



Cubed Circle Newsletter

The newsletter is back to its regular size this week, with coverage of RAW, the first night of the All Japan Carnival, ROH Border Wars and some thoughts on Dolf Ziggler and Jack Swagger. This week's issue is packed with content and I hope that you enjoy it.

WWE RAW 2012/04/23 Detroit, Michigan

Overall Show Thoughts

It was evident by the content on the show that this RAW went three hours for absolutely no particular reason. Many of the segments were really dragged out and there was a lot of filler, which really hampered them, like the Punk sobriety test, which in all honesty would have been a bad segment to begin with. The Lesnar/ Cena segments also felt stalled, which left the show difficult to sit through. However the Kingston/ Jericho match definitely benefited from the extra time, although matches like the Khali tag which should have only been minutes long just dragged and dragged. All in all the show was pretty mediocre.

Justin Roberts welcomed Teddy Long, Long welcomed everyone to the Extreme Rules contract signing and he welcomed the 2 time WWE champion and 10 WWE champion in a botch which he realized. Out came Cena, Lesnar's music hit, Cena looked intimidated, but there was no Lesnar. Laurinaitis came out and said that Cena shouldn't be in a big hurry to sign the contract anyway, because this might be his last night on RAW ever. He then instructed Long to get Cena out of the ring, he eventually did so reluctantly, but Edge interrupted Laurinaitis and the crowd went nuts.

Edge said that he wasn't supposed to be there and that his contract was going to expire in a couple of days. He came to talk to Cena, he said that he could have done it privately, but he thought that it would have had more impact there. He said that he didn't know that John Cena, he wanted to talk to John Cena, his greatest rival. The one that beat him in Toronto, the one that chucked him into the Long Island Sound. Edge said that he didn't know if it was caused by the loss to the Rock, because people change after they loose, he proceeded to list names like Rock and Hart. Edge said that

he can't lose he has to find strength, because their one similarity is how much they



love the business and it is the only thing that they have ever wanted to do. He asked if Cena thought it was the same for Lesnar (which is actually true, Lesnar was not a wrestling fan growing up), he said that that the only thing that

Lesnar cares about is lining his pockets. Edge said that if Cena loses it would be a slap in the face to guys like Michaels, Undertaker and himself who love the business. He screamed "wake up!" at Cena and said that he was not asking Cena to beat Lesnar he was telling him to.

1. Chris Jericho vs. Kofi Kingston

You could tell by Jericho's entrance and the reaction to it that even though he is in a main angle for the championship, this angle has undermined his aura to an extent. Jericho went to the outside of the ring after Kingston landed a large flurry of moves,



but he rolled back in. Jericho gained the advantage with a thumb to the eye, but Kingston landed a topé con giro on Jericho. Jericho got the advantage back during the break. Kingston landed the SOS for two, followed by a cross body and the boom drop, he went for the Trouble

in Paradise, but Jericho reversed it into the walls of Jericho. Kingston went to the outside, Kingston went for a springboard, but he was caught in the code breaker by Jericho, Jericho didn't pin him for some reason and locked in the walls of Jericho for the win, in a very good TV match and the second good Kingston match in two weeks.

Jericho then cut a promo saying that this was proof that he will become the new WWE champion at Extreme Rules. He said that Punk knows about being extreme, with an extreme father, mother and sister. He said that at Extreme Rules he will make Punk out as an extreme failure in front of his hometown, family, friends and wannabe fans like the people in the crowd. He said that Punk will receive an extreme beating from him, but he brought him a gift that he will present to him tonight. A gift that will

help him cope with his loss to Jericho and he will prove that he is the best in the world at everything he does.

They showed a package of Lesnar destroying Jeff Hardy and played the video package from last week. CM Punk was backstage when he was approached by Matthews who asked him to comment on the gift. He showed Matthews the liquor basket that he had received from Jericho, he said that he had a gift for Jericho and he would deliver it at Extreme Rules. He followed this by giving the basket to Matthews.

2. Lord Tensai vs. R-Truth

They showed a short clip of Tensai cutting a promo in terrible Japanese in the top right hand side of the screen. He killed Truth and hit the chokebomb and then locked in the mist claw into a chokeslam for the win. Even after last week the crowd didn't seem all that into Tensai.

