

New Column: Hawkins And Ryder Didn't Read The Fine Print On The Lockbox Bro

Looking at the difference between logical but boring and entertaining but Russo.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/tommyhall/kbs-review-hawkins-ryder-didnt-read-fine-print-lockbox-bro/>

Wrestlemania XXXV Preview: Raw Tag Team Titles: Revival(c) vs. Curt Hawkins/Zack Ryder

Well of course this is here too.

If there's a match that felt more tacked on than this one, I can't remember the last time it happened. This match wasn't even announced on TV with the only mention being in a YouTube video. Hawkins and Ryder, who haven't won a match in years, are now getting a WrestleMania title match because WE MUST GET THE TITLES ON THE SHOW. I think you know where this is going.

Of course Revival drops the titles here and probably never get them back, because WWE doesn't get why they're unhappy with their spot in the company. This match is going to be about five minutes long and belongs on the Kickoff Show but the fans will lose their minds at the New York team winning the titles again. It would be

perfectly fine on Monday Night Raw the next night, but that would mean just fifteen matches and that's not good enough.

Main Event – September 13, 2018: The Work Pays Off



IMG Credit: WWE

Main Event

Date: September 13, 2018

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

It's the go home show for Hell in a Cell and that means some clips of the big pushes from Raw and Smackdown. This really is a week where they could just drop the original matches altogether but that doesn't exactly seem to be in the cards. You can probably guess what we're getting tonight but that makes for some interesting television at times. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

Opening sequence.

Ember Moon vs. Dana Brooke

Now remember: this is the IMPROVED Brooke. Dana takes her into the corner without much effort and a few rollups get a few near falls. A test of strength goes to Brooke until Moon fights up without much

effort. Some shoulders in the corner set up a knee to the ribs for two.

More knees set up a bodyscissors but Moon fights up and nips into a hurricanrana. That just earns her the handspring elbow in the corner and we hit the abdominal stretch, first on the mat and then the standing version. The springboard crossbody gets Moon out of trouble, only to have Brooke enziguri her into the corner. That means a roll into the buckle though and the Eclipse gives Moon the pin at 5:23.

Rating: D. Brooke just isn't very good and there's not much of a way around that anymore. She tries but it's a situation where she's not going to get any better being fed to these big names. The solution would be to send her down to NXT for a good while, but WWE isn't one to change course, even on someone as low on the totem pole as her.

Video on Rousey vs. Bliss.

From Raw.

Tag Team Titles: Dolph Ziggler/Drew McIntyre vs. B Team

The B Team is challenging. Ziggler and Dallas start things off with Bo hitting an early neckbreaker for two. Axel comes in and slugs away as we take a break. Back with McIntyre working on an armbar before stomping on Axel's hand. A superkick into a reverse Alabama Slam gives McIntyre two but Axel catapults Ziggler into the corner. Everything breaks down and Ziggler rakes Dallas' eyes, setting up the Zig Zag/Claymore combination to retain at 8:48.

Rating: D. The B Team are still comedy guys and there's still no reason to believe that Ziggler and McIntyre shouldn't slaughter them. They were fine for what they were as short form comedy goofs but they were designed to lose huge to a better team. There's nothing wrong with that, but this match should have been what the title change was: near if not complete and utter dominance.

Post match Ambrose and Rollins run in to beat down Ziggler and McIntyre, who bail before McIntyre can get Stomped.

Video on Charlotte vs. Lynch.

From Smackdown.

Brie Bella vs. Maryse

Brie now has the Seattle Seahawks colors too. Maryse bails to the

floor at the bell and Miz gives her a good luck kiss. Back in and Maryse hides in the ropes before heading outside again. Brie grabs the mic and calls Maryse a coward. Feel the burn I guess. Miz doesn't like this and talks about how Maryse gave birth just five months ago. This city doesn't deserve this match so Miz and Maryse are out. Brie chases Maryse down and sends her into the apron but Bryan going after Miz lets Maryse get in a kick to the head for two. The YES Lock has Maryse in trouble but Miz pulls Brie out for the DQ at 4:40.

Rating: N/A. I don't use that very often but this wasn't a match. They "wrestled" for about twenty seconds near the end of their angle and that's about it. I know WWE might be a little worried about the two of them wrestling, but if that's the case they shouldn't be in the main event of this show. Now we're going to have to hear even more about how much of a legend Brie is, but at last Nikki's match last night was a match as opposed to this angle that they tried to call a match.

Post match the brawl is on with Bryan running Brie over by mistake. Maryse sends Brie into the apron a few times but Brie comes back with her terrible punches. Bryan gets back in and takes Miz down with Brie punching him into a clothesline to the floor to end the show.

Zack Ryder vs. Apollo Crews

They shake hands before the feeling out process starts. Crews takes over with a wristlock but Ryder dropkicks him into the corner without much effort. Back up and Crews flips away in the corner, followed by a dropkick of his own to show Ryder who the better athlete is. A slingshot dive sets up a chinlock until Ryder jawbreaks his way to freedom. Stereo crossbodies give us a double knockdown with Crews getting up first.

Some clotheslines set up a powerslam to put Ryder in trouble again, followed by the nipup just to show off. A low bridge to the floor lets Ryder hit a dropkick from the apron though, followed by the Elbro for two. Ryder's neckbreaker looks to set up the Broski Boot but Crews is out of the way and Ryder is in trouble again. An enziguri sets up a frog splash to finish Ryder at 8:32.

Rating: C+. This is a good example of what can happen when you let talented performers work. How much input do you think the higher ups

had in this match? Other than “Apollo you’re going over with something from the top”, do you really think an agent gave them many instructions? These are two talented guys and they had a very nice match. It’s not going to get them anywhere, but hopefully someone took some notice of the work they put in.

From Smackdown.

Samoa Joe reads a bedtime story (complete with book) about AJ Styles, who built a house but then forgot his friends who helped get him there. One of his friends promised to make things better by beating Styles up, which leads them to Sunday where AJ will get to go back to his family. After he wakes up of course. The last shot of the book is Joe as champion with Styles’ family for a rather evil visual.

The rhyming here was a good idea as they’ve done some solid work with the promos leading up to the match. It’s amazing how much you get out of switching up a few things like this. The best part is they can back it up in the ring, which is the part that lacks in so many of these well built feuds.

And from Raw.

Here’s Strowman to call out Reigns. No one shows up and Strowman says Reigns won’t be able to run on Sunday. Strowman will get his hands on Reigns and then hurt Foley far worse than Undertaker ever did. Reigns pops up on the announcers’ table so Strowman goes after him, earning himself a Samoan drop off said table through part of the stage to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Oh yeah this was WAY better and that’s not exactly surprising. WWE is still high quality television when they cut out all their other nonsense and given how much nonsense there is to cut out, Main Event is often the best choice for a go home show. They covered all of the big stories in one swoop and gave us a snappy Crews vs. Ryder match too. Not bad at all.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the paperback edition of KB’s Complete 2003 Monday Night Raw Reviews (also available as an e-book) from Amazon. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/09/07/new-book-kbs-complete-smackdown-2003-reviews/>

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

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

Main Event – May 10, 2018: The One Night Flashback



IMG Credit: WWE

Main Event

Date: May 10, 2018

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Vic Joseph, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

How exactly do you have a full show when there was one major story getting attention all week? This was the first week of Money in the Bank qualifying matches and that means a lot of the matches will be shown here, along with all of the usual stuff we see around here. In other words, the same people having the same matches. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

Opening sequence.

Tony Nese vs. Cedric Alexander

Non-title and Nese is the hometown boy. Hang on though as Nese needs to give Long Island the posing. Cedric flips over him and snaps off an armdrag but gets shouldered in the corner. A good dropkick has Nese in trouble but he's fine enough to pull Alexander off the ropes for a crash. We hit the neck crank for a good while before Cedric fights up with a DDT. Nese tries to speed things up and sends Cedric outside for a big flip dive and two back inside. The Neuralizer rocks Nese though and the Lumbar Check is good for the pin at 5:58.

Rating: C. Why not make this a title match? Nese getting a shot wouldn't be a stretch and it's Alexander getting a clean win so why not? Give Main Event even the slightest spark and see where you can go. Have Cedric insist that the title is on the line or something. It's simple and doesn't change anything while giving the show a quick boost. Or just let us have the same boring show. Same thing really.

