigans seem to be up.

The brackets are set for the semi-finals:

Jericho

Punk

Finlay

Regal

Video on the annual post Wrestlemania European tour.

Here's Shawn for a little chat. Apparently Batista isn't happy about Shawn retiring Flair at Wrestlemania so Shawn wants to talk about it right now. They have a match on Sunday with Jericho as referee for no apparent reason, although it would set up a six month feud between Shawn and Jericho. Here's Batista and Shawn if Batista wanted to face Flair at Mania, which is what Jericho suggested on Smackdown.

Batista asks if that would make Shawn feel better. This isn't about Flair anymore, but rather about Big Dave and Shawn. He respects where Shawn is, but not how he got there. He'll finish this with Shawn at Backlash. Shawn appreciates the honesty but he's everything Batista says he is. Whether Dave likes it or not, Shawn is Mr. Wrestlemania and there definitely is blood on his hands. Batista is going to need luck on Sunday. Shawn goes to leave but Batista spins him back around. Shawn gets into superkick position but Batista just walks past him and leaves.

Hilary Clinton gives the kind of promo/speech that a famous person gives when they talk to a wrestling audience that they don't understand. This one isn't terrible though as she mainly talks about how she'll fight for America and lists some of her issues. It's very corny, but I'll give them points for at least talking like this. Obama and McCain will talk later.

Hardcore Holly vs. Carlito

Just...why? Oh this is something to do with the tag titles. Holly and Rhodes are champions coming into this. Carlito has his partner Santino with him. Feeling out process to start with Holly mainly in control. Carlito comes back with a backbreaker for two. Off to a chinlock which doesn't last long. Carlito works on the back some more but misses a charge.

Holly makes his comeback with clotheslines and the dropkick but his back gives out. He loads up the Alabama Slam but his back gives out again. Backstabber gets the pin.

Rating: D. This wasn't much. This would presumably set up the match on Sunday but it didn't happen for some reason. Then again, no one cared at all about the tag titles so it's not like anyone cared. This was really just a breather to allow everyone to transition from the first half of the show to the second.

HHH says he'll win.

King of the Ring Semi-Finals: Chris Jericho vs. CM Punk

Both guys are tentative to start but both get quick twos. The first big move is Jericho draping him over the top rope out of a suplex. Punk tries a springboard but Jericho kicks his legs out and Punk is in trouble. Jericho tries a hammerlock but Punk takes his head off with a clothesline for two. They trade rollups like at the end of Punk's other match but no one gets a pin. Walls are countered into a rollup for two.

Jericho hits an enziguri for two and this is getting good. Punk snaps off a powerslam for two. GTS is countered into the bulldog and Jericho loads up the Lionsault. It looks strange as Jericho tried to land on all fours because Punk had his knees up. Either way he stopped himself and hooks the Walls but Punk makes a rope. Jericho goes up but Punk high kicks him down. He puts Jericho on his shoulders and the GTS sends Punk to the finals clean.

Rating: B-. These two always work well together and this was no exception. Punk got a win here which made him look a lot stronger, which is what someone like Jericho is great at. Even four years later Jericho is still putting people over but it still means something, which is a great sign for a veteran like him.

Senator Obama gives a very corny speech, concluding with “do you smell what the Barack is cooking.” Just...no.

King of the Ring Semi-Finals: William Regal vs. Finlay

Finlay has the bad knee coming in. Regal circles him to start but gets monkey flipped to the floor. Regal sends him into the steps and he hits knee first. Back in the ring and it's time for a slugout. Regal goes shoulder first into the post for two. Finlay tries a fireman's carry but the knee gives out. Back to the forearms and a rollup gets two. Regal hits him in the head with a knee and puts on the Regal Stretch. Finlay passes out to send Regal to the finals.

Rating: C. These two always have good matches as they're always physical. The more I see of Finlay the more I appreciate him as he was really good at stuff like this. There was nothing for him to lose out there and he was going to be adequate at worst no matter who you put him out there with. Good stuff but short.

McCain uses a lot of wrestling lines and says go vote.

We run down the card for Backlash.

Cena says that you've heard everyone talk tonight and he has as good a chance as anyone else, but the advantage he has is he doesn't have to go through himself.

Let's get this over with.

Hilary Clinton vs. Barack Obama

There's a Bill impersonator with Hilary, who comes out to Real American. No one reacts AT ALL. Obama comes out to Rock's theme and I guess is the face in this. They're impersonators in case you didn't get that. It's so weird seeing and hearing people not care at all about Hogan's music. I mean there's NOTHING. This is one of those times I feel ashamed about being a wrestling fan. They both cut promos on each other and

Hilary's is far better, as she's played by a chick from SHIMMER. The fans still don't care.

Is this supposed to be funny? Are we supposed to be this stupid to find this entertaining? Rock's theme gets ZERO reaction either and Obama has huge ears. King gets the only funny line of this by saying that if Obama were facing Mike Tyson in this it would be a buffet. They have a "match" which isn't completely terrible as both are played by wrestlers. Obama hits a Rock Bottom but Bill breaks up the People's Elbow. Cue Umaga for a Spike to Obama and a Samoan Drop to Hilary. Bill runs away. This got TEN MINUTES.

Here are a bunch of face Divas to introduce the new Women's Champion Mickie James. She beat Beth who was considered unbeatable so it was a big upset. It still amazes me how much more interesting the Divas were just a few years ago. Mickie thanks the other girls but gets cut off by Beth and some other evil girls. Remember when there were twelve Divas that could be in one segment and could all have at least a passable match? Beth says it's not if she'll win the title back, but when she'll win it back. Michelle slaps Beth and the brawl is on.

Mr. Kennedy is coming back.

King of the Ring Finals: William Regal vs. CM Punk

Punk comes in with bad ribs because of the matches earlier. Regal is basically in his second match after the Horny match and beating an injured Finlay. Punk starts off fast with some kicks in the corner. He tries the bulldog but gets suplexed down and it's off to a bow and arrow hold. Punk fights up from that and hits a spinning kick to the knee.

Regal grabs the arms and forces him right back down to the mat as is his custom. The idea is that it's strikes vs. grapples which is about as natural as you're going to get with these two. Punk fights up again and hits a BIG kick to the head to

stagger Regal. Spinning backfist sets up the high kick for two. That sounded great. Punk loads up the GTS but Regal grabs the rope. He escapes and hits the knee trembler, followed by the Stretch. Punk hangs on for almost thirty seconds but finally has to tap to give Regal the tournament.

Rating: C-. This was too short to mean much but it gave Regal some more psychosis to work with which was a really entertaining time. Then it just stopped cold because it was getting too good and that's how WWE works. Punk giving up because of the rib injury is ok because Regal didn't win fairly (coming in at a big advantage), which is fine.

Regal's psycho look while he sits on the throne is still great.

Here's Orton for the main event but first he brags about how awesome he is and how his title reign will continue after Sunday.

