



Cubed Circle Newsletter Issue 229 – It's Here Everybody!

Say what you will about the build to WrestleMania 32, or even recent WrestleManias in general; I don't think that many would argue with the idea that WrestleMania Weekend is the best time of the year to be a wrestling fan – perhaps only rivalled by the G1 Climax. If you are a fan of professional wrestling there will be something for you to enjoy this weekend, of that you can be sure.

We have a light issue for everyone this week, as we get ready for one of our best and biggest issues of the year in our annual WrestleMania issue next week. As always, Ben covers all of the news in the Pro-Wres Digest, as well as coverage of the go-home edition of RAW from Monday night!

– Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

The Pro-Wres Digest for March 27th – April 1st.

@BenCarass.

Top Stories:

We unfortunately have some heartbreaking news to start what is the biggest week of the year for pro wrestling, as 32 year-old British wrestler Kris Travis tragically passed away after an 18 month battle with stomach cancer on 31/3. Travis was diagnosed with the disease in October 2014 and had to pull out of the second season of TNA British Bootcamp because of the diagnosis. In 2015 he underwent surgery to remove a tumour and a part of his stomach then went through 18 weeks of intensive chemotherapy, which appeared to put him on the road to recovery. Travis defied all doctors expectations and returned to the ring at a Preston City Wrestling show on August 7th 2015. He proceeded to work seven more shows for various promotions around the UK, with his last match being against Marty Scurll at the Progress: Chapter 21 show on September 9th 2015. A couple of weeks later on September 21st 2015, Travis announced on Twitter that he had been suffering from stomach cramps and had undergone a second surgery on his stomach.

“I'm basically in the hospital..... Had an operation. Not going to go into much detail here. Thanks everyone for kind words. Xx” - Kristoffer Travis (@RealKrisTravis)

“I'm going to put this out there right now..... I won't ever be wrestling ever again. Guttled yes. But I have to accept this. Lots of love. X” - Kristoffer Travis (@RealKrisTravis)

There was an outpouring of support for Travis following his retirement from people within the business and he received messages of support on a daily basis from fans and wrestlers alike in his

fight against the terminal disease. In October 2014, Preston City Wrestling promoter Steven Fludder set up an indiegogo account to help Travis with the cost of his treatment and the £5,000 goal was met in just two months. The news of his death was announced by Fighting Spirit Magazine editor Brain Elliot at around 12pm GMT on 31/3 and within minutes messages of condolences flooded in from the wrestlers who worked with Kris and the fans who saw him perform.

“I only met Kris twice but he made me feel like we’d been friends for years. If I feel this way, I can’t imagine what longtime friends feel.” - Kevin Owens (@FightOwensFight)

“Rest now @RealKrisTravis it was a pleasure knowing/working with you and I pray for your family's strength! #RIPKRISTRAVIS.” - Brain G James (@WWERoadDogg)

“Kristopher Travis was a true inspiration to me. He gave hope to every human being he ever crossed paths with. A true hero. Deeply saddened” - Vince Russo (@THEVinceRusso)

“Woke up to the news of Kris Travis passing. Genuinely gutted. He should be an inspiration to everyone for never giving up. RIP Kris.” - Jimmy Havoc (@JimmyHavoc)

“RIP Kris Travis. In the ring you were brilliant, out of the ring you were the bravest man I knew X” - Jim Smallman (@jimsmallman)

“Terrible news to wake up to. RIP #KrisTravis. You're a true inspiration to many people!” - The Young Bucks (@NickJacksonYB)



We would also like to send our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Kris Travis. I got to see him wrestle live on a couple of occasions and he was indeed one of the top performers on the UK scene, however his courage and fighting-spirit outside of the ring in battling his disease was even more impressive and inspirational.

Triple H held his usual pre-Takeover conference call on 31/3 and the only real big news from the call was the announcement of seven names for the WWE Global Cruiserweight Series. Zack Sabre Jr is the biggest independent name on the list, and Akira Tozawa from Dragon Gate is probably the

most surprising guy to be a part of the Series. Scottish-born UK wrestler Noam Dar and Ho Ho Lun from Hong Kong will also be brought in to work alongside NXT regulars, Johnny Gargano, Tommaso Ciampa & Rich Swann. We've got more on the WWE Global Cruiserweight Series, which will debut on the WWE Network on July 13th, later on in this week's Digest.



Nakamura bidding farewell to his mother at the airport -- living the gimmick.

