



Cubed Circle Newsletter

We are back (hopefully) on time with another newsletter this week, and I am pleased to announce that all technical issues are fixed, and everything, at least for now (I am sure it will change) is running smoothly. In this week's issue we cover the current WrestleMania direction, the Jack Swagger situation, the location for WrestleMania XXX, the new WWE title, we preview New Japan's anniversary show, look at New Japan's February 11th house show, Elimination Chamber, the RAW following it, the ratings thereof, the last Impact from England, plus Ben Carass covers NXT and SmackDown as always!

-Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

News

Mania 29 Still Riddled With Uncertainty

Normally by the RAW after the Elimination Chamber and most of the time even before then the majority of the main programs have already been set in place for WrestleMania and are reaching their peaks. However, that doesn't seem to be the case this year, as there is still a fast amount of uncertainty regarding the top four matches on the card this year. This is a bit of a strange idea considering that we had an idea of what three out of the four of those programs were going to be months ago, but things change.

Since after RAW 1000 sometime most people have speculated that the top match at this year's WrestleMania would be Rock versus Cena II for the WWE championship, and as the months wore on these thoughts seemed to be confirmed. Yet here we are, towards the end of February 2013 and the match still isn't official. Instead, Rock defended the title against Punk in a rematch at the Elimination Chamber, but they had a dusty finish and John Cena and CM Punk are now vying for the Mania opportunity. Punk was originally supposed to be in a program with the Undertaker at WrestleMania, but even that match has come into question as the Undertaker still hasn't shown up.

There is always the possibility of them doing a triple threat match as the main event of this year's WrestleMania if Undertaker is unable to make the show, but I would assume that they are going to have Undertaker cost Punk the championship shot building to a match, which honestly would probably work out better than a three-way. While that is the money match and it, plus one other match, are probably the only

ones that matter in the long run when it comes to drawing potential, it is worrying to some degree that they don't have this in place. In some ways it could be a good idea, as having Cena and Rock doing what they did last year for six or seven weeks would probably become rather tedious.

Those aren't the only other two matches that are currently up in the air as the World Title match and Lesnar/Triple H matches still haven't been put into place. I would assume that they are going with Lesnar/Triple H following the Vince McMahon angle, but considering the fact that they sold that Vince had broken his hip they really shouldn't have had him back so soon. There is a match set up next week with Heyman versus McMahon, so I would expect that to lead into the Brock Lesnar angle.

The World Title program was set up in around the time frame that you would have expected, but given the fact that Swagger was charged with a DUI, speeding and possession of marijuana they may have to change that match too. Those three offenses were minor offenses and depending on how they view Swagger and the program he could simply be fined, which is what happens with a lot of the top guys, but I would even opt for a suspension.

The thing with Swagger is that they gave him an opportunity, the biggest of his entire career, and instead of cherishing and respecting that opportunity he went out speeding under the influence. That would tell me as the promoter that I couldn't have faith in that person and that they don't deserve to be in a mainevent spot, let alone win the championship. Everyone has differing opinions when it comes to marijuana use, and if he was using it at home and some how got busted maybe I would feel differently. However, the reality is that he was not only putting his own life in danger by driving under the influence, but he was also endangering other motorists.

The Swagger/Coulter anti-immigration angle has garnered a lot of media attention, much like the RJ Brewer character in Lucha Libre USA, from which this angle draws its inspiration. This led to some interesting attacks on the WWE and comments from both the left and right. It's funny, because I commented in the RAW report how great Alex Jones would be as a wrestling character, but he reportedly went nuts on his radio show when talking about the angle. WWE actually contacted him to make an appearance, but he hasn't said anything publicly yet.

In a slightly more bizarre altercation conservative political commentator, Glen Beck, attacked not only the WWE for the angle, but also its fans. As a part of WWE's rebuttal they had Jack Swagger and Zeb Coulter cut a promo saying how what they do is entertainment, and invited him to plead his case on RAW. Beck later responded by basically saying that he would rather be doing anything else. There are currently rumors that the RAW script for Monday features many stabs at Beck, but we all know that plans change by the minute.

It is a bit of a strange situation, because they could put Swagger on a 30 day suspension and have him come back just in time for WrestleMania, but then he would be off of TV and they would have to have Zeb Coulter cut all of the promos for him, which he already does, and get all of the heat, which would be rather difficult. Knowing the WWE they will probably capitalize on the media coverage that this has received and do the match, fine Swagger and then drop him down to the mid-card

after Mania. It isn't necessarily what I would do, but I could see them going in that direction.

Of course, they could always go with Ziggler, which they have set up for, but then that would beg the question of what to do about the Money in the Bank briefcase, as I feel that when they do elevate Ziggler they have to be in it for the long haul and keep him up there. However, we should know their stance by Monday, or Tuesday at the latest.

The only other match that we really know of is Kane versus Daniel Bryan, which can only be a positive for Bryan as his team with Kane hasn't done him any favors in the long run. There were rumors of a Ryback match with Jericho, but after the last few weeks of programming that seems less than likely. There have also been talks of a Ryback heel turn, but I don't see how they will have enough time for that, unless of course they have him turn on Sheamus.

The only other people who really need a main position at Mania are the Shield, and as of right now I can't really think of a valid direction for them since all of the top talent will be locked up already. Although, if one thing is for sure is that they shouldn't beat them any time soon.

WrestleMania XXX Superdome

Sticking with the topic of WrestleMania...the location for WrestleMania XXX was officially announced this week at a corporate press conference featuring the Rock, John Cena, Triple H and Vince McMahon while the WWE were in New Orleans for the Elimination Chamber pay-per-view. As rumors and speculation suggested the 30th anniversary of WrestleMania will take place at the Superdome, a venue that hasn't hosted a big wrestling show in years.

Before the announcement of WrestleMania 29 in the New York market I would have expected them to have done WrestleMania 30 there, but considering the fact that they would have to host WrestleMania in the same market two years straight chances were that they would need a different city. In a way it is strange to think that the 30th anniversary of WrestleMania will take place in a city that has never hosted it before, as WrestleMania 1, 10 and 20 were all hosted in New York City.

I don't know if there was any discussion of them doing WrestleMania XXX at Madison Square Garden, but at the very least the thought must have crossed somebody's mind. They could have made it work in theory, because although WrestleMania is now a stadium show, it would have been in the New York market and they could have spiked the ticket prices. Still, given the fact that WrestleMania hasn't been hosted in an arena of that size since 2006 I would find it rather unlikely.

Of course the Superdome played host to the biggest matches in Mid-south wrestling history under Bill Watts, which gives it historical significance in some ways. However, Mania 30 will undoubtedly be the biggest wrestling event when it comes to attendance in that building, even if some of those Superdome shows hold up better in local lore.

WWE Reveals Long Awaited New Belt



The WWE finally revealed the long awaited redesigned WWE Championship belt this Monday in the main event segment with the Rock. The title was originally planned to be used during CM Punk's reign, but they obviously chose to wait until Rock was the champion. There have been rumours for what seems like forever about a new belt, and it

has been confirmed for quite some time that the belt had been created and only needed to see the light of day.

As far as the design goes it is a vast improvement and can be taken far more seriously than the spinner belt. I don't have as much against the spinner belt as some people do, but in terms of legitimacy it was very difficult to take seriously. In terms of the new belt it looks far more solid and major league, the only gripe that I have with it, and it was the thing that jumped out at me as soon as I saw it, is that the bottom portion of the WWE logo makes it look skewed. Other than that I really have no complaints about it.

I know that it is hard to believe, but the spinner championship was around for over double the length of time as the undisputed belt, which lasted from 2002-2005, and it also lasted more than the WWF Attitude title, which ran from 1998-2002. In fact, it ran longer than both of them combined, which I found astounding. It was a good idea to change the title now, as it will get a lot of media coverage with it being around Rock's waist and all.

