



Cubed Circle Newsletter

This week we cover TNA's Lockdown pay-per-view from San Antonio, the Bully Ray heel turn, the Royal Rumble buyrate, New Japan Cup, the Paul Bearer edition of RAW, the rating that it did, the post Lockdown edition of Impact plus Ben Carass covers NXT and SmackDown as always. Also just in case you missed last week's issue we are going to be running a survey to decide what you want out of the newsletter. Plus, there are also a few things that I have planned, so you may have a chance to sample those in the survey; and, with that I hope you enjoy this week's newsletter and have a great week!

- Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

News

TNA Lockdown 2013 – Bully Ray Heel Turn

This past Sunday was TNA's Lockdown pay-per-view from the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas and was not only the first legitimate outing for TNA in respect to its new model, but also a big success in that they drew the largest North American crowd in company history; 6,700 fans. TNA also did such a great job at making the building look full (or at least their portion of it), that it wasn't too much of a stretch for them to announce an attendance of 11,000.

The show itself was a mixed bag, as there were a lot of matches on the show that simply weren't worthy of a big four pay-per-view, nor was there a big blow away match, which they could have done with on a show like this. On the other hand, they closed the show off with one of the best turns that they have done in years, and easily the best finish to a pay-per-view that I have seen from them in the last couple of years. Bully Ray defeated Jeff Hardy proceeding his heel turn where the Aces & Eights climbed into the cage and he was handed a hammer by Devon, which he used to strike Hardy with. Ray then announced that he was in fact the president of the Aces & Eights the entire time as the ring was pelted with cans and drinks (an occurrence that was originally spurred on by a couple of plants, so it was planned).

Despite the fact that they managed to build a very good turn for Ray, it didn't serve to erase some of the

logical inconsistencies that would have popped up some time down the line. The main problem with Bully Ray being the leader of the Aces & Eights is that they beat him up so many times, which you could make excuses for, but the chances are that it won't be mentioned, and small touches like those are always the ones that tend to linger in the background.

A few things lead me to believe that this was the direction for the angle all along, because if you look at the early part of the Aces & Eights angle Ray never had any contact with the Aces & Eights, which only leads me to assume that they were setting up Hogan's distrust and this turn. However, they did decide to have the Aces & Eights attack Ray early on, which is where the first few holes seem to emerge. Regardless of the plot holes present in this angle currently (and realistically there were many), Bully Ray as the leader of the Aces & Eights adds starpower and a direction to the group, which were the main things missing for months.

One of TNA's biggest problems right now is going to be successfully finding a babyface on their roster that will be able to chase Ray for the title, as right now there is no clear candidate for that role. Luckily they are only running four pay-per-views a year, so they could still go with someone like Angle, who it seems like they have been setting up for a while, or possibly Styles depending on where they go with him. However, it is obviously really early in the angle, and they could do a lot of things, although regardless of where they go, Ray should be a great world champion. I just hope that this isn't a swerve and they are going to go with Bischoff as the leader at the end.

All of the other cage matches on the show were apart of the TNA versus Aces & Eights angle with Wes Briscoe beating Kurt Angle by escaping the cage after an assist from D-lo Brown, and Team TNA winning Lethal Lockdown, which in hindsight shouldn't have happened. The Angle match was decent, but obviously nothing special, and the Lethal Lockdown was fun towards the closing stretch.

Other matches on the show included a three-way tag team championship match with Aries & Roode retaining over Chavo & Hernandez and Daniels & Kazarian, which was the best match on the show. They also had Joe Park beat Joey Ryan and Robbie T beat Robbie E in comedy matches. Gail Kim failed to beat Sky for the Knockout's championship as they continue her feud with referee Taryn Terrell and Kenny King retained his X Division championship in a very wacky three-way.

Royal Rumble 2013 Buyrate Lower Than Expected

Despite the fact that the 2013 Royal Rumble show was well built and seemed to have a lot of steam behind it, for whatever reason the attention that it got from people that aren't normally into the product didn't translate into a successful buyrate. The show was expected to do the second biggest buyrate of the year, only behind WrestleMania, but in actuality while it did pull a good Rumble number it underperformed to a very large extent.

The show did 498,000 buys overall with 322,000 coming from North America and 176,000 coming from outside of North America, meaning that it did do the best number in five years, but unfortunately that just isn't good enough for a show of that magnitude, because while it did do the best number of the last five years it didn't make nearly as much money, as the WWE obviously had to pay Rock for the appearance. I would have expected the show to do in the range of 400,000 buys in North America, and possibly above that, so people in the company must obviously be very disappointed.

If you actually look at the numbers Rock made far more of an impression in his first match back at Survivor Series 2011 than he did at the Rumble, which is really telling given the fact that the buy-rate for that show was considered so bad at the time. The one question that you have to ask yourself going away from this is if the lackluster build to the Rumble itself could have made a difference, because while many people said at the time of the Rumble that Rock vs. Punk was the only thing that mattered on the show (and obviously people in the company felt the same), this would have to, at least in some ways point to the lack of build to the Rumble match itself.

Still, the buyrate is not a failure, as it will be in all likelihood the largest drawing show on pay-per-view other than WrestleMania, but then again a lot of the time the Rumble is that show regardless. I don't think that this will be huge negative for Punk, as he is a big enough star at this point for them to look past this, and realistically it probably doesn't have to do with Punk as a performer. There were some things that they could have done with the build that would have made the match stronger, but you could say that with most matches and as a whole the build was good.

Sometimes there are ideas, matches, and wrestlers who you expect to get over far more than they actually do, and maybe the build to the show was one of those things. It probably doesn't mean much in the grand scheme of WrestleMania and the rest of the year, but it certainly is something interesting to keep note of.

New Japan Cup 2013 Under-Way

New Japan officially kicked off their annual New Japan cup tournament off on March 11th from Korakuen Hall. The New Japan Cup is a single elimination tournament that New Japan has been running for the past few years now with Hirooki Goto winning every tournament to date. It is quite unfortunate that the show didn't surface earlier in the week, because it did in fact surface just out of the press time window, still we should have that show up next week.

In the first match on the show Tomohiro Ishii pinned Satoshi Kojima with his brainbuster, which was pretty expected, but hopefully Ishii goes far in this tournament. Goto pinned Tama Tonga with the Shouten Kai. Toru Yano pinned Manabu Nakanishi, which is for the best considering that Nakanishi is basically a tin man at this point. Karl Anderson beat Hiroyoshi Tenzan with the gunstun. Yujiro Takahashi pinned Togi Makabe continuing their feud, which originally felt like a very thrown together match for an internet-pay-per-view, but has turned into a legitimate program. Minoru Suzuki beat Yuji Nagata, getting his win back from the Tokyo Dome show and continuing their perpetual exchange of wins and losses. Plus they would probably want to keep Suzuki strong considering that he is in a program with Okada right now, which will surely be progressed at some point during this tournament. Kazuchika Okada submitted Karl Anderson with his new finisher entitled 'Red Ink', which is essentially a modified camel clutch apparently. It's nice that they are having Okada expand his arsenal, and I am sure that they are still going to protect the rainmaker. Then in the only big upset on the show Davey Boy Smith Jr. defeated Intercontinental Champion Shinsuke Nakamura, which serves to further the CHAOS/Suzuki-gun program. After the match Suzuki apparently swore that Suzuki-gun would win the Cup, which adds yet another reason for Suzuki and Okada to meet at some point during the tournament.

The New Japan cup finals are scheduled for March 23rd and as far as I know will be on internet-pay-per-view.