Randy Orton/Edge/Chavo Guerrero/John Bradshaw Layfield vs. John Cena/HHH/Kane/The Undertaker

Orton is Raw champion, Edge is challenging Taker on Sunday, Chavo is challenging Kane, JBL is challenging Orton, Cena is challenging Orton, HHH is challenging Orton, Kane is ECW Champion, Undertaker is Smackdown champion. Now that's a packed main event. How out of place does Chavo look here though? After the entrances take forever to get through we're ready to go. Seriously, there were ten minutes spent on entrances PLUS a commercial. That's ridiculous.

Taker and Orton look to start but Edge jumps Taker in a surprise. This goes badly for the Canadian as a big clothesline puts him down. Old School hits (hasn't that been called old longer than it wasn't called old?) and we take a break after 40 seconds. Back with Chavo tagging Edge in to work over a downed HHH. The spear is countered into a spinebuster and there's the tag to Cena.

He starts his finishing sequence very quickly on Edge but Chavo low bridges him on the Shuffle attempt. JBL throws him back in clean which shocks Jerry. Off to Orton who does nothing so it's JBL again. Russian legsweep gets two as does a clothesline. Edge comes in and the Cena chants begin. Edge gets a big boot and it's off to Orton for a chinlock. Cena stands up but it's a double clothesline and both guys are down.

The tags are made to Chavo and Kane with the Big Bald cleaning house. All of the evil team goes down and a side slam puts Chavo down. The top rope clothesline mostly gets shoulder and everything breaks down. Chavo counters a slam attempt into a DDT but as he goes for the Frog Splash Kane chokeslams him down. Out of nowhere though Edge spears Kane for the pin.

Rating: C. It's a main event tag match and that's about it. They covered almost everything and they had the most secure winner at the PPV (Kane) take the fall which is a good thing. Not a bad match but it's just a way to throw everyone into the main event at once, which is fine for building up the PPV main events.

Edge takes an FU post match, HHH takes the Clothesline, RK0 to HHH and a double chokeslam to JBL and Orton. Undertaker stands tall to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was a really entertaining show that went by fast. I'd have liked to see some better wrestling in there but the matches had to be fast due to the tournament. I'm glad they didn't go to any double eliminations as in an eight man tournament that's kind of excessive. Good show though and I want to watch Backlash now so that's a great sign. Good stuff.

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On This Day: April 11, 2011 – Monday Night Raw 2011: Leave The (Canadian) Memories Alone

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 11, 2011

Location: Webster Bank Arena at Harbor Yard, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Josh Matthews

Tonight we'll likely begin the build to Extreme Rules. We didn't have much time last week as the focus was on Mania fallout and of course next year's Wrestlemania main event being set up. It should be interesting to see what Cena does to fill the next 50+ weeks. No matches on the Raw side have been announced for the PPV so we should get something tonight. Let's get to it.

On Tough Enough there was a teaser that Edge says his career might be over. That came out of left field.

Cole gets a special introduction as the only undefeated superstar in the WWE. "What's up Jerry?"

Here's Cena to open the show properly. He talks about how this is a great time to be in the WWE Universe because last week there was an announcement made that turned WWE upside down. Cena talks about the announcement that was so big it takes a year to digest. The match can't just be a match though, so that match needs to be for the WWE Championship. Therefore Cena needs to win the WWE Championship, so he issues a challenge for right now.

Instead he gets Randy Orton. Orton says that Cena may want a title shot but he had his already and lost. Orton says Cena should step aside and let someone that won their match at Wrestlemania get a shot. Cena gets ready to reply but here's John Morrison. He says we've seen this show (referring to Cena vs. Orton) before but now it's better because John Morrison is involved.

Before that though here come Vickie and Dolph. Vickie says she should get the shot because she pinned Morrison. But if not her then Dolph. Ziggler says he isn't here on Raw to waste his time on Cena. He's never faced Miz for the title so the line starts with him. Don't worry though because everyone will get title shots when he's champion.

We're not done yet because here's R-Truth. He says that the gospel truth is that he's never had a WWE Championship match. I think there's a reason for that Truth. An e-mail says that there's a new cobncept match. It's a 5 man gauntlet match. Tonight (presumably) there will be two starting and another enters at a preset interval. You can't get a win until all five are in and the winner meets Miz at Extreme Rules. I think those are the rules at least. It was a bit hard to keep track of.

Lawler vs. Swagger later. If Lawler wins he gets a rematch with Cole.

There's a video of a baby doll with its head taken off. You can see the person holding it, clearly the soon to be debuting Awesome Kong. She laughs crazily.

Divas Title: Eve Torres vs. Brie Bella

Brie allegedly won a Divas battle royal to win this shot. Wasn't that weeks ago and she got the shot already? Eve brings a marker to have an X put on Nikki's hand so we know she's on

the floor. That's rather intelligent. Brie takes her down to start but Eve makes her comeback with a dropkick and the standing moonsault for two. Eve gets her in the Tree of Woe and when she's being taken off there's a switch. While Nikki is being taken out Brie sneaks up on her and an X-Factor gives Brie the title at 2:20. Weak match but all the girls looked good from a looks perspective at least.

Sin Cara debuts next.

Back with Eve being all upset about losing and Gail comes in to say she knows how it feels. Eve says all the Divas are the same. Natalya gets the same response. Tamina walks up to get something and just keeps walking. Ok then.

Sin Cara vs. Primo

The fans cheer for Sin Cara as Primo hammers away. He tries to toss Cara into the air so Sin Cara lands on his shoulders and backflips off. Out to the floor and a slingshot rana sends Primo flying. Primo is thrown back in but gets a baseball slide to send Cara back out. We hit a modified chinlock as Primo is getting way too much offense in here.

Cara chops away and gets another rana to get the crowd going a bit more. Powerbomb is countered into a very fast and hard sunset flip. Primo goes up but gets kicked in the head. They stand on the top rope and Primo falls, sending Cara to the floor. A C4 2000 (Downward Spiral with a backflip off the top) ends Primo at 4:30.

Rating: D+. I haven't seen this big of a blown debut in a long time. Primo controlled the majority of the match and whenever Cara got something going, Primo would hit something to slow him down. You couple that with the botch at the end and this was a glorified train wreck. At least the ending was good.

We get a clip from the end of Raw last week with Corre running in. During the live chat on NXT last week Howard Finkel said that was very stupid of them to do. When the Fink comes down on someone, that's not a good sign.

Corre is in the ring and Barrett says he used to see them as equals, but if they can't hold up their end of the bargain then there's no point in continuing. Gabriel takes offense to it and says the 450 has taken out more people and he's a 3 time tag champion. Slater says WE are three time tag champions. Jackson says he made Corre legit. He gets cut off by Santino's music though.

