

Main Event – March 9, 2017: Thank Goodness For Raw

Main Event

Date: March 9, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Back to the land of the misfit toys that no one cares enough to repair because they weren't all that fun in the first place. I'm sure we'll get to hear about how amazing Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg will be, despite it not being likely to last as long as either match on this show is going to be. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jinder Mahal vs. Curtis Axel

Dang from a pay per view to Main Event in the same week. Some people might say that the Fastlane match was COMPLETELY POINTLESS but I'm not supposed to complain about free wrestling or something. Curtis chops away in the corner as you can see droves of people going to the stairs. A jumping knee to the chin puts Axel down and some kneedrops make things worse. That earns Jinder some angry right hands in the corner and the Hennig necksnap for two. The PerfectPlex is broken up though and Jinder grabs a cobra clutch slam for the pin at 3:46.

Rating: D. For those of you who were begging for Jinder to get his head back you see. Axel continues to be someone whose time has passed and there's almost no way to recover but at least he got that token Intercontinental Title reign a few years back. These guys are the Main Event Players and it's no surprise that the match was as meaningless as it was.

Package on Sunday's main event which is longer than the main event itself.

To Raw!

Here's Chris Jericho to get us going, which is the absolute best thing they could do to keep the crowd from turning on the show. Tonight is the rebirth of Chris Jericho because last night at Fastlane he screwed Kevin Owens out of the Universal Title. A few weeks ago, Owens took a knife and he stuck it in man.

Jericho wants Owens out here right now so here's Kevin. Owens starts to talk but Jericho immediately cuts him off and wants to know why he was stabbed in the back. Kevin says there was no stabbing in the back because they were never best friends. Remember who his best friend used to be? Sami Zayn, who Owens stabbed in the back as he would do over and over again.

Jericho is just a tool and Owens did whatever he could to keep the Universal Title. Chris was there to watch his back because he knew what to expect but he was also gullible. Then Jericho outlived his usefulness by accepting the match against Goldberg on Kevin's behalf. Last night Goldberg would have been outsmarted but Jericho got the better of Kevin last night.

Jericho calls trusting Owens the worst thing he ever could have done but now he has friends around this arena. Chris: "I've got the friends of Jericho! CHEER ME ON MAN!" Jericho isn't done with Owens though because last night was the beginning of a road that ends at Wrestlemania. The match is made but since the show is in a month, let's have a fight right now. Owens comes down to the ring for the brawl until Samoa Joe comes in to jump Jericho. Sami Zayn runs out with a chair for the save and house is cleaned.

To Monday again.

Here's Goldberg and EGADS the booing starts when the music stops. Goldberg holds up the title and says it belongs to the people as much as it belongs to him. Goldberg says he has information he's never mentioned before but the CM PUNK chants start up. He kind of rolls with them but here's Paul Heyman instead. Heyman knows he's not man enough to get in the ring with Goldberg but he knows someone who is.

Cue Brock Lesnar for the staredown with Heyman saying that no one is

happier for Goldberg than Lesnar himself. Only one of them can walk out as the winner because the other will walk out of Wrestlemania as the loser. Lesnar extends his hand as Goldberg looks at Lesnar, meaning it's an F5 for the new champ.

Jack Gallagher/Mustafa Ali vs. Tony Nese/Noam Dar

Gallagher does his headstand in the corner to scare Nese off so he brings in Dar to take Ali's headscissors. You know what that means. Yeah apparently WWE thinks that a basic move on a nothing show is going to get the next Undertaker Loses reaction so CUE THE FREAKING CROWD SHOT.

Back from a break with Ali armdragging Nese into an armbar. Gallagher comes in and gets beaten down as well with the tag formula going full steam ahead. Jack escapes a body vise and makes the hot tag to Ali for the rolling neckbreaker. Gallagher is brought right back in for the headbutts, setting up the inverted 450 to give Ali the pin at 9:15.

Rating: C-. This felt like it was out of the early days of the cruiserweight division and that's not a good thing. There's no particular reason for these four to be fighting (or teaming together for that matter) but they had ten minutes to do their thing, which wasn't all that impressive. It's certainly not bad but nothing you'll want to see again.

And now from the end of Raw.

Here's Strowman to finish what he started last night. Roman's music starts but is quickly replaced by a gong because here comes Undertaker. The fans are WAY into this staredown but Braun bails into the crowd as the fans cheer for Undertaker. As Undertaker goes to leave, cue Reigns for the real staredown. The fans aren't quite as into this and boo Reigns out of the building as he says this isn't about Undertaker. Reigns says it's his yard now (that's all this match needed to set it up) and that earns him a chokeslam. We get a shot of the Wrestlemania logo over Undertaker's shoulder before he walks out to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. In what's becoming a horrible trend, there's nothing to talk about with the original stuff, which becomes a rather irritating problem. The good thing is that we had a strong Raw to balance things out and give us some good clips. I know there's a reason for this show to stay around but the lack of effort is getting really tiresome.

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Smackdown – October 10, 2002: Stop Trying to Be Raw

Smackdown

Date: October 10, 2002

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're ten days away from No Mercy and the big question is Undertaker's hand, which was broken last week. That's not good when he's heading into the Cell with Brock Lesnar. The other major story is the Tag Team Title tournament, which is almost destined to offer a string of great matches. Let's get to it.

We open with one of those stuttering recaps with Stephanie McMahon narrating because we watch these shows to hear from her. Anyway we

recap Undertaker vs. Lesnar with the OFFICIALLY broken hand (you want to make sure it's the official one or you won't be able to get a warranty) and an announcement of the Cell match.

Undertaker is in the parking lot.

Here's Matt Hardy with something to say. After the WE WANT JEFF chants die down, Matt brags about beating Undertaker for the second time last week. Matt talks about how last week was a defining moment in Mattitude and we see a clip of last week's pin. Of course we see Undertaker coming to the ring and the beating is on in a hurry. A few headbutts and cast shots open Matt up but he gets in a low blow. That's fine with Undertaker who casts Matt in the head and then casts a chair into Matt's head. Undertaker punches the post and Matt FINALLY escapes. This went on far longer than it should have but you have to fill time somehow.

Rikishi vs. Eddie Guerrero

Fallout from last week where Eddie make Mark Henry tap in a tag match. Rikishi doesn't waste time and grabs a bearhug but Eddie crawls over into a sunset flip. That goes nowhere so Eddie hits a dropkick, allowing Chavo to get in some choking from the floor. The cheating earns Uncle Eddie a spinebuster but he goes after the knee and scores with the slingshot hilo for no cover.

The frog splash misses though and Rikishi loads up the Stinkface, meaning Chavo has to make another save. That means Rikishi superkicks him into the corner as well and Stinkfaces them both. You would think that the combined forces could have allowed them to escape but alas not so much. The referee, who somehow hasn't called for a DQ, has to deal with Eddie throwing Chavo a chair. It is but a ruse though as Eddie uses another chair on Rikishi's leg, setting up the El Paso Lasso for the tap.

Rating: C-. I could go for watching the Guerreros do their cheating every day. They have so much chemistry together and really do feel like they could beat anyone with these shenanigans. It helps that Eddie is doing some of the best work of his career right now and looking more and more awesome every single week. Rikishi was just fine here too as the one that gets to stand still while Eddie does his thing.

Torrie Wilson can't believe Dawn Marie has challenged her to a lingerie contest. I can't quite hear what she says next because the

pop is far too strong. Torrie's father shows up and she tries to hide her lingerie choices before getting him away.

Stephanie wants the tag division to be legitimate so she lectures Chris Benoit and Kurt Angle. Wouldn't it make more sense to bring in regular teams to make the belts a bit more legit? I mean, I'm no one to question Stephanie but reforming the Dudleyz or something like that would have made more sense. Or not letting THE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS JUMP TO RAW IN THE FIRST PLACE. Angle mocks Benoit's missing tooth and they get in an argument over who leaves first.

Rey Mysterio is ready for his tournament match with Edge tonight when Nidia comes in for a Spanish argument. Rey seems to insult her so Nidia storms off to yell at Jamie Noble. Jamie says don't treat him like that because he has a tournament match of his own tonight. Coffee is tossed away and security breaks it up.

The Guerreros are fired up over their win when Benoit comes out of Stephanie's office (Does that mean he won or lost the competition with Angle?) and looks rather serious. Eddie: "Did you just get in trouble with the principal man?" Benoit doesn't want to be suspended for a year but Chavo chimes in with a rumor that Angle is taking a year off to train for the Olympics. Chris is suspicious when Angle comes out. His greetings to Eddie and Chavo respectively: "What up home slice?" and "Word up my Chicano friend." The Guerreros leave and Angle things they were talking about him. Violence is threatened and Benoit smirks.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Billy Kidman/John Cena vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Benoit

The winners get the Guerreros next week. Kidman hurricanranas Benoit down to start and it's off to Cena (in purple and orange, Phoenix Suns colors) for a hiptoss on Angle. That's not cool with Kurt so he snaps off a belly to belly to send Kidman flying out to the floor. Benoit and Angle get annoyed at each other again (of course) so Chris rolls some German suplexes on Kidman.

We hit a kneeling half crab with Benoit cranking on it as only he can. Kidman does the tag that the referee doesn't see spot so Angle can throw him down again. Angle is finally sent into the post and Benoit takes an enziguri, allowing the real hot tag off to Cena. Everything breaks down in a hurry and Benoit's powerbomb is countered into an X-Factor to give Kidman a near fall. Angle is back

in for an Angle Slam though but Cena saves the ankle lock. He can't save the Crossface though and Kidman taps.

Rating: C. This got better at the end but was there any real question about who was going to win here? They kind of screwed themselves over with the "one year suspension" thing because no one is going to buy that happening. Angle and Benoit trying to one up each other is very entertaining though and that makes for some fun matches.

Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman arrive with a good looking woman. They want to have the path to the ring cleared because they have an announcement.

And now for the highlight of the show: a Desire video all about Matt Hardy with Matt narrating. I know he gets a lot of flack for all these reinventions but when they hit, they hit huge.

We recap the Undertaker vs. Matt brawl.

Here are Lesnar, Heyman and that woman for what I really hope isn't the announcement I think it's going to be. Heyman talks about Undertaker being in the back talking about the Cell, which Lesnar isn't qualified to talk about. However, Tracy is qualified to talk about what kind of a man Undertaker is. This brings out a ticked off Undertaker so Heyman and Lesnar bail. Tracy stays though and calls him Mark because it's serious you see.

They've been sleeping together for three months and she just found out he's married. The big SARA tattoo on his throat wasn't a hint that there was a woman in his life? She didn't care that he was famous and promised to never take the relationship permanent. The fans chant some VERY unkind things about Tracy until Undertaker denies it. Tracy slaps him in the face and storms off.

Post break, Heyman and Lesnar are leaving when Stephanie pops up to put Lesnar in the tournament with Tajiri. It's important to have the best teams, which is why the Dudley Boyz are still separated right? Heyman protests so Stephanie guarantees him that Undertaker is banned from ringside. If he interferes, he's out of the title match.

