

Smackdown – September 5, 2017: The Shane McMahon/Kevin Owens Hour

Smackdown

Date: September 5, 2017

Location: Denny Sanford Premiere Center, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

The march towards the Cell continues and we have a new commentator to help us get there. The big story tonight is Randy Orton vs. Shinsuke Nakamura for a future shot at Jinder Mahal. Other than that we'll be having more on Shane McMahon vs. Kevin Owens, which only exists for the sake of having Shane in the Cell again. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Tom Phillips explains that JBL has left on good terms and introduces Corey Graves as the new analyst. Nothing wrong with that.

Randy Orton says he's seen a bunch of stars come and go so Nakamura is nothing new.

Shinsuke Nakamura says the title is his destiny.

Carmella and James Ellsworth are here for her match against Natalya but Kevin Owens comes out to say he'll be referee. Cue Shane McMahon to say this isn't happening again. He's not going to let Owens take over like he did last week and he's certainly not having Owens become a referee. Shane talks about Owens blaming him for all of his problems. We even go all the way back to Owens being handed the Universal Title a year ago.

Owens thinks this is all about Shane wanting attention from his daddy. That's why he brings out his kids and has them dance around. That's a major red line for Shane so Owens talks about Shane diving off the Cell and surviving the helicopter crash. Shane's whole family would have been better off if he hadn't survived that crash, including his kids. The

beating is on and Owens gets knocked over the table before it's broken up.

Post break, Owens is helped to the back when he runs into Daniel Bryan. Owens says this really is going to become the Kevin Owens Show because he's going to sue the McMahon Family for everything they have. Daniel says there has to be something else Owens can do so Kevin says he'll just press criminal charges against Shane instead.

Carmella vs. Natalya

Non-title. Carmella snaps off a headscissors to start and a dropkick gets two. We take an early break and come back with Natalya fighting out of a bodyscissors. Carmella superkicks her back down and Ellsworth throws her the briefcase. She screams no and Natalya grabs a rollup for the pin at 6:19.

Rating: D. Barely enough to rate here but technically you could see it due to that stupid picture in picture thing during the break. This was all angle of course due to the Ellsworth stuff and I still have no idea why he's out there with her. I mean, I get it from his perspective but what did Carmella gain from him?

Post match Carmella yells at him for being such a screwup and call him a charity case. They're done.

Conor's Cure video.

Here's the reinvented Dolph Ziggler, who looks just like he has for years. Ziggler says no one appreciates what he can do in the ring. These people would rather sit on their hands unsatisfied while he's right here in front of them. The fans would rather have some dumb gimmick. Ziggler leaves and here's John Cena's music...with Ziggler doing Cena's entrance. Ziggler holds up a Cena hat to the camera: "We're on Smackdown Live! BUY THIS BABY!"

If that doesn't work, we can try this. Cue Ziggler to Pomp and Circumstance with a good looking blonde and a bad robe. That's not it either so Ziggler has one more idea. This time it's Naomi's Glow

entrance, complete with wig. Ziggler says that doesn't work either so it's the fans' fault and he's done. I think I get what they're going for here but it feels like a YouTube video rather than a storyline.

Sami Zayn vs. Aiden English

Sami headscissors him down to start but misses a high crossbody, allowing Aiden to grab a rollup for the clean pin at 1:05.

Post match Aiden tries to sing again but gets chased off. He manages to keep singing even as he begs Sami not to hurt him.

Bryan is upset by what happened with Shane when New Day comes in, showing off their new underwear (for sale of course). The Usos come in as well and announce that it's going to be a street fight against New Day next week for the titles. The tag teams leave and Bryan gets a phone call from someone who says something has to be done in the ring. Bryan says he'll do it right now but he's not pleased.

Here's Bryan (with no music) to the ring. Bryan calls Shane to the ring so here's the boss, also without music. Daniel asks Shane what he's thinking and talks about all the times he's had to swallow his pride as boss. You can't run Smackdown doing things like he wants. Shane apologizes and says there's no coming back once you cross a line about his kids. He asks Bryan what would happen if he was in Shane's place but Bryan says don't put him in that place. The call from before the break was from Vince, who has indefinitely suspended Shane.

Jinder Mahal doesn't care who he faces.

Tye Dillinger vs. Baron Corbin

AJ Styles is on commentary. Corbin heads outside to yell at him so Tye dives onto Baron to take over early on. A clothesline sends Corbin outside again and we take a break. Back with Dillinger fighting out of a chinlock and scoring with a forearm. The Tyebreaker doesn't work and Corbin sends him outside for a kick to the head. A chokeslam is countered into a rollup for two and Tye hammers away in the corner. Corbin hits him in the throat though (AJ: "CHEAP SHOT!") and the End of Days is enough

for the pin on Tye at 7:40.

Rating: D+. Tye got in some offense here so it was far from a squash but the winner wasn't exactly a secret here. Corbin vs. Styles for the title should be fine and it's nice to see that Corbin's punishment seems to be over, or at least slowing down. To be fair, Corbin going after the US Title makes more sense than the World Title anyway so this is the right call.

Post break AJ tells Dillinger that he has the US Title shot next week. That's the third title match on the card.

Video on Bobby Roode.

Ellsworth runs into Carmella in the back and begs her forgiveness. Carmella says from now on, they're doing things her way. She kisses him and then slaps the taste out of his mouth.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Randy Orton

The winner gets Mahal, who is watching in a sky box, at Hell in a Cell. The threat of an RKO sends Nakamura bailing into the corner and Orton offers a smile. Nakamura does his head on the chest but Orton tries the draping DDT, sending Nakamura to the floor as we take a break. Back with Nakamura elbowing his way out of a chinlock but getting dropped onto the announcers' table to keep Orton in control.

We hit another chinlock until Mahal kicks him in the head to get a breather. The knees in the corner keep Orton in trouble but he comes back with his backbreaker. Nakamura gets caught on top for the superplex but Orton can't follow up. That earns him a COME ON and Nakamura starts with the knees.

Kinshasa is countered into the powerslam and Orton is shocked by the kickout. Now the hanging DDT works but the RKO is countered into a cross armbreaker (nice). A triangle choke has Orton in trouble though it's not all the way in. Orton breaks it up with a powerbomb, only to eat Kinshasa for the pin and the title shot at 13:26.

Rating: B. Good though somewhat predictable match here as there was no

way they were doing Orton vs. Mahal again. Nakamura seems like a good option to win the title as Mahal has done just about all he can with the belt. The fact that he's been called repetitive and someone who does the same thing every time tells you a lot about the problem with his reign.

Nakamura looks a bit shaken up but gets to his feet.

Owens is in the back when Bryan comes up to him. This was just the beginning because next week, Smackdown is Owens' personal playground. No one can do anything about it, but Bryan has a surprise of his own: Vince is here next week.

Overall Rating: D+. This was a very flat show with a focus on two stories that aren't too thrilling in Carmella/Ellsworth and Owens/Shane. It doesn't help that they've all but made up the graphics for Owens vs. Shane inside the Cell and are waiting for the actual announcement. That being said, we have three title matches set for next week and that should breath some life into a show that really needs it at this point.

Results

Natalya b. Carmella – Rollup

Aiden English b. Sami Zayn – Rollup

Baron Corbin b. Tye Dillinger – End of Days

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Randy Orton – Kinshasa

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Monday Night Raw – September 4, 2017: A Labor of Like

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: CenturyLink Center, Omaha, Nebraska

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

As has been the case in recent weeks, we're coming in with a big match on the card. In this case it's Jeff Hardy making a return to singles action as he challenges Miz for the Intercontinental Title. Other than that we also have a showdown as Braun Strowman faces Big Show inside a steel cage. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of the John Cena vs. Roman Reigns promo last week. The more I think about it, the more I like it for Reigns. More on this later this week.

John Cena vs. Jason Jordan

Before the match, we look at Cena answering an open challenge from Kurt Angle fifteen years ago in his debut match. The fans are actually behind Cena, which should tell you a lot about Jordan's future. Jason grabs an early takedown and grabs a waistlock. Cena can't do much with him to start until a hard clothesline drops Jason without much effort. A suplex gets two on Jordan, followed by a hard whip into the corner for the same as we take a break.

Back with Jordan hitting his own suplexes and that's enough for Cena, who initiates the finishing sequence. Jordan's rollup is countered into the STF but he reverses into something like a Crossface. Cena powers out

(because he's Cena) and reverses another suplex into a crossbody. That's enough for Cena though as he grabs the AA for the pin at 11:38.

Rating: B-. These performances make Jordan look like a star but the whole being Angle's son thing is really not doing him any favors. It's not an effective story and I think WWE is starting to get that. Hopefully they build Jordan up and then do something to get rid of the Angle connection because it's not doing much for him.

Post match Roman Reigns comes out for a chat. Back from a break with Roman asking why it took a veteran twenty minutes to beat a rookie. I don't think Reigns knows A, what a rookie is or B, how to tell time. Cena says Roman is starting to ask questions and that's the worst thing he could do. They're distracting him and he's out here with his zipper down. Reigns: "I busted it actually. Big dog."

