

Monday Night Raw – July 13, 2015: Viva Las Divas (And Stephanie Just Because)

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 13, 2015

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Battleground and thankfully Brock is here, hopefully to beat up a pair of cars in a handicap match this week. Other than that we have the rest of the build towards Wyatt vs. Reigns, possibly even including why they're fighting and what it has to do with Reigns' daughter, and more stuff including whatever Ambrose might be doing on Sunday. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Lesnar beatdown, complete with Heyman reusing the Dudleys' commandment of don't screw with Brock. It's fair to erase the Dudleys from history at this point so it's not that big a deal. Heyman might have written that line in the first place.

Here are Brock and Heyman to get things going, drawing a SUPLEX CITY chant. For some reason the crushed car is brought out as Heyman proclaims Brock's impending dominance over Rollins this coming Sunday. Paul lists off Brock's accomplishments and the various people he's conquered before promising to have Lesnar suplex Rollins all over the place, put his foot on Seth's chest and be proclaimed the champion once again.

Cue Rollins and Kane because YAY KANE IS BACK FROM HAWAII OR WHATEVER THAT STUPID STORY WAS! Rollins talks about how Brock is frustrated over his inability to be champion and stumbles over trying to say "an inanimate object" in a funny goof. Brock has been carrying the car around the country (in a truck or on his back?) like a symbol and that's just fine, because Suplex City is burned to the ground tonight.

Brock offers to take Rollins to Suplex City tonight but Kane intervenes

with the threat of a contract signing. Kane threatens Lesnar if he messes up the contract signing but Heyman laughs off the threats from “Undertaker’s baby brother.” Kane is of course annoyed as Heyman goes on about Brock smashing stuff with one final promise of pain to Rollins if he provokes the Beast tonight.

Ryback/Randy Orton vs. Sheamus/Big Show

Miz is on commentary and this is billed as an All-Star match. I’d prefer we go play that over the top video game instead but have it your way. This is the old standard idea of taking two feuds and combining them into a tag match, which is an idea that stays around because it still works. Ryback knocks Sheamus to the floor to start and we’re in a very early break.

Back with Sheamus bailing into the floor to hide from Orton. Apparently Randy is really bad at hide and seek so it’s back to Ryback vs. Big Show with the latter stomping Ryback down onto the mat to take over. Sheamus tries a bearhug and is easily driven into the corner for the tag to Orton. Remember the days when Sheamus was like, really really strong? What happened to that?

Back from a second break with an Irish Curse (backbreaker. OH THE SCANDAL!) for two on Orton but he counters Big Show’s chokeslam into a DDT for a breather. Miz gets off of commentary and shouts on a mic as Ryback comes in and cleans house. Big Show has enough of Miz though and chases him up the ramp, leaving Sheamus to take an RKO and top rope splash from Ryback for the pin at 15:21.

Rating: C+. Nice long tag match here and again, a good way to set up both matches at once. I would have liked a countout or DQ finish instead of having Sheamus take a pin, but it’s a plus that he took two finishers for a pin so it’s hardly clean. Sheamus vs. Orton does nothing for me and the triple threat isn’t much better, but at least there’s something on the line and Ryback has started looking good again.

Network ad.

Rollins doesn’t like the idea of the contract signing but Kane has a

plan.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

Good grief people build a midcard already. Wyatt's name graphic is just letters on a screen now instead of in a box like everyone else. During the entrance though, Reigns appears and lays out Wyatt as Ambrose is just kind of forgotten. Bray finally gets in a lantern shot to escape. No match.

The Bellas have been nominated for Choice Female Athletes in the Teen Choice Awards. Dear goodness I don't want to know who else they are.

Here are the Bellas and Alicia Fox with something to say. Nikki brags about holding the title forever because AJ Lee MUST be eliminated from history. She's defended against every single Diva there is and has given them all a chance. A quick search shows that, at least in TV matches, Nikki has defended against AJ, Naomi and Tamina (whose one shot came at Beast in the East) and that's it. She calls the three of them Team Bella, because all you have to do these days is put the word Team in front of a name. Come up with something more interesting, please.

Nikki goes on about how awesome she is and how dominant they are...and here's Stephanie McMahon because she hasn't laid waste to the Divas yet. Stephanie is a face tonight too because there's something cool coming and therefore she just MUST be there to get a piece of the action. The legacy of the WWE rests on her shoulders (yes, Stephanie says this company's history is on HER shoulders) and there's a revolution going on right now in women's sports, ranging from women's soccer to UFC to tennis. These are supposed to be applause lines if that's not clear.

Stephanie introduces Paige, because of ALL DIVAS IN WWE, Paige is the one that would be thrilled to be associated with Stephanie. I mean Paige is clearly a corporate loyalist right? Nikki talks about how Paige doesn't deserve another shot, but STEPHANIE runs WWE and this division instead of her.

Stephanie, the WWE and Paige want this revolution (what is she even talking about?) but courage can't do it alone. Therefore, Paige needs

backup. Instead of bringing this person out though, Stephanie goes on about how amazing they are and FINALLY introduces Becky Lynch. Now, does Becky get to say anything and introduce herself? Of course not, because that would cut away from Stephanie's mic time, meaning the boss gets to introduce Charlotte, in that voice that only Stephanie can deliver.

Cole: "STEPHANIE HAS SHAKEN THINGS UP!" I hate this company at times.
Stephanie: "WOO!" Oh shut up. Cue Naomi and Tamina with a mic because we haven't heard enough horrible voices yet. Naomi says the two of them are all the competition the Bellas need. That's all the mic time she needs too, because Stephanie needs to bring out Sasha Banks. Sasha stands with Naomi and Tamina, but STEPHANIE WON'T SHUT HER FREAKING MOUTH and talks about setting the table for opportunity.

We get a THIS IS AWESOME chant to a legitimately cool moment and the fight is on. Charlotte cleans house until Naomi dropkicks her down, only to have Paige and Sasha get into it. Tamina breaks up the PTO on Naomi but Brie Bella interrupts as the announcers line up to kiss Stephanie's feet for these new arrivals. Alicia gets caught in the Figure Eight, Becky puts Brie in the armbar and Nikki gets the Bank Statement as a big NXT chant breaks out. The Bellas and Fox are cleared out and the other six yell at each other as the freaking Total Divas theme plays this out.

I'm not going to bother ranting about how Stephanie made this all about her. It's Stephanie McMahon, she's the biggest hound for a spotlight that has ever lived in WWE and you know that if there's a big moment there that people are going to erupt over, she's going to shoehorn her way in despite the fact that there is absolutely no logical reason for her to be involved.

This story has been about Paige finding help but that's thrown out the window because Stephanie has basically just decided to turn this story into a chess game for her own amusement. The big sign here: none of them got to talk and then Stephanie just left after she was the only voice you heard for the big moment. The main part here was all about Stephanie look cool and how thankful we should be for her big gift to us and that's all there is to it.

Aside from all that, this is EXACTLY what the Divas have been needing for so long. All of a sudden, there is some brand new blood in the Divas' division and the fans buy into it. They know these three are amazingly talented and can tear the house down....but the Bellas are still around. As long as they're the focus of the division (and they will be as long as Total Divas is around), the newcomers are going to have to tone it WAY down so Nikki, Brie and Alicia can handle it and that takes away from the NXT crew's magic. This is going to be interesting, but they could drag things way down for the sake of breaking AJ's record.

New Day vs. Prime Time Players/Mark Henry

The hometown boy Xavier Woods says this is the greatest town in the world because they stay positive. Even though they shut down the city due to an inch of snow last year and the Atlanta Hawks choked in the NBA Playoffs, they stayed positive. Kofi is 100% that they're getting the titles back on Sunday because Prime Time is out of time at Battleground because NEW DAY ROCKS.

Titus shrugs off a Kofi kick to start so it's off to Darren, who clotheslines E. out to the floor. The Players and Henry throw everyone out to the floor (JBL: "FLYING PH.D!") as we take an early break. Back with Titus taking the rotating stomps in the corner as the announcers talk about how awesome the Divas were. For once, they're actually right. E. gets two off a splash but Titus is quickly up and tagging in Henry to clean house. Everything breaks down and a World's Strongest Slam ends Woods at 8:29.

Rating: D+. Good night do they really not know how to set up a tag match anymore? When is the last time New Day won a match? My guess is they get the belts back anyway because that's how WWE works these days. The match was nothing interesting and Henry is just thrown out there but gets the pin over a #1 contender anyway. Well sure why not.

The winners dance.

Long recap of Lesnar b. Cadillac via TKO last week.

King Barrett vs. R-Truth

No King entrance for Truth and Cole tells us he rapped to the ring during the commercial. Truth gyrates a lot to start and gets kicked in his face. A backbreaker and middle rope elbow get two each on Truth and a boot knocks him onto the apron. Truth fights out of a chinlock as the announcers talk about Tough Enough to kill time. Barrett misses a charge and eats a Lie Detector for the pin at 3:12.

Rating: D-. Good grief it's going to get a rubber match on Sunday isn't it? This whole thing is such a waste of whatever they had with the King of the Ring because Barrett hasn't been embarrassed enough over the years. Bad match, horrible feud, disgusting waste of someone like Barrett for a comedy act.

Truth puts on his king attire.

We recap Rusev destroying Ziggler last week, finally making Rusev feel like a monster (and a wrestler) again.

