



Cubed Circle Newsletter – It Lives!

Amazingly, after nearly five years of the newsletter it was not the CCN curse of technical difficulties that brought the publication down for two weeks, nor was it something altogether catastrophic or tragic (well, I suppose this is perspective dependent). No, what brought the newsletter down for a near unprecedented two weeks was a multiple choice test, but not just any multiple choice test mind you – the second MATH II major multiple choice test. However, we (and by “we” I actually mean our fearless captain, Captain Ben) are back with another regular issue of the newsletter covering all of the week's biggest news stories, and some not so big, as well as RAW and WWE's Payback pay-per-view with AJ Styles challenging Roman Reigns.

Whilst the Pro-Wres Digest and reviews form the backbone of the newsletter, I am sad to say that I haven't been contributing as much as I would like opinion-piece wise. This is unfortunate, however, looming exams and constant tests, much like last year, have left me with time insufficient for the next several weeks. We have some fun things planned for the June holidays in a month, however, and upon my full return to writing I plan to cover the last two or so months worth of pro-graps in but a week or two. We also have some new (hopefully) weekly columns planned coupled with some new guest content over the next few weeks/months, and yes, perhaps even a review of the new outrageous Hot Dad album, 'Wrestle'.

As always, thanks for reading everyone – have a great week!

– Ryan Clingman, Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor

The Pro-Wres Digest for May 1st – May 6th 2016

Ben Carass.

Top Stories:

WWE went on a spring cleaning spree this week and 6/5 became Black Friday for eight contracted performers. Wade Barrett, Damien Sandow, Hornswoggle, El Torito, Zeb Colter, Alex Riley, Santino Marella & Cameron were released from the company within the space of a couple of hours. Hornswoggle, Riley, Colter & Cameron were the first group of names that were axed on Friday afternoon. Hornswoggle had not been used on TV since he hilariously failed a Wellness test in September 2015. Riley had been used sporadically on NXT as an unintentionally comedic jobber in recent weeks, however he felt like a holdover from a previous era and always seemed like he was fighting an uphill battle to keep his spot. Colter's last TV appearance was last year during the doomed pairing with Alberto Del Rio and Cameron, much like Riley, was surpassed by a much

more talented new generation of performers. Barrett released a statement on [Twitter](#) and noted he had been let out of contract early and would be taking a break from wrestling for a while. Torito, Santino & Sandow's names were revealed not long afterwards as the cuts continued. Torito vanished after Los Matadores were taken off TV and with Primo & Epico being repacked, Torito must have known he was on the chopping block. Santino underwent neck surgery in September 2014 and was pretty much retired from active competition; the fact that he managed to keep getting paid for that long while doing absolutely nothing is quite impressive. Sandow had been treated like a dog after he got himself over as the Miz's stunt double last year and made a handful of TV appearances in the meantime where he always got a good reaction from the crowd. It is likely a case of "Creative has nothing for you," but aside from Barrett – whose departure had been expected for some time – Sandow had the biggest upside of all the talent that was cut and could have easily slotted back into a regular featured role.

Hulk Hogan is ready for round two with Gawker and has filed a second lawsuit against the much maligned sleaze-peddling website. Hogan and his legal team are accusing Gawker of leaking a sealed document containing the tape where Hogan made his racist comments to the National Enquirer, who subsequently published the transcript of the tape. WWE responded to the story the only way they know how and removed all traces of Hogan from their website, including the Hall of Fame alumni, and immediately ended their working relationship with Hogan. Also indicted in the case are Michael Calta (AKA "Cowhead") and Matthew Christopher Loyd (AKA "Spice Boy"), two Florida radio employees who were allegedly responsible for the initial theft of the DVDs from Bubba the Love Sponge's home. Hogan's legal team believe that Loyd stole the tapes and consulted with Calta about what to do with them. Calta is then believed to have contacted AJ Daulerio from Gawker and got the ball rolling on an extortion scheme and ultimately the publication of the DVDs. As always, Bix has got you covered with all the details of the biggest rematch since Hogan/Warrior at Halloween Havoc 98 in the [Figure Four Weekly](#) newsletter.