Kane came out he said that Extreme Rules is his favourite night of the year and that means bad things for Orton. He said that Orton found out at WrestleMania that he couldn't beat Kane under normal rules let alone no rules. He said that he knows what's going through the mind of Orton and he discovered the one true weakness of Orton when he looked into his eyes after he hit Bob Orton with the pipe. When he saw him lying there he was disappointed, he realized that he was not a viper and he is just a scared little boy begging for the nightmare to end, praying that the monster will go away. But, he continued by saying that he is the nightmare, the monster that Orton will never wake up from. This was your usual Kane promo absolutely dripping in cheese.

Orton appeared on the tron, he said that Kane could ask anyone, if you mess with his family there is no turning back and he had to return the favour. The camera zoomed out to reveal of all people, Paul Bearer, who has disappeared so many times and reappears in the most wacky scenarios. Orton called Kane backstage and pushed Bearer into what looked like a walk in freezer, but it was never explained and it could have been something else. Kane Laughed and said that the heart of a monster has no room for a father, he only has room for his own father, the devil! Satan! By this point the segment went straight off of a cliff, he then said that he had no intention of saving Bearer. Orton came out and they brawled on the ramp, Kane was hit into the steps and Orton grabbed a pipe from under the ring and used it on the back and stomach of Kane. He then knocked Kane over the barricade, Kane fled, the man that only answers to Satan. I have no idea why any of this would make me want to see the match.

3. Alberto Del Rio & Cody Rhodes vs. Big Show & the Great Khali

This match went agonizingly long, Khali was worked on by Rhodes, he crawled across the ring for the hot tag, yes, the Great Khali. He made the tag to Big Show, whose leg was worked on by Rhodes. Rhodes was almost chokeslammed by Big Show, but he landed a sweep and locked in a figure four leg lock. Del Rio abandoned Rhodes, who was chokeslammed by the Big Show for the win, in a long nothing match.

Jericho, Laurinaitis, Eve and Otunga were backstage. Jericho said that he knows it's crazy, but he saw Punk drinking. Eve said that WWE superstars aren't allowed to

drink within a 12 HOUR period of an event! This statement completely blew my mind in every way possible. Jericho said that they should get the police in, so that when Jericho fails the sobriety test they can give the title to him.

Brock Lesnar arrived at the building, Matthews came by and wanted to know if he lost his match at Extreme Rules if he would still be the face of the WWE. Lesnar grabbed him and pushed him up against the wall, but let him go. Matthews said that it was just his job, Lesnar responded by killing Matthews, throwing him through some stuff backstage. Matthews must have tucked into that liquor basket.

4. Divas Championship Match Beth Phoenix vs. Nikki Bella

Before the match Eve came out, she said that the Bellas cheat and the rest of the Divas weren't doing anything so it would be a lumberjill match. Nikki Bella rolled Beth Phoenix up to become the new Divas champion in a terrible match. This will presumably lead to a Bella/ Kharma squash, but then again that's where we thought the Mania match was going.

Teddy Long and CM Punk were backstage, Long said that Punk would be in the ring next for a sobriety test, Punk proceeded to flip out like a little child. Jericho came out and said that he would make sure that the test was done right and he wanted to be there when Punk was stripped of the title. Long said that if Punk does fail, then he will be stripped of the title. Punk replied by saying that it was ridiculous and he said WWF universe and swore. Some wacky police were there, they wanted Punk to recite the alphabet backwards, Punk couldn't get from Z to Y, but it turns out that the whole thing was a farce and it was just so wacky. They then got Punk to walk on the straight line, he couldn't walk the line and Jericho said that he was drunk and they should strip him of the title. The one officer said that Punk was obviously intoxicated and they walked off. Punk asked for one more chance, he said that he just needed one more. He walked the line going forward and backwards and did the Ric Flair strut. He was supposed to recite the alphabet backwards, but he botched it a few times. He then stopped and took Jericho down, Jericho attempted to escape, but Punk continued to beat on him.

