

# A Much Longer Than Anticipated Look at Bayley

I originally wrote this as a comment on a blog post about why Bayley isn't working. It was originally going to be a paragraph or two and wound up being two pages. Here's my take on why Bayley has completely missed on the main roster and why that's not a surprise at all (nor is it her fault).

As a big Bayley fan who has been more angered by how she's been used on the main roster than most, this is going to be a long one.

This is the NXT to WWE issue in a nutshell: NXT is all about the journey moreso than the result while WWE is all about what's going on right now.

Bayley started off as nothing in NXT, much like so many others down there. She slowly started building herself up and then started getting over with the hugging stuff. Then she was the biggest thing in NXT, either male or female (just listen to that pop for her entrance in London).

The other key was how people could relate to her. It's similar to Mick Foley in a way. Bayley had wanted to do this her whole life and fought and worked to get there. Her success wasn't due to being Snoop Dogg's cousin or a 6'0 physical specimen like Charlotte. She got where she was because she never gave up and kept working hard no matter what knocked her back. That kind of character will always work in any form of entertainment because people naturally appreciate hard work and fighting for your dreams. When she finally won the title in Brooklyn, people were connected to her and it was like they were beating Sasha with her (the fact that it was a great match helped too).

Now let's look at her WWE run.

She shows up in August and is treated as the latest challenger to Charlotte since Sasha Banks is out with an injury. That makes her look like a second tier performer right off the bat. After losing the title match (with Banks also involved), she trades wins with Dana Brooke of all people.

This is where her big problem begins: is she one of the Four Horsewomen and the latest awesome NXT talent or is she someone who lucked her way into being so popular? Charlotte, Sasha and Becky all came up and hit the ground running. Bayley came in and looked like she was in WAY over her head, despite being treated like a big deal at first. You can't have that both ways.

Then she's suddenly in the title hunt and gets the title shot at Royal Rumble. She loses there, only to win the rematch the next month with Sasha's help. That was Charlotte's first pay per view singles loss and instead of Bayley getting the focus, it was all about Charlotte losing. The fact that Banks interfered to help her is basically brushed aside, making Bayley look like she's less important/talented than Charlotte all over again. She wins the four way at Wrestlemania, again pinning Charlotte, but the big moment was at the previous show instead of Wrestlemania. Again, that doesn't make sense just from a logical booking perspective. Who books the big moment at the nothing show and then the far less interesting rematch at the biggest show of the year?

Then she makes the greatest mistake of her life: she's born in a town where WWE is having a pay per view. Therefore, by definition, she must lose to Alexa Bliss. Now there's nothing wrong with Bliss, who rocketed up the main roster far faster than I think anyone would have realistically expected. She was suddenly the loser who couldn't get it done again, which was a complete reversal from being able to pin the previously unbeatable Charlotte twice in a row. She then basically got

squashed in the Singapore cane match where she never got a comeback and never got to prove Bliss wrong.

That brings us to her latest stuff, where after weeks of being humiliated, she's suddenly winning two or so matches in a row and getting a title shot at Summerslam because that's all the time we have for character rebuilding. Is she over losing to Bliss? Is she upset by being humiliated like that? Eh no time to worry about that because we've got to get moving to the next pay per view. The fans will just get over those losses because, as WWE seems to think, wins and losses mean absolutely nothing, despite Cole and company never shutting up about them more often than not.

The general problem is rather simple: NXT is more about setting up a character and putting them on a path. They actually take their time in setting something up and want to get them to an eventual goal. WWE would rather rush everything together and put the character development (as limited as it is) in later. Aside from Wrestlemania (or any show Roman Reigns is on), it seems to be a concept of just throwing people into matches and filling in the details between the start and finish later.

The fans in NXT were given a reason to care about Bayley and exploded when she first won the title. WWE fans, who might not be familiar with Bayley, see a woman in weird looking clothes who they're told was a big deal in NXT, get the title and then the details can be filled in. WWE seems to think that making a person a champion is character development and actually taking the time to tell their backstory and give us a reason to care about them is a big waste of time. I'm sure the fact that NXT has had many more successful new characters than WWE in recent years is just a coincidence.

There are two more big things to cover.

Let's talk about the promos real quick. While I don't think

Bayley is nearly as bad as some people think she is, she's not great on the mic. Imagine that: someone whose main training in talking was in short, mostly pre-taped promos that had a lot of time to edit and prepare, isn't great at being handed a mic and told to talk for five minutes in front of a live audience. Bayley never was a great talker in NXT in the first place and now she's expected to be good at doing something that's much harder that she has no training in? Of course she is, because in WWE, one size fits all and everyone is expected to be able to go out and talk like they're Austin, Rock or Flair.

As for her looks, this is a tricky area. First and foremost, she's mainly worked with Alexa Bliss over the last few months. Almost anyone in wrestling history is going to pale in comparison next to Bliss, who is one of the best looking sexiest women the business has ever seen. Other than that it's usually Charlotte, who looks like she was carved out of stone or Sasha, who has a lot more charisma than Bayley in the first place. Bayley was never meant to be the hot woman in the Trish mold. She's the one there for the younger girls to gravitate towards: the nerd who was comfortable in her own skin. She's not supposed to be the plastic Nikki Bella or the blonde bombshell like Lana. She's the more average woman that girls can look up to, which doesn't do much for men who tend to think that if you're not Trish Stratus, you're just not good enough. Bayley is a very good looking woman but she's not supposed to be sexy. For some reason, this is a problem for a lot of fans and it's rather unfair.

Overall, Bayley is another victim of the same problem so many NXT callups have: despite having far more time and far more writers, the main roster sees very little incentive to actually build up a character with some solid roots. Instead they would rather throw them in the middle of the lake and see who can swim. It's a lack of time and effort that could lead to greater results, but they need to spend more time coming up with great "natural" sounding quips for Cole to read off a

paper or ways to force the Roman Reigns peg into the top star hole. People like Bayley, who don't have the family pedigree or natural talents to get them to a certain standard, are in trouble because WWE seems to think that if you're not the greatest thing in the world immediately, you're not worth the effort. It's a complete shame, but unfortunately it's how WWE thinks anymore. Bayley has the talent, but in the system she's in, it's not likely to get much of a chance to be shown properly.

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## Monday Night Raw – March 24, 2003: Overtime with Recaps

### Monday Night Raw

Date: March 24, 2003

Location: ARCO Arena, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Wrestlemania but more importantly we'll be seeing the first ever Rock Concert with Rock giving us a performance for the ages. Other than that though it's time for the final push towards Seattle, which likely means we won't be seeing a lot of wrestling around here for the sake of avoiding a last minute injury. Let's get to it.

Lillian Garcia sings the National Anthem. That's quite the celebration for the twelve year anniversary of Wrestlemania VII: Stars and Strikes Forever.

Opening sequence.

Here's the unscheduled Steve Austin with something to say. He's really not cool with Rock coming out here last week and giving him a Stone Cold Stunner and a Rock Bottom. Austin isn't going anywhere until the Rock

comes out here (down an aisle as there's no ramp this week) for a beating. Cue Test and Stacy Keibler with the former saying he just wants to have a match tonight. It's a Stunner for Test and Stacy runs off as Austin has a seat at ringside.

Lance Storm, who is scheduled to face Test tonight, comes in and covers with Austin counting the two. That means a Stunner for Storm so here's Eric Bischoff, flanked by cops, to issue a restraining order. After a fairly long time and threats of being shot, Austin finally leaves so Bischoff can plug the Rock Concert.

### Jeff Hardy/Trish Stratus vs. Victoria/Steven Richards

The genders have to match. The guys start things off with Richards taking him into the corner, only to get shoved right back out for the legdrop between Steven's legs. Jeff's slingshot dropkick sends Richards over to Victoria, meaning it's off to Trish for the first time. Jeff dives onto Richards, leaving Victoria to hit her spinning side slam. The Stratusphere sets up the Stratusfaction off Richards' chest for the pin.

Jeff and Trish are about to kiss again when Jazz jumps her from behind.

Coach tells Bischoff that there's a security issue that needs to be taken care of right now.

Goldust is ready to fight in the tag match tonight and says HHH sounds like a dic...dic...dic...dictator! This STILL isn't funny.

The security issue is that Austin is still in the parking lot because the restraining order only covers the arena. Bischoff has plans for Austin and threatens to fire Coach if he doesn't go deal with this.

### Scott Steiner vs. Christian

Christian's gear is extra neon green here, meaning it shines rather brightly when Steiner throws him outside. Back in and it's the clothesline into the push-ups, followed by multiple reps on a gorilla press. A reverse DDT puts Steiner down for two with the kickout sending Christian flying. Christian gets in a neckbreaker and some choking until Steiner hits the first suplex. Steiner catches him on top with something

like a super Angle Slam for the pin.

**Rating:** D. It's amazing that Steiner has nothing to do at Wrestlemania but it's really not surprising. Steiner has become as generic and slow of a power wrestler as you'll ever find and now he's going over perfectly acceptable wrestlers like Christian. Thankfully Christian has settled into a fine role as an upscale lackey like Jericho.

Coach tells Austin about Bischoff's threats but Austin doesn't say a word. I'm sure the fans who were waiting for Austin to come back are thrilled by watching him sit there stoically.

Wrestlemania Moment: Shawn wins the title.

Morely says that William Regal can't wrestle at the moment so Morely and Storm are the new champions. It's about time. WWE officially recognizes this as two reigns for Storm, which is yet another stretch for the titles' history. Kane and Rob Van Dam come up and want a title shot at Wrestlemania. Morely backs away but agrees to make Van Dam and Kane vs. the Dudleys in a #1 contenders match for later tonight.

Remember when Austin was sitting outside doing nothing? Well now he's sitting outside and playing with his windshield wipers.

HHH/Ric Flair vs. Goldust/Booker T.

All four get their own entrances to really stretch things out. Goldust, still with the bad arm, start things off and we get the traditional exchange of WOO's. Some right hands puts Flair down as JR and Lawler go over the history of the Rhodes Family. HHH comes in but Booker does the same, meaning it's time to slow things way down. A leapfrog into a hiptoss sends HHH into the corner and Lawler is panicking.

Booker kicks him into the other corner so it's off to Flair, whose chops have no effect again. HHH offers a distraction though and it's a chop block to put Booker down. Back from a break with Booker reversing Flair's Figure Four and hitting a few chops to set up the hot tag. Goldust fires away, only to have the bad arm flare up again.

A missed crossbody sends Goldust outside so HHH can send him into the

steps and the fresh heat segment begins. HHH offers a distraction so Flair can get in a good low blow and choking as only Ric can do. A neckbreaker gives HHH two and it's back to Flair, who allows the tag. The referee doesn't see it of course so HHH has to charge into a boot in the corner for the real hot tag.

Booker comes in to take over, including the hard whip to send HHH sailing over the corner to the floor. Goldust and Flair fight into the crowd as Booker busts HHH open. Flair comes back in and gets caught with a spinebuster for no count as the referee actually remembers who was legal. Get that man a raise! The Pedigree is broken up and it's a catapult into the post, followed by the scissors kick for the pin.

**Rating:** C+. The match was long but had the right ending. Unfortunately it's also the WWE way of saying HHH is going to retain on Sunday, which would be the dumbest idea that WWE could possibly have. I'm sure this now qualifies as HHH putting someone over though, and that's all he needs to do to be the best of all time right?

Post break HHH is staring at the title while Flair gives him a pep talk.

Here's Chris Jericho for a chat. Jericho is ready to face Shawn Michaels at Wrestlemania but needs to say something to his face right now. This brings out Shawn, with Jericho saying he modeled himself after Michaels for years. Jericho has a video of the two of them side by side, showing how similar they are due to Jericho imitating him.

After all those years of being talked up as the next Shawn Michaels, he wanted to be the first Chris Jericho because he was better than Shawn. Then Shawn left in 1998 and Jericho became the workhorse and backbone of the company. Jericho is ready for Wrestlemania and slaps Shawn in the face. Shawn slaps him back and...that's it as we cut to a break.

Rock comes in to see Bischoff and has an idea for tonight: put speakers in the parking lot so he can listen to the Rock Concert.

We run down the Wrestlemania card. For some reason this isn't on the Network version.

## Rob Van Dam/Kane vs. Dudley Boyz

The winners get Storm/Morely at Wrestlemania. It's a brawl to start with Kane taking Bubba into the corner for some right hands. A German suplex puts Kane down and D-Von adds a jumping clothesline, which only seems to annoy the monster. It's off to Van Dam for Rolling Thunder but D-Von comes right back with a neckbreaker to put both of them down.

The spinning kick to the head drops Bubba and it's back to Kane and D-Von. Everything breaks down and Bubba hiptosses Van Dam into a neckbreaker (cool spot). Cue Storm to kick D-Von by mistake before being chased off by Bubba. The chokeslam and Five Star send Kane and Van Dam to Wrestlemania.

**Rating:** D. Nothing match here but they went with the logical ending which should have been obvious the whole time. The ending just makes you think that Bubba and D-Von are about to be back to normal almost immediately, making the last few weeks even more uninteresting and a waste of time than I had previously thought. At least they got to the right ending though.

The speakers are set up next to Austin's truck.

Here's Rock for the Concert. Rock has a chair, a music stand and some fancy looking bottled water on a table next to him. He's glad to be in Sacramento because it means he can be out of here in about an hour. Rock sings about how hideous the women here are and how bad it is to live here. Eh I think I prefer Elias. We see Austin sitting in his truck and shaking his head as Rock makes jokes about the Sacramento Kings.

