

Wrestlemania XXXI Preview: Sting vs. HHH

Let's get something out of the way first.

For some reason there are people thinking this is going to close out the show. I know Sting is a big deal and I'm looking forward to seeing one of my all time favorites finally getting inside a WWE ring, but don't kid yourself: this match isn't closing the show and there's no logical reason that it should.

This is another match where they really needed to pick a story and stick with it a long time ago but for some reason they can't decide what to go with. At first it was being presented as WCW vs. WWE in one final round of the Monday Night Wars. I thought that was really stupid but was ready to go with it, even though they're ignoring the totally logical story (we'll come back to that in a minute).

But anyway, they seemed to be going with the WCW vs. WWE story, but then Sting said the most logical thing I've heard all year: "Of course I'm not fighting for WCW. That would be pretty ridiculous fourteen years after it closed." Makes perfect sense, so of course Stephanie came out, cut off Sting's balls, turned it right back into WWE vs. WCW and didn't let Sting get in any rebuttal because this company is all about making sure Stephanie never looks bad.

See, this is where the story goes off the rails because they had the perfect story when Sting made his debut. After all the months of the Authority using their power to abuse and intimidate everyone, Sting shows up as the Dark Knight: the one man with the power and stature to be immune to the Authority and the only man willing to stand against them because, simply put, THAT'S WHAT STING DOES. He did it in WCW against the NWO and he did it in TNA against their 184 different heel factions. Sting is the guy that stands up to the corrupt bosses and fights the good fight.

But for some reason that's not what we're getting. Well, at least not the

full on version of it. Instead they're building it up as a dream match, which you could go with if you've run out of other dreams to have I guess. I'll give them this though: the image of HHH pulling out the hammer but Sting countering with the ball bat is the most naturally perfect image this feud could have had and they nailed it as well as they could have.

Now the match itself is a completely different story. We've seen that HHH can still go in the ring with anyone and give a good to very good performance. I have no doubt he'll be ready to go for Wrestlemania. On the other hand, I haven't seen Sting look good in a match in a very, very long time. The guy is just getting up there in years and can barely sit back on the Scorpion anymore. However, this is Wrestlemania and I think Sting has one more decent to good match in him.

The question now is who wins. My instinct and every bit of wrestling logic I have says Sting goes over. Why in the world would you bring Sting in and have him lose his WWE debut match? That being said, this is WWE in 2015 where logic and common sense is thrown out the window for the sake of "well why don't we do this?" and ignoring the response of "because it's really stupid." HHH doesn't need to win another match as long as he lives though, so I'll go with Sting since HHH does seem to have mellowed a bit in recent years as his last win was at Wrestlemania XXIX. The one before that? TLC 2011.

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Wrestlemania XXXI Preview: Randy Orton vs. Seth Rollins

A classic case of overthinking it.

Oh man I'm torn on this one. On one hand, this could be the one that completely steals the show and makes Rollins into an even bigger star than he was before. On the other hand, GOOD FREAKING GRIEF HOW DID THEY MANAGE TO SCREW THIS MATCH UP SO BADLY??? I've been in awe over the horrible botching they've done with the build to this match because it really should have been the easiest thing in the world.

Think back to Fast Lane where Orton returned and cleaned house on the Authority but Rollins escaped. That right there was all they needed to do, but since this is modern WWE, they managed to completely overthink it and ruin the whole thing. Instead of Orton, who has been built up as a guy that can snap at a moment's notice for years, going into Apex Predator mode and hunting his way through the Authority to get his hands on Rollins, he joined them after beating them up to get his hands on Rollins instead.

A few weeks back Orton tried to explain the whole thing and it just didn't make sense. It came off like damage control, which really shouldn't be needed for a match like this. Like I said, this should have been Orton coming back, saying Rollins tried to end his career and trying to end Rollins' career (or take his briefcase) as payback. But that would have meant Stephanie didn't get to add Orton's balls to her collection so instead, this is what we got.

The match itself should be entertaining as both guys have a tendency to rise up like few others can when they're given the chance on the big stages. Orton has almost always had sleeper matches in the midcard which surprised a lot of people (he dragged KANE to a good match a few years back. Even Cena had issues doing that) and Rollins is someone who can work well against anyone and has established himself as a main event caliber guy.

The more I think about it, the more I'm going with Rollins. Orton already got his big beatdown segment, so it would be pretty anti-climatic to have him just beat Rollins up again and then pin him after the RKO. Since this isn't going to be a gimmick match (because the calendar says we can only have those next month), there's really no reason to have Orton go all psycho again here and get his revenge. Also, it would be nice to see Rollins get the big win, especially if he's going to cash in later in the night (more on that later).

This match has the potential to be the best worked match on the card, as Orton always gets a reaction and the Stooges have been awesome as Seth's inept backup. I'm thinking they offer a distraction and Rollins gets the big Curb Stomp for the win, as there's really no logical reason for Orton to go over here....and that probably should swing my vote to the other side shouldn't it? I'll stick with Rollins in one of the few matches I'm looking forward to, really stupid build (imagine that on this show) aside.

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Monday Night Raw – March 23, 2015: The Last Ditch Effort

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 23, 2015

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

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

We're at the final show of a pretty short build to Wrestlemania and they're already in California. This is the final show before Wrestlemania and it's time for the big push for all the matches. On top of that we have Snoop Dogg and ESPN's Bill Simmons, who has been feuding with JBL on Twitter, in the building as well. Because that makes me want to see Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Sting. Well that's a bit better. What isn't a bit better is Cole babbling about fourteen years ago and all the WCW stuff. This is STING on Raw. We don't need commentary right now. Sting says this is what it feels like to start Raw. Over the last fourteen years he's watched HHH manipulate and undermine his way to the top of WWE. HHH must think he's unstoppable and that there's no consequence for his action. Even though Sting is the last soldier in some forgotten war. He's not here to fight for WCW because that would be ridiculous at this point (REALLY good idea to drop that idea).

Instead he's here to take HHH down....and here's freaking Stephanie. Are you kidding me? Sting got to talk for 90 seconds and she just has to interject herself now? Booker: "I don't think Sting knows how to handle Stephanie." Oh screw you too whoever told him to say that line. She goes into her usual schtick but Sting calls her a spoiled brat who buys her own hype and thinks she deserves this. Sting: "But it's nice to meet you Steph!"

Stephanie recaps the end of the Monday Night Wars (about two minutes after Sting said this wasn't about WCW) and says you can only paint a dog up so well. She doesn't want to insult dogs by comparing them to Sting and ripping on WCW. So I guess her and Shane buying WCW and ECW is just forgotten. She loads up the slap but Sting grabs her arm and Stephanie is STUNNED. Cue HHH to thankfully save this segment and take off his jacket. Stephanie pulls out the sledgehammer but Sting of course has the bat ready. That's still just a perfect visual. HHH leaves so Sting drops the

bat and tells him to come on.

Well enough of that cool segment. Time to plug the App and show Divas standing in the back!