Last week [Pro Wrestling Sheet reported](#) that Brie Bella would be retiring following the RAW after WrestleMania. Well [this week](#) Ryan Satin and co. reported that Nikki Bella would not be returning to in-ring action on a full-time basis after being told by doctors it would be too risky. Satin's sources claim that Nikki was supposed to appear on RAW this week, however after meeting with doctors she was told that any kind of accidental bump would severely set back her recovery from neck fusion surgery. The report is that Nikki is set for a CAT scan in July to see if her neck has fused correctly, however Satin noted that she was told a full-time return to action, "will never be possible based on the severity of her injury." In [this week's Observer](#), Dave Meltzer disputed Ryan Satin's report last week regarding Brie Bella moving up her retirement due to an issue with Bryan Danielson's health. "Her retirement decision for sometime shortly after WrestleMania was decided on well before Bryan retired," the Observer noted. Meltzer also added that he believed the "health issue" report regarding Danielson was inaccurate and noted that Bryan was training Jiu Jitsu with UFC fighter Bryan Barbarena at the MMA Lab in Glendale, AZ on 29/3.

Mike Johnson of PW Insider reported on 31/3 that Karl Anderson & Doc Gallows are scheduled to be at TV this week for WWE and they will also be backstage at WrestleMania. Johnson noted that Anderson & Gallows are expected to bypass NXT and debut on the main roster under the "Balor Club" name, so it would appear like Finn Balor's time in NXT is coming to an end and his main roster debut is imminent as well. Just so you don't have to infect your computer with a bunch of malware by going up to the PW Insider site, here is what Johnson posted on 31/3:

"Karl Anderson and Doc Gallows – The Bullet Club – are scheduled to be at this week's WWE TV Tapings, PWInsider.com has confirmed with multiple sources. It's expected they will be at WrestleMania, at least backstage at the event, as well. As we had reported previously, the pair were expected to debut on the main WWE roster, bypassing NXT, in late

March/early April. It appears their debut is imminent. The belief is that the team will be using The Balor Club name. “

This all-but confirmed Dave Meltzer's note in the [Observer](#) this week about the debut of Anderson & Gallows being imminent.

Unbelievably, TNA apparently has found another money mark and are in “serious talks regarding a new investor coming in,” as reported by Dave Meltzer in the [Observer](#) this week. In a similar deal to when Toby Keith wanted to buy them out, Dixie Carter wants to keep 49% of the company so she can retain controlling power. The word is the new investors, who at the moment remain anonymous, want at least a 55% stake in the company, so unless Dixie finally relinquishes power then TNA are in serious danger of running of what could, and in all honestly should, be their last chance at survival. In more TNA news, Angelina Love is gone after letting her contract expire during her pregnancy and PWInsider reported on 28/3 that Velvet Sky's contract is up next month also. EC III was pulled from some UK dates he was advertised for this week. Carter was booked for Southside Wrestling on April 2nd and a Preston City Wrestling show on April 3rd, however TNA cancelled his appearances due to supposedly needing him for something more important. TNA are not running any shows or taping TV over WrestleMania weekend, so Carter was not pulled from the UK dates due to a scheduling conflict. A similar situation occurred with James Storm, who was set to work the WrestleCon Supershow, but was also pulled from the event. TNA claimed that Storm & Carter were needed for “promotion work,” however their own World Champion, Drew Galloway, will be working the Evolve shows and several TNA guys, including Matt & Jeff Hardy, will still be on the WrestleCon Supershow. Go figure.

After only three months with the WWE, Mauro Ranallo announced on Twitter on 28/3 that he will be calling the WrestleMania pre-show. The two hour Kick-off show begins on the WWE Network at 5pm EST and the first hour will feature the US title match between Kalisto & Ryback. The USA/WWE Network simulcast begins at 6pm EST and Ranallo will also have the “honour” of calling the 10 Diva Tag match, plus the Usos vs. the Dudley Boyz. Originally, the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal was scheduled for the pre-show as well, however it now appears that it will be on the actual WrestleMania main card. Additionally, Ranallo noted that he would be a part of the NXT pre-show panel before the big Takeover: Dallas show on April 1st. Ranallo has made SmackDown a much more enjoyable show to watch in the short time he has been doing play-by-play and it will be fun to hear his voice calling a WrestleMania, even if it is only for the pre-show. Although, it would have been awesome to hear Ranallo and Corey Graves calling Takeover: Dallas, especially the Nakamura/Sami Zayn match.

Mike Johnson of PW Insider reported on 29/3 that former All Japan Triple Crown Champion, Joe Doering, is battling brain cancer. Doering was diagnosed on February 25th and underwent successful surgery to remove the Stage 3 tumour on March 4th. He is set to undergo chemotherapy and radiation sessions starting next week, with the treatment expected to last at least six weeks. Doering is said to be hopeful that he will one day be able to return to the ring. Best of luck to Doering on a speedy recovery.

