

Monday Night Raw – November 29, 1993: The Good Thing About The Kliq

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 29, 1993

Location: Westchester County Civic Center, White Plains, New York

Attendance: 3,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Bobby Heenan

We're past Survivor Series and thankfully this was taped after Survivor Series so we don't have some lame stand alone show to fill in time before the next taping. Now it's that weird place where we need to start getting ready for the Royal Rumble but it's still several weeks away so we can't quite get there yet. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Steiner Brothers vs. Mike Khoury/Reno Riggins

Scott throws Mike around to start and gives him a dragon suplex of all things. Rick beats up Riggins a bit and it's back to Scott for an armbar. The Steiner Screwdriver makes Heenan cringe (rightfully so) before the Frankensteiner puts Khoury away.

Rating: C. Any match that has the Screwdriver in it makes me smile, even if it probably broke half of Reno's neck in the process. The Steiners were just such a dominant team and I'm surprised they didn't get to hold the titles longer. That being said, they were always more of a WCW team than a WWF team but their run was always cool. They wouldn't do much more but they would have several months to go in the company.

BUY THE REPLAY!

Jeff Jarrett can't get a meeting at a talent agency. Is this going ANYWHERE anytime soon?

Razor Ramon vs. Diesel

Non-title. Diesel shoves him into the corner a few times to start as Heenan talks about Rio Rogers (a Dusty Rhodes knockoff). Some knees to the back have Razor in even more trouble and there's the running crotch attack with Razor over the ropes. A side slam gets two and we hit the bearhug. This really does show you how much better Diesel got in a hurry as he's gone from a boring match here to some good stuff with Razor the following year.

There's the big boot (which made great contact) followed by Snake Eyes for a delayed cover. Diesel charges into a boot in the corner and Razor's middle rope bulldog (formerly the Hall Buster in the AWA) gets two. The Razor's Edge is loaded up but Shawn Michaels runs in for the DQ.

Rating: C. I know the Kliq gets a lot of flack but they really did have good matches against each other. I'm fairly sure this was the first time these two wrestled (certainly the first time on TV at least) and they had a pretty good power match with the screwy ending being necessary to protect both guys.

The 1-2-3 Kid saves Razor.

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. John Crystal

Crystal actually gets in a few shots to start as Heenan makes fun of Gorilla Monsoon. A hard clothesline stops that offense and it's time for a neck crank. Bigelow slams him and demands Doink get out here. An enziguri finishes Crystal with ease.

Rating: D. Bigelow was kind of a weird fit at this point as he was being treated as a bigger star than he used to be but wasn't really doing anything. Somehow this would result in a Wrestlemania main event about a year and a half later because wrestling really is funny that way. Not bad so soon after the Four Doink match disaster.

On Wrestling Challenge, Santa Claus gave Doink a miniature clown (in a bag) named Dink. See there can't be more than one Doink (because it would create chaos) so he was named Dink instead.

Vince is in the ring to present the Superstar of the Year Award. In November? Anyway Vince brings out Lex Luger as the runner up, which is rather impressive considering he didn't really do anything all year. Luger thanks everyone who voted for him and congratulates the winner for everything he's accomplished. With that he brings out Bret Hart as Heenan thinks he's in line for the REAL trophy next year. Bret is honored to win and knows he has a lot of challenges left to achieve. The award is dedicated to everyone who has stood by him and this isn't really going anywhere.

We see the end of the Hart Family vs. Shawn Michaels and his Knights with only Owen being eliminated. This would be the very early stages of Owen's heel turn and amazing series against Bret.

Owen Hart vs. Chris Duffy

In a change of pace, Owen wears Bret glasses and gives them to a fan ala his brother. Owen dropkicks him down and hits a legdrop as we get a WE WANT BRET chant. This seems to get on Owen's nerves as he backdrops Duffy for no cover. Duffy is sent to the floor and taken out with a plancha. Back in and a missile dropkick sets up the Sharpshooter to complete the squash.

Heenan can't get an interview with Owen.

Scott Taylor vs. Ludvig Borga

That would be Scotty 2 Hotty. Taylor avoids an early elbow and has almost no effect off a dropkick. One heck of a clothesline turns Taylor inside out and Borga chokes him with one arm. Borga torture racks him for the fast submission.

The 1-2-3 Kid accepts a challenge to face Shawn next week.

Overall Rating: C-. Some better wrestling helps this one a lot though it might have more to do with less Quebecer singles matches. They're certainly back to the stand alone/lower level shows at this point which makes every week a lot more hit or miss than the times where we're building towards the big shows. You can also see the rise of the Kliq

starting to take shape and that's a mixed bag to say the least.

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Monday Night Raw – November 8, 1993: DOWN GOES VINCE!

Monday Night Raw

Date: November 8, 1993

Location: Fernwood Resort, Bushkill, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Bobby Heenan, Randy Savage

We're creeping towards Survivor Series and hopefully things are better this week after such a disaster last time around. The big story is of course the Foreign Fanatics vs. the All Americans and tonight we'll be seeing Ludvig Borga vs. Scott Steiner in a preview match. Let's get to it.

Borga talks about how much he hates America so Steiner says he doesn't like Borga talking about how much he hates America. Well no one ever accused this of being the most exciting era.

Opening sequence.

Heenan is wearing what looks like a parachute because recently someone parachuted into a big boxing match. As usual, topical jokes really aren't funny. Savage promises to destroy Crush if he gets the chance.

Vince plugs a phone number where you can select Pierre's opponent for next week. Your options are: Doink the Clown, the 1-2-3 Kid or Lex Luger. After that obvious set of choices, Vince pulls the cord on Bobby's parachute, which he has on backwards.

Scott Steiner vs. Ludvig Borga

Borga jumps him before the jacket can come off and scores with a good looking top rope clothesline. Scott demonstrates the American abilities to suplex foreigners, followed by a pumphandle slam to send Ludvig to the floor. We hit the pause button while Borga yells a lot, followed by a shot of Savage yelling about Crush again. Borga grabs a headlock as Savage rants about not caring about legal issues, even promising to slap Jack Tunney if it means he can get his hands on Crush.

Steiner avoids an elbow drop but here are the Quebecers to offer Borga some advice. Vince: "This is patently absurd!" Back from a break with Steiner suplexing him back inside as Rick Steiner comes out to even things up a bit. Borga finally makes the ropes to break up a Boston crab so Scott goes with a bad looking top rope dropkick for two. Rick gets on the apron for no logical reason and Borga pulls him inside. The Quebecers get in as well and the match is thrown out.

Rating: D+. This didn't go anywhere and you knew they were going to have the big nothing finish as soon as Rick came out there. Borga could have been a great heel if he hadn't been as crazy as he was but he was really cool while he lasted. Scott wasn't a great singles guy anymore at this point but he was still a very appropriate choice to face Borga here.

Jeff Jarrett is still in Nashville and it's time to go to the Grand Ole Opry. Country music is corrupt or something. This turns into a discussion of Undertaker being in shambles. Jarrett just keeps going and it gets worse and worse every minute as no one cares in the slightest.

Men on a Mission vs. Steve Smith/Cory Student

Mable is still dancing when Smith taps him on the shoulder for no logical reason. That earns him a trip around the ring before a double dropkick (with maybe one foot combined making contact) puts him down. Mo's sunset flip gets two on Student (what a name) as the announcers make jokes about an upcoming USA movie. We hit the chinlock for a bit before the double splash puts Student away.

Rating: D. I never know what to say about these squash matches as they're just beatings until we get to the inevitable pin. Men on a Mission were entertaining in a way but they haven't exactly aged well. It doesn't help that Oscar is one of the worst wrestling rappers this side of PN News.

We go to the Survivor Series control center as we run down the card, including the Hart Family facing Jerry Lawler and his Knights, which of course wouldn't happen. Bret can't wait to get his hands on Lawler for everything he's said about the family.

Still in the control center, we see the Headshrinkers finding out that they'll be facing a pair Doinks. Oh just.....no.

Undertaker tells us that drinking and driving is bad. That's not something you expect to see.

Rick Martel vs. John Paul

Martel starts with the usual as Vince speculates that Savage might replace Tatanka on the All Americans team. Paul grabs a headlock but gets suplexed down. Martel ducks a middle rope cross body and the Boston crab wraps it up in a hurry.

Crush vs. Dan Dubiel

Vince immediately has to calm Savage down by waistlocking him but Savage THROWS VINCE DOWN! IN 1993!!! Savage erupts on Crush with referees and suits not being able to break it up.

Bob Backlund vs. Barry Horowitz

How weird is it that Backlund is still around nearly 23 years after his comeback in his forties here? They trade armdrags to start before

Backlund takes him down with ease. Cue Savage back to the announcers' desk as the technical display continues. And never mind as we cut to Crush breaking out of his locker room, sending Savage to the back. They fight onto the streets as the match is completely forgotten to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. It's nice that they have a direction going towards Survivor Series though the ridiculous amount of changes they're making to the card isn't doing them any favors. The big match wasn't exactly thrilling but Savage vs. Crush is a hot angle that they somehow waited five months to blow off. Not much of a show here but 1993 isn't the best time.

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Monday Night Raw – March 25, 2002 (2016 Redo): When It Was All About Stephanie

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 25, 2002

Location: Bryce Jordan Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 15,550

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

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

Linda McMahon is in WWF Studios to welcome us to the show, telling us that only twenty picks will be made tonight for the sake of time. The changes won't officially take place until next week so everyone will be on Smackdown this week. As for tonight though, HHH, Chris Jericho and Stephanie McMahon can't be drafted because they're in a triple threat for the World Title (Yes Stephanie was getting a World Title shot and was a major focus fourteen years ago as well.). Steve Austin can't be drafted either due to a contractual stipulation (read as a real life contract dispute) and is therefore a free agent and can sign wherever he wants.

Opening sequence.

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

Tazz vs. Mr. Perfect

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

Tazz says the perfect pick has become just another victim.

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

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

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

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

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

Ric comes out and picks Undertaker #1 overall despite hating him.

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

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

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

Angle reads off his resume until Vince makes him the #2 pick.

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

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

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

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

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

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

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

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

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

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

Vince picks Billy and Chuck as a unit.

The Rock/Hulk Hogan vs. NWO

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

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

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

The NWO runs off.

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

Jeff Hardy vs. Billy

Lita, Matt, Chuck and Rico are all at ringside. Billy fires off some right hands in the corner to start but misses a charge. The announcers talk about being drafted to different shows as Jeff hits a tornado DDT. The Swanton misses though as Lita completely botches a hurricanrana to Rico (her legs weren't around his head and he had to flip himself). Jeff grabs a rollup for a fluke pin in another nothing match.

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

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

European Title: William Regal vs. Rikishi

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

Jazz wants to see where the Divas end up.

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

Here are the picks:

Smackdown

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

Raw

1. Undertaker

2. NWO
3. Kane
4. Rob Van Dam
5. Booker T.
6. Big Show
7. Bubba Ray Dudley
8. Brock Lesnar
9. William Regal
10. Lita

Riveting no?

Intercontinental Title: Kurt Angle vs. Rob Van Dam

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

Kurt puts on the ankle lock until Edge makes the save.

Stephanie is ready to win the title.

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

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

HHH catapults Jericho into Stephanie so we can have the falling low blow

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

Jericho grabs the belts (this was when there was no Undisputed Title belt yet) for a double knockout, meaning Stephanie can cover both of them. The Walls have HHH in trouble but Stephanie breaks them up by jumping on Jericho's back. A Pedigree gets rid of Jericho but THERE SHE IS AGAIN. HHH has finally had enough and hits a spinebuster (because we can't hurt her perfect face) to retain.

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

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

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

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

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

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Monday Night Raw – July 11, 2016: This Close To Interesting

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 11, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

Things are back to normal this week, or at least as back to normal as they're going to be with just one more Raw after this before the Draft takes place. The only major event announced for tonight is Zack Ryder challenging Rusev for the United States Title after beating Sheamus twice last week. Let's get to it.

