

# Monday Night Raw – January 29, 2018: Hit Em Hard, Hit Em Fast

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 29, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

It's the night after the Royal Rumble where the big story was the debut of Ronda Rousey, who came out for a staredown with Charlotte, Asuka and Stephanie McMahon to end the show. Other than that we need a #1 contender, which is why the qualifying matches for the Elimination Chamber begin tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a look at Rousey's debut and all the mainstream coverage. I couldn't escape this story today and that's a big reason why this was done.

Jonathan Coachman is welcomed back to the announcers' booth.

There are new match graphics for the first time in what feels like forever. That's a good thing too as sometimes you just need to freshen things up.

Here's a dancing Stephanie McMahon to recap last night's women's Royal Rumble. After taking way too long to do so, Stephanie brings out Asuka to ask about which champion she wants to face. Before she makes that decision though, she needs to know that Alexa Bliss will be defending the title in the first women's Elimination Chamber. Asuka says something in Japanese before talking about becoming champion because no one is ready for her. This brings out Sasha Banks to mock the "nobody is ready for Asuka". Sasha disagrees and wants Asuka tonight.

## Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Kane vs. Braun Strowman

Last man standing and joined in progress with the fight heading into

the crowd. Strowman hits him with a chair and knocks Kane into an anvil case. That means it's time to go to the announcers' area, sending the announce team bailing in a hurry. Kane gets knocked down in front of the table and Braun turns the whole thing over (desk and stage) on top of him for the win at 2:41. What in the world was that? A way to write Kane off TV and make Strowman look dominant? Didn't they do that half a dozen times already?

Post match a stretcher is brought out and Strowman says he just did his job.

Back from a break with the announcers on the stage, talking about how Kane has been sent to a medical facility. Therefore, cut to the back to see Kane being rolled around on a stretcher.

Strowman is still here when Kurt Angle comes up and tells him to lay off. Strowman says he's right....because Strowman can do more. He's going to be the last man standing at the Elimination Chamber and then he'll be the last man standing over Brock Lesnar at Wrestlemania.

#### Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Elias vs. Matt Hardy

Before the match, Elias talks about taking out John Cena last week. For now though, his mind is on Wrestlemania and the song is about wanting to take out Brock Lesnar on Elias' night. The announcers have moved to ringside as Elias takes Matt down with a headlock to start. Matt comes back with some chops and grabs a cravate while saying DELETE over and over. The Twist of Fate is broken up and a clothesline puts Matt down as Elias gets way more fired up in a hurry.

Matt gets taken down with his arm being wrapped around the post as we take a break. Back with Matt getting two off a Russian legsweep as we keep looking at the destroyed announcers' table. People: it's a table on its side, not the car door that Brock threw into the crowd. The Side Effect gets two and we've got Bray Wyatt. Well at least his lights going out thing, allowing Elias to hit a running boot to the face. Drift Away ends Matt at 9:48.

**Rating:** C-. Not much to the match but I'm digging the heck out of this Elias push. It's clear that they think something of him and that's a very good thing. He has a good gimmick and the people are buying into it so there's not much missing. What is missing is something interesting between Matt and Bray, which feels like another forced Wyatt feud. It would be a good idea to have Bray be more calm and sinister rather than so over the top for a change but that's what WWE seems to like about him.

Bray pops up on screen and laughs.

Miz, doing one of those hand held promos that seem to be becoming the norm, says tonight he'll retain the Intercontinental Title. Once he does, he'll deserve a standing ovation like the one Tom Brady should receive on Sunday when the Patriots beat the Eagles.

The announcers now have a desk at ringside.

#### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Roman Reigns

Miz is defending and gets punched in the face to start as the beating is on in a hurry. For some reason Miz tries a chop and is suddenly the Ric Flair to Reigns' Sting. The champ gets knocked outside for a whip into the steps as the one sided beating continues. Reigns grabs a chair to chase the Miztourage off but Miz posts him to take over as we take a break.

Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and grabbing a Samoan drop. Glad to see some things never change. Miz actually wins a bit of a slugout until Reigns hits the corner clotheslines and a big boot to take over again. The YES Kicks have Reigns in trouble and a chop block puts him down.

We hit the Figure Four for a good while until Reigns turns it over, sending Miz to the ropes. Reigns' lifting sitout powerbomb gets two so Miz goes to the turnbuckle like last week. That's intercepted though and Miz pokes Reigns in the eye so the Skull Crushing Finale can get two. The Superman Punch gets the same but here's the Miztourage to interfere again. That earns them a Superman Punch and a spear but Miz grabs a rollup to retain at 18:07.

**Rating:** B-. These two have some good chemistry together, which is rather surprising given both of their reputations. Miz retaining is the right call here as it seems like they're setting up Reigns on the comeback trail. You know, because we're supposed to buy that Reigns is someone who faces adversity and wasn't anointed as the chosen one several years back.

We recap the Elimination Chamber qualifying matches and Braun's path of rage.

### Rhyno/Heath Slater vs. Revival

Joined in progress for a change with Slater working on Dash's arm. Wilder isn't about to stand for someone showing up their ability to work on a limb so he takes Slater down by the arm instead. Dawson comes in for a belly to back suplex and it's back to Wilder for an armbar. A neckbreaker takes Wilder down but Dawson comes in and cuts the ring off. It doesn't work as Slater makes the tag anyway but it was cool to see. Rhyno comes in and hits a shoulder as everything breaks down. Dawson gets in a shot to the knee and the Shatter Machine ends Rhyno at 3:21.

**Rating:** D+. That's all this needed to be as Revival gets another win. Of course they need this win to rebuild themselves after last week but the Shatter Machine will get them out of a lot of problems. Just give them a run towards the titles and let them be the old school Andersons style team and everything will be fine.

Post match the Revival asks Charly Caruso how they compare to the Graham Brothers. Charly isn't familiar with them (humbug) and Wilder isn't surprised. She's just like these fans who chant ECW and try to get themselves over because they're stuck in the past. This...could be interesting.

Dudley Boyz Hall of Fame video. What do you want me to say here? This is the biggest layup of a tag team not named Demolition that you'll ever see.

Balor Club brags about Balor's time in the Rumble and he wants to move on to Wrestlemania anyway. Now he has to get by John Cena to

get to the Elimination Chamber so that's what he's doing tonight. Anderson and Gallows have done wonders for Balor, though not as much as getting away from Wyatt and the Demon vs. Abigail thing.

Sasha says she's ready to end Asuka's undefeated streak.

### Asuka vs. Sasha Banks

Banks slaps her in the face to start and takes Asuka into the corner for a ram into the buckle. That just earns her a kick to the head and a hip attack to put Sasha on the floor. Back in and some kicks to the legs set up the armbar to keep Sasha in trouble. Banks fights up with a kick to the face and running double knees as we take a break.

We come back with Asuka in trouble after the double knees in the corner, followed by the double arm crank. A headscissors into a very fast Bank Statement is countered into a rollup for two. Sasha gets it right back on but Asuka rolls out again before being sent outside. Banks' dive is blocked with a kick to the face for a SCARY crash to the floor.

Back in and Asuka unloads with a knee to the face and some HARD strikes to the head. The hip attack in the corner sets up a missile dropkick for two so it's off to the cross armbreaker. Banks reverses that as well and Asuka's running hip attack misses, sending her outside in a heap. Banks follows with the knees off the apron (nearly crushing Asuka's head in the process) and more of them off the top for a close two. The Bank Statement goes on again but Sasha tries to move it back to the middle, allowing Asuka to reverse into the Asuka Lock for the tap at 14:28.

**Rating:** B+. This was in the "beat the heck out of each other" school of wrestling with Sasha's knees hitting Asuka over and over while Asuka just survived the whole thing and caught Banks at the end. That's the biggest win Asuka has had yet in WWE and if she can beat Charlotte, whoever finally beats Asuka is going to look like the biggest conqueror ever. Excellent match here and a lot of fun, especially after how big last night was.

John Cena wants to join Asuka and Shinsuke Nakamura in knowing how they're getting to Wrestlemania. Maybe on a plane, a train or a bus, but maybe an Elimination Chamber. For everyone wondering when he's done, he's just getting started.

#### Tag Team Titles: The Bar vs. Titus Worldwide

The Bar is defending. Crews rolls Sheamus up for two less than ten seconds in and does it again less than a minute in. Titus comes in and forearm Sheamus down, meaning it's time for the Titus Worldwide pose. It's off to Cesaro, who gets chopped in the chest and tossed around with ease. A blind tag brings in Sheamus for a forearm to the back and we take a break.

Back with Sheamus cutting off a hot tag attempt and bringing Cesaro back in for a double clothesline. Titus gets knocked to the floor but chops Sheamus in the chest and pulls him throat first into the ropes. Back in and Titus hits a clothesline and the hot tag brings in Crews. A top rope clothesline looks to set up a standing moonsault but Crews has to land on his feet instead.

Crews dropkicks him down and now the moonsault get two as Cesaro comes back in to launch Crews into a powerbomb where he lands HARD on his head. Thankfully he's back up with an enziguri but has to roll through a high crossbody for two. Not that it matters Crews is sent into the post, setting up Super White Noise to retain the titles at 12:25. Titus disappeared at the end of the match.

**Rating:** B-. Another match that went beyond its league and that's a good thing. Titus Worldwide can grow off of this mini push and it was very nice to have some fresh air in the division. Of course having three matches between the same team didn't help things, but I'll take what I can get.

We recap Rousey's debut again.

We recap Strowman's destruction earlier. Apparently Kane sat up in the emergency room and pulled himself to his feet. Kane left the hospital and no one has seen him since. So they couldn't catch a 50 year old man who has been banged up tonight? How bad are these

doctors?

### Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Finn Balor vs. John Cena

Balor has Anderson and Gallows in his corner. The fans are behind Balor of course as he takes Cena down into an armbar. Balor does it again but Cena takes him down with two straight headlocks. Cena gets sent outside and points at a fan as we hit a test of strength. The fans are looking at something else, which is initially booed and then cheered. The camera cuts to the side as Cena looks into the crowd to see what's going on. Cena punches Balor down and we take a break with Cena looking at the crowd again.

Back with Cena tossing Balor into the corner a few times but stopping to look at the crowd. The announcers say the fans are getting to him, which is a weird way to go with Cena. The finishing sequence is initiated but the Shuffle takes WAY too long, allowing Balor to move. Balor gets two off an Eye of the Hurricane and scores with the Pele.

The Sling Blade sets up the shotgun dropkick but Cena is right there with a clothesline to take him down. Cena grabs the AA for two and goes to the apron...where he tells Coach that he's just trying to go to Wrestlemania. He takes way too long to go up top and Balor kicks him down, setting up the shotgun dropkick. The Coup de Grace misses and Balor bangs up his knee. We hit one of the worst looking STF's Cena has ever put on but Balor makes the rope. Balor takes too long going up and it's the Super AA for the pin at 17:48.

**Rating:** C+. Weird crowd and weird Cena aside, this was only pretty good. The problem is both guys should be in the Chamber and Cena is likely getting the Undertaker match (erg) so I'm not sure why they needed to have Cena beat Balor here. That being said, I'm more confused about the whole crowd thing. Is that Cena's latest crisis of confidence as we head to New Orleans? It seems like he has one every other year. Oh and Balor wasn't buried. He lost, but that's a far cry from being buried.

**Overall Rating:** B. I liked this one a lot actually as they had an energy all night long. It felt like they were trying to get to a

goal now instead of just going through the motions of heading towards the Rumble. Hopefully that means we get something good in the next nine weeks as Wrestlemania approaches, but if history has shown me anything, it's to not get my hopes up.

### Results

Braun Strowman b. Kane when Kane couldn't answer the ten count

Elias b. Matt Hardy – Drift Away

The Miz b. Roman Reigns – Rollup

Asuka b. Sasha Banks – Asuka Lock

The Bar b. Titus Worldwide – Super White Noise to Crews

John Cena b. Finn Balor – Super AA

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# Royal Rumble 2018: I Had Fun Again

## Royal Rumble 2018

Date: January 28, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Tom



Phillips, Booker T.

The big night is finally here and for the first time ever we have two Royal Rumbles in one night. This time around we have a women's version to go with the standard men's version and that opens up the doors for a lot more surprise entrants. Of course it also opens the door for a lot more boring action if the last few Rumbles are any indication. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Drew Gulak/TJP/Jack Gallagher vs. Kalisto/Gran Metalik/Lince Dorado

Drew takes Kalisto down by the arm to start as the announcers talk about the upcoming 205 Live General Manager. That just earns a few chants from the crowd, which Gulak of course can't stand. It's off to Gallagher vs. Metalik with Gran working on the knee until Lince and TJP come in to complete each trio's ring time.

The announcers discuss dabbing until the villains are all sent outside. The three masked men hit stereo moonsaults from the same turnbuckle (very cool) to the floor as we take a break. Back with TJP kicking Lince in the ribs and handing it off to Gulak, who drops Dorado's partners off the apron. Now the announcers speculate on the next General Manager, which is much more focused than you would expect from these guys.

Jack cranks on Dorado's leg as about half of the HUGE group of empty seats opposite the hard camera is filled in. But hey, at least we have a meaningless match going on an hour and a half before the rest show starts. Gallagher goes to the middle rope, pauses to listen to Gulak telling him not to jump, and then misses a dive anyway. The hot tag brings in Metalik for the rope walk into the dropkick to put Gulak down. The rope walk elbow works just as well for two as everything breaks down. Stereo dives take Gallagher and Gulak down, leaving the Salida Del Sol to finish TJP at 13:13.

**Rating:** C. Take any match between some combination of these guys that you might have seen on 205 Live and add five minutes to get this match. I'm not sure how that's supposed to entice me to watch a pay per view but I'm sure WWE is smarter than I am on that front.

Nothing special here, outside of that triple moonsault that is. This would have been fine as the only dark match but with two more, it could have been cut.

#### Kickoff Show: Revival vs. Anderson and Gallows

Rematch from Monday where Anderson and Gallows won, followed by the Revival getting destroyed by DX and Scott Hall. The Brian Pillman style trunks don't really suit Revival but anything is better than Monday. Dawson gets sent outside to start for a breather before it's Gallows tossing both of them around. Back from a break with Dawson working on Anderson's knee with a string of elbow drops.

