

Big Boss Man Announced For WWE Hall of Fame

LONG overdue for me, even though he wasn't the biggest star. He and Hogan made a fortune back in 1989 and he was one of those guys who was always around. I'm very happy with this one.

Smackdown – March 3, 2016: When You Need A Break

Smackdown

Date: March 3, 2016

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

We're coming off a not great Raw this week and we could be in for another edition of that tonight on Smackdown. It's always hard to guess what's going to happen on one of these shows as they're more wrestling based but if last week is any indication, they're going to be recap based. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of HHH and Dean Ambrose from Raw which set up the main event of the upcoming Roadblock special.

Here's a limping Ambrose to open things up. Dean sits down because all the bruises on his body are grouping together into one huge bruise. He isn't one to have a long term plan because he's more of a five second guy. Like a few weeks ago when he challenged Brock Lesnar and got sent into the windshield of a car. Then he went after HHH but this time it got him a shot at the WWE World Heavyweight Championship.

Now things get messy because everything is ready for Wrestlemania with Reigns vs. HHH. So what happens when Dean wins the belt? Does he face Reigns or should it be Brock, as in the person he's already signed to face? Or maybe he fights HHH because of some rematch clause. Why not just throw all four of them in a cage and see what happens? That's probably their best way out of it actually but I don't think we're getting there.

Instead here's Kevin Owens to interrupt and likely set up the main event. Owens is tired of seeing Ambrose get beaten up and then have so many people wanting to fight him when the Intercontinental Champion can't get a single challenger. Dean: "You could try being nicer to people." That gets under Owens' skin for some reason as he gets inside and says Ambrose is everything wrong with WWE. A fight breaks out and Owens gets hit in the back with a chair. Simple enough but neither guy needs to be doing a job tonight.

Usos vs. Sheamus/Rusev

Sheamus and Jimmy get things going with the pale one pounding the Uso down before quickly handing it off to Rusev. The League pounds him down on the floor and we take an early break. Back with Sheamus in control of Jey and giving him a suplex slam for no cover. There are the ten forearms to the chest from Sheamus, setting up a running knee in the back from Rusev to keep Jey in trouble and knock him out to the floor.

A DDT finally drops Rusev and the hot tag brings in Jimmy. Everything breaks down and Sheamus misses the Brogue Kick and the Usos start diving. Sheamus misses the Brogue Kick which allows Jimmy to superkick him out of the air. Back in and the Superfly Splash hits knees, setting up the Brogue Kick for the pin at 9:45.

Rating: C-. This is a good example of why people are getting tired of the Usos: they haven't changed up their formula in years and it's the same match over and over again. Yeah it's entertaining and still more than watchable but I could go for something different from them. Unfortunately I'm not sure what that is and it's becoming a problem for them.

Post match here are the Dudley Boyz with a table. The Usos fight them off but get powerbombed instead, albeit not through the table.

We see part of Stephanie speech from Monday.

Dolph Ziggler vs. The Miz

The announcers make a big deal about the match on Monday ending in 1:05. Miz punches him down to start and kicks Ziggler in the face for two. Back up and Miz misses a charge in the corner, allowing Ziggler to grab a backslide for the pin at 48 seconds.

R-Truth is in catering when he sees Goldust sitting by himself. Truth tries to make up for it but Goldust wants nothing to do with him. Now Truth is willing to be Goldust's partner but Goldust thinks it's going result in a plate of food going into his face. Well Goldust isn't going to let that happen because he'll do it to himself first. Goldust: "Who's the idiot now?" They've actually turned this into an interesting story instead of just the same jokes every single week which is quite the surprise.

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

Rematch from Raw for the #1 contendership. The fans are split here as a test of strength puts Sasha down for two. With the wrestling not working, Sasha opts to forearm Becky in the face. Both of them try dropkicks and we've got a standoff as they're matching each other step for step so far. This brings out Charlotte and Ric as we take a break. Back with Becky fighting out of a double arm crank and getting two off a t-bone suplex.

The running legdrop misses though and Becky gets caught in a quick Bank Statement. A European uppercut gets two for Becky and frustration is setting in less than ten minutes into the match. They head outside for a double clothesline but Flair starts strutting around them. Well at least he has good taste. Charlotte decks both of them from behind though and it's a double DQ (thankfully she hit them at the same time so it's an actual double DQ) at 12:04.

Rating: C. This was another match where you were sitting around waiting on the screwy finish and they did very little to hide it. Also I can kind of go with the idea that Charlotte screwed up like this as her dad never learned a lesson and it makes sense that she wouldn't either. If nothing

else we're almost guaranteed the triple threat, which is where this should be going in the first place.

Charlotte beats both of them down even more post match.

Renee Young tells Charlotte that it's a triple threat at Wrestlemania for the title. Ric and Charlotte aren't pleased.

We recap Undertaker and Vince from Raw. That was so short that they might as well have just shown us the whole thing again. They still really need to tweak that thing too because it's going to get a lot worse in a hurry otherwise.

Kofi Kingston vs. AJ Styles

This could be really good. Before the match, Kofi and Woods talk about the wonders of the world such as the sun, the moon, or Jello. Kofi: "We can't explain these things!" Big E.: "Actually Kofi we can. Jello is a mixture of water, flour...." Kofi: "WE CAN'T EXPLAIN THESE THINGS!" Another miracle is that Xavier Woods is such a success despite coming from a town like Hot Trash Lanta. No matter what happens though, they'll always be the champions.

AJ comes out alone as Jericho is on a promotional tour. Woods and Francesca II offer an early distraction but a rollup gets two for AJ. The drop down into the dropkick get two more for Styles but he makes the mistake of going after Francesca and takes out Woods with a plancha, only to eat a baseball slide from Kofi. Back from a break with AJ in a chinlock, followed by another chinlock to keep him in trouble.

