

More In Depth Thoughts on Raw – February 3, 2014

Last night's show was polarizing to say the least. I've seen people calling it a classic to a decent show to the worst show in a long time. As usual I found myself right in the middle. We'll start with the beginning of course.

First and foremost, the crowd was chanting for CM Punk throughout the night. Here's the thing that people keep forgetting: Punk walked out on the company and the fans. In a word, he quit. Punk wasn't being held back by the company, he wasn't being misused and he wasn't some kind of a martyr. He quit a job that he wasn't happy at anymore and that's all there was to it. The fans chanting for him comes off as more anti-WWE than pro-Punk, but that's not what it should be.

This brings me to the Authority, who interrupted Orton while he was fighting the Punk chants. To clarify, HHH didn't want Bryan to be champion but now that Orton has done everything HHH wants, HHH doesn't want Orton as champion either and keeps setting up new hoops for Randy to jump through. Then he's all pro-Bryan even though nothing seems to have changed between the two of them. Whether he's acting like one or not, HHH is supposed to be a heel but isn't acting like one at all. Last week was great when he was acting like a corporate jerk to Bryan but being the same to Orton is just confusing.

Next up was the further murdering of the midcard title scene. JBL mentioned that Ambrose never defends his US Title and Langston loses the fall. Big E. suddenly has nothing to do at all after spending weeks fighting off a challenger of the month for the title which was as basic of a story as you can get but it worked fine. Now both champions are

making the titles look more and more worthless despite being strong to start. In other words, they're the same as every midcard champion has been for years.

Shield vs. Wyatts is going to be amazing. I don't think I need to go any further than that.

I don't get the deal with Lawler interrupting Bad News Barrett. I don't think they're building to a match between the two of them, but Barrett needs ANYTHING to do right now and Jerry Lawler isn't going to make things better for him. He was a good character when he was pointing out how bad stuff was, but saying stuff like "eating junk food is bad for you" isn't going to get anyone to care about him.

Swagger losing is little more than another losing streak angle that they've used a dozen times before. Stop with the same ideas over and over again and come up with some actual stories for the split. Say Swagger is in love with a foreign chick or have Sin Cara help him so Swagger realizes Colter is wrong or something so people can actually RELATE TO HIM instead of just making him look pathetic and going for pity.

Betty White as the guest host is just....there. She'll make some people chuckle, she'll interact with some comedy guys, she'll make fun of low level heels, and then she'll leave and will be mentioned once more in about a year or so and people will say "Oh yeah. She was on Raw once." Seriously, that's it.

Now on to the biggest disaster of the night: that cage match. This was just horrible for a few reasons. First and foremost, the Outlaws just aren't any good in the ring and I have no idea why people would expect

them to be. Do you remember the Outlaws in the 90s? They were the Honky Tonk Man of the division, winning by cheating in ways that no one had even invented yet and stealing the belts from every team that deserved them until the fans found their antics funny and turned them face as a result.

Now they're beating a good team clean because people remember them as awesome and think that means they used to be good in the ring. It doesn't help that they're playing to the crowd and can do that as well as any team in history so the fans are always going to cheer for them, making Cody and Goldust, as in the team that has worked harder than anyone to get over, look like afterthoughts as we set up their singles feud (which no one wants to see) through ANOTHER losing streak angle.

In other words, we're pushing nostalgia as faces (nothing wrong with that) at the expense of good faces (a lot wrong with that). Have the Outlaws doing this stuff to 3MB or the Real Americans or ANY heel team and the act is much more fun and logical than anything else. Instead it's hurting Goldust and Cody to make a team with an average age of 47 years old and who are only out there on a nostalgia run. On top of that, their matches have SUCKED and Road Dogg nearly let Cody kill himself by not taking a step to the left to catch him. Oh and why can Road Dogg swear during the in-ring entrances but not the song opening?

Moving on to the next match we have Titus O'Neil as a monster heel which I really dig. The guy was the best thing not named the Usos about the dying days of the original NXT and I'd love to see him pushed as something that matters. The Clash of the Titus is a great power move and looks awesome when used.

During that same match we had Miz come out and complain that he couldn't

get on the show while a guy that makes internet championships and a guy who barks like a dog get TV time. Word on the street is that he's being paired with Ziggler (check out the promo from the App on Smackdown to see more. We'll be back to Dolph later) as two disgruntled performers who want to be higher on the card. Sounds like they're parodying/mocking Punk to me but maybe not.

What I liked here though was Miz felt spontaneous. How many times have you seen a match end and we cut to the back where two people just happen to be standing in front of a camera so it can catch their conversation, which clearly hasn't started until the match ended? That kind of thing drives me insane because it looks SO scripted. Miz coming out during a match made it feel like he had to get this off his chest and didn't flag down a cameraman and demand time so it could be aired after the match. It happened right then and there, making it feel more realistic. I miss that so much anymore.

This brings us to the dance off with Summer Rae and Emma. They did this same bit in NXT which worked better there because of one simple reason: the fans know who Emma is. This is the same reason why Diamond Dallas Page never got over in the WWF. See, down in NXT it's a much more close knit atmosphere. The fans feel like they're a part of the show and they've embraced Emma and want their people to be the little engines that can and show they can be just as good as WWE (same as ECW when you think about it).

Well WWE fans have no idea who Emma is for the most part. She's just some chick that dances in the crowd and holds up a sign that says EMMALUTION while Cole says "Oh she's from NXT", which a lot of fans have no idea exists. The people didn't care about Emma because they have no reason to care about Emma. She's just some chick that has been at Raw for the last month and apparently dances a lot. Why should I care about that unless I watch NXT?

Next up was Sheamus not squashing Curtis Axel in seven minutes. Sheamus is in the world title match at the next PPV and took seven minutes to beat a jobber to the stars. That's not acceptable.

Batista was up next but thankfully was cut off by Alberto Del Rio. Why are these two fighting? Because Del Rio thinks Batista doesn't deserve that title shot. Not that Del Rio wants the title shot for himself or anything, because that would just be a stupid thing to add to the match. It might actually intrigue people or something and we wouldn't want that.

The Wyatts squashed the dancers and Ziggler to further make my head hurt. The announcers acknowledged the promo Ziggler cut and then he goes out and gets destroyed in five minutes like nothing has changed at all. This is what I'm talking about when I say the writers don't remember anything that happened five minutes ago. Have Dolph be frustrated or try extra hard or SOMETHING, but don't have him say one thing then do another and expect us to care about him. Or maybe you could, I don't know, SHOW US THE PROMO instead of just hyping the App. You show us stuff from it every week but not that?

There was a Divas match between Naomi and Aksana which was just embarrassing. Near the end Naomi caught Aksana in a head scissors position out of the corner but didn't take Aksana down. Instead she just wiggled her hips in the air and let go. From a kayfabe perspective, what does that accomplish? How does that help Naomi win the match? It makes her look like she doesn't take this seriously, so why should I take her as a serious challenger to AJ?

Last up was the main event, which made things even worse. First of all let me clarify: the match was very entertaining, but the story made no

sense. Kane interfered at the end, presumably sent by the Authority (unless the Authority complains about him interfering later, we have no reason to assume they disagree with what he did) to help Orton win. Why would they come out and help Orton win if they seemingly had no problem with Bryan beating him?

Again, the Authority tries to play both sides without ever playing heels ON CAMERA. Their interference is implied here, but whenever they're on screen they'll be talking down to Orton like he's a child (imagine someone saying that to Rock, Austin, Hogan, or any other champion. The reaction alone would turn them face but instead Orton just nods and accepts it because the Authority is all powerful and cannot be questioned) and say Orton has to regain their trust before starting this cycle all over again.

To put it into one sentence, the Authority storyline makes no sense. What do they want? Orton as face of the company? Fine, but if they want him as face of the company, why constantly move the goal posts on him? You do that to people you hate, not people you want to be the top guy. Vince did it to Austin and Bischoff did it to WCW when he ran the NWO. And why is HHH backing Bryan after spending months telling him he was worthless? The Authority is Johnny Ace without the goofy charisma and that's not a good thing at all.

A few other notes here:

Were there any backstage segments last night? There weren't a ton on Smackdown that I remember and now there were none last night. I rather like that idea as there are usually WAY too many and they drag the show down. One or two is fine but keep those things quick and have them mean something.

No Cena due to the eye injury which is all you can ask for. He ran in for the post show beatdown of Orton and Kane but I'd assume his eye was too messed up to be seen on camera. That's the right idea as you need him healthy for Elimination Chamber and Wrestlemania, not a Raw in early February.

Overall I thought Raw was good last night, but this Authority nonsense has been going on WAY too long. The Authority is fine as a heel idea, but have them be HEELS, not people who treat everyone like garbage. It makes your heels look weak and keeps fans from caring about seeing them get beaten up. A double standard is a heel tactic, but when you use it on another heel, it just confuses people.

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Monday Night Raw – February 3, 2014: I Welcome This Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 3, 2014

Location: CenturyLink Center, Omaha, Nebraska

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

The big story from last week is CM Punk walking out on the company due to reasons that aren't entirely clear. There's always the possibility that it's a work, but as of right now there's a very good chance Punk isn't at Wrestlemania. Other than that we're three weeks away from Elimination Chamber and the card is already getting filled in. Let's get to it.

Here's Orton to open the show and he immediately has to talk over the CM Punk chant. He says the Authority is trying to teach him something, even though he won the title with hard work. Orton asks the fans how many times he has to beat all five of his opponents inside the chamber. Randy says he'll keep the title there and at Wrestlemania against Batista. Back in Evolution they were equals but now Orton is simply the better man.

This brings out the Authority (with Stephanie showing off some large arms) to talk down to Orton about how he needs to calm down. HHH goes into the same speech he's had every week for months now: he's not sure if Orton is worthy of being the face of the WWE and they might be losing faith in him. Stephanie says Orton is going to be facing all five of his opponents in the coming weeks and if he loses tonight, we might have a new face of the WWE: Daniel Bryan. HHH starts a YES chant, basically erasing the entire end of 2013 from existence.

Shield vs. Big E. Langston/Rey Mysterio/Kofi Kingston

Not a bad group of midcard challengers. Langston takes Ambrose into the corner to start before it's off to Kofi who cranks on the arm for a bit. The announcers bring up the fact that Ambrose never defended the US Title as it's off to Rollins who gets taken down by a monkey flip and a running clothesline in the corner for two. Ambrose comes back in and takes Kofi down before handing it back to Rollins for a front facelock. Seth cranks on Kofi's head but misses a knee drop, allowing for the hot tag to Mysterio.

A seated senton from the top and a kick to the head are good for two but Rollins makes a blind tag to Reigns. Rey tries a hurricanrana on Rollins but gets caught by a jumping clothesline from Reigns which allows Seth to

powerbomb him down for two as we take a break. Back with Reigns holding a chinlock on Mysterio before it's back to Ambrose for some jumping stomps. Dean puts on a chinlock of his own before Rey fights up and slams him down, allowing for the real hot tag to Langston.

Big E. runs over Reigns and hits the belly to belly and Warrior Splash for two until the other Shield members save. Everything breaks down until we're back to Reign vs. Langston with Big E. hitting the Superman Punch. Reigns loads up the spear but Ambrose tags himself in and hits the bulldog driver for the pin on Big E. at 11:34.

Rating: C+. Shield looks good as expected and there's drama at the end to set up the potential split even more. It's going to be a big moment when Reigns Superman Punches Ambrose's head off or spears the vest off of him. A Kofi loss would have been better than Langston here though. I never care to see champions lose.

Post match the Wyatts pop up on the screen with Bray talking about knowing Shield's blueprint. They spend their days crawling to that beautiful moment where they can sacrifice themselves in the name of their king. That moment is closer than they think because Bray is building his empire close to the sea so he can watch his enemies drown with a smile on his face. Harper says that he (presumably meaning Bray) has always been their king. Rowan leans forward with the sheep mask and says run.

Bad News Barrett thinks it's funny that 112 million people who watched the Super Bowl and ate so much junk food that they won't be alive for next year's game. Jerry Lawler of all people gets on the announce table and says hopefully Barrett won't be here next week. Nothing more to it than that.

How to download the WWE App. Even JBL and Lawler make fun of him for this. Cole turns it into a plug for the WWE Network, spelling out the savings on buying all the PPVs. We also get a clip of the Countdown show.

Christian vs. Jack Swagger

Rematch from Smackdown. Jack takes him right to the mat and puts on Luke Harper's Gator Roll before driving him into the corner. Christian sends

him to the floor but Jack trips him up to send Christian face first into the apron. A whip into the steps gets two for Jack and a beal gets the same. Swagger rams him back first into the buckle and puts Christian down with a powerslam for another two.

The fans get behind the Canadian and he gets a boot up to stop a charging Swagger. A middle rope missile dropkick puts Swagger down again but Jack knees Christian in the ribs to slow him down. The gutwrench powerbomb is countered into a reverse DDT for two and Christian starts clapping. He snaps Jack's back across the ropes but has to fight out of the Patriot Lock. The Killswitch is countered as is the middle rope sunset flip. The Vader Bomb hits feet though and now the sunset flip out of the corner is good for the pin on Swagger at 5:55.