Now it's time to sing an Austin version of Hound Dog before suggesting that Austin smokes something funny to go with the beer. Next up it's a Willie Nelson song about beating Austin up before finishing off with some Frank Sinatra about how much pie he can get. Outside, an ambulance drives in and Austin drives the truck in to follow. Rock panics and demands the security come to the ring, followed by Austin's truck.

It's driven by Hurricane though, with Austin hiding in the back of the truck. Rock goes back to singing, allowing Austin to come in and beat up

Rock as you knew he was going to do. Austin destroys the guitar as security just stands around watching. This is edited WAY down on the Network, cutting out the better part of five minutes (meaning every time Rock sang anything).

And now, here's Vince to show us the whole contract signing from Smackdown.

Since this show hasn't gone on long enough (and it's already in overtime), we go back to Smackdown to see the Angle brothers demand an apology from Brock Lesnar, resulting in Kurt injuring Brock's ribs to FINALLY end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. There's not much to talk about here save for the extra stuff at the end, which was just a commercial for the Smackdown side of things. The few matches we got were nothing special though at least one match was added to the card. As has been the case throughout the build to the pay per view, there's nothing going on to make me want to see the show. It's just not good TV building stories that aren't great either. It could be worse but the HHH vs. Booker stuff has been a horrible second level story for the red show. Another weak show here but that's normal around here anymore.

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# Smackdown – August 22, 2017: Definitely Not Glorious

## Smackdown

Date: August 22, 2017

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the final night in Brooklyn as Summerslam has come and gone. Jinder Mahal is still the Smackdown World Champion and AJ Styles is still the US Champion. One of these titles was retained in a much better match than the other and I'll let you guess which of those was which. Let's get to it.

Here's AJ Styles to open things up. He says this is still the place that he built because he beat Kevin Owens on Sunday. Therefore, tonight he's reinstating the US Title Open Challenge and it starts right NOW. The fans want a certain Canadian but get Kevin Owens instead. AJ says this isn't happening because he's already beaten Owens. Kevin blames the whole thing on Shane McMahon so here's Shane to offer a rebuttal.

The boss wants to know what Owens' issue is so Owens goes on a rant about how Shane can survive a helicopter crash and fall out of buildings but he gets grazed on Sunday and can't get up. We see a clip of AJ being pinned though his foot was on the rope before one. Owens says this isn't fair and complains until AJ agrees to put the title on the line tonight.

Shane agrees to make the match, but Owens wants one more thing: he wants to pick the referee. AJ says the referee doesn't matter because he'd count the pin no matter what. There's a little girl in the front row who could probably count a three count just fine so he'll agree to anyone as referee. The match is made for later tonight but Shane says that this is Owens' last shot as long as AJ is champion.

Daniel Bryan is in his office when the Singh Brothers come in to introduce Jinder Mahal. Jinder takes credit for Summerslam but Daniel says he's tired of seeing the Singh Brothers interfere. Therefore, tonight Shinsuke Nakamura gets to face the two of them in a handicap match.

Owens runs into Sami Zayn in the back and wants him to be guest referee. Sami watched his DVD recently and says they've been fighting for so long that it seems like they don't even remember why they're fighting. Owens points out that Sami hasn't done much since arriving here and wants Sami to think about it. Sami doesn't say no.

Here's Aiden English to sing his song but he's cut off.....by GLORIOUS DOMINATION!

### Bobby Roode vs. Aiden English

The fans go INSANE for the entrance and Roode seems to be a face, at least for the night. They take turns posing at each other with Roode clotheslining English to the floor and sending us to a break. Back with English in control but Roode drives him into the corner for some chops. A forearm sets up the Blockbuster as JBL says Roode needs to win to get some beer money. English hits a Director's Cut for two but walks into a spinebuster. The Glorious DDT ends English at 6:28.

**Rating:** C-. Barely enough to rate but this was all about the debut and the fans going nuts for the entrance. Roode was definitely a face here but that can easily be changed once we're out of a smark haven like New York. He's a natural heel and once you have him wrestle like this for a few weeks and then let his real self shine through.

Post match Roode says everything he does is big box office and in a New York minute Smackdown has gone from great to GLORIOUS.

Chad Gable comes in to Bryan's office where the boss says he's sorry for the Jason Jordan thing. There was a catch to moving Jordan to Raw though: Angle suggested someone to be signed to Smackdown. That would be Shelton Benjamin, who is Chad's new partner. They'll be having a match next week, though Shelton doesn't seem thrilled.

Sami won't be the referee.

### Usos vs. Hype Bros

Non-title. Jey and Mojo start things off with the twins taking him down into the corner. That doesn't last long though as Mojo kicks him away and brings in Ryder to clean house. Everything breaks down and Mojo heads outside to run Jimmy over. A superkick drops him though, allowing Jey to superkick Ryder down for the pin at 3:14.

**Rating:** D+. Just a quick match here to remind you that the Usos are awesome and one of the best teams on Smackdown. Unfortunately it also reminds you that they're one of the only teams on Smackdown as the division is looking weaker and weaker every single day. The Usos need challengers and this didn't do that problem any favors.

Post match the Usos say the whole division is on notice.

### Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Singh Brothers

Mahal is at ringside and the Brothers, in dress pants and dress shirts, don't have to tag. An early Good Vibrations has them in trouble and the Brothers are quickly sent outside. Nakamura tells Mahal to come on and the Brothers jump him from behind, only to have Nakamura grab a triangle choke for the tap out at 2:47.

Mahal jumps Nakamura from behind but takes Kinshasa for his efforts.

Breezango offers to be the referee but Owens tells them to get away. Baron Corbin comes up and offers his services. If Owens wins though, he wants the first shot. That's cool with Owens.

Here's Natalya, now with a Hart Foundation style jacket, for her first comments as champion. Summerslam will be remembered as the day the Glow was unplugged because she's the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be. She holds up the title and says she's restoring it to glory, meaning it's back to normal. Carmella comes out for their tag match but says she's biding her time to cash in.

### Natalya/Carmella vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi

Feeling out process to start and we take a break less than a minute in. Back with Becky dropping a leg on Natalya until a forearm cuts her off. Natalya tries for a tag to Carmella but she drops to the floor and tells Natalya to do her thing. Becky gets the tag off to Naomi for the reverse Rings of Saturn but Natalya slips out. Carmella gets tagged from behind and caught in the Bexploder, setting up the split legged moonsault for the pin at 7:43.

**Rating:** D+. Sweet goodness I forgot how much I can't stand the "I'M GOING TO CASH IN ANY DAY" period. They tease the heck out of it for weeks if not months at a time and it's the same story every year. For now we're stuck with Natalya as champion and Carmella almost as a mustache twirling villain. Lucky us.

Dolph Ziggler mocks a lot of the characters who get more TV time than him and has plans for next week.

Lana is on the phone in the locker room and says she'll see someone next week. Tamina comes in and asks what's up with her path to the title. Lana tells her to close her eyes and think about everyone who has been against her over the years. The path to being the dominant champion begins next week.

Corbin cuts AJ off and says he wants a shot at the title. AJ tells him to answer the open challenge.

#### US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Styles is defending with Corbin as guest referee. Owens bails to the apron to start and Corbin cuts AJ off from going after him. The distraction lets Owens get in a forearm to take over early on. A forearm cuts Owens off though and we take a break. Back with Owens getting two off a fall away slam into the barricade.

We hit the chinlock for a bit until AJ fights back with his series of strikes. The running seated forearm gives AJ two but he stops for a staredown with Corbin. There's the Calf Crusher and Owens gets a finger on the ropes. AJ rolls it over to the middle of the ring and AJ is annoyed at the rules being called properly. Owens knocks AJ into Corbin

to start another argument with Corbin shoving AJ into a rollup for two.

A double clothesline puts both guys down though and we're at a standstill. Cue Shane McMahon because we can't have these two in a match without all this extra stuff. He yells at Corbin, allowing Owens to hit a low blow for two with Shane pulling Corbin out of the ring. That's enough for Corbin who walks out and throws Shane the shirt. Owens is livid and the Phenomenal Forearm retains the title at 12:45.

**Rating:** C+. Just like Sunday, there's a good match in there underneath all the nonsense with the referees. I get that they want to get to Owens vs. McMahon (possibly in the Cell because that's how the calendar works) but do we really have to sacrifice what could have been a pair of great matches to get there? There's good stuff in there somewhere but it was the same problem as Sunday: too much focus on anything but the wrestlers and that gets old.

Owens looks furious to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. This show really didn't work and there's not much other way to put it. Mahal isn't interesting on top, there's little of interest in the midcard, the tag division basically doesn't exist and Shane seems ready to swallow up another good chunk of the show to set up one more match to prove that he's still got it. Aside from Roode's debut, there's nothing on here to get excited about and that's really rare for Smackdown.

### Results

Bobby Roode b. Aiden English – Glorious DDT

Usos b. Hype Bros – Superkick to Ryder

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Singh Brothers – Triangle choke to Samir

Naomi/Becky Lynch b. Carmella/Natalya – Split legged moonsault to Carmella

AJ Styles b. Kevin Owens – Phenomenal Forearm

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# Monday Night Raw – August 21, 2017: Can Brock Smash A Beach Ball Please?

## Monday Night Raw

Date: August 21, 2017

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

With Summerslam behind us, it's time to start heading towards No Mercy, which ultimately leads us to Survivor Series. The big story is a combination of Brock Lesnar retaining the Universal Title and Braun Strowman arriving as the new monster as he manhandled Lesnar last night. If that's not a title program at some point in the near future, I have no idea where WWE's head is. Let's get to it.

Here are Lesnar and Paul Heyman to open things up. Heyman says this isn't a tape delay because we're live with Brock Lesnar still your reigning and

defending Universal Champion. He talks about the conspiracy against Lesnar, who fought off everyone else last night to keep his title. For the first time in his life, Lesnar was taken off the battlefield in an attempt to get rid of him without having to pin him or make him submit. But Lesnar wouldn't have any of that and marched back down the aisle so conquering could ensue. As for tonight, there is no one in WWE or UFC history, like Lesnar himself.

Cue Braun Strowman and you can see Lesnar wince a bit. The fans cheer for Strowman as Brock gets in his face. A chokeslam is countered but Braun kicks him in the face and hits a powerslam to put Lesnar down. He starts to get up so it's another powerslam, leaving Strowman to hold up the title. Strowman is the only person who should be challenging Brock right now and they would be crazy to wait any longer than Survivor Series (and even that's a stretch) to do this match.

#### Enzo Amore vs. Big Cass

Street fight as this feud MUST continue. Before the match, Enzo talks about his history with Cass, including the two of them breaking bread together as his family's house. Enzo grabs a shopping cart full of weapons, which he throws at Cass, who easily dodges and clotheslines Enzo down. A shopping cart shot to the ribs drops Enzo and they head inside with Cass throwing Enzo a chair.

That just earns Enzo a big boot to the face and we take a break. Back with Enzo hitting a jawbreaker but getting crushed in the corner again. A big boot misses though and Cass falls out to the floor. Cass kicks the chair away from Enzo again but seems to have hurt his knee on the fall. The knee gives out and the referee throws up the X and stops the match at 8:55.

**Rating:** D-. In a way I hope that was legit as I really, REALLY don't need this feud to continue. Enzo has gone from being entertaining to one of the most annoying people I've seen in years as there's just no point to have him fight Cass over and over again. The match was a squash anyway with Cass losing via basically slipping on a banana peel. He deserves better than that while Enzo deserves a root canal with no medication.

Emma is annoyed at Sasha Banks getting all this attention and complains to Dana Brooke about it. She runs her mouth about Nia Jax as well, who just happens to be standing right behind her. I think you know where this is going.

#### Nia Jax vs. Emma

Emma goes after her to start but gets run over and crushed with some elbow drops. A dropkick has no effect and it's the Samoan drop for the pin on Emma at 1:14. So yeah, the division has three active wrestlers of any value but let's make sure to squash Emma over and over and over to punish her for daring to question the company's oh so brilliant planning. As usual, WWE would rather cut off its nose to spite its face and then wonder why people stopped caring about the division.

Here's Elias for a song. He teases singing R-Truth's song but says he's kidding and it's time for some real music. The song mocks Truth so here he is to interrupt.

#### R-Truth vs. Elias

Truth takes him down to start but runs into an elbow as Booker's microphone isn't working properly. Drift Away ends Truth at 1:22.

Here's Kurt Angle to announce a new surprise: John Cena, who is now back on Raw. Cena isn't sure why he's here before saying he was asked to come here by Angle himself. That's what Cena wanted because he wanted to go face to face with a certain superstar. Cue Roman Reigns and I'm rather curious to see who the fans will boo more. Cena says that's the man he was looking for but Reigns says Cena has only been running his mouth on Twitter.

Reigns wants to know if Cena will run his mouth to his face. The fans chant for Undertaker, which Cena says is them holding a bit of a grudge. Cena didn't come here to talk though and the mic's are dropped. The fight is teased but here are Miz and the Miztourage to interrupt. Miz: "So this is what a sold out Barclays looks like. I wouldn't know." He asks how many moments Cena and Reigns get, earning himself a round of applause.

