

# Smackdown – September 12, 2002: Billy and Chuck and Eric and Stephanie

## Smackdown

Date: September 12, 2002

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

TIME FOR A WEDDING! Er, a commitment ceremony! So this time around, WWE has decided to try and run a gay wedding for the sake of publicity, which is exactly what they got from it. Billy and Chuck are becoming “tag team partners for life” here and I’ll give you three guesses how legitimate this is. Let’s get to it.

We open with a wedding invitation because of course we do. Oh and this is the season premiere. So last week’s average show was a season finale? They need to work on this stuff.

Video on Brock Lesnar vs. Undertaker’s confrontation last week.

Opening sequence.

## Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Non-title. They slug it out to start with Holly hanging in there until it’s an overhead belly to belly suplex to make things right with the world. A front facelock only seems to annoy Holly and he takes Lesnar outside to turn it into another brawl. Raw power gets Lesnar out of trouble again though as he sends Holly back first into the post and grabs another suplex. The LESNAR chants start up with the announcers mentioning his connections to the state. That’s a simple little save but very helpful to keeping Lesnar looking like a heel.

A delayed vertical suplex sets up a bearhug but Brock charges into some boots in the corner. That earns him a completely botched powerbomb with Holly hanging on his head, putting him out of action for over a year. Holly somehow gets in a dropkick and the kick to the ribs, only to eat the F5 for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Really dull stuff here and that’s not the most surprising

thing in the world. What is surprising is seeing Holly popping up and finishing the match despite his neck being destroyed like that. I know he might not be the most popular guy in the world but he's certainly one of the toughest, which means a lot on its own.

Undertaker and his wife arrive. Uh, didn't that go badly for Undertaker last time?

### Eddie Guerrero/Chavo Guerrero vs. John Cena/Edge

Cena is in Minnesota Vikings colors and it's a brawl to start with the cousins jumping the makeshift team to start. That earns Eddie a pull of the mullet before Cena spins out of a double top wristlock. Eddie and Chavo beat him down on the floor though and Chavo gets in a very hard clothesline.

Back to back gorilla press slams have Eddie in trouble so he calmly dropkicks the knee out because Cena isn't ready to take Eddie on yet. The tag brings in Edge to clean house until Chavo crotches him against the post. Eddie runs up the corner for a hurricanrana but the half nelson faceplant is enough for the hot tag to Cena (Fan's sign: "HOT TAG!". Eh better than "the guy behind me can't see".). Everything breaks down and Edge goes shoulder first into the post. Cena is left all alone to take the brainbuster and frog splash for the pin.

**Rating:** C+. This worked like you would expect it to but I continue to be confused by Cena. He came in white hot and hit the ground running but then he was losing to D-Von and getting pinned clean in tag matches. As is so often the case, you need more than just a wrestling match to get someone over and the lack of any development is really hurting Cena.

Post match Eddie loads up a Stinkface with Chavo playing Rikishi but Edge breaks it up and puts Eddie's face in there instead.

As expected, Eddie goes nuts on Chavo post break.

Undertaker says Sara is here because she has family in Minneapolis. Matt Hardy comes in and says he'll have a kid one day with all his Mattributes. That earns Matt a shove into a wall, earning Undertaker the promise of a Mattitude Adjustment.

Rico can't get the right figures on top of a cake but needs to talk to Stephanie. She can't go because she has bad luck at weddings (ok I chuckled at that) but Rico gets close to having a meltdown and

talks her into it.

### Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Kurt thinks it's funny that we're in "Mini" and he's facing Mysterio again. Angle: "You know, mini? He's short. Oh come on that's funny." Angle doesn't want to hear Chris Benoit laughing at him anymore either but jumps back to Mysterio, who is a boy in a man's world. Kurt: "And I'm a man who loves to play with boys. Wait! I meant to say you're a boy and I'm a man and tonight I'm going to manhandle you!" If that's not enough comedy for you, the announcers spend Mysterio's entrance talking about how the wedding isn't for ratings and Bischoff used HLA to catch up with Smackdown's quality.

Some early suplexes have Rey in trouble so he speeds things up (makes sense) with a headscissors. Angle goes shoulder first into the post and a springboard moonsault gets two. A frustrated Kurt flips Rey upside down with a release German suplex and things get more into Kurt's pace.

We hit the bodyscissors to keep Rey down, followed by some rolling German suplexes to make things even worse. Rey fights right back with a moonsault press and a crossbody to put Angle on the floor. The 619 looks to set up the West Coast Pop but Kurt has to settle for a regular hurricanrana for a close two. Rey takes a bit too long going up though and the corner running Angle Slam puts him away.

**Rating:** B+. For a TV match, this was absolutely great stuff. These two always have chemistry together, but to be fair that's the case with almost anyone Angle faces. He's the kind of guy who can have a good match against anyone and it made for an entertaining match here. Really strong match and that shouldn't be a surprise in the slightest.

Someone from the wedding party arrives in a long black limousine.

### Chris Benoit vs. Rikishi

Rikishi slugs away to start and grabs a sitout spinebuster for no cover. Instead Rikishi gets kicked low and chopped down but the Crossface can't go on full. Rikishi fights up and tries the Rump Shaker, only to get caught in a rather impressive electric chair drop. The Swan Dive is loaded up but here's Angle to shove Benoit off the top for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. So you remember how I said Angle can work well with

anyone? Well that's not the case with Rikishi, who just has no place at this level and everyone knows it. I really have no idea why he's here, especially when there are a lot of people ready to be raised up to get a shot like this. Orton and Cena are reduced to jobbing roles but Rikishi can be pushed this hard?

Post match Angle holds Benoit in place for the Stinkface.

The wedding ceremony is being set up so Benoit spends the time getting a match with Angle at Unforgiven. Stephanie agrees as Matt comes in and gets a match with Undertaker tonight.

Here's Rico to complain about how the ceremony isn't what he ordered, including a very old Justice of the Peace. The singers belt out It's Raining Men to bring Billy and Chuck to the ring (edited off the Network of course, making for a very awkward transition) and the old man dances. With the Justice's hands shaking, Chuck talks about how he didn't know much about Billy when they met.

Billy might have captured a lot of tag team gold but now he's captured Chuck's heart. Billy: "That was corny! Even for you!" Rings are exchanged and Rico is all aglow. Rico presents a video called Our Love Story with various comedic/romantic moments between the two of them which is so cheesy it almost works in a way.

We get the speak now line and here's Godfather with the ladies. Godfather knows Billy has some pimp in him and Chuck was a great skirt chaser, especially with the heftier ladies. Rico will have none of this and dismisses the "Good Time Girls" so the ceremony can continue. Anyway, Billy says yes and Chuck does the same, albeit with some cold feet.

The Justice of the Peace almost pronounces them as married but Chuck says hang on because this was a publicity stunt that got WAY out of hand. Billy flat out says they're not gay but they have no problem with gay people. Rico loses it but the Justice of the Peace says this is the kind of love that can go on for fifty years, sixteen months....or three minutes.

The shaking stops and the voice changes with the old man ripping off the prosthetic makeup to reveal Eric Bischoff. I know you can tell it a lot better now with the voice but this COMPLETELY got me back in the day and was one of the best surprises I had ever seen. 3 Minute Warning comes in for the beatdown with Bischoff holding Stephanie back.

Stephanie takes a Samoan drop (BIG pop for that) and I'm sure that's going to warrant another year of her glorious presence on TV. Edge, Cena and Mysterio come in for the save. The rest of the locker room comes out as well because WE ALL LOVE STEPHANIE and Smackdown is awesome and such.

This one deserves a few notes. First of all, we come back from a break with a listen to the Unforgiven theme song: Adrenaline by Gavin Rossdale, featuring the line "Nobody said this stuff makes any sense." Well of course it doesn't. It's a wrestling angle mainly focusing on the bosses.

That's the next important note: the recap focuses almost ENTIRELY on Bischoff and Stephanie with the whole wedding, Billy and Chuck, Rico and 3 Minute Warning and anything else being forgotten because we need a long look at how stunned Stephanie was. I know it was shocking, but there were more people there than just Stephanie.

Third, this whole "WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER" stuff didn't work for WCW and it didn't work in the Invasion so it's not going to work here. We just watched Edge shove Eddie's face into a rather unpleasant area of Chavo's body but OH NO STEPHANIE IS IN TROUBLE so they'll band together to help save her? Get out of here with that nonsense. It's way too much to accept and it's all for the sake of pushing Raw vs. Smackdown which wasn't interesting in the first place and still isn't here.

Finally, I have to mention GLAAD (a gay rights group) completely buying into the story and actually sending a wedding present (it was a gravy boat). After it was revealed to be a ruse, GLAAD ripped WWE apart, all while people were laughing at them for somehow trusting a PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ANGLE to be on the up and up. That always gave me a good chuckle and I really don't feel a bit sorry for them looking stupid. Think this stuff through.

### Nidia vs. Torrie Wilson

It's a brawl on the floor to start with Torrie getting in a few chops to take over. The announcers talk about the wedding shenanigans and for once it's acceptable given how big (albeit stupid) that angle was. Nidia charge into the buckle and gets caught with a neckbreaker for the fast pin.

Undertaker tells Sara this won't take long.

Matt recruits Brock to be at ringside with him.

### Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy

Lesnar and Heyman are at ringside too. Heyman immediately starts running around the ring and throws a chair in with Tazz blaming Stacker 2 (sponsor) for all the energy. Undertaker will have none of this and grabs a powerslam to plant Hardy. Heyman gets ejected and the distraction lets Hardy get in a low blow.

A quick clothesline from Brock puts Undertaker down again and that's a second ejection. As you probably guessed, Undertaker shrugs it off and beats the heck out of Matt but Heyman shows up in Sara's locker room. Undertaker runs off for the save (thankfully without an awkward stare at the screen) and the no contest.

**Rating:** D. This was an excuse to get to the ending and there's nothing wrong with that. They didn't exactly hide what they were going for with Sara being shown right before the match and that's how it should have gone. I'll even give them points for Hardy not losing, which really is kind of a surprise.