Rating: C+. I liked this much more than I thought I would. Swagger is good in the ring but he needs to shake off this loser stigma that he's acquired. He's a guy with a lot of ability but he's in need of repackaging at this point. Still though, good match here with both guys looking better than I expected.

The cage is lowered.

Betty White is guest starring next week. Just...why?

Tag Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Cody Rhodes/Goldust

The Outlaws are defending and you can only win by pinfall or submission, not escaping. We get the big match intros after a break and we're ready to go. Goldust grabs a headlock on Road Dogg to start before taking Dogg down in something like an armdrag. He gets on all fours to chase Roadie to the corner but Goldust lets him go. Road Dogg asks Billy what they're doing in here before tagging Gunn in to face Goldust.

Cody comes in with a sunset flip out of the corner for two and a small package gets the same. Back to Road Dogg who takes Cody into the corner as a CM Punk chant starts and quickly dies. Billy comes in again and pulls Cody's bad elbow around the top rope before putting on an armbar. The announcers talk about the tag division until it's back to Goldust for an armbar on Road Dogg. Not exactly inspiring stuff so far.

Goldust pounds on Dogg in the corner with right hands but misses a cross body and crashes into the cage to change momentum as we take a break. Back with Goldust still in trouble via a Road Dogg chinlock until it's back to Gunn who walks into a clothesline out of the corner. Goldust finally makes the hot tag to Cody as everything breaks down. The Disaster Kick gets two on Billy and Cody is frustrated. He looks up at the top of the cage, tells Billy to suck it and starts to climb. Cody goes to the top of the cage, totally misses the moonsault press on Road Dogg and gets caught by the Fameasser to give Billy the pin at 16:10.

Rating: D+. This was a very boring match that didn't need to be in a cage except for the big spot at the end. I'm assuming the Brothers are going to be splitting up soon which isn't the worst idea in the world. It also helps that they didn't go with the losing streak angle to set up the title change.

Zack Ryder vs. Titus O'Neil

Titus has new heel music which starts out sounding like the reveal of a villain in an over the top action movie before transitioning into something more like the Prime Time Players' song. Titus gets in a hard shot to the face to start and sends Ryder out to the floor. Miz comes to commentary to complain about a guy barking like a dog and a guy with a fake internet championship being on Raw when he isn't.

Miz says there's something wrong with that and immediately walks off. That sounded like a heel turn. Titus puts on a bearhug before taking Ryder down with a clothesline. Ryder makes a brief comeback with the Broski Boot but walks into a BIG Clash of the Titus for the pin at 2:46.

Profile on Ernie Ladd for Black History Month.

Time for a dance off because that's what WWE is all about. It's Fandango vs. Santino Marella but Santino thinks it should be Summer vs. a member of the audience. Naturally he picks Emma and it's the same bit they did in NXT: Summer actually dances and Emma does her goofy stuff that the fans like and cheer for. Notice the difference here: Emma is a fun character doing goofy stuff whereas Vickie Guerrero can't dance and we're laughing at her instead of with her. Emma wins and JBL says he's going to

be sick.

Ad for Legends House on the WWE Network.

Sheamus vs. Curtis Axel

Sheamus easily takes Axel down to start before pounding him around the ring. Axel gets to the apron and tries a neckbreaker because he's not that bright. Sheamus easily counters into the ten forearms before a big clothesline sends Curtis outside. Back in and Axel avoids a charge to send the recently repaired shoulder into the post. Curtis drops an elbow on the shoulder before cranking on an armbar. Sheamus fights up after a good while in the hold and hits the rolling fireman's carry. The Brogue Kick is enough for the pin at 7:03.

Rating: D-. WAY too long here with that armbar draining the life out of the match. There's nothing wrong with Sheamus getting another win to show off after being gone for so long. Axel still isn't great but I like him in the ring. He just didn't have a chance at all here though and everyone knew it.

Here's Batista to speak but Del Rio interrupts. Blast it all. He says Batista has been in Hollywood while Del Rio was winning titles and it takes cahones to be a champion. Thankfully they get right to the brawl with Del Rio punching Batista in the face, only to have to bail to avoid a Batista Bomb attempt.

Dolph Ziggler/R-Truth/Xavier Woods vs. Wyatt Family

Rowan runs over Woods to start and all three of the Wyatts get their turn on him. Bray hits his especially violent stomps as the fans want Ziggler. That's exactly what they get as everything breaks down. Wyatt hits something resembling a chokeslam on Truth as things settle back down. Bray leans upside down to look at Ziggler before Sister Abigail lays him out for the pin at 5:08. Total squash.

Rating: D. This was another of those moments that gets on my nerves: WWE has Ziggler cut a great promo after Smackdown about how angry he is and they acknowledge it here, only to have him squashed in the same match as

Woods and Truth who aren't going anywhere. Nothing to see here other than the Wyatts being creepy.

Shield comes on screen post match and says they're coming for the Wyatts. Bray says he welcomes this war.

Alexander Rusev and Lana are coming.

Naomi vs. Aksana

Alicia Fox is in Aksana's corner but AJ and Tamina come out to watch as well. It's a dance off to start with AJ calling Naomi a baked potato. So she's good with sour cream? Naomi hits a Bubba Bomb and rolls Aksana round on the mat for two. Aksana comes back with a wheelbarrow slam as AJ says Tamina failed her in the tag matches where Naomi pinned her.

Aksana puts on a chinlock as we randomly go to a wide shot of the arena. Back with Aksana holding Naomi in a figure four necklock. Naomi fights up with some dropkicks and a headscissors with some gyrations. A knee to the face puts Naomi down as the match grinds to a halt. Naomi quickly takes her down again and hits the split legged moonsault for the pin at 4:51.

Rating: D. I can't stand the Divas at this point. The hip swivel stuff was just annoying with it being nothing more than trying to make the crowd chuckle. Aksana looked horrible out there and the ending with the knee to the face stopped the match cold. It sounds like we're heading to AJ vs. Tamina though which makes sense.

Randy Orton vs. Daniel Bryan

They have a lot of time for this and it's non-title. Feeling out process to start with Bryan taking over by throwing Orton down. He sends Randy into the post and wraps the knee around the steel before hitting a running dropkick to drive it into the post. Back in and Bryan throws on a leg lock before turning it over for a two count. Off to a modified Indian deathlock but Randy bites Bryan's hand to escape.

Daniel will have none of this being in trouble nonsense and gets two off a backslide before taking Orton down with a dragon screw leg whip. He cannonballs down on Orton's leg to send the champion outside but Bryan

follows him out with more kicks to the leg and ribs. All Bryan so far and he throws Orton over the announce table for good measure. Back inside and Bryan gets two off a top rope hurricanrana. There's the double knee stomp out of a surfboard and Orton is reeling.

Orton gets caught in a half crab and Bryan drags him back to the middle of the ring. Orton gets all serious and crawls to the ropes before heading outside. Randy finally gets in some offense with a belly to back suplex onto the barricade and Daniel is in some trouble. Back in and Randy mouths YES before going off with right hands in the corner. Daniel comes back with kicks to the ribs and knee before moonsaulting over Randy in the corner, only to have the clothesline countered with the powerslam. I love how Orton learns from his past matches and counters signature spots. He's done that throughout the years and it's smart.

Back from a break with Bryan hitting more YES Kicks but having his last one countered into a capture suplex. Orton takes him to the floor and sends Bryan's shoulder into various metal objects for two back inside. Randy cranks on a Fujiwara armbar before just stomping at the arm instead. The bad arm is draped across the top rope but Daniel fights out of a superplex with rights and lefts to the ribs.

Bryan puts Orton down with a missile dropkick but injures his arm again. They slug it out with Bryan taking over with kicks until Randy grabs the arm and wrenches it to the mat to get the advantage back. There's the YES Lock out of nowhere but Orton is quickly in the ropes. Bryan goes back to the alternating kicks in the corner but hurts his arm again on a running dropkick. The injury slows him down enough that Orton is able to hit a running dropkick of his own to put Bryan back down. Sell the freaking knee Randy.

The Elevated DDT would look to set up the RKO but Bryan kicks him square in the head to block. Bryan goes up, points with one arm, and hits the flying headbutt for a VERY close two. There are the YES Kicks to the chest and the big one to the head has Orton down. Here's Kane who is dropkicked off the apron almost immediately. Orton is low bridged to the floor as well and the FLYING GOAT puts both of them down. Kane is sent into the steps and the RKO is countered into the running knee for the

clean pin at 26:58.

Rating: B. Good but not great match here. The biggest in ring problem here was Orton forgetting about the knee injury after the break. It was a very good match and I'm so glad they didn't have Bryan lose because of the interference. That being said, I'm not wild on Orton losing clean in the middle of the ring to anyone at all, but at least it was Bryan.

Kane and Orton double team Bryan with no one making the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. There were some bad parts here but in perhaps the only instance of this ever, I don't think there were any backstage segments tonight. It was all about the in ring action tonight and it was a very nice change of pace from the usual Raw formula. That being said, there were a lot of problems tonight as well.

First of all, there wasn't a standout match until the main event. The first two matches were decent enough but they're nothing I'm going to remember in a few days. I liked Miz coming out in the Titus match to protest stuff but at the end of the day it's still Miz. Things are shaping up heading into the Chamber, but with the amount of stars missing, there are a lot of ways they could go heading into Wrestlemania and that's not the best thing in the world. Different but not great show, making this a decent birthday show for me.

Results

Shield b. Rey Mysterio/Big E. Langston/Kofi Kingston – Bulldog driver to Langston

Christian b. Jack Swagger – Sunset flip

New Age Outlaws b. Cody Rhodes/Goldust – Fameasser to Rhodes

Titus O'Neil b. Zack Ryder – Clash of the Titus

Sheamus b. Curtis Axel – Brogue Kick

Wyatt Family b. Xavier Woods/R-Truth/Dolph Ziggler – Sister Abigail to

Ziggler

Naomi b. Aksana – Split legged moonsault

Daniel Bryan b. Randy Orton – Running knee

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Smackdown – January 31, 2014: Solving The Big Problem

Smackdown

Date: January 31, 2014

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're past the Rumble now and two third of the Elimination Chamber are already filled in. There's a chance we might actually get something to happen tonight with the final two spots being taken. On top of that there's the interesting case of CM Punk who has walked out on the company which may or may not be a work. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Raw with Bryan/Cena/Sheamus defeating the Shield thanks to the interfering Wyatt Family, earning themselves spots in the Elimination Chamber along with defending champion Randy Orton.

Here's Shield with something to say. Ambrose talks about how glad Randy Orton is that the Wyatts interfered on Monday because the title would be coming back home with the Shield at Elimination Chamber. Ambrose and Reigns get in a mini argument about who would have won in the Chamber but Reigns is cool with Ambrose trying to throw him out of the Rumble because it was every man for himself. Rollins breaks them up because they have someone more important to deal with right now: the Wyatts.

He talks about how great each member of the Shield is and how they had the match won on Monday until the Wyatts got involved. If the Wyatts want a new world, come get one at the hands of the Shield, and yes that is a challenge. Instead they get Vickie Guerrero who promises to make history, only to have HHH cut her off. HHH tells them to drop it about the Wyatts but Roman gets in his face and says this isn't a request. The Wyatts vs. the Shield is made for Elimination Chamber.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Antonio Cesaro vs. Dolph Ziggler

See, this is an actually fresh match where either guy could win. Cesaro hits a running dropkick for two at the bell before a standing sunset flip gets the same. They trade rollups for two each before Ziggler hits the Fameasser to send Cesaro outside. Back in and Cesaro hits a quick backbreaker to take over and a big clothesline puts Ziggy outside as we take a break. We come back with Ziggler in a chinlock and a clip from the break of Cesaro on the middle rope and suplexing Ziggler back in from the apron.

Dolph fights up and hits a nice dropkick for two before putting on the sleeper. Cesaro fights out and loads up Swiss Death but Ziggler turns it into a DDT for a very close two. Antonio is up first and blocks the Zig Zag before putting on the Swing to a big face pop. Ziggler is already done and it's the Neutralizer for the win at 8:34.

Rating: C+. This was better than I was expecting and Cesaro getting the win makes things even better. He has no chance of winning inside the

Chamber but it's nice to see him getting even a spot in a match like this. There's always one guy in there that can showcase himself and hopefully it's Antonio this year.

Fandango vs. Xavier Woods

R-Truth is on commentary and Woods now has no mustache. A quick slam puts Xavier down but he comes back with a quick dropkick, only to be caught in a wheelbarrow suplex for one. We hit the chinlock on Woods but he fights up and counters another wheelbarrow suplex by rolling forward and slamming Fandango face first into the mat. Woods comes back with some strikes and a nice dropkick to send Fandango outside. A nice flip dive takes Fandango down again as Emma is dancing in the crowd again. Back in and Fandango hooks a quick falcon's arrow for the pin on Woods at 3:20.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but man alive I'm over these dancer vs. dancer matches. Woods is another guy who is just taking up space on the roster while there are more talented guys down in NXT. He's not the worst in the world but I really don't see the appeal of his in ring work.

Truth makes the save from a post match beatdown and dancing ensues.

