



Cubed Circle Newsletter

We have a diverse issue for you this week covering TNA Final Resolution, RAW, RAW Ratings, Kobashi's Retirement, Part I of the Wrestling Observer Award coverage, Impact, the Tokyo Sports Awards and Volk Han's last match in brief, plus Ben Carass covers SmackDown and NXT.

I also wanted to notify everyone that the Sunday after next will be the last issue of the year, and the 2012 year in review issue – if you have any thoughts on 2012 you can send them to ryan@cubedcirclewrestling.com and they could show up in that issue. I also want to wish all of the readers a great holiday season (yes, it is that time of year again) and a happy new year!

– Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

Wrestling Observer Year End Awards Part I: Pro-Wrestling Move of the Year, Booker of the Year

Believe it or not it is that time of year again; time to reflect back on the year that's been in the world of professional wrestling – a time to compile our 2012 Wrestling Observer Awards ballots. Some awards are easier than others, just as some awards are more important historically, but regardless of the award category careful consideration needs to be taken for each award.

I have laid the coverage out differently this year. Instead of jumping straight into the awards as they are listed in one big feature, I thought we would split the awards up and tackle a couple each week until we reach the year end issue. In that way we can focus more on individual awards, people and moments than in the past.

I thought that we would start with some of the “lesser awards” and by lesser I refer to the awards that probably hold the least amount of historical significance, at least in my view. While all the awards help to capture the year that was, some aspects are more important than others. For example the Thesz/Flair award is probably more important than the move of the year; although it is still interesting to look back on moves that have won in the past.

Today we are going to tackle one such award from Group B, the pro-wrestling Move of the Year award. I find my pick for this year far more interesting than in the past,

because unlike moves that win solely on their difficulty to perform or aesthetic appearance, my vote for this year is a move that has garnered a very high level of value based almost completely on great booking – and that move is Kazuchika Okada’s rainmaker.

Without a shadow of a doubt Okada’s rainmaker was the best move of 2012. Although it may seem as though it is just a simple short arm clothesline, in execution it is far more. Not only is it an important part of the new Kazuchika Okada’s gimmick, but it is basically sold as a decapitation; once you have been hit with the move you cannot kick out, and this is the concept that the move has been sold on throughout the year.

At this point Okada has won and defended the IWGP Heavyweight title with the rainmaker, and he lost the title due to not being able to hit the move. The same is true for his victory in the G1; although everybody including Okada was subject to parody booking no one kicked out of the rainmaker and that is probably the way that it will stay for a very long time.

I believe that on January 4th at the Tokyo Dome show Okada will capture his second IWGP heavyweight championship with the same move, and if Tanahashi does manage to kick out once, which I don’t think is going to happen, it will be sold as a colossal event.

I can picture Okada not only recapturing the IWGP title with the move, but also elevating someone with it. Once somebody does kick out of it, it will be a monumental moment for that person’s career and he will be able to get over solely on the fact that they kicked out of the rainmaker. While there have been more spectacular moves throughout 2012, none were booked as impressively as the rainmaker.

There was another award in Group B that seemed like a complete no brainer to me, and that award would be the Booker of the Year award. While Joe Silva of the UFC is a great booker, number one this is a pro-wrestling newsletter, and number two is even if it wasn’t the UFC has made a few questionable booking decisions this year.

Then we look to other professional wrestling promotions and the two big North American promotions, WWE and TNA, can quickly be ruled out, because God knows that they haven’t had the most stellar year booking wise. I know that some people will be voting for Quakenbush, which is fine with me, but for me at least Chikara Pro doesn’t warrant that award – not this year.

You then move onto ROH and while they didn’t do nearly as many stupid things as WWE or TNA, in fact they booked quite logically, they were bland for a large portion of the year and weren’t creatively hot enough to warrant the award either. Moving on to Japan the answer is obvious, Gedo and Jado stood head and shoulders above the rest.

New Japan went through somewhat of a renaissance this year, in the sense that within their niche they have been very successful and have been able to grow throughout 2012 following the company’s sale to Bushi Road. Much of this success can be attributed to the booking prowess of both Gedo and Jado.

No promotion in 2012 booked a more perfect, clean cut, logical year than New Japan, and probably, at least from my standpoint, no company had as much creative success as the company either. To put it simply wins and losses matter in 2012, and no two bookers recognized this fact more.

Probably one of the biggest success stories for me coming out of 2012 was that of Kazuchika Okada. A man that went from being less than a TNA prelim guy to becoming one of the hottest wrestlers in Japan, the eye for talent that New Japan management exhibited this year was to put it simply, unreal.

Kazuchika Okada had his return match for New Japan at the Tokyo Dome, a terrible match with YOSHI-HASHI, and went on to win the IWGP Championship from Tanahashi a few months later. At the time this seemed like a terrible idea, but fast forward a few months and Okada has blossomed into one of the most impressive young prospects in all of wrestling.

A lot of his success has to do with Gedo and Jado's booking, unlike in other promotions, when it was made clear that Okada couldn't talk for the time being, he was paired with Gedo and nobody looked back; without a great booking team the pairing would never have happened and Okada probably wouldn't be where he is today.

The same can be said for so much in the company, whether it is the diverse gimmicks and the ability to let each star truly shine, to the booking of the Sakuraba/Shibata invasion, Gedo and Jado should win the award for a second year in a row, because not only do they deserve it, but I would actually go as far as call them a no brainer for this award.

TNA Final Resolution 2012 December 9th 2012 Impact Zone, Universal Studios, Orlando, Florida

Overall Show Thoughts:

This show didn't underwhelm, but it certainly didn't overwhelm either; it was by every definition a B-show. TNA have announced that they are moving to ten pay-per-views next year, but with the level of inconsequential pay-per-views that they have put on this year they really should cut it down to six; especially considering the fact that Dixie Carter and management seem to be against the pay-per-view model anyway and they do such low buyrates that the number of buys that they lose would be inconsequential.

The majority of the card was either below average to mediocre, with the first match above that level coming in the fourth match. The show opened with an unannounced match between Kazarian and James Storm, which is something that I never like on pay-per-view. However, Storm has been placed at a certain level at this point, which really wasn't the right thing to do, but it seems like that is the case.

The opener was preceded by a collection of sub-par matches, with the first being Rob Van Dam's X Division championship defence against Kenny King. Van Dam has

become progressively slower over the last few years and it really showed in this match, with Van Dam botching spots and putting on a sloppy performance. I feel sorry for King in his current situation, since he left ROH for greener pastures, but they have done absolutely nothing with him.

In the TNA Tag Team Championship match Chavo and Hernandez defended against Morgan and Ryan in what was a match of the level that you would have expected going in. Although, the finish does mean that the feud must continue, which isn't exactly what I want to see on the next pay-per-view.

Aries and Ray had a good match, with Brooke Hogan running down during the finish, which obviously led to a dusty finish and Aries getting the win. They were limited in what they could do due to the continuation of the program, but as always both men were really good. Ray bladed off of a stairs spot, which I wasn't expecting at all.

Mickie James and Tara had an above average Knockouts' match, with Tara retaining the championship with the Widow's Peak. The Aces & Eights match was fine for what it was; although I was expecting a horsemen beat down from Bischoff and Briscoe, but I guess they want to do that in front of a larger audience.

Daniels and Styles had a great match, which was expected. It was billed as the last match between the two, but that seemed like a very last minute stipulation and I can't see it being carried through for very long – still it was the only real match of note on the show.

Finally Jeff Hardy retained the TNA World Heavyweight Championship in a good match against Bobby Roode. The Aces & Eights did in fact interfere in the finish, but Bobby Roode was the one that was cheated out of the victory at the end. The pay-per-view went off the air with the Aces & Eights standing victorious, which was fine, but they really need to get to a reveal at this point; not that Mike Knox and C.J. O' Doyle are going to turn any heads.

Match by Match:

The show opened with another lame Jeff Hardy introspective promo; still it was better than the promos on Impact.

James Storm came out to open the show. He talked about how he ran in during the Aces & Eights beat down and how Roode gave the thumbs up. He wanted to beat Roode down before his match. He was interrupted by Kazarian. He called Storm the biggest "man baby" in the company. He talked about how we had to see Storm wine for years and his alcoholic tendencies. Kazarian recommended that Storm ride off into the sunset. Storm said that Kazarian could have come up with a better promo. Kazarian responded by calling Storm a drunk along with the fans. Storm challenged Kazarian. Kazarian said it was not a sanctioned match, but Storm said that he didn't need a referee to "whip [his] ass". A referee ran out and Storm went after Kazarian.

1. Kazarian vs. James Storm

Storm went after Kazarian, but he was hung up on the top rope by Kazarian. Kazarian landed some elbows on the floor followed by an axe handle. Kazarian locked in a front facelock following a legdrop. Storm made his way out and ran wild with a flurry of clotheslines and a double underhook inverted DDT. Kazarian came in with a slingshot DDT. Storm landed an Alabama Slam followed by a codebreaker. Kazarian went behind the referee, he went for Fade to Black, Storm rolled through and landed the superkick for the win in what was a pretty much a nothing match.

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There was another recap of the Aces & Eights beat down.