This segment went way to long, it was drawn out and I can tell you right now if it wasn't a three hour show that needed time filled it wouldn't have gone that long. I just didn't see the point of the whole thing. So what Punk fooled everyone? And then what? The police made a ruling what happened to that, does Long have the authority to overturn that? Why didn't the police do a breathalyzer test? The whole thing made no sense and didn't make me want to see the match anymore than before.

They showed some clips of Lesnar destroying Hogan on SmackDown, which is ridiculous in hindsight.

5. Sheamus vs. Mark Henry /w Special Guest referee Daniel Bryan

Bryan taunted Sheamus begging him to strike him, Henry landed a splash on Sheamus and Bryan counted three in a phenomenally fast manner. After the match once Bryan had removed his referee shirt Sheamus struck Bryan, in what is an absolutely

ridiculous logical leap. Sheamus went for the Brogue kick on Bryan, but hit Henry instead, Bryan landed the highkick and locked in the yes lock, sadly the crowd wasn't as into Bryan as crowds from previous weeks.

Matt Striker interviewed Sheamus, Sheamus said that Bryan hid behind his referee shirt, but there are no snakes in Ireland and Bryan better pray.

5. Primo & Epico vs. Zach Ryder & Santino Marella

Ryder was more over than Bryan in Detroit, Marella hit the cobra on Primo for the win in a very quick match. At this point the tag titles mean less than nothing and after this two weak straight burial I can't see what the point is.

Kane went into the freezer and grabbed Bearer, only to push him back in, I guess the selling point of the feud will be who was able to push Kane's father into the freezer first. Primo and Epico were arguing backstage when they were confronted by Abraham Washington, he wanted to know why they were being treated like jokes and handed them his card.

6. Brodus Clay & Hornswoggle vs. Dolf Ziggler & Jack Swagger

Hornswoggle made a quick hot tag to Clay after Swagger got the "heat" and I use that term very loosely. Vicky ran in and slapped Clay for the DQ, the funkettes ran in and gave Clay his hat as everyone looked on. Hornswoggle then bit the backside of Vicky as they all began to dance, in an embracement of a segment.

They showed some highlights from the Lesnar/ Angle WrestleMania 19 WWE title match. They showed Lesnar hitting the three F5s, but never showed the botched shooting star press.

Laurinaitis came out for the contract signing, he said that Extreme Rules will be his first pay-per view as GM of both SmackDown and RAW. He also said that it is the match between two of the biggest stars in the company. He introduced Lesnar, who came out and sat down, he then introduced Cena whose music hit, but never appeared.



Lesnar then got on the mic and said come out little Jonny, he complained that he had been flown all the way to Detroit, but Cena didn't show and asked if Cena was too scared to show up. He explained why he was late, saying that he and Laurinaitis had to discuss business. He told Laurinaitis to take a seat and

then proceeded to list his demands that would have to be made before he signs the contract, because they need Brock Lesnar. Number one was that he gets creative control basically, he is the boss and everything has to go through him. Number two was that he wants Vince's private jet to fly him to and from venues. He continued by saying that what makes him happy is beating people up and he had already done so

that night. He said that he doesn't like people, especially the stupid ones and he said that he will show up how he wants when he wants and he won't be anybody's puppet. He said that Laurinaitis walks around fining people like Sheamus, but he will not be fined, in fact he will be paid more. He continued by saying that until his demands were met there would be no match and he put his feet on the table. He then said that if he is going to be the face of RAW then the show will have to have a new name, Monday Night Raw Featuring Brock Lesnar, in an amazing line. They then shook hands and Laurinaitis agreed to the contract.

Cena came out with no smile on his face, which was a good sign and he had what looked to be his rap gimmick chain wrapped around his fist, but I wasn't sure. Lesnar asked Cena what was a matter and told him to sign the contract. He said that the problem was that he gets a vibration from Cena, like he can feel that Cena is afraid. He said that he was the reason that Cena lost on last week's RAW and told him to "sign the damn contract." Lesnar pushed over the table and handed Cena the mic, he then got this amazing evil smirk across his face, they circled the table and Lesnar left to close off the show.

