

# New Column: Smackdown Is Better

Another column where the title should tell you everything. We're looking at a few reasons why the blue show is just flat out better.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-smackdown-is-better/>

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## Monday Night Raw – September 26, 2016: I Didn't Want It To Be This Way

### Monday Night Raw

Date: September 26, 2016

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're past Clash of Champions and this is going to be an interesting show. The key here is Raw's competition as they're up against Monday Night Football and a Presidential debate that is likely going to break a lot of viewership records. Kevin Owens is still Raw World Champion and Roman Reigns picked up the US Title from Rusev last night it's time to start looking towards the Cell. Let's get to it.

One more note: I was in the arena for the show last night so this is my second time seeing this.

There's no intro as we're heading straight for the opening match.

Translation: PLEASE DON'T CHANGE THE CHANNEL YET! I can completely accept this.

#### US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Rematch from last night with Reigns defending. The fans want Lana as Rusev takes him down with a front facelock. That's going to keep the people from watching the debate. Reigns is cheered quite strongly as he kips out of a headscissors but gets double legged back to the mat.

Rusev gets one off a suplex and starts in on Reigns' back. The nine corner clotheslines get Reigns out of trouble but he can't lift Rusev up for the powerbomb because of the back injury. We take a break and come back with Rusev putting on a bearhug to keep up the simple psychology. A dropkick hits Reigns in the mouth and some gutwrench suplexes get two. Back to the waistlock as the match slows down again.

Reigns fights up with more clotheslines and a big boot but the Superman Punch is countered, sending them both falling out to the floor. We come back from another break with Reigns headbutting him off the top and hitting a middle rope clothesline. Geez man enough with the Lex Luger style offense.

Reigns still can't powerbomb him so Rusev gets in a spinwheel kick. More headbutts and another kick to the head give Rusev another two. Reigns' latest comeback is stopped with a superkick and the fans are really getting into this in a way you almost never hear for a Reigns match. The Accolade is broken up but Lana offers a distraction to break up the Superman Punch. The apron kick staggers Rusev (and gets a great reaction from the crowd) and they fight into the crowd for a double countout at 25:38.

**Rating:** B. The match was another good outing for the two of them and the ending sets up a rematch in the Cell, which is going to receive a divided reception depending on your taste in Cell matches. Maybe it was just the Cincinnati crowd or maybe it's because he's in the midcard instead of the main event but Reigns was getting a great reaction here. This is the kind of role he's made for: an athletic freak who can take a beating and give out one of his own. Good match here.

Post match Rusev gets a chair and hits Reigns over the back. They get inside and Reigns gets in a spear to put Rusev down. Reigns sits

in the chair and poses with the belt before hitting Rusev with the chair to even things up.

WWE2K17 ad with Ambrose's appearance getting a huge pop.

Here's Mick Foley for a chat about last night's Cesaro vs. Sheamus match. The thought of the series ending in a draw seemed to be a mathematical impossibility (not really) but that's what's happened. Foley brings out Sheamus and Cesaro with Sheamus almost immediately cutting him off to say this was about physical dominance.

Cesaro talks about doctors holding Sheamus back last night and an argument breaks out over who was more dominant. Foley cuts them off to say they're both right and they're both getting a championship opportunity...which they're getting together as they're fighting for the Tag Team Titles. Cesaro: "SAY WHAT???" Foley tells them to get over it and just team together because that's his decision.

I had a very bad feeling that this was where they were going and while it's not the worst idea in the world (Raw is dying for tag teams at the moment), it feels like the TNA way of getting here: a bunch of matches that did nothing but fill time until we get to the end result. Sheamus and Cesaro had some good matches (even one very good one) but they drove the feud into the ground to the point where I didn't care how good the matches were since I had absolutely no desire to watch them.

And now, none of that matters because they're basically saying the whole thing was a tie and we're just going to do something different. It comes off as lazy booking and a way to fill in time, which is one of the worst things you can do in wrestling. I'm sure they'll be a decent team but they better not cut New Day's title reign off this close to the record.

#### Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending in a rematch from last night after Xavier Woods used Francesca II. The match starts fast with Kofi having to dodge a diving Anderson. It's off to Big E. for the Unicorn Stampede with Woods blowing the trombone in time with the stomps. Gallows, apparently not a music fan, pulls Big E. out to the floor and superkicks him in the face.

Anderson adds a running kick to the face for two and the champs are in quick trouble. Gallows gets in a chokeslam and we take a break.

Anderson's powerbomb gets two and we hear about Demolition's title reign being in reach. A kick to the head finally allows the hot tag to Big E. for the suplexes. Big E. misses a charge into the post though and a running boot to the face gets two.

That's enough of being on defense for Big E. so he spears Anderson through the ropes, setting up the Midnight Hour for two with Gallows making the save. Kofi is sent shoulder first into the steps and the Magic Killer gets a very close two on Big E. They had me on that near fall. A VERY bloody Kofi comes back in and hits Trouble in Paradise to pin Anderson and retain the titles at 11:03.

**Rating:** C+. They're doing really well at making me buy into the title changes here and that's hard to do when it comes to a regular TV title defense. Anderson and Gallows are done as challengers now and I'm really not sure where they go from here. Sheamus and Cesaro are fine for placeholder challengers but New Day really should break the record when they're this close. It would be a waste of time not to.

We look at Kevin Owens injuring Seth Rollins' ribs in their match at Clash of Champions. Stephanie McMahon sent a second referee down for the count, seconds after Rollins would have had the title won. After the show ended, HHH arrived and asked Stephanie how it went ("Great.").

Sheamus and Cesaro (back in his suit) are bickering when Foley comes in. Mick starts yelling about how much potential these two have together because they could shake up the tag division. He'll even give them a chance tonight in a tag match. Foley showed a lot of fire here, as is his custom. Remember that.

### Bayley vs. Anna Fields

Fields chokes her on the ropes to start and we hit an early chinlock. Bayley comes back with her elbows and clotheslines, setting up a quick Bayley to Belly for the pin at 2:04.

Post match Bayley says she's not done with Sasha and Charlotte after that triple threat because she wants to hug that Women's Title.

And now, the bad part of the show. Foley goes in to see Stephanie and asks about the referee issue in last night's main event and telling HHH it was great. Stephanie ERUPTS on Foley, talking about how it should have been his responsibility to get a new referee out

there. Instead, he was probably with Sheamus and Cesaro because he thinks with his heart instead of his head. She hired him because of his mind as a businessman (Huh?) and wants him to be more like her. Instead of showing the fire he had earlier, Foley just stands there and takes this because she's Stephanie.

This is every problem with Stephanie rolled into one promo. Not only is it part of a story that is taking WAY too long to go anywhere (I'd be shocked if we get any real resolution before the Royal Rumble) but this is Mick Foley, a three time WWE World Champion and a WWE Hall of Famer. He's one of the best talkers with some of the best fire of all time but he's standing here cowering in front of Stephanie because that's what happens to people around her.

Brock Lesnar, Charlotte, Sting, Roman Reigns and now Mick Foley all have nothing to say back to her because she's Stephanie and the most intimidating presence of all time. Oh except for when she's fun Stephanie who dances with kids and is just a regular soccer mom. This has been going on for years now (keep in mind that Stephanie debuted SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO and first became an authority figure in 2000) and if we're lucky she gets one bit of comeuppance a year. Other than that it's all Stephanie browbeating everyone else and if you don't like it, deal with it because she's Stephanie.

#### Rich Swann/Cedric Alexander vs. Drew Gulak/Lince Dorado

Swann and Alexander get an inset promo talking about how they're here to have fun but they're not underestimating their opponents. This didn't air in the arena and it would have helped quite a bit. Gulak and Dorado get their Cruiserweight Classic videos and again they're better than nothing. We get the big handshake to start for a compliment to the purple ropes, which take forever to set up and take down.

Dorado and Swann trade headscissors to start and nip into a stalemate. Everything breaks down and Dorado moonsaults onto all three as we take an early break. Back with Drew holding Swann in a chinlock before it's back to Dorado for some chops. The hot tag bring in Alexander for some forearms and a running kick to Gulak's head. A Lumbar Check sends Dorado to the floor and Swann sunset flips Gulak for the pin at 8:25.

**Rating:** C. This was the big popcorn break match of the night and it's still not hard to see why. Again, the wrestling is fine but the

whole division is being wedged into a show that is already bloated. Swann and Alexander have some personality but Dorado and Gulak are just warm bodies in the eyes of the fans. It's better than last week but they still need some adjustments to make people care.

### Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Nick Cutler/Willis Williams

Cesaro takes Cutler over with a one armed delayed vertical suplex but Sheamus drops to the floor instead of tagging in. For some reason he gets on the apron with his back to the ring so Cesaro can tag him in with a slap. The ten forearms make it even worse for Cutler and it's off to Williams, who is taken down with a hard clothesline. The jobbers actually start working on Cesaro's arm for a few seconds before Sheamus Brogue Kicks both guys. Cesaro pins the unconscious Williams at 3:33.

**Rating:** D+. This was exactly what it needed to be, though it's still forced and something that should have come months ago without the long feud in the first place. We haven't had a wacky partnership that went somewhere important since Kane and Daniel Bryan so this is as good as anything else they have.

Video on TJ Perkins.

TJ talks about wanting to be here for eighteen years but here's Brian Kendrick to interrupt. Kendrick says it's his title to win because Perkins owes him for his career. A brawl is teased and they'll fight at some point in the future.

Here are Charlotte and Dana Brooke for a chat. Charlotte says last night was another chance for everyone to be disappointed because that's what she does time after time. She's not the huggable Bayley or the internet darling Sasha Banks. Cue Sasha to say that's her title because Charlotte didn't beat her last night. Sasha is owed a one on one match and she wants it right now. Charlotte tells the YESing fans to be quiet so she can tell Sasha that she'll get her rematch....next week. Sasha cleans house and the villains leave.

Rollins is on his way to the ring to interrupt the upcoming Highlight Reel but Foley cuts him off because Seth isn't medically cleared. All Rollins can hear are Stephanie's words coming out of Mick's mouth.

### TJ Perkins vs. Tony Nese

Non-title with both guys being TNA castoffs because they're dumb

that way. The much stronger Nese throws Perkins around to start and he cartwheels out of TJ's ankle scissors to show off. An early kneebar attempt doesn't work for TJ as Nese sends him outside for a superkick and a big dive to take us to a break. Back with Perkins grabbing a Black Widow but getting planted with a reverse gutwrench suplex.

The fans chant for Harambe (the gorilla who was shot at the Cincinnati Zoo, which was a recurring trend all night long) and CM Punk as TJ fights back with uppercuts and a jumping neckbreaker out of the corner. A gutbuster looks to set up a tornado DDT but Perkins is draped over the top rope instead. TJ is right back up with the fireman's carry into an enziguri (Fans: "RANDY SAVAGE!") and the kneebar makes Nese tap at 8:50.

**Rating:** C+. I know the fans don't care but this was entertaining stuff, partially because we have a reason to care about Perkins. Something as simple as being the champion tells us more about him than we know about anyone else and the announcers did a good job of building Nese up as the perfect athlete who could take down the champ. Good little match here, though the fans really didn't care. Hispanic Heritage Month video on Pedro Morales.

Sasha vs. Charlotte and Perkins vs. Kendrick for the respective titles next week.

Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson are going to be in Los Angeles next week to take care of Chris Jericho and Kevin Owens.

It's time for the Highlight Reel. Jericho tells us to be quiet about a dozen times because this is the most anticipated Highlight Reel in WWE history. Before Owens comes out here though, Jericho has a bone to pick with Masterson and Kutchner, who have the nerve to claim that they're better friends. Jericho: "THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!" That's so unthinkable that they're both about to make the List of Jericho.

It's almost time for Owens to come out but Jericho yells at the cameraman for shooting him from the wrong side, which means HE MADE THE LIST! Rollins is on there too because he got hurt again last night. Owens comes out and praises the Jeritron 5000 but says he's not about to wear a suit for a place like Cincinnati, Ohio. What kind of town can this be when it created Dean Ambrose? Jericho: "HE STILL OWES ME \$17,000!"

Owens moves on to Rollins and says the rib injury is karma after all the people Seth injured over the last year and a half. Cue Rollins but security and Foley pull him back. Instead here are Enzo Amore and Big Cass to interrupt and ask Jericho how they're doing. Jericho says they're just fine but Enzo and Cass ARE ON THE LIST.

After Owens corrects Jericho's spelling, Cass accuses Jericho of being Santa Claus. Jericho: "Maybe I am Santa Claus! Maybe I'll come down there and sit on your lap!" Cass points out that people sit on Santa's lap but Jericho said he was going to punch Cass in the face. A fan poll makes Jericho even angrier but as it turns out, Foley just made a match between these four.

### Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

Jericho and Enzo start us off but first we need to pause for the scarf removal. An armdrag has Jericho so frustrated that he crawls over for a hug from Owens. Kevin comes in and gets dropped by Cass so it's time to launch another human being over the top rope as a projectile. Sidewalk slams have the Canadians in trouble but Jericho sidesteps a charge to send Cass outside as we take a break.

