



### Cubed Circle Newsletter

This week we look at the Money in the Bank pay-per-view, the great RAW that followed, TNA's strange week, Chris Sabin's TNA world title win, two weeks of RAW ratings, and Ben looks at NXT and SmackDown as always. Unfortunately, Mark Robinson will not have a piece in this week's newsletter, as he had quite the busy week. However, we have a big issue planned for next week (read more about that at the end of the issue), and with all of that out of the way, I hope that you enjoy this week's newsletter and have a great week ahead!

- Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

### News

#### **Money in the Bank 2013 - WWE Continues Hot Run**

With their 2013 Money in the Bank pay-per-view from the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia, WWE continued what has been a hot couple of months for them on pay-per-view. Whilst the show was not as good as WWE's Payback show from Chicago last month, it was still one of the best pay-per-views that the WWE has put out the entire year - a year in year out trend that we seem to be seeing with the Money in the Bank pay-per-view as an annual concept.

The strange thing about the WWE in 2013 is that they feel like they are building momentum, and in many ways they are, but apart from the last two shows that feeling hasn't translated into great pay-per-views. With the great run of TV matches that we have seen all year, you would expect that trend to carry over, but up until June that was not the case, and they were actually on a rather weak run when it came to big monthly shows,

Originally the main event for Money in the Bank seemed to be the WWE Championship match with Mark Henry challenging John Cena for the title, but it was clear that the opinion of the general fan was that the RAW Money in the Bank 'All-Star' match was viewed as the most important match on the show, and when it came to the show on Sunday it turns out that the WWE followed suit with this idea, and placed the match on last.

There were two main stories coming out of the match, the first was that Orton won the Money in the Bank briefcase over Daniel Bryan, who was the suspected winner by a lot of people (although, if you followed Reddit and the betting odds you would have known the night of the show). The story was that Bryan was going to win the briefcase, there was no one around to stop him, but Curtis Axel ran down to lay him out. This led to Heyman coming out to be yelled at by Punk, before Heyman ultimately turned on Punk with a ladder shot.

It was most likely the best match on the show, showcasing a slew of great workers, CM Punk, Daniel Bryan, Christian, Sheamus, Randy Orton and the returning Rob Van Dam. There was no one crazy, off the wall spot, and on the whole the match was probably as low risk as a 2013 mainevent ladder match can be, which seems to be the general trend. That isn't to say that the match wasn't physically taxing, as there were still a lot of spots that made me wince somewhat, plus both Van Dam and Punk suffered cuts requiring stitches (14 for Van Dam and 13 for Punk). On top of that Christian also suffered a chipped tooth when he was potatoed by Sheamus.

The SmackDown ladder match was also a very good match, it was close to the level of the mainevent match in terms of work, but lacked the star power and intense crowd heat (the crowd was by no means dead though). Unexpectedly, Damien Sandow, won the briefcase in the end. The finish to the match was done very well, as Cody Rhodes was built up strong throughout the entire match, and looked great, but had the briefcase stolen out of his hands just about by his partner, Sandow.

I don't expect Sandow to hold the briefcase too long, as I can see them doing a similar deal to their 2007 Money in the Bank angle following WrestleMania 23. What happened that year was that Ken Anderson won the briefcase, but due to injury or what have you lost it to Edge on an edition of RAW soon after. I suspect that they will be going with Rhodes and Sandow at Summerslam for the briefcase. If they are keeping the briefcase on Sandow, they already beat him on RAW pretty quickly in a match against Christian.

The pre-show featured what would have been the second best match on the entire main card, the Shield versus the Usos for the tag team titles. From the onset it seemed to be a bad idea to put them on the pre-show. I stand by that assumption, especially when there was a weak patch on the main card that could have been partly interchanged with this match. With that being said, I was pleasantly surprised with WWE's handling of the match. Instead of cutting the match down to the usual pre-show length of say seven minutes or so, they were given a good fifteen or so minutes with ads in between. It wasn't the best model, but if I had a choice between a short Shield match with no breaks and a long Shield match with breaks, suffice to say I would choose the later.

Speaking of that weak patch on the main card, it was comprised of three straight matches, an Intercontinental Championship match, Curt Axel defending against the Miz, a Diva's title match, AJ retaining over Kaitlyn, and a Rybak/Chris Jericho match, which Ryback won. Now, they had to get a Diva's match on the maincard, and you could make the case for Axel, especially because

they want to keep him strong, but did they really need all three of these matches on the show? Chances are that they did not, and the show would have been better if the Shield had been placed in there instead.

In the two world title match, John Cena retained over Mark Henry, and Del Rio retained over Ziggler via DQ. As surprising as it may sound, the John Cena match was better than the Del Rio one. Mark Henry was submitted by Cena after a match involving some very convincing near falls and tremendous crowd heat. On the other hand, the Ziggler/Del Rio match went to an anticlimactic, albeit necessary DQ finish with AJ costing Ziggler the title. It was necessary because they needed to take Ziggler out of the title picture so that they could split the AJ, Langston and Ziggler trio up, completing his face turn.

As far as their Summerslam direction goes, the top match on the card seems to be Brock Lesnar/CM Punk, with John Cena versus Daniel Bryan as the semi-main. They have only really done a handful of angles to build up the Lesnar/Punk match at this point, but every single one of them has been great so far. The angle that they delivered on RAW with Lesnar laying out Punk after a fantastic promo spot between he and Heyman, was literally one of the best angles of the entire year.

As far as the actual match goes, I can see it surpassing the expectations of many people in a similar way to Lesnar's match with Cena, and less so in the manner that Triple H and Lesnar undelivered in every match in their series. Given that we still have quite the ways to go until Summerslam, I would expect a lot of great angles from Heyman, Punk and Lesnar, which should make for one of the more interesting matches that the WWE has put on in a while.

The WWE title match also has my interest peaked, as John Cena defends his WWE title against Daniel Bryan. The match is important for many reasons, the first clear point is that if Bryan wins the title, it will be the cherry on top of a turning point for the company, in terms of who they push, and who they see as stars. The match may also be one of the better matches of the entire year depending on how much time they get, and crowd heat, together with the finish.

If you saw the closing angle on Monday Night's edition of RAW, which was Cena choosing his Summerslam opponent from anyone on the roster, it was clear that Daniel Bryan has the potential to become a major star for the company. Obviously Bryan has been someone more over than his push for years, but there are a lot of people like that in the company and in the wrestling business as a whole, who have never made it to any kind of mainevent level. However, Bryan is different, and it is because of that fact that he has been able to transcend so many limitations that have been placed on him in order to get where he is.

I would suspect that Bryan will win the WWE title at Summerslam, only for Orton to cash in on him, hence setting up a Bryan/Orton program for a few months. They would probably do a three-way for the next pay-per-view, before going to a clear cut program between either Orton and Cena, or Bryan and Orton. If they do go with the latter it would make sense, given that the Bryan/Orton face versus face program from earlier in the year didn't feature one singles match

on pay-per-view.

Orton suffered a cervical strain and cervical neuropraxia during the Smackdown taping this week. Whilst the injury was only really reported by WWE.com, Orton failed to work the dark match apart from landing an RKO towards the end, so it is probably legitimate. However, they could use it to add to the surprise factor of a Money in the Bank cash in if they are so inclined.

As far as long term plans and direction go WWE's current outlook is generally very positive, as they have multiple avenues that they have already turned down, and that they could turn down that would result in a very interesting, as well as influential period for the company.

### **TNA Has Bad Week That Ends On Positive Note**

There is no question that this week wasn't a positive one for TNA, after all, they cut Tara, D-lo Brown, and even Bruce Pritchard who they couldn't come to terms with. Making matters even worse was the fact that a person such as DOC (Real name Drew Hankinson, the former Luke Gallows and Festus, 29), who was apart of a relatively major storyline with Ken Anderson, which looked like it was leading to a face turn, was let go after someone didn't realize that his contract had expired.

These were obviously big cost cuts for a company that seems to be in a difficult spot right now. They are spending a large amount of money on every TV taping on the road, and up until this past week's edition of iMPACT nothing seemed to have helped. They would go from live to tape, on the road back to Orlando, and switched times, but nothing has helped to change business around. They even switched to a model that at the time most people, including myself, saw as a positive when they cut back from 12 to 4 pay-per-views towards the beginning of the year, and that too didn't cause a change.

Even talent such as Hulk Hogan, who is obviously one of the most well treated members of the roster, was reportedly paid late and that has been the case with many members of the roster with the developmental talent being at the top of the list. They even moved to a different time slot, something that they do on occasion when ratings aren't working out, and that didn't help anything either. Plus, they forsook the Bellator lead-in that they provided, which was a huge positive for Spike and its relationship with TNA.

