

Smackdown – September 4, 2003: Didn't We Do This Already?

Smackdown

Date: September 4, 2003

Location: New Orleans Arena, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We've got a big main event this time around as Smackdown World Champion Kurt Angle is defending against the Undertaker, who won a triple threat last week to earn the shot. Brock Lesnar is looming though and there's a good chance that's not going to end well. At the same time though we have the freshly face Eddie Guerrero spreading his awesomeness all over the place and that's more than enough around here. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's triple threat with Undertaker winning the title shot.

Opening sequence, which actually still has Rock included. I can't even remember the last time he was on this show.

Tag Team Titles: APA vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

The APA is challenging....for some reason. Faarooq powerslams Haas for two to start but Benjamin gets in a shot from behind to take over. The jump over Haas (which barely clears his head) crushes Faarooq's back and the double stomping continues. Haas grabs a bearhug (not something you would expect from him) before tripping Faarooq down for two.

Now it's Haas going up top but diving into a powerslam, allowing the hot tag to Bradshaw. A fall away slam and big boot drop the champs as everything breaks down. Bradshaw pulls Benjamin outside, leaving Faarooq to hit a spinebuster on Haas for two. Benjamin's superkick gets two on Faarooq so Bradshaw takes his head off with the Clothesline. Haas gets the foot on the rope though and a belt shot lets the champs retain.

Rating: D+. Actually somewhat better match than I was expecting here and thankfully the APA were just there to give the champs a rub. The division needs some more teams though and having the APA thrown in there for a week is fine enough until we get some fresh acts. Not a bad match, though the ending didn't do the champs a ton of good.

Eddie Guerrero is polishing his low rider and the US Title when the long black limo arrives. This time it's Big Show, Sable and Vince, who seem to like Eddie's car. Brock Lesnar shows up and wants to know why Vince hasn't talked to him much since Summerslam. Maybe because he's been busy with Brock's future wife? It's because Brock tapped out (Brock REALLY doesn't want to hear that) but Vince will talk to him later.

Post break, Brock is in Vince's office where the boss slaps him in the face as a wake up call. It seems to do the trick as Brock grabs him, only to be calmed down when Vince tells him to be a monster. Maybe now he can tap to Benoit or someone else instead of ripping through the roster?

Here's John Cena for a chat. Cena wants to know why Eddie is waxing the car. Is it dirty, or is he worried that Cena will "jack it with a Compton quickness"? We see a clip of Cena beating Eddie up last week and giving him an AA onto the tire. Cena thinks Eddie should be mowing his lawn because he used him like a girl from a Girls Gone Wild video.

After calling Eddie a rather mean name, here comes the low rider. The fight is on in a hurry with Cena getting the better of it off a belt shot. He's not done either as he steals the low rider, much to Eddie's chagrin. Eddie is so shocked that he can't get out of the ring and chase after the car, which must be going a full four miles an hour as it backs out of the arena.

Post break, after Cena has left the arena, Eddie rants to Stephanie about the car. A Latino street fight in the parking lot is made for next week. Maybe by that point Eddie will figure out how to catch up with a car backing up in slow motion.

Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

Rematch from last week where A-Train tapped with his legs under the

ropes. Benoit sticks and moves to start but the chops don't have much effect. A running elbow in the corner has an effect on Benoit though and A-Train whips him hard in the corner to start on the ribs. We're already off to a chinlock with a knee in Benoit's back as A-Train actually has some psychology.

A butterfly suplex of all things gets two on Benoit and we hit the bearhug. Benoit fights out and hits some running forearms, followed by the rolling German suplexes. The Swan Dive misses and the Train Wreck gets two but the referee gets bumped. Cue Rhyno to try a Gore on Benoit, only to hit A-Train by mistake to give Benoit the pin.

Rating: C-. A-Train working the back made sense but are they really spending back to back weeks protecting him? He's that important? Anyway, Rhyno vs. Benoit should be fine for a one off match but it shouldn't be any more than that. Benoit needs to move on to something important, especially after spending months with Rhyno in one form or another.

Undertaker praises Angle but says he's not tapping to the ankle lock even if his ankle is broken. Then he'll show Angle what a real submission is with the dragon sleeper. If that doesn't work, maybe it's a chokeslam or a Tombstone or a Last Ride but he's leaving with the title. It's almost weird to hear Undertaker talk like this.

Earlier today, Torrie Wilson and Nidia compared how they look in bikinis for the sake of a bikini contest which took place before the show. Nidia puts in her false breasts and they dance for no apparent reason. Nidia rubs lotion on Torrie's back, which Torrie seems to like. Is it really already time for another Torrie likes girls story?

Angle promises to make Undertaker tap.

Vince has taken over Stephanie's office where Brock is apparently slamming things into a wall. Sable is nowhere to be seen and...egads ok then.

Smackdown World Title: Kurt Angle vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is challenging. Angle grabs a front facelock to start so

Undertaker grabs a wristlock and cranks away. That earns him a headlock on the mat as they seem to have a lot of time here. Undertaker drops a leg on the arm and cranks on a short arm scissors. An armbar of all things sets up Old School but Angle suplexes him right back down.

Undertaker's solution is to punch Angle in the face, followed by an elbow to the chest on the apron. The apron legdrop drops Angle to the floor and Undertaker posts him for good measure. Back from a break with Undertaker still in control and amazingly not using a chinlock. Angle grabs a sleeper but gets suplexed down, leaving Undertaker to slap himself in the head. Well at least he's taking this one seriously.

Undertaker's dragon sleeper is broken up in short order so he goes with the running corner clothesline. Snake Eyes into the running big boot looks to set up a legdrop but Kurt picks the ankle. It's way too early for a tap out so Angle switches to the Slam for two instead. A second Angle Slam is countered into a chokeslam for two more.

Angle reverses the Last Ride into a sunset flip and then the ankle lock but this time Undertaker pulls him down into a Fujiwara armbar. That's rolled over into another ankle lock but Undertaker reverses again into a triangle choke. Angle's arm drops twice so he gets his foot on the ropes for the break.

Undertaker limps into a big boot but only hits ropes, allowing Angle to slap on the ankle lock for a few more seconds. A shot to the face has Angle bleeding from the cheek and Undertaker slugs away for good measure. The chokeslam is countered into the fifth ankle lock and, again, Undertaker rolls out of it. The ankle is fine enough for a chokeslam and the Last Ride but here's Brock with a chair to beat them both down for the DQ.

Rating: B-. This didn't hit the level these two are capable of and the ankle lock seemingly not causing Undertaker much discomfort didn't help things. It felt like they were just doing their thing until we got to the finish, which didn't give us much drama. What we got was good, but it's really hard to buy the threat of Undertaker tapping, even to someone like Angle.

Brock destroys them both with chair and belt shots.

Post break, Undertaker refuses attention until he collapses.

Angle just settles for some ice.

Some New Orleans Saints are here.

There was a bikini contest earlier today and it's trimmed to a highlight package. How in the world can you screw up having good looking women walk around in swimsuits? It's Sable, Dawn Marie, Nidia and Torrie in Mardi Gras themed attire before they disrobe. Torrie wins but Shaniqua runs in and beats them all down. I'm really hoping this was cut due to time instead of content because that would be a new low even for WWE.

The APA isn't happy with their loss but the office is back. They even have a red bow on the door and a butler (Bradshaw: "I won him in a poker game. I even have a deed for him!") to present them with cigars and beer. This might be better if they hadn't lost earlier in the night but we're not supposed to remember that part. Well assuming you ignored what they talked about to start the segment.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Tajiri

Rey is defending. They start fast with Rey armdragging him down, only to have us go into a standoff. Rey tries a headscissors out of the corner but lands on the referee, who is nice enough to throw him off so he can flip Tajiri over. The springboard is broken up with a superkick and Rey is rocked on the apron. He's fine enough to miss a 619 though and Tajiri kicks him in the back to knock him outside.

Cole brags about Mysterio defending the title week after week the last few weeks (this is his second title defense in two weeks Cole) as the handspring elbow is broken up with a spinwheel kick. Back from a break with Tajiri kicking him out of the air and grabbing a hammerlock. Not exactly a move you expect to see so late into a match. Rey sends him outside and hits a hard suicide dive to take both guys down.

Back in and Tajiri blocks a sunset bomb with right hands but it's Rey kicking him down for two. The sitout bulldog (which isn't innovative

Cole) gets two and the springboard seated senton gets the same. A hard kick to the arm drops Rey for two more and we hit the Tarantula.

Rey is right back with the 619 but the springboard splash hits raised boots to the face. Mysterio is fine enough to try his own Tarantula but Tajiri breaks it up without too much effort. They head up top with Tajiri getting shoved down, setting up the West Coast Pop from the turnbuckle to retain.

Rating: B. Solid wrestling match here with Rey getting tested. Who would have guessed that Rey Mysterio and Tajiri would have a good match if they were given a long stretch of time? Hopefully this goes somewhere else with Rey getting to defend the title against the top cruiserweights, which is kind of the point of the title in the first place. Good match, as you probably expected.

Post match Tajiri mists him to turn heel again.

Here are Vince and Big Show for the big closing segment. Vince didn't like that DQ finish earlier so Angle will be defending the title again. In two weeks, it's Angle vs. Lesnar in a sixty minute Iron Man match right here on Smackdown. Oddly enough, Vince is very low key in the announcement. Vince brings out Brock...who isn't here.

Brock pops up in a sky box and thanks Vince for reminding him of who he is. Earlier tonight he proved who he is by attacking Undertaker and Angle. We pause for the YOU TAPPED OUT chants before Brock talks about what went on behind those closed doors earlier. Brock was, shall we say, softening up someone who needed to be taught a lesson. Brock steps aside and Zach Gowen is in a wheelchair with a gag around his mouth.

Brock slaps him in the broken leg and talks about the wheelchair being jet powered. Gowen panics (well duh) and Brock wheels him back to the concourse where he throws Zach out of the chair. Zach crawls away (without taking the gag off for some reason) but Brock kicks him in the broken leg. Brock talks about wanting to be the monster and we cut back to Vince looking curious.

More stomps to the leg keep Gowen in trouble before Lesnar talks about

the chair being magical. See, it can fly, and Brock is going to prove it. Gowen is sat in the chair and Brock chokes him out before shoving Gowen down the steps (complete with a camera cut to Vince before the big fall) to end the show.

This was rather long as Brock had him in the stairwell for above five minutes. I get the idea here of making Brock out to be a monster, but didn't they do that when Brock caved Gowen's head in and broke his leg in the first place? I think we've covered this already and it might have been a bit more effective if he hadn't lost to Angle clean at Summerslam. The scene was effective but the camera cut hurt it a bit and it went on a tad too long. Hopefully that gets rid of Gowen for a little while longer as there's only so much you can get out of having him around.

Overall Rating: C+. Two long and entertaining matches are more than enough to carry this show as we flash back to the glory days of Smackdown for a week. The Iron Man match has some serious potential as they'll have time to do whatever they want, which is often lacking around here. Throw in booking Eddie vs. Cena a week in advance and it's almost like they're thinking ahead for once. This was a fun show and, stupid parts aside, gives me hope that Smackdown might be on its way back up.

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Thought of the Day: When Commentary Sounded Real

Somehow, it's much more real than in the reality era.

Since we have the WWE Network (still the greatest thing for any wrestling fan), I'll often throw on an old pay per view just for some background noise while I'm working on something else. The other day I threw on Survivor Series 1988 and heard the following discussion between Gorilla Monsoon and Jesse Ventura when Jacques Rougeau was tagged into the match:

Jesse: "Which Rougeau is that? Is that Jacques or Raymond?"

Gorilla: "That is Jacques. He's a little bit taller than his brother."

Jesse: "Oh that's Jacques, ok. I get those two confused."

And that's it. No insults, no jokes about how Jesse is stupid, no laughing and ignoring the match and no stupid bickering between the two over some petty feud that only they care about while the match is ignored. This felt like a simple, realistic conversation between two people watching a wrestling match. The Rougeaus may not have been twins but it might have been difficult to remember at times (I couldn't remember which Hardy was which until about 2001) and it's not ridiculous for Jesse to be confused, or for Gorilla to say which one it is and give him a way to remember it.

Today, this would set off a minute long argument between Corey Graves and Byron Saxton because they have to fight every chance they get over whatever stupid thing is going on at the moment, all while the match is completely ignored. Then Cole will laugh about something and plug whatever is coming later in the night, ignoring the match even further.

It's such a different world of commentary and shows just how forced and scripted things have become today. Let these people sound normal and see

if it's not way more effective.

205 Live – January 30, 2018: Hail the Big Potato

205 Live

Date: January 30, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness

It's a big week around here as we have the first ever General Manager being announced. In addition to that though, we also have the next step in the Cruiserweight Title situation as the title was vacated due to Enzo Amore being released from the company. That sounds like a tournament and that wouldn't be the worst thing in the world. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to open things up with the big announcement. He's not alone though as he's flanked by TNA's Rockstar Spud. Bryan mentions the Cruiserweight Classic before talking about the new General Manager. Under his leadership, this show will be giving us the kind of action that the fans want.

Spud is officially named Drake Maverick (with Vic mentioning the Rockstar Spud name) and Bryan leaves him to make his initial speech. Drake has dedicated his entire career to get here and he's proud to be here in WWE. As for the title, there will be a sixteen man elimination tournament to crown a new champion with the finals taking place at Wrestlemania. That tournament starts TONIGHT with Gran Metalik vs. Cedric Alexander and Tyler Bate (making his 205 Live debut) vs. TJP.

I like the pick. Maverick had some good intensity and sold the promo very

well. We solve both problems in one move and hopefully have some structure to the show going forward. It also helps that he can wrestle down the line if need be and it's not like it would be a stretch to have him against the other cruiserweights. This works well all things considered.

Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Cedric Alexander vs. Gran Metalik

Before the match, Cedric says he's ready to win. In the back, Maverick tells Metalik to show him something. Cedric grabs the arm to start but Metalik flips away. A headscissors goes nowhere with Alexander waving a finger no. Instead he sends Metalik over the ropes, only to charge into a kick to the head. Metalik adds a top rope dropkick but Alexander is right back up with a top rope clothesline and a flip dive to the floor.

Back in and we hit the chinlock on Metalik for a bit before Alexander charges into a superkick. Metalik sends him outside for a running flip dive, drawing a rare 205 chant. They trade some shots to the head until Metalik gets two off a standing C4. Metalik catches him on top though and mostly hits a springboard hurricanrana for two of his own. The Lumbar Check is reversed into a DDT (sweet counter) for two but the moonsault hits boots. Cedric grabs the Lumbar Check for the pin at 9:25.

Rating: B. I'd be surprised if Alexander didn't either win the tournament or lose in the finals as he was at worst a heavy favorite to take the title from Amore. He's been around for a long time now and has one of the most successful finishers around the division. Now go somewhere with him. Metalik continues to be a solid hand as well, which should do him a lot of good.

Video on Tyler Bate, most of which I believe has aired on NXT before.

Jack Gallagher thinks he should be in the tournament finals.

Drew Gulak presents Maverick with some flowers in the hopes that he'll support law and order.

Mustafa Ali lost a big match last week but he heard the fans cheering him

on. He's ready to get back to it though and earn the Cruiserweight Title.

TJP insists on being referred to as the first ever Cruiserweight Champion and reminds us that he won the Cruiserweight Classic. Maverick comes in and says that was a long time ago. He'd like to know which TJP is going to show up tonight. Will it be TJP the champion or the TJP who whines when he doesn't get his way?

Akira Tozawa wanted to be GM but he'll settle for winning the title again at Wrestlemania.

Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: TJP vs. Tyler Bate

As you might expect, the fans are behind Bate. They fight over the arm to start until spins into a headscissors for two with a dab thrown in for good measure. Bate reverses into a headscissors and even a nip up can't get TJP out of trouble. We actually get some dueling chants, albeit with the LET'S GO TYLER side easily dominating. Bate tries to roll him into another hold but gets caught something like a surfboard. He reverses into one of his own though and even stands up to rock TJP back and forth for a painful looking visual.

With the hold not getting him anywhere, Bate sends him outside for a suicide dive, which doesn't get the biggest reaction in the world. Back in and some choking in the corner gets TJP out of trouble, followed by a belly to back suplex for two. We hit a double underhook crank on Bate so he powers TJP into the corner for the break. As usual, there's no substitute for straight power.

Bate charges into the corner though and TJP jumps up for a half crab with the two of them in the ropes. That's a new one. Nigel gets in a great stat as he mentions Bate being born the year TJP had his first match. Back up and Bate hits a running big boot to the face to knock TJP's head off. A delayed German suplex gets two and TJP looks rocked. Some kicks to the leg stagger Bate but he tosses TJP with another suplex.

A standing shooting star gets two but TJP goes back to the knee to take Bate down again. Bate misses his rebound clothesline and it's off to the kneebar. As usual though (as in what happens nearly EVERY SINGLE TIME),

the first attempt is broken up without much effort. A hard clothesline drops TJP for two but Bate is feeling the knee injury. He's still able to do the airplane spin (which I actually thought was playing at double speed) and TJP is all dizzified.

The Tyler Driver 97 doesn't work though and it's back to the kneebar. This one is reversed into a rollup, followed by that hard left hand to TJP's jaw. Spiral Tap misses though and it's the third kneebar to have Bate in real trouble. Somehow he makes the ropes AGAIN so let's try the Tyler Driver again. This time TJP grabs the ropes and reverses into a rollup with a handful of trunks to win at 14:33.

Rating: B. They were starting to roll here with the leg injury being perfectly fine. I still can't emphasize enough how impressive Bate is for someone his age. His power stuff is awesome and the athleticism is impressive, especially for someone with as plain of a look as he has. Give him some more experience and time to learn and he could be a very solid player. TJP winning is a bit of a surprise but maybe they're dropping the whole whining thing and just letting him do what worked before.

Next week in first round matches: Kalisto vs. Lince Dorado and Hideo Itami vs. the debuting Roderick Strong.

Overall Rating: A-. What more can you ask for? No Enzo, the top issue is addressed, we have two very good matches and an energetic debut, plus two more tournament matches being announced in advance. It's almost like they're trying around here all of a sudden and that's not something you get on this show very often. Excellent show here and one of the best 205 Live has ever done.

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Monday Night Raw – September 1, 2003: Shocking

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 1, 2003

Location: Cajundome, Lafayette, Louisiana

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Wrestling please. Last week's show was about everything but wrestling and I'd like to see that change this time around. The McMahons were all over last week's show, along with various things such as attempted murder and bragging about sexual assault. That's not what I was expecting on a wrestling show so hopefully it's not here this time around. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Kane's path of rage, leading to Shane burning him alive (again) last week. There's going to be a crazy amount of Shane tonight isn't there?

Opening sequence.

JR let us know that Kane is NOT dead. Well that's quite the start to the show.

Jerry Lawler vs. Jonathan Coachman

Well at least they're getting it out of the way early. Coach wears University of Texas gear to tick JR off even further. Lawler gets tired

of Coach circling him and punches him in the jaw to start us off. A belly to back suplex gets King out of a suplex...and here's Al Snow (Coach's broadcast partner on Heat) to say stop this. Coach gets back inside anyway and is wristlocked into an armbar. Lawler lets go so Coach heads outside and tells Snow he can do this, only to get punched down again. As you might expect, it's a ruse with Snow posting Lawler so Coach can drop an elbow for the pin.

