

NXT – November 2, 2016: The Hot Tag To Toronto

NXT

Date: November 2, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're down to three shows before heading north to Toronto and that means it's time to start hammering out the rest of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic. The quarterfinals begin tonight and we'll need to get down to the finals in the next three weeks. Some of the matches have been taped at house shows so it might be time to take a field trip. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We're going straight to San Jose, California for the first quarterfinal match.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Roderick Strong/Austin Aries vs. TM61

So here's the thing: Austin Aries has a fractured orbital bone and is unable to compete so Austin suggests we have a singles match to determine who advances (assuming that's not made really obvious by the stipulations). Regal comes out to say that's cool with him and TM61 agrees.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Roderick Strong vs. Shane Thorn

At least I don't have to remember which is which. Shane does a very complicated spin out of a wristlock before kicking Strong in the face. A standing moonsault gets two but Strong's first backbreaker puts Thorn down on the top turnbuckle as we take a break. Back with Thorn hitting a good looking dropkick to put both guys down. We hit an Australian uppercut train until another backbreaker gives Strong two. He really can hit those things from everywhere and he makes

them look different enough to keep it fresh.

Strong tries a superplex but gets knocked down for Alberto Del Rio's top rope double stomp (Fans: "SI SI SI!"). A Falcon Arrow gets two on Strong, followed by a sitout powerbomb to bring Aries up to the apron. Strong kicks Miller down but walks into a small package to send TM61 to the final four at 10:45.

Rating: B-. This was just about all it needed to be with Thorn sending the team on, as you kind of had to know they would given Aries' injury. Strong continues to look good and this is more of a storyline loss than anything else. TM61 making a strong run in this tournament would do a lot for them as they haven't really set themselves apart yet so this could be their big moment.

Samoa Joe and Shinsuke Nakamura will sign the contract next week.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: DIY vs. Revival

Non-title. Actually hang on a second as Scott Dawson is on crutches. Dawson has hurt everything in his knee and it would cripple a normal man (Dawson: "Like you two.") but a little rest will make a man like him just fine. Therefore, the Revival is sitting this one out and DIY can have a pass to the next round. I like this much better than A, wasting another edition of a great series and B, having either team lose a match. No match.

Gargano and Ciampa are ready for whoever they face next.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Rich Swann/No Way Jose vs. Authors of Pain

Back to San Jose. Akum and Jose start things off with No Way being driven straight into the corner. Some dancing sends the bull charging through the ropes and a big right hand actually staggers him a bit. Swann comes in for an assisted hurricanrana which really just annoys Akum. Instead it's off to Razar but Swann keeps the speed up with a dropkick to stagger him. For some reason Rich decides to dive onto both Authors at the same time but it takes Jose diving onto all three to put them down.

Back in and the beating begins with Akum throwing Rich into the

corner for a running splash from Razar. Paul Ellering even gets in a little choking of his own on the bottom rope like the good old school manager he is. A spinning kick to Razar's face gives Rich a breather and an enziguri to Akum allows the hot tag to Jose (BIG pop for that). A TKO drops Akum for two but Razar sends Swann into the steps. The lack of a partner means Jose gets caught in the Last Chapter for the pin at 8:06.

Rating: C. The more I see of the Authors, the more I like them. They don't need to be anything more than a pair of big guys who can beat the heck out of people. More importantly though, they get in just enough trouble to make you believe they could be in danger before taking someone's head off. That leaves the opening of the right team being able to outlast them and then beat them, which makes them more interesting.

Video on Mickie James.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic Quarterfinals: Sanity vs. TJ Perkins vs. Kota Ibushi

Wolfe and Ibushi start things off with a headlock slowing Kota down so much that it's off to TJ for the always broken up first kneebar. Fulton comes in and gets kneebarred as well with Wolfe's save not working. Back from a break with the cruiserweights starting up their dives until TJ gets pulled out of the air. A slam sends him onto Wolfe's knees and it's off to the chinlock.

That's switched up to a bearhug to keep Perkins in trouble for a big longer. A shot to the face allows the tag to Kota and it's time for the kicks. The Gold Star Bomb gets two on Wolfe but Eric Young and Nikki Cross get the referee's attention. A suplex/powerslam combo puts Kota away at 12:15.

Rating: C-. This didn't do much for me but I'm starting to dig Sanity a lot more than I ever expected to. Kota wasn't likely going to get very far in this thing due to his lack of a contract but at least the Full Sail fans got a nice treat by seeing him live. I like the idea of regular teams going forward though and that's what we have for the semifinals.

The final four:

Sanity

TM61

DIY

Authors of Pain

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling was fine here and they moved through an entire round of the tournament in one night with some smart booking decisions. The rest of Toronto's card is mostly set so it's ok to dedicate a full show to one concept like this. I'm looking forward to the final four and that's a big step forward for a tournament that hadn't taken much shape yet.

Results

Shane Thorn b. Roderick Strong – Small package

Authors of Pain b. Rich Swann/No Way Jose – Last Chapter to Jose

Sanity b. Kota Ibushi/TJ Perkins – Suplex/powerslam combination to Ibushi

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Monday Night Raw – October 24, 2016: Who Needs Sunday and a Cell?

Monday Night Raw

Date: October 24, 2016

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

The Beast is back tonight as Brock Lesnar is here for his first comments about his upcoming match with Goldberg. In addition to that we have two big matches including Sheamus and Cesaro vs. New Day in a non-title match and Chris Jericho vs. Seth Rollins vs. Kevin Owens in a triple threat. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Jericho to open things up with some terrible news: tonight's triple threat match has been canceled until further notice. The fans aren't happy with that one but Jericho says it's because SOMEONE HAS STOLEN THE LIST OF JERICHO. Fans: "NO! NO! NO!" Jericho isn't leaving until the List is returned but here's Owens to interrupt. Owens doesn't care who has the List but he'll help Jericho find it once they get rid of Rollins.

Jericho says there's no triple threat match tonight but here's Stephanie McMahon to interrupt. She explains the idea of the triple threat (because Stephanie thinks all fans are idiots) and here's Rollins with the List. Jericho freaks out and Stephanie goes all screechy to say give it back.

Seth sees Stephanie mentioned as a stupid idiot but at the very bottom is Jericho's former best friend, Kevin Owens. Rollins wants to start a new list about Owens, who has no idea how it is inside the Cell. He'll also kick Owens' teeth down his throat and break his face with a Pedigree so he can teach HHH and Stephanie a lesson (because that's what really matters in this whole thing).

This segment showed how horribly uninteresting this whole thing is when Jericho isn't talking. Owens barely got to say anything and Rollins wants to win the title to show up HHH and Stephanie. Some main event feud. Also, did Stephanie need to be here? Like at all? She came out, told Jericho to do the main event (which Owens had already done) and was insulted that she was on the list (like Owens a few seconds later).

Post break Stephanie tells Rollins to give the List back because the fans were promised a triple threat. Rollins vents about Stephanie's real intentions and says the List is in the locker room.

Enzo Amore vs. Karl Anderson

Anderson and Gallows have cut off Enzo's mic so he and the crowd do it with pure vocal power. Enzo fires off rights and lefts in the corner but dives into a spinebuster as we take an early break. Back with Enzo getting kicked in the face but stopping a charge in the corner. A rollup is broken up but Cass kicks Karl in the face to give Enzo the pin at 7:39.

Rating: D+. I almost had this whole match written from the opening bell because this was exactly what you would have expected these two to do. It's fine to set up the tag match and thank goodness we didn't hear any of Anderson and Gallows trying to be funny. Enzo and Cass need to win on Sunday as it's not like Anderson and Gallows can go much further into the hole.

Rusev says he slept like a baby last night because he gets his hands on Roman Reigns inside the Cell this Sunday. Reigns has done a lot of horrible things but now it's Rusev's chance to crush him for good. Simple and to the point here, as it should be.

New Day vs. Cesaro/Sheamus

Non-title. Before the match, New Day praises Cesaro but says Sheamus shames us because no one wants to see him. Woods is the odd man out here, which is kind of surprising as they're normally defending the titles. Cesaro's backbreaker gets two on Kofi and a double back elbows shows that Cesaro and Sheamus can actually work together. New

Day quickly gets it together and takes Sheamus into the corner for the Unicorn Stampede.

Back from a break with Kofi in trouble and taking the ten forearms to the chest. Cesaro misses a charge into the post and the hot tag brings in Big E. to deal with Sheamus. The Irish Curse gets two on Big E. and Cesaro's vertical suplex gets the same. The Midnight Hour is broken up but Kofi is launched straight into the uppercut. Sheamus Brogue Kicks Big E. for the pin at 11:45.

Rating: C+. Let's see. Yeah I'm checking here. Maybe...almost...nah I still don't care about Sheamus and Cesaro. They're still the same uninteresting pair that have been around since before Summerslam and still are little more than a rehash of the League of Nations having problems against New Day back in the spring. New Day needs to roll over them and give us the record in December. If you just have to give these two the belts after that then so be it but don't mess with the year plus run for this stupid idea.

We look back at Goldberg's return.

Jericho frantically looks for the List but runs into Titus O'Neil, the Shining Stars and Jinder Mahal, all of whom have something for him other than the List (Titus Brand, travel brochures and a breathing exercise).

Bayley vs. Dana Brooke

Bayley has a taped up shoulder after last week. Dana says not so fast because she doesn't like the idea of last week's win being called an upset. Tonight there's going to be another match but this time it's arm wrestling. Dana easily wins so Bayley offers to go left handed. Bayley starts to win and of course Dana decks her and turns the table over for the beatdown. A Bayley to Belly sends Dana running and thankfully cuts off the BORING chants. Can you blame the fans for not being impressed here?

Jericho is freaking out over the List when he runs into Stephanie, who isn't interested in helping him. Stephanie lists off everything she has going on and says Jericho is in the match, List or not.

Chris says no List and no match, ya dig? That's not cool with the boss, who says Jericho wrestles or gets suspended.

Curtis Axel vs. Bo Dallas

Before the match, Axel does a really good speech about his Minnesota roots and being Curt Hennig's son. Bo starts fast but the Roll of the Dice is countered into a PerfectPlex for two. I bought that for a second. A running forearm drops Curtis and we hit the chinlock. Axel fights out and hits the running neck snap for two and that's it for his offense as Dallas grabs a rollup for the pin at 2:58. I've said Axel should be pushed as a face for years and this was more evidence that I'm right. It's also more evidence that WWE gets way too much pleasure out of having people lose in their hometown.