2. X Division Championship Match

Rob Van Dam vs. Kenny King



Van Dam locked in a headlock, but King grabbed a rollup and a headlock of his own. Van Dam landed an enzuigiri, but King landed a leaping highkick for two. King landed a Japanese armdrag, but was caught with a sloppy dropkick to the knee. Van Dam went to the top rope, but was caught with a highkick from King launching Van Dam to the top a few seconds late. Van Dam landed a spinkick in the corner. They traded shots, King locked in a chokehold, but Van Dam landed a highkick. King hung Van Dam up and landed a kick to the back. King landed a sideslam and went for a splash, but Van Dam got the knees up. Van Dam landed a clothesline followed by a superkick, monkey flip and rolling thunder. Van Dam went to the top, but was followed by King. King back flipped to the mat, but was caught with a sloppy kick from Van Dam. Van Dam missed the frogsplash and

went for his spinning sideslam, but Van Dam grabbed a leg scissors rollup for the win.

This was pretty much your typical Van Dam match, he botches the occasional spot and is pretty slow, but the crowd is still pretty into him.

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Borash was backstage with Daniels. He talked about how many times he had wrestled Styles, tags, X title, World Title match, ultimate X matches; all of which were prologues to this night. A good promo from Daniels.

3. TNA World Tag Team Title Match Chavo Guerrero & Hernandez vs. Joey Ryan & Matt Morgan



Hernandez landed the belly to belly suplex out of a bearhug. Morgan missed a splash on Chavo and Hernandez was tagged in. They did the shoulderblock test of strength spot. Morgan cut Hernandez off with a clothesline and made the tag to Ryan.

Hernandez landed a delayed vertical suplex. Chavo and Hernandez tagged in and out wearing Ryan down. Morgan was tagged in and slammed Chavo into the turnbuckle, which led to Chavo taking a cool bump. Morgan landed a sideslam and they wore Chavo down. Ryan was sent into the turnbuckle with a head scissors and the tag was made to Hernandez who ran wild. However, Morgan landed a front suplex and threw Ryan on top of Hernandez for two. Chavo landed a missile dropkick on Morgan and Hernandez clotheslined him to the floor. Hernandez then landed the big shoulderblock, Chavo landed the frogsplash, but Morgan pulled the referee out of the ring. Guerrero attempted a pescado, but was thrown into the post. Hernandez then landed his dive onto Morgan.

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Borash was backstage with Austin Aries. Aries talked about how he wanted justice and a fair shake and until he got a title shot he would keep stirring. Aries asked what Ray would do when “Austinmania runs wild on you, brother”.

4. Austin Aries vs. Bully Ray



Aries slapped Ray who responded with a release gutwrench slam. Ray landed a clothesline and a backdrop. Aries landed a dropkick to the leg and a shoulder to the back for two. Aries landed another shot to the back and locked in a chinlock. Aries did the Hogan taunt and landed a boot followed by the Hogan legdrop. Ray landed a couple of big slaps to the chest followed by a gorilla slam and splash for two. Aries was sent into

the turnbuckle, Ray went to the top, but was cut off by Aries who did the Stan Hansen taut. Aries was pushed off the top and Ray landed a huge missile dropkick for two. Ray was bridged to the floor and went for a topé, but was caught with a huge boot and Aries took a great bump. Ray did a Stan Hansen taunt of his own. Aries landed the dropkick in the corner and Ray landed the cutter out of the flapjack for two. The fans chanted for tables, which made no sense considering the match. Ray was dropped into the steps and Ray bladed. Aries went to the top rope, but out came Brooke Hogan to check on him. Aries pulled Brooke into the ring. Hogan was trapped in-between the ropes for ages, but Ray ran in for the save. Hulk Hogan walked down to the ring and Hogan dragged her off. Aries landed a low blow behind the referee's back and got a rollup for the win.

This was the first match in a presumable series, which made the Brooke involvement in the finish more acceptable, but it still detracted from the match. I really wasn't expecting blood, aseptically in the first match. The match could have been really great without the interference. Ray and Aries are both great workers, but they had to go with an indeterminate finish.

There was a recap of the Velvet Sky return. Borash was backstage with Tara and Jesse. Jesse said that he couldn't distinguish between the trolls and A-list celebrities. Tara said that after the match James would be embarrassed to show her face.

5. Knockout's Title Match

Tara vs. Mickie James

Tara locked in a wrist lock. Tara talked to Jesse on the apron and was caught with a rollup. James followed it with a northern lights suplex. James landed a hurricanrana and double baseball slide on Tara and Jesse. The camera missed a kick from Tara. Tara dropped James onto the apron and went for the Widow's Peak, but James dropped down. Jesse distracted the referee as James grabbed a rollup. Tara landed a spinout sideslam for two. James fought back with a couple of shots and landed a flurry of clotheslines. James landed a kick to the gut and an enzuigiri for two. Tara was thrown into the arms of Jesse and caught with a Thesz press from the top to the floor. Jesse was superkicked off of the apron, which allowed Tara to land the Widow's Peak for the win.

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Borash was backstage with Bobby Roode. Roode was asked about his relationship with the Aces & Eights. Roode talked about how he was the longest reigning champion in TNA history, he wanted to retain the title under any circumstances. He went back to the question saying that he does what's right for business.

6. Kurt Angle, Samoa Joe, Garrett Bischoff & Wes Briscoe vs. Devon, DOC, Masked Man 1 (Mike Knox) & Masked Man 2 (C.J. O'Doyle)

Devon went after Angle following a cheap shot. Angle landed a suplex for two and Joe was tagged in. He landed a flurry of shots on DOC in the corner followed by a leaping highkick. DOC tagged in Knox on Garrett. Briscoe was tagged in and he landed a splash off of the back of Bischoff. O'Doyle was tagged in. Joe landed some



big kicks to the chest. Devon was in control off of a cheap shot. The Aces & Eights wore Joe down for ages. Joe landed an STO on O'Doyle onto Knox. Angel landed a crossbody and a German suplex followed by a belly to belly suplex this led to a

brawl breaking out. DOC landed a chokeslam on Angle, but was caught with a Briscoe crossbody. Bischoff landed a DDT on DOC, Devon took him out, but Joe took him out and landed an elbow topé on Devon. Angle tore the straps down and locked the ankle lock in. DOC grabbed a hammer and Briscoe landed a spear on DOC. Angle then landed an Angle Slam on 'O Doyle for the win.

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Borash was backstage with AJ Styles. He talked about how bad his year was, but he said that he would beat Daniels; he had been there for ten years. He and Daniels would face each other one last time.

7. AJ Styles vs. Christopher Daniels



Both men worked in and out of holds. Daniels landed couple of shoulderblocks and Styles rolled to the floor. Styles landed a big clothesline off of a hip toss attempt. Styles landed a dropkick followed by a head scissors from the mat. Styles landed a splash and landed a suplex on the apron. Daniels responded with a uranagi on the apron! Daniels followed the uranagi on the apron with a suplex on the steps. Daniels continued to work over the back in the ring. Daniels landed an elbow and a kick to the gut for two. Daniels landed some slaps yelling "I'm better than you". Styles landed a couple of headbutts and cut Daniels open. Both men collided with crossbodies and Daniels landed another uranagi. Daniels missed the BME and Styles landed a flying forearm. Styles landed a head scissors, but was perched on the top rope for the

inverted crucifix bomb for two. Styles countered a DDT, and landed the inverted DDT for two. Styles was hung up on the top rope and Daniels landed a superplex. Styles landed a flurry of shots and was caught with a leaping highkick, but Styles landed a discus lariat and pelé. However, Styles was unable to make the cover. Daniels went for Angel's wings, but Styles transitioned into the Styles Clash for two. Styles brought Daniels to the top rope and went for a top rope Styles Clash, but Daniels countered into a hurricanrana and Daniels landed a Styles Clash of his own for the win.

As expected this was a very good match, the fans could have been more into it, but Styles and Daniels did such a good job that the match still shined. The finish was good and I would say that this won't be the last match between the two, even though it was promoted from the last minute as such.

8. TNA World Heavyweight Title Match Jeff Hardy vs. Bobby Roode

They aired a really good video package before the match, which really should have been on Impact.



Roode went straight after Hardy with shoulderblocks in the corner. Hardy landed a head scissors and backdrop. Hardy landed a pescado. Roode cut him off with a clothesline and landed a kneedrop. Roode continued to wear Hardy down. Hardy got his feet up off of a splash from Roode, but Roode threw Hardy out to the floor and whipped him into the steps. Hardy fought back with a flurry of clotheslines and landed a legdrop. Hardy landed splash and landed the whisper in the wind after slipping on the top rope. Hardy landed an enzuigiri, facebuster and splash in the corner. Hardy went for a twist of fate, but Roode countered and landed a spinebuster for two. Hardy landed the stunner style twist of fate and splash off of the apron. Hardy went for a leg lariat off of the steps, but Roode moved and Hardy landed on the concrete. Hardy was perched on the top rope, but Roode was pushed off and

landed the swanton. However, he rolled away from Roode selling the midsection. Roode landed a big spear for two. The Aces & Eights came out. Roode screamed for them to come in, but Hardy landed the twist of fate for the win.

