

205 Live – December 27, 2016: I Think They're On To Something

205 Live

Date: December 27, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Austin Aries, Corey Graves, Mauro Ranallo

We're starting to get in a groove around here and that's the best thing that can happen for a show that has only been around about a month. Tonight's big match is a non-title showdown (which WWE has gone out of its way to make seem like a title match) between Rich Swann and Neville, the latter of whom is likely to become #1 contender should he win. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Neville's heel turn and subsequent path of rage.

Opening sequence.

Cedric Alexander vs. Tony Nese

Alicia Fox and Drew Gulak are the seconds. Nese powers him up to start but Alexander moonsaults into a headscissors, followed by a dropkick to the chicklets (as Mauro called them). A big throw puts Cedric on the floor and Tony's missile dropkick gets two back inside. The showing off continues as Nese drops down and nips up to avoid a clothesline, leaving Alicia to play cheerleader.

We hit a chinlock for a bit before Cedric speeds things up with a Tajiri handspring elbow into a kick to the head. That means it's time for Gulak and Fox to get into the required argument, capped off by Drew hitting the ground and claiming Alicia shoved him (she never touched him). The referee actually ejects her, allowing Nese to palm strike Cedric for the pin at 6:04.

Rating: C. Alexander is one of those guys who has grown on me so much since he's been in WWE. The twenty pound weight loss has done him a lot of good, though some of that might have to do with getting away from Ring of Honor and the really stupid Veda Scott story. Nese is being built up in a nice way too, which is what we need around

this show.

Noam Dar brings some mistletoe for Alicia, earning himself a slap to the face. Dar tries again and gets slapped a second time, though he doesn't seem to mind.

Earlier today Renee Young sat down with Neville, who doesn't like being left out of the Cruiserweight Classic. WWE and Americans in general are intimidated by his greatness. When he was in Japan, Swann was his young boy and Neville isn't putting up with him here. Renee can't understand what he says at the end and that's enough of this interview.

Mustafa Ali vs. John Yurnet

Yurnet is better known as Mr. 450 and has been on NXT a few times. John seems to get injured early on with his right leg looking immobile in a hurry. He's willing to keep going though and tries a sunset flip but the referee insists on checking it out. Ali hits a quick reverse DDT and finishes with an inverted 450 at 2:12. The finisher looked cool but it's clear that Yurnet wasn't wrestling at 100% here.

Post match Mustafa says he's from Chicago and isn't going to let all the prejudice against him define things. All he's going to do is keep racking up wins and let those speak for themselves. Simple, yet effective.

Video on Ariya Daivari, who is certainly a scoundrel and thinks nothing of Jack Gallagher.

It's time for the gentleman's duel, which I don't think counts as a match. Gallagher comes out in a suit while Daivari is wearing gear. There's a table with some flowers and various weapons in the ring. Gallagher lists off some weapons, almost all of which can be found in a game of Clue, plus an umbrella and a teapot. Daivari picks the lead pipe but Gallagher will fight with an umbrella.

We're not ready to go yet as Jack insists on standing back to back and taking five paces. Daivari tries to cheat but Gallagher knows it's coming and proceeds to use the umbrella for a low blow and a leg trip. Gallagher shrugs off a beating and hits his running corner dropkick to send Daivari running. If Daivari had ANY personality, this would be really entertaining. As it is, it's just something else to add to the highlight reel for when Gallagher becomes a star.

Tajiri is back next week.

Rich Swann vs. Neville

Non-title and Swann doesn't even dance when he gets to the ring. Rich goes right after him to start and takes the fight to the floor for a right hand to Neville's jaw. A dropkick frustrates Neville as we hear about Swann being Neville's young boy in Japan. Neville gets fired up with a forearm to the face and sends Swann into the barricade a few times to really take over.

A hard ram sends Swann's bad back into the LED apron and Neville follows by mostly missing a big flip dive. Back in and we hit a chinlock, followed by a standing shooting star to make the back even worse. A missile dropkick gets two and Neville is just toying with him. The USA chant only seems to get on Neville's nerves until a hurricanrana sends him outside.

Swann follows him out with a Phoenix splash of all things and a tiger bomb gets two. One heck of a superkick knocks Neville out on his feet and Swann's Fantastic Voyage gets a very close two. A loud kick to the head gets a third straight two but Swann gets crotched on top. One heck of a superplex knocks Swann silly for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I thought I would and the ending was the right way to go. Swann's back was messed up and his last run was all built on adrenaline, meaning it made sense for a big shot, especially one on the back, to be enough to cut him off for good. This also sets up the rematch with the title on the line and that's going to be one heck of a fight, especially if it makes pay per view.

Post match Neville kicks him in the head and hammers away. He finally leaves and demands his crown to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This show is starting to find its groove and if I just have to sit through a fifteen minute match between people I care about week after week, so be it. If you can tweak the formula just enough and keep people like Lince Dorado off the show, everything is going to get a lot better in a hurry. The show isn't quite there yet but it's gone from a task to get through to something I'm enjoying and that's a very good sign going forward.

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new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Main Event – December 22, 2016: Why the Cruiserweights Don't Work

Main Event

Date: December 22, 2016

Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Austin Aries

I'm curious to see what they're going to do with what should be a holiday show. I know we already had one of those last week but shouldn't that have been taking place this week instead? Either way we're at one of the last shows before the end of the year and it's hard to guess what we might get here, save for some uninteresting lower card matches. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Goldust vs. Curtis Axel

Goldust, who apparently debuted before Tom was born (according to Aries at least), works on the arm to start and grabs a powerslam to send Axel outside. Now it's time for Curtis to work on the arm as I guess he's a heel again this week. R-Truth plays cheerleader on the

floor as Goldust comes back with a spinebuster to put both guys down. Ten right hands in the corner have Axel in more trouble and the Final Cut wraps Axel up at 5:21.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but that's what Main Event is for now that Jinder Mahal seems to be getting a small push on Raw. Why Mahal is the one getting that spot isn't clear but I'm sure general idiocy can be blamed on some level. That being said, what did Axel do to deserve all these losses? He can't even beat Goldust anymore?

Back to Raw for the first time.

Here's New Day to address their title loss. They're cool with losing the titles because Ric Flair couldn't become a sixteen time champion without losing fifteen times. Big E.: "And that's Charlotte in a month." After declaring that they still rock, here are the new champions to interrupt. Sheamus and Cesaro are already bickering over who won last night so New Day insults Sheamus a bit more.

Cesaro on the other hand has catlike reflexes and is strong like a.....someone help Big E. out. Cesaro: "Like an ox?" Kofi was thinking more like a carpenter ant who can lift seven times his own weight. They bicker a lot with Woods talking about how much merchandise they have at the moment. Cue Anderson and Gallows to talk about how sick they are of the New Day nerds, only to be cut off by the Shining Stars. A brawl breaks out and you can book the eight man tag from here.

Shining Stars/Anderson and Gallows vs. Cesaro/Sheamus/New Day

This is joined in progress with Epico hitting a nice double underhook gutbuster on Kofi. Gallows and Anderson take turns on Kingston as Saxton thinks Cesaro and Sheamus had one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of the division last night. This is why people make fun of you Byron. Anderson spikes Kofi and we take a break.