Reports

TNA Lockdown March 10th 2013 Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas

Overall Thoughts:

Lockdown 2013, TNA's real first pay-per-view in its attempt to reinvent its model was somewhat of a mixed bag. I personally enjoyed the show, and didn't have any problem sitting through it, but a lot of the stuff that I was sitting through didn't seem all that important, and certainly not worthy of a big four show. However, there was a lot of good on the show, the tag team title match was by far the best match in terms of work (although not a ***** match or anything), and hopefully they go in a direction that leads to a tag program between Aries & Roode and Daniels & Kazarian. The Lethal Lockdown match was also very good, but I am not nearly as high on it as most people were. Finally the main event, while not the best match on the show, led to one of the best creative pay-offs that TNA has produced in a very long time. Bully Ray is such phenomenal performer, and his subtleties leading up to this match made the payoff all the more effective. As for the crowd, it was the biggest North American crowd that TNA has ever drawn. They were set up well, and were into the majority of the show and helped make the main event angle what it was. As whole this was not a blow away show by any means, but I would highly recommend that you check out the final angle - you won't regret it.

This was the biggest crowd that TNA has ever been able to draw in the United States drawing 6,700 fans with 11,000 announced, and even though there is a very large dependency between those two numbers, they made the arena look so good that it didn't really matter.

1. TNA X Division Championship Match Kenny King vs. Zema Ion vs. Christian York

King landed a kick to the gut on York before the bell rang, and York responded with a topéon King on the outside. King, for what reason I have no earthly idea, attempted an Asai moonsault off of the head of Ion that was sticking through the ropes. This obviously didn't end well with King slipping and colliding with the back of his head and neck against the guardrail – absolute stupidity. The moral of the story you ask? Don't try moonsault off of a person's sweaty back! Ion also tried something unique doing a frankensteiner on King into a splash on York, which was a less risking move and didn't end badly. Like on most of TNA's shows on the road they had an elevated entrance ramp set up, which King used to slam Ion on and land a legdrop. Instead of the usual superplex bomb spot they had Ion land a superplex fall away slam on York and King. King landed an enzuigiri on Ion, and went for his spin-out neckbreaker on York, York countered, but landed it a few seconds later for the win. This was certainly a good opener, but honestly it was simply a cluster of cool moves, some of which were well performed, and others...well...others not so much.

They cut to Borash backstage with Park. He said that the boys had been ribbing him, Kazarian and Daniels came by, and told him that Dixie wanted to speak to him in catering and sent him off on his merry way. Kazarian did some great comedy and then Daniels who somehow made a funny promo really mean something by making the tag titles seem important with comedy.

2. Joesph Park vs. Joey Ryan

Ryan oiled up before the match and Park acted absolutely disgusted. Ryan tried to get some cheap heat by calling the fans fat. Ryan then called Park and the fans marks, which is just way too inside. Park grabbed the mic saying how much he loves San Antonio, but was dropped from behind by Ryan. They wrestled what was very basic match, and that really is the point. Ryan got the heat for a while, and Park sold everything like a rookie. Park then missed a splash, Ryan went for a sunset flip, but Park sat down and killed Ryan by simply doing a big man sitdown for the win. This wasn't a good match, but that was the point and it was exactly what it should have been.

* 1/4

They showed Hardy arriving in the arena earlier on and then cut to Ray backstage with Brooke consoling him. He talked about how he had never been in that situation before and in came Hogan on his crutches. Hogan put over the show like it was a turning point for the company, he said that Ray was the man to carry it forward. He wanted Ray to win the title for him and he said that Andre once pulled him aside and said "Boss just make sure that they remember you.". Ray then promised that he would make them remember him. This was a great segment on its own, and was even better in hindsight.

3. Knockout's Championship Match

Velvet Sky vs. Gail Kim

Terrell and Kim argued before the match. Kim had her hand on the rope for a pinfall, and Terrell got extremely worked up. When Kim strangled Sky in the corner she screeched when counting into Kim's face. There was a spot where Kim used Terrell as leverage to land eat defeat for two. Kim pushed Terrell saying that it was a two count and slapped her calling for a DQ saying that she would get a rematch. Terrell then landed a spear, which got a very big pop. In the melee Terrell's hair was just flying all over the place; obviously extensions. That led to Sky landing the pedigree for the win. The match was what you would have expected from a Velvet Sky match, but while I wasn't a big fan of the finish at all the crowd was surprisingly into it.

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Borash was backstage with Robbie E, E proceeded to put on a Texan accent and said that he would make his bro his ho. There was then a recap of the entire history of the Robbie E/Robbie T pairing.

4. Robbie E vs. Robbie T

Strangely they announced Robbie T from the Jersey Shore. Of course Robbie E attempted to hug it out with T, but that simply led to T pushing E off. They did a lot of spots early on with E attempting moves, but not really getting anything out of them. E threw T shoulder first into the post, which led to a period where T had to sell for E. T then hulked and had some miscommunication before landing a chokeslam like move for the win.

*1/2

Borash was backstage with Aries asking where Bobby Roode was obviously playing off of the Bobby Roode contract situation. He said that he could beat both of the other teams on his own, but he wouldn't need to, which was Roode's queue to walk by.

5. Austin Aries & Bobby Roode vs. Christopher Daniels & Kazarian vs. Chavo Guerrero & Hernandez

Hernandez and Guerrero worked over Kazarian and Daniels for the first three minutes or so before Kazarian shot in with a missile dropkick for the advantage. Hernandez landed a double suplex and made the tag to Chavo, but he too bent to Daniels and Kazarian. This was pretty smart, as Chavo and Hernandez were apparently two of the most over people at the fan fest. Roode eventually tagged himself in and the subsequent tag was made to Aries, who got a big pop. They literally worked on Guerrero for the longest time possible. Aries and Roode had a faceoff with Daniels and Kazarian. Aries and Kazarian collided with crossbodies, which led to Hernandez being tagged in and running wild. Hernandez got the visual pin on Aries, but Roode distracted Hebner. This led to everyone coming in and landing big moves. It all culminated in Guerrero landed a frogsplash, which got a big pop; however, Roode touched the foot of Chavo and stole the pin for the win. While I would have really liked to have seen Daniels and Kazarian vs. Aries and Roode rather than a three-way this was a really good three-way tag match, especially towards the end.

*** 1/2

Borash was backstage with Terrell. She basically said that she had to stand up for herself before Kim attacked her from behind with more hair flying everywhere. They aired a wacky video for Slammiversary, which will be in Boston. Brown was giving a nefarious prep-talk backstage to the Aces & Eights backstage. Borash was once again backstage this time with Kurt Angle. Angle said it was the night that he would make Briscoe famous, he said that he was the greatest wrestler who ever lived, and Brown was next. There was a retrospective of the entire Angle/Bischoff/Briscoe angle.



6. Steel Cage Match

Kurt Angle vs. Wes Briscoe

Angle shot in with a take down, which led to chants of USA – strange considering that both men are from the United States. This match in many ways was a test for Wes Briscoe, because as history has shown it is very difficult to have a bad match against Kurt Angle – one of the greatest pay-per-view wrestlers of all time. There were definitely some bizarre moments in this match like when Briscoe had Angle down and was on his feet, but when he approached the door he magically fell to his knees and began to crawl. One of the biggest spots of the match was where Angle landed a German suplex on Briscoe while standing on the top rope. There was a ref bump (like we needed another one of those), Angle grabbed an ankle lock and Briscoe submitted. Angle then gave Briscoe the middle finger and swore. Angle made his way out of the cage, but before the

referee could see Brown ran out and threw Angle in and Briscoe out for the win. Yes, there was interference in this cage match, but then again cage matches haven't been synonymous with no to little interference for a very long time. I guess they had to have the Aces & Eights retain their heat for the next match on the show. As for Briscoe, he is very, very green. There were some things in this match that he did like dropping down and crawling to the door, or being in the wrong place for big spots that you really shouldn't be doing on this position of the card.