Cena promises that Reigns will get his answers at No Mercy, either by a guy who has lost his steps or someone who has been stringing Roman along. Roman is going to learn that he's an entitled golden boy while people like Chad Gable, Jason Jordan and even the Miz have had to fight and claw their way to get where they are. Point being, Cena doesn't respect Reigns because Roman is the only one living a lie. Reigns wants to fight right now but Cena doesn't seem interested. That makes Roman think he's all talk, which is why Reigns doesn't respect him. More good stuff here as you can feel the personal issues, which is what this match needs.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

Dean Ambrose and Seth Rollins are on commentary. Slater rolls Cesaro up for a very early two and gets caught in the wrong corner for his efforts. It's off to Rhyno for the power, only to walk into the Brogue Kick for the fast pin at 2:17.

Matt Hardy thinks it's a WONDERFUL night for a new Intercontinental Champion. Jeff talks about wrestling each match like it's his first as well as his last. Tonight he's either going out in a blaze of glory or as the new Intercontinental Champion. Matt is ready for the Miztourage too.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Jeff Hardy

Miz is defending. Jeff gets three near falls in the first minute before a clothesline puts Miz on the floor. A dive is teased but Jeff pulls back as Miz moves, sending us to a break. Back with Jeff getting two off his sitout gordbuster but mostly missing the Whisper in the Wind. Dallas offers a distraction so Axel can break up the Swanton, leaving Matt to take care of both of them. All three are ejected and it's Jeff grabbing a rollup for two.

Miz's DDT gets the same but he misses the running clothesline in the corner. Miz hits a running knee ala Daniel Bryan for two and we hit the YES Kicks. Jeff is right back with a dropkick but his dive off the apron is broken up. We hit the Figure Four for a bit with Jeff getting out without too much trouble.

The Twisting Stunner has Miz in trouble so he heads outside, only to get caught by Poetry in Motion against the barricade. Back in and the Swanton misses thanks to Maryse telling her husband it was coming. Another Twist of Fate is countered into the Skull Crushing Finale to retain the title at 13:02.

Rating: B. Better match than I was expecting and Miz retaining clean (the Maryse thing wasn't interference) is a good idea. The fact that they're pushing Miz's total days as champion is interesting too as he's only about six months away from setting the all time record for combined days with the title. That's easily something he could reach, along with most title reigns. They would be crazy not to push the heck out of that and it seems to have started.

We look back at last week's main event with Alexa Bliss winning the title but getting beaten down by Nia Jax.

Nia comes in to see Kurt Angle and wants to know why she's not in the title match. Emma comes in to do her "I started the Women's Revolution and it's all over Twitter" stuff. Nia threatens to end her so Kurt makes a tag match with the two of them facing Bliss and Banks. If Nia and Emma win, they're added to Bliss vs. Banks at No Mercy to make it a four way.

We look back at Big Show and Braun Strowman breaking the ring in April.

Enzo Amore/Cedric Alexander/Gran Metalik vs. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak/Noam Dar

Rematch from 205 Live because that show needs to be made even less important. Enzo says it's ok for him to cheat last week on 205 Live because it means he's smart. He has nicknames for the other five people in the match, most of, all of which we heard on 205 Live. Joined in progress after a break with Nese and Alexander jumping over each other.

Nese gets sent into the corner so Enzo tags himself in, only to get dropped into the corner. Drew grabs a seated abdominal stretch until Enzo fights up to send all three villains to the floor. Back up and the hot tag brings in Cedric for the handspring enziguri to Gulak. Alexander and Metalik hit stereo dives but Enzo tags himself in again for a poke to the eye. The Jordunzo ends Gulak at 4:59.

Rating: D+. So yeah, this was just a shortened version of the 205 Live match, meaning it's even more worthless than I was expecting. As is still the case, Enzo is the most over member of the roster and there isn't another option to push on the show. No one else has gotten any traction and Enzo is popular so this makes sense, as annoying as it is.

Sasha Banks is getting ready when Alexa Bliss comes in. A shouting match ensues with Banks promising to make Bliss scream at No Mercy.

Here's Finn Balor for a chat. He misses being Universal Champion and thinks the Intercontinental Title would have looked good around his waist, had it not been for Bray Wyatt. Just because he beat Bray at Summerslam, a monster like that never really goes away. Finn doesn't run from his demons because sometimes he becomes them.

Bray pops up on screen to talk about Abigail taking him hunting. His first kill was an exhilarating experience but one day it became too easy. Then he put his weapon down and began hunting with his hands. He showed them no mercy and it showed him his purpose. The Demon is Finn's bow and arrow so face Bray with his bare hands at No Mercy. Balor says he's made his choice so Bray tells him to run.

Nia Jax/Emma vs. Alexa Bliss/Sasha Banks

If Emma and Jax win, they're added to the No Mercy title match. Joined in progress with Sasha not being able to wristdrag Nia. Emma tags herself in and stomps away in the corner before grabbing a seated full nelson. It's off to Bliss for some kicks to Emma with Nia not even offering a tag.

Bliss and Banks take turns beating on her, even joining up for a double suplex. Twisted Bliss doesn't work and it's off to Nia for the Samoan drop on the champ. Sasha has to dive in for a save but can't get the Bank Statement on Nia. Jax plants Banks and drops the big leg but Emma runs in for the pin at 8:55.

Rating: D+. Well it's better than just having Banks vs. Bliss all over again. Emma's Women's Revolution thing is still annoying but at least she's not getting squashed in a minute anymore. The division needs all the fresh blood it can get and Emma is as good of an option as there is at the moment.

Nia Samoan drops Emma post match.

Strowman thinks tonight is a recipe for destruction and that's a message to Brock Lesnar.

Ambrose and Rollins run into Elias with Dean liking the music.

Dean Ambrose/Seth Rollins vs. Anderson and Gallows

Non-title with Sheamus and Cesaro at ringside. Seth stomps Anderson in the corner to start as Cole can't stop laughing for some reason. The champs knock Anderson and Gallows to the floor for stereo dives and we take a break. Back with Ambrose in a chinlock, followed by a chokebomb for two.

Rollins makes a quick save and Dean dropkicks his way to freedom. The hot tag brings in Seth to clean house with a suicide dive and a Sling Blade. Cesaro and Sheamus finally do something by offering a distraction, only to have Rollins grab a rollup on Anderson for the quick pin at 11:50.

Rating: C-. Another skippable match in a series of them tonight. The tag division continues to be weak due to having no depth but that's the problem with having so few people around here and the Revival on the

shelf. The match wasn't bad but there's just no interest here and that's not surprising at all.

Cesaro and Sheamus beat up Anderson and Gallows to make the point clear.

Conor the Crusher video for pediatric cancer awareness month. Some other kids got to invent their own characters too in a nice touch. Nothing wrong with that.

Enzo is celebrating with Metalik and Alexander when Neville comes in. The three of them will be in a fatal five way elimination match tomorrow night on 205 Live with the winner getting the title shot at No Mercy.

The referee from the ring collapse match says he's going to let them fight tonight.

Big Show won't stand for this idea of being put out to pasture by Strowman because Braun doesn't know what a cage match is. There hasn't been anyone in twenty three years big enough or bad enough to break Big Show. This was one of Show's best promos in years, even though he was looking just slightly to the left for some reason.

Brian Kendrick and Tony Nese are the other two in the five way.

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman

Inside a cage with pinfall/submission/escape to win. Strowman splashes him up against the cage to start but runs into the KO punch as we go to a break. Back with both guys down again until Show slams him into the cage over and over. Show tries to climb for some reason and gets crotched, only to shove Strowman off again.

That means a top rope elbow for two and a THIS IS AWESOME chant. Show goes for the door but gets pulled back, only to have Strowman get the door slammed on his head. A double shoulder puts both of them down but Show's chokeslam is countered into a DDT for two. The chokeslam is good for two and Show escapes the powerslam. Strowman misses a charge and goes into the cage wall but is still able to catch Big Show escaping. The big old superplex plants Show and it's the running powerslam for the pin at 16:58.

Rating: B. These two continue to surprise me as they haven't actually had a bad match. WWE has a bad tendency to turn these battles of the big men into really boring matches but this was another great power match with both guys looking good. It's also proof that having an obvious winner isn't the worst thing in the world. Strowman was obviously winning (Big Show isn't Kalisto after all) and it didn't make the match any less entertaining.

Post match Strowman says that's nothing compared to what he'll do to Lesnar. Now it's time to put Big Show out to pasture, so Strowman powerslams him through the cage (a section of which breaks and falls to the floor) to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This show flew by which is a major upgrade over what they do so often anymore. The main event was good enough, especially due to tying it to the ring collapse match throughout the night. Other than that, there wasn't a lot of great wrestling, but they're hyping the heck out of No Mercy for the sake of getting people to renew their Network subscriptions. If I just have to see a stacked pay per view, so be it. Good enough show this week and that's not the worst thing in the world.