Dean Ambrose/R-Truth vs. Luke Harper/Stardust

Barrett is on commentary. Truth sends Stardust to the floor to start where the CODY chants annoy him. It's off to Harper vs. Ambrose as the announcers talk about the betting odds for the ladder match. Everything breaks down and the good guys clear the ring as we take a break. Back with Stardust holding Ambrose in the chinlock before an Alabama Slam gets two near falls in a row.

Harper throws Dean down as well and sets him on the top before tagging Stardust back in. A superplex attempt doesn't quite work and Dean falls to the floor for a clothesline to Harper. He follows it up with a tornado DDT as Stardust is running the apron. Truth comes in to clean house and gets two off his sitout gordbuster with Harper making the save. A superkick drops Truth but Harper eats the rebound clothesline and a suicide dive. The Little Jimmy puts Stardust away at 10:40.

Rating: C-. The match was fine and it's nice to see Truth get a win for the a change. The ladder match has the potential to steal the show if they let these guys go nuts, but I'm going to roll my eyes if Barrett walks out with the title. At least they've cut back on the stupid title stealing, but it's going to wind up being one of those moments that makes me roll my eyes, only to be harmless at the end of the day.

Barrett wisely runs off with the belt before anyone can steal it. Truth gets Dean to do a little dance post match.

Some Special Olympians are here.

Video on Reigns, centered around a sitdown interview. He talks about how Lesnar has built up a mystique but backed it up. Reigns says he can and he will defeat Brock. Believe that.

Miz and Mizdow interviewed Will Ferrell and Kevin Hart about their new movie earlier today and of course the actors like Mizdow.

Miz/Damien Mizdow/Ascension/Adam Rose vs. Prime Time Players/Ryback/Zack Ryder/Erick Rowan

Bill Simmons from ESPN is on commentary. The fans want Mizdow but get Titus giving Miz a backbreaker. Titus suplexes Young onto Miz as Simmons talks about Lesnar. Rose steals a tag that was meant for Mizdow but eats a discus forearm and atomic drop. Off to Rowan for a fall away slam of his own, followed by a Broski Boot from Ryder. This might be Ryder's longest Raw match in at least a year.

Ascension comes in and stomps away on Ryder but Mizdow returns the favor to Rose by tagging himself in. He cleans house and takes off his glasses but Miz demands to be tagged back in. Ryder finally scores with a faceplant and dives over for the tag to Ryback. Everything breaks down and Miz charges into the Meat Hook, setting up Shell Shock for the pin at 5:48.

Rating: D. These are always hard to grade as there's really nothing you can do with so many people out there. This was an easy way to help set up the battle royal, even though Ryback is probably the only guy in the ring that has a real chance of winning on Sunday. Decent enough match and a nice way to get all these guys on TV for a change. I still feel sorry for the Ascension though as they've fallen through the floor. Not as far as Ryder but that's rare company. Simmons was fine but did almost nothing here.

The fans choose Randy Orton's opponent.

Big Show: 11%

Kane: 12%

Seth Rollins/Joey Mercury/Jamie Noble: 77%

Seth Rollins/Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury vs. Randy Orton

Mercury starts but quickly tags out to Noble. That goes as well for Jamie as you would expect but Rollins gets in a cheap shot from behind to give Noble an opening. Orton comes back with a powerslam and double Elevated DDT, only to avoid a Curb Stomp attempt. Rollins runs so Jamie takes the

RKO (which looks awkward since he's so short) for the pin at 3:17.

Rating: D+. This was an angle instead of a match, though I have no idea why Rollins needed to officially be on the team. He could have done the same thing as a manager outside but at least he didn't get beaten up or pinned. This was the best thing they've done in the disaster of a build up for these two and it continues to be a good use of the Stooges.

This week's sitdown interview is with Cena, who talks about how important it is to bring the US Title back to America so he can represent it around the world, including in Russia.

Nikki Bella has offered either AJ or Paige a Divas Title match tonight but they have to pick who gets it. Neither girl wants to take it over the other but Paige says AJ is crazy if she doesn't take it. You know what that does to AJ and tension is teased.

Divas Title: Nikki Bella vs. Paige

Nikki is defending but gets speared down and hammered with right hands to the face. The champ heads outside for a bit before taking Paige down with a clothesline. We stop for some unnecessary pushups, allowing Paige to take her back outside and regain control. Back in and a facebuster gets two for Nikki as we take a break. We come back with Paige fighting out of a chinlock but walking into something like a spinebuster for two. A double clothesline puts both girls down and it's Paige up first with her three clotheslines and a running dropkick for two of her own.

Nikki comes back with a horribly missed spinning kick out of the corner for two, only to walk into a superkick for the same. Rampaige is countered into a small package for two before Nikki hits an Alabama Slam (that's becoming a really popular move). The Rack Attack is countered but Rampaige only gets two. They fall to the floor and AJ knocks out Brie, only to hit Paige by mistake, allowing Nikki to hit the big forearm. AJ is stunned as Nikki hits the Rack Attack for the pin to retain at 10:42.

Rating: C. Storytelling here again but I'll give them credit for a good surprise on the knockout of the Rampaige. I'm still not sure why the title isn't on the line Sunday, as it's not like belts have never been up for

grabs in a tag match before. This was fine though and Nikki has improved exponentially in the last few months. She would still be overwhelmed if a match ever got above second gear, but she's gone from a disaster to totally watchable and that's a big upgrade.

Paige and AJ get into it post match.

Here's tonight's other guest star Snoop Dogg, wearing what looks to be pajamas and accompanied by a lot of dancing Divas. He talks about how awesome Wrestlemania is going to be, but Curtis Axel cuts him off. Curtis says Axelmania is running wild and here to stay. Axel calls him a clown that's been popping up on Twitter. He's been waiting for Axel to show up because he needs to see the real mania. Cue Hulk Hogan to talk about pressing Andre over his head in front of 94,000 fans. He's a fan of Snoopmania, but he's not sure about this Axelmania. "What's this brother smoking over here?" Axel tears his shirt off but eats a right hand before Snoop throws him to the floor and reveals a Hulkamania shirt. Posing ensues.

For those of you that call wrestling predictable, I ask you this: if I had told you three months ago that on the go home show for Wrestlemania, Hulk Hogan would confront Curtis Axel, how insane would I have sounded?

We look back at the Brock interview from last week.

Cesaro/Tyson Kidd/Natalya vs. Los Matadores/El Torito

Rematch of the interspecies match from Thursday. In case you love this moronic comedy you see. The Usos and Naomi are on commentary as Cesaro throws Fernando down to start. Torito comes in to face Natalya but it's just a tease as Kidd and Diego come in. Cesaro offers a cheap shot so his partner can take over with a chinlock. Back up and Kidd dives into a dropkick and the double tag brings in Cesaro and Fernando as the fans do not seem interested. Everything breaks down and Torito sunset flips Natalya for the pin at 4:15.

Rating: D. Six days before Wrestlemania. Six days.