New Japan 41st Anniversary Show – Tanahashi vs. Devitt

New Japan are running their 41st Anniversary show on the 3rd of March at Korakuen Hall, which will not be on internet-pay-per-view, but will be broadcast live on Samurai TV in Japan. It is shaping up to be a pretty interesting card, particularly when it comes to the main event match between Hiroshi Tanahashi and Prince Devitt.

The match was originally set up before New Japan's last pay-per-view, the New Beginning, when Devitt pinned Tanahashi in a tag match teaming up with Karl Anderson to face Tanahashi and Taguchi. The finish came as a major surprise, as it isn't customary for junior heavyweights to pin heavyweights in that kind of match, plus in theory it would set up a title match at the next show, which I know a lot of people were excited about. Well, Tanahashi got his pinfall back in a tag team match the night after the pay-per-view, but they are still doing the match at the Anniversary show, but not for the title.

Instead Tanahashi said that if he does not win his match he will vacate the title, which makes me think that they may be doing a similar thing to what All Japan did with Get Wild last year, as in have Tanahashi lose to Devitt and then enter the New Japan cup to reclaim the title. Initially I wasn't a big fan of it being non-title, as it took the edge off the match, but after they added the new stipulation I changed my stance

somewhat. It makes logical sense for it to be non-title given the fact that Tanahashi pinned Devitt, and the nearfalls will be even more believable given the stipulation.

In terms of the match itself I am expecting nothing less than a phenomenal match. It is in many ways a dream match as you have Tanahashi who is probably the strongest case for best wrestler in the world, and Prince Devitt who is one of the best technical wrestlers in the world. Neither man ever has a bad match, and when they are given the mainevent they always shine so the chances of this match being great are very high.

The other big match on the show is Shinsuke Nakamura defending his Intercontinental Championship against one half of the IWGP Tag-Team champions, Lance Archer, in what should be a very intriguing match. It is a part of the ongoing Suzuki-gun/CHAOS feud and I fully expect Nakamura to retain. The other Suzuki-gun/CHAOS match on the show is an eight-man elimination match with Kazuchika Okada, Tomohiro Ishii, Gedo and Jado versus Minoru Suzuki, Davey Boy Smith Jr., Kengo Mashimo and TAKA Michinoku. Given the fact that it is an elimination match it could be very good, as all of the members of CHAOS apart from Jado and most of the people on Suzuki-gun have the opportunity to take part in some great sequences.

I expect the match to come down to Okada and Suzuki with Suzuki getting the win in some devious way – that would make the most sense if they are building towards Okada finally getting the big win. Apart from your standard multiman matches on the show there is also a Junior Heavyweight Tag Team Championship match with the Time Splitters versus Jushin Liger and Tiger Mask, in a match where I am not expecting anywhere close to greatness, but it should be a very fun match.

The card looks really good at this point, and I would recommend that you keep eye out for it.

Reports

New Japan Pro-Wrestling February 11th 2013 Road to New Beginning Osaka Prefectural Gymnasium, Osaka, Japan

Overall Thoughts:

This show in many ways was your default New Japan house show with many of the same matches that you have come to expect like the junior tag match and other multiman matches. There were some unique matches on the show with three or for building to the New Japan anniversary show. I found it interesting that they decided to book another tag match featuring Anderson and Tanahashi for the mainevent, but with the stipulation going into the anniversary show match with Devitt being that Tanahashi will relinquish the title if he loses, I wouldn't be surprised if Tanahashi enters the New Japan Cup looking to regain his title.

If you haven't seen some of the New Japan house shows over the last six months or so it could be fun for you to check this out, but for everybody else the only real key match here was the mainevent, with the majority of the show being pretty forgettable.

Match by Match:

1. BUSHI & Sho Tanaka vs. Hiromu Takahashi & Takaaki Watanabe

I don't mean this as an insult to any of the men involved, but from the outside looking in Watanabe, Tanaka and Takahashi all looked pretty indistinct wearing the same Young Lions gear. Obviously Watanabe is the broadest and stiffest of the three, but in some of the fast sequences I could see some people having to do a double take. It looks like they are going with Takahashi and Watanabe as a team for the time being, which seems like a good idea. The finish was quite unexpected as Watanabe had Tanaka in a Boston crab, Tanaka looked like he was going to fight his way out, but landed up submitting in 09:13. Takahashi, Watanabe and Tanaka all have promise.

** 1/2

2. Gedo, Forever Hooligans (Alex Koslov & Rocky Romero) & Jado vs. Jushin Thunder Liger, Time Splitters (Alex Shelley & KUSHIDA) & Tiger Mask

This was pretty much a given going in, but they did everything that you would expect from an opening level multiman juniors match featuring the men involved. The heels got the heat on Liger until doing a quadrupedal hug spot, which allowed Liger to make the hot tag to KUSHIDA. Rocky Romero came in after a while with more lariats, but Tiger Mask eventually pinned Gedo with a Tiger Driver in 11:18. After the match Koslov and Romero cut promos saying how the titles were theirs. These junior matches are usually fun and work on the house shows, but after such a long period of doing pretty much the same match they really need to freshen up the formula. Plus it doesn't make much sense having Forever Hooligans ask for a title shot after they lost at the iPPV.

** 3/4

3. Hirooki Goto & Wataru Inoue vs. Tomohiro Ishii & YOSHI-HASHI

Inoue and Ishii had a fiery chop exchange early on. Goto and HASHI went at it and Goto landed his fireman's carry over the knee neckbreaker, but HASHI kicked out and landed a big lariat for two. Ishii and Inoue were tagged in while Goto and HASHI went at it on the floor. Inoue kicked out of a top rope brainbuster, and Goto ran in with a big lariat. Inoue landed his buster, but HASHI was in to break it up. Goto pulled off a plancha on HASHI, and a fired up Ishii went after Inoue with a stiff clothesline and brainbuster for the win in 12:33. I found it interesting that they beat Goto and Inoue while they are in the midst of a program with Sakuraba and Shibata. Hopefully this becomes part of a trend for Ishii, as he really is one of the most underutilized people in the company.

4. Satoshi Kojima, Hirooyoshi Tenzan, Tama Tonga & Captain New Japan vs. TAKA Michinoku, Davey Boy Smith Jr., Lance Archer & Hiro Tonai

Michinoku did his usual "lets get crazy!" spot before the bell, which was the signal for KES to jump the face team before the bell. Unlike at the pay-per-view Tenzan and Kojima did not avoid the ambush. Suzuki-gun had their way at the start of the match, but Kojima was tagged in and landed a flurry of chops on both Smith and Michinoku.. Kojima landed his ace crusher, but Suzuki-gun snuck behind the face team and knocked them off the apron. New Japan was still open for the tag, but in a spot, which was either unintentionally humorous or cringe worthy, Archer and or Kojima were out

of place so Kojima had to wait in place for ages before Archer could break up the tag, only for Archer to get it seconds later. Tonga landed his splash and New Japan grabbed the Caribbean death grip on Archer, but Smith came in for the killer bomb for the win in 11:19.

** 3/4

5. Yuji Nagata, Togi Makabe & Manabu Nakanishi vs. Yujiro Takahashi, Takashi Iizuka & Toru Yano

Surprisingly enough they didn't stick to the usual formula of having Iizuka and Yano use foreign objects for most of the match and then have the babyface comeback. No, in fact they didn't even remove the turnbuckle pad. Instead, they had a pretty average match, the babyfaces ran wild at the end, but Yano landed a low blow and chain shot on Makabe for the DQ. Despite the fact that the Takahashi/Makabe match at the pay-per-view seemed like it was just a way to get both men on the show, it looks like they are continuing with the program by the looks of it. At least this way it made more sense than having Yano get disqualified after Iizuka and Yano have done their shtick.