Billy Gunn vs. Reverend D-Von

The Gunn is back and so is the generic rock music. D-Von, with Ron Simmons in his corner, hammers away to start but gets clotheslined for two. That's enough for D-Von to take a breather on the floor and

Simmons gets in a cheap shot to take over. Back in and we hit the chinlock as the announcers ignore the match to talk about anything else. Can you blame them in this case? A powerslam gets two but Billy grabs the One and Only for no cover. Simmons breaks up the Fameasser so Chuck superkicks him, allowing the Fameasser to connect for the pin a few seconds later.

Rating: D. Boring match here but that's all you can expect here. I'm sure there's a good reason to have D-Von lose before he and Simmons have their semifinal match next week. At least Bubba is still getting to team with Spike over on Raw and fill in a spot in a one off gimmick match. That's also all we'll see of Gunn until June of next year as he wrecked his shoulder a few days later at a house show.

Undertaker can't get a word in with Sara and she hangs up on him. This is exactly what I want to see to build up the most violent match in the company.

Chavo is holding his head and screaming for Benoit. Chris comes up and Chavo says Angle jumped Eddie. Benoit goes off to find them and Chavo shoves him into a closet where violence can be heard. A smiling Eddie comes out holding a dented chair and saying Angle did it.

Torrie is ready for her lingerie contest and asks her dad to not watch (well duh). Dawn Marie comes up and gives Al a preview of her outfit, which he seems to approve of.

Lingerie contest, Torrie wins, Cole thinks this is WAY more impressive than it really is, Torrie won't shake hands after winning.

Post break Al is waiting outside the women's locker room when Dawn comes up to give him the Divas Undressed magazine with her hotel room key marking her pages.

Heyman is telling Brock what to watch for in the tag match when Lesnar asks for his phone. Brock calls Sara and asks if she's ok before smiling and hanging up. Heyman looks somewhere between mortified and inspired.

We hear Tracy's bad acting skills again.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Brock Lesnar/Tajiri vs. Rey Mysterio/Edge

The winners get D-Von and Simmons next week for reasons that make my head hurt. Edge and Lesnar start with the champ shoving him down with ease. The Canadian pops back up and gets in a takedown before mocking Lesnar's pose. That just ticks Lesnar off and I don't see this ending well. If nothing else, Brock being on the floor gives Cole a chance to praise Stephanie's business sense.

Back in and the beating begins but Mysterio tags himself in and springboards into a crossbody on Lesnar. That gives us the staredown with Brock hitting something like a powerslam for two. Tajiri tags himself in for the first kick before grabbing a chinlock. That's followed by the more successful Tarantula but Rey escapes and grabs a hurricanrana.

The hot tag brings in Edge and Lesnar has no issues watching his partner get beaten up. Edge makes the mistake of knocking Brock off the apron and here comes the champ. Brock actually gets dropped by a flying forearm and Tajiri kicks Lesnar by mistake. A double dropkick puts Lesnar on the floor and the 619 into the spear sends Edge and Rey on.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what you would expect from these four in this situation. I could certainly go for Tajiri vs. Rey and Edge vs. Lesnar doesn't sound too bad either. I'm not sure I get the logic of giving the face team such an easy path to the finals but the tournament needs to be the best or something.

Lesnar cleans house until Undertaker makes the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. There's good stuff sprinkled through this show but it's not enough to overcome the stupid Tracy story, the pretty lame tournament stuff and Billy Gunn vs. D-Von. Smackdown works because it has a bunch of action instead of the weak drama and bad storylines. Give us any two combinations of the really talented guys for twelve minutes or so and everything will be fine.

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205 Live – March 7, 2017: (One of) The Greatest Return(s) That Ever Lived

205 Live

Date: March 7, 2017

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves

The big cruiserweight story is Austin Aries signaling that he's ready to get physical again, which is the best thing possible for a lot of people around here. Last night on Monday Night Raw, Aries forearmed Cruiserweight Champion Neville in the face, seemingly signaling that he's ready to go after the title. Let's get to it.

We actually open with the end of Smackdown and AJ Styles and Randy Orton leaving. That's a bit odd.

Long recap of Neville retaining the title at Fastlane and Aries laying him out the next night on Raw.

Opening sequence.

The announcers chat about Aries.

Speaking of Aries, here he is for a chat...with himself. As in he asks himself a question and then switches sides to answer. Aries remembered a lesson he learned in grade school: if you want respect, you take it. That's why he punched the toughest guy in the room in the mouth last night. Austin Aries: expert analyst is gone but

Austin Aries: in-ring expert is here.

This brings out Neville to say Aries is in over his head. Aries says Neville is at the A level but he's way below the A-Double Level. The champ says all that matters around here is the Neville Level. That earns the champ an invitation to the ring but Aries isn't worthy of Neville's presence. Instead, Neville thinks there's a locker room full of talent ready to take Aries' head off. That's fine with Austin and it sounds like we have an open challenge for later tonight.

Rich Swann tries to teach Jack Gallagher to dance when Noam Dar comes in to brag about Alicia Fox. There seems to be some confusion about who sent her the flowers last week but Dar takes credit.

Noam Dar/Ariya Daivari vs. Rich Swann/Jack Gallagher

Daivari takes Swann down to start with the announcers suggesting that Swann isn't at 100% after losing to Neville the previous night. Swann gets in a kick to the head but Dar grabs his foot to block a hurricanrana. The slow beating continues with Daivari driving knees into the back and grabbing a chinlock. Swann fights out without too much trouble and the hot tag brings in Gallagher. Everything breaks down and it's the big headbutt to Daivari to set up Rich's Phoenix splash on Dar for the pin at 6:14.

Rating: C-. Kind of slow here but that's the norm for Daivari. I like Dar for the most part but he wasn't in the ring all that much here. Swann and Gallagher get to win for some restored momentum after losing to Neville a few times. Not much of a match but the last minute or so was entertaining.

Post match a deliveryman brings out some chocolates for Fox. Dar is confused but takes credit for them anyway.

Brian Kendrick says Akira Tozawa can have a fight tonight if he really wants one.

Akira Tozawa vs. Brian Kendrick

Actually hang on a second. See, Kendrick agreed that Tozawa could fight Brian Kendrick but not THE Brian Kendrick.

Akira Tozawa vs. Bryan Kendrick

Bryan is played by indy regular Arik Cannon. Kendrick gets in a few forearms but has to duck a spinning kick, allowing Akira to snap the German suplex for the pin at 1:07.

Neville doesn't want to hear about Austin Aries and says Tony Nese will be a nice challenge tonight. There will be a new #1 contender next week.

Austin Aries vs. Tony Nese

Feeling out process to start with Aries very happily grabbing a headlock. That's enough for Aries to lay out on the top rope and then kiss the biceps for good measure. Nese knocks him outside and Aries might have tweaked his knee. Back in and Aries grabs the neckbreaker over the ropes to take over again but Nese crotches him on the top. The announcers point out that it might be due to ring rust, which is a nice touch that you don't get enough of from commentary.

It's off to a body vise with the legs but Aries is out almost immediately and being sent to the floor again. Nese screams at Aries to go back where he belongs (with a point at the announcers' desk) and as you might expect, Aries pops right back up and starts cleaning house. The running corner dropkick sets up the roaring elbow for the pin at 9:37.

Rating: C+. Not a great match but I liked the idea that Aries was having ring rust and couldn't go as hard as he would otherwise. It's also nice to have him beat a bigger name before being slotted into the Wrestlemania title match. I mean, Aries being handed the match would have been fine but I can go for some authenticity for a change.

Overall Rating: C. This was more of a one concept show with the focus on Aries. The big idea was to reestablish Aries as a player on the roster and that was certainly accomplished. I barely remember the rest of the show at this point and that's perfectly fine given how well they accomplished the Aries stuff. That being said, this

show needs more than one big story going on and I don't see Tozawa vs. Kendrick getting one minute as fulfilling that requirement.

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Monday Night Raw – October 7, 2002: Gimmicks Gone Wild

Monday Night Raw

Date: October 7, 2002

Location: Thomas and Mack Center, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're in Las Vegas for a special show as WWE continues to fight (in vein) against Monday Night Football. This week it's Raw Roulette, meaning every match is Spin the Wheel, Make the deal. I was always a fan of that gimmick back in WCW but having a full show built around it could be a mess. Let's get to it.

Quick video on Raw Roulette which basically says "tonight is Raw Roulette". Thanks for that one.

Eric Bischoff is in the back with some showgirls and explains the concept: a spin of the wheel determines the gimmick for every match tonight. First up: a steel cage match.

Opening sequence.

Booker T. vs. Big Show

In a cage of course. There's a weird buzzing sound coming through commentary so I have another annoying sound to deal with aside from JR and King try to explain why this match is happening. Show tosses him into the cage and hits a hard clothesline before throwing Booker into the corner again.

The very slow beating continues as this is going nowhere. Booker slugs away a bit so Show kicks him in the face for his efforts. A side kick knocks Big Show into the cage and a top rope scissors kick (cool move) knocks him silly. Somehow that's not enough to finish it either as Booker has to low blow Big Show off the top before escaping for the win.

Rating: D-. For a regular match it was boring but for a cage match it was a disaster. This is a good example of what's going to be going wrong all night: these gimmicks aren't adding anything to the matches but we're getting them for the sake of trying to fight off football. Really boring stuff here as Show does little more than throwing Booker into things and that's not enough to fill in eight minutes.

Chris Jericho runs in and lays Booker out, even drawing some blood. Kane and the Hurricane get to defend the Tag Team Titles in....a TLC match. Bischoff: "Tables, ladders and chairs." Hurricane: "Holy Mick Foley!"

Jericho is tired of being overlooked and wants some respect.

HHH gets a blindfold match and thinks it should be against one of the showgirls. Flair calms HHH down and introduces Bischoff to his own personal lesbians. William Regal comes in to say this is ridiculous so the wheel gives him a Las Vegas Showgirl against Goldust. As in they have to dress like showgirls. We're really going the drag route?

Batista is coming to Raw. Anything that gets him away from D-Von is great, but what about the contracts being frozen a few weeks ago?

HHH vs. D'Lo Brown

Non-title and they're both blindfolded. They slowly walk past each other before the miss right hands. HHH talks smack to a turnbuckle and Brown hits a lucky right hand. Of course he grabs the referee because he thinks HHH wrestles in a shirt. Some right hands have

Brown in trouble but he backdrops his way out of a Pedigree. There's the Sky High but HHH rolls over to the ropes. A Flair distraction lets HHH cheat and hit the Pedigree for the pin. What a waste of time and the WORLD CHAMPION.

Christian, Bubba Ray Dudley and Jeff Hardy are in Bischoff's office where he says no one knows more about TLC matches than they do. All three of them can pick their own partners for tonight's title match and Bubba stares Eric down. Goldust comes in in his showgirl attire and seems right in his element.

