

# Monday Night Raw – December 28, 1998: We Close It Out With Shawn

## Monday Night Raw

Date: December 28, 1998

Location: Pepsi Arena, Albany, New York

Attendance: 11,928

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

It's the final episode of the year and it only took me two years to get through 1998. I don't remember what happens here, but my guess is that it's not as good as what happens next week. Tonight we're likely going to have more on Kane joining the Corporation and what the next move for DX is. Also there's a turn coming but I'm not sure if it happens tonight or not. Let's get to it.

We open with the Corporation saying they're taking care of Mankind tonight. They go looking for him in what looks like the boiler room and after awhile Mankind runs out and jumps one of them. You can't see anything because of the lighting but eventually the numbers get the better of him. Vince shouts that Mankind is fighting for the Hardcore Title tonight. Also Vince is going to fire Michaels when Shawn gets here. Ok then.

## Hardcore Title: Road Dogg vs. Val Venis

That's not a misprint. The winner of this faces Mankind for the title later tonight. Val does the same joke he did every December: this leg is Christmas and the other is New Year's, so come see me between the holidays. The important thing though: he got to say it, which is more than a lot of people can say today. Val jumps him to start but Roadie comes back to a big reaction. After a minute or so of not much, here's the Corporation to surround the ring. Test comes in and bulldogs Val for a DQ. In a Hardcore Title match. Love that Russo!

Val gets destroyed on the floor until DX comes out for the save. Vince comes out to the stage and says Roadie gets to defend against Mankind. As for the rest of DX, they're all going to pay. As soon as Shawn gets here, he's fired. So basically we're reiterating what was said five minutes ago.

Al Snow is still covered in blood from last week.

Kane gets a member of DX tonight.

### Al Snow vs. Edge

Edge has his more familiar music now and comes through the crowd instead of doing the circle of fire entrance. Snow goes off on Edge on the floor to start but stops to have another psychotic break. Back inside and Edge pounds away, causing Snow to shout LOOK WHAT I'VE DONE. Snow slams him down and hits a moonsault for no cover. He heads to the floor and gets a chair but Edge drives Snow chest first into the chair instead. Snow comes back with the headbutts to Edge's chest before hitting Edge with Head for the DQ. Typical Snow insanity.

The Brood and the JOB Squad get in a fight post match.

Dennis Knight (Phineas Godwin) is here for no apparent reason.

### Women's Title: Sable vs. Spider Lady

A fan comes into the ring to give Sable a yellow rose. The fan would later be named Tori and she would mean nothing until she became X-Pac's girlfriend. Spider Lady is a reference to an incident called the Original Screwjob. Wendi Richter had been Women's Champion back in the 80s and was facing a masked woman named Spider Lady. It was actually Fabulous Moolah in a mask and Moolah shot on her and took the title, basically throwing Richter out of the company because of a real life contract issue.

Spider Lady destroys Sable before the match and there's no bell. Sable gets whipped by a belt until the Oddities make the save. Spider Lady is unmasked as Luna. No match but I guess this is what passes for a lower card swerve. If ten people in the arena got the reference, I'd be shocked. Luna says it's about her.

### European Title: X-Pac vs. Big Boss Man

Power vs. speed here with power controlling to start via a powerbomb to counter an X-Pac rana. Off to a bearhug to the champion which is broken pretty quickly. Pac misses a charge in the corner and crotches himself on the middle rope which gets two for the challenger (Boss Man). Off to a chinlock followed by a backbreaker for no cover for Boss Man. Boss Man misses a top rope splash and Pac kicks him down a few times. The Bronco Buster hits and here comes the Corporation. Val Venis also comes out for the save and it's a DQ win for Boss Man.

**Rating:** D+. This was barely long enough to rate and that's what holds it down. Boss Man is a good size opponent for X-Pac as he's a big guy but not big enough that it's ridiculous like Big Show or Kane. Val coming in was a nice touch as he has a reason to be mad at the Corporation after what happened earlier tonight. This could have been a bit better with some more time.

We get a Vince training montage with him drinking raw eggs set to a Rocky sounding song.

### Goldust/Steve Blackman vs. Jeff Jarrett/Owen Hart

This feud will not end. Jarrett and Goldie start things off and Jarrett gets two off a powerslam. Goldust comes back with a clothesline and loads up Shattered Dreams but Jeff escapes thanks to Owen. Jarrett goes after the arm and hits a double clothesline with Owen's help again. A LOUD nugget chant breaks out and there's the tag to Blackman, who is immediately taken down by an enziguri and a spinning heel kick for two. There's the Sharpshooter and here comes Dan Severn in a neck brace. The distraction lets Godlust roll up Jarrett for the pin. Another nothing match in a nothing feud.

The Acolytes are kidnapping Dennis Knight and put him in the trunk of his own car before driving off in it.

### Intercontinental Title: HHH vs. Ken Shamrock

The crowd is all over Shamrock to start. HHH hits an atomic drop and

neckbreaker to send Shamrock to the outside. Cole goes into an explanation about rights of free speech and taking obscene signs away for some reason. Shamrock hits a spinning elbow to take over but HHH comes back with a gordbuster and a baseball slide to take out Test. Shamrock gets in some shots to the knee and HHH is down.

HHH comes back with a hard whip into the corner and a right hand to the back of the head. The jumping knee takes Shamrock down but it hurts HHH's knee even more. There's the facebuster but HHH has to take out Boss Man. The distraction lets Shamrock put on the ankle lock but HHH makes the rope. Shamrock won't let go and it's a DQ.

**Rating:** C+. This was REALLY hot while it lasted with the fans losing it on every move HHH hit. The ending sucks but it's almost 1999 so you can't expect a clean finish. The DX vs. Corporation feud went on for a long time until the Ministry rose up to be the real villains in the whole thing for awhile.

DX comes out for the save until Kane reluctantly clears the ring.

Shamrock and Gunn yell at each other.

Here are Henry and Brown with something to say. Henry apologizes to Chyna for what happened and says it was completely wrong. He gets down on his knees to beg her to come back but he gets PMS instead. They say they have plans for Henry but Brown says back off. Cue Chyna who gets in PMS' faces and says stay away from her man. Brown is STUNNED and Henry starts jumping up and down. Jackie makes fun of Chyna and gets choked down for her troubles. She says she'll see Mark later and smiles a bit.

The Corporation is looking for someone.

We look at the year in review, which is pretty well done. It's a highlight package from the whole year. There's a long section on the Cell and I can't argue a bit with that. Austin vs. McMahon gets a lot of time as well.

The Corporation is destroying....the Godfather? Apparently he's facing Billy Gunn next and that's not cool.

### Billy Gunn vs. Godfather

There's no Godfather so here's his replacement.

### Billy Gunn vs. Kane

Kane is here against his will because he was let out of the insane asylum on the condition that he helps the Corporation. Billy goes after him but gets pounded into the corner. Billy hits the yet to be named Fameasser out of nowhere but Kane is up first. A clothesline puts Kane on the floor and here's Shamrock with some cheap shots on Billy, including the ankle lock. There's the chokeslam but Brisco says do more. There's another chokeslam but Patterson asks for another. HHH and X-Pac run in for the save and the DQ.

**Rating:** D. This was a squash with another dirty ending. That's the same kind of thing you get in almost every match and it's really tiring after awhile. I know Russo likes this kind of stuff but it's hard to sit through and it's only going to get worse next year. Billy never had a chance in this.

Rock comes out for commentary on the main event.

### Hardcore Title: Mankind vs. Road Dogg

Shawn arrives with like fifteen minutes left in the show. The match is joined in progress after a break. Rock rips into both guys and is on fire tonight. Roadie is in control to start but the Cactus Clothesline puts both guys on the floor. They head up the ramp with Mankind in control, hitting a suplex on the stage for no cover. Mankind pulls out a table and suplexes it onto Roadie for two.

Road Dogg takes over and they head back towards the ring. That lasts for about two seconds as Mankind drops him face first onto the apron. Mankind pulls out a toolbox but it gets knocked out of his hands. Some cookie sheet shots put Mankind down as security puts a rowdy fan down. Back inside a chair to the back puts Mankind down as does a Russian legsweep onto the chair which gets two. Mankind comes back with a pulling piledriver for two and takes over again.

Another piledriver on the chair gets another two and we head back to the floor. They head into the crowd and Mankind knocks him behind some hockey boards. A shot with a monitor misses Road Dogg and he knocks Mankind through a production assistant into some boxes. Mr. Socko comes out of nowhere and the Claw puts Roadie down as Rock leaves the announce table. Mankind drops an elbow on Roadie on the table but Rock lays out Mankind with a Rock Bottom on the concrete, allowing Road Dogg to get the pin to retain.

**Rating:** C+. This was when they were starting to get the Hardcore Title formula down and it got a lot better. Road Dogg turned out to be really good at this stuff and the matches were entertaining enough to keep the fans fired up. This was mainly to set up Rock vs. Mankind though which would be a big deal the next week.

Road Dogg is mad about winning it like that. He didn't see the Rock Bottom when he got the pin.

Here's Vince to fire Shawn to end the show. He calls out Shawn who doesn't seem angry or nervous at all. Vince talks about making Shawn Michaels and then hearing Shawn say he didn't need Vince anymore. We get a clip from March of him saying just that, talking about how Vince needs Shawn. Then last week Shawn held back the Corporation while Shane was getting beaten up. Vince says he doesn't lay down for anybody and fires Shawn as Commissioner. Shawn superkicks Vince to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. This one dragged a lot because there's really only one major angle going on for the whole show. The DX vs. Corporation feud was going on strong but they had a BIG change the next week which changed everything for the company. It's also my all time favorite moment in wrestling so that makes it even better. Not a great show here but it wasn't terrible.

That's all for 1998 and somehow it took me two years to get through it. The company had spent most of 1997 growing up and they reaped the benefits of it this year. Once the spring hit, there was nothing WCW could do to hold back the eruption that the WWF was having. With DX and Austin rising up and taking the wrestling world by storm, there was no

way this company wasn't going to go straight to the top. They took over and they kept the pressure on WCW for months on end. The next year would be the year when the WWF put their foot on WCW's neck and pressed hard, but we'll get to that soon enough.

I'll be starting 1999 soon and I've already done the first episode. Here's next week's show if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/04/24/monday-night-raw-january-4-1999-foley-wins/>

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## **In Your House 2: The Lumberjacks – A Forgotten Shawn Classic**

Before we get started, please keep in mind this is one of the first reviews I ever did and I didn't know what I was doing yet.

### **In Your House 2: The Lumberjacks**

Date: July 23, 1995

Location: Nashville Municipal Auditorium, Nashville, Tennessee

Attendance: 6,482

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

We're coming off the heels of KOTR 95, which may have been the worst PPV of all time and I kid you not. It was just flat out bad all around. It had a "triple main event". This consisted of Bret Hart vs. Jerry Lawler in a Kiss My Foot Match, Mabel

vs. Savio Vega in the KOTR Finals, and Diesel and Bigelow vs. Sid and Tatanka. Holy freaking goodness.

Anyway, that festering pile of garbage leads us here, with Sid getting a rematch for the title as well as the newly face Shawn Michaels going after the IC Title from Jeff Jarrett. This show is yet again a SNME on PPV, but that's ok I think. It was 20 dollars for some decent wrestling, so what more could you really ask for? Let's see if it's any good.

Show starts with a cheap country song about the show tonight. I get that these are for the theme of the show, but these are just annoying to me most of the time. Kind of catchy I guess. Vince's buildup lines here are almost creepy with how enthusiastic he is about them.

### 1-2-3 Kid vs. The Roadie

DX explodes here as X-Pac faces the Road Dogg. This is fallout from the Razor vs. Jeff Jarrett feud. Dogg was actually a worse wrestler back then than he is now. The story here is that Jarrett is singing live tonight for the first time, which yet again, no one really cared about but they had to fill time on the show I suppose. During the match we see Jarrett in the back not paying a bit of attention to his friend's match.

Kid has a bad neck coming in just in case you were wondering. This isn't bad, but it's 1-2-3 Kid vs. the Roadie, which kind of hurts it. Based on the way they're talking, Roadie was supposed to be a big deal or something, which is just kind of funny. I always enjoy seeing the future fairly big names in their previous gimmicks as it never ceases to amaze me what people can do to surprise you. Roadie hits a kind of bad/cool looking pile driver from the middle rope to get the win.

**Rating:** C+. Like I said, the main thing hurting this match is the fact that it was X-Pac vs. Road Dogg, but before they were anything close to stars. It's not particularly bad as it kept my attention for the most part, but it's nothing great. Post



match, Roadie goes to the stage to check Jarrett's mic for later on. Holy theme for the show Batman.

The Million Dollar Corporation says Sid is winning the title tonight.

#### Men on a Mission vs. Razor Ramon/Savio Vega

Oh screw it not this again. Mable is still the King and still sucks beyond belief. Somehow this guy got the title shot at Summerslam. Seriously, I have yet to get what Vince was thinking at the time when he booked this nonsense. Razor, as always, has bad ribs. Savio, as always, sucks. You know, out of all these four, I completely forgot about Mo. Seriously, that's his name: Mo. Was he supposed to be intimidating or something?