Wilder comes in to crank the knee even more but Anderson keeps kicking him away. Therefore, in a good tag team idea, Revival double teams him to keep the advantage. Now why is that so hard to figure out? Of course the hot tag goes through a few seconds later but at least they were trying. Everything breaks down and Gallows scores with a splash for two. Everything breaks down and the Magic Killer is broken up. Dawson sidesteps a charge to post Gallows and Dash's chop block is good for the pin on Anderson at 9:11.

**Rating:** C. Well, it was better than Monday. I'm glad Revival won and now of course we're likely to have the rubber match tomorrow night because WWE loves their trilogies. The leg stuff was fine here but the break in the middle didn't do it many favors. At least the right team won though and that helps a lot.

#### Kickoff Show: Bobby Roode vs. ???

Roode is defending in an Open Challenge answered by...Mojo Rawley. The fans think Mojo sucks as he sends Roode into the corner and actually hammers him down as we take a break. Back with Mojo driving knees in the corner and grabbing a chinlock. Roode fights up and hits a running forearm, followed by a neckbreaker for two. There's the Blockbuster but the Glorious DDT is countered into a spinebuster. Back up and another Glorious DDT is countered into a backdrop but the running punch is blocked. Instead it's a regular DDT to retain the title at 7:37.

**Rating:** D. This could have been on any house show and that's not good as the Kickoff Show main event. Roode doesn't have a ton of challengers and a lot of that is due to how so few people were treated as important for the sake of Jinder Mahal. They need some kind of a feud going here and Rawley isn't the kind of person to do that.

The opening video doesn't say much out of the ordinary but it does a very good job of setting up the big matches while treating the Rumble win as a big deal. It's very nice that they gave the match some shine for once because they haven't exactly treated it like it matters up to this point.

#### Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn

AJ is defending in a handicap match. The challengers do have to tag and it's Sami starting for the team. No contact and it's off to Owens, who hangs on the ropes instead of going after the champ. Sami is already back in as there's almost no contact in the first minute and a half. AJ wrestles Sami down but it's already back to Owens, who takes AJ down, runs to the floor and tags Sami back in.

That means a drop down into a dropkick for Zayn as Byron and Graves have ANOTHER stupid argument that completely ignores the match. There's a backdrop for two on AJ as the fans aren't sure who to cheer for. Owens comes back in and unloads with right hands before sending AJ into the barricade. Almost all challengers so far. Owens gets in a double stomp and brings AJ into the corner for more right hands. An electric chair faceplant is good for two more and it's off to the chinlock.

AJ fights up again and gets in a shot to Owens' ankle, which was banged up on Smackdown in the first place. The Pele is enough to bring Sami back in but the Helluva Kick is blocked with a raised boot. Everything breaks down and Owens monkey flips Styles, who hurricanranas Zayn to the floor instead of crashing to the mat. The Calf Crusher has Owens ready to tap until Sami dives back in for the save.

Owens kicks AJ in the back of the head to knock him into the Blue

Thunder Bomb, which of course only gets two (once in a lifetime you see). Another kick to the head puts Sami down this time and the springboard 450 is good for another near fall. They slug it out with AJ throwing Sami to the floor, only to eat a superkick from Owens. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered into a rollup though and AJ retains (pinning the illegal man) at 16:08.

**Rating:** B. About what was expected here as there's only so much you can do when the participants have been treated as background characters. I'm glad Bryan and Shane were left out but the match has been booked to make them the stars, meaning this is likely to continue. Some good action here, but it wasn't the most thrilling match in the world.

Wrestlemania XXXIV ad.

Sami and Kevin ask Shane what he's going to do. They can't have another referee screw Owens out of another title. Shane says that yep, he did indeed see that. Nothing else is said.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable

The Usos are defending and this is 2/3 falls after Gable pinned the wrong Uso a few weeks back. In other words, the same ending as the previous match, again showing the limited creative abilities of WWE. Gable can't hit a German suplex on Jimmy to start so it's some chops to the chest in the corner. A distraction lets Chad get in a chop block though and Jimmy is in trouble early on.

Benjamin drives knees into the bad knee as the challengers start cutting the ring off for an old NWA feel. Shelton stops to yell at the crowd though and it's an enziguri to cut him off. The hot tag brings in Jey, who dives through the ropes to take out both challengers in a row. Back in and Gable gets two off a tiger suplex (I haven't seen that one in years), followed by a powerbomb to send Jey into Jimmy.

Pay Dirt gives Shelton two and the bug eyed look on the kickout is funnier than it should be. It's back to Gable who moonsaults onto both champions on the floor but Gable can't pin the illegal Uso.

That means a superkick into the Superfly Splash for two in a surprise near fall. The double Superfly Splash is broken up so Gable loads up Rolling Chaos Theory.

That's broken up as well and four straight superkicks end Gable at 12:21. Gable and Benjamin beat the heck out of both champs to start the second fall. A rolling Liger Kick hits Jey and Chad goes up, leaving Shelton to get small packaged to retain the titles in two straight falls at 13:47.

**Rating:** B-. That was kind of a surprising ending but it's not like it really matters. The Bludgeon Brothers (who have kind of disappeared in recent weeks) are pretty clearly the next challengers and it should be a fun match when we get to it. I'm not sure what happens to Benjamin and Gable at this point but they've proven to be a good team who deserve more time.

Rumble by the Numbers video.

Jerry Lawler joins commentary for the Rumble.

### Men's Royal Rumble

90 second intervals this year. Rusev is #1 (with Aiden English singing him to the ring) and Finn Balor (in red here) is in at #2 to a very strong reaction. Balor gets sent to the apron early on but gets back in without too much effort. Rhyno is in at #3 and gets in a showdown with Rusev that doesn't go much of anywhere. Balor is back up and it's Baron Corbin in at #4 to quickly eliminate Rhyno.

Finn is right behind Corbin though and gets rid of him as well, sending Corbin into a rage. That means Balor is pulled to the floor for a whip into the barricade (shoulder first) and End of Days on the floor to Rusev. Heath Slater is in at #5 and gets run over on the ramp. Everyone is down and it's Elias in at #6, playing the guitar (and kicking Slater in the head) on the way to the ring.

It's time for a song about spitting in the Rocky statue's face but the countdown clock cuts him off. NXT Champion Andrade Cien Almas is in at #7 (running Slater over again as we have a running joke) and a running elbow puts Elias into the corner. The running knees rock

Elias again but the hammerlock DDT is broken up. A hard clothesline drops Almas and it's Bray Wyatt in at #8.

Naturally Slater gets laid out again and there's a release Rock Bottom to Elias. Balor comes back in to break up Sister Abigail (again, thank goodness). Big E. is in at #9 and gives Slater some pancakes instead of beating him up. Bray is waiting on him with Cole saying Bray has been so dominating since entering. IT'S BEEN LIKE TWO MINUTES!

Rusev is back in but can't get rid of Almas. Tye Dillinger is in at #10 (again), giving us Balor, Rusev, Slater (still not in the ring), Elias, Almas, Wyatt, Big E. and Dillinger. Actually hang on a second as we cut to the back to see Dillinger getting beaten down by Owens and Zayn. Sami is taking his place and continues the tradition by jumping Slater.

Sheamus is in at #11 and throws Slater in...who immediately eliminates Sheamus (on his BIRTHDAY). Bray dumps Slater almost immediately and it's Xavier Woods in at #12. Woods and Big E. double team Sami and a wheelbarrow slam into a splash hits Elias. Rusev can't get rid of Big E. and it's Apollo Crews in at #13. Apollo gets in a good looking jumping enziguri on Bray as Byron is now anti-Zayn as he tries to show a personality.

Balor escapes Sister Abigail and it's Shinsuke Nakamura in at #14. Sami is waiting on him in a Takeover: Dallas flashback as the fans sing Nakamura's song. There are WAY too many people in there and some eliminations are needed. Nakamura fires off some kicks and it's Good Vibrations for Elias. The running knee in the corner gets rid of Sami and Cesaro is in at #15, giving us Balor, Rusev, Elias, Almas, Wyatt, Big E., Woods, Crews, Nakamura and Cesaro.

Uppercuts abound without much happening and it's Kofi Kingston in at #16 to put New Day at full strength. Cesaro cuts him off with an uppercut but Crews gorilla presses Cesaro...to the apron at least but he gets back in. Instead a shot to the back gets rid of Crews to thin the ring out a bit. Jinder Mahal is in at #17 and goes after Woods, who dropkicks him into the corner. Woods is dumped a few

seconds later though and Mahal gets rid of Big E. as well.

Seth Rollins is in at #18 (now with flames on his tights) and gets rid of Cesaro in short order. Mahal sends Kofi over the top but he lands on Xavier...and then on a plate of pancakes. Big E. and Woods launch him from the floor over the ropes and over Mahal, who gets caught with Trouble in Paradise for the elimination. As the rest of New Day throws pancakes at Mahal, Almas hits the hammerlock DDT and eliminates Kofi in a pretty big upset.

Matt Hardy is in at #19 for a standoff with Bray, which is broken up by Rusev. Bray and Matt actually start working together and get rid of Rusev (the fans are NOT pleased) before fighting each other. They eliminate each other and it's John Cena at #20, giving us Balor, Elias, Almas, Nakamura, Rollins and Cena.

Everyone jumps Cena at the same time in a smart move but then let him up, allowing him to AA Elias out. The Hurricane of all people is in at #22 (which Cole calls a superhero persona which was a huge hit with kids years ago) and tries a chokeslam but gets tossed out by Cena. Hurricane lands on the pancakes, nearly slips, and then does his pose over and over again on the way to the back. Aiden English is in at #22 and goes after Rollins before switching to Balor.

Adam Cole (with taped ribs) from NXT is in at #23 to a very nice reaction. Balor kicks English off the ropes for an elimination and it's Randy Orton in at #24. An RK0 drops Almas and there he goes after a strong performance. Things settle down a bit and it's Titus O'Neil in at #25. Cole gets sent to the apron but slides back in, leaving Titus to chop Nakamura in the corner. Miz is in at #26 and starts fast with the YES Kicks, followed by a Skull Crushing Finale on Cena.

Lucky #27 is the returning Rey Mysterio to get rid of Cole in a hurry. The Miz takes 619 and it's Roman Reigns in at #28. You can feel the pain from the booing. Reigns goes after Miz and hits the jumping clothesline, followed by the clotheslines in the corner. Titus gets eliminated but the Miztourage saves Miz from the same fate. Rollins Curb Stomps Miz but gets into a showdown with Reigns.

A DoubleBomb gets rid of Miz but Reigns turns on Rollins to get rid of him as well.

Goldust is in at #29 and hurts himself headbutting Reigns. Cena gets beaten up as well and it's Dolph Ziggler (POP) in at #30, giving us a final group of Balor, Nakamura, Cena, Orton, Mysterio, Reigns, Goldust and Ziggler. Goldust is out in a hurry and Balor kicks Ziggler out, making him one of the most inconsequential #30s in recent memory. Rey, Cena and Orton get together in one corner, Nakamura and Balor are in another and Reigns is on his own (how appropriate).

Balor takes a quick AA followed by the 619 to Reigns. There's an RK0 to Nakamura but Cena blocks another attempt. A Superman Punch lets Reigns get rid of Orton and a double 619 hits Reigns and Cena (with Cena loudly talking to Reigns while they wait). Balor throws Mysterio out to get us down to four meaning everyone goes to a corner.

We get the big staredown as the fans are behind Nakamura. Cena throws a You Can't See Me at Balor and hammers on Nakamura while Reigns beats on Balor. That gives us the big showdown as the fans think they both suck. No one throws a punch as Balor and Nakamura get back up, giving us a much better received showdown. The running knees in the corner put Balor on the apron but he kicks a charging Nakamura in the head. Another kick to the head rocks Balor but he scores with a basement dropkick.

Reigns and Cena are back up again with Cena charging into a Samoa drop. The Superman Punch is countered with a ProtoBomb but the Shuffle is broken up with a Sling Blade. Balor hits the shotgun dropkick on Reigns but Nakamura kicks Balor in the face. Balor's standing double stomp cuts off Kinshasa and Cena tosses Balor to get us down to three. Reigns slips out of an AA and hits the Superman Punch on Cena. The spear is cut off by the AA and Nakamura puts Cena on the apron.

A running kick to the face gets rid of Cena and we're down to Nakamura vs. Reigns. That means COME ON and Reigns does so with a



Superman Punch. Reigns sends him to the apron but gets kicked in the head but Nakamura grabs a hanging triangle over the apron. A powerbomb brings Nakamura back in and they're both down again.

It's Reigns up first but the spear is cut off with a kick to the face. A middle rope knee to the face drops Reigns but Kinshasa is hit with a spear to put them both down again. Nakamura grabs the ropes to hang on and another running knee drops Roman, setting up the elimination to give Nakamura the win at 65:32.

**Rating:** A. Best Rumble in years, though that's not exactly saying much. The important thing here was they went with a popular name to win the Rumble, which has been lacking in recent years. Nakamura winning really surprised me as I never thought they would actually do it but I'll take what I can get.

They laid the match out nicely here as things took a little time to get going but the final ten to fifteen minutes were excellent with the final six all being solid options. I wasn't dreading this one at all and it made the match that much better. This was a lot of fun and the way the Rumble should go, with one of the best endings in a long time. Great match.

The Smackdown bosses are celebrating in the back when Stephanie McMahon and Kurt Angle come in to say Raw will win later. Daniel and Shane (buddies again) don't seem to care.

Post match Nakamura is asked who he wants to face at Wrestlemania.  
Fans: "PLEASE SAY STYLES!" Nakamura: "AJ STYLES!"

There was a Royal Rumble to determine the next Colonel Sanders with Ric Flair winning. He has the wrinkles for it.

Raw Tag Team Titles: The Bar vs. Jason Jordan/Seth Rollins

Rollins and Jordan are defending with Seth and Sheamus starting things off. Seth gets driven into the corner with Cesaro offering a distraction to keep Jordan away from interfering. Jordan is ready for the hot tag but Cesaro pulls him down (I thought that was the heel turn) and posts him into near unconsciousness. Back in and Sheamus' top rope clothesline gets two as the double beatdown is on,

made especially worse by Seth's long Rumble run.