First of all, on a personal note, Happy Anniversary Becca. Thanks for an amazing year and I love you.

Opening sequence.

Battle Royal

Goldust, Darren Young, Apollo Crews, Viktor, Konnor, Bubba Ray Dudley, D-Von Dudley, Dolph Ziggler, Bo Dallas, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, R-Truth, Baron Corbin, Jimmy Uso, Jey Uso, Jack Swagger, Alberto Del Rio, Curtis Axel

Winner gets an Intercontinental Title shot at Battleground so Miz and Maryse are on commentary. English is put out early and he lands near Bob Backlund, who is managing Young. R-Truth puts out Viktor and Bubba (Not D-Von, Cole.) gets rid of Axel. There goes Truth and Konnor follows him out. One Uso tries to eliminate the other but they settle with a double superkick to get rid of D-Von as we go to a break.

Back with Gotch and Jey having been eliminated during the break. Del Rio gets rid of Goldust and Crews eliminates Dallas as the ring is emptying out. Jimmy and Swagger are thrown out so we're down to Crews, Bubba, Young, Del Rio, Corbin and Ziggler. Crews low bridges Bubba out and Del Rio is the only one left standing. Ziggler drops him with a Fameasser and goes for a cover out of instinct. That's not enough to eliminate him though as Alberto comes back with a tilt-a-whirl gutbuster.

Alberto misses a charge and goes through the ropes, allowing Ziggler to superkick him to the floor which isn't an elimination. Corbin sends Dolph to the apron but can't get him out. Del Rio comes back in and gets backdropped out by Crews to put us down to four. Corbin gets rid of Ziggler but Crews gets rid of himself and Corbin, leaving Young to win the thing at 13:20.

Rating: D. You know what, why not? That's certainly a unique way to win the match and it's a nice way to have Young go somewhere after all those vignettes. I would have gone with Crews here but this could have been a lot worse. I mean, at least it's not another battle of Cleveland with Ziggler vs. Miz. It was a pretty standard battle royal though, which is only going to be so entertaining.

Backlund picks Young up to celebrate.

Shane and Stephanie McMahon are talking about why Vince McMahon is going to be here tonight. Maybe it's to give one of them a promotion. Seth Rollins comes in and thinks Vince is here to see about him as the face of the WWE. Rollins has footage for tonight and Shane thinks it should be on the Ambrose Asylum. Stephanie says no because she hates Dean (Have we ever gotten a reason other than he's apparently an embarrassment to the company?) so Seth will get to debut the Rollins Report. Great. EVEN MORE talking.

Quick look at Brock Lesnar winning his return to the UFC on Saturday before he faces Randy Orton at Summerslam. Orton will be on the Highlight Reel at Battleground.

Zack Ryder comes up to challenge Rusev again but Sheamus jumps him from behind. Apparently there's no title match tonight because Ryder will be facing Sheamus next. Three WOO's for false advertising!

Sheamus vs. Zack Ryder

Ryder goes right after him to start and knocks Sheamus to the floor for a dropkick off the apron. Back in and a running boot to the face gets two for Zack as the announcers ignore the match to play fantasy draft. Not that it matters as the Brogue Kick ends Ryder at 2:22. I knew this was coming because this is how WWE works but thanks for YET ANOTHER waste of potential for the sake of a nothing match on Smackdown.

Rusev comes out and beats up Ryder as well while shouting that he accepts Ryder's challenge. Wait, so Ryder is getting the title shot after Sheamus just beat him clean? SERIOUSLY? This is the kind of stuff you suggest in sarcasm because it's the dumbest thing you could possibly do, not what

you actually do on Raw.

Breezango vs. Lucha Dragons

This is due to the Dragons messing up Breeze's vest on the pre-show. Fandango and Cara start things off and it's time for more Draft talk. Cara headscissors him down but gets caught in the wrong corner to put him in trouble. Fandango is sent into the corner as well and the hot tag brings in Kalisto, who almost immediately botches a springboard. A few kicks to Breeze go better and the hurricanrana driver makes it worse. The numbers get the better of him though and Breeze gets in a superkick for the pin on Kalisto at 4:20.

Rating: D+. I can't help it but I like Breezango. They're just a goofy little midcard heel team but it's not like there's anything better for either of them to do. If nothing else it means we're getting something out of that Golden Truth story, which went on forever and deserves to actually go somewhere. Also it's not like the Dragons mean anything at this point anyway so them losing doesn't exactly matter.

Here's Seth Rollins for the Rollins Report. Tonight he has something special for us: footage from a special sitdown interview with Roman Reigns. Please tell me this isn't going to be one of those things where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to sound embarrassing.

We see the footage and it's....one of those things where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to sound embarrassing. Basically Reigns "admits" he did it and says he should be out of the triple threat because he's no role model. Oh and he hates Dean being champion.

Back in the arena, Rollins says Ambrose should be out of the triple threat because he deserves his rematch for the title, one on one. Cue Ambrose but Rollins yells at him for being a coward and stealing the title from him at Money in the Bank. Dean says he loves to come out here and have a good time but he's the top man in this industry. He's more than just a joke and a utility player because he's the only one still standing and the king of this company. Dean goes on about Rollins wanting

another shot and offers a title shot anywhere any place. Rollins is ready right now but nah, not tonight. He'll see Dean next week.

We get a quick preview of New Day fighting the Wyatt Family at their compound. This DEFINITELY looks like the Final Deletion.

Ambrose vs. Rollins for the title is confirmed for next week.

Kevin Owens vs. ???

Sami Zayn is on commentary but Kevin won't come out until he's gone. Stephanie comes in to say get rid of Sami because she's all about solutions. Sami starts to leave but gets in a fight with Owens on the ramp. No match.

Vince arrives and says he's here to name the Commissioner of Smackdown.

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Time for more Draft talk! I know it's a big deal but could you please talk about the actual match for more than two seconds first? Cesaro gutwrenches him over for two to start before they trade headlocks. A hurricanrana puts Owens down but he makes the ropes to break up the Swing. Owens takes over with a whip into the barricade as the announcers talk about where John Cena will be drafted. Cesaro's suplex doesn't break their focus but Owens knocks him into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock and avoiding the Cannonball in the corner. The Pop Up Powerbomb is blocked and the springboard spinning uppercut gets two for Cesaro. Another running uppercut on the floor (with Cesaro wearing JBL's hat) but Cesaro gets crotched on top to slow him down. Owens busts out a torture rack neckbreaker for the clean pin at 12:24.

Rating: C+. I like the finisher but I could go without Cesaro losing all over again. I mean to be fair he had that awesome run against Miz and came up short, which is his standard operating procedure. It's still working, but at some point you're just wasting a lot of potential and acting like Cesaro isn't being hurt by all the losses.

Post match Owens grabs a headset to brag about how awesome he is until Sami Zayn jumps him from behind. Cesaro swings Owens in a meaningless gesture. Maybe he should, I don't know, be upset about the loss?

The Club thinks John Cena is abandoning Enzo and Big Cass by hosting the ESPYs and not being here tonight. Maybe after the win they could hop on a plane and crash the awards so they can beat up John Cena.

Heath Slater vs. Titus O'Neil

We actually get a Slater Gator reference for a name I never thought (or hoped to) I'd hear again. Titus throws him around to start but runs into a raised boot in the corner. That means it's time for a quick Bo-Train, followed by Slater getting two off a DDT. Titus starts powering back and catches a diving Heath in three straight backbreakers. The Clash of the Titus puts Heath away at 3:12.

Rating: D. Well that happened and I'm not sure what else there is to say about it. This is another short match that doesn't seem to mean much but maybe that's going to be the norm going forward. Titus winning is fine but I'm not sure where he's going after losing to Rusev so decisively.

Sasha has been waiting to shut Dana Brooke up all weekend now and wants the title after that. Tonight, she gets real.

We look back at the Wyatt Family challenging the New Day to come to their compound last week.

Now we go to the compound, where a bunch of cars turn their lights on and try to crush New Day as they get out of their truck. The editing makes this look like it's being played in fast motion so it's almost impossible to keep track of. The Wyatts arrive in a car and the brawl is on with New Day being beaten down with a variety of weapons. Woods hides behind a tree until Bray swings an ax at him and rams him into the tree trunk.

Kofi is shoved into some mud until Big E. suplexes Rowan. Strowman (who looks even more frightening with his shirt off) and Big E. hit each other a few times until Bray comes back and drops the unconscious Woods by the car. Kofi and Big E. are beaten down again as the editing gets even

faster. Woods gets back up with a trashcan lid for a save but Bray beats everyone down and asks where the power of positivity is now.

New Day is sent into a car which is quickly beaten down but they escaped somewhere in there. Bray is left alone but smiles at New Day, who are freaked out by his laughter. Rowan and Strowman come back but a bunch of people in sheep masks appear, all holding lanterns. That's enough for New Day as they bail, leaving Bray to say follow the buzzards.

Yes it's clearly a takeoff from the Final Deletion and I'm sure I'll hear about how much better TNA's version was, though this was the serious version and exactly the kind of thing that made the Wyatts creepy in the first place. This really is something that has to be seen though as words really don't do it justice. It worked though.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. The Club

Enzo and Cass say they want Cena's spot but they're willing to earn it. The Club on the other hand think they can take it by beating Cena up 3-1. AJ tells them to walk away but Enzo says the only place they're walking is into that ring right now. This is joined in progress after a break with Enzo trying to hold Anderson with a headlock. It's quickly off to Gallows who headbutts Enzo back into the corner as the beatdown begins.

Karl comes back in for a headlock but Cass comes in and slams Enzo onto Anderson for two. To be fair Enzo might as well just be a projectile as I don't think he's entirely human. Gallows kicks Enzo in the face and sends him shoulder first into the post as we take a break. Back with Anderson and Gallows taking turns on Enzo. Anderson finally lets Enzo get away for the hot tag to Cass (Enzo's signature) and a fall away slam sets up the Bada Boom Shakalacka. AJ low bridges Gallows to the floor though and it's a DQ at 10:48.

Rating: C. This was just a long beating on Enzo and to be fair that's almost all he's good for in a situation like this one. I like how much they're protecting Cass though as I don't think he's been pinned yet and the Club actually lost here. The match was fine, albeit pretty basic for the most part. It's acceptable though as you don't want to burn the fans out on this match like they did with the Club vs. the Usos.

Post match the beating is almost on but here's Cena, who was in Los Angeles earlier today, for the save. Well at least he's not live via satellite. That earns him a big CENA chant which you really don't hear that often.

Dana Brooke vs. Sasha Banks

Sasha shoves her outside to start and things instantly slow down. Back in and Dana talks a lot of trash before kneeling Sasha in the ribs. Banks is sent outside so Charlotte can brag us to a break. Back with Sasha in a chinlock (Charlotte: "Very good Dana.") before stomping away in the corner. The announcers continue to talk about ANYTHING other than this match as Dana grabs another chinlock to keep things slow. Sasha fights out again and hits the double knees in the corner. Dana crotches her on top but Sasha pops right back up and grabs the Bank Statement for the win at 12:00.

Rating: C-. This was fine and another win for Sasha as that Natalya feud looks more and more pointless every single week. Dana is getting better in the ring as she's not botching everything she tries but she still is on the main roster far sooner than she probably should have been.

Post match Charlotte says that's not good enough so Sasha has to beat Dana again on Smackdown.

Here are Shane, Stephanie and Vince for the Smackdown Commissioner announcement. Vince thinks they've been doing a fair job but wonders how they could be his kids. Where's the violence and anger? How could they not have stabbed each other in the back yet? What's up with Stephanie being all passive aggressive and Shane having no ruthless aggression?

The kids are given a chance to convince their dad that they should be in charge of Smackdown and Stephanie goes first. Stephanie goes on a rant about what Shane said on the Mick Foley podcast about how he left when he wasn't congratulated enough. That's nothing compared to what he says behind Vince's back because he's all crazy and needing to be praised.