Results

John Cena b. Jason Jordan – Attitude Adjustment

Cesaro/Sheamus b. Heath Slater/Rhyno – Brogue Kick to Rhyno

Miz b. Jeff Hardy – Skull Crushing Finale

Enzo Amore/Cedric Alexander/Gran Metalik b. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak/Noam Dar – Jordunzo to Gulak

Nia Jax/Emma b. Alexa Bliss/Sasha Banks – Legdrop to Banks

Dean Ambrose/Seth Rollins b. Anderson and Gallows – Rollup to Anderson

Braun Strowman b. Big Show – Running powerslam

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Mae Young Classic Episode Eight – Someone Has to Lose

Mae Young Classic Episode #8

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

It's semifinals time and that means we should be in for some nice, long matches. It wouldn't surprise me if we didn't get a bonus match thrown in as well and that wouldn't be the worst idea in the world. Hopefully they can live up to the expectations as the matches have been good but nothing great. The extra time should help a lot so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week.

JR and Lita offer a preview.

Video on Shayna Baszler, who held that choke longer last week to send a message.

Video on Mercedes Martinez, who says this is the culmination of her

career. We also see clips of Martinez training Baszler, which offers a very nice bonus aspect to the match. Why wasn't that mentioned before?

Semifinals: Shayna Baszler vs. Mercedes Martinez

Baszler shakes hands this time. Martinez isn't as polite and slugs away at Baszler with right hands and chops in the corner. A kick to the ribs is blocked but Martinez just lets it go, seemingly in an attempt to get inside Baszler's head. The threat of a running kick sets up a chinlock, which isn't a rear naked choke no matter how much JR seems to think it is.

Baszler sends her into the corner and hammers away before getting two off a gutwrench suplex. A kneebar has Martinez in trouble until she finally kicks away. This time it's Martinez grabbing a hold of her own with something like a Regal Stretch before they forearm it out from their knees. Baszler gets the better of it but Mercedes fights up into a fisherman's suplex to put Baszler down. The fisherman's buster is countered into the rear naked choke and Mercedes finally taps at 8:10.

Rating: B. Baszler winning is the absolute right call, especially with the Four Horsewomen battle coming up. Martinez doesn't have a background in WWE but they've treated her as a major deal, which makes it more impressive to have Baszler beat her. Good match here, which is becoming the trend around here.

They hug post match with Stephanie McMahon (well duh), HHH and Sara Amoto out to congratulate Baszler.

Video on Toni Storm, who is here to win.

Video on Kairi Sane, who promises to win. I was hoping she was here for a flagon of rum and a treasure hunt.

Semifinals: Kairi Sane vs. Toni Storm

Sane takes Toni down and rides her for a bit until Storm slips out of a chinlock. That's fine with Kairi who hits a running dropkick and starts smiling. Storm goes with a shot to the face for two, only to get pulled to the floor with her back landing on the apron. Kairi adds a big dive to

put Storm down again and it's off to a Boston crab.

The sliding forearm is blocked with some raised boots though (smart) and it's the running hip attack rocking Kairi. Storm tries another one but takes a clothesline to the ribs (not quite a spear) to cut her off again. They slug it out with Kairi getting the better of it but she gets caught on top. Storm gets two off a fisherman's suplex.

It's off to a flip over armbar (ala Tommaso Ciampa) with Toni CRANKING on that thing. Kairi finally rolls over to the other side for two but can't follow up. Toni's top rope legdrop hits the back but she bangs herself up at the same time. Kairi kicks her down again and hits the top rope elbow for the pin at 12:24.

Rating: B+. This might have been the best match of the tournament so far, or at least the hardest hitting. Kairi winning was pretty obvious and there was no secret to the fact that it was going to be her vs. Baszler, almost from the beginning. Storm looked great again here and if they don't sign her, they're dumber than I thought.

Sane gets the victory celebration as well. Baszler comes out for the showdown with JR getting in the usually awesome summary line: the one with the biggest fight in the dog is fighting the biggest dog in the yard.

Overall Rating: A-. I'm ready for the finals and that's a good thing. The two matches were both quite good and I want to see the winners beat the heck out of each other next week. They've built both of them up as unbeatable, which is what makes for an awesome showdown in the end. Really good good show here and the best thing they've done so far.

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Mae Young Classic Episode Seven: New Orleans on April 8 is a Place and Time

Mae Young Classic Episode #7

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

We're down to the final eight and that means four quarterfinal matches tonight. You can probably guess what's coming for the final four but that's what makes these rounds exciting: there's the chance of a big upset and that could change everything. Things were a lot better in the second round and hopefully that's the case here too. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of how all eight made it to the quarterfinals.

No bio videos here, though to be fair you should know who they are at this point.

Quarterfinals: Abbey Laith vs. Mercedes Martinez

Abbey takes her down in a test of strength to start until a hard palm strike to the jaw slows Laith down. Mercedes headlocks her for a bit before a heck of a slap staggers Abbey again. A spinning kick is countered so Abbey just does the splits instead of getting dropped again. Laith kicks at the arm a bit and JR brings up the two years off that

Mercedes needed for a shoulder injury. That little background information often helps things so much and I wish we got more of it in WWE.

Abbey chops her back and kicks Mercedes in the head for two. That just earns Abbey a hard whip into the post and they fight to the apron with Lita joining the IT'S THE HARDEST PART OF THE RING club. Abbey kicks her out to the floor (which hasn't been the case very often in the tournament) for a crossbody to leave both of them laying.

Back in and Abbey tries to get fired up but Mercedes sends her outside for a breather. That goes nowhere so Abbey grabs a bridging German suplex for two, drawing a heck of a scream out of Laith on the kickout. Mercedes grabs the fisherman's buster for the pin at 8:57 in another fast finish.

Rating: B. These finishes coming out of nowhere aren't doing much for me and they're becoming a pattern around here. Mercedes advancing is the right call as she's been treated as a veteran killer so sending her to the semifinals makes sense. Good match here too, which is all you can ask for.

Johnny Gargano is here and you know what that means.

Quarterfinals: Candice LeRae vs. Shayna Baszler

The winner gets Martinez in the semifinals. Shayna wastes no time with a hard knee lift and looks like she's toying with Candice to start. A kick misses though and Shayna crotches herself to give Candice a breather. Shayna gets sent outside for a suicide dive into a DDT (cool) to drop her on her head. Back in and we hit an Octopus hold on Baszler, followed by the Gargano Escape for a nice touch. Baszler calmly powers her up for a side slam and tries a super gutwrench suplex. Ms. LeRae's Wild Ride is easily countered into the rear naked choke for the tap at 3:11.

Rating: C+. They were getting going here until the very sudden ending, though this was the right idea. The idea behind Baszler is that she can finish you in the blink of an eye and that's exactly what they should be going for with her. LeRae is going to be fine wherever she goes and that suicide DDT was freaking sweet. Throw in the submission tease and they had me going a few times here. Give this more time though and it's

instantly better.

Baszler won't let go of the hold, to the point where I thought they were going to reverse the decision for a second. She even kicks at LeRae as the doctors check on her. Now that's how you book a heel.

Quarterfinals: Piper Niven vs. Toni Storm

Storm takes the far bigger Niven into the corner and gives her a playful tap on the jaw. For some reason Toni thinks a test of strength is a good idea with Niven taking her down. Storm bridges up and Niven can't break it for an impressive strength display. Like, a very impressive one as Toni isn't that big. They bridge up at the same time and shake hands upside down for a cute bit.

Niven powers her down and gets two off a splash, followed by Toni getting the same off a crossbody. Two more splashes give Piper the same so Toni grabs a Backstabber (popular move in this tournament) for a breather. A German suplex is countered into the Michinoku Driver for two and Piper is stunned. She tries the Vader Bomb, only to get caught in a German superplex. A top rope legdrop sends Storm on at 7:36.

Rating: C+. I don't think anyone was buying the idea that Niven was anything more than a dragon for someone to slay. Storm is as good of an option as anyone else as she has a great look and feels like someone they want to push the heck out of, especially over time. Good enough match here and while Storm isn't making it to the finals, she's getting noticed, which is often more important.

Baszler's fellow Four Horsewomen are proud of her win but here are Bayley, Charlotte and Becky Lynch for the staredown. Rousey: "Anytime, anyplace." Say....New Orleans perhaps? Maybe early April?

Funaki is here.

Quarterfinals: Kairi Sane vs. Dakota Kai

Kairi headlocks her down to start and the fans seem pleased at an early standoff. A spinning backfist misses and Kai gives her a martial arts pose. Kairi takes her into the corner for some hard chops as this is

getting physical. The fans are behind Kairi but get quieted down with a running kick to the jaw in the corner. Kairi is tired of getting hit in the face so she spears Kai down for a breather.

Kai hits another running kick in the corner but gets sent into the corner. Kairi can't hit a superplex but can avoid a top rope double stomp with Kai tweaking the knee on the landing. A top rope Phenomenal Forearm gives Kairi two but Kai kicks her down again. Another running kick in the corner misses though and it's an Alabama Slam it's the top rope elbow to send Sane to the semifinals at 7:42.

