

205 Live – April 18, 2017: A Scheduling Error

205 Live

Date: April 18, 2017

Location: KFC Yum! Center, Louisville, Kentucky

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

For once, we're actually addressing one of the major problems around here as TJ Perkins has become a third major name in the division. Perkins has also turned heel, which gives Austin Aries something to do as he gets ready for his Cruiserweight Title shot against Neville. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show.

We open with a recap of Neville getting inside TJ Perkins' head and turning him to the dark side in his feud against Austin Aries.

Opening sequence.

Akira Tozawa vs. Tony Nese

Feeling out process to start until Tozawa is sent outside. That only seems to tick him off so he scares Nese out to the floor as things slow down a bit. Back in and Nese elbows him in the face to take over for the first time. We're off to an early neck crank and here's Brian Kendrick. A suplex sets up another chinlock but Tozawa knees his way out of a second suplex.

Tozawa sends him outside again for another suicide dive but gets sent throat first into the ropes to slow him down. With the referee distracted, Kendrick tries a kick to the head. Thankfully the referee actually catches him and says no, allowing Tozawa to grab a rollup for the pin at 6:02.

Rating: C. I'm liking the Kendrick vs. Tozawa feud but they're reaching a point where it's just continuing for the sake of continuing. Adding Nese to the mix could help things out a bit as you can only have the two of them fight for so long before it stops

doing anything for anyone. Good little match here though with the ending making sense.

Nese isn't cool with that and decks Kendrick. Tozawa says that's lesson #3: always have eyes in the back of your head.

Here's Rich Swann for a chat (complete with an unnecessary bell) about giving Alicia Fox all the gifts. This brings out Noam Dar and Alicia Fox (with separate entrances) with the latter saying that she thought Dar was the future face of 205 Live. He's young and talented but then she saw the other side of him: he's annoying, his cologne smells terrible and he thinks he can cook ("Just not in every room."). She's been using him and if she hears that ALICIA F00000X one more time, she's going to snap.

Fox tells him to get out of here before switching her attention to Swann. She thanks him for the gifts, which Swann says all game from the heart. Now Swann wants to give her what she deserves. Cedric Alexander is one of Swann's best friends and she broke his heart. There's a word for people like Fox but Swann won't say it. The world knows what she is though and that's his real gift. Fox SNAPS over the WHAT treatment and screams a lot, which she really does very well.

Mustafa Ali vs. Ariya Daivari

Earlier today, Ariya Daivari arrived in a very nice car. So he's rich now. Ali grabs the arm but Daivari looks disgusted by being touched. Some flips don't get Mustafa very far so he sends Ali outside for a flip dive over the ropes. Back in and Daivari grabs a belly to back suplex onto the apron, followed by a spinebuster for two.

Ali comes back with some knees to the ribs and a dropkick....but we've got feedback. Cue Drew Gulak with a bullhorn to shout "I AM NOT LYING! NO HIGH FLYING!" The distraction lets Daivari pull Ali off the top and hit a hammerlock clothesline (the Rainmaker, which is still just a clothesline) for the pin at 6:50.

Rating: D+. I've watched this match twice now and I really didn't

remember a thing of it until Gulak came out. It's a very forgettable match as Daivari continues to become more and more of a stereotype, which is almost never a good thing. The match isn't even bad and it helps set up Gulak vs. Ali but there's nothing to remember here.

Gulak says he sees a bright future around here and has nothing against Ali but his style needs to change.

TJ Perkins vs. Austin Aries

Perkins bails to the floor to start so Aries has a seat in the ring. Back in and it's already time for the armdrags into the armbar as it seems they have a lot of time here. Perkins reverses into the headscissors and, of course, dabs. The threat of a Last Chancery puts TJ outside again but Aries gets crotched on top to slow things down again. A dropkick gets two with TJ putting one foot on the chest for a dabbing cover.

Now it's off to something like a standing figure four with a butterfly lock on the arms. Perkins misses a standing flip splash though and gets dropped by an ST0. A side slam gives Aries two but it's too early for the 450. Aries jams his knee on the landing and there's the kneebar. It's only the first attempt though and Aries makes the rope. Aries slugs away but gets caught in a strike rush.

The discus Fivearm misses and they botch the double chickenwing gutbuster, basically turning it into a low blow for two instead. Now the forearm connects to set up the 450 but Perkins gets his feet on the ropes. The Last Chancery (with Aries crossing his legs to avoid putting pressure on the bad knee) sends TJ to the ropes again and Aries isn't sure what to do. The Detonation Kick doesn't work so Aries claps his hands around TJ's ears, setting up the Fivearm for the pin at 11:48.

Rating: B-. Perkins is rapidly improving with this heel character and his in-ring work has gotten better too. I'm not wild on having him lose here but at least it was in a match with some time that went back and forth instead of being mostly one sided. Good main event here and Aries looks strong going into the pay per view.

Post match here's Neville for the brawl with Aries and it's a quick Last Chancery. Perkins makes the save though and the double beatdown ensues. Neville grabs the Rings of Saturn with TJ taunting Aries to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I know you hear it a lot but the scheduling of this show really, really hurts it. Smackdown ended it at 10pm and by 10:15, the arena was probably 1/3 empty. By the time the show ended, it was probably close to 1/3 full. This show was entertaining but the fans just do not care to stick around and watch it. Move it before Smackdown and just air it on tape delay. I really don't know why the show MUST go on at 10pm but that's what WWE seems to go with and it doesn't seem to be changing anytime soon.

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205 Live – April 11, 2017: The Post-Post-Wrestlemania Roll

205 Live

Date: April 11, 2017

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're in the post-post-Wrestlemania era now and that means things can start to get back to normal. Last week Austin Aries became the new #1 contender to the Cruiserweight Title but since his win, Cruiserweight Champion Neville has been getting inside TJ Perkins' head. This could mean a potential change to the title match so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Aries vs. Neville, as well as Aries winning last week's #1 contenders match.

Opening sequence.

Brian Kendrick vs. Mustafa Ali

Kendrick works on the arm to start as we hear about Drew Gulak's quest to get rid of high flying. Graves calls it the WWE equivalent of a mother in law. More arm work frustrates Kendrick out to the apron and things slow down a bit. Ali pops up and moonsaults over Kendrick in the corner before sending Brian outside again.

The first big dive takes Kendrick down and we cut to Gulak watching in the back and getting rather annoyed. Kendrick crawls underneath the ring and pulls Ali's shoulder into the post to take over for the first time (nice idea with the veteran presence etc). We hit a seated cobra clutch for a bit before a good looking spinwheel kick drops Brian again.

The rolling neckbreaker gets two and Kendrick charges into a knee in the corner. Brian breaks up the inverted 450 and grabs the Captain's Hook for....a bell without a submission. The referee says the match isn't over and we see Akira Tozawa holding the bell up. Kendrick is livid and gets kicked in the head again, setting up the inverted 450 for the pin at 9:14.

Rating: C+. Good match here and you can see Tozawa starting to get the hand over Kendrick, who isn't going to take this well. It also helps that Ali was close enough to the ropes that you could believe he wasn't finished so he comes off looking fine too. Nice stuff here as the long form storytelling is still working.