Shane says he came back in this arena five months ago and he's eternally thankful. He's ready to change everything about Smackdown and shatter the

glass ceilings that Vince and Stephanie have set up. We get a quick fan poll with Shane easily winning which Stephanie attributes to crowd manipulation.

Vince doesn't care what the people think but one of them has to run Smackdown. That will be.....Shane, while Stephanie runs Raw. Ah that's better. For a second there I thought they might actually do something interesting. Vince wants them to compete for who gets the keys to the kingdom but they'll both be naming General Managers. Great. MORE power struggles and double bosses for each show.

Vince leaves and Stephanie tells Shane she's going to make him wish he was never born. Shane thinks Stephanie is hiding something and it's fear. It's game on, but Stephanie says she's married to the only game in this business. She slaps him in the face so he kisses her on the cheek, only to have Stephanie slip off the steps as she leaves to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I actually liked this show more than I was expecting to as it absolutely flew by. Even though it was just a big preview for the Draft next week (as it should have been), they kept it entertaining enough and set some stuff up going forward, which is all it was supposed to do. Unfortunately the ending really hurt things as it's going to be all about the McMahons even longer, which is really the last thing they needed to go with but that's how WWE works. Anyway, not a good show or anything but it was good enough for a show in a vacuum like everything else is around here at the moment.

Results

Darren Young won a battle royal after Baron Corbin and Apollo Crews eliminated each other

Sheamus b. Zack Ryder – Brogue Kick

Breezango b. Lucha Dragons – Superkick to Kalisto

Kevin Owens b. Cesaro – Torture rack neckbreaker

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. The Club via DQ when AJ Styles interfered

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Bank Statement

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

New Column: Who's The Boss

Today we're looking at a quirky 1980s sitcom starring Tony Danza as a former Major League Baseball player who becomes a housekeeper.

And a little bit about who should be running the new Raw and Smackdown.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-whos-the-boss/>

Payback 2016: The Booking Anchor

Payback 2016

Date: May 1, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're off to the first pay per view after Wrestlemania and things are kind of on a roll around here. The main event is Roman Reigns defending the WWE World Title against AJ Styles with the question of whether or not Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows will be interfering on AJ's behalf. Other than that we find out who will be in control of Monday Night Raw going forward between the Authority and Shane McMahon. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

This was bumped from the main card earlier today. Corbin tosses him around to start and gets two off a hard right hand. Ziggler's comeback is easily cut off with a modified hot shot as Corbin keeps casually walking around. A heavy clothesline sets up the chinlock to keep Corbin on Ziggler's neck.

Ziggler gets out and grabs a sleeper for a bit, followed by a Fameasser for two. They head outside with Ziggler loading up a dive but getting kicked out of the air. Corbin loads up a powerbomb but it's the old Big Show Alley Oop to send Ziggler face first into the post for a good looking crash. For some reason Baron takes way too much time getting back in, allowing Ziggler to roll Corbin up for the pin at 7:43.

Rating: C-. The match was a nicely done big man beatdown for the most part and then they do THAT ending? I don't know how to make this any clearer to WWE but Dolph Ziggler isn't going anywhere and it's long past due to stop giving him wins like this. Corbin could be something on the main roster but now he's losing his first major match less than a month after debuting. I'm sure it's a surprise though and that's what WWE must be going for, along with annoying the NXT fans who think they understand

wrestling.

Pre-Show: US Title: Kalisto vs. Ryback

Kalisto is defending after Ryback beat him in a non-title match a few weeks back on Smackdown. The crowd is really not pleased to see Ryback here and bust out the tried and true GOLDBERG chants. Ryback blasts him with a right hand to start (that sounds so familiar) but Kalisto gets in a monkey flip to send Ryback outside.

A suicide dive sets up a springboard corkscrew plancha with Ryback barely getting underneath him in time to keep Kalisto from bouncing off the apron. Back in and a tornado DDT is countered into a suplex for two as we take a break. We come back to see Ryback sending him shoulder first into the post, only to grab a spinning DDT to put both guys down.

They head to the apron with Kalisto hitting a nice enziguri and another DDT to send Ryback onto the apron (Mauro: "MAMA MIA!"). Ryback comes up holding his shoulder but Kalisto goes with a spinning kick to the face and the hurricanrana driver for two. The Salida Del Sol is countered into a Shell Shock attempt but Kalisto flips out of that as well, only to eat a spinebuster for two. Ryback goes up for some reason but gets kicked in the head again to slow him down. Kalisto goes up as well and is promptly gorilla pressed face first onto the mat. The top rope splash misses though and the Salida Del Sol retains the title at 9:28.

Rating: B. That was an AWESOME match with both guys working very hard throughout. Now the problem here is WHAT WERE THEY THINKING??? Kalisto is another name on a long list of lame duck champions who never get to do anything with the title because they either never defend the thing or lose their non-title matches. At the same time, Ryback continues to flounder in his latest heel run because WWE keeps cutting his legs off in matches like this. Still though, awesome match and one of the best pre-show matches they've ever done.

The opening video is Bray Wyatt talking about how payback is the first thing we think of every day and how much it consumes all of us. This must have been made weeks ago.

Here's the New Day to open things up. They'll be down at ringside watching and sipping on some lemonade like Becky with the good hair. Woods offers his services to help Beyonce get back at Jay-Z for cheating on her and Big E. hits the catchphrases.

Now we get a normal opening video with the standard highlight packages on the big stuff.

Tag Team Tournament Finals: Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Vaudevillains

The winners get a title shot at some point in the future. Enzo: "If my aunt had hair on her back, she'd be my uncle." The Vaudevillains need to get in their DeLorean and go back to the future and Cass thinks they're posing like Hey Arnold. Cass: "You never should have gotten off the stoop!" After saying they never should have left their stoop (another Hey Arnold reference), Cass calls the SAWFT to get us going.

Enzo and Gotch start things off with Simon working on the arm before it's off to the partners. The tag to Cass is treated as a big deal but everything breaks down with Cass throwing Enzo at both guys. Enzo gets sent hard out to the floor with his head hitting the bottom rope in an ugly crash. He isn't moving and a stretcher is brought out as the match is called off at about four minutes. I won't be rating this due to the time and the injury but it was fine while it lasted.

The announcers talk for a good while with the camera only showing Enzo for a few moments at a time.

Long video on Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens, the same one that aired on Raw and Smackdown.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

They slug it out immediately and Kevin is sent outside for a big flip dive. JBL starts talking about a tiger attacking Roy of Siegfried and Roy, including ripping off Chris Rock's line of "that tiger went tiger." Back in and Owens gets in a hard shot before dropping Sami face first onto the apron. Zayn is sent hard into the steps as Cole tells us that Enzo is talking and moving his extremities. That's such a relief.

Back in and Owens poses a lot while asking why Sami isn't getting payback yet. A chinlock slows things down and it's Sami slugging away with forearms. The hard clothesline puts Kevin down but Sami can't follow up. Referee: "YOU GUYS GOOD?" Owens: "Shut up!" Sami hammers away in the corner before a Michinoku Driver (called the Blue Thunder Bomb by Cole) gets two.

The real Blue Thunder Bomb gets two more and Owens' brainbuster onto the knee gets the same. Kevin drops a frog splash and a couple of Cannonballs (JBL: "He may roll a perfect game!") but the Pop Up powerbomb is countered with a dropkick. The half and half suplex sends Kevin flying but he pops up and clotheslines Sami inside out. Another powerbomb is countered into a rollup as you can feel the chemistry here. These two just know each other so well and there's nothing that can replace that.

Sami's tornado DDT is countered into a backbreaker and Kevin's face turns evil. A third powerbomb, this time onto the apron, is countered again with a backdrop to send Kevin spine first onto the apron and then the floor. The diving tornado DDT plants Kevin again but Kevin superkicks his head off and finally gets the powerbomb for the pin at 14:28.

Rating: A-. I was really feeling this one as both guys beat the tar out of each other for a long time and told an awesome story of knowing each other so well. I would have had Sami go over here but you really can't go wrong with either guy winning. Both of them will be fine and Sami is the one who can lose most of his matches and be fine at the end.

Post match Kevin beats him up some more and demands that Byron bring him a mic. Kevin: "Ask me about beating Sami Zayn right now!" Byron, who is taller than Owens, asks if the rivalry is over. Owens: "THAT'S NOT WHAT I TOLD YOU TO SAY!" Kevin says he finally proved that he's the better man between the two of them and now he can refocus on getting back his Intercontinental Title. Byron asks if Kevin thinks Miz will retain the title, which Kevin takes as an invitation to do commentary on the next match.

Intercontinental Title: Cesaro vs. The Miz

Miz is defending and there isn't much of a story here other than Cesaro

wants the title. Miz goes for the shoulder to start but Cesaro shoves him away and shakes a finger at him. The delayed vertical suplex gets two (Owens: "He can keep him up for awhile but he can't keep him down for three.") followed by a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for the same.

Miz gets in a shot on the arm and cranks away on the shoulder as Owens is asked who he would rather face for the title. Owens: "I would rather face you but that's not going to happen." Back up and Miz poses a bit before hitting the sleeper. Cesaro gets caught in a bodyscissors but casually picks Miz up and throws him off for the break.

We hit the uppercuts with Owens saying he never wants to take another one of those. Cole: "Well if Cesaro wins you'll have to..." Owens: "COLE STOP TELLING ME WHAT I'LL HAVE TO DO!" A running dropkick gets two on Miz as Owens calls Miz Mike by mistake. Byron interprets this as Owens cheering for his friend. Owens: "Byron go call your mom or something because no one else wants to listen to you."

The spinning uppercut sets up Swiss Death for a very close two but Cesaro goes shoulder first into the post. Miz gets the Finale for two but here's Sami Zayn to go after Owens and fight him into the crowd. Cesaro swings Miz for a long time and puts on a Crossface but Owens and Zayn get on the apron to distract the referee as Miz taps. The distraction lets Miz roll Cesaro up for the pin at 10:26.

Rating: C+. DANG IT WWE STOP DOING STUPID THINGS! This should have been the biggest layup on the card but instead they'll keep the title on Miz because we haven't waited long enough to give Cesaro a major win. This is up there with the League of Nations beating New Day at Wrestlemania on the scale of stupid booking decisions. I'm a big Miz fan but they should have changed the title here and moved on to Owens vs. Cesaro vs. Zayn. On a more positive note, this was some of the funniest commentary I've ever heard as Owens is one of the best jerk heels in years.

Owens and Zayn keep fighting and Sami takes another Pop Up Powerbomb. Maryse has to save Miz from a powerbomb of his own.

We recap Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho which started when Ambrose took over the Highlight Reel and turned it into the Ambrose Asylum. Jericho

doesn't like the idea of someone upstaging him and the match was set up as a result.

Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose

Jericho bails to the floor to start so Dean chases him back inside and hits an early cross body. Chris crawls over to the referee for protection before dropping Dean ribs first across the top rope. We hit the chinlock on Dean for a bit but Jericho's bulldog is countered with a shove into the corner. Byron talks about both guys' documented careers, prompting JBL to say that it's documented because he and Cole have talked about him. Your lesson for this match: JBL needs to let Kevin Owens do the heel commentary.

Dean gets two off a bulldog of his own but the top rope elbow is countered into the Walls. A rope is eventually grabbed and Jericho is sent to the floor for the suicide dive. They head to the announcers' table with Jericho trying the Walls but settling for a catapult over the barricade for a big crash. As expected, Dean dives back in at nine before escaping the Codebreaker.

The rebound lariat puts both guys down for a breather. Now the top rope elbow gets two but Jericho grabs the Walls again, only to have Dean make the ropes again. The enziguri and butterfly backbreaker get two each for Chris but Dean gets the knees up to block the Lionsault. An awkward sequence (with Jericho laying on Dean's knees) sets up Dirty Deeds for the pin on Chris at 18:18.

