

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2003: The Original Suplex City

Royal Rumble 2003

Date: January 19, 2003

Location: Fleet Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Attendance: 15,338

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

To say a lot has changed in the last year is a huge understatement. We have the Brand Split now and there are two world titles. That brings us to the part of this show that is most remembered: the world title matches. We have HHH defending the Raw Title in one of the worst matches ever, followed by Angle defending the Smackdown Title in one of the best matches ever. Also Brock Lesnar is here and has taken Smackdown by storm. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about what you would expect it to be: thirty men wanting to go to Wrestlemania.

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

The loser is out of the Rumble. Big Show has Heyman with him, which I'm sure makes him the best wrestler EVER right? Show won the title from Lesnar at Survivor Series after Heyman turned on Brock in one of those matches where they were backed into a corner out of their own stupidity. Show shoves him around to start so Brock snaps off a belly to belly suplex to fire up the crowd.

There's a second suplex and Show is in trouble early. Lesnar loads up a third but Show grabs him by the throat and shoves him to the floor. Show throws Lesnar around the ring which looks awesome when you consider Brock is a massive dude. Lesnar avoids a charge in the corner and hits a release German suplex for two.

A big boot slows Brock down and a side slam looks to set up the chokeslam. Brock kind of rolls through it into a two count, followed by

another belly to belly. Heyman gets dragged in but Show saves him from an F5. The chokeslam gets two as Heyman is losing his mind. Show gets rammed into Heyman and the F5 sends Brock to the Rumble.

Rating: C+. As intricate as modern wrestling has become, there's something to be said about having two big guys get out there and throw each other around for five minutes. The power displays here made the fans gasp which is the right idea. At the end of the day, wrestling is a spectacle and having larger than life characters doing larger than life things is a surefire idea. This wasn't so much good as it was fun, which is the right choice for an opener.

Jericho says he'll win the Rumble.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Regal and Storm are defending and Regal is STILL doing the brass knuckles thing. Storm and Ray get things going with Lance working on the arm, only to get powered down with ease. Bubba hits one of his LOUD chops in the corner and takes Storm down with a kind of chokebomb. In something I've never seen him do otherwise, Bubba hooks a standing Figure Four. Actually I can't think of anyone who has ever used that.

Off to D-Von for a dropkick (what's gotten into the Dudleys tonight?) and here's Regal to get slammed down immediately. The champs double team D-Von down and we get into the standard tag team formula. Storm takes D-Von to the mat and it's off to Regal for a front facelock. Lance comes back in with a cravate into a sleeper as this continues to meander along.

D-Von rolls Storm away and makes the tag to Bubba who speeds things up. The guy has emotion if nothing else. A big running splash in the corner crushes both champions and a side slam gets two on Storm. The American hits a German on the Canadian for two, followed by a spear to the Englishman. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Lance and Regal takes What's Up. A double flapjack (stupid fans: "3D!") gets two on Storm and here's Chief of Staff Sean Morely. Regal finds the brass knuckles but walks into the 3D. D-Von hits Storm with the knuckles for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D. This didn't work for me. It felt like a Raw match that was

trying to be a PPV match but never got near the hump they were trying to get over. The ending was stupid on top of that, as they had Regal beaten with the 3D, so why use the knuckles? Also it didn't help that Bubba single handedly beat up the tag champions for about two minutes straight. Bad match.

Lawler on that match: "I'm as confused as a baby in a topless bar." What is WITH the announcers and their similies/metaphors in this company?

Nathan Jones is coming. Oh geez.

We recap the Torrie vs. Dawn feud. This is one of those stories where you look at it in awe and wonder what they were thinking. Dawn Marie (a gorgeous Diva) fell in love with and married Torrie's fifty something year old dad Al Wilson, then screwed him to death (literally) on their honeymoon. There was some lesbianism (as in kissing on screen and unfilmed other stuff) involved which was there to tease the audience and wasn't bad at all. This is supposed to be a stepmother vs. stepdaughter match. Again, I have no idea what this was supposed to accomplish.

Dawn Marie vs. Torrie Wilson

Dawn comes to the ring in a veil because she's in mourning. Torrie gets blasted in the face to start before spearing Dawn down and things get sloppy. Marie tries an armbar because we need some wrestling in this I guess. Torrie gets beaten on for a bit until they collide and hit the mat. Dawn hits a springboard spinning clothesline for no cover, giving us the highlight of the match. Torrie hits a neckbreaker out of nowhere for the win.

Rating: D-. Anything with these two in those outfits can't be considered a failure, but at the end of the day, there is no real defending this match in the slightest. It was HORRIBLE and the story was borderline insulting to my intelligence, but the girls looked good and I guess that was the whole point. Why not just have a regular match if you want to is beyond me, but it's 2003 so what do you expect?

Stephanie seems to hit on some young guy in the back when Eric comes up to trade some weak trash talk. They're both GM's at this point. Stephanie

has a bombshell for Smackdown which would wind up being Hogan. They argue over money or blood being more important and nothing goes anywhere. That young guy by the way? Randy Orton.

House show ads, including one for 7pm on a Monday night.

Sean O'Haire as the Devil's Advocate promo. Sweet goodness this could have been HUGE.

Nathan Jones is STILL coming. Seriously did we need that twice in 30 minutes?

We recap HHH vs. Scott Steiner as I begin to take deep breaths. HHH was giving a promo about how awesome he was when Steiner interrupted and demanded a title shot. This led to a series of contests like pushups and bench presses which went nowhere. Note that Steiner hadn't actually had a match in WWE up to this point. I wonder why.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Scott Steiner

HHH has red trunks on here for some reason. He mixed them up every now and then and rarely did the other colors work. Stick with basic black Game. Hebner brings them to the middle for instructions which is ultra rare stuff. Steiner wins an early slugout and pounds on the champion in the corner. A gorilla press sends HHH to the floor and Steiner pounds away with those weird looking overhand punches of his.

Steiner suplexes him back in for two and works on the back some more. An elbow to the face puts HHH down and there's an appropriate Boston Crab. HHH powers out of it and hits the facebuster but Steiner no sells it. There's a bear hug which is quickly broken but Steiner snaps off an overhead belly to belly (1) for two. Flair saves HHH from being put in the Steiner Recliner and Steiner charges into a boot in the corner to finally change the momentum.

We head to the floor again where Scott goes into the steps. The fans aren't exactly thrilled with this so far but they've still got time to crank it up a bit. Flair chokes away with his jacket and HHH hits his second neckbreaker in about 30 seconds for two. Since we didn't allido it

properly the first time, Flair chokes away even more. A Pedigree attempt is countered into a slingshot into the buckle. Steiner looks like he's going through labor.

An overhead suplex (2) puts HHH down and I kid you not: Steiner FALLS DOWN due to exhaustion. He's clearly sucking wind and HHH didn't touch him at all. Speaking of HHH, he counters a tombstone attempt into a...I think it was supposed to be the third neckbreaker in about 90 seconds but Steiner took it wrong, causing it to look like a cutter where he fell backwards instead of forwards. That gets two and the fans are starting to boo.

HHH is loudly calling spots to try to salvage this before he hits a vertical suplex. For no apparent reason he goes up and jumps into a belly to belly (3). Steiner can barely punch so he settles for some clotheslines. There's an overhead belly to belly (4) and an overhead belly to belly (5) and an overhead belly to belly (6). The fans are openly booing Steiner now. His response? To hold HHH's hair while HHH rams his own head into the buckles (seriously, Steiner clearly isn't even pushing) and to hit a spinning belly to belly (7) for two and even more booing.

Steiner tries a butterfly powerbomb and literally falls backwards as he does it, causing HHH to land on Steiner's knees. The fans groan at the sight of this so HHH goes up top to get superplexed down. He's handing these spots to Steiner. THANKFULLY HHH tries to walk out but Steiner won't have it, because WE HAVE TO KEEP GOING. Steiner blasts HHH with the belt to bust him open to try to get the fans to care but the match is long past salvageable at this point.

Back in and Steiner hits ANOTHER belly to belly (8), causing the fans to get MAD. They're not annoyed, they're not wanting a new champion, they want Steiner to get out of their ring now. HHH tries to get counted out but Steiner goes after him AGAIN. Back in and Steiner does the pushups to tick off the fans even more as Flair is BEGGING the referee to stop the match.

Now HHH throws the referee to the floor but HEBNER WON'T STOP IT. I mean

he pulls his arm up to ring the bell but stops and says keep it going. Steiner hits the NINTH belly to belly suplex (9) of the match for two so HHH hits him low and grabs a fast rollup for two. HHH finally gives up and hits Steiner with the sledgehammer for the DQ.

Rating: H. As in HHH, who I feel sorry for here. Now everyone knows I'm no fan of the guy in 2003, but he was in a HORRIBLE situation here. HHH was trying to keep this a coherent match, but Steiner was beyond worthless here, causing the match to sink to levels far below what any other main event "talent" would be capable of. After about seven minutes (out of eighteen), Steiner stopped doing anything resembling trying to have a match and was just doing suplexes.

Remember that back stuff he did at the beginning? Completely forgotten. Did you see him try his finisher? Not even once. He somehow managed a belly to belly suplex every two minutes, despite being on defense for a good third of the match. This was absolutely horrible and quite possibly the worst world title match I can EVER remember, which is covering a lot of ground.

Post match, Steiner beats up HHH and Flair with the hammer, which gets SYMPATHY from the fans. HHH is getting SYMPATHY from a crowd. Think about that for a minute. And what's worse: THEY HAD A REMATCH! Oh and there's the Steiner Recliner to absolutely nothing positive from the crowd at all. Bischoff has to come get Steiner off HHH.

We cut to Cole and Tazz and even MICHAEL FREAKING COLE has a look on his face as if to say "WOW that was an abomination."

We recap Benoit vs. Angle. Angle won the title from Big Show at Armageddon thanks to Lesnar before revealing that he hired Paul Heyman to be his new manager. Heyman said anyone could get a shot other than Brock Lesnar and brought in Team Angle (Haas and Benjamin) to protect Kurt during a knee injury. Benoit won a title shot over Big Show to set this up.

Smackdown World Title: Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Team Angle is immediately ejected to make sure it's one on one. Benoit

grabs a headlock to start before trying the Sharpshooter to send Angle to the floor. Back in and Angle goes for the ankle but gets dropkicked away. Benoit grabs a kind up reverse Figure Four but Angle grabs the rope. This is all holds/counter holds so far. Benoit gets sent shoulder first into the post followed by an Angle suplex for two.

They chop it out with Benoit taking over and hitting a reverse clothesline to take Angle down. Angle drops Benoit across the top rope but gets guillotined down by the Canadian. They head to the apron with Benoit DDTing him down onto the side of the ring. The champion has a busted nose now. Back in and the Swan Dive misses but Benoit rolls out of the Angle Slam. There's the Sharpshooter to Angle who eventually gets to a rope. A belly to back suplex gets two for Chris but Angle snaps off an overhead belly to belly (just one so far).

Back to the floor where Benoit gets dropped onto the barricade to further mess with his head. Off to a rear naked choke back inside so Kurt can overly loudly call some spots. Angle catches Benoit in another belly to belly followed by a belly to back for two. Back to the chinlock for a bit until a double clothesline puts both guys down. Benoit rolls some Germans but so does Angle. And people wonder why their necks were held together by tape.

Benoit gets the final German but Angle runs the ropes to hit the belly to belly off the top to put both guys down. That gets two but the Angle Slam is countered into the Crossface. Angle gets the rope, so Benoit shifts to an ankle lock. Angle reverses into one of his own and now Benoit is in trouble. Benoit goes to kick off but instead grabs another Crossface. Kurt counters into a rollup but Benoit put the Crossface on the other (right) arm this time. Angle stands up and hits the Angle Slam but can't immediately cover.

Angle takes the straps down but another German attempt is countered into a rollup for two. They trade HARD Germans until Benoit hooks a release German to put both guys down. Before anyone asks, the difference between this and the previous match with the suplexes is how hard these are. Steiner looked like he was at a dance recital but here they look like they're trying to kill one another. Not to mention there's OTHER STUFF in

between the suplexes.

Benoit hits the longest diving headbutt you'll EVER see, but he can't cover because of his head getting jarred like that. Angle counters the Crossface into a reverse powerbomb onto the buckle. The Angle Slam gets a VERY close two as the crowd is losing their minds. Back to the Crossface but Angle rolls through into the ankle lock. Benoit rolls over but can't break the hold. He kicks Kurt off but Angle goes right back to the hold. Benoit keeps trying to kick him off but Angle hooks the grapevine and Benoit has to tap.

Rating: A+. That's your match of the year right there people. Oh wait according to Meltzer there was some match in Japan that no one but him ever saw and that has to be better than this right? Anyway, these two DESTROYED each other with some absolutely amazing counters and awesome sequences out there while suplexing the tar out of each other. This both guy's best match ever, and that's saying A LOT.

Benoit gets a standing ovation, showing that he was ready to be world champion. Naturally that's why he had to wait fifteen months to get the title, because the world was BEGGING for another Steiner match, the Nash feud with HHH, and the Goldberg run of doom. Ok Goldberg I can live with but the other two? Screw that.

Van Dam and Kane say they'll knock each other out to win the Rumble.

