

Fast Lane 2015: The Best Commercial I've Ever Seen

Fast Lane 2015

Date: February 22, 2015

Location: FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

It's the final major show before Wrestlemania XXXI and I've yet to find someone who really wants to see this show. The big story tonight is finding out who is going to be in the main event against Brock Lesnar, as well as if Sting is going to accept HHH's likely challenge for a match at the biggest show of the year. Gee I wonder what his answer is going to be. Let's get to it.

There's no pre-show match this month but we do have MizTV with special guest Paul Heyman. Before Heyman comes out though, Miz tells Mizdow to go sit in the corner. Miz was supposed to be at the Oscars but the Academy got Dwayne Johnson to fill in for him. He explains Reigns vs. Bryan for later tonight and here's Heyman. Paul suggests that Miz is terrified of Lesnar being here because he's not a good enough actor to hide that fear.

Brock is NOT here tonight, but Miz can't get off that insult to his acting abilities. He brings up his win in the main event of Wrestlemania (he's going to catch Jericho's "I beat Rock and Austin in one night" at this pace) as a qualification for being able to ask who Lesnar wants to face this year. Miz talks up Bryan's wins last year and Heyman understands how hot Bryan is right now, but he doesn't think Brock would be worried.

Heyman gets freaked out by Mizdow sitting in the corner so Miz makes his employee face the corner. This gets Mizdow on his feet but Miz shouts him down again. Now we get back to the main event of Wrestlemania with Heyman repeating all of his lines about Reigns from the last few weeks.

The fans cut him off with a Mizdow chant so Heyman actually starts all over again. That's one way to get some heat. Heyman talks about the YES

chants at Wrestlemania that will be silenced by Brock Lesnar, and you can believe that Reigns will go down as well. Paul rolls his eyes as he leaves. This felt like total filler since there aren't enough matches to go around.

The opening video has a computerized car theme, talking about speed and velocity while focusing on the two main events.

Dolph Ziggler/Erick Rowan/Ryback vs. Seth Rollins/Kane/Big Show

This was announced on WWE.com earlier in the week. Rowan now has a big R on his coveralls. Ziggler and Rollins get things going as the fans chant for Ryback. Dolph escapes a headlock and counters a powerbomb into a sunset flip. Cole brings up Rollins bringing up the Daily Show and Jon Stewart actually responding to him. A nice dropkick staggers Rollins and it's off to Rowan to work on the arm.

That's not enough for Rowan so he hooks a pumphandle backbreaker for two. I've always liked pumphandle moves and could go for more of them. Kane comes in for the battle of boring big men and Rowan slams him down, followed by a legdrop for no cover. A nice jumping middle rope back elbow gets two on Kane but he drives Rowan into the corner for the tag to Big Show.

The villains take Rowan to the floor where he spinwheel kicks the post by mistake. Another FEED ME MORE chant starts up as Lawler makes easy bald jokes about Big Show. Back in and Kane stomps Rowan in the corner before it's off to Rollins to stomp on the leg. A Blockbuster gets two more and Big Show comes back in to keep control. He hooks the Lasso From El Paso to actually show some psychology but just lets go for some reason. Rowan counters a chokeslam and plants Show with a DDT but Rollins breaks up the tag attempt.

Erick gets up though and spinwheel kicks Seth down with the bad leg. The hot tag brings in Ryback as things speed up but Rollins avoids the Warrior splash. The Curb Stomp is countered into a powerbomb but Kane takes the Meathook. There's the low superkick for two on Ryback but another Blockbuster is countered into Shell Shock but Big Show makes the save. It's off to Ziggler for a jumping DDT on Kane for two but Rollins

interference allows Big Show to knock Ziggler cold, giving Kane the pin at 13:00.

Rating: B. The man is Mr. Money in the Bank and possibly the future of the company and he's now running interference for Big Show and Kane to get the glory as they pin one of the most popular guys in this company. This was your basic Smackdown main event, meaning it was entertaining enough and a good choice for a PPV opener. I'm totally sick of this story, but at least it's a good enough match.

The beating continues post match (picture any Smackdown.....if anyone actually watches that show) but Orton FINALLY returns and cleans house, sending Rollins running away. He goes all the way into the parking lot and presumably drives away though we don't see him get in a car.

We recap Stardust vs. Goldust, which is due to their issues as a tag team. Their father Dusty Rhodes tried to settle things on Monday but Stardust attacked his brother, setting up this match.

Dusty is in the back with Goldust and asks him not to hurt Cody too badly tonight. Goldust talks about going to the shows with Cody to watch Dusty in the ring. Tonight, he's facing Stardust though, and he has to beat him so badly that the thought of painting his face and putting on a costume will make Cody sick. He isn't leaving without Cody tonight.

Stardust vs. Goldust

Stardust is now in star tights and no shirt. Goldust shoves him out of the corner to start and neither guy seems comfortable to be out there. They trade hiptosses and Stardust hides in the corner for some polite applause. An atomic drop and right hand have Stardust in more trouble but Stardust escapes the Curtain Call. We see a nervous Dusty watching in the back. Goldust clotheslines him out to the floor before loading up Shattered Dreams, only to have Stardust bail to the apron.

Back in and Stardust finally gets some energy into the match and stomps away, taking it back to the floor. This isn't very interesting so far but it's not the worst thing I've ever seen. Back in and we hit a bodyscissors on Goldust before a rollup gets two for Stardust. A slap to

the back sets up another body vise as the fans can't decide who to cheer for. Goldust misses a springboard elbow but counters Cross Rhodes into a bad looking crucifix for two, which is called three in what looked to be a botched ending at 10:00. The referee's hand only hit the mat twice.

Rating: D. I think they were going for Goldust not wanting to do this, but it came off as much more boring and dull than anything else. At the end of the day, these sort of matches don't hold up for me with neither guy wanting to do much and clearly just being there to set up another match down the line. Nothing to see here other than a good looking change of outfit for Stardust, who wound up losing.

We see Jon Stewart of the Daily Show responding to Seth Rollins. Seth has made a big mistake by coming after the Daily Show and even J and J Security can't get him out of it. Stewart is coming for him.

Rollins says he's not hard to find and welcomes Stewart to Fast Lane or any Raw he has time to come to.

Goldust and Dusty are in the back and hope it's over but Stardust comes in and destroys his brother. He yells at Dusty that he was the black sheep of the family before nailing Goldust again.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Tyson Kidd/Cesaro

The Usos are defending after Cesaro and Kidd beat them in a non-title match. Naomi and Natalya are here as seconds. Jey takes Kidd down to start and holds him for a top rope shot to the chest from Jimmy. It's off to Cesaro via a blind tag and he takes out Jimmy's knee to take over. Kidd goes after the knee and Cesaro follows suit with a one legged swing.

Back to Kidd with a slingshot legdrop for two. Notice how much they're mixing up the offense on the leg. You don't have to take turns doing the same holds over and over again. Jimmy gets over for the tag to speed things up but Cesaro grabs a quick rollup for two. The running Umaga attack gets two on Cesaro but he crotches Jimmy on the top. Cesaro lifts Jimmy off the apron for a superplex, setting up the top rope elbow from Kidd for two.

Jey escapes the Sharpshooter and throws Kidd into the air for a Samoan drop from Jimmy, only to have Cesaro drag Kidd outside. That's fine with Jimmy as he hits a huge dive. A Samoan drop drives Kidd into the barricade and all four are down outside. Back in and Jimmy's Superfly Splash hits knees and Kidd slaps on the Sharpshooter. Jey makes the save and slugs it out with Cesaro but they fall to the floor. With Jimmy still shaken up, Kidd hits a quick fisherman's neckbreaker for the pin and the titles at 9:35.

Rating: B-. Another good match here and I'm very pleased with the results. Kidd has gotten a lot better in the last few months and it's nice to see him get rewarded for all the hard work. The Usos can only do their thing for so long before they need a freshening up and this might be such a chance. Another good result after another good match.

We recap Sting interrupting HHH at Survivor Series and then again on Raw a few months later, setting up their confrontation tonight.

HHH comes out in his leather jacket and jeans for a change. He brings up the meeting with Flair on Raw and calls out Sting right now, so here's Sting in person. HHH knows why he's here and thinks Sting is backing the wrong horse. Sting may have been WCW but he went down with the ship.

It was guys like HHH that made the ship go down in the first place because his family is what keeps the WWE alive. So HHH is now taking credit for killing WCW? He wasn't even in the Winner Take All match. If Sting just walks away now, his legacy goes on. He can continue through DVDs and merchandise, and maybe even the Hall of Fame one day.

HHH takes off the jacket and says we can do it another way. He goes for a cheap shot but Sting lays him out, only to eat a microphone shot to the face. It's sledgehammer time but Sting pulls out the ball bat. HHH throws the hammer down and Sting points the bat at the Wrestlemania sign. Sting turns away but hits HHH with the bat while he's trying a cheap shot. The Death Drop leaves HHH laying. This was exactly what people expected but it worked well enough. The hammer vs. the bat was really cool to see.

We recap the pre-show edition of MizTV.

Quick recap of the Bellas embarrassing Paige.

Divas Title: Paige vs. Nikki Bella

Paige is challenging. Lillian screws up again and calls it the Women's Title. Paige quickly takes it to the mat and Nikki rolls to the floor. A chase gets us back inside but Nikki knocks her right back to the floor. Back in again and we hit the chinlock before an Alabama Slam gets two on Paige.

Nikki charges into a boot in the corner before Paige hits the three straight clotheslines. A dropkick gets two and Paige kicks her in the face for the same. The Rampaige is countered into a facebuster but Paige pops right back up. Nikki counters a superplex into a nice powerbomb for two but has to crawl to the ropes to escape the PTO. In a fast ending, Nikki sends her into the buckle and grabs the trunks for the pin to retain at 5:37.

Rating: D+. Believe it or not, this wasn't horrible, but I think most of that is due to Paige holding the thing together. The Bellas (they're the same person in my eyes anyway) know how to do some decent looking moves, but they don't know how to work a match. That's a very big difference and it shows badly when they're in there against well rounded wrestlers.

Cameron and Eva Marie are at the Oscars.

Sting vs. HHH is officially announced for Wrestlemania.

Intercontinental Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Bad News Barrett

Ambrose pinned Barrett in a non-title match (join the freaking club) and literally forced him into signing a contract for a title match. Dean goes right after him to start but gets kicked off the top rope and out to the floor. A chinlock doesn't last long and Barrett kicks him in the face again to stop Dean's comeback. Back in and Dean scores with a tornado DDT before countering Winds of Change into a small package for two.

The standing elbow drop gets two more but Dean runs into Wasteland. They're just trading signature moves right now. The Bull Hammer is countered into a rollup for two and Dean kicks him in the face for no

cover. Barrett tries to bail but gets caught by a suicide dive. Dean pulls him back from the crowd and stomps away in the corner for the DQ at 7:46.

Rating: D. This felt like a Raw match to set up a pay per view match, reenforcing my theory that this show could have been broken up into a bunch of Raws instead of being its own pay per view. Nothing to see here and it was pretty clear about halfway through that it was going to be a screwy finish.

Dean hits Dirty Deeds and leaves with the title.

The lights go out and Undertaker's druids come out with their torches. The gong strikes and two hooded men wheel out a casket. The casket opens up and it's Bray Wyatt inside. He says he will never forget the first time that he saw him. He made Bray tremble with his cold eyes but now he's just a shell of his former self. His soul is lost and it's time to go home. Bray's mission is clear because he doesn't fear him anymore. At Wrestlemania, he will claim the Undertaker's soul. Bray lays back down in the casket and the druids close it up.

The pre-show panel recap the evening so far.

We recap Cena vs. Rusev, which is based on the idea of Cena reaching the end of his career and being far weaker than he used to be. The eye injury has been forgotten in the span of a week.

