

Smackdown – July 23, 2015: See? You Can Do It

Smackdown

Date: July 23, 2015

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso

This is an interesting show as Raw went off the air with a closed story for a change. The big story is of course the announcement of Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar....we're probably at V or VI over the years now. There's no chance either guy is on this show so we should get some new stuff set up for Summerslam instead. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jerry Lawler isn't here tonight, possibly due to his brother passing away this week.

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Sheamus has seen Dean's insanity but thinks Dean is just wanting a way out. Well tonight there's no way around the beating that he's going to receive from the next World Champion. Dang man Cena is here? You don't expect that on a Smackdown. Dean thinks Sheamus looks stupid and those are fighting words.

It's a brawl to start with Sheamus getting knocked to the floor where he easily stops a dive with a forearm to the head. Sheamus goes after him again but eats a tornado DDT onto the floor. We take a break and come back with Sheamus breaking up another tornado DDT attempt and starting in on the knee, which was hurt a few weeks back so why not. A powerbomb gets two on Dean and it's time for a half crab.

Dean gets underneath Sheamus for the break and hits the rebound clothesline as the knee is suddenly fine. That stuff gets old fast but you get used to it after awhile. Now the suicide dive hits, followed by

the standing elbow drop but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Harper is standing on the announcers' table as well and Dean goes after him, only to walk into a Brogue Kick. Back in and another Brogue Kick gives Sheamus the pin at 11:33.

Rating: C. The match was your standard brawl but there's one thing I really liked: this opened the show. Not a promo to set up the main event, not the same long promo that we've heard a dozen times this month, not trying to figure out if we're supposed to hate the Authority or be so happy that a little ray of Stephanie's sunshine chased the blues away again, and not a five minute recap of what we saw last week. It was a wrestling match to open the show and that's a very nice change of pace.

We get a comic book style recap of Stardust vs. Neville from last week.

Neville doesn't think Stardust is a supervillain because Stardust is a coward. You can't stop what you can't contain and the Altitude Era is upon us. Neville leaves and Stardust pops up on the video screen to laugh.

Neville vs. Adam Rose

Feeling out process to start with Rose hitting a quick snap suplex and putting on an early chinlock. Adam busts out a middle rope hurricanrana to send Neville outside but his suicide dive is countered with a forearm to the face. Some kicks and a moonsault set up the Red Arrow for the pin at 3:05.

Rating: D+. There wasn't much here but it's always good to see Neville getting in the ring. I know a feud with Stardust isn't much but it's nice to see him having a feud at all. This could lead somewhere for him with the superhero idea as it's one of the easiest things in the world for a heel to go after. Rose looked decent there too.

Neville poses when Stardust comes on the screen with a party hat on and a noisemaker in his mouth. He says even the sharpest arrows come crashing down. His hand is touching your hand (Hard Times reference) so be his hero.

Video on Sasha Banks where she talks about being the Boss and debuting on Raw as part of the three way feud.

Here's King Barrett to say he's the most important thing in WWE. He defeated three names in less than 24 hours and then defeated R-Truth again this past Sunday. That win told everyone that you better hit him right between the eyes because he'll take your head off. This was an old school promo with Barrett just coming out and talking about who he is and why you should care about him. I'll take that over another loss or stupid feud any day.

Here's Kevin Owens to talk about people chanting TAP OWENS TAP at him. Yeah he tapped, but Owens gave Cena the fight of his entire career. However, he isn't the one with the motto of NEVER GIVE UP. His motto is more along the lines of "live to fight another day." Owens has no issues with turning on Rusev this Monday because Rusev was too busy trying to figure out which Lana he wants to get to second base with. Cue Rusev and it's time to fight.

Rusev vs. Kevin Owens

I'm digging these heel vs. heel matches because they make sense to the story and the heels aren't buddies just because they're heels. Summer is once again dressed as Lana. Rusev goes right after Owens to start and we take a break in about thirty seconds. Back with Owens elbowing him in the face and punching the Russian out of Rusev. Owens avoids a charge in the corner and nails a superkick, followed by the Cannonball for no cover.

Instead it's a Vader Bomb for two as Owens keeps adding new stuff to his arsenal. It's chinlock time before a Codebreaker of all things gets two more on Rusev. Another chinlock slows things down until Rusev fights back with strikes and a spinning belly to back suplex. The spinwheel kick stuns Owens again, all the way to the point that he sticks his chin out for the running superkick. Rusev loads up the Accolade but Owens rolls outside for the countout at 9:39.

Rating: C. This worked while it lasted and I like that Owens' character is now someone who doesn't want to fight after talking a big game. However, this goes against the formula that made him a big deal down in

NXT. He's talented enough to make it work, but I'd like to see him beat someone up again just because he can.

Cesaro is fired up about getting to face Seth Rollins tonight because it's all about loving this business. He would drive hundreds of miles for a handshake and missed his best friend's wedding but that's what this is all about. It's time to prove that the American dream is alive and well. Owens comes up to make fun of Cesaro, saying that Cesaro took Cena to the limit but Owens beat him. Kevin says Cesaro abandoned his family but Cesaro calls him the master of abandoning because of all the matches he's walked out on. Owens is on his way to catering so Cesaro warns him not to choke like he did against Cena. Good stuff here.

Naomi/Sasha Banks vs. Bella Twins

Nikki takes Naomi to the mat to start and I think the Bellas are actually faces here. It's off to Brie, who eats a clothesline from Naomi, allowing for a tag to Sasha. Nikki comes back in for a headscissors with pushups before Brie dropkicks Sasha for two. BRIE MODE is broken up by Tamina because the power of a scream can be devastating. Brie gets pulled outside for some stomping and we take a break.

Back with Naomi stomping a mudhole in Brie before Sasha sends her back into the corner. The double knees get two as this is a very standard formula Divas tag, which you really don't see that often. Naomi puts on a chinlock as Nikki plays cheerleader on the apron. To be fair I like the Bellas as faces more, but could we please get a reason why we're supposed to care about them now, especially when it was supposed to be such a huge moment when Brie tapped out on Sunday?

Back to Naomi for a Codebreaker (with feet instead of knees) for two before slapping on another chinlock. A BRIE MODE chant gets Brie to fight up and she finally dropkicks Naomi to the floor. Nikki comes in for her clotheslines and an Alabama Slam to Naomi. Sasha breaks up a Rack Attack as everything breaks down. Brie and Sasha fight outside, leaving Nikki to Rack Attack Naomi for the pin at 13:14.

Rating: C+. Considering this was a Bellas match, I was kind of shocked at how much I liked it. The key thing for me here: this didn't feel like a

Divas match but a match that Divas in it. I could see any male wrestlers having this same match and liking it just as much, which is a major change for this division. The Bellas turning again for no apparent reason (again) is annoying but you have to accept it at this point.

The Tough Enough cast talks about why Jake Gyllenhaal is tough.

Long recap of Undertaker vs. Lesnar on Raw.

Cesaro vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Rollins bails to the floor to start before easily countering a wristlock into a gorilla press. Back up and Seth kicks Cesaro to the floor for a suicide dive as we take a break. As you might expect, we come back to Rollins holding a chinlock but Cesaro powers out and throws some suplexes. A slam into a suplex (cool move) gets two more on Rollins as the announcers compare Cesaro to Chuck Norris.

Seth comes back again with a low superkick for two but Cesaro changes things up again with a running dropkick for a near fall. Saxton: "Is there anything Cesaro can't do?" Uh, get a pin? The buckle bomb (with a nice throw) staggers Cesaro again but he counters the Pedigree into the Sharpshooter. Rollins is too close to the ropes though so it's off to a Crossface in the middle of the ring. That doesn't work either so it's a VERY high Swiss Death for two more. The Swing is broken up by a poke to the eye though, setting up the Pedigree to give Seth the pin at 13:31.

Rating: B. Good match here and I like the idea of a heel doing something as simple as poking his opponent in the eye. It doesn't have to be this big ref bump and interference ending that we always get, especially when there's something simple they can do like a thumb to the eye. Cesaro continues to be awesome and hopefully he goes somewhere instead of just being considered bulletproof when he isn't yet.

Owens comes out and gives Cesaro a Pop Up Powerbomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I liked this more than I've liked a Smackdown in a long time for one reason: this felt like a wrestling heavy show instead of the usual Raw supplement we get most of the time. The Divas got time,

the main event was good, and the worst match was barely long enough to rate. It's a good, fun show that let the wrestlers wrestle and advanced some midcard storylines. That's what a show like Smackdown should be if it's not going to be anywhere near Raw's level. Good use of the blue show this week.

Results

Sheamus b. Dean Ambrose – Brogue Kick

Neville b. Adam Rose – Red Arrow

Rusev b. Kevin Owens via countout

Bella Twins b. Naomi/Sasha Banks – Rack Attack to Naomi

Seth Rollins b. Cesaro – Pedigree

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NXT – July 22, 2015: Let's Get To It

NXT

Date: July 22, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Rich Brennan, Byron Saxton

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

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

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

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

Eva Marie vs. Cassie

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

Rating: D+. Well, she didn't bomb. The problem though is that's the only

standard Eva had to reach here. She didn't have to be anything great and while she could be good in the ring one day, there's always going to be a mark on her due to how she got into WWE. This could have been far worse, but it's like watching a Tough Enough rookie having their debut: after all this time, she's only up to average. It's a step up, but she had nowhere to go but up.

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

Baron Corbin vs. ???

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

Samoa Joe vs. Mike Rallis

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

Emma and Dana Brooke aren't worried about Bayley.

Bayley vs. Emma

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

A bulldog gets two but Dana offers a distraction so Emma can post the bad hand. Emma pulls on the fingers so hard you would think she was trying to steal them (but I'm sure she meant to pay for them). She cranks on both arms for a choke but Bayley comes back with ax handles to the chest. A

pull of the hair tie sets up a middle rope elbow to the jaw for two and the fans are right back with the BAYLEY chants. Dana tries to interfere again but gets ejected, setting up the Bayley to Belly (didn't it used to be the other way around?) for the pin at 5:37.