Rating: C. It really is amazing how much damage that loss to Lesnar did to Ambrose as I just do not care about him anymore. This match went on for a LONG time and didn't go anywhere other than two people doing moves (and missing a lot of them) for the better part of twenty minutes. Dean winning is the right call, even if it makes Jericho going over AJ last month all the more confusing.

Jericho throws a fit post match.

Sasha Banks is talking to Shane McMahon.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Natalya

Charlotte is defending and has Ric Flair in her corner while Natalya has her uncle Bret Hart in hers. Charlotte W00s at her to start but Natalya grabs the Sharpshooter. That's flipped away so Natalya nips up to scare the champ a bit. Another takedown sets up a leg lock for a bit before Charlotte bails to the floor. A chase results in Natalya getting kicked on the way back in but the fans would rather have Sasha.

They trade some chops until Natalya sends her flying with a release German suplex. Charlotte starts in on the leg ("Hey Bret, you want to learn something?") but takes too much time bragging and gets caught in an armbar. Natalya shoves her off the top for a big crash, allowing Flair to tell some fans to keep their mouths shut. Charlotte loads up a powerbomb onto the apron but Natalya counters into something resembling a hurricanrana on the floor.

Back in and a boot to the face stops Natalya's discus lariat, only to have a slap (yes a slap) break up the Figure Eight. A quick Natural Selection gets two for the champ, followed by that great looking moonsault for the same. The Figure Four is put on but quickly reversed so Charlotte puts on Natalya....AND IT'S FREAKING MONTREAL with Charles Robinson (a noted Flair megafan) ringing the bell without Natalya tapping to retain the title at 13:04.

Rating: C+. MONTREAL. It's been nearly twenty years and they're STILL doing that thing again? Would it freaking kill them to just put Sasha in the title hunt instead of giving us Natalya vs. Charlotte IV or whatever it's going to be at Extreme Rules? Bret did absolutely nothing here and the whole thing feels like a huge waste of time and effort.

Bret and Natalya put on matching Sharpshooters post match. I'm so glad Natalya got over that loss in all of 14 seconds.

Here's Vince for his decision on the control of Raw but the fans cut him off with a CM PUNK chant. Vince talks about how amazing Raw is but gets cut off again, prompting him to ask how long it can go. Vince: "COME ON! YOU'VE GOT MORE THAN THAT!" He talks about all the different eras Raw has gone through and thinks it's time for a new visionary. Vince brings out

Stephanie to even more booing.

The fans are pleased with the idea of Reigns spearing Stephanie at Wrestlemania but she doesn't want their support or sympathy. Stephanie brags about her success, including the debut of the Shield and the Divas Revolution. Their biggest success was the launch of the WWE Network which went from an idea to 1.8 million subscribers. That brings her to Shane, whose only qualification to run Raw is being a man. After the better part of five minutes, Stephanie brings up Shane blackmailing Vince to get back into the company after leaving for seven years. Cue Shane to break up the BORING chants.

Shane shows a bunch of media clips about how he's made wrestling cool again. That brings him back to the WWE Network comment, which was Vince's idea. Of those 1.8 million subscribers, we've got about 18,000 of them in the house tonight. Oddly enough, a lot of those people came on board around Wrestlemania XXXII, which was probably due to one match in particular. Fans: "YOU STILL GOT IT!" Stephanie: "Thank you, yes I do!"

Shane brings up the departure in 2007 and says it was due to his voice being ignored. In the void he left, the Authority took over and promptly ran the company into the ground. Shane came back to save the company's future for all of the future McMahon generations. The fans are entirely behind Shane of course but Vince says Shane shouldn't be here after the loss to Undertaker.

Then Shane came out the night after Wrestlemania and was handed Raw because he would fall on his face. However, Vince didn't think Shane failed that badly but he doesn't listen to these people. Vince wants to see them slit each others' throats and disembowel each other....so they'll both be running the show together. Shane and Stephanie shake hands before leaving.

Pre-show recap.

We recap the World Title match. Reigns won the title at Wrestlemania and AJ became #1 contender the next night at Raw. The twist has been the debut of Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows, AJ's former partners in the Bullet Club in New Japan, who attacked Reigns multiple times. AJ has

denied being behind it but Reigns doesn't buy it.

Enzo has been diagnosed with a concussion but all other tests have come back negative.

WWE World Title: AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending. AJ cranks on a headlock to start but is easily shoved away. Styles starts kicking at the legs but it's still a standoff in the early going. They do a quick chase around ringside and AJ gets in a few kicks to briefly take over. A hard clothesline turns AJ inside out and a big old sitout powerbomb gets two. The Superman punch is countered with a quick enziguri (cool visual there) and AJ's strike rush sets up the low forearm for two on the champ.

AJ elbows out of a Samoan drop and gets the Calf Crusher, sending Roman crawling to the ropes. Reigns bails to the floor and eats a GREAT looking Phenomenal Forearm to send both guys through the table in a big crash. AJ tries to throw Reigns back in but it's a countout win for Styles...until Shane comes out to make this match no countouts. Ignore the fact that he runs RAW and not pay per views of course.

They get back in with AJ not being able to hit anything off the top. Another strike rush sets up a 450 but Reigns gets the knees up for two. AJ is up first but dives into a right hand below the belt for a DQ. As you might expect, here's Stephanie to say not so fast because we're restarting it with no disqualifications. Oh yeah it's going to be all about the McMahons.

Reigns takes him outside and sends AJ into the steps before kicking him over the barricade and into the crowd. Thankfully Reigns doesn't follow him to avoid being murdered. AJ kicks him again and they head back inside, only to have another Phenomenal Forearm countered with a Superman punch. Again, that looked GREAT. A second Superman punch drops AJ but here are Gallows and Anderson to go after Roman.

The champ is beaten down and another Phenomenal Forearm gets two with Reigns putting his foot on the ropes. Cue the Usos to go after Anderson and Gallows but Reigns shoves AJ onto all four of them to break up the

fight. Now Reigns does his own big dive to take out the pile so AJ throws him inside for a springboard 450 (Not a shooting star Cole. Come on now that's not even close.) and another near fall. Another Forearm misses and the spear puts AJ down at 24:58.

Rating: A. Oh yeah this was awesome with Reigns being the perfect foil for someone like AJ and his high flying offense. It's clear that we're getting a big gimmick rematch in three weeks at Extreme Rules but at least the first match was excellent stuff. Shane and Stephanie interfering was really annoying but that's exactly what you have to expect going forward because they're like interesting or something. Great match here though and better than I was expecting.

Reigns poses until we cut to the back where Shane and Stephanie make AJ vs. Reigns II in an Extreme Rules match for the title. Shane supports Stephanie's decision to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Well that was....something indeed. There was a lot of good action but the booking decisions (Miz and Montreal) really brought things down. AJ vs. Reigns and Owens vs. Zayn were both excellent but my goodness the McMahon drama feels like something that is going to go on for the better part of ever. I had a good enough time watching it though and the wrestling in the two big matches really brought things up. Find a way to fix the booking (read as STOP DOING STUPID THINGS) and this show goes through the roof.

Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Vaudevillains went to a no contest when Amore was injured

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

Miz b. Cesaro – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Dean Ambrose b. Chris Jericho – Dirty Deeds

Charlotte b. Natalya – Sharpshooter

Roman Reigns b. AJ Styles – Spear

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Monday Night Raw – April 4, 2016: Hitting The Ground Limping

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 4, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

It's pretty much New Year's Day in WWE after everything came to a big conclusion last night. We're officially in the Roman Reigns Era (part three) and hopefully that means a little break from the Authority. The other interesting thing will be seeing where the McMahons go from here because they're the real stars of this show. Let's get to it.

Again I was in the arena for this show so my perspective might be a bit different.

We open with a long recap of Wrestlemania, because what else are they going to start with?

Opening sequence.

The announcers tell us that the crowd is going to be “non-traditional” tonight. Translation: “Please don’t listen to the fans booing Reigns. He’s really AWESOME!” JBL says they’re just having fun. If fun means chanting for the Sheraton Hotel room that came in their travel packages, followed by a TRAVEL PACKAGE chant, I’d rather sign up for misery.

Here’s Vince to get things going and the fans actually sing his theme song. Vince: “Exactly the same chance my son had against the Undertaker!” He brings up Reigns winning the title and the fans are really not pleased. However, as of this morning the lock box is all taken care of, save for explaining what the heck that’s about. Last night was a great night but seeing his grandsons out there with Shane got to him a bit. It almost got to him when Shane climbed the Cell, which of course draws a Shane O’Mac chant.

Vince promises that tonight is a night we’ll never forget and goes to leave but Shane slowly limps out to cut him off. The fans thank Shane but he wants to shake Vince’s hand (“Since I’m the only man in the family.”) because Vince won at Wrestlemania. Shane thanks the fans and goes to leave but Vince cuts him off and blames the fans for what happened last night. Vince cuts him off again and says no one upstages him. He’s often thought how insane it would be to have Shane running Raw....so let’s see how bad it can get.

Yes Shane is now in charge of Raw, completely negating A MONTH AND A HALF of storylines, along with erasing the point of last night’s Cell match. It’s almost like they booked themselves into a stupid corner with the story and had to find a way out of it while completely throwing logic out the window. This is the kind of nonsense that gets old in a hurry because I basically spent a month and a half trying to make sense of this stuff and then they say “oh never mind because we’re just doing what Vince was so scared of because.” Why? Just because. That drives me crazy but it happens far too often around here.

Here’s New Day for a talk before their title defense. Woods now has a smaller horn for reasons that aren’t likely to be explained. Maybe Vince

just lost his mind and felt it should be smaller. The fans do the HEY! WE WANT SOME NEW DAY song before Big E. says things didn't go according to plan last night.

Kofi did get to twerk with Shawn Michaels but Woods took a Stunner. Woods: "Upon further review of the tape, I have to admit...that it was pretty much my own fault." However, they now have the last piece of Booty's from last night, which will be playing the role of Simba as Woods hums Circle of Life from Lion King. It's one of my all time favorites and the fans dug the heck out of that bit.

Tag Team Titles: King Barrett/Sheamus vs. New Day

The challengers come out after a break but first we get to see Lillian dancing with New Day, which she actually did twice. Kofi and Sheamus go into the corner to start as the announcers talk about the Shane story because the Tag Team Titles aren't interesting enough. Everything breaks down and the League is sent outside, followed by Kofi being launched over the top (complete with fanfare from Woods) for a big crash.

Sheamus gets back up and knocks Kofi off the top for a crash but thankfully Woods is there to reassure him that the Booty is magical. Kofi fights back on Barrett but gets kicked hard in the ribs. We take a break and come back with the Wave going on in the background. Even Sheamus gets in on it, which actually causes Woods to get the mic and say if you like the Wave you like Sheamus.

This was the second time he said something like that after he had to get the fans to stop chanting Rocksteady during the break. To his credit, the crowd stopped cold both times so that seems to be the solution to the annoying chants. Kofi kicks Sheamus away and makes the hot tag as the fans are busy chanting about how awesome they are. Big E. starts in with the suplexes and the Warrior splash, followed by a whip to send Barrett into Sheamus. The Midnight Hour retains the titles at 8:45.

Rating: C. The match was fine but I'm sick of seeing these groups fight. There has to be someone else that New Day can fight, even if it's some pairing of two big heels. The League just isn't interesting no matter how many times they call themselves the lads or spin their fingers around

their heads. New Day is way over but they're getting into that Edge and Christian territory of having no one to feud with. At least they're getting a nice long reign out of it though and with those shirts selling as strong as they do, the team isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

Post match Sheamus says he's had it with all this losing. Every time he looks at one of these losses, he sees one weak link and that's going to change. That means a Brogue Kick to Barrett, which draws out the Wyatts to destroy the remainder of the League, complete with the fans singing He's Got The Whole World In His Hands. So there's the face turn for the Wyatts, though let's look at this League thing for a minute.

