



Cubed Circle Newsletter

In this week's newsletter we preview Sunday's WWE Extreme Rules pay-per-view and look at how it stacks up in comparison to last year's show, take a look at the Kenta Kobashi retirement match, review the 2013 Championship Carnival Final, look at the go-home show for Extreme Rules, report on a decent edition of Impact and Ben Carass looks at a sub-par edition of NXT and the go-home edition of SmackDown! And with all of that out of the way I hope you enjoy this week's issue and have a great week!

If you haven't done so already, you can fill out the issue 80 survey and tell us what you would want out of the newsletter at <http://tinyurl.com/CCWSurv80>.

News

Extreme Rules 2013 – First WWE Pay-Per-View in Six Weeks

This Sunday is WWE's Extreme Rules pay-per-view from the Scottrade Centre in St. Louis Missouri, the first pay-per-view in six weeks, and since WrestleMania 29. Over the past few years the Extreme Rules show has become synonymous with great matches, and has been in top contention for the best WWE show of the year for a couple of years now. This is in part due to all of the gimmick matches on the show, but looking back WWE's Backlash shows after WrestleMania also used to be very good shows, and therefore I would state that there is certainly a correlation between the post-WrestleMania season and fun shows for whatever reason.

This year's show is different however. For whatever reason, whether it is the fact that WrestleMania wasn't all that hot this year, or that the main programs seem rather uninteresting, I simply can't see this show reaching the same level as prior years. That isn't to say that it will be a bad show by any means, as there are two if not three matches on this show that have the opportunity to be really good, but from a creative and big match standpoint the momentum simply isn't there. Last year was very unique, in that you had Brock Lesnar, a returning star who had just left the UFC, taking on the company's top babyface John Cena. Brock Lesnar is in the mainevent this time around, but he is facing Triple H for the third time, which brings nowhere near the level of interest as the Cena match did at this same time last year.

The build to the Brock Lesnar/Triple H match has been reminiscent to their other two matches, in that they did a lot of things right, but most of the major angles that they did simply didn't connect with the audience in the way that you would want them to. That is at least in part due to the fact that this is the third time that they have done this match, but looking back the builds for the first and second matches weren't so hot either. The match this time around is in a steel cage and is being built

as an old-school cage match. On paper it seems like it could be a very good match, but it is safe to say that the other two matches delivered below expectations, either due to poor crowd reactions, in the case of their WrestleMania match, or just due to the fact that they put on a by-the-numbers performance in the case of their match at Summer Slam.

This time around a large portion of the performance will be based on how well they honour the stipulations. If they go in there and have a crazy steel cage match, it may in fact be a memorable caveat to an otherwise lacklustre program. That isn't to say that either man necessarily has to get colour, although realistically that would add to the match in some way. However, if they go out there with a long lumbering match, which was the case at WrestleMania and Summer Slam, then they may have an issue.

In the other two matches there was serious talk of who was going to go over at the end of the day, but this time around not having Lesnar come out on top would be sheer idiocy. I felt that the general consensus coming out of WrestleMania was negative with the Triple H victory, so I am assuming that the purpose of this match is to give Lesnar momentum going forward; and in any other instance there would be little utility in booking this match.

Last year the WWE championship match didn't take centre stage either, as CM Punk took on Chris Jericho in a match that was built around Punk and Jericho's interactions with his family. The build wasn't the greatest, but the work in the street fight served to produce another great match on that same Chicago Extreme Rules show. This year's equivalent to that match is John Cena versus Ryback in a last man standing match, which hasn't been built to in the strongest fashion imaginable, and unless something completely unforeseen happens I doubt that this match has any chance of matching Jericho/Punk.

The actual John Cena/Ryback match is seemingly fresh, as they obviously haven't done a singles program between the two up until this point, but factoring in Punk's triple threat title defence against both men, and the fact that we saw quite a bit of Ryback on top towards the later stages of last year, I have no interest in seeing this match – even if it is for the first time. Ryback simply doesn't connect with me as a main event act, and he doesn't have a unique enough dynamic with Cena to really have people believe that they are seeing something new and fresh. Ever since Punk pinned Ryback via referee assistance at Hell in a Cell last year, the bloom has been very much of the rose when it comes to Ryback, and his status as a main event act, and I haven't seen anything during the past few months, or during the build to this match that makes me think otherwise.

During the build to the Punk match the possibility of Ryback coming out with the title was there, and in fact it caused a lot of debate at the time; I simply don't see that this time around with Cena. The first problem is that after Hell in a Cell Ryback was in a three-way at Survivor Series with Cena and Punk, and he lost that match as the result of Shield interference. He then went on to lose his three way TLC match at WWE TLC to the Shield and then lost another TLC match to CM Punk on the first RAW of the New Year. Apart from that he was eliminated by Cena at the Royal Rumble, and he was pinned by Mark Henry at WrestleMania this year, so in no way is there the same level of intrigue going into this match.

I could see a situation where they could possibly put the championship on Ryback, but in all likelihood I think Cena will retain the championship here, either via interference of some kind, or just via a clean ten count.

Speaking of the WWE title match last year, Chris Jericho is set to face Fandango in one of the only vanilla singles matches on the show. The build to the match has been fun over the past six weeks for the most part, although I doubt it has lit the worlds of many people on fire. Following his

WrestleMania 29 victory over Jericho, Fandango was met with an unexpected extremely positive response from the post-WrestleMania crowd. Many say that the fans were not into Fandango, but rather were into his theme song, or the act of singing and dancing to it to be specific, but regardless Fandango probably has more steam going into this match than his match at WrestleMania this year.

There is no question that the love for Fandango has cooled off since that post-WrestleMania edition of RAW, in fact I am not even sure if you could still consider the "Fandango-ing" craze alive. Regardless, I expect Fandango to go over once again, as Jericho should be leaving soon anyway.

The other memorable match on the 2012 Extreme Rules card was a great two out of three falls World Title affair between Daniel Bryan and Sheamus. This time around there actually is no analogous World Title match simply because the championship isn't going to be defended on the show due to a concussion that Dolph Ziggler suffered at the hands of a freak kick by Jack Swagger on SmackDown last week. The World Title was originally going to be defended in a triple threat ladder match, but since that isn't an option at the present time, they have booked Jack Swagger versus Alberto Del Rio in an 'I Quit' match.

From a logic perspective you could always ask the question of why exactly this Del Rio/Swagger match warrants an 'I Quit' stipulation, but when it comes to stipulation shows it is best to check your traditional booking philosophy in at the door. The funny thing is that before Ziggler was thrown into the World Title mix the plan was to have Swagger challenge Del Rio for the World Title in a submission match, which in many ways is a similar match to what we are getting here. As far as match quality and predictions go it should be a good match, with Del Rio most likely getting the win.

The two men involved in the 2012 World Title match are participating in two of the more intriguing matches on the show this year, as Bryan teams with Kane to defend their tag team championships against the Shield (Roman Reigns & Seth Rollins) in a tornado tag match. Sheamus is of course involved with Mark Henry in a strap match in a culmination of a rather peculiar build that they have been running for the past four weeks or so.

I can see the Bryan match being the best match on the show, as the Shield are usually the ones to pull off one of, if not the best match on most the recent shows, and given that it is a tornado tag match they will be able to do some interesting things, although I will assume that Bryan will still be the one selling for the most of the match. I can't see anyway that they will be able to not put the titles on the Shield. The thing is that the Shield have the most momentum out of any group in the company at this moment, so to have another team hold the tag team titles seems silly. I just hope that they bring the titles up by putting the titles on the Shield and not visa versa.