Seth finally sends Sheamus into the post to get it back to even, followed by a Sling Blade and Blockbuster. Sheamus comes back in for the save but Rollins drops both of them for a double frog splash. As Seth gets up, Jordan is STILL sitting on the steps, leaving Sheamus to hit the Brogue Kick. The super White Noise gives us new champions at 13:03. Jordan was never in the match.

**Rating:** C-. This was an angle instead of a match and there's nothing wrong with that. For some reason we seem to be waiting on Jordan vs. Rollins at Wrestlemania, even though that doesn't quite blow my skirt up. The match was stuck in the cool down spot after the great Rumble and that was the right spot for it.

We recap the Raw World Title match. Basically you have three monsters fighting each other and breaking things to hurt each other, meaning it's time to get violent.

#### Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Kane vs. Braun Strowman

Brock is defending and it's one fall to a finish. Strowman wastes no time in cleaning house, including a hard knee to Brock's head. That's fine with Brock who starts throwing punches, only to have Kane score with a chokeslam. Brock grabs a chair but Braun punches it away and drops everyone.

Shots with the steps clean house and it's time for a pair of tables. Strowman chokeslams Kane for two with Brock making the save and it's time for Suplex City. Braun pops up like a daisy and powerslams Brock through a table with Kane making the save this time. Kane is tossed away again (it's almost like he's completely unnecessary in this match until the ending) and it's time for the announcers' table.

Braun takes too long though and it's an F5 to drive him through instead. Brock turns the other table over Braun (Corey: "I'm about to throw this German guy in front of me!") and F5's Kane through another. Braun gets up again and sends Brock into the steps, followed by the powerslam. Kane makes the save and sends Braun

outside, setting up an F5 onto the chair to retain Brock's title at 10:12.

**Rating:** B-. Well duh. The world knows that Braun is ready to be World Champion and should have been like six months ago but Vince McMahon and seemingly Vince McMahon alone wants to see Reigns take the title from Brock. Again, as has been the case many, many times: none of this is important because we're just sitting around waiting on Reigns to take the title like we've been waiting for for nearly a year now. After that, I have no idea where they go and I'm not sure WWE does either. This was fun, but exactly as expected.

Trailer for Andre the Giant's HBO documentary.

We get a video on the women's Royal Rumble with a focus on the Revolution (and Stephanie of course) with everyone talking about how important this is.

Maria Menunos is guest ring announcer and Stephanie McMahon is guest commentator, with Cole reading off her resume (and saying Stephanie will tell you about her trailblazing). Alexa Bliss and Charlotte come out to watch at ringside.

### Women's Royal Rumble

Sasha Banks (in Wonder Woman gear) is in at #1 and Becky Lynch is in at #2 to give us a good start. Becky blocks an early elimination attempt and we talk about how nervous Stephanie is. The Bank Statement is broken up and it's a double clothesline as Sarah Logan is in at #3. Logan clotheslines Becky down but Sasha makes a questionable save. Becky gets stomped down in the corner and it's Mandy Rose in at #4. Mandy can't get rid of Sasha and it's LITA in at #5.

Sasha and Becky aren't sure what to do so they opt with kicking her in the stomach. Mandy jumps Lita from behind and gets placed on the apron, followed by a hard shot for the first elimination. Kairi Sane is in at #6 and chops Lita into the corner as Cole talks about her "yacht persona". She's not Ashley Remington (bet you didn't think I knew that one) because SHE'S A FREAKING PIRATE! Sane kicks Sasha

down and drops the Insane Elbow, followed by another to Becky as Tamina is in at #7.

Lita starts hitting the Twists of Fate and hits a double moonsault onto Sasha and Becky (more like her falling backwards instead of any kind of jump but give her a break). That means the YOU STILL GOT IT chant before she eliminates Tamina, only to get dumped by Becky. That's all this needed to be from Lita and it worked to perfection. Dana Brooke is in at #8 and actually dumps Kairi before stomping on Sasha in the corner.

Torrie Wilson is in at #9 (oh give me a break) and it's time to prove why she wasn't a wrestler. Logan dropkicks her down but Torrie pops up and eliminates Dana. Sonya Deville is in at #10, giving us Banks, Lynch, Logan, Wilson and Deville. Sonya starts firing off knees and gets rid of Torrie (thank goodness). Liv Morgan is in at #11 so the Squad can start getting together. No one is tossed though and it's Molly Holly in at #12.

Molly gets rid of Logan and hits the Molly Go Round on Sasha. Lana is in at #13 and is immediately taken down by Morgan and Deville. She actually gets fired up and slaps her way to freedom as Michelle McCool is in at #14. That means an UNDERTAKER chant as she gets rid of Logan, Morgan and Holly. Sasha and Becky are down on the floor (not eliminated) as Michelle gets rid of Lana as well. With Michelle alone, Becky and Sasha get back in and it's Ruby Riott at #15, giving us Michelle, Becky, Sasha and Ruby.

Vickie Guerrero is in at #16 and shouts EXCUSE ME over and over but everyone stares her down. She tries to bail and is tossed with ease (I guessed that as a comedy spot and it's as perfect as I thought it would be). Carmella is in at #17 but Vickie takes the Money in the Bank briefcase to knock her silly. Natalya is in at #18 and throws her gear on Carmella, who pulls Natalya off the apron. That's enough for Carmella to get in for some superkicks and it's Kelly Kelly in at #19. Kelly fends off an early elimination as Natalya gets rid of McCool.

Naomi is in at #20, giving us Banks, Lynch, Riott, Carmella,

Natalya, Kelly and Naomi at the moment. Becky goes up for some reason and gets dumped by Riott. Jacqueline is in at #21 and goes after Kelly. Nia Jax is in at #22, meaning it's time to clear the ring. Jacqueline is out first, followed by Kelly with ease. Natalya is sent outside (through the ropes), leaving Nia to press Riott onto the top turnbuckle and then out to the floor. Naomi goes after Nia's legs but tries a hurricanrana.

Nia knocks her off the apron but the pile catches her, allowing Naomi to land on the barricade. NXT Women's Champion (with a bad arm) is in at #23 with a springboard kick to Nia's face. Nia sends her flying as Naomi is walking across the barricade to steal Maria's chair on wheels. She then crawls across the floor using her hands and the wheels on the chair...only to have Nia catch her coming back in and toss her out. I smiled at the irony. Beth Phoenix is in at #24 and this could be a lot of fun.

Phoenix is a lot closer to Nia's size than I expected and manages a fireman's carry but can't eliminate Nia. Natalya's help doesn't work very well as they knock Nia through the ropes. That means a hug and of course Natalya turns on her and gets rid of Beth. Carmella (never eliminated) comes back in to jump Natalya from behind...and it's Asuka at #25. There's the hip attack to Carmella and it's time for the showdown with Ember Moon.

Ember actually hits a one armed Eclipse but Asuka goes after the bad arm and gets rid of her. Sasha (also never eliminated) gets back in and it's Mickie James in at #26. That goes nowhere and it's Nikki Bella getting lucky #27 (well duh). That means the JOHN CENA SUCKS song but Carmella takes Nikki into the corner for the Staten Island Shuffle (not the Moon Walk Stephanie). Nikki powers her up though and a neck snap across the top rope gets rid of Carmella.

Brie Bella is in at #28 to save her sister from a big beatdown. The Bellas get their big moment (their latest one for those of you who have lost track) and knock Nia off the apron. A double suplex puts Natalya down and it's Bayley in at #29. Asuka kicks Bayley in the head in short order but can't get rid of her. It's Trish Stratus in

at #30 (not exactly shocking and that's not a bad thing) to give us a final group of Sasha, Natalya, Nia, Asuka, Mickie, Nikki, Brie, Bayley and Trish.

Stratus gets to clean house and hits a double Stratusfaction before getting into a showdown with Mickie. James misses a charge and gets tossed, meaning it's time for everyone to go after Nia. She shrugs them all off but the Bellas choke her on the ropes, allowing everyone else to join in and get rid of Nia. Sasha of course turns on Bayley for the elimination and we're down to six.

Natalya puts Trish in the Sharpshooter for some reason and is broken up just as quickly. The Chick Kick eliminates Natalya but Trish mocks Sasha's Boss pose, meaning the Stratusfaction is broken up to get rid of Stratus. Sasha turns around to meet Asuka but they decide to get rid of the Bellas...for all of three seconds until Sasha decks Asuka from behind. Sasha calls the Bellas off so she can beat on Asuka in the corner but the Twins dump her out as she tries the double knees.

So we're down to the Bellas and Asuka and it's time for the YES Kicks to both Twins (there's a joke there that I'm not touching). Brie gets sent to the apron but Nikki decks Asuka, followed by the Rack Attack 2.0. Nikki decks Brie to get rid of her though and it's down to two. Asuka is on the apron and hits a missile dropkick but Nikki's spinning middle rope kick catches her in the face. Nikki puts her on the apron for the big forearm...which doesn't end it. Instead Asuka grabs a headscissors to put Nikki on the apron but Asuka kicks kicks her in the leg for the elimination to win at 58:47.

**Rating:** B. I know a lot of people are going to be annoyed about the amount of legends (and the amount of botches) in there but my goodness what else were you expecting? The women's division is about twenty people deep and I'd rather have people like McCool, Lita and Trish in there to give us either a good performance or appearances from people who are legitimate trailblazers (not McCool obviously but she did quite well). I was surprised by the lack of NXT names

but what we got was fine, save for the Iconic Duo still not appearing.

The match itself was fine, albeit a bit predictable. You knew Asuka was the heavy favorite and really, it's not like there were many other solid options. Aside from Jax, who really else was there? Banks or Lynch? Well maybe, but Asuka getting the title needs to be a big deal and one of those two can take the other title. Either way....uh, back in a minute.

The champions get in the ring.....AND BAD REPUTATION HITS AS RONDA ROUSEY IS HERE!!! Rousey, in a Roddy Piper shirt, points at the Wrestlemania sign and offers Asuka a handshake but Asuka slaps it away. Ronda also shakes Stephanie's hand and high fives fans to end the show.

Oh and Stephanie's commentary was annoying but acceptable. She didn't need to be there and added nothing at all but she could have been worse. Sounded very much like a fan who wasn't the most polished but it was fine.

**Overall Rating:** A-. I loved the heck out of this show as they made the Rumbles FUN. That's been sorely, sorely lacking in recent years and they made up for it tonight. The Rumbles are interesting by definition but above all else, these matches were a good time as I kept waiting to see who was coming out next. I was actually worried about Reigns and Nikki winning so well done on some false drama. This did everything it needed to do, including setting up a major Wrestlemania match. I had a great time with this show and that's what the Rumble is supposed to be. Well done all around and a great show.

### Results

AJ Styles b. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens – Rollup to Owens

Usos b. Chad Gable/Jason Jordan – Small package to Benjamin

Shinsuke Nakamura won the Royal Rumble last eliminating Roman Reigns

The Bar b. Seth Rollins/Jason Jordan – Super White Noise to Rollins

Brock Lesnar b. Kane and Braun Strowman – F5 to Kane

Asuka won the Royal Rumble last eliminating Nikki Bella

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## **He's Going to Wrestlemania!**

YES! YES! YES HE IS! By that I mean Shinsuke Nakamura of course, who last eliminated Roman Reigns to win. John Cena and Finn Balor filled out the final four. The big surprise was Rey Mysterio with Hurricane as a comedy joke. Andrade Cien Almas and Adam Cole were the NXT representatives. No Daniel Bryan.

Also, Nakamura said he wanted to face AJ Styles, so the match seems to be made for Wrestlemania.

I was completely wrong about this as I never would have guessed Nakamura to win. Some people said he would though and it turns out they were right.

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# Royal Rumble 2018 Preview

The big day is here. We're less than twenty four hours away from the "2018 Royal Rumble" and that means we're in for one of the biggest nights of the wrestling year. In this case we have two Royal Rumble matches to go with two far less interesting World Title matches, but the double Rumble on its own should be enough to carry the show as far as it needs to go. Besides, even if the Rumbles are terrible, they're still Royal Rumbles and that makes them entertaining by definition.

## Kickoff Show: US Title: Bobby Roode(c) vs. ???

This is an open challenge with new champion Roode defending against an opponent to be named. In this case, that could be anyone and that makes this a little more interesting. It also opens the door for another Rumble name if a surprise shows up as there's always the chance that someone will work two matches on the show, though that tends to not be the case most of the time.

I'll take Jinder Mahal to answer the challenge and Roode to retain. The other options would likely be Tye Dillinger and Dolph Ziggler, though I would need therapy to get my head around the idea of Ziggler vacating the title and then coming back to try and win it in a regular match. Roode should of course retain and sadly enough, he has to do it on the pre-show.

## Kickoff Show: Revival vs. Anderson and Gallows

You know, I'm already more optimistic about this match than I was when they fought Monday on "Raw". Really, it can't get any worse for the Revival than what happened to them there so it's a nice relief to know we might actually get an interesting match. At the very least there isn't likely to be a completely unnecessary legends beatdown, so things

are looking up.

Unfortunately I'll take Anderson and Gallows to win here. Not that they need it more (though a win would be nice for them) but more along the lines of WWE seems to like the idea of throwing someone out there and having them lose in a short match before having them lose in a longer match. This should be fine though, and if Revival can pull off the win, even better.

### Kickoff Show: Kalisto/Lince Dorado/Gran Metalik vs. TJP/Jack Gallagher/Drew Gulak

Watch them put this on the pre-show second, leaving one of the other matches to get the empty arena treatment. This feels like any other six man tag you might see on "205 Live" and as luck would have it, the same three good guys fought TJP and two other partners on this week's show. For WWE, this is impressive progress.

I'll take the luchadors to win because really, it's not like it matters one way or another. We're still waiting on the new General Manager to take over "205 Live" and reset things (again) so there's no way of telling what to expect at the moment. You'll get some nice dives and flips, but really there's not much to this one. It'll serve its purpose of warming up the crowd, but that purpose is low when there are so many other matches on the card.