** 3/4

7. Lethal Lockdown

Sting, Samoa Joe, James Storm, Magnus & Eric Young vs. Devon, DOC, Mike Knox, Mr. Anderson & Garrett Bischoff

Unfortunately the roof that normally drops down on the cage after the final entrant has entered the match did not work with this set-up, which was a shame since that is one of the best parts of Lethal Lockdown. Magnus and Anderson were out first followed by Knox. Joe was out next and he came sprinting out cleaning house. Garrett was out next and it was once again advantage heels. You know you have a problem when a guy comes out and all you hear every time is "you can't wrestle!". Eric Young was out next, he came down in tights, but then pulled them down to reveal white trunks. Devon came, but in terms of match structure everything was pretty disjointed at that point. Storm was out next running wild. In general the early parts of the Lethal Lockdown are much like the Rumble in terms



of simplicity of offense. DOC was out next. Finally Sting was out with two trashcans full of weapons, which was a replacement for the roof and its weapons. This led to five minutes or so of Team TNA landing shot after shot on the Aces & Eights until every single one of them turned the tables at once. Garrett wanted to escape the cage, but Joe landed what was basically a giant powerbomb tower

from the top of the cage. Sting landed the scorpion deathdrop on Knox, but instead of making the pin Sting sent Young to the top for a top rope elbow drop for the win. I enjoyed the Lethal Lockdown this year, although there was a certain edge missing. The finish really worked though with the big crowd so super into it, but for the majority of the match it was basically a Rumble in a cage, without the suspense of course.

*** 1/4

8. TNA World Heavyweight Championship Steel Cage Match Bully Ray vs. Jeff Hardy

Hardy attempted to escape the cage early on, but jumped back in with a splash from the top rope. Hardy climbed once again, but Ray landed shots to the leg as they battled on the top rope and Hardy was hung up groin first. Since the door was facing the ramp it introduced an interesting situation since you could literally run through the door.. The fans dual chanted as Ray landed a bodydrop. Hardy went



to the top rope when Briscoe and Bischoff made it into the cage, Hardy attacked them, and my God Briscoe's selling was bad. It literally consisted of swaying and heavy blinking. This led to Ray and Hardy teaming up in the middle of a world title match, throwing them out of the cage and then facing off. This was once of the bigger inconsistencies of the night when it came to the turn, as why would Ray beat up his own men?? Hardy and Ray once again traded big shots on the top rope. Hardy went for a dropkick, and fell straight down for a splash

from Ray. Ray then landed a Bubba Bomb right from the top rope, which legitimately concussed Hardy and both men were down. Hogan and Brooke made their way down to ringside to cheer Ray on. The Aces & Eights followed. Devon was in the cage and suddenly Ray was thrown the hammer by Devon and landed a shot on Hardy with the hammer – this led to reuniting of the Dudley Boys and Ray made the pin to become the new TNA World Champion. Ray then yelled at Brooke calling her a stupid bastard and he had an awesome faceoff with Hogan.

Ray was given a mic and he called Brooke a “stupid b***h” he said that he used Hogan and he screwed Brooke. This led to fans throwing garbage in the ring – it was originally started by a bunch of plants, but inevitably everyone joined in. He then revealed himself as the president of the Aces & Eights. They then closed off the show with the fans throwing garbage in the ring. I won't lie this closing angle made me smile, originally when they had Garrett and Briscoe come out I rolled my eyes, the same with a few of the spots in the match with Aces & Eights involvement. However, when Devon threw Ray that hammer it was just awesome. I will admit, I hate(d) the Aces & Eights angle, but this was one great pay-off.

*** 1/4

WWE Monday Night RAW March 11th 2013 Indianapolis, Indiana

Overall thoughts:

Some may say that it was in bad taste and others may have been put off by it, but honestly I wasn't offended in the least by this Paul Bearer tribute show. It is very hard to be insulted after all of the things that the WWE has done in the past, I mean could this really hold a candle to "Eddie's in hell!"? Of course not. Nor could it stand up to the Lawler angle, or anything of that ilk for that matter. In fact, you could go as far as to say that the show long thing was a fitting ode to Paul Bearer, either way they didn't go overboard. This is pro-wrestling, a business that has been doing things like this, really for the majority of its existence, and the chances are that many promoters of the past would have been tempted to attempt a similar angle.

As for how the angle itself went, I was perfectly fine with it, they could have probably had Undertaker say a few things instead, as I don't think that going halfway with a Punk promo really helped the angle. The show itself was pretty mediocre with the final hour going fifteen minutes over, which there is really no excuse for given the fact that they have a three hour period to get everything done in – it simply comes down to bad planning. There was no Cena or Rock on the show, but they had a phenomenal video package for their match, which was probably the best thing on the show. Bryan and Ziggler put on the best segment wrestling wise, but there was nothing else to really write home about apart from the Lesnar segment.

Segment-by-Segment:

The show opened with Justin Roberts asking the crowd to rise in respect for Paul Bearer. They then cut to an awesome tribute to Bearer with a ton of interviews and footage both archived and taped just for the package. They then had the Undertaker come out, with the urn placed in the ring. Undertaker did his pose in front of the urn with a graphic in memoriam of Bearer on the tron. Of course Punk interrupted, which is something that you would have expected them to do. They had Punk extend his condolences for Undertaker's loss, his loss at WrestleMania. Bearer would remember Undertaker as 20-0, but in a few weeks Undertaker would be 20-1. They had Punk do the Raven pose for a really long time, and then did a really weird cut and Punk walked off. After the break they showed a "WWE Active exclusive" with Kane going after Punk and almost choke slamming him off the stage. They cut back to Kane going crazy backstage throwing geeks around, looking for Punk backstage. This wasn't necessarily in poor taste, as it really is just what the WWE does, and it didn't feel like they were really disrespecting a man's memory. They then aired footage of the Shield laying Big Show out after RAW last week.

Rollins made it out with Ambrose and Reigns through the crowd for his match with the Big Show. Show sent Rollins to the floor, basically with a topé onto Ambrose. This led to the Shield going after Big Show anyway, so there wasn't really a point of setting a single's match up in the first place. They had Big Show run wild for a while until Reigns ran in with a spear and they actually got Show up for the triple powerbomb, which looked really impressive. This was very much like what they have been doing for the past few weeks, but everything that they did looked more impressive on the Big Show. Regardless of the current program I feel that all three men are really going to be something. Vickie was talking with Maddox backstage. Punk came by and complained about Kane, but Vickie made a no DQ match with Kane for the mainevent. There was the first of many Paul Bearer moments, with the first being the debut of Bearer in the WWF in 1991. Bryan and Ziggler were in the ring for a singles match; AJ and Langston obviously at Ziggler's side. They had a great TV match with tons of counters and nearfalls. The finish came when Bryan locked in the no lock, but Langston put his feet on the rope off of a distraction. That led to an exchange of counters with Ziggler grabbing the Zig Zag for the win. I

guess Ziggler is still higher up than Bryan...well...at least for now. Langston then hit his finish on Bryan after the match. There was a video package of the history of Lesnar vs. Triple H.