Whilst the Sheamus/Mark Henry strap match probably won't be the greatest match in the world, I am personally looking quite forward to it. Now granted I was looking forward to the Henry/Ryback match at WrestleMania, but that is besides the point. The main spot that they will probably be building to during the match is a huge Mark Henry power showcase spot, as anything else would make little sense given all of the vignettes that they have done with Henry over the past few weeks, when they aren't turning him babyface. I see them going with Sheamus here, but Henry beat Ryback at WrestleMania, so they could just as easily go in the other direction, and I would be perfectly fine with that.

Other matches on the show include Randy Orton versus the Big Show in an extreme rules match, which could be fun but nothing more, and the Dean Ambrose/Kofi Kingston match for the United States Championship. The Ambrose match is a bit of a worry, because there seems to be no way out of it other than to put the title on Ambrose, which would be a great occurrence in another era, but at

this point in the game the US and IC titles act as shackles rather as a means in which to elevate talent. Hopefully they just want to get the title on Ambrose so that all three members of the Shield can have belts and nothing more.

Kenta Kobashi Retirement Match Thoughts

I was hoping by the time that press time rolled around that the entire Kenta Kobashi retirement show would have surfaced, but unfortunately that was not the case. However, I did get to see the main event match, which was obviously the most important part of the entire show. Was it a great match? No. Was it a great emotional spectacle? Absolutely. The match went around forty minutes with Kobashi busting out far more than you would have expected given how broken does his body is. He did a heck of a lot of chops, and busted out his final moonsault on Kanemaru to end the match.



The opening minutes and the closing were by the most memorable moments of the match, with the match opening with KENTA slapping Kobashi, and the match obviously closing with the moonsault spot. Likewise, the pre and post match segments for the most part overshadowed the majority of the individual spots in the match. The reaction to Kobashi coming out was once in a life time in many ways, it wasn't the biggest

pop in the world (although it was sizeable), however, the amount of streamers that flew down into the ring, and the emotion that the fans invested in Kobashi resulted in an unbelievable site

With every ebb and flow of the match the crowd reacted, whether it was a flurry of chops or a cheap heel move from Taniguchi, it didn't matter, the crowd came to see Kobashi, and that's what they got. Even if he is broken down to a phenomenal degree, Kobashi was still able to pull off one aspect of the match to pretty much the same level as when he was in his prime, and that aspect was the facials. Whether it was when he was on the apron waiting for the hot-tag, or in the ring his face was never really blank and he was able to get more across with his face than many people can do with a complex series of moves, which was the story for a large portion of his career, particularly in the latter years.

The post-match was truly magical, as pretty much every major star in Japanese pro-wrestling came to show their respects to Kobashi, one after another they embraced Kobashi before he delivered his post match speech. In the speech he addressed the fact that Misawa never had a retirement show and led the crowd in chants of “Mi-Sa-Wa”, which was one of the many moments that will stick with me for a very long time following the show.

Reports

All Japan Pro-Wrestling Championship Carnival Final April 29th 2013

Korakuen Hall, Tokyo, Japan

The 2013 Championship Carnival final from Korakuen Hall was most likely my favourite All Japan show of the last few months. That isn't to say that the entire show was must see, or even that there was a match of the year level showcase on the card, but from top to bottom it was a show that featured a bunch of great matches, three of which approached the great level.

The show kicked off with a tag team match pitting the team of Shuji Kondo & Kaz Hayashi against SUSHI & Yasufumi Nakanoueno. All four men worked a match that you would have expected in many ways, apart from the fact that there was a string of quite a few big nearfalls towards the final stretch of this seven or so minute match. The closing portion of the match really made Nakanoueno look great, as not only did he kick out of an Hayashi tombstone, but he also survived a final cut, a Kondo lariat and an inverted powerslam from Hayashi. Hayashi landed up getting the win on



Nakanoueno with the powerplant to cap off a fun opener (***)

The next couple of matches were the semi-finals of the 2013 Championship Carnival. The first was KAI versus Go Shiozaki in what was most likely the best match on the card. KAI came in with a chest covered in welts, and while

neither this match nor the mainevent were chop centric matches, his chest looked pretty gruesome towards the end of this match; and even worse towards the end of the night. In fact, there were times that I thought that his chest was bleeding due to how red it became from just a few stray chops from Shiozaki. I know that I have mentioned this in the newsletter before, but every time I see Shiozaki in an All Japan ring I take note of what a different man he seems to be in this company. Whether it is due to the fact that he is more motivated now, or simply that he has been repackaged; he looks younger and seems to work in a different manner than he did in his twilight years in Pro-Wrestling NOAH.

My favourite spot of the match came when KAI landed a superplex, and both men no sold leading to a double down. There were also a few key little things, such as a spot where Shiozaki shot out with a dive, and KAI made sure to catch him with a quick boot to the face. The final moments of the match put it over the edge, as KAI won with a modified chicken wing to move into the finals (****).

The second Championship Carnival semi-final saw Jun Akiyama take on Seiya Sanada. The match was clearly not set at the same pace as KAI and Go's match, but then again that was expected given its placement on the card, and the mentality of veterans such as Akiyama. Akiyama played the clear bully role throughout the entirety of the match, with Sanada getting his spots to shine towards the finish. However, the match only went about twelve minutes with Akiyama pinning Sanada with the wrist-clutch exploder suplex (***)

In what was clearly the throw away match on the card KENSO, Takao Omori & free-agent Yutaka

Yoshie teamed up to take on the team of Ryota Hama, Akebono & Masanobu Fuchi. The match landed up going around ten minutes, which was a little long for what they needed to do. Still, it was a fun match with Omori getting the pin on Fuchi with an axe bomber (**). One thing that always amazes me when I watch the undercard of a lot of these All Japan shows is the fact that Fuchi is 59 years old and is still going strong. I guess that you could say the same for Tenryu, although his body doesn't seem to be in the same condition as Fuchi's. Given that Fuchi was very much a grizzled veteran during the time of the Tsuruta/Misawa six-man tags, and Kobashi has just retired it really is amazing, even if he is working a very light style in the veteran comedy role.

Next was my next favourite match on the show, only slightly behind KAI/Shiozaki, the Burning versus All Japan junior heavyweight six-man tag with Kotaro Suzuki, Atsushi Aoki & Yoshinobu Kanemaru of Burning teaming up to face Koji Kanemoto, Hiroshi Yamato & Minoru Tanaka representing All Japan. The match started off with a wild hate filled brawl between the two teams, with Suzuki going after Tanaka, Yamato after Kanemaru and Aoki after Kanemoto. There were big slap exchanges between everyone involved, and even a heated rolling cradle spot with Suzuki and Tanaka. It was absolute chaos towards the end with Yamato and Kanemaru duking it out, before Yamato pinned Kanemaru with a brain buster to set up a Junior Heavyweight championship match down the line. (*** ¾)

Next up was a pretty nothing match with Suwama & Joe Doering teaming up to face Stack of Arms, Masakatsu Funaki & Masayuki Kono. There was nothing of real note here, other than the fact that Doering pinning Funaki with a powerbomb nearing the seven minute mark. (** ¾)



Then in the main event match, which was the finals of the 2013 Championship Carnival, KAI took on Jun Akiyama. The match started off slow until Kai overwhelmed Akiyama with his speed landing a topé. The next big spot came when Akiyama landed a guillotine knee drop off of the apron putting him in control, and placing KAI in the position of the young babyface trying to overcome the much stronger, and larger veteran in Akiyama. KAI kicked out of a piledriver, and they eventually built

up to the point where KAI was landing some of his big moves on Akiyama. KAI took a knee and exploder, followed by a second knee, but he kicked out, which was one of the more impressive sequences of the match. They closed the match off with a slap battle, which Akiyama got the better of landing his wrist-clutch exploder suplex at the nineteen minute mark. After the match Akiyama brought KAI to his feet to applause. This was a very impressive run for KAI, so hopefully All Japan continue to build him so he can stay in the main event mix (*** ½). After the match Suwama came out to make the challenge, so as we mentioned a few weeks ago, we will be getting a rematch of the amazing Suwama/Akiyama match from October 2011.