Prime Time Players vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel

Curtis punches Darren to start and drives him into the corner. Off to Ryback who throws Young out to the floor with ease. Back in and the Meat Hook sets up Axel's neckbreaker into a faceplant for the pin at 1:30. My goodness that was quick.

Young is bleeding from the mouth and Titus isn't pleased. He's about to walk away but Darren says they're family. Titus says they're not a family because this partnership is the first time that Titus has ever been a loser. The only thing Titus is doing is dropping the dead weight of Darren Young off his back. Titus kicks him in the chest and stomps him to

the floor, giving us a good old fashioned heel turn. Young is either in line for a big gimmick change or he's not making it to the summer.

Jake Roberts Hall of Fame video.

Alexander Rusev and his handler Lana are coming.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Christian vs. Jack Swagger

This is Christian's first match back after a lengthy absence due to injury. Swagger gets the jobber entrance. We get a clip of Colter slapping Swagger to fire him up on Monday. JBL gets Zeb to join in on commentary, showing how important Swagger's match is to him. Jack throws Christian up and over the corner to the floor to start before putting on a body vice. A Vader Bomb gets two and Swagger stays on the ribs.

Christian fights out of a superplex attempt and gets two off a tornado DDT. A middle rope dropkick gets the same but Swagger comes right back with the gutwrench powerbomb for two. Jack walks around for a bit to the anger of Colter, allowing Colter to get his feet up to block another Vader Bomb. He comes right back with the Patriot Lock but Christian sends him shoulder first into the post, setting up the Frog Splash for the pin at 6:00.

Rating: C-. Nice while it lasted but this was more about angering Colter and getting Christian into the Chamber than the match itself. I'm hoping this breaks up the Real Americans as Swagger has dragged the team down since the day they got together. He's just been branded as a loser in WWE and that's almost impossible to escape.

Christian is happy he won because his window of opportunity is starting to close.

Damien Sandow vs. Kofi Kingston

An inset interview with Sandow says this losing period is just his trial by fire. Damien grabs a quick rollup for two but Kofi takes him into the corner to slow him down. A standing sunset flip gets two more for Sandow as Kofi rolls through and kicks Sandow in the chest. Trouble in Paradise hits the ropes but a sloppy SOS is good for the pin on Sandow at 1:57. Not a good match.

We look at Heyman demanding Brock get a match with either Batista or Orton but getting neither. As a result, Lesnar broke up the New Age Outlaws vs. Cody Rhodes/Goldust on Raw.

In his weekly sitdown interview, HHH announces Cody/Goldust vs. the Outlaws for the titles on Raw in a cage.

Road Dogg vs. Cody Rhodes

Rhodes has a bad arm coming in due to Lesnar's attack on Raw. A quick clothesline takes Roadie down as we hear about Brock being fined \$10,000 for attacking a referee on Sunday. Road Dogg goes after the arm by wrapping it around the ropes and ramming it into the buckle. Cody fights out of an armbars and both guys ram heads to put each other down. Rhodes takes over with a kick to the ribs and a springboard missile dropkick as Billy and Goldust get in a fight on the floor. There's a Disaster Kick to Gunn and a second one to Dogg for the pin at 3:53.

Rating: D+. This didn't do much for me but it did what it was supposed to do for Monday. I don't think the Outlaws lose the belts on Raw which hopefully leads to a long overdue Usos title reign. Road Dogg continues to look decent in the ring, especially after being out of action for so long.

Shield is out for the main event when the Wyatts appear on screen. Bray is looking forward to the war, especially the Shield waving those white flags. For once Harper actually speaks about the beautiful hill Shield has chosen to die on. Bray says don't invite the devil into your back

yard because he might like it and choose to stay.

Shield vs. Sheamus/Rey Mysterio/Daniel Bryan

Sheamus takes Rollins over with a headlock to start before a shoulder block sends Seth into the Shield corner. We get the tag to Reigns and it's time for a big power showdown. The fans aren't sure who to cheer for but it's Reigns running Sheamus over with a shoulder of his own. Roman stomps on Sheamus in the corner but the pale one comes back with a hard clothesline and a neckbreaker.

Off to Ambrose for some right hands but Sheamus drapes him across the top rope, setting up the forearms to the chest. The spot is definitely still over and Ambrose falls to the floor as we take a break. Back with Bryan putting Seth in the surfboard with the dragon sleeper before it's off to Rey for a running kick to the chest and a two count. A middle rope hurricanrana looks to set up the 619 but Reigns tags himself in and throws Rey outside.

Back to Rollins for a lot of trash talk and a chinlock as JBL asks Cole what he means when he calls Rollins the Architect of the Shield. Apparently Cole means tactician, which of course is why he calls Rollins the Architect. Rey sends Seth into the middle buckle and it's hot tag to Bryan as things speed up. He backflips over Reigns in the corner and hits the running clothesline to set up the YES Kicks.

Roman is low bridged to the floor to set up the FLYING GOAT. Sheamus catches Rollins in the Irish Curse but gets dropped with a Superman Punch. The missile dropkick from Bryan sets up the YES Lock to Reigns but it's Ambrose with the save. Sheamus' bad shoulder goes into the post but you don't need a good shoulder to Brogue Kick Ambrose in the face. There's the 619 to Rollins and Rey sets up one on Reigns, only to have Roman pop up and spear Rey in half for the pin at 12:50.

Rating: C+. Typically good Shield match here with Sheamus looking like he

hasn't lost a step. The fans seem to like him as well so at least there isn't that awkward phase where he gets back to what he was doing. He's still in need of a story and an actual challenge though. Bryan got a solid reaction as always but didn't really do much here.

Overall Rating: B-. This show addressed the main problem that Smackdown has been having for several months now: something actually happened here. While it wasn't anything major, we had a tag team split up which we haven't seen in a long time. That's a good thing as the division is growing and the Prime Time Players were little more than jobbers in the division anyway. On top of that we had a PPV match made and the Chamber was filled in. It's nice to have this show feel like it means something for a change.

Results

Antonio Cesaro b. Dolph Ziggler – Neutralizer

Fandango b. Xavier Woods – Falcon's arrow

Ryback/Curtis Axel b. Prime Time Players – Neckbreaker into a faceplant to Young

Christian b. Jack Swagger – Frog Splash

Kofi Kingston b. Damien Sandow – SOS

Cody Rhodes b. Road Dogg – Disaster Kick

Shield b. Rey Mysterio/Daniel Bryan/Sheamus – Spear to Mysterio

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More In Depth Thoughts On Monday Night Raw – January 27, 2014

Since the Royal Rumble extra thoughts post went over so well I figured I'd try it again with Raw. I won't be making this a regular thing unless there's a big show where a lot of stuff happens. Let's get to it.

The opening promo was absolutely awesome and did several things that it needed to accomplish. First and foremost, it caused the Authority to act like heels for the first time in a long time. For many weeks now they've been the smug semi-faces that played to the crowd and acted like they were doing something to please the fans. HHH and Stephanie came off like total villains last night and it's exactly what they were supposed to be doing.

On top of that, the promo advanced several feuds at the same time. It gave Sheamus something to do as soon as he gets back, it puts Cena in the Chamber to keep him in the title scene while keeping him directly away from Orton, and it gives Bryan the shot at the title that the people have been wanting him to have all along. It also keeps Shield front and center which is never a bad thing.

I'm going to lump all of the matches save for the main event into one big pile. Last night's wrestling really didn't do much for me and a lot of that is due to the amount of rematches we had. Usos vs. Ryback/Axel again, Kofi vs. Del Rio in their monthly meeting and Truth vs. Fandango

because they're both dancers. No the matches don't happen every week like some of the feuds we get, but they happen often enough that we don't need to see them for a long time.

It's a big problem in WWE that needs to be addressed. With as deep of a roster as WWE has, there's no excuse to not have a fresh match every few weeks. It's ok to mix things up a bit instead of just doing the same stuff over and over again, even though it's all WWE seems they're capable of doing anymore.

That brings us to the big segment in the middle of the show with Orton, Batista and Brock Lesnar. The key thing here is the amount of doors this segment opened. It's possible that we could be seeing Batista vs. Brock at the Elimination Chamber for the Mania title shot, or that Brock could enter into the Chamber, or that we could wind up with a three way out of all this (erg). The best thing though is that it could be one of several ideas and I'm not sure which one. That's always a great feeling and it's what I got last night.

However, the one option I don't care to see is Batista vs. Del Rio at the Chamber. No matter how many midcarders Del Rio beats up, he's a jobber at the main event level and has been for years now. Batista may not be the hottest thing in the world, but he's more interesting than Del Rio. No one is going to buy that Del Rio is going to make Batista tap or pin him after the superkick. It would be a filler match with what sounds like very uninteresting chemistry.

The Tag Title match was nothing special but the Outlaws showed they've still got it. They were playing the same characters they did before, but somehow they haven't aged in the fifteen years they've been gone. I don't see them being long term champions and would love to see the Usos take

the belts off of them, but there's just not much to them in the ring. To be fair though, there wasn't when they were in their prime either.

Brock interfering keeps things open but I was surprised that there was nothing to follow it up later in the show. I was expecting the Authority to come out and address Brock but the less interaction I see between HHH and Brock Lesnar, the better my experience watching Raw goes. Lesnar continues to be terrifying, which is in part due to him throwing chairs everywhere. He needs to watch it with that.

The main event was absolutely awesome with both teams looking great. Sheamus is certainly back and in the same shape he was in before his injury. That's a good sign as so many people leave and then come back with a totally different look and physique that takes six months to get back to normal. As for the match, Bryan vs. Rollins stole the show as Seth continues to be the workhorse of the team. Reigns is starting to get his signature moveset together as you can see the big push coming.

The ending was perfect as neither team deserved to job, Reigns got to break the STF, and we set up a future match. Yeah lost in all this was the future Wyatts vs. Shield match which people have been drooling over for months now. The Shield isn't going to be around much longer and this is the one big match that people have been wanting to see for a long time. It'll be a nice addition to the Chamber, unless Bray and/or Reigns are added to the Chamber itself and the six man is at Wrestlemania.

A few other notes about the show:

Jake Roberts is a great choice for the Hall of Fame. He worked very hard to get his life back in order and deserves the honor for the DDT alone.

This might be the better idea than putting him in the Rumble where he might have injured himself falling out of the ring.

A lot of people were missing from last night's show, including Punk, Langston and Rusev. I kept thinking Punk wasn't looking right during the Rumble so maybe he's banged up after all the wear and tear he's built up over the last few months. Langston might have needed a week off after the Rumble as well, given that it wasn't his night. I hope Rusev appears more than just once in the Rumble as the guy has potential.

Oh and Christian is back on Friday. Uh...yay.

Overall it wasn't a great show but it did what it was supposed to do. The wrestling wasn't great but it was able to get us through the night until we hit the awesome main event. More than anything else though it set things up on the Road to Wrestlemania and calmed the fans down after they were on the verge of rioting at the Rumble. The crowd wasn't a very big deal last night but that's a good thing at the moment. Good but not great show.

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Royal Rumble 2014: The Night The Crowd Died

Royal Rumble 2014

Date: January 26, 2014

Location: Consol Energy Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

Tonight marks the official start of the Road to Wrestlemania. We're ten weeks away from the biggest show of the year and barring some surprising changes, the main event will be set in place tonight. The odds on favorite for the Rumble would seem to be Batista, but for the life of me I can't imagine anyone but Daniel Bryan winning it. He isn't entered yet, but there are about ten slots left open. Give him a late number and listen to the roof blow off the place. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Tag Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Cody Rhodes/Goldust

Cody and Goldust are defending and lost a non-title match to the Outlaws to set this up. Road Dogg starts with Cody and is taken down by a quick shoulder block. Back up and Roadie hits his shaky fist but has to duck the Disaster Kick. Gunn comes in off the tag but is quickly sent to the floor for a top rope clothesline as we take a break. Back with Road Dogg dropping a knee on Goldust for two and putting on a chinlock.

Goldust fights back up and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Billy breaks up a tag attempt as the announcers brag about how Gunn hasn't aged a bit since the 90s. For 50 years old the guys is in good shape. Goldust finally makes the hot tag and Cody speeds things up, including a double springboard missile dropkick to put both Outlaws down. Cross Rhodes lays out Road Dogg but Billy saves at two. Billy comes in off a blind tag as Cody hits the Disaster Kick to Roadie, setting up the Fameasser for the pin and the titles at 6:30.

Rating: C. I was surprised here. Not only was this not the result I was expecting, but the match was better than I thought it was going to be. The Brothers had been on one heck of a roll since the fall, but this

likely leads into the Authority being corrupt storyline. That doesn't make sense given that the Outlaws just won the match clean, but I'm assuming that's the idea.

The opening video focuses on a countdown and how the Road to Wrestlemania begins tonight.

We recap Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt. Daniel joined the Wyatt Family a few weeks ago but only lasted two weeks in the group before turning on Bray in the huge face turn, despite him barely ever being a heel. Tonight is the showdown we've been waiting for.