I thought that the segment did a good job at making Lesnar out as a knifing heel, one that has everything in his favour. It also did a good job showing that Lesnar is not just another henchman that Laurinaitis owns. But, some of the stuff was to inside and it felt like they didn't really know what to do with Cena, the entire gimmick is supposed to be that he will fight through it all, but that didn't come across here and the opening segment with Edge probably sold people on the idea of the match far more than this segment. Lesnar at points came off as the same man as in the UFC style video package, but at other points came across like less of a destroyer and more of a manipulator, which isn't what people want to see.

Blown Opportunities and Wasted Talent: Jack Swagger and Dolf Ziggler

While I was watching RAW this week I saw something very sad and it wasn't just isolated to this week, it keeps happening on just about every single week of WWE programming. The thing that really struck me was the complete waste of talent and the complete degradation of midcard championships, but the two focal points of this complete waste and mismanagement of talent were that of Jack Swagger and Dolf Ziggler.

Dolf Ziggler can work, he has good mic skills with moments of brilliance and he seems to carry himself like even more of a star every week. People in the company are apparently high on Ziggler and recognize his potential, yet he is still stuck in comedy spots on the lowercard with the likes of Brodus Clay and Hornswoggle. He had a match with Punk at the Royal Rumble, which was probably the high point of his career, but the match wasn't really built around him as an imposing challenger at all and rather a plot device for Laurinaitis to combat Punk.

Now it seems that Ziggler has been brought back to far below that point and with no mic work and no valuable ring time he doesn't get a chance to showcase his ability. The first time that many people recognized his ability in terms of in ring work was when he had a match with Daniel Bryan, at Bragging Rights a few years ago. The match was great and although he was in a match with Bryan, who is probably in terms

of pure work rate the most talented guy in the company, held his own and added to the match.

Swagger is a good worker, although he is not on the same level as Ziggler, he can still put on a good match and with the right person possibly a great one. He has had a farce of a championship reign much like Ziggler, but unlike Ziggler he was able to showcase himself in ECW as champion. During that reign he functioned well and was believable, but in the years that have past since then he has improved. However even with these positions in the top spot neither man is viewed as a guy that could main event a big show or stick with someone in a top angle.

Swagger is a wrestler that in a different time and place would have at least been valued to a certain extent as a shooter and a legitimately tough guy, because many people may not realize it, but Swagger is one of if not the most legitimate guy on the roster (excluding Lesnar). However because of how oversaturated his aura has become with comedy and lower level content, no one views him that way and it is a real shame. If Swagger had been booked differently from a few years ago then he could have even been a person that Lesnar could have faced during his stay and on his way to his big match with whoever he will land up facing at the end at presumably next year's WrestleMania.

One of the biggest problems with Swagger and Ziggler at the moment is their pairing; don't get me wrong they could have been a good and valuable team, especially if the tag team division wasn't dead, but, under the circumstances that the team formed (which was very Vince Russo esque), they never even got their footing. Another problem is Vicky Guerrero, she is a great heat drawer, but the way that she has been booked as their manager just adds to the strange dynamic. However I actually feel that Vicky is a victim in a way and has been misused along with Swagger and Ziggler, because she certainly does have talent in a certain regard.

I would say bring them up to the midcard, but at the moment there really isn't one to really build them up with. Who would they work with, either as a team or as singles? Why would it make a difference to their credibility in the least? I could go on and on, on ways to fix the problem, but that's one thing that rambling won't do.

Ziggler is a guy that if used right could make a difference and if he can work more main event programs then he could develop into a big star. But, remaining where he is now, in mediocrity won't do anything for him.

The same is true for Swagger who could have been something special if they never dropped him so soon after winning the championship. But, alas right now he is damaged, his aura has diminished and no one will take him seriously as a legitimate guy. But, if they really get behind him, which I see no indication of, then they could turn him around.

I just find it sad that in a time when the top guys on the show and big money draws are people who have been brought back and made it year's ago, that they can't just give some guys with talent a shot. I am not saying by any means put Ziggler or Swagger anywhere near the top right away, because that would be absurd. But, if they

just give these guys some direction, some concrete program then I think that they could flourish.