Miz wants to know why the two of them get this time while he was stuck on the Kickoff Show last night. A quick fan poll says Cena isn't welcome here so Miz says there are 18,000 people wanting him to leave. Cena goes to leave but Miz spins him around and says he's not done yet. Miz rants about how no one knows what to do with Cena or Reigns and that hurts him, the only champion in this ring. He wants to know when he gets his moment because he's spent twelve years earning it.

Cena suggests he team up with Reigns to face Miz and either of Miz's lackeys. Miz says no because that would be a moment for Cena and not him. This brings out Samoa Joe of all people to say that he's going to be Miz's partner whether Miz likes it or not. Joe doesn't want to waste his time on Reigns because he owns Roman one on one.

Instead he slugs away at Cena as Reigns beats up Miz and the Miztourage. The AA is countered into the Koquina Clutch with Reigns making the save via a Superman Punch. Roman and Cena are left alone and the fans tell them that they both suck. I fully support these two singles matches, especially at No Mercy.

Drew Gulak/Noam Dar/Tony Nese/Ariya Daivari vs. Rich Swan/Mustafa Ali/Gran Metalik/Cedric Alexander

No one gets an entrance and it's Metalik walking the ropes to dropkick Gulak down. It's quickly off to Ali vs. Daivari for a quick strike exchange. Swann comes in for the threat of a spinning kick to Daivari, which sends him over to the corner. Dar won't tag in so Nese does it instead, earning himself a dropkick.

Nese runs Swann over though and we take a break. Back with Swann slugging away at Dar but not being able to get over for a tag. The fans are doing the wave as Cedric gets the hot tag and starts cleaning house with kicks to the head. Everything breaks down and Metalik moonsaults out to the floor, leaving Cedric to Lumbar Check Nese for the pin at 8:45.

**Rating:** D+. So that's a thing that existed and that's about all I can say about it. Really, the cruiserweight division is a big waste of time save for maybe the champion and his top challenger, which makes 205 Live an even bigger waste of time. It's not even an entertaining match where most

people didn't even get involved. Just nothing to say here.

Neville is in the back and says the fans are hilarious for wanting someone else as champion. Cue Titus O'Neil and Akira Tozawa to say Daivari gets his rematch tomorrow night on 205 Live.

Jason Jordan comes in to see Angle and says he wants Finn Balor tonight. Kurt reluctantly agrees.

Here are Seth Rollins and Dean Ambrose for a chat. Rollins is glad that they got back together and now they're champions. Dean says he slept with the title under his pillow last night, which confuses Seth for a second until he says this is one big party. Seth says he wants to get the rematch with Cesaro and Sheamus out of the way but here are the Hardys to interrupt instead. Matt understands that brothers fight and thinks it's time to make things wonderful. They've revolutionized tag team wrestling for twenty five years and it's time to do it again in Brooklyn. Here's a referee and we're ready to go after a break.

#### Dean Ambrose/Seth Rollins vs. Hardy Boyz

Non-title. Dean headlocks Matt to start but an early double team slows Ambrose down. It's quickly off to Rollins for a kick to Jeff's chest for two. The Spin Cycle gets two on Rollins but he drop toeholds Matt into a knee drop from Ambrose for two more. Neither finisher can hit though and it's off to a stalemate.

A big slugout takes us to a break and we come back with Rollins enziguring Jeff. Matt and Dean come in with both champs being sent outside. Jeff nails Poetry in Motion over the top to drop them both again. Back in and Seth pulls Dean out of the way of the Whisper in the Wind before grabbing a front facelock. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Jeff dropkicks both of them down.

It's back to Matt as everything breaks down. A Sling Blade drops Matt so Dean can get two before the Hardys are sent outside. There's the double suicide dive but Matt hits a Side Effect on Rollins on the apron. Another Side Effect gets two on Dean but he comes back with an attempt at a super Dirty Deeds. That doesn't work of course so it's the Twist of Fate to set

up the Swanton, which hits raised knees. The wind-up jumping knee to the face sets up Dirty Deeds to end Jeff at 17:45.

**Rating:** B. Good, long match here with Seth and Dean getting a big win over a much more high profile team. They've got something with that jumping knee into Dirty Deeds too, which is a lot more than a lot of teams can say. The Hardys definitely seem to be shifting into the role of putting other teams over and there's nothing wrong with that for them, especially at this point in their careers.

We look at the opening sequence again.

Here's Sasha Banks for her first comments after winning the title. She may be from Boston but she's always left her heart right here in Brooklyn. Like when she and Charlotte tore the house down last year at Summerslam, which allows her to wish Ric Flair well. Sasha plans on defending the title the right way but here's Alexa Bliss to interrupt. She laughs off the idea of Sasha being the right kind of champion but wants nothing to do with a rematch tonight in front of these Brooklyn fanboys. They'll fight soon enough but for now, Bliss is fine making Sasha wait.

### Jason Jordan vs. Finn Balor

Jordan takes him down to the mat to start and a rollup gets two, earning Balor a quick smile. Another technical sequence puts Jordan down, only to have Finn hit a dropkick to stagger Jason. Balor wants nothing to do with a handshake and snapmares him down instead. A leapfrog is countered into a powerslam to give Finn two and we take a break.

Back with Jordan putting him down again and dropping an elbow to the ribs. They fight over a butterfly suplex with the fans very upset about something that seems to be off camera. Balor stops a charge with a boot in the corner before sending Jordan to the floor for a baseball slide. The running apron kick has Jordan in more trouble but Jason comes back with the belly to belly.

The shoulder in the corner looks to set up the wheelbarrow neckbreaker, only to have Finn counter into a crossbody. A Pele drops Jordan again and

both guys are down. Jordan drives him into the corner but gets caught with a Sling Blade. The shotgun dropkick puts Jordan in the corner and it's the Coup de Grace for the pin at 11:45.

**Rating:** B. Definitely Jordan's best singles match to date and it made him look like a bigger deal. Balor winning was the right call as Jordan shouldn't be beating a former World Champion just yet. It was a good, competitive match though and that's much better than what you usually get from Jordan at this point.

Alexa gets her title rematch next week.

### Miz/Samoa Joe vs. Roman Reigns/John Cena

Cena bulldogs Miz to start and the fans are very pleased as it's already off to Joe. The fans go nuts over something and Cena actually pauses to look at it....because it's a freaking beach ball. It seems that the ball is taken away with Cena looking annoyed, earning himself a beating from Joe. Miz comes in to stomp away and it's time for the wave again. Now Cena joins in the wave, earning himself a quick DDT for two.

The cheering and booing continues as a beach ball is put into play and confiscated as the match continues to be ignored. Cena gets ax handled for two as Miz stops to tell the fans to pay attention. Miz misses a charge and it's off to Reigns to clean house with clotheslines to no reaction. Roman gets taken down as well for the YES Kicks. The last one is countered into a powerbomb though and both guys are down again.

Joe Rock Bottoms Roman but Reigns heads outside to beat up the Miztourage. Back in and the hot tag brings in Cena for the finishing sequence. Joe cuts off the Shuffle though and it's off to the Koquina Clutch. Reigns tries a save with the Superman Punch but Joe sidesteps it, causing Cena to get hit instead. The second Superman Punch hits Joe but Cena pops up and grabs the AA to pin Miz at 13:03.

**Rating:** C+. I hate beach balls, I hate beach balls, I hate beach balls. As usual, whenever you ask a crowd to pay attention for this long (to something they paid for of course), it's bound to cause them to lose their interest and set off something like this. Naturally their response

is screw anyone who doesn't like it, because wrestling fans are selfish creatures by definition. I couldn't stand this stuff in Orlando and it's really annoying now, much like WWE encouraging this nonsense. As for the match, it was exactly what you would expect though Cena pinning Miz made me roll my eyes.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The wrestling was much better tonight with two very good matches but there was also a lot of stuff that felt like filler. As usual, if you cut out an hour of this show, it gets far better in a hurry, though at least the stuff that was good was very good. Strowman vs. Lesnar should be amazing and it would be even better if Cass' legitimate knee injury isn't serious. Good show tonight, which is a positive sign after last night's hit and miss effort.

### Results

Enzo Amore b. Big Cass via referee stoppage

Nia Jax b. Emma – Samoan drop

Elias b. R-Truth – Drift Away

Rich Swan/Mustafa Ali/Gran Metalik/Cedric Alexander b. Noam Dar/Tony Nese/Ariya Daivari/Drew Gulak – Lumbar Check to Nese

Seth Rollins/Dean Ambrose b. Hardy Boyz – Dirty Deeds to Jeff

Finn Balor b. Jason Jordan – Coup de Grace

John Cena/Roman Reigns b. Miz/Samoa Joe – Attitude Adjustment to Miz

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## **A Few Quick Raw Notes**

Some are nicer than others. 1. Strowman vs. Lesnar is official for No Mercy. Freaking yay and the only way they could go.

2. Screw beach balls. Seriously, screw them. If you're that bored at a show, go do something else and quit messing with the fans who don't care about that nonsense.

3. It looks like Cass' injury is legit. There's no word on the severity but that would suck if he has to miss time. It also doesn't look good for Enzo either, as he doesn't have much else to do other than deal with Cass.

4. Again, screw beach balls and screw WWE for encouraging them.

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## **If You Ever Wondered Why The Expanded Kickoff Show Was A**

# Bad Idea

It can lead to things like this.



That would be Miz making his entrance for the Kickoff Show match with only a few hundred (if that) people in the arena. Miz is the current Intercontinental Champion and he's in an arena with fewer people than a flea market show. This match was a rematch from Raw and served virtually no purpose other than getting people on the show. It started at roughly 5:20pm, because we just had to get in three Kickoff Show matches.

Now here's the thing. Apparently the arena's gates didn't open until after 5pm. Ok, that's understandable and can't be blamed on WWE. What CAN be blamed on them is having so much material that the first match had to start an hour and a half before the regular show officially began. The second and third Kickoff Show matches were before a reasonable crowd. This however looks awful and is something that is likely going to be a running joke for a good while.

Stop cramming in so much stuff, especially when it's hardly adding anything.

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# Summerslam Count-Up – 2016 (2017 Redo): The Bella, The Doctors and the SMASH

## Summerslam 2016

Date: August 21, 2016

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 15,974

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield

A year has passed since I saw this show and I can barely remember much about it. That's very telling when you look at how stacked this show really is. There are multiple top level matches here and it really wasn't clear what was going to close the show until the night of the event. Hopefully that means that this SIX HOUR show holds up. Let's get to it.

So here's a quick plug. I'm going through the pre-show and there's a three expert panel of Booker T., Jerry Lawler and Lita. Earlier this year, I met all three of them at WrestleCon. If you're ever at a Wrestlemania weekend, treat yourself to an amazing time and GO TO WRESTLECON. I met over 120 wrestlers in about four hours. Where else are you going to get to do something like that? Anyway, on with the show.

Pre-Show: American Alpha/Hype Bros/Usos vs.

Breezango/Ascension/Vaudevillains

Who would have thought that Breezango would be the most entertaining out

of all these teams? This is pretty much the still titleless Smackdown tag division at this point as they had to bring in the Headbangers and throw together Heath Slater and Rhyno to be able to have a tournament. This is also a rematch from Smackdown, which shows how little effort they were putting into the tag division at this point.

Gable and Breeze start things and the fans are WAY into Gable. Chad twists around as only he can to escape a wristlock and it's off to Jey, who is quickly driven into the corner. English comes in and says that he's what a man is. That earns him a right hand to the jaw and it's off to Mojo to work on a wristlock. Ryder comes in to quite the reaction as Mauro says the Hype Bros have more chemistry than the Periodic Table.

Everything breaks down (What took them so long?) and Ascension clears the ring, only to have American Alpha come off the top (the same corner) with double clotheslines (that's pure Steiner Brothers). English posts Ryder though and we take a break. Back with Gotch putting Ryder in a chinlock, followed by Viktor doing the same. The other heels take turns stomping on Ryder until Breeze grabs his own chinlock. Fandango adds a slingshot legdrop as this is going WAY longer than it needs to.

JBL thinks cold beer uniting the APA is more effective than furry selfie sticks uniting Breezango but maybe he's wrong. Ascension knocks the good guys off the apron but Viktor misses a charge in the corner, allowing Ryder to get in a neckbreaker on Konnor. The hot tag (with a limited reaction) brings in Jimmy to clean house.

Jordan gets the real hot tag and does his fired up sequence (which he really is awesome at) with a belly to belly getting two on Breeze. We hit the parade of secondary finishers as the referee is imploring them to tag. Mojo powerbombs Breeze and Viktor out of the corner and the Usos add stereo superkicks to set up stereo dives. Back in and Grand Amplitude plants Gotch, only to have Jey tag himself in for a Superfly Splash and the pin at 14:31. Gable is really not cool with that. Eh just wait until your team is split up for a pretty lame story where Jordan is Kurt Angle's son.

**Rating:** B-. If you cut out a few minutes from this, it's a heck of an

opener. There are too many people in the match of course but they kept it moving fast enough (for the most part) to really get something fun out of it. Jordan's house cleaning spot is a heck of a way to fire the crowd up and it made the match more fun than it should have been. Tweak this a bit (eight/ten man tag or shorten the match a bit) and it's even better.

#### Pre-Show: Dudley Boyz vs. Sami Zayn/Neville

Sami works on D-Von's arm to start and it's off to Neville for more of the same. Both of them get in more shots as we hear about the rivalry over the NXT Title. I do appreciate the history, especially when Graves should know about that match very well. Bubba is sent outside but D-Von breaks up a springboard dive, allowing Bubba to nail Neville from behind to take over. The fans want tables but a back elbow to Neville's jaw cuts them off in a hurry.