Daniel Bryan vs. Bray Wyatt

The Family is with Bray here, despite the idea of the match being that they're not supposed to be here. Daniel fires off kicks to the leg and takes Bray down with a running knee but Bray gets in a shot of his own to take over. The Wyatts get in a few blows of their own and are ejected, with Bray saying he doesn't need them to fight this war. Back in and Daniel gets in some kicks to the leg and a high cross body for two, only to be sent to the floor. Bray misses a charge into the steps and injures his knee again, giving Bryan the opening he's been needing.

Daniel hooks something resembling an Indian Deathlock before stomping Bray's face into the mat for two. They slug it out on the apron with the fans chanting YES/NO in time. Bray headbutts Daniel to stagger him and wrings his arm down onto the apron to take over. Back in and Bray is in serious mode now. We hit the chinlock but Daniel quickly fights up with forearms, only to be backdropped to the floor.

The annoying fans chant Jerry Lawler as Bray rams Daniel's head into the post and drives in forearms for good measure. A running senton backplash has Daniel in even more trouble and Bray asks the fans why they don't help him. Bray catapults Daniel throat first into the ropes and we hit another chinlock. Wyatt does his spider walk out of the corner and the announcers of course laugh at Linda Blair jokes. He stays on Daniel's neck with another chinlock but Daniel gets in a shot to the head and shakes the ropes before firing off even more strikes.

A drop toe-hold sends Bray into the middle buckle and there are the YES Kicks to the chest and leg. Daniel hooks a hurricanrana from the middle rope to send the big man flying but he's out at two. Now the fans are into it by saying this is awesome and there's the moonsault in the corner. Daniel loads up the clothesline but thankfully Bray knows what's coming and hits a running elbow to stop Bryan's comeback.

Bray misses a charge and falls to the floor, allowing Bryan to hit a running tornado DDT off the apron. Awesome looking move. There's the running dropkick to knock Bray into the barricade and the missile dropkick puts him down back inside. Now the real YES Kicks have Bray in even more trouble as the fans are going nuts. The big kick to the head gets two and Daniel loads up the running dropkicks in the corner but Bray clotheslines him inside out for a very near fall.

Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two and there's the YES Lock but Bray bites the hand for the break. Bray's superplex is countered with headbutts and Daniel hits a top rope splash to crush Wyatt. Daniel loads up the running knee but Bray bails to the floor. Bryan dives at him with the FLYING GOAT but Bray catches him in midair and hits a wicked Sister Abigail into the barricade. Sister Abigail connects for the pin at 21:37.

Rating: A. Well that was awesome. This was a good example of a match where both guys could look great and only one could win. Daniel losing here isn't a bad thing as he could still come back later and win the Rumble to make up for this. Both guys look better coming out of this and Bray was the one that needed the win more. As soon as he loses, a lot of his mystique is gone. Outstanding match here and something Bray needed.

The expert panel (HBK, Flair, Duggan) are impressed. Shawn seems fine after his fight with Bryan a few weeks ago.

Paul Heyman says Brock wants a title shot and talks about how great Big Show is. It doesn't matter though as Brock is going to destroy him and then take over the WWE.

We recap Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar. Show doesn't like Lesnar and is tired of him being a bully so tonight he's standing up to him. He also stuffed

a Lesnar takedown attempt on Raw earlier this week to show how strong he was.

Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

For once this is under regular rules. Brock takes him down before the bell like an MMA fight and just mauls Big Show before blasting him over and over with a chair. More chair shots put Show on the mat as Jerry butchers history, saying Big Show gave Brock his first loss at the 2002 Royal Rumble (it was the 2002 Survivor Series). Show is beaten down even more with chair shot after chair shot. The bell still hasn't rung.

The referee runs from Brock and Big Show says ring the bell. Brock comes at him with the chair but walks into the KO Punch which knocks Lesnar silly. He rolls to the floor and Big Show throws him around with ease. Back in and Brock ducks another KO Punch and gets caught in the F5. Lesnar WALKS AROUND WITH BIG SHOW ON HIS SHOULDERS and hits the biggest F5 you'll ever see, making it more like an AA, for the pin at 2:05.

Post match Brock destroys him with even more chair shots, each one louder than the last. He bends two chairs over Show's back so he goes to get a third and beats on Show's leg. Show is left in a heap after what was much more of a segment than a match.

The Shield won't tell each other their numbers. Rollins says the only number that matters is three.

Randy Orton says he'll beat John Cena tonight and send him to the back of the line. Renee Young mentions Batista, Brock Lesnar and Bray Wyatt wanting title shots. Orton: "Bray Wyatt? He's a Duck Dynasty reject." The crowd laughs as Orton says it's not John Cena's night.

We get a LONG recap of John Cena vs. Randy Orton. Randy beat him at TLC for the Undisputed Title in a TLC match but tonight it's one fall with no stipulations. On top of that Orton attacked Cena's father a few weeks ago on Raw to make it personal.

WWE Title: Randy Orton vs. John Cena

We're ready to go after the big match intros. The fans chant for Daniel

Bryan and then that the match is boring. Cena takes him down with a headscissors and the chant shifts to the usual dueling Cena chants. Orton grabs a headlock and suplexes Cena down as the chants go to WE WANT ANGLE and Randy Savage. There's a Y2J chant....AND CENA TRIES FOR A LIONTAMER! It shifts the chants to Undertaker as Orton suplexes Cena back inside for two.

The fans think it's boring as we're in a chinlock less than five minutes into the match. They head outside with Cena being sent into the steps as the crowd is restless again. Back to the Bryan chant and Orton actually shouts that he's the champion and not Bryan. A nice DDT puts Cena down for two and the fans think both guys suck. Cena comes back with an electric chair for two and the shoulder blocks followed by the ProtoBomb. Orton counters the Shuffle with the powerslam but Cena comes back with his half nelson slam into a neckbreaker for two of his own.

Cena loads up the top rope Fameasser but first has to block a superplex attempt before connecting for two. Orton throws him to the apron but Cena backdrops him to the floor to counter the Elevated DDT. The crowd has calmed down a bit now. Orton comes right back with the Elevated DDT on the floor and holds a finger to his ear for the crowd. Back inside and the RKO is countered into the STF as the crowd just does not care, probably because they know a title match isn't ending less than fifteen minutes in.

Randy crawls over to the rope and gets in a shot to the head for a breather on the floor. Back in and Cena grabs another ProtoBomb followed by the Shuffle but Orton grabs the rope to block the AA. The referee gets bumped and there's the STF, making Randy tap but there's no referee. Randy hits him in the face with the belt for two as the doctor revives the referee.

The fans think this is awful as an AA gets two for John. An RKO gets the same and the fans still don't buy that the match is ending yet. Orton poses as the fans say they want Divas. With nothing else to do, Orton puts Cena in the STF but Cena is quickly out and has Orton in a Crossface. That's countered into a rollup for two and Orton hits an AA (done more like Cena used to do it without going down) for two more.

Cena of course hits an RKO for two of his own before loading up the middle rope AA, only to have Orton get free pretty quickly. A tornado DDT puts Orton down and sets up the STF in the middle of the ring...and cue the Wyatts. Cena chases them off but walks into the RKO for the pin at 20:53. Orton was surprised by the Wyatts being there.

Rating: B. The worst part about the crowd: the match was good. Trading finishers was something new for these guys, which is impressive as they've had about a dozen matches on PPV alone. The Wyatts interfering would seem to set up Cena vs. Wyatt at Mania, which is interesting to say the least. Good stuff here, as the show continues to rock.

Cena is destroyed as Orton bails. Bray hits Sister Abigail after shouting BEHOLD THE CREATORS OF THE NEW WORLD.

The New Age Outlaws tell Renee Young to put some more onto their intro. We look at the end of the preshow match and it's a new record for longest time between title reigns at 14 years. They have two words for Renee: new champs.

We even get old school Rumble promos!

Miz will do whatever it takes to headline Wrestlemania again.

The Usos say only one can win and go to Wrestlemania.

Langston is ready.

Fandango wants to go to the Big Dance.

Batista: "Exactly."

Sandow says insanity means trying the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. He won't make them again.

Ryback says his unlimited energy takes him to Wrestlemania.

Rey Mysterio says he'll shock the world again.

Back to the expert panel. Shawn picks Shield or Punk. Flair picks Batista. Duggan picks....Dolph Ziggler?

Royal Rumble

90 second entrants this year and it's Punk at #1 and Rollins at #2. Punk takes him back into the corner to start but Rollins puts him onto the top, only to be elbowed in the head. Punk comes back with strikes but Rollins just punches him into the face. A kick to Seth's ribs slows him down but he avoids a big kick to the face and hits a running dropkick. There's a running forearm in the corner but Punk comes back with the running knee. He calls for the GTS but gets caught by an enziguri. Punk kicks him in the face and both guys are down as Damien Sandow is in at #3.

Sandow goes right for Punk as Rollins gets a breather. Punk gets double teamed but comes back with a neckbreaker to Rollins/DDT to Sandow combo to put both guys down. He tries to throw Rollins out but Sandow breaks it up. Cody Rhodes is in at #4, meaning people from earlier in the night can be in as well. He hits a quick Cross Rhodes on Damien but Seth prevents an elimination. Sandow charges at Punk and is backdropped out to get us back to three.

Rollins gets double teamed but Kane is #5, wrestling in black dress pants. He goes right after Punk and stomps him down in the corner before hitting a nice side slam. Punk blocks the chokeslam with a high kick and throws Kane out with relative ease. Alexander Rusev, a Bulgarian monster from NXT, is in at #6. He immediately starts cleaning house but only throws Cody and Rollins to the apron. Alexander picks up Punk and throws him around with a fallaway slam and it's Jack Swagger at #7.

Jack charges to the ring and hits a quick Vader Bomb on Rollins and Cody as the ring is filling up a bit. We get a showdown between Rusev and Swagger and the fans chant USA. Rusev takes over with a clothesline and a charge in the corner but Rollins takes Alexander's leg out and it's a triple team with everyone not named Punk stomping the Bulgarian. The fans are WAY into this.

Kofi Kingston is in at #8 and you can feel the big save coming. He rolls into the ring and immediately punches Punk down but can't throw him out. Cody hits the Disaster Kick on Swagger as Kofi goes after Rusev, who he's

been feuding with in NXT. Swagger has Rollins upside down in the corner but can't get him out. Jimmy Uso is in at #9 and hits a quick Bubba Bomb on Rollins and gets in shots on everyone else. Punk headbutts Jimmy and we get some good old fashioned racial stereotypes as it has no effect.

Goldust is in at #10, giving us a group of Punk, Rollins, Rhodes, Kingston, Rusev, Swagger and Uso. He takes Rollins down with some right hands and hits the kneeling uppercut on Jimmy. Rusev punches the paint off Goldie's face to stop his momentum and everyone gangs up on Alexander again. We need some eliminations here. A big group of about five people get Rusev out in a showing that could have gone longer.

Kofi is knocked to the apron and into Rusev's arms, so he lays him on the barricade and drives knees into Kingston's back. Kofi stands up on the barricade and tightropes across before jumping ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE APRON in an incredible athletic display. Ambrose (coming through the entrance) is in at #11. He goes right for Kofi and then Punk as Swagger is in big trouble but gets back inside. Things slow down a bit as Goldust slides back in under the ropes. Dolph Ziggler returns at #12.

Ziggler speeds things up by pounding on everyone but is put on the apron in just a few seconds. The ring is really getting full as we need a monster to clear it out. Instead we get R-Truth at #13 but is double teamed by the two Shield members. They toss him to the apron and Ambrose kicks him out with ease. Jimmy goes up but gets kicked in the head, allowing Ambrose to shove him out as well. Kofi is on the apron but has to block a boot from Swagger. He holds onto it so long that he's literally hanging in by his feet and pulls Jack's boot off.

Kevin Nash of all people is in at #14, giving us a group of Punk, Rollins, Nash, Ziggler, Ambrose, Goldust, Swagger, Rhodes and Kingston. Nash puts out Swagger as soon as he gets in but has to deal with Shield. Things slow down again and it's Roman Reigns in at #15 to put the entire Shield in the match. There's a spear to Cody and a headbutt to Nash's chest. Roman catches Trouble in Paradise and throws Kofi out but shrugs off the Zig Zag and hits a GREAT spear on Ziggler for a quick elimination.

Nash is low bridged out by Reigns as well as the ring is rapidly emptying out. Goldust and Cody go after Reigns but Rollins makes a save. Great Khali is in at #16 and Shield is on him as he comes in. The giant shoves all of them down but a Superman Punch knocks him into the ropes, allowing all three of them to put Khali out. Goldust, Punk and Rhodes pair off with the three guys but Cody is sent to the floor, only to be accidentally knocked out by his brother. Reigns dumps Goldust and we're down to Punk vs. Shield.

Things even up a lot as Sheamus returns at #17. Shield is right on him but the pale one fights them off and gets them all in different corners. There are the ten forearms to Ambrose's chest with the last one being to the exposed chest. An Irish Curse puts Rollins down and a Brogue Kick knocks Reigns silly. Sheamus stands tall but Reigns is dead weight. Rollins and Ambrose double team Sheamus and it's Miz at #18, giving us Shield, Punk, Sheamus and Miz.

Everyone pairs off again but they all wind up in one corner. Punk has been down for a long time now but is likely just getting a breather. The clock is going very fast tonight as Fandango is in at #19. Shield swarms Sheamus as Fandango goes after Miz. Punk is still down in the corner. The fans want Daniel Bryan but get El Torito at #20. As in the little guy in the white bull costume.