Kofi tries to go up top but dives into a quick release northern lights suplex. I know there isn't much to break down or analyze here but this has been a solid back and forth match. It's hard to find stuff to talk about in something that works like this. AJ's running forearm and fireman's carry backbreaker get two each. Kofi gets the SOS for two more but Trouble in Paradise misses and the Pele sends Kofi outside. The threat of a trombone assault gets Woods and Big E. ejected, setting up the springboard forearm for the pin on Kingston at 9:57.

Rating: B-. This wasn't a masterpiece or even a classic but it was two talented wrestlers getting to show off for a little bit. AJ continues to look like a star who was born for the WWE and I'm glad to see him getting a chance to do something like this. Kofi on the other hand continues to be the modern day Tito Santana: he has the resume to look good and can work well with anyone that he gets in the ring against. Good stuff here and that shouldn't surprise anyone.

AJ bails from New Day in a smart move.

Brock Lesnar vs. Bray Wyatt is official for Roadblock.

The Wyatts talk about the Beast and how he needs to be slayed. Brock may have conquered them all but how do you strike fear in Bray Wyatt?

Freebirds Hall of Fame announcement.

Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and Ambrose is limping badly on his way to the ring. It's nice to see someone selling around here for a change. Dean tries a shoulder to start but has to stop to hold the injury. Well no one ever suggested that he was the brightest guy. Owens knocks him outside to mess with the bad ribs and gets in a few good kicks as we take a break.

Back with Dean being driven into the corner to break up Dirty Deeds. The backplash (smart move) gets two and we hit something like a seated abdominal stretch. Kevin throws him to the floor and into the barricade for a nine count, only to be sent right back to the floor. Ambrose does that apron 619 of his and blasts Owens with a clothesline for another long count. Lawler is in full on heel mode here as he cheers for Owens, which really is working for me.

No Jerry isn't doing anything amazing or groundbreaking but he's being a jerk and insulting good guys. He isn't bringing up some European sports competition that goes over 80% of the audience's heads or trying to sound way smarter than he really is. Instead he's cheering for villains and calling heroes stupid and it's working. Why can't more people get the simple idea that less is more? Back in and Ambrose starts fighting back,

including the running clothesline and suicide dive to really bang up the ribs some more.

Back in again and Ambrose gets crotched, setting up the Cannonball for a close two. You can't fault Owens' psychology here. Dean fights back again and gets two off the top rope elbow but has another suicide dive countered, this time with his back being driven into the apron. Back in and the Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana but Dean eats a superkick. The backsplash hits knees and Ranallo describes this as a fight between a dentist and a carpenter. Tooth and nail you see. Dirty Deeds puts Owens away at 14:45.

Rating: B+. I love the match but I really don't like the booking here. They did every single thing they could have here to make Owens look smart and protect him but at the end of the match he was looking up at the lights after a clean finisher. I'm well aware that the Intercontinental Title means little to WWE but maybe they wouldn't have this problem of injuries destroying the roster if they had some people who actually were protected and could be slotted into these matches instead. Dean winning is good but no champion should be losing twice in a week with a month before Wrestlemania, period.

Overall Rating: C+. The two good matches helped a lot and the main event was very strong but the important thing here was how they gave us actual stuff. I know it wasn't anything amazing but at least it wasn't a Raw clip show like last week's was. Hopefully they'll start setting things back on track on Monday but this week was a bit better with a much more standard show.

Results

Sheamus/Rusev b. Usos – Brogue Kick to Jimmy

Dolph Ziggler b. The Miz – Backslide

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks went to a double DQ when Charlotte interfered

AJ Styles b. Kofi Kingston – Springboard forearm

Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens – Dirty Deeds

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01AXP08DK>

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

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

Wrestlemania XXXIII To Be Held In Orlando

Officially announced today in a pretty big non-shock.

New Column: The Birds Are Back

After a lot of complaining we'll talk about something fun for a change with a look at the Fabulous Freebirds.

[The Birds Are Back](#)

Monday Night Raw – February 29, 2016: We Waited 23 Years For This

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 29, 2016

Location: Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the first Raw ever on February 29 and the big story would seem to be Undertaker showing up to address his match with Shane McMahon. Other than that we should get more between HHH and Roman Reigns, assuming Reigns is back from his nose injury at HHH's hands last week. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of HHH beating Reigns down last week to end the show.

Opening sequence.

Here's HHH to get things going. HHH talks about how only a handful of us actually have any authority and the rest of us all have an authority figure in their lives. Every single one of us hate it (much like opening Raw with a long promo that isn't likely to lead anywhere) and want to fight back but we're all afraid. That fear keeps everything in line but people like Reigns decided to not listen to that fear.

Now Reigns is sitting at home breathing through his mouth and hoping he can still go to Wrestlemania. Cue Ambrose to a nice reaction from the fans as things slow down. Dean just got off the phone with Reigns, who says hi but he's also coming for HHH. They make some Oscar references to recap Ambrose challenging Lesnar last week and Shane having to fight Undertaker at Wrestlemania.

Ambrose asks who HHH wanted to win the match at Fastlane but the champ brushes it off by saying Dean wasn't a factor in that match. Dean gets right in HHH's face and says he's the last person HHH wants to face at

Wrestlemania. The boss finally gets that Dean really is crazy but Ambrose can see it in him: HHH is scared.

HHH thinks that's the smell of clean clothes and power that Dean isn't familiar with, which draws a YOU CAN'T BEAT HIM chant. Dean gets right to the point and asks for a title shot but HHH says that shouting RIGHT NOW doesn't earn you a title shot. He'll give Dean an answer at the end of the night (with Dean clarifying that HHH means by the end of the show) but first of all, Dean has to fight Alberto Del Rio.