Here are Santino, Henry, Bryan and Bourne. Santino says if they're the Corre then they're the A.P.P.L.E.: Allied People Powered (by) Loathing Everything (you stand for). This fight is for Kozlov so APPLE POWERS UNITE! And yes Santino really said that.

Corre vs. Apple

This is joined in progress as we come back. The Apple name is hilarious if nothing else. Corre is in control hammering away on Daniel Bryan. I wonder if he regrets leaving being the king of the indies yet. Gabriel gets a hilo for two. After a nice long beating it's the hot tag to Santino who cleans house. Cole makes apple jokes the whole time. Everything breaks down and Bryan throws out a suicide dive to take out Barrett. Cobra is loaded up and a reverse DDT ends Santino at 3:37.

Rating: D+. Nothing special at all here other than to show that Corre is mostly united at least. Bryan sells very well so the match was about as good as it was going to get given what they had to work with. Not a terrible match but all things considered it was just ok. At least the right team won.

We talk about Lawler vs. Swagger and here's JR to be in

Lawler's corner. Cole makes fun of Ross so JR tries to break into the Cole Mine. When that fails he hits Cole with his hat. Jerry gets up to take out Swagger and we go to a break.

Jerry Lawler vs. Jack Swagger

If Lawler wins he gets a rematch with Cole at Extreme Rules and gets to pick the stipulations. If Swagger wins then Cole never has to face Lawler again. Cole and Ross are at ringside and are on microphones. Swagger controls with basic stuff to start, namely hammering on Jerry. Cole keeps talking trash as Jerry makes a brief comeback, including taking a brief victory lap around the ring.

Headlock by Swagger is reversed by a belly to back suplex. Ankle lock goes on and Jerry does as Ross says by getting to the ropes. Cole shouts MOMMY at Jerry during the hold. Josh isn't talking during the match. Swagger grabs an armbar and cranks on it a bit. Ross: "Your guy had you in an ankle lock and now has a wrist lock. Show's how stupid he is!"

Cole calls Swagger Jackie as he rams Jerry into the buckle. Lawler Lawlers Up and hammers away. Cole keeps running his mouth so JR finally blasts him. The distraction allows Jerry to grab a rollup for the pin at 5:18. Swagger's face after it is one of the funniest things I've ever seen.

Rating: C-. A lot of that is for the commentary/talking alone. JR's line is one of the most obvious yet brilliant lines I've heard in a long time and shows the basic lack of psychology that is present in wrestling today. Not a great match or anything but given who was in there, this was solid. And no, I'm not saying this was better than the previous two matches. They're not on the same scale and shouldn't be.

Cole rips into Swagger post match, blaming him for everything and saying he paid good money for his help. It was all

Swagger's fault that he lost. Then he slaps Swagger and runs. Jerry grabs the mic and says we need to talk about Extreme Rules. He picks the obvious tag match: JR/Lawler vs. Swagger/Cole. Smart thinking actually. Jerry reminds Swagger that Cole just slapped him in the face. Cole panics as Swagger looks like he's about to eat him.

We get a video package of wrestlers both past and present talking about how great Undertaker vs. HHH was.

Edge is talking to Cena and will be heading to the ring next.

Here's Edge as JR, King and Matthews are doing commentary now. Please, I beg of you, pick a team and stick with it. This rotating lineup in the middle of the show is getting annoying. Anyway Edge says he's going to ramble a lot in this. He says a lot of people thinks WWE doesn't hurt and he wishes that wasn't true. 8 years ago he had a neck injury and had spinal fusion surgery to correct it.

He knew he was wrestling on borrowed time but recently he's been losing the feeling in his arms. He's taken some tests and managed to make it through Wrestlemania, but the tests tell him he has to retire. The doctors have said he has no choice but thankfully they've found out now and he's not going to be in a wheelchair.

Edge breaks down into tears as I'm thinking this isn't a storyline at all. The fans chant thank you Edge and he says thank you guys. Edge talked to Christian who has been his best friend for 27 years. Edge was mad at himself but he's still a fan of the WWE. He talks about going to Maple Leaf Gardens with Christian and seeing guys like Demolition, the LOD and Hogan.

Then he went to Wrestlemania 6 and saw Hulk Hogan vs. the Ultimate Warrior and said he'd be doing that. Fast forward 18 years and it was him in there against the Undertaker. Now he's won more titles than anyone in WWE history and had his last

match in a main event at Wrestlemania and gets to retire as World Heavyweight Champion.

Edge has been in this business for 19 years and he grew up in front of these people. He runs through his career from running through the streets of New York to doing posing for the benefits of those with flash photography to a live sex celebration ("luckily with Lita and not Vickie Guerrero") and he hopes that he's earned the fans' respect.

He's going to miss this and tomorrow he doesn't have to wear tights and now he gets to eat ice cream. He says he'd do it again, even getting hired by JR. He drops the mic and gets a standing ovation. No Alberto, no interruptions, nothing else. If this was a work, give this man an Emmy right now. He does his pose on the stage and his music plays him out. Heavy stuff man.

We're back and everyone, faces and heels, is applauding Edge. Even Vickie, Dolph, Corre, everyone. Dustin Rhodes is there in a shirt and tie. Still no Alberto or Christian. No word on the title situation yet but I'd assume Christian will take his place in the ladder match for the vacant title.

Cue Miz to a nice pop actually. He's on commentary here.

John Cena vs. Randy Orton vs. R-Truth vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. John Morrison

Two will start and then it's a standard gauntlet match, last man standing wins. Ziggler locks on a chinlock after some back and forth stuff. Lawler asks Miz who he'd prefer to face and Miz says he can't hear him over his awesomeness. Josh is reading something and not seeming to pay attention.

Orton fires off some offense and looks down at Miz. Ziggler hides in the ropes to avoid the RK0. He can't avoid the

elevated DDT though and Orton sets for the RK0. The Nexus returns though and distracts Orton, allowing him to be pinned at 2:43. Well I didn't see that one coming. Orton has to fight off the Nexus but Ryan takes him out. Orton is left laying as we take a break.

Back with Truth vs. Ziggler. Miz runs down Truth, wondering which version of him would come up. Lawler asks who Miz would rather face and Miz says he'll face either of them. Chinlock goes on by Ziggler as Miz talks about not getting respect. If Cena wanted icon vs. icon he should have challenged Miz. Miz says he's not a talker. Lawler responds with a facepalm.

The in ring stuff is rather boring, mainly because everyone knows Truth doesn't have a chance here of winning the whole thing. Truth hammers away with right hands and gets a sitout gordbuster for two. Ziggler comes back with a neckbreaker as the fans aren't exactly thrilled by this. Out of nowhere Truth gets a jumping downward spiral to put eliminate Ziggler after 4:00 (all times other than the final are of the two in the ring, not overall time).

Morrison is next and will face Truth after the break. They exchange a bunch of pinfalls to start us off until Morrison hits a breakdancing legdrop and throws on a chinlock. Miz keeps bashing everyone and is sounding like a less insulting version of Mystery Science Theater. They hit the floor and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Both guys slide back in at nine and we keep going.