Did Sheamus forget that whole THEY WON AT WRESTLEMANIA part? Barrett knocked Woods silly to set up the win but now he's kicked out after one loss? As has been proven already, it seems that New Day should have won at Wrestlemania to set this up, especially since they won here like the Wrestlemania match meant nothing. It's bad storytelling and really should have been fixed before it became a stupid moment.

Vince goes to leave the arena but tells Renee Young that Shane is only in charge temporarily. He's leaving early because this is going to be a disaster and he doesn't want to watch the ship go down.

Summer Rae vs. Sasha Banks

Summer actually gets promo time and says if she was in charge of Bad and Blonde last night, they wouldn't have wound up flat on their faces like Sasha did. Banks is back in the shorts tonight. She grabs the mic away from Summer and reminds us that she is in fact the Boss before slapping Summer in the face. Summer begs off like a heel should and suckers Sasha in to a neck snap across the middle rope. We're in a chinlock thirty seconds in but Sasha is quickly up with a snapmare and running knees to the chest for two. The Bank Statement makes Summer tap at 1:40.

Shane McMahon is talking to Apollo Crews.

Apollo Crews vs. Tyler Breeze

This is Crews' main roster debut after only a few months down in NXT.

Then again when you have those natural gifts, it's not expected that you'll see him in developmental that long. Crews starts fast with a pop up powerslam for two, followed by a suplex from Breeze for the same. We're already in the chinlock and it would be nice for Crews to at least look...something. He's just kind of there and ignoring that someone has him in a chinlock. Crews pops up with the gorilla press and standing moonsault, followed by the lifting powerbomb for the pin at 1:52. Typical debut squash.

Clips of Charlotte and Roman Reigns on the Today Show.

Here's Reigns to open the second hour with even louder booing than the previous night. During the entrance, JBL says Reigns is so happy to finally be on top of the mountain. That would be back on top of the mountain actually because this is his third reign which is supposed to mean more than the first two. The people boo him again but Reigns says he's not a bad guy. He's not a good guy either. No he's just THE guy because he won the World Title in the biggest Wrestlemania of all time. If anyone wants to come get this title from him, he's not going anywhere.

This brings out Chris Jericho, who brags about all his successes, which are far stronger than anything Reigns has ever done. Jericho stops though and calls out the fans for their stupid chants because they're not going to hijack the show. Fans: "WE ARE IDIOTS!" Jericho rips on the internet favorite AJ Styles, which brings out Styles himself.

Before he can say anything though, here's Kevin Owens. Again nothing is said though because Sami Zayn comes out, likely due to his leash to Owens getting a bit too tight. Owens and Zayn go right at it and fight to the floor with Zayn hitting a big flip dive. AJ is sent outside and Jericho eats a spear.

Of note: Zayn seemed to land awkwardly on that flip dive and BOLTED to the back with his arm dangling by his side. He ran off while the lights were down so most people couldn't see him but it was definitely visible.

We look back at Vince agreeing to let Shane run Raw.

Back from a break and Shane makes a four way between Zayn, Owens, Jericho

and Styles for the #1 contendership. Reigns thinks that's just fine.

Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

Before the match, Corbin says all you need to know about him is this trophy. Ziggler hammers away in the corner but gets elbowed in the face for his efforts. A forearm knocks Ziggler off the apron and we take a break. Back with Ziggler in a nerve hold and the fans cheering for a beach ball because some nitwit fan felt the need to pull one out and bat it around.

This would be during the Raw debut of an NXT talent that the same people probably begged to be promoted for months while chanting for NXT. I'd also be willing to bet that they'll blame Vince for not pushing Corbin properly while Vince's reaction is "they saw him in his first match and would rather play with a beach ball." BUT THEY'RE JUST HAVING FUN! Anyway Corbin misses a charge and hits the post, setting up a neckbreaker for two. Deep Six gets the same for Corbin and they head outside into the crowd for the double countout at 8:32.

Rating: D+. This was an awkward one as Ziggler was kind of being squashed but is too big of a star for that treatment and tried to fight back but couldn't make it work. Corbin looked good but I'm not sure why they didn't just have him get the win here. It's not like Ziggler can't bounce back from a dozen losses or anything like that so just give Corbin the big win here. At least he didn't lost though.

Post match Corbin gives him the End of Days on the floor.

We look back at Lesnar destroying Ambrose last night.

Here's Zack Ryder with something to say. When Ryder was a kid he got to meet Razor Ramon and hold the Intercontinental Title. Well last night they took another picture with Ramon holding Ryder's title, which makes for a really good pair of photos. Ryder thanks his dad (in the front row) but here's Miz to interrupt. Last night Ryder stole what belongs to Miz and now it's time to show that Ryder is just a flash in the pan. That means it should be time for a title shot right now. Ryder says Woo Woo Woo let's do this.

Intercontinental Title: Zack Ryder vs. The Miz

Ryder is defending of course. Miz can't get in an early Reality Check so Ryder dropkicks him for two. A baseball slide sends Miz into the barricade and we take a break. Back with Ryder getting knocked to the floor like the jobber that he is. Ryder fights back with some clotheslines but misses a dropkick, setting up the low DDT for two. The Rough Ryder misses but Ryder counters a suplex with a neckbreaker. I've always liked that counter.

The Elbow gets two on Miz but the Broski Boot misses. They head outside in front of Zack's dad, so as you might expect, Miz is shoved down by Ryder Sr. To be fair, Zack's dad is in better shape than half the roster. Fans: "MR. RYDER!" This brings out Maryse of all people (Miz's wife) to slap Papa Ryder in the face, which is enough of a distraction for Miz to hit the Skull Crushing Finale for the pin and the title at 10:26.

Rating: D. Yeah this didn't work. You can push Ryder as having a big moment all you want but at the end of the day, he's still the same Zack Ryder who has been a jobbing goon for years now. It would be a stretch to have him beat Miz in the first place and an even bigger stretch to have him beat Miz to retain the title. As I've said already though, this was pretty clearly Neville's spot and he would have fit better, but I'm not sure who else they could have put here, especially if Miz is just getting the title back so soon.

Also of note: Lillian started to get in the ring to announce a match before Miz came out at all. This led to what looked like quite an argument at ringside which went on for a bit between Lillian and a producer.

Owens says he lost the title because he was in the ring with six other guys so the loss was hardly fair. Last night Sami Zayn stole the title from him but now it's on to bigger and better things, like winning the WWE World Title. Sami cost him the Intercontinental Title last night but he's not costing him the World Title tonight. The road to KO Mania II begins tonight.

The Vaudevillains are coming on Smackdown.

All of the women including Lita come for the formal presentation of the Women's Title. Lita talks about not having many role models to look up to as a kid. That's not the case for the youngest generation today though because this division has never been stronger. Charlotte is introduced but the fans cut her off by wanting some Bayley. She says this title is about all the women in this ring who made this happen and because of all the fans....who won't stop singing about how they want Bayley. JBL: "These people are rude."

Charlotte finally goes with the heel stuff by saying she won the title, but now the fans are on a WOMEN'S WRESTLING chant. The real credit goes to Ric Flair though because she got her here. The energy from the fans fueled her to her victory. It makes her laugh that she hasn't even been here for a year while some of the less successful women have been here seven or eight years.

Sasha and Becky walk out and the rest of the women follow, save for Natalya. Somehow this turns into an argument over the Harts and the Flairs because that's still a thing they're pushing. Also ignore the fact that we just saw Charlotte vs. Natalya and haven't gotten Sasha vs. Charlotte in a one on one feud yet. Natalya puts her in the Sharpshooter until Ric makes the save.

AJ Styles says it's a new beginning and the start of a new era. That new era is going to be phenomenal.

Video on Primo and Epico, who really like Puerto Rico. This might actually be a downgrade from Los Matadores.

Usos vs. Dudley Boyz

Tables match. It's a brawl to start of course and they head outside as JBL talks about his tables matches against Bubba and D-Von. Jimmy gets slammed to set up What's Up but Bubba won't do GET THE TABLES. The Usos pop up and dive onto the Dudleyz and we take a break. Back with Jey breaking up a superplex through the table as the fans are almost entirely behind the Dudleyz.

Jimmy dives over a table and onto Bubba with a splash. A double superkick

breaks up a double powerbomb attempt, followed by the Usos running the barricade for a double dive. Back in and the Superfly splashes miss but drive the Usos through the tables. Apparently that's enough to give the Dudley Boyz the win at 8:53, even though it's long since been established that you have to drive them through a table using an offensive move. They're not announced as the winners and JBL acknowledges that it was an early bell.

Rating: D. A lot of these matches really aren't working for me and a lot of that is due to this match not needing to happen. I'd assume we'll get a third match between them soon enough because the world is waiting on seeing who gets the advantage in a feud that isn't interesting in the first place. The Usos need a new direction because they're getting less and less interesting every time they come out.

Sami Zayn says he's been in every kind of match around the world. He talks about wrestling around the world when Kevin Owens jumps him and gives him a powerbomb through a table.

Post break the Dudleyz are still at ringside yelling...and here come Enzo and Cass to the pop of the night. Cole: "If you haven't got a sample of them...well some would say you're in for a treat." The fans start a loud HOW YOU DOIN chant before Enzo talks about being a smack talker skywalker with a lightsaber in his hand. The Dudleyz are still standing in the aisle and Enzo thinks they're jealous because they're ugly.

Bubba and D-Von look almost scared at how stupid this sounds but Enzo says he'll use the gift of jab to knock that lazy eye back into place. Enzo: "Fall back like your hairline!" Cass invites the Dudleyz down for a fight but they back off like true heels. That's enough for Cass to declare them SAWFT to wrap this up. Yeah the insults were kind of lame but this was all about the delivery and the reaction and these guys look like stars.

Zayn is officially out of the four way but a replacement will be named.

Ryder gets his rematch on Smackdown.

Dr. Phil will be the guest star next week. Why? No reason of course but

he's a celebrity and therefore interesting.

Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles vs. ???

The mystery entrant is.....Cesaro, who was the most likely option and very well received by the fans. If nothing else we get a cool new entrance as Cesaro comes out in a tear away suit with trunks underneath. AJ and Jericho fight in one corner with the other two across the ring before it's off to AJ vs. Cesaro to a very nice reaction. A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker drops AJ for two and we take a break.

Back with Jericho suplexing Styles but Cesaro gets back in, only to have Owens break up the Swing. The big guys head outside again as Jericho loads up a superplex on AJ, only to have Owens and Cesaro come back in to make it a Tower of Doom. With everyone else down, Cesaro starts running the corners for European uppercuts, only to have Owens get a boot up. AJ enziguris Kevin but walks into Swiss Death. Jericho clotheslines Cesaro outside but gets jumped by his fellow Canadian.

The package side slam gets two on Jericho, who avoids a Cannonball. The Lionsault hits knees though, only to have AJ hit the springboard 450 for two of his own. Owens gets back again and tells AJ to stay down with his stupid haircut but Cesaro gets back in and sends both of them into the corner for rotating European uppercuts. Jericho takes over a third corner and now it's time for triple rotating uppercuts.

Chris breaks it up but dives into the Swing as it's all Cesaro at this point. Owens superkicks AJ to block a springboard and there's the Pop Up Powerbomb for two on Styles. A Codebreaker gets the same on Owens with Cesaro making the save. Cesaro gets caught in the Walls but he reverses into the Sharpshooter to a big reaction. AJ makes the save with the forearm to Cesaro and Peles Owens to the floor, only to eat a Codebreaker for two. A quick backslide attempt has Jericho in trouble but AJ keeps rolling forward into the Clash for the pin and the title shot at 16:44.

Rating: B+. This match was a blast with four potential winners until Styles pulled off the big surprise pin. I'm not sure where Cesaro goes after this as you would assume Sami vs. Owens for Payback so maybe Cesaro gets Jericho. Styles vs. Reigns could be something interesting if they

build it up properly but it could also be a borderline disaster with the fans booing Reigns out of the building.

