

Summerslam Count-Up – 2004: Orton, Benoit, HHH... And Eugene

Summerslam 2004

Date: August 15, 2004

Location: Air Canada Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Attendance: 17,640

Announcers: Jim Ross, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Tazz

A year has passed but not a lot has really changed. Evolution still runs Raw but Benoit has jumped shows and is the World Champion. Over on Smackdown we have Angle in another rematch from Wrestlemania against Eddie Guerrero, although not for the title this time. John Bradshaw Layfield, now a businessman instead of a bar fighter, beat Guerrero for the title over the summer and gets to defend against Undertaker tonight. HHH on the other hand is fighting a slow guy named Eugene at the second biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

The theme this year is the WWE Olympic Games. It's definitely more on the cute side than serious, but that could be said about a lot of Summerslams.

The theme song is Summertime Blues by Rush so we get some good music. The video focuses on almost all of the big matches but doesn't give a ton of backstory.

Dudleys vs. Paul London/Rey Mysterio/Billy Kidman

This was when the Dudley Boyz were under Spike's (Cruiserweight Champion) leadership and going to war with the Cruiserweight division for lack of regular sized tag teams to feud against. Spike recently beat Rey for the title so this is technically two feuds combined into one since London and Kidman are Smackdown tag champions. Kidman fires off forearms to D-Von to start before taking him down via an armdrag. Off to London with some more forearms and a nice dropkick for two.

Bubba cheats like a true Bully was and the bad guys take over. Spike comes in off the top with a double stomp to the ribs as the fans want tables. Bubba comes in and suplexes London down while calling him a piece of crap and threatening to beat his face in. You can't go wrong with a loudmouthed New Yorker who can fight. Off to D-Von for a chinlock as Cole is already at two vintages less than four minutes into the match. London ducks a Bubba clothesline to knock D-Von to the floor.

An enziguri puts Bubba down and there's the hot tag to Mysterio. Rey gets two beat on Spike in an attempt to get revenge for being put through a table. Dropping the Dime gets two on Spike and a top rope rana gets the same. Rey hits a springboard seated senton to Rey and a big facejam to D-Von. Kidman tags himself in and hits a jumping back elbow off the top (love that move) to Spike.

The BK Bomb (Sky High) gets two on Spike and everything breaks down. London dives off the top to the floor to take out Bubba as Rey and Kidman hit a Hart Attack on Spike. 619 to Spike sets up the Shooting Star for two but D-Von makes the save. Rey dives at D-Von but only hits barricade before Ray kills London with a clothesline. Kidman tries to fight off both big Dudleys on his own but walks into 3D with Spike getting the pin.

Rating: C. Good choice for an opener here but it might have been better to split this up and give us two title matches instead. Still though, starting things off with a fast paced tag match is always a good idea as it sets the pace for the rest of the show. The good guys' high spots were more than enough to fire up the crowd and the show is off to a fast start, which is the goal of an opener.

We recap Matt Hardy vs. Kane. Matt's girlfriend Lita slept with Kane to keep him from destroying Matt but got pregnant as a result. The solution? A match to determine who Lita has to marry of course. What else would it have been?

Matt Hardy vs. Kane

We get to see Lita in something resembling a dress which is a rare visual. This is called a Til Death Do Us Part match which I guess is similar to the Love Her Or Leave Her match in 1999, but I'm pretty sure

it's a standard one on one match. Matt jumps Kane from the opening bell and hits a running clothesline in the corner. The Side Effect gets two and Kane is sent to the apron. A middle rope Fameasser brings Kane back inside and a nearly botched tornado DDT gets two.

Matt pounds on Kane in the corner as this is completely one sided so far. As soon as I say that, Kane comes back with a huge uppercut to lay Matt out. Kane chokes away both on the mat and in the corner before staring at Lita. Kane misses a charge and gets low bridged to the floor so Matt can hit a big dive. A Twist of Fate on the floor has Kane in trouble but there's no count on the floor. Kane sits up and gets back in at nine so Matt goes back to the stomping.

Lita slides in the ring bell and distracts the referee long enough for Matt to knock Kane silly for two. Back up and Hardy has to fight out of a chokeslam bid but gets caught by a big boot to the face. Kane goes up top but gets crotched, sending Matt up for a top rope DDT. You don't go up top with Kane though as he grabs Matt by the throat and a top rope chokeslam is good for the pin.

Rating: C. This was short but fun while it lasted. Matt was working hard out there but he was just up against too much. The top rope chokeslam looked good too with Matt bouncing off the canvas. Kane was good as a ruthless monster like this and the evil smiles helped a lot. Lita's early days as a heel were fun give what was coming for her in the coming years.

Randy Ortno says tonight is about the rise of a new star, but someone stops him in his tracks. John Cena shows up and takes the spotlight from Orton and offers to hook Orton up with his own merchandise. Cena polls the audience and they don't think he's winning the title tonight. He's still in the full on rapper mode but he's clearly working as hard as he can at it which is what gets you noticed. Orton doesn't care what the people think because he's winning the title tonight.

Booker T. vs. John Cena

Booker is US Champion but this is the first match in a best of 5 series for the title, meaning the belt isn't on the line here. Cena won the title at Wrestlemania but was stripped of it by then GM Kurt Angle with

Booker winning it a few weeks later. They slug it out in the middle of the ring to start until Cena gets two off a hard clothesline. Booker elbows out of a hammerlock and chops away but another clothesline puts him down.

Cena hits the Throwback for two but Booker crotches him on the top and knocks Cena out to the floor to take over. Back in and Booker fires off a hook kick to the jaw and drops a knee to the head. The side kick (called a spin kick by Cole despite a lack of spinning) puts Cena down and it's off to a quickly broken camel clutch. Booker stops Cena's comeback and it's off to a chinlock. Cena fights up and gets two off a quick small package before avoiding the ax kick. John makes his comeback with his usual array of strikes, only to get caught in a facejam, setting up the Spinarooni....but Booker walks into the FU for the pin.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much and it's kind of stupid to have the first match of a best of five series here. The whole thing wouldn't end until October, dragging the idea out WAY too long. It wasn't bad but this felt like it could have been on any given episode of Smackdown. Also did we really need to have the champion lose clean in less than seven minutes?

Teddy Long, still the Smackdown GM, brags about the best of 5 series idea to himself. Eric Bischoff comes in (Teddy: "Hey it's the head cracker that runs Raw.") and laughs at Smackdown for having so many GM's. He thinks Teddy will be out of a job by Survivor Series. This is being written nearly nine years later and Teddy is still kicking around on Smackdown and has been GM on and off the entire time. Anyway Long says he'd love to take Bischoff's nephew Eugene to Smackdown and making him a huge star. Apparently that offer is good for anyone sick of Bischoff's nonsense.

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. Chris Jericho vs. Batista

Edge is defending and Batista has been destroying everyone left and right leading up to this with a big running clothesline. Batista jumps Edge during his entrance but Jericho is quickly on Big Dave. The fans are surprisingly behind Jericho despite us being in Edge's hometown. Batista starts firing off the shoulder blocks in the corner and catches a cross

body in a powerslam to put Jericho down. Edge comes in just in time to break up the Batista Bomb with Jericho going to the floor.

Batista drops Edge face first on the buckle with snake eyes but Jericho breaks up the big clothesline. Edge dropkicks Batista to the floor.....and is booed out of the building. Odd indeed. He joins the challengers on the floor and sends Batista shoulder first into the steps as the fans say they want Christian. Instead they get a battle of the Canadians in the ring with Jericho being the HUGE favorite. Edge takes over and the booing begins again.

Jericho counters the Edgecution into a Walls attempt but Edge counters that into a small package for two. Edge rolls through a cross body for two but now the Walls go on full. Jericho pulls him away from the ropes and Edge is in big trouble but Batista makes the last second save. He sends Jericho into the post but gets caught by a tornado DDT from Edge for two.

Chris is back up just in time to break up the spear to Batista, because why would you want the monster taken down? Batista hits the spinebuster on Jericho for two as Edge saves. He escapes a spinebuster from Batista as well before getting two on a rollup to Jericho. Jericho makes another comeback on Edge with the fans entirely behind him. The bulldog takes Edge down but he has to dropkick Batista down, allowing Edge to spear his fellow Canadian down to retain.

Rating: C-. This came off like a forced heel turn for Edge and the full turn would be coming very soon. Jericho being the big favorite was only somewhat surprising as he was a native countryman but you would expect Edge to have been a bit popular there. The match was nothing special but the idea was to keep Batista down which is a nice rub for him and his time was coming soon.

We recap Eddie Guerrero vs. Kurt Angle. Eddie beat Angle at Wrestlemania to retain the title and then Angle's neck legitimately gave out so he was made GM. Angle then made the decision that cost Eddie the title (the right call actually) and then screwed him over in the rematch, setting up the second match here.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Kurt Angle

Technical stuff to start with Eddie actually surviving on the mat. The fans are almost entirely behind Angle but it's Eddie going for the ankle. When that gets him nowhere it's off to a headlock instead but you know Angle isn't going to stand for that very long. He hooks a keylock on Eddie's arm but Eddie gets out with a fireman's carry. Off to an armbar by Guerrero but Angle spins out, only to be caught in the ankle lock in the middle of the ring.

Kurt finally rolls over and rakes the eyes to escape before hooking an Angle Slam for two. There go the straps and the ankle lock is locked on Eddie, only to have him counter into another one of his own. Kurt counters THAT into his second ankle lock but Guerrero makes it to the ropes. Angle's heavy Luther Reigns gets in a cheap shot and Kurt goes right back to the hold but Eddie makes another rope.

Back in the middle of the ring and Angle hooks a very modified STF as the mat work continues nonstop. Kurt goes to a regular leg lock and starts taking off Eddie's boot which is what cost him the Wrestlemania match. Off to a chinlock with a leg trap but Eddie fights up and gets a jawbreaker and an Angle Slam of his own. Yeah Kurt LOVED the whole stealing finishers bit.

Back up and Eddie fires away as his boot is almost off. The Three Amigos put Angle down but he pops up and runs the corner to suplex Guerrero down before the frog splash. The Angle Slam is countered into a DDT but the frog splash misses. Now the Angle Slam connects for two (duh) and the fans are behind Guerrero. Angle rips Eddie's boot off and the ankle lock goes on again, but this time Eddie rolls through, sending Kurt into the referee.

A boot shot to the head puts down both Angle and Reigns but Eddie throws the boot down and drops to the mat like a good cheater. The frog splash gets two and the fans changes sides again. Eddie complains to the referee and the ankle lock goes on again, this time forcing the tap out.

Rating: B. This was entertaining but it felt like it skipped a few gears. The seven straight minutes of mat work were good but when you go from

that into the traditional main event style it's kind of a big jump. Angle looked good out there but Eddie really didn't do much. It felt like we were just waiting on Angle to finally catch him and then he did to end the match.

We recap HHH vs. Eugene. Rock saved Eugene from an attack but Eugene said HHH was his favorite wrestler. HHH used this to his advantage and made Eugene an honorary member of Evolution. Flair: "It'll kill our gimmick!" HHH said it was just to get the title back but Eugene wound up costing HHH his rematch against Benoit, leading to the Evolution beatdown. This led to HHH destroying Eugene's friend William Regal, setting up HHH vs. Eugene tonight. You know, HHH, the multi-time world champion against a slow guy who learned to wrestle watching TV.

HHH vs. Eugene

They slug it out to start and HHH stomps him into the corner. Eugene comes back with an elbow to the face and a backdrop, sending HHH rolling to the floor. An ax handle off the apron puts HHH down and the booing begins. As in people are booing Eugene. This sounds like a good time for a sidebar.

For those of you that weren't around in 2004, Eugene was easily the most over guy on the roster for a few weeks. I mean his music would play and the crowd would just explode, no matter what city they were in. Even I was a big fan of the guy. He was such a fun and innocent character that it was almost impossible to not like him. It was so goofy to see him doing Stunners and Rock Bottoms and stuff Junk Yard Dog did back in the day because it was like watching a five year old wrestle. Then one night he was shown in a gym beating William Regal in a chain wrestling contest, making him even more popular.

In other words, the Eugene character was a full on success. This is where WWE screwed everything up. Instead of just letting Eugene be what he was and make occasional appearances to pop the crowd (or open house show matches beating some annoying heel), they pushed it too far. The minute they put him in a story about the world title with main event level guys, it was all over.

At the end of the day, that's just not what the people wanted Eugene to be. They wanted it to be fun and silly so they could have a good time with it, but WWE tried to make it serious, completely killing the joke. As soon as you tell fans that Eugene's character has a problem, you're no longer laughing at a guy who does goofy things but rather you're laughing at a slow guy, which no one wants to do.

This lead to the fans not wanting to watch Eugene anymore, because he really was just a guy doing a bunch of random wrestling moves and had no business being at this level (Note that Nick Dinsmore, the guy that portrayed Eugene is a very talented wrestler. His character was what didn't belong here, not Dinsmore himself. BIG difference). When you try to force the fans to like something in a way they don't want to, it's going to blow up in a hurry. The lesson to be learned: don't make the audience go somewhere they don't want to go, because at the end of the day they make the decisions, not the company.

So anyway HHH hides behind Lillian to get the advantage and rams Eugene into the barricade before heading back inside for some stomping. He loads up the announce table but Eugene suplexes him back in to block. Eugene pounds away back inside but HHH sends him to the floor. Back in and HHH hits some backbreakers after suckering Eugene in after faking an injury. Eugene comes back so HHH begs off again, only to be pulled into a Rock Bottom and a People's Elbow, with the latter being pulled into a spinebuster from HHH.

They head outside again with HHH sending him into the steps, busting Eugene's shoulder open. Back inside and HHH continues toying with him before hooking a sleeper. Eugene shakes his finger at two arm drops before powering up and pounding away. He Hulks Up, catches the boot and does the Austin version of the finger in the face before hitting a Stunner. Back to the floor (again?) and here's Flair.

Eugene hits the big boot and legdrop for two but has to deck Flair. A Pedigree is countered into a catapult and Eugene hits one of his own but it's Flair making the save. Flair trips Eugene and gets ejected, drawing out Regal to knock Flair out cold. The distraction lets HHH hit the Pedigree for the pin on Eugene.

Rating: D-. Let's recap: it took fourteen minutes and help from Flair for HHH to beat Eugene. On the other hand, we had to sit through fourteen minutes of HHH vs. Eugene and HHH had to sell most of the offense. AT SUMMERSLAM! This was the death of the Eugene character, even though he would win the tag titles with Regal soon after this. Somehow he went on THREE MORE YEARS, which is remarkable after how stupid this match was.

Now let's waste more time with Divas Dodgeball, which is exactly what it sounds like. This is taking place at a basketball practice facility so you know the live crowd is THRILLED. It's good looking girls basically in swimsuits and another team in uniforms. This is beneath me and that's all there is to it. It's the main roster Divas vs. the Diva Search girls and after about five minutes of intros we get to the two minute game. The Diva Search girls dominate and win.

Smackdown World Title: Undertaker vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

No real story here other than Taker has to get a title shot at one PPV a year. They quickly head to the floor and Taker has to glare JBL's goon Orlando Jordan down before punching the champion in the face. Back inside but JBL punches his way out of Old School. A neckbreaker puts Taker down and a side slam gets two. Jibbles hits a top rope shoulder for two more but Taker pulls him down with an armbar of all things.

Now Old School connects and a downward spiral gets two before Taker cranks on a triangle choke. Back up and they trade big boots but Taker has to knock Jordan off the apron. JBL takes him down and wraps the leg around the post before cracking the ankle with a chair. The bad knee is rammed into the announce table and we head back inside with JBL busting out a Robinsdale Crunch of all things.