Quick sidebar. The Raw tag division is a wreck, Smackdown is having to put together any two people they can to do a tournament and these three are all split from their respective partners. Edge is doing wonders on his own and Matt is doing pretty well (albeit as a goon in the Undertaker vs. Lesnar feud) but D-Von is a disaster. Can anyone give me one good reason why the Dudleyz weren't back together two months ago? And maybe the Hardyz too? Anyway, Goldust pops up in his showgirl attire.

Goldust vs. William Regal

They're both dressed as showgirls and of course Regal goes WAY too far with it to great comedic effect. It's a good thing they had showgirl outfits in mens professional wrestlers' sizes. Goldust takes over and tries the Shattered Dreams but Lance storm offers a distraction. Regal pulls the knucks from his bra (just go with it) and knocks Goldust cold for the pin in less than a minute.

Christian isn't going to pick any of the Un-Americans to be his partner because he'd like to win. Instead he'll have Chris Jericho as his partner.

Stacy Keibler vs. Trish Stratus for the Women's Title gets two spins: paddle on a pole and bra and panties. The first to strip their opponent wins and then gets to spank the loser.

Bubba picks Tommy Dreamer as his partner tonight but sees Spike being upset. Spike has watched Bubba and D-Von for years and wanted to be there one day. Bubba changes partners and Spike smiles (Dreamer is fine with this).

Women's Title: Stacy Keibler vs. Trish Stratus

Trish is defending and this is a bra and panties match. Stacy jumps her from behind and sends Trish face first into the title. They both

lose their tops until Trish reverses a rollup and gets Stacy's shorts off for the win. Normal situation here: great visuals, horrible non-wrestling.

Victoria comes out and destroys Trish post match.

Jeff Hardy picks Rob Van Dam as his partner.

Victoria wants the Women's Title and suggests that Trish has done some horrible things in her past, <http://onhealthy.net/product-category/allergy/> including things that hurt Victoria personally.

Al Snow vs. Test

Las Vegas Street Fight, meaning they've found a new way to put hardcore back on TV. The weapons are pulled out and Snow starts swinging plastic dice. Test knocks him out of the air with a trashcan lid but gets suplexed onto the full can. A trashcan lid shot to the head staggers Test again and Snow grabs a bowling ball. Test gets up but slips on a trashcan lid (unintentionally) and gets hit in the head with the ball for the pin.

Rating: D. Remember when they got rid of the hardcore division because it was the same stupid stuff over and over? That's exactly what the case was here as there was nothing we hadn't seen before. Snow was one of the more entertaining hardcore guys but they got rid of this nonsense for a reason.

Jerry Lawler vs. Steven Richards

It's Legal in Nevada match, meaning here come the Godfather and his ladies. The winner here gets to take a ride on the train so I think you know where this is going. Richards jumps Jerry from behind and gets two off a suplex. Lawler gets his feet up to block a middle rope fist drop though and the strap comes down. Jerry hits the dropkick and fist drop for two. Back up and Richards tries a sunset flip but Lawler drops down for the pin.

Lawler is very, very happy.

Randy Orton video. Bob Orton: "In ten years, I see Randy being one of the best of all time." He's not wrong.

Kane is all fired up to become a triple champion at No Mercy. Coach comes up to tell him that Flair and HHH are beating up Hurricane so Kane runs off for the late save.

Tag Team Titles: Rob Van Dam/Jeff Hardy vs. Dudley Boyz vs. Chris Jericho/Christian vs. Kane/Hurricane

TLC with Kane defending on his own as Hurricane is still down in the back. It's a huge brawl to start with Jericho throwing in an early ladder as people pair off. Christian and Jericho are easily shoved off said ladder though and everyone else heads outside. Jeff dives off the barricade to take Kane down and it's Christian and Jericho putting the ladder on the turnbuckle.

Spike goes into the ladder but heel miscommunication puts Christian down. Kane comes back in with the top rope clothesline and chokeslams Bubba for good measure. There's a ladder up in the ring as Kane throws Spike over the top and onto Van Dam. The Canadians knock Kane to the floor and put him on a table so Jeff can hit a legdrop off a ladder. Christian gets powerbombed off the ladder and we take a break.

Back with Bubba and Jericho slugging it out on top of the ladder as it's clear that Kane is the only one tall enough to reach the belts at that height. Jericho bulldogs Bubba off the ladder and Christian gives Van Dam a reverse DDT off another one. This match is still all over the place and doesn't feel like there's any teamwork or anything other than a bunch of people doing a bunch of spots.

With everyone down, the fans want tables. Christian goes up but gets crotched on the top by Kane, followed by a powerslam to Jeff. Bubba plays Matt for some Poetry in Motion to Kane and there's the Van Terminator to knock him even sillier. Jeff goes up so Bubba superplexes him right back down and everyone is done. In an interesting note, we see a replay of the superplex and the original commentary is still there. You don't hear that too often.

Now it's Jericho going up with Spike shoving the ladder over, sending Jericho out to the floor in a scary looking crash. Christian throws Spike through a table as this just keeps going. The Five Star hits Christian and Jeff misses a Swanton before being backdropped through a table. Kane comes back in and chokeslams Jericho off a ladder before pulling down the titles for the win.

Rating: B-. This was entertaining but WAY too long at over twenty five minutes, the fourth longest of all time and the longest team version ever. Above that though, there was no flow or psychology to the match. With the more famous one, you could tell that the matches

were laid out with far more precision, which made for a better match. This one was all over the place with everyone hitting random spots and popping back up for the next one. It's entertaining but nothing I'll remember watching in a day or two.

Post match here are HHH and Flair to mention the name....here we go....Katie Vick, who Kane killed ten years ago. HHH calls Kane a murderer to end the show as the audience doesn't seem too thrilled.

Overall Rating: D-. The second best match of the night was Stevie Richards vs. Jerry Lawler in a match to leave with a bunch of random women. This was ALL about gimmick overload and proof that there's no benefit from just throwing gimmicks out there for the sake of having them without the stories behind them. The wrestling barely existed and a main event that wasn't all that great was nowhere near enough to save it, especially with the big angle to end the show. Terrible show here as they're looking more and more desperate every week.

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Smackdown – March 7, 2017: That Old Feeling

Smackdown

Date: March 7, 2017

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, Tom Phillips, David Otunga

We're down to four shows left before Wrestlemania XXXIII and tonight we're likely finding out who is challenging for the Smackdown World Title. I know you might have heard that one before but this time seems to be the real thing. Tonight AJ Styles faces Randy Orton for the title shot against Bray Wyatt at the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Randy Orton joining Bray Wyatt, seemingly with the intent to betray him later. That led us to last week where Orton burned Bray's barn down, presumably destroying Sister Abigail's grave in the process. I know I'm older than the average fan, but in my day, felonious arson recorded on tape wouldn't be seen as a face turn.

Here are Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan to get things going. They're not sure who should get the title shot as Daniel thinks it should be Orton while Shane prefers Styles. Bryan talks about how the winner of the Royal Rumble has to get the shot. Shane says no one has ever given up their shot like Orton did (Orton would be the third I believe). This leads to more recaps and the fans seem to like the idea of Styles getting the shot. Therefore, tonight we're having a match for the #1 contendership. This too quite a bit longer than necessary.

Post break AJ gets in the bosses' faces and says he's tired of this anti-AJ conspiracy. AJ makes it clear that he's not afraid of fire.

James Ellsworth/Carmella vs. John Cena/Nikki Bella

Before the match, Ellsworth says he beat AJ Styles three times in a row and it took Cena three times to get his first win. That makes Ellsworth the mack daddy of Smackdown! The women start and here are Miz and Maryse at the bell. The distraction lets Carmella get in a superkick and we take an early break.

Back with Miz and Maryse on commentary and Nikki kicking Carmella to the floor. There's the hot tag off to Cena and Ellsworth has to come

in. Ellsworth slaps him in the face and gets ProtoPlexed. Carmella gets in Cena's face and eats a forearm, setting up a double Shuffle, stereo AA/Rack Attack 2.0 and double STF's for the tap at 7:11.

Rating: D. This was completely not about the match of course and there's nothing wrong with that. The idea here is to set up the mixed tag at Wrestlemania and having Cena and Bella dominate a couple of goons in their first match together is fine. This accomplished a goal and that's all it needed to do.

Miz and Maryse lay them out post match with Miz going on a rant about how he and Maryse have been the real first couple of WWE for a year now and it sickens him to see someone pretend to have real love for the sake of promoting their brands. Maryse throws the mic at Bella and we're out.

Orton suggests that AJ run.

Rick Rude Hall of Fame announcement.

Curt Hawkins is in the ring to call out Dean Ambrose for attacking him before their match last week. Ambrose comes out and sends Hawkins packing before saying he wanted to call out Baron Corbin. Baron pops up on screen to say Ambrose should enjoy what he has while he has it. Whenever Corbin wants to, he's taking what Dean values most. Ambrose heads to the back but stops to give Hawkins Dirty Deeds on the floor.

Women's History Month video on Trish Stratus and Lita.

Post break, Ambrose is looking for Corbin.

Mojo Rawley, in a suit, says he wants his Wrestlemania moment. Therefore, he's announcing his entrance into the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal. Dolph Ziggler comes up and says Mojo has to earn that kind of a moment. Mojo: "Is that why you don't have one?"

Dean is still looking for Corbin when Baron jumps him with a pipe to the knee and another shot to the chest. Corbin: "You found me!" Dean: "All right. Good talk!" Corbin kicks him again for saying something that stupid. Baron finds a forklift and lowers the lift onto Dean's chest. Every the geniuses, the referees try to lift it

off of him until one of them wakes up and presses the UP button.

Here are Alexa Bliss and Mickie James for a chat. Bliss is here to announce her opponent for Wrestlemania but first, let's talk about who it won't be. It's not going to be Naomi because she's off feeling the ow. It won't be Nikki Bella, who is in the trainers' room being nursed back to help by her square jawed superman. It won't be Carmella with her weird chin. It won't be Chuckie, who you all know as Becky Lynch.

Bliss has gotten rid of her over and over and she just keeps coming back (I hear Rick Steiner has experience in that area.). Cue Becky to say she has a Declaration (Becky: "You don't have to call it that. I've done better.") to say she's taking the title back at Wrestlemania.

This brings out Natalya to tell Beaker to step aside. Natalya thinks Becky is out of her and Alexa's league but Alexa thinks Natalya has been getting into the catnip. See, Natalya is the worst there is, the worst there was and the worst there ever will be. Mickie grabs the mic and says Becky and Natalya are ruining this moment.

Of course it's going to be Mickie getting the title shot but Alexa doesn't seem to agree. Becky points out that she beat Mickie twice last week. Alexa: "See...what had happened was...". Natalya calls Mickie ugly and here's Daniel Bryan to break it up. He and Shane heard Alexa call herself the greatest woman on the Smackdown roster and there's only one way to find out if that's true. Therefore, it's going to be Alexa defending against the entire division at Wrestlemania. As for tonight, let's have a holla holla (Daniel's words) tag match.