The Indie Scene:

With Evolve already announced as hosting qualification matches for the WWE Global Cruiserweight Series, two of the hottest promotions in the UK are getting in on the act and cashing in on the WWE's new found acceptance of the indie scene. Progress Wrestling founder Jim Smallman announced on 27/3 that the 24/4 show at the Electric Ballroom in Camden, North London

– Chapter 29: Practically Progress in Every Way – would feature two qualifying matches for the WWE Cruiserweight Series. No names have been announced yet, however tickets go on sale for the show on April 4th so it won't be too long until we know who will be featured in the qualifiers. The following day (28/3), it was announced by promoter Andy Quildan that Revolution Pro would also be hosting at least one qualifying match up for the Series. No dates or matches were given on Rev Pro's website, but Quildan said it was an honour to be selected as one of WWE's "global partners" and noted, "we are very excited for the opportunity to share our product with fans across the globe." In the past both Progress and Rev Pro have provided footage for WWE video packages on Finn Balor and, in the case of Rev Pro, Shinsuke Nakamura. Rev Pro working with WWE is an interesting development, as the company has a strong relationship with New Japan and they bring over top Japanese stars to the UK for big shows at least twice a year. There is no doubt that the partnership facilitated Will Ospreay heading straight into New Japan as a top junior heavyweight, so one would logically assume that Ospreay would not be able to compete in any qualifying matches for the WWE Series, although I suppose he could always lose a qualifier if all parties agreed to it. Rev Pro also has a relationship with ROH and has used guys like Roderick Strong, Jay Lethal and ACH in the past, which could be another political minefield as WWE clearly view ROH as competition for NXT.

Japan:

New Japan sold-out Korakuen Hall (1,741 fans) on 27/3 for the Road to Invasion Attack show that featured a mini best-of-five series between NJPW vs. the Bullet Club. It was a fun, easy show to watch and it was nice to see New Japan putting some effort into making the Korakuen shows feel somewhat important again. (1) Tomohiro Ishii, Toru Yano & Roppongi Vice beat Kushida, Jushin Liger, Tiger Mask & David Finlay in 9:49 when RPG Vince hit Strong Zero on Finaly (***). (2) Hiroyoshi Tenzan, Satoshi Kojima, Yuji Nagata & Manabu Nakanishi over Katsuyori Shibata, Ryusuke Taguchi, Captain New Japan & Juice Robinson in 10:54 when Nagata pinned CNJ with his Backdrop Hold. They told a fun story of Shibata going after Tenzan to set up their Never title match. (** ¾). (3) **NJPW vs. Bullet Club Match:** Michael Elgin pinned Cody Hall in 7:09 with a Powerbomb; it wasn't very good (* ¾). (4) **NJPW vs. Bullet Club Match:** Kenny Omega over Jay White in 10:25 after the One Winged Angel. Arguably the best match of White's career and possibly the best on the show too (*** ¾). (5) **NJPW vs. Bullet Club Match:** Hiroshi Tanahashi over Yujiro Takahashi in 8:55 with the HFF; poor Tana tried his best with Yujiro (**). (6) **NJPW vs. Bullet Club Match:** Bad Luck Fale pinned Tomoaki Honma in 9:45 with the Bad Luck Fall (** ¼). (7) **NJPW vs. Bullet Club Match:** Togi Makabe beat Tama Tonga via DQ in 8:46 when Tonga Roa (Camacho) hit the ring and beat up Makabe. Tama Tonga declared themselves the Guerrillas of Destruction and they beat up some Young Lions (**). (8) Los Ingobernables de Japon (Naito, Bushi & Evil) over Kazuchika Okada, Hirooki Goto & Yoshi-Hashi in 17:35 when Naito pinned Yoshi-Hashi with Destino. Match was very good. LIJ beat the hell out of Okada, Goto, Hashi and Gedo. Naito even nailed Red Shoes Uno with a sliding kick and LIJ stood tall at the end of the show (*** ½).

Mexico:

AAA ran their big Rey de Reyes show last week on 23/3. It was announced the day before that the show would be available on iPPV, however on the actual day of the show the iPPV was cancelled. Instead, the footage will be shown on AAA TV, which is what they usually do for the Rey de Reyes show, on 2/4 and 9/4. The 7,000 seat Plaza de Toros Monumental El Paseo in San Luis Poto was reportedly sold-out, although the Cubs Fan noted that the show was heavily promoted around a special tribute to Hijo del Perro Aguayo. The ceremony for Perro opened the show and was used to