From Raw.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Kevin Owens vs. Braun Strowman

Strowman shoves Owens away to start, knocking the referee down in the process. Some whips into the corner knock Owens down twice in a row before sending him outside. Owens tries to bail into the crowd but manages to catch Strowman in a tornado DDT. Strowman beats the count at eight and Owens is losing his mind. Back in and Strowman hits him in the chest but Owens sends him outside again as we take a break. We come back with Strowman hitting the same kind of knockdown as he did earlier, only to get kicked in the head.

Owens gets two off a backsplash but Strowman pops up with a big boot. Strowman misses a charge into the corner and it's a superkick into the bullfrog splash for two more. There's another superkick but the Pop Up Powerbomb just isn't happening. Instead it's a splash in the corner and Owens bails outside. The running gag continues with Strowman shouldering him down three times in a row. Back in and the running powerslam sends Strowman to the ladder match at 8:42.

Rating: C. This wasn't too bad with Owens getting in some offense before falling short. Strowman should be on his way to the Universal Title so hopefully this is a step in the right direction. However, there's a good chance that Strowman is the guy who gets close to winning and comes up short while Lesnar holds the title for the better part of ever. You know, longer than he already has.

Also from Raw.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Roman Reigns vs. Finn Balor vs. Sami Zayn

Sami yells at Reigns to start and gets punched in the face to send him outside. Balor speeds things up and dropkicks Reigns down for two as the announcers debate how important Money in the Bank is compared to the rest of the year. More right hands drop Balor and Zayn as we take an early break. Back with Balor stomping on Reigns until Sami grabs a rollup for two.

There's a Samoan drop to put Zayn on the floor with Balor on the opposite side. The fans start a TOO SWEET chant and the double beating is on to one of the strongest reactions of the night. Even Balor and Sami seem taken aback by the YES chants. The three head into the crowd and the fans are annoyed when Reigns comes back. A Helluva Kick knocks Reigns into the tech area and the other two head back inside to kill time until Reigns spears one of them.

The Blue Thunder Bomb gives Sami two but Balor fights back and they head to the floor. The fans start booing and I think you know what that means. Cue Reigns diving over the barricade to take Sami out but Balor drops Reigns again. Back in and Reigns hits the Superman Punch on Sami. The Sling Blade looks to set up the Coup de Grace but Reigns rolls away. Instead it's another Superman Punch but here's Mahal to trip Reigns. The distraction lets Sami hit the Helluva Kick to drop Reigns but Balor hit the shotgun dropkick and Coup de Grace on Sami for the pin at 15:25.

Rating: C. I like the surprise ending, if nothing else for the sake of needing to see Jinder vs. Reigns, potentially in Chicago, where the fans might be so confused that they break into small camps and

stage full revivals of Broadway classics instead of watching the match. Balor going on makes sense and the question about where Owens was is interesting as well. One last question: is there a clause in Roman's contract that lets him have a break during every multi-man match? It seems to happen every time.

One more time from Raw.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Ruby Riott vs. Ember Moon vs. Sasha Banks

Sasha and Ember get together to start and take Riott down, only to have Banks roll Moon up for two. Some rather athletic armdrags have Banks in trouble but Riott comes back in to send Sasha face first into the middle buckle. Sasha gets sent outside again as we hear about how successful Money in the Bank cash-ins have been. A double DDT plants Sasha and Moon for two each and it's off to a chinlock on Moon. That's broken up with a jawbreaker but here's Sasha back in to run people over.

Banks stops to dive onto the Riott Squad though, allowing Riott to run her over. Moon hits a heck of a suicide dive for two on Riott as the fans are distracted by something in the crowd, which gets a YOU DESERVE IT chant. Back in and Banks gets two off a sunset flip with the Riott Squad coming in for the legal save. Cue Bayley to help Sasha but the Squad takes her out as well. Moon heads up top for an Eclipse to both Banks and Riott at the same time for the pin on Riott at 10:23.

Rating: D. This felt like an indy match with a bunch of disjointed spots and no flow to the match whatsoever. Moon winning is the right call as Riott could be getting a title shot at the pay per view and Sasha will possibly be busy with Bayley, or in the match later on. This wasn't a good match though and the ending wasn't as exciting as it should have been.

And from Smackdown.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Charlotte vs. Peyton Royce

Before the match, Billie says Charlotte's loss made her uncle

overcome his stutter because he was laughing so hard. Peyton tries to imitate the look but it's only funny when Charlotte does it. They lock up to start with Charlotte shoving her around. A toss to the floor takes us to an early break. Back with Peyton grabbing a chinlock before choking in the corner. A half nelson over the ropes with her legs has Charlotte in even more trouble and we hit another chinlock. Charlotte fights up with a neckbreaker by the hair but misses a big boot (but Peyton doesn't sell it like Carmella did on Sunday).

A rollup gets two on Peyton and Charlotte dives onto Billie, leaving Peyton to grab a swinging neckbreaker on the floor. The referee gets distracted by Peyton so Billie can snap Charlotte's neck across the top, setting up a spinning kick to the face for two. Charlotte is right back with the big boot, only to have the moonsault hit knees. Royce kicks the knee out for two but gets speared down. The Figure Eight makes Peyton tap at 12:56.

Rating: B-. This was a nice surprise, if nothing else as I was getting worried that Charlotte would lose back to back matches. They went with the right call here though as Charlotte is more interesting and you can put Billie in the match later. Just having one of them in there basically means they're both in there and that's all you need.

Here's Curt Hawkins to issue an open challenge. Hawkins talks about this being his hometown and his parents being in the crowd tonight. Fans: "WE WANT RYDER!"

Zack Ryder vs. Curt Hawkins

For once, Main Event serves a purpose. Hawkins tries a cheap shot and gets punched in the face, followed by an armbar. A faceplant sends Hawkins to the apron and he backdrops Ryder to the floor, sending us to a break. Back with Hawkins getting two and grabbing a chinlock. Ryder is right back up with a neckbreaker (The Woode Awakening. I hate myself for liking that.) and the middle rope missile dropkick.

The Broski Boot connects for two but Hawkins sends the Rough Ryder

into the buckle for two. If this weren't Main Event, I'd have bought that as a near fall. Ryder is right back up with a middle rope hurricanrana and the Rough Ryder gets two with Hawkins' boot going on the rope. Ryder looks stunned and another Broski Boot is blocked, allowing Hawkins to grab a rollup with feet on the ropes. That's caught, allowing a second Rough Ryder to pin Hawkins at 9:04.

Rating: C+. Where in the world did that come from? That was an actually entertaining match with some near falls and Ryder got to win a match in his hometown. It was nice to see Ryder get a chance for once and not be humiliated. I know it's not going to lead anywhere, but for an old Ryder fan like myself, who always thought he got a horrible ending to his push, this was nice for a nice.

Post match Ryder says he wants to represent WWE a Mr. Money in the Bank.

Back to Smackdown.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Jeff Hardy vs. The Miz

Non-title. Miz cranks on the arm to start as the announcers talk about Miz's history in the Money in the Bank match. Jeff sends him outside and hits Poetry in Motion against the barricade but it's way too early for the Swanton. We take a break and come back with Jeff holding an armbar as the pace stays slow. The Reality Check gets two on Jeff but he elbows out of a Skull Crushing Finale attempt.

They head outside with Jeff getting the better of a slugout as the sleeves of Jeff's shirt make me want a rainbow pop. The legdrop between the legs and the Twisting Stunner rock Miz but again he gets out of the way before the Swanton. Miz slams him neck first onto the apron and we take another break.

Back again with Jeff jawbreaking his way out of a chinlock and getting two off the Whisper in the Wind. A baseball slide knocks Miz to the floor but again he avoids the Swanton, this time with a good crotching. Instead it's a sunset bomb for two as the back and forth continues. The Twist of Fate gets two and a corner dropkick sets up Hardiac Arrest (the other corner dropkick). Another Twist of Fate

sets up the Swanton for real this time, but Miz rolls him up for the pin at 20:16.