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

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

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

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

Vaudevillains vs. Angelo Dawkins/Sawyer Fulton

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

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

It's time for Balor and Owens to sign the contract for Takeover with Regal moderating. He talks about the largest audience in NXT history but

Owens comes out to cut him off. Before he can say or do anything though, here's Finn Balor to look like a star again, offering a very nice visual compared to Owens' brawler look. Balor goes to sign but Owens asks him how it feels to be champion. How does it feel to defend the title in the biggest main event in NXT history ("which takes place in BROOKLYN!")? And how does it feel to go in as the underdog.

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

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

Results

Eva Marie b. Cassie – Sliced Bread #2

Baron Corbin b. Jesus de Leon – End of Days

Samoa Joe b. Mike Rallis – Muscle Buster

Bayley b. Emma – Bayley to Belly

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

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Monday Night Raw – July 20, 2015: The Old and the Beautiful

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 20, 2015

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

As uneventful as Battleground seemed going into last night, a lot changed in the final moments. The Undertaker of all people returned to end the World Title match by attacking Brock Lesnar. The interesting point was that Rollins just disappeared after basically being squashed by Lesnar for the entire match. It should be interesting to see what happens as we head towards Summerslam. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at the end of the main event.

Here's Undertaker to open things up with the announcers listing off all of his accomplishments and making the entire moment feel like anything else. The fans don't seem to mind Undertaker's rather heelish actions last night, as anyone with a functioning brain could have predicted. Undertaker starts with a big line: streaks are made to be broken.

However, Lesnar has gone on for months about his greatest accomplishment.

Ever since he broke the Streak, Lesnar has bragged about it. You can't kill what won't die, and Undertaker will conquer what has yet to be conquered. Just like everyone else, be they man or beast, Brock Lesnar will rest in peace. This definitely wasn't a heel promo and it didn't need to be.

Since we haven't talked about them enough yet, we cut to the Authority who brags about how big a main event they have. Stephanie is ready to market things, but HHH thinks Brock should take the night off.

Cena/Orton/Cesaro vs. Rusev/Owens/Sheamus for the main event. Cesaro and Rusev getting those spots is a great sign.

Charlotte vs. Brie Bella

Team Bad is on commentary but before the match we have to get a quick recap of how Stephanie saved us all. Feeling out process to start with Charlotte knocking Brie to the floor but misses a dive. Back from a break with Brie working on the arm and kicking Charlotte square in the jaw. We get the YES Kicks to fire up the crowd, followed by a low dropkick for two. Brie hooks a chinlock for a good while before Charlotte starts firing off chops and a big boot to the face. Nikki's distraction doesn't work and a spear sets up the Figure Eight for the submission for Charlotte at 9:02.

Rating: C. Brie is fine if you keep things simple but Charlotte winning is definitely the right idea. It's starting to feel like the new girls are becoming a thing and that's a very good sign this early in their run. It's going to get annoying just sitting around waiting on the title match though, which seems to be what we're going to be doing until Nikki breaks the record.

HHH is on the phone with Heyman and tells Lesnar to take the night off. Heyman needs to grow a set and tell Lesnar to not show up tonight. Miz tries to interrupt and gets Big Show as a result.

Prime Time Players vs. Los Matadores

Non-title. Darren takes Diego into the corner to start and blasts him

with a spinning forearm. The masked men take over, despite the fans not sounding all that interested. Young snaps off a belly to belly suplex and it's off to Titus to clean house. Cue New Day for a distraction though, allowing Diego to hit a Backstabber on Titus for the pin at 4:04.

Rating: D. So not only is the feud continuing, but now we're getting the old distraction into a pin finish again? Also, can we please stop giving people wins over champions when it's not going to lead anywhere? This happened a few years back when Kofi pinned WWE Champion Randy Orton and then it went nowhere. If that's what you're going for, just have the champs win and then let it be a post match attack. Finally, if you want to build a team up, STOP HAVING THEM LOSE TO A NOTHING TEAM LIKE LOS MATADORES! That's not how you build up a match, especially when they're not even in the feud.

Big Show vs. Miz

Show chops Miz in the corner to start, as only Big Show can do. A slam sets up the middle rope elbow for the pin on Miz at 1:27. And he was supposed to get a title shot last night?

Show rants about how he's still around and tells Ryback to show up on Tough Enough tomorrow night for a brawl.

HHH and Stephanie want artwork made up for Lesnar vs. Undertaker when Heyman arrives. He's here to give Lesnar's response and nothing more, but the Authority isn't interested.

Back from a break with the roster meeting with the Authority. They want the entire locker room to keep Lesnar and Undertaker apart because they have to protect the Summerslam main event. There is WAY too much Authority tonight.

Here's Heyman to address the Summerslam main event. Brock isn't the World Champion right now, but why isn't he? It's not because Rollins out wrestled or out fought him or because Rollins survived a trip to Suplex City. It was all because of a yet again resurrected Undertaker, who can't get over losing the Streak to Brock Lesnar. Of course Heyman has hyped up the Streak being broken because why wouldn't he?

It's the biggest accomplishment of his career because no one else could ever do it. The Undertaker wants to face Brock Lesnar again at Summerslam, so let's make this personal. Heyman goes into full on promoter voice to rant about the Streak being broken. Undertaker may have sold his soul to the devil to get revenge but he belongs to Brock Lesnar. There goes the gong and the look on Heyman's face is priceless.

Brock hits the ring and the fight is on with the fans being behind a ticked off Brock. Security has as much success as you would expect so HHH sends a bunch of midcarders out until there must be twenty five guys trying to break this up. The announcers bail so it's up to the audience to tell us how awesome this is (and they're right for a change). Undertaker gets to him on the floor again as even main eventers are out there to break it up now.

We come back from a break and they're fighting in the back again with the entire roster not being able to hold them back. Brock finally steps back and says he's done, allowing the police to tie his hands.

Rollins comes in to laugh at what just happened but promises the Authority that he'll be in the arena later.

Bray Wyatt says he's never alone because his family stands by his side. They know that he is the revolution and the fans need to learn it. The people have annointed Roman Reigns and it's time for them to burn for it. Harper says this is just the beginning and they will take Reigns apart brick by brick. Anyone but you.

Luke Harper vs. Roman Reigns

The fans sound like they're chanting for Wyatt so Byron says it's for Reigns. Roman shrugs off a clothesline and fires off chops, only to have Harper go after Roman's left arm. That earns him a suplex though and we take a quick break. Back with Roman stuck in a chinlock before Harper wisely goes back to the arm. A charge doesn't work for Reigns as Harper tosses him outside, injuring the arm again.

The match keeps going as Harper cranks on the arm while also working on a chinlock. That's dedication to your craft. Harper misses a big boot and

crashes to the floor, allowing Reigns to start his comeback. Roman and Bray get into it with both Wyatts taking apron kicks. Wyatt pulls Reigns outside though and that's a DQ at 13:00.

Rating: C-. Harper trying some psychology was a good idea but it's pretty clear that we're headed for a tag match at Summerslam. I like the idea of Ambrose and Reigns as the best friends/brothers who will fight back to back until the end and anything with Wyatts vs. Shield vibes is a good thing.

Everyone brawls post match and the Wyatts run.

We get the same recap from the opening.

Here's Rollins to brag about surviving with the title. He's sorry to announce this to the people but Lesnar didn't get the job done. Being champion is so much harder than people think it is because Rollins has to put so much effort into it. After last night, he's still exactly where he promised he would be, but he never got to hear his name announced last night. Therefore, Lillian Garcia is invited in for the official announcement.

That's exactly what we get...and here's Cena to interrupt. Rollins cuts him off by saying this isn't about him because no one cares about what he does, but Cena talks about how a champion is supposed to be ready to fight no matter what. The brawl is about to be on but, as you would expect, Rollins bails. That might be the co-main event at Summerslam.

Hey! Remember when Stephanie TOTALLY saved the Divas' division? Well here it is again.

Paige/Becky Lynch vs. Naomi/Sasha Banks

The Bellas/Alicia are on commentary this time. Sasha and Becky get things going, which is almost guaranteed to be awesome. Some armdrags and an armbar have Sasha in early trouble so it's off to Naomi. That's fine with Becky who drops a leg (where's Xavier Woods to rate it though?) as the heroes stay in control.

Sasha gets kicked in the head a few times and we take a break. Back with

Naomi cranking on a front facelock as JBL brings up WCW and the NWO because it's just so fun to make fun eighteen years later. Back from a break with Naomi kicking Becky in the face for two. Sasha comes back in to yell at Paige, allowing Naomi to get in some shots from the apron.

Becky rolls away and DIVES for a tag but Sasha makes a save, only to have the hot tag bring in Paige a second later. Paige cleans house but the PTO on Naomi is broken up at the last second. Everything breaks down as the Bellas just keep chattering like they do in everything they say. The Bank Statement makes Paige tag at 13:05.

Rating: C+. Less Bella means a better match. It's so adorable hearing them talk about themselves like that and imagining that people care for them. I'm sure they'll still be around because that's the nature of the beast, but at least there's some fresh blood to change things up around here.

Southpaw preview, which is tied into a Tough Enough plug.

Long Undertaker vs. Lesnar recap.

We look back at Rusev's ankle being fine and the ensuing Ziggler beatdown.

Lana says Ziggler will be fine when Summer Rae comes up in a Lana outfit. Rusev comes in to kiss Summer, who then slaps Lana in the face.

Randy Orton/John Cena/Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens/Rusev/Sheamus

After the entrances take their sweet time, we start things off with Cena vs. Owens. Why? The feud (should have at least) ended last night and it's off to Rusev before any contact. An early fall away slam gets two and Rusev opts for the stomping away in the corner. That goes badly for the Russian so it's back to Owens, who has to dive to the ropes to break up an STF attempt. A DDT plants Cena but he rolls away from the Cannonball for the hot tag.

Everything breaks down and Cesaro loads up the Swing, only to eat a jumping superkick to send the match to a break. Back with Owens holding Cesaro down until Cesaro powers up with a nice suplex. Cesaro gets to

play face in peril for a bit as all the heels get in their shots. Sheamus and Owens wind up hitting each other though and the fight is on with Sheamus getting the worse of it.