Video on Rich Swann.

Jericho is about to leave when a guy comes up to say he saw the List. Chris finds....Braun Strowman looking at it and asks for it back. Braun: "Say please." Strowman doesn't see Sami Zayn's name on the List but gives it back anyway. Jericho says it's on page four and since Braun touched his personal property, HE JUST MADE THE LIST!

Roman Reigns talks about being in the Cell, which Rusev hasn't experienced. Reigns takes this personally and is ready to do anything to keep the title on Sunday.

We run down the card for Sunday's show.

Golden Truth vs. Shining Stars

Mark Henry is with Golden Truth and Titus is with the Stars, which makes me feel a bit better about their earlier segment. It's really nice to have them actually have a reason to be in the back instead of just showing up for a cameo. I love little things like that. Corey is reading a brochure as the Stars come out to the ring as he needs to get his mom a birthday gift.

Primo is dropped by Goldust to start but some double teaming puts him down. The snap powerslam puts Epico down and everything breaks down with Titus low bridging Truth to the floor. Henry shoves Titus

into the ropes to crotch Epico, setting up a flapjack into Little Jimmy for the pin at 4:02.

Rating: D. Can someone take this show behind the barn and shoot it already? I'll actually give this match a little credit: they're trying to build something out of nothing and it could be a lot worse. I mean, there's at least something there and a moderate attempt to be interesting. It's not really working and the match feels like a nacho break but I'll take what I can get.

Mick Foley is in the ring for the contract signing between Sasha Banks and Charlotte. They talk about how big of a moment this is going to be, only to have Foley go into his annual rant about how evil the Cell is. Charlotte calls Sasha an entitled second rate talent who will learn respect from the Queen this Sunday. Sasha is ready to crawl up the ramp broken and bloodied as long as she has the Women's Title. They trade insults but Foley cuts them both off to say he's their future. Dude if the Cell is going to turn them into 6'4 men with long beards, maybe we should cancel the match.

As expected, the fans chant for Foley, thereby completely missing the point of this segment. Foley met Charlotte as a child and his kids gave Sasha their signed photo of Eddie Guerrero. More insults and a double signing FINALLY wrap this up. Charlotte vs. Sasha in a major gimmick match is fine but no one, like NO ONE, buys that the match is going to be all violent and career threatening like Foley is pushing and that kills the idea.

Emmalina video.

Brian Kendrick vs. Rich Swann

TJ Perkins is on commentary. As Kendrick makes his entrance, we see clips of his run from seven to ten years ago. It's very sad that the #1 contender to a title doesn't even have enough video from his current run for a highlight reel. In case you didn't know, Perkins runs down his history with Kendrick (Brian was his mentor) for the millionth or so time.

Swann flips over Brian and hits a good looking dropkick. A spinning

dive to the floor takes Kendrick down and we head to a break. Back with Swann fighting out of a chinlock and snapping off a top rope hurricanrana. What looks like a victory roll is broken up but Swann slips out of the Captain's Hook and grabs a cradle for the pin at 9:14.

Rating: C. So Swann, who looked a lot better here, pins the #1 contender for a title that has no heat going into a pay per view title match. I get that Swann is likely the next challenger but they're ruining this division more week by week. I'll spare you another list of problems and just say Swann looked good here and go on.

Owens promises violence on Sunday but he's the only one coming back.

Braun Strowman vs. Sami Zayn

This has the potential to be good so let's see how they can screw it up. Before the bell, Strowman says he wants competition but he doesn't see that in front of him. Strowman shoves him away but Sami low bridges him to the floor. This goes badly for Sami as he dives at Braun, only to get thrown into the barricade. Strowman walks away and there's no match.

Kendrick comes in to see Perkins and says the clock is ticking on his career. If TJ loses on Sunday, he'll bounce back. If Brian loses, that's it for feeding his family. TJ walks away.

Here are Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman with something to say. Heyman does his usual schtick about how Lesnar will smash Goldberg, only to have the Goldberg chants cut him off. Heyman calls out the fan that started them and says they're getting on Brock's nerves. After their match, all of the chants in the world won't be able to put Goldberg back together again. Suplexes are promised and the fans go back and forth with SUPLEX CITY/GOLDBERG chants. Heyman rips on them and the chant turns into GOLDBERG SUCKS....to wrap this up. Ok then. There was NOTHING here and it didn't need Brock at all.

Owens and Jericho have a meeting before the triple threat with Chris asking if their friendship means as much as the title. Kevin smiles

it off and doesn't really answer. Jericho says they'll still be best friends no matter what but Kevin looks concerned.

Seth Rollins vs. Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They play keep away to start until Owens gets kicked out to the floor. A Blockbuster gets two on Jericho but Owens pulls Seth outside. The champ is sent into the barricade but Jericho throws Seth into the crowd. Back in and Owens scores with a clothesline, only to have Rollins avoid the Cannonball. The Pedigree doesn't work on either Canadian but the Lionsault hits Seth's knees.

Owens saves his buddy from a Pedigree and it's time for the double teaming. The handicap portion continues until Owens is low bridged to the floor. Jericho eats the low superkick and Rollins dives onto Kevin. Seth misses the frog splash and eats a Codebreaker for two. Owens comes back in and slaps Rollins a lot as the STUPID IDIOT chants kick in. Rollins escapes a double superplex and pins both guys at the same time with a double rollup at 10:00.

Rating: C+. The match was fun but it's WAY too late in the night to really matter. Rollins pinning the champ is appropriate as Owens has been a huge afterthought in this entire story. That also makes four straight times that Rollins has pinned Jericho so you certainly can't say he's getting too many wins.

Post match Owens and Jericho destroy Rollins by sending him hard into the steps. We're still not done though as Rollins runs up the ramp and dives at Owens, only to get beaten down again. Owens gives him the Apron Bomb and walks back up the ramp to get his title so some posing can end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. What a dog of a show this was. There was no effort here and their best idea was to say "Raw Exclusive Pay Per View" over and over as many times as they could. This was every lame idea they could come up with in three hours with almost no one really trying and the show feeling even longer than usual. The worst part is the show wasn't even the worst. What it was was lacking energy and that's as bad as it's going to get. Horrible stuff here and little more than making me want to get to Survivor Series

instead of caring about Sunday.

Results

Enzo Amore b. Karl Anderson – Rollup

Cesaro and Sheamus b. New Day – Brogue Kick to Big E.

Bo Dallas b. Curtis Axel – Rollup

Golden Truth b. Shining Stars – Flapjack into Little Jimmy to Epico

Rich Swann b. Brian Kendrick – Oklahoma Roll

Seth Rollins b. Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho – Double rollup

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NXT – October 19, 2016: I Love NXT and I Don't Know How Else To Say It

NXT

Date: October 19, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're getting closer to the second round of the Dusty Rhodes Tag

Team Classic and it's also the start of a fresh taping cycle. The other interesting story is the return of Shinsuke Nakamura to go after Samoa Joe. It's fairly obvious that they'll be facing each other again in Toronto. Let's get to it.

We open with a look back at Nakamura being laid out about a month ago but coming back last week to go after Samoa Joe.

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Rich Swann/No Way Jose vs. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak

It should be interesting to see this work so much better here than it would on Raw. Rich and Drew start things off as the fans aren't sure which good guy to cheer for. It's time for some fast flipping to start with Rich bouncing over Drew and handing it off to Jose for the big guy dancing. Nese comes in and eats a big flapjack (that sounds good) for two. Some quick kicks put Jose down for two but it's back to Rich for some kicks to the chest. They head outside and it's Nese superkicking (of course) Swann as we take a break.

Back with Gulak and Swann clotheslining each other for a double knockdown. That means a double tag off to Jose and Nese with the dancing one turning Tony inside out off a clothesline. Gulak gets thrown into the air and punched right in the jaw (better than most Superman Punches) for two with Nese making the save. The full nelson slam ends Gulak at 10:40.

Rating: C+. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Jose is WAY too talented for this dancing party guy gimmick. He looked even more like a star than usual here as he was towering over the other three and was able to show off with the power game. It really is amazing how much more interesting the cruiserweights are when they're in front of a crowd that actually wants to see them.

Rich and Jose are ready for the Authors of Pain, who better not look past them. Dancing ensues.

Quick discussion of Hideo Itami's injury, meaning he's out of the tournament.

We look back at Glorious Ten splitting up.

Tye Dillinger has requested and been granted a match against Bobby Roode in Toronto.

Austin Aries would rather talk about potassium instead of his surprise partner. The tournament isn't for everyone, such as Hideo Itami. Hideo is out because an MRI revealed he doesn't have a spine.

Bobby Roode vs. Sean Maluta

Maluta actually grabs a rollup for an early two but Roode takes his head off with a clothesline. A hard whip into the corner makes it worse for Sean, followed by a spinebuster to break up his comeback. An implant DDT ends Sean at 3:07.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here, which is a good role for some of the lower level cruiserweights. We've seen what they can do in the tournament so these wins are more impressive than the ones you see over the run of the mill jobbers. Maluta has a good look and can be pushed if the need ever arrives, just like so many of the other people NXT has been using lately.

Roode laughs off Dillinger's complaints because Tye was the one who begged Roode to team up for the Dusty Classic. All Roode wanted to do was bring Tye up to a GLORIOUS level. After a line about Klingons, Tye comes out and clears the ring. The fans, who went nuts over Roode's entrance, give Tye a huge TEN chant.

Liv Morgan is in the back when Peyton Royce and Billie Kay jump her from behind. Morgan is dragged out to the stage and laid out again, leaving Kay and Royce to brag about how this is their division.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Austin Aries/??? vs. Tucker Knight/Otis Dozovic

Aries' mystery partner is.....the debuting Roderick Strong, who teamed with Aries to win the ROH Tag Team Titles as part of Generation Next. The announcers put Strong over hard, mentioning his matches against people like AJ Styles, Samoa Joe, Daniel Bryan and Kevin Owens. Otis throws Aries around to start before it's off to Tucker for some hard chops to Strong.

Everything breaks down and Aries has to break up a Vader Bomb from Otis. Aries and Strong start trying to chop down the massive Dozovic but he pretty easily suplexes them both at the same time. The hot tag brings in Knight for a double splash in the corner but he misses a charge and falls outside. Back in and the Sick Kick knocks Knight silly for the pin (ignore the shoulder being up at one) at 6:15.

