

Smackdown – August 6, 2015: The Lamé Duck Can Kind Of Fly

Smackdown

Date: August 5, 2015

Location: Sleep Train Arena, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Jimmy Uso, Tom Phillips, Jerry Lawler

Summerslam is mostly set at this point so it's time for another supplemental show that can help firm up the midcard a little bit. We aren't likely to see much in the main event scene tonight after everything we saw on Monday, but that's what Smackdown does these days. The show has been fun lately so hopefully that keeps going. Let's get to it.

We get the Piper tribute video and a nice chant from the crowd.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns to get things going. After a quick sucking up to the crowd, Reigns says he wants to talk about Bray Wyatt. He thought Battleground was going to be a one on one match but that wasn't quite what happened. Instead it was a family reunion with Luke Harper, and Reigns only has one family member. Reigns asks if the fans want to see a family war, and shockingly enough, they're more than up for it. That's a challenge for Summerslam and you can believe....fans: "THAT!" So he's got a catchphrase.

Cue Rusev and Summer Rae, as Rusev has Reigns later tonight. Rusev tells Reigns to get out of the ring right now because he has more interesting things to talk about. Reigns thinks this sounds important but Rusev tells him to be worried about their match later tonight.

Roman wants to know what Rusev has to talk about and wonders if it's about turning Summer into a Lana clone. Reigns: "She's not a Barbie." Uh....yeah she kind of is actually. Rusev rants in Russian but Reigns is one step ahead of him again. "This is America baby. We have NO idea what

you just said.” Rusev is welcome to come down here and have a chat with Reigns in a language that everyone understands but Rusev just walks away.

New Day vs. Mark Henry/Prime Time Players

Didn't we see this a few weeks back? Well to be fair we saw a rematch from last week's show on this week's Raw so I guess this is payback. Kind of? Big E.: “RETIRE ALREADY!” Woods hides from Darren in the corner to start before going right after Young with right hands and headbutts. We get a nice little back and forth wrestling sequence with Darren getting two off an atomic drop and boot to the head.

It's off to Kofi but he's quickly taken to the apron for a belly to back suplex. A big staredown takes us to a break. Back with Titus chopping the skin off Kofi's chest (Jimmy: “THERE GO THE NIPPLE!”) before it's off to Henry for a right hand to the ribs. Kofi makes a blind tag to Big E. as Jimmy says he thinks the Lucha Dragons should be #1 contenders. How rare is it to hear someone make an actual pick instead of just saying “oh it could be anyone.”?

Big E. sneaks in and takes Darren down as the New Day finally takes over. Woods whips Darren into a kick from Kofi, followed by a superkick. Big E. adds a Warrior splash for two but Young drops him with an enziguri, allowing for the hot tag to Titus. A powerslam plants Kofi but everything breaks down, allowing Henry to tag himself in. Titus catches Woods diving at him and fall away slams him into the World's Strongest Slam for the pin at 10:56.

Rating: C. Well the ending was cool and I'm hoping this drops New Day out of the title match at Summerslam, or at least opens the doors for another team to get a chance. We've seen the Players vs. New Day twice already and it's really not that interesting. This was a fine match though with everyone doing their thing and even some nice wrestling sequences to fill in the holes between spots.

Clip of Swerved.

Post break New Day says Mark Henry just beat them, not the Prime Time Players. Henry should have retired a long time ago and they will NOT

stand for this negativity. They are clean and pristine and the next Tag Team Champions. There's a new chant: "HEY! WE WANT SOME NEW DAY!"

Video on Charlotte.

Charlotte vs. Naomi

Feeling out process to start until Charlotte is taken into the corner for Naomi's headscissors shake, which is still really stupid. Charlotte doesn't take kindly to it either and slaps Naomi in the face, setting up an early Figure Eight but also drawing in Sasha Banks for the DQ at 1:56.

Time for a tag match playa! Who knew Mike Chioda was Teddy Long in disguise?

Charlotte/Becky Lynch vs. Naomi/Sasha Banks

Charlotte takes Sasha down to start before it's off to Becky for a double elbow. Naomi comes in and elbows Becky in the head to take over but Lynch grabs some nice rollups for two each. Some snap legdrops from Becky set up a kneedrop from Charlotte for another two, followed by the rolling headscissors. Tamina offers a distraction because she's still a thing, setting up a superkick to knock Charlotte out to the floor as B.A.D. takes over.

Naomi scores with a basement clothesline for two of her own and it's chinlock time. Jimmy brings up Nikki being the Divas Champion and says until then, Team Bella is the winning team. I'm digging the stable wars idea, but Nikki needs to defend the thing already. Give her a squash win or something but she hasn't defended the thing since Beast in the East. Sasha's Backstabber sets up a double arm choke with her knees in the back instead of the Bank Statement, allowing Charlotte to roll free and flip Sasha backwards.

The tag brings in Becky for a bouncing kick to Naomi's face, followed by a t-bone suplex for a near fall. That earns her a superkick and legdrop from Naomi and it's time for another chinlock. We take a break and come back with Sasha kneeling Becky in the back and Naomi taunting Becky by making her look at Charlotte. Nice touch there.

Back to Sasha for a double arm choke until Becky is able to dive over for the tag off to Charlotte. A quick spear gets two on Sasha but Naomi comes in without a tag and takes Sasha's place. They fight over a small package and Naomi gets the clean (well as clean as you can be while being in there illegally) pin at 14:58.

Rating: C+. Treat them seriously, get a good match. That's one of the major things about this whole Divas Revolution idea: they're treating the Divas seriously for a change and it's become a much better division. This was another quality match which was given the time to get somewhere, which helps quite a bit. However, GET TO THE TITLE STUFF ALREADY.

Clips of Neville vs. Rollins on Raw.

Stardust vs. Zack Ryder

Before the match we get clips of Stardust calling out Stephen Amell on Raw, setting up a showdown on next week's show. Ryder works on the arm to start but Stardust does a kind of handstand to kick Zack in the head. Off to a bow and arrow hold on Ryder but Zack flips out and scores with a flapjack. A middle rope missile dropkick sets up the Broski Boot but the Rough Ryder is countered, setting up the Queen's Crossbow for the pin on Zack at 3:55.

Rating: D+. I'm not sure where this Stardust/Neville/Amell feud is going (though in theory it's just a match at Summerslam with Amell in the corner) but I'm getting into this more and more every week. Then again it could be that I'm a comic book geek and really like Arrow and both guys are pretty awesome in their roles.

Stardust is thrilled that Amell is coming to Raw on Monday.

We see Heyman's last rites promo from Raw. The line of "the match bigger than Wrestlemania" is a great touch.

Big Show is throwing punches in the back and says Ryback is like Rocky. The idea is fine, but Show's Rocky voice is horrible. As for Miz, he's trying to turn this part time role into a full time role, and if he doesn't drop it, Big Show is going to turn his face into a Halloween

mask.

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

We get a big staredown to start in a vain attempt to recreate the awesome ending to the battle royal last year. They shove each other around to start with Rusev running Roman over, only to have Reigns do the same, followed by a headlock. Back up and Reigns is flipped over to the apron, where he punches and kicks Rusev in the face like a good gladiator should. Rusev is able to post him though and it's off to a commercial.

We come back with Rusev holding a nerve hold to kill some time. A spinning belly to back suplex gets two on Reigns but he avoids a middle rope headbutt. Reigns finally scores with a clothesline, followed by another clothesline and then a series of clotheslines in the corner. After hitting the apron boot and spitting a bit, Reigns charges into what's called a spinning heel kick but looked more like a flying hip to the face.

Rusev hammers away in the corner until Reigns powerbombs him down for two more. The Superman Punch connects but Summer starts lurking. Cue Lana for a catfight but Rusev nails Reigns with the superkick for two. Rusev freaks out over Reigns getting up at two and walks around long enough for Reigns to spear him down for the pin at 15:30.

Rating: C. Remember when pinning Rusev was a big deal? Well now it's happened twice in a few weeks with Cesaro and Reigns both getting three on him. It's not the biggest shock in the world as that's the nature of undefeated monsters but it's still a bit disappointing to see. This was fine for a Smackdown main event but not much more.

The show looks to be over but Bray Wyatt's clapping hands appear on screen. He tried to warn Roman that Bray's hands would be the ones that would tear down the Roman Empire. The challenge for Summerslam is accepted. Roman can bring his lunatic because Bray will bring his brother, because Bray welcomes this war.

Overall Rating: C+. This was fine. That's about as much as I can think of for it though. The show had some good wrestling, some story advancement

and absolutely nothing that is really going to matter once the next Raw comes and goes. It's the nature of Smackdown: they can do whatever they want and it means nothing, which is likely going to be the case after they move to USA as well, but I can hope at least.