Sheamus walks out on the match and Owens does the same a few moments later, leaving Rusev down 3-1. This goes about as you would expect it to with the parade of finishers putting Rusev down. Cue Lana to spear Summer down, leaving Cesaro to catapult Rusev into an RKO for the pin at 14:21.

Rating: C. Totally Smackdown six man until the cool ending move. I'm not sure what the point of this was as it just came and went without having much going on, but at least Rusev doesn't look bad in defeat and the other two looked fine as well. This was such a strange ending to Raw as everything was wrapped up and none of these guys seem to have a match set for Summerslam.

Overall Rating: C+. This is about as much of a two idea show as you can have as they set up the main event of Summerslam and pushed the heck out of the Divas revolution. How amazing is it that the Divas could arguably be the more interesting story of the two? You can see that they've turned it on for Summerslam and that's one of the best things you can get in WWE.

Results

Charlotte b. Brie Bella – Figure Eight

Los Matadores b. Prime Time Players – Backstabber to O'Neil

Big Show b. Miz – Middle rope elbow

Roman Reigns b. Luke Harper via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

Sasha Banks/Naomi b. Paige/Becky Lynch – Bank Statement to Paige

John Cena/Randy Orton/Cesaro b. Rusev/Kevin Owens/Sheamus – RKO to Rusev

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Battleground 2015: Burn It To The Ground

Battleground 2015

Date: July 19, 2015

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

It's time for the show that is here to fill time until it's Summerslam, which usually isn't the most interesting thing in the world. The main event tonight is Seth Rollins defending the World Title against Brock Lesnar in Brock's return title match after Rollins stole the title at Wrestlemania. We also have Owens vs. Cena III for Cena's US Title which has the potential to steal the show again. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: King Barrett vs. R-Truth

For the crown in one of the worst feuds I can remember in a long time. Truth takes him into the corner to start and bunny hops out as we hear a very brief history of the King's Crown Title from the 1980s. Barrett shoves him away but gets a pelvic thrust and dropkick. A slingshot dive drops Barrett as Lawler makes big nose jokes. The announcers babble about BB King, Stephen King and Burger King as we take a break.

Back with Barrett stretching the arms and JBL talking about working on a rap album with Truth. This goes about as far as you would expect until

Truth fights back and gets two off an ax kick. Lawler: "He's got the whole world in his nose!" Winds of Change gets two on Truth and the Bull Hammer FINALLY gives Barrett the pin at 9:10.

Rating: F. The wrestling sucked, but this fails due to the jokes and the story. This has been a lame story since the beginning and they've made no secret about the fact that no one cares what happens here. Barrett is right back where he started and that's not something you want from someone who is supposed to be a big deal after winning the tournament. Awful stuff and please let him do anything new, as long as it's serious.

The opening video talks about how the matches tonight have led to a battleground to decide their final fate. This isn't exactly making up for the lame build.

Randy Orton vs. Sheamus

This is due to Sheamus helping Kane beat Orton a few weeks back, triggering a feud that most people aren't all that interested in seeing. Big pop for the hometown Orton, even though he isn't billed from St. Louis here. Feeling out process to start with Sheamus bailing to the floor, only to have Randy follow him outside to start the beating. The fans get behind Orton but the match immediately gets back to its boring pace.

Sheamus comes back with a kick to the ribs and Orton is in trouble. Three straight Irish Curses put Orton down again for two and a knee drop gets the same. It's time to hit that chinlock as this is normally the time where we would be coming back from a commercial. Back up and they slug it out with Orton getting the better of it (duh) before they head outside to keep up the fight.

Orton drops him onto the table and snaps off the powerslam for two more back inside. The elevated DDT is countered with a necksnap across the top and a tilt-a-whirl powerslam gets another two. Can we please get to the pay per view level stuff and drop this TV style? I know it's the most important thing but it's still nothing I want to see. Both finishers are countered so Sheamus plants him with White Noise for two.

Sheamus goes up but eats a bunch of right hands, setting up the superplex for, say it with me, two. The elevated DDT connects this time and the place goes nuts for the RKO set up but Sheamus rolls him up for two. The Brogue Kick connects out of nowhere but Sheamus can't cover. Instead it's the Cloverleaf with Orton having to crawl to the ropes twice. Not that it matters as the RKO finishes Sheamus at 16:46.

Rating: C+. This took its time to get going but the second half was far better than the first. In other words, it was another good TV match formula transferred over to pay per view. Orton going over here, while annoying in a way, was the right choice for an opener, even though I hate Sheamus losing as Mr. Money in the Bank. Good back and forth stuff here though and I got a lot more into it after that chinlock.

Cole talks about the revolution in the Divas' division setting social media on fire. Therefore, it's time to recap the Stephanie segment from Raw because that was the focus of the entire thing. Stephanie saying she set the table was horrible and made Paige's whole story look worthless because Stephanie had to be there to get the credit for everything.

Stephanie, playing a total face instead of the heel authority figure, sucks up to the live crowd. Tonight there's a triple threat match between each Divas' trio and Stephanie will accept nothing less than the house being torn down.

Tag Team Titles: Prime Time Players vs. New Day

New Day is challenging after losing the belts to the Players at Money in the Bank. Before the match, New Day talks about staying positive because they know they have to reap the rewards of their sacrifices soon. Woods is on the floor as Kofi starts with Darren. Kofi is a bit too fast for Young so it's off to Titus for some VERY loud chops in the corner. A New Day conference leads to a tag to Big E., who eats a legdrop from Titus. Woods: "WORST LEGDROP EVER!"

It's back to Darren who gets thrown outside as the champs take over, allowing Xavier to be an even more obnoxious (meaning AWESOME) cheerleader. We get the alternating stomps, capped off by a running basement dropkick. Woods: "OH IT'S SO GOOD!" An apron splash gets two on

Young (that looked good) and we hit the abdominal stretch.

Woods shouts about tricep meat and Darren scores with an enziguri, setting up the hot tag to Titus so house can be cleaned. Titus' dominance doesn't last long though as it's quickly back to Young. The Midnight Hour is broken up and the Gut Check sends Kofi to the floor. O'Neil comes back in for the Clash of the Titus on Big E. to retain at 8:53.

Rating: D+. Well that's a surprise. I'm not sure how I feel about the result as the Players are little more than adequate and New Day is still one of the funniest acts in wrestling. The match was nothing to see but the Players retaining is an acceptable result. It's more of a surprise than anything else, and that's not the worst thing in the world.

Paige is with Charlotte and Becky Lynch in the back and makes sure to praise Stephanie for starting the revolution. They're going to tear the house down tonight and rebuild the division brick by brick.

We recap Reigns vs. Wyatt, which started with Bray using Reigns' daughter to get inside his head, before saying anyone but Reigns. The idea seems to be that Reigns hasn't earned the hero role and Wyatt wants anyone else there, but as usual it isn't clear with Bray.

Bray Wyatt vs. Roman Reigns

The fireflies continue to look awesome. They lock up to start with Bray hammering him down in the corner for a bit of a surprise. The fans are WAY into Wyatt here, though it might be more anti-Roman instead. An uppercut sends Wyatt to the floor but he pops Reigns with one of his own to take over again. The cross body block takes Reigns down again but Reigns Samoan drops him out to the floor.

Wyatt is fine with the violence of course and sends Reigns into the steps as this has been almost all Bray so far. They slug it out on the apron for something different, setting up a Wyatt DDT on the apron for something painful. We hit the chinlock and get a creepy Wyatt smile as he pulls back. That's the kind of thing Wyatt does very well and it's a great addition to the whole package. Reigns finally powers up with a belly to back suplex to break the hold.

It's time for the comeback, thankfully with only one standing clothesline. Another belly to back drops Wyatt but he clotheslines Reigns out of the air to break up the apron kick (now the Drive By apparently). Bray adds a backsplash on the floor but takes too long putting Reigns on top, allowing Roman to Batista Bomb him out of the corner for a very close two. The Superman Punch misses but Reigns drops him on the apron again.

The apron boot (screw that Drive By nonsense) connects but Bray shakes it off and Rock Bottoms Reigns (appropriate) for two. Fans: "THAT WAS THREE!" I know they've been talking about making Wyatt face for a long time now and the fan support seems to be there. Sister Abigail is countered into the Superman Punch (with Bray falling before it connected) for two. This is surprising, despite that almost never being a finisher. Reigns gets all fired up and tries the spear but eats a boot, followed by getting all fired up again but charging into a right hand. You have to change it up a bit you see.

Sister Abigail is broken up (obvious due to being a slow kiss) so Reigns hits ten clotheslines in the corner and another Samoan drop. Both guys are spent so Bray grabs some chairs. Reigns knocks them away just as quickly though and grabs chairs of his own. All four chairs wind up in the ring but someone in a hood superkicks Reigns, allowing Bray to hit Sister Abigail for the pin at 22:10.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I thought I would and Bray getting the win is a very nice sign. Reigns is going to be a big deal and Wyatt could be as well, but at some point you need to win matches like this one. The interference is a good sign as well with Bray's best days being as a cult leader, so why not let him try it again?

The guy gets in the ring and it's....Luke Harper, so maybe the reunion is on.

Naomi, Tamina and Sasha Banks (collectively known as B.A.D., meaning Beautiful and Dangerous, as well as the fact that they're doomed because that's a horrible name) are ready for the triple threat.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte vs. Nikki Bella

All nine are here. Nikki and Sasha have a staredown before the match and it's going to be Brie instead. Oh yay.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte vs. Brie Bella

Thankfully Brie is sent outside early on, leaving the two that know what they're doing in the ring. Charlotte gets her throat snapped across the top rope, leaving Brie to come in with her catfight style Thesz press. That's fine with Sasha, who sends both of them to the corner for the double knees to the ribs for two each. It seems that they're keeping Brie out of the action for the most part here and it's no secret that that's a good idea.