Morrison gets all angry and takes down Truth with some running offense, including a leg lariat. Truth reverses into a suplex/Stunner. He picks Morrison up for a suplex but shifts him to the side and catches him in a Stunner. Cool looking move. Morrison gets up and hits his kick off the middle rope but misses Starship Pain. The jumping Downward Spiral sends Truth to the final two at 4:51.

Cue Cena as it's him vs. Truth for the shot at Miz. I didn't see this one coming. We're going to start this up after a break. During the break we're told Edge will surrender the title on Friday. This looks more real every second. Back and we're ready to go. Miz comments on the dueling chants and Cena hits a dropkick to the champ's shock. Cena hammers away and hits a new move: a combination powerslam/side slam for two.

Release fisherman's suplex gets two and Cena goes up top. Top rope Fameasser gets two and I have a feeling this isn't going to be as easy as it seemed. Truth makes the comeback and "hits" (read as it misses by about 8 inches) his spinning forearm for two. The downward spiral (that needs a name) can't hit and Cena initiates his ending sequence. Cena sets for the FU but Miz and Riley run in and hit both guys at the same time for a double DQ I guess. The last pairing ran 5:36 and overall counting commercials it ran 30:40.

Rating: C+. The grade is for the whole thing rather than any individual segment. Hard to really grade this as there isn't much of a precedent for it and the whole match was choppy. Luckily this had a lot of time as the matches where people are eliminated in about a minute are rather annoying as they're ridiculous any other time of the year. Not bad, but hard to grade. Ending was good though.

Miz says there's no #1 contender and we get an E-Mail. There are now 2 #1 contenders: Cena and R-Truth, and there will be a triple threat match at the PPV. Odd choice but ok then. Cena and Truth have a weird bromance moment for a bit as they slap each other on the back rather fiercely and Truth glares at Cena as he leaves.

Overall Rating: B. Well it can't be said nothing happened here. We have a new stable (and yes I know it's a joke), a new #1 contender, a new champion and one of the biggest stars of all time retired. The wrestling here clearly wasn't the point and for a show with this much going on that's more than

understandable.

Results

Brie Bella b. Eve Torres – Sitout Facebuster

Sin Cara b. Primo – C4 2000

Corre b. Apple – Slater pinned Marella after a reverse DDT

Jerry Lawler b. Jack Swagger – Rollup

Randy Orton vs. John Cena vs. R-Truth vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. John Morrison went to a double disqualification when Alex Riley and the Miz interfered

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

A Few More Thoughts on Wrestlemania/The Raw Crowd

Since we're now about four days removed from Wrestlemania and three from Raw, I figured I'd take another quick look at the two shows since a lot of their impacts were probably lost during the live reviews. Wrestlemania

The more I think about it, the worse the show looks. To begin with, how in the world can you have a nine match card running FOUR HOURS and have to cut a match due to time constraints? There were no backstage segments, the Hall of Fame stuff was quick, five matches didn't even make it to eleven minutes, and the longest match was 24:01. But somehow we had to cut a

match for time? Let's see. Could it have been:

Rock vs. Cena promo – 2 minutes

Announcers play with WWE action figures – 1 minute

Package on the Special Olympics – 3 minutes

John Cena Make-A-Wish video – 2 minutes

Video on the Pre-Show – 1 minute

Rock vs. Cena promo – 2 minutes

Diddy Intro – 2 minutes

Diddy Concert – 8 minutes

Video on Slim Jims – 1 minute

Rock vs. Cena promo – 2 minutes

Gee, could it be the TWENTY FOUR MINUTES spent either hyping up stuff we ALREADY BOUGHT or WWE patting themselves on the back for how great they are? Yeah instead of having Ryder and 3MB in the back doing something amusing, we need to hear about how awesome it is that WWE has sent Slim Jims to soldiers.

Moving on, there's the major problem with this show: it wasn't that good. The best match was either Undertaker vs. Punk or HHH vs. Lesnar and neither of them are anything resembling a classic. They're both good but I want a bit more when I think of two of the biggest matches of the year. Both were more than fine for second and third biggest matches on Wrestlemania though.

This brings us to the main event which just wasn't very good. It was exactly what we were expecting and while there were some good spots in there, the majority of the match did

nothing for me. I'm very tired of the idea of using five finishers a match as the only offense as they stop being finishers and are just moves at that point. Cena winning was the right move, but the problem at the end of the day was that Rock winning the title didn't do much. It wasn't a good title reign and he was really just there to pass the title along to Cena.

As for the other major matches, let's take a quick look at a few.

Swagger vs. Del Rio: meh. This feud stopped being interesting about two weeks in and Swagger not even getting an intro showed how lame it was in the eyes of the company. The match was nothing of note (again clipped because of time, because WE NEED DIDDY!) and Swagger looks like the jobber he's been for years.

Lesnar vs. HHH. While the opening part ran long, the match was very physical and brutal. Now that being said, why in the world am I supposed to look at Brock as a serious threat again? The match vs. Cena made Brock look like a BEAST and Cena looked like he was trying to survive rather than win the match. That made for a great showcase and a great match. The matches with HHH on the other hand were ALL about HHH. Think about it: Brock was a guy there for HHH to get beaten down by and then make the Superman comeback against months later. Lesnar was just a guy for HHH to beat and nothing more. This is Brock Lesnar, not Khali or Henry, but he's being treated like a regular monster.

Overall Wrestlemania was entirely forgettable. Nothing on the show was incredibly fun or interesting, so it came off as very

lame. Out of the 29 shows in the series, it's probably not even in the top 20. That's not a good sign coming off last year's incredible show.

Now on to Raw, which was very interesting for a lot of different reasons.

Let's get the big one out of the way right now: Raw sucked this week. Here are the matches:

Squash

Rematch from Mania's pre-show with a stupid booking decision

VERY boring handicap match

MITB cash-in

6 man tag to get people not on Wrestlemania on TV

The bizarre match

90 second Fandango match ending in a run-in

Mania match on Raw because WWE LOVES SLIM JIMS!

3 minute match to set up the show ending angle

Other stupid stuff on Raw:

Booker not letting us just have Henry vs. Cena for the title (which would have been a better booking move given the ending)

Colter and Swagger trying to get a heel reaction by asking the fans to chant USA

Ziggler being world champion

The Twitter Poll being canceled after the results were shown on screen

Now we get to the big deal of the show: the crowd. Let me get this out of the way: that crowd was not a good thing. It was entertaining for a bit, but eventually they decided to take over the show and make it all about them, because those 12,000 or so people are more important than the fans at home or the people in the ring. Were they amusing for a bit? Yes they were, but as soon as they made the entire show about them, it was too much. It was annoying in ECW and it was annoying here, along with being disrespectful to the people who are working hard in the ring.