Tensai made it out with Clay, Candice and Naomi. Justin Roberts brought out Fandango, he didn't come out, but Tensai landed up making his entrance. Curtis overacted to the worst degree. He called Tensai a disgrace to dance He wanted Naomi to say his name and claimed that she was above Tensai, Clay and Candice. Tensai had an outburst, and Fandango then denied them a match. I can't see how this will not be the worst gimmick of 2013. There was a trailer for Rock's new G.I. Joe movie. Monday Night Trailers everybody. There was another Paul Bearer recap this time from WrestleMania XX. Sandow and Rhodes did a DX parody, it was great. This led to the New Age Outlaws making their way out. They did their schtick and had a match with the Rhode's Scholars, well that was until Brock Lesnar made it out to murder Billy Gunn and Road Dogg. Heyman cut a promo saying how Lesnar had destroyed Vince, Michaels and New Age Outlaws – this led to Heyman accepting Triple H's challenge, but only if he accepted their stipulations, only after he had signed the contract. Heyman then did the DX two words gimmick, but with “Brock Lesnar” in the place of “suck it”. I can see this leading to an MMA rules match – and I would be more than fine with that.

Mark Henry beat Kofi Kingston in a match that didn't go more than three minutes. Henry picked Kingston out of the air and landed the world's strongest slam for the win. Rhodes and Kaitlyn were backstage, Rhodes attempted to impress her, but Sandow came by with of all people, the Bella Twins. Vickie then came by making a match with the Rhode's Scholars vs. Sheamus & Orton. Ryback squashed Heath Slater as Henry made it out to the entrance ramp to watch. McIntyre went after Ryback after the match and Ryback took him out. Henry made his way down to the ring and gave McIntyre the World's Strongest Slam. Ryback landed another marching Samoan drop, and Henry a world's strongest slam. This led to a face-off between the two and the fans chanted “feed me more”. Next on Monday Night Trailers was a trailer for 'The Call'. Del Rio made it out for a match with Cesaro and delivered the cheesiest in-set promo possible saying that he was born in Mexico, but made in America. They had a decent match with Del Rio submitting Cesaro with an armbar. What in the world is the point of this US title? Matthews interviewed Kane saying that it must be hard for him, but Kane just looked down at the urn that was in his hands and walked off. There was another Paul Bearer video package this time with Kane's debut at the first Hell in a Cell. They then aired what was probably the highlight of the show, in the best video package that the WWE has aired in ages with John Cena vs. The Rock. It was just a great video package getting all of the main points across, and was the closest that you could get to a money video package.

It was time for the Rhode's Scholars versus Orton and Sheamus. It got way more time than you would have expected it to with Rhodes and Sandow getting the heat on Orton for what felt like a really long time before Orton landed a superplex and made the tag to Sheamus. Sheamus and Orton then finished the match soon afterwards landing the brogue kick and RKO, with Sheamus getting the pin on Sandow. They showed footage during the break of the Shield laying out Orton and Sheamus – this is getting pretty annoying. They aired some Paul Bearer tOuts – they were less embarrassing than usual. Chris Jericho made it out for RAW is Jericho (with no set), and my God is he over on this run for one reason or another. This turned to more RAW is Trailers with Jericho airing footage of the Marine 3. Miz was being congratulated by Jericho when Barrett made his way out and aired a trailer for his movie Deadman Down. The segment only went down hill from there with all three men doing the “really?” gimmick. Jericho then took his jacket off and saved the segment saying that he was a nine time IC champion and wanted to make it ten. Out came Maddox, and things went down hill once again. It was

made even worse by the fact that it was buried by Cole and Lawler on commentary; in fact without that it wouldn't have been half as bad. For some reason it was Jericho vs. Miz for a shot at the IC title in the next segment, I don't really know why this match was made since Cole and Lawler talked over the previous segment. Barrett was on commentary and finally ended the match when Miz was thrown into him. Miz landed the skull crushing finale on Barrett and Jericho the code breaker. I don't know exactly where this is going to lead, as it definitely felt thrown together from the onset. I can see them doing a threeway, which at least to me seems completely uninspired. They aired a 7th grade level Ricardo and Del Rio impersonation of Coulter and Del Rio on Mexican food. They aired a 1995 video of Paul Bearer being interrogated for the disappearance of Yokozuna.

Sin Cara was out for a match with Jack Swagger. However, Zeb Coulter cut a promo before he match saying how the people didn't cheer Sin Cara of their own accord, they cheered him because they were programmed to, due to all of the flips and the like. Coulter proceeded to call Cara a thief and said that most American's were afraid to do so. Suffice to say this did not get over. The crowd chanted "boring" and "what" throughout the whole thing. The fact of the matter is that this thing isn't going to get over. They proceeded to have a less than mediocre match with Swagger submitting Sin Cara. Del Rio actually made the save this week locking in an armbaar, with Coulter pulling Swagger to the floor. There was an interview with Halle Berry with David Otunga phoning in the middle of the interview and he said that he gave her number to someone who wanted to cause him harm. Kane phoned saying that he was her biggest fan and she triggered Kane's pyro in an empty arena in which Kane was standing. Monday Night Trailers!

Punk was in the ring for his mainevent no DQ match with Kane, who made his way out with the urn. Punk shot out on Kane with a pescado, but Kane soon began to pick Punk apart. This led to chants for CM Punk, so the overarching story didn't have that much of an effect on the crowd, at least from that



perspective. They really pushed the concept of "RAW overtime" hard, because they did in fact go long. Punk landed some shots with a steel chair that Kane had thrown into the ring, and he did the Undertaker's pose. Taker's dong went off in the middle of the match, which led to Kane getting a chokeslam win. Undertaker and Kane did their pose, but Punk landed a shot with the urn on Kane. Undertaker

eventually made his way into the ring, but Punk was already on the entrance ramp and did Undertaker's pose and Undertaker did his pose in return to close off the show.

RAW Ratings for March 11th 2013

This week's edition of Monday Night RAW was down in the ratings; however, it still pulled a better

number than the majority of three hour RAWs in the past. The show drew a 3.34 rating and 4.79 million viewers, down from last week's show average of over 5.0 million viewers. There was a showcase of the usual drop-off, but it made even more sense this week it given how lackluster the third hour was. The show was third for the night on cable, but it did in fact beat the JR Ewing funeral on Dallas, which drew 3.56 million viewers.

The opening segment with Undertaker coming out with the urn and the subsequent Punk promo did an opening of 3.46, which is down from the number that they have been opening at for the past few weeks. Big Show vs. Seth Rollins lost 9,000 viewers, which is a lesser loss than what they have been doing over the past few weeks in that segment, but they did have fewer viewers to begin with. Daniel Bryan vs. Ziggler gained 132,000 viewers; a good sign. The Fandango segment lost 298,000 viewers, which truly comes as no surprise. The New Age Outlaws match which led into the Brock Lesnar/Paul Heyman segment did the biggest gain of the show – 326,000 viewers to a 3.57 quarter.

The 20:00 to 21:00 hour drew 4.98 million viewers (2,236,000 viewers and a 1.7 rating in the 18-49 demo – the number two hour for the night).

Mark Henry vs. Kofi Kingston and the Ryback/3MB match with the Ryback/Henry segment that followed lost 179,000 viewers, fine for the post-21:00 drop-off. Del Rio versus Cesaro lost a further 265,000 viewers. Then the John Cena/Rock video lost 10,000 viewers, which is a real shame considering just how good that package was. The Randy Orton/Sheamus tag match at the 22:00 time slot gained 106,000 viewers to a 3.32 quarter.

The 21:00 to 22:00 hour drew 4.89 million viewers (2,269,000 viewers and a 1.79 rating in the 18-49 demo – the number one hour for the night)

The highlight reel segment with Jericho, Miz and Barrett actually gained 81,000 viewers, which is very surprising given that it was the post-22:00 segment and the actual segment in question was lackluster to say the least. The Miz/Jericho match that followed didn't fair as well losing 359,000 viewers; the largest loss on the show. Jack Swagger vs. Sin Cara lost a further 79,000 viewers. Then finally in the overrun, which went fifteen minutes over (so far over that they had to take a commercial break), CM Punk vs. Kane gained 153,000 viewers, so people obviously weren't all that invested in the mainevent, that coupled with the fact that the show went 15 minutes over. They closed at a 3.18.