** 1/2

6. Shinsuke Nakamura & Kazuchika Okada w/ Gedo vs. Minoru Suzuki & Kengo Mashimo w/ TAKA Michinoku

There were some great exchanges between Okada and Suzuki early on with Okada and Suzuki both screaming at each other to hit one another. Suzuki then began to choke Okada with the barricade at the same time that Mashimo went after Nakamura. Nakamura landed his big knee in the corner on Suzuki for two, Suzuki brushed his boot against Nakamura's face, which led to a strike exchange. In came Mashimo, and Nakamura managed to make the tag to Okada who grabbed a flapjack. The referee was pulled to the outside, which allowed Michinoku to run in with a boot on Okada. Okada however managed to land his dropkick and rainmaker on Mashimo for the win in 11:10. The match didn't go as long as I expected, but as a house show match it served its purpose building the Suzuki-gun/CHAOS program further.

*** 1/4

7. Hiroshi Tanahashi & Ryusuke Taguchi vs. Prince Devitt & Karl Anderson

I was surprised that they went with this tag match following the New Beginning show, considering the fact that Tanahashi had already defeated Anderson the previous night. It wasn't much of an issue, but these tags are normally used to set up title matches, which in a round about way is the case considering that Devitt was in the match and Tanahashi pinned him giving impetus to make their match a non-title match. Devitt and Anderson worked over Taguchi before he made the hot tag and Devitt was sent off of the apron to the floor by Tanahashi. Anderson landed the spinebuster for two and he and Tanahashi had a forearm exchange. Devitt dropped Taguchi and Tanahashi to the floor for the topé con giro. This allowed him to land the double foot stomp, he went for Bloody Sunday, but couldn't get Tanahashi up, which allowed Tanahashi to land the highfly flow. Devitt got the knees up off of a highfly flow. Taguchi landed the chicken wing face buster and Anderson was thrown to the floor, which allowed Tanahashi to land the highfly flow for the win in 14:11. They worked a very good match, even if the story going in and coming out is a little strange. Out of everything on the show this is the one thing that you should search for.

After the match Tanahashi attempted to help Devitt up, but Devitt pushed him away, which led to a shoving contest and Devitt walking off. Tanahashi then did his long promo to close the show off and he and Taguchi did the air guitar, and Tanahashi sang.

*** 3/4

WWE Elimination Chamber February 17th 2013 New Orleans Arena, New Orleans, Louisiana

Overall Thoughts:

I don't know if I enjoyed this show as much as the Rumble, but in terms of quality I thought that it was better. There were three really good matches on the show, and although the Elimination Chamber match wasn't all that memorable it was very solid. There was also the Shield match, which delivered far more than I would have expected it too, and while I wasn't a big fan of the finish of the main event, they once again worked a very good match. As a whole this was a really fun show that I thought delivered the majority of what it promised going in.

Match by Match:

1. World Heavyweight Championship Match

Alberto Del Rio w/ Ricardo Rodriguez vs. Big Show

Show went straight after Del Rio with shots early, but Del Rio went after the leg and landed a flurry of boots to the head and a superkick for two. Show landed a spear for two and landed a top rope splash. Del Rio managed to grab a cross armbreaker, but Big Show made it to the ropes. Ricardo was tugging at the bottom rope, which didn't make much sense. Big Show locked in a bearhug, but Del Rio made his way out and landed a hurricanrana. Big Show landed a chokeslam for two in a great nearfall. Del Rio grabbed a spike DDT and step-up enzuigiri for two – the crowd was extremely into these nearfalls. Del Rio locked the cross armbreaker in, Del Rio had it locked in for ages, but Big Show powered his way out. This led to JBL calling Big Show a giant Bob Backlund, which was just phenomenal. Big Show knocked Ricardo off the apron and went for a shot with the bucket, but Del Rio was out of place and Show had to wait for longer than was needed. This led to Del Rio missing the first enzuigiri and having to land a second off the bucket. Finally Del Rio grabbed a cross armbreaker and had it locked in for ages before Big Show tapped. Although they did a regular match for a feud built off of stipulation matches this was the best out of the three. The finish was sloppy, but the nearfalls really worked and the spots where Big Show made it out of the cross armbreaker helped a lot too.

*** 1/4

There was a trailer for the new G.I. Joe movie starring the Rock. They then cut to two other stars of the G.I. Joe movie D.J. Cotrona and Adrianne Palicki.

2. United States Championship

Antonio Cesaro vs. The Miz

Miz came out with his entire shoulder taped up. Cesaro caught Miz in mid-air off of a leapfrog and landed a shoulderbreaker. Cesaro continued to go after the arm of Miz

locking in a double wristlock. After a few minutes of arm work Miz landed a really stiff kick to the jaw and stomped away in the corner. Miz came off of the top, but was caught in an armbar. Cesaro went for a shoulder first lawn dart into the post, but Miz was thrown into the steps knee first and went after the knee. Then in a very wacky finish Miz set up for the for the figure four, but Cesaro sent him knee first into his crotch for the DQ. After the match Miz landed a big low blow on Cesaro. It didn't really make all that much sense for them to finish the match like this if they wanted to end the program, and I don't see what the point would be in continuing this, but from the finish the feud must continue.

** 3/4

Kane and Bryan were backstage. Kane was still giving Bryan the silent treatment and Bryan said that he should have been the one to not be talking after the Rumble match. Kane said that he was focused, because he had never been in the mainevent of WrestleMania. They had a hug, and Kane told Bryan to watch his back and he would watch his own back too, and he walked off.

3. Elimination Chamber Match

Daniel Bryan vs. Chris Jericho vs. Randy Orton vs. Kane vs. Jack Swagger vs. Mark Henry

Swagger cut a promo saying that he holds power when he holds microphone. Coulter talked about how ashamed Thomas Jefferson would have been to see Louisiana today. The story that they are telling is that Coulter was with Swagger's father in Vietnam, Coulter then said that it would mark the beginning of a Jack Swagger America. Daniel Bryan and Chris Jericho started off, which was by far the best possibility. Jericho and Bryan weren't able to do much in their allotted time as they got way less than five minutes. Swagger was out next and went after both men. The crowd was behind Jericho as he was sent over the top rope onto the steel. Bryan then came flying off the top onto Swagger with a knee. Kane was in next and he and Bryan ran wild on Swagger and Jericho until Bryan went for a rollup rather early. Kane kicked out and Bryan backed off calling for deep breathing and he wanted to hug it out. Bryan



piefaced Kane and landed a flying dropkick out of the corner and the no kicks. Kane and Jericho then landed a doomsday device and Swagger shot in with a cover for two. Orton was out next and cleaned house landing a draping DDT on Kane on the steel. Jericho and Orton then did a dual superplex spot on Bryan

and Swagger seconds after each other. Everybody was done and Henry began to pound on his Chamber, Henry made it out a few seconds later and killed everyone. He pinned Bryan with the world strongest slam and threw Orton through a pod. Kane halted Henry, he came off the top with a clothesline, but Henry caught him with the World's Strongest Slam for the elimination. Swagger and Jericho worked on eliminating Henry and landed a double suplex on the steel, which must have been no

fun for anyone, but especially Henry; when you way that much taking a big bump is bad enough let alone on steel. Jericho went for a lionsault on Swagger in the ring, but he was caught by Henry and thrown into the chain-link. Henry went for a splash on both Swagger and Jericho, but both men moved. Jericho landed the code breaker and Orton who had been in the pod the entire time landed the RKO for the elimination. Henry then climbed back in the chamber and gave all three men a world's strongest slam. Out came Booker T and Long and they got him to leave. Jericho and Orton sent Swagger over the post and head first into the pod and went at it at full speed. Swagger grabbed an ankle lock on Orton, but he was caught with an enzuigiri from Jericho. Swagger grabbed an ankle lock, but Jericho grabbed the walls. I didn't really get the point of breaking up the pins, because the chamber is in fact an elimination match. The crowd was amazingly into Orton following a double DDT. Orton eliminated Jericho off of a lionsault, but Swagger grabbed a rollup for the win. This was a really good Chamber match, I have seen far better, but there were some great spots throughout the match and the crowd was super hot for the entire thing. However, there was nothing that I will really remember in a few years time besides Swagger winning.