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

The winner gets Charlotte (at ringside with Ric Flair) for the title at Wrestlemania. Just get to the double pin now. They start fast with some pinfall reversal sequences and get some near falls each. Neither submission works and we've got a stalemate as both of them are trying for their Wrestlemania moment. Not the title or anything, but a Wrestlemania moment.

Becky is sent outside and taken down with a baseball slide, allowing Sasha to send her into the post as we take a break. Back with Sasha driving two knees into Becky's chest for another near fall as JBL keeps up the line of it all being about going to Wrestlemania. Becky grabs an exploder suplex and stops a charge with a boot to the face. A missile dropkick gets two for Lynch but Sasha is up first and heads up top. Becky is right there though and tries a superplex, only to get countered into a sunset flip. Sasha lays back for no apparent reason and it's a double pin at 9:54.

Rating: C+. This was much more like the NXT format for a women's match and it was better as a result. Instead of having them sit around and do chinlocks for three minutes, these two were actually telling a story and making things work far better. The ending was predictable but I'd rather have all three of them in the match instead of just Sasha.

We don't have a winner and Charlotte is happy.

The Wyatts come on screen with Bray talking about insanity meaning to try something more than once and expecting different results. Well maybe he's

insane then because he wants to save us all. He had an idea which is turning into a plan and can be used to save us all. Run.

Dolph Ziggler vs. The Miz

This is over an argument on the pre-show last week over Ziggler asking what Miz has done lately. Let me repeat that. DOLPH ZIGGLER is asking what someone has done lately. Ziggler starts punching away in the corner but gets whipped hard into the corner to set up a rollup....for the pin at 1:05. Well that's surprising. Nice but surprising.

Long recap of last week's opening segment with Shane McMahon returning.

Here's Stephanie for her acceptance speech for the Vincent J. McMahon Award. We get some classic heel tactics as she asks for the respect that she deserves during her speech. The fans chant for Shane but apparently he's not here tonight, just like he won't be here after Wrestlemania. Stephanie holds the trophy like a baby and talks about all the sacrifices she makes, only to be greeted with more WE WANT SHANE chants.

She turns the podium over and goes on a rant about how horrible Shane is and what it means that people cheer for him. Stephanie goes on about how Shane has been gone for years, which proves how little he cares about this whole place. This is a speech you could have said about the Rock before he returned in 2011 with some of the exact same lines.

Apparently it eats Shane alive that Stephanie and Hunter are married and that she has so much power. Shane's kids can be in charge later on but they'll have to fight to earn that power. She hits the screeching voice and talks about how we all need to show her respect and bow down to the queen before leaving. To recap: no Shane, no interruption and no one getting anything in on Stephanie as she hypes up....herself. Oh yeah everything is normal again.

Lucha Dragons vs. Rusev/Sheamus

Of course this is still going. JBL: "The League is like the Four Horsemen. They just need a JJ Dillon." Cara sunset flips Sheamus for two to start but charges into an Irish Curse. Rusev comes in to crush Cara's

head before Sheamus comes back in for an armbar. I'm not sure on having a power guy like Sheamus using an arm hold. That doesn't feel right.

Cara comes back with a tornado DDT and the hot tag brings in Kalisto to clean house with his bouncing offense. The hurricanrana driver (minus most of the drive) gets two on Rusev and Cara dives onto Barrett. That earns Cara a Brogue Kick though and Kalisto takes Sheamus down with a flip dive. Back in and Rusev kicks Kalisto in the head for the pin at 5:05.

Rating: D+. You can't make this stuff up. I mean, as soon as the Dragons came out you knew Kalisto was going to take the pin if his team lost because we need to protect SIN CARA for some reason. I'm really not sure what we're going with the League as they're just floating, so yeah of course let one of them pin the US Champion.

Del Rio gives Kalisto the top rope double stomp post match.

Immediately after the match, Cole: "Of course Total Divas airs every Tuesday night on E!" I'm glad they're not even bothering to hide the fact that the show is more important than the US Title.

Renee Young and Natalya do a commercial for Subway. Eh it's a big check for WWE for thirty seconds of Raw. It's hard to complain about something like that.

We recap the opening segment.

Ryback vs. Adam Rose

Before the match, Ryback talks about wanting the spotlight and promises to take it for himself. Ryback throws him around the ring to start but Rose gets in a running kick to the chest for two. Normally I would say there's no way WWE is going to have Ryback lose a week after a heel turn but you never can tell these days. The Backpack Stunner breaks up a chinlock and Ryback pounds away on the mat until Rose is out cold. The Shell Shock is good for the pin at 2:04.

We recap Brock's antics last week, including laying out Ambrose and accepting his challenge for Wrestlemania.

New Day vs. AJ Styles/Chris Jericho

Non-title. After a break, New Day says they're the greatest three man team of all time and will fight anyone who disagrees. They aren't a loose collection of talents like the League of Nations and are better than any great team like Sonic and Tails, Snoop and Dr. Dre, Edge and Christian or Cheerios and milk. Jericho and Kofi get things going with Chris nailing a nice dropkick. Stereo dives to the champs take us to a break.

Back with Styles in trouble and taking the Unicorn Stampede thanks to some Woods interference. AJ gets dropped onto the barricade and Kofi pulls out a card to show that he has AJ's number. Back in and the Pele drops Kofi long enough for the hot tag to bring in Jericho. Everything breaks down with Jericho destroying the champs but having to kick out of a rollup. The Lionsault gets two on Kofi with Big E. making the save, only to get taken down by the springboard forearm. Trouble in Paradise is countered into the Walls of Jericho to make Kofi tag at 8:59.

