

Wrestlemania XXXII: HHH vs. Roman Reigns

Not the main event.

So it's off to the main events and we'll start with the match I actually think won't close the show. This is a really hard one to get into and the story continues to plague everything they're trying to do. Thankfully that seems to be one of the general consensuses: it's been the story they're telling and not the people themselves.

Here's the thing: Roman Reigns is going to get booed and he's going to get booed loudly. It doesn't matter what he does here but he's going to get booed out of the building. The match could be Steamboat vs. Savage II and the fans just will not accept it or care. They do not want Roman Reigns to be the main star of the company no matter what he does, even though he's done some better stuff in the last few months. HHH on the other hand has done some great mic work of his own to help set up this feud and I'm really buying the story they're going with.

The problem is I don't think they've done enough to make up for all the months of horrible and worthless stuff that Reigns has done. I know Reigns is a two time World Champion but I don't buy him in this spot at the moment. The story makes sense and almost everything has been good but it's not the conclusion I want out of this. Having this not go on last would be a huge help but it's not going to fix the underlying problem: people don't like Reigns.

As for the winner, I just can't picture Reigns losing, at least not if the match goes on last. HHH winning and then setting up a title match with someone else (maybe Dean) for the next pay per view could work, especially if Shane wins control of Raw and turns the tables on HHH as champion. If this goes on last though, Reigns wins with probably the fourth spear and 100,000 people boo very, very loudly. I'm not sure WWE is smart enough to realize that's going to happen but if they do, this isn't closing the show.

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Monday Night Raw – March 28, 2016: Go Home, Go Home, GO HOME!

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 28, 2016

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

It's the final Raw before Wrestlemania and things are almost entirely set in stone. The big question is whether or not anything major happens between now and Sunday, as there's still time for some big moves before we get into Dallas. There's always a chance that it could happen but the go home Raw's have been uneventful at times. Let's get to it.

Here's the Undertaker, who Cole calls the greatest of all time, to open things up. He gets right to the point (thankfully) and says that Shane's blood will be on Vince's hands, but Vince's blood may be on Undertaker's hands. This will NOT be his last Wrestlemania because the Cell is his

house.

Cue Shane to say that Undertaker is fighting to not lose while he's fighting to win. Shane is the agent of change that WWE has needed for a long time and no matter what happens, Shane will crawl down the aisle and stand in the middle of the ring to usher in a new era. Undertaker brings up legacies and Shane comes to the ring to get in his face. This talk doesn't worry him because Undertaker's legacy died two years ago at Wrestlemania.

Undertaker doesn't want to hear about this because Shane has belonged to his father since the day he was born. That sets Shane off for his now standard offensive flurry, which still has no effect. They head outside with Shane escaping a Last Ride through the table and hitting Undertaker in the head (hands) with a monitor. Shane goes to the top for the top rope elbow which barely grazes Undertaker's arm. However, since the New York fans are the smarkiest of smarky fans in the world, which translates to "we'll cheer ANYTHING", it's called awesome, despite being borderline sad. Shane leaves and Undertaker sits up.

Chris Jericho vs. Zack Ryder

This is fallout from Jericho ripping into Ryder for being a loser on the pre-show. Before the match, here's AJ Styles to interrupt. AJ still wants to face Jericho at Wrestlemania because that still hasn't been booked for some reason. Ryder gets in a quick rollup for two to start but Jericho sends him to the floor. Jericho charges into the knees in the corner and Ryder's middle rope dropkick puts Jericho in the corner. The Broski Boot is blocked by a Walls attempt but AJ starts a chant to make fun of Jericho, setting up a quick small package to give Ryder the pin at 1:55.

Jericho IMMEDIATELY hits a Codebreaker after the match to keep Ryder in his place. We get an old WCW style tantrum and Jericho agrees to the match.

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Non-title and Sasha Banks is on commentary. They trade armdrags to start with Charlotte getting the better of it as we take an early break. Back

with Becky running Charlotte over and Sasha getting to her feet. The distraction lets Ric trip Becky, setting up a big boot and Natural Selection to give Charlotte the pin at 6:28. Too much in the break to rate but Becky continues to look weak going into the title match.

Vince is in the back to say that he agrees the Cell is Undertaker's yard but Shane wants the yard, the house and the whole WWE Universe. Shane comes in to say yell at Vince for thinking he's the only one that can run Raw. This Sunday, Shane is letting out 40 years of frustration and taking the company from Vince, just like he took it from his dad.

Social Outcasts vs. Kane/Big Show

Barely a match as the Outcasts all come in for the DQ at 32 seconds.

The ring fills up with midcarders in the battle royal for the big brawl. Mark Henry, Kane and Big Show are left alone with Mark taking a double chokeslam. The Outcasts are chokeslammed at the same time.

We look back at Reigns attacking HHH and Stephanie last week.

Here are HHH and Stephanie, the former of which was announced as being on the way to the arena before the break. Stephanie orders all of us to get on our feet and show respect to the champ. HHH talks about how the largest crowd in history will be in Dallas this Sunday to see Reigns fall. It is the dream of every athlete to walk out on that stage and the dream of everyone here in this arena.

However, that's never going to happen because they just don't have the ability. Roman Reigns has that ability because he's a one in a million talent but this Sunday he's going to lose it all. We get a nice rant about how HHH's obsession with this business and how it's lead him to dominate this title for twenty years (not quite). That has allowed him to put on a suit and really run this business, only to have Reigns powerbomb him through that announce table four months ago.

All that did was reignite the fire in him though because maybe people had forgotten who he was. Now it's time for HHH to become the old Game again and destroy Reigns once and for all. Stephanie screeches for a bit and

here's Reigns to a lot of booing. Thankfully he doesn't say anything stupid but clears the ring, only to be booed even more.

The thing to remember here is this isn't a response to what Reigns has been doing for the last month but rather to what he's been doing for the last year and a half. The fans aren't going to forget all the stupid promos and illogical booking that we've been subjected to. This has been a good final push for Reigns and things could get better in the future but Wrestlemania is looking like a wash at this point.

Stephanie and HHH promise to fix things.

Here's New Day for a match but first of all they need to plug Booty0's, the official cereal of Wrestlemania. They also question why the League of Nations doesn't have their own cereal, with the theory being because it would suck. The fans LOVE New Day here, especially when Big E. praises New York pizza.

Kofi Kingston vs. Alberto Del Rio

Kingston starts fast and sends Del Rio outside for a quick concert. Back in and a charge misses, allowing Del Rio to hit his reverse superplex for two as we take a break. Kingston is still in trouble when we come back with Del Rio getting two more off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The top rope double stomp misses for Alberto and the SOS gets two. Kofi misses in the corner again and a quick double stomp puts Kofi down. No cover though as Del Rio would rather shout and pose, allowing the armbreaker to be countered into a rollup for the pin at 7:40.

Rating: C-. Not great here as I'm getting tired of this feud. There's a possibility that the titles have been cut out of the match to make it even less important than it already is, which was something you had to expect at some point. Kofi winning is a nice sign though as he's really turning back into the version from nine years ago who looked like he could be something very special.

Post match THE COACH, as in Jonathan Coachman from ESPN, makes a surprise appearance to announce that SportsCenter will be covering Wrestlemania all day. He even dances a bit for fun.

We recap the opening brawl.

Roman Reigns is in the back for an interview when the Dudley Boys interrupt. Yeah because two people from NEW YORK are going to get Reigns cheered. HHH comes in for the sneak attack and Reigns is destroyed.

Konor vs. Kalisto

Non-title. Konor gets in an early headlock but Kalisto speeds things up with his kicks, followed by a dropkick to Viktor. A quick springboard Salida Del Sol puts Konor away at 1:49.

Post match Ryback comes out for a staredown.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar for the hard sell. Heyman talks about being the advocate for the baddest beast on the planet today before hyping us on the fact that we're six days away. This year people have a once in a lifetime chance to see an athlete at the top of his game in Brock Lesnar. That's why they've been looking for the right lunatic to take on Lesnar at Wrestlemania XXXII and Dean Ambrose happens to be smarter than he's given credit for.

Dean has the opportunity to take some weapons and try to survive a no holds barred street fight against Brock Lesnar, which is the good news for Ambrose. However, the bad news is that he has a no holds barred street fight with BROCK LESNAR. Cue Dean with a wagon, which he fills with various "toys" from under the ring. Why he didn't have those in there in the first place isn't clear but he finds the barbed wire baseball bat and the chainsaw. After filling up the wagon, Dean leaves without even looking at Brock.

Paige vs. Emma

This is a preview match for the Total Divas (Paige/Alicia Fox/Brie Bella/Natalya) vs. what seems to be called Team Bad and Blonde (Lana/Naomi/Tamina/Summer Rae/Emma) for Sunday. Emma dropkicks Paige down to start and gets one off the former Emma Sandwich. The THIS IS MY HOUSE clothesline gets two for Paige but the other women get in an argument at ringside, allowing Lana to come in for a cheap shot to give Emma the pin

at 2:53.