There was a commercial for WrestleMania 29.

4. John Cena, Sheamus & Ryback vs. The Shield (Tyler Black, Dean Ambrose & Roman Reigns)

They started off brawling before the bell and the face team did a triple delayed vertical suplex. The bell rang and Sheamus ripped Ambrose' vest off landing clubbing blows to the chest. The Shield got the advantage off of a cheap shot from Ambrose, but Sheamus burst out of the corner with a boot to Ambrose, it was called by the announce team as a brogue kick, but in reality it was a simple big boot. Cena was tagged in, but the Shield managed to neutralized him as well, all the while JBL put the Shield over phenomenally hard. The fans dual chanted as the Shield continued to



work over Cena. They were obviously keeping Ryback out of the match until the hot tag, which was definitely the best move. They were literally sticking to the most simple formula possible, but the fans slowly but surely began to chant “feed me

more”. Finally the tag was made and of course Ryback ran wild cleaning house. Reigns ran in with a clothesline and they both dropped to the floor with Sheamus being speared through the barricade. They went for the triple powerbomb, but Cena grabbed the leg. They went for their finishers on Rollins and Ambrose, but Ryback was killed with a spear by Reigns and Rollins fell into the pin for the win. So there you have it, the Shield didn't only win, but they pinned Ryback clean. I don't want to say that this is the end of Ryback, but he has lost so much of his steam. Still, the

positive is that they are clearly behind the Shield, and that is a relief, because I was really afraid that they were going to beat the Shield here. As for the match itself it was really well laid out, the first 80 percent was just textbook tag team wrestling with the build to the Ryback hot tag. Then they had a stupendous closing stretch, which made for a great match.

Dolph Ziggler came out. He said that he wasn't on the card while Swagger just walked in and took a title shot. He basically said that if Swagger thought he was going to take the title he had another thing coming. Out came Booker T and he said that the man that he would face could do everything that Ziggler could do and a little more and out came Kofi Kingston.

5. Dolph Ziggler w/ AJ & Big E. Langston vs. Kofi Kingston

Kingston landed a topé on Langston early on, and landed the trouble in paradise on Ziggler in a very believable nearfall, but Ziggler kicked out. Kingston continued by landing a cross body, but he was hung up on the top rope and Ziggler dropped him right on the top turnbuckle with a front suplex and then hit the zigzag for the win. Ultimately this was a thrown together match and it got the amount of time that you would expect, but they went at full speed for all the time that they got and with what they had to work with they did a good job. After the match Langston got his revenge destroying Kingston.

There was another tutorial on how to download the WWE app – yes I know. It was actually pretty funny, because it clearly wasn't Cole's phone and there was a picture of Cole and Lawler as the wallpaper. Clay was backstage playing with the new WWE action figures. Tensai came by and was asked what the writing on his face meant, and he said they were supposed to be words of honor, but with his luck it was probably a sushi menu. They then cued the music to cheer pure old Tensai up.

6. WWE Divas Championship Match Kaitlyn vs. Tamina Snuka

I like how they simply introduce Tamina as from “the Pacific Islands”. They aired an inset promo with Kaitlyn, it was not good. They had a match. What more can I say? Snuka got some offense in, but missed the Superfly splash and Kaitlyn landed the spear for the win.

* 3/4

There was a WrestleMania 29 Coming Home promo.

7. WWE Championship Match The Rock vs. CM Punk w/ Paul Heyman

Punk slapped Rock after a ton of stalling, which led to Rock unloading in the corner in Punk's first attempt at going for the DQ. Punk then spat in the face of the Rock, and Rock went nuts again landing shots on the outside. The crowd traded chants for both Rock and Punk as Punk locked in a chinlock that he worked for ages. Rock made it out, but Punk landed a high knee and elbow from the top rope for two. Punk picked

apart the Spanish announce table, but was thrown back in by Rock. Punk found a highkick countering the Rock Bottom. Punk then landed the Rock Bottom on the announce table, and I felt really bad for Rock as the table didn't give at all. Rock and Punk exchanged shots with both being cheered and booed equally. Punk countered the Rock bottom with a flurry of elbows to the midsection. Punk went for the springboard elbow, but was caught in the Rock Bottom, which he kicked out of and it got a huge pop. The referee was arguing with Heyman on the apron and was knocked off. Punk landed the GTS and got a visual pin and count of six or seven. Punk went for another GTS, but the Rock landed a spinebuster and the people's elbow for two once again. Rock rolled over the knee of the new referee, Punk landed a highkick, but the referee was on the outside. Punk called for the title and Heyman held the Rock up, but of course Punk nailed Heyman and Rock landed the Rock Bottom for the win. I thought that the first couple of nearfalls made Punk look really strong, but I wasn't a big fan of all the ref bumps, if anything it made Punk come off as the face until the final spot of the match.

*** 1/2

WWE Monday Night RAW February 18th 2013 Cajun Dome, New Orleans, Louisiana

Overall Thoughts:

This was a decent edition of RAW, however it did drag far more than usual. I thought that the Cena character came across slightly better on this show, although having him give up his Mania title shot was something that I know a lot of people will take offense to. My main gripe with the show was actually that in spite of the fact that this was the show following the Chamber it still doesn't feel like they have kicked the Mania build into full gear.

The closing segment was very effective with Punk knocking Cena down with the title and then having a staredown with the Rock before throwing the old championship down. Other than that and the Shield segment the show was about what you would have expected.

Segment by Segment:

Cena came out to open the show. He said that Mania was taking shape and he would face the Rock when CM Punk and Paul Heyman came down to interrupt. Punk admitted that the Rock beat him fair, only with an 18 count that he had on him moments earlier, and he brought up the fact that Cena had never defeated him. Punk told Cena that he had never won the big one and told him to walk away. Cena said that they both had something to prove, they would have a match, if Cena won Punk would shut his mouth and go away and if Punk won he would get his Mania title shot – Cena wanted to do it right then and there. Punk and Heyman whispered back and forth. Punk wanted to do it next week and walked off, which just made no sense. Cena accepted for the next week.

There was a simple graphic for President's day. Sheamus was backstage as Ryback paced back and forth in-front of the camera. They had a face off and Sheamus asked if Ryback was a neanderthal. Who was the person to break up the fight? Well Chris Jericho. He said that they had to stop the Shield on behalf of the company. Jericho

said that he would go to Vickie asking for a match. Ryback said “feed me Shield” and Sheamus patted him on the back.

1. Mark Henry vs. Sin Cara

This is exactly what you would have expected, Henry squashed Sin Cara and pinned him with the world strongest slam. After the match he strangled Cara and went for another world's strongest slam, out came Great Khali, but Henry walked off. I know that it is a heelish move, but when ratings were up for SmackDown last year it was the monster Henry who simply destroyed everyone was the one on top. Plus they had Henry destroy everyone in the Chamber, so why would he be afraid of Khali who he squashed a couple of weeks ago? They showed a tweet from Vickie saying that it would be the Shield versus Ryback, Sheamus and Jericho later on.

2. No Disqualification Match

Antonio Cesaro vs. The Miz

Miz still had his shoulder taped up. I don't know if they were just giving this feud some closure, but they had Miz submit Cesaro with the figure four leglock after Cesaro was sent knee first into a chair and took an awful bump face first on a chair. If this was there idea of a blow-off they were doing it wrong.