Ryback's status with WWE is up in the air after he left the RAW show on 2/5 in St. Louis, MO and flew home to Las Vegas. During WWE's tour of Dubai three weeks ago, Ryback did an [interview](#) and said he was not happy about his role in the last three WrestleManias and noted he might "go find another world to work in." He was once again on the pre-show on 1/5 at Payback and lost to Kalisto. Ryback clearly sent a message to the people in charge when he performed CM Punk's entrance and wore a weight belt that read, "The Pre-Show Stopper." At the RAW in St. Louis on Monday he reportedly had a meeting with Vince McMahon about his status, which resulted in Ryback being told to go home until they could "agree or not agree to specific terms." On 3/5, Ryback posted a long statement on [Tumbler](#) of all things and vented his frustrations. He noted, "contrary to reports it isn't over money," then proceeded to write a lengthy criticism about the discrepancy of pay between the "winners" and "losers." Ryback's main gripe seems to be that the top guys, who naturally win more matches, get paid more and also sell more merchandise than guys lower on the card. He noted that losing all the time has a direct effect on merchandise sales and felt that the talent should be compensated more by the company when this occurs. In the past, employees who have spoken out against the company usually don't last very long. Ryback himself even noted that WWE might release him, but said he had been "very smart" with his finances over the years and seemed to have a blasé attitude towards being let go. "If it is the case so be it," he stated. [Pro Wrestling Sheet](#) followed up on the story with a report citing a battle over trademark rights to, "The Big Guy" name. Ryback reportedly filed a trademark on "The Big Guy" in October last year, however the WWE filed the same trademark three months later. Ryback's filing was published by the USPTO for opposition on 3/5, which gives any potential party 30 days to contest the filing.

Adam Rose finally delivered on his promise to produce a doctors note for the failed Wellness test that got him suspended for 60 days on 16/4. Rose responded to his suspension with a lengthy [Twitter](#) statement on 20/4 and claimed his doctor was “shocked and appalled by this suspension.” Two weeks later on 3/5 Rose posted a note from Dr Charles DeVine, dated 22/4, which explained that Rose had been taking Aderall XR for “chronic signs of ADHD, determined through a very thorough psychiatric exam on 4/30/15.” I'm extremely empathetic to anyone dealing with mental health issues, however it surely would have been much more prudent for Rose to handle this situation privately instead of posting everything on Twitter for the whole world to see. Apparently Rose realised this, or someone in the company told him he had messed up big time, because he subsequently removed the doctor's note on 5/5. In a bizarre turn of events Rose reposted the [doctor's note](#) on 6/5 during the WWE's spring cleaning, which caused some people to speculated that he was trying to get himself fired, however as of writing this he is still employed.

There was a scary scene at the NXT house show in Citrus Springs, FL on 6/5, as Kenneth Crawford was placed in a neck brace and carried out of the arena on a stretcher. Crawford, who was working the opener against Noah Keko, slipped while performing a springboard move and landed awkwardly in the ring. Keko quickly rolled him up to end the match and the referee threw up the dreaded, “X”. EMTs attended to Crawford in the ring then took him out on a stretcher. Reports from the building suggest that he was able to communicate with the doctors although there is some conflicting information about whether he could move his extremities. [F4Wonline](#) noted that Crawford was unable to move his arms or legs and a fan in attendance claimed that he was informed by the EMTs that Crawford had been flown out to be treated at a nearby hospital. [Cagesideseats](#) on the other hand reported that Crawford was in fact able to move his extremities before being carried out of the ring.