The Aces & Eights initiated a beat down on Hardy and landed a powerbomb. Roode was in the ring shouting at the leader complaining that they didn't interfere. Just then Devon landed a shot with a baseball bat and a beat down ensued. DOC then landed a chokeslam on Roode. The pay-per-view ended with the Aces & Eights posing over Roode.

WWE Monday Night RAW December 10th 2012 Newark, New Jersey

Overall Show Thoughts:

Overall this was a decent go-home show for TLC, especially considering the fact that they had to improvise quite a lot to get the main event to work. The show had some good wrestling on it and is most likely the last major show in the market before WrestleMania.

Ziggler was really good in the opening segment and he keeps getting better each week. The only problem was that Sheamus came off as quite unlikeable by pushing Ziggler off of the ladder. The Vickie Guerrero/Vince McMahon shtick was already really old by the second time that it was done and I found it annoying at this point. A funny note was that they built Vince up last week as special attraction, but he was on the show again this week.

Beating Barrett in less than five minutes was obviously really stupid and I still cannot find a logical reason for doing so. The Sheamus/Ziggler match was fine; although we have seen the match many times, both with and without a dusty finish.

Punk was good on his promo, although he didn't really say much of note given the fact that he is not on the pay-per-view. Antonio Cesaro and Kofi Kingston had a very good TV match with Cesaro picking Kingston out of the air for an awesome backbreaker.

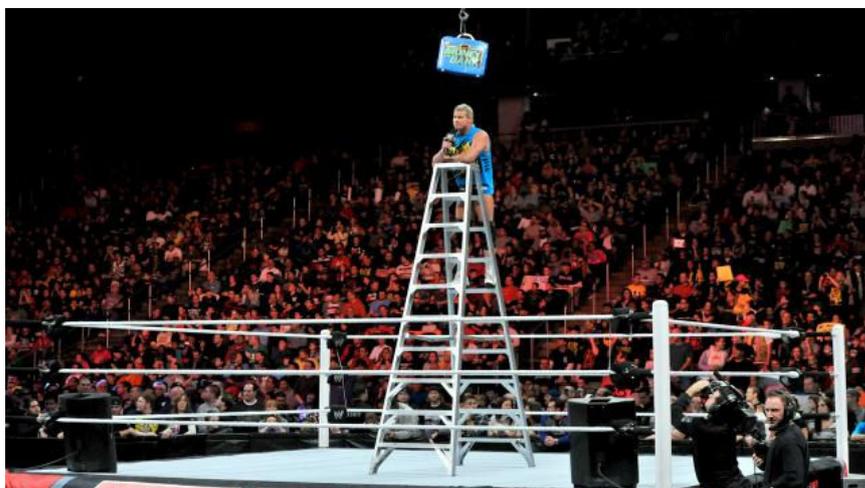
Then in the closing segment Big Show and Cena had a decent match and the brawl to close off the show was good. However, the closing image of the brawl would have been far more effective if we hadn't seen it so many times this year as a finish to lumberjack matches and the like. I suppose it was the best that they could do with their current situation and with that in mind it was good.

As an overall go-home show this show was good, it dragged like every three hour RAW does, but there was some good stuff on here. There were the mid-card matches that really could have led better into TLC, especially when factoring in that both Kingston and Barrett were beaten here. I liked the way that they built up the Shield too and it will be interesting to see just exactly what they do on Sunday and what kind of business this show does.

Segment by Segment:

The show kicked off with Ziggler on top of a ladder. He talked about how he was on top and how Cena had failed to cash in the briefcase in the past. After he beat Cena he would cash in on Big Show and become the greatest World Heavyweight Champion

of all time. Sheamus came out. The set was full of tables, ladders and chairs, which didn't make much sense considering this was RAW and not the pay-per-view.



Sheamus talked about he would become champion, but Ziggler wouldn't beat Cena; it would be Cena versus Sheamus at some point instead. Out came Big Show and he called both men delusional. He wanted to smear

Sheamus' "Irish immigrant face" into the mat. He would wait until TLC. If Ziggler cashed the briefcase in he would knock him out. He would knock the white skin off of Sheamus' body. Sheamus said he made Show's "chest nuts roast over an open fire". He couldn't have contact with Show, but he could with Ziggler and for no specific reason he pushed Ziggler off of the ladder where he was hung up on the top rope; taking a Ziggler bump to the floor.

Vince was walking backstage and they said that he would be on next. Cesaro was on commentary and Barrett in the ring when Vince came out.

He said that the mainevent would be Big Show versus Cena. Vickie was brought out and she did a curtsy. They did their usual shtick, where Vince would recommend an idea and Vickie would act befuddled. She thought of Ziggler versus Cena and then recommended a handicap match with AJ. Vince then said that it would be Vickie Guerrero versus AJ later on.

1. Wade Barrett vs. R-Truth

Kingston was on commentary. Barrett landed a big superkick to the gut, but Truth grabbed a big rollup a couple of minutes into the match for the win. Kingston then jumped into the ring with a crossbody on Barrett and Truth faced off with Cesaro.

Beating Wade Barrett made absolutely no sense here, especially considering the fact that he is the challenger on Sunday. It wasn't even like this match served much of a purpose with it going less than five minutes. The idea is to have the challenger going in strong, but I guess creative didn't get the memo.

AJ was freaking out backstage and was talking to Aksana, hugging Kaitlyn and rushing into the men's locker room to tell Cena.

2. Cody Rhodes & Damien Sandow vs. Jimmy & Jey Uso vs. The Prime Time Players vs. Primo & Epico



Usos was worn down, the fans got behind him, but Primo went to work on the leg. Uso then landed a splash on Primo for the elimination. ‘O Neal ran in with a clothesline, but the Prime Time Players were eliminated

during the break, which was really strange. The crowd chanted moustache at Cody Rhodes’ moustache. Sandow landed his elbow for two. Lawler didn’t know what distain meant. The Usos ran wild, landing the pelvic thrust in the corner. Sandow dropped Jimmy onto the apron, he went for a splash, but Rhodes got the knees up and landed Cross Rhodes for the win.

Michael Cole and Lawler talked about the Slammy Awards.

3. Eve vs. Alicia Fox

Fox landed a northern lights suplex for two followed by a tilt-o-whirl backbreaker also for two. Eve dropped Fox from the top and landed the neckbreaker for the win. After the match Eve posed over Fox.

Punk was shown on crutches backstage.



Punk came out on his crutches. Punk talked about how people thought that his surgery was fake; he said it was 100% real and what happens when you are WWE champion for over a year.

The crowd cheered. They showed a clip of the Ryback beat down from last week. They chanted “feed me more”. Heyman said that the fans were “ticking [him] off, because they were chanting feed me more. He buried their sports teams and said that Punk didn’t have a stunt double like Rock. Punk would defend the title against Rock,

because he was the best in the world. The mic was handed back to Punk. He challenged whoever thought he should be stripped of the belt to come strip him. He said that no one could take it away. The Rock had one shot, but he would also fail. Punk said he would be watching the TLC pay-per-view; watching the Shield injure Ryback.

4. Dolf Ziggler vs. Sheamus



Sheamus went after the injured leg of Ziggler. The New Jersey crowd chanted for Ziggler. Ziggler landed his awesome dropkick. Ziggler was cut off with a clothesline on the floor landing right

on his head. Sheamus fought out of a headlock after the brake, but was cut off with a knee to the gut. Ziggler landed shots in the corner, Sheamus fought out of another headlock throwing Ziggler into the post. Both men traded shots, Sheamus got the better of the exchange and landed a big clothesline in the corner. He went for a spear in the corner, but was sent shoulder first into the post. Ziggler grabbed a rollup with his feet on the ropes, the referee saw and Ziggler landed a DDT for two. Ziggler went for a splash, but was caught with a fall away slam. Sheamus landed some clubbing blows in the ropes. Sheamus went to the top rope, but was hung up by Ziggler. Ziggler was pushed off of the top by Sheamus, but caught Sheamus with a top rope X factor for two. Sheamus went for a cloverleaf; Ziggler fought out, but was caught with a backbreaker. Ziggler ducked a brogue kick, Sheamus went after him, but Ziggler landed a chair shot for the DQ. He went for a chair shot in the ring, but Sheamus brogue kicked the chair out of his hands.

Vickie was warming up backstage when Hornswoggle and Great Khali came in. Vickie said that she was tight and they helped her stretch. Vince walked in and said it was supposed to be a family show – it was accompanied by the usual fake laughter from Cole and Lawler. This was a really stupid segment.

A recap aired of the SmackDown Shield segment. They cut to a hand held camera promo. Ambrose welcomed Miz to consequences, Rollins welcomed Orton to payback. Ambrose said that Ryback was put on a pedestal – they work for each other. Ambrose said that he would bring the sword and challenged them to bring ladders, chairs and tables.

5. Alberto Del Rio vs. Zack Ryder

Both men had a perfectly average match. Del Rio went after the back and arm of Ryder. Lawler talked about his heart attack and how grateful he was. The fans got behind Ryder and he dropped Del Rio to the floor where he landed on his face. Ryder missed the Broski boot and Del Rio grabbed the cross armbreaker for the win.