The 22:00 to 23:15 hour drew 4.57 million viewers (2,144,000 viewers and a 1.69 rating – the bottom hour for the the night). The demos for the show were as follows: 2.8 in males 18-49, 2.3 in male teens, a 1.3 in female teens and a 1.2 in females 18-49.

WWE –NXT
March 13th 2013 – Full Sail University, Florida.
Ben Carass.

To open things up this week, a pre-titles video package rolled which hyped Alberto Del Rio's appearance on the show. Kassius Ohno appeared and Tony Dawson brought up his recent "exchanges" with William Regal; Regal said he hoped "all that silliness" was behind him. Derrick Bateman came down to face Ohno.

Derrick Bateman vs. Kassius Ohno

The two exchanged holds and a few chops at the start, until Bateman double-legged Kassius and fired up with some punches. Ohno rolled to the apron to stop the momentum then snapped Bateman over the top rope with a cravate to start the heat. Bateman fought up from another cravate and suddenly started his comeback, after which he hit three simultaneous tackle and cover spots in a bid to build some excitement; he failed. Ohno cut him off with a big boot and got the three count.

Kassius Ohno defeated Derrick Bateman via pinfall, at 4:16.

After the match, Ohno applied a variation of the Regal stretch with a cravate to Bateman; Regal ran down and broke up the hold then dropped Kassius on his rear with a left hook. Ohno sheepishly backed up the ramp as Regal solemnly looked on from the ring.

Not much to say about the match really, other than Bateman's comeback was certainly lacking some intensity and Ohno could have looked stronger, although I suppose he went over in 4 minutes so it's not all bad. The angle with Regal was done nicely; both men's facial expressions were tremendous. Ohno looked surprised/embarrassed to have been put on his backside by one shot and Regal appeared dismayed at resorting to violence. This was a good way to get this programme rolling after weeks of teases and hints.

Bo Dallas joined Renee Young in the back and claimed he couldn't explain how much he loathed Bray Wyatt then stated Wyatt would never forget what he was going to do to him tonight.

Following the commercial break, Dawson and Regal were at the desk; Regal looked morose then simply uttered: "I'm truly sorry; very unprofessional of me".

Emma came out with her wacky dance and awkward ring entrance gimmick; Summer Rae did her best Maryse impersonation during her arrival for the match they set up last week.

Emma vs. Summer Rae

Emma took control early and Summer backed off, however Summer delivered an awkward drop toehold then went to work on the leg. Summer applied an Indian deathlock during the heat and stole Paige's wild banshee scream; Emma landed a clothesline and followed up with a sunset flip, but Summer scored with a spinning heel kick to pick up the victory.

Summer Rae defeated Emma via pinfall, at 3:50.

Immediately after the fall, Paige made her return and hit the ring. Summer made a hasty exit from the fired up anti-Diva then fled through the crowd.

Thankfully, the match was better than Emma vs. Aksana from a couple of weeks ago. I'm not exactly sure if Emma is still a heel or not, but if she isn't then booking her as a goofy, cumbersome babyface is rather foolish. Summer was great here, her body language and ring presence were that of a truly confident heel, which gives me great hope for the feud with Paige.

Renee was back; this time with Adrian Neville. Neville said Oliver Grey would be fine then laid out an open challenge to any member of The Wyatt Family for next week.

It would be nice if we got more of these little promos to set up matches on WWE's main shows. How many times do we just get a lame graphic on Raw which leads into a match on SmackDown?

In a segment that was clearly not taped at Full Sail, Matt Striker was inexplicably on the show to interview Big E. Langston. Big E. stated his first title defence against Connor O'Brian would be "dominant, destructive and delicious".

Bray Wyatt made his way out and rambled about there being no time in his world then said if Bo Dallas was unwilling to make the ultimate sacrifice then he had already lost. Bo showed up with some fittingly generic new music for the contest.

Bo Dallas vs. Bray Wyatt

Wyatt took over after a big cross body then got the heat. Bo showed his fight with some shots then tried for a sunset flip; Wyatt tried to drop all of his weight down to reverse the hold, but Dallas moved for the transition into his comeback. Bo fired up with forearms, however Wyatt cut him off with a urinagi then hit a running splash in the corner. Dallas countered the swinging reverse STO with a forearm and scored with his belly-to-belly for the finish.

Bo Dallas defeated Bray Wyatt via pinfall, at 6:28.

As Bo headed up the ramp, Harper and Rowan jumped him from behind. The Family beat down Dallas; Bo came back with a flurry and sent Wyatt's goons packing, however Wyatt took out Dallas from behind with his reverse STO.

Basic stuff during the match, however the decision to put Bo over was pretty dumb. Wyatt has been undefeated on NXT and nobody made a big deal about this being his first loss. Furthermore, this feud had the potential to run for at least a month, but Bo already got his win so what is the point? I know The Family attacked him after the match, but surely that could have happened during the bout and lead to a Wyatt victory. What is the payoff going to be since Bo already beat Wyatt? This booking decision puzzled me.

Justin Gabriel was interviewed backstage by Renee; he claimed being in the South African Militia had messed up Leo Kruger's head then challenged Leo to a match next week.

Ricardo Rodriguez introduced Alberto Del Rio over his ring music and it came off a lot better than when he performs the ceremony to a silent arena. Del Rio put over NXT and the Full Sail crowd then said the next WWE or World Champion was potentially in the back. Antonio Cesaro interrupted Alberto and called himself the "greatest US Champion in WWE history" then challenged Del Rio to a champion vs. champion match so he could prove himself as the greatest champion in the WWE Universe. Dusty Rhodes came out to the stage; The Dream said Del Rio was a guest then told Cesaro he didn't get to make matches. Dust said there would be a champion vs. champion match and booked Cesaro vs. Big E. Langston; Big E. made his entrance for the main event.

Champion vs. Champion Match: Big E. Langston (NXT Champ) vs. Antonio Cesaro (US Champ)

Big E. showed off his power and no-sold a European uppercut; Cesaro landed two more uppercuts then a knee strike and went for some heat. Big E. fought up from a chinlock for the hope, however was shut down by Cesaro's falling knee drop from the top. Antonio hit a gutwrench suplex then applied a chinlock; Big E. fought up again and started his comeback with a pair of clotheslines. Big E. delivered a big body check, however Corey Graves ran in and attacked Big E.

Big E. Langston defeated Antonio Cesaro via disqualification, at 4:54.

Big E. made quick work of Graves, but Connor O'Brian ran in and the two heels stomped Langston down. They beat on Big E some more and the show went off the air with the pair standing tall over the fallen champion.

The match was nothing; Big E. looked strong in there with Cesaro, but it ultimately was meaningless. The post-match stuff was fine in setting up the possibility for a three way feud over the title, but after the terrible O'Brian/Graves/Dallas match, I am less than enthralled at the thought of this.

This show was rather odd; none of the matches stood out, but lots of angles were continued or set up so it served its purpose in some ways. The Regal/Ohno situation and the Paige/Summer Rae feud are defiantly the stand out angles; even the Title picture was set up admirably. The finish to Wyatt/Dallas was inexplicable, but other than that I like the way this episode built around feuds and continued the angles.