It's Open Challenge time and Rusev is here to renew a rivalry that doesn't need to be renewed. He blames Lana for losing the title in the first place and says he broke Ziggler because of the USA. Before the match though, here's Kevin Owens with something to say. Rusev says no because he was here first and that Owens needs to pick a single first name. They argue a bit but here's Cesaro to interrupt as well. Cena heads outside as the three brawl, setting up a triple threat match with the winner getting a title shot immediately after because WHO NEEDS PSYCHOLOGY???

Rusev vs. Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

Cena is on commentary as Cesaro gets beaten down in the corner. Rusev gets beaten down and Cannonballed, only to have Cesaro hit the running uppercut to Owens' jaw. Swiss Death gets two on Rusev as Cena puts over the Divas' segment. Owens has to escape two pinfall attempts, followed by Cesaro doing the same off a Saito Suplex from Rusev. Cena continues to be as good of a commentator as you'll see in this company, only to have to stop for Cesaro turning Owens' superplex into a Tower of Doom for two each.

The Russian takes over again as these guys are just hammering each other. Owens blocks Rusev's German suplex attempt so Cesaro Germans both of them AT ONCE. I know I say this every week but DANG that guy is strong. Since that's not enough, Cesaro busts out a corkscrew dive over the top to take out both guys. Back in and Cesaro gets two off a high cross body on Rusev but Owens breaks up the Swing with a superkick.

Kevin drops both guys but stops to shout at Cena, allowing Rusev's Alabama Slam to set up the Accolade. Cesaro saves this time and delays a vertical suplex on the Russian. Well ex-Russian but whatever. Cena keeps making some rather heelish yet totally fair comments about how he's the lucky one here as these guys are all brawling but he gets to come in fresh. Rusev sends Kevin outside and Owens bails, saying he'll see Cena Sunday.

Back from a break with Rusev chinlocking Cesaro, only to have the bald one pop up and hit a springboard spinning uppercut to drop Rusev. The apron superplex is countered with Rusev suplexing Cesaro onto the apron to put both guys down onto the floor. Back in again and Cesaro dropkicks Rusev on the top, only to have his superplex countered. The Russian's top rope splash misses and Cesaro crossfaces Rusev, only to have Rusev power up into something like a spinning Rock Bottom for two more.

Back up again and Cesaro can't get a Sharpshooter, allowing Rusev to hit a spinwheel kick for two. The Accolade is countered into the Swing which sets up the Sharpshooter, drawing a loud TAP chant. Rusev makes the rope but since this is still officially a triple threat, he has to crawl outside to break the hold. Nice touch of continuity there. Cesaro hasn't done something cool in all of 14 seconds now so he comes back with a suicide dive. Back in and Cesaro gets tripped off the top, setting up a superkick from Rusev for the pin at 24:02.

Rating: B+. Why not make Cesaro the Intercontinental Champion? Like, just let him go out there and have awesome matches with anyone because Cesaro is pure gold at this point. It's the simple concept of "hey, this guy is awesome right now so LET'S PUSH HIM!" Unfortunately he'll probably be forgotten again in three weeks while someone like Barrett or Truth get pushed because they're funny or something. Like, is Cesaro even going to

be on the pay per view?

US Title: Rusev vs. John Cena

The psychology is all over the place here as Cena, the face champion, comes in with a huge advantage since Rusev is spent. Cena starts fast and hits a release fisherman's suplex followed by a headlock. Rusev bails to the ropes but Cena nails the shoulders. In a nice touch, Rusev can't get up due to the exhaustion, making the finishing sequence look really awkward. The AA is countered into the Accolade out of nowhere and Cena hangs on for about 45 seconds (fair since Rusev is weakened) until Owens comes back in for the DQ at 4:57.

Rating: D. This was more awkward and weird than bad as Cena was basically wrestling a squash match against a big name until the end where he got caught in a big move. Like I said, this was just strange and would have been FAR better served as a single, four way elimination with Cena involved. It was different, but the execution of the second match didn't work for me.

Owens gives Rusev a Pop-Up Powerbomb and tells Cena that he's taking the title on Sunday.

Rollins tells Kane that it's on him if tonight goes bad.

The Tough Enough cast is on stage when Lita (a coach on the show) comes out with something to say. She officially introduces us to the cast and this is a big waste of time because Tough Enough just isn't all that interesting this season. It was so uninteresting that I haven't watched it yet and don't plan to.

We recap Reigns and Wyatt from earlier.

Stardust (hey he's back) talks about how the world needs heroes because the world is made up of heroes and villains. "From where I stand, the view never changes." Neville has been claiming that the forces of evil have forsaken him, but those forces will bring him down. Embrace the strange. Or embrace Cody Rhodes for a change.

Barrett vs. Truth for the crown on Sunday. If Rusev and/or Cesaro aren't

on that show, I lose so much of my faith in this company, meaning I fully expect it to happen.

Stardust vs. Neville

Neville is no longer the New Sensation, which is one of the best things that could happen to him. A loud CODY chant starts up but let's just keep him as Stardust because it's done wonders for his career. Stardust isn't interested in a handshake and kicks Neville down, only to have to get up before the Red Arrow can launch. There's a cartwheel from Star and we hit the chinlock.

As has been the trend tonight, this match is bizarre as the fans are cheering Stardust instead of the guy they're pushing as an actual superhero. It's funny how such shortsightedness works. Neville fights back to silence (I'm stunned too) but Stardust rolls him up and grabs the trunks for the pin at 4:09. JBL: "Go to the pay window young man!"

Rating: D. So let's see. They've (so far) wasted any potential for Cody coming off his father's passing, Neville looks lame because no one wants to boo the son of a legend whose father recently passed away, and then Stardust cheats instead of getting to make this an important and cool moment. Oh and the match wasn't any good either. What a mess as psychology means nothing around here.

It's time for the contract signing to close things up this week. Rollins and Kane are out first and the champ talks about watching the footage of the car being destroyed again. After this Sunday, Suplex City will be a memory and he'll still be champion, but here's a Beast to disagree. Well, likely to stand there while Heyman disagrees. Paul says Rollins wants to burn Suplex City down, but the fans want to see him get taken apart for his breaking of the eleventh commandment.

People want to see Rollins get beaten up and that's what they're going to see this Sunday when he gets kicked, slapped, punched, suplexed, F5'd and dethroned. Rollins signs anyway, as does Brock, and there goes the table. Kane comes at Brock but Lesnar pulls out an ax handle and actually flips the table back up. The fight is on again and Rollins goes flying. Kane breaks up an F5 on the floor and Rollins hits him with the ax handle.

Some steps to the head have Brock in more trouble but Beast Mode prevails with Kane taking an F5 on the floor. There goes Rollins into the crowd, leaving Brock to crush Kane's ankle on the steps, likely making this Sunday one on one. Brock poses with the title but we're not done yet as Rollins comes back to ringside and yells about being the man to slay the Beast on Sunday. Medics tend to Kane so Rollins yells at him too, calling Kane's career one big disappointment. This is on Kane and Rollins kicks him in the ankle to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a great example of a show where the good was good but the bad was really bad. Some of these matches and stories are disasters and I really don't think I need to explain which is which. The show wasn't terrible and had some VERY good stuff going on, but between Stephanie throwing herself into a feud she has nothing to do with and the battle of the kings that no one wants to see and a few other big misses, I wanted this show to end instead of wanting to like it. Not the worst by any means and the Divas segment (once it was about them) was great, but WAY too much bad to hold it back.

Results

Ryback/Randy Orton b. Sheamus/Big Show – Top rope splash to Sheamus

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

R-Truth b. King Barrett – Lie Detector

Rusev b. Kevin Owens and Cesaro – Superkick to Cesaro

Rusev b. John Cena via DQ when Kevin Owens interfered

Stardust b. Neville – Rollup with a handful of trunks

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Monday Night Raw – July 13, 2015: The KB Is On His Honeymoon So The Show Will Be Up Later Edition

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 13, 2015

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Battleground and thankfully Brock is here, hopefully to beat up a pair of cars in a handicap match this week. Other than that we have the rest of the build towards Wyatt vs. Reigns, possibly even including why they're fighting and what it has to do with Reigns' daughter, and more stuff including whatever Ambrose might be doing on Sunday. Let's get to it.

Smackdown – July 9, 2015:

I'll Have The Special

Same as last week as I won't be able to post the full thing tonight so here it is in advance.

Smackdown

Date: July 9, 2015

Location: Bradley Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler

We're back after this Monday's classic of Cena vs. Cesaro and Lesnar squashing a Cadillac with...maybe Cesaro and Rollins if we're lucky. My guess is we'll get more of a focus on Reigns vs. Wyatt, which is a far more interesting story than the World Title situation. Hopefully the wrestling will be good. Let's get to it.

The opening recap is a long video on Lesnar vs. Rollins, with Cena vs. Cesaro not warranting air time.

Here's Rollins to open things up by calling Lesnar a coward. Luckily we're treated to a JUSTIN BIEBER chant because that's a full time thing now. Rollins rants about the destroyed Cadillac but here's Paul Heyman with a tow truck hauling out the remnants. Heyman says you can't treat Lesnar like Rollins did and not expect to be taken to Suplex City.

Both say that the car is a metaphor for their opponent (or client's opponent) in a good exchange. Rollins brings up the whole destroying the Shield thing but Heyman promises Lesnar putting his foot on Seth's chest as he holds up his new title. Seth cuts him off again and promises to keep the title. This was basic stuff but it's why they have Heyman with Lesnar though. If Brock can't be around, just throw Heyman out there to do the talking.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bo Dallas

In case Monday's squash didn't do it for you I guess. Before the match, Bo takes credit for the success of Rock's new HBO series Ballers. Ambrose works on a hammerlock to start but Dallas sends him into the post three

times in a row. Some choking with the ring skirt (that's something you don't see to often) sets up Bo's belly to belly (his old finisher) for two and we take a break. Back with Dean fighting out of a chinlock and firing away against the ropes. We get a big surprise as Bo runs the ropes for a belly to belly superplex, followed by a Downward Spiral for two. That goes nowhere so Dirty Deeds finishes Bo at 9:07.