Off to a side leg lock but Taker quickly counters into a half crab. Taker switches over to a knee bar and the fans are loudly booing. Back up and Taker punches him out to the floor with a big right hand going into JBL's jaw. The fans want the Spanish table but get the apron leg drop and more standing around. Back in and JBL gets punched off the top, setting up an Undertaker superplex but JBL goes right back to the knee to take over. He tries a spinning toehold but gets caught by the throat.

Taker hits a spinebuster of all things for two and the fans are counting down to something. The jumping clothesline puts JBL down but Taker's knee is bothering him. A Snake Eyes and big clothesline combination gets two on the champion. The chokeslam connects but JBL gets a shoulder up to surprise the crowd. Here comes the tombstone but Taker has to get rid of Jordan again, allowing the Clothesline to put the dead man down for two.

Now the fans are behind Undertaker as he pounds away in the corner. There goes the referee and a double big boot puts both guys down. Jordan throws in the title so JBL can knock Taker out but even with Jordan picking up the referee's hand it's only good for two. Another Jordan distraction lets JBL hit a second Clothesline for no cover. He pounds away in the corner and gets caught in the Last Ride but there's STILL no referee. A delayed cover gets two and here's Jordan for the 4th time but Taker knocks the title out of his hand, decks JBL with it, and gets caught for the LAME disqualification.

Rating: D. I've seen worse matches but the ending dragged it into the ground. This needed about five minutes taken away and added to the previous match to make the best out of everything. The match just went WAY too long and they had to repeat things so many times that the fans were chanting for the table instead of the match. This would be a repetitive pattern for JBL matches for the next eight months or so. Also what happened to Taker's leg injury after about ten minutes in?

Taker chokeslams JBL through the roof of his limousine for revenge and to fill in some time. JBL does a stretcher job.

Wrestlemania 21 is in LA.

Raw World Title: Randy Orton vs. Chris Benoit

Orton won a battle royal a month ago to set this up. It's weird to see Orton with hair, regular colored skin and few tattoos. The fans of course are more interested in telling Earl Hebner that he screwed Bret. Feeling out process to start with Benoit taking it into the corner for a clean break. Benoit takes it to the mat and puts on a hard chinlock which gets him nowhere. Off to a test of strength with the taller Orton taking over,

but Benoit comes back with pure leverage.

Benoit hooks an armbar as we reset a bit. Orton fights up and is armdragged right back down to the mat with Benoit cranking away on the arm. That goes nowhere so Benoit tries a Sharpshooter but Orton kicks him off and puts on one of his own. Benoit counters into his own Sharpshooter but it's not on full, allowing Orton to get to the ropes. The Crossface doesn't go on full either so they head to the floor where Benoit is whipped into the barricade.

There's the Spanish table chant again as Benoit is sent shoulder first into the post. Back in and Orton puts on an armbar of his own, showing some basic psychology. Orton drops him ribs first across the top rope and the fight moves to the outside with Benoit hitting a kind of DDT onto the apron to take over. Chris tries a suicide dive but rams his head into the barricade as Orton moves to the side. Back in and Orton wrenches the neck around before putting on something resembling a camel clutch.

Orton puts Benoit over his shoulder for a powerbomb but steps forward into a neckbreaker for two in a nice move. We hit the chinlock which is actually a smart move here. Back up and both guys hit cross bodies for a double knockout. They slug it out with the champion taking over via a series of forearms to the head. Orton blocks the rolling Germans but gets caught in a northern lights for two.

Randy fights off a superplex and hits a high cross body for two, crushing Benoit's head again in the process. Chris ducks a clothesline and hits a release German suplex before putting on the Sharpshooter. Two arm drops later and Orton gets to the ropes, only to be caught in a long series of rolling Germans for two. Benoit loads up the Swan Dive but Orton gets up the knee, driving it right into Benoit's jaw. That's hard to watch today. Orton's cover is countered into a bad looking Crossface but Orton rolls away to escape. Back up and another Crossface attempt is countered into the RK0 out of nowhere for the pin and the title.

Rating: B+. This took a bit to get going but I really liked the ending with the RK0 hitting from nowhere. It caught the technical master off guard which was the right idea given that Orton is younger and faster.

It's a good match and Benoit put Orton over clean right in the middle of the ring. You can't ask for more than that.

Orton celebrates as Benoit leaves but Chris comes back and demands that Orton be a man and shake his hand.

Overall Rating: D. This show really wasn't all that good. You have two good matches out of eight on the card (faces being 2-6 on this show didn't help things) with Angle vs. Guerrero having been done better at Wrestlemania and Benoit vs. Orton being done again the next night on Raw. Undertaker vs. JBL would go on for a few more months while Benoit would drop out of the title scene. Orton's push would be stopped cold as HHH would beat him for the title a month later and hold onto it until April because that's what HHH does. This isn't a good show though and is one of the worst Summerslams in a long time.

Ratings Comparison

Dudleys vs. Billy Kidman/Paul London/Rey Mysterio

Original: B-

Redo: C

Matt Hardy vs. Kane

Original: B

Redo: C

John Cena vs. Booker T

Original: D

Redo: D+

Chris Jericho vs. Edge vs. Batista

Original: C

Redo: C-

Eddie Guerrero vs. Kurt Angle

Original: C-

Redo: B

HHH vs. Eugene

Original: D

Redo: D-

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. Undertaker

Original: B-

Redo: D

Chris Benoit vs. Randy Orton

Original: A

Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: D

What was I thinking on that Undertaker match?

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Summerslam Count-Up – 2003: But That Means HHH Wouldn't Be Champion!

Summerslam 2003

Date: August 24, 2003

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 16,113

Commentators: Jim Ross, Tazz, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

Another year another Summerslam and yet again the company has changed. Tonight we have a double main event with a Wrestlemania rematch of Lesnar vs. Angle II for the Smackdown Title and an Elimination Chamber match for the Raw Title. 2003 was split down the middle in quality as Raw was atrocious and Smackdown was some of the best television in company history. It's always interesting to see the two shows come together. Let's get to it.

The US Marine Corps presents the American flag while Lillian sings the Star Spangled Banner.

The opening video talks about how there is evil in this world and the Chamber tonight will prove it.

Raw Tag Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. La Resistance

The Dudleyz are challenging and the EVIL foreigners are Rene Dupree and Sylvain Grenier. Bubba of course comes out with an American flag to hammer in the face status. The whole patriotism thing was a big deal in this feud as the third member of La Resistance, an American named Rob Conway, pretended to be a soldier to sneak up on the Dudleyz. It's a

brawl to start in the aisle with the challengers in full control.

D-Von chokes Dupree with the robe to start before armbarring Grenier down. A slam and a legdrop gets two on Sylvain and it's off to Bubba for the power brawling. He puts Grenier in the Tree of Woe and stands on his crotch to make the French guy scream. The Dudleys clear the ring but Grenier gets in a cheap shot to give the champions control on Bubba. A double shoulder puts Bubba down for two as the USA chant starts up.

Back to Dupree for a bearhug, which isn't often a move you see on a fat man like Bubba. Some headbutts break up hold but Bubba walks into a spinebuster for two. Bubba punches his way over to the hot tag (four minutes into the match) and D-Von cleans house. A rollup gets two on Grenier as everything breaks down. D-Von walks into a double spinebuster for two but it's What's Up to Dupree. The 3D lays out Dupree but Grenier makes save. Now a cameraman lays out D-Von with a camera to the head to retain the titles. It's Rob Conway of course.

Rating: D+. That's a pretty lame choice for an opener. Not only did the fans not get what they wanted but the match sucked as well. This was a dark time for the tag team division and there was no reason at all for there to be two sets of titles at this point. At the end of the day there wasn't nearly enough depth and it made for lame matches like this. The Dudleys would get the belts next month.

Spike tries to run in for the save but Conway lays him out with the camera. Conway hasn't been named here but I think the spoiler is ok at this point.

Coach says La Resistance was clever so Bubba accuses him of being anti-American and vows to get the belts back.

Eric Bischoff is warming up when Intercontinental Champion Christian comes up. He wants to know why he isn't on the show but Bischoff blames Co-GM Steve Austin. Christian isn't pleased but offers to be in Eric's corner for his match later. Bischoff says he has his own plan and won't answer what happens in the bedroom with Linda. Eric says he'll tell everyone later.

We recap A-Train vs. Undertaker. A-Train (Tensai) is working for Vince who is in a semi-war with Taker, setting up tonight's match. This would evolve into a bigger war soon enough.

Undertaker vs. A-Train

A-Train comes out with Vince's mistress Sable and Undertaker has bad ribs. Feeling out process to start with A-Train grabbing a few headlocks for early control. Taker hits a quick Russian legsweep for two and he cranks on the arm to set up Old School. The second attempt works a bit better and Taker stays on the arm. A big boot misses and Taker falls out to the floor, reinjuring the ribs.

A-Train starts pounding away on the ribs and sends them into the barricade for two back in the ring. Taker gets in some shots to the ribs of his own for a breather but A-Train comes back with an impressive suplex to take him down. This is the kind of character A-Train was perfect as: a heavy who could do some impressive moves at times. A-Train fights out of a sleeper with a belly to back suplex but Taker hits a quick Snake Eyes to get a breather. A big boot misses the big bald head and a double clothesline puts each other down.

Taker wins a slugout after A-Train hung in there a lot longer than expected. Now the big boot sets up the legdrop (BROTHER) for two and another legdrop to the back of the head with A-Train on the apron has the bald one staggered. The Last Ride is easily broken up but the referee is bumped.

A-Train hits the Derailer (chokebomb) but the delayed count only gets two. Taker accidentally clotheslines the referee down again (the second match does NOT warrant two ref bumps) and A-Train brings in a chair, only to have it cracked over his own head for a near fall. A-Train escapes a tombstone but gets caught in a chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: D. What are you expecting out of this match? This was back when Taker was pretty bad in the ring due to being completely unmotivated and bored with the biker character. Thankfully he would be the Dead Man again by Wrestlemania and would eventually reignite his career around 2007.

Post match Sable tries to seduce Taker for some reason but Stephanie comes in to go after her, presumably setting up a mixed tag.

Coach polls some fans on who wins the Chamber.

We recap Shane McMahon vs. Eric Bischoff. Shane was feuding with Kane but Bischoff stopped them from fighting. Austin made Bischoff vs. Shane for that night but Kane interfered and cost Shane the match (he later tied Shane to the steps and electrocuted his testicles. It was stupid back then and it's even worse now. This is what I had to deal with people).

Later, Bischoff caused JR to nearly be lit on fire, so Austin had to prevent a lawsuit by making Kane vs. Bischoff but Kane walked away for some reason, giving Bischoff the win by countout. This was a qualifying match for a Summerslam match with Kane, making our match tonight. Then Bischoff went to Linda's house and pinned her arm behind her back and kissed her against her will. Think that's enough to set up this match?

Shane McMahon vs. Eric Bischoff

Before the match, Eric implies that he screwed Linda several times over that night. This brings out Shane to send Eric into the corner for a beating. Crossface punches send Bischoff to the floor but Shane clotheslines him in the back of the head. Back to ringside and Shane breaks the referee's count (sidebar: why doesn't that happen when both guys are on the floor and one guy slides back in at the last second?) before kicking away at Shane even more.

Bischoff is sent into the announce table and stomped down, only to have Coach come in with a chair and turning heel by helping Bischoff. The referee says ring the bell but Bischoff makes it No DQ and falls count anywhere. Shane is sent into the steps for two as Coach is playing the enforcer here. He holds Shane as Bischoff tells the production truck to turn off JR and King's microphones so Coach can do commentary.

Bischoff starts firing off kicks as Coach does the eternally annoying JR impersonation. This keeps going for awhile until Shane gets in a right hand, only to be dropped by a low blow from Coach. Cue Steve Austin who can't fight unless physically provoked. Shane shoves Coach into Austin

which is enough for the beating to begin. Austin and Shane stomp Coach down in the corner and clear the ring. Austin has the mics turned back on as Shane grabs Eric's hand and uses it to slap Austin's face, meaning Austin can Stun Bischoff. That's not good enough for Shane so he puts Eric on the table for the big elbow for the pin.

Rating: N/A. This was a long segment instead of a match. Also to recap how stupid things were at this point, we're supposed to be interested in Austin/Shane vs. Coach/Bischoff when Austin has equal power to Eric. We also have Stephanie vs. Sable, because EVERYONE wants to see the McMahons dominating the show. This is in addition to Evolution dragging Raw down the drain with the Kevin Nash and Goldberg feuds. See why 2003 is considered so bad?

Wrestlemania moment. Kind of an odd time for one of these but Shawn superkicking Bret was an awesome moment.

We see Kevin Nash getting ready. JR: "Nash is a street fighter at heart." I haven't laughed that hard in awhile.

Flair and HHH tell Orton to keep the title on the Game tonight and nothing more.

US Title: Eddie Guerrero vs. Chris Benoit vs. Tajiri vs. Rhyno

Eddie is defending and this is one fall to a finish. Eddie has ticked off all three challengers so they all want to take him out. The champion bails to the floor so everyone else can fight and we quickly get down to Rhyno vs. Benoit. Chris hooks a quick Crossface, drawing Eddie in for the save. Tajiri is back in as well but Eddie breaks up a cover. Everyone is in now and all three challengers go after Eddie at the same time.

Rhyno hits a running shoulder to Eddie's ribs in the corner and powerslams him down for two but Benoit comes back with a German suplex. A belly to back gets two on Tajiri but Eddie makes another save. Benoit is suplexed to the floor and Eddie is left alone with Tajiri, only to have the challenger monkey flip Eddie down for two. Rhyno comes back in and sends Tajiri to the floor but Benoit wants to beat up Eddie himself, triggering a brawl between challengers.

Rhyno gets control again and superplexes Eddie down for two but Tajiri kicks him in the back of the head. Tajiri snaps off the handspring elbow for two on Chris but Rhyno sends Tajiri to the floor, only to have Eddie headscissor him out to the floor. Eddie hurricanranas Benoit out of the corner for two and it's Tajiri in again for some hard kicks. Eddie hooks the Lasso From El Paso (Liontamer crossed with the Texas Cloverleaf) on Tajiri but Benoit stops Rhyno from making the save with the Crossface.

Tajiri makes the ropes so Eddie turns around to dropkick Benoit in the head for the save. Benoit grabs the Crossface on Guerrero but Rhyno and Tajiri make the double save. Rhyno hits a spinebuster for two on Tajiri but Benoit knocks Rhyno to the floor. Chris rolls some Germans on Tajiri but Tajiri reverses into one of his own for two on Benoit.

Tajiri catches a charging Benoit in the Tarantula and the distraction lets Eddie get the US Title to shield himself from Rhyno's Gore. Tajiri breaks up the Frog Splash but gets caught in the Tree of Woe. Benoit Swan Dives Rhyno but Tajiri makes a last second save. Tajiri and Benoit fall to the floor and Eddie frog splashes Rhyno to retain.

Rating: B+. This was non-stop action for about eleven minutes and incredibly entertaining as a result. It's a great example of how wrestling and action can be so much more interesting than whatever drama the McMahons have going on at the moment. Watching these four make save after save is WAY more fun than hearing about Bischoff forcing himself on Linda or Stephanie being FURIOUS with Sable over whatever affair her dad is having this month.

We recap Brock Lesnar destroying Zack Gowen on Smackdown (good for him). Lesnar had him COVERED in blood and rubbed the blood on his own chest. Gowen had his leg broken in two places so he couldn't face Matt Hardy tonight. Matt declared himself the winner on Heat like a good heel would.

We recap Angle vs. Lesnar. Angle lost to Brock in the main event of Wrestlemania, leading to Vengeance where Angle pinned Lesnar in a three way to get the title back. The two of them became best friends and friendly rivals, leading to Brock wanting a rematch. Vince said no, but if Lesnar can beat Vince in a cage with Angle as referee, he can have the

shot. Before the match, someone attacked Brock and laid him out with a concussion. Brock popped up and turned on Angle, revealing that he's working for Vince as the new heavy and getting the title shot for tonight. Vince called this the REAL Brock Lesnar.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle

Angle is defending of course. Brock shoves him in the corner to show off the power so Angle starts getting lower. They hit the technical stuff on the mat but Brock escapes into a standoff. Brock quickly takes him down with a headscissors but it's Angle escaping to another stalemate. Lesnar shoves him around with the power so Angle leverages him into the corner and says bring it on. Some quick armdrags send Brock out to the floor and various things are destroyed in frustration.