They aired a YouTube video with Jack Swagger and Zeb Coulter. Coulter talked about how immigrants prayed on the goodness of Americans. They then said that they would send the immigrants over the border if they came looking for a hand out. There was an Abraham Lincoln graphic. Bryan was angry with Kane. He was going to have a match with Swagger and he didn't want Kane coming out with him. Kane said that he wanted a match of his own, he didn't like snakes and just then Orton asked if he was talking about him. Orton said that Kane was like Barney the dinosaur. Vickie was talking on the phone backstage and Heyman came by. And Vickie said that she had news that would effect Heyman's entire career. Heyman said that he didn't like her process and Vickie said that she knew; Heyman smirked.

3. Alberto Del Rio w/ Ricardo Rodriguez vs, Dolf Ziggler w/ AJ & Big E. Langston

The epic Dolf Ziggler push continued here with Del Rio submitting Dolf Ziggler with the armbar. Del Rio was in control for the majority of the match, there were some fun nearfalls like when Del Rio landed a backstabber, but Dolf Ziggler got his hand on the ropes. Langston was up on the apron, but Del Rio grabbed the cross armbreaker. After the match Langston laid out Del Rio saying that his time was over, Ziggler went to cash in the briefcase, but Ricardo grabbed it. Eventually AJ got it back, but Del Rio landed an enzuigiri.

Barrett came out and plugged his new movie airing a clip – Dead Man Down. Barrett was never actually in the movie at all. Sheamus came by and pointed out the obvious and then he said that the time was up. I have no idea what the point of any of this was.

4. Tensai, Brodus Clay & Naomi w/ Candice vs. Primo, Epico & Rosa Mendez

Mendez and Naomi started off, Naomi is at least athletic, but I literally cannot say anything good about Mendez' ring work – she is atrocious. It was basically a squash match with Primo getting pinned with a double splash.

They showed the corporate announcement for WrestleMania XXX at the SuperDome. There was a Harry Truman quote. Swagger and Coulter were in the ring for the state of the union address. I know this isn't exactly the most difficult thing to do, but Swagger's new theme song is the best theme song that the WWE has put out in ages. The basic premise of Coulter's promo was that Swagger was a real American and Del Rio was not, and Swagger would reclaim the title. The angle had potential and it is pretty early on, but crowds don't seem to be all that into it at this point. Out came Bryan.

5. Daniel Bryan vs. Jack Swagger w/ Zeb Coulter

The match was joined in progress. Cole was likening Coulter to Alex Jones, and you know what? Jones, is a big enough crack pot to make a great manager – he certainly has the intensity. Swagger worked over Bryan's taped up ribs, but Bryan managed to make a comeback landing a topé. Swagger, however, caught a no kick clipped Bryan's leg and locked in the ankle lock for the win. I am adverse to beating Bryan, but they made Swagger look really good here. There was a WrestleMania 'Coming Home' video package.

Vickie Guerrero was in the ring and made her big announcement, which was that Brad Maddox would be her assistant. The story was that Vince was happy with Maddox for the footage, so he gave Maddox the role. Heyman wanted to walk off, but Vince appeared on the tron “via satellite”; that hip replacement sure was over quick. Heyman asked Vince if he had a heart and Vince replied that he did not. They aired footage of Heyman saying that he would do anything he wanted. Vince threatened that he would fire Heyman, but said that was too good. He said that they would have a fight next week and that was the segment. Apart from the fact that Heyman is not supposed to be an employee, this was fine. However, adding Brad Maddox to the picture just makes me think of another heel authority figure to get in the way of the progression of the show.

6. The Shield vs. Chris Jericho, Sheamus & Ryback

It obviously wasn't pulled off to the same extent, but they told a similar story to the previous night. They had Sheamus brogue kick Ambrose off the apron and then get Ryback in for the hot tag. There was a distraction by Ambrose on the apron, they did the same spear spot as the night before, but Ryback kicked out. They had an awesome exchange at the end of the match. Jericho landed the lionsault and Sheamus speared Reigns, but while there was a brawl on the floor Rollins flew in with a knee on Jericho for the win. I don't know if they wanted to just blow the feud off here, but I saw no point in beating Ryback again. Still the Shield came off looking very strong and having it on TV will help even more. There was a Kennedy quote.

Sandow came out saying that he held President's day very dear. He spewed extraordinary hogwash about members of the Sandow family serving the Presidents and then he thanked the crowd and attacked Kingston from behind. Sandow wailed on Kingston before the match, but out came the returning R-Truth for the save. He

landed the scissors kick on Sandow and sent him packing to the floor. Josh Matthews was backstage with D.J. Cotrona and Adreine Palicki from the night before. There was then a sneak peak for the next G.I. Joe movie. There was a Fandango vignette; this will not work.

8. Randy Orton vs. Kane

They had pretty much the match that you would have expected between Randy Orton and Kane. The main story was that Daniel Bryan walked out with an absolute blank face, Kane was distracted and was pinned with the RKO. It looks like they are going with Kane versus Bryan as a Mania program, which I am happy, because Bryan could be doing far better things.

The Louisiana marching band made its way out their for a victory celebration. The drums were playing to the beat of The Rock's entrance, which was a pretty cool effect. There was a stand in the middle of the ring with a tarp over what we now know is the



new WWE title. He did his victory promo, but then switched his gaze to the title. He said that the spinning title worked eight years ago, but he said that the title should never spin or look like a toy. The title should be worthy of people who wore the title in the past people like Bruno Sammartino,

Hulk Hogan, Bret Hart and Steve Austin and he revealed the new WWE title. It is a fast improvement fast improvement. The crowd chanted “who dat?”. He asked who he would face and Cena's name did not get booed as much as you would have expected, in fact he didn't get booed at all. Rock was going to say who he wanted to face, but out Cena came before he could reveal the name. They had a brief staredown on the apron before Punk landed a cheap shot with the spinner belt. He then threw it to the ground and pointed to the Rock they then had a faceoff to close off the show.

RAW Ratings for February 18th – Another Success

RAW on Monday was back to above average levels (if that is the right way to phrase it) after they did their worst rating of 2013 last week. They have been doing above average numbers for pretty much the entirety of 2013, and while you could cite the WrestleMania season as the main reason for the increase, last year's numbers at this time weren't up substantially, and they are doing better numbers now under the three hour banner than last year this time. Part of it is certainly due to the star power on each show, as most of the shows have have either Lesnar or Rock on them.

This week's show did a 3.28 rating and 4.66 million viewers and was third for the night on cable. The big news coming out of the show was that they opened strong, but suffered big drop-offs and never really recovered from there. It isn't really anything to

worry about, as the show still did really well, but it was probably caused by two main things. The first being that people tuned in to see what happened with Rock and then weren't captivated by the show and tuned out. The second probably has something to do with the three hour format and burnout, which is something that we know really well already.

The opening segment with Paul Heyman, CM Punk and John Cena drew a 3.71 quarter, which is really strong. Mark Henry vs. Sin Cara lost 332,000 viewers. The Antonio Cesaro/Miz match coupled with the Swagger/Coulter segment lost 210,000 viewers, which is to be expected coming from such a strong opening. The two backstage segments with Kane, Bryan, Orton, Vickie and Heyman lost 194,000 viewers. Then at 21:00 Alberto Del Rio versus Dolf Ziggler gained 326,000 viewers to a 3.42 quarter, which is slightly above what they have been doing in that segment lately.

The 20:00 to 21:00 hour drew 4.82 million viewers (2,053,000 viewers and a 1.62 rating in the 18-49 demo) – up from last week in both overall viewership and in the 18-49 demo.

The Tensai/Brodus Clay six person tag match and the second Jack Swagger/Zeb Coulter segment lost 226,000 viewers, which is around the normal level for the post-21:00 drop-off. Daniel Bryan vs. Jack Swagger lost a further 171,000 viewers. The Vickie Guerrero, Vince McMahon, Paul Heyman and Brad Maddox in-ring segment gained 200,000 viewers. Then at 22:00 the Shield versus Chris Jericho, Sheamus and Ryback match gained 277,000 viewers to a 3.48 quarter, which is in the range of what they normally do.