However, whether it was due to the fact that Bruce Pritchard was let go, or simply because they felt it was time to change the World Title, they did so in a way that few would have expected going in. For the past few weeks they have been running angles leading to a Chris Sabin/Bully Ray world title match, for a special Destination X edition of iMPACT, a spot that would normally be filled by the Destination X pay-per-view. Last year it was a show where Austin Aries very unexpectedly won the TNA World title from Bobby Roode, which led to a positive run for the company, at least creatively. Now the gimmick is that the X Division champion is able to cash the title in for a shot at the champion at Destination X, and that is exactly what happened here.

The match between the two was good, but nothing extraordinary. However, in the end it was Sabin who used the Aces & Eights' hammer to win the TNA World title. And when the ratings for the show were released it turns out that by building to an edition of TV like a pay-per-view, they were able to move the needle, if only very slightly. They almost always do between a 0.9 and 1.1, and this time they broke that barrier with a 1.2 and 1.4 million viewers.

I am by no means saying that this means anything for the company, especially when they had a strong lead in, but it does give them something to work towards, even if it may land up being the pot under the rainbow kind of story - something that has been the case for TNA for a very long time.

With Sabin as champion I don't really know what's next. It looks like they are going to be doing Bull Ray versus Hulk Hogan at Bound for Glory, or at least that is what they have been building towards. However, that by no means seems like a good idea from my point of view. It will be interesting to see where the company goes from here though. I don't think that they will be able to turn things around, but I don't really see them sinking either. Chances are that for at least the next few years they will keep shuffling on as TNA, the company that they have always been. The product will probably go through some ups and downs between then and now, but everyone will keep chugging on in Limbo.

Still, this seems like a positive move for the company, so if nothing drastic comes to pass, at least we may get some fun programming from the company over the next few weeks, and realistically that's all I ask for when it comes to TNA.

## **Reports**

### **WWE Money in the Bank July 14th 2013 Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Overall Thoughts:

Money in the Bank was another strong show from WWE following a hot run of shows. I would put this show on par with WWE's last PPV, Payback, and if you factor in the Shield match from the pre-show it may actually be the better of the two. Both ladder matches were good, with the RAW match reaching the 'great' level. The two title matches were also very strong. Everything else on the main card was pretty forgettable, but the Shield match was great, and would have probably been the second best match on the show had it been on the main card. The Philadelphia crowd was obviously a huge part of the show's success, but as a whole it looked like a good show coming in, and it very much delivered coming out.

Pre-Show

The show opened with Josh Matthews, Big Show, Kofi Kingston and Vickie Guerrero of all

people in the booth. The Usos made it out and they aired clips of them winning the number one contender's shot, funnily enough I remember none of it, even though there were some big spots in there from the highlights. The Shield got a good reaction on their way down. The fans already started chanting for RVD during this match. They had to take a minute break for a Money in the Bank trailer. Reigns landed a huge lariat on Uso who was on the apron, and took a flip bump on his head and shoulder right on the apron. The Usos took tons of stiff punishment. Next was a trailer for Dead Man Down. They claimed that it was the first all-stars Money in the Bank, but wasn't that the gimmick last year? There was a super powerbomb tower spot, which isn't traditionally a tag-team spot. There was one amazing nearfall where Uso landed a splash for a near three count. The fans were chanting that it was awesome. Rollins landed a buckle bomb into the spear for the win. During the match I was getting rather agitated by all of the ads, but in the end the match got enough time and the pre-show was cut short, so it really was a worth while sacrifice. This was the best pre-show match that I have seen, which makes the fact that it wasn't on the main show even more bizarre (\*\*\*\*). A graphic came up showing the Money in the Bank stars one by one Bryan, Punk and Christian got cheers, Orton and Sheamus were booed, and the crowd popped for RVD. They were running long, as Ambrose & Fandango made it out on the pre-show.

## Main-Show

### 1. SmackDown Money in the Bank Ladder Match

Antonio Cesaro vs. Dean Ambrose vs. Cody Rhodes vs. Wade Barrett vs. Jack Swagger vs. Fandango vs. Damien Sandow

It was really funny, because the show opened with Ambrose and Fandango in the ring, and they



were introduced first and second, and then everyone was introduced regularly. As expected Philadelphia was very happy with Colter's speech. Swagger and Colter cleaned house to "we the people" chants. Sandow and Rhodes did the same, but were also disposed off by Cesaro and

Swagger. Fandango caught Barrett with a highkick for an incredibly choreographed leg drop spot on the ladder. There was a big sloppy patch where there was some miscommunication between Sandow and Fandango. Barrett tore off a wrung from a ladder and proceeded to bludgeon Sandow with it. Barrett was pulled off by Swagger into an uppercut by Cesaro, which was really

great. Ambrose took Swagger out with a DDT off of the ladder. He climbed, but was hung from the top in a Cesaro headlock. Cody Rhodes fought him off and dropped Cesaro onto a corner standing ladder in a muscle buster. Swagger climbed, but he was killed with a Barrett elbow. Fandango climbed and responded with a sunset flip. His joy was short lived as Ambrose landed a big bulldog DDT from the ladder. Swagger and Cesaro came in. Ambrose did the Funk airplane spin. He was lifted up and skinned the cat onto the ladder that Cesaro and Swagger were holding, but was dropped to the outside. This was so wacky, but such a unique idea. They wrecked shop and Cesaro looked to grab the briefcase by climbing on Swagger's shoulders, but Rhodes shot in with a missile dropkick! Fandango was laid out with a Cross Rhodes and so too was Barrett, and Rhodes grabbed one of the big ladders. He and Ambrose traded a top of the ladder. Ambrose was rammed head first over and over again, yelled "see ya bye", but the Shield ran in with a beatdown on Rhodes, which was seconds late. Ambrose began to climb, and out came the Usos, and a huge brawl broke out on the floor. Rhodes then responded by tipping Ambrose onto everyone else. Cody climbed, but Sandow was the one to stop him and retrieve the briefcase. There were some cluttered spots, but as a whole this was a very ladder match. I was a big fan of the way that they did the Sandow finish, as this may be the angle to elevate Rhodes as well, because he had a great performance tonight.

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It looks like they are back to the "Don't try this at home" slogan as opposed to the "don't try this" slogan. Brad Maddox was brought out and did some intentionally bad comedy, and he got Vickie to wave from the pre-show box. He tried to get them to chant "thank you Vickie", and he said that Philadelphia was known for being rude. There was then a Vickie Guerrero video package featuring her most embarrassing moments. He tried to get them to give her a standing ovation, and the segment just ended. The fact that this was on pay-per-view and the Shield match was not made me angry. This was a RAW segment, and why it was on pay-per-view I don't understand.

## 2. Intercontinental Championship Match Curtis Axel w/ Paul Heyman vs. Miz

Heyman distracted Miz out on the floor, before Miz did an Eddie Guerrero esque gimmick of clapping his hands, and then taking a bump, which got Heyman sent to the back. Heyman was of course the most over figure in this match, which led to loud "we want Heyman" chants - so why did they remove him from the match? Axel landed the perfect plex for two, which is a move that they aren't getting over strong at all. Miz locked in the figure four, Axel reversed the pressure, Miz got it over again, but Axel made it to the ropes. Axel slid out to the floor, rolled back in and then hit his neckbreaker finish for the win in a rather strange finish. Cole then claimed that it was the only time in history that someone had countered the figure four to their advantage! In what world?

\*\* ¼

There was a SummerSlam commercial featuring pictures of the biggest stars when they were younger.

### 3. Diva's Championship Match

AJ w/ Big E. Langston vs. Kaitlyn w/ Layla

AJ pushed Kaitlyn into the post face first and went after the arm. Kaitlyn landed a big inverted DDT for two. AJ was pushed to the floor, but was caught by Langston. Kaitlyn landed a spear, but sold the arm and couldn't make the cover. AJ locked in the black widow, and had it locked in for quite a while before Kaitlyn finally tapped. Suffice to say this match was nowhere close to their Payback match in quality.

\* 1/2

There was a commercial for Total Divas - it looks horrendous. They cut back to Matthews, Big Show, Kingston and Guerrero back in the booth. They talked about Vickie's firing, and Sandow's victory, coupled with the other two matches.

### 4. Chris Jericho vs. Ryback

Ryback dropped out to the floor and paced back and forth before being caught with a baseball slide. Ryback was able to garner the advantage, and even landed a splash from the second rope before dropping Jericho to the floor. Jericho was able to land a boot to the face, but was caught with a belly to belly suplex. Jericho fought out of the shell shock, but was slammed out of the code breaker and taken back up for a powerbomb. Jericho made his comeback with an enzuigiri and landed a codebreaker with Ryback draped across the second rope, Ryback fell to the floor and made it back in at nine. Ryback got Jericho up for the shell shock again, but Jericho got him down for a DDT. Jericho went for a lionsault, but Ryback grabbed a rollup for the win. This was probably one of the better single's matches of Ryback's career, which was completely due to Jericho. Plus, it was Ryback's first PPV win in over a year. Still, I would have rather had the Shield.

\*\* 3/4

There was a video package for the opening of the WWE performance center.

