



Cubed Circle Newsletter – Kenta Kobashi Retirement Issue

We have quite a diverse newsletter for you this week from the retirement of one of the greatest wrestlers of all time, Kenta Kobashi, to...did you guess homophobic slurs? If your answer was yes, good for you then. We also cover the ROH Border Wars show, RAW with Lesnar breaking things, some of the big matches announced for the best of the Super Juniors, Impact with the return of Abyss, the lowest RAW ratings since the end of football season, plus Ben Carass covers NXT and SmackDown!

As I have mentioned for the past few weeks, we are running a survey to figure out what you want out of the newsletter, and if you haven't filled it out yet you can do so by visiting tinyurl.com/CCWSurv80. And with all of that being said, I hope you have a great week and enjoy the newsletter.

-Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

News

Kenta Kobashi – Eternal Burning

Today is a special day, as on May 11th 2013, Budokan Hall witnessed the retirement of one of the greatest performers to ever wrestle inside of its walls, not only that, but the world witnessed the departure from the ring of not only one of the greatest wrestlers in the history of Japan, or even the world in the last few decades, but one of the greatest workers in the history of the business – Kenta Kobashi.

One could make the case for a few people as the greatest workers of all time, some would say Shawn Michaels, others Manami Toyota or Mitsuharu Misawa, but you could make a very strong argument for Kobashi, as very few people have been able to perform at such a consistently high level for so many years. Even more than that Kobashi had many attributes that were lacking in his contemporaries, Mitsuharu Misawa and Toshiaki Kowada, as he had the facial expressions and selling ability that neither man, specifically Misawa, ever had.

He also had another very important attribute that unfortunately was never granted to Misawa or Kawada, and that was the gift of longevity. Even though Misawa wrestled until his untimely passing in the ring in 2009 and Kawada has wrestled up until very recently, neither of those two men were able to maintain their level of in ring performance for as long as Kobashi; certainly not Misawa, and while Kawada put on the occasional great match in his post 2004-2005 run, the fact is that he could not touch Kobashi during that period.

It is actually quite ironic that Kobashi was able to perform at the most consistently high level out of the three, as he was the one who has been putting his body through abnormal levels of abuse since the very early 90s. His knees have been blown for years, and he suffered from other injuries along the road, but for whatever reason he was able to carry on and work a very stiff and taxing style that paid dividends in the form of great matches, but obviously placed serious strain on his health.

Kobashi had one of my most favourite runs ever in the 2003 to 2005 period where he was the ace of Pro-Wrestling NOAH, and held the GHC championship from his March 1st 2003 victory over Mitsuharu Misawa, until March 5th of 2005, where he lost the title in NOAH's attempt to elevate Takeshi Rikio into a top star, a plan that failed in the long run. During that run he put on classic after classic including his victory over Misawa, a defence against Yuji Nagata, Kensuke Sasaki at the Tokyo Dome, Jun Akiyama and many more. To use a present day example, it was the 2011/2012/2013 Tanahashi run; only magnified by ten and in a reign that lasted for two years.

A good career before that NOAH run combined with the run itself would have made Kobashi a strong Observer Hall of Fame candidate, but in reality he didn't have a good, or even very good career before that run, he had a great, even phenomenal career by 2003. His All Japan run in the 90s was filled with classic matches, in both his legendary rivalry with Misawa, although rivalry may have been too strong of a word, as well as tag matches with Misawa and singles matches with the likes of Steve Williams, Stan Hansen, Kawada and many others.

He even had one of the best matches in Ring of Honor company history when he wrestled



Photo Credit: Sports Navi Japan

Samoa Joe on October 1st of 2005, in a stiff, hotly contested battle between two of the best wrestlers of that year in the New Yorker Hotel in Manhattan.

Despite the fact that Kobashi has had so many matches that were better, either from a crowd heat, technical or drama standpoint, his match with Joe from 2005 will stick out as one of the matches that I will remember most about Kobashi's career.

Sure, some of his matches with Misawa in many cases

had it all, and his matches with Steve Williams and Stan Hansen have become classics in the eyes of many people, but for whatever reason, whether it was the attitude of the crowd on the night, the way that Kobashi worked the match, or simply the way that everything fell into place on the night – it was one of the nights for me personally that really exhibited to an unbelievable extent just how much of a star Kobashi was, and how he fits in amongst the top workers of all time.

I don't know how long Kobashi would have been able to go when it comes to putting on great matches, but in 2006 he contracted renal cancer, which he in-turn recovered from, but was never the same following the time off. It was a combination of factors, years of abuse, combined with time off, and the most glaring thing in that the man had just beaten cancer. Still, despite being limited in what he could do he was able to put on a great match every now and again, like the tag match on the first Diamond Ring show as a semi-recent example, where Kobashi teamed with Jun Akiyama to face Kensuke Sasaki & Mitsuhiro Kitamiya. Kobashi's return match on December 2nd 2007 was also a memorable outing when he teamed with Yoshihiro Takayama to take on Mitsuharu Misawa & Jun Akiyama.

Misawa, Kawada, and specifically Kobashi remain big names to this day in Japan, and you can look for no further illustration of that fact than Kobashi's retirement show at Budokan Hall, 'Final Burning', and the excitement that surrounded it. This wasn't like the retirement of a Michaels, or even a Ric Flair, in the sense that former presidents were in attendance and the show sold out two days after tickets went on sale. Not only that, but if you wanted to catch a glimpse of the live show via closed circuit in Japan at the last minute, there was no use in trying, as most, if not all of the cinemas airing the show were sold out. Budokan, which hasn't been as strong for Japanese pro-wrestling as in the past over the last few years, didn't only witness a sell-out this time around, but the building was actually over capacity on the 11th.

The above are simple metrics that don't only speak for the star power of Kobashi, but the level of public exposure that wrestling in Japan had during that time period, and why it will be so hard to rekindle that flame. It is in many ways a different world for wrestling in Japan. Tanahashi, Okada and others can draw big numbers at times, but they simply don't have the TV deals or levels of momentum that top stars had during the 90s. That is in no way a knock on any current wrestler on the roster, but rather an indictment of the current status of pro-wrestling in Japan, and why it will take so much reach even a fraction of what it used to be.

Despite the fact that the show doesn't look to be an amazing show on the level of any of the best shows of this year, I am still more excited to get a hold of the show than anything else, as everything that I have read on the show so far points to it being a magical night. The mainevent saw Kobashi, Sasaki, Akiyama and Mutoh defeating the younger team of Go Shiozaki, KENTA, Maybach Taniguchi & Yoshinobu Kanemaru when Kobashi pinned Kanemaru with a moonsault after a forty minute long match.

The convention in pro-wrestling if for the wrestler retiring or leaving the territory to lose on the way out, it only makes sense, but there are certain times when you would want to bypass this convention and this is one of those times. When so many people paid to see Kobashi, and simply wanted to send him off, it would make little sense having someone beat Kobashi, as Kobashi is one of the guys that deserves to win on the way out more than most people.

From the pictures that have surfaced of the show at press-time it looks like the mainevent could be one of those matches where the wrestling isn't the best, and it is just a feel good match, but the atmosphere alone makes it extremely memorable. What could be even more special is that after the match the fans apparently chanted Misawa's name and Kobashi made a comment dedicated to Misawa. After the match Kobashi's wife and mother both entered in the ring in front of a very teary-eyed Budokan Hall apparently, with two very hard men in KENTA and Akiyama both crying.

Today is a special day indeed, as May 11th 2013 marks the day that one of the most unique and talented people in the history of the business, a man that changed the way that I looked at pro-wrestling, a man in an elite class, one of the greatest, if not the greatest wrestler to ever live, Kenta Kobashi, retired from professional wrestling in a building that he made home – Budokan Hall.

Best of the Super Juniors XX Tournament Details

After revealing the participants for the Best of the Super Juniors tournament 2013, New Japan has also announced the blocks and preliminary matches for the tournament. Block A consists of the following: Jushin Thunder Liger, Alex Shelley, Hiromu Takahashi, Titan, Trent Barretta, Ricochet, Rocky Romero, Prince Devitt and Taichi. Block B consists of the following: Tiger Mask IV, Ryusuke Taguchi, KUSHIDA, BUSHI, Kenny Omega, Alex Koslov, Brian Kendrick and TAKA Michinoku. It would obviously be quite tedious to list every match of the tournament, but I thought it would serve some utility to take a look at some of the most unique and fun looking matches of the tournament.