Undertaker charges to the back and chokes Heyman but takes a chair to the head from Lesnar. Brock puts his hand on Sara's pregnant stomach to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. The wedding sent this one flying off a cliff and there wasn't enough time to recover. That twenty minute segment sucked the life out of the place and that's not good considering how big of a deal this was supposed to be. I really don't know how much longer they can keep up this Stephanie vs. Eric stuff but knowing WWE, I'd put a low estimate at about six months minimum with the audience's level of interest having no impact whatsoever.

The rest of the show was up and down as well but that Angle vs. Mysterio match is worth checking out. I had a good time with some of it but so much of the show was built around one really bad idea that it's hard to give it the benefit of the doubt. Unforgiven is getting one of the worst builds to a pay per view I've seen in a long time and that's not good, especially after a classic like Summerslam.

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# Monday Night Raw – August 26, 2002 (2017 Redo): The Champion as a Prop

## Monday Night Raw

Date: August 26, 2002

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're past Summerslam and that means a lot of things have changed. To begin with, Shawn Michaels shocked the world and beat HHH in one heck of a street fight. Other than that, Brock Lesnar is the new WWE World Champion but is exclusively signed to Smackdown. It's not clear if that's going to mean we need something new around here for HHH to likely dominate. Let's get to it.

Here's Eric Bischoff to open up "his" Monday Night Raw. Tonight we're going to combine the Hardcore Title with the Intercontinental Title which is probably best for everyone. On top of that, we're going to have a special Lifetime Achievement Award for a member of the WWE Hall of Fame.

As for right now though, Bischoff brings out Brock and Heyman for a chat. The fans are happy when Lesnar comes out but cut Paul off with the ROCKY chants. Heyman finally gets to talk and says every legacy

before Lesnar's doesn't matter, including Hulk Hogan and Bruno Sammartino. Enough of that though as Paul goes into a glorious rant about how no one believed him when he promised that Lesnar would do all this. Lesnar brags about being twenty five years old...and here's HHH to Shawn's music because THIS NEEDS TO BE ABOUT HIM.

That's the last time you'll ever hear Shawn's horrible music because HHH has gotten rid of him for good. As for right now though, Lesnar only has that title because HHH softened Rock up for him. HHH wants a title shot but here's Undertaker to cut them both off. Undertaker wants the first shot at the young pup and the fight is on. Lesnar gets knocked to the floor but HHH is allowed to leave mostly unscathed. WAY too much non-Lesnar here but we all need more HHH in our lives.

#### Booker T. vs. Christian

After what looks like a quickly fixed lighting problem, Booker hammers away until a reverse DDT onto the knee puts him down. A chinlock sets up some choking until Booker pops up with the spinning sunset flip out of the corner for two. Goldust and Lance Storm get in a fight (of course) and it's the scissors kick for the pin on Christian.

**Rating:** C-. Just a quick match here to keep the Tag Team Title feud going, though I'm not sure what they're waiting on at this point. It's not like the Un-Americans are all that interesting as heels or champions so just let them lose the belts already to an interesting team. Booker is getting hotter and hotter every week, which almost guarantees his imminent destruction.

The WWE was in New York for the Smackdown Your Vote campaign.

Test has plans for the American flag tonight. This isn't likely to end well.

#### Bubba Ray Dudley/Spike Dudley vs. Christopher Nowinski/William Regal

The villains have Molly Holly in their corner due to one heck of a horribly acted segment between Chris and Molly. Bubba side slams Chris to start and Spike adds a top rope stomp (that always looks so



painful) for no cover. Chris pops back up and distracts the referee so Spike can get crotched against the post. The beating doesn't last long as Spike gets up and tags Bubba so everything can break down. What's Up hits Molly and it's table time. That goes nowhere so it's the Bubba Bomb to end Regal.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to see here as I didn't know this story was still going. Are we really supposed to be interested in Nowinski wanting to sleep with Molly? It's the start of a character at least but Nowinski really isn't the most interesting guy in the world no matter what. At least it's better than making fun of Molly's weight. Post match Nowinski saves Molly from the table.

Bischoff tells the guest to come out when Eric says.

Molly thanks Chris and offers to help him if need be.

Apparently that would be after the break as Bischoff brings out Jimmy Snuka. Highlight package, Bischoff cuts him off, 3 Minute Warning, JR is aghast. Chris Jericho comes out and puts Snuka in the Walls of Jericho and tells the has been to get out of the ring. Who would guess that we would see something similar at Wrestlemania one day? Jericho shows us some clips from last night and claims that he made Flair tap out. Since Fozzy's concert was cut off last week, Jericho belts out his own version of New York, New York.

#### Chris Jericho vs. Jeff Hardy

Jericho knocks him around to start until Jeff gets in a dropkick of his own to take over for a bit. Lawler talks about a tuxedo vs. evening gown match later tonight as Jeff sends Jericho outside for a big dive off the top. The dive off the apron is countered into a powerslam (cool looking spot) and Jericho starts choking with Jeff's shirt.

A missed dropkick has Jeff in even more trouble (it might help if he did something other than throw dropkicks) so we hit the abdominal stretch. This isn't exactly burning up the mat so far. When the hold goes nowhere, Jericho heads up top but gets dropkicked out of the air. Even that's not enough to pop the crowd very strongly but the

Whisper in the Wind does a bit better. The Swanton is good for two as Jericho grabs the rope. Jericho grabs the Walls and Hardy grabs the rope, only to have Jericho refuse to break for the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. These two are capable of doing so much better and I'm not sure why they were this dull here. I don't know if Jeff is just done or if Jericho's stuff with the submissions isn't working but I don't know how you go from good last night to a near disaster just a day later. Maybe it's a bad night but this was a big disappointment. Brock doesn't care who wins tonight.

Test wants to burn the American flag. After a break, here are the Un-Americans with Test carrying a blowtorch. Kane's pyro goes off but Booker and Goldust make the save instead. The Texans are cleaned out and it's Kane (with a new half mask) coming in for the real save. So we owe one to Spain. Make that two as we get a Kane-A-Rooni.

#### Intercontinental Title: Tommy Dreamer vs. Rob Van Dam

Officially this is a unification match but the Hardcore Title is done no matter what so I guess it's not on the line. This is however under hardcore rules so Dreamer has a bit of an advantage. They shake hands and we're ready to go. We actually start with some technical stuff until Dreamer dropkicks him in the face to take over.

It's time for the first kendo stick and a White Russian legsweep gets two on Rob. They head outside with a ladder being bridged between the ring and the barricade. Dreamer hits a quick spinebuster but can't suplex Rob onto the ladder. Instead Van Dam shoves him face first into the ladder, setting up a kick off the ladder for two.

Back in and the DDT gives Dreamer two, followed by a middle rope elbow which only hits the ladder. Rolling Thunder onto the ladder onto Dreamer and Rob crotches him for a bonus. The dropkick drives a chair into Dreamer's face and the Five Star gets rid of the Hardcore Title for good.

**Rating:** C+. Not a bad match actually and it's nice to see the division go out on a nice note instead of 18 people who never do anything else hitting a single weapon shot for a pin. I'm no Dreamer fan but it's cool to see him having a good match in his element like this, even if he had no chance of winning.

#### Lillian Garcia vs. Howard Finkel

The winner is permanent ring announcer. It's a tuxedo/evening gown match, meaning whoever is stripped first loses. Stacy Keibler comes out to keep an eye on Trish so Howard says she's interfering with something in his trousers. JR: "Howard may get aroused!" Thankfully the fans boo this out of the building until Trish and Stacy object to Howard insulting blondes. Fink is stripped and Lillian wins. As you might expect, that just makes the fans hate the match even more.

#### HHH vs. Undertaker

The winner gets Lesnar at some point in the future. HHH jumps Undertaker as he gets off the bike and we're ready to go in a hurry. They get inside with an early Pedigree attempt being blocked so Undertaker can hammer away in the corner. Old School gets two but HHH hits a jumping knee to the head. The very slow beating continues and we hit a HHH chinlock.

That shifts over to a sleeper in case we were going too fast for you. Back up and Undertaker hits him in the head a few times but the ref gets bumped. One of the worst big boots I've ever see (there was a good six inches between the boot and HHH's face) sets up a chokeslam but here's Lesnar for a distraction. HHH gets in a low blow and, after a belt shot from Lesnar, the pin and the title shot.

**Rating:** D. Boring match of course but that's what you have to expect when two older guys get to be the focus instead of the new World Champion. This was really weak stuff from two guys who should be more than capable of doing something better. Lesnar felt like an afterthought here, which has been the case all night long.

Oh look: it's Stephanie, who is all happy because she's never allowed to lose any face. Lesnar is officially signed to Smackdown

and the title is coming with him. So now she can change the rules of the Brand Split. Stephanie to Eric: "How do my peaches taste now?"

**Overall Rating:** D-. I don't remember the last time I've seen two shows on back to back nights be such polar opposites. Last night was all about energy and entertainment while tonight was all about HHH vs. Undertaker and Stephanie vs. Bischoff with Lesnar being little more than a plot device in either. The best thing on the show was Dreamer vs. Van Dam while the rest was spent on stuff they knew wasn't going to be interesting while having almost no focus on anything that mattered. In other words, it's back to what Raw has been doing in recent months.

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## New Column: The Twenty Year Problem

Looking at a story that has been going on since 1997 in various forms and why Smackdown has figured it out in one simple change.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-twenty-year-problem/>

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# Main Event – January 12, 2017: A Show With a Plan

## Main Event

Date: January 12, 2017

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Austin Aries

The more I watch this show, the more I like the concept. Yeah it's a short show that doesn't offer anything special but at least it's a place where some names can get attention they wouldn't have otherwise. Sometimes you even get a good match out of it to go with all the highlights. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Brian Kendrick vs. Mustafa Ali

Feeling out process to start until Ali tries a springboard, allowing Kendrick to shake the ropes and bring him down. A hard forearm puts Ali down again and we hit something like a dragon sleeper without the hands being locked. Ali gets back up and turns up the speed with a tornado DDT to put both guys down. Kendrick misses a charge in the corner and Ali rolls forward into a neckbreaker for two, only to get kicked in the face. The Captain's Hook makes Ali tap at 4:55.