Raw sucked on Monday and they're not going to have a crowd like that to take the focus off that in the future. That's a very bad sign for them going forward.

Thought of the Day: Mix It Up A Bit

This occurred to me during Raw and while I was watching an old Nitro. As opposed to the new Nitros that is. Raw and Smackdown could use some random matches between guys they don't often feature. Look at the roster they've got. With as many talented guys as they've got, they can't manage to ever get them on one of the bigger shows. I know they're on Superstars and other such C-shows, but instead of having the same matches over and over again, let some of these guys be

jobbers on the main shows. I mean, do we need to see Cesaro fight Kofi fifteen times or Sheamus vs. Barrett so often? Look at the six man tag from Raw. Those were six guys you could throw on TV at any time and get a decent match out of them, so why not use them?

More Fandango Awesomeness

I can't embed this but my goodness it's amazing. From after Raw.

<https://vine.co/v/btWLDKPHT6a>

ZIGGLER CASHES IN MITB!!!

The place went nuts when his music hit. Del Rio has just finished a handicap match against Swagger and Colter. Ziggler..... WON THE TITLE with the Zig Zag. New Champion!

Rock Allegedly Walks Out On

WWE

Word on the street is that Rock was scheduled to be at Raw tonight and talk about losing the title, only to be laid out by Lesnar, setting up a showdown at Mania XXX. Well allegedly, and I emphasize that word, Rock said screw that and went home. Again, no word on if this is official, but we'll know in like six hours. Until then, better go pay to read EXCLUSIVE BACKSTAGE INFO which will NEVER be published for free on another site, right? Did I mention I find that method of news reporting stupid?

Anyway, assuming this is true:

1. It's Cena's fault right? Everything else is. We better turn him heel and then complain about how lousy his heel turn was executed.
2. If Rock wants to leave, I have no issues with it, much like I have few with Austin bailing in 2002. He doesn't owe WWE or the fans a thing.
3. It's not like he lit the world on fire last night so why not let him go? It doesn't really add much anymore.

Thoughts on this?

Monday Night Raw – April 1, 2013: Everything Is The Same

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 1, 2013

Location: Verizon Center, Washington, D.C.

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's finally the go home show for Wrestlemania which means we're likely in for a slow evening tonight. These shows tend to be mainly talking with little action, as most of the wrestlers don't want to risk injuries before the biggest night of the year. These shows don't tend to do much, but to be fair most of the show on Sunday is already set in stone. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the three main events for the PPV and how all six guys will be around tonight to hype up Wrestlemania.

Here's Cena to open the show. As the crowd is split, Cena talks about how this is a house divided. Just like in Washington DC politics, we have Cenacrats and Rockpublicans here tonight. Cena says that a year ago he would have come out here and made a stupid joke while Rock would have thrown Cena's shirt in a bowl of Fruity Pebbles. This time the match is serious because Rock has done everything he's ever set out to do. Therefore, Cena winning is impossible right? Just like Cena winning the Rumble and Cena beating Punk to go to Wrestlemania were impossible tasks right?

This Sunday is going to be different because Rock has already stuck his foot in his mouth. Cena had to put up with Rock establishing a new era in the WWE, but on Sunday in Rock's first defense he's losing his own era. However, Cena will continue the People's Era after the mighty Rock experiences failure. Cena isn't going to replace the WWE Championship when he wins it because he wants to hold it as a symbol. The fans chant boring for some reason. Cena says he's going to get the title back and the champ will be here.

We stop for Lawler to make a Tout about who is going to win the match between Rock and Cena on Sunday. Lawler picks Rock.

3MB vs. Randy Orton/Sheamus/Big Show

Orton and Slater start things off with Sheamus quickly coming in to work on Heath as well. Off to McIntyre who gets punched in the face and powerslammed down for no cover. 3MB finally uses their numbers to take Sheamus down in the corner but Slater walks into the Irish Curse. Hot tag brings in Show as everything breaks down. The brogue Kick puts Drew down and the WMD ends Mahal at 3:05.

Rating: C-. Total squash here which was what the entire idea was. The problem with this team is Shield is the only group that could give them a battle. Seeing them beat up 3MB isn't going to do much good, but at least the match was short and we likely won't have to see this again until Wrestlemania.

Shield comes down the aisle but stops halfway through. Ambrose congratulates them for such a big win. Rollins says Orton and company are only convincing themselves that they're on the same page. Justice never lies and Shield knows the truth. That truth is that they're not looking at a team but the people don't believe in them. Once Sunday is over, the world will believe in the Shield.

Colter and Swagger were in Washington D.C. earlier today to talk about how America was broken. Swagger is the man to fix this because he'll take care of the illegal immigrants and get them back to where they came from. He'll start that at Wrestlemania by breaking the champion's ankle as well as his spirit.

Del Rio says that America is a land of opportunity and Swagger has the right to free speech. If Del Rio doesn't like what Swagger is saying, he can do something about it. Tonight it's Del Rio vs. Colter and Zeb is a pinata with a mustache.

Daniel Bryan vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler grabs an armbar to start as AJ looks like her usual psycho self.

Bryan fights back and catches Ziggler in a kind of spinebuster to send him into the corner. Bryan fires off some kicks to a kneeling Dolph and does his moonsault out of the corner. A clothesline puts Ziggler down but he makes the ropes before the NO Lock. Ziggler goes after the knee to take over before sending Bryan into the corner. A charge misses though and Bryan puts Ziggler in an old school Tarantula but has to stop to stare at Langston. Ziggler hits a quick Fameasser for two and we take a break.

Back with Bryan kicking Ziggler in the face out of the corner before firing off some NO kicks to Ziggler's shoulder and chest. Dolph misses a charge in the corner and Bryan fires off more kicks. A hard kick to the head looks to set up a Swan Dive but Bryan only hits mat. Both guys try cross bodies and crash to the mat as AJ starts skipping around Kane. The distraction lets Langston run over Kane and that distraction lets Ziggler roll up Bryan for the pin at 11:00.

Rating: C+. Semi-botched ending aside (Bryan's shoulder looked to be up) this was a hard hitting match. The problem is this doesn't exactly make me want to see the match on Sunday. Langston looked good but it would be nice to see him in a match, even a squash, before Sunday. This was good for what it was but it didn't accomplish much.

Post match Langston lays out the tag champions.

Here's Shawn Michaels who says you can't have Raw without him. Shawn lists off the major matches before getting around to HHH vs. Brock. He has some doubts about something but here's HHH to interrupt. HHH says he knows what he's doing but Shawn says he doesn't think so. Shawn thinks the situations the two of them in were very different.

When Shawn's career was on the line, Shawn looked at someone he had great respect for and that respect was mutual. When Shawn lost, he was heartbroken but Undertaker was just as heartbroken. Undertaker never came out here and bragged because Taker cares about Shawn that much. Brock on the other hand respects no one and HHH doesn't respect him either.