Sasha headscissors Charlotte down for two and hits a pair of running knees in the corner for the same. Brie makes a save as the fans want Becky. Charlotte clotheslines both of them down but Brie comes back with her own screaming clotheslines. A double bulldog kind of works but Brie just gets two on both. Back up and Sasha sidesteps a charge, sending Charlotte into Brie instead. They're doing a really good job of keeping Brie limited here while the talented ones do their thing.

Brie comes back in with a double missile dropkick (with the camera barely catching it), setting up the BRIE MODE running knees to the chest. The Bellas huddle on the floor but are quickly surrounded, setting up a BIG staredown. Sasha dives through the ropes to take out a lot of them, followed by Charlotte diving on the rest. Back in and Brie breaks up the Bank Statement on Charlotte, only to have the Bella Buster countered into the Figure Eight for the submission at 11:31. Cole: "TEAM BELLA IS MORTAL!" Oh shut up Michael.

Rating: C+. This was as well booked as they could have made it. You want to keep Nikki away from these newcomers as long as you can and Brie is about as perfect of a sacrifice as there is. It was clear that Brie couldn't hang with the other two and it would have been crazy to imply she could. This was better than I was expecting and it's clear that they want the Divas to mean something, which is a great sign.

The preshow panel recaps the night, including Barrett beating Truth.

Long recap of Cena vs. Owens. They traded wins in their first two classics but tonight Cena's US Title is on the line. Owens claims that Cena keeps disrespecting him but Owens has never been the kind of guy that says what he really means.

US Title: John Cena vs. Kevin Owens

Cena is defending and gets the JOHN CENA SUCKS song. Cena: "RAIN IT DOWN!" Owens gets in the first big shot to start and slugs Cena down with forearms to the back. More big shots put Cena down and the backplash (just wait until Owens or Bray have to drop that one) gets two. Cena tries a comeback with a dropkick but Owens puts him down one more time, only to miss a swanton. It's really impressive that a guy his size can do something like that.

Owens busts out Cena's finishing sequence but the AA is countered into Cena's STF. The rope is quickly grabbed as Cena starts his comeback, only to Kevin catch the top rope legdrop into a sitout powerbomb for two more. An AA gets two for the champ, thereby fulfilling the quota for the match. The sunset bomb gets the same but Owens busts out the swinging superplex for the same.

Back up and the Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana, setting up an AA to Cena, followed by an STF to really fire up the crowd. John finally makes the ropes and dives for a tornado DDT, which still doesn't put Owens away. The Springboard Stunner does better than usual but Owens stays going and takes Cena's head off with a clothesline. No cover though, as Owens goes with the brainbuster onto the knee for two instead.

Another AA gets another two on Kevin and the Pop Up Powerbomb gets the same on the champ. Owens heads up top again and gets caught one more time, setting up the super AA for two. I don't think anyone has ever kicked out of that one before so well done. Cena has the same face he had when the Rock beat him at Wrestlemania so it's off to a rematch that no one wanted to see. Actually it's the STF instead and Owens taps at 22:14.

Rating: B+. I didn't like this one quite as much as the other two and I have no idea why you don't put the title on Owens here. Owens kicked out

of the super finisher and then just taps out to the regular finish? That's some backwards booking to put it mildly, despite a great match to get there. Owens will be fine, but this really should have been his big moment. As a sidebar, they really didn't put Cesaro and/or Rusev on this show somewhere? Really?

Here's Miz for a chat instead of the Intercontinental Title match. Miz rips on Ryback for bailing on the match because it's messed up his branding team's plans for talk show appearances as the new champion. He knows he's the toughest man in St. Louis and thinks Big Show should retire like everyone wants him to do. Big Show comes out and lays Miz out with one punch as you would expect him to do.

Long recap of Rollins vs. Lesnar. Seth stole the World Title by cashing in Money in the Bank at Wrestlemania, but tonight Lesnar is out for revenge and his title. Brock has also broken Kane's ankle and put the Stooges out of action to make this one on one. Also something about breaking a car for some product placement.

WWE World Heavyweight Title: Seth Rollins vs. Brock Lesnar

Seth is defending of course but Brock drives him into the corner for some shoulders to the ribs. An early German attempt sends Seth outside and the champ gets Brock to chase him. Back in and some kicks to the leg have Brock staggered, but Rollins dives into the first German. Three more send Rollins flying and it's out to the floor. He tries to run but Brock just hurdles the barricade and throws him back to ringside. Well that's one way to get him back.

German #6 has Rollins in even more trouble and Brock looks livid. Rollins backflips out of #7 and hits a superkick (way too common a move tonight), followed by three straight low superkicks. Another regular superkick means Rollins can apply to be a Young Buck, but the Pedigree is easily countered. Rollins hits a pair of suicide dives but Brock charges in and throws Rollins with a belly to belly.

Brock rolls three more Germans (10), followed by a release for #11. We're up to thirteen and Rollins looks dead. The F5 connects.....and we've got Undertaker. Brock looks terrified but escapes a chokeslam. The F5 is

countered and Undertaker kicks him in the face. We'll say the match was thrown out at 9:00.

Rating: C+. I really didn't like this one as I'm getting tired of all the suplexes. I know Brock is capable of doing other stuff but he's basically a popular Royal Rumble 2003 Scott Steiner in this formula. It's still entertaining enough but Brock can do more stuff than just throw Germans everywhere all the time. This was probably their best idea, but I'm not sure who goes after the belt next.

The chokeslam works the second time and Brock gets tombstoned for good measure. Rollins is nowhere in sight during any of this. A second Tombstone has Heyman freaking out and Undertaker poses to end the show. The fans were behind him so I think it's face vs. face at Summerslam.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a really tricky one to grade as it's much more a collection of good to quite good matches instead of a great show. The Undertaker stuff could go a bunch of ways, but it's cool to see him doing ANYTHING other than his usual Wrestlemania appearance. The show was better than I was expecting and for a Summerslam warmup, I'll call it a big success. Just keep the scale in mind when you consider that big success.

Results

Randy Orton b. Sheamus – RKO

Prime Time Players b. New Day – Clash of the Titus to Big E.

Bray Wyatt b. Roman Reigns – Sister Abigail

Charlotte b. Brie Bella and Sasha Banks – Figure Eight to Bella

John Cena b. Kevin Owens – STF

Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins went to a no contest when Undertaker interfered

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Smackdown – July 16, 2015: That Man Is Strong

I'll be back to the normal schedule next week so just one more early Smackdown, unless you like them early. I normally have them done before the show is on the air and could easily post them early if you prefer. Let me know which way you like me doing them.

Smackdown

Date: July 16, 2015

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Battleground and this past Monday's show saw the destruction of Kane at the hands of Brock Lesnar, meaning Seth Rollins is all alone on Sunday. My guess is that this week's show will focus on Wyatt vs. Reigns, which is all but set yet still needs a few more details. Like why Wyatt is doing anything and why he just dropped the stuff with Reigns' daughter. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Reigns to open the show. This all started at Money in the Bank

when Wyatt cost him the match, but Bray isn't in his head and Bray can't break his focus. Tonight we have Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus and it's time to start a fight, but here's Bray on screen to interrupt. He asks what gave Roman the right to go after him on Monday, but Wyatt knew Reigns was there. For a moment, Bray was just like these people. For once, he saw Reigns being exactly what he should have been.

Bray saw him as a stone monument, but at Battleground, he will be the hammer that breaks the monument down. Reigns is ready to fight but Bray says this is what true fear feels like. Collect your roses gladiator because none of them are real. What is real though is that Bray is back here with everyone Reigns cares about. He's capable of some very evil things and this game has just begun. Wyatt has been trying to bring the fire out of Reigns and knows he'll get bitten by the big dog. One day though, he'll tell the dog to sit and the dog will obey. Roman needs to go kiss the people he cares about because anyone but him.

This helped and is probably as clear of a reason as we're going to get as to why Wyatt has targeted Reigns. I'm still not clear on why his daughter is involved, but maybe the idea is that Reigns isn't what he seems and Wyatt wants to expose him as a fraud? It all started with Reigns in an ad for being a great father so maybe Bray thinks that's not the real Reigns?

New Day vs. Lucha Dragons

The champs are on commentary of course with Woods as the odd man out. Kofi flips over Cara to start but Cara does the exact same thing. Off to E. vs. Kalisto, with the latter hitting a nice springboard wristdrag/headscissors to take New Day down and we take an early break.

Back with New Day stomping in the corner and Titus thinking this would be a fun triple threat match on Sunday. Kofi hurricanranas Cara down and Kalisto gets knocked off the apron for not paying attention. The abdominal stretch keeps Cara in trouble but he finally dives over Big E. and makes the hot tag to Kalisto. Everything breaks down and the Salida Del Sol plants Big E., only to have Kofi break up Cara's swanton. The Midnight Hour ends Kalisto at 10:06.

Rating: C-. Phillips saying that the New Day is on a roll tells you how

lame the division has become again in recent weeks. Assuming they win on Sunday, New Day is stuck sitting around waiting on the Usos to come back and then.....well then I have no idea where they're going. I see no reason to believe the Players keep the titles as the lame father of the year award "hype" is over so there's no reason to have Titus as a champion anymore.

New Day says they'll win on Sunday and change the chant up to "NEW! TAG CHAMPS!" The Players chase them off without violence. At least they made the match feel a little more important.

Reigns and Ambrose are ready to take care of Sheamus and Big Show because they both want to get rid of Wyatt. Dean says he hates everyone.

King Barrett vs. Jack Swagger

This is how far Barrett has fallen. Swagger rides him to the mat to start but Barrett punches him in the face a few times. The announcers of course treat this match as a joke by talking about Barrett's nose, because that's what Barrett is these days. An attempt at the Vader Bomb doesn't get to launch so Swagger slams him into the apron, only to get kicked in the ribs. The Bullhammer ends Swagger at 2:35.

Post match Truth comes out so they can shout over each other. Barrett says this has gone on long enough (amen) because he's the real King of the Ring. Truth on the other hand is just another guy who lost in the same tournament, which really isn't helping me care about this feud. Barrett promises to make Truth bow on Sunday.