Rating: F. This is what they used to start Monday Night Raw. Not as filler later on, but during the first ten minutes of the show. It's not going to appeal to the mainstream wrestling fans because they would know Al Snow as a comedy guy and it's not going to appeal to the hardcore fans because it's Jonathan Coachman. What is the thought process here, and why wasn't it "no one is going to care about this" before moving on?

Terri asks Shane McMahon about burning Kane last week while mentioning that Kane "disappeared" from the dumpster. Shane hopes he's still burning. Whatever keeps this story off TV.

Coach and Snow are celebrating when Eric Bischoff joins them. Steve Austin comes in and isn't happy before going into the arena, despite it being time for the Highlight Reel. The set is quickly tossed to the floor and Austin has a beer. Please don't spill it on that sweet carpet. First, Austin would like JR to stand up. Austin has been hearing that JR is Stone Cold's boy and he's getting sick of it. At Unforgiven, it's Coach vs. JR (seriously), along with Shawn Michaels vs. Randy Orton.

Austin talks about the main event of Goldberg vs. HHH with Goldberg's career on the line. Therefore, the fans in Lafayette, Louisiana should get to see Goldberg in a six man tag when he teams up with Maven/Shawn Michaels vs. Evolution. Austin is ready to go but cue an angry Chris Jericho to interrupt.

Jericho yells about the set being destroyed and how much it costs. Austin: "Yes I know because I wrote the check." Jericho offers to forgive Austin if he'll kiss Chris' boots but it's a middle finger instead. Now it's Christian, who wants an apology for last week. Austin says no but does give Christian a match tonight. Jericho is ready for a tag match but

Austin had something else in mind. This did what it needed to do but EGADS are they serious with this Coach vs. JR stuff? Like I said earlier: who in the world is this supposed to be appealing to?

Intercontinental Title: Christian vs. Chris Jericho

Christian is defending and the fans immediately call this boring. What else do you want here? Coach vs. King II? King rejoins commentary and the match ignoring can begin. Feeling out process to start with Jericho, in street clothes, having to skin the cat early on. Back in and some right hands in the corner don't have much effect on Jericho so he grabs a rollup for two, much to Christian's annoyance. Christian: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING???" Jericho: "Trying to be the champion!" Ask a simple question, get a simple answer.

They slug it out with Jericho being knocked to the floor but sending Christian into the steps for his efforts. Back in and Jericho chokes with the wrist tape like a real Canadian villain. Christian gets two off the reverse DDT backbreaker and chokes as well. A reverse tornado DDT gives Christian two but Jericho kicks the referee into the ropes to crotch the champ on top. As usual though, that's not a DQ because the rules change almost by the minute.

The Lionsault hits knees but the Unprettier is countered into a Walls attempt with Christian reversing into a small package. Back up and Jericho's spinning crossbody (off a turnbuckle with the pad removed) takes the referee down by mistake. The belt is brought in and Jericho's bad looking Flashback (with Christian falling out of his grip) getting two. Jericho rolls him up with the tights for two but Christian reverses into one of his own, grabbing the ropes to retain.

Rating: C+. This started slowly but got better as things went on and you saw what kind of dastardly things they were willing to do to win the match. It fits them perfectly to be winning to cheat their best friend to get ahead, making the ending that much better. The fans wanted to see Jericho win here but he's still a solid heel.

Shane McMahon is in the back when Austin comes up to him and says it might be best if Shane leaves. Shane thinks he'll stick around actually.

Well you can't get the TV time from anywhere else. Unless you're Linda that is.

Video on Goldberg dominating the Elimination Chamber until HHH destroyed him. Again: remember who is really in charge around here.

HHH is sick of hearing about Goldberg and starts the chant by mistake. Goldberg isn't a wrestler but rather a mass marketed version of what someone thought a wrestler should be (I wonder who he's talking about...). HHH is the best there is and the best in the game so he'll end Goldberg's mystique at Unforgiven. Goldberg comes in to say he'll hurt HHH...later tonight because he wants HHH to think about it. The levels of ineptness when it comes to Goldberg continue to amaze me.

Trish Stratus/Ivory vs. Gail Kim/Molly Holly

King: "JR do you think Trish has a VCR?" JR: "A video recorder?" King: "No. A very cute rear." Oh good grief go fight Coach again. The villains jump Trish and Ivory to start with Gail chopping Ivory up against the ropes. The spunky Ivory fights out because spunky is pretty much her entire character. JR thinks jealousy might be the reason Molly and Gail hate Trish while Lawler thinks it's just because women hate each other.

Gail misses a charge in the corner and Ivory sunset flips Molly for two. Ivory gets choked against the ropes and Molly grabs an over the shoulder backbreaker of all things. That's escaped in short order and the hot tag brings in Trish as everything breaks down. Gail breaks up the Stratusphere on Molly and a double powerbomb ends Trish.

Rating: D+. This story continues to go nowhere and adding Ivory isn't going to help anything because she's just there for the sake of being a warm body. So Gail and Molly are jealous of Trish and Trish goes and gets Ivory to help her? That's how low the depth is on the women's roster? This story is a black hole of charisma and it's not showing any signs of getting better. That finish looked good though.

Post match Ivory takes a double DDT.

Shane goes to leave but runs into Vince McMahon, who is on both shows

again. Vince has a right to be here and while he hasn't been the best father, he's concerned about Shane. That doesn't fly with the son, who wants to deal with this in the ring. In other words we need to get another long talking segment between these two.

Shane comes to the arena to call out Vince but he gets Eric Bischoff instead. After Shane says he's not exactly scared here, Eric makes a threat...but gets cut off by Kane, who sneaks in from behind. Shane is sent into and smashed with the steps before Kane cuffs him to the post. With Shane's legs pinned down by the steps, Kane pours water over him and pulls out a battery with some jumper cables. He attaches the cables to Shane's crotch and electrocutes him until Rob Van Dam runs out for the save with a chair. Rob frees Shane's testicles and beats Kane up even more.

I remembered the electrocution going on longer but maybe it was just because the story was dumb. Again: they've wasted their big moment with Kane and having him face Shane on pay per view in a street fight or whatever isn't going to make up for a lot of this stuff. Kane should be in the World Title hunt but we're getting this instead.

Bischoff makes Kane vs. Van Dam in a cage next week.

Hurricane/Rosey vs. La Resistance

Non-title. Hurricane armdrags Dupree to start as JR thinks Kane was planning to torture Shane tonight. Good thing he had a plan ready that includes Shane bumping into Vince in the back and saying he wanted to deal with this in the ring. Grenier sends Hurricane into the corner and we hit the bearhug as JR and King talk strategy for JR vs. Coach.

Now the discussion shifts to Kane attacking Linda and JR saying he won't be a swimsuit model. Geez people can you please at least pretend that this that this match matters? Rosey gets in a splash for two as everything breaks down. Hurricane's high crossbody gets two but Rob Conway (JR: "The master of disguise!" He's in jeans and a sleeveless shirt here.) comes in with a belt shot to give Grenier the pin.

Rating: D-. Commentary is getting really annoying here as it's all about

ANYTHING else as they can't even focus on a four minute match. Are the fans really going to stop caring if we're not talking about Kane every second of every day? If it mattered that much, they would be doing something bigger for him than the Shane feud. I mean, I know WWE thinks Shane is the greatest thing since Stephanie, but not everyone else goes with that line of thinking.

Post match Grenier wants tables but here are the Dudleys for the save as this feud keeps going.

Maven has been wanting to be in this position since he came to WWE (All that time huh?) but Evolution comes in to laugh at him.

Post break Shawn comes in to see Maven, who has earned this. I know they're trying with Maven but come on already. Hurricane has earned this more than he has.

Teddy Long asks Steve Austin why Rodney Mack and Mark Henry didn't get the Intercontinental Title shot tonight. Austin says they got bumped and that's that. He keeps walking and bumps into Rob Van Dam. Rob is cool with the cage match next week but wants it to start the show. Austin grants the request, mainly because next week is the season premiere of Monday Night Football.

Stacy Keibler calls Test a jerk and she doesn't trust him. Egads that's harsh for the man treating you like a sex slave. Test brings up the Testicles bit and says people can love them again. Everything will be fine.

Steven Richards/Victoria vs. Test/Stacy Keibler

This is intergender, meaning men can face women. Test and Stacy come out to the Legs song. As they come to the ring, the match is announced as No DQ. Test punches Steven to start and brings Stacy in (Why would she accept the tag?) to kick him in the ribs. Victoria gets in a cheap shot though and shouts about Stacy being a Barbie.

It's back to Steven for a few spanks but he loads up a pumphandle, drawing Test in for a clothesline. Stacy crawls over for the tag and Test

drops to the floor (JR: "Did Test slip off the apron?"). He comes back in and holds her for a slap from Victoria, who hits Test by mistake. Steven beats Test up and clotheslines Stacy, drawing in Scott Steiner for the save. Test kicks Victoria in the face by mistake (aiming for Steiner), giving Stacy the pin.

Rating: F. The Rock N Roll Express and the Midnight Express think this feud has been going on too long. I know Steiner isn't exactly in the best place in the world at this point but they didn't have ANYTHING else for him to do? Like maybe sit at home while his contract ran out? Somehow this is probably leading to Test vs. Steiner again as they manage to make this story even more ridiculous.

Test drags Stacy away again and stops to sneer at Steiner. What emotion.

Evolution vs. Shawn Michaels/Goldberg/Maven

Goldberg's entrance is shortened a bit this week as Shawn, in a hat, slugs away at Orton to start. Maven comes in for some armdrags as JR pushes him as the big young star. It's already off to Flair for some right hands in the corner but Shawn comes back in for the big staredown. Well it's the best combination they have for this match.

Shawn punches everyone down, including knocking the still injured HHH off the apron. The slingshot dive takes out all of Evolution (Which JR calls a split. Taking down everything is called a strike JR.) but Flair gets in a low blow to cut him off. HHH actually comes in for a low blow of his own as JR says the people HHH has defeated in World Title matches could fill a Hall of Fame. I'd be down for a Taka Michinoku induction. Shawn kicks Flair away but HHH is back in to stomp him down.

Evolution keeps taking turns on Michaels with JR playing cheerleader. HHH grabs the abdominal stretch but gets caught cheating, earning a break so Shawn can chop away. Another hot tag attempt is cut off and HHH stops to taunt Goldberg a bit. A big shot allows the tag to Goldberg and things pick up in a hurry. HHH cuts Goldberg off (well of course) and punches him down in the corner, followed by Orton getting in a shot of his own. Instead it's a spear to Orton and some trash talk to HHH before the Jackhammer puts Orton away.

Rating: C-. Totally standard main event tag formula, even though the match was a glorified handicap match as Maven was a total non-factor after the opening thirty seconds. Goldberg vs. HHH still isn't a great story as they're setting up Goldberg as the challenger of the month but at least the fans are still into him. Odds are we'll be getting Shawn vs. Orton as well, which should do some good things for Randy's future.

Overall Rating: D-. And somehow, this is MILES better than last week's show. There's a bunch of bad stuff here but at least it felt like a wrestling show (electrocution segment aside). They're setting stuff up for Unforgiven and while it's still not a good show, at least they're going somewhere and it's not all about the announcers and McMahons. The fact that it's still heavily about them doesn't help, but I'll take what I can get after the recently terrible shows.

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Mixed Match Challenge –

January 30, 2018: All the Way

Mixed Match Challenge Episode #3

Date: January 30, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Beth Phoenix

We're back with another week and that means another mixed tag match, albeit after some entertaining promos. The interesting thing about this so far has been a pretty weak live audience but a rather strong audience of people watching later. That being said, the audience is tuning in to watch later, meaning there is an interest in the show. Let's get to it.

You can vote on whether you want Becky Lynch or Sami Zayn to start the match. Gah with these people who don't know wrestling making strategy decisions.

Earlier today, Lynch and Zayn met with some UNICEF representatives and did a little dance.

Earlier today, Braun Strowman gave Alexa Bliss, in a Braun sized shirt, car flipping lessons. Strowman broke down the physics of it and Bliss left, saying she had a better idea. What that idea is isn't explained, but this was funny.

First Round: Sami Zayn/Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss/Braun Strowman

Sami is in full on face mode here, minus the dancing strut to the ring. Strowman and Bliss continue to be the most awesomely cute team ever, with Strowman holding his hand up for a high five so the short Bliss has to jump. Sami and Becky snap their fingers at them and it's Becky winning the poll to start the match. Becky takes Bliss down to start and rubs her head but the Disarm-Her sends Bliss bailing to the ropes.

Back up and Becky does Sami's dance, sending Sami into hysterics on the apron. Becky grabs a Tumbleweed and neither of them can stand up straight, sending Bliss to the wrong corner for a tag. For some reason isn't not off to Strowman, even though the fans want to see him.

Bliss decides to slap Braun for a tag so Sami calls him a meathead. In the smartest thing he could do, Sami bails to the floor and calls Strowman a chicken for not following him. The chase is on but Sami gets caught, only to slip out and IMMEDIATELY tag Becky back in. Bliss' cheap shot works well enough and we're off to the chinlock. We use the time to look at Bobby Roode and Charlotte live chatting the show as a RUSEV DAY chant starts up.

Sami starts the crowd on a chorus of HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Becky (thankfully appropriate or it's a rather odd choice), drawing her to her feet for the hot tag. Strowman misses a charge and falls to the floor, only to catch Sami's dive without much effort. Sami gets launched over the barricade and Becky is posted, setting up the skyscraper Twisted Bliss (off Braun's shoulders) for the pin on Becky at 11:13.

Rating: B. This was a lot of fun as the teams were clearly having a blast setting it up. Strowman and Bliss are as adorable of a team as you can get and Lynch and Zayn are basically the mirror images of each other. You could tell they were having a great time out there and that's a lot easier to sit through than a boring by the numbers match.

Jimmy Uso and Naomi don't care who Goldust has to replace the injured Alicia Fox because they'll feel the Glow in the Uso Penitentiary.

Goldust's new partner: Mandy Rose. Works for me.

Strowman and Bliss say this was a team effort, and they even find each other cute. Bliss: "We're going all the way." Braun's face is hilarious as he has the biggest creepy smile ever until Bliss explains what she means. Again: fun.

Overall Rating: B+. This was probably more about the wrestlers involved but I had a great time with this show. They were having fun and the promos before the match made things even better. Also, just like the previous weeks, they were in and out in the span of twenty two minutes. Let these guys show some more personality and this show will be a lot easier to watch (even though it's one of the easiest in wrestling at the moment).

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Smackdown – January 30, 2018: Kevin Owens is a Bad Friend

Smackdown

Date: January 30, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the final night of the Philadelphia Story and Smackdown is in a very different place than Raw. The blue show has the men's Royal Rumble winner and as a result, the World Title match for Wrestlemania XXXIV is already set. There are a lot more details to get through though and that starts tonight. Let's get to it.

Here's Rumble winner Shinsuke Nakamura to open things up. He talks about kneeing everyone in the face and is ready to do it to AJ Styles at Wrestlemania. This brings out Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn to interrupt with Sami ranting about the loss in their title shot. Owens was never tagged in so he couldn't be pinned. Owens: "YEP!"

Therefore, they deserve the next shot at the title, which they'll take at Wrestlemania. Nakamura calls them losers and here's AJ Styles to interrupt as well. AJ agrees with the losers comment and suggests the dream match become a dream team against Sami and Kevin tonight. Kevin and Sami: "NOPE!"

Post break Daniel Bryan makes the tag match. Owens and Zayn are livid but Bryan gives them another chance. Next week, it's Owens vs. Zayn in a #1 contender match with the winner getting a shot at Fastlane.

Kofi Kingston vs. Jinder Mahal vs. Rusev vs. Zack Ryder

The winner gets a US Title shot next week and champion Bobby Roode is on commentary. It's a brawl to start with Kofi and Jinder trading rollups for two each. A knee to the head cuts Kofi off though and Ryder low bridges Mahal to the floor. After a brawl near the announcers' table, everyone gets back in with a double Irish whip setting up Kofi's dropkick to Rusev.

Back up and Kofi hits a big dive over the top onto Ryder and Mahal, meaning it's time to throw pancakes. The Singh Brother cuts off Rusev's dive (this is completely against Rusev Day tradition) so Aiden English shoves him into New Day, meaning the PANCAKES ARE DROPPED! All four seconds are ejected and we take a break. Back with Ryder hitting the Broski Boot on Rusev but Mahal throws him outside to take the near fall for himself. The SOS gives Kofi two but Rusev is right in to break things up. The Stackalade is broken up so Rusev settles for the regular version on Kofi for the tap out at 12:44.

Rating: C+. Nice energetic match here with the right choice for the winner. It's a few weeks late for Rusev but it's not late enough that it doesn't work. Rusev is still hot and putting the US Title on him would be a great way to capitalize on him. They need to do something with him and hopefully this is the start of something good for him.

Ascension is helping Fashion Files answer some Twitter questions (including some about hair conditioner) when Shelton Benjamin and Chad Gable come in to call it stupid. They turn over the table and we have a match set up for later.

Here are the Usos for a chat. They talk about cleaning out the tag division, including listing off each team, causing a jail graphic to come up on the screen. There's no one left for them to face so of course here are the Bludgeon Brothers.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. ???/???

Jobber #1 is sent hard into the corner for a running charge in the corner from Harper. The jobbers are sent into each other and it's a full nelson slam/powerbomb combination to #1. The double spinebuster ends #2 at 1:50.

Daniel Bryan announces a superstar ranking system which will be starting soon. This was announced earlier in the day.

Shane McMahon is in his office when Tye Dillinger comes in. He'd love to talk about the ranking system (there are ten names on it after all) but he's not happy with what happened at the Rumble. Baron Corbin comes in to yell about not getting the title shot and questions Shane's McMahonhood. Dillinger mocks Corbin for losing Money in the Bank (a bit behind the times there buddy) but Shane says they'll settle this in the ring tonight.

Video on Ronda Rousey debuting.

Here's Charlotte for a chat with Renee Young (in what looks like Danny Davis' old ring jacket). Charlotte wanted to be in the ring on Sunday to see if she could come in at #3 and survive like this guy she knows. Then the moment happened that broke the internet and she was in the ring with Alexa Bliss, Asuka and Ronda Rousey. She's walking into Wrestlemania as Smackdown Women's Champion and wants to know who she'll be facing.

This brings out the Riott Squad with Ruby saying Charlotte's ego is as big as her father's. Charlotte doesn't seem to mind so Riott talks about how she's met people like Charlotte throughout her career. If it's up to Ruby, Charlotte won't even make it to Wrestlemania. Charlotte holds off the attack for a bit but the numbers get the better of her. The parade of finishers ensues...AND HERE COMES CARMELLA! She hands the referee the briefcase but accidentally dropkicks him to the floor before the match is on. Charlotte is back up so Carmella changes her mind. So Carmella is now

a klutz?