**Rating:** C-. They didn't have a lot of time here but they managed to fit in a story with the neck work to set up the Captain's Hook. I like Ali more every time I see him and Kendrick, although boring, is still good enough to be a bigger name in the division than most others. Nothing special to the match or anything but they tried.

From Raw.

### Seth Rollins vs. Braun Strowman

Braun doesn't waste time and cleans house immediately crushes Seth in the corner. Rollins can't get anything in as Braun pulls him away from the ropes. A neck snap across the top rope staggers the monster but he knocks Rollins off the apron with ease to send us to a break.

Back with Rollins hitting a suicide dive and running knee to the face.

A low superkick gets two and the springboard knee to the face only has a limited effect. Seth knocks him off the top (which freaks Byron out way too much considering it was the second time in the match) and a frog splash gets two. One more trip to the top goes a bit worse though as Rollins crashes into the barricade. Braun is fine with just watching him for the double countout at 11:36.

**Rating:** C-. It's interesting that they didn't have Braun get the win here as he still doesn't really have a major victory to his name (save for maybe last week over Sami but I'm not sure if that's major). That being said, beating Rollins might be a bit too much for him at this point. At least they had him look good though and that's what matters.

Seth holds Braun off with a chair.

From Raw again.

Here's Foley to request Undertaker come out, making it sound like he's summoning the Candyman (not Brad Armstrong for you old school fans). The lights go out...and here's Stephanie to rip on Foley for being unable to produce the Undertaker. Stephanie talks about all the issues Foley has created, including putting the Cruiserweight division on the line, creating the monster Braun Strowman and above all else: ALLOWING SMACKDOWN TO BEAT RAW IN THE RATINGS.

Before I can elaborate on how stupid that is, Undertaker cuts them off and makes his big appearance. After a very long entrance (duh), Undertaker says he goes where he wants, when he wants and no one (as he gets in Stephanie's face) tells him what to do. He'll be in the Royal Rumble and has dug 29 holes for 29 souls so he can be in the main event of Wrestlemania. If anyone stands in his way, they will REST IN PEACE.

#### Sin Cara/Darren Young vs. Shining Stars

Epico and Cara trade some rollups to start as Aries talks about how good the bananas are at the Shining Star Resort. Some arm work doesn't have much effect on Epico but Cara suplexing his partner onto Primo works a bit better. Young goes shoulder first into the post though and we take a break. Back with Young still in trouble but escaping a chinlock. What might have been a poke to the eye

keeps Young slow until he avoids a charge in the corner and brings Cara back in. A Lionsault press gets two on Epico but Primo grabs a rollup for the pin at 9:44.

**Rating:** D+. Just a tag match here as Young continues to be on the show for the sake of being on the show with random partners. The Shining Stars are passable at best though and that's not the best thing for a main roster show. At least they're just on Main Event this week and not doing a bad comedy sketch on the big show.

One more from Raw to wrap it up.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Reigns is defending and is smart enough to lock Jericho in the shark cage, only to have Owens make a last second save. The champ is thrown against the cage, which falls down off the stage in a quieter than expected crash. Another shove sends Reigns into the steps as we're waiting on the opening bell. The challengers have to tag here so Owens starts out for the team.

Jericho comes in and grabs the chinlock, only to have Roman, whose arm is banged up, come back with clotheslines. The Superman Punch misses Jericho and a Lionsault gets two. A Pop-Up Codebreaker is countered with back to back Superman Punches but Owens gets in a superkick from the floor. Reigns blocks the apron powerbomb though and scores with the apron dropkick. The Codebreaker slows Roman down though and now Owens hits the powerbomb on the apron. Back in and another Codebreaker gives Jericho the pin and the title at 8:19.

**Rating:** C-. What does it say that it took two World Champions to get the US Title off of Reigns? Like, couldn't they have done the EXACT SAME THING by having Owens interfere and cost Reigns the title in one of their many matches? Nah, that might imply that Reigns isn't invincible and therefore make things a bit more interesting. It's not like this was some big major screwjob or anything as they just beat Reigns and that was it. I'm glad Jericho won the title though as Reigns certainly didn't need it.

**Overall Rating:** C-. Nothing to go out of your way to see here and that's the standard for this show. Main Event continues to be a good way to get the highlights of Raw (or at least the top stories) in a quick version, but it wouldn't be the worst idea to clip some of those matches down and give us some more stuff.

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# Monday Night Raw – January 9, 2017: The Night Stephanie Shouted a Lot

## Monday Night Raw

Date: January 9, 2017

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's a big night as WWE tries in vain to fight off the College Football National Championship game. Their best bet is appropriately enough a Hail Mary in the form of having Undertaker and Shawn Michaels appear, along with Roman Reigns defending the US Title against Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens in a handicap match. Let's get to it.

Stephanie McMahon is in the back with Mick Foley (who now has even less hair) for his annual performance review. First though, she wants to talk about the rumor that Undertaker will be here tonight. You mean the rumor that you SHOWED A VIDEO FOR LAST WEEK? Seth Rollins comes in and tells Stephanie he's in the Royal Rumble. Before that can go anywhere, Braun Strowman comes in to say he wants



Goldberg or Reigns tonight. Rollins punches Strowman in the face and throws a plant at him until security breaks it up. Stephanie goes into screech mode to say she'll handle this.

#### US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Reigns is defending. Hang on a second though as Strowman comes out and gets in a fight with Reigns, leading to a 3-1 beatdown. Cue Rollins with a chair for the save, allowing Reigns to grab his own chair to attack as well, so no match for now.

Cue Stephanie to say there's going to be a handicap match later tonight while Rollins faces Strowman.

#### Seth Rollins vs. Braun Strowman

Braun doesn't waste time and cleans house immediately crushes Seth in the corner. Rollins can't get anything in as Braun pulls him away from the ropes. A neck snap across the top rope staggers the monster but he knocks Rollins off the apron with ease to send us to a break. Back with Rollins hitting a suicide dive and running knee to the face.

A low superkick gets two and the springboard knee to the face only has a limited effect. Seth knocks him off the top (which freaks Byron out way too much considering it was the second time in the match) and a frog splash gets two. One more trip to the top goes a bit worse though as Rollins crashes into the barricade. Braun is fine with just watching him for the double countout at 11:36.

**Rating:** C-. It's interesting that they didn't have Braun get the win here as he still doesn't really have a major victory to his name (save for maybe last week over Sami but I'm not sure if that's major). That being said, beating Rollins might be a bit too much for him at this point. At least they had him look good though and that's what matters.

Seth holds Braun off with a chair.

Clip of Shawn's new movie The Resurrection of Gavin Stone.

Bayley is really excited about facing Charlotte at the Royal Rumble and Sasha Banks says she'll have her back. Charlotte comes in to

laugh at them and Sasha yells at her, only to get jumped by Nia Jax. Nia cleans house and winds up choking Charlotte before walking away. We look back at the Gentleman's Duel.

#### Jack Gallagher vs. Drew Gulak

Gulak takes over quickly with a middle rope clothesline and cranks on a double arm choke. Gallagher comes back with his headstand in the corner, followed by a headbutt and running corner dropkick for the pin at 3:21.

**Rating:** D+. This is a great example of how important a character is. Gulak is one of the least interesting wrestlers in the division and is going absolutely nowhere. Gallagher is a character unlike most in WWE and he stands out as a result. It also helps that he's one of the only people who could play the character. If you don't think that's important, picture anyone else playing Undertaker.

Post match Gallagher says he has the rite to give Daivari a thrashing like never before in WWE. Instead though, he'd like to invite him to parlay, as in a sitdown meeting to discuss terms of agreement.

TJ Perkins teaches Shawn Michaels to dab.

Stephanie pesters Foley about where Undertaker is. Apparently Foley's ENTIRE performance review depends on getting Undertaker in the ring in the next hour. There's no real reason for this other than Stephanie decrees it and therefore we're not allowed to question it.

Here's Shawn to talk about about the Rumble. He's enjoying the idea of Royal Rumble season, especially since it's in his hometown, which is where he won the WWE World Title twenty years ago. "And yes, I am that old." Shawn is much more comfortable sitting on the outside when you think about all the people in that match.

Cue the ONE MORE MATCH chant so Shawn says he's going to teach us a lesson in standing up to peer pressure. He's here to talk about his new movie but here are Rusev, Jinder Mahal and Lana to interrupt. Rusev thinks Lana should have been in the movie and says Shawn can

put her in via CGI. Shawn accuses Rusev of being a Wookiee but Rusev says Lana should have won the Golden Globe. Shawn: "Could you not talk about golden globes? It makes me a bit uncomfortable."

Cue Enzo and Big Cass to say Shawn is the realest guy in the room. Shawn asks Enzo what we have over here. Shawn: "HATERS! HATERS I TELL YOU!" Cass thinks they could be in a movie called Beauty and the Beast or the Pianist. Shawn cringes and Cass explains the title in a joke that both hits and misses at the same time. They finally get to the challenge with Rusev wanting to fight Cass but it's going to be Mahal instead. Shawn thinks he'll stay out here for the match and if you're not down with that, guess what two words he has for you.

#### Jinder Mahal vs. Big Cass

Joined in progress with Mahal hitting a running knee and a low dropkick for two. With legs as long as his, that offense makes sense. Cass comes back with his corner splashes but Rusev grabs his foot. That earns him Sweet Chin Music. The East River Crossing (pretty much botched) and the Empire Elbow wrap Mahal up at 3:09.

**Rating:** D. That botch didn't look good and it might be time for Cass to get another big power finisher. Above all else though, Shawn is a good example of how to use a legend. He came in, promoted his movie (by saying the date over and over in an old school move), was involved in a nothing match and gives a quick endorsement before leaving. In other words, it was effective instead of something like Ric Flair where it's a mess.

Emmalina video.