AJ celebrated for a very long time after the show went off the air.

Overall Rating: B-. I had a good time here, despite some big holes in a lot of what was going on. The Raw after Wrestlemania isn't about the in ring action but rather all the events that take place. Cesaro returning, Shane taking over Raw (and seems to be more off camera than the Authority, which is already a huge plus) and a bunch of debuts are a good sign and there should be some fun matches going into Payback, even though a lot of them aren't hard to figure out. This may not have been a great, blow away show but it showed some promise going forward which is all it needed to do.

Results

New Day b. Sheamus/King Barrett – Midnight Hour to Barrett

Sasha Banks b. Summer Rae – Bank Statement

Apollo Crews b. Tyler Breeze – Lifting powerbomb

Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler went to a double countout

Miz b. Zack Ryder – Skull Crushing Finale

Dudley Boyz b. Usos – The Usos went through tables

AJ Styles b. Chris Jericho, Cesaro and Kevin Owens – Styles Clash to Jericho

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Wrestlemania Preview: Undertaker vs. Shane McMahon

And yes it's really likely the main event.

That leaves us with one main event in the form of Undertaker vs. Shane McMahon inside the Cell with Undertaker future vs. control of Raw on the line. Let me repeat this: the Undertaker vs. Shane McMahon inside the Cell is at worst the co-main event of Wrestlemania XXXII. I understand that the injuries had a lot to do with this but that's a main event that only has limited potential. Given that this was going to be Undertaker vs. John Cena I could understand the idea, but maybe that was enough of a reason to change the plan up.

The big question here isn't what happens or who wins but rather who interferes. You can almost guarantee Vince and the Authority, but the big question is about the surprises. There's a rumored name that I won't mention here (if you've heard the rumor you know who it is) but I don't quite buy him as a big surprise for Wrestlemania. I mean, he would be a surprise but it's not something I expect to actually happen.

I see the big problem here that most people see: how in the world is this supposed to fill in thirty to forty minutes? Shane is old and hasn't wrestled in years while Undertaker is old and only wrestles a handful of times a year. This feels like the match that's going to be gimmicked to death (and it should be) but I'm not sure that's something you can use to close the biggest show of the year.

At the end of the day though, I think Shane somehow pulls it off. I don't want him to as I have a major problem with Shane McMahon being the second person to knock off Undertaker at Wrestlemania, especially a year after

Undertaker beat Bray Wyatt up so badly. There's a chance this match could be fun but there's also a strong chance that this could be a lot of sitting around begging for it to finally wrap up as we wait for anything interesting to happen because Shane is so blown up that he can't move five minutes in. Either way, it's going to be interesting. Scary but interesting.

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Monday Night Raw – March 28, 2016: Go Home, Go Home, GO HOME!

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 28, 2016

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

It's the final Raw before Wrestlemania and things are almost entirely set in stone. The big question is whether or not anything major happens between now and Sunday, as there's still time for some big moves before

we get into Dallas. There's always a chance that it could happen but the go home Raw's have been uneventful at times. Let's get to it.

Here's the Undertaker, who Cole calls the greatest of all time, to open things up. He gets right to the point (thankfully) and says that Shane's blood will be on Vince's hands, but Vince's blood may be on Undertaker's hands. This will NOT be his last Wrestlemania because the Cell is his house.

Cue Shane to say that Undertaker is fighting to not lose while he's fighting to win. Shane is the agent of change that WWE has needed for a long time and no matter what happens, Shane will crawl down the aisle and stand in the middle of the ring to usher in a new era. Undertaker brings up legacies and Shane comes to the ring to get in his face. This talk doesn't worry him because Undertaker's legacy died two years ago at Wrestlemania.

Undertaker doesn't want to hear about this because Shane has belonged to his father since the day he was born. That sets Shane off for his now standard offensive flurry, which still has no effect. They head outside with Shane escaping a Last Ride through the table and hitting Undertaker in the head (hands) with a monitor. Shane goes to the top for the top rope elbow which barely grazes Undertaker's arm. However, since the New York fans are the smarkiest of smarky fans in the world, which translates to "we'll cheer ANYTHING", it's called awesome, despite being borderline sad. Shane leaves and Undertaker sits up.

Chris Jericho vs. Zack Ryder

This is fallout from Jericho ripping into Ryder for being a loser on the pre-show. Before the match, here's AJ Styles to interrupt. AJ still wants to face Jericho at Wrestlemania because that still hasn't been booked for some reason. Ryder gets in a quick rollup for two to start but Jericho sends him to the floor. Jericho charges into the knees in the corner and Ryder's middle rope dropkick puts Jericho in the corner. The Broski Boot is blocked by a Walls attempt but AJ starts a chant to make fun of Jericho, setting up a quick small package to give Ryder the pin at 1:55.

Jericho IMMEDIATELY hits a Codebreaker after the match to keep Ryder in

his place. We get an old WCW style tantrum and Jericho agrees to the match.

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Non-title and Sasha Banks is on commentary. They trade armdrags to start with Charlotte getting the better of it as we take an early break. Back with Becky running Charlotte over and Sasha getting to her feet. The distraction lets Ric trip Becky, setting up a big boot and Natural Selection to give Charlotte the pin at 6:28. Too much in the break to rate but Becky continues to look weak going into the title match.

Vince is in the back to say that he agrees the Cell is Undertaker's yard but Shane wants the yard, the house and the whole WWE Universe. Shane comes in to say yell at Vince for thinking he's the only one that can run Raw. This Sunday, Shane is letting out 40 years of frustration and taking the company from Vince, just like he took it from his dad.

Social Outcasts vs. Kane/Big Show

Barely a match as the Outcasts all come in for the DQ at 32 seconds.

The ring fills up with midcarders in the battle royal for the big brawl. Mark Henry, Kane and Big Show are left alone with Mark taking a double chokeslam. The Outcasts are chokeslammed at the same time.

We look back at Reigns attacking HHH and Stephanie last week.

Here are HHH and Stephanie, the former of which was announced as being on the way to the arena before the break. Stephanie orders all of us to get on our feet and show respect to the champ. HHH talks about how the largest crowd in history will be in Dallas this Sunday to see Reigns fall. It is the dream of every athlete to walk out on that stage and the dream of everyone here in this arena.

However, that's never going to happen because they just don't have the ability. Roman Reigns has that ability because he's a one in a million talent but this Sunday he's going to lose it all. We get a nice rant about how HHH's obsession with this business and how it's lead him to dominate this title for twenty years (not quite). That has allowed him to

put on a suit and really run this business, only to have Reigns powerbomb him through that announce table four months ago.

All that did was reignite the fire in him though because maybe people had forgotten who he was. Now it's time for HHH to become the old Game again and destroy Reigns once and for all. Stephanie screeches for a bit and here's Reigns to a lot of booing. Thankfully he doesn't say anything stupid but clears the ring, only to be booed even more.

The thing to remember here is this isn't a response to what Reigns has been doing for the last month but rather to what he's been doing for the last year and a half. The fans aren't going to forget all the stupid promos and illogical booking that we've been subjected to. This has been a good final push for Reigns and things could get better in the future but Wrestlemania is looking like a wash at this point.

Stephanie and HHH promise to fix things.

Here's New Day for a match but first of all they need to plug Booty0's, the official cereal of Wrestlemania. They also question why the League of Nations doesn't have their own cereal, with the theory being because it would suck. The fans LOVE New Day here, especially when Big E. praises New York pizza.

Kofi Kingston vs. Alberto Del Rio

Kingston starts fast and sends Del Rio outside for a quick concert. Back in and a charge misses, allowing Del Rio to hit his reverse superplex for two as we take a break. Kingston is still in trouble when we come back with Del Rio getting two more off a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The top rope double stomp misses for Alberto and the SOS gets two. Kofi misses in the corner again and a quick double stomp puts Kofi down. No cover though as Del Rio would rather shout and pose, allowing the armbreaker to be countered into a rollup for the pin at 7:40.

Rating: C-. Not great here as I'm getting tired of this feud. There's a possibility that the titles have been cut out of the match to make it even less important than it already is, which was something you had to expect at some point. Kofi winning is a nice sign though as he's really

turning back into the version from nine years ago who looked like he could be something very special.

Post match THE COACH, as in Jonathan Coachman from ESPN, makes a surprise appearance to announce that SportsCenter will be covering Wrestlemania all day. He even dances a bit for fun.

We recap the opening brawl.

Roman Reigns is in the back for an interview when the Dudley Boys interrupt. Yeah because two people from NEW YORK are going to get Reigns cheered. HHH comes in for the sneak attack and Reigns is destroyed.

Konor vs. Kalisto

Non-title. Konor gets in an early headlock but Kalisto speeds things up with his kicks, followed by a dropkick to Viktor. A quick springboard Salida Del Sol puts Konor away at 1:49.

Post match Ryback comes out for a staredown.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar for the hard sell. Heyman talks about being the advocate for the baddest beast on the planet today before hyping us on the fact that we're six days away. This year people have a once in a lifetime chance to see an athlete at the top of his game in Brock Lesnar. That's why they've been looking for the right lunatic to take on Lesnar at Wrestlemania XXXII and Dean Ambrose happens to be smarter than he's given credit for.

Dean has the opportunity to take some weapons and try to survive a no holds barred street fight against Brock Lesnar, which is the good news for Ambrose. However, the bad news is that he has a no holds barred street fight with BROCK LESNAR. Cue Dean with a wagon, which he fills with various "toys" from under the ring. Why he didn't have those in there in the first place isn't clear but he finds the barbed wire baseball bat and the chainsaw. After filling up the wagon, Dean leaves without even looking at Brock.

Paige vs. Emma

This is a preview match for the Total Divas (Paige/Alicia Fox/Brie Bella/Natalya) vs. what seems to be called Team Bad and Blonde (Lana/Naomi/Tamina/Summer Rae/Emma) for Sunday. Emma dropkicks Paige down to start and gets one off the former Emma Sandwich. The THIS IS MY HOUSE clothesline gets two for Paige but the other women get in an argument at ringside, allowing Lana to come in for a cheap shot to give Emma the pin at 2:53.

Post match the Total Divas get beaten down until Eva Marie of all people comes out for the save. The fans boo her almost as bad as Reigns but the rest of the Total Divas don't seem impressed.

R-Truth comes up to Goldust and says it's every man for himself in the battle royal. Goldust doesn't care because they're not a team.

Snoop Dogg is being inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Sami Zayn/Sin Cara/Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens/Stardust/The Miz

The fans are WAY behind Sami as he starts with Miz. The arm work sets up a tag off to Owens but he tags out to Stardust instead. Off to Ziggler (in a shirt for some reason) to hold Stardust down with a front facelock (notice that they're being VERY safe this week) before superkicking Miz off the apron to take us to a break.

Back with Sin Cara coming in off the ropes for an elbow to Stardust's shoulder. The fans chant for Byron Saxton and then JBL as Stardust clotheslines Sin out of the air. Owens makes Stardust tag Miz as the CM Punk chants break out. Sami comes in to draw an OLE chant (at least it's about the match now) and gets stomped down by Stardust. That's enough of the heels in control as it's off to Ziggler for a lukewarm reaction. Miz gets in a cheap shot from the apron as Owens still won't come in. Ziggler gets stomped down even more and we take a second break.

Back again with Ziggler still in trouble as Miz puts on a chinlock. Now it turns into a NEW DAY ROCKS chant because the "smart" fans are surprised that a go home show doesn't have the most exciting action. Ziggler sends Stardust into the post and gives Miz the Fameasser, setting up the hot tag to Sami. Everything breaks down and Cara makes a blind

tag, allowing Sami to dive onto Owens.

Cara's high cross body gets two on Stardust but the Swanton hits knees. Sami comes in again but walks into the Skull Crushing Finale which sets off the Parade of Finishers, capped off by a big Cara moonsault to Stardust. Now Owens comes in but the Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a dropkick. Miz and Stardust want nothing to do with Owens now (makes perfect sense), allowing the tornado DDT and Helluva Kick to put Kevin away at 21:22.