Lesnar picks up the belt and tries to walk out with it but Kurt pounds him down in the aisle to start the brawling. Back in and Angle snaps off the first overhead belly to belly for two before stomping him down in the corner. Brock comes right back with a gorilla press and throws Angle out to the floor. Angle is sent into the steps as this is far different from the Wrestlemania match. Back in and Brock hits a release belly to belly without leaving his feet.

Angle slips out of another gorilla press and gets two off an O'Connor Roll, only to walk into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. We hit the rear naked choke on Angle which is turned into a bodyscissors. Angle fights up but runs into a knee to the ribs to put him right back down. Kurt is pounded into the corner but grabs a rollup for two, only to be clotheslined back down. The story of this match isn't working as well as their first fight. This is much more of a traditional wrestling match with good vs. evil and that's not what these two are best at.

Lesnar comes right back with something like a Muscle Buster for two, followed up by shoulders to the ribs in the corner. Brock sends him into the corner to stay on the ribs and back before firing off more shoulders in the corner. Angle finally moves to avoid a charge, sending Brock shoulder first into the post. A dropkick takes Brock's knee out and Angle rolls some Germans for a close two. Brock comes back with an overhead

belly to belly of his own but Angle pops up and tries the Slam, only to be countered into a spinebuster for a close two. The fans are into this match.

Angle counters an F5 into a DDT and both guys are down. A delayed cover gets two for the champion and there go the straps. The Angle Slam connects but Brock is up at two as per tradition. In one of my favorite moments, Angle puts the straps up so he can take them back down, firing himself up even more. There's the ankle lock but Brock makes a rope. Angle pulls him back so the rope doesn't count in a questionable call, so Lesnar rolls out, bumping the referee in the process.

Lesnar sends him into the corner and Angle tries a sunset flip but stops before going down, wrapping his legs around Brock's neck in a choke before putting on another ankle lock. Lesnar eventually taps but there's no referee so here's Vince with a chair to Angle's back to break the hold. Brock gets to his one good foot and hits a pretty awesome one legged F5 for a delayed two. Vince demands another F5 but Angle counters into the ankle lock. Brock grabs the rope but again Angle pulls him to the middle for no break. Brock grabs all four bottom ropes but the referee doesn't break it, forcing Brock to tap out.

Rating: B. It's a good match but the ending never worked for me. At the end of the day, if you touch the ropes the hold is supposed to be broken. That's wrestling 101, but for some reason it doesn't count at the end of this match. The match was good but it was overbooked when you have these two being able to own whatever ring they're in. The Vince stuff was annoying but that's what you have to expect in WWE.

Post match Vince tries to jump Angle again but gets Angle Slammed through a chair for his efforts. And on Vince's birthday too.

Goldberg is listening to an iPod to get ready. That's such a wrong image.

Some Arizona Diamondbacks are here.

We recap Kane vs. RVD. They had been friends and tag champions but Kane lost a match to HHH, forcing him to unmask. This unleashed Kane's inner demons for the 10th time or so, turning him into a psycho who lit JR on

fire. Kane swore everyone was laughing at him even though RVD told him everything was fine. Kane beat up RVD in a match and tombstoned Linda McMahon on a stage to start his feud with Shane, leading to a rematch with Rob here tonight.

Kane vs. Rob Van Dam

Fink says this is No Holds Barred. So does that make Kane Zeus? JR calls Kane an inbred mongrel dog, which isn't that high up on his list of sayings. Van Dam fires off right hands to start but Kane takes him to the floor with a few uppercuts. Kane charges into a boot and gets kicked in the face to put the monster down. Kane easily slugs him down and pulls out a ladder. Van Dam manages to smash the end of it to drive the ladder into Kane's face, only to have Rolling Thunder caught by the throat.

RVD kicks out of the chokeslam but gets knocked out to the floor as the brawl continues. Kane sends him into the steps and is in full on monster mode. Back in and Van Dam scores with a kick and some shoulders to the ribs for two. Rob goes up top but gets shoved down onto the barricade to give Kane control again. A ladder to the face gets two back in the ring and a big clothesline puts Van Dam down again.

We hit the slow motion part of the match as Kane pounds on Van Dam very slowly to stop the crowd from being interested. Van Dam is backdropped to the floor but Kane badly botches the top rope clothesline, nearly falling on his head and dying. Kane avoids another ladder shot and DDTs Van Dam on the floor, only to have Rob catch a charging Kane in a drop toehold to send him face first into the steps. Kane is kicked into the crowd and crotched as he tries to come back to ringside.

Van Dam's spin kick off the apron puts Kane down again as this match just keeps going. Back in and Rolling Thunder onto the chair crushes Kane but Rob can't follow up. Kane sits up but gets caught by a Van Daminator. Rob loads up the Van Terminator but Kane rolls away at the last second. They head to the floor and Kane tombstones Rob onto the steps, killing him dead for the pin.

Rating: C-. This was an ok brawl but it went on WAY too long. At the end of the day this was just a rest stop on the way to Kane vs. Shane next

month which was probably the more interesting feud anyway. The match was Van Dam trying his best but not being able to keep Kane down. It certainly wasn't a squash but it wasn't many steps above one.

Eric is annoyed that Terri is asking him questions. Linda comes in and slaps Bischoff in the face.

HHH looks at the world title.

The Chamber is lowered.

We recap the world title match. There isn't much to this other than HHH is injured and can't fight Goldberg one on one so we get an Elimination Chamber instead. Goldberg is in for obvious reasons, Jericho and Nash have been feuding lately, Orton is there to give HHH a hand and Shawn is there for past issues with HHH. This gets the music video treatment, set to St. Anger by Metallica.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Kevin Nash vs. Goldberg vs. Chris Jericho vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Randy Orton

After about 12 minutes of entrances we start with Shawn vs. Jericho, who will go for three minutes. After that time is up, a pod will open to release another wrestler. Three more minutes and another pod opens. This repeats until everyone is in and it's last man standing wins.

Eliminations can occur at any time and have to take place in the ring, not on the cage floor outside the ring next to the pods. They trade hammerlocks to start until Jericho rolls through a cross body for two.

They trade chain wrestling moves into a pinfall reversal sequence as the fans chant for Goldberg. Back up and Shawn slaps him in the face before backdropping him down. Jericho's Walls attempt is countered into a small package for two but Jericho comes back with a bulldog to take Shawn down. JR screws up the world title continuity by saying the title has only changed hands once in Phoenix, but that's the other world title. Not that it matters to WWE but they make such a big deal about the continuity that it's worth pointing out.

Anyway Orton is #3 and gets two off a high cross to Shawn. Michaels is

clotheslined to the cage floor but he comes back in to pound away on Jericho. Randy dropkicks him down and stomps Jericho down against the ropes but can't RK0 Shawn. Instead Orton is sent to the cage floor by a combined effort, only to have Jericho put Shawn in the Walls. Kevin Nash is in at #4 to make the save and go after Jericho as Shawn and Orton brawl in the ring. Jericho's face is rubbed against the cage to give us our first blood.

Nash (with short blonde hair here for a movie) cleans house but walks into a superkick into a rollup for the pin by Jericho. Nash was in there about two minutes or so. HHH is #5 but Shawn superkicks him before he can get out of the pod to make sure the injured champion doesn't have to do much. Nash lays out Jericho, Orton and Shawn with Jackknives, leaving everyone down for a massive dead spot. Shawn is busted as well.

They finally get back up to slug it out as JR talks about Oklahoma for no apparent reason. Here's Goldberg at #6 to FINALLY wake the crowd up a bit. He cleans house and clotheslines Jericho and Shawn down before spearing Orton down for the pin, leaving us with four. Jericho hits a quick missile dropkick for two on Goldberg but he launches Chris into the cage to put him back down.

Goldberg sends Shawn into the corner before spearing Jericho through the glass pod. Goldberg is dazed though, allowing Shawn to drop the elbow to set up Sweet Chin Music. This is Goldberg though so the kick is blocked by a spear and the Jackhammer gets us down to three. A quick spear and Jackhammer to Jericho leaves us with HHH vs. Goldberg. HHH is still in the pod as he's been in the match for about six minutes now and literally hasn't done anything.

Flair shoves the pod door closed to save HHH so Goldberg kicks the pod door in so we can actually have a match. Goldberg pounds away in the pod before sending HHH face first into the cage. The champion is busted open but he FINALLY gets in a kick to the leg and sends Goldberg into the cage. Goldberg comes right back with a clothesline and they head into the ring. The spear is loaded up but hits the sledgehammer that Flair slid in, keeping the title on HHH.

Rating: C-. This didn't work very well and the ending sums up everything wrong with Raw in 2003. The fans were primed for a Goldberg title win, HHH was injured and had no business being in the match anyway, Goldberg dominated the match, HHH literally hit two offensive moves in ten minutes of match time, but HHH uses the sledgehammer to retain the title. Yeah Goldberg got the title a month later, but THIS is the match people remember because THIS is the big show. HHH wins at the big show, the monster wins the next month at the B show. Does this sound familiar to fans in 2013?

As for the rest of the match, there's nothing going on here. It's less than twenty minutes long from bell to bell and the three minute intervals really hold this down. No one had time to do anything, making it more like the 1995 Rumble than anything else. It's just not very good and the ending sucked whatever life it had out of the match. Again, 2003 Raw just wasn't that good and this match sums up why.

Post match HHH and Evolution gets to destroy Goldberg again with the hammer to really pound in who is the star. Goldberg is handcuffed to the cage so HHH can shove the belt in his face and remind him who the champion is to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. There's some good stuff on here but the HHH factor drags it down again. I've said this a lot tonight but 2003 just wasn't a good year overall. It's a bunch of matches and feuds that people don't want to see but we have the same McMahon nonsense over and over again because WWE is their playground and they can do whatever they like. Over on Raw HHH gets to keep the title FOREVER despite being hurt and having beasts like Benoit and Guerrero waiting in the wings to be the next guys. Did they pan out in the end? No, but at this point no one knew that was the case and HHH got the title as a result.

Ratings Comparison

La Resistance vs. Dudley Boyz

Original: C

Redo: D+

A-Train vs. Undertaker

Original: D

Redo: D

Eric Bischoff vs. Shane McMahon

Original: D

Redo: N/A

Tajiri vs. Rhyno vs. Eddie Guerrero vs. Chris Benoit

Original: B-

Redo: B+

Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle

Original: A-

Redo: B

Rob Van Dam vs. Kane

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Goldberg vs. HHH vs. Kevin Nash vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Jericho vs.
Randy Orton

Original: D

Redo: C-

Overall Rating

Original: D+

Redo: C

So I liked almost all of the matches more or the same the first time, but

the overall rating is much higher this time. Not surprising.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/08/06/history-of-summerslam-count-up-2003-brock-vs-angle-ii/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IH70904>

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Monday Night Raw – August 8, 2016: Point Being?

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 8, 2016

Location: Honda Center, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

Things are starting to pick back up as we have thirteen days before Summerslam. The big story coming out of last week saw Randy Orton and Brock Lesnar trade assaults though there's no word on Lesnar being back this week. Other than that we have a rematch between Sheamus and Cesaro for reasons that aren't entirely clear. Let's get to it.

We open with a Last Week on Raw which covers Balor vs. Rollins, Reigns vs. Rusev, Lesnar getting RKO'ed and showing up on Smackdown to take out Orton. I like this idea but they need to speed it up a little.

Opening sequence.

Here are Enzo and Cass to open things up with Enzo saying Sasha Banks was smitten with him last week. There was as much chemistry as a science fair and he was hitting it to the track but Chris Gold Glove Jon Bon Jericho came out and pulled it back over the wall. Enzo and Cass are some Anaheim Angels on a Stairway to Heaven so welcome to the jungle you Axl Rose wannabe. Jericho comes out and calls them a couple of goofballs before Kevin Owens comes out.

Apparently Jimmin Marvinluter had a chat with them and now Owens has his back. They're closer than brothers, which Owens takes a few seconds to confirm. Cass thinks it's like Bert and Ernie where they're in the same bathtub scrubbing each others' backs. Owens calls Enzo a dead weight that Cass brought over to Raw with him so he doesn't like Cass anymore. Owens and Cass are about to fight but Jericho wasn't talking to the big mutton head Cass, even though he was looking right at him. Jericho: "I was talking to the hip hop hobbit." A brawl is teased but nothing happens as we go to a break.

Enzo Amore vs. Chris Jericho

We actually wait to come back from commercial for the opening bell. Enzo starts fast with a dropkick and headscissors but gets run over by a shoulder. Owens, at ringside with Cass, runs his mouth as only he can. Jericho is sent to the floor with a baseball slide and a big staredown takes us to a break. Back with Jericho in control with chops in the corner, only to get caught with a middle rope DDT. Enzo tries another hurricanrana but gets caught in the Walls. The rope is grabbed but Jericho hits a quick Codebreaker. Cass and Owens get in a fight on the floor, ending with Cass coming in to boot Jericho for the DQ at 11:17.

Rating: C-. As far as a match whose only reason to exist was to set up a tag match at Summerslam goes, this was perfectly fine. The more Enzo gets in the ring on his own the better it's going to be for him. The good

thing about Jericho at this point is you could imagine him jobbing to anyone so Enzo wasn't out of the running here. That's a rare treat you don't get often enough.

Post match Cass issues the challenge for a tag match at Summerslam. The Canadians quickly accept.

Mick Foley is on the phone with Stephanie when Sasha Banks comes in. She wants to face Charlotte and Dana Brooke in a handicap match tonight. Instead Mick makes it Dana vs. Sasha tonight and if Sasha wins, it's one on one with Charlotte at Summerslam. Mick: "Good luck." Sasha: "You don't need luck when you're the Boss."

Braun Strowman vs. Jorel Nelson

Nelson is speechless about why he agreed to do this. Strowman kicks him off the apron and turns him inside out with a clothesline. The reverse chokeslam ends this at 1:00.

Mick Foley meets with Puff Daddy and receives front row tickets to his concert in Columbus, Ohio. New Day comes in and Puff eats some Booty0's. Big E. is out due to his injury from last week and Kofi makes rap jokes.

Titus O'Neil vs. Darren Young

This would be the first match we saw last week. Darren hits him in the face to start so Titus hammers away. He loads up a quick powerslam but gets rolled up with Darren grabbing the trunks this time for the pin at 2:00. Keeping this short is the best thing that could happen tonight.

Here's Seth Rollins to open the second hour. The last few weeks have been a learning experience for everyone, including learning about his Summerslam opponent Finn Balor. He's followed Finn's career for years now and thought he was just a knockoff. "The Jared Leto to his Heath Ledger if you will."

We see a clip from last week with Balor talking to Seth, which makes Rollins talk about how Finn Balor isn't even his real name. Apparently it's a famous warrior and a demon king, which would be like Seth calling himself Rambo Apocalypse. Seth wants to know the real Finn Balor who came

in here and insulted Seth in his ring. Balor has had two matches in WWE and now he thinks he's some big star.

The reason Seth is so arrogant is because he knows his place in WWE. He's not ignorant and doesn't need to surround himself with myths and legends because he knows who he is. One day parents will tell their kids stories about Rollins conquering people like Brock Lesnar, John Cena and Roman Reigns. His legend will be expanded at Summerslam when he adds Balor's name to that list. As has been the case lately, Rollins was on point here.

We look back at Orton hitting the RK0 on Lesnar last week and Lesnar retaliating.