#### Neville vs. Lince Dorado

Dorado hits a very quick handspring into a Stunner followed by a running dive to the floor. Back in and Neville hits something like a fireman's carry slam into an armbar. A release F5 sets up a Rings of Saturn of all things to make Dorado tap at 2:59.

Rich Swann comes out for the save but Neville ducks the big kick to the head.

Video on Edge winning the Royal Rumble.

Sasha and Bayley come in to see Stephanie and demand a tag match next week. Stephanie tells Sasha to take the bass out of her voice because she's the only boss in this room. If Bayley keeps yelling, she'll lose her title shot. The tag match is on for tonight.

### Luke Gallows vs. Sheamus

Cesaro and Anderson are on commentary to make it a five man booth. They slug it out to start until Sheamus gets in a spinning kick to the face. The slingshot shoulder gets two and they head outside for more slugging out. A big boot knocks Sheamus off the top though and we take a break. Back with Sheamus hitting the ten forearms to the chest followed by the top rope clothesline for two. The Brogue Kick is loaded up but Anderson hits Cesaro with a bottle. The distraction lets Luke get in a flapjack for two. Sheamus pops up and hits the Brogue for the pin at 10:20.

**Rating:** D+. These teams just aren't interesting and their matches aren't any good either. The idea of taking four guys who wrestle a similar enough style isn't something that works too often and that's what's going on here. It doesn't help that none of them have shown any personality that's going to bring in any interest but hey, Sheamus and Cesaro had a series of matches and that makes them interesting right?

Reigns says he'll retain.

Here's Foley to request Undertaker come out, making it sound like he's summoning the Candyman (not Brad Armstrong for you old school fans). The lights go out...and here's Stephanie to rip on Foley for being unable to produce the Undertaker. Stephanie talks about all the issues Foley has created, including putting the Cruiserweight division on the line, creating the monster Braun Strowman and above all else: ALLOWING SMACKDOWN TO BEAT RAW IN THE RATINGS.

Before I can elaborate on how stupid that is, Undertaker cuts them off and makes his big appearance. After a very long entrance (duh), Undertaker says he goes where he wants, when he wants and no one (as

he gets in Stephanie's face) tells him what to do. He'll be in the Royal Rumble and has dug 29 holes for 29 souls so he can be in the main event of Wrestlemania. If anyone stands in his way, they will REST IN PEACE.

Jericho and Owens are ready to become national heroes because it's time America was represented by two Canadians.

#### Nia Jax/Charlotte vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks

It's a big standoff to start and we take a break less than a minute in. Back with Banks in control of Charlotte until a shot to the knee puts her right back down. Bayley gets the tag and does her elbow to the back into the sliding clothesline spot but it's off to Nia for the domination. Charlotte comes in for some suplexes before the hot tag brings Sasha back in. That goes nowhere though and Bayley has to come back in, only to be run over by Nia. The big leg is enough to put Bayley away at 8:55.

**Rating:** D. I'm really not sure what they were going for here but it didn't do much good. Unless Nia is being added to the title match (gee, if only there was a power mad boss who could make it happen), I have no idea what the point of this was. The match wasn't even good and that's not promising going into the pay per view.

Noam Dar offers Alicia a free slap but she kisses him instead. Dar is shaken and Alicia says Cedric was right: he can't handle a real woman.

Here's New Day to address Titus O'Neil wanting to be part of the team. After a break, Titus comes out and suggests being on the team again but first, let's look at a clip of the original NXT with Titus stumbling while trying to carry a keg. They have an offer for Titus: if he can carry a keg around the ring in less than 12.7 seconds (the winning time of the original contest), he wins. Titus runs around but drops the keg before crossing the line. A match is made for after a second break.

#### Kofi Kingston vs. Titus O'Neil

Kofi runs around to start because Titus isn't smart enough to keep

up with him. A chop off goes to Titus and he gets two off a big boot. Kofi's sunset flip gets the same and it's time for some tromboning. That's fine with Titus as he throws Kofi onto the rest of the team and Trouble in Paradise wraps O'Neil up at 3:39.

**Rating:** D-. WHY IS NEW DAY FEUDING WITH TITUS O'NEIL??? Is this really the best that WWE can find for them? These guys were borderline main eventers just a few months ago and now they're feuding with Titus O'Neil less than a month after losing the belts? It says a lot when you can drag Kofi down but Titus pulled it off. That's impressive.

Video on the UK Tournament.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Reigns is defending and is smart enough to lock Jericho in the shark cage, only to have Owens make a last second save. The champ is thrown against the cage, which falls down off the stage in a quieter than expected crash. Another shove sends Reigns into the steps as we're waiting on the opening bell. The challengers have to tag here so Owens starts out for the team.

Jericho comes in and grabs the chinlock, only to have Roman, whose arm is banged up, come back with clotheslines. The Superman Punch misses Jericho and a Lionsault gets two. A Pop-Up Codebreaker is countered with back to back Superman Punches but Owens gets in a superkick from the floor. Reigns blocks the apron powerbomb though and scores with the apron dropkick. The Codebreaker slows Roman down though and now Owens hits the powerbomb on the apron. Back in and another Codebreaker gives Jericho the pin and the title at 8:19.

**Rating:** C-. What does it say that it took two World Champions to get the US Title off of Reigns? Like, couldn't they have done the EXACT SAME THING by having Owens interfere and cost Reigns the title in one of their many matches? Nah, that might imply that Reigns isn't invincible and therefore make things a bit more interesting. It's not like this was some big major screwjob or anything as they just beat Reigns and that was it. I'm glad Jericho won the title though as Reigns certainly didn't need it.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This show started off fairly strong and then fell off a cliff in the last hour. Above all else, Stephanie was up to her old tricks again and it really hurt the good things going on. Was the whole point of the performance evaluation just to set up the line about Undertaker doing whatever he wanted? That's what we had to sit through all those Stephanie segments for? Other than that, the wrestling wasn't great but I'm getting the Royal Rumble itch and that's a very good sign. Not a great show here, but the title change is a positive step forward. Tone down the Stephanie and the show is much better in a hurry.

### Results

Braun Strowman vs. Seth Rollins went to a double countout

Jack Gallagher b. Drew Gulak – Running corner dropkick

Big Cass b. Jinder Mahal – Empire Elbow

Neville b. Lince Dorado – Rings of Saturn

Sheamus b. Luke Gallows – Brogue Kick

Nia Jax/Charlotte b. Bayley/Sasha Banks – Legdrop to Bayley

Kofi Kingston b. Titus O'Neil – Trouble in Paradise

Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho b. Roman Reigns – Codebreaker

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# Smackdown – August 1, 2002: The Summer of Stephanie

## Smackdown

Date: August 1, 2002

Location: Charlotte Coliseum, Charlotte, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's back to the blue show where Brock Lesnar is a monster and everyone else is just hoping he doesn't come after them. On top of that though we have a new face force comprised of John Cena, Rey Mysterio and Edge, who cleaned house to end last week's show. That being said, their opponents are now gone due to Bischoff vs. Stephanie. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

### Rey Mysterio vs. Tajiri

Mysterio baseball slides him during the entrances and scores with a headscissors. Tajiri shows him how to really kick someone in the face and bends the back around the post. A baseball slide in the Tree of Woe makes things even worse for Rey as we're just waiting on the big comeback here.

Back up and Mysterio flips into a tornado DDT for two, only to get caught in the Tarantula. Another hurricanrana is countered into a sitout powerbomb but Rey comes right back with the Six Nineteen (Tazz dubs it the 619). The West Coast Pop is broken up but Mysterio comes back with a top rope version for the quick pin, earning the crowd reaction you would expect from a Mysterio match.

**Rating:** C. That's more like it and amazingly enough, Chavo Guerrero wasn't the best choice to face Mysterio in his debut. This wasn't great or anything but it popped the crowd multiple times and Tajiri looked good in defeat. It's clear that Mysterio is going to be a big deal around here, especially with the Cruiserweight Title not being the hottest thing in the world at the moment.



Here's Kurt Angle with something to say. He owes us an apology for scaring everyone last week by making us think he might be leaving. Who would even watch the show if he left? Last week he had to blow off some steam due to that punk kid Brock Lesnar. I mean, Lesnar only won an NCAA Title. Angle: "Where are YOUR gold medals???" Lesnar got him disqualified and then had THE NERVE to suggest that Angle was done. That means a challenge and the fans really like that idea.

Instead they get Hulk Hogan (with no music) to make fun of Angle for whining too much. Ignore the fact that Angle was cutting a pretty face promo actually. Hogan wants a piece of Lesnar too but Angle thinks the best Hogan could do is challenge him to a game of shuffleboard.

A fight is teased but here's Stephanie to say we'll have a match instead. Thanks for that Steph. I'm so thankful for the completely unnecessary cameo. Anyway they fight tonight and the winner gets Lesnar. Angle promises to make him tap so Hogan punches him to the floor. Again: no need for Stephanie here but she's going to be here all night.

Bischoff is in Stephanie's office to brag about stealing talent. Eric thinks they can be friends but it's just an excuse for Stephanie to shout SECURITY over and over in that loud voice that only she likes. We get MAD STEPHANIE MODE as he's tossed. As a bonus, we follow them through the halls as she tells security to get rid of him. For some reason he asks what she has for a main event and it's Edge and Rock.

#### Brock Lesnar vs. Mark Henry

Henry wants to fight Lesnar face to face. Lesnar bounces off of him to start so a hard clothesline gets two on Henry. A suplex gets the same for Mark but Brock belly to bellies him down. The F5 is enough for the easy pin.

In the back, Lesnar tells Hogan that he wants to face him next week. Billy and Chuck consider splitting up because there are no titles

for them to win. Rico comes in and says it's ok which sends the team away. John Cena comes in to say the boys are in trouble but Rico makes fun of his fashion sense. Gay jokes ensue.

Angle runs into Lesnar, who wants Kurt to win tonight. All three of these segments were in one long shot. I kind of like that actually.

