



Cubed Circle Newsletter 153 – Night of Champions 2014 Go-Home Edition

This week we are back with quite the diversified issue, as Ben Carass looks at both the RAW and SmackDown go-home shows leading into WWE's 2014 Night of Champions pay-per-view, together with the generally terrible build over the last few weeks, NXT with the WWE in-ring debut of KENTA, plus something a little different for this newsletter, as Bryan Rose looks at the Ultimo Guerrero/Atlantis mask match from the world's oldest major promotion's 81st anniversary show!

– Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

Raw Ramblings September 15th 2014 – Night of Champions RAW Go-Home Show.

Ben Carass.

There is a PPV this Sunday. And that PPV does in fact have some professional wrestling matches scheduled to take place, although if you watched Monday's go-home Raw you could be forgiven for not having a clue what any of the matches actual are. Clearly Night of Champions is a one match show and to be fair most fans would probably be able to tell you that Cena/Lesnar is the main event on Sunday. However they did an appalling job building the undercard and for what was at least the fourth week in a row, Raw was utterly torturous to endure.

The story of the show was John Cena taking Paul Heyman hostage and threatening to kick his ass if Brock Lesnar didn't show up at "half time." Not halfway through Raw, halftime of the football game on the other channel. They actually told fans it's OK to tune out, just make sure you flip back for 15 minutes during halftime of the game to see the big angle. It was one of the dumbest things they have done in a while, although they could trump themselves with the outcome of Cena/Lesnar on Sunday. So, Cena locked Heyman in a room and told Khali to make sure nobody got in or out (expect for a cameraman) and when the time came Cena dragged Heyman back out to the ring. Lesnar did in fact show up to save Heyman and he took out Cena with one German suplex. Cena attacked Brock from behind and ended up getting the better of a brawl and some geek security had to run down to restrain Cena. – Let's recap:

1. Cena threatens to kick an out of shape, 49 year old manager's ass if he doesn't get his own way.
2. Cena kidnaps said 49 year old father of two and locks him in a room, guarded by a giant.
3. Cena pushes the defenceless manager around until Brock, the fighting champion makes the save

- and protects an innocent man.
4. Brock takes out Cena with ease and stands tall.
 5. Cena ambushes him from behind and in the process lands some horribly phony looking punches, killing the credibility of the angle in an instant.

And John Cena is the babyface in all of this! Whereas Lesnar, the badass, fighting champion who takes no B.S only wants to show up, fight and is not interested in any of the other garbage that is absolutely suffocating the WWE product right now, is the heel. Believe it or not, this angle was probably the best thing on the show. But we'll get to the other useless stuff later; there is a much more pressing matter to discuss and it is one that I cannot actually fathom.



Everyone is talking about John Cena beating Lesnar and regaining the title. Remember that once in a lifetime feeling you had when the referee counted the Undertaker's shoulders down at WrestleMania? What about the radically progressive and bold move of Lesnar destroying Cena at SummerSlam? If John Cena beats Brock Lesnar on Sunday then WWE will have flushed two of the biggest and most memorable moments of the year, if not in their entire history, down the toilet forever. Surely they cannot be that stupid, right? Well, I'm afraid they can, and most likely will be. It would be like Hogan winning the title at WrestleMania IX, wrong place, wrong time, wrong guy and wrong for the business. WWE's product is on the verge of going completely off the rails; the shows are booked poorly, the dialogue is reaching an all-time low, bad finishes are getting more frequent and it is becoming ever more of a chore to sit through three hours of Raw. All during a time when the company needed to convince people to re-subscribe to stop the Network number sinking even further. Sure the international subs will give them a little boost, but if the TV and PPVs/Live Specials become as stale and infuriating to watch like this time last year, then you add John Cena beating Brock Lesnar and killing everything they have built since Mania, I suspect a lot of people will be canceling or not signing up all together. I sampled the Network a couple of times for free this year and I can honestly say I am not going to be signing up anytime soon. Think of all the people that hate John Cena, a good majority of them are

internet fans, the very same people who are most likely to figure out how to cancel their subscription if he is smashed over Lesnar on Sunday. OK, I'm sure you get it, Cena beating Lesnar would be beyond idiotic. So let's have a quick look at the rest of Raw, which once again was a poor pro wrestling show.