Back with Enzo pounding on Jericho in the corner and getting two off a high crossbody. Owens offers a quick distraction though and it's time for the villains to take over. Thankfully that means Owens doing Enzo's dance across the apron because he knows how to mock a crowd. Jericho and Owens take turns beating on Enzo with Owens handling the trash talking ("THAT'S THE LEAD SINGER OF FOZZY!").

Enzo blocks a superplex but dives into a dropkick, setting up Owens' backplash for two. Owens to the referee: "I'm the Universal Champion!" Referee: "It was two!" Owens: "But he shouldn't even be out of NXT yet!" Enzo finally gets in a right hand to make the tag off to Cass for the house cleaning. For some reason Jericho decides to slap Cass, earning himself a boot to the face. The two of them head outside and it's Enzo hitting his middle rope DDT for two on Owens. The powerbomb puts Amore away at 16:37.

**Rating:** C. Owens' trash talking aside, this was just your standard main event tag. Enzo and Cass are fine for this role and it's already more entertaining than seeing them talk about buying a timeshare in Puerto Rico. They're still making sure to protect Cass and it's way too early to even think about a split so this is about as good as it's going to get for them at the moment.



The show wraps up just after the match ends. Post show, Owens and Jericho kept beating on Enzo until Sami Zayn came out for the save. Posing ensued to close out the night.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This show suffered had the same problem as so many others: burnout. The first half hour was a good, hard hitting match, followed by an entertaining Tag Team Title match. Then it was Stephanie treating Foley like a dog who tracked mud into her house and a cruiserweight tag match that didn't need to be on the show.

The main event was a nice pick up but they really need something to fire the crowd up in the middle. Maybe a Sami Zayn match instead of putting him on Superstars? At the end of the day, three hours is too much on TV and it's even worse when you're watching it live. The show has good stuff on it but that good stuff is dragged down by so many other things, the biggest of which is just time itself. It wasn't a horrible show but you could tell when the debate came on because the show just gave up.

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## **New Column: The Real Clash Of Champions**

In case you were confused by what you're going to see Sunday.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-the-real-clash-of-champions/>

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# Monday Night Raw – September 19, 2016: It's Like A Little League Movie

## Monday Night Raw

Date: September 19, 2016

Location: FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Clash of Champions as we now go two weeks between single brand pay per views. The big stories coming into tonight seem to be Mick Foley punishing Seth Rollins for interfering in last week's main event and the return of Rusev, who came back last week to go after Roman Reigns. Let's get to it.

Last Week on Raw, Kevin Owens beat Reigns to retain the title despite interference by Rollins and thanks to help from Rusev.

Here's Reigns to get things going but Stephanie McMahon cuts him off, only to have Mick Foley cut her off. Stephanie: "FOLEY! FOLEY! FOLEY!" Thank you Stephanie, though we didn't need your input. Foley apologizes for letting things get out of hands last week and makes Rusev vs. Rollins for tonight. On the other hand, Reigns will be getting a US Title shot against Rusev on Sunday. Stephanie: "And I personally guarantee it will happen." Reigns: "Thanks Stephanie. That means so much coming from you." I might have applauded that line.

Foley goes into a discussion of Raw vs. Smackdown and says he's out

of a job if they lose the ratings war. That means Kevin Owens vs. Reigns again tonight. This brings out Owens to say he should be getting ready for the title match on Sunday. Stephanie says tonight is non-title but Foley makes it a cage match.

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are in the back when Rusev comes up to plug Lana's movie (Interrogation, with Edge) and Holy Foley. Rusev leaves and Foley gets a call from Chris Jericho.

### Rusev vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Rusev starts in with his variety of kicks but gets dropkicked out to the floor for his efforts. Rollins is sent back first into the post and a hard whip sends him back first into the buckle for good measure. Some right hands stagger Rusev as Rollins looks so at home as a face. Unfortunately he's not quite at home on the top as Rusev slams him down with one arm to take us to a break.

Back with Seth fighting out of a waistlock and hitting a quick enziguri for a breather. There's the Sling Blade to keep Rusev in trouble and Rollins muscles him over for a Falcon Arrow. Rusev comes right back with a superkick to the shoulder (even Cole acknowledges how off it was) for two of his own. Seth gets in the springboard knee and a suicide dive. They fight up the aisle and that's a double countout at 11:52.

**Rating:** C+. Oh sweet goodness is Rollins perfect as a face. His size makes him as natural of a good guy as you can get and I still don't know why they brought him back as a heel other than to make sure Reigns stayed a face. Well, as much of a face as Reigns can be in the fans' eyes.

Post match they fight over to the announcers' table where Seth escapes a powerbomb and dives off the table to take Rusev out.

Dana Brooke yells at Foley about last week's double pin. The solution: ANOTHER FREAKING TRIPLE THREAT MATCH. Can you imagine if there were this many last man standing matches or cage matches? Almost every story has to wind up as a triple threat at some point and it's getting really, really tiresome.

Videos on Cedric Alexander and Brian Kendrick, both of whom are debuting as cruiserweights tonight.

Owens and Jericho have a list of grievances for Foley.

#### Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Rematch from two weeks ago. Cara fires away right hands and kicks to start until Strowman just runs him over like a monster. We hit an early neck crank for a bit before Cara tries to speed things up, only to have his moonsault caught in a powerslam for the pin at 1:54. What in the world was the point of the countout a few weeks ago?

Bayley and Sasha Banks are ready to team together tonight but they'll fight on Sunday.

#### Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Bayley/Sasha Banks

Sasha rolls Dana up to start before it's off to Bayley, who sends Charlotte into the buckle and us to a break. Back with Bayley in trouble as the heels take turns cranking on her arms. Bayley gets in a back elbow and middle rope armdrag, allowing the tag to Sasha for a double suplex. Charlotte is smart enough to go after the huge tape around Sasha's ribs. It's back to Dana to send Sasha face first into the mat a few times. A headscissors puts Charlotte down and the real hot tag brings in Bayley. Dana saves the Bayley to Belly though and it's a big boot from Charlotte for the pin on Bayley at 11:09.

**Rating:** C. Perfectly acceptable formula tag match here with the rib injury giving it an easy story and Charlotte getting some momentum heading into the title match after losing for weeks leading into the title defense. It's always fun to see the women having the same kind of match you would expect from the men with the only exception being their genders. The lack of PUPPIES chants probably helps a lot too.

Seth goes into Stephanie's office. After a break, Rollins asks Stephanie why she threw him away for Owens. Stephanie says she had nothing to do with HHH (and since she's apparently not asked her husband about this once) but it was Seth who allowed the title to go to her brother's show. Maybe HHH was tired of Seth ruining HHH's

reputation (which has a street value of about \$14). Seth is going to prove that the Authority put their money on the wrong horse. Stephanie gets all serious (of course) and orders him to not threaten her.

### Bo Dallas vs. Gary Graham

Bo does more serious poetry about how only he can believe in himself. It's another quick beatdown with knees and right hands as the fans chant for the jobber. The Roll of the Dice ends Graham at 1:18.

Video on the Cruiserweight Classic final.

### Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match six in the best of seven series with Cesaro down 3-2 and let's get this over with. They slug it out to start and Cesaro flips out of an early backdrop attempt. Sheamus sends him outside and we take a break. Back with Cesaro hitting the uppercut train to knock Sheamus over the barricade and next to some Memphis Grizzlies' feet. Cesaro can't do the apron superplex though and gets caught in White Noise onto the apron. The Brogue Kick misses but Cesaro walks into the Irish Curse for two. Sheamus grabs the Cloverleaf but gets small packaged for two. A rollup with feet on the ropes gets the same on Cesaro before he ducks the Brogue Kick and Neutralizes Sheamus for the pin at 9:40.

**Rating:** C-. The same problems that have plagued this stupid series for a month are still around here and I won't bother going over them again. This would have been a lot better if the last three or four matches had a gimmick or something but the fact that we're heading to a seventh match and nothing has changed really isn't interesting. Foley makes the seventh match for Clash of Champions when Jericho comes in. Jericho accuses him of never being a fan but Foley brings up recommending him to Paul Heyman for ECW. Chris has his List of Jericho (list of grievances), which now includes a bad fashion sense. As you might expect, Foley brings up the scarf look. Jericho: "This is very big in Luxemburg." Foley: "Well it looks ridiculous,

right here, in Memphis, Tennessee.” Jericho: “Number six: Uses cheap babyface pops.”

It’s time for Jericho’s list of grievances. First up: Foley is trying to drive a wedge between Jericho and Owens. A fan yells at him so Jericho adds “brace face in row twelve”. We get to the Sami Zayn phone attack last week but here are Enzo and Cass to interrupt. Cass lists off some great friendships, including Bevis and Butthead and Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson.

Cue the Shining Stars to offer some time shares. This brings out the New Day with Kofi saying they have a very good reason to be out here. Big E.: “We have nothing better to do.” Woods promises to keep the titles on Sunday so here are Anderson and Gallows to interrupt. Jericho says everyone in the ring is on his stupid idiot list but here’s Sami because we need a tenth guy for the huge tag match.

Shining Stars/Chris Jericho/Anderson and Gallows vs. Enzo and Cass/Sami Zayn/New Day

We start after a break with Kofi spinning into a crossbody for two on Jericho. It’s off to Sami vs. Epico before Big E. comes in for his spanking abdominal stretch. Anderson comes in and catches Kofi with a spinebuster as the bad guys take over. That lasts all of thirty seconds before the hot tag brings in Big Cass to clean house. The Empire Elbow gets two on Primo as everything breaks down. Sami runs the corner for his tornado DDT and there’s a Helluva Kick to Primo. The Bada Boom Shaka Lacka is enough for the pin on Primo at 5:24.

**Rating:** D+. This is as simple of a way as you’re going to find to do three matches in one on a show where Stephanie needs ten segments. I’m assuming Enzo and Cass get their win back on Sunday’s pre-show and that’s fine enough of a way to end such a nothing feud. Enzo and Cass have to fight New Day sometime and they’d be fine to take the belts away, especially since New Day is less than three months away from Demolition’s record.

We recap the opening segment.

Videos on Gran Metalik and Rich Swann.

Video on Eddie Guerrero in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Here's Foley to introduce the cruiserweights. After screwing up a few of his lines, Foley talks about the Cruiserweight Classic and introduces Rich Swann, Gran Metalik, Cedric Alexander and Brian Kendrick. Foley makes the first match: a fatal fourway for the shot at TJ Perkins' Cruiserweight Title on Sunday.

Rich Swann vs. Gran Metalik vs. Cedric Alexander vs. Brian Kendrick

One fall to a finish. It's a brawl to start since there are no tags, eventually leaving us with Kendrick and Alexander. Brian bails to the floor but gets kicked in the face so Alexander sunset flips Metalik for two. A springboard clothesline gets two more on Metalik but Swann comes back in to kick Cedric in the back.

Swann and Alexander trade strikes and miss kicks until Cedric flips out of a headscissors. A big flip dive takes Kendrick down and it's only Metalik in the ring. You know what that means as Metalik dives onto everyone, finally drawing a reaction from the crowd. Kendrick breaks up Metalik's springboard and throws Swann and Alexander into various objects. A few kicks to Swann's leg take us to a break.

Back with Alexander breaking up Swann's cover on Metalik but Kendrick grabs a tornado DDT for two of his own on Metalik. Swann's jumping 450 looks to finish Alexander but Kendrick grabs his Captain's Hook (bully choke) on Cedric, only to have Metalik make the save. A Lumbar Check drops Metalik and the Captain's Hook makes Alexander tap and sends Kendrick to the title shot at 15:04.

**Rating:** C-. Blame it on whomever you want but this fell apart because of the time. This should have been about people flying all over the place and keeping things moving. You know, like a cruiserweight match. Instead it was your run of the mill WWE multi-man match with WAY too much time and the fans just dying throughout. The guys ran out of things to do and then had six or seven minutes to go. Horrible booking decision here and odds are it's more of the same bickering between Kevin Dunn and HHH's camps with Kevin trying

to shoot down whatever HHH sets up. Oh and the new champ doesn't even get a cameo? Really?

Nia Jax vs. Alicia Fox on the pre-show.

### Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns

Non-title and inside a cage. Reigns slugs away to start but wants nothing of going through the door. The champ gets beaten down in the corner and a running clothesline makes it even worse. A ram into the cage wall sets up a superkick for two on Roman and we take a break. Back with Owens getting crotched on the top and getting crushed up against the cage a few times.

Reigns' clotheslines have Owens in trouble but he has to Superman punch his way out of a Pop Up Powerbomb. The second attempt at the powerbomb gets two for Owens and they go to the top rope for some rams into the cage. Both guys are down and Reigns sprints up the cage to get outside before Owens can go through the door for the win at 13:17.

**Rating:** D+. Not only was it boring and not only was there no reason for this to be a cage match but Reigns winning makes Owens' big problem even worse: he feels like someone who is just there while Stephanie has her issues with Foley/Rollins/Smackdown or whatever disease she's so passionate about that week. This should have been Rusev coming out and costing Reigns the match and then doing the beatdown that we all know is coming. But no, instead Reigns is the big star and Owens is just another loser.