Rating: B. I'm starting to get the appeal of Sane and a lot of it is due to having her do stuff like this. Kai was very game here and that made for a more entertaining match. People like Sane are going to get more out of this than by squashing someone so it's definitely the right call. Kai will have a job in WWE if she wants one but this is Sane's tournament to win. Maybe.

The semifinals are set:

Kairi Sane

Toni Storm

Mercedes Martinez

Shayna Baszler

Overall Rating: B. I'm not sure what it says that I'm more interested in the Four Horsewomen battle than the tournament but that was definitely one of the big draws of this whole thing. The final four are interesting and while you can almost pencil in Sane vs. Baszler for the whole thing, that's not the worst result in the world. Good show here and I'm fired up for the last two shows.

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Mae Young Classic Episode Six – This is What I Signed Up For

Mae Young Classic Episode #6

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

It's time to finish up the second round and get us down to the final eight. That means we have some big names facing some other big names on this show and that should be a lot of fun. I've managed to avoid as many spoilers as possible and it's amazing how much more entertaining a show like this can be when that's the case. Let's get to it.

We open with the standard recap of the previous show and tonight's preview.

Opening sequence.

We see Ronda Rousey and the Four Horsewomen arriving earlier. Gee I wonder who is making the finals.

Video on Toni Storm, who wants to fight and win.

Video on Lacey Evans, who is everything a modern woman is supposed to be.

Second Round: Toni Storm vs. Lacey Evans

They fight over a headlock to start with Toni getting the better of it. Lacey grabs one of her own with a fairly serious look on her face until a kick to the chest puts her down again. Storm tries a bit too flashy hip attack and gets rolled up for two for her efforts. A leg sweep from the apron into a slingshot elbow gives Lacey two and it's time to work on the arm.

Storm goes back to the strikes to get a breather and it's a Backstabber (not a Codebreaker JR) to put Lacey down in the corner. Lacey comes back with a good looking swinging neckbreaker, only to walk into Strong Zero (modified White Noise onto the knee) to send Storm on at 5:08.

Rating: C-. I'm digging Storm (good look, strong enough work) so far as she's got a bit of a charisma that is helping her stand out. Hopefully she's sticking around for awhile as I could see her going somewhere with the right coaching. Evans' gimmick is kind of odd as she has the serious military background but looks like one of the Andrews Sisters in the ring. I liked her when I saw her live but it's not quite working this time.

Video on Mia Yim, who has been working specifically to be the best.

Video on Shayna Baszler, who has combat experience.

Second Round: Mia Yim vs. Shayna Baszler

Of note: Baszler, one of MMA's Four Horsewomen, walks past Charlotte, Becky Lynch and Bayley with only a passing glance. An exchange of kicks naturally goes to Baszler (JR: "Some people enjoy going to the mall. I think she'd go to the mall just to beat people up.") but Mia knocks her outside for a heck of a suicide dive. Back in and Baszler rolls some gutwrench suplexes for two but gets caught in the Tarantula (with JR calling Tajiri a handsome rascal).

An ankle lock cuts Mia off again but she's right back with some strikes to the face for two. Not that it matters as Baszler knees her hard in the

face for a knockdown and it's right back to the ankle lock. Mia kicks her way to freedom and is able to powerbomb Baszler for two because ankle injuries aren't a thing. Just in case you thought it was a thing, Mia tries a 450 but gets caught in a rear naked choke for the tap at 5:36.

Rating: B-. Lack of selling aside, I'm sad to see Mia go out so early. For a long time I never got her appeal but she grew on me a lot during the tournament. That being said, Baszler is someone they're going to push very hard in this thing due to the Four Horsewomen affiliation. It would surprise me if we didn't see a four on four match at Wrestlemania and that would be just fine.

Post match Shayna celebrates with her friends before going over to the wrestling Horsewomen to throw up the hand signs. Fans: "YES! YES! YES!"

Video on Dakota Kai, who is a fast striker. A striker? In a women's wrestling tournament?

Video on Rhea Ripley, who is big and strong but young.

Second Round: Dakota Kai vs. Rhea Ripley

The much bigger Ripley works on a headlock before diving over Kai, who snaps off some armdrags. A dropkick sends Ripley into the corner before a running kick to the chest makes things even worse. Ripley gets sent outside and drops her face first onto the apron for another two. Some running knees to the chest give Ripley the same and frustration is setting in.

The full nelson slam is broken up by a kick to the head, followed by a running dropkick. One heck of a running kick to the face in the corner gives Kai two, only to have Ripley superkick her away. A northern lights suplex drops Kai for two more and Ripley looks stunned. They head up top with Ripley getting caught in the Tree of Woe for the top rope double stomp to send Kai on at 7:03.

Rating: B-. Another good match, though this only sends Kai on to be Sane's latest victim. Ripley has every tool you could possibly need to be a huge star and I'm sure she's going to be just fine down in

developmental. Kai looked great as well and should be just fine if she sticks around with NXT. Good match here as Ripley continues to impress.

Video on Candice LeRae, who will give everything she has to win this.

Video on Nicole Savoy, who loves to suplex people. She must have been miserable in the first round then as she didn't do a single one.

Johnny Gargano is here. I love how these wrestlers are ushered in and out every match.

Second Round: Candice LeRae vs. Nicole Savoy

JR talks about PWG and my head threatens to explode. Lita on the other hand slips up a bit by saying Savoy's previous match was last night. Savoy kicks away a handshake offer and we're ready to go. The fans, with a decidedly female sounding voice, are behind Candice. Savoy sends her into the corner for a crash but LeRae comes right back out with a jumping Downward Spiral for two.

The first suplex drops LeRae for two and they trade modified surfboards. Candice elbows her way out of trouble and hits a Codebreaker for a breather. Savoy rolls some butterfly suplexes but can't get a cross armbreaker. Another kick to the head gives Candice a breather and it's off to something like a Black Widow to slow Savoy down. For some reason Savoy takes her up top and even old man JR knows it's a bad idea to put LeRae up top when her finisher comes from there. As you might expect, Ms. LeRae's Wild Ride ends Savoy at 5:54.

Rating: C+. Savoy looked better here but you knew LeRae was winning here, especially with the idea of her being massacred by Baszler in the next round. This was some good storytelling with LeRae fighting from underneath and being willing to go the extra mile to beat the fighting machine. Good match here.

Again, no brackets are shown for the next round but here you are:

Mercedes Martinez

Abbey Laith

Shayna Baszler

Candice LeRae

Toni Storm

Piper Niven

Dakota Kai

Kairi Sane

Overall Rating: B. Now this is more like it. The wrestling was good from top to bottom and while a lot of the endings were obvious, there's nothing wrong with having some good wrestling where you know who's winning. I'm digging this more and more every single episode and the fact that they've done this all in two major content drops is a great idea. Best show of the tournament so far with ease.

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Mae Young Classic Episode Five: No Mercy Lives!

Mae Young Classic Episode #5

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Jim Ross, Lita

The fast paced shows continue as we have four more episodes being released today before we get ready for next week's live finale. We're down to sixteen competitors to go and for the most part, I'm coming into this blind on the spoilers. It's hard to say where some of these matches are going to go so let's get to it.

Mauro handles the opening recap again.

The remaining entrants are on stage.

Video on Abbey Laith, who has wrestled for years and is here now.

Video on Rachel Evers, who was originally scheduled to lose in the first round but Marti Belle was so horrible that they changed plans mid-match.

Kassius Ohno is here.

Second Round: Abbey Laith vs. Rachel Evers

The fans sound split here as Rachel shoves her down to start, only to get wristdragged to the floor. Back in and a Stunner of all things puts Abbey down but they hit stereo bicycle kicks for a double knockdown. Abbey sticks with the kicks, including a high one off the side of Evers' head to send her straight down. She's up fast enough to catch Abbey on top with a super powerslam of all things for two. Cool looking move if nothing else. Evers tries another kick but gets dropped with a powerbomb, setting up the Alligator Clutch for the pin at 4:51.

Rating: C-. This started off a bit awkward but got better as things went on. Laith feels like someone they're ready to push pretty hard,

especially given her background on the indy scene. Evers just needs a lot more ring time, though she has the look and pedigree to make a pretty nice run for herself one day.

Video on Serena Deeb, who is very aggressive and will work hard.

Video on Piper Niven, who wants to be tough but with a big smile.

Second Round: Serena Deeb vs. Piper Niven

Niven powers her into the corner to start and falls on Deeb in a slam attempt. Well to be fair that was just kind of dumb. A hard belly to back suplex breaks up Serena's headlock and there's a splash for two more. With the holds not working, Deeb opts for just punching her in the face for a change. A middle rope Codebreaker (or maybe something like a monkey flip) drops Niven and a neckbreaker gets two.