Rating: B. First of all, good back and forth match. Now for the problem (and I'd bet on this being right): this isn't going to mean a thing as far as the US Title is confirmed. The champion just got pinned clean and I have a feeling we're not going to hear a word about Miz wanting to be champion. Money in the Bank has done this before and it makes things all the dumber. Miz just pinned the US Champion clean and I'd be actually surprised if anything happens to the title as a result. I really hope I'm wrong, but odds are that's where this is going.

And one more time from the blue show.

Money in the Bank Qualifying Match: Daniel Bryan vs. Rusev

Bryan starts in on the legs early on and kicks the arm out for good measure. Some more kicks sends Rusev outside so Bryan tries the suicide dive, only to be caught and thrown over the announcers' table as we take a break. Back with Rusev throwing him around some more but getting dropkicked in the corner.

The Spinning Rock Bottom doesn't work so Rusev kicks him in the head for two instead. A quick YES Lock sends Rusev bailing to the ropes and Aiden English is rather relieved. Rusev heads outside so Bryan hits the running knee off the apron for two. Back in and the running knee misses, setting up a Machka Kick to give Rusev the completely clean pin at 11:20.

Rating: C+. Uh...huh? I'm not sure how the reaction to this one is going to go as Rusev winning a big match is nice, but Bryan losing clean almost has to be leading somewhere. You don't have Bryan come in here and lose like that, but maybe they have something planned. If nothing else, I'm sure Miz has something to say about that loss. Bryan looks devastated to end the show. It seems like they have something planned there.

Overall Rating: C-. Sweet goodness I know I said they were going to have one idea around here but egads I was expecting something more

than that one idea. It would be nice to mix things up a little bit but when you only have that one idea on both shows, you're kind of stuck. Throw in Backlash being Backlash and is there any wonder that this week's shows didn't do very well? Ryder vs. Hawkins was fun though and you almost never get that on Main Event.

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<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/03/23/new-paperback-kbs-grab-bag/>

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

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

Best of 2016: Surprise of the Year

This is one of the last two because we're getting close to the Royal Rumble and that's FAR too late for the sake of doing a Best of series. Basically today we're looking at the Surprise of the Year, which I'm going to keep a bit shorter for the sake of time. There are a LOT of options here and it's going to take forever if I go into a bunch of details. These are in no particular order.

1. AJ Styles Debuts at the Royal Rumble.

Sweet goodness this worked, assuming you can ignore what WWE felt was the more important visual. This was AJ STYLES debut in WWE and for some reason we were looking at Roman Reigns. Styles actually appearing in WWE was almost unthinkable but here it was, in one of the most important matches of the year. That's one of those moments you remember and it worked really well here.

2. Dean Ambrose Cashes in Money in the Bank.

I know it might not be the biggest in the world but the cash-ins are always cool to see. Ambrose cashed in and beat Seth Rollins for the World Title, which meant that all three members of the Shield were World Champion in the same night. Ambrose actually winning was a surprise as he was a few steps below the other Shield members and he finally won the big one. Well done, especially considering how many times that briefcase has been cashed in before.

3. Goldberg Returns.

For someone who hasn't been around in over twelve years, Goldberg made one heck of an impact and the place went nuts when he showed up again. Sure it was just for the sake of a video game but the place came unglued when he was announced and it set up a big moment down the line. That's hard to do with someone from a different generation but they pulled it off here.

4. AJ Styles Beats John Cena Clean.

You know how many people get to beat Cena clean? You can probably count them on your fingers (and toes if you're a little slow) and Styles is another one to have done it. People were expecting the whole "Cena loses then Cena wins" but instead, Styles becomes one of the few to get away with a perfect record against Cena, which is quite the year for someone who hasn't been around that long.

5. Zack Ryder Wins Intercontinental Title.

This was one of those things that you just couldn't imagine happening and the fact that he did it at Wrestlemania is even better. Ryder could barely win a single match and now he's the Intercontinental Champion. Sure he lost it the next night and sure I'm convinced that it was going to be Neville before his broke his ankle but Ryder won that title and there's no one that can take it away from him. Well save for Miz of course.

6. Rhino/Brian Kendrick Have Titles in 2016.

These two hadn't even been thought of in WWE in years and they manage to win new titles. Rhino is a bigger surprise given how good the tag division actually is over on Smackdown. I liked his run with Heath Slater even more than I was expecting to and the team worked very well. Kendrick wasn't the most thrilling Cruiserweight Champion but at least he put on a few good heel performances.

7. Cruiserweight Division Returns.

Speaking of the cruiserweights, they're back too! This is one of those things that has been talked about for years and they actually did it. I'm not sure we needed a Cruiserweight division but the tournament they used to bring it back was awesome too. 205 Live has become a lot of fun and that's an even bigger bonus. Good stuff here, which I didn't expect coming into the division.

8. Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte Main Events a Pay Per View.

Let me repeat that: women main evented a WWE pay per view. I really don't think this needs much more of an explanation.

9. Goldberg Squashes Brock Lesnar.

It's very rare that I sit in awe of something I see on a wrestling show but that's what happened here. I was genuinely shocked by what I saw and that doesn't happen. Goldberg didn't just beat Lesnar but rather DESTROYED him in less than ninety seconds. That's getting up there with an old Midnight Express time in the main event of a pay per view. Just...dang man.

10. Daniel Bryan Retires.

I'm not sure if this qualifies as a surprise after all the time that Bryan missed from the ring. Still though, the speech itself was incredible and Bryan looked like a star who never had the chance to stay on top. It made him a legend but it was a pretty big shock when we knew he wasn't coming back this time around.

11. Finn Balor Vacates Universal Title.

The fact that this happened so soon after he won the thing (another surprise in its own right) is what makes this one so big. Balor literally won the title in his third match on the main roster and then he goes down with a major shoulder injury. Above all else: just imagine what happens to his career if he lost that title match. He'd be lucky to get a Cruiserweight Title run at that point.

12. Shane McMahon Returns.

I don't know how to put this one into words. The wife and I were looking away from the screen and our necks snapped into place as our jaws dropped. Shane hadn't been around in nearly eight years and yet here he was on Monday Night Raw with his dad all over again. It was a genuine shock and that doesn't happen in WWE.

13. Another Brand Split.

Again, this is one of those things that is talked about all the time but for once they actually pulled the trigger. I'm still not sure the rosters are deep enough to pull this off but it's the wrestling world we live in now, McMahons and all. I like the idea well enough and it was certainly exciting, especially for the Draft when it actually happened.

Overall this was a two horse race. I had to think back to how shocked I was over Shane returning and the Lesnar squash and the more I thought about it, the more I couldn't get my head around Goldberg vs. Lesnar. That to me is the sign of a surprise having lasting power and it's enough to give the main event of Survivor Series the win here.

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

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

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

Daily News Update – December 14, 2016

Chris Hero Returning to NXT. December 12, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/chris-hero-returning-to-nxt/>

Ratings Up For "Saturday Night Live" Featuring John Cena. December 12, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/ratings-saturday-night-live-featuring-joh>

[n-cena/](#)

Former WWE Wrestler Stops Robbery. December 12, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/former-wwe-wrestler-stops-attempted-robbery/>

Cody Rhodes Debuting at “Wrestle Kingdom” Against Former NXT Star. December 12, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/cody-rhodes-debuting-wrestle-kingdom-former-nxt-star/>

WWE Announces Cruiserweight Title Match for “Roadblock 2016”. December 12, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/wwe-announces-cruiserweight-title-match-roadblock-2016/>

Former X-Division Champion Finishes Up with TNA. December 13, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/former-x-division-champion-finishes-tna/>

Bray Wyatt Responds to Broken Matt Hardy’s Open Challenge. December 13, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/bray-wyatt-responds-broken-matt-hardys-open-challenge/>

Roman Reigns Needs to Drop the US Title Immediately. December 13, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/roman-reigns-needs-drop-us-title-immediately/>

See How Samoa Joe Reacts to TNA Chants. December 13, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/see-samoa-joe-reacts-tna-chants/>

“Monday Night Raw” Ratings Down, Worst Week Since October. December 13, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/monday-night-raw-ratings-worst-week-since-october/>

Zack Ryder Injured at “Smackdown Live”. December 14, 2016.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/zack-ryder-injured-smackdown-live/>

Battleground 2016 Preview

This show has gone from one of the most B level shows ever to one of the least important shows in a very long time. It's still definitely just a filler show before we get to Summerslam but then the Draft has made the whole thing even more of a mess. You could tell things were all over the place when basically two matches were hyped up during the TV shows leading up to the pay per view. Let's get to it.