### Raw Tag Team Titles: Seth Rollins/Jason Jordan(c) vs. The Bar

Jordan and Rollins have only been champions for a month now and it already feels like they've had them for a year. I'm not sure why I'm supposed to be interested in Jordan's heel turn and move into a feud with Rollins in the injured Dean Ambrose's place but that might suggest that WWE has to come up with something that fits instead of just writing a new story two months out.

I'll take Rollins and Jordan to retain for now but you know they're going to lose the titles in the near future. Sheamus' injury issues would suggest that they're not the best options in the world to take the titles so I'll wait on Anderson and Gallows to win the titles, probably at "Elimination Chamber 2018" For now though, it's more miscommunication as we wait on the heel turn.

### **Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles(c) vs. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn**

What a weird title match. Does anyone believe we're going to have co-champions? I get that the idea is something about Shane McMahon vs. Daniel Bryan in their ridiculous power struggle story because WWE for some reason thinks that's more important than the World Title situation, but for now we're getting this match for the title on one of the biggest pay per views of the year.

I'm not sure how, but Styles retains here, possibly through interference from the two bosses. I mean, it's hard to imagine that they're not at ringside to keep the focus where it needs to be, but other than that we're likely watching a lot of double teaming from some great heels while they try to make the match work. Styles can be great against either of them, but for some reason they've gone with the least appealing match they could choose. But yeah, Styles retains.

### **Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos(c) vs. Chad Gable/Shelton Benjamin**

This is a 2/3 falls match, which seems like a smart idea on a show with so much time to fill. If they spend their time right, they can put together something very entertaining here as they all know how to fly around the ring and be very entertaining. The Usos have been the best team in the company for a very long time and that could make for a fun match, especially given the amount of time they should

have.

I'll take the Usos to retain here as their feud against the Bludgeon Brothers seems to be set in stone from here. Benjamin and Gable are almost guaranteed to win one fall and then we can move on to the teams going crazy in the third fall. The Usos are more than capable of rocking the house with good challengers and that's what they have here. This should be a lot of fun.

### **Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar(c) vs. Kane vs. Braun Strowman**

This is being written a few hours after Johnny Gargano and Andrade Cien Almas rocked the house for the NXT Title. Now why do I have a feeling that this one might not have the same level of emotion? The Universal Title has continued to be a thing that exists while we wait until New Orleans and there's just no hiding that.

I'd like to say Braun Strowman wins here just for the sake of some false hope but it's going to be Brock Lesnar pinning Kane (though pinning Strowman wouldn't shock me) to retain the title and head on to the big title match with Roman Reigns. Hopefully this approaches the intensity of the hoss fights from late last year but I'm not exactly buying the idea of Kane being able to do that. Hopefully he doesn't slow things down too badly, but he should just be there to take the pin.

### **Men's Royal Rumble**

The more I think about it, the more drama I think there might be in this. That's a little bit of a change of pace as WWE has done next to nothing to hype this match. It's really just been "hey it's the Rumble" and we'll worry about the rest later. There are a few potential winners and while some of them are more interesting than others, as usual, it's going to boil down to just a few options.

I'm torn on this one but I think I'm going to go with Roman Reigns. It's either going to be him or Shinsuke Nakamura (or maybe John Cena) but it would be better if they didn't waste our time with the false hope of Reigns not going to the title match in New Orleans. Of course they could use this to make a new star but that doesn't seem to be their cup of tea lately. Hopefully it happens here though, as they REALLY need that at the moment.

### Women's Royal Rumble

I'm starting to get more interested in this one as I'm curious to see what they might throw in here to fill in the spots. That being said, EGADS WHY MUST STEPHANIE MCMAHON BE ON COMMENTARY DURING THE ENTIRE THING??? I really could go without the announcers cowering in fear of her hatred of all things pronouns and trying to be all casual and funny while speaks the corporate line all match.

The more I think about it, the more I think Nia Jax takes this. Asuka seems to be a little too easy and hopefully it sets up Asuka vs. Charlotte. Asuka vs. Alexa Bliss II isn't a Wrestlemania caliber match and they would be crazy to go there when Charlotte is an option. Go with Jax and see who she gets to face for the title while FINALLY giving her a big win at the same time. It's a better story, but none of the options are really great.

### Overall Thoughts

Like I said, they've done a pretty pathetic job of setting up this show. They've focused on the two World Title matches without realizing that there's not much to either of them in the first place. The "Raw" match is the most obvious ending in the world and the "Smackdown" match is more about the bosses being passive aggressive to each other than the title match or the wrestlers involved. That's not lost on the fans and it hasn't helped make me interested in the show.

Other than that we have the two Rumbles themselves, which haven't built up anyone but Asuka as a real threat to win either match. You could go for Nakamura or Reigns, but other than the two of them the thing feels like it could be anyone winning, even though almost no one has been built up for either match. Hopefully the matches do better than they seem on paper, which should be the case given that it's the Rumble.

Oh and for surprise picks: Kaitlyn, Michelle McCool, Tommy Dreamer and for some reason, Ryback.

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## **Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2016: This Was Their BEST Idea?**

### **Royal Rumble 2016**

Date: January 24, 2016

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 15,170

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Now this one actually has my interest for a change. A year ago, WWE decided that the right idea was to have WWE World Champion Roman Reigns fight everyone in a single match for the title. This is completely different as now he fights everyone for the US Title. Anyway, the whole thing is about the main event, as it should be, so let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Mark Henry/Jack Swagger vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Darren Young/Damien Sandow vs. Ascension

One fall to a finish and the winners go to the Rumble. I can't help but call JBL cute for suggesting that any of these four have a chance to win the Rumble. The fans want Sandow and just EXPLODE when he actually gets the tag. The Wind-Up Elbow gets two on Swagger before it's off to Young so the crowd can die all over again. Konnor tags himself in and it's a big eight way standoff as we take a break.

Back with Swagger powerslamming Konnor as we hear about the fans wanting some Sandow. D-Von gets crotched against the post so the fans change up to wanting Sexual Chocolate. Henry obliges with a hip swivel, which will probably get him fined for not focusing enough or some jazz like that. A D-VON chant gets him back to his feet because we need a long chinlock in a match that doesn't break eight minutes and has eight participants. Bubba comes in off the hot tag and cleans house with Young taking Wazzup. 3D gets two on Viktor but Henry steals the pin at 7:58.

**Rating:** D. This wasn't great but it did everything it needed to do. At the end of the day, other than MAYBE the Dudleyz, Swagger and Henry were the only pairing that made sense here. Just let us have two former World Champions in there to fill in a few spots. It's not like anyone wanted to see Young or Ascension (a sign in the crowd called them today's joke and I can't say I disagree) in there so go with what makes sense.

Vince and Stephanie McMahon show up in a limo (So they're good at this point. Got it.) and talk about how awesome tonight is going to be and how fair it is to Reigns. Vince loves the idea, almost as much as he loves himself.

The opening video recaps the only thing that matters here with the tagline of One vs. All. I liked that last year and I still do.

### Intercontinental Title: Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose is defending and this is last man standing. They go right after each other to start with Dean hammering away and biting Owens' head before scoring with the bulldog out of the corner. What looks like a tablet to the head gives Owens a breather and a superkick sets up the Cannonball through the barricade. A few chair shots keep Dean in trouble and Owens has a seat as the champ gets up.

Two chairs are set up in the middle of the ring but, just like putting a chair in the corner, whoever sets them up goes through them, meaning Ambrose backdrops him through the chairs. A suicide dive is countered into a ram into the apron followed by a whip into the steps for about a seven. With Ambrose getting up again, Owens loads up two tables on top of each other but the superplex is blocked, meaning we'll get back to the big crash later.

Dirty Deeds gets eight on Owens and another one onto a chair sends Owens rolling to the floor to land on his feet at nine. Eh that's kind of clever. The fans want Owens to fight (multiple times even) but Dean elbows him through a table. That's still not enough so Dean says he hates Owens. Kevin: "I hate you too!" Back in and Owens' swinging fisherman's superplex sends Dean through another table to give Kevin a nine count. Owens lays Dean on a set of chairs but the champ pops up and shoves him through the double tables to retain at 20:50.

**Rating:** B+. It's no masterpiece but this is the kind of show that only needs one great match to be a classic, making this a bonus. The big spot at the end was a good choice and I kind of like that over a finisher onto something made of metal. It's a good match and a good way to open things up since the rest of the card is just a way to get to the main event.

We recap heel New Day (what a weird concept, though they're rapidly turning face here) vs. the Usos, which has involved Chris Jericho destroying Francesca to freak Woods out.

### Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Usos

New Day is defending (of course) and there's no Woods. Kofi asks for a moment of silence for Francesca but here's Woods with a new trombone named Francesca II. See, he's in mourning but a man has, ahem, needs. This isn't it for them tonight though as New Day wants the World Title so 2016 can be all gold everything. Kofi: "GOLDEN



UNICORNS!" Woods: "Stay golden pony boy."

The twins take over to start and the fans aren't all that thrilled. A jawbreaker puts Jimmy down and it's off to Big E. for some hip swiveling, only to have Jey dropkick him into the barricade. Woods proves his worth to the team by dropping Jey to take over again. Sometimes it's a bit harder to get rid of those old heel tendencies you see. The fans demand a Francesca performance but Woods plays when he wants to, which isn't while Kofi has Jey in a chinlock.

The Warrior Splash gives Big E. two as JBL talks about NFL coin flips. A spinning enziguri drops Kofi and there's the hot tag to Jimmy so house can be cleaned. Normally the fans are a bit more enthusiastic about that but New Day is just WAY too popular here for fans to get behind the Usos.

Everything breaks down and a Whisper in the Wind gets two on Big E. A belly to belly gets the same on Jey but the spear through the ropes is blocked by a raised knee. Why not just step to the side? The second attempt works a bit better but it's too early for the Midnight Hour. Jey superkicks Kofi into the Superfly Splash for two as a foot goes on the rope. Kofi eats another superkick but a blind tag brings in Big E. for the Big Ending to retain at 10:52.

**Rating:** B-. This took some time to get rolling but once everything broke down, it was as good as you would expect from these teams. New Day is clearly the future of the division despite being champs for nearly five months at this point. Catching a top rope splash out of the air is really impressive as the champs continue to show that they have the ring work to back up their charisma.

We look back at Brock Lesnar beating up the League of Nations, followed by Reigns spearing Brock. The Wyatts then beat Reigns and Brock up to make themselves a threat for later tonight.

The Wyatts say they'll win the title for Bray tonight. Singing ensues.

US Title: Kalisto vs. Alberto Del Rio

Kalisto is challenging and they've been trading the title for a few weeks now. Kalisto starts fast with the strikes to send him outside for a suicide dive. Now you might think this is competitive, but JBL is right there to hammer in the ideas that David NEVER beats Goliath and that Kalisto is going to get destroyed. You know, in case you're

dumb enough to not get the idea here.

Back in and Del Rio kicks him down, followed by a top rope ax handle for two. That means JBL gets to talk about how fun it is to beat up luchadors. Two knees to the ribs have Kalisto in more trouble and it's time to go after the mask. There's some good heel psychology in there about someone with Del Rio knowing the tradition of the mask and going after it anyway but the announcers gloss over it.

Del Rio's low superkick gets two and Kalisto gets the same off a springboard tornado DDT. Kalisto goes up top but gets caught in a reverse superplex. They HORRIBLY botch a Code Red (the sunset bomb) so Kalisto goes straight to the Salida Del Sol for two. Del Rio unhooks a turnbuckle pad and of course he goes into it, setting up another Salida Del Sol for the pin and the title at 11:32.

**Rating:** C+. Not bad here but the commentary was driving me crazy here. JBL kept talking about how there was NO WAY the smaller guy could win and that's exactly what we saw happening. There's a difference between setting up an idea and just hammering it into the ground, which is what we had here. The match itself was fine but I do wonder how they screwed up Kalisto. He might not have been a future World Champion but he's someone that could have been a fixture in the midcard. Instead, he's just a guy on the roster because we needed to feed him to Rusev down the line. You know, to feed him to Reigns.

Pre-show recap.

Paul Heyman comes up to Stephanie and says they can renegotiate Lesnar's contract after he wins the Rumble. Stephanie is cool with that as long as Reigns is taken to Suplex City. Why she hates Reigns isn't clear but I'd assume it's because she just feels like it at the moment.

Recap of Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch. They were best friends but Charlotte won the title and realized she didn't need Becky anymore. Becky talked Ric Flair into accepting the title shot for his daughter and we're ready to roll.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Charlotte is defending and has her dad with her. Feeling out process to start with Charlotte shouldering her down. Becky goes right for the arm and the fans are entirely behind her. The announcers explain

the Figure Eight as Charlotte grabs an armbar of her own. Back up and a kick to the chest puts Charlotte on the floor where Ric gets in Becky's way. A clothesline drops the champ again so Flair kisses Becky for your weekly case of sexual assault (edited off the Network).

Charlotte takes over and grabs a cravate as the fans are WAY behind Becky here. Like moreso than usual. Thankfully Charlotte mocks the chants before doing the headscissor faceplants followed by the Figure Four necklock. Becky gets out and starts firing off dropkicks to take over but a neckbreaker puts Charlotte right back in control.

The Bexploder gets two and Charlotte's spear gets the same. You can hear Flair freaking out as only he can and it wouldn't be the same without that screaming. Becky gets a cross armbreaker out of the corner and the fans get right back into this, only to have a powerbomb break the hold to give Charlotte two. The Disarm-Her goes on but Flair throws his jacket at Becky for the distraction, allowing Charlotte to get another spear to retain at 11:34.

**Rating:** B. Another good match between the two of them but I'm really starting to roll my eyes at Flair's interference. We get the concept already and there's no need to keep doing it over and over. At some point Charlotte needs to drop him and once that happens, she's going to go through the roof, which would turn out to be in a bigger way than anyone could have expected.

Charlotte beats on Becky post match but here's Sasha Banks for the save and Bank Statement on the champ. Cole: "Sasha Banks making a statement with the Bank Statement!" I bet he spent two weeks coming up with that one.

Some fans went to the Performance Center under the ruse of being part of a focus group. The wound up getting to meet a full tour of the facility and met most of the NXT roster. Note to self: sign up for focus groups.