Lesnar is here for the money, but the two of them are here for love of the sport. HHH loves it more than Shawn though because it's HHH's life.

HHH says Shawn can't talk him out of it, but that's not Michaels' point. Shawn is here to tell HHH that he HAS to do this. He's going to be in HHH's corner but before they can do the catchphrase, here are Brock and Heyman. Heyman says Brock has two words for HHH but doesn't say what they are yet.

HHH is going to have to live with the disappointment of the McMahons because he won't be able to fight Vince's battles anymore. He's used to disappointing his wife and he's going to disappoint Shawn too. Brock might break Shawn's arm again because that's what Lesnar does. HHH should have walked away like Shawn did because now he's going to have to crawl away. Lesnar has forced HHH to commit professional suicide.

Wade Barrett vs. Zack Ryder

Miz is on commentary and will meet Barrett for the title on the preshow. Barrett kicks him in the ribs to start and gets two off a fast suplex. Ryder goes up top but is pulled down for another two count and Wade drops an elbow. A big boot puts Ryder on the floor but Barrett stops to jaw with Miz. Back in and Ryder hits a flapjack and some hard forearms to the head. The Broski Boot gets two but Barrett blocks the knees in the corner. The Bull Hammer ends Ryder at 3:46.

Rating: C-. Total squash here and a dull one for the most part. Barrett winning is nice but I'm glad the title match is going to be on the preshow as it's the least interesting match in a long time. Nothing to see here for the most part as it was just there to push the idea of Miz causing problems for Barrett...which he didn't do.

Santino tells Vickie and Brad Maddox that Vince is here and he's MAD. Oh and April Fool's. Santino gets a match as punishment.

Santino Marella vs. Mark Henry

Santino fires off some kicks and goes right for the Cobra, only to be run over by Henry. World's Strongest Slam and we're done in 52 seconds.

Post match here's Ryback but Henry says hang on a second. Henry says that nearly breaking a bench press record doesn't give Ryback the right to

intimidate Henry. Besides, they have a no contact clause. Tonight, all Henry is going to do is smile. Ryback responds by picking up Santino and ramming him into Henry. Mark is knocked to the floor, so Ryback picks Santino up and throws him onto Henry.

Punk says he doesn't care if he's disrespecting the memory of Paul Bearer. He's trying to get inside Undertaker's head so he can win. Punk says that on Sunday, the only thing people are going to remember is Undertaker losing.

Zeb Colter vs. Alberto Del Rio

Swagger goes after Ricardo and the distraction lets Colter hit Del Rio in the back with a crutch for the DQ at 50 seconds.

Post match Swagger takes out the champion's knee and beats on him with the crutch.

Here's Rock with something to say. Rock says he's here because of the connection between himself and the fans. He's here to go to Wrestlemania and take it to John Cena before beating him all over Wrestlemania. Rock says he and Cena could change the world if the people will it. He gets on a bizarre tangent about being President someday and that he's glad he can count on all of the fans' votes.

When he's inaugurated, he'll start his speech by saying FINALLY he's come back to Washington D.C. On Sunday, Cena's time is never and it's not about passing the torch, because the only way that happens is if Rock lights the belt on fire and puts it inside Cena. On Sunday, Cena is facing both Rock and the MILLIONS, if you smell what he's cooking.

Chris Jericho vs. Antonio Cesaro

Cesaro throws him around to start but walks into a dropkick for two. A quick chinlock by the US Champion (non-title here of course) is broken up and Jericho loads up a top rope rana for two. Cue Fandango as we take a break. Back with Cesaro holding a cravate as Fandango is scoring Jericho's moves. Cesaro pounds away for a few two counts and sends Jericho out to the floor before cranking on his neck some more. Antonio

yodels a bit before charging into Jericho in the corner to pound away.

Jericho comes back with a top rope ax handle (4 from Fandango) and the bulldog to set up the Lionsault (3). Cesaro counters the Walls in a SWEET spin out into the gutwrench suplex for two. Jericho chops him down and goes up for a cross body (4) but he dropkicks Fandango down, allowing Cesaro to roll Chris up for two. Not that it matters as Jericho hooks the Walls for the tap out at 12:47.

Rating: C. My but this was disappointing. At the end of the day, Cesaro has been depushed harder than anyone I can remember since Zack Ryder and for no apparent reason other than the boredom of the writers. He's a total jobber at this point and is US Champion for no apparent reason. Jericho better put Fandango over STRONG on Sunday.

Fandango destroys Jericho post match and hits two guillotine legdrops for good measure.

Stephanie McMahon is inducting Trish Stratus into the Hall of Fame.

We get some fan Touts on who wins between Rock vs. Cena.

Bella Twins vs. Funkadactyls

Naomi and we'll say Brie start things off with Naomi taking the Bella down with the Rear View. I'll let you figure out what she did there. Off to Nikki to crank on Naomi's arm with an armbar as Tensai and Brodus play cheerleader. Naomi botches a sunset flip and it's back to the armbar. She fights back and it's off to Cameron for a bouncing headscissors on I think Brie. A legdrop hits Brie and a good DDT gets no count as Nikki makes the save. Everything breaks down and Nikki rolls through a Cameron cross body for the Bellas win at 4:46.

Rating: D+. The Bellas are intense and looked good in their tiny outfits, but at the end of the day there's nothing to be seen in the ring. Cameron was especially bad and brought the athletic Naomi down. The eight person tag on Sunday should be ok but other than that there isn't much to be seen here.

Here's Undertaker for his "verbal evisceration" of CM Punk. Punk's title

reign lasted over 400 days but his punishment is going to last for eternity. The disrespect for Paul Bearer will cause Punk to pay the ultimate price. This brings out druids with torches but Undertaker looks surprised to see them. We hear Bearer's OH YEEEEEEES and here's Heyman in a Bearer disguise.

Taker has had enough and goes up the ramp, only to be stopped by....nothing at all. Instead he beats up the druids to find Punk but picks the wrong one. Punk hits him in the ribs with the Urn and a few shots to the back for good measure. Punk yells that it's over and that it's going to be 20-1. With Undertaker down, Punk POURS THE ASHES ONTO UNDERTAKER.

Overall Rating: C. Right in the middle is perfect for this show. It was kind of entertaining and didn't drag for the most part, but the show didn't make me want to watch Wrestlemania any more or any less than I already wanted to. It enforced the matches well enough but didn't do anything to excite me. Therefore, it's right in the middle.

Results

Randy Orton/Sheamus/Big Show b. 3MB – WMD to Mahal

Dolph Ziggler b. Daniel Bryan – Rollup

Wade Barrett b. Zack Ryder – Bull Hammer

Mark Henry b. Santino Marella – World's Strongest Slam

Alberto Del Rio b. Zeb Colter via DQ when Colter used a crutch

Chris Jericho b. Antonio Cesaro – Walls of Jericho

Bella Twins b. Funkadactyls – Rollup to Cameron

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Monday Night Raw – March 25, 2013: Remember This Guy? He's World Champion.