Rating: C-. Bo surprised me here a bit and it's been cool to see him working extra hard lately, dating back to the match against Neville on pay per view. Ambrose is still looking for his next feud and you almost have to assume it's going to be against Reigns because, simply put, who else is there?

Big Show tells Rollins to take care of Lesnar and promises to take out Reigns tonight. Man I thought we were past that mess.

Recap of Rusev putting Ziggler out on Raw.

Fandango vs. Rusev

Rusev has shoes now, which is a very smart mandate for him. Fandango scores with a headscissors to start as Jimmy brings up Rusev wearing boots after Tom and Jerry spent thirty seconds talking about it during Rusev's entrance. This is every Rusev match before he feuded with Cena: a nerve hold, no selling Fandango's comeback, the superkick and the Accolade for the submission at 3:15.

Rating: D. Hey, Rusev is back. I think that sums up the whole thing here as it was just a quick squash with a bunch of shots of Summer Rae to make things a bit easier to sit through. Summer works fine as a gold digger, even if Rusev doesn't have a ton of gold at the moment. Make Rusev a monster again and he'll be fine.

Roman Reigns vs. Big Show

Remember what I said about being fine? Forget all of that here. Show is now in a sleeveless black shirt instead of the singlet top. Reigns gets thrown around to start and Show shoves him out to the floor. The giant gets posted for an eight count and it's time for Reigns' clotheslines,

because where would we be without a series of clotheslines? The Superman Punch is loaded up but we've got a fake Wyatt on the stage. The real one gets punched off the apron but pulls Reigns down for the DQ at 4:00.

Rating: D+. This was barely a match as a good chunk of it was spent on the fake Wyatt and waiting on Big Show to beat the count back in. Thankfully we didn't have to sit through a long Reigns vs. Big Show match which would have killed the crowd and been a big bore all match long. Wyatt vs. Reigns should be a really fun power brawl when we get there though.

Bray hits a pair of Sister Abigails.

Titus O'Neil vs. Big E.

E. takes over to start and hammers Titus into the corner to start. That's a very common way to open matches these days. We hit the early abdominal stretch complete with slaps but Titus tosses E. out to the floor. A belly to belly stops Titus' comeback and the partners all try to interfere, earning them a mass ejection. Clash of the Titus ends E. at 2:49.

Austin WWE2K16 video.

Video on the Cadillac being crushed earlier this week. So what wrecked car was brought out earlier???

After a recap of what happened between them on Monday, here's Orton to talk about what happened with Sheamus earlier this week. He keeps it simple by saying he's going to attempt to make Sheamus entertaining by ripping off his mohawk, but here's the Ascension of all people for some reason. There was a time when this might have been interesting but instead it's RKO's all around.

Video on Cesaro vs. Cena from Raw. This deserved any attention it could get.

Naomi/Tamina vs. Brie Bella/Alicia Fox

Brie shoves Naomi into the corner to start before it's off to Tamina, who takes some kicks to the ribs as well. All hail the Bellas right? Tamina

makes a comeback so it's off to Alicia and Naomi with the latter still having no luck. Everything breaks down and a Nikki distraction lets Alicia hit the ax kick for the pin on Tamina at 2:55.

Ryback doesn't like how Seth Rollins has been acting as champion, including how he ran away on Monday. Tonight, Ryback will show Rollins how a champion acts because there is no running and hiding.

Ryback vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title and both guys come out alone. Ryback shoves him out to the floor with ease to start and Rollins is already frustrated. Back in and some knees to the chest only earn Rollins a thirty second delayed vertical suplex. Seth kicks him off the apron though and nails a nice suicide dive, only to come back in using Brock's jump to the apron. Man this guy has some guts.

Seth's chinlock is quickly countered into a Backpack Stunner and the low superkick is countered into a powerbomb. It's Rollins' turn to counter though as he escapes Shell Shock and kicks Ryback in the head. Instead of covering though he walks out, but Ryback throws him onto the floor a few times. The threat of a Shell Shock on the floor is enough to make Seth run into the crowd for the countout at 8:11.

Rating: C-. I've seen worse. Ryback is really starting to find his groove as the upper midcard guy who can dabble in the main event when he needs to. He's already a solid Intercontinental Champion and a good power guy so why not see how far out he can swim? This was more about the story and there's nothing wrong with that.

Post match here's Big Show to double team Ryback but Reigns makes the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. I'm getting really tired of these not terrible yet still totally skippable shows. This is another example of a show that you do not need to watch but won't hate yourself if you sat through it. In other words, meh. That's Smackdown in a nutshell: it exists and mostly doesn't suck. That's hardly a ringing endorsement but what else is there to say about it?

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Bo Dallas – Dirty Deeds

Rusev b. Fandango – Accolade

Roman Reigns b. Big Show via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

Titus O'Neil b. Big E. – Clash of the Titus

Alicia Fox/Brie Bella b. Naomi/Tamina – Ax kick to Tamina

Ryback b. Seth Rollins via countout

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Monday Night Raw – July 6, 2015: Well Of Course Brock Smash

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 6, 2015

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

The big story coming out of last week: product placement and lame action. The shows really aren't lighting the world on fire right now, but a lot of that has to do with a lack of the Authority and Brock, because without the two of them, the show comes off as a glorified Smackdown. Get to the point already or get rid of the Authority as the main focus of the show because otherwise, a show without them on it isn't going to go anywhere. Let's get to it.

The opening recap covers last week's product placement and Rollins reuniting the team.

We open with Heyman and Lesnar coming out to the exact reaction you would expect for them in a smark paradise like Chicago. Heyman talks about how the Authority thinks Brock is still in Tokyo, because they allowed him to show up tonight. Lesnar is a god and hallowed be his name, but he isn't a god of love or charity or kindness. No, Lesnar is a god of violent retribution and the sword that will pierce Seth Rollins' shield.

Heyman brings up the Streak but points out that it wasn't because of any malice towards Undertaker. Heyman: "This one you'll cheer." When Brock took John Cena to Suplex City, it was just because Lesnar wanted the title and not out of disrespect. The same was true for Reigns at Wrestlemania, but it's not the case for Seth Rollins.

No, Rollins has broken the 11th commandment by cashing in Money in the Bank, running away from a rematch and having his Authority buddies attack him two weeks ago. Heyman's job is to sell us on Battleground in St. Louis, but the beatings and the suplexes begin tonight in Chicago. The Beast of Battleground is waiting for the champ tonight, so Rollins better be ready.

Kane is in Hawaii and we have badly photoshopped and unfunny photos to prove it.

The Stooges have taken a road trip and we're going to get pictures later. That....could work?

Big Show vs. Ryback

Non-title and Miz is at ringside in director's chair with a microphone. In an inset interview, Ryback says he is one of the few who can manhandle Big Show and Big Show doesn't like that. Well not many people would but Ryback never was very insightful. Miz starts shouting into the mic but only tells the big guys to hit each other.

The fans really don't seem pleased with this one and Show chops Ryback in the corner. Miz: "ONE MORE TIME! ONE MORE TIME!" Ryback kicks him in the face a few times but Show knees Ryback into the corner. This is a very slow and lumbering match so far which isn't a great choice for the opening match. Miz distracts Ryback so Show can slam him down as we take a break.

Back with Show holding a leg lock and Miz telling Show that he should never retire (WOO!). Ryback powers out and takes out the knee as well before dropping Show with three straight shoulders. The Meat Hook and a splash get two but the top rope version misses. Show hits a chokeslam and middle rope elbow, drawing in Miz for the double DQ (he was smart enough to hit them both at once) at 9:24.

Rating: D-. I have tried and tried to defend this three way feud but my goodness Big Show is dragging it down. Ryback is trying to become a more interesting character but there's only so much you can do with Big Show as the power moves against him look cool, but once you've seen them a few times (over the last fifteen years or so) they lose a lot of their impact. Let him do comedy again or something, because Show as the big, strong monster is WAY past its expiration date.

Miz attacks both guys and then begs both guys to wait for Battleground. Ignore the large gap behind him where he could run at any time of course. Miz takes a Shell Shock and chokeslam and another Meat Hook drops Show again. At least the champ stood tall.

More Kane hysterics.

The Stooges went to Wrigley Field and weren't impressed. They could at least take the price sticker off the window. That car better bite the dust before the end of the night.

Brie Bella vs. Paige

Paige gets backdropped to the apron to start and the announcers are already on the amount of days Nikki has held the title. So we're just stuck with nothing interesting until we get to AJ because Nikki is interesting or something. Nikki: "BRIE MODE!" You can hear the crowd dying for this one, which could be because this story hasn't changed in weeks now. Fox gets in a cheap shot but Brie knees down her sister/friend at the same time by mistake. Paige sidesteps the middle rope dropkick ala Samoa Joe but the other girls get involved, setting up the Bella Buster for the pin at 3:12.

Rating: D. This story needs to go somewhere already, and by somewhere I don't mean having Naomi and Tamina come in to help Paige. This story has been set up for something major and the same Divas being rotated in one more time certainly isn't it. The Bellas are long past interesting at this point and while Nikki is better than she was, this story needs a rest but we're pretty much confirmed for the next few months because AJ MUST DIE or something.

Paige gets beaten up post match.