Post match, Rusev comes out and locks the door so he can put Reigns in the Accolade. You know, because THERE'S NO WAY REIGNS COULD EVER GET OVER A CAGE WALL. Rollins comes out and does the big dive off the top (reminiscent of Rey Mysterio in the early days of the first Brand Split), not even bothering to look at the door because THERE ISN'T A ROOF ON THE CAGE. Everyone is down to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. It's just too long and I don't know how many other ways there are to say that. Whether it's seeing Sheamus vs. Cesaro week after week after week or the cruiserweights' debut being



one of the biggest messes I've seen in a long time or even more Stephanie and Foley hijinks, these shows feel like they're going on for days instead of three hours. These shows are too long and the matches and promos having to be stretched out to fill in the time shows worse every week.

Then there's the main feud as it feels like Stephanie's latest promo about her power struggle (which DOESN'T EXIST) should end Sunday's show instead of Owens vs. Rollins. It's like watching some kids movie about rival Little League teams where the parents are more into the fighting than the adults and that's getting really, really annoying.

Just let HHH come back and do the match with Rollins at Survivor Series like they should, rather than stretching this ALL THE WAY TO FREAKING WRESTLEMANIA BECAUSE HHH IS WORTHY OF THE BIG STAGE. That main event and these stupid angles ticked me off tonight like they haven't in a long, long time and that's not good for any show, especially when they're heading into a pay per view.

### Results

Rusev vs. Seth Rollins went to a double countout

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara – Powerslam

Charlotte/Dana Brooke b. Bayley/Sasha Banks – Big boot to Bayley

Cesaro b. Sheamus – Neutralizer

New Day/Enzo and Big Cass/Sami Zayn b. Shining Stars/Chris

Jericho/Anderson and Gallows – Bada Boom Shaka Lacka to Primo

Brian Kendrick b. Gran Metalik, Rich Swann and Cedric Alexander – Captain's Hook to Alexander

Roman Reigns b. Kevin Owens – Reign escaped the cage

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# Monday Night Raw – September 5, 2016: A Labor Of Boredom

## Monday Night Raw

Date: September 5, 2016

Location: Sprint Center Arena, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're in the Kevin Owens Era but the questions remain focused on HHH, who helped Owens win the title last week while also costing Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns at the same time. This almost has to set up a big match in the very near future though it's really not clear gets to fight whom. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the last five minutes of Raw and focuses on the big online reaction.

Earlier today Stephanie McMahon demanded a big celebration for Owens. Mick Foley came up and looked really upset. Last week, HHH made him look like a fool and Stephanie won't talk to him about it. Stephanie gets all serious when Foley accuses her of knowing what HHH was going to do. Stephanie: "Who do you think you're talking to?" Oh here we go.

Foley actually cuts her off and tells a story about meeting Stephanie just after he flew off the Cell in 1998 and thought she was an innocent girl. Stephanie almost sounds vulnerable as she asks

how she can maintain a shred of dignity after what happened last week. Mick believes her but gives a thinly veiled threat if this is all a lie.

Opening sequence.

Mick and Stephanie are in the ring and welcome Owens (in a SUIT) as the balloons fall and pyro goes off. Owens agrees that he does deserve this before ripping into the fans for making it all about themselves with the YOU DESERVE IT chants. He's known that since the day he set foot in this ring and doesn't need the fans to tell him that all over again. Last week he beat three superstars to win this title and yeah he got a little nudge from HHH.

Owens had already done 98% of the work though so tonight it's officially the Kevin Owens Show. This brings out a ticked off Rollins to say this isn't about Owens. Instead he goes off on Stephanie for letting him down last week. Owens says this isn't about Seth but Rollins keeps going on his rampage and says everyone is in Stephanie's pocket. Kevin has been HHH's chosen one since the day he debuted in NXT but Seth is here to burn the whole thing to the ground.

Owens thinks Rollins has only been making plans for failures so Seth punches him in the face. Stephanie suspends Seth indefinitely but Foley immediately overturns it, drawing him one of the loudest pops he's gotten in years. Instead of suspending him, Foley gives Seth (Foley to Seth: "I've never really liked you.") the title match at Clash of the Champions.

This was good stuff for the most part, assuming you can ignore HHH helping Rollins last week not being brought up. Rollins seemingly turning face (or at least starting it off) is a really good thing and WAY overdue but it certainly seems to be a slower burn than a full on version. Either way, Clash just got a lot better looking on paper.

After a break, Stephanie and Foley are yelling at each other (Stephanie's third appearance in twenty three minutes) when Owens comes up. Foley gives him a match against Sami Zayn, which draws in

Jericho. Chris gets in a hilarious line by calling Owens the longest reigning Universal Champion in history. That earns him a match against Rollins later.

### Charlotte vs. Bayley

Non-title and Charlotte has given Dana a clipboard to take notes. Bayley starts in on the arm and throws some Japanese armdrags, only to have Charlotte send her face first into the buckle. That just fires Bayley up and she sends Charlotte into the buckles a few times instead. Charlotte heads outside and Bayley tries a dropkick under the ropes (think Sami's diving DDT) but leaves it way short, leaving her to just kick Charlotte in the chest instead. Bayley is favoring her knee as we go to a break.

Back with Charlotte holding the figure four neck lock and actually getting two off a rollup. Charlotte slams the bad leg into the corner and then wraps it around the leg. That sets up a half crab and DDT on the knee but Bayley grabs a rollup to break the momentum. Some limping ax handles to the chest have Charlotte in trouble but Dana pulls Charlotte out of the way of an elbow. Somehow that's not a DQ so Bayley kicks Charlotte into Dana and hits the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 12:40.

**Rating:** C+. The important thing here is the time. This match worked because it had some time to set up the leg injury and the ending made sense (save for ANOTHER lack of a disqualification) due to the extra focus it received. You can't do anything important in a four minute match and it helped so much to actually let this thing go somewhere for a change. Good stuff and the PPV rematch is obvious. Connor's Cure video for children's cancer awareness month.

Charlotte yells at Dana, who promises to make up for it. That earns her one heck of a slap in the face.

### Bo Dallas vs. Kyle Roberts

Bo is all serious here despite holding up a BELIEVE IN B0 sign (please don't let this be ANOTHER political themed character) He takes Roberts down and hammers away before snapping off some knees

to the face. A Roll of the Dice (as Cole described it) puts Roberts away in 38 seconds.

Owens and Jericho fire each other up.

#### Chris Jericho vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins starts fast with a dropkick and sends Jericho outside for a suicide dive. Oh yeah he's wrestling like a face. Back in and Jericho slaps him a few times as the fans aren't sure who to cheer for. Jericho sends him face first into the buckle and we take a break. Back with Rollins hammering away and getting two off the Sling Blade. A Blockbuster gets the same and Rollins might as well have a big sign saying YEP I'M A FACE NOW around his neck.

Rollins dropkicks him out of the air but gets caught in the Walls. That goes as far as you would expect and Rollins' low superkick gets two. Rollins gets caught on top but still shoves Jericho off, only to miss the frog splash. The Lionsault gets a close two as this is really picking up. The Codebreaker is broken up and a Pedigree puts Jericho away at 13:47.

**Rating:** B. Anyone who has watched Rollins for years now has known he would be an awesome face and that's certainly what you got here. Rollins looked great out there and he's just so easy to cheer with this offense. I don't think he gets the title back at Clash but it's going to be fun watching him in this new role.

#### Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #3 in the series with Cesaro down 2-0 and coming in with a bad shoulder/back. Cesaro grabs some rollups for early near falls but a backdrop has him in trouble. Sheamus sends the back into the apron and drives in some knees. The Cloverleaf is blocked but Sheamus grabs four straight Irish Curses for a near fall. With that not working, Sheamus lifts him up for the Celtic Cross but drops it down into a backbreaker. The Brogue Kick makes it 3-0 to Sheamus at 4:06.

**Rating:** C. Well that happened and I really don't care. Thank goodness the fourth match is at a house show on Wednesday so I don't have to put up with seeing them again that many times. The back

injury is fine but my goodness I've seen enough of these matches for my lifetime. It really feels like a way to give the writers a month off and that gets old in a hurry.

#### Shining Stars vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Before the match, Enzo thinks he's in labor so Cass, who has watched a lot of ER, performs Lamaze with HOW YOU DOING replacing the "hoo hoo" part. Enzo and Cass take over to start and it's off to a quick break. Back with Enzo in trouble but avoiding a Primo charge and making the hot tag off to Cass. The Bada Boom Shaka Lacka is broken up and Epico rolls Enzo up with a handful of trunks at 7:05. Too much was in the break to rate but I'd again like to point out that NO ONE CARES ABOUT THE SHINING STARS.

Sami Zayn says his career has been stuck in place since he beat Owens, who is now the Universal Champion. Owens comes in and laughs at the idea that Sami is chasing him now. The race will never be over and Sami says he'll win the title on his own, without HHH handing it to him on a silver platter.

#### Nia Jax vs. Ann Esposito

Apparently Ann is friends Alicia Fox. Nia throws her around to start but gets caught in a sleeper to actually put her in trouble. That earns Ann a ram into the corner and a throw to the mat, followed by three straight Umaga attacks in the corner. A fireman's carry into a powerslam (with a pause before the powerslam) ends Ann at 1:38.

It's time for Anderson and Gallows to not be funny. Now they're retirement specialists who have already gotten rid of the Dudley Boyz, so now let's welcome the OLD DAY. Cue some New Day impersonators (one on a motorized scooter, one on a walker and one on a cane) to a slow motion version of their theme. The crowd is just silent for this as the Old Day says everything changed for them at Clash of Champions. We get every old person joke you can imagine, including Big E.'s hips going out as he does the swivel.

Cue the real New Day to ask which X-Man is their favorite. For some reason it's Cyclops....which isn't all that funny. Kofi thinks

there's a paradox taking place here and if the New Day comes into contact with the Old Day, the WWE Universe will explode. Anderson and Gallows bail and dancing ensues, only to have Old Day's sneak attack completely fail. The old guys are beaten down to finally wrap this up. This went on WAY too long and it just wasn't very funny.

We look back at the opening sequence.

#### Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal

Titus O'Neil is on commentary for reasons of pure torture. Darren gets an early two off a swinging neckbreaker but has to fight out of a chinlock. Titus goes out to ringside as Darren hits the Gut Check for the pin at 2:15.

Darren and Titus fight again after the match.

Alicia Fox checks on her injured friend when Nia Jax, who just happened to be there, shows up and laughs. Total Divas is mentioned and Fox yells a lot while throwing things. Nia just leaves as she goes nuts.

#### Braun Strowman vs. Sin Cara

Well it's better than jobber after jobber. Cara is fighting due to Braun ripping off the luchador's mask last week. A dropkick sends Braun into the corner but he explodes out with a shoulder. We hit the neck crank and nerve hold for a bit before Braun sends him outside. Cara is tossed into the steps but comes back with a dropkick, only to be whipped into the barricade for the countout at 2:11. Are we really going to have to watch this again next week? Really?

Strowman beats Cara up even worse post match.

Here's Sasha Banks for an announcement. She talks about how every story has an ending before talking about the Divas Revolution. Back in July 2015, Stephanie McMahon (oh yeah) introduced the Divas Revolution and it was a new era without bra and panties matches (which there hadn't been in YEARS) and no more butterfly title (not for about nine months actually).

This revolution was about every little girl and every person who has

been told they're not enough. She used to collect soda cans to try to save up enough money to come to a WWE event. Sasha starts crying as she talks about being injured at Summerslam and she has an update on her condition. Cue Dana Brooke to say she's going to use Sasha's broken body to finish what Charlotte started at Summerslam. Dana goes after Sasha but gets caught in a Bank Statement. The bad news was for Charlotte, who will be facing Sasha at Clash of Champions.

#### Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They start slugging it out at the bell and it's quickly outside with Sami going shoulder first into the barricade. Sami does his moonsault off the barricade (and kicks Owens square in the face) as we take a break. Back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock and sending Owens to the floor for back to back flip dives.

The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two but Owens rolls to the apron before the Helluva Kick. A Stunner over the ropes has Sami in trouble but the half and half suplex gets two on the champ. Sami climbs the ropes but lands on a bad ankle. Owens can't hit the apron powerbomb so Sami grabs another half and half to drop Kevin on his head. Back in and the ankle gives out again, setting up the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin on Sami at 13:05.

**Rating:** B-. This was their usual good match but you knew Owens wasn't going to lose his first match as the champion. Sami will probably get his title match at some point in the future and that's going to be one heck of a rollercoaster when they finally get there. Good stuff here though but this show is way past saving.

Post match here's Roman Reigns to a LOUD chorus of booing. Chris Jericho comes out to have Owens' back but Foley prevents the violence. Next week it's Roman vs. Owens and if Reigns wins, it's a triple threat at Clash of the Champions. They had that same booking idea recently on Smackdown and it's still overdone here. Reigns spears Jericho to let off some steam and end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D. This show hit a wall in the middle and it just never recovered. That being said, it's not like they had that much good going on in the first place. I liked the opening sequence and



there was some good wrestling in the middle but pretty much everything from Cesaro vs. Sheamus until the main event was just death. Then again this is a holiday show and no one is going to watch it but it gets really tiring watching a badly bloated show with so little effort from the creative side of things.