Alex Shelley takes on Prince Devitt on the first show on May 24th at Korakuen Hall, in what should be a very good match if their first was anything to go by. On the May 30th show at Korakuen Hall Kenny Omega takes on Ryusuke Taguchi and Prince Devitt takes on Ricochet with both matches having the potential to be really good. There is a tradition of sorts for the Best of the Super Juniors shows to have some impressive heavyweight six-man tag matches in the middle or even top of some of the cards, and this year is no exception, with the June 1st show at Korakuen producing what could be a very good match in Kazuchika Okada, Tomohiro Ishii & Gedo versus Togi Makabe, Hirooki Goto & Tomoaki Honma, they are running the same match the next night at the Industrial Exchange Center in Hyogo the night after that Yawatahama Citizen Sports Center in Ehime...the night after that at the Yawatahama Citizen Sports Center in Ehime, and on the 6th at Korakuen, although the first and last matches should be the best.

They could do a lot with Prince Devitt, as there is the opportunity of New Japan moving him up permanently as a heavyweight, which will add even further depth to an already deep portion of the New Japan roster. However, if they do move Devitt up that will take away one of the Junior division's biggest stars, and they probably need that big star at the moment. Takahashi certainly has potential, but he certainly isn't on the championship level as of yet and is probably a couple of years away from that. Regardless of what they do with either man I can see a Devitt/Taguchi final with a combination of Ricochet and Omega in the semi-finals.

Jay versus Mark – Briscoe vs. Briscoe...and Shooting Apparently

From this week's edition of ROH TV it looks like they are going to be doing Jay Briscoe versus Mark Briscoe for the ROH World Title come their next internet-pay-per-view, Best in the World. It is quite the perplexing decision as Jay only won the title just over a month ago, and Mark hasn't been elevated to any extent where he would be a believable title contender – he lost to Matt Taven of all people on the last internet-pay-per-view. It isn't being built as a heated rivalry, as it's more of a babyface match, but I see this leading to a breaking up of the Briscoes, and a heel turn at one point.

Jay Briscoe also hasn't been established as a strong ROH world champion in the same manner that Kevin Steen or Davey Richards was before him, and that isn't very good given that Mark Briscoe hasn't been established as a major contender either. Making matters even more confusing is the fact that on the WrestleMania weekend shows it was clearly stated that Michael Elgin would be the number one contender when he beat Jay Lethal. Yet there hasn't been a major pay-per-view or TV title show for him, which is what you would expect when something like that occurs on pay-per-view.

In all honesty, Michael Elgin should be the one that they are building to as a long term champion, as he is one of the only newer stars that the fans really take to in the same manner as other champions in ROH's past. At the 2012 WrestleMania show when Richards and Elgin put on their memorable ***** match, Elgin was dramatically elevated, but like with Richards and even Tyler Black before him they have waited too long to put the championship around his waist.

Speaking of the Briscoe Brothers, Jay Briscoe has shutdown his Twitter account due to homophobic slurs on the account...yes, another one of those. In response to the Delaware senate passing a gay marriage measure Jay Briscoe tweeted the following "The Delaware Senate passed a bill yesterday that allows same sex couples to get married. If that makes you happy, then congratulations!!!!". That seems all fine and dandy right? No problem there. That was until he tweeted the following statement (please note that profanity has been censored) "... try and teach my kids that there's nothing wrong with that and I'll f*****g shoot you." – something that was not in fact fine, nor was it dandy. Later Jay Briscoe tweeted the following "I feel very strongly about who should teach kids about certain things but I showed poor judgment by using that analogy and I'm sorry."

A few hours later Jay Briscoe had deleted his twitter account completely and ROH had released the following via twitter: "The recent post by Jay Briscoe does not represent the views or opinions of Ring of Honor Wrestling, its owners, management or employees." and a tweet that had to be extended "Ring of Honor Wrestling respects and appreciates every fan regardless of age, gender, race, religion or sexual preference. The recent post by Jay Briscoe does not represent the views or opinions of Ring of Honor Wrestling, its owners, management or employees.".

Obviously ROH are lucky that they weren't the size of WWE or even TNA, as they would have had a much larger backlash. We have seen these kinds of comments before, both from Bully Ray and to a much smaller extent CM Punk in Australia. However, those two incidents were different in the sense that they were not aimed directly at the gay rights movement, but more at a single fan in the audience. Does that it more or less wrong? I don't know, and I suppose it depends on your take. However, it is 2013, there is no excuse to be intolerant, and more over incredibly stupid, because it will get yourself and other people into trouble. The moral is and always has been, think before you post, and that goes for all forms of media.

Reports

ROH Border Wars May 4th 2013 Ted Reeve Arena, Toronto Ontario, Canada

Overall Thoughts

As a whole this wasn't a bad show, in fact it was fine, but the reality is that ROH has set its standards at a different level, and this show didn't meet them on any level. There was no blow-away match on the show, and although Ishimori/Edwards was good, it wasn't at the right level to make this a good show, nor was the Davey Richards/Paul London match. The angles on the show also felt like much of the same, and that feeling isn't necessarily helped by the fact that there seems to be very little interest in the SCUM angle, which is a shame since they have invested a lot into it at this point. The problem with that angle and even the Aces & Eights at this point, is that the heel group doesn't have the right mix of stars, and feels thrown together, while there is no one on the babyface side to really spark any interest at all. There is also the fact that the failed invasion group has been done to death at this point, and honestly the most successful of those invasions we have seen over the past few years is the Shield angle, but I don't know if you could even classify them in the same archetype. There was also the 2005 ECW invasion, which is actually overlooked quite a bit, but other than that there have been very few, if any, to work in the long term. The other major problem on the show was that the main event felt like a TV match, which wasn't the best way to close the show off. As a whole, this was a fine show, but there was nothing on it that you should go out of your way to see.

Nigel McGuinness seems to be back at least for the time being as a commentator on the pay-per-views, which is an improvement in every way.

1. Caprice Coleman & Cedric Alexander vs. ACH & Tadarius Thomas

ACH was clearly the most over person of the match, and has been for the last few shows. A "we want tables" chant broke out in the early portion of the match, something that seemed rather obscure to me. Alexander and Coleman did a Young Bucks style dive to the floor, and began to wear Thomas down. Thomas landed a pair of enzuigiris and made the tag to ACH who ran wild with some really impressive offense culminating in a tumbling dive from Thomas and an insane corkscrew plancha to the floor. Thomas landed some big kicks on Coleman before landing rolling northern lights suplex. ACH landed a ricochet inverted powerslam, but Alexander caught him with a dropkick, Coleman landed a frankensteiner, and Alexander landed a frogsplash for the win. I really wasn't as high on the opening matches from the last few shows as most people, but this was a good match despite a couple of botches and mistimed spots.

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2. Roderick Strong vs. Mike Bennett w/ Maria

This was somewhat of a thrown together match given that it was originally supposed to be Mike Mondo versus Bennett, but Mondo is out with an injury. Still, they had a perfectly fine match. Bennett has now shaved his head, which honestly isn't the greatest given that he has given up a lot of his look. Bennett gained the advantage by throwing Strong into the barricade repeatedly on the floor. Maria joined Kelly and Nigel for a couple of seconds at ringside. She was asked about the future of she and Bennett, and she replied that there was gold in their future. Strong made his comeback with chops and elbows followed by a big superplex. Bennett landed a spinebuster and Strong responded with a backbreaker. Bennett landed a spear for two, but Strong grabbed the Strong hold. Maria jumped on the apron to cover up for Bennett tapping out, Bennett landed a superkick and box office smash, but Strong kicked out. Cheeseburger, the member of the ring crew that Bennett laid out in New York, ran in kissing Maria setting up for a sick kick off of the distraction from Strong for the win.

** 3/4

3. I Quit Match

BJ Whitmer vs. Rhett Titus w/ Steve Corino

From the video package that they aired before the match I would have thought that Steen was up next, but it was in fact the I Quit match that was announced, which was rather strange. The crowd chanted "boring" during a Corino promo, so I guess that has officially replaced "what?". Whitmer rushed out after Titus to kick off the match. Nigel left right at the start of the match to grab a pair of referees to remove Corino from ringside. All the while Whitmer was destroying Titus out on the floor, which wasn't as impactful unfortunately due to the camera crew switching between Nigel and the match. Titus got the advantage out on the floor landing a neckbreaker and strangling BJ. He proceeded to land a big kick from the outside, BJ made a brief comeback. Titus grabbed a couple of cable ties, but Whitmer was able to tie Titus to the top rope. Titus refused to quit repeatedly replying "hell na" in reply to the referee's query. Corino stepped into the ring, and opened himself up for a chair shot. However, Titus responded by quitting to save Corino. This made no sense, given that Corino blew the entire thing off, and made this match feel like a waste of time. Corino brought Compton and Rave in, but Lethal and Elgin made the save leading straight into the next match on the show.