Bits & Pieces

All Japan Championship Carnival Day One 2012/04/21 Korakuen Hall, Tokyo, Japan

Note: All Matches in *italics* are part of the All Japan Championship Carnival, where as matches that were typed normally were not.

1. Masanobu Fuchi & Yutaka Yoshie vs. Ryota Hama & Yasufumi Nakanoue

I am amazed that Fuchi is still wrestling even on a semi-regular basis, I remember his participation during the Tsuruta wars in the early 1990s and even at that time he was passed his peak. Regardless he was in for a long time, but Hama and Yoshie were in until Yasufumi was worked on by the opposing team. Yoshie and Hama went at it again. Yoshie then fired up and pinned Yasufumi with a Thesz press in 13:33.

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2. *Takumi Soya vs. Yuji Okabayashi*

Soya landed kicks to the back of Okabayashi, but Okabayashi locked in a chinlock. Soya went for a slam, but it was countered and he was worked on by Okabayashi. Okabayashi landed chops and strikes, but Soya fired back as both men began to exchange strikes. Soya landed a leg lariat and a yakuza kick followed by a double underhook DDT for two. Soya was taken out in the corner and Okabayashi locked in the Boston crab, but Soya powered out and got to the ropes. Okabayashi landed strikes in the corner, but Soya landed an ace crusher and big kicks for two. Soya hit the pedigree and locked in the modified abdominal stretch; Okabayashi passed out and was covered for two. Soya landed some kicks and running boots on Okabayashi, but Okabayashi fired back with a powerslam for two. Okabayashi landed a big lariat for two and locked in the Boston crab once again, Soya attempted to power out again and almost made it to the ropes, but he was pulled back and tapped out in 13:28.

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3. *Daisuke Sekimoto vs. Masayuki Kono*

Both men went right at it and Sekimoto landed a topé suicida to the outside. They exchanged strikes on the outside until they landed face to face back in the ring. Sekimoto hit a suplex and locked in a Boston crab, but Kono escaped. Kono landed a knee in the corner and a back suplex for two. Kono landed a sitout chokebomb, he went for a knee, but Sekimoto hit a brainbuster for two. Kono locked in a gogoplata, but Sekimoto powered out and landed a powerbomb. Kono got a knee for two and went for the King Kong knee, but Sekimoto moved out of the way, Sekimoto then landed a frogsplash for two. They exchanged strikes, but Sekimoto landed an enzuigiri and lariat for two. Sekimoto landed a deadlift suplex for the win in 07:08.

4. *Taiyo Kea vs. Akebono*

The match went exactly how I expected it to up until the finish, Akebono was the immovable object, prolonging the match, drawing it out, locking in a nerve hold. Kea finally got Akebono down with a super kick, but was quickly taken back down by Akebono. But, Kea then got Akebono up and landed a Death Valley driver for the win in 07:07!

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5. Kaz Hayashi, Shuji Kondo & Minoru Tanaka vs. KAI, Hiroshi Yamato & BUSHI

This match was basically pure fast paced action with the focus being on BUSHI and Hayashi. KAI and Hayashi had a great exchange, Kondo and Yamato went at it, but Kondo was triple teamed by all the members of the opposing team. The tide was turned on BUSHI, KAI and Hayashi landed kicks and Kondo covered BUSHI for two. BUSHI went for a dive on Hayashi, but he was halted by the rest of the team. BUSHI, KAI and Yamato then landed triple topé suicidas on Tanaka, Kondo and Hayashi. Everyone hit their moves, BUSHI landed a Canadian destroyer on Hayashi, followed by a 450 splash. Hayashi landed a neckbreaker elbow combination on BUSHI, the rest of the team continued brawling on the outside, while Hayashi and BUSHI exchanged near falls, up until the point where Hayashi hit the power plant on BUSHI for he win in 09:50.