US Title: Rusev vs. John Cena

Rusev is defending. They stall to start and the fans think Cena sucks. A big right hand drops Rusev so he kicks Cena in the face for two. The champ chokes him in the corner and nails a spinwheel kick for two more. A Jerry chant starts up as a fan takes pictures of Lana. Cena comes back with a dropkick for two of his own but Rusev hits a slightly worse dropkick for two more.

The fall away slam gets yet another near fall and Rusev slowly stomps away even more. Cena charges into an elbow in the corner and we hit the chinlock. A suplex puts Rusev down but the AA is countered with a DDT.

Back up and Cena fires off right hands before starting his usual sequence. Another AA is countered into the jumping superkick for two. The STF doesn't work either and Rusev hits a swinging Rock Bottom for two more.

Cena goes to the middle rope for a tornado DDT but still can't put Rusev away. They slug it out and Rusev grabs the ropes to block another AA attempt. Cena pulls him into a Crossface (called an STF by Cole) but Rusev easily powers out and hits the second Alabama (Moscow?) Slam of the night. Some elbows to the back look to set up the Accolade but Cena blocks a stomp (it could have been the shouting of RUSEV CRUSH) and slaps on the STF.

Rusev finally grabs a rope and escapes the AA again but misses the superkick. Now the AA connects for two (I'm as shocked as you are) and both guys are spent. The top rope Fameasser misses though and Rusev hooks the Accolade. Cena has his knees under him though and powers up, only to have Lana offer a distraction so Rusev can kick him low. Another superkick to the face sets up the Accolade and Cena passes out at 19:00.

Rating: B. Good freaking grief STOP USING PAY PER VIEW TO SET UP REMATCHES. They're making it as clear as they can that this show is just a big preview for Wrestlemania and they can claim "you didn't have to pay for it." Unless you're loyal to WWE of course and actually bought the Network before the free month. This took some time to get going but finally took off about halfway through. Of course it sets up Cena's big win at Wrestlemania, but this is a good win for Rusev. Granted it's on a worthless show but at least it's there.

Cena is dazed post match.

Kickoff panel recaps again.

We recap Reigns vs. Bryan, which is all about headlining Wrestlemania against Brock Lesnar. They started off respecting each other but it's evolved into a game of topping each other to play mind games.

Roman Reigns vs. Daniel Bryan

The previous match got big match intros but this didn't get anything. Good sign in the crowd: PUNCH THAT HIPPIE! Bryan keeps getting down low on the mat to avoid Roman's power in a smart move. A headlock slows Reigns down a bit but he counters into one of his own. Daniel goes for the leg and takes Reigns down into the surfboard but Reigns easily kicks him away. Roman stomps him down in the corner without showing a lot of aggression.

A nice tilt-a-whirl slam and clothesline put Bryan on the floor but he comes back with kicks to the leg to slow Reigns down again. That's fine with Roman who just blasts Bryan with a right hand to the jaw as they're getting a good story going here. Back up again and Reigns hits the jumping clothesline but misses a charge into the corner. Another clothesline turns Bryan inside out and Reigns starts rolling some pumphandle suplexes. The Superman Punch is countered with a kick to the ribs.

Some knees to the ribs have Reigns in even more trouble and the running corner dropkicks stagger him again. Bryan tries a top rope hurricanrana but gets caught in a superbomb for a close two as things are starting to get good. Reigns loads up a top rope superplex but gets crotched down, setting up a belly to back superplex to stay on the weakened midsection. The YES Lock goes on but Reigns gets the rope and bails to the floor.

Bryan hits back to back Flying Goats but tries once too often and gets belly to belly suplexed. The spear hits the steps though and Reigns barely beats the count back in. Bryan dives into something resembling the Superman Punch for two. The spear is countered into a rollup but the running knee only gets a very near fall. The YES Kicks have Reigns reeling but he blocks the big one.

Bryan slaps him in the face on one leg before pulling Reigns down into a YES Lock. Reigns turns it over and hammers away right hands to stun Bryan again. He lifts Bryan up into a powerbomb and both guys are down. Bryan's legs are over Reigns but the referee doesn't count it as a cover. Both guys sit up and Reigns hammers away with right hands so Bryan just unloads with kicks to the head to put him down again. Another running knee is countered with the spear though to send Reigns to Wrestlemania at

20:04.

Rating: A-. I actually really like that ending because storyline wise, Bryan has very little claim to a spot in the main event at Wrestlemania. This is the big win that Reigns needed to look like a star and he certainly delivered his half. They were telling a good story out there with Bryan trying to pick Reigns apart but eventually just getting run over by raw power. Excellent main event here and it did what it was supposed to do.

Bryan pokes Reigns in the chest and tells him to take out Lesnar at Wrestlemania. They shake hands and Bryan lets Reigns celebrate to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This show was good in spite of itself because of some really solid wrestling. Unfortunately, the total lack of need to have this show really hurts it though as this simply didn't need to be a pay per view. Reigns should have eliminated Bryan last from the Rumble and the exact same things could have been accomplished on TV. The wrestling carried this, but there was no way to care about a lot of the stuff on this show. Think about it like this: other than the Tag Team Titles and the Divas, every match on here (or the post match segment) seemed to be to set up a future match. That's inexcusable for a big time show.

Results

Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins b. Dolph Ziggler/Ryback/Erick Rowan – Kane pinned Ziggler after a KO Punch from Big Show

Goldust b. Stardust – Crucifix

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro b. Usos – Fisherman's neckbreaker to Jimmy

Nikki Bella b. Paige – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Bad News Barrett b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Ambrose wouldn't stop stomping

Rusev b. John Cena – Accolade

Roman Reigns b. Daniel Bryan – Spear

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Fast Lane 2015 Preview

It says a lot that I had completely forgotten this show was tomorrow night. Fast Lane is a show that really doesn't need to exist and most of these matches could have easily been done as big time Raw main events over the course of a few weeks. Instead though they need a way to bulk up the Network subscriptions, and to be fair the free month for Survivor Series was an amazing success. This show really isn't doing much for me though so let's get to it.

We'll start with the match recently added: a six man tag between Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins vs. Ryback/Dolph Ziggler/Erick Rowan. This match makes sense because the Survivor Series WILL NEVER DIE. It was also odd that you had these six guys all sitting around doing nothing so why not just get a big tag match to put them all on the show? It's definitely the most logical move they could go with and avoids repeats of singles matches we've already seen for a change.

As for the winners, of course it's the Authority, because we have to keep Big Show and Kane looking strong see. Oh and that Rollins guy gets to get a nice rub too. Rollins hasn't had much to do since the Rumble and it really goes to show you how up and down the booking is. Yeah he's beaten Ziggler a few times, but who hasn't at this point? Rowan is done to say

the least, but Ryback has been treated as a pretty big deal since he's been back. Still though, the Authority wins and they win without much trouble.

I'll take Stardust over Goldust, likely setting up a Wrestlemania rematch for Goldust's career. The guy has been around forever and would be excellent for an agent's job. Stardust needs a win to establish himself as a singles guy, which could be interesting if they let him run with it.

Usos retain the titles because Cesaro and Kidd are just there to give the smarks something to cheer for. Not that it matters anyway as the Ascension is waiting in the wings to take the belts. I wouldn't mind a more interesting story for the titles, but at least it's based on something that happened in WWE rather than the stupid reality show.

Ambrose somehow loses the title shot because Barrett has lost almost everything leading up to this match, so why not just let him keep the title? Besides, Ambrose hasn't won on pay per view since...well since the Shield was around actually. Couple that with him not winning a singles pay per view match since Night of Champions 2013 and there's no reason to think he should win tomorrow night.

Speaking of horrible stories that make my soul hurt and have no basis in logic or reasoning while involving babbling morons who are a disgrace to their far more talented NXT counterparts but fill out tight tops and shorts better and therefore are more entitled to a spot on the main roster, Nikki retains the title over Paige because TOTAL DIVAS MEANS THEY'RE SO TOTALLY CELEBRITIES and since that show is about the Bellas, they're more important than Paige. Or something.

I'll actually take Rusev to keep the title, albeit not in a straight finish. This screams Wrestlemania rematch, which isn't something I care for most of the time. They also seem to be having some issues with how this match is booked, as the eye injury has been forgotten and for some reason they're not just going with America vs. Russia, which has worked for the better part of eternity. Instead it's "Cena is suddenly old, even though no one but Vince thinks that", which is a pretty lame storyline. Anyway, Rusev retains and Cena gets his big win at Wrestlemania....in

theory. I'd love to see Rusev beat him on the big stage.

That leaves us with Bryan vs. Reigns for the Mania title shot, and I really think they're going with the triple threat. It would fit perfectly with this show meaning nothing, so why not just have them go with that and put Bryan in the title match? It makes sense (or as much sense as this story can make) and gets us where we need to go. Reigns vs. Lesnar wouldn't work on its own nearly as well, but it's clear that this Wrestlemania is going to suffer from them not knowing where they want to go, at least on paper.

Oh and HHH calls out Sting. They'll talk, they'll talk some more, they'll pretend the Invasion wasn't a thing, Sting will punch him a few times, a match will be made for Wrestlemania, it will take about three times longer than it should.

Overall, as I've mentioned more than once in the preview, this show doesn't need to exist. It's there because the Network needs something to hype up and doesn't make sense with the storylines they have. It's a weak card which will likely lead us to a weak Wrestlemania, so why would I want to see this? I'll be watching, but I think the Oscars are going to distract me from this dull show more than once.

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Smackdown – February 19, 2015: Yep, It's Still Smackdown

Smackdown

Date: February 19, 2015

Location: BB&T Center, Sunrise, Florida

Attendance: 8,000

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

It's the final show before Fast Lane and thankfully the ending to Monday's show was a bit more interesting than trying to figure out exactly when Bryan turned into a whiny loser who is using his contractual obligations to get back in the title picture instead of just winning matches like he did last year. Other than that we have Rollins vs. Ziggler again tonight because what else could they air? Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the Reigns vs. Bryan story from Monday with both of them messing with the others match and a big brawl to end the show.

Opening sequence.

Miz vs. Daniel Bryan

Before the match, we see Miz ripping on Mizdow earlier in the night, but he insists it's just trying to help Mizdow from being a loser. Mizdow of course out pops Miz, earning him a severe tongue lashing. Miz orders him to go get an Egyptian cotton towel for after his match. Apparently Bryan wants Miz to only use American goods and kicks some patriotism into his former mentor.

The running clothesline and corner dropkick set up a top rope hurricanrana but Miz bails to the floor to avoid the running knee. Back in and Miz kicks out the knee before driving knees into the hamstring. You don't try to match submissions with Bryan though and the YES Lock is good for the submission at 2:54.

Ryback vs. Kane

Ryback hammers him into the corner to start and hits a decent belly to belly. A threat of the Meat Hook sends Kane outside in the same sequence from the first match with the running knee. Back in and Kane hits a running DDT followed by a big boot to send Ryback into the corner. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Ryback fights up with a Thesz Press and the Warrior Splash. Ryback gets knocked off the top rope to the floor, which means absolutely nothing as he hits the Shell Shock immediately after getting back in for the pin at 3:51.

Rating: D. This was a ten minute power match packed into less than four minutes. Ryback and Kane could have a decent match if they were given a few more minutes but they had to fly through this instead, likely so we can see a bunch of videos from Raw. Also, Ryback can pin Kane but Reigns can only beat him by countout? These are the kind of things that just make no sense and make you wonder if anyone is actually thinking backstage.

We recap Ambrose making Barrett sign the contract on Monday.

R-Truth vs. Bad News Barrett

Non-title so just raise Truth's hand now. Ambrose is on commentary and wants to know why Truth is shouting WHOMP THERE IT IS, even though it's on his iPod. Barrett stomps away in the corner as Dean talks about the title being the backbone of the company. Truth gives Barrett a pelvic thrust, earning him a beating in the corner.