TNA Impact March 14th 2013 Sears Center Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Overall Thoughts:

I really did enjoy this edition of Impact. It wasn't the perfect show, and some of the niggling logical inconsistencies that usually hamper the show still managed to rear their heads, but I was in many cases able to look past them due to some great performances. Ray is far and away the best all around performer in the company, as from what I have heard/read/seen he simply gets it. There are certain small things that he does that make whatever he is involved in feel more important and serious, which is a very big positive considering the state of the Aces & Eights angle a few weeks ago. To be honest, I was actually excited for Impact this week, which isn't something that I have been able to say for a very long time. While, they did overpower the show as always, it really didn't feel like they were hampering the progression of the show. There are some big niggling issues with the story, such as the fact that the Aces & Eights still don't have a truly defined direction, but that will come with time. Their biggest issue at this point will be getting a babyface to chase for the title, as of right now they are running pretty low. However, since they have switched to the new model it is far easier, because if they were running a pay-per-view every month things would be very difficult. I assume that they will be going with Angle/Ray for the next show, and possibly Styles/Ray for Bound for Glory, but I could be wrong.

The show opened with a phenomenal video package of the Bully Ray heel turn at Lockdown. It was numerous times better than the standard drama style recaps that they usually start the shows off with.

They then cut to the Sears Center Arena, which, just like at Lockdown, looked very major league. Chavo and Hernandez made it out for a tag team title match, but the Aces & Eights ran in for a beat down. Devon got on the mic and brought out Bully Ray. Out came Ray to a remixed version of the Aces & Eights theme and he gave Taz hug at ringside. He opened up with his “do you know who I am?” gimmick, and then said something similar to the pay-per-view saying that he used Sting, screwed Brooke, and fooled the fans and Hogan. I was really happy in the fact that they made sense of the Briscoe/Bischoff run-in. He said it was the plan to have him escape the cage, but Hogan gave him the advice and he wanted to do something memorable – and they did in one night what the NWO could never do. Ray dared Hogan to come out and fire them, and they closed off the segment. Sting was freaking out backstage, saying that he was going to get Ray, but first he needed to talk to Hogan. Kim made it out for a Knockout's match tag match. She said that Terrell had been placed on probation. Tara, with Jesse, Mickie James and Velvet Sky made it out next. Sky in one of the highlights of the match pulled Kim to her own corner, so she had to pull her all the way back across the ring to make the tag to James. The story was that Terrell and Kim argued for the whole match until Terrell snapped after Kim pie-faced her. This led to Terrell slapping Kim and everyone landing their finishers before Sky landed the pedigree on Tara. I sense that Kim slapping Terrell will further the probation angle, which makes no sense since Kim did lay her hands on an official. The Aces & Eights were drinking around a table and they left a voice mail on Brooke's phone. There was a commercial for Slammiversary in Boston.

Hogan was approached by the stalker cameramen and he refused to answer any questions. Robbie E and Rob Terry made it out for a rematch. Robbie T is now going by the Robbie Terry name. E called T a fluke and said that T wouldn't be so lucky. He attempted to attack Terry before the bell, but Terry was having none of it. This led to “feed me more chants” believe it or not before Terry squashed E and went into his post match dance. Sting walked into Hogan's office and they cut to the Aces & Eights fooling around. They went back to Sting and Hogan, and Hogan of course blamed Sting for trusting Ray. Hogan cut a great promo saying that he knew how the movie would end and this was the end of the movie, and he sent Sting out of his office in a fit of rage. There was an AJ Styles retrospective. Aries and Roode walked by Sting in matching “Dirty Heels” t-shirts (absolute stupidity). They worked over Sting's raw nerve, picking him apart, Sting said that the only thing that he wanted to do was fight. Roode walked off and Sting said that he would be facing Aries. Styles was apparently supposed to make it out, his music hit, but he didn't come out. Since they were in Chicago Daniels and Kazarian made it out in Road Warrior facepaint. They called the Legion of Doom the second best tag team in history, and they did an LOD impersonation. Daniels then called the Road Warriors “fake tough”. Daniels christened their team the Legion of Boom. James Storm's music hit and he came down to interrupt. Storm said that the LOD were bigger, taller and more over than they would ever be – yes, more insider references. I don't see the point. Storm then managed to start a match with Daniels completely out of nowhere. Storm averted the BME, went for the superkick, but was distracted. Still, he managed to pin with Daniels with, believe it or not, a back cracker. This led to a two on one beatdown on Storm. The crowd chanted for Styles and out came. He landed one shot on Kazarian and they bailed. It was all predictable up until Styles landed a lariat on Storm and left. Styles as an anti-heel could be something that the company really needs right now.

There was a video recap of the Angle/Briscoe cage match. Angle was walking backstage when he was distracted by Briscoe and beaten down by the Aces & Eights. Park came down in a suit for a promo in his home town. He listed his three proudest moments of his life graduating from law school at the top of his class, becoming a partner at Park, Park and Park and being in an Impact ring. He was talking about Chicago sports when Morgan came down to the ring. He pretty much called Park Hogan's biggest

mistake and said that he was going to eliminate Hogan's mistakes one by one. He claimed that he was going to start with Park and asked for him to get out of his ring. Park was going to leave, but he called Chicago a “dump city” and Park said that they never back down from a fight in Chicago. Park challenged Morgan to a fight, Morgan laughed it off, but Park put up his fisticuffs. Morgan said that they do things on his time and waited until Park turned his back before he laid him out with the carbon footprint. He said that his time was next week and left. They cut back to the Aces & Eights fun table. Ray asked for Hogan to fire them again, and if he didn't take the initiative they would ruin the show. They then got up to do just that. Footage aired of Brooke's backstage reaction to Bully Ray; probably the best piece of acting that Brooke has ever done.

Taz and Tenay made fun of the “Dirty Heels” t-shirts saying that they must have dirty feet. Aries and Sting made it out for the mainevent. Roode and Sing brawled on the floor off of a referee distraction and Sting landed the stinger splash on the guardrail before Aries landed a big axe handle. Roode was thrown out, which was a distraction that allowed for Aries to land a low blow and topé. Aries attempted the scorpion deathlock, but couldn't figure out how to lock it in, which led to him yelling “how do you do this crap?”. Aries landed a big dropkick right to the face. Sting landed the scorpion deathdrop, but Aries still kicked out. Sting locked in the scorpion deathlock, but the Aces & Eights ran in for the no-contest. Ray got on the mic saying that he used Sting, Ray called Hogan out repeatedly. His music finally hit and he came out after the break. He claimed that firing the Aces & Eights would be the easy way out, and they wouldn't be getting the easy way out. He would band every member of the TNA locker room together to fight against the Aces & Eights, and out came the Impact roster sprinting down to the ring. This led to a melee that I thought was going to close off the show, but Ray got on the mic after laying out everybody. He asked if he was doing something memorable and laid everyone out with a chain. Ray and Hogan then had a face-off to close the show off.

WWE SmackDown – March 15th 2013.
Allen County War Memorial Coliseum: Fort Wayne, IN
Ben Carass.

For the first time in months they forewent the video recap and Sheamus came out to kick off the show; Lilian Garcia announced a tag team match as the opener. Footage of The Shield attacking Sheamus and Randy Orton on Raw rolled then Orton emerged to team with the Irishman. Brad Maddox joined Cole and Josh again on the call; he said Booker T and Vickie had reached an agreement for him to fill in while JBL was away, “rock climbing”. The Rhodes Scholars appeared on the stage; Sandow claimed: they were robbed of their victory over The Outlaws on Raw, their endeavour with the Bellas had been postponed and they were forced into a match they were not ready for against Orton and Sheamus. Cody said the two had ruined their “date” then stated The Rhodes Scholars would ruin the babyfaces’ night.

Randy Orton & Sheamus vs. Team Rhodes Scholars

Sheamus used his strength to beat up both Rhodes Scholars early; Sandow took advantage of a distraction from Cody and hung up Sheamus over the top rope. Sheamus managed to fight back on the outside, but Rhodes hit a disaster kick off the announce table to start the heat.