Rumble By the Numbers video, which is still one of my favorite annual traditions. This is tied in with the stats that Reigns, who is entering at #1, has to overcome to retain the title.

WWE World Title: Royal Rumble

Reigns is defending and comes in at #1, making the tagline One vs. All. We have 90 second intervals here and that's rarely a good

thing. I had forgotten about Reigns' through the crowd entrance and how unfitting it was. Can you imagine him trying to pull that today without getting pummeled? Anyway Reigns is in at #2 and Rusev is in at #2, which is smart as they had an awesome final section to a battle royal on Smackdown back in 2015. They start slugging it out and even JBL knows they can't keep up this pace. Rusev gets in a spinwheel kick but can't throw him out. Well not over the top at least as he sends Roman through the ropes instead. The spear however is enough to put Rusev out as the clock begins.

And then, in perhaps the dumbest production decision I've ever seen in WWE, the camera stays on Reigns' face as AJ STYLES makes his debut at #3. Like literally, the camera just locks in on Reigns as the crowd freaks out. They even posted a different cut of this on the WWE YouTube page because it was such a stupid visual. Thanks to the entrance taking forever, we only have time for AJ to not be able to hit the Styles Clash and a Samoan drop planting AJ.

Tyler Breeze is in at #4 and the fans are COMPLETELY behind AJ, which isn't all that surprising. Breeze scores with a few right hands before a pretty unnecessary double team gets rid of him. Curtis Axel (with the WAY too over Social Outcasts) is in at #5 to send AJ into the buckle, earning himself some forearms to the face. Reigns gets back up and the Outcasts are beaten down until AJ clotheslines Axel out (JBL: "The chains are back on."). Chris Jericho is in at #6 and we've got a snappy triple threat going here. AJ gets knocked down and Reigns is sent into the post, leaving Styles to have to fight out of the Walls. Kane is in at #7 and Cole is WAY too fast to call him the greatest performer in the Rumble's history. Wouldn't it have helped if he had actually WON THE THING a time or two Cole? Styles goes right after the monster but gets kicked down and all four head to a corner until Goldust is in at #8. Not a lot happens here other than the fans chanting for AJ even more because he debuted as a star, which only a handful of people get to do. Ryback is in at #9 and gets to clean house without eliminating anyone.

AJ clotheslines Reigns in the corner to another big pop and it's Kofi Kingston in at #10 (with New Day staying at ringside) so we can just start the clock for the big save. At the moment we have Reigns, Styles, Jericho, Kane, Goldust, Ryback and Kingston. AJ comes off the top to hit Jericho and it's Titus O'Neil in at #11. Styles and

Jericho take backbreakers and Goldust is tossed. Kofi almost gets rid of Reigns and is somehow even more popular than he's been all night.

R-Truth is in at #12 and of course he pulls out a ladder and climbs up to retrieve...nothing. I forgot how much I enjoyed Truth's confused gimmick. Kane pulls him down and tosses him out before throwing the ladder out as a bonus. A clothesline puts Kofi over the top and right onto Big E.'s shoulders for the big save. Eh not as good as some I've seen but you can't have a classic every year. Luke Harper is in at #13 and here are Vince and the League of Nations to pull Roman to the floor (under the ropes of course). The champ is sent into the steps and kicked in the face by multiple members of the team.

This goes on so long that Stardust comes in at #14. Rusev splashes Reigns through the table as we have NO IDEA what is going on in the ring during all this. While we were gone, Jericho eliminated Kingston which was of course ignored by the announcers. Now for the stupid part: Vince and the Nation JUST LEAVES.

Like, they don't throw him inside and then back out. They don't pay someone off to get rid of Reigns. They don't do anything but leave while Reigns is taken out on a stretcher. You would think Vince would have learned his lesson from Steve Austin in 1999 but he's a heel so this is just really stupid instead of head caving in stupid. Big Show comes in at #15 and eliminates Titus and Ryback, giving us a lineup of Reigns (being taken out), Styles, Jericho, Kane, Harper, Stardust and Show. Reigns is now walking in front of the stretcher, making this even less of a good idea.

Styles escapes a chokeslam and it's Neville in at #16. The rapid fire kicks stagger some people as Reigns is shown WALKING TO THE BACK UNDER HIS OWN POWER. What a hero he certainly is. Braun Strowman is in at #17 and hopefully some people are about to be tossed. Strowman casually eliminates Kane and has the showdown with Big Show. The standing choke (what a stupid move) knocks Show out and Strowman eliminates him a few seconds later.

A limping Kevin Owens is in at #18 and that's good for one heck of a pop. Styles is there to meet him and you know the fans are into that. Neville throws AJ to the apron and Kevin adds a superkick to get rid of Styles, making himself a full on heel once again. Dean

Ambrose is in at #19 and Owens is waiting on him to keep up the brawl from earlier. Since there's nothing like a Royal Rumble for the World Title going on, let's look at the Reigns beatdown from earlier.

Sami Zayn is in at #20 for a main roster cameo and of course he goes after Owens in a slugout. Kevin is gone in a hurry and we've got Reigns (not in the ring), Harper, Stardust, Jericho, Zayn, Ambrose, Neville and Strowman. Erick Rowan joins the field at #21 as the Wyatts are strong in this one. Harper and Rowan get together to get rid of Stardust and Neville as Strowman chokes Jericho out.

Mark Henry is in at #22 and is eliminated by the Wyatts in less than a minute. Strowman tosses Sami leaving Ambrose and Jericho to fight the monsters. Cole: "I don't see any help coming anytime soon." The clock is ticking down as he says this so you know it's going to be someone big. As you might expect, Brock Lesnar is in at #23 and the place just goes NUTS.

It's time for some suplexes with Harper and Rowan flying across the ring (not eliminated). It takes three clotheslines to drop Strowman and there goes Rowan. Harper takes a German suplex but Brock can't suplex Strowman. Now THAT is a rub. Braun goes shoulder first into the post and another clothesline puts him down. Jack Swagger is in at #24 and lasts about fifteen seconds before Lesnar gets rid of him. More suplexes abound as Lesnar is rapidly running out of things to do.

The Miz is in at #25, giving us Reigns (you know the drill by now), Jericho, Harper, Strowman, Ambrose, Lesnar and Miz, who walks around for a bit before going in to face Brock. He actually gets on commentary and threatens to turn Disney World into Mizney World. Harper takes another German suplex and Strowman gets shouldered in the corner. That's enough to get rid of Harper and Alberto Del Rio is in at #26. Alberto and Dean double team Lesnar in the corner and are promptly launched across the ring. Some clotheslines get rid of Strowman and the fans are VERY pleased.

Bray Wyatt gets lucky #27 and the other three Wyatts all get back in to pummel Brock. Brock tosses the three eliminated guys out again and suplexes Bray but Harper saves the F5 with a kick to the chest (or face if you're Cole). Unlike Vince and the League (who did almost the same thing earlier), Bray is smart enough to ELIMINATE

BROCK, who responds by.....calmly walking away instead of, you know, breaking people in half and making a throw rug out of their entrails.

Dolph Ziggler is in at #28 and it's FINALLY time for Miz to get in. A Skull Crushing Finale plants Dolph but Miz can't put him out. Sheamus is in at #29 but Reigns jumps him in the aisle, over twenty four minutes after he left and over HALF AN HOUR after the beatdown started. Naturally he's booed out of the building but still manages to get rid of Del Rio. I get that they're trying to repeat the 1999 Royal Rumble and ignoring the fact that they're copying the worst Rumble of all time, but there's a big stretch between the biggest star of all time and Roman Reigns.

Anyway Roman fights Bray for a bit and it's HHH in at #30 for one of the most obvious "swerves" in recent history. The final group is Reigns, Jericho, Ambrose, Wyatt, Ziggler, Sheamus and HHH, who gets a HUGE pop because the fans have a way out of Reigns winning the whole thing. Why the announcers have HHH stats despite him being A COMPLETE SURPRISE isn't clear but we'll chalk it up to the regular way of making it clear that this is entirely staged.

HHH and Reigns do the big staredown and the top heel is suddenly the big hero because that's how little people care about Reigns. Ziggler charges into a Pedigree like a goof and Wyatt takes a spear so Reigns can have equal power. The facebuster looks to set up a Pedigree on Reigns but Sheamus and Ambrose throw them both to the apron. Jericho bulldogs Bray down and hits a Lionsault but takes a Zig Zag. A superkick can't knock HHH off the apron and he gets back in to eliminate Ziggler a few seconds later.

Bray and HHH have a very interesting staredown which isn't likely to go anywhere. Sheamus saves HHH from Sister Abigail and Bray is tossed. Dean and Sheamus fight for a bit until Jericho dives on Ambrose. A Codebreaker puts HHH down but Dean eliminates Jericho to get us down to four. Dean eats a Brogue Kick but sidesteps a charge to get rid of Sheamus, followed by HHH eliminating Reigns to the pop of the night.

So we're down to Ambrose vs. HHH and Reigns stays on the floor instead of helping his buddy due to a combination of stupidity, honor and plot convenience. The rebound lariat (which Cole calls, I kid you not, the Wacky Line) has HHH in trouble and Dean sends him

to the apron, only to be backdropped to the floor to make HHH the winner and champion at 1:01:42.

**Rating:** A-. This one took a good while to get going but once Reigns left, everything picked up. That's where everything starts falling apart. This match is all about Reigns and the problem is very simple: people don't seem to like him. It says a lot that Jericho lasted 51 minutes and Reigns officially went 58 though only one of them needed half an hour of rest. That right there is proof positive that Reigns probably isn't going to be get cheered most of the time. This made him look very lame and that's one of the worst things you can do to a star. Having him WALK OUT OF THE ARENA was just horrible and the worst possible idea.

The rest of the match was pretty awesome though as you had everyone fighting over the title. Unfortunately there are some major holes, such as Brock just walking away and having to wait for Reigns to come back. It's not the best Rumble of all time as Reigns loomed over the whole thing but having the title on the line was a great idea and something I wish they did more often than every twenty four years. Give us some better options for the possible winner and ANYTHING other than Reigns vs. HHH as the big story and this is one of the best of all time.

HHH and family celebrate as fireworks take us out.

**Overall Rating:** A. This was a one match show and anything else worth watching on the show (such as the opener) was going to be more than enough to make this awesome. While it wound up setting the stage for the worst Wrestlemania in a long time, at least we have an awesome Royal Rumble to get us there. WWE had a lot of potential at this point, especially considering all the injuries they had at the time. It's a strong Rumble, assuming you ignore the completely backwards reactions for Reigns.

#### Ratings Comparison

Mark Henry/Jack Swagger vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Darren Young/Damien Sandow vs. Ascension

Original: D+

Redo: D

Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Original: B



Redo: B+

New Day vs. Usos

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Alberto Del Rio vs. Kalisto

Original: C

Redo: C+

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch:

Original: C-

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: A-

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: A

What was up with me hating the women like that?

Here's the original rating if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2016/01/24/royal-rumble-2016-this-rumble-game-thing/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the 2018 Updated Version of the History of the WWE Championship in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/01/26/new-book-kbs-history-of-the-wwe-championship-2018-updated-version/>

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# On the Big Royal Rumble Matches

We're almost to one of my favorite matches of the year as the Royal Rumble is almost upon us. Well the double Royal Rumble in this case but you get the idea. The interesting thing this time around is either Royal Rumble could go in multiple directions and that makes things a lot more fun. So what to do with each one? Or the title matches for that matter?

We'll start with the men's Rumble, which is probably the hardest of the four top matches to pick. You really could go in several different ways, but the best option would [seem to be either Roman Reigns or Shinsuke Nakamura](#), who are the favorites on at least one betting site. The more I think about it the more I'm leaning towards Reigns, as you can imagine WWE wanting to "get it right" in Philadelphia this time around.

As for the women's Rumble...dang again. While it's hard to imagine anyone not named Asuka winning this, the fun part [might be guessing who is going to be in the thing](#). We already know eighteen names announced, leaving twelve in the air for either legends or NXT talent. I can't imagine we see Ronda Rousey but after this week's Raw, Trish Stratus and the Bella Twins are all strong possibilities. Asuka will win, but the fun part is seeing who she defeats to get there.

Then we have the World Title matches with one of them being a little easier to predict than the other. That would be the WWE Championship match as I can't imagine Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens taking the title from AJ Styles and becoming the co-champions. AJ should retain here, and then we can figure out an opponent for him down the road (likely at Fastlane).

Finally there's the Universal Title match and really, there isn't a ton of doubt here either. Roman Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar is all but chiseled into stone for Wrestlemania XXXIV in New Orleans. With Kane

around, they can easily keep the title on Lesnar without taking anything away from Braun Strowman. That's especially important with Strowman [having a pretty big match on the Wrestlemania card](#).

The show should be a lot of fun, but those Rumble matches alone should make the card worth seeing. They're much more interesting than the two World Title matches, mainly due to the wide open fields. It's one of my favorite nights of the year and this time around the best part is doubled.

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# Main Event – January 25, 2018: They Picked A Side

## Main Event

Date: January 25, 2018

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

And you thought the Manhattan Center was going to be forgotten. With one of the biggest episodes in the history of Monday Night Raw and the go home show for the Royal Rumble, this show could look very different compared to the regular weeks. That's not to say it'll be bad, but expect some flashbacks to nostalgia. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Goldust vs. Curt Hawkins

Hawkins hides in the ropes to start but Goldust takes his deep breath and spits it back out in Hawkins' face. Just like last week, Hawkins lays down and offers a pin, even raising his own leg. The small package attempt has Nigel SHOCKED at Curt's attempt at cheating because Nigel is good on that front. A chinlock doesn't get Hawkins very far as Goldust hits his uppercut from the knees into a rollup for the pin at 3:28.

**Rating:** D. What in the world does it mean when you're losing to an uppercut into a rollup? Hawkins is finding new ways to lose but he's around so often that he's kind of grown on me. There almost has to be a payoff of some sort and that could be a very fun moment when it finally happens. Nothing match of course, but it's just Main Event.

Here's the big history package from Raw 25. Still awesome.

From Raw.

Back in the arena, Stephanie introduces Vince, who absolutely has to be here for the opening sequence. Vince nearly dances in the ring and says twenty five years is quite the accomplishment. The fans chant THANK YOU VINCE (which Stephanie explains to him) but Vince says enough of that and we're off to the festivities. Vince goes to leave but Stephanie and Shane have a present for him.