The 21:00 to 22:00 hour drew 4.67 million viewers (1,979,000 viewers and a 1.56 rating in the 18-49 demo).

The Damien Sandow/Kofi Kingston match that never got underway lost 393,000 viewers in the post-22:00 segment. It was then followed by the biggest losing segment of the show, Kane vs. Randy Orton, which lost 506,000 viewers to a show low 2.85 quarter. Finally the Rock title reveal and CM Punk/John Cena staredown gained 773,000 viewers to a 3.39 overrun. The overrun did one of the best gains in a while, but it was following the show low quarter.

The 22:00 to 23:04 hour drew 4.49 million viewers (2,006,000 viewers and a 1.59 rating in the 18-49 demo). There was a definite drop-off throughout the show, but they did manage to maintain their 18-49 viewership for the majority of the program, which is the case a lot of the time. The show drew a 2.6 in males 18-49, a 2.0 in male teenagers, a 1.2 in females 18-49 and a 1.2 in females teenagers.

WWE –NXT
February 20th 2013 – Full Sail University, Florida.
Ben Carass.

The tiresome video recap that apparently has to air at the start of every single show WWE produces went over Adrian Neville and Oliver Grey winning the Tag Team titles last week.

Finally recovered from a torn pectoral muscle, Bray Wyatt came down with The Family to face perennial enhancement favourite, Yoshi Tatsu.

Yoshi Tatsu vs. Bray Wyatt w/The Wyatt Family

Wyatt no sold some strikes then hit a big uranage; poor Yoshi was finished off by a running corner splash and a swinging reverse STO.

Bray Wyatt defeated Yoshi Tatsu via pinfall, at 1:35.

After the match, Wyatt tossed Yoshi to the floor and commanded Harper and Rowan to enter the ring. At Bray's request, footage of the finish to last week's Tag Title match aired on the tron; Wyatt berated his team for losing then provoked Harper and Rowan into brawling after convincing each that the other was to blame for the loss. Wyatt broke up the skirmish and told the two that he was proud of them and that he never wished for them to taste defeat again.

Despite it coming off as a little silly, this was enjoyable; Wyatt looked like a monster in the quick squash and the deal afterwards was nice because it displayed how much power the maniacal preacher has over his two followers. Apparently Harper had been "carrying" Rowan for "all his life; not much character development, but at least it's a start.

Renee Young was with Sasha Banks in the back; Sasha was acting like she was excited about meeting her secret admirer when another love-note was handed to her. Out of nowhere, Audrey Marie attacked Sasha from behind and revealed herself as the secret admirer; Audrey was disgusted to have been replaced by Sasha due to her injury and told Banks to get out of NXT.

I did not see that coming; to be honest I don't know what I was expecting, but it wasn't that. I was not high on the secret admirer angle, however I thought the payoff was tremendous.

Commercial Break.

El Local hit the ring for a rare TV match; Xavier Woods danced his way out to face the hooded Ricardo Rodriguez.

Xavier Woods vs. El Local

They started out relatively fast; Xavier shone briefly with some armdrags, but Local soon took over after catching a double stomp to the back of Xavier's head. Local got the heat with some chinlocks; Xavier hit a tilt-o-whirl head scissors to start his comeback. The finish came when Local hit a jawbreaker, however Xavier landed a boot to the gut and delivered a tornado DDT out of the corner.

Xavier Woods defeated El Local via pinfall, at 4:40

It was fun to see El Local, however the match he had with Sin Cara on Saturday Morning Slam last year was a lot more entertaining. Obviously this was just a match

to get Xavier over since Ricardo has other things to do than work as a jobbing luchador. It was fine, nothing special.

Dr. Michael Sampson was backstage with Renee; he dropped a few medical terms and said Paige was recovering, but she would need to be evaluated again. The doc would not state when Paige was likely to return to the ring.

Commercial Break.

Audrey Marie appeared for a match that was set up by the earlier segment; Sasha Banks tried her best to appear vengeful on her way out.

Sasha Banks vs. Audrey Marie

Audrey quickly took control and began to work some ground holds; Sasha fought up to hit a tilt-o-whirl head scissors to begin her comeback, which nobody in the crowd seemed to care about at all. Audrey cut off Sasha and landed a wheelbarrow facebuster for the victory.

Audrey Marie defeated Sasha Banks via pinfall, at 2:05.

This wasn't bad, it was just mundane; the crowd were flat, which didn't help, but it is expected since the live audience isn't shown any backstage promos or angles during the tapings.

Renee Young was back for some more airtime with Summer Rae; Summer stated Paige got what she deserved then claimed she would go on to become the greatest Diva ever in the WWE. Summer informed Renee to only refer to her as “the first lady of NXT” from now on.

Commercial Break.

Tony Dawson introduced Tyson Kidd for an in-ring interview; Dawson asked about the torn ACL and Tyson explained that he injured himself on a house show while performing a dive, but still worked the next night. Kidd said he had heard a lot of rumours about how long he would be on the shelf then guaranteed he would return to action. Next, Dawson asked how he felt about CM Punk calling him a “workhorse” during a promo on Raw; Kidd said he was honoured to get the acclaim from Punk and stated that being a workhorse was “a way of life” that had been instilled in him since the day he started in the dungeon.

Leo Kruger showed up on the stage and informed Kidd he would end his career; Kruger said Kidd should have stayed away then got in the ring and kicked away his crutches. Justin Gabriel hit the ring to save his buddy and ran off Kruger.

Commercial Break.

Conor O'Brian got the full Ascension entrance this week, which is good because without it he is left with very little at all. Big E. Langston came out for the non-title main event.

Non-Title “Special Challenge” Match: Big E. Langston (NXT Champion) vs. Conor O’Brian

From the start, they told the story of each guy matching strength with the other; Big E. took control and sent O’Brian over the top with a clothesline.

Commercial Break.

Big E.’s shoulder collided with the ring post for the transitional spot and O’Brian got the heat. O’Brian hit a full-nelson slam for a two count then worked an arm-trap chinlock; Big E. fought up to begin his comeback. The two traded shots and the match began to break down; the referee tried to restore order, but was thrown to the ground by the brawling enemies and called for the bell.

Big E. Langston & Conor O’Brian fought to a no contest in 7:35.

Big E got rid of O’Brian with a clothesline through the ropes as Byron Saxton announced a “double disqualification” as the official decision. Big E. held the NXT Championship in the air, when Corey Graves blindsided the champ with a forearm from behind. Graves grabbed the belt and made a hasty exit and was soon pursued by Langston as the show closed.

The main event was a lumbering affair and the finish was a complete waste of time; I was ready to call this the worst end to a show in NXT history until Graves showed up and stole the belt. Big E. and O’Brian had no interaction at the set of tapings on February 21st; however O’Brian went over Graves and Bo Dallas in a number one contenders match. So unfortunately, we have to watch another ponderous match between Big E. and O’Brian. Some good news out of the tapings is the start of a Bo Dallas/Bray Wyatt feud and the William Regal/Kassius Ohno angle finally turned physical. Although there was no sign of El Generico after his appearance at a house show on February 12th.

TNA Impact February 21st 2013

Wembley Arena, London

Overall Thoughts:

This would have probably been an average show at the Impact Zone, but the London crowd was once again so into everything that I found the show way more enjoyable. I will say it again... the Aces & Eights angle is a big detriment to this show as they ruined a couple of big segments. Plus, seeing Ray team with Sting for the umpteenth time didn't mean anything to me, especially when it was obvious that Hogan wouldn't make his way out.

If anyone dissevers a shot at the championship outside of storyline it would be Bully Ray, as he is honestly one of the best talents in the entire promotion. However, I can tell that Hogan putting Ray in the spot is really going to serve as a distraction that isn't needed down the line. Overall this was a solid show, even if the Aces & Eights stuff was quite tedious.