6. *KENSO vs. Yuji Nagata*

KENSO landed a backsuplex on Nagata, followed by slaps, Nagata didn't break a front face lock and KENSO practically passed out, selling it very well. Nagata went for a dive, but KENSO locked in a sleeper in the ropes, KENSO went for a pescado, but missed and landed on his knee. Nagata kicked KENSO over the barricade and rammed his head on the outside. Nagata worked on the leg of KENSO locking in a figure four leg lock. KENSO almost reached the ropes, but Nagata held on until KENSO finally reached the ropes. Nagata landed knees and both men began to exchange strikes, Nagata went for a kick, but KESNO caught the leg. KENSO landed a kick and dive on Nagata, Nagata landed a knee in the corner, but KENSO hit a suplex for two. KESNO went for the knee in corner, but missed, both men were perched up top, Nagata went for a superplex, but they both exchanged forearms. Nagata landed a release side suplex from the top rope and a kick on KENSO for two, KENSO landed slaps and chops on Nagata, but he responded with a pelé. KENSO got a roll up for two, but Nagata hit a backdrop driver for the win in 15:37.

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7. *Seiya Sanada vs. Manabu Soya*

Like in other matches on the card both men went straight at it, Sanada wrestled circles around Soya and got a backslide for two. Soya responded with a Death Valley driver, they exchanged strikes on the outside and Soya clipped Sanada's leg on the apron. Soya locked in a head lock, Sanada landed chops on Soya, but Soya fought back and worked on Sanada. Sanada finally landed a dragon screw in the ropes, an ace crusher and then locked in an abdominal stretch. Soya landed a big suplex and a powerslam, but Sanada responded with an ace crusher. Sanada landed a million elbows and a back

suplex for two, Soya landed a torture rack bomb and went for a big lariat, but Sanada landed a bridging O'Conner roll for two. Soya got a big lariat for the win in 14:30.

8. *Suwama vs. Takao Omori*

They exchanged strikes, but Suwama got the upper hand. Suwama worked on Omori, but they soon went back to the strike exchange. Suwama landed strikes on the outside and they brawled up until the point where Suwama hit Omori with an unprotected chair shot to the head. Omori was knocked off of the apron and Suwama locked in a front chancery in the ropes. Suwama then landed a bell to belly suplex for two. They exchanged strikes again, this time Omori landed a leg lariat and a neck breaker for two. They went back once more, with Omori going for a boot, but Suwama countering it into a single leg belly to belly suplex. Suwama landed a clothesline in the turnbuckle followed by a powerslam for two. Suwama hit a scoopslam and went to the top, where he was slapped by Omori who landed a superplex, but Suwama no sold. Omori landed a German suplex, but Suwama no sold that as well and landed a release German suplex of his own and both men went down. They went back to the strike exchange, Suwama landed a powerbomb that he had been teasing for two, and he proceeded to land a dropkick and backdrop for two. He went for the powerbomb again, but Omori countered and hit a hurricanrana pinning combination for two. Omori landed a guillotine driver for two, he went for a lariat, but Suwama blocked it and landed a lariat of his own. Suwama went for the powerbomb again, but it was countered by Omori into the guillotine driver followed by a lariat for the win in 19:37.

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ROH Border Wars

On May 12th ROH will be hosting a concept show entitles Border Wars in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, with most of the card being essentially Canada vs. the USA. This will presumably be a very important show for ROH, because it will probably be the culmination of a very long term build, where Steen will win the championship.

What ROH has done is very clever, they have done what ECW and other promotions have done so well in the past and that is make the fans believe that they are in control, having them boo Richards and cheer the anti-hero Steen. When in actual fact that is exactly what is needed from them. The crowd should be hot and the mainevent match should be pretty good.

However with such a big show taking place and the destruction of the relationship between Go Fight Live and ROH, it is a mystery as to where the PPV will be hosted. I don't see them going back to GFL, especially after the problems that they have been having and going back to GFL will most likely ruffle some feathers of paying customers that lost out last time. I don't see them going with Gabe Sapolsky's WWN Live and the show can't go straight to DVD.

As far as where they will go and if they will start up their own service, I don't know, but many customers order because of convenience of the Roku on GFL, so that will also need to be taken into account. We will have more on the situation as it develops.

Next Week's Newsletter

In next week's issue we cover more of the All Japan Heavyweight Carnival, Extreme Rules, the post Extreme Rules RAW, the latest news and more! For more on next week's newsletter head over to <http://www.cubedcirclewrestling.com>.

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