6. AJ vs. Vickie Guerrero

Brad Maddox came out as a referee. The fans chanted “you can’t wrestle”. Vickie tackled AJ and slapped her. AJ went crazy and tackled Vickie. Vickie attempted to escape, but was tackled and thrown back into the ring by AJ. AJ landed a slap of her own and made the cover, but Maddox refused to count. Vickie then grabbed a rollup for the win. AJ then went crazy throwing chairs around, tipping over the ladder, screaming, slapping Justin Roberts.

This would have been fine if we hadn’t already had the evil authority figure screw the babyface so many times this year. It drew on pay-per-view with Laurinaitis, but even that angle dragged on for way too long. This angle had no steam to begin with and adding matches between Vickie and AJ to the fray simply isn’t going to help anything.

AJ was freaking out backstage; still breaking stuff. Cena came by and attempted to stop AJ’s tantrum. Cena then embraced AJ. Back in the ring Cesaro went on about America going rotten and he got some cheap heat.

7. Antonio Cesaro vs. Kofi Kingston



Cesaro hung Kingston up. Kingston landed a sloppy splash. Cesaro landed a double stomp. Cesaro locked in a bearhug, Kingston grabbed a rollup, but was caught with a pump handle slam. Cesaro landed a spinebuster.

Kingston landed a splash to the back, he went for the SOS, but Cesaro landed an uppercut to the back of the head. Kingston landed the SOS, but Cesaro got his hand on the bottom rope. Kingston landed a leaping highkick and went for a crossbody, but was caught in a powerslam backbreaker, which was awesome! Cesaro then landed the neutralizer for the win.

Miz came out for Miz TV. He was once again extremely annoying. Sandow said the only thing worse than Miz’s show was the people that watch it – tune out for the win. Sandow asked them to stay silent for the “new and improved Cody Rhodes”. Rhodes

said that Miz spends most of his time watching himself in the main event. They talked about how Princeton was an island of intelligence amongst a sea of stupidity. Miz used the awful “I moustache you a question” line. He inferred that they were homosexual. Sandow said that Miz had lost touch of reality. Miz did his really shtick. Sandow called Miz a terrible host. Miz asked how it felt that Sandow didn’t visit him. He attempted to cause strife between the two. Miz acted like an all out heel saying that Rhodes was overshadowed by his father. Rhodes said that the interview was over and they walked off. Miz continued to be the worst babyface ever.

AJ approached Cena and wanted to be with him during his match. AJ wanted Cena to stay in the back for her own safety. She agreed. Ziggler came out for commentary.

8. John Cena vs. Big Show

Big Show came down on Cena following an AA attempt. Cena countered a chokeslam into a DDT after the break, but Show landed a sideslam for two. Big Show landed a spear for two. Show locked in a bearhug, Cena made his way out and Show fought out of an STF. Big Show landed a splash for two and teed off on Cena in the corner. Cena



landed a backsuplex and landed the five knuckle shuffle. Big Show got straight up and landed a chokeslam only for two. Big Show missed the KO punch

and Cena landed the AA. Both men were down and the Shield ran down beating Cena down.

They placed a table in the ring and Reigns grabbed a ladder. Just then Kane’s pyro hit and Bryan ran down to the ring. Ziggler jumped Cena and so did Big Show. Sheamus ran out and went after Ziggler. Cena sent Show through a table and the crowd chanted “feed me more: and out came Ryback. The Shield called for him to come in, but he threw a ladder at all three men. This led to a brawl to close off the show.

WWE Monday Night RAW Rating for December 10th 2012

The RAW rating was not at 15 year lows this week, but it still didn’t perform too strongly in the ratings. It went up against a football game that, to my knowledge, was expected to be strong like last week’s, but it disappointed. The Houston Texans/Patriots football game did a 10.41 and 14.48 million viewers, down from last week’s show, which did an 11.89 and 16.21 million viewers.

The show opened with a 2.78 for the Dolf Ziggler/Sheamus promo segment, which was up quite a bit from last week's 2.58 opening. The Vince/Vickie segment together with R-Truth/Wade Barrett and AJ running around backstage lost 41,000 viewers, which shows that Vince doesn't really mean much when he is in segments that don't have much meaning and in timeslots that don't draw.

The tag team four-way match lost 262,000 viewers, which was in the realm of what you would expect for that kind of match. Eve Torres/Alicia Fox and the Punk promo gained a combined 223,000 viewers, which continues a trend that has been running for a couple of weeks with the Diva's matches gaining. Also Punk and Heyman on their own almost always do well.

In the 21:00 segment Sheamus/Ziggler gained 201,000 viewers, which was actually up from the Sheamus/Cena tag last week, which gained 138,000 viewers. The 21:00 segment has been going through a decline as of late, but seems to be showing signs of recovery.

From 20:00 to 21:00 they did 3.74 million viewers and 1.558 million viewers in the 18-49 demo (1.23 rating). They were slightly up from last week in overall viewership, but they did relatively similar numbers in the 18-49 demo.

The Shield interview lost 354,000 viewers, which is in the same range that they have been doing in the segment after 21:00 for the past week. Last week's Sandow/Marella match took a slightly lower hit than Mystério/Bryan the week before, but I would say that this is a result of a combination between the audience taking a while to get into new talent and the time slot.

Alberto Del Rio/Zack Ryder actually gained 114,000 viewers, which is funny, because Del Rio was in the exact same slot last week and lost almost the same amount of viewers that were gained here. Then in the 22:00 slot AJ/Vickie gained 115,000 viewers to a 2.78 quarter. Vickie was placed in a similar segment last week and also gained viewers.

From 21:00 to 22:00 they did 3.88 million viewers and 1.656 million viewers in the 18-49 demo (1.31 rating), which was up in both instances from last week.

Kingston/Cesaro lost 546,000 viewers, which compared to the same match from last week and the R-Truth/Barrett match, it failed losing close to 400,000 more viewers. This led to a show low of a 2.39 quarter. Sandow & Rhodes on Miz TV gained 169,000 viewers, which was surprising for babyface Miz.

Then it was what was probably the biggest surprise of the night the main event between Big Show and Cena only gained 11,000 with the main event doing a terrible 2.52. The brawl in the overrun gained 627,000 viewers to a 2.96 overrun, but still the main event should be considered a failure in that segment.

The 22:00 to 23:00 hour did 3.67 million viewers and 1.678 (1.33 rating) in the 18-49 demo. The show average was 2.67 and 3.76 million viewers, which was obviously much better than last week's 2.55.

The show was once again third for the night on cable. They did the same as last week in male teens, a 2.3, they were up with a 2.1 in males 18-49, women 18-49 was up too with a 0.9, but the female teen demo was once again down with a 0.9.

As a whole this week's RAW did what I would consider a passable rating for a three hour RAW. What is concerning about this week's rating was the fact that the mainevent showed hardly any gain – a worrying sign. As always there were obvious signs of burn out.

WWE –NXT
December 12th 2012 – Full Sail University, Florida.
Ben Carass.

We got a video recap of the Rollins/Mahal Face-to-Face segment from two weeks ago and some highlights of their feud to start the show; a graphic hyped the title match between the two as the main event.

Tom Phillips welcomed viewers to the NXT arena then Paige made her way to the ring for the opener; Sasha Banks appeared to face “the Anti-Diva”. Phillips said Paige had the “Anti-Barbie Army” behind her.

Paige vs. Sasha Banks

The two competed for the early advantage by trading holds, until Paige took Banks over with a head scissors; Sasha eventually escaped and scored with a pair of armdrags, however Paige recovered with a clothesline. Banks fired back with a big chop then delivered a tornado-style springboard armdrag out of the corner for a two count.

Paige grabbed a double handful of hair and tossed Sasha across the ring with a big Biel then landed a fisherman suplex for a two count; Banks fought up from a double underarm hold to get a near fall off a roll up, before returning the favour with a Biel by the hair. Paige cut off Sasha with a boot to the gut then hit the lightning spiral for the three count.

Paige defeated Sasha Banks via pinfall, at 4:05.

A decent effort from both women; there were a couple of sloppy moments and I have no idea who was the face or heel, but there have been many Diva's matches on NXT worse than this.

Tony Dawson was backstage with Roman Reigns; Tony said the interview had been “weeks in the making” then Roman cut him off and claimed he did things on his own time. Roman rubbed his expensive watch in Tony's face, after implying the announcer was poor then stated it was, “Roman Reigns time”. Roman continued to demine Dawson, until he took an important phone call and walked away; Tony remarked, in his best sad child voice: “what about the interview?”

I tried my best not to throw in an obvious Vader reference here; maybe it was Paul Orndorff on the phone, offering to protect Roman after his blatant gimmick infringement... I couldn't resist.

Commercial Break.

Footage aired of Tyson Kidd being attacked by Kassius Ohno after his match with Leo Kruger last week.

Ohno and Kruger were in an undisclosed location backstage; Ohno claimed Richie Steamboat, Trent Barreta and Tyson Kidd all needed “intensive care” after crossing the heel duo then Leo remarked they were “three trophies”. Ohno said he was disappointed with William Regal and stated Regal would be sent to the “ICU” if he got involved in the heels’ business again.

A graphic hyping Rollins vs. Mahal for the NXT title aired.

Commercial Break.

Summer Rae introduced Oliver Grey, who was already in the ring; Bray Wyatt hit the stage and began to preach about love and power. Wyatt said Grey would share in the sensation and feel what true power was; Bray then introduced his “son” and Erick Rowan came out with a rocking chair. After sending his “son” into battle, Wyatt took his seat on the stage.