#### Kurt Angle vs. Hulk Hogan

The winner gets Lesnar next week. Hogan shoves him around to start but is easily taken down into a front facelock. For some reason Angle lets go and lets Hulk grab a wristlock followed by a hiptoss. This is more basic wrestling than Hogan has done in years. They head outside for the brawling and that's much more Hogan's style.

Back in and Angle drives some shoulders to the ribs in the corner but let's talk about Bischoff and Stephanie! This time it's asking whose mind Bischoff poisoned (seriously) to get inside. I mean, the fact that he works for the company doesn't get him past security in the first place? Kurt hammers away in the corner before grabbing a chinlock to give Hogan a breather.

It's Hulk Up time and, after escaping the ankle lock, the big boot puts Angle down. Amazingly enough he can pop up from a simple kick to the face and grabs the Angle Slam for two. The ankle lock results in a ref bump but Hogan kicks the ensuing chair shot back into Kurt's face. Now the leg connects for no count so here's Lesnar for the distraction, allowing Angle to get in that chair shot....just as the referee wakes up to draw the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. Actually not horrible here as they just had Hogan stand around while Angle did most of the work. It's also a good idea to not have Hogan pin Angle when you can accomplish the same ending with a simple DQ. Hogan jobbing to Lesnar should do Brock some good as they try to make Lesnar ready for Summerslam at a break neck pace.

Hogan takes the F5.

#### Rikishi vs. Revered D-Von

The big man runs D-Von over to start until Batista grabs Rikishi's

leg. A legdrop to the back of Rikishi's head has D-Von in control and he sends Rikishi into the barricade for good measure. Batista demands punishment and seems pleased with a middle rope legdrop as WE TALK ABOUT BISCHOFF AND STEPHANIE AGAIN. D-Von goes up top for the Swan Dive and lands right between Rikishi's legs because that's so funny. A DDT to D-Von and a superkick to Batista sets up the Rump Shaker to give Rikishi the pin.

**Rating:** D. Sweet goodness these two are so boring. As usual, there's nothing to see from either of them but yet they somehow manage to be on the show almost every week. At least Batista didn't job to Rikishi, whose extended push I still fail to understand. It's a bad match of course but you have to expect that given who was in there. Rikishi gets beaten down after the match.

Stephanie yells at Stacy Keibler for letting Bischoff in. This better not happen again. Stephanie is just mad that Stacy wound up with Test isn't she? Stacy smiles as Stephanie leaves.

Here are Nidia and Jamie Noble to make fun of the crowd. Basically they're rich now and don't have to deal with these rednecks. Anyway, Jamie isn't cool with Cole making eyes at Nidia so he has her kiss Cole for a VERY long time, including doing "that trick with the tongue". Jamie calls her off because the crowd is liking it too much. If Cole treats them nice from now on, he'll let Nidia give Cole some more lovin.

Kidman, Hardcore Holly and Mike Awesome are watching a tape of Shawn Michaels getting attacked on Monday when STEPHANIE comes in to ask why they're watching this instead of Smackdown. That's why they're not in any main events: they're not paying attention. From now on, there is NO WATCHING SMACKDOWN. Why do I have a feeling this is an inside joke that isn't connecting with the audience? Not that it matters as it gets Stephanie another appearance.

### John Cena vs. Rico

This would have been a much better, and very different, match down in OVW (Rico was awesome back then). Rico slaps him in the face to

start and fires off his kicks in the corner until Cena gets in a spinebuster. A tilt-a-whirl powerslam gets two but Cena gets dropkicked out of the air. Not that it matters as the ProtoBomb ends Rico a few seconds later. Not much to see here.

Billy and Chuck, seemingly fine again, come out for the big beatdown.

Bischoff has a ticket and sits in the front row. In an unimportant detail, he has an upper deck seat but pays off a fan to upgrade. I've always wondered why there's always an empty front row seat for this angle.

Back from a break with Bischoff starting a WATCH RAW chant and guess who comes out for a chat. Apparently she misspoke when she said the main event was Rock vs. Edge because it's actually the two of them teaming together to face the newest Smackdown talent acquisitions.

#### The Rock/Edge vs. Chris Benoit/Eddie Guerrero

Cole: "WHAT A COUP FOR STEPHANIE!" Benoit brings the Intercontinental Title with him to Smackdown. Bischoff jumps the barricade and gets in a fight with security, allowing Stephanie to demand (by screeching of course) that he be thrown out of her building. Eddie goes after Rock to start as Cole talks about them having a war a few weeks back. That sounds like someone has been watching Raw lately. No wonder Cole hasn't been in any main events lately.

It's off to Benoit who gets suplexed for two as the announcers compare the talent stealing. Apparently the Tag Team Champions plus Chris Jericho and Test pale in comparison to Benoit and Guerrero. Rock gets taken back into the corner for the double stomping until a faceplant drops Eddie.

The hot tag brings in Edge but let's talk about Stephanie getting in all those great lines as Bischoff was taken away. The beating doesn't last long though as Benoit gets in a cheap shot to take over on Edge for the real heat sequence. Guerrero works on a leglock and it's off to Benoit for the rolling German suplexes. We hit a half

crab Liontamer (cool looking move) for a bit before Edge has to fight out of a double superplex.

A top rope sunset flip gets two on Eddie but Benoit is right there to break up the tag again. Edge powerbombs Eddie out of the corner and there's the hot tag to Rock, who doesn't get the pop you would expect. Everything breaks down and the Rock Bottom plants Eddie. Cue Lesnar for a distraction though, allowing the Crossface to make Rock tap completely clean.

**Rating:** B+. Heck of a match here and the fact that the pin was entirely clean (well, almost entirely clean) makes it work even more. Rock isn't going to lose anything by tapping to the Intercontinental Champion and it helps build up his match with Lesnar, which needs all the help it can get at this point. Eddie vs. Edge could be awesome stuff too.

Hogan hits Lesnar with a chair to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. The main event pulls this one from out of the abyss because otherwise it's one of the weakest episodes the show has ever done. I know I've harped on it a lot but the big problem here is Stephanie, who comes off like the annoying kid who keeps shouting "HEY! DON'T FORGET ABOUT ME!" every five minutes while the adults try to do something important. It's often a case of here she is again in a cameo that doesn't need to exist and that gets old in a hurry.

Other than that though, the wrestling really didn't have much to offer. Main event aside, this was a really dull show that didn't advance much as the bigger story for Summerslam is over on Raw. They're also not doing much to hide the fact that Lesnar is getting the title at the pay per view and that makes the build a little weird. Rock is really just here to be beaten and while it's going to be a big moment, it's still a strange way to get to the pay per view.

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## **New Column: How Smackdown Won the Week and Pretty Much Everything Else**

Instead of a year in review, let's look at why Smackdown is so many miles ahead of its Monday counterpart.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-smackdown-won-week-everything-else/>

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## **Monday Night Raw – December 26, 2016: I Love It When They Troll Us**

**Monday Night Raw**

Date: December 26, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the city that keeps giving even after the holidays. We're closing out the Monday Night Raw year in Chicago and unfortunately that doesn't mean the Slammy Awards. With just under five weeks to go until the Royal Rumble, the big story is Braun Strowman invading the main event. That could result in some very interesting reactions from the Chicago crowd. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Strowman's destruction last week.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie McMahon to open things up. She wishes us all happy holidays and says Mick Foley is off tonight due to his extreme work schedule as of late (possibly due to hip surgery). The fans cut her off with a CM Punk chant and she actually acknowledges it by saying if the fans could last two minutes and fifteen seconds, they would last a minute longer than Punk.

Cue Seth Rollins to say he wants HHH tonight but Stephanie says she isn't her husband's keeper. Rollins begs HHH to come down but says he'll settle for Strowman. This brings out Roman Reigns to say he wants Strowman too. Since both guys are wanting to fight Strowman, Reigns thinks they should go back there and drag him out here for a Shield style beating.

Stephanie is really fired up by the idea and even suggests that Dean Ambrose could be here. She's just kidding though because the Chicago fans are that easily manipulated. Instead, tonight we'll have Seth vs. Strowman and Reigns vs. an opponent of Stephanie's choosing.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Cesaro/Sheamus

New Day is challenging with Big E. on the floor. Cesaro gets beaten down in a hurry with double middle rope elbows and a legdrop for two each. Woods is thrown out to the floor and comes up grabbing his knee as we take a break. Back with Woods diving through the ropes into a tornado DDT to plant Cesaro on the floor.

The hot tag brings Kofi in for the flip dive and a slightly botched counter into the SOS for two on Sheamus. Everything breaks down and

Woods' top rope elbow gets two on Sheamus with Cesaro making the save. The Swing goes on but Big E. gets on the apron for a distraction. That earns Kofi a gorilla press down onto the big man and a blind tag sets up the Brogue Kick to retain the titles at 10:11.

**Rating:** C+. This was the required rematch so Cesaro and Sheamus can move on to someone else. New Day is in the Edge and Christian position of having long since outgrown the tag division so it's time to move on to a new endeavor. Unfortunately I'm not sure what that's going to be but a strong Kofi singles run could be interesting.

Video on Brock Lesnar. Goldberg is back next week.

Strowman runs into Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens, who seem to have been looking for him. Owens thinks that Strowman is up next for the title after Reigns is dispatched so Strowman should focus on the Seth and Roman. Apparently Rollins and Reigns have been talking smack about Strowman and said his punches are like being hit with a pillow. Strowman doesn't buy the rumors and seems to want to demolish the two of them.

Golden Truth is in the back talking about Scrooge when Bayley comes up to give Goldust a Bayley Bear dressed like Dusty Rhodes. Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows come in and RIP THE BEAR'S HEAD OFF.

#### Nia Jax vs. Scarlet

Scarlet is a jobber wearing a Sasha shirt so the destruction is over in 53 seconds off a Samoan drop.

Nia tells Scarlet to choose a better role model and drops the big leg.