Results

Prime Time Players/Mark Henry b. New Day – World's Strongest Slam to Woods

Charlotte b. Naomi via DQ when Sasha Banks interfered

Naomi/Sasha Banks b. Charlotte/Becky Lynch – Small package to Charlotte

Stardust b. Zack Ryder – Queen's Crossbow

Roman Reigns b. Rusev – Spear

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Monday Night Raw – August 3, 2015: Let's Get Rowdy

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 3, 2015

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

We have less than three weeks to go until Summerslam and the big question is whether or not John Cena will be able to breathe well enough to challenge Seth Rollins for the World Title. Rollins broke Cena's nose last week to put him on the shelf, but tonight is all about Brock Lesnar, who is back to address the issues with Undertaker from two weeks ago. Let's get to it.

As you might expect, this show is dedicated to Rowdy Roddy Piper and we get a ten bell salute with the roster on stage in Hot Rod shirts.

We see the Piper tribute video, set to a song about never taking your life for granted.

Opening sequence.

Here's Seth Rollins, in a NEVER SHUTS UP shirt to mock Cena, with something to say. Rollins says he's the only person that can slow himself down but he has a problem with sympathy. Last week he destroyed John Cena's nose and if a picture is worth 1000 words, then this video is priceless. We see the knee to the nose from last week (that's four times tonight) and hear a THANK YOU ROLLINS chant from the crowd.

Rollins didn't feel bad about what happened because he'll break more noses down the line. However, it's the first time he broke the nose of the face that runs this place. We see some post show pictures of Cena's nose and my goodness it looks awful. As soon as Rollins saw that, he knew that it was time to stop the match and award him the US Title, but Cena took advantage of the sympathy and stole a win.

That will never happen again, so Rollins has a proposition for Cena: one more match at Summerslam, title for title. If Cena doesn't accept, Cena should just forfeit the title to Rollins, who promises to walk out with the belt anyway. As for tonight, San Jose is the place to be. "Not because of any of you. It's because I'm here." This is the place where John Cena held his first US Open Challenge, but everyone knows Rollins

can do anything Cena does even better, so let's have a WWE World Heavyweight Championship Open Challenge.....now.

After a break, Jojo is in the ring to ask Rollins about the open challenge. There are two rules to this challenge: the opponent must be under 6'0 and under 200lbs. Therefore, the only option is El Torito. Torito's music starts playing but that's not who comes out.

WWE World Title: Seth Rollins vs. Neville

The fans are behind Neville as he spins out of a wristlock to start. Neville flips over him in the corner and Seth gets caught in the running hurricanrana but is smart enough to roll away before the Red Arrow can launch. Instead it's a cross body to put Rollins on the floor and a huge corkscrew dive to take him out as we go to a break. Back with the champion in control and getting two off a running clothesline.

Off to a chinlock for a bit before Neville comes back by superkicking Rolling out of the air. A German suplex off the ropes followed by a dropkick get another two, followed by the delayed German for a third straight near fall. The Pedigree is countered into a rollup for a two so close that the fans gasp at the knockout.

Seth goes up top but Neville is right there with a top rope hurricanrana, setting up the Red Arrow for three but Rollins had a foot on the ropes. Dang these are some hot near falls. JBL has the right idea: "COVER HIM AGAIN!" Neville takes his sweet time before going up again and only hits the mat. The Pedigree retains Rollins' title at 13:16.

Rating: B-. This is the kind of match that Rollins needed after last week's loss. It's no classic or anything but Rollins won clean over a guy he should have beaten. Neville loses nothing by getting pinned and Rollins gets a good looking win. What more can you possibly ask for in a TV match?

New Day/Ascension vs. Lucha Dragons/Los Matadores

Rematch from Smackdown with the Prime Time Players on commentary again. Los Matadores double team Kofi to start and a springboard flip dive gets

two for Diego. Viktor comes in and kicks Diego to the floor and we go to a break. Back with Diego getting dropkicked down for two before it's off to Viktor for a jumping knee to the face. Diego dives over for the hot tag to Sin Cara as everything breaks down. Cara hits a bunch of dives to the floor and Kalisto gets two on Kofi off a high cross body. Xavier kicks Torito away but the distraction lets Kofi hit Trouble in Paradise for the pin on Kalisto at 8:24.

Rating: D+. Why do I bother watching Smackdown? They did the same match on Smackdown but for some reason this one matters more. I'm guessing we get New Day vs. Prime Time Players for a third straight pay per view because Kalisto rolling Viktor up on Smackdown to win the same match doesn't count.

Bella Twins vs. Charlotte/Becky Lynch

In pre-match video inserts, the Bellas say the Divas Revolution started when Nikki won the Divas Title and Charlotte/Becky/Paige dub themselves the Submission Sorority. I've heard worse names and at least it's not Team "Insert Name Here". Becky takes over on Brie to start before it's off to Charlotte vs. Nikki with the champ coming in off a blind tag. They trade front facelocks until Charlotte grabs a cravate.

A Figure Eight attempt is countered and Nikki pulls Charlotte off the middle rope for two. Brie comes back in for a chinlock but Charlotte fights out (because it's Brie Bella) and tags in Becky to clean house. The Disarm-Her has Brie in trouble until a rope is grabbed and Nikki takes Becky down as we go to a break.

Back with Becky fighting out of Nikki's chinlock but walking into a facebuster for two. Brie stomps away in the corner (thank goodness she stopped doing the lame attempts at YES Kicks) and gets two of her own off a bulldog. Becky fights out of a chinlock and makes the tag to Charlotte, who runs over Nikki with a neckbreaker and spear. Everything breaks down and Nikki plants Charlotte with a spinebuster for two. Charlotte gets right back up though and the Figure Eight makes Nikki tap at 13:14.

Rating: C. I really don't like it when WWE wastes my time. I'd assume this sets up Charlotte's title shot at Summerslam, where I'd bet quite

heavily that Nikki retains through shenanigans to get to the middle of September and the record because Heaven forbid a current WWE Diva doesn't hold a record that the fans only care about because Cole and company keep telling us about it.

Team Bad isn't pleased with all the attention Paige is getting so tonight it's Paige vs. Naomi. Naomi even throws in an insult to Ronda Rousey for claiming that she's the baddest woman on the planet. Something tells me that's not going anywhere, but my goodness it would be entertaining if it did.

It's time for MizTV with Miz in a Hot Rod shirt and a kilt. Before he gets going, Miz says that there wouldn't be a MizTV, a Heartbreak Hotel, a Highlight Reel or any other talk show without the original Piper's Pit, because Piper was the best ever at this and he'll be missed. Here here Miz.

After a legitimately cool moment, Miz talks about his accomplishments and describes himself as on fire right now. That brings him to his guests tonight: two men who have also been on fire recently: Cesaro and Kevin Owens. Kevin is out first and sucks up to Miz a bit by saying he owns all of Miz's movies on DVD. Before Cesaro can get much further though, here is Cesaro in a suit to interrupt.

Miz makes sure Cesaro isn't here for a fight but Cesaro says he's just here to hear what Walk Owens Walk has to say. Kevin gets right to the point: Cesaro is jealous of him because of Owens accomplishing all of the things that Cesaro never could, including beating John Cena. Owens says Cesaro has been whining about missing all those life moments, but no matter what he does, Cesaro will never be better than Owens because Cesaro lacks the love for this business.

Cesaro says the real lack of respect and love is shown every time Owens walks away from a match because it makes Owens an embarrassment. Kevin is ready to fight but says tonight isn't the right price. "Yeah why don't you do what you do best and walk Owens walk." Miz tells Cesaro to go do something but Owens jumps them both from behind, only to run away when Cesaro gets up. Good, solid program building segment here.

We get a clip of Ronda Rousey paying tribute to Roddy Piper after her win on Saturday night.

Rusev vs. Mark Henry

Can we just have Henry tap out now and save five minutes? Rusev stomps away in the corner but gets shoved down, only to come back with a dropkick for one. Off to a front facelock from the Russian, followed by a pair of jumping superkicks for the pin at 2:05.

Rusev gives him a third superkick for good measure.

Clip of Swerved.

Bray Wyatt rips the petals off a flower and compares it to Roman Reigns when you rip away everything that the world sees. Roman is no different than anyone else. Harper warned Ambrose but Dean chose wrong. Sheamus comes in and says he's going to make this short and painful. Bray likes the idea of the enemy of his enemy being his friend.

Zack Ryder vs. King Barrett

Barrett says Ryder is King of the Internet (wasn't that like three years ago?) but there's no crown on his head. A knee to the ribs puts Ryder down and it's off to an early chinlock. Ryder fights up and hits the Broski Boot but Barrett throws him into the buckle to break up the Rough Ryder, setting up the Bull Hammer to give Barrett the pin at 1:56.

