



Cubed Circle Newsletter 140 – Not Being Dead

We have a scaled down issue for you this week due to travel delays with a RAW report meant to serve as an overview of the show inevitably resulting in a few tirades on a couple of different issues, Ben however was still fully-functional this week with full recaps of NXT and SmackDown. There is a big issue coming up next week, which we have more information on at the end of the issue.

- Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

Detestable RAW Angle & Shield Breakup

The fear of flight is fairly common, and is one that long-term readers of the newsletter will know that I have suffered from for quite some time. Mid-flight combustion, disintegration, explosive decompression, and pilot suicide, are but some of the reoccurring, perhaps somewhat irrational thoughts, that have overcome me many a time mid-flight. But, it was this past week, on a 16 hour voyage over the Atlantic Ocean, that a far more harrowing vision encircled my mind. What would happen if any of the suggested scenarios above transpired, not whilst I was listening to some music staring blankly into space, but rather whilst I lay mostly blank-faced, perhaps grimacing slightly, at Stephanie McMahon "projectile vomiting" on Vickie Guerrero ?

Personal mortality jokes aside, I can proclaim, without hyperbole, that the Vickie Guerrero/Stephanie McMahon vomiting angle from Monday, was one of the worst that I have seen in years. It wasn't an angle of an ilk similar to that of the Vince/Bischoff hug, or Punk's early post-Money in the Bank 2011 return, in that it most likely won't have a direct, tangible effect on business. However, it is indeed an angle, much like many which the company has run over the years, Katie Vick being a prime example, that have perpetuated a, now somewhat recovering, public perception of the company as sleazy, self-unaware, and culturally inept. And this doesn't only sully the name of the company, but also that of the entire business, which, in the eyes of the non-wrestling fan, it is very often exclusively tied. What makes the angle all the more unproductive is that Roman Reigns, a man that is supposedly poised to become the company's next top star, one who relies on a tough-guy aura to overcome inexperience in the ring and on the mic, was one of the key players in the entire mess. Reigns should, at this stage of his career and for the foreseeable future, be portrayed as an immovable tank, and not an attempted Cena clone. Especially when these antics are the ones that turned a large percentage of the fans against Cena in the first place, the same core group that Reigns should additionally be attempting to win back eventually!

What made this week's edition of RAW all the more frustrating was the lack of a solid direction for

the Shield, a trend that continued throughout the week, into SmackDown as mentioned in Ben's report for that show. The Shield went from being a young trio determined to prove themselves against Evolution, to a team of Ambrose & Reigns feuding against Rollins for a couple of weeks, to then Reigns going after the championship and Ambrose wanting to end Rollins, the latter step showing no intermediary stages whatsoever -- a situation made all the more peculiar when it is thought that Ambrose & Reigns are barely even a unit anymore. Ambrose was a valuable part of the Roman Reigns package at this stage, as was Rollins during the time of the Shield as a trio. By separating Ambrose from Reigns they are removing a colourful tie from the act, one that could help prevent him from becoming an unrelatable robot like others before him.



Reigns is now in a title picture that he has no business in at this stage of his career, not because he isn't worthy of the championship, but rather because it is far from the right time to give him the championship. I would go as far as to say that by putting the title on Reigns they would be doing the inverse of what they did with Daniel Bryan last year, the inverse of what Ring of Honor did with the likes of Davey Richards & Tyler Black -- it will be a case of too much too soon, and we have seen this same problem countless times with performers who the company is high on. Reigns has been positioned in this year's Money in the Bank ladder match alongside John Cena, Randy Orton, Alberto Del Rio, Cesaro, Bad News Barrett, Sheamus, and Bray Wyatt, and is an equal favourite to take home the title alongside Cena, Orton and Wyatt, who at this time seem to be the main candidates. Going back to a Cena or Orton would be one of the worst plausible switches that they could make, given how much we have seen both men on top and how stale the product was during those periods. Wyatt is also a large enough star that his victory is not completely unlikely, but whether or not they see him as a person to perform at that level or not is yet to be determined. Cesaro, with Heyman as his mouth-piece, is somebody who could be immediately elevated with such a win, but I would predict a slower rise to prominence for Cesaro.