Oliver Grey vs. Erick Rowan

Rowan landed a big boot then took over with some blows, before delivering a bodyslam; Grey ducked under a right hand and scored with a couple of shots, only to be shut down by a forearm. Rowan ragdolled Grey then executed a big sidewalk slam for the victory.

Erick Rowan defeated Oliver Grey via pinfall, at 1:55.

After the match, Bray introduced “the second member of the Wyatt family” as simply, “Rowan”.

The match was a basic NXT squash, but I like the stable of psycho rednecks being put together by Wyatt. They will add a lot to Bray's character when he is given his inevitable title push; that is, if the higher ups don't pluck Wyatt out of developmental without any explanation.

A split screen showed Rollins and Mahal warming up for the main event.

Commercial Break.

Dusty Rhodes’ music hit after the break and The Dream came out to the stage; Dusty put over the main event then directed his attention to Vickie Guerrero. Big Dust stated Vickie was “welcome anytime”, but added she could make no decisions on his watch; the interim GM then overruled the bounty placed on Big E. Langston.

Camacho interrupted Dusty and stated he needed the money, because Hunico was “stuck in Mexico”; Camacho told Dusty he would put his own bounty on The Dream, if Big Dust erased the bounty on Big E.

Big E. showed up and starred down Camacho; Dusty said he had an idea then booked a handicap match for next week and told Camacho to find a partner. Big E. was pleased with the announcement and began to chant “five”.

I don't understand the concept of Camacho putting a bounty on Dusty's head; would he pay himself if he took Big Dust out? I thought he needed the money? What if someone else tried to claim it? Camacho would be in further debt...Anyway, the babyface GM booking a babyface in a handicap match may seem counterproductive, however they have done a great job in getting Big E. over the people will see him as the favourite in any type of match.

An “earlier today” promo from the Big Show aired; Show said he was on NXT, because he saw a “loud mouth, long haired, 30lbs soaking wet little dweeb” challenge any WWE Superstar. Show accepted Bo's challenge then claimed Dallas had no place in the wrestling industry, before listing the names of top guys he had knocked out. Show then stated he would do Bo a favour by making sure he doesn't get any further than he is right now.

A split screen of Rollins and Mahal aired; the two were preparing to come out for the main event.

Commercial Break.

A graphic hyping Big Show vs. Bo Dallas rolled.

Jinder Mahal made his entrance, complete with 3MB outfit and music; Seth Rollins came out to a nice reaction and headed down to defend his title. J.R was on commentary with Regal and Summer Rae made the in-ring introductions.

NXT Championship Match: Seth Rollins (Champion) vs. Jinder Mahal.

The two started off slow and set the story of the match out with Seth being the aggressive babyface Champion, who got the best of his heel challenger during the opening exchanges. Rollins unleashed some strikes in the corner, however Jinder fired back with a right hand; the blow only fired up the Champion and Mahal fled to the outside. Rollins pursued his foe and delivered a pair of chops then sent Jinder into the apron, before taking the match back inside.

Rollins set up for a backdrop, but was caught with a boot; the Champion absorbed the blow and took over again with some clotheslines. Jinder dumped Seth on the apron, only to eat a right hand; Rollins went for a springboard manoeuvre, however Mahal countered and sent him crashing to the floor.

Commercial Break.

Mahal was in control after the break; Seth fought from underneath, only to be shutdown with an Irishwhip to the buckle. Jinder went to the floor and used the ring

post in a bow and arrow type hold on Rollins; Mahal executed a suplex on the outside then rolled the Champion back in the ring for a two count.

Jinder scored with a backbreaker for another two then continued to get the heat; Seth fired back with chops, but Mahal cut him off with a knee to the gut. Rollins powered up from a reverse chinlock to deliver a tilt-o-whirl head scissors then a backdrop for the hope spot; Mahal crotched the babyface on the top rope for the shutdown.

Commercial Break.

Rollins fought up from a rear chinlock and landed an enziguri for the distance; Seth fired up then the two traded blows in the middle of the ring. Mahal was sent to the outside by a clothesline over the top and Rollins took him out with a topé.

Back inside, Rollins caught Jinder with a springboard knee strike for a two count, before going for a hurricanrana off the top; Mahal countered the super-rana with a roll through for a near fall then scored with a bodyslam for another two. Jinder came off the second rope, however Rollins caught him in mid-air with a dropkick.

Seth ate the top turnbuckle after missing with a Stingersplash then Mahal went for some mounted punches in the corner; Rollins countered and hooked Jinder for the buckle-bomb. Both men countered the other's big move then Mahal landed a knee to the back of the head and went for the Camelclutch; Rollins got to the ropes, which gave the Champion the opportunity to hit a superkick. Rollins followed up with a Shiranui for the three count.

Seth Rollins defeated Jinder Mahal via pinfall, at 19:58; to retain the NXT Championship.

After the match, Rollins celebrated at ringside; Corey Graves was in the front row, applauding the Champion. Seth held his belt in the air and the two talked trash to each other; Rollins held his belt high again as the show came to a close.

The main event was a solid effort with a nice story and the crowd were pretty into the finish; thankfully, this is likely to be the last time we see Jinder work a twenty minute title match for a while.

Although we only got a Diva's match and a squash under the main event, two matches were set up for next week, in addition to a tease for the upcoming Rollins vs. Graves title match; there was also a follow up to the Kruger/Ohno alliance. We need more booking like this in future; I realise it may be difficult to plan with the taping format, but this show would benefit greatly from a little more consistency in the booking.

TNA Impact December 13th 2012

Impact Zone, Universal Studios, Orlando, Florida

Overall Show Thoughts:

Impact was a mixed bag this week. There were the usual annoyances in the form of the Hogan segment and the Aces & Eights overpowering the show, but there was also a slight bit of intrigue added to the show in the form of the Styles interview and Aries'

involvement with the Aces & Eights. However, the problems that bring Impact down as a show every week did so once again.

The Bobby Roode open of the show was fine and added intrigue for later on. It was followed by the really bad Velvet Sky match, but then again that match was to be expected from Rayne and Sky.

The Briscoe/Bischoff tag was fine, but both men are still really green and putting them in there without a tag partner really wasn't the greatest idea. The Jeff Hardy/Storm tag match was perfectly adequate up until the finish where the Aces & Eights ran in, but there was no DQ. It is one of those things that TNA tends to do over and over again, which doesn't make any sense.

The Styles promo was probably the best part of the show. From what I saw I expect a Styles heel turn; although they could change their mind. Regardless, Styles needs a change of some kind, because after being with the company for so many years he is starting to feel stale.

The Kenny King versus Rob Van Dam non-title match wasn't great by any stretch, but was far better than their pay-per-view match; with fewer blown spots and both men looked far better during the match. The King turn at least made sense and I am happy that they are doing something with him, because it would have been sad for them to not do anything with him after his sacrifice.

I found the Ray/Hogan segment really annoying, with Hogan just coming across as the most unlikeable authority figure. I get that they are trying to turn Ray and he was very good with his promo, but this angle is just making no sense.

Bully Ray and Jesse had a surprisingly decent mainevent, with both men working pretty stiff and Ray actually being busted open. Once again there was a stupid spot where Tara ran into the ring, it was nonsensical, but at least it played into the story of the match.

The final segment with Aries and Hardy was decent; although I hope they make sense of Aries refusing the championship match by having him demand a shot at the pay-per-view, because without that this segment also made no sense.

As a whole this was an adequate edition of Impact, but a lot of niggling issues caused it to falter, which has been their problem for a very long time.

Segment by Segment:

Bobby Roode stormed out to open the show. He said he made an investment to guarantee that he would become the new TNA World Heavyweight champion. He said that a deal is a deal and he wanted answers from the Aces & Eights. Out came Devon, DOC and a bunch of other Aces & Eights.

Devon said a better deal came up. Roode screamed wanting to know who it was. Devon calmly said that they like to keep the details within "the club". Devon climbed

on the apron and said he couldn't tell Rode, but later on in the night he would get his answer. Hardy's music hit and he came out with Storm knocking Devon off the apron.

Velvet Sky was talking about how she was happy to be back and wanted to become Knockout's champion. She said that "the pigeons have been cooped up for so long" – yes, that's what she said. They cut to Mickie James after the PPV, she was crying about letting her fans down. She said that she was the best female wrestler in the world and she shouldn't have allowed the loss to take place; best in the world Mickie James is not.

1. Velvet Sky vs. Madison Rayne

Rayne and Sky bickered back and forth before the match. Rayne went after Sky, but Sky rammed Rayne's head into the turnbuckles and landed a dropkick for two. Rayne landed a shortarm lariat and stood on the hair of Sky. Sky landed an upkick and a flurry of clotheslines. She landed her bulldog and the pedigree x-factor for the win – a horrid match.

Angle was backstage with Briscoe and Bischoff. He said that he would be in their corner later on, they wanted coffee, but he gave them five hour energy in a blatant product placement spot. Daniels and Kazarian were asked if they had anything to do with Aces & Eights. They denied everything; Kazarian said that they should ask Styles. A recap aired of the Aces & Eights eight-man tag.