Naturally he beats up a few guys but Punk gives him a look that channels Miz by saying "really?" Punk grabs him by the head but gets caught in a freaking hurricanrana. Fandango runs him over (JBL: "PETA is going to be mad. I head Mantauro is his grandfather.") but gets hurricanranaed to the apron and dropkicked out by the bull. Torito dives on Reigns like an idiot though and is LAUNCHED onto Fandango for his sixth elimination. We're back to Miz, Sheamus and Punk vs. Shield.

Cesaro is in at #21 and picks Miz up for a quick Cesaro Swing. Punk gets one as well but Rollins and Ambrose break it up. Cesaro rams them into each other and swings Rollins until it's Luke Harper at #22. Reigns spears Cesaro down as things slow again. Rollins and Cesaro slug it out and Jey Uso is in at #23, giving us Shield, Sheamus, Miz, Jey, Punk, Cesaro and Harper. Speaking of Cesaro and Harper, they have a big power

slugout with Harper kicking Cesaro's head off to take over.

JBL of all people is in at #24 to a BIG pop and comes in wearing a full suit and tie. He yells at Cole to come take his coat, allowing Reigns to throw him out with ease. That's #7 for Reigns. Erick Rowan is in at #25 and teams up with Harper to dump Miz, leaving us Shield, the Wyatt Family, Miz, Punk, Sheamus, Cesaro and Jey Uso. Jey is kicked out by Harper and Shield stares down the Wyatts as Ryback is in at #26. Everyone brawls and Alberto Del Rio is #27.

Nothing much happens until Batista is in for the big cleanup spot at #28. He's in very short shorts instead of trunks but still looks good. He clotheslines Rowan out and it's showdown time with Ryback. They slug it out and Cesaro has to dive out of the way of a launched Batista. Ryback is backdropped out by Big Dave but Del Rio clips Batista and kicks him in the head. Batista easily picks Alberto up and tosses him out though, right before Big E. Langston is in at #29.

Langston starts with a nice belly to belly on Batista and a series of backbreakers to Sheamus. The fans start chanting YES as the clock is ticking down. #30 is.....Rey Mysterio, completely letting the air out of the arena. The final group is Punk, Shield, Harper, Sheamus, Cesaro, Mysterio, Langston and Batista. Rey and Rollins try to eliminate each other but neither go out. Sheamus knocks out Langston to get us down to ten but the fans just do not care now.

Rollins tosses Mysterio to a pop because he's not who the fans wanted to see. Rollins and Ambrose stomp Sheamus down in the corner and get Harper to the apron but Reigns Superman Punches him out. Ambrose tries to get rid of Reigns but can't quite do it, triggering an argument. Cesaro goes after both of them so Reigns dumps Cesaro, Rollins and Ambrose, which ties Kane's record of eleven. His reward is a spinebuster as we're down to four: Punk, Batista, Sheamus and Reigns.

Make that three as Kane comes in and pulls Punk out before chokeslamming him through the table. The final three are Reigns, Batista and Sheamus who are all down as the fans chant for Mysterio. Everyone slowly gets back up and the fans boo this out of the building. This would be Sheamus'

third straight final three by the way. Batista breaks up a spear to Sheamus as the NO chants begin. Sheamus rewards him with the Regal Roll but Batista ducks the Brogue Kick.

A backdrop puts Sheamus on the apron and Reigns dumps him for the record at 12 eliminations. Batista thinks he dumps Reigns but Roman slides back in as we're down to two. Roman unzips the vest and stares Batista down as the fans are somewhat into this. They slug it out with Reigns taking over but Batista comes back with a spear. The fans are COMPLETELY behind Reigns here as he spears Batista right back. He's all fired up...but Batista easily throws him out for the win at 55:10, letting the air out of the arena again.

Rating: B. It was a really good Rumble, but man alive if that crowd reaction doesn't change something, nothing is going to. I've been watching wrestling my entire life and I have never ever heard a crowd just go silent like they did when Mysterio came out. I mean they just DIED. Batista was destined to win this thing, even though he was the completely wrong pick. Reigns looks like a STAR here but needed the win to cement it. Batista just was not the right pick here, but you knew it was coming the entire time.

The fans are not pleased as a lot of fireworks go off to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. Very ticked off crowd to say the least, this was an outstanding show. Everything was either good to excellent with only the world title match being a step below the rest. Raw tomorrow night is going to be VERY interesting as they're either going to change a lot of stuff or have the worst crowd reaction to a Wrestlemania of all time. I had an awesome night with this show, but Batista should not have gotten that win, period.

I'll have more in depth thoughts and analysis on the Rumble tomorrow after it's had a better chance to process.

Results

Bray Wyatt b. Daniel Bryan – Sister Abigail

Brock Lesnar b. Big Show – F5

Randy Orton b. John Cena – RK0

Batista won the Royal Rumble, last eliminating Roman Reigns

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Smackdown – January 24, 2014: The Show They've Needed For Weeks

Smackdown

Date: January 24, 2014

Location: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Josh Matthews

It's the go home show for the Rumble and not a lot changed this past week on Raw. Batista is back and apparently people are still interested in him, meaning I can't imagine anyone else taking the Rumble at this point. Since it's Friday, I'm guessing we'll be getting a big tag match to close out the week. Let's get to it.

We open with an in memory of George Scott graphic. Always nice to see.

Opening sequence actually opens us up.

The main event tonight is a ten man tag with the Usos/Rhodes Brothers/Langston vs. Shield/New Age Outlaws.

The Real Americans are in the ring to start with Colter ranting about Big Show attacking him. Unfortunately his voice is better now and not as awesome as it was last week. We get a clip from two weeks ago of Big Show knocking Colter out cold which set up tonight's tag match with Show/Mysterio vs. the Real Americans. Colter doesn't think Mysterio is his real name either. Speaking of names, Colter comes up with various names for Big Show/Mysterio: the Border Jumping Buddies, Tacos Supremos Hold the Salsa and El Gordito and the Jumping Bean.

Real Americans vs. Big Show/Rey Mysterio

Swagger charges at Big Show to start and is easily thrown down. Some forearm to the back send Jack running to the corner for a tag off to Cesaro who is thrown around as well. Show puts his foot on Cesaro's face and lifts him up by the arm for a kind of reverse curb stomp. Cesaro is tossed out to the floor and Mysterio takes him down with a seated senton off the apron. A kick to the face drops Swagger and we take a break. Back with Cesaro holding a chinlock on Mysterio until Rey fights up and gets two off a rollup.

Antonio doesn't like being covered so he Swings Mysterio around for a few seconds. Off to Swagger who counters catches a middle rope hurricanrana in midair, only to be sent face first into the middle buckle. Cesaro comes back in but the Real Americans get caught in a double DDT, allowing for the hot tag to Big Show. The monster hiptosses both Americans with ONE ARM. That's very cool looking, even if both of them helped with the throw. A 619 sets up the WMD and the splash off Big Show's shoulders for the pin on Cesaro at 8:52.

Rating: C-. The match was formula stuff but it made Big Show look good going into the showdown on Sunday. Mysterio was just kind of there but it's good to see him in the ring instead of on the injured list all the

time. He's nowhere near what he used to be but at his age and with his knees held together with glue, it's about as good as you can expect.

Heyman comes out post match and tells Big Show to enjoy his health while he can, because there will be nothing to celebrate on Sunday. Big Show did throw Lesnar around on Monday, but it's only made Brock want to hurt Big Show even more. Lesnar will be WWE Champion after dealing with the giant.

The Miz vs. Brodus Clay

Before the match, Wade Barrett's podium rises up and he informs us that while the ten man tag will be awesome tonight, this is going to be one of the worst matches in WWE history. He starts the MIZ IS AWFUL chant and bangs his gavel in place of the five clap sequence. That's really not something you should say on your programming, even for a Miz match. Miz jumps Barrett while the crowd takes up the chant. Barrett keeps taking jabs at the match, calling it one of the worst things he's ever seen and thinking the crowd wants milk and cookies. He asks Clay to dance and the distraction lets Miz hit a DDT for the pin at 1:22.

Miz goes up to the podium but Barrett laughs down at him.

Rumble By The Numbers promo.

AJ Lee vs. Cameron

Non-title. AJ quickly takes her down but charges into a boot in the corner. Cameron stops to dance a bit before dropping a leg for two. A baseball slide puts Naomi down but she walks into a Shining Wizard for the pin at 1:32.

Post match Tamina goes after Cameron but Naomi makes the save and lays AJ out with a Bubba Bomb.

Raw ReBound shows Batista returning and laying out Alberto.

Shield says twenty seven other men are going to enter the Royal Rumble as hungry dogs. Those other people can pretend they're going to have a chance but it's just wishful thinking. All of the other men are casualties and Reigns says he'll win.

Ryback/Curtis Axel vs. Los Matadores

JBL thinks El Torito is a descendant of Mr. Ed. Ryback slams Diego down for an early two before Axel comes in to ram Diego into the corner. A nice running dropkick keeps Diego in trouble, causing Josh to say Torito has a look of concern on his face. JBL: "HE'S A BULL!" Back to Ryback who toys with Diego even more before jumping off the middle rope into a pair of boots. Axel can't break up the hot tag attempt and Fernando comes in to clean house. A double arm DDT gets two on Axel but Ryback makes the save and throws Diego to the floor. Fernando throws Ryback out, only to get rolled up by Axel for the pin at 3:20.

Rating: C-. I believe that's Los Matadores' first loss, but thankfully they stayed undefeated for so long because they haven't been on TV all that much. They're just not an interesting team at all and I can't picture them lasting much longer without being relegated to Superstars. It's nice to see Axel get a pin as well.

Post match Torito IMMEDIATELY sends Axel to the floor and dives on him Ryback so the fans won't have their spirits crushed or something.

Here's Punk to address Kane making him #1 in the Rumble. We get a clip of Punk calling Kane a suck up last week, earning himself a chokeslam as well as a clip from Raw of Kane apologizing and getting knocked to the floor. Punk talks about the Authority's lapdog making him the #1 entrant in the Rumble to stack the deck against him. That's what he expected from HHH and Stephanie but it just motivates him to become WWE Champion again.

He's done a lot in the WWE but the one glaring omission is winning the Rumble. Now that he's #1 it might be the toughest match he's ever competed in, but that's what you have to expect if you call yourself the best in the world. On Sunday he's going to punch the lion in the face and do everything he can to be the last man standing.

This brings out Kane who says that Punk has a .000000186 chance of winning, or one in five hundred million. Maybe his odds are a little better because he's best in the world though. Punk says never tell him the odds and that it's sad to see what has happened to the Devil's Favorite Demon. Is he the Authority's Favorite Statistician now? Punk isn't worried because the #1 entrant has won before and he's been the best since day one.

We recap Bryan vs. Wyatt who have a match on Sunday. I'm actually looking forward to that showdown.

Wyatt Family vs. Prime Time Players

Harper pounds on Young in the corner to start before kicking his head off with a big boot. Off to Rowan who takes off the mask to reveal that hideous face of his. Harper loads up a whip to send Rowan into the corner but instead Rowan whips Harper into the other corner to take out Titus. The discus lariat ends Young at 1:05 in a total squash.

Darren gets Sister Abigail post match and Bray says he'll change the world. You can hear some Bo Dallas in his voice as he speaks, only to have Daniel Bryan cut him off. Bryan says listen to these people because they don't fear fate, the reapers or burning with the saints. On Sunday, Daniel will no longer be trapped in Bray's madness, but Bray will be trapped in Daniel's prison. He'll find out who the real monster is as the fans chant YES.

Fandango vs. Kofi Kingston

During the entrances we get an inset interview from Kofi who says that he's done some amazing things to stay in the Rumble, but this Sunday he's going to perform his greatest feat of all: win the Royal Rumble and go on to headline Wrestlemania. Simple, to the point, ties into his character's history. I'd love these sort of promos to be more common.

A shoulder block puts Kofi down and Fandango gyrates a bit. Back up and Kofi throws him over the top and out to the corner (nice touch) and we get an Emma sighting. Fandango rams him into the apron to take over and something resembling a Pele gets two on Kofi back inside. Kingston pops back up and sends Fandango into the ropes for Trouble in Paradise and the pin at 2:57. Just a match.

Rumble By The Numbers Part II.

Long recap of Cena vs. Orton.

New Age Outlaws/Shield vs. Usos/Cody Rhodes/Goldust/Big E. Langston

Jimmy and Rollins get things going with Seth stomping him down in the corner. They run the ropes a few times until Jimmy stops to dance and grab an arm. Ambrose comes in and has his arm worked on for a few minutes before a right hand gets two. Langston gets the tag and charges into Ambrose's ribs in the corner before hitting a series of backbreakers to keep Dean in trouble. Dean gets a boot up in the corner and tags in Reigns for a big running clothesline.

Big E. gets triple teamed for a bit but just powers Shield off and makes the tag to Cody. Things speed up a bit with a springboard missile dropkick and the Disaster Kick but Gunn comes in for a shot from behind to take over. We take a break and come back with Cody sunset flipping Rollins for two before Seth takes him down again. Gunn gets the tag and drops a knee for two. The heels continue their tagging with Reigns hammering on his back and holding him in place with a cravate.