Barrett has to give Kane the Intercontinental Title and doesn't want to

let it go again. Then he just gives it up after wasting thirty seconds of our time.

Rusev vs. Jack Swagger

Non-title. Rusev elbows him in the face to start and hammers away in the corner. Just Accolade him now and stop wasting our time. The fans want Lana as Rusev stomps away and we hit a chinlock. Jack fights up for a big boot and a quickly broken Patriot Lock. Swagger gets caught on the middle rope and clotheslined back onto the mat. The superkick and Accolade end Swagger at 4:37.

Rating: D+. My goodness I'm over seeing these two fight. Bring back the nameless jobbers instead of just having him destroy Swagger over and over again. We know what's coming anyway, so why bother crushing Rusev like this? It's such a waste of time and the little crowd reaction he gets at this point, so stop hurting him.

Rusev won't let go so Cena comes out for the save. The brawl is on but Rusev takes him to the floor and posts Cena and throws him over the table. Rusev goes to leave but comes back for a running superkick. The announcers' table is loaded up and Cena is thrown on top, setting up the Accolade on the table. Cena blacks out again.

Here's Bray Wyatt with something to say. He wants to know why people hide from the truth. Is it because you're afraid for them to know who you are? Each and every single one of us are guilty of hating the people that looks at them in the mirror every morning. That's why you put on makeup to cover all the inconsistencies inside of yourself. It doesn't change the fact that every one of you is a liar.

Bray isn't a liar though. His tongue is a sword of truth and cuts through the lies of this world. The Undertaker lies as well, but the angle with the burned wings has been sent to take him back to the other side. Thunder starts to rumble but Bray says this belongs to him now. He judges the living and the dead and he has judged Undertaker as guilty. Undertaker will feel Sister Abigail's kiss on Sunday and Bray will be the new face of fear. AWESOME promo here and maybe Bray's best ever.

Kevin Nash Hall of Fame video.

Natalya overhears Tyson Kidd talking to his Burger King and gets a bit jealous until she has a fry.

Daniel Bryan vs. Dolph Ziggler

The belt is above the ring. The other five participants in the ladder match are in a fan voted poll to be guest referee. Ambrose wins with 57% of the votes. They hit the mat to start with Bryan sitting out for a standoff. We hit a test of strength until Bryan suplexes him down and starts on the arm. Dolph reverses into a headlock and takes Bryan into the corner but it turns into a slugout. Bryan backflips out of the corner but Ziggler throws him over, only to have Bryan skin the cat and headscissor him outside. They fly at the timekeeper's area as we take a break.

Back with Bryan fighting out of a sleeper and getting two off a German suplex. He heads up top but gets crotched down, setting up a running top rope faceplant for two for Dolph. Bryan can't backslide him so he just kicks Dolph in the face for two. We get dueling chants but the YES chants for some kicks in the corner drown them out. Bryan charges into a superkick and the Zig Zag is good for the completely clean pin at 10:55.

Rating: B-. Good but not great match here. It's still weird to see Bryan getting pinned clean, especially around Wrestlemania time. I'd love to see these two get the time for a real program instead of just being in there with all the other people for a big messy title match. Good stuff here though and the best match of the night.

Dirty Deeds plants Ziggler post match and it's ladder time. Everyone comes out for the big climbing war and the ladder falls down onto Harper's leg, leaving everyone down on the mat. Harper might be hurt as that didn't look planned.

Here are Lesnar and Heyman for the big showdown with Reigns. Heyman does his usual and says if he hasn't sold us on the main event beating yet, there's nothing he can do now. If you want to see Roman Reigns take a beating, you'll get your money's worth. Last year, the fans said Lesnar

couldn't beat Undertaker, but he could and did. People said he couldn't beat John Cena, but he could and did.

Now people say he's a mercenary, but Lesnar is a man who loves to hurt people trying to take the title away from him. Reigns might as well take Brock's wife, take his house, the food off his children's plates and rename them Reigns if he wants to take that title from Lesnar. This man is a beast who will take Reigns' wife, his house, the food off his children's plates and rename them Lesnar, so come for a fight. This Sunday Brock conquers the main event of Wrestlemania. Reigns says he can and he will, but this Sunday the champ says you can't and you won't.

Here's Reigns himself at 11:08pm for the big staredown. Brock holds up the title but Reigns grabs it from his hand and holds it in Brock's face. Lesnar tries to take it back and they struggle over the belt to end the show. THAT'S IT??? We waited two months for THAT?

Overall Rating: C-. I didn't hate this show but my goodness it's really hard to care about most of this. At the end of the day, they haven't made me interested in most of what they're presenting on Sunday. Bray's promo was awesome and there were some other good things going on, but then we had a bull pinning Natalya as the Tag Team Champions literally looked on and a Burger King ad (which to be fair made me laugh).

Wrestlemania will have the potential to knock it out of the park on Sunday if they get the wrestling right, but at the same time, it has the potential to absolutely bomb. It doesn't seem to have much higher to go than "pleasant surprise", but it could be more along the lines of Wrestlemania 27: one or two good things, but overall a show where you look back and ask "what were they thinking?"

Results

R-Truth/Dean Ambrose b. Stardust/Luke Harper – Little Jimmy to Stardust

Ryback/Zack Ryder/Prime Time Players/Erick Rowan b. Miz/Damien Mizdow/Ascension/Adam Rose – Shell Shock to Miz

Randy Orton b. Jamie Noble/Joey Mercury/Seth Rollins – RK0 to Noble

Los Matadores/El Torito b. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd/Natalya – Sunset flip to Natalya

Rusev b. Jack Swagger – Accolade

Dolph Ziggler b. Daniel Bryan – Zig Zag

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

It's been a week since the last episode of Monday Night Raw and I'm still somewhat annoyed at what I sat through last week. I try to do these a bit sooner but I needed some extra time to let this one get out of my mind before I rant on it all over again. I'm going to try to focus on the good things this time and give the show a fairer look as the show made me so mad last week that I wasn't able to focus on things like I should have. Let's get to it.

Before we get started, let's establish something. With four episodes to go before Wrestlemania, every single episode of this show should be designed to make me want to watch Wrestlemania and little else. The show hasn't had a great build to this point and

Rollins and the Stooges opened the show with the former calling out Jon

Stewart, who is on his way to the arena. This brought out Reigns, but Rollins mentioned a bunch of internet reports and referenced people like Wiz Khalifa (performing next week), Michael Jordan (became a billionaire last week) and Mark Henry (rumored to return last week but didn't). I'm really not sure what the point of this was but it really didn't do much.

Seth implied he was going to cash in at Wrestlemania or the night after on Raw but got punched in the mouth instead. Like most other things on this show, there really wasn't much to it and it really didn't make me care about anyone involved. Basically it set up the Stewart appearance and established that Reigns was in the building. Not much here.

Post break Orton yelled at the Stooges for letting that happen to Rollins and suggested Rollins vs. Reigns tonight. Again, this is holding the viewers' hand and walking them through every single thing instead of just throwing up a graphic and saving five minutes.