Rating: C. It's been a bad night for champions. I'm so glad they're putting Jericho and AJ together for a title program because having AJ face, say, Kevin Owens for the Intercontinental Title at Wrestlemania and letting them go nuts for fifteen minutes would just be a disaster. Normally I would complain about Jericho and Styles winning like two matches and suddenly being a top team, but that's the extent of the division these days so it's not the biggest problem.

Post match Jericho and Styles say they're officially a thing and want a title shot next week on Raw.

Here's Vince for a chat before Undertaker comes out. Vince talks about how the stars would have to align to have Shane come out here in charge on Raw the night after Wrestlemania. None of that is going to happen though because only fools believe in miracles. Vince introduces Undertaker and after three more Wrestlemanias have passed, he finally gets down to the ring.

Vince talks about how Undertaker is his destroyer but Undertaker grabs him by the throat. Once that door closes, Shane's blood is going to be on Vince's hands, not Undertaker's. That's it, after Undertaker might have

been in the ring for ninety seconds. Vince isn't done yet though, as he says Shane has lost his inheritance and is out of his will. All of Vince's money is now going to Stephanie and Shane is no longer his son.

We look back at the Dudley Boyz beating up the Usos three weeks back.

Jey Uso vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Jey goes right after him with right hands and drives Bubba up against the ropes for some shoulders to the ribs. A superkick puts Bubba down but D-Von pulls out a table to blast Jimmy in the face. Jey superkicks D-Von but eats a Bubba Bomb for the pin at 2:11.

Goldust comes up to R-Truth in the back but Truth cuts him off to say this isn't happening. He doesn't want to see what costume Goldust has or what song he has to sing because he's done with all this. Goldust walks away sad.

Kevin Owens vs. Big Show

Non-title and a rematch from Smackdown where Owens won by countout. They're quickly on the floor with Owens hitting a superkick, followed by a tornado DDT off the apron for nine. Show slides back in but has to kick out of the backsplash at two. Owens goes up top but gets crotched, setting up a countout to give Big Show the win at 2:36.

Brie Bella is here and talking about Bryan when Lana of all people interrupts. Lana talks about how she's a real woman with a real figure while Brie is married to a tiny goat man. A match is actually teased.

Brie Bella vs. Naomi

I'm so glad they teased this. Brie starts in on the arm to start and works on an armbar until Tamina trips her up. Back in and a legdrop gets two for Naomi and we hit the double arm crank. The split legged moonsault misses but Naomi is able to hit the dancing kicks. She misses the big kick to the head though and Brie is able to come back with the YES Kicks. Tamina offers another distraction though and Naomi puts on a crucifix to pull back on Brie's arms while cranking on the neck for the submission at 4:07.

Rating: D-. They're just not very good. I really don't know how else to put it but these women really aren't very good. Naomi is an athletic freak with no idea how to use her athleticism and Brie....well she's....there's no other way to put it other than she isn't a good wrestler. As in she fails at almost every aspect in the ring and it's getting harder to sit through her matches while she sponges off Bryan's head.

Lana comes out to shake her head at Brie.

Fabulous Freebirds Hall of Fame video.

We look back at Becky vs. Sasha from earlier.

Sasha and Becky argue in the back until Charlotte comes up to say there's going to be a rematch on Smackdown. Charlotte makes fun of them for being so excited.

We recap Vince cutting Shane out of his will and saying he won't be his son anymore. How many times has Vince done that over the years?

Dean Ambrose vs. Alberto Del Rio

Ambrose is all bandaged up so Del Rio sends him out to the floor and into the barricade. Back in and Alberto rams shoulders into the buckle, followed by a DDT for two. The armbreaker over the top rope cranks on the bad arm even more but Dean counters the top rope double stomp. The Backstabber sends Dean outside again and now the double stomp connects from the apron. Dean beats the count back in at nine (because of course he does) so Alberto fires off kicks to the ribs.

Dirty Deeds is broken up but Dean settles for a bulldog and missile dropkick. Back up and Ambrose goes shoulder first into the post, allowing Alberto to hit the corner enziguri. Alberto misses a charge and hits the floor, allowing Dean to dive on all four of them. The referee starts counting but here's HHH to interrupt. The distraction lets the League sneak in for the DQ at 9:40.

Rating: D+. This was a squash with Dean getting in some hope spots near the end but you knew HHH was going to get involved somehow. I can go for

the League as a bunch of goons who do HHH's bidding instead of being a featured act. It's a good enough idea but the difference here is there's a reason to care about someone like Ambrose. Reigns is just a guy who happens to be there and it's a big part of why this isn't working.

Post match HHH says Ambrose will never beat the Authority so Dean punches him in the jaw. Ambrose gets in some shots in the corner but eats a Pedigree. HHH says the match is on and leaves, because why have the match now when your opponent is done? Ah, yes, plot convenience. Ambrose crawls over to the mic and says thanks but HHH takes the jacket off and unbuttons his sleeves. HHH comes back and throws Dean to the floor, setting up the required whip over the announcers' table. Referees come out to break it up and one actually shouts "THIS IS UNPROFESSIONAL!" HHH leaves Dean laying to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Save for the last five minutes, this was a disaster. The problem here is simple: I watched last week's show. For some reason though WWE has decided to just keep showing us the same clips over and over because that's enough to make us keep watching. The main event scene still has the same problem: Ambrose is someone people can relate to but Reigns is someone who isn't even on the show but we're supposed to want to see him fight in the biggest match of the year? The title shot could change things but I'd be stunned if they actually do a title change this close to Wrestlemania.

The rest of the show was horrible though with almost no good matches and the feeling that we're somewhere in October instead of having less than five weeks before Wrestlemania. The top three matches at Wrestlemania seem to be set in stone and if that's the case, it's going to be a very long night in Dallas. There's still time to shake things up and there's a reason to hope but good night we could be in for some trouble.