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

This is the other rematch from last week where Cesaro won. Apparently that wasn't enough to impress the bosses, which matters more than winning around here. Cesaro starts with a dropkick and scores with a suicide dive. Back in and Cesaro hits the running uppercut in the corner, only to get caught with the big ax handle as we take a break. We come back to Sheamus hitting a top rope shoulder for two and grabbing a chinlock.

White Noise is countered into a failed Swing attempt but the Brogue Kick misses as well. The Irish Curse and White Noise get two each and Sheamus is stunned. Sheamus goes up top but gets dropkicked down, setting up the uppercut train on the floor. The referee gets in the way of a right hand and doesn't see Sheamus rolling Cesaro up. Back up and Cesaro grabs a rollup of his own for the pin at 11:00.

Rating: C. This wasn't as good as last week's match but at least there's no reason to do a third match. That being said there was no reason to do a second match and we got one anyway. Above all else though the line from the announcers about how the bosses want to see physical dominance instead of people winning matches made me cringe. If it's not about winning, what's the point of being here?

We look at Lesnar attacking Orton on Smackdown. That's the third time in ninety minutes.

Long video on Randy Orton vs. Brock Lesnar, including sitdown interviews with each talking about their time together in Ohio Valley Wrestling. The talent level down there was unheard of with Orton, Lesnar, Cena, Shelton Benjamin and Batista all in the same place. They debuted in 2002 and both took their own paths to greatness though Lesnar reached his peak far faster.

Then Lesnar left because he didn't like people to pursue his fortunes elsewhere. Lesnar: "I became a megastar and he became just a star." Heyman says Orton is the best surfer on the beach, riding all those big waves. But then Lesnar is the shark. We see Lesnar laying Orton out on Smackdown for the fourth time tonight but Orton says it only takes one RKO. Good stuff here, even though they really don't have history together.

Lesnar is here next week.

Dudley Boyz vs. Sin Cara/Neville

This is due to the Bubba and D-Von doing their usual "you're new and therefore you suck" speech to Neville earlier in the day. Sin Cara is dressed like Black Panther tonight. Bubba pounds Neville into the corner to start and the old guys take turns in the corner. D-Von is in a regular t-shirt this week for a new look. Bubba goes after Neville and gets sent outside for a flip dive from Cara. Back in and D-Von takes over with a big elbow drop for two but misses a charge into the corner. It's off to Neville who ducks a D-Von clothesline to send it into Bubba, setting up the Red Arrow to pin D-Von at 5:18.

Rating: C-. Fine enough here and Neville/Cara are a passable selection for the new high flying team. I mean, it does make you wonder why they didn't just keep the Dragons together in the first place when Kalisto is just a warm body on Smackdown but I don't think they thought that through.

Bubba gives D-Von an angry glare post match. I blame the shirt change.

Here are Rusev and Lana in their wedding clothes with a wedding party set up. They're here to talk about their very special occasion and we get to

experience their wedding day. We see a package of wedding photos and I flash back to last year when Lana was taken off TV for revealing the engagement. Yeah it's almost like that MADE NO DIFFERENCE WHATSOEVER. The fans call this boring which Rusev interprets as them wanting MORE MORE MORE. They're about to exchange their wedding vows again when Roman Reigns comes out to interrupt.

The fans boo because they have no idea how wrestling works or what they want out of their time here. Reigns was in the back watching and wondered why Rusev didn't have a best man. Maybe Roman can fill in that role and offers to give the newlyweds a toast. Rusev says no, so Reigns issues a challenge for Summerslam. Roman pours a drink and makes wedding night jokes, causing Rusev to go after him. A right hand knocks Rusev into Lana, sending her right into the wedding cake. Lana: "I HATE YOU!!!"

This is exactly the kind of thing that Reigns needs to do: simple stories that should get him cheered because he's doing something people want him to see. This was a really basic idea but it's going to set up the title match and gives people a reason to cheer Reigns and boo Rusev. Old school stories still work just fine and I have no idea why people hate them so much.

Sasha Banks vs. Dana Brooke

Non-title and if Sasha wins Dana is banned from ringside at Summerslam. Sasha takes her down to start but gets taken to the mat. Charlotte slaps Dana in the face by mistake and gets dropped by the champ. Back up and Dana misses a charge in the corner, setting up the double knees in the corner to give Sasha the pin at 2:17.

We get a sitdown talk from Finn Balor who talks about the origin of his name, including a famous warrior named Finn. Then there was the king of the demons: Balor. These aren't just stories but rather a source of power. When a warrior knows his power isn't enough, he can tap into these things and become greater than himself. Seth has never seen a demon like this but he'll meet the king at Summerslam.

Anderson and Gallows are dressed like doctors to discuss a condition called ringpostitis, which has been sweeping through the roster as of

late. We see clips of Big E. getting crotched on the post last week and Anderson has a jar with ping pong balls inside. They recently performed surgery and the results were nuts. It makes you want to ball your eyes out and Gallows got a little testy. Tonight they collect another sample from Kofi Kingston. I love little vignettes like this, if nothing else just to spice things up a bit.

Kofi Kingston vs. Luke Gallows

Kofi starts fast and sends Gallows outside for a flip dive. Gallows takes over on the floor and muscles Kofi back in for a fireman's carry flapjack and the pin at 1:33. They're certainly not taking their time tonight.

Woods has to save Kofi from a post crotching.

Earlier today, Goldust met with Scooby-Doo and R-Truth thinks he's been replaced by man's best friend. A fight almost breaks out but Goldust suggests they go watch the new WWE Scooby-Doo movie together and eat some Scooby Snacks. The first movie was entertaining so I'm fine with this.

Here's Mick Foley for his big meeting with Daniel Bryan. They praise each other a bit before talking about Orton vs. Lesnar last week. Foley also isn't happy with Bryan degrading the Universal Title and wondering when the Milky Way Title was coming up. Mick says this isn't a joke and here's Rusev, in ring gear, to interrupt.

Rusev sucks up to Mick, which Bryan thinks is a way out of his match with Roman Reigns. This brings out Cesaro to say he's earned a championship match in his last two performances. Bryan: "Cesaro, I think you've been completely underutilized on Raw." Foley: "Stay out of this Daniel." Mick makes the title match right here, right now.

US Title: Cesaro vs. Rusev

Cesaro is challenging and the bell rings at 11:01pm. Rusev goes after the arm to start and Cesaro is in early trouble. A whip into the corner puts Cesaro down again but he comes back with the running uppercuts. Rusev knocks him down again but the Accolade is countered into an electric chair drop. A slugout goes to Cesaro and the springboard uppercut drops

the champ.

The Swing sets up the Sharpshooter and here's Sheamus to break it up. The distraction lets Rusev hit the superkick for two. I bought that as the finish. Sheamus gets up AGAIN and the distraction leads to a ref bump, meaning there's no count on the Neutralizer. Rusev pokes Cesaro in the eye to set up a Brogue Kick, followed by another kick to the head to retain the title at 9:50.

Rating: D. For the booking, not the wrestling. I actually groaned out loud at that ending because this is just dumb on so many levels. Let's take a quick look at why this was so dumb many levels.

1. It started after 11pm with zero announcement or build. Set this up instead of just doing it in such a hurry.
2. It only exists to set up Cesaro vs. Sheamus again, despite Cesaro beating Sheamus twice in a row, clean both times.
3. We now have Cesaro losing to set up a match against a two time loser.
4. Did I mention Cesaro loses again?
5. This felt like they ran out of ideas and threw in a taped house show match.
6. What was the point of Sheamus vs. Cesaro earlier tonight? Cesaro had already beaten him last week and all it did was set up a way to get us to this ending. Set up the match, perhaps by making last week's match a #1 contenders match instead of having it be a way to impress the bosses, and then have Sheamus interfere to set up the rematch. Don't have a rematch for no logical reason (the bosses wanting to see it again doesn't count) and then use it as a way to pay off another match later. That's stupid booking, but then again so is half the stuff WWE does at times.

Just a mess all around here and really stupid booking to get us to the next really stupid idea.

We're not done with the stupid as Rusev holds up the title and stares straight ahead for a good three seconds so Reigns can run down the aisle

and spear him to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This show was much more boring than bad and that's not necessarily an improvement. The biggest problem here is that this wasn't an interesting show. Nothing really happened here, save for Reigns going after Lana and Rusev plus an ending that made my head hurt. They kept things quick all night and as a result none of the matches felt important. This felt like they were just burning off a show instead of building up to Summerslam, almost like they don't have enough stuff to fill in a three hour (plus) card. It just wasn't all that interesting though the Reigns, Rollins and Balor stuff was all good.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Enzo Amore via DQ when Big Cass interfered

Braun Strowman b. Jorel Nelson – Reverse chokeslam

Darren Young b. Titus O'Neil – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Sin Cara/Neville b. Dudley Boyz – Red Arrow to D-Von

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Double knees to the chest

Luke Gallows b. Kofi Kingston – Fireman's carry flapjack

Rusev b. Cesaro – Kick to the head

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IH70904>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Summerslam Count-Up – 2002: The Best Ever

Summerslam 2002

Date: August 25, 2002

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial, Uniondale, New York

Attendance: 14,797

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Tazz, Jim Ross

The main story coming into this show would be the Brand Split but that's not really an issue here as the main four PPVs weren't brand exclusive. As for the show itself it's another double main event with Rock defending his WWE (yeah E) Title against a beast named Brock Lesnar and the returning Shawn Michaels fighting his best friend HHH in a street fight. This is considered one of the best shows of all time so hopefully it holds up. Let's get to it.

There's no opening video this year for some reason.

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Rey beat Angle in a tag match and has been an annoyance for him lately. This is right after Mysterio debuted as part of probably the best year for new talent in company history. In 2002 WWE got Mysterio, Brock Lesnar, Batista, Randy Orton and a guy named Cena. This is when Rey's knees weren't held together by glue so it should be awesome. Rey comes in from behind and takes Angle down with a quick springboard dropkick but he has to go to the ropes to escape the ankle lock. An early 619 attempt misses and Angle pulls him to the floor. Very fast start.

Angle kicks at the leg as they come back in. An uppercut staggers Rey and a wheelbarrow suplex puts him down. Rey grabs the rope to avoid a German and gets a quick two off a rollup. Kurt gets two off a backbreaker and bends Rey's back around the ropes. The fans are all over Angle but he

shrugs off some forearms and catches a headscissors into a side slam for two.

Off to a wicked half crab on Rey but he somehow sneaks out and gets two off a rollup. Kurt takes his head off with a clothesline, only to get caught in a jawbreaker. Rey tries to speed things up but walks into the overhead belly to belly. There go the straps but Rey armdrags out of the Angle Slam and sends Angle to the floor. Rey loads up a dive but the referee stops him, drawing the most heat of the night. Mysterio will have none of that and dives OVER THE REFEREE to take Angle out.

Back in and a springboard legdrop gets two as the crowd is on fire. Rey tries a victory roll but gets caught in the ankle lock. Mysterio rolls out and send Angle to the ropes for the 619. The West Coast Pop gets a VERY close two and a spinwheel kick puts Angle down again. Mysterio goes up top but Angle runs the ropes for the suplex, only to have Rey flip over him but he tweaks the ankle on the landing. He's fine enough to pop back up and dropkick Angle on the corner though and he loads up a hurricanrana. Angle falls forward on it though and the ankle lock is good for the submission.

Rating: A-. EXCELLENT opener here with Mysterio showing he could hang with anyone in the company. He really was amazing to watch when he wasn't banged up and bloated like he is today and this might be his best match ever. This was a great choice for an opener and both guys looked amazing.

Eric Bischoff (Raw) and Stephanie McMahon (Smackdown) agree to share the GM's office tonight.

Chris Jericho vs. Ric Flair

Flair is a legend, Jericho is a young punk. This led to Jericho running down Flair over and over again so Flair destroyed a bunch of Jericho's band Fozzy's equipment as they were performing on Raw. Jericho takes him into the corner so Flair slaps him in the face. Feeling out process to start as Flair looks to be in a dancing mood tonight. A backdrop puts Flair down and a belly to back suplex does the same.

Back up and Flair hits some LOUD chops to take over. They head to the

corner and it's Jericho firing off some chops of his own to set up a Flair Flip in the corner. A clothesline puts Flair on the floor and Jericho hits an elbow off the top to crush him against the barricade. Back in and Jericho fires off punches before doing a little dance. The Canadian gets two off a middle rope missile dropkick and chokes Flair with some tape. Flair fires off some chops but gets dropped by a single right hand.

Jericho goes up top but Flair pulls a page out of every opponent he's ever had to slam him down. Chris misses a charge into the corner and Flair backdrops him down. NOW we go to school but Jericho escapes a suplex and tries the Walls. Flair rolls out but Jericho hits an enziguri to put Naitch down again.

The Lionsault misses and Flair goes back to the chops to take over. Flair tries a half crab but Jericho escapes and puts Flair in the Figure Four. Ric makes the rope but taps out anyway, which isn't a submission apparently. There's a rule clarification if you ever need one. The referee goes to tell the timekeeper that the match is still going, allowing Flair to hit a low blow and put on the Figure Four for the submission. Don't bother setting up the move or anything Ric.

Rating: C. I'm sorry for not having much of note to say but it's almost impossible to add stuff to good matches. Nice match here as Flair gets to be the dirtiest player in the game again but it wasn't anything spectacular. Jericho was still awesome as a heel and it felt good to see Flair make a comeback and beat him in the middle of the ring. This was at a point when Flair could still look decent in a pair of trunks so it wasn't an embarrassment at all.

Heyman gives Brock a pep talk for the main event tonight. Brock is in Rock's head and the next big thing arrives tonight. This is when Brock was the unstoppable monster instead of being HHH cannon fodder for a year. I still can't get over that it lasted that long.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Edge is still finding his footing as a singles guy and the potential is through the roof, so the solution is the same as it was with DDP back in

97: put him with really talented people who can make him look awesome. This resulted in Edge vs. Regal, Angle and Guerrero for about six months, making everyone love Edge like few thought possible. Apparently Eddie is jealous of Edge's popularity and his status as a sex symbol. Cole's words, not mine.

Technical stuff to start until Edge suplexes Eddie to the apron but gets his neck snapped across the top rope. Edge comes back with a hot shot and a standing powerslam for two before tying Eddie up in the ropes. There's the spear to Eddie's ribs but Eddie avoids the second attempt to send the Canadian to the floor. Edge is holding his shoulder (the spear arm) and Eddie has something to focus on. The bad shoulder goes into the steps and Edge is in trouble.

Back in and Eddie DDTs the arm before driving some elbows into the shoulder. A jumping DDT to the arm off the top gets two and it's off to a keylock. Edge finally gets to a rope so Eddie stomps even harder on the shoulder. Now it's a cross face chickenwing of all moves shifted into a Fujiwara Armbar. Back up and Eddie belly to back suplexes him down but stays on the arm with a top wristlock. Edge finally slams him down to get a breather and fires off some clotheslines.

The half nelson faceplant gets two and Edge suplexes Eddie to the floor. A cross body off the top to the floor puts Guerrero down but Edge injures the shoulder again. Back in and Edge goes up but has to counter a superplex into a front superplex for two on Eddie. Edge loads up the spear but Eddie dropkicks him in the shoulder to put him down.

The frog splash hits knees and there's the Edgecution for two. Another Edgecution is countered into a northern lights and Eddie hits the frog splash onto the bad shoulder for two. Some IDIOTS are chanting boring at this. Eddie goes up again but gets slammed down allowing Edge to hit the spear (with the bad shoulder with no problem) for the pin.

Rating: B-. This was chugging right along until the STUPID ending. You cannot have Eddie working over on the arm for ten minutes and then hit the finisher like it's nothing. What's the point in even working on the arm if that's how you end the match? It was going fine until that point

but the ending just stopped it cold, much like the spear should have done for Edge.

The Un-Americans are ready to beat Booker T and Goldust to prove that America sucks. The only bad part though is they have to do it here in Long Island. This is a classic gimmick and would work at almost any point in history.