Back from a break with Bubba hitting his neckbreaker out of the corner. Things slow down even more as Bubba is talking even more than he usually does in a match. Bubba: "COME ON ENGLISH BOY! O-LAY! O-LAY!" The middle rope backplash misses though and the hot tag brings in Sami. D-Von takes the Blue Thunder Bomb for two but the reverse 3D gets the same. Neville escapes the regular version though and we get some heel miscommunication. The Helluva Kick sets up the Red Arrow to put Bubba away at 7:55.

**Rating:** C-. That would be it for the Dudleys in WWE as they would have one more segment tomorrow night where Anderson and Gallows sent them packing. It's also pretty much it for Sami and Neville as a team, which is quite odd as you would think they would be a fine choice for a team. The match was nothing you wouldn't expect on Raw.

#### Pre-Show: Cesaro vs. Sheamus

You know, because two matches just weren't enough for the pre-show. This is the first match of the Best of Seven Series, which really wasn't too well received. After Cole says Cesaro is facing Cesaro and both Cole and Saxton say this is about establishing physical dominance, we're ready to go. Sheamus misses a very early Brogue Kick but the spinning springboard uppercut is blocked as well.

Cesaro charges into an uppercut but comes back with a dropkick for one. The ten forearms to the chest are broken up so Sheamus clotheslines him onto the apron instead. It's off to an armbar on Cesaro's chronically taped up shoulder but Cesaro lifts him up into that kind of reverse Angle Slam of his. They're certainly hitting each other hard here, which is pretty much the draw of the whole feud.

Sheamus hits a tilt-a-whirl slam and it's off to a break. Back with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock because that rule even applies on pre-shows that will never end. The Irish Curse gives Sheamus two as Cole runs down the pay per view card, which only makes me think that there are FAR too many titles in WWE. They fight over a suplex and fall out to the floor in a heap. Back in and Cesaro starts firing off the running uppercuts in the corner, capped off by a dropkick to knock him off the ropes.

The apron superplex (which wasn't from the apron) gets two but Sheamus counters the Neutralizer into White Noise for two. There's the super Regal Roll for two more and frustration is really setting in. Another Brogue Kick attempt is countered by one heck of a clothesline though and Cesaro adds a high crossbody for two of his own. Cesaro tries the Sharpshooter but Sheamus gets to the ropes. Back up and a poke to the eye sets up the Brogue Kick to give Sheamus the pin at 14:11.

**Rating:** B. They beat the heck out of each other and it was a fun match but it also brings up the problem: I'm not going to want to watch them fight six more times. No matter how good things are, having them happen so many times in a row over several weeks is going to get tiresome. It happens in all these series and it's happening here too.

And now, after more wrestling than you get on an average Smackdown, here's the actual pay per view.

The opening video looks at New York City, with the narrator telling you how AMAZING the city is. I'm not sure if New York City or Texas is worse about bragging about their home's greatness. As usual, this switches over to a series of quick looks at the biggest matches on the card.

[Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens](#)

Well duh. That's about as easy of a choice for an opener as you could ever find for this show. As you might expect, the crowd eats up the opening promo with a spoon and of course we hear a ton of New York City music references. Included are Frank Sinatra, Biggie Smalls and Jay-Z, plus more that probably go over my head. Cass adds in a few songs of his own as this is the only way this show could have opened. Since Graves is the best heel commentator in wrestling today though, he points out that Enzo is from New Jersey.

Jericho and Owens jump Enzo at the bell and the STUPID IDIOT chants start rolling. Enzo comes back with a crossbody and a running right hand to the jaw for two. It's off to Cass, who drags Owens inside for a beat. That's some scary power. Enzo gets launched into the corner to crush Jericho but the Canadians bail to the floor. That's fine with Cass who tosses Enzo over the top onto them in a huge crash. I've always loved that spot as it just looks cool.

Back in and Enzo ax handles Owens but turns into a middle rope dropkick from Jericho. The Canadian violence begins with Owens kneeing Enzo from the apron and doing his dance on the apron in a rather funny visual. Owens' comedic skills aren't given enough credit more often than not. It's back to Jericho for the Arrogant Cover and a chinlock with Owens telling Jericho to do it like he taught him.

Owens comes in and adds a gutbuster for two, followed by the running start for a chinlock. It takes real talent to turn a chinlock into an art form but Owens has somehow pulled it off. Enzo finally rolls away but Jericho is there to break up the diving tag attempt. Owens drops the frog splash for two and his stunned looked on the kickout is the usual awesome visual. Enzo gets pulled off the corner to make things even worse but, after blowing a kiss to Jericho, misses the Cannonball.

That means the hot tag to Cass and everything breaks down. Jericho dives into a big boot but Owens breaks up the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka. Cass gets posted on the floor and now the Cannonball against the barricade connects. Back in and Enzo scores with his top rope DDT on Jericho with Owens making the save. A pop up Codebreaker (didn't look great as Jericho was too far away) ends Enzo at 12:09.

**Rating:** C+. Odd choice for an ending aside (not surprising of course but odd), this was a good way to get the crowd going. I could have gone for another hope spot from Enzo and more of Cass cleaning house but that pop up Codebreaker could have been a heck of a finisher if done right. Nice opener, though would it have killed them to put Enzo and Cass over in Brooklyn?

Smackdown bosses Daniel Bryan and Shane McMahon run into Raw General Manager Mick Foley to brag about how awesome their shows are. Former Daily Show host Jon Stewart and his son come in to ask what Foley is thinking to work with Stephanie. He rants about abuse of power but realizes she's right behind him. Stephanie yells at him about how great it is to abuse power but thankfully New Day comes up. As the Smackdown bosses and Foley munch on cereal, New Day asks Jon if he'd like to do something. He gets out as fast as he can and Stephanie isn't amused.

We recap Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks. Sasha won the Women's Title on the first exclusive show after the Brand Split and tonight is the rematch. The other big idea here is Charlotte never loses singles matches on pay per view and Banks has to recreate the magic one more time.

#### Raw Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Banks is defending and we get the Big Match Intros. Some early WOOing sets up a slightly less early Bank Statement but Charlotte bails to the floor. Back in and Banks climbs the corner for a wristdrag before sending Charlotte face first into the middle buckle. Banks gets caught on top though and Charlotte basically drops her onto the ropes for a backbreaker which almost had to hurt horribly. The fact that Banks had a bad back coming in and Charlotte still did some rather sloppy moves like that got her in some hot water.

We hit a Gory Stretch on the champ for a bit but she comes back with a pair of running clotheslines. That just earns her another backbreaker and Charlotte stomps away at the back. The Figure Eight is broken up but Sasha misses a charge into the corner and gets caught in the Tree of Woe. Charlotte picks her up for a super Razor's Edge but since that would, you know, kill Sasha, she reverses into a hurricanrana to put them both down.

Back up and a WOO earns Charlotte a string of slaps before Sasha avoids a charge in the corner and hits the double knees to the back for two. Charlotte kicks her in the leg to break up a charge but gets knocked outside again, setting up the double knees from the apron. Back in and the Backstabber doesn't work but Natural Selection is countered into the Bank Statement (thankfully too as the Natural Selection clearly didn't send Sasha's head anywhere near the mat).

Charlotte makes the rope for the break and takes out the knee again. Natural Selection gives Charlotte two so she yells about being better than Sasha. Another Bank Statement goes on but Charlotte reverses into a rollup for the pin and the title at 13:52. Saxton: "Just like that?"

**Rating:** B. This was just a straight match and that's the key to the whole thing. The women are getting to show that they can have a good match without the smoke and mirrors, which never would have been the case otherwise. If nothing else it got the kind of time that a title match deserves to develop the story of Banks having a bad back (which would keep her on the shelf for about a month). Strong match here and another of many to come for these two.

Doctors Anderson and Gallows (oh man I had forgotten how stupid this was) run into AJ Styles for a Club reunion. Finn Balor comes up and doesn't think much of it. Somehow, this has still never gone anywhere.

#### Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is defending after winning a triple threat match. Miz comes out wearing a glittery Phantom of the Opera mask while Maryse is basically in a one piece swimsuit. In a sign of the changing times, Mauro talks about Miz's look instead of Maryse. Miz stomps away in the corner and gets two off a running kick to the chest. Crews gets the same off a rollup, only to walk into the short DDT as it's almost all Miz to start. We're already in the reverse chinlock before Miz sends him into the apron to cut off a comeback. Miz takes too long coming off the top though and dives into a dropkick to put both guys down.

A crossbody into a nipup has Miz in trouble as JBL rants about Otunga calling Crews a Jackrobat (jacked acrobat). The Toss Powerbomb is

countered so Crews gets two off a tilt-a-whirl powerslam. An overhead belly to belly sets up a standing moonsault, which Otunga sums up perfectly: "A man with that kind of size and that kind of muscle should not be able to do that." Miz teases taking a walk but Maryse cuts him off, allowing Miz to post Crews. The Skull Crushing Finale retains the title at 5:36.

**Rating:** D+. Standard Smackdown match and something that could have been cut, or at least put in the Kickoff Show in the place of the Dudleys match. Crews felt like an easy obstacle to overcome because there was nowhere near enough build to set the match up. Put some more effort into the title already people, as it's just not working.

We recap John Cena vs. AJ Styles. They set up the first match when Styles and Cena were in the ring together, only to have Anderson and Gallows interfere to turn Styles heel. Styles went on a great rant about how Cena was a fraud who couldn't hang in the ring with someone like him. Cena went into a great speech about how he's here out of love because it never gets old. AJ beat him at Money in the Bank with assistance from Anderson and Gallows, setting up a rematch between the two here.

### AJ Styles vs. John Cena

This just feels big. AJ grabs a waistlock to start but is easily knocked away. The announcers go out of the way to put over how AJ has been on big shows before but nothing this big. Oh I don't know. I remember him being at that Wrestlemania thing earlier in the year. The dueling chants begin and the AJ STYLES side is pretty clearly stronger.

Cena's headlock is countered and AJ scores with the dropkick but the bragging earns AJ a right to the jaw. A hard whip into the corner sends AJ down for a bit with Cena doing some rare trash talking. They head to the floor and the fans start belting out JOHN CENA SUCKS, only to have AJ turn it into some gasping with a suplex onto the apron. Cena is right back with a dropkick for two and it's time for some more right hands to the head.

AJ comes back with a forearm to the face, earning himself Cena's finishing sequence. It's way too early for the AA though as AJ hits a

Pele, followed by the Styles Clash for a close two. The fans were actually more into the near fall than I was expecting as you would think they'd know better this early. The AA gives Cena two of his own and both guys are down again.

Styles slips out of the super AA and grabs the torture rack for the spinout powerbomb. They're trading bombs at this point and it's the only way they should be going here. Something like a Big Ending gives Cena two but he can't get the STF. Instead it's the AA neckbreaker for two on Cena (not the same as the AA JBL) but the springboard 450 only hits mat.

A faceplant puts Cena down again though and AJ can't follow up. He manages the springboard forearm but Cena reverses into the worst STF I've ever seen. Thankfully AJ slips out and grabs a Crossface, which Cena powers out of as well. That's reversed into the Calf Crusher which AJ is smart enough to twist away from the ropes. Cena reverses that into another horrible STF (AJ's face is on the mat) so AJ is quickly up with the enziguri. A tornado DDT plants AJ and there's the top rope Fameasser for two.

Cena heads up again and gets taken down with a super hurricanrana (Mauro: "MAMA MIA!"), followed by the Phenomenal Forearm for a VERY near fall (drawing Mauro to his feet). It's Cena's turn now as he takes AJ up for the super AA and...it's two. NOW the fans know it's on as I don't think anyone has ever kicked out of that before. Cena is stunned and the AA is countered into another Clash. The Phenomenal Forearm puts Cena away clean at 23:10.

**Rating:** A. I know it's not going to sound good but a lot of this goes to Cena. At the end of the day, the crowd completely lost it when AJ kicked out of that super AA. AJ wins here not because he got a pin but because he beat Cena clean. That's a very, VERY short list and that's what makes it feel so important. Think back to how big of a deal it was when Warrior pinned Hogan clean. That felt like an era changing win, and while this isn't quite that big, it's the same idea.

Oh yeah and it's an outstanding match and possibly the Match of the Year. This was the heavyweight slugfest formula as they beat the heck out of

each other with both guys hitting everything they could until one of them couldn't get up. That's a really hard match to pull off and these two did it in an incredible match. It belonged on the grand stage and gives Cena one heck of a mountain to overcome, which he somehow did in a better match at the Royal Rumble.

Post match Cena takes off his wristband and leaves it in the ring. He would do dark matches for a few weeks and then be back wrestling on TV in less than a month so this didn't mean anything.

Some fans won a contest and got some stuff. In other words, let the fans have a breather.

Here's Jon Stewart for your celebrity appearance. He makes fun of himself for interfering in Cena's match last year and says the big lesson he learned was to tuck your shirt in when you're taking an AA. As for tonight though, he's here to be in New Day's corner to help deal with Anderson and Gallows. In honor of the moment, he throws on a unicorn horn and does Big E.'s (out injured due to getting crotched against the post) entrance.

#### Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending of course and unfortunately Anderson and Gallows are still doing their stupid doctor nonsense, complete with jars for Kofi, Xavier and Jon's testicles. I hear Paige can help you with one of those. Anderson headlocks Kofi down to start but he's right back up with the jumping back elbow to the jaw. Kofi flips onto his feet and gets two off the standing double stomp. You can tell the fans are still recovering from the previous match and it's off to Woods.

That goes badly as the he gets taken into the corner for a beating from Gallows. At least it does bring the fans back a bit with the rhythmic clapping. Gallows gets taken into the corner for the Unicorn Stampede (which they've kind of stopped doing in recent months) and the fans are really not responding. Woods sends him outside so Kofi can hit a running dive (while posing in the air) to take him down again. Back in and Gallows kicks Kofi in the head to take over for real this time with Anderson working on the arm.

That goes nowhere as the hot tag brings in Woods to clean house. Anderson sends him to the apron for an enziguri, setting up the rope walk elbow drop. Everything breaks down and Anderson kicks Kofi in the chest, setting up the Magic Killer. Stewart gets in though and it's time to crotch him as well. Hang on though as he has to tuck in his shirt first. Cue the returning Big E. for the save though and that's a DQ at 9:09.

**Rating:** D. I don't know if it was the previous match or what but sweet goodness the fans did NOT care for this one. It's not a good match in the first place as Anderson and Gallows aren't funny in the doctor roles, but the bigger problem here was the focus being on Stewart at the end. Oh and the ending sets up a rematch, which really isn't what they need to be going with here. Bad match but Big E.'s return did wake up the crowd.

Big E. drinks the fluid in the jar holding his "testicles". Stewart dances with New Day and the fans...well they care when Big E. dances at least.

We recap Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler. Dolph won a six way match to earn the shot and then it all went nuts. Ziggler started talking about how he was tired of being told that he always either too good or not good enough. It was time to turn up the jets and become champion for the third time. Serious Ziggler was nice but I don't think anyone was buying him as having a real chance here. You know, because he's Dolph Ziggler.

#### Smackdown World Title: Dolph Ziggler vs. Dean Ambrose

Dean is defending and Shane and Daniel are here for no apparent reason. The fans are behind Ziggler and they trade some grappling on the mat with Ziggler getting the better of it (not exactly a surprise). The threat of a neckbreaker sends Ambrose bailing to the floor so Dolph splashes him against the barricade.

Back in and Ziggler's jumping DDT is countered with Dean throwing him outside again. Ziggler escapes a super Dirty Deeds so Dean slaps on a half crab of all things. You can tell Dean is playing the subtle heel here as the smark crowd is always going to cheer for Ziggler. Dean heads up top and gets dropkicked out of the air but he's right back with a double chickenwing facebuster.

Ambrose tunes up the band (which is now mocking Ziggler instead of anything involving Shawn Michaels) but shakes his head and tries Dirty Deeds instead. That's reversed into the jumping DDT and both guys are down again. A double collision gives us another lay down period until Dean is up first and hammering away.

The top rope elbow gets two so Ziggler grabs the sleeper, earning them both a tumble out to the floor. Ziggler gets in the superkick on the floor but it's barely two back inside. The Zig Zag gets the same but Dean pops back up with the rebound lariat. Ziggler catches Dean on top and pulls him back down, right into Dirty Deeds to retain the title at 15:22.

**Rating:** D+. And that people, is Ziggler choking again. This would lead to him saying he's never won the big one, which would turn into him never holding the World Title that long because holding the title is more important than winning it. The match was nothing all that good as we were just waiting on Dirty Deeds, which only happened so Dean could keep it warm for AJ next month. That was completely obvious the second AJ pinned Cena again and that's all this title needed to do.

Package on Summerslam weekend.

#### Natalya/Alexa Bliss/Eva Marie vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi/Carmella

Dang I didn't know the Glow was a year old. Actually hang on a minute as Eva Marie is suffering from exhaustion, anxiety and stress (likely brought on by reading too many Wellness Violation messages, which meant she would never wrestle again) so we have a replacement. At least we got that amazing entrance one more time.

#### Natalya/Alexa Bliss/Nikki Bella vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi/Carmella

So yeah, you know full well that Nikki is going to be all that matters in this match because IT'S HER BIG COMEBACK THAT EVERYONE TOTALLY CARES ABOUT BECAUSE WE LOVE HER SO MUCH! She does get one heck of a pop though, which is rather scary. During her entrance, Mauro declares her return "miraculous". Oh man this is going to be a long one.

Bliss rolls Becky up to start and gets in a hard slap for good measure.

Naomi comes in to scare Alexa off so it's Natalya instead. A forearm puts Natalya down and the splits legdrop gets two. Carmella comes in for the Staten Island Shuffle before a missed charge sends Natalya outside. Back in and a powerslam out of the corner plants Carmella before it's off to Nikki, the heel, for a strong face pop.

We hit the chinlock but hang on as we need some Nikki pushups. Alexa chokeslaves Carmella down for the moonsault knees to the ribs as the crowd is dead all over again. The abdominal stretch keeps things slow until Carmella finally rolls over and makes the hot tag to Becky. All three heels are sent into the corner for the springboard kicks from Lynch, followed by a Bexploder on Natalya.

Becky's top rope legdrop gets two with Nikki making the save. A blind tag brings in Naomi for the dancing kicks with the fans just not reacting at all. Bliss' springboard splash hits knees so it's off to Nikki vs. Carmella. A bad looking Bronco Buster gets two on Nikki and everything breaks down. Nikki's big forearm sets up the Rack Attack 2.0 (Nikki: "I'm back.") for the pin at 11:16.

**Rating:** D. This was all about Nikki's return and that's not enough to carry a dull match. Naomi's Glow stuff wasn't over yet, Becky was stuck around people who weren't up to her level and Carmella was showing that she didn't need to be on the main roster yet. The same was true for Alexa and Natalya was her usual self. Just not a good match and it showed the lack of depth to the division.

We recap Rusev vs. Roman Reigns. Rusev and Lana were married and so Reigns interrupted for no apparent reason to insult them and shove them into a cake.

Maria Menunos interviews Rusev and Lana, who don't like her questions about Reigns. They won't stand for this and Lana is sure that her husband will destroy Reigns.

We recap the Universal Title match. Basically we need a new title due to the Brand Split and Universal Title was the best they could come up with. Seth Rollins was put into the match as Raw's #1 draft pick and Finn Balor earned his way in by winning a series of matches. Not much else to it as

there's no major animosity between them but it's better than pulling the title out of a suitcase.

Seth did get in a great promo talking about how he's done everything Balor has done but he's done it a little bit better. He's not wrong, though that's not the best thing to do when you have someone so new to the main roster. Then Balor showed up as the Demon and scared Rollins to death.

### Universal Title: Finn Balor vs. Seth Rollins

Anything goes and the title (which isn't that well received due to a bad case of being hideous) is vacant coming in. Unless I'm forgetting something, to date this is the only time Balor has wrestled as the Demon on the main roster. We get the Big Match Intros and the title itself receives some hearty boos. Balor dropkicks him into the corner at the bell but it's too early for the Coup de Grace.

Instead Balor hits a suicide dive to the floor, followed by some kicks to the knee back inside. They head outside again with Seth getting in his first offense via a suplex on the floor. Balor is right back with something like a Phenomenal Forearm off the barricade. Back in again and Balor hits a basement dropkick for two as this is almost one sided so far. Finn stays on the leg as the fans are singing something.

Balor jumps over the ropes but Rollins slides between his legs and powerbombs him into the barricade, completely destroying Balor's shoulder and putting him on the shelf for the better part of eight months. We're less than four minutes in though and you can see the shoulder looking all messed up. Back in and Seth gets two off a backbreaker, setting up a chinlock. The chants are still going and it sounds like THAT TITLE SUCKS to the tune of John Cena Sucks.

Seth starts the trash talk and cuts off a comeback attempt. A snapmare into a kick to the back has Finn in even more trouble but Seth would rather walk around than follow up. It's back to the chinlock for a good while until the springboard knee to the head sets up Seth's frog splash for two. What looks like a Rainmaker is countered into a DDT to give Balor his first major offense in a long time and he follows up with some

forearms.

A basement dropkick sets up the Sling Blade but Seth kicks him down without much effort. An enziguri stuns Balor but he's right back with the Pele, earning a very nice round of applause. If nothing else the chants about the title have stopped. 1916 (reverse implant DDT) gives Finn two but the Coup de Grace is countered into a triangle choke of all things. Finn falls outside because rope breaks don't count (anything goes remember) and things slow down a bit.

Back in and the buckle bomb sets up the low superkick for two on Balor with Seth looking stunned on the kickout. A small package driver gets the same count and reaction so Seth goes up, allowing Balor to hit a very loud enziguri to put him on the floor. Balor adds a shotgun dropkick to send him into the barricade, followed by a top rope double stomp to the back of the head for two. The Coup de Grace misses and it's a Pedigree for two. Finn counters a second Pedigree into a double stomp, followed by the Coup de Grace for the pin and the title at 19:23.

**Rating:** B+. When you factor in that shoulder injury, this is quite the impressive performance. Above all else though, how good is it that Balor won the title here? If he loses his first major pay per view match and then goes away until April, he's lucky to come back to the cruiserweight division.

This was a heck of a match with both guys beating the heck out of each other. It took some time to get built up but once they finally got there, the fans really started to accept things, which is a very positive sign. Balor is someone who is going to get a very positive reaction no matter what and giving him the title here was entirely the right call.

Balor can barely move his right arm after the match but finally holds the title up. On his WWE 24 special, he said you could feel and hear the shoulder crunching and crackling as he lifted the title and it probably did more damage to the arm.

The pre-show channel chats a bit and throws us to a KFC ad with Dolph Ziggler dressing up as Colonel Sanders to beat up Miz dressed as a chicken. It's actually dumber than you remember it being.

Here's Lana to introduce Rusev, albeit while wearing half of a wedding dress, the bottom of which looks like a diaper. She's one of the most beautiful women on the roster but she looks ridiculous here.

#### US Title: Rusev vs. Roman Reigns

Roman is challenging and the booing is strong with this one. Rusev jumps him before the bell and they fight out to the floor with Roman being sent into the steps. The fans chant RUSEV MACHKA because they've given up on America over their hatred for Reigns. Roman gets in a Superman Punch as the bell hasn't rung yet. They fight over a chair with Reigns getting the better of it and destroying Rusev. Reigns finally leaves but comes back with a spear, all while the fans chant WE WANT SLATER. No match of course, likely due to time issues.

We recap Randy Orton vs. Brock Lesnar. This match was announced as Orton's return match from surgery and the build focused on Orton being able to hit the RKO anytime, including a sweet moment where Orton interrupted a Lesnar promo with an RKO. The hype video even includes some OVW clips as they came up through developmental together and debuted within a few months of each other. This had a heck of a build and felt like something important but the question was whether Lesnar would have an actual match or just do his usual Lesnar stuff.

#### Randy Orton vs. Brock Lesnar

Heyman handles Lesnar's introduction, saying he's conquering out of the University of Suplex City. Brock seems to get into his MMA stance to start before driving Orton into the corner for the shoulders to the ribs. Orton escapes the first German suplex attempt but can't hit the RKO.

Now the first suplex connects (with Mauro knowing that it's the 33<sup>rd</sup> Lesnar has hit at Summerslam because he's awesome that way) and Brock follows with two more. Orton is almost out on his feet so Lesnar suplexes him again. It's nothing but suplexes at this point and it's already getting dull. They head outside for a much needed change of pace with Orton being thrown over the announcers' table.

Orton gets thrown from the front row through the table as this is

dominance. The other table is loaded up but whatever Lesnar is trying is countered into the RKO onto (not through) the table. The hanging DDT plants Lesnar back inside and another RKO gets two. Orton realizes he has no choice and tries the Punt, only to have it reversed into the F5 (bad one) for two more.

That's enough for Lesnar so he takes off the gloves and pads and hammers on Orton. An elbow to the head actually busts Orton open VERY badly. Lesnar just keeps hammering on him while the fans chant GOLDBERG until the referee FINALLY stops it at 11:47. I've heard a bunch of answers about what happened but I believe this was the planned ending and a hard way opening.

**Rating:** D. Yeah this didn't work when it happened and it didn't work again this time around. Lesnar suplexing Orton for five minutes then selling a few big moves doesn't make me think it's an awesome main event. This was everything wrong with Lesnar's current WWE run in one match and that made for a really dull match, save for the odd finish that seemed designed to protect Orton. You know, after he was basically squashed.

Lesnar keeps hammering on him until the always intimidating Shane McMahon comes out, earning himself an F5 (which thankfully didn't lead anywhere). Heyman panics as they leave to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. If you cut an hour (or more) out of this, it's bordering on the classic level. As it is, this is just a good show that runs WAY too long. At some point you have to cut something out and WWE just refuses to do that. Cut out the Dudleys match or the women's tag and give us some breathing room here because sweet goodness this show could use it.

Now that being said, there's some outstanding stuff on here with the Styles vs. Cena match as an instant classic, the Women's Title being very good, a great Universal Title match and really only the Tag Team Title match being without much value. The show is certainly good and the positives outweigh the negatives but unless the show is a masterpiece, fans are going to start losing interest near the end. It's a solid show but cut out a good forty minutes to really make it great.