Dean Ambrose beat Bad News Barrett with Dirty Deeds. This involved more shenanigans with the Intercontinental Title and helped set up the ladder match. This is another big deal at the moment and I seem to be on the opposite side of most people. Here's the thing: yes it's doing something with the Intercontinental Title, but I still don't like it. The same title match could be set up so easily without having the champion lose all the time. Instead, he keeps losing every match he's in and the title is literally handed around as a prize.

You know what really brought this angle down for me? The quick promo Ambrose gave on the snowed out Raw where he talked about wanting to make the title mean something. This has done the opposite of that and turned the title into a comedy prop. It's true that this is an upgrade over what the title has been for years now, but it could so easily be done better that it drives me crazy.

Miz debuted the commercial he stole from Mizdow. Of course it was a comedy bit with Miz implying he had erectile dysfunction and included quotes from Miz completely out of context. We'll ignore the company filming Miz's parts before he agreed to be in them for the sake of comedy. Of course everyone laughed and Miz blamed Mizdow, but the big

eruption didn't happen yet. I'm still not sure what happens at Wrestlemania though as Mizdow throwing out Miz and then getting thrown out kind of defeats the purpose.

Bray Wyatt lit a casket on fire. If Undertaker isn't going to show up until Wrestlemania, Bray has to do more than just talk so this is the smartest thing he can do.

Cesaro/Kidd/Natalya b. Naomi/the Usos to continue this feud. I'm hoping we get some fresh challengers for the champs soon.

Now we get to the segment that ruined this show for me. John Cena came out and said he wanted to face Rusev for the title again at Wrestlemania. He wants to bring it back to America, but if Rusev won't accept the challenge, maybe he'll enter the Andre the Giant battle royal. This part was fine. Far fetched, but fine.

Then Stephanie came out and right away I saw a red flag. Here's the problem: she has nothing to do with this story. Nothing. Why was she out here? No one mentioned her name and she hasn't had any direct connection with Cena or Rusev in weeks if not months, but here she was anyway.

So anyway she said that Cena isn't allowed to just decide what match he's in (Cena: "That's what people do in a battle royal."), didn't understand a Murder's Row reference, and started talking about being Andre the Giant's friend. She pulled up a picture of her sitting on Andre's knee at the first Wrestlemania and said Cena wasn't going to disrespect his memory like this. This is about Wrestlemania, which is far bigger than John Cena. John needs to think about what he'll do without WWE, not the other way around.

This brings up the obvious question: WHAT IS SHE TALKING ABOUT? How did we go from Cena wanting to fight Rusev for the US Title to Stephanie and Andre the Giant in the span of five minutes? This segment felt like nothing more than a way to get Stephanie on the show and let her rip Cena's balls off because that's what her character does anymore.

It didn't have anything to do with Wrestlemania because no one believes Cena isn't going to fight Rusev again, and as Cena said, EVERYONE JUST

ENTERS THE BATTLE ROYAL. Stephanie said something about Cena not respecting Andre's legacy, which implies that Cena isn't important. Isn't this the same Cena that the Authority sucked up to for weeks on end a while back? The whole speech made no sense and was even worse live than recapping it here.

But then, something happened to make it feel a lot better. Curtis Axel, now a full on Hogan tribute character, to say he might be the next John Cena and could win the battle royal. Stephanie makes Cena vs. Axel so Cena can prove himself or something, but the Rusev stuff is so far gone by now that it doesn't matter. Cena squashed him in two minutes. Axel was great, but there was no saving this segment. Rusev came out and said no so Cole implied Cena won't be at Wrestlemania.

"Yes you too can see Wrestlemania for just \$10 on the WWE Network! John Cena! Daniel Bryan! These are just some of the people who might not be on the show!" I'm sure so many people are going to stick around to see if their favorites might be on the show to give you your money. Or maybe Stephanie will tell us what she did in fourth grade! That's a crowd for sure.

HHH came out and talked about how Sting was given a chance to leave without pain but he chose to fight instead. Booker T. was called into the ring, said no one could control Sting including HHH, and got fired. He went to leave but HHH hired him back because he wanted to show off his control. I'm still not 100% clear on what this feud is about, but Sting better win at Wrestlemania or the entire arena is going to go flat quick.

Paige vs. Nikki Bella got big match intros and lasted all of seven minutes. Of course half of that was in a commercial and the match ended with a DQ, but that's more of a chance than they usually get. The big deal here was AJ returned to save Paige, setting up a tag match at Wrestlemania.

The other big bit of the night was Jon Stewart coming out to face off with Seth Rollins. They knocked this out of the park with Stewart giving one of, if not the best celebrity appearance ever. You can tell he's a big WWE fan and knew what he was talking about as he ripped into Rollins.

The big line here though, and one that seemed to be planting seeds for later, was Stewart asking why the Authority isn't putting Rollins in the main event of Wrestlemania if they're all behind him. The brawl broke out and Orton offered a distraction so Stewart could kick Rollins low and leave. This was exactly what it needed to be and the highlight of the show.

Daniel Bryan beat Luke Harper in a quick match. More belt shenanigans followed and ended with Ziggler taking the belt.

Alundra Blayze is going to the Hall of Fame. That's another name on the list of WOW returns.

Orton promised to have Rollins' back tonight but Big Show and Kane told him to stay out. I still have no idea what they're waiting on with this story.

Heyman came out and said Lesnar was tough and Reigns couldn't beat him. There are only so many ways Heyman can say the exact same thing before it stops working. Lesnar needs to show up already so we can mix the story up a bit.

The main event was a big standard show closing fight with Rollins pinning Reigns. Yeah this happened, for reasons that I still do not understand. Yeah apparently the idea to have Reigns look like he can beat the unbeatable Lesnar is to have him lose to someone who doesn't have a Wrestlemania match right now. Orton tripped Reigns up for the loss, but it's still a stupid idea.

BUT WAIT, the masses say, because Reigns hit a great looking dive onto the Authority and then speared Rollins out of the air to end the show. This felt like a big fireworks show at a baseball stadium after the home team loses a close game. Yeah it may look cool, but it comes right after your soul gets ripped out. Tell me: why did Reigns need to lose this match? What good does that do anyone? Just saying "he didn't need to win it" isn't a good enough answer, because winning doesn't mean much for him, but losing it makes him look weak going into the title match. These are the little things that are just done that drive me crazy.

Overall Raw felt like it had no idea what its goal was. The problem with that is there should be no doubt as to what the goal is right now. The goal should be Wrestlemania and making the fans want to see it. Instead, it feels like the goal is to cram in every single thing they can and hope that someone cares about some of it.

As good as Stewart's appearance was, it really was just a good version of the usual guest stars schtick. I get why they did it because he's the biggest name they've had on here in years, but it still doesn't make me care about Wrestlemania any more than I already did. This company needs to tighten things up by about fourteen notches, because this Wrestlemania build has been a misguided disaster.