Sheamus fought from underneath after the break, yet was shut down by a Cody Rhodes dropkick. Sheamus stayed competitive throughout the heat, constantly fighting back, however The Rhodes

Scholars were able to cut him off from Orton and made frequent tags. Sheamus came off the top with a shoulder block to set up the hot tag; Orton ran wild on Cody with his predictable offence then landed the hangman's DDT. Sheamus drilled Sandow with the Brogue kick and Orton planted Cody with an RKO for the victory.

Sheamus & Randy Orton defeated Team Rhodes Scholars via pinfall, at 9:57.

The Shield's music hit after the bell and the trio appeared on the Titantron; Ambrose said Orton and Sheamus didn't need to be afraid, but Rollins stated that maybe they did then Reigns added, "just not tonight". Ambrose told the faces that they were standing in The Shield's ring and if they didn't believe them they could ask The Big Show. Rollins reminded everyone that they had laid out John Cena and The Rock in the centre of the ring then called them "criminals" for taking the main event spot at WrestleMania away from the most dominant force in the WWE: The Shield. Rollins continued and claimed The Shield not being in a match at WrestleMania was the biggest injustice he ever heard of; Ambrose then challenged Orton and Sheamus to find any partner they wanted. The two babyfaces accepted the match and Rollins informed them that the showcase of the immortals would become the showcase of justice. Ambrose started, "at WrestleMania you will believe..." and Reigns finished, "... believe in The Shield".

That was quite an opening segment and was a welcomed break from the predictable format of guys coming out one-by-one for a promo until the GM shows up and books a match. First of all, the match was good; it could have been given more time, but still it was fun to watch. The Rhodes Scholars actually looked like they belonged in the ring with top guys during the heat. I hope WWE realises Sandow and Rhodes are much better off as a team at this stage, as they were only apart for a few weeks and they were already beginning to be crushed underneath the glass ceiling. The promo from The Shield was excellent as usual and was a nice way to set up the storyline for the show of who Sheamus and Orton would pick to be their partner.

A graphic hyped Jericho vs. Swagger as the main event then another set up Ryback vs. Mark Henry, before another Fandango vignette aired. Cole and Josh recapped Brock Lesnar killing The New Age Outlaws (which I admit, I never saw coming) and Paul E. accepting the match with Triple H at WrestleMania. Cole then speculated about what kind of stipulation Brock would choose, No Holds Barred, Hell in a Cell and Last Man Standing were all mentioned, which leads me to believe it will be none of them.

Sheamus and Orton were in the back, they had apparently decided on whom their partner would be; The Big Show walked in and offered to be the third man to take on The Shield. Unfortunately for Show, Ryback entered and Sheamus said, "the two of us pick him"; Big Show didn't say a word and walked away.

Thankfully, I read the spoilers and knew where this was going, or I would have surely cursed out my TV at the lunacy of Show not getting the spot.

Layla and Kaitlyn were ready to take on Tamina and Aksana after the break; according to some arena reports I checked out, this match was diabolically bad.

Layla & Kaitlyn (Diva's Champion) vs. Tamina Snuka & Aksana

Tamina tossed around Layla for a while then the heels made some quick tags and kept the heat on; the Funkadactyls were shown watching in the back for some reason. Layla finally got the hot tag after some atrocious selling and Kaitlyn fired up on Aksana; the Diva's champ hit an inverted DDT, but Tamina landed a cheap shot from the outside. This made no difference however, as Kaitlyn sent the bumbling heels into each other and caught Aksana with a spear. Layla tagged herself in and did her phony springboard crossbody to get the three count; for no explainable reason, Aksana no-sold Kaitlyn's finish and was on her feet, in position to take the move.

Layla & Kaitlyn defeated Tamina Snuka & Aksana via pinfall, at 3:48.

This actually was no worse than your standard Layla or Kaitlyn match; Kaitlyn vs. Tamina from last week was much more horrible. The match went a little too long, Layla's selling and the finish bothered me greatly, but this wasn't quite the train wreck I was expecting. Obviously Layla is turning to go after the belt, so forget Punk/Taker; we've all got that to look forward to.

The Funkadactyls came across The Bellas in the back and told the twins they had been a big influence on them; Cameron claimed they "grew up watching" Nikki and Brie. Nikki sarcastically said, "We influenced two hoochie mamas to come to WWE and shake their butts for a dancing dinosaur and his fat friend that thinks he's Japanese; isn't that great." Brie said they didn't mean to disrespect The Funkadactyls and they just wanted to introduce themselves; The Bellas offered a handshake, but Cameron and Naomi looked suspiciously at each other. Nikki and Brie seemingly are badasses now and began to brawl with the "hoochie mamas"; Mike Rotunda and Jamie Noble ran in with Rod Zapata and Mike Chioda. The referees broke up the melee, while Noble and Rotunda looked on like completely helpless goofs.

The Raw Rebound aired then Kane was accompanied out by Daniel Bryan; Cole said he would face Dolph Ziggler after the break. Ziggler didn't get his entrance again and was already in the ring with AJ and Big E.

Kane (Tag Champion) w/ Daniel Bryan vs. Dolph Ziggler w/ AJ & Big E. Langston

Kane took it to Ziggler early; Ziggler got some shots in, but Kane continued to control the match. Ziggler was dumped on the apron and hung Kane up on the top rope then came off the top with a dropkick; Dolph got some heat then cut off a comeback with his jumping DDT for a two count. Kane landed a clothesline and a vertical suplex, but Ziggler countered a sidewalk slam into a sleeper; Kane powered out and caught Dolph coming off the second rope with an uppercut for a near fall, before hitting his big clothesline off the top. AJ jumped on the apron and distracted Kane while Bryan brawled with Big E. at ringside; Big E. tossed Bryan over the rail into the timekeeper's area but turned right into a boot from Kane. The finish came when Ziggler caught Kane with the Rockerdropper as he climbed back inside the ring then Dolph followed up with the Zigzag to get the pin.

Dolph Ziggler defeated Kane via pinfall, at 7:20.

Kane snatched Ziggler by the throat after the match, however Big E. nailed him with a bodycheck and planted Kane with his inverted front powerslam. Cole made sure to let us know that Dolph had beaten both Tag Champs in the same week and Big E. had destroyed both of them as well.

The match was rather ordinary, but it was fine, which is more or less the story of every Kane match. Maybe the Gods of pro wrestling: Gotch and Hackenschmidt heard my plea last week to have Zigler finally start winning some matches and took it upon themselves to awaken the creative team...More likely, it was Vince going insane as is usual at this time of year and forced a reshuffle of the undercard of Mania. Sadly the best the writers could come up with was to put the potential future World Champion in a programme for a secondary title. Last week I talked about the possibility of The Outlaws facing HellNo for the titles, which was based on pure speculation; I think it pretty safe to say this week that Dolph and Big E. are set up to go for the straps at WrestleMania. That is of course, if Vince doesn't blow another gasket in the three weeks we have left.

Del Rio and Ricardo parodied another Zeb Colter and Jack Swagger YouTube video; this week the subject was "borders". Ricardo talked about immigrants sneaking across the border to take jobs (he even referenced the Goobacks episode of South Park, by repeating: "They took our jobs!") and stealing the American's freedom. Del Rio said they were referring to Canadians; Ricardo stated they "speak with funny accents, eh" and play sports on ice then claimed the Canadians were smuggling an expensive, additive substance into the US. Del Rio pulled out a bottle of maple syrup and Ricardo told people to think before buying any syrup about how they were "destroying 'Merica". Del Rio had to be fed the "we the people" line from Ricardo to close the skit.