set up an angle between the remaining members of Perros del Mal (Pentagon Jr, Joe Lider, Daga & Taya) and a new Perros del Mal stable made up of former members, Halloween, Damien 666, Nicho, as well as independent talent, Pagano. Pentagon won the Rey de Reyes final over Villano IV & La Parka; the match was originally supposed to be a four-way with Blue Demon Jr but he no-showed the event. Afterwards, the new/original Perros stable attacked Pentagon's group and called the AAA version of Perros del Mal imposters. So the angle is two teams are feuding over the rights to a stable named after a man who passed away last year. The main event saw Texano Jr beat El Mesias to win the AAA Mega Heavyweight Championship for the second time. The title had been vacant since November last year when Alberto Del Rio was stripped of the belt due to him jumping ship to WWE. Texano's first reign was the longest in the nine-year history of the title (735 days) and he was the man Del Rio beat for the title back on December 7th 2014. Also on the show, Dr Wagner Jr beat Psycho Clown (Latin American Champion) in a non-title bloody brawl and demanded a title shot afterwards. Chessman & Averno retained the AAA Tag Team titles in a TLC match over the teams of Daga & Joe Lider and Argenis & Australian Suicide. Argenis was subbing for Jack Evans, who missed the show due to food poisoning. Zorro, Dark Cuervo & Dark Scoria retained the AAA Trios titles over Aerostar & Fenix & Drago and the opener saw Octagon Jr, Fabi Apache, Mascarita Sagrada & Pimpinela Escarlata beat Taurus, Taya, Mini Psycho Clown & Mamba.

Thanks to the holiday weekend, CMLL drew some impressive crowds for a couple of Arena Mexico shows last week. 25/3 saw 8,000 fans show up to see a pretty average card, with a first time ever match between Ultimo Guerrero & Cibernetico being the only big match on the show. Guerrero fouled Cibernetico with a low-blow in the third fall and the referee called for the DQ at 12:18. The main event was Atlantis, Mascara Dorada & Volador Jr over Barbaro Cavarnario, Mr Niebla & Negro Casas in two straight falls at 6:42. On the undercard, Los Ingobernables (La Mascara, Pierroth & Rush) beat Caristico, Marco Corleone & Super Porky. After the match in a backstage interview, Caristico challenged La Mascara to a mask vs. mask match at the Anniversary show in September. Remember, this is Mexico and guys make idle challenges all the time that end up going nowhere. They were back at Arena Mexico on 27/3 and drew close to 5,000 people for a completely nothing show that saw Mephisto, Mr Niebla & Rey Escorpion beat Mascara Dorada, Mistico & Volador Jr in the main event.

There was a note in the [Observer](#) this week regarding the status of King Cuerno, who is one of the many Lucha Underground talents signed to a seven year contract. Cuerno was reportedly offered a spot in the WWE Global Cruiserweight Series but neither AAA nor LU would allow him to participate. Cuerno, who works as Hilo del Fantasma in Mexico, has not worked for AAA since 4/3 and has not been apart of any of LU season three tapings. The fact that he is not a bigger star in both companies is pretty inexplicable: he's fluent in English, has a great body and is on the higher end of the scale when it comes to good luchador workers. If Cuerno wants to go to WWE, or more importantly if WWE are seriously interested in him, then it will probably happen one way or another.

Other Notes:

The WrestleMania 32 program lists the HHH/Roman Reigns WWE title match as a No DQ. On a similar note, the program also seems to suggest that Shinsuke Nakamura will be only using his surname going forward, however on WWE.com he is still listed under his full name.

PW Insider reported that the WWE will be rebranding the Diva's division after WrestleMania and it will simply be known as the Women's division. [SE Scoops](#) "verified" the report and noted that a new Women's Championship belt has already been commissioned and it bares a strong resemblance

to the WWE World title, only mounted on a white leather strap and is obviously smaller in size.

TNA announced on 31/3 that they will be holding taping iMPACT TV tapings on April 21-24 at the Impact Zone in Universal Studios. The saga continues for now.

Ivelisse Velez was injured at the Lucha Underground tapings last weekend. She Tweeted an update on 31/3 and confirmed she had two fractures and a torn ligament in her ankle which have caused her to pull out of her WrestleMania weekend bookings.

On the live Steve Austin Podcast with Mick Foley from Axxess on 31/3, Foley officially announced that his WWE Network show would debut in August. The show – called “Holy Foley” – will be the usual mind-numbing scripted family reality TV series and will follow the Foley's around in their “everyday” lives. Noelle Foley will be a big part of the show and she came out during the Austin Podcast and talked about how the show would document her training to become a Diva. She is obviously a very good looking girl, but her appearance on the podcast was brutal and she clearly needs a lot more work at public speaking.

SquaredCirclesirens.com apparently got the scoop on new casts members for the next season of Total Divas. Lana & Renee Young are set to become the two newest members of the show, while Naomi is believed to return as a regular character for season six.