### 5. World Heavyweight Championship Match

Alberto Del Rio vs. Dolf Ziggler.

The fans were incredibly into Ziggler from the onset. Ziggler landed his elbows, and Lawler muttered with delight "I believe that killed me one time". Dolf was met with a big enzuigiri to the floor before being thrown into the barricade allowing for some ring work. JBL called Del Rio a "4 time Mexican champion" - what is the Mexican championship, and when did Del Rio hold it? Del Rio landed shots to the kidneys to very loud to chants for Ziggler. Del Rio went to the top, and was dropped down with a top rope X factor. Del Rio caught Ziggler with a bridging German suplex, but Ziggler ducked an enzuigiri and landed a fameasser for two. Del Rio went back up top, but was caught with a dropkick straight to the face. AJ's music sounded; the second time in two Money in the Bank shows. Ziggler called for AJ to leave, and landed a big spike



DDT following a great series. Del Rio landed an inverted superplex, as the whole arena chanted for Ziggler. Ziggler countered the armbreaker, and was caught with a huge superkick for two. Del Rio revealed the exposed knee brace, but AJ shot in with a belt shot on Del Rio for the DQ, in an angle to set up the break up between the two. It was a lame finish, but it was a necessary evil on a strong card, so I was okay with it. The one thing that bugs me, and this is a nitpick, is that they play the theme music during these situations, it just doesn't make any sense. Ziggler screamed at AJ and walked off to "you screwed Ziggler" chants.

\*\*\* ¼

There was the usual National Guard spot. I was very happy to learn that Cena and Henry was going on first. It only makes sense, given that the crowd and most people viewed the RAW Money in the Bank as the mainevent.

## 6. WWE Championship Match John Cena vs. Mark Henry

There were the usual loud duelling "let's go Cena" and "Cena sucks" chants. Henry knocked Cena out to the floor and landed a front suplex on the steps. Henry actually did the spot where Cena's head would be hung up on the middle rope, and he would dive through, which looked incredible. He then borrowed somewhat from the Cesaro playbook and did a half great wing into the barricade. Cena went for a slam, but all of Henry's wait came crashing down on him. They traded strikes, and Cena finally knocked Henry down with a shoulder block before landing a



back suplex and five knuckle shuffle. Cena got Henry up for the AA, but Henry tumbled back down on him. However, Cena was able to finally get Henry up and landed the AA, but Henry kicked out! Cena went for a splash, but Henry landed the world's strongest slam for two. Henry

removed the turnbuckle cover, which gave him time to grab a pair of steel chairs. This in turn allowed him to expose the other turnbuckle, but Cena threw him into it and locked in the STF. Cena was pushed into the referee, which gave Henry the opportunity to land a low blow for two in a great nearfall. Henry went into beast mode, went for the world's strongest slam, but Cena grabbed an STF dragging Henry to the center for the win. Much like the Sheamus/Mark Henry match last year this was a surprisingly good match, which was due to both the nearfalls, but also

that Cena is really good at these giant slaying matches. If you look at his 2007 Royal Rumble match with Umaga, or his match with Lashley, or even the Big Show, all of those matches over delivered, and the same was true here, great work from both men.

\*\*\* ½

There was a Dead Man Down Blu-Ray combo pack trailer. They cut to the Money in the Bank panel - Big Show and Kingston were great here. I really like this concept. They aired a recap of the Wyatt segment from RAW.

## 7. WWE Championship Money in the Bank Ladder Match

Daniel Bryan vs. CM Punk vs. Randy Orton vs. Christian vs. Rob Van Dam vs. Sheamus

In one of the stranger things on the show, without any fanfare Rob Van Dam was just trotted out, first, before everyone else. Why not bring him out last? Bryan was super over with pretty much everyone in the building chanting his name, and Punk was really over as always. Orton is growing a thick villainous beard. RVD has gotten himself back into shape and is looking good.



He was taken out immediately by the other participants right at the start of the match. Everyone went after Sheamus next, narrowing it down to four. Punk went after Christian, and Orton after Bryan. This left Punk and Bryan in the ring to the delight of the crowd. Punk and Bryan did a lot of

traditional wrestling before Sheamus came in with the ladder. This allowed Van Dam to land all of his signature offense. Cole claimed that RVD's wrestling debut was at the ECW arena in 1996 - wrong. Van Dam set up for a frog splash on Orton who was on a ladder, but Christian came in with a ladder strike. Sheamus went for the briefcase and Van Dam pushed the ladder down sending Sheamus onto the middle portion of the ladder that he was standing on - it looked like no fun. He got his revenge shortly after with a rolling senton on a ladder. Sheamus set up a ladder bridge between the ring and announce table and went for the celtic cross on Bryan. Bryan countered and shot out with his knee. A pair of ladders was set up and soon everyone was fighting atop of the two ladders; everybody fell to the mat. Sheamus cleaned house again and laid RVD out with a brogue kick. Bryan met him at the top, and Sheamus landed his clubbing blows on the ladder. At one point Sheamus was swinging from the briefcase, but Punk pulled him down. Orton landed a T-bone suplex on the ladder. Christian shot in with a spear on Orton and

then another on Bryan. There were chants for tables. Van Dam and Christian battled on top of the ladder, Christian fell to the mat, but Van Dam landed on another ladder, which he used to land the frog splash off of. Sheamus pushed RVD off of a ladder, and he did a terrible dramatic throat sell. Bryan unloaded with shots and landed a tope on Punk on top of a pile of ladders, did the kip up, and proceeded to murder everyone, sending Sheamus through the ladder bridge. However, as Bryan was climbing for the belt Curtis Axel of all people came down to lay him out. Punk responded by landing a GTS on Axel out on the floor. Heyman made it out and yelled at an incapacitated Axel. This led to chants for Lesnar. Punk began to climb and it was awesome, because you knew that a big turn was coming with Heyman cheering him on. Heyman then threw the ladder at Punk (right in the head splinting Punk open hard way - his idea I am sure) and left him laying. This allowed Van Dam to climb, but Orton pulled him down into an RKO and won the Money in the Bank. This was a very well put together ladder match.

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### **WWE Monday Night RAW July 15th 2013 Barclay's Center, Brooklyn, New York**

#### Overall Thoughts:

As far as RAW shows over the past few months go, this was probably one of the better shows of the year. It was one of those shows for numerous reasons it had a hot crowd, which got to see longer matches and key angles. The WWE creative direction is also at a stage where they have the majority of the heels and faces set up in the correct manner, where the fans want to cheer the babyfaces and boo the heels, which is obviously what you should strive for in your wrestling product. They built a large portion of the show around Cena picking Bryan as his Summerslam opponent in the mainevent segment. The build and pay-off was either planned really well by the WWE, or was a tremendous coincidence. They had Bryan off of the show for the whole night, which wasn't the original plan, since they originally wanted to have Bryan/Barrett on the show, but they ran late and decide to just give the extra time to Jericho and RVD. This not only gave us a great TV mainevent, but also kept Bryan fresh for the reveal, and given that they were in Boston, what a reveal it was. The closing segment was tremendous with Bryan mounting the top turnbuckle screaming "yes" along with the crowd. They also had one of the best angles of the year with Punk, Heyman and Lesnar. To top it all of most of the matches had a good amount of heat, and the GM nonsense was kept as low as it will get in 2013 I suppose. All in all, when you have good long matches interspersed with key segments the three hour show doesn't feel as long, and is actually quite fun, and that was the case here - really good show.

Brad Maddox came out to a drumroll and announced a Ziggler/Del Rio rematch for later on. Before he could reveal anything else Cena made his way down to the ring. Cena was booed heavily, and as always blew it off. Cena said that it was the only time that Maddox would be in the ring with a person more hated than he was. Maddox put Cena over. Maddox then announced that Cena would be able to choose his Summerslam opponent, leading to huge "yes" chants. Cena mentioned the people that he could face, one of whom was Dutch Mantel. Orton made it out to a big ovation. Orton said Cena would never see his cash in coming, this queued Fandango

to the largest Fandangoing we have seen since the post-Mania RAW. Fandango said that Orton would have to cash on on him, because he was the one that the fans wanted to see face Cena. Cena tried to pronounce Fandango's name, before Orton went after Fandango. Fandango got a quick advantage, but Orton jumped back in and cleaned house. This led to Maddox booking the first match of the night for right then and there. The fans cared little for this match for the first few minutes chanting for Randy Savage, and JBL...strange that the majority of these chants are during Orton matches. However, unlike the post-Mania crowd they were into the actual match most of the time. Orton got the crowd riled up, hit the RKO and waited a few seconds before grabbing the pin in a very fun match helped great deals by the crowd.