* 1/4

4. Jay Lethal & Michael Elgin vs. Cliff Compton & Jimmy Jacobs w/ Steve Corino & Rhett Titus

The stipulation for the match was that if SCUM won Steve Corino would become the new colour commentator, but if they lost Steve Corino would have to leave the company. The match got underway with Titus still tied to the ropes. Lethal and Elgin did a lot of work on the floor while the referees released Titus from the ropes. Elgin held a delayed vertical suplex on Jacobs for so long that the crowd actually lost count. He then did the same thing on Compton moments later before Lethal hoisted Jacobs up for a suplex of his own. Lethal shot out with a topé on Jacobs, and then proceeded to work a very believable knee injury. Elgin dropped out to the floor to check on Lethal while Jacobs and Compton were left in the ring. Nigel got out of his chair and came by while Corino was ordering the referee's to end the match. Elgin was then sent back into the ring to go after Jacobs and Compton on his own. He actually caught Jacobs in mid spear and landed a double fall away slam for two. Jacobs and Compton worked over Elgin in the ring due to numbers advantage. Elgin in an incredible spot landed a dead lift German suplex on Compton with Jacobs on his back! Everyone was down until Kevin Steen ran out and he asked for Nigel to give him the opportunity to fill in for Lethal as Elgin's partner. Nigel obliged, which made little sense, given that the heels didn't take Lethal out or anything. Steen was tagged in by Elgin as streamers rained in the ring. Steen absolutely wrecked shop, landing all of his big moves. Elgin got his legs knocked out from under him, Steen went for the package piledriver, but Jacobs shot in with a small package for the win. From the start of the match up until right near the finish this was a very well laid out and well executed angle and match. The way that they built to the Steen run-in was really great, but honestly the finish fell flat. The stipulation stated that if SCUM lost Corino would have to leave the company, so they wouldn't have been able to do that, but they could have done something other than a small package to continue the angle, as this didn't get heat, it was just met with dead silence and disinterest.

They aired segments of matches from Taiji Ishimori's 2005 match against Generico as a part of one of ROH's Japanese tours, which is a great idea for intermission. They also aired a match between Paul London and Michael Shane, and if they were going to air a London match it should have probably been his 2/3 falls match with Danielson or his match with Styles.

Evans made it out with QT Marshall who has also shaved his head, and looks worse for it. Evans cut a Canada centric promo, which led to Fandango-ing. Evans took it really well, asking if it was the Canadian national anthem calling it a terrible song. Evans complained about reDragon not being there. The lights went off repeatedly and there was beeping and videos of Tomasso Ciampa aired on the screen simply reading "Caecilian Psychopath". The lights went off, and out came Ciampa. He got a ton of streamers and had a huge brace on his one knee. Evans and Marshall fled and Ciampa went after them. ROH did a great job of making Ciampa feel like a big deal, and the great thing about it was that it worked from the onset. Corino made it down to the announcer's table saying that he had a big announcement for TV.

5. Eddie Edwards vs. Taiji Ishimori

The weird thing about this was that they were building this as Ishimori's first match in ROH, when they showed a match from Ishimori during ROH's tour of Tokyo during the intermission. Ishimori landed a head scissors sending Edwards to the floor setting up for a moonsault to the outside. Edwards landed a huge topé out to the floor colliding with his midsection against Ishimori. Ishimori landed a big pair of double knees from the top, and Edwards responded with machine gun chops in the corner. Ishimori countered a diehard into a tombstone and landed a running knee for two. Ishimori shot up to the top for a frankensteiner, but was pushed off, and amazingly landed on his feet. A pin exchange ensued, and Ishimori landed a reverse frankensteiner and a lariat, which the crowd were really into. Ishimori landed a couple of huge superkicks for two. Edwards got the knees up off of a 450 splash and landed a frankensteiner followed by a superkick and powerbomb into a sitout powerbomb for two. Edwards then landed the diehard for the win in what was a very good match; unfortunately the crowd didn't peak at the end of the match, but were still very much into it.

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6. ROH TV Title Match

Matt Taven w/ Truth Martini vs. Mark Briscoe

Briscoe sent Taven out to the floor landing a vertical suplex on the apron. Briscoe went to the top rope, but was hung up by Martini, which gave Taven the advantage. Taven landed a corkscrew quebrada for two, but Mark fought back with red neck kung-fu. Briscoe landed an exploder in the corner, but Taven got his knees up off of an elbow attempt. Briscoe landed a big DDT for two, Taven slipped off of a springboard and was caught with a spinebuster. Truth Martini went for a shot with the Book of Truth, Briscoe side stepped him and he fell to the floor. The two ladies that accompany Taven to the ring then proceeded to kiss on the apron, Briscoe scared them off, but Taven grabbed a rollup for the win. Briscoe landed a red neck kung-fu chop on Martini after the match.

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7. Davey Richards vs. Paul London

London was out there for quite some time shaking hands with the fans. It is important to note that he was wrestling in the tights that he wrestled his last ROH match in... that was in 2003. Kevin Kelly mentioned his role as a talent scout briefly, obviously not mentioning the WWE by name. The dreaded "you still got it" chants were running strong. London was drenched in sweat from very early on. London was tossed from the top rope down onto a photographer. Richards followed it with a big kick off the apron. Richards locked in an inverted Indian deathlock and Richards really heeled it up. London landed a big lariat and topé con giro out to the floor. London landed a shooting star press from a standing position, and was caught with a big German suplex for two. They went to an elbow exchange; London landed a pair of superkicks and a dragon suplex for two. London grabbed a headscissors into the tombstone position on the floor, but Richards countered and landed a tombstone out on the floor in an incredible spot! London made it in at 19, but was then caught with a double footstomp to the face of London. This was a very scary move that ultimately gave London a concussion, rendering unable to work the TV tapings the next night. Many people complained that they continued to work the match following the spot, but hindsight is always 20:20. Richards was legitimately concerned asking if London was okay. There were "you killed Paul" chants and "please don't die" chants, this was a bad situation. London landed a sunset flip powerbomb, and went for the shooting star press, but Richards got the knees up for the win. This was a good match, but it seemed as though London had blown up at the start. They grabbed me and everyone else with the tombstone spot, but they should have ended it at the footstomp spot realistically. After the match Richards put London over as one of the people that paved the way for he and the rest of the lockerroom. Richards walked off, but London grabbed the mic and said that the honour was his.

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8. ROH World Championship Match

Jay Briscoe vs. Adam Cole

Briscoe landed some vicious strikes in the corner, and Cole responded with a topé out on the floor. Cole locked in a figure four around the ring post and went after the leg. Cole took control in the middle portion of the match landing a fireman's carry over the knee neckbreaker. Cole landed another neckbreaker over the knee for two. Jay responded with a Death Valley driver on the apron! Briscoe went for the Jay Driller, but Cole countered into a figure four. Cole landed a German suplex from the top rope with Jay landing on his head; he followed it with a couple of superkicks and the Florida Key for two. He went back to the figure four. Briscoe sent Cole into Todd Sinclair for a ref bump. Steve Corino made it out and offered Cole a SCUM shirt, Nigel jumped up on the apron and hung Corino hung setting up for a tower of London on Corino and he took him to the back. Jay then landed the Jay driller for the win. Cole and Jay shook hands after the match and they teased a Cole heel turn, but he just slid to the outside and to the back. The mainevent was fine, but the thing is that ROH has been doing way too many run-ins and ref bumps in mainevent matches and this was no exception. The Tower of London spot was awesome, I just don't know if they should have done the ref bump.

WWE Monday Night RAW May 6th 2013
Roanoke Civic Centre, Roanoke, Virginia

Overall Thoughts:

Given the fact that we are only a week away from Extreme Rules, and they have had a ton of time to build to it, I really am underwhelmed with the Extreme Rules show at this point in time. Sure, there is the Shield tag team title match, but other than that there really isn't anything on the show that I am looking forward to. Triple H versus Brock Lesnar could be a good match, but given that their other two matches didn't live up to expectations, and the build to this match has been rather lacklustre, I am not terribly excited for the match. It is being built as an old-school kind of cage match, and they could land up with something special if they have Lesnar pull off a performance like he did with Cena at last year's Extreme Rules, but I don't know if that will be the case. There is also the matter of the Cena/Ryback match, and granted there isn't another major program on the horizon right now, but I have absolutely no interest in that match whatsoever. As for this show, it wasn't awful, and I wouldn't even say that it was bad, but it was completely uninspiring from almost every angle, and they could have built to something halfway decent given that they have had so much time to put their major angles into motion.