Tozawa says that's Lesson #2.

We look back at Neville getting inside Perkins' head, leading to Perkins defeating Aries on later that night on Raw.

Perkins thinks Neville is right because he's the hero of the Cruiserweight Classic but can't get a break around here. Jack Gallagher comes up to say this is poppycock but they'll have a match later tonight. Perkins doesn't want to hear it.

Rich Swann vs. Johnny Ocean

Johnny stomps away in the corner to start and shouts a lot in the process. Fans: "WE DON'T KNOW YOU!" Swann shrugs it off and kicks Ocean down, setting up a jumping splash. The Phoenix splash wraps Ocean up at 2:16 and you can hear him tell Swann "thank you so much" during the count.

Post match Swann talks about sending presents to Alicia Fox but here's Noam Dar to interrupt. Swann is LYING about giving her those presents and blows are about to be struck, only to have Fox come out. She believes Dar but she's seen Swann looking at her. Cue a courier with another present, which Dar says is from him. Fox opens it and is covered with exploding powder. That's uh...quite the plan from Swann. It's a good thing he knew Dar would not only be in the arena but also knew that he'd come out there in time.

Aries thinks Neville wants Perkins around as a puppet instead of a friend. It turns out that Aries is a puppet master so he's capable of dealing with this. Now if you'll excuse him, he has a banana to finish.

TJ Perkins vs. Jack Gallagher

Gallagher goes to his usual bag of tricks early on with the hand walk to escape a headlock, followed by an armbar, complete with a toss of his hair. TJ gets taken to the mat and caught in a headscissors, only to bounce back and forth to escape. That earns him a dropkick to the floor but Perkins runs off before it can be Mary Poppins time.

Back in and Perkins has to pause due to the corner headstand spot but he can grab a DDT on the leg to take over. The leg work begins with Perkins stomping away and wrapping it around the bottom rope. We hit an Indian deathlock, followed by something between a Sharpshooter and a Figure Four in a pretty cool looking hold.

Unfortunately TJ turns it over and puts Gallagher right in front of the ropes so it's quickly broken but it did look good while it lasted. Perkins takes him right back to the mat and grabs another

leglock, this time while grabbing the arms in a butterfly lock. Gallagher grabs his own foot and pulls it away for the escape before grabbing a modified powerslam for two. With the leg almost completely gone, Jack takes him to the top for a belly to back superplex and one heck of a crash.

TJ rolls outside but gets pulled back inside, only to grab a kneebar. Somehow Gallagher manages to roll over for the rope but goes with a spinning backbreaker onto the bad knee in a bit of a dumb move. The pain sends Gallagher rolling to the floor but he's able to block the Wrecking Ball and hit one heck of a headbutt for two. Perkins goes off with strikes but gets nailed with another headbutt. There's just nothing left in the leg though and Gallagher can't hit the running dropkick. Instead TJ sends him into the post for the knockout before hitting the Devastation Kick for the pin at 15:30.

Rating: B. Heck of a match here as the cruiserweights continue to be able to show off at a very high level when they have the time to do so. The leg was the focus of the match and played into the ending, which goes back to Perkins' run in the Cruiserweight Classic. I could go for a refocused Perkins, who really can be one of the best around when he's on his game.

Neville comes out to congratulate Perkins to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Maybe it's just the post-Wrestlemania season but I've been liking this show a lot more than usual lately. The development of Perkins (which has taken place in the last twenty four hours) is a great addition to the show as Aries and Neville have been alone at the top for a few months now. This was another good episode and the show has been on a bit of a roll lately.

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205 Live – April 4, 2017: Right Show, Wrong Time

205 Live

Date: April 4, 2017

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

One more Orlando show to wrap up the week. We're in an interesting place with the cruiserweights as Neville retained the title over Austin Aries, leaving us with no #1 contender and no one not named Aries is even in his league. Tonight we have a four way for the #1 contendership, which could see Aries get another shot or someone new get in there. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show with the hard cameras on my left and the Titantron almost straight in front of me.

Long package on Aries vs. Neville.

Opening sequence.

The announcers chat for a bit.

Akira Tozawa vs. Brian Kendrick

Rematch from last week. Kendrick comes out to talk about lesson #10. Fans: "TEN! TEN! TEN!" The chants change Brian's mind about the crowd, who he had pegged as a bunch of goofballs. The lesson is all about psychological supremacy, though I'm distracted by the most obnoxious sign ever in the front row: "The person behind me can't see."

That's one you see at a lot of shows and it makes my head shake harder every time. I mean....you're going to a big show, you spend a lot of money on tickets, and you actually take the time to make a sign for the sole purpose of ruining someone else's night? You paid your money so now you need to make sure that other people wasted

theirs? That's completely pathetic and something that can't be defended. Grow up man.

Kendrick bails to the floor at the bell but Tozawa still beats him to the punch to take over. The backsplash gets two but Kendrick is ready for the fake out punch and grabs a rollup for two. Not that it matters as Tozawa kicks him in the face to take over again. A bad old fashioned thumb to the eye sets up a leg lariat for two on Tozawa. Kendrick can't get the Captain's Hook so he settles for a reverse chinlock instead.

Back up and Tozawa grabs a hurricanrana before knocking Kendrick to the floor. Kendrick claims a poke to the eye but the referee says it was a forearm. Naturally he's goldbricking so Tozawa dives at him instead, only to tweak his knee. This time it's Tozawa goldbricking though and Brian gets rolled up for the pin at 5:17.

Rating: C+. This was a good way to extend the feud (some might even call it fine) but I'm really not sure how much longer they can carry this out without a big change of pace. Kendrick has grown on me a good bit in this story and it's making Tozawa look better as well, especially since he finally won a match.

Tozawa says that was lesson #1.

Oney Lorcan vs. Rich Swann

Lorcan is an NXT callup but he's billed as a replacement for an injured Noam Dar, meaning this might be a one off appearance. Oney charges at Swann at the bell and scores with a series of running uppercuts. It's off to an abdominal stretch as Swann looks overwhelmed to start. A bodyscissors keeps Swann in trouble for a bit until he escapes for a kick to the head.

Lorcan catches him up top but can't hit a half and half superplex as Swann backflips out. A running Alabama Slam into the corner gives Oney two but Swann scores with some clotheslines for a breather. Swann kicks him down a few more times and adds the Phoenix splash for the win at 6:42.

Rating: C+. If Lorcan didn't have a full callup coming in, there's a good chance he earned a spot with this performance. He beat the heck out of Swann here and that's one of the best things that he could possibly have done. Sometimes you just need to showcase yourself and Lorcan did so very well here.

Post match Swann says he's been the one sending the gifts to Alicia Fox. That's how you move a story forward in a hurry. Phillips brings up the possibility that Swann is lying.

Drew Gulak stops Mustafa Ali in the back and suggests competing a bit more conservatively in the four way. Ali doesn't want to hear this but Gulak says change is coming so be on the right side of history.

Some of the WWE UK Title tournament are here, including Trent Seven, Mark Andrews, Wolfgang, Pete Dunne (big pop) and of course Tyler Bate, who gets his own entrance. There's going to be a weekly UK show on the Network in the near future.