### Results

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Bo Dallas b. Kyle Roberts – Roll of the Dice

Seth Rollins b. Chris Jericho – Pedigree

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

Shining Stars b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Nia Jax b. Ann Esposito – Powerslam

Darren Young b. Jinder Mahal – Gut Check

Braun Strowman b. Sin Cara via countout

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

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# Monday Night Raw – August 29, 2016: It's His Show And We're Just Watching It

## Monday Night Raw

Date: August 29, 2016

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's a big night this week as we're guaranteed a new Raw World Champion in a fatal fourway with Kevin Owens, Big Cass, Roman Reigns and Seth Rollins facing off for the title. It's hard to say what we're going to get at Clash of the Champions in about a month so hopefully we can start setting some stuff up tonight. Let's get to it.

In Memory of Mr. Fuji.

We recap Balor's shoulder injury and the setup for tonight's title match.

All four World Title participants for the title are in the ring with Corey Graves moderating. Rollins cuts him off and says they're all here because of him so he'll cede his time to someone else. Owens talks about how he's a prize fighter and tonight he's fighting for a prize. That leaves Reigns, who Owens just allows to be booted.

Cass is tall...and that's about it. Cass: "Did Jericho write that for you?" Cass says he's the biggest dog in this fight, causing Owens to point to Reigns. Seth is glad that this is an elimination match so he can beat up all of them in one night. A brawl breaks out with Reigns and Cass having a staredown before the ring is cleared. I'm glad they kept this short since no one said anything important and it was just hype for the main event.

## Neville vs. Chris Jericho

Before the match, Jericho says Owens will win tonight but promises

everyone the Gift of Jericho. This is their first match since Neville broke his ankle back in the spring. A catapult puts Jericho on the floor early but he hides behind the ref to get in a cheap shot and send us to a break. Back with Jericho putting on a chinlock but diving into a kick to the ribs.

Neville moonsaults out to the floor and avoids a charge into the corner, setting up a small package for two. A superkick drops Jericho and I'm very surprised at how hot the crowd is despite such a big main event. The Red Arrow misses and the Liontamer make Neville tap at 10:50.

**Rating:** C+. I continue to be very glad that Neville can do more things than just the Red Arrow as those one spot guys can get lost in the shuffle quickly. Neville being a main eventer was a long shot at best but he's fine in the midcard where he could pull off an upset and most people wouldn't be that shocked.

Earlier today Bayley met the New Day and dancing ensues until Dana Brooke comes up, setting up a six person tag along with Gallows and Anderson. The key here: it didn't feel scripted. Instead it seems like the producer said "Bayley runs into the New Day and you've got two minutes. Go." That works so much better than scripting out the jokes and gives you entertaining things like this.

#### Nia Jax vs. Haion

Jax runs her over and finishes with an AA into a powerslam at 1:15. Anderson and Gallows now run a retirement home and suggest that New Day will be joining Team 3D. Nurse Dana Brooke comes in and puts on a rubber glove.

Video on Seth Rollins.

#### Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Sami has a bad ankle coming in and he tweaks it early on, allowing Mahal to smack him in the back of the head for two. A chinlock doesn't go very far and Sami comes back with the Helluva Kick for the pin at 3:06.

**Rating:** C. I'm still waiting for an explanation of why they brought

Mahal back. He's fine enough for a warm body but of all people, Jinder Mahal? Anyway I'm assuming this is the start of something for Sami as the announcers kept talking about how he wanted the title. If Owens wins it tonight, there's no logical reason to not do Sami vs. Owens at Clash of the Champions.

Earlier tonight Sasha Banks was on the pre-show, saying that Charlotte was trying to injure her and end her career. Sasha will be back for revenge and the title.

#### New Day/Bayley vs. Dana Brooke/Anderson and Gallows

Charlotte is on commentary and doesn't think much of Bayley putting on a unicorn horn and eating Booty0's. The women start with Bayley getting some quick two counts before working on the arm. It's quickly off to Big E. for a belly to belly (gimmick infringer) on Anderson as the champs take over. That lasts all of a few seconds before the villains beat him down in the corner. The hot (or at least moderately warm) tag brings in Kofi for the Unicorn Stampede, including a running dropkick from Bayley. Some dancing sends us to a break.

Back with the camera on the commentators as the match is going on behind them. I smell Kevin Dunn's fingers all over this. We actually look at the match to see Kofi in trouble and getting elbowed in the face. Kofi gets in a double stomp and makes the tag to Big E. for the house cleaning. Everything breaks down and Kofi does an insane dive over the top, nearly breaking his arm in the process. Back in and Dana gets two off a rollup, only to have the Bayley to Belly wrap it up at 12:28.

**Rating:** C+. The crowd was digging the heck out of this and I can't blame them a bit. This was the perfect match for Bayley as New Day is over by definition and she fits in perfectly with them. Bayley gets another win to help set up her title match at Clash of the Champions and Anderson and Gallows save face. Good stuff all around and a fun match.

Cesaro says no one likes Sheamus so he'll spin him around and around and around.

Video on Big Cass.

### Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #2 in a best of seven series with Sheamus up 1-0. Before the match, Sheamus says he'll prove that he's just the better man. Cesaro takes him down to the mat to start and gets two off a double stomp. Sheamus' arm is banged up and the announcers want the match stopped to check it. Thankfully it's a dropkick to send Sheamus outside and we take a break.

Back with the Irish Curse getting two but Cesaro comes right back by hitting the springboard corkscrew uppercut. The high cross body connects (check your Bingo card) and Cesaro sends it outside. That goes well for Sheamus who backdrops him back first into the post, setting up the Cloverleaf for the submission at 11:15.

**Rating:** C+. Points for putting a story into the series with Cesaro's back injury though I'm still having issues getting interested in even more of these matches. WWE has a real problem of just having the same match over and over and then wondering why it stops being interesting in the process. Make it best of three or just do a 2/3 falls match or something but having it go twice that long doesn't seem like the best move.

Tribute video to Mr. Fuji and it's as good as you would expect from WWE.

Video on Kevin Owens.

### Braun Strowman vs. Americo

Standard masked luchador. It's the squash you would expect with Strowman throwing him around and tossing him into the air for a faceplant and the pin at 58 seconds.

Strowman unmaskes him post match.

Here's Stephanie McMahon to address Shane McMahon getting F5'd at Summerslam, but first she has to say we're about to crown the "first" Universal Champion. Paul Heyman cuts her off but Stephanie is right there to cut his balls off by demanding an apology. Heyman talks about how Lesnar provides value to Raw and is here to pay

Lesnar's \$500 fine. He pulls out a pile of \$1 bills but Stephanie throws them onto the floor. Stephanie wants to know what value Heyman offers to Raw and warns him of a coming storm.

Heyman goes into a rant about the board of directors and how Stephanie can control everyone but Lesnar. For some reason this turns into a discussion on female empowerment with Stephanie saying Heyman is staring at the women's revolution. Heyman apologizes to her and she accepts before dropping the mic and leaving. With Stephanie gone, Heyman chuckles and smirks.

Video on Balor's injury and surgery.

Video on Roman Reigns.

### Titus O'Neil vs. Darren Young

The aggressive Young knocks Titus to the floor where he asks for a timeout. Back in and a hard whip sends Darren over the corner where he lands on a camera to break it into pieces. Some neck cranks don't go anywhere so Young crucifixes him for the pin at 4:04.

**Rating:** D-. Can ANYONE explain why this feud is still going or why I'm supposed to care about them fighting over and over again? Neither guy is interesting and it seems like a character that exists for the sake of the Presidential elections and nothing more. Total filler here and it's getting more and more annoying every match.

Backlund and Young celebrate so Titus beats them both up.

Mick Foley apologizes for not being out there for Stephanie but she didn't need him. He suggests that everyone is barred from ringside tonight and again Stephanie says it's the first Universal Title match. Rollins comes in and Stephanie wishes him luck.

### Raw World Title: Big Cass vs. Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns vs. Seth Rollins

The title is vacant coming in and this is under elimination rules. Mick and Stephanie are at ringside as they should be. Cass says he's shocking the world tonight. The bell rings after a break (THANK YOU!) and Owens immediately heads outside. The Cass vs. Reigns showdown is delayed again as the villains go after the big men and

it's time to pair off.

Seth and Kevin are knocked outside and we get the big showdown with Cass blocking the Superman Punch. A running big boot knocks Reigns outside with Cass falling out as well. Rollins dives onto Cass but Owens drops him onto the barricade, only to have Reigns dive onto Owens and Cass as we take a break. Back with Owens in control and getting two off the backslash to Cass.

Reigns fights back with his string of clotheslines until Cass kicks his head off. They've done a really good job of making Cass look like he belongs here in the first ten minutes. A big boot puts Owens on the floor and the Empire Elbow hits Rollins. The East River Crossing is broken up by a Superman Punch and the low superkick gets two. Owens adds the Frog Splash to get rid of Cass at 13:46. I'm sure Saxton saying he thinks Cass can pull it off a minute earlier didn't give that away for anyone. Also, I believe that's the first time Cass has been pinned on the main roster.

Back from a second break with Reigns powerbombing Owens and Rollins for a Tower of Doom. Rollins' falcon arrow gets two on Roman but the Superman Punch knocks Rollins out of the air for two more. Cole describes this as incredible action for the second time in about a minute.

Owens comes back in with a superkick to Rollins, setting up back to back Cannonballs for another big reaction. The crowd has somehow stayed hot all night and that's a really good sign. The Superman Punch gets two on Owens and you can hear the crowd's sigh of relief on the kickout. Owens' Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with another Superman Punch and Reigns hits a quick sitout powerbomb for two on Seth.

A spear drops Rollins on the floor but here's HHH of all people to Pedigree Reigns on the floor. HHH throws Rollins back inside for the pin on Reigns at 23:48 (POP!), meaning Rollins needs HHH's help yet again. HHH throws Owens inside, Pedigrees Rollins and gives a shocked Owens the title at 25:05.

**Rating:** B+. This is a hard one to grade as they nailed the near

falls and the drama to near perfection but I really don't care for HHH being back AGAIN and presumably setting up HHH vs. Rollins and/or Reigns. That's the standard problem with HHH: even if someone new is getting a big title win, it's still about HHH for a long time. However, let's get to the good part: KEVIN OWENS IS WORLD CHAMPION! Yeah that hasn't quite sunk in yet but it's actually happened and that is most certainly a good thing.

HHH leaves and Owens celebrates to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. Make no mistake about it: the main event is the ONLY thing on this show that mattered in the slightest. The only other thing of note was the really awkward Stephanie vs. Heyman promo and I'm still not sure what happened there. They did a really good job with the title match though (HHH involvement aside) and that's all that matters on this show. A lot of this stuff is going to depend on the fallout but I'm very happy with Owens winning as he's definitely the most logical option. Good show with a red hot crowd throughout helping it along.

### Results

Chris Jericho b. Neville – Liontamer

Nia Jax b. Haion – Fireman's carry into a powerslam

Sami Zayn b. Jinder Mahal – Helluva Kick

New Day/Bayley b. Dana Brooke/Anderson and Gallows – Bayley to Belly to Brooke

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Cloverleaf

Braun Strowman b. Americano – Faceplant

Darren Young b. Titus O'Neil – Crucifix

Kevin Owens b. Seth Rollins, Roman Reigns and Big Cass – Pedigree to Rollins

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## **Monday Night Raw – March 25, 2002 (First WWF Draft): This Might Be A Bad Idea**

This seemed appropriate given what we're seeing now. Starting tonight, I'll be putting up alternating reviews from the original Brand Split with Raw going up on Wednesday and Smackdown/pay per views going up on Saturdays. There's no better place to start than on the original Draft so let's get to it.

### **Monday Night Raw**

Date: March 25, 2002

Location: Bryce Jordan Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 15,550

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This seemed due for a second look since they're doing it all again this year. We're just after Wrestlemania XVIII and things are kind of in a lull. With so many wrestlers and no big evil for the WWF to fight (since the WCW/ECW Invasion just had to be started and wrapped up by Thanksgiving), it was decided to split the rosters in two. This was a really cool idea at the time but it should be interesting to see how it worked when the initial Brand Extension isn't the most fondly remembered concept. Let's get to it.

Linda McMahon is in WWF Studios to welcome us to the show, telling us that only twenty picks will be made tonight for the sake of time. The changes won't officially take place until next week so everyone will be on Smackdown this week. As for tonight though, HHH, Chris Jericho and Stephanie McMahon can't be drafted because they're in a

triple threat for the World Title (Yes Stephanie was getting a World Title shot and was a major focus fourteen years ago as well.). Steve Austin can't be drafted either due to a contractual stipulation (read as a real life contract dispute) and is therefore a free agent and can sign wherever he wants.

Opening sequence.

There are PODIUMS ON THE STAGE! YES I SAID PODIUMS!!!

### Tazz vs. Mr. Perfect

Perfect wouldn't be around much longer due to a certain airplane ride (long and bad story). After promising to be a perfect pick, Perfect dropkicks him at the bell as we're told that the WWF and Women's Champion can compete on both shows. An early PerfectPlex gets two as Tazz is next to the ropes. Perfect charges into a boot and the Tazmission finishes quick. I wouldn't expect to see a lot of strong wrestling tonight.

Tazz says the perfect pick has become just another victim.

Ric Flair (Raw owner) and Arn Anderson are in their war room to go over their draft options.