Charlotte shakes Stephanie's hand when Owens and Jericho come in to lodge an official complaint. Jericho doesn't bring spiders or being in shark cages. Is Foley going to put the spiders in the cage? It might give Jericho acne-arachna-phobia! They want to be face Reigns for the US Title tonight as punishment for Foley. Stephanie says she hates bosses who use their authority to advance some personal agenda (HAHA STEPHANIE IS SO IRONIC AND FUNNY!) so she gives Owens the



title shot. Jericho doesn't seem pleased but goes along with it.

Here's Bayley for a chat. She's so happy to be in Chicago because she's the new #1 contender. This brings out Charlotte to show us the clip from last week where her shoulder was up at two. Since there was a problem, Stephanie has agreed to expunge the match from the record books. However, since Charlotte is feeling charitable, she'll let Bayley have another chance to win right now. Oh and there's going to be a guest referee: Dana Brooke.

### Charlotte vs. Bayley

Dana won't let Bayley go into the corner so Charlotte starts in with the chops. Bayley takes over and gets dragged off so Dana gets suplexed. Another referee runs in as Charlotte takes over in the corner with more chops. Bayley shrugs it off and grabs the Bayley to Belly but Dana pulls the referee out. Back in and Charlotte grabs a rollup with feet on the ropes, allowing Dana to count the pin at 3:39.

**Rating:** D. Just an angle here instead of a match and that's fine. I'm not sure how we get to Bayley's title match without Foley around, though of course there's a chance that Stephanie will be all nice and happy and give Bayley the match anyway. Bayley is going to get over huge when she wins the title, if she isn't there already. Stephanie yells at Braun, who wants Sami Zayn in a last man standing match next week. The boss agrees, as long as Seth gets the same beating Sami will get.

We look back at Neville's speech from last week, which is one of my favorite moments in a long time. He's nailing the heel character at the moment and I'm hoping he annihilates Swann to take the title.

### TJ Perkins vs. Neville

Austin Aries replaces Saxton on commentary. Neville won't shake hands (as he shouldn't) so Perkins knees Neville in the chest for two early on. A spinning kick sends Neville outside and a high crossbody gets two back inside. An AUSTIN ARIES chant starts up as Neville kicks TJ in the head to send him to the floor. Back in and

we hit the chinlock for a bit before a double chickenwing into double knees to the chest gives TJ two. The Detonation Kick looks to set up the kneebars but Neville reverses into a rollup and grabs the tights for the pin at 4:58.

**Rating:** C-. Well that didn't work quite as well as it had before. Neville really shouldn't be giving up that much offense and it's really annoying to see them possibly screwing up a great character this fast. I loved watching Neville in that tag match last week because he was eight steps ahead of everyone else but here he was just slightly better, which isn't how to make the character work that well.

Neville yells about people making fun of his accent and face not being appropriate for Monday Night Raw. It's American ignorance and arrogance that prevents them from appreciating him. Tomorrow night, Neville wants Rich Swann.

We look back at Enzo Amore getting destroyed by Jinder Mahal and Rusev at sensitivity training.

Here are Enzo and Cass with the former in a wheelchair (and of course it's leopard skin). Enzo says the sensitivity class isn't for him because he's already gotten a degree in being a certified G (which means you can teach that). We get a long rant from Enzo about how his cup runeth over and he's spilled his Haterade. Since he's done that, the big man is hitting cleanup. Cass calls out Rusev but gets someone a bonus with Jinder Mahal. Enzo pops out of the chair and pulls Mahal off the apron, leaving Cass to clear the ring. The injured Enzo is thrown into Mahal and Cass stands very tall.

### Shining Stars vs. Bo Dallas/Darren Young

This is over an incident on Facebook Live earlier today. And never mind as it's Strowman time...and he's got a Christmas tree. The beatdown is on and it's officially a no contest at 1:04 (though it should be a DQ as he hit Dallas first).

Strowman destroys everyone, including Bob Backlund (though just by proxy).

### Seth Rollins vs. Braun Strowman

Strowman throws him into the corner to start but Seth gets in a suicide dive on the floor. Back in and the enziguri and springboard knee to the head stagger the monster. A second knee has him even more wobbled but he pulls Seth out of the air on the third attempt. Seth actually drops him with a Blockbuster but the Pedigree is countered with a backdrop over the top. Braun runs him over again...and here's Sami through the crowd to jump Strowman for the DQ at 3:34.

**Rating:** C. I would have had Strowman go over clean here but I can live with what they did. Rollins shouldn't be squashed but he sold quite a bit for the monster, which is the best thing they could have done without having him get destroyed. Strowman didn't lose though and that helps so much.

Post match Braun chases Sami to the back, leaving Rollins to take the Codebreaker from an invading Jericho.

Owens praises his best friend for getting rid of Rollins, leaving it one on one tonight.

Emmalina says the wait will be worth it but she's still premiering soon.

### Golden Truth vs. Anderson and Gallows

Goldust takes Anderson down in the corner to start but Gallows comes in to start the beating. Truth fights up and brings Goldust back in as everything breaks down. We actually get some fire from Goldust, who throws Anderson into the barricade. They head inside though and it's Karl getting in a rollup for the pin at 3:34.

**Rating:** D-. Goldust can't even get revenge for someone ripping his dad's head off a teddy bear? I mean, they could have NOT BOOKED IT THAT WAY but how else would we get the third rollup finish of the night without it? Anderson and Gallows going after the belts is a good idea, albeit one we've seen for months now.

### Rich Swann vs. Ariya Daivari

Non-title. Daivari takes him down to start but misses the early frog

splash attempt. That means a double stomp to the back and the spinning kick to Daivari's head for the pin at 1:22.

Post match Swann agrees to face Neville, who jumps the champ from behind.

Daivari calls Jack Gallagher a scoundrel so of course Gallagher is next to him. Jack challenges Daivari to a duel, SLAPS HIM WITH A GLOVE, and corrects Daviari's American history by saying this makes Gallagher more like Aaron Burr.

Video on Lesnar vs. Goldberg from Survivor Series. I still don't know why I would want to see them fight a third time.

#### US Title: Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending. Owens hides in the corner to start and gets knocked to the floor with a right hand. Back in and Owens starts to slowly hammer away but Reigns clotheslines him down. Cue Jericho for a distraction so Owens can score with a DDT. The backsplash gets two and we take an early break.

Back with Owens getting two off the Cannonball and we hit the chinlock. Owens: "ASK HIM!" Reigns fights up and gets in the apron kick, only to get caught with a Backstabber for two. It's too early for the Pop Up Powerbomb though so Reigns grabs the sitout powerbomb for two.

The Superman Punch misses but the second attempt connects for two on Owens. Jericho offers a distraction though and Owens gets in a Codebreaker for two. This brings out Rollins to Pedigree Jericho on the floor but Owens superkicks Seth down. Back in and the spear ends Owens at 16:21.

**Rating:** C-. I'm actually starting to get a kick out of WWE trolling the fans so hard. They just had the World Champion get pinned as close to clean as a World Champion is going to get pinned by Reigns again and they did it in Chicago no less. As much as I can't stand the booking, there's something amazing about how much WWE is willing to screw the fans over for their own ambitions.

Post match Owens gets Pedigreed and Jericho gets speared to end the

show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This wasn't a horrible show but you could tell they weren't putting in much of an effort on the tail end of a holiday weekend. The ending was rather annoying but it's balanced out by Strowman being this unstoppable monster. I'm not sure where he's going next but he's already an entertaining part of the show. That being said, there's really nothing that has me interested at the moment, though maybe that's due to the end of the year and the rather awful main event scene.

### Results

Cesaro/Sheamus b. New Day – Brogue Kick to Kingston

Nia Jax b. Scarlet – Samoan drop

Charlotte b. Bayley – Rollup with feet on the ropes

Neville b. TJ Perkins – Rollup with a handful of tights

Shining Stars vs. Bo Dallas/Darren Young went to a no contest when Braun Strowman interfered

Braun Strowman b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Sami Zayn interfered

Anderson and Gallows b. Golden Truth – Rollup to Goldust

Rich Swann b. Ariya Daivari – Kick to the head

Roman Reigns b. Kevin Owens – Spear

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# Smackdown – July 25, 2002: Who's That Jumping Off the Cage?

## Smackdown

Date: July 25, 2002

Location: Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's another big night for Smackdown as we have the in ring debut of Rey Mysterio as well as the Smackdown debut of Brock Lesnar, who Stephanie stole this past Monday. We're also getting ready for Summerslam and that's the best thing that could happen after a rather dreadful summer. Let's get to it.

We open with a video of Stephanie introducing the show in a seizure inducing moment. See, Stephanie is all hip and cool and caters to the youth of the country with her hipness.

Opening sequence.

### Kurt Angle vs. Mark Henry

Henry shoves him around to start and just glares him Kurt for trying a suplex. Kurt is sat on top where Henry pats him on the head for fun. A missed charge allows Kurt to hit the first suplex and really take over. Another powerslam puts Angle down but here's Lesnar to F5 Henry for the DQ. There was no one but Angle to be put in this spot right?

Angle follows Lesnar to the back and asks what was up with that. Brock was just trying to help Kurt out after Angle blew it at Vengeance. Now that Brock is here, Kurt's time as the top star on Smackdown is over.

Stacy Keibler goes in to see Stephanie and offers to help her in any way possible. Stephanie has her answer the door, which is a flower delivery from Eric Bischoff, who will be here tonight. The vase is thrown against the wall.

#### Reverend D-Von vs. Big Valbowski

Hardcore Holly is in Val's corner. Venis starts fast with a clothesline and big boot but both of them fall out to the floor in a crash. Back in and Venis gets two off a fisherman's suplex with Batista making the save. The partners get in a fight on the floor, leaving Val to grab a Blue Thunder Bomb for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here as D-Von's reverend gimmick has basically stopped save for the theme song (which is still awesome). Venis and Holly are fine for a low level veteran team but I can't picture them going any further than a single title shot and maybe not even on pay per view.

Batista cleans house post match. Just let him leave D-Von already and go after someone bigger.

On Stephanie's orders, Stacy sends security after Edge.

Lance Storm and Christian are ready for their first title defense against the Rock and Hulk Hogan. That's quite the step up.