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Monday Night Raw – March 2, 2015: Screw This Show And Screw Wrestlemania

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 2, 2015

Location: Prudential Center, Newark, New Jersey

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

We're one step closer to Wrestlemania this week and the big event coming out of last week is Randy Orton not attacking Seth Rollins as everyone expected him to at the end of the show. That would seem to be a layup for a match at Wrestlemania but you never can tell around this company. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here are Rollins and the Stooges to get things going. Before he can say anything though, we get a clip of him appearing on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart last Thursday. Stewart is on his way here so Rollins suggests that he beg for forgiveness now and turn around. This isn't like Lawler vs. Kauffman because unlike the Daily Show, every single person in this arena paid to see him tonight.

Cue Roman Reigns, who tells Rollins to keep talking because he wanted to hear what it sounded like to hear the fans tell Seth that he sucks. Rollins says he's worth more than Michael Jordan because he can out work and out talk anyone, including Wiz Khalifa. He can even out eat Mark Henry. Khalifa is scheduled to perform next week and Henry is rumored to be here tonight so that sounds like an internet newsletter come to life.

Rollins doesn't think Reigns can beat Brock Lesnar, but he can beat both Lesnar and Reigns. Roman asks if Rollins is man enough to make the main event of Wrestlemania a triple threat match as the fans chant for Punk. Rollins thinks it's smarter to cash in on the winner of the match, or maybe do it the next night. Or maybe just cash in when no one is expecting it. Or maybe Reigns should just punch him in the mouth right now, which is what he does. The Stooges are laid out and Reigns stands on the Money in the Bank briefcase, but somehow that still doesn't make me care about him.

Post break, Rollins yells at the Stooges for letting him get hit in the mouth. Randy Orton pops up and says the same thing. He thinks Rollins should demand a match with Reigns tonight to prove he can out talk Jon Stewart and out wrestle Roman Reigns as well. Rollins says he can out wrestle anyone on the roster, which doesn't sit well with Orton. Dang they were getting close to not having a main event set up. I'm glad these

coincidences just happened to take place at complete random.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bad News Barrett

Non-title with R-Truth on commentary. Ambrose stomps away in the corner to start as Cole brings up the multi-man ladder match for the Intercontinental Title at Wrestlemania. Truth is officially announced for the match as Ambrose stomps away at the ribs and puts on a cross leg face rip. A bulldog sets up the standing elbow drop but Barrett crotches him to take over. The champ boots him out to the floor and holds up his title as we take a break.

Back with Ambrose fighting out of a chinlock but Barrett goes outside to yell at Truth for being a thief. Ambrose hits a suicide dive to take Barrett down though and hits the running standing elbow off the apron. This allows Truth to comically sneak over and steal the title belt because this is now a children's comedy. Winds of Change plants Ambrose as Luke Harper comes up and takes the belt from Truth. The distraction lets Ambrose hit Dirty Deeds for the pin on Barrett at 9:23.

Rating: D. I have nothing left. Just nothing.

We recap Miz stealing Mizdow's spot in a commercial last week on Smackdown.

Most of the midcard is in the back when Miz asks for silence. He calls Mizdow borderline worthless before giving us the world premiere of the new commercial. Mizdow tries to tell Miz something but Miz cuts him off and mentions a bunch of actors. As expected, it's for an erectile dysfunction pill and has Mizdow involved with the good looking women. Back live and Mizdow can't control his laughter. Neither can the rest of the people in the room.

Miz yells at everyone and says his little general has plenty of bullets. This is all Mizdow's fault of course and Miz slaps him, again setting Mizdow off to a big reaction but once again he backs down. Mizdow almost has to eliminate him from the battle royal, but does it really matter is Mizdow doesn't win the thing?

Here's Bray Wyatt to ask if Undertaker is still the heart of fear. He wants Undertaker to come out and see him because Bray has built his own casket. Everything comes at a price though and Bray pulls out a gasoline can. He's always had a fascination with fire because it has no prejudice and no feelings, just like him. No one can hide from him because everything burns, including Undertaker at Wrestlemania. He pours the gas on the casket and lights it on fire before shouting to find him. Like most Bray stuff, it makes just enough sense to get the idea across without being able to understand it.

Natalya/Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. Usos/Naomi

Genders have to match here. Jey and Kidd get things going but the champs take over with a quick double team. A Samoan drop puts Cesaro down but he bails to the floor, setting up a tag to the women. Naomi pops Natalya in the face and starts a quick pinfall reversal sequence, only to have Naomi kick Natalya in the ribs.

Naomi doesn't buy a leg injury from Natalya and sunset flips her for two, only to have it quickly go back to Jimmy and Kidd. A Whisper in the Wind drops Kidd but he dives away from a double superkick and tags Natalya. The distraction lets Natalya get a rollup pin at 2:54. Didn't we see this EXACT same story last month but with the titles switched? Now I'm supposed to want to see it at Wrestlemania?

Kidd and Natalya almost get in a fight but they hug it out.

Here's John Cena with something to say after Rusev turned down his request for a rematch last week. He says this is one of those rare occasions where his detractors are having a good time because not only did Rusev beat him in their first match but his rematch was turned down. Cena is going to get his rematch and is going to bring the title back home to America. Rusev is a marked man and he's going to lose that title at Wrestlemania. If he won't defend it though, maybe he could just enter the Andre battle royal.

Oh screw it Stephanie comes out with that smug look on her face. She asks when do people just announce what match they're in. Cena: "That's what everyone does in the battle royal." Stephanie doesn't get the term

Murderer's Row (famous baseball lineup, means a great talent pool) and brings up a picture of her sitting on Andre's knee after the first Wrestlemania.

She says Cena can't disparage Andre's legacy (what is she even talking about?) but Cena cuts her off and says this is about Wrestlemania. He says she won't leave him off Wrestlemania so she goes into full on evil Stephanie mode and says WWE is bigger than any star it's ever had. The question is what will Cena do without WWE, not the other way around.

Cue Curtis Axel of all people who says he's already deserving a spot in the main event so he should win the battle royal too. A LOUD Axelmania chant starts up and Stephanie thinks he may be the next John Cena. Stephanie makes a match right now, but stops to say Cena can only get his match with Rusev by changing his mind. Axel: "WHATCHA GONNA DO WHEN AXELMANIA RUNS WILD ON YOU???" He rips the shirt off and Cena looks stunned. Cena gives him one chance to leave before pain comes to him.

John Cena vs. Curtis Axel

The bell rings after the break and Axel does Hogan poses. Cena stares a hole in the back of Axel's head, hits some clotheslines, the AA and the STF for the submission at 2:02.

Post match Rusev comes out and again says no. Cole calls this humiliating because he doesn't know the meaning of basic English words. Cole: "We could be coming up on the first Wrestlemania with no John Cena." Me: "Oh screw off."

Arn Anderson and Michael Hayes talk about Sting's career and how great he really was. This lasts all of ten seconds.