We'll open with the quick pre-show match between the Usos and Breezango. The Usos are the definition of "just there" and it's getting harder and harder to care about them. Breezango may not be the most exciting team in the world but it's still cool to see them getting even the most moderate push. There's no reason to have the Usos, who haven't done a thing in a long time, win here so we'll go with Breezango getting their biggest win ever.

Let's get this one out of the way: Rusev squashes Zack Ryder and no sells his comeback because that's what happens to Ryder. The mini push means nothing and they made that very clear as soon as they had Sheamus beat him clean in two minutes. Ryder loses to Rusev like he always does as we continue to wait for a serious challenger to the title.

We'll continue the midcard title theme with Miz beating Darren Young. I love the Backlund segments but I just can't imagine them actually giving him the title. He won the battle royal almost by mistake and hasn't won anything of note on his own. Why would I buy him as a midcard champion already? Miz holding the title longer is fine as the big win over him is going to mean even more when he's been built up that long.

In another match that's just kind of there, we'll go with Becky Lynch over Natalya. I barely remember why they're fighting at this point and I can't imagine WWE really cares either way. This might as well be for the Smackdown Women's Title as the division is basically these two and everyone else, which really does show why there's no need to either bring up all the new women or to put the women on both shows. Becky wins here because it's not like Natalya needs much to restore her to her eternal spot on the card.

While we're here we'll knock out the other women's match as Sasha Banks and a mystery partner team up to face Charlotte and Dana Brooke. This is basically Sasha needing help after all the weeks of Charlotte and Dana beating her up so it's time for her to get some backup. There are some new women on the Raw roster but there's almost no way it's not going to be Bayley. If there's ever been a bigger layup for a mystery partner on a pay per view five days after the latest WWE Draft to debut in a women's tag, I can't think of it off the top of my head.

That being said, Bayley isn't going to be a factor here because this whole thing exists for Sasha to make Charlotte tap in the middle of the ring and set up their big showdown at Summerslam. It's still a great way to debut Bayley as she'll get her own big moment instead of being yet another name being brought up on Draft night. She'll be one of the first challengers to Sasha's new title and the debut should be fun.

In the first of two matches that don't mean much now that everything has changed, New Day faces the Wyatt Family in a six man tag with no titles on the line. The Wyatts have been split up by the Draft while New Day gets to keep going on their longest (modern) reign ever as Tag Team Champions. The whole Xavier Woods is terrified thing has gone nowhere so and I'd be interested in seeing where they were going to go had it not been for the split. Hopefully this wraps it up and we see New Day vs. the Club for the titles at Summerslam. But yeah, New Day wins here with ease.

The other match is basically the same story as John Cena teams up with Enzo Amore/Big Cass to face the soon to be split Club. In theory this is designed to set up AJ vs. Cena for Summerslam in their big rematch so we'll say the Club pins Enzo here. Above all else I love the idea that they're not going to just have the rematch here and then burn through the feud even faster. There are other ways to keep the feud going and I'll never understand why they have to just keep doing the same match over and over again. At least this is working for not though.

Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens are having their FINAL match against each other despite them being on the same roster for reasons that I still don't understand. My hope is that they eventually team up and fight New Day (or the Club) for the titles as teammates who are forced to work together and happen to have great chemistry despite not being

able to stand each other. I'll take Sami winning here in a fluke but it's probably my least confident pick of the show.

That leaves us with the main event and egads where do I even start. So it's the big Shield triple threat that people have wanted to see for years and not only are they throwing it on this show instead of Summerslam but it's less than a week after the Draft so everything is thrown apart and it's not clear how things go after this. Oh and Reigns has been suspended for freaking Adderall of all things so he hasn't been around to help build things up. It's almost like this is a mess and should have been postponed for a bigger show.

I'll take Rollins to win the title after the rather pointless double title matches from earlier in the week. Ambrose has been taking the ratings and Reigns would just be destroyed (like more than usual) if he wins the title back already so there's just Rollins left. Now the key for him would be to stay FAR away from HHH and Stephanie as they destroyed his first title reign, but given who runs Raw I can't imagine she won't have her fingers all over the new reign. I'll go with Rollins to get the title back though and Ambrose to drop right back to where he was before.

Overall Battleground is.....well it certainly exists. This is one of those shows that doesn't need to be there and is pretty clearly just a way to promote Summerslam in a few weeks. I'm not really looking forward to the show but that might be more due to the fact that we're in for four hours tonight, three tomorrow and two each on Tuesday and Wednesday. Tonight is going to be all about matches exceeding expectations though and while that's possible, I don't have the greatest hope in the world.

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Monday Night Raw – July 11, 2016: This Close To Interesting

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 11, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

Things are back to normal this week, or at least as back to normal as they're going to be with just one more Raw after this before the Draft takes place. The only major event announced for tonight is Zack Ryder challenging Rusev for the United States Title after beating Sheamus twice last week. Let's get to it.

First of all, on a personal note, Happy Anniversary Becca. Thanks for an amazing year and I love you.

Opening sequence.

Battle Royal

Goldust, Darren Young, Apollo Crews, Viktor, Konnor, Bubba Ray Dudley, D-Von Dudley, Dolph Ziggler, Bo Dallas, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, R-Truth, Baron Corbin, Jimmy Uso, Jey Uso, Jack Swagger, Alberto Del Rio, Curtis Axel

Winner gets an Intercontinental Title shot at Battleground so Miz and Maryse are on commentary. English is put out early and he lands near Bob Backlund, who is managing Young. R-Truth puts out Viktor and Bubba (Not D-Von, Cole.) gets rid of Axel. There goes Truth and Konnor follows him out. One Uso tries to eliminate the other but they settle with a double superkick to get rid of D-Von as we go to a break.

Back with Gotch and Jey having been eliminated during the break. Del Rio gets rid of Goldust and Crews eliminates Dallas as the ring is emptying out. Jimmy and Swagger are thrown out so we're down to Crews, Bubba, Young, Del Rio, Corbin and Ziggler. Crews low bridges Bubba out and Del Rio is the only one left standing. Ziggler drops him with a Fameasser and goes for a cover out of instinct. That's not enough to eliminate him though as Alberto comes back with a tilt-a-whirl gutbuster.

Alberto misses a charge and goes through the ropes, allowing Ziggler to superkick him to the floor which isn't an elimination. Corbin sends Dolph to the apron but can't get him out. Del Rio comes back in and gets backdropped out by Crews to put us down to four. Corbin gets rid of Ziggler but Crews gets rid of himself and Corbin, leaving Young to win the thing at 13:20.

Rating: D. You know what, why not? That's certainly a unique way to win the match and it's a nice way to have Young go somewhere after all those vignettes. I would have gone with Crews here but this could have been a lot worse. I mean, at least it's not another battle of Cleveland with Ziggler vs. Miz. It was a pretty standard battle royal though, which is only going to be so entertaining.

Backlund picks Young up to celebrate.

Shane and Stephanie McMahon are talking about why Vince McMahon is going to be here tonight. Maybe it's to give one of them a promotion. Seth Rollins comes in and thinks Vince is here to see about him as the face of the WWE. Rollins has footage for tonight and Shane thinks it should be on the Ambrose Asylum. Stephanie says no because she hates Dean (Have we ever gotten a reason other than he's apparently an embarrassment to the company?) so Seth will get to debut the Rollins Report. Great. EVEN MORE talking.

Quick look at Brock Lesnar winning his return to the UFC on Saturday before he faces Randy Orton at Summerslam. Orton will be on the Highlight Reel at Battleground.

Zack Ryder comes up to challenge Rusev again but Sheamus jumps him from behind. Apparently there's no title match tonight because Ryder

will be facing Sheamus next. Three WOO's for false advertising!