Here's Neville for a chat before the main event. No one is on the Neville Level and it feels nice to be proven right. Neville can't believe people think he ripped at Aries' repaired orbital socket out of desperation. That's nonsense. He did it because Aries deserved it. Neville thanks us for never believing in him because it's made him royalty. He'll be at ringside for the four way, or as he calls it, four more lambs to the slaughter.

Mustafa Ali vs. Jack Gallagher vs. TJ Perkins vs. Austin Aries

Ali and Gallagher are knocked to the floor to start, leaving Aries and Nese to work on an arm each. Perkins' corkscrew dive takes Ali down again but it's already time for the Mary Poppins spot.

Thankfully Aries breaks it up and dropkicks Jack to the floor. All four take turns coming back in and get a few shots here and there until Gallagher does his headstand in the corner to stop a charging Mustafa.

Perkins comes back in with the kneebar on Jack but Aries makes the save with a Last Chancery. Ali goes after the eye though, leaving Gallagher to grab a reverse DDT on Perkins. Aries grabs one at the same time on Gallagher, leaving Ali to roll in with the neckbreaker to take all three down at the same time. Back up and Ali gets crotched on top, setting up Gallagher and Aries for a double superplex. Aries isn't done though as he dives onto Ali and Perkins, allowing Gallagher to get in the Mary Poppins spot.

Back in and Perkins takes a wicked tornado DDT from Mustafa with Aries making the save. Aries loads Ali up for what looked to be a superplex but stepped aside so Gallagher can nail his running corner dropkick, sending Ali crashing outside. Perkins and Gallagher slug

it out until Perkins takes the headbutt. Gallagher falls to the floor though, leaving Aries to hit the Fivearm to put Perkins away at 11:24.

Rating: B. It was fun, albeit a bit messy. These guys beat each other up though and Ali's bump near the end was a good looking crash. Aries is the only logical move here as he's the only person near Neville's level. We've seen the other three already and none of them were anything of note. There's a good reason to believe Aries can pull it off in a second match and it should be fun to see.

One quick live note: you could tell the fans were burned out by the time the main event started. One fan in the section next to me went on a HILARIOUS string of insults against Perkins, shouting every few seconds about how terrible he was and how he needed to stay out of the ring. I don't know if it was just due to being tired from the week or something similar but the sections around him were in stitches. Then he went a bit too far and knew it.

Fan: "ROMAN REIGNS IS A BETTER WRESTLER THAN TJ PERKINS!"

Everyone else: "NO! DELETE! DELETE! DELETE!"

Fan: "I APOLOGIZE! I PROMISE TO FADE AWAY AND CLASSIFY MYSELF AS OBSOLETE!"

Anyway, trash talk ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was one of the best episodes of the show to date but you could tell the crowd was just done by the end. After Wrestlemania, Raw and anything else you did in the previous days, there was no way anyone was going to give this show their full attention. Some of the fans did leave before the show but other than a few seats in front of me, you really couldn't see any major pockets of suddenly empty seats. Good show, but a bad spot on the schedule.

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205 Live – March 28, 2017: Covering Their One Idea

205 Live

Date: March 28, 2017

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's the last show before Wrestlemania XXXIII and while I know I'm a bit behind schedule, it's always worth looking at everything setting up a major title match. I was really looking forward to Austin Aries vs. Neville for the Cruiserweight Title and it's time for the final push to the match. Let's get to it.

Neville doesn't think much of Aries dancing with New Day on Raw because it's everyone wanting to see what 205 Live would be like without him. Tonight, he'll make that happen.

Opening sequence.

Rich Swann vs. Ariya Daivari

The announcers start suggesting that Swann has been sending Alicia Fox the presents, an allegation which Swann certainly hasn't shied away from. Daivari runs him over a few times but gets knocked to the floor. Swann gets dropped face first onto the announcers' table and Farsi is shouted.

Back in and Ariya stays on the neck before sending him hard into the corner. The frog splash misses though and Swann grabs a Michinoku Driver for two of his own. Daivari's running neckbreaker and frog

splash get two, only to have Swann kick him in the head. A Phoenix splash (which seems to be the most popular move in the world anymore) ends Daivari at 7:27.

Rating: C. This was fine with Daivari being a bit more watchable than usual. His in-ring work is fine enough but being a black hole of charisma has crippled any long term potential he has. Good enough match here though as Swann is just fun to watch almost no matter what he's doing.

Fox is talking about Noam Dar's injury when Swann comes up to ask about why Dar hates him. Another gift is delivered with Fox getting perfume this time. She eats it.

Drew Gulak tries to recruit Mustafa Ali to become a more mat based wrestler instead of doing all the flips. So he's Drew Gulak For a Better NXT? Ali leaves while he's talking.

Mustafa Ali vs. Brandon Scott

Ali flips around to start and grabs a hurricanrana before kicking him in the head. Scott gets in a few kicks to the chest and gets two off a hard clothesline. A high crossbody drops Scott again and a kick to the head sets up the inverted 450 for the pin on Scott at 3:24.

Rating: C-. This was fine given how little time it had but the idea of Ali vs. Gulak in a technical vs. high flying feud could be fun, especially if it gives Gulak any kind of a character. Good enough match here with Ali continuing to get to show off as he's still one of the best surprises of the show so far.

Video on Aries vs. Neville.

Akira Tozawa vs. Brian Kendrick

This is the result of a long feud as Kendrick keeps attacking Tozawa to teach him a variety of lessons. Kendrick gets kicked in the face to send him outside in a hurry, followed by a top rope backsplash for two inside. A quick Captain's Hook has Tozawa in trouble but he's out in a hurry. Kendrick bails to the floor and suckers Tozawa into a drop toehold onto the ramp. A suplex gives Brian two and we

hit a half nelson of all things.

Kendrick switches up to a reverse chinlock with a few shots to the face like a villain should do. Tozawa fights up and kicks him in the face, only to get caught in Sliced Bread #2 for a near fall. Now the Captain's Hook goes on full but Tozawa gets out again. They go to the corner where a turnbuckle pad comes off. As you might expect, Tozawa charges straight into the steel a few seconds later, giving Kendrick the pin at 9:53.

Rating: C+. I liked this one again but why in the world do you have Tozawa lose here? It wasn't clean but you would think he's going to be the next challenger for the Cruiserweight Title assuming Neville retains. Kendrick is a gatekeeper instead of someone who should be winning a match, making this a rather confusing ending to a solid match.

Kendrick says that was Lesson #9: Anything can be used as a weapon. Here's Neville for the second time on a show he wasn't going to be part of. Neville says he's at a crossroads after facing many trials over his career. He's picked himself up every time though, including after his broken ankle last year. Then he became the face of 205 Live and carried the division. Yet the people boo him, even though he's the reason there's a Cruiserweight Title match at Wrestlemania. The fans want to cheer for a commentary guy like Aries, even though there is no 205 Live without him. Want to see what it's like without him? Here's a black screen.