Natalya/Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James

Joined in progress with Bliss shoving Natalya and getting slapped in the face for her efforts. Natalya does her stepover into the basement dropkick (clearly missed) for two and it's off to Becky via a somewhat forceful tag. Mickie comes in as well and takes a few dropkicks, followed by a Becky nip-up. It's back to Bliss who throws Becky down by the hair for two as JBL wants to know what kind of a

match Bliss will be defending her title in (it was never specified). A quick trip to the floor goes badly for Lynch and we take a break. Back with Lynch still getting double teamed and James grabbing a chinlock. Becky finally throws Alexa away but she opts to clothesline Mickie instead of tagging out. Natalya doesn't care for this and comes in with a German suplex on her partner (the fans seem surprised that a heel would do a heelish thing) before walking out. Bliss tags herself in and steals the pin at 12:45.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but the angle advancement at the end was fine. The title match is going to be a huge mess but you have to expect that at a Wrestlemania. I'd much rather it be Becky vs. Bliss for the title, though that doesn't exactly benefit the rest of the division on a very, very packed show.

Mickie kicks Bliss in the head post match.

We look back at the forklift incident. Ambrose has been taken to a medical facility with possibly broken ribs.

Austin Aries wants us to watch 205 Live.

AJ Styles vs. Randy Orton

The winner faces Bray Wyatt for the title at Wrestlemania. Before the match, AJ says he should be the champ again because he made the B show into the A show. Then you have Randy Orton who burned a man's house down and is getting praised for it. No one is keeping him from being in the main event on the grandest stage of them all and making Wrestlemania phenomenal.

Orton tries the RKO in a hurry but AJ bails out to the floor. Back in and AJ grabs a chinlock before Orton sends him hard into the corner. Styles starts kicking at the knee and Orton falls out to the floor as we take a break. Back with AJ staying on the leg and grabbing a chinlock. Orton pops back up with a full nelson slam for one but gets caught in the Hoshi Geroshi for two.

The Calf Crusher goes on but Orton slowly crawls over to the ropes. Orton comes right back with the hanging DDT but AJ gets sent outside. That looks to set up the springboard 450 so Orton coils,

only to have AJ springboard up but drop right back down to the apron in a good fakeout. The springboard 450 misses though and a pop up RK0 sends Orton to the title match at 18:45.

Rating: B-. This was a bit more slow paced than you would expect but Orton winning was the most obvious ending since...well since Cena and Ellsworth were in the same match earlier tonight. Orton vs. Wyatt is the logical move and I'm sure we're going to be seeing Styles vs. Shane (as in the guy who thought AJ should get the spot in the first place). I loved that fakeout spot though as it shows someone thinking in a match, which you just don't see enough anymore.

Overall Rating: C+. Here's a great example of a show that wasn't about the wrestling. Tonight was about pushing stories forward towards Wrestlemania and building interest in them. I had a good time with the show and multiple matches were advanced. There's a good feeling when Wrestlemania season is upon us and I'm getting fired up for the show. This was a good night and I had fun getting ready for Wrestlemania.

Results

Nikki Bella/John Cena b. Carmella/James Ellsworth – Double STF's

Alexa Bliss/Mickie James b. Natalya/Becky Lynch – Bliss pinned Lynch after a German suplex from Natalya

Randy Orton b. AJ Styles – RK0

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Monday Night Raw – March 6, 2017: In Case You Thought Fastlane Meant A Thing

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 6, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

So Fastlane was last night and I'm kind of at a loss for anything positive to say about it. Roman Reigns beat Braun Strowman clean, Charlotte's pay per view streak was broken in a weird moment where Sasha Banks cheated to help Bayley and then Kevin Owens lost the Universal Title to Goldberg in 22 seconds. If that sounds bad, imagine Chicago getting to react to it. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick recap of last night's main event. How quick can a recap be when the match is 22 seconds long?

Here's Chris Jericho to get us going, which is the absolute best thing they could do to keep the crowd from turning on the show.

Tonight is the rebirth of Chris Jericho because last night at Fastlane he screwed Kevin Owens out of the Universal Title. A few weeks ago, Owens took a knife and he stuck it in man.

Jericho wants Owens out here right now so here's Kevin. Owens starts to talk but Jericho immediately cuts him off and wants to know why he was stabbed in the back. Kevin says there was no stabbing in the back because they were never best friends. Remember who his best friend used to be? Sami Zayn, who Owens stabbed in the back as he would do over and over again.

Jericho is just a tool and Owens did whatever he could to keep the Universal Title. Chris was there to watch his back because he knew

what to expect but he was also gullible. Then Jericho outlived his usefulness by accepting the match against Goldberg on Kevin's behalf. Last night Goldberg would have been outsmarted but Jericho got the better of Kevin last night.

Jericho calls trusting Owens the worst thing he ever could have done but now he has friends around this arena. Chris: "I've got the friends of Jericho! CHEER ME ON MAN!" Jericho isn't done with Owens though because last night was the beginning of a road that ends at Wrestlemania. The match is made but since the show is in a month, let's have a fight right now. Owens comes down to the ring for the brawl until Samoa Joe comes in to jump Jericho. Sami Zayn runs out with a chair for the save and house is cleaned. I heartily approve of every single thing that happened here.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

I had the tag match written up but I sit here surprised. Sami hammers away to start and sends him outside for a kick to the chest. One heck of a flip dive (over the referee) takes Owens out but he comes back in with the Pop Up Powerbomb for no cover. Instead he hits a brainbuster onto the knee, followed by a second Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 3:54.

Rating: C-. It was fun while it lasted but this was just a step above a squash. It's not like Sami has anything to do right now but I could go for a match like this being a little longer than four minutes. Sami's dive was cool but I'm not sure why this needed to be so short. At least Owens gets some heat back after last night.

Cruiserweight Title: Rich Swann vs. Neville

Neville is defending. After the handshake, Swann wastes no time in going after the champ and pounds him out to the floor. Neville is right back though and sends him head first into the LED apron for a thud. Back from a break with Swann getting out of a chinlock as the AUSTIN ARIES chants strike up. Swann sends him outside and hits a bit flip dive off the top (Aries: "Was that a swan dive?") but gets crotched back inside.

The superplex knocks Swann silly but he's able to roll outside before the Rings of Saturn can go on. Back from another break with Swann getting in a German suplex and kicking Neville in the head for a close two. Another kick to the head sets up the Phoenix Splash but Swann only hits mat, setting up the Rings of Saturn to retain the title at 13:33.

Rating: B-. The lack of drama and abundance of commercials hurt this a lot but Neville is just nailing it right now. He looks unbeatable, which should mean that it's time for the Greatest Man that Ever Lived to get his shot. I've liked Neville more than almost anyone else in WWE as of late and I look forward to seeing him every week.

Post match Aries goes into the ring for an interview with Neville but the fans cut him off with the AUSTIN ARIES chants. Neville says he's laid waste to pretender after pretender and there's no one left on 205 Live to challenge him. Aries makes sure he understood that: there's no one that can challenge Neville?

The fans chant for Aries and he actually acknowledges them for a change, which isn't cool with the champ. Neville gets in his face so Aries takes off the sunglasses and Neville keeps at it until Aries has a question for him. Actually it's more of a statement and that means a big left hand to Neville. A discus forearm puts Neville on the floor to a MASSIVE pop.

Enzo and Big Cass get in Cesaro and Sheamus' face for some short form trash talk.

Here's Goldberg and EGADS the booing starts when the music stops. Goldberg holds up the title and says it belongs to the people as much as it belongs to him. Goldberg says he has information he's never mentioned before but the CM PUNK chants start up. He kind of rolls with them but here's Paul Heyman instead. Heyman knows he's not man enough to get in the ring with Goldberg but he knows someone who is.

Cue Brock Lesnar for the staredown with Heyman saying that no one is happier for Goldberg than Lesnar himself. Only one of them can walk out as the winner because the other will walk out of Wrestlemania as

the loser. Lesnar extends his hand as Goldberg looks at Lesnar, meaning it's an F5 for the new champ. This still flat out does not need the title involved.

Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore and Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

Enzo and Cass are challenging after Amore's foot was pushed off the ropes to end their title shot last night. Cass runs over Gallows and the champs are sent to the floor. They're smart enough to move before Enzo can dive though and here come Sheamus and Cesaro. Back with Amore in trouble but grabbing a tornado DDT. A suicide dive takes Gallows out again but Enzo spills Cesaro's coffee. That's enough to draw Cesaro and Sheamus in for the DQ at 6:53.

Rating: D. I'm so over this feud and I have a bad feeling that we're going to be getting a triple threat title match at Wrestlemania for reasons that still aren't clear. I don't know who would want to see that match, which is why we're so likely to see it. If Amore and Cass win the belts there then it's going to be worthy of a great pop but there's nothing to look forward to on the way.

Cesaro and Sheamus clean house post match which might set up a triple threat.

Rick Rude Hall of Fame announcement.

Post break Foley breaks up Amore/Cass and Cesaro/Sheamus from fighting in the back. They'll have a #1 contenders match next week. Everyone seems happy so HERE'S FREAKING STEPHANIE to tell Mick to go come to her office.

Ariya Daivari vs. Akira Tozawa

Daivari takes him down to start so Tozawa shouts a lot and sends Daivari to the floor for a suicide dive. Back in and the snap German suplex ends Daivari at 2:08.

Tozawa says he wants to fight Brian Kendrick but Brian comes out and says be careful what you wish for.

New Day vs. Shining Stars

Before the match, New day shows off their ice cream cart and say

they can now host a lot of things, including a beating for the Shining Stars. A butterfly gutbuster puts Kofi down to start and Big E. is knocked off the apron. The Stars go after the ice cream cart but Big E. is there for the save. The Midnight Hour wraps up Primo at 1:18.

Women's History Month video on Trish Stratus and Lita.

Foley is in the ring to introduce Bayley. The champ is glad to have retained the title but she doesn't feel right about how she kept it last night. She had wanted Sasha Banks to stay in the back but something else happened instead. When she was a kid, her calendar began and ended with Wrestlemania and now she's going to the show but she doesn't feel right about it.

Foley asks who she'll be defending the title against (Shouldn't he be telling her?) but here's Sasha to interrupt. She wants the shot and Bayley seems to agree but Foley asks for the people's opinion. Cue Charlotte and Dana Brooke to say this was the plan all along. Whoever lost at Roadblock wasn't supposed to get a second chance and now Banks is pulling this. Charlotte blames Foley and says she's the victim because she was robbed.

Cue Stephanie to say she's the boss (yes Stephanie you haven't made that clear enough yet) and call out the fans for being losers like CM Punk. Stephanie makes Charlotte #1 contender but Mick says you can't leave the Boss out. Stephanie: "Mick, who is the boss?" Mick suggests Charlotte vs. Banks for the #1 contendership next week but Stephanie has a better idea (well duh): Bayley vs. Sasha right now and if Sasha wins, the title match at Wrestlemania is a triple threat.