Sheamus vs. Zack Ryder

Ryder goes right after him to start and knocks Sheamus to the floor for a dropkick off the apron. Back in and a running boot to the face gets two for Zack as the announcers ignore the match to play fantasy draft. Not that it matters as the Brogue Kick ends Ryder at 2:22. I knew this was coming because this is how WWE works but thanks for YET ANOTHER waste of potential for the sake of a nothing match on Smackdown.

Rusev comes out and beats up Ryder as well while shouting that he accepts Ryder's challenge. Wait, so Ryder is getting the title shot after Sheamus just beat him clean? SERIOUSLY? This is the kind of stuff you suggest in sarcasm because it's the dumbest thing you could possibly do, not what you actually do on Raw.

Breezango vs. Lucha Dragons

This is due to the Dragons messing up Breeze's vest on the pre-show. Fandango and Cara start things off and it's time for more Draft talk. Cara headscissors him down but gets caught in the wrong corner to put him in trouble. Fandango is sent into the corner as well and the hot tag brings in Kalisto, who almost immediately botches a springboard. A few kicks to Breeze go better and the hurricanrana driver makes it worse. The numbers get the better of him though and Breeze gets in a superkick for the pin on Kalisto at 4:20.

Rating: D+. I can't help it but I like Breezango. They're just a goofy little midcard heel team but it's not like there's anything better for either of them to do. If nothing else it means we're getting something out of that Golden Truth story, which went on forever and deserves to actually go somewhere. Also it's not like the Dragons mean anything at this point anyway so them losing doesn't exactly matter.

Here's Seth Rollins for the Rollins Report. Tonight he has something special for us: footage from a special sitdown interview with Roman Reigns. Please tell me this isn't going to be one of those things

where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to sound embarrassing.

We see the footage and it's....one of those things where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to sound embarrassing. Basically Reigns "admits" he did it and says he should be out of the triple threat because he's no role model. Oh and he hates Dean being champion.

Back in the arena, Rollins says Ambrose should be out of the triple threat because he deserves his rematch for the title, one on one. Cue Ambrose but Rollins yells at him for being a coward and stealing the title from him at Money in the Bank. Dean says he loves to come out here and have a good time but he's the top man in this industry. He's more than just a joke and a utility player because he's the only one still standing and the king of this company. Dean goes on about Rollins wanting another shot and offers a title shot anywhere any place. Rollins is ready right now but nah, not tonight. He'll see Dean next week.

We get a quick preview of New Day fighting the Wyatt Family at their compound. This DEFINITELY looks like the Final Deletion.

Ambrose vs. Rollins for the title is confirmed for next week.

Kevin Owens vs. ???

Sami Zayn is on commentary but Kevin won't come out until he's gone. Stephanie comes in to say get rid of Sami because she's all about solutions. Sami starts to leave but gets in a fight with Owens on the ramp. No match.

Vince arrives and says he's here to name the Commissioner of Smackdown.

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Time for more Draft talk! I know it's a big deal but could you please talk about the actual match for more than two seconds first? Cesaro gutwrenches him over for two to start before they trade headlocks. A hurricanrana puts Owens down but he makes the ropes to break up the Swing. Owens takes over with a whip into the barricade

as the announcers talk about where John Cena will be drafted. Cesaro's suplex doesn't break their focus but Owens knocks him into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock and avoiding the Cannonball in the corner. The Pop Up Powerbomb is blocked and the springboard spinning uppercut gets two for Cesaro. Another running uppercut on the floor (with Cesaro wearing JBL's hat) but Cesaro gets crotched on top to slow him down. Owens busts out a torture rack neckbreaker for the clean pin at 12:24.

Rating: C+. I like the finisher but I could go without Cesaro losing all over again. I mean to be fair he had that awesome run against Miz and came up short, which is his standard operating procedure. It's still working, but at some point you're just wasting a lot of potential and acting like Cesaro isn't being hurt by all the losses.

Post match Owens grabs a headset to brag about how awesome he is until Sami Zayn jumps him from behind. Cesaro swings Owens in a meaningless gesture. Maybe he should, I don't know, be upset about the loss?

The Club thinks John Cena is abandoning Enzo and Big Cass by hosting the ESPYs and not being here tonight. Maybe after the win they could hop on a plane and crash the awards so they can beat up John Cena.

Heath Slater vs. Titus O'Neil

We actually get a Slater Gator reference for a name I never thought (or hoped to) I'd hear again. Titus throws him around to start but runs into a raised boot in the corner. That means it's time for a quick Bo-Train, followed by Slater getting two off a DDT. Titus starts powering back and catches a diving Heath in three straight backbreakers. The Clash of the Titus puts Heath away at 3:12.

Rating: D. Well that happened and I'm not sure what else there is to say about it. This is another short match that doesn't seem to mean much but maybe that's going to be the norm going forward. Titus winning is fine but I'm not sure where he's going after losing to Rusev so decisively.

Sasha has been waiting to shut Dana Brooke up all weekend now and wants the title after that. Tonight, she gets real.

We look back at the Wyatt Family challenging the New Day to come to their compound last week.

Now we go to the compound, where a bunch of cars turn their lights on and try to crush New Day as they get out of their truck. The editing makes this look like it's being played in fast motion so it's almost impossible to keep track of. The Wyatts arrive in a car and the brawl is on with New Day being beaten down with a variety of weapons. Woods hides behind a tree until Bray swings an ax at him and rams him into the tree trunk.

Kofi is shoved into some mud until Big E. suplexes Rowan. Strowman (who looks even more frightening with his shirt off) and Big E. hit each other a few times until Bray comes back and drops the unconscious Woods by the car. Kofi and Big E. are beaten down again as the editing gets even faster. Woods gets back up with a trashcan lid for a save but Bray beats everyone down and asks where the power of positivity is now.

New Day is sent into a car which is quickly beaten down but they escaped somewhere in there. Bray is left alone but smiles at New Day, who are freaked out by his laughter. Rowan and Strowman come back but a bunch of people in sheep masks appear, all holding lanterns. That's enough for New Day as they bail, leaving Bray to say follow the buzzards.

Yes it's clearly a takeoff from the Final Deletion and I'm sure I'll hear about how much better TNA's version was, though this was the serious version and exactly the kind of thing that made the Wyatts creepy in the first place. This really is something that has to be seen though as words really don't do it justice. It worked though.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. The Club

Enzo and Cass say they want Cena's spot but they're willing to earn it. The Club on the other hand think they can take it by beating Cena up 3-1. AJ tells them to walk away but Enzo says the only place

they're walking is into that ring right now. This is joined in progress after a break with Enzo trying to hold Anderson with a headlock. It's quickly off to Gallows who headbutts Enzo back into the corner as the beatdown begins.

Karl comes back in for a headlock but Cass comes in and slams Enzo onto Anderson for two. To be fair Enzo might as well just be a projectile as I don't think he's entirely human. Gallows kicks Enzo in the face and sends him shoulder first into the post as we take a break. Back with Anderson and Gallows taking turns on Enzo. Anderson finally lets Enzo get away for the hot tag to Cass (Enzo's signature) and a fall away slam sets up the Bada Boom Shakalacka. AJ low bridges Gallows to the floor though and it's a DQ at 10:48.

Rating: C. This was just a long beating on Enzo and to be fair that's almost all he's good for in a situation like this one. I like how much they're protecting Cass though as I don't think he's been pinned yet and the Club actually lost here. The match was fine, albeit pretty basic for the most part. It's acceptable though as you don't want to burn the fans out on this match like they did with the Club vs. the Usos.

Post match the beating is almost on but here's Cena, who was in Los Angeles earlier today, for the save. Well at least he's not live via satellite. That earns him a big CENA chant which you really don't hear that often.

Dana Brooke vs. Sasha Banks

Sasha shoves her outside to start and things instantly slow down. Back in and Dana talks a lot of trash before kneeling Sasha in the ribs. Banks is sent outside so Charlotte can brag us to a break. Back with Sasha in a chinlock (Charlotte: "Very good Dana.") before stomping away in the corner. The announcers continue to talk about ANYTHING other than this match as Dana grabs another chinlock to keep things slow. Sasha fights out again and hits the double knees in the corner. Dana crotches her on top but Sasha pops right back up and grabs the Bank Statement for the win at 12:00.