Here's Paul Heyman to talk about the Undertaker attacking Brock Lesnar two weeks back. We see a clip of the end of Battleground, but Heyman says that's a different Undertaker than we've seen running roughshod over the WWE in the last 25 years. Would you ever see the old Undertaker kicking Brock Lesnar in the groin? Of course not, because the old Undertaker wasn't scared of anything. We see a clip of the brawl from two weeks ago and Heyman brings up the 1 in 22-1 before bringing out Brock himself.

Lesnar doesn't immediately get in the ring but rather throws some steps inside. With Brock standing on the steps, Heyman has a story to tell us. After the beating last year, Undertaker called Vince McMahon and begged for a rematch with Brock at this year's Wrestlemania. Vince wisely said

no because he knew what would happen the next time the Undertaker faces Brock, leaving Undertaker to do what he did at Battleground this year.

The WWE had to book the match at this point because the match was going to have to happen somewhere. Heyman says this isn't just the rematch of the year, decade or century. This is the rematch that is bigger than Wrestlemania. Undertaker may look big and bad but he's going to Suplex City. Last time Undertaker needed a year to recover, but this time he'll rest in pieces as his career receives last rites at the hands of the conqueror. Heyman had me at that bigger than Wrestlemania line.

Here are the same Cena pictures from earlier tonight.

Paige vs. Naomi

They lock up to start and Paige actually gets a two count out of it. That's a new idea. Paige takes her into the corner but Naomi catches her in her corner headscissors and shake which does nothing, aside from look stupid of course. A kick to the head gets two for Naomi and it's time for a chinlock.

That goes nowhere so Naomi bends the ribs around the post and drives Paige back first into the apron. Paige fights out of another chinlock and scores with a fall away slam before sending Naomi face first into the buckle. A kick to the head staggers Paige but Naomi misses a high cross body, allowing Paige to slap on the PTO for the submission at 7:28.

Rating: C. At least Paige got to win something for a change. I like the submissions idea a lot as it fits their characters and adds a new dimension to the Divas instead of their one or two signature moves. Naomi has gotten lost in the shuffle of this whole thing but it's nice to see her getting some time like this.

Clips of Neville vs. Rollins.

Stardust laughs at Neville for listening to the fans chant ONE MORE TIME and losing earlier.

Roddy Piper tribute video.

Ambrose and Reigns say they're all out of bubblegum. It's time to bust some heads and Orton comes in to agree, as long as he gets Sheamus to himself.

Arrow's Stephen Amell will be here next week.

Luke Harper/Bray Wyatt/Sheamus vs. Randy Orton/Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns

Ambrose and Harper get things going with Dean throwing Luke outside. Everyone else comes in for a brawl and the villains are knocked to the floor, setting up Dean's big elbow to take us to a break. Back with Reigns taking Sheamus' head off with a running right hand to take the fight back outside. That goes nowhere so Reigns comes back in and says he wants Wyatt but it's Harper first. Dean comes in to hammer away in the corner but Harper dropkicks him in the face to get a breather. Now Wyatt is willing to come in and hammer away before knocking Dean off the top and out to the floor for a rare second break.

Back again with Harper and Ambrose trading slams, allowing Dean to make the tag off to Orton for the powerslam to Wyatt. Sheamus takes a right hand as well and Orton counters the Rock Bottom into the backbreaker to put everyone not named Randy down. Harper breaks up the RK0 to Bray with the discus lariat before getting dropkicked out to the floor by Dean.

That earns Ambrose a big boot to the face but Reigns takes Harper out, leaving us with Roman vs. Sheamus in the ring. Everything breaks down again and Reigns takes Bray and Sheamus down with apron boots. Both guys get Superman Punches to go with them but it's Harper again with a superkick to take Roman down. Ambrose tries to dive on Harper but has to fight out of Sister Abigail first. An RK0 drops Wyatt and Sheamus eats Reigns' spear for the pin at 16:25.

Rating: C+. Nice main event tag here with the good guys looking awesome and Harper continuing to show how awesome he can be in the ring by doing things that just aren't normal for someone his size. This helped set up Summerslam a bit more as you can pretty much guarantee Orton vs. Sheamus and the tag match. Good stuff here.

Overall Rating: C. I liked the show but as is the case so often with Raw,

the length took away a lot of the good feelings it had built up. They're building to what should be a strong Summerslam, but these Raw's aren't the easiest to sit through. They just go on too long and whatever they have going is often replaced by thoughts of "let this end already."

Results

Seth Rollins b. Neville – Pedigree

New Day/Ascension b. Lucha Dragons/Los Matadores – Trouble in Paradise to Kalisto

Charlotte/Becky Lynch b. Bella Twins – Figure Eight to Nikki

Rusev b. Mark Henry – Jumping superkick

King Barrett b. Zack Ryder – Bull Hammer

Paige b. Naomi – PT0

Randy Orton/Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Sheamus/Bray Wyatt/Luke Harper – Spear to Sheamus

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Smackdown – July 30, 2015: The Balancing Act

I knocked this out tonight instead of Thursday so we'll see how this goes early instead of waiting for showtime.

Smackdown

Date: July 30, 2015

Location: BOK Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Commentators: Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler, Tom Phillips

Smackdown has the potential to be interesting this week as we could get some more midcard build for Summerslam, which could be some of the more interesting stuff going on in WWE at the moment. The big story is likely to be Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens, which could be the match of the night at the pay per view. I don't like that many could's. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Seth Rollins to open things up. Seth: "SO WHAT?" Those are the words he's heard so many times over the year. He heard them when he was the first person to cash in Money in the Bank at Wrestlemania and the man who stood toe to toe with Brock Lesnar at Battleground and came out with the title. This past Monday he reached his breaking point and the victim of his rage was John Cena, who went to the emergency room with a broken nose.

We see a clip of the knee that broke Cena's nose and Rollins calls himself an artist, but here's Cesaro to interrupt. Cesaro really doesn't want to hear Rollins go on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on about how great he thinks he is like he does every single week. See, Rollins is leaving out the part where Cena made him tap out. Rollins calls it a strategic move that he made because he has bigger things to worry about than the US Title. Cesaro says he'll see Rollins later tonight, unless they both want to have their match right now.

Cesaro vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Cesaro goes after the leg with some dragon screw leg whips to start but the threat of a Sharpshooter sends the champ bailing to the floor. Cue Kevin Owens to watch as we take a break. Back with Rollins holding a headlock and Owens' head holding a headset for commentary. Cesaro double stomps Seth for two and catches a diving Rollins in midair. That's not enough of a power display for Cesaro though so he throws Rollins up for a suplex. As I say every week, that man is scary strong.

Rollins is able to send him into the buckle with the release Downward Spiral and now it's Seth with the European uppercuts for a change of pace. A chinlock doesn't get Rollins very far as Cesaro powers out (I'm as shocked as you are) with a belly to back suplex. Cesaro loads up the Swing but Owens comes in for the DQ at 8:35.

Rating: C. This was fun while it lasted but it didn't have enough time to go anywhere, especially with a good chunk of this match taking place in the commercial. Cesaro vs. Owens could be one heck of a brawl, especially if they let them have fifteen minutes or so. I mean, it's a four hour show so there's no reason every match shouldn't have a lot of time right? Assuming there's no lame musical guest so.....yeah Cesaro vs. Owens is going to be lucky to get eight minutes right?

Owens lays out Cesaro and Rollins gets in a few shots of his own.

Los Matadores/Lucha Dragons vs. New Day/Ascension

Weren't the two masked teams fighting on Monday? Before the match, New Day says the Lucha Dragons and Los Matadores could be #1 contenders, so if New Day wins tonight, they should be the #1 contenders! After some WAY over the top introductions, it's Woods on the floor as Diego leg sweeps Viktor to start. A slingshot elbow from Diego sets up a slingshot hilo from Sin Cara, who starts working on the arm.

It's off to Konnor for some hard kicks to the ribs before New Day breaks up a dive and sends Cara out to the floor. Well that sucks. Back from a break with Woods calling Cara stupid as the villains take turns stomping away in the corner. Viktor's chinlock doesn't work very well as the Players say they'd love to face the Usos. Big E. holds Cara for a running knee to the face (well mask) from Kofi as Woods is still going on.

Darren passes the time by wearing glasses and taking notes. That's not something you often see but it makes sense. Viktor runs Cara over for two more as hear about Big E. making Young sick for some reason that Young doesn't want to get into. A Crossface keeps Cara in trouble but he finally avoids a charge, allowing for the Kalisto. Everything breaks down and Kalisto kicks Big E. down, leaving Torito to hit a kind of 619 to knock Woods silly. Big E. loads up the Midnight Hour but Viktor takes Kofi's tag, only to get rolled up by Kalisto for the pin at 10:10.

Rating: C+. Standard face in peril tag match here but I liked Woods on the floor and the Players on commentary. They're setting up some decent stuff here with the division, but it says a lot that the NXT tag team division has equal depth with half the roster. I could see a big multi-team match at Summerslam, even though I'm really not a fan of them. Just give me a feud with a story.