Here's HHH to talk about coming to this company twenty years ago. Now he's the COO and a thirteen time World Champion. Eight days ago he offered Sting a chance to be immortal, but now he has the chance to make it as if Sting never existed. But why didn't Sting come here before? HHH invites Booker T. into the ring because Booker recently said HHH politiced Sting from ever coming to the company. Why does he think that? That makes Booker sound like one of those internet fans that think they

know the ins and outs of the business when they don't know a thing.

Booker says no one has ever been able to control Sting and now HHH gets to deal with him at Wrestlemania. HHH thanks him for the opinion and then fires him. Booker goes to leave but HHH says he's changed his mind. That was just an example of the control he has because he's been handed the chance to end the last vestige of WCW and that's what he'll do. I can't believe they're STILL talking about WCW. That company has been out of business longer than it was in business and WWE is still bragging about defeating them.

Divas Title: Paige vs. Nikki Bella

Nikki is defending again in a rematch from Fast Lane. We even get Big Match Intros. Paige knocks her around to start but Nikki bails to the floor to avoid the PTO. A minute in and we hit the break. Back with Nikki cranking on the arms and Cole saying the action before the break was, and I quote (see what I did there?), fast and furious. Paige fights up but walks into a weak spinebuster for two.

We get the third mention of Total Divas in about the third minute of, ahem, action. A double clothesline puts both girls down and of course that one clothesline gets us to even after Paige has been in trouble for a few minutes. Paige hits three more clotheslines and a running dropkick for two. The PTO is loaded up again but Paige has to nail Brie. Nikki misses her forearm and eats a superkick, setting up the PTO. Cue Brie for the DQ at 6:46.

Rating: D. GIVE THEM A CHANCE! YOU MIGHT GET A FIVE MINUTE MATCH NEXT TIME! Yeah this was another obvious ending to set up the obvious return to set up the obvious "dream" tag match at Wrestlemania so the Bellas can show how good they really are and AJ can take a loss and be humiliated for calling out Stephanie on her nonsense. But hey, why bother entertaining when you can get one up on AJ in front of the dozens of people who are going to pay for this disaster of a Wrestlemania?

AJ runs in for the save and attacks the Bellas as we have new Super Best Friends.

Post break, AJ and Paige kind of agree to be friends to fight the Bellas.

It's time for the Daily Show with Seth Rollins, complete with a copy of the Daily Show's intro. Rollins takes some shots at Stewart's Oscar hosting last year (it was seven years ago) and at his movie Rosewater for not doing so well as the Stooges applaud in the background. Cue the real Stewart to rip on the Curb Stomp being a New Jersey greeting instead of something to fear. He remembers the wrestlers that earned their spots like Sammartino and Monsoon.

Rollins never went up against the establishment like Austin or fought through injuries like Undertaker. Seth wants to be the poster boy, but just like posters, they get taken down when people are tired of them. If the Authority really cared about him, why isn't he in the main event at Wrestlemania? He's better on the mic and claims to be better in the ring, but it's Lesnar vs. Reigns.

Stewart says the briefcase doesn't belong to Rollins because he was at Money in the Bank and saw what really happened. That's enough for Rollins as he grabs Stewart by the collar, drawing out Orton for the save, but Stewart kicks Rollins low and escapes on his own. This was one of the best celebrity performances ever in WWE and most of that is due to Stewart clearly being a huge fan. You can't fake that kind of passion. Well you could, but if you've ever seen the Faculty, you know Stewart isn't that good of an actor.

Post break Stewart leaves quickly to avoid retaliation.

Daniel Bryan vs. Luke Harper

Cole says Bryan isn't going to Wrestlemania either. Harper starts fast but gets sent face first into the middle buckle. A running dropkick has him in trouble but Luke slams Bryan to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Harper kicking him in the face and hitting a half nelson suplex for two. A rollup gets the same for Bryan before Harper throws him down again. That's fine with Bryan as he counters into the YES Lock for the win at 6:23.

Rating: D+. The Divas got more time than this match, which may or may not

be about Bryan going into the title match at Wrestlemania. Just like the rest of this show, it's like they have no real idea where the matches are going and we're less than a month away from the show. Announce the things and let us know what we're getting.

Barrett comes out to take the belt back, but it's stolen by Ambrose, Harper, Truth then Harper again with the big man leaving with the belt. Ziggler cuts him off with a superkick though and puts the title on his shoulder. Dolph climbs the ladder with the belt and Bryan does a YES chant on the table.

Alundra Blayze Hall of Fame video. Two notes here. One, this is shocking if you know your history. Two, in the list of great champions over the years, we saw Moolah, Martel, Trish, the Bellas and Lita. Who on earth actually thinks that's true? I mean, someone say that to me so I can laugh very hard in their face. They actually mention the belt in the trash moment in the video.

Orton yells at Rollins for going after Stewart but promises to have his back if Rollins needs him. Big Show and Kane come up and say they have his back, so Noble says Orton won't be needed. Randy walks away, saying suit yourself.

Here's Heyman who says he's going to shoot from the hip. Yes Brock will be at Wrestlemania. Believe that. He'll be anywhere he pleases before the title match. He'll be anywhere he pleases after the title match. He'll be anywhere he wants as the WWE Champion. Fans like to believe their fantasies, starting with Daniel Bryan having a chance at beating his client.

Reality is that Lesnar would squash him under his boot, so now it's time for Roman Reigns. Heyman has to switch microphones before he rants about the fans buying into this idea of Reigns. WWE has already bought the confetti and the pyro but it's a big waste of time.

Last week he said Sammartino, Hogan, Austin, Rock HHH and Cena couldn't beat Lesnar. Fan: "ANDRE!" Heyman to the fan: "I DIDN'T MENTION HIM BECAUSE HE'S DEAD STUPID!" Of course there's no Stephanie to defend Andre now because that segment earlier made no sense. Heyman says none of those

people disputed a single thing he said last week because it's all true. At Wrestlemania, Lesnar is going to conquer Reigns and maybe he'll just Ronda Rousey Roman. BELIEVE THAT.

Roman Reigns vs. Seth Rollins

Reigns knocks him around with ease to start and sends Rollins hard into the corner. Seth's comeback is easily stopped with a knee to the ribs but he catches Reigns with a dropkick. We hit the right hands to the face and Reigns is sent hard into the buckle, but here's Orton for a distraction as we go to our last break.

Back with Rollins holding a chinlock for a bit until Roman makes his comeback with some clotheslines and a tilt-a-whirl slam for two. Mercury breaks up the Superman Punch, allowing Rollins to score with an enziguri for two. Roman fights up again but Noble's distraction lets Rollins kick him in the face.

A powerbomb from Reigns puts both guys down. They head outside with Big Show getting in a cheap shot but Reigns dives off the apron to take him down. Kane nails him in the ribs with a chair, giving Rollins a near fall back inside. We get yet another comeback from Reigns as he nails a Superman Punch, only to have Orton grab the foot, allowing Rollins to roll up Reigns for the pin at 15:38.

Rating: D+. The #1 contender for the World Title and the man that is supposed to save us from the horrors of Brock Lesnar just got pinned less than a month before the biggest show of the year. I don't care what he does after the match. That ending is stupid and there was no reason to not just have the big DQ or something like that. My goodness do they want me to watch Wrestlemania or not?