Cue Aries to say 205 Live is twice as good with him on it but Neville looks miserable all the time. They've both had to prove people wrong all their lives. When they both step in this ring, all they want to do is prove that they're the best in the world and steal the show. Neville punches him in the face and stomps away but takes a microphone to the ear. A quick Last Chancery sends the champ bailing to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was fine enough for the go home show as the lone 205 Live contribution to Wrestlemania weekend is Neville vs. Aries. It wasn't the most thrilling show in the world or anything

like that but it did its job, which is far too often the case for a lot of shows around here.

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205 Live – March 7, 2017: (One of) The Greatest Return(s) That Ever Lived

205 Live

Date: March 7, 2017

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves

The big cruiserweight story is Austin Aries signaling that he's ready to get physical again, which is the best thing possible for a lot of people around here. Last night on Monday Night Raw, Aries forearmed Cruiserweight Champion Neville in the face, seemingly signaling that he's ready to go after the title. Let's get to it.

We actually open with the end of Smackdown and AJ Styles and Randy Orton leaving. That's a bit odd.

Long recap of Neville retaining the title at Fastlane and Aries

laying him out the next night on Raw.

Opening sequence.

The announcers chat about Aries.

Speaking of Aries, here he is for a chat...with himself. As in he asks himself a question and then switches sides to answer. Aries remembered a lesson he learned in grade school: if you want respect, you take it. That's why he punched the toughest guy in the room in the mouth last night. Austin Aries: expert analyst is gone but Austin Aries: in-ring expert is here.

This brings out Neville to say Aries is in over his head. Aries says Neville is at the A level but he's way below the A-Double Level. The champ says all that matters around here is the Neville Level. That earns the champ an invitation to the ring but Aries isn't worthy of Neville's presence. Instead, Neville thinks there's a locker room full of talent ready to take Aries' head off. That's fine with Austin and it sounds like we have an open challenge for later tonight.

Rich Swann tries to teach Jack Gallagher to dance when Noam Dar comes in to brag about Alicia Fox. There seems to be some confusion about who sent her the flowers last week but Dar takes credit.

Noam Dar/Ariya Daivari vs. Rich Swann/Jack Gallagher

Daivari takes Swann down to start with the announcers suggesting that Swann isn't at 100% after losing to Neville the previous night. Swann gets in a kick to the head but Dar grabs his foot to block a hurricanrana. The slow beating continues with Daivari driving knees into the back and grabbing a chinlock. Swann fights out without too much trouble and the hot tag brings in Gallagher. Everything breaks down and it's the big headbutt to Daivari to set up Rich's Phoenix splash on Dar for the pin at 6:14.

Rating: C-. Kind of slow here but that's the norm for Daivari. I like Dar for the most part but he wasn't in the ring all that much here. Swann and Gallagher get to win for some restored momentum after losing to Neville a few times. Not much of a match but the

last minute or so was entertaining.

Post match a deliveryman brings out some chocolates for Fox. Dar is confused but takes credit for them anyway.

Brian Kendrick says Akira Tozawa can have a fight tonight if he really wants one.

Akira Tozawa vs. Brian Kendrick

Actually hang on a second. See, Kendrick agreed that Tozawa could fight Brian Kendrick but not THE Brian Kendrick.

Akira Tozawa vs. Bryan Kendrick

Bryan is played by indy regular Arik Cannon. Kendrick gets in a few forearms but has to duck a spinning kick, allowing Akira to snap the German suplex for the pin at 1:07.

Neville doesn't want to hear about Austin Aries and says Tony Nese will be a nice challenge tonight. There will be a new #1 contender next week.

Austin Aries vs. Tony Nese

Feeling out process to start with Aries very happily grabbing a headlock. That's enough for Aries to lay out on the top rope and then kiss the biceps for good measure. Nese knocks him outside and Aries might have tweaked his knee. Back in and Aries grabs the neckbreaker over the ropes to take over again but Nese crotches him on the top. The announcers point out that it might be due to ring rust, which is a nice touch that you don't get enough of from commentary.

It's off to a body vise with the legs but Aries is out almost immediately and being sent to the floor again. Nese screams at Aries to go back where he belongs (with a point at the announcers' desk) and as you might expect, Aries pops right back up and starts cleaning house. The running corner dropkick sets up the roaring elbow for the pin at 9:37.

Rating: C+. Not a great match but I liked the idea that Aries was having ring rust and couldn't go as hard as he would otherwise. It's

also nice to have him beat a bigger name before being slotted into the Wrestlemania title match. I mean, Aries being handed the match would have been fine but I can go for some authenticity for a change.

Overall Rating: C. This was more of a one concept show with the focus on Aries. The big idea was to reestablish Aries as a player on the roster and that was certainly accomplished. I barely remember the rest of the show at this point and that's perfectly fine given how well they accomplished the Aries stuff. That being said, this show needs more than one big story going on and I don't see Tozawa vs. Kendrick getting one minute as fulfilling that requirement.

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205 Live – February 14, 2017: The Old Box of Chocolates Version

205 Live

Date: February 14, 2017

Location: Honda Center, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Austin Aries, Corey Graves, Mauro Ranallo

With Fastlane starting to get close, we have a Cruiserweight Title match set for the pay per view. It's going to be a battle of England with champion Neville defending against Gentleman Jack Gallagher, who probably won't be much of a threat to the title but at least the match should be fun. Let's get to it.

We recap last week's Fatal Five Way where Gallagher became the new #1 contender.

Opening sequence.

The announcers preview tonight's show.

Noam Dar vs. Rich Swann

Before the match, Swann says it's an important night because he's back on the show and because it's Valentine's Day. Since it's a special night, he's dedicating this one to Alicia Foooooooooox, but she can't handle this. Dar takes him down by the arm to start until Rich uses his flips to speed things up. A dropkick puts Noam on the floor for some treatment from Fox so Rich does some dancing.

The treatment seems to work just fine as Dar kicks away to take over, earning some loud cheering from Fox. One heck of a kick to the jaw drops Dar but he ducks an enziguri into an ankle lock. Swann has been watching his Kurt Angle Collection on the WWE Network though and flips Dar outside for the escape. Dar gets in a Northern Lariat (with Mauro referring to it as such), only to get caught in a hurricanrana. The Phoenix Splash gives Swann the pin at 7:55.

Rating: C. These two have developed incredibly well in a short time and that's due to very different reasons. Swann's athleticism and in ring work have gotten so much better in a hurry and the dancing has taken a backseat, which is the best thing that could have happened to him. On the other hand, Dar is a great example of someone being enhanced by having a great looking valet. They're a good pairing and that's what Dar needed.

We get a sitdown interview between Neville and TJ Perkins. Neville gives the closest thing to praise that he's going to offer by talking about TJ's win in the Cruiserweight Classic. TJ says he put

the cruiserweight division on the mat but Neville wants to know what happened to Perkins when Neville showed up. Perkins wants to know what happened to Neville between NXT and WWE because he seemed to disappear. That's too much for Neville and threats are made for later.

Video on Gran Metalik losing in the finals of the Cruiserweight Classic. He lost to the better man and is back to prove his worth.