Cole asks how that contract signing can stand. Dean: "Well there's a graphic for the match on WWE.com and the internet is always true." We hit the chinlock on Truth as Barrett talks trash to Dean. Truth fights up with ease and a side kick gets two. Ambrose ignores more trash talk, even as Barrett takes Truth to the floor and beats him up right in front of Dean. Back in and Dean turns his back on Barrett, allowing Truth to grab a rollup for the pin at 3:09.

Rating: D. Egads man I was kidding about Truth winning. Remember the good old days when champions ACTUALLY WON MATCHES??? On top of that, history

shows us that Truth isn't going anywhere after this win because pinning the champion is a plot device instead of a way to elevate someone. I don't know what Barrett did to deserve this treatment, but he'd have a better future as a shark dentist than as Intercontinental Champion.

Vince is on the cover of Muscle and Fitness.

We look back at Cena and Rusev fighting on Monday. If nothing else, that segment proved that American healthcare is better than Russian, as Cena's eye went from the focal point of the match to ignored in the span of a week.

Bray Wyatt says find him before he finds you.

Sheamus return video.

New Day vs. Ascension

Kofi is the odd man out here. Viktor and Woods get things going with Xavier planting a knee into the ribs for two. Ascension drags Woods into the corner for a double teaming, featuring a lot of choking in the corner. Back to Viktor for a kick to the ribs but Woods rolls over for an ice cold tag to E. Viktor gets thrown around but gets a reprieve as Big E. wipes away the sweat. A cheap shot from Konnor allows Viktor to send Big E. into the post, setting up Fall of Man for the pin at 2:52. I'm not surprised they've already pulled the plug on New Day, even though I like at least two of the members of the team.

Luke Harper vs. Roman Reigns

My goodness Harper has cooled down since winning that Intercontinental Title. It really has become a death knell in the last few years. Reigns throws him into the corner and stomps Luke down with ease. More stomping sends Harper outside and Roman nails him with a running clothesline. If Reigns can do one thing as well as anyone, it's explode with running moves.

Back in and something like the ProtoBomb gets two but they head right back outside where Luke sends him into the steps. Back in and a slingshot hilo of all things gets two for Harper but Reigns fights out of a

headlock. A big Samoan drop sends Harper flying but he escapes another and hits a swinging Boss Man Slam for two. Reigns pops back up, no sells a superkick and spears Harper down for the pin at 4:49.

Rating: C. As much as I can't stand the no selling of hard shots to the face, this is the kind of win that makes Reigns look better. Have him get in there for a hard hitting match and then spear someone in half for the pin. It's a really basic way of getting him over and to show off his physical abilities instead of whatever the heck the story with Bryan is supposed to be. I've watched the entire thing so far and I still don't get it. What I do get however is Reigns spearing people and pinning them because it looks cool.

Recap of Flair and HHH from Raw for the response to the acceptance for the challenge to talk.

Big Show vs. Erick Rowan

I don't see this going well. Show kicks Rowan to the floor before the bell and throws him into the steps. He picks Rowan up by the beard and throws him inside where the referee is fine with opening the match despite Rowan taking a horrible beating which should be a DQ but that might make Big Show look weak and this is a Big Show tribute company after all.

Show stomps him down in the corner and plants him with a slam. More stomping sets up the chokeslam for the pin at 2:26. Why in the world did we need a Big Show squash? He beat Daniel Bryan on Raw and now he needs to win a squash? Oh wait, it's more Survivor Series fallout. Why didn't I see that coming?

Cameron vs. Paige

The Bellas are on commentary and wearing sunglasses, which actually fit them quite well. Cameron flips her hair at Paige to start and gets the revolving elbows in the corner for her efforts. Paige drives knees into the chest and does her shout on the apron to no reaction from the Bellas. Apparently Nikki is fierce. Good to know. Cameron comes back with her horrible offense and slaps Paige in the face, earning her a series of

clotheslines. A kick to the face sets up the PTO for the submission at 2:09.

Paige shouts at the Bellas post match. They were actually far easier to sit through here as they've turned up the obnoxious levels to make it more of a character than just half doing everything and coming off like catty teenagers at summer camp. Naturally Nikki is going to retain the title Sunday though, because Paige has won every match leading up to the showdown and the Bellas are evil, meaning they have to get the upper hand.

We recap Goldust and Stardust's issues with Dusty on Monday.

Stardust knows what it's like to be considered a freak, so he embraced Stardust. They were on fire as a team and won the Tag Team Titles, but then darkness crept in. He saw it coming because it happened to him, and it took Cody away from him. Now Stardust is a cancer eating Cody alive and he wants his brother back. That means he has to face his brother and beat him at Fast Lane. Stardust appears on the screen behind him and asks to be spared from Goldust's sentiments. After Sunday, Cody won't be the only one who has ceased to exist. The universe will forget the name of Goldust.

Jimmy Uso vs. Tyson Kidd

Before the match, Kidd says his decision to team with Cesaro is the best move he's ever made. Natalya's face is rather amusing to say the least. Also of note here: Kidd is about a foot shorter than Cesaro. I've never noticed that kind of a height difference before. Kidd fires off ROH style forearms to the head to start but Jimmy comes back with right hands in the corner. Not that it matters though as Rusev comes in to beat up both guys at 0:57.

Rusev destroys everyone and rants in Russian about Cena. No Lana here.

Seth Rollins vs. Dolph Ziggler

The Stooges are barred from ringside. Feeling out process to start with both guys going for arm holds and Rollins bailing to the ropes. They hit

the mat with Ziggler caught in a headlock but he comes back with a nice dropkick. Rollins avoids a Stinger Splash though and we take a break. Back with Ziggler fighting out of a chinlock (as is almost always the case) but charging into a hot shot for two.

Big Show, Kane, Ryback and Rowan are all at ringside. After what happened earlier, why would you want Rowan out there? Isn't there an elderly music teacher somewhere that could give you a better fighting chance? Rollins yells at Ryback and Rowan, allowing Dolph to come back with a running forearm to put both guys down.

Now the Stinger Splash connects and Ziggler follows it up with a neckbreaker. Rollins tries the buckle bomb but gets countered into a sunset flip, followed by the Fameasser for two more. Dolph dropkicks him out to the floor where Seth slaps Ryback and Rowan. Back in and Ziggler has to fight off Kane, allowing Rollins to hit the buckle bomb, followed by the Curb Stomp for the pin at 10:23.

Rating: B-. Solid enough match here but it's nothing we haven't seen them do far better before. Rollins getting a big win is a good sign and I'd assume there's going to be a six man tag set up for Sunday. If nothing else it would fill out the card a bit and get us beyond six matches for the show. Oh and a big talk, because that's what I want to pay for: a preview for the next show.

The Stooges come out and it's time for the big beatdown. Given that Ziggler is done and Rowan is Rowan, it's basically Ryback getting destroyed, making a decent comeback and then getting destroyed again for the last three minutes of the show, because the Stooges were able to subdue Rowan and we're still doing the same things we did around Survivor Series time. So much for Kane and Big Show having issues I guess, unless something happens Sunday.

Overall Rating: C-. Now this felt like an alternative to Raw. Monday night tends to be about packing as much stuff as you can into a show, but at the same time it feels like they're stalling for time. This show flies by with some decent wrestling and VERY few stories. Smackdown is much more streamlined and makes it an easier show to sit through.

However, that doesn't make it an interesting show. Nothing happens on this show and it was pure false hope when it moved back to Thursdays. This is right back to the same stuff they did for years and there's no real reason to watch it. Yeah there was some mild storyline development here, but it's more like the downloadable content for a video game: it might be fun to kill some time, but if you never saw it, you wouldn't lose anything from the game itself.

Results

Daniel Bryan b. Miz – YES Lock

Ryback b. Kane – Shell Shock

R-Truth b. Bad News Barrett – Rollup

Ascension b. New Day – Fall of Man to Big E.

Roman Reigns b. Luke Harper – Spear

Big Show b. Erick Rowan – Chokeslam

Paige b. Cameron – PTO

Jimmy Uso vs. Tyson Kidd went to a no contest when Rusev interfered

Seth Rollins b. Dolph Ziggler – Curb Stomp

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: February 9, 2015

We have a new direction for Fast Lane now as for some reason there was a controversy regarding the Rock, which comes off more like “we’re scared because the smarkiest city in the world didn’t like what we were doing so here’s Fast Lane to give Bryan a shot.” Other than that there isn’t a ton of stuff to talk about because Fast Lane doesn’t need to exist. Let’s get to it.

We opened with the required Reigns/Bryan chat which didn’t get us anywhere, so the Authority came out and made Reigns/Bryan vs. Big Show/Kane. The monsters wound up getting disqualified in a match longer than it needed to be which should have ended with Kane tapping out but that would be a waste of his incredible heat so they kept the giants looking strong instead. Bryan and Reigns had issues post match so HHH made a rematch with Rollins/Noble/Mercury being added to the giants’ team.

Somehow, this whole thing took about half an hour and it showed the one major problem with the main event scene at the moment: IT’S REALLY BORING. We’re seeing these giant fight Bryan and Reigns in every possible combination and there’s no reason to see them fight all over again. Bryan vs. Reigns is being shoehorned in when Bryan was eliminated from the Rumble 100% clean.

They screwed up at the Rumble by having Bryan dumped out so early and now their solution doesn’t add up either. The match should be good, but that’s getting into TNA logic: if we have a good ending, the journey there doesn’t matter. At this point, they’re not just getting the fans to calm down but rather getting the fans to stop caring about anyone. Yeah they pop for Bryan, but this story is killing the momentum they had going. It got even worse on Smackdown when Big Show knocked out Kane,

likely setting up a feud between the two. Because they're big and old you see.

Ryback beat Rollins via DQ when the Stooges interfered. Somehow, this was STILL Survivor Series fallout because that's still a thing.

Sheamus is coming back. A lot of people seem to be complaining about that, but imagine him in Kane's current role. Does that make things sound a bit easier to sit through?

Paige beat Brie Bella because WWE still thinks the Bellas are interesting. That's their major flaw: their characters are so basic as the stuck up heels that they can't carry the division on their own. It also doesn't help that we're watching Sasha Banks, Charlotte and Bayley having great matches in addition to having just as defined, if not more defined, characters down in NXT.

One of the big segments of the show was Lana and Rusev mocking Cena for being old and past his prime. There's a story to be told about Cena needing to face the impending end of his career, but calling someone that can throw both Stooges on his shoulders at the same time and go toe to toe with Brock Lesnar over the hill is a huge stretch, especially when they still look like Cena. Just do the Hogan vs. Nikita Koloff formula (it would be an insult to Rusev to compare him to Nikolai Volkoff) and let the fans chant USA for the whole feud. As usual, why mess with something that's almost guaranteed to work?

Bray Wyatt beat Dolph Ziggler in a loss probably designed to make Ziggler eventually snap and turn heel. In theory the idea is that he's worked so hard and isn't getting anywhere because of it, which of course causes another problem: all the momentum he got from the Survivor Series win and subsequent success are thrown away for ANOTHER losing streak angle. We get at least three or four of these a year and they almost always lead to a turn. There a dozen other ways to turn someone heel, but for some reason this is the company's favorite.

On the other hand you have Bray, who is clearly being set up for a Wrestlemania showdown with Undertaker, assuming he's capable of going of course. My guess would be Wyatt wins, because there is zero reason for

Undertaker to win. What is Cole going to say? "THAT'S THE START OF A NEW STREAK!"?

Wyatt being the bigger freak and overwhelming Undertaker because he's lost his identity and can't keep up with the younger generation, ultimately leading to his retirement, is an interesting story that would give Wyatt a huge rub, but unfortunately I think we're heading for an Undertaker win to make us feel better about last year's loss because WWE is afraid of hurting our feelings in exchange for thinking for the future.