## Ratings Comparison

American Alpha/Hype Bros/Usos vs. Breezango/Ascension/Vaudevillains

Original: C

2017 Redo: B-

Dudley Boyz vs. Neville/Sami Zayn

Original: C

2017 Redo: C-

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

Original: B-

2017 Redo: B

Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Original: C+

2017 Redo: C+

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Original: B

2017 Redo: B

Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Original: C

2017 Redo: D+

John Cena vs. AJ Styles

Original: A

2017 Redo: A

New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

Original: D+

2017 Redo: D

Dolph Ziggler vs. Dean Ambrose

Original: B-

2017 Redo: D+

Natalya/Alexa Bliss/Nikki Bella vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi/Carmella

Original: C

2017 Redo: D

Finn Balor vs. Seth Rollins

Original: B+

2017 Redo: D+

Brock Lesnar vs. Randy Orton

Original: C+

2017 Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: B

2017 Redo: B-

That's quite the drop on Ambrose vs. Ziggler and Lesnar vs. Orton. Some of them are spot on though and that's not the biggest surprise.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2016/08/21/summerslam-2016-they-didnt/>

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# Smackdown – March 20, 2003: At Least They're Admitting It

## Smackdown

Date: March 20, 2003

Location: Freedom Hall, Louisville, Kentucky

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're ten days away from Wrestlemania XIX and hopefully things are going to pick up around here. The big story coming out of last week is Kurt Angle screwing over Brock Lesnar in their big showdown last week. You know Lesnar isn't going to stand for that so violence is likely due. Let's get to it.

We open with a montage of America the Beautiful from Wrestlemania over the years in honor of the US armed forces invading Iraq. The fact that I can tell which Wrestlemania each is from on the audio alone tells me that I've spent WAY too much of my life watching Wrestlemania.

Long recap of last week's title match, including showing the brothers Angle switching during Lesnar's entrance. That wasn't shown last week.

Opening sequence.

### Charlie Haas vs. Rhyno

Rhyno wastes no time in slugging away before Haas can even get his belt off. Some hard right hands (that intensity is always cool to see) have Haas in even more trouble but he sends Rhyno outside for a superkick from Shelton. Back in and a belly to belly sends Rhyno flying before it's time to work on the knee.

We hit a few leg locks until Rhyno finally crawls over to the ropes. Charlie sticks with the leg until Rhyno uses the good leg to kick him away. A suplex drops Charlie but the knee gives out again. Tazz: "It's like a table with three legs but Rhyno has two legs because he's a human and not a table". Shelton grabs the bad leg to break up the Gore and it's a belt shot to Rhyno's head for the DQ.

**Rating:** C-. I was starting to dig the match until the pretty stupid ending. If you want to do the DQ, just do it off Shelton interfering. Either way, at least Rhyno got to show off a bit as you rarely think of him doing much more than the Gore. He can wrestle a pretty decent power match and he was having a good little match here until the messy ending. I can always go for preventing title match participants from taking a pin before a pay per view though.

Bob Costas talks about how big Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon will be, because it's like the seniors' golf tour. That's quite ahead of its time for a featured Wrestlemania match.

Brian Kendrick is in Stephanie McMahon's office so she can yell at him (shocking I know) for defying her authority in his efforts to get a job. Uh...if he doesn't work here, why does he answer to Stephanie? Anyway she's giving him a match tonight and if he wins, he gets a contract. You know, because Stephanie is firm but kind.

John Cena issues an open challenge for a rap off at Wrestlemania. This was scheduled to take place but the rapper, Fabolous, was arrested before the show and therefore the whole thing was canceled. Cena is ready for Lesnar too and is back next week.

Los Guerreros go to a golf course and annoy some semi-racist golfers. One golfer suggests a foursome but Eddie didn't quite mean that. They agree to a winner take all bet and of course Eddie and Chavo cheat to win. Chavo: "If you're not cheating, you're not trying."

#### Rikishi/Los Guerreros vs. FBI

Nunzio jumps Eddie to start but Chavo comes in with a Batista Bomb of all things for two. It's off to Palumbo so Chavo starts in on his leg but a clothesline takes him down. Cole: "I've got a nickname now: the gangsta." As you try to get that image out of your head, the Italians lure Eddie in and put Chavo in a double half crab (seems unnecessary) so Nunzio can drop a middle rope leg to the back of his head.

Palumbo gets two off a Samoan drop but a tornado DDT gives Chavo a bit of a reprieve. There's the hot tag to Eddie and everything breaks down with Rikishi cleaning house with a double clothesline. All three Italians get crushed in the corner by the big man, leaving Palumbo to take a superkick and the frog splash for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Am I missing something with the four non-Guerreros? Rikishi and the FBI get TV time almost every week for some reason and I have no idea why. They're not interesting and there's nothing special about them but for some reason they're treated like fairly big stars. At least Eddie got the pin, though they should be getting more attention on their upcoming title match rather than this one off match.

Bobby Heenan calls Hogan vs. McMahon the old timers' match as well. He's right, again. It's still sad to hear his voice that way though.

#### Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Mysterio sends him into the corner to start but gets powerbombed into the buckle for his efforts. Rey gets tossed outside for a hard clothesline from Nidia and it's off to an inverted Gory Stretch back inside. A tornado DDT plants Noble and a top rope hurricanrana makes things even worse. Nidia grabs Mysterio's mask so he dives over the top to take her out in a rather violent moment. Back in and the 619 into the West Coast Pop gives Rey the pin.

**Rating:** C. Mysterio rising up the cruiserweight ranks is the best thing that can happen to the division and it's cool to see him starting to get closer to the title. It's also a good idea to have him go after Matt Hardy, who is a far bigger star than anyone in the division and therefore a better match for Mysterio. Unfortunately the rest of the division is pretty interchangeable and expendable, though they can put on some nice filler matches, just like Noble did here.

Kurt Angle tells his brother Eric, now in a leg cast, that they'll make things right.

Here are the Angles for a chat. Kurt brags about retaining the title and credits his intelligence in making it happen. He explains the entire plan from last week and says Eric is the best brother anyone could have. Eric: "Mom was right. You don't suck bro." Now on to serious business though, as Kurt has to deal with Lesnar for putting his hands on Eric. Kurt calls him a disgrace to all forms of wrestling and says if you hurt one Angle, you hurt all Angles.

He wants Brock out here right now but gets....Stephanie instead. Well to be fair she's more intimidating. She changes the rules for Wrestlemania, saying that if Kurt gets disqualified, he loses the title. Stephanie: "Don't look at me like that Kurt!". Kurt isn't happy but he's staying out here until he gets his apology from Lesnar. Cue Brock to go after Eric but Kurt hits him low and Angle Slams Brock through a chair. Angle puts a knee in Brock's back and grabs something like a Crossface until referees break it up.

#### Undertaker vs. Bill DeMott

Undertaker shoulders him down to start as Cole mentions that Undertaker has never lost at Wrestlemania. A kick to the ribs is countered into a legbar to send DeMott over to the ropes. Snake Eyes looks to set up a big boot but DeMott grabs a spinebuster for two instead. Undertaker is right back up with Old School for the same but the chokeslam is broken up. The second attempt works just fine though and the Tombstone ends Bill without too much effort.

**Rating:** D. Just a step above a squash here but it was good to give

Undertaker a win like this. If nothing else it might get rid of DeMott even faster as he's still not an interesting heel. At the very least he's likely heading to Velocity now as there's little left for him to do after a loss like this.

Brock thinks he's broken his ribs again. Isn't that always the way before a big title shot?

### Brian Kendrick vs. Shannon Moore

Shannon has Matt Hardy, who graciously included Shannon in his book and is Shannon's idol, in his corner. Brian tries some fast rollups to start and slips out of an electric chair into la majistral for two. A snap suplex gives Shannon two and we hit the bow and arrow. Back up and Brian gets in a facebuster followed by a springboard missile dropkick for two, with Tazz saying that was his best shot.

Matt has had enough of this being in trouble thing and pulls Brian to the floor for a faceplant onto the steps. That's only good for two though and here's Mysterio to go after Matt, allowing Brian to hit Sliced Bread #2 for the win. Since Kendrick doesn't have music, he leaves to Rey's instead.

**Rating:** D+. Nothing wrong with this one and I'm glad we can get rid of the Kendrick doesn't have a job story as he's wrestled more often than most people already on the roster. Mysterio and Hardy getting involved works as well as anything else and it's not like Moore losing is going to hurt anyone. Not the worst match either.

This week's Wrestlemania moment: Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper in a boxing match. That's the ONLY option they had?

We run down the Wrestlemania card.

Clips of the Wrestlemania press conference.

Vince is happy with the contract before the signing later tonight.

### Chris Benoit vs. Shelton Benjamin

Benoit chops away to start and gets one off a belly to back suplex. Shelton gets in a suplex of his own for two and chokes on the mat to set up a chinlock. That's fine with Benoit who comes back with a Crossface but Shelton rolls out, only to get dropkicked back down. The Crossface goes on again with Rhyno goring down an interfering Haas, leaving Benjamin to tap.

**Rating:** C. It was really short but intense while it lasted, which is all you can expect from these two. I'm really not big on a champion losing in about three and a half minutes at any point, especially less than two weeks before the pay per view. At least it wasn't in a tag match though, which would have been even worse. Fun match while it lasted though.

Jesse Ventura doesn't think there's ever been a bad Wrestlemania and thinks Vince is willing to take chances. Did he just stop watching when he went to WCW?

Gene Okerlund is here to moderate the Vince and Hogan contract signing. Hogan comes out first and makes sure to soak in some cheers from some unbelievable Maniacs. Hulk wants to know what's up with McMahonmania because Vince didn't create Hulkmania. We see Vince walking through the back but here he is attacking Hogan from behind with a chair. I know it's a simple editing trick but I've always been a fan of that kind of thing. Vince chairs Hogan down and busts him open, forcing him to sign the contract in his own blood. We get the big dramatic shots of the bloody Hogan to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. If there was any doubt about the Smackdown main event for Wrestlemania, this show certainly got rid of them. This was full speed ahead on Hogan vs. McMahon and it's towering over Lesnar vs. Angle. The title match has the more entertaining build but there's no hiding the fact that the old timers are the real focal point. The wrestling was short here but it was entertaining while it lasted, especially for matches designed to set up the pay per view and not be big deals on their own. They're starting to focus on Seattle but there's not a lot of time left and it's really starting to show.

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# Summerslam Count-Up – 2015: He Did... Kind Of... But It Didn't Count.

## **Summerslam 2015**

Date: August 23, 2015

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 15,702

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

This show was only a year ago and I barely remember anything about it save for the two main events. It really is amazing that these shows have just stopped standing out aside from Wrestlemania. Unfortunately we're at the point where Summerslam is now a regular four hour show because three hours of pay per view plus five hours of TV a week and a two hour NXT show the night before this just isn't enough. Let's get to it.

Thankfully there was no pre-show match so we can get straight to the regular show. When you have three hours and forty four minutes on pay per view, you really don't need an eight minute warmup match.

Here's host Jon Stewart to open things up. Stewart hypes up the crowd and says it's nice to be back in reality after spending sixteen years talking about politics. The WWE superstars respects their audience and they're all ready to thrill this crowd. Jon lists off some names appearing on the show and of course Reigns and Cena are loudly booed. He's not over the Streak being broken yet and is here to talk to Brock face to face about defeating the Undertaker.

Stewart isn't crazy though and has brought some backup in the form of Mick Foley. Mick comes out and reminds Stewart that he only has one ear and thought Jon said he wanted to talk to ROCK. Stewart: "Are you telling me that the great Mick Foley is afraid of Brock Lesnar?" Foley: "Jon that's exactly what I'm telling you!"

Stewart brings up the Cell match against Undertaker and calls it inspirational. Foley agrees that it was inspirational but also reminds Jon that IT WAS SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO. Mick has never been to Suplex City and he's not starting tonight so he's out of here. Stewart says on with the show to end this moderately funny bit. Above all else though, Stewart is clearly a huge fan and that helps so much in something like this. It felt like he's here because it's something he's always wanted to do instead of just something he's doing to promote a movie or whatever.

Opening video focuses on New York City (of course) and then goes into the main events.

I forgot how annoying that "We Cool For The Summer" song can be.

### Randy Orton vs. Sheamus

This is fallout from Sheamus attacking Orton when Orton had the WWE World Title won, leading to a failed Money in the Bank cash-in attempt by the pale one. Cole: "Speaking of Money in the Bank, Randy Orton has had a great career right here at Summerslam." Eventually he gets around to tying that together by saying Orton cashed in his briefcase two years ago but that's not the best statement to start out with.

The fans tell Sheamus that he looks stupid and he has to bail from a very early RK0 attempt. Actually Sheamus grabs the mic and gets on the

announcers' table to say the fans look stupid, not him. Orton is willing to fight on the floor but Sheamus takes him down with a clothesline. Sheamus actually hits a top rope knee drop for a rare sight. The slow beating continues with Sheamus stopping to adjust the mohawk.

A chinlock doesn't last long so Sheamus takes him right back down and puts on another chinlock. Randy finally comes back with a clothesline and the backbreaker, followed by a suplex over the top and out to the floor. Back in and Sheamus gets two off a powerslam to set up a modified Cloverleaf. That's escaped as well (because other than Chris Jericho, heels can't win with submissions) and Orton hits the elevated DDT.

Sheamus gets the ten forearms to the chest but slingshots right into the RKO. Orton has to throw him back inside though and that means it's time for the Punt. Yeah don't even bother at this point as I don't think anyone buys it as a real threat. Instead White Noise gets two, followed by back to back Brogue Kicks for the pin on Orton at 12:24.