Vince's war room is just an office. He has the first pick and a photo of Kurt Angle is visible on his desk.

Here's Vince for the first pick, which I'm sure will involve a speech. The first pick for Smackdown will be....the Rock. Well who else was it going to be? Rock leaves the locker room (walking past Undertaker and Hogan who are among the masses in a nice touch) as we see a quick graphic showing his career highlights.

Vince tells Rock that he's not allowed to put his hands on him or threatening to put his boots in various places or saying IT DOESN'T MATTER ever again. The fans cut him off with a ROCKY chant so Vince says he made both Hogan and the Rock. The boss goes to leave but Rock isn't quite done yet. To be fair he hasn't said anything yet so he hasn't actually started.

Rock wants to go out on Raw with a bang because he won the WWF World Title here, formed the Rock and Sock Connection here and did various things to Vince. We hit some catchphrases before Rock has them do the Penn State chant (WE ARE....PENN STATE) and then alters it to insult Vince even more. This was just a Rock's greatest hits stretched over about ten minutes.

Ric comes out and picks Undertaker #1 overall despite hating him. Kurt Angle comes in to yell at Vince for not picking him first. Vince talks about throwing Flair a swerve out there (By picking the Rock?) when Undertaker comes in to yell. The boss promises to make this right.

#### Edge/Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian/Booker T.

Two feuds in one here but Edge is about to start a really good feud with Angle. Booker kicks Edge in the face to start and Christian gets two off a powerslam. A quick clothesline drops Christian though as the announcers talk about Austin having a clause in his contract to make sure he's a free agent. In case of a Brand Split you see. Booker eats the Diamond Cutter but Christian gives him an Unprettier. A quick scissors kick puts Page away in a nothing match. Angle reads off his resume until Vince makes him the #2 pick.

Ric picks the NWO (Hall/Nash/X-Pac) because that's something you can do. I can't wait for that Rock vs. Nash match. The NWO is uh...not in the locker room.

Vince yells at Angle for getting the NWO (who Vince brought in to poison the company) and promises to sign Austin. Angle suggests Chris Benoit (currently out with an injury but coming back soon.) with the next pick so Vince makes him #3. Benoit would return in July and just show up on Raw with no mention of being drafted to Smackdown. If nothing else it's a good idea to have some of these picks backstage as there's no reason to have them both come out here every time.

We see both brands' big boards and JR thinks Flair's strategy is, uh, strange.

The NWO threatens Ric so he picks Kane to keep an eye on them. Aside from X-Pac, Hall is now the second shortest member of the roster.

#### Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

Ivory returned last week to start a feud with Trish. They start fast with Ivory hammering away and ducking a middle rope cross body. Trish fights out of a chinlock and grabs the Stratusphere, followed by the Stratusfaction for another nothing match.

Vince picks Hulk Hogan, whose graphic incorrectly lists him as a seven time WCW Champion.

After a break, Ric picks Intercontinental Champion Rob Van Dam.

Vince is ticked because he wanted the title so Angle suggests giving him an Intercontinental Title shot tonight so he can bring the title to Smackdown. Vince: "That's why you're the number two draft pick! Maybe he should have been #1."

Rock and Hogan have a bro moment where they praise the people. Ignoring the whole attempted murder thing from a few weeks ago, Rock agrees to team up against the NWO in a handicap match.

Vince picks Billy and Chuck as a unit.

#### The Rock/Hulk Hogan vs. NWO

The NWO powerbombed Rock through a table on Smackdown until Hogan made the save to set this up. Hogan and X-Pac get things going with a big shove sending the smaller one out to the floor. Hall gets pushed down with ease so it's off to Nash who can actually shove Hulk down.

Hogan cleans house with ease but he takes too long loading up a backdrop and gets kicked in the face. It's off to X-Pac for more kicks but Hogan knocks him away and makes the tag off to Rock. Things finally speed up and X-Pac is easily knocked to the floor. The Rock Bottom and legdrop get two on Nash with X-Pac making the save. It's a three on two beatdown until Kane comes out for the DQ.

**Rating:** F. Were you expecting anything else? It says a lot when the match lasts five minutes and is this boring with a screwy ending. I mean, X-Pac can't take a fall to the combined forces of Hulk Hogan and the Rock? I could go for an entertaining match at some point tonight but I'm not feeling confident at this point.

The NWO runs off.

Vince accuses Ric of sending Kane out there so Flair takes Booker T. Vince: "Edge!" Ric: "Big Show!" Vince: "Rikishi!"

#### Jeff Hardy vs. Billy

Lita, Matt, Chuck and Rico are all at ringside. Billy fires off some right hands in the corner to start but misses a charge. The announcers talk about being drafted to different shows as Jeff hits a tornado DDT. The Swanton misses though as Lita completely botches a hurricanrana to Rico (her legs weren't around his head and he had to flip himself). Jeff grabs a rollup for a fluke pin in another

nothing match.

Ric picks Bubba Ray Dudley so he can have "the most dominant tag team in WWF history." Vince: "Well Ric it looks like you're trying to get the most dominant tag team in WWF history." Did Stephanie write this segment? Vince picks D-Von to balance things out.

The Dudleys, realizing their careers are pretty much over for the time being, hug it out.

#### European Title: William Regal vs. Rikishi

Regal is defending. And never mind as Brock Lesnar runs out and flattens Rikishi with an F5.

Jazz wants to see where the Divas end up.

Vince comes out to pick Brock but Ric says it's his pick and he'll select Brock instead. Vince: "Mark Henry!" Ric: "William Regal!" Vince: "Maven!" (Hardcore Champion). Ric: "Lita!" Vince gets on him for choosing a woman and thinks Ric just wants to sleep with her. Well duh.

Here are the picks:

#### Smackdown

1. The Rock
2. Kurt Angle
3. Chris Benoit
4. Hulk Hogan
5. Billy and Chuck
6. Edge
7. Rikishi
8. D-Von Dudley
9. Mark Henry
10. Maven

#### Raw

1. Undertaker
2. NWO
3. Kane
4. Rob Van Dam

5. Booker T.
6. Big Show
7. Bubba Ray Dudley
8. Brock Lesnar
9. William Regal
10. Lita

Riveting no?

#### Intercontinental Title: Kurt Angle vs. Rob Van Dam

Angle is challenging and grabs a German suplex for two as the bell rings. Van Dam gets stomped down as the fans chant USA. I'd assume for Angle, even though Michigan is just as American as Pennsylvania. Van Dam kicks him in the head and gets two off Rolling Thunder. Angle pulls the referee in the way of a top rope kick for the DQ. Kurt puts on the ankle lock until Edge makes the save.

Stephanie is ready to win the title.

#### WWF World Title: HHH vs. Chris Jericho vs. Stephanie McMahon

HHH is defending and the challengers have a business relationship. I have no idea why they never had a romantic relationship as that could have been amazing. If HHH pins Stephanie, she's gone FOREVER. HHH backdrops the real wrestler to start but has to look at Stephanie so Jericho can chop away. Stephanie lays down so Jericho can cover her for two but he has to save her from the Pedigree.

HHH catapults Jericho into Stephanie so we can have the falling low blow spot. Thankfully HHH kicks her to the floor so we can have an actual match for a bit. Of course Stephanie won't STAY AWAY FROM THE MATCH as she just has to come back in to screech about how Jericho needs to work on the leg. Stephanie gets run over by mistake so she slaps Jericho and demands that he get HHH. Jericho clotheslines her by mistake but gets sent to the floor, allowing HHH to tease another Pedigree. Naturally that can't happen because the fans love waiting on her getting her comeuppance instead of actually getting it.

Jericho grabs the belts (this was when there was no Undisputed Title belt yet) for a double knockout, meaning Stephanie can cover both of them. The Walls have HHH in trouble but Stephanie breaks them up by jumping on Jericho's back. A Pedigree gets rid of Jericho but THERE

SHE IS AGAIN. HHH has finally had enough and hits a spinebuster (because we can't hurt her perfect face) to retain.

**Rating:** D-. They couldn't even do a good match (which these two are certainly capable of having) because that wasn't the point here. Yeah a Wrestlemania main event rematch for the title eight days later wasn't the focus. Instead, as I'm sure you can tell, this was ALL about Stephanie and there was no hiding it. Of course her being gone "forever" lasted less than four months as she was brought back as the completely face GM of Smackdown because she's just so darn loveable that we can forgive this along with the whole Alliance thing last year.

Here's the thing: what exactly did Stephanie add to this? Why couldn't this have just been HHH vs. Jericho with Stephanie leaving if Jericho lost? It's actually a good match, Jericho is fine with losing a fall to the champ and the guys don't have to keep stopping so often so she can catch up. Horrible match of course and completely not HHH and Jericho's fault, but since it can't be Stephanie's fault either (as nothing ever can be), we'll blame...uh...oh yeah the referee. HE RUINED IT!

Stephanie of course freaks out and tries to hang on to anything she can before security takes her away. HHH sings the Goodbye Song to end the show. This was a special bonus in case you didn't get that you were watching Monday Night Stephanie.

**Overall Rating:** F. Oh sweet goodness what a mess. First of all, the match of the night was.....uhhh....you know what it was actually Mr. Perfect against Tazz in a match lasting 1:53. That's not to say it was good but it didn't have a major botch, a stupid ending or the powers of Stephanie holding it back.

Other than that though, this was a complete disaster with Smackdown being stacked, Raw basically begging Austin to come back and save the thing and the "wrestling" being little more than background noise. This was somehow worse than I remembered it, which is covering quite a bit of ground as I remember this show being horrible the last time I watched it.

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# Summerslam Count-Up – 2014: The Squash Of A Lifetime

## Summerslam 2014

Date: August 17, 2014

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 14,079

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

Time for a redo of a show with a main event billed as the Biggest Fight of the Summer. The more I think of that line, the more I like it. The main event here is Cena (subbing for the injured Bryan) defending against Brock Lesnar, who is having his first match since breaking the Streak. Interestingly enough, I don't even remember another match from this card. Let's get to it.

I usually don't say anything on the pre-show, but my goodness Renee Young is stunning. I know you often hear about the Divas looking great, but she is just beautiful, especially in a nice red dress here.

### Pre-Show: Cesaro vs. Rob Van Dam

No real story here. Rob rolls out of a wristlock to start and we hit the ECW chants. My goodness there's other stuff to cheer over people. Cesaro is sent to the floor and Rob slips a bit on his dive but still manages to kick Cesaro down and hit Rolling Thunder on the outside. Back in and Cesaro simplifies stuff by just pummeling Van Dam in the corner before throwing him down with the gutwrench suplex.

We take a break and come back with Cesaro holding a chinlock as the



announcers give us one final hype for Cena vs. Lesnar. Rob fights up for a rolling cradle and the split legged moonsault for two, followed by a superkick to put Cesaro back on the floor. This is Van Dam 101 here, which was the biggest criticism he faced during this time. The Five Star is broken up by a big uppercut but Rob is still able to block a superplex.

That earns him another uppercut though because Cesaro is pesky like that. Van Dam shoves him down again but Cesaro hits the third straight uppercut, only to be shoved down yet again. Rob is finally able to dive...right into an uppercut of course. This time it's Cesaro kicking Rob in the face for two and frustration is setting in. Back up and Van Dam hits his quick step over kick, followed by the Five Star for the pin at 8:06.

**Rating:** C-. The uppercut sequence was nice but like I said, Van Dam was just doing high spots here and nothing else. That was the case for most of his 2014 run and that's not really doing anything for him at this point. Cesaro was just wandering around at this point, which makes his Wrestlemania battle royal win feel like the biggest waste of a rub in recent history, which is really covering a lot of ground.

In a sign of the times, Hulk Hogan is brought out to open the show. Well to be fair it worked really well at Wrestlemania XXX so this isn't the worst idea in the world. He thinks it's appropriate for Hollywood Hogan to open the show here in Los Angeles and talks about how amazing Summerslam really is. This turns into a commercial for the Network, all while Hogan's video is playing behind him. Hogan hits the catchphrase and he's out in less than three minutes. This was fine and got the crowd fired up while also plugging something. Well done.

The opening video is in the theme of an old 1980s action movie trailer (Follow the Buzzards Productions) with the usual previews for the main events, but with everyone's nickname instead of their actual name. I really liked this as a movie geek and it holds up quite well a year later.

It's a shame that the curse of the standardized sets has hit Summerslam as well. It's the second biggest show of the year. Mix that stuff up people.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Miz is defending and has the Hollywood star gimmick. I still really like his work in this and still find him to be one of the better done characters. Before the match, Miz talks about being real instead of CGI and brags about how jealous you all should be of the moneymaker. Tonight he's going to make Ziggler the WWE version of the Lakers. Feeling out process to start as the announcers talk about the Ice Bucket Challenge, back when that was still a thing.

The threat of a superkick sends Miz bailing to the floor as we hear about the Shawn Michaels vs. Rick Martel match from Summerslam 1992 where it was agreed that neither would hit the other in the face. Back in and a quick rollup gets two for Dolph but he gets whipped chest first into the corner as Miz takes over. With his variety of stomps used up, Miz kicks Dolph hard in the face before slapping on a chinlock.