Back with the Shining Stars diving onto the champs and the Boot of Doom getting two on Kofi. Big E. comes in to clean house but Sheamus tags himself in, setting up an assisted White Noise for two on

Epico. Cesaro comes in and swings Primo into the Sharpshooter for the submission at 10:46.

Rating: C. That's your tag division people: the bickering champs, the bald guys who put "ski" at the end of random words, the jobbers and the team that is better than all of them put together. New Day is in a weird place now as they need something new to do but I'm not sure how they're going to go fight outside of the division.

From Raw again.

Here's Charlotte to address winning the title back last night. She goes into a big speech about how no one is on her level because she's a guaranteed win on pay per view. This brings out Bayley and Charlotte isn't pleased. Bayley knows Sasha vs. Charlotte was the greatest rivalry of all time but now it's time for the Bayley vs. Charlotte rivalry to begin.

Last night was all about the scoreboard and Bayley is 2-0 against Charlotte, including at Survivor Series earlier this year. Charlotte put up four fingers last night for the Four Horsewomen but Bayley didn't come up with the rest of them because she just wasn't good enough. The challenge is issued and Charlotte actually agrees to fight right now.

Bayley vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Charlotte works the arm to start and puts Bayley in trouble with the figure four headscissors. A headlock gets Bayley out of trouble and she rides Charlotte on the mat. We even get a little strut before Charlotte is sent outside. Back from a break with Charlotte ramming Bayley face first into the mat over and over.

A chinlock keeps Bayley in trouble but she fights out of the corner and gets in her sliding clothesline. Charlotte sends her into the corner again but the moonsault only gets two. Bayley reverses a chop into a backslide (with Charlotte's shoulder clearly up) to put Charlotte away at 14:45. Graves points out the shoulder being up and replays confirm it.

Rating: D+. This was actually one of the sloppier matches I've seen

in a good while. Maybe it was nerves or Charlotte being a bit tired after last night but this really didn't work as well as I was expecting. I don't think Bayley gets the title at the Royal Rumble but the big match at Wrestlemania has a lot of potential.

Tony Nese vs. Lince Dorado

Dorado speeds things up to start and snaps off some armdrags into an armbar. Aries' suggestion: poke him in the eye. Nese finally powers him up into a backbreaker as we go to a break. Back with Dorado going hard into the buckle and Nese posing a bit. One heck of a clothesline gets two for Tony and it's off to a bodyscissors. Dorado fights up and hits the handspring Stunner, followed by the big dive over the top for good measure. Back in and Lince kicks him on the top, only to get shoved away, setting up the 450 for the pin at 11:48.

Rating: C-. Nese's posing and power displays helped but this really wasn't the most interesting thing in the world. Dorado really doesn't do anything for me as he really is as generic of a luchador as you're going to find. In other words, this was the cruiserweight equivalent of power vs. speed and it didn't work all that well.

We see Jericho getting locked inside the shark cage on Monday.

We'll wrap it up with Monday's main event.

Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho

Rollins gets caught in the wrong corner to start and the Canadians take turns stomping him down. A quick Sling Blade puts Jericho down for two and the bad guys try to leave, only to get caught from behind. Back from a break with Reigns hitting his running clothesline on Owens, only to get decked so Jericho can take over.

The slow beating continues and we even get one of the suddenly favorite crowd reactions shots, showing a very bored looking girl. Owens puts on a chinlock of his own until Reigns gets free off a Samoan drop. Rollins comes in with a DDT/neckbreaker combo, earning himself two more crowd reaction shots. Jericho blocks a Pedigree and the frog splash to set up the Walls, sending Seth over to the ropes.

Reigns gets in a Superman Punch and reaches for the hot tag, only to have Strowman run out to go after Roman for the DQ at 15:04.

Rating: D. Strowman getting involved is at least a little more interesting but DANG I'm bored with the main event scene right now. People were ready to cheer for Jericho, only to have the carpet pulled out from underneath them because SURPRISE, we're right back where we were when these matches were announced.

A powerslam plants Reigns as Jericho and Owens watch from the ramp.

Overall Rating: D. This was bad even by Main Event's standards and that's about as low as you're going to get in wrestling. The stuff from Raw wasn't very good, the original wrestling wasn't very good and Byron Saxton still has a job. Aries was his usual entertaining self but you have to give him something to work with or it's going to be bad, like this one. Really lame show this week and that's not nice around the holidays.

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205 Live – November 29, 2016 (Debut Episode): It's

All About the Presentation

205 Live

Date: November 29, 2016

Location: Colonial Life Arena, Columbia, South Carolina

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Austin Aries, Corey Graves

Remember the Cruiserweight Classic being all awesome? Now do you remember the cruiserweights being equally awesome on Monday Night Raw? Odds are you don't, because the division has floundered on Monday nights and it's already time for the show to have its own show on the WWE Network. This debut episode could range from good to a mess so let's get to it.

Also, these are probably not going to be done on Tuesday nights. I'll have them up as soon as possible every week though.

The opening sequence says tonight it's time to defy expectations. There are very few clips from Raw here with almost everything coming from the tournament. I'm as shocked as you are.

Opening sequence.

It should be interesting to see how the crowd looks as this was taped after Smackdown went off the air.

Austin Aries, currently out with an eye injury, is a surprise commentator. He teases winning the title once he's healthy.

The roster (or at least tonight's roster) is on stage for introductions. We have Rich Swann, TJ Perkins, Jack Gallagher (SWEET), Hoho Lun, the Bollywood Boyz, Noam Dar, Tony Nese, Drew Gulak, Ariya Daivari, Cedric Alexander, Lince Dorado, Akira Tozawa, Mustafa Ali, Gran Metalik and Brian Kendrick. This minute long series of introductions is already more than we got on Monday Night Raw and gives me some hope.

Video on the Bollywood Boyz, Harv and Gurv Sirah. They grew up watching Bret Hart and want to bring the Indian culture to America. Again, HUGE improvement over what we got on Mondays.

Bollywood Boyz vs. Drew Gulak/Tony Nese

The Boyz do a lot of dancing and are clearly the faces here. The fact that they're fighting heels was your second clue. Aries doesn't get the point of the handshakes and I still can't disagree. Gurv (who is in trunks instead of tights like his brother) works on Drew's arm to start before it's off to Harv for more of the same.

Drew takes Harv's head off with a running dropkick as Ranallo is, say it with me, a big improvement over what we've had in recent weeks. Harv gets taken down into the corner with Gulak working over his leg like a technical mat wrestler should do. Nese's chinlock doesn't last long and a neckbreaker gets Harv over to the corner for the hot tag to his brother.

Everything breaks down and we get the eternally stupid spot with Gulak being thrown into Nese, who DDT's his partner because he's incapable of letting go of his partner's head. Harv springboards into a crossbody to take Gulak down outside but Nese slams Gurv to take over again. Back in and a DDT sends Nese outside, setting up a double superkick to pin Gulak at 7:04.

Rating: C+. Let's see: characters, good action, defined faces and heels and a better reaction from the crowd. This is how you start a show and introduce some new talent, which seems to be more over with the crowd than almost anyone else has accomplished in the last few months.