Raw Tag Titles: Goldust/Booker T vs. Un-Americans

The Un-Americans are Lance Storm and Christian (with Test) and they have the gold coming in. Goldust and Christian start with the Canadian being run over and uppercutted down for two. Off to Storm who gets caught in an atomic drop and it's Booker T in to fire off right hands. Booker drops a big knee for two and brings in Goldust, only to have Storm poke him in the eye to take over.

The fans chant USA like the true xenophobes they are. We get some classic heel cheating as the Canadians double team until Christian gets two off a backbreaker. Back to Storm who walks into a kind of Boss Man Slam but Christian distracts the referee so the hot tag doesn't count. The beating continues but Goldust catapults Christian into Storm to buy himself some time.

Goldust slaps the mat to try to fire up the crowd but Storm takes out Booker again so there's no one for Goldie to tag. The champions miss a Conchairto and NOW the hot tag goes through. Booker cleans house and lays in the chops to Christian. A missile dropkick gets two but Booker accidentally superkicks the referee. Booker hits a double ax kick to take out both champions and there's the Spinarooni. Christian is kicked down but here's Test with a big boot to lay out Booker, giving Christian the pin.

Rating: D+. This was a BIG step down from what we've had so far tonight. The match was just dull and nothing we haven't seen done better a hundred times. Booker and Goldust had chemistry and fan support so we had to wait four months for them to get the titles. The Un-Americans were a find midcard heel act but the titles should have changed here.

Nidia is at The World (WWF New York) and makes out with a fan for some reason.

Bischoff and Stephanie continue their stupid back and forth.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending and a Smackdown guy in this brand vs. brand match. Van Dam hits some quick kicks to send Benoit to the outside but Benoit takes him down back inside. Van Dam spins away from a kick in the corner and hits a spinning cross body out of the corner for two. Benoit ducks another kick and hits a great release German suplex to take over. An elbow to the face gets two more for Benoit and it's time to work on the back.

Benoit gets another near fall off a backbreaker and a snap suplex gets the same. Off to an armbar as Benoit wants the shoulder now. Rob gets some quick twos off rollups but Benoit runs him over with another elbow to the face. Benoit runs into a boot in the corner but the split legged moonsault hits knees. The Swan Dive misses but Benoit rolls away from the Five Star as well.

Now the Crossface goes on for a good while but Van Dam makes the ropes. The challenger goes up but Benoit shoves him off the top and shoulder first into the barricade. Back in and Benoit hits a shoulder breaker (see that people? It's called psychology. LEARN IT!) for two as the fans are distracted by something. Benoit wisely puts on a rest hold until their attention is back again.

They trade cross arm chokes with Benoit taking over again. Van Dam kicks his leg out but misses Rolling Thunder, allowing Benoit to put on the Crossface again. Rob elbows out but gets rolled up for two. Benoit goes back to the arm and sends him shoulder first into the post. A northern lights suplex onto the arm has Van Dam....looking confused and two more don't really change that.

Back to the Crossface and Van Dam looks more annoyed than anything else. Rob (with his hair down for maybe the only time I ever remember) makes the rope and puts a Crossface on Benoit for a few seconds. A jumping kick

to the face puts Benoit down for two and now Rolling Thunder connects.

Van Dam hits a shoulder to the ribs but injures the shoulder again (thanks for selling Rob). Not that it matters though as he kicks Benoit in the face for two. Rob gets crotched on the top but counters a belly to back superplex into a cross body to put both guys down. Van Dam pops up and hits the Five Star for the pin and the title. Extra points for Rob doing the finger point from the mat when he's announced as the new champion.

Rating: B. This bad shoulder selling is getting on my nerves. Benoit had RVD in one of the best submissions ever three different times and Van Dam looked like he had a five year old child on his leg. The rest of the match however was very solid with Rob hanging in there with Benoit who was his usual awesome self.

Stephanie, having just lost the IC Title to Raw (giving them all the belts I believe) laughs. This story continued to not make sense until they just gave up.

Video on the Un-Americans who hate American. Undertaker wasn't going to stand for this and turned face to deal with them. Well among other reasons but this was his first major feud as a face.

Undertaker vs. Test

Feeling out process to start with Taker sending Test into the corner and cranking on the arm. A big clothesline takes Test down for two but he shoves the referee into the ropes to break up Old School. Test sends him into the steps and into the turnbuckle to keep Taker in trouble. A running clothesline in the corner staggers Taker and it's off to an armbar. Taker suplexes out but misses an elbow drop as this continues to drag.

Test misses an elbow as well and now Old School connects. Snake Eyes connects but Test ducks the big boot. Taker shoves him off and hits the chokeslam for two. Christian and Storm come in as a distraction but take a chokeslam each, allowing Test to hit his big boot for two. Test tries a chair shot but hits the ropes, sending it back into his own face. The

Tombstone finishes this.

Rating: D. This wasn't horrible but come on. It's Undertaker vs. Test at the second biggest show of the year with Test being as an Un-American. Did you really expect ANY other result here? The match was passable enough but it's definitely the lame match on the show. To be fair though it's not even nine minutes long and it's not a disaster.

Now let's get to the real reason this show rocks.

We recap Shawn Michaels vs. HHH. They were best friends back in the late 90s but Shawn broke his back and had to retire. Over the next four years, HHH rose to the top of the company and a higher level than Shawn ever achieved. Shawn came back to Raw and offered to reform DX, but HHH laid him out, saying they were never friends and he just used Shawn.

Then someone rammed Shawn through a windshield and HHH vowed to find out who it was. Shawn found security video revealing it was HHH, who said he did it to prove Shawn is vulnerable. Shawn's doctors said he'd make a full recovery. Say by, Summerslam? The match isn't sanctioned and is a street fight because it couldn't be anything else. This is a great example of a feud based on hatred instead of some convoluted idea and it made the match much better.

Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

Shawn is in jeans tonight to hide the knee braces. Michaels comes out with right hands but HHH sends him to the outside. Not that it matters as Shawn is right back inside with more right hands. HHH is tossed to the floor and Shawn hits a nice dive to take him out. Remember that this is Shawn's first match since March of 1998, or four and a half years ago.

A clothesline puts HHH down again and it's garbage can time. HHH gets in a shot to the ribs and drops Shawn face first onto the barricade to get a breather. Shawn comes back in and is tossed over the top again but he skins the cat to a big pop. A trashcan shot caves in HHH's head and a top rope fist to the head puts him down again. Shawn tunes up the band but HHH counters into a backbreaker to get to the meat of the match.

Another backbreaker has Shawn in agony and flopping like a fish as only he can. HHH gives a crotch chop and kicks Shawn down with ease. It's chair time but a shot to the back only gets two. Shawn escapes a suplex into an O'Connor Roll for two but walks into a facebuster. A DDT onto the chair is only good for two but Shawn is busted open. HHH takes off Shawn's belt and whips him in the back as the screaming continues.

And now it's sledgehammer time. Shawn gets in some shots to the ribs to escape and HHH drops the hammer. The fans are behind HBK but he gets whipped into the corner and it's off to the abdominal stretch. HHH gets caught holding the ropes and Hebner physically breaks the hold before yelling HHH into the corner. They slug it out again and HHH loads up a superplex but Shawn shoves him off, only to get crotched. HHH blasts Shawn's wide open back with the chair and the crowd is somber.

A backbreaker onto the chair has Shawn lying motionless but HHH only gets two. He covers a few more times and HHH is very frustrated. A side slam onto the chair gets another two as JR screams for a fast count. Shawn counters a Pedigree onto the chair with a low blow and both guys are down. The HBK chant starts up again and HHH has the chair superkicked into his face. Now HHH is busted open too and Shawn slugs away before hitting the forearm and the nipup to blow the roof off the place.

Shawn backdrops him down and cracks HHH in the head with the chair. HHH is whipped over the corner and out to the floor where Shawn gets to beat on him with the belt. Shawn knocks him onto the announce table and hits him in the head with Hugo Savinovich's shoe (Lawler: "A heel for a heel!"). HHH is sent into the steps and here's a ladder being slammed into HHH's face.

Some shots to the ribs have HHH screaming and the ladder is placed against the post with HHH being catapulted face first into the steel. That's only good for two so Shawn heads outside again to get the ladder. HHH baseball slides the ladder into Michaels and pounds away at the cut head. For some reason HHH tries to come in off the top and gets caught in a superplex for two.

The crowd is losing their minds off these kickouts. A sunset flip gets

two for Shawn but he gets caught by the knee to the face for two. HHH brings in the steps but Shawn drop toeholds him face first into the steel. A clothesline puts HHH on the floor and Shawn pulls out a table. Well why not since we've used everything else.

Shawn puts him on the table and splashes him from the top rope in the big spot of the match. Both guys are DONE and the fans are in awe. Shawn sends the ladder back inside, says he loves us all, and drops the elbow from the top. Michaels has that look in his eye and tunes up the band but HHH catches the kick coming in. He loads up the Pedigree but Shawn sweeps the legs and rolls HHH up for the pin to blow the roof off the place again.

Rating: A+. Anyone who has read my stuff over the years knows I do not like a lot of things about HHH. For tonight, forget all that because this is one of the best matches of all time. I've seen this match several times and it still had me smiling to see Shawn make comeback after comeback and give HHH every single thing he deserved. It goes to show how great Shawn is as he came in after being gone nearly FIVE YEARS and does this. That's remarkable when you think about it and is one of the greatest performances of all time.

Let's talk about the match a little bit. It's an excellent example of how to book a comeback, which is probably Shawn's greatest strength. Shawn had the people believing that he was DEAD but he kept hanging in there time after time and made the huge comeback just like the crowd wanted. The other thing that works so well is the ending which a lot of people overlook.

The crux of this match was the destruction of both guys and seeing how far they could take it. At the end though, Shawn uses a basic wrestling counter and a cradle to win, totally shifting gears and beating HHH, the Cerebral Assassin, by thinking. That's INCREDIBLE psychology and the perfect way to end this match. All in all, it's a masterpiece and arguably the best performance of all time, all things considered.

Post match HHH becomes the universal evil by hitting Shawn square in the back with the sledgehammer and leaving him laying. Shawn is taken out on

a stretcher.

Now that we've had that amazing match, it's time for something completely stupid. Howard Finkel of all people has something to say. He's been here forever and while Major League Baseball may be going on strike, he'll be here forever. This brings out Trish Stratus who slapped him in the face recently. Howard insults Long Island women and Trish says he has a sexy voice. He makes various references and they hug but it's a ruse to have Lillian Garcia come in and kick Howard low.

We recap Rock vs. Lesnar. Brock is the new monster and Rock is the warrior champion and there isn't much more to it than that. The videos of Rocky going through special training (actually for The Rundown) were pretty awesome.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar has his agent Paul Heyman with him. Rock charges into the ring and walks into a belly to belly suplex for two. Lesnar hits a pair of backbreakers for two and we head to the floor with Brock clotheslining him into the crowd. Apparently Rock has bad ribs coming into this match. Back in and Brock hits another overhead belly to belly suplex for two before dropping some elbows. A powerslam puts Rock down for two as this is one sided so far. Brock fires off some shoulder in the corner but misses a charge and hits the post.

Rock hits a belly to back suplex of his own and both guys are down. Both guys nip up at the same time and Rock isn't sure what to think. Rock hits some clotheslines but it takes three of them to finally drop Brock. The champion hooks a Sharpshooter and Brock is in trouble. Heyman throws in a chair which distracts Rocky, allowing Lesnar to get out and blast Rock in the ribs with the chair. Off to the bearhug which ended Hogan and takes Rock down to the mat here.

The fans are entirely behind Lesnar here which is very strange to hear. Rock doesn't let his arm drop a third time and now we get a Rocky chant. The champion finally escapes the hold but gets a hard shoulder into the ribs to slow him down again. Rock comes out of the corner with a running clothesline and the crowd reaction is mixed at best. A series of right

hands knocks Lesnar out to the floor and Rock loads up the announce table. After scaring Heyman to death, Rock launches Lesnar face first into the post.

There's a Rock Bottom through the table for Heyman and the announcers couldn't be happier. Back in and the Rock Bottom hits Lesnar for a VERY close two. The fans shift affiliation again, now cheering for Brock. Their current hero hits a Rock Bottom of his own for two and both guys stagger to their feet. Rock hits the spinebuster but as he loads up the Elbow, Brock pops up and hits a HUGE clothesline. Here comes the F5 but Rock escapes and tries the Rock Bottom. That and another attempt at the same move are both countered and the F5 gives Lesnar the title.

Rating: B-. The match was just ok until the very hot finish, but the last two minutes or so made up for a lot of the earlier problems. This was a great example of how to make a guy like Lesnar look like a monster. Rock left to film The Rundown immediately after this so Lesnar was the only one left standing. Great way to put Brock over here and a pretty solid match overall.

Lesnar celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: A+. As I said this is considered one of the best shows of all time and it's easy to see why. The main event was the start of a new era in the company, there's a masterpiece of a match, the upper half of the card is stacked and the worst match is passable. I can't put it as high as Wrestlemania X7 on the all time scale but the fact that it's even in the conversations speaks volumes. This is absolutely worth seeing though and HHH vs. Shawn is must see.

Ratings Comparison

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: A+

Redo: A-

Chris Jericho vs. Ric Flair

Original: B

Redo: C

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Un-Americans vs. Booker T/Goldust

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit

Original: B

Redo: B

Undertaker vs. Test

Original: D

Redo: D

Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

Original: A+

Redo: A+

The Rock vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Still a masterpiece.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/08/05/history-of-summerslam-count-up-summerslam-2002-best-summerslam-ever/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IH70904>

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Cruiserweight Classic – August 3, 2016: Daniel Bryan's Man Crush

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: August 3, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

It's the final night of the first round as this tournament has been as well structured as anything WWE has produced in a long time. Tonight

we'll have another four matches to complete the field of sixteen for the second round. It should be interesting to see which people get the star treatment this week as you can almost always see who WWE wants to push, meaning they might be a big deal in the upcoming Cruiserweight division. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's show.

Preview of tonight's matches.

Opening sequence.

Corey Graves looks at the updated brackets.

Rich Swann says he won't take anyone lightly because people have spent years telling him he'll never make it.

Jason Lee of Hong Kong has been wrestling for eight years and wrestles with a kung fu style.

First Round: Rich Swann vs. Jason Lee

America vs. Hong Kong and dancing vs. nunchucks. They run the ropes to start with Swann diving over Lee and catching him with a dropkick for two. The fans are WAY behind Swann and chant ALL NIGHT LONG as he holds an armbar. I hope he does more than that tonight. Lee comes back with some very fast strikes and an enziguri for two. Swann knees him in the head and jumps to the top for a hurricanrana but Lee comes back with a DDT. La Majistral gets two for Jason as Bryan is amazed by Lee's speed. Swann comes right back with a kick to the head and a standing 450 gives him the pin at 3:49.

Rating: C+. Both guys looked good here but you knew they weren't going to give Jason the pin over an NXT guy. Swann is really over with the crowd already and that standing 450 looked cool. I know Lee isn't likely to go anywhere in WWE but it's cool to see people like him get a shot, even if it's a one off like this.

Gurv Sihra, brother of Harv from last week, grew up watching cruiserweight wrestling and he can't wait to represent India.

Noam Dar wants to represent Scotland.

First Round: Noam Dar vs. Gurv Sihra

Scotland vs. India. Dar starts fast with a dropkick to the knee but gets caught in a headlock. Sihra can't get in a backbreaker so Noam starts back in on the knee and dropkicks him in the side of the head as a bonus. Another dropkick in the corner gets two but Gurv comes back with a spinwheel kick for two, only to miss a top rope elbow due to wasting time on a handheld Bollywood camera (as in the old Hollywood Blonds taunt). Noam uses the crash to grab a kneebar for the tap at 5:23.