Gran Metalik vs. Drew Gulak

Gulak shakes hands but hits a dropkick at the bell and watches Metalik botch some kind of a springboard. A Sami Zayn chop to the chest into a wristdrag off the top sends Gulak outside and thankfully there's no botched dive to follow it up. Instead Drew slows it down with an armbar before Metalik mostly misses a double springboard....something. Drew grabs a Gory Special and spins Metalik into a neckbreaker. Since there's no lucha libre word for selling, Metalik pops back up and enziguris him to the floor for a springboard dive. Back in and the Metalik Driver ends Gulak at 5:26.

Rating: D+. The botches were strong with this one and it really hurt Metalik's debut. Sometimes people try to go a little too fast for their own good and that seems to be what happened here. Of course there's more than enough time for Metalik to fix things up as Kofi Kingston had one of the worst debuts I've ever seen and turned out just fine.

Brian Kendrick comes in to see Akira Tozawa and offers to be his mentor again. Kendrick talks to him like an idiot because Tozawa can't speak English....until he says he knows what Brian is saying and doesn't like him.

TJ Perkins vs. Neville

Non-title. Feeling out process to start with TJ taking over off a twist of the arm. Neville can't get anywhere with the arm work so he kicks TJ in the face to escape. Perkins gets two off a springboard crossbody but gets sent outside so Neville can do some high quality sneering. A rather loud missile dropkick puts TJ down for two and we

hit the chinlock. Back up and Neville gets caught in a jumping neckbreaker, followed by a springboard DDT of all things for two.

The fans chant for Austin Aries as TJ starts in on the arm, only to have his armbar countered into a sitout powerbomb for an emphatic break. Back up and they forearm the heck out of each other until Neville has to escape the Detonation Kick. TJ escapes the superplex and one ups himself by countering the Rings of Saturn into a rollup. Neville will have none of that though and kicks him in the arm to set up the Rings of Saturn for the submission at 12:31.

Rating: B-. This was actually a bit disappointing from what you would expect these two to put together. Perkins is still one of the best performers in the division and Neville is on fire right now. For some reason though the match was just kind of there, which isn't the performance you would expect out of these guys.

Post match Jack Gallagher comes out for the brawl and, after Neville sends William III to the floor, Gallagher headbutts him down and poses with the title to end the show. Kind of a non-gentlemanly action there, no?

Overall Rating: C-. Not the best show this week as I actually couldn't remember most of the card aside from the main event just a little while after watching it. The Metalik match was sloppy and the opener was totally forgettable. Gallagher vs. Neville comes off like a filler feud, albeit an entertaining one. That's not enough for a full show though and it showed badly here.

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205 Live – January 10, 2017: I Need To Quit Forgetting To Post These

205 Live

Date: January 10, 2017

Location: Raising Cane's River Center Arena, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves, Austin Aries

With less than three weeks before the Royal Rumble, it's pretty clear that we're getting Neville vs. Rich Swann for the title at the pay per view. All we're waiting on now is the official announcement and there's a good chance that it's going to be set up here. We've also got the ongoing issues of Cedric Alexander vs. Noam Dar over Alicia Fox. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Dar vs. Alexander with Cedric coming this close to blaming Fox for his losses and Dar being all creepy as he tries to steal her.

Opening sequence.

Cedric Alexander vs. Noam Dar

It's amazing how much good a story can help out a match like this. Well that and Alicia Fox being on camera too. Before the match, Dar says the kiss from Alicia last night didn't deter him and he'll have her soon enough. Feeling out process to start with both guys being a bit tentative until Cedric just punches him in the jaw.

Noam isn't sure what to do so they head outside with Cedric firing off some chops. An elbow to the face makes Alicia very happy but Dar is smart enough to kick Alexander in the chest while he tries a Tajiri handspring. Dar works on the arm due to all the strikes he's had to deal with so far. A cross arm choke keeps Cedric in trouble before Noam splashes the arm.

We hit another armbar for a bit until a hard elbow drops Dar. Cedric

tries to go up but springboards into a Fujiwara armbar (on the wrong arm but nice try). The arm is crushed under the steps until Alicia gets in Dar's way, allowing Cedric to hit one heck of a baseball slide. Now the springboard clothesline works a bit better and Cedric kicks him in the face for good measure. Alexander goes up top for a moonsault but Fox pulls Dar out of the way. As Alicia looks very confused, Dar knees Cedric in the face for the pin at 12:35.

Rating: B-. Well that was odd but in a good way. They've gotten me to the point where I want to see what's going to happen with the story and I really didn't expect that. Fox could be awesome as the woman who switches sides by turning on Alexander but I'm not sure if that's where they're going. That makes the story just a bit better, which is a surprising touch.

Fox slaps Dar and leaves with Cedric as she still looks confused.

Akira Tozawa is coming soon. That's a good thing.

Brian Kendrick vs. Sean Maluta

Kendrick is annoyed at Tajiri for spraying the mist last week and promises to take it out on Maluta. Sean actually grabs some rollups for two and a basement dropkick puts Kendrick on the floor to set up a flip dive. Back in and Maluta is sent into the buckle so Kendrick can grab a cobra clutch. That doesn't last long and Maluta gets in a reverse DDT but misses Rolling Thunder. A gordbuster and Shining Wizard give Maluta two more but his frog splash (because it's always a frog splash, 450 or shooting star) hits knees. The Captain's Hook makes Maluta tap at 4:43.

Rating: C+. Maluta continues to be someone with a lot of potential which hopefully he'll get to build on someday. The idea of Kendrick being all cocky and almost losing because of it was the right call. Then again the idea of Kendrick in general tends to completely deflate me as he's just not that interesting but such is life in WWE.

Alexander yells at Fox and breaks up with her. Fox gets all whiny and freaks out because no one breaks up with her. This is some combination of bad and amazing but I'm not sure which is better.

Here's Jack Gallagher for his parley with Ariya Daivari. Gallagher lays down his umbrella (named William) and offers Daivari some tea or biscuits but Daivari wants to get to the point. Jack thinks his

honor has been besmirched and asks for negotiations to begin. Daivari thinks Gallagher wants to surrender because people like Jack are always going to lose. Gallagher: "Pardon?"

Apparently Gallagher is fine with these negotiations not being peaceful so they agree to an I Forfeit match to wrap up their feud once and for all. Daivari signs but throws William, meaning the jacket comes off. Gallagher: "I hope the Queen isn't watching." The brawl is on until the referees come out to break it up.

Rich Swann vs. Tony Nese

Non-title. They start fast for a change with Swann flipping over Nese and dropkicking him out to the floor. Nese shows some intelligence by dropping Swann ribs first across the barricade to take over. A bodyscissors sets up a gutbuster for two and Nese squeezes the ribs again. Rich gets up and pops him in the face a few times before a hurricanrana gets two. Nese sticks to the game plan though with a legsweep and stomp to the ribs. Swann grabs a tiger bomb for two and the spinning kick to the head ends Nese at 7:32.

Rating: C. Swann needed a clean win like this and that's a good sign going into the title match against Neville, which is all but guaranteed at this point. Nese is a good choice for a dragon to be slayed and that's what we got here. It's still not a good sign for his title reign when Neville is this hot as a heel but it's been nice while it lasted.