Heyman and Lesnar came out to cut a basic promo on how neither Reigns nor Bryan has any chance to win the title at Wrestlemania and is just fighting for second place. There was absolutely no reason for Lesnar to be out there for this segment and it was a total waste of an appearance. I like seeing the title out there for a change, but Brock didn't need to be there for this one.

Goldust and Stardust did their usual schtick and the New Day got a pin. Get to the feud already.

Reigns and Bryan had a cliched backstage bit where they said they'll work together and then fight at Fast Lane. This is a very by the numbers feud and that's not helping things.

HHH said he wanted to confront Sting at Fast Lane. The lights flickered, a fake Sting popped up in the ring, and the words I ACCEPT showed up on screen. Somehow this took nearly five minutes.

Then we got to the stupid moment of the show, as the Usos lost to Kidd and Cesaro. Not only is this stupid because it's the exact same idea we see far too often, but it was also preceded by Cole saying he had heard a rumor that a win over the Usos could give Cesaro and Kidd a future title shot. This is the team that I believe has won two matches leading up to this past Monday, and now they're the #1 contenders? Off a rumor? This was your standard overbooked and overthought WWE mess that only they care about and no one really benefits from.

Rikishi is going to the Hall of Fame. For some reason people are

complaining about this, despite him being a pretty successful midcard guy who was WAY over in 2000 with Too Cool. I have no problems with his induction.

Sin Cara beat Damien Mizdow, because WWE doesn't understand that the right move is to have Mizdow keep one upping Miz until he beats him in the showdown. Instead it's turned into a battle of who sucks less, making everyone look weaker than they should.

Bray Wyatt did his usual cryptic promo, which is about the Undertaker.

Dean Ambrose squashed Curtis Axel but was told he gets no Intercontinental Title shot. This was fine, but hearing Axel being called a third generation sports entertainer made me cringe. Does WWE really believe that anyone outside the company boundaries calls it sports entertainment? A little over a year ago in NXT, Bo Dallas was trying to sound stupid and said he had been sports entertaining around the world. Is that what we're supposed to call it? A sports entertainment contest instead of a match? That's what we're going with? Again, stop overthinking things.

The main event saw Reigns and Bryan get beaten up until Ryback, Ziggler and Rowan interfered and took out Big Show, Kane and Rollins, allowing Reigns to spear Mercury for the win. Just like in Miz/Mizdow, why are we having the guys we're supposed to cheer for look helpless and leave us with two guys who look lame to cheer for? Oh that would be because we have to keep Big Show and Kane looking strong for reasons.

That idea of "for reasons" is something that needs to be addressed. Look at what's going on in WWE right now. Why did the Authority make Reigns and Bryan vs. five guys? I know they're heels, but what is the motivation for going after Reigns and Bryan? There's a history with Bryan so that checks out, but they don't have a clear reason to feud with Reigns. If it's still over Reigns as part of the Shield then fine, but TELL US THAT.

At the moment it's coming off as people doing things because, in the words of Mark Henry, that's what they do. The opening tag was clearly just made because it's what they wanted to do that night and they didn't feel the need to have a logical reason to do so. The same was true of the

main event. There's no storyline reason for these matches to be happening and there doesn't seem to be anything for the Authority to gain from it, so why do they keep doing it?

The stories are going in circles and there doesn't seem to be an end game other than "title match at Wrestlemania", after which I would assume it's more of the same: winner vs. Authority's monster of the month. It's like they don't know where they want to go with things and just expect Wrestlemania to bail them out. I hate to say this but TNA is currently far more logical and well written than this mess. Yeah the stories can still be messy and unnecessary at times, but there's a clear path there for them and they know how to get to their goal. I'm not convinced WWE has a goal at this point.

Oh and Reigns speared Bryan after the match and got booed. Nothing wrong with that, but they're running the risk of making Lesnar a huge face at Wrestlemania and they better have something ready to combat that or it's the ending of Wrestlemania X7 in reverse. That's not how you want the next face of WWE (again because reasons instead of common sense) coming off on his big stage.

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Monday Night Raw – February

9, 2015: Everyone Loves A Loser

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 9, 2015

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

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

We have a much better idea of what to expect at Fast Lane after last week and the Daniel Bryan fans have a lot more hope going forward. There are two weeks left before Fast Lane, meaning it's all about the build to the show. It's going to be interesting to see how Reigns handles his adversity last week going forward. Let's get to it.

We recap last week's events with the Authority making Bryan vs. Rollins for the shot at Reigns at Fast Lane.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns and we look at his events from last week. Roman says he stood in this ring last week as the #1 contender for the World Title at Wrestlemania, meaning the title was as good as his. Then the Authority showed up last week and made it clear that they don't want Reigns in that spot. That's fine with Reigns because he has more than enough spears to go around.

Cue Bryan who thanks Reigns for the help against Rollins and to say he's ready for Fast Lane. This brings out the Authority to bring up Reigns' loss last week and rip on Bryan for putting Kane in the casket. Bryan: "Given what your husband has done in caskets, I thought you would enjoy it." Stephanie makes Reigns/Bryan vs. Kane/Big Show right now. Now I know this sounds bad, but think of it this way: if they do this match, neither guy can wrestle again later. Just get it over with at the same time.

Roman Reigns/Daniel Bryan vs. Big Show/Kane

Bryan sends Kane to the floor to start for the Flying Goat and it's

quickly off to Reigns vs. Big Show. The Authority takes over in the corner with their variety of right hands and forearms, followed by Kane's bad chinlock. Even the director gets bored with this one so they go to a clip of the spear to Big Show last week. Reigns fights out and suplexes Kane down, setting up the double tag to Bryan and Big Show.

Daniel busts out all the kicks and sends him to the floor with the big YES Kick. Kane and Show easily catch him in the air though and send Bryan back first into the ropes as we take a break. Am I missing something or did Bryan just go down to the equivalent of an Irish whip? Back with Big Show holding Bryan in a chinlock before it's off to Kane for a bearhug. STOP PUSHING THESE TWO ALREADY! Big Show misses the Vader Bomb elbow but Kane breaks up the hot tag attempt. That earns Kane a YES Lock but it's Show pulling Bryan to the floor. He throws Bryan into the timekeeper's area for a fast DQ at 12:00.

Rating: D. The match was boring but as usual, the main issue here is these feuds still going for no reason other than the script saying they have to. Big Show and Kane are as dull and uninteresting of a pair of guys as I've seen since Bundy and Studd, and this is a far different time than their era. And, to go back to an old standard, was there ANY REASON why Kane didn't tap out here? This just had to be a DQ?

Post match Reigns destroys Show with a chair but gets knocked into the corner by Kane. Bryan tries the running dropkick on Kane but hits Reigns by mistake. Roman shoves him down, so HHH makes Reigns/Bryan vs. Kane/Big Show/Mercury/Noble/Rollins. DEAR GOODNESS WHY DO I HAVE TO SIT THROUGH THIS AGAIN???

Seth Rollins vs. Ryback

Rollins, the fifth guy to work two matches tonight so far, quickly knocks him onto the floor to start before putting on a front facelock back inside. Ryback shoves him to the floor and fights off the Stooges, only to have them break up the Shell Shock attempt for the DQ at 2:59.

Ryback gets curb stomped post match.

Sheamus is coming back.

Paige vs. Brie Bella

Freaking BRIE MODE is back. I was told that was leaving and now I have to hear it again. I hate this company at times. Brie kicks her down for two to start and hits the running knee to chest (which is close enough to Bryan's finisher to make it a nice idea) for two more. The middle rope dropkick gets the same as Paige hasn't had any offense so far. A double slap staggers both girls but a Nikki distraction backfires, setting up Rampaige for the pin at 3:14.

Rating: D-. The Bellas are such a disaster on top of the division. They've actually gotten a bit better in the ring, but my goodness they're the least interesting act I've seen in years. This idea that they've fought so hard to get to the top of the division doesn't hold up and their matches are some of the worst messes I've seen in a long time. But they make the top stars happy and that's all that matters.

Here are Rusev and Lana to pay tribute to John Cena. After some microphone feedback, they agree that Cena has accomplished great things in WWE and just like the Oscars or Grammys, they want to acknowledge someone who has done so much. We get a quick montage of Cena winning before going to clips of some of his worst beatings. Lana wonders how Cena can keep going through all this punishment over the years. Rusev talks about how Cena is no longer full of ruthless aggression and is now just a weak nothing. He'll break Cena at Fast Lane and crush his spirit.

Cue Cena, sporting a black eye for a rebuttal. He says Rusev thinks he's already won the match at Fast Lane, so why bother having the match at all? It's because so many people are sick of hearing Rusev and Lana run their mouths all over the place. Yeah Cena has taken some beatings over the years and suffered a lot of injuries but he keeps getting back up. Cena is going to hit Rusev in the mouth at Fast Lane and adjust his attitude. Some more trash talking leads to a brawl with Cena getting the better of it until Rusev gets in a shot to the bad eye and sends him into the set. This was fine.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler

Rematch from last week. Ziggler goes for the leg to start and the fans

are split on who to cheer for, though Dolph's cheers are louder. A dropkick sends Bray into the ropes but he elbows Dolph in the jaw to take over. Dolph avoids a charge in the corner and scores with a neckbreaker before snapping Bray's throat over the top rope as we take a break.

Back with Bray holding a chinlock before hitting that running cross body. There's something to be said about someone just launching themselves at their opponent. Dolph ducks a big clothesline and nails another dropkick to put both guys down. The Fameasser and a superkick get two on Bray but he takes Ziggler's head off with the clothesline on the floor. Back in and the Spider Walk sets up Sister Abigail for the pin at 11:40.

Rating: C+. This was good, though the same thing as last week. Bray looked like his old monster self here though and it was one of the more entertaining things I've seen from him in a good while. Ziggler's push coming off Survivor Series has been a complete waste, but does that really surprise anyone?

Junkyard Dog Black History Month video.

Here are Lesnar and Heyman to address the Fast Lane situation. Heyman brings up the Brian Williams controversy and calls Reigns and Bryan the biggest liars in the land. Both of them say that they're fighting for a chance to go to Wrestlemania but they're just lying to themselves. Let's start with Roman Reigns: the most violent dude from the most violent tribe from the most violent island in all of Samoa. Heyman stood next to him and it was clear that Reigns was terrified of Lesnar.

Then there's Bryan, who clearly has no chance against Lesnar. It's not just the size difference because Bryan can back it up with ability and can pull off miracle after miracle, but do you really think he's the one to beat the one in twenty one and one? Let's get to the point: whoever wins the match at Fast Lane should jump in a helicopter with Brian Williams and subject themselves to enemy fire, because it will be less dangerous than the F5 waiting for them at Wrestlemania. Again, this was fine.

New Day vs. Goldust/Stardust

Woods is on the floor again. Kofi and Stardust get things going with the painted one scoring with a shoulder and cartwheeling. Goldust tags himself in and that's already enough for Stardust, who walks out. Kofi gets the pin off a rollup at 1:38.

We look back at Reigns and Bryan having issues earlier tonight.

Bryan says he probably would have done the same thing to Reigns in the heat of the moment. Roman comes in and says they should work together tonight so they can handle their business at Wrestlemania. Daniel doesn't react.

Post break Goldust says this is Dustin talking and says Cody is his brother. Stardust shoves him and says Cody is dead.

Here's HHH to address Sting. He's been around this company for twenty years to make this a better place. Now he has to deal with the face of WCW, a company he helped destroy fourteen years ago. Then at Survivor Series, Sting had to attack like a coward. That's why HHH is calling him out at Fast lane to meet him face to face so he can explain to Sting why he was right to wait. If Sting shows up, he'll be allowed to leave with his face intact and never come back again.