Dean comes back in with a spinning belly to back suplex for two but Cody fights out of a belly to back superplex and hits the moonsault press on the now legal Reigns. Goldust gets the hot tag to clean house and even hits a top rope hurricanrana to blow everyone's minds. A powerslam gets two on Road Dogg and here's Langston for the Big Ending on Rollins but Roman makes the save with a spear.

Jey superkicks Reigns down and Jimmy adds the Superfly Splash but throws Dean to the floor instead of covering. The Usos load up the stereo dives but Billy cuts off Jimmy and takes him down with the Fameasser. Cody comes back in for the Disaster Kick but Roadie takes him down with the pumphandle slam, only to have Goldust grab a rollup but Shield makes a save as the match is thrown out at 13:20.

Rating: B-. This was an old formula tag match but the very hot finish helped it out a lot. I'm a sucker for the parade of finishers to set up the ending and when you have ten guys it's quite a long parade. The DQ ending is a smart move here as you don't want anyone doing a job going into the Rumble or a title match.

Everybody gets in and we get the traditional huge brawl with everyone else announced for the Rumble (other than Batista of course) coming to join in the fight. CM Punk comes out to a BIG pop to get in on the brawl as the show goes off the air.

Overall Rating: B. This is the show they've been needing to have since the beginning of the year. Tonight was about the Rumble match itself with people wanting to go to Wrestlemania, which is the whole point of the show this Sunday. The other matches got some nice build as well and for once I'm excited for the entire show. Tonight wasn't supposed to be about good matches or the in ring action and it wasn't the focus. Good episode tonight which did its job.

Results

Big Show/Rey Mysterio b. Real Americans – Splash to Cesaro

The Miz b. Wade Barrett – DDT

AJ Lee b. Cameron – Shining Wizard

Curtis Axel/Ryback b. Los Matadores – Rollup to Fernando

Wyatt Family b. Prime Time Players – Discus lariat to Young

Kofi Kingston b. Fandango – Trouble in Paradise

Usos/Big E. Langston/Cody Rhodes/Goldust b. Shield/New Age Outlaws via DQ when all three members of Shield came into the ring

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Monday Night Raw – January 20, 2014: Just Get To The Rumble Already

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 20, 2014

Location: Nutter Center, Dayton, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

In case you haven't watched WWE in the last month and a half or so, Batista is making his return tonight after a nearly four year absence.

It's also the go home show for the Royal Rumble which is starting to take shape. Coming out of last week the big story is Daniel Bryan turning face again, but unfortunately he suffered a concussion last week and is likely out of the show this Sunday. Let's get to it.

We open with a tribute to Martin Luther King and various other African American pioneers such as Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali and Barack Obama. Vince always does something for this holiday.

The Authority is in the ring to open the show and both hype up the Rumble on Sunday. HHH introduces Batista but Orton comes out instead. He wants to know who the Authority thinks they are but Stephanie asks Orton who he thinks he is. Stephanie turns this into an ad for the WWE Network before showing us footage from last week with Kofi Kingston pinning Orton, causing Randy to attack John Cena's dad at ringside.

Stephanie rips him apart for the attack and threatens to fire Orton if it happens again. Randy blames it on the Authority for making his life difficult. Orton says there wouldn't be a WWE Network without him and says he wouldn't change a thing if he could. HHH cuts him off and gives Orton a big pep talk, saying Orton can take care of Cena, Lesnar and Batista and he doesn't have to attack old men. Randy needs to be a man and fix whatever is broken inside him. He'll get the chance to do that tonight by facing Kofi Kingston in a rematch. After that, he gets to face Cena in this ring tonight for an apology, all alone.

Now that HHH is done making the WWE Champion look like a five year old, here's Batista's big return. Batista bows to the fans and hugs HHH before slowly looking at Randy. Orton sticks out his hand but Batista says hello instead. He understands Orton has some questions about his return. Batista is back for the World Title and to headline Wrestlemania, so deal with it. Batista looks decent though not as good as he did back when he was full time (understandable) and got a good reaction so thumbs up on the return. He seems to be a face as well.

Shield vs. Big E. Langston/Cody Rhodes/Goldust

Cody and Goldust will be defending the titles against the New Age Outlaws on the Kickoff show this Sunday. Langston runs over Ambrose to start before it's off to Goldust who cleans house on Rollins. An atomic drop and kick to the side of the head get two on Rollins and it's off to Cody for a delayed front suplex. We hit the armbar for a bit before Rollins bails to the floor, only to have Cody hit a nice dive. A standoff takes us to a break.

Back with Rollins holding Cody in a chinlock before handing it back to Rollins who pounds away in the corner. Reigns comes back in and knocks Goldust off the apron but walks into a Disaster Kick to give Cody the breather he's been needing. The hot tag brings in Langston who suplexes Ambrose in half and clotheslines Reigns to the floor.

Big E. runs Dean over but Rollins breaks up the Big Ending. An overhead belly to belly sends Dean flying and there's the Warrior Splash for two. The Superman Punch knocks the Disaster Kick out of the air and there's a spear to Goldust. Langston runs Reigns over but

gets caught by the Blackout from Rollins for the pin at 10:40.

Rating: C+. This didn't have the time that most Shield matches need to work and I'm not wild on Langston getting pinned. That's the problem with having all champions on a team: if they're going to lose, a champion is going down and that's not a good thing. Not a bad match here but nothing we haven't seen before.

We look at Bryan turning on Wyatt last week.

Here's Bryan to a jobber's entrance of all things to a BIG YES chant. "And some people say I shouldn't be the face of this company!" People have been asking if he had a plan when he joined the Wyatts. He isn't

proud of what he had to do to take down Bray Wyatt, including being indoctrinated, keeping some of the people he cares about in the dark, and standing next to three men he despises. Last week he got exactly what he wanted though: to expose Bray Wyatt. On top of that, it's Bryan vs. Wyatt at the Rumble.

Cue Bryan to the screen to say that where he comes from, being a traitor is an offense punishable by death. The people cheered for him because they chose to kneel before him. Daniel needs to go home and tell his loved ones that he cares for them...and that's it. Presumably because of what will happen to him on Sunday?

Xavier Woods vs. Fandango

R-Truth is on commentary and keeps referring to Cole as Mike Stone. They slug it out for a few seconds before Fandango hits a quick suplex and the guillotine legdrop for the pin at 1:08. Was there a point to this?

Emma is in the crowd again.

Brad Maddox and Kane are in the back talking about Batista when Stephanie comes in to yell at Kane for attacking Punk. I'm getting REALLY tired of the Authority getting to look like the paragons of virtue all the time and NEVER looking bad at all. It's the basic "you can't do that anymore" speech and Kane has to apologize to Punk.

After a break, here's Kane for the apology. We look at Kane chokeslamming Punk on Smackdown before both guys come out. Kane angrily apologizes, even though he saved Punk from a 5-1 beatdown. Punk makes him apologize twice before jumping him and knocking Kane out to the floor. Brad Maddox comes out and makes Punk vs. Billy Gunn to let Punk get out some of his aggression.

Billy Gunn vs. CM Punk

Road Dogg is on commentary and says the Outlaws turned on Punk for the publicity which has gotten them a Tag Team Title shot. Punk sends Billy to the floor and into the apron but stops to yell at Roadie. Billy gets in a cheap shot and we take a break. Back with Punk putting on a sleeper but getting suplexed down and put in a chinlock. Billy slams Punk down and finally takes his shirt off, only to be knocked to the floor again.

Punk loads up a suicide dive but instead goes to the floor to beat up Road Dogg. The knee in the corner looks to set up Punk's bulldog but a Dogg distraction lets Billy hit a tilt-a-whirl slam for two. Punk comes right back and loads up the Macho Elbow but Dogg pulls Gunn to the floor. Not that it matters as the GTS connects for the pin on Billy a few seconds later for the pin at 8:57.

Rating: C. I'm not a big Billy Gunn fan but this worked well enough. There was no way you put either Outlaw over Punk and having them double team him was the only way to make the match even the slightest bit competitive. This was more about advancing the Punk vs. Authority story and there's nothing wrong with that.

Post match Kane makes Punk #1 in the Rumble.

Lesnar and Heyman arrive.

Time for Rumble By The Numbers. I love this.

208,993lbs in the history of the Rumble, or 4 semi trucks or 492 Big Shows

25 countries that have had entrants

39 Hall of Famers

3 wins for Steve Austin, a record

9 who have won their first Rumble

25 years of age when Brock won, a record

30, which has produced the same number of winners as #1

62% of the winners in the past decade have won the world title at Wrestlemania

Rey Mysterio vs. Alberto Del Rio

Because this needed a rubber match. Feeling out process to start until Del Rio takes him down and gets two off a kick to the head. Rey comes back with a low dropkick for two of his own and a kick to the chest sends Del Rio outside. An Asai Moonsault connects but Rey might have hurt himself. Back in and Rey hits a baseball slide between Del Rio's legs, only to have Alberto come back with a stomp to the face to take over. A top rope ax handle sets up the chinlock, followed by a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two on Rey. Mysterio is sent to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Del Rio sending Rey into the corner before putting him in the Tree of Woe and going for the mask. Mysterio gets to the floor and walks up the ramp a bit to fix the mask. Rey has his back bent around the post before being sent shoulder first into the buckle. He's able to avoid a charge, sending Albeto shoulder first into the post. A flying shoulder puts Del Rio down but it hurts Rey's arm again.

Rey's seated senton and a kick to the head get two but the 619 is caught. Del Rio gets two off the low superkick as this just keeps going. The cross armbreaker is countered into the 619 followed by the top rope splash but Del Rio grabs the ropes. The armbreaker goes on for the submission from Rey at 14:52.

Rating: C-. The match was fine from a technical standpoint by OH MY GOODNESS I did not care. Above all else, the biggest problem here was there's no reason for these guys to be fighting. Why are they having this match? Because they had two last week. Why did they have two last week?

No reason at all. That's not interesting television and the fans didn't care either.

Post match Batista comes out and destroys Del Rio with the spinebuster and Batista Bomb.

Here's Big Show who does a pretty funny imitation of Heyman hyping up Brock. Lesnar may be a very dangerous man, but Big Show still doesn't like him. Show calls out Brock for a showdown and gets his wish. Brock comes to the ring but walks to the back instead of getting inside. Show calls Brock out again and gets Lesnar a second time.

Brock actually gets in the ring this time but is thrown to the floor. Lesnar goes on a rampage and destroys the announce table before blasting it with a chair. Heyman tries to distract show so Brock can bring in a chair but Big Show steps on it and takes it away. Lesnar and Heyman slowly leave. Not a bad segment but it's still Big Show getting the match with Lesnar on Sunday.

AJ had a party earlier tonight to celebrate being the longest reigning Divas Champion ever. Bad News Barrett showed up and told her no one liked her, sending AJ into a fit. Tamina took some cake to the face.

Funkadactyls vs. AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka

Tamina runs over Cameron to start before it's off to AJ for a chinlock. Cameron gets a boot up in the corner and makes a tag to Naomi for some athletic but sloppy offense. Tamina comes right back with a bot to the face and brings in AJ, only to have her walk into a rollup from Naomi for the pin at 2:21.

We recap the opening segment.

Rumble by the Numbers Part 2!

753 entrants who haven't won

39 eliminations by Shawn Michaels, a record

37 eliminations by Kane, second place

11 eliminations by Kane in 2001, a record

455,107 fans that have seen the Royal Rumble over the years

62:12 that Rey Mysterio spent in the 2006 Rumble to set the record

:01 that Santino spent in the Rumble in 2009

We run down the Rumble card.

Video on Martin Luther King.

Usos vs. Wyatt Family

Harper runs over Jimmy to start before being sent to the floor for a clothesline off the apron from Jey. Rowan comes in to choke away a lot as the Wyatts take over. Back to Harper for more brawling offense before Rowan comes in to keep up the fast tags. Jimmy is shoved off the top rope and into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Harper holding Jimmy in a headlock as Bray grabs a mic and talks about the punishment that Daniel Bryan will be experiencing. This is nothing compared to the torment that awaits him at the Rumble. Jimmy finally gets away and makes the hot tag to Jey who cleans house on the monsters. The running Umaga attack has Harper in trouble and Jimmy hits the big plancha to Rowan. Harper comes back with a Michinoku Driver for two on Jimmy as Bray is ticked off. Cue Bryan to jump Bray and kick Rowan in the head. The distraction lets Jimmy roll up Harper for the pin at 12:35.

Rating: C-. The match was decent enough but good freaking night I am sick

of these meaningless tag matches. The Usos, the Wyatts and the Real Americans have been trading wins back and forth for months now and none of them have gotten the slightest bit of advancement out of it at all. We've seen these same matches time after time and no one gets anywhere off of it. That's why these tag team renaissances never get off the ground. Well that and the tag champions always wind up being stuck in the main event story where the titles aren't used.