Ziggler was walking in the back when AJ came by, and Ziggler said that it was time to move on. AJ embraced him, but he repeated his message saying that he was moving away from her. Henry came down looking very good in a suit. He put Cena over as a great champion. The fans chanted "you tapped out". He said that he wanted a rematch at Summerslam; he would take Cena to his limits again. This brought the Shield out. A great three on one beatdown followed, with Henry fighting the Shield off before being killed with a spear. They then landed the triple powerbomb to loud "holy sh\*\*" chants. This was so good, and I guess we are getting a Henry face turn. Jericho walked into Maddox' office, Jericho threw some insults around, and Maddox suggested a match with RVD. Jericho told Maddox that he did a great job. Del Rio made it out before Ziggler.



Ziggler landed his elbows, and Lawler said with a chuckle that it brought back bad memories. Ziggler then proceeded to go into the turnbuckle face first really hard before getting kicked in the head. Ziggler took what would have been considered a crazy bump, even on the previous night's

show. Taking what was a nasty back drop down to the floor - this man literally bounced off of the ground. Ziggler landed a very impressive top rope fameasser, but in the middle of the match AJ rang the bell. This allowed Del Rio to land a superkick for the win to set up Ziggler's Summerslam direction. This was a very good match, it wasn't on par with their match from the previous night, but it was close. AJ then came in distracting Ziggler setting up for Big E. to run in with a huge clothesline and body check. AJ then kissed an unconscious Ziggler and left.

R-Truth made it out, as he yelled "Brooklyn" the lights went off and they aired a clip of Bray Wyatt saying that they were there. They did the same entrance as last week and laid Truth out.

Rowan and Harper welcomed Wyatt to the ring. Wyatt was cutting a great promo...but he was still getting the 'what' treatment regardless. Truth made it back on the apron chair in hand. Rowan and Harper left the ring leaving Wyatt alone open for a shot; Truth looked around, which ultimately allowed for a cheap shot and three on one assault. He told Kane to "follow the buzzards". The lights went out and they cut to a break. When they came back a graphic for a poll asking if Cesaro & Swagger should face the Usos, Prime Time Players or Tensai & Clay was up. The same clip was shown for the WWE Performance Center. Cesaro, Swagger and Colter came out. This time around Colter even brought up Yiddish. He wanted Cena to choose either Cesaro or Swagger. The poll results were revealed with the Usos winning with 55%, to the 27% of Tons of Funk and the 18% of the Prime Time Players. They didn't have the time to really do much, and unfortunately Cesaro was the one to take the fall via rollup.

There was a B.A. Star commercial. Sandow made it out with the Money in the Bank briefcase for a match against Christian. Poor Christian, who had a very hard night at the office on Sunday, took a bump from the turnbuckle onto the apron and down to the floor. Christian countered the Elbow of Distain with a rollup for the win...and so the losing streak begins. Sandow lifted the briefcase above his head, and Rhodes stormed out in a suit attacking Sandow who quickly fled through the crowd. There was a ridiculous vignette with a hiccuping guy getting his friend to call 1-800-FELLA for help. A clip was shown of Vickie walking through the building earlier asking for people to sign her petition. Brie Bella was out for a match with Naomi. Naomi is a really



good athlete, but this match was very bad, and was mostly used to build to Total Divas. Naomi landed a crossbody for the win. A clip was shown of Heyman walking out of the building after Money in the Bank, and yes, this was promoted as a WWE.com Exclusive. A limping CM Punk in a gracie jujitsu hoodie made it down to the ring. Punk kept it very short and to the point saying that Heyman and Lesnar were in the building and called them out. Heyman popped out, and said

that he was looking at an empty ring, because in his world Punk didn't exist. He gave the usual speech saying what he had down for Punk, but he basically said that without him Punk wasn't the best in the world. Punk came back thinking that he was better than Heyman, and Heyman was the one that dumped Punk and not the other way around. Punk had no family, no mother, no father, he only had the fans. Punk took Heyman's best friend and Heyman took away Punk's shot at the title. Punk made Heyman swear on his children, but it was his children who were asking all of the questions that planted the seeds for the double cross. He betrayed Punk because he can't beat Lesnar plain and simple. Punk said that Heyman knew better than anyone else than when he wanted something he was relentless, and he would get Heyman. Punk even swore on Heyman's children's life. Punk would rip apart whoever got between them, and he would keep Heyman alive just long enough to burn down everything around him. Punk called Heyman a "son of a b\*\*\*h", which got a huge pop, and was bleeper on my feed. Heyman then got on his knees tapped his wrist and yelled that it was clobbering time bringing Lesnar out. While Punk had his eyes on Lesnar Heyman went at him from behind, but Punk was able to go after Lesnar on the floor for a great brawl. Punk was thrown over the table, but still made it until he was rammed into the post back first. Punk was then F5'd on the table. Punk made it to his feet after Lesnar and Brock left, but soon collapsed clutching his throat. This segment was absolute gold. When it comes to making you want to see a match, this was better than the Henry segment, and it was better than the Triple H/Lesnar segments - it was probably the best single angle of the year.

Following that top tier segment there was a Total Divas segment; what a transition that was. Cena was walking through the back when Khali came by talking in Punjabi, which Cena



responded in. Maddox met with Stephanie. Stephanie asked how Maddox' night had been going, but was actually talking to Hunter behind him. Triple H and Stephanie said that letting Cena choose his opponent was a bad idea, as they would love who he would pick, but Vince would not.

Hunter wished him luck in his future endeavors and then walked off. Van Dam made it out for his match with Jericho. RVD landed a stiff kick mid match. Jericho responded with a powerbomb later on. RVD then landed a no hands moonsault off of the apron - Van Dam has done more in these two nights than in the last three years. Van Dam's cut split open again at some point. Jericho landed a lionsault half way across the ring, and was caught with a highkick. Van Dam went for the frogsplash, Jericho made it up top, but was caught with a senton of all things to a

standing opponent! Jericho locked in the walls from an attempted hurricanrana. Van Dam then landed his spinkick and five star frog splash for the win. This was a great TV match, and was really helped by the extra time, even if Van Dam was clearly tiring towards the end. (\*\*\*)1/2)

The entire roster was out on the stage. Cena said that he hadn't given the fans their say yet. He asked for their help and the entire crowd chanted yes. He would say some names and gauge their reaction Slater (on his birthday), boos, 3MB as a whole, boos, Orton, mixed, Great Khali, boos, Del Rio, boos, Jericho, mid level cheers, Van Dam, good reaction, Fandango, a mixture of Fandangoing and indifference, Sheamus, strong boos, Ryback, boos. He asked if he was forgetting anyone and the crowd chanted yes, and he acted like he was ignoring them. The fans chanted for Daniel Bryan on the top of their lungs. He then chose Daniel Bryan and the place erupted. Bryan stormed down to the ring, and he got a megastar reaction. This was a great moment, and a great way to cap off a very good edition of RAW.

### **RAW Ratings for July 8th 2013**

The July 8th edition of RAW ended up doing the best overall number since May 20th believe it or not. The show pulled a 3.1 rating and averaged 4.18 million viewers across three hours. It also showed the same healthy pattern that they have exhibited for a number of weeks now, with the amount of total viewers growing throughout the show. They faced no real competition.

The opening match, which was Daniel Bryan versus Sheamus, lost 183,000 viewers, which is fine for the opening match. The first video searching for the Wyatt Family together with a Mark Henry video package lost 140,000 viewers, which is usually the case with segments of this nature. Sweet T & Clay versus the Shield then gained 339,000 viewers, which I would consider good. At 21:00 the John Cena/Mark Henry face-off and promo segment gained 424,000 viewers to a 3.41 quarter.

The 20:00 to 21:00 drew 3.79 million viewers (1.4 in the 18-49 demo, fourth for the night on cable behind the second hour).

In the post-21:00 segment Chris Jericho versus Curtis Axel lost 250,000 viewers, which was fine given the high that they were coming off of. A Money in the Bank backstage segment, which culminated in Fandango getting elbowed by Wade Barrett lost 285,000 viewers. Del Rio versus Sin Cara with a wacky Ziggler run-in gained 171,000 viewers. Then at 22:00 the Vickie Guerrero job evaluation segment gained 553,000 viewers to a 3.55 quarter, which is phenomenal for a non-overrun segment

The 21:00 to 22:00 segment drew 4.31 million viewers (1.6 rating in the 18-49 demo, third for the night on cable behind the third hour).

Kane versus Christian lost 736,000 viewers in the post-22:00 segment, which is understandable. The Wyatt Family debut with an attack on Kane, Ryback consoling Vickie backstage, and the AJ & Fox versus Kaitlyn & Layla tag match gained 122,000 viewers. Finally in the overrun segment

Orton versus Punk gained a measly 48,000 viewers, which is very bad for the overrun spot; however, they were coming off of a high. Still, this does put the terrible number that Bryan did a few weeks ago into perspective.

The 22:00 to around 23:00 segment drew 4.4 million viewers (a 1.6 in the 18-49 demo, second for the night on cable, only behind Love & Hip Hop Atlanta, which was number one with a 1.9). The demographics for the night were as follows: a 2.5 in males 18-49, a 2.2 in male teenagers, a 1.2 in female teenagers and a 1.1 in females 18-49.