Gulak and Nese say the Dancing with the Stars rejects won because of greasy ropes. That sounds like the start of a story, which again puts this one up on Raw.

Video on Noam Dar.

Kendrick says you should gamble on him tonight because he's going to capitalize on Swann's mistakes. Perkins comes in and wants his rematch so he wishes Kendrick luck.

Video on Gran Metalik. These are a bit long but you only have to air them once and people will catch on in a hurry.

Ariya Daivari vs. Jack Gallagher

Gallagher is a wrestling gentleman and got a very strong reaction in his Cruiserweight Classic run. Jack does his fancy spin to counter a wristlock before bending both arms around in ways other than nature intended. Even Graves has to appreciate how awesome Gallagher really is.

Gallagher handstands his way out of a headlock by walking on his hands. Another headstand in the corner has Aries freaked out and it's time to tie Daivari's limbs up in so much of a knot that Gallagher stands off to the side and smiles at him. A running kick to the back of the trunks annoys Aries because it wasn't great.

Daivari comes back with some basic wrestling, including a neckbreaker and chinlock, which finally slows Jack down. Some dropkicks have Daivari in trouble again and a headbutt knocks him into the corner. One of the hardest running dropkicks I've ever seen puts Daivari away at 5:28. Even Aries calls it impressive, partially because that's one of his signature moves.

Rating: B-. Here's the simple point: Gallagher works because he's unlike anyone else on the roster. As I've said for a long time: if you do the same thing over and over again with the only difference being the name attached, no one is going to notice. If you do something completely different, people are going to notice. That's what Gallagher did here and that's why people will be talking about him.

Ranallo: "Austin, what do you think of 205 Live so far?" Aries: "Well I'm here so it's great."

Lince Dorado video. He's your standard masked luchador.

Video on Rich Swann, who lost his parents young and has traveled the world wrestling anyone he can.

Cruiserweight Title: Rich Swann vs. Brian Kendrick

Swann, billed as outlandish for some reason, is challenging and they're absolutely insane if they don't change the title here. We're ready to go after the Big Match Intros and the standard handshake. They trade wristlocks to start before it's time to speed things up,

including a hard dropkick for two on the champ. A tiger bomb drops Kendrick again and he bails to the floor for a breather.

Back in and the champ snaps off a hard belly to back suplex but it's too early for the Captain's Hook to really work. A similar suplex does the same to Kendrick but Swann takes too long going up and gets caught in a neckbreaker onto the buckle. Kendrick has a target now and a bridging dragon suplex makes things even worse. It's off to a straitjacket hold for a bit, only to have Swann grab something like a Michinoku Driver.

Brian's eyes are bugging out (great visual) but he gets the knees up to block the standing 450. The long form Captain's Hook gives us the dramatic crawl to the ropes and Kendrick's frustration continues. It only gets worse when Sliced Bread #2 gets two, allowing Swann to hit three straight spinning kicks to the head for the pin and the title at 13:31.

Rating: B. This felt like a big title change and that's exactly what it needed to be. There's no other way to put it: Brian Kendrick is one of the least interesting heels in a very long time. He was on a great nostalgia run in the tournament and the big idea was to turn him heel because....well I have no idea actually. Swann as the new face champion has potential and whoever beats him can actually be the big bad that this division needs. Good match here, which is what they needed.

Swann dedicates the win to his mother and Kendrick says you shouldn't get used to this.

A replay of the title change ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. As Paul Heyman said, it's all about the presentation. On Raw, the cruiserweights are wedged in on a show where they don't fit in the slightest. It's basically the new Divas match so people can go get nachos (Hopefully with barbecue sauce. Try it.) and that's not worth keeping around.

This show actually felt like it mattered and even if it's just a low level show for the sake of validating the talent being signed, it's

WAY better than giving them ten minutes in front of a crowd that doesn't want to see them. On top of that, the talent was actually introduced to the fans so we can get to know them a bit.

Look at what we had here: two guys from India who like movies, a British wrestling gentleman and a fun guy who loves to dance winning the title. In other words, something other than a bunch of guys doing a similar style with no charisma (Perkins and Kendrick for example, meaning the top two names in the division).

I don't think this show is going to blow the doors off of anything but giving them their own show is the only possible option if they want the division to be a success. It's not a great show or anything but it's different enough to be entertaining and that's the important thing. I liked what I saw here as it felt like a weekly episode of the Cruiserweight Classic. If they just have to keep the division on Raw for awhile so be it, but their best bet is right here.

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Superstars – October 28,

2016: The Kickoff Preview

Superstars

Date: October 28, 2016

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

I can get through this. I can get through Darren Young vs. Jinder Mahal IV. Normally I wouldn't believe they would actually go there but I said that after their first match and again after their second match. At least my therapy has been going well since then. Mahal was on Raw this week though so he's at least in the building. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Neville vs. Titus O'Neil

This could be a disaster as Titus was one of the only people who could drag Neville down when they were in NXT. Neville wisely gets the crowd going by moonsaulting over Titus to start and kicking him in the face to actually do something to him. A good looking flip dive takes Titus down again but he kicks Neville in the face with a bit more force. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Titus tries to start a LET'S GO NEVILLE chant. Back up and Titus charges into raised boots in the corner and the Red Arrow finishes him at 4:30.

Rating: D. It takes a lot to mess up a power heel vs. a speed face but they managed to make it boring. I don't know how someone with Titus' look can be this bad but he pulls it off every single time. Above all else though, Neville is going to get a pop from the crowd no matter what because that Red Arrow just works every time.

We go back to Raw for the first time.

Here are Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman with something to say. Heyman does his usual schtick about how Lesnar will smash Goldberg, only to have the Goldberg chants cut him off. Heyman calls out the fan that started them and says they're getting on Brock's nerves. After their match, all of the chants in the world won't be able to put Goldberg

back together again.

Suplexes are promised and the fans go back and forth with SUPLEX CITY/GOLDBERG chants. Heyman rips on them and the chant turns into GOLDBERG SUCKS....to wrap this up. Ok then. There was NOTHING here and it didn't need Brock at all. Even Heyman looked rattled by the reaction.

Back to Raw again.

Mick Foley is in the ring for the contract signing between Sasha Banks and Charlotte. They talk about how big of a moment this is going to be, only to have Foley go into his annual rant about how evil the Cell is. Charlotte calls Sasha an entitled second rate talent who will learn respect from the Queen this Sunday. Sasha is ready to crawl up the ramp broken and bloodied as long as she has the Women's Title. They trade insults but Foley cuts them both off to say he's their future. Dude if the Cell is going to turn them into 6'4 men with long beards, maybe we should cancel the match.

As expected, the fans chant for Foley, thereby completely missing the point of this segment. Foley met Charlotte as a child and his kids gave Sasha their signed photo of Eddie Guerrero. More insults and a double signing FINALLY wrap this up. Charlotte vs. Sasha in a major gimmick match is fine but no one, like NO ONE, buys that the match is going to be all violent and career threatening like Foley is pushing and that kills the idea.