Styles goes to talk strategy with Nakamura but Shinsuke only wants to talk about the Wrestlemania match. They'll be fine tonight if Styles listens to him, which doesn't sit well with AJ.

Carmella wanted to remind Charlotte that the danger is real.

Tye Dillinger vs. Baron Corbin

They fight outside at the bell with Corbin being sent into the barricade. Back in and Corbin unloads on Tye with right hands before throwing him outside as we take a break. We come back with Tye fighting out of a chinlock and getting in some right hands to the ribs. Corbin does his slide underneath the ropes but the clothesline misses. Instead Tye sends him shoulder first into the post, followed by a boot to the face. The Tyebreaker is broken up though and Corbin hits him in the back of the head. The chokebreaker sets up End of Days to give Baron the pin at 6:38.

Rating: D+. This was fine for a way to give Baron a little momentum, though he doesn't have anything going on at the moment. Dillinger is in even worse shape though and needs to do something different if he wants to go anywhere. It could be worse, but at the moment there's nothing there. That's not exactly shocking either and I'm kind of surprised that he's made it this far.

Aiden English sings about the upcoming Rusev Day title change.

Roode has Rusev Day marked on his calendar. He circles it, but turns the circle into the 0 in glorious. That was clever. I'm not wild on these handheld promos but I am a fan of promos being used to set up matches. It worked for years and I have no idea why it was decided that they can't work again.

Sami and Kevin are in the back talking about how they're ready for tonight. Kevin implies that he'll win next week and Sami doesn't seem pleased.

Wrestlers are speculating on who will be the 205 Live General Manager.

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable vs. Breezango

Fandango chops away at Shelton to start but walks into a spinebuster. Chad comes in to start on the arm but makes sure to knock Breeze off the apron to keep control. Back up and Fandango gets something like a backbreaker, only to get caught with a rolling Liger kick for two. Breeze comes in off the hot tag as everything breaks down but it's a quick powerbomb/top rope clothesline to put Tyler away at 3:40.

Rating: D. Much like Corbin, this was a quick win to get Benjamin and Gable back on track. There was no reason to expect anything of note and it's not like Breezango was going to get anything important in anyway. The wrestling was short and to the point, though I'm not sure what Gable and Benjamin do now while the titles are busy.

Wrestlemania XXXIV ad.

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens

AJ wastes no time in headscissoring Owens into the corner so it's off to Sami to work on Nakamura's arm. Styles comes back in for a few kicks before Nakamura is back in, only to be taken into the corner for the double stomping. Nakamura fights back with some shots to the head and we hit the front facelock. Sami gets thrown outside but Owens uses the distraction to shoulder Nakamura down.

That leaves Sami down on the floor so Owens yells at him, meaning it's time for the big argument. That's too much for Sami and he takes the walk up the ramp as we go to a break. Back with Owens holding Styles in a chinlock as Sami watches from the stage. AJ's belly to back facebuster gets two as Sami runs back in for the save. Sami comes in for two off a backdrop and it's quickly back to Owens for two off the backplash. Owens chops Sami for a tag but that's not cool with Zayn, who does the same to bring Owens right back in.

They get knocked into each other so Sami leaves again, leaving Kevin to break up the Phenomenal Forearm. A Vader Bomb elbow gets two but the Pop Up Powerbomb is thwarted. Instead it's off to Nakamura for some kicks, only to have Owens bail before Kinshasa. AJ throws him right back in

though and it's a spinwheel kick to the head, followed by Kinshasa to give Nakamura the pin at 15:25.

Rating: C+. Pretty standard main event tag match here but it advanced the story of Sami vs. Kevin's issues. AJ vs. Nakamura has a lot of time to build up and there's no need to rush things. Let that take its time to be properly built and see where they can go instead of rushing through things and running out of steam with a month to go before Wrestlemania.

An unpleased Sami is watching in the back but says that's not the end of their friendship. This is about Sami getting his chance because it's his time to be champion.

Overall Rating: C+. Nice enough show here, especially after we're coming out of the Rumble and heading into Fastlane. There's a lot more to do here but this set the stage for the next few weeks, which is all you can do here. You can probably pencil in Owens vs. Zayn for Wrestlemania while Nakamura vs. Styles seems to be written in ink. This should be an interesting season and since I can't imagine them messing with anything major at Fastlane, everything seems to be looking better. Throw in the lack of Bryan vs. Shane tonight and this was another nice show.

Results

Rusev b. Kofi Kingston, Jinder Mahal and Zack Ryder – Accolade to Kingston

Bludgeon Brothers b. ???/??? – Double spinebuster

Baron Corbin b. Tye Dillinger – End of Days

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable b. Breezango – Powerbomb/top rope clothesline combination to Breeze

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn – Kinshasa to Owens

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WWE Unreleased 1986-1995 DVD: All I Could Ever Ask For

WWE Unreleased 1986-1995 DVD

Hosts: Sean Mooney, Charly Caruso

This isn't something I do very often but every now and then I see a collection like this that is so far up my alley that I can't help it. The name of the set sums it up as well as possible: it's a nearly nine hour collection of dark matches and other unreleased material from 1986-1995, which could include some incredibly interesting stuff. Let's get to it.

Caruso welcomes us to the set and adds a grand total of nothing. Wait this is just an intro for the set? Do all DVDs think I'm stupid enough to not be able to hit PLAY?

Note that there won't be commentary on most of these matches as they're mainly dark matches which were taped just in case of something like this.

Another note: the front of the DVD says 1986-1995 but the back says 1985-1996. Come on people. That's not a knock on them. I just want to get on with the show.

Disc 1

We open with a shot of the WWE tape vault. I...hang on I need a minute here. It's just so darn beautiful. Seriously, I'd pay good money to be allowed to just look through that place, let alone touch/look at anything.

Caruso goes through the room (With a box labeled Boston 87-88. Good grief that makes me all tingly. Just imagine the stuff they have hidden in there. It must be enough to fill...probably a three disc set just on 1986-1995 alone. Well played WWE.) and finds a wild Sean Mooney. Sean introduces our first match by explaining the Machines, saying the identity are still a mystery to this day. Oh yeah I'm going to love the heck out of this.

Machines vs. Bobby Heenan/Big John Studd/King Kong Bundy

Date: September 16, 1986

Location: Baltimore Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Attendance: 7,000

Dark match at the end of a Superstars taping. So the Machines are this "Japanese" team of masked men, consisting of Big Machine (Blackjack Mulligan), Super Machine (Bill Eadie, better known as Ax from Demolition) and usually a random third partner, in this case Hulk Machine (Sterling Golden). They wrestled almost exclusively against Heenan and company with the third partner being the high point of the whole thing.

It's a brawl to start and Hulk slams Studd to clear the ring (which would earn him \$15,000 thanks to a challenge laid out by Studd and Heenan). Bundy and Super officially get things going and it's so strange to watch this with no commentary. Studd comes in for a big elbow but gets dropped by three straight clotheslines. Hulk chases Heenan away and it's off to Big vs. Bundy.

That goes badly for Bundy and it gets even worse when Hulk comes in for the showdown. I mean, it's not like there's any history here as Hulk Machine is a newcomer around here. A slam drops Bundy and another drops Studd (including another slam for another \$15,000) and it's back to Super for a slam of his own with Heenan failing to make a save. Big finally charges into a boot in the corner and Heenan actually comes in for some

forearms in the corner.

As you might expect, that earns him a heck of a bump over the corner and a quick tag (with Heenan laying face first on the apron) to Bundy. A bearhug keeps Big in trouble and Studd even adds a top rope forearm to the back. Heenan's cheap shots draw Hulk in so Studd can choke away in the corner. You would think wrestlers would get that through their head one day but it hasn't happened yet. Bundy's Avalanche crushes Big in the corner but Bundy celebrates too long, allowing Hulk to switch places. Heenan comes in and it's the big boot for the pin at 9:35. The pin was on Heenan in case you're kind of stupid.

Rating: C. Oh yeah I'm going to have a good time with this. That ending was perfect for something like this as the fans get to see Heenan take a quick beating while Hulk (whatever his last name is) gets to look good. These six man tags are perfectly fine and a great way to send the fans home happy. Fun match and that's all something like this is supposed to be.

Hulk pulls the mask up to reveal....eh some Scooby Doo villain.

Randy Savage vs. Pedro Morales

Date: October 28, 1986

Location: Broome County Arena, Binghamton, New York

Attendance: 6,400

Savage's Intercontinental Title isn't on the line. This is a dark match at a Superstars taping and apparently the first time the Superstars banners hung in the rafters. We hit the stall button to start as Savage hits the floor to yell at fans until Pedro sends him into the barricade. Back in and a should gives Pedro one but Savage bails again. A shot to the throat drops Savage again as Morales certainly isn't your standard good guy with this offense. Savage works on the arm but gets flipped over for his efforts.

That means the third time to the floor where Savage has to yell at Liz to stay in the corner. Back in and we go further into Memphis as Savage uses a phantom foreign object to rake the eyes. Pedro is back with some flowers (for Liz) to the face but Savage throws him hard out to the

floor. Savage is right after him with a top rope ax handle and Pedro is in trouble in a hurry. Back in a Savage dives into a left hand as this is starting to drag. Pedro slugs away but gets tripped, allowing Savage to throw his feet on the ropes for the pin at 7:47. It would have been nice if Morales was actually trying to kick out.

Rating: D. Ok so they're not all going to be winners. This was slow paced and not much of an improvement over the norm for Pedro at this point. He was WAY past his prime and you could tell that Savage was having to slow things down to let him keep up. Still though, a slowed down Savage was still better than almost anyone else. Bad match though.

Paul Orndorff/Harley Race vs. Roddy Piper/Hulk Hogan

Date: December 9, 1986

Location: Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Phoenix, Arizona Attendance: 15,200

I'm not sure on the date here as the DVD says December 9, but every other source I can find says December 10 (in Tuscon, Arizona). Also, the December 9 show is listed as a Superstars taping and you can see the Wrestling Challenge (December 10) banners in the rafters. Then again it's not that hard to make a mistake with something like this. Also it's not like it matters because HOGAN AND PIPER ARE ON THE SAME TEAM???? I'm not sure I know how to handle something like this.

It's a brawl to start with Hogan and Piper (gulp) clearing the ring. Thankfully they do look at each other rather uncertainly until Orndorff jumps Piper to start things off. Hogan headbutts Paul and Piper throws him into Hulk's boot before it's off to Race. The fans are rather pleased at the idea of Hogan beating Harley up but also like Piper coming back in to work on the arm.

A hammerlock slam keeps Race in trouble and Hogan drops the arm over the rope. Piper comes back in and kicks away at Race's shoulder but gets taken into the corner for some headbutts. Orndorff comes in for a top rope elbow but Piper sunset flips him for two more. Race misses the falling headbutt though and it's Hulk (not Machine of course) time. The big boot drops Race but there's no count. Back up and the legdrop looks to finish but Heenan comes in for the DQ at 6:23.

Rating: C. What am I even supposed to say about this? A match like this would be a blast and there's nothing wrong with that, though I'm not sure why Hogan couldn't get a pin here. This would be like Cena and Punk five years ago and those matches were fun too. That being said, has Harley Race ever not looked like he was in his early 60s? He's 43 here and looks the same as he always did. I'm not sure if that's good or not but it's always been the case.

Hogan and Piper even do a big handshake after the match. I don't know where my life is anywhere.

Dingo Warrior vs. Jose Estrada

Date: June 23, 1987

Location: Market Square Arena, Indianapolis, Indiana

Attendance: 10,555

I'm sorry what now? This is the Dingo (as in Ultimate) Warrior's third match with the company, having debuted less than a week ago. He looks the same but is billed from Queens, New York and even starts with a leapfrog into an armdrag. Dang it someone get my medicine. I mean, it leads into a bad armbar but sweet goodness what have I stumbled into?

Estrada rakes the eyes and slugs away at the face and ribs to shocking success. We hit the neck crank and a chinlock (with a near fall actually) as this isn't exactly the kind of match you would EVER expect from Warrior. One of the worst chinlocks I've ever seen (note the gap between the arm and Warrior's chin) brings Warrior back to life. A gorilla press brings the fans back the same way but it's back to the armbar as Warrior clearly has no idea how to string stuff together.

Back up and Estrada misses a charge...and is armdragged into an armbar for the THIRD time in about four minutes. Since it was just an armbar (or a lot of armbars), Estrada is back up and choking in the corner until Warrior makes the most standard comeback ever. An atomic drop sets up a Randy Savage style clothesline to put Estrada away at 6:13.

Rating: F+. That's partially just for my head spinning at Warrior being announced from Queens. This was TERRIBLE as Warrior looked like he had no idea what he was doing out there, meaning the version we got was the

IMPROVED version. It's like he had all of two month's worth of training and was given this weird gimmick (As Vince said: "What is a dingo warrior?") because he was in great shape. Absolutely terrible match, but not even the fun kind of terrible. It certainly felt like something special though and that's the entire point of this set so well done on that front.

Back in the vault, Charly and Sean talk about the Mega Powers. Charly talks about them forming on Saturday Night's Main Event and Sean asks if she remembers the time when Hogan came out to save Savage from a 3-1 beatdown at the hands of Honky Tonk Man and the Hart Foundation. Ok so they're talking about THE EXACT SAME NIGHT but points for trying something.

Mega Powers vs. Hart Foundation/Honky Tonk Man

Date: January 5, 1988

Location: Von Braun Civic Center, Huntsville, Alabama

Attendance: 8,500

No bell for this one as we start with Hogan and Neidhart (what an odd visual) shoving each other. Hogan avoids a charge and hits a running clothesline in the corner. He grabs Neidhart by the beard (THAT'S TOO FAR!) and hands it off to Savage for the elbows to the head. Neidhart takes Savage into the corner but Bret comes in and gets armbarred right back down. Bret's hard clothesline takes over though and he gets two off the backbreaker. Honky Tonk misses the fist drop though and the hot tag brings in Hogan. House is cleaned in a hurry and the legdrop finishes Honky Tonk at 5:17.

Rating: D+. I would question how much there could be from a match where the Mega Powers barely broke a sweat but IT'S THE MEGA POWERS. It would have been weirder had this been a competitive match, even if the heel team was as talented as this one was. Hogan and Savage are one of those legendary teams and there's no reason that this should have been anything but quick and mostly one sided.

Hogan gets Savage to pose and Randy looks almost confused by the fans' reactions.

Owen Hart vs. Barry Horowitz

Date: March 8, 1988

Location: Viking Hall, Bristol, Tennessee

This is Owen's tryout match. I watched these two in a match from later in the year when Owen was the Blue Angel so there's a lot of potential here. Owen flips out of a wristlock to start and does that springboard into a hiptoss of his. Back up and Owen moonsaults over him, followed by a running dropkick into the corner. A middle rope knee gets a slow two as Owen is just crazy ahead of his time here.

An armbar slows things down but Barry is back up with a knee to the ribs and some choking. Barry drops a standing legdrop for two more but Owen backflips up and scores with a suicide dive (unheard of at this point). A slingshot stomp to the face (unheard of today too) has Barry in more trouble and a spinning high crossbody gets two back inside. Owen hits his belly to belly and a CRAZY long Swan Dive (I've never even seen Benoit hit one that far) for the pin at 5:45.

Rating: C+. It's a bit sloppy at times but WOW this was amazing stuff for 1988. Considering that we were in the era where a high crossbody was a big deal, Owen hitting those crazy dives and slingshots was almost unthinkable. This belonged in a cruiserweight match on Nitro or something and he's doing it before Wrestlemania IV. Owen would be hired pretty soon after this and that really shouldn't be a surprised whatsoever.

WWF World Title: Andre the Giant vs. Randy Savage

Date: April 21, 1988

Location: New Haven Coliseum, New Haven, Connecticut

Attendance: 12,000

Andre is challenging of course and seems to crack Heenan up during the entrances. Another dark match main event and another match that I saw recently on the same show as Owen vs. Horowitz. For some reason Heenan goes after Liz, earning him a very early chase. Back in and Savage gets thrown down off a lockup before Andre hammers away in the corner. Andre sits on him for good measure as the fans chant for Hogan. They settle for Andre cranking on the arms instead as Liz gets on the apron. Andre goes

after her though and that's enough for Savage to use a chair for the DQ at 3:21.

Rating: F. This was a glorified segment and really didn't need to be here. They've had good matches before (like the one I mentioned) so they would have been better off just cutting this one. There's only so much you can do with Andre but Savage has proven that he's capable of hanging in there with him so this felt more like a time issue than anything else.

Tag Team Titles; Demolition vs. Powers of Pain

Date: June 21, 1988

Location: Civic Center, Glenn's Falls, New York

Attendance: 6,000

Demolition is defending. This is supposed to be a dream match but I'm really not seeing it. The Powers are substituting for Strike Force and therefore have Tito Santana in their corner. It's a brawl to start while the music is still playing and Demolition is knocked outside. Ax wants time out and I NEED Monsoon to say there are no time outs in the sport of professional wrestling.

We pause for a good bit until Demolition is ready to go with Ax and Warlord starting it off. Actually hang on for some more stalling as the brawl is the only contact two minutes in. The staring continues as the other two get in as well. Three minutes in now and STILL no lock up. They lock up at a ridiculous three minutes and forty two seconds in (Larry Zbyszko is somewhere calling them amateurs) and it's Ax losing a battle of the shoulder blocks.

Even more stalling leads to Ax getting in some forearms, only to be knocked out to the floor. Barbarian and Smash come in for some stalling but a test of strength is denied. Barbarian FINALLY picks up the pace with some right hands and a running headbutt as everything breaks down. The champs are sent into each other and manager Mr. Fuji gets decked. That's enough for Demolition, who walks out for the countout at 7:15.

Rating: F-. Holy sweet merciful chicken sandwiches with meatballs and a cold Sprite this was a waste of time. I'm still not sure who looked at the Powers of Pain and thought they should be faces (though the same

could be said about Demolition) but egads this was horrible. Thankfully they were turned heel in a few months but this was easily the worst thing on the set so far. Why did this even warrant inclusion?

Back to the vault where they've both found a tape to watch. Sean has Wrestlemania V (please, I've suffered enough) but Charly has a tape from April 4, 1989 (two days after Wrestlemania V). She wants to watch the whole thing while Sean wants to know why these weren't Coliseum Video exclusives.

Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd

Date: April 4, 1989

Location: Civic Center, Glenn's Falls, New York

The WEASEL chants are out in strong form tonight. Andre chokes him into the corner to start but Studd slugs away without much effort. We're in the bearhug less than a minute in as I'm longing for Wrestlemania I. Some shots to the ribs almost put Andre down but a headbutt staggers Studd.

We hit the standing nerve hold as this is firmly in slow motion so far (not exactly shocking). More slugging leads to Andre choking with the singlet until he goes head first into Studd's knee. I'm guessing that's what they were going for at Wrestlemania when Andre suddenly went down despite Jake Roberts not really hitting him. Studd hammers away until Heenan comes in for the DQ at 7:46.

Rating: D-. Well what else were you expecting here? There was almost no way this was going to be good but you kind of have to know that's the case coming in. Studd wouldn't be around much longer and really, I'm not sure what else people were expecting him to do other than a weak feud with Andre. Terrible match here but Andre was a shell of the shell that he was earlier in the 80s.