Owens is told that the Authority has made Owens/Rollins vs. Cesaro/whomever he can find. Kevin isn't pleased and is going to take it out on Cesaro's partner.

Video on Becky Lynch, complete with some old school pictures of her in Japan with Natalya.

Luke Harper says Bray Wyatt saved him by showing him the truth so now Harper has everything he needs. Wyatt talks about Harper liking where he is now and deciding to stay. Anyone but you Roman.

Rusev comes out for his match but first up he and Summer have something to say....about the fish thing from Raw. Lana ruined the hot Summer because she's jealous and now Rusev would never fall for her again. After winning tonight, Rusev is going to take Summer and Dog Ziggler for a walk anywhere but Oklahoma. Maybe they'll lay on a blanket, stare into each other's eyes and....oh geez here we go again.

Rusev vs. Jack Swagger

SERIOUSLY??? Well to be fair we're in Oklahoma and Swagger hasn't lost to Rusev recently. Swagger starts with some AMERICAN armdrags to send Rusev outside as Tom makes the mistake of talking about their rivalry last

year, because that's so thrilling to hear about. Back in and Swagger wrestles him to the mat but Rusev just throws him into the corner and drives a knee into the face.

Rusev starts in on the back but since Swagger used to be something years ago, Rusev can't just beat him in three minutes and shorten our agony. The slow stomping continues as the fans try to believe. So Oklahoma is the new center of delusion? Swagger comes back with some clotheslines and punches in the corner, only to have Rusev blast him in the face as we go to a break, because this feud just has to keep going. Back with Rusev holding a front facelock as the fans are already dying.

Swagger fights up and kicks Rusev's ducked face but the Vader Bomb misses. Instead Jack plants him with a belly to belly and is promptly nailed with a spinwheel kick. The back and forth continues as Swagger goes after the leg to set up the Vader Bomb. Tom: "What is it going to take to put away Rusev?" A different opponent Tom. The superkick sets up the Accolade so Swagger can tap to Rusev at 14:40, because that's the entirety of Swagger's job description.

Rating: D. I know I wanted the old Rusev back but did we really need to see ANOTHER destruction of Jack Swagger? I know he isn't ever going anywhere but good grief we get the point already. Find ANYONE else, even if it's some rookie jobber, for Rusev to beat up every time you want to do Rusev vs. Swagger because it's dead.

Post match Swagger pulls himself up and avoids a charge, followed by the Patriot Lock to Rusev for Oklahoma's consolation prize.

Cesaro isn't going to hunt for a partner because no one here owes him anything. He's gotten here on his own (I'd try to forget the Heyman era too) and if he has to, he'll fight on his own. I liked this but Cesaro can't connect to me so maybe it's a desire for nachos that I'm interpreting as caring about a wrestler.

We recap Neville vs. Stardust. It might not lead anywhere, but it's certainly different.

Stardust vs. R-Truth

R-Truth has been using that theme song for over 12 years. When is it time that he gets started? He's really bad about procrastinating. They run the ropes to start and we get a bit of an awkward pause as Truth has to hit a running fist to take over. Stardust gets in some shots, R-Truth gets in his kicks, Stardust sends him into the buckle and the Queen's Crossbow (Cross Rhodes) is good for the pin at 2:01.

Stardust says Neville has failed this city (a line from Arrow) so here's Neville to save Truth from further beating. Again, nothing great, but I'm kind of liking this.

Sheamus says he kicked Orton in the face on Monday for Orton showing him up at Battleground. He did it because he's a real man, unlike Orton who just thinks he's a real man. How many REAL MAN characters are there going these days? The idea of WWE without Orton is like Oklahoma without Tulsa: a dream come true. Hey, did you know that Vince hates Oklahoma?

Video on Undertaker vs. Lesnar. Brock is back on Monday.

Cesaro/??? vs. Kevin Owens/Seth Rollins

Cesaro is here alone until Dean Ambrose comes down as a surprise. It's a big brawl before the bell with the good guys cleaning house twice in a row as we wait for the opening bell. We take a break and come back with the bell (THANK YOU!), meaning it's Dean vs. Seth before Cesaro quickly comes in to keep the champ on the mat. Owens gets punched off the apron but the distraction lets Rollins gets in a shot to take over.

The bad guys take over with Owens firing off knees in the corner and it's back to Rollins for a chinlock. Back to Owens for some right hands for two (seriously?) and a chinlock of his own. Rollins comes back in and misses the top rope knee to the head, allowing the hot tag to Dean. He backdrops Seth to the floor for a suicide dive. Dean's superplex doesn't work as well as Rollins counters into a buckle bomb for two. You wouldn't expect a power move like that to work for someone like Rollins but he makes it look good.

The top rope knee to the head and low superkick get two more but Owens takes too much time going up and gets crotched for his efforts. You don't

try to superplex Kevin Owens though as he counters into the swinging superplex for another near fall as Cesaro dives in with a double stomp for the save. The backsplash misses too and it's the real hot tag to Cesaro.

That kind of reverse Angle Slam sets up the Crossface on Owens but Rollins' attempt at a save earns him a Swing. Cesaro clotheslines Owens outside, leaving Dean to stop Rollins from diving on the two of them. Instead Dean superplexes Rollins down, only to have Owens try the Pop Up Powerbomb. Dean is ready though and slips out, setting up a rollup from Cesaro for the pin on Kevin at 14:03.

Rating: B-. I had a better time with this than I was expecting as it felt like an old Coliseum Video exclusive where they took two random pairings and gave them time to have a fun match. It's nice to see Cesaro getting a big win for a change, but I'm not sure where Owens goes if he loses at Summerslam.

Overall Rating: C. The main event and Rusev vs. Swagger mess cancel each other out so we'll say the show was in the middle. I can easily live with Smackdown as a wrestling heavy show focusing on the midcard instead of the lame show it's been for so long, though I have almost no faith in WWE to keep this up. Maybe they'll start fixing things when Smackdown moves to USA in January, but I don't have a reason to get my hopes up. Fun enough show this week if you ignore the really dull Rusev vs. Swagger mess.

Results

Cesaro b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Kevin Owens interfered

Los Matadores/Lucha Dragons b. New Day/Ascension – Rollup to Viktor

Rusev b. Jack Swagger – Accolade

Stardust b. R-Truth – Queen's Crossbow

Cesaro/Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens/Seth Rollins – Rollup to Owens

Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – July 20, 2015

This one could be interesting as I barely remember the show as I was falling asleep due to a long day of traveling. This is the fallout show from Battleground where Undertaker returned (again. There's probably a three disc set of Undertaker returns ready to be made) to go after Brock Lesnar and set up the main event of Summerslam. We're on the road to the second biggest show of the year so let's get to it.

They opened as they should have, with Undertaker coming out and saying streaks are made to be broken. The gist of this was Undertaker being annoyed at Heyman and Lesnar for bragging about breaking the Streak over and over for the last fifteen months. To be fair, it is getting a bit old. The big story later in the night would be Heyman coming out to brag even more when Undertaker appeared, triggering a massive brawl, broken up by the locker room.

There isn't much to say here because the whole thing was awesome, but more importantly, they let it feel awesome. They let this thing feel like a brawl between two monsters, but I'm not sure how the match is going to go. Do you really want Undertaker to get suplexed all over the place? Undertaker isn't going to be a heel in this match no matter what they do, and thankfully they didn't seem to be trying to make him one. Anyway, the segments really worked and the match should be good, though I emphasize should.

Oh and there was something about the Authority wanting to prevent the match from being broken up. I stop caring when they're talking most of the time so I'm not sure what their issue was.

Charlotte beat Brie Bella in a totally watchable match. Brie still isn't great in the ring and probably never will be, but she's to the point where she can have a watchable match with someone talented like

Charlotte. Also, nice touch on not having Charlotte get beaten yet, though I have a feeling she will when she comes up against Nikki because All Hail The Bellas.

Los Matadores beat the Prime Time Players in a non-title match because there was nothing better to do than to have New Day distract the champions so the low level team can beat them in a match that isn't going to lead anywhere.

Big Show beat Miz in a quick match that I think was supposed to make us care about the giant again. He then challenged Ryback to a fight on Tough Enough to try to make people watch it. It says a lot when Big Show is considered a draw.

Roman Reigns beat Luke Harper via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered. This seems to be setting up a tag match at Summerslam with Ambrose coming in to help out his brother. I'd be interested in seeing them bring in a third man each, but bringing in Sting would be one of the lamest ideas they could have as it would overshadow the story they're shooting for with Reigns vs. Wyatt, as well as making people clamor for Wyatt vs. Sting because they're both supernatural or something and that instantly means you would want to see them fight.