Rating: B-. It's strange to see the smaller, faster guys as the heels but this was a better match than I was expecting. Dozovic and Knight are two big power guys and I'm always entertained by seeing guys their size chopped down. Aries/Strong vs. TM61 should be a lot of fun, which is the cool part about tournaments like this one.

Andrade Cien Almas attacked Cedric Alexander over a lack of respect. Now it's time to take the respect for himself.

Nikki Cross vs. Danielle Kamella

Cross is just as crazy as she used to be and throws Danielle with a suplex. After biting and scratching herself, Nikki ends this with a fisherman's neckbreaker at 1:20. Total squash.

Nikki keeps beating on Danielle so the referee reverses the decision.

Here's Shinsuke Nakamura with a message for Samoa Joe. Nakamura confirms the rematch with Samoa Joe in Toronto because he'll beat Joe with no mercy. This brings out Patrick Clark, who wants the title shot for himself. Instead he gets a kick to the head, only to have Joe come out for the big staredown. Joe stays on the ramp while Clark eats Kinshasa to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I had a really good time here as they covered almost everything that's likely to be taking place at Takeover: Toronto in less than an hour. We had good tag wrestling, a debut, story advancement and a hot ending. In other words, things you rarely get on Raw and/or Smackdown and in even less time. NXT knows how to turn on the jets whenever they need to and that's exactly what they've done again here.

Results

No Way Jose/Rich Swann b. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak – Full nelson slam to Gulak

Bobby Roode b. Sean Maluta – Implant DDT

Austin Aries/Roderick Strong b. Tucker Knight/Otis Dozovic – Sick Kick to Otis

Danielle Kamella b. Nikki Cross via referee's decision

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NXT – October 5, 2016: I Love That Concept

NXT

Date: October 5, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's time to start a tournament as we have the first round of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic kicking off tonight. Last year's event was a lot of fun and set up the NXT Title feud for the next several Takeovers. The finals of this year's tournament will be taking place at Takeover: Toronto in November so let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the Dusty Classic returning this year. Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Bollywood Boyz vs. Authors of Pain

Harv and Gurv Shira dance a lot before the bell so Razar puts Harv on the top rope for some clubberin. Gurv comes in and gets beaten down as well, setting up the Russian legsweep and clothesline combination (now dubbed the Last Chapter) for the pin at 1:47.

Dan Matha arrives tonight.

Rich Swann vs. Patrick Clark

Clark looks like he's wearing Prince style gear. Even Swann looks confused here. Rich does some dancing punches in the corner until he gets caught in a spinebuster. The fans sing Swann's theme song and he makes a quick comeback with a running kick in the corner. A running moonsault puts Clark away at 2:58.

We look back at Cedric Alexander and Andrade Cien Almas facing off a few weeks back and joining forces in the tournament as a result.

Video of Asuka squashing Liv Morgan last week. After the match, Billie Kay and Peyton Royce laughed at Morgan's loss.

Peyton Royce vs. Danielle Kamela

Kamela starts fast with a small package and cross body for two each. Peyton sends her into the corner for some long legged choking and forearms to the chest. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Kamela fights up for handspring elbow, only to get kned in the head. A fisherman's suplex gives Peyton the pin at 3:44.

Rating: D+. The wrestling wasn't much but it was a good sign that they're actually trying to make some new names both in the division and in the promotion as a whole. Royce and Kay are fine as replacements for Dana Brooke and Emma as the heel team, though I can't imagine them being much of a threat to Asuka.

Bobby Roode is way too fired up for the first round match in the Dusty Classic. He doesn't want to talk about Sanity when everyone is talking about Glorious Ten. "It will be glorious when we're victorious." Roode rushes Dillinger out before he can say anything.

Dan Matha comes out (looking like a cross between Matt Morgan and Nathan Jones) for his debut but here's Samoa Joe to beat him down instead. Joe asks Regal how many more have to suffer like this one here.

Rich Swann and No Way Jose have teamed up due to a love of dancing.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Andrade Cien Almas/Cedric Alexander vs. Revival

Non-title. Alexander and Dawson start things off with Cedric getting shouldered down. Everything breaks down and the Revival is dropkicked out to the floor and a backdrop does it all over again. A big flip dive from Cedric takes the champs down again and it's all Alexander/Almas in the first four minutes. Revival finally gets it together by suckering Almas into a blindside forearm as we take a break.

Back with Dawson getting two off a northern lights suplex as the champs start in on Almas' arm. The fans want Cedric and an enziguri from Almas gives them what they want. Everything breaks down again and Alexander gets two off a sunset flip into a bridge. Almas has knocked out to the floor though and it's the Shatter Machine to send the Revival on at 12:40.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I was expecting to as Almas is looking better while Alexander looks like one of the most natural newcomers to WWE in a very long time. Revival has to advance here and that's the only possibly outcome they could have, especially in the first round. Someone almost has to take them out though as you have Gargano/Ciampa and the Authors of Pain looming for them.

Post match, Almas beats Cedric down and sends him into the post. Almas soaks in the YOU SUCK chants to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Another fast paced show with every story hitting perfectly. Almas turning is long overdue and is another example of NXT seeing something not working and changing course as a result. That's close to blasphemy in WWE but down here, it's what you do when something isn't going right. NXT actually pays attention and

fixes things because they listen to their audience. I love that concept.

Results

Authors of Pain b. Bollywood Boyz – Last Chapter to Gurv

Rich Swann b. Patrick Clark – Running moonsault

Peyton Royce b. Danielle Kamela – Fisherman's suplex

Revival b. Cedric Alexander/Andrade Cien Almas – Shatter Machine to Alexander

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Monday Night Raw – September 26, 2016: I Didn't Want It To Be This Way

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 26, 2016

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're past Clash of Champions and this is going to be an interesting

show. The key here is Raw's competition as they're up against Monday Night Football and a Presidential debate that is likely going to break a lot of viewership records. Kevin Owens is still Raw World Champion and Roman Reigns picked up the US Title from Rusev last night it's time to start looking towards the Cell. Let's get to it.

One more note: I was in the arena for the show last night so this is my second time seeing this.

There's no intro as we're heading straight for the opening match. Translation: PLEASE DON'T CHANGE THE CHANNEL YET! I can completely accept this.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Rematch from last night with Reigns defending. The fans want Lana as Rusev takes him down with a front facelock. That's going to keep the people from watching the debate. Reigns is cheered quite strongly as he kips out of a headscissors but gets double legged back to the mat.

Rusev gets one off a suplex and starts in on Reigns' back. The nine corner clotheslines get Reigns out of trouble but he can't lift Rusev up for the powerbomb because of the back injury. We take a break and come back with Rusev putting on a bearhug to keep up the simple psychology. A dropkick hits Reigns in the mouth and some gutwrench suplexes get two. Back to the waistlock as the match slows down again.

Reigns fights up with more clotheslines and a big boot but the Superman Punch is countered, sending them both falling out to the floor. We come back from another break with Reigns headbutting him off the top and hitting a middle rope clothesline. Geez man enough with the Lex Luger style offense.

Reigns still can't powerbomb him so Rusev gets in a spinwheel kick. More headbutts and another kick to the head give Rusev another two. Reigns' latest comeback is stopped with a superkick and the fans are really getting into this in a way you almost never hear for a Reigns match. The Accolade is broken up but Lana offers a distraction to break up the Superman Punch. The apron kick staggers Rusev (and gets a great reaction from the crowd) and they fight into the crowd for a double countout at 25:38.

Rating: B. The match was another good outing for the two of them and

the ending sets up a rematch in the Cell, which is going to receive a divided reception depending on your taste in Cell matches. Maybe it was just the Cincinnati crowd or maybe it's because he's in the midcard instead of the main event but Reigns was getting a great reaction here. This is the kind of role he's made for: an athletic freak who can take a beating and give out one of his own. Good match here.

Post match Rusev gets a chair and hits Reigns over the back. They get inside and Reigns gets in a spear to put Rusev down. Reigns sits in the chair and poses with the belt before hitting Rusev with the chair to even things up.

WWE2K17 ad with Ambrose's appearance getting a huge pop.

Here's Mick Foley for a chat about last night's Cesaro vs. Sheamus match. The thought of the series ending in a draw seemed to be a mathematical impossibility (not really) but that's what's happened. Foley brings out Sheamus and Cesaro with Sheamus almost immediately cutting him off to say this was about physical dominance.

Cesaro talks about doctors holding Sheamus back last night and an argument breaks out over who was more dominant. Foley cuts them off to say they're both right and they're both getting a championship opportunity....which they're getting together as they're fighting for the Tag Team Titles. Cesaro: "SAY WHAT???" Foley tells them to get over it and just team together because that's his decision.

I had a very bad feeling that this was where they were going and while it's not the worst idea in the world (Raw is dying for tag teams at the moment), it feels like the TNA way of getting here: a bunch of matches that did nothing but fill time until we get to the end result. Sheamus and Cesaro had some good matches (even one very good one) but they drove the feud into the ground to the point where I didn't care how good the matches were since I had absolutely no desire to watch them.

And now, none of that matters because they're basically saying the whole thing was a tie and we're just going to do something different. It comes off as lazy booking and a way to fill in time, which is one of the worst things you can do in wrestling. I'm sure they'll be a decent team but they better not cut New Day's title reign off this close to the record.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending in a rematch from last night after Xavier Woods used Francesca II. The match starts fast with Kofi having to dodge a diving Anderson. It's off to Big E. for the Unicorn Stampede with Woods blowing the trombone in time with the stomps. Gallows, apparently not a music fan, pulls Big E. out to the floor and superkicks him in the face.

Anderson adds a running kick to the face for two and the champs are in quick trouble. Gallows gets in a chokeslam and we take a break. Anderson's powerbomb gets two and we hear about Demolition's title reign being in reach. A kick to the head finally allows the hot tag to Big E. for the suplexes. Big E. misses a charge into the post though and a running boot to the face gets two.

That's enough of being on defense for Big E. so he spears Anderson through the ropes, setting up the Midnight Hour for two with Gallows making the save. Kofi is sent shoulder first into the steps and the Magic Killer gets a very close two on Big E. They had me on that near fall. A VERY bloody Kofi comes back in and hits Trouble in Paradise to pin Anderson and retain the titles at 11:03.