Randy Savage vs. Ultimate Warrior

Date: April 4, 1989

Location: Civic Center, Glenn's Falls, New York

Same show as the previous match and Savage already has Sherri with him. Savage jumps Warrior (looking weird in black boots) but gets knocked to

the floor and punched in the face for his efforts. Warrior gorilla presses him back in and ties Savage in the Tree of Woe (a spot you don't often see in this era) for some stomping. A charge misses though and Warrior gets kneed out to the floor in a heap.

Back in and we hit the chinlock as the fans are all over Sherri. A double ax gives Savage two but Warrior punches him into the corner. Cue new Intercontinental Champion Rick Rude to annoy Warrior (possibly by holding the title upside down) as Warrior gets two off an atomic drop. The Warrior Splash hits knees (possibly because Warrior aimed for them) but it's time to shake the ropes. The real comeback is on but Warrior goes after Rude and it's a countout at 7:10.

Rating: C-. After everything else we've been sitting through, this was a minor miracle. Warrior was nowhere near capable of going toe to toe with Savage (then again almost no one ever was) so Randy was helping him along here. Both guys are protected by the finish too and this was about as good as Warrior was going to get in this circumstance around this time.

Warrior comes back with the stolen Intercontinental Title to clean house.

Ted DiBiase vs. Dusty Rhodes

Date: June 6, 1989

Location: Dane County Coliseum, Madison, Wisconsin

Dusty has been in the company for all of a week at this point. Before the match, DiBiase offers Dusty money so that he won't have his career ended like Jake the Snake (Jake was out with a back injury attributed to DiBiase in a move you don't see enough anymore). Dusty punches him in the face though and Ted (looking weird with no wrist tape) drops the money, which Dusty gives to the fans (though a lot of it falls on the floor).

Back in and Dusty punches him out to the floor again, only to have an atomic drop send Ted outside for a third time. If nothing else that gives us DiBiase's great fall over the top, which I've always been a huge fan of. Dusty rams Ted and Virgil's heads together and it's time to dance, drawing a VERY solid reaction from the northern crowd.

DiBiase takes him down and hits a middle rope elbow, followed by those

sweet falling punches. Dusty won't stand for this being sent into the corner jazz but DiBiase elbows him down into a chinlock instead. Back up and Dusty punches him out of the air, followed by an elbow out to the floor. A suplex brings Ted back in but Virgil trips Dusty to give DiBiase the pin at 10:00.

Rating: C+. This was interesting in a couple of ways. First of all, it shows how big a star Dusty really was. Having not been a regular north of the Carolinas for YEARS, he came off like a total star here with the fans treating him like a huge deal. It shows you that star power and charisma (which Dusty had in spades) will always shine through, which is a great lesson to learn. Also, assuming what I've seen elsewhere is true, the loss was to show that Rhodes was willing to put people over, which was a major fear for the WWF roster. Thankfully he was smart enough to just be a talent, which still had a lot of value.

Finally, and easily my favorite, I love watching DiBiase move in a ring. I know he's best known for his talking and character work but there was a certain smoothness to him in the ring that few others have. Any flip or landing looked perfect and it was a signature style of his that I don't remember anyone else having. I always liked it and DiBiase looked like a really skilled guy out there, which is overlooked far too often.

Dusty cleans house post match to some hearty applause.

King Duggan/Hillbilly Jim vs. Haku/Andre the Giant

Date: July 19, 1989

Location: Memorial Auditorium, Utica, New York

What a gloriously odd combination. Duggan took the King's Crown from Haku about two months prior. No contact for the first minute. Make that a minute and a half. Two minutes now as we establish that Duggan's 2x4 and Hillbilly's horseshoe are on the floor. They FINALLY start slugging it out over two minutes in with Duggan hammering Andre and Hillbilly choking Haku in the corner.

The USA chants get stronger and stronger as the good guys take over, only to have Andre impose his Andre-ness on Duggan to take over. Andre crushes Duggan in the corner and it's off to Haku to work on the neck. A dropkick

misses though and Duggan slugs away before ramming Haku and Andre's heads together for a double knockdown. Hillbilly comes in for two off a shoulder but gets caught with something that looked low.

Andre charges into a pair of knees in the corner but Duggan gets punched down without much effort. Haku tries a sunset flip but lands on Duggan's back, seemingly injuring Jim's knee in the process. It's quickly off to Hillbilly, who gets caught by a certain French giant. Andre holds the arms but Hillbilly avoids Haku's superkick (ala Wrestlemania VI), allowing Duggan to hit a pair of three point clotheslines for the pin on Haku at 9:12.

Rating: C-. Well that was....something. I love these random matches that you might see on an old Coliseum Video and this is a great example of why. There's no reason for this match to be taking place but here it is, in all its glory. The Jim's were fine for a midcard team like this though I don't think they ever teamed on TV. Fine enough, though they did just beat a team who would be Tag Team Champions by the end of the year.

Charly and Sean are going through a box labeled 89-90 tryouts. We see Sean's tryout tape (from 1988 but close enough) and it's nothing special whatsoever.

Bryan Adams vs. Barry Horowitz

Date: August 9, 1989

Location: Selland Arena, Fresno, California

Attendance: 9,000

Crush looks weird here with a beard and worse hair than usual, though you can tell he's a powerhouse. Barry gets shoved outside to start, followed by a dropkick to put him out there again. Back in and Barry bounces off of him before getting caught in a bearhug. Barry slips out and gets in some offense, including a gutwrench suplex for two with Adams powering out on the kickout. A delayed vertical suplex (which he made look easy) plants Horowitz and a Tombstone is good for the pin at 5:34.

Rating: D. You can see two things here. First of all, it's EASY to see why Adams kept a job for so long as he looked like a monster with a great build and general presence to him. However, the other thing you can see

is how lame he was in the ring. There was almost nothing noteworthy about his abilities and that's only going to get you so far. Of course this is the WWF and the look alone is going to get you a few feet in the door.

Earthquake Evans vs. Paul Roma

Date: September 20, 1989

Location: Louisville Gardens, Louisville, Kentucky

This is the debut for the Earthquake name as he had actually wrestled two dark matches under the name John Tenta back in March. He's a lumberjack here (what an odd look) and has Slick in his corner. Roma is kind of a jerk (but don't worry because Bret Hart said he could have been the greatest jerk of all time) but Crank It Up was such a sweet theme song.

Evans, in a lumberjack shirt and black pants, shoves him down without much effort and shrugs off some right hands. Roma actually does take him down with an armdrag into an armbar but his crossbody is countered into a backbreaker. A bearhug doesn't go very far so Earthquake slowly works him over in the corner. Earthquake misses a charge though and Roma scores with three straight middle/top rope forearm to the head. A VERY high dropkick actually puts the big man down but Roma misses a crossbody. Earthquake drops a big elbow for the pin at 6:57.

Rating: D-. Really slow here but you could see the potential in Earthquake. Once they got him out of the lumberjack look and made him look like a monster instead of a guy filling in time during the off season, things would get a lot better. He was headlining Summerslam against Hogan less than a year later so they certainly did something right. Not a good match of course as it needed to be cut in half and with far less offense from Roma.

Powers of Pain vs. Rockers

Date: January 22, 1990

Location: Miami Arena, Miami, Florida

Attendance: 15,063

This is the day after the Royal Rumble and I'm not sure why this warrants inclusion. Shawn and Barbarian start things off and you can imagine how far Shawn is pushed away off the lockup. Everything breaks down in a

hurry and it's double superkicks and clotheslines to put the Powers on the floor. We settle down (and change corners for some reason) to Marty vs. Warlord with Jannetty having to keep things fast. A blind tag....doesn't keep Shawn in very long as it's almost immediately back to Marty.

Maybe Shawn should have stayed in as a good looking powerbomb plants Jannetty for two. One heck of a launch into a face first crash gives Warlord the same and Barbarian boots him outside. The Powers trade places and Shawn is about to deck the ref (I mean, it's a Hebner so maybe the threat stuck all the way to Montreal). Marty shrugs off some right hands but dives into a good looking powerslam. Barbarian misses a middle rope elbow though and the hot tag brings in Shawn. Everything breaks down again until Fuji trips Shawn for the DQ at 7:54.

Rating: C. Pretty standard power vs. speed match and there's always room for something like that. Marty played a good Ricky Morton here, which he often did over the team's run. The Powers of Pain would split soon as there was just no need for them with Demolition and the soon to arrive Legion of Doom.

The beating continues post match with Marty taking something like a super Hart Attack. With Shawn down, HULK HOGAN of all people makes the save. Well that's why this was included and I can certainly understand why. Other than nearly killing the Rockers when he was looking for Randy Savage at Main Event II, I couldn't imagine Hogan lowering himself to their level at this point.

Tag Team Titles: Colossal Connection vs. Demolition

Date: January 23, 1990

Location: Civic Center, Fort Myers, Florida

Attendance: 5,000

Andre and Haku are defending in what must be an early Wrestlemania dry run. On a side note, assuming what I've seen is true, this is the same show where Scott Hall made his company debut yet we're seeing this instead. How odd indeed. Or maybe that wasn't filmed, which is always a possibility. Haku and Smash start things off with Smash getting pummeled

in the corner (not quite clubberin but it's close).

The ax handles get Smash out of trouble and a tag with the referee not paying the slightest bit of attention brings Ax in. We're in an early chinlock from Ax, followed by a neck crank from Smash. Haku finally fights up and brings in the much bigger man to stand on Smash's chest. Smash does manage to get in a shot to the ribs though and Demolition manages to hammer Andre down.

Andre opts to grab Ax's face to take over though and the champs get him down in the corner. We hit the choke with the singlet, followed by the worst looking shoulders in the corner I've ever seen. I mean Andre's shoulders are a good foot from Ax's ribs, though thankfully he's barely selling them. Haku charges into an elbow and the hot tag brings in Smash (quite the reaction too) as everything breaks down. A double clothesline drops Andre and Demolition stupidly hits him with the titles for the DQ at 8:04.

Rating: D. Demolition looked really dumb here and that's not exactly their style. That's something you would expect more out of a Hogan match and I mean that as a rather strong insult. The Connection not being the most thrilling team in the world didn't help things either and Andre was looking especially lumbering out there.

Intercontinental Title: Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage

Date: January 23, 1990

Location: Civic Center, Fort Myers, Florida

Attendance: 5,000

Savage (now the King) is challenging of course but FAR more interesting is the fact that this is raw footage, meaning there's one angle for the entire match (only from the hard camera), complete with a time counter on the bottom of the screen. That certainly makes this feel unique, which is the entire point of something like this.

Sherri's early distraction lets Savage knee Warrior to the floor but again the high crossbody is pulled out of the air. Warrior stomps away in the Tree of Woe, followed by a backslide of all things for two. A backdrop gives us Savage's sweet looking bump to the floor but Sherri

gets in some eye raking for a breather. Savage is right back with a top rope ax handle for two, only to miss a crossbody and fall out to the floor.

Warrior can't even get back up though and it's the big elbow for two. The loaded purse gets the same and NOW the kickout gets a good reaction. Warrior Warriors Up and some clotheslines have Savage tied up in the ropes. A missed charge sends Warrior to the floor though with Savage following for the double countout at 8:14 (even though Warrior was ON HIS FEET IN THE RING when the referee counted ten).

Rating: B-. They were really starting to figure each other out at this point and that made for much better matches. I know Warrior wasn't exactly an in-ring star but to go from where he was in 1987 to where he is here is absolutely remarkable. He was a lumbering oaf back in the day and now he's a lumbering oaf having some snappy matches. Things would get even better in about fourteen months when these two had a masterpiece at Wrestlemania VII but for the time, this was very surprisingly good stuff.

Disc 2

Sean and Charly talk about how fun this has been with Sean mentioning Alfred Hayes' God Save the Queen party back in the day. They drop a tape (giving us a shot of an Ultimate Warrior Wrestling Buddy for some serious points) as Charly asks Sean why he's here. Sean ducks the question and pulls out Wrestlemania VI. Charly says she was in daycare during that show and we see a clip of Mary Tyler Moore at Wrestlemania. Sean: "After that, I really felt like I made it after all.". Charly: "I don't get it.". I don't care how well she's rocking the jeans she has on in this thing. That is unacceptable.

Earthquake vs. Hulk Hogan

Date: April 3, 1990

Location: Onondaga War Memorial, Syracuse, New York

Two days after Wrestlemania VI here so Hogan is actually on a losing streak. Earthquake (now in his signature gear) jumps Hogan to little avail as some right hands have the big man in trouble. Some running shots can't drop Earthquake but a jumping knee gets him half down.

Hogan makes the mistake of going after Jimmy Hart though, allowing Earthquake to post him and take over. Some splashes in the corner and a backbreaker have Hart rather elated and a bearhug looks to make it even worse. It also makes me a bit sleepy as it stays on for a very long time, though it's hard to complain about a dark match like this. The Earthquake gets two and Hogan makes the comeback to finish with the usual at 7:36.

Rating: C. It's really pretty easy to see why these two made so much money together. Earthquake was big enough to look like a credible monster and you know Hogan knows EXACTLY what to do with someone like that. Throw in Earthquake putting him on the shelf for most of the summer and this was made of money. We weren't quite there yet but there was a lot of gas left in Hogan's tank, especially for something like this.

Posing ensues.

Big Boss Man vs. Ted DiBiase

Date: April 3, 1990

Location: Onondaga War Memorial, Syracuse, New York

Same show as the previous match and a match that was set up at Wrestlemania. DiBiase jumps him at the bell but gets kicked in the face for his efforts. The fast punches in the corner (Boss Man was great at those) look to set up a running splash but Virgil trips him up. Ted knocks Boss Man outside where the most livid kids I've ever seen yell at DiBiase with reckless abandon. Seriously, they impressed me.

Back in and the falling punch gives Ted two. It works so well that they do it again and Boss Man does his drunken selling (not a bad thing). A double clothesline puts both guys down, followed by Boss Man punching him out of the air. DiBiase gets backdropped to give us a good looking flip and a spinebuster draws Virgil in for the DQ at 4:13.

Rating: D+. No time to do much here but it's more than anything we got on TV out of this. You would think this would be another layup of a match with Boss Man being able to play a blue collar guy against DiBiase's money but for some reason it seemed to be a one off idea that was dropped without too much followup. Nothing to this one but it was fun for a bit.

The double teaming is on post match but Boss Man fights back and handcuffs Virgil.

Rick Rude/Mr. Perfect vs. Ultimate Warrior/Kerry Von Erich

Date: August 8, 1990

Location: Providence Civic Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Attendance: 15,000

These would both be matches in about two and a half weeks at Summerslam. Warrior only has his cheek painted here and it's a really weird look. The stall button is stuck again as a minute goes by before the heels get in the ring. Perfect gets in after about a minute and a half. Warrior and Perfect start but it's quickly off to Von Erich for some hard right hands in the corner.

The fans are WAY into Kerry here, which really isn't surprising given his crazy levels of charisma. The villains are sent outside and rammed into each other, meaning it's time for a meeting. Back in and more right hands rock Perfect, including one to turn him inside out. Rude comes in and gets to face Warrior, meaning it's time to hit the backpedal in a hurry.

It's back to Von Erich for the Tornado Punch (seemingly not yet a finisher) and more right hands until Perfect knees him in the back. The necksnap keeps Tornado in trouble and it's time to work on the leg, including a toehold on the phantom foot, which HAS to be a rib. Rude gets in some right hands and it's straight back to Perfect for a chinlock.

You can hear Heenan's instructions very plainly here and it actually adds a lot to the match, especially due to the lack of commentary. They don't listen very well though and it's Perfect dropkicking Rude by mistake, setting up the hot tag to Warrior. House is cleaned in a hurry and the Warrior Splash ends Perfect at 11:51.

Rating: C+. If there is a more fun match based on the participants involved alone, I can't wait to see it. This was a ton of fun with the fans loving what they were seeing and Warrior having the manic energy to really carry things. Von Erich was a fresh addition too and when you have a perfect heel team like Rude and Perfect, what more can you ask for?

Legion of Doom vs. Demolition

Date: October 30, 1990

Location: Allen County Coliseum, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis

Well this works. For some reason they never actually had this one on TV, which makes little sense given how perfect it could have been. At least do it on a big house show and air it on Prime Time or something.

Demolition is wrestling in masks here and has more sinister music, making them look like a bunch of generic jobbers.

LOD starts in on Crush's arm until Animal throws him over the top. Smash (I think) gets in a cheap shot on the floor though and it's Crush taking over back inside. The Decapitator is broken up and it's back to Hawk to clean house with his variety of clotheslines. The top rope version pins Smash at 2:28. Well that was nothing.

War Eagle vs. Dale Wolfe

Date: January 8, 1991

Location: UTC Arena, Chattanooga, Tennessee

It's another one with the time counter on the screen. War Eagle is better known as Tatanka and for some reason he comes out to the old Young Stallions' song Crank It Up, which doesn't fit whatsoever with the war dance around the ring. What does fit is his crazy awesome physique which is up there with Lex Luger's.

Wolfe bails to the floor to start before coming back in, only to get armdragged outside again. That means a walk up the aisle until Wolfe comes back in to get his arm cranked. Wolfe fights back and grabs a chinlock, which goes as well as you would expect. We hit the war dance before some chops, followed by the Samoan drop to give Eagle the pin (with the camera zooming in on the crowd during the count for no apparent reason) at 4:56.

Rating: D-. Pretty bad match here as Eagle didn't have the fire in his comeback but it's easy to see why they kept at it with him based on the physique alone. For some reason it took him the better part of forever to get onto the actual shows but once he got there, he had a very nice midcard career for himself.

Charly finds Rick Martel's "Yes I Am A Model" button on top of a tape of a blindfold match from two months before Wrestlemania VII. We recap the story of Martel blinding Jake Roberts with his Arrogance cologne to set up their match at Wrestlemania, which saw them both wearing hoods (including a hole you could see through).

Jake Roberts vs. Rick Martel

Date: January 29, 1991

Location: Savannah Civic Center, Savannah, Georgia

This is a blindfold match and seems to be a practice match for their disaster at Wrestlemania VII. The bell rings before they put the blindfolds on so we get a good bit of stalling. After a minute of waiting to put them on, the bell rings again because this whole time thing is confusing.

Just like at Wrestlemania, Jake uses the crowd to help him find Martel and we get some early stumbling around without any significant contact. Martel gets him down and chokes away, only to miss a backdrop attempt as Jake runs by him. Things reset again and Martel goes to the floor for no apparent reason. A touch of the snake bag freaks Rick out but he finally manages to pull Jake outside for a ram into the apron.

That works fine...and then Martel loses him. Instead he finds a chair and pokes at nothing with it, eventually backing into and hitting the post with said chair (same spot from Wrestlemania). Speaking of Wrestlemania, can we watch that instead? It's actually better than this mess.

Martel finally gets back in as we're somehow SEVEN MINUTES into this. They bump into each other with Martel getting in some right hands and a slam before missing an elbow drop (see also: Wrestlemania VII). Martel finally gives up and takes the hood off to knock Roberts into the ropes. Arrogance is loaded up but Martel gets caught with the DDT for the pin at 8:44.