### **RAW Ratings for July 15th 2013**

This week's show was down slightly from last week's, which performed very well. However, I would still consider this week's rating good considering that they went up against the Home Run Derby, which drew a 4.78 rating and 6.65 million viewers. They once again showed a healthy rise throughout the show, which I would consider a big positive. Plus, it was a really good show and that helps.

The opening segment with Cena, Maddox and Orton opened at a 2.99 quarter, which I would consider weak. Randy Orton versus Fandango lost 85,000 viewers. The great Shield beatdown on Mark Henry gained 78,000 viewers. Del Rio versus Ziggler then gained 273,000 viewers at 21:00 for a 3.19 quarter rating.

The 20:00 to 21:00 hour drew 3.93 million viewers (1.5 rating in the 18-49 demo, 6th for the night on cable behind the second hour).

A Bray Wyatt vignette coupled with the performance center video lost 209,000 viewers. The Usos versus Cesaro & Swagger, and Christian versus Damien Sandow lost a further 253,000 viewers. Brie Bella versus Naomi of all things gained 265,000 viewers, which is the second time in two weeks that the Divas have performed well (in a ratings sense that is). Then at 22:00 the fantastic CM Punk, Heyman/Lesnar segment gained 498,000 viewers to a 3.41 quarter.

The 21:00 to 22:00 hour drew 4.11 million viewers (1.6 rating in the 18-49 demo, 5th for the night on cable, behind the third hour.)

In the post-22:00 segment, the Cena/Khali skit, together with Maddox, Triple H, and Stephanie backstage lost 497,000 viewers. The very long Van Dam/Jericho match then lost a further 172,000 viewers. Finally Cena choosing Bryan did a great gain of 669,000 viewers to a 3.41 overrun.

The 22:00 to around 23:00 hour drew 4.27 million viewers (1.6 rating in the 18-49 demo, 4th for the night on cable behind the Home Run Derby prelude, Love & Hip-Hop, and the actual Home Run Derby). The demos for this week's show were as follows: a 2.5 in males 18-49 (a demographic that has been doing very well as of late), a 1.9 in male teenagers, a 1.1 in females 18-49, and also a 1.1 in female teenagers.



**WWE – NXT. July 17<sup>th</sup> 2013.  
Full Sail University, Florida.  
Ben Carass.**

Leo Kruger made his entrance to start the show this week. Antonio Cesaro appeared with his big yellow flag then Sami Zayn showed up for the opener.

**Numer One Contender’s Triple Threat Match: Sami Zayn vs. Antonio Cesaro vs. Leo Kruger**

Sami fought off the two heels for a while but Cesaro landed some shots in the corner then Leo dumped Antonio over the top and took Zayn over with a hammerlock suplex. Cesaro pulled Leo to the floor, so Sami took out both heels with a summersault plancha as the pre-commercial highspot. After the break Cesaro countered a high cross off the top from Zayn into a tilt-o-whirl backbreaker, but Kruger broke up the pin. Antonio and Leo traded shots briefly then we got a wacky three-way spot: Leo caught a kick from Sami and trapped him in a high-cradle; Cesaro hit Kruger with a Germansuplex, which caused Zayn to be thrown halfway across the ring by a high-cradle suplex. Antonio dumped Kruger over the top with his gutwrench then worked a chinlock to wear Sami down for the neutraliser; Leo broke up Cesaro’s finish with his big “slice” clothesline deal and got a two count on Zayn. Sami drilled both guys with a DDT/downward spiral combo for a triple-down, complete with a ten count from the ref, then started a comeback on both heels and countered the pop-up European uppercut into a hurricanrana for a near-fall. The finish saw Zayn dump Kruger over the top, however Cesaro hit him with a European and delivered the neutraliser; Leo slid back in and took out Antonio to steal the pin.  
*Leo Kruger defeated Sami Zayn & Antonio Cesaro via pinfall, at 6:40 (TV Time).*

*This was a very good match even though the finish has been done to death in three-ways; the action was well paced, the big spots were timed nicely, plus Cesaro and Sami looked as strong as possible in losing. I’m looking forward to Leo going after the Title and I am intrigued to see if they can book around the Full Sail crowd’s reaction to Bo Dallas. They can push Bo as John Cena all they want, even though it is the most ridiculous idea since, well, the company’s response to fans that hated John Cena in the first place, but seeing the entire arena pop for a sneaky heel run-in on the supposed babyface champion is not the story you want to come across on TV.*

Sylvester LeFort appeared in a suit not too dissimilar to something Michael Hayes would wear to the Hall of Fame; he introduced himself then brought out his money-maker Scott Dawson. Bo Dallas got the Cena treatment on his way out and Regal talked about Bo heading for a showdown with Leo Kruger.

**Non-Title Match: Bo Dallas (NXT Champion) vs. Scott Dawson w/Sylvester LeFort**

Bo landed some sloppy dropkicks then Dawson went to the apron and used the rope like an elastic band to get the advantage. Dallas sold his eye after the rope shot then Dawson landed a clothesline and tried to get some heat on the hated Dallas. Bo fought up from a chinlock and started his comeback to the delight of three shrieking women in the crowd. The finish was Dallas hitting his belly-to-belly for the clean pin.

*Bo Dallas defeated Scott Dawson via pinfall, at 2:34.*

Bo had his hand raised by John Cone and they deployed the unimpressive house show steam machine; the fans sat on their hands. Leo Kruger ran in and beat down the NXT Champ; Leo dropped Dallas with a hangman's facebuster then held Bo's belt over his head; the crowd loved this and chanted, "thank you Kruger".

*This segment was all kinds of horrible. The match was poor, the crowd were dead and didn't care one bit about Bo in there; what an inspiring champion. The post-match deal was a perfect example of why they need to come up with more creative ideas than Leo doing run-ins. There was no sympathy for Dallas whatsoever and the fans embraced the guy who has been built as one of the biggest heels in the territory.*

Socially handicapped, or pilled-up Bayley was in the ring. Ric Flair came down to the ring and put over NXT and all the developmental guys then introduced Charlotte, whom Naitch described as "the greatest Flair athlete of all time." Charlotte came out and got a pretty good reaction; she did some gymnastic stuff then hugged her dad.

### **Charlotte w/ Ric Flair vs. Bayley**

Charlotte gave the fans a "Woooo" then the two engaged in an exchange of holds. Bayley went for some pinning combinations, however this angered the Nature Boy, who took off his jacket and encouraged his daughter. Bayley got a one count off an exploder then Charlotte did the Flair/Ray Stevens spot in the corner and hit a front-flip ace-crusher for the finish.

*Charlotte defeated Bayley via pinfall, at 2:49.*

*Charlotte looked pretty good here; obviously it was kept short to hide her greenness, but considering she has only had one or two matches, she wasn't as bad as her in-ring experience would dictate. I also got a kick out of her doing Ric's old cocky smile before the collar-and-elbow at the start.*

Tony Dawson magically materialised in the back, despite supposedly being out in the arena on commentary. Sheamus showed up and said he was excited for his first match on NXT next week. Bray Wyatt nailed him from behind and told Sheamus to follow the buzzards as the Family stood over him.

Tyler Breeze (Mike Dalton) was backstage; he was sat in a chair with his back to the camera and

was staring into a mirror. He had some cronies around him and claimed to be a model then said next week NXT would experience “gorgeousness”.

Adrian Neville and Corey Graves hit the ring for the main event then the Wyatt Family came down to defend their straps for the last time.

### **NXT Tag Team Championship: Adrian Neville & Corey Graves vs. The Wyatt Family (C) w/Bray Wyatt**

Graves worked over Harper and strangely out-brawled the big man, however Rowan took over on Neville. Graves made a blind tag and hit Rowan with a dropkick then the big man took a needless ring post spot. Harper tagged in, but Graves delivered a couple of Dragonscrews; Neville took out Rowan with a springboard dropkick then Harper cut off Graves with a big boot to the face for the heat spot. After the break the Family got the heat on Graves with their slow methodical offence; Graves fought up from a chinlock to land a sunset flip for a hope spot and Harper shut him down with a dropkick. Rowan worked an abdominal-stretch; Graves fought out to land a back-elbow only to be cut off again by a clothesline. Graves showed some more fight, however Harper planted him with a Traylorlam for a near-fall. Harper missed a big boot in the corner and spilled over the top, which allowed Neville to get the hot tag in and run wild on Rowan then deliver a hurricanrana to Harper off the apron. Neville low-bridged Rowan over the top and hit both heels with a top rope Asai-moonsault then got a two count off a second rope Phoenix splash. For the finish, Wyatt got involved and crotched Neville on the top behind the ref’s back, but Neville kicked out. Sheamus ran down and sent Wyatt into the steps. Graves caught Rowan with a chopblock then Neville hit him with the British Airways to get the pin.