WWE Monday Night RAW May 13th 2013 BOK Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Overall Thoughts:

Much like the build to WrestleMania this year, I felt that the go-home show for the 2013 Extreme Rules show fell flat to some extent. It wasn't a bad show, but I don't feel that they convinced the average viewer to buy the Extreme Rules pay-per-view, which is something that they have been able to do, at least to some extent for the last few years, particularly when it came to the return match of Brock Lesnar last year against John Cena. The final segment saw Triple H and Brock Lesnar brawl inside of a steel cage for a few moments before Lesnar was knocked out of the cage by Triple H, which I didn't view as a damaging circumstance to the steel cage stipulation, even though many did. What I did find damaging however, was the Shield match, which didn't necessarily hurt them in their current state, but a three-way unbeaten streak could have been a really big deal over the next year or so. The most annoying part of the entire situation isn't even that they ended the streak, but rather that they did so in such a meaningless and nonchalant manner when it could have been a far more important affair. As a whole this show wasn't terrible, but you should expect more from a go-home show that they had six weeks to build to.

The show opened with Lawler in the ring recapping Fandango's victory over Jericho, he then brought Fandango out with Summer Rae. Jericho had Edyta Sliwinska (Dancing with the Stars 2005-2010) as his partner; she actually wasn't able to dance at all due to an exclusivity deal with



Dancing with the Stars. JBL was really playing Jericho up as the underdog. JBL in the next breath called Fandango the best dancer in the world. Fandango said that the crowd who crowned Khali the winner of the contest last week didn't know anything about dance, and that he was a true artist. Jericho said that he would start a new dance craze called the "I just kicked your jack-ass all over this

damn ring", he said that he would dance over Fandango's face at Extreme Rules. Fandango was up first, but he cut the music saying that he needed absolute silence from the crowd. Summer Rae "twisted her ankle" in the first few seconds, and they got the heat on Fandango by having him yell at her. Sliwinska checked on her and Jericho went up to Rae as well. Fandango acted as if he was going to leave, but then attacked Jericho from behind. This led to a Fandango beatdown on Jericho out on the floor, throwing him into the announce table and such before grabbing the wooden board covering the ring and laying Jericho out with it. Fandango then got in the ring and Summer Rae sprung up to her feet, clearly demonstrating that she was working everyone. I enjoyed this segment for what it was. Rae's selling left much to be desired, but then again I wasn't expecting any more. The fact that they didn't dance was fine, although the segment was quite drawn out going over the fifteen minute mark. It also helped that the crowd was so into Jericho before the beatdown.

Ryback made it out to squash Zack Ryder. They plugged the app during the match saying that Del Rio was cutting a promo backstage, which seems counterproductive when you are encouraging people to turn away from your product. Sweet T and Clay made it out for a match with the Prime

Time Players. Young landed a hair pick shot on Clay to set up for an 'O Neal rollup. They showed footage of Ziggler getting concussed by Swagger on SmackDown. Long was brought out for an announcement regarding the title, before Colter and Swagger made it out saying that Ziggler should be stripped of the title. Langston and AJ made it out, and an argument ensued. Long booked an I Quit Match between Del Rio and Swagger for Extreme Rules, why this warranted an I Quit match is beyond me. He also booked a match between Langston and Swagger/Del Rio with WWE app votes deciding the match.

Sandow made it out for a match with Kingston. He said that he wasn't going to sing Kingston's theme. The announcers debated the correct pronunciation of the word "snail", before Kingston won with the Trouble in Paradise. Henry made his way out with a strap. They showed clips of Eddie Guerrero versus JBL from the Great American Bash 2004, which was not in fact a strap match, but rather a bull-rope match. They showed clips of Henry pulling trucks from SmackDown. He got



Matthews to tie a strap around his arm, before shoving him down to the ground and he touched all four posts. So I guess Henry isn't turning babyface, which makes the booking up until this point even more perplexing. He called Sheamus down to the ring. Sheamus made it out, before grabbing a strap from under the

ring, which led to strap battle until Henry slid to the floor. A clip of Lesnar killing Vince was broadcast. A trailer aired for Orton's new movie, '12 Rounds II' these words flashed across the screen "a twisted genius" and "a good man", make of that what you will. Cesaro made it down for a match against Randy Orton in a rematch from Main Event, a match that Orton won. Once again they pushed the app really hard...during the match. Orton pinned Cesaro in a pretty short match with the RKO, what this accomplished you ask? I have no idea. Apparently people high up in the company find Cesaro "boring", which simply boggles my mind.

The Miz returned from filming his latest ABC Family Christmas movie with a match with Heath Slater. They plugged the WWE app yet again, making it almost as bad as twitter last year. Then in a small spot that was the highest comedic point that RAW has reached in ages, Lawler, who was obviously getting sick of plugging the app said that you could watch the app with your one eye, and RAW with the other, to which Bradshaw replied "What if you are a cyclops?". Uncontrollable laughter ensued. Miz sent Slater out onto Mahal and McIntyre before locking in the figure four for the win. In a really hellish move Miz kept the figure four locked in on Slater after the match, which shows a complete lack of basic instincts from somebody. There was a Susan G. Komen video for 'Race for the Cure'. There was a video of Lesnar getting busted open. Bryan, Kane and Cena made it out for an eliminated six-man tag with the Shield. It was also announced that the tag team title match at Extreme Rules would be a tornado tag match. As always Cena, Kane and Bryan started off with the advantage, before Bryan was isolated by the Shield. The crowd got behind Bryan and he made the tag to Kane who ran wild on Ambrose. He destroyed Ambrose out on the floor laying out referees and using the cover of the announce table on Ambrose before being eliminated via DQ. Before the break they plugged the app saying that the match would continue during the break on the app, which wouldn't instill confidence in me if I was an advertiser. The thing is that they aren't

gaining much if anything from the app, so why deter advertisers from a product that intrinsically cannot draw high ad revenue? Cena made the hot tag to Bryan who ran wild shooting out with a topé on Reigns. He landed stiff elbow and missile dropkick on Rollins for two. Ambrose grabbed a tag, allowing for Rollins to land an enzuigiri and Ambrose to land his weird bulldog DDT for the elimination on Bryan. A three on one assault ensued on Cena before he pinned Rollins with the AA, which I would have been okay with. Reigns landed a spear before shoving the referee for the DQ. Ambrose made the cover, but Cena kicked out at two. Cena grabbed the STF, but the Shield ran down for he DQ and three on one powerbomb. This isn't a huge negative for the Shield at this point, but beating them made absolutely no sense here, especially when the match wasn't even necessary in the first place. In addition to the obvious natural ability that all three men in the group possess, they also had the opportunity to get really hot with the streak, which is an avenue that has been closed off for no valid reason. They gained nothing from this, and given that Cena has already pinned pinned by Reigns I don't see how failing in a three on one assault could have hurt anybody. After the match Ryback made it down to the ring, he looked at Cena, slid out of the ring, and then grabbed a steal chair and landed a shot to his ankle. They showed some stills from WrestleMania 29 with Lesnar versus Triple H.