Rating: F. It was stupid at Wrestlemania and this was even worse without Bobby Heenan making a mockery of the thing (Heenan: "Excuse me. MARTEL! HE'S ON THE FLOOR!"). This wasn't even a match as Jake hit a single move the whole time and Martel might have hit seven (if you count three right

hands as three). This would have been a better inclusion if we hadn't seen it before in a somehow better version.

Ted DiBiase vs. Sid Justice

Date: July 8, 1991

Location: Saddledome, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Attendance: 8,500

What in the holy sweet name of donuts and red Gatorade is this? Actually this would be Sid's WWF in-ring debut as he had left WCW less than two months earlier. Sherri offers an early distraction so DiBiase can get in a cheap shot, only to get dropped by a chokeslam. The screeching is on early as Sid knocks him outside and an atomic drop does it again, this time with one of those great DiBiase bumps.

DiBiase tries to brawl on the floor and is quickly posted as you might expect. Sherri offers a distraction though, allowing Ted to get in a loaded purse shot...which doesn't even drop Sid off his feet. Some right hands give DiBiase two with the power kickout scaring the heck out of Sherri. That falling middle rope elbow misses though (as always) and Sid scores with a Stinger Splash. The powerbomb ends Ted at 5:41.

Rating: D. Here's the thing that got Sid so over: sure he's horrible in the ring and no he can't work a match to save his life but he has that pure, raw charisma and fans are going to gravitate to that every single time. That's what he did here and the fans were into him, even in a promotion he had never worked in before. That's impressive and the match worked as a result. Well that and having DiBiase in there too.

Undertaker vs. Ultimate Warrior

Date: August 19, 1991

Location: War Memorial, Rochester, New York

Casket match, which was a brand new concept at the time. Back in April, Undertaker had sealed Warrior inside a casket, which eventually led to Jake Roberts teaming up with Undertaker. The Warrior vs. Roberts feud never happened as Warrior was released from the company about a week after this, but the build was excellent and gave us Undertaker's face turn soon after this.

Warrior slugs away on the floor to start and knocks Undertaker into the steps, which barely registers any response. They get inside where Warrior is cut off with a clothesline and a running boot in the corner. A slam has no effect on Undertaker so Warrior tries his running clotheslines instead.

Undertaker uppercuts him down and hits the safest Tombstone of all time to knock Warrior lukewarm. Choking won't get Warrior in the casket as it revives him instead. How exactly did that guy work anyway? Undertaker finally gets him in but, after waiting the better part of thirty seconds with his hand on the lid, can't shut the thing. Instead, Warrior steals the urn and clocks Undertaker, setting up the win at 5:39.

Rating: D+. There's a reason this idea has been around for so many years. It might not be the most complicated thing in the world but it's a perfect way to keep someone protected while also giving the winner a victory. Undertaker would of course be fine as losing a dark match isn't going to hurt anyone. Bad match of course, but the fans were WAY into the near finishes.

Warrior leaves and Undertaker pops out of the casket, making the zombie look feel all the stronger.

Ric Flair vs. Roddy Piper

Date: October 1, 1991

Location: Huntington Civic Center, Huntington, West Virginia

Another dark match at a Prime Time taping with the time code included. They had been trading insults on TV in recent weeks so the crowd should be hot here. Flair even has the uncensored Big Gold Belt to really make it feel different. Piper wastes no time in hammering away in the corner and raking Flair's eyes on the top rope ala Arn Anderson.

They head outside with Flair getting the better of it (that's an odd one) before losing a chop off back inside. Ric goes to the eyes though (that's more like it) and now the chops work a bit better. It's already off to the leg with some kicks and the cannonball but Piper does his best Sting impression when he no sells the chops in the corner. Flair gets slammed off the top (such a stupid Nature Boy) but a classic low blow brings

Piper down again. It's chair time but the ref gets bumped, meaning there's no count off Piper's small package.

In the most ridiculous visual I've seen in a long time, a second referee comes in, bypasses Piper covering Flair to check on the down referee, and then JUMPS UP to count a pin on Piper when Flair rolls him up at 5:54. There's no bell though and Piper beats Flair up some more, only to have the referee take the chair away. Flair grabs another rollup to pin Piper again at 6:52. Geez was Piper in trouble or something?

Rating: C. The wrestling worked just fine, which was all you could have expected given how many times these two have fought each other. Their stuff about nine years earlier was excellent and there was no reason to believe this would have been anything else. The ending was ridiculous though and I have no idea why they jobbed Piper twice (more than he had done in most years) in less than a minute. At least tell me the referee was fired for being that biased.

Post match Piper stays on Flair, hitting a few weak chair shots.

Back to Charly and Sean, including a box labeled No Holds Barred: Alt Ending. I laughed. Anyway, Charly finds a taped labeled Mr. Madness, which is a house show only character that Randy Savage did after losing his career at Wrestlemania VII. In other words, it's the original Juan Cena. This is fallout from the Savage/Liz wedding reception where Jake and Undertaker interrupted with a cobra because they're real villains.

Mr. Madness vs. Jake Roberts

Date: November 12, 1991

Location: Springfield Civic Center, Springfield, Massachusetts

Attendance: 8,500

Dig that Trust Me entrance music for Jake! Unfortunately Mr. Madness isn't a costume or anything and is just the same old Savage. You know, because that's a huge problem. But really, not even a mask or a different outfit or anything. Kind of disappointing really. Savage is all over him to start and elbows Jake (wearing a snake handler's glove) in the throat, only to get kneed in the ribs.

Some choking on the ropes sets up the snap left hands. The DDT is broken up but Savage is sent outside as the beating continues. Jake gets posted though and Savage hits the top rope ax handle. Savage chairs him down and even though there's no bell, we'll say it's a DQ at 4:32.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here and I was actually disappointed by having Mr. Madness just be the same old Savage. If it's just a house show, just say that it's a trial period or something. I don't get the idea here but it's not like it really matters. What does matter is how the match was nothing as Savage showed far less fire than usual and got beaten up for a long time before snapping at the end. It makes sense, but their match less than a month later at This Tuesday in Texas was great.

More chair shots send Jake bailing before he can pull out the snake.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Ric Flair

Date: November 12, 1991

Location: Springfield Civic Center, Springfield, Massachusetts

Attendance: 8,500

Same show as before with Hogan defending, but more importantly this includes the FAKE Big Gold Belt, which is exactly what it sounds like. They were still doing the Real World Champion deal but had lost the NWA World Title so this was something they had made. It was never on TV (the blurred belt was often a Tag Team Title, which looked ridiculous in person) and to the best of my knowledge, there's only one actual photo of the thing. Oddly enough it looks like a cross between the Big Gold Belt and the AWA World Title, which is quite the visual. Flair also has Mr. Perfect with him.

The crowd is RABID for Hogan here and we hit the early stall button. The only contact in the first two minutes is Flair shoving Hogan away. A second shove gets us to two and a half minutes and Flair won't lock up. More walking around and WOOing ensues until Hogan draws a line on the mat. Flair crosses it with a headlock and Hogan actually goes down to one knee. A shoulder puts Flair down and it's time to slow down again, this time with Hogan getting the headlock.

Hogan clotheslines him to the floor and the fans are going nuts for their

hero. Back in and Flair says he's been there twenty four times (not even he could think he has that many World Titles so I'm not sure what that means) but a poke to the eye puts Hogan in trouble. Hogan no sells the chops and fires off right hands in the corner, followed by biting the forehead. In the words of Gorilla Monsoon, perhaps hungry.

The Flair Flip sets up a clothesline off the apron and that's enough for a walk up the aisle. Ever the champion, Hogan won't let that happen and drags Flair back inside and is promptly snapmared down for a knee to the head. Flair whips him into the corner but Hogan drops to the mat for some reason (like you would on a regular running the ropes spot), meaning Flair has to jump over him to hit the buckle.

Hogan trips him up from behind and rakes the face to complete a rather strange (yet effective) sequence. Perfect offers a distraction though and it's time to go after the knee. A good crotching against the post keeps Hogan in trouble and the knee is kicked again. The Figure Four is broken up but since Flair never learns, Hogan breaks it up a second time.

Speaking of never learns, Flair, top rope, slam. Hogan yells at the referee though, allowing Perfect to slip in the foreign object for the knockout shot. The Hulking Up is on but Flair bails outside after the big boot. Hogan follows and gets poked in the eye for his efforts but is still able to send Flair into the steps for the countout win at 14:54.

Rating: B. Heck of a match here but it's a great example of why Hogan vs. Flair never worked in the WWF. Simply put: no one is going to buy Flair as a threat to win the title. Hogan doesn't get pinned and he's never going to give up in the Figure Four, so why should I buy that Flair is going to take the title? Flair was a great character and knows how to get people to care about him, but it was still a culture clash with Flair not being able to do his style of a match (meaning he would need at least half an hour) and never being a real threat. It was a good idea on paper, but practically this was never going to work.

Posing ensues.

And now, a Piper's Pit from Toledo, Ohio on April 7, 1992 with Piper fresh off losing the Intercontinental Title. Piper brings up losing the

title and praises Bret as a great champion. He was about to leave and go mess with his Jetski but the company wanted him back for some Pits. The company is going through some scandals at the moment (whoa) and it's time to get something positive going.

Tonight, the Pit is going to be based on audience participation. Therefore, whenever the fans think the person is lying, they need to make a barking noise. The first guest: the Brooklyn Brawler with Piper asking fans for questions. First up is why doesn't Brawler take a bath? Brawler says he's a millionaire. Piper asks what that's going to do with taking a bath but Brawler says he's going TO BE a millionaire.

Brawler won't look at Piper but eventually says he'll be the next World Heavyweight Champion. Piper: "I ain't never seen you win a match." He'll do it by not doing what Piper did at Wrestlemania so Brawler grabs the bell (which Piper refused to use against Hart, and if you don't that, you shouldn't be here). Violence is threatened so Piper pokes him in the eye and clocks Brawler with the bell instead.

Bret Hart vs. British Bulldog

Date: June 30, 1992

Location: Broome County Arena, Binghamton, New York

Attendance: 4,000

Bret's Intercontinental Title isn't on the line and I'm assuming this is a practice match for Summerslam. Well in theory it's non-title as the title is held up before the match and nothing is said. There's always a chance that this might have been planned for a home video release and then changed so maybe the announcement would be dubbed in later. A headlock and shoulder block go badly for Bret as he gets knocked all the way outside.

Back in and Bret takes him down with a headlock for a change before a small package gets two. It's an interesting style here as they're moving very fast in bursts and then slowing it back down. The movement is very crisp though, as you might expect. Bulldog escapes the headlock and grabs a hammerlock to start in on the arm. Back up and it's Bret cranking on the arm until Bulldog rolls away (that must be a family thing) and snaps

on the armbar all over again. Bret fights up and gets in an atomic drop, followed by the chinlock.

Now it's Bulldog getting up and trying the crucifix, only to get dropped hard on his back instead. A backslid gets two on Bret and the fans are WAY into these near falls. The middle rope elbow connects and Bulldog has a broken nose. The threat of a Sharpshooter has Bulldog scurrying for the ropes and an enziguri of all things puts Bret on his face. There's the delayed vertical for two but Bret is right back up with a sleeper to slow things down. Bulldog fights up and it's a double hiptoss to put both guys on the floor. Bulldog gets back in first but Bret jumps over him and grabs a German suplex for the pin at 14:20.

Rating: B. They weren't quite up to the Summerslam level but that's not exactly a fair comparison. These two definitely had chemistry together and it's almost strange to see Bret get a clean pin on him. It's also interesting that their famous match is so much different than this one. That shows how talented they are as they had two good matches with different structures while most people can't even have one of them.

Papa Shango/Kamala vs. Bret Hart/Ultimate Warrior

Date: October 13, 1992

Location: Argidome, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

I'd give good money to hear either of these teams just having a conversation about anything. Bret literally won the WWF Title the day before and Warrior is in his weird singlet look here. Warrior and Kamala start with the guy with the painted moons on his stomach (Meaning Kamala. You know, that might actually need some clarification in this case as you never know with Warrior.) bails in fear. Instead he'll try Bret and has to bail to the ropes to get out of an armbar.

For some reason Bret agrees to a test of strength (Ugandans are known for their Greco Roman Knuckle Locks) and then stomps on Kamala's bare foot to show off some intelligence. Kamala hands it off to the guy with boots as I continue to be astounded that he's the future Godfather. Some shoulders give Bret a breather but Kamala hits him in the throat to cut him off again. Shango charges into a knee though and it's back to Warrior for

three clotheslines on Shango, a slam to Kamala and the splash to pin Shango at 7:09.

Rating: D. This would have been bad even by house show main event standards, which is about as low as you can get at this point. Maybe Bret was still jazzed from winning the title or something but this one wasn't working for me. Then again, what were you expecting with these combinations?

Undertaker vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Date: January 26, 1993

Location: Convention Center, Fresno, California

There's a timer at the bottom (though a different kind than the previous versions), the quality seems a lot lower and neither guy has an entrance. It's also hard cam only again, which is always a weird way to watch wrestling. Bigelow waits over a minute before throwing the first punch and gets choked in the corner as a result. You can't waste time around here like that.

Old School connects but the jumping clothesline misses and Undertaker falls out to the floor. They head outside...and we lose them because we only have the hard cam. Back in and Undertaker misses a charge in the corner, allowing Bigelow to hit a clothesline to the back of the head. A headbutt keeps Undertaker down but the top rope version misses, allowing Undertaker to finish with a chokeslam at 5:25. The fans RUN for the exits as the show is over in a funny visual.

Rating: D. Another weak one here but this wasn't supposed to be anything other than sending a big name out there to end the long taping session. Undertaker vs. Bigelow is a match that could have been good under the right circumstances and that's not the case in a five minute match where we couldn't see part of it. Not good, but that's not their fault.

A very excited Charly starts making Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle puns because she's just that awesome. What you are about to see is real and a MAJOR reason why I wanted to see this set.

Toxic Turtles vs. Tommy Stevenson/Ron Preston

Date: March 9, 1993

Location: Augusta Civic Center, Augusta, Georgia

Attendance: 8,000

That would be Tom and Terry Turtle (Barry Hardy/Duane Gill respectively) and it's EXACTLY what it sounds like. This lasted one night only for any two of the 19 obvious reasons you've thought of so far. The ring announcer makes sure to announce that the jobbers weigh 488lbs combined rather than saying one of the average sized guys weighs that on his own. For absolutely no apparent reason, the Turtles are from Terrytown, Texas. The costumes are TMNT costumes almost to perfection, even down to the masks.

Since you can't see their faces, we'll say Raphael starts with Preston and it's a lot of rolling around while the fans are SILENT. Like even the kids aren't responding, mainly because TMNT was WAY past its peak at this point. Donatello comes in for a double dropkick and a near fall but gets stuck on his shell and needs assistance getting up. These guys are like the anti-Hunchbacks.

Preston gets his arm worked over and the booing begins. Raphael comes back in for some chops to the head and a headbutt, followed by a slingshot hilo for the pin at 2:19. Stevenson was never in the match and it was crazy weird, but the Turtles fought with honor, and that's all that matters. This was everything I expected and worse, but my goodness what a cool thing to see, just due to hearing about it for years.

Disc 3

To show you this show's sense of humor and for you who will get this joke, this disc starts with Sean throwing away a box labeled T. Magee because there's nothing in it. Again, I laughed. Next up is a box labeled 1993 Post WM 9. This next one might be a little scary.

Undertaker vs. Giant Gonzalez

Date: April 5, 1993

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 7,000

Well yeah it is scary. This is the day after Wrestlemania IX so that box is quite accurate. Also another one with the timer and hard cam only. Again: it's so strange to have the music playing but not cutting to the entrance, meaning the first time you see Undertaker is as he gets on the apron.

Gonzalez jumps him from behind to start and sends Undertaker into a few buckles. A clothesline sends Undertaker outside and the camera shifts to the side so we can see the brawl. Back in and Gonzalez kicks him in the chest, followed by a clothesline to the floor. Undertaker comes right back with headbutts and uppercuts but Gonzalez steals the urn and clocks Undertaker for the DQ at 3:28.

Rating: F. Yeah there's really defending Gonzalez as he really is one of the worst of all time. Part of the problem is he's just so big and there's not much that can be done with him. When Undertaker can't do anything with you, you're to the point where there's nothing that can be done. This was somehow worse than Wrestlemania, which I didn't think was possible.

Undertaker sits up and fights Gonzalez to the back. Somehow this kept going until Summerslam.

Smoking Gunns vs. Barry Horowitz/Reno Riggins

Date: April 5, 1993

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 7,000

Same show as the previous match and The Gunns are Kip Winchester (Billy) and Brett Colt (Bart). The Gunns are making their debut here and are virtually the same, save for a few (mostly cosmetic) changes. It's even the same gear and entrance costumes. The female fans seem VERY pleased when the Gunns take their shirts off.

Billy and Barry start as we're on the wide shot from the hard camera again. A hiptoss takes Barry down to start and we're in an early armbar. Bart does the same as to Reno as they're certainly not shying away from the early arm work. A double Russian legsweep gets two but the referee isn't pleased with the cheating, allowing Barry and Reno (sounds like a

bad Vegas act) to choke Bart in the corner.

Reno grabs an abdominal stretch as the Gunns are giving up a lot more than I would have expected here. A back elbow gives Barry two and it's back to Reno for a chinlock. Back up and Bart shoulders him down, allowing the hot tag off to Billy. Everything breaks down and Billy cleans house with some dropkicks. A powerslam sets up the top rope bulldog to give Billy the pin at 9:41.

Rating: C-. Not half bad here as the Gunns were clearly good enough to get a job in the near future as a result. The Gunns were actually a pretty good team for their time, even though they were a pretty standard gimmick. That being said, the division was hardly worth anything in the first place so any good team (and the Gunns were one) was going to do well.

Intercontinental Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Mr. Perfect

Date: April 6, 1993

Location: Tuscon Convention Center, Tuscon, Arizona

Shawn is defending and the camera doesn't move again. Perfect wastes no time in slugging away and the fans are right there with him. The running knee lifts knock Shawn into the corner and there's a whip to send Shawn out to the floor. They brawl on the outside and it's kind of hard to see what's going on as they're opposite the camera.

Back in with Shawn choking on the ropes until a hard right hand knocks him away. Shawn drops him again though and we hit the chinlock. The fans deem it perfect so at least they appreciate good chinlockery. I'm sure Shawn would agree too. Perfect fights up and slams Shawn down by the hair, followed by a toss across the phone by said hair. That's followed by a crotching against the post and a hard shot to the head gives Perfect two.

The ref gets bumped and Shawn brings in the title, only to have it knocked away. There's the PerfectPlex and a second referee comes in to count the pin at 6:05. As ring announcer Mike McGuirk declares Perfect "the new champion of the World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Title", the first ref waves it off because of the bump and Shawn retains

via DQ.

Rating: C. Totally standard match here but the fans were entirely into the whole thing. They probably did this in every city and there's nothing wrong with that as it gives the fans something fun and it's not like there's a ton of ways to know what's going on at the moment, at least not to the masses. Also, better chemistry here than they had at Summerslam.