Rating: C-. This was fine and another win for Sasha as that Natalya

feud looks more and more pointless every single week. Dana is getting better in the ring as she's not botching everything she tries but she still is on the main roster far sooner than she probably should have been.

Post match Charlotte says that's not good enough so Sasha has to beat Dana again on Smackdown.

Here are Shane, Stephanie and Vince for the Smackdown Commissioner announcement. Vince thinks they've been doing a fair job but wonders how they could be his kids. Where's the violence and anger? How could they not have stabbed each other in the back yet? What's up with Stephanie being all passive aggressive and Shane having no ruthless aggression?

The kids are given a chance to convince their dad that they should be in charge of Smackdown and Stephanie goes first. Stephanie goes on a rant about what Shane said on the Mick Foley podcast about how he left when he wasn't congratulated enough. That's nothing compared to what he says behind Vince's back because he's all crazy and needing to be praised.

Shane says he came back in this arena five months ago and he's eternally thankful. He's ready to change everything about Smackdown and shatter the glass ceilings that Vince and Stephanie have set up. We get a quick fan poll with Shane easily winning which Stephanie attributes to crowd manipulation.

Vince doesn't care what the people think but one of them has to run Smackdown. That will be.....Shane, while Stephanie runs Raw. Ah that's better. For a second there I thought they might actually do something interesting. Vince wants them to compete for who gets the keys to the kingdom but they'll both be naming General Managers. Great. MORE power struggles and double bosses for each show.

Vince leaves and Stephanie tells Shane she's going to make him wish he was never born. Shane thinks Stephanie is hiding something and it's fear. It's game on, but Stephanie says she's married to the only game in this business. She slaps him in the face so he kisses her on the cheek, only to have Stephanie slip off the steps as she

leaves to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I actually liked this show more than I was expecting to as it absolutely flew by. Even though it was just a big preview for the Draft next week (as it should have been), they kept it entertaining enough and set some stuff up going forward, which is all it was supposed to do. Unfortunately the ending really hurt things as it's going to be all about the McMahons even longer, which is really the last thing they needed to go with but that's how WWE works. Anyway, not a good show or anything but it was good enough for a show in a vacuum like everything else is around here at the moment.

Results

Darren Young won a battle royal after Baron Corbin and Apollo Crews eliminated each other

Sheamus b. Zack Ryder – Brogue Kick

Breezango b. Lucha Dragons – Superkick to Kalisto

Kevin Owens b. Cesaro – Torture rack neckbreaker

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. The Club via DQ when AJ Styles interfered

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Bank Statement

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Smackdown – July 7, 2016: Pre-Draft Momentum

Smackdown

Date: July 7, 2016

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

This is a fresh start for a change as Monday was a completely worthless show thanks to the Fourth of July. We're getting closer to Battleground but more importantly we're less than two weeks away from the Draft which resets everything anyway. In other words there's no way of knowing how good this will be so let's get to it.

The Club is conferencing.

Chris Jericho is trying to find his blue scarf.

Sami Zayn is ready to beat Jericho tonight and make him second best.

Seth Rollins arrives and runs into Jey Uso. Some Samoan family insults are made and a match gets the same treatment. I could go for these quick vignettes becoming a regular thing. It worked for Saturday Night's Main Event and it works here too.

Opening sequence.

Here's Dean Ambrose to say he wants to try his hand as a ring announcer because he could be a taller Howard Finkel.

Jey Uso vs. Seth Rollins

Seth is apparently from a place where he didn't get enough hugs as a child. That's sad. Jey takes over with an early armbar as the fans (or at least the canned versions) are behind the Samoan. Seth gets two off a backbreaker as Dean plugs his new t-shirt and the Seth Rollins ice cream bars but apparently they don't taste very good. A high crossbody gets two on Rollins and there's a suicide dive to take Rollins out again. Dean says that's five minutes (not quite) and asks Seth if it's time to go to a commercial.

Back with Seth hitting his running knee off the apron and throwing on a chinlock. Seth goes to the middle rope but Dean makes an announcement that a 1997 Ford is about to be towed for being in the fire lane. This one doesn't work as well as Seth scores with an

enziguri, only to run into a Samoan Drop. The Superfly Splash hits knees though and the Pedigree puts Jey away at 10:25.

Rating: C. Dean was amusing enough here and it's better than just having him do guest commentary for the tenth time Rollins has a match. It's also a good sign that the Usos can work as singles wrestlers and do well enough as so many teams can't do anything without their partner around.

Dean: "The winner of the match, the human equivalent of a root canal." Seth bails at the threat of a fight so Ambrose can't raise his hand. Dean: "I'll just raise this instead." And he holds up the title.

We look back at Sami and Kevin Owens beating Jericho up two weeks ago.

Zack Ryder vs. Sheamus

Ryder has a new rock version of his music and it's actually working for me. Sheamus pounds him down with forearms and clotheslines to start, followed by the forearms to the chest. A slam onto the apron makes things even worse but Ryder kicks him in the face and comes back with more forearms. That just earns him an Irish Curse before Sheamus loads up a superplex. Ryder knocks him off and drops the Elbro for the completely clean pin at 2:43. I know Sheamus isn't what he used to be but this is a big drop off. At least Ryder is getting a push though and that's a good thing.

Ryder wants to get his US Title back and issues the challenge to Rusev.

Baron Corbin video.

Rusev accepts the challenge.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

No match as Natalya jumps Becky from behind and puts her in the Sharpshooter. Naturally she tells Becky to tap, which always makes me chuckle.

We recap the Wyatt Family and New Day from Monday.

Xavier Woods is worried about going to the Wyatt Compound because they have no idea what's going to happen there. Woods isn't happy with what his brothers have decided but he'll stand by them. Did the Wyatts send them directions to get there? Otherwise we could be in

for a long scavenger hunt.

Here are Enzo and Big Cass to talk about deciding to help John Cena on Raw. That wasn't about them saving Cena or any personal issue with the Club. Monday was about sending a message to the Club to tell them that they can't beat down anyone they want. This brings out the Club with AJ saying they owe the Club an apology for interrupting them as they beat up John Cena.

Anderson thinks they should beat up Enzo and Cass, then hit some golf balls, have some strawberry shortcake and then BEAT UP JOHN CENA. AJ wants to fight Enzo, who says they're not a good original or a good remix. After one round with Sugar Ray Amore, they'll walk out a diabetic.

AJ Styles vs. Enzo Amore

AJ wrestles him down and smirks a lot, only to have Enzo do the same right back. Enzo sends him outside for a big dive but trips on the top for a big crash onto the floor. Thankfully he gets up and is fine this time with AJ hammering away in the corner. Enzo gets in a dropkick but AJ easily takes him down for a chinlock. Back up and the tornado DDT is countered into a suplex to send Amore crashing into the corner. The big guys get in a fight on the floor as AJ crotches Enzo, setting up the Styles Clash for the pin at 5:37.

Rating: C-. This was fine despite the ending not being the biggest surprise in the world. Enzo is fine for a spot like this as he isn't expected to beat almost anyone on his own but he can do such an effective job of talking that he can get back whatever he lost in all of ten seconds. The six man could be a lot of fun.

Apparently Owens stole Jericho's scarf because he wanted to see if he could get one for his wife. Owens had some popcorn earlier and got the thing all greasy so Jericho demands money to have it cleaned. Kevin drops some change into Jericho's hand but Owens makes sure to get the button back. Jericho wants one more quarter but Owens gives him a Jolly Rancher. Oh and he'll be ringside for Jericho vs. Sami later. Jericho thinks it smells like soup. This was a completely face promo from Owens and he was just as good as always.

The Miz vs. Kalisto

Non-title. This is the result of Kalisto being the one to throw

potato salad at Maryse on Monday. Apparently she's allergic so this could have been an international incident. Kalisto starts fast with a top rope corkscrew armdrag to send Miz outside where Maryse prevents a dive. Miz sends him into the steps and we take an early break. Back with Miz working on the back with some forearms before he charges into Kalisto's raised boots. Miz comes right back with a slingshot powerbomb for two before sidestepping the corkscrew forearm. The Skull Crushing Finale puts Kalisto away at 7:54.