Post match Neville comes out to challenge Swann, who insults Neville's ears in response. Neville says he's not getting in the ring with Swann unless it's a Cruiserweight Title shot. Swann is fine with that and says name the time and place. That would be the Royal Rumble so Swann says it's on to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The important thing about this show is the idea of actually setting something up for the future. It's not just a bunch of random matches anymore as they're advancing stories and making things a little more interesting than the old six man tags that dominated the early episodes. I'm not dreading the show anymore and I'm starting to look forward to seeing where some of this stuff goes, which is a very positive sign.

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205 Live – December 27, 2016: I Think They're On To Something

205 Live

Date: December 27, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Austin Aries, Corey Graves, Mauro Ranallo

We're starting to get in a groove around here and that's the best thing that can happen for a show that has only been around about a month. Tonight's big match is a non-title showdown (which WWE has gone out of its way to make seem like a title match) between Rich Swann and Neville, the latter of whom is likely to become #1 contender should he win. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Neville's heel turn and subsequent path of rage.

Opening sequence.

Cedric Alexander vs. Tony Nese

Alicia Fox and Drew Gulak are the seconds. Nese powers him up to start but Alexander moonsaults into a headscissors, followed by a dropkick to the chicklets (as Mauro called them). A big throw puts Cedric on the floor and Tony's missile dropkick gets two back inside. The showing off continues as Nese drops down and nips up to

avoid a clothesline, leaving Alicia to play cheerleader.

We hit a chinlock for a bit before Cedric speeds things up with a Tajiri handspring elbow into a kick to the head. That means it's time for Gulak and Fox to get into the required argument, capped off by Drew hitting the ground and claiming Alicia shoved him (she never touched him). The referee actually ejects her, allowing Nese to palm strike Cedric for the pin at 6:04.

Rating: C. Alexander is one of those guys who has grown on me so much since he's been in WWE. The twenty pound weight loss has done him a lot of good, though some of that might have to do with getting away from Ring of Honor and the really stupid Veda Scott story. Nese is being built up in a nice way too, which is what we need around this show.

Noam Dar brings some mistletoe for Alicia, earning himself a slap to the face. Dar tries again and gets slapped a second time, though he doesn't seem to mind.

Earlier today Renee Young sat down with Neville, who doesn't like being left out of the Cruiserweight Classic. WWE and Americans in general are intimidated by his greatness. When he was in Japan, Swann was his young boy and Neville isn't putting up with him here. Renee can't understand what he says at the end and that's enough of this interview.

Mustafa Ali vs. John Yurnet

Yurnet is better known as Mr. 450 and has been on NXT a few times. John seems to get injured early on with his right leg looking immobile in a hurry. He's willing to keep going though and tries a sunset flip but the referee insists on checking it out. Ali hits a quick reverse DDT and finishes with an inverted 450 at 2:12. The finisher looked cool but it's clear that Yurnet wasn't wrestling at 100% here.

Post match Mustafa says he's from Chicago and isn't going to let all the prejudice against him define things. All he's going to do is keep racking up wins and let those speak for themselves. Simple, yet effective.

Video on Ariya Daivari, who is certainly a scoundrel and thinks nothing of Jack Gallagher.

It's time for the gentleman's duel, which I don't think counts as a

match. Gallagher comes out in a suit while Daivari is wearing gear. There's a table with some flowers and various weapons in the ring. Gallagher lists off some weapons, almost all of which can be found in a game of Clue, plus an umbrella and a teapot. Daivari picks the lead pipe but Gallagher will fight with an umbrella.

We're not ready to go yet as Jack insists on standing back to back and taking five paces. Daivari tries to cheat but Gallagher knows it's coming and proceeds to use the umbrella for a low blow and a leg trip. Gallagher shrugs off a beating and hits his running corner dropkick to send Daivari running. If Daivari had ANY personality, this would be really entertaining. As it is, it's just something else to add to the highlight reel for when Gallagher becomes a star.

Tajiri is back next week.

Rich Swann vs. Neville

Non-title and Swann doesn't even dance when he gets to the ring. Rich goes right after him to start and takes the fight to the floor for a right hand to Neville's jaw. A dropkick frustrates Neville as we hear about Swann being Neville's young boy in Japan. Neville gets fired up with a forearm to the face and sends Swann into the barricade a few times to really take over.

A hard ram sends Swann's bad back into the LED apron and Neville follows by mostly missing a big flip dive. Back in and we hit a chinlock, followed by a standing shooting star to make the back even worse. A missile dropkick gets two and Neville is just toying with him. The USA chant only seems to get on Neville's nerves until a hurricanrana sends him outside.

Swann follows him out with a Phoenix splash of all things and a tiger bomb gets two. One heck of a superkick knocks Neville out on his feet and Swann's Fantastic Voyage gets a very close two. A loud kick to the head gets a third straight two but Swann gets crotched on top. One heck of a superplex knocks Swann silly for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I thought I would and the ending was the right way to go. Swann's back was messed up and his last run was all built on adrenaline, meaning it made sense for a big shot, especially one on the back, to be enough to cut him off for good. This also sets up the rematch with the title on the line and that's going to be one heck of a fight, especially if it makes pay per

view.

Post match Neville kicks him in the head and hammers away. He finally leaves and demands his crown to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This show is starting to find its groove and if I just have to sit through a fifteen minute match between people I care about week after week, so be it. If you can tweak the formula just enough and keep people like Lince Dorado off the show, everything is going to get a lot better in a hurry. The show isn't quite there yet but it's gone from a task to get through to something I'm enjoying and that's a very good sign going forward.

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Monday Night Raw – December 26, 2016: I Love It When They Troll Us

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 26, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the city that keeps giving even after the holidays. We're closing out the Monday Night Raw year in Chicago and unfortunately

that doesn't mean the Slammy Awards. With just under five weeks to go until the Royal Rumble, the big story is Braun Strowman invading the main event. That could result in some very interesting reactions from the Chicago crowd. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Strowman's destruction last week.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie McMahon to open things up. She wishes us all happy holidays and says Mick Foley is off tonight due to his extreme work schedule as of late (possibly due to hip surgery). The fans cut her off with a CM Punk chant and she actually acknowledges it by saying if the fans could last two minutes and fifteen seconds, they would last a minute longer than Punk.

Cue Seth Rollins to say he wants HHH tonight but Stephanie says she isn't her husband's keeper. Rollins begs HHH to come down but says he'll settle for Strowman. This brings out Roman Reigns to say he wants Strowman too. Since both guys are wanting to fight Strowman, Reigns thinks they should go back there and drag him out here for a Shield style beating.

Stephanie is really fired up by the idea and even suggests that Dean Ambrose could be here. She's just kidding though because the Chicago fans are that easily manipulated. Instead, tonight we'll have Seth vs. Strowman and Reigns vs. an opponent of Stephanie's choosing.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Cesaro/Sheamus

New Day is challenging with Big E. on the floor. Cesaro gets beaten down in a hurry with double middle rope elbows and a legdrop for two each. Woods is thrown out to the floor and comes up grabbing his knee as we take a break. Back with Woods diving through the ropes into a tornado DDT to plant Cesaro on the floor.