The fans tell Miz that he can't wrestle, but you could say the same thing about Ziggler so it's not really clear. Dolph punches him out of the air and hits a Stinger Splash before a rollup gets two more. Now the superkick connects with the moneymaker for two so we get the required attempt at bailing, only to have Dolph baseball slide him down.

Somehow that earns Ziggler a Figure Four (because Miz needed a submission hold and it's always a good thing to pay tribute to Flair, who won SO many major matches with that hold right?) but Dolph is in the ropes. His leg is fine enough for a Fameasser but Miz pops to his feet for the Skull Crushing Finale before he starts to sell. The kickout shocks Miz again but he misses another running boot, allowing Dolph to score with the Zig Zag for the pin and the title at 7:57.

**Rating:** C-. These two don't have any kind of special chemistry but they would fight each other for the better part of eternity because WWE doesn't know how to set up anything fresh more than once every few months. Ziggler winning the title gave the fans a nice moment but there was nothing to the match.

We recap the latest part of the RIVETING Brie Bella vs. Stephanie McMahon feud where Stephanie brought Daniel Bryan's physical therapist to say she and Bryan had an affair, leading to Brie slapping the therapist and getting arrested, just as she had done to Stephanie a few weeks earlier. The affair stuff was so hated that

they dropped it pretty much the next day.

Brie talks about doing a bunch of reflecting while she was in jail where she thought about Stephanie torturing Nikki while Brie was gone, how she insulted Bryan and how she paid the therapist to lie about an affair. She's going to take out the beast tonight because that's best for business. Oh dear I think I'm going to have something to say about this.

#### Divas Title: Paige vs. AJ Lee

Paige is challenging and they've been feuding for most of the summer with AJ returning and winning the title, causing Paige to start imitating her for reasons that still aren't clear. They're friends and enemies at the same time (yes I know there's a word that combines the two and no I won't use it) so Paige offers a handshake, only to have AJ rip some of her hair out. AJ stays all aggressive (Heaven help me if I say the other word about her) and sends Paige onto the announcers' table, only to have Paige come back with a knee to the ribs.

The champ gets dropped onto the barricade but Paige realizes she can't win the title via countout. Back in and we get Paige's sexy crawl over AJ before she pulls her own hair extensions out. Well no one ever accused Paige of being normal. The chinlock on AJ goes nowhere and she's able to shove Paige off the top, though she's nice enough to blow her a kiss first.

A top rope clothesline to the floor drops Paige again. The Shining Wizard gets two but Paige kicks her in the face, only to have the Paige Turner countered into the Black Widow. Just like at the Raw after Wrestlemania though, Paige powers out again and scores with the Rampaige for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** C+. This was similar to the Divas version of Shawn Michaels vs. Mr. Perfect back at Summerslam 1993 where they basically guaranteed a classic but just had a good match instead. This was one of the last good feuds before Nikki took over the title in a few months, which we're somehow still surviving nine months later. Lucky us.

Summerslam 2015 will be in New York/New Jersey. That would be slightly changed to Brooklyn

#### Jack Swagger vs. Rusev

Speaking of things still going on later, these two are still having the same match the following summer. This is also a flag match, meaning a regular match with the winner getting their flag raised. Lana (rocking the white suit here) and Zeb Colter (remember him?) are the seconds. Before the match, Lana says that Hollywood is a great example of everything wrong with America. In real life, there is no happy ending and America is full of worthless cowards.

Swagger counters with members of the US Army Color Guard to present the American flag. Rusev jumps Jack before the bell and the American flag falls, which is a big sign of disrespect. Swagger counters into a Patriot Lock as we're still waiting on the bell. The referee breaks it up so Lana orders Rusev to his feet. Now the bell rings and Jack goes after the leg and ankle again.

Rusev bails to the floor so Swagger, showing some fire for a change, follows him out with a hard clothesline. The Vader Bomb hits knees though, which really should hurt the bad leg but why bother with logic? Jack happens to have bad ribs coming in so Rusev has his own target now. With the leg breaking down, Rusev opts for a bearhug, meaning he has to stay on his feet anyway. Jack can't belly to belly his way to freedom but his second attempt works a bit better.

The Vader Bomb connects but hurts Jack's ribs all over again.

Rusev's superkick is caught in the Patriot Lock but Rusev is quickly out, only to walk into a powerslam for two. The second superkick connects and the Accolade (on one leg) goes on, only to be countered into the Patriot Lock. Rusev kicks out of that as well, spinwheel kicks Jack down, and Accolades him again for the knockout victory.

**Rating:** C. This is a tricky one to grade, as yet again, since these guys have fought roughly a dozen times, I never once believed Rusev was in trouble. That being said, they did a good job here of using the ankle injury to try to add some drama. It's a very difficult thing to do when there is almost zero doubt as to who is winning, but they gave it a good try.

The problem for these two is they're still fighting on occasion and it never gets any closer for Jack. That's something WWE is really bad about: they don't understand that fans don't want to see the same obvious match over and over again but that's what we get because there's no one other than Swagger (or Henry) to take these losses. Bring back unknown jobbers or something, because they have

about the same chance of winning and would at least feel fresh for a change.

Rusev attacks Colter post match and the Russian flag comes down.

We recap Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose, which is Dean's first attempt for revenge on Seth after Rollins broke up the Shield over the summer. Seth ran a lot previously but tonight it's time for a lumberjack match so Dean can finally get his hands on him.

### Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose

Most of the lumberjacks were attacked by Rollins and the Shield at some point in the last year and a half. Rollins is Mr. Money in the Bank here. It's a slugout as soon as they're both in the ring with Dean taking over and knocking Rollins outside. That goes as badly as you would expect for Rollins so he goes back inside for something a bit safer: Ambrose ripping at his nose. This time it's Dean being sent outside for a beating but some guys hold the attackers back.

Now it's Rollins in control for a bit so Ambrose just punches him in the face. He goes up top for no logical reason (to be fair he's supposed to be crazy) and gets caught in the Tree of Woe as Seth really takes over. A chinlock doesn't go very far as Dean is sent to the apron, only to suplex Rollins over the top and out onto the lumberjacks in a big crash. The whole thing turns into a war with Dean backdropping Rollins over the barricade.

Dean dives onto the lumberjacks because he's nuts and then down the announcers' tables to get to Rollins in the crowd. This is more like what the match should have been and it's about time they got to it. They fight into the balcony as Kane comes down to tell the lumberjacks to do their job. Bo Dallas stops Rollins from powerbombing Dean off the balcony so Seth runs towards the entrance but gets caught by Stardust, Big E. and the Usos.

Rollins is literally carried back to the ring but Dean is waiting on them with a huge dive off the top. Back in and Dirty Deeds is countered but Ambrose blasts him with the rebound lariat. NOW the crowd is way into things and Dean curb stomps Seth, only to have Kane come in for the save. The lumberjacks get in another fight because they all have anger management issues. Dean dispatches the Wyatts but walks into a briefcase shot to the face for the pin.

**Rating:** B-. This is one where your opinions may vary wildly and I'm

not going to put up much of an argument either way. There were only so many ways that they mess with the idea to keep the lumberjack gimmick going (which fit the story) while also being insane. Good, insane brawl here and that's what it needed to be.

We recap Chris Jericho vs. Bray Wyatt, which started because Bray decided it was time and didn't like Jericho calling himself a savior. Jericho beat Wyatt clean at Battleground in a stupid decision so tonight the Family is barred from ringside. I have no idea why they thought this would make me interested in seeing it again but it's better than another gimmick match.

### Bray Wyatt vs. Chris Jericho

The fireflies are still so cool looking. Bray goes right after him to start and they're quickly on the floor with Jericho stepping over Bray's hat. That's polite of him. Jericho gets shoved to the floor as the announcers start reading Tweets. I know the match isn't the most thrilling story in the world but come on. A running knee sends Jericho's head into the steps and Bray drives him into the post for good measure.

Back inside and we hit the chinlock, because no matter how insane or unconventional someone is, they make sure to throw on a chinlock. Like everyone has ever done, Jericho fights out with ease and gets one off an enziguri. Jericho's dropkick stops a charging Bray but he walks into the release Rock Bottom for two. Sister Abigail is countered into the Walls but Bray gets a rope (unlike in NXT where he tapped to the Walls years ago).

Bray goes to the middle rope so Jericho can hurricanrana him back down for a delayed two. I'm never a fan of people going up just so someone can hit them with a move. It's a stretch of the suspension of disbelief. Bray spiders up and says that he can't die because he is already dead. Jericho breaks his code for two and Bray slides outside where he smacks Jericho in the face, setting up Sister Abigail into the barricade. Back in and another Sister Abigail is enough to give Bray the pin.

**Rating:** C-. I wasn't really feeling this one as it's a match that Bray was supposed to win and then did. He was still trying to recover from the huge blow of losing the feud to Cena and losing the first match to Jericho really didn't do him any favors. The match was nothing to see either as Jericho was starting to run on fumes

again here. This would have been so much more effective if Jericho hadn't won the first match.

Bray serenades us post match.

We recap Brie Bella vs. Stephanie McMahon, which was a recap I needed when I watched this show live as the whole thing was such a mess. So Stephanie was all evil to Daniel Bryan, but Bryan is on the shelf with his neck injury so the feud was transferred over to Brie, because Brie and Bryan are totally the same thing.

Stephanie threatened to fire Brie but Brie quit first, leaving Stephanie to torture Nikki by putting her in handicap matches against such devastating forces as Alicia Fox, Rosa Mendes, Cameron and Eva Marie. Yes, this was really supposed to be intimidating. Brie and Stephanie sued each other over slapping each other because that's what this feud needed. Then Brie offered to drop the charges in exchange for a match with Stephanie at Summerslam, because that's how wrestling works.

#### Stephanie McMahon vs. Brie Bella

This is Stephanie's first match in ten years and the announcers act like it's Bruno vs. Hogan. We immediately get to the point as Stephanie comes out in something that looks like a superhero outfit with skin tight leather that shows off every inch of her figure. Oh and of course she throws the Four Horsewomen sign to Ronda Rousey and the other three women whose names no one knows (in the front row when Rousey was just starting to make noise as a big time star) because Stephanie is cool like that.

The announcers swoon over Stephanie like it's Trish in 2000 and then give Brie a polite response. That's the match right there: Brie looks good while Stephanie looks amazing and it's entirely by design. Stephanie shoves Brie against the ropes to start and blows her a kiss. Brie gets back up and can barely do a lockup properly. Some shoulders in the corner have Brie in more trouble as the announcers try to act like Brie is some big physical threat while also pointing out that Stephanie has long legs.

The big slap is blocked though and the threat of a YES Lock sends Stephanie outside, likely out of fear due to how bad Brie made the hold look on Raw a few weeks back. Brie's suicide dive is blocked by a forearm to the face and it's Stephanie in control again. Stephanie talks trash and busts out a Hennig neck snap, drawing a YOU STILL

GOT IT (shut up. Stephanie never had it in the ring in the first place. Think before you chant) and even more praise from the announcers.

Stephanie cranks on both arms as Brie has been on offense for all of fifteen seconds so far. An evil look that would make Edge jealous looks to set up...something, but Brie comes back with a Thesz press and the YES Kicks in the corner. Well close enough to them as she can't get the timing right because the one spot that is going to get her a cheer is too complicated for her.

The middle rope dropkick gets two on Stephanie and Brie follows up with some of the absolute worst punches I have ever seen. I mean even Lita's horrible punches (go back and watch her matches. She's one of the most athletic women in wrestling history but she couldn't throw a good punch to save her life) look great compared to these. HHH comes out but Nikki is here as well because those two are so equal. The Pedigree is countered into whatever Brie calls her imitation of the YES Lock because that's not the hold her husband uses.

HHH pulls the referee out anyway, which shocks Cole for some reason. I have no idea why Cole is switching sides so fast because he's spent the last ten minutes praising Stephanie. Brie baseball slides HHH and does the YES chant, only to have Nikki come in...and turn on Brie because that's the least logical and worst idea they could go with for this story. Stephanie Pedigrees Brie for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Where do I even start with this one? First and foremost: Brie Bella is a horrible wrestler. She's a beautiful woman, she's found the right look for herself with the ripped tights and shirt tied around her waist and she can clap on the floor, but she just does not have it in the ring. Some of the stuff in here was Eva Marie level work with those punches and the inability to do a lockup properly just being unforgivable.

On top of that, this is the wrong story. After the months and months of the Authority tormenting the Bellas, they win here in the end with Brie getting squashed until a quick comeback at the end, only to have it all taken away from her again so we can get to the Bella feud that no one other than the Total Divas producers wanted to see. Nikki turning on Brie would lead to the "I wish you died in the womb" nonsense that went on forever and was then just dropped, but I



spent a three months ranting about that so I'll cut myself off for now. Brie should have won here, no matter how bad she looked in the ring.

That gets us to the final point: this match was ALL about Stephanie. Brie was just the person in the ring to bounce off of her as Stephanie got to look great (both mechanically and physically. I know she gets a lot of flack, but Stephanie can rock some tight outfits) out there and even had the crowd cheering for her. That praise was well deserved though as Stephanie was as polished here as any Diva had been since probably Mickie James but, as is always the case, Stephanie has to look great and can't get any comeuppance. In this case though, she deserves a lot of praise because this was one heck of a performance.