Ryback was approached by Striker backstage. He said that he wouldn't be "screwed out of the title" again - don't let this man speak at all. Langston was brought out and the results of the poll were shown with Jack Swagger winning 65% to 35%. The announcers played it up as a big surprise, but really if you look at the segment building this match up, Del Rio wasn't even involved. I know this is news to everybody, but Langston is umpteen times more talented than Ryback. Swagger ducked a spear from Langston sending him over the barricade for the count out victory. This of course led to Del Rio running down, which was obviously the role planned for Swagger. Swagger locked in the ankle lock, Ricardo through a bucket at him, and Del Rio locked in an armbar, Langston broke it up, and he was sent to the floor by both men before Del Rio clotheslined Swagger to the floor. Kaitlyn and the Bellas were at ringside for a match between Natalya and AJ. Kaitlyn received a secret admirer gift in the middle of the match. AJ submitted Natalya with a modified octopus hold believe it or not. Jericho did an interview backstage. He said that he knew who Fandango was and he had seen it all and done it all, he was Chris Jericho, and he was going to teach him how to dance Chris Jericho style.



Triple H made it out inside of a steel cage and called Brock Lesnar out into his home. Heyman said that they were about the little perverse pleasures in life. He referenced the fact that you are not allowed to use the word "hate" on WWE television. They prepared to walk off citing that Lesnar wouldn't fight for free, but Triple H got on the mic saying that he would beat Lesnar

taking away his mystique. He said that Lesnar believed hat he was the baddest man, but Heyman no longer did. He asked if he was going to be Brock Lesnar the beast or the "b***h" and Lesnar stepped into the cage. They went after one another and Lesnar was sent into the cage after throwing Triple H into it. Lesnar was then thrown into the cage knocking Heyman to the floor. I wasn't as low on the finish as most people, although it did seem quite counterproductive to have Lesnar fall out of the cage, even if the door will be closed on Sunday. All in all the build to this match has been quite

uninspiring.

RAW Ratings May 13th 2013

The RAW rating this week was up slightly from last week, which was the lowest rated show of the year; however, the slight rise in viewership this week coincides directly with a slight drop in viewership of the NBA play-off game, which landed up being a blow-out game and losing viewers towards the final stretch. One positive coming out of the show was that the show's viewership in both the 18-49 demo and in general rose throughout the show, which certainly hasn't been the trend for the past few months.

The opening segment with Fandango and Chris Jericho opened at a 3.0, which was to be expected, although that is slightly down from what the show usually opens at. The Ryback/Zack Ryder squash match lost 125,000 viewers. The Prime Time Players matches versus Brodus Clay & Tensai match, together with the Teddy Long/Dolf Ziggler announcement, lost 263,000 viewers. Kofi Kingston versus Damien Sandow lost 136,000 viewers to a show low rating of a 2.62. The Mark Henry/Sheamus strap segment coupled with a Brock Lesnar recap video and the trailer for the Randy Orton film, 'Twelve Rounds II', gained 397,000 viewers at 21:00 to a 2.91 rating.

The 20:00 to 21:00 hour drew 3.793 million viewers (1.608 million viewers and 1.27 rating in the 18-49 demo placing it seventh for the night on cable, behind T.I. & Tiny).

In the post-21:00 segment the Randy Orton/Antonio Cesaro and Heat Slater/Miz matches lost 160,000 viewers, which is fine for that segment. The Shield versus John Cena, Daniel Bryan & Kane gained 623,000 viewers to a show high of a 3.24 rating. The Shield have drawn consistently in the ratings for quite a few weeks now, and while this was a match featuring another big star, the public does seem to be buying into them at this point, which is a huge positive.

The 21:00 to 22:00 hour drew 4.098 million viewers (1.841 million viewers and a 1.46 rating in the 18-49 demo, placing it in the fifth spot for the night on cable, behind the final hour of RAW).

In the post-22:00 segment, Jack Swagger versus Big E. Langston lost 274,000 viewers. It was then followed by the AJ/Natalya match which lost a further 279,000 viewers, really showing a drop-off from the 22:00 high. Finally, the Brock/Lesnar Triple H altercation in the cage gained a decent 465,000 viewers to a 3.18 overrun.

The 22:00 to 23:09 hour drew 4.25 million viewers (2.004 million viewers and a 1.58 rating in the 18-49 demo, placing it in the fourth slot for the night on cable directly behind Love & Hip-Hop and the two NBA games). The demographics this week were as follows: a 2.3 in males 18-49, a 1.9 in male teenagers, a 1.1 in females 18-49 and a 0.7 in female teenagers.

WWE – NXT

May 15th 2013 – Full Sail University, Florida.

Ben Carass.

We got a video package setting up Damien Sandow vs. Big E. Langston for the NXT Title to start things off; they showed Sandow's challenge last week and Tom Phillips provided the voice over hyping the main event. (I could only barely distinguish Phillips' monotonous drone from the wearisome tones of Tony Dawson.)

Natalya came out for the opener; Phillips and Brad Maddox comprised a two man booth. Summer Rae made her entrance and Phillips talked about Summer attacking Paige last week.

Natalya vs. Summer Rae

They started out with some chain wrestling and Natalya, for the most part, got the better of the exchanges, although Summer managed to hold her own somewhat. Nattie grabbed an arm-ringer, but Summer threw her to the canvas with a handful of hair. Next came some lumbering tackle, dropdown, leapfrog spots then Nattie tried for the sharpshooter, but Summer got to the ropes. After some more awkwardness, Nattie hit a discuss lariat for a two count; Summer begged off and offered a handshake. Nattie fell for the old heel trick and looked like an idiot babyface, as Summer tossed her to the outside. While Nattie climbed back inside the ring, Summer delivered a kick to the head and took over. After the break, Summer had the heat on and executed her rolling guillotine into full-mount; Phillips called it a DDT, so if that is the case, it is one of the worst DDTs I've ever seen. The finish saw Paige appear and get on the apron as Nattie went for the sharpshooter; Summer kicked free, which caused Nattie to knock Paige to the floor then Summer scored a roll-up for the pin.

Summer Rae defeated Natalya via pinfall, at 5:04 (TV Time).

After the match, Paige was kind enough to let Summer run right past her before she began to chase her bitter rival to the back.

I wouldn't say I've become a fan of Summer, but I've become appreciative of her, let's say, potential talents; her promos are pretty good and the way she projects herself is tremendous. Sadly, this match was bad, I'd even go as far as calling it awful. Nattie tried to carry the thing and the way the match was set out was fine until the finish, but Summer's greenness was exposed and most of the spots were executed sloppily. I don't know who had the bright idea of getting Paige involved in the finish; the only thing that accomplished was to both babyfaces look stupid during this segment.