Post match the Total Divas get beaten down until Eva Marie of all people comes out for the save. The fans boo her almost as bad as Reigns but the rest of the Total Divas don't seem impressed.

R-Truth comes up to Goldust and says it's every man for himself in the battle royal. Goldust doesn't care because they're not a team.

Snoop Dogg is being inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Sami Zayn/Sin Cara/Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens/Stardust/The Miz

The fans are WAY behind Sami as he starts with Miz. The arm work sets up a tag off to Owens but he tags out to Stardust instead. Off to Ziggler (in a shirt for some reason) to hold Stardust down with a front facelock (notice that they're being VERY safe this week) before superkicking Miz off the apron to take us to a break.

Back with Sin Cara coming in off the ropes for an elbow to Stardust's shoulder. The fans chant for Byron Saxton and then JBL as Stardust clotheslines Sin out of the air. Owens makes Stardust tag Miz as the CM Punk chants break out. Sami comes in to draw an OLE chant (at least it's about the match now) and gets stomped down by Stardust. That's enough of the heels in control as it's off to Ziggler for a lukewarm reaction. Miz gets in a cheap shot from the apron as Owens still won't come in. Ziggler gets stomped down even more and we take a second break.

Back again with Ziggler still in trouble as Miz puts on a chinlock. Now it turns into a NEW DAY ROCKS chant because the "smart" fans are surprised that a go home show doesn't have the most exciting action. Ziggler sends Stardust into the post and gives Miz the Fameasser, setting up the hot tag to Sami. Everything breaks down and Cara makes a blind tag, allowing Sami to dive onto Owens.

Cara's high cross body gets two on Stardust but the Swanton hits knees. Sami comes in again but walks into the Skull Crushing Finale which sets off the Parade of Finishers, capped off by a big Cara moonsault to Stardust. Now Owens comes in but the Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a

dropkick. Miz and Stardust want nothing to do with Owens now (makes perfect sense), allowing the tornado DDT and Helluva Kick to put Kevin away at 21:22.

Rating: C-. The match was dull but of course the focus is going to be on the crowd who couldn't to five minutes without having some big dive or flip to entertain them, meaning we're stuck with more announcers chants. I liked the basic story they went with here and that's the best thing about the match. Seeing Sami pin Owens was a great touch too, as I don't think he ever did that in NXT.

Usos vs. Dudley Boyz and the Divas tag are now on the USA portion of the pre-show. No word on where the battle royal will air.

Here's the Authority to wrap things up. Stephanie talks about how Reigns is going to fall and promises that there will be no new leadership next week. It's about time they acknowledged this for a change. HHH doesn't want to hear about him attacking Reigns from behind because there's too much at stake. This brings out Reigns for another brawl with Reigns getting the better of it until a bunch of guys (the League, Dudley Boyz and Stardust) come out to pull him off. This brings out some good guys and it's a big brawl. They're finally separated but Reigns does a big dive over the ropes to take out the pile to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. It's a not horrible go home show for a not horribly built Wrestlemania. The crowd had its moments here but it's pretty obvious that Sunday is going to be interesting and not in the best possible way. There's some good stuff going on but they better knock it out of the part with everything they're doing at the pay per view. Other than that, this was your standard go home Raw: not much action, a lot of pushing the pay per view, and little else. Oh and where are the Wyatts? Are they really just stuck in the battle royal? That's the best they can get?

Results

Zack Ryder b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

Charlotte b. Becky Lynch – Natural Selection

Kane/Big Show b. Social Outcasts via DQ when all four Outcasts were in the ring at once

Kofi Kingston b. Alberto Del Rio – Small package

Kalisto b. Konor – Salida Del Sol

Emma b. Paige – Pin after a kick from Lana

Sami Zayn/Dolph Ziggler/Sin Cara b. Kevin Owens/The Miz/Stardust – Helluva Kick to Owens

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Smackdown – March 24, 2016: Smackdown And Such

Smackdown

Date: March 24, 2016

Location: TD Banknorth Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

Brock is here for a rare Smackdown appearance so you know we're getting closer and closer to Wrestlemania. There are two shows left before the

biggest show of the year and things are ranging from hot to lukewarm at best so it should be interesting to see which one we get here tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Non-title and Becky Lynch is on commentary. We're not quite ready to go though as Charlotte promises to lead the WOO Revolution over Sasha and Becky in front of a record setting crowd in Dallas. Simple speech but rather efficient. Like any good heel champion, Charlotte is on the floor before anything can happen to her. Back in and Sasha flips her over for two before slapping the champ in the face.

Charlotte comes back with a kick to the face and a neckbreaker, giving us a good old fashioned WOO. We hit the chinlock before a big chop puts Banks down again. A Thesz press gets two on the champ but the double knees in the corner miss. They head outside for a minute and it's Sasha being whipped into Becky. Charlotte takes her back inside for the Figure Eight, only to be small packaged to give Sasha the surprise pin at 4:56.

Rating: C. Not a great match as they didn't have time but hopefully the intensity shown here is a good indication of what we're going to be seeing in Dallas. They're doing a good job of setting this up as a match where anyone can win, even though I can't imagine Becky having much of a chance. Good TV match here though and that's how you build to the big stuff.

Post match Becky gets in the ring for a Bex Plex to both of them, followed by Sasha giving Charlotte a Backstabber.

Here's New Day for their weekly chat. We're just ten days away from Wrestlemania XXXII and they'll be having a match against the League of Nations. The League is so boring that they're like the going to the DMV of WWE. If they were a Star Wars character, they would be the Jar Jar Binks of WWE. Or if they were another sports star they would be the Michael Jordan of baseball. As usual, this was all about how strong New Day sells the material instead of whatever they're actually saying.

Kofi Kingston vs. Sheamus

No Del Rio for some reason. Sheamus isn't playing around here and throws Kofi into the corner for an early stomping. It's not quite the Unicorn Stampede but Sheamus is hardly trained for such combat. Kofi gets back up for some stomping of his own to send Sheamus to the floor. A big standoff is teased but the power of Francesca II calms things down. Kofi gets tripped off the apron though and we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Rusev shouting in some insults. We hit the chinlock with Sheamus clearly calling some spots, one of which seems to be missing a middle rope knee drop. Things get even worse for Sheamus as he misses a charge into the post to start Kofi's comeback. There's the Boom Drop and Kofi follows with a flip dive over the top to take out Sheamus again. Back in and Sheamus grabs a suplex slam for two before going for a turnbuckle pad. Rusev offers a distraction so New Day chases him off, only to have Barrett's distraction set up the Brogue Kick for the pin on Kofi at 10:28.

Rating: C-. Kofi is getting better and better every week, to the point where I could easily see him going up to the main event after the New Day run is over. You have to give the League something before they get to the pay per view though and this was as fine as anything else, especially with them playing up the numbers advantage for the League.

Usos vs. Ascension

Viktor runs Jey over to start and it's off to Konnor for a chinlock. That goes as far as a first minute chinlock is going to go as Jey fights up and sends Konnor into the corner. Everything breaks down and a double superkick puts Viktor away at 1:37.

Post match the Usos put Viktor through a table.

The Dudley Boyz don't think much of the Usos as they're only two time Tag Team Champions. They've beaten up Rikishi and they could beat up the Wild Samoans, but here's Roman Reigns to interrupt. Reigns doesn't like the way Bubba is disrespecting his family so let's have a fight tonight.

Long video on Shane vs. Undertaker, the same one from Raw.

Dolph Ziggler/Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens/The Miz

Sami and Miz get things going as we have to hear about the other three guys being added to the Intercontinental Title match for the sake of making it way more of a mess than it needs to be. Sami works on the arm to start (there's a safe idea) before it's off to Ziggler for a rollup. Owens: "WE GET IT! YOU WENT TO COLLEGE!" Dolph's headlock slows things down but Miz puts a knee into his ribs to take over.

Owens comes in and eats a dropkick, only to run away from Zayn. He teases leaving again but this time Miz will have nothing to do with that and grabs Kevin's arm, allowing Zayn to get in a dive to take them out. Some elbows to the head have Owens in trouble and that's about it for this dream match. I would say save it for Wrestlemania but apparently we wanted a seven way ladder match including a guy who has won one match in nearly two years. Ziggler comes in and gets stomped in the corner before a catapult puts him on the floor.

We take a break and come back with Ziggler blocking the backplash with the only counter that people use for that move. The hot tag brings in Sami for his running clotheslines and a high cross body to Miz. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two as everything breaks down. Owens breaks up the Helluva Kick and a victory roll gets two on Miz. Both guys are down but now it's time for Owens to walk out, only to have Sin Cara, Zack Ryder and Stardust stop him. Back in and Miz gives Owens a Skull Crushing Finale, setting up a superkick and Helluva Kick for the pin on Miz at 13:57.