Deeb is right back up with a modified Diamond Cutter for two more as the fans are split again. A charge misses in the corner though and Niven drops a Vader Bomb...for two. Dang I would have bet on that one. Niven heads up top (uh oh) and misses a splash, only to grab the Michinoku Driver to put Deeb away at 7:12.

Rating: C. What in the world was that ending? Niven missed the splash to seemingly give Deeb a hope spot but she was up less than five seconds later and hit the finish for the pin. I looked away for a second and my head swung back because I thought the video had skipped. They were trying to get into the Sting vs. Vader formula here but that ending REALLY knocked them back.

Video on Princesa Sugehit, who may be a veteran but needs to win this tournament.

Video on Mercedes Martinez, who has waited a long time for this opportunity.

Kalisto is here.

Second Round: Princesa Sugehit vs. Mercedes Martinez

Sugehit, in Wonder Woman themed gear, takes her down by the arm and tries a quick rollup for two. Another rollup, this time into the corner, gets the same on Martinez but she's right back with Two Amigos into a draping swinging neckbreaker. Princesa grabs a Codebreaker but has to block a superplex attempt. Instead it's a tornado DDT (now a big spot on the indy Bingo card) for two on Martinez and both of them are spent less than five minutes in. One heck of a Fujiwara armbar has Martinez in more trouble but she pops up and hits a fisherman's buster for the pin at 5:09.

Rating: C. What is with these sudden endings? Sugehit was dominating and then got caught by one move, seemingly out of nowhere, for the pin. Mercedes winning certainly isn't a surprise but they could have done a better job of laying the match out. You have almost all the time you want and there's no need to cut them down this fast.

Video on Bianca Belair, whose hair whip thing is still stupid.

Video on Kairi Sane, who is perhaps the most awesome thing ever.

Second Round: Bianca Belair vs. Kairi Sane

Kairi gets taken down to start and we hit a headlock as JR continues to brag about how awesome of an athlete Belair is. Back up and Belair blows her a kiss, only to have Sane grab it out of the air and stomp it on the mat. One heck of a forearm drops Belair but she hits the hair whip (So you can use it to whip people but get yelled at for pulling it?) to take over.

A delayed vertical suplex with some squats gets two and we hit a seated full nelson. So she's a No Mercy fan? Some ground and pound of all things has Kairi down but she gets her knees up to stop a splash. Kairi does those rapid fire chops in the corner that probably don't hurt much but they're done in Japan and therefore they must be awesome.

A seated double arm choke (another No Mercy move) has Belair in trouble until she fights up and gets in a double chickenwing slam. One heck of a 450 gets a red hot near fall on Sane and Bianca is stunned. Kairi kicks her down and hits a running corner clothesline, followed by the top rope elbow (which she almost completely misses as her hip makes contact

instead) to eliminate Belair at 10:00.

Rating: B. I'll give this one a higher rating for the No Mercy based offense and the hair thing being gone. Sane is clearly the top star in this whole thing and I'd be surprised if she doesn't win the whole thing. Belair is a heck of an athlete and that 450 looked awesome. She'll be a big deal in NXT for a good while and then on the main roster assuming she has any kind of talking ability.

A recap wraps things up.

Overall Rating: B-. Now we're getting to the fun part where they're having big names face other big names. The wrestling is getting better too and that can make for some sweet matches. I'm looking forward to where things go from here and the rest of the tournament, assuming it's given time, should be a lot of fun.

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Smackdown – April 3, 2003:

Tournament Rush

Smackdown

Date: April 3, 2003

Location: Spokane Arena, Spokane, Washington

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're past Wrestlemania and that means it's time to reset a few things. It also means that we don't have Kurt Angle around for a long time as he needs a fresh bandage on that pesky broken neck of his. Brock Lesnar is World Champion again and that means he needs a new challenger. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Wrestlemania set to Crack Addict.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie McMahon for the serious speech about how great Wrestlemania was and the injuries to both Brock (who has a concussion) and Angle (pretty much everything), the latter of whom could be out for several months. But never mind any of that because we'll be having a #1 contenders tournament for the shot at Backlash starting tonight. Here are the brackets:

Rey Mysterio

Undertaker

John Cena

Eddie Guerrero

Chris Benoit

A-Train

Rhyno

Big Show

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Undertaker vs. Rey Mysterio

Rey tries to speed things up to start and scores with some kicks to the leg, only to have his head taken off with a big boot. A chokeslam is broken up with Rey grabbing a DDT, followed by the 619 for two with Rey being launched off the cover. The West Coast Pop is loaded up and easily countered into the Last Ride to send Undertaker to the next round.

Rating: C. It was starting to get energetic when Undertaker realized he was selling for Rey Mysterio. The fact that Rey only got in the 619 and then got finished with one big move doesn't do him many favors, but it's not like Undertaker was exactly known for his selling at this point. Not terrible, but Undertaker didn't give him much here.

Undertaker helps him up post match. It's not exactly Jeff Hardy last year.

Vince McMahon wants to know when Hulk Hogan arrives.

Jamie Noble vs. Brian Kendrick

Shannon Moore and Matt Hardy, who was the only Hardy to wrestle at Wrestlemania this year and has read his book twelve times, are out for commentary. Jamie stomps away in the corner as Tazz tries to be funny about Matt's diet focusing on yams instead of banana juice. Brian gets sent to the floor where he kicks Nidia away and comes back in with a high crossbody. A powerslam gives Jamie two and a hard clothesline gets the same. Nidia pulls the ropes down to send Kendrick outside but Jamie's dive takes her out by mistake. Sliced Bread #2 gives Kendrick a fast pin.

Matt dumps Kendrick outside and calls out Brock for a champion vs. champion match. Brian tries to come back in and gets beaten down again.

The FBI steals stuff from a truck after tying the driver up.

Highlights of Lesnar vs. Angle. We also see Brock after the show and he was just gone thanks to the concussion. Now let's look at the botched shooting star from multiple angles in slow motion.

Piper's Pit is back next week. And so it begins. Er, continues.

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

Cole points out that we could see Big Show vs. A-Train or Benoit vs. Rhyno in the second round. Tazz: "Cole we can't get nothing past you!" A-Train knocks him to the floor to start so Benoit grabs an early Crossface. That's reversed into a very modified camel clutch with Benoit's legs wrapped around A-Train's legs as A-Train is on his feet. Since that's not enough, A-Train pulls him up by the head and slams Benoit down hard for two.

A chinlock doesn't last long and Benoit is chopped out to the floor. Back in and A-Train talks more trash but misses a charge, setting up the rolling German suplexes to a great reaction. The Swan Dive gets two but Benoit charges into the bicycle kick. There's the Crossface again with A-Train powering up to his feet. Benoit is ready for him though and kicks off the ropes to get the hold again, this time for the tap out.

Rating: C. I liked this better than I was expecting to with A-Train acting as a pretty decent tree for Benoit to chop down. In theory this sets up Benoit vs. Big Show for a spot in the finals and if they send Benoit on to face...I'm guessing Cena, everything should be fine. Benoit was his usual good self here and I'm glad to see him back in singles matches as the Rhyno team didn't do much for me.

Stephanie comes in to see Vince, who is ready for Hogan tonight.

Sean O'Haire says break the rules in the weakest of these vignettes yet. Are these things ever going anywhere?

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: John Cena vs. Eddie Guerrero

Cena is all over him to start with some choking in the corner and a delayed suplex for two. We hit the bearhug early on as Cena is showing the power more than usual. Tazz thinks Cena could be the next big thing. Maybe I should listen to the Tazz Show more often. Eddie fights back with some clotheslines and Three Amigos for two. Cena reverses a victory roll into an electric chair but takes too long going for a chain. Instead it's Eddie dropkicking it away and picking it up himself, only to have the referee take it away. Eddie tries a suplex to set up the frog splash but

has to roll through. A charge sends him right into the Death Valley Driver to advance Cena.

Rating: C. Well if you need someone to look good, put them with Eddie. This was much more of a showcase for Cena and that's a good sign. There's little reason to go with anyone other than Cena to win this tournament after all the promos he's cut on Brock but it's very cool that he's having to beat some bigger names to get there. Barring a surprise it's going to be Eddie, Undertaker and Benoit, which is nothing to sneeze at whatsoever.

Hulk, his son Nick (with a freaking skateboard) and Jimmy Hart arrive. Nick: "Where's catering?" He was annoying even back then.

Clips of Limp Bizkit at Wrestlemania.

Here's Torrie Wilson for her Playboy coming out party, complete with the cover dropping down over the entrance. Torrie can't believe so many people want to see her in the magazine. Torrie teases taking her top off...and freaking SABLE makes her return to interrupt. Cole: "She's kicking!" The announcers do their "look at *insert name here*" stuff and it's still just as annoying as it was when Al Wilson was around.

Sable says she's having her own coming out party because she's back. Torrie clearly just wants to be Sable and a lot of people think there's no room for two Divas like themselves. Sable however thinks they'll be the best of friends and gives her a peck on the lips. Naturally the announcers act like it was the most amazing thing they've ever seen.