Segment by Segment:

Hogan came out once again to open up the show and announce the number one contender. He announced it as Bully Ray, who came out shocked. Ray played the part of the humble contender, and thanked Hogan saying that all he ever wanted to do was make Hogan proud. He then suggested a six-man tag for the mainevent with the Aces & Eights against Ray, Sting and Hogan. He built up to the Hogan announcement and the crowd couldn't have been more happy. Daniels and Kazarian came by Aries and Roode backstage to discuss their eight-man tag later on. Aries and Roode agreed with everything that Daniels and Kazarian said, but then blew them off as they walked away.

1. Bobby Roode, Christopher Daniels, Austin Aries & Kazarian vs. James Storm, Chavo Guerrero, Hernandez & Joe Park

Those rookies really do progress fast nowadays. Taz was really heeling it up on commentary saying such things as “wrestlers don't politic”. Aries and Roode were fighting over Park, but Daniels tagged himself in. An argument between both teams ensued, which allowed Park to make the tag. Aries and Roode left abandoning Daniels and Kazarian. Storm then came in and ran wild. Chavo landed a frogsplash on Daniels and Kazarian was caught with a superkick from Storm and a splash from Park for the win.

There was a recap of Rockstar Spud's appearances on Impact and they interviewed him talking about how things had changed for him.

2. Robbie E w/ Robbie T vs. Rockstar Spud

Taz also put Rockstar Spud over. Obviously T had a roll in the finish, E went for a shot with the book, but T held on, which allowed Spud to get a roll-up. E was arguing with T after the match, poked his chest and slapped him in the face, which led to T taking off his short and E fleeing, which really got a big reaction from the crowd. I was impressed with Spud, in TNA his size in some ways plays to his advantage, simply because it is so easy for him to get sympathy. However, even if he is really great, and we don't know if that's the case yet, his size will also be a limiting factor.

3. TNA Knockouts Championship Elimination Four-Way Match With Brooke Hogan at Ringside

Tara vs. Gail Kim vs. Brooke Tessmacher vs. Velvet Sky

I had a similar problem with this match as I did with the Elimination Chamber in that they kept breaking up pins and fighting over covers, where it makes no logical sense to do so. Velvet Sky landed the pedigree on Tara and Kim then covered Tara to very little fan fare. I have seen it work in the past before, but I am not a big fan of pinning the champion first, aseptically when it was this under played. Tessmacher was rolled up by Sky for the elimination. In a very sloppy sequence Kim was holding onto the ropes attempting a pin, but was thrown off by Terrel, Sky then landed the pedigree for the win. I don't know what it is with Velvet Sky and all of these dusty finishes, but it is really bizarre considering that she is the babyface. When it comes to overall talent Kim deserves the title, but people seem to be into Sky so I was fine with this.

Sting and Hogan were talking backstage, and Ray came by like a little kid saying how cool it was to be tagging with them. There was a video package looking at the history of Garrett Bischoff and Wes Briscoe.

4. Samoa Joe vs. Garrett Bischoff

In your mind if you could picture a finish for this match what would it be? The finish of the match came when Joe was about to finish Garrett off, but Briscoe ran down for the DQ. As for the match it was fine, but nothing special by any means, although Garrett is far more effective as a heel. Angle ran down for the save and said that Briscoe would face him at Lockdown in a steel cage.

5. X Division Championship Match Rob Van Dam vs. Kenny King

They had what was definitely their best match so far, mainly due to the crowd who was dual chanting the entire time through, and were into just about every spot. Even though Van Dam pinned King clean he came off looking better than in the last few matches simply because of the crowd heat.

Brooke Hogan was backstage trying to convince Hogan not do the match, but he reassured her that with her husband and “the best wrestler who ever lived” in there he would be fine. There was a video of Jeff Hardy saying that he would be good to go next week. I don't know if it has been mentioned here or not, but the reason for Hardy not being in the UK was due to prior run-ins with the law that would make it difficult to make it overseas.

6. Bully Ray, Sting vs. Devon, DOC & Mr. Anderson

Obviously Hogan couldn't worth the match so they didn't have him come out at the start of the match. While Ray and Sting were waiting they were jumped by the Aces & Eights. The majority of the match was comprised of the Aces & Eights working over Ray until he finally made the hot tag to Sting. They went for a double team, but just then the Aces & Eights came out with a battered Hulk Hogan and Brooke Hogan. This led to Ray running off and DOC landing a big boot on Sting for the win. Brooke and Ray were looking over Hogan while Sting was destroyed in the ring to leave the Aces & Eights standing victorious to close off the show.

WWE SmackDown – February 22nd 2013.
Mississippi Coast Coliseum: Biloxi, MS.
Ben Carass.

Another week and another video recap: it focused heavily on Jack “Hello my name is Dr. Greenthumb” Swagger and the Cena/Punk/Rock angle.

Inside the arena, Ricardo Rodriguez introduced Alberto Del Rio and the two headed to the ring; Josh and JBL checked in on commentary. Del Rio started his promo with, “we’re going to WrestleMania!” then turned his attention to the bonehead of the week, Jack Swagger. Del Rio said Swagger had a new attitude and believes he represents everything that is right about America, while Alberto stands for all that is wrong with the U.S. Del Rio claimed to have watched all of YouTube videos and

deduced that Swagger's main problem with America was immigration; Alberto stated that America was built by hard working immigrants chasing the American Dream. Del Rio pandered some more then said the World title was the result of his hard work and was his American Dream, before calling Swagger a "real Jackass". Alberto finished with the horrendously scripted line, "if we, the immigrants want handouts; why don't you come out here so I can lay my handout all over your face, pero!"

What is that even supposed to mean?

Randy Orton came down and told Del Rio that Swagger had taken his World title match at WrestleMania; Orton said a part of him respected Swagger, but a bigger part of him wanted to take out all his aggression on Swagger tonight. Randy asked Del Rio to "step aside" for one night so he could get his hands on Swagger, however Orton added, "if we have to fight over it, so be it". Booker T hit the stage and said he had already had plans; Booker booked Del Rio vs. Wade Barrett and Orton vs. Swagger.

Not a great way to start the show. Del Rio's promo was almost embarrassing; I guess he is pandering to the American fans now too. Maybe that will change if Swagger is taken out of the Mania angle. Orton's character bothers me when he needlessly alienates himself from the other babyfaces. I understand he wants his gimmick to come across as a solitary badass, however he is nowhere near as believable as Steve Austin or even Samoa Joe for that matter. Plus, some of the most enjoyable stuff Randy has done is when he had people around him; Evolution, Cowboy Bob, Legacy. Perhaps if he went full on heel and started kicking people in the head again, it would work better.

Commercial Break.

Sheamus appeared for the opening contest. Damien Sandow was his opponent; I'm sure you knew where this was going. Before the match, Sandow called Sheamus a "false idol" and said his reign of terror would come to an end.

Sheamus vs. Damien Sandow

Sheamus beat up Damien from the bell; Sandow got a few strikes in, but Sheamus showed his supremacy as a brawler and sent him over the top with a clothesline. Sheamus tossed Sandow into the barricade a couple of times then took it back inside. The first heat spot was a kick to the knee after a ref break in the corner, but that didn't count for much, as Sheamus took over again with his clubbing forearms.

Commercial Break.

We missed the transition due to the break, but Sandow had the heat and dropped the Cubito Aequet. Sheamus fought from underneath, but was shutdown then grounded with a chinlock. After selling some more, Sheamus went into his comeback, but Sandow cut him off with a sit-out rear mat slam for a two count then went for the straightjacket neckbreaker. Sheamus countered then they traded reversals, until finally Sandow took the white noise and a Brogue kick for the finish.

Sheamus defeated Damien Sandow via pinfall, at 11:43.