Skippy Taylor vs. Tazmaniac

Date: May 5, 1993

Location: Exposition Building, Portland, Maine

Attendance: 2,700

Now this is interesting as we have Scotty 2 Hotty vs. Taz when Taz was basically a caveman. Scotty is from Maine and would likely just be a local job guy at this point. Tazmaniac wristlocks him into a suplex but Taylor flips over his back into a dropkick. A hard headbutt puts Skippy (yes Skippy) down and it's a Tazplex followed by a chinlock. Back up and Scotty (who is oddly the bigger guy here) gets suplexed again and we hit a neck crank. A sunset flip gives Taylor two and Taz goes up (Huh?), only to dive into a right hand to the ribs. Not that it matters as an overhead belly to belly gives Taz the pin at 3:30.

Rating: D. What were you expecting from a caveman character? Taylor was as generic of a wrestler as you could have asked for at this point and yet he still looked better than Taz. What are you expecting to get out of a caveman? Nothing match of course and I'm not surprised that neither guy was hired at this point, though Taylor likely wasn't a candidate for a job anyway.

Bret Hart vs. Yokozuna

Date: May 5, 1993

Location: Exposition Center, Portland, Maine

Attendance: 2,700

Same show as before (but not a hard camera match for some reason) and the final match of the show. Bret gets a strong reaction as you might have guessed. We get the long delay for Yokozuna and Mr. Fuji's ritual and you can hear Bret call him fat. Bret even jumps him during the salt throwing

and alternates between shots to the head and stomach. See, he's versatile. A clothesline takes Bret down though and it's time to slow things up.

Choking on the ropes wakes Bret up a bit but his comeback earns him a right hand to the throat. A trip to the floor sees Bret going into the steps and the big leg crushes him again back inside. The brilliant fans chant USA to cheer on the Canadian...and it seems to work as Bret avoids the corner charges. A middle rope bulldog gives Bret two and a regular version drops the big man again. Bret gets the Sharpshooter but Fuji comes in for the DQ at 5:26.

Rating: D+. They weren't trying here but a lot of that was due to the amount of time they had. It's not like these two are going to have a great match in the first place and cutting it down to less than five minutes counting everything with the salt didn't do it any favors. Yokozuna would get better after crushing Hogan in about a month.

Post match Owen Hart comes in for the save but gets beaten down until Bret makes the save with a chair.

Money Inc. vs. Mega Maniacs

Date: June 14, 1993

Location: Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio

Attendance: 3,700

Hogan/Beefcake of course in another Wrestlemania IX rematch. This is the day after King of the Ring 1993 and Money Inc.'s second match of the night after losing the Tag Team Titles to the Steiners earlier in the night (which they would win back two days later, only to lose them for good to the Steiners again three days later). Sgt. Slaughter is guest referee and you can see the Coliseum Video logos, meaning this was likely originally intended for home release but didn't make it for whatever reason.

Money Inc. jumps them during the entrances and get cleared out in as short of a fashion as you would guess. Hogan poses and egads it's still weird to see him this small in the WWF. More long form stalling ensues (definitely a thing back then and a lost art today) with Slaughter doing

a weapons check as we're finally ready to go two minutes plus after the bell. Hogan and DiBiase finally start...and we get a second bell. Egads why is this so complicated?

DiBiase forearm him in the back to start but Slaughter shoves Ted out of the corner when Hogan is on the ropes. How physical of him. Hogan uses the distraction to poke DiBiase in the eye (because Bobby Heenan was right about him being a no good cheater) and it's off to Beefcake for some chops in the corner. IRS wants time out until DiBiase goes back in, walking right into an armdrag.

Ted suggests a hair pull and demonstrates it on Slaughter, but the fans (and Hogan) say it didn't happen. Beefcake gets another armdrag and DiBiase says he did it again. Therefore Slaughter demonstrates the armdrag on DiBiase before tripping him down to give Beefcake two. Everything breaks down and it's Hogan clotheslining IRS so Beefcake can hit him in the throat. Slaughter of course yells, so Hogan gets in a cheap shot. Hogan and Beefcake are making a snappy heel team here.

An IRS distraction finally lets DiBiase get in a few cheap shots and Slaughter cuts Hogan off from making a save. We're firmly in the formula now, including IRS sweating profusely despite not doing much yet. DiBiase grabs a chinlock and now we get in an argument with Slaughter over the lack of a tag. Therefore, IRS has to let go of his chinlock so DiBiase can get in his own.

It's back to IRS for more chinlockery as this is just dying in a hurry. Beefcake is up at the third arm drop and suplexes his way to freedom, allowing the hot tag to Hogan. Everything breaks down and IRS grabs the briefcase, which Hogan uses to clock DiBiase in the head. Slaughter then clocks both members of Money Inc...and disqualifies them at 12:21?

Rating: D-. What in the world was that supposed to be? Were they taking the night off (from that rigorous Hogan formula) and wanted to do something more "fun"? This might have worked if you cut off four minutes and REALLY toned down the Slaughter stuff (he came off as the star of the match) but as it was, total misfire here and really boring for the most part. Then again it's not like the Wrestlemania match was anything good

either.

Posing ensues, as is the custom.

Lex Luger vs. Ludvig Borga

Date: October 20, 1993

Location: Burlington Civic Center, Burlington, Vermont

Attendance: 2,500

Another Coliseum Video match and my goodness the fans have cooled on Luger since his Summerslam loss. Like he's just a guy now. The USA chants begin and of course annoy Borga but just makes me think Jim Duggan could get an even stronger response at this point (impressive since he was gone from the company).

Borga powers him down to start and let's stand around a bit. A shove sends Luger into the corner and we're somehow almost three minutes into this. Luger shouts about Finland as Borga almost gets in a fight with a fan, who takes his shirt off.

The fans are rather pleased (no clue why) so Luger calms them down with a headlock. Well you wouldn't want to get them too fired up. We stall some more and it's time for a USA chant, followed by a wristlock from Luger. A shoulder and crossbody put Borga down for a second and it's right back to the wristlock.

Lex charges into a boot in the corner though and Borga punches him down. But wait, let's yell at the shirtless guy some more. At this point it's clear why this didn't make Coliseum Video and we're all better for that. Of course it's off to the chinlock before a clothesline gets two on Lex. Luger's rollup gets the same but he comes back with the forearm for the pin at 11:13.

Rating: F. It's kind of amazing how terrible Luger could be when he wasn't motivated, which is made worse by how rarely he actually was motivated. This was terrible and one of the worst matches on the set so far. Then again that's not surprising as this was a very dark era for the company and it wasn't about to get any better.

Randy Savage vs. Crush

Date: February 1, 1994

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

Attendance: 3,000

The time clock is back. This is part of a big feud as Crush turned on Savage and cost him his announcer's job, sending Savage over the edge (took about six inches of pushing) and into a rage for revenge. Savage jumps him on the floor to start and posts his head for good measure. They get inside with Savage going for the elbow way too early but getting distracted by Mr. Fuji anyway.

Savage grabs a chair instead but the referee yelling at him allows Crush to get in his first big shot. Suddenly we go to a very wide shot (blood maybe)...and then zoom back in like usual. Is the director drunk or something? Crush knocks him down and poses a bit, allowing Savage to grab a hiptoss. The ax handle sends Crush rolling outside and he sends Savage into the barricade.

Back in we hit the bearhug as the USA chants begin. At least there's a Japanese flag to go with the Hawaiian villain. Some shots to the back keep Savage down and it's off to a bow and arrow hold of all things. Not exactly what you would expect from Crush but it's not a match people are supposed to see. A slow motion tilt-a-whirl backbreaker gives Crush two but Savage finally sends him into the buckle for a breather. Crush's suplex is reversed so he goes for the salt, only to have it knocked into his face. Now the elbow can give Savage the pin at 8:54.

Rating: C-. Not bad at all here as Savage could sell perfectly and Crush could work the back more than well enough. The anger was there to start but kind of died near the end, though at least there was a story and some intensity. I've always liked this feud and while this was a far cry from their Wrestlemania match (which I liked as well), it was an improvement over what we've been seeing.

WWF World Title: Bret Hart vs. Jim Neidhart

Date: October 21, 1994

Location: Montreal Forum, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Attendance: 16,843

Bret is defending (in case you're REALLY slow) as Neidhart returned earlier in the year to back Bret up, only to turn on him and side with Owen. I've seen these two have a title match from MSG in the same month and wasn't incredibly impressed but maybe the Canadian air will help things out. Bret gets a hero's reaction (of course) but Neidhart jumps him during the entrance.

Without even taking the jacket off, Bret comes back with a clothesline and the Sharpshooter, only to have Jeff Jarrett of all people run in for the beatdown. I believe the fans chant for Razor as we seem destined for a tag match but instead, this one begins (the bell never rang to start it) as Bret is mostly done. So yeah, Bret is getting screwed in a WWF World Title match in Montreal THREE YEARS EARLIER. Egads man stay in Calgary.

Bret avoids an early charge and hammers away before grabbing the beard. They head outside where Anvil forearm a post and Bret shoves Jarrett, who is still at ringside in a chair, over. Back in and Bret does the chest first buckle bump (well duh) and we hit a cobra clutch, which was actually called the Anvilizer. I have no idea why he called it that, what it means, or when in the world he ever used a sleeper to win a match but Neidhart could be a strange guy.

Neidhart lets it go and pounds him down as we're into a pretty standard wheelhouse now. It's off to the bearhug but Bret is out in a hurry, only to get kneed in the ribs for his efforts. The running powerslam (now that should be the Anvilizer) gets two and it's back to the floor, hopefully with less forearming the post. That goes nowhere so Bret pulls him back in for a bulldog. The Russian legsweep gets two and Jarrett is rather pleased. Neidhart blocks the middle rope elbow though and catches Bret on top with the slam. For some reason Neidhart decides to try a top rope splash and the miss sets up the rollup to retain at 6:35.

Rating: C. They were smart to keep this short as I'm not sure how much longer Neidhart could have gone in a singles match. He's very one dimensional (nothing wrong with that as there's always a place for a

power guy like Neidhart) and that's not the best choice to go in a long match. Thankfully Bret is right there to keep things together, even with the rather pesky Jarrett interference, which didn't mean anything in the end.

Sean is on a ladder with Charly saying this isn't the safest thing in the world. Sean: "Try interviewing Andre the Giant after Bobby the Brain Heenan told him that I said he wasn't a real giant." He's found some unseen ladder matches and Charly doesn't buy it because everyone has seen the same ladder matches.

...and now here's Shawn Michaels vs. Razor Ramon from Wrestlemania X, but Charly stops the tape because that's already been on a bunch of home releases. Ok that was funny.

Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. British Bulldog

Date: May 16, 1995

Location: O'Neil Center, Danbury, Connecticut

Attendance: 1,800

Jeff is defending, though oddly enough he would lose the title to Razor in a ladder match at a house show, only to get it back in another ladder match three days later. These were mentioned on Raw and would really make for a better entry here, assuming they were filmed. I've seen the one from three days before this via fan cam so they were very common around this time.

The camera work is much lower level than usual with a lot of moving over to other things rather than cuts. Jeff hammers away to start but gets caught in the (only slightly) delayed vertical suplex. That earns Bulldog a throw to the floor where Roadie gets in a clothesline as I wonder why Luger, who came to the ring with Bulldog, didn't stick around. Of course just after I finish saying that, here's Luger to punch Roadie in the face and chase him to the back. Bulldog gets in another suplex and the go outside (and off camera) until Bulldog brings in the first ladder.

Jeff makes a save and hits him in the ribs with the ladder before starting the climb. In one of the rare smart moves you'll see in a ladder match, Jeff sees Bulldog coming and jumps down to kick him instead of

being shoved over. Of course he's shoved over a few seconds later but at least he did it right once. A ladder shot to the ribs puts Jeff down and Bulldog makes a very shaky climb, only to have it cut off as well. Bulldog whips him into the ladder again and goes up but gets dropkicked down. That's enough for Jarrett to retain at 7:15.

Rating: C. Perfectly acceptable ladder match here, especially for a dark match at a Superstars taping. They didn't have a ton of time but this was the paint by numbers version as it's not like they had a ton of big match ladder matches to draw from at this point. Bulldog was fine for a quick challenger like this, though I'm kind of surprised that Jeff won clean.

Post match Bulldog goes after Jeff like a sore loser but Roadie comes in to chop block him. Luger makes the save.

Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Razor Ramon

Date: June 5, 1995

Location: Struthers High School, Struthers, Ohio

Attendance: 1,450

From a Raw taping and Jeff is defending in another ladder match. Hang on a second as Jeff says the belt is too high. The belt is lowered a bit, which would seem to make it easier for the taller Razor to retrieve. They slug it out to start with Razor of course getting the better of it until he ducks his head and gets caught in a swinging neckbreaker. Razor goes outside and grabs the ladder, which is quickly baseball slid (Slided? Sliden?) into his ribs.

Even in a short match like this, that's way too early to go up so Razor gets back in for the save. Again though, Jeff is smart enough to come down and hit him in the ribs with the ladder. The ladder is dropped onto Razor but he makes another save. You may be noticing a pattern emerging here. This time it's Jarrett catching Razor on top and shoving the ladder over to put both guys down.

The Razor's Edge is broken up with Jeff backdropping him over the top, which of course means a banged up knee. The knee is fine enough to make another save though and they're both down again. Jeff gets sent into the ladder in the corner a few times but one more shove down allowing him to

retain the title at 10:23.

Rating: C+. This was much more the standard ladder match with a little more time to make it better. Jarrett and Ramon had some good chemistry together and it made for a better match as a result. It's interesting that the matches are rather different with this one being more like a standard ladder match while the first was a match that happened to involve a ladder. Both were good though as Jarrett is a talented performer, as long as you keep him away from the main event scene.

Post match Razor gives him the Edge and picks up the title, only to drop it on the unconscious Jarrett.

Charly and Sean find a box of New Generation tapes and, after suggesting that Mooney lives in the vault (works for me), we have a tape of Shawn Michaels and Bret Hart as partners. Charly: "How does that sound?" Sean: "It sounds like it would be a heart break, kid." Charly's face tells you everything you need to know here.

Shawn Michaels/Bret Hart vs. Hakushi/Jerry Lawler

Date: July 26, 1995

Location: Kiel Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Attendance: 10,500

Another Coliseum Video match. This happened a handful of other times but is still one of those things you never can imagine seeing. The villains jump them to start and the ropes seem a bit loose. Hakushi sends Bret into the corner to start and hits a cartwheel elbow. It's off to Lawler for some choking before Hakushi comes back in for a knee drop. The threat of a Shawn (sporting a bit of a beard here) right hand scares Lawler away and it's off to choking in the corner.

Hakushi's Bronco Buster keeps Bret in trouble as this is one sided so far. Choking ensues on the ropes and then in the corner to continue the riveting pace. Shawn FINALLY does something by chasing after Hakushi and hitting him in the head. I mean, it would be better if he were legal so Bret pulls Lawler face first into the post. Bret finally avoids a charge and brings in Shawn to clean house. The top rope ax handle gets two and the elbow drop is good for the same as everything breaks down. The

Sharpshooter puts Hakushi away at 11:41.

Rating: D-. This was terrible, which says a lot given how much chemistry Bret had with both of them. There's not much he can do though in a choking special like this as no one seemed all that interested in working hard here. Shawn especially looked bored out of his mind and barely did anything until the very end.

WWF World Title: Diesel vs. Yokozuna

Date: July 26, 1995

Location: Kiel Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Attendance: 10,500

Same show as before with Diesel defending in a cage. Diesel slugs away to start but gets dropped by a hard shot to the chest. Yokozuna misses the big elbow though and it's time to lay down for a long time. Back up and Diesel hits a headbutt to drop the monster but falls down as well for the second double knockdown in less than three minutes. Diesel goes up first, only to get crotched on the top.

The big splash misses and let's lay down again! Diesel catches him going out with a good crotching of his own, followed by right hands on the mat. That's still not enough to get out though and Diesel goes into the cage. The big leg misses as Yokozuna is really bad at this leaving his feet thing. After sending Diesel into the cage again, Yokozuna decides to climb, freaking Jim Cornette out in the process.

That works as well as you would expect as Diesel sends him into the cage and knocks the big man down. Diesel is caged as well though and it's ANOTHER double knockdown. Geez people come up with something new. They both go for an exit at the same time and it's Diesel getting over the top before Yokozuna can make it through the door to retain at 11:20.

Rating: F. Egads what a mess of a match. They were out there for less than twelve minutes and somehow managed to have FOUR double knockdown spots. How do you even do that? This wasn't going to be a good idea as Yokozuna was just too big at this point and there wasn't anything that almost anyone could do with him.

Sean and Charly wrap it up while teasing a sequel. Post copyright notice, we see Sean going to a makeshift bed in the warehouse, complete with Ultimate Warrior Wrestling Buddy.

Overall Rating: A. Oh come on like I'm going to do anything but love this. This was all about changing things up and offering a bunch of stuff that you actually haven't seen before, which is a lot better than seeing the same matches over and over again. They even make fun of that trope with the Shawn vs. Razor ladder match. It starts to run out of steam near the end but egads the amount of stuff they must have in that vault.

There better be a sequel to this as they could probably make half a dozen of these things without getting repetitive. That's the beauty of having archives dating back nearly fifty years. They could easily do one of these for multiple eras and they would all be must buys. This was one of the most entertaining sets I've seen, just for the amount of times it made my eyebrows go up at what I was seeing. If you're a fan of this time period, go out of your way to find this as it's a straight blast.

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Monday Night Raw – January 29, 2018: Hit Em Hard, Hit Em Fast

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 29, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

It's the night after the Royal Rumble where the big story was the debut of Ronda Rousey, who came out for a staredown with Charlotte, Asuka and Stephanie McMahon to end the show. Other than that we need a #1 contender, which is why the qualifying matches for the Elimination Chamber begin tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a look at Rousey's debut and all the mainstream coverage. I couldn't escape this story today and that's a big reason why this was done.

Jonathan Coachman is welcomed back to the announcers' booth.

There are new match graphics for the first time in what feels like forever. That's a good thing too as sometimes you just need to freshen things up.

Here's a dancing Stephanie McMahon to recap last night's women's Royal Rumble. After taking way too long to do so, Stephanie brings out Asuka to ask about which champion she wants to face. Before she makes that decision though, she needs to know that Alexa Bliss will be defending the title in the first women's Elimination Chamber. Asuka says something in Japanese before talking about becoming champion because no one is ready for her. This brings out Sasha Banks to mock the "nobody is ready for Asuka". Sasha disagrees and wants Asuka tonight.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Kane vs. Braun Strowman

Last man standing and joined in progress with the fight heading into the

crowd. Strowman hits him with a chair and knocks Kane into an anvil case. That means it's time to go to the announcers' area, sending the announce team bailing in a hurry. Kane gets knocked down in front of the table and Braun turns the whole thing over (desk and stage) on top of him for the win at 2:41. What in the world was that? A way to write Kane off TV and make Strowman look dominant? Didn't they do that half a dozen times already?

Post match a stretcher is brought out and Strowman says he just did his job.