2. Robbie E & Robbie T vs. Wes Briscoe & Garrett Bischoff /w Kurt Angle

E & T attacked Bischoff and Briscoe before the break. E & T worked over Briscoe. Briscoe attempted to get a foot up off of a splash from E, E telegraphed it, but missed an elbow and the tag was made to Bischoff. He landed a flapjack, but was dropped by T on the apron. Briscoe tagged himself in and landed a crossbody off of a chinbreaker from Bischoff for the win.

After the match a member of the Aces & Eights ran out and clipped Angle's leg with a pipe. He ran back, Briscoe and Bischoff stayed with him and there was in fact no Horsemen beat down. They cut to Angle in the back with a medic.

They cut to Joe Park in OVW. He arrived in a little car and talked to Danny Davis. Davis said they would start right then and there, Park said that he had no gear and so Davis said he had trained men in suits before! They showed some vigorous training and Park vomiting in a bucket. This was a cute vignette.

They cut straight to Tara and Jesse approaching Brooke backstage. Tara said that their boyfriends were having a match that night. She wanted to pick an opponent with Brooke for next week. Brooke proceeded to yell at Tara saying that she should go back to signing autographs at grocery stores. She would find out who her opponent was next week. There is definitely a tossup between Brooke Hogan and the Miz for worst babyface on TV.

There was another 1.3.2012 vignette. King was backstage saying that he came up short on Sunday, but he would knock Van Dam "square on [his] ass" later on.

3. Jeff Hardy & James Storm vs. DOC & Masked Man (Mike Knox)

Hardy and Storm went at it with DOC. Knox was tagged in and Hardy landed a splash



on him. Tenay openly mentioned that Hardy as a former WWE World Heavyweight champion. Hardy landed a splash onto both men. After the break Hardy was cut off by Knox who landed a clothesline from the apron. Knox locked in a front

facelock on Hardy, Hardy fought out with a jawbreaker, but DOC was tagged in. Hardy almost made the tag, but was dragged back to the heel corner. Hardy landed the whisper in the wind after being dropped to the floor; however he was cut off again. Hardy finally made the tag off of an enzuigiri and Storm ran wild landing a leaping highkick and crossbody for two. Storm tagged Hardy back in, which made no sense. Hardy landed the poetry in motion and both men landed a double suplex. Just then the Aces & Eights ran out and Storm and Hardy cleared house. However, they didn't make contact with Hardy and Storm so it was not a DQ! Storm and Hardy then landed the twist of fate and superkick for win.

Devon got on the mic and said that Austin Aries paid them off. Hogan was backstage going crazy and he wanted to know where Aries was. Roode was still going crazy, Hogan said Roode did the same thing, but Roode said what Aries did was worse. Aries phoned Hogan and he wanted an explanation by the end of the night.

Styles came out for a promo. The crowd chanted "you still got it". He said that he wasn't going anywhere, but the truth was he didn't know where he was going. He was trying to take care of everyone else, but he had forgotten about AJ Styles. It didn't have to do with the fans, the Impact Zone, Dixie Carter or Impact Wrestling; it had to do with AJ Styles. He didn't want to clean up every TNA mess. He was tired of doing the right thing, he would be doing his own thing from here on out.

Styles was approached by Dixie. She asked who he was and he threw his t-shirt at her. Daniels and Kazarian were dancing and singing backstage, because they thought that Styles was leaving. Kazarian said that he had a gift for Daniels and Daniels chased after him.

4. Kenny King vs. Rob Van Dam

Both men exchanged leg kicks, but Van Dam caught King with a kick to the head. Van Dam taunted, but was kned to the floor by King. King landed a corkscrew pescado to the floor. King landed a backsplash in the corner for two. Van Dam landed a kick out of the corner and a legdrop from the top rope. King landed a springboard neckbreaker for two. King missed a splash and Van Dam missed the split leg moonsault. Van Dam landed a northern lights suplex. Van Dam ducked a spinkick from King and landed spinkick of his own. Van Dam went to the top rope, King followed suit, was pushed off into a backflap, Van Dam landed a crossbody, but King rolled through and got his feet on the ropes for the win.

Ray approached Hogan and asked if he had a different opinion. Hogan pushed over a chair and said that his personal issues have turned into personal issues. Ray went crazy and said that she possibly likes him. Ray said that she was apologizing to Ray on behalf of Hulk. Ray wanted to do the right thing, Ray threw some things around and he called Hogan “Terry” – this is not WCW or the late 90s and using real names really doesn’t help to get anything over (not that it did back then). Ray said that he always had respect for Hogan. Ray said that Brooke was a grown woman and walked off. Hogan then whispered “weak”.

5. Bully Ray vs. Jesse

Ray went straight after Jesse before the bell. Jesse attempted to fight back, but Ray



landed a boot and did the Hansen taunt. Ray landed some huge chest slaps, Tara jumped into the ring once again not a DQ. Ray slapped the backside of Tara and this fired Jesse up. Jesse went after Ray, but was caught with another huge chest slap. Jesse went after Ray once again, but Ray landed a Bubba cutter for the win. Ray was cut open hardway somehow. Ray did his best Stan Hansen impersonation after the match.

Aries was shown walking to the ring and there was yet another 1.3.2013 package.

Aries came out and admitted his guilt. Aries wasn’t surprised that the Aces & Eights revealed his guilt. He said that at least when the Aces & Eights fought other people’s battles they got paid. He brought up when Hogan had him fight the Aces & Eights, but he

never got paid. Once he was finished Hogan hopped on the Hardy bandwagon. That is

why he has been pushing buttons and wont stop until he gets his title back. Hardy came out.

Hardy called Aries pathetic and told him to ask for a shot like a man. Aries said that he always has to jump through hoops. Hardy said that it would be Hardy/Aries III next week. Aries didn't want to do it in-front of Hardy's fans (Didn't Aries just say that he had to jump through hoops? Yet, here was the champion practically begging to give him a shot.), he does things when he wants to. Hardy tackled Aries, Aries went for the brainbuster, but Hardy landed the twist of fate. He went for the swanton, but Aries rolled out of the ring.

WWE SmackDown – December 14th 2012.
Webster Bank Arena: Bridgeport, CT
Ben Carass.

The baritone voiceover man recapped the main event angle from Raw then a graphic hyping The Shield vs. Team HellNo and Ryback at TLC aired. Highlights of The Big Show and Sheamus feud rolled and further alto inflected narration put over the no contact clause.

Inside the arena, Antonio Cesaro and Sheamus were at ringside with Josh and JBL; Matthews said the two were there to scout their opponents for TLC. The Big Show made his entrance then R-Truth came out for the opening match on the go-home SmackDown.

Non-Title Match: Big Show (World Heavyweight Champion) vs. R-Truth

Show took control with headbutts and some big overhand chops; Truth landed a couple of shots, but Show overpowered him and continued to unleash strikes on Truth.



Show went to the floor and bad mouthed Sheamus; Truth took advantage with a boot to the face then came off the apron, only to be nailed in

mid-air with a big chop. Cesaro left his chair and stood over the fallen Truth; Sheamus also got up from the announce table then shoved Antonio to the ground.

Back in the ring, Show flapped his gums at Sheamus again, which allowed Truth to catch the giant with both boots in the corner, before locking in a sleeperhold. Show powered out, however Truth avoided an elbow drop then scored with his

scissors kick for a two count. Truth tried to follow up with a DDT, but Show was too strong and the World Champ connected with the WMD for the three count.

Big Show defeated R-Truth via pinfall, at 4:47.

After the match, Show got in Sheamus' face at ringside and the two squared off; JBL comically pleaded with the number one contender not to touch Show then Cesaro shoved Sheamus into the World Champ. The announcers speculated whether the no contact clause had been broken, as Show laughed and said "I'm telling Booker"; the World Champion left with his title and Sheamus looked concerned at ringside.

I have no problem with the World Champion looking strong in matches, however surely they could have picked a better opponent than the number one contender for the US title. Truth looked almost pathetic throughout most of the match, which only serves to demine the US title further. The post-match stuff was fine, but the no contact deal has added no heat to the feud; Show vs. Sheamus was booked as the Dark Main Event for this show, which should tell you how seriously creative takes this angle.

Commercial Break.

Show found Booker T backstage and told the GM, the title match at TLC had to be called off, as Sheamus clearly broke the no contact clause. Book stated it was Cesaro's fault that the two touched then accused Show of being scared of Sheamus. Show insisted he was not scared and tried to convince the Booker Man to call off the match again, but Booker was adamant that the match would take place; the GM stated: "it's on dawg" then left Show looking perturbed.

Damien Sandow was in the ring; he claimed his search for an apprentice was like looking for a needle in a haystack. Sandow then professed his "esteemed pleasure" in reintroducing his tag team partner and "best friend": "the magnificent, the marvellous, the moustachioed; Cody Rhodes".

Cody headed down to the ring as footage of The Rhodes Scholars winning the Four-way on Raw rolled. Rhodes said it was an honour to be back in the ring with Damien and the search for an apprentice was officially over; before Cody could finish his promo, The Usos' music hit and the brothers headed down to face the heel team.

Commercial Break.