They aired a dramatic Impact style video of Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman invading WWE headquarters with a promise to show footage later on in the night, and boy did they do a lot of showing. There was also a recap of the Shield match from last week. Cena made it out to open the show with an ankle that was not in fact taped up. He said that people had questions, and he would answer them in the same fashion as "Ancient Chinese Philosopher" Daniel Bryan. He proceeded to do Bryan's yes/no gimmick to some comedy questions, which simply came across as lame. He yelled "the champ is here", but Vickie made her way out to interrupt. She pointed out that there was still no stipulation for Cena's match with Ryback. She stated that she wanted a stipulation fair to both champion and challenger, and brought Ryback out. Cena suggested some comedy stipulations such as a "whining match". He proceeded to do some atrocious comedy impersonating Ryback. Ryback once again did the spoiled child heel gimmick, and it simply doesn't fit in with his character. He delivered some over scripted dialogue before opting for a last man standing match and walking off. Even though Ryback is extremely annoying in his current role, and more in a go-away heat fashion more than anything else, he was far less annoying in this segment than Cena. Cole showed some tweets featuring Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman at WWE headquarters. After the break they announced that Ryback would face Cena in a last man standing match. Damien Sandow made it out singing to the rhythm of Orton's theme song – they really should be doing more with him. Orton has shaved his head again, which is a shame given that his 2005 look really gave him some much needed freshness. Sandow got his offence, but they didn't go nearly as long, nor was Sandow made to look as competitive as in Orton's match with Rhodes last week. While Orton was walking back up the ramp Show made it through the curtain and knocked him out.

Chris Jericho and his light up jacket made it out. He said that he would be critiquing Fandango's performance along with Sweet T and Clay, and unlike when Fandango critiqued Jericho, they had an entire judge's table set up at ringside. Fandango made it out to slight Fandango-ing. Fandango said that Jericho had no right to critique him, which led to R-Truth making his way out. For whatever reason, since Truth had his match in England he has been getting great reactions. Does that mean anything? I doubt it, but it is certainly something to keep your eye on. Fandango left after being caught with a scissors kick and rolling to the floor, which is a finish that they do far too often. They showed some more tweets from WWE headquarters. Daniel Bryan was backstage with Josh Matthews, he challenged Ryback to a

rematch, and Ryback came by and refused the challenge citing Bryan's injuries from SmackDown. Ryback called Bryan half the man that he was when Kane came by and Ryback



said that he wasn't the monster that he used to be. This didn't explicitly set up a match for later on, but it was the angle that led to the mainevent. Dolf Ziggler, AJ and Langston made it out for a match

against Del Rio who was of course with Ricardo Rodriguez. Swagger made his way out in the middle of the match, ring music and all. You know, they should really back off a bit when it comes to the use of theme music in run-ins. When they came back from the break the match was still underway with Colter on commentary. AJ jumped up on the apron and threw Del Rio into Swagger for the DQ. Swagger then cleaned house, and killed Del Rio and Langston. He then grabbed a ladder and laid Ricardo and Ziggler out before destroying Del Rio. This was another good RAW match followed by a really good angle with Swagger that made him look like a force to be an absolute killing machine leading into Extreme Rules – however, he really needs to lay-off with the force of those ladder shots. There was a recap of the Cena/Ryback segment that opened the show.

They officially announced Ryback and Kane as the mainevent. They aired a video for WWE on Yahoo promoting the channel's release in the summer. Kaitlyn was backstage with the Funkadactyls talking about her secret admirer. Natalya came by with the Great Khali and they put him undercover to check on Kaitlyn's secret admire. The Bellas were shown spying on the conversation. The Shield made it out before a recap of their decimation of Kane on SmackDown airing. After the break the Usos and Kofi Kingston were on the other side of the ring to be destroyed. For the first time that I can recall there were light "let's go Shield" chants. They worked the usual RAW Shield match. They got the heat on Uso before he made the tag to Kingston. Kingston ran wild for a couple of seconds, but Reigns killed Uso out on the floor, Rollins cleaned house and Ambrose landed a great spike DDT on Kingston for the win. They showed some more tweets from the Lesnar/Heyman invasion – they were pushing this angle really hard. It will be Cesaro versus Orton on Mainevent this week, so hopefully Cesaro will get another chance to shine. Cesaro made it out, and that match on Main Event did absolute wonders for Cesaro's position in the company (at least for now), as Ryder was placed in his path to destroy with the neutralizer. He then had the opportunity to get on the mic. He asked if that was the only competition that they had for him, and he said that he put the "W" in WWE. There was nobody in the company who could hold a candle to him. He got the "what" treatment, but then again what would you expect after they beat him for months on end?

They showed some security camera footage of the Lesnar/Heyman invasion. Heyman appeared via satellite and he showed some incredibly high quality cellphone footage – Heyman must have next-gen tech. They showed the Extreme Rules poster and rightfully asked why Sheamus was on it. They stated that Andre the Giant had been dead for 150 years, which was a bit of an overstatement. They worked past the front desk, and made it up to the top floor. Heyman stated that there was no poster of Lesnar in the entire building. They made sure to focus in on the “Paul Levesque” sign outside of his office – it’s a shoot you see. Believe it or not Triple H has a photo of Killer Kowalski in his office, and Heyman proceeded to ask “who did he ever beat?” which was simply amazing. Lesnar manhandled an employee telling him to shut-up. Lesnar sat at Hunter’s desk and broke his laptop, keyboard monitor, and then proceeded to grab Triple H’s sledge hammer in the office destroying everything in sight. This was entertaining television. Heyman said that he was the voice of reason, but now that Triple H laid him out with a pedigree he would encourage Lesnar to basically become an animal and maim Triple H. He said that Lesnar would take Triple further and further past the Extreme. Triple H’s music hit and out he came in the middle of Heyman’s promo. He said that he knew about “extreme” because he “tore through the Attitude Era with an iron fist”, and knocked out Brock Lesnar. He said that he had two offices; one in Stanford and the other in the ring. He said that the ring was more like his home and unlike at his actual office if Lesnar wanted to destroy it he would fight back. Well Triple H blew that off completely – the destruction of the office was great and all, but Hunter blowing it off really made it meaningless in the long run.

The Lawler and JBL made an in joke asking how they could tell the Bellas apart. There was then another trailer for the new Divas reality show. AJ teamed up with the Bella twins to take on the Funkadactyls and Kaitlyn. Kaitlyn pinned AJ to build to their Divas title match – so having AJ get pinned helped the title match how? Mark Henry made it out saying that in moments Sheamus would make his way out and would act tough, but he doesn’t need to act



tough because he is. The fans yelled “what?” when Henry said “when Sheamus” so Henry responded by repeatedly looping what he had just said and called the fans puppets, which was tremendous. Henry asked the cameraman to focus in, saying that he wanted Sheamus to face

him, and rambled on for a few more moments before Sheamus made his way out to interrupt. He aired his own video package, with clips making him seem like the heel of the pair showing him attack Henry in the tug-of-war and arm wrestling contest. They prepared to go at it right then and there before Wade Barrett made it out for his match with Sheamus. When they made it back from the break Henry was on commentary and Barrett was in control. Henry went after Sheamus, but was caught with a brogue kick. Sheamus won with a brogue kick before Henry slid in with a belt that he had stripped from the time keeper. He used the

belt whip Sheamus with repeatedly. Henry then landed a World's Strongest Slam out on the floor. I would really hate to be IC or US champion at this point. There was a commercial for a Jericho/Fandango dance-off next week.

They showed the footage of Lesnar destroying Triple H's office – really pushing this hard. Kane and Ryback made it out for a match that they had been building as “monster versus monster” the entire show. During the commercial break there was a commercial for ‘No One Lives’. Ryback landed up pinning Kane after a marching Samoan drop when Kane went to the top for the clotheslines – a bad match suffice to say. The Shield made it out through the crowd, Bryan made it out, but Ryback slid to the floor. Cena ran down for the save, but Ryback slid in, chair in hand, only to turn on Cena. He landed a few chair shots and stood over Cena's fallen body to close the show off.

RAW Ratings for May 6th 2013

Monday's edition of RAW was the lowest rated show since football season, doing a 2.89 rating and drawing 3.92 million viewers. There was strong competition in the Chicago Bulls/Miami Heat basketball game, which drew a 4.14 and 5.46 million viewers. The show was third for the night on cable in overall viewership, but in the 18-49 demo they averaged in the 7th slot over three hours.

The show opened with a 3.29 quarter for the John Cena/Ryback stipulation announcement, which is a strong number and is better than what they have been doing most weeks as of late. The Orton/Sandow match lost a shocking 725,000 viewers, which was a big loss even factoring in the strong opening quarter. The Chris Jericho interview gained 124,000 viewers. The Fandango segment with R-Truth lost 146,000 viewers to a 2.74 quarter Dolf Ziggler versus Alberto Del Rio at 21:00 gained 228,000 viewers to a 2.91.

The 20:00 to 21:00 hour drew 3.966 million viewers (a 1.34 rating and 1.707 million viewers in the 18-49 demo, which was down substantially from average. The first hour was number seven for the night on cable, behind hour one).

In the post-21:00 segment the Shield versus Kofi Kingston & Uso Brothers match lost 206,000 viewers, which is the usual number for the post 21:00 drop-off, but they were coming off of a low. Antonio Cesaro versus Zack Ryder gained 26,000 viewers. Then in a segment that really helped save the show, the Brock Lesnar/Paul Heyman office destruction segment at 22:00 gained 899,000 viewers to a 3.44, which is huge for that time slot, and would have been great even for the overrun. It was an almost entire male gain in viewership as male teen viewers rose by 35% and males 18-49 rose by 38%.