Stephanie catches up with Edge, who assures her he isn't leaving to sign with Raw. Instead he was going to the production truck with a tape. The tape starts rolling and it's a countdown clock with about an hour and thirty seven minutes on it. That's how long there is left in the show and in that time, Edge is going to get his hands on Chris Jericho inside a cage. Wait WHAT? It's a video tape that seems to start with 97 minutes left and Edge got it into the tape player EXACTLY ON TIME??? Including being stopped by security and talking to Stephanie? She had to write this idea. Like, she had to. Only Stephanie could see this working.

Angle is on the phone with someone named Eric. It's going to be his brother isn't it?

#### Rikishi vs. Albert

Albert bicycle kicks him in the head at the bell for no cover. A few corner splashes set up a Vader Bomb for two but Rikishi gets in a DDT. The running hip attack in the corner sets up a Stinkface, followed by the Rump Shaker for the pin. What in the world is up with pushing Rikishi like this?

Stephanie (yes again) calls Angle and demands an explanation via voicemail.

Remember last week when we saw a video saying Rey Mysterio debuts in a week? Everything is still on schedule.

#### Tag Team Titles: The Rock/Hulk Hogan vs. Lance Storm/Christian

The Canadians are defending. Hogan and Storm start things off and guess what the fans are chanting. Storm gets in a clothesline to start and is quickly pinballed back and forth by right hands from the challengers. Wait, we need to stop and look at a worried Stephanie. Ok now that we're done with that, let's talk about how worried she is! Rock gets double teamed for a bit until a Samoan drop drops Storm like a Samoan.

Test breaks up the People's Elbow though and you can hear the energy come out of the building. Back in and Test cuts off another comeback, followed by a superkick to give Storm two. Hogan comes in for the save but gets distracted to the floor by Test. Therefore there's no one for Rock to tag so he waits about ten seconds and makes the hot tag on the second attempt. A double belly to back gets two on Hogan but it's Hulk Up time, only to have Lesnar come in for the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. Not the worst here but Rock could have been almost anyone. You really don't need to tie this in to the Summerslam match as the idea is more about treating Brock like a monster. The match was as good as an average tag team facing two of the biggest stars of all time was going to be.

Lesnar orders Hogan's limo driver to take himself and Heyman instead.

The announcers recap the talent stealing story. Would it kill Cole



to wear a suit?

John Cena thinks Test has ugly teeth and gets slapped in the mouth for it.

Stephanie comes up to Jericho and it turns into an ad for the new Fozzy CD.

### Rey Mysterio vs. Chavo Guerrero

I remember thinking that it was a different Mysterio since he had the mask back on. Rey starts fast with his variety of headscissors (smart way to go) but Chavo sends him into the corner to take over. We hit an abdominal stretch for a bit before Chavo drives him back first into the apron. Rey has enough of being on defense and busts out a big flip dive to knock Chavo silly. A sweet cradle gets two but a Gory Bomb plants Rey for the same. That goes nowhere so it's the 619 (no pop yet and Tazz calls it the Six Nineteen) into the West Coast Pop (no name either) to give Rey his first win.

**Rating:** C. This could have been better by letting Rey fly around more but this is WAY past the point where he blew the doors off the place. That being said, he's miles better than almost anyone in the division and it was another big name from WCW that could actually mean something in the future. In other words, it's potential, which isn't something you can never have enough of in wrestling.

In the back, Test lays Mysterio out.

### John Cena vs. Test

Cena goes right for him to start but a hard knee to the ribs slows him down. A quick DDT gets Test out of trouble but let's talk about Bischoff again! A Jericho style flying forearm drops Test again and the ProtoBomb gets two. Back up and Test tries a powerbomb but gets sunset flipped to give Cena another upset.

**Rating:** C-. I'm a Test fan (I think there are three of us) so I liked this a bit more than I should have. That being said, Cena really, really needs a finisher outside of a fluke rollup. That's all he's used to win so far and while it's not great, the ProtoBomb would be fine for a finisher until he gets something better. Cena is

good enough at the moment but he needs some upgrades.

Test kicks him in the face post match.

Stephanie calls Angle and basically rips him apart for not calling her back. If he's going to Raw with Eric, the least he could do is tell her face to face. It's going to be his brother isn't it?

### Edge vs. Chris Jericho

Inside a cage and this is actually joined in progress. You don't see that too often in a big match. Jericho goes head first into the cage and Edge rips some skin off his chest with chops. A spear up against the cage makes things worse but Jericho sidesteps a second attempt to send Edge into the steel. That means a nasty cut on Edge's head and a sleeper drop gets two.

Back up and Edge ducks another charge to send Jericho into the cage but Edge can't get out quite yet. A sitout gordbuster (not an inverted powerbomb Tazz) gets two on Jericho as they're already trading big moves, though there's not a lot of drama yet. Cole: "You've got to give the businesswoman Stephanie McMahon a lot of credit!" Well of course we do! We haven't talked about her all match and just to be clear, she's a totally professional businesswoman and our role model.

Edge escapes the Walls so Jericho goes for the door, giving us the fairly standard "heel grabs the chair right next to the door" spot. A very loud chair shot gets two with Edge's spear connecting for the same. Both guys head to the top for a super bulldog from Jericho and it's time for a double breather. Jericho goes up again and gets pulled right back down with a super electric chair for a nasty looking crash. Both guys are down but it's Edge getting up over the top for the escape before Jericho can get out the door.

**Rating:** B-. This wasn't the best cage match in the world as there wasn't enough build to the big spot trading section. Edge going over clean is the only call here and now he's beaten Angle and Jericho in back to back feuds. That's how you build someone up and it's a good sign when the fans are responding to someone rising up the ranks

like this.

Post match the Un-Americans come in for the beatdown. Cena tries to make a save but instead it's Mysterio diving off the cage to take everyone down.

Bischoff is in the parking lot so HERE COMES STEPHANIE! She tries to get into the limo while he talks about knocking Stephanie out. The limo pulls away with Eric laughing along with someone we can't see. Angle comes up and Stephanie is thrilled because IT WAS HIS BROTHER ON THE PHONE! GEE! SHOCKING INDEED! Stephanie wants to know who is in the limo to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. I know I keep harping on this but Stephanie is already killing these shows. It feels like we have to stop and see whatever nonsense she's up to almost every five minutes and it boils down to this Raw vs. Smackdown show. What that ignores though is the fact that you can watch both shows and not miss anything. The pay per views give you the payoff to all the feuds and the TV shows are on the same nights.

Why should I care if Bischoff and Stephanie are stealing talent from the other show? It doesn't help that it's treated as the biggest story in the company because that means we don't really have an option other than watching As Stephanie's World Turns. The wrestling wasn't bad but it really feels like it's a few miles behind the big story, which isn't interesting.

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# Vengeance 2002 (2016 Redo) : Serious Stephanie

## Vengeance 2002

Date: July 21, 2002

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 12,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in an interesting place here as both shows have their first General Managers but the stories are hit and miss at best. The main event is the Rock, who has had one match since he came back, challenging Undertaker for the title in a triple threat also involving Kurt Angle. This is really just a pit stop before Summerslam though so let's get to it.

We open with a Biblical passage talking about being your brother's keeper. Somehow this is supposed to be about the main event. I'm pretty sure this is the Samuel L. Jackson speech from Pulp Fiction.

The show's announcing will actually be divided in half with Smackdown commentary first and then Raw. I don't remember them doing that very often.

#### Dudley Boyz vs. Chris Benoit/Eddie Guerrero

Elimination tables match and the Smackdown commentary is already weird here as they have no connection to these guys. Benoit runs Spike over like he's Chris Benoit and he's wrestling Spike Dudley. A quick tag brings in Bubba, who can suddenly stick with Benoit and Guerrero.

Benoit quickly takes Bubba down and drops some running elbows, followed by the first German suplex. The heels take turns stomping away in the corner until it's time for the first table. Spike makes a quick save but doesn't make a tag, meaning Bubba's beating continues. Now the table is set up in the middle of the ring so Spike has to save Bubba from a double superplex. By that I mean he moves the table instead of breaking it up so Bubba goes flying. Spike is a really, really bad partner.

That's not cool with Benoit and Guerrero so they try to put Spike through the table, only to have Bubba tackle him down to prevent going through the table. So Bubba is a better partner too.

Everything breaks down and Spike gives Benoit a top rope double stomp, followed by What's Up.

Bubba's middle rope splash only hits table, which doesn't count as an elimination because it wasn't an offensive move that put him through the table. Well yeah it was but it was Bubba's own offensive move. Spike actually does something right by giving Eddie the Dudley Dawg through a table. It bangs him up too much though and Benoit throws him through a table of his own, only to get Bubba Bombed onto a table to give the Dudleyz the win.

**Rating:** C+. Stupid decisions by Spike aside, this was entertaining stuff and a good way to open the show. Now of course it doesn't make a lot of sense to have Eddie and Benoit lose to Bubba and Spike of all people but you can't expect WWE to get things right with them just yet.

Bischoff chases down HHH, who is going into Stephanie's office. See, HHH is always negotiating.

#### Cruiserweight Title: Jamie Noble vs. Billy Kidman

Kidman is challenging and they exchange some fast near falls to start. A hurricanrana has Noble staggered and a Fameasser with Jamie in the ropes makes it even worse. Like a good heel should though, Noble hides behind Nidia and takes Kidman's arm out to take over. The arm goes into the post but Kidman is still fine enough to dropkick his way out of trouble. Jamie takes him right back down into a Fujiwara armbar. The title has gone to Jamie's head though as he thinks he can powerbomb Kidman, earning himself a Sky High for two. The Shooting Star press misses and a tiger bomb gives Jamie the clean pin.

**Rating:** C. This was fine as a coronation match to crown Rey Mysterio's first victim for the title. Kidman is still one of the best performers on the roster but he's stuck in the cruiserweight division again because everything that happened in the last year of WCW means nothing. I mean, it was worthless back then too but this just proves it even more.

Kurt Angle is ready to win the title when Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar come in for the dream match staredown. Brock wishes him luck and leaves. Kurt: "I hate pompous people."