Some fan won a contest and got to make a character called Mama's Boy, complete with some training. He even got to make an entrance at NXT, to the Hurricane's old theme song for some reason. Eh cute enough.

#### Randy Orton vs. Roman Reigns

This is due to Reigns costing Orton a title shot and Reigns' first big solo match. I like the blue trim on Reigns' attire but it can be a bit distracting. Orton goes right at him to start and is quickly headbutted out to the floor. Some right hands and a clothesline put Orton outside again but he sends Reigns into the steps and takes it back inside for a chinlock. This isn't exactly thrilling stuff so far. We hit the Garvin Stomp followed by a nice top rope superplex for two. I love a good superplex.

Back to the chinlock for a bit before Reigns counters into a rear naked choke of all things. See, why doesn't he do stuff like that more often today? There's more to life than clotheslines. Orton falls backwards to escape and we're right back to the chinlock. Orton isn't exactly giving Reigns much to work with here. The Samoan drop gives Roman a breather and he jacks Randy's jaw to set up the apron kick. Lawler: "Reigns kicked the Kryptonite out of him!"

Orton whips him into the barricade to take over again though and drops him onto the announcers' table to keep Roman in trouble. Back in again and Reigns punches his way back into it (shocking I know), followed by a super Samoan drop for two more. The Superman Punch knocks Orton silly but he counters the spear into one heck of a

powerslam. That looked great.

The Orton DDT gets two but Reigns gets up for another Superman Punch, only to dive into the RKO for a very near fall. Randy is livid so he loads up the Punt, which is about the dumbest thing you can do against someone who uses the spear for a finisher. Well that's how it should have ended but instead Reigns just moves away from the Punt and then the spear is good for the pin.

**Rating:** B-. This was supposed to be a huge turning point for Reigns' career but it came off as just an ok match with some good moments. The first seven to eight minutes really dragged this down as the chinlocks took the crowd out of things. Now to their credit, Orton and Reigns were able to get them back later on but this needed some tweaks to really make it work. It's Reigns' biggest win yet but it really wasn't anything great.

Long recap of John Cena vs. Brock Lesnar. The idea is Cena beat Lesnar two and a half years ago when Lesnar returned, but since then Lesnar has reached his full Beast Mode and is the unstoppable monster. Cena is pretty clearly a fill in for the injured Daniel Bryan, who would have made for a better story here. They really aren't hiding the fact that Lesnar is going to win the title here but you know Cena isn't going down without a fight.

#### WWE World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena

Cena is defending of course. They do the big staredown across the ring before the bell and we get one of my favorite Cole lines: "It's the biggest fight of the summer." I know that was the tagline going into this match but I love his delivery there. Before we get started, awesome sign in the crowd: "Cena wins, we logically discuss on Twitter." Cena charges right at him but gets taken down to the mat...and the F5 connects at thirty seconds. I actually screamed "NO WAY! NO WAY!" when I saw that for the first time.

Lesnar shouts that Cena just had his one chance and I think everyone in the building believes him. Cena looks totally out of it and we're 90 seconds into this. The first release German suplex sends Cena flying and the fans are just stunned. German #2 has Cena's mouth hanging open and the replay makes it look even worse. Cena wildly swings but only hits the mat.

A quick drive into the corner and some shots to the ribs just annoy Lesnar as he knees Cena to the mat and slaps on a chinlock so Cena

can remember what planet he's on. More punches from Cena are stopped by a knee as this is even more dominant than I remembered. Four more Germans (six total, counting a snap that I didn't mention) have Cena a crippled mass in the middle of the ring. Lesnar drives even more knees into the ribs and pulls Cena up so he can throw another German.

The referee FINALLY checks on Cena, who says he'll have two eggs and sausage. John goes flying off another German but elbows out of the next and gets in some right hands and a clothesline, followed by an AA for two. That seems like Cena's last gasp though and he can't follow up. Lesnar does the Undertaker sit up...and starts laughing. He tells Cena to get out of the corner and bring it on while bouncing back and forth on his feet. Cena charges and gets taken down and pounded in the head.

Cena can't even move on the mat but tells the referee to let it keep going. Lesnar is ticked off at Cena not quitting so he rolls four straight German suplexes, earning what sounds like applause. He still won't quit, so there are three more rolling Germans. With Brock standing over him, Cena sweeps the leg and puts on the STF but Brock rolls over and just unloads on him with right hands. The F5 finally ends the slaughter and gives Brock the title.

**Rating:** A+. This was hard to watch. Not hard in the WCW or TNA hard to watch way, but in the "that's enough, stop this before Cena dies" hard to watch way. This was a complete squash that ran 16:14. In that span of time, and this is being VERY generous at times, Cena was on offense for 1:22. That's including the opening where they were grappling on the mat and the time where Cena was trying to break Brock's grip.

Above all else though, this match did what it was supposed to do, which is make Brock Lesnar look like the biggest monster this side of Godzilla. This wasn't a technical masterpiece or anything, but the fact that it got this kind of emotion out of me is doing something right. Outstanding performance and Cena selling so well made it even better.

Cena is checked on and can't move to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Something occurred to me as I was getting ready for this show: I didn't remember anything about it other than the main event. I can tell you the main event for all of the big four

shows and every In Your House off the top of my head, but I had no idea that Orton and Reigns had a match here. Looking back, it's easy to see why. Other than Lesnar vs. Cena, nothing on here is anything outside of the average range. Almost all of the redo ratings are in the middle of the pack and nothing else is memorable. It's a watchable show, but totally forgettable, which isn't something you should say about Summerslam.

### Ratings Comparison

Rob Van Dam vs. Cesaro

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Dolph Ziggler vs. The Miz

Original: C

Redo: C-

AJ Lee vs. Paige

Original: B-

Redo: C+

Jack Swagger vs. Rusev

Original: C+

Redo: C

Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Original: B

Redo: B-

Bray Wyatt vs. Chris Jericho

Original: C

Redo: C-

Brie Bella vs. Stephanie McMahon

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Roman Reigns vs. Randy Orton

Original: C

Redo: B-

Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena

Original: A-

Redo: A+

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: C+

.....what? I mean just....what? That overall rating doesn't even make bad sense. Other than Brie vs. Stephanie and maybe Orton vs. Reigns, nothing really changed drastically, but it went from great to above average? I REALLY got into that Lesnar vs. Cena match the first time around. That original rating actually made my eyes bug out when I read it to see what I had originally given the show.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/08/17/summerslam-2014-on-the-a-list/>

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# Monday Night Raw – August 1, 2016: One Week

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 1, 2016

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

After last week's well received show, it should be interesting to see where everything goes with the full time Monday Night Raw roster. Last week Finn Balor made his main roster debut and earned himself a shot in the first ever Universal Title match at the upcoming Summerslam. On top of that, Brock Lesnar is going to be making his first appearance since Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We open with a "Last Week On Raw" video, which is a really good idea that I'd love to see become a regular feature, as long as they keep it short.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sasha Banks to open things up and that belt looks ridiculous on her tiny waist. We have to wait for the YOU DESERVE IT chant to die down before Sasha can talk about herself and Bayley stealing the show last year over Summerslam weekend. That's going to be the case again this year when she defends against Charlotte at Summerslam. Cue Charlotte who is walking much faster than usual.

That means we get the YOU TAPPED OUT chants before Sasha says she can't put her finger on what's different about Charlotte this week. Charlotte says it was a fluke because she was champion for over 300 days. Sasha thanks Charlotte would never have been champion without her dad and here's.....Chris Jericho to interrupt? Jericho calls Charlotte royalty and thinks she's done more than Flair ever did. Now we get to the important point: what makes Sasha his boss?

Jericho brings up the Snoop Dogg connection and calls Sasha a brat. Now it's Enzo Amore coming out without Big Cass to kiss Sasha's hand. Sasha doesn't seem to mind the ensuing flirting but Charlotte has heard bad things about Enzo's love life. This turns into a surreal scene of Jericho impersonating Cass and Sasha impersonating Enzo before it turns into Enzo saying Jericho is like a messed up iPhone.

Jericho calls Enzo a hip hop hobbit so the fans call Jericho a

stupid idiot. Enzo talks about going back in time and warning Jericho to not buy that scarf but here's Foley to cut them all off. Foley: "Enzo is a certified G and I'm a certified GM." After a cheap plug for Holy Foley, Mick makes a mixed tag for right now.

#### Enzo Amore/Sasha Banks vs. Chris Jericho/Charlotte

To keep things odd, Kevin Owens is on commentary with Byron's tie around his neck. The guys start with Enzo scoring off some armdrags before it's off to Sasha for a quick rollup on Charlotte. Sasha's chop hurts her own hand so she wristdrags Charlotte down instead. A double clothesline puts the bad people on the floor as Owens talks about wanting to knock Enzo out for interrupting him on Draft night. The double dive puts everyone down and we take a break.

Back with Jericho in control of Enzo until Amore gets two off a cross body and a faceplant to the knee. Jericho dropkicks him out of the air but bangs up his knee in the process, allowing the double tag to the women. Sasha kicks her in the face but here's Dana Brooke for a distraction. Jericho offers another distraction, setting up Natural Selection for the pin at 9:58.

**Rating:** C-. I like the match being a very fresh mix but at the same time I REALLY don't like the new champion getting pinned in her first match as champion. It weakens the new title reign, which is the last thing you want to do, especially when the champion is as on fire as Sasha is right now.

Post match Enzo takes a Codebreaker but Big Cass comes down for the save.

#### Braun Strowman vs. Evan Anderhold

When asked why he's here, Evan (better known as Corey Hollis from NXT) says it's because he gets \$1000 and \$5000 if he wins. Those numbers serve as great joke material for the announcers during Evan's massacre, capped off by the reverse chokeslam for the pin at 59 seconds.

Stephanie and Mick talk about how awesome each others' ideas have been when Mark Henry comes in. Henry thinks it's time to reopen the

Hall of Pain but Stephanie thinks he would be better in a mentorship role. All Mark needs is one more chance so Foley gives him a US Title shot against Rusev.

Golden Truth is still looking for Pokemon but Goldust thinks they should focus on their match instead.

#### Golden Truth vs. Shining Stars

Goldust and Primo start things off as Truth is still playing Pokemon Go on the apron. Graves mistakenly says Truth is playing inside the ring as Goldust gets in a powerslam to change control. Truth has apparently caught a Pokemon and misses a tag. On top of that he drops his phone and actually goes out to get it as Goldust is waiting for a tag. Epico grabs a sunset flip for the pin at 2:00. Cole: "Pokemon no for Golden Truth tonight."

Truth finds another Pokemon post match.

Michael Cole brings out Finn Balor for a chat. Finn says he's here to prove his draft status but Seth Rollins cuts him off. Seth tells us about Balor being a former NXT Champion, though he wasn't the first NXT Champion because that was Rollins. Balor was also a first round pick but he wasn't the #1 overall pick because that was Rollins too. Last week Balor pinned Roman Reigns, even though Rollins did the same thing in his first match back after a career threatening injury.

Balor is just like a bad Hollywood remake like the new Ghostbusters. The idea of Balor beating Seth for the title is like the Atlanta Braves winning the World Series. Balor says everywhere he's gone, there has been someone like Seth, saying they're the man until Balor comes in and takes that spot. They may have a lot of things in common, but at least Finn earned his spot in the title match instead of having it handed to him. The brawl is about to start but Balor easily kicks him out to the floor to send Seth running. Balor looked like an underdog here, though an underdog that belonged in this spot.

#### US Title: Mark Henry vs. Rusev



Rusev is defending and Lana is here in her wedding dress. Saxton: "What is she wearing?" Henry throws him around a few times to start and snapping his throat across the middle rope. Back from a break with Henry blocking the Accolade and kicking Henry in the face. Now the Accolade goes on and Henry taps at 6:35. Too much time spent during the break but this was every Henry vs. Rusev match you've ever seen.

Post match Rusev rips on the American Olympic teams for not having to face the superior Russian and Bulgarian athletes. This brings out Roman Reigns to a very distinct face pop. Rusev is chased off with a Superman Punch. That face pop has to be a big relief too, because if Reigns can't get over by standing up for AMERICA, he might as well be running a doughnut shop.

Video on Nia Jax.

#### Darren Young vs. Titus O'Neil

Earlier today Titus asked the same question everyone has been asking: when was Darren great in the first place? Darren's chops don't have much effect and Titus hits a few backbreakers. The splash in the corner gets two and we hit the armbar. A slam gets two on Darren but he comes back with a kick to the face. Both finishers are broken up and Titus grabs a rollup with a handful of trunks for the pin at 3:58.

**Rating:** D-. Who in the world thought this was a good idea in any way? Neither guy is interesting and it was another spur of the moment heel turn that does nothing for either guy. The fact that it was a boring match because Titus has some of the worst offense in recent memory doesn't help either.

Stephanie presents Foley with his own tablet when Sheamus comes in to complain about getting overlooked for that US Title shot. Cesaro cuts him off though and says the fans want to see him. Foley says the only reason Cesaro wasn't drafted so highly was due to that shoulder. Sheamus on the other hand hasn't had his head in the game since cashing in Money in the Bank. Tonight they'll have a match and whoever impresses them the most (not whoever wins because that would

make too much sense) gets a future title shot.