Recap of Wyatt vs. Reigns from last week.

Sheamus vs. Roman Reigns

Get your countouts ready now. Reigns shoves the briefcase out of Sheamus' hands before we start and the brawl is on with a devastating headlock. Sheamus knees him in the ribs to take over but Reigns pulls him off the middle rope and knocks Sheamus outside. They're still firmly in first power gear at this point.

Sheamus actually wins a slugout on the apron and sends Reigns face first into the post as we go to a break. That looked (and sounded) good at least. Back with Sheamus holding a chinlock and a nice loud CM PUNK chant keeping the crowd from being bored. Reigns' best way around this is a bunch of clotheslines, followed by a BIG clothesline in the corner. Feel the intensity!

The Irish Curse is countered and a Samoan drop connects. The Superman Punch is countered into another Irish Curse for two but Reigns Superman Punches him out of the air...and here's Bray. Roman charges up the ramp and Superman Punches...somebody, as Bray pops up on the screen and says anyone but you. Sheamus wins by countout at 11:20.

Rating: C. Decent enough power brawl here but like I said, it was no secret that we were going to get a countout or some kind of wonky finish. It wasn't anything of note, but there's only so much you can do with power brawls, especially when we just had one about forty minutes ago. WWE REALLY needs to work on alternating their styles because you keep getting the same styles of matches over and over and they get old fast.

Post match Randy Orton comes out for an RKO. I had been wondering where he was.

The WWE Network is in Italy. Uh...yay.

Rollins comes in to see HHH, who wants to know what Seth is going to do about Brock Lesnar. The champ thinks he has Battleground in the bag, but HHH is worried about tonight. Rollins needs to do the unthinkable tonight: have him laid out by the Authority like they did two weeks ago. To be fair, that is pretty unthinkable. Imagine the Stooges and Rollins being a real threat to Brock.

Here are Rusev and Summer Rae to keep this mess going. Rusev loves having a submissive Summer around but gets annoyed at the fans wanting Lana. He rambles on about being better than Dolph Ziggler until Summer tells the fans to give Rusev the respect he deserves. Rusev: "Thank you hot Summer." Is she a radio chick now?

Cue Ziggler and Lana with the former saying Rusev achieved everything he has in WWE because of Lana. Dolph says Lana is his now and it's time for kisses. The girls tease a fight but Rusev blasts Ziggler with the crutch before taking off the boot. This goes on for nearly five minutes with the only highlight being Summer attacking Lana. Ziggler's comeback didn't work and the beating just kept going.

This was WAY too long and my goodness Ziggler sucks in this role. After

all the years of being with whatever girl can get him somewhere he's all gaga over yet another good looking blonde because...she likes him? Is there any other reason for these two to be together? Rusev needs to murder Zigler and then do something bad to Lana and then never speak of this whole mess again.

Post break they actually do the big serious talk about Zigler being attacked. Zigler even did a stretcher job. This story SUCKS and there is no need to ever talk about it again. Figure out how your characters work and then don't screw with them because going against established characters is one of the worst things you can do in wrestling or any other form of entertainment.

Bo Dallas vs. Dean Ambrose

Before the match, Dallas talks about how that was a bad thing happening to a bad person. Good things happen to people like him though, as long as you BOLLIEVE! The dueling WE BOLLIEVE/LET'S GO AMBROSE chants start up as Bo gets two off a clothesline before hitting the chinlock. Bo misses a knee drop and gets bulldogged down, setting up Dirty Deeds for the pin at 2:59. This was WWE saying "yeah Ambrose is still a thing after losing Thursday. Oh you didn't know he lost Thursday? Well then never mind."

The Stooges got stuck in traffic. Seriously.

R-Truth vs. King Barrett

No entrance for either guy as this feud just keeps going. Barrett stomps him down in the corner to start and a clothesline takes them out to the floor. Truth is sent into the post a few times and we hit the chinlock. A big boot gets two for Barrett and we take a break. Oh freaking joy we get to see more of this match. Barrett hammers away but runs into a series of clotheslines (WAY too popular tonight and in general). Winds of Change is countered into a crucifix for two but a low blow drops Truth. Truth goes up and dives into the Bull Hammer for the pin at 9:37.

Rating: D. So? Barrett has knocked Truth out a few times already, so what difference does it make if he does it again? Why should this horribly uninteresting feud that has made Barrett look even less important than he

was when he was Intercontinental Champion? Barrett could be doing ANYTHING else and it would be better but we're stuck with this. The match was boring too, just like everything else they've done.

Back from a break with another look at Zigler being beaten down. This is treated as way too big of a deal after the mess they've made of this feud.

Here's Rollins with an ax handle and the Stooges with their car and their own ax handles. Oh come on man. No one could possibly be that stupid. Rollins is going to burn Suplex City to the ground before going on about how awesome he is a bit longer. He finally asks if Lesnar is just Heyman's....uh....I think you can figure this out, so here's Brock. All three are ready for him so Brock thinks better of it and tells Heyman to bring him something. Heyman brings over an anvil case containing a pair of axes. Oh this is going to be good.

Brock smashes the ax into the car door and can't even get it out, so he breaks a few windows and tears off a door. The door goes flying into the crowd (apparently hitting a fan, who was ok) and now it's time for the Stooges to come save their car. Noble winds up with a broken arm and Mercury gets suplexed onto the hood, much to the delight of the crowd. Brock chases Rollins out of the ring and holds up the title to wrap things up.

THIS is what Brock should have been doing for the last six months. Just have him break stuff and be a freak of nature. Don't have him get beaten down by Kane and the Stooges like EVERY OTHER FACE EVER. That was the problem with the HHH feud: anyone could have played Lesnar's role. Here, there isn't anyone else that Rollins hasn't already beaten or has any real reason to be afraid of anymore so only Brock really fits.

Lucha Dragons vs. New Day

Woods is the odd man out here and the Players are on commentary, with a shirt for Cole. The Dragons speed things up to start but Kofi comes back with a kick to the ribs (devastating!) before it's off to Big E. Titus goes on about some kind of fungus that Big E. has (maybe he could use a washcloth to clean it up. It didn't make sense when they said it for

weeks on end (and yes I know what it is) so why not say it again here?) before the Dragons clean house and dive on all three New Day guys as we take a break.

Back with Kofi getting two on Kalisto before it's off to Big E. for more clubbing forearms. The abdominal stretch with the slaps set up a chinlock from Kofi as we hear about where everyone went to college. The hot tag brings in Cara and Titus takes over on commentary, doing a pretty awesome old school play by play, including a quick rant about how he should have JBL's salary. Everything breaks down and the Midnight Hour ends Cara at 10:16.

Rating: C. This was fine and a nice way to set up the title match at Battleground. Neither of these teams are exactly lighting the world on fire at the moment but it's nice to see something other than the team fighting over and over again. Titus continues to be WAY more charismatic than half the roster and deserves the success he's having.

Steve Austin is on the cover of WWE2K16.

It's Open Challenge time but first we get a package on Owens losing the NXT Title in Tokyo over the weekend. Cena says have no fear because the champ is here, meaning there will be a title match right here on Raw. Again Owens interrupts and says this is the worst part of the show every week because the people have to listen to Cena saying the same garbage over and over again. The bell is about to ring but here's Cesaro one more time. Cesaro says he deserves another shot because he had Cena ready to tap out but Owens cost him the title shot. Owens walks away from the threat of violence and it's time for a rematch.

US Title: Cesaro vs. John Cena

Cena is defending of course. A quick uppercut puts Cena down on the floor and we take a very early break. Stop doing that nonsense and just have the bell after the break. We got maybe 40 seconds of "action" and then miss three and a half minutes. I hate that way of thinking. Back with Cesaro stomping away as he almost has to play the heel here, even though he's turned face for all intents and purposes.

A one arm delayed vertical suplex with a squat gets two but Cena shrugs it off (because it's a suplex) and drops Cesaro with a front face electric chair drop. The AA is countered into a DDT for two and it's off to the chinlock. That's good for a second commercial in about five minutes of actual match time because they're really trying to fill in time. Back with Cesaro catching Cena's shoulder in a backbreaker and countering the Shuffle with a crossface.

That's countered into an AA attempt but Cena has to settle for the STF instead. A rope is grabbed so Cesaro rolls some gutwrench suplexes for two of his own. That was a cool looking spot, as always. Cena blocks the Swing by doing a big situp into a DDT for two of his own and the fans are starting to buy into this. Cena rolls through a cross body into the AA but Cesaro lands on his feet.

Swiss Death is countered into a hurricanrana for two and both guys are down. The fans officially think this is awesome so they've won over one of the tougher crowd. Cesaro makes it even more awesome with a spinning springboard uppercut for an even closer two. They fall to the floor with Cena backdropping him into the timekeeper's area but the referee takes his time counting. Well to be fair that's not really a main event level finish so you can't go there again.

Cena shoves Cesaro off the top for two off the Fameasser and then tells him to hold the ropes, which Cesaro does to counter another AA. A HUGE Swiss Death connects for two more but a quick AA gets the same. Both guys are spent so Cesaro is able to grab the Swing, setting up the Sharpshooter which he transitions into another crossface, but Cena slips out and puts on the STF.

Cesaro powers out of THAT and lifts Cena up into the air for a snap suplex. That is just scary, scary power. The Springboard Stunner misses so badly that Cesaro just Neutralizes Cena for two instead of going down. Cena's tornado DDT is stopped in midair and Cesaro slaps him down into another crossface, sending Cena into the ropes for a chorus of boos.