I never remember him doing anything at all, yet he was always around, kind of like a bad fungus. Oh, apparently Razor's ribs are fine. Dang I almost started to care for a minute there. Close call indeed. Lawler's line of if brains were sunshine Razor would be a snowstorm makes me chuckle. This match is happening because Savio lost to Mable in the king of the ring final and Razor is his friend.

Mo is there because there was already a bum at the local gas station so they gave him a night's "work". I must really love you guys: I'm watching Savio Vega vs. Mabel. Let that sink in for a minute. Razor is the only thing that's decent in the match and he's been in it all of 90 seconds.

The referee's counts are insanely fast so I guess he realizes how bad this match is too. The crowd is way too hot for a match like this. Razor throwing Mabel around like he does is actually kind of cool to see. Belly to belly and another fast count ends this.

**Rating:** C-. Seriously, WHAT WAS VINCE THINKING??? Three out of these four completely suck and one kind of sucks. Mable pins

Razor clean? I can't blame Razor for bailing for WCW in less than a year one bit.

Todd Pettingill interviews the band for Jarrett and plays with his instruments.

Michael Hayes is with some of Diesel's lumberjacks. I just realized: there are thirty lumberjacks for this main event. Is that really needed? Wouldn't 20 be enough? That's five guys per side of the ring. Nothing of note is said here other than the rumor of DiBiase buying off some lumberjacks. You know, Man Mountain Rock and Adam Bomb were freaking awesome characters. Sure they weren't serious, but DANG they were cool. Look them up if you haven't seen them yet.

It's time for Jarrett to sing. I'm ashamed to admit it, but I have this song on my ipod. The song is kind of catchy, but the twist was supposed to be that he was lip synching for Roadie, eventually leading to a feud between the two. However, after tonight the pair would both leave the company. Both guys went to the USWA for a few months but Jarrett was back within six months and Roadie was back in about a year.

The spelling of his name was actually a decent gimmick because even nearly 15 years later, every time I type his name that line is in my head. This was actually a decent little song and it was rather catchy. The story made sense and had it played out, it could have been something I think. Roadie actually has a decent singing voice.

I remember distinctly watching this live with my mother and my mom was legitimately impressed. He actually sings far better than the backup, professional, singers. Vince trying to sound country and hip is just flat out sad.

The fans mostly like the song.

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Henry Godwin

0.....k. Godwin simply does not work as a heel, end of argument. It's just creepy. These two are both lumberjacks tonight and Henry cost Bigelow a match with Sid on Raw. Oh man I forgot about Bigelow's pyro gimmick again. WWE should rehire whoever this announcer is. Dude's pretty freaking sweet.

I always kind of liked Godwin. The guy had a decent look to him and wasn't too bad in the ring. He was bad, but not that bad. Bigelow got thrown out of the Corporation and is going through them one by one, even though Godwin was just an associate of theirs at the time.

This is a style as old as time: two big guys beating on each other. Yes, it's pretty bad looking, but it's not supposed to be a classic. Godwin dominates most of this short match until Bigelow comes back wins this pretty quickly. I think the finish was a botch as Godwin misses a knee from the top and gets covered for a pin.

**Rating:** C. This was short and rugged, but it did its job. Bigelow gets a win, Godwin looks decent, and the feud is continued. It wasn't supposed to be a classic and it wasn't. Pretty entertaining little match, but don't expect much. Bigelow would be gone by the end of the year and Godwin would (thank God) be a face.

Bob Backlund wants to be President. My lord what was wrong with wrestling in 1995?

Shawn Michaels (the day after his birthday) says he wants the IC Title as a present.

Intercontinental Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Jeff Jarrett

This is by far the match of the night. Shawn is newly face after a long heel run where he was having the best matches on the show and got over by way of that. This came about by Shawn doing commentary one night but Roadie throwing some guy onto him, leading to a brawl with Jarrett and Shawn.

Jarrett again shoots himself in the foot by leaving the day after he has the best match of his career up to that point. Jarrett's intro takes like three minutes on its own with a guest announcer and Roadie. Shawn's pop blows the roof off the place. Jarrett is champion here. Jarrett clutching his title to him is rather amusing.

Memphis levels of stalling to start until Shawn is all like screw that and steals the title. After a lot of nothing, Shawn does the lay on the ropes taunt. I love that thing. This should be very good from a technical standpoint. Shawn had reached the point here where he was the best in the company or a close second, but he just wasn't ready for the jump to the main event.

It's kind of a long feeling out process here as Shawn does the Jarrett strut and Jarrett does the Shawn corner thing. And there goes Jarrett as he tries to leave. Dang he comes back since I guess he sucks as a heel. This is pure Memphis with all of the stalling. Shawn is like screw this and goes to the floor to bring him back.

They keep changing things up here and never actually going straight at it for more than a few seconds at a time. Shawn gets a big dive to the floor to take out both guys which looked sweet. Shawn has looked awesome for the whole thing so far and is just picking Jarrett apart. Until right then when he gets launched over the top and crashes to the floor.

Gordbuster to REALLY go old school here. I think Vince's mic is out as Jeff gets an abdominal stretch for a good while. Roadie gets involved and costs Jarrett his advantage or at least for a bit. He gets involved again but this time it works and Shawn is in trouble. Nice pinfall reversal sequence gets us some close near falls.

Shawn tries to crank it up but gets caught in a sleeper. The basic reversal follows and both guys are down. Forearm hits and Shawn's feet never hit the ground as he's nipping up already. Moonsault gets two and Jarrett won't stay down. Elbow gets the same as Jarrett keeps getting up.

This is a very solid back and forth match. Jarrett gets the suplex off the middle rope but the figure four is countered into a small package for two. Another is blocked and down goes the referee. Cross body gets two for Jarrett as this is very good so far. Roadie screws up and hooks the wrong leg, allowing Shawn to kick Jeff's head off for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** A. This was just a great match all around and the match of the night by a mile. Shawn shows once again that he is the future of the company and Jarrett shows that he can't handle the spotlight as he bails again. Still, great stuff here and just pure fun the whole time. Well worth checking out.

Holy  
Freaking  
Crap

Doc Hendrix just gave the most wild, insane speech that I have ever seen. He sounds like he's on so much cocaine that he can barely see straight. He speaks for about thirty seconds in one long sentence, talking about Roadie and Jarrett fighting. This had my mouth hanging open in awe. Either awesome or creepy and I'm not sure which.

Tag Titles: Owen Hart/Yokozuna vs. Allied Powers

Sweet goodness that was a bad team after awhile. Luger would be gone by September to appear on the first Nitro and Bulldog kind of faded away. Even I at 7 years knew they stood no

chance in this match. Yoko isn't at his fattest yet but you can see that his weight is completely getting out of hand at this point. This match isn't any good really and it's just there to fill time.

Luger and Smith control the majority of it until there's your big melee and Hart hits a double axe on a not looking Luger to set up the legdrop to allow Yoko to pin him. Just a waste of ten minutes.

**Rating:** D. There is nothing here. It's just ten minutes of the faces beating on Yoko before the really bad ending. Luger bailed in three months and I don't blame him one bit. Smith turned heel in August and was gone a few months later. Just a filler.

WWF Title: Diesel vs. Sid

You've heard the story if you're read the previous review. The idea is Diesel and Shawn were feuding when Sid was Shawn's bodyguard. Sid beat up Shawn after being fired and Diesel made the save, leading to this feud. Sid is part of the Million Dollar Corporation as well.

This match is miles ahead of the previous encounter with them trying some new things and it worked. Diesel even does a suicide dive over the top rope a la Undertaker. Sid of course hits the powerbomb but is slow and Diesel kicks out. The lumberjacks, namely Shawn, beat up Sid and Diesel kicks him and pins him. Decent match and then the champion celebrates to close us out.

**Rating:** B-. This was pretty good. The main issue is it's just barely ten minutes long. With another five minutes this could have been very good, but at the same time it could have exposed their weaknesses. It finally ended this long feud that was just kind of a summer filler before the big one came with Diesel and Bret.

This concludes the regular show and it's now time for the Home Video exclusives.

### Bret Hart vs. Jean-Pierre Lafitte

This was in the middle of a feud between the two where you have to kind of scratch your head over what the heck they were doing with Hart. He goes from Hakushi to this, to the World Title? Lafitte is a pirate gimmick of all things, just not as entertaining as Burchill was with it. This match is as standard of a Bret match from this time as you'll ever find with Bret getting the tar beaten out of him for about ten minutes before coming back and winning via some surprise, in this case a roll up.

**Rating:** C. This is just kind of there. It's a solid match, but seriously, Bret Hart faces a freaking pirate? The idea was that Lafitte kept stealing Hitman's glasses and eventually his jacket. To this day I don't get where they were going with this, but it was blown off a month later so call this a dry run.

### Undertaker vs. Kama

Casket match. So why are they keeping two of their biggest stars off the main show? I get there are time constraints, but this is a bit excessive. This is another dry run as the big one of this was at Summerslam. Kama stole the urn and turned it into a necklace as you already know. Standard stuff here as Kama tries a chokeslam and gets his Godfathering head kicked off and thrown into the casket.

**Rating:** C. Seriously, why leave these two (Taker and Hart) off the card? The match is fine and I get that this was a treat for the fans so it's ok. Taker was in a weird spot here as no one knew what to do with him, which is the exact same thing that anyone could claim around this time. It wasn't until the next year when Hall and Nash left that guys like Shawn, Bret and Taker were pushed to the top of the roster and it helped a

lot.

**OverallRating:** B-. Definite improvement over last time. Far less wastes of time as every match has a purpose in the main stories at the time and at the end you get two of the top stars in the company as a bonus. You throw in something regional with the country song and a great Jarrett/Michaels match and this is an easy thumbs up. Good show but they were still hammering out some bugs.

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## I Want To Talk A Little Bit About WWE's Tag Team Relaunch

This is one of the things that fans always say needs to happen. I mean you hear it CONSTANTLY, and now it seems like this is actually happening. What I don't really understand is why this is something that so many people want. When you think back, there haven't been very many times when there was a strong tag team division. There's a strong case to be made that it's only happened once in WWF history. Today we're going to take a look at the tag team division and why people want it back so much. Let's get to it.

There's no argument to be made that the pinnacle of tag team wrestling in the WWF is the late 80s. In that time you had teams like the Hart Foundation, Demolition, the British Bulldogs, the Dream Team, the Killer Bees, the Powers of Pain, Strike Force, the Brainbusters, and I could probably come up with at least half a dozen more. There were TONS of



teams that could win the titles at any given moment.

Then around 1991, things changed and they changed in a hurry. There were four men that caused these changes and basically killed tag team wrestling in the company forever. We'll start with the obvious two: Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels. After Wrestlemania 7, the Hart Foundation (as well as Demolition) split up. Neidhart (we'll get back to him later in a tangent) would go on to do nothing of note while Bret would get a push that would last for the next six years.

In the fall of that year, another team was starting to have some issues. This team was known as the Rockers and was comprised of Shawn Michaels and Marty Jannetty. They were hitting their peak as a team, showing continuity the likes of which were rarely seen in the WWF, before Shawn started having a big head. It seemed that the team was on the verge of splitting when they met face to face on the set of the talk show The Barber Shop in December of 1991.

On that show, in probably the most famous tag team split ever, Shawn Michaels superkicked Marty and rammed him face first through a window, completely splitting the team and establishing himself as the a fast rising heel. Shawn would also go on to greatness, feuding with Bret on and off for five years while putting together one of the greatest in ring careers of all time.

This is where the whole division started to fall apart. Instead of building teams for the sake of having teams, it was about putting two guys together to recreate the kind of breakup that Shawn and Marty had, or splitting them off like the Harts and finding the new Bret Hart. What the company didn't get was that it wasn't the split that made the new guys big stars, but rather the fact that Bret and Shawn are two of the

most talented wrestlers of all time.

Look to modern tag team wrestling for proof of this. Well by modern I mean about three years ago but you get the idea. When Miz and Morrison split up, the crux of their feud was over which one of them would be the Jannetty. Just the idea of which would be a success (and dang were most people, myself included, wrong on which one would be the star of the team) was enough to warrant a feud.

This brings me back to Neidhart and that tangent I mentioned earlier: why is the weak member of a team called the Jannetty? I've touched on this before, but Jim Neidhart is WAY more of a dud than Marty Jannetty was after his team split. Once the Rockers split, Marty won a tag team title of his own with the 1-2-3 Kid and he won it seven months before Shawn did. Jannetty also won an Intercontinental Title, beating Shawn in a match that won Match of the Year from PWI.