### European Title: Jeff Hardy vs. William Regal

Jeff is defending and gets shouldered down for three early near falls. The sitout jawbreaker puts Regal down for two and they head outside, only to have Jeff miss the barricade running clothesline. Back in and Jeff's Swanton (in case you had it confused with Regal's Swanton) hits knees, only to have Jeff roll him up to retain.

**Rating:** D. Well that happened. This might as well have been on Raw because the title means nothing more than a way to fill time. Hardy retaining is fine and in theory should let him move on to his next feud but why would anyone want the thing at this point? It's just a worthless belt and at least Regal holding it made sense. Now it's a prop for Jeff, who is no more over now that he has the thing.

Hogan and Flair congratulate Jeff before shaking hands. Hulk thinks he might hit a Swanton of his own tonight. After that bizarre visual, Hogan wants to know what's up with the new GM's. Flair is worried about the young superstars getting caught up in the power struggle. I have no idea why this was added save for giving Flair a cameo and therefore a payday.

### Chris Jericho vs. John Cena

Rematch from Smackdown where Jericho got disqualified. Jericho is all ticked off and grabs a chair before the bell, only to have Cena take it away and blast Jericho over the back. Now we get the bell because anything that happens before the bell only counts when it's important to the story. Cena gets in a few right hands until a shot shot slows him down and calms Canadian fans everywhere. A few more right hands put Cena down and he even throws in a little shuffle.

Chris takes too long going up and gets caught in a superplex but Cena can't follow up. Instead he misses a dropkick, only to roll away from the Lionsault. The second attempt works but Jericho doesn't want to cover. Chris tries the Walls and is quickly small packaged for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. Cena getting the win is a big deal for him but you can only give him so many flukes before he needs some kind of big

offense of his own. At the moment he's just a tough rookie, which is fine for a start, but he needs something more substantial going forward. For now though it's fine as the long list of pins over Jericho begins.

Jericho has a fit after the match.

Bischoff fails to stop Stephanie's attorney from going into her locker room.

The commentary switches up.

### Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar is challenging after defeating Van Dam in the King of the Ring final. Some quick strikes have Brock on the floor, followed by some kicks to the knee. Lesnar gets knocked outside a second time but he easily catches Rob diving through the air for a powerslam. Back in and it's suplex time but Rob escapes a second and kicks Brock in the face. Heyman: "THAT HAD TO HURT!" They're doing a good job here of showing that only strikes work on Brock as all of Rob's high flying has gotten in trouble.

An attempt at a monkey flip sends Rob over the top and into the steps, followed by the bearhug to keep things slow. Brock makes it even better with an abdominal stretch which lasts as long as your average abdominal stretch is going to last. The top rope kick to the chest sets up Rolling Thunder for two on Brock. Heyman's advice in this situation: "DON'T LOSE!" The F5 is countered into a tornado DDT and Rob adds the Five Star, causing Heyman to pull the referee for the DQ. Big pop for Van Dam retaining the title.

**Rating:** D+. There's just not much left to do with Brock other than put the title on him and hope for the best. He's dominating everyone he faces until Heyman has to save him at the end. Thankfully WWE wasn't stupid enough (yet) to set up a champion vs. champion match on pay per view because they still realized you could do two title matches and get twice the impact.

Post match Heyman breaks up the Van Terminator, allowing Lesnar to F5 Van Dam onto a chair.

Stephanie comes out of her office and says he signed in her intimidating voice. HHH comes out a second later and Bischoff yells at him. It turns out though that those were divorce papers and HHH hasn't made up his mind. Sweet goodness why am I supposed to care about this stupid stuff?

### Big Show vs. Booker T.

No DQ and a rematch from Raw. In other words, the same story as Jericho vs. Cena from Smackdown plus the stipulation. Booker's early kicks are pulled out of the air as Big Show sends him flying. An enziguri slows Show down but that's a bit too much selling so he clotheslines Booker outside.

A chair swing is punched out of the air but since this is Big Show, he screws up by clotheslining the post. They fight behind the announcers' table as this is finally starting to play towards the gimmick. A monitor shot to the head knocks Show down and we get the big spot of the match with an ax kick through the table. Back in and another ax kick sets up the Houston Hangover to give Booker the pin, which is treated like a huge upset.

**Rating:** C. The match wasn't anything great but the important thing here is Booker going over. Beating Big Show isn't going to change his career or anything but it's a sign that WWE is actually doing something with him. Not a great match of course as Big Show is mostly worthless at this point, though he's fine for a punching bag. Torrie Wilson and Dawn Marie argue over who is winning the main event.

Here's HHH for the big contract decision. Bischoff comes out for the first pitch and suggests making HHH a movie star because everything will be business., meaning there's no ex-wife to deal with on Raw. Talk of a sneaker deal brings out Stephanie with that horrendous "I'm all grown up" theme and Lawler saying she's hot.

Stephanie brings up their past successes and says it's all personal this time around. She even has an ace in the hole by bringing up Bischoff calling HHH a no talent back in the day. HHH insults them



both and says he could say screw you to both of them, though Stephanie would like it. He'd rather go with the devil he knows (Stephanie)....and here's Shawn Michaels.

Shawn said he'd come out here but he doesn't want to get in the middle of all this. The NWO is out of business and Shawn wouldn't want to be in HHH's shoes. However he wants HHH to remember something. The two of them had more fun together than anyone else ever and it would be a blast to make Bischoff miserable. HHH hugs Shawn and goes to Raw, wrapping this up at just shy of sixteen minutes, or longer than any match so far.

Actually we're still not done as Bischoff has to rub Stephanie's nose in it to make this even longer. Bischoff: "The one big difference between you and I? I've got testicles and you don't." Stephanie slaps him and leaves to her music to make sure we know she's tough. So yeah, Stephanie is all awesome and amazing but Raw got HHH because like he was going to stick around on Smackdown.

Now we go to Rikishi of all people to hear about HHH leaving Smackdown. He thinks it's bad.

Booker is glad HHH is coming to Raw. Are we really having a post announcement reaction show?

#### Tag Team Titles: Hulk Hogan/Edge vs. Un-Americans

Lance Storm and Christian are challenging here with no Test in sight. During the entrances, JR outdoes himself by saying Wrestlemania III was 15 years ago and saw Hogan face Ultimate Warrior. He then corrects himself by saying it was Wrestlemania VI because Wrestlemania III was here in Chicago.

Hogan dumps Christian out to the floor to start and there goes the bandana. Storm gets punched in the face as Lawler is talking about bra and panties. It's off to Edge for some right hands in the corner, only to have Christian offer some cheating to take over for the first time.

The fans want Hogan as Edge fights out of a chinlock. It's back to Hogan for the usual with the legdrop getting two on Christian as

Storm saves. Hogan is sent outside for the superkick from Storm and the stomping begins. It ends just as quickly though with a double clothesline to drop Storm and Hogan.

The tag brings in Edge for a series of clotheslines and the ref gets bumped. Cue Test for the big boot to Edge, giving Storm two. They actually had me on that one for a second. Rikishi waddles down to deal with Test, allowing Jericho to come in and hit Edge with a belt for the pin and the titles.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to the match here but again they get the booking right by using Hogan and Edge as a transitional team to get the belts on a regular team. The Un-Americans aren't the best act in the world but I'll take them over thrown together teams like Rikishi and Rico.

Bischoff tries to get Angle on Raw. Kurt says they'll talk later. Stephanie promises to win the war because she's in contact with EVERY Raw superstar.

The announcers recap the show.

We recap the World Title match. Rock tried to cost Undertaker the title at King of the Ring so Undertaker wanted to fight him. Then Undertaker vs. Angle went to a draw so Angle was added to this match.

#### Undisputed Title: Kurt Angle vs. The Rock vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is defending and comes to the ring without his bandana for a weird look. It's a three way staredown to start with Undertaker and Rock jawing at each other while Angle waves his arms behind them. That earns him a double right hand and a big clothesline to send him outside.

Undertaker gets the same treatment but Kurt slides back in for a belly to belly on Rock. The champ takes Angle's place and gives Rock a side slam for two. To really mix things up, Rock chokeslams Undertaker, which is pretty much just a release Rock Bottom anyway. All three are back in now and Rock grabs a horrible, HORRIBLE ankle lock on Kurt.

Angle gets out and Rock Bottoms Rock, only to get Angle Slammed by Undertaker. Cute sequence though Rock's ankle lock was worse than his Sharpshooter. The spinebuster sets up the People's Elbow with Angle pulling Rock to the floor and stealing the two count. Everyone heads outside with Rock being dropped onto the announcers' table and Kurt getting busted open.

Old School, with a right hand to the face instead of the shoulder, gets two on Angle. The running DDT gets the same on Rock, who doesn't even need help kicking out. Angle brings in a chair but gets caught in the middle of alternating right hands. The ref gets bumped (of course) and one heck of a chair shot knocks Undertaker out. An Angle Slam drops Rock as the referee is back up (good) but he kicks out at two and puts Angle in the Sharpshooter.

Undertaker saves and gives Rock the Last Ride, only to have Angle break it up with the ankle lock. That's rolled through and now it's the triangle choke that made Undertaker tap a few weeks ago. Rock makes a save this time and gets ankle locked, which is quickly escaped as well. A Rock Bottom gets two on Undertaker but he walks into the Angle Slam. One more Rock Bottom puts Kurt away to give Rock another title.

**Rating:** B. The over hyping hurt this as JR made it sound like the greatest thing he had ever seen. It's certainly good and entertaining with the stolen spots sequence being one of the better parts but Rock winning the title by beating Angle isn't great. Then again that's how triple threats work most of the time and Rock is just holding it for Lesnar anyway.

**Overall Rating:** C-. This is such a forgettable show and there isn't much other way to put it. The main event was very good but that's really about it. Maybe they could have had a better match in the middle if we didn't need a fifteen minute HHH announcement but that's where the money is in this company, or so WWE would tell us. There's just not much to say about this one and it shows badly. Summerslam will be the bigger deal though and that's what really matters.

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