**Rating:** C+. This was a longer version of a Raw match with a surprisingly clean ending. You kind of expect Sheamus to lose here but Orton losing instead was a nice change of pace. The problem is these two really don't have a ton of chemistry and they were just kind of trading moves until the finish.

Some fans won a contest from Draftkings.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Lucha Dragons vs. Los Matadores vs. Prime Time Players

One fall to a finish. For reasons I don't want to know, the Prime Time Players are defending. New Day, still heels, offer to explain hip hop to the Brooklyn fans. We immediately get the New Age Outlaws strategy with Big E. trying to pin Kofi but only getting two. Instead it's Kofi headlocking Cara down before Sin monkey flips his partner onto Kofi for two.

That means it's time for Big E. who takes a Tajiri handspring into an enziguri. Young comes in to face Cara and things get WAY faster with neither guy being able to get anywhere before it's a stalemate. Darren

reaches over to get Kofi and gets a splash on the back from Big E. Los Matadores steal the advantage and hit a slingshot hilo for two on Darren. The yet to be named Unicorn Stampede gives New Day control again as Woods lists off their favorite breakfast foods. You can see the cereal schtick coming from here.

Kofi chinlocks Young for a bit before Big E. grabs a dancing abdominal stretch. Big E. hits a clothesline and Woods loses his mind shouting about tricep meat. Woods: "YOU CAN'T EVEN GET A HAMBURGER IN WWE BECAUSE BIG E. HAS THE MARKET CORNERED ON TRICEP MEAT!!!" Darren finally knocks Kofi away and makes the hot tag off to Titus for the house cleaning.

Everything breaks down and the masked men start with all their dives. El Torito's double springboard dive is caught in midair by Woods (Torito really is small) so Young belly to back suplexes Xavier on the apron, only to have Big E. hit his spear through the ropes. He's going to kill himself with that one day. Back in and Titus powerbombs the Dragons in the Tower of Doom, followed by the Clash of the Titus to Fernando. That brings Kofi back in to kick Titus in the face though and Big E. steals the pin on Fernando to get the titles back at 11:20.

**Rating:** B-. This started slowly with the normal problem of too many bodies at once but as usual it went away once they started tagging. The problem continues to be how weak the division is though as you have three middling teams and then the awesome New Day who was just begging to turn face at this point. It was clearly their time and there was no other option than to put the titles back on them here. Somehow they still hold the belts heading into the following Summerslam which just doesn't happen these days.

New Day goes INSANE celebrating with Big E.'s hips defying gravity and Kofi bouncing around the match on his back.

Jon Stewart brags to Neville and Stephen Amell (celebrity here for a match) about being friends with Undertaker. The lights go out and Undertaker (or someone who looks a lot like him) walks past. The bragging quickly ends.

We recap Rusev vs. Dolph Ziggler. Rusev threw Lana out so she hooked up

with Ziggler while Rusev hooked up with Summer Rae. This led to several blonde catfights but tonight it's the guys fighting alone.

### Rusev vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler goes right after him to start but misses a charge to go face first into the buckle. The Russian/Bulgarian (whatever he is this week) stomps away and we hit an early bearhug. The fans cheer for Lana as Ziggler is planted with a spinout Rock Bottom. Rusev's gorilla press (in case you thought Dolph was doing it) is countered into a DDT and it's time for the running clotheslines required for all face comebacks.

For some reason Rusev goes up top with Ziggler faceplanting him down for two more. A sunset flip gives Dolph two and he grabs the sleeper but Rusev uses the powers of THIS ISN'T 1982 to escape. Dolph joins the twentieth century with a Fameasser for a near fall but walks into the jumping superkick to the arm. The Accolade goes on but Lana slaps Summer to distract Rusev into breaking the hold. The guys join them on the floor as Lana gets the loudest chant of the night. Rusev gets superkicked onto the announcers' table and it's a double countout at 11:49.

**Rating:** C. This was an extended Raw match with a non-finish. Lana definitely came off as the biggest star here, which is why they dropped her face push because of a wrist injury and TMZ reporting that she and Rusev were engaged. Naturally WWE had ABSOLUTELY NO CHOICE but to acknowledge this on Raw and punish her as a result. I'm in the small group that likes this story though some of that is due to Lana in her outfits.

Another catfight ensues.

We recap Stephen Amell/Neville vs. Stardust/King Barrett. Neville and Stardust had been doing a comic book inspired feud between a hero and a villain. One night Stardust shoved Amell (the star of the Green Arrow TV show) and a tag match was made with Barrett joining in due to having nothing else to do.

### Stephen Amell/Neville vs. Stardust/King Barrett

Stephen comes out in his Arrow hood but wrestles in regular black shorts. Barrett gets hit in the face to start so Stardust comes in to face Neville instead. Stardust wants Amell though and Stephen gets a pretty good pop as he flips over the top to come in. A shove sends Stephen down so he nips up and knocks Stardust up against the ropes for a surprise. It's off to Barrett who easily takes over on Amell. As odd as it is to see the celebrity getting beaten up, Neville has to be the one coming in to clean house when we get to the hot tag.

Amell finally gets in an enziguri and dives over for the tag to Neville. The rapid fire kicks set up the middle rope Phoenix Splash on Barrett but Stardust makes the save. The villains are sent to the floor and Stephen dives off the top onto both of them for the big spot of the match. Back in and the Red Arrow finishes Barrett at 7:34.

**Rating:** C+. Of course that's on a sliding scale as Amell has no idea what he's doing here and was just doing whatever he could. It's not exactly a huge star out there but it fit the story well enough. Unfortunately Barrett takes the fall here, despite Stardust being the main bad guy in the whole thing.

Look at WWE taking over Brooklyn.

#### Intercontinental Title: Ryback vs. The Miz vs. Big Show

Ryback is defending and the other two have both taken shots at the title. Miz takes sanctuary on the floor but comes back in to try a double suplex on Big Show. Yeah I think you know what's coming there, especially when you notice that Show would have broken his back on the turnbuckle if they had suplexed him from there.

They really need to find a way to stop telegraphing that kind of thing. Show actually hits a middle rope swanton (well forward roll) onto Ryback before chopping Miz in the corner. Ryback takes out Show's knee and plants Miz with a powerslam for two. That's enough being on defense for Show as he chokeslams Ryback onto Miz but the KO Punch is countered with a spinebuster. It was a bit sloppy but what can you expect when it's to someone Big Show's size?

The Shell Shock plants Show but Miz runs in with the Skull Crushing Finale for two on the champ. Miz covers both of them twice each but it only serves to tick Ryback out. Shell Shock is broken up with the KO and Miz makes ANOTHER save. Another KO drops Miz but Ryback clotheslines Show to the floor and steals the pin on Miz to retain at 5:34. Cole: "CLASSIC TRIPLE THREAT MATCH!" Oh shut up.

**Rating:** C+. This was just a Raw match but they kept things moving well enough that I was entertained throughout. It wasn't anything we haven't seen before but I liked Ryback copying Miz's strategy to keep the title. Ryback was getting somewhere with the title and could have been something special if they hadn't dropped him yet again. It's no wonder he left less than a year later.

Jon Stewart goes to see Brock but gets cut off by Heyman. Stewart says wrestling fans were disappointed in the Streak ending and no one remembers the person who broke perfection. Heyman is probably happy to see the fans all crushed and destroyed like that because he likes giving coal to kids on Christmas morning. Paul sings about the glory of Lesnar in response. I'm with Heyman here. The Streak was amazing and will never be duplicated but it's ridiculous to say it can never be broken no matter what because fans would be sad. Sometimes evil wins and there's nothing that can be done about it.

#### Wyatt Family vs. Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Harper and Wyatt here. Bray targeted Reigns earlier in the summer and Roman was tired of getting beaten up so he got some help. It's almost weird to see Reigns coming through the crowd instead of the entrance. Cole flat out says the feud isn't ending tonight because it's going to go on and on. Ambrose bulldogs Harper to start so Bray comes in, only to get punched in the mouth.

A suicide dive takes Bray down again and it's already a wild brawl. Reigns dives over Ambrose to clothesline Harper in a cool spot before Ambrose runs all three tables to take out Bray as well. Things settle down with the Shield guys taking turns on Harper. Dean's top rope elbow gets two but a Bray distraction lets Harper get a shot in. Roman goes

after him but Harper suicide dives onto Roman, only to have Dean take them both out with another dive.

Harper kicks Dean in the face and Bray drops the backplash to really take over for the first time. Bray gets creative with a suplex through the ropes to the floor. Back to Harper for something like a Crossface as Reigns is STILL down on the floor a good three and a half minutes after that beatdown. The referee stops to look at something in the corner as a ROMAN'S SLEEPING chant starts up.

Dean finally hits the rebound lariat as Reigns gets back on the apron for the hot tag. Him being down on the floor that long really didn't mean anything but it's not something that looks good, especially given some of the stuff Reigns has been laughed at before. A superkick and Batista Bomb plant Reigns but Bray spends too much time going up and gets Superman Punched. Dean plays Hawk in a Doomsday Device and the DoubleBomb plants Harper. Dirty Deeds and a spear put Bray down at 10:56.

**Rating:** B. That should wake the crowd up a bit. Other than Reigns' latest nap, this was a good old fashioned fight with both teams looking awesome throughout. That being said, I'm so glad the feud is going to keep going after Reigns just pinned Bray. It should be the blowoff but why blow it off when you can just keep going with even more matches?

We recap John Cena vs. Seth Rollins in a title for title match with Cena narrating a video about how tough New Yorkers are. The video is a cool look at all the venues in and around New York City as it's almost always about Madison Square Garden. A few weeks ago Rollins broke Cena's nose in a NASTY looking injury so Cena is after revenge and to end Rollins' joke (Cena's description) of a title reign. He's right to be fair as Rollins basically bowed down to HHH as often as he could and was getting squashed by Brock the previous month to make him look like a loser.

WWE World Title/US Title: Seth Rollins vs. John Cena

Winner take all. The JOHN CENA SUCKS song is out in full swing here as the people just do not like Cena. Rollins comes out in white, albeit with lines painted on that makes it look like a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle shell. The fans are all over Cena again and it's Rollins hitting a

dropkick to take over and giving Cena You Can't See Me. Oh yeah he's the face in this match and everyone knows it. Cena grabs a belly to belly and we hit the chinlock less than two minutes in.

Rollins comes right back by sending Cena to the floor for back to back suicide dives and a big flip dive over the top. Back in and Cena's finishing sequence is broken up with a headlock takeover but the second ProtoBomb works a bit better. Rollins is still able to break up the Shuffle but Cena comes back with a HORRIBLE springboard Stunner, basically making it look like he was reaching for Seth's wrist instead of the neck. I think he retired it after this show and you can't blame him after how bad that looked. Rollins comes back with double knees to the chest and a standing shooting star for two.

Cena is sat on top and then tied into the Tree of Woe for Alberto Del Rio's top rope double stomp (which Seth makes look much better) for another near fall. Back up and the first AA connects for two and we're not even nine minutes into the match. You think they might be trying a bit too hard?

They do the big slugout until Cena catapults him into the corner to set up a faceplant for another near fall. They're certainly doing some different stuff tonight and it helps a lot. What doesn't help is the announcers acting like this is the main event of Wrestlemania and that it's been going on for half an hour instead of ten minutes. That's not even a Raw main event yet.

Seth is right back in it by breaking up a super AA attempt and hitting a great looking frog splash. Rollins rolls through a crossbody and hits his own AA to an even bigger face pop. Back up and Rollins misses the Phoenix Splash, only to flip out of the AA. The Pedigree doesn't work either and it's Cena grabbing a Figure Four because RIC FLAIR.

Rollins reverses but Cena makes the ropes and goes up top with Rollins running the ropes for a superplex into the falcon's arrow for a near fall. That really should be the finish but of course it's only good for two. Another Phoenix Splash misses and Cena grabs another AA but the referee gets bumped. With Cena demanding another ref, Rollins hits the

jumping knee to the face and here's Jon Stewart with a chair. Both guys get up and Stewart gives Cena a shot to the ribs, setting up a Pedigree on the chair to give Rollins the US Title at 19:25.

**Rating:** B+. This was on the way to being a classic but the Stewart ending was a bad choice when Rollins and Stewart had been feuding for months. The explanation was that Jon didn't want Cena to tie Flair's record because IT'S RIC FLAIR! I'm fine with Cena not getting the title back as him wanting the US Title back made it seem all the more important. Unfortunately it also made the WWE World Title look horrible because Rollins had to lose to drop that title. But hey, Jon Stewart right?

WWE Network ad.

Pre-show panel chat and they have to talk over a THANK YOU STEWART chant.

We recap the Divas Revolution which means STEPHANIE TIME! For anyone who doesn't get my obsessive hatred of almost all things Stephanie, this was my breaking point. For weeks, Paige had dealt with the Bellas and their numbers advantage with the idea being she would need help. Say, with the arrival of some friends from NXT?

Well that's what happened, but only because Stephanie came out and announced they (as in Charlotte, Sasha Banks and Becky Lynch) were here. For some reason Stephanie put them into three women teams and a feud was started "for superiority". Yeah superiority instead of the story they had spent months building up. But whatever. Story telling isn't what's important. It's all about putting Stephanie, that pioneer of women's wrestling, in the story so she gets credit for the (very) cool moment.