Rating: D+. So much for the Kalisto experiment as he's gone from defending the US Title at Wrestlemania to losing a match started over potato salad. He's just the latest victim of the writers throwing a toy out of the crib and it's still pretty sad to see. They had something there but so much for that because it's time to go with....well nothing actually.

Sasha Banks talks about how awesome she is when Charlotte comes in dressed as Banks. Insults are exchanged and Sasha vs. Dana is set for Monday. Charlotte throws down her Sasha gear because it's not her look.

We get Monday's Darren Young/Bob Backlund segment. This has to be close to the last one.

Brock Lesnar's official opponent for Summerslam is.....Randy Orton. Scott Stanford, Booker T., and Corey Graves preview the match a bit from WWE world headquarters.

Golden Truth plugs Sonic with Truth putting the food on top of a ladder to get ready for Money in the Bank. This was no "we got a couple of taters" from Monday.

Sami Zayn vs. Chris Jericho

Kevin Owens is at ringside and starts ripping on Byron before his music even ends. Owens: "Hi Sami! Hope you have a good match! I hope you break your ankle." Jericho wristlocks him down for a bit until Sami scores with three straight armdrags. They head outside with Sami hitting his barricade moonsault but Jericho punches him in the face and mocks the OLE chants as we take a break.

Back with the Lionsault (Owens: "I taught him how to do that.") connecting for two before we hit the chinlock. Jericho: "WHERE'S THE OLE??" Sami comes back but Jericho bails to the floor, only to take one of those running clotheslines. Back in and Owens talks about

wanting to see Jericho kick Sami in the face, which is exactly what Chris does a second later.

Sami tornado DDTs Jericho to the floor for the big flip dive but Sami goes to take out Owens so Jericho can take over again. The exploder suplex sends Jericho into the corner but the Helluva Kick has to take Owens down. Jericho's Walls attempt is countered into a quick rollup to give Sami the upset pin at 12:12.

Rating: B-. This is exactly the kind of match you have Jericho around for. He's been built up for the last few months and now you have a young guy like Sami get a big win that makes him seem important. Owens interfering was a nice touch but the key here was Sami having Jericho beat with the Helluva Kick before having to recover and then win with the rollup. In other words, Sami was the better man and didn't just win off a fluke.

Jericho lays Sami out and Owens comes in for a Pop Up Powerbomb to leave Sami laying as the show ends.

Overall Rating: C. There was an energy to this show that has been missing in the last few weeks and that's a good sign going into the Draft. Above all else though they actually had some stuff happen here with the Lesnar announcement and Ryder challenging Rusev for the title. It's the start of making people feel like they need to see Smackdown instead of it just being a show that they'll stop on if they flip over to USA by mistake. There's a long way to go but hopefully this was a first step.

Results

Seth Rollins b. Jey Uso – Pedigree

Zack Ryder b. Sheamus – Elbro

AJ Styles b. Enzo Amore – Styles Clash

Miz b. Kalisto – Skull Crushing Finale

Sami Zayn b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

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Monday Night Raw – July 4, 2016: Half A Cheer For The Red Monday Night Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 4, 2016

Location: Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

Now this should be interesting as it's another show where almost no one is going to be watching, meaning WWE isn't likely to put much, if any, effort into the show. There's a US Title match between Rusev and Titus O'Neil plus a big US vs. The World elimination tag match which will likely get a lot of time. Let's get to it.

We open at the roster's Fourth of July party with Golden Truth rapping in the background. The Vaudevillains take their place with English singing the Declaration of Independence, only to have food thrown at him. Miz and Maryse (who should wear red more often) go into a rant about how this is why we can't celebrate holidays anymore, which turns into an ad for Smackdown going live in two weeks.

A massive food fight breaks out with Kane and Big Show getting into a chokeslam battle until Heath Slater throws something at them, earning himself a chokeslam through a table. Everyone else leaves with only Kevin Owens sitting at a table. Owens: "This would never

happen on Canada Day." Someone hits him with a pie and Owens freaks out. Total filler but it's tradition at this point.

Opening sequence.

Lillian Garcia sings the National Anthem as we have red white and blue ropes again.

US Title: Rusev vs. Titus O'Neil

Rusev is defending and yes this is actually happening again. Titus is dressed like Apollo Creed for a nice touch. This is joined in progress after a break with Titus throwing Rusev around with ease before being tossed/suplexed out to the floor. Back in and we hit the chinlock for a bit before Titus fights up for the slugout. Some shoulders and a big boot put Rusev down, followed by a powerslam for no cover. The Clash of the Titans gets two and the announcers basically admit that it's over. Rusev gets in some kicks to the head and the Accolade ends this at 5:53.

Rating: D+. Next. Like please, find ANYTHING to go with from here because this feud has been over from the second the match was announced in the first place. Titus was fine (ok that's a stretch) enough for a one off match but this is something like four times that we've seen Rusev beat up Titus, save for a lame countout. This needs to end the whole thing though because it's not interesting and never really was.

Miz vs. Ambrose tonight in your weekly Smackdown rematch.

Here are the Social Outcasts dressed as minutemen but are quickly cut off by Enzo and Big Cass. Enzo thinks we should have some star spangled banter because they're stars and take meteor showers. Amore lists off the Presidents in order and it's time for a match.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Social Outcasts

Bo and Curtis since Heath is still banged up from earlier. Enzo gets beaten down for all of a minute before Cass comes in to clean house with the usual. A big boot sets up the Bada Boom Shakalacka for the pin on Dallas at 2:03. In other words, the people dressed as the old school Americans get squashed.

Here are Charlotte and Dana Brooke with something to say. Charlotte talks about people being jealous of her and the proof is around her waist. It must be eating Sasha alive that Charlotte is the champ and all she has is a WE WANT SASHA chant. There is no one that has done more than Charlotte this year because Sasha is all hype.

Cue Sasha to say Charlotte can be champion but she'll never be Sasha. Charlotte doesn't want to be here but Sasha says she would be champion if not for Charlotte's daddy. We get the very good question of what it means to be the boss. Charlotte has been champion for most of the time since they debuted in WWE a year ago so she's the legit boss. Sasha talks about how a boss fights all the time and is about to fight now but Dana's distraction lets Charlotte kick Sasha in the face. That earns her a Bank Statement with Dana making the save before Charlotte can tap.

Dean Ambrose vs. The Miz

Non-title and another Smackdown rematch that won't be billed as a rematch because Smackdown means nothing. Dean starts fast and clotheslines Miz out to the floor for a whip into the barricade. Miz reverses a whip and we take an early break. Back with Ambrose fighting back but getting dropkicked in the knee for his efforts.

We hit the Figure Four for a bit as JBL goes on his same rant about how you can't put Ambrose's face on billboards or have him on Jimmy Fallon, even though NO ONE BUT CENA (and occasionally Reigns) EVER DOES ANY OF THAT STUFF. Miz's top rope ax handle is countered and Dean sends him outside for the suicide dive. Ambrose is nice enough to hold his leg after the dive connects. Back in and Miz kicks him in the face, only to walk into Dirty Deeds for the pin at 9:42.

Rating: C-. The match was fine, albeit a shorter version of the exact same match that we saw back on Smackdown because that show is a dress rehearsal for whatever they're doing on Monday. JBL continues to get on my nerves with his whole HE CAN'T BE CHAMPION thing because as usual, it makes no sense.

Post match here's Seth Rollins for his match and a quick staredown with Ambrose that goes nowhere. Dean changes his mind and comes back

to do commentary as it's time to rip off Dean Ambrose from a few months ago.

Seth Rollins vs. Dolph Ziggler

Non-title and Dean switches from Spanish commentary to English as they get started. They hit the mat to start with Ziggler sending Rollins outside. Seth comes back in for some stomps and an enziguri to knock Dolph to the floor as we take a break. Back with Dolph getting a faceplant off the top for two, followed by Rollins' low superkick getting the same. Ziggler evens the superkick score for another near fall, only to have the Zig Zag countered into the Pedigree for the pin at 11:18.

Rating: C+. This was fine and a better use of Ziggler than you normally see. Ziggler is going to be fine no matter how many times he loses and it's a good idea to have Rollins win matches clean like this one. Rollins is a much bigger star so this really doesn't hurt anyone in the short or long run.