Royal Rumble

The intervals are two minutes if you listen to Fink and 90 seconds if you listen to JR. There are fifteen Raw guys and fifteen Smackdown guys this year which would be the norm for a few years to come. Shawn gets #1 and Jericho gets #2, but it's Christian playing the role of Jericho at the entrance, allowing Jericho to sneak in from behind and jump Shawn. Jericho hits Shawn low and starts the beat down before getting a chair to crack Shawn open.

Chris Nowitski is #3 and he's perfectly fine with letting Jericho maul Shawn. Jericho easily dumps Shawn, setting up their classic at Wrestlemania. Nowitski isn't in the ring yet. Rey Mysterio (still pretty

new here) is #4 as things speed up a lot. A springboard dropkick and rana take Jericho down but Nowitski gets in as well...or not as he slid back out. Rey escapes a gorilla press and dropkicks Jericho into the ropes, only to get jumped by Nowitski.

Edge is #5 for a big pop. He would have been world champion by summer if he hadn't hurt his neck. Jericho is sent into the post and Nowitski is knocked down, allowing the two good guys to pound away on each other while both miss finishers. A springboard rana by Rey is countered into a sitout powerbomb and Christian is #6. He hugs his brother but Edge spears him down out of common sense. Nowitski tries to dump Edge and Rey but gets caught by a "double" dropkick (read as Mysterio hit him but Edge completely missed and landed on Chris after he was already down).

The Bronco Buster hits Nowitski and Chavo is #7. He immediately takes Rey down but gets caught in a 619. Rey drops the dime on Chavo and hits a 619 on Christian. He tries a springboard rana on Christian but lands on Nowitski and takes him to the floor in the process. Jericho puts Mysterio out, leaving us with Jericho, Edge, Christian and Chavo at the moment. You can add Tajiri at #8 to that list.

Christian gets the tar kicked out of him and Chavo gets put in a spinning backbreaker. Not bad for the first twenty seconds for Tajiri. Bill DeMott is #9 and no one cares. At this point, he had been a Tough Enough trainer and his gimmick was that the rookies had ticked him off so much that he was basically a sociopath. I've heard of worse. Tommy Dreamer is #10 and he brings some toys with him.

There are too many people in the ring at the moment. Edge gets in some kendo stick shots on DeMott for an elimination. Christian and Jericho hit Dreamer with trashcan lids in a modified Conchairto for another elimination. Tajiri elbows both guys down but tries the Tarantula on Jericho and gets dumped as a result. B2, as in Bull Buchanan as Cena's ex-lackey, is #11. Edge knocks out Chavo as the ring is thinning out nicely.

Jericho gets sent over the top but skins the cat and pulls out Edge and Christian in the process. Jericho is busted open but he's left all alone

in the ring. RVD is #12 and man alive do the fans love him. They slug it out for a bit with Van Dam hitting a slingshot to send Jericho to the apron but not out. Matt Hardy (who strongly dislikes mustard) is #13. The heels (as in those not named RVD) double team the good guy (as in those named RVD) but Jericho is too weak to do much and Matt kind of sucks so Van Dam takes them down.

There's a Five Star to Jericho and Eddie is #14. He pounds away on Van Dam as well and hits a Frog Splash of his own, only to walk into a Twist of Fate from Matt. Jeff Hardy is #15 and Matt tries an alliance, only to get kicked in the gut. Jeff throws Matt to the apron but Matt's MF'er Shannon Moore prevents the elimination. There's the Twist of Fate to Matt but Shannon covers up Matt from the Swanton. Jeff just dives on both of them and Rosey of 3 Minute Warning is #16.

Absolutely nothing of note happens here so Test with Stacy is #17. He cleans house until John Cena is #18 with a rap for us. He manages to rhyme "Explain it to ya" with Wrestlemania so I'm impressed. He spends forever rapping until Van Dam throws him inside. The ring is way too full again. After Cena is in the ring for about eight seconds, Charlie Haas is #19. Van Dam and Jeff slug it out until Jeff goes up top like an IDIOT and gets shoved out. He would burn out and leave the company in about three months anyway.

Eddie walks the buckles and hits a rana on Jericho as Rikishi is #20, giving us Jericho, Van Dam, Matt, Eddie, Rosey, Test, Cena, Haas and Rikishi. Again that's too many people. Rosey and Rikishi square off but nothing happens. Instead they team up and beat up Matt and Shannon because they can, until Rosey clotheslines the heck out of Rikishi. Jamal of 3 Minute Warning (you know him better as Umaga) is #21.

Rikishi superkicks Jamal down almost immediately and there's a Stinkface for him. Kane is #22 and I think we have eleven people in there at the moment. He cleans as much house as you can clean with that many people in there before FINALLY putting someone out in the form of Rosey. Jericho gets thrown to the apron but hangs on. Shelton Benjamin is #23 and Team Angle starts taking over. Booker T is #24 and we DESPERATELY need someone to clear some guys out.

Booker immediately kicks Kane down and fires up a Spinarooni to a BIG pop. Eddie gets backdropped out and Booker pounds on Rikishi. A-Train (Albert/Tensai) is #25 and the hometown boy gets to beat up a lot of people in a hurry. Shawn Michaels runs in with a bandage on his head and goes after Jericho, causing Test to dump Jericho out. See, that way it's legal.

Maven from Tough Enough (finally with actual trunks) is #26. He goes right for Kane like an idiot and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Goldust is #27 and he barely makes it 45 seconds before Haas and Benjamin put him out. Booker goes off on Haas in the corner but gets thrown out by Team Angle as well. He would get the world title shot at HHH as a consolation prize.

Big Dave Batista is #28 and you can hear the fans react to him. The first guy he hits? John Cena. It's always cool to see the future in there like that. Test takes him down with a full nelson slam but Batista low bridges him for the elimination. Batista takes down Rikishi with a spinebuster before clotheslining him out. At least the ring is clearing out a bit. Brock Lesnar is #29 and is the odds on favorite to win this thing.

Brock immediately eliminates Team Angle by himself before F5ing Matt on top of them. A-Train hits a bicycle kick to take Batista down as Undertaker is #30 to a big ovation. The final grouping: Van Dam, Cena, Jamal, Kane, A-Train, Maven, Batista, Lesnar and Undertaker. Drop Maven and A-Train and that's a pretty stacked field. To the shock of no one paying attention, Taker is returning here. There's a 9 hour DVD of matches and moments where Undertaker returns easily.

Taker punches everyone and dumps Cena and Jamal with ease. Maven dropkicks Taker in the back and celebrates, earning himself a chokeslam. The elimination is academic. A-Train hits the chokebomb on Taker to finally slow him down as Kane chokeslams Lesnar. Kane and Van Dam, the Raw tag champions, start teaming up to beat people up but A-Train takes them both down. Van Dam saves Kane from a backbreaker and the champs double clothesline Albert out.

Kane tells Van Dam to let him pick Van Dam up and drop him on Batista,

but Kane turns (not heel) on Van Dam to throw RVD out. We're down to Lesnar, Undertaker, Kane and Batista which is awesome by today's standards. Taker and Lesnar have a showdown but the other two guys break it up. Taker pounds away on Batista in a preview of the feud of the year in 2007.

A big spinebuster puts Taker down and Lesnar fights off the two Raw (Batista/Kane) guys. There's an F5 for Kane and NOW we get Taker vs. Brock. They slug it out and after Taker says big boot, he hits a big boot to take Brock's head off. The F5 is escaped but there's a tombstone for Brock. A clothesline casually puts Batista out to get us down to three. Taker teases an alliance with Kane but dumps him as well. He has to knock away an invading Batista and Brock dumps Undertaker to go to Wrestlemania.

Rating: B-. Good but definitely not great Rumble here. You could see the next generation in the blocks but the problem is they were just that: the NEXT generation. Taker was the only possible winner here other than Brock and that's a recipe for a bad Rumble. You need more than one candidate for the Rumble and as soon as Lesnar's music hit, it was clear who was winning this.

Taker says go win the title but he wants the first shot. Brock says ok to end the show. Did we need that?

Overall Rating: C-. The problem with this show is that the excellent match on the card is brought down by the HORRENDOUS match just before it. The Rumble is good but it isn't good enough to save an otherwise bad card. The show isn't terrible, but it's a sign of things to come for this year, especially with HHH on the Raw side. Not much to see here other than Benoit vs. Angle of course. HHH vs. Steiner is only worth seeing if you want to see a trainwreck.

Ratings Comparison

Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: D

Redo: C+

Dudley Boys vs. William Regal/Lance Storm

Original: C

Redo: D

Torrie Wilson vs. Dawn Marie

Original: DD

Redo: D-

Scott Steiner vs. HHH

Original: G-

Redo: H (As in HHH)

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Royal Rumble

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C-

I'm not sure what I was thinking the first time. The show just isn't that good.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/22/royal-rumble-count-up-2003-best->

[match-ever/](#)

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of Wrestlemania at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2002: It's Time To Play The Rumble

Royal Rumble 2002

Date: January 20, 2002

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 12,915

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is the first step to things falling downhill, as we're a few months away from the Brand Split and things falling through the floor in quality. The main event tonight aside from the Rumble is Jericho defending his newly won Undisputed Title (which he won by beating the Rock and Steve Austin IN THE SAME NIGHT in case you didn't know that) against Rock. HHH is back in the ring tonight also (he may have fought on Smackdown before this but I don't think he did) so let's get to it.

The opening video has clips of various Rumble wins in a photo album kind of theme. The theme for this year's show is 30 Men, 1 Winner. I've heard worse ideas which we'll get too very soon.

Tag Titles: Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Dudley Boys

I LOVE Stacy as the Duchess of Dudleyville. I never remember her looking better. Anyway, Spike and Tazz are defending here in a reign that I don't think anyone ever remembers. The Dudleys beat up Spike recently so he's in a neck brace. The Dudleys attack to start and hit the belly to back neckbreaker on Tazz on the floor. It's Bubba vs. Spike to start things off in a handicap match for all intents and purposes. Bubba rips the neck brace off and drops a big elbow.

Bubba shouts at Spike to get up as we get a very nice shot of Stacy. Tazz is back on the apron as D-Von hits a Hennig necksnap of all things. Bubba loads up a second brainbuster on Spike but gets countered into a Dudley Dog for no cover. The tag to Tazz is missed so Spike has to take a double flapjack instead. Spike avoids a headbutt from D-Von and makes the Dudleys clothesline each other. Hot tag brings in Tazz to clean house with suplexes. A big boot to Bubba's head sets up a top rope cross body by Spike for two. Stacy interferes and gets put in the Tazmission. D-Von gets caught in the same hold and the champions retain.

Rating: D+. I have no idea what the point of this being on PPV was as it barely broke five minutes. Nothing with Stacy in the Dudley attire can be bad, but this came about as close as you can get. Actually scratch that as it wasn't so much bad but just short. I have no idea why this wasn't on Raw or something like that. Tazz would be retired very soon after this due to a horrible neck.

We immediately go to a recap of Regal vs. Edge which is based on Regal using brass knuckles over and over again. Edge got fed up with it and beat up a lot of people with a chair.

Edge has a chair with him tonight to counter the knuckles. Apparently he broke Regal's nose recently.

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. William Regal

Edge is defending. The referee checks Regal over and over again for knuckles and finds them in his trunks. Well you can't say he didn't do his job. The referee stupidly puts them on the ring post instead of like,

giving them to someone to take to the back or something. Edge pounds away to start and chokes with his boot in the corner. He goes after Regal's bad nose as Lawler claims conspiracy.

Regal comes back with a clothesline but Edge kicks him in the back to put both guys down. Being the British dude that he is, Regal suplexes Edge down for two. Make that four. Uh six. Yet somehow that isn't three. Off to an arm trap chinlock followed by a hard forearm to put the champion down again. A double arm powerbomb hits Edge for two and they head to the apron. Edge busts out a DDT onto said apron, further injuring Regal's nose.

Back in and they ram heads to put both guys down as the match continues to drag at a slow pace. Edge wins a slugout and takes Regal down with a spinwheel kick and a suplex for two. Regal suplexes him down as well, only for Edge to hit a big old clothesline for two more. The Regal Stretch goes on out of nowhere but Edge reverses into a terrible version of his own to no avail. A top rope spinwheel kick puts Regal down but he finds another set of brass knuckles. Instead of swinging them though, he pulls the referee in the way of Edge's spear. Regal clocks Edge and wins the title.

Rating: D+. This didn't click at all. Regal didn't seem interested in selling at all and Edge wasn't ready to carry a match by himself yet. He was getting to the point where he could but it would take a summer of feuding with Eddie to get him up to that point. Regal wouldn't really do anything with the belt other than lose it to RVD. Nothing to see here.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Jacqueline is referee for absolutely no apparent reason and Trish is defending. Jazz is basically being a bully and has injured Trish's hand coming into this. Jazz jumps Trish to start but misses a splash, giving Trish two off a rollup. A modified hot shot slows the champ down again and a legdrop gets two. Jazz works on the bad hand for a bit but Jackie pulls them out of the ropes. Jackie of course makes it all about herself and won't count a cover on Trish. Stratusfaction hits out of nowhere for two and Jazz is up a few seconds later, basically no selling it. Trish

hits a bad looking running bulldog to retain.

Rating: D. It was short, it was sloppy, the ending was stupid and Jackie was in it. What other kind of grade do you expect here? Stratus was starting to get better but it would take another year and Lita before she got amazing. Jazz was a pretty stupid pick to bring over to WWE as no one remembered her and she didn't have the looks to back up any lack of hype. Bad match here.