Rating: C-. The match was dull but of course the focus is going to be on the crowd who couldn't to five minutes without having some big dive or flip to entertain them, meaning we're stuck with more announcers chants. I liked the basic story they went with here and that's the best thing about the match. Seeing Sami pin Owens was a great touch too, as I don't think he ever did that in NXT.

Usos vs. Dudley Boyz and the Divas tag are now on the USA portion of the pre-show. No word on where the battle royal will air.

Here's the Authority to wrap things up. Stephanie talks about how Reigns is going to fall and promises that there will be no new leadership next week. It's about time they acknowledged this for a change. HHH doesn't want to hear about him attacking Reigns from behind because there's too much at stake. This brings out Reigns for another brawl with Reigns getting the better of it until a bunch of guys (the League, Dudley Boyz and Stardust) come out to pull him off. This brings out some good guys and it's a big brawl. They're finally separated but Reigns does a big dive over the ropes to take out the pile to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. It's a not horrible go home show for a not horribly built Wrestlemania. The crowd had its moments here but it's pretty obvious that Sunday is going to be interesting and not in the best possible way. There's some good stuff going on but they better knock it out of the park with everything they're doing at the pay per view. Other than that, this was your standard go home Raw: not much action, a lot of pushing the pay per view, and little else. Oh and where are the Wyatts? Are they really just stuck in the battle royal? That's the best they can

get?

Results

Zack Ryder b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

Charlotte b. Becky Lynch – Natural Selection

Kane/Big Show b. Social Outcasts via DQ when all four Outcasts were in the ring at once

Kofi Kingston b. Alberto Del Rio – Small package

Kalisto b. Konor – Salida Del Sol

Emma b. Paige – Pin after a kick from Lana

Sami Zayn/Dolph Ziggler/Sin Cara b. Kevin Owens/The Miz/Stardust – Helluva Kick to Owens

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Wrestlemania Count-Up –

Wrestlemania XXIII: Now That's More Like It Dead Man

Wrestlemania XXIII

Date: April 1, 2007

Location: Ford Field, Detroit, Michigan

Attendance: 80,103

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

To say this show was a success is an understatement. Until Rock vs. Cena, this show drew more PPV buys than any show in the history of the company, which says a lot when you consider what came before it. The main event here is Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga, which is the Battle of the Billionaires, as Donald Trump and Vince are backing the two respectively. The losing billionaire gets his head shaved. There's also Cena vs. Shawn in what should be awesome. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a montage of Wrestlemania logos which turns into your usual highlight reel.

We get a clip of the opening of Wrestlemania III before transitioning to Ford Field in the same city. Aretha Franklin is here again twenty years later to sing America the Beautiful again. That's a very nice touch, as are the clips from Tribute to the Troops.

Now we get the video for this year's show, which is the All Grown Up theme. It's a bunch of kids dressed like the stars who then turn into their adult selves.

Mr. Kennedy vs. CM Punk vs. Randy Orton vs. Finlay vs. Matt Hardy vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Edge

With this match, we start the tradition of having too many people in a single MITB match and overcrowding the thing. Everyone looks up at the case until Kennedy goes to get a ladder. Orton heads to the floor to stop him as the big brawl begins. Finlay DIVES on everyone not named Edge,

allowing the Canadian to make a climb, only to be stopped by Matt. They head to the floor, allowing Orton and Finlay to head up top for a brawl on the ladder.

They topple to the floor so it's Jeff going up, only to be shoved down by Kennedy. Booker goes to pull out a ladder but it's Horny's, meaning it's only about two feet tall. Punk takes it away and pounds on people with it, only to have Edge take over again. This is one of those matches that moves too fast to really keep track of things. Punk is bleeding from the forehead as Edge bridges a ladder between the ring and barricade.

Back inside and Booker takes over with kicks and spinebusters for everyone in sight. Before climbing though, here's a Spinarooni. The distraction lets the Hardys crush Booker with some ladders before Matt and Edge go at it a bit. The Hardys set up a ladder seesaw but Jeff is sent off the top to break up whatever they were going to do to Edge. Instead Edge suplexes Matt onto the ladder, only to be sent to the floor by Kennedy.

Kennedy pounds away on Matt but the Kenton Bomb only hits ladder. Instead it's Jeff with a Swanton to Mr. before the brothers team up to drop everyone in sight with the ladder. Both Hardys go up and start slugging it out on top of the ladder, only to be shoved into the top rope by Finlay. Edge hits the spear on Finlay and one for Orton and Booker as well. Kennedy and Matt take spears too and there's one for Jeff to nearly complete the set. Punk jumps over Edge to send him into the corner and become the only man standing.

Punk puts the ladder around his head and spins around a bit to take everyone out until Edge thinks wisely and DUCKS, allowing him to take out Punk's vulnerable ribs. Edge gets the big ladder and makes a climb, only to gets caught by Orton and shoved down to the floor. Jeff saves that though and climbs up on his own as Matt puts Edge on the ladder between the ring and the barricade. Jeff dives off the ladder THROUGH EDGE AND THROUGH THE LADDER! Needless to say, Edge and Jeff are DONE.

We're down to six people in the match now and it's Orton's turn to take over with RKOs all around. He picks up a regular sized ladder but Punk

knocks him down and sets up a second ladder in the middle of the ring. Apparently Jeff is still on the floor despite Edge being taken out. Orton and Punk both climb up and it's an RKO off the top of the ladder to end Punk. Booker goes up but has to stop an RKO attempt with a Bookend off the ladder.

It's Matt vs. Booker on the ladder but Matt drops down and threatens to give Sharmell the Twist of Fate, drawing Booker down. There's the Twist to the King but Finlay (sporting a NASTY cut on the back of his head) shoves the ladder over. The Celtic Cross (White Noise) crushes Matt against the ladder but hurts Finlay's back in the process. Finlay is barely able to stand so here's Horny to climb for him.

Instead though Kennedy pops up the ladder...and gets smacked in the face by Horny. There's a fireman's carry roll off the ladder for the little guy's efforts. Finlay destroys Kennedy with the ladder but gets knocked off the ladder by Matt. Now it's Punk going up but Kennedy meets him on the ladder for a slugout. Punk shoves him off but Kennedy spears him in the ribs with another ladder, allowing Kennedy to climb up and win the case.

Rating: B. This was definitely the weakest of the matches so far as there were too many people in there and no one to have the big spots like Shelton. It's definitely good but this one lacked the pop that most of these matches had over the years. Kennedy would lose the case to Edge a few weeks later.

Video on the premiere of The Condemned so we can clear the ring out.

Kennedy warns every champion that he's coming for them and says he's Mr. Money in the Bank. Bank.

Batista is All Grown Up.

Great Khali vs. Kane

This is when Khali is still a decent monster who could move a little bit. Kane is easily shoved down to start and then shoved to the floor for good measure. Back in and Kane slugs Khali, only to be chopped right back

down. Off to the nerve hold before Khali slugs away in the corner. Kane comes back with punches of his own but is easily shoved down and across the ring.

Kane fires back with a right hand and tries the top rope clothesline but it only staggers Khali. Another shot sends Khali into the ropes and Kane has his opening. Kane heads to the floor and grabs a chain with a hook on the end which he used in the horror movie he was in around this time. Khali knocks him back and rips off the turnbuckle pad to distract the referee, allowing Kane to kick him low. In one of the big spots of the show, Kane slams Khali ala Hogan slamming Andre twenty years ago. That only gets two so they both grab chokeslams, but it's Khali hitting the Punjabi Plunge for the one footed pin.

Rating: D-. The slam was cool and the rest was completely horrible. Khali was nothing good and somehow he would get even worse. Kane was in that weird period for him where he was just kind of there and doing nothing of note. By period, I mean about a five year stretch of course. Terrible match but the slam was good.

Post match Khali chokes him out with the chain and no one makes the save.

The Divas say they're All Grown Up. The idea of taking them seriously is amusing.

Cryme Tyme tries to cheer up a now bald Eugene with an Extreme Expose dance party. That would be Kelly, Layla and Brooke (now Tessmacher) as a dance troupe. Instead Moolah and Mae Young show up and Eugene wants to dance with them. Cue REVEREND SLICK of all people to show us how it's done. This brings in Dusty Rhodes who says you can't have a dance party without him. The music comes back on and here are Sgt. Slaughter, Jimmy Hart and IRS to join in. Ricky Steamboat in full karate attire shows up until we get the Ron Simmons payoff.

Some Detroit Tigers are here.

US Title: MVP vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending and MVP is pretty new here. They head to the mat to

start with MVP actually in control. Off to a headlock by the challenger but he has to shove Benoit to the floor to avoid the Crossface. Back in and Benoit can't hook the Crossface as MVP keeps it on the mat with the headlocks. Back up and MVP pounds Benoit into the corner but charges into an elbow. A superplex attempt is blocked and Benoit's arm is draped across the top rope to shift momentum again.

Back in and MVP works over the bad arm with some driving shoulder blocks. He misses a spinning kick though and Benoit busts out the Rolling Germans. The Swan Dive is broken up though and MVP goes back to the arm by sending it into the post. Off to an armbar again, followed by a running clothesline for two. Out of nowhere Benoit reverses a slam into a Crossface attempt but the arm is too weak to hook the hold. This time the slam works and there's the Ballin elbow for two. MVP misses a charge into the corner and it's time to roll some Germans. After four of those, Benoit hits the Swan Dive to retain.

Rating: C. Yeah that's it. The match really never got off the ground and could have used another four minutes or so. As always the scariest part is thinking that Benoit only had about two months left so he likely wasn't sane during this match. The match itself wasn't bad but as mentioned it never got off the ground. MVP would win the title at Backlash and hold it for almost a year.

Video on Undertaker who is All Grown Up...I think.

Donald Trump is in his dressing room and complaining about the lack of food and drinks backstage. Boogeyman comes in for no apparent reason and Trump doesn't seem impressed. Trump asks him for a sandwich. This uh...happened. Yeah we'll go with that.

Hall of Fame time. Mr. Perfect was one of the headliners here and gets a pretty touching tribute. William Shatner inducted Lawler, which is kind of annoying as Lawler had wanted Lance Russell (announcer of Memphis Wrestling for like forty years) to do it but WWE said no and picked Shatner because of a forgotten segment on Raw back in like 1995. The other headliner was Dusty Rhodes who asked to be made an honorary Horseman. That's just wrong. No presentation to the crowd here which is

weird.

The attendance is over 80,000, which is of course a new record.

Here's the Fink because what would Wrestlemania be without him? Oh ok he's doing the Hall of Fame live presentation to the crowd. JR gets easily the biggest pop of the entire class.

82% of the fans think Undertaker will win the title.

We recap Undertaker vs. Batista but there isn't much to say. Taker won the Rumble and picked Batista for an awesome power match. They had to team up at No Way Out and Batista turned on him to give us a one night only heel, even though that's not really too far out of Batista's normal behavior.

Smackdown World Title: Batista vs. Undertaker

Teddy Long does the intros here for some reason. We lso get the druids and the torches, which look AWESOME in the huge stadiums like this. The bell rings and Batista spears Taker down before pounding away in the corner. Undertaker fires off right hands of his own but Batista throws him right back into the corner. The fans are totally behind Undertaker here. They head to the floor with Undertaker being sent knees first into the steps as is his custom.

Back in and Batista hits a top rope shoulder for two. If you're listening to Cole, you would think he had hit a 450. A big clothesline puts Taker down for two but Undertaker comes back with right hands and a running charge in the corner. The Snake Eyes and big boot combo puts Batista down and a legdrop gets two. Old School connects but Big Dave powers out of the chokeslam to huge boeing.