Jericho beat Kane in 13 minutes; the match was pretty dull and had me longing for their blood feud of 2000 that started because Jericho spilled coffee on Kane. Presumably they had Jericho go over so they can feed him to Orton at Night of Champions. That's all fine. After a month or so of build, Jack Swagger beat Bo Dallas clean in 6 minutes. The babyface beat the heel in the first match, so where do they go now? Well, of course they had Bo beat Swagger on SmackDown. Paige & Nikki Bella beat AJ Lee & Brie when Paige pinned Brie, who once again was buried six feet deep; AJ and Paige skipped at each other. Yawn. Big Show and Bray Wyatt went to a DQ when the Family interfered, setting up a six-man on SmackDown and a Bray/Show feud. Show gave Harper & Rowan a double chokeslam like a pair of geeks; there is now officially no escape from mid-card purgatory for Bray and his Family. Sheamus & The Usos downed Cesaro & The Dust Brothers; they inexplicably had the #1 contender for the US title get pinned by one of the tag team champions, which did nothing for either title program. The run of atrocious women's matches continued with Naomi vs. Cameron. Comedy ensued when Cameron tried for a pinfall on Naomi when she was lying on her belly. As I suspected, they did the exact same thing with Dolph & R-Ziggler vs. The Mizs. They went all WCW and gave away Rollins/Reigns for free. Not only that, but they had Rollins deliver one of the most embarrassing promos you have ever seen. He called Reigns a Neanderthal then proceeded to imitate one by squatting and dragging his knuckles while grunting. Rollins also called Reigns: "part Gorilla, part Samoan and part Rhinoceros." Subtle racism in 2014, just what we need. It was a decent 11 minute match, but Reigns won clean as a nun's diary, completely killing any interest or purpose for their PPV match. And because they had the big angle timed to the minute to go on during halftime of the football, Mark Henry and Rusev were in the main event overrun segment. Henry did a "Rah-Rah" USA speech and got the "what?" treatment from the crowd, who should have just cut their losses and gone home at this point. They ended up getting into it and Henry fought out of Rusev's hold to end the show standing tall. And that was the go-home show for Night of Champions. Awful, right?

Bryan Rose on the Ultimo Guerrero/Atlantis Mask Match

I am, admittedly, not the biggest lucha libre follower in the world. I watched the CMLL 80th anniversary show last year and enjoyed what I saw. I also caught some of the En Busca de un Idolo tournament that ran during the summer in which "rookies", Hecicero and Cavernario, stole the show with their performances, the latter going on to win the tournament. So entering this year, I knew of some of the participants, some from the previously mentioned shows as well as the tours some of the CMLL stars did for the NJPW Fantasticamania shows from this past winter. But the big match between Ultimo Guerrero and Atlantis I didn't know much about. In fact, beyond the controversy of last year's Anniversary, all I knew was these were two big names in Mexico who people wanted to see have a mascara contra mascara bout.

The controversy probably propelled the match to even bigger heights of anticipation. Last year, there was a tag bout between La Sombra and Volador Jr. against Atlantis and Ultimo Guerrero in a revolas sucida match- the winning team would advance to the final match of the night where they would face each other in a mascara contra mascara match. Everyone expected Atlantis and Ultimo Guerrero to face off, but in the end the opposing team won their match. The show, which was pretty well heated for the most part, became deflated immediately after that bout. Many people were expecting Atlantis and

Ultimo Guerrero to face off, and when the match wasn't happening people were less than happy with the remainder of the show, shouting "foul" in between the bouts thereafter.

But a year later, the date had arrived. Atlantis and Ultimo Guerrero finally faced off, mask vs. mask. The first two falls happened quickly, as it's usually the case in lucha libre, with both earning a pinfall. The tension heated up quickly as Ultimo Guerrero and Atlantis pelted each other with move after move, each pinfall attempt meaning something. Watching this live, this was as dramatic as it gets in professional wrestling this year, even more so than the Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar match at Wrestlemania. Finally, Atlantis locked in his torture rack submission and scored the third fall, winning by submission. The pop of this crowd was so gigantic, it was beyond words – Atlantis, hero to many in the arena that night, had won Ultimo Guerrero's mask.