Now by comparison, what in the world did Jim Neidhart ever do without Bret as his partner? He never won a title, he never had a memorable match, he never had any notable success AT ALL in the WWF without Bret. None. He was Owen's lackey in 1994 and was part of the Hart Foundation in 1997, but other than that, Neidhart did NOTHING. If you want to talk about a team with two guys having completely opposite careers after the split, it's Bret and Neidhart, not Michaels and Jannetty.

Back to the subject of what killed the tag division, there are two other men that had a big role in this: Hawk and Animal, the Legion of Doom. Now before I get into this, I want to make it clear that I was a HUGE LOD fan. I had an LOD hat, I had an LOD shirt, I ate Legion of Doom cereal, and yes that really existed. However, there came a point where there was no one that was going to be able to beat the LOD and everyone knew it.

Think about it: what tag team could give a legitimate challenge to the Legion of Doom? This was a team that had gone toe to toe with the Horsemen in the NWA and now were here, beating up everyone in sight, including the formerly dominant team of Demolition (how those two never had a big PPV match is one of the great wrestling mysteries of our time). As cool as the LOD was, there are only so many places you can go with them as champions.

At the same time the LOD was on top, the competition REALLY dried up as well. You only had a handful of other teams, with names like the Beverly Brothers, the Natural Disasters, and the team that took the titles from the LOD (in a match that was specifically never filmed), Money Inc. That's kind of a far cry from Demolition, the British Bulldogs and the Brainbusters.

After that, the tag division went into a total funk in the 90s, with teams like the Smoking Guns and Owen/Yokozuna and a bunch of other pairings that most people don't remember dominating things. Then we reached the more modern version of tag team wrestling in late 1997 when on Shotgun Saturday Night (a show that deserves to be looked up by you Attitude Era fans), two guys said they were tired of fighting each other and decided to team up.

These two were former multiple time tag team champion Billy Gunn and the Road Dogg Jesse James, who formed the team known as the New Age Outlaws. The Outlaws would dominate tag team wrestling for the next two years, winning five tag titles, a record at the time. To give you an idea of how dominant the Outlaws were by comparison, other than them, no team from May of 1997 to June of 2003 held the titles for longer than three months. La Resistance, the team that broke that streak, won them after the brand split when there were two sets of titles.

The Outlaws lost their final title in February of 2000 to a new team called the Dudley Boyz, kicking off what is incorrectly considered a renaissance of the tag team division. Over the fourteen months, the Hardy Boys, Edge and Christian, and the Dudleys won a combined thirteen tag titles, with the final change between the teams coming at Wrestlemania X7. Between February of 2000 and April of 2001 (X7), three teams (Right to Censor, Too Cool and Rock/Undertaker) combined to hold the titles for 62 days. Other than that, it was all Dudleys/Hardys/Edge and Christian.

So what does this tell us about this period? It tells us that this was not a renaissance or a rebirth of the division. It was a three way feud that was incredibly popular for how action packed the matches were. This was a fresh idea because the Outlaws followed the Nash/Hall formula of being tag team champions: they rarely defended the titles.

Now the Outlaws defended them a lot more often, but how many times do you distinctly remember them defending the belts? How many of those defenses do you remember lasting five minutes? In the Attitude Era, you very rarely got a long match, so seeing Edge/Christian, the Hardys and the Dudleys going out and having fifteen minute matches that were pretty awesome was a new thing for the division and it made the titles look greater than they were.

As always with a great feud, at some point it becomes stale, which is what happened once Edge and Christian broke up. You can only run the Hardys vs. the Dudleys so many times before no one cares anymore, and by the end of 2001, not many people did. After that, the tag titles fell through the floor with no one caring about them on Raw or their counterparts on Smackdown (other than the end of 2002 and early 2003 on the blue show) for the better part of the decade.

This brings us to now, with a bunch of new teams being brought together to feud for the one set of titles. As of this writing (September 26, 2012), there are currently at least eight teams that are established and could be champions. Bryan and Kane are hilarious as champions, but the question becomes what happens once their hot streak ends, will anyone care about the titles anymore? History would say no, but if the teams are given a chance to get out there and show off a bit, maybe it could last for awhile. It's too early to say but it's the best chance in awhile.

In short, the division has only really worked once and that was back in the 80s when there was a ton of talent to be put throughout the division. Since then, there never has been an extended period of time where tag team wrestling in the company has worked. In the early 2000s, there were three teams who dominated everything and that is not a division no matter how you look at it. Today, there seems to be a chance of a division coming together a little bit, but it still certainly isn't for sure. It hasn't worked in over 20 years, so odds are it won't work now.

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# Backlash 2008: For A Wrestlemania Replay, This Is Pretty Awesome

## Backlash 2008

Date: April 27, 2008

Location: 1<sup>st</sup> Mariner Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Attendance: 11,277

Commentators: Mike Adamle, Tazz, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Mick Foley

We begin the final set of PPV reviews here with the next to last Backlash. The main events are mostly Mania rematches, as JBL has been added to the Raw triple threat from Mania 24 and Edge faces Undertaker again. Other than that we have Shawn vs. Batista which is fallout from Shawn vs. Flair and sets up the Shawn vs. Jericho feud. Dang Shawn had a lot going on here. Let's get to it.

The opening video says Mania was the beginning and tonight is the revenge. Or the backlash you might say.

The announcers welcome us to the show and Mick Foley is revealed as the new commentator.

#### US Title: Matt Hardy vs. MVP

This is the culmination of a feud that went on for almost eight months as Matt and MVP both got hurt so they had to keep waiting. We get a clip from five months ago where MVP attacked Matt's leg. Matt returned last month to cost MVP the MITB match and tonight it's FINALLY the blowoff. We get some big match intros and we're ready to go. MVP goes for the knee of Hardy and Matt looks a bit ginger on it.

Hardy comes back so MVP bails to the floor. Back in and Matt takes him to the canvas with a headlock. A middle rope elbow to the back of the head gets two but MVP gets in a shot to the back to slow Hardy down. They go to the corner with MVP's belly to back superplex being broken up. Matt's moonsault hits knees though and the champion takes over. He works on the back/midsection which was injured as well apparently.

Off to an abdominal stretch but Matt escapes with a hip toss. He lands on MVP, meaning MVP probably has broken ribs. The champ comes back with a belly to belly for two. A clothesline finally gets Matt a breather and allows him to hit a bulldog out of the corner for two. The Playmaker is countered into the Side Effect for two. The crowd is really getting into this.

Hardy goes up but gets crotched due to a dropkick to the ropes. They go up top and Matt hits a top rope Side Effect for no cover as both guys are down. It eventually gets two as does a backslide from the champ. Matt

grabs a fast rollup for two but the Twist of Fate is countered. MVP hits the Drive By (running boot to the face) and Hardy is knocked to the floor. He barely gets back in at 8 and MVP is stunned. Another boot to the face puts Matt down but a running one in the corner hits buckle, allowing Matt to hit the Twist for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** B-. The idea here was to give the fans something to get all fired up over and that was certainly accomplished. This feud went on forever but the ending was the perfect kind, as the fans were all behind Matt and wanted to see him end the nearly year long reign that MVP was on. Good opener here and I was getting into it by the end.

Matt talks about how great this is and how hard he's worked. It's been worth all the injuries too. And to MVP, I am better than you.

#### ECW Title: Kane vs. Chavo Guerrero

Kane is defending after having won the title in 8 seconds at Mania. Chavo has his bodyguard Bam Neely. Edge attacked Kane's knee on ECW on Tuesday so the champ is coming in injured. Chavo goes for the knee so Kane hits him in the face. The low dropkick hits Chavo's face but it hurts the knee even more. Kane chokes Chavo over his back and hits a gorilla press to follow up. Guerrero finally takes the knee out and sends him face first into the buckle.

They head outside but Kane catches Chavo in the air and rams his back into the barricade. They head back in but Kane has his knee kicked out to give the challenger control. Neely gets in some shots and we go back in. Adamle is totally lost in calling this, getting basic things wrong and even having Tazz make fun of him. Chavo goes up but winds up on Kane's shoulders for an electric chair drop.

Both guys are down now but Chavo kicks the knee out again. Kane is all cool with that and grabs him by the throat. That gets released so it's a big boot to the face instead. Side slam gets two and Adamle actually called it the right name. He's getting a little better at least. Kane goes up and hits the top rope clothesline for two. Chavo goes up as well and a missile dropkick gets two. He takes out the knee again but goes up, only to get caught in a chokeslam position. Chavo escapes but the Frog

Splash is caught in the chokeslam for the pin and Kane retains.

**Rating:** C-. Not much here but it wasn't that bad I guess. Kane needed to get a clean win here instead of making it look like a fluke/meaningless win as it was at Mania, but at the end of the day there's almost no way you can spin Chavo as a credible threat to someone like Kane. Not a great match but it could have been a lot worse.

Orton says he's been through a lot lately but he'll come out of this as world champion still.

### Great Khali vs. Big Show

No real story here. They're just fighting for the sake of fighting because they're both massive. They stare each other down and slug it out a bit with Big Show moving much faster than Khali. Show headbutts him but it doesn't have much effect. They trade chops and a clothesline puts Show down. Show fights back and tries a slam, only to get clotheslined to the floor.

After nothing of note happens out there they head back in with Khali chopping him down again. A big boot puts Show down and Khali hooks on, I kid you not, a Crippler Crossface. Show fights up but can't slam Khali. Off to a nerve hold which causes a lot of screaming from Big Show. That gets broken pretty quickly but Show gets chopped down for another two count. Khali cranks on the arms as the fans think this is boring. Big Show fights up and slams Khali for two. The Punjabi Plunge is countered into the chokeslam for the pin.

**Rating:** D-. Next. Seriously, next. This match came, it went, there's nothing to think about here at all. Khali was big and slow and once he lost the world title, it was all downhill from there. Show may be big and slow, but at least he has some skill and a tiny bit of speed to throw in there to make his matches seem like they're actually happening instead of a series of still photographs. Horribly dull match but given who was in there, what else were you expecting?

Cena gives country music advice to Jimmy Wang Yang when Orton comes up. Orton says Cena will lose again tonight but Cena says tonight Orton will



go home broken. Cena's hair looks a lot darker here than usual.

We recap Shawn vs. Batista. The idea here is that Shawn retired Flair at Wrestlemania and Batista isn't happy about that. During Flair's retirement ceremony, the camera panned over to Batista for a quick shot, which showed him being very unhappy when Shawn came out. Jericho is involved in this too, as he thinks Shawn wanted to retire Flair which Shawn doesn't like the idea of. He thinks Batista wanted to retire Flair too, which got him beaten up by both guys. Jericho is the guest referee tonight.

### Shawn Michaels vs. Batista

Feeling out process to start as Batista tries to figure out how to counter the strength advantage. He tries chops which get him nowhere other than into a Batista Bomb attempt. Back in now as Shawn fires away some kicks to the legs which don't have much effect. Big Dave is like screw this and runs Shawn over to gain control. Shawn gets him down by taking out the leg again and hooks a shortarm scissors.

They actually hit the mat for a bit with Batista trying to roll out, only to get caught by some knees to the arm. Since it's a Shawn Michaels shortarm scissors though, you know the counter that's coming. It takes awhile but there it is, as Batista lifts him off the mat and throws Shawn over the top and out to the floor. Dave goes with him though and both guys are down on the outside.

Shawn rams the arm into the post as Batista is in trouble. Shawn is kind of wrestling heel here which is a natural fit for him if he needs it to be. Back in and he cranks on the arm, tying it up in the ropes for more leverage. Batista tries to take it to the corner but Shawn locks on a standing cross armbreaker which he bends over the ropes as well. That looked sick. Shawn goes up and drops a double ax to the shoulder as he's totally focused on one body part.

Batista finally comes back with a Samoan Drop to put both guys down and buy himself a breather. Shawn gets sent into the corner and flips upside down, followed by a big clothesline from Batista's good arm. The Batista Bomb is countered into a Crossface which is pretty soon after Benoit. The

Animal almost gets to a rope but Shawn floats over into a cover followed by another Crossface back in the middle of the ring. That was slick.

Batista gets the rope and the fans are booing loudly. Jericho has to physically break the hold and Shawn isn't pleased. Batista gets a side slam with the bad arm for two and we get a quick breather. Shawn hits the forearm and nips up but he walks into the spear for two. Shawn goes up and after shoving Batista down he hits the big elbow for no cover. He loads up Sweet Chin Music but Batista counters that into a spinebuster. The Bomb is escaped but Shawn's knee gives out. Jericho checks on Shawn and it's ok to continue. Batista walks over and gets his head kicked off, giving Shawn the pin.

**Rating:** B. Shawn was on fire in 2008 and this was no exception. This was getting very good when it ended but the ending was fine. It's actually the beginning of a much bigger storyline as Jericho didn't believe the knee was really hurt and called Shawn out on it. These two would feud until October and it was without question the top feud of the year. Good match here but the best hadn't even started yet.

Jericho has to help Shawn to the back.

Buy the Wrestlemania DVD.

Orton comes to see HHH now and says tonight HHH won't succeed. Orton says he'll win but HHH says pride comes before the fall.