Results

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks went to a double pin

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Rollup

Rusev/Sheamus b. Lucha Dragons – Kick to Kalisto's head

Ryback b. Adam Rose – Shell Shock

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles b. New Day – Walls of Jericho to Kingston

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Jey Uso – Bubba Bomb

Big Show b. Kevin Owens via countout

Naomi b. Brie Bella – Crucifix neck crank

Dean Ambrose b. Alberto Del Rio via DQ when the League of Nations interfered

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01AXP08DK>

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

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

Smackdown – February 25, 2016: Get Used To It

Smackdown

Date: February 25, 2016

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

We're getting close to Wrestlemania in a hurry and things are really

starting to change. This past Monday saw the return of Shane McMahon and the announcement of his match against Undertaker of all people inside the Cell at the biggest show of the year. Other than that we have what seems like the face HHH vs. the heel Roman Reigns for the World Title coming up. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the main event of Fastlane and the post match staredown with Reigns vs. HHH.

Here's HHH for a rare Smackdown appearance to open things up. He gets things going by quoting some Rolling Stones with a little Sympathy for the Devil. HHH talks about how Monday left no doubt in Roman Reigns' mind about what's coming for him at Wrestlemania and we see a long clip of the attack on Reigns to end the show.

We see a picture of Reigns after his surgery, which HHH says is a man who has been humbled. You see HHH in a suit right now but make no mistake about it: he is the authority. Everyone wants to rebel and HHH has even been there himself but there's no point to it. Instead you bow your head and you go to work to do your job. Either accept the authority or let your soul go to waste.

HHH has had to walk over a lot of people to get where he is. Reigns has the sweat part down and HHH knows Roman is good. He saw the blood on Monday, which just leaves the tears. HHH will save those for Wrestlemania when he humbles Roman once and for all because he's the Game and that's what he does as the Game, the Cerebral Assassin and the WWE World Heavyweight Champion. This didn't fix everything but it's the best promo these guys have done for their match so far.

League of Nations vs. Lucha Dragons/Neville/Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler and Barrett get things going with the King making his first actual in ring appearance in weeks. Everything breaks down less than a minute in with the Dragons diving on Del Rio and Rusev. Alberto kicks them both down as Ziggler DDT's Barrett, only to get taken down by Sheamus and Rusev as we take a break.

Back with Del Rio giving Ziggler a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two.

Rusev mocks Ziggler's attempts to tag his partners before bringing Sheamus back in for a suplex. Ziggler comes back with a superkick (of course) and Lawler is suddenly a League fan. The hot tag brings in Neville to clean house with a running clothesline and a basement dropkick to Barrett before heading up top. Sheamus tries to make a save so Neville dives over him with a 450 for a near fall. The Dragons take out Rusev as Neville hits a Red Arrow on Barrett. Del Rio makes the save but eats a superkick, followed by the Brogue Kick to put Neville away at 8:22.

Rating: C+. I liked this because they didn't bother stretching the match out for the sake of stretching it out. That's something you see so often on Raw and it makes matches feel longer and longer every single week. This was just as long as it needed to be and didn't feel like it was missing anything they would have done in a match five minutes longer. Good little match here and it's nice to see Barrett back in the ring.

Kevin Owens talks about seeing Dean Ambrose take a beating on Monday and then come back to face Brock Lesnar again. It inspired him so much that Ambrose deserves an Intercontinental Title shot. However, Ambrose isn't here tonight so that's just too bad. There's no one left for Owens to beat so he has the night off, which brings in Big Show. Owens makes some retirement jokes until Show grabs him by the shirt and threatens to KO KO.

D-Von Dudley vs. Jimmy Uso

Before the match, Bubba goes on his same rant about not being a nostalgia act because they're the nine time WWE Tag Team Champions. D-Von promises that they'll be doing whatever they have to do to prove that they're the greatest tag team of all time whether you like it or not. Jimmy starts fast with a series of kicks before going up top. Bubba distracts the referee with a table though, allowing him to shove Jimmy off the top. D-Von gets a rollup for the pin at 53 seconds in a storyline segment.

Long recap of Shane McMahon returning on Monday.

Undertaker will be on Raw to address everything.

Chris Jericho talks to AJ Styles about being being partners and

potentially Tag Team Champions. They need a third man for a six man tag against New Day later, so here's Mark Henry to say he'd love to teach those three clowns a lesson.

Godfather Hall of Fame announcement.

Video of Ryback walking out on his partners on Monday, saying it was time for things to be about him.

Big Show vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. Owens goes right after him to start and is promptly knocked into the corner. A shot to the throat puts Show down and the backsplash gets two. The near fall ticks Show off and he chops away in the corner, sending Owens out to the floor for a breather. Back in and a chokeslam sends Kevin right back to the floor. For some reason Show goes up, only to get crotched out to the floor for a countout at 3:05.

Rating: C. I liked this far better than I was expecting as they actually packed some good intensity into a short match. Show can work quite well in a role like this instead of being in main events over and over. It's also nice to see Owens winning again instead of losing matches to schnooks like Dolph Ziggler.

Natalya vs. Becky Lynch

They shake hands to start and Natalya takes her down with a headlock. Becky fights up with a dropkick but she misses the spinning legdrop. A suplex sends Becky outside but here are Naomi and Tamina to lay Natalya out for the DQ at 1:58.

Sasha Banks runs out for the save and the villains are cleared out. Cue Charlotte to laugh about Becky vs. Sasha for the #1 contendership taking place on Monday. She'll be in the front row and wishes both of them the best of luck.