The lights dim and a crow is heard. We go to a creepy video with HHH talking and Sting paint superimposed over his face. The fans want Sting and we see someone in the ring (clearly not the real Sting) who scares HHH so badly that he falls down. The words I ACCEPT appear on the screen and the guy is gone.

Usos vs. Tyson Kidd/Cesaro

Non-title again and Cole says the rumor is a win could get Kidd and Cesaro in the title hunt. Lines like those are what make me hate WWE commentary. Jimmy slams Kidd down to start and it's off to Jey as the announcers talk about the double date from Smackdown. Everyone falls out to the floor and the girls get in an argument as we take a break. Back with Jimmy suplexing Kidd but Cesaro breaks up the tag.

The heels take turns putting on chinlocks before Cesaro just hammers

Jimmy's face. Jimmy scores with an enziguri to knock Cesaro outside and the hot tag brings in Jey to face Kidd. Tyson blocks a dive but jumps into a superkick for a close two. The Running Umaga Attack misses and Cesaro shoves Jey off the top to give Kidd the pin at 10:37.

Rating: D+. GET. NEW. WRITERS! For the love of all things good and holy I'm so sick of seeing challengers beat the champions to get a title shot. Shut up with this nonsense about "getting a win to get in the title hunt" because THERE IS NO FREAKING TITLE HUNT! You have three teams having the same matches over and over again and see the division die more and more every single day. The Usos losing here makes the titles look even weaker, and now I'm supposed to want to see these teams fight again just because the worthless titles are on the line?

I would suggest that Kidd and Cesaro beat some teams to earn a title shot, but who are they supposed to beat? New Day? Los Matadores? As in the teams that have lost so many times that the wins mean nothing? We have probably ten people down in NXT spinning their wheels who have been ready for the big show for months but there's just no room for them on the main roster? Are you kidding me? Get someone new in there so we can stop doing these same stupid ideas over and over again.

Rikishi is announced for the Hall of Fame. The loser Usos dance to celebrate. Does no one think before they map out these shows?

Damien Mizdow vs. Sin Cara

Miz makes Mizdow take off the sunglasses because he isn't the stunt double anymore. Damien takes over but gets sent outside where Miz requests a water. That's not enough thought as Miz wants him to open the water. The distraction lets Cara hit a dive over the top to take over as Miz isn't very interested. The Reality Check puts Cara down but Miz freaks out over the Figure Four, allowing Cara to small package Mizdow for the pin at 3:43.

Rating: D+. This was story development more than a match, but instead of doing something like having Mizdow be better than Miz, we have Mizdow lose to give us yet another loser to cheer for, because, again, THE FREAKING WRITERS DON'T THINK THROUGH THIS NONSENSE BEFORE THEY THROW IT

ON TV!

Bray Wyatt asks where we go when we die. Some say we become part of the earth, but some say we go on to eternity. People like him and whoever he's talking about though are stuck on earth for the rest of time. They don't belong here but Bray doesn't fear him. He pities the man he speaks to because it's time for that man to go home.

Sheamus is still coming back. Nothing has changed in the last hour and a half.

Dean Ambrose vs. Curtis Axel

In case Axel getting squashed on Smackdown didn't get the idea through your head. Axel says no one is going to take this from him, not even Kanye West. Dean hammers him up against the ropes to start but Axel knees him in the face and rubs Dean into the mat. We hit the early chinlock but Dean fights up with the rebound clothesline and Dirty Deeds for the pin at 2:40. The match was nothing special, but they lost me when I was told Axel was a third generation sports entertainer.

Dean won't stop until he gets his Intercontinental Title shot. Barrett pops up and says the BNZ (Bad News Zone) still says Dean gets no shot.

Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Kane/Joey Mercury/Jamie Noble/Seth Rollins

Here's your "we have nothing else so here's a big mess" main event. The five rush the two before the bell and it's a big brawl to start. A double chokeslam plants Reigns and of course none of this warrants a DQ, meaning Bryan pulls himself up to start with Rollins. Seth talks a lot of trash and it's off to Big Show for a slam. Reigns is nowhere in sight after the pre-match attack.

Noble comes in and gets sent into the middle turnbuckle but Mercury comes in to keep control. Seth has to break up a YES Lock and it's off to Kane to continue the feud that will not die. Reigns finally gets up and starts beating people up but Big Show KO's him with ease. A buckle bomb gets two on Bryan and the giants load up the announcers' table.

Cue Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler for the save and the match....isn't thrown out despite three people interfering and fighting three legal men to the back. It's the Stooges vs. Bryan now with Reigns still down. The running knee is loaded up but Reigns tags himself in and spears Mercury for the pin at 7:38.

Rating: D. This was SUCH a great way to make me want to see Reigns vs. Bryan. I mean, I don't know about you, but seeing Kane and Big Show destroy everyone in their path is clearly the most interesting thing in the world. Boring match here and just a glorified squash because the Authority must look strong no matter what. To sum up this match, Bryan and Reigns can't combine to beat up Big Show/Kane/Rollins, but can beat up two Stooges. I'm so glad I sat through two matches tonight to establish that fact.

Bryan is upset at Reigns for trying to leave. He shoves Roman away and eats a spear to end the show with Reigns getting a heel reaction.

Overall Rating: D+. This show got a lot better after the first half hour, but my goodness a lot of the booking on here drove me insane. It's clear that this company either doesn't think these shows through before airing them or just doesn't care that people actually see them. I have no reason to care about a lot of the people I'm supposed to care about in so many of these stories for one simple reason: people don't cheer for losers. Why is that so hard to comprehend?

Another thing that should be easily comprehended: there is no need for a PPV between the Rumble and Wrestlemania. Just let us have a long build instead of this mess. You could easily do Reigns vs. Bryan as a major Raw match and then save the rest of the stuff either for Wrestlemania or just not do it because the stories aren't all that great. I get the Network business idea behind it, but that doesn't do much for the on screen product.

Results

Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns b. Kane/Big Show via DQ when Show threw Bryan into the timekeeper's area

Ryback b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Joey Mercury and Jamie Noble interfered

Paige b. Brie Bella – Rampaige

Bray Wyatt b. Dolph Ziggler – Sister Abigail

New Day b. Goldust/Stardust – Rollup to Goldust

Tyson Kidd/Cesaro b. Usos – Kidd pinned Jey after Cesaro shoved him off the top rope

Sin Cara b. Damien Mizdow – Small package

Dean Ambrose b. Curtis Axel – Dirty Deeds

Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns b. Joey Mercury/Jamie Noble/Seth Rollins/Big Show/Kane – Spear to Mercury

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: February 2, 2015

The big idea coming into this week was HHH promising to shake up the WWE and end the controversy that ended the Royal Rumble. That led to the big question: what was the controversy? Reigns won the Rumble by eliminating

Rusev and is going to Wrestlemania, but as usual the fans wanted Daniel Bryan. That's the best theory we have coming into this show so let's get to it.

The big announcement opened the show and I'll give a very quick recap: Rock interfered in the Rumble before Rusev was gone so Seth Rollins and Daniel Bryan will fight in the main event for the right to face Reigns at Fast Lane for the Wrestlemania title shot. Rusev was never mentioned once in the promo. This led to Big Show vs. Roman Reigns with Big Show pinning Reigns for his first pinfall loss in a singles match in less than three minutes (with an assist from Rollins and the briefcase).

We're now going to jump to something a bit different. A few hours after the show ended, I was talking to my fiancée, who has been watching wrestling for over twenty years. I looked at her and explained the first thirty minutes of this show. Her face went from its usual smile to confusion, awe and bordering on shock. She didn't know how to respond to anything I explained to her and eventually just said "what". Not a question, but a statement. What.

That's somewhere around where I am too. Read over what happened and explain to me how the decision makes sense. For those of you that have ever taken a logic class, the premises make sense but the conclusion doesn't fit. Yes, there was some controversy to end the Rumble. Yes, Rusev might have a claim to an unfair loss. Yes, Daniel Bryan deserves a rematch for the World Title as he never lost the belt. Solution: Bryan vs. Rollins with Rusev not being a factor. THAT DOESN'T ADD UP!

Just....it doesn't make sense. If they haven't set up Rusev vs. Cena already, you could set up Bryan vs. Rusev instead of Bryan vs. Rollins tonight and have Cena cost Rusev the match (by countout of course), giving you Bryan vs. Reigns and Cena vs. Rusev with logical stories instead of this mess. But instead, they rushed into the matches without enough thinking, meaning the whole thing is a mess that doesn't make a ton of sense and leaves fans talking about the buildup instead of the end goal. Short version: slow down and think instead of just barreling into the matches without using some logic.

That brings us to Reigns vs. Big Show, which gives me a similar reaction. The more I think about it, the more I don't hate the idea. Giving Reigns a loss is a good way to build some adversity for him and keep him from being just another Superman. As I've said before, Roman Reigns needs to be Roman Reigns, not a Samoan John Cena. Having him lose early is actually going to be a relief to him later on and also takes away some of the certainty of him winning at Wrestlemania.

But.....WHY WAS THE LOSS TO THE BIG SHOW??? Of all the people on the roster, they felt that he needed to be the first man to defeat Roman Reigns? There was no one, like say Seth Rollins, that would have gotten more out of such a win? I can't believe WWE thinks this is a hot feud and it almost has to be just sticking it to the fans at this point. On top of that though, there is almost no logical reason for them to have fought again. Reigns pinned him clean on Smackdown, so why are they fighting again? Bad match, questionable at best booking, and a way to tick the fans off. As was said earlier, what.

Oh yeah other stuff happened on this show.

Curtis Axel has a new catchphrase: Don't change the channel. As much as I like Axel and think his potential has been wasted, that line made me chuckle, which says a lot after the mess I've seen so far tonight. Anyway, he thinks he got ripped off at Wrestlemania and ate Dirty Deeds from Ambrose for his opinion. Dean wants the Intercontinental Title, which is as good as anything else he could get around this time.

Stardust and Goldust are having issues and lost to Ascension. People have been asking for this feud for like ever so why not now. Oh and Stardust doesn't like being called Cody.

Cena came out to recap his feuds with Rusev and the Authority but Stephanie came out to make matches for the three guys that were fired for Survivor Series. I've said this far too many times now, but can we PLEASE move on past Survivor Series? That show was two and a half months ago and it's still a major driver of stories. Can't they come up with something fresh by this point? I'm over the idea of seeing these three guys being tortured because of one match that doesn't mean anything, but WWE seems

to think it's the most interesting idea they've ever seen.

Ryback beat Luke Harper because Harper is a former Intercontinental Champion and therefore doesn't get to have much success.

Cesaro beat Jimmy Uso because of something about a double date and because Cesaro and Kidd winning one match makes them the next challengers for the titles. With all that talent they have, there's no room to bring people up? They can't throw Itami and Balor together on the main roster like they've thrown them together in NXT? Get them onto the main roster and then let them go their separate ways after giving us a decent title program? No, instead it's the same "well we won a match!" build that people have been complaining about for years now but WWE doesn't seem to be able to correct.

Miz fired Mizdow and made him a personal assistant. It's about time on this one as the stunt double thing stopped making sense about ten seconds after it started. Miz has basically been fighting a bunch of handicap matches while Mizdow hasn't been allowed to contribute anything. It's like hiring a chef but not letting them cook anything because you think you're better in the kitchen. The whole thing never made sense and Mizdow is over for all the wrong reasons, which to be fair is better than not being over at all.

Wyatt beat Ziggler in a decent match, which seems to be the start of a rumored Ziggler heel turn. I've heard of worse ideas as he's been abused by the Authority for months, so why not have him give up? I mean, we can't have him get revenge on the Authority and make them look bad, because WWE is little more than an Authority vanity project when they're involved.

While talking to the Authority, Rollins name dropped Randy Orton. That's going to be an interesting return as it could open up a lot of doors in the main event scene.