Flair says he'll win.

We recap Vince vs. Flair. Flair debuted after Survivor Series as the new co-owner of the company and has driven Vince crazy since. This led up to a street fight tonight between the two of them tonight which isn't as big a deal as they were shooting for I don't think. The highlight of it was Vince dressing up as Flair and saying destroying lives turned him on.

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

Remember this is a street fight. Vince shoves him down to start and struts, so Flair punches him down and struts as well. Flair wins a chop battle in the corner (duh) so Vince goes to the eyes to escape. There's the Flair Flop followed by a Flair Flip in the corner as Vince is in full control. We head to the floor and get our first weapon shot, with Vince pounding on Ric with a metal Keep Off sign.

There's a trashcan shot to the head and Flair is busted open. How thin must the skin on his forehead be? Anyway, Vince steals a camera from someone to take a picture of Flair's cut before we head back inside. Since he's a jerk, Vince starts working over the knee in (less skilled) Flair fashion. The leg is wrapped around the post and Vince puts on a Figure Four that Dusty Rhodes would be jealous of.

Flair turns the hold over and Vince IMMEDIATELY lets go of the hold. So not only is he better at it than some wrestlers, he's also smart. Never let it be said that Vince doesn't know what he's doing. Vince bails to the floor and grabs a lead pipe that he used to bust Flair open in the build up to the match. Flair catches him coming in with a low blow and pounds away on the floor.

Vince takes a monitor shot to the head and in a weird spot, we see a replay on the monitor on the table as the live match goes on. Vince is busted open now and we head back inside. Scratch that as we go back outside immediately where Flair's family takes pictures of Vince's cut. Set it up earlier, pay it off later. Good move. Back in and Flair kicks him low again just because he can, cracks him in the head with the pipe and ends it with the Figure Four.

Rating: C+. At the end of the day, this match makes as much sense as almost anything you'll see. Vince controlled at the beginning, but at the end of the day he's a boss and Flair is a veteran wrestler and athlete. It makes sense for him to be able to shrug that off and destroy Vince with relative ease once he got the upper hand. On top of that we got some good blood and Vince getting hit in the balls so how can this not be entertaining?

Stephanie talks trash about everyone else in the Rumble and runs down Debra as well. Austin walks up and WHAT's her away. Cole gets a bit of it too. This is when the bit was brand new and still kind of funny, as opposed to now when it ruins almost every serious promo.

No highlight package for the world title match? For those of you not around in 2002 (LUCKY!), Jericho won the title in December, beating Rock along the way. It makes sense for Rock to get the first shot, especially since they feuded over the end of the year.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho still has both titles because HHH wasn't there to win the first Undisputed Title and get the new belt. Rock decks him immediately and the champ heads to the floor, only to run back in and get punched some more. Jericho misses a charge and hits the post but pulls off a hot shot out of nowhere to give himself a breather. They trade strikes in the corner before Jericho hits a spinwheel kick to Rocky's arms for two.

A suplex gets two for Jericho and for some reason Rock's left thumb is sticking out. The champ unhooks a buckle but can't get the Walls. A missile dropkick gets two on Rock and it's off to the chinlock. That goes on for a good while so Chris goes up again, only to get crotchted and

superplexed. A belly to belly suplex gets two for Rock but Jericho clotheslines him down and hits the Lionsault. Due to high reasons of arrogance, Jericho waits forever to cover and fights with the referee after getting two.

Another dropkick attempt by Jericho is caught in a Sharpshooter, but here's Lance Storm for a distraction while Jericho taps. Christian comes in as well and is promptly punched out by Rock. Jericho hits a Rock Bottom on Rock for two and the frustration begins. The champ loads up a People's Elbow but Rock nips up and sends Jericho out to the floor.

Both guys are rammed into both announce tables before Jericho's Rock Bottom attempt is countered into an AWESOME looking Rock Bottom by Rock from one table through the other. That only gets two back inside before Jericho counters another Rock Bottom into the Liontamer (yes I said Liontamer instead of the Walls). Ok now it's the Walls, which allows Rock to make the rope.

The jumping clothesline takes the referee down by mistake, allowing Jericho to blast Rock with the belt. Another referee slides in and gets two off that and Rock DDTs Jericho down. Rock covers....and Nick Patrick won't count. There's a Rock Bottom for his efforts and a People's Elbow for Jericho but there's no referee. Rock checks on Hebner, allowing Jericho to hit him low, send him into the Chekov's Gun in the shape of an exposed turnbuckle. All that plus a rollup with his feet on the ropes is enough for Jericho to retain the title.

Rating: B. This took awhile to get going but once things picked up it turned into what you would expect from Rock vs. Jericho in a nearly 20 minute match. The overbooking worked here as Jericho needed something to boost him up to Rock's level, which is what you're supposed to do as a heel. Good stuff here and a very fine title match.

Shawn Michaels, in a really stupid looking Texas flag shirt, is at WWF New York. He picks Taker or Austin to win the Rumble.

Video on the Rumble. The main picks to win are Taker, HHH, Angle and Austin.

Royal Rumble

Rikishi and Goldust are #1 and #2 respectively and we've got two minute intervals. Goldie walks around Rikishi to start and gets punched in the face for his efforts. Rikishi knocks him around for a bit but can't quite drop the big load on Goldie's chest. A backdrop puts Goldust on the apron and Boss Man is #3, making it 2-1 against Rikishi. Goldust gets punched in the face but Boss Man pounds Rikishi into the corner. The heels explode after a long one minute partnership.

Bradshaw is #4 and hopefully he can pick things up a bit. He beats up everyone as Rikishi loads up the Stinkface on Boss Man. A superkick and a clothesline put Boss Man out and there's a Samoan Drop to Bradshaw. Goldie pounds away on Bradshaw in the corner and gets powerbombed for his efforts. Lance Storm is #5 and absolutely nothing of note happens until Al Snow (on Tough Enough at this point) is #6. Bradshaw kills Storm with the Clothesline as the fans want Head.

Billy of Billy and Chuck is #7 and we're still waiting on something to happen. The fans are still into this at least so it's not a failure at this point. Storm and Snow fight to the apron with Snow superkicking Lance to an elimination. Billy dumps Bradshaw and Undertaker is finally #8 to pick things up a bit. A chokeslam kills Billy (the third in the series, not starring Uma Thurman) and another one puts out Goldust. Snow and Rikishi are dumped out and Billy follows them, leaving Undertaker alone to a big reaction. He's evil here in case you're not up on Taker history.

Matt Hardy is #9, which is interesting as Taker injured both Hardys and Lita. The redhead gets in along with Matt and helps him take the big man down via a low blow. Matt hits a Twist of Fate and stomps away but can't get Taker out. Naturally Jeff Hardy is #10 because that's how the TOTALLY RANDOM draw works in the Rumble.

Taker slugs down one of the best tag teams ever in just a few seconds, only to get caught in the Twist/Swanton combo. Again, why would you use moves that keep a giant on the mat? Not that it matters as Poetry in Motion is caught and Jeff is easily thrown out. The Last Ride kills Matt

and he's gone too, leaving Taker alone again. The clock during that segment was REALLY long too as they were roughly three minutes each to get the whole segment in.

Maven from Tough Enough is #11 but Lita is on the apron. Taker PUNCHES her down, drawing the Hardys back in. Taker dumps both of them again, but Maven dropkicks Undertaker in the back and eliminates him in arguably the biggest surprise elimination ever in the Rumble. The look on the Dead Man's face is hilarious as he has absolutely no emotion at all. He calmly turns around, gets back in the ring, and mauls Maven, sending him through the ropes to the floor. A HUGE chair shot cracks Maven's head and the beating continues until Scotty 2 Hotty is #12.

Taker punches Scotty down and throws Maven back in to eliminate him, which under old Rumble rules would count. The beating goes into the crowd as there's nothing in the ring at the moment. Christian is #13 but has no one to fight because Scotty is still down. Instead we go to the back where Maven is rammed face first into a popcorn machine. Taker eats a handful of popcorn and finally leaves Maven alone.

Scotty gets in and walks into a DDT as DDP is #14. Nothing of note continues to happen until Scotty superkicks Page through the ropes to the floor and hits the Worm on Christian. Page sneaks back in and throws Scotty out as Chuck is #15. They all beat on each other for a bit with Christian and Chuck teaming up for a bit. Godfather, now the owner of an escort service in an attempt to salvage the gimmick, is #16 and brings out 12 good looking women with him. Page is eliminated off camera during this.

With Godfather in the ring after about 15 seconds due to dancing, Albert is #17. He's the Hip Hop Hippo at this point and lasts about 45 seconds before being tossed by the villains. Godfather is dumped soon thereafter, and here's Saturn at #18. Chuck and Perry slug it out as the fans cheer for the Ho's leaving. Nothing happens again, until Austin is #19. Chuck is the first victim, getting stomped down in the corner. There goes Christian, Saturn gets a Stunner, Chuck is eliminated, Saturn is dumped, Christian gets thrown back in, Stunned and thrown out again, Chuck gets the same as Christian, and Austin takes a breather.

Val Venis is #20 (and also returning) and things go about as you would expect, although Val does get in some offense and survives until Test is #21. A double teaming lasts for a bit until Austin remembers who he's fighting and dumps both guys in a few seconds. Austin does his watch bit when no one is in the ring with him. Notice the difference between the big stars and the regular guys: the big ones are CONSTANTLY trying to keep the audience entertained instead of letting them die.

Speaking of entertaining the crowd, HHH is #22. The entrance takes about a minute and a half, they stare at each other for about twenty more seconds, and the slugout only lasts for a few seconds until Hurricane is #23. Luckily for him, the legends knock each other down so Hurricane can try a double chokeslam. The look on Austin's face is hilarious as the two of them dump Hurricane with ease.

Austin and HHH chop each other in the corner until Faarooqq is #24 and lasts about that many seconds. Mr. Perfect makes a surprise return at #25 to a big surprise reaction from the audience. He looks a bit, shall we say, tipsy here. Perfect chills on the floor a bit as JR makes a mistake, saying Perfect debuted at the Rumble in 1993. In reality he was #4 in 1989. Austin and HHH double team Perfect to no avail so here's Angle at #26, drawing the rare double chant of YOU SUCK WHAT.

HHH and Angle pair off as do the other two guys and the match slows down a bit. Kurt starts suplexing people but can't dump HHH because Austin makes the save due to reasons of a big ego. Big Show is #27 in his one piece women's swimsuit. Angle gets chokeslammed so Austin and HHH double team the big man to limited avail. HHH saves Angle, presumably because he wants Kurt's help to get Show out. Makes sense I guess.

Show dominates everyone until Kane is #28. HHH gets chokeslammed so we can have our battle of the giants. Jerry: "They're not getting any smaller are they JR?" Uh yeah Jerry, actually they are. They do the double chokeslam spot but Kane kicks Show low and picks him up, slamming him to the floor. AWESOME display of strength there, but Angle immediately dumps Kane to get us back down to four.

Van Dam is #29 and hits a Five Star on Angle who is down from something

we didn't see. Everyone but HHH gets kicked down so he hits a Pedigree to put Van Dam down. Booker T is #30, giving us a final group of Booker, RVD, Angle, Perfect, HHH and Austin. Booker throws out RVD without having to do anything else thanks to the Pedigree. We get a Spinarooni, followed by a Stunner and elimination to get us down to Austin, Angle, HHH and Perfect.

Austin hits a slingshot into the post on HHH who walks into an Angle Slam. Angle rolls some Germans on Austin and the C/Kurts try to dump Austin. Austin hits some HARD right hands to break that up but as he tries to dump Perfect, Angle runs up and dumps the Rattlesnake. Austin pulls Perfect to the floor but Kurt sends Austin into the steps to break it up. Steve still isn't done as he comes back in with a chair for all three guys. Eh he's Austin so he can get away with it.

Angle accidentally clothesline Hennig but doesn't eliminate him. There's the PerfectPlex (BIG pop for that) to Kurt but HHH dumps Perfect a second later. Angle and HHH stare each other down and the Game pounds away on him to take over. Kurt gets HHH to the apron but can't get the win. HHH chokes away but charges into a backdrop, sending him to the apron. Kurt makes the classic mistake of not making sure the other guy is out and gets clotheslined to the floor, giving HHH the Rumble. For you trivia guys, this is the longest Rumble ever to date, even going 11 seconds longer than the 40 man version.

Rating: C+. This has some very bad spots in it but the rest of the stuff is solid all around. Once Austin gets in there things pick up a lot, but the 18 guys before him don't do much. Taker's elimination came too fast which hurt things here, as there was no one of note from #9 until Austin at #19. Still though, the good stuff here was good enough to check this out, but you might want to fast forward some parts of it.

Overall Rating: B-. This is a pretty good but certainly not great show. 2002 was a bad year for the company on Raw and things were clearly starting to look weak here. The main problem was the lack of elevation of anyone new to the main event in the year, as the main events for almost every PPV were people who had been there before. There's nothing on here that's required viewing but there's also nothing terrible on here either.

Check it out but don't expect to be blown away.