Back from a break with the announcers on the stage, talking about how Kane has been sent to a medical facility. Therefore, cut to the back to see Kane being rolled around on a stretcher.

Strowman is still here when Kurt Angle comes up and tells him to lay off. Strowman says he's right...because Strowman can do more. He's going to be the last man standing at the Elimination Chamber and then he'll be the last man standing over Brock Lesnar at Wrestlemania.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Elias vs. Matt Hardy

Before the match, Elias talks about taking out John Cena last week. For now though, his mind is on Wrestlemania and the song is about wanting to take out Brock Lesnar on Elias' night. The announcers have moved to ringside as Elias takes Matt down with a headlock to start. Matt comes back with some chops and grabs a cravate while saying DELETE over and over. The Twist of Fate is broken up and a clothesline puts Matt down as Elias gets way more fired up in a hurry.

Matt gets taken down with his arm being wrapped around the post as we take a break. Back with Matt getting two off a Russian legsweep as we keep looking at the destroyed announcers' table. People: it's a table on its side, not the car door that Brock threw into the crowd. The Side Effect gets two and we've got Bray Wyatt. Well at least his lights going out thing, allowing Elias to hit a running boot to the face. Drift Away ends Matt at 9:48.

Rating: C-. Not much to the match but I'm digging the heck out of this

Elias push. It's clear that they think something of him and that's a very good thing. He has a good gimmick and the people are buying into it so there's not much missing. What is missing is something interesting between Matt and Bray, which feels like another forced Wyatt feud. It would be a good idea to have Bray be more calm and sinister rather than so over the top for a change but that's what WWE seems to like about him.

Bray pops up on screen and laughs.

Miz, doing one of those hand held promos that seem to be becoming the norm, says tonight he'll retain the Intercontinental Title. Once he does, he'll deserve a standing ovation like the one Tom Brady should receive on Sunday when the Patriots beat the Eagles.

The announcers now have a desk at ringside.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Roman Reigns

Miz is defending and gets punched in the face to start as the beating is on in a hurry. For some reason Miz tries a chop and is suddenly the Ric Flair to Reigns' Sting. The champ gets knocked outside for a whip into the steps as the one sided beating continues. Reigns grabs a chair to chase the Miztourage off but Miz posts him to take over as we take a break.

Back with Reigns fighting out of a chinlock and grabbing a Samoan drop. Glad to see some things never change. Miz actually wins a bit of a slugout until Reigns hits the corner clotheslines and a big boot to take over again. The YES Kicks have Reigns in trouble and a chop block puts him down.

We hit the Figure Four for a good while until Reigns turns it over, sending Miz to the ropes. Reigns' lifting sitout powerbomb gets two so Miz goes to the turnbuckle like last week. That's intercepted though and Miz pokes Reigns in the eye so the Skull Crushing Finale can get two. The Superman Punch gets the same but here's the Miztourage to interfere again. That earns them a Superman Punch and a spear but Miz grabs a rollup to retain at 18:07.

Rating: B-. These two have some good chemistry together, which is rather surprising given both of their reputations. Miz retaining is the right call here as it seems like they're setting up Reigns on the comeback trail. You know, because we're supposed to buy that Reigns is someone who faces adversity and wasn't anointed as the chosen one several years back.

We recap the Elimination Chamber qualifying matches and Braun's path of rage.

Rhyno/Heath Slater vs. Revival

Joined in progress for a change with Slater working on Dash's arm. Wilder isn't about to stand for someone showing up their ability to work on a limb so he takes Slater down by the arm instead. Dawson comes in for a belly to back suplex and it's back to Wilder for an armbar. A neckbreaker takes Wilder down but Dawson comes in and cuts the ring off. It doesn't work as Slater makes the tag anyway but it was cool to see. Rhyno comes in and hits a shoulder as everything breaks down. Dawson gets in a shot to the knee and the Shatter Machine ends Rhyno at 3:21.

Rating: D+. That's all this needed to be as Revival gets another win. Of course they need this win to rebuild themselves after last week but the Shatter Machine will get them out of a lot of problems. Just give them a run towards the titles and let them be the old school Andersons style team and everything will be fine.

Post match the Revival asks Charly Caruso how they compare to the Graham Brothers. Charly isn't familiar with them (humbug) and Wilder isn't surprised. She's just like these fans who chant ECW and try to get themselves over because they're stuck in the past. This....could be interesting.

Dudley Boyz Hall of Fame video. What do you want me to say here? This is the biggest layup of a tag team not named Demolition that you'll ever see.

Balor Club brags about Balor's time in the Rumble and he wants to move on to Wrestlemania anyway. Now he has to get by John Cena to get to the Elimination Chamber so that's what he's doing tonight. Anderson and

Gallows have done wonders for Balor, though not as much as getting away from Wyatt and the Demon vs. Abigail thing.

Sasha says she's ready to end Asuka's undefeated streak.

Asuka vs. Sasha Banks

Banks slaps her in the face to start and takes Asuka into the corner for a ram into the buckle. That just earns her a kick to the head and a hip attack to put Sasha on the floor. Back in and some kicks to the legs set up the armbar to keep Sasha in trouble. Banks fights up with a kick to the face and running double knees as we take a break.

We come back with Asuka in trouble after the double knees in the corner, followed by the double arm crank. A headscissors into a very fast Bank Statement is countered into a rollup for two. Sasha gets it right back on but Asuka rolls out again before being sent outside. Banks' dive is blocked with a kick to the face for a SCARY crash to the floor.

Back in and Asuka unloads with a knee to the face and some HARD strikes to the head. The hip attack in the corner sets up a missile dropkick for two so it's off to the cross armbreaker. Banks reverses that as well and Asuka's running hip attack misses, sending her outside in a heap. Banks follows with the knees off the apron (nearly crushing Asuka's head in the process) and more of them off the top for a close two. The Bank Statement goes on again but Sasha tries to move it back to the middle, allowing Asuka to reverse into the Asuka Lock for the tap at 14:28.

Rating: B+. This was in the "beat the heck out of each other" school of wrestling with Sasha's knees hitting Asuka over and over while Asuka just survived the whole thing and caught Banks at the end. That's the biggest win Asuka has had yet in WWE and if she can beat Charlotte, whoever finally beats Asuka is going to look like the biggest conqueror ever. Excellent match here and a lot of fun, especially after how big last night was.

John Cena wants to join Asuka and Shinsuke Nakamura in knowing how they're getting to Wrestlemania. Maybe on a plane, a train or a bus, but maybe an Elimination Chamber. For everyone wondering when he's done, he's

just getting started.

Tag Team Titles: The Bar vs. Titus Worldwide

The Bar is defending. Crews rolls Sheamus up for two less than ten seconds in and does it again less than a minute in. Titus comes in and forearms Sheamus down, meaning it's time for the Titus Worldwide pose. It's off to Cesaro, who gets chopped in the chest and tossed around with ease. A blind tag brings in Sheamus for a forearm to the back and we take a break.

Back with Sheamus cutting off a hot tag attempt and bringing Cesaro back in for a double clothesline. Titus gets knocked to the floor but chops Sheamus in the chest and pulls him throat first into the ropes. Back in and Titus hits a clothesline and the hot tag brings in Crews. A top rope clothesline looks to set up a standing moonsault but Crews has to land on his feet instead.

Crews dropkicks him down and now the moonsault get two as Cesaro comes back in to launch Crews into a powerbomb where he lands HARD on his head. Thankfully he's back up with an enziguri but has to roll through a high crossbody for two. Not that it matters Crews is sent into the post, setting up Super White Noise to retain the titles at 12:25. Titus disappeared at the end of the match.

Rating: B-. Another match that went beyond its league and that's a good thing. Titus Worldwide can grow off of this mini push and it was very nice to have some fresh air in the division. Of course having three matches between the same team didn't help things, but I'll take what I can get.

We recap Rousey's debut again.

We recap Strowman's destruction earlier. Apparently Kane sat up in the emergency room and pulled himself to his feet. Kane left the hospital and no one has seen him since. So they couldn't catch a 50 year old man who has been banged up tonight? How bad are these doctors?

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Finn Balor vs. John Cena

Balor has Anderson and Gallows in his corner. The fans are behind Balor of course as he takes Cena down into an armbar. Balor does it again but Cena takes him down with two straight headlocks. Cena gets sent outside and points at a fan as we hit a test of strength. The fans are looking at something else, which is initially booed and then cheered. The camera cuts to the side as Cena looks into the crowd to see what's going on. Cena punches Balor down and we take a break with Cena looking at the crowd again.

Back with Cena tossing Balor into the corner a few times but stopping to look at the crowd. The announcers say the fans are getting to him, which is a weird way to go with Cena. The finishing sequence is initiated but the Shuffle takes WAY too long, allowing Balor to move. Balor gets two off an Eye of the Hurricane and scores with the Pele.

The Sling Blade sets up the shotgun dropkick but Cena is right there with a clothesline to take him down. Cena grabs the AA for two and goes to the apron....where he tells Coach that he's just trying to go to Wrestlemania. He takes way too long to go up top and Balor kicks him down, setting up the shotgun dropkick. The Coup de Grace misses and Balor bangs up his knee. We hit one of the worst looking STF's Cena has ever put on but Balor makes the rope. Balor takes too long going up and it's the Super AA for the pin at 17:48.

Rating: C+. Weird crowd and weird Cena aside, this was only pretty good. The problem is both guys should be in the Chamber and Cena is likely getting the Undertaker match (erg) so I'm not sure why they needed to have Cena beat Balor here. That being said, I'm more confused about the whole crowd thing. Is that Cena's latest crisis of confidence as we head to New Orleans? It seems like he has one every other year. Oh and Balor wasn't buried. He lost, but that's a far cry from being buried.

Overall Rating: B. I liked this one a lot actually as they had an energy all night long. It felt like they were trying to get to a goal now instead of just going through the motions of heading towards the Rumble. Hopefully that means we get something good in the next nine weeks as Wrestlemania approaches, but if history has shown me anything, it's to not get my hopes up.

Results

Braun Strowman b. Kane when Kane couldn't answer the ten count

Elias b. Matt Hardy – Drift Away

The Miz b. Roman Reigns – Rollup

Asuka b. Sasha Banks – Asuka Lock

The Bar b. Titus Worldwide – Super White Noise to Crews

John Cena b. Finn Balor – Super AA

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Royal Rumble 2018: I Had Fun Again

Royal Rumble 2018

Date: January 28, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips,

Booker T.

The big night is finally here and for the first time ever we have two Royal Rumbles in one night. This time around we have a women's version to go with the standard men's version and that opens up the doors for a lot more surprise entrants. Of course it also opens the door for a lot more boring action if the last few Rumbles are any indication. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Drew Gulak/TJP/Jack Gallagher vs. Kalisto/Gran Metalik/Lince Dorado

Drew takes Kalisto down by the arm to start as the announcers talk about the upcoming 205 Live General Manager. That just earns a few chants from the crowd, which Gulak of course can't stand. It's off to Gallagher vs. Metalik with Gran working on the knee until Lince and TJP come in to complete each trio's ring time.

The announcers discuss dabbing until the villains are all sent outside. The three masked men hit stereo moonsaults from the same turnbuckle (very cool) to the floor as we take a break. Back with TJP kicking Lince in the ribs and handing it off to Gulak, who drops Dorado's partners off the apron. Now the announcers speculate on the next General Manager, which is much more focused than you would expect from these guys.

Jack cranks on Dorado's leg as about half of the HUGE group of empty seats opposite the hard camera is filled in. But hey, at least we have a meaningless match going on an hour and a half before the rest show starts. Gallagher goes to the middle rope, pauses to listen to Gulak telling him not to jump, and then misses a dive anyway. The hot tag brings in Metalik for the rope walk into the dropkick to put Gulak down. The rope walk elbow works just as well for two as everything breaks down. Stereo dives take Gallagher and Gulak down, leaving the Salida Del Sol to finish TJP at 13:13.

Rating: C. Take any match between some combination of these guys that you might have seen on 205 Live and add five minutes to get this match. I'm not sure how that's supposed to entice me to watch a pay per view but I'm sure WWE is smarter than I am on that front. Nothing special here,

outside of that triple moonsault that is. This would have been fine as the only dark match but with two more, it could have been cut.

Kickoff Show: Revival vs. Anderson and Gallows

Rematch from Monday where Anderson and Gallows won, followed by the Revival getting destroyed by DX and Scott Hall. The Brian Pillman style trunks don't really suit Revival but anything is better than Monday. Dawson gets sent outside to start for a breather before it's Gallows tossing both of them around. Back from a break with Dawson working on Anderson's knee with a string of elbow drops.

Wilder comes in to crank the knee even more but Anderson keeps kicking him away. Therefore, in a good tag team idea, Revival double teams him to keep the advantage. Now why is that so hard to figure out? Of course the hot tag goes through a few seconds later but at least they were trying. Everything breaks down and Gallows scores with a splash for two. Everything breaks down and the Magic Killer is broken up. Dawson sidesteps a charge to post Gallows and Dash's chop block is good for the pin on Anderson at 9:11.

Rating: C. Well, it was better than Monday. I'm glad Revival won and now of course we're likely to have the rubber match tomorrow night because WWE loves their trilogies. The leg stuff was fine here but the break in the middle didn't do it many favors. At least the right team won though and that helps a lot.

Kickoff Show: Bobby Roode vs. ???

Roode is defending in an Open Challenge answered by...Mojo Rawley. The fans think Mojo sucks as he sends Roode into the corner and actually hammers him down as we take a break. Back with Mojo driving knees in the corner and grabbing a chinlock. Roode fights up and hits a running forearm, followed by a neckbreaker for two. There's the Blockbuster but the Glorious DDT is countered into a spinebuster. Back up and another Glorious DDT is countered into a backdrop but the running punch is blocked. Instead it's a regular DDT to retain the title at 7:37.

Rating: D. This could have been on any house show and that's not good as

the Kickoff Show main event. Roode doesn't have a ton of challengers and a lot of that is due to how so few people were treated as important for the sake of Jinder Mahal. They need some kind of a feud going here and Rawley isn't the kind of person to do that.

The opening video doesn't say much out of the ordinary but it does a very good job of setting up the big matches while treating the Rumble win as a big deal. It's very nice that they gave the match some shine for once because they haven't exactly treated it like it matters up to this point.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn

AJ is defending in a handicap match. The challengers do have to tag and it's Sami starting for the team. No contact and it's off to Owens, who hangs on the ropes instead of going after the champ. Sami is already back in as there's almost no contact in the first minute and a half. AJ wrestles Sami down but it's already back to Owens, who takes AJ down, runs to the floor and tags Sami back in.

That means a drop down into a dropkick for Zayn as Byron and Graves have ANOTHER stupid argument that completely ignores the match. There's a backdrop for two on AJ as the fans aren't sure who to cheer for. Owens comes back in and unloads with right hands before sending AJ into the barricade. Almost all challengers so far. Owens gets in a double stomp and brings AJ into the corner for more right hands. An electric chair faceplant is good for two more and it's off to the chinlock.

AJ fights up again and gets in a shot to Owens' ankle, which was banged up on Smackdown in the first place. The Pele is enough to bring Sami back in but the Helluva Kick is blocked with a raised boot. Everything breaks down and Owens monkey flips Styles, who hurricanranas Zayn to the floor instead of crashing to the mat. The Calf Crusher has Owens ready to tap until Sami dives back in for the save.

Owens kicks AJ in the back of the head to knock him into the Blue Thunder Bomb, which of course only gets two (once in a lifetime you see). Another kick to the head puts Sami down this time and the springboard 450 is good for another near fall. They slug it out with AJ throwing Sami to the floor, only to eat a superkick from Owens. The Pop Up Powerbomb is

countered into a rollup though and AJ retains (pinning the illegal man) at 16:08.

Rating: B. About what was expected here as there's only so much you can do when the participants have been treated as background characters. I'm glad Bryan and Shane were left out but the match has been booked to make them the stars, meaning this is likely to continue. Some good action here, but it wasn't the most thrilling match in the world.

Wrestlemania XXXIV ad.

Sami and Kevin ask Shane what he's going to do. They can't have another referee screw Owens out of another title. Shane says that yep, he did indeed see that. Nothing else is said.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable

The Usos are defending and this is 2/3 falls after Gable pinned the wrong Uso a few weeks back. In other words, the same ending as the previous match, again showing the limited creative abilities of WWE. Gable can't hit a German suplex on Jimmy to start so it's some chops to the chest in the corner. A distraction lets Chad get in a chop block though and Jimmy is in trouble early on.

Benjamin drives knees into the bad knee as the challengers start cutting the ring off for an old NWA feel. Shelton stops to yell at the crowd though and it's an enziguri to cut him off. The hot tag brings in Jey, who dives through the ropes to take out both challengers in a row. Back in and Gable gets two off a tiger suplex (I haven't seen that one in years), followed by a powerbomb to send Jey into Jimmy.

Pay Dirt gives Shelton two and the bug eyed look on the kickout is funnier than it should be. It's back to Gable who moonsaults onto both champions on the floor but Gable can't pin the illegal Uso. That means a superkick into the Superfly Splash for two in a surprise near fall. The double Superfly Splash is broken up so Gable loads up Rolling Chaos Theory.

That's broken up as well and four straight superkicks end Gable at 12:21.

Gable and Benjamin beat the heck out of both champs to start the second fall. A rolling Liger Kick hits Jey and Chad goes up, leaving Shelton to get small packaged to retain the titles in two straight falls at 13:47.

Rating: B-. That was kind of a surprising ending but it's not like it really matters. The Bludgeon Brothers (who have kind of disappeared in recent weeks) are pretty clearly the next challengers and it should be a fun match when we get to it. I'm not sure what happens to Benjamin and Gable at this point but they've proven to be a good team who deserve more time.

Rumble by the Numbers video.

Jerry Lawler joins commentary for the Rumble.

Men's Royal Rumble

90 second intervals this year. Rusev is #1 (with Aiden English singing him to the ring) and Finn Balor (in red here) is in at #2 to a very strong reaction. Balor gets sent to the apron early on but gets back in without too much effort. Rhyno is in at #3 and gets in a showdown with Rusev that doesn't go much of anywhere. Balor is back up and it's Baron Corbin in at #4 to quickly eliminate Rhyno.

Finn is right behind Corbin though and gets rid of him as well, sending Corbin into a rage. That means Balor is pulled to the floor for a whip into the barricade (shoulder first) and End of Days on the floor to Rusev. Heath Slater is in at #5 and gets run over on the ramp. Everyone is down and it's Elias in at #6, playing the guitar (and kicking Slater in the head) on the way to the ring.

It's time for a song about spitting in the Rocky statue's face but the countdown clock cuts him off. NXT Champion Andrade Cien Almas is in at #7 (running Slater over again as we have a running joke) and a running elbow puts Elias into the corner. The running knees rock Elias again but the hammerlock DDT is broken up. A hard clothesline drops Almas and it's Bray Wyatt in at #8.

Naturally Slater gets laid out again and there's a release Rock Bottom to

Elias. Balor comes back in to break up Sister Abigail (again, thank goodness). Big E. is in at #9 and gives Slater some pancakes instead of beating him up. Bray is waiting on him with Cole saying Bray has been so dominating since entering. IT'S BEEN LIKE TWO MINUTES!