Rating: C. I wasn't as interested here but I can always go for something as simple as working on the knee from the start to set up a leg submission at the end. Noam looked a lot better here and Gurv really did look young out there. This wasn't much of a match but again it didn't overstay its welcome, which has been a great thing about this whole tournament.

Fabian Aichner wants to see what it's like to wrestle outside of Italy where there isn't much of a wrestling scene.

Jack Gallagher, in a suit, is a British gentleman.

First Round: Fabian Aichner vs. Jack Gallagher

Italy vs. England. Jack already has more of a character than almost anyone else in this tournament. Gallagher spins out of a wristlock to start and does it again nearly in slow motion, much to Daniel's delight. A very British toehold keeps Aichner in trouble but the much bigger Italian runs him over with a shoulder. Some loud chops set up a slightly botched springboard kick to the chest and we hit a chinlock.

A pinfall reversal sequence results in Gallagher charging into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. Aichner surprises everyone with a double springboard moonsault for two, only to have Jack come back with a guillotine choke. Gallagher gets lifted into a suplex but powerbombed down and the fans boo the heck out of Aichner for beating on Bryan's new man crush. A great looking running dropkick knocks Fabian silly enough

for the pin at 6:47.

Rating: B. Oh yeah this was a lot of fun. Gallagher is like the stereotypical British wrestler you would see in a video game but he's turned up to twelve or so. Bryan was gushing over him and I can't say I really blame him. Aichner was no slouch either and I really hope he gets another shot somewhere else.

The guys get a THANK YOU BOTH chant. Daniel: "I'm in love."

Video on Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa, who are best friends outside the ring but will fight as hard as they can to advance here.

Gargano and Ciampa both say they'll win.

First Round: Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa

America vs. America here. They take a few seconds before shaking hands and it's Gargano with an armbar to start. A very loud elbow to the jaw knocks Johnny's head around and Tommaso mocks the "Johnny Wrestling" chants. Another hard elbow has Johnny in trouble and we get a C DUB C chant. Tommaso grabs what looks like White Noise but climbs the ropes instead of crashing down, allowing Johnny to slip out and superkick him through the legs.

A powerbomb brings Ciampa down and a suicide dive makes things even worse. Back in and they just kick each other in the head over and over, leaving Gargano looking rather shaken up. They chop it out on the apron and White Noise only gives Tommaso two. Johnny looks completely out of it and Ciampa can't bring himself to knee Gargano in the face.

The distraction lets Johnny get in a superkick but he walks into Project Ciampa (powerbomb into a Backstabber) for two. The stunned look on Ciampa's face is excellent. Some chops rock Johnny and a right hand just makes Ciampa angry. Ciampa loads up his armbar but Johnny counters into a crucifix for the surprise pin at 10:49.

Rating: B+. This was awesome stuff with some excellent selling from Gargano. They did a great job of making the evil Ciampa a little more human as he was afraid to hurt his friend and tag partner, only to get

caught in a rollup at the end. These two are going to get a Tag Team Title shot at Takeover: Brooklyn and with a match like this it's easy to see why. Really good stuff here and probably the match of the tournament so far.

Ciampa can't shake hands post match but comes back to hug Johnny.

Here are the updated brackets:

Akira Tozawa

Jack Gallagher

Tajiri

Gran Metalik

Drew Gulak

Zack Sabre Jr.

Noam Dar

Hoho Lun

Brian Kendrick

Tony Nese

Kota Ibushi

Cedric Alexander

TJ Perkins

Johnny Gargano

Lince Dorado

Rich Swann

Overall Rating: A-. I'm digging this show more and more every week and it's cool to see so many different styles involved. Somehow they keep

things fresh every week and go through things fast enough that it doesn't get dull. This really does feel like something different and that makes for interesting shows every week. Things are going to get even better now that we have the first round out of the way and that's just cool.

Results

Rich Swann b. Jason Lee – Standing 450

Noam Dar b. Gurv Sihra – Kneebar

Jack Gallagher b. Fabian Aichner – Running corner dropkick

Johnny Gargano b. Tommaso Ciampa – Crucifix

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Monday Night Raw – August 23, 2004: Unlike Anything I've Ever Seen

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 23, 2004

Location: Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Hey it's another request that I'm finally getting to. This is a fairly big week as Randy Orton was thrown out of Evolution last week and it's time to hear not only why (shouldn't be that complicated) but what happens next. On top of that we have Kane and Lita getting married in another step in a bizarre story. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick recap of Orton being thrown out of Evolution.

Opening sequence. I miss Across the Nation as the theme song.

We start things off with the Raw Diva Search and they're all in swimsuits to really hammer the point home. If nothing else this really shows the difference between ten years ago and what we see today as this would NEVER be allowed on Raw today. They get right to the point with Tracy (like most of their names matter) being eliminated in sixth place.

Now for tonight's task: everyone will have two minutes to talk about how great the Coach is but Coach thinks five would be more appropriate....but here's the Rock to interrupt in a surprise. Rock gives Coach five seconds to get out and he barely gets out at four and a half. That leaves Rock and the five remaining Divas and Rock seems to approve. He also thinks the women are all wet (with perspiration) before saying that Lillian Garcia (looking even better than usual tonight) is a Raw Diva. She used to have a real job at the sperm bank but got fired for drinking on the job.

Rock asks which one is Carmella (while slipping in a line that he hasn't been watching the show) because the rest of the girls hate her. Back in the day no one liked him either so she needs to stick to her guns here. Not that it matters what she thinks of course. Rock mocks a contest a few weeks back where the girls had to make ice cream cones because no one wants to see them do that. What Rock wants to see is these women eating pie.

This brings out Tajiri with some pies, which he just happened to have on hand. Now we have a table and it's going to be a pie eating contest.

Everyone has twenty seconds to eat pie in whatever way they want, but first Rock mocks some fans and asks Tajiri what is his favorite type of pie. Fan: "SUSHI!"

This just keeps going with Joy going first and insulting Carmella instead of eating. Amy goes second and Rock won't even let her near a mic. Instead she slowly licks the pie out of the pan and keeps going after the clock runs out. Carmella rubs it on herself and teases a way too excited Tajiri. Maria eats her pie with her fingers and licks it a bit, leaving a drop on her nose for effect. Last up is Christy....who sits on the pie. You can see the pain on Rock's face as he goes through this.

In case this hasn't gone on long enough, here are Coach with Raw Tag Team Champions La Resistance with promises of a Chinese beating (in honor of the Japanese Tajiri). The heels hit the ring and actually beat Rock down for a bit until Rhyno (Tajiri's partner) comes out for the save. Coach challenges Rock and gets the usual to end this opening segment after an unthinkable TWENTY FOUR MINUTES. The only entertaining thing here was Rock riffing on how stupid it was and making it clear that he doesn't actually watch Raw.

Kane, in his ring gear, arrives with his suit in a bag.

We recap Evolution turning on Randy Orton and throwing him off the team last week.

The remaining members of Evolution are in the back. Batista has delivered an ultimatum to Orton for later tonight.

Kane comes in to see a disgusted Lita and promises that nothing will ruin this wedding tonight. The wedding will be an all white affair to signify the purity of his child. He even has a dress for her.

Intercontinental Title: Chris Jericho vs. Edge

Edge is defending and we have the first match starting about forty minutes into the show. Edge came back from injury a few months ago and it's quite as popular as he was before he left. Jericho grabs a quickly broken hammerlock to start but is easily able to low bridge Edge to the

floor. Back from a break with Edge chopping in the corner but eating a top rope elbow to the jaw for a near fall. A DDT gets the same for the champ but Jericho sidesteps the spear and grabs the Walls, only to have Edge reverse into a rollup to retain.

Not so fast though as the referee caught Jericho's feet in the ropes, meaning we're going to continue after a break. Back with Jericho missing a dropkick but hitting a running enziguri. The running bulldog looks to set up the Lionsault but Edge rolls away because he's seen a Jericho match before. The Edge-0-Matic (I still love that move) gets two and sets up a high cross body with Jericho rolling through for a near fall of his own. Edge gets caught in the Walls he makes the rope for the quick break. Back up and Edge "accidentally" crotches Jericho and that's a DQ with Edge hitting the spear just after the bell.

Rating: B. I was liking this one while it lasted but it was a storyline ending instead of anything conclusive. Edge would lose the title due to an injury (I'm shocked too) soon after this and would come back as a mega heel instead of the same bland face that he had been since coming back. Jericho on the other hand would continue to just float around until he would leave in about a year.

Here's Evolution for their big address on the Orton issue. HHH says he doesn't believe in destiny because every choice you make has a consequence. Orton was someone who was destined for greatness and chose to stand side by side with the greatest talent of all time. Then he chose to go on for himself instead of just softening Chris Benoit up like he was supposed to.

That sealed his fate because the World Title belongs to HHH and everyone knows it. Last week the confetti fell and it was just like sand in an hourglass because Orton's time was up. The beating last week was just a warning though because Orton has his choice now. Orton can come out here and lay down to make HHH the champion that he's supposed to be again. If Orton lets it go, Evolution will forget about him and let him live. There is no choice when it comes to the World Heavyweight Championship and it's as simple as life and death.

This brings out Orton to Evolution music and a referee soon follows. Orton starts to hand over the title but pulls it back and spits in HHH's face. A belt shot knocks HHH down and Orton bails before Flair and Batista and use his limbs as drumsticks. This story really should have turned Orton into one of the biggest stars in the company but instead HHH got the title back in less than three weeks, allegedly so there could be three face challengers for Taboo Tuesday. Seriously. That was the official justification HHH gave for wanting the title back so soon. Taboo Tuesday, which Orton headlined anyway.

Victoria is trying to get Eric Bischoff to call off the wedding but HHH interrupts and yells a lot. HHH gets a rematch for the title at Unforgiven. That's what you get for beating Eugene at Summerslam.

William Regal vs. Ric Flair

This should be interesting. Speaking of Eugene, he's in Regal's corner here and this is fallout from Flair interfering in the HHH vs. Eugene match. Regal runs him over to start and it's strange to see him as the (likely) stronger wrestler. Flair starts firing off some chops but gets uppercut and backdropped for his efforts. That means a Flair Flop but Ric is able to send Regal outside for more chops. Another backdrop on the floor has Flair in trouble and we take a break.

Back with Flair dropping back to back knees to the head for two. Regal fires off the uppercuts and forearms in the corner before slamming Flair off the top. Batista finally remembers he's at ringside and hits Regal in the back to set up the Figure Four. Now it's Eugene offering a distraction so Regal can turn the hold over. Batista goes after Eugene but here's Benoit to chop Batista, allowing both guys to pull out brass knuckles. Regal is a bit quicker though and knocks Flair out for the pin and a pretty big upset.

Rating: C+. This was the kind of hard hitting match you would expect from these two, even though Flair was only doing signature stuff at this point. Regal always seemed like someone who might turn into a huge deal but he was happy to just be a cool midcarder who had almost unlimited respect.

We get a Smackdown Rebound, including JBL in a neck halo with his cowboy hat on top. Why this man isn't in the Hall of Fame completely eludes me. We also saw Rey Mysterio coming out to save Eddie Guerrero but Kurt Angle destroyed Eddie's low rider.

Coach shows us how to vote in the Diva Search.

Lita hates her wedding dress and breaks her mirror.

The ring has been transformed into a wedding venue and Kane is in an all white tuxedo. Naturally the ring bearer and flower girl are dwarfs, the former with paint under his eyes. Kane comes out with the biggest smile on his face....until he sees Lita in a black dress. The minister says we have a special guest here and it's someone very familiar to both the bride and groom.

Lita gets her hopes up but it's Eric Bischoff, also in a white tux. Bischoff reads a passage from the Bible and even gives a brief prayer before the minister says this is clearly a very unique relationship. Kane has a video of their relationship, which is basically Lita being terrified when she finds out she's pregnant and all the ensuing fallout.

That brings us to the vows, with Kane saying Lita is now his property. She will never know freedom again until the day he dies. On the other hand, Lita hates Kane more than life itself and he has no soul. She has no choice but to marry him but she will always love Matt Hardy. Well that's quite the Edgey statement. All she can hope for is to see Kane suffer a horrible accident to free her from this nightmare. Kane: "That was lovely."

We get to "speak now or forever hold your peace" and there's no Matt. Instead here's Trish Stratus in white lingerie (completely outclassing every one of the Diva Search contestants) to offer her services as Maid of Honor. Trish's advice is for Lita to open her heart, just like she opened her legs.

The catfight is on for a bit until the minister gets things under control again. Cue Matt Hardy (with Lita doing a perfect damsel in distress smile) for the save from behind, only to have a wall of fire cut off the

escape. A chokeslam off the stage and through a table destroys Matt. Lita is dragged back to the ring for the I Do and the forced kiss ends the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I've seen every episode of Raw ever and I don't remember a single show that was all over the place like this one. From the ridiculously awful opening twenty five minutes (well as horrible as you can get with Maria, Christy and Carmella looking like that) to two good matches to the actually solid Orton segment to the so bizarre it's great wedding (With Trish being a highlight. Just DANG.), this show somehow went from dreadful to one of the most entertaining shows I've seen in a long time. Fix the opening segment and this could have been a classic but that was like a knife to the stomach.

Here's next week's show if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/12/17/monday-night-raw-august-30-2004-total-divas-wish-they-were-like-this/>

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Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – August 1, 2016

I hadn't planned for this to be a recurring feature but this week's show seemed like it deserved a second look. Last week's show was outstanding while this week's show felt like any old episode and that's not a good thing. I know things had to come back down to earth a little bit but there were some things here that really came off bad. Let's get to it.

The show opened with a voiceover saying Last Week On Monday Night Raw. I know they do these almost every week but this made it feel more like a special feature instead of something to fill in time. They also kept it shorter and more to the point for a big improvement.

Sasha Banks (with the Women's Title looking WAY too big) came out to open the show but was cut off by Charlotte (of course). They went back and forth a bit with the rematch being made, but Chris Jericho of all people interrupted. This turned into a back and forth between the Jericho and Sasha over which woman deserved to be champion more. The worst part about this was hearing Ric Flair's name brought up over and over, making me think he'll be back soon. You know, because last week's title change was begging for Ric Flair to be at ringside.

Anyway Enzo Amore came out on his own to defend Sasha and hit on her as only Enzo can. The result was some actually funny comedy between Jericho and Enzo (I say actually because Jericho's interactions with other big time comedy names often go badly) until Mick Foley came out to make it a mixed tag. The heels won with Charlotte pinning Sasha, which isn't a good idea a week into her reign. Yeah it's to set up the rematch but you couldn't have Sasha get knocked out with Natural Selection on the floor to make it a countout? Also of note: Kevin Owens was on commentary here and didn't like Enzo at all.

Braun Strowman squashed a jobber. These matches have gotten me more interested in Strowman than anything since his debut.

Mark Henry was given a US Title shot against Rusev later in the show. The

match was exactly what you would expect from the two of them fighting with Rusev winning via the Accolade. There were two interesting parts here though. First of all, Lana was in her wedding dress and dear goodness that woman is gorgeous.

In the more interesting part though, Roman Reigns came out for the save post match and seemed to set up what seems like a feud against Rusev for the US Title. Punishment over the drug test aside, this is the kind of thing Reigns needs to do: fight in the midcard in a feud where people are going to cheer for him in a simple story so he can build more love from the fans. This is what he needed to do years ago to get himself over instead of getting one third of the Shield over but for some reason REIGNS MUST HAVE BEEN THE STAR AT WRESTLEMANIA XXXI NO MATTER IF HE WAS READY OR NOT.

Golden Truth seems to be breaking up over Pokemon Go. It's not like Smackdown needs tag teams or anything. No instead let's break them up for the sake of a lame comedy bit after spending months setting them up in the first place.

Now for the big speech of the night as Finn Balor came out for a chat and was cut off by Seth Rollins. Seth kept to the idea that he's done everything Balor has done over the years but did it first. Balor talked about how there's always someone talking down to him and everywhere he's gone he's taken their spot because he's the better man before kicking Rollins out to the floor.