Ratings Comparison

Spike Dudley/Tazz vs. Billy and Chuck

Original: C-

Redo: D+

William Regal vs. Edge

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Trish Stratus vs. Jazz

Original: D+

Redo: D

Ric Flair vs. Vince McMahon

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Chris Jericho vs. The Rock

Original: B+

Redo: B

Royal Rumble

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Yep, about the same for the most part here.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/21/royal-rumble-count-up-2002-game-on/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the History of Wrestlemania at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0188BJRGU>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

NXT – September 23, 2015: Ladies Night

NXT

Date: September 23, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's another night in the Dusty Classic as we're moving towards Takeover: Respect with the semi-finals and finals of the tournament as well as a thirty minute Iron Woman match for the Women's Title. Tonight is likely to be about the tournament and filling in the rest of the card for the

show on October 7. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Eva Marie vs. Carmella

Oh this one could hurt. Carmella shoulders her into the corner to start and throws Eva to the floor so we can get a Moonwalk inside. Back in and Eva's suplex is booed out of the building as the announcers talk about Eva not being accepted for her improvements. A big boot drops Carmella for two (fans: "THAT'S A KICKOUT!") and we hit a bow and arrow hold. Fans: "ALL BOTCH EVERYTHING!" Carmella fights back and starts dancing around like Enzo before ramming Emma into the buckle for two. Eva comes back by throwing Carmella to the floor for a big crash and a countout win at 5:10.

Rating: D. So here's the thing: the story makes sense and yeah Eva is going to get a ton of heat when she probably takes the title from Bayley, but a lot of people, myself included, are going to get annoyed at sacrificing everything the women in NXT have built up for the sake of pushing someone because she's occasionally on a reality show that doesn't even draw a million people a week. Yeah that match that sold the Brooklyn show and was all successful and good, but now let's get rid of it for a woman getting on the job training to be the next Nikki Bella. That's life in WWE and it's something we just have to live with.

Nia Jax is still coming. Nothing has changed since Takeover.

Recap of the announcement of the Iron Woman match.

Tyler Breeze vs. Bull Dempsey

Their tag team was a failure and Bull is getting in better shape. Tyler uses the referee as a shield to start and is thrown around like a doll. Bull messes with the hair to really get under Breeze's skin, causing Tyler to send him out to the floor. Unlike Carmella though, Bull is able to get back in off a whip to the floor. Must be the Bull Fit. Fans: "BULL FIT WORKS!"

Back from a break with Tyler ripping at Bull's face before opting for a

regular headlock. Graves: "Now going down into the trapezius. I learned my anatomy from Gorilla Monsoon." Bull throws him off and gets all fired up as Breeze punches him. Some left jabs drop Breeze but he's able to roll to the ropes before Bull can drop the headbutt. Bull goes up again for some reason, only to have Tyler pull him off for the pin with his feet on the ropes at 10:19.

Rating: C. Bull Fit is a nice idea but Breeze winning here was the right idea. Breeze has the potential to really go somewhere in NXT and winning matches and feuds like this are a good sign for him. Dempsey needs to drop some more weight but the fans are getting into the gimmick which is the most important sign.

Clips of the Texas tour.

William Regal brings out Japanese star Kana, whose Titantron video says Asuka. Regal pronounces the new name as "Aska" and asks if there's anything she'd like to say. Asuka says she's happy to be here and wants to be NXT Women's Champion. They sign the contract but here are Dana Brooke and Emma to interrupt. Regal chides them for their rudeness and it gets even worse as they mock Asuka's English. They're the ones who ran Charlotte and Becky Lynch off so Asuka better play nice. A dejected Asuka starts to leave but the fans chant her name. Asuka turns back and smiles before slowly leaving.

Tyler Breeze doesn't have much to say about his match with Apollo Crews at Takeover. Crews comes up and is far more excited about the match than Tyler is.

Feature on the Dusty Classic. Here are the updated brackets:

Samoa Joe/Finn Balor vs. Colin Cassidy/Enzo Amore

Dash/Dawson

Hype Bros vs. Chad Gable/Jason Jordan

Baron Corbin/Rhyno

The Hype Bros and Gable/Jordan are both ready for next week.

Tag Team Titles: Vaudevillains vs. Blake and Murphy

Vaudevillains are defending in the rematch from Takeover: Brooklyn. Gotch shoulders Blake down for two to start and here's Blue Pants to chase Alexa into the ring for a brawl. Both of them head to the back and English slaps a chinlock on Blake. Blake comes right back with a headlock of his own but Aiden armdrags both challengers down with ease. Murphy back suplexes English onto the apron and we take a break.

Back with English still in trouble off a kick to the face and a chinlock from Blake. Murphy's chinlock keeps the match slow until English comes back with a hard slap to the face. Gotch and Blake come in with Simon's screwy offense taking over. Everything breaks down and Blake gets his knees up to stop Aiden's middle rope senton. English gets two off a rollup and sends Murphy to the floor, allowing Simon to come back in for the Whirling Dervish to retain at 12:17.

Rating: C-. That was certainly chinlocky. It was much more boring than bad though as there was almost no chance of the titles changing back here. I'm assuming the winners of the tournament, likely Gable/Jordan, are the next challengers, which makes more sense than anything else.

Enzo and Big Cass are thankful for everything Dusty did for them and want to win the tournament in his honor. They respect Balor and Joe as well, but respect goes out the window next week.

Balor and Joe say Cass and Enzo might be the realest guys in the room but they're the toughest guys on the block and you can't teach that.

Overall Rating: C. Not the worst show in the world here but it was much more about setting stuff up for later shows. The tournament is mostly set up now and we have a good chunk of Takeover set with the Iron Woman match guaranteed to take up thirty minutes and the tournament matches filling in most of the rest of the card. Fun enough show here but it was much more of a building episode than anything else.

Results

Eva Marie b. Carmella via countout

Tyler Breeze b. Bull Dempsey – Pin with feet on the ropes

Vaudevillains b. Blake and Murphy – Whirling Dervish to Blake

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete 1997 Monday Night Raw Reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/product/B015IN12I2>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Summerslam Count-Up – 2009: Good Grief He's Back Again

Summerslam 2009

Date: August 23, 2009

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 17,129

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Todd Grisham, Matt Striker, Josh Matthews

Not a lot has changed in the last year other than some names have risen up the card. Jeff Hardy is the Smackdown Champion and is defending tonight against the on fire CM Punk who is now a heel, bragging about how great he is due to being straightedge. We also have Orton vs. Cena #875 although only their second match here at Summerslam. It's a decent looking card on paper so let's get to it.

The opening video is set up like a movie theater, but DX takes it over by making shadow puppets on the screen. Shawn wins by putting up Abraham Lincoln. They finally break the projector but Shawn says he can fix it. He turns it into a DX highlight video but breaks the camera one more time.

Intercontinental Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Dolph Ziggler

Rey is defending after a long but awesome feud with Jericho. Ziggler pounds him down into the corner before getting two off a powerslam. Dolph throws him over his shoulders to the top but Rey bounces off with a moonsault press for two. Out to the floor and a cameraman is taken out via I think a hurricanrana. Back in and Ziggler catches (kind of) a rana off the top in a buckle bomb for two to take over.

We hit the chinlock before Dolph gets two off a side slam. The jumping elbow gets two and it's back to the chinlock. Back up and Rey drop toeholds him into the corner before, only to have his head taken off by a clothesline for another near fall. A fireman's carry gutbuster gets two and it's back to the chinlock. Rey fights up again and hits a hard kick to the head for a near fall of his own. Dolph comes back with a dropkick to take down a flying Mysterio for two more as these covers are getting very hot.

Back up and Rey tries to roll up Ziggler's body into a sunset flip but Ziggler falls onto him for two. A wicked clothesline gets two more for the challenger but Rey kicks him into 619 position, only to have Ziggler drop to the floor. Back in and the Fameasser gets two for Dolph but Rey gets the same off a sunset flip.

Rey hits a kind of tornado DDT for two more and an armdrag sets up the 619 but Ziggler avoids the springboard splash. Ziggler gets a quick near fall off the miss and the fans are split on who to cheer for. A kick to Rey's head sends him to the apron so Ziggler loads up a top rope gutbuster, only to have Rey counter into a hurricanrana in mid air to retain the title.

Rating: B+. Excellent opener here with Ziggler being able to go move for move with one of the best high fliers of all time. It was clear that

Dolph was going to be a big deal and this was a great example of why. Rey was on fire at this point but he would be derailed by a Wellness violation a few weeks later, forcing him to drop the title to John Morrison.

Jack Swagger and MVP are in the back. Swagger says his match with MVP tonight is a culture clash between the All American American and an ex-con. MVP is nothing but a stepping stone but MVP says he made some bad decisions. Tonight he's teaching Swagger a lesson and the teacher is an MVP.

Jack Swagger vs. MVP

MVP jumps over Swagger in the corner and hits a quick clothesline for two to start. Swagger rolls to the floor to avoid the Ballin Elbow, only to be caught by a suicide dive. Back in and Swagger gets in some shots to the ribs to take over followed by a forearm to the back. MVP counters another shot with an elbow to the face, only to get caught in an abdominal stretch.

A hard clothesline puts MVP down for two and it's off to a camel clutch. MVP stands up and breaks the hold with an electric chair for two. This is really basic stuff and the fans aren't all that thrilled. Back up and MVP pops him in the jaw with a right hand, setting up the Ballin Elbow for two. A big boot in the corner sets up the Playmaker for the pin on Swagger.

Rating: D. The match wasn't even that bad but it was very dull. Neither guy did anything special out there and it was about six minutes of boring, yet acceptable, wrestling. Swagger would go on to a world title the following year for reasons no one can quite fathom while MVP would do nothing of note for the rest of his WWE run.

Luke Perry is here.

Video on celebrities guest hosting Raw. Did we really have to relive this stupid idea?

Nancy O'Dell from Access Hollywood is here to talk about her ALS charity.

No one cares. At all. She interviews Freddy Prinze Jr., one of the recent guest hosts. O'Dell sounds like any other celebrity who has never watched a wrestling show before.

Tag Titles: Chris Jericho/Big Show vs. Cryme Tyme

Jericho and Show (I can't stand those combined names) are defending and the belts are unified at this point, meaning the champions have two belts apiece. Jericho says he and Show are the real celebrities here tonight and that's about it. JTG (how is he still employed in 2013? Seriously, I want an answer to that) starts against Jericho and a nice flip neckbreaker gets two on Chris. A quick Walls attempt is countered and JTG hits a middle rope leg lariat for two.

Todd Grisham: "They bring the right kind of flava eh JR?" JR: "Flava? Like barbecue or cheddar?" Off to Big Show who knocks JTG into the corner and puts on a hard headlock. JTG gets up a pair of boots in the corner before bringing in the much bigger Shad Gaspard. Jericho charges in but gets caught in a gorilla press. The distraction is enough to let Show run Shad over to take control again. A hard chop in the corner puts Shad down and it's back to the Canadian.

Shad gets in a jawbreaker but Jericho is smart enough to knock JTG to the floor before there's a hot tag. Show puts on a full nelson but throws Gaspard down to bring Jericho back in. We hit the chinlock before Shad fights up and hits a powerslam to put both guys down. The hot tag brings in JTG but the fans don't care at all. Everything breaks down and a clothesline sends Shad and Show to the floor. JTG is put in the Walls but makes the rope, only to be knocked out by Big Show to retain the titles.

Rating: C-. The match was ok but I don't think anyone believed the titles were in jeopardy. Cryme Tyme was a fun team (on occasion) but most of the time they were jobbers to the stars. Jericho and Big Show at least gave the tag titles some fresh life for a few months so I can't complain about them all that much. The match was standard stuff though.

Punk has a screenplay called the Jeff Hardy Story. In the movie, Jeff survives and beats Punk tonight in the TLC match. That's as phony as everyone here in LA, where the only real person is Punk himself. Punk

goes on a rant against America's obsession with cool pop culture and says no one makes movies about him because he doesn't support the Hollywood lifestyle. Punk is FEELING IT here.

Kane vs. Great Khali

Here's a Wrestlemania rematch that no one was asking for. Kane is the heel here and has attacked Khali's brother a few times before this. Khali shoves him into the corner to start and throws Kane out to the floor. Back in and Khali clotheslines him down but misses a legdrop, allowing Kane to hit a low dropkick for two. Both guys break up chokeslams and Khali takes over again.

He pounds Kane on the mat for two and hits a hard chop in the corner. Khali charges (and I use that word loosely) into a boot in the corner, allowing Kane to hit the top rope clothesline for two. We hit the chinlock before Khali makes a slow motion comeback and chops Kane down for two. Kane pulls Runjin Singh (Khali's brother) in and the distraction lets Kane dropkick Khali's knee. A bad looking DDT is enough for Kane to get the pin.

Rating: D-. Erg why do they keep doing these battles of the giants when they know they're going to suck? Khali was getting so slow at this point and it was easy to see where the insults about his abilities were coming from. Kane would float around for most of the next year until he saved Undertaker and won the world title as a result.

Slash, Robert Patrick and Maria Menunos are here.

We recap DX vs. Legacy. Rhodes and DiBiase had been destroying HHH for months so he made a call to Shawn. HHH then had to get Shawn out of his job as a short order cook (don't ask) and tonight is the big reunion match against Legacy.

Legacy vs. D-Generation X

DX comes in on a tank, trailing behind a bunch of soldiers on an Army jeep. Ok points for an AWESOME entrance. HHH starts with DiBiase as Ted fires off right hands in the corner. They have even less effect than you

would expect so HHH suplexes him down and drops a knee for two. Off to Cody who walks into the high knee to the face from the Game and slaps Shawn as a result. Shawn gets the tag to a big pop but gets slapped again after running the ropes a bit.