Recap of Lesnar vs. Rollins, focusing on various beatdowns of both Lesnar and the car.

Cesaro runs into Kevin Owens, who wishes him luck in his match.

Rusev vs. Cesaro

This should be on pay per view but that's what Smackdown is for these days. They shove each other around to start with Cesaro getting the better of it, only to have Rusev punch him in the face to take over. Rusev loads up a suplex but Cesaro will have none of that as he reverses

into one of his own. I could watch Cesaro throw people around all day.

A snap belly to back suplex drops Cesaro again but he rolls some quick Germans for a breather. Back from a break with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock and a clip of the slam into the spinout Rock Bottom from Rusev during the commercial. The uppercuts stagger Rusev and a nice dropkick puts him on the floor. There isn't much to talk about here as this is quite the back and forth power brawl so far.

Back in and the spinwheel kick stops Cesaro cold but he comes right back with a Neutralizer attempt. Rusev backdrops him down though and nails a superkick. The Accolade doesn't work either though, setting up a USA chant. Jimmy: "I know what's about to happen King!" They head outside again where Cesaro charges into another superkick. Jimmy: "I didn't know that was about to happen King!" Rusev goes up top but dives into an "uppercut" (barely connected and looked awkward), setting up the Neutralizer to give Cesaro the pin at 12:40. Cesaro is the second person to ever pin Rusev in WWE.

Rating: B. Now THAT is more like it. This was treated as a big deal and actually felt like one with the commentators pointing out that Rusev has never been pinned on Smackdown (or on TV ever I believe). Cesaro comes off like a big deal, but at the moment he isn't scheduled to be in action at the pay per view. It's a shame that another bald power guy who happens to hold a title isn't injured, leaving a spot open for a title match that Cesaro could say, win on Sunday, leaving him to do this every week on Smackdown like Daniel Bryan was scheduled to do.

Cesaro jumps into the crowd to celebrate.

Sheamus says Sunday is just another day at the office. Tonight he gets to team with a giant and he hopes Orton is watching the beating that Ambrose and Reigns receive. What is WWE's obsession with Sheamus vs. Orton? They've never had anything resembling a good match so they keep getting pushed because they look like a good match on paper? To be fair it wouldn't be the first time WWE has done something because it sounded good and continued to do so after it failed time after time.

Stardust vs. Neville

Rematch from Raw where Neville lost in what is being billed as a battle of comic book characters, complete with comic page backgrounds on the recap. Stardust drops him with a quick forearm, only to be sent to the floor for the Asai moonsault. Back in and Stardust gets caught holding the ropes on a sunset flip, allowing to pop back up with a victory roll for the pin at 2:20. The good vs. evil concept works and I like Neville being treated as a superhero, but the matches aren't lighting anything on fire, let alone the world.

After a break, Neville says his strategy was just to wait for his window of opportunity to open and then strike. Stardust decks him and says prepare for turbulence during the Altitude Era.

Long recap of the Divas' segment from Raw. It still focuses on Stephanie and therefore it's still not as good as it could be. It's still great, but it shouldn't have been about her.

Sasha/Tamina/Naomi say it's finally fair because the odds are even. Sasha says it's their time to run this division. Naomi: "We bad." They're the trifecta and they're not here to make friends or play nice.

Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns vs. Big Show/Sheamus

Dean rides Sheamus to the mat to start but Sheamus knees him in the back to take over. That goes nowhere as Dean runs Sheamus over and knocks Show to the floor, setting up the standing elbow drop to both. We come back from a break with Reigns coming in to face off with Big Show because IT WILL NEVER DIE! It's quickly back to Dean to hammer on Big Show in the corner but Sheamus gets in a shot to take over as we're firmly in the Smackdown main event formula.

Show punches him in the ribs a few times, which the announcers equate to drowning. The Final Cut gets two and makes me remember that the Final Cut used to be a move. An elbow finally misses and it's a double tag to Reigns and Sheamus with the former cleaning house as you would expect. Big Show offers a distraction though, allowing Sheamus to get two off White Noise. Dean's suicide dive is caught by Big Show but the chokeslam through the table is countered into a DDT to put everyone down again. Reigns wins a slugout with Sheamus and hits the Superman Punch but Wyatt

comes in for the DQ at 13:52.

Rating: C-. Dull but fine match here as we were just waiting for Bray to run in. I do however like that no one actually jobbed three days before a pay per view because there's no logical reason to have someone get pinned going into a major match. Also, how nice was it to see someone stay down from a DDT for a change? It was a big spot and they treated it like one for a change. That's a rare delicacy, as sad as that really is.

Overall Rating: C+. This is the kind of show they needed to shore things up before Battleground. The World Title match has long since been set so tonight was mostly about setting up everything else, but I'm curious to see where they go with the Intercontinental Title situation. You would think Neville vs. Stardust would be added to the pre-show, but I can't accept the idea of Cesaro not being on the main card. He's earned a spot doing something there and if he's left off for something stupid, it's going to be a shame. The Divas have to get something in there too so Sunday could look very interesting.

Results

New Day b. Lucha Dragons – Midnight Hour to Kalisto

King Barrett b. Jack Swagger – Bullhammer

Cesaro b. Rusev – Neutralizer

Neville b. Stardust – Victor roll

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Sheamus/Big Show via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

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Ryback Injured, Out Of Battleground

<http://www.wwe.com/shows/webbattleground/ryback-injured-27658773>

Sounds legit. I'd assume we get Miz vs. Big Show or a talking segment, but I'd love it if their time was given to Cesaro and/or Rusev. Those guys deserve it after their performances Monday, and I'm sure a lot of fans will be annoyed if they don't make it on but Barrett vs. Truth for the crown makes it instead.

Monday Night Raw – July 13, 2015: Viva Las Divas (And Stephanie Just Because)

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 13, 2015

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Battleground and thankfully Brock is here, hopefully to beat up a pair of cars in a handicap match this week. Other than that we have the rest of the build towards Wyatt vs. Reigns,

possibly even including why they're fighting and what it has to do with Reigns' daughter, and more stuff including whatever Ambrose might be doing on Sunday. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Lesnar beatdown, complete with Heyman reusing the Dudleys' commandment of don't screw with Brock. It's fair to erase the Dudleys from history at this point so it's not that big a deal. Heyman might have written that line in the first place.

Here are Brock and Heyman to get things going, drawing a SUPLEX CITY chant. For some reason the crushed car is brought out as Heyman proclaims Brock's impending dominance over Rollins this coming Sunday. Paul lists off Brock's accomplishments and the various people he's conquered before promising to have Lesnar suplex Rollins all over the place, put his foot on Seth's chest and be proclaimed the champion once again.

Cue Rollins and Kane because YAY KANE IS BACK FROM HAWAII OR WHATEVER THAT STUPID STORY WAS! Rollins talks about how Brock is frustrated over his inability to be champion and stumbles over trying to say "an inanimate object" in a funny goof. Brock has been carrying the car around the country (in a truck or on his back?) like a symbol and that's just fine, because Suplex City is burned to the ground tonight.

Brock offers to take Rollins to Suplex City tonight but Kane intervenes with the threat of a contract signing. Kane threatens Lesnar if he messes up the contract signing but Heyman laughs off the threats from "Undertaker's baby brother." Kane is of course annoyed as Heyman goes on about Brock smashing stuff with one final promise of pain to Rollins if he provokes the Beast tonight.

Ryback/Randy Orton vs. Sheamus/Big Show

Miz is on commentary and this is billed as an All-Star match. I'd prefer we go play that over the top video game instead but have it your way. This is the old standard idea of taking two feuds and combining them into a tag match, which is an idea that stays around because it still works. Ryback knocks Sheamus to the floor to start and we're in a very early break.

Back with Sheamus bailing into the floor to hide from Orton. Apparently Randy is really bad at hide and seek so it's back to Ryback vs. Big Show with the latter stomping Ryback down onto the mat to take over. Sheamus tries a bearhug and is easily driven into the corner for the tag to Orton. Remember the days when Sheamus was like, really really strong? What happened to that?

Back from a second break with an Irish Curse (backbreaker. OH THE SCANDAL!) for two on Orton but he counters Big Show's chokeslam into a DDT for a breather. Miz gets off of commentary and shouts on a mic as Ryback comes in and cleans house. Big Show has enough of Miz though and chases him up the ramp, leaving Sheamus to take an RKO and top rope splash from Ryback for the pin at 15:21.

Rating: C+. Nice long tag match here and again, a good way to set up both matches at once. I would have liked a countout or DQ finish instead of having Sheamus take a pin, but it's a plus that he took two finishers for a pin so it's hardly clean. Sheamus vs. Orton does nothing for me and the triple threat isn't much better, but at least there's something on the line and Ryback has started looking good again.

Network ad.

Rollins doesn't like the idea of the contract signing but Kane has a plan.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

Good grief people build a midcard already. Wyatt's name graphic is just letters on a screen now instead of in a box like everyone else. During the entrance though, Reigns appears and lays out Wyatt as Ambrose is just kind of forgotten. Bray finally gets in a lantern shot to escape. No match.

The Bellas have been nominated for Choice Female Athletes in the Teen Choice Awards. Dear goodness I don't want to know who else they are.

Here are the Bellas and Alicia Fox with something to say. Nikki brags about holding the title forever because AJ Lee MUST be eliminated from

history. She's defended against every single Diva there is and has given them all a chance. A quick search shows that, at least in TV matches, Nikki has defended against AJ, Naomi and Tamina (whose one shot came at Beast in the East) and that's it. She calls the three of them Team Bella, because all you have to do these days is put the word Team in front of a name. Come up with something more interesting, please.

Nikki goes on about how awesome she is and how dominant they are...and here's Stephanie McMahon because she hasn't laid waste to the Divas yet. Stephanie is a face tonight too because there's something cool coming and therefore she just MUST be there to get a piece of the action. The legacy of the WWE rests on her shoulders (yes, Stephanie says this company's history is on HER shoulders) and there's a revolution going on right now in women's sports, ranging from women's soccer to UFC to tennis. These are supposed to be applause lines if that's not clear.