Rating: C+. They're doing really well at making me buy into the title changes here and that's hard to do when it comes to a regular TV title defense. Anderson and Gallows are done as challengers now and I'm really not sure where they go from here. Sheamus and Cesaro are fine for placeholder challengers but New Day really should break the record when they're this close. It would be a waste of time not to.

We look at Kevin Owens injuring Seth Rollins' ribs in their match at Clash of Champions. Stephanie McMahon sent a second referee down for the count, seconds after Rollins would have had the title won. After the show ended, HHH arrived and asked Stephanie how it went ("Great").

Sheamus and Cesaro (back in his suit) are bickering when Foley comes in. Mick starts yelling about how much potential these two have together because they could shake up the tag division. He'll even give them a chance tonight in a tag match. Foley showed a lot of fire here, as is his custom. Remember that.

Bayley vs. Anna Fields

Fields chokes her on the ropes to start and we hit an early chinlock. Bayley comes back with her elbows and clotheslines,

setting up a quick Bayley to Belly for the pin at 2:04.

Post match Bayley says she's not done with Sasha and Charlotte after that triple threat because she wants to hug that Women's Title.

And now, the bad part of the show. Foley goes in to see Stephanie and asks about the referee issue in last night's main event and telling HHH it was great. Stephanie ERUPTS on Foley, talking about how it should have been his responsibility to get a new referee out there. Instead, he was probably with Sheamus and Cesaro because he thinks with his heart instead of his head. She hired him because of his mind as a businessman (Huh?) and wants him to be more like her. Instead of showing the fire he had earlier, Foley just stands there and takes this because she's Stephanie.

This is every problem with Stephanie rolled into one promo. Not only is it part of a story that is taking WAY too long to go anywhere (I'd be shocked if we get any real resolution before the Royal Rumble) but this is Mick Foley, a three time WWE World Champion and a WWE Hall of Famer. He's one of the best talkers with some of the best fire of all time but he's standing here cowering in front of Stephanie because that's what happens to people around her.

Brock Lesnar, Charlotte, Sting, Roman Reigns and now Mick Foley all have nothing to say back to her because she's Stephanie and the most intimidating presence of all time. Oh except for when she's fun Stephanie who dances with kids and is just a regular soccer mom. This has been going on for years now (keep in mind that Stephanie debuted SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO and first became an authority figure in 2000) and if we're lucky she gets one bit of comeuppance a year. Other than that it's all Stephanie browbeating everyone else and if you don't like it, deal with it because she's Stephanie.

Rich Swann/Cedric Alexander vs. Drew Gulak/Lince Dorado

Swann and Alexander get an inset promo talking about how they're here to have fun but they're not underestimating their opponents. This didn't air in the arena and it would have helped quite a bit. Gulak and Dorado get their Cruiserweight Classic videos and again they're better than nothing. We get the big handshake to start for a compliment to the purple ropes, which take forever to set up and take down.

Dorado and Swann trade headscissors to start and nip into a stalemate. Everything breaks down and Dorado moonsaults onto all

three as we take an early break. Back with Drew holding Swann in a chinlock before it's back to Dorado for some chops. The hot tag bring in Alexander for some forearms and a running kick to Gulak's head. A Lumbar Check sends Dorado to the floor and Swann sunset flips Gulak for the pin at 8:25.

Rating: C. This was the big popcorn break match of the night and it's still not hard to see why. Again, the wrestling is fine but the whole division is being wedged into a show that is already bloated. Swann and Alexander have some personality but Dorado and Gulak are just warm bodies in the eyes of the fans. It's better than last week but they still need some adjustments to make people care.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Nick Cutler/Willis Williams

Cesaro takes Cutler over with a one armed delayed vertical suplex but Sheamus drops to the floor instead of tagging in. For some reason he gets on the apron with his back to the ring so Cesaro can tag him in with a slap. The ten forearms make it even worse for Cutler and it's off to Williams, who is taken down with a hard clothesline. The jobbers actually start working on Cesaro's arm for a few seconds before Sheamus Brogue Kicks both guys. Cesaro pins the unconscious Williams at 3:33.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what it needed to be, though it's still forced and something that should have come months ago without the long feud in the first place. We haven't had a wacky partnership that went somewhere important since Kane and Daniel Bryan so this is as good as anything else they have.

Video on TJ Perkins.

TJ talks about wanting to be here for eighteen years but here's Brian Kendrick to interrupt. Kendrick says it's his title to win because Perkins owes him for his career. A brawl is teased and they'll fight at some point in the future.

Here are Charlotte and Dana Brooke for a chat. Charlotte says last night was another chance for everyone to be disappointed because that's what she does time after time. She's not the huggable Bayley or the internet darling Sasha Banks. Cue Sasha to say that's her title because Charlotte didn't beat her last night. Sasha is owed a one on one match and she wants it right now. Charlotte tells the YESing fans to be quiet so she can tell Sasha that she'll get her rematch....next week. Sasha cleans house and the villains leave.

Rollins is on his way to the ring to interrupt the upcoming Highlight Reel but Foley cuts him off because Seth isn't medically cleared. All Rollins can hear are Stephanie's words coming out of Mick's mouth.

TJ Perkins vs. Tony Nese

Non-title with both guys being TNA castoffs because they're dumb that way. The much stronger Nese throws Perkins around to start and he cartwheels out of TJ's ankle scissors to show off. An early kneebar attempt doesn't work for TJ as Nese sends him outside for a superkick and a big dive to take us to a break. Back with Perkins grabbing a Black Widow but getting planted with a reverse gutwrench suplex.

The fans chant for Harambe (the gorilla who was shot at the Cincinnati Zoo, which was a recurring trend all night long) and CM Punk as TJ fights back with uppercuts and a jumping neckbreaker out of the corner. A gutbuster looks to set up a tornado DDT but Perkins is draped over the top rope instead. TJ is right back up with the fireman's carry into an enziguri (Fans: "RANDY SAVAGE!") and the kneebar makes Nese tap at 8:50.

Rating: C+. I know the fans don't care but this was entertaining stuff, partially because we have a reason to care about Perkins. Something as simple as being the champion tells us more about him than we know about anyone else and the announcers did a good job of building Nese up as the perfect athlete who could take down the champ. Good little match here, though the fans really didn't care.

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Pedro Morales.

Sasha vs. Charlotte and Perkins vs. Kendrick for the respective titles next week.

Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson are going to be in Los Angeles next week to take care of Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens.

It's time for the Highlight Reel. Jericho tells us to be quiet about a dozen times because this is the most anticipated Highlight Reel in WWE history. Before Owens comes out here though, Jericho has a bone to pick with Masterson and Kutchner, who have the nerve to claim that they're better friends. Jericho: "THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!" That's so unthinkable that they're both about to make the List of Jericho.

It's almost time for Owens to come out but Jericho yells at the

cameraman for shooting him from the wrong side, which means HE MADE THE LIST! Rollins is on there too because he got hurt again last night. Owens comes out and praises the Jeritron 5000 but says he's not about to wear a suit for a place like Cincinnati, Ohio. What kind of town can this be when it created Dean Ambrose? Jericho: "HE STILL OWES ME \$17,000!"

Owens moves on to Rollins and says the rib injury is karma after all the people Seth injured over the last year and a half. Cue Rollins but security and Foley pull him back. Instead here are Enzo Amore and Big Cass to interrupt and ask Jericho how they're doing. Jericho says they're just fine but Enzo and Cass ARE ON THE LIST.

After Owens corrects Jericho's spelling, Cass accuses Jericho of being Santa Claus. Jericho: "Maybe I am Santa Claus! Maybe I'll come down there and sit on your lap!" Cass points out that people sit on Santa's lap but Jericho said he was going to punch Cass in the face. A fan poll makes Jericho even angrier but as it turns out, Foley just made a match between these four.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

Jericho and Enzo start us off but first we need to pause for the scarf removal. An armdrag has Jericho so frustrated that he crawls over for a hug from Owens. Kevin comes in and gets dropped by Cass so it's time to launch another human being over the top rope as a projectile. Sidewalk slams have the Canadians in trouble but Jericho sidesteps a charge to send Cass outside as we take a break.

Back with Enzo pounding on Jericho in the corner and getting two off a high crossbody. Owens offers a quick distraction though and it's time for the villains to take over. Thankfully that means Owens doing Enzo's dance across the apron because he knows how to mock a crowd. Jericho and Owens take turns beating on Enzo with Owens handling the trash talking ("THAT'S THE LEAD SINGER OF FOZZY!").

Enzo blocks a superplex but dives into a dropkick, setting up Owens' backplash for two. Owens to the referee: "I'm the Universal Champion!" Referee: "It was two!" Owens: "But he shouldn't even be out of NXT yet!" Enzo finally gets in a right hand to make the tag off to Cass for the house cleaning. For some reason Jericho decides to slap Cass, earning himself a boot to the face. The two of them head outside and it's Enzo hitting his middle rope DDT for two on Owens. The powerbomb puts Amore away at 16:37.

Rating: C. Owens' trash talking aside, this was just your standard main event tag. Enzo and Cass are fine for this role and it's already more entertaining than seeing them talk about buying a timeshare in Puerto Rico. They're still making sure to protect Cass and it's way too early to even think about a split so this is about as good as it's going to get for them at the moment.

The show wraps up just after the match ends. Post show, Owens and Jericho kept beating on Enzo until Sami Zayn came out for the save. Posing ensued to close out the night.

Overall Rating: D+. This show suffered had the same problem as so many others: burnout. The first half hour was a good, hard hitting match, followed by an entertaining Tag Team Title match. Then it was Stephanie treating Foley like a dog who tracked mud into her house and a cruiserweight tag match that didn't need to be on the show.

The main event was a nice pick up but they really need something to fire the crowd up in the middle. Maybe a Sami Zayn match instead of putting him on Superstars? At the end of the day, three hours is too much on TV and it's even worse when you're watching it live. The show has good stuff on it but that good stuff is dragged down by so many other things, the biggest of which is just time itself. It wasn't a horrible show but you could tell when the debate came on because the show just gave up.

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Monday Night Raw – October 3, 2016: One Of Those Shows... . Maybe?