Fed up, Shawn tackles Cody down but gets pounded in the face a few more times. Shawn comes back with a Thesz Press and right hands to another big reaction. The Band is tuned up but Cody bails to the floor and comes back in to a headlock. A belly to back suplex puts Shawn down and it's off to DiBiase to keep up the punching motif. Ted slams him down to stay on Shawn's back but Michaels gets a quick neckbreaker for a breather.

The hot tag brings in HHH to clean part of the house but Cody breaks up a Pedigree attempt. Everything breaks down and HHH backdrops Michaels over the top and onto Cody. Ted gets in a cheap shot on HHH to take over, meaning we're in for a long one here. Legacy takes over o the Game in the corner and the double teaming begins. DiBiase hooks a long chinlock, but HHH keeps fighting to get to Shawn. See how easily that can be done? Instead of just laying on the mat until it was time for the comeback, HHH is constantly moving and trying to keep the fans alive. That's such a lost art and it's rather sad.

Anyway HHH suplexes out of the hold but Cody comes in with a DDT to stop the tag to Michaels. Off to a front facelock and of course this time HHH lays on the mat after I praised him for one of the few times after the year 2000. HHH powers out of the hold but DiBiase breaks up another hot tag. You know HHH isn't going to stand for that for very long so he launches Ted over the top and out to the floor and finally makes the tag to Shawn.

House is really cleaned now with Shawn picking Rhodes apart. The atomic drop sets up the flying forearm but DiBiase breaks up the nipup attempt. Everything breaks down and HHH sends DiBiase into the stands as Cody goes up, only to miss a top rope elbow. Shawn loads up his own elbow but gets crotched down onto the buckle. He can still block a superplex though and now the elbow launches, only to hit Cody's knee. Shouldn't that hurt the leg a lot more than Shawn?

There's no DiBiase to tag so Shawn gets up and puts on a Figure Four, only to have DiBiase make the save. HHH can't hit a Pedigree as Cody takes him down and actually hits Cross Rhodes on Shawn for two. Now a Pedigree connects on Cody but DiBiase hits Dream Street (cobra clutch slam) on Shaw. HHH and Ted fight on the floor as both guys are down in the ring. Both guys get up at the same time and it's Sweet Chin Music to knock Cody senseless for the collapsing pin from Shawn.

Rating: B+. Another excellent match here with all four guys working the tag team formula to perfection. Shawn continues to be able to time a comeback like no one ever could and HHH was clicking tonight. Legacy looked great and would actually beat DX in the next month's match. I was surprised by how well the rookies looked here and DX actually had to sweat a bit here. I wouldn't say they were in jeopardy but it wasn't an easy win by any stretch.

ECW Title: Christian vs. William Regal

Christian is defending. Remember Matt Hardy vs. Mark Henry going 32 seconds last week? This is a quarter of that as Christian grabs the Killswitch as Regal is taking his robe off for the pin to retain.

Post match Regal's heavies Vladimir Kozlov and Ezekiel Jackson lay out Christian so Regal can put on the Regal Stretch.

Video on the Summerslam festivities in Los Angeles.

We recap Orton vs. Cena. Orton has dominated the year and Cena is the latest guy to try to take the title. Not much here but do these two really need a backstory?

Raw World Title: John Cena vs. Randy Orton

Orton is defending. Cena takes him down with a front facelock but Orton counters into a hammerlock. Randy takes him into the corner and kicks at the ribs a bit, cuing a Cena comeback with rights and lefts. Orton comes back with an elbow to the face and his VERY slow stomping. This is the main criticism of Orton around this time: he wrestled in slow motion and it makes for very dull matches. The big knee drop to the chest gets two.

Cena comes back with some right hands but walks into the backbreaker for two. We hit the chinlock and the dueling chants begin. Cena finally powers up and initiates his finishing sequence. The Shuffle connects but Orton escapes the FU into the powerslam (NOT A SCOOP SLAM COLE, YOU STUPID STUPID MAN!) for two. Orton misses a knee drop but Cena's shoulder block only hits air, sending him out to the floor. The Elevated DDT is good for two as Orton keeps things slow.

Cena gets in another shot and pops up top for the Fameasser, good for two. Orton grabs the ropes to block the FU and a double clothesline puts them both down. They slug it out with Cena taking over and speeding things up, but Orton shoves the referee for the LAME DQ. To be fair though it was the first fast paced thing he did all match.

Lillian, Rhodes Scholar that she is, calls Cena the new champion before saying Vince gave her word that the match restarts and if Orton gets DQ'd again he loses the title. This would be an entirely pointless bit that stopped the match cold. Back in and Orton takes over before whipping Cena into the steps. Orton slams him down and goes to get the title and walk out. We get the same announcement and the match continues again.

Back in and the STF, RK0 and FU are all countered and Orton grabs a rollup with his feet on the ropes for the pin. As you might expect, we're STILL not done as a second referee comes out and tells the first what happened. So on the third restart Cena puts on the STF but a "fan" runs in for a distraction, stopping things cold again. Cena walks around with his hands on his hips but Orton comes in and hits an RK0 to retain the title. For real this time.

Rating: D. On top of the INSANE overbooking, the match was really boring with Orton being his usual slow self. These two would feud forever and trade the title back and forth. The matches would get better but people were sick of seeing them fight at the end. This match was a great example of how overthinking can screw up a match. Brett DiBiase was the fan but that was never acknowledged on TV and I don't think it was ever addressed again.

We recap the main event. This is a pure culture clash with Jeff Hardy

being the free spirit and Punk being the serious straightedge guy who lives a very strict life. Punk cashed in MITB against Hardy at Extreme Rules but Jeff won the title back two months later. This gets the music video treatment with a song featuring lyrics of "I don't want to be like you." Nice touch.

Smackdown World Title: Jeff Hardy vs. CM Punk

TLC match here. They fight over a lockup to start until Punk takes him into the corner for some knees to the chest. He stomps Hardy down and throws him to the floor before grabbing the first chair. A shot to the ribs and back allows Punk to go up but Hardy makes a quick save. Hardy stomps him down in the corner and hits the slingshot dropkick before going up. This time it's Punk making the save but Hardy sends him into the ladder to put both guys down.

Back up and Hardy loads up Poetry in Motion but Punk drops him onto the open chair to take over. A series of ladder shots to the back have Hardy in big trouble. Punk sends him to the floor and hits a suicide dive but misses a chair shot. Hardy sends him into the post and gets in a chair shot to the elbow to take over. This is a slower paced match so far which is usually the best way to go about TLC matches. Now Poetry In Motion hits against the barricade and Punk is in trouble.

Hardy puts him on a table but Punk moves before Hardy can splash him through it, sending Hardy down in a big crash. We get another ladder in the ring as JR calls this a carcinogenic match. Punk goes up but Jeff literally jumps over him to go after it himself, only to get caught in an electric chair, only to counter that into a sunset bomb to put both guys down. The champion goes up first but Punk shoves him onto the corner in a SCARY landing with Jeff's leg hitting the rope.

Punk says on him with a superplex onto the ladder in another cringe inducing landing. Somehow Jeff snaps off a quick Twist of Fate but the Swanton hits knees. Punk hits the running knee in the corner but the bulldog is countered by Hardy throwing Punk over the top and through a table. Jeff starts to climb but Punk is back up to dropkick Hardy off the ladder. They head outside with Punk's knees being sent into the steps,

allowing Hardy to go NUTS on Punk with a chair.

Hardy loads up a table next to the ring and this Punk in the head with part of the announce table and a monitor. A chair shot puts Punk down again as Hardy is in full control. Jeff sets up the big ladder and hits an INSANE Swanton Bomb through Punk through the announce table. That looked NUTS but the crash was great. Both guys are checked on as the stretcher is brought out. Hardy is taken out but Punk is crawling towards the ladder. Jeff gets off the stretcher and goes after Punk, only to be kicked off the ladder in another big crash, giving Punk the title.

Rating: A-. This was an excellent war with a great story being told: Punk played it safe while Hardy lived for the moment and lost the title as a result. The Swanton spot looked amazing and it was the last straw for Hardy as he just couldn't keep getting up from all these crashes. Awesome match here and a great bit of storytelling.

Punk stands over Hardy with the title in the air and the lights go off. A gong strikes and the lights come up with Undertaker in Hardy's place. He hits a huge chokeslam on Punk and poses on the stage to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. There's some bad stuff on here but the good stuff far outweighs it. Its biggest problem is the Orton vs. Cena match which was slow and dull leading up to the STUPID ending. The other big matches delivered though and the opener is excellent. The show is worth watching, but pop in the Cena vs. Orton match from Breaking Point instead. Good show here that could have been a classic with a better Raw Title match.

Ratings Comparison

Dolph Ziggler vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: A-

Redo: B+

Jack Swagger vs. MVP

Original: C

Redo: D

Chris Jericho/Big Show vs. Cryme Tyme

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Kane vs. Great Khali

Original: D+

Redo: D-

D-Generation X vs. Legacy

Original: A

Redo: B+

William Regal vs. Christian

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

John Cena vs. Randy Orton

Original: B-

Redo: D

CM Punk vs. Jeff Hardy

Original: A

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: A-

Redo: B

The Cena vs. Orton match carries or sinks this show depending on how you look at it.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/08/12/history-of-summerslam-count-up-2009-punk-in-another-main-event-3/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

Finally, make sure to check out the Wrestling Bundle, which wraps up Sunday August 23 at midnight EST. Here are the details:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2015/08/16/the-wrestling-bundle/>

NXT – July 22, 2015: Let's Get To It

NXT

Date: July 22, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Rich Brennan, Byron Saxton

We're officially on the way to the next Takeover in Brooklyn with an announced main event of new NXT Champion Finn Balor defending against former champion Kevin Owens. This makes for an interesting match as Owens has kind of outgrown NXT despite only being there about seven months so far. It should be interesting how they get to the show so let's get to it.

A quick opening video shows us Balor returning to Japan to win the title.

We open with the champ, holding the title in his hand instead of around his waist, which is something I've always been a fan of. After a quick YOU DESERVE IT chant, Balor talks about all the places he's wrestled and how hard of a decision it really was to come to NXT. However, the moment he was handed the NXT Title, he knew it was all worth it so he could hold this title up. As for Owens, yeah he's done a lot, but there's one thing he couldn't do: pin Finn Balor. He couldn't do it in Tokyo and he won't do it again in Brooklyn. This was a nice, to the point debut promo for the title reign and Balor looks like a star.

Eva Marie is very thankful for an opportunity tonight and is taking it so seriously. There's a misconception about her but she's ready to show what she has so open your eyes.

Eva Marie vs. Cassie

First sign of trouble: Graves tells the other commentators to pick their jaws up off the floor during Eva's entrance. The NXT girls' looks are almost never mentioned and it sets them apart from the Divas and it's the first thing mentioned about Eva. The LET'S GO EVA/EVA SUCKS chants start up almost immediately as Eva cranks on a wristlock followed by a decent suplex for two. We hit the armbar on the mat for a good while before Cassie kicks her in the face for two of her own. Eva grabs a quick Sliced Bread #2 for the pin at 3:52.

Rating: D+. Well, she didn't bomb. The problem though is that's the only standard Eva had to reach here. She didn't have to be anything great and while she could be good in the ring one day, there's always going to be a mark on her due to how she got into WWE. This could have been far worse, but it's like watching a Tough Enough rookie having their debut: after

all this time, she's only up to average. It's a step up, but she had nowhere to go but up.

Tyler Breeze is in Regal's office and wants something good for Takeover.

Baron Corbin vs. ???

I don't even have time to look up the jobber's name before End of Days wraps this up in 12 seconds. I believe it was Jesus de Leon, who has appeared on a TNA One Night Only show and some indy shows.

Samoa Joe vs. Mike Rallis

Joe has new, far more sinister music which takes out the stupid upbeat sound of his original. That's one of my favorite things in NXT: they actually fix big problems like that instead of just waiting for fans to go numb to them. Mike goes right at Joe to start and pounds away with some forearms, only to have Joe stomp him into the corner. The Rock Bottom out of the corner sets up the Muscle Buster to end Rallis at 2:05.

Emma and Dana Brooke aren't worried about Bayley.

Bayley vs. Emma

This is about revenge after Emma broke Bayley's hand about two months ago. I know it's goofy and aimed at kids, but there is something so goofily innocent about Bayley that I can't help but smile every time she does anything. I've said she's the purest face in wrestling right now and the more I see her the more right I think I am. Emma slaps her in the bad hand (still in a brace) to start and takes over for a few moments, only to have Bayley send Emma face first into the buckle a few times.

A bulldog gets two but Dana offers a distraction so Emma can post the bad hand. Emma pulls on the fingers so hard you would think she was trying to steal them (but I'm sure she meant to pay for them). She cranks on both arms for a choke but Bayley comes back with ax handles to the chest. A pull of the hair tie sets up a middle rope elbow to the jaw for two and the fans are right back with the BAYLEY chants. Dana tries to interfere again but gets ejected, setting up the Bayley to Belly (didn't it used to be the other way around?) for the pin at 5:37.

Rating: C-. This was about revenge and Bayley did exactly what she should have done here. Now, assuming this ends Bayley vs. Emma, there's almost no reason not to send Bayley after the Women's Title. It's been a very long time coming and the fans would erupt when she finally wins it. Bayley is as close to a female Sami Zayn as you can get and the win would be a great main event for a Takeover if they want to roll the dice.