The Usos vs. Team Rhodes Scholars

We joined the action in progress, as Jimmy worked over Cody; Jey came in briefly with some shots then tagged his brother back in. Rhodes dumped Jimmy on the apron and Sandow caused the distraction, which allowed Cody to wrench Uso's arm over the top rope. Sandow delivered a cheap shot on the floor then Cody rolled Jimmy back inside for a two count.

Sandow tagged in and kept the heat on Jimmy with a Russian legsweep then the Cubito Aequet, before bringing Cody back in. Rhodes caught Jey with a cheap shot then stomped Jimmy in the heels' corner behind the referee's back; Jimmy fought up from a full nelson to make the tag to his brother.

Jey fired up on Cody with a pair of clotheslines, however Rhodes quickly made the tag to Sandow; Jey took over on Damien then scored with a Samoan drop. Jey connected with a running hip attack in the corner and tagged in Jimmy, who prevented Sandow from making the tag then brought Rhodes in with a hiptoss over the top rope. Jey sent himself and Cody over the top with a Cactus clothesline, however Sandow caught Jimmy with a schoolboy for the three count.

Team Rhodes Scholars defeated The Usos via pinfall, at 3:53 (JIP).

Basic tag action here; obviously Rhodes & Sandow had to go over with their match with Mystério & Sin Cara on Sunday. I'm hoping the Rhodes Scholars get the win at TLC, since it's not the right time for a HellNo/Rey & Sin Cara programme, plus I would like to see Rhodes Scholars vs. HellNo again. The first match was thoroughly underwhelming, so I'm intrigued to see if they can put together a match which meets my expectations from these two teams.

Big Show and David Otunga were in the back; the Harvard man was looking over the contract for the World Title match at TLC. Otunga said the contract stated in black and white that any physical contact would result in the chairs match at TLC to be called off. Show told the attorney to use his Harvard degree and Otunga informed Show that they should make their case publically in the ring.

Commercial Break.

The Big Show and Otunga were in the ring after the break; Show stated again that Sheamus violated the terms of the contract and therefore should be stripped of his title shot at TLC. Show said if Booker T would not listen to him then maybe he would listen to his "legal counsel"; Otunga accused Booker of being biased then claimed the GM was incapable of making a fair decision. Otunga announced they would take their case to the board of directors then pointed out the WWE headquarters was only 20 miles away from the arena. The attorney declared they would demand the chairs match to be called off and insist Booker T be removed from his position as GM.

Booker appeared on the stage and spouted some nonsense about contracts being honoured by "the spirit of the intent" then affirmed the chairs match at TLC was still on. Otunga insisted the board of directors would fire Booker and added he intended to get Sheamus fired as well, before asking the GM for one reason they should not proceed with their legal case.

Before Book could answer, Sheamus' music hit and he marched down to the ring with a chair. Sheamus said the reason was: if the match was called off then there would be nothing stopping him from kicking the Big Show's arse right then and there. Show sheepishly replied, "the contract is still valid" then left Otunga in the ring, to take a Brogue kick from Sheamus.

Again, this did little for me and probably less for the buyrate; I thought they were going somewhere with Otunga threatening to have Booker fired...I'm sure we've all heard the rumours of a "big name" coming in to take over both shows, but it appears a real life lawsuit has put the kibosh on that idea for the time being.

Footage of Randy Orton destroying Brad Maddox from two weeks ago on Raw and the subsequent Shield beatdown aired. Matt Striker was with a stagehand backstage, Josh said he would be conducting an interview with Orton after the break.

Commercial Break.

The Shield were putting the boots to Orton in the back; it appeared as though Randy had been put through a table; Ambrose, Rollins and Reigns left Orton immobile and walked away in triumph.

Inside the arena, Aksana and Kaitlyn were in the ring, ready for a match.

Kaitlyn vs. Aksana

Aksana worked a side headlock then transitioned to a rear chinlock; Kaitlyn fought up, however Aksana held on to the hold. Kaitlyn eventually escaped with a sidewalk slam, but Aksana went right back to the chinlock; Kaitlyn powered up again and began her comeback, which lead to a single knee gutbuster for the victory.

Kaitlyn defeated Aksana via pinfall, at 3:52.

This match was as boring as it gets; Aksana working the headlock/chinlock like she was Ed Lewis, was just ludicrous.

Matt Striker was outside the trainer's room; he said Orton had separated his shoulder and may have suffered a concussion. Striker added Randy was being prepared to be taken to a local medical facility.

A graphic hyping Miz TV with Team HellNo aired; Josh said it would be after the break.

Commercial Break.

Miz had all his gimmicks set up and began to talk about The Shield being the most controversial individuals in the WWE; Miz then hyped the Six-man at TLC and



introduced Kane and Bryan.

Bryan said he and Kane had been in therapy for months and on Sunday all that anger would be unleashed with tables, ladders and

chairs; Bryan added, when The Shield beg for mercy, he will say, “No!” Kane stated The Shield’s attack had brought the Tag Champs closer together and “now that Daniel had found his inner monster”, the pair were unstoppable. Kane professed they would use tables, ladders and chairs, while Bryan yelled “Yes!” at the thought of utilising all those weapons.

The screen cut to black then a video from The Shield rolled; Ambrose told Team HellNo to ask Randy Orton what happens when you threaten The Shield. Rollins answered, “justice is what happens” then claimed HellNo and Ryback were the main perpetrators of injustice. Ambrose announced “justice will be served” in 48 hours and Kane replied, “Why wait till Sunday”; Reigns answered, “finally something we agree on” and The Shield appeared to head out to the arena. JBL put over the trio as a big deal then the group appeared up in the stands; the three began to head down the arena steps, when Ryback hit the ring and The Shield retreated back up the steps.

I’m not sure why this had to take place on Miz TV, maybe to give babyface Miz the rub from guys who are actually over as faces. Nonetheless, this was the most enjoyable segment on the show so far and I thought the promos from Kane and Bryan were money. I for one will be interested to see what number the show does with these six guys on top of the card.

Commercial Break.

A graphic hyping the Six-man TLC match aired.

The Great Khali and Hornswaggle came out with Natalya to join Tyson Kidd and Justin Gabriel for an Eight-man tag match. The opponents, Primo and Epico and The Prime Time Players were already in the ring.

The Great Khali w/Natalya, Hornswaggle, Tyson Kidd & Justin Gabriel vs. Primo & Epico w/ Rosa Mendes & The Prime Time Players

Khali and Titus started out; O’Neil took an overhand chop then Young came in, only to eat a big chop. Hornswaggle tagged in, but Titus took him out with a clothesline. Young got the tag, however Hornswaggle scored with a headbutt to the gut then tagged Kidd. Tyson came in with a springboard dropkick, although Primo caused a distraction, which led Young to hit an overhead belly-to-belly suplex.

Primo got the tag and unloaded on Kidd with some shots then brought in Epico, who locked in a rear chinlock; Kidd fought out, only to be shutdown with a right hand. Rosa caught Tyson with a slap from the outside then Nattie took her down by the hair. Primo landed a dropkick for a two count then went for a backdrop; Kidd countered with a sunset flip, but Primo dropped to his knees for a pinning combination; Kidd reversed into a roll up for the three count.

The Great Khali, Hornswaggle, Tyson Kidd & Justin Gabriel defeated Primo & Epico & The Prime Time Players via pinfall, at 3:17.

Epico jumped Kidd after the match, however Gabriel sent him flying over the top rope; Young entered and took a big chop from Khali then Hornswaggle came off the apron with a splash for O’Neil. Titus caught the little guy, but Kidd and Gabriel delivered a double dropkick through the ropes that took out the Prime Time Player,

before executing a pair of topés on the Colons. The babyface team celebrated in the ring with some dancing; JBL remarked, “that wasn’t exactly Gotch/ Hackenschmidt”.

Another short multi-person match, that was allotted no time and as a result came off as a giant exercise in futility.

A graphic hyping Sheamus vs. Antonio Cesaro as the main event rolled.

I have no idea why this was announced over an hour into the show, when there was a perfectly logical time to book the match after the opening segment.

Commercial Break.

Kofi Kingston brought some energy to this lacklustre show with his entrance then Ricardo Rodriguez introduced Alberto Del Rio as his opponent.

Non-Title Match: Kofi Kingston (IC Champion) vs. Alberto Del Rio w/Ricardo Rodriguez

The two traded some crisp holds and reversals then Kofi scored with a dropkick after a double leapfrog transition; Kofi worked an armbar, however Del Rio grappled his way out and charged at his foe in the corner. Kofi moved out of the way then delivered some mounted shots in the corner and followed up with a European uppercut for two.

Del Rio used his opponent’s hair to deliver some knee strikes, but Kofi came back with a springboard chop and sent Alberto over the top with a clothesline, before connecting with a slingshot plancha. Kofi placed Del Rio on the apron and Alberto managed to send Kingston into the ring post.

Commercial Break.

Del Rio had the advantage after the break and delivered a tilt-o-whirl backbreaker for a two count; Alberto mocked Kofi’s “boom” routine then went for a splash in the corner. Kofi moved and came back with some shots, however Del Rio whipped him into the buckle for the shutdown then stomped Kingston. Del Rio nailed his step up enziguri for a two count, before executing what appeared to be a Michinoku driver for another two; Alberto got some heat with a reverse chinlock and Kofi fought out then countered another tilt-o-whirl. Kingston started his comeback with some chops and a dropkick, only to be shut down by a belly-to-back suplex; Del Rio went for a suplex, but Kofi escaped into a roll up for the victory.