The hot tag brings Kofi in for the flip dive and a slightly botched counter into the SOS for two on Sheamus. Everything breaks down and Woods' top rope elbow gets two on Sheamus with Cesaro making the save. The Swing goes on but Big E. gets on the apron for a distraction. That earns Kofi a gorilla press down onto the big man

and a blind tag sets up the Brogue Kick to retain the titles at 10:11.

Rating: C+. This was the required rematch so Cesaro and Sheamus can move on to someone else. New Day is in the Edge and Christian position of having long since outgrown the tag division so it's time to move on to a new endeavor. Unfortunately I'm not sure what that's going to be but a strong Kofi singles run could be interesting.

Video on Brock Lesnar. Goldberg is back next week.

Strowman runs into Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens, who seem to have been looking for him. Owens thinks that Strowman is up next for the title after Reigns is dispatched so Strowman should focus on the Seth and Roman. Apparently Rollins and Reigns have been talking smack about Strowman and said his punches are like being hit with a pillow. Strowman doesn't buy the rumors and seems to want to demolish the two of them.

Golden Truth is in the back talking about Scrooge when Bayley comes up to give Goldust a Bayley Bear dressed like Dusty Rhodes. Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows come in and RIP THE BEAR'S HEAD OFF.

Nia Jax vs. Scarlet

Scarlet is a jobber wearing a Sasha shirt so the destruction is over in 53 seconds off a Samoan drop.

Nia tells Scarlet to choose a better role model and drops the big leg.

Charlotte shakes Stephanie's hand when Owens and Jericho come in to lodge an official complaint. Jericho doesn't bring spiders or being in shark cages. Is Foley going to put the spiders in the cage? It might give Jericho acne-arachna-phobia! They want to be face Reigns for the US Title tonight as punishment for Foley. Stephanie says she hates bosses who use their authority to advance some personal agenda (HAHA STEPHANIE IS SO IRONIC AND FUNNY!) so she gives Owens the title shot. Jericho doesn't seem pleased but goes along with it.

Here's Bayley for a chat. She's so happy to be in Chicago because she's the new #1 contender. This brings out Charlotte to show us the

clip from last week where her shoulder was up at two. Since there was a problem, Stephanie has agreed to expunge the match from the record books. However, since Charlotte is feeling charitable, she'll let Bayley have another chance to win right now. Oh and there's going to be a guest referee: Dana Brooke.

Charlotte vs. Bayley

Dana won't let Bayley go into the corner so Charlotte starts in with the chops. Bayley takes over and gets dragged off so Dana gets suplexed. Another referee runs in as Charlotte takes over in the corner with more chops. Bayley shrugs it off and grabs the Bayley to Belly but Dana pulls the referee out. Back in and Charlotte grabs a rollup with feet on the ropes, allowing Dana to count the pin at 3:39.

Rating: D. Just an angle here instead of a match and that's fine. I'm not sure how we get to Bayley's title match without Foley around, though of course there's a chance that Stephanie will be all nice and happy and give Bayley the match anyway. Bayley is going to get over huge when she wins the title, if she isn't there already. Stephanie yells at Braun, who wants Sami Zayn in a last man standing match next week. The boss agrees, as long as Seth gets the same beating Sami will get.

We look back at Neville's speech from last week, which is one of my favorite moments in a long time. He's nailing the heel character at the moment and I'm hoping he annihilates Swann to take the title.

TJ Perkins vs. Neville

Austin Aries replaces Saxton on commentary. Neville won't shake hands (as he shouldn't) so Perkins knees Neville in the chest for two early on. A spinning kick sends Neville outside and a high crossbody gets two back inside. An AUSTIN ARIES chant starts up as Neville kicks TJ in the head to send him to the floor. Back in and we hit the chinlock for a bit before a double chickenwing into double knees to the chest gives TJ two. The Detonation Kick looks to set up the kneebar but Neville reverses into a rollup and grabs the

tights for the pin at 4:58.

Rating: C-. Well that didn't work quite as well as it had before. Neville really shouldn't be giving up that much offense and it's really annoying to see them possibly screwing up a great character this fast. I loved watching Neville in that tag match last week because he was eight steps ahead of everyone else but here he was just slightly better, which isn't how to make the character work that well.

Neville yells about people making fun of his accent and face not being appropriate for Monday Night Raw. It's American ignorance and arrogance that prevents them from appreciating him. Tomorrow night, Neville wants Rich Swann.

We look back at Enzo Amore getting destroyed by Jinder Mahal and Rusev at sensitivity training.

Here are Enzo and Cass with the former in a wheelchair (and of course it's leopard skin). Enzo says the sensitivity class isn't for him because he's already gotten a degree in being a certified G (which means you can teach that). We get a long rant from Enzo about how his cup runeth over and he's spilled his Haterade. Since he's done that, the big man is hitting cleanup. Cass calls out Rusev but gets someone a bonus with Jinder Mahal. Enzo pops out of the chair and pulls Mahal off the apron, leaving Cass to clear the ring. The injured Enzo is thrown into Mahal and Cass stands very tall.

Shining Stars vs. Bo Dallas/Darren Young

This is over an incident on Facebook Live earlier today. And never mind as it's Strowman time...and he's got a Christmas tree. The beatdown is on and it's officially a no contest at 1:04 (though it should be a DQ as he hit Dallas first).

Strowman destroys everyone, including Bob Backlund (though just by proxy).

Seth Rollins vs. Braun Strowman

Strowman throws him into the corner to start but Seth gets in a suicide dive on the floor. Back in and the enziguri and springboard

knee to the head stagger the monster. A second knee has him even more wobbled but he pulls Seth out of the air on the third attempt. Seth actually drops him with a Blockbuster but the Pedigree is countered with a backdrop over the top. Braun runs him over again...and here's Sami through the crowd to jump Strowman for the DQ at 3:34.

Rating: C. I would have had Strowman go over clean here but I can live with what they did. Rollins shouldn't be squashed but he sold quite a bit for the monster, which is the best thing they could have done without having him get destroyed. Strowman didn't lose though and that helps so much.

Post match Braun chases Sami to the back, leaving Rollins to take the Codebreaker from an invading Jericho.

Owens praises his best friend for getting rid of Rollins, leaving it one on one tonight.

Emmalina says the wait will be worth it but she's still premiering soon.

Golden Truth vs. Anderson and Gallows

Goldust takes Anderson down in the corner to start but Gallows comes in to start the beating. Truth fights up and brings Goldust back in as everything breaks down. We actually get some fire from Goldust, who throws Anderson into the barricade. They head inside though and it's Karl getting in a rollup for the pin at 3:34.

Rating: D-. Goldust can't even get revenge for someone ripping his dad's head off a teddy bear? I mean, they could have NOT BOOKED IT THAT WAY but how else would we get the third rollup finish of the night without it? Anderson and Gallows going after the belts is a good idea, albeit one we've seen for months now.

Rich Swann vs. Ariya Daivari

Non-title. Daivari takes him down to start but misses the early frog splash attempt. That means a double stomp to the back and the spinning kick to Daivari's head for the pin at 1:22.

Post match Swann agrees to face Neville, who jumps the champ from

behind.