Sin Cara/Lince Dorado/Cedric Alexander vs. Tony Nese/Ariya Daivari/Drew Gulak

Cara and Nese start things off with the masked one starting in on Tony's arm. A facebuster puts Cara down and it's off to Gulak as the fans get a lot more quiet. Daivari of all people gets a reaction so Cara armdrags both Drew and Ariya at the same time. Dorado comes in and gets knocked off the apron and into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Lince still in trouble thanks to a chinlock and armbar. Gulak misses a charge though and it's off to Alexander to really

wake the crowd up. Everything breaks down with Cara knocking Nese and Gulak to the floor for a big dive. Back inside, the Lumbar Check knocks Daivari out for the pin at 8:09.

Rating: C. This was your run of the mill cruiserweight six man and it's about as good as you're going to get with no story or reason for them to be fighting. The match was fine enough and hopefully they can improve it when they do the same match again as the Kickoff match on Sunday.

We wrap the show up with Monday's main event.

Seth Rollins vs. Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. They play keep away to start until Owens gets kicked out to the floor. A Blockbuster gets two on Jericho but Owens pulls Seth outside. The champ is sent into the barricade but Jericho throws Seth into the crowd. Back in and Owens scores with a clothesline, only to have Rollins avoid the Cannonball. The Pedigree doesn't work on either Canadian but the Lionsault hits Seth's knees.

Owens saves his buddy from a Pedigree and it's time for the double teaming. The handicap portion continues until Owens is low bridged to the floor. Jericho eats the low superkick and Rollins dives onto Kevin. Seth misses the frog splash and eats a Codebreaker for two. Owens comes back in and slaps Rollins a lot as the STUPID IDIOT chants kick in. Rollins escapes a double superplex and pins both guys at the same time with a double rollup at 10:00.

Rating: C+. The match was fun but it's WAY too late in the night to really matter. Rollins pinning the champ is appropriate as Owens has been a huge afterthought in this entire story. That also makes four straight times that Rollins has pinned Jericho so you certainly can't say he's getting too many wins.

Post match Owens and Jericho destroy Rollins by sending him hard into the steps. We're still not done though as Rollins runs up the ramp and dives at Owens, only to get beaten down again. Owens gives him the Apron Bomb and walks back up the ramp to get his title so some posing can end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Yeah this was fine. Aside from Rusev vs. Reigns, this was a solid preview for Sunday's show. I would have gone with ANYTHING other than the Lesnar/Heyman promo though and I really don't get why they decided to air that mess again. The exclusive wrestling was fine for a pair of glorified dark matches and that's all Superstars is supposed to be.

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NXT – October 19, 2016: I Love NXT and I Don't Know How Else To Say It

NXT

Date: October 19, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're getting closer to the second round of the Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic and it's also the start of a fresh taping cycle. The other interesting story is the return of Shinsuke Nakamura to go after Samoa Joe. It's fairly obvious that they'll be facing each other again in Toronto. Let's get to it.

We open with a look back at Nakamura being laid out about a month ago but coming back last week to go after Samoa Joe.

Opening sequence.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Rich Swann/No Way Jose vs. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak

It should be interesting to see this work so much better here than it would on Raw. Rich and Drew start things off as the fans aren't sure which good guy to cheer for. It's time for some fast flipping to start with Rich bouncing over Drew and handing it off to Jose for the big guy dancing. Nese comes in and eats a big flapjack (that sounds good) for two. Some quick kicks put Jose down for two but it's back to Rich for some kicks to the chest. They head outside and it's Nese superkicking (of course) Swann as we take a break.

Back with Gulak and Swann clotheslining each other for a double knockdown. That means a double tag off to Jose and Nese with the dancing one turning Tony inside out off a clothesline. Gulak gets thrown into the air and punched right in the jaw (better than most Superman Punches) for two with Nese making the save. The full nelson slam ends Gulak at 10:40.

Rating: C+. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Jose is WAY too talented for this dancing party guy gimmick. He looked even more like a star than usual here as he was towering over the other three and was able to show off with the power game. It really is amazing how much more interesting the cruiserweights are when they're in front of a crowd that actually wants to see them.

Rich and Jose are ready for the Authors of Pain, who better not look past them. Dancing ensues.

Quick discussion of Hideo Itami's injury, meaning he's out of the tournament.

We look back at Glorious Ten splitting up.

Tye Dillinger has requested and been granted a match against Bobby Roode in Toronto.

Austin Aries would rather talk about potassium instead of his

surprise partner. The tournament isn't for everyone, such as Hideo Itami. Hideo is out because an MRI revealed he doesn't have a spine.

Bobby Roode vs. Sean Maluta

Maluta actually grabs a rollup for an early two but Roode takes his head off with a clothesline. A hard whip into the corner makes it worse for Sean, followed by a spinebuster to break up his comeback. An implant DDT ends Sean at 3:07.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here, which is a good role for some of the lower level cruiserweights. We've seen what they can do in the tournament so these wins are more impressive than the ones you see over the run of the mill jobbers. Maluta has a good look and can be pushed if the need ever arrives, just like so many of the other people NXT has been using lately.

Roode laughs off Dillinger's complaints because Tye was the one who begged Roode to team up for the Dusty Classic. All Roode wanted to do was bring Tye up to a GLORIOUS level. After a line about Klingons, Tye comes out and clears the ring. The fans, who went nuts over Roode's entrance, give Tye a huge TEN chant.

Liv Morgan is in the back when Peyton Royce and Billie Kay jump her from behind. Morgan is dragged out to the stage and laid out again, leaving Kay and Royce to brag about how this is their division.

Dusty Rhodes Tag Team Classic First Round: Austin Aries/??? vs. Tucker Knight/Otis Dozovic

Aries' mystery partner is.....the debuting Roderick Strong, who teamed with Aries to win the ROH Tag Team Titles as part of Generation Next. The announcers put Strong over hard, mentioning his matches against people like AJ Styles, Samoa Joe, Daniel Bryan and Kevin Owens. Otis throws Aries around to start before it's off to Tucker for some hard chops to Strong.

Everything breaks down and Aries has to break up a Vader Bomb from Otis. Aries and Strong start trying to chop down the massive Dozovic but he pretty easily suplexes them both at the same time. The hot tag brings in Knight for a double splash in the corner but he misses

a charge and falls outside. Back in and the Sick Kick knocks Knight silly for the pin (ignore the shoulder being up at one) at 6:15.

Rating: B-. It's strange to see the smaller, faster guys as the heels but this was a better match than I was expecting. Dozovic and Knight are two big power guys and I'm always entertained by seeing guys their size chopped down. Aries/Strong vs. TM61 should be a lot of fun, which is the cool part about tournaments like this one.

Andrade Cien Almas attacked Cedric Alexander over a lack of respect. Now it's time to take the respect for himself.

Nikki Cross vs. Danielle Kamella

Cross is just as crazy as she used to be and throws Danielle with a suplex. After biting and scratching herself, Nikki ends this with a fisherman's neckbreaker at 1:20. Total squash.

Nikki keeps beating on Danielle so the referee reverses the decision.