R-Truth vs. Heath Slater

Before the match, Goldust comes out to stand in a neutral corner despite the GOLDEN TRUTH chants. They start with some basic stuff until Truth

puts the brakes on and thrusts his hips. Some forearms give Truth the first advantage but Slater comes back with a running knee. Truth gets pulled to the mat by the hair, only to catch Slater with a jumping side kick to the head. Dallas offers a quick distraction but Goldust punches Slater into a backslide to give Truth the pin at 3:10.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but I'm still hoping they don't go with Golden Truth. There's a better story with Truth rejecting him and Goldust not reacting well instead of "yeah sure let's just be a team." The segments have been fun but the story doesn't do much for me if it's the same thing Goldust did back in 2002.

Post match Truth still doesn't want help but is a bit nicer about it.

Video on Brock and Ambrose from Raw.

New Day vs. Mark Henry/AJ Styles/Chris Jericho

Before the match, New Day rips on the League of Nations a bit more but then switches over to Y2AJ. As for tonight though, Kofi is stunned that Mark Henry still thinks he's the World's Strongest Man. They jump back to insulting Jericho and Styles, who will never be the WWE Tag Team Champions (dance time) because NEW DAY ROCKS.

Big E. shoulders Jericho down to start but it's quickly off to Henry for a staredown. Some headbutts stagger Big E. and a shoulder puts him down. Henry clotheslines Woods and Kingston out to the floor and his partners add dives. The heroes dance (nice to see AJ getting to show some personality) and we take a break.

Back with Jericho chopping Woods to draw some screams. AJ hits a backbreaker and brings Jericho in again for the springboard dropkick. The distraction lets Big E. take over though as he drops Jericho face first onto the buckle for two. The Unicorn Stampede sets up some tromboning and we get a dance from Big E. Saxton: "When Big E. dances it looks like a penguin in a hula hoop contest."

Kofi puts Jericho in a chinlock and avoids a dropkick to keep Chris in trouble. Big E.'s Warrior Splash and a Woods legdrop get two, followed by

the abdominal stretch. The Big Ending doesn't work though and Jericho makes the tag to Styles as everything speeds up. The moonsault into the reverse DDT (still botched a bit but it was closer this time) drops Woods and everything breaks down. Trouble in Paradise hits Henry but Jericho takes a bullet for AJ in a nice moment of friendship. AJ grabs the Calf Crusher to make Woods tap at 11:19.

Rating: C-. Standard six man Smackdown main event here but it was little more than a way to set up Jericho and Styles as a regular team. Henry could have been anyone else here and the story would have been the same. AJ and Jericho were the stars here and it's pretty clear that we're going to see the two of them getting a shot at the belts in Dallas.

Overall Rating: C-. This was far more about the video packages than anything else and you can almost guarantee that is the norm going into Wrestlemania season. The wrestling was nothing to see here but we got some decent storyline development. Above all else it's nice to see the stories flow from Raw to Smackdown and then back to Raw instead of Raw, then Smackdown as bonus material before we get back to Monday. Not a good show or anything here but it got some stuff done.

Results

League of Nations b. Lucha Dragons/Neville/Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick to Neville

D-Von Dudley b. Jimmy Uso – Rollup

Kevin Owens b. Big Show via countout

Natalya b. Becky Lynch via DQ when Tamina and Naomi interfered

R-Truth b. Heath Slater – Backslide

AJ Styles/Chris Jericho/Mark Henry b. New Day – Calf Crusher to Woods

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01AXP08DK>

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

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

Happy Birthday WWE Network

It's two years old today. It feels like it's been around forever.

Monday Night Raw – February 22, 2016: Here Comes The Wrestlemania Build

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 22, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's a big night for Raw as we're done with Fastlane and have less than six weeks before the biggest night of the year. In addition to that we also have the presentation of the first ever Vincent J. McMahon Award and the fallout from Brock Lesnar attacking Dean Ambrose before the show started tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the triple threat main event from last night with Reigns pinning Ambrose to earn the title shot.

Opening sequence.

Cole tells us about Brock attacking Dean as he got to the arena earlier today and we see the video. Ambrose was put in a neck brace and driven away in an ambulance.

Vince McMahon comes out to present the Vincent J. McMahon Sr. Legacy of Excellence Award (which seems to be the same trophy that was give to Hornswoggle for winning a video game tournament a few years back). McMahon talks about his family's history of presenting sports entertainment for over 100 years and how it was all about a legacy. That's the kind of person we're honoring tonight so Vince brings out the first recipient: Stephanie McMahon.

Stephanie comes out to a chorus of boos as Vince tries to tell her how much she deserves this award. She didn't expect to win but she happens to have a speech prepared. Stephanie starts talking about how much of an honor this is but hoe she couldn't do this without her husband....and here's SHANE MCMAHON of all people to interrupt. The place goes NUTS at this and actually does a big old YES chant for the white haired Shane. Vince asks for a hug or a handshake but Shane isn't interested.

Shane seems genuinely choked up as he thanks the fans. It's quickly off to the reason he's here though: this Award, which Stephanie doesn't deserve. Stephanie rips into him a bit but Shane says she really doesn't know. Apparently Stephanie and HHH have been running this company into the ground, such as the stock price, the ratings and all of the injuries. Stephanie calls Shane a quitter so Shane asks if Vince wants to tell her. Years ago, Vince screwed up big time and Shane was there to save things.

Shane was able to take some time off but he never lost his place in line. The reason Stephanie has gotten this far is because Shane let it happen. Stephanie doesn't buy this but Vince looks....somewhere between annoyed and terrified. Stephanie offers Shane a spot at Wrestlemania this year but Vince cuts her off to talk to his son. Vince asks her to leave but Shane says it's all true because at the time it was best for business. She

finally leaves but not before saying she'll never forgive Shane for screwing this up.