Reigns snaps post match and destroys everyone not named Orton. He hits a huge dive over the top and spears Rollins out of the air as JBL shouts about him being ready. No man. Screw that noise. I'm not buying Reigns as anything when he's losing less than a month before the big night, screwy finish or not. You don't do that no matter what, especially when Lesnar isn't here to set up the stupid match.

Overall Rating: F+. Where do I even start? First of all, how do you only have six matches on a three hour plus show with two of them not even breaking three minutes? That's just unacceptable. Second, they really do seem to be making this stuff up as they go. We're supposed to believe Cena and Bryan aren't going to be at the pay per view? That's your big selling point? "Hey people, come see this show without the biggest stars appearing!" Well they might not. I mean, they DARED to challenge Stephanie.

That's the next major point: the Authority was all over the place tonight and not a single bit of it made sense. All of a sudden Stephanie is the patron saint of French giants and HHH is spouting off at the mouth about having to control Sting, whatever the heck that is supposed to mean. I can't get over how bad that Stephanie segment was. How is that supposed to make me want to see Wrestlemania? Cena potentially in the battle royal because he can't convince Rusev to defend the belt, which he'll eventually do by going after the Russian flag, which won't bring up a single mention of Big Show doing the same thing months ago?

The main event continues to be a one sided affair because Lesnar isn't on TV. Heyman can only say YOU CAN'T BEAT HIM in so many different ways before it stops being entertaining. It's one of those cases where you can only perform so well with what you're given and that point has long since passed. Brock and Reigns need to do something face to face again, because the last time was the night after the Royal Rumble.

The Divas' push comes off as a huge joke as the big chance seems to be a tag match at Wrestlemania and a pairing that we've seen before. I don't really know why this is supposed to be a big match, other than AJ is the one not on Total Divas, which is the real title in this division these days. Give them a chance I guess, but if this is the chance, give them a bus ticket out of the company, because it's not getting better anytime soon.

I have almost no desire to see Wrestlemania this year and I haven't had that feeling in a very, very long time. There's almost nothing on the card that I want to see and somehow it seems to get worse every week. It's like they have no focus for the card this year other than "Reigns

wins and we go from there.” To what? Reigns vs. Big Show? That’s a real possibility and I don’t think I can handle it. Then again, I don’t think I can handle three more episodes like this either.

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Bad News Barrett – Dirty Deeds

Usos/Naomi b. Natalya/Cesaro/Tyson Kidd – Rollup to Natalya

John Cena b. Curtis Axel – STF

Paige b. Nikki Bella via DQ when Brie Bella interfered

Daniel Bryan b. Luke Harper – YES Lock

Seth Rollins b. Roman Reigns – Rollup

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Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: February 23, 2015

We’re past Fast Lane now and the only thing left between here and Wrestlemania is time. Well that and five Raws and Smackdowns of course. The main story tonight is the start of the hard build between Lesnar and Reigns as well as filling in the rest of the card for the biggest show of

the year. Let's get to it.

To begin with, let's get through the big story of the week which didn't air on Raw: Brock Lesnar not appearing. Allegedly this was over some undisclosed contract issue, which seems to be very convenient given that he was seen at UFC 184 over the weekend. I'm not saying it's an angle, but there's enough there that it seems like it's a possibility. Either way, Lesnar will be in the main event at Wrestlemania and I'd be absolutely shocked if anything else happened. At the end of the day, Brock will be there for the right price because unlike CM Punk, he isn't completely delusional.

Orton opened the show and said this wouldn't be a twenty minute speech. He wants Rollins but got the full Authority instead, and OF COURSE we had to listen to Stephanie say every corporate name she could fit into a single speech. That might be the most annoying thing she does. Everything has to be proper titles and it comes off like the least natural way of speaking I've seen in years. There's going to be a business conference later in the night to get to the point of this. I'm as riveted as you are. Not by the dumb story, but by Stephanie. I mean, don't you just freeze in place when she speaks?

Dolph Ziggler pinned Bad News Barrett. I've ranted enough about how annoying it is when the Intercontinental Champion loses, but at least this seems to be setting up a big match at Wrestlemania....where the perennial loser will win and all is supposed to be forgotten right?

The business conference was more of STEPHANIE POWER as she got Orton to agree to team with Rollins tonight. As I said back on Monday, this felt like just a way of killing time until we get to the obvious ending. That kind of storytelling rarely works, especially with so little time before Wrestlemania.

The Prime Time Players beat the Ascension because....well why not just bail out of the Ascension story before it has the chance to go anywhere? Now, can someone please tell me what that story was supposed to be, because the legends thing stopped weeks ago.

Now we get to the big segment of the night: Daniel Bryan endorsing Roman

Reigns and then Paul Heyman coming out to say the exact same thing he's been saying for weeks: Reigns is awesome, but not awesome enough. This segment was well done, well spoken and had a very clear goal. However, it completely failed at its intended goal: making me care about Roman Reigns.

They're following a script now and the idea makes sense, but Reigns is just not someone the fans can relate to. Look back at the Bryan story. It's such a basic concept with the volume turned way up: Bryan is the every man who has been held down by the machine but will not stop fighting until he overcomes the odds and achieves his glory. What is Reigns' story? Come see Superman fight Doomsday? That's only a story when Superman loses, and I don't picture Roman Reigns losing at Wrestlemania.

Someone tell me why I should care about Roman Reigns. Yeah he had a really cool run as part of the Shield, but Rollins has grown by leaps and bounds since then and Ambrose has had his moments. Reigns is basically the same guy he was a year ago at this time but without his partners around him. The more I think about it, the more I see him as Diesel in 1994: big, strong, not that interesting because there's little to him other than power and high impact offense. That's not enough to carry him against Lesnar and I don't see this experiment working longer than a few months.

Kidd and Cesaro beat the Usos in their rematch. This was about what you would expect and thankfully they didn't just switch the titles right back. The Usos can do something else besides get the belts back (I'm not sure what exactly) and just let Kidd and Cesaro show off for the next four months or so. The Usos were good long term placeholders, but I've seen enough of them with the belts in the last year.

Mizdow has gotten a commercial shoot by being the stunt double. This would be the 318th issue to start the eventual face turn.

Bray Wyatt says his usual insane stuff about Undertaker. At least he has a target now.

Jack Swagger beat Stardust with the Patriot Lock after a distraction from

Goldust. I don't like Wrestlemania rematches and we seem to be getting more than one this year.

Cena and Rusev argued over political ideologies, monetary policy and whether or not Cena gave up in the Accolade. Or Acolyte, whichever Cena is calling it this time. It's worked for 40 years and it works now.

Rollins and Orton didn't have much to say.

Cool video on Sting to catch younger fans up.

The Bellas vs. Paige/Emma lasted 30 seconds. They seem to be setting up Bellas vs. Paige/AJ in a dream tag match. That would likely be Kevin Dunn's dream with the Bellas going over.