Indie Scene:

ROH are starting their tour with New Japan on 8/5 with the Global Wars PPV from Chicago Ridge, IL. Card is as follows:

- * Pre-Show Match: Kelly Klein vs. Crazy Mary Dobson.
- * The Addiction vs. Jushin Liger & Cheeseburger.
- * Bullet Club (Matt Jackson, Nick Jackson, Tama Tonga & Tanga Roa) vs. Motor City Machine Guns, Kushida & Matt Sydal.
- * Hiroshi Tanahashi & Michael Elgin vs. Kazuchika Okada & Moose.
- * Four Corners Survival, World TV Title #1 Contender's Match: ACH vs. Roderick Strong vs. Dalton Castle vs. Adam Page.
- * ROH Tag Team Title: War Machine (C) vs. The Briscoes.
- * ROH TV Title: Tomohiro Ishii (C) vs. Bobby Fish.
- * Non-Title Match: IWGP Champion Tetsuya Naito vs. Kyle O'Reilly.
- * ROH Title: Jay Lethal (C) vs. Colt Cabana.

The War of the Worlds Tour begins the next night on 9/5 in Dearborn, MI and will be head-to-head with RAW. Card for Dearborn:

- * Matt Sydal & ACH vs. Silias Young & Beer City Bruiser.
- * Hiroshi Tanahashi & Michael Elgin vs. ANX.
- * Jushin Liger vs. Roderick Strong.
- * Non-Title Match: IWGP Jr Heavyweight Champion Kushida vs. Dalton Castle.
- * Non-Title Match: ROH TV Champion Tomohiro Ishii vs. Moose.

- * Non-Title Match: ROH Tag Team Champions War Machine vs. Kazuchika Okada & Gedo.
- * Jay Lethal (ROH World Champion) & Tetsuya Naito (IWGP Heavyweight Champion) vs. reDRagon.
- * Motor City Machine Guns vs. The Briscoes.

There are two other dates for the tour, with the Ted Reeve Arena in Toronto on 11/5 and Terminal 5 in New York on 14/5 as the venues. The Toronto show will be taped for ROH TV and will feature:

- * Okada vs. Matt Sydal.
- * Non-Title: Jay Lethal (ROH World Champion) vs. Donovan Dijak.
- * The Young Bucks & Kenny Omega vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi, Michael Elgin & Yoshitatsu.
- * Non-Title: Kushida (IWGP Jr Heavyweight Champion) vs. Kyle O'Reilly.
- * Non-Title: Tomohiro Ishii (ROH TV Champion) vs. Will Ferrara.
- * Non-Title: Tetsuya Naito (IWGP Heavyweight Champion) vs. Moose.

The New York show at Terminal 5 has one of the strongest cards of the entire tour and a hell of a main event that see's Okada, Ishii & Tanahashi teaming up in a ROH vs. NJPW All-stars match.

- * Matt Sydal vs. Gedo.
- * Non-Title: ANX vs. Guerrillas of Destiny (IWGP Tag Team Champions).
- * Cedric Alexander vs. Donovan Dijak.
- * Non-Title: Kushida (IWGP JR Heavyweight Champion) vs. Silas Young.
- * Lio Rush vs. Moose vs. Dalton Castle vs. Michael Elgin.
- * Motor City Machine Guns vs. Roppongi Vice.
- * Jushin "Thunder" Liger vs. Mark Briscoe.
- * ROH World Tag Team Title: War Machine (C) vs. reDRagon vs. The Addiction.
- * Non-Title Match: Tetsuya Naito (IWGP Heavyweight Champion) vs. ACH.
- * NJPW All-stars vs. ROH All-stars: Hiroshi Tanahashi, Kazuchika Okada & Tomohiro Ishii vs. Jay Lethal, Jay Briscoe & Roderick Strong.

Evolve are running a double shot weekend on [WWNLive](http://WWNLive.com). Evolve 60 is on 6/5 from the MCW Arena in Joppa, MD. Here's the card:

- * Chris Hero vs. Zack Sabre Jr.
- * Evolve Tag Team Titles: Drew Gulak & Tracy Williams (C) vs. TJ Perkins & Fred Yehi.
- * Drew Galloway vs. Ethan Page.
- * Johnny Gargano vs. Marty Scurll.
- * Lio Rush vs. Caleb Konley.
- * Matt Riddle vs. Anthony Nese.
- * The Bravado Brothers vs. The Devastation Corporation.