Here's Shinsuke Nakamura with a message for Samoa Joe. Nakamura confirms the rematch with Samoa Joe in Toronto because he'll beat Joe with no mercy. This brings out Patrick Clark, who wants the title shot for himself. Instead he gets a kick to the head, only to have Joe come out for the big staredown. Joe stays on the ramp while Clark eats Kinshasa to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I had a really good time here as they covered almost everything that's likely to be taking place at Takeover: Toronto in less than an hour. We had good tag wrestling, a debut, story advancement and a hot ending. In other words, things you rarely get on Raw and/or Smackdown and in even less time. NXT knows how to turn on the jets whenever they need to and that's exactly what they've done again here.

Results

No Way Jose/Rich Swann b. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak – Full nelson slam to Gulak

Bobby Roode b. Sean Maluta – Implant DDT

Austin Aries/Roderick Strong b. Tucker Knight/Otis Dozovic – Sick

Kick to Otis

Danielle Kamella b. Nikki Cross via referee's decision

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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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Monday Night Raw – October 3, 2016: One of Those

Shows... . Maybe?

Monday Night Raw

Date: October 3, 2016

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We've got a packed show tonight with two big matches. First up Cruiserweight Champion TJ Perkins has the first title defense on Raw as he puts the title on the line against Brian Kendrick in a Clash of Champions rematch. In the bigger title match, we have Sasha Banks challenging Charlotte for the Raw Women's Title in her first one on one rematch. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Roman Reigns to open the show and MY GOODNESS they're booing him out of the building. WWE is asking for this one as Reigns just isn't the kind of person who can go out there and talk full time. He goes into the guy line but here's Lana to interrupt. Fans: "THANK YOU LANA!" With the accent slipping, Lana rips into Reigns for everything he's done in recent weeks but Reigns just tells her to bring her husband out here if he wants that rematch.

Rusev comes out and the brawl is on again with the Bulgarian getting the better of it and knocking Reigns into the crowd. Rusev takes the belt and starts to walk up the ramp but Reigns sneaks up from behind him with a Superman Punch. Reigns grabs the mic and says they can have the rematch but it's going to be inside the Cell.

We recap Brian Kendrick vs. TJ Perkins, which is over Kendrick thinking he deserves the title more than TJ. Perkins had talked about being homeless while pursuing his dream (Sidebar: allegedly this got Perkins heat because other wrestlers have done the same thing. Uh, are any of them Cruiserweight Champion and wrestling on Raw? No? Then shut up with your jealous complaining.) but Kendrick has worked harder and longer. Perkins beat him at Clash of Champions and tonight is a rematch because...well because no one knows anyone

other than these two.

TJ Perkins vs. Brian Kendrick

Non-title (Wasn't this announced as a title match last week?) and both guys are basically the hometown boys. A dropkick puts Kendrick on the floor to start and a slingshot dropkick makes it even worse. Back in and Brian boots him in the face before putting Perkins hand inside the clamp that attaches the turnbuckle to the post.

We take a break and come back with TJ hitting his double chicken wing into the gutbuster but the kneebar sends Kendrick to the ropes. A quick Sliced Bread #2 gets two on TJ and there's the Captain's Hook but Perkins rolls Kendrick up for two. The slingshot dropkick looks to set up the fireman's carry enziguri, only to have Kendrick rake the eyes. Another Captain's Hook gives Kendrick the title at 9:00.

Rating: C. Well ok. Perkins wins the whole tournament and is basically unbeatable but a single rake to the eyes is enough to beat him in less than ten minutes? The best thing here though is having a clear heel and a clear face so we can actually have a story. At the end of the day though, this is likely setting up a third match at the pay per view, despite neither match really warranting a third one.

Earlier today, Seth Rollins sat down with Michael Cole to say he's been medically cleared. Rollins talks about gaining enemies due to being HHH's friend. He and Kevin Owens are both hard workers but HHH handed Owens the title. No one handed the title to Rollins at Wrestlemania XXXI (which we're still talking about) and Owens is going to be another piece in HHH's big plans. Rollins is going to get the title back no matter what Owens or Chris Jericho have to say about it.

Braun Strowman vs. Chase Silver

Before the match, Silver says he's in Hollywood because dreams come true here. Strowman runs him over and shouts that this is the best WWE can offer. A running shoulder sends Silver flying into the

corner and the powerslam (Cole: "Hi ho Silver, away) is enough for the pin at 1:45.

Post match Strowman says WWE is wasting his talents on these weak fools week in and week out. If he doesn't get better competition next week, there might not be a next week. Good, as they need to advance this story and character at some point.

Bayley comes up to Sasha Banks and congratulates her for being in the main event of Raw. Sasha knows Charlotte is great but she's destined to be champion.

Here are Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho to respond to Rollins' comments earlier. Owens asks Jericho what he's done to deserve a rematch because the truth is that Seth lost at Clash of Champions. Rollins has been complaining about the referee but he's only got himself to blame.

After laughing at the fans for chanting STUPID IDIOTS (because it makes them stupid idiots), Owens suggests that Jericho should be the guest referee. Jericho suggests that he get a title shot of his own but of course he means the two of them getting the Raw Tag Team Titles. Owens isn't sure about it because that's a bit too much work for him so Jericho suggests a Universal Title shot. Owens: "Yeah! Let's do it! Let's go after New Day!"

Cue New Day to say they're the best friends in WWE. That earns them a spot on Jericho's list but Big E. cuts him off to say they'll have to have a champion's huddle. This excludes Jericho so BIG E. MAKES THE LIST. Woods laughs and you know where that lands him. Owens yells at New Day for feeding kids questionable cereal and says they jumped the shark about seven months ago. Woods: "Look at yourself. When is the last time you jumped over anything?" Owens: "PUT WOODS ON THE LIST AGAIN!" A match seems to be made for later.

Sheamus and Cesaro arrived earlier and threw each other's bags out of the car.

Sami Zayn vs. Titus O'Neil

Titus says this is the debut of the Titus Brand. Some forearms to

the back have Sami in trouble and a bearhug makes it even worse. Sami comes right back with a clothesline, the exploder suplex in the corner and the Helluva Kick for the pin at 2:48.

Sheamus and Cesaro argue over whose fault it was that they were late. Mick Foley comes in and says they're doing this to become as amazing of a team as they can. The arguing continues.

Anderson and Gallows vs. Golden Truth

Oh yeah Golden Truth is still a thing. Earlier today, Anderson and Gallows blamed New Day for ruining the tag team division. Truth and Anderson start things off and it's time for dancing and gyrating. Goldust comes in for a neckbreaker but it's quickly off to Gallows with a boot to the face and a chinlock. Back up and the hot tag brings in Truth for the house cleaning, including an ax kick to Anderson. Everything breaks down and the Magic Killer puts Truth away at 3:22.

Rating: D. If this was supposed to start building Anderson and Gallows back up, it might have been a good idea to not have them get beaten up for so much of the match. Having Golden Truth out there as jobbers is fine but it's still not exactly thrilling stuff outside of the top of the division. Of course by division I mean the three or four teams running around at the moment.

Jericho and Owens are on the way to the ring when they run into Ashton Kutcher and Danny Masterson. The List is discussed with Masterson reading off a few items: people who don't appreciate a good scarf and superstars who lose to Fandango at Wrestlemania. Owens goes off to get ready and the celebrities say they'll be at ringside for the match against New Day. Jericho threatens to give them.....hang on as he goes off camera to the left and comes back in on the other side to say they'll get IT.