*Adrian Neville & Corey Graves defeated the Wyatt Family via pinfall to become the new NXT Tag Team Champions, at 9:39 (TV Time).*

Sheamus handed the titles to the new champs and celebrated with them in the ring. Regal put over Neville and Graves for their achievement and the show went off the air with a big fanfare for the victorious babyfaces.

*This was a pretty good main event and the people were hot for the finish. Graves really looked good in this one; he took it to the big guys at the start then showed tremendous heart during the heat and would not give up despite taking a huge battering. Even though they didn’t drop the straps at the July 11<sup>th</sup> tapings, I assume Neville & Graves will be somewhat transitional champions. There isn’t much of a Tag Team scene in NXT now D<sup>2</sup> are no more and the Wyatt Family are unlikely to be around as much, still Regal & Dawson played up Neville & Graves not getting along and that was before they even won the belts. Perhaps the new Ascension will be built up to replace the Wyatt Family as the monster heel team, although we would then be subjected to ungodly boring matches every week.*

*We got a good, noteworthy episode this week. The opener was very good and set up Leo for a title shot then he laid out the champ, even though nobody cared. Charlotte’s debut was*

*impressive and she could be the new face of the NXT diva's when Paige is finally called up to the main roster. Then we got a solid main event with a title switch. If you have a spare hour, give this show a look.*

**TNA iMPACT - Destination X July 18th 2013  
Broadbent Arena, Louisville, Kentucky**

Overall Thoughts:

I enjoyed this week's edition of iMPACT, promoted as Destination X. The three X Division three-ways were fun, but very formulaic, and in the end forgettable. It wasn't really any of the wrestlers' faults however, as there really is only so much that you can do under those conditions. The Roode/Aries opener was also very good, and could have reached the great level if given enough time. Of course, the largest talking point coming out of this show was the Chris Sabin world title win. Before I watched the show I browsed the internet as per usual. I don't intentionally go out looking for results, but I don't avoid them either. It turns out that I never saw much on the Sabin title win, and never expected a win going into the show, suffice to say I was surprised when Sabin landed that hammer shot and got the pin. Given the state that TNA is in right now it was nice to see Sabin with the title, but unfortunately it didn't feel like as big of a deal as it should have. Whether it was the announcing, which felt very much like the "oh, look that fellow just won the title" kind of expression, to the polite applause from the crowd, it wasn't close to the same level as Aries' win last year. It could have very well been a bi-product of the release of Pritchard and others, because from what I have read some people in TNA weren't too high on the idea of Sabin as champion. Even though it won't make any difference business wise, having the title on Sabin feels fresh and will open up for the possibility of many new and fresh match-ups. All in all this was a fun, easy to sit through, show and the Sabin title win is worth seeking out.

The show opened with a ton of X Division talent in the back including Homicide. It was followed by a great career retrospective for Sabin's world title match. Tenay and Borash were on commentary playing up the absence of Taz. Bully Ray made it out alone. Ray said that the internet and wrestling magazines, were talking about one "little boy" - what magazine, FSM? He said that instead of cheering Sabin they should have been planning his funeral. With everything in place and out of the way he wanted to talk to Brooke, and she was brought out. Brooke said in the most cheesy way possible that Ray should move on. Ray spoke softly and calmly and then yelled that Brooke would move on when he said that she could. This brought Hulk out to loud "Hogan" chants. They walked off citing that enough was enough. Ray claimed that he would never lose the title, and he would never grant her a divorce - I don't think that is how divorce law works. This brought the Mainevent Mafia up on the screen, and they basically said that they would destroy Ray's plans. Roode was interviewed backstage, and was asked if Destination X brought up bad memories, and he replied saying that he would only look to the future. He was standing on no points but would become world champion yet. They showed the leaderboard and Park is sitting on -10 points somehow. Roode made it out for a BFG Series match with Aries, who has moved back to his old goatee look. Aries busted out the craziest axe handle to the floor

that you will ever see, basically spinning in the air. Aries landed a 450 splash for two in a great nearfall. For Aries' next trick he landed a tope on Roode onto the steel steps. The Roode losing streak continued here with Aries pinning Roode with a brainbuster in a very good TV match. This led to Roode snapping on the outside throwing things around, and the site of Borash fleeing in terror really made me chuckle.



Homicide greeted Hernandez backstage, and Chavo said that he was a big fan. Chavo then claimed that he would face Hernandez next year for the world title as he would win the X title, and Hernandez the world title - not happening. Anderson was talking to the Aces & Eights backstage, and in the most nonchalant manner possible basically said that the pressure got too much for DOC and he quit. Homicide, Petey Williams and Sonjay Dutt made it out for a three-way. Dutt pinned Homicide with his crazy double foot stomp moonsault in a pretty standard X division three-way. Manik, King and Chavo were in the ring for the next match. When referring to Manik, Tenay was able to say with a straight face that Aries was "guilty of gimmick infringement". Manik pinned King with a double knee gutbuster. Sting was giving a prep talk to the Mafia backstage and they walked down to the ring in their suits. There was a similar Sabin retrospective. Sabin was backstage with Hogan telling him like with Ray that he should make sure that they remember him. The Mafia came down to

the ring. Angle said that they were taking the fight to the Aces & Eights, and they would prove just how great they were. Magnus said that they were ready, and Anderson appeared on the tron. He said that they were invited backstage, and the Mafia obliged. Of course it was a trap and Ray

kidnapped Kurt Angle...yes, he kidnapped Kurt Angle.

Rubix (Jigsaw), Spud, Greg Marasciulo (Trent? His real name.) made it out for another three-way. The fans chanted, "Trent Barretta". Trent ended up pinning Spud with an inverted tombstone (Archibald Peck's finish) in a fun three-way. Spy footage was shown of Ray talking on the phone, saying that Briscoe had been punched out, and he wanted Angle to be taken to a predetermined location. They would make him an offer that he couldn't refuse. James made it out before the break, and angle was shown walking back into the arena. James said that she had changed women's wrestling history, and she aired a clip of her tour of Memphis as a singer. Kim made it out to interrupt. James only gave Kim two stars for her match with Terrell. A little harsh, don't you think? James said that the music magazines gave her five stars, which led to a pull apart between the two. Aries came by Sabin backstage and said that the only reason that Sabin was there was because of Aries; he raised Sabin's game. Styles was talking in a hoodie backstage, he said that he made the X Division, but next week he would face Hardy. Hardy was a hero, but it wasn't any place for a hero.

Sabin and Ray made it out. Ray got in Sabin's face, took off his jacket, and Sabin jumped in Ray's face screaming that he would be the next champion. Sabin and Ray exchanged kicks to the underarm and slaps to the chest respectively. Sabin then unloaded with a hail of shots on Ray in the corner. The Aces & Eights ran down as Sabin sold on the ramp. However, it wasn't long before the Mainevent Mafia trooped out to ringside before the break. Angle was there, so I have no idea where this is going. Ray even threatened Rampage, saying that he would punch him out. Ray continued to work over Sabin's knee, ripping apart the boot, and throwing his brace to Devon. Ray dared Rampage to do something before shutting Sabin down again. Ray mocked the Hogan taunt to "Bully sucks" chants. Ray shut Sabin down time after time, this time with a superplex. Sabin landed an enzuigiri and a missile dropkick, but the referee was knocked down. Anderson passed Ray the hammer, which was the trigger for the brawl to the back. Rampage is very, very green. Ray went for a powerbomb, but Sabin landed a hammer shot, which the referee never saw, this allowed Sabin to grab the cover for the win.

**WWE SmackDown – July 19<sup>th</sup> 2013.**  
**Dunkin' Donuts Centre: Providence, RI.**  
**Ben Carass.**

Teddy Long was in the ring and welcomed everyone to the show. He talked about Vince hiring Brad Maddox and said Mr McMahon knew what he was doing and would be on the show tonight. Teddy said that Vince was going to hold another job evaluation for him and asked the people if he had done a good job, some people cheered, then he asked if the people wanted him as permanent GM, far less fans cheered this time. Booker T, the real SmackDown GM in case you have forgotten, interrupted Teddy, whom did not look pleased to see his pal, Book. Booker thanked Teddy for filling in while he was out then did his catchphrase; Vince McMahon soon appeared and strutted down the ramp. Vince told the two there could only be one authority figure on SmackDown, despite there being two on both shows for months, and wanted to know what match each would book for later on. Teddy made Curtis Axel vs. Chris Jericho for the IC Title then Booker T announced Del Rio vs. Orton. Vince seemed impressed, however the Raw theme

music hit and Brad Maddox ran down to the ring. Maddox asked Vinnie Mac to make him GM of both shows and declared that Rob Van Dam would return to SmackDown tonight. Vince mulled over his decision for a while and a drum roll played; finally Vince said the new permanent GM of SmackDown would be Vickie Guerrero. Vickie came down and hugged Vince then said she hated the people who caused her to lose her job as Raw Managing Supervisor. She stated there was nothing the fans or anybody in the ring could do about her new found power then Vickie left Maddox, Teddy and Booker standing in the ring bickering like goofballs.