It became very clear that Ultimo Guerrero was emotional following the match, wiping tears from his face as his full name was revealed as Jose Gutierrez Hernandez, 42 years old. Women in the audience cried as the drama continued to build to the stipulation being met. He took off his mask, revealing his face, and gave it to Atlantis. After some words and show of respect between the two, both men's music played as they met with fans to close out the show. Workrate wise, it wasn't the best match of the show, as the two other top matches (Rush/La Mascara vs. Negro

Casas/Shocker and Cavernario vs. Rey Cometa) were probably better. But its tension and drama was in a different universe than those two, and probably compared to any other match this year, or perhaps even of the last decade. It was so intense that it was one of those "you had to be there" moments.

Many see this show as a "one more time" kinda deal, as there aren't that many matches that one can get emotionally invested in to the extent people were on Friday night when Atlantis and Ultimo Guerrero went at it. I would like to think that someday there will be another big boom where people will care about a mask vs mask match at this level, but I understand right now that there probably won't be anything like this for a very long time. I mean after all, we kind of care about Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena, but can one really be emotionally invested in anything WWE, TNA, or even ROH or New Japan at this level? It's going to be very difficult to accomplish what CMLL did on Friday. It can happen again, but only if these promotions can build their talent to this degree, which won't be anytime soon.

– Bryan Rose

WWE NXT – September 18th 2014.
Full Sail University: Winter Park, FL.
Ben Carass

Before the titles, they recapped all the big goings on from TakeOver then the latest main roster dropout to get a run down in NXT, Titus O’Neil, came out to get things going with a promo. He quickly went heel on the fans and said the show would now be called, “NXT, T.I.T.U.S”. Sami Zayn showed up and buried him for not being able to win a match and getting beaten up by bunnies. Titus threatened Sami with a beating then Adrian Neville hit the ring and stated only he could defend the honour of NXT. Tyson Kidd appeared and dropped some “facts” about Sami being a loser and Neville doing what he had to in order to retain his title. Sami said he would not have done the same to Neville and Neville replied that was why Sami would never be the NXT Champion. William Regal eventually emerged and booked Kidd & Titus vs. Sami & Neville for the main event. – *They rarely do long in-ring promo segments in NXT, so unlike Raw what the wrestlers said felt important and you actually wanted to listen to them.*

Non-Title Match: Charlotte (Divas Champion) vs. Emma – Charlotte over in 4:29. Match wasn’t very good and Emma didn’t look good at all, although was still pretty over with the NXT fans. Charlotte got the heat right away then Emma made a clunky and awkward comeback. Charlotte hit her flipping Ace-crusher, which they called “natural selection”, for the finish.

Hideo Itami vs. Justin Gabriel – Hideo Itami won with a double stomp at 3:58. Renee said Itami was trained by “the Great Kobashi”, which I guess is close enough. The people were hot for Itami and he landed one dropkick, which the fans popped for then Gabriel got the heat. Itami came back with a flurry of kicks and a springboard dropkick. He also did the running dropkick in the corner before hitting the double stomp. The Ascension hit the ring afterwards to beat down Itami and they left him lying with their finish. – *A pretty unspectacular debut, but Itami was as over as anyone in NXT and he looked decent for such a short match. Trying to compare this to his 40 minute NOAH main events, or the stuff he did as GHC Jr champion would be quite ridiculous: it was a 4 minute match against Justin Gabriel and he did nothing but sell and throw some kicks. I’m not sold on the Ascension feud, but we’ll see where they go and if they bring in Funaki for a tag match down the road.*

Baron Corbin vs. CJ Parker – Corbin squashed CJ with his swinging downward spiral in 0:32. Renee played up that Corbin wouldn’t talk to anyone after he beat CJ at TakeOver and Baron walked up the ramp without celebrating after the match.

Enzo Amore and Big Cass were working out in the Performance Centre. Carmella from the hair salon turned up and yelled at them for getting her fired. She told them she wanted a job and to be a fighter; Enzo mocked her so she took him out with a medicine ball. Big Cass laughed at his buddy and Enzo asked him not to post the video online.