Beth Phoenix/Melina/Layla/Jillian Hall/Victoria/Natalya vs. Mickie James/Michelle McCool/Ashley/Cherry/Kelly Kelly/Maria

Mickie won the title from Beth a few weeks ago in a huge upset. There is something to be said about putting 12 good looking women in a single tag match. Beth, with curly hair, starts with Michelle, who looks GOOD in black. Beth counters the speed moves and powerslams her down for two. Off to Melina who hooks a bridging front facelock with a choke. Michelle rolls through a sunset flip and dropkicks Melina in the face.

Off to the champ (Mickie in case you forgot) who hits a rana out of the corner but Melina tags off to Natalya who is in a black and yellow body

suit. It's her PPV debut so it's understandable I guess. Victoria comes in and misses her shaking moonsault. Mickie hits an enziguri and the brawl breaks out on the floor. Ashley comes in for a HORRIBLE rana on Jillian, getting two. Thankfully Beth comes in to give her a beating for how bad it was. Ashley escapes the Glam Slam but can't tag. Mickie comes in illegally and the parade of finishers begin. After everyone hits something, Beth pins Ashley with a fisherman's buster.

**Rating:** D+. The match sucked, but MAN were the girls better back then. They were better in the ring and they looked a lot better too. The girls here actually looked like their outfits weren't made by the same people which is a big upgrade. Also them having more than 90 seconds a week is a big improvement too. Screw them being role models. They exist because they look good in tight spandex that shows off their bodies. Don't try to over complicate this stuff.

Some Baltimore Ravens are here.

We recap Edge vs. Undertaker. Edge tapped away the title at Mania and says he hasn't felt right ever since. Vickie, corrupt authority figure #847, has stacked the deck against Taker by making him have hard matches while Edge has basically had a month off.

#### Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Undertaker

Taker actually says I'm going to hurt you to Edge during the big match intros. Edge gets thrown to the floor to start and then is run over by a shoulder block. It's still in the feeling out period here. Taker charges into a boot and gets clotheslined down as Edge takes over for the first time. And never mind as Edge gets thrown into the corner and Taker pounds away even more. Taker cranks on the arm and sends the shoulder into the buckle.

The champ loads up Old School but Edge rakes the eyes to escape. Taker gets clotheslined to the floor and a baseball slide sends Taker into the barricade. Edge dives off the apron but is easily caught and rammed into the posts. That's similar to what Kane did earlier so maybe it runs in the family. The champ pounds him down some more and drops the leg on the apron but it hurts Taker's bad back.

Back in the ring a slam and legdrop get two, brother. What might have been the tombstone is countered into the Edge-0-Matic for two. With Taker in the corner Edge hits a spear to the back for two. Edge hooks a body scissors and Taker is getting ticked off. The Dead Man pounds away at Edge's face to escape but Edge hits a dropkick to the back to put him down again. Another baseball slide puts Taker on the floor and we head outside for another bit.

That goes nowhere so we head back inside for a Canadian camel clutch. Taker fights out of that by standing up but Edge hooks another body scissors and right back into the camel clutch. That gets broken up exactly the same way and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Now a double big boot puts both guys down in case you're a leg man instead of an arm man. Taker wins a slugout much to the fans' delight and a big boot puts Edge down again.

A running corner clothesline hits Edge and it's snake eyes into the big boot. An elbow drop gets two and Taker is getting a bit gassed. Old School is broken up again and Edge pounds away in the corner. That would be because he's an idiot in case you're wondering. Taker gets him in Last Ride position but Edge THINKS and climbs down as no one else has thought to do. Taker shoves him off and tries a top rope elbow (I've seen him do that live and it's awesome) but Edge moves and gets two.

The challenger rolls to the floor and grabs the belt but Taker grabs the chokeslam. Edge counters that as well, this time into a Russian legsweep for two. Edge goes up again but gets chokeslammed down for a delayed two. The tombstone is countered as Edge grabs the ropes. He pulls on them so hard that the buckle comes off. Taker gets rammed back first into it but manages a Last Ride attempt anyway.

Curt Hawkins of the Edgeheads runs in and hits Taker with the belt but that only gets two as well. The spear is countered into a DDT for two. The chokeslam is abandoned because of Zach Ryder interference (man that would be different today) so Taker opts for the Last Ride again. Edge rolls through into a rollup but Taker grabs Hell's Gate for the tap out to retain. Sweet finishing sequence.

**Rating:** B. I was digging this one as it was the kind of interference filled match that you expected at Mania but didn't quite get. The Mania match is better due to the atmosphere and the significance of the win, but this was still a solid match with both guys showing off some solid chemistry together. Edge would eventually get the title back and it would of course be in another good match.

Taker doesn't let go of the hold for awhile. Vickie has to come down and the horror of her running (after being in a wheelchair) makes Taker let go. Edge gets wheeled out on a stretcher.

Orton goes up to see JBL when Punk pops up. He holds up the MITB case and says good luck tonight.

Cena and HHH combine for over 80% of the four person poll of the main event.

We recap the main event. Basically it's the triple threat (Orton defending against Cena and HHH) from Mania with JBL thrown in. This gets the music video treatment.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Randy Orton vs. HHH vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

This is no DQ and no countout with elimination rules. HHH gets a big pop and Cena gets a mixed yet louder reaction. Orton gets a lot of booing and no one cares that JBL is here too. Orton immediately gets knocked to the floor by HHH and looks like he's about to throw up a frog. JBL jumps Cena but HHH says he's mine and gets in a fight with Cena on his own. Orton is still hiding on the floor so Cena takes him down.

JBL knocks Cena off the apron and onto the announce table with a LOUD landing. Orton and JBL beat on HHH in the ring with the Game being in trouble. He comes back with a double clothesline and sends JBL to the floor. Orton's shoulder hits the post and HHH goes to the floor. He sends JBL into the steps and loads up a Pedigree but JBL escapes. Cena hits the Throwback on Orton followed by the top rope Fameasser into the STFU. JBL comes back in and sets to break it up then realizes there's no reason to do so and tells Orton to tap.

HHH grabs JBL and puts him in a Crossface right in front of Orton who is still in the STFU. JBL pokes Cena in the eye for some reason which breaks the STFU, allowing Orton to shout at JBL to tap in a funny bit. Cena knocks Orton into HHH and JBL, breaking the Crossface. Orton throws Cena to the floor again but JBL kicks Randy down for two. Orton comes back with a clothesline and goes up but gets crotched.

JBL loads up a superplex but JBL and Cena make it a Tower of Doom. Cena and the Game slug it out until Cena hits a release fisherman's suplex for two. ProtoBomb takes HHH down again but the Shuffle is broken up by a spinebuster. HHH loads up the Pedigree but JBL tries the Clothesline for some reason. That results in an FU for him followed by the STFU for the tap. We're down to three but Orton immediately punts Cena for the pin and we're down to two.

So it's Orton vs. HHH in a one on one match for the title. HHH throws him to the floor where Orton lands with a thud. Randy goes into the table but HHH goes into the steps, meaning advantage champion. Orton launches him into the barricade and into the crowd. A suplex brings HHH back to ringside and Orton poses a bit. Orton stomps on HHH back in the ring and poses some more before covering for two.

HHH tries a comeback but walks into the backbreaker for another near fall. We hit the chinlock for awhile but HHH fights out of it. Orton takes him down AGAIN, this time with the powerslam for two. The RKO is countered and they slug it out. HHH hits the high knee and both guys are down again. Facebuster gets two for the Game. He clotheslines Orton to the floor and throws him over the announce table.

Orton comes back by sending HHH into the barricade and loads up a piledriver on the steps but gets countered instead. Back inside and a spinebuster puts Orton down again. The Pedigree is countered as is the RKO and the referee goes down. The RKO hits out of nowhere but the slow cover only gets two. The Punt is countered into the Pedigree for the pin and the title for HHH.

**Rating:** B-. The match was good although you could pretty easily write out Cena and JBL and have the same thing. They added a bit but more than half

of the match was the one on one stuff. That being said it's probably the best match Orton and HHH ever had and is certainly better than the Mania main event they would have the next year. Not a classic or anything close to one, but for a B-level main event this was perfectly fine.

**Overall Rating:** B+. The show isn't a masterpiece or anything but when almost all of the matches are good save for one which is relatively short, that's a pretty solid show all around. Good stuff here but the year would go downhill a bit as the feuds would get driven into the ground with the same three guys dominating everything. Still though, this was a solid show and while it's not a classic, it's worth checking out.

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# Backlash 2007: I'm Not Here Anymore. I'm Over There. The Ending Sequence Blew Me Away

## Backlash 2007

Date: April 29, 2007

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 14,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Taz, John Bradshaw Layfield, Joey Styles

It's the final show in this set of WWE reviews as I jump over Backlash 2006 because I'm saving it for the final review in the series. The main event here is a fourway for the belt as well as Undertaker vs. Batista II in a last man standing match. ECW is around now too and we get Vince/Umaga/Shane vs. Lashley for the ECW Title in what I'm sure will be riveting TV. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about how everything began at Wrestlemania but everything continues tonight.

#### Raw Tag Titles: Hardy Boys vs. Lance Cade/Trevor Murdoch

The Hardys are defending. We're back to co-branded shows here so everyone is here tonight. Matt and Cade get us going. The fans are all behind the Hardys here of course, even though Cade knocks Matt down in the corner. Matt comes back with some hiptosses for both guys before taking Cade down with a headlock. Lawler makes the always stupid statement that they're the same height on the mat.

Off to Murdoch who is quickly slammed down as well. Jeff comes in to a quick pop and things speed up. The Hardys clear the ring and Jeff hits Poetry In Motion over the top and out to the floor. Back in and Matt hits a middle rope elbow on Murdoch for two. Matt's bulldog is countered though and the challenges take over. Cade comes in for a powerbomb attempt but gets caught in a Russian legsweep which lets Jeff get the tag.

Jeff cleans house, probably finding Cade's drugs in the process. He misses a dropkick through the ropes though and crashes to the floor, changing the momentum again. Sitout Rock Bottom gets two for Cade. Murdoch comes in and blocks Jeff's jawbreaker and hits a neckbreaker for two. A big boot puts Jeff down for two. Cade and Murdoch were pretty talented in the ring, but they were just boring at the end of the day. That and the lack of competition is why they're not remembered that well at all.

The challengers keep double teaming but it's Cade that gets caught in the jawbreaker, proving that Murdoch is more of a ring technician than his partner. Murdoch also breaks up the hot tag and hits a suplex for two. Jeff mule kicks Cade down but Murdoch breaks up the tag again. Man when that tag hits the roof is going to come off. Murdoch sets for the jump off the middle rope for the sake of jumping into boots, but he blocks the boots, bringing a smile to my face. Jeff makes the tag almost immediately thereafter and the pop isn't as great as I was expecting.

Matt also cleans house (probably looking for drugs as well), destroying



everything in sight. Cade is sent to the floor but the Twist to Murdoch is countered. Side Effect gets two instead as Cade makes the save. Murdoch hits a standing sunset flip bomb for two on Matt. Trevor's fireman's carry is countered into the Twist and Swanton, allowing Matt to get the pin to retain.

**Rating:** B-. This was formula tag wrestling and it worked pretty well. The Hardy reunion didn't do anything great but it gave both guys something to do for awhile and brought some credibility back to the belts for about ten seconds. Jeff would go on to bigger things of course, moving into the main event scene by the end of the year while Matt would move into the Smackdown midcard.

Umaga gets a pep talk from the McMahons. Shane says he's ready. Vince says Shane should be ECW Champion but Shane says Vince should get the title instead. Vince likes the idea.

#### Women's Title: Melina vs. Mickie James

Melina is defending. Mickie is getting her return match here and is looking very bouncy tonight. They head to the mat to start with Mickie hitting a monkey flip for one. Off to a headlock by the challenger which is reversed into one by Melina. Mickie escapes that with ease so Melina pounds away as she can't win a wrestling match here. Mickie mounts her (lucky) and pounds away as well.

James goes up top but gets sent out to the floor to give Melina control. She chokes Mickie in the ropes and then hooks a full nelson with her legs. Now it's a choke in the corner but Mickie escapes. And never mind as Melina comes off with a seated senton to take over again immediately. That gets two so Mickie tries her spin kick. That fails also as Melina counters, sending Mickie down into the splits. James hooks Melina's legs and they slug it out with both girls in a splits position.

Mickie makes her comeback with forearms and hair tosses. She's very fired up here and it looks like a good comeback instead of the usual lame Divas offense. Mickie's rana out of the corner is countered as Melina sends her to the apron. She pops back up and hits a top rope cross body for two. Back to the corner and Melina hits a kick to the head followed by a

reverse DDT to retain.

**Rating:** C+. This was one of the best Divas match I've seen in YEARS. Mickie was awesome as was Melina, but most importantly of all: this was treated like a match between two women, rather than a Divas match if that makes sense. The match wasn't treated like anything different, which is the best thing they could do with the Divas anymore. Also it got time, which helped a lot.