Team Angle vs. Funaki/Tajiri

Non-title. The champs jump Tajiri to start, leaving Funaki to get backdropped. Shelton offers a quick bow so the Japanese guys beat him down and bow right back in a cute bit. Haas gets knocked to the floor but Shelton uses the distraction to jump Funaki from behind. It's off to Haas, who would rather be facing Tajiri. That earns him a nice spinwheel kick to the face for two as the champs are in more trouble than you might expect here.

Shelton tries a cheap shot from the apron so Tajiri KICKS HIM IN THE FACE for his efforts. It's back to Shelton to jump over Charlie and land on Tajiri's back, setting up a Boston crab. Funaki makes a save to Tajiri can hit a double handspring elbow and clean house. A high crossbody gets two on Haas and there's the Tarantula to Benjamin. It doesn't last long though and Benjamin chop blocks Funaki, setting up the Haas of Pain for the submission.

Rating: B. Where in the world did this come from? This was WAY better than I was expecting with Tajiri and Funaki getting to showcase themselves for a change instead of just being jobbers. We often forget how talented some of these guys are and it's a shame that they don't get to show it off more often. You might get more surprises like this.

John Cena knows his chances against Undertaker are slimmer than a bus full of anorexic women. He'll shock the world next week and leave Undertaker like a clean pool table with no balls.

The FBI comes up to Undertaker, who makes fun of their accents. They ask him to sit down for a chat and Undertaker, who have some coffee and asks if any of them are wearing a wire. Nunzio talks about whacking Nathan Jones at Wrestlemania, which was in retaliation for what Jones did to Palumbo last week. They want to bury the hatchet, which Undertaker can appreciate. However, he brings in Jones and the Italians bail. This was WAY out of the norm for Undertaker and felt really weird.

#1 Contenders Tournament: Rhyno vs. Big Show

Show smacks him down to start and steps on Rhyno's chest. Rhyno gets tossed around some more as Show is in full on slow mode. A side slam gets two but Rhyno slips out of what looks like a powerslam. Show misses a charge into the corner so Rhyno hits a Gore in the corner, only to have to chase off A-Train. The regular Gore connects but A-Train comes in for the DQ. I'd hope Big Show thrashes him for that.

Rating: D. This was just a step above a squash until the ending, which was rather stupid and little more than a back door to save Big Show's face. Rhyno vs. Benoit should be fun, though I'm not sure why I'd want to see Rhyno vs. A-Train. Then again, Rhyno should probably buy A-Train a

steak for the free pass to the next round.

A-Train holds Rhyno for a legdrop from Show, who doesn't seem to mind what A-Train did.

Here are the updated brackets:

Undertaker

John Cena

Chris Benoit

Rhyno

Here's Vince for the big closing segment, which has a ton of time. Yeah he lost on Sunday and maybe he misjudged Hogan. Tonight though, Vince would like Hogan out here for a talk. Cue Hogan (thankfully minus the pest with the skateboard) so Vince can say Hulk has no idea how to deal with this kind of defeat. He'd like to turn the clock back twenty years if he could (meaning before Hogan had come back from the company) and maybe one day they could be friends again. Vince offers a handshake which Hulk doesn't go for.

The boss heads to leave but Hulk asks if he's serious and extends his hand. They shake hands and Vince leaves but Hulk says stop the music. He thanks Vince, who goes to leave again. Now it's Vince saying thank you for all the memories. That's all people are going to have though as Hogan is in the ring for the last time. Hogan may have pinned him at Wrestlemania but now he's going to sit on the shelf for the duration of his new contract.

That way Hulkamania will rot and finally die a slow, agonizing death of leprosy. If Hulk has something to say about that, Vince will be waiting in the parking lot. Hulk goes to the back where Vince is waiting next to a limo. It's Hulk's limo though with Jimmy and Nick inside. Vince hides behind cops and tells Hulk to get inside, where Nick is begging him to just come on. Hogan gets in and leaves with Vince angrily gloating to end the show. This would be another example of building up a big match with a big stipulation, doing the match, and then ignoring the stipulation. Such

is life in WWE and such is a reason why this story sucked.

Overall Rating: C+. This show was rolling and then the crazy long main event segment killed it. It was the better part of twenty minutes while none of the matches even broke seven, which makes for a fast paced start to the show and then a major grinding halt. I liked the tournament stuff and the faster pace with some good action, though next week is going to be a much better indicator of what the future is going to hold for Smackdown.

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Main Event – August 31, 2017: I Still Can't Get Over That Promo

Main Event

Date: August 31, 2017

Location: FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

It's a shame that this can't be your classic Memphis style show as it would give things a fresh blast of energy. That being said, I can live with dull wrestling if it means we get to see the Roman Reigns/John Cena promo again, which was easily one of the most entertaining things I've seen all year. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Dana Brooke vs. Alicia Fox

They lock up to start with Fox sending her into the corner but getting rolled up for two. A handstand splash gets two on Alicia but she comes back with some knees to the back. We hit the chinlock as it's pretty clear they don't have much to do here. The northern lights gives Alicia two but Brooke makes her comeback with some slams and a cartwheel splash for the pin at 5:20.

Rating: D. Thank goodness they didn't have her job here in a meaningless match. I'll never understand how someone can get back out there so soon after the kind of loss Brooke went through (her boyfriend died less than a week before this was taped) but it's quite impressive that she's back out there performing. The match was exactly what you would expect from something like this but I'm not going to hold anything against Dana at this point.

We look back at Braun Strowman laying out Brock Lesnar two weeks ago.

From Raw.

Here are Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman for a chat. Heyman talks about what happened last week with Braun Strowman, who is the kind of monster that his parents warned him about. Strowman had an historic night at Summerslam when he, as Corey Graves said, monster handled Lesnar by powerslamming him through two tables. We see a clip of last week's attack on Lesnar, which Heyman says made him know Strowman is a monster. At No Mercy, Lesnar is going to be ready for Strowman. Heyman explains what's going to happen but Brock takes the mic. Brock: "What he's trying to say is Suplex City b****."

From Raw again.

Kurt Angle is in the ring for the contract signing between Cena and Reigns. Cena is out first to say that he's on Raw to face one man and Angle has made that happen for No Mercy. He's seen Reigns being treated as the untouchable star and we'll see how he can hang at No Mercy. Cena signs and here's Reigns. Roman says that as great as Cena is, there's one thing that he's done that Cena can never do: retire the Undertaker at Wrestlemania.

Cena kneels before him and says some people are still trying to figure Reigns out. We hear about the fans wanting to see Cena change his ways (with the term heel turn being dropped in a rare moment) before Cena says Reigns is just a guy trying to fill shoes he can never fill. Cena isn't a man at the end of his career with a bad hip. The reason Reigns won't sign that is because the Roman Empire is done if he does.

Reigns says Cena sucks so Cena puts his arm around Angle and says the fans think he does too but he won a gold medal. Roman seems a bit shaken and lost for what to say. Cena: "Go ahead find it. I'll wait. It's called a promo and if you want to be the big dog you're going to have to learn how to do it. SEE YOU FOURTH WALL!" Reigns gets fired up and goes on a rant that sounds straight off a message board, talking about how hard he works on the weekend so Cena can be on the Today Show.

Then Cena gets on his tour bus and shows up at a show if they pay him enough with the big shovel to bury people around him. Reigns is the one guy he can't bury or see. Cena calls him out for being repetitive and says "it took you five years to cut a halfway decent promo but now I'm about to cut you down to size." He talks about the mythical golden shovel but it's always the fans who hold the keys and they always will.

Cena is tired of hearing the same thing for ten years by a lot tougher people. Here's the thing: Cena hasn't main evented Wrestlemania in five years and he was the opening match at Summerslam. He won the US Title and used it to introduce new stars to the WWE including Kevin Owens and AJ Styles (I believe he means Sami Zayn as AJ debuted way later). Reigns took the US Title as a demotion and now stands there blaming Cena for not

being able to hang with him.

Cena has seen a lot of people trying to hang at this level and he's heard about one guy getting to do it. Now he sees Roman face to face and gets the line of the night: "You're lucky I'm a part timer because I can do this part time way better than you ever could full time." Reigns signs and turns over the table...and the clip ends before Anderson and Gallows' ridiculous cameo appearance can be mentioned.

Ariya Daivari vs. Mustafa Ali

Daivari takes him down without much effort and we hit an early armbar. A dropkick sends Daivari outside and we take a break. Back with Daivari eating a jumping knee to the face for two but grabbing a spinebuster for the same. Not that it matters as Ali's rolling neckbreaker and tornado DDT set up the 054 for the pin at 8:20.

Rating: C. It didn't have much time to do anything (remember the long break) and that's kind of a shame. Ali has become one of the more consistent cruiserweight performers and Daivari isn't the worst, as long as we don't have to hear his lame promos. This was your standard Main Event cruiserweight match though and that's not a good thing.

We'll wrap it up here.

Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Sasha Banks

Banks is defending and gets rolled up for an early two. Sasha sends her hard into the corner and grabs an armbar. They're starting with a slow pace and Bliss bails to the floor for a breather. There are the double knees from the apron and we take a break. Back with Bliss holding an armbar of her own before starting in on the back.

It's off to a bow and arrow hold but Banks fights up without too much effort. The Bank Statement doesn't work so Sasha goes with the running knees in the corner, only to miss a second attempt. Bliss goes with a hard right hand and a Code Red for a pretty close two. Banks gets in a few more knees and some aggressive forearms in the corner.

Back up and Alexa catches her in the corner by sending her face first

into a buckle. A top rope superplex connects to bust up the back even more. Bliss is slow to cover and gets caught in the Bank Statement. That's reversed into a rollup for two and there's the DDT to give Bliss the title back at 15:00.

Rating: B. I'm really not getting the lack of successful title defenses for Banks. That makes four reigns and she's lost the title in her first defense every time. As for the match itself, Bliss winning clean is an interesting call and the right one if you have to change the title. She looked better than she has before in the ring and is getting to the point where she can hang with the better workers. Couple that with the insane charisma and persona and she's quite the force.

Post match Nia Jax comes out and destroys Sasha before putting Bliss on her shoulders. One electric chair later and Jax holds up the title over the new champ to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The main event and the long promo alone make this an easy show to watch. As usual the original wrestling was nothing memorable in the slightest but I don't think anyone watches this show for that content. Raw is still on a roll right now with even the recap shows being entertaining.

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Monday Night Raw – March 31, 2003: Who's Next? Eh It's Not That Hard To Figure Out.

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 31, 2003

Location: Key Arena, Seattle, Washington

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's time for one of the biggest Raw's of the year and it should be interesting to see where things are going. HHH needs a new challenger after he sent Booker packing from the main event scene and Rock finally vanquished Steve Austin at Wrestlemania. There's room for a lot of changes on the show at the moment so let's get to it.

We open with a nearly four minute highlight package of last night. Nothing wrong with that after the biggest show of the year.

Opening sequence.

Rock is looking in a mirror when a makeup guy comes up, only to annoy the Great One. Tonight is Rock Appreciation Night and he needs to look perfect.

Here's Austin to get things going in the arena. Austin says he's always been honest since he's been here and last night Rock was the better man. He'd like to have Rock come out here right now for a handshake but gets Eric Bischoff with some papers instead. Eric doesn't buy Austin wanting a handshake and thinks it's a ploy. The fact is Austin won't be beating anyone up anytime soon.

The night before Wrestlemania, Austin was in a hospital so Eric had his lawyers look into a few things. While Austin was in the hospital for an

anxiety issue, there's a lot more to it than that. Bischoff reads off a bunch of neck and back issues that Austin is dealing with (apparently having stolen Austin's personal medical records) and he's not medically cleared to wrestle. Austin says he's going to do whatever he wants and that includes fighting against doctor's orders. That's fine with Bischoff, who fires him. The FedEx is on its way to Austin's home in Texas too.

HHH vs. Hurricane

Non-title. During the entrances, JR and King say that Goldberg will be part of the upcoming Backlash pay per view. Hurricane gives his mask to a kid so Flair takes it away and breaks the thing. HHH jumps him on the floor and takes him down with a spinebuster back inside. A vertical suplex is broken up and Hurricane's jumping neckbreaker mostly connects.

Some jumping clotheslines and a Shining Wizard give Hurricane two but Flair trips him up. It doesn't really matter as the chokeslam is good for two, followed by a high crossbody for a pretty good near fall. The Pedigree is broken up and the Eye of the Hurricane gets two more. The Blockbuster misses though and it's a Pedigree to put HHH away.

Rating: C-. This would also be known as a "take that Rock" match as Rock went out of his way to give Hurricane a rub and then HHH beats him clean in about four minutes. Hurricane's offense looked good and there's nothing wrong with the World Champion getting a clean win but did it just NEED to be Hurricane? Seems rather petty but that's how it goes.

Kane thinks he and Rob Van Dam should go their separate ways but Rob has already gotten them another Tag Team Title shot tonight. If they lose though, they have to join the Bischoff Administration. Kane is livid. Rob: "Dude.....we're gonna win."

Goldberg video. He'll be at Backlash.

Scott Steiner vs. Christopher Nowinski

Chris has a protective mask on his face and politely requests not to be hit in the face. Steiner threatens to make Nowinski floss with his

shoelaces and Nowinski's running doesn't get him anywhere. Scott hammers him down and gets in a kick to the chest but Nowinski uses a headbutt with the mask to get a breather. Not that it matters as a belly to belly and the Steiner Recliner put Chris away in short order. Total squash.

Austin confirms that his neck is messed up.

Rock Appreciation Moment: a song montage. It really is amazing how much great stuff he packed into so little time.

JR goes on a heck of a rant against Bischoff for somehow getting Austin's medical records and getting rid of him this way. Heck yeah JR. Medical reasons like Austin having a horrible neck and back? What kind of problems could those ever cause? I get what they're going for with Bischoff finding a way to get rid of Austin but good luck getting me to take issue with protecting the neck/back of someone who already missed a year due to neck surgery.

The Dudleys aren't happy with Storm and Morely. Here's the Chief to tell them that they're in the Tag Team Title match tonight as well where their jobs will be to get rid of RVD and Kane before laying down to retain the titles.

Flair comes in to see Booker T., who is getting his knee taped up. Booker chokes Flair for being annoying and shows why he's one of the scariest men in wrestling. Seriously he was terrifying when he was shouting down at Flair.

Clip of Ashanti singing America the Beautiful.

Rosey vs. Maven

Fallout from Maven pinning Rico a few weeks back and of course that requires another match. Maven kicks him in the ribs but gets his head taken off with a clothesline. King ignores the match to talk about being a celebrity photographer for Playboy, which doesn't cause nearly as much excitement as you would expect.

Rosey misses a charge in the corner and gets forearmed down, only to have Maven COMPLETELY miss a dropkick to Rosey's back. The idea was supposed

to have Rosey get knocked into Rico on the apron, likely for a rollup pin. Rosey starts to go into Rico anyway but thankfully realizes how stupid that would be since he wasn't touched. They stumble around into an awful looking rollup to give Maven two, followed by a sunset flip to put Rosey away. This was terrible and made some of the Divas matches look horrible. By the way, Maven would have been a perfect choice (one of many) for HHH's squash earlier rather than Hurricane.

Here's Chris Jericho for a match but first he needs some respect. Jericho talks about having one of the best matches in Wrestlemania history last night and Shawn Michaels knows that he was bested. When people look back at the match, they'll remember Shawn writhing in pain while Jericho walked out with his head held high. Tonight, he'll take out his frustrations on Booker T.

Chris Jericho vs. Booker T.

Booker has a bad leg so Jericho goes after it before the bell. Some kicks and elbow drops have the leg in trouble but Booker kicks him over the top for a breather. Back in and a flapjack drops Jericho as JR praises HHH's Indian Deathlock. There's a superkick but here's Flair for the DQ.

HHH comes out and it's a 3-1 beatdown until Shawn makes the save. Jericho breaks up Sweet Chin Music though and it's Shawn taking the beatdown, including the Walls. HHH gets the Indian Deathlock and the good guys tap. Yeah it's still just an Indian Deathlock dude. Try the sleeper again.

Jeff Hardy vs. Steven Richards

Jeff is in all white, making him look like he's off to paint an apartment. Richards gets sent outside early on but Victoria pulls him away before Jeff's barricade running clothesline. Back in and a DDT on the arm gives Richards two and we hit the armbars as Jeff's blue arm paint is all over Richards. Jeff makes the comeback and gets two off the leg lariat in the corner. The Swanton is broken up by Victoria so here's Trish, who got out here WAY too fast, to kick her in the head. Now the Swanton can put Richards away.

Rating: D. The paint was the most interesting part of the match. This

Jeff/Trish thing isn't doing anything for me but I can't imagine it's going to be anything long term. They also need some fresh talent for the women's division as Trish vs. Victoria all over again makes my head hurt.

Trish smiles at Jeff post match.

Austin says goodbye to the production staff and leaves.

Rock Appreciation Moment: Rock insults various crowds and people. "HE SAID TORONTO! THAT'S WHERE WE LIVE!" Still amazing.

Test calls Torrie Wilson because he's dumb enough to do this when his girlfriend is around. Speaking of the girlfriend, Stacy comes up and innocently asks who was on the phone. Test gets nervous and says it was a wrong number. He tries to get Goldust to lie for him but the Tourette's gets the better of him.

Rock finds the dejected production staff (who haven't moved since Austin left) and says he's got a big party after Rock Appreciation Night. I mean, they can't come in or anything but the party will be happening.

Goldberg video.

Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Rob Van Dam/Kane vs. Lance Storm/Chief Morely

The graphic still shows the old title belt design. Morely and Storm are defending and this is elimination rules. Rob and Kane slug it out with the champs with Van Dam moonsaulting to the floor to take out the two of them plus Bubba as a bonus. Kane dives onto all of them and the fans are way into Van Dam, as is usually the case. We really get things going with Rob and D-Von as the fans want tables.