Just like last week, this was not particularly funny. Every idea creative has come up with for Del Rio to get over as a babyface seems to have been completely ineffective; pandering to the Mexicans didn't work then sucking up to America fans failed. Now he's an unfunny comedian that cares more about making jokes and spoof videos than defending the Heavyweight Championship of the World at the biggest show of the year. Now I can see why Vince flipped his lid with these guys.

In the locker room, R-Truth and Chris Jericho pretended to be amused by what they had just watched on a monitor then Swagger and Colter walked in. Swagger asked Jericho if he thought it was funny when he won the Elimination Chamber and now is fighting for "the soul" of America at WrestleMania then told Jericho he snuck across the border from Canada. Jericho informed Swagger that even though he grew up in Canada, he was born in America then called Zeb a cross between Rush Limbaugh and Yosemite Sam. Y2J decided to cut Alberto's promo for him and said Swagger shouldn't be concerned with immigration, but he should be concerned with facing Del Rio for the World title at WrestleMania. Jericho then stated Swagger should be worried about facing him tonight and told the two to "shut the hell up".

The Great Khali and Natalya were dancing in the ring; Fandango appeared on the stage and buried their abhorrent moves. He then wanted to hear Khali pronounce his name correctly; Khali said, "You Fandango, I know you; you Fandango". In an act of tediousness futility, Fandango tried to teach Khali how to pronounce his name one syllable at a time. This obviously failed and Fandango postponed his debut yet again.

If the idea is for Fandango to debut at WrestleMania then I would put him on the list of guys that will fail to get over in MetLife Stadium. The character produces "go away" heat, which more often than not, doesn't translate into genuine heel heat during a match.

They showed the Rock/Cena video package then Matt Striker was in the back with Sheamus and Orton;

Striker said Booker had just made the match with The Shield official and asked Sheamus if the odds were even now Ryback was their partner. Sheamus said the odds were now in their favour and Orton added Ryback would show what he can do in his match against Mark Henry. Out of nowhere, Roman Reigns speared Sheamus through the interview set; The Shield destroyed the two and slammed Orton into the large steel arena door then sent Sheamus through a table. Mike Choida and Rod Zapata arrived again; “let’s go, break it up”, one of the refs said sternly after the babyfaces had already been decimated.

After a break, Booker T watched on as the doctor checked over Sheamus and Teddy Long attended to Randy Orton; Ryback walked in and asked what happened. Teddy began to explain, but Booker cut him off and told Ryback to go handle his business with Mark Henry in the ring.

Mark Henry meandered down the ramp for the contest; Ryback came down and looked even more jacked up than ever.

Ryback vs. Mark Henry



The two locked up, however The Shield’s music hit and they came down through the people; Mark Henry backed out of the ring and the trio began their attack. Ryback disposed of The Shield quickly then Henry teased a return to the ring; this distracted Ryback long enough for The Shield to pounce once again. The triumvirate beat down Ryback and delivered the triple powerbomb before

leaving through the people.

Henry got back in the ring and hit three World’s strongest slams in a row on the defenceless Ryback then yelled, “you will not run through me!”

Ryback and Mark Henry went to a no contest.

When this match was announced on Raw, I thought they were going to hot shot this feud and kill 3 more weeks of potential build; luckily my fears were put to rest when the spoilers came in. The only thing I would have done differently (besides booking this match on SmackDown in the first place) would have been The Shield jump Ryback before the bell and saved the first lock up of the monsters until Mania. With any luck, we won’t get a rematch on Raw or SmackDown and the match will happen on April 7th; that way the Big Show can team with Orton & Sheamus as the last 3 weeks of TV have built in that direction.

Jack Swagger was led out by Zeb Colter for the main event; Chris Jericho made his entrance to face the real American. Cole referred to the lamentable Highlight Reel from Raw as, “very entertaining”, after burying the segment almost to the Earth’s core at the instruction of Vince on Monday.

Chris Jericho vs. Jack Swagger w/Zeb Coulter



Jericho sent Swagger off the apron with his springboard dropkick, after Swagger controlled briefly at the start; following the break, Swagger was in control and he had the heat on Jericho. In a display of poor editing, Swagger had Jericho in a front facelock then we got a shot of Zeb on the outside, after which they cut to Jericho covering Swagger for a two count. Jericho fought out of an attempted ankle lock, however Swagger hit a belly-to-

belly for a two count. After another break, Jericho scored with a DDT for a near fall; Swagger countered the Walls of Jericho into an ankle lock, but Jericho rolled through to lock in the Walls.

Zeb got on the apron and Swagger made it to the ropes; Jericho badmouthed Zeb then hit Swagger with a dropkick and sent him into the steel steps. Jericho came off the top with a crossbody for a two count, but Swagger countered the Code Breaker and landed a gutwrench powerbomb for the three count.

Jack Swagger defeated Chris Jericho via pinfall, at 16:53.

Swagger climbed the ropes and pointed at the WrestleMania sign; Cole hyped Triple H and “perhaps The Undertaker” for Raw on Monday as the show went off the air.

The main event was lacklustre and a bit of a dud; I suppose the positives coming out of it are they got the gutwrench over as a finish again, which should play into the match at Mania and Swagger got a win over a big name like Jericho.

While there was some stuff on this show that played into Mania; such as Booker officially making The Shield vs. Sheamus, Orton & Ryback, Zigler pinning Kane and Mark Henry annihilating Ryback; looking at the big picture, nothing really mattered. Booker will most likely be overruled by Vince or Ryback will ask to face Henry instead; the announcement of Henry/Ryback and the Tag title match will likely be saved for Raw, making SmackDown virtually insignificant once again. Just like last week at the end of the episode, we more-or-less ended up right back where we started. Don't get me wrong, there were lots of entertaining stuff on this show: the opener, The Shield appearances and Henry's destruction; as a standalone episode I would rate it above other recent editions, however they will certainly show the most “important” parts on Raw anyway, which gives the audience even less

incentive to tune in on Friday nights.

Bits & Pieces

I just wanted to make a few notes on the Paul Bearer story from last week. Paul Bearer past away from a suspected blood clot. I also neglected to mention that he was at the Gulf Coast Wrestlers' Reunion that week and was the emcee, although he was confined to a wheelchair due to weakness. He was also suffering the effects of a respiratory infection that he contracted a few weeks ago. Another sad note is that he was set to receive the Lou Thesz award at Cauliflower Alley this year.

New Japan president Takaaki Kidani took particular offense to the fact that the March 3rd New Japan show from Korakuen Hall showed up so quickly on the internet. He put particular blame on Dailymotion and the torrent sites. The funny thing is that the March 3rd show wasn't even a pay-per-view, and given the fact that the pay-per-views seem to surface online before they expire at this point, I would be more upset about that if I was him. I for one discourage the piracy of say the internet-pay-per-views, simply because they are easily available and New Japan deserves money for their product. However, when something isn't available to you, in this case the TV show, I don't see as much of a moral problem with it – in fact those are normally by sources for the reports that I do. Still, I do have a problem with some of the things that are uploaded to torrent sites such as DVDs and the like, although I understand the fact that torrent sites are in fact torrent sites; and you should expect as much. It is very hard to draw the line sometimes, as I am forced to download wrestling TV, not because I refuse to pay for a cable service, but because I cannot access full and timely versions of the show from my geographical location.

News began to circulate a few days ago that CM Punk had been seriously injured at a house show in Bridgeport Connecticut, originally it looked like they were going to have to make some big changes when it came to Mania plans, but apparently he simply wasn't able to work the house show, and should be fine for WrestleMania and presumably RAW on Monday.

Next Week's Issue

Next week we look at New Japan's New Japan Cup, more on Bully Ray's post Lockdown heel turn, more on the Road to WrestleMania, the news, a little creativity and so much more!

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