Vince offers to give Shane another big check to make this go away but this isn't about money. Every morning, Shane wakes up and is so glad to have his freedom. This is about legacy though because the McMahon Family with Shane's children now the fifth generation. Shane finally gets to the point: he wants control of Monday Night Raw. Vince says it's not that easy because the company is in a different place now. Shane wants to make sure that there's a generation for the future.

That just ticks Vince off but he has an idea. He'll give Shane what he wants if Shane has one match on one night. However, if Shane loses, he loses possession of anything he has over Vince's head. The deal is on so Vince says something that has to be censored. Shane goes to leave but Vince stops him to name the specifics. Naturally the match is at Wrestlemania and the opponent is.....the Undertaker, inside the Cell.

Neville/Lucha Dragons vs. New Day

Kalisto and Woods get things going and Xavier is sent to the floor as we take a break. Back with Kalisto coming in to work on Woods' arm before it's off to Big E. for a belly to belly on Neville. The Unicorn Stampede keeps Neville in trouble and Kofi nails a running boot to the face. Kofi's dropkick keeps Neville down and Woods gets two as we take another break.

Back again with Big E. staying on Neville and standing on his wrist to keep Neville away from making the tag. Woods gets backdropped face first onto the steps, allowing Neville to kick Kofi away and make the tag off to Sin Cara. Everything breaks down and Cara hits a springboard back elbow to drop Kofi.

A standing Lionsault gets two on Kofi with Big E. making the save, only to get kicked to the floor for a Neville 450 from the apron. Woods does a springboard off Neville's back onto Woods, leaving Kofi to avoid a Swanton Bomb, tear at Cara's mask and hit Trouble in Paradise for the pin on Cara at 15:30.

Rating: C+. Fun match here, though it's a bit overly long with the extra break not really adding anything. You had to know that was coming after the long opening segment though so there really wasn't a big surprise. New Day certainly wasn't face here and that's probably better for them at this point. Let them drop the belts to someone (new hopefully) and then let them turn face after Wrestlemania.

Roman Reigns doesn't have an update on Dean Ambrose but is ready for his one on one fight at Wrestlemania against HHH. That night, it's all about his fist and his heart. Reigns likes his odds.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar with something to say. Heyman says this will be the main event of the evening even though Brock isn't even in his wrestling gear. It doesn't matter what Lesnar is doing because he's the main event. Last night Dean Ambrose and Roman Reigns got beaten up by Brock Lesnar. If the Undertaker tapped out to Brock Lesnar, Roman certainly was going to as well.

However, Dean Ambrose saved his buddy and turned a wrestling match into a street fight. This ticked off Brock Lesnar so earlier today, Brock attacked Dean as he arrived at the arena. After looking at the clip from earlier, Heyman says there is no shield that can protect Dean from Brock Lesnar. HHH and Roman Reigns can kid themselves all they want by saying they're the main event when Brock is on the card. Brock needs a new Wrestlemania opponent so Heyman issues a warning to anyone in the locker room.

Go to the hospital tonight and visit Dean to ask what happens when you invoke the wrath of Brock Lesnar. They go to leave and of course, RIGHT ON TIME, here's the ambulance with Dean inside. Cole: "What is going on?" Man you called the 1999 Royal Rumble. I'm thinking you should know this.

Dean rips the neck brace off as he crawls down the ramp towards the ring. Brock runs him over with a single shot and keeps walking to the back. Makes sense. Dean grabs a mic and says he's indestructible, which Brock is going to find out the hard way. We get the challenge for Wrestlemania in a no holds barred street fight. Brock comes back to ringside for an F5 on the floor, which Heyman means is a yes.

Usos vs. Ascension

Before the match, here are the Dudley Boyz to interrupt. Bubba apologizes for what they did a few weeks back, even though they're the most decorated team in wrestling history. Their legacy won't be defined by a piece of furniture but rather by their accomplishments. That's why you'll never see a table again. Speaking of accomplishments, maybe the Usos' daddy (Rikishi) should have spent more time around them instead of going all over the place.

That's not much of an insult but it allows Ascension to jump them from behind to start. Konor kicks Jimmy in the face and Viktor drops a fist for two. Jey gets the hot tag a few seconds later as house is cleaned. Viktor dives into a double superkick and the Superfly Splash is good for the pin at 1:57.

Here's Chris Jericho with something to say. He's heard about AJ Styles for years and then last night he was defeated by Styles for the second time. He'd like AJ to come out and see him face to face. Cue Styles, who Jericho thanks for proving something last night. AJ has proven that he belongs here in the WWE and he has everything it takes to go to the top and become a champion. Jericho knows that AJ is phenomenal....and here are the Social Outcasts.

Slater thinks this is pathetic but Bo finds it really beautiful. Slater: "Bo, I was being sarcastic." Dallas: "Oh yeah. Me too." The Outcasts don't buy Y2AJ as a thing but Jericho tells Slater to shut up. They weren't going to be a team but they'd be glad to if it means getting the Outcasts out of here.

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles vs. Heath Slater/Curtis Axel

This is joined in progress with AJ dropkicking Slater and hitting the basement forearm. Slater powers out of the Clash by sending Heath to the apron, only to have the other Outcasts interfere to take over. Axel stomps him down in the corner and it's back to Slater for a chinlock. That goes nowhere and it's the hot tag off to Jericho as everything breaks down. AJ springboard forearms onto Slater, leaving Jericho to make Axel tap to the Walls at 4:02.

Rating: C-. Maybe New Day vs. AJ/Jericho for the Tag Team Titles at Wrestlemania? I've certainly heard worse ideas so why not get them on there and give AJ a quick title? I mean, it's not like there's a long line to get to the top of the tag division. If nothing else, Kofi vs. AJ could be quite the entertaining segment.

We recap the long opening segment.

HHH tells Stephanie to shake off what happened earlier. Stephanie gets to go tell Roman something to make herself feel better.