Ratings:

The go-home RAW before WrestleMania did a 2.65 rating with 3,761,000 viewers. 8 pm did 3,818,000. 9 pm did 3,845,000 and 10pm did 3,629,000. It's not a terrible number, but last year's Mania go-home show did a 3.03 rating with 4.19 million viewers and in 2014 the show did a 3.13 with 4.38 million viewers.

Last week's SmackDown (24/3) with Brock Lesnar did a 1.75 rating with 2,501,000 viewers, which was up from the 1.71 and 2,260,000 million viewers the week before.

Lucha Underground on 23/3 with Aztec Warfare and the in-ring debut of Rey Mysterio set the all-time record for the company with 163,000 viewers.

Impact from 29/3 did a combined 312,000 viewers overall. The 9 pm premier did 236,000, while the midnight replay did an additional 76,000. The number was down from 331,000 last week.

Total Divas on 29/3 drew 563,000 viewers, down from 663,000 last week.

****Happy WrestleMania weekend everyone!****

WrestleMania Weekend Line-up & Cards:

All times given are Central Standard Time.

Thursday March 31st:

6pm – NWA Parade of Champions 2016: Ridglea Theater, Fort Worth, TX (Not on iPPV).

* NWA World Title: Jax Dane (C) vs. Charlie Haas w/ Black Bart.

* NWA World Tag Titles: The Iron Empire (C) vs. Brown & Dirty.

- * NWA Women's Title: Amber Gallows (C) vs. Jessica James w/ Special Ref Veda Scott.
- * NWA North American Title: Tim Storm (C) vs. Devin Driscoll.
- * NWA Jr Heavyweight Title: Steve Anthony (C) vs. John Saxon.
- * Lance Archer vs. Rodney Mack vs. Ray Rowe.
- * Chase Owens vs. Jason Kincaid.
- * Battle Royal.

Friday April 1st:

4pm – EVOLVE 58: Eddie Dean's Ranch, Dallas, TX – (Live on WWN).

- * EVOLVE Title: Timothy Thatcher (C) vs. Matt Riddle.
- * Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Will Ospreay.
- * Chris Hero & Tommy End vs. Drew Gulak & Tracy Williams.
- * Johnny Gargano & Drew Galloway vs. Anthony Nese & Caleb Konley, and if Nese & Konley lose, they can't team up again
- * Ricochet vs. TJ Perkins.
- * Sami Callihan vs. Ethan Page.
- * Marty Scurll vs. Fred Yehi.

4pm – Queens of Combat: Hyatt Regency, Dallas, TX – (Not on iPPV).

- * Queens of Combat Title – Taeler Hendrix (C) vs. Jessicka Havok vs. Tessa Blanchard.
- * Mickie James vs. LuFisto.

7:30pm – ROH Supercard of Honor X, Night 1: Hyatt Regency, Dallas, TX – (Not on iPPV).

- * The Young Bucks vs. The Motor City Machine Guns.
- * ROH World Title: Jay Lethal (C) vs. Lio Rush.
- * Kyle O'Reilly vs. Matt Sydal.
- * ACH vs. Adam Cole.
- * Moose vs. Roderick Strong.
- * War Machine & The Briscoes vs. ANX, Silas Young & Beer City Bruiser.
- * Six-Man Mayhem: Donovan Dijak vs. Cheeseburger vs. Adam Page vs. BJ Whitmer vs. Dalton Castle vs. Frankie Kazarian.

8pm – CZW Welcome to the Combat Zone: Eddie Dean's Ranch, Dallas, TX – (Live on WWN).

- * Masada vs. Matt Tremont.
- * Nation of Intoxication vs. Amazing Gulaks & Chuck Taylor.
- * Sami Callihan vs. Bull James.
- * Joey Janela vs. Lio Rush.
- * Joe Gacy vs. Tim Donst.
- * WSU World Title: Cherry Bomb (C) vs. Jessicka Havok.

9pm – NXT Takeover: Dallas: Dallas Convention Centre, Dallas, TX – (Live on WWE Network).

- * NXT Title: Finn Balor (C) vs. Samoa Joe.
- * NXT Women's Title: Bayley (C) vs. Asuka.
- * Sami Zayn vs. Shinsuke Nakamura.
- * Apollo Crews vs. Elias Sampson.
- * NXT Tag Titles: The Revival (C) vs. American Alpha.
- * Austin Aries vs. Baron Corbin.

11:55pm – Kaiju Big Battel Contest of Champions: Eddie Dean's Ranch: Dallas, TX – (Live on WWN).

- * Fighto for the Southern Division Championship Belt – Paco Plantain vs. Hell Monkey.
- * Arm Wrestling Championship Match – Dusto Bunny vs Steam Powered Tentacle Boulder.
- * Kota Ibushi will also be wrestling on the show in some form.