Edge is in the back and says he liked Cena and Michaels having an hour long match on Raw. Maria has a note asking how Edge won his first title, which he says was by cashing in MITB. Mr. Kennedy pops up as the guy that asked him. He's also the current Mr. MITB and implies he'll cash in tonight.

Video on The Condemned.

#### US Title: MVP vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending here and is announced as being from Atlanta for a good reaction. These two had an impromptu match on Smackdown where MVP walked out. A quick Crossface attempt sends MVP to the floor and things slow down. Back in the ring MVP takes over with a headlock on the mat. Benoit bridges up into a backslide for two and then hits a belly to back suplex to break the hold.

The Sharpshooter goes on and MVP is in trouble. He makes the rope before sending Benoit into the corner. A boot to the back of the head takes Benoit down and it's off to a cravate. Benoit fights out with elbows but walks into an overhead belly to belly for two. Back to the chinlock as the fans chant that MVP is a Power Ranger. Back up and MVP misses a clothesline, allowing the Canadian to hit Rolling Germans on the American.

He goes up for the Swan Dive but MVP hooks his foot before he can get up top. MVP sends him into the corner, further jarring the neck and getting two. Benoit gets a quick Crossface but MVP grabs the ropes. Back to the neck lock but MVP gets caught using the ropes. A big kick to the head puts Benoit down but he snaps off more Rolling Germans to take over. He

tries the Swan Dive but it hits knees to change momentum again. MVP hooks a half crab for some reason but it's broken pretty quickly. Out of nowhere Benoit reverses a suplex into a small package to retain.

**Rating:** C+. The constant neck holds got repetitive but the match itself was pretty good. MVP would get the title the next month in a 2/3 falls match and would hold the title for almost a year. Benoit wouldn't live through the end of summer of course, and it's scary to think that he was in the ring as a champion so close to the end of his life.

Cena says nothing before Orton pops up and talks about how similar they are. He wants an alliance tonight but Cena makes gay jokes. Ron Simmons appears, next.

We recap the ECW Title match but there isn't much to say here. Lashley beat Umaga at Wrestlemania to have Vince's head shaved. You know this isn't cool with Vince so tonight it's about revenge.

ECW Title: Vince McMahon/Shane McMahon/Umaga vs. Bobby Lashley

Lashley is champion and whoever gets the fall is champion. Shane starts us out and is promptly destroyed. Lashley throws him around and suplexes him down before throwing him to the floor. Bobby wants Vince but Shane staggers back in instead. Off to Umaga who is sent into the corner but Lashley charges into a boot to the face. Well foot tape to the face but you get the idea.

Bobby sends him into the corner again and hits some clotheslines including a big one to send him over the top rope and out to the floor. Down goes Shane so there's only Vince left on the apron. Instead Shane gets back in and takes a delayed vertical suplex. Umaga tries a headbutt but it hits the Boy Wonder by mistake. Shane finally does something effective by pulling the top rope down to send Bobby out to the floor.

Umaga sends Lashley into the steps as we continue the filler until Vince comes in. Lashley is in trouble but Vince still doesn't want the tag. Shane puts on a Fujiwara Armbar followed by a hammerlock with knees. Off to a cross armbreaker/triangle choke hybrid which Lashley can't quite power out of. Scratch that as he hits a kind of powerbomb for two. Back

to the Samoan for a headbutt followed by a bearhug.

Bobby escapes for a second but gets caught in a Samoan Drop to put him down again. Shane hooks a camel clutch for longer than should be humanly possible to survive. Lashley gets out of that too with pure power and hits a Torture Rack backbreaker (Shock Treatment ala Abyss) to Shane. Umaga gets speared and it's a Dominator to Shane but Vince finally comes in for the save. In the confusion Shane gets a belt shot in for two from Vince. Vince is ticked off now and brings in Umaga for a top rope splash. That gets two for Vince as well so Umaga does the exact same thing again to give Vince the title.

**Rating:** C. This was fine I guess but it would start a huge ordeal with ECW fans saying that Vince was killing the legacy of ECW. You know, because it was SO healthy after guys like Big Show was champion and we got a single ECW Rules match a week if we were lucky and guys like Matt Striker and Elijah Burke and Mike Knox and Test were featured on the show every week. Lashley would get the title back in a month or so before the title fell into the midcard level it would stay at until it was axed.

Vince and company celebrate for awhile before heading to the back and laughing at the ECW Originals.

We recap Taker vs. Batista, which is just another rematch, but this time it's Last Man Standing. The Mania match was good so hopefully this is too.

#### Smackdown World Title: Batista vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is defending here. Apparently he's never lost a last man standing match. I wouldn't have guessed that. He also might have a bad right arm coming into this. The chokeslam is broken up but the flying clothesline takes Batista down. Old School hits and Batista is in trouble early. Big Dave comes back with something called a powerslam for about four.

Out to the floor and Batista sends him into the barricade to take over. Scratch that as he gets sent into the steps, but Taker's arm isn't holding up that well. Batista has a bunch of tape on his leg so Taker has

a target as well, making the arm not as much of a handicap. Taker puts him on the apron and drops the leg for a five count or so. Now Undertaker gets sent into the steps but no one can follow up.

They head back into the ring with Batista going up, only to get dropped by an uppercut. A superplex puts Batista down but Undertaker can't get up either. Batista gets a seven count and they slug it out. A big clothesline puts Taker down for eight, followed by a slam and legdrop from Batista for about six. Taker sends him out to the floor and starts setting up the announce table. Batista avoids the pain though by sending Undertaker into the barricade.

Big Dave sets for a powerslam through the announce table but gets caught in a Russian legsweep, sending him into the barricade for about seven. Undertaker hits him in the face with the steps and Batista barely makes it to his feet. It's table time with Batista being placed on the table as Undertaker walks the barricade for a legdrop through Batista and the table. That looked pretty awesome but it only gets nine. Something, probably the steps, busted Batista open.

They head back in and Batista hits a spear out of nowhere, getting an eight. Batista snaps and hits three spinebusters but that gets nine as well. The Bomb is countered and Undertaker hits a chokeslam to put both guys down but Batista is up at nine to keep things going. Taker channels his inner idiot and pounds away in the corner, and he deserves the Batista Bomb that he gets.

That still doesn't end it so Batista cracks him with a chair. Taker backdrops him onto the chair, followed by the Tombstone which STILL only gets nine. The look on Taker's face is great. They head back to the floor and Taker punches him up the ramp. Batista pounds away at him but the Bomb attempt is countered. Taker tries to throw him off the stage but Batista escapes and spears him off the stage into the electrical equipment, causing an explosion. The match ends in a draw as no one can get up in time.

**Rating:** B. The ending was a cop out and got booed out of the building, but the rest of it was pretty good. It wasn't a masterpiece or anything

and it really became a rehash of the match at Mania, although with a counting system instead of pins or submissions. Still though it was entertaining and felt like a big time match. They would have even more matches that were good too, so this was a good second match in the series.

Cena dominates the texting poll of who will win, getting 50% of four options. Shawn got 34%, meaning that Edge and Orton combined for 16%.

Music video recaps the main event. Cena is defending against Shawn, Edge and Orton. Shawn was his opponent at Mania and Edge/Orton are here because DX is injured so they have no one to face.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Edge vs. Randy Orton

One fall to a finish. This is coming off the one hour match between Shawn and Cena on Raw. Shawn talks trash to Cena to start and it turns into a four way argument. Rated RK0 yells at the other two until the other two hammer Rated RK0 to the floor. Shawn immediately chops Cena into the corner. John comes back with a release fisherman's suplex for two.

The other two come in and have a staredown of their own. They slug it out with Orton dropkicking Edge to the floor. Cena throws him back in and this time it's Orton going to the floor, only to be beaten up by Shawn on the other side of the ring. All four head outside now and it's only Edge on his feet. Shawn slams him down and goes into the ring for a moonsault onto all three guys. That always looks great.

Shawn and Edge get back into the ring but they clothesline each other. Cena comes back in and hits a double top rope Fameasser to take both guys down, getting two on Edge out of it. He goes to cover Shawn but Orton takes his head off with a clothesline. Orton throws out the guys with long hair and hits the backbreaker on Cena for two. A knee drop gets the same and Orton sends Cena shoulder first into the post.

Cena goes to the floor and it's Shawn taking his place. Forearm and nip up follow but Edge spin wheel kicks him down for two. Orton is mad at Edge now but they team up to put down both guys. Cena gets sent into the table and it's 2-1 on Shawn in the ring. They both grab a leg and put on

what I guess you would call a double half crab. With Shawn in trouble, Cena comes in to take out both guys and save Shawn.

Cena cleans house and hits various signature moves on various opponents. Edge takes the Protoplex and Shuffle after everyone else has been shouldered out. Shawn Orton pull Cena out to the floor and send him into the post, followed by Shawn putting Orton into the same post. Shawn loads up a piledriver onto the table to Orton but Edge cracks him with a chair to break up it. Orton gives him a thumbs up and takes a chair shot for his efforts.

Edge comes into the ring and tries to use the chair on Cena but gets caught in the STF instead. Edge makes the rope and Orton comes in to replace him in the same hold. Shawn comes back in and almost gets caught in the STF but instead it's a small package on Cena for two. Shawn clears out the ring other than Cena who takes the top rope elbow for two. He loads up the superkick but has to dodge an Edge spear. Edge goes down and the top rope elbow hits him as well.

Orton comes in for the same move but Cena breaks it up before Shawn can jump. Cena tries an FU on Shawn off the top but gets caught in a double electric chair drop off the top with Shawn crashing even harder. Edge and John are the only ones left in the ring but all three of the FU attempts fail. Orton and Shawn come back and it's an RK0 for Michaels. That gets two as Cena saves, as does the Edgecution on Cena. Everyone but Shawn tries finishers on everyone but only Edge hits a spear on Orton. Cena FU's Edge and gets superkicked onto Randy for the pin. That was a great finish!

**Rating:** B+. I was really getting into this at the end and Cena getting superkicked down into the pin was a great way to keep everyone looking strong. The ending was so fast that I gave up trying to keep up with everything that was happening. It didn't come off as a huge main event but at the same time it wasn't supposed to. Very good stuff here though and everyone came off looking great.

Shawn yells at Cena to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A-. DANG this was a solid show. When you have six matches

on the card and no filler, it means the matches all get time and are able to develop. Also when the worst match is a good one, it's hard to call it anything but great. The ending to the main event had me glued to the screen, which is saying a lot when I already knew who was pinning who to win it. This was a great show and well worth checking out.

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# **Backlash 2006: A Shoulder Injury, A Forgotten Classic, And God In A Dance Off (Plus Final Thoughts On WWE PPVs)**

## **Backlash 2006**

Date: April 30, 2006

Location: Rupp Arena, Lexington, Kentucky

Attendance: 14,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

I can't believe I just typed that. Since I started these reviews I knew this would be the final PPV I would do for one simple reason: it's the only PPV I've ever attended live. I graduated high school around this time so it was kind of a gift to myself. I went with a friend of mine and sat in the upper deck to watch this show and I'll never forget it. This is actually the first time I've seen the show in full since the night it aired, so this is going to be an interesting experience. We've got Vince/Shane vs. Shawn/God tonight as well as Cena defending against HHH and Edge in the main event. For the last time on an old PPV, let's get to it.

As a rare bonus, I'm throwing in the match from Heat.



## Rob Conway vs. Goldust

This was in essence our dark match but it aired on WWE.com as well so it's not a big deal. Conway was doing a Buff Bagwell style gimmick at this point. The announcers waste their time by trying to come up with stupid nicknames. The guys talk some trash before Goldie takes over with some rights. Goldust freaks Conway out with his usual antics and things slow down already. Conway comes back with some basic offense and gets two off a whip into the corner.

A clothesline puts Goldust down and it's off to the chinlock. Yes a chinlock two minutes into a three and a half minute match. They hit stereo crossbodies to put both guys down for another spot you wouldn't think was needed in a match this short. Conway wins a slugout and hits a swinging neckbreaker for two. He ducks his head off a whip though and Goldie hits that uppercut of his. Goldust starts his comeback and takes him into the corner for ten punches. A powerslam gets the pin for the human Academy Award.

**Rating:** D. Yeah whatever. No one cared about this but then again it was a match to get the crowd warmed up. Conway tried and was a big deal in OVW so he was kind of a hometown boy but his gimmick killed him. Goldust did his thing which wasn't really intimidating anymore but no one had cared about him for the most part in years. Nothing too bad due to the length but nothing good either.

The opening video is about the two main event matches. Vince and Shane are beating up Shawn because Shawn beat him at Mania and Vince went insane. The title match is a rematch from Mania with Edge thrown in.

I would have been sitting in the upper deck opposite the cameras on the right hand side.

## Chris Masters vs. Carlito

These two were partners for awhile but have since had a parting of the ways. Carlito turned on him just after Mania, hitting him with a Backstabber. He would be your face in this match. They slug it out to start with Masters taking over. It's so weird to hear about how the

Kentucky Wildcats play in this arena. I would graduate from high school in the same arena in less than a month.