Rollins bragged about keeping the title, Cena came out and said Rollins needed to take the title more seriously, and nothing else happened. I'm really hoping they're not setting up champion vs. champion, but given how the ratings have been going, it seems like we're getting back towards Cena on top as he's the only one that can really move things these days. And since the idea of ever pushing anyone as a big star is foreign to WWE, this is what we're stuck with for now.

Sasha Banks and Naomi beat Paige and Becky Lynch in another pretty good match. This actually got thirteen minutes and didn't feel long, which is more than you would ever expect out of a Divas match. The division has gotten the big boost that it needs, but they really need to go somewhere with it in the next few weeks. There's more than enough time to have it be the big blow away story they need and thankfully Stephanie hasn't been a thing for the most part.

The main event was a six man tag with Cena/Orton/Cesaro beating Sheamus/Owens/Rusev in a match that actually tied things up in a nice package to end the show. That's not something you often see but it worked well enough one time. Other than that though, the big story was Owens and Sheamus walking out on their partner, leaving Rusev to take a big beating. Combine this with Rusev being the default face in his match with Owens on Smackdown and.....no I don't think they're turning Rusev.

Owens leaving makes sense as he lives to fight another day and I guess the same is true for Sheamus, though it's still not the best result in the world. Based on what happened on Smackdown we're going to get Cesaro vs. Owens at Summerslam and since we just NEED the Ziggler vs. Rusev showdown, there's no turning it into a triple threat. It would be nice to have a title for them to fight over, but we need champion vs. champion for reasons that aren't entirely clear.

Overall Raw was just kind of there with almost all of the focus being on Undertaker vs. Lesnar. Rollins will have his day soon enough and a win over Cena at one of the biggest show of the year would help him a lot, though I have a feeling Cena would get the title to make things all better again.

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Smackdown – July 23, 2015: See? You Can Do It

Smackdown

Date: July 23, 2015

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso

This is an interesting show as Raw went off the air with a closed story for a change. The big story is of course the announcement of Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar....we're probably at V or VI over the years now. There's no chance either guy is on this show so we should get some new stuff set up for Summerslam instead. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jerry Lawler isn't here tonight, possibly due to his brother passing away this week.

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Sheamus has seen Dean's insanity but thinks Dean is just wanting a way out. Well tonight there's no way around the beating that he's going to receive from the next World Champion. Dang man Cena is here? You don't expect that on a Smackdown. Dean thinks Sheamus looks stupid and those are fighting words.

It's a brawl to start with Sheamus getting knocked to the floor where he easily stops a dive with a forearm to the head. Sheamus goes after him again but eats a tornado DDT onto the floor. We take a break and come back with Sheamus breaking up another tornado DDT attempt and starting in on the knee, which was hurt a few weeks back so why not. A powerbomb gets two on Dean and it's time for a half crab.

Dean gets underneath Sheamus for the break and hits the rebound clothesline as the knee is suddenly fine. That stuff gets old fast but you get used to it after awhile. Now the suicide dive hits, followed by

the standing elbow drop but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Harper is standing on the announcers' table as well and Dean goes after him, only to walk into a Brogue Kick. Back in and another Brogue Kick gives Sheamus the pin at 11:33.

Rating: C. The match was your standard brawl but there's one thing I really liked: this opened the show. Not a promo to set up the main event, not the same long promo that we've heard a dozen times this month, not trying to figure out if we're supposed to hate the Authority or be so happy that a little ray of Stephanie's sunshine chased the blues away again, and not a five minute recap of what we saw last week. It was a wrestling match to open the show and that's a very nice change of pace.

We get a comic book style recap of Stardust vs. Neville from last week.

Neville doesn't think Stardust is a supervillain because Stardust is a coward. You can't stop what you can't contain and the Altitude Era is upon us. Neville leaves and Stardust pops up on the video screen to laugh.

Neville vs. Adam Rose

Feeling out process to start with Rose hitting a quick snap suplex and putting on an early chinlock. Adam busts out a middle rope hurricanrana to send Neville outside but his suicide dive is countered with a forearm to the face. Some kicks and a moonsault set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 3:05.

Rating: D+. There wasn't much here but it's always good to see Neville getting in the ring. I know a feud with Stardust isn't much but it's nice to see him having a feud at all. This could lead somewhere for him with the superhero idea as it's one of the easiest things in the world for a heel to go after. Rose looked decent there too.

Neville poses when Stardust comes on the screen with a party hat on and a noisemaker in his mouth. He says even the sharpest arrows come crashing down. His hand is touching your hand (Hard Times reference) so be his hero.

Video on Sasha Banks where she talks about being the Boss and debuting on Raw as part of the three way feud.

Here's King Barrett to say he's the most important thing in WWE. He defeated three names in less than 24 hours and then defeated R-Truth again this past Sunday. That win told everyone that you better hit him right between the eyes because he'll take your head off. This was an old school promo with Barrett just coming out and talking about who he is and why you should care about him. I'll take that over another loss or stupid feud any day.

Here's Kevin Owens to talk about people chanting TAP OWENS TAP at him. Yeah he tapped, but Owens gave Cena the fight of his entire career. However, he isn't the one with the motto of NEVER GIVE UP. His motto is more along the lines of "live to fight another day." Owens has no issues with turning on Rusev this Monday because Rusev was too busy trying to figure out which Lana he wants to get to second base with. Cue Rusev and it's time to fight.

Rusev vs. Kevin Owens

I'm digging these heel vs. heel matches because they make sense to the story and the heels aren't buddies just because they're heels. Summer is once again dressed as Lana. Rusev goes right after Owens to start and we take a break in about thirty seconds. Back with Owens elbowing him in the face and punching the Russian out of Rusev. Owens avoids a charge in the corner and nails a superkick, followed by the Cannonball for no cover.

Instead it's a Vader Bomb for two as Owens keeps adding new stuff to his arsenal. It's chinlock time before a Codebreaker of all things gets two more on Rusev. Another chinlock slows things down until Rusev fights back with strikes and a spinning belly to back suplex. The spinwheel kick stuns Owens again, all the way to the point that he sticks his chin out for the running superkick. Rusev loads up the Accolade but Owens rolls outside for the countout at 9:39.

Rating: C. This worked while it lasted and I like that Owens' character is now someone who doesn't want to fight after talking a big game. However, this goes against the formula that made him a big deal down in

NXT. He's talented enough to make it work, but I'd like to see him beat someone up again just because he can.

Cesaro is fired up about getting to face Seth Rollins tonight because it's all about loving this business. He would drive hundreds of miles for a handshake and missed his best friend's wedding but that's what this is all about. It's time to prove that the American dream is alive and well. Owens comes up to make fun of Cesaro, saying that Cesaro took Cena to the limit but Owens beat him. Kevin says Cesaro abandoned his family but Cesaro calls him the master of abandoning because of all the matches he's walked out on. Owens is on his way to catering so Cesaro warns him not to choke like he did against Cena. Good stuff here.

Naomi/Sasha Banks vs. Bella Twins

Nikki takes Naomi to the mat to start and I think the Bellas are actually faces here. It's off to Brie, who eats a clothesline from Naomi, allowing for a tag to Sasha. Nikki comes back in for a headscissors with pushups before Brie dropkicks Sasha for two. BRIE MODE is broken up by Tamina because the power of a scream can be devastating. Brie gets pulled outside for some stomping and we take a break.

Back with Naomi stomping a mudhole in Brie before Sasha sends her back into the corner. The double knees get two as this is a very standard formula Divas tag, which you really don't see that often. Naomi puts on a chinlock as Nikki plays cheerleader on the apron. To be fair I like the Bellas as faces more, but could we please get a reason why we're supposed to care about them now, especially when it was supposed to be such a huge moment when Brie tapped out on Sunday?

Back to Naomi for a Codebreaker (with feet instead of knees) for two before slapping on another chinlock. A BRIE MODE chant gets Brie to fight up and she finally dropkicks Naomi to the floor. Nikki comes in for her clotheslines and an Alabama Slam to Naomi. Sasha breaks up a Rack Attack as everything breaks down. Brie and Sasha fight outside, leaving Nikki to Rack Attack Naomi for the pin at 13:14.

Rating: C+. Considering this was a Bellas match, I was kind of shocked at how much I liked it. The key thing for me here: this didn't feel like a

Divas match but a match that Divas in it. I could see any male wrestlers having this same match and liking it just as much, which is a major change for this division. The Bellas turning again for no apparent reason (again) is annoying but you have to accept it at this point.

The Tough Enough cast talks about why Jake Gyllenhaal is tough.

Long recap of Undertaker vs. Lesnar on Raw.

Cesaro vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Rollins bails to the floor to start before easily countering a wristlock into a gorilla press. Back up and Seth kicks Cesaro to the floor for a suicide dive as we take a break. As you might expect, we come back to Rollins holding a chinlock but Cesaro powers out and throws some suplexes. A slam into a suplex (cool move) gets two more on Rollins as the announcers compare Cesaro to Chuck Norris.