They have a plaque commemorating his twenty five years of Raw...and he's not happy. Vince goes on a rant about it being cheap and how plaque is the horrible stuff on the people of Brooklyn's teeth. There's only one person who should be thanked for all of this and that's Vince himself. As he goes off about how great he is.....the glass shatters.

After Austin does his usual entrance, Vince praises Austin's look but says he's had his own share of health problems. His bones are broken and brittle and he has arthritis and he even lives in a retirement home. Vince: "But my son Shane is in his prime!" Austin raises Shane's hand and gives him a Stunner to the delight of the fans. Vince produces beers and the fans chant ONE MORE TIME! Vince: "I don't think Shane can take another one!" They drink their beer and hug but Austin looks at Vince, followed by one more Stunner for old times' sake. For some reason Shane gets up and takes one more Stunner.

From Raw again.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Roman Reigns

Miz is challenging. They take their time to start until Reigns pops him with a right hand. The Miztourage offers a distraction though

and Miz sends him into the steps as we take a break. Back with Reigns hitting the corner clotheslines, followed by a running big boot. The apron dropkick connects but the spear is countered into a rollup for two with the feet on the ropes. The YES Kicks keep Roman in trouble but the big kick is countered into a sitout powerbomb for two.

Another apron dropkick takes the Miztourage out and Reigns slips out of the Skull Crushing Finale for another Superman Punch. Bo Dallas grabs the foot though and Miz hits his corner clothesline. That means a double ejection but Reigns hits them one more time, allowing the Skull Crushing Finale to connect for two. Back up and Reigns tries the spear but hits an exposed turnbuckle pad. The Skull Crushing Finale makes Miz an eight time champion at 13:13. A replay shows that Miz got the pad off when Reigns was beating up the Miztourage for a nice surprise.

**Rating:** C. This was a booking decision more than anything else and there's nothing wrong with that. The loss lets Reigns drop the title before he wins the Universal Title at Wrestlemania (THIS TIME FOR SURE!) and the win gives Miz something else to do, especially now that he's less than three months away from the most combined days as champion (and only one reign behind Chris Jericho's record).

#### Kalisto/Gran Metalik vs. TJP/Jack Gallagher

TJP charges at Metalik to start and gets chopped in the chest. A springboard armdrag is enough to sent TJP crawling over to Jack ala Eddie Guerrero. Jack sends Metalik into the corner and we take a break. REALLY? Back with Kalisto coming in for a hurricanrana driver on TJP. Metalik drops the elbow and the Metalik Driver is good for the pin at 6:04. Not enough shown to rate but they were REALLY rushing here.

We get some quick clips of AJ Styles vs. Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens from Smackdown.

We'll close it out from Raw.

Angle brings out all of the legends and people from the poker game

to surround the ring for the closing segment as we go to a break at 11:03. Back with Angle bringing out Braun Strowman and Kane, who are held apart by a lot of the wrestlers. Paul Heyman comes out and introduces Brock Lesnar for a fight. Here's Brock...and everyone but Kane and Strowman bail in fear. Brock runs over Strowman and hits an F5 on Kane but Strowman is back in to knock Lesnar to the floor. The running powerslam through the announcers' table plants Lesnar to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This was the VERY shortened version of Monday's show and seemed to focus a lot more on Sunday than this past week's show. That's not a bad thing as it seemed a lot more focused than the big show on Monday. It's still not good or anything due to the lame original matches, but the stuff from Monday, especially the video package, is worth seeing.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monda-y-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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# Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2015: They Need To Wake Up

**Royal Rumble 2015**

Date: January 25, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 17,164

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

Now this is one I've been looking forward to and dreading at the same time. I actually didn't mind the main event the first time around but ever since then I haven't been able to think of a single good thing that match did. It should be interesting (hopefully) to see how far this thing has fallen in just a year. Let's get to it.

#### Pre-Show: Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Talk about a year making a big difference. Cesaro and Kidd looked to be the hottest team in years and now they're both out while New Day, who looked to be a horrible disaster, actually IS the hottest team in years. As usual, time can change so much in wrestling. As usual, Woods is the odd man out here. Adam Rose is here with Kidd/Cesaro for no adequately explained reason but the fans would rather cheer for Cesaro anyway.

Kidd and Big E. get things going as the announcers talk about the Rumble instead. Ok to be fair, it's a pre-show tag match with nothing on the line so I can live with it here. Big E. grabs a few backbreakers to start before it's off to Kofi for two off a dropkick. Cesaro comes in for a BIG reaction and you can tell who the star of this match is going to be.

It's quickly back to Big E. who takes over with a shoulder in the corner, followed by a middle rope cross body from Kofi. Lawler: "I like New Day but I'm excited to see what they're going to evolve into." Cesaro and Kidd take Kofi into the corner and I still don't get why Rose is on the floor. Like, I don't remember that in the slightest and it's bizarre to see a year later. The Cesaro Swing into the dropkick (still awesome) gets two and we take a break.

Back with Cesaro holding Kofi in a chinlock but Kingston comes back with a dropkick to Kidd. Big E. starts cleaning house with clotheslines and the fans are REALLY not pleased. Cesaro charges into a Rock Bottom (well close enough to one) out of the corner for two. Kidd is sent to the floor for a flip dive from Kofi, followed by Big E. spearing Cesaro through the ropes for a big crash.

It's Cesaro on his own against both guys but Big E. is sent outside and Kofi gets kicked in the head, setting up a superplex into a springboard elbow from Kidd for a VERY close two. A sunset flip gets

two on Kofi with Cesaro holding Kidd in place for a smart move. Trouble in Paradise is countered into the Sharpshooter but Big E. makes the save with a belly to belly. Rose gets on the apron and gets kicked in the head, only to have Kidd grab a fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin on Kofi at 11:03.

**Rating:** B-. Well that worked. This is why having a hot tag division is so important: you can wake up the crowd in a match that really doesn't matter either way because both teams looked great. New Day could clearly go in the ring but it would still be a few months before they really figured it out. Well that and until they were allowed to have some personality, which was the cure all along.

The opening video is about finding the moment that cements what you are. However, there can only be one. Tonight, someone's moment becomes a reality. The triple threat gets a little attention as well.

#### New Age Outlaws vs. Ascension

This is fallout from the Outlaws, the NWO and Acolytes beating down the Ascension for not respecting the veterans enough or something. Yeah it ruined another act that was built up for over a year in NXT but HHH's buddies got a pay per view appearance out of it. Gunn and Viktor get things going and all it takes is a hiptoss to draw the YOU STILL GOT IT chant. Fans get easier to impress every year. Dogg comes in for the shaky knee drop on Konnor but the young guys take over with a chinlock.

As the match slows down (likely so the Outlaws can breathe), JBL regales us with tales of Bullet Bob Armstrong vs. Buddy Colt. Konnor puts on a chinlock and Dogg taps, likely because tapping out wasn't a thing when he started. The match keeps going anyway with Dogg avoiding an elbow drop, only to be chinlocked down by Viktor. That goes nowhere and the hot tag brings in Billy to clean house, only to miss the Fameasser and walk into the Fall of Man for the pin at 5:26.

**Rating:** D. And of course this launched the Ascension up the card and into the Tag Team Title scene forevermore. Yeah of course they never recovered after getting beaten down by a bunch of old retired guys and then winning a meaningless match against a long past retired team because....yeah I think you know why this didn't work, or at least you should.



We look at Sting saving Cena from Big Show/Kane/Seth Rollins on Raw. Sting isn't on the show or anything but he had a cameo there of course. Cena winning however did get Dolph Ziggler, Ryback and Erick Rowan their jobs back but Rowan didn't qualify for the Rumble. At least the match meant something.

The Authority isn't pleased with Sting doing that WCW nonsense around here. Cue Paul Heyman who says Brock can help with their problems, whatever those are.

#### Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Damien Mizdow/Miz

The Usos are defending but Mizdow is the most over guy in the match. Speaking of things that have changed a lot in a year. The Usos took the titles from Miz/Mizdow to close out 2014 so this is the rematch. Jey and Miz get things going and the fans already want Mizdow. Something like a top rope Demolition Decapitator gets two on Miz as Cole recap Miz trying to get Naomi on their side with promises of Hollywood fame.

Miz gets crotched on top so Mizdow (gently) does the same, continuing the one idea act that somehow had fans cheering for him. Miz's top rope ax handle is punched out of the air so Mizdow goes up and dives into a punch from no one. The fans think Mizdow is awesome, meaning it's time for a chinlock from Miz himself. The Reality Check gets two but Miz won't tag Mizdow in. Again, this doesn't make a ton of sense as Miz is making himself wrestle the whole match by himself.

Anyway, Jimmy gets away and tags in Jey to take over with the running Umaga Attack in the corner but Miz grabs a DDT for two. Everything breaks down and both Usos hit a dive to take out both challengers, though Jey almost misses Miz, drawing a rather rude chant from the fans.

Back in and Jey misses the Superfly Splash, allowing Miz to get two off the Skull Crushing Finale. The second attempt at the Splash connects but Mizdow breaks it up, drawing the loudest pop you will EVER hear for a heel breaking up a cover. Mizdow's Skull Crushing Finale gets two on Jimmy, who superkicks Miz into a powerbomb from Jey. Jimmy's Superfly Splash retains the titles at 9:20.

**Rating:** C-. Nothing special here as Miz/Mizdow's one joke is long past its point of interest and we're just waiting on Mizdow to turn, which would of course take too long to mean anything as WWE would

screw it up again. It really is amazing how far the tag division has fallen in just a year as all the injuries and screwiness have turned the division on its head. The Usos are still the Usos though and that's all that matters.

The pre-show panel chats a bit and we look at the pre-show match.

J&J Security play the new WWE mobile game until Seth Rollins comes in to yell at them for not being serious enough. Rollins says he's been called the future but he's the right now.

Wrestlemania ad. I had forgotten how much I hated that theme song.

### Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

No idea what the story here is but I'm sure it's Total Divas related. Nikki and Paige get things going with Paige not being able to Irish whip her. It's off to Natalya who gets two off a kick to the back of the head. Brie comes in to work on the arm as the announcers joke about which twin is older. I'm not sure why this is supposed to be funny but they certainly think it is. A double suplex puts Brie down and Paige does her slow, crawling cover for two.

Natalya comes in and covers as well but for some reason she isn't legal. Even Paige is confused as she grabs Brie again and now tags Natalya in all legal like. Brie gets two off a quick slam and it's back to Nikki for a Hennig neck snap. Lawler: "Name two countries and then a state." Cole: "It was a joke." It's as random as it sounds. Now it's off to Lawler approving of the Bellas' looks as they take turns on Natalya for some near falls.

Brie puts on a chinlock for a bit before both Bellas grab a leg and roll forward to flip Natalya onto the back of her head. Nikki puts on a headscissors and does push-ups to drive Natalya's face mere inches away from the mat. Natalya powers up and drops Nikki on her back for the break and avoids a clothesline, only to have Brie pull Paige off the apron. Nikki's big forearm puts Natalya away at 8:02.

**Rating:** D. We don't even have time for a hot tag? This wasn't much to see but again, it's all about the Bellas because they're the stars on Total Divas and know how to act like the Kardashians or whatever. Nikki would get a lot better after another six months on top of the division or so, but that would be a very long six months.

Roman Reigns says he'll beat his performance from last year.

Stardust does his usual and Goldust says he's right.

Rusev says he'll win and promises to crush whoever wins.

Miz says this is his year and Mizdow repeats everything. Again: that's not what a stunt double does.

Big Show says he's not mortal because he's a giant.

Fandango says no one understands the power of the tango.

YES, Daniel Bryan thinks he can get back to the main event of Wrestlemania.

We recap the triple threat for the World Title. Rollins tried to cash in Money in the Bank on Lesnar at Night of Champions while Cena was challenging, triggering a feud between Rollins and Cena. Tonight they both get their shot in what should be awesome.

#### WWE World Title: John Cena vs. Seth Rollins vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar is defending and this is one fall to a finish. The fans just explode on Cena with the JOHN CENA SUCKS song making its return. I was there when it debuted and that's a pure thing of brilliance. Lesnar on the other hand is treated...well about how you would expect Philadelphia to react to him. Rollins bails to start and there's the first German suplex to Cena. Another one drops Cena again so J&J come in, only to get a German of their own.

Rollins kicks Cena in the head but gets pulled inside to face Brock all alone. It's time for more German suplexes and the fans loudly applaud. There's a regular suplex to Rollins and we get an ECW chant. Brock grabs a Kimura on Cena but John lifts him up, allowing Seth to springboard in with a knee to the champ. Cena and Rollins get smart and double team Lesnar, only to have Seth throw John to the floor for one off an AA.

Brock pops up like a daisy and sends both of them outside, only to have Rollins knock him into the steps. As J&J are in a heap next to the barricade, Cena starts his usual finishing sequence on Rollins but Lesnar breaks up the Shuffle with another German suplex. Seth breaks up the rolling Germans though as he needs Cena to help fight against Brock. Makes sense. A knee to the back puts Brock on the floor but the champ is right back in for the save as Seth covers Cena.

Back up and Cena throws Rollins to the floor and actually drops Brock with some clotheslines. Seth pulls Cena outside and tries a springboard, only to get caught in a big F5. That is some terrifying

strength. Brock loads up a table for some reason so Cena gives him three straight AA's for two with Rollins making a last second save. There's a Curb Stomp from Seth and this time Cena has to dive in and break up the cover. The fans think this is awesome (indeed) as everyone heads outside, where Cena spears Lesnar through the barricade.

Brock keeps getting up so Cena throws him into the steps and blasts him in the face for good measure, knocking the champ onto the announcers' table. Rollins feels left out so he drives Brock through with a HUGE top rope elbow and Cena is the only one standing. The non-Lesnars head back inside and Seth hits a quick low superkick for two. The AA doesn't work so Cena Batista Bombs him for a VERY near fall.