Monday Night Raw

Date: October 3, 2016

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We've got a packed show tonight with two big matches. First up Cruiserweight Champion TJ Perkins has the first title defense on Raw as he puts the title on the line against Brian Kendrick in a Clash of Champions rematch. In the bigger title match, we have Sasha Banks challenging Charlotte for the Raw Women's Title in her first one on one rematch. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns to open the show and MY GOODNESS they're booing him out of the building. WWE is asking for this one as Reigns just isn't the kind of person who can go out there and talk full time. He goes into the guy line but here's Lana to interrupt. Fans: "THANK YOU LANA!" With the accent slipping, Lana rips into Reigns for everything he's done in recent weeks but Reigns just tells her to bring her husband out here if he wants that rematch.

Rusev comes out and the brawl is on again with the Bulgarian getting the better of it and knocking Reigns into the crowd. Rusev takes the belt and starts to walk up the ramp but Reigns sneaks up from behind him with a Superman Punch. Reigns grabs the mic and says they can have the rematch but it's going to be inside the Cell.

We recap Brian Kendrick vs. TJ Perkins, which is over Kendrick thinking he deserves the title more than TJ. Perkins had talked about being homeless while pursuing his dream (Sidebar: allegedly this got Perkins heat because other wrestlers have done the same thing. Uh, are any of them Cruiserweight Champion and wrestling on

Raw? No? Then shut up with your jealous complaining.) but Kendrick has worked harder and longer. Perkins beat him at Clash of Champions and tonight is a rematch because...well because no one knows anyone other than these two.

TJ Perkins vs. Brian Kendrick

Non-title (Wasn't this announced as a title match last week?) and both guys are basically the hometown boys. A dropkick puts Kendrick on the floor to start and a slingshot dropkick makes it even worse. Back in and Brian boots him in the face before putting Perkins hand inside the clamp that attaches the turnbuckle to the post.

We take a break and come back with TJ hitting his double chicken wing into the gutbuster but the kneebar sends Kendrick to the ropes. A quick Sliced Bread #2 gets two on TJ and there's the Captain's Hook but Perkins rolls Kendrick up for two. The slingshot dropkick looks to set up the fireman's carry enziguri, only to have Kendrick rake the eyes. Another Captain's Hook gives Kendrick the title at 9:00.

Rating: C. Well ok. Perkins wins the whole tournament and is basically unbeatable but a single rake to the eyes is enough to beat him in less than ten minutes? The best thing here though is having a clear heel and a clear face so we can actually have a story. At the end of the day though, this is likely setting up a third match at the pay per view, despite neither match really warranting a third one.

Earlier today, Seth Rollins sat down with Michael Cole to say he's been medically cleared. Rollins talks about gaining enemies due to being HHH's friend. He and Kevin Owens are both hard workers but HHH handed Owens the title. No one handed the title to Rollins at Wrestlemania XXXI (which we're still talking about) and Owens is going to be another piece in HHH's big plans. Rollins is going to get the title back no matter what Owens or Chris Jericho have to say about it.

Braun Strowman vs. Chase Silver

Before the match, Silver says he's in Hollywood because dreams come true here. Strowman runs him over and shouts that this is the best WWE can offer. A running shoulder sends Silver flying into the corner and the powerslam (Cole: "Hi ho Silver, away) is enough for the pin at 1:45.

Post match Strowman says WWE is wasting his talents on these weak fools week in and week out. If he doesn't get better competition next week, there might not be a next week. Good, as they need to advance this story and character at some point.

Bayley comes up to Sasha Banks and congratulates her for being in the main event of Raw. Sasha knows Charlotte is great but she's destined to be champion.

Here are Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho to respond to Rollins' comments earlier. Owens asks Jericho what he's done to deserve a rematch because the truth is that Seth lost at Clash of Champions. Rollins has been complaining about the referee but he's only got himself to blame.

After laughing at the fans for chanting STUPID IDIOTS (because it makes them stupid idiots), Owens suggests that Jericho should be the guest referee. Jericho suggests that he get a title shot of his own but of course he means the two of them getting the Raw Tag Team Titles. Owens isn't sure about it because that's a bit too much work for him so Jericho suggests a Universal Title shot. Owens: "Yeah! Let's do it! Let's go after New Day!"

Cue New Day to say they're the best friends in WWE. That earns them a spot on Jericho's list but Big E. cuts him off to say they'll have to have a champion's huddle. This excludes Jericho so BIG E. MAKES THE LIST. Woods laughs and you know where that lands him. Owens yells at New Day for feeding kids questionable cereal and says they jumped the shark about seven months ago. Woods: "Look at yourself. When is the last time you jumped over anything?" Owens: "PUT WOODS ON THE LIST AGAIN!" A match seems to be made for later.

Sheamus and Cesaro arrived earlier and threw each other's bags out of the car.

Sami Zayn vs. Titus O'Neil

Titus says this is the debut of the Titus Brand. Some forearms to the back have Sami in trouble and a bearhug makes it even worse. Sami comes right back with a clothesline, the exploder suplex in the corner and the Helluva Kick for the pin at 2:48.

Sheamus and Cesaro argue over whose fault it was that they were late. Mick Foley comes in and says they're doing this to become as amazing of a team as they can. The arguing continues.

Anderson and Gallows vs. Golden Truth

Oh yeah Golden Truth is still a thing. Earlier today, Anderson and Gallows blamed New Day for ruining the tag team division. Truth and Anderson start things off and it's time for dancing and gyrating. Goldust comes in for a neckbreaker but it's quickly off to Gallows with a boot to the face and a chinlock. Back up and the hot tag brings in Truth for the house cleaning, including an ax kick to Anderson. Everything breaks down and the Magic Killer puts Truth away at 3:22.

Rating: D. If this was supposed to start building Anderson and Gallows back up, it might have been a good idea to not have them get beaten up for so much of the match. Having Golden Truth out there as jobbers is fine but it's still not exactly thrilling stuff outside of the top of the division. Of course by division I mean the three or four teams running around at the moment.

Jericho and Owens are on the way to the ring when they run into Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson. The List is discussed with Masterson reading off a few items: people who don't appreciate a good scarf and superstars who lose to Fandango at Wrestlemania. Owens goes off to get ready and the celebrities say they'll be at ringside for the match against New Day. Jericho threatens to give them.....hang on as he goes off camera to the left and comes back in on the other side to say they'll get IT.

Jericho is the perfect example of why natural charisma is so much more important than writing. The stuff he's doing is so stupid but

he knows how to time things so well that there's almost nothing he can't get over. If any rookie came up with this same material, odds are they would be fired. Jericho has such natural presence though that it works like little else on the show. You can't teach that and it's one of the most important things in wrestling.

Enzo Amore and Big Cass are in the ring with three breast cancer survivors for the annual Susan G. Komen segment. The three women are given replica WWE Title belts.

Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. New Day

Non-title. Masterson and Kutcher are on commentary as Owens runs Woods over to start. Owens makes sure to jump over Xavier in the kind of funny bit that most people just don't think to do. Woods gets taken into the corner for the double teaming as Kutcher talks about their new show. It's off to Big E. to face Owens for some hip swiveling.

Graves says Saxton would be the Fez (character on That 70s Show, on which Masterson and Kutcher starred) of the commentary table, which sounds like a good insult, assuming you find dating Mila Kunis' character to be a bad thing. Big E. gets beaten down even more as the announcers discuss middle names and scarves.

Back from a break with Owens and Big E. colliding off a double clothesline. Woods comes in and gets chinlocked before it's back to Jericho for a running clothesline in the corner. A superplex is broken up and Woods gets two off a high crossbody. Owens breaks up a hot tag attempt and gets two off a DDT.

Cue Seth Rollins to the stage for a distraction though and Woods gets in an enziguri. The hot tag brings in Big E. to clean house (and swivel the hips of course) but Owens superkicks him down. Big E. and Owens go to the floor and Jericho gets the Liontamer on Woods, only to have Rollins offer a distraction. A quick Midnight Hour puts Jericho away at 16:25.

Rating: C-. This was much longer than it needed to be and served little more purpose than to have Kutcher and Masterson there to plug

their new show. It's a really bad sign that this is what the World Champion is being used for: a second hour tag match with little to gain other than helping set up a Netflix show. Well done WWE. It's good to see what you think of what should be your flagship star. Masterson and Kutcher were both fine and seemed to be having a lot of fun, which is much better than you're going to get out of most guest stars.

Rollins gives Jericho a Pedigree to really get under Owens' skin.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Charlotte says she's the only reasons Sasha is in the main event and she'll rise to the occasion as she always does.

Video on Rich Swann.

Stephanie McMahon comes up to yell at Rollins because he's just as replaceable as anyone else. Rollins says getting rid of him was the second worst decision HHH has ever made. The worst: marrying Stephanie. Seth promises to burn Raw to the ground and take Owens and Jericho with him.

Rich Swann vs. Tony Nese

Nese says Swann has a dance with the best athlete in the division. Swann tries to dance early on but gets taken down with hard forearms. A bodyscissors and chinlock don't get Nese very far as Rich pops up with some dropkicks. That's about it for Swann though as Nese stun guns him into a sitout pumphandle powerslam for the pin at 4:13.

Rating: C-. Yeah fine. I'm assuming they're building Nese up as the next challenger (for Perkins, whose match earlier apparently wasn't for the title, which WWE didn't exactly go out of their way to make clear last week) which is better than nothing. This division still has a long way to go though and this didn't do it many favors.

Mil Mascaras video as WWE is celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month for the second month in a row.

We see a bunch of pictures of Emma in swimsuits. Coming soon: the transformation of Emma into Emmalina. I've heard of worse.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Raul White/Mark Carradine

White and Cesaro start things off with Raul being sent into the corner for alternating shots to the ribs from both guys. White's partner comes in and walks into an Irish Curse. Sheamus loads up the Cloverleaf but Cesaro jumps over him for a DDT onto White. The Brogue Kick is good for the pin on at 1:55.

Long recap of Charlotte vs. Sasha, going all the way back to the BFF's days in NXT. They've both been fighting to prove themselves as the best in the world and have traded the title over the last few months.

Charlotte and Dana Brooke are on the way to the ring when they run into Bayley. Charlotte laughs at Bayley for thinking she could be in this place someday but says she has to leave so she can go main event the show. Dana laughs at Bayley too.