Carlito comes back with right hands but gets backdropped down. The announcers talk about God's in ring debut tonight as Masters gets two. Carlito throws on the Master Lock (you read that right) and Masters bails to the floor, where Carlito hits a good looking dive. Back in and Carlito pounds away in the corner at a very fast pace. No counting in Spanish from the Lexington crowd though so they officially suck.

Masters counters a rana into a buckle bomb and Carlito is in trouble all of a sudden. Off to a neck crank and Masters breaks up a comeback attempt by Carlito. Masters clotheslines him down and things slow down even more. Here comes the Masterlock but apparently shouting the name of the move you're about to use is a bad idea as Carlito counters into a rollup for two.

A springboard reverse elbow puts Masters down and it's apple time. Carlito throws it to him and dropkicks the knee out to take over even more. Masters never was the smartest guy in the world. Carlito fires off some left armed clotheslines and a dropkick for a delayed two. Masters sends him into the corner but a belly to back superplex is broken up. Carlito "hits" a moonsault press for two. Masters was halfway down before Carlito even touched him. Masterlock is countered by sending Masters' face into the buckle and the Backstabber with feet on the ropes gets the pin.

**Rating:** D+. This felt like a long Raw match. Carlito wasn't that popular but they were trying with him I guess. It's certainly not bad but it was very dull, which is the exact opposite of what you're looking for in an opener. I didn't really like this one live and it didn't work any better six years later.

Outside shot of Rupp Arena. I live five minutes away.

Maria screws up the result of the previous match and we get some fans' opinions on the winner of the triple threat later. Lita interrupts and makes fun of the Lexington fans. Maria implies Lita is...well that she enjoys men, so Lita threatens her. Tonight after Edge wins, it's a

private sex celebration.

### Umaga vs. Ric Flair

Umaga debuted less than a month before this so this is his first real match. When you need a new kid tested, call in Naitch. Flair jumps him in the aisle and that goes badly for him. We go into the ring for the bell and Flair gets pounded into the corner. Flair pokes him in the eye and hits him low a few times, only to get chopped right back down.

The running corner attack (NOT FROM RIKISHI YOU NXT ANNOUNCERS) misses and we go to the floor. Umaga misses a charge and hits the post and it's time to go after the leg. The Figure Four is broken up and Flair is put in the Tree of Woe for a headbutt. The running hip attack sets up another headbutt which sets up the Samoan Spike for the pin.

**Rating:** C+. This was a total squash for Umaga but the idea here was perfect: Flair made Umaga look like a monster here which is exactly the point of something like this. Umaga would be a destruction machine, not losing until January when Cena finally put him down with a rollup of all things. This was a textbook example of how to put someone over using a legend.

Vince is in the back when Shane comes in for a pep talk. Vince insists it's a tag match and not a handicap match. Also, let him take care of God. There's nothing God can do that Vince can't do. To prove it, he takes Shane's bottle of water and pours it in on the floor. He stomps on it and declares that he's walking on water. Now he takes a well placed loaf of bread and a fish. He throws the fish away and breaks the bread and throws it away. Someone off camera throws a lot of bread at him as well as the fish. It's a "holy mackerel." Shane drinks the water and now it's purple. Get it?

We recap Mickie James vs. Trish for the title. Mickie is a psycho that is obsessed with Trish. She won the title from Trish at Mania using some VERY un-PG actions. Mickie was HOT as the psycho.

### Women's Title: Mickie James vs. Trish Stratus

The girl I went to this was a lesbian so this was by far her favorite match of the night. Trish is in skin colored attire trimmed with Kentucky Blue. Nice touch. Actually that's a bit lighter than Kentucky Blue but close enough. Trish grabs a quick rollup for two and blows a kiss. She Ma-Trishes out of a clothesline and fires off forearms. A HARD bicycle kick puts Mickie down and there's a Thesz Press off the apron by Trish. That gets two back in the ring and we get a great upskirt shot of the champ.

Trish pounds away in the corner but gets dumped over the top to the floor, dislocating her shoulder in the process. You can see the bulge in her back where it's not in place. The referee throws up a quick X and Mickie covers a bit. She chokes away for the DQ after like four minutes.

**Rating:** N/A. I can't give this a fair grade as the injury derailed it maybe two minutes in. The shoulder injury was SICK live as you could see it out of joint on the big screen and the crash that hurt it was terrible looking. Trish would be out for about two months because of this which is a shame as this was one of the best Divas feuds in years. Also, as someone that has seen these girls up close, cameras do not do them justice. They are stunning in person, as are most of the Divas.

Maria corrects her mistake about Masters earlier and brings in Shawn. He says God is with him as always and he knows it's a handicap match.

Money in the Bank Briefcase/Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Shelton Benjamin

It's winner take all with Rob holding the case and Shelton holding the title. Shelton takes him to the mat to start and rides Van Dam a bit. The fans are completely behind RVD, namely because this is during the opening part of Shelton's heel run. Shelton backflips out of a wristlock to show that he can hang with Rob in all of the high flying stuff. RVD gets his rolling cradle for two and Shelton bails to the corner.

Shelton keeps getting frustrated and heads to the floor for a breather. Back in and Benjamin pounds him down and fires off some forearms. Rob will have none of that and kicks Shelton down. The champ (Shelton) bails to the floor again to avoid Rolling Thunder so Rob dives to the floor to

take him out. Shelton runs back in and hits a sunset bomb to the floor to take over again.

Back in and Benjamin works over the back before hooking a chinlock with a knee in the spine. Rob quickly escapes that but gets caught by a knee lift for two. Back to the chinlock which might be a choke. Not that it matters as Rob makes the rope. Rob fights up and tries Rolling Thunder but Shelton catches him in a Samoan Drop in a SWEET counter. They go up and Rob knocks him off the top, but Shelton JUMPS up the corner (not runs the corner. He JUMPED from the mat to the top rope and superplexes Rob down for two.

Off to a kind of rear naked choke which is broken up again. A spin kick takes down Shelton as do some clotheslines. Van Dam kicks him down a few more times and FINALLY hits Rolling Thunder for two. See? Build it up, then pay it off. Not that hard. Split legged moonsault out of the corner gets two. Shelton counters the monkey flip but another spin kick puts him down. Five Star misses and Shelton hits a DDT for two. Actually make that six as it's three two counts, the third having feet on the ropes.

Shelton goes to the floor for no apparent reason. Oh ok he's grabbing the briefcase. Rob goes to the floor after him but gets knocked down quickly. Back in and Shelton hits a top rope cross body which Van Dam rolls through for two. Dragon Whip misses Van Dam and he hits a rana to take Shelton down. Shelton goes for the case and there goes the referee. Rob ducks a shot and hits a van Daminator with the case. Five Star gives Rob the title.

**Rating:** B. This was a very fun match and the Five Star absolutely has to be seen to be believed. He didn't hold the title long but he would cash in the case in about a month and a half for the WWE Title at One Night Stand. Shelton never got back to the point he was at a year before this, which is a shame as he was on fire at that point. Good match here.

We recap Kane vs. Big Show. They were tag champions until Kane started hearing voices that said May 19. The reason for this would never be explained but it would be the date See No Evil came out, as well as the date that it was revealed that Undertaker lit the fire that killed his

parents. It might not have been that but it was something related to it. This would result in a fake Kane in the mask feuding with real Kane without the mask. In short: it was ridiculous.

Big Show says Kane has a movie coming out on May 19<sup>th</sup> and he needs to get over whatever issues he's got going on. Kane attacked Big Show recently and Show's eye is messed up, so tonight it's an eye for an eye.

### Kane vs. Big Show

Kane jumps him before the bell so Show GORILLA PRESSES him. That is SCARY power. Show charges into a boot and Kane goes for the eye. They go to the floor and as they get back in, Kane sends him into the post to take over. Some choking and a corner clothesline hit Big Show and with a loud whisper of GO DOWN, another clothesline puts Show down. Show slams him down but misses an elbow drop, allowing Kane to work on the arm.

The arm work goes on for awhile with Show on his knees. While in that position, he's up to Kane's shoulder. Kane goes up but jumps into a fallaway slam as Show takes over. A corner charges hits and Kane is in trouble. The chokeslam is countered into what was supposed to be a DDT but was rather an arm on Show's back that he fell down from. A big boot that literally has four inches between itself and Kane's face gets two.

JR is calling it an ugly match which is the code for "we know it sucks too". Powerslam gets two for Show and he goes after the eye. Kane blocks that and kicks Show in the head, sending him out to the floor. And now we bring out the suck, as the arena goes red and Kane's voice fills the arena, talking about May 19. Kane freaks out and has a bit of a fit on the mat. Show is concerned about him so he grabs a chair and blasts Kane in the head with it to knock him out. The match just ends.

**Rating:** F. There's no other way to put it. The premise was stupid, the match SUCKED with some of the worst looking miscues I've seen this side of a Divas match, and the ending was ridiculous. The live crowd thought the match sucked, but MAN watching this again shows me what this match was: it wasn't just bad. It was REALLY bad. These two can never have a good match together it seems.

Candice Michelle has a chest cold and goes to Vince to heal it because he's God. Vince puts his hand on her chest and prays for her in a parody of a spiritual healer. Candice sounds like she's having an orgasm. This is so stupid I can't comprehend it. The arena hated it too. Shane comes in to take Vince away and he's annoyed.

We recap the "tag" match. Before Mania, Shawn told Vince to get over Montreal so Vince declared war on Shawn. The idea is that Shawn is a Christian but he has to resort to levels he doesn't want to in order to beat him, which he did at Wrestlemania. Vince created his own religion: McMahonism. This resulted in some skits in a church which reached new levels of bad taste. Vince made a "tag" match between himself/Shane vs. Shawn/God. I was really worried about what they were going to do for God here.

#### Shawn Michaels/God vs. Vince McMahon/Shane McMahon

Vince introduces God and we get a spotlight. His tron video is clouds and he comes out to harp and piano music. Vince stops and criticizes God before challenging him to a dance contest. I kid you not, this is really happening. The spotlight gets in the ring and Vince tells the referee to check him out. Vince makes the match no holds barred because the idea of Vince wrestling an actual match isn't pleasing. Sexy Boy finally hits to end this stupidity.

Vince starts to run his mouth some more and Shawn finally drills him to get going. The daddy goes to the floor while Shawn beats up Shane. Shawn dives on Vince before clotheslining Shane to the floor and hitting a flip dive to take him out. Michaels chops Shane up the ramp but Shane comes back with knees to the stomach. Shane tries to piledrive Shawn off the stage but gets backdropped instead.

Shawn comes back but here's Vince with a chair as they're all on the stage now. Shawn blocks the shot and takes Shane down again before hitting a cross body on Vince off the stage. This looked like nothing live but it looked good on camera. Shawn climbs back up to the stage but gets hit in the face with the chair by Shane. Michaels is busted which I never noticed in the arena.

Shane and Shawn head back to the ring and Shawn goes into the post. Shawn gets sent into the barricade and then back into the ring as Shane is in complete control. The top rope elbow misses and both guys are down. Vince is on the apron now and apparently they have to tag. Shane DDTs Shawn down and it's off to Vince. Vince takes his belt off and whips Shawn's back because he's that evil. Shane throws in a garbage can and Shawn gets his head caved in.

Vince wants a mic and taunts God a bit. God walks out and Vince says come back. Vince declares that God has left the building, but Shawn hasn't. He stands Shawn up and tries a superkick but the kick gets caught. Shawn makes his comeback and hits the forearm and nip-up. Shane misses a chair shot and caves in Vince's head by mistake. It's a forearm for Shane followed by an atomic drop and some clotheslines. Shawn's top rope elbow hits and both McMahons taste superkicks.

Shawn, ever the genius, doesn't go for a cover but rather goes to the floor for a table. Make that two tables. My fellow Lexingtonians (yes that's what they're called) want ladders because much like other wrestling fans, they're greedy people. Both McMahons are put on tables and here comes the ladder. It's the jumbo sized ladder too. Shawn climbs up but has to dive on the invading Spirit Squad. That was incredible live but the camera didn't get a great shot of it. The main problem was you didn't see them until the dive so Shawn looked crazy.

The numbers catch up with Shawn and he gets beaten down by the five male cheerleaders who are currently tag team champions at this point. They throw Shawn back in and get the McMahons off the tables. The Squad takes Shawn into the ring and hit their finisher on him, which is them all picking him up at once and dropping him through a table. Vince gets the pin. JR calls this BS but the uncensored version.

**Rating:** D. The match was boring, but JR put it best during the match: this was uncomfortable. On top of that, the whole thing was stupid. This would set up a feud that ran for the whole year which didn't work all that well either. It did lead to the reformation of DX which was pretty interesting, but dang this first part was torture to sit through. Not a horrible match but dang this was a chore to sit through.



The Squad put the McMahons on their shoulders with the man that would become Dolph Ziggler cheering the loudest.