Post match Rollins gets on the announcers' table to rant about his legacy. He still thinks Reigns should be taken out of the triple threat because Reigns hasn't worked for anything a day in his life. Ambrose gets on the other announcers' table so Rollins can yell at him a bit before the fight is on. Rollins gets the worst of it though and it's Dirty Deeds onto the table, which doesn't break.

We get an old school Wyatt Family video with them talking about how New Day's reality doesn't really exist. They invite New Day into their world because the power of positivity is a myth believed only by fools and children. Join them.

Video on Baron Corbin. You don't see this kind of thing often enough.

Here's Vickie Guerrero to say she should be in charge of Smackdown. This goes on for a good while until security takes her away. Cole calls this very strange, despite it happening every week for the last month.

Big Show gives Team America (Zack Ryder, Kane, Dudley Boyz, Apollo

Crews, Mark Henry and Jack Swagger) a pep talk about how it doesn't matter where you're from. Naturally the Battle Hymn of the Republic is playing in the background.

Vickie is being taken away when she runs into ex-boyfriend Dolph Ziggler....who says he's never seen her before so she should be taken away.

Golden Truth vs. Vaudevillains

Breezango is at ringside. Truth and Gotch start things off with Simon taking a kick to the face. A double tag brings in Goldust to work on English, including a bulldog for no cover. Everything breaks down and Truth tags himself in, setting up a powerbomb/side slam combo (Solid Gold) for the pin on English at 1:31. I'm so glad they brought the Vaudevillains up for something like this. Breezango did nothing.

Bob Backlund wants Darren Young to live a problem free life. His advice is to make his problems bend to his will. Then he asks about Young's finisher, which is still the Gut Check. Backlund isn't cool with the fact that Darren doesn't have a submission hold so he suggests the Crossface Chickenwing, which he officially gives to Young. See, Backlund believes in Darren and wants him to be great again.

Here's John Cena to suggest that the crowd isn't as fired up as they normally are. They seem a little disappointed tonight but maybe they need to find that energy they had the first time he stood face to face with AJ Styles. We were waiting fifteen years for the big showdown but then AJ failed to stand on his own two feet. It wasn't a big surprise though as Cena always knew he'd have to fight all of the members of the Club if he wanted to fight one, which is why he got laid out last week.

Cue the Club with AJ talking about the Club making their return to Tokyo this past week but the posters were all about John Cena. The Club runs Tokyo and soon they'll run WWE, but first they have to get rid of Cena himself. AJ knows that Cena is loading up that shovel to get rid of him but last week there was no one out to save Cena when

he was in trouble. It's because no one relates to him because he's this top star. Instead people relate to the Club, because they have the guts to get it done.

The Club is going to beat him up week after week, including on Labor Day and Halloween, even if it means dressing up like Bushwhacker Luke and Brutus Beefcake. Then on Christmas Day, Anderson is going to wrap presents with his hot Asian wife (his words) and then beat up John Cena. The Club comes down to the ring to beat him up now and the attack is on until Enzo and Big Cass of all people make the save. That's certainly better than the Usos.

The Shining Stars are actually still a thing.

Summer Rae vs. Becky Lynch

Natalya is watching from the back as Summer chokes in the corner to start. We hit the chinlock less than a minute in before Summer botches a suplex, basically dropping Becky on her head. Some clotheslines set up the Bexploder for two before the Disarm-Her makes Summer tap at 2:58.

Chris Jericho wishes the Multi-National Alliance (Yes really. That would be Jericho, Alberto Del Rio, Cesaro, Sami Zayn, Sheamus, Kevin Owens and the Lucha Dragons) a happy Canada Day but a multilingual argument breaks out.

Enzo and Cass shill Sonic.

Here's New Day to talk about the Wyatt Family. We get Deliverance jokes before New Day promises to bring them a bowl of Booty0's. The Wyatts pop up from their compound and say New Day's screams are music to their ears. Bray issues the challenge to come to the compound. Kofi accepts but Woods keeps looking worried. As Big E. promises to spread positivity from the window to the wall, Woods cuts them off and says Bray just knows about fear. This is a bad idea and it's no longer fun and games. If they can't see that, New Day can't survive.

John Cena/Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. The Club is set for Battleground.

Team USA vs. Multi-National Alliance

USA – Apollo Crews, Big Show, Kane, Dudley Boyz, Mark Henry, Jack Swagger, Zack Ryder

Multi-National Alliance – Chris Jericho, Kevin Owens, Sami Zayn, Cesaro, Sheamus, Alberto Del Rio, Lucha Dragons

Elimination rules and the foreigners (including Kalisto, who hails from the far off land of Chicago) come to the ring to their national anthems. Owens beats up Ryder to start before it's quickly off to D-Von vs. Cara. This is going to be really hard to keep track of early on. A quick 3D gets rid of Cara at 1:05 and the Brogue Kick does the same to Bubba at 1:12.

Back from a break with Cesaro swinging D-Von into the Sharpshooter for the submission at 5:45. Swagger comes in for the Patriot Lock but has to fight out of the Sharpshooter attempt. Jericho comes in and the Vader Bomb hits raised boots, setting up the Codebreaker for the elimination at 7:53. Kane comes in but everything breaks down for a huge brawl as we take another break.

Back with Del Rio getting two on Crews off a Backstabber before getting dropkicked out of the air. The hot tag brings in Henry for some slow motion house cleaning, only to have Kalisto dive into the World's Strongest Slam for the elimination at 13:20. Owens comes in and GIVES HENRY A POP UP POWERBOMB for the elimination at 13:35.

That was insane and I was thinking there was no way he could do it but he just did anyway. Ryder is in next but Owens sends him into Sami, triggering the obvious brawl. Kane tags himself in but Owens hits Sami with a chair for the DQ at 14:55. As in Owens is disqualified, though it should really be Kane. Speaking of Kane, he hits Owens with the chair for another DQ at 15:24, despite Owens already being eliminated. Kane chokeslams Sami so Crews adds the standing moonsault for the elimination at 15:49. Sheamus Brogue Kicks Crews for the elimination at 15:53 and we're rapidly running out of people.

So it's down to Ryder/Big Show vs. Jericho/Sheamus/Del Rio/Cesaro with Jericho beating on Ryder. Cesaro tags himself in and it's time for the uppercut train on Cesaro's own teammates. He loads up the

Neutralizer on Ryder but gets rolled up to eliminate Cesaro at 18:41. The announcers treat that way too lightly and it's Sheamus beating on Ryder, only to get caught with a neckbreaker. The hot tag brings in Big Show to start cleaning house with the KO Punch eliminating Jericho at 20:14. Del Rio's low superkick is blocked and a chokeslam gets rid of Alberto at 21:31.

We're down to Sheamus vs. Ryder/Big Show with Show pulling Sheamus back in over the top by the hair. The chokeslam doesn't work though and Sheamus is smart enough to go for the leg. Ryder comes in for his forearms in the corner, only to get caught in the powerslam for two. Show grabs Sheamus by the throat and shoves him into the Rough Ryder for the final pin at 22:18.

Rating: C-. Oh what else were you expecting here? You knew that a bazooka blast to the chest wasn't going to defeat the Americans here and that's exactly how this should have gone. Ryder getting the win is a fun little moment and no one is going to remember this by the time it's the fifth of July so everything is fine. The match was nothing to see but it's not like any rational person was expecting anything else.

Old Glory is lowered and fireworks take us out.

Overall Rating: D+. Again I ask: what else were you expecting? It was mostly a skippable show with some decent wrestling and a grand total of nothing of note, save for a six man being announced twenty days before a pay per view. This is a good example of a throw away show that no one was going to watch in the first place but at least there was enough stuff on here to keep me entertained for three hours. We'll be back to serious next week and that's fine on a holiday like this.

Results

Rusev b. Titus O'Neil – Accolade

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. Social Outcasts – Bada Boom Shakalacka to Dallas

Dean Ambrose b. The Miz – Dirty Deeds

Seth Rollins b. Dolph Ziggler – Pedigree

Golden Truth b. Vaudevillains – Solid Gold to English

Becky Lynch b. Summer Rae – Disarm-Her

Team USA b. Multi-National Alliance – Rough Ryder to Sheamus

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