Sasha Banks vs. Bayley

Non-title. Banks takes her to the mat to start and gets two off a rollup. Bayley gets the same off an armdrag and they stare each other down a bit. Sasha hiptosses her into the corner as Charlotte keeps complaining about how she was cheated last night (completely true). A hard chop staggers Bayley and a wristdrag out of the corner sends her outside. They don't seem to want to hurt each other here.

Back in and a hard clothesline drops Bayley as we take a break.

We come back with the slow pace continuing and a camera shot of the announcers' desk instead of the ring. Bayley can't get the suplex but here are Charlotte and Dana to ringside. Banks misses the middle rope knees in the corner, followed by Bayley missing a high crossbody. The Bank Statement goes on and Sasha kicks Charlotte off the apron as Bayley taps at 13:00.

Rating: D+. Hey we want some triple threats! I get why they flat out can't leave Charlotte out of the match but what in the world is the point in booking Bayley like this? She became one of the biggest stars in NXT history by being an underdog so now she's having her friends help her win title matches and losing in a match to set up a triple threat because Stephanie and Foley are still fighting. And people wonder why this show makes people's heads shake.

Charlotte takes Sasha out post match.

Roman Reigns says if Braun Strowman wants to even the score, he'll be in the middle of the ring at the end of the show.

Video on Seth Rollins rehabbing his knee.

HHH joins us via satellite to talk about how great WWE's medical program is and hopes that Rollins will listen to the experts. He's been called many things over the years but everyone knows he's always been the man. Why Rollins can't use his head and stay away isn't clear but if HHH has to do something about it, so be it.

Emma is coming. Graves: "Not this again!"

Samoa Joe vs. Chris Jericho

Non-title with Owens and Zayn banned from ringside. Joe takes him into the corner to start and stomps away before a quick crossbody gives Chris two. The Walls are quickly countered so Jericho settles for an enziguri. A dropkick puts Joe on the floor and Jericho baseball slides to the floor...right into the Koquina Clutch. Joe grabs the hold on the floor and it's a countout at 3:55.

Rating: D+. Again it was fun while it lasted but was this really the best idea? The champ just got choked completely out and lost the

match because Joe was better. It's a great way to push Joe but Jericho looked like he was in over his head here. Eh to be fair though it's not like the US Title has meant anything lately anyway. Joe goes after Jericho again and takes a Codebreaker. That helps the result a good bit.

Here's Strowman to finish what he started last night. Roman's music starts but is quickly replaced by a gong because here comes Undertaker. The fans are WAY into this staredown but Braun bails into the crowd as the fans cheer for Undertaker. As Undertaker goes to leave, cue Reigns for the real staredown. The fans aren't quite as into this and boo Reigns out of the building as he says this isn't about Undertaker. Reigns says it's his yard now (that's all this match needed to set it up) and that earns him a chokeslam. We get a shot of the Wrestlemania logo over Undertaker's shoulder before he walks out to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This show started off white hot and then cooled WAY down. They were brilliant to start this off with Jericho and Owens because it's the hottest feud in the company right now and the thing people want to see. The rest of the first hour was good stuff too with Neville vs. Aries as a highlight. After that it was mainly business as usual but it was nowhere near as bad as it usually gets. I had a good time with this one and you can really see how utterly worthless Fastlane was. That show was a mess and worthless while this one was energetic and built towards Wrestlemania. Raw wins, which you don't say often.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

Neville b. Rich Swann – Rings of Saturn

Anderson and Gallows b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass via DQ when Cesaro interfered

New Day b. Shining Stars – Midnight Hour to Primo

Sasha Banks b. Bayley – Bank Statement

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Fastlane 2017: Yep

Fastlane 2017

Date: March 5, 2017

Location: Bradley Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the final show before Wrestlemania XXXIII and it's fairly clear that this is just a way to fill in time before Orlando. The main event is Kevin Owens defending the Universal Title against Goldberg, which has a serious chance of being a squash. Of course it also has the chance of Chris Jericho interfering and costing his former friend the title. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Noam Dar/Brian Kendrick vs. Akira Tozawa/Rich Swann

Take two feuds (Kendrick vs. Tozawa/Swann vs. Dar) and throw them into one match. Tozawa starts firing off the kicks early on with Dar barely able to keep up. It's off to Swann for the stereo dives but Kendrick and Dar hide behind Alicia Fox before anything can happen to them.

Back from a break with Swann in trouble as Dar and Kendrick take turns working on the arm. Kendrick chokes in the corner with his

boot before it's back to Dar for a more standard armbar. Swann finally sends Noam into the corner and it's time for the hot tag to Tozawa. Now the double dives work just fine and Kendrick eats a Shining Wizard. Swann kicks Dar down and it's a snap German suplex into the Phoenix splash to put Noam away at 9:21.

Rating: C+. This was exactly what this pre-show match is supposed to be as the cruiserweights did their usual high spots and fast paced offense to wake the fans up. Dar taking the pin makes sense as he can just do one of his annoying promos to get back on the annoying side where he belongs.

The opening video talks about how important it is to have momentum on the way to Wrestlemania while looking at the major matches. Strowman vs. Reigns doesn't warrant a major mention though.

Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe

This has a lot of potential. Joe debuted a few weeks back and talked about earning his spot here instead of being all happy to be here like Zayn. Feeling out process to start with Sami avoiding for a few moments until a big kick to the chest puts him down. The kneebar doesn't work just yet but Joe does get in an enziguri in the corner to really knock Sami silly. A surfboard hold makes things even worse for Zayn but he flips over onto Joe for two. Sami tries to get all fired up so Joe spinwheel kicks the leg to put him right back down.

A quick (and better than expected) Blue Thunder Bomb gets two on Joe but the offense ends there as Joe boots him in the chest again. The backsplash gets two and Sami is all shaken up. He still manages a small package, only to have to escape a MuscleBuster. Not that it matters as Joe enziguris him again but can't get a superplex.

Instead Joe is sent face first into the buckle but he still Grabs Sami in the STO out of the corner. The Koquina Clutch ends Zayn at 9:13.

Rating: B. Sami passing out in the hold after fighting with everything he had was exactly what this needed to be. Joe is still establishing himself on the roster and a match where he's able to fight off everything Sami throws at him and then choke him out for

the win is a great start. Sami will be just fine though as he always is and that's one of his major strengths: you can have him lose so many times and just a single win gets him right back on track.

Bayley isn't worried about Dana Brooke having Charlotte's back tonight. If Charlotte is the champion she claims to be, she'll face Bayley one on one. Nia Jax comes up and says if Charlotte doesn't take the title, she will.

Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

Enzo and Cass beat Sheamus and Cesaro to earn this shot. Before the match we get some cheap pops from Enzo and Cass about the local sports teams (that will always work) and a few jabs at the champs' bald heads. Cass slugs away on Anderson to start before Amore does the big dive onto both champions. Anderson gets in a running knee to the head though and Gallows throws in a double Too Sweet to remind us of more entertaining groups gone by.

It's off to the chinlock before Amore manages to get Gallows outside. That's not enough for the hot tag though as Anderson knees him in the face. Anderson misses a charge in the corner though and it's the hot tag to Big Cass. House is quickly cleaned and the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka looks to finish, only to have Gallows make the last second save. A running knee to Enzo is enough for the pin to retain at 9:00 with Gallows shoving the boot off the ropes.

Rating: D+. Just a Raw match here as you almost had to expect from this one. It wasn't very entertaining but that's the standard for the tag division anymore. Why would I care about the match when the build has been almost non-existent and neither team is really all that interesting in the first place?

Stephanie's plane is stuck on the tarmac so Mick Foley is in charge tonight. She yells at him for telling her to relax. She's going to stay on the phone with him for the rest of the show but as luck would have it, Mick accidentally hangs up on her.

We recap Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks. Jax beat on Banks for a few months while exploiting Sasha's bad knee. This match is taking place

because Banks said she would be in Bayley's corner later tonight, which wasn't cool with Stephanie.

Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks

Banks tries some dropkicks to start but a hard whip into the corner cuts her off in a hurry. A backbreaker makes things even worse and Nia runs her over again for good measure. Nia cranks on both arms before getting kicked in the head for the break. It's off to a torture rack (great visual with Sasha bent bent around like that) and Nia even does some squats for good measure.

Banks spins out into most of a guillotine before a faceplant sets up the Bank Statement. The crowd gets WAY into this for a second but Jax easily powers free. A Faarooq style spinebuster sets up a legdrop to Banks' back and it's time to gloat. Nia gloats a bit too long though and a quick rollup into a bridge gives Sasha the pin at 9:21.

Rating: C+. This is the formula I was expecting out of Sami vs. Joe actually but the ending was a big surprise. I like the idea of Banks getting the win here as it gives her some momentum back while also making Jax look vulnerable for a change. I'm sure there's going to be a rematch and Jax can run her over there, presumably setting up the Wrestlemania match a bit more.

Earlier tonight, Mick Foley gave Jinder Mahal and Rusev singles matches because they want to end their team.

Mahal and Rusev come out for their matches but get in a fight with Mahal actually getting the better of things.

Cesaro vs. Jinder Mahal

Mahal is in early trouble and a backbreaker gives Cesaro an early two. He seems to have hurt his back though and can't get the apron superplex. A dropkick to the back gets two on Cesaro and a running knee gets the same. The slow beating continues until Mahal's suplex is reversed to give Cesaro a breather. Cesaro hits the Uppercut Train and the Swiss 1 9 (oh give me a break) makes things even worse. Jinder breaks up the Swing but gets in a staredown with

Rusev, allowing the pop up uppercut to end Mahal at 8:33.

Rating: D+. The wrestling was fine but my goodness this was one of the least interesting ideas I could possibly think of. Mahal was never interesting either as a singles guy or as a tag wrestler but we're supposed to be interested in seeing him on a pay per view in a singles match? It's nice to see Cesaro win something for a change though.

Rusev beats Mahal up post match and here's his opponent.

Big Show vs. Rusev

You would have expected Sheamus here no? Rusev has gotten one heck of a haircut. The USA chants begin as Show chokes in the corner and then on the ropes. A headbutt makes things even worse and the Final Cut gets two on the Bulgarian. Show clotheslines him a few times as this has been completely one sided.

Rusev finally takes out the knee and it's off to a leglock as the fans keep chanting USA. A shot to Rusev's face breaks the hold (Graves: "This could be devastating to his handsome status!") and he bails to the floor. Back in and the chokeslam is broken up, followed by a trio of superkicks for two. The Accolade is broken up though and a chokeslam plants Rusev for no cover. There's a second and third chokeslam followed by the KO Punch for the pin on Rusev at 9:38.

Rating: D. I'm assuming this was a way to help set up Big Show vs. Shaquille O'Neal at Wrestlemania, even though they keep hinting that the match isn't happening for some reason. Rusev was completely squashed here, but what do you expect after he was attacked by the likes of Jinder Mahal earlier?

Kevin Owens doesn't think anything of Goldberg because Goldberg has won a single match in about ten years. He's not wrong you know. It doesn't matter who he faces because he'll keep the title as long as he wants.