Cena, drawing mostly boos, says that he doesn't have to get pinned tonight so the wins HHH has gotten over him lately don't matter. He's heard everything lately and the fans are divided. The silence is the voice of the people that want Edge to win the title. The cheers are for HHH, but there's one voice that will stand tall at the end. That would be the voice of Lillian Garcia who will declare Cena still WWE Champion. I missed most of this promo the first time as I was watching what was being set up in the ring.

It's time for Matt Striker's Classroom because we can't fill in a three hour PPV with just Raw matches. Striker says that there's another miracle tonight: there's an intelligent person in Kentucky. He talks about what Kentucky is known for: illegally recruited basketball players and fried chicken. It's not known for its education though, but he's here to remedy that. Striker brings out the best educated person ever from Kentucky: Eugene, who was mentally slow. Literally, that was his character. His music was very catchy though.

Striker calls Eugene proof that you shouldn't marry your sister. Eugene may be the smartest person ever from Kentucky but Striker doesn't think he can even spell his own name. He hands Eugene a piece of chalk and asks him to write it on the chalk board. Eugene writes that Striker enjoys human waste. Striker criticizes the grammar and punctuation, but Eugene is picking his nose. He starts to eat it but Striker stops it. I think you all know what's coming, and there it goes into Striker's mouth. Eugene stuns him too. This would result in a match a few weeks later on Raw which Striker won.

We recap the world title match. Cena beat HHH at Mania to retain but HHH said he wanted another title shot. Edge came out and said he earned the shot by beating Foley in their famous hardcore match. The solution is of course a triple threat match.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. HHH vs. Edge

Cena is defending if that wasn't clear. HHH is the huge crowd favorite.

The girl I was with was a huge Cena fan so I was for Edge all night. Well I liked Edge so it wasn't completely because of her. Edge tells the other two to go at it and heads to the floor. That's cool with HHH and Cena as they slug it out, won by the champion. Some shoulders take HHH down and there's the release fisherman's suplex for two. Edge makes the save and bails right back to the floor.

Cena punches the Game some more but walks into the high knee which gets two and some applause. Edge makes another save and heads right back to the floor. HHH and Cena finally have enough of the Canadian and they both go after him. Cena clotheslines Edge to the floor and takes turns with HHH ramming Edge into the announce table. This is awesome as it turns into a contest to see who can do it harder. Edge goes into the table about 10 times and looks mostly dead.

All three go back in but HHH throws Cena to the floor. Cena pulls HHH off the apron and rams his face into said apron. A top rope splash gets two on Edge and Cena loads up the Shuffle, only for Lita to pull the rope down and send Cena to the floor. HHH rams Cena into the steps and goes back in for a facebuster on Edge. The knee to the face gets two as does the spinebuster.

Edge counters a suplex and hits the Edge-0-Matic for two. HHH shrugs that off and puts on a sleeper but Edge reverses into one of his own. We have a Cena chant as he gets both guys up for the FU at once. That blew my mind at the time and he didn't even hit the move. Edge gets off the top and spears Cena down while HHH is still in the FU position, giving the Game a Samoan Drop from Cena. Cool spot.

HHH and Edge head to the floor and HHH gets catapulted into the post to bust him open. Edge DDTs HHH on the table, leaving blood everywhere when the table doesn't break. That made me cringe in the arena. HHH is COVERED in blood. Back in and Edge dropkicks Cena for two. He spears Cena in the corner but Cena counters the regular one into the STFU. Edge is about to tap but HHH pops up and blocks the hand from coming down and hits Cena in the head with the mic to break the hold.

HHH caves Edge's head in with a chair shot, knocking him into the crowd.

He heads back inside and walks right into the STFU just like at Mania. There is blood everywhere. HHH keeps his arm up (there need to be more arm checks from the referees. I miss those) and finally makes the rope. FU is countered into a Pedigree but that's countered back into the STFU. Edge breaks it up and there goes the referee.

Cena tries to FU Edge from the middle rope but HHH gets beneath Cena to make it a modified Tower of Doom. Everyone is down so Lita brings in a chair. She charges at HHH with it but walks into a spinebuster which got a big pop in the arena. HHH gets the chair but throws it down. Instead he pulls out the sledgehammer but Edge spears him down. Edge gets the hammer but Cena loads him into the FU. HHH breaks that up with a low blow but the Pedigree to Cena is countered into a rollup for the pin to retain.

**Rating:** B+. This was WAY better from this perspective as I wasn't all that impressed when I saw it live. This was actually an awesome match with a great blade job from HHH and almost non-stop action. Cena getting another win over HHH was another big step in his push towards the top of the company as he wasn't quite there yet. This was a great match and it really impressed me on a second viewing.

HHH blasts them both with the hammer and leaves to King of Kings to end the show. To this day I'm not sure why they went with that ending.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Leave it to me to go with right in the middle to end things. This show is a strange one as it's barely a B-level show, but there are two very good matches on it, including what you could probably call a forgotten classic of a main event. The problem with the show is that the bad parts are VERY bad and they really bring the show down. That being said, it's still the first and to this point only PPV I've attended live so I have to give it the benefit of the doubt.

That's the end of WWE/F. This has an even longer history of PPVs than the other two companies (combined actually) and maybe it's the fanboy in me, but I say they've done it best. WWF (screw those panda people. I grew up calling it WWF so it's WWF) has mastered the art of putting together a major show. That being said, they often times forget how to do it and I'm sure you can name a ton of entries where they did just that.

On the other hand, they pulled off stuff like Wrestlemania X7 and Summerslam 2002 which put just about any other company's stuff to shame. Over time they've had a ton of shows and therefore they've had a lot more practice to pull them off. The days of the Big Four are long gone and I don't think they're ever going to drop down below one a month again. That being said, it's nowhere near as bad as people make it out to be but that's another topic.

Overall, WWF has had better luck in my eyes on PPV, but they're far from perfect. The Brand Split shows never were that good as they flat out did not have enough talent on each show to run full three hour PPVs. I'd love to see the In Your House idea come back as a mid level PPV that was only two hours but cost less money. That's just one of a number of possible solutions that could work, but again I'm getting off track. Just like with the other two companies (ECW only had 21 PPVs so I'm omitting them), the WWF has had its ups and downs but when their shows are good, there's nothing better.

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## **Wrestlemania #24: What Is The Main Event?**

There are a bunch of matches here which could be considered the main event. What do you think it was? For me it's Michaels vs. Flair. The ending was obvious and now it means nothing, but at the time there was something that seemed like it was the biggest moment in a long time.

Thoughts?

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# Monday Night Raw – March 14, 2005: Rockers And Snakes

## Monday Night Raw

Date: March 14, 2005

Location: Gwinnett Center, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is another request. If I had known the other one was three weeks after this I'd have swapped the order. Anyway we're on the Road to Wrestlemania here so expect a lot of HHH dominating the show. I would assume this show was requested because it has the Rockers' reunion on it. Let's get to it.

We open with the Highlight Reel. Jericho is on a ladder with a briefcase above him due to the debut of MITB at Mania. Jericho talks about how everyone wants to climb the ladder of success but he's actually going to do it and will win MITB. His guest tonight has nothing to do with the ladder match though: it's Randy Orton. He talks about how he's facing Undertaker at Wrestlemania and how Undertaker is a Hall of Famer. Orton wants to be in the Hall of Fame as well and to do that, he needs to end the Streak. He rattles off some of his career highlights and says he'll surprise Undertaker on Smackdown.

Jericho says that speaking of surprises, he's got a surprise guest. Now Jericho has never faced Undertaker at a Wrestlemania, but his guest has. The guest is from Georgia, and it's Jake Roberts, or rather a huge beer belly with a Jake Roberts attached. We get a LOUD Jake the Snake chant and Roberts, sounding like he smoked about 5 cartons of Marlboros a day, talks about Orton's heritage. However, he doesn't know much about Randy. Jake says it's all about timing and talks

about Orton not being champion anymore.

He's rambling here. Jake is here to do a favor to Cowboy Bob. Roberts says to stop running your mouth. Orton says that facing Undertaker isn't about winning or losing. It's about leaving with your soul, which Jake should know something about. Orton says Jake knows about losing, and Orton will make more impact in one win than Jake did in his entire career. Jake goes for the snake but clotheslines Orton instead. Jake loads up the DDT but takes an RK0 instead. Jericho was just kind of standing around in the background for this segment.

### Kane vs. Christian/Tomko

This is due to last week's match where Kane beat Christian but Tomko ran him over with a ladder post match. Kane goes after Tomko immediately but Christian jumps him. The team has to tag and the Canadian starts things off. Kane throws him around but it's off to Tomko who has better luck. Back to Christian as we hear about the Pick Your Poison matches with Batista picking HHH's opponent (Benoit) and vice versa (not yet picked). A reverse DDT puts Kane down and it's back to Tomko. Kane sends a cheating Christian into the post and the Canadian walks out. Sidewalk slam, top rope clothesline, chokeslam and we're done.

**Rating:** D. This was pretty pointless. Christian has now lost twice heading into Mania, but he has a chance at winning the world title shot still? The match was nothing as Kane was never in any danger whatsoever. I don't get why so many people want Tomko to come back as Christian's bodyguard. There's not much to him.

Post match Christian tries to hit Kane with a ladder but gets glared down. Tomko takes the ladder shot.

Flair talks Snitsky into being Batista's opponent tonight. Flair says an injury to Batista wouldn't be Snitsky's fault. HHH gets Benoit and Batista gets Snitsky? That's not quite a balanced set.

Lita gives Christy a pep talk and has some guest trainers for her: Regal and Tajiri. They're the tag team champions and this is the best they can do. Tajiri won't do it without Christy signing his copy of her Playboy. Tajiri demonstrates some kicks and Christy tries them. Regal gets kicked in the balls. I'm looking and I see no point to this at all.

Shawn is in the back when Marty Jannetty of all people comes up. Marty is facing Angle on Smackdown and Shawn thinks Marty needs a match tonight. Tonight, the Rockers are back against La Resistance.

### Edge vs. Shelton Benjamin

Shelton is IC Champion but this is non-title. Edge jumps Shelton during his entrance and throws him into the stage wall. Edge is pretty freshly heel here so he's venting his frustrations or something like that. Down to ringside and Shelton is thrown into the steps and barricade. They finally get in the ring but Edge pounds on him even more. The referee checks on Shelton and we finally start the match.

Edge immediately knocks him to the floor and Benjamin is in big trouble. We take a break and come back with Edge holding a chinlock and bodyscissors. Shelton tries to fight back but Edge drops him again. Edge tries to load up a superplex but Shelton knocks him off and hits a top rope clothesline for two. They both hit forearms to put both guys down. Shelton goes off on him and makes his comeback.

Clothesline sets up a backdrop which sets up a Stinger Splash attempt, but Edge ducks. Shelton is like screw crashing and lands on the top rope. He comes off with a sunset flip for two but gets caught in a powerslam for two for the Canadian. Spear misses and the Dragon Whip takes out the referee. Impaler and Exploder Suplex are countered and Edge hits the spear but there's no referee. Edge goes under the ring and pulls out a ladder, but Jericho runs out and hits Edge with it. Exploder

gets the pin.

**Rating:** B-. Good stuff here as Shelton continued to be completely awesome at this point. Edge was about to become the big time heel that he's known as, mainly due to the huge Lita/Matt Hardy love triangle feud that would dominate the summer for him. Good match here though as you would expect from these guys.

### Rockers vs. La Resistance

This is the Conway/Grenier version. Jannetty and Grenier get us going and after some arm drags by Marty, the EVIL Frenchmen take over. There's the tag to Shawn and we get some signature Rockers stuff, although Marty can't do the nip up anymore. Double dives to the floor take La Resistance out but Conway low bridges Shawn to give the heels control. Conway suplexes him for two and it's back to Grenier. Marty tries to come in and La Resistance hits a Hart Attack of all things for two. Shawn comes back with his forearm and it's hot tag to Marty. He cleans house and hits the Rucker Dropper on Conway for the pin.

**Rating:** C+. This wasn't great or anything but it wasn't meant to be. This was about having fun and some nostalgia and in that regard, it worked. On top of that, it wasn't a half bad tag match. Having Marty get the pin was a nice touch because there was nothing for Shawn to gain here. The idea was to have Marty get a warmup for Angle on Smackdown and that worked well here. Good stuff.

Flair tells HHH he'll make people forget about him tapping out last week when he beats Benoit tonight. HHH gets to pick Batista's opponent next week.

Maria asks Trish about Lita training Christy for Wrestlemania. Trish isn't worried and goes off on Maria for it. She says she'll get Hannibal Lecter to train her because she's going to eat Christy alive (BIG pop for that). Maria says the Twist of



Fate Christy gave Trish was powerful, so Trish massacres Maria.

Flair is with Snitsky again now and gives him a pep talk. Batista pops up and Flair yells at him, so Batista says he's taking HHH's title.