Raw Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is defending and we get Big Match Intros. Sasha kicks her outside and hits a suicide dive, setting up a break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Charlotte in control and working on the back with a backbreaker (makes sense) and a hard shove into the corner. Sasha blocks the big boot and gets two off the double knees. The champ is sent outside but is still able to drop Sasha's back onto the apron.

Sasha tries to go up top but gets knocked onto the ropes for a nasty crash. Charlotte's superplex is shoved off and double knees from the top get two. It's too early for the Bank Statement though so Charlotte sends her outside, setting up a CORKSCREW MOONSAULT TO THE FLOOR! I mean it made almost no contact but it looked awesome. Natural Selection gets two back inside and Charlotte is frustrated. A headscissors sets up the Bank Statement and Charlotte taps in a hurry to give Sasha the title at 14:17.

Rating: B. Good match but they felt out of sync at the end. That missed moonsault didn't help things and the ending felt like it was out of nowhere. Sasha winning makes the most sense and, dare I say,

sets up a rematch inside the Cell? They'll have a rematch one way or another and it needs a little something more than just a regular match.

A long celebration ends the show.

Overall Rating: C. There wasn't anything horrible about the show (meaning Stephanie was only in one segment) but I barely remember most of this show. It's like the main event started and I couldn't think of anything that happened in the previous two hours and forty five minutes. The show was just there for the most part as they've actually got time to set up the next pay per view for a change. Not a bad show but really just there, which is often worse.

Results

Brian Kendrick b. TJ Perkins – Captain's Hook

Braun Strowman b. Chase Silver – Powerslam

Sami Zayn b. Titus O'Neil – Helluva Kick

Anderson and Gallows b. Golden Truth – Magic Killer to R-Truth

New Day b. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho – Midnight Hour to Jericho

Tony Nese b. Rich Swann – Sitout pumphandle powerslam

Cesaro/Sheamus b. Raul White/Mark Carradine – Brogue Kick to Carradine

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Bank Statement

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Monday Night Raw – September 19, 2016: It's Like A Little League Movie

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 19, 2016

Location: FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Clash of Champions as we now go two weeks between single brand pay per views. The big stories coming into tonight seem to be Mick Foley punishing Seth Rollins for interfering in last week's main event and the return of Rusev, who came back last week to go after Roman Reigns. Let's get to it.

Last Week on Raw, Kevin Owens beat Reigns to retain the title despite interference by Rollins and thanks to help from Rusev.

Here's Reigns to get things going but Stephanie McMahon cuts him off, only to have Mick Foley cut her off. Stephanie: "FOLEY! FOLEY! FOLEY!" Thank you Stephanie, though we didn't need your input. Foley apologizes for letting things get out of hands last week and makes Rusev vs. Rollins for tonight. On the other hand, Reigns will be getting a US Title shot against Rusev on Sunday. Stephanie: "And I personally guarantee it will happen." Reigns: "Thanks Stephanie. That means so much coming from you." I might have applauded that line.

Foley goes into a discussion of Raw vs. Smackdown and says he's out of a job if they lose the ratings war. That means Kevin Owens vs. Reigns again tonight. This brings out Owens to say he should be getting ready for the title match on Sunday. Stephanie says tonight is non-title but Foley makes it a cage match.

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are in the back when Rusev comes up to plug Lana's movie (Interrogation, with Edge) and Holy Foley. Rusev leaves and Foley gets a call from Chris Jericho.

Rusev vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Rusev starts in with his variety of kicks but gets dropkicked out to the floor for his efforts. Rollins is sent back first into the post and a hard whip sends him back first into the buckle for good measure. Some right hands stagger Rusev as Rollins looks so at home as a face. Unfortunately he's not quite at home on the top as Rusev slams him down with one arm to take us to a break.

Back with Seth fighting out of a waistlock and hitting a quick enziguri for a breather. There's the Sling Blade to keep Rusev in trouble and Rollins muscles him over for a Falcon Arrow. Rusev comes right back with a superkick to the shoulder (even Cole acknowledges how off it was) for two of his own. Seth gets in the springboard knee and a suicide dive. They fight up the aisle and that's a double countout at 11:52.

Rating: C+. Oh sweet goodness is Rollins perfect as a face. His size makes him as natural of a good guy as you can get and I still don't know why they brought him back as a heel other than to make sure Reigns stayed a face. Well, as much of a face as Reigns can be in the fans' eyes.

Post match they fight over to the announcers' table where Seth escapes a powerbomb and dives off the table to take Rusev out.

Dana Brooke yells at Foley about last week's double pin. The solution: ANOTHER FREAKING TRIPLE THREAT MATCH. Can you imagine if there were this many last man standing matches or cage matches? Almost every story has to wind up as a triple threat at some point and it's getting really, really tiresome.

Videos on Cedric Alexander and Brian Kendrick, both of whom are debuting as cruiserweights tonight.

Owens and Jericho have a list of grievances for Foley.

Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Rematch from two weeks ago. Cara fires away right hands and kicks to start until Strowman just runs him over like a monster. We hit an early neck crank for a bit before Cara tries to speed things up, only to have his moonsault caught in a powerslam for the pin at 1:54. What in the world was the point of the countout a few weeks ago?

Bayley and Sasha Banks are ready to team together tonight but they'll fight on Sunday.

Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks

Sasha rolls Dana up to start before it's off to Bayley, who sends Charlotte into the buckle and us to a break. Back with Bayley in trouble as the heels take turns cranking on her arms. Bayley gets in a back elbow and middle rope armdrag, allowing the tag to Sasha for a double suplex. Charlotte is smart enough to go after the huge tape around Sasha's ribs. It's back to Dana to send Sasha face first into the mat a few times. A headscissors puts Charlotte down and the real hot tag brings in Bayley. Dana saves the Bayley to Belly though and it's a big boot from Charlotte for the pin on Bayley at 11:09.

Rating: C. Perfectly acceptable formula tag match here with the rib injury giving it an easy story and Charlotte getting some momentum heading into the title match after losing for weeks leading into the title defense. It's always fun to see the women having the same kind of match you would expect from the men with the only exception being their genders. The lack of PUPPIES chants probably helps a lot too.

Seth goes into Stephanie's office. After a break, Rollins asks Stephanie why she threw him away for Owens. Stephanie says she had nothing to do with HHH (and since she's apparently not asked her husband about this once) but it was Seth who allowed the title to go to her brother's show. Maybe HHH was tired of Seth ruining HHH's reputation (which has a street value of about \$14). Seth is going to prove that the Authority put their money on the wrong horse. Stephanie gets all serious (of course) and orders him to not threaten her.

Bo Dallas vs. Gary Graham

Bo does more serious poetry about how only he can believe in himself. It's another quick beatdown with knees and right hands as the fans chant for the jobber. The Roll of the Dice ends Graham at 1:18.

Video on the Cruiserweight Classic final.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match six in the best of seven series with Cesaro down 3-2 and let's get this over with. They slug it out to start and Cesaro flips out of an early backdrop attempt. Sheamus sends him outside and we take a break. Back with Cesaro hitting the uppercut train to knock Sheamus over the barricade and next to some Memphis Grizzlies' feet. Cesaro can't do the apron superplex though and gets caught in White Noise onto the apron. The Brogue Kick misses but Cesaro walks into the Irish Curse for two. Sheamus grabs the Cloverleaf but gets small packaged for two. A rollup with feet on the ropes gets the same on Cesaro before he ducks the Brogue Kick and Neutralizes Sheamus for the pin at 9:40.

Rating: C-. The same problems that have plagued this stupid series for a month are still around here and I won't bother going over them again. This would have been a lot better if the last three or four matches had a gimmick or something but the fact that we're heading to a seventh match and nothing has changed really isn't interesting.

Foley makes the seventh match for Clash of Champions when Jericho comes in. Jericho accuses him of never being a fan but Foley brings up recommending him to Paul Heyman for ECW. Chris has his List of Jericho (list of grievances), which now includes a bad fashion sense. As you might expect, Foley brings up the scarf look. Jericho: "This is very big in Luxemburg." Foley: "Well it looks ridiculous, right here, in Memphis, Tennessee." Jericho: "Number six: Uses cheap babyface pops."

It's time for Jericho's list of grievances. First up: Foley is trying to drive a wedge between Jericho and Owens. A fan yells at him so Jericho adds "brace face in row twelve". We get to the Sami

Zayn phone attack last week but here are Enzo and Cass to interrupt. Cass lists off some great friendships, including Bevis and Butthead and Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson.

Cue the Shining Stars to offer some time shares. This brings out the New Day with Kofi saying they have a very good reason to be out here. Big E.: "We have nothing better to do." Woods promises to keep the titles on Sunday so here are Anderson and Gallows to interrupt. Jericho says everyone in the ring is on his stupid idiot list but here's Sami because we need a tenth guy for the huge tag match.

Shining Stars/Chris Jericho/Anderson and Gallows vs. Enzo and Cass/Sami Zayn/New Day

We start after a break with Kofi spinning into a crossbody for two on Jericho. It's off to Sami vs. Epico before Big E. comes in for his spanking abdominal stretch. Anderson comes in and catches Kofi with a spinebuster as the bad guys take over. That lasts all of thirty seconds before the hot tag brings in Big Cass to clean house. The Empire Elbow gets two on Primo as everything breaks down. Sami runs the corner for his tornado DDT and there's a Helluva Kick to Primo. The Bada Boom Shaka Lacka is enough for the pin on Primo at 5:24.

Rating: D+. This is as simple of a way as you're going to find to do three matches in one on a show where Stephanie needs ten segments. I'm assuming Enzo and Cass get their win back on Sunday's pre-show and that's fine enough of a way to end such a nothing feud. Enzo and Cass have to fight New Day sometime and they'd be fine to take the belts away, especially since New Day is less than three months away from Demolition's record.

We recap the opening segment.

Videos on Gran Metalik and Rich Swann.

Video on Eddie Guerrero in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Here's Foley to introduce the cruiserweights. After screwing up a few of his lines, Foley talks about the Cruiserweight Classic and introduces Rich Swann, Gran Metalik, Cedric Alexander and Brian

Kendrick. Foley makes the first match: a fatal fourway for the shot at TJ Perkins' Cruiserweight Title on Sunday.

Rich Swann vs. Gran Metalik vs. Cedric Alexander vs. Brian Kendrick

One fall to a finish. It's a brawl to start since there are no tags, eventually leaving us with Kendrick and Alexander. Brian bails to the floor but gets kicked in the face so Alexander sunset flips Metalik for two. A springboard clothesline gets two more on Metalik but Swann comes back in to kick Cedric in the back.