For some reason people have been saying Balor looked bad here but I liked the exchange. Balor definitely isn't the most comfortable talker in the world but that's where modern WWE gets in trouble: they seem to think that if everyone doesn't fit their idea of what a big star is then that person has no value. Balor is going to get over because of his in ring ability, his look, his in ring work and his overall cool factor. But no, for some reason he's doomed to never make it in the main event because he can't stand in the ring and exchange with someone on the mic.

Look back at some of the biggest stars ever. How much did someone like Austin, Rock, Hogan or Sting get over based on their look and how you had

to see what they were doing? Balor has the same appeal. There's the leather jacket and the cool music and the posing and the Demon and all the other intangibles he brings to the act. No he isn't the best talker in the world but what people don't get is that he doesn't need to be.

The same thing played a big role in bringing Reigns down: he was bad at talking in the middle of the ring but he didn't need to be doing that in the first place. How over did Balor get in NXT while barely ever talking? The reaction to this seemed to be that Balor was stumbling over his words and having no business being there. I'm not sure what they were watching but I saw Balor looking just fine (different than excelling) in an area he really shouldn't need to be great in.

Titus O'Neil beat Darren Young in a bad match. Afterwards they seemed to set up something more with Titus yelling at Bob Backlund and getting laid out by Young. I don't want to see this continue but they have to fill those three hours somehow.

Now we get to the thing that actually made me want to do this again this week, though unfortunately I can't take credit for pointing this out in the first place. Stephanie and Foley were backstage (They were on the show a lot more this week but it wasn't annoying. Yet.) when Sheamus came in wanting to know why he didn't get the US Title shot. Cesaro came in and asked the same thing. Foley said a lot of Cesaro's issues are due to his Draft spot, which was lower due to that shoulder injury.

Here's where we get to the big issue: Cesaro is drafted lower because he's three months removed from a shoulder injury but less than half an hour earlier Rollins was talking about his near career ending knee injury that he returned from about a month ago. Rollins was the #1 pick in the Draft but that knee injury hasn't been mentioned once by Stephanie or Foley or any other boss.

This is a great case of WWE picking and choosing their storylines and not paying attention to continuity. A simple "but he's Seth Rollins and we believe how great he can be" from Stephanie would solve this but odds are we're never going to hear about it because the writers either A, didn't notice or B, think/have been told that it's not important enough to

mention. It's inconsistency that should be solved so simply but instead it's just left sitting there because Heaven forbid you close a small plot hole with a quick statement.

Oh and one more thing: Cesaro and Sheamus' match isn't for the #1 contendership or a future title shot. Well it kind of was but not directly. See, instead of the WINNER getting the prize, it was whoever would impress the bosses more. In other words: wrestling doesn't matter because it's all about making the bosses happy. I've never liked that idea and I was really hoping it would go away but that's not the case just yet.

Nia Jax squashed another jobber. Same idea here as Strowman and the same positive result.

New Day beat Gallows and Anderson (which seems to be their official name) in less than ninety seconds to set up a post match beatdown. Big E. was crotched against the post to potentially injure him. I'm really not sure what the point is in having Gallows and Anderson lose so quickly is, unless their rematch will see them get serious and win the titles. Stupid again, but that's WWE for you.

Cesaro and Sheamus had a good power brawl with Cesaro winning clean off the Neutralizer. I've seen these two fight before and they didn't do anything we haven't seen a dozen times but at least it was entertaining. Unfortunately this match further illustrated the problem with someone like Cesaro or Dolph Ziggler.

Yes, Cesaro has a lot of cool moves that are going to pop the crowd but he does them EVERY SINGLE MATCH. It's kind of hard to get fired up over the same cool stuff week after week. They just stop having the same impact when they're out there every single time but they have to do them to get the crowd going. Save that stuff for the bigger matches and find some basic stuff to get you through the regular matches.

Jinder Mahal and Heath Slater came to the ring to say they wanted jobs, Foley came out to make a match for said job and Mahal won in 14 seconds. Next.

Owens said he had Jericho's back. Fine enough, especially if it leads to Kevin turning face.

Rollins beat Sami Zayn in a good enough main event. The idea here was to have Rollins beat someone similar to Finn with all the NXT experience to set up the Summerslam match and it worked just fine, though hearing the announcers brag about this being on Raw for the first time ever made me cringe.

The other reason I wanted to do this again was the closing segment, which I completely undersold in the live review. Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar came out to do their usual speech with a focus on Randy Orton not being able to hit the RK0 on Lesnar. Now anyone who has watched wrestling before knew what was coming here but it was still awesome to see Orton run through the crowd and lay Lesnar out with an RK0 to end the show. I really liked this and it was pulled off perfectly.

Of course that's assuming you don't mind Raw and Smackdown already invading each other less than two weeks after the Draft. I really, really don't need to see this already as it defeats the point of the Draft in the first place. If you want these shows to be separate then be separate. If you want them to be the same then let them be the same. There's a very good chance that this is just because the match was announced before the Draft but I have a feeling that this is going to be the norm going forward.

Overall this show was up and down but the biggest issue was a lack of energy. Aside from the opener and one or two other things, most of the show felt like any given show that you might see in the middle of May instead of with just a few weeks to go before Summerslam. Hopefully they can make things better once they work the kinks of the Brand Split out but this was a letdown after last week's great show.

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Smackdown – August 2, 2016: Double The Problem And It Might Go Away

Smackdown

Date: August 2, 2016

Location: Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tennessee

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Last week's show wasn't the greatest in the world and the reception has been mixed at best. That doesn't mean the show is in trouble by any means though as Raw started off great and wasn't exactly as strong last night. If nothing else we get American Alpha tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan watching the end of Raw last night with Randy Orton. Shane isn't happy because he thinks Orton has jeopardized everything but it was pretty awesome. There's a bunch of security standing by but Orton doesn't think they're necessary. The bosses walk away and run into Miz and Maryse with the former saying he's their Jason Bourne. Bryan announces a triple threat match between Baron Corbin, Apollo Creed (yes Creed) and Kalisto with the winner getting the shot at Summerslam. They keep walking and run into Dean Ambrose who says nothing of note.

Opening sequence.

Here's Ambrose to say he loves being the captain of the blue brand and

he's here to stay. That brings us to Summerslam so Dean would like Dolph Ziggler to come out here right now. Ziggler started here as a male cheerleader and knows what it means to work hard to get to the top. Dean doesn't want to hear it though because people told him that he wasn't championship material and you can't pay attention to all that negativity. You can't be worried about what fans chant and what people say on the internet and stealing the show all night long.

All that matters is that Ziggler is facing him for the title at Summerslam. Ziggler goes into a story about going to his first WWE live event when he was five and then being a star at Kent State University as a walk-on. He's spent seven years being told he's too good and then not good enough and he's going to walk into Summerslam to take the title like he deserves to.

Dean leaves and there go the lights with Bray Wyatt appearing to lay out Ziggler with Sister Abigail. Bray calls him worthless and wants a match with Ziggler tonight for the #1 contendership. Putting Wyatt in the spot would make sense but I have a bad feeling that they're going with this as a way to put Ziggler over because the last six to eight years haven't accomplished that yet but having Wyatt lose would be the ticket.

Post break Ziggler tells the bosses that he wants the match.

Kalisto vs. Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

Winner gets the Intercontinental Title shot at Summerslam with Miz on commentary. Everyone also now has a little tail of the tape during their entrance to make things feel a little more professional. Corbin gets double teamed to the floor to start but he's able to low bridge Crews to the floor, only to have Kalisto take Baron out with a suicide dive as we go to an early break.

Back with Corbin in control with Kalisto sends him outside. A Samoan drop gets two for Crews but Corbin comes back in with Deep Six for two of his own. Another hurricanrana attempt is countered but Corbin gets dropkicked to the floor, leaving Crews to pin Kalisto for the title shot 6:45.

Rating: C. This was barely long enough to rate with the commercial but

Crews was the only option. They're not going to go heel vs. heel for the title and Kalisto is a lost cause so Crews had to get the win. It's nice that they're actually doing something with him for a change though and maybe it can actually mean they're serious about these random callups.

Post match Corbin goes after Kalisto with Crews making the save, only to eat a Skull Crushing Finale.

Becky Lynch vs. Eva Marie

Eva gets her big over the top entrance, which seems to be her new standard. Actually hang on a second as Eva is claiming a leg injury before the bell. We get a trainer brought in and there's no match. This comes off as the latest answer to "we can't have Eva wrestle live."

We go to Renee Young for an interview with Carmella but Natalya cuts them off. They get catty with each other (because that's what WWE women do) and a match is teased for later.

American Alpha vs. Vaudevillains

Gable quickly takes Gotch down to start before it's off to Jordan. That doesn't go as well so it's right back to Gable for a top rope double clothesline. A double dropkick sends the Vaudevillains to the floor and Alpha does their sliding pose. Chad gets beaten down for a few seconds before the hot tag brings in Jordan to clean house. The dropkicks and suplexes set up Grand Amplitude to end English at 3:28.

Rating: C+. This was exactly what the debut needed to be as they kept it short but got in everything they needed to hit. These guys really are like a modern day Steiner Brothers and the high flying makes it even more entertaining. I still don't know why they're doing new Smackdown Tag Team Titles though when of the seven or so teams they have, two of them are jobbers and another is Breezango. Anyway though, Alpha looked great here.

Video on John Cena hosting the Teen Choice Awards.

Here's AJ Styles with a message for Cena but he's cut off in a hurry by Cena himself. AJ thinks he could beat Cena up but he's done that time after time and Cena just keeps sticking around. Styles doesn't like Cena

making these kids delusional and taking the kids with them. You don't get dessert before dinner, you don't stay up late with school the next day and you don't get a trophy for participation. You're rewarded for winning like AJ did when he beat John Cena last time.

Cena does his standard "they make up their own minds about me" but AJ cuts him off again to rant about his win again. Styles wants to know why Cena is still here with all that stuff he has going on outside of WWE. As usual, it's because Cena loves this place. He loves doing the ESPYs and the Teen Choice Awards because people always ask him when he's leaving WWE. That gives him another chance to say the WWE is his home and he's never leaving.

Tomorrow when AJ is kicking it on his day off, Cena will be in New York on the Late Show representing WWE. All AJ has to do is be a great wrestler who can get up and leave when he needs to. There is no other place for Cena so what the heck is AJ doing here? AJ mockingly applauds him and issues the challenge for Summerslam, which Cena immediately accepts. Cena was great as usual but I'm really not sure what AJ's issue was here and that's not good.

Randy Orton vs. Fandango

Security is around ringside. The fans already want an RK0 but get Orton working on the leg but walking into a dropkick instead. We're already in a chinlock as JBL incorrectly says Orton's father was in the main event of the first Wrestlemania (being in the corner for doesn't mean being in the match). Breeze tries to come in and eats a powerslam, leaving Fandango to take the elevated DDT. There's the RK0 but cue Brock to come in for the F5 and the DQ at 3:05.

Rating: D. Normally I wouldn't rate this when the last fifteen seconds of the match were Brock coming out to watch and the F5 but it's not like it matters that much. Thank goodness they can use a team like Breezango as cannon fodder like this. But hey, we should totally buy them as title contenders soon after this.

During the break, Lesnar was forced to leave the arena.

Heath Slater comes in to see Daniel Bryan and asks for a contract. Bryan gives Slater a match next week and if he wins, he gets a job. Slater thinks he's facing Jumping Marty Lunde (Arn Anderson's real name) but gets Gored by Rhyno instead.

Ambrose says nothing surprises him.

Carmella vs. Natalya

And again no match with Natalya jumping Carmella from behind and putting on a Sharpshooter.

The bosses try to talk Ziggler out of the match and he says screw them.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler hits a dropkick and Fameasser for two less than ten seconds in. The threat of a superkick sends Bray outside and he's hobbling on his previously injured leg. Back from a break with Bray hitting a superplex and putting on a cravate. Bray's leg seems fine as Ziggler comes back with clotheslines and a neckbreaker. The superkick is blocked though and Bray gets two off the backsplash.

Bray goes to pull off the turnbuckle pad but gets caught with a Zig Zag for a close two. Even Dean is stunned off the kickout. Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two but the release Rock Bottom gets two on Dolph. Back up and Bray is sent face first into the exposed buckle (as usual, right in front of the referee because they're worthless in WWE), followed by a superkick for the title shot at 11:34.

Rating: B. The false finishes were really good here but that lack of a DQ makes the match look so faked. At least try to make it clear that the referee isn't looking or something because it makes them look incompetent. Speaking of incompetent, we're really sticking with Ziggler vs. Ambrose at Summerslam? That's what they're going with? I mean, I know it's not a popular move and the match won't be that great but that's what we're getting because WWE decided it.

Post match Erick Rowan comes out to beat down Ziggler. Ambrose's save attempt doesn't work and it's Sister Abigail on Dolph to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I liked it better than last week but it's really clear that adding more titles would be a horrible decision right now as the depth just isn't there. The depth was barely there for one set of titles so the solution is clearly to double everything. That ending gives me hope that we won't be seeing just Ambrose vs. Ziggler at Summerslam. The worst part is the match will be at least decent but there's just no WOW factor to it and that's a really bad thing for Smackdown's future.

Results

Apollo Crews b. Kalisto and Baron Corbin – Rollup to Kalisto

American Alpha b. Vaudevillains – Grand Amplitude to English

Randy Orton b. Fandango via DQ when Brock Lesnar interfered

Dolph Ziggler b. Bray Wyatt – Superkick

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Monday Night Raw – August 1,

2016: One Week

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 1, 2016

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

After last week's well received show, it should be interesting to see where everything goes with the full time Monday Night Raw roster. Last week Finn Balor made his main roster debut and earned himself a shot in the first ever Universal Title match at the upcoming Summerslam. On top of that, Brock Lesnar is going to be making his first appearance since Wrestlemania. Let's get to it.

We open with a "Last Week On Raw" video, which is a really good idea that I'd love to see become a regular feature, as long as they keep it short.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sasha Banks to open things up and that belt looks ridiculous on her tiny waist. We have to wait for the YOU DESERVE IT chant to die down before Sasha can talk about herself and Bayley stealing the show last year over Summerslam weekend. That's going to be the case again this year when she defends against Charlotte at Summerslam. Cue Charlotte who is walking much faster than usual.

That means we get the YOU TAPPED OUT chants before Sasha says she can't put her finger on what's different about Charlotte this week. Charlotte says it was a fluke because she was champion for over 300 days. Sasha thanks Charlotte would never have been champion without her dad and here's.....Chris Jericho to interrupt? Jericho calls Charlotte royalty and thinks she's done more than Flair ever did. Now we get to the important point: what makes Sasha his boss?

Jericho brings up the Snoop Dogg connection and calls Sasha a brat. Now it's Enzo Amore coming out without Big Cass to kiss Sasha's hand. Sasha doesn't seem to mind the ensuing flirting but Charlotte has heard bad things about Enzo's love life. This turns into a surreal scene of Jericho

impersonating Cass and Sasha impersonating Enzo before it turns into Enzo saying Jericho is like a messed up iPhone.

Jericho calls Enzo a hip hop hobbit so the fans call Jericho a stupid idiot. Enzo talks about going back in time and warning Jericho to not buy that scarf but here's Foley to cut them all off. Foley: "Enzo is a certified G and I'm a certified GM." After a cheap plug for Holy Foley, Mick makes a mixed tag for right now.

Enzo Amore/Sasha Banks vs. Chris Jericho/Charlotte

To keep things odd, Kevin Owens is on commentary with Byron's tie around his neck. The guys start with Enzo scoring off some armdrags before it's off to Sasha for a quick rollup on Charlotte. Sasha's chop hurts her own hand so she wristdrags Charlotte down instead. A double clothesline puts the bad people on the floor as Owens talks about wanting to knock Enzo out for interrupting him on Draft night. The double dive puts everyone down and we take a break.