Post match Bayley says she wants the title and wants to beat the best to get there. Therefore, she wants a match with Charlotte.

We get a clip of the NXT girls making their in ring debut at Battleground.

Charlotte is thankful for the opportunity when Dana Brooke comes in. Dana is tired of everyone getting a chance because of their last name when she has never gotten a single shot. Charlotte likes the sound of that and says Bayley can wait a week.

Vaudevillains vs. Angelo Dawkins/Sawyer Fulton

Gotch and Dawkins get things going but it's quickly off to Fulton to lay a beating down on Simon. Something like a Hart Attack with a dropkick instead of a running clothesline gets two on Gotch and it's off to an abdominal stretch. Gotch picks up his own boot and kicks Angelo in the face to escape (that's just cool) and makes the tag off to English. The Whirling Dervish puts Dawkins away at 2:47.

Blake/Murphy/Alexa aren't impressed by the Vaudevillains and think Gotch and English are from the old days of 1999. The title match is next week and Bliss guarantees they retain the belts. That could open some doors for a new team at Takeover, such as some hometown boys.

It's time for Balor and Owens to sign the contract for Takeover with Regal moderating. He talks about the largest audience in NXT history but Owens comes out to cut him off. Before he can say or do anything though, here's Finn Balor to look like a star again, offering a very nice visual compared to Owens' brawler look. Balor goes to sign but Owens asks him how it feels to be champion. How does it feel to defend the title in the biggest main event in NXT history ("which takes place in BROOKLYN!")? And

how does it feel to go in as the underdog.

Balor was exactly right earlier in the night when he talked about all the things Owens did, such as beating up Rusev, sending Neville out of NXT, crippling Sami Zayn twice and beating John Cena. All that was in his first six months, so now he gets to show the fans that Japan was just a fluke. Balor can't wait to make Owens eat those words and both guys sign. There goes the table and Regal gets punched in the face. Balor forearms Owens to the floor and dropkicks him for good measure to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I had a good time with this show and I was amazed by how fast it went by. This was about setting up Takeover as they have five weeks and most of the card isn't set already. The wrestling wasn't the point here and it covered a lot of the stuff it needed to get to. They'll be fine going forward and the Brooklyn crowd is going to help the show a lot. Fun, well done show this week.

Results

Eva Marie b. Cassie – Sliced Bread #2

Baron Corbin b. Jesus de Leon – End of Days

Samoa Joe b. Mike Rallis – Muscle Buster

Bayley b. Emma – Bayley to Belly

Vaudevillains b. Angelo Dawkins/Sawyer Fulton – Whirling Dervish to Dawkins

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of NXT Reviews: The Full Sail Years Volume I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B011T13PV4>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

NXT – May 27, 2015: A Bit More Stoppable

NXT

Date: May 27, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Rich Brennan

It's the week after Takeover: Unstoppable and the main story seems to be Kevin Owens fights everyone at once. After challenging John Cena on Raw, sending Sami Zayn away to get shoulder surgery, possibly putting Hideo Itami on the shelf, attacking Commissioner William Regal and getting a new #1 contender with Samoa Joe, Owens now has to deal with the debuting Samoa Joe. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week, complete with a quick interview with Joe where he says he's coming for the title.

Opening sequence.

Sami Zayn's music opens the show but we get Kevin Owens instead. He was going to issue an NXT Title Open Challenge, but he isn't insecure enough to have to defend his title against anyone every week. The fans sing JOHN CENA SUCKS, but Owens finds it odd that they never say that about Sami Zayn and he sucks too. We won't be seeing Sami again anyway because Owens did exactly what he said he would do at Takeover. The only reason he did that was so he could keep the NXT Title and keep providing for his family, because that's what a good man does.

Another thing a good man did was to let Samoa Joe live last week. A lot of people have said that Joe is gonna kill him, but that's as ridiculous

as the colors of John Cena's merchandise. If Joe ever steps in the same ring as Owens again, he'll drop Joe just like that. Speaking of dropping people, that's what he's going to do at Elimination Chamber when he shows John Cena that the champ is here.

This brings out General Manager William Regal, who says Owens is walking a thin line. Owens says Regal put his hands on Owens first, which Regal considers the only reason Owens still works here. Regal lists off all the people who have been taken out on a stretcher since Owens arrived, but Kevin denies being behind Itami's injury. Also, Sami's injuries are on Sami for asking for it and on Regal for making the match.

This brings out....Solomon Crowe? Solomon heard Owens talking about how he isn't going to fight anyone unless they earn it and that means Kevin is scared. Kevin thinks Solomon has just earned an opportunity, so Regal makes the match. That means you can add Solomon to the list of people he's sent out of here on a stretcher ("Riley, Sami, Sami, Sami, and now him.").

Look back at Hideo's arm injury last week.

Hideo says he's had surgery and when he comes back, there will be no stopping him.

We get an interview from last week with Zack Ryder, who was interrupted by Mojo Rawley, who freaked Zack out a little bit.

Emma vs. Bayley

Emma is flanked by Dana Brooke. Bayley gets stomped down in the corner to start and Emma cranks on an armbar, only to have Bayley throw her to the mat and just pound away with right hands. A kick to the face gets two near falls for Emma as the fans are of course completely behind Bayley. Emma throws her down by the hair a few times and grabs a leg drag, followed by the Emma Lock for the clean submission at 4:13.

Rating: D+. This was a glorified squash for Emma, which isn't something you often see in this division. Emma being more aggressive is a good change of character for her, but I'm not sure where Bayley goes from

here. She's so ridiculously over that it's kind of a strange choice to have her lose like this.

Charlotte comes out for the post match save but gets beaten down as well.

Recap of Baron Corbin beating Rhyno last week.

Baron was being interviewed after his win last week when Rhyno came up and said they should do it again soon.

We see Becky Lynch's career retrospective from last week with new footage of her match with Sasha last week.

Elias Samson/Mike Rallis vs. Blake/Murphy

Non-title and Alexa Bliss is with the champs. Blake and Rallis get things going with Mike taking a quick beating. It's off to Murphy for a slingshot hilo and a chinlock as the champs continue to dismantle Rallis. Mike finally rolls over for a hot tag, bringing in Elias for some dropkicks. That lasts all of ten seconds before the running brainbuster into the frog splash is enough for the pin on Samson at 3:15.

Rating: D+. Another squash here to establish the new trio. The new look works very, very well for Bliss and she's very fitting as a woman who looks down on everyone around her. Blake and Murphy are good in these roles but I'm really not sure how far they can go after they lose the belts.

Samson takes a Sparkle Splash for some insult to injury.

Post break, Bliss says she gravitated to the team because they're all winners. Compare this to Carmella, who is famous for being from a garbage dump like Long Island. Next week, that's where Bliss is sending her.

Tye Dillinger vs. Finn Balor

Dillinger scores with a quick elbow to the face but Balor smiles at him. Some choking with a boot in the corner has some more effect on Finn and we hit the chinlock. Balor comes back with a running forearm and basement dropkick, followed by the Sling Blade. The Coup de Grace completes the

squash for Finn at 2:45.

Jason Jordan says he's found the perfect partner when Chad Gable comes up, saying it has to be him. Gable lists off his qualifications but Jordan says he already has a partner. He also says the wrong name so Gable throws him a towel with his name on it.

Kevin Owens vs. Solomon Crowe

Non-title. Owens bails to the floor so Solomon goes after him, only to eat some right hands to the face. Back in and Owens throws him outside again and we take a break. We come back with Owens putting on a chinlock. That gets boring in a hurry so Owens just hammers him down and tosses Solomon back to the floor. The pop-up powerbomb finally ends Crowe at 9:24.

Rating: D+. Another dull squash but did anyone expect anything else? There was no need for this to be anything other than Owens crushing Crowe and it's not like you lose anything. Crowe is the definition of a guy who is just there and not doing a thing despite being a fairly big signing back in the day. Nothing to see here.

Owens loads up the apron powerbomb but Samoa Joe comes out big staredown, sending Kevin running to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This just wasn't very good. It's a big fallout show from Takeover, but unfortunately that meant little more than airing clips from the show and having the winners in squash matches. It wasn't the worst because not a lot happened, but this was one of the flatter shows they've done in a long time. Things should pick up when they start the big stories again soon.

Results

Emma b. Bayley – Emma Lock

Blake/Murphy b. Elias Samson/Mike Rallis – Frog splash to Samson

Finn Balor b. Tye Dillinger – Coup de Grace

Kevin Owens b. Solomon Crowe – Pop up powerbomb

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume III at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00X0UNBEA>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

NXT – April 29, 2015: That Old Feeling

NXT

Date: April 29, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Rich Brennan, Byron Saxton

We're at the start of the new taping cycle this week, meaning it's time to get ready for the build to the next Takeover special. Sami Zayn made his big return last week to go after NXT Champion Kevin Owens, which almost has to be the next big main event. Other than that, most of the card is pretty clear at this point. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of last week's show with Kevin Owens beating Alex Riley again, only to have Sami Zayn return and start a pull apart brawl with Owens.

Here's Kevin Owens for a chat to get things going. He talks about having everything in hand last week and giving Alex Riley what he deserved, but then Sami Zayn had to play hero again. Owens wants Sami out here right now but gets Commissioner William Regal again. The fans start chanting for one more match but Regal says Owens won't be using this place for his own agendas.

That's not good enough for Owens who still wants Sami right now. Cue Zayn to fire the fans up even more but Regal stops him on the steps and says this isn't happening. Regal looks at both of them and says this is the easiest thing he's had to do in weeks. Obviously these two want to fight each other, so let's do it on May 20 at Takeover. Owens chuckles but says it's a non-title match because Zayn hasn't earned a shot in the last month. Sami thinks Owens needs this match. It has nothing to do with last week, but over the last twelve years, Owens hasn't done a thing without having Sami's name right next to it.

Even now as NXT Champion, the fans are only talking about what Owens did to him. You could say that Kevin Owens has been living in Sami Zayn's shadow. That one gets to Owens and the fans tells him he got told. Sami fights for a prize, and Owens is no prize. That's enough for Kevin to put the title on the line and the fans strike up their OLEs. Notice how they got to this point in a totally logical way without using the phrase "contractually obligated rematch" and in less than ten minutes on screen. It can be done and all it takes is a single promo.

Enzo, Cass and Carmella are jabbering about the jewelry Blake and Murphy gave her but she says she can handle herself. The guys leave and Blake and Murphy come up and insult Enzo and Cass, which isn't cool with Carmella. They step back so Alexa Bliss comes up, only to get shoved away. Blake and Murphy come up to Bliss but she doesn't seem interested in hearing from them. This was kind of an odd segment and I'm not entirely sure what they were shooting for.

Sami signs his contract when Alex Riley comes up and asks for one more match with Owens. Regal snaps about giving Riley so many opportunities but Sami says don't let Owens get to you. Riley doesn't want to hear that from Sami so Zayn offers to fight Alex for a warmup.

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Blake/Murphy

Non-title. Before the match, Enzo calls the champs Frosted Flake Wesley Blake and the Sugar Cube Dude. You know there's just one word to describe them. Blake and Enzo get things going but the champs quickly get Amore into the corner for some stomping. A clothesline gets two for Blake as the fans chant LET'S GO ZO.

Enzo breaks free with a jawbreaker and it's a double tag to bring in Murphy and Cass. The big man cleans house and hits a splash in the corner before Enzo misses a high cross body. That's so appropriate for him for some reason. Carmella distracts Blake and it's a big boot to the face, followed by a Rocket Launcher for the pin on Blake at 3:18.

Rating: D+. I'm not wild on having champions lose as you could pretty much do the same match with any combination here. The interesting part here is Carmella, who I'm hoping joins the champs but gets dumped by them too, leaving her all alone since no one likes her in the first place.

Becky Lynch talks about traveling the world to become the best in the world. She's here to become the best in the NXT women's division and won't just be another face in the crowd.

Bayley can't find her gear and is freaking out. Emma is show with Bayley's headbands and shirt.

Video on Baron Corbin, talking about wanting to crush the dreams of everyone in NXT. Rules don't apply to him and that's not his problem. This is yet another example of character development and telling us more about a character in twenty seconds than we've known about him in four months.

Bayley vs. Dana Brooke

Bayley looks a bit off without her stuff but of course she has a huge smile on her face. Bayley grabs a headlock to start but Dana throws her down and flexes. The fans want Blue Pants but get Bayley taking Dana to the mat and rolling around on her back. Dana goes nuts and slams Bayley's head into the mat a few times before doing her headstand foot choke.

Wasteland gets two for Dana and we hit a half crab with a knee in Bayley's back. Bayley gets up and gets all aggressive with elbows in the corner but cue Emma in a Bayley shirt to Bayley's music and full entrance, allowing Dana to hit a Whiplash for the pin at 4:16.

Rating: D+. So yeah, Dana isn't quite there yet but this was a match designed to advance Emma vs. Bayley instead of Dana's push. Right now Dana just needs ring time and she's got the core base figured out. Emma stealing Bayley's stuff, which is almost Bayley's identity, is an interesting idea and could work out well for a short feud. If nothing else it means I get to hear more of Bayley's infectious theme song.

Regal announces a triple threat for Takeover for the #1 contendership between Finn Balor, Tyler Breeze and Hideo Itami.