Seth comes back again with a low superkick for two but Cesaro changes things up again with a running dropkick for a near fall. Saxton: "Is there anything Cesaro can't do?" Uh, get a pin? The buckle bomb (with a nice throw) staggers Cesaro again but he counters the Pedigree into the Sharpshooter. Rollins is too close to the ropes though so it's off to a Crossface in the middle of the ring. That doesn't work either so it's a VERY high Swiss Death for two more. The Swing is broken up by a poke to the eye though, setting up the Pedigree to give Seth the pin at 13:31.

Rating: B. Good match here and I like the idea of a heel doing something as simple as poking his opponent in the eye. It doesn't have to be this big ref bump and interference ending that we always get, especially when there's something simple they can do like a thumb to the eye. Cesaro continues to be awesome and hopefully he goes somewhere instead of just being considered bulletproof when he isn't yet.

Owens comes out and gives Cesaro a Pop Up Powerbomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I liked this more than I've liked a Smackdown in a long time for one reason: this felt like a wrestling heavy show instead of the usual Raw supplement we get most of the time. The Divas got time,

the main event was good, and the worst match was barely long enough to rate. It's a good, fun show that let the wrestlers wrestle and advanced some midcard storylines. That's what a show like Smackdown should be if it's not going to be anywhere near Raw's level. Good use of the blue show this week.

Results

Sheamus b. Dean Ambrose – Brogue Kick

Neville b. Adam Rose – Red Arrow

Rusev b. Kevin Owens via countout

Bella Twins b. Naomi/Sasha Banks – Rack Attack to Naomi

Seth Rollins b. Cesaro – Pedigree

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New Column: It's A Big World After All

Something I thought about over the ocean.

Monday Night Raw – July 20, 2015: The Old and the Beautiful

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 20, 2015

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

As uneventful as Battleground seemed going into last night, a lot changed in the final moments. The Undertaker of all people returned to end the World Title match by attacking Brock Lesnar. The interesting point was that Rollins just disappeared after basically being squashed by Lesnar for the entire match. It should be interesting to see what happens as we head towards Summerslam. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at the end of the main event.

Here's Undertaker to open things up with the announcers listing off all of his accomplishments and making the entire moment feel like anything else. The fans don't seem to mind Undertaker's rather heelish actions last night, as anyone with a functioning brain could have predicted. Undertaker starts with a big line: streaks are made to be broken.

However, Lesnar has gone on for months about his greatest accomplishment. Ever since he broke the Streak, Lesnar has bragged about it. You can't kill what won't die, and Undertaker will conquer what has yet to be conquered. Just like everyone else, be they man or beast, Brock Lesnar will rest in peace. This definitely wasn't a heel promo and it didn't

need to be.

Since we haven't talked about them enough yet, we cut to the Authority who brags about how big a main event they have. Stephanie is ready to market things, but HHH thinks Brock should take the night off.

Cena/Orton/Cesaro vs. Rusev/Owens/Sheamus for the main event. Cesaro and Rusev getting those spots is a great sign.

Charlotte vs. Brie Bella

Team Bad is on commentary but before the match we have to get a quick recap of how Stephanie saved us all. Feeling out process to start with Charlotte knocking Brie to the floor but misses a dive. Back from a break with Brie working on the arm and kicking Charlotte square in the jaw. We get the YES Kicks to fire up the crowd, followed by a low dropkick for two. Brie hooks a chinlock for a good while before Charlotte starts firing off chops and a big boot to the face. Nikki's distraction doesn't work and a spear sets up the Figure Eight for the submission for Charlotte at 9:02.

Rating: C. Brie is fine if you keep things simple but Charlotte winning is definitely the right idea. It's starting to feel like the new girls are becoming a thing and that's a very good sign this early in their run. It's going to get annoying just sitting around waiting on the title match though, which seems to be what we're going to be doing until Nikki breaks the record.

HHH is on the phone with Heyman and tells Lesnar to take the night off. Heyman needs to grow a set and tell Lesnar to not show up tonight. Miz tries to interrupt and gets Big Show as a result.

Prime Time Players vs. Los Matadores

Non-title. Darren takes Diego into the corner to start and blasts him with a spinning forearm. The masked men take over, despite the fans not sounding all that interested. Young snaps off a belly to belly suplex and it's off to Titus to clean house. Cue New Day for a distraction though, allowing Diego to hit a Backstabber on Titus for the pin at 4:04.

Rating: D. So not only is the feud continuing, but now we're getting the old distraction into a pin finish again? Also, can we please stop giving people wins over champions when it's not going to lead anywhere? This happened a few years back when Kofi pinned WWE Champion Randy Orton and then it went nowhere. If that's what you're going for, just have the champs win and then let it be a post match attack. Finally, if you want to build a team up, STOP HAVING THEM LOSE TO A NOTHING TEAM LIKE LOS MATADORES! That's not how you build up a match, especially when they're not even in the feud.

Big Show vs. Miz

Show chops Miz in the corner to start, as only Big Show can do. A slam sets up the middle rope elbow for the pin on Miz at 1:27. And he was supposed to get a title shot last night?

Show rants about how he's still around and tells Ryback to show up on Tough Enough tomorrow night for a brawl.

HHH and Stephanie want artwork made up for Lesnar vs. Undertaker when Heyman arrives. He's here to give Lesnar's response and nothing more, but the Authority isn't interested.

Back from a break with the roster meeting with the Authority. They want the entire locker room to keep Lesnar and Undertaker apart because they have to protect the Summerslam main event. There is WAY too much Authority tonight.

Here's Heyman to address the Summerslam main event. Brock isn't the World Champion right now, but why isn't he? It's not because Rollins out wrestled or out fought him or because Rollins survived a trip to Suplex City. It was all because of a yet again resurrected Undertaker, who can't get over losing the Streak to Brock Lesnar. Of course Heyman has hyped up the Streak being broken because why wouldn't he?

It's the biggest accomplishment of his career because no one else could ever do it. The Undertaker wants to face Brock Lesnar again at Summerslam, so let's make this personal. Heyman goes into full on promoter voice to rant about the Streak being broken. Undertaker may have

sold his soul to the devil to get revenge but he belongs to Brock Lesnar. There goes the gong and the look on Heyman's face is priceless.

Brock hits the ring and the fight is on with the fans being behind a ticked off Brock. Security has as much success as you would expect so HHH sends a bunch of midcarders out until there must be twenty five guys trying to break this up. The announcers bail so it's up to the audience to tell us how awesome this is (and they're right for a change). Undertaker gets to him on the floor again as even main eventers are out there to break it up now.

We come back from a break and they're fighting in the back again with the entire roster not being able to hold them back. Brock finally steps back and says he's done, allowing the police to tie his hands.

Rollins comes in to laugh at what just happened but promises the Authority that he'll be in the arena later.

Bray Wyatt says he's never alone because his family stands by his side. They know that he is the revolution and the fans need to learn it. The people have anointed Roman Reigns and it's time for them to burn for it. Harper says this is just the beginning and they will take Reigns apart brick by brick. Anyone but you.

Luke Harper vs. Roman Reigns

The fans sound like they're chanting for Wyatt so Byron says it's for Reigns. Roman shrugs off a clothesline and fires off chops, only to have Harper go after Roman's left arm. That earns him a suplex though and we take a quick break. Back with Roman stuck in a chinlock before Harper wisely goes back to the arm. A charge doesn't work for Reigns as Harper tosses him outside, injuring the arm again.

The match keeps going as Harper cranks on the arm while also working on a chinlock. That's dedication to your craft. Harper misses a big boot and crashes to the floor, allowing Reigns to start his comeback. Roman and Bray get into it with both Wyatts taking apron kicks. Wyatt pulls Reigns outside though and that's a DQ at 13:00.

Rating: C-. Harper trying some psychology was a good idea but it's pretty clear that we're headed for a tag match at Summerslam. I like the idea of Ambrose and Reigns as the best friends/brothers who will fight back to back until the end and anything with Wyatts vs. Shield vibes is a good thing.

Everyone brawls post match and the Wyatts run.

We get the same recap from the opening.

Here's Rollins to brag about surviving with the title. He's sorry to announce this to the people but Lesnar didn't get the job done. Being champion is so much harder than people think it is because Rollins has to put so much effort into it. After last night, he's still exactly where he promised he would be, but he never got to hear his name announced last night. Therefore, Lillian Garcia is invited in for the official announcement.

That's exactly what we get...and here's Cena to interrupt. Rollins cuts him off by saying this isn't about him because no one cares about what he does, but Cena talks about how a champion is supposed to be ready to fight no matter what. The brawl is about to be on but, as you would expect, Rollins bails. That might be the co-main event at Summerslam.

Hey! Remember when Stephanie TOTALLY saved the Divas' division? Well here it is again.