Paige beat Alicia Fox and was attacked by the Bellas to further set up her title shot. The Bellas have just drained whatever energy this division had going for it. Yeah they're better than they used to be and I'll take this a million times over "and I've never told anyone about

this", but my goodness the Bellas just aren't interesting.

Mizdow cost Miz his match against Sin Cara, which I don't think surprised anyone.

Rusev beat up Rowan before their match and Accoladed him. The Russian flag messed up but the announcers actually covered it by saying Cena might have sabotaged it. It's nice to see them tie a mistake into a bit of a storyline advancement.

Bryan came in to talk to Reigns and was basically told to get out before he was thrown out. This was the kind of emotion and aggression we haven't seen from Reigns in a long time and it was a good sign for him.

Bryan beat Rollins with an unintentional assist from Reigns. It was probably the only way they could have gone and the match was the best thing that happened all night. There isn't much else to say here as it was Bryan vs. Rollins for seventeen minutes. What more do you need to hear?

Overall this Raw felt like getting punched in the jaw to knock out a sore tooth. Yeah your problem is solved, but now you're annoyed and sore instead of just in pain. I'm really not sure how this was the best option they could come to, but at least we're getting Reigns in a major singles match before Wrestlemania. A win over Bryan could take away some of the heat on him, especially if it's a clean win in a good match.

The first half hour of this show really drained me, but it's not quite as bad looking back at it a week later. Still though, this is a really weird way to get where they needed to go and could have been handled a lot better if they had just stopped and thought for a minute. Again, why not just have Rusev vs. Bryan with Cena costing Rusev the match and set up the Rollins stuff later? It makes sense and keeps Rusev involved, which was the whole point of the controversy in the first place.

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<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Smackdown – February 5, 2015: Let It Go. Let It Go.

Smackdown

Date: February 5, 2015

Location: World Arena, Colorado Spring, Colorado

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

This week's Raw changed a lot of things about the Fast Lane and potentially Wrestlemania cards. The big story was Daniel Bryan defeating Seth Rollins to earn a shot against Roman Reigns at Fast Lane with the winner facing Brock Lesnar for the World Title at Wrestlemania. This is due to the Rock interfering in the Royal Rumble when Rusev was still involved and somehow was announced without ever mentioning Rusev's name. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the "earth shaking" announcement from Raw. Rusev is still not mentioned by the Authority. That's downright impressive. Bryan pinning Rollins to earn the shot is shown as well.

Opening sequence.

It's time for MizTV with special guests Roman Reigns and Daniel Bryan. Miz has Mizdow sit at ringside to further his new role as assistant. The fans of course want Mizdow and Miz says they have him, sitting outside where he belongs. The guests come out and Reigns lays out Miz with a Superman Punch before anything can be said. Well that's one way to make fans like him. Reigns grabs the mic and says he went through 29 wrestlers

to get here and he'll go through one more to go to Wrestlemania. Wouldn't it be one of them again since Bryan was in the Rumble?

Reigns is going to go to Wrestlemania by beating Bryan at Fast Lane but they should just do it right here. Bryan is game but here are Rollins and the Stooges to interrupt. Seth blames Reigns for taking his spot in the main event of Wrestlemania but he'll get there one day on his own, even though Reigns is scared to face him one on one. As per the Authority, Bryan will be in action tonight against himself and the Stooges.

Post break Miz says he should be in the main event of Wrestlemania instead and wants to fight Roman tonight.

Goldust/Stardust vs. Ryback/Dolph Ziggler

Thankfully they come out to Ziggler's music this time. An inset interview from Ziggler and Ryback says for Goldust and Stardust, it's too bad that they're too good. Stardust jumps over Goldust to start for the team and is quickly slammed down by Ryback. Off to Ziggler who gets two off a dropkick and brings Ryback in again to hammer on Stardust even more. Ziggler drops the big elbow (after a quick strut) and Ryback follows with the splash for two. Stardust tells Goldust he has this and we take a break.

Back with Goldust choking Ryback on the ropes before it's back to Stardust for a front facelock. Ryback finally backdrops Goldust out to the floor and punches Stardust out of the air, allowing the hot tag to Ziggler. Things speed up and the running DDT gets two on Stardust. The Disaster Kick drops Ziggler and Goldust wants a tag, calling his brother Cody again. He tags in by smacking Stardust in the head, causing Cody to walk out. The solo Goldust walks into a Shell Shock for the pin at 9:14.

Rating: D+. You know, I kind of wish these teams would just split in a hurry instead of doing these weeks long drawn out buildups to the big showdown. It should be an interesting match and feud, but again I'd like to know who else they have to fill out the division, which is currently about three teams deep. Maybe it's Ryback and Ziggler, who aren't the worst combination in the world and at least they have something in common.

Ernie Ladd Black History Month video.

Curtis Axel vs. Dean Ambrose

Axel uses the “don’t change the channel” line again, which is somewhere between brilliant and depressing. He wants everyone to join the movement and of course he has a hashtag for it. Curtis tries to jump Dean to start and gets stomped down into the corner for his efforts. He spins Dean around in the corner and hammers at the back but makes the mistake of sending Dean outside. As he throws Dean back in, Ambrose comes back out with a dropkick to the face, setting up the rebound lariat. Dirty Deeds is good for the pin at 2:44 after Axel got in far more offense than I was expecting.

Barrett pops up on screen with the BNZ: Bad News Zone. The bad news this week: Ambrose is much too insane to receive a title shot.

Fandango vs. Adam Rose

The Trust Fall fails and Rose blames the Rosebuds for doing it on purpose. That earns the hot dog a right hand and kick to the knee in something I never thought I would have to type. Fandango pulls him inside and chops Rose in the corner, only to get stomped down in the corner for his efforts. A belly to back suplex onto the apron has Fandango in even more trouble. Back in and Fandango hits a spinwheel kick, yells to the crowd like a good guy would, and drops the guillotine legdrop (finally named the Last Dance) for the pin at 2:07. Fandango was wrestling entirely like a face here.

Miz vs. Roman Reigns

They’re flying through these matches tonight. Miz gets in a good line before the match with “You want to headline Wrestlemania? Come face someone who actually did it.” That’s Miz’s “I beat the Rock and Austin in the same night.” He knocks Reigns off the apron during the entrances and sends Reigns into the steps. Roman says ring the bell and Miz pounds away as soon as he can. Reigns ducks his head for a backdrop and gets kicked in the face, so he opts for just running Miz over with a shoulder.

After a quick beating on the floor, Miz comes back inside with even more left hands as he's come to play. Cole says a loss here would really hurt Roman Reigns. Like the one on Monday where Big Show beat him in less than three minutes? Or is that an exception because it's Big Show who is in fact big? Miz puts on a neck crank followed by a chinlock but charges into a big clothesline. The low DDT is countered into a bearhug and then a Samoan drop, setting up the spear to pin Miz at 5:47.

Rating: C-. This was much better than I was expecting with Miz having more fire in him than I've seen in years. It's also a good idea to have Reigns have to come from behind instead of just running people over, especially over former World Champions. Yeah Miz is on the low end of that list, but it's better than beating up jobbers or Kane all over again. Also at the end of the day, it's not Big Show, meaning it's a better match by definition.

Rusev vs. Erick Rowan

Non-title. They slug it out to start with Rowan kicking him in the face as a huge USA chant starts up. A shoulder sends Rusev outside but he scores with a spinwheel kick back inside to take over. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Rowan clubs him down and beats Rusev across the ring. A middle rope back elbow to the jaw drops Rusev again but Rowan gets kicked off the ropes. The Accolade makes Rowan tap at 3:20.

Rating: D. Standard brawl here to make Rusev look good by beating up Cena's....buddy I guess? I mean who remembers Rowan helping to steal the souls of children last summer or whatever you call it? After all, they had a 45 second chat that one time on Raw and those things bury all hatchets. This was your run of the mill Rusev match.

We look at the Bellas putting spray tanner on Paige from Monday. Somehow this is the most interesting feud in the division in months.

Paige was actually embarrassed on Monday because she isn't your standard Diva. She's also not a conformist and the Bellas will be the embarrassed ones at Fast Lane. Not a bad thirty second promo, especially given what she has to work with.

Paige vs. Alicia Fox

In case you didn't get enough of it on Raw. Paige erupts on her to start and hammers on Fox, only to walk into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The Bellas are watching in the back as Fox sends Paige outside. Back in and the northern lights suplex gets two on Paige and it's time for the chinlock.

Saxton says the Bellas have been the faces of the Divas division for the better part of seven years. That would make my soul hurt if it was actually true, but I think Laycool, Mickie James, Kelly, Melina, AJ and even Paige might have a bit to say about that, especially given that before this title reign, the Bellas had combined to hold titles for about two and a half months in those seven years. Anyway, Paige fights up and hits a dropkick, setting up PT0 for the win at 2:32.

We go to the double date with Jimmy Uso/Naomi and Natalya/Kidd, but Tyson thought he'd be coming with Cesaro because they're partners. Natalya facepalms and eats at the same time while Cesaro and Kidd say FACT at the same time. Naomi yells at Natalya for being rude and letting her husband be a jerk. Jimmy doesn't like what Kidd says about Naomi and gets knocked out by Cesaro. Natalya blames Jimmy and Naomi.

Network/Fast Lane hype.

Bray Wyatt says a man is defined by his actions but he is no man. He is the reaper, so what makes you think your actions towards him mean nothing? You are blinded by your pride and the devil is knocking on your door. He just wants you to come home, so just let him in. Let him in. Let Bray in.

Daniel Bryan vs. Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury/Seth Rollins

Mercury offers a test of strength to start but gets kicked in the leg instead. Daniel rides him on the mat with ease so it's off to Noble to get abused as well. A cross armbreaker sends Noble running to the ropes and it's off to Rollins for a smattering of applause before the YOU SOLD OUT chants begin. A dropkick puts Seth down but he gets Bryan into the corner for the triple team. Back to Noble as the announcers recap

Wrestlemania from last year. Rollins takes Bryan outside and sends him into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Bryan getting German suplexed for no cover. Seth does Brock's bounce before throwing another German suplex. The Stooges take turns stomping away with Noble throwing some shadow punches. Mercury gets two off a dropkick (people might forget how young the Stooges really are. Noble is the older of the two and is only 38. This is hardly Patterson and Brisco II) before Seth comes in for some cocky stomping.

Daniel fights up for a double cross body to put both guys down. Back up and Seth sends him into the buckle to take over again but makes the mistake of setting up the Triple Bomb out of the corner. Bryan counters into a hurricanrana and Daniel speeds things up. A top rope double dropkick puts the Stooges down and it's time for rotating YES Kicks. Bryan clotheslines Rollins to the floor and throws Noble out with him, setting up the YES Lock for the submission on Mercury at 13:58.

Rating: C. This was fine and again it helps that the Stooges are still more than capable of having a passable match. Considering they're wrestling in business casual clothing, this wasn't too bad. Bryan winning here makes sense and there's no need to have him pin Rollins again. As I said in the Wyatts' feud against Cena (before it was resolved with one of those 45 second backstage chats), a good villain needs lackeys for situations like this one.

Post match Kane comes out and beats down Bryan because THIS FEUD WILL NOT FREAKING DIE ALREADY. Bryan gets a big beating to end the show, including a chokeslam and curb stomp. There is no reason for Kane and Bryan to keep fighting, especially after last week.

Overall Rating: C. This show was rolling along to a decent rating and then they do this stupid thing again where they can't just let a feud end and move on to ANYTHING else because for some reason, writers in WWE don't get that it's ok to end a story at some point. There's no reason for this thing to keep going but they're just going to keep it going because they have no idea where else to go with Kane.

Unfortunately, this show felt like an old Friday night episode of the

show with nothing really interesting and a decent match here and there. It's not bad or anything, but at least they had the two most important names featured here. At the end of the day, any show that doesn't have Cena on it all the time doesn't feel like a major show. The company really does revolve around him and you can notice when he's gone.