Tyson Kidd & Titus O’Neil vs. Sami Zayn & Adrian Neville (NXT Champion) – Kidd & O’Neil over in 11:15 (TV Time). Neville and Kidd blind tagged each other then Sami stole Neville’s standing moonsault; the fans chanted “better than Neville”, so Neville pulled out a standing corkscrew to shut them up. They played off a spot from the TakeOver match: Neville went for a dive, but Sami cut him off by taking out Kidd with a moonsault. Sami ended up selling for the heat, which went a little too long then Neville ran wild on Kidd. Finish saw Neville go for the Red Arrow, but Titus pushed him off

the top onto Kidd's knees behind the referee's back, who was trying to get Sami out of the ring at the time. Show closed with Sami and Neville exchanging words, however it wasn't particularly heated. – *Match was fine, but the Zayn/Neville story they are starting to tell is being booked tremendously at this point. They followed up Neville pulling the ref out of the ring at TakeOver with them taking subtle shots at each other and the finish was one of those deals they can spin in order for Neville to blame Sami. Let's hope they keep pacing the Zayn/Neville feud like this.*

This was far from a great episode of NXT, in fact if not for the great storytelling in the main event and the newsworthy debut of Itami, this show could easily have been a week to miss. Still, a sub-par NXT like this was still miles better than any of the Raws we've been subjected to recently.

WWE SmackDown – September 19th 2014.

Mississippi Coast Coliseum: Biloxi, MS.

Ben Carass.

Tom Phillips welcomed us to the show then hyped Roman Reigns vs. Rusev as the main event. The Usos and the Dusts made their entrances and they showed the previous weeks of angles for the feuding pair of brothers.

Jimmy Uso (Tag Team Champion) w/Jey Uso vs. Stardust w/Goldust – Jimmy won with a superkick at 2:56. The Dusts did a wacky inset promo about winning the tag titles on Sunday. They had a pretty basic match, but it was fine for what it was. Goldust tried a sneak attack afterwards and the Usos took him out with double superkicks.

Sheamus (US Champion) & Dolph Ziggler (IC Champion) vs. Cesaro & The Miz – Sheamus & Dolph over at 7:02 (TV Time). The stunt doubles were out at ringside. As usual, JBL was completely out of control on commentary, yelling at Cole for correcting him and referring to Phillips' play-by-play as, "insipid." Ziggler got a few shine spots in before being cut off by a tilt-o-whirl backbreaker from Cesaro. Heels worked over Dolph for the heat; Ziggler landed a DDT for the transition, which Cesaro took tremendously. Sheamus ran wild off the hot tag; Sandow tried to get involved, so Truth took care of him. Miz hit Sheamus with a DDT for a near-fall then they went to the finish, which saw Truth get on the apron to distract Miz then Ziggler hit an illegal superkick and Sheamus finished him off with the Brogue-kick. Sheamus and Cesaro had a stare down after the match. – *If everyone in this match hadn't wrestled each other a million times in singles then this would have been a decent set up for the two title matches, expect for the US champion pinning the #1 contender for the IC title, that is just dumb any way you look at it.*

Adam Rose vs. Heath Slater w/Titus O'Neil – Rose got the pin at 2:55. They actually had a decent little match until the finish; Rose landed a nice high crossbody early and made a fiery comeback. The Bunny hopped in the ring and took out Titus with a pescado then Rose hit the party foul for the finish. – *So a while ago I had the idea for an angle with a heel disguising himself in the bunny costume and attacking Rose while he was partying with his geeks. As a one-time deal, it would have been a decent little angle for an undercard comedy program. What they are currently doing is only going to end up getting the bunny over more than Rose, who apparently now needs a giant bunny to help him win matches against super jobbers like Slater and Titus.*

Lana and Rusev joined Renee in the back. They both spoke in Russian/Bulgarian then Lana said

“Rusev crush” and that was it.