Team B.A.D. vs. Team Bella vs. Team PCB

B.A.D. – Sasha Banks, Naomi, Tamina Snuka

Bella – Nikki Bella, Brie Bella, Alicia Fox

PCB – Paige, Charlotte, Becky Lynch

This is under elimination rules, meaning the a single fall eliminates an entire team, making the match far less interesting from the start. Brie

and Becky start things off as we hear about the history of Summerslam being in the New York area. Becky is sent into the ropes for a running knee to the face (with Brie shouting TEAM BELLA instead of BRIE MODE, which may or may not be worse) but Tamina tags herself in to superkick Becky in the jaw.

Sasha comes in to a very nice reaction...and she's back out in less than five seconds. It's Naomi coming in despite almost no one caring about her whatsoever. The fans want Sasha so she's back in, gets rolled up for two, and is back out in about thirty seconds. They head outside with Charlotte saving Sasha with a spear to Tamina, only to have Naomi and Sasha hit (well less so in Sasha's case) flip dives.

The Bellas hit suicide dives, which Cole incorrectly calls something new. Paige and Alicia fight on the top until Paige knocks her off and dives onto everyone at once. Back in and Brie hits a super facebuster on Tamina for the elimination, taking a lot of the life away from the crowd who wanted to see Sasha. That's being pretty greedy though as Sasha was in the match for at least 50 seconds.

Nikki hits a quick Rack Attack on Becky for no cover as Paige and Charlotte drag their partner back to the corner. A fall away slam sends Nikki to the floor but she Paige takes too long following her out, meaning it's an Alabama Slam on the outside. Back in and a double flapjack plants Paige, setting up a Brie chinlock. The YES Kicks are countered into a rollup for two but Fox comes back in to work on a double arm crank.

Now the fans will settle for Charlotte as Paige gets double suplexed for two. A running knee to Fox finally allows the hot tag to Charlotte as the crowd FINALLY wakes up a bit. Everything breaks down with Nikki having to save Alicia from the Figure Eight. A double big boot drops Charlotte and Fox so it's off to Becky vs. Brie but BRIE MODE misses, setting up a pumphandle suplex to pin Brie at 15:17.

**Rating:** C. Well that happened. It didn't revolutionize anything, it didn't change anything, it didn't accomplish anything and it annoyed the fans when Sasha was eliminated in about five minutes. But hey, Stephanie

got a focus in the pre-match video and Nikki gets a step closer to vanquishing AJ from the pages of the WWE record books. That's all that matters right?

### Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

This started over the two of them wanting to face Cena for the US Title. Owens is coming in after a brutal ladder match last night at Takeover: Brooklyn. They slug it out to start with Owens sending him to the floor for a flip dive. Owens spends too much time jawing at Cole though and it's Cesaro running back inside for a corkscrew plancha of his own. The Uppercut Train takes too long though and Cesaro is sent into the barricade to set up a cannonball.

The backsplash gets two inside and we hit the chinlock on Cesaro. A torture rack neckbreaker gives Owens two more and it's time for a second chinlock. The powers of the OLE chants bring Cesaro back to life though and he knocks Owens into the corner to set up that weird modified Angle Slam for two. Cesaro's gutwrench superplex gets two but Owens throws him down a few seconds later, only to miss a double springboard moonsault.

A superkick gets Owens out of trouble but the springboard corkscrew uppercut drops him again. The Swing sets up Cesaro's Sharpshooter with Owens only a few feet from the ropes for the quick break. Both guys go up for something but Cesaro gets crotched and superplexed to set up the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 14:17.

**Rating:** B. You knew this was going to be good with these two on this stage. They kind of had to give Owens the win here after he lost in his NXT farewell last night but it's still not good to have Cesaro lose here either. That's the problem with the way they book their midcarders: they're bounced around so much with wins and losses all over the place that a loss on a big stage really cripples them all over again. At least the match was good.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Undertaker. Of course Brock broke the Streak at Wrestlemania XXX and Undertaker disappeared for a long time. Then Undertaker returned at Battleground 2015 to cost Lesnar the WWE World Title to set up this match. They actually billed this as being too big

for Wrestlemania which was a good line, though I'm not sure how many people actually believed it.

### Brock Lesnar vs. Undertaker

Lesnar is actually smart enough to attack at the bell and I can't believe no one else has ever thought of that before. Undertaker comes back with a boot to the face and Brock is sent outside as it's time for the brawl to begin. The bell rings and Brock double legs him down, only to have Undertaker hit him in the face to take over. The dueling UNDERTAKER/SUPLEX CITY chants start up and Old School is countered into an F5 but Undertaker slips off the shoulders.

It's Suplex City time though, or at least it would be until Undertaker sends him face first into the middle turnbuckle. A big boot puts Brock on the floor and draws some blood from his forehead. Back in and the chokeslam is countered with another German suplex so Brock cracks a smile. They head outside again and there's an F5 to send Undertaker through the table.

Somewhere in there Brock got busted open much worse and stands in the ring with another smile on his face. Undertaker slowly crawls back in with Brock telling Undertaker that he's going to kill him. Undertaker: "YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO!" That earns Brock a chokeslam (and a great selling job) and a Tombstone for a close two. Both guys are down until Brock sits up and laughs.

Undertaker does the situp and mocks Lesnar's laughing so, while still on the mat, they just PUNCH EACH OTHER IN THE FACE OVER AND OVER. Brock gets the better of it and takes him into the corner for the Kimura on the second rope. Of course that's not a DQ or even a count from the referee because that's not what the story calls for, meaning Undertaker has to Last Ride him out for two.

The second F5 gets two and the second gets the same as I continue to hate how much WWE lets people kick out of finishers. I know it's a big match but at what point does a finisher become just another move that someone uses? Both guys are spent but Undertaker pulls him into the Hell's Gate. That's reversed into the Kimura and the bell rings for the big surprise

submission. Not so fast though as the referee waves it off, allowing Undertaker to hit Lesnar low and put on the Hell's Gate again. Lesnar flips Undertaker off and passes out for the submission/knockout at 17:10.

**Rating:** B+. That ending (which we'll come back to in a minute) brings down an otherwise great old school power brawl. Undertaker teasing a heel turn to get the big win is a big stretch as he reached bulletproof legend status well over ten years ago. I get the story they're going for and it's not bad, but the low blow wasn't really necessary here.

The important thing here though was Undertaker hurt Brock. You can have Lesnar be the Beast and maul people but at some point someone has to be able to hurt him or there's no point in bringing him out. Look at what he did to Ambrose at Wrestlemania XXXII or Rollins at Battleground 2015. It stops being entertaining and starts being the Brock Lesnar Show, which doesn't do anyone any good but him. This was different though, and that's a good thing.

We get a replay oh yes Undertaker does tap out. So yeah, it's a screwy ending for the sake of setting up a rematch, just like in the other main event. That's not a bright idea at any show, especially the second biggest of the year. Heyman declares Brock the winner via submission to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. This is a really strong show with nothing bad and a bunch of good matches but the top two are ruined by the horrible booking choices. Above all else though, this show was ruined by the length. This show runs nearly three and three quarter hours with a lot of stuff that could have been cut.

I mean, was anyone needing Rusev and Ziggler to go ten minutes or a sixteen minute Divas three way? It's a good example of a show that could have been trimmed quite a bit for its own good, which unfortunately is a recurring trend these days. This was a very good show otherwise but it's not exactly memorable and that hurts it a bit.

### Ratings Comparison

Sheamus vs. Randy Orton

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Prime Time Players vs. New Day vs. Los Matadores vs. Lucha Dragons

Original: B-

Redo: B-

Rusev vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: C

Redo: C

Stephen Amell/Neville vs. King Barrett/Stardust

Original: B+

Redo: C+

The Miz vs. Big Show vs. Ryback

Original: C-

Redo: C+

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. Wyatt Family

Original: C+

Redo: B

John Cena vs. Seth Rollins

Original: B+

Redo: B+

Team Bella vs. Team PCB vs. Team B.A.D.

Original: C-

Redo: C

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Original: B-

Redo: B

Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: B+

Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B

That original overall rating is probably a bit high as I liked almost everything more the second time around. Being able to watch this in pieces instead of in a straight sitting helps it a lot.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2015/08/23/summerslam-2015-a-long-long-very-long-summer/>

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# 205 Live – August 15, 2017: Neville Needs a Hobby

## 205 Live

Date: August 15, 2017

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

Things have changed in a hurry around here as we now have a new Cruiserweight Champion. Last night Akira Tozawa defeated Neville for the title in quite the surprise. Their rematch is this Sunday but tonight we have Tozawa's official celebration, because celebrations need to be well regulated. Let's get to it.

As you might expect, we start with a look back at Tozawa winning the title.

Opening sequence.

### Cedric Alexander/Gran Metalik vs. Drew Gulak/Tony Nese

Drew gives a speech about how Nese might be a show off, but he's a show off who is the picture of health and fitness. Nese starts with Alexander but hang on a second as we need to hit that bicep pose. A crossbody gives Cedric two and we hit the near fall exchange. Gulak comes in and eats a dropkick to the ribs before it's off to Metalik for a nice backflip. Metalik springboards into an armbar but one heck of a slap only seems to tick Drew off.

It's Metalik in trouble until a spinning bulldog and dropkick drop Nese. Tony bails outside so Metalik walks the ropes for a moonsault. You know, just because. Back in and Gulak offers a distraction to let Nese take over but Metalik is right back with a hurricanrana. The hot tag brings in Cedric as everything breaks down. A spinning elbow to the jaw drops Gulak

for two and there's the springboard clothesline to Nese. The Lumbar Check ends Gulak at 7:40.

**Rating:** C. I'm digging this Alexander vs. Nese feud as Alexander is easy to relate to, which isn't something that happens too often around here. It's easy to get behind the idea of someone getting annoyed over someone obsessed with their physique. Metalik is entertaining as well, but unfortunately Gulak has lost all of his steam without the No Fly Zone, which now seems to be completely dead.

Ariya Daivari, Noam Dar and Lince Dorado are talking about how Neville lost the title. Cue Neville of course, sending all three away without another word. Neville throws a chair.

### Brian Kendrick vs. Mustafa Ali

This is over Kendrick interrupting an Ali interview earlier today (which they don't even bother showing us). Kendrick looks very nervous as he comes to the ring and he looks underneath said ring for signs of Jack Gallagher. Ali takes him down to start and Kendrick seems panicked over the idea of a basic move. A dropkick gets two on Kendrick, followed by a crossbody out of the corner for the same. The announcers are pushing the heck out of the fact that Kendrick isn't himself, which makes me think he'll win anyway.

Ali gets shoved off the top but rolls through a sunset flip anyway. The inverted 450 is broken up with Ali landing HARD on the turnbuckle, setting up the Captain's Hook. Ali hangs on way longer than he should be able to and makes the rope. Back up and a hard kick to the head sends Ali outside with Kendrick sending him into the LED apron. Kendrick wedges Ali's foot into the steps and loads up something, only to have Gallagher run in for the DQ at 5:02. Hey I was right.

**Rating:** C-. There's an idea here but I'm really not sure where it's going. Gallagher could really use a change of pace and this might be the right way to go, though they can't quite go back to his usual stuff after it's over. Ali got in some good offense here but looked pretty defeated by the end. At least it wasn't a squash by a distracted Kendrick though.

Gallagher chases him off.

Rich Swann is ready for his victory dance over TJP but Ariya Daivari comes up to say he's facing Swann instead for not given reason.

### Ariya Daivari vs. Rich Swann

Rich ducks a shot in the corner and dances away, as is his custom. A headlock slows Daivari down (not that he was going very fast in the first place) until they head to the apron. Swann kicks him to the floor but charges into something like a Stun Gun onto the apron for a painful looking crash.

Back in and we hit a seated full nelson to stay on the neck. Swann fights out and hits a running flip Fameasser, only to get caught in a reverse DDT. Daivari misses the top rope splash though and it's time for the Phoenix Splash...only to have TJP come out with his leg in a cast and using crutches. The distraction sets up the hammerlock lariat to give Daivari the pin at 5:06.

**Rating:** C+. I liked this one more than I was expecting to and that's always a nice surprise. Swann got in some good offense but Daivari was even more of a surprise than expected. TJP vs. Swann needs to wrap up soon, though I'm not sure how likely that is with the leg being banged up like that (assuming it's real of course).

Kendrick is getting out as fast as he can, but not before mentioning a potential duel with Gallagher.

Here's Titus O'Neil to introduce Tozawa for his championship celebration. Tozawa talks about this was his dream for so long and calls it easy. Titus tells Tozawa thank you for making their dreams realities. Dancing ensues but here's a somewhat disheveled Neville to interrupt. He talks about bringing honor to the title but then it was all gone in one day.

With his voice cracking, Neville promises to make everything better in less than a week. A clock comes up on screen counting down to Summerslam, which is how long Tozawa has left with that title. Neville charges the ring but gets dropkicked down from the apron. Tozawa beats him up on the

floor and then kicks him off the apron for good measure. The champ sits on Titus' shoulders to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Better show than usual this week but it makes me think that Sunday's Cruiserweight Title match isn't going to do much for me. Neville vs. Tozawa is already starting to feel played out and like something that doesn't need to be on Summerslam. The rest of the show was entertaining though and that's more than you can get out of 205 Live these days. Good show, but firmly under the 205 Live dome.

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