Hideo Itami vs. Adam Rose

Itami looks so insulted by the Rosebuds and Adam's entrance. This is billed as fallout from the Andre battle royal. Rose rolls around to start and eats a chop, followed by a running kick to the face for two. A quick trip lets Rose have a breather and he drops a fist for two. Rose's chinlock doesn't go anywhere so Hideo hits his array of kicks, capped off by the Shotgun Kick for the pin at 2:52. Just a step above a squash.

Becky Lynch vs. Sarah Dawson

Dawson is a pretty generic looking girl but she gets half of a dueling chant. A quick rollup gets two for Sarah but Becky takes her into the corner for a good stomping. Lynch drives her down into a Fujiwara armbar before sitting up to crank even harder, drawing the submission at 2:12.

Rhyno has heard what Baron Corbin is all about but Rhyno isn't the past. Methinks we have our power match for Takeover.

Alex Riley vs. Sami Zayn

Owens is in on commentary. Feeling out process to start as Owens asks if Riley being let out of a cage means he can't take a shower. Riley cranks on an armbar and gets two off a dropkick. We're in a chinlock less than three minutes in until Sami fights up, only to get caught in a TKO for

two. Riley misses a charge and falls to the floor, setting up the big flip dive. That's enough for Owens as he gets up and decks Sami for the DQ at 4:40.

Rating: C-. This didn't have time to go anywhere but they were trying to set up a match instead of doing anything interesting here. Owens going nuts and attacking everyone in sight is a good idea as it's in his nature to be insane. Riley still looks decent in the ring but it might have gotten ugly had he tried to hang in there with Sami.

Kevin powerbombs Riley on the apron and smiles to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Yes, I'm aware that's higher than all of the matches and you should be aware by now that there's a lot more to a wrestling show than just the wrestling. Owens vs. Sami is going to blow the roof off the place and the triple threat and Women's Title matches should both be great. It's not a great show, but the energy is back after going missing for the last month or so. That's what NXT thrives on and it's still working here.

Results

Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady vs. Blake/Murphy – Rocket Launcher to Blake

Dana Brooke b. Bayley – Whiplash

Hideo Itami b. Adam Rose – Shotgun Kick

Becky Lynch b. Sarah Dawson – Armbar

Sami Zayn b. Alex Riley via DQ when Kevin Owens interfered

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Thunder – November 4, 1999: Option B

Thunder

Date: November 4, 1999

Location: Cox Arena, San Diego, California

Attendance: 5,091

Commentators: Larry Zbyszko, Scott Hudson

It's a taped show in the Russo Era, which is the kind of thing nightmares are made of. I'm not sure anyone wants to see what's going on with this show but at least it's only two hours instead of three and there are no tournament matches in sight. Maybe it'll even make sense! Ok I got ahead of myself there. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Evan Karagias vs. Juventud Guerrera

This is the third shot at this match after having Bret and Sid interrupt the previous attempts. The fans aren't pleased with Juvy so he fires off kicks at Evan, only to charge into a boot and a powerslam for two. Well we're already closing in on the first match's time. Juvy escapes a suplex but fails on a rollup attempt, setting up a double clothesline to put both guys down.

Back up and Evan chops away, only to duck his head and get caught by a DDT. Juvy again stops to pose for the crowd and walks into a gorilla press hot shot. Evan misses a Lionsault but is still able to crotch Juvy on the top. They slug it out until Norman Smiley of all people comes out to interrupt, meaning the match doesn't end again.

Rating: C-. This could potentially be a running joke. Granted the joke would have a shelf life of about a month but there's potential there.

Unfortunately I don't think that's the plan and they just don't care about the match and are using it as a backdrop for people to come out here and break the script for whatever they have to talk about. As usual, Russo has so much to do that he can't fit it all into five hours of TV a week.

Norman asks Juvy (in Spanish) for a minute. Now, everyone knows that Norman is hardcore to the bone and is here to bring the Big Wiggle to the division. When you think of hardcore, you think of one man: NORman. Both cruiserweights beat him up but he eventually collapses, causing them to dropkick each other. With both guys down, IT'S WIGGLE TIME! Norman is WAY too talented for this but he's hilarious in the role.

Shane Douglas thinks the Revolution should allow new members if someone good is available. Saturn says even NFL teams screw up in their first draft picks sometimes.

Sid, in red pants and a hat that covers about 25% of his hair, is told that there's a change in booking tonight. His match: teaming with Saturn to face Rick Steiner and Chris Benoit. Oh that wacky Russo. Sid isn't happy but he'll do it.

Booker T. vs. Kaz Hayashi

Booker easily sends him into the corner to start but lets him out with a clean break. That Booker is a nice guy. A powerslam drops Hayashi but Booker poses too long (common problem tonight) and misses an elbow, allowing Kaz to fire off some low dropkicks. Why do I have a feeling that's the extent of his offense in this match?

T. heads outside where Kaz teases a dive to make Booker duck, only to hit the slingshot dive on the real attempt. Sensing his brother being in trouble, Stevie comes over and pounds on Kaz and of course the referee is all fine with this. Back in and Booker nails a Rock Bottom, followed by the 110th Street Slam and the missile dropkick for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was supposed to be a squash but it wound up being Harlem Heat having to team up to beat Kaz Hayashi. Booker really shouldn't be having issues like these against someone as low level as this. It's

almost like they have no idea how to book someone in the midcard. Also, this is going to be the closest thing we have to a clean finish all night isn't it?

The Filthy Animals steal Doug Dillinger's wallet with Torrie offering a distraction. Again, we're supposed to cheer for these guys right?

Rick Seiner says he and Sid will be the last men standing in the tag match tonight. Ok then.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Coach Buzz Stern

That's Glacier if you've tried to block this from your memory. Coach actually takes over with a shoulder block and backbreaker to start as student Luther Biggs takes notes. That makes sense, as does the Animals taking his notebook. Hoodlums. Eddie nails a headscissors that sends Stern over to yell at the Animals, who promptly destroy him for about 30 seconds. Of course this doesn't matter because WCW referees are worthless, including allowing Kidman to hit the BK Bomb to set up the frog splash for the pin. Comedy match.

Biggs gets beaten down as well and the Animals steal Stern's shirt.

The challengers for the Tag Team Titles don't seem to get along but are ready to win the belts. Their names: Berlyn and Curly Bill. This really shouldn't surprise you.

Rick Steiner warns Benoit that it's going to be a long night. I reiterate: ok then.

Tournament recap.

The Revolution want to know why Sid is teaming with Saturn, but Sid just says he isn't happy. Were they running really short tonight?

Gene interviews La Parka of all people, with La Parka speaking Spanish about making it big in the United States and facing Buff Bagwell. That's pretty basic stuff, but the captioning is a huge rant about La Parka wearing his costume as a tribute to He-Man villain Skeletor because he has every episode on tape at his house and will defeat Bagwell tonight BY

THE POWER OF GREYSKULL! I know I rip on Russo a lot (and with good reason), but this was hilarious.

Buff Bagwell vs. La Parka

After a quick recap of what these two have been through so far, we see that Buff isn't that into the match again. La Parka does his dance but throws in the Hogan hand to the ear to keep himself the most over unimportant luchador on the roster. An armdrag puts Buff down and they take more time to play to the crowd. After a lot of strutting from both men, La Parka slams him down a few times.

Buff tries to get the fans to cheer for La Parka, but the masked man gets ticked off. He tells Buff to come after him so Bagwell stomps away in the corner before kneeling in the middle of the ring so La Parka can kick him like he did on Nitro a few weeks back. This time though Buff ducks and stomps away, setting up the Blockbuster for the pin.

Rating: D. La Parka is rapidly becoming a favorite of mine, but this Buff storyline is killing whatever interest anyone else can dig up. It's all this "haha we're so smart that we're going to expose the business to make the sheep keep watching", even though the shows are getting almost unwatchable at times. But hey, people are talking! They're laughing and calling this show a disaster and it's killing any future potential, but they're talking!

Kidman is too preoccupied with Torrie being back to worry about defending the titles tonight. Usually that line would make me roll my eyes, but it's Berlyn and Curly Bill. Come on.

Tag Team Titles: Konnan/Kidman vs. Berlyn/Curly Bill

Guess who's defending. The intros take forever as all of the Animals have to jabber on like all those young 90s kids talked. I'll give them this on their entrances: going from rap to opera to country is quite the variety. Berlyn fires off a bunch of strikes at Kidman to start but Kidman ducks under some clotheslines and gets two off a cross body. A powerslam puts Kidman down but Berlyn is dumb enough to try a powerbomb.

Kidman has been practicing though as he punches down instead of breaking it up with the usual faceplant. Off to Konnan for his finishing sequence but he whips Berlyn into the ropes instead of going for the Tequila Sunrise, earning him a clothesline. Off to Bill who CLEANS HOUSE (!) but quickly wants the tag. That's not good with Berlyn, who knocks him out with the loaded glove, setting up the Tequila Sunrise.

Rating: D-. So the Neo Nazi punched out the black cowboy so the Spanish speaker and his fellow thieves can retain their titles. Which part of that makes you scratch your head? That's a serious question actually as I'm really curious to see which one of them is the most bizarre. This is another stupid idea that just gets thrown out there for surprise value.

The Animals stomp Bill because they're good guys like that.

Gene brings out Lash Leroux, who says he doesn't trust Disco as far as he can throw his granddaddy's mule. Disco has his Cajunweight title and Lash is coming for it.

After a break, Gene brings out Van Hammer, who is the rumored newest member of the Revolution. "For the Revolution, I'll be a revelation." No you won't be. You suck too much.

Silver King vs. Lash Leroux

Feeling out process to start until Leroux gets taken down with a drop toehold. A standing Harlem Hangover gets two for King before Lash rolls under a spinwheel kick to send King down. It's time for the dance into the splits into a clothesline before they head outside where King whips him hard into the steps. Back in and Leroux comes right back with a high cross body, only to get kicked HARD in the head to put him down again.

King goes to the ropes for something like a springboard Whisper in the Wind splash for two. They head outside one more time and now it's King being sent into the barricade. Back in again and Lash gets taken down by another drop toehold but he avoids something like a Lionsault. A quick dropkick sets up the Whiplash for the pin.

Rating: C-. When did Silver King get this good at high flying? He was

busting out some pretty insane stuff out there despite looking like a little butter ball. Lash isn't bad but he really doesn't have a character outside of being Cajun, and you can only rely on that accent for so long.

Benoit says Malenko is his prey now and he'll fight Sid and Steiner by himself if he has to.

Dean Malenko vs. Van Hammer

Hudson says three fourths of the Revolution is here. I'd assume he means Benoit is the missing link because WCW announcers are stupid. Hammer says he should be in the Revolution and says they can do this the easy way or the hard way. Dean decks him for general purposes and goes after the knee. Hammer limps around but actually catches Dean in a powerslam. He can't follow up though because of his knee and Dean nails him with a flying clothesline.

Since you need help with Van Hammer, Saturn gets in a knee shot of his own. Back up and Dean misses a charge, setting up a quick Flashback for two. We hit the cobra clutch but of course there's a ref bump (that should be the center square on Russo Bingo so far), allowing the rest of the team to crotch Hammer on the post. The Cloverleaf makes Hammer tap.

Rating: D. Gah they can't just let a match go simply can they? At some point the fans are going to catch on to all the ref bumps (by at some point I mean by the second one) and stop caring. Then again one of the big stories right now is THIS IS ALL FAKE AND I HATE THE BOOKING so I don't think insulting their intelligence is all that big of a priority.

Video showing how much the Powers That Be have been screwing with lower midcard guys and Madusa. This doesn't make the whole thing any better.

Battle Royal

Steve Regal, Dave Taylor, Chris Adams, Jerry Flynn, Prince Iaukea, Scotty Riggs, El Dandy, Chavo Guerrero

E freaking gads man. Apparently this is an Opportunity Knocks battle royal and the seven non-winners are on the bubble for roster spots and the winner gets a golden opportunity on Nitro. Why do I have a feeling

that's code for getting squashed by Goldberg or getting nothing because WCW won't remember it?

Oh and just because we need one, Hudson says this isn't a good time "to go up north." This is from November 1999. The WWF had been a national promotion for what.....at least twelve years now? And yes I get that it's their headquarters but it's another stupid insider line that most fans won't get and another reason why WCW is stupid.

It's a huge brawl to start with El Dandy being thrown out just after the bell. The Brits get in a fight (it's expensive living in England) and Chavo takes advantage by knocking out Adams. Regal responds by kicking him low before Riggs, Flynn and Iaukea are all out in a hurry, leaving us with Regal, Taylor and Guerrero. The Brits get together but Taylor clotheslines Regal by mistake but gets eliminated anyway. A quick catapult sends Regal out to give Chavo the win as the announcers say there are seven roster spots open.

Rating: F. I don't often do this, but I'm going to give a spoiler for this coming Nitro: Chavo wins nothing. He goes into the Powers That Be's office and asks for his opportunity. Russo says that the opportunity for Chavo is selling Amway and throws him out. I knew something like that was going to happen as soon as this match started not because I read a spoiler, but because that's how WCW works these days. Total waste of time and a nothing match.

Rick and Sid talk about doing the finger poke ending. That's referenced and used WAY too often.