Randy Orton vs. Kofi Kingston

Orton starts fast but keeps looking back at the ramp for Cena. Kofi gets in some shots of his own but Randy throws him to the floor and into the barricade to stop the comeback cold. Kingston is knocked down again and Orton does the You Can't See Me. A backslide and the SOS both get two on Orton and Cena is shown arriving at the arena at 10:59 PM. Kofi grabs Orton's leg but here's Cena in the arena, sending Orton running. Randy gets caught between both guys and Cena goes off on him for the DQ at 5:05.

Rating: D+. This was just about waiting for the Cena run-in so I won't even bother commenting on it.

Cena beats Orton into the crowd but Randy escapes an AA attempt. They fight up the steps and into a suite where Orton escapes to the street outside. Orton gets into a waiting car to escape. Cena comes back inside and goes into the arena for posing, replays and high fives to end the show. It was kind of awkward as he just walked down the steps for about three minutes with nothing significant happening.

Overall Rating: C-. I care about the Rumble a bit more so they did their job on that front, but the show was still dull with no matches standing out and a lot of them feeling like time was being killed until we got to the big stuff at the end. Just nothing to see here though there are some seeds planted for post Rumble time which gives me hope for the future.

Results

Shield b. Cody Rhodes/Goldust/Big E. Langston – Blackout to Langston

Fandango b. Xavier Woods – Guillotine legdrop

CM Punk b. Billy Gunn – GTS

Alberto Del Rio b. Rey Mysterio – Cross armbreaker

Funkadactyls b. AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka – Small package to AJ

Usos b. Wyatt Family – Rollup to Harper

Randy Orton b. Kofi Kingston via DQ when John Cena interfered

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Smackdown – January 17, 2014: Punk's Career Suicide

Smackdown

Date: January 17, 2014

Location: DCU Center, Worcester, Massachusetts

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, The Miz

The main story coming off Raw is of course Daniel Bryan turning on the Wyatts to a huge reaction. I thought Bryan was going to leave them eventually though this was faster than I was expecting. Other than that,

the road to the Rumble started to pick up on Monday as people names were added to the match to make it give it far more star power than it had before. Tonight we should get a few more names added to the match as the show is in nine days. Let's get to it.

New Age Outlaws vs. Cody Rhodes/Goldust

Non-title. Cole recaps the turn on Raw and says he doesn't get the surprise at the Outlaws' treachery. For once, he's absolutely right. Roadie does the intro and the PG issues get a bit muddled. Why can't Road Dogg swear on the way to the ring but can when he's introducing Billy? Goldust and Road Dogg get things going with Roadie suckering Goldust in for some shaky punches. Goldust takes him into the corner for some right hands of his own followed by a back elbow to the jaw.

Billy comes in but is backdropped out to the floor, allowing for a tag off to Cody. Why Goldust is exhausted already is beyond me as he was barely touched. He powerslams Roadie down and tags in his brother to a nice pop. Cody cleans house on Gunn but has to deal with Road Dogg as well. A double springboard missile dropkick puts the Outlaws down for two as everything breaks down.

Goldust and Roadie go to the floor as Cody avoids the Fameasser but has Cross Rhodes countered as well. Billy gets two off a tilt-a-whirl slam but still can't hit the Fameasser. There's the Disaster Kick...and Vickie Guerrero interrupts. She reminds us that the Royal Rumble is every man for himself, including brother vs. brother. The distraction lets Billy roll up Cody for the pin at 4:43.

Rating: C-. Goldust's cardiovascular issues aside, this wasn't bad until the stupid ending. It's bad enough that I have to put up with the stupid corporate stuff on Impact but now I have to put up with it on Smackdown as well. I'd love to sit down with the creative team and show them some old matches so they can see other ways heels can cheat to win a match. What do I have to do to get a cover with feet on the ropes around here?

CM Punk says he's going to call out all three members of the Shield. Literally that's that entire interview.

Here's Paul Heyman to brag about how amazing Lesnar is, focusing on destroying Mark Henry. After that though, Lesnar was attacked by Big Show who implied he could take Brock out. Heyman admits that Big Show is intimidating but he'll fall to Lesnar at the Royal Rumble.

Heyman talks about going through wars with Lesnar at his side, meaning he has to fear no evil. Big Show may hurt Zeb Colter, but he won't hurt Heyman to get to Brock, including on Raw when Lesnar appears live. Big Show comes out and Heyman is in the crowd before Big Show is all the way in the ring. Big Show shows us a clip from Raw where Show threw Lesnar around, followed by Big Show promising to knock Lesnar out.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Rey Mysterio

Before the match Rey talks about Del Rio being afraid of Batista, sending Del Rio into a frenzy to start. He wraps Rey's arm around the rope but gets sent outside for Rey's sliding splash under the bottom rope. Back in and Del Rio crotches Rey down to tie him up in the Tree of Woe for a kick to the ribs as we take a break. Back with Rey hitting a top rope seated senton, only to run into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two.

JBL talks about George Washington for some reason as Rey rolls through a sunset flip and kicks Del Rio in the head for two. The corner enziguri brings Rey down from the top again but Del Rio can't pin him. Rey comes back with a tornado DDT for two of his own but Del Rio hits the Codebreaker on the arm. The armbreaker is countered into the 619 but the top rope splash hits knees. Del Rio loads up the low superkicks but Rey counters into a rollup for the pin at 8:25.

Rating: C+. This took time to get going but the last few minutes were good back and forth stuff. It was a nice change of pace for Del Rio to not be on the arm the entire way through, even though he stayed on the

arm as is his custom. This was way better than their basic match on Raw, which is nice as they have chemistry together.

Post match Del Rio jumps Mysterio and puts him in the cross armbreaker.

Naomi vs. Tamina Snuka

Fallout from Tamina hitting AJ with the Rear View on Monday. Emma is in the audience doing her dance again. Miz reads a statement from Maryse congratulating AJ on breaking her record for longest reigning Divas Champion. Naomi jumps Tamina to start but is easily knocked down and backdropped for two. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Naomi comes back with some kicks to the ribs and a modified bulldog. A Bubba Bomb puts Tamina down but the referee is looking at Cameron and AJ. Tamina uses the distraction to kick Tamina in the head and hit a split legged moonsault for the pin at 2:35.

Video on Mae Young. These are always saddening yet cool at the same time. If there has ever been a woman more willing to do anything to entertain a crowd, I'd love to see her.

Video of Bryan turning on Bray Wyatt Monday to a huge reaction.

Here's Bray without his hat in person with something to say. I love that you can't see Harper and Rowan until the lights come on even though they're right next to Bray. He talks about wanting to be powerful like his father as a child. Bray did his best to appease him and be just like him but it was never good enough. His father was never there for him and never entrusted Bray with his kingdom.

Instead he cast Bray out amidst the sheep, forcing him to walk the earth alone. But then Sister Abigail saved him by singing the sweetest songs Bray had ever heard. Bray became obsessed with her beauty and power, but Abigail told him that Bray would be betrayed again on his path to

righteousness.

Monday was the moment that Abigail was talking about, when Bray knew he had to sacrifice himself to be resurrected into the creature he was born to be. You can't hurt him because he's already dead and he does not bleed like we do. Daniel Bryan was given a chance to walk with the reapers but now he will be forced to walk with the saints. More creepy stuff here as Bray's backstory is slowly filled in.

Punk is going to call out the New Age Outlaws in addition to the Shield. If that's career suicide, consider it a gift to the Authority.

Big E. Langston vs. Fandango

Non-title as well. Langston hits a quick backbreaker to start and Fandango bails to the floor. Back in and the dancer pounds away with right hands but Langston runs him over with a shoulder block. Fandango avoids a charge in the corner and kicks Big E. to the outside before pulling Langston's shoulder into the post. Langston is thrown back inside and we hit the armbar for a few moments as the match slows down. Big E. easily powers Fandango to the floor as JBL and Miz argue over who was a bigger star. Fandango is suplexed down, setting up the Warrior Splash, the running Vader Attack and the Big Ending for the win at 4:16.

Rating: D+. Pretty boring match here but Big E. getting clean wins on TV is the right idea for him. Fandango got in some offense here instead of just being the sandwich that Langston had for supper tonight. He's not going to be a big deal for a long time but it's better than getting squashed.

Shield thinks it's the other 27 people in the Rumble that need to be worried instead of the three of them. Ambrose says he wouldn't throw Rollins out but Rollins says Dean couldn't do it anyway. Rollins would throw Ambrose out, leading to an argument between the two. Reigns cuts them off and says he'll throw both of them out and go to Wrestlemania,

but they'll still be a united Shield.

Ultimate Warrior Hall of Fame video.

Video on the WWE Network.

We look back at Kofi shocking Orton on Monday, leading to Orton attacking Cena's dad. HHH has promised to deal with Orton internally.

Real Americans vs. Usos

Colter is in a wheelchair to sell the attack on Monday. Cesaro and Swagger do the hand over the heart but Zeb rolls down the ramp without them holding him in place. Before the match, Colter, with his voice muffled by the neck brace, says he wants Lesnar to destroy Big Show at the Rumble before asking the fans to say WE THE PEOPLE. Jimmy has bad ribs and Jey has a bad shoulder due to the cage match on Monday.

Swagger throws Jey around to start and the injuries take their toll immediately. Off to Cesaro for some shoulders to the ribs before Swagger comes back in with knees to the midsection as well. Jack launches Cesaro into a splash in the corner and Antonio follows up with rights and lefts to the ribs as we take a break. Back with Jimmy in the Cesaro Swing which still gets a nice reaction, months after it was at its peak. Jimmy fights off the dizziness and kicks the Real Americans in the face and stomach, finally allowing the hot tag to Jey. The running Umaga attack gets two on Jack and a Samoan drop gets the same.

Cesaro is knocked to the floor but Jey gets caught in the Patriot Lock. Jimmy superkicks Swagger for the save before chasing Antonio to the floor. Cesaro hides behind Colter's wheelchair before missing a charge into the barricade. Jimmy shoves the wheelchair into Cesaro for a big crash as Jey hits an electric chair drop on Swagger. Jey drops the Superfly Splash for the pin at 9:16.

Rating: C. The idea was fine here with the Real Americans working on the injuries but we've seen these teams fight so many times now that it's hard to care anymore. Colter is so good on the mic but he needs someone better than these two losers to get anywhere. Swagger is in such desperate need of repackaging it's unreal.

Here's Punk for the big call out to end the show. Punk says he's out here because he's not a coward like the Authority. He doesn't need an army of people to fight his battles for him, but maybe he's insane. Yeah he might get slaughtered by Shield and the Outlaws so why not also call out the In Laws, the Ultimate Warrior, the Dingo Warrior and the Road Warriors?

The thing is, people listen to him when he talks and that's real power. Punk talks about HHH abusing his power to satisfy his own agenda while hiding behind his wife. Shield's music cuts Punk off before he can get too far into that though, which is a nice touch if it was intentional. The Outlaws come out before Shield can get to the ring and Punk is surrounded.

Punk holds up the microphone as his weapon but Kane's pyro goes off and he orders everyone to stand down. He gets in the ring and says the Authority doesn't want it this way. Punk's anger is displaced and his paranoia is getting the better of him. The Authority wants Punk to main event Wrestlemania, which is why they entered him in the Rumble.

In fact, Kane's new top directive is to treat Punk with the respect that he deserves. Punk looks confused as Kane leaves so he asks if he has Kane's word. Kane nods but Punk doesn't buy it because Kane is a seven foot suck up. Kane says get him before catching a distracted Punk in a chokeslam to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This is another show that didn't need to exist. The wrestling wasn't bad, the promos weren't bad and the ending advanced very little, but the show isn't actively bad. That's the best way to describe Smackdown as a whole: not much happens, but it's better than having your

face carved up with a branding iron. In a way though that's the worst kind of show as it's not bad enough to make fun of but it's not good enough to be worth seeing either. In a word, Smackdown exists and that's all there is to say about it.

Results

New Age Outlaws b. Cody Rhodes/Goldust – Rollup to Rhodes

Rey Mysterio b. Alberto Del Rio – Rollup

Naomi b. Tamina Snuka – Split legged moonsault

Big E. Langston b. Fandango – Big Ending

Usos b. Real Americans – Superfly Splash to Swagger

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Three Thoughts of the Day

Maybe I should watch Raw while I'm barely awake more often.

1. Boy That's Convenient!

Last night on Raw, Brad Maddox made the Usos vs. Daniel Bryan and Bray Wyatt have a rematch inside of a cage. Wasn't it lucky that there just happened to be a cage above the ring? Could you at least try to make it seem like this show isn't completely scripted?

2. Nice and Easy.

With Shield's breakup being imminent for the last three months or so, I'm very relieved to see that they're not being jobbed out every single match. That idea is so overused and it takes away any kind of shock you might see coming. Thankfully Shield has only lost a handful of times and is still a powerful force. Hopefully this means they change some of their played out ideas up a little bit.

3. Watch How It's Done Junior.

If you've watched WWE in the last three weeks or so, you know that Batista is coming back next week and that he'll be in the Rumble. WWE has hyped up the return like they always do and I'm betting WWE will draw a crowd as a result. Batista is a big star and people are likely going to be interested in watching him return.