Stephanie introduces Paige, because of ALL DIVAS IN WWE, Paige is the one that would be thrilled to be associated with Stephanie. I mean Paige is clearly a corporate loyalist right? Nikki talks about how Paige doesn't deserve another shot, but STEPHANIE runs WWE and this division instead of her.

Stephanie, the WWE and Paige want this revolution (what is she even talking about?) but courage can't do it alone. Therefore, Paige needs backup. Instead of bringing this person out though, Stephanie goes on about how amazing they are and FINALLY introduces Becky Lynch. Now, does Becky get to say anything and introduce herself? Of course not, because that would cut away from Stephanie's mic time, meaning the boss gets to introduce Charlotte, in that voice that only Stephanie can deliver.

Cole: "STEPHANIE HAS SHAKEN THINGS UP!" I hate this company at times.
Stephanie: "WOO!" Oh shut up. Cue Naomi and Tamina with a mic because we haven't heard enough horrible voices yet. Naomi says the two of them are all the competition the Bellas need. That's all the mic time she needs too, because Stephanie needs to bring out Sasha Banks. Sasha stands with Naomi and Tamina, but STEPHANIE WON'T SHUT HER FREAKING MOUTH and talks about setting the table for opportunity.

We get a THIS IS AWESOME chant to a legitimately cool moment and the fight is on. Charlotte cleans house until Naomi dropkicks her down, only to have Paige and Sasha get into it. Tamina breaks up the PTO on Naomi but Brie Bella interrupts as the announcers line up to kiss Stephanie's feet for these new arrivals. Alicia gets caught in the Figure Eight, Becky puts Brie in the armbar and Nikki gets the Bank Statement as a big NXT chant breaks out. The Bellas and Fox are cleared out and the other six yell at each other as the freaking Total Divas theme plays this out.

I'm not going to bother ranting about how Stephanie made this all about her. It's Stephanie McMahon, she's the biggest hound for a spotlight that has ever lived in WWE and you know that if there's a big moment there that people are going to erupt over, she's going to shoehorn her way in despite the fact that there is absolutely no logical reason for her to be involved.

This story has been about Paige finding help but that's thrown out the window because Stephanie has basically just decided to turn this story into a chess game for her own amusement. The big sign here: none of them got to talk and then Stephanie just left after she was the only voice you heard for the big moment. The main part here was all about Stephanie look cool and how thankful we should be for her big gift to us and that's all there is to it.

Aside from all that, this is EXACTLY what the Divas have been needing for so long. All of a sudden, there is some brand new blood in the Divas' division and the fans buy into it. They know these three are amazingly talented and can tear the house down...but the Bellas are still around. As long as they're the focus of the division (and they will be as long as Total Divas is around), the newcomers are going to have to tone it WAY down so Nikki, Brie and Alicia can handle it and that takes away from the NXT crew's magic. This is going to be interesting, but they could drag things way down for the sake of breaking AJ's record.

New Day vs. Prime Time Players/Mark Henry

The hometown boy Xavier Woods says this is the greatest town in the world because they stay positive. Even though they shut down the city due to an

inch of snow last year and the Atlanta Hawks choked in the NBA Playoffs, they stayed positive. Kofi is 100% that they're getting the titles back on Sunday because Prime Time is out of time at Battleground because NEW DAY ROCKS.

Titus shrugs off a Kofi kick to start so it's off to Darren, who clotheslines E. out to the floor. The Players and Henry throw everyone out to the floor (JBL: "FLYING PH.D!") as we take an early break. Back with Titus taking the rotating stomps in the corner as the announcers talk about how awesome the Divas were. For once, they're actually right. E. gets two off a splash but Titus is quickly up and tagging in Henry to clean house. Everything breaks down and a World's Strongest Slam ends Woods at 8:29.

Rating: D+. Good night do they really not know how to set up a tag match anymore? When is the last time New Day won a match? My guess is they get the belts back anyway because that's how WWE works these days. The match was nothing interesting and Henry is just thrown out there but gets the pin over a #1 contender anyway. Well sure why not.

The winners dance.

Long recap of Lesnar b. Cadillac via TKO last week.

King Barrett vs. R-Truth

No King entrance for Truth and Cole tells us he rapped to the ring during the commercial. Truth gyrates a lot to start and gets kicked in his face. A backbreaker and middle rope elbow get two each on Truth and a boot knocks him onto the apron. Truth fights out of a chinlock as the announcers talk about Tough Enough to kill time. Barrett misses a charge and eats a Lie Detector for the pin at 3:12.

Rating: D-. Good grief it's going to get a rubber match on Sunday isn't it? This whole thing is such a waste of whatever they had with the King of the Ring because Barrett hasn't been embarrassed enough over the years. Bad match, horrible feud, disgusting waste of someone like Barrett for a comedy act.

Truth puts on his king attire.

We recap Rusev destroying Ziggler last week, finally making Rusev feel like a monster (and a wrestler) again.

It's Open Challenge time and Rusev is here to renew a rivalry that doesn't need to be renewed. He blames Lana for losing the title in the first place and says he broke Ziggler because of the USA. Before the match though, here's Kevin Owens with something to say. Rusev says no because he was here first and that Owens needs to pick a single first name. They argue a bit but here's Cesaro to interrupt as well. Cena heads outside as the three brawl, setting up a triple threat match with the winner getting a title shot immediately after because WHO NEEDS PSYCHOLOGY???

Rusev vs. Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

Cena is on commentary as Cesaro gets beaten down in the corner. Rusev gets beaten down and Cannonballed, only to have Cesaro hit the running uppercut to Owens' jaw. Swiss Death gets two on Rusev as Cena puts over the Divas' segment. Owens has to escape two pinfall attempts, followed by Cesaro doing the same off a Saito Suplex from Rusev. Cena continues to be as good of a commentator as you'll see in this company, only to have to stop for Cesaro turning Owens' superplex into a Tower of Doom for two each.

The Russian takes over again as these guys are just hammering each other. Owens blocks Rusev's German suplex attempt so Cesaro Germans both of them AT ONCE. I know I say this every week but DANG that guy is strong. Since that's not enough, Cesaro busts out a corkscrew dive over the top to take out both guys. Back in and Cesaro gets two off a high cross body on Rusev but Owens breaks up the Swing with a superkick.

Kevin drops both guys but stops to shout at Cena, allowing Rusev's Alabama Slam to set up the Accolade. Cesaro saves this time and delays a vertical suplex on the Russian. Well ex-Russian but whatever. Cena keeps making some rather heelish yet totally fair comments about how he's the lucky one here as these guys are all brawling but he gets to come in fresh. Rusev sends Kevin outside and Owens bails, saying he'll see Cena

Sunday.

Back from a break with Rusev chinlocking Cesaro, only to have the bald one pop up and hit a springboard spinning uppercut to drop Rusev. The apron superplex is countered with Rusev suplexing Cesaro onto the apron to put both guys down onto the floor. Back in again and Cesaro dropkicks Rusev on the top, only to have his superplex countered. The Russian's top rope splash misses and Cesaro crossfaces Rusev, only to have Rusev power up into something like a spinning Rock Bottom for two more.

Back up again and Cesaro can't get a Sharpshooter, allowing Rusev to hit a spinwheel kick for two. The Accolade is countered into the Swing which sets up the Sharpshooter, drawing a loud TAP chant. Rusev makes the rope but since this is still officially a triple threat, he has to crawl outside to break the hold. Nice touch of continuity there. Cesaro hasn't done something cool in all of 14 seconds now so he comes back with a suicide dive. Back in and Cesaro gets tripped off the top, setting up a superkick from Rusev for the pin at 24:02.

Rating: B+. Why not make Cesaro the Intercontinental Champion? Like, just let him go out there and have awesome matches with anyone because Cesaro is pure gold at this point. It's the simple concept of "hey, this guy is awesome right now so LET'S PUSH HIM!" Unfortunately he'll probably be forgotten again in three weeks while someone like Barrett or Truth get pushed because they're funny or something. Like, is Cesaro even going to be on the pay per view?

US Title: Rusev vs. John Cena

The psychology is all over the place here as Cena, the face champion, comes in with a huge advantage since Rusev is spent. Cena starts fast and hits a release fisherman's suplex followed by a headlock. Rusev bails to the ropes but Cena nails the shoulders. In a nice touch, Rusev can't get up due to the exhaustion, making the finishing sequence look really awkward. The AA is countered into the Accolade out of nowhere and Cena hangs on for about 45 seconds (fair since Rusev is weakened) until Owens comes back in for the DQ at 4:57.

Rating: D. This was more awkward and weird than bad as Cena was basically

wrestling a squash match against a big name until the end where he got caught in a big move. Like I said, this was just strange and would have been FAR better served as a single, four way elimination with Cena involved. It was different, but the execution of the second match didn't work for me.

Owens gives Rusev a Pop-Up Powerbomb and tells Cena that he's taking the title on Sunday.

Rollins tells Kane that it's on him if tonight goes bad.

The Tough Enough cast is on stage when Lita (a coach on the show) comes out with something to say. She officially introduces us to the cast and this is a big waste of time because Tough Enough just isn't all that interesting this season. It was so uninteresting that I haven't watched it yet and don't plan to.

We recap Reigns and Wyatt from earlier.

Stardust (hey he's back) talks about how the world needs heroes because the world is made up of heroes and villains. "From where I stand, the view never changes." Neville has been claiming that the forces of evil have forsaken him, but those forces will bring him down. Embrace the strange. Or embrace Cody Rhodes for a change.

Barrett vs. Truth for the crown on Sunday. If Rusev and/or Cesaro aren't on that show, I lose so much of my faith in this company, meaning I fully expect it to happen.

Stardust vs. Neville

Neville is no longer the New Sensation, which is one of the best things that could happen to him. A loud CODY chant starts up but let's just keep him as Stardust because it's done wonders for his career. Stardust isn't interested in a handshake and kicks Neville down, only to have to get up before the Red Arrow can launch. There's a cartwheel from Star and we hit the chinlock.