Saturday April 2nd:

12pm – EVOLVE 59: Eddie Dean's Ranch, Dallas, TX – (Live on WWN).

- * USA vs. Europe Series Match #1: Ricochet vs. Will Ospreay.
- * USA vs. Europe Series Match #2: Timothy Thatcher vs. Marty Scurll.
- * USA vs. Europe Series Match #3 Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Matt Riddle.
- * USA vs. Europe Series Match #4: TJ Perkins vs. Tommy End.
- * EVOLVE Tag Team Title Match: Johnny Gargano & Drew Galloway (C) vs. Drew Gulak & Tracy Williams.

2pm – ROH Supercard of Honor X, Night 2: Hyatt Regency, Dallas, TX – (Not on iPPV).

- * No Holds Barred: Adam Cole vs. Kyle O'Reilly.
- * 2-out-of-3 Falls: Bobby Fish vs. Roderick Strong.
- * 4 Corner Survival #1 Contenders Match: The Addiction vs. The Briscoes vs The Motor City Machine Guns vs. The Young Bucks.
- * ANX vs. Reborn Matt Sydal & ACH.

4pm – SHIMMER 80: Eddie Dean's Ranch, Dallas, TX (Live on WWN).

- * 12-Woman Tournament to crown the first ever Heart of SHIMMER Champion, featuring: Veda Scott, Heidi Lovelace, Nicole Matthews, Crazy Mary Dobson, Cherry Bomb, Cheerleader Melissa, Candace LaRae, Kimber Lee, Nicole Savoy, Leva Bates, LuFisto & Jessicka Havok.

6:30pm – WWE Hall of Fame Ceremony 2016: American Airlines Centre, Dallas, TX (Live on WWE Network).

- * Sting, inducted by Ric Flair.
- * The Fabulous Freebirds, inducted by the New Day.
- * Stan Hansen, inducted by Vader.
- * Big Bossman, inductor TBA.
- * Jacqueline, inducted by the Dudley Boyz.
- * The Godfather, inducted by the APA.

8pm – WrestleCon 2016 Supershow: Hyatt Regency, Dallas, TX – (Not on iPPV).

- * Five-way Monster's Ball: Abyss vs. AR Fox vs. Trevor Lee vs. Jeff Hardy vs. A Mystery Opponent.
- * Matt Hardy vs. Lance Storm.
- * Will Ospreay vs. Marty Scurll.
- * 10-Man Captain's Choice – Joey Ryan vs. Jeff Jarrett.
- * Aerostar, Fenix & Andrew Everett vs. Drago, Fireball & Jack Evans.

8pm – WWN Supershow: Mercury Rising 2016: Eddie Dean's Ranch, Dallas, TX – (Live on WWN).

- * Kota Ibushi, Johnny Gargano & TJ Perkins vs. Will Ospreay, Tommy End & Marty Scurll.
- * EVOLVE Championship Match: Timothy Thatcher (C) vs. Sami Callihan.

- * Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Chris Hero.
- * SHINE Championship Match: Champion Taylor Made (C) w/So Cal Val & Andrea vs. Ivelisse.
- * FIP Title Four-way: Caleb Konley (C) vs. Maxwell Chicago vs. Gary Jay vs. Jason Cade.
- * Ethan Page vs. Anthony Nese w/So Cal Val & Andrea.
- * Drew Gulak vs. Fred Yehi.
- * Matt Riddle vs. Tracy Williams.

Sunday, April 3rd:

5pm – WWE WrestleMania 32, AT&T Stadium, Arlington, TX – (Live on WWE Network).

- * WWE World Title: HHH (C) vs. Roman Reigns.
- * Hell in a Cell Match (Control of RAW vs. Undertaker's WrestleMania Career): Shane McMahon vs. The Undertaker.
- * No Holds Barred: Brock Lesnar vs. Dean Ambrose.
- * IC Title Ladder Match: Kevin Owens (C) vs. Sami Zayn vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Zack Ryder vs. Sin Cara vs. The Miz vs. Stardust.
- * WWE Tag Team Titles Four-on-Three Handicap Match: New Day (C) vs. League of Nations.
- * US Title: Kalisto (C) vs. Ryback.
- * WWE Diva's Title: Charlotte (C) vs. Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch.
- * The Usos vs. The Dudley Boyz.
- * 20-Man Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal.
- * Plus another multiple person women's match.

RAW Ramblings – March 28th 2016

Barclays Centre: Brooklyn, NY.

Ben Carass.