Rene Young was joined by Sami Zayn in the back; she said Sami already had a reputation internationally, but his opponent for his debut match next week, Curt Hawkins, also had a reputation, then she asked Sami what was going through his mind. Sami told her that this was not his first rodeo and he had been doing this for a while then stated although other people are nervous upon arriving in the WWE that was not this case for him. Sami finished by saying next week could not arrive fast enough.

Talk about not making an impression on your first appearance. Sami came across as just another generic WWE guy with no personality or character. Let's hope they have something planned for him in that department going forward.

Bray Wyatt appeared with The Family; Bray was wearing a white face mask and rambled about seeing a different reflection of himself. Wyatt said Chris Jericho forced him to go back to his roots then welcomed everybody to the "new face of fear". He ranted some more about being the eater of worlds and stated that anyone who looked into his face would realise they could not hurt him because he was "already dead". 9 year pro Danny Burch, who I am familiar with from his days as Martin Stone in the British FWA promotion, showed up to take a beating in his NXT debut.

Danny Burch vs. Bray Wyatt w/ The Wyatt Family

Burch threw a punch and hurt his hand on the mask; Wyatt took control then landed a cross-body and hit a running splash in the corner. Bray hit his swinging reverse STO for the finish.

Bray Wyatt defeated Danny Burch via pinfall, at 1:45.

For the time being, I like the mask gimmick; it gives Bray another dimension to his already dark

character. Although apparently, he has trouble keeping the thing on during his match next week with Corey Graves, so this new look may not last too long.

Bo Dallas approached Adrian Neville in the back and asked if he was still mad about losing the Tag Team Titles. Neville said he had felt better then began to talk about how Oliver Grey was doing; Bo interrupted and told him that time heals all wounds then quoted John Cena (or Bob Backlund) and informed Neville to “never give up”. Adrian was confused and asked Bo where he had been all day; Dallas stated he was off entering himself in the number one contenders battle royal, but informed Neville that all the spots were taken. Neville replied that he had entered himself in the battle royal anyway and declared, “may the best man win”. The two shook hands and Neville walked off.

This was atrocious in many ways. I think Bo was supposed to come off as arrogant and self-centred, but his wooden delivery made it appear like any other promo he has done. This could be the start of a heel turn for Bo, which would be a good move, because the NXT crowd got sick of his smiling babyface routine a long time ago.

Conor O’Brian made his gimmicky entrance for a two-on-one handicap match; Sakamoto and Briley Pierce were already in the ring.

Sakamoto & Briley Pierce vs. Conor O’Brian

O’Brian took out Sakamoto with a modified implant buster then worked over Pierce with some rolling side headlocks and a vertical suplex. O’Brian no-sold some double-team shots from the geeks then stacked them up in the corner and hit a running splash. O’Brian pinned both guys after a double flapjack.

Conor O’Brian defeated Sakamoto & Briley Pierce via pinfall, at 2:30.

O’Brian celebrated in the ring, however his attention was caught by Rick Victor, who appeared on the stage. Victor and O’Brian stared at each other, however Phillips apparently had no clue who Victor was.

The match was nothing and the stuff after didn’t exactly fill me with excitement for an O’Brian vs. Victor feud; with any luck they will just stick them together as a tag team and not torture us with matches between the two. As for Briley and Sakamoto, well they were released on Friday along with Derrick Bateman, Percy Watson, Anya, and Brandon Traven.

Corey Graves was with Tony Dawson in the locker room; Graves said that in order to succeed you have to fail first and once you have broken through, you never have to look back. He stated he had entered the battle royal in two weeks, but Bray Wyatt interrupted and told Graves his time will come just like Kassius Ohno’s did. Graves stated that he didn’t have a family watching his back and told Bray if he and the “swamp people” keep messing with him, they would all “stay down”. Wyatt laughed and replied, “we shall see” then walked away.

Damien Sandow came through the curtain for the main event then Big E. Langston showed up to defend his championship.

NXT Championship Match: Big E. Langston (Champion) vs. Damien Sandow

Big E. established his power and went for the big ending early, but Sandow escaped; Big E. continued to control with his strength and Sandow managed to evade another big ending then rolled to the floor. Big E. was still working over Sandow after the break, however Damien avoided a

running corner splash and took over after a clothesline to the back of the head; Big E. fought up from a chinlock only to eat a dropkick which got a two count. Sandow kept the heat on the champ and came off the top with an axe-handle; Big E. powered up from another chinlock, but this time Sandow shut him down with a dropkick to the knee. Sandow landed some strikes then applied a front facelock; Big E. broke free and hit a belly-to-belly for the double down. Big E. started his comeback with some clotheslines then hit a body check, however Sandow escaped from the big ending once more to land a sit-out rear mat slam for a near fall. Damien got another two count off a swinging neckbreaker and his elbow of distain; Big E. countered the terminus and delivered the big ending for the finish.

Big E. Langston defeated Damien Sandow via pinfall, at 10:45 (TV Time)

Big E. did his usual post-match gimmick of hitting his move and counting to five then he raised the belt high above his head as some steam descended from the rafters.

A pretty basic main event; Big E. used his strength, until Sandow took advantage of one mistake and controlled the champ by keeping the distance close and by trying to keep the big guy grounded with holds, but Big E. came back to get the win. This didn't do Sandow any favours, however it did make Big.E look like a credible champion as he has graduated to defending the title against main roster guys and not just geeks that clearly have no chance of beating him.

This was a fairly lousy edition of NXT; two squashes, a terrible opener and a mediocre main event made for some uninteresting television this week. There were a few angles furthered, like Bray Wyatt's character developing a Leatherface-type aesthetic (only with a plastic mask), plus his confrontation with Graves was a nice way to set up their match next week and the subsequent post-match beat down. There was a bizarre tease of O'Brian and Rick Victor, also Bo Dallas could have begun a slow-burn heel turn. On a more interesting note, although Sami Zayn's promo was less-than riveting, next week he makes his debut against Curt Hawkins then goes on to beat Cesaro on the same show, so that has got to be worth checking out.

TNA iMPACT May 16th 2013 Bancorp South Arena, Tupelo, Mississippi

Overall Thoughts:

I enjoyed this week's edition of Impact more than last week, it was a fun show with a good mainevent segment, and a couple of good segments. However, it was in no way a show that would take your breath away, in fact it was only slightly above most of the recent editions of Impact that I have seen as of late. The main problem is that they don't have any fresh new stars, and they have a roster full of people who they have been cycling in and out for years. The lack of talent on the roster isn't even something that you can blame on the state of the business, as look how many of the independents' top talents WWE has snatched up over the past couple of years. There is no reason why TNA couldn't take an Adam Cole type person and try and make them a star. All in all this was a fun show, but the mainevent angle was the only real thing of note here.

Hogan made it out to open the show. He announced that they would have the Bully Ray/Sting contract signing later on. He wanted to personally thank Abyss and called him down to the ring, his music hit, but after moments of waiting Joe Park came out in his place. Park was saying how amazed he was that Abyss returned when Devon and Brown made it out to interrupt. Devon and Park had a confrontation leading to Park breaking, and challenging Devon to a fight right then and there. Devon refused, but Brown stepped up in his place. Devon was fine with this, and promised that he would get to Abyss. Hogan then made the stipulation that if Park won he could have Devon

whenever he wanted to end a perfectly fine opening segment. Storm was asked what had happened last week he simply replied that people should watch and find out. There was a video with Christian York saying that he would do whatever it took to become World Champion. Bobby Roode made it out for a match with Chavo Guerrero, an encounter that we have seen far too many times. Chavo Guerrero was dropped to the floor when Storm made it out and spat beer into the face of Bobby Roode, who just to clarify wasn't the man to spit beer in the eyes of Storm last week. This resulted in a DQ with Chavo disappearing into the ether - I assume this means that they are going with a Storm/Roode program again, which certainly isn't in any way fresh.