The Bushwhackers are going into the Hall of Fame. Luke licked my face when I was three so I can't complain too much.

Ryback beat Curtis Axel in 44 seconds. That Axelmania and the Royal Rumble clock are the most entertaining things Axel has ever done.

The final match was your standard main event tag with Reigns and Bryan beating Orton and Rollins with the running knee ending Seth. Orton bailed after Rollins tagged himself in but didn't RKO Rollins for some reason. That reason would be ALL HAIL STEPHANIE of course, because Heaven forbid he offend her.

Overall, this show proved one thing: the road to this year's Wrestlemania is lacking. The stories are being told well enough, but they're just not very good stories. Reigns isn't an interesting hero, Orton vs. Rollins needs to just get set up already, the Intercontinental Champion is the biggest loser this side of Barry Horowitz and there are at least two upcoming rematches if not more. That doesn't scream biggest show of the year to me. It screams "oh dang we blew our ideas last year and we've got nothing left for this time." That's not good in any way, shape or form.

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

New Column: Giving the Divas A Fighting Chance

I can't believe I'm saying this, but the Bellas haven't been treated fairly.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-giving-divas-fighting-chance/34085/>

New Column: On Whose Authority

Looking at the Authority, the authority, and NOT Roman Reigns for a change.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-whose-authority/33709/>

Monday Night Raw – February 2, 2015: Are They High Or Just Really Stupid?

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 2, 2015

Location: Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

stops at Fast Lane.

That's why HHH has called Sting out to come to the ring at Fast Lane to solve their problems. You can see that on the WWE Network for just \$9.99, or free for new subscribers in February. That brings them back to the original problem: what would have happened if Rock hadn't come out? Maybe Roman Reigns wouldn't have won the Rumble, meaning his victory is tainted. They haven't actually said Rusev's name in this whole thing. Reigns comes out and says no one is taking away his win. Stephanie says she knows what it's like to have a family legacy to live up to and says it shouldn't stop him from going to Wrestlemania.

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

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

Roman Reigns vs. Big Show

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

singles match in WWE at 2:40 shown.

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

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

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

Video on Ernie Ladd for Black History Month.

Ascension vs. Goldust/Stardust

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

Stardust walks out on Goldust after the match.

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

Here's Cena with something to say. The match with Rusev at Fast Lane is officially a US Title match. You can see the DQ finish from here. First up though is the Austin Podcast tonight where Austin can ask questions no one wants to ask, but HHH might just step around them all again. HHH has taken over NXT and rebranded it into a group of guys who are ready to come in here and take over. His vision is a WWE without John Cena, but

HHH has to answer to sponsors and TV companies and that's not the best idea.

The Authority tried to make him give up but that's never going to happen. We see Sting coming out to help Cena beat the Authority two weeks back, meaning welcome back Rowan, Ziggler and Ryback. Well back to Raw that is as they've been back for about a week and a half already. Cena knows Rusev can be beaten but here's Stephanie to cut them off. Ziggler cuts her off but she says those three haven't fought any of their own battles. Tonight it's Ziggler vs. Wyatt, Rowan vs. Rusev and Ryback vs. Harper.

Ryback vs. Luke Harper

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

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

Jimmy Uso vs. Cesaro

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

Back in and we hit the chinlock on Jimmy, followed by the Cesaro Swing. A double stomp and tiger bomb get two on Jimmy but he comes back with some clotheslines. The superkick is countered and Jimmy is sent outside, but Kidd can't get in any cheap shots. Back in and Jimmy superkicks him out

of the air, setting up the Umaga attack. Kidd offers a distraction though and Cesaro uppercuts Jimmy out of the air for the pin at 6:22.

Rating: D. This show has completely drained me. We're only halfway through the show and I already don't care about anything else they're going to air tonight. This was your standard way of setting up the Tag Team Title match because WWE only knows a few ways to set matches up nowadays and they used up their one interesting idea with Naomi, meaning it's time for another year of the same rehashed ideas.

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

WWE Network plugs.

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

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

Dolph Ziggler vs. Bray Wyatt

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

We come back from a break with Bray putting on a chinlock to keep killing time. Ziggler fights up and sends Bray shoulder first into the post, only to dive into a right hand. The second backsplash misses though and Ziggler hits a running clothesline, followed by a neckbreaker to put Bray

down. Bray takes his head off with a clothesline but Ziggler nails the running DDT for two more. Things speed up and Ziggler hits something like a running superkick to the ribs (it certainly wasn't the jaw) for two. Ziggler hits the Fameasser but Bray pops up and grabs Sister Abigail for the pin at 14:54.

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

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

Paige vs. Alicia Fox

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

Brie covers Paige with tanning spray post match.

Miz is on Sirens this week.

Sin Cara vs. Miz

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

Rating: D. This was all storyline advancement and it could have been

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

Miz yells at Mizdow but Bray cuts them off. He says he's been watching someone for a long time now and he's the new face of fear. Bray can't wait to see someone again. Find him. It shouldn't be hard to do as it's almost Wrestlemania season.

Erick Rowan vs. Rusev

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

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

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

Seth Rollins vs. Daniel Bryan

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

Bryan fights back with right hands but gets caught in a quick downward

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

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

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

HHH says he'll address this on the Podcast.

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

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

The rest of the show was WAY too Authority heavy as this felt like another show from back in the pre-Survivor Series days. For some reason the Authority is still going after those three guys when the story has been dead (or at least should have been dead) for months now. I'm not

sure what we're getting at Wrestlemania and they're making it a pretty boring way of finding out.

Results

Big Show b. Roman Reigns – Chokeslam

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

Ryback b. Luke Harper – Shell Shock

Cesaro b. Jimmy Uso – European uppercut

Bray Wyatt b. Dolph Ziggler – Sister Abigail

Paige b. Alicia Fox – Small package

Sin Cara b. Miz – Rollup

Daniel Bryan b. Seth Rollins – Running knee

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2014 Awards – Worst Angle of the Year

Stop me if you've heard this one before.

Anyone who has followed me this year should be able to figure this one

out.

We'll start with the weaker ones.

Dixie Carter going through a table. The fact that TNA showed this one a week before it took place hurt me a bit, but not as much as her back hurt after the bump broke two bones in it. The problem here is it came WAY too late and I really didn't care by the end.

Daniel Bryan cheating on Brie. Thankfully this lasted like five days before they just pulled the plug on Claire Lynch Mach II.

Batista is a face. Seriously, that might be the biggest bomb of the year. See what I did there?

That leaves us with the thing I probably complained about more than anything else all year: the freaking Bella Twins. We had to go through MONTHS of these two running their mouths, having bad matches, the NEVER ENDING PROMOS and "I've never told anyone about this" before they just freaking reunited like nothing ever happened because they're sisters. On top of that there's Nikki trying to be all serious despite being an appetizer for most of the former big name Divas. I mean, can't you picture Trish smiling at them and then just kicking them both in the face? These two drove me crazy all year and nothing about them worked.