*Obviously there were things here that made little sense, like Brad Maddox being able to book a match on SmackDown, not to mention the Booker T vs. Teddy storyline they have been teasing since before WrestleMania has apparently been completely scrapped. Also, Vince McMahon didn't appear annoyed with Maddox for letting John Cena choose Daniel Bryan for the SummerSlam match; in fact Vince never even mentioned it. I guess they are saving all the Bryan-bashing stuff for Raw. As for Vickie, I'm glad she is still on TV, because she is a walking heat magnet. I was a little perturbed by SmackDown seemingly regressing to 2008 with her appointment as GM, but hey Teddy has been doing his 2004 GM routine for months so what can you do? Plus heel GMs have become somewhat cliché. I'm guessing this is all a part of the McMahon family power struggle story and this was Vince's way of getting back at Triple H, Steph and the fans for pushing Vickie out of her role on Raw.*

Jack Swagger was already in the ring; Zeb Colter and Antonio Cesaro were at ringside then Dolph Ziggler made his entrance. They showed Dolph kicking AJ to the curb on Raw then the finish of Del Rio/Ziggler aired.

### **Dolph Ziggler vs. Jack Swagger w/ Zeb Colter & Antonio Cesaro**

Big E. and AJ were watching on a monitor in the back. Swagger rolled to the floor early to have a strategy meeting with Zeb and Cesaro then took Dolph down with his high single-leg. Ziggler came back and landed a dropkick, but Swagger rolled out again; Dolph threw Swagger back inside, however Cesaro pulled him off the apron and hit a European uppercut. The ref didn't see anything, but he still threw Zeb and Cesaro out; Dolph got a couple of two counts off a roll-up and a sunset-flip then Swagger applied the ankle-lock. Ziggler rolled through to hit the ZigZag for the clean pin.

*Dolph Ziggler defeated Jack Swagger via pinfall, at 3:05.*

*After the match, Dolph cut a promo and said he was sorry for not dumping AJ sooner. Match wasn't much really. Ziggler got a clean win, which I guess he needed. I'm all for the idea of Dolph breaking away from Del Rio to have a run with Big E, as it's a good way to build Dolph back up for another shot at the Title. I'm not sure who they have lined up for Alberto at SummerSlam yet, but I would keep Dolph chasing the Title he fought so valiantly to defend at Payback for as long as possible.*

AJ started freaking out in the back, throwing chairs and whatnot. Big E. tried to calm her down

then the two teased a kiss, but Langston pulled back and planted a pack on Lee's forehead. Seth Rollins and Roman Reigns came through the crowd for a Money in the Bank pre-show rematch. They showed the Shield taking out Mark Henry on Raw then the Usos showed up with their customary war dance. Jimmy and Jey charged the ring and initiated a pre-match brawl; Dean Ambrose ran in to help his teammates work over the Samoans. Mark Henry hit the ring and took out all three guys. Finally the Shield overwhelmed him, but the Usos got back in to help Henry clear the ring of the Shield, who fled back through the crowd. The match never officially got started.

*This was a decent angle. It looks like we'll be getting a six-man at some point with the newly turned Henry & the Usos. Perhaps that will happen on TV and we'll get Henry vs. Ambrose & the Usos vs. Rollins & Reigns for the belts at SummerSlam. There are many ways to go here, however I'm hoping this is handled better than last month and the booking fiasco that occurred with Christian. I'm sure you've all heard the rumours of some backstage heat on Rollins & Reigns. It would be a huge shame if backstage politics got in the way of the Shield's progression, however it appears they are being kept semi-strong in the mid-card for the time being. With any luck, it won't get much worse for them.*

Daniel Bryan brought the Rhode Island crowd to their feet on his way out for a match with Wade Barrett. Purely for selfish reasons I often wish WWE would stay in the North East, as the crowds are invariably hotter than some other parts of the US. Footage of Cena choosing Bryan to challenge for the WWE Championship at SummerSlam rolled.

### **Daniel Bryan vs. Wade Barrett**

Cole talked about Cena picking the hottest superstar on the roster to face him; JBL said if he were Cena, he would have picked Yoshi Tatsu or Hornswaggle. Barrett got the heat and landed a slingshot backbreaker; Bryan fought up from a chinlock to land a series of kicks in the corner, but Wade landed a boot to the gut. The finish came when Bryan did the Tiger wall-flip out of the corner and went for a crucifix, but rolled through into the Yes-lock to get the tap-out.

*Daniel Bryan defeated Wade Barrett via submission, at 1:58.*

*Since Bryan is being labelled the "hottest superstar" in the company, I wonder if he will continue to roll through guys, like Barret here, on his way to SummerSlam. It would be a great way to establish his in-ring legitimacy for any fans that may have been put off with him simply being handed a title shot. It will also be interesting to see what kind of reaction Bryan receives from fans in Corpus Christi and Laredo, Texas, where the next two weeks of Raw will emanate from.*

Brad Maddox walked up to Vickie in the back and congratulated her on becoming the new GM.

Vickie agreed to shake hands with the bumbling Raw GM, however she pulled her hand away and drilled Maddox with a stiff looking slap, presumably for wearing a shirt seventeen sizes too small.



Miz TV was our next segment. Luckily the guest was Paul Heyman and just like a few weeks ago, Paul E saved us from the usual mundane drivel of the loathsome “talk-show”. They showed the frankly brilliant Punk/Heyman/Brock segment from Raw then Miz told Paul he was beyond contemptible and didn’t have any questions for such a rotten character, although he did hand the mic over to Paul so he could say whatever he wanted. Heyman said he was merely an advocate, however his client, Brock Lesnar, was a “merciless emissary of suffering” with his sights set on CM Punk. Paul stated Brock had no conscience, but claimed he still had love in his heart for his former best friend then urged CM Punk to stay down and not return to the WWE. Heyman said Lesnar would take an appearance from Punk as a “spiteful act of provocation” which would be dealt with by the beat incarnate. Miz told Paul he was revolted by the fact that he swore on his children and lied to CM Punk; the host then dropped the mic and walked out of the ring. Before Miz left, Heyman brought out Curtis Axel and the two had a stare down at the top of the ramp.

*Same old, same old: Miz was poor, Paul was great. When you can get people to hate you more than the Miz, you are one hell of a heel. This added little to the Punk/Lesnar storyline, but was a perfectly adequate way to eat up some air-time, and why not give the biggest angle in the company as much exposure as possible?*

Chris Jericho made his full entrance after a recap of the opening segment.

### **Intercontinental Championship Match: Chris Jericho vs. Curtis Axel (C) w/ Paul Heyman**

Jericho sent Axel over the top with a clothesline early then caught him with a baseball slide and came off the top with a flying forearm for an early two count. Axel landed a knee to the gut and a right hand to start the heat; Jericho fought up from a crossface to land a northern-lights for the hope spot, but was cut off by a clothesline. Jericho avoided a splash in the corner and came off the top with a crossbody for a two then Axel countered the codebreaker with a spinebuster for another two. After the break Jericho took the ring-post spot and just like last week the spot meant absolutely zero, as Axel went for a splash off the top and missed then Jericho started his comeback. Axel countered a bulldog to hit his running neckbreaker for a near-fall then Jericho avoided a dropkick and scored with the lionsault for a two count. Jericho countered the Perfectplex and went for the walls, but Heyman jumped on the apron for the distraction and Axel hooked a schoolboy for a nice false-finish. Jericho finally got the walls on, however Axel held on like he was Steve Austin to get to the bottom rope. Finish saw Axel roll to the floor; Jericho landed a dive over the top, sent him into the announce table then rolled him back inside. Heyman distracted Jericho as he climbed back inside and Axel landed a boot to the head then hit a hangman’s facebuster to get the pin.

*Curtis Axel defeated Chris Jericho via pinfall, at 9:29 (TV Time).*

Ryback strolled down to the ring and taunted the helpless Y2J. Jericho fired up with some shots, but Ryback nailed him with a big clothesline then delivered the shellshock.

*The match was ok, probably a little better than last week due to some nice work at the end. Although there were a couple of spots that were somewhat illogical, like the ring post spot that went nowhere and Axel fighting valiantly to make the ropes could have been rectified by simply having Heyman help Curtis reach the rope. This could be Jericho's last appearance, as I believe his Fozzy tour starts on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, which would explain the Ryback beat down. Of course, with two weeks of Raw and SmackDown being taped next week, there is still time for Jericho to appear on at least one of those shows and be written out in a manner that could actually get Ryback over as a monster again.*

Damien Sandow was flaunting his newly won briefcase in the ring. He quoted Ghandi then stated it was every man for himself at Money in the Bank and insisted he did not screw Cody. Sandow showed footage of Cody attacking him on Raw and said he was not going to condemn or spew hateful rhetoric at him, because that is what knuckle-dragging halfwits would do. Damien stated he and Cody were civilised gentlemen and claimed the two were still best friends. Sandow invited Cody out and Rhodes joined Damien in the ring; Sandow told Cody he forgave him for attacking him on Raw and offered Cody the position of "protector of the case". Damien told Rhodes had earned the right to look after the briefcase until the time comes to cash in and he handed it over to Cody. Rhodes stared at the briefcase for a while then drilled Sandow in the head with it and pounded on his former friend. Cody tossed the briefcase all the way up the ramp and Sandow clutched it like a new born baby.