Angle made it out and announced that Hulk had made a match with him versus Styles at Slammiversary, which should be a very good match. He wanted to fight right then and there, but Anderson made it out with a sucker in his mouth to interrupt. Anderson said that Styles would be given his colours next week. Anderson warned Angle not to interfere, but Angle dropped Anderson with a right hand. Styles slid in and faced off

with Angle before landing a pelé. I can see a swerve coming next week. There was a video with Jay Bradley, and he has the opportunity to be something, which was also the case with Brian Cage. Jay Bradley made it out for a match with Christian York. Bradley pinned York with his lariat. Hemming asked Bradley what it meant for him and he said that he was one step closer to being TNA world champion. Bradley has good size, a good look, good talking ability, decent working ability, and charisma, so he definitely has a sizeable upside. Storm was interviewed backstage and he said that he should have a right to retaliate. Anderson was backstage and he hyped D-lo up.

Velvet Sky made it out for a match with Gail Kim. They cut to Mickie James and Brooke Hogan backstage. James asked why she hasn't been given an opportunity and was given a title shot next week. Ray came by and told Brooke that it would be a negotiation rather than a signing later on. The gimmick is that they are still married, which simply doesn't make sense to me. Sky and Kim didn't have a very good match at all, as Sky's selling leaves a lot to be desired. Sky won with a rollup, but after the match Kim laid her out with a figure four around the post, which has become her gimmick over the past few weeks. There were some interviews with King and Sabin, which were really well done. It's really unfortunate that they have established these bizarre triple threat rules, as King/Sabin would have had more impact than a three-way on Impact. There was a wacky suicide vignette for next week. King, Sabin and Williams were all on the ring for an X-title match. King pinned Williams with a fireman's carry into a spin-out powerslam, in your standard X-Division three-way. Daniels and Kazarian were backstage saying how James Storm was the one in the wrong, and Daniels said that he would be facing Hernandez.

Brown thanked Anderson for saving him last week. Anderson said that things went down hill for him ever since he started burying Wes and Garrett. Daniels and Hernandez made it out for a match, once again there really wasn't anything new here. Kazarian interfered repeatedly before Storm made it down and while Daniels was distracted Hernandez landed his pounce for the win. Storm said that

Hernandez and Kazarian would be defending against Roode & Aries, Daniels & Kazarian, and then Storm and a partner of Storm's choosing, which will add some freshness to the tag division, even if it is only by 25%. D-lo and Park were out for a match. They went back and forth, until Brown landed a shining wizard and then a sliding D - I see D-lo has been catching up on his Puro. Park was bleeding from his forehead, which surely does contradict the new TNA anti-blood policy. Of course this led to Park running wild and pinning D-lo with a black hole slam. Ray made it out and threw Borash out of the ring. He did his "do you know who I am?" gimmick for a while before bringing Sting out. He then brought Hogan out who stood with his arms folded on the entrance ramp. Sting rambled about all the ways that Ray should maim him at Slammiversary, breaking his arms, dislocating his knee etc. Ray asked why Sting would want that, and he said that if Ray didn't do it to him he would do it to Ray. He wanted a no holds barred match and Ray agreed if Sting agreed to never wrestle for the world title again. He didn't want him to retire, because he wanted him to die knowing that he would never hold the title again. Hogan tried to convince Sting not to do it, but Ray asked for him to man-up. Sting agreed and they traded shots back and forth to close off the show.

I thought that this was exactly the kind of segment that they needed to do to get people excited about the Slammiversary show. I don't know if they succeeded, and I also don't know if they should be going with Sting and Hogan in the top contender slots, but the fact of the matter is that Sting can really do some great promo work when he is put in the right position, and he was placed there tonight. Of course, the segment wouldn't have meant much either if it wasn't for the great work of Bully Ray.

WWE SmackDown – May 17th 2013.
INTRUST Bank Arena: Wichita, KS.
Ben Carass.

Our video package this week consisted of Jack Swagger concussing Dolph Ziggler and Teddy Long booking the "I Quit" match for the PPV, after which footage of Randy Orton hitting Big Show with an RKO rolled and the narrator hyped the two on Miz TV for the show.

Miz TV was the opening segment for this go-home SmackDown; Randy Orton and Big Show came down to take part in the lamentable talk show. Miz talked up the extreme rules match then showed footage of Show knocking out Tensai and Orton's post-match RKO; Miz asked if that was a preview of what was going to happen at the PPV. Show told him the only way Orton was able to hit that RKO was from behind and said at Extreme Rules anything goes, however he didn't need any weapons because he had two at the end of his wrists. Show told Randy that in his hometown, the last thing the people are going to remember is a TKO, not an RKO. Orton said there was no way Show would knock him out in front of his friends and family then stated the only thing people will remember at the PPV is how The Viper strikes down the giant. Zeb Colter and Jack Swagger interrupted the proceedings; Zeb declared that Extreme Rules will be memorable not because of anything Show or Orton do, but because Swagger will make Del Rio say "I Quit". Zeb added that on Sunday, people will remember the night when Jack Swagger's America became a reality. Del Rio showed up with Ricardo and told Zeb everyone was sick of hearing him talk; Alberto began, "the only thing people will remember on Sunday is..." then Ricardo chimed in with, "Alberto Del Rio!" Del Rio informed Swagger he would make him say "I Quit" and become the number one contender then vowed to send Zeb back to where he came from, so he never sneaks his way into Alberto's business again. Because there wasn't enough going on in this segment, Mark Henry came out; he told everyone in the ring that the only thing people are going to remember is him setting a world record by pulling two tractor-trailers and beating Sheamus like nobody had ever done before in the strap match. Henry joined the seven other guys in the ring and stated the only thing people will remember (*I apologise for the repetitiveness, but hey, I didn't write this stuff*) is the strongest man in

the world. Predictably, Sheamus was out next and claimed the strap match would be the most memorable (*ugh*), as he would leave Henry's giant carcass battered and bruised in the middle of the ring. Sheamus revealed a strap he had hidden behind his back and said there was no need to wait until Sunday then charged the ring. Henry took a couple of licks from the strap, as Orton and Del Rio got a few shots in on their respective foes then the heels quickly bailed to leave the babyfaces standing tall.

This was far too convoluted for my liking. I know they had to set up the Six-man main event, but this segment had so much going on that Teddy didn't even have time to show up and book the match. They could have achieved the same result by just having all the guys as guests on Miz TV instead of having everybody show up one-by-one in a display of tedious monotony. Out of the eight guys who had a speaking part in this angle, Henry and Zeb were by far the most believable; everybody else pretty much came off as insecure petulant juveniles fighting over the most popular girl in school or something. "I will be the most memorable", "No, I will be remembered more!" The conflict felt pretty contrived is what I'm getting at.