Some people simply do not want to believe that the WWE – specifically **Vince McMahon** – are completely out of touch. There is a bizarre need to try and explain the unmitigated disaster of **Roman Reigns** as a “political hit” by **HHH**, or, even more laughably, that this has all been a long

slow-burn build towards a heel turn for **Reigns**. Why these people cannot just accept that the company and indeed, **Vince McMahon**, are simply incapable of making stars anymore and have no idea how to book a likeable top babyface in 2016 is totally beyond me. If you were ever in any doubt as to the sheer scale of WWE's ignorance and lack of awareness, the go-home show for WrestleMania 32 demonstrated some of the most clueless and tone-deaf booking ever seen since the heyday of **Vince Russo** in 2000. We have now reached the stage of **Vince McMahon** sticking his fingers in his ears while having a full-on tantrum like a petulant child that can't get his own way.

There was exactly one big WrestleMania-sized angle on the go-home RAW, which came in the opening segment, and the rest of the show was customary WWE nonsense and idiocy. Don't get me wrong, a lot of the stuff they did was build for WrestleMania, however most of it was booked so poorly that it made for a very lacklustre and boring go-home show.



As mentioned, the big angle came in the opening segment. **Undertaker** came out and cut a promo about this WrestleMania not being his last then **Shane McMahon** showed up and got a great reaction just stepping into the ring with **Taker**. **Shane** said he would win control of RAW and cement his legacy by beating **Undertaker**, who replied that **Shane** needed to watch his mouth. **Taker** called **Shane**, "daddy's b*tch" and **Shane** unloaded with his business-exposing punches, which poor old **Undi** had to sell for yet again. They brawled on the floor and **Taker** went for a Last Ride through the announce table; **Shane** countered and laid **Taker** out on the table with some shots to the head with a TV monitor, which gave **Taker** a cut that was dangerously close to his eye. **Shane** did his old Elbow Drop off the ring post and smashed through the table, barely grazing **Taker** on his way down. It was impressive that **Shane** still managed to pull off the dive after all these years, but even more amazing was that he didn't kill the 51 year-old **Undertaker**, or himself, in the process. Fans went crazy and chanted, "Holy sh*t." **Shane** walked up the ramp then **Taker** did his **Michael Myers** sit-up and got back to his feet, essentially rendering the big spot insignificant. There was also a backstage segment with **Shane & Vince** later on and **Shane** said **Vince** had "stolen" the company from **Vince Sr** and told him he would take it from him. - The segment worked well and the fans lost their minds for the dive, but I question giving away such a big spot for free on TV, especially when both guys could have been seriously injured. Also, how on earth do they top this inside a cage? I suppose the obvious answer is that **Shane** is going to fall off

part of the Cell, but nobody has ever taken a bump off the top of the Cell since they went to the new, much bigger, cage and I don't think a 46 year-old non-wrestler should be the first to try it. I suppose he could take the **Shawn Michaels** bump off the side of the cage, but even that seems like a bad idea. We also got a brief shot of **Shane's** abs during the brawl and he is certainly in better shape than he was in his 30's. Just how strictly he has been following his father's cheesed to the edge of the platter workout plan remains to be seen.



Let's get to what they did with **Roman Reigns**, because it was just pathetic. **HHH & Stephanie** came out at the top of the second hour and literary cut the exact same promo they do every week. **Roman Reigns** interrupted and was booed to a comical extent. **Reigns** got a few shots in on **HHH** and **Trips** bailed to the floor; **Stephanie** was left alone with **Reigns** in the ring for a second but the crowd didn't bite for the tease and they continued to boo the hell out of **Reigns**. There was also a huge, "**Roman sucks**" chant and **Reigns** looked like a defeated man by the reaction of the crowd. We're still not done though, as they pig-headily did virtually the same thing in the main event angle, only with a few geeks thrown in the mix. We also got a backstage segment where **Reigns** was jumped by the **Dudley Boyz & HHH**, which all of the fans cheered when **Roman** was being beaten up. **HHH & Steph** came back out at 10:55pm and did their stale old deal of burying the fans for being poor and having terrible lives. **Reigns** hit the ring again and had another brawl with **HHH**; fans booed him again. Eventually a bunch of geeks showed up to pull them apart and **Reigns** did a huge dive over the top onto the pile of guys and **HHH**. Some of the fans cheered the dive, but there was a huge, "you still suck" chant as the show went off the air with **HHH & Reigns** starring each other down. - I don't even know what to say anymore about this. **Reigns** is simply not the guy, yet **Vince McMahon** refuses to change his mind. Maybe they will see sense and turn him heel on Sunday, but if they do then be assured that all of this disastrous build to **WrestleMania** has not been a master plan to make **Reigns** into a monster heel.