Daivari calls Jack Gallagher a scoundrel so of course Gallagher is next to him. Jack challenges Daivari to a duel, SLAPS HIM WITH A GLOVE, and corrects Daviari's American history by saying this makes Gallagher more like Aaron Burr.

Video on Lesnar vs. Goldberg from Survivor Series. I still don't know why I would want to see them fight a third time.

US Title: Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending. Owens hides in the corner to start and gets knocked to the floor with a right hand. Back in and Owens starts to slowly hammer away but Reigns clotheslines him down. Cue Jericho for a distraction so Owens can score with a DDT. The backslash gets two and we take an early break.

Back with Owens getting two off the Cannonball and we hit the chinlock. Owens: "ASK HIM!" Reigns fights up and gets in the apron kick, only to get caught with a Backstabber for two. It's too early for the Pop Up Powerbomb though so Reigns grabs the sitout powerbomb for two.

The Superman Punch misses but the second attempt connects for two on Owens. Jericho offers a distraction though and Owens gets in a Codebreaker for two. This brings out Rollins to Pedigree Jericho on the floor but Owens superkicks Seth down. Back in and the spear ends Owens at 16:21.

Rating: C-. I'm actually starting to get a kick out of WWE trolling the fans so hard. They just had the World Champion get pinned as close to clean as a World Champion is going to get pinned by Reigns again and they did it in Chicago no less. As much as I can't stand the booking, there's something amazing about how much WWE is willing to screw the fans over for their own ambitions.

Post match Owens gets Pedigreed and Jericho gets speared to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This wasn't a horrible show but you could tell they weren't putting in much of an effort on the tail end of a

holiday weekend. The ending was rather annoying but it's balanced out by Strowman being this unstoppable monster. I'm not sure where he's going next but he's already an entertaining part of the show. That being said, there's really nothing that has me interested at the moment, though maybe that's due to the end of the year and the rather awful main event scene.

Results

Cesaro/Sheamus b. New Day – Brogue Kick to Kingston

Nia Jax b. Scarlet – Samoan drop

Charlotte b. Bayley – Rollup with feet on the ropes

Neville b. TJ Perkins – Rollup with a handful of tights

Shining Stars vs. Bo Dallas/Darren Young went to a no contest when Braun Strowman interfered

Braun Strowman b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Sami Zayn interfered

Anderson and Gallows b. Golden Truth – Rollup to Goldust

Rich Swann b. Ariya Daivari – Kick to the head

Roman Reigns b. Kevin Owens – Spear

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205 Live – December 20, 2016: The Night of Neville

205 Live

Date: December 20, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: Austin Aries, Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves

We've actually got a hot story around here as Neville returned on Sunday and turned full on heel for the first time in his WWE career. This included beating up Cruiserweight Champion Rich Swann, which set up a tag match on tonight's show. Neville will team with Brian Kendrick to face Swann and TJ Perkins. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sunday's title match and Neville's turn, including the tag match being set up last night on Raw.

Opening sequence.

Ariya Daivari vs. Lince Dorado

Dorado flips around a lot with Aries accurately saying it's wasting energy. Daivari grabs a neckbreaker for two and drives a running knee into the back. We hit the chinlock as this isn't the most interesting match so far. Dorado gets up and hits a Tajiri handspring into a Stunner, sending Daivari outside for a big flip dive. A springboard hurricanrana puts Daivari down but Dorado gets shoved off the top, setting up a frog splash to give Ariya the pin at 5:37.

Rating: D+. As interested as I am in the main event tag (which has a limit), this is a good example of everything wrong with the division. There's almost no interest in the match, the wrestling was nothing all that special and Daivari is a rather dull character. Dorado is the most generic luchador in a long time and it doesn't make for a strong match as a result.

Daivari says Jack Gallagher is a scoundrel.

Kendrick comes up to Neville in the back but Neville wants nothing to do with him until they're out in the ring.

Tajiri is coming.

Cedric Alexander vs. Drew Gulak

Speaking of uninteresting characters. Cedric, with Alicia Fox in his corner, works on Gulak's arm to start and knees him in the face for good measure. Gulak sends him throat first into the middle rope and does something like a curb stomp with the shin instead of the foot. A chinlock doesn't last long and it's Cedric coming back with his springboard clothesline for two.

In a pretty scary bump, Alexander grabs a vertical suplex and takes Gulak over the top for a crash to the floor. They're lucky they landed right there. Gulak shoves Cedric into Fox and we've got a bad ankle. Cue Noam Dar to carry Fox off, leaving Cedric to hit the Lumbar Check for the pin at 5:35.

Rating: C. The wrestling was better here and both guys were trying but Gulak just isn't interesting in the slightest. Cedric has the talent and there's something there with the Fox story but it's still fairly low level by comparison to a few of the others in the division. Alexander could make the jump up the division ladder but he's going to need a stronger story.

Cedric runs off to find Fox. Gulak blames Fox for the loss because women do not belong on 205 Live.

Video on Jack Gallagher.

Fox is getting her ankle iced and thanks Dar for having her back.

Neville/Brian Kendrick vs. TJ Perkins/Rich Swann

Neville blasts Swann in the face to start and the aggression is really flowing early on. Swann gives a look that suggests he can't handle this as the announcers talk about how awesome Neville has been since Roadblock. You know, the show TWO DAYS AGO. Kendrick smiles as Neville forearms Rich in the corner but a forearm allows a blind tag to Perkins.

TJ actually gets in some offense before Kendrick comes in, stares at Neville, and chokes on the mat. A good looking spinning kick to the face puts Kendrick down, followed by a slingshot hilo for two. There's an interesting story here with Neville being the scariest thing in the match and Kendrick being the only one the good guys can beat.

The still banged up Swann tags himself in and manages a few clotheslines on Kendrick. A Flatliner cuts Swann off again though and Neville deadlifts him into a German suplex for two. Some weak

rights and lefts have little effect on Neville but a superkick gives the champ a near fall (though the replay shows the lack of contact).

Neville pops right back up and clotheslines Swann inside out but the champ gets over for the hot tag. Perkins fires away on Perkins and the Detonation Kick sets up the kneebar. It's Neville making another save but Swann tags himself in and kicks Neville in the head. A double superkick gets two on Kendrick as everything breaks down.

Perkins and Neville wind up on the floor, leaving Sliced Bread #2 to set up the Captain's Hook on Rich. This time it's Perkins making a save, leaving Neville to kick Swann in the head and talk a lot of trash. TJ tags himself back in and dives into an enziguri, setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 14:09.

Rating: B. The wrestling was good here but this was completely about the storytelling. Neville looks about 900 miles ahead of the rest of the division and the beatdown of Swann was the perfect way to make that come alive. I completely got into the story here and Neville pinning Perkins and covering him like it's an annoyance instead of a victory is great. Neville is just killing the character so far and that's some great potential for this division.

Overall Rating: C+. The opening two matches didn't do much for me but that main event saved the show. Unfortunately this brings up the obvious problem: there's not enough (at the moment) for a whole show but this stuff doesn't work on Raw. Since putting it on Smackdown is COMPLETELY OUT OF THE QUESTION AND WE SHOULDN'T EVEN ASK ABOUT IT EVER AGAIN for some reason, this is probably the best of the remaining option.

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