After the break, Teddy Long came out and booked a Six-man tag with the guys from the opening segment; at ring side Cole finally explained that Booker T has been out getting shoulder surgery then The Shield's music hit. Lilian introduced Rollins and Reigns, with Amrbose, for a tag team match; Cole talked about the possibility of all three guys winning championships at Extreme Rules and JBL put them over huge for taking out The Undertaker. Nobody mentioned their undefeated streak being broken. The Usos made their entrance and Cole mentioned their run-in on Main Event to help Kane fight off The Shield.

The Usos vs. Seth Rollins & Roman Reigns w/ Dean Ambrose.

The Usos were fired up early, but Reigns made a blind tag and caught Jey with a clothesline. Jey caught Reigns with both boots in the corner then delivered a running hip attack; Rollins came in, but Jimmy took care of him and the two brawled on the outside. Jey landed a boot to the gut, however Reigns came back to hit a spear for the finish.

Seth Rollins & Roman Reigns defeated The Usos via pinfall, at 1:50.

The Shield triple-teamed Jey after the bell and Kofi Kingston ran down to try make the save, but he was soon dumped to the floor. The Shield went for the triple powerbomb on Jey, however Kofi grabbed a chair and drilled Ambrose in the spine as Rollins and Reigns fled. The Shield retreated and Kofi remained fired up in the ring.

The match was just a way to try and make people forget that The Shield actually lost on Monday; this needed to be done, so I'm fine with that. Personally, I would have Cena pinned after Reigns hit him with the spear on Raw and kept The Shield undefeated as a team for as long as possible, although I can see the argument for beating them the way they did. If for example The Shield ran through everybody for a year and the undefeated gimmick began to define their existence as a team, meaning other top guys wanted to be the first team to beat them, then their first loss could have potentially been a gimmick killer. This may sound like an extraneous comparison, but Goldberg was never the same after his lost to Nash at Starrcade 98; now that is due mostly in part to the diabolical booking of Big Sexy and later Vinny Roo. Still, that streak defined Goldberg's place in the company; the streak was the gimmick. Even Ryback lost some steam after he lost to Punk at Hell in a Cell. I am pretty certain WWE had the foresight not to book The Shield as an undefeated team and nothing more, but having them lose via DQ in a Raw match that most people will forget in a few weeks eliminates the chance of the first loss being the beginning of the end. If they built to a huge blow-off match, the biggest of The Shield's career to that point and they lost, then there would

be nowhere else to go but down. At least this way The Shield lost and they still have a long way to run, let's just hope if, or when they get the belts they don't start losing singles every week.

Miz was in the GM's office with Teddy and said it felt like he never left after being involved in the schmoz of an opening segment. Damien Sandow walked in; he told Miz we all were better off without him, so we could bask in the glory of a host with a sense of taste and decency then pitched, "The Damien Sandow Show" to Teddy. Teddy said he would take it under consideration and booked Sandow vs. The Miz for later on.

They showed the finish of Cena and Team HellNo vs. The Shield then the triple powerbomb to Cena after the match. Josh said The Shield "sacrificed victory", which was a pretty good line to gloss over the loss. Footage of Ryback smashing Cena's leg with a chair also rolled. "Get to the betting window and put all your money on Ryback", stated Josh. One oddsmaker has Cena at 1/6 on and Ryback at 3/1, so make up your own mind, but I would not touch that one.

Tons of Funk danced their way out with The Funkadactyls for a rematch with The Prime Time Players; the match started after a commercial break and the PTPs didn't get an entrance.

Tons of Funk w/ The Funkadactyls vs. The Prime Time Players

The dancing lardos hit a double-team sidewalk slam/elbow drop combo and Young rolled to the floor; Tensai rolled him back inside, but Titus came off the apron with a clothesline to Sweet T. The PTPs got the heat on Tensai, until Titus missed a running shoulder block in the corner and Clay came in off the hot tag. Brodus ran wild on Young then landed a powerslam and made the cover; Titus broke up the pin, but Tensai caught him with a boot. The finish saw the tubby funsters hit their double splash on Young, after he had been sandwiched between the two big fellas.

Tons of Funk defeated The Prime Time Players via pinfall, at 4:02.

This was your basic 4 minute undercard match and since the PTPs went over on Raw Clay and Tensai had to go over here, because WWE like to build feuds by everybody beating everybody else, which of course gets nobody over.

They showed the dance-off angle and the Fandango attack on Chris Jericho from Raw then Y2J came down for a match and Antonio Cesaro appeared as the opponent.

Chris Jericho vs. Antonio Cesaro

As Jericho began his shine, they brought up the app gimmick in the bottom of the screen; Fandango and Summer Rae re-enacted their hoax from the dance-off then laughed at their heelish deception. Cesaro rolled to the floor to break Jericho's early momentum then after some stalling got back inside to land some shots, however Jericho took over again with a dropkick from the second rope. Cesaro rolled to the apron and both guys teased a suplex then Jericho scored with his springboard dropkick. Cesaro had the heat after the break, Jericho got some hope in with a backslide, only to be shut down by a clothesline. Cesaro worked a chinlock, which Jericho actually *fought* out of then came off the top with a big axe-handle and went for the lionsault; Cesaro got his knees up and delivered a double footstomp to start the near falls. After an up-and-over transition in the corner, Jericho got a two count off an enzuigiri then Cesaro hit a tilt-o-whirl backbreaker for another two. Cesaro used the chinlock again, presumably to "soften up" Jericho for the neutraliser as he went for his finish after applying the hold; Jericho countered and tried for the walls, but Cesaro rolled through. Jericho came off the top with a cross-body, only to eat a big European uppercut for a nice near-fall, which the crowd didn't seem into. For the finish, Jericho countered the deadlift gutwrench

into the walls and got the tap-out.

Chris Jericho defeated Antonio Cesaro via pinfall, at 8:28 (TV Time).

Fandango's music hit and Summer Rae danced her way out onto the stage; Fandango ran in from behind, but Jericho was too smart for that and began to pummel him with right hands. Cesaro tried to get involved, but ate a shot as well and Fandango made a hasty exit. Just to make bury Antonio a little more, Jericho hit him with a codebreaker and starred down Fandango, who stood on the ramp with Summer.

The match was good, not great, but still it was much better than the live crowd gave it credit for; they weren't really into the story much and they definitely were not into Cesaro. It is sad to see that after he put on one of the best WWE TV matches of the entire year with Kofi three weeks ago that Cesaro just keeps being buried. I do not understand it at all; the guy has everything and he's being punished for creative's inability to utilise him correctly. As for Jericho and Fandango, I wish they would have got to fiery babyface Y2J a little sooner, but call me crazy, I actually enjoyed the dance-off on Raw. Maybe not the needless eighteen-plus minute length of the segment, but I thought the premise was a good idea; of course, it would have been a lot better if Summer hadn't danced with Jericho on the stage a few weeks back.

Damien Sandow was in the ring after the break then The Miz made his way out; Josh may have uttered the most embarrassing line I've heard in a long time and showed us all why 99.9% of people in the WWE have no idea what appeals to their fans anymore when he said Miz was more popular than the Jonas Brothers and Harry Styles combined. I guess someone has realised anybody over the age of 12 couldn't possibly find Miz likeable, so they've targeted the easiest marks possible; the commercialised pre-teens. Anyway, Josh's comment really made my skin crawl. Regardless, Cody Rhodes was on commentary and Cole said Miz wanted to use Cody as a steppingstone to the WWE or World title; Cody replied that he would be a wall that Miz could not get through.