The apron superplex (with EASE) gets two but Cena pops back up and floats over into a Batista Bomb (the sign of Cena being desperate) for a sloppy

two, as called out by the announcers. Cena takes him to the corner but almost gets caught in a super Neutralizer, only to be countered into a super AA to retain the title at a mind blowing 30:10.

Rating: A-. Yo Vince, I think the guy can connect to the fans. Cesaro is basically where Dolph Ziggler was a few years ago: having really entertaining matches but never being able to show what else he can do because he's never given the chance. Cesaro is one of the rare cases where he nails every single thing he's asked to do and almost everyone is begging for him to move up to the next level, but something about a superhuman freak with a good look who can speak five languages fluently and has nearly fifteen years experience doesn't click with Vince and for some reason the guy never gets the push he deserves.

At least there was this though, which is somehow better than last week's near classic. Cena and Cesaro are guys with incredible chemistry and yet another example of someone going out there and having maybe the match of their lives against Cena. I'm hoping that when Cena retires, people look back at him in awe because this is a once in a generation kind of talent and we take him for granted.

Owens runs in and eats an AA to close the show.

Overall Rating: C. It took a lot to bail this show out but thankfully the main event is awesome and eats up well over half an hour to close things out. Other than that and the awesome BROCK SMASH segment, there really wasn't much to see here. The wrestling in the first hour was horribly lame and the Rusev vs. Ziggler stuff has to end with Ziggler getting eaten like a Russian stew or the whole thing is an even bigger disaster than I was expecting. The main event leaves this on a very positive note, but there's a lot for it to overcome here.

Results

Big Show vs. Ryback went to a double DQ when Miz interfered

Brie Bella b. Paige – Bella Buster

Sheamus b. Roman Reigns via countout

Dean Ambrose b. Bo Dallas – Dirty Deeds

John Cena b. Cesaro – Middle rope Attitude Adjustment

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: May 25, 2015

Oh boy it's this show. I've been putting this off for as long as I can because this show drove me up the walls, down the walls, to the grocery store and then halfway to Oklahoma. It's very rare to find a show with two different parts that get under my skin this badly but this show managed to pull it off. Let's get to it.

I'm going to do this one a little bit differently as there are two major pieces I'll be spending far more of my time on. Therefore, I'll get those out of the way and then cover the rest of the show. You can probably guess what these two major segments were (hint: I wrote a column about one of them) so we'll start with the one that went on longer: the Dean Ambrose arrest story.

The basic idea is simple: Ambrose has until the end of the show to sign the contract for the match with Rollins on Sunday (why the Authority

didn't say "you have four seconds to get out here and sign this starting now" isn't clear) so the Authority ran some trickierations and had Dean arrested for punching an innocent cameraman. Later in the show, it was revealed that Rollins shoved the cameraman into Dean so he wouldn't make it back to the show in time. Naturally, with the Authority celebrating at the end of the show, Dean came back (in a police van) and signed the contract just as the show ended (complete with overrun of course).

Now let's stop for a minute and think about this. Monday Night Raw is a wrestling show. We have to accept that a lot of really, really questionable things happen, but WWE has built a universe where it's plausible that these things could happen. In other words, fans are willing to suspend their disbelief to accept that we're watching crazy people do crazy things because the show has made it possible for that to happen.

Look at it from a comic book perspective. I can believe that Superman can fly because he's an alien under a yellow sun. Those are the rules that DC comics have established and as long as they play by those rules, I can go along with them. However, if one day Superman can suddenly turn people into chickens and the justification is "well he's an alien and has powers", it's unacceptable because this comes out of left field and doesn't gel with the story of the character.

This past Monday with Dean just happening to make it out of jail on time and just happening to be there at the very end of the show to sign the contract was WWE suddenly being able to turn people into chickens. There were WAY too many coincidences and perfect timing for me to accept that this was going to be the case. It didn't help that they were basically saying "yeah you know he's getting back and signing" and it was just a matter of time before the big evidence showed up to save Dean.

I said this in the review but it felt like the end of any given sitcom episode. Our hero is in big trouble for doing whatever and he can't prove his innocence, but here's some deus ex machina to save him and give us all a happy ending while the villains are left kicking and screaming and promising to get Ambrose next time Gadget, NEXT TIME!

The word to sum it up was staged. This felt like it was designed to be completely fake and set up the whole way through instead of trying to be realistic. Look at Lucha Underground for a counter example. They have some completely over the top stories (including a man who was the spirit of a dragon and a monster killing a wrestler) but they play it totally seriously and it never fails to work. This story felt like WWE was winking at the camera the entire time and making it as clear as they could that Ambrose was going to be there at the last second to save the day, making the entire three hour story a big waste of time.

That's the other big deal for me: what did this whole thing change? Ambrose came into the show with a title shot and left with a title shot. All that happened in between was the Authority looks bad and Rollins doesn't really do anything else. Instead of a serious promo exchange or making me want to see the match more, the show was a big stand alone story that changed nothing and got on my nerves. It's bad writing and bad booking and something that really didn't need to happen.

Now on to the other stupid idea of the night: Rusev turning into a big, emotional goon instead of the brute that he's been for over a year now. I understand the idea that he would be upset over Lana leaving him for an American, but the reaction was all wrong. Rusev should have been stomping and raving and FIGHTING ZIGGLER but instead he was asking to hold Lana's hand and talking about all the dreams they had in Bulgaria.

As I ranted about in the column I wrote (which I know you've all read of course), this was missing the point of the character. Rusev is a monster and they're trying to give him emotions. It's all wrong for him and doesn't fit anything that they've set up over the past year plus for him. It goes back to the Superman example earlier: you can't just throw in a polar opposite set of characteristics for someone without any sort of foundation for them. Rusev getting all emotional has no background, Lana or no Lana.

Oh and now Rusev is injured and could be out for more than a month, so the last thing people are going to remember from him is the big change scene with the song from the trailer from every bad romantic comedy ever. What a great followup to the four pay per view series with Cena. But hey,

at least Rusev is a more three dimensional character, because a guy named the Bulgarian Brute was just dying for a soft side right?

As for the rest of the show, Ambrose pinned Rollins in a tag match, which should have ended the show and been the main focal point of their feud that night. I'll stop myself there.

Rusev squashed R-Truth in 59 seconds. Again, I'll stop myself there.

The other major story of the night was a trio of matches between the six participants in the Elimination Chamber match for the Intercontinental Title. In addition to Truth vs. Rusev, we had Ryback beating Barrett (shocking!) and Sheamus Brogue Kicking Ziggler. This is another example of tired booking ideas that need to be replaced. Only Sheamus vs. Ziggler broke four minutes, making these matches, which really change nothing for Sunday's match, more like a waste of time than anything else. Consolidate these into a long six man instead of three singles or have a tag match or two three ways or ANYTHING but this boring idea.

The cast of Entourage was here to fill in time, including a segment where they mentioned Ronda Rousey in front of Stephanie. That's something of note was well: notice that a lot of the bad writing and bad structuring take place when Stephanie is back full time. We had a bunch of bad filler segments and more of her talking with proper nouns (you don't have to say the exact name of the title, wrestlers or pay per view every ten seconds Stephanie. We're not going to care more or start Tweeting about it because WE'RE ALREADY WATCHING THE SHOW).

Neville beat Stardust (who had a pre match staredown with Stephen Amell of Arrow, allegedly setting up a showdown at Summerslam. Seriously. To his credit though, Amell is in great shape so it could be passable) and was beaten down by Bo Dallas post match. They're still playing up the knee injury which is fine for a quick story.

Cena's Open Challenge speech was talking about the fans who boo him and want someone to knock him down for good. Kevin Owens has his chance on Sunday but it's not going to happen. As usual, this was Cena owning the fans as only he can and chuckling as they think they own him.

Zack Ryder answered the challenge and had a very fun four minute match (complete with Ryder missing a 450 of all things) before Cena pinned him. This was the right call as Ryder is a Long Island guy and this was the last show in Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, which was played up a lot during the match. As usual, this was the best part of the show as Cena continues to be amazing when they just let him go out there and do his thing. Post match Owens, now in more proper gear, laid Cena out again. They better not screw this up on Sunday, but I'm sure they will.

Tamina, the bodyguard for one of the challengers for the Divas Title on Sunday, pinned the other challenger for the Divas Title on Sunday. The stupidity was flowing through this entire show.

To cap it off, let's throw all psychology out the window and have Kane (for no apparent reason) book New Day in a 3 on 11 handicap match, because the way to get heels booed is to put them against impossible odds. This lasted less than a minute before the big brawl.

Do I need to sum this one up for you?

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Elimination Chamber 2015 Preview

It's time for a "let's get people to watch the Network and hope they don't remember to cancel their free month in the hour they have after the show goes off the air" show that they're calling a pay per view. This is going to be an interesting show as they only have two weeks before Elimination Chamber, which means we might get something interesting short term to set up for a change down the road. Let's get to it.

There's no pre-show match this time but Daniel Bryan will be on MizTV. There's nothing to see here other than Miz returning and Bryan plugging the book/DVD/whatever else he has coming out. I can't imagine he's coming back to the ring already and he probably shouldn't yet either. I'll be glad to see Miz back as yes, I still like the guy.

Now we'll go with the bigger matches as we start with the Tag Team Title Elimination Chamber match. Given that it's under elimination rules, we'll look at each team and eliminate them one by one.

Los Matadores – Just no.

Ascension – I'd love to see these guys just massacre everyone in this thing and win the belts like they should have when they debuted before....I'm going to stop myself there because I'll rant all day on them all over again. Ascension won't win, even though they should be a force in this match.