Seth Rollins has been placed in a number one contender's match for the WWE World Heavyweight title, with an opponent that has yet to be decided. If Seth Rollins is set to win against an opponent that Hunter & Stephanie "hand pick" then Reigns is a clear favourite, but if someone like Lesnar is brought in then Cesaro may very well get a short interim title reign, which wouldn't serve him well in the long run. There is also the highly unlikely possibility that Daniel Bryan is somehow placed

into that match, decides to use his opportunity on the night, and reclaims the title straight after being stripped of it. Regardless, this places Dean Ambrose in an awkward position if he is not in fact the mystery opponent, as Rollins' direction repeatedly switches between him and Reigns.

Money in the Bank always lends itself to interesting possibilities, this year more than usual, but at the same time, the direction for the three Shield members and the title picture as a whole feels shaky, and has been in that state since WrestleMania.

WWE NXT – June 19th 2014.

Full Sail University: Winter Park, FL.

Ben Carass

A recap of last week's Adrian Neville/Tyson Kidd NXT title match opened the show then they showed Natalya talking to JBL backstage at this week at Raw. She asked him to put Tyson in a tag team with Sami Zayn; JBL agreed, however when Nattie walked away he made it clear by his facial expression that he had sinister intentions.

Sasha Banks w/ Charlotte & Summer Rae vs. Alexa Bliss

Alexa shone briefly and still looked very green; she landed a sloppy dropkick and a slow-motion monkey flip then Sasha cut her off for the heat. Charlotte and Summer began to argue at ringside, which distracted Sasha and Alexa won with a roll-up. – *Alexa Bliss defeated Sasha Banks via pinfall, at 3:45.* Summer and Charlotte got into a shoving match and Sasha tried to intervene, however all three began to bicker with each other. – *Nothing match. Alexa is way too green to be on TV, but she looks good and you know how that goes in this company. The BFF angle afterwards was good and they didn't spend too much time on them bickering.*

A wacky black and white, old-timey vignette aired, featuring the Vaudevillians. It was only about 30 seconds long; English and Gotch spoke like old-timey dudes and decided to go after the tag team titles. It was quite unique.

Mojo Rawley vs. Garrett Dylan

For once Mojo didn't sell immediately, he got a couple of basic shine spots in then Dylan, a complete jobber with little TV time, got the heat on him. Comeback and Earthquake splash for the finish. – *Mojo Rawley defeated Garret Dylan via pinfall, at 3:30.* – *I say the same thing every week, but it bears repeating. Mojo is never going to improve or get over wrestling these nothing matches where he is required to sell 90% of the time. It is almost reaching Ascension squash levels of redundant.*

Eden told us that Tyler Breeze had entered the building then the Vaudevillians made their entrance. Everything turned black and white, Simon Gotch and Aiden English hit the stage and English introduced them like a circus barker with a blowhorn. They had wacky ragtime piano theme music and random old stock footage from like the 20's on the tron.

The Vaudevillains vs. Angelo Dawkins & Travis Tyler

So Simon Gotch is Missouri indie worker Ryan Drago and he's got a strongman gimmick, despite having a completely average looking physique. He did some Hindu squats during the match, which solely consisted of the Vaudvillains getting the heat on Tyler. Finish saw Gotch hit a Finlay-roll and

English came off the top with a senton bomb. – *The Vaudevillains defeated Angelo Dawkins & Travis Tyler via pinfall, at 3:18.* The old-timey duo celebrated and their goofy music played again. – *I'm glad they have changed up English's act, the singing gimmick was beginning to wear a little thin. This new direction is also completely wacky, however it has a lot more potential and for a mid-card team it is a perfectly acceptable gimmick.*

Devin was with Colin Cassady in the back. He said something had been missing for a while then sang That's Amore by Dean Martin, however he stopped just before uttering "Amore", which was a nice tease for Enzo's return.