Back with Jericho in control of Enzo until Amore gets two off a cross body and a faceplant to the knee. Jericho dropkicks him out of the air but bangs up his knee in the process, allowing the double tag to the women. Sasha kicks her in the face but here's Dana Brooke for a distraction. Jericho offers another distraction, setting up Natural Selection for the pin at 9:58.

Rating: C-. I like the match being a very fresh mix but at the same time I REALLY don't like the new champion getting pinned in her first match as champion. It weakens the new title reign, which is the last thing you want to do, especially when the champion is as on fire as Sasha is right now.

Post match Enzo takes a Codebreaker but Big Cass comes down for the save.

Braun Strowman vs. Evan Anderhold

When asked why he's here, Evan (better known as Corey Hollis from NXT) says it's because he gets \$1000 and \$5000 if he wins. Those numbers serve as great joke material for the announcers during Evan's massacre, capped

off by the reverse chokeslam for the pin at 59 seconds.

Stephanie and Mick talk about how awesome each others' ideas have been when Mark Henry comes in. Henry thinks it's time to reopen the Hall of Pain but Stephanie thinks he would be better in a mentorship role. All Mark needs is one more chance so Foley gives him a US Title shot against Rusev.

Golden Truth is still looking for Pokemon but Goldust thinks they should focus on their match instead.

Golden Truth vs. Shining Stars

Goldust and Primo start things off as Truth is still playing Pokemon Go on the apron. Graves mistakenly says Truth is playing inside the ring as Goldust gets in a powerslam to change control. Truth has apparently caught a Pokemon and misses a tag. On top of that he drops his phone and actually goes out to get it as Goldust is waiting for a tag. Epico grabs a sunset flip for the pin at 2:00. Cole: "Pokemon no for Golden Truth tonight."

Truth finds another Pokemon post match.

Michael Cole brings out Finn Balor for a chat. Finn says he's here to prove his draft status but Seth Rollins cuts him off. Seth tells us about Balor being a former NXT Champion, though he wasn't the first NXT Champion because that was Rollins. Balor was also a first round pick but he wasn't the #1 overall pick because that was Rollins too. Last week Balor pinned Roman Reigns, even though Rollins did the same thing in his first match back after a career threatening injury.

Balor is just like a bad Hollywood remake like the new Ghostbusters. The idea of Balor beating Seth for the title is like the Atlanta Braves winning the World Series. Balor says everywhere he's gone, there has been someone like Seth, saying they're the man until Balor comes in and takes that spot. They may have a lot of things in common, but at least Finn earned his spot in the title match instead of having it handed to him. The brawl is about to start but Balor easily kicks him out to the floor to send Seth running. Balor looked like an underdog here, though an

underdog that belonged in this spot.

US Title: Mark Henry vs. Rusev

Rusev is defending and Lana is here in her wedding dress. Saxton: "What is she wearing?" Henry throws him around a few times to start and snapping his throat across the middle rope. Back from a break with Henry blocking the Accolade and kicking Henry in the face. Now the Accolade goes on and Henry taps at 6:35. Too much time spent during the break but this was every Henry vs. Rusev match you've ever seen.

Post match Rusev rips on the American Olympic teams for not having to face the superior Russian and Bulgarian athletes. This brings out Roman Reigns to a very distinct face pop. Rusev is chased off with a Superman Punch. That face pop has to be a big relief too, because if Reigns can't get over by standing up for AMERICA, he might as well be running a doughnut shop.

Video on Nia Jax.

Darren Young vs. Titus O'Neil

Earlier today Titus asked the same question everyone has been asking: when was Darren great in the first place? Darren's chops don't have much effect and Titus hits a few backbreakers. The splash in the corner gets two and we hit the armbar. A slam gets two on Darren but he comes back with a kick to the face. Both finishers are broken up and Titus grabs a rollup with a handful of trunks for the pin at 3:58.

Rating: D-. Who in the world thought this was a good idea in any way? Neither guy is interesting and it was another spur of the moment heel turn that does nothing for either guy. The fact that it was a boring match because Titus has some of the worst offense in recent memory doesn't help either.

Stephanie presents Foley with his own tablet when Sheamus comes in to complain about getting overlooked for that US Title shot. Cesaro cuts him off though and says the fans want to see him. Foley says the only reason Cesaro wasn't drafted so highly was due to that shoulder. Sheamus on the

other hand hasn't had his head in the game since cashing in Money in the Bank. Tonight they'll have a match and whoever impresses them the most (not whoever wins because that would make too much sense) gets a future title shot.

Backlund yells at Titus for cheating so O'Neil threatens to knock him out. Darren jumps Titus from behind and puts him down with one punch.

Nia Jax vs. Ariel Monroe

Ariel actually laughs at Nia to start and is pulled around the ring by her hair as a result. A fireman's carry into a powerslam is enough to flatten Monroe at 1:12. That's a much better finisher than the legdrop.

Post match Saxton asks Nia how it feels to be here so she runs Ariel over again. Nia: "Why don't you ask her?"

Sami is ready to face Rollins tonight.

New Day vs. Gallows and Anderson

Non-title and Woods is banned from ringside due to drawing a banana out of a bag instead of one of the two oranges. The obvious joke is about to be made but New Day says that's too serious. Big E. throws Anderson around to start but Karl gets in a cheap shot to take over. We get some Too Sweet but Big E. rolls Anderson up for the pin at 1:19.

Post match the brawl is on with Woods coming out, only to have New Day get destroyed and left laying. Big E. is crotched against the post to really hammer the point home.

Cesaro vs. Sheamus

They trade uppercuts to start with Sheamus getting the better of it. The fans don't seem entertained though and it's Cesaro coming back with more uppercuts. Cesaro sends him outside for the cannonball off the apron, only to have the bad shoulder go into the post. Back in and Sheamus hits the ten forearms to the chest, only to be deadlifted into a suplex because Cesaro is freakishly strong. The springboard corkscrew uppercut sets up the Neutralizer to put Sheamus away at 5:58.

Rating: C. How many times do we need to see these two fight each other? Cesaro vs. the winner of Rusev vs. Reigns should be a fun power brawl either way they go, despite Cesaro having next to no chance against either of them. Sheamus really is in need of ANYTHING new at this point as he's really just a guy in trunks with weird hair.

Cesaro and Sheamus are still brawling after a break, leaving Heath Slater and Jinder Mahal of all people to show up in the ring. Slater promises that 2MB is going to set Raw on fire but here's Foley to interrupt. Tonight they're going to have a match and the winner gets a job.

Jinder Mahal vs. Heath Slater

Mahal kicks him in the face for the pin at 14 seconds.

We look back at the mixed tag.

Jericho rants about how Enzo and Cass made fun of him earlier tonight and promises some revenge, you dig? He has someone in mind to watch his back and it's....Jimin Marvinluter, a Canadian shot put champion? Kevin Owens comes in to say he has Jericho's back instead because Jimin Marvinluter isn't a real person. Oh and Tom Phillips is a stupid idiot for saying his name isn't Tim.

Sami Zayn vs. Seth Rollins

The big attraction here: they've never fought on Raw before, making this completely different than the match they had on Smackdown about six weeks ago. They're quickly on the floor with Sami hitting his moonsault off the barricade to take over. Rollins sends him into the barricade and then into the corner with a hard whip. Sami is sent outside again and we take a break.

Back with Sami getting caught in the Buckle Bomb, followed by an enziguri to keep him in trouble. That's not enough for the Pedigree though as Sami climbs the turnbuckle for the tornado DDT, only to have Seth bail to the floor to avoid the Helluva Kick. That's fine with Sami who hits his flip dive to the floor instead. Back in and the Helluva Kick misses again, setting up the Pedigree for the pin at 11:40.

Rating: C+. I can't emphasize enough how lame of a finisher the Pedigree is for Rollins. I know that's become his thing now but it feels like they're just doing it to set up a match with HHH that really doesn't have the highest level of interest. It's a good idea to have Rollins go over various NXT stars to get ready for Balor, but I'm really hoping it doesn't end with Rollins going over Finn himself. We've been there and it's just not that interesting.

Puff Daddy guest stars next week.

Here's Paul Heyman to introduce Brock. At Summerslam, Brock is going to entertain the fans. Yes entertain, because his form of entertainment isn't what you see promoted in WWE. Instead it's something violent, which isn't something he should be saying but he can because he's standing next to Brock. Good point actually. That brings Heyman to Randy Orton, who has this great equalizer called the RK0. All Orton has to do is hit one RK0 at Summerslam to shock the world, just like when Brock conquered the Streak at Wrestlemania XXX. Heyman: "If that still bothers you, GET OVER IT ALREADY!"

Paul's advise for Orton is to take it from the wise old Jew (his words): Lesnar is going to drag him down to Suplex City. Maybe Orton can stay out of the hospital though and can fight again in 2016. Maybe he can do it if he can hit one RK0, but that's never gonna....and here's Orton with an RK0 to lay Lesnar out. Yes indeed they made it a whole ONE WEEK before a Smackdown wrestler was on Raw. Orton bails through the crowd to end the show. I'll give them this: that one RK0 with Lesnar being down for a few seconds is better than anything Ambrose got in his buildup.

Overall Rating: C-. So much for Raw being awesome. This was every episode of the show you've seen for years with a few more squashes thrown in. It wasn't terrible by any stretch and the ending segment was a good idea but there was just so much stuff on here that felt like a nothing episode.

The opening gave me some hope that they really were mixing it up but then a match was lost due to Pokemon, Jinder Mahal was back, Rusev squashed Mark Henry AGAIN, a champion got pinned and we were supposed to be excited about a match taking place on this show for the first time ever.

Oh and Smackdown invaded. Welcome to the new era.

Results

Charlotte/Chris Jericho b. Sasha Banks/Enzo Amore – Natural Selection to Banks

Braun Strowman b. Evan Anderhold – Reverse chokeslam

Shining Stars b. Golden Truth – Sunset flip to Goldust

Rusev b. Mark Henry – Accolade

New Day b. Anderson and Gallows – Rollup to Anderson

Cesaro b. Sheamus – Neutralizer

Jinder Mahal b. Heath Slater – Kick to the face

Seth Rollins b. Sami Zayn – Pedigree

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Cruiserweight Classic – July 27, 2016: A Lot Of Wrestling

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: July 27, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

We're still in the first round but since this tournament is structured rather well, we'll be done with it next week. This show has become a very refreshing change of pace with nothing but wrestling and almost no storylines. I know that wouldn't work long term but it's really fun in the short version like this. Let's get to it.

We look at tonight's four matches.

Opening sequence.

Tyson Dux used to wrestle in WWE and then destroyed his knee.

Zack Sabre Jr. says Harry Potter isn't the only wizard from England.

First Round: Tyson Dux vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

Canada vs. England. I've actually never seen a Sabre match. The fans are entirely behind Sabre here as he takes Dux down by the leg. Bryan talks about Sabre being well educated in the art of escapology, meaning he knows how to get out of every possible hold. Sabre keeps spinning around from one body part to another with some sweet movements, each one frustrating Dux even more. You can almost hear Bryan drooling over every single thing Zack does.

Dux tries to grab a headlock but gets caught in an armbar on the mat. A slam and some chops stagger Sabre a bit but he comes right back with European uppercuts. Some kicks to the arm only seem to tick Dux off and he grabs a fisherman's buster. Zack's stunned look as he lands is great.

Dux puts on a Fujiwara armbar but Zack gets to his feet and grabs an

octopus hold. Tyson gets the ropes so Zack hits a running kick to the chest for two. A quick DDT gets two for Dux and he clotheslines Zack's head off. Sabre comes right back with a Kimura before taking him down into something like the YES Lock but he bends Dux's fingers back for the submission at 9:23.

Rating: B. This was exactly the way they should have had Sabre make his debut: Instead of having him just run through Dux, Sabre had to actually break a sweat here and that makes for a more interesting match. It means that Sabre might have to actually put in some work as he moves forward, which makes for something worth watching. Just having Sabre tie Dux up and make him tap in four minutes would have worked short term but this is putting in some early effort for a better payoff later. That's so rare these days and it's nice to see a change.

Drew Gulak is a submission expert from Philadelphia.

Harv Sihra was inspired by Eddie Guerrero to embrace his heritage.

First Round: Drew Gulak vs. Harv Sihra

America vs. India. Sihra is part of the Bollywood Boys and his brother is also in the tournament. They're quickly on the mat with Gulak grabbing a bodyscissors, only to have Harv tie the legs up to send Drew crawling to the ropes. The fans didn't seem to see what was going on though and there wasn't much of a reaction. Gulak comes right back with a middle rope clothesline for two, only to be backdropped to the floor. Harv gets in a nice twisting cross body to the floor and grabs a superplex back inside. With Gulak down, Harv goes for the ankle but gets caught in a dragon sleeper for the tap out at 5:24.

Rating: C. Gulak isn't as flashy as Sabre but you can tell he certainly knows his submissions. That dragon sleeper looked great and he looked completely in control of Sihra out there. Sabre vs. Gulak in the second round should be excellent, especially if they give it enough time to go somewhere.

Tony Nese says he's a complete athlete.

Anthony Bennett is from Philadelphia and has very large hair.

First Round: Tony Nese vs. Anthony Bennett

America vs. America here and Bennett's hair has its own sunglasses. Bennett dances around to start and Nese will have none of that nonsense. They head outside with Bennett hitting a quick cannonball off the apron but is easily taken down for a springboard middle rope moonsault. A suplex plants Bennett, who pops back up for a dropkick. Bennett's guillotine choke doesn't get him very far so Tony slams him again....and the referee stops the match to check on him. We get the all clear and Nese hits a 450 for the pin at 6:33.

Rating: D+. I wasn't feeling this one as well with Bennett's size being a bit too much to overlook. Nese is fine but a bit too much of your standard "I'm awesome and athletic" cruiserweight. The 450 looked good though and made for a good ending to a not so great match. Eh they can't all be great.

Raul Mendoza grew up idolizing Eddie Guerrero who was small but became champion.

Brian Kendrick is here to get his second chance.

First Round: Brian Kendrick vs. Raul Mendoza

America vs. Mexico. Kendrick is looking very skinny and you can see a lot of his bones here. They trade leapfrogs to start with Kendrick being sent out to the floor. Back in and Mendoza slaps on something like a reverse Texas Cloverleaf, only to swing Brian around before taking him down into a leglock on the mat. Cool indeed. Kendrick suckers him in for a big boot before putting Mendoza's mouth on the ropes, which he then kicks for good measure.

Mendoza is bleeding from the mouth but quickly says he's ready to continue. Raul comes right back and sends him outside for a f

lip dive, only to miss a springboard 450 back inside. A big running kick to the face drops Raul but Kendrick takes too long getting up top, allowing Raul to crotch him into the Tree of Woe. Mendoza goes way big

with a Coast to Coast dropkick but a backbreaker only gets two. We get some old school goldbricking as Kendrick fakes an injury, only to pull Mendoza down into a choke (apparently the Bully Choke) for the submission at 7:35.

Rating: C+. I would have gone with Mendoza here as Kendrick is a big name but he's not exactly a big enough name that he has to go forward here. Raul was a sweet high flier here and that's something we haven't seen much of tonight. I get why they went with Kendrick but I hope he doesn't go much further than this.

Overall Rating: B-. This show worked but I would have gone with Sabre as the main event. It's clear that he's going to be a big deal in this and I don't know why they wouldn't go with him last. They had a good show with four good to watchable matches though as this tournament is flying by. The first round wrapping up is a good thing as we can now see big names facing off, which is the point of a tournament. Another good show this week, as has become the norm.

Results

Zack Sabre Jr. b. Tyson Dux – Double arm lock

Drew Gulak b. Harv Sihra – Dragon sleeper

Tony Nese b. Anthony Bennett – 450

Brian Kendrick b. Raul Mendoza – Bully Choke

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