Prime Time Players – They're funny and I dig the team, but I don't picture them winning the titles in one of their first matches back together.

Lucha Dragons – They're the dark horses to win here as they've been pushed strong since debuting and clearly have the offense to get the fans into any of their matches. Why Los Matadores still exist with these guys around is beyond me.

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – You would think these guys would have a good shot but I just don't see it happening again.

New Day – I've loved the team and it's hard not to, but there's only so long you can keep the joke going. These guys work well together to steal pins, but having them survive five other teams might be a bit too much to ask.

So who do I have winning? This might come as a surprise, but I'm going with the Dragons. I don't see New Day surviving that many teams without someone catching them and Cesaro/Kidd don't feel right. The other teams are filler so yeah, I'm actually picking the Dragons.

Off to the other Chamber for the vacant Intercontinental Title so let's do the same format.

R-Truth – I think I have a better chance of winning the title than he does.

Dolph Ziggler – He has Lana. Don't get greedy. Also there's nothing for him to win here as he's held the title a bunch of times before and doesn't gain anything by winning it again.

King Barrett – He's already jobbing to R-Truth clean in less than three minutes. Heaven help him if he wins the title back and is getting rolled up by El Torito next. Pass here and that's the best for everyone involved.

Ryback – I just can't see it. They're playing up that he hasn't won a title yet so maybe he chases the belt, but I can't see him winning it here.

Rusev/Bray Wyatt – This is in case Rusev can't go due to his leg injury, and it certainly seems that he can't. Wyatt would be a very good option here but again I don't see it. He'll take a Shell Shock to even the "feud" with Ryback and no one will care.

Sheamus – This has been the odds on pick for a while now and he probably does make the most sense. Sheamus has been doing well since he got back and throwing another title on him isn't the worst idea in the world. I'll

take him.

Neville defeats Dallas because there's really no reason for him not to.

I'm really tempted to go with Ambrose over Rollins for a two week title reign but I don't see it happening. I think they'll just go with the safe story of having the interference be too much for Dean to overcome and keep the title on Seth, even though Reigns has nothing to do and probably should come out and help his buddy.

Uh...Naomi takes the Divas Title and feuds with Paige for a bit, even though Tamina pinned Paige on Raw in another really dumb booking decision.

Now we get to the match I'm looking forward to the most and the match with the best build: John Cena vs. Kevin Owens in a non-title match. These two have been trading shots for two weeks now and it's going to be a huge moment if Owens somehow pulls off the win. Notice that I said somehow, as there's no need for him to win the match clean. All he has to do is survive it and hang on long enough to win by countout, DQ or maybe a fluke pin.

This is one of the very rare situations where I'm thrilled by the possibilities and really looking forward to the match for a change. Owens is a great bully character and having him win will instantly make everyone more credible. If Owens is sticking around on the main roster, give him the win here and let him become a star. Cena is going to be fine about ten seconds after the match so does it really matter? Just let Owens win and be done with it. Look at Mick Foley winning his first World Title: everyone remembers the win and no one remembers that he dropped it less than three weeks later because only the win matters.

Overall, I'm looking forward to this show, but there's a good chance it's going to be a massive disappointment. There's only so much you can expect from WWE without them rounding back into form, just like they did this past Monday on Raw. There's bound to be something good on the show though and if there's more than a few good things, Sunday could be really, really special.

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New Column: Say Anything, As Long As It Makes Sense

This is basically the first half of this week's Reviewing the Review about why Raw SUCKED this week.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-say-anything-long-makes-sense/35892/>

Monday Night Raw – May 25, 2015: It All Comes Crashing Down

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 25, 2015

Location: Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., John Bradshaw Layfield

It's Memorial Day and also the last Raw before Elimination Chamber. The two Chamber matches are set and we also have the World Title match ready to go, leaving just the details to be added to the matches to make things fully ready. There's also the issue of Owens powerbombing Cena last week and standing on his US Title. Let's get to it.

We open with the traditional salute to the veterans who have passed away serving their country. In the arena, we have a moment of silence and a ten bell salute. WWE always does a great job with these things.

Here's the Authority in full to open things up. After a look at the ending to last week's show, Seth talks about Ambrose coercing the Authority into giving him a title at Elimination Chamber last week. That's not how the Authority operates because it's not best for business. Therefore, couldn't the Authority just take away the title match or fire Ambrose right now? Well they could and they considered it, but Rollins asked them not to.

HHH has a contract ready for Ambrose to sign so here's Dean to the stage. Dean thinks there might be something wrong with him because he's been having trouble sleeping lately. He's tried counting sheep but he would rather count the times he punches Rollins in the face. It's the closest thing to happiness he can have and that's what he got last week. He always enjoys beating Seth up, but next time he wants it to be for the World Title.

Once he becomes the new face of the WWE, there are going to be some

changes. The Stooges can go barefoot like some respectable hobbits and Kane can just wear a collar like the lapdog that he is. That leaves Rollins to drunk dial Selena Gomez like the Justin Bieber that he is.

Rollins shrugs off the Justin Bieber chants by actually defending him, saying the fans all want to be Bieber, just like Ambrose wants to be like Seth. He talks about Ambrose being a loser all his life and asks him to sign so he can lose one more time. Really good back and forth segment here with the Authority just being in the background while it happened. Ambrose comes to the ring but here's Reigns to have his back. Stephanie gets on the mic and says Dean can sign the contract until the end of the show, but until then, it's Reigns/Ambrose vs. Rollins/Kane right now.

Seth Rollins/Kane vs. Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns

Kane slugs Ambrose in the corner to start but Dean punches and chops up against the ropes. Off to Reigns who takes Kane down with a suplex before Rollins comes in to do the same to Ambrose. It's quickly back to Reigns for a Samoan drop on Seth but he goes outside to chase the Stooges off, only to get caught in a chinlock back inside. A lukewarm tag brings in Ambrose for shots in the corner and a clothesline to put Seth outside, setting up the suicide dive. The good guys stand tall and we take a break.

Back with Rollins stopping a Dean comeback and getting some nice applause from the Stooges. A big time clothesline puts Rollins down and the hot tag brings in Reigns. Roman cleans house for a bit until a Kane boot puts him down. That earns him a Superman Punch and the top rope elbow from Dean for two with Rollins making the save. The springboard knee to the head gets two for Seth (that looked good) but an enziguri knocks Dean into the ropes, only to have him bounce back and grab a backslide to pin Rollins at 13:25.

Rating: C-. The wrestling was fine but it was really hard to care about this one. It's almost the same match we've seen a dozen times with one or two pieces being changed without anything really changing. Ambrose getting the pin is the right idea for this match to set up Sunday, but these tag matches are almost impossible to get up for these days.

After a break, Ambrose says he'll get the contract signed later in the night. The Stooges come up and say they have the contract but Mercury forgot it. Noble: "Well slap me upside my head and call me Sally!" Always the gentleman, Ambrose does just that and beats up the two of them before punching a cameraman by mistake. Dean looks upset by what he did to the innocent guy.

Video package on Kevin Owens' career.

The cast of the movie Entourage arrives and don't get much of a reaction.

Rusev vs. R-Truth

Rusev is officially Bulgarian again. Truth gets in a few shots but the Accolade wraps things up in 59 seconds.

Post match Rusev says he and Lana need to talk so please get down here. He stays in the ring waiting for her through a break asking her to come out and talk to him. Come on man. At least have a giant boom box. Lana finally comes out but won't let Rusev hold the ropes open for her. Rusev knows she cares about him, even with all the mistakes she's made and that he makes sure to list off.

It's not her fault though. She's a woman, and all women make mistakes. He talks about the dreams they had back in Bulgaria and asks her to take his hand...which she eventually does. Rusev wants to hear three magical words though: "I was wrong." That's too much for Lana though as she shoves his hand away and leaves, saying Rusev quit. Rusev: "YOU NEED TO KNOW YOUR PLACE WOMAN!" Lana calls him a liar and a quitter. No one earns her, especially Rusev. She leaves yet again and here's Zigler for another kiss.

So yeah, remember the last year plus of Rusev being a monster who beat Cena by knockout at Fast Lane? Well screw all that because we need to put him in a stupid soap opera style story because EVERYONE is a character like that who needs to have depth and emotions and all that nonsense.

HHH and Rollins come into Ambrose's locker room and have the cameraman say that Ambrose hit him, despite thinking someone pushed him. Dean is

arrested (“Yeah I’ve heard this before.”) and HHH smiles.

Post break the Stooges laugh at Ambrose as he’s taken away.

King Barrett vs. Ryback

Ryback still has bad ribs coming in. Barrett is thrown around to start and planted with an early powerslam but he rolls outside. Ryback follows but takes a hard kick to the ribs to give the King control. Back in and some kicks to the ribs followed by a middle rope elbow get two. Wasteland gets the same as Barrett wisely stays on the ribs. The Bull Hammer takes too long to set up though, allowing Ryback to hit a spinebuster and the Shell Shock for the pin at 3:56.

Rating: D+. So Barrett just spent the entire match working on the ribs and then Ryback hit his power moves like he was perfectly fine. Nothing to see here other than yet ANOTHER Barrett loss, which just keep coming and coming and coming. This was another match designed to set up the Chamber but with no time to get there because we need more stupid soap opera nonsense.

The cast of Entourage comes in to see the Authority and name drop people cameoing in their movie. They bring up Rhonda Rousey making Stephanie scream at Wrestlemania and are politely asked to leave.

Tough Enough videos.