Rating: C+. That scene with Ryder, Cara and Stardust coming out to stop Owens from leaving sums up every problem this title match has. If for whatever reason we can't have Zayn vs. Owens, the best solution is to just add Miz and Ziggler to the mix. I'm not wild on it but it's as good of a story as we can get. The other three can't even get into a match on Smackdown and really do come off as people just there for the sake of being there. As usual, if you can eliminate something entirely and tell the same story, they're really not necessary.

Post match Stardust comes in with the Queen's Crossbow to Zayn. Ryder and Cara come in for the big brawl and it's Ryder of all people standing tall.

Recap of Roman Reigns vs. HHH/Stephanie on Raw.

Roman Reigns vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Reigns comes through the entrance again. Bubba immediately hits the floor to yell at the fans which is why he's such a great heel. Back in and a Superman Punch sends Ray right back out to the floor. The brawl heads outside and Ray is in even more trouble as Reigns slams him into the table over and over for a DQ at 1:52.

D-Von's save attempt earns him a Superman Punch and some steps to the shoulder. Reigns spears Bubba for good measure.

Goldust is painting his face in the bathroom when R-Truth comes in to call him partner. They're still not partners but Goldust denies coming down to help him on Monday. Somehow Truth knows that Goldust sleeps without clothes on so Goldust paints NO on Truth's forehead. Truth looks in the mirror. "ON! IT'S ON!"

The Lucha Dragons are in the back to talk about how they can leave Wrestlemania with a title each. Cara leaves and Ryback comes in to talk about how much bigger and stronger he is than Kalisto. He can bench press Kalisto with one arm and ate that much weight for breakfast this morning. Ryback deserves the Wrestlemania spotlight and Kalisto can settle for a flashlight. Kalisto says he'll win and leaves.

Tyler Breeze vs. AJ Styles

AJ starts with his striking sequence to send Breeze outside, setting up a springboard forearm. Breeze, who is announced for the Andre battle royal, knees AJ in the face but his superplex is broken up. Another Phenomenal Forearm is enough to pin Breeze at 2:03.

Here are Brock and Heyman to wrap things up. Heyman cuts off the speech by saying that his name is Paul Heyman and this is your main event of the evening. Brock is going to be your Wrestlemania moment, just like when he

conquered the Streak. That still gets people to boo. That brings Heyman to the no holds barred street fight at Wrestlemania, which means Dean can use anything he can get his hands on against BROCK LESNAR.

It can be a chair, a table or a kendo stick but it won't be enough. Now we have Mick Foley and Terry Funk handing Dean various weapons to use against Lesnar too. To shoot from the hip a bit, the only reason Funk and Foley are still alive is because Heyman's prayers continue to go unanswered. What Ambrose doesn't understand is that if Dean can get his hands on something, Brock can get his hands on as well. However, Brock can also get his hands on Dean and that's just going to end badly.

Heyman invites Dean out to fight right now but he gets the Wyatt Family (minus Harper) instead. Brock seems to like the idea of being surrounded but here's Dean to interrupt. Lesnar gets in a quick suplex to Rowan as Dean gets in, only to have Strowman take Brock's head off with a clothesline. Dean's distraction lets Brock suplex Strowman (first time for that I believe) before beating Lesnar down with the kendo stick. That's fine with Brock who pops up and gives him an F5 to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling wasn't great here but this was all about helping to set the stage for Wrestlemania. Things are really starting to shape up for the big night and they're doing a better job of setting it up than they did last year. There are still some major issues on the pay per view of course but they're doing what they can to fix some of them as fast as they can. This was a good enough building show and that's exactly what it needed to be.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Small package

Sheamus b. Kofi Kingston – Brogue Kick

Usos b. Ascension – Double superkick to Viktor

Sami Zayn/Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens/The Miz – Helluva Kick to Miz

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Reigns sent him into the announcers' table

AJ Styles b. Tyler Breeze – Phenomenal Forearm

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Monday Night Raw – March 21, 2016: And Then They Hit A Wall

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 21, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

The march of pain continues for Roman Reigns as we're in one of the smarkiest towns in the world. There are also less than two weeks until Wrestlemania so this is the time when the really heavy lifting for the show has to be done. It's going to be rather, shall we say, interesting to see how Reigns is greeted tonight so let's get to it.

This show is dedicated to Mary Katharine Stewart. I'm actually not sure who that is.

We open with the now traditional long recap of last week's show. I get

the idea of keeping us up to date but cut these things down.

Here's Stephanie to get things going. Apparently HHH isn't here tonight and you have 60 seconds to get to the box office for refunds. That absence is of course due to corporate responsibilities and NOT due to Roman Reigns attacking him last week. That's because Roman Reigns is stupid and opportunistic. How short sighted could he have been last week when he attacked HHH for revenge?

Cue Reigns to some VERY loud booing (expected of course). Stephanie goes into her patented voice but Reigns puts his hand over the mic and says the reason HHH isn't here is because he knows the beating that would be coming to him. At Wrestlemania, he's going into HHH and Stephanie's stadium and taking their title. Stephanie loads up the slap but Reigns blocks it with an ease that far more people should have when Stephanie pulls that arm back. That's it for Reigns, who again kept it short here. That's the best thing they could have done here and it worked far better than I was expecting.

Kevin Owens vs. AJ Styles

Non-title and a very smart choice for an opener. Owens takes him to a knee with a headlock but AJ pops up into the dropdown and dropkick. They head to the floor and Owens gets in a hard whip to the barricade as we take a break. Back with AJ fighting out of a chinlock and scoring with an enziguri to put both guys down. The Pele misses and Owens takes his head off with a clothesline. A nice rack neckbreaker gets two for Owens but Owens misses the Cannonball.

AJ comes right back with the AA into a backbreaker for the same. Styles can't get a top rope hurricanrana though and Owens debuts a frog splash for two. You know, because you debut a huge spot like that and have it get two. We get the ROH style slugout and AJ Peles him down again as we take a break.

Back again with AJ getting two more off his torture rack slam before heading up top. Owens is right there meet him, only to have AJ slip down into a sitout powerbomb with a nasty looking landing for two more. Cue Jericho though, only to have AJ grab the Calf Crusher anyway. That brings

Jericho to the apron to break the hold though and Owens gets a rollup for the pin at 19:20.

Rating: B+. This felt like an ROH match and that's the perfect way to start a show in front of this crowd. AJ losing is the right call and I was nervous that they would go for the 50/50 booking that has plagued them for so long. Thankfully they let these two beat the tar out of each other for a long time and the match worked as a result. Really good match but more importantly it was smart.

Post match Owens grabs the belt and says that everyone is wondering who will be facing him for the title at KO Mania. Cue Dolph Ziggler (DANG IT GET OUT OF HERE!) and Miz to argue with each other until Sami Zayn comes out. Miz calls him the skinny Seth Rogen as Owens leaves. Kevin says he'll go to the Authority and get a triple threat match set up for the title shot tonight.

Earlier today, Dean Ambrose was in a pub to talk about how far Lesnar was going to have to go to beat him at Wrestlemania. Terry Funk of all people comes in and puts Dean over before giving him a chainsaw. Dean of course turns it on and slices through a table.

Stephanie makes Owens' triple threat match for later.

We recap Shane returning last month to set up Undertaker vs. Shane. Various legends and Hall of Famers talk about how big it was, including Mick Foley, John Cena, Michael Hayes, Booker T., Chris Jericho, Edge, Steve Austin, Ric Flair and Jerry Lawler. They all think Shane is in over his head. You would think Shawn Michaels would have made an appearance here.

Here's the League of Nations for a match but first of all we have to see last week's beatdown of the New Day. This brings out New Day to call the League trash, complete with cards that call them trash. Kofi thinks Rusev has smelly feet and that the three of them would make a better set of kings than Barrett. That brings them to Sheamus, whose parents actually put the word SHAME in his name. Not to worry though because all of this could be cured with a simple bowl of Booty0's because New Day ROCKS.

Big E. vs. Rusev

Rusev drops straight to the floor at the bell but Big E. throws him back in for the one man Unicorn Stampede. A big stomp has Rusev in trouble as we take an early break. Back with Rusev holding a chinlock before nailing a nice one footed dropkick for two. New Day is out after a beatdown during the break. Cole thinks this could be the most physical match at Wrestlemania because Cole isn't that bright.

Big E. fights up again with the belly to belly but the Warrior splash hits knees. A Rock Bottom out of the corner drops Rusev for two and the fans are entirely behind New Day. Now the Warrior splash gets two and Woods is back up to start the brawl with the League. The Accolade is broken up with an electric chair but Big E. has to spear Sheamus through the ropes. That allows Kofi to kick Rusev in the head, setting up the Big Ending for the pin on Rusev at 11:03. Big E. gets a good reaction for the win.