Sid Vicious/Perry Saturn vs. Chris Benoit/Rick Steiner

Let's get this over with. Asya and Saturn come out, with Saturn saying that's one fourth of the team. If Asya counts as a member, it's one half. If Asya doesn't count as a member, it's one third. Again, WCW announcers are all stupid. It's in their contracts. Here's the opening of the match: Rick drops down for a cover but small packages Sid for two (just like Hall did on Monday). Sid responds by powerbombing him (hopefully ending their friendship) and leaving, meaning it's Saturn vs. Benoit. Somehow this match might now suck!

They slug it out in the corner with Benoit getting the better of it with chops and a back elbow to stop a running Saturn. A backbreaker gets two on Saturn but he pops back up with a t-bone suplex. Benoit has to raise his knees to block a Lionsault and Rick gets on the apron for a tag.

Thankfully Benoit is a wrestling fan and doesn't let him in...and Steiner blasts him with a clothesline because WE NEED RICK STEINER IN OUR LIVES! Steiner suplexes Saturn too, just so we know he's way better than both guys, and leaves. The Crossface doesn't work so Benoit rolls some Germans instead. The Swan Dive misses but Malenko comes in for the DQ anyway.

Rating: C. This was one of the biggest messes I've seen in a good while but it was mostly Benoit vs. Saturn for four minutes so I can't complain. Yet again we have more overbooking because Russo is so sure we need it, meaning we get nonsense like Sid getting a paycheck for 45 seconds of "work" and Rick Steiner laying out everyone because he's Rick Steiner and therefore has to be dominant. Oh geez we're getting Sid vs. Steiner now aren't we?

The Filthy Animals run in to attack everyone to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was actually a pretty watchable show when they let the wrestlers wrestle. They kept things moving for the most part which is the best thing they could do on a show like this. It's kind of nice to have something almost completely unrelated from the title tournament stuff, but it's kind of terrifying that this was their second best batch of ideas.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

NXT – January 21, 2015: Strike While The Crowd Is Hot

NXT

Date: January 21, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Corey Graves, Jason Albert

Things are starting to pick up again in NXT with Kevin Owens making another appearance last week to lay out NXT Champion Sami Zayn after a successful title defense against Adrian Neville. These two are on a collision course and there's no way the match isn't going to be awesome. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens over the last few weeks. Neville promises revenge.

William Regal announces the next Takeover special for February 11. There will be a tournament for the #1 contendership starting tonight, as well as Charlotte defending against Sasha Banks. As usual, Regal keeps this quick as he was on screen less than a minute and announced a show, a tournament and a title match.

Opening sequence.

Sami Zayn vs. Tye Dillinger

Sami charges the ring and EXPLODES on Dillinger, knocking him to the floor before the bell rings. No match I'm assuming.

Zayn demands Owens get out here right now but he gets Regal instead. The champ says he isn't wrestling one more match unless it's against Owens so get him out here right now. Regal says he can't do that because Owens hasn't earned a title shot yet. Sami offers to make it non-title or whatever he has to do to get his hands on Owens. He won't explode out of

respect for Regal, but he'll do whatever Regal asks him to get what he wants. Regal agrees and makes the showdown for Takeover.

Owens vs. Zayn at Takeover will be non-title.

Regal says Owens and Zayn will sign the contract next week.

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Curtis Axel vs. Finn Balor

I love how foreboding Balor's music is. Fans: "FINN'S GONNA KILL YOU!" Axel elbows him in the face to start so Balor knocks him to the floor for a big flip dive. Back in and Axel clotheslines him in the back of the head for two and nails a great looking dropkick. The fans keep it simple by telling Axel that he sucks.

We hit the chinlock before a running knee to the head gets two more. It's amazing how much easier Axel matches are to sit through when he doesn't have all the big expectations behind him. Heyman seems to have caused him more problems than good. Balor fights back up with the Pele and Sling Blade, followed by the top rope double stomp for the pin to advance at 4:55.

Rating: C-. Not much of a match here but Axel is fine for a generic heel. He has the skills to make a match work but all of the expectations put on him due to being associated with Heyman really brought him down. I liked his work in NXT (this one, not the old show) as McGillicutty and now he's just a more intense version of that character, meaning he's a lot easier to sit through. That being said, this was just a formality for Balor.

Here are the full tournament brackets.

Finn Balor

Curtis Axel

Adrian Neville

Tyson Kidd

Hideo Itami

Tyler Breeze

Baron Corbin

Bull Dempsey

Sasha Banks says Charlotte has no one to protect her tonight and it's time to win the title. She doesn't care if Devin has any more questions.

Bull Dempsey swears revenge next week.

Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

They grapple to the mat to start with Charlotte getting the better of it but having to nail Becky in the face. Back in and Charlotte hammers away but Becky comes in for the DQ at 2:15. Not much of a match due to time.

Bayley comes in for the save but eventually picks up the title. Charlotte isn't cool with that and eats a Belly to Bayley. It doesn't seem like a heel turn as Bayley almost looks like she regretted it. It worked for Rick Steiner back in 1989 (albeit in a face turn) so why not here? Regal comes out and makes a fourway title match for Takeover.

Kevin Owens doesn't want to be interviewed and will say whatever he has to say to Sami's face next week.

Vaudevillains vs. Buddy Murphy/Wesley Blake

The Vaudevillains have been doing dinosaur training to make up for their recent losses, which apparently involves the Iron Sheik's Persian clubs. English misses a forearm to Murphy in the corner to start and eats a running forearm, only to take Buddy into the corner for a beating. Off to Gotch for a suplex for two and English hooks a chinlock. Murphy finally rolls over for the tag to Blake who gets a fast two off a powerslam with Gotch making the save. With the referee getting Gotch out of the ring, Murphy sneaks in a kick to the head, giving Blake the pin at 3:58.

Rating: D+. The match was nothing special but I really like the booking. Murphy and Blake have been around long enough that people are familiar with them and they've gotten close enough to picking up wins that this

isn't a huge stretch. It gives the Dragons fresh challengers for the titles and keeps the cycle moving. That's one of NXT's strengths and something I really wish WWE would get better at. Keep the future challengers safe instead of squashing them, because you never know when you might need them.

Tyler Breeze is ready to implement his plan to separate the gorgeous ones from the uggos.

Murphy and Blake say that wasn't an upset and want a title shot next week.

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Hideo Itami vs. Tyler Breeze

Marcus Louis is seen looking at Breeze from behind the stage during Tyler's entrance. Breeze avoids a big kick to start and wags a finger at Itami. Another kick misses and the fans call Breeze a TOTAL DIVA. Breeze suckers Itami in for a kick of his own before running into a knee to the ribs. Back up and Itami gets sent face first into the middle buckle and tossed out to the floor. A dropkick (noticing a theme here?) gets two for Breeze and a neckbreaker gets an even closer near fall as we take a break.

Back with Breeze holding a chinlock but Itami fights up with clotheslines and a tornado DDT necksnap. There's the top rope clothesline followed by a release fisherman's suplex for two on Breeze. Back up and Breeze blocks an O'Connor Roll and DRILLS Hideo with the Supermodel Kick for two.

Itami is shaken up in the corner so Breeze crawls onto his back for a kind of snap crucifix for a fall so near that the referee looked like he had to slow down for the kickout. Tyler shouts that this is about him but Itami screams at him. More kicks have Breeze rocked and the running dropkick in the corner sets up a running boot to the face for the pin at 14:24.

Rating: B-. I'm trying really hard to care about Itami and it's just not quite there. His offense has definitely gotten better but I really have no reason to care about him. There are a lot of guys who kick really hard and Itami hasn't shown he has much to differentiate himself from the

pack. Breeze continues to live way beyond his gimmick and looks more and more comfortable every week.

Overall Rating: C+. This show was much more about moving things forward than the wrestling itself. They're rushing to the next Takeover with only about six weeks since the last one, but with the main event they have set up, they would be crazy not to go with it right now. The rest of the card could be excellent with the fourway being wide open and the tournament having some potentially awesome finals. Another good show this week but in a different way.

Results

Finn Balor b. Curtis Axel – Top rope double stomp

Charlotte b. Sasha Banks via DQ when Becky Lynch interfered

Wesley Blake/Buddy Murphy b. Vaudevillains – Kick to the head

Hideo Itami b. Tyler Breeze – Running kick to the face

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

NXT – December 25, 2014: Best

of the Best

NXT

Date: December 25, 2014

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jason Albert, Rich Brennan, Alex Riley

Hosts: Renee Young, Corey Graves

Back in the 1980s, Fritz Von Erich had a great insight about Christmas: Once you open the presents, what else is there to do? Well apparently we can watch NXT, which is on a roll as of late. The main story coming out of last week was Kevin Owens destroying Adrian Neville just like he did to Sami Zayn the week before. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

And we have an empty arena with only Renee Young and Corey Graves in the ring, meaning we have a Best Of show. There will however be a new match with Charlotte defending the Women's Title against Sasha Banks in an R-Evolution rematch.

We start by looking at some of the stars who came from NXT up to the main roster, including Paige, Bo Dallas, Lana and Rusev. There's nothing to say here as they're just saying the names and showing maybe a ten second clip.

Video on NXT: Arrival. That feels so long ago even though it was only February.

This leads to a package of Adrian Neville going home to Newcastle, England. Wearing glasses, which is an odd look on a wrestler for some reason, he goes to see his mom and talks about soccer for awhile. His original plans were to play soccer for Newcastle United but then he saw something called WWF and things changed. We get some clips of his training and developing the high spots, which we then see in NXT. He even got to wear a Newcastle jersey to his match in the Newcastle arena for a very cool moment.

Tyler Breeze is still off modeling but wants to tell all the Wannabreeze that he'll be adding gold to his ensemble in 2015.

We see the last six or so minutes of Zayn vs. Neville, plus the entire post match celebration and Owens' heel turn to end the show.

Curtis Axel comes in to see Regal and thinks he needs to recharge his career. He wants in on this NXT thing but Regal tells him to make an appointment.

Lucha Dragons video. Sin Cara still hates to do the pre-match pose.

Vaudevillains video, of course in black and white.

We get about four minutes of the Lucha Dragons vs. Vaudevillians match from R-Evolution. There will be a rematch due to Kalisto pinning the wrong man.

Next week we'll have Finn Balor/Hideo Itami vs. Ascension II.

Itami and Balor promise to destroy the Ascension. Itami's English is improving by leaps and bounds.

We look at some NXT debuts this year, including Baron Corbin, Bull Dempsey, Hideo Itami, Finn Balor and of course Kevin Owens.

Owens says he's sent the former champion and the new champion to the hospital in the span of seven days. If he's done that to people he considers friends, what is he going to do to people he doesn't care about? He'll fight anyone and everyone until he's the only one standing. "Why don't you put that on a t-shirt?"

Time to look at NXT people making splashes on the main roster: Paige, Bo Dallas, Emma, Summer Rae, Adam Rose, Rusev and Lana.

Earlier this week, Bayley was watching the HHH DVD to see how he came back from his knee injury. It motivates her to come back bigger, better and stronger, just like HHH. So she's gaining 40lbs of unnecessary muscle, slowing down and stopping everything that made her awesome in the first place?

Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Sasha is challenging and this is a rematch from R-Evolution. She has Becky Lynch with her, so Charlotte comes out with her dad, Ric Flair. Ric looks sober tonight so this should be good. He says that he has two Hall of Fame rings (only wearing one here) but his daughter took the torch from him. Two weeks ago Sasha and Charlotte had one of the best matches ever (to Sasha: "Yeah I'm talking about you. You were great.") and tonight they're going to do it again.

They slug it out to start with Sasha diving at the champ, only to get caught in something like a spinebuster. Charlotte goes after the knee by wrapping it around the post, only to get pulled face first into the steel. We take a break and come back with Sasha in control and slapping Charlotte on the back. That's not exactly the best offense. The announcers actually mention the "internet wrestling community" sending HHH a fruit basket as a thank you for R-Evolution. That's such a cool story.

Banks drives two knees into Charlotte's ribs and puts on Bankrupt, only to have Charlotte fight to her feet and escape with something like a jawbreaker. She's really good at using her athleticism to get out of things like that, which really isn't something most of the other women can do. Charlotte fires off some chops and a neckbreaker but gets caught in a double arm neckbreaker (Regal Cutter) for two more.

The Banks Statement goes on but it's right next to the ropes. Another thing I like about NXT: heels feel like they could win a big match by submission. That's what always annoyed me about heel Del Rio: he wasn't going to make anyone big tap and the armbreaker felt like a waste of time. They fight up top with Banks nailing a nice superplex (Riley: "She's straight gangsta!"), only to get caught in the Figure Four with the bridge to retain Charlotte's title at 10:45.

Rating: C+. While it was nowhere near as good as the R-Evolution match, it was still another solid effort from the NXT girls. Banks is impressing me in the ring for the first time as she's very feisty in there. She has the attitude down and the matches are getting better every week. I still

think Lynch is the star of the team, but Banks is nailing it in NXT.

Overall Rating: C+. These are always hard to grade so I'll just go with the same rating I gave the match. I really liked the Neville video as it's the kind of personalized profile that you just do not get in WWE anymore. I would have liked to see more Sami here as he only won the title at the end of the year but he was still a huge part of NXT all year. The attention to detail in this promotion blows away everything else and it's my favorite wrestling show to watch every week. If next year is as good as this one was, everything will be fine.

Results

Charlotte b. Sasha Banks – Figure Four

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of the Royal Rumble at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PZ1GR7E>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Finally, I'm holding a Holiday Special for my e-books: any two of them for just \$5. Check out the details here.

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/11/28/holiday-sale/>