Results

Dolph Ziggler/Ryback b. Goldust/Stardust – Shell Shock to Goldust

Dean Ambrose b. Curtis Axel – Dirty Deeds

Fandango b. Adam Rose – Last Dance

Roman Reigns b. Miz – Spear

Rusev b. Erick Rowan – Accolade

Paige b. Alicia Fox – PT0

Daniel Bryan b. Seth Rollins/Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury – YES Lock to Mercury

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Monday Night Raw – February

2, 2015: Are They High Or Just Really Stupid?

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 2, 2015

Location: Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Tonight is a major night as HHH has promised to shake the company to its core and give us an end to the controversy at the Royal Rumble. What that controversy is isn't really clear but hopefully he'll give us an explanation tonight. Other than that we're getting closer to Fast Lane and therefore closer to Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of HHH on Smackdown, promising tonight's major announcement.

Opening sequence.

Here are Stephanie and HHH for the announcement as a lot of the midcard watches in the back. First up, they talk about the Super Bowl and Stephanie emphasizes that the Patriots won because it was best for business. I thought they won because they scored more points. HHH hopes they can survive the new "Cancel the NFL Movement" that struck after the end of the game last night.

HHH shows us the controversy to end the Rumble, which is Rock coming in to attack Big Show and Kane before Rusev was officially eliminated. After comparing the ending to the end of the Super Bowl (I assume when the fight started before the last kneel down), HHH says Rock coming in wasn't ok. Rock is a huge Hollywood star but that doesn't mean he can come back in just because he's a name. Sting recently did the same thing, and it stops at Fast Lane.

That's why HHH has called Sting out to come to the ring at Fast Lane to solve their problems. You can see that on the WWE Network for just \$9.99, or free for new subscribers in February. That brings them back to the

original problem: what would have happened if Rock hadn't come out? Maybe Roman Reigns wouldn't have won the Rumble, meaning his victory is tainted. They haven't actually said Rusev's name in this whole thing. Reigns comes out and says no one is taking away his win. Stephanie says she knows what it's like to have a family legacy to live up to and says it shouldn't stop him from going to Wrestlemania.

Cue Daniel Bryan in a new shirt to really wake the crowd up. He says the real controversy is him being stripped of the title and never getting a rematch. If the title match is open at Wrestlemania, he wants to officially throw his name in the hat. HHH sees the logic in that and could see Bryan getting the shot at Wrestlemania. This brings out a smiling Rollins and the Stooges as we take a break due to what seemed like microphone issues.

Back with Rollins asking Bryan if he really wants to face Lesnar for the title at Wrestlemania, because Lesnar would eat him alive. If anyone deserves the shot at Lesnar one on one, it's Rollins because he broke Brock's ribs. Reigns cuts him off with the threat of a punch to the face but HHH gets to the point: tonight it's Bryan vs. Rollins and the winner gets to face Reigns at Fast Lane for the shot at Wrestlemania. Reigns eventually accepts the deal but is told to stay in the ring.

Roman Reigns vs. Big Show

This is joined in progress after a break because WWE has no idea what fans want to see. Reigns tries to fight out of a bearhug but gets headbutted out to the floor. Back in and Roman hits a middle rope clothesline to put Show down. He sends Show into the post but the Stooges break up a Superman Punch attempt, allowing Show to hit a bad spear for two. Reigns fights out of a chokeslam attempt and hits the Superman Punch, only to have Reigns hit Rollins in the back with the briefcase, allowing Big Show to chokeslam Reigns for his first pinfall loss in a singles match in WWE at 2:40 shown.

HHH and Stephanie are in the back and laugh about manipulating everyone into getting what they wanted. Next up: manipulate Austin on the podcast. So it's going to be kayfabe. Freaking joy.

Here's Curtis Axel for a chat. Axel: "Don't turn the channel because I've got something to say!" JBL: "I was thinking about changing the channel." He says he should be going to Wrestlemania because he got sucker punched before he could ever get in. Cue Dean Ambrose and it's time for a fight. He easily throws Axel over the top and says no he's eliminated.

Ambrose has some demands of his own. He trudged through the ice and snow to WWE Headquarters and saw a wall of former champions. He takes a nice mugshot so maybe he would look great on that wall. Recently he pinned Bad News Barrett so he's in line for an Intercontinental Title shot because his face would look good on that wall. Get ready for the road to Fast Lane. Axel jumps him again and winds up taking Dirty Deeds.

Video on Ernie Ladd for Black History Month.

Ascension vs. Goldust/Stardust

Viktor runs over Stardust to start but Goldust sneaks in for some cheap shots before dragging his brother to the ropes for a tag. Off to Konnor who gets kicked in the side of the head but a quick Fall of Man ends Goldust at 1:48. Stardust disappeared after the first thirty seconds.

Stardust walks out on Goldust after the match.

After a break Goldust comes up to Stardust in the back and calls him Cody to make Stardust snap. He says never call him that again, hisses, and walks off.

Here's Cena with something to say. The match with Rusev at Fast Lane is officially a US Title match. You can see the DQ finish from here. First up though is the Austin Podcast tonight where Austin can ask questions no one wants to ask, but HHH might just step around them all again. HHH has taken over NXT and rebranded it into a group of guys who are ready to come in here and take over. His vision is a WWE without John Cena, but HHH has to answer to sponsors and TV companies and that's not the best idea.

The Authority tried to make him give up but that's never going to happen. We see Sting coming out to help Cena beat the Authority two weeks back,

meaning welcome back Rowan, Ziggler and Ryback. Well back to Raw that is as they've been back for about a week and a half already. Cena knows Rusev can be beaten but here's Stephanie to cut them off. Ziggler cuts her off but she says those three haven't fought any of their own battles. Tonight it's Ziggler vs. Wyatt, Rowan vs. Rusev and Ryback vs. Harper.

Ryback vs. Luke Harper

They trade suplexes to start with Ryback hitting a nice delayed version. The middle rope splash gets one on Harper but Luke big boots him out to the floor to take over. Another boot to the face gets two and we hit the chinlock on Ryback. He fights back up and hits a Thesz Press, only to walk into the swinging Bossman Slam for two. The Meat Hook is countered with a third kick to the face for two more and Shell Shock is countered into a sunset flip for two. Back up and Shell Shock is good for the pin on Harper at 6:00.

Rating: C. The match was a decent power showdown but my goodness this is their big idea? Having Harper get pinned here completely clean? I'm so glad he's now being used to get someone over again because we're somehow still dealing with fallout from Survivor Series. This show is getting harder and harder to sit through.

Jimmy Uso vs. Cesaro

This is apparently over a double date Natalya set up for her and Kidd with Jimmy and Naomi. Well of course it is. Cesaro jumps him to start but Jimmy comes back with some chops to take over. Jimmy whips him to the floor and a Jey distraction sets up a flying Uso to put Cesaro down.

Back in and we hit the chinlock on Jimmy, followed by the Cesaro Swing. A double stomp and tiger bomb get two on Jimmy but he comes back with some clotheslines. The superkick is countered and Jimmy is sent outside, but Kidd can't get in any cheap shots. Back in and Jimmy superkicks him out of the air, setting up the Umaga attack. Kidd offers a distraction though and Cesaro uppercuts Jimmy out of the air for the pin at 6:22.

Rating: D. This show has completely drained me. We're only halfway through the show and I already don't care about anything else they're

going to air tonight. This was your standard way of setting up the Tag Team Title match because WWE only knows a few ways to set matches up nowadays and they used up their one interesting idea with Naomi, meaning it's time for another year of the same rehashed ideas.

Kidd gets in a cheap shot on Jey after the match.

WWE Network plugs.

Mizdow is getting Miz food at catering when a guy comes up to ask for an autograph. Miz shrugs him off but the guy was asking Mizdow. Damien is happy to sign but Miz rips up the picture and erupts on Mizdow for getting too big of a head after all those months of Mizdow dressing up in costumes and losing all the time. Miz fires him but gives Mizdow a new job as personal assistant. Mizdow goes along with it but looks defeated.

Rowan comes in and thanks Cena for making him his own man. Tonight he'll thank him by hurting Rusev.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray runs him over with a forearm to start and gets in a cheap shot as the referee tries to break it up. A Fameasser attempt sends Bray running to the floor and things slow down. Back in and Ziggler grabs the leg but eats a big uppercut for his efforts. The backsplash gets two and we hit the nerve hold. They're just doing moves to each other at this point, likely due to the fact that there's no reason for these two to be fighting. Some dropkicks have Bray in trouble but he snaps Ziggler ribs over the middle rope and suplexes him out to the floor.

We come back from a break with Bray putting on a chinlock to keep killing time. Ziggler fights up and sends Bray shoulder first into the post, only to dive into a right hand. The second backsplash misses though and Ziggler hits a running clothesline, followed by a neckbreaker to put Bray down. Bray takes his head off with a clothesline but Ziggler nails the running DDT for two more. Things speed up and Ziggler hits something like a running superkick to the ribs (it certainly wasn't the jaw) for two. Ziggler hits the Fameasser but Bray pops up and grabs Sister Abigail for the pin at 14:54.

Rating: B-. This took its time to get going but they picked up after the break. Bray winning is the right move at this point, but it really didn't need to be at Zigler's expense. As usual, they have no idea how to get through storylines without having guys they want to get over losing at some point. I'm all for Wyatt getting a stronger push though.

Rollins comes in to see the Authority and they tell him they're giving him this match because they have faith in him. They bring up Orton for the sake of plot convenience and Seth promises to go to Fast Lane.

Paige vs. Alicia Fox

The Bellas are on commentary so Paige goes over to scream at them. Back in and Fox gets two off a northern lights suplex before putting on a chinlock as the Bellas speak in hashtags. Fox hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker but Paige small packages her for the pin at 2:44.

Brie covers Paige with tanning spray post match.

Miz is on Sirens this week.

Sin Cara vs. Miz

Mizdow stands at ringside instead of imitating Miz, drawing an even louder chant than usual. Miz's early chinlock doesn't get him anywhere as Cara hits some spring cross bodies. Cara goes up and Mizdow is worried, but Miz avoids the Swanton. Damien can't help himself and teases going to the top, only to be yelled back to ringside. Back in and Miz gets two off a boot to the head and puts on a chinlock. Just have Mizdow cost him the match already. Cara fights up but gets put right back down, drawing Mizdow up to the apron. Miz yells at him but gets rolled up for the pin at 5:40.

Rating: D. This was all storyline advancement and it could have been anyone in Sin Cara's role. The show has already crippled my soul and I have no real interest in a lot of what's going on here, but that's almost the new norm around here. Miz and Mizdow splitting is a good thing, even though Miz has been doing a face's work for months now.

Miz yells at Mizdow but Bray cuts them off. He says he's been watching

someone for a long time now and he's the new face of fear. Bray can't wait to see someone again. Find him. It shouldn't be hard to do as it's almost Wrestlemania season.

Erick Rowan vs. Rusev

Non-title. Rusev jumps Rowan before he gets in the ring and quickly posts him. He rips at Rowan's face and bends him around the ropes and slapping on the Accolade. No match.

Lana invites us to a movie premiere since it's Oscar season. This movie is reality instead of the usual happy fairytale ending that will show what happens to anyone who opposes Rusev. We get a Rusev highlight package of people being destroyed by the Russian before posing ensues. The Russian flag doesn't come down properly and the Russians are livid. Thankfully the announcers say Cena had something to do with this, which is a nice save in case it's not true.

Daniel Bryan comes into Reigns' locker room and says he saw what Rollins did out there. He knows Roman wants revenge, but it's not coming at Fast Lane. Reigns perceives this as a threat and tells Bryan to get out. Reigns felt a lot more heelish here.