Austin Aries package with Aries making some package jokes before and after.

Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville is defending after Jack won a five way for the shot. Gallagher starts the mind games by doing the headstand in the corner a few times to really confuse the champ. A dropkick puts Neville on the floor but he snaps Gallagher throat first across the top rope to take over. Neville's reverse chinlock doesn't last long as Gallagher comes back with forearms to the head, followed by a suicide dive of all things. The announcers make sure to point out how rare that is for him in a rare nice job.

Back in and a superplex gets two on the champ but he comes back with something like a Stroke. Jack is sent chest first into the ropes though and a wicked snap German knocks Gallagher silly. A middle rope Phoenix splash is only good for two though and Jack gets in the headbutt.

Another headbutt puts Neville down and Gallagher falls on top for two. The running corner dropkick misses but Gallagher breaks up the superplex attempt. Another very, very hard headbutt knocks Neville down on the top but he throws Jack down in a huge crash. The Red Arrow retains the title at 12:08.

Rating: B. This was WAY better than I was expecting and this was by far and away the best match on the show. I had a lot of fun with it as Gallagher was doing his thing here and showing that he has the chops to hang in the ring. That being said, when Neville turns it on, no one can hang with him and it's really not even close. I loved this match and it was by far and away the best thing on the show so far.

Paul Heyman doesn't care if Goldberg or Owens wins tonight because Brock Lesnar wins no matter what. If Goldberg wins, their match is now a title match. If Owens wins, Lesnar will have a plan on how to beat Goldberg.

Here's New Day with a bicycle powered ice cream cart. When they had an idea for a cereal, all they had was a t-shirt and a dream. Then they heard the voices....Big E.: "I HEAR VOICES IN MY HEAD! THEY TALK TO ME.....". Now they stand before you again with a new t-shirt and a

dream but Big E. starts trying to sing again. Woods and Kofi think he's been sipping on something but now there's an opportunity. The fans have a chance to have their voices heard and it's all about this New Day bike. They're riding it all the way down the Road to Wrestlemania and...that's it. There's no followup to it and we're done.

We recap Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns. Strowman wants competition and has attacked Reigns a few times so here's the big showdown.

Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns' shoes are white on the bottom and it's very distracting. Is he supposed to be a white feet babyface? Strowman shoves him into the corner to start but Reigns smiles at a shot to the mouth. A clothesline puts Strowman over the top but he pulls Reigns outside and sends him into the steps. Strowman gets in a spinebuster to start in on the ribs and a huge beal sends Reigns flying.

Roman can't get him in a fireman's carry so Strowman grabs his own Samoan drop. A splash sets up a chinlock and they head outside again with Strowman loading up the announcers' table. That goes nowhere and Strowman goes shoulder first into the post to give Reigns his first real opening. The Samoan drop gets two but Strowman pops back up with the powerbomb into a faceplant for two of his own. A missed charge sends Strowman outside though and he comes up holding his knee.

Reigns gives chase (he's got the shoes for it) and gets powerslammed through the table for his efforts. Strowman can't follow up because of the knee though and Reigns gets in a spear for two. Some Superman Punches stagger Braun again but he punches Reigns down (fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!"). Braun goes up (Cole: "GET DOWN FROM THERE STROWMAN!") but misses a top rope splash, setting up a spear to give Reigns the pin at 17:13.

Rating: B+. I'm very split on this one because it's a heck of a match but WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THE POINT IN BUILDING STROWMAN UP LIKE THAT TO HAVE HIM LOSE HERE??? That's the big shine taken away from Strowman for the sake of another chorus of groaning from the

crowd because HAHA REIGNS WINS AGAIN. This actually sucked the life out of me and that's hard to do after a great match. Yes it was great because they let Reigns be a superhero (with white shoes) but there was no reason for Reigns to win clean here, period.

Foley tells Samoa Joe to stay out of the main event or face the consequences.

We recap Bayley vs. Charlotte. Bayley won the title last month and Charlotte is getting her pay per view rematch. The idea is Bayley can win on Raw but Charlotte always wins when the lights are on bright.

Women's Title: Bayley vs. Charlotte

Bayley is defending and Charlotte steps in front of Dana Brooke, much to Dana's chagrin. Charlotte takes her to the mat for an early two and Bayley gets the same off La Majistral. They head outside with Bayley grabbing a hurricanrana off the apron, followed by a high crossbody for two. Bayley gets caught in the ropes though and Charlotte drops a knee to take over. We hit the figure four necklock followed by a legdrop to give Charlotte two.

We're in a rather slow pace here but Charlotte picks it up a bit with the moonsault for two. Bayley pops right back up and gets in a belly to back suplex for a near fall of her own. It's off to the Tree of Woe with Bayley COMPLETELY missing the springboard elbow to the point where neither the fans nor the announcers reacted to it. The thing really was that bad.

They both head to the corner and I don't see this ending well. Charlotte knocks her back into the ring but Bayley is right there with a forearm to the head to set up a much better looking hurricanrana. Now it's Bayley going up for a top rope elbow and another near fall as this is already starting to get better. Charlotte kicks the knee out but can't hook the Figure Four just yet.

Bayley is sent into the barricade but here's Sasha Banks to break up the moonsault. The distraction lets Bayley get in the Bayley to

Belly on the floor (it's not clear if she saw Sasha) but Charlotte gets in a small package with a handful of tights. Sasha tells the ref though and there's no count, allowing another Bayley to Belly to finish Charlotte off at 16:42.

Rating: C+. The tights thing is fine but there was no reason for Banks to be down there in the first place. It certainly feels like we're planting the seeds for a heel turn though as Banks came out there when she wasn't needed (it's not like Bayley was done or anything) and cheated. I'm not sure why it wasn't a DQ and it's a very lame way to have Charlotte lose her first pay per view title match.

Bayley points at the sign and Sasha cheers her on.

We recap Seth Rollins and HHH's segment on Raw.

We recap Goldberg vs. Kevin Owens. Goldberg beat Brock Lesnar at Survivor Series and now he's the #1 contender. Owens is just kind of there but he's cranked up the evil in recent weeks so there's some doubt to this one.

Universal Title: Kevin Owens vs. Goldberg

Owens is defending. Goldberg gets a nice pop but Owens gets a louder one when his music hits (though it dies very quickly). Owens bails to the floor before the bell and it's now 11:00, meaning a show with a JINDER MAHAL match added is getting an overrun. Kevin gets to the apron two more times and bails again both times. Owens finally gets in, Jericho comes out for a distraction, spear, Jackhammer, new champion in 22 seconds.

I'm not even mad really. Everyone and their mother knew Goldberg was getting the title here and defending it against Lesnar at Wrestlemania (because of course) but that makes it worse in a way. The whole "GOLDBERG IS STILL UNSTOPPABLE" thing was fun once but much like giving the Rock the title in 2013, it feels completely unnecessary. Tell me how Goldberg vs. Lesnar is better with the title on the line. If you can somehow make that work, this makes sense. Unfortunately, that's simply not the case and it makes for a

very uninteresting Wrestlemania main event. At least there was a distraction though, which does help.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a great, great example of a show where the booking completely overshadows the wrestling (which ranged from Raw levels to very, very good). Look at the last hour and fifteen minutes. Reigns wins clean, Bayley wins in a booking decision that makes Charlotte the underdog and Goldberg is now World Champion after having wrestled less than two minutes in twelve years. I don't know if Goldberg is capable of wrestling a long match (it would honestly surprise me given the circumstances) but can you imagine if they do this at Wrestlemania with the prices people are paying for those seats? This could be your main event? Goldberg vs. Lesnar going 90 seconds?

The rest of the show really wasn't anything noteworthy and a lot of this felt like it could have happened on Raw. Other than that Charlotte's pay per view loss and the title change, what felt like it belonged on a pay per view? Fastlane really didn't need to be a pay per view but we have to have something to get those free subscriptions right? Bad night, though check out Reigns vs. Strowman and the Cruiserweight match.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Sami Zayn – Koquina Clutch

Anderson and Gallows b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Running knee to Amore

Sasha Banks b. Nia Jax – Rollup

Cesaro b. Jinder Mahal – Pop up uppercut

Big Show b. Rusev – KO Punch

Neville b. Jack Gallagher – Red Arrow

Roman Reigns b. Braun Strowman – Spear

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Goldberg b. Kevin Owens – Jackhammer

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Main Event – March 2, 2017: Take a Lesson From TNA

Main Event

Date: March 2, 2017

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, R-Truth

It's a month away from Wrestlemania and that means it's time to watch some of the talent who has little chance of making it to the main shows more often than not. Raw has been up and down lately and I'm not sure why some of the bigger names from around here (work with me) hasn't been bumped up to jobbers to the stars status on the big show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sin Cara vs. Bo Dallas

They trade some quick takedowns to start until Cara scores with his springboard elbow to the jaw. It's WAY too early for the Swanton though and Cara has to settle for a running flip dive off the apron. Dallas sends him into the apron for a near countout, followed by his elevated swinging neckbreaker for two. He charges into raised boots

in the corner though and the Swanton gives Cara the pin at 3:59.

Rating: D+. So much for Dallas being ready to move up to the main roster. I really don't get how they decide the winners on this show as it really does feel like there's no particular rhyme or reason to almost anything they do. Dallas is one of the regular big winners on this show and now he's losing clean to Sin Cara in just a few minutes. TNA's bad days had more consistent booking than this show. To Raw!

Here's Goldberg to get things going. He thanks the fans for their chants but gets straight to the point: he's winning the title at Fastlane with his son cheering him on. This brings out Kevin Owens to say what he really thinks about Goldberg. When he got to this company, Owens promised to grab this company by the throat and show WWE what he was really about.

Then he beat John Cena in his first match, followed by beating Dean Ambrose, AJ Styles, Seth Rollins and the Big Dog himself, Roman Reigns. Now why should Goldberg be any different? Goldberg likes the speech and wants to fight right now but Owens doesn't think Green Bay deserves to see him fight. They'll fight on Sunday and the Goldberg chants die.

Back to Raw, which we never left!

We get a long video on the long history of HHH making Seth Rollins. They've been together for years but then Rollins hurt his knee which HHH referred to as dropping the ball. Rollins is injured but the question is can he get back in time.

Here's Rollins, on crutches, for a sitdown interview with Corey Graves. He doesn't know where he is mentally now but it seems that he's in Chicago because we get a freaking CM PUNK chant. Thankfully it's loudly booed and Seth can get back to the point. He's not sure if he can continue at this point and as of right now, the doctors haven't cleared him for Wrestlemania.

This brings out HHH and Samoa Joe with the former talking about how Rollins has no idea what he's doing here. HHH knows Rollins isn't

going to Wrestlemania because that's how he is. It was HHH who handed him the title and then Rollins bit the hand that feeds him. Rollins didn't mind reaping the benefits along the way but now he's treating HHH like this.