Bubba comes in to club Kane in the chest but takes a jumping clothesline for his efforts. A quick What's Up slows Kane down but it's right back to Rob for a bunch of kicks to the face. Everything breaks until it's Bubba and Van Dam alone in the ring where Rob misses the Five Star. Storm tries to bring in a chair but D-Von takes it away and misses a swing, setting up the Van Daminator to get rid of the Dudleys.

Back from a break with Morely suplexing Van Dam and Kane making a save. Storm comes in and grabs a half crab, which isn't even treated as a finisher anymore. To be fair, did anyone outside of WCW ever buy that as a good move? The hot tag brings in Kane as everything breaks down.

A really bad camera shot shows Van Dam's top rope kick not coming close to Storm (which the announcers didn't acknowledge, making it a bit less bad than Maven's disaster earlier). There's the double chokeslam on the champs and the Five Star to Morely gives Rob and Kane the titles.

Rating: D+. Kind of slow here but the ending was the only important part. Kane and Van Dam should have won the titles last night but the extra emotion here did make things a little better. At least the titles are off of Storm and Regal as they were setting new standards for uninteresting champions. The Dudleys didn't really need to be there either but they didn't hurt anything.

Bischoff has a contract of some kind and promises a big surprise.

Here's Rock for Rock Appreciation Night/the most obvious debut ever. Rock has FINALLY come back to sea...all you jabronis appreciate him. The ROCKY chant breaks out and Rock says he doesn't care for what happened to Austin earlier tonight. If Austin just had to get beaten last night, at least it was by the best. Rock brags about all the Rock Bottoms last night and the fans keep cheering him.

We get another montage of awesome Rock moments (edited off the Network due to the music), which still doesn't get them to boo. He talks about going to Hollywood and coming back to boos as the fans FINALLY catch on...by chanting for Goldberg. Rock: "Don't think you're cool just because you know Rock's accountant Ira Goldberg!"

Rock is out of people to beat though so this is the last time you'll ever see him. He tells them what they can do with their booing...and here's Goldberg. This would have been a heck of a surprise if they hadn't said he would be at Backlash and then had Bischoff do the contract thing. Goldberg says Rock is next and a spear ends the show.

Overall Rating: C. This definitely felt like the post-Wrestlemania show

with very little wrestling throughout and one match with any significant time. They set up a few things going forward but a lot of this show was about taking a breath after the hard push towards Wrestlemania. There's nothing wrong with that and the Goldberg debut, while highly telegraphed, did feel like a big moment. Not a bad show, but it's not the place to look if you want a lot of action.

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205 Live – August 29, 2017: Proof That It's Working

205 Live

Date: August 29, 2017

Location: Verizon Arena, Little Rock, Arkansas

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Corey Graves

We're officially in the Enzo Amore Era on 205 Live and that makes me think doing my own dental surgery sounds like a good idea. It's pretty clear that Enzo is going to be the next big challenger to Neville and the title, which actually gives me a mixed reaction. He's already the biggest

star on the show but that means he's around more often and egads that sounds like torture. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Brian Kendrick vs. Jack Gallagher and the buildup to their No DQ match tonight.

Opening sequence.

The announcers chat for a bit.

Brian Kendrick vs. Jack Gallagher

No DQ and Gallagher is in street clothes. Kendrick says he's a fighter as Gallagher stands perfectly still. They stare each other down for the better part of a minute before Jack uppercuts him into the corner and scores with a headbutt. Gallagher even breaks an umbrella over Kendrick's back to put him outside as the violence starts cranking up. Some hard shots to Brian's face sets up a whip through some equipment cases.

The beating knocks Kendrick down the aisle as Gallagher looks completely calm the entire time. It's almost eerie really. Kendrick gets thrown onto the announcers' table for some hard right hands to the head. The announcers' table is loaded up but Kendrick comes up with a kendo stick to the ribs.

Brian sends him into the steps before tying Jack's foot in the wires underneath the ring skirt. Now it's time for the beating with the stick and Jack is busted open pretty badly. We stop for the medic to tend to Gallagher's head and Kendrick has to stand around for a bit. Kendrick drops him with a DDT onto the bell and puts on the Captain's Hook with the stick for the submission (though Gallagher is out) at 7:30.

Rating: C+. This needed more time but there's a good chance that it was cut off due to the cut. It was nice while it lasted though and showed a different side of Gallagher, which he really needs to show. At the same time you need to have Kendrick get a bigger win once in awhile as him putting everyone over isn't going to work forever. Good brawl, cut short by time.

Noam Dar, Drew Gulak and Tony Nese are ready for the six man tag tonight.

Dar insists that he beat himself for having a bit too much fun the night before. Gulak thinks Enzo is going to tarnish the 205 Live. He believe in a better 205 Live and you can bet your bojangles that Enzo isn't going to be a part of that. Nese says Enzo isn't on his level.

Rich Swann vs. Ariya Daivari

TJP, still on crutches, is out for commentary. Daivari dedicates this to another Iranian wrestler. They fight over a wristlock to start with Swann dancing/nipping up to escape. Swann's front flip into a dropkick gets two but Daivari starts in on the back. TJP talks about how he and Swann are both former champions.

The fact that he had to beat five people to become champion while Swann only beat one is just a detail. Swann's running flip Fameasser gets two and something like Rolling Thunder gets the same. They head outside with Daivari getting the better of it and stealing TJP's crutch, only to get small packaged for the pin at 4:08.

Rating: D+. Angle advancement instead of much of a match here as TJP vs. Swann continues. You know they're heading to a big match down the line, even if it isn't likely to mean anything. Well, at least until Enzo becomes the Cruiserweight Champion to turn the whole thing into a big comedy act.

Post match Daivari goes after TJP, who fights back with a variety of kicks and his knee appearing just fine. Swann watches all this in disbelief before handing TJP his crutch and leaving. TJP hits Daivari with the Detonation Kick.

Enzo comes in to see Cedric Alexander and Gran Metalik, offering some coaching tips on a dry erase board. Alexander says this isn't the same as Raw and the two of them have more experience. This turns into a discussion of Enzo's mother's cooking and Gran Metalik being named Pepper Jack. He's really not going to be able to stay a face long, or at least he shouldn't.

Drew Gulak/Noam Dar/Tony Nese vs. Enzo Amore/Cedric Alexander/Gran Metalik

Before the match, Enzo calls this the realest in-ring debut in the history of 205 Live. Drew looks like Captain Underpants and Nese works at Chippendale's. Enzo and Gulak start things off with Drew imitating the dance. It's not like it's hard to make fun of. Gulak starts talking trash as he cranks on an armbar, sending Enzo bailing to the corner. There's no tag though so a front facelock takes Enzo down again.

Now it's off to Alexander as Neville is shown watching from the back. Tony comes in to pose a bit but Cedric speeds things back up into a headscissors and dropkick to take over. It's back to Enzo to eat a dropkick as the heels take over for the first time. A Downward Spiral gets Enzo out of trouble but everything breaks down with Metalik and Alexander hitting (well maybe as the camera went down too) stereo dives.

That leaves Nese to run Enzo over before he can dive (Corey: "I think, in a roundabout way, Tony Nese just saved Enzo's life.") and mocks the dance as well. Just in case you needed any more proof that Enzo is the star of this show and everyone else is chasing him. Cedric springboards in with a clothesline but gets sent outside so Gulak and Nese can hammer away while Enzo has the referee for reasons of general stupidity.

Cedric fights out of a chinlock and hits the handspring enziguri for a breather. The hot tag brings in Metalik for a superkick to Nese and the rope walk dropkick. Gulak saves Nese from a Swanton so Alexander takes Drew down, allowing for the hot tag off to Enzo. Eat Defeat (now the Jordunzo because of course it is) drops Dar (I had forgotten he was in this match) and a rollup with feet on the ropes pins Nese at 9:48.

Rating: C-. I'm not sure how to take this. For one thing I've talked for the better part of a year now about how I thought Enzo as a cheating cruiserweight would be great but sweet goodness now it's actually happening. The character in this form has a short shelf life but if they put the title on him and make him the Honky Tonk Man of the division, he'll be fine.

Here's the way you can tell it's working at the moment though: when else have I ever talked about someone on 205 Live this much? As you knew he would be, Enzo is instantly the biggest personality on the show and draws

the most attention. If they could find some more people like him, this show could take off a bit more. As it is, it's Enzo, Neville and everyone else a few miles beneath them.

The winners dance to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This show flew by and that's one of the better things you can say about 205 Live. They don't have the most interesting stories in the world but if they get in, do their stuff and get out, it's quite the entertaining way to kill most of an hour. The No DQ match was good and TJP vs. Swann is kind of interesting, though it would be nice if any of this stuff was going to mean anything. If Enzo gets the title though, those people will be getting a lot more attention in a hurry. Fine show this week though nothing worth going out of your way to see.

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