Swann and Alexander trade strikes and miss kicks until Cedric flips out of a headscissors. A big flip dive takes Kendrick down and it's only Metalik in the ring. You know what that means as Metalik dives onto everyone, finally drawing a reaction from the crowd. Kendrick breaks up Metalik's springboard and throws Swann and Alexander into various objects. A few kicks to Swann's leg take us to a break.

Back with Alexander breaking up Swann's cover on Metalik but Kendrick grabs a tornado DDT for two of his own on Metalik. Swann's jumping 450 looks to finish Alexander but Kendrick grabs his Captain's Hook (bully choke) on Cedric, only to have Metalik make the save. A Lumbar Check drops Metalik and the Captain's Hook makes Alexander tap and sends Kendrick to the title shot at 15:04.

Rating: C-. Blame it on whomever you want but this fell apart because of the time. This should have been about people flying all over the place and keeping things moving. You know, like a cruiserweight match. Instead it was your run of the mill WWE multi-man match with WAY too much time and the fans just dying throughout. The guys ran out of things to do and then had six or seven minutes to go. Horrible booking decision here and odds are it's more of the same bickering between Kevin Dunn and HHH's camps with Kevin trying to shoot down whatever HHH sets up. Oh and the new champ doesn't even get a cameo? Really?

Nia Jax vs. Alicia Fox on the pre-show.

Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns

Non-title and inside a cage. Reigns slugs away to start but wants

nothing of going through the door. The champ gets beaten down in the corner and a running clothesline makes it even worse. A ram into the cage wall sets up a superkick for two on Roman and we take a break. Back with Owens getting crotched on the top and getting crushed up against the cage a few times.

Reigns' clotheslines have Owens in trouble but he has to Superman punch his way out of a Pop Up Powerbomb. The second attempt at the powerbomb gets two for Owens and they go to the top rope for some rams into the cage. Both guys are down and Reigns sprints up the cage to get outside before Owens can go through the door for the win at 13:17.

Rating: D+. Not only was it boring and not only was there no reason for this to be a cage match but Reigns winning makes Owens' big problem even worse: he feels like someone who is just there while Stephanie has her issues with Foley/Rollins/Smackdown or whatever disease she's so passionate about that week. This should have been Rusev coming out and costing Reigns the match and then doing the beatdown that we all know is coming. But no, instead Reigns is the big star and Owens is just another loser.

Post match, Rusev comes out and locks the door so he can put Reigns in the Accolade. You know, because THERE'S NO WAY REIGNS COULD EVER GET OVER A CAGE WALL. Rollins comes out and does the big dive off the top (reminiscent of Rey Mysterio in the early days of the first Brand Split), not even bothering to look at the door because THERE ISN'T A ROOF ON THE CAGE. Everyone is down to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. It's just too long and I don't know how many other ways there are to say that. Whether it's seeing Sheamus vs. Cesaro week after week after week or the cruiserweights' debut being one of the biggest messes I've seen in a long time or even more Stephanie and Foley hijinks, these shows feel like they're going on for days instead of three hours. These shows are too long and the matches and promos having to be stretched out to fill in the time shows worse every week.

Then there's the main feud as it feels like Stephanie's latest promo

about her power struggle (which DOESN'T EXIST) should end Sunday's show instead of Owens vs. Rollins. It's like watching some kids movie about rival Little League teams where the parents are more into the fighting than the adults and that's getting really, really annoying.

Just let HHH come back and do the match with Rollins at Survivor Series like they should, rather than stretching this ALL THE WAY TO FREAKING WRESTLEMANIA BECAUSE HHH IS WORTHY OF THE BIG STAGE. That main event and these stupid angles ticked me off tonight like they haven't in a long, long time and that's not good for any show, especially when they're heading into a pay per view.

Results

Rusev vs. Seth Rollins went to a double countout

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara – Powerslam

Charlotte/Dana Brooke b. Bayley/Sasha Banks – Big boot to Bayley

Cesaro b. Sheamus – Neutralizer

New Day/Enzo and Big Cass/Sami Zayn b. Shining Stars/Chris

Jericho/Anderson and Gallows – Bada Boom Shaka Lacka to Primo

Brian Kendrick b. Gran Metalik, Rich Swann and Cedric Alexander – Captain's Hook to Alexander

Roman Reigns b. Kevin Owens – Reign escaped the cage

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Cruiserweight Classic – September 7, 2016: That's Not Fandango

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: September 7, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Maruo Ranallo

It's the second half of the semifinals tonight with the other two names getting set for next week's live two hour finale. This show somehow keeps getting better despite already being one of the most entertaining hours of wrestling every week. Tonight we get to see Zack Sabre Jr. in action again and there's nothing wrong with that. Let's get to it.

Preview of tonight's matches.

Opening sequence.

Zack Sabre Jr. isn't worried about the billions of people he's performing in front of because there's only one opponent in the ring with him at a time.

Noam Dar is the youngest entrant in the tournament but he's fought around the world and knows how to adapt.

Quarterfinals: Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Noam Dar

England vs. Scotland. Sabre rides him on the mat to start and grabs a rather rough looking headlock. A dropkick to the knee has Zack in a bit of trouble as Mauro tells us about Dar being a bit jealous of Zack's success and the publicity that comes with it. Dar goes after the leg a bit too much and it's Zack getting in a stomp to the arm to take over. The standing armbar doesn't work yet and it's a

pinfall reversal sequence for some near falls.

Zack gets punched in the face so he grabs a half nelson suplex for another near fall. Dar goes after the leg again but gets kicked in the arm, only to have the Penalty Kick mess up Sabre's leg even worse. Dar gets two more off a running dropkick to the back and there's the kneebar to put Sabre in trouble. That's reversed into a cross armbreaker and a rollup for two on Dar.

They strike it out again until Dar gets caught in the armbreaker, sending him straight to the ropes. Sabre shows off his lack of common sense by trying a top rope knee drop, only to bang it up again. Dar comes off the top with a double stomp to the leg and there's the kneebar. Sabre can't reach the ropes so he rolls outside to put both guys down in a crash. Zack has to dive back in at nine but he seems to have injured his shoulder. A bunch of stomps to the arm have Zack in trouble but he pulls Dar down and puts on the Rings of Saturn with his legs, bending Dar's arms so far back that I cringe as Dar gives up at 15:48.

Rating: B+. Really good chess match here as they spent the whole time working on the limbs until one of them had to give up. There's a story in the end with Dar switching gears to go after the arm instead of the already injured leg but Sabre stuck with his guns to win with what he had set up all night. This was great stuff and that's all you can expect from Sabre. Dar more than held his own though and that's a positive sign for his future on Raw.

Dar can barely stand for the official decision so they hug from the mat.

TJ Perkins knows he's one of the best in the world because you have to think that in this business.

Rich Swann says you'll see the best of him when the pressure is on.

Quarterfinals: TJ Perkins vs. Rich Swann

Philippines vs. America. The fans sing Rich's theme song in the ultimate sign of respect. They trade near falls to start and it's an early standoff. It's off to the battle over the wristlock as we hear

about how Eddie Guerrero both influenced them. Perkins dances out of a headscissors and does that bicep kissing thing (yes I know what it's called). Mauro talks about rap lyrics until Swann stops to dance. Mauro: "It's a dab duel at the Cruiserweight Classic."

Rich sends him outside but tweaks his knee on a moonsault attempt. Perkins isn't about to let that go and dropkicks him down before going with a belly to back suplex. There's a chance he didn't see the knee injury so this isn't necessarily bad psychology. Perkins starts in on the leg until Rich hits him in the face a few times. Simple yet effective. A jumping DDT gets two on TJ but Rich's leg gives out on a hurricanrana attempt.

The second attempt works a bit better though as Perkins is put down, setting up a kick to the head for two. Perkins grabs a quick kneebar but Rich is right next to the ropes. A tiger driver out of nowhere gets two on Perkins and Rich kicks him square in the head. Perkins comes right back with a fireman's carry into a kick to the head (think a GTS but with a kick instead of a knee), followed by the kneebar to make Swann submit at 17:01.

Rating: B-. This got better once they cut out the dancing stuff and got down to a serious match. Swann is really growing on me and I'm very surprised that they went with Perkins here. That being said, I can't imagine they'll go with him over Ibushi next week. Still though, good match here and it got a lot better as they started getting serious.

Perkins immediately checks on Swann and seems almost sad that he had to beat him.

A video on next week's final three matches wrap us up.

Overall Rating: A-. Yeah what else were you expecting here? Of course this was awesome as the Cruiserweight division has the potential to be something great once they finally get to Raw, though I have a bad feeling they're going to just have random matches without the storylines to make everything work. Still though, really good show here as the quality wrestling continues.

Results

Zack Sabre Jr. b. Noam Dar – Rings of Saturn

TJ Perkins b. Rich Swann – Kneebars

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Cruiserweight Classic – August 24, 2016: A Surprise

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: August 24, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

We're wrapping up the second round tonight and after this show we'll have the final eight competitors. There are only three weeks left before the finale and it's hard to imagine that this isn't going to be around much longer. The wrestling has gotten even better as the tournament goes on, which really is amazing given where they started. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the tournament via a HHH voiceover as well as seeing the (really simple) trophy being unveiled.

Look back at last week's show.

Preview of tonight's three matches.

Opening sequence.

The announcers talk about last week and tonight.

Lince Dorado is here because it's all he's ever wanted to do and he's a hybrid wrestler.

Rich Swann says wrestling saved his life.

Second Round: Lince Dorado vs. Rich Swann

Puerto Rico vs. USA here. The goofy Swann gets his traditional ALL NIGHT LONG chant to start us off. They start fast with some nice early near falls and neither guy being able to pull off a headscissors. Dorado keeps cutting off Rich's dancing so he can do an Alex Wright style dance.

Swann sends him outside and does some dancing of his own until a springboard missile dropkick knocks Rich outside as well. A HUGE dive from Dorado takes Swann down again but he comes right back with a neckbreaker. That means more dancing before he lifts Dorado up for a suplex but kneels down and bends Dorado over his neck for a hold. That's certainly new.