Seth Rollins vs. Daniel Bryan

Winner gets Reigns at Fast Lane for the Wrestlemania title shot. Rollins runs him over with a shoulder to start but Daniel starts going after the arm. An armbar attempt sends Rollins bailing to the ropes before he throws Bryan outside. The Stooges get in some cheap shots and Seth dives on Bryan as we take a break. Back with Rollins in control and Big Show looking on from ringside.

Bryan fights back with right hands but gets caught in a quick downward spiral into the buckle. Daniel backflips over him out of the corner and hits the running clothesline before firing off the kicks in the corner. A top rope hurricanrana is countered into a sunset flip for two for Rollins and both guys fight back to their feet. The Stooges try to interfere but Bryan throws Rollins out onto them and hits a big Flying Goat to take them all out.

Back in and Seth crotches him on the top to break up the flying headbutt but Bryan hooks a belly to back superplex for two. The running knee is countered into the Buckle Bomb and the low superkick gets two more. Rollins takes his time going after Bryan though and gets caught in the YES Lock but gets his feet on the bottom rope. Cue Reigns to spear Big Show. Mercury gets speared as well but Noble comes in with the briefcase, allowing Reigns to Superman Punch Rollins. The running knee sends Bryan to Fast Lane at 17:11.

Rating: B. Well that helped a lot. It doesn't save this show or really come close to it, but the booking made sense and Bryan gets a big win. Now I give him almost no hope of winning the match against Reigns or getting into the main event of Wrestlemania, but it's nice to see something like this happen to give the fans something to cheer for.

HHH says he'll address this on the Podcast.

Back in the arena, Bryan thanks the fans for putting him here and promises to win the match at Fast Lane for them.

Overall Rating: D+. This show got a lot better near the end but that first hour was as bad of a stretch as I can remember in years. Reigns losing might seem like some big plan, but my goodness they're overthinking these things. There was no real need to address this made up controversy, especially when Rusev wasn't even a factor in the plans. Bryan is being shoehorned in to appease some fans and I'd give him about as much of a chance at main eventing Wrestlemania as I have.

The rest of the show was WAY too Authority heavy as this felt like another show from back in the pre-Survivor Series days. For some reason the Authority is still going after those three guys when the story has been dead (or at least should have been dead) for months now. I'm not sure what we're getting at Wrestlemania and they're making it a pretty boring way of finding out.

Results

Big Show b. Roman Reigns – Chokeslam

Ascension b. Goldust/Stardust – Fall of Man to Goldust

Ryback b. Luke Harper – Shell Shock

Cesaro b. Jimmy Uso – European uppercut

Bray Wyatt b. Dolph Ziggler – Sister Abigail

Paige b. Alicia Fox – Small package

Sin Cara b. Miz – Rollup

Daniel Bryan b. Seth Rollins – Running knee

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I'm Stunned

Raw spoilers incoming. The controversy wound up being Rock interfering in the Rumble, meaning Rusev got screwed. The solution? Bryan vs. Rollins tonight with the winner going to face Reigns at Fast Lane for the Mania title shot. Rusev wasn't mentioned in the promo.

We're not done though. REigns was in the ring for the discussion and then had to fight Big Show. Big Show PINNED REIGNS, for his first pinfall loss in a singles match in less

than three minutes. I know I said it wasn't fair at the Rumble, but commence saying this company is making this nonsense up as they go.

Reviewing the Review: Royal Rumble 2015

We've finally arrived at one of the biggest shows of the year as we're almost to the Road to Wrestlemania. While it seems like there are multiple ways to get to the biggest show of the year, it seems like this is destined to end with Reigns vs. Lesnar as the match that not many people want to see. Let's get to it.

Cesaro and Tyson Kidd beat the New Day in a good pre-show match. It seems like New Day is already a lost cause and I can't say I'm shocked. There isn't much to the team other than a lot of sweating, but they're fine as the face version of 3MB. Kidd and Cesaro have potential but I don't see them being anything more than the challengers of the month.

Ascension beat the New Age Outlaws in the opener and it was exactly what it was supposed to be. I still like Ascension and it's clear where they're going with the team, but they went a long way around to get there. I'm also not sure what other veteran teams they can beat as the Dudleys don't seem to be a possibility and the APA is retired. I'm sure it ends with Usos vs. Ascension for the belts, maybe at Wrestlemania, and the match could be good if they go with an old 80s formula. That being said, I'm not sure how much a win over the Outlaws is supposed to impress me in 2015. They were past their prime in 2000 and they're still kicking around?

Heyman offered the Authority the use of Lesnar to take out Sting. That's an odd choice as I don't want to see Sting ground into dust from Brock's stare, let alone what might happen if they had contact.

The Usos retained the Tag Team Titles over Miz/Mizdow in a match that no one wanted to see again. This feud died months ago, right around the time Naomi was forgotten. Why the writers will never understand that stories can save dull wrestling is beyond me but it's a lesson that would save us a lot of headaches.

The Bellas beat Paige/Natalya with a forearm in the fourth straight tag match of the night. This looked like filler, was wrestled like filler, and ended like filler. In other words, it was filler because they've blown through Natalya vs. Nikki about five times already.

The old school Rumble promos don't make me think anyone but Reigns has a chance.

Now we get to the real treat of the night as Brock Lesnar defended the World Title against John Cena and Seth Rollins. If there's one thing WWE can get right, it's carnage. That's exactly what we got here as these three guys just beat the tar out of each other for over twenty minutes and it became who could possibly survive.

Cena and Lesnar both got to throw around the Stooges in a power off, leaving Rollins to steal the show with his high spots. The biggest of said spots was a flying elbow from the top rope to drive Lesnar through the announcers' table. The idea here was that Lesnar broke a rib and was out of the match for a few minutes, which he sold like he was dead instead of just injured. However, this caused the lone problem of the match, which happens all the time in WWE main events.

With Lesnar down, Cena and Rollins traded finisher attempt and the fans weren't all that impressed. Yeah they popped some, but there was no question about the kickouts. That's become a trope in WWE main events and it's something they need to change. Have them hit secondary moves here or something, but stop this whole "I hit a finisher and then you hit a finisher" sequence. It was stupid when Orton and Cena did it and it worked about as well this time. Even an STF attempt would work better than the AA, but that's the formula they keep sticking with for some reason.

Before we get to the ending, I have to give Rollins some praise. He's

gone from the guy I thought would be the white Kofi Kingston to a guy who looks like he belongs in the World Title scene and stood toe to toe with John Cena and Brock Lesnar in a war. This guy is going to be a star someday and his face turn is going to blow the roof off the place. Just imagine the pop when he curb stomps some big time heel.

Anyway, Lesnar came back in and went into Beast Mode for the F5 and pin on Rollins. There is some serious money to be made with Lesnar as a face (assuming he isn't back in MMA right after Wrestlemania) and it would be the easiest turn in years. He really wouldn't have to change anything as he would just start fighting heels in the same way he is now, probably without Heyman to guide him, giving him an out to lose via DQ etc. It's not a necessary turn, but he's going to be the face at Wrestlemania anyway, so why fight it at this point?

That brings us to who he'll be the heel against at Wrestlemania...and of course it's Roman Reigns. I've spent far too much time talking about how Reigns isn't ready and the 8000 stories they could go through to make things better (and those ways do exist. This story isn't guaranteed to be the disaster people are sure it's going to be) so instead we'll look at the Rumble piece by piece.

First up we'll look at the returns. This wasn't the best part of the match as once you get past Bubba Ray's good return, which didn't lead anywhere as he wasn't even out there five minutes, the returns took a big hit. I mean, the Boogeyman, Zack Ryder and Diamond Dallas Page? They were out there about four minutes in total and the last one was gone about halfway through the match. This can be a major strong point for the match and it fell totally flat here.

Before we get to the really bad things, let's touch on the good stuff. Bray Wyatt had a REALLY strong stretch in there and looked like the monster he used to be. There's still a lot of potential for him and I'm interested in where he's going from here, even if it's fighting Undertaker (though that depends on what you do with Undertaker going forward. I'm sure I'll get to that at some point). Wyatt was the iron man at just under 47 minutes and made it to the final batch.

That gets us to the end of the really good/memorable parts (even Kofi's save wasn't anything special this year, though it was a matter of time until we got to the Rosebuds saving someone) so now we'll get on to the really big flaws. We'll start with what ended Wyatt's, as well as far many others', night: Big Show and Kane. This is where the Rumble went from being boring to just flat out bad.

At the end of the day, the Rumble set up a ton of potential with guys like Reigns, Rusev, Wyatt, Ziggler, Ambrose and Cesaro around near the end. That opened the door for a really hot ending in the same vein as Reigns vs. Rusev in the Money in the Bank qualifying battle royal back in July. What we got instead was the wrath of the Big Balds as Kane and Big Show threw out Ziggler, Wyatt and Ambrose in short order before getting in a quick fight with each other, allowing Reigns to dump them out at the same time.

So yeah, at the end of the day, it came down to Reigns vs. Big Show to end the Rumble, despite it being the least interesting story in years. I've yet to hear from anyone who actually cares about these two fighting but it closed the Royal Rumble to send Reigns to the biggest show (hardy har har) of the year. Why would we want to see these young and interesting guys when we can see Big Show being the same character he's been since 1999? I mean, it worked for the New Age Outlaws in the opener so it can work here in the main event. It's like bookends!

If that wasn't enough though, they had Kane and Big Show go after Reigns again, only to have the Rock make a return for the save. The fans weren't pleased even with one of the biggest stars ever out there, and can you really blame them? It didn't help that they seemed to mistime things as Rusev came back in after not being eliminated and was tossed with ease in a final screw you to the fans with one more blast of false hope.

That brings us to the real problem of this match: the lack of doubt. Daniel Bryan came in at #10, eliminated Tyson Kidd, and was out in ten minutes, being eliminated between Adam Rose and Fandango. He was little more than a throwaway entrant as it seems WWE isn't interested in doing anything with him this year. Here's the thing: I can accept that. It may not be the most popular move, but Bryan is fresh off major neck surgery

and has been back literally less than three weeks. I can understand WWE being hesitant to put the title on someone 33 years old and coming off a major injury, especially after they nailed his win last year.

What I can't understand though is the idea to put him out that early. At the end of the day, this Rumble was over the second Bryan's feet hit the floor. That elimination sealed every bit of doubt away forever as it was just a matter of time until Reigns showed up, cleaned house (by which I mean three guys. Quite the way to showcase your new star WWE) and won the match. It was right out of 1993 where Undertaker was thrown out and there was zero doubt that it was going to Yokozuna (who just happens to be related to Reigns).

All the drama was gone and it became really, really boring. There was some hope, but Big Show and Kane took away whatever chance there was of the match being interesting. Daniel Bryan didn't need to win, but he needed to be there to keep the crowd under control until the end. Having him lose clean, especially to Wyatt, is fine but don't have him get thrown out in ten minutes after barely doing anything that early on.

The overarching problem with this Rumble was the lack of drama. Much like many bad Rumbles, there was zero doubt as to who was winning. There can be fun stories to be told if you stack the deck against them, but the final three (excluding Rusev) had as much drama as Mr. Perfect and Rick Rude vs. Hulk Hogan in 1990. On top of that they threw out Bryan ala throwing out Hogan early in 1989 and the results were just as lame. It didn't help that the rest of the Rumble was horribly uninteresting with only one fun surprise and nothing else worth talking about. I could see it being the worst Rumble ever but 1999 is hard to top.

Overall, this show needs to be incredibly grateful for the classic World Title match because without that match, it's a bunch of lame tag matches and a dreadful Rumble. That being said, the World Title match is good enough to make me forget about the earlier weak stuff, which is a common case in wrestling (see also Wrestlemania VI, where the show is pretty fondly remembered due to one match alone). WWE can salvage Wrestlemania's main event, but this show left a horrible taste in a lot of mouths due to Reigns and Reigns alone being shoved down our unready throats.

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