Jericho is the perfect example of why natural charisma is so much more important than writing. The stuff he's doing is so stupid but he knows how to time things so well that there's almost nothing he can't get over. If any rookie came up with this same material, odds are they would be fired. Jericho has such natural presence though

that it works like little else on the show. You can't teach that and it's one of the most important things in wrestling.

Enzo Amore and Big Cass are in the ring with three breast cancer survivors for the annual Susan G. Komen segment. The three women are given replica WWE Title belts.

Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. New Day

Non-title. Masterson and Kutcher are on commentary as Owens runs Woods over to start. Owens makes sure to jump over Xavier in the kind of funny bit that most people just don't think to do. Woods gets taken into the corner for the double teaming as Kutcher talks about their new show. It's off to Big E. to face Owens for some hip swiveling.

Graves says Saxton would be the Fez (character on That 70s Show, on which Masterson and Kutcher starred) of the commentary table, which sounds like a good insult, assuming you find dating Mila Kunis' character to be a bad thing. Big E. gets beaten down even more as the announcers discuss middle names and scarves.

Back from a break with Owens and Big E. colliding off a double clothesline. Woods comes in and gets chinlocked before it's back to Jericho for a running clothesline in the corner. A superplex is broken up and Woods gets two off a high crossbody. Owens breaks up a hot tag attempt and gets two off a DDT.

Cue Seth Rollins to the stage for a distraction though and Woods gets in an enziguri. The hot tag brings in Big E. to clean house (and swivel the hips of course) but Owens superkicks him down. Big E. and Owens go to the floor and Jericho gets the Liontamer on Woods, only to have Rollins offer a distraction. A quick Midnight Hour puts Jericho away at 16:25.

Rating: C-. This was much longer than it needed to be and served little more purpose than to have Kutcher and Masterson there to plug their new show. It's a really bad sign that this is what the World Champion is being used for: a second hour tag match with little to gain other than helping set up a Netflix show. Well done WWE. It's

good to see what you think of what should be your flagship star. Masterson and Kutcher were both fine and seemed to be having a lot of fun, which is much better than you're going to get out of most guest stars.

Rollins gives Jericho a Pedigree to really get under Owens' skin.

We look back at the opening sequence.

Charlotte says she's the only reasons Sasha is in the main event and she'll rise to the occasion as she always does.

Video on Rich Swann.

Stephanie McMahon comes up to yell at Rollins because he's just as replaceable as anyone else. Rollins says getting rid of him was the second worst decision HHH has ever made. The worst: marrying Stephanie. Seth promises to burn Raw to the ground and take Owens and Jericho with him.

Rich Swann vs. Tony Nese

Nese says Swann has a dance with the best athlete in the division. Swann tries to dance early on but gets taken down with hard forearms. A bodyscissors and chinlock don't get Nese very far as Rich pops up with some dropkicks. That's about it for Swann though as Nese stun guns him into a sitout pumphandle powerslam for the pin at 4:13.

Rating: C-. Yeah fine. I'm assuming they're building Nese up as the next challenger (for Perkins, whose match earlier apparently wasn't for the title, which WWE didn't exactly go out of their way to make clear last week) which is better than nothing. This division still has a long way to go though and this didn't do it many favors.

Mil Mascaras video as WWE is celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month for the second month in a row.

We see a bunch of pictures of Emma in swimsuits. Coming soon: the transformation of Emma into Emmalina. I've heard of worse.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Raul White/Mark Carradine

White and Cesaro start things off with Raul being sent into the

corner for alternating shots to the ribs from both guys. White's partner comes in and walks into an Irish Curse. Sheamus loads up the Cloverleaf but Cesaro jumps over him for a DDT onto White. The Brogue Kick is good for the pin on at 1:55.

Long recap of Charlotte vs. Sasha, going all the way back to the BFF's days in NXT. They've both been fighting to prove themselves as the best in the world and have traded the title over the last few months.

Charlotte and Dana Brooke are on the way to the ring when they run into Bayley. Charlotte laughs at Bayley for thinking she could be in this place someday but says she has to leave so she can go main event the show. Dana laughs at Bayley too.

Raw Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is defending and we get Big Match Intros. Sasha kicks her outside and hits a suicide dive, setting up a break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Charlotte in control and working on the back with a backbreaker (makes sense) and a hard shove into the corner. Sasha blocks the big boot and gets two off the double knees. The champ is sent outside but is still able to drop Sasha's back onto the apron.

Sasha tries to go up top but gets knocked onto the ropes for a nasty crash. Charlotte's superplex is shoved off and double knees from the top get two. It's too early for the Bank Statement though so Charlotte sends her outside, setting up a CORKSCREW MOONSAULT TO THE FLOOR! I mean it made almost no contact but it looked awesome. Natural Selection gets two back inside and Charlotte is frustrated. A headscissors sets up the Bank Statement and Charlotte taps in a hurry to give Sasha the title at 14:17.

Rating: B. Good match but they felt out of sync at the end. That missed moonsault didn't help things and the ending felt like it was out of nowhere. Sasha winning makes the most sense and, dare I say, sets up a rematch inside the Cell? They'll have a rematch one way or another and it needs a little something more than just a regular match.

A long celebration ends the show.

Overall Rating: C. There wasn't anything horrible about the show (meaning Stephanie was only in one segment) but I barely remember most of this show. It's like the main event started and I couldn't think of anything that happened in the previous two hours and forty five minutes. The show was just there for the most part as they've actually got time to set up the next pay per view for a change. Not a bad show but really just there, which is often worse.

Results

Brian Kendrick b. TJ Perkins – Captain's Hook

Braun Strowman b. Chase Silver – Powerslam

Sami Zayn b. Titus O'Neil – Helluva Kick

Anderson and Gallows b. Golden Truth – Magic Killer to R-Truth

New Day b. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho – Midnight Hour to Jericho

Tony Nese b. Rich Swann – Sitout pumphandle powerslam

Cesaro/Sheamus b. Raul White/Mark Carradine – Brogue Kick to Carradine

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Bank Statement

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NXT – September 7, 2016: Well You See...What Happened Was....

NXT

Date: September 7, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips

We're in an interesting place here as the next Takeover has been announced for November but the taping schedule hasn't caught up to the announcement yet. Therefore we're still in the fallout stage from Brooklyn, meaning we're likely going to see some stuff being set up for the next big TV show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

TM61 vs. Tony Nese/Ariya Daivari

Thorn and Nese start things off with Tony doing a sweet drop down into a nip up to avoid a clothesline. Neither guy can do anything so it's off to Miller vs. Daivari for a change of pace. A jawbreaker sends Miller into the corner and Nese adds a dropkick to set up a big flip dive to the floor. Unfortunately he takes out his partner in the process, only to have Thorn dive over all of them, barely grazing his opponents.

Back in and Nese gets two off a running knee (I'm getting sick of running strikes. It seems everyone uses one of those these days.), followed by some stomping in the corner. We take a break and come back with the tag off to Miller as the crowd is really not interested so far. A high/low gets two on Nese but he comes right back with a superkick. Ariya gets two off a frog splash but walks into Thunder Valley for the pin at 10:30.