Not to be outdone, Rollins reverses a superplex attempt into a running Buckle Bomb for two more. Both guys are spent so Rollins tries a Curb Stomp, only to get caught in the STF. Cue J&J from their comas for the save as a stretcher comes out for Brock. There's a TripleBomb for two on Cena but he ducks a briefcase shot and AA's both J's at the same time. He should not be able to do that twenty minutes into a match this physical. Or any match for that matter.

Another AA gets two on Rollins and the Curb Stomp gets the same on Cena as the fans are freaking out on these kickouts. We're told Brock has at least a broken rib as Rollins busts out the Phoenix Splash on Cena. Not that it matters as a TICKED OFF Brock gets back in for some German suplexes, only to have Seth hit him in the face with the briefcase. Rollins loads up a Curb Stomp onto the case but you don't try that on Lesnar, as he counters with a HUGE F5 to retain at 22:42.

**Rating:** A. Good grief what a battle. This was the night where Rollins became a star and people knew that he was going to be champion soon. Cena put in his normal amazing performance here as well, but good night Brock looked like a monster. This is the beast that WWE wanted to build up for someone to take down and it worked perfectly here. Just outstanding action here with all three looking like they had been through a war. This was the instant match of the year leader and it would take something special to knock it off.

Brock walks off as the medics are stunned.

Rumble By The Numbers video.

## Royal Rumble

Good luck following that. Miz is #1 and R-Truth is #2 with 90 second intervals. They start slowly (smart here) until Truth gets in a few pelvic thrusts. Truth is sent to the apron a few times and gets crotched on the top until Bubba Ray Dudley makes a big surprise return at #3. You think that might wake the Philadelphia fans up a bit? Bubba is fired up to start and gives Miz the Dusty punches before R-Truth plays D-Von (I'm not touching that one) on What's Up.

Now it's table time but Miz gets up, only to be put back down with a 3D. There go Miz and Truth as Luke Harper is in at #4 for a hoss fight. They slug it out boo/yay style but Harper elbows out of a Bubba Bomb. A big clothesline drops Harper but Bray Wyatt is in at #5. Bubba isn't sure what to make of him and Bray does his big freaky smile. The fans want D-Von (fair enough idea) but Bray sends Bubba into a clothesline and dumps him a few seconds later.

Harper and Wyatt stare at each other and Curtis Axel is in at #6, only to have Erick Rowan jump him from behind and destroy him, kicking off Axelmania because Axel was never officially eliminated. Rowan (not part of the Family at this point) gets in and teases a reunion against Bray, only to be quickly double teamed. Erick almost gets Harper out but Bray dumps them both and points to the sign. In another surprise return, the Boogeyman is in at #7. Cole: "It's the eater of worlds against the eater of worms!" His entrance takes forever and Bray dumps him like the jobber that he is.

Sin Cara is in at #8 and gets in a few shots, only to get punched out of the air. Sister Abigail sets up another elimination and Bray is on a roll. With no one to fight, Bray grabs a mic and issues an open challenge to everyone in the back because this is his year. It's time to sing until Zack Ryder is in at #9 (apparently returning from shoulder surgery), only to be eliminated even faster than Cara.

NOW things get interesting as Daniel Bryan is in at #10 to one of the loudest reactions you'll hear since...well since the last time Bryan was in a big match probably. Daniel speeds things up a lot with some running dropkicks in the corner as JBL tells Bryan not to go so hard because he needs to pace himself. Preach it JBL. A middle rope hurricanrana puts Bray down and it's Fandango in at #11. Well that's quite the drop in star power. He goes after Bryan but stops to dance, allowing Bryan to flip out of a belly to back suplex.

We go old school (way old school actually) with an airplane spin until Tyson Kidd (with his sweet theme song) is in at #12. A springboard missile dropkick drops Bryan and Fandango is quickly dropped into the corner, leaving Kidd and Bryan to slug it out in what could rock with about fifteen minutes. Stardust is in at #13, with Cole saying it's his Rumble debut. No Cole, no it's not. I get what he's going for and no Cole, no it's not.

Fandango and Stardust take turns skinning the cat before Stardust takes out the knee to get Fandango in trouble. Bryan eliminates Kidd but Bray is back up, only to be knocked through the ropes and out to the floor. You know that means a suicide dive from Daniel, followed by Diamond Dallas Page in at #14 for another surprise. Stardust is right on him but there's the first Diamond Cutter. JBL: "Do they teach that in yoga class?"

Fandango takes Page down but gets crotched on top, setting up a super Diamond Cutter for a very nice pop. Bray pounds on Page but takes a Diamond Cutter of his own, which is one step too far. The guy is a monster and shouldn't get dropped by a retired legend. Rusev comes in at #15 and superkicks Page before eliminating him. Side note: put Page in the Hall of Fame already. He has the resume and he's worthy of canonization after what he accomplished with Roberts and Hall.

Rusev dumps Fandango and puts Bryan on the apron, allowing Bray to knock Daniel out. That right there is pretty much it for this Rumble meaning anything as we now know it's all about Reigns, even though the fans aren't going to be interested no matter what. I know you can't have Bryan win here, but you could at least give him a run near the end. This was a bad idea and the DANIEL BRYAN chants starting up a minute after he's gone don't bode well for the rest of the show.

Goldust is in at #16, giving us Goldust, Stardust, Rusev and Wyatt. The brothers go after each other for a bit until Kofi Kingston is in at #17. Kofi goes after Bray as the fans are booing everything presented to them no matter how watchable it is. All five wind up in one corner for some reason with no eliminations until Adam Rose is in at #18. The Rosebuds do the full entrance and catch Kofi as he's launched over the top for his annual save. Rusev dumps Rose with ease and kicks Kofi out a few seconds later to get us back to four. Roman Reigns is in at #19 and oh man this is going to be good.

The fans go nuts on Reigns as he fires off the running corner clotheslines and gets rid of Goldust and Stardust in rapid succession. Big E. is in at #20 and only gets kind of booed. Rusev is right on him and that gets booed loudly out of pure spite. Rusev hits a quick Cannonball on Big E. and it's Damien Mizdow in at #21 for a bit of relief from the fans. Miz cuts him off and wants the spot but Reigns shoves him down and Damien, egged on by the crowd, goes in as well.

Mizdow cleans some house but is thrown out by Rusev in less than twenty seconds. Dang they really don't want the fans to cheer anything tonight do they? Well other than Reigns of course. Jack Swagger is in at #22 and gets in a few nice shots until Bray cuts him off. We've got Wyatt, Swagger, Reigns, Big E. and Rusev at the moment until Ryback is in at #23. That means more power brawling with Meat Hooks and suplexes all around. Bray and Rusev continue their loose alliance to get Ryback in trouble and there's a CM Punk chant for the latest false hope.

Kane is in at #24 and you know the people aren't happy with that. The match slows down a bit with Kane putting Ryback on the apron and Big E. doing the same thing to Swagger. Those attempts go as far as you would expect and it's Dean Ambrose in at #25 to give the fans something to actually cheer for. Dean goes for Rusev to start but has to stop a charging Kane. The fans are WAY into Ambrose as he's the first guy they've wanted to cheer for in about fifteen minutes.

Titus O'Neil is in at #26 and put out in four seconds by Ambrose and Reigns. So much for that one. The ring is getting too full and Intercontinental Champion Bad News Barrett makes it even worse at lucky #27. Everyone brawls against the ropes until it's Cesaro in at #28. Cesaro fires off a bunch of European uppercuts but he can only get Ambrose to the apron. Rusev dropkicks Big E. out to clear a little room but Big Show takes his place at #29.

Everyone goes after him but Show throws them away before starting a chokeslam contest with Kane. There goes Ryback thanks to both giants and Show dumps Swagger. A chokeslam sends Rusev rolling out under the ropes and it's Dolph Ziggler in at #30 (Remember when "who is #30" was the big question every year? Now it's just another entrant. It's kind of sad really.), giving us a final grouping of Wyatt, Rusev, Reigns, Kane, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro, Big Show and Ziggler.

Here's the thing: that's actually a stacked final set of people. Wyatt, Rusev, Ambrose, Barrett, Cesaro and Ziggler are crowd favorites, Big Show and Kane are at least good monsters to conquer and Reigns is....well that other group is really popular. The problem here is NO ONE but Reigns has a chance and the entire audience knows it, making this inevitable rather than anything interesting.

Ziggler superkicks the giants and takes them both down with the running DDT. Barrett is sent to the apron and superkicked out but Ziggler gets caught in the Cesaro Swing. Cesaro sends him to the apron but Dolph gets him to the apron for a superkick and an elimination, only to have Big Show and Kane put Ziggler out. That also gives Kane the all time record for Rumble eliminations.

The giants throw Bray out like he's no one (thanks for the 47 minutes Bray) and the fans are getting even angrier than they already were. So it's Ambrose/Reigns vs. Big Show/Kane with Rusev forgotten on the floor. Roman is bleeding from the mouth as he clotheslines Show down but he and Dean can't get rid of the bigger giant. Kane boots Roman in the face and the KO Punch knocks Dean silly, giving the giants an easy elimination. Reigns is suddenly even less popular as the inevitability gets that much closer. Even Cole acknowledges that the fans hate this.

Reigns fights back and the booing gets even louder until Kane and Show start fighting, because the last SIXTEEN YEARS of these two fighting isn't enough. They fight next to the ropes and Reigns gets up for a double elimination, actually sending the fans into silence for the win.

Kane and Big Show get back in and beat Roman down even more, complete with a double chokeslam. The fans remember that Rusev is still in but here's the Rock to help save his cousin. He cleans house and drops both giants to a nice reaction until Reigns Superman Punches Show into a Rock Bottom. Rock leaves and Rusev gets back in, only to get speared and eliminated to really give Roman the win at 59:31.

**Rating:** D-. WOW. This is somehow so much worse than I remember it as WWE was clearly going out of its way to clear the path for Roman but the fans were having none of it. The problem here is a simple one: there was never any drama. Look back at 2012 for a second. The final two were Chris Jericho and Sheamus, neither of whom were interesting



choices to win. However, the final three minutes of that match are AWESOME as you really didn't know who was going to win and both guys had a real chance. That's the easiest way to get fans to like the Rumble, or really most matches.

This Rumble is really more like 1993 than anything else. That was the year of Yokozuna and everyone knew it, though there was the slightest chance of the Undertaker winning it. However, Undertaker went out in the middle of the match and the rest was just a waiting game to see who was on Yokozuna's victim list.

That's exactly what happened here. Everyone knew Reigns was the heavy favorite no matter who they wanted to win and the ONLY person with a real chance of beating him was Bryan. This year Bryan was the twelfth man eliminated, leaving about thirty five minutes left in the match. That's a long time for the fans to sit around with little to no hope as things get worse and worse. The best false hope they had for the rest of the match was Ambrose and that just wasn't going to happen.

On top of that, you have Big Show and Kane as the big bads for Reigns to conquer. That's fine on paper, until you look at all the papers labeled "Raw Results" where you see how many times he and everyone else has beaten both of them. Instead of some group of the popular guys at the end, it was Kane and Big Show for the first ending. Then there's Rusev for the false hope spot but Reigns destroyed him too before winning.

So yeah, this was one big mess all designed for Reigns to look like a hero and it failed miserably. It boils down to a simple concept that actually takes me back to the Russo days to a degree: you have to earn it. The problem here is Reigns hasn't really accomplished anything to earn this spot and the fans are rejecting him. Austin dominating the 1998 Rumble worked because the fans had seen Austin go through a lot of wars to earn the right to be the top dog. Reigns' big moment was a win over Randy Orton at Summerslam 2014. That's not exactly huge and the fans hadn't forgotten.

Ignoring the Reigns part for a minute, this was a really dull match. Bubba was a cool surprise and Page was good for a Diamond Cutter, but Boogeyman? Other than that and Bray's dominance (which went nowhere), this was really dull stuff. Kofi being caught by the Rosebuds was a good quick chuckle but really low on his list of

saves. Just a horrible Rumble from start to finish with only a few bright spots throughout.

Rock poses with Reigns and the fans STILL boo. The Authority comes out to glare a lot as Reigns celebrates and points at the sign to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. Oh yeah this was bad. The triple threat is the only thing keeping this from being a disaster as the rest of the card is a bunch of nothing tags and then a disaster of a Rumble for the last third. The Rumble itself really is that bad and drags an already bad show down even lower. It's balanced out a bit by the triple threat but twenty two minutes of awesome can't make up for an hour of horrible. Terrible show here and thankfully WWE finally figured out that Reigns wasn't ready yet, because he just wasn't here.

#### Ratings Comparison

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. New Day

Original: B

Redo: B-

Ascension vs. New Age Outlaws

Original: D+

Redo: D

Miz/Damien Mizdow vs. Usos

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Bella Twins vs. Paige/Natalya

Original: D-

Redo: D

Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Original: A

Redo: A

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D-

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: D

How in the world did I add that one up last year?

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2015/01/25/royal-rumble-2015-more-teasing-than-a-15-year-old-on-prom-night/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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# Monday Night Raw – January 22, 2018 (25th Anniversary): Tug of War

## Monday Night Raw 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Date: January 22, 2018

Location: Manhattan Center, New York City, New York/Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T., Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Now this is a big night with the show having been build up for several months and a slew of guest stars booked for the night. The show is also being run from two arenas, including the location of the first ever episode. I'm more excited for this than I am for Sunday's Royal Rumble so let's get to it.

JR and King welcome us from the Manhattan Center, complete with an ICOPRO sign.

The regular announcers' team welcome us from the Barclays Center.

Shane McMahon and Stephanie McMahon are in the ring to open the show with Stephanie doing that ever present growling introduction. Shane thanks us for being here along with all the people behind the scenes who make this happen. With that, Shane introduces us to the long highlight reel of Raw moments. This was released on the site's YouTube page and is very awesome with almost every major Raw moment ever.

Back in the arena, Stephanie introduces Vince, who absolutely has to be here for the opening sequence. Vince nearly dances in the ring and says twenty five years is quite the accomplishment. The fans chant THANK YOU VINCE (which Stephanie explains to him) but Vince says enough of that and we're off to the festivities. Vince goes to leave but Stephanie and Shane have a present for him.

They have a plaque commemorating his twenty five years of Raw...and he's not happy. Vince goes on a rant about it being cheap and how plaque is the horrible stuff on the people of Brooklyn's teeth. There's only one person who should be thanked for all of this and that's Vince himself. As he goes off about how great he is.....the glass shatters.