The Miz vs. Damien Sandow

Sandow went to the floor and Miz took him out with an axe-handle off the apron, however Sandow caught Miz with a boot as he was getting back in the ring and took over. Cody got on the house mic and told all the fans to stand up and show some respect for Sandow, who began to get the heat on Miz. Cole hyped Wade Barrett on the app then Sandow hit his leg sweep and elbow combo. Miz fought up from a chinlock and started his comeback, before landing his flying clothesline in the corner and another axe-handle off the top. Miz went for the figure-four, but had to forego the hold to drop Cody off the arpon; Sandow attempted a belly-to-back and Miz countered then applied the figure-four to get the victory.

The Miz defeated Damien Sandow via submission, at 4:09.

Cody began to enter the ring, however he thought better of it and attended to Sandow instead; Cole hyped Miz vs. Rhodes for the pre-show on Sunday.

This was a nothing encounter; I had forgotten just how detestable babyface Miz can be while he was gone shooting his movie. I seriously hope Cole's line about Miz wanting to be World or WWE Champ has no actual weight to it and was just something to say. With Cena in the WWE title picture, Miz as a babyface would have no shot at that belt, so that leaves the World Title and if Miz were to win that with the figure-four, I think I would have to resign from my post as your SmackDown reporter. The chances of that happening anytime soon are relatively slim, so I don't have to throw the towel in just yet. At least they are trying to set up the pre-show match and didn't

just throw two random guys out there, but I will not be logging on to YouTube to see Miz go over Cody in 4 minutes.

Aksana was warming up in the ring then Kaitlyn came out as her opponent; I thought Kaitlyn's old music was the worst thing I've ever heard, but her new theme is equally atrocious. They showed a cut-in "earlier today" deal with Kaitlyn receiving some flowers and a pair of gloves from her secret admirer.

Non-Title Match: Kaitlyn (Diva's Champion) vs. Aksana

Kaitlyn dominated early with her strength then went for an inverted DDT; Aksana countered and landed a short-arm clothesline. The announcers were speculating about the identity of the secret admirer; "I think it's Sin Cara", stated Josh. "SIN CARA?!" Replied an incredulous Cole. I thought that was pretty funny. Aksana got the heat with a chinlock then delivered a Russian legsweep, before going back to the chinlock. Kaitlyn fought up, but was cut off by some shots then Aksana applied an over-the-shoulder backbreaker; Kaitlyn escaped and hit the spear to get the win.

Kaitlyn defeated Aksana via pinfall, at 3:09.

I've seen quite a few Kaitlyn/Aksana matches now and this one was just as poor as any of the previous ones; the most entertaining thing here was the announcers. Cole was on Josh about being the secret admirer, JBL talked about how he would like to be with Aksana, but couldn't because of his wife. He also made a joke about putting a picture of his wallet as his profile picture on eHarmony.

After a recap of the Triple H/Brock Lesnar feud, they showed the entire main event segment from Raw. I still don't get why Hunter would knock Brock out of the cage, unless that is going to be the finish on Sunday, which would be a less than satisfactory way of getting some steam back on Lesnar.

Ricardo Rodriguez introduced Alberto Del Rio then Sheamus and Randy Orton came down to complete the babyface team for the main event. The heels had all made their way out and were in the ring after the break.

Sheamus, Randy Orton and Alberto Del Rio w/ Ricardo Rodriguez vs. Mark Henry, Big Show & Jack Swagger w/ Zeb Colter



Del Rio took it to Swagger early then Orton came in and hit a dropkick; Swagger came back with a chop block, but Randy got the tag and Alberto scored with his double-knee backbreaker. Swagger rolled outside and Del Rio took him out with a topé; back inside, Swagger delivered Kurt Angle's running belly-to-belly superplex and tagged out. Big Show began to get some heat then all three heels worked

over Del Rio in their corner; Alberto fought his way free, but Show cut him off from making the tag

with an elbow drop. After commercial, the heels were still in control; Show went for a powerbomb, but Del Rio countered with a headscissors and made the hot tag. Sheamus ran wild on Show and scored with the white noise; Henry caused a distraction, which led to Show delivering the chokeslam for a two count. Swagger entered and worked over Sheamus to begin the build for the next hot tag. Sheamus got in a Finlayroll as a hope spot, however Henry came in briefly to keep the heat on. Show got the tag and Sheamus showed some fight, only to be shut down by a tackle from the giant. Swagger hit a Vaderbomb for a two count, but Sheamus countered a second with an electric chair for the double-down. Orton got the tag and fired up on Swagger, however Henry cut off the comeback with a body check then Show dumped Sheamus over the top; Del Rio caught Henry with an enzuigiri and Show ate a Brogue kick on the floor. Swagger avoided another enzuigiri and applied the anklelock to Alberto, but Orton slid in and hit an RKO to get the victory.

Sheamus, Randy Orton & Alberto Del Rio defeated Mark Henry, Big Show & Jack Swagger via pinfall, at 12:05 (TV Time).

The babyfaces celebrated in the ring and Cole hyped the most extreme night of the year on Sunday. For what it's worth, a commercial for the next PPV, Payback aired after the UK broadcast and it featured Randy Orton and a voice over urging Orton to never forgive or forget.

The Six-man was a good effort for a go-home main event; you could make an argument for putting the heel team over, as I'm old school and like my bad guys strong going into a big show, but it doesn't really matter in this day and age, plus the heels controlled for most of the match, so I'm content with that. I suppose if the next PPV is called Payback, then that makes the possibility of rematches look more likely, so all of these guys are likely to be involved with each other one way or another for the next month at least.

Thanks to the main event, this was a decent go-home show. Not much else was particularly stellar other than Jericho/Cesaro which was good and the post-match stuff with Fandango was also fine. The Shield rightfully went over The Usos in no time at all; a good move considering they have got to be coming out of the PPV with all the gold. The only other segment which built for Sunday was Miz vs. Sandow, however a tiresome match with a mind-numbingly poor babyface is not really an incentive to go out of your way to check out the PPV pre-show.

Bits & Pieces

During last week's edition of Impact before Bobby Roode & Austin Aries faced Daniels & Kazarian, ring announcer Christy Hemming made a mistake calling Bobby Roode & Austin Aries "Daniels & Kazarian", a mistake that I have seen many times, not just in pro-wrestling, but even in MMA as Bruce Buffer made a similiar mistake a couple of weeks ago. However, Aries chose to react to it, which was fine given that he is a heel. What wasn't fine however was the fact that he proceeded to pin Hemming up against the turnbuckle by mounting it, creating a very uncomfortable situation. I noticed when I was watching Impact, but blew it off at the time. However, it has turned into quite the story, as many people were offended by Aries' actions, and rightfully so. However, while TNA claims that disciplinary action has been handed out to Aries, the legitimacy of that claim is still in question, as Aries posted the following tweets, in theory after he should have been reprimanded: "Pretty nuts some of the junk people get the balls to say over the net, knowing they couldn't to you r face. Eh anyway time to sack out." and "Hey! Hey, I said! Look at me! Yo, over here! I'm right here people! Give me attention! Please. I desperately beg you to notice me! #Pathetic," and "Wow...just wow, #VictimNation".

Next Week's Newsletter

Next week we look at the WWE Extreme Rules show from St. Louis, the Extreme Rules fall out on RAW, Impact on the road to Slammiversary, New Japan news leading to Okada/Makabe, NXT and SmackDown with Ben Carass, the news and more!

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