Seth needs to make the right decision and not come to Wrestlemania because HHH is done playing with him. If Rollins shows up there, it's the last thing he'll ever do in a WWE ring. HHH goes to leave but Seth cuts him off and says he'll be in Orlando and it's going to be the last thing HHH ever does.

Ariya Daivari vs. Gran Metalik

Daivari takes him down by the arm and we're off to a break thirty seconds in. Back with Ariya missing a splash in the corner and getting caught with a middle rope hurricanrana. They trade some hard strikes to the face before Daivari grabs a Rainmaker of all things for two. Why is it for two? BECAUSE THE RAINMAKER IS JUST A CLOTHESLINE! Not that it matters as the Metalik Driver is good for the pin at 6:38. Not enough to rate but this was nothing too special anyway. I do like Metalik though.

And now, the grand finale.

It's time for the contract signing with Mick Foley running the show. Strowman doesn't think much of him and says he would have respected him back in the day when Foley was competition. Foley finally snaps and yells at Strowman, basically threatening to get physical because he's still a legend, even if he won't be the General Manager that much longer.

Cue Reigns to start the fight, which quickly heads into the crowd. Strowman beats on him even more until Reigns spears him through the barricade and a security guard in the process. Back in and Reigns stops to sign the contract but gets sent into the corner so hard that the top rope breaks. Strowman leaves and Reigns signs to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. If you ignore the Main Event exclusive stuff, this was a good go home show for Fastlane. Unfortunately that's only

kind of what this show is supposed to be, though I'm assuming the short second break was there for the sake of the long HHH vs. Rollins segment. This really does serve as a good recap of Raw but if you've already watched that show, there's no need to ever watch Main Event.

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205 Live – February 28, 2017: The B Plot

205 Live

Date: February 28, 2017

Location: Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul Minnesota

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Corey Graves, Austin Aries

We're five days away from Fastlane and Neville defending the Cruiserweight Title against Jack Gallagher. There's really not much else going on though and that's not a good thing. This show needs some more stories to really get going but at least we have a great champion on top. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Jack Gallagher vs. Neville. This feud needs to end in a hurry as it feels like little more than filler,

which to be fair, it is.

Gallagher is ready for Neville's Fastlane address and thinks he'll be brooding about the title reign and say that his reign will never end. We'll see about that on Sunday.

Opening sequence.

Noam Dar vs. Lince Dorado

Before we get going, someone brings Alicia Fox a bouquet of flowers, much to Dar's annoyance. Dar tries to take him to the mat but Dorado speeds things up and hits a Lionsault press for two. As Dar takes him to the mat and works on the arm, Alicia is actually eating the flowers. We hit a chinlock as Rich Swann is watching in the back. Now the fans want flowers as Dorado gets in a hurricanrana and a belly to belly suplex. Dorado springboards into a Stunner for two but misses a dive off the top. One heck of a kick to the head gives Dar the pin at 4:01.

Rating: C-. This was fine as a way to push a midcard angle (good idea) and the flowers thing could likely set up Dar's next feud. I'm not sure how interesting that's going to be as there's a good chance Fox is going to leave him anyway. Of course Fox eats flowers so it might not be the most easy to predict person in the world.

Post match Dar says he sent the flowers but I sense a ruse.

Austin Aries is in the ring to interview Akira Tozawa. Regarding turning down Brian Kendrick's offer of being a mentor, Tozawa wants to be his own man. We get a look back at Kendrick's "lessons" and Tozawa wants to fight right now. This is followed by a series of weird noises, which Graves calls a war cry.

Cue Kendrick (with some buggy eyes) to say he has a plan and no desire to fight. What makes Tozawa think that Kendrick is already willing to get in the ring with him? Who does Tozawa think he is? Tozawa starts to talk but Kendrick tells him to learn English first, like these Minnesotans need to do. This feud started off as nothing with someone I really don't care about but I'm actually getting into it. Well done.

Tony Nese/Drew Gulak/Ariya Daivari vs. Mustafa Ali/TJ Perkins/Cedric Alexander

Nese slams Mustafa to start but it's off to Cedric for a bit better luck. The good guys start working on the arm with TJ bending it back

like a slot machine (thanks for the analogy Mauro). Nese gets pulled down into a cross armbreaker and it's a stream of people being sent outside so the good guys can load up their dives. TJ gets pulled outside for a beating and we settle down to Daivari (from nearby Minneapolis) grabbing a neckbreaker. It's off to Gulak for a Gory Stretch before Daivari adds one heck of a clothesline.

TJ finally gets out and makes the hot tag to Ali but Gulak grabs him in a torture rack for a slam. Everything breaks down and everyone but Ali and Gulak wind up on the floor. Mustafa hits the inverted 450 for two as Ariya puts the boot on the ropes. Nese comes back in for the German suplex into the corner but can't follow up. The Detonation Kick rocks Daivari, only to have Gulak crotch Perkins on the top. Nese adds the running knee in the corner for the pin on Perkins at 10:16.

Rating: C+. So Nese is on the good list again? We can push him again now? This was fun but a bit too sloppy for my taste. These guys don't really have anything going on right now and are now more like flashbacks to the original cruiserweight division on Raw, which really isn't a good thing. They could go for some more mic time to give us a reason to care about them too.

Austin Aries video.

Here's Neville for an extended chat. Neville takes credit for all the good things on 205 Live but the fans are completely ungrateful. The fans would rather cheer for a sideshow act like Gallagher. They're the reason for his upcoming destruction on Sunday and there's nothing that can stop that.

Cue Gallagher to say this sounds like a meltdown. He offers Neville some tea and biscuits so you know what the fans are going to be chanting now. Neville says this is his ring but Gallagher thinks it belongs to the people. That means it's time for Neville to leave so the fight is on. The headbutt and some dropkicks both in and out of the ring send Neville into the crowd to wrap things up.

Overall Rating: C+. I really like Gallagher but he's just not on this level yet. It's pretty clear that Aries is getting the Wrestlemania title shot (or at least he certainly should) and that makes for some rather dull shows leading up to the announcement. Neville is a great champion and a win over Aries would look great but it's not easy to watch Gallagher, who is very talented, have no

chance in the upcoming match. The rest of the show was fine but the only other interesting story is Kendrick vs. Tozawa. An extra story is a good step though and things could be getting better, albeit somewhat slowly.

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania I: At Least It's Not The Colossal Tussle

I had to get here eventually and it feels great to be back. These shows are the first reviews I ever did as I thought it would be fun to look back at every show leading up to Wrestlemania XXXIII. Little did I know that I would spend four years doing them and wind up going on to do every major PPV of all time. That's appropriate as this is the birth of the modern PPV (Yes Starrcade came first and no, it wasn't the same kind of show. Well not at first at least) and the biggest event in wrestling.

Wrestlemania started off as little more than a house show with mainstream press. Fueled by the Rock N Wrestling Connection which saw wrestlers appearing in pop and rock music videos (thanks to the rise of MTV), the show was the follow up to a pair of shows called the Brawl to End it All and the War to Settle the Score.

The show, featuring Hulk Hogan and Mr. T. teaming up in the main event, was a smash hit and has since spawned an unthinkable 32 followup editions. Wrestlemania paved the way for the modern day pay per view and is by far the biggest show of the year for the WWE. We're going to examine these shows one at a time and one per day until we reach Wrestlemania XXXIII this year in Orlando. Let's get to it.

Wrestlemania I

Date: March 31, 1985

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 19,121

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jesse Ventura

We begin here at a show that certainly won't be like the rest of these. This show is far more about the spectacle than the major matches which is shown in the main event. Our big match tonight is Hulk Hogan and Mr. T. teaming up to face Paul Orndorff and Roddy Piper in a grudge match. Yeah the first show doesn't even have the world title on the line. Today, there are at least two world title matches per show. Anyway, this is where it all began so let's get to it.

The opening video is a bunch of shots of New York City with the WWF logo and some pictures of the wrestlers coming in later. The celebrities for tonight's show (headlined by Muhammad Ali) are also shown.

Here's Mean Gene to sing the Star Spangled Banner.

Tito Santana says he's ready for the undefeated Executioner and he's going to teach the newcomer a thing or two about the big leagues.

The Executioner says he's going after Santana's injured leg. So much

for secrecy.

Tito Santana vs. Executioner

Executioner is Buddy Rose (of Blow Away fame) under a mask. Tito is WAY over here in MSG so he was a good choice to open things up. We start with a crisscross before Tito dropkicks Executioner out to the floor. Back in and Santana hooks a headlock to take Executioner to the mat as we're still waiting on that promised leg work. Tito charges into a boot in the corner and Executioner takes him down with a knee to the ribs. A spinning toe hold is easily escaped so Executioner goes after the other leg. So which one is injured in the first place?

Tito shrugs him off and the masked guy hides in the corner. Since it's a corner that Tito is looking straight at, the hiding doesn't go all that well and Tito slugs him down. Executioner comes back with a slam and goes up, only to be slammed right back down. A Santana splash hits knees though and we get to the knee work. That work consists of one cannonball down onto it before Tito kicks him to the floor. Back in and the forearm sets up the Figure Four to make Santana the first winner in the history of Wrestlemania.

Rating: C-. This wasn't too bad and the crowd reacted well to Santana, but Executioner was just a guy there to be evil. For an opening match this was a pretty good idea but for a match in general it was pretty lame stuff. Then again they have no idea what they're doing at this point so it's understandable.

S.D. Jones says he's ready for King Kong Bundy. I see why I've never heard him talk other than this show. He's going to get down for Bundy.

Bundy says Jones needs to be ready for the Avalanche and the five count.

S. D. Jones vs. King Kong Bundy

Here's an infamous one. Jones is a guy from the old days who is here to make the fans feel good I guess. The match lasts 23 seconds with Bundy shoving Jones into the corner, splashing him three times and

getting the pin. According to the WWF the time was 9 seconds, which doesn't even make bad sense for them.

Matt Borne, the future Doink the Clown, says he's ready to beat a worldwide star in Ricky Steamboat. Steamboat's problem is that he's too nice of a guy. That's likely true.

Steamboat says this is the biggest card ever and he's here to develop his meanness. You don't hear this often, but Steamboat failed miserably in that regard.

Matt Borne vs. Ricky Steamboat

Borne is the Maniac so I have another name to use. Steamboat is looking chiseled here. I've never seen him so ripped up and it's a strange look on him. Also he isn't called the Dragon yet which is even odder to hear. Ricky speeds things up to start and chops Borne down before hitting a chinlock only about 40 seconds in.

Off to a headlock instead with Steamboat backflipping over Borne twice with the second time resulting in an atomic drop. Back to the headlock which is shifted into a front facelock but Borne comes back with a snap suplex for two. Ricky is like dude I'm Ricky Steamboat and suplexes Borne down, followed by a swinging neckbreaker. A shoulder block puts Borne down and the cross body ends this near squash clean.

Rating: D+. Eh it's Steamboat in the 80s so how bad can this be? Ricky wasn't a huge star yet but he was rapidly becoming known as something special. It would be another year or so before he started tearing the house down on a regular basis and started having his masterpieces. Borne would be a lot better when he had a gimmick to go with his skills.