Stardust vs. Neville

Stephen Amell of Arrow is in the front row. Neville vs. Bo Dallas is official for Sunday. Stardust goes after the bad knee to start as the announcers talk about Stardust and Amell feuding on Twitter. As Stardust puts on a half crab, Bo Dallas slowly walks to the ring to cheer for Neville. Stardust can’t hit a superplex as Neville kicks him down and nails a tornado DDT, setting up the Red Arrow (after some slaps to the bad knee to wake it up again) for the pin at 3:19.

Rating: C-. The match was nothing special, but this is the kind of match I like: a guy with a pay per view match having a bit of a sweat before beating a guy with a nice resume. We don’t get

these nearly enough. It sets up the match on Sunday and keeps Neville from having to waste a big match. Good booking but not a great match.

Post match Dallas tells him to Believe and kicks the knee out again.

The Entourage guys hit on the Total Divas, creating a massive vortex of indifference. Zack Ryder comes up and asks them to come into his dressing room because he has an idea.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Sheamus

Cole incorrectly says the Intercontinental Title is the only title Sheamus has never held (Tag Team Titles being the other). Sheamus runs him over to start as the announcers talk about Lana and Rusev. We're already in the chinlock with Sheamus talking a lot of trash at the same time. They head outside with Dolph ramming him into the announcers' table, only to get kicked in the knee back inside.

A Cactus clothesline puts both guys on the floor but Sheamus powerslams him outside, drawing Lana to the stage to watch. Back from a break with Sheamus getting two off a neckbreaker but Ziggler fights up with a bunch of forearms. The Fameasser gets two and Ziggler escapes White Noise and ducks the Brogue Kick. Ziggler's superkick gets two and here comes Rusev to the ring for a distraction, allowing Sheamus to hit the Brogue Kick for the pin at 10:20.

Rating: C. And we're DONE with the Intercontinental Title preview matches. This is one of those ideas where WWE does one match and then just MUST do the exact same idea three times in one show with no one looking good coming out of it because none of this matters for Sunday. Decent match but my goodness this show has killed my interest.

Rusev puts on the Accolade to make Ziggler look at Lana. "KISS HIM NOW!"

It's Open Challenge time. Fans: "JOHN CENA SUCKS!" Cena to the camera: "I guess the remix is still a popular song." Cena says in the last ten years, the WWE Universe can be summed up in five words: "Let's go Cena,

Cena sucks.” He thanks the fans who believe in hustle, loyalty and respect but has to stop for a WE WANT RYDER chant. Those people have had his back for years and he thanks them from the bottom of his heart.

That brings him to the other group of fans, who have been begging for someone to get in this ring and knock him down. Name after name have tried to do just that but all of them have failed. Last week he met Kevin Owens, who broke the internet last week and then broke his best friend Sami Zayn in half.

Maybe that’s why the fans think Kevin Owens is the man that can put Cena down for good. This Sunday those fans that chant CENA SUCKS can instead chant FIGHT OWENS FIGHT. Owens can fight all he wants because it doesn’t mean WIN OWENS WIN. Last week Cena found out that Owens knows how to start a fight and this Sunday he’ll find out if Owens can finish one. That’s Sunday though, so let’s get to tonight. The Open Challenge starts right now.

Cena is ready and here’s the cast of Entourage. Cole: “Really?” Thankfully they’re just here to introduce the man taking the challenge.

US Title: John Cena vs. Zack Ryder

The Entourage cast is at ringside. Some early suplexes get two for Cena to start but Ryder comes back with the middle rope dropkick. Cena avoids the Broski Boot and starts his finishing sequence, only to have one of the Entourage guys get in for a distraction. A quick rollup gets two on Cena but Ryder counters the AA into a Killswitch for two. Now the Broski Boot gets two and the Rough Ryder gets the same. Zack goes up top but misses a 450 of all things, setting up the AA for the pin at 4:05.

Rating: C+. At the end of the day, it would have been cool to see Ryder get the big win to close out the building but you can’t do something like that to Cena here. Ryder looked good here and hopefully gets some more TV time out of a good performance like this. The 450 wasn’t half bad either.

Cena, Ryder and the Entourage guys get to pose in the ring for a nice moment. Cena poses on his own but turns around for a Pop Up Powerbomb from Owens, now wearing a FIGHT OWENS FIGHT shirt. Owens stomps on the US

Title again for good measure.

The Authority recaps the Ambrose incident.

Now the announcers recap the Ambrose incident.

Tamina vs. Paige

Bellas are on commentary. Tamina knocks her to the floor to start and slaps on a neck crank. A quick rollup gets two for Paige followed by her three clotheslines and a dropkick. Nikki gets in a quick cheap shot though and Tamina's Samoan drop is good for the pin at 3:52.

Rating: D-. Oh sweet goodness really? This is the best thing they can do? We're six days before the Divas title match and the #1 contender just got pinned by the enforcer in less than four minutes. I know Tamina is Jimmy Snuka's daughter or whatever, but that doesn't make her the slightest bit interesting. Bad match here and even dumber booking.

Here's the New Day to say it's preposterous and ridiculous that they're being persecuted for being positive. No one wants to see them lose their titles! Just ask the WWE Universe! Cue Kane to say that the Chamber is fair, but the following match isn't quite the same.

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd/Los Matadores/Lucha Dragons/Prime Time

Players/Ascension vs. New Day

10-3 handicap match and joined in progress with.....never mind as all ten come in for the big beatdown and the DQ at 49 seconds. Yes, the HEELS are in a big handicap match and were put there by a heel. I guess logic and the Curb Stomp can chill together on the banned list.

We get the big brawl with the Dragons diving on most of the other people at the same time. New Day stands tall, only to have Cesaro and Kidd come in and clean house.

Preview of the preview of the Daniel Bryan documentary airing on the Network tonight.

We get a second angle of Ambrose punching the cameraman (from the WWE

Youtube channel because of course it is) because Rollins shoved Ambrose into him. This really doesn't change anything as Ambrose still turned around and punched him, but this show is a sitcom instead of a wrestling show.

Here's the Authority for the big stupid ending to this stupid, stupid show. Yeah there's a video, yeah there's evidence saying Ambrose is innocent (he isn't) but there's no time. Therefore...cue Reigns before HHH can say it's too late. The brawl is on, Reigns gets beaten down, Ambrose shows up in the police van and wearing police gear, and the big brawl allows Ambrose to sign just in time. CUE THAT LAUGH TRACK AND END THEME SONG!!!

Overall Rating: F. Yeah it failed. I was miserable watching this show as they took a huge leap backwards from all the good stuff they had been doing in the last few weeks. Instead of the fun matches and high energy, this was ALL about the backstage stuff and in ring segments with the Authority being on screen WAY too much. Look at some of the things they were doing out there and tell me they were segments we needed to see. The Entourage guys were on TV like four times and added nothing. They certainly weren't bad, but have them out there once and stop showing them otherwise.

On top of that....my goodness just make Rusev into the crying Zack Ryder when Eve left him. No it won't be that bad, but my goodness man, what in the world is the point of this stupid love triangle story? What WWE doesn't understand is there are some people who shouldn't be like everybody else. Yeah Rusev is a human, but he needs to be treated like a monster. Let him just be the guy that got this far and stop trying to add dimensions to him. There are some people it's ok to mess with, but Rusev isn't that kind of character.

Then there's the stupid contract signing deal, which comes off like a sitcom plot: it's some wacky situation which JUST HAPPENS to work due to some master plan coming together, but it somehow manages to all unravel just as the show goes off the air with the Authority shouting that they'll get you next time Ambrose, NEXT TIME!!!

I was livid sitting through this show as they just completely turned off the reality and made it into the biggest TV show schtick they could. That's not even talking about the HORRIBLE booking choices of having three Intercontinental Title preview matches that went nowhere and barely set up the Chamber whatsoever. Horrible, horrible show here and wouldn't you know it: it's also the first show in a long time where Stephanie was a featured player. How about that.

Results

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns b. Seth Rollins/Kane – Backslide to Rollins

Rusev b. R-Truth – Accolade

Ryback b. King Barrett – Shell Shock

Neville b. Stardust – Red Arrow

Sheamus b. Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick

John Cena b. Zack Ryder – Attitude Adjustment

New Day b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd/Los Matadores/Lucha Dragons/Ascension/Prime Time Players via DQ when all ten attacked New Day at the same time

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: May 18, 2015

We're done with Payback and therefore it's time to race towards the Elimination Chamber show because we must get it in before people have to start paying for the Network again. The big story here is Rollins retaining the World Title over his former Shield teammates and Orton in a good four way last night, but now everything is about getting to Elimination Chamber.

The Authority was back, complete with HHH's slow talking and Stephanie dropping in every proper name that she could in a manner that no one uses in the real world. They don't have much to say here (thank goodness) other than All Hail Rollins and that he's getting a tribute later in the night.

This brought them to the Elimination Chamber, which led to interruptions from Ryback and Sheamus. Both of them are announced for the match but of course they'll be fighting tonight too. The match was nothing out of the ordinary with Sheamus Brogue Kicking a distracted Ryback for the pin. I'm glad it's only a two week build to the Chamber as you can only have the people in the match do these simple matches for so long before they lose their effectiveness. The match was fine and I like Sheamus winning, but I think Ryback's push is in major trouble after back to back losses.

Kane was put in charge of the celebration tonight and didn't seem to mind. Ambrose came in and asked for a title shot but was given a match against Bray Wyatt tonight. This was a great example of people being in the right place at the right time saying the right things to move the show forward, making it feel very unnatural.