Post break Roman goes to check on Dean but Stephanie stops him to make Reigns vs. Sheamus for later. The League isn't happy with the way Reigns is getting all this attention for Wrestlemania and it would be a shame if they hurt Reigns and took him out of Wrestlemania.

Goldust brings R-Truth a cake to make up for what happened last night. R-Truth doesn't think much of it but the cake has yellow frosting on chocolate, just like them. Goldust knew Truth would turn him down and that's exactly why they would be great partners. That fascinates Truth, but he's not going to smash the cake in Goldust's face. Actually he does just that, again much like a heel would. Goldust eats some of the cake.

Ryback/Big Show/Kane vs. Wyatt Family

Bray is swapped in for Strowman this time. Harper puts his mask on Byron before the match and for some reason Saxton can't speak. This is joined in progress with Kane and Bray trading big shots before it's off to Ryback vs. Harper. Ryback slugs away in the corner and brings in Kane, who eats a quick dropkick. JBL goes on about Hansen and Brody before Cole brings up JBL vs. Austin in a beer drinking contest at the first modern Saturday Night's Main Event.

Ryback cross bodies Rowan and hits two running knees in the corner. A clothesline sends Rowan to the floor and we take a break. Back with Harper getting two off a Michinoku Driver before Rowan drops an elbow on Ryback. The missile dropkick puts Rowan down and a hot tag brings in Big Show to clean house. Rowan gets chokeslammed but Strowman low bridges Show to the floor. Harper kicks away at the face but his sleeper is

broken up, allowing the hot tag to bring in Kane. Everything breaks down and Ryback walks out, leaving Bray to hit Sister Abigail for the pin on Kane at 12:27.

Rating: C-. So the big goal of that whole thing was to turn Ryback heel? Thank goodness they jobbed the Wyatts out for the sake of that because they couldn't have done anything like this otherwise. It's a nice enough story, but Ryback needs to not look like a loser who can't win the big one before I'm going to care about him turning heel.

After a break, Ryback says he's tired of being in tag teams because it's about him. This isn't anything personal with Big Show or Kane. He's just tired of not getting the spotlight, especially after he won the match last night. It's time to grab the brass ring and break the glass ceiling.

Sasha Banks vs. Naomi

It's still a thing. Sasha works on the arm to start and blocks a backslide attempt, only to get kicked in the ribs. Tamina pulls Sasha to the floor and we take a break. Back with Naomi still in control until Becky Lynch comes out to deal with Tamina. A quick Bank Statement makes Naomi tap at 6:45. No rating due to the break in the middle but it was fine.

Post match, here's Charlotte dressed like a Bella. Charlotte is still emotional after beating Brie Bella last night, even though there needs to be a #1 contender. She loves to see the two of them getting so close. "BECKY WATCH OUT!" Becky believes that Sasha is going to attack her and Charlotte laughs because it's clear that they don't trust each other. The next few weeks are going to be fun.

After another recap of the opening, Stephanie tells Vince that she refuses to work for Shane. Vince calls it a calculated risk and Stephanie seems a bit calmer.

We get the Godfather Hall of Fame announcement.

Roman Reigns vs. Sheamus

Sheamus goes after the arm that Brock had in the Kimura last night and

Roman is in early trouble. Roman comes back with a headbutt and some right hands in the corner as the fans boo loudly. It's back to a regular armbar until Roman fires off right hands to the head. A big clothesline puts Sheamus on the floor and one from the steps drops him again.

Rusev gets in a kick to the head though and we take a break. Back with both guys down and the League having been ejected. Roman sends him to the floor for another running clothesline before diving into the ring at seven. Cue HHH in fighting clothes and the fight is on so we'll say the match is a DQ at 10:45.

Rating: D. These two really don't have good matches together but that's the perfect way for WWE to push them harder and harder every single time. Sheamus is right back where he belongs: as a midcarder who might win a title every now and then but is really just a guy that can be shuffled around as necessary.

A brawl breaks out as Sheamus has just disappeared. HHH hits him in the face/throat with the bell and then drives Reigns' face into the table about 25 times. Reigns is badly busted open as the fans are LOUDLY cheering for HHH. A Pedigree onto the steps ends the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a show almost entirely built around storylines and there's nothing wrong with that, especially when we've got less than six weeks before Wrestlemania. The Shane thing is big and sets up one of the main events, assuming that match actually takes place. I know Shane was awesome at one point, but it's really a stretch to imagine him as a credible threat to Undertaker inside the Cell.

Other than that though, the wrestling was barely around tonight as everything was focused on getting to Wrestlemania in a hurry. The card is looking stronger now but they still have a long way to go to get out of the funk that Fastlane and its build put them in. Tonight was at least a big step in the right direction though.

Results

New Day b. Lucha Dragons/Neville – Trouble in Paradise to Cara

Usos b. Ascension – Superfly Splash to Viktor

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles b. Heath Slater/Curtis Axel – Walls of Jericho to Axel

Wyatt Family b. Kane/Big Show/Ryback – Sister Abigail to Kane

Sasha Banks b. Naomi – Bank Statement

Roman Reigns b. Sheamus via DQ when HHH interfered

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of the Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume IV at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B01AXP08DK>

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

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

So Uh.... .THAT Just Happened

And I didn't see this one coming. Shane McMahon just returned to open Raw. It seems that only his hair has aged though.

Brock Lesnar Attacks Dean Ambrose Before Raw

And there's a video. In theory this is now a Wrestlemania match, meaning Bray vs. Brock could be off the books.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/brock-lesnar-attacks-dean-ambrose-in-parking-lot-before-tonights-monday-night-raw/>

Also, how cool is it to see an actual angle that feels like it's going on in real life? Why can that only happen for Wrestlemania?