Kalisto vs. Tyler Breeze

They kept it very slow for a while, Breeze worked headlocks for about five minutes then Kalisto came to life with a springboard corkscrew then faked a tope. Breeze got the heat and stomped Kalisto down in the corner then worked some more chanceries! Kalisto rolled to the apron and landed a springboard crossbody for a double-down then got a near-fall with a rolling kick to the face. Breeze tried to cut Kalisto off on the top, but he cartwheeled himself back into the ring then went for another springboard move. Breeze cut him off in mid-air with the beauty shot heel kick for the finish. – *Tyler Breeze defeated Kalisto via pinfall, at 8:10 (TV Time).* – *From a logic standpoint the match made a lot of sense, but it was horrendously boring. Breeze's headlock fest utterly killed the crowd and Kalisto didn't nearly hit enough highspots to bring them back to life. They have yet to get the best out of Kalisto and I hope this miscasting of him will not hinder his progression when they realise all they need to do is let him go out there and do some big highspots.*

NXT Tag Team Championship Match: Sami Zayn & Tyson Kidd vs. The Ascension ©

The story of the match was that the Ascension got the heat on Sami and Kidd jumped down off the apron, so when Sami got his hope spot crossbody in, there was nobody to tag. Konner smashed Sami in the corner then the Ascension hit the fall of man to get the win. – *The Ascension defeated Sami Zayn & Tyson Kidd via pinfall, at 4:44.* Kidd walked out of the arena and the Ascension posed with their belts as the show went off air. – *Good angle. The Ascension squashing everybody for months actually paid off here, as the big monster heel tag champs killing one of the top babyfaces didn't really make Sami look all that bad and the heat was on Kidd for not helping out.*

Another good show this week; as always everything was paced well and made perfect sense, which is more than can be said for the main shows. The BFF's break-up angle is reaching its apex nicely, the Vaudevillains act could be a lot of fun but I'll reserve further judgement for a later date, Breeze/Kalisto was a bit of a let-down but the main event match/angle was a fine way to close the show and to get people invested in the Zayn/Kidd feud. No standout matches to speak of, however we got a fun hour of TV and that is all that I want out of my wrestling shows.

WWE SmackDown – June 20th 2014.

Nationwide Arena: Columbus, OH.

Ben Carass.

As usual, Raw recaps a plenty were the order of the day then John Cena came out for a promo. He pointed out that the belts were still above the ring then he rapidly recapped the championship storyline from about September last year. He did some goofy comedy then talked about climbing the ladder and walking out WWE champion. You know the deal by now, everyone else in the title match (except Bray Wyatt) came down and virtually said the same thing. Del Rio was first,

followed by Sheamus. Paul Heyman spoke for Cesaro and naturally was way better than everyone else at getting over the ladder match. Roman Reigns came through the crowd and got in Cena's face and said nobody would stop him, which was one of the highlights of the segment. Randy Orton told Reigns that he had finally reached the big one and while he thought he would run through everyone, he would not run through him. Reigns went after Orton and they brawled up the ramp. A schmoz broke out in the ring; Cena and Sheamus sent the heels packing and stood tall. – *Typical WWE multi-man angle we've seen a million times, but it was fine. The highlights were of course Paul Heyman and Roman Reigns' stare down with Cena. Keeping Bray Wyatt out of the angle was a good move, as getting thrown out of the ring by Cena and Sheamus probably wouldn't have done him any good.*

Seth Rollins vs. Kofi Kingston

Seth had new gear; it was some kind of black latex thing that made him look like Nova from ECW. Thankfully, he removed the top and just wrestled in long tights, although it still looked weird. Kofi did an inset promo about wanting to be in the Money in the Bank match. Seth got some brief heat and Kofi made a short comeback. They did a basic near-fall or two then Kofi missed the trouble in paradise; Seth pounded the crap out of him, hit a buckle bomb and won with the curb stomp. – *Seth Rollins defeated Kofi Kingston via pinfall, at 2:55.* Rollins said he was the first entrant in the Money in the Bank "contract" match then Dean Ambrose appeared on the tron. He told Rollins to always be on his toes because he could get his revenge at any time then stated he would send Kane and Rollins back to where they belong: Hell! – *Match was virtually a squash. Ambrose's promo after was decent, although anything involving Kane always has to include corny lines about sending people to Hell, which I find incredibly goofy.*

Money in the Bank Qualifier: Dolph Ziggler vs. Bad News Barrett (IC Champion)