Rating: C-. Good enough here but I'm worried that they might change the titles at Wrestlemania based on how many times the League has lost leading up to it. The key thing here though was the smart booking continues as they put out another match that people are going to care about and don't focus on something they're going to hate.

The Wyatt Family talks about rebirth and promises Dean Ambrose as a sacrifice tonight.

Here's Big Show to talk about the Andre Memorial Battle Royal. JBL thinks Show has the best chance to repeat as the winner. Well given that he's the only one who CAN repeat as the winner, you can't argue there. Show talks about Andre's legacy and how Andre was the greatest giant of all time. Last year it meant a lot to him to win the battle royal because he doesn't win a lot of battle royals (right).

Cue the Social Outcasts to say they're a combined Cinderella story. Axel says they're more like Voltron and the Outcasts attack. Show grabs Slater by the throat but gets beaten down until Kane comes out for the save. The Outcasts are dispatched and Show hugs Kane, only to stupidly pose on the ropes, allowing Kane to chokeslam him down.

Stan Hansen Hall of Fame induction announcement. This is another deserved one.

Chris Jericho vs. Fandango

Just get AJ out here to cause the big upset already. Jericho takes over to start of course but stops to yell about how Fandango never beat him at Wrestlemania. Fandango gets in a few shots but misses the top rope legdrop. Cue AJ for a distraction so Fandango can get in a small package for two. Jericho pops back up with the Codebreaker for the pin at 2:10.

AJ comes down for the fight but Jericho bails. Styles says he's competed all over the world except for one place, giving us a DRAMATIC POINT AT THE SIGN. We get the official challenge for Wrestlemania...which I could have sworn was already made.

Quick line from Mick Foley about how dangerous the Cell is.

Video on Shane's training for the Cell, including clips from more legends talking about how tough Shane is. They seem to think that Undertaker is going to kill him anyway.

Here's Kevin Owens to introduce the participants in the triple threat match for the #1 contendership.

Stardust vs. Sin Cara vs. Zack Ryder

Owens apparently got to hand pick these guys because he never told Stephanie who would be in the match. The announcers bury all three of them by asking why any of them deserve a title shot. Cara starts cleaning house to start as Ryder is sent to the floor. A slingshot ankle scissors gets two on Stardust but Ryder pulls them to the floor. Cue Sami, Ziggler and Miz to stare down Owens as the match is basically forgotten. A huge brawl breaks out and the match is thrown out at 3:40. No rating since so much was spent on Owens but the wrestling wasn't the point here.

Everyone beats Owens down and DO NOT TELL ME it's going to be a seven way match at Wrestlemania with three extra goons added in.

We look back at the opening segment.

Stephanie is thinking about leaving when Kevin Owens comes in to complain about what just happened. She gets annoyed at him calling it KOMania and makes a SEVEN WAY LADDER MATCH for the title. BECAUSE OF COURSE THEY ARE BECAUSE THE INTERCONTINENTAL TITLE IS A FREAKING JOKE THESE DAYS AND THEY'RE GIVING TITLE SHOTS TO PEOPLE THEY JUST SPENT A WHOLE MATCH BURYING BECAUSE IT'S A STUPID IDEA THAT THEY KEEP DOING EVERY SINGLE YEAR!

Stephanie (of course it's Stephanie) is leaving and HHH gets out of his car. They go to leave when Reigns appears and attacks HHH as Stephanie won't stop screaming. Doesn't she have a pointless ladder match to book?

Natalya vs. Charlotte

Non-title with Becky and Sasha bickering on commentary. Charlotte starts fast but gets knocked to the floor for a hard shot to the head. Back in and Charlotte gets two off a clothesline as the arguing continues. Charlotte hammers away in the corner but gets caught in a sitout powerbomb, setting up the Sharpshooter. A rope is quickly grabbed and Natural Selection puts Natalya away at 4:51.

Rating: D+. Not exactly Roadblock here but at least we got that good looking powerbomb in again. I could have done without the annoying chattering about Irish jokes and bling but that's how you do commentary these days. The match should be fine assuming they give it time though this was nothing interesting.

We look back at Dean and the chainsaw earlier.

R-Truth vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Bubba pounds him down to start and asks where Truth's boy Goldust is. Truth makes a quick comeback and hits a running splash in the corner but D-Von offers a distraction, allowing a big boot to put Truth away at 2:10.

Goldust comes out for a failed save so here are the Usos for the real save. The Usos load up a table but Bubba breaks it up.

Here's Vince to talk about the Cell and what might happen if Shane

somehow pulls off a miracle. We look back at last week's ending segment with Undertaker destroying Shane. Vince agrees with what Shane said about Undertaker last week because if Undertaker doesn't beat Shane, this is his last Wrestlemania. Well....that's a bit better I guess.

Dean Ambrose vs. Braun Strowman

Heyman is on commentary. Strowman hammers away to start but gets sent out to the floor, though not off his feet. The suicide dive doesn't put Braun down and now it's time for the beating. We hit the chinlock for a bit but Dean fights up and gets a sleeper, which seems to just annoy Braun more than anything else. Ambrose makes another comeback but can't hit Dirty Deeds. Instead he settles for avoiding a charge to send Braun shoulder first into the post. Dean grabs a chair and starts beating on Braun for the DQ at 6:04.

Rating: D+. This was fine and did exactly what it should have done: showed Dean against a monster and let us see what he can do against him without wasting Braun's monster aura. The match wasn't good or anything but that's what Braun is here for: to look like a big guy who can serve as a warmup for a match against Brock. They got the idea right here and it worked well enough.

Post match Dean hits him with the chair a few more times and scores with Dirty Deeds onto the steel. Some staring at Heyman ends the show.

Overall Rating: C+. They were rolling along and then hit one of the hardest walls I've ever seen. I really can't remember the last time I stopped caring about a show as hard as when they announced that seven man ladder match. Yes it's going to be a spectacle and yes it's going to have some big spots, but it goes against every bit of storytelling they've had in recent weeks. They don't have a roster to fill in a battle royal and they have a great story HANDED TO THEM with Zayn vs. Owens, but no let's go with the big mess because it's easy and requires less work.

The worst part though is the storyline explanation for this is "Stephanie felt like it." Nothing more and nothing less. Why should I care about some story they're putting together or anything for that matter when it continues to come down to "well the Authority wants this"? It's lazy

writing and bad storytelling, which is so much of a plague on this company.

Other than that though, this was actually quite a strong show as they kept things moving and avoided any major issues with the crowd. That was the key thing to the whole show: don't give the fans a reason or a chance to hijack things and it's clear that they pulled it off here. Good show overall and a needed show with less than two weeks before Wrestlemania but there were some major holes.

Results

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles – Rollup

Big E. b. Rusev – Big Ending

Chris Jericho b. Fandango – Codebreaker

Stardust vs. Sin Cara vs. Zack Ryder went to a no contest when all three attacked Kevin Owens

Charlotte b. Natalya – Natural Selection

Bubba Ray Dudley b. R-Truth – Big boot

Braun Strowman b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Ambrose used a chair

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Smackdown – March 17, 2016: Why Can't Raw Do That?

Smackdown

Date: March 17, 2016

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton

This is one of the three final episodes before Wrestlemania XXXII in April and things are...interesting. This past Monday saw the return of Roman Reigns, who showed some of the fire that made him a success near the end of the year. The question now though is how much of that will stick around and how much will be a return to his not so successful form. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Reign returning to attack HHH, resulting in the champ needing six staples to close the gash in his head.

Here's Reigns, again down the ramp which seems to be his new norm, to open things up. The fans aren't sure what to think of him to start but says that footage shows what HHH gets for running his mouth. Reigns believes in the big fight, which is what knocked HHH into next week. It's a good thing that HHH isn't in the building tonight because Reigns would beat him again just as badly. Not because he wants to you see, but because he can. At Wrestlemania in Dallas, Reigns is going to hold the title over HHH's body because he can and HHH needs to believe that.

This wasn't a great promo but above all else it was short. That's been Roman's big downfall: they leave him out there for so long that Reigns gets lost because he's just not that great of a talker. However, showing how strong of a fighter he is on Monday and then having him talk about it here in a three minute speech is the best path they can go with. If they can just avoid him being booed out of the building (remember that the next two Raw's are in Philadelphia and New York) before Wrestlemania,

things will be as good as they can be.

We look back at Chris Jericho splitting up the partnership with AJ Styles and then getting laid out by Styles on Monday (in what was apparently an improvised segment due to the Neville injury).