The match was ok; the finish was executed nicely with all the reversals. I was surprised at how much offense Sandow got in, I thought Sheamus was going to roll over him in 4 minutes. I'm don't know what Cody and Damien did to be booked to lose every match all of a sudden, but it can't be worse than dropping CM Punk on his head just days before a PPV match with The Rock.

They showed the announcement for WrestleMania XXX in New Orleans.

Commercial Break.

A recap of The Shield's victories at Elimination Chamber and on Raw aired then Kaitlyn and Layla showed up for an apparent tag match. Footage rolled of Cody Rhodes bumping into the Diva's Champ in the back; Kaitlyn said she liked Cody's moustache and he replied, "Some ladies are calling it the love-stache" then the two walked away awkwardly.

A babyface turn and a love angle with Kaitlyn for Cody? I certainly hope not; I could deal with the turn (which would explain all the jobs) but not another goofy "will they, won't they" storyline.

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

Layla's idea of babyface shine was to dance then put her butt in Aksana's face; Kaitlyn came in and for some reason grabbed a chinlock after hitting what looked to be a Thesz press. Aksana sent Kaitlyn through the ropes and Tamina scored with a clothesline for the transition. Aksana got the heat until both teams made the tag; Layla fired up on Tamina, however Snuka showed her power and countered that horrible crossbody into a Samoan drop position. Kaitlyn tagged in before Tamina hit the move and delivered a spear for the three count.

Layla & Kaitlyn defeated Aksana & Tamina Snuka via pinfall, at 3:28.

After the match, Layla looked longingly at Kaitlyn's Championship belt.

The match was not good. Tamina hardly did anything and when she did, it was just getting taken out like a geek; there goes her credibility. The thought of Kaitlyn vs. Layla at Mania is truly depressing, but that appears to be the idea; there was a little deal a few weeks ago with Layla subtly coveting the title and here again she made it clear they are setting up a turn.

Commercial Break.

They showed an unnecessary amount of The Rock's WWE Championship celebration on Raw then Zeb Colter and Jack Swagger were shown in the back. Wade Barrett approached the pair and told them he would take out the main problem with America. Zeb said Wade didn't talk like him and asked where Barrett was from; Barrett proudly stated: "I'm from England". Zeb told him that he was just as bad as Del Rio and he hope the two beat each other senseless so Swagger could send them both back to where they came from. Barrett attempted to speak, but Swagger cut him off with, "we the people" then was led away by Zeb; Wade shook his head at the intolerant duo.

Randy Orton was out for his match.

Commercial Break.

Swagger and Colter made their entrance as a graphic hyped the World title match at WrestleMania.

Randy Orton vs. Jack Swagger w/Zeb Colter

Swagger got some offence in, but Orton controlled the early going at a methodical pace. Swagger countered a chinlock into a belly-to-back suplex and took over for a while, but Orton came back to deliver a dropkick and the Garvin stomp. Swagger rolled to the floor then wrapped Randy's leg around the ring post. Orton fought out of the anklelock then hit a Theszpress and a clothesline on the outside.

Commercial Break.



The two traded shots then Swagger countered the hangman DDT; they brawled on the floor and Orton was sent into the steps. Back in the ring, Swagger got a little heat, but was dumped to the floor once again. Orton landed a belly-to-back on the barricade, but took a chop block and a Vaderbomb upon

entering the ring. Swagger missed a shoulder block in the corner and hit the ring post to set up Orton's comeback routine. Randy scored with the hangman, however Zeb encouraged Swagger to roll to the apron; Swagger poked Orton in the eye then stacked up Randy for the pinfall.

Jack Swagger defeated Randy Orton via pinfall, at 16:23.

I understand that they tried to tell a competitive, back and forth story, but psychology wise this was not great. The ring post spot, the steps spot, the barricade spot... all these were either no-sold or didn't play into the match whatsoever. It was entertaining to an extent, but for me it just came off as a series of meaningless spots. It is certainly going to be worth watching Raw to see what direction they go in with Swagger now he got busted; he's due in court on March 12th so I can't imagine him not being taken out of the angle. If we were a little further down the road with the build then the decision could have been much more difficult, but seeing as the angle has not got its legs yet, I see no problem in removing the imbecilic Swagger. On Wednesday, WWE released this statement: "Mr. Swagger is responsible for his own personal actions". Smoking a joint while driving when you are booked in a World title match at WrestleMania is certainly not responsible.

Commercial Break.

Footage of Brad Maddox being announced as Vickie's assistant aired then they showed Vince taking the F5 and McMahon challenging Paul Heyman to a fight.

The Miz showed up and was still selling his injured shoulder at the hands of Antonio Cesaro. Cody Rhodes emerged and an inset promo aired; Cody said he was sick of all the criticism about his moustache then referred to it once again as, "the love-stache".

The Miz vs. Cody Rhodes

Almost immediately, Cody worked over Miz's taped up shoulder; Miz showed some fight, but was quickly taken down with a dropkick. Cody continued to punish the injured shoulder; Miz countered a belly-to-back and scored with a boot to the face, however Cody avoided a shoulder block in the corner. Rhodes went for an Alabama slam, but Miz rolled through to lock in the figure four to get the submission.

The Miz defeated Cody Rhodes via submission, at 3:54.

What kind of idiot babyface tries to deliver a shoulder block with an injured shoulder? The same idiot babyface who botched up one of the most iconic holds in the business on live TV. The match was nothing really, what's even more unbelievable than Miz using Ric Flair's finishing hold, is idea that Dusty Rhodes didn't teach Cody how to get out of it; that's hard times daddy.

Commercial Break.

Wade Barrett turned up for the main event; Ricardo introduced Alberto for the second time on the show. Jack Swagger and Zeb Colter came out to the stage and glared towards the ring.

Champion vs. Champion: Alberto Del Rio (World Heavyweight Champion) vs. Wade Barrett (IC Champion)

Barrett rolled to the floor after Del Rio's shine; Ricardo mocked Barrett, which



resulted in a chase around ringside. In a well timed spot, Del Rio caught Barrett with a dropkick through the middle rope as he was chasing his buddy.

Commercial Break.

Barrett dumped Alberto off the top rope to the floor for the transition then sent Del Rio into the steps; back inside, Wade got the heat and cut off an attempted comeback with a pump handle slam. Barrett delivered his knee strikes while Alberto was in the

ropes then hit a big boot to the face for a two count. Del Rio sold for some more heat then fought up from a chinlock to start his comeback; Alberto fired up and scored with his superkick for a two count then went for the step-up enzuigiri; Barrett countered into a Traylor slam for a nice near fall.

Del Rio fought out of the wasteland and hit a double knee backbreaker; as he set up for the cross armbreaker, Swagger and Colter headed down the ramp. Barrett hooked a schoolboy for a two count then hit a boot to the face. Alberto avoided the bullhammer and locked in the cross armbreaker to get the tap-out.

Alberto Del Rio defeated Wade Barrett via submission, at 11:44.

Swagger and Del Rio stared each other down as Josh and JBL hyped the World title match at WrestleMania.

The main event was decent, but the with the World title being so overshadowed by the WWE title, all this did was bury the IC belt even more. Sure, Barrett looked competitive in there, but that is of little merit when the Intercontinental title tells all the fans that he is way down on the pecking order.

On the whole, this was a typical SmackDown show; not much really happened and the matches struggled to get above average. What they did do in terms of build may turn out to be irrelevant come Monday, should Vince decide that getting busted for speeding and holding some pot is not the kind of publicity that he wants on the road to WrestleMania.

Next Week's Issue

Next week we cover Diamond Ring's first show of 2013, All Japan, hopefully a more clean cut Mania direction, ratings, the news and so much more! In the meanwhile if you want to stay up to date head over to CubedCircleWrestling.com or simply subscribe to the RSS feed.

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