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 25, 2013

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

It's hard to believe that we've got less than two weeks before Wrestlemania. Pretty much everything is set and for the first time in weeks tonight, the WWE Champion is here to hype up the title match against Cena. Other than that we aren't likely to get anything of note because the entire card is either set or obvious at this point. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of all of the major feuds for Wrestlemania.

Here are Punk and Heyman to open the show. Punk throws the urn in the air before setting it on the mat. He talks about Undertaker being the mystical being that Undertaker is built up as and how the urn gives Undertaker his powers. Apparently "they" say it all the time. Who are they actually? Punk says they are irrelevant and he's the only one that matters. Last year, Undertaker hit 20-0 and the match had the perfect ending. Instead of skipping off with HHH and HBK, Undertaker came out here and pointed at Punk's Wrestlemania sign.

The fans chant for ECW and Punk says "speaking of dead things." Punk drops the urn because it means nothing to him, just like the Undertaker and his Streak. He's the 1 in 20-1 and at Wrestlemania, the Streak will

Rest in Peace. There go the lights and as they come back up, Undertaker is in the ring and pounding away on Punk. Heyman runs off with the urn as Punk escapes.

Fandango comes out for a match but before he can have an opponent announced, Jericho runs out and beats down Fandango with a vengeance. Fandango and his dancing chick run away and here's Dolph Ziggler instead. Apparently this was a match for later but instead it's happening now.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho takes him down to the match before pounding away at Ziggler's head. A quick attempt at the Walls are countered but Dolph charges into an elbow in the corner. Jericho hits a top rope cross body for two and we take a break. Back with Jericho in a chinlock before coming back with a rollup for two. Dolph dropkicks him down for two of his own and hooks an abdominal stretch on the Canadian. Chris fights back and hits a top rope ax handle and the bulldog, but has to take out Langston with a springboard dropkick. A DDT gets two for Dolph but a Fameasser attempt is countered into the Walls for the tap at 5:53.

Rating: C+. Good stuff here with Jericho winning, although the booking continues to be stupid. Ziggler gets off a losing streak to go on a winning streak for the last few weeks, only to be jobbed out to Jericho to set up Fandango vs. Jericho. Now, Kofi loses, Ziggler loses, and Jericho is about to be beaten down by Fandango so Jericho looks weak. That's WWE's booking issues in a nutshell. With a roster as deep as they have, there is no reason to have Ziggler need to do this job. None.

Post match Langston hits the Big Ending on Jericho and here's Fandango for another beating on Jericho.

We get a clip from Smackdown with Sheamus and Big Show arguing after beating 3MB, only to band together to glare at Shield. Sheamus is about to say something about that incident but Shield beats him down. Orton

tries to make the save with a chair but gets beaten down as well. Big Show makes the real save.

Mark Henry vs. Usos

I believe that's Jey starting things off but does it really matter? Henry throws him around but the Usos both hit superkicks to actually put him down. The Superfly Splash from Jimmy gets two but Henry sends Jey FLYING off the apron and into the barricade. A big clothesline on Jimmy and the World's Strongest Slam ends Jimmy at 1:45.

Post match Jey gets a Slam of his own. Both guys are splashed too.

Antonio Cesaro vs. Alberto Del Rio

Ricardo is here on crutches and his ankle is in a cast. Feeling out process to start with Cesaro taking over via a European uppercut. Off to a cravate but Del Rio comes back with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. He loads up the low superkick but here's Zeb Colter for a distraction. Cesaro gets in some shots but as Del Rio loads up a superplex, Swagger comes out and attacks Ricardo again. Del Rio chases after Swagger and beats him up in the crowd for the countout at 3:20. I'm not going to bother rating this as a good deal of the match was spent on the outside interference stuff.

Post match Del Rio beats up Cesaro despite the loss being his own fault.

HELL NO vs. Prime Time Players

Titus and Kane start with the masked man taking over almost immediately. Off to Bryan for some kicks in the corner and it's back to Kane for more punishment of the Players. Here are Zigler and Langston to distract Bryan and let the Players take over. Titus suplexes Darren onto Bryan for two and it's off to a body vice by Young. Bryan fights up and brings in

Kane for the side slam on Darren. Bryan takes out Titus with the running knee to the floor and the chokeslam ends Young at 4:37.

Rating: D+. Just a glorified squash here which didn't do anything of note for anyone. It's not like Langston and Ziggler did anything here other than make the match last a bit longer, so why should I want to see these teams fight now? Does anyone remember why they're fighting in the first place? By the way that's rhetorical. Don't leave me comments explaining what started this because I remember it. My point is it wasn't significant or memorable and WWE doesn't ever remind it to us because they expect everyone to remember every single thing EVER.

Another example of this would be Lawler talking about washrags when Titus was in there. If you don't remember that, you're not alone. That was mentioned ONCE in a match back like last year, but Lawler brings it up whenever Titus is in there. If you didn't see that ONE probably five minute tag match, you likely don't get the joke. I barely remember it because it was a stupid discussion from that many months ago, but WWE brings it up like it went on for months and everyone knows it. That's really stupid and annoying when they do it with such stupid stuff like that.

We recap HHH and Lesnar's contract signing from last week.

Here's HHH to talk about the match with Lesnar some more. If he loses at Wrestlemania it's the end of his career. The thing is if you go to the ring thinking you're going to lose, you're already done because Lesnar is a destroyer. HHH has fought like his life and career depended on it every night for twenty years so these stipulations aren't some coup for Heyman. It's Lesnar that needs to fight like his career is on the line because that's what he has to do. HHH isn't coming to wrestle and he isn't coming to fight. He's coming to hurt Brock.

As HHH leaves, Wade Barrett interrupts him and stares HHH down. HHH kicks him low and keeps walking.

Wade Barrett vs. The Miz

Barrett is in agony here so Miz hits a quick atomic drop to mess with Barrett even more. The Figure Four is escaped as the champion (non-title here) bails to the floor. Back in and Miz hits a few more atomic drops but can't hook the Skull Crushing Finale. Barrett pounds away as the announcers talk about movies. Off to a chinlock by the champion but Miz fights up and backdrops Wade out to the floor. An ax handle off the apron puts Wade down again and we take a break.

Back with Barrett pounding away at Miz in the ropes and kicking him out to the floor. Back in and Miz avoids a charge before firing off some left hands. The corner clothesline sets up the top rope ax handle for two but Barrett rolls out of the Finale. The Winds of Change get two for Barrett but Wasteland is countered. Miz dropkicks the knee out but the Figure Four is countered again. Barrett gets a rollup for two and a low kick to the head for the same. The Bull Hammer misses and Barrett crotches himself on the top rope after missing a big boot. Figure Four gets the tap out at 12:08.