After Austin does his usual entrance, Vince praises Austin's look but says he's had his own share of health problems. His bones are broken and brittle and he has arthritis and he even lives in a retirement home. Vince: "But my son Shane is in his prime!" Austin raises Shane's hand and gives him a Stunner to the delight of the fans. Vince produces beers and the fans chant ONE MORE TIME! Vince: "I don't think Shane can take another one!" They drink their beer

and hug but Austin looks at Vince, followed by one more Stunner for old times' sake. For some reason Shane gets up and takes one more Stunner.

This was just about the perfect opening as you have to have Vince there for something like this and if there's Vince, there must be Austin. All those Stunners over the years were a huge part of the show and Austin is arguably the name that more people would associate with Raw than anyone else. This was great and the only way things should have gone to start.

Absolution/Alicia Fox/Nia Jax vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks/Mickie James/Asuka

There's a big brawl before the bell and Asuka has banged up ribs. She's still able to kick Sonya to the floor though and we take an early break. Back with Asuka hip attacking half of the villains off the apron before it's off to Jax vs. Banks. That goes fairly badly for Sasha who gets caught in Alicia's northern lights suplex for two.

We hit the chinlock until Banks gets double teamed in the corner. Everything breaks down and we take a second break because it's not like there's a lot of stuff to get to tonight. Back with Banks grabbing the Bank Statement to make Fox tap at 11:58. The stuff after the break was less than fifteen seconds long.

**Rating:** C-. This was fine all things considered but at the same time, there's some other stuff going on tonight that they need to cover. That's kind of the problem with having this big special on the same night as the go home show for the Rumble. They have to build things up but at the same time they have to get to the big special features. The match was fine, but probably should have been shorter.

Post match Asuka throws her partners over the top in a Sunday preview.

Kurt Angle is in the back when Jonathan Coachman comes in. Coach talks about all the faces he's seen around here, so cue Harvey

Wippleman and the Brooklyn Brawler who offer cigars. Cue Teddy Long for the required dancing. Brother Love comes in (he scared me to death as a kid) and declares love for everyone until Boogeyman comes in, complete with the worms in the mouth...which he hands to Coach. A lot of staring ensues.

In the Manhattan Center, JR and King (who mentions puppies) introduce a nice video package on Undertaker's greatest Raw moments. Here's the Undertaker, with the lights not going out for his entrance in a strange visual (flashback to his original). For twenty five years, he's buried souls who dared to challenge him and buried them in the cold dark earth. Steve Austin, Mick Foley, his brother Kane have all fallen before the reaper and now, after all this time, they may rest in peace. JR: "Is that a warning?" The music plays again and no one interrupts. I'll believe it's over when I don't see him at Wrestlemania but that seems to be the case at the moment.

We go to the APA's office with Heath Slater losing all of his money in a poker game as Rhyno shakes his head. Someone comes in and throws some money down...and of course it's Ted DiBiase. They deal him in and we get the evil laugh. Still the greatest villain of all time for my money.

Here's are some of the all time greatest General Managers: Johnny Ace (with a red suit and blue tie), William Regal, Eric Bischoff (to a ROAR) and Daniel Bryan. Miz and the Miztourage interrupt though and it's time for one of the big matches.

#### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Roman Reigns

Miz is challenging. They take their time to start until Reigns pops him with a right hand. The Miztourage offers a distraction though and Miz sends him into the steps as we take a break. Back with Reigns hitting the corner clotheslines, followed by a running big boot. The apron dropkick connects but the spear is countered into a rollup for two with the feet on the ropes. The YES Kicks keep Roman in trouble but the big kick is countered into a sitout powerbomb for two.

Another apron dropkick takes the Miztourage out and Reigns slips out of the Skull Crushing Finale for another Superman Punch. Bo Dallas grabs the foot though and Miz hits his corner clothesline. That means a double ejection but Reigns hits them one more time, allowing the Skull Crushing Finale to connect for two. Back up and Reigns tries the spear but hits an exposed turnbuckle pad. The Skull Crushing Finale makes Miz an eight time champion at 13:13. A replay shows that Miz got the pad off when Reigns was beating up the Miztourage for a nice surprise.

**Rating:** C. This was a booking decision more than anything else and there's nothing wrong with that. The loss lets Reigns drop the title before he wins the Universal Title at Wrestlemania (THIS TIME FOR SURE!) and the win gives Miz something else to do, especially now that he's less than three months away from the most combined days as champion (and only one reign behind Chris Jericho's record).

Back to the poker game with the Hardys, the Usos, and MVP playing as Slater continues to lose his money.

It's time for the Peep Show with Christian. He knows a thing or two about being a Tag Team Champion so his guests are Jason Jordan and Seth Rollins. Jordan takes over for Seth and talks about what an honor it is to be here but the crowd won't let him talk. Jordan eventually talks about Kurt and asks the fans to applaud him. Cue the Bar to say that all the fans are because of them, not all the legends. They'll be getting the titles back on Sunday and it's because Jordan sucks. We hit the YOU SUCK song and the brawl is on. Sheamus gets knocked to the floor but Seth's springboard knee hits Jordan.

Alexa Bliss is annoyed at being asked if she'll still be champion at Wrestlemania. Charlotte comes in and MY GOODNESS she towers over Alexa. She says Alexa doesn't have the stature to be champion and Ric Flair himself comes in to say Charlotte is going to be champion until she decides to hang up the robe. Flair appearing was great, though they're teasing the heck out of one of these two losing before Wrestlemania.

Video on Edge, who isn't here tonight.

More people are at the poker game, now including Natalya and Titus Worldwide. Heath loses again, this time to Natalya's queen high flush in hearts. Dana has counted it up: Heath has lost a lot.

### Bray Wyatt vs. Matt Hardy

In the Manhattan Center and this match takes place here? Sister Abigail is broken up in the first five seconds as JR tries to figure out what Sister Abigail is. Matt grabs a Russian legsweep and drops the middle rope elbow to the back of the head. The Twist of Fate is broken up and Bray runs him over as we take a break. Back with Matt hitting a running corner clothesline but having his bulldog broken up. The Side Effect gets two on Bray but Sister Abigail is good for the pin on Matt at 5:48. Not enough shown to rate but that's quite the abrupt loss in the first match between these two.

Back in Barclays, here are some of the greatest female talents ever: the Bella Twins, Maryse, Kelly Kelly, Lilian Garcia, Jacqueline, Torrie Wilson, Michelle McCool, Terri Runnels, Maria Kanellis and of course Trish Stratus as the big name. This group is declared as trailblazers so I have a good laugh as we cut away.

Elias is walking through the back when he runs into Chris Jericho (in an Alpha Club shirt). Chris compliments his scarves and asks if he can play a song he's written about Elias. He can't borrow the guitar but worry not because Jericho has his own. The song is about Elias being a stupid idiot and HE JUST MADE THE LIST! Jericho loads up the pen but says he's kidding. Jericho: "NO I'M NOT! YOU JUST MADE THE LIST!"

Here's Elias in the ring to talk about how amazing it is that it took Raw twenty five years to find him. WWE stands for Walk With Elias but the fans won't let him play his song. Elias wants to sing it for the fans but points out Jimmy Fallon in the front row. The song is about the various legends, including talking about how Shawn's time is passed and Undertaker is a decrepit old man. He's going to the Royal Rumble but here's John Cena to interrupt.



Cena asks the crowd if they're loud now and points out that both he and Brooklyn have balls because there they are (it's a beach ball in this case). Elias tells him to shut up because the fans are there to see Elias but Cena ruined it. Cena tells him to do something about it but Elias says no and teases leaving. The fight is on of course and Cena hits his finishing sequence but the AA is cut off by a low blow. A guitar to the back leaves Cena laying and Drift Away makes it even better. I'm pleasantly surprised here as this was a very solid rub for Elias who took some of Cena's best and left him laying. Good stuff here.

New Day is at the poker game now with Woods betting pancakes. Slater FINALLY wins a hand but is accused of cheating. A fight nearly breaks out and Bradshaw says if you want to fight, do it in the ring. Oh I can feel the Revival's death coming from here. Titus Worldwide and Slater/Rhyno leave but DiBiase wins with a royal flush. As he rakes in the chips, Ron Simmons says his catchphrase.

Mark Henry is in the back and runs into the Godfather and...some random woman. Godfather brings up Sexual Chocolate but Henry says that was a long time ago. Henry seems to hit on the woman...and it's Godfather's wife. Mark smiles and isn't sure what to think.

#### Titus Worldwide vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

Titus chops Rhyno to start before it's off to Crews vs. Slater with Heath starting in on the arm. A very delayed vertical suplex puts Heath down and we take a break. IN THIS MATCH??? Back with the match being thrown out at 5:40. Again not enough to rate but this seems like a means to an end.

Cue the Dudley Boyz (including Bubba, who was named ROH GM two days ago and D-Von, who looks rather huge) as everyone bails to the floor. Slater gets thrown back inside for What's Up (with Booker commenting on D-Von's weight gain). It's table time of course (with Rhyno pulling the ring skirt back) and the 3D drives Slater through it for good measure. This was a HUGE relief as the Revival wasn't destroyed for no apparent reason.

AJ Styles is in the back and has his own interviewer: Mean Gene

Okerlund. AJ does his best Hogan impression to Gene (AJ: "Sorry I've always wanted to do that.") before talking about facing Kami on Sunday. He has a small window to fight on Sunday but if he does it right, they'll hear him announced as still being champion. Gene looks confused.

Back to the Manhattan Center and here's DX for the big reunion. Well just Shawn and HHH to start. Shawn has been hearing people ask HBSizzle what his best moment in the 25 years have been. He can't remember 25 minutes ago but he does remember something about a big sausage, which HHH cuts him off. Then one time they were all in Christmas stuff but HHH says no again.

Shawn gets annoyed because he used to be the boss of this group but now HHH is the boss of everything so Shawn doesn't get to do anything anymore. All you have to do to see all those moments again though is sign up for the WWE Network. HHH talks about the fans starting the fire and now they're here because of him.

We hear about some of the history of DX, including a rare Chyna name drop. HHH talks about going to WCW in a tank (it wasn't a tank) and starting a war (which had started well over a year prior) but now they're here because the Manhattan Center is home. They're not here alone though because here are the New Age Outlaws. Maybe Road Dogg can ruin Raw now.

Dogg does his usual and here's X-Pac for another surprise (I mean, assuming you didn't see the graphics all night long). The crowd cuts X-Pac off with a 1-2-3 chant but there's one more surprise: Scott Hall. Back after a VERY abrupt break with everyone in the ring and Ramon saying Hey Yo. He calls this whole thing too sweet...and here's Balor Club. They all do too Too Sweet...and it's the freaking Revival to get the legends burial.

#### Revival vs. Anderson and Gallows

Revival jumps them before the bell and it's Anderson in early trouble. A headlock is broken up in short order and it's off to Gallows for the kicks to the head. The Magic Killer ends Dawson clean at 2:00.

Revival goes after DX and takes the finishers, because this worked so well for Damien Sandow. X-Factor, Shake Rattle and Roll, Fameasser, Sweet Chin Music, Pedigree and Coup de Grace, followed by Billy getting in his catchphrase. So glad they had Revival, one of the best teams in a long time, to do this. To be fair they're wrestlers and we don't have room for that around here.

Angle brings out all of the legends and people from the poker game to surround the ring for the closing segment as we go to a break at 11:03. Back with Angle bringing out Braun Strowman and Kane, who are held apart by a lot of the wrestlers. Paul Heyman comes out and introduces Brock Lesnar for a fight. Here's Brock...and everyone but Kane and Strowman bail in fear. Brock runs over Strowman and hits an F5 on Kane but Strowman is back in to knock Lesnar to the floor. The running powerslam through the announcers' table plants Lesnar to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. This show was trying to do two things at once and it made them both suffer. There was actually a bit too much wrestling going on and some of those longer matches (which to be fair were only in the first half of the show) were cutting down on time that could have been used for the nostalgia stuff. The problem is you have to do that for the Rumble, leaving less time for the big anniversary material.

The anniversary stuff was fine enough, but it really peaked at the beginning and was kind of downhill from there. Going back to the Manhattan Center was fun, though it really felt like the crowd there got screwed a bit. Other than DX and Undertaker's short appearance, almost nothing there felt important or special and that's not a great sign. Throw in the stupid, stupid, STUPID beatdown of Revival (who not only got taken out by the old guys but also lost a clean two minute match) and Terri Runnels/Kelly Kelly apparently being trailblazers and some of this stuff left a lot to be desired.

As for the Rumble build...eh. Once the big names for the Rumble are set, there's not a lot that can really be done to build to the pay per view. We know all of the main roster women in the Rumble and

most of the men are already set so there's only so much you can do here. What we got was ok, though the triple threat stuff isn't doing anything for me.

Now there was a lot of good stuff as well, including Miz winning the Intercontinental Title back (thanks for keeping it warm Roman), Elias beating Cena down, the lack of Undertaker vs. Cena being made (though that could change), some of the cameos (Henry and Godfather made me laugh) and of course Austin and Vince. It wasn't the worst show, but I was expecting a lot more and didn't get really close to it, which is rather disappointing. Still though, it could have been much worse.

### Results

Bayley/Sasha Banks/Mickie James/Asuka b. Absolution/Alicia Fox/Nia Jax – Bank Statement to Fox

The Miz b. Roman Reigns – Skull Crushing Finale

Bray Wyatt b. Matt Hardy – Sister Abigail

Titus Worldwide vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno went to a double DQ when all four brawled

Anderson and Gallows b. Revival – Magic Killer to Dawson

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# Rumor: Roman Reigns Named as Customer of Steroid Distributor

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/rumor-roman-reigns-involved-steroid-distribution-ring-miami/>

It's way, WAY too early to know if this is going anywhere, but if it's true I'd be stunned if he gets the title in New Orleans. With the TV deal coming up, I don't think WWE would want to pull the trigger on something like this.

That of course brings up the major problem: what if they postpone THIS TIME FOR SURE until XXXV and make us waste another year on this nonsense? I don't think I can take that again.