Styles says the fans can chant for whoever they want because this is WWE. This Monday felt so good...and here's Kevin Owens. Kevin thinks AJ sounds just like Sami Zayn with all this whining. Maybe they can have their own show on the WWE Network where they hold each other and cry. AJ talks about how Owens is just like Jericho with their insecurity. Owens says the easiest answer would be they're both from Canada but that's not what matters. It's the Intercontinental Title that really matters but AJ thinks it's more important that they're having a match tonight (BIG pop for that).

The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ranallo brings up the horribly tired Battle of Ohio idea for this match. Ziggler takes it to the mat for an early front facelock but Miz reverses into a small package. They fight over headlocks because there's almost nothing left for these two to fight over these days. Ranallo keeps up the lame references by bringing up Donald Trump and Rosie O'Donnell. Of all the people Trump is associated with and feuding with these days, the best he's got it Rosie O'Donnell?

Ziggler pulls Miz to the mat again and drops some elbows but gets sent chest first into the buckle as we take a break. Back with Miz getting two off a top rope ax handle and slapping on a body scissors. Ziggler fights up again with his running clotheslines and a neckbreaker, followed by a sunset flip for two. He takes too much time getting up though and it's time for the Figure Four. Ziggler is quickly in the ropes though and a superkick puts Miz away at 10:40.

Rating: C. These guys are on that dreaded list of people I do not need to see fight ever again. If the Battle of Ohio is really the best thing they can come up with for a quick story then it's clear that they need to move on with both guys. Hopefully the two of them are in the battle royal instead of squeezed into the Intercontinental Title match as has been

rumored as neither is interesting enough for that spot at the moment.

We look at Ryback challenging Kalisto for a US Title match at Wrestlemania.

Kalisto accepted the challenge.

We look back at Mick Foley giving Dean Ambrose the barbed wire baseball bat.

Earlier today, Dean was here in his hometown of Cincinnati and loves every bit of it. Brock Lesnar may have been trained to fight in the UFC but on the streets of this city, every day is Wrestlemania because you fight every day and night. Pressure like that makes diamonds and Brock better be ready because nothing hurts like an education. I love these on location promos as they give things such a sense of importance and realism.

Jackie Moore Hall of Fame video.

Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Goldust

D-Von gets a table out just a few seconds after the bell, drawing a very nice reaction from the crowd. The distraction lets Bubba send Goldust into the buckle a few times, all while calling Goldust a freak. After Bubba shouts about Goldust having face paint just like the Usos, Goldust starts a comeback with right hands, only to run into an elbow to the jaw. Goldust hammers away in the corner and scores with the bulldog for two. A quick D-Von distraction pays off though and Bubba kicks Goldust in the face for the pin at 3:23.

Rating: D. What are you expecting from a match that seems designed to just set up the Usos vs. Dudley Boyz match? Goldust and Bubba Ray Dudley being around in 2016 is some combination of amazing and sad, though the fact that they certainly didn't embarrass themselves out there is a good sign.

Post match R-Truth comes out for the save but gets beaten down as well. The Usos come out for the real save.

Here's Charlotte (dressing more like Nikki Bella every day) for a face to face meeting with Becky Lynch and Sasha Banks. Charlotte gets right to the point by saying she's known the two of them (not out here yet) for most of her adult life. They've done it all together but she wouldn't be standing here today if not for the two of them. Becky comes out on her own and Charlotte isn't sure what to think of it, so here's Sasha a few seconds later. Well that was kind of pointless. Charlotte: "You finally showed up." Sasha: "Child please, I am not on your schedule."

Charlotte brings up their past in NXT and tells a story about calling her dad when she met the two of them. Ric thought they sounded like the Horsemen but Charlotte thought they were the Horsewomen. Over time she started to accept the idea but now she owes Ric an apology because these two could NEVER be the Horsewomen.

That's enough for Becky, who goes on a rant about how you can call her whatever she wants but at Wrestlemania she's going to be the one ripping Charlotte's arm off and becoming Divas Champion. Sasha says sorry boo boos (yes boo boos) but she's the one who took the NXT Women's Title from Charlotte and the only one who hasn't been beaten in WWE. Charlotte watches as Becky and Sasha argue over jewelry but they quickly go after the champ, sending her running off. Another good segment here as I want to see the match more than I did coming in.

Here's New Day for Kofi Kingston's match but they're swinging trash bags. After looking at a video of their beatdown, Woods says they're fine after that beatdown because they've been eating their Booty's. Now some people might think that they couldn't do anything after a beating like that, which sends Big E. into a perfect 1980s style over the top promo that you see when someone is pretending to be pretending to be a wrestler.

That brings them to the trash bags, which represent a member of the League of Nations each. Each one is punted out of the ring, accompanied by a good imitation of each member. The challenge for a three on two Tag Team Title match is accepted for Wrestlemania, which certainly should be interesting to see.

Kofi Kingston vs. King Barrett

Kofi takes him straight into the corner for a one man Unicorn Stampede, meaning it's time for a seven man staredown as we take a way too early break. Back with Kofi firing off the kicks to the legs but getting distracted by the League, allowing Barrett to kick him in the face to take over.

We get some clubbing (yes clubbing I say) forearms to the back for two, only to have Kofi come back with a spinning cross body for the same. Winds of Change is countered with a backflip into a DDT (sweet move) but Woods and Del Rio get on the apron. Everything breaks down on the floor and it's Kofi grabbing a rollup (and trunks) for the pin on Barrett at 7:51.

Rating: C. Another simple match here and it's amazing to see how easily New Day is slipping into their face role. They haven't officially turned yet but you know it's going to come the night after Wrestlemania at the very latest. Kofi is so smooth in the ring and I'd love to see him get a strong singles run after New Day breaks up one day.

Dean is in a bar and talks how much you grow up here. You start thinking about the fights you've won and the fights you've lost, but above all else you start thinking about fighting for pride. At Wrestlemania, he's bringing Cincinnati with him and Lesnar better be ready.

Long recap of Vince, Shane and Undertaker from Raw.

The Social Outcasts are sitting on the apron and promise to be the first team to win the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal together. That idea lasts all of three seconds (the amount of time between Dallas saying it and Slater starting to talk) before they argue over who will be winning.

Cue Dean with a kendo stick to hammer all four of them (drawing your required Cincinnati Reds reference), sending the Outcasts running. Dean has heard that Brock is going to be in Boston next week for Smackdown because everyone knew he wasn't coming to Cincinnati. If Brock is going to be here next week, Dean will be right there with him for the fight that Brock walked away from on Raw. More good stuff here.

AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. We start fast with AJ's drop down into the dropkick as Lawler makes fun of Ranallo calling everything AJ does phenomenal. The springboard forearm is countered into a gutbuster and the backplash crushes Styles. We take a break and come back with fighting out of Chinlock City and blocking another backplash with raised knees. Owens: "Ranallo shut up! I can hear you from here you idiot!"

AJ gets in the running forearm to a seated Owens and sends him outside for a slingshot forearm. Back in and Owens' package piledriver slam (called a Blue Thunder Bomb by Ranallo, which isn't exactly what I would call the move) gets two but AJ kicks him in the head. They slug it out with AJ getting the best of it until he misses a spinning backfist and eats a superkick.

The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered and AJ actually torture racks him into a spinning powerbomb for two. I always love seeing a surprise move like that as it keeps you from getting bored with the same stuff over and over. AJ heads up but has to knock Owens off the top, only to have Jericho come out to break up the Phenomenal Forearm. Styles takes WAY too long getting back inside and it's the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 11:43.

Rating: B. This was getting really good until the ending but that worked well too. Styles losing is fine here as Jericho cost him the fall to make sure it wasn't clean. They've done a very good job of making AJ look like a big deal and it's even better when Owens gets a nice win as well. Really nice main event here and I'd love to see them get more time in a big match later.

Post match Jericho gives AJ a Codebreaker and mocks the AJ STYLES chants to end the show. Jericho continues to nail this heel run like he hasn't in years.

Overall Rating: B-. YES. This is the kind of show that WWE has been needing for a long time now as it actually felt like they were setting up something special at Wrestlemania. You had nearly every match get a strong build (save for the Cell and they're messing that enough up on Raw

every single week) and now I want to see more of the matches than I did coming in. This might not have been the highest quality show but it was an important one given how horrible the build has been to this point.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. The Miz – Superkick

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Goldust – Big boot

Kofi Kingston b. King Barrett – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Monday Night Raw – March 14, 2016: The Mad Scramble

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 14, 2016

Location: Energy Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

This is one of the final three Raw's before Wrestlemania and things are

starting to get interesting. The question though is what to do with Roman Reigns. It's pretty clear that the fans don't want to cheer for him but at some point they either need to change the main event or accept the crowd reactions. Let's get to it.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Rusev/Alberto Del Rio

Woods says there's no stopping this New Day train and they've had a good time celebrating on Twitter. After shilling the cereal box (Kofi: "This is a real thing you can get on WWE.com!"), Big E. talks about having some Kim Kardashian inspired gluteal workout DVDs. Kofi is actually the odd man out here for a change.