Rating: C-. The match wasn't bad and that's a Wrestlemania match for you. No one cares about Barrett or the title, but it's nice to see the match getting a spot on the biggest show of the year again. The Figure Four still doesn't work for Miz, and I really didn't need a match with the main focus being Barrett's crotch, but the match wasn't bad.

Bryan and Kane have a mini-argument about Kane's mental stability before getting into a full argument about AJ. Kaitlyn pops up to say chill because she was the one screwed over by AJ. AJ is behind them as they argue. Kaitlyn says AJ is a nutjob and AJ blasts her.

Shield vs. Great Khali/Zack Ryder/Justin Gabriel

Khali chops at Rollins to start but once Ryder comes in things fall apart. A middle rope dropkick misses Ambrose and the Shield takes over.

Off to Gabriel vs. Reigns with Justin trying to speed things up. Ambrose gets a blind tag and clotheslines Gabriel's head off. Dean puts on a surfboard hold as Rollins hits a top rope knee drop for the pin on Gabriel at 2:30.

Post match Khali tries to fight off the Shield but gets caught in the TripleBomb. Cue Sheamus, Orton and Big Show for the big brawl.

We recap Jericho and Fandango from earlier. Jericho is MAD and says he's like a target now because of what he's done over the years. He's sporting a black eye here and apparently it's Jericho vs. Fandango at Wrestlemania.

Brodus Clay/Tensai vs. Rhodes Scholars

Brodus and Sandow start things off but it's quickly off to Tensai for some double teaming. Tensai misses a splash though and it's off to Rhodes for an armbar. The not hot tag brings in Brodus who does his usual stuff like the throw and splash on Cody. The Bellas and Funkadactyls get in a brawl on the floor, allowing Rhodes to hit the Disaster Kick for the pin on Clay at 2:30.

Another video on G.I. Joe 2.

3MB vs. Ryback

Handicap match here with Slater starting for the band. A quick Thesz Press puts Heath down and there's a splash for no cover. Off to Drew who is rammed into the corner for some hard shoulder blocks. After cleaning out the ring, Ryback is caught by a big boot from McIntyre to take over. Slater puts on a front facelock but Ryback easily throws him off. After the token beating from 3MB, Ryback fights back and throws Slater around a big. The double Shell Shock to Mahal and Slater are enough to pin Heath at 4:04.

Rating: D+. What do you expect here? Ryback did this for like a year and no one is surprised that he can do it again here, other than Cole and Lawler of course. Nothing to see here for the most part, but Ryback and Henry one upping each other with the destruction isn't a bad idea.

Ryback and Henry have a weightlifting competition on Friday.

Arnold Schwarzenegger is inducting Sammartino into the Hall of Fame.

AJ Lee vs. Kaitlyn

Non-title here. Kaitlyn erupts on AJ to start and pounds her down, only to be slapped down by AJ. Kaitlyn will have none of that and hits a fireman's carry gutbuster to send AJ to the outside. The spear misses AJ and hits the barricade, drawing a countout at 2:02.

We run down the Wrestlemania card.

It's time for the final segment of the show: a Q&A panel with legends asking questions to Rock and Cena. Lawler is moderating and the panel is Booker T, Mick Foley, Dusty Rhodes and Bret Hart. Ric Flair was supposed to be part of this panel but health issues kept him out of the segment. Rock barely gets a reaction as this crowd is exhausted.

Foley gets to ask the first question and talks about losing the fall at Wrestlemania XX which was supposed to be Rock's last match. He says that it was a relief that Cena lost the match because it wasn't Rock's Wrestlemania swan song. Foley's question is to Cena: can he handle losing to Rock again? Cena says that he wins everything at once if he wins but losing is definitely an option as it was last year.

He brings up former Eagles' quarterback Donovan McNabb who was famous for getting deep into the playoffs but never winning a Super Bowl. The fans don't like McNabb because it's all about winning the big one. Cena is

great but he needs that big win. Rock however can't live with failure.

The champion responds by telling a familiar story about getting his mattress out of a dumpster. Then six months later he got his shot in the WWE but blew out his knee six months later. Then he worked even harder and came back, asking for a mic. Then Rock became the youngest WWE Champion ever and headlined Wrestlemania 15, right here in this very city. Cue FINALLY of course. Rock came into Philly with a Pat's cheese steak in one hand and the WWE Title in the other...and Steve Austin beat him for the title. Rock came back as the hardest working man ever and the man that is beating Cena in thirteen days.

Bret (now with gray hair) says that both Rock and Cena are his friends but he didn't like it last year when this became too close to Bret vs. Shawn. What changed? Rock says that it was two guys going at it for over 30 minutes and after Rock won, Cena took it like a man. Cena talks about calling Rock out years ago in an interview and then Rock proved it. After last year, Cena thought Rock was walking out but then Rock said he wanted to be WWE Champion and did just that.

Booker asks why Cena thinks he can win and John says it's because he has to. Rock isn't impressed and wants to know why Cena thinks that. Cena goes off by saying that Rock can't beat him. Cena beat himself last year by making one bad decision. Every single week for ten years, Cena has come out to a mixed reaction but he's walked through it. Only Rock has been able to get inside Cena's head and after Cena survived everything Rock threw at him, Cena tried something stupid by trying the People's Elbow and beat himself. John knows he's better than Rock and says Rock knows it too.

Rock says he knows if Cena knew he had Rock beat, he would have beaten him. Cena threw everything he had at Rock and Rock kept kicking out. Rock talks about growing up idolizing Ric Flair who said to be the man you have to beat the man. Cena can't beat the man, because he isn't the man. John will never, and the Rock means never, beat the Rock.

Dusty likes them taking the gloves off and asks both guys what they want on April 7 (third time they've said the date of the show because the top guys know how to sell a show). Cena wants to win the big one and dominate the Rock. He's going to prove that he's better when Rock is looking up at the sky. Rock says he won't be haunted by Cena and wants to fight right now. Cena says you can't see me and gets shoved. AA is countered into a Rock Bottom and Rock stares at Cena to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The show wasn't awful but say it with me: it dragged because it ran for three hours. It's not terrible or anything but there's nothing of note here until the ending which was more like what the world title feud was needing. The problem with the build at this point is that nothing is really exciting for whatever reason it may have. Cena vs. Rock will draw, but it would be nice to see the company actually try instead of just going on reputation alone.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Dolph Ziggler – Walls of Jericho

Mark Henry b. Usos – World's Strongest Slam to Jimmy Uso

Antonio Cesaro b. Alberto Del Rio via countout

HELL NO b. Prime Time Players – Chokeslam to Young

Shield b. Great Khali/Justin Gabriel/Zack Ryder – Top rope knee drop to Gabriel

Rhodes Scholars b. Tensai/Brodus Clay – Disaster Kick to Clay

Ryback b. 3MB – Shell Shock to Slater

AJ Lee b. Kaitlyn via countout

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