Neville was being interviewed when Bo Dallas came out. This seems to be the next feud as Dallas isn't cool with Neville bringing up their history in NXT. Dallas attacked Neville's previously injured knee, allowing Barrett to take Neville down pretty easily. This wasn't much of a match due to the time, but I'm getting worried about Neville doing the same

things every time. He's going to be over due to his high flying abilities for a long time, but some of that heat is going to wear off and he needs to have something to build himself back up. The knee injury and a feud with Dallas are a good start though and there's no reason to panic.

Rusev yelled at Lana a lot and broke up with her. Later that night, Lana came out and kissed Ziggler. I'm not wild on pairing her with Ziggler, but I'm even less wild about how fast this turn started and wrapped up. One week she was Fandangoing and then she's being dumped by Rusev? That's because here in WWE, we have to get the next story set up before the pay per view because Heaven forbid we wait more than a few weeks to set something up.

Bray Wyatt beat Dean Ambrose in a match built around a ton of interference and cheating, which is the only way to have that result. This was the usual good brawl between these guys but did you really expect anything else?

Cesaro and Kidd failed to win the Tag Team Titles again after a no contest with New Day. This didn't have the time to go anywhere and was really just a way to extend the feud yet another week as we're getting closer and closer to Elimination Chamber, where this time FOR SURE we're getting new champions. The feud and matches are still fun, but they're running out of ways to have New Day survive without getting repetitive.

After the match, Ascension, the Lucha Dragons, Los Matadores and the Prime Time Players came out to confirm that it's going to be six teams in the Chamber instead of just three. This makes for a very interesting match where it's possible that several teams could walk out with the titles. Well other than Los Matadores or Prime Time Players of course but the other four all have at least a chance. I'm not sure who wins there and I love that feeling.

Now we get to the money part of the show: the US Open Challenge. This week's was answered by NXT Champion Kevin Owens, who gave one of the best debut promos that I've ever seen, as he talked about the NXT Title being the real prize to fight for and how Cena doesn't get to give him advice or pick the time where they fight. I've spent a lot of time on the

podcasts on how much I loved this segment and Owens comes off like one of the best villains in a long time. He can back it up in the ring too and he'll get to show that at Elimination Chamber. That's a non-title match too, which a lot of people seem to be overlooking.

Dolph Ziggler beat Stardust in a very short match to set up Lana kissing him. I'm really not wild on that move but it's what we're stuck with for the time being, meaning Dolph is right back where he was a few years ago.

The Wyatts crushed Ryder/Fandango in a match designed to say "yo, we're monsters."

Nikki beat Naomi via DQ when Tamina interfered. Paige returned for the save and laid out Nikki in what wasn't a heel turn.

The big ending segment was a long, drawn out exchange with Rollins making Kane praise him before Dean came out and threatened to put him through some cinder blocks until he was given a title shot. A bunch of brawling ensued and Rollins hit a Pedigree to stand tall to end the show.

I tried really hard to get into this one but it didn't leave much for me to care about. The main event stuff has too many people floating around it right now. You have the Authority bosses, Kane, the Stooges (ok they don't count as much) and the two guys in the match. They need to just let Ambrose and Rollins carry this instead of just putting everyone they can in there and making it a big mess all over again.

The rest of the show was an improvement over the main event with the Chamber matches both looking good and Owens vs. Cena making me all tingly. If they can keep the HHH/Stephanie involvement to a minimum, we could be looking at a very hot card at Elimination Chamber. Or we could be looking at the same lazy stuff WWE does over and over to waste their potential.

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Reviewing the Review: Payback 2015

We continue to marathon these pay per views and the big question here is can Payback continue to be the most unlikely good series in wrestling? The main event is a well enough built up fatal fourway with Rollins defending against Reigns, Ambrose and Orton, basically making it a Shield triple threat with Orton on the side. Let's get to it.

I'm getting through the pre-show matches as fast as I can so I never have to think about them again. R-Truth beat Stardust in a bonus match with all the charm of a bad infection. These two have fought two or three times now and it's gotten less and less interesting every single time. Therefore, look for them to fight again in the future.

In the other pre-show match, Ascension beat the Mega (changed from Meta for reasons of good taste) Powers in a short match. I would praise WWE for not going with the comedy act here, but I have some issues giving them credit for upgrading from a horrible move to common sense. Yeah they put Ascension over a newly formed comedy team. Am I supposed to be impressed? Finally, does anyone else feel dirty about calling them the Mega Powers?

The opener was a good back and forth match between Dolph Ziggler in Sheamus to seemingly blow off their feud. The key here was the end of the match where Ziggler headbutted Sheamus and busted himself open hardway, which caused the match to end in a hurry. Now granted they didn't have to

cut off much time as the match ran twelve minutes, but it always makes me curious to know what they were going to do otherwise.

Sheamus getting a nice win is the right idea though as he needs the push more than Ziggler. I'm pretty much over Dolph at the moment as he's been the same guy for the better part of ever now. Yeah his matches are still good enough, but I haven't been excited to see a Ziggler match in years now.

For reasons I don't quite get, Kane and Rollins argued even more. On pay per view. I'm going to be really surprised if they set up a Kane face turn as that would be so far out of the realm of common sense these days for WWE. Rollins is almost going to have to turn face eventually though, as it's the nature of being a heel in wrestling.

Now it's time for the match people were drooling over: New Day defending the Tag Team Titles against Cesaro/Tyson Kidd in a 2/3 falls match. This had the potential to be one of the most entertaining matches in a very long time if they set it up right, but unfortunately that's not exactly the way they went about it. Cesaro/Kidd won the first fall in less than three minutes (off a mostly botched Swing into the dropkick). This never sits well with me as the champions just got pinned in almost no time. Let the thing stretch out a bit or have them win the first fall by cheating so it doesn't look that easy.

A bad looking Midnight Hour (with Kofi's arm hitting Kidd's back instead of being a DDT) tied things up in less than nine minutes total and NOW we could pick things up. This is where they get into the insanity with the hot near falls and all the good stuff....and it was about five minutes long.

That's where the match lost me a bit as the majority of the match was done in the first two falls instead of the really hot ending. This needed to be more of a bottom heavy match, setting up the really smart finish of having Woods pretend to be Kofi to steal the final pin. Yeah it's borderline racist, but it was a really smart and even funny way to keep the belts on New Day. I would have liked more time here though and more offense from the challengers, but entertaining stuff all around.

Bray Wyatt and Ryback had a good power brawl built around the idea that Ryback had busted up ribs due to a backsplash off the apron from Wyatt. Granted it didn't work as well as when Ryback hit a top rope splash and didn't sell the ribs all that well. Either way, this was a fun enough match with Ryback going down at the end as he should have. Wyatt needed the win a lot more than Ryback did, but neither guy really needed a major loss at this point. Both guys are in need of a direction though, and that's way too common a problem at this <http://onhealthy.net/product-category/adhd/> level of the card.

Now we had the most entertaining and probably divisive match of the night as John Cena defended the US Title against Rusev in their final battle with an I Quit match. These two beat the living tar out of each other for nearly half an hour with the spots getting bigger and bigger. I had a great time here as they kept building up to the big ending, but the key was I wound up forgetting that it was an I Quit match other than the constant DO YOU QUIT. I know a lot of people have found this annoying, but I really didn't have a big problem with it. Yeah they said it a lot, but that's kind of the point of the match no?

This was exactly what this match should have been with both guys beating the living tar out of each other until Lana submitted for Rusev, which is likely going to trigger their split. It's not the best match in the world, but it was more than entertaining enough which is the right way to go with something like this. Rusev can get right back on track by beating like, anyone in a big match, so this didn't hurt him all that bad. At the end of the day, he was destined to lose this feud, though I could have done with cutting the chain match and just going with this as the finale at Extreme Rules.

We'll follow that up with my favorite part of the night: a quick New Day promo where they drink milk out of champagne glasses, brag about not complaining or swearing...and of course do a spot take, complain and swear upon hearing that they'll be defending their titles inside the Elimination Chamber. That's the perfect moment for these three and I laughed just as much as I expected to. These guys can do no wrong at the moment and they're a major highlight for me.

Naomi and Tamina beat the Bellas in the worst match of the night, which had some bad looking botches, bad timing and the least time of any match on the main card. This was nothing more than a way to set up Nikki vs. Naomi for the title, which really should have just been here instead of the next night on Raw but WWE doesn't have the best logic at times anyway.

Neville beat King Barrett via countout in a good but short match. This was designed to introduce Neville's knee injury, which seems to be his major story going forward. It doesn't really change much about his offense, but at least they're giving him some attention instead of just letting him be the same guy week after week until the crowd gets bored with him.

That brings us to the main event which is your standard wild brawl with all four getting in their big stuff with a bunch of near falls to tease a title change that was never coming. The big deal here was a very short Shield reunion, which blew the roof off the place for just a few moments. That's all the validation they need to pull the trigger on a real reunion for the trio one day, as those three are going to be a force going forward.

The match itself was fun and that's all it really needed to be. Thankfully Orton ate the pin because he's a made man who can do whatever he wants and keep popping back up without any real damage being done to him. The ending came when Rollins Pedigreed Orton for the pin, which I'm assuming is to fuel Rollins vs. HHH down the line, but it comes off as more like Rollins screaming for his daddy's attention. Good match, not my favorite ending though. I didn't mind all the brawling like some have though. Rollins is a heel who cheated. Why is this some big surprise?

Overall, Payback was another big surprise as they had no reason for this to be much of anything, but it wound up being a more than entertaining show with some really solid matches in there. I don't know if it's due to the really low expectations or the really hard work, but for a show with nothing important going on, Payback was really fun and a great surprise.

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