The Sammartinos are ready for Johnny V and Brutus Beefcake. Bruno threatens Johnny V is he tries to get involved.

David Sammartino vs. Brutus Beefcake

Sammartino was the son of a legend and had a good way into the business as a result. He had a good look on top of that, but he had one thing holding him back: he had no talent. His "career" was

really just a way to keep Bruno around for a few more years to draw in some extra crowds and that's the only reason this match is happening. Beefcake is new at this point and is nowhere near what he would become so this is going to be pretty bad.

David's height doesn't help him either as he's about 5'8 or so. They head to the mat to start and Brutus has to bail to the floor for a breather. Back in and Sammartino takes it right back to the mat with a front facelock. A legdrop to the arm has Beefcake in trouble and it's time to talk to the managers a bit. Beefcake comes back with a headlock takeover but David grabs the legs to work them over a bit. Off to a leg lock as we keep things very basic so far. Brutus fights up with his leg seeming fine all of a sudden. He drops some forearms to David's back and there's a hard whip into the corner by Beefcake. David comes back with a backdrop and they slug it out a bit. Sammartino strikes like his daddy. A suplex gets two for David but Brutus sends him to the floor. The managers get into a fight and both guys run in for a double DQ.

Rating: D+. This is a hard one to grade as it's a competitive match and not completely terrible, but the problem is how low level of quality this was. Neither guy was terrible but you could tell they were trying which makes a big difference. This could have been WAY worse but it just wasn't that good in the first place.

I forgot to mention how the interviews are being done. Alfred Hayes is standing in the entrance with the ring behind him as the guys come by him for their matches. The interviews are recorded earlier in the day though so it's kind of odd.

Anyway Valentine says he's tough and leaner than usual.

JYD says he's going to take a bite out of Valentine. So he's promising to cheat? Good to know.

Intercontinental Title: Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine

Dog cranks on the arm to start and punches him in the shoulder ala Marciano. A punch to the face takes Valentine down and a headbutt sends the champion (Greg in case you're not familiar with this era)

to the floor. Valentine tries his luck at the arm now and pounds away with some forearms to the back of the head. I'm not sure if that should hurt the Dog or not.

The champion goes after the leg now with what looks to be the start of a half crab but he never turns Dog over. A kind of DDT on the leg has the Dog in trouble again and there's a headbutt between the legs. Dog breaks up the Figure Four and hits a headbutt to stagger the champ some more. Jimmy Hart tries to interfere but Dog causes Valentine to blast him in the head instead. Valentine grabs a fast rollup and puts his feet on the ropes for the pin.

Rating: D+. I'm getting tired of using that rating but this is what the matches keep coming out as: not terrible but nothing good at all. Valentine would get back to his current feud with Tito Santana very soon with the title changing hands pretty soon if I remember properly. Dog was there as more of a fun character than a serious threat so this was fine.

Speaking of Santana, here he is to tell the referee what happened. The referee restarts the match but Valentine walks out for the countout without ever getting back in. That's just building Santana vs. Valentine for later.

Iron Sheik and Nikolai Volkoff say their countries are better than America. Where's my pitchfork when I need to run freaks like these off?

The US Express say they're ready.

Tag Titles: US Express vs. Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Sheik

The Express is Barry Windham and Mike Rotundo and they're defending tonight. A little trivia for you: the song Real American was originally used for the two of them but Hogan wound up using it instead. The heels do their whole Russian national anthem and Iran/Russia #1 deal before the match. Rotundo and Sheik start things off with the Iranian hooking a headlock. A dropkick puts Sheik down and Mike grabs a headlock.

Off to Barry who avoids double teaming and causes the challengers to

collide. Back to Rotundo to work over Nikolai with an elbow drop getting two. Windham comes in off the top with a shot to the arm and Rotundo does the same thing. Sheik suplexes Mike down for two as the foreigners take over. Nikolai drops him throat first across the throat and the USA chant starts up.

A sunset flip gets a quick two for Mike but it's back to Sheik for an abdominal stretch. That doesn't last long though as Mike hiptosses out of it and it's off to Barry via the hot tag. The bulldog (Barry's finisher at the time) takes Volkoff out as everything breaks down. In the melee, Sheik hits Windham in the back with the cane for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C. This was a better match than we've seen so far with the fans getting way into the whole USA vs. foreigners thing. The title change was there only so something historic could happen and the Express got the belts back about two and a half months later. They would split soon after that with both guys heading to the NWA.

Sheik and Volkoff said they've proven their superiority now.

Intermission which is edited out of the home video releases.

Big John Studd says he'll slam Andre and keep the money.

Big John Studd vs. Andre the Giant

This is a bodyslam challenge with some special stipulations: if Andre wins, he gets \$15,000 but if Studd wins, Andre has to retire. Studd charges in to start but is immediately chopped back and he bails to the floor. Back in and Andre punches him in the head and rams him in the corner with all of his weight. Studd goes for a slam and Andre is just like dude please. The fans chant for a slam as Andre puts on a bearhug. That goes on for a good while until Andre shifts over to a facelock. Apparently if this goes to the time limit, Andre has to retire. Andre kicks at the leg for a bit and casually slams Studd for the win. It's as quick as it sounds.

Rating: D. This was pretty terrible but the fans loved Andre and he had to be on here. Also this was part of a big feud as Andre and Studd cut Andre's hair a few weeks before this. The match was pretty

weak but then again what are you going to expect from these two guys with Andre's body starting to fail on him.

Andre hands a few bucks out to the fans but Heenan steals the bag and runs off.

Andre says he doesn't care about the money because he's better than Studd and now he's proven it. He isn't retiring anytime soon either.

Cyndi Lauper and Wendi Richter want Wendi's title back. Richter is MAD here and has a nearly man's voice.

Moolah and Lelani Kai are ready to keep the title.

Women's Title: Lelani Kai vs. Wendi Richter

The big deal here is that Cyndi Lauper, pop superstar of her day, is in Richter's corner. Moolah, as in the woman who cost Richter the title a few weeks ago, is in Kai's corner. The camera is on a wide shot for the start of Richter's music (Girls Just Wanna Have Fun) and the whole crowd literally gets up at once. Cool visual. For reasons that continue to elude me, the slow motion shot of Richter and Lauper running through the back and into the arena is a famous clip.

They both pull hair to start and we're clearly in a normal women's match here. By that I mean neither girl is that good in the ring and their moves are really overblown. Richter cranks on the arm for a bit until Kai pulls her hair to take over. Now the champion works on the arm for a bit and Richter is in trouble. More hair pulling ensues until Richter puts on a body scissors.

Kai charges into a boot in the corner and Richter shoves the referee away like a jerk. Moolah chokes away at Wendi in the corner until Lauper comes over to make the save. Richter hits a kind of reverse AA and a splash for two. Lelani hits a backbreaker for two before going up for a cross body, only to have Wendi roll through for the pin and the title.

Rating: D. These two just didn't work that well, but that would be the case for almost any women's match back in the 80s. The girls were out there basically for a spectacle or in this case the pop

culture connection that was driving the era. Richter was a HUGE star at this point, occasionally main eventing house shows when Hogan was in another city.

Richter and Lauper dance around the ring in celebration in another semi-famous scene.

Richter and Lauper celebrate in the back as well.

We introduce the celebrities for the main event. The guest ring announcer is Billy Martin, former manager of the Yankees. He introduces Liberace as guest timekeeper, accompanied by four Rockettes. They all get in the ring and do the famous kicks which you'll see in the occasional highlight package. The guest referee is someone you may have heard of: Muhammad Ali. Jose Torres, another boxer, is on the floor as well.

Hulk Hogan/Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper/Paul Orndorff

Piper comes out with the full New York Pipe and Drums band while Hogan and T come out to Eye of the Tiger. Advantage Hogan/T. Piper and Orndorff have Bob Orton as their second while Hogan/T have Jimmy Snuka. Advantage Hogan/T. This is looking kind of one sided isn't it? Oh and Pat Patterson is the inside referee while Ali is the outside referee. The heels all hug and we're ready to go.

Orndorff and Hogan get things going but Piper tags in before there's any contact. Therefore T wants to fight Piper and they immediately head to the mat. T and Piper do some amateur stuff and T actually lasts long enough for a standoff. We get some staring until T hooks Piper in an airplane spin. Everything breaks down and Ali gets in to help break it up. Orton and Snuka try to get in as well but Ali glares Orton down.

Things break down again and the heels get rammed together until we get down to Hogan vs. Piper. Hulk rams Piper's head into the mat over and over until it's back to T. Hogan offers his knee as something to ram Piper's head into and it's back to the champion to send Piper to the outside. Orndorff jumps Hogan from behind and knocks him outside where Roddy blasts him with a chair.

Paul chokes away from the apron until T charges in for the save. Pat Patterson has to pull T off and you know he enjoys this in some way. A double atomic drop puts Hogan down and Orndorff hits a vertical suplex. Roddy comes back in to get in his punches and knee shots followed by an Orndorff top rope elbow to the back of Hulk's neck for two. Paul goes up again but misses the knee drop and there's the hot tag to T.

Orndorff and T brawl on the mat for a bit until Mr. gets in trouble via a Piper front facelock. That goes nowhere though as T stands up and makes the tag with no effort to be seen. Hogan pounds away but walks into a belly to back suplex. Orton and Snuka get in the ring for no apparent reason and as the referee calms things down, Orton comes in off the top with the cast but hits Orndorff by mistake to give Hogan the pin.

Rating: B-. Is it great? Not even close, but the point of this match was the crowd reacting to it rather than the match itself. It's easily the best match of the night and while the only question coming into tonight was who was getting the fall. This was exactly what the fans wanted and that's what this was supposed to be about. Nice main event here.

Piper and Orton bail but the good guys let Orndorff leave without beating on him even more.

We recap the ending of the main event.

Hogan, T and Snuka talk about winning.

Credits end the show. That's a sign of the past.

Overall Rating: D+. First and foremost let me make something clear: the overall rating for this show means jack because the whole thing was there for the spectacle and the matches were an afterthought other than the main event. This show was a huge success and kickstarted what is known as the Golden Era, so I don't think you can call it anything but a good show. It's also on the list of shows that every fan has to see at least once, just so they can say they've seen it. Not great quality, but incredible historical

significance.

Ratings Comparison

Tito Santana vs. Executioner

Original: C

Redo: C-

King Kong Bundy vs. S.D. Jones

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Ricky Steamboat vs. Matt Borne

Original: C-

Redo: D+

David Sammartino vs. Brutus Beefcake

Original: D-

Redo: D+

Junkyard Dog vs. Greg Valentine

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Nikolai Volkoff/Iron Shiek vs. U.S. Express

Original: B-

Redo: C

Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd

Original: D+

Redo: D

Wendi Richter vs. Lelani Kai

Original: B

Redo: D

Hulk Hogan/Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper/Paul Orndorff

Original: B

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: D+

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/08/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-1-just-a-big-house-show/>

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