The 21:00 to 22:00 hour drew 3.871 million viewers (a 1.28 and 1.62 million viewers in the 18-49 demo, which placed it as the eighth hour for the night on cable obviously behind hours one and hour three above it.)

In the post-22:00 segment Kaitlyn, Cameron & Naomi versus the Bella Twins & AJ...yes you guessed it...lost 921,000 viewers. If you look at it they only sat at a 22,000 viewer deficit from the previous segment, but then again this shows no interest whatsoever in the match. The Mark Henry/Sheamus confrontation and Sheamus versus Wade Barrett gained 146,000 viewers. Finally, the Ryback versus Kane mainevent segment with the run-ins from the

Shield, Ryback and Bryan gained 163,000 viewers to a 2.99 overrun, which was exceptionally weak, especially given the deficit that they were faced with.

The 22:00 to 23:06 hour drew 3.908 million viewers (a 1.43 rating and 1.810 million viewers in the 18-49 demo, placing it in the sixth position on cable behind T.I. & Tiny at number five (1,862,000 viewers/1.47 rating), Teen Mom II at number four (1,864,000 viewers/1.47), Love & Hip-Hop Atlanta at number three (1,864,000 viewers/1.47), NBA Chicago/Miami at number two (1,864,000 viewers/1.47) and the NBA Golden State/San Antonio game in the top slot (1,864,000 viewers/1.47). The show drew a 2.3 in males 18-49, a 1.8 in male teenagers, a 0.9 in females 18-34, and a 0.8 in female teenagers.

WWE – NXT
May 8th 2013 – Full Sail University, Florida.
Ben Carass.

Tony Dawson narrated a video recap of the Adrian Neville and Oliver Grey vs. The Wyatt Family story; Dawson blamed The Family for injuring Grey, despite the stable never officially taking responsibility for putting him out, then hyped the Tag Title Main event with Bo Dallas filling in for Grey against Harper and Rowan.

Damien Sandow made his way down for the opening bout then Baron Corbin showed up to make his debut.

Damien Sandow vs. Baron Corbin

The crowd didn't care one bit about the newcomer and quickly began to chant for Sandow; Damien out wrestled the rookie then threw some strikes in the corner. Corbin got a couple of shots in from underneath, but Sandow continued to dominate with ease. Suddenly, Corbin delivered a snapmare and a pair of shoulder tackles for some hope, however Sandow shut him down then hit his legsweep/elbow combo. Damien hit a new move to get the three count; Dawson called it "the silencer". The best way I can describe it is, a sort of half-necktie, sit-out waistlock slam.

Damien Sandow defeated Baron Corbin via pinfall, at 3:08.

Sandow got on the stick and challenged Big E. for the NXT Title; he didn't specify a date, but it goes down on next week's show and Damien does the job for Big E.

I guess the match was intended to get Sandow over as a threat to the NXT Title, which I suppose they accomplished. Big E. retaining next week is not that big of a deal since he went over Daniel Bryan on Raw and is involved with the World Champion on every show. Still, I do wish they would take the belt of him and make someone else into the top NXT guy; someone that isn't going to be called up within a month would be a good place to start.

Paige came out to face Bayley, who was already in the ring. Dawson put over Paige's win over Summer Rae and Regal talked about Paige's mission to eliminate all the Barbies from the WWE.

Paige vs. Bayley

They traded arm-ringers and Paige took over with a headbutt then began to run Bayley into the ropes like she did to Summer last week. Paige was sent over the top, but landed on the apron then Bayley grabbed her hair and Paige took a bump on the side of the ring. During the heat, Bayley came off the second rope with a flying back elbow for a two count and hit a modified exploder, which Regal claimed he would steal. Paige countered a suplex into a fisherman for the transition into her comeback; Dawson yelled, “thePaigeturner”. “A fisherman suplex there”, replied Regal in an apathetic manner. Paige ran wild then hit the lightening spiral/Paigeturner for the finish.

Paige defeated Bayley via pinfall, at 4:58.

After the match, Summer Rae ran in and attacked Paige from behind. Summer laid her out with a cheap shot, posed, then headed back up the ramp as Paige sold in the ring.

The match was fairly good and both women worked well with each other. The one thing I will say is that somebody needs to tell Paige not to do her new spot of running her opponent head-on into the ropes; it looks awkward and horrendously phony. I'd say Paige, Emma and Bayley are just as competent in the ring as at least two-thirds of the women on the main roster, which would be a good thing if the Diva's division didn't seem to be more meaningless than ever. I'm fine with the Summer/Paige feud continuing, as the women are two of the most over members of the NXT roster and their match last week was not half bad.

Tom Phillips was with Big E. Langston in the back; Phillips said Big E. had put together an impressive title run and Big E. told him if he thought that was impressive, he should see his yo-yo collection, (*I have no idea either*). Damien Sandow interrupted this “dissertation of ignorance” and challenged the champ to a title match again. Big E. said he would give Damien a shot if he could answer some mathematic equations. Sandow obliged, however the answer turned out to be “five”; Big E. made Sandow repeat the number then the Champ began to chant the number as well. Damien looked bemused and walked off.

Sakamoto appeared to face BrileyPierce , who didn't get an intro nor was his identity announced to the viewers.

Sakamoto vs. Briley Pierce

Pierce took over after a single-leg then he did DolphZiggler's headstand/bridging hammerlock; Dawson openly noted the gimmick infringement and stated Pierce was in fact Dolph's brother. They traded some 1985, opening match hiptosses then the eerie blue lighting was deployed; Conor O'Brian hit the ring and took out both guys.

Sakamoto and Briley Pierce fought to a no-contest, at 2:05.

O'Brian continued to beat up the geeks and left them lying after he hit each of them with a flapjack, which I guess is his big move.

The match was nothing and it was strange how they let Dawson refer to Pierce as Ziggler's brother with such a throwaway line. I'm not high on O'Brian, but he needed to look strong after he failed on numerous occasions to defeated Big E. for the title. However if he is just going to lose in another title match, this was pointless.

Sakamoto and Briley were in the back with Renee Young; Pierce said O'Brian had made the biggest mistake of his life then Sakamoto challenged him to a two-on-one handicap match next week and ranted in Japanese. Pierce told Renee, "yeah, what he said", and the two wandered off.

I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that O'Brian goes over next week, however after the match he has a stare down with Rick Victor, which could lead to a new Ascension or one of the worst feuds in NXT history.

Dawson said the next match involved someone with whom Regal was very familiar with; Regal just smiled and nodded at his colleague. A fired up Kassius Ohno made his entrance to face Camacho.

Kassius Ohno vs. Camacho

Peculiarly, they established Camacho as the power-guy in the match and Ohno used speed to get the advantage; Kassius even did a kip-up, before he delivered a modified neckbreaker. Camacho caught Ohno with a boot in the corner then a clothesline from behind and began to get some heat. Dawson claimed Camacho's ring attire was a tribute to his "humble background"; Regal pointed out that Camacho was wearing a pair of \$200 sneakers, which was pretty amusing. Ohno showed some fight, only to be shut down by a backdrop and Camacho went back to the heat. Kassius fought up from the dreaded nerve hold to hit a kick for the transition then started a comeback; Ohno applied the Kassius clutch to get the tap-out.

Kassius Ohno defeated Camacho via submission, at 6:13.

Ohno grabbed the mic and headed up to the announce position; he said the last few months had been a blur and claimed he didn't know who he was anymore. Ohno apologised to Regal, however The Wyatt Family showed up for the main event. Harper and Rowan eyeballed Kassius on their way down the ramp then Ohno turned around to come face-to-face with Bray Wyatt. Bray told Ohno he meant him no harm, but The Family attacked from behind; Wyatt called off the assault then hit Kassius with his swinging reverse STO on the stage.

The match was fine; Ohno worked well as a babyface, however the crowd didn't seem to notice the difference in his demeanour or style, so I guess you could argue he didn't do that great of a job. To be fair, it's hard to try turn a crowd with no build or hint whatsoever; maybe if Ohno apologised to Regal before the match, the fans may have got behind him a little more. It appears the idea is to turn Ohno and Corey Graves into a new duo, which sounds promising for the NXT Tag Title scene.

After the break, Adrian Neville and Bo Dallas came out to defend the straps.