If you still don't believe that the same company that made **Hulk Hogan, Steve Austin & The Rock** into worldwide megastars have forgotten how to get babyfaces over, or even what makes them likeable, then look no further than what they did with **Eva Marie**. **Emma** beat **Paige** in 2:55 after **Lana** hit **Paige** with her Kung Fu kick of doom behind the referee's back. All of the women in the multi-Diva tag match brawled at ringside, with the babyfaces being outnumbered five to four. **Eva**

Marie's music hit like she was the saviour of the women's division and she even posed and pointed at the heels as if the fans were supposed to buy her as an ass-kicking babyface. **Eva**, who could barely even run down to the ring without looking like a malfunctioning animatronic, attacked **Lana** with some horrendous offence and stood tall with the other women from Total Divas. The crowd booed **Eva** just as much, if not more, than **Roman Reigns** and I'm sure **Vince & Kevin Dunn** were dumbfounded as to why this gorgeous model, who has shown no interest at all in becoming a competent pro wrestler, was booed out of the building. - You cannot make this stuff up.



There was yet more idiocy on the show, as **Chris Jericho** lost to **Zack Ryder** in 1:55 after **AJ Styles** distracted him by chanting, “Y2 Jackass.” Before the match, **Styles** said he would make sure he got his match at WrestleMania with **Jericho** and afterwards **Jericho** accepted the challenge. Of course, **Jericho** got his heat back immediately by hitting **Ryder** with the Codebreaker. - So this feud is essentially all about two guys who are such stupid losers that they get distracted by a chant and lose matches to complete jobbers. Why it is so hard to book two men who win all their matches then face each other to see who is the best is totally inexplicable to me.

Paul Heyman did his best to save the show and cut a hard-sell promo about **Brock Lesnar** killing **Dean Ambrose** at Mania. **Brock** just stood there and looked mean; it was great as always. **Heyman** made fun of the WWE's banned words and noted he was not supposed to say the word, “weapons” and proceeded to say it at ever opportunity. It was funny, because when **Heyman** pointed it out it became blatantly obvious that the announcers were trying their hardest not to use the word. After **Heyman** finished being awesome, the 28 writers took over and tried to turn the segment into a cute wacky little angle. **Dean Ambrose** came out and dragged a red wagon down to ringside, which he then filled with weapons from underneath the ring; including **Mick Foley's** barbedwire bat and **Terry Funk's** chainsaw. **Ambrose** never looked up at **Lesnar**, who just stood in the ring and looked bemused at this fool and his little toy cart.

If You Want Crud (You Got It): **Charlotte** beat **Becky Lynch** in a non-title match at 6:35 when **Ric Flair** distracted **Becky** by grabbing her foot and **Charlotte** pinned her with Natural Selection. **Sasha Banks** was on commentary and it was clear that the real story is **Charlotte vs. Sasha**, while

Becky is a complete afterthought. - That was the second distraction finish in a row by the way. **Big Show & Kane** were best buddies and booked to face **Curtis Axel & Bo Dallas**, despite the fact that **Kane** chokeslammed **Big Show** last week. The rest of the **Social Outcasts** jumped in for the DQ at 0:30 then every geek under the sun ran out to join the fray. **Goldust, Tyler Breeze, Fandango, Darren Young, The Ascension, Jack Swagger, R-Truth, Damien Sandow, & Mark Henry** were some of the chumps involved and the segment ended with **Show & Kane** double chokeslamming **Mark Henry**. **New Day** did their usual spiel and Brooklyn ate up the wacky comedy act. **League of Nations** showed up and we got **Kofi Kingston** over **Alberto Del Rio** in 7:45. **New Day** celebrated on the ramp then **Jonathan Coachman** came out on the stage and announced that SportsCenter would be live at WrestleMania. **Coach**, remarkably, got a decent babyface pop – **JONATHAN COACHMAN!** He also danced like a moron with **New Day**. **Kalisto** pinned **Konnor** in 1:45 with his move; **Ryback** came out and said “Feed me more.” **Sami Zayn, Dolph Ziggler & Sin Cara** over **Kevin Owens, The Miz & Stardust** in 21:55. Match went way too long and in Brooklyn – during a match involving Owens & Zayn – the fans got bored and started all the goofy chants: “**CM Punk**”, “**Chris Benoit**” & “This is booty” were some of the highlights. Yet again, there was no word on what roles the **Rock, Steve Austin, Mick Foley** or **Shawn Michaels** will have at WrestleMania and they were barely mentioned at all besides a promo video for the **Rock**.



Next Week's Issue

We have a giant issue coming up next week with special editions of both the Pro-Wres Digest and Mixed Bag covering all of the best and worst matches, moments, and general happenings from the most important weekend in the pro-wrestling year – WrestleMania Weekend 2016!



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