As has been the trend tonight, this match is bizarre as the fans are cheering Stardust instead of the guy they're pushing as an actual

superhero. It's funny how such shortsightedness works. Neville fights back to silence (I'm stunned too) but Stardust rolls him up and grabs the trunks for the pin at 4:09. JBL: "Go to the pay window young man!"

Rating: D. So let's see. They've (so far) wasted any potential for Cody coming off his father's passing, Neville looks lame because no one wants to boo the son of a legend whose father recently passed away, and then Stardust cheats instead of getting to make this an important and cool moment. Oh and the match wasn't any good either. What a mess as psychology means nothing around here.

It's time for the contract signing to close things up this week. Rollins and Kane are out first and the champ talks about watching the footage of the car being destroyed again. After this Sunday, Suplex City will be a memory and he'll still be champion, but here's a Beast to disagree. Well, likely to stand there while Heyman disagrees. Paul says Rollins wants to burn Suplex City down, but the fans want to see him get taken apart for his breaking of the eleventh commandment.

People want to see Rollins get beaten up and that's what they're going to see this Sunday when he gets kicked, slapped, punched, suplexed, F5'd and dethroned. Rollins signs anyway, as does Brock, and there goes the table. Kane comes at Brock but Lesnar pulls out an ax handle and actually flips the table back up. The fight is on again and Rollins goes flying. Kane breaks up an F5 on the floor and Rollins hits him with the ax handle.

Some steps to the head have Brock in more trouble but Beast Mode prevails with Kane taking an F5 on the floor. There goes Rollins into the crowd, leaving Brock to crush Kane's ankle on the steps, likely making this Sunday one on one. Brock poses with the title but we're not done yet as Rollins comes back to ringside and yells about being the man to slay the Beast on Sunday. Medics tend to Kane so Rollins yells at him too, calling Kane's career one big disappointment. This is on Kane and Rollins kicks him in the ankle to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a great example of a show where the good was good but the bad was really bad. Some of these matches and stories are disasters and I really don't think I need to explain which is which. The

show wasn't terrible and had some VERY good stuff going on, but between Stephanie throwing herself into a feud she has nothing to do with and the battle of the kings that no one wants to see and a few other big misses, I wanted this show to end instead of wanting to like it. Not the worst by any means and the Divas segment (once it was about them) was great, but WAY too much bad to hold it back.

Results

Ryback/Randy Orton b. Sheamus/Big Show – Top rope splash to Sheamus

Mark Henry/Prime Time Players b. New Day – World's Strongest Slam to Woods

R-Truth b. King Barrett – Lie Detector

Rusev b. Kevin Owens and Cesaro – Superkick to Cesaro

Rusev b. John Cena via DQ when Kevin Owens interfered

Stardust b. Neville – Rollup with a handful of trunks

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Monday Night Raw – July 13, 2015: The KB Is On His Honeymoon So The Show Will Be Up Later Edition

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 13, 2015

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Battleground and thankfully Brock is here, hopefully to beat up a pair of cars in a handicap match this week. Other than that we have the rest of the build towards Wyatt vs. Reigns, possibly even including why they're fighting and what it has to do with Reigns' daughter, and more stuff including whatever Ambrose might be doing on Sunday. Let's get to it.

Saturday Night's Main Event #2: Time For A Wedding!

Saturday Night's Main Event #2

Date: October 5, 1985

Location: Meadowlands Arena, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Attendance: 8,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jesse Ventura

One of the best things about the first episode of this series was how few names were used. There was the opening six man tag, the four wrestlers (and Mr. T.) in the Piper's Pit and title match, the girls and Junkyard

Dog. That leaves a huge cast of characters to look at in upcoming episodes and that's exactly what we're going to do here. This episode has several of the people on the first show but also a bunch of other names that we haven't seen yet. Let's get to it.

Nikolai Volkoff and Freddie Blassie promise to take the WWF World Title back to Russia and then push the missile button to destroy us all. Volkoff and Sheik have lost the Tag Team Titles to the US Express, who have since lost them to the Dream Team, who we'll be seeing later.

Hulk Hogan tells America not to worry.

Hillbilly Jim, Cousin Luke and Uncle Elmer (the resident hillbillies) are ready for Elmer's wedding and the reception later tonight. Piper comes in and mocks the whole thing.

Opening sequence, again with different people than last time but still ending with Hogan.

Vince and Jesse run down the card. Ventura thinks the wedding is going to be boring.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Nikolai Volkoff

We get the Russian national anthem and Real American Hulk Hogan actually doesn't interrupt. Instead we get an on the floor promo from Hogan, who hates seeing the Russian flag flying in an American ring. He'll be carrying the Stars and Stripes to the ring and promises that it's the only flag you'll see after the match is over. Hogan actually comes to the ring to Stars and Stripes Forever instead of Real American in a nice touch.

The evil Russian jumps the champ before the bell and chokes him with a shirt. Hogan blocks a ram into the buckle though and hammers away in the corner before nailing a hard running clothesline. Some headbutts and right hands put Volkoff down again and a boot to the chest puts him onto the timekeeper's table. Volkoff lands on the bell, causing it to ring in a funny bit.

Nikolai sends Hulk into the post to take over though and stomps away on

the back inside. The gorilla press (not the full version) backbreaker plants Hogan but Volkoff doesn't go for the cover. Hulk powers out of an over the shoulder backbreaker but Nikolai pounds him back down again. A slam gets two and it's Hulk Up time. Hulk avoids a charge in the corner and the big leg is enough to retain the title.

Rating: D+. Again, the idea here was to get Hogan on free TV but this was short and dull for the most part. Volkoff was pretty much just a strong oaf who could talk about how great Russia was and then get beaten up by a real American. It was a simpler time, but it would have been nice to have someone that could have had a better match than Volkoff.

Hogan spits on the Russian flag and throws it on the ground.

Post break Hogan says he'd love to beat up Volkoff again and calls him baby doll. Hogan is ready for the wedding as well.

The bride is getting ready.

The Hillbillies aren't worried about anything they have to do tonight.

Jerry Valiant vs. Uncle Elmer

The bell rings, Elmer slams him and gets the pin. It barely broke ten seconds and is announced as a new record of six seconds.

We see the King Kong Bundy vs. SD Jones match from Wrestlemania I that held the old record of nine seconds, even though it was more like twenty one. I still don't know how they got nine out of that.

Arnold Schwarzenegger is here and it's really not treated as that big of a deal.

It's time for Jesse Ventura's Body Shop interview segment. His guest is Bobby Heenan, who has issued a \$50,000 bounty on the head of former client Paul Orndorff. Heenan suggests that Orndorff just retire instead of try to fight back.

Orndorff doesn't think the bounty is anything to worry about and laughs at the idea that Piper is already spending the money.

Piper says he'll rip Heenan's throat out if he doesn't pay off. Tonight he can make some money and get rid of someone he can't stand. He also doesn't think Elmer should get married because it means he could reproduce and who would want that?

Roddy Piper vs. Paul Orndorff

Piper comes out to a full pipe and drums band. It's a brawl to start with Piper going right at it like the fighting villain that he is. A boot to the face puts Orndorff down and Piper rams his head into the mat over and over. Orndorff comes back and hammers away before they start ripping at each others' faces. Piper keeps stomping away as the fans all stand up to look at something in the audience.

The guys head outside with Orndorff throwing a chair back inside but coming in with a shot to the head. A belly to back suplex drops Roddy but he comes back with a poke to the eye and a kneelift. They hit heads and Orndorff gets up first, nailing a cross body to take both guys outside. Neither guy cares about the count and they brawl up the aisle for the double countout.

Rating: C+. Really fun brawl here with both guys beating the tar out of each other until they went to the appropriate ending. In theory this sets up a big series of matches on house shows where they could have a real winner. These two had great chemistry together and this was very fun stuff.

It's time for the wedding with Okerlund playing the organ and Uncle Elmer in his overalls and a tie. The wrestlers are the wedding party with Andre in his tights and Hogan in a sleeveless shirt and bow tie. The minister calls the groom Uncle Elmer and everything goes fine until Elmer can't understand the minister and messes up the vows.

Roddy Piper interrupts and says there's no room for romance in wrestling. That goes nowhere as the wedding goes on without any major hitch. This went on for a good while and never really did anything of note. In theory it was supposed to be funny but it never reached that point. From what I've read, this was an actual wedding rather than just a storyline.

Some pigs and chickens are running around the reception area.

Big John Studd and King Kong Bundy, Heenan's pair of giants, say they're going to prove that they're the real giants of wrestling instead of Andre. They recently cut Andre's hair to give him his best remembered look.

Tony Atlas/Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd/King King Bundy

Atlas is a power wrestler. This was set up when Andre was beaten down by the giants, so Atlas is here to help him out. Andre chokes Bundy to start and takes him into the corner for some big hip shots. Off to Atlas who is easily knocked over with a shoulder but avoids a splash. Studd comes in and drills Tony with a shoulder of his own but gets rocked by some headbutts.

Tony misses a dropkick though and John stomps away. Bundy gets in a cheap shot when Andre goes after Studd, but Tony crawls over for the tag a few seconds later. We get an awkward sequence as Andre doesn't seem sure of what to do before he just lays on Studd against the ropes. A big boot sends John outside but Bundy comes in with a cheap shot. Studd rams Atlas into the post and the giants double team Andre for a double DQ.

Rating: D+. Not much to this one but it was designed to set up something later on. At the end of the day, Atlas just wasn't much of a partner for Andre as he needed someone a bit bigger to hang in there with monsters like Bundy and Studd. The match wasn't anything to see but it advanced a major story.

Hogan comes in to save his old friend Andre, setting up another showdown later on.

Gene Okerlund, in safari gear, is on a hunt. Granted the tiger print jeep doesn't do much for his camouflage. Apparently he's hunting for George Steele and has been told to look in the Detroit Zoological Park. Steele is right there and hasn't been seen since undergoing shock treatment, which gave him the ability to speak for a few moments before another shock turned him back to his normal self. He and Gene look at some animals, including a tiger (Steele: "Detroit!"), a weasel ("Heenan!") and

a hippopotamus ("Bundy!"). George runs off into some bushes. I miss these segments outside the arena as they make things a bit more interesting.