### HHH vs. Chris Benoit

They go to the mat to start and Benoit pulls him off the ropes to slam the Game into the mat. Off to a headlock followed by chops by Benoit. Benoit tries two quick Crossface attempts but HHH gets to the floor. Flair gets the referee's attention so HHH can throw a right hand (why would that require a distraction?) which doesn't work either. Benoit fires off more chops and they go to the floor, with HHH going into the barricade.

Now it's Benoit going into the barricade and we take a break. Back with a slugout being won by Benoit's chops, but he gets caught in a spinebuster for two. HHH takes over and puts him on the top rope and they slug it out up there as well. Benoit goes off with headbutts to knock HHH down but the Game crotches him. A superplex puts Benoit down for two and HHH is getting frustrated.

HHH loads up the Pedigree but Benoit counters into a slingshot. They slug it out again and once again Benoit wins with the chops. Here are the Rolling Germans and then a second set of them. Swan Dive gets a very close two. Benoit hits his third series of Rolling Germans, getting the total up to eight. Now he pounds away with right hands in the corner but HHH manages to Irish whip Benoit into the corner.

Both guys are down but HHH gets up first. Pedigree is countered into a failed Sharpshooter so HHH tries again but is countered into the Crossface. HHH rolls out of it like he did at Wrestlemania but this time it actually works. We get MORE German suplexes, bringing the total up to nine I believe.

Pedigree attempt #4 leads to counter #4, this time into the Sharpshooter. Flair tries to cheat and gets ejected but the distraction allows HHH to hit Benoit low and Pedigree him for the pin.

**Rating:** B+. Again, you give talented guys time and you'll get a good match. These two destroyed each other with those Germans being very awesome. Great match and both guys got in some good stuff. The idea of HHH constantly being outwrestled and countered and having to resort to cheating to win was a great story too. Very fun match.

Hassan and Daivari come out and whine about not being on Wrestlemania. This isn't over apparently. They weren't on Mania anyway.

Lita says she'll teach Christy how to beat Trish. Lita runs into Snitsky who says evil things.

#### Batista vs. Gene Snitsky

HHH and Flair come out to ringside for this. They stare each other down for awhile and then Batista takes over with the power. He looks down at HHH though and charges into a big boot in the corner. Snitsky goes after the knee and rams it into the post a few times. Back inside Snitsky works on the knee even more and hits a pumphandle powerslam for two. Batista comes back with a spinebuster and loads up the Batista Bomb but Flair comes in for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. Boring match even before we got to the lame ending. Flair became downright annoying in this period as he did nothing but praise HHH and interfere in matches related to HHH. Nothing good here but what were you expecting from a Snitsky match? The just just wasn't that good.

Flair, HHH and Snitsky all get chairs but Kane makes the save. Batista and Kane clear the ring and HHH names Kane as Big Dave's opponent next week.

**Overall Rating:** B+. Not much to complain about here other than a somewhat weak main event. It really should have been Benoit vs. HHH to end the show. Anyway, good mix of wrestling, backstage stuff and nostalgia thrown in as well. It doesn't quite make me want to watch Mania, but by this point I think most people would have already made their decisions. Good show.

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## **Monday Night Raw – March 19, 2012: Not Much Of A Statement Rocky**

### **Monday Night Raw**

Date: March 19, 2012

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole

We're almost to Wrestlemania but first of all we have to go through the scariest place on the planet in wrestling: Philly. Cena is likely to get crucified here although I'm not sure if Rock is scheduled for tonight or not. I do know that Michaels, HHH and Undertaker are all scheduled to be in the ring at the same time though. Not much else to say other than that so let's get to it.

Theme song opens us up.

Rock is indeed here tonight.

We open with Punk coming to the ring with a full introduction. That's not something you hear that often anymore but ok. Before he talks we get a clip from last week with the Jericho talk about Punk possibly becoming an alcoholic. Punk talks about how last week Jericho told the world that Punk's father is an alcoholic. He says he feels like he's not wearing any clothes in front of the world. Punk talks about how everyone has been affected by alcohol somehow.

He's not going to allow Jericho to convince kids everywhere that because their life sucks they're going to turn to the bottle. Punk may have alcoholism in his genes but the addiction in him is going to become Jericho's problem. Punk says that Jericho left out the ending where Punk's dad overcame his demons. He's proud of his father and he's proud of being straightedge. Alcoholism is an obstacle but he finds ways around obstacles. His next obstacle is Chris Jericho, and at Wrestlemania he's going straight through him.

Punk is about to leave when Jericho pops up on the monitor. He's not here tonight and is in a suit. Jericho sounds somber here and says this is Chris, not Jericho with no bravado and no fancy jacket. He crossed the line last week and he's sorry. Jericho will never say anything else about Punk's father on this show again. However, he'll talk about Punk's sister's substance abuse problems quite a bit. Punk freaks out while Jericho talks about Punk's sister being a drug addict. That means Punk is pre-disposed to being addicted. Punk drops a bunch of censored words and yells at Jericho. Good segment.

### Kane vs. Big Show

Before the match we get a highlight reel of Show at Mania from Cody Rhodes. Cody has on boxing gloves at ringside. Show takes him down quickly and goes to the middle rope, but Cody gets on the apron. Show shoves him off and Kane chokeslams Show off the ropes for the pin at 49 seconds.

Post match Cody hits the Beautiful Disaster. He handcuffs Show to the ropes and pounds on him with the boxing gloves. Show yells at Cody to run, which Cody does despite Show being cuffed. They get him freed but Show is all messed up from getting beaten on.

### Santino Marella vs. David Otunga

We start with a posedown and Santino has abs painted on. He hurts his leg posing so Otunga hammers away. Santino comes back with his usual and loads up the Cobra. Ace slides in his phone for some reason so Santino stomps on it. He walks into Otunga's spinebuster, putting the champion at 0-2 in his last two matches on Raw since winning the thing. The match ran about 1:45. I'm REALLY getting tired of these losses for champions.

Teddy slaps Ace post match and runs off so he can dance on the stage.

Lord Tensai (A-Train) is coming.

Rock is in front of the Rocky statue and says this is the city with a fighting spirit. We get a picture of him at 12 years old posing in front of the statue. Rock talks about training to become an icon and watching the first Wrestlemania and then Wrestlemania 6. He loved the Warrior. He had no idea what Warrior was talking about, but then again no one did. Then at Wrestlemania 15, right here in Philadelphia, Rock main evented his first Wrestlemania...and he got Stunned and lost.

Then Rock went on to beat Austin and Hogan at Wrestlemania, and that leaves just one person: John Cena. Tonight, Rock is coming to the arena and he's going to send Cena a message. If Cena doesn't get that message, Rock is going to get back in his car and drive to Pat's (famous Philadelphia cheese steak place) and say that he wants it both with and without (it's a Pat's thing). That way he can turn it sideways, and I think you know the rest. Then all the greats will say bang bang, W00

and from up above, oh yeah. Rocky is going to eat lightning, crap thunder, and layeth the smacketh down. Rock continues to be better on location.

### Daniel Bryan vs. Zach Ryder

We get a clip from earlier today with Ryder holding a rally to become part of Team Teddy. Ryder has black trunks now. AJ looks GREAT tonight. Ryder controls and hits the Broski Boot but the Rough Ryder is countered into the LeBell Lock for the tap at 1:45.

Flo Rida is going to play Rock to the ring.

### John Cena vs. Mark Henry

Henry throws Cena around a few times to start including once to the floor. Back in and Cena is down again, this time off a failed shoulder. Henry knocks him into the corner using the power. Back to the floor and Henry won't let him back in. He rams Cena into the barricade and yells at him as we go to a break. Back with Cena breaking free of a hold but getting run over quickly. Splash gets two. They talk about the car accident and imply Cena is off a step because of it. Cena avoids a charge in the corner and hits a belly to back to set up the Shuffle. AA and the Slam fail but the second AA gets the pin at 8:11.

**Rating:** D+. They were keeping it purely in first gear with Henry using nothing but power. It's sad to see him being nothing but a jobber to the stars at this point but at least he's jobbing to the top star. Not abad match but it was pretty clear that Henry wasn't going to have any chance here.

Post match Rock immediately comes out and lays out Henry with a Rock Bottom. He points to the catchphrase on his shirt and walks out.

We get a clip of Shawn being announced as the guest referee.

We saw the acceptance of the Cell stipulations earlier.

We get clips of the Divas deal on Extra. Eve is officially Beth's sidekick. Maria pinned Beth on Raw once. A tag match at Mania comes out of this.

Miz is in the ring to talk about....King Kong Bundy? He talks about Bundy being in the main event of Wrestlemania in 1986 (it was 1987) and then being in a match with two little people the next year. Now Miz is going to break the record for the longest fall. He's issued an open challenge to prove his worth to Ace.

### The Miz vs. Sheamus

Slugout to start and Miz gets in a kick to the chest. Not that it matters as Sheamus takes his head off with a double ax. Miz comes back but has his low DDT countered. Fireman's carry roll gets two. Ace and Otunga are watching in the back. Miz hooks a neckbreaker and then a chinlock but Sheamus comes back and the Brogue Kick kills Miz dead at 2:59. Nothing to see here but Cole is now calling Sheamus the Dublin Destroyer.

We recap the Jericho/Punk's sister thing from earlier.

Orton comes out for an interview on the stage. He says he's not responsible for Kane changing so much lately. He's not a monster, he's not a big red machine, he's not the devil's favorite demon. He's Randy Orton....and that's that.

Clips of an anti-bullying campaign event, which seems to be a way to get Stephanie on TV again.

Vickie introduces Dolph and Swagger as members of Team Johnny.

### Dolph Ziggler/Jack Swagger vs. Kofi Kingston/R-Truth

Kofi and Jack start and Kofi gets double teamed into trouble. Aksana is out here for some reason. Off to Dolph who has a neckbreaker countered into a backslide for two. Dropkick gets

two for Dolph. Back to Swagger who does pushups on Kofi's back. Hot tag minus the heat brings in Truth to clean house. Swagger gets knocked to the floor and Kofi takes him down with a clothesline. Axe kick misses Dolph and the Fameasser hits (with Truth diving down before it hit him) for the pin at 4:35. Vickie shoved Truth's foot off the rope.

**Rating:** D+. I really haven't been liking this show tonight and this was another example of that. This didn't work that well for me at all, although technically it was fine. I think it's that I'm tired of this GM feud and there are WAY too many people involved in it, but how else are you going to get them all on the card?

Aksana and Vickie brawl after the match. Kofi's eyes are hilarious when he pulls them apart.

We get a clip from last night at MSG where HHH used a tombstone and the Taker pin/tongue for the pin.

Time for the big in ring confrontation with HHH, Taker and Shawn. Gee, I wonder what they're going to say. Shawn talks about how he has the end of an era in his hand, but everyone knows that's code for end of the Streak. Taker comes out and says this match has to stay pure. HHH comes out before much else can be said and says stop worrying about Shawn and worry about HHH. It's also not about Shawn, despite how much Shawn wants it to be.

HHH talks about the Cell and how these two have defined them. The Cell has gone from being the devil's playground to HHH's proving ground. I wouldn't go that far but it's HHH so reality is usually thrown out the window for his promos. The world will see the end of an era, and it'll be Undertaker's era.

HHH starts to say that he knows what it'll take to beat Taker in the Cell, but Taker cuts him off and asks if he really knows. Taker asks if HHH is willing to put it all on the line at Mania. HHH says he is ready and he will. Does that mean



Streak vs. career? It's never stated clearly. Taker goes to leave but comes back and asks if HHH remembers when Taker said Shawn was better than HHH? Well he is. And that's the end. Ok then.

**Overall Rating:** C. The show wasn't bad, but I really got bored with it a lot of times. The problem they have is one that you have before any big show: the card is set, the feuds are made, and there's nothing else to talk about for them. Also, what did Bryan and Sheamus do to tick off this company, because they can't combine to get five minutes of TV time but we can get an angle for the Divas tag match? I'll never get this company half the time. Anyway, not a great show but it could have been worse.

#### Results

Kane b. Big Show – Chokeslam off the middle rope

David Otunga b. Santino Marella – Spinebuster

Daniel Bryan b. Zach Ryder – LeBell Lock

John Cena b. Mark Henry – Attitude Adjustment

Sheamus b. The Miz – Brogue Kick

Dolph Ziggler/Jack Swagger b. Kofi Kingston/R-Truth – Fameasser to R-Truth

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## Wrestlemania #10: Which Is

# The Better Match?

I'll have to take Adam Bomb vs. Ear.....oh you mean the other matches. This show has two masterpieces on it and the question is simple: which is better?

I think I'm going to have to go with the opener. It's got a built in story and it still holds up to this day as a great match. The ladder match is still great and I don't buy the argument of "it's been topped since." The future ladder matches have no bearing on this one because they had history to look back on. This was, for all intents and purposes, the first ladder match. Maybe it's that I've seen the ladder match too many times, but I like Bret vs. Owen a little better.

Your pick?