Unfortunately it can't last long due to the laws of physics so it's time to strike it out. Dorado blocks a top rope hurricanrana and they hit bicycle kicks at the same time for a double knock down. Back up and Dorado gets in a few kicks to take over until Rich gets two off a DDT. The standing 450 only hits Dorado's raised knees and Swann is planted with a reverse hurricanrana. Lince misses his shooting star press though and Swann's Phoenix Splash lands on Dorado's face to send him to the final eight at 8:15.

Rating: C+. Swann is an NXT guy and almost guaranteed to make a run in this thing and the lighthearted character is starting to grow on me. Not everything needs to be this big serious moment so throwing a dancing guy who can wrestle so well in there helps a lot. Good enough match here but nothing compared to some of the other stuff they've done.

We look at Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa losing to the Revival at

Takeover.

Gargano, with Ciampa next to him, says he doesn't want to lose again.

Drew Gulak likes to hurt people.

Zack Sabre Jr. knows how to wrestle and can escape anything.

Drew Gulak vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

USA vs. England. Gulak won't shake hands to start and tries to take it to the mat early on. Drew actually gets the better of it with a straitjacket choke, only to have Zack take him to the mat and crank on both arms at the same time. The more aggressive Gulak chops him in the corner and works on a double arm hold of his own. Sabre tells him to come on so Gulak slaps him in the face. Gulak's top rope clothesline is countered into a Fujiwara armbar but it's reversed into a Gory Special with Sabre's arms being bent so far backwards that they cross behind his back.

Sabre gets out and puts on an octopus hold which is quickly reversed into an ankle lock. Drew can't hang on to an electric chair so Sabre reverses into a Kimura with a bodyscissors. Gulak slams him down to escape until a penalty kick to the chest gets two for Zack. A slap to the face knocks Sabre silly but the dragon scissors is countered into rollup to pin Gulak at 8:28.

Rating: B. Now that's more like it as they were just countering everything and turning it into one hold after another until someone finally got caught. That's an important word as Gulak didn't so much get defeated as much as he got caught in the end. It's good to see Sabre get tested like this after looking so dominant in the first round. Good stuff here and really fun to watch.

Drew shakes hands after the match.

TJ Perkins is a high flier and one of the best in the world.

Johnny Gargano is one of the best in the world period and had a great match against Tommaso Ciampa to get to the second round.

Second Round: TJ Perkins vs. Johnny Gargano

Philippines vs. USA. They're playing up the idea that Gargano is four days removed from Takeover so he might not be 100% coming in. Perkins takes him to the mat to start and grabs a Muta Lock for a bit. Back up and Gargano sends TJ outside for a suicide dive but his knee is banged up again. Perkins comes right back with that rocking horse hold of his, followed by a surfboard for good measure.

Gargano gets out of a headscissors and spears Perkins through the ropes for no cover. A big sitout powerbomb plants Johnny and we get a BOTH THESE GUYS chant. They head outside with Johnny hitting a running flip dive but his leg crashing into a table. Back in and they slug it out even more with Perkins hitting a springboard dropkick to the face. A kneebar doesn't work as Gargano reverses into a modified crossface. Perkins is sent face first into the middle buckle with authority for two more and both guys are spent. TJ is smart enough to kick the leg out and roll into a kneebar for the submission at 12:18.

Rating: B. Now THAT is a surprise as Gargano was probably one of the major favorites to win this whole thing. I really like the storytelling here though as they set up the knee injury from a show that hadn't even taken place yet and tied it together here. Gargano giving up because of the knee makes sense and it made for a great story as a result. That kind of thing amazes me and they pulled it off really well here.

Here are the quarterfinal matchups:

Akira Tozawa

Gran Metalik

Zack Sabre Jr.

Noam Dar

Brian Kendrick

Kota Ibushi

TJ Perkins

Rich Swann

Overall Rating: B+. Another night of great wrestling with a huge surprise to wrap things up. Those last eight names should make for an amazing final three weeks and I'm really looking forward to whatever they have planned going forward. There's almost no way the next few rounds won't be great as this show has proven that they can pull off almost anything in the ring.

Results

Rich Swann b. Lince Dorado – Phoenix Splash

Zack Sabre Jr. b. Drew Gulak – Rollup

TJ Perkins b. Johnny Gargano – Kneebar

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Cruiserweight Classic – August 3, 2016: Daniel Bryan's Man Crush

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: August 3, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

It's the final night of the first round as this tournament has been as well structured as anything WWE has produced in a long time. Tonight we'll have another four matches to complete the field of sixteen for the second round. It should be interesting to see which people get the star treatment this week as you can almost always see who WWE wants to push, meaning they might be a big deal in the upcoming Cruiserweight division. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's show.

Preview of tonight's matches.

Opening sequence.

Corey Graves looks at the updated brackets.

Rich Swann says he won't take anyone lightly because people have spent years telling him he'll never make it.

Jason Lee of Hong Kong has been wrestling for eight years and wrestles with a kung fu style.

First Round: Rich Swann vs. Jason Lee

America vs. Hong Kong and dancing vs. nunchucks. They run the ropes to start with Swann diving over Lee and catching him with a dropkick for two. The fans are WAY behind Swann and chant ALL NIGHT LONG as he holds an armbar. I hope he does more than that tonight. Lee comes back with some very fast strikes and an enziguri for two. Swann knees him in the head and jumps to the top for a hurricanrana but Lee comes back with a DDT. La Majistral gets two for Jason as Bryan is amazed by Lee's speed. Swann comes right back with a kick to the head and a standing 450 gives him the pin at 3:49.

Rating: C+. Both guys looked good here but you knew they weren't going to give Jason the pin over an NXT guy. Swann is really over with the crowd already and that standing 450 looked cool. I know Lee isn't likely to go anywhere in WWE but it's cool to see people like him get a shot, even if it's a one off like this.

Gurv Sihra, brother of Harv from last week, grew up watching cruiserweight wrestling and he can't wait to represent India.

Noam Dar wants to represent Scotland.

First Round: Noam Dar vs. Gurv Sihra

Scotland vs. India. Dar starts fast with a dropkick to the knee but gets caught in a headlock. Sihra can't get in a backbreaker so Noam starts back in on the knee and dropkicks him in the side of the head as a bonus. Another dropkick in the corner gets two but Gurv comes back with a spinwheel kick for two, only to miss a top rope elbow due to wasting time on a handheld Bollywood camera (as in the old Hollywood Blonds taunt). Noam uses the crash to grab a kneebar for the tap at 5:23.

Rating: C. I wasn't as interested here but I can always go for something as simple as working on the knee from the start to set up a leg submission at the end. Noam looked a lot better here and Gurv really did look young out there. This wasn't much of a match but again it didn't overstay its welcome, which has been a great thing about this whole tournament.

Fabian Aichner wants to see what it's like to wrestle outside of Italy where there isn't much of a wrestling scene.

Jack Gallagher, in a suit, is a British gentleman.

First Round: Fabian Aichner vs. Jack Gallagher

Italy vs. England. Jack already has more of a character than almost anyone else in this tournament. Gallagher spins out of a wristlock to start and does it again nearly in slow motion, much to Daniel's delight. A very British toehold keeps Aichner in trouble but the much bigger Italian runs him over with a shoulder. Some loud chops set up a slightly botched springboard kick to the chest and we hit a chinlock.

A pinfall reversal sequence results in Gallagher charging into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. Aichner surprises everyone with a double springboard moonsault for two, only to have Jack come back with a guillotine choke. Gallagher gets lifted into a suplex but powerbombed down and the fans boo the heck out of Aichner for beating on Bryan's new man crush. A great looking running dropkick

knocks Fabian silly enough for the pin at 6:47.

Rating: B. Oh yeah this was a lot of fun. Gallagher is like the stereotypical British wrestler you would see in a video game but he's turned up to twelve or so. Bryan was gushing over him and I can't say I really blame him. Aichner was no slouch either and I really hope he gets another shot somewhere else.

The guys get a THANK YOU BOTH chant. Daniel: "I'm in love."

Video on Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa, who are best friends outside the ring but will fight as hard as they can to advance here. Gargano and Ciampa both say they'll win.

First Round: Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa

America vs. America here. They take a few seconds before shaking hands and it's Gargano with an armbar to start. A very loud elbow to the jaw knocks Johnny's head around and Tommaso mocks the "Johnny Wrestling" chants. Another hard elbow has Johnny in trouble and we get a C DUB C chant. Tommaso grabs what looks like White Noise but climbs the ropes instead of crashing down, allowing Johnny to slip out and superkick him through the legs.

A powerbomb brings Ciampa down and a suicide dive makes things even worse. Back in and they just kick each other in the head over and over, leaving Gargano looking rather shaken up. They chop it out on the apron and White Noise only gives Tommaso two. Johnny looks completely out of it and Ciampa can't bring himself to knee Gargano in the face.

The distraction lets Johnny get in a superkick but he walks into Project Ciampa (powerbomb into a Backstabber) for two. The stunned look on Ciampa's face is excellent. Some chops rock Johnny and a right hand just makes Ciampa angry. Ciampa loads up his armbar but Johnny counters into a crucifix for the surprise pin at 10:49.

Rating: B+. This was awesome stuff with some excellent selling from Gargano. They did a great job of making the evil Ciampa a little more human as he was afraid to hurt his friend and tag partner, only to get caught in a rollup at the end. These two are going to get a

Tag Team Title shot at Takeover: Brooklyn and with a match like this it's easy to see why. Really good stuff here and probably the match of the tournament so far.

Ciampa can't shake hands post match but comes back to hug Johnny.

Here are the updated brackets:

Akira Tozawa

Jack Gallagher

Tajiri

Gran Metalik

Drew Gulak

Zack Sabre Jr.

Noam Dar

Hoho Lun

Brian Kendrick

Tony Nese

Kota Ibushi

Cedric Alexander

TJ Perkins

Johnny Gargano

Lince Dorado

Rich Swann

Overall Rating: A-. I'm digging this show more and more every week and it's cool to see so many different styles involved. Somehow they keep things fresh every week and go through things fast enough that it doesn't get dull. This really does feel like something different and that makes for interesting shows every week. Things are going to get even better now that we have the first round out of the way and that's just cool.

Results

Rich Swann b. Jason Lee – Standing 450

Noam Dar b. Gurv Sihra – Kneebar

Jack Gallagher b. Fabian Aichner – Running corner dropkick

Johnny Gargano b. Tommaso Ciampa – Crucifix

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