The new Tag Team Champions the Dream Team (Greg Valentine and Brutus Beefcake) are willing to fight anyone. We see a clip of Brutus blinding Barry Windham to win the titles. Barry and Rotundo will be sitting ringside for the match.

Tag Team Titles: Dream Team vs. Tony Garea/Lanny Poffo

Garea is an old timer and five time Tag Team Champion. Poffo is more famous as the Genius and Randy Savage's brother. Valentine easily slams Lanny down and works on a headlock before tagging in Brutus. Poffo quickly fights back and drops both guys before getting two off a moonsault to Beefcake. The champs work over Poffo in the corner but he finally dives over and tags in Garea. Tony speeds things up for a bit and takes over until Beefcake gets in a cheap shot from the apron, allowing Valentine to put on the Figure Four to retain the titles. Windham and Rotundo didn't do a thing.

Rating: D+. Total squash again here with the champs never being in anything resembling danger. Then again they were in there against a couple of jobbers so the ending never was in much doubt. The division was about to take off in another year or so with the Dream Team being one of the last teams of the old era.

We go to the wedding reception where Jesse is writing a poem for the bride and groom. Hogan thinks this could launch Elmer to the top of the WWF. Lou Albano is eating with Cousin Luke and tries to teach him some manners. Poffo, still sweaty and in his gear, reads a poem of his own for the couple, ending it with a plug for NBC. Hillbilly Jim says he's open for dinner invites every Sunday.

There's a special guest: Tiny Tim! Who is that you ask? Well he's a guy who had a novelty song called Tiptoe Through The Tulips which he sang while playing his ukelele. Tim was involved in a nationally televised wedding before this and has been mentioned throughout the night. He gives Elmer a ukelele and that's it for Tim tonight.

Jesse reads his poem and calls the whole thing wrong. Wrestling and romance don't belong together so all the good guys throw him into a cake to end the show.

After a break, Vince announces Hogan/Andre vs. Bundy/Studd on the next show, a month from tonight. Hogan is excited about the match and we go to our last break before dancing ends the show.

Overall Rating: D. This one really didn't do it for me as most of it was based around the wedding and it really wasn't all that entertaining. Why should I care about a comedy character getting married on national TV? It comes off like nothing but a ratings ploy, which really shouldn't be necessary on the second show of a series.

The wrestling wasn't much better here as most of the matches were either really quick or just there to set up something later on down the line. Thankfully it's a short line with only a month before the next episode. The Hogan and Andre team is going to wind up being something important, but we're a good way off from that. Bad episode here though.

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NXT – July 8, 2015: Do We Have Proof He's A Human?

NXT

Date: July 8, 2015

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Corey Graves, Rich Brennan

We have a new NXT Champion though we're likely only going to hear about it in voiceovers as this is a taped show from a few weeks back. Finn Balor took the NXT Title from Kevin Owens in Tokyo on 4th of July and you know Owens is going to be gunning to get his title back. Other than that though, we have the Vaudevillains vs. Enzo/Cass for the #1 contendership. Let's get to it.

Sasha Banks/??? vs. Dana Brooke/Emma

The new announcer introduces Dana and then throws in that she's accompanied by her partner Emma. Dana laughs at Sasha for not having a partner so the fans chant Blue Pants. Sasha is ready to fight on her own but here's someone to back her up.

Sasha Banks/Charlotte vs. Dana Brooke/Emma

Charlotte says she'll be Sasha's partner but Banks owes her one. Banks kicks Dana around to start but Brooke runs when it's off to Charlotte. That means it's off to Emma, who bails to the floor to avoid a knee drop. The heels finally take over but the fans are busy arguing over whether Dana is ratchet or not. Emma bodyscissors Charlotte to slow it down but she fights up for the tag off to Sasha and the champ cleans house. A running knee in the corner and the Bank Statement makes Brooke tap at 4:39.

Rating: C. This didn't have time to go anywhere and it dragged the match down a lot. Dana tapping out is a bad sign for her but I don't think anyone really bought her as the top star of the division or anything like that. Sasha vs. Charlotte again is going to be fine and Becky and Bayley

returning will make things even better.

As you might guess, Charlotte's payment will be a title shot next week, which Sasha is just fine with.

Bayley says she can't wrestle at the moment because of a broken hand. She'll be back for the NXT Title, but Emma is in for more than a hug.

Video on Finn Balor's rise to the top of NXT and becoming #1 contender.

We get a clipped version of Balor vs. Owens for the title in Tokyo, but here's the full match in case you haven't read it yet.

NXT Title: Finn Balor vs. Kevin Owens

We get the Demon entrance and oh yes it's still glorious. For a bonus, the camera changes to an arena shot at the crescendos of the music. To make it feel even more special, we get the full on flower presentation from geisha girls (Owens throws his into the crowd of course) and streamers for both guys. Get this through your head ROH: doing the same thing for every match doesn't make it feel more special. Hideo Itami is shown in the front row and we're ready to start. Balor has more paint than ever with his face, torso and left leg covered.

Balor charges at the bell and loads up the Coup de Grace in the first ten seconds. Owens rolls outside so Balor nails a big dive as the NXT chants start up. He tries to bail again and eats a baseball slide as Balor is all over him. Back in and Owens hammers away to take over for the first time. Owens: "AND THAT'S WHY I'M THE CHAMP!" We hear more of Balor's accomplishments in New Japan as Owens takes some bows.

It's off to Chinlock City before a forearm breaks up Balor's springboard. The slow pace is working for Kevin here and it fits him very well. Finn beats the count back in but takes the backsplash for two. Back in and Owens snapmares him down and runs the ropes...before stopping for a chinlock. Owens: "Are you not impressed? I don't care. I hate this country and all its stupid people!" Balor fights back again with a middle rope forearm for two so Owens does Cena's finishing sequence, complete with an attempted AA.

Balor is afraid of a lawsuit over gimmick infringement (only Kurt Angle can steal that many finishers) and slips out twice in a row. Bloody Sunday is teased (and the fans gasp) but it's a Pele Kick to put Owens down instead. Owens takes a big flip dive and a top rope double stomp to the back, followed by a reverse Bloody Sunday (not called that of course) for a VERY close two. The Coup de Grace misses though and Owens' Cannonball gets two. The package piledriver slam gets the same but Balor hits a quick Sling Blade.

Another Coup de Grace is countered so Balor kicks him in the head and FINALLY connects with the stomp...for two. Dang I thought that was it. Owens can't hit the swinging fisherman's superplex so he settles for a middle rope Regal Roll for two. That looked great. Kevin's Swanton hits knees and the real Bloody Sunday gets an even closer two. They're trading bombs here and it's getting awesome. Owens makes the eternal mistake of slapping a hero in the face and saying the hero can't beat him. Balor dropkicks him into the corner, hits a running corner dropkick and a second Coup de Grace for the title at 19:30.

Rating: B+. Was there ever any doubt that this was going to be awesome? Owens is one of the best heels that I've seen in years and he does everything he can do to make you hate him. The fact that he can go as well as he does in the ring makes him even better, which is saying quite a bit as he's that good as a character.

Tatsumi Fujinami congratulates Balor on his win.

Kevin Owens doesn't have anything to say about the loss.

Chad Gable doesn't know why Jason Jordan doesn't want him as his partner other than he's happy with losing. Jordan finally comes up and asks Gable to be his partner next week. Well it's more saying they'll be partners next week but it's as polite as Jordan gets.

Solomon Crowe says he's back to be the resident monster.

Marcus Louis vs. Solomon Crowe

Louis is back with no music but he's still crazy. A chop puts him down

and Crowe puts on a standing Crippler's Crossface with his leg tied into Louis' to crank on the shoulder. That's a new one. Louis crotches him on top for a very aggressive two and puts on a kneeling abdominal stretch. Crowe fights up again and slaps on a Brock Lock, apparently called the Crowebar for the tap out at 3:18.

Rating: C-. Well Crowe looked better, but it's still not fitting for him. I'm also never a fan of a crazy guy tapping out as it shows way too much logic and common sense to give up like that. The match wasn't anything special but neither guy has anything going for them so seeing them on TV is a good sign.

The Vaudevillains say they'll be the #1 contenders.

Clip of some guys congratulating Balor on winning, including John Cena. Balor says this couldn't have gone any better.

Vaudevillains vs. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady

English is rocking a MANLY beard. Enzo and Gotch get things going with Simon getting a rollup for two. Off to English for a headlock on the mat but he's back out just a few seconds later. Cass shoves both of them to the floor and calls them S-A-W-F-T as we take a break. Back with Cass throwing Enzo into Aiden for two but Enzo charges into a boot in the corner, giving him one of the best eyes wide open stunned faces I've ever seen.

It's Enzo playing the semi-human in peril (I've yet to see actual proof that he's a person) in a chinlock followed by a legdrop before diving over for the tag to Colin. Everything breaks down and Aiden gets kicked in the face. The Rocket Launcher has to be changed into a cross body though and English rolls through for the pin and the title shot at 10:48.

Rating: C+. I liked this more than I thought I would but my goodness they're really not going with Enzo and Cass getting the titles in Brooklyn? Are they just asking for the worst reaction in years? I know the Vaudevillains will be well received, but my goodness this is one of those layup ideas that they're just missing. Granted there's another month before we could get there so all hope isn't lost.

Overall Rating: C+. This was another shot that set the stage for later more than a good stand alone episode. However, it's setting up Takeover in Brooklyn and there's no way that's not going to be awesome due to the crowd reaction alone. Things will pick up when they can say Balor won the title instead of just having the commentary do it, but Sami will get a great reaction next week in the last show of the taping cycle.

Results

Sasha Banks/Charlotte b. Dana Brooke/Emma – Bank Statement to Brooke

Solomon Crowe b. Marcus Louis – Crowebar

Vaudevillains b. Enzo Amore/Colin Cassady – English rolled through a high cross body

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