The announcers explain the Freebird Rule as Rusev and Big E. shove each other around to start. The fans want Lana but Rusev laughs them off, only to get caught in the abdominal stretch, complete with a quick spanking. There's the Unicorn Stampede before Big E. throws Woods into Rusev's face. Rusev kicks him away and brings in Del Rio who suplexes Big E. for two. A Backstabber gets two more before Woods gets kicked in the face as well as we take a break.

Back with Woods caught in Rusev's bearhug, followed by Del Rio slapping on a chinlock. As usual the League is burning up the mat with this offense. Woods kicks him in the leg and knees Alberto in the face, allowing for the hot tag to Big E. The Warrior Splash gets two and everything breaks down with Woods DDTing Rusev. Del Rio double stomps Big E. to the floor and Rusev kicks Woods in the face for two. Everything breaks down and Kofi goes after Barrett, allowing Woods to roll Rusev up with a handful of trunks for the pin at 13:40.

Rating: C. The match was dull at times but a lot of that is due to the League. New Day is awesome but there's only so much you can do with a team whose entire gimmick is "we're from other countries." You would think this ends things but since this is WWE, the odds are that they'll keep going a bit longer.

Post match the League destroys New Day for a long time, which would seem to set up another match at Wrestlemania.

Here's Dean Ambrose with something to say. After seeing the false finish from Roadblock, Ambrose says he's upset that he isn't here tonight as the WWE World Champion. One thing is for sure though: HHH is more sore tonight than he's ever been. That brings Dean to the Road to Wrestlemania but this brings out Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar. Heyman gives Brock a huge introduction but Dean wants Paul to unleash the Beast.

That's not a good business move though as it would eliminate one of the biggest matches at Wrestlemania. You don't want to lose the main event of Wrestlemania, because any match that Brock Lesnar is in is the main event. Heyman says he'll see Dean in twenty nights and leaves but Brock heads towards the ring. Dean pulls out a crowbar and Brock circles the ring, only to wisely leave before getting hit in the head with a steel crowbar.

Ryback vs. Sin Cara

Cara is in black compared to Kalisto's white with the mask making him look like a cat. Ryback throws him down to start and does the Thesz press, followed by a big backdrop. The squashing continues with a hard clothesline for two before it's off to the chinlock. Cara low bridges him to the floor and gets in a suicide dive, only to have a dive caught in the Shell Shock. A second Shell Shock wraps this up at 4:17.

Rating: D+. Total squash but at least they're finally getting somewhere with Ryback. It's even better as they're getting closer to splitting up the Dragons, which has been needed for months now. Hopefully this sets up the title match at Wrestlemania, which is pretty obviously the next step and maybe it can even be a singles match.

Post match Ryback says that's what happens when a big guy faces a little guy. On top of that though, he'd like a US Title shot at Wrestlemania. Well to be fair, he did just beat Sin Cara. That better make him the #1 contender.

Here's a strutting Stephanie McMahon who brings out HHH for some bragging about winning on Saturday. It was so much fun crushing the fans' hope at Roadblock because everyone has hope. It starts in high school when you're ready to take over the world but then you get married and get a job where

hope kicks in. You hope for a raise or a promotion but when you don't get it, you're the last person to be blamed.

Then people like the guy in the front row goes to the bar to drink and blame the authority above them because nothing can ever get better. Then you start hoping for the lottery but then thirty years go by and you might get a watch. By this point everything is falling apart and you wind up in a home drooling on yourself. People like that cheer for Roman Reigns because they hope that he can win overcome the Authority and take the WWE World Title at Wrestlemania. He's going to fail though, just like all of your lives, because the Authority always wins. This brings out....Dolph Ziggler?

Dolph gets right to the sucking up to the fans, which Stephanie says is very Cena-esque of him. Stephanie knows Dolph is good but he's not all that great. He's never going to quit because he's tired of the fans being insulted. The people live through Ziggler and Ambrose because they were screwed by the system, the Authority's system. They tease firing him but HHH says that's not how this works because the Authority knows Ziggler is beloved.

HHH offers a chance at Ziggler joining the Authority but Dolph would never join forces with a corrupt boss and his stupid wife. There's the big slap but Ziggler still won't quit. Stephanie makes Ziggler an offer: if he can win any one match tonight, he can have any match he wants at Wrestlemania (save for the World Title match of course). The match is against HHH, albeit non-title.

Why am I watching Dolph Ziggler get a match against HHH with twenty days to go before Raw? I know Ziggler is still kind of popular but does anyone really think this is the best option they have? Are they that scared of putting Reigns on TV this close to Wrestlemania? You would think they would change things around if that's how bad it's gotten but for some reason they seem dead set on having Reigns take the title and get his big glory moment, assuming of course that he actually wins the thing.

Sami Zayn vs. The Miz

Kevin Owens is on commentary of course. Sami sends him to the floor but

has to bail out of the big dive. We take a break and come back with Sami fighting out of a double arm crank, only to walk into a DDT for two. Sami starts his comeback with the clotheslines and sends Miz to the floor for the big flip dive. Owens offers a distraction but Miz actually takes him on, allowing Sami to hit the Helluva Kick for the pin at 7:17.

Rating: C-. Way too much of this was in the break but it was much more about storytelling than anything else and at least Miz lost. The Intercontinental Title match has the potential to be a mess, mainly because they seem intent to add Miz to the match despite his lone win being that minute and a half pin on Zigler a few weeks back.

We look back at the League beating New Day down.

The League wants one more match with New Day at Wrestlemania where it won't be a comedy.

Naomi/Tamina vs. Alicia Fox/Brie Bella

Lana comes out for an early distraction, allowing Naomi to get in a cheap shot on Alicia. Tamina cranks on her neck but it's off to Brie for the worst YES Kicks she's ever done, which is covering a lot of ground. The BRIE MODE knee hits Tamina and a middle rope Bella Buster gets two as Naomi makes the save. Everything breaks down and Lana offers a distraction, allowing Tamina and Naomi to hit a powerslam/neckbreaker combo for the pin on Brie at 2:41.

Alicia goes after Lana but walks into a double superkick.

The Social Outcasts still for Burger King.

Lana wants the Divas Title when Paige comes in to say Lana hasn't even had a match yet. If Lana wants a test against a real Diva, Paige would be happy to oblige. This brings in Naomi and Tamina to say Paige shouldn't run her mouth.

Charlotte talks about how she knew Sasha and Becky before they were Sasha and Becky. She can remember holding Sasha's hair back before Sasha's first match because Banks was so nervous. Charlotte can remember Becky being so nervous that she had to be calmed down. Ric is very amused by

all this and promises that Charlotte is walking out as champion. This was nice and it's a good idea to add something personal to the three way. These women have a past and it would be stupid to not go somewhere with it.

Usos vs. Adam Rose/Bo Dallas

The Dudley Boyz are on commentary and talks about not using tables as a crutch. A long string of superkicks put the Outcasts down and the Superfly Splash puts Dallas away at 1:56.

Dean is in the back with his crowbar when Mick Foley comes in. He knows Dean doesn't have that thing because he loves baseball so why is he doing all this? Dean asks if Foley was afraid when he was on top of that Cell with the Undertaker. Foley: "You mean right here in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania?"

Foley was afraid but he was up there because that's what he does. Dean: "I'm Dean Ambrose and this is what I do." Foley is sick of hearing about Suplex City and would love for Dean to do something about it. Therefore, he has a present for Dean. Foley hands Dean a box and leaves, allowing Dean to pull out the baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire. Again good stuff, but I hope Foley has something else to do besides this match. Ambrose vs. Lesnar doesn't need help so why waste what Foley can add here?

Dolph Ziggler vs. HHH

Non-title. Cole says this is HHH's first match on Raw in nearly three years, which you can add to his list of inaccurate statements that are intended to make him sound smart. Ziggler headlocks him down to start and holds onto it for a good while until HHH gets in an elbow to the jaw. A hard whip puts Ziggler into the barricade and we take a break. Back with HHH working on the arm via an armbar and its flying cousin.

The jumping knee to the face gets two and HHH drops the knee to the head for two more. Ziggler is sent to the floor and into the steps for a big crash as the arm is being destroyed. HHH goes to the middle rope for the sole reason of diving into a raised boot (haven't seen that stupid spot

in a long time) and it's time for the comeback.

The superkick is blocked but the Pedigree is countered so Ziggler settles for two off the Fameasser. You can hear the crowd getting into this. Ziggler gets two off the running DDT but runs into the spinebuster for no cover, though we do get a spot call. A very quick superkick (the called spot) gets two and HHH goes to the outside for a breather. Back in and the Zig Zag is countered, setting up the Pedigree for the pin at 17:29.

Rating: B-. Better than it should have been, especially for what was little more than a long practice session to get HHH back in ring shape. The problem here is that Ziggler isn't someone who is going to get interest in a match like this because no matter how you look at it, he's still Dolph Ziggler. Good match though.

Post match here's Roman Reigns coming down the aisle for no apparent reason, though threats of death by booing could be a possibility. The booing is there but it's not as bad as it's been in the past. Reigns destroys HHH around the ring and beats him into the announcers' table just like HHH did a few weeks ago. HHH gets knocked along the outside and heads to the technical area. They head to the back where HHH is bleeding from the side of the head. Reigns breaks a TV monitor over his head and some wrestlers finally get him out of there.

Jackie Moore Hall of Fame video.

Goldust is walking through the back (because he's just there in wrestling gear every week) when he runs into a penguin. Of course it's R-Truth, but he doesn't know they're in Pittsburgh (the Pittsburgh Penguins are a hockey team if that makes no sense). See, when penguins meet their mates, they're mates for life. Therefore, R-Truth wants Goldust to be his tag partner for life. That's another no from Goldust. R-Truth: "That's cold."

Chris Jericho comes out for his match but first he has to insult the fans for cheering AJ Styles. Last week Jericho had to show AJ who his daddy was because Jericho is the really phenomenal one.

Chris Jericho vs. Neville

Jericho starts fast and sends him out to the floor for a break less than a minute in. Back with Neville hurricanrana Jericho for two but coming up limping. Jericho rolls him up for two before shoving the referee for the DQ at 4:50. No rating due to the commercial of course.

Post match Jericho tells the fans to chant for AJ Styles so here's AJ with a forearm, now called the Phenomenal Forearm.

Here's Vince to wrap things up. Vince has his entrance done twice for some reason before talking about how Shane could come out here the night after Wrestlemania and talk about how it's a new era in WWE. Everything will change because it's a new reality but that reality is going to be a nightmare. However that's not going to happen because Vince has the ultimate instrument of destruction named the Undertaker.

After a nearly three minute entrance, Vince tells Undertaker to never put his hands on him again (referencing a few weeks back). Undertaker takes off the hat and coat so Vince apologizes for bringing it up again. Vince knows that Undertaker doesn't mind doing the devil's work like ramming Shane McMahon into the steel and leaving his spirit in a pool beneath his feet. Some people call it an unholy alliance but Vince calls it best for business. Cue Shane and his orange shoes to say that he'll never stop coming at Undertaker no matter how long it takes.

Undertaker grabs the mic and says it still won't be enough. Undertaker's legacy, even more than Wrestlemania, is his fists. Shane agrees that Undertaker is a legend but he doesn't understand why Undertaker is dancing like Vince's puppet. Undertaker says no one controls him but Shane says Undertaker is being Vince's....well I think you know what he said. The fight is on and amazingly enough Shane's punches have almost no effect. Vince shoves Shane into a chokeslam before running away from Undertaker to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. Well that was something. It's like they suddenly remembered that Wrestlemania is in less than three weeks but forgot that they haven't done jack yet. Some of the stuff on there is fine (Brock vs. Dean) and can help fix a lot of the issues so it's not a total loss, but stuff like HHH vs. Reigns is firmly in car wreck territory. The midcard

stuff is better but the two main events are absolute disasters at this point. This show could be one of the biggest disasters in years unless they pull off a miracle (which they could). Right now it really does feel like they've run out of ideas and are throwing in whatever they can to make this work, which is almost never a good idea.

Results

New Day b. Rusev/Alberto Del Rio – Rollup with a handful of trunks to Rusev

Ryback b. Sin Cara – Shell Shock

Sami Zayn b. The Miz – Helluva Kick

Tamina/Naomi b. Alicia Fox/Brie Bella – Powerslam/neckbreaker combination to Fox

Usos b. Adam Rose/Bo Dallas – Superfly Splash

HHH b. Dolph Ziggler – Pedigree

Neville b. Chris Jericho via DQ when Jericho shoved the referee

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New Column: Roadblock Preview

Simple idea this week.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-roadblock-preview/>

Wrestling Wars Podcast Episode 41

The bitterness returns as we look at the drek that was this week's Raw.

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-41-so-much-depression-and-cussing-as-kb-and-myself-try-to-figure-out-why-we-subject-ourselves-to-wwehey-at-least-there-is-nxt-right/>

New Column: Road Work To Be Done

I've been asked to talk about Roman Reigns vs. HHH and the Vince McMahon/Shane McMahon/Undertaker stuff so here's a column about both of them (in different sections) plus some other news that makes me shake my head.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-road-work-to-be-done/>

Monday Night Raw – February 22, 2016: Here Comes The Wrestlemania Build

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 22, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's a big night for Raw as we're done with Fastlane and have less than six weeks before the biggest night of the year. In addition to that we also have the presentation of the first ever Vincent J. McMahon Award and the fallout from Brock Lesnar attacking Dean Ambrose before the show started tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the triple threat main event from last night with Reigns pinning Ambrose to earn the title shot.

Opening sequence.

Cole tells us about Brock attacking Dean as he got to the arena earlier today and we see the video. Ambrose was put in a neck brace and driven away in an ambulance.

Vince McMahon comes out to present the Vincent J. McMahon Sr. Legacy of Excellence Award (which seems to be the same trophy that was given to Hornswoggle for winning a video game tournament a few years back). McMahon talks about his family's history of presenting sports entertainment for over 100 years and how it was all about a legacy. That's the kind of person we're honoring tonight so Vince brings out the first recipient: Stephanie McMahon.

Stephanie comes out to a chorus of boos as Vince tries to tell her how

much she deserves this award. She didn't expect to win but she happens to have a speech prepared. Stephanie starts talking about how much of an honor this is but how she couldn't do this without her husband...and here's SHANE MCMAHON of all people to interrupt. The place goes NUTS at this and actually does a big old YES chant for the white haired Shane. Vince asks for a hug or a handshake but Shane isn't interested.

Shane seems genuinely choked up as he thanks the fans. It's quickly off to the reason he's here though: this Award, which Stephanie doesn't deserve. Stephanie rips into him a bit but Shane says she really doesn't know. Apparently Stephanie and HHH have been running this company into the ground, such as the stock price, the ratings and all of the injuries. Stephanie calls Shane a quitter so Shane asks if Vince wants to tell her. Years ago, Vince screwed up big time and Shane was there to save things.

Shane was able to take some time off but he never lost his place in line. The reason Stephanie has gotten this far is because Shane let it happen. Stephanie doesn't buy this but Vince looks...somewhere between annoyed and terrified. Stephanie offers Shane a spot at Wrestlemania this year but Vince cuts her off to talk to his son. Vince asks her to leave but Shane says it's all true because at the time it was best for business. She finally leaves but not before saying she'll never forgive Shane for screwing this up.

Vince offers to give Shane another big check to make this go away but this isn't about money. Every morning, Shane wakes up and is so glad to have his freedom. This is about legacy though because the McMahon Family with Shane's children now the fifth generation. Shane finally gets to the point: he wants control of Monday Night Raw. Vince says it's not that easy because the company is in a different place now. Shane wants to make sure that there's a generation for the future.

That just ticks Vince off but he has an idea. He'll give Shane what he wants if Shane has one match on one night. However, if Shane loses, he loses possession of anything he has over Vince's head. The deal is on so Vince says something that has to be censored. Shane goes to leave but Vince stops him to name the specifics. Naturally the match is at Wrestlemania and the opponent is.....the Undertaker, inside the Cell.

Neville/Lucha Dragons vs. New Day

Kalisto and Woods get things going and Xavier is sent to the floor as we take a break. Back with Kalisto coming in to work on Woods' arm before it's off to Big E. for a belly to belly on Neville. The Unicorn Stampede keeps Neville in trouble and Kofi nails a running boot to the face. Kofi's dropkick keeps Neville down and Woods gets two as we take another break.

Back again with Big E. staying on Neville and standing on his wrist to keep Neville away from making the tag. Woods gets backdropped face first onto the steps, allowing Neville to kick Kofi away and make the tag off to Sin Cara. Everything breaks down and Cara hits a springboard back elbow to drop Kofi.

A standing Lionsault gets two on Kofi with Big E. making the save, only to get kicked to the floor for a Neville 450 from the apron. Woods does a springboard off Neville's back onto Woods, leaving Kofi to avoid a Swanton Bomb, tear at Cara's mask and hit Trouble in Paradise for the pin on Cara at 15:30.

Rating: C+. Fun match here, though it's a bit overly long with the extra break not really adding anything. You had to know that was coming after the long opening segment though so there really wasn't a big surprise. New Day certainly wasn't face here and that's probably better for them at this point. Let them drop the belts to someone (new hopefully) and then let them turn face after Wrestlemania.

Roman Reigns doesn't have an update on Dean Ambrose but is ready for his one on one fight at Wrestlemania against HHH. That night, it's all about his fist and his heart. Reigns likes his odds.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar with something to say. Heyman says this will be the main event of the evening even though Brock isn't even in his wrestling gear. It doesn't matter what Lesnar is doing because he's the main event. Last night Dean Ambrose and Roman Reigns got beaten up by Brock Lesnar. If the Undertaker tapped out to Brock Lesnar, Roman certainly was going to as well.

However, Dean Ambrose saved his buddy and turned a wrestling match into a street fight. This ticked off Brock Lesnar so earlier today, Brock attacked Dean as he arrived at the arena. After looking at the clip from earlier, Heyman says there is no shield that can protect Dean from Brock Lesnar. HHH and Roman Reigns can kid themselves all they want by saying they're the main event when Brock is on the card. Brock needs a new Wrestlemania opponent so Heyman issues a warning to anyone in the locker room.

Go to the hospital tonight and visit Dean to ask what happens when you invoke the wrath of Brock Lesnar. They go to leave and of course, RIGHT ON TIME, here's the ambulance with Dean inside. Cole: "What is going on?" Man you called the 1999 Royal Rumble. I'm thinking you should know this.

Dean rips the neck brace off as he crawls down the ramp towards the ring. Brock runs him over with a single shot and keeps walking to the back. Makes sense. Dean grabs a mic and says he's indestructible, which Brock is going to find out the hard way. We get the challenge for Wrestlemania in a no holds barred street fight. Brock comes back to ringside for an F5 on the floor, which Heyman means is a yes.

Usos vs. Ascension

Before the match, here are the Dudley Boyz to interrupt. Bubba apologizes for what they did a few weeks back, even though they're the most decorated team in wrestling history. Their legacy won't be defined by a piece of furniture but rather by their accomplishments. That's why you'll never see a table again. Speaking of accomplishments, maybe the Usos' daddy (Rikishi) should have spent more time around them instead of going all over the place.

That's not much of an insult but it allows Ascension to jump them from behind to start. Konor kicks Jimmy in the face and Viktor drops a fist for two. Jey gets the hot tag a few seconds later as house is cleaned. Viktor dives into a double superkick and the Superfly Splash is good for the pin at 1:57.

Here's Chris Jericho with something to say. He's heard about AJ Styles for years and then last night he was defeated by Styles for the second

time. He'd like AJ to come out and see him face to face. Cue Styles, who Jericho thanks for proving something last night. AJ has proven that he belongs here in the WWE and he has everything it takes to go to the top and become a champion. Jericho knows that AJ is phenomenal....and here are the Social Outcasts.

Slater thinks this is pathetic but Bo finds it really beautiful. Slater: "Bo, I was being sarcastic." Dallas: "Oh yeah. Me too." The Outcasts don't buy Y2AJ as a thing but Jericho tells Slater to shut up. They weren't going to be a team but they'd be glad to if it means getting the Outcasts out of here.

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles vs. Heath Slater/Curtis Axel

This is joined in progress with AJ dropkicking Slater and hitting the basement forearm. Slater powers out of the Clash by sending Heath to the apron, only to have the other Outcasts interfere to take over. Axel stomps him down in the corner and it's back to Slater for a chinlock. That goes nowhere and it's the hot tag off to Jericho as everything breaks down. AJ springboard forearms onto Slater, leaving Jericho to make Axel tap to the Walls at 4:02.

Rating: C-. Maybe New Day vs. AJ/Jericho for the Tag Team Titles at Wrestlemania? I've certainly heard worse ideas so why not get them on there and give AJ a quick title? I mean, it's not like there's a long line to get to the top of the tag division. If nothing else, Kofi vs. AJ could be quite the entertaining segment.

We recap the long opening segment.

HHH tells Stephanie to shake off what happened earlier. Stephanie gets to go tell Roman something to make herself feel better.

Post break Roman goes to check on Dean but Stephanie stops him to make Reigns vs. Sheamus for later. The League isn't happy with the way Reigns is getting all this attention for Wrestlemania and it would be a shame if they hurt Reigns and took him out of Wrestlemania.

Goldust brings R-Truth a cake to make up for what happened last night. R-

Truth doesn't think much of it but the cake has yellow frosting on chocolate, just like them. Goldust knew Truth would turn him down and that's exactly why they would be great partners. That fascinates Truth, but he's not going to smash the cake in Goldust's face. Actually he does just that, again much like a heel would. Goldust eats some of the cake.

Ryback/Big Show/Kane vs. Wyatt Family

Bray is swapped in for Strowman this time. Harper puts his mask on Byron before the match and for some reason Saxton can't speak. This is joined in progress with Kane and Bray trading big shots before it's off to Ryback vs. Harper. Ryback slugs away in the corner and brings in Kane, who eats a quick dropkick. JBL goes on about Hansen and Brody before Cole brings up JBL vs. Austin in a beer drinking contest at the first modern Saturday Night's Main Event.

Ryback cross bodies Rowan and hits two running knees in the corner. A clothesline sends Rowan to the floor and we take a break. Back with Harper getting two off a Michinoku Driver before Rowan drops an elbow on Ryback. The missile dropkick puts Rowan down and a hot tag brings in Big Show to clean house. Rowan gets chokeslammed but Strowman low bridges Show to the floor. Harper kicks away at the face but his sleeper is broken up, allowing the hot tag to bring in Kane. Everything breaks down and Ryback walks out, leaving Bray to hit Sister Abigail for the pin on Kane at 12:27.

Rating: C-. So the big goal of that whole thing was to turn Ryback heel? Thank goodness they jobbed the Wyatts out for the sake of that because they couldn't have done anything like this otherwise. It's a nice enough story, but Ryback needs to not look like a loser who can't win the big one before I'm going to care about him turning heel.

After a break, Ryback says he's tired of being in tag teams because it's about him. This isn't anything personal with Big Show or Kane. He's just tired of not getting the spotlight, especially after he won the match last night. It's time to grab the brass ring and break the glass ceiling.

Sasha Banks vs. Naomi

It's still a thing. Sasha works on the arm to start and blocks a backslide attempt, only to get kicked in the ribs. Tamina pulls Sasha to the floor and we take a break. Back with Naomi still in control until Becky Lynch comes out to deal with Tamina. A quick Bank Statement makes Naomi tap at 6:45. No rating due to the break in the middle but it was fine.

Post match, here's Charlotte dressed like a Bella. Charlotte is still emotional after beating Brie Bella last night, even though there needs to be a #1 contender. She loves to see the two of them getting so close. "BECKY WATCH OUT!" Becky believes that Sasha is going to attack her and Charlotte laughs because it's clear that they don't trust each other. The next few weeks are going to be fun.

After another recap of the opening, Stephanie tells Vince that she refuses to work for Shane. Vince calls it a calculated risk and Stephanie seems a bit calmer.

We get the Godfather Hall of Fame announcement.

Roman Reigns vs. Sheamus

Sheamus goes after the arm that Brock had in the Kimura last night and Roman is in early trouble. Roman comes back with a headbutt and some right hands in the corner as the fans boo loudly. It's back to a regular armbar until Roman fires off right hands to the head. A big clothesline puts Sheamus on the floor and one from the steps drops him again.

Rusev gets in a kick to the head though and we take a break. Back with both guys down and the League having been ejected. Roman sends him to the floor for another running clothesline before diving into the ring at seven. Cue HHH in fighting clothes and the fight is on so we'll say the match is a DQ at 10:45.

Rating: D. These two really don't have good matches together but that's the perfect way for WWE to push them harder and harder every single time. Sheamus is right back where he belongs: as a midcarder who might win a title every now and then but is really just a guy that can be shuffled around as necessary.

A brawl breaks out as Sheamus has just disappeared. HHH hits him in the face/throat with the bell and then drives Reigns' face into the table about 25 times. Reigns is badly busted open as the fans are LOUDLY cheering for HHH. A Pedigree onto the steps ends the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a show almost entirely built around storylines and there's nothing wrong with that, especially when we've got less than six weeks before Wrestlemania. The Shane thing is big and sets up one of the main events, assuming that match actually takes place. I know Shane was awesome at one point, but it's really a stretch to imagine him as a credible threat to Undertaker inside the Cell.

Other than that though, the wrestling was barely around tonight as everything was focused on getting to Wrestlemania in a hurry. The card is looking stronger now but they still have a long way to go to get out of the funk that Fastlane and its build put them in. Tonight was at least a big step in the right direction though.

Results

New Day b. Lucha Dragons/Neville – Trouble in Paradise to Cara

Usos b. Ascension – Superfly Splash to Viktor

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles b. Heath Slater/Curtis Axel – Walls of Jericho to Axel

Wyatt Family b. Kane/Big Show/Ryback – Sister Abigail to Kane

Sasha Banks b. Naomi – Bank Statement

Roman Reigns b. Sheamus via DQ when HHH interfered

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