Inset promo from Dolph; he said he would steal the show and the contract. Barrett's bad news was that Team USA had only beat Ghana at the World Cup and he would eliminate Ziggler just like the American soccer team. I know this was taped on Tuesday, but this aired one day after the English team were humiliated by losing their second game at the World Cup to Uruguay. I know no one else cares, but we English would have loved to be in the position the USA team are in. Dolph went at 100mph and missed a corner splash early. Barrett got the heat and tossed him into the timekeeper's area. Dolph got some hope spots in, but Barrett cut him off with the Traylor-slam for a near-fall. Finish saw Ziggler avoid the bullhammer then counter a powerbomb into a sunset-flip. – *Dolph Ziggler defeated Bad News Barrett via pinfall, at 4:25(TV Time).* Barrett laid out Ziggler afterwards with the bullhammer to get his heat back and made everyone look stupid. – *I hate this company sometimes. Why would you book the IC champion to lose to a guy that has been booked like the biggest geek for months? Just say Wade is defending the IC title at the PPV and not even bother putting him in a qualifier. Match was fine, but Dolph could have beaten ANYBODY ELSE to get into the Money in the Bank match and Barrett laying him out afterwards only helped in making them both look stupid.*

Cole said the main event was, Cena, Reigns & Sheamus vs. Wyatt, Orton, Cesaro & Del Rio; we couldn't get a real announcement or anything? See, this is why Teddy Long shouldn't have been cut!

Adam Rose vs. Titus O'Neil

Rose was billed from the Bahamas, don't ask me why, and they showed the Kevin Hart thing from Raw. The crowd actually sang Rose's song at the start and Rose won in no time with a small

package, but not before doing some superfluous selling. – *Adam Rose defeated Titus O’Neil via pinfall, at 0:48.* Titus claimed he wasn’t ready and asked for an instant rematch. Rose obliged and the bell rang once again. This time, Rose didn’t sell at all and instantly rolled up Titus for the pin. – *Adam Rose defeated Titus O’Neil via pinfall, at 0:09.* – *I said a couple of weeks ago that Rose should just be squashing guys for a while before being thrown into a program, so I was fine with this.*

Kane vs. Dean Ambrose

Seth Rollins was on commentary and they showed the finish of the Cena/Kane stretcher match, including the spot where Kane chokeslammed Ambrose like a goof. Dean had his new music, which I’m not really a fan of. It starts with a motorcycle revving and I expect to hear Tommy Lee’s snare come in for Motley Crue’s 'Kickstart My Heart'. Listen to me, I sound like that dork Alex Riley. Dean wrestled in a wifebeater and jeans; he ate a big boot and started selling for Kane instantly. Ambrose came back with the jawbreaker lariat then countered a chokeslam and got a near-fall with a tornado DDT. He followed up with a tope then dove over the announce table onto Rollins, however Kane shut him down with an uppercut then rolled him back inside for a chokeslam to get the win. – *Kane defeated Dean Ambrose via pinfall, at 3:33.* Rollins got in the ring and hit Dean with a curbstomp. – *Match wasn’t much; basic plodding Kane affair. Things are not looking good for Ambrose. The generic music, the wifebeater and jeans look, booking him like a stupid babyface on three shows in a row. All this seems to be a telling sign that creative has no idea what to do with the guy. Sure he’ll have some good matches with Rollins, but then what? They can’t just throw him in there with Kane and hope for him to get over as a single, it just will not work.*

Big E vs. Jack Swagger w/Zeb Colter.

Zeb did a promo beforehand about Lana costing Swagger his match with Big E last week and asked how long E had been in “cahoots” with Lana. Swagger hit E with a chopblock and got the heat right away, which was at least the third time that a match started in such a way on this show. E quickly came back with a body-check and the big ending for the finish. – *Big E defeated Jack Swagger via pinfall, at 0:50.* – *This is why we need actual jobbers, not mid-carders that are used as jobbers whenever they feel like. I cannot stand babyface squash matches that involve a short heat segment, it is completely stupid! If they had real jobbers, Big E could have just impressively beaten a guy instead of selling because they have to half-heartedly protect Jack Swagger.*

Fandango ran into Summer Rae in the back. She apologised for her recent actions and told Fandango that Layla would never love him like she loved him. Layla came out of her dressing room just in time to see Summer making out with Fandango and she looked sad then went back into the locker room. – *Horrible stuff. The kind of thing nobody wants to see on a wrestling show.*