Compare this to the return of AJ Styles. Styles returned at the end of an episode of Impact and the next week he was in a world title unification match. No additional hype, no time to make the fans feel like they had to see it and nowhere near as many additional fans watching the show as they could have had. The rating was higher due to having a big match. Imagine how much higher it could have been if more people had known they could have seen AJ return to the ring for a world title unification match.

Monday Night Raw – January 13, 2014: YES I Did Tell You So

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 13, 2014

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

We're only two weeks out from the Rumble though it feels like there are months to go. The field is still wide open and that's usually a good sign, but the Rumble doesn't feel like a big deal right now. Actually nothing does, as everything feels only big but not huge. Obviously that could change, but we're still a long way off from Wrestlemania which is all that really matters. Let's get to it.

Wyatt Family vs. Usos

It's Bryan/Bray for once here and Bryan is extra aggressive tonight. Jey fights him off but Daniel takes him into the corner for the tag off to Wyatt who kicks away in the corner. Back to Bryan who rips at Jey's face and drops a knee to the chest before it's off to Bray for some evil sneering. Bray cannonballs down onto Jey's chest and runs him over in the corner.

Daniel comes in again for the YES Kicks as the fans aren't pleased with Bryan at all. Daniel puts on a chinlock but Jey fights up and enziguris him down, allowing for the hot tag to Jimmy. The Usos start cleaning house and send the Wyatts to the floor for the stereo dives. Back in and the other Family members run in for the DQ at 5:35.

Rating: C-. This was more about the story than the action and there's nothing wrong with that. Daniel is still going to get something big out of this, perhaps even winning the Rumble, but tonight was a good way of using him in the stable. It advances the story, which is what you need right now.

Post match the Usos fight off the monsters and escape, leaving Daniel on the mat with Bray pacing back and forth. Daniel gets up and Bray whispers something to him, sending Bryan to his knees with his arms out. Bray gives him Sister Abigail and says that was for all of them. All four Wyatts leave together.

John Cena vs. Damien Sandow

Cena armdrags him down to start and cranks on an armbar as the announcers talk about how bad Sandow's year ended. A hiptoss puts Sandow down again for two but he pops back up and takes over with some headbutts as we take a break. Back with Sandow working on the arm but missing a knee drop. Cena initiates his finishing sequence but the AA is countered into an Edge-0-Matic for two.

Sandow's neckbreaker is countered but Cena can't get the STF. Damien kicks the knee out and puts on an Edgecator (Sharpshooter to start but Sandow doesn't step over and pushes the legs forward instead of pulling). Cena is easily out and grabs a half nelson slam, only to spin around into a neckbreaker for two.

John goes up top and shoves Sandow away, only to catch him with a tornado DDT for two. Sandow counters the AA into a sunset flip for two more before spinning a neckbreaker into a DDT for another near fall. You're Welcome is countered into the STF but Damien is quickly into the ropes. Sandow grabs a Crossface but Cena powers up into the AA for the pin at 10:25.

Rating: B-. Not as good as the MITB match due to the lack of drama but this was a very nice surprise. These two have chemistry in the ring but Sandow's stock is so low that there's almost no way to believe he's going to beat Cena. Still though, much better than I expected it to be.

Video on the WWE Network. That's going to be awesome.

Kane is looking at some papers when Brad Maddox comes in. Brad makes fun of Kane for letting the show fall apart already but Kane says Brad should be reinforcing the rules. Maddox makes Bryan/Bray vs. Usos in a cage for later. Kane says the door is chained and locked and he'll have the key.

Big Show vs. Jack Swagger

Before the match we see Big Show throwing Lesnar around last week. Show throws Swagger around to start and headbutts him around the ring. A splash in the corner sets up a shoulder tackle to send Jack flying. The chokeslam ends the squash at 1:20. It's so nice to have them mix up the jobbers every now and then.

Big Show chases Cesaro off and punches Zeb out because he's not a nice guy.

New Age Outlaws/CM Punk vs. Shield

Rematch from Smackdown. Billy starts with Ambrose with Dean getting in some shots to the head to take over. Off to Rollins who is in long sleeves tonight and allows the tag to Road Dogg. Seth kicks him in the ribs and brings in Ambrose to rip at Dogg's face a bit. Punk gets the tag and cleans house on Dean, including driving elbows into the head in the corner. Rollins comes in but has to fight out of a GTS, only to bring in Reigns to a noticeable pop.

Punk and Reigns slug it out with Punk getting the better of it, only to be punched in the chest to give Roman control. Reigns is low bridged to the floor, allowing Punk to hit a suicide dive as we take a break. Back with Rollins dropping Punk and tagging in Reigns, who heads to the floor for a dropkick to the side of Punk's head as it hangs over the bottom rope. That's INSANELY athletic. Ambrose puts on a chinlock and stops Punk's comeback attempt before bringing Rollins back in.

Seth takes Punk into the corner for some knees to the ribs. Dean stays on those ribs with some stomps and throws Punk to the floor in a heap. Punk reverses a whip into the steps but Reigns throws Ambrose back in to cut off Punk's chance. A springboarding Rollins can't take Punk on but Reigns gets between Punk and the corner. CM is all good with that and high kicks Reigns down....but the Outlaws drop to the floor, leaving Punk 3-1. The numbers game catches Punk about 30 seconds later as Reigns spears him down for the pin at 15:31.

Rating: C. This was again about the story and there's nothing wrong with

that. If I had to guess, that's the start of Punk vs. HHH at Wrestlemania which is a match about two years overdue. It's also likely a way to get the Outlaws out of the ring, which is the right idea. They're a nostalgia act, meaning their shelf life is limited at best.

Punk gets TripleBombed post match.

Bray tells Bryan that they've been inside a cage their entire lives but tonight they find absolution. Bryan freaks out and says the same thing.

Funkadactyls vs. AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka

Before the match, NXT Diva Emma is shown in the crowd and identified by the announcers. That's a good addition to the division if it happens. Cameron takes Tamina down with a headscissors to start but gets draped over the top rope for two. Off to AJ who gets two off a neckbreaker, skips around a bit, and ends her with the Shining Wizard at 2:52. Total squash and Naomi was never in.

Post match Naomi makes the save and sends AJ running.

Orton is looking for the Authority and finds Kane after the break. He raves about all the people coming after him because he's the champion but Kane cuts him off. Orton can have Kofi tonight.

We get the first inductee into the Hall of Fame: the Ultimate Warrior.

Paul Heyman goes on a long rant about Big Show having his pituitary gland removed, leading to a massive case of stupidity. That's the only way you can explain him going after Brock Lesnar. Heyman ensures us that Lesnar isn't as easy to take out as Jack Swagger and he'll prove that at the Rumble.

Randy Orton vs. Kofi Kingston

Non-title. Orton is especially ticked off tonight and sends Kofi to the floor. A whip into the barricade gets two for the champ and he clotheslines Kofi down for no cover. Kofi is sent to the floor again but he manages to send Randy into the announce table a few times to get a breather. Back inside and Orton sends him face first into the middle

buckle before superplexing Kingston down for two. Orton drops a knee to the face but Kofi comes back with strikes to the head to knock Orton outside. Kofi follows him to the floor and sends Orton face first into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Orton ramming Kofi into the announce table before taking him back inside for a chinlock. Kofi fights up but gets sent to the floor and into the steps for the third time tonight. Make it four as Orton is all insane again. A hard stomp to the side of the head gets two and we hit the chinlock again.

Orton shrugs off a comeback and walks around a lot more. Kofi gets a quick two off a backslide so Orton uppercuts him down for another chinlock. The hold is broken and Kofi avoids a knee drop. A dropkick sets up the Boom Drop but Orton rolls away and loads up the Elevated DDT...but Kofi counters into the SOS for the completely clean pin at 16:51.

Rating: D+. This was mind warping. First and foremost, WAY too long with the chinlocks and walking around. I get the idea of Orton letting Kofi hang in there and getting pinned, but there are far better ways to go about it than that. Then there's the booking which is crazy enough if you think about it for more than three seconds. Orton is the new world champion, meaning he should not be getting pinned on Raw. It's stuff like that which crippled the World Heavyweight Title and they don't need to do it with the one title.

Post match Orton throws a fit and destroys a bunch of stuff before hitting John Cena's dad in the front row. Security pulls him away and Cena comes out to tend to his Pop.

After the break Cena's dad is taken out on a stretcher.

Cody Rhodes/Goldust vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel

Non-title again. Axel hammers away on Goldust to start before the golden one comes back with an uppercut. Off to Ryback as the announcers mention his big Twitter rant over the weekend. Cody comes in with a not great moonsault press for two before it's back to Goldust who has to deal with Axel making a blind tag. Curtis gets in a clothesline to the back of the

head and it's quickly back to Ryback for a chinlock. The announcers tell some far more entertaining inside jokes about Lawler in the AWA but unfortunately Cole gets back to the match.

Goldust comes back with a bulldog to put Ryback down and the hot tag brings in Cody. House is cleaned very slowly with Cody hitting a kick to the ribs and a missile dropkick to put Curtis down. The Disaster Kick staggers Ryback on the apron but Axel grabs a rollup for two. Axel's neckbreaker is countered into Cross Rhodes for the pin at 6:05.

Rating: D+. This just didn't do it for me for some reason. Ryback's Twitter rant looks like it's going to be turned into a storyline which isn't a bad idea at all. The match however didn't work, possibly due to Cody and Goldust clearing out the division in just a few months. Not terrible but nothing to see here.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Rey Mysteriou

Del Rio is still aggressive, driving Rey into the corner and slamming him down for two. Rey comes back with a headscissors but can't hit the 619. Del Rio bails to the floor and gets caught by a seated senton off the pron. Back in and Rey kicks Alberto in the head for two, only to get caught with a Codebreaker to the arm.

An armbar doesn't get Del Rio anywhere so he takes Rey down with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. The arm is wrapped around the ropes again but Del Rio's charge hits the post to give Rey a break. Alberto's Alabama Slam is countered into a headscissors and the 619 but Rey gets crotched on the top. The running enziguri sets up the armbreaker to make Rey tap at 4:55.

Rating: D+. Again this didn't have time to go anywhere but it wasn't far above a squash. Del Rio's psychology in the ring continues to be solid but his character is so boring that I just can't care at all. He'll still be a good first feud for Batista, even though he's just a warmup for Big Dave.

Post match Del Rio says that was a preview for Batista.

Same Network video from earlier.

Punk complains to Kane about the Outlaws and enters the Rumble.

We get a very well edited clip of the Usos talking about their match, show "moments ago."

Usos vs. Wyatt Family

Inside a cage with Kane holding the key to the door. It's a brawl to start with the Usos being sent into the cage and choked a lot. Jey gets backdropped into the steel as the pace slows even more. Daniel tries to throw a charging Jimmy into the cage but Jimmy climbs up for an escape attempt. Bryan and Jimmy fight on top of the cage but Bray goes up as well to pull Jimmy backinside. Jey pulls Bray down to the mat and does the same to Bryan with a Russian legsweep as we take a break.

We're quickly back with the Wyatts in control again until Jey slams Bray's head into the cage a few times, setting up a Whisper in the Wind for two. A double belly to back superplex puts Daniel down but Bray is back into it. He blocks a superkick from Jey but takes too long setting up Sister Abigail, allowing Jimmy to superkick Bray for the save. The Wyatts make a double save to keep the Usos from escaping but the twins knock Bray and Daniel down. Jimmy dives on Rowan and Jey climbs down for the win at 11:15 for our second big upset of the night.

Rating: C-. It's nice to see a new team win the match and we get more development in the Bryan storyline. Kane played no role in the match at all but he doesn't have a connection to anyone in it at the moment. I'm an Usos fan so I have very few complaints here. Not the best match but still good enough.

Post match Bray smiles and Bryan drops to his knees, but this time he shoves Bray away from hitting Sister Abigail. Bray's eyes get all freaky as Daniel is listening to the fans. Now Bray is looking nervous and offers to let Bryan have a free shot. Daniel isn't sure what to do so Bray calls him a coward. Bray charges but misses in the corner and Daniel erupts on him with running dropkicks. There are the YES Kicks as Harper and Rowan can't get past the locked door. Daniel rips off the coveralls

and destroys Bray with everything he's got. One of the loudest YES chants you'll ever hear sets up the running knee to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The show had an energy that it's been missing for way too long now. The Rumble is starting to take shape which has been missing until tonight. We have a personal reason for Cena and Orton to be fighting and people started talking about winning the Rumble. That's all you can ask for about one of the last shows before the Rumble and Batista returning will make for a great go home show. As for Bryan, I told you two weeks ago that he wasn't going to be a Wyatt long and would come out of this looking fine. Why you people don't listen to me more often is beyond me.

Results

Usos b. Wyatt Family via DQ when Luke Harper and Erick Rowan interfered

John Cena b. Damien Sandow – Attitude Adjustent

Big Show b. Jack Swagger – Chokeslam

AJ Lee/Tamina Snuka b. Funkadactyls – Shining Wizard to Cameron

Kofi Kingston b. Randy Orton – SOS

Cody Rhodes/Goldust b. Ryback/Curtis Axel – Cross Rhodes to Axel

Alberto Del Rio b. Rey Mysterio – Cross armbreaker

Usos b. Wyatt Family – Usos escaped the cage

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