NXT Tag Team Championship Match: Adrian Neville & Bo Dallas (Champions) vs. The Wyatt Family w/Bray Wyatt

Dallas and Neville controlled Rowan by making some frequent tags and keeping the heel in their half of the ring. Rowan landed a pair of forearms then made the tag, but Neville used his quickness to avoid Harper and took him down with a hurricanrana off the second rope. After the break, the heels seemingly had the heat; Bo made the tag and Neville ran wild on Harper then wiped out Rowan with a corkscrew plancha. Neville hit the British Airways, however

Rowan broke up the pinfall and began to get the heat on Adrian; Neville got an inside cradle in for a hope spot, but Harper came in and the heels delivered some double team shots in the corner. Harper missed a big boot in the corner and spilled over the top to the floor; Neville crawled to his corner and made the hot tag. Dallas ran wild on Rowan then got a two count off an inverted DDT; Bo shot Rowan in for his belly-to-belly, however Rowan held onto the ropes and landed a pump-handle slam, which Bo had a hard time getting up for. Rowan tried for a second pump-handle and Dallas escaped to hit a spear for a two count. The finish saw Bo go for his tornado bulldog, but Rowan countered and shoved Dallas into Neville, who fell off the apron, then Harper tagged in to hit a discuss lariat to get the victory.

The Wyatt Family defeated Adrian Neville & Bo Dallas to become the new NXT Tag Team Champions, at 10:50 of TV time.

Bray left his rocking chair and got in the ring to raise the hands of his victorious team as the show closed.

This was a solid main event, although it wasn't quite as good as the matches The Family had with Neville and Grey. Switching the belts is only logical, as Bo can go back to being a singles and perhaps they will also get behind Neville with a big push. There are not too many teams for The Family to go against, which could explain the upcoming Ohno and Graves angle. Still, even after that there isn't much in terms of babyface teams to throw in there; there's always The Usos, but they have been buried long enough in my opinion.

This was a packed edition of NXT; I can't recall a show with 5 matches before, although none of them were all that thrilling. There were plenty of angles shot here though: Paige/Summer continues, Ohno's turn has seemingly begun, they set up a title match, crowned new Tag champs and even began to rebuild Conor O'Brian. There is not much to look forward to on next week's show, other than Bray Wyatt's promo from underneath a mask, which is bizarre considering he blames the loss to Jericho as the reason for wearing the mask and appeared here like nothing had changed. Apparently, Bray has a hard time trying to keep the mask on during a match with Danny Burch, so we'll have to see if they edit parts of that segment. In two weeks things pick up, with the Sami Zayn show and Ohno/Graves being laid out by The Family. I like the idea of Ohno and Graves together, their styles would mesh well and they could be a hell of a tag team. However I see the babyface Ohno as just a short term thing which will help him become a bigger heel in the long run and possibly even set up another match with Regal.

TNA Impact May 9th 2013 Bancorp South Arena, Tupelo, Mississippi

Overall Thoughts:

I don't know have much else to say at this point. This was your standard edition of Impact, it wasn't necessarily awful, but there was nothing all that great on the show, and for the most part all of the big angles fell flat. Abyss returned in the mainevent segment, which could have been a great moment; however, they never built to it at all, and it felt like a thrown together angle simply due to the fact that they had no one to fill the role. Don't get me wrong, they need all of the people that they can get at this point, but to bring Abyss back with no major build just felt like a wasted opportunity. The Kenny King/Chris Sabin interview spot was surprisingly one of the best things on the show, but even then it wasn't anything to really

write home about. All in all if you are person that enjoys Impact, then sure, you will have a fine time watching this, for everyone else who isn't watching the product there is no real impetus to tune in at this point.

Sting and Kurt Angle made their way down to the ring to open the show up. Sting said that they couldn't just simply strive for the best against the Aces & Eights, and that's why he chose Angle, handing the mic over to Angle in the process. Angle called AJ Styles out, and out he came. Angle asked if Styles would join their team, which led to chants of "yes" from the Tupelo crowd. Styles remained blank faced and silent; Angle demanded an answer. Sting openly addressed the similarities between the crowd angle and 2013 AJ Styles. The crowd was really fired up chanting AJ's name, Angle screamed in Styles' face, but Styles walked off to light boos. Angle chased after him, which led to a large melee on the stage. While that was progressing on the ramp, Devon, Anderson and Ray slid in laying Sting out with the 3D. After the break Styles was approached backstage, and simply walked off. Tara made it out with Jese to team with Gail Kim to take on Mickie James and Velvet Sky. Taz put Kim over hard on commentary. Sky pinned Tara with the pedigree, in a match that really wasn't anything at all, although the crowd was really into it. After the match Kim laid Tara out with a clothesline and locked in a figure four around the ring post – hopefully this leads to a large push for Kim. Ray and the Aces & Eights were socializing in the back, when D-lo came by and was given the cold shoulder.

After the break Kazarian and Daniels came by Storm in the back, they offered him a beer and asked for him to do the right thing. Bully Ray made it out to address the situation with the six-man tag. He then turned to D-lo and asked for him to revoke his colours. Brown refused saying that his jacket was his life. Anderson yelled that the Aces & Eights was not for quitters – this was getting the 'what' treatment at this point. Ray wanted him to earn his way back into the club by standing by during DOC's match with Magnus, making sure that DOC got the job down. Magnus made it out before the break and we joined the match in progress when



they made it back. Brown took Magnus out to the floor, but was laid out being thrown into the steps by Magnus. DOC landed a flapjack and Brown inadvertently grabbed DOC leading to Magnus getting the win. Given that Magnus won with the aid of Brown this didn't do much for

him, but at least he didn't have to take the fall. As for this D-lo angle...I have no interest.

They made it back from the break. Brown was taken down by the Aces & Eights backstage – they reduced him to the level of a runner and let him go. Hogan walked into a lockerroom with Angle and Sting. Hogan said that he had a potential wild card for the night, but Angle

and Sting suggested Magnus in his place. Roode and Aries approached James Storm backstage offering him some beer, and Roode rushed through some lines saying that he was the weak link in Beer Money. Storm made it out before Daniels & Kazarian and Roode & Aries. Towards the end of the match Daniels grabbed Aries' tights, but Storm took note of it and refused to count. Aries spat beer in the face of Daniels and then spat in the face of Storm. Storm missed a superkick on Aries and landed one on Daniels. At first I thought that they were going to do the 1997 Summerslam finish, but instead Storm just landed a superkick on Aries and walked off, ending the segment. So just like that the match ended, with no announcement or anything – this was phenomenally stupid. Backstage, the Aces & Eights destroyed Magnus. There was a Suicide vignette, before they aired a recap of Sabin's X Division win last week. Kenny King made it out to new theme music and called Sabin out after putting him over. King asked for Sabin to tell his story, and he did with some good promo material. King said that sometimes people in wrestling put too much clout in titles and wins and losses and forget what's really important – in what world...? King wanted Sabin to raise the X title and said that it was the closest he would ever get to holding it. He basically said that Sabin wasn't in his league, but Sabin dropped King down to the floor with a big punch to King who was holding the X title in one of the better segments on the show.

There was a huge commotion backstage with James Storm laid out and Aries & Roode



bickering with Roode & Kazarian. The Aces & Eights are laying people out constantly, we didn't need another angle like this. There was a trailer for a four man tournament for next week, with a Gut Check winner being able to compete in the Bound for Glory series. Ray was delivering a prep-talk backstage justifying his treatment of D-lo Brown. Angle, Sting and Hogan were backstage, Sting and Angle left and Hogan got on the phone

to his secret weapon of sorts. Sting and Angle made it out alone to face Ray, Devon and Anderson. Once again there were "USA" chants for Angle during the heat – and the other men are from where? They cut to the Aces & Eights laid out in the back before the break during the match. Ray landed a dropkick and Taz compared it to a Mil Mascaras dropkick, which was just awesome. The hot tag was made to Sting and he ran wild before facing off with Ray and locking in the scorpion death lock. Anderson ran in to break it, and Angle was taken out on the floor. Ray and Devon grabbed a table when of all people Abyss made it out for the save. He made the cover winning the match for his team and stood in the ring victorious to close out the show. The return of Abyss was fine and all, but honestly it isn't going to make a difference to the quality of the Aces & Eights angle at this point, nor will it make a difference in the ratings.

WWE SmackDown – May 10th 2013.
PNC Arena, Raleigh, NC.
Ben Carass.

SmackDown kicked off with footage of Jack Swagger killing everyone with the ladder on Raw then the narrator hyped Swagger vs. Big E. Langston for tonight. Next, they recapped The Shield taking out Kane last week and set up Daniel Bryan vs. Dean Ambrose for the show.