Kofi Kingston defeated Alberto Del Rio via pinfall, at 11:48.

Kofi headed up the ramp, when Wade Barrett appeared; Kingston ducked Wade’s attempted clothesline and took him out with the trouble in paradise. Kofi celebrated on the ramp with his belt.

The match was decent and by far the most entertaining wrestling so far; Del Rio pulled out another new addition to his WWE move set this week, with the Michinoku driver. Kofi looked strong during the early stages, but the fluke victory makes me

think Wade is getting the strap. I've been wrong before and I hope I am again here; as I said last week, the IC title is a burden Wade could do without.

A graphic hyping the John Cena/Dolph Ziggler Ladder match at TLC rolled.

Commercial Break.

The Raw Rebound aired and was unbearably long; they even showed a good chunk of Sheamus vs. Ziggler.

I'm unaware exactly how much, because I hit fast-forward on my DVR the second I saw Ziggler with a chinlock on Sheamus.

Another graphic hyping the Cena/Ziggler match at TLC aired.

Josh and JBL recapped the Show/Sheamus angle from earlier and footage of things we had just seen only an hour ago rolled.

Sheamus was with William Regal in the locker room; Regal told Sheamus not to blow his title shot at TLC then advised him not to take Cesaro lightly in the main event. Sheamus promised his friend he would wait until Sunday and vowed to become the new World Heavyweight Champion.

Commercial Break.

Sheamus was out first for the main event then footage of last week's contract signing aired. Antonio Cesaro made his way to the ring to face The Great White.

Non-Title Match: Sheamus vs. Antonio Cesaro (US Champion)

Both men battled for control and traded shoulder blocks; Sheamus took over with a knee lift then delivered some axe-handle blows, before gaining a two count off a Finlay roll. Cesaro used the tights to send his foe through the ropes; Sheamus quickly jumped up on the apron, but was drilled with a knee.



Cesaro locked in a rear chinlock and Sheamus powered up, only to be caught with a knee in the corner then a European uppercut to the upper back.

Antonio hit his gutwrench and kept the heat on Sheamus, who fought from underneath; the two traded blows then Sheamus began his comeback with some more axe-handles.

Sheamus was dumped on the apron, but landed a forearm and came off the top with a shoulder block then unleashed his clubbing forearms. Cesaro was brought back inside with a suplex, however The Big Show appeared on the stage, with a fallen William Regal at his feet.

Sheamus headed up the ramp to check on his friend; Regal told Sheamus, “don’t let him do it to you” then Show nailed William with a chair shot to the spine. The referee counted to ten and The Big Show looked amused by his actions.

Antonio Cesaro defeated Sheamus via count out, at 7:45.

Sheamus did his best to convey his anger and dejection at seeing his friend destroyed as the show went off the air.

Now I understand why the main event wasn’t announced earlier, because it was simply a device to set up the decimation of Regal. As a result, the match was not a patch on the match Sheamus & Cesaro had on Raw a couple of weeks ago.

This go-home show did little to entice me into buying the PPV (of course I will purchase the show, as WWE has had a direct line to my wallet for years now); Bryan and Kane did more to sell the PPV more than anyone else with their tremendous promos. The stuff with Regal at the end was nice, but I’m not sure how much laying out a guy who was a heel for pretty much his entire career will mean to contemporary fans of the product.

Bits & Pieces

One of the Greatest Ever Announces Retirement

As we talked about last week, NOAH has been facing some major issues in regard to talent. It was announced last week through Tokyo Sports that Kenta Kobashi was fired from NOAH and would be leaving followed by the possible resignation by big names such as Shiozaki and Akiyama.

However, at the NOAH show from last Sunday Kobashi announced that he would be retiring in 2013. He stated that he was doing so of his own accord due to a multitude of injuries racking up of the years. Kobashi’s list of injuries, especially over the last few years has been well documented, but if this was a move to try prevent NOAH from going under I wouldn’t be surprised.

Kobashi (now 45), probably should have retired a few years ago, because even now he has been on the shelf with even more injuries and can’t work full time. I have seen him work in 2012 and from the tag match from the first Diamond Ring show he can still go, but all of the stiff matches over the years have taken their toll on his body together with kidney cancer from a couple of years ago.

Although nobody has confirmed this, it does look like Kobashi wants to retire on the 25th anniversary of his pro debut, which would be mid-2013 sometime. Kobashi is undoubtedly on an elite level of greatest wrestlers of all-time. In fact, he is at a level

so high that I would maybe even rank him above the likes of Misawa and Toyota due to selling ability.



Kobashi has had a great career with more classic matches than the current WWE roster combined. If he is going to retire next year it will in some ways be very sad to see a legend like him go, but I would rather see a guy like Kobashi retire than become more broken down and beaten with each match.

Selfishly, by the time that his retirement date in 2013 roles around one of my dreams as

a fan of professional wrestling will have died – I will never get to see Kenta Kobashi live.

We will have more on the Kobashi retirement over the next few months.

Tokyo Sports Awards 2012: Rainmaker Wins Big

As I have already posted on the front page, one of the most prestigious pro-wrestling year end awards behind the Observer Awards have been released in the form of the 2012 Tokyo Sports awards. The Tokyo sports awards serve as an accurate representation of the Japanese media's thoughts on pro-wrestling for the year, and this year has definitely been Okada's year. The full list of the awards is as follows:



Most Valuable Player: Kazuchika Okada [NJPW]

Best Match: Kazuchika Okada vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi, DOMINION, June 16th in Osaka. [NJPW]

Best Tag Team: "GET WILD" Takao Omori & Manabu Soya [AJP]

Distinguished Service Medal: Takeshi Morishima [NOAH]

Fighting Spirit Award: Abdullah Kobayashi [BJW]

Technical Award: Shinsuke Nakamura [NJPW]

Top Newcomer: Daichi Hashimoto [ZERO1]

Joshi: Yuzuki Aikawa [Stardom]

Lifetime Achievement Award: Seiji Sakaguchi [NJPW]

MVP of the year runners....

~ Takeshi Morishima

~ Hiroshi Tanahashi

Okada won outright with 16 votes, compared to Mori's 3 and Tana's 2.

Also listed as the best matches of the year....

2nd: Onita vs. Akebono from 8.26 in Yokohama [Special Show]

3rd: Kota Ibushi vs. Kenny Omega from 8.18 in Budokan. [DDT]

~ Nakamura/Okada vs. Suwama/Kondo from 7.1 in Ryogoku. [ALL TOGETHER]

~ Tanahashi vs. MiSu from 10.8 in Ryogoku. [NJPW]

~ Tanahashi vs. Okada from 2.10 in Osaka. [NJPW]

~ Suwama vs. Kea from 5.7 in Korakuen. [AJP]

~ Akiyama vs. Funaki from 8.26 in Ota. [AJP]

~ Jun Kasai vs. MASADA from 8.27 in Korakuen. [Kasai Produce]

~ Masato Tanaka vs. Tomohiro Ishii from 11.19 in Shibuya [NEVER]

~ Takashi Sugiura vs. KENTA from 11.23 in Korakuen. [NOAH]

~ Kane vs. Daniel Bryan from 8.9 in Ryogoku. [WWE]

~ Atsushi Sawada & Shinichi Suzukawa vs. Kazushi Sakuraba & Katsuyori Shibata from 12.31 in Saitama [IGF]

Runners for Tag Teams...

~ Jimmy's [DG]

~ Sakuraba & Shibata [Laughter7]

~ Brahman Brothers [Free]

Runners for Distinguished service...

~ Masakatsu Funaki

~ Abdullah Kobayashi

~ KENTA

~ Sanshiro Takagi

Runners for Fighting Spirit....

~ CIMA

~ Hirooki Goto
~ Katsuyori Shibata
~ Atsushi Onita

Runners for Technical Award...

~ CIMA
~ Masakatsu Funaki
~ Toru Yano
~ Antonio Honda

Volk Han & Masakatsu Funaki Set to Do Battle

This isn't going to be an in-depth story, but a quick note on the upcoming Volk Han/Funaki match at the RINGS revival. Believe it or not the revival is taking place on the day that this newsletter is published – suffice to say I am super excited for this.

Volk Han is one of my favourite wrestlers of the 90s, and for anybody that knows me, I tend to say some pretty outrageous things pertaining to the man's greatness. I don't really know how true the things that I say are, but regardless this should be an interesting match and interesting show. I don't expect much quality wise, but Volk Han should be able to pull off a lot of his submissions and sambo moves – plus we all know that Funaki can still go.

I am not expecting a very large crowd at the show; I just can't imagine there being that many RINGS fans left in Japan and I don't even know if the ones that are would be interested in this show. Still there should be some sort of coverage in next week's newsletter.

Next Week's Issue

We have a big issue coming up next week, on my . . . I mean Keiji Mutoh's birthday, with ROH's Final Battle show, WWE's TLC show, Impact (with Storm superkicking Santa), the results of Volk Han/Funaki, RAW, the Ratings, Wrestling Observer Awards Part II and Ben Carass covers SmackDown and NXT. Plus the week after that is the year end special and there is going to be quite a bit on the site so check that out too.

Contact

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