Backlund yells at Titus for cheating so O'Neil threatens to knock him out. Darren jumps Titus from behind and puts him down with one punch.

#### Nia Jax vs. Ariel Monroe

Ariel actually laughs at Nia to start and is pulled around the ring by her hair as a result. A fireman's carry into a powerslam is enough to flatten Monroe at 1:12. That's a much better finisher than the legdrop.

Post match Saxton asks Nia how it feels to be here so she runs Ariel over again. Nia: "Why don't you ask her?"

Sami is ready to face Rollins tonight.

#### New Day vs. Gallows and Anderson

Non-title and Woods is banned from ringside due to drawing a banana out of a bag instead of one of the two oranges. The obvious joke is about to be made but New Day says that's too serious. Big E. throws Anderson around to start but Karl gets in a cheap shot to take over. We get some Too Sweet but Big E. rolls Anderson up for the pin at 1:19.

Post match the brawl is on with Woods coming out, only to have New Day get destroyed and left laying. Big E. is crotched against the post to really hammer the point home.

#### Cesaro vs. Sheamus

They trade uppercuts to start with Sheamus getting the better of it. The fans don't seem entertained though and it's Cesaro coming back with more uppercuts. Cesaro sends him outside for the cannonball off the apron, only to have the bad shoulder go into the post. Back in and Sheamus hits the ten forearm to the chest, only to be deadlifted into a suplex because Cesaro is freakishly strong. The springboard corkscrew uppercut sets up the Neutralizer to put Sheamus away at 5:58.

**Rating:** C. How many times do we need to see these two fight each

other? Cesaro vs. the winner of Rusev vs. Reigns should be a fun power brawl either way they go, despite Cesaro having next to no chance against either of them. Sheamus really is in need of ANYTHING new at this point as he's really just a guy in trunks with weird hair.

Cesaro and Sheamus are still brawling after a break, leaving Heath Slater and Jinder Mahal of all people to show up in the ring. Slater promises that ZMB is going to set Raw on fire but here's Foley to interrupt. Tonight they're going to have a match and the winner gets a job.

#### Jinder Mahal vs. Heath Slater

Mahal kicks him in the face for the pin at 14 seconds.

We look back at the mixed tag.

Jericho rants about how Enzo and Cass made fun of him earlier tonight and promises some revenge, you dig? He has someone in mind to watch his back and it's....Jimin Marvintuter, a Canadian shot put champion? Kevin Owens comes in to say he has Jericho's back instead because Jimin Marvintuter isn't a real person. Oh and Tom Phillips is a stupid idiot for saying his name isn't Tim.

#### Sami Zayn vs. Seth Rollins

The big attraction here: they've never fought on Raw before, making this completely different than the match they had on Smackdown about six weeks ago. They're quickly on the floor with Sami hitting his moonsault off the barricade to take over. Rollins sends him into the barricade and then into the corner with a hard whip. Sami is sent outside again and we take a break.

Back with Sami getting caught in the Buckle Bomb, followed by an enziguri to keep him in trouble. That's not enough for the Pedigree though as Sami climbs the turnbuckle for the tornado DDT, only to have Seth bail to the floor to avoid the Helluva Kick. That's fine with Sami who hits his flip dive to the floor instead. Back in and the Helluva Kick misses again, setting up the Pedigree for the pin at 11:40.

**Rating:** C+. I can't emphasize enough how lame of a finisher the Pedigree is for Rollins. I know that's become his thing now but it feels like they're just doing it to set up a match with HHH that really doesn't have the highest level of interest. It's a good idea to have Rollins go over various NXT stars to get ready for Balor, but I'm really hoping it doesn't end with Rollins going over Finn himself. We've been there and it's just not that interesting.

Puff Daddy guest stars next week.

Here's Paul Heyman to introduce Brock. At Summerslam, Brock is going to entertain the fans. Yes entertain, because his form of entertainment isn't what you see promoted in WWE. Instead it's something violent, which isn't something he should be saying but he can because he's standing next to Brock. Good point actually. That brings Heyman to Randy Orton, who has this great equalizer called the RKO. All Orton has to do is hit one RKO at Summerslam to shock the world, just like when Brock conquered the Streak at Wrestlemania XXX. Heyman: "If that still bothers you, GET OVER IT ALREADY!"

Paul's advise for Orton is to take it from the wise old Jew (his words): Lesnar is going to drag him down to Suplex City. Maybe Orton can stay out of the hospital though and can fight again in 2016. Maybe he can do it if he can hit one RKO, but that's never gonna...and here's Orton with an RKO to lay Lesnar out. Yes indeed they made it a whole ONE WEEK before a Smackdown wrestler was on Raw. Orton bails through the crowd to end the show. I'll give them this: that one RKO with Lesnar being down for a few seconds is better than anything Ambrose got in his buildup.

**Overall Rating:** C-. So much for Raw being awesome. This was every episode of the show you've seen for years with a few more squashes thrown in. It wasn't terrible by any stretch and the ending segment was a good idea but there was just so much stuff on here that felt like a nothing episode.

The opening gave me some hope that they really were mixing it up but then a match was lost due to Pokemon, Jinder Mahal was back, Rusev squashed Mark Henry AGAIN, a champion got pinned and we were

supposed to be excited about a match taking place on this show for the first time ever. Oh and Smackdown invaded. Welcome to the new era.

### Results

Charlotte/Chris Jericho b. Sasha Banks/Enzo Amore – Natural Selection to Banks

Braun Strowman b. Evan Anderhold – Reverse chokeslam

Shining Stars b. Golden Truth – Sunset flip to Goldust

Rusev b. Mark Henry – Accolade

New Day b. Anderson and Gallows – Rollup to Anderson

Cesaro b. Sheamus – Neutralizer

Jinder Mahal b. Heath Slater – Kick to the face

Seth Rollins b. Sami Zayn – Pedigree

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# Smackdown – July 19, 2016: Draft Notice

### Smackdown

Date: July 19, 2016

Location: DCU Center, Worcester, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

Now this is a big one. Tonight we're not only going live but also splitting the shows into two rosters again for the first time in a few years. There's only been one other draft like this in company history and it wasn't the greatest show in the world. The interesting things here tonight are the potential returns of former stars as well as the guaranteed NXT callups. Oh and a rematch from last night's World Title match as a bonus. Let's get to it.

We open with the Commissioners and the GM's on the stage and a quick explanation of the rules:

1. Raw gets three picks to every Smackdown two.
2. Tag Teams are selected as a unit unless a GM wants either.
3. Raw has the first pick.
4. Six NXT picks will be made.

Stephanie cuts Foley off and picks Seth Rollins number one. So much for the title meaning a lot.

Daniel Bryan picks Dean Ambrose to put the Shield boys on different shows.

I won't bother saying the specifics so I'll just say which show.

Raw: Charlotte

Smackdown: AJ Styles

Raw: Finn Balor

Before we get to another pick, it's time for a match.

#### John Cena vs. Luke Gallows

The rest of the Club, Enzo and Cass are at ringside. We go to a quick commercial but this time they're showing the match during the commercial on a split screen. Gallows powers him down and is apparently too heavy to take the AA. Cena gets in a dropkick and we come back from the break. A spinning side slam gets two for Luke but he walks into the ProtoBomb and the Shuffle. Gallows breaks up the AA with a superkick (GET THAT MAN A T-SHIRT!) but the other four get in the ring and the match...is allowed to continue with Anderson and Styles being sent to the floor. An AA gives Cena the pin at 5:27.

**Rating:** C-. This didn't have time to go anywhere and I'm hoping the

airing the match during the break doesn't become a regular thing. If there's one concept WWE never got, it's the idea of giving the fans a breather. You can't present every single moment as must see and expect the fans to stick with you through the insane amount of content WWE pumps out.

Time for more picks.

Raw: Roman Reigns

Smackdown: John Cena

Raw: Brock Lesnar

Smackdown: Randy Orton

Raw: New Day

#### Darren Young/Zack Ryder vs. Rusev/The Miz

Challengers vs. champions. Backlund atomic drops Miz to start and Ryder adds a slingshot elbow for two. Miz pulls Zack off the ropes for a crash before it's off to Rusev for some shots to the back. Miz gives up the hot tag to Young for his still generic offense. A quick Gut Check gets two but Rusev suplexes Darren, only to throw Ryder into a Rough Ryder on his partner. Zack dropkicks Rusev off the apron and the crossface chickenwing makes Miz tap at 4:05.

**Rating:** C-. No time here and I have a feeling that's going to be the case for almost all matches tonight. That's how things should go though as the wrestling isn't the point here. Young making Miz tap sets up the title match just fine, though I don't see much of a reason to get hyped for Ryder vs. Rusev. Maybe it was the losing to Sheamus in two minutes flat.

#### Xavier Woods vs. Bray Wyatt

Everyone is at ringside. Bray stands in the corner with his back to Bray before bending backwards. He even kneels in the middle of the ring to offer a free shot but Woods is afraid. Woods seems to be hypnotized so Bray beats him down and chokes a bit. The release Rock Bottom plants Woods again but he makes a quick comeback, only to walk into Sister Abigail for the pin at 4:47.

**Rating:** D+. This was all about the story instead of the match and that's the right idea. Bray squashing Woods is the right idea too and it's cool to see someone freaking out at the sight and thought of Bray. That almost has to play into the finish on Sunday but it

also makes the titles more interesting. If Woods is teasing a split, they'll have to drop the belts soon and that's not happening Sunday.

### Kevin Owens vs. Kane

And never mind as Sami Zayn runs out to attack Owens. Kevin sends Sami in for a chokeslam from Kane but he chokeslams both of them for fun. No match.

Back to the picks!

Raw: Sami Zayn

Smackdown: Bray Wyatt (not the Wyatt Family)

Raw: Sasha Banks

Smackdown: Becky Lynch

Raw: Chris Jericho

### Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte/Dana Brooke

Dana starts for the team but Sasha knocks Charlotte outside and hits the double knees off the apron. Back in and Dana misses a charge to set up the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte break it up and hit Natural Selection for the pin at 2:21.

More picks:

Raw: Rusev w/Lana

Smackdown: The Miz w/Maryse

Raw: Kevin Owens

Smackdown: Baron Corbin

Raw: Enzo Amore/Big Cass

### Chris Jericho vs. Cesaro

Cesaro uppercuts him to the floor and hits a running version up against the barricade. Back in and we hit the pinfall reversal sequence until Jericho slams him off the top. The Lionsault is countered into a Russian legsweep off the middle rope and it's time for a Swing. The spinning springboard uppercut is countered into the Codebreaker for the pin on Cesaro at 4:53.

**Rating:** C+. In case you didn't get enough of these two during the build to Money in the Bank. I'm really not wild on the idea of Jericho winning here as they don't seem interested in actually doing anything with him despite giving him a bunch of wins. Cesaro



continues to be that guy who keeps losing and WWE keeps expecting him to be over, which to be fair he kind of is.

Back from a break with Becky Lynch attacking Natalya before a match. Ok then.

Draft time.

Raw: The Club

Smackdown: American Alpha

Raw: Big Show

Smackdown: Dolph Ziggler

Raw: Nia Jax

Rollins says he'll win tonight.

Time for the final five televised picks before 30 more will be made on the WWE Network.

Raw: Neville

Smackdown: Natalya

Raw: Cesaro

Smackdown: Alberto Del Rio

Raw: Sheamus

#### WWE World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Ambrose is defending and Rollins jumps him during the big match intros. We take a break before the bell rings with Dean being posted. Back with Ambrose saying ring the bell, allowing Rollins to hammer away in a hurry. A backbreaker sets up the chinlock before Rollins sends him outside for a chop off. Dean gets whipped into the barricade but he backdrops Rollins into the timekeeper's area. Back in and Seth hits a low superkick for two as we take a break.

We come back again with what sounds like a CM Punk chant accompanying Rollins hitting a running forearm in the corner. Dean fights back with elbows to the face and a swinging neckbreaker for two. A quick Buckle Bomb sets up a missed frog splash but Rollins grabs a quick superplex. He loads up the Falcon's Arrow but Dean reverses into Dirty Deeds at 12:21.

**Rating:** C+. The match was fine but it's pure filler with Battleground and the triple threat looming. Rollins getting pinned

clean is interesting as now Dean looks a lot more like an equal instead of someone who keeps getting beaten in the big matches over and over. It's a good main event, though it feels kind of worthless after last night. Like, what did any of that accomplish?

Shane and Bryan come out to celebrate and a PPV rundown ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. These are the hardest shows to review as there's nothing to compare it to. They kept it moving fast enough and the wrestling was just there for the most part but they kept the draft picking moving and that's a very good thing. This felt like something professionally run and that's never really been the case in previous drafts. Good show here but this would have been better off after Battleground.

### Results

John Cena b. Luke Gallows – Attitude Adjustment

Darren Young/Zack Ryder b. Rusev/The Miz – Crossface chickenwing to Miz

Bray Wyatt b. Xavier Woods – Sister Abigail

Charlotte/Dana Brooke b. Sasha Banks – Natural Selection

Chris Jericho b. Cesaro – Codebreaker

Dean Ambrose b. Seth Rollins – Dirty Deeds

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