Rusev is back in but can't get rid of Almas. Tye Dillinger is in at #10 (again), giving us Balor, Rusev, Slater (still not in the ring), Elias, Almas, Wyatt, Big E. and Dillinger. Actually hang on a second as we cut to the back to see Dillinger getting beaten down by Owens and Zayn. Sami is taking his place and continues the tradition by jumping Slater.

Sheamus is in at #11 and throws Slater in...who immediately eliminates Sheamus (on his BIRTHDAY). Bray dumps Slater almost immediately and it's Xavier Woods in at #12. Woods and Big E. double team Sami and a wheelbarrow slam into a splash hits Elias. Rusev can't get rid of Big E. and it's Apollo Crews in at #13. Apollo gets in a good looking jumping enziguri on Bray as Byron is now anti-Zayn as he tries to show a personality.

Balor escapes Sister Abigail and it's Shinsuke Nakamura in at #14. Sami is waiting on him in a Takeover: Dallas flashback as the fans sing Nakamura's song. There are WAY too many people in there and some eliminations are needed. Nakamura fires off some kicks and it's Good Vibrations for Elias. The running knee in the corner gets rid of Sami and Cesaro is in at #15, giving us Balor, Rusev, Elias, Almas, Wyatt, Big E., Woods, Crews, Nakamura and Cesaro.

Uppercuts abound without much happening and it's Kofi Kingston in at #16 to put New Day at full strength. Cesaro cuts him off with an uppercut but Crews gorilla presses Cesaro...to the apron at least but he gets back in. Instead a shot to the back gets rid of Crews to thin the ring out a bit. Jinder Mahal is in at #17 and goes after Woods, who dropkicks him into the corner. Woods is dumped a few seconds later though and Mahal gets rid of Big E. as well.

Seth Rollins is in at #18 (now with flames on his tights) and gets rid of Cesaro in short order. Mahal sends Kofi over the top but he lands on Xavier...and then on a plate of pancakes. Big E. and Woods launch him from

the floor over the ropes and over Mahal, who gets caught with Trouble in Paradise for the elimination. As the rest of New Day throws pancakes at Mahal, Almas hits the hammerlock DDT and eliminates Kofi in a pretty big upset.

Matt Hardy is in at #19 for a standoff with Bray, which is broken up by Rusev. Bray and Matt actually start working together and get rid of Rusev (the fans are NOT pleased) before fighting each other. They eliminate each other and it's John Cena at #20, giving us Balor, Elias, Almas, Nakamura, Rollins and Cena.

Everyone jumps Cena at the same time in a smart move but then let him up, allowing him to AA Elias out. The Hurricane of all people is in at #22 (which Cole calls a superhero persona which was a huge hit with kids years ago) and tries a chokeslam but gets tossed out by Cena. Hurricane lands on the pancakes, nearly slips, and then does his pose over and over again on the way to the back. Aiden English is in at #22 and goes after Rollins before switching to Balor.

Adam Cole (with taped ribs) from NXT is in at #23 to a very nice reaction. Balor kicks English off the ropes for an elimination and it's Randy Orton in at #24. An RK0 drops Almas and there he goes after a strong performance. Things settle down a bit and it's Titus O'Neil in at #25. Cole gets sent to the apron but slides back in, leaving Titus to chop Nakamura in the corner. Miz is in at #26 and starts fast with the YES Kicks, followed by a Skull Crushing Finale on Cena.

Lucky #27 is the returning Rey Mysterio to get rid of Cole in a hurry. The Miz takes 619 and it's Roman Reigns in at #28. You can feel the pain from the booing. Reigns goes after Miz and hits the jumping clothesline, followed by the clotheslines in the corner. Titus gets eliminated but the Miztourage saves Miz from the same fate. Rollins Curb Stomps Miz but gets into a showdown with Reigns. A DoubleBomb gets rid of Miz but Reigns turns on Rollins to get rid of him as well.

Goldust is in at #29 and hurts himself headbutting Reigns. Cena gets beaten up as well and it's Dolph Ziggler (POP) in at #30, giving us a final group of Balor, Nakamura, Cena, Orton, Mysterio, Reigns, Goldust

and Ziggler. Goldust is out in a hurry and Balor kicks Ziggler out, making him one of the most inconsequential #30s in recent memory. Rey, Cena and Orton get together in one corner, Nakamura and Balor are in another and Reigns is on his own (how appropriate).

Balor takes a quick AA followed by the 619 to Reigns. There's an RK0 to Nakamura but Cena blocks another attempt. A Superman Punch lets Reigns get rid of Orton and a double 619 hits Reigns and Cena (with Cena loudly talking to Reigns while they wait). Balor throws Mysterio out to get us down to four meaning everyone goes to a corner.

We get the big staredown as the fans are behind Nakamura. Cena throws a You Can't See Me at Balor and hammers on Nakamura while Reigns beats on Balor. That gives us the big showdown as the fans think they both suck. No one throws a punch as Balor and Nakamura get back up, giving us a much better received showdown. The running knees in the corner put Balor on the apron but he kicks a charging Nakamura in the head. Another kick to the head rocks Balor but he scores with a basement dropkick.

Reigns and Cena are back up again with Cena charging into a Samoa drop. The Superman Punch is countered with a ProtoBomb but the Shuffle is broken up with a Sling Blade. Balor hits the shotgun dropkick on Reigns but Nakamura kicks Balor in the face. Balor's standing double stomp cuts off Kinshasa and Cena tosses Balor to get us down to three. Reigns slips out of an AA and hits the Superman Punch on Cena. The spear is cut off by the AA and Nakamura puts Cena on the apron.

A running kick to the face gets rid of Cena and we're down to Nakamura vs. Reigns. That means COME ON and Reigns does so with a Superman Punch. Reigns sends him to the apron but gets kicked in the head but Nakamura grabs a hanging triangle over the apron. A powerbomb brings Nakamura back in and they're both down again.

It's Reigns up first but the spear is cut off with a kick to the face. A middle rope knee to the face drops Reigns but Kinshasa is hit with a spear to put them both down again. Nakamura grabs the ropes to hang on and another running knee drops Roman, setting up the elimination to give Nakamura the win at 65:32.

Rating: A. Best Rumble in years, though that's not exactly saying much. The important thing here was they went with a popular name to win the Rumble, which has been lacking in recent years. Nakamura winning really surprised me as I never thought they would actually do it but I'll take what I can get.

They laid the match out nicely here as things took a little time to get going but the final ten to fifteen minutes were excellent with the final six all being solid options. I wasn't dreading this one at all and it made the match that much better. This was a lot of fun and the way the Rumble should go, with one of the best endings in a long time. Great match.

The Smackdown bosses are celebrating in the back when Stephanie McMahon and Kurt Angle come in to say Raw will win later. Daniel and Shane (buddies again) don't seem to care.

Post match Nakamura is asked who he wants to face at Wrestlemania. Fans: "PLEASE SAY STYLES!" Nakamura: "AJ STYLES!"

There was a Royal Rumble to determine the next Colonel Sanders with Ric Flair winning. He has the wrinkles for it.

Raw Tag Team Titles: The Bar vs. Jason Jordan/Seth Rollins

Rollins and Jordan are defending with Seth and Sheamus starting things off. Seth gets driven into the corner with Cesaro offering a distraction to keep Jordan away from interfering. Jordan is ready for the hot tag but Cesaro pulls him down (I thought that was the heel turn) and posts him into near unconsciousness. Back in and Sheamus' top rope clothesline gets two as the double beatdown is on, made especially worse by Seth's long Rumble run.

Seth finally sends Sheamus into the post to get it back to even, followed by a Sling Blade and Blockbuster. Sheamus comes back in for the save but Rollins drops both of them for a double frog splash. As Seth gets up, Jordan is STILL sitting on the steps, leaving Sheamus to hit the Brogue Kick. The super White Noise gives us new champions at 13:03. Jordan was never in the match.

Rating: C-. This was an angle instead of a match and there's nothing wrong with that. For some reason we seem to be waiting on Jordan vs. Rollins at Wrestlemania, even though that doesn't quite blow my skirt up. The match was stuck in the cool down spot after the great Rumble and that was the right spot for it.

We recap the Raw World Title match. Basically you have three monsters fighting each other and breaking things to hurt each other, meaning it's time to get violent.

Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Kane vs. Braun Strowman

Brock is defending and it's one fall to a finish. Strowman wastes no time in cleaning house, including a hard knee to Brock's head. That's fine with Brock who starts throwing punches, only to have Kane score with a chokeslam. Brock grabs a chair but Braun punches it away and drops everyone.

Shots with the steps clean house and it's time for a pair of tables. Strowman chokeslams Kane for two with Brock making the save and it's time for Suplex City. Braun pops up like a daisy and powerslams Brock through a table with Kane making the save this time. Kane is tossed away again (it's almost like he's completely unnecessary in this match until the ending) and it's time for the announcers' table.

Braun takes too long though and it's an F5 to drive him through instead. Brock turns the other table over Braun (Corey: "I'm about to throw this German guy in front of me!") and F5's Kane through another. Braun gets up again and sends Brock into the steps, followed by the powerslam. Kane makes the save and sends Braun outside, setting up an F5 onto the chair to retain Brock's title at 10:12.

Rating: B-. Well duh. The world knows that Braun is ready to be World Champion and should have been like six months ago but Vince McMahon and seemingly Vince McMahon alone wants to see Reigns take the title from Brock. Again, as has been the case many, many times: none of this is important because we're just sitting around waiting on Reigns to take the title like we've been waiting for for nearly a year now. After that, I have no idea where they go and I'm not sure WWE does either. This was

fun, but exactly as expected.

Trailer for Andre the Giant's HBO documentary.

We get a video on the women's Royal Rumble with a focus on the Revolution (and Stephanie of course) with everyone talking about how important this is.

Maria Menunos is guest ring announcer and Stephanie McMahon is guest commentator, with Cole reading off her resume (and saying Stephanie will tell you about her trailblazing). Alexa Bliss and Charlotte come out to watch at ringside.

Women's Royal Rumble

Sasha Banks (in Wonder Woman gear) is in at #1 and Becky Lynch is in at #2 to give us a good start. Becky blocks an early elimination attempt and we talk about how nervous Stephanie is. The Bank Statement is broken up and it's a double clothesline as Sarah Logan is in at #3. Logan clotheslines Becky down but Sasha makes a questionable save. Becky gets stomped down in the corner and it's Mandy Rose in at #4. Mandy can't get rid of Sasha and it's LITA in at #5.

Sasha and Becky aren't sure what to do so they opt with kicking her in the stomach. Mandy jumps Lita from behind and gets placed on the apron, followed by a hard shot for the first elimination. Kairi Sane is in at #6 and chops Lita into the corner as Cole talks about her "yacht persona". She's not Ashley Remington (bet you didn't think I knew that one) because SHE'S A FREAKING PIRATE! Sane kicks Sasha down and drops the Insane Elbow, followed by another to Becky as Tamina is in at #7.

Lita starts hitting the Twists of Fate and hits a double moonsault onto Sasha and Becky (more like her falling backwards instead of any kind of jump but give her a break). That means the YOU STILL GOT IT chant before she eliminates Tamina, only to get dumped by Becky. That's all this needed to be from Lita and it worked to perfection. Dana Brooke is in at #8 and actually dumps Kairi before stomping on Sasha in the corner.

Torrie Wilson is in at #9 (oh give me a break) and it's time to prove why

she wasn't a wrestler. Logan dropkicks her down but Torrie pops up and eliminates Dana. Sonya Deville is in at #10, giving us Banks, Lynch, Logan, Wilson and Deville. Sonya starts firing off knees and gets rid of Torrie (thank goodness). Liv Morgan is in at #11 so the Squad can start getting together. No one is tossed though and it's Molly Holly in at #12.

Molly gets rid of Logan and hits the Molly Go Round on Sasha. Lana is in at #13 and is immediately taken down by Morgan and Deville. She actually gets fired up and slaps her way to freedom as Michelle McCool is in at #14. That means an UNDERTAKER chant as she gets rid of Logan, Morgan and Holly. Sasha and Becky are down on the floor (not eliminated) as Michelle gets rid of Lana as well. With Michelle alone, Becky and Sasha get back in and it's Ruby Riott at #15, giving us Michelle, Becky, Sasha and Ruby.

Vickie Guerrero is in at #16 and shouts EXCUSE ME over and over but everyone stares her down. She tries to bail and is tossed with ease (I guessed that as a comedy spot and it's as perfect as I thought it would be). Carmella is in at #17 but Vickie takes the Money in the Bank briefcase to knock her silly. Natalya is in at #18 and throws her gear on Carmella, who pulls Natalya off the apron. That's enough for Carmella to get in for some superkicks and it's Kelly Kelly in at #19. Kelly fends off an early elimination as Natalya gets rid of McCool.

Naomi is in at #20, giving us Banks, Lynch, Riott, Carmella, Natalya, Kelly and Naomi at the moment. Becky goes up for some reason and gets dumped by Riott. Jacqueline is in at #21 and goes after Kelly. Nia Jax is in at #22, meaning it's time to clear the ring. Jacqueline is out first, followed by Kelly with ease. Natalya is sent outside (through the ropes), leaving Nia to press Riott onto the top turnbuckle and then out to the floor. Naomi goes after Nia's legs but tries a hurricanrana.

Nia knocks her off the apron but the pile catches her, allowing Naomi to land on the barricade. NXT Women's Champion (with a bad arm) is in at #23 with a springboard kick to Nia's face. Nia sends her flying as Naomi is walking across the barricade to steal Maria's chair on wheels. She then crawls across the floor using her hands and the wheels on the chair...only to have Nia catch her coming back in and toss her out. I smiled at the irony. Beth Phoenix is in at #24 and this could be a lot of fun.

Phoenix is a lot closer to Nia's size than I expected and manages a fireman's carry but can't eliminate Nia. Natalya's help doesn't work very well as they knock Nia through the ropes. That means a hug and of course Natalya turns on her and gets rid of Beth. Carmella (never eliminated) comes back in to jump Natalya from behind...and it's Asuka at #25. There's the hip attack to Carmella and it's time for the showdown with Ember Moon.

Ember actually hits a one armed Eclipse but Asuka goes after the bad arm and gets rid of her. Sasha (also never eliminated) gets back in and it's Mickie James in at #26. That goes nowhere and it's Nikki Bella getting lucky #27 (well duh). That means the JOHN CENA SUCKS song but Carmella takes Nikki into the corner for the Staten Island Shuffle (not the Moon Walk Stephanie). Nikki powers her up though and a neck snap across the top rope gets rid of Carmella.

Brie Bella is in at #28 to save her sister from a big beatdown. The Bellas get their big moment (their latest one for those of you who have lost track) and knock Nia off the apron. A double suplex puts Natalya down and it's Bayley in at #29. Asuka kicks Bayley in the head in short order but can't get rid of her. It's Trish Stratus in at #30 (not exactly shocking and that's not a bad thing) to give us a final group of Sasha, Natalya, Nia, Asuka, Mickie, Nikki, Brie, Bayley and Trish.

Stratus gets to clean house and hits a double Stratusfaction before getting into a showdown with Mickie. James misses a charge and gets tossed, meaning it's time for everyone to go after Nia. She shrugs them all off but the Bellas choke her on the ropes, allowing everyone else to join in and get rid of Nia. Sasha of course turns on Bayley for the elimination and we're down to six.

Natalya puts Trish in the Sharpshooter for some reason and is broken up just as quickly. The Chick Kick eliminates Natalya but Trish mocks Sasha's Boss pose, meaning the Stratusfaction is broken up to get rid of Stratus. Sasha turns around to meet Asuka but they decide to get rid of the Bellas...for all of three seconds until Sasha decks Asuka from behind. Sasha calls the Bellas off so she can beat on Asuka in the corner but the Twins dump her out as she tries the double knees.

So we're down to the Bellas and Asuka and it's time for the YES Kicks to both Twins (there's a joke there that I'm not touching). Brie gets sent to the apron but Nikki decks Asuka, followed by the Rack Attack 2.0. Nikki decks Brie to get rid of her though and it's down to two. Asuka is on the apron and hits a missile dropkick but Nikki's spinning middle rope kick catches her in the face. Nikki puts her on the apron for the big forearm...which doesn't end it. Instead Asuka grabs a headscissors to put Nikki on the apron but Asuka kicks her in the leg for the elimination to win at 58:47.

Rating: B. I know a lot of people are going to be annoyed about the amount of legends (and the amount of botches) in there but my goodness what else were you expecting? The women's division is about twenty people deep and I'd rather have people like McCool, Lita and Trish in there to give us either a good performance or appearances from people who are legitimate trailblazers (not McCool obviously but she did quite well). I was surprised by the lack of NXT names but what we got was fine, save for the Iconic Duo still not appearing.

The match itself was fine, albeit a bit predictable. You knew Asuka was the heavy favorite and really, it's not like there were many other solid options. Aside from Jax, who really else was there? Banks or Lynch? Well maybe, but Asuka getting the title needs to be a big deal and one of those two can take the other title. Either way...uh, back in a minute.

The champions get in the ring.....AND BAD REPUTATION HITS AS RONDA ROUSEY IS HERE!!! Rousey, in a Roddy Piper shirt, points at the Wrestlemania sign and offers Asuka a handshake but Asuka slaps it away. Ronda also shakes Stephanie's hand and high fives fans to end the show.

Oh and Stephanie's commentary was annoying but acceptable. She didn't need to be there and added nothing at all but she could have been worse. Sounded very much like a fan who wasn't the most polished but it was fine.

Overall Rating: A-. I loved the heck out of this show as they made the Rumbles FUN. That's been sorely, sorely lacking in recent years and they made up for it tonight. The Rumbles are interesting by definition but

above all else, these matches were a good time as I kept waiting to see who was coming out next. I was actually worried about Reigns and Nikki winning so well done on some false drama. This did everything it needed to do, including setting up a major Wrestlemania match. I had a great time with this show and that's what the Rumble is supposed to be. Well done all around and a great show.

Results

AJ Styles b. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens – Rollup to Owens

Usos b. Chad Gable/Jason Jordan – Small package to Benjamin

Shinsuke Nakamura won the Royal Rumble last eliminating Roman Reigns

The Bar b. Seth Rollins/Jason Jordan – Super White Noise to Rollins

Brock Lesnar b. Kane and Braun Strowman – F5 to Kane

Asuka won the Royal Rumble last eliminating Nikki Bella

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She's Going to Wrestlemania!

Something something BAD REPUTATION!!!

Again not quite as Asuka won, last eliminating Nikki Bella. The others in the final four were Brie Bella and Sasha Banks. ASuka was about to pick the champion to challenge when RONDA ROUSEY came out. Ronda, in a Roddy Piper t-shirt and what looked to be Piper's old jacket, offered Asuka a handshake and then pulled it back before pointing to the Wrestlemania sign. Rousey shook Stephanie's hand too and Stephanie awkwardly stared at her to end the show.

I'm sold, either way. Well not with Stephanie vs. Rousey but Rousey vs. Asuka works for me.