Lilian introduced Chris Jericho, who was in the ring with his Highlight Reel set ready to go; Jericho put over the Last Man Standing match at Extreme Rules then brought out Ryback as his guest. Cole told us Cena was still suffering from his Achilles “injury” then they showed the schmoz from the end of Raw were Ryback laid Cena out with a chair. Jericho claimed he knew where Ryback was coming from when it came to Cena, however Ryback claimed he didn’t need any approval from Y2J. Jericho asked what Ryback’s rules were and stated they were much simpler than, “don’t eat carbs or don’t go swimming until 30 minutes after you eat”. Jericho said Ryback’s rules were: do whatever it takes to get to the top and do whatever it takes to win the WWE Title; Jericho told Ryback he could understand that, because he had been a 6 time World Champion and made enemies everywhere in the company: Cena, Shawn Michaels, even Bob Barker. Ryback didn’t take kindly to the judgment from Chris and stated, “I take care of me”; Jericho informed Ryback he was not judging him, although it sounded like all the Jericholics in the arena were. Jericho asserted that the fans were booing Ryback, because they knew the difference between what it took to beat Austin and Rock on the same night and what it will take to beat a one legged John Cena. (*Didn’t Vince McMahon help Jericho become the Undisputed Champion that night? – I guess that’s what it takes*). Jericho continued to say that Ryback would prefer to be a champion that cuts corners and takes the easy way out, rather than being the “nice guy who always finished second”, then claimed Ryback would lose the respect of the entire WWE Universe if he becomes the WWE Champion at Extreme Rules. Ryback told Jericho he talked too much then threatened to drop the host of the Highlight Reel right there. Jericho claimed he could tell by the look in Ryback’s eyes that he wouldn’t do a damn thing; they squared up to each other and Teddy Long came out to, you guessed it, book the two in the main event. Ryback gave Jericho a cheap shot and left Y2J lying in the ring.

Other than setting up the main event, this opening segment was pretty much useless. I understand what Jericho was getting at, but the material the two were working with made little sense. Ryback turned heel weeks ago, so surely he lost the fans respect when he didn’t help Cena fight off The Shield and I have no idea what the line about being a cowardly champion or a nice guy that finishes second was about. Who wants to finish second in any sporting contest? Take (inset your favourite non-combat sport here); I’d take an ugly last minute point/goal to win a match every day of the week, rather than face the agony of defeat. But this is WWE, so maybe comparing real sports is a little ridiculous. Either way, Jericho didn’t even explain that he was one of the sneakiest World Champions in history, so he knew it is not worth winning the title if nobody respects you. As for Teddy, he was in full-on babyface GM mode this week, so I’ve given up on trying to predict where they are going with this storyline, although, I would like to know where Booker T has disappeared to.

A graphic hyped Mark Henry pulling some trucks later on; Cole said he was going for a world record. After the break, Kofi Kingston had just entered the ring to take on Cody Rhodes.

Non-Title Match: Kofi Kingston (US Champion) vs. Cody Rhodes

Kofi threw a couple of armdrags, but Cody took over after not obliging in a clean break as the two were in the ropes. Cody hit a gourdbuster and got the heat; Kofi fought up from a backhammer then started his comeback with some chops and got a two count off a roll-up. Cody landed a knee strike for another two, although the crowd did not buy this near-fall one bit. Kofi came off the top with a high cross, but Rhodes rolled through for a near-fall which the people were into a little more. The finish saw each guy counter the other's signature moves: Cross-Rhodes, the SOS, then Cody went for the disaster kick, but Kofi caught him in mid-air with the trouble in paradise and got the three.

Kofi Kingston defeated Cody Rhodes via pinfall, at 3:27.

The finishing sequence was nice, but the match was pretty basic stuff really. Kofi should be winning matches like this, granted the US Title is beyond salvation at this point, but I would much prefer if they booked the secondary champions to go over mid-carders every week, as opposed to being fodder for main eventers and guys they are trying to get over. Rhodes and Sandow are on quite the losing streak; I doubt there is anything sinister behind their current situation, it's probably just what happens when creative has nothing for you.

They showed highlights of Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar "invading" Titan Towers and Brock destroying Triple H's gimmicked up office then aired parts of Paul E and Hunter's promos that followed. JBL, Josh and Cole all flapped their gums about who would win the cage match; JBL stated that Lesnar had become the UFC Heavyweight Champion inside a cage, however in the WWE the cage can be used as a weapon, so that favoured Triple H. This whole "WWE is better than UFC" mentality is totally juvenile if you ask me. Cole hyped Lesnar and Trips in a "face-to-face" for Raw.

Jack Swagger and Zeb Colter joined Renee Young in the back; this week, Zeb called her "Riva" then told her to stand there and just hold the mic. Colter referred to Ziggler as, "a man of questionable moral character" and Del Rio as a "criminale" then said Swagger delivered a statement on Raw when he took out 4 guys with the ladder. Zeb added that Swagger would serve another statement tonight when he takes out "little blondie's bodyguard", Big E. Langston, and claimed every step Swagger takes up the ladder at Extreme Rules, is a step closer to every real American achieving their goals. Zeb stated, step one was to win the World Title and step two was to take their country back.

Big E. Langston made his entrance, complete with weightlifter's chalk; Ziggler and AJ accompanied Big E.



down to the ring. Alberto Del Rio joined the announce team after the break; Cole said Ricardo was not there because of what happened on Raw then footage of Swagger going nuts with the ladder rolled. Alberto said he had the advantage, because he had been in more

ladder matches than Ziggler and Swagger combined. *(By my count Dolph has been in 5, Swagger 3 and Alberto 4)*. Swagger made his way out with Zeb Colter. Before the match, Del Rio pulled out a ladder and slid it into the ring; Ziggler went after the ladder, but Swagger kicked him right in the face then Swagger and Big E. had a tug-o-war over the ladder. Zeb nailed Langston from behind, however this just angered Big E; Swagger took advantage of the distraction and rammed the ladder into Big E's gut then dumped Langston over the top. Ziggler came back in and dropkicked the ladder into Swagger, before he delivered a baseball slide into the ladder, which took out Zeb on the floor. Del Rio ran in and nailed Dolph with his superkick then nailed Ziggler and Swagger with the ladder. Alberto set up the ladder in the ring and there was some obvious editing (random shots of the crowd), then Del Rio suddenly had the World Title in his hand; he climbed to the top of the ladder and held the belt above his head.

As I'm sure you are all aware, Ziggler sustained a concussion during this angle and according to WWE.com, Dolph suffered some memory loss, which is not good at all. Ziggler noted he could not remember anything from Monday or Tuesday and that he had suffered concussions in the past, but this one was, "by far the worst". The injury occurred when Ziggler went after the ladder and Swagger kicked him in the face, which means Ziggler was on autopilot for the rest of the segment and had to take a superkick, plus some ladder shots while being concussed. I'm not going to get on Swagger, because accidents happen all the time, but this is bad news for the PPV; if Dolph can't go will they just go with a number one contender's ladder match with Swagger and Del Rio? I suppose that would be fine, but the three-way was set up for Ziggler to put on a show and to make the other guys look good with the crazy bumps he would have no doubt pulled out. I can't see Swagger and Del Rio being able to deliver the same entertainment factor without Dolph, although I'm sure they would be more than capable of putting on a perfectly adequate ladder match. Still, I'm hoping Ziggler isn't hurt too seriously and is ready to go for the PPV, although that doesn't look likely at this point.

The Shield came through the crowd and Lilian introduced Ambrose for the one-on-one encounter. Daniel Bryan appeared with Kane and The Shield scattered as the Tag Champs hit the ring.

Daniel Bryan (Tag Champion) w/ Kane vs. Dean Ambrose w/ Seth Rollins & Roman Reigns

Bryan started out fast with a flying knee and some shots in the corner; Ambrose turned the tables briefly, but Bryan took over again with some kicks. Ambrose landed a shot to the



throat and began to land some blows, but Bryan did the Tiger wall flip out of the corner then scored with a flying clothesline. Bryan scored with a topé for the big spot before the break; after commercial, Ambrose was in control and got

the heat. Bryan fought up from a neck crank, but was shut down by a knee strike then Ambrose hit a running dropkick; Bryan battled up from a chinlock then the transition came when he avoided a shoulder block and Ambrose took the ring post spot. Bryan hit his running dropkick in the corner then tied up Ambrose in the tree of woe and delivered another dropkick. Ambrose got in a backslide to start the near-falls, but Bryan came off the top with a missile dropkick for a two count. Ambrose landed a sit-out belly-to-back facebuster for another two count then threw some knee strikes; Bryan wrestled Ambrose down into the No-lock, but Rollins caused a distraction and Reigns drilled Bryan with a boot behind the ref's back. Kane brawled with Rollins and Reigns on the floor; back in the ring, Ambrose went for his headlock driver, however Kofi Kingston ran in and attacked Dean to cause the DQ.

Dean Ambrose defeated Daniel Bryan via disqualification, at 9:21 of TV time.

Kane dumped Reigns over the barricade, as Bryan and Kofi took care of Ambrose and Rollins in the ring. The babyfaces stood tall, as The Shield retreated through the people.

This was solid and they worked well together as you might have expected, but there was always going to be some sort of run-in or mass brawl at the finish, considering the way the HellNo/Shield feud has been booked. If you were left wanting more from Bryan and Ambrose then check out their match from DGUSA in 2010. Kofi making the run-in was a surprise, but it kind of makes sense given he was pinned by Ambrose on Raw; it looks like we're getting a six-man this Monday, which should lead to the announcement of The Shield going for the Tag Titles. I would be amazed if they stick Kofi in a Six-man for the PPV; they could put all the titles on the line, but The Shield should be kept as far away from the US Title as humanly possible.