Paige/Becky Lynch vs. Naomi/Sasha Banks

The Bellas/Alicia are on commentary this time. Sasha and Becky get things going, which is almost guaranteed to be awesome. Some armdrags and an armbar have Sasha in early trouble so it's off to Naomi. That's fine with Becky who drops a leg (where's Xavier Woods to rate it though?) as the heroes stay in control.

Sasha gets kicked in the head a few times and we take a break. Back with Naomi cranking on a front facelock as JBL brings up WCW and the NWO because it's just so fun to make fun eighteen years later. Back from a break with Naomi kicking Becky in the face for two. Sasha comes back in

to yell at Paige, allowing Naomi to get in some shots from the apron.

Becky rolls away and DIVES for a tag but Sasha makes a save, only to have the hot tag bring in Paige a second later. Paige cleans house but the PTO on Naomi is broken up at the last second. Everything breaks down as the Bellas just keep chattering like they do in everything they say. The Bank Statement makes Paige tag at 13:05.

Rating: C+. Less Bella means a better match. It's so adorable hearing them talk about themselves like that and imagining that people care for them. I'm sure they'll still be around because that's the nature of the beast, but at least there's some fresh blood to change things up around here.

Southpaw preview, which is tied into a Tough Enough plug.

Long Undertaker vs. Lesnar recap.

We look back at Rusev's ankle being fine and the ensuing Ziggler beatdown.

Lana says Ziggler will be fine when Summer Rae comes up in a Lana outfit. Rusev comes in to kiss Summer, who then slaps Lana in the face.

Randy Orton/John Cena/Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens/Rusev/Sheamus

After the entrances take their sweet time, we start things off with Cena vs. Owens. Why? The feud (should have at least) ended last night and it's off to Rusev before any contact. An early fall away slam gets two and Rusev opts for the stomping away in the corner. That goes badly for the Russian so it's back to Owens, who has to dive to the ropes to break up an STF attempt. A DDT plants Cena but he rolls away from the Cannonball for the hot tag.

Everything breaks down and Cesaro loads up the Swing, only to eat a jumping superkick to send the match to a break. Back with Owens holding Cesaro down until Cesaro powers up with a nice suplex. Cesaro gets to play face in peril for a bit as all the heels get in their shots. Sheamus and Owens wind up hitting each other though and the fight is on with Sheamus getting the worse of it.

Sheamus walks out on the match and Owens does the same a few moments later, leaving Rusev down 3-1. This goes about as you would expect it to with the parade of finishers putting Rusev down. Cue Lana to spear Summer down, leaving Cesaro to catapult Rusev into an RK0 for the pin at 14:21.

Rating: C. Totally Smackdown six man until the cool ending move. I'm not sure what the point of this was as it just came and went without having much going on, but at least Rusev doesn't look bad in defeat and the other two looked fine as well. This was such a strange ending to Raw as everything was wrapped up and none of these guys seem to have a match set for Summerslam.

Overall Rating: C+. This is about as much of a two idea show as you can have as they set up the main event of Summerslam and pushed the heck out of the Divas revolution. How amazing is it that the Divas could arguably be the more interesting story of the two? You can see that they've turned it on for Summerslam and that's one of the best things you can get in WWE.

Results

Charlotte b. Brie Bella – Figure Eight

Los Matadores b. Prime Time Players – Backstabber to O'Neil

Big Show b. Miz – Middle rope elbow

Roman Reigns b. Luke Harper via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

Sasha Banks/Naomi b. Paige/Becky Lynch – Bank Statement to Paige

John Cena/Randy Orton/Cesaro b. Rusev/Kevin Owens/Sheamus – RK0 to Rusev

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Battleground 2015 Preview

Maybe it's just where I've been away for a bit but it doesn't feel like it's time for a pay per view. To be fair though, WWE doesn't seem to know either, because it's the day before the show and we've got a five match card. While I'm sure there will be some fixes made and matches added, Battleground feels like a show that doesn't need to exist, but there's some stuff worth looking at. Let's get to it.

Starting with the preshow, we have King Barrett vs. R-Truth for the Crown. Now you may be asking, why is this match happening. Well that's because Vince has again fallen in love with a comedy character and thinks that it's just SO FREAKING FUNNY that it's worth putting Barrett through another mess for a story that no one cares about.

Barrett summed up the problems on Raw: why should I care if he beats Truth again when he already beat him in the King of the Ring tournament in the first place? These two have traded wins since then and the story just isn't working. Let's say Barrett wins Sunday. Where is he then? Right back where he was when he won the tournament: King, having beaten R-Truth to get there.

That is of course after all the weeks of having bad matches and stupid promos about R-Truth being KING WHAT'S UP because it's funny that Truth is crazy. This has been such a waste of Barrett and the entire tournament, but then again the whole thing was thrown together as a Network audience builder. This was a huge waste of time and I guess Barrett wins, because there's no point to putting it on Truth other than to make Vince lau....Truth is probably winning isn't he? I'll stick with Barrett but be ready to throw my remote at the TV.

I'll take Reigns and Wyatt going to a DQ to set up another Raw match. My

guess is we eventually get Reigns vs. Ambrose at Summerslam, but at this point I'm thinking it's a double DQ or double countout, because Reigns hasn't failed in enough big matches yet. Wyatt needs the win, but he's needed a big win since.....December? I don't think you can count Ryback as a major win, not back then at least. I'll take the draw here, but my goodness is there anything worse than seeing these two as such meaningless acts right now?

New Day gets the belts back. Word on the street is the Players got the belts because of Titus' dad of the year award and, shockingly enough, NO ONE CARED ABOUT THAT EITHER. New Day gets the titles back here and thankfully we're back to normal. The Players are a fine team and Titus is as professional as they get, but there's just no reason to care about them on top of the division.

It's taken me a while to write this out but I'll take Orton to win over Sheamus. Not that it's a complicated decision or anything, but it took me three or four tries to stay awake to write this out. There's no reason for this match to be happening aside from they both need something to do. Neither guy feels like anything more than an overgrown midcard act right now, even though they're both former World Champions and legitimate big stars. There's nothing to this story and the match has no heat, especially considering how many times these two have bored the fans to death. Orton wins as Sheamus has the MITB curse at the moment.

I'll go with the obvious and have Owens take the US Title. As strange as it would be to have the US Champion fighting for the NXT Title, it's clear that Owens thinks the NXT Title means something. If that's not where they go with it, there's always the option of Owens saying the US Title is more important and saying he'll do the rematch because he signed and a loss means nothing to him. Still though, Cena has nothing left to do with the title so put it on Owens, the best heel going today.

That leaves us with the main event and....just dang man. This should have been the easiest feud in the world ("You stole the Beast's title and now it is time to pay."). That's where they've kind of gone with it, but for the most part it's been about beating up the Stooges and a car for product placement. I certainly don't hate this one, but it hasn't made

itself stand out.

At least there aren't currently any Authority members to bail Seth out, but whether he wins or loses, this is going to wind up being about the Authority one way or another. Why? Because that's how WWE works and there's no way around it. I'll take Seth retaining through shenanigans to drag this out. Again.

And somehow that's it. We really don't have anything else on the card to talk about, though I'm pretty sure we're going to get something between Big Show vs. Miz and maybe Stardust vs. Neville. However, that leaves out Cesaro and Rusev, who both currently have rockets attached to their backs. I could easily see Cesaro added to the Intercontinental Title match for a vacated title, but I could also see him doing nothing more than a run-in during the US Title match.

Throw in a Divas match/segment, but there's something interesting here: yeah the NXT girls are here, but we're counting down the days until Nikki sets the record. This is where the problem: at some point she's going to have to fight one of them, and I'm not sure they can come up with two months of stalling before either A, the NXT girls lose or B, Nikki drags them down and no one cares. In other words, that whole record thing is going to threaten the entire story, but WWE would rather destroy their entire division to get rid of AJ Lee from the history books, unless they grow up and stop Nikki's reign early.

Overall, Battleground could be fun if the matches overachieve, but at some point WWE needs to be running on more than just that. There isn't a lot going on here and the big draws are the third match of a trilogy and Lesnar, who probably doesn't get the title back. Then again, this show doesn't really mean much as we're gearing up for Summerslam, where the real fun takes place.

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Smackdown – July 16, 2015: That Man Is Strong

I'll be back to the normal schedule next week so just one more early Smackdown, unless you like them early. I normally have them done before the show is on the air and could easily post them early if you prefer. Let me know which way you like me doing them.

Smackdown

Date: July 16, 2015

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Battleground and this past Monday's show saw the destruction of Kane at the hands of Brock Lesnar, meaning Seth Rollins is all alone on Sunday. My guess is that this week's show will focus on Wyatt vs. Reigns, which is all but set yet still needs a few more details. Like why Wyatt is doing anything and why he just dropped the stuff with Reigns' daughter. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Reigns to open the show. This all started at Money in the Bank

when Wyatt cost him the match, but Bray isn't in his head and Bray can't break his focus. Tonight we have Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus and it's time to start a fight, but here's Bray on screen to interrupt. He asks what gave Roman the right to go after him on Monday, but Wyatt knew Reigns was there. For a moment, Bray was just like these people. For once, he saw Reigns being exactly what he should have been.