Bo Dallas vs. Fandango

Layla didn’t come out with Fandango and they felt the need to show the kiss with Summer again. Summer ran down and started dancing in the ring; Layla came down and they got into a catfight. Fandango ended up eating a kick from Layla and she chased Summer up the aisle. Bo, who appeared to have a nasty black-eye, checked on Fandango then hit him with the Bo-dog to get the quick win. – *Bo Dallas defeated Fandango via pinfall, at 1:13.* A bunch of fans had planted signs for Bo, they were like the Andre the Giant “OBEY” gimmick, only with Bo’s face and, “Bo-lieve” underneath. Bo told Fandango there were plenty more fish in the sea and urged him to keep Bo-lieving. – *The stuff with Layla and Summer is pure garbage. I’m not sure if Bo is currently a heel*

or face, but the people seem to be getting into him, which can only be a good thing and can be manipulated any way the booking team sees fit

The Wyatts were backstage for a promo. Bray rambled about shattering the world when he took the WWE title at Money in the Bank and said we would enter the “Era of Wyatt”. Cole hyped a “contract ladder match announcement” for Raw and said that Seth Rollins was the first entrant in the traditional Money in the Bank match.

John Cena, Roman Reigns, & Sheamus (US Champion) vs. Alberto Del Rio, Bray Wyatt, Randy Orton & Cesaro w/Paul Heyman

Cesaro and Sheamus had a mean guy exchange early; they teased some tension between Wyatt and the rest of the heels and also between Cena and Reigns. Sheamus sold for some false heat and Cena ran wild on Orton off the tag. A mass brawl broke out on the floor and Orton hit Cena with the hangman DDT to start the real heat segment of the match. Wyatt planted Cena with a uranage then Cesaro worked over Cena with some moves: suplexes and chinlocks. The story of the match was that Reigns never got tagged in until the final comeback and Cesaro prevented Cena from making the tag with a pop-up uppercut. Del Rio nailed his step-up enzuigiri for a near-fall; Cena got a hope spot dropkick in, but Cesaro tagged in and cut him off then dropped Sheamus off the arpon. Cena finally caught Cesaro with a backdrop for the transition and made the hot tag to Reigns, who ran wild on everybody. Finish saw Reigns nail Wyatt with a superman punch then he sent Orton to the outside after countering an RKO; he also countered Del Rio’s armbreaker and delivered a spear to get the pin. – *Cena, Reigns & Sheamus defeated Del Rio, Wyatt, Orton & Cesaro via pinfall, at 15:48 (TV Time)*. All three babyfaces stared at each other and looked up at the belts before they started celebrating. – *Solid main event that was put together very well, with all the personal issues and past history brought up on commentary throughout. Reigns was protected well and only came in to make the final big comeback. He is still yet to fully show that he is capable of being put into a singles feud or to deliver the 20 minute monotonous soliloquies like other WWE main eventers, but if they don’t rush it then they will undoubtedly have a star on their hands. That of course means NOT putting the title on the guy at the PPV. Now, I’m not comparing Reigns to The Rock so don’t take this the wrong way, it is merely an observation. Rock defended the IC title at SummerSlam 98 and only two months later they put the world title on him at the Survivor Series. Rock was also the company’s next “chosen one” and they thrust him into the main event scene at the Survivor Series after wrestling a three-way with Mankind & Ken Shamrock then a terrible singles match with Mark Henry, which, by the way, he lost. There are many reasons why Rock made it work: he was already super over, the product was hot, they turned him heel and put him with the corporation, but most important of all...he was The Rock! Reigns is nowhere near the level that his “cousin” was in 98 and putting the title on him would surely do him more harm than good at this point*

An average show with a whole lot of filler and nothing matches, although it was watchable if like me you need a break from watching 3 games of the World Cup a day. The main event was well worked and enjoyable, however I expect a similar opening segment on Raw that will most likely lead to another multi-person match. They announced Rollins as the first guy in the traditional MITB match, obviously Ambrose will be in the thing but they are waiting for the go-home Raw to announce the other participants. “It doesn’t really matter now”, seems to be the consensus when trying to get people to buy the shows, what with the Network and all. Still, it would be nice if they tried to make the monthly “Special Events” seem at least somewhat special and important. Throwing cards together at the last minute and hoping people renew their subscription after 6 months is hardly a sound business strategy.

Next Week's Issue:

We are back to our usual format next week, with double RAW ratings, reviews of NJPW Dominion, ROH Best in the World, RAW, and SmackDown & NXT with Ben Carass as always, plus we preview Money in the Bank, look at some live thoughts from the first set of TNA tapings, initial Network thoughts and more!

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