Footage from earlier in the day aired: Mark Henry was preparing to pull a giant eighteen wheeler. Damien Sandow and The Prime Time Players were in attendance in the parking lot, along with some EMTs. Henry successfully pulled the huge vehicle and back at ringside, the announcers told us Henry was going for a world record and would attempt to pull two giant trucks. After the break, they rolled footage of Henry whipping Sheamus with a belt on Raw then showed still shots of Sheamus' welted up body.

Back "live" outside, Henry was getting strapped in to the harness; Curt Hawkins had shown up to join Sandow and the PTPs to watch then Matt Striker asked him how he would be able to pull over 100,000 lbs. Henry said many men had pulled trucks, boats, buses and such, but no one had ever pulled two tractor-trailers. Henry added that this would be a demonstration as to how he would pull Sheamus around the ring and touch all four corners during the strap match. Henry struggled to move the vehicles, the heel geeks cheered him on and Striker asked if he could really pull the two semi-trucks; Henry yelled at the irritating announcer to move then tried again to move the trucks. The vehicles didn't budge and Striker chimed in again by stating Henry was struggling. Henry told Striker that he and none of the fans in the arena believed he could do it then screamed at Striker to move; Titus encouraged Henry and he began to pull the huge machines. Henry moved the trucks a couple of feet then collapsed in a heap; Cole and JBL put over the new world record, as the EMTs rushed in. Henry began to stand on his own and yelled, "That's what I do!" Off camera, Titus could be heard saying, "We don't need no paramedics, go on about your business". Lilian then asked for a hand for Mark Henry and the fans began to applaud and cheer the monster heel.

I don't quite know what to make of this. It was a good little segment, if Henry were turning face, however I don't think that is the plan at the minute. It was an impressive visual, despite the fact that there must have been some sort of gimmickery in play somewhere; at least Sheamus didn't show up and Brogue kick Henry as he was pulling the trucks.

Randy Orton was in the back with Renee; they showed Big Show knocking Randy out with a suckerpunch on Raw. Orton said trusting Show at Mania caused him to get knocked out twice then claimed there would be no antidote for what he does to Show at Extreme Rules. Big Show's music hit and he strolled down the ramp for a match. Brodus Clay and Tensai were dancing in the ring with The Funkadactyls after commercial; Cole said Sweet T was Show's opponent.

Tensai w/ Brodus Clay & The Funkadactyls vs. The Big Show

Tensai took it to the giant with some shots then tried for his treeslam; Show blocked and hit him with the KO punch for the quick victory.

Big Show defeated Tensai via pinfall, at 0:49.

Brodus checked on his buddy, but ended up taking a spear. Show set up for another KO punch, but Orton ran in and hit him with an RKO. Cole talked about what it will be like when Orton and Show face each other at the PPV when anything goes.

Show vs. Orton will be an extreme rules match; they didn't announce any stip, there was only Cole talking up that there will be no DQ. I had to check WWE.com to find out the actual stipulation for the match. This was fine to build for the match, but I'm not into this programme at all and hope the feud doesn't continue after Extreme Rules, which of course means at least two more PPV matches from Show and Randy.

AJ bumped into Kaitlyn in the back and called her "Man arms" then asked if she was texting her mother. Kaitlyn told her it was the secret admirer then said maybe Dolph was tired of "little spider monkeys" and wanted a real woman; AJ scoffed and told her real women aren't supposed to bench more than their man. Kaitlyn sarcastically asked, "so a real woman is supposed to have the body of a ten year old boy?" Natalya showed up and stood beside Kaitlyn; AJ bailed and said, "later, gentlemen" (I must admit that cracked me up). Kaitlyn told Nattie that it was driving her crazy that she didn't know who the mystery man was and asked if Khali had found anything out; Nattie said he hadn't come up with anything yet then Khali appeared in a Rey Mysterio mask. All the horrendous acting became totally worth it, when Khali said, "Rey Mysterio! Boo-da-ka! Boo-da-ka! 619!" (I was literally crying with laughter at this). Khali took off the mask and said, "thatme baby, you think it was Rey Mysterio?" Nattie told him he looked just like Rey and Khali replied that he tried his best then walked off. Kaitlyn told Nattie that Khali didn't have to be in disguise and said she just wanted him to keep his ears open in the locker room then she walked away. Nattie turned around and told Khali he didn't have to go undercover and he didn't have to look like Cody Rhodes; the camera panned up to reveal Khali sporting a fake moustache. "I tried the best", stated Khali.

It's rare that I laugh hysterically at anything WWE scripts, however if you didn't find anything funny about this, then I don't know what to suggest.

Chris Jericho came out for the main event then after the break, Cole informed us that on WWE Active, Fandango cut a promo saying he would beat Jericho at the PPV and in the dance contest on Raw. Boy, I'm missing out not having the WWE app. Ryback came through the curtain to face Y2J.

Chris Jericho vs. Ryback

Ryback established his power and Jericho got in a dropkick, but then was dumped onto the apron and dropped to the floor with a right hand. Back inside, Ryback continued to control with stomps and strikes then worked a chinlock; Jericho fought up to take Ryback out with his springboard dropkick. Following the break, Ryback had the heat on Jericho then applied a wasitlock; Jericho showed some fight, only to be shut down by a spinebuster. Jericho got some hope spots in with a pair of tackles, which Ryback didn't go down for, and an axe-handle off the top, however Ryback shut him down with a front powerslam. Jericho avoided a splash and hit the lionsault for a one count then went for the codebreaker, but Ryback countered into a spinebuster, before unleashing a deadlift powerbomb. Jericho landed a dropkick to the knee and went for the walls; Ryback powered free then delivered a table-top suplex and the meat hook clothesline. Jericho escaped from the shellshock and applied the walls, however Ryback got to the ropes; Jericho followed up with the codebreaker, but the momentum took Ryback to the outside. The finish came when Ryback crotched Jericho on the ring post and Scott Armstrong called for the DQ.

Chris Jericho defeated Ryback via disqualification, at 11:28 of TV time.

After the match, Ryback sent Jericho over the announce table with a clothesline and the announcers hyped the Last Man Standing match with Cena as the show closed.

The main event was a little lacklustre; Jericho did make Ryback look pretty good, however it was nothing special. If they are trying to get Ryback over as a monster heel, then surely he could have pinned Jericho; I get the DQ finish plays into the last man standing match, as the message was Ryback could do the same, and more, to Cena at the PPV. But a clean pin on Jericho would have been a better move if you ask me; I assume they didn't want to job Jericho out too much if he is going to put Fandango over again.

Overall I was not enamoured by this edition of SmackDown. Bryan vs. Ambrose was good and the build to Team HellNo vs. The Shield remains the best thing on either show for me. The other stuff which set up PPV matches was far from stellar; Ryback remains a less than credible challenger for Cena and even with the "Achilles injury", I find it hard to believe anybody thinks Ryback is going to keep Cena down for a ten count after losing in 6 straight PPVs. Mark Henry continues to be booked as the world's most courageous heel and Big Show squashed Tensai then was taken out by an RKO. The latter was fine, however the heat between Show and Orton is nowhere near where it should be for an extreme rules match. Let's hope they have something good planned for Monday and next week's SmackDown, because at the moment, I still only care about Team HellNo vs. The Shield.

Bits & Pieces

Paul London wasn't the only one to suffer a concussion this week, as Dolf Ziggler suffered a concussion on the SmackDown taping this week I believe. Both instances are very unfortunate, and the Ziggler concussion is actually quite a big news story due to WWE policy

and the fact that there is a very strong chance that Ziggler will not be able to make the Extreme Rules show, which makes a mundane show weaker, as they are going to have to do Del Rio and Swagger for a number one contender's opportunity, or something to that effect if Ziggler is unable to make the show.

I had an opportunity to watch the much talked about Antonio Cesaro/Kofi Kingston match from WWE's Mainevent show from last week, and was very impressed with what I saw, as were most people. The match was probably in the **** ¼ range and was probably in the top five WWE matches of the year so far.

TNA Impact is moving back to its old 21:00 time slot, which may be an urgent ploy to change the current rating patterns, but the chances are that it isn't going to make an difference. However, they are inconveniencing Bellator a great deal, as they will have to move to another night, which isn't good for TNA or Bellator given that Impact provided such a good lead in to Bellator, like WWE and UFC on Spike in 2005 obviously on a smaller scale. The move comes into effect on May 30th, which means that they moved to this timeslot just over a year ago, and that didn't get them very far.

Next Week's Issue

Next week we hopefully look at the Kenta Kobashi retirement show from Budokan Hall, the go-home show for Extreme Rules, the Finals of the Championship Carnival, Impact, NXT, ratings and much more!

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