The jumping clothesline puts Batista down again but only for two. Taker puts him on the apron for the elbow and legdrops before busting out the Taker Dive as is his custom at Wrestlemania. Taker pounds away even more but Batista counters to throw him through part of the barricade to take over. With Undertaker dazed, Batista loads up a powerslam from one announce table through the other, which actually isn't countered.

Back in and that only gets two so the champion pounds away more for good measure. Batista loads up the Bomb but Taker plows him into the corner to counter. Dave comes right back with a belly to belly suplex for two. He pounds on Taker in the corner like a schmuck and of course there's the Last Ride for two. Taker has a breather but walks right into the spinebuster.

Batista doesn't cover though and gets caught in a chokeslam for a VERY close two. The Tombstone is countered and Batista hits the spear and Batista Bomb for an even closer two, shocking the champion. Batista loads up another Bomb but Taker backdrops out of it and avoids a spear, setting up the Tombstone for the title.

Rating: A. The idea is that these two were annoyed and decided to have an awesome match to show everyone up. These two would go on to have more great matches on shows where Batista actually had a chance to win. This was the feud of the year and it's hard to argue as they could both work the power game like few others.

Lashley is All Grown Up.

Vince is in the back looking in a mirror when Stephanie comes in with a stroller. Vince goes off on Stephanie before playing with his granddaughter. Naturally there's a camera from inside the stroller looking up at Vince. He promises to fracture Trump's skull.

Joey tries to talk about the ECW Originals vs. the New Breed but we need to get this along.

New Breed vs. ECW Originals

It's Elijah Burke/Matt Striker/Kevin Thron/Marcus Cor Van vs. Rob Van Dam/Tommy Dreamer/Sabu and for no reason whatsoever this is a regular eight man tag instead of the Extreme Rules match we would get on ECW a few days later. Striker starts with Sabu and Matt is in early trouble. It's quickly off to Sandman vs. Burke but before Sandy does much he brings in Dreamer. Cor Von hits Dreamer in the back and comes in to pound away a bit.

It's quickly back to Burke (the New Breed's leader and more famous as D'Angelo Dinero) for the running knees to the back for two. Thorn comes in to crush Dreamer into the corner and put on a chinlock. Back up and a sitout powerbomb gets two for Thorn and here's Cor Von again. Burke comes in as well but Dreamer takes them down with a simultaneous neckbreaker/reverse DDT combo. The hot tag brings in Van Dam and there's the top rope kick to Thorn. Rolling Thunder lands on Striker as everything breaks down. With everyone else on the floor, Van Dam Five Stars Striker for the pin.

Rating: D+. Seriously, why wasn't this the Extreme Rules match? The whole point of ECW is to be extreme but we got a seven minute tag match which went nowhere at all. The theory was to finally let these guys get on Wrestlemania, but Van Dam had been on it before and won a title here. Nothing to see here at all.

Austin is All Grown Up.

Wrestlemania 24 is in Orlando.

We recap the real main event for tonight's show and the reason why this show was the highest drawing show ever for the next five years. Vince and Donald Trump both agreed to back a guy into a match and the losing billionaire would get their head shaved. This was when Trump was still a big deal and EVERYONE was backing Umaga because they wanted to see Trump bald. Oh except for Rock who actually cut a promo about wanting to see Vince bald.

Trump picked the ECW World Champion Bobby Lashley. Steve Austin was brought in to referee because this is Wrestlemania. The best part of the build was Lashley in a cage with Umaga on the floor. To escape, Lashley shoulder blocked the cage wall, knocking it down to the floor and nearly crushing Umaga in the process.

Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

The barber's chair gets its own entrance complete with some snappy music. Oh and Umaga is IC Champion. Trump coming out to a song with the only word being MONEY is perfect. Real money rains down from the ceiling,

including \$100 bills. To be fair this show brought in like 50 million dollars in PPV alone so they can afford a bit. They collide to start and slug it out with Lashley pounding him into the corner. Austin pulls Lashley off of Umaga since they're in the ropes and Umaga gets in some shots of his own. Lashley goes up to the middle rope for a shoulder for two.

Umaga's manager Armando Estrada is dragged in by Lashley and powerslammed down with ease. Lashley throws him out to the floor and low bridges Umaga to send him to the floor as well. Back in and Lashley misses a spear, sending him out to the floor this time. We head inside again and Umaga chokes away, only to be pulled off at four and a half by Austin. Austin has to do it again, this time by the hair for good measure.

A BIG clothesline puts Lashley down again and Umaga cannonballs down onto his chest for good measure. The Samoan drop puts Lashley down again as he does a failed slam attempt. Vince gets up on the apron and gets dropped down by an elbow from Lashley, only to walk into a shot from Umaga to take over again. Umaga goes up and gets slammed down before being clotheslined down. Both guys down and Austin gets to nine before stopping so it doesn't end in a draw.

Shane McMahon comes out to check on Vince as Umaga hits an uppercut to drop Lashley again. Austin has to pull Umaga out of the corner, earning him a Samoan Spike. Shane comes in and pounds away on Lashley until Umaga is back into things. The running hip attack crushes Bobby's face and Vince throws in some trashcans. Shane hits the Coast to Coast to drive the can into Lashley's face. A top rope splash from Umaga crushes Lashley and Shane has a referee's shirt on now.

Austin breaks up the pin and beats up Shane for good measure, only to walk into another Samoan Spike. Trump isn't sure what to do and shows off those great acting skills of his. Vince comes over to taunt him and TRUMP CLOTHESLINES VINCE! Umaga tries another Spike on Austin but gets countered into the Stunner. The spear from Lashley connects and it's time for Vince to be bald.

Rating: D. This match sucked for the most part until Austin got going.

The problem at the end of the day was no one on the planet with any idea what was going on here thought Vince was going to win. It also didn't help that no one cared about Lashley because no one had ever given us a reason to. He was just kind of there for the most part and there was nothing more to him than he used to be a college wrestler and he's muscular. Seriously, that's Lashley's story almost in full.

Post match they take FOREVER to Stun Vince and cut his hair. Austin Stuns him because that's what Austin does to Vince. To their credit though, they SHAVE his head, not just trim it. Vince's face during this whole thing is great as he goes from shock to the patented Vince rage in a few seconds. This led to three months of Vince/Shane/Umaga vs. Lashley which didn't work for the most part. Austin, Lashley and Trump share beers and Trump gets Stunned. I'll give the guy this: he has a soft spot for wrestling. He hosted two Wrestlemanias, was in the crowd for two more and did this.

John Cena is All Grown Up.

For no apparent reason other than we have nothing else to talk about, we look at the dark match with Flair/Carlito vs. Gregory Helms/Chavo Guerrero in a lumberjack match.

Womens Title: Melina vs. Ashley

It's a lumberjill match and all of the other Divas are introduced. Melina is defending here because thank goodness Ashley never got the title. Ashley, who isn't a wrestler, takes Melina down and pounds away. The crowd is audibly quiet for this match and can you blame them? Ashley pounds away in the corner and does some bad choking but Melina comes back by SCREAMING. Off to a bow and arrow for a bit as I have no interest in watching this match at all. Ashley misses an elbow and thankfully Melina reverses a rollup into one of her own to retain.

Rating: M. As in Mickie James, who was on the floor during this match instead of in the ring. Point blank, Ashley cannot wrestle. She was decent looking, but other than that she had nothing going for her at all. This was a popcorn break match and thankfully it was barely three minutes long as I couldn't sit through much longer.

Shawn Michaels is All Grown Up.

We recap Michaels vs. Cena. Shawn won a triple threat to set this up and then won the tag titles with Cena. The idea is Shawn has turned on every one of his partners in his career and he'll do it again here. No music video here for some reason.

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Remember that they're tag champions here but neither guy wears the belt. I can't say I blame them of course. Cena's special entrance this year is driving a muscle car from "the parking lot" into the arena due to being in Detroit. They circle each other to start before Shawn slaps him in the face. A quick headlock doesn't do much for Shawn so he uses his speed advantage to pop John with some right hands. Back to the headlock and it works a bit better this time as Shawn takes Cena down to the mat.

Cena has had enough of this defense thing and rings Shawn's bell with a clothesline. Shawn is sent to the apron but he tosses Cena from the ring and out to the floor. A BIG chop staggers Cena but Shawn's Asai Moonsault hits mostly table and Shawn is hurt. Luckily for him though Cena is even more hurt as they head back inside. Shawn chops away in the corner before going after Cena's knee. The leg is wrapped around the post and Cena is in trouble. The referee asks Cena if he can continue and of course Cena says yes.

Shawn keeps kicking at the leg before wrapping it around the ring rope. With Cena down in the corner, Shawn stares straight at him to play even more mind games. Back up and John hits a big right hand to send Shawn flying across the ring. Shawn charges straight back at him with a shoulder into the ribs in the corner to keep control. Michaels charges again but Cena's leg gives out and Shawn goes head first into the post, busting him open.

Cena has had enough of getting beaten up so he punches Shawn down before firing off some mounted right hands. The ProtoBomb and Shuffle hit but Shawn punches his way out of the FU. Cena is sent into the corner but manages to duck Sweet Chin Music. The referee isn't so lucky though and is knocked senseless. Cena tries the FU but is countered into a DDT to

put both guys down.

With no referee in sight, Shawn rolls to the floor and hits a sick piledriver onto the steps. The THUD when Cena's head hit was a little scary. The back of Cena's head is cut open BAD on top of that. Back in and here's a second referee but the count only gets two. There are the forearm and nip-up as the blood flows down Shawn's face. The top rope elbow connects but Cena blocks Chin Music with a big clothesline to put both guys down again.

They slug it out in the middle of the ring but the FU is countered again into a sunset flip for two. Shawn's leap frog is caught in the FU but Cena is too banged up to cover. The very delayed cover gets two and the champ is getting frustrated. With nothing else to do he tries an FU off the top, only to be shoved off by Shawn. Michaels dives at Cena but gets caught in the FU position. He counters that as well though by landing on his feet, only to miss the superkick and have Cena try for the STFU. Cena keeps trying for it but gets small packaged down for two instead.

Shawn misses an enziguri attempt and now the STFU is on. Cena cranks back on it but Shawn is only a few inches away from the rope. As Shawn starts to black out he grabs the rope and Cena has to break. He takes a bit too long though and gets in an argument with the referee, allowing Shawn to kick Cena's head off. Another delayed cover gets two and both guys are down. In a cool spot, both guys have to lean on the other to get up. The FU is countered again but Shawn can't avoid the STFU again. Cena cranks back on it and Shawn has no choice but to tap out.

Rating: A-. This was a much better match than the HHH match from the year before for a few reasons. First of all, there was a story behind the match. As simple as it was, Shawn being Cena's partner gave them a bond and seeing them fight was something interesting to see. Second, the drama was better here. Cena felt like he was in real trouble and that the title was in danger, which I never felt last year. It's a better match overall and they would have even better ones in the future.

A highlight package ends the show.

Overall Rating: B+. This is a show where the stuff that is bad is really

bad but the stuff that is good is REALLY good. There are only eight matches on the card and three of them are very good to great. The best part about that though is the bad matches (other than one) were all short and pretty easy to get through. The show is completely forgettable other than Trump vs. Vince and maybe Undertaker vs. Batista, but it's worth seeing. I would however recommend fast forwarding through some of the weaker parts.

Ratings Comparison

CM Punk vs. Mr. Kennedy vs. Finlay vs. Randy Orton vs. King Booker vs. Jeff Hardy vs. Booker T vs. Edge

Original: B+

Redo: B

Great Khali vs. Kane

Original: D

Redo: D-

Chris Benoit vs. MVP

Original: B

Redo: C

Undertaker vs. Batista

Original: B+

Redo: A

ECW Originals vs. New Breed

Original: D+

Redo: D

Bobby Lashley vs. Umaga

Original: C-

Redo: D

Melina vs. Ashley

Original: F

Redo: M (for Mickie James)

John Cena vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B

Redo: B+

Almost everything goes down and the rating goes up. I'm a complex guy sometimes.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/30/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-23-over-80000-people/>

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