Rating: C. I really don't get the appeal of TM61 and the fans being that silent didn't do them any favors. They're really just two guys in trunks who can wrestle a good enough match but that's not good enough when we've had American Alpha, the Revival and Gargano/Ciampa tearing the house down every time they're in the ring. This was more about the cruiserweights though and they looked fine out there.

Earlier today, Asuka talked about the crowd being so excited in Brooklyn and how she now respects Bayley. Even though Bayley fought hard, Asuka fought harder and retained the title. Asuka has cleaned out the division and she defends the title for herself and Japan. She says something for her Japanese fans and says no one is ready for her.

Steve Cutler wants to know what Shinsuke Nakamura has sacrificed to get here. Cutler has sacrificed four years of his life to get this opportunity. People will respect him.

Ember Moon vs. Leah Von

Von is a blonde newcomer. Ember starts fast with a springboard spinning crossbody but gets taken down into a chinlock. That goes nowhere as Moon kicks her in the ribs, hits a flipping clothesline and finishes with the top rope Stunner (possibly called the Eclipse) at 2:45.

No Way Jose appreciated Bobby Roode's fashion sense and isn't changing for anyone.

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa will get a match at the Cruiserweight Classic final and if they win they might get a Tag Team Title shot.

Austin Aries vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Almas has dropped the hat and suspenders. The fans are all over Almas to start and Aries gets them on his side with a dropkick to the face and a little rest in the corner. Almas comes back with a dropkick of his own and a good looking hurricanrana. Aries is just fine though as he shoves Almas off the top for a nasty crash as we take a break.

Back with Aries dropping a knee for a cocky cover before we hit the chinlock. Almas sends him crashing into the ropes and scores with a springboard dropkick. That just earns him the running dropkick in the corner but Aries misses a charge in the corner. The running knees miss (again with the running strike) and a powerbomb sets up the Last Chancery to make Almas tap at 11:48.

Rating: C-. I don't know what's with this show so far tonight but they're not clicking so far. Then again maybe it's just Almas being such an uninteresting character with a really basic offense that feels like the generic template you would get if you selected high

flier in a Smackdown vs. Raw game. Just turn him heel and let him be bitter so people don't have to be bored with him every time. Aries winning is fine and that's all that mattered here.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Steve Cutler

Non-title with Samoa Joe on commentary. They start slow with Nakamura not exactly treating Cutler like a serious threat. We're quickly into the corner for Good Vibrations before Nakamura starts in with the strikes. The reverse exploder sets up Kinshasa for the pin on Cutler at 3:21.

Rating: D+. Not much to say here because there wasn't much to it. Cutler could have been anyone in this spot and it would have been the same match as Nakamura dismantled him in just a few minutes. Joe vs. Nakamura II should be a lot of fun, especially if they're allowed to beat the heck out of each other for twenty minutes.

Joe walks away from commentary to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. I really wasn't feeling the show this week as two of the matches just kept going and the other two were too short to mean much. They're definitely in need of some energy but luckily this isn't Raw, where such a thing sounds impossible. Not a very good show this week but it certainly wasn't bad.

Results

TM61 b. Ariya Daivari/Tony Nese – Thunder Valley to Daivari

Ember Moon b. Leah Von – Eclipse

Austin Aries b. Andrade Cien Almas – Last Chancery

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Samoa Joe – Kinshasa

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Cruiserweight Classic – August 17, 2016: Where My Eyebrows Go Up

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: August 17, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Daniel Bryan

If last week is any indication, this should be one of the most entertaining shows all week. We're into the second round now and already know two of the names in the final eight. Tonight that more than doubles with three matches advertised at the end of last week's show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's great show and a preview of tonight's matches.

Opening sequence.

Jack Gallagher is still very British.

Akira Tozawa will never give up or back down. I believe these are the same vignettes from the first round with clips of their first round matches added in.

Second Round: Jack Gallagher vs. Akira Tozawa

England vs. Japan. They trade wristlocks to start until Tozawa takes him to the mat and works on the leg. Gallagher reverses into an Indian Deathlock (with wrestling expert Daniel Bryan telling us that it's also called a British Figure Four) so Tozawa puts him on the mat with a headlock. That's fine with Jack as he gets up into a headstand and walks backwards to escape. Fans: "HE'S SO DAPPER!"

Somehow Gallagher ties Tozawa's limbs together into a ball. I'm not sure if Tozawa can't get out or doesn't realize Gallagher isn't there but he realizes it when Jack gives him a running kick. A frustrated Tozawa takes him to the mat in a chinlock and drops a

backsplash to slow Jack down a bit. Gallagher gets the closest thing he can be to ticked off and ties the leg up on the mat. Tozawa finally gets smart and kicks him in the face but that just earns him another leg lock.

Back up and Tozawa hits a running boot to the chest but the leg means he can't cover quickly enough. Tozawa tries a suplex but is smoothly taken down into a heel hook. Gallagher immediately lets go when Tozawa gets the rope, only to have Tozawa fall down on an Irish whip attempt. Tozawa seems to be goldbricking though and starts firing off kicks until Gallagher headbutts him in the chest. A deadlift German suplex sends Gallagher crashing into the mat though and that's enough for the pin at 11:38.

Rating: B+. As good as the wrestling was here, the commentary deserves so much praise in this match. Bryan and Ranallo did a perfect job of pointing out the differences in styles and treated it as a showdown of two very different wrestlers. The people in the ring then played their roles perfectly and I had a great time watching this match. Just a lot of fun in a wrestling match here and that's what I love about this show.

Hoho Lun has known what he wanted to do since he was eight years old.

Noam Dar is ready to go despite being the youngest man in this tournament and can submit anyone. "Everyone's leg bends the same."

Second Round: Noam Dar vs. Hoho Lun

Scotland vs. Hong Kong. They trade wristlocks to start with Dar getting the better of it before starting in on the leg with a dragon screw leg whip. A belly to back gets two for Dar so Lun kicks him in the head for the same. The fans' chant here: saying DAR over and over again to the tune of Darth Vader's theme song. Dar kicks him down again and we hit something like a half crab. Lun gets up and hits a missile dropkick with the knee giving out in a hurry. A Michinoku Driver gets two on Dar but he pulls Lun down into the kneebar (with kicks to the back) for the submission at 7:02.

Rating: C. Still good here but the time hurt them. That being said, there's only so much you can do with a story of taking apart someone's leg and then using submissions to make them give up. It's a simple idea and not something you can really stretch out that far. Dar has had a nice run but odds are he gets Zack Sabre Jr. in the

next round so this is probably it for him.

Tony Nese is very athletic and should have been here a long time ago.

Brian Kendrick is a veteran looking for one more shot.

Second Round: Tony Nese vs. The Brian Kendrick

USA vs. USA. Nese doesn't play around and just blasts Kendrick in the face with a kick in the first fifteen seconds. Kendrick is knocked outside but Nese is right there to chop him some more. Back in and Nese somehow gets his hand caught in the turnbuckle pad, allowing Kendrick to get in his first offense. Nese ducks under a clothesline and comes back with some legdrops for two.