*This was a good segment. Sandow really came across like a jerk and the fans reacted well to Cody even though he hasn't yet cut the big Dusty Rhodes, "I'm coming for you, daddy" promo. I guess the "best friends" deal is a little too similar to Punk/Heyman to go there at the minute. Personally, I wouldn't have put Damien over in the ladder match, but the story they told that night with Cody was so excellent I immediately got on board with the idea of Rhodes turning and going after Sandow. I don't necessarily agree with the two having a match for the briefcase, after all Sandow won the match, in terms of ladder match rules, fair and square. However I think a feud with these two could be a lot of fun and without the briefcase at stake, Cody can get redemption by pinning the dastardly heel. Also if the fans see Cody as the rightful owner of the briefcase and Sandow is still walking around with it, in theory this should provoke the people to get behind Rhodes as a face and want to see him succeed even more. As for Damien, well after his quick loss to Christian on Raw, it appears like they are giving him the Dolph Ziggler treatment, so be prepared to see Sandow doing a plethora of jobs in the coming months.*

Darren Young got the jobbers entrance then Rob Van Dam showed up for his first appearance on SmackDown in eight years. Cole said JBL was the Champion last time RVD was on the show.

### **Rob Van Dam vs. Darren Young w/ Titus O'Neil**

Van Dam did some of his signature spots then took out Young with a slingshot dive over the top. Titus got on the apron and distracted RVD with his whistle; Young took over and got some heat. Van Dam fought up from a chinlock to land a springboard crossbody and some kicks, however Young cut him off with a clothesline. Van Dam landed a roundhouse kick and rolling thunder

then avoided an attempted sunset-flip to score with a springboard kick. Titus got on the apron again, but he ate a boot then Van Dam nailed Young with the 5 star for the finish.

*Rob Van Dam defeated Darren Young via pinfall, at 3:16.*

*Basic stuff here. You can't blame anyone, creative or Rob, for wanting to keep this short. After Money in the Bank and a 20+ minute main event with Jericho on Monday, I'm sure RVD was happy to see he was pencilled in for a 3 minute outing with Darren Young. I don't know where they go with Van Dam from here, but in the 24 hour period from Money in the Bank to Raw, Rob looked better than he ever did during his 3 years in TNA. It's amazing what a little motivation can do.*

The Raw rebound focused on the Wyatt Family destroying R-Truth then we were in the GM's office with Vickie. She was on the phone and said he wanted her office to be redecorated in time for next week. Teddy walked in and Vickie offered to let bygones be bygones; Teddy asked Vic if she was for real then after a ridiculously long pause, Vickie said, "hell no!" and called for security. Some geeks showed up to drag Teddy away; Vickie told him if he would have to buy a ticket to get in to a show in future.

*Why did Vickie wait until the main event to throw Teddy out? Surely she could have done it during the opening segment.*

Randy Orton came through the curtain for the main event then after the break, a graphic hyped Big Shows return for this week on Raw and Alberto Del Rio hit the ring.

### **Non-Title Match: Randy Orton vs. Alberto Del Rio (World Heavyweight Champion)**

Orton shone at the start, but Del Rio caught him in an armbar with the use of the ropes then sent Randy's shoulder into the post for the ring post spot. Alberto went to work on the arm and landed the divorce court then tied up Orton's arm in the ropes. Randy got in a roll up for the hope, but was shut down by a superkick to the arm. On the outside, Orton delivered a belly-to-back on to the barricade, however Alberto reversed an Irish-whip into the steps and Randy sold his shoulder again. Del Rio went for an axe-handle off the top and Orton caught him with a dropkick then started to land some clotheslines, but Alberto avoided a powerslam to lock in the cross-armbreaker. Randy quickly got to the ropes then nailed his inverted headlock backbreaker for a two count; Del Rio escaped the hangman's DDT and hit an enzuigiri which dropped Randy off the apron to the floor. Back inside, Del Rio landed a kick to the arm and began to imitate Orton's pre-RKO routine; Randy countered his own finish to land a powerslam for a near-fall. Alberto stopped the babyface's momentum briefly with a double-knee armbreaker, however Orton came back to deliver the hangman's DDT. Randy set up for the RKO; Del Rio countered with a double-knee backbreaker for a two count then called for the armbreaker. The finish came when Randy rolled through the armbar and hit an RKO for the clean pinfall victory.

*Randy Orton defeated Alberto Del Rio via pinfall, at 8:55 (TV Time).*

Cole attempted to get this over as a big deal by screaming, “Randy Orton has pinned the World Champion” then he explained, because wrestling fans are stupid, that Orton has a shot at the



WWE Title in the briefcase, not the World Title. The show went off the air with Randy holding the briefcase above his head.

*This was a good, solid main event. I won't spend long on this, but this match was a good example of the correct use of the ring post spot. I do have an issue with the World Champion losing clean in TV matches, even when the champion is a heel, I like my title holders to be treated as such. Orton apparently suffered a "stinger" somewhere in the match, although I could not locate the exact spot that supposedly caused the injury. The story broke on WWE.com, so keep that in mind when you have your "work detector" on. Also they apparently stopped Bryan vs. Orton on Raw last month, because Bryan suffered the same "injury"; work or shoot, there is a lack of consistency somewhere.*

*This wasn't a patch on the good Raw from Monday, however I enjoyed this show and in addition to the perennial solid main event and decent match in the middle of the show, SmackDown had some fairly "big" angles this week. Teddy & Booker were shown the door and thanks to Vince, Vickie is now in a position of authority once again. I didn't expect the McMahon drama to spill over to Friday nights, but I'm not all that surprised really. Heyman also brought the Punk/Lesnar story from Raw in his promo and number one contender to John Cena, Daniel Bryan, got a decisive win. If for whatever reason some viewers don't watch Raw, and believe me these people do exist, then the SmackDown audience was clued in on the big angles happening in the company, and not just through senselessly long Raw recaps. I can't see this happening every week, but it made for a pleasant change that SmackDown felt somewhat relevant to the main show, where the real, important action takes place.*

## **Bits & Pieces**

The Ultimate Warrior has signed a deal with Take Two and will be a pre-order exclusive for the upcoming WWE2K14 video game releasing later this year. There is actually a very goofy trailer out with Warrior throwing around Take Two employees on the front page of the website.

According to this week's Wrestling Observer Newsletter, Rob Van Dam will be appearing on the South African house shows coming up later this month into early August.

Keiji Mutoh said earlier this week that he wants his new Wrestle-1 project to be similar to the old HUSTLE promotion. He also said that he would like to start a women's division with around ten female wrestlers, which I think would be a positive for female Japanese pro-wrestling if Wrestle-1 takes off to any extent.

Chris Jericho has finished up yet another WWE stint with his recent run, and actually called it one of his favourite in-ring periods of his entire career. He will be on extended tour with Fozzy, and probably won't be back for several months.

The cause of death released in the Matt Borne autopsy report was an accidental drug overdose. The following is a line from the official report "I am of the opinion that a 55 year old white man, died as a result of toxic effect of opiates..."

For those of you that are big fans of the Death Valley Driver Board, well, you will have to start from scratch, as they have been having severe technical difficulties. How severe? Well the entire board had to be erased, and a new one created in its place. You can find the new board at [deathvalleydriver.com/forum/](http://deathvalleydriver.com/forum/). You will have to reregister.

We ran a story a few weeks ago about IVP videos, and the trouble that they were going through with New Japan. Well, the same thing has happened to a well known Dailymotion uploader using the name, Jahmale Hepburn. While that site is gone it looks like a new one will be created in its place within the next few days. You can still find puroresu pretty easily on Senor Lariato's Dailymotion channel.

## **Next Week's Issue**

We have a big issue coming up next week covering New Japan's iPPV from two perspectives, with a report from myself and Bryan Rose, plus Mark Robinson looks at TNA, Ben Carass NXT and SmackDown, and we look at the Summerslam direction, ratings, news and more! For more information on next week's issue head on down to [cubedcirclewrestling.com](http://cubedcirclewrestling.com).

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Any Site Questions: [Admin@cubedcirclewrestling.com](mailto:Admin@cubedcirclewrestling.com)

General/Questions/Feedback: [Ryan@cubedcirclewrestling.com](mailto:Ryan@cubedcirclewrestling.com)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CubedCircleNewsletter>

Ben Carass's Twitter: [@BenDosCarass](https://twitter.com/BenDosCarass)

Mark Robinson's Video Game Podcast: [analogsticker.tumblr.com](http://analogsticker.tumblr.com)

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