The Wyatt Family vs. Big Show & Los Matadores w/ El Torito – Wyatts over in 8:05 (TV Time). Match was joined in progress after the break. The Wyatts beat up one of the Matadores for a while, I want to say Fernando...either way it was Orlando Colon. Show tagged in but he was soon cut off and Bray tagged in to start the heat. Watching Big Show play babyface in peril while the Colons stood on the apron seemed quite silly, but they wanted to tell the Show/Bray story. Diego made a short comeback; Harper and Rowan took out Fernando then sent Show into the ring post. Bray pinned Diego with Sister Abigail.

Roman Reigns was backstage with Renee. He did a short promo about beating Rusev and doing the same to Rollins at Night of Champions.

Non-Title Match: Paige (Divas Champion) vs. Nikki Bella – Paige downed Nikki with the Paige turner at 2:54. AJ was on commentary and said she wanted to get Paige “on her back.” Aside from the obligatory hair pulling, which all the women are told to do, Nikki worked the match like a total babyface. WHAT IS GOING ON?! AJ and Paige had another weird exchange over the title then Nikki grabbed it, laid them both out with it then stood tall with the belt in the air. – *This segment was so infuriatingly bad on every level; it literally gave me a headache. I could rant more about this, but that would be no fun for any of us and since this is a respectable publication dammit, I can't use any profanity. Just think of every four letter word you can and you will be on the right track.*

Bo Dallas vs. Jack Swagger w/Zeb Colter – Bo pinned Swagger at 2:46. Match wasn't much at all. They both hit a couple of moves: Bo used a hangman neckbreaker and Swagger the Vader-bomb. Bo tried to run away then hung Swagger's arm up on the top rope and hit the Bo-Dog for the finish. Bo told Jack that he had “lost his Swagger” and said he would end up like Zeb if he didn't Bo-lieve. Swagger nailed him with a boot and Bo fled up the ramp. – *The babyface wins the first match then loses the second in 3 minutes? And they wonder why nobody gets over ever.*

A John Cena/Brock Lesnar hype package rolled then Mark Henry was interviewed in the back by Renee. He did his Olympic sob-story routine and said he would “Crush” Rusev at Night of Champions.

Roman Reigns vs. Rusev w/Lana – Rusev via DQ in 6:01 (TV Time). It was mostly a plodding affair with Rusev taking most of the match and working over the mid-section. Reigns made a comeback then Rollins showed up for the distraction and Rusev got a near-fall with a superkick. Rollins tried to nail Reigns with the briefcase and hit Rusev instead. Reigns gave Rusev the superman punch then brawled into the crowd with Rollins. Rusev was announced as the winner then Mark Henry came down and a giant American flag dropped from the rafters; he took out Rusev with the world's strongest slam then celebrated to Stars and Stripes forever. For the second go-home show this week, just like on Raw, they went off the air with Mark Henry standing tall. – *Dull match, the crowd weren't really into Reigns as much as they should be at this point, although (and I don't mean to sound xenophobic, this is just an observation I've made over many years) it usually takes states in the deep south a while to catch on to the hot new acts. They made Henry look good, but the cramming of two feuds into the final segment felt somewhat clunky and rushed, which didn't really give either story time to breathe.*

What a wretched go-home show. When TNA is putting on better weekly TV than you then there is a huge problem somewhere. Incredulously stupid booking and finishes, dull matches and a real lack of

depth at the minute is absolutely killing the WWE product. Thankfully Ambrose will be back soon to inject some life into the shows, however like I said before, if John Cena beats Lesnar on Sunday I dread to think how bad things will get. Cena worked Kane on the Saturday house show in Lexington, KY; I don't know if that is an indication of a new direction, but I simply cannot believe they will do a Cena/Kane title program. Of course they could have Cena beat Brock then have Rollins cash in, but again it feels way too soon for that and anyone that has a clue can tell you they should keep the title on Lesnar until Mania. The product needs rejuvenating in the worst way and putting the title back on Cena would be a gigantic step in the wrong direction.

Next Week's Issue:

Next week we return with coverage of WWE's 2014 Night of Champions pay-per-view, perhaps incredibly negative coverage depending on the finish, possibly New Japan's Destruction pay-per-view, ratings, and Night of Champions fall-out!

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