Evolve 61 is the next night on 7/5 from La Boom in Queens, NY, and features two WWE Global Cruiserweight Series qualifiers:

- * Grudge Match: Drew Galloway vs. Johnny Gargano.
- * WWE Global Cruiserweight Series Qualifier: Drew Gulak vs. Tracy Williams.
- * WWE Global Cruiserweight Series Qualifier: TJP vs. Fred Yehi.
- * Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Marty Scurll.
- * Matt Riddle vs. Lio Rush.
- * Ethan Page vs. Chris Dickinson.

* The Bravado Brothers in action.

Japan:

New Japan's annual May show, Wrestling Dontaku, took place on 3/5 in Fukuoka at the International Centre Arena and the show was a stacked ten-match card that went four and a half hours. The show was very good, however a lot of the matches, especially after intermission, felt rushed. In addition to being on NJPW World, Dontaku was also broadcast on TV Asahi so it is possible they were trying to make sure they got everything in the allotted TV window, however according to [@e-key-oide](#), the TV Asahi broadcast cut off before the end of the main event.



(10) Tetsuya Naito retained the IWGP Heavyweight title over **Tomohiro Ishii** in 30:33 with the Destino, (**** ¼). Match was fantastic and the best on the show by a mile. Ishii worked over Naito's surgically repaired knee. There were two ref bumps; Evil & Bushi interfered but Okada & Gedo fought them off. They did a bunch of great near-falls; Ishii hit a sick inverted Brainbuster that the fans bought big time. Naito countered another Brainbuster and hit the Destino for the win. Afterwards, Okada got in Naito's face and Naito told him, "Tranquilo." Naito also thanked Kidani again for watching on NJPW World and said next time he wants Kidani to be there live to hear the reaction of the crowd. The biggest news on the show was the announcement of Kenny Omega defending the IC title against Hiroshi Tanahashi in the first ever ladder match in New Japan. **(4) Omega & The Young Bucks** regained the hot potato NEVER Trios titles when they beat **Tanahashi, Michael Elgin & Yoshitatsu** in 14:03. Match was full of ridiculous ref bumps and weapon spots to the point of absurdity. Post-match, Tana challenged Omega for the IC title, but Omega said he would only face him in a ladder match. The two both climbed a ladder and met at the top, where Tanahashi accepted the ladder stip. Omega told Tanahashi, "Welcome to American style." **(9)** Semi-main saw **Kazuchika Okada** over **Sanada** in 15:11 with the Rainmaker, (** ½). Sanada looked good, but the crowd didn't really buy into the idea that he could beat Okada. **(8) Evil** pinned **Hirooki Goto** in 9:53 of a match that was mostly a wild brawl. Evil won with the Darkness Powerbomb and his STO, (***) It felt very rushed for a match third from the top. **(7) Kushida** retained the IWGP Jr Heavyweight title over **Jushin "Thunder" Liger** in a very good match at

14:37, (***) ¾). Liger went after the knee and slammed it into the barricade and the ring post; he also hit a Brainbuster on the floor for a count-out tease, of which there were numerous on this show. Liger attacked the leg with a bunch of submissions and got a near-fall with his old Thesz Press finish. Kushida won with the Hoverboard Lock and afterwards he told Liger that he had “stopped the clock on his final chapter” and said he wanted Liger to continue wrestling for the next five, ten, fifteen or twenty years. Liger said if the strongest junior and the champion thinks he still can go then he would have to ask for another shot at the title. **(6) Yuji Nagata** downed **Katsuyori Shibata** to become the new NEVER Openweight champion in 11:53, (***) ¼). Match was good, although selfishly I wanted another ten minutes or-so; there was also a questionable long Figure Four spot from Shibata and Nagata was up no-selling and throwing kicks immediately. Shimpei Nogami lost his mind when Nagata won the title and was screaming his guts out while tears streamed down his face – best in the business by a mile, and I don't even speak Japanese. **(5) Guerillas of Destiny** retained the IWGP Tag titles over **Togi Makabe & Tomoaki Honma