Kendrick realizes he has to get crafty by tying Nese's arm around the ropes and cranking away on a seated armbar. A cross armbreaker makes things worse for Nese and a Fujiwara Armbar makes Nese scream. Bryan gives a very impassioned speech about how he and Kendrick lived together and trained together which helped make Bryan the wrestler he was. Nese gets back up and sends Kendrick outside for a running dive over the top.

Back in and Nese easily wins a slugout before a Falcon Arrow gets two. Nese gets pulled off the top for two off a nasty crash but he comes right back with a buckle bomb for two. Brian isn't done yet either as he grabs that Bully Choke until Nese pumphandles him into a sitout powerslam for two more. Now Nese is getting frustrated so Kendrick just unloads with headbutts and a leg lariat. Kendrick gets kicked off the top but is still able to avoid a 450 and grab the Bully Choke for the tap out at 14:38.

Rating: B. That ending made my eyebrows go up as I was actually surprised by the finish. They told a really good story here with Kendrick being overmatched by the more athletic and younger Nese but hanging in there just long enough to catch Nese in a mistake. Good stuff here and that's all you can ask for with a match like this.

Overall Rating: B+. It's not as good as last week but that's not a fair comparison to make. The opener was really good and the other two matches ranged from just fine to a surprise, giving us three more strong matches to go with last week's two great ones. The final three rounds could produce some classics if these matches are any indication and I'm really excited to see where they go from here.

Results

Akira Tozawa b. Jack Gallagher – German suplex

Noam Dar b. Hoho Lun – Kneebar

Brian Kendrick b. Tony Nese – Bully Choke

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Cruiserweight Classic – July 27, 2016: A Lot of Wrestling

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: July 27, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

We're still in the first round but since this tournament is structured rather well, we'll be done with it next week. This show has become a very refreshing change of pace with nothing but wrestling and almost no storylines. I know that wouldn't work long term but it's really fun in the short version like this. Let's get to it.

We look at tonight's four matches.

Opening sequence.

Tyson Dux used to wrestle in WWE and then destroyed his knee.

Zack Sabre Jr. says Harry Potter isn't the only wizard from England.

First Round: Tyson Dux vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

Canada vs. England. I've actually never seen a Sabre match. The fans are entirely behind Sabre here as he takes Dux down by the leg.

Bryan talks about Sabre being well educated in the art of escapology, meaning he knows how to get out of every possible hold. Sabre keeps spinning around from one body part to another with some sweet movements, each one frustrating Dux even more. You can almost hear Bryan drooling over every single thing Zack does.

Dux tries to grab a headlock but gets caught in an armbar on the mat. A slam and some chops stagger Sabre a bit but he comes right back with European uppercuts. Some kicks to the arm only seem to tick Dux off and he grabs a fisherman's buster. Zack's stunned look as he lands is great.

Dux puts on a Fujiwara armbar but Zack gets to his feet and grabs an octopus hold. Tyson gets the ropes so Zack hits a running kick to the chest for two. A quick DDT gets two for Dux and he clotheslines Zack's head off. Sabre comes right back with a Kimura before taking him down into something like the YES Lock but he bends Dux's fingers back for the submission at 9:23.

Rating: B. This was exactly the way they should have had Sabre make his debut: Instead of having him just run through Dux, Sabre had to actually break a sweat here and that makes for a more interesting match. It means that Sabre might have to actually put in some work as he moves forward, which makes for something worth watching. Just having Sabre tie Dux up and make him tap in four minutes would have worked short term but this is putting in some early effort for a better payoff later. That's so rare these days and it's nice to see a change.

Drew Gulak is a submission expert from Philadelphia.

Harv Sihra was inspired by Eddie Guerrero to embrace his heritage.

First Round: Drew Gulak vs. Harv Sihra

America vs. India. Sihra is part of the Bollywood Boys and his brother is also in the tournament. They're quickly on the mat with Gulak grabbing a bodyscissors, only to have Harv tie the legs up to send Drew crawling to the ropes. The fans didn't seem to see what

was going on though and there wasn't much of a reaction. Gulak comes right back with a middle rope clothesline for two, only to be backdropped to the floor. Harv gets in a nice twisting cross body to the floor and grabs a superplex back inside. With Gulak down, Harv goes for the ankle but gets caught in a dragon sleeper for the tap out at 5:24.

Rating: C. Gulak isn't as flashy as Sabre but you can tell he certainly knows his submissions. That dragon sleeper looked great and he looked completely in control of Sihra out there. Sabre vs. Gulak in the second round should be excellent, especially if they give it enough time to go somewhere.

Tony Nese says he's a complete athlete.

Anthony Bennett is from Philadelphia and has very large hair.

First Round: Tony Nese vs. Anthony Bennett

America vs. America here and Bennett's hair has its own sunglasses. Bennett dances around to start and Nese will have none of that nonsense. They head outside with Bennett hitting a quick cannonball off the apron but is easily taken down for a springboard middle rope moonsault. A suplex plants Bennett, who pops back up for a dropkick. Bennett's guillotine choke doesn't get him very far so Tony slams him again....and the referee stops the match to check on him. We get the all clear and Nese hits a 450 for the pin at 6:33.

Rating: D+. I wasn't feeling this one as well with Bennett's size being a bit too much to overlook. Nese is fine but a bit too much of your standard "I'm awesome and athletic" cruiserweight. The 450 looked good though and made for a good ending to a not so great match. Eh they can't all be great.

Raul Mendoza grew up idolizing Eddie Guerrero who was small but became champion.

Brian Kendrick is here to get his second chance.

First Round: Brian Kendrick vs. Raul Mendoza

America vs. Mexico. Kendrick is looking very skinny and you can see a lot of his bones here. They trade leapfrogs to start with Kendrick being sent out to the floor. Back in and Mendoza slaps on something like a reverse Texas Cloverleaf, only to swing Brian around before taking him down into a leglock on the mat. Cool indeed. Kendrick suckers him in for a big boot before putting Mendoza's mouth on the

ropes, which he then kicks for good measure.

Mendoza is bleeding from the mouth but quickly says he's ready to continue. Raul comes right back and sends him outside for a flip dive, only to miss a springboard 450 back inside. A big running kick to the face drops Raul but Kendrick takes too long getting up top, allowing Raul to crotch him into the Tree of Woe. Mendoza goes way big with a Coast to Coast dropkick but a backbreaker only gets two. We get some old school goldbricking as Kendrick fakes an injury, only to pull Mendoza down into a choke (apparently the Bully Choke) for the submission at 7:35.

Rating: C+. I would have gone with Mendoza here as Kendrick is a big name but he's not exactly a big enough name that he has to go forward here. Raul was a sweet high flier here and that's something we haven't seen much of tonight. I get why they went with Kendrick but I hope he doesn't go much further than this.

Overall Rating: B-. This show worked but I would have gone with Sabre as the main event. It's clear that he's going to be a big deal in this and I don't know why they wouldn't go with him last. They had a good show with four good to watchable matches though as this tournament is flying by. The first round wrapping up is a good thing as we can now see big names facing off, which is the point of a tournament. Another good show this week, as has become the norm.

Results

Zack Sabre Jr. b. Tyson Dux – Double arm lock

Drew Gulak b. Harv Sihra – Dragon sleeper

Tony Nese b. Anthony Bennett – 450

Brian Kendrick b. Raul Mendoza – Bully Choke

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