Bray saw him as a stone monument, but at Battleground, he will be the hammer that breaks the monument down. Reigns is ready to fight but Bray says this is what true fear feels like. Collect your roses gladiator because none of them are real. What is real though is that Bray is back here with everyone Reigns cares about. He's capable of some very evil things and this game has just begun. Wyatt has been trying to bring the fire out of Reigns and knows he'll get bitten by the big dog. One day though, he'll tell the dog to sit and the dog will obey. Roman needs to go kiss the people he cares about because anyone but him.

This helped and is probably as clear of a reason as we're going to get as to why Wyatt has targeted Reigns. I'm still not clear on why his daughter is involved, but maybe the idea is that Reigns isn't what he seems and Wyatt wants to expose him as a fraud? It all started with Reigns in an ad for being a great father so maybe Bray thinks that's not the real Reigns?

New Day vs. Lucha Dragons

The champs are on commentary of course with Woods as the odd man out. Kofi flips over Cara to start but Cara does the exact same thing. Off to E. vs. Kalisto, with the latter hitting a nice springboard wristdrag/headscissors to take New Day down and we take an early break.

Back with New Day stomping in the corner and Titus thinking this would be a fun triple threat match on Sunday. Kofi hurricanranas Cara down and Kalisto gets knocked off the apron for not paying attention. The abdominal stretch keeps Cara in trouble but he finally dives over Big E. and makes the hot tag to Kalisto. Everything breaks down and the Salida Del Sol plants Big E., only to have Kofi break up Cara's swanton. The Midnight Hour ends Kalisto at 10:06.

Rating: C-. Phillips saying that the New Day is on a roll tells you how

lame the division has become again in recent weeks. Assuming they win on Sunday, New Day is stuck sitting around waiting on the Usos to come back and then.....well then I have no idea where they're going. I see no reason to believe the Players keep the titles as the lame father of the year award "hype" is over so there's no reason to have Titus as a champion anymore.

New Day says they'll win on Sunday and change the chant up to "NEW! TAG CHAMPS!" The Players chase them off without violence. At least they made the match feel a little more important.

Reigns and Ambrose are ready to take care of Sheamus and Big Show because they both want to get rid of Wyatt. Dean says he hates everyone.

King Barrett vs. Jack Swagger

This is how far Barrett has fallen. Swagger rides him to the mat to start but Barrett punches him in the face a few times. The announcers of course treat this match as a joke by talking about Barrett's nose, because that's what Barrett is these days. An attempt at the Vader Bomb doesn't get to launch so Swagger slams him into the apron, only to get kicked in the ribs. The Bullhammer ends Swagger at 2:35.

Post match Truth comes out so they can shout over each other. Barrett says this has gone on long enough (amen) because he's the real King of the Ring. Truth on the other hand is just another guy who lost in the same tournament, which really isn't helping me care about this feud. Barrett promises to make Truth bow on Sunday.

Recap of Lesnar vs. Rollins, focusing on various beatdowns of both Lesnar and the car.

Cesaro runs into Kevin Owens, who wishes him luck in his match.

Rusev vs. Cesaro

This should be on pay per view but that's what Smackdown is for these days. They shove each other around to start with Cesaro getting the better of it, only to have Rusev punch him in the face to take over. Rusev loads up a suplex but Cesaro will have none of that as he reverses

into one of his own. I could watch Cesaro throw people around all day.

A snap belly to back suplex drops Cesaro again but he rolls some quick Germans for a breather. Back from a break with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock and a clip of the slam into the spinout Rock Bottom from Rusev during the commercial. The uppercuts stagger Rusev and a nice dropkick puts him on the floor. There isn't much to talk about here as this is quite the back and forth power brawl so far.

Back in and the spinwheel kick stops Cesaro cold but he comes right back with a Neutralizer attempt. Rusev backdrops him down though and nails a superkick. The Accolade doesn't work either though, setting up a USA chant. Jimmy: "I know what's about to happen King!" They head outside again where Cesaro charges into another superkick. Jimmy: "I didn't know that was about to happen King!" Rusev goes up top but dives into an "uppercut" (barely connected and looked awkward), setting up the Neutralizer to give Cesaro the pin at 12:40. Cesaro is the second person to ever pin Rusev in WWE.

Rating: B. Now THAT is more like it. This was treated as a big deal and actually felt like one with the commentators pointing out that Rusev has never been pinned on Smackdown (or on TV ever I believe). Cesaro comes off like a big deal, but at the moment he isn't scheduled to be in action at the pay per view. It's a shame that another bald power guy who happens to hold a title isn't injured, leaving a spot open for a title match that Cesaro could say, win on Sunday, leaving him to do this every week on Smackdown like Daniel Bryan was scheduled to do.

Cesaro jumps into the crowd to celebrate.

Sheamus says Sunday is just another day at the office. Tonight he gets to team with a giant and he hopes Orton is watching the beating that Ambrose and Reigns receive. What is WWE's obsession with Sheamus vs. Orton? They've never had anything resembling a good match so they keep getting pushed because they look like a good match on paper? To be fair it wouldn't be the first time WWE has done something because it sounded good and continued to do so after it failed time after time.

Stardust vs. Neville

Rematch from Raw where Neville lost in what is being billed as a battle of comic book characters, complete with comic page backgrounds on the recap. Stardust drops him with a quick forearm, only to be sent to the floor for the Asai moonsault. Back in and Stardust gets caught holding the ropes on a sunset flip, allowing to pop back up with a victory roll for the pin at 2:20. The good vs. evil concept works and I like Neville being treated as a superhero, but the matches aren't lighting anything on fire, let alone the world.

After a break, Neville says his strategy was just to wait for his window of opportunity to open and then strike. Stardust decks him and says prepare for turbulence during the Altitude Era.

Long recap of the Divas' segment from Raw. It still focuses on Stephanie and therefore it's still not as good as it could be. It's still great, but it shouldn't have been about her.

Sasha/Tamina/Naomi say it's finally fair because the odds are even. Sasha says it's their time to run this division. Naomi: "We bad." They're the trifecta and they're not here to make friends or play nice.

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus

Dean rides Sheamus to the mat to start but Sheamus knees him in the back to take over. That goes nowhere as Dean runs Sheamus over and knocks Show to the floor, setting up the standing elbow drop to both. We come back from a break with Reigns coming in to face off with Big Show because IT WILL NEVER DIE! It's quickly back to Dean to hammer on Big Show in the corner but Sheamus gets in a shot to take over as we're firmly in the Smackdown main event formula.

Show punches him in the ribs a few times, which the announcers equate to drowning. The Final Cut gets two and makes me remember that the Final Cut used to be a move. An elbow finally misses and it's a double tag to Reigns and Sheamus with the former cleaning house as you would expect. Big Show offers a distraction though, allowing Sheamus to get two off White Noise. Dean's suicide dive is caught by Big Show but the chokeslam through the table is countered into a DDT to put everyone down again. Reigns wins a slugout with Sheamus and hits the Superman Punch but Wyatt

comes in for the DQ at 13:52.

Rating: C-. Dull but fine match here as we were just waiting for Bray to run in. I do however like that no one actually jobbed three days before a pay per view because there's no logical reason to have someone get pinned going into a major match. Also, how nice was it to see someone stay down from a DDT for a change? It was a big spot and they treated it like one for a change. That's a rare delicacy, as sad as that really is.

Overall Rating: C+. This is the kind of show they needed to shore things up before Battleground. The World Title match has long since been set so tonight was mostly about setting up everything else, but I'm curious to see where they go with the Intercontinental Title situation. You would think Neville vs. Stardust would be added to the pre-show, but I can't accept the idea of Cesaro not being on the main card. He's earned a spot doing something there and if he's left off for something stupid, it's going to be a shame. The Divas have to get something in there too so Sunday could look very interesting.

Results

New Day b. Lucha Dragons – Midnight Hour to Kalisto

King Barrett b. Jack Swagger – Bullhammer

Cesaro b. Rusev – Neutralizer

Neville b. Stardust – Victor roll

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Sheamus/Big Show via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

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Ryback Injured, Out Of Battleground

<http://www.wwe.com/shows/webbattleground/ryback-injured-27658773>

Sounds legit. I'd assume we get Miz vs. Big Show or a talking segment, but I'd love it if their time was given to Cesaro and/or Rusev. Those guys deserve it after their performances Monday, and I'm sure a lot of fans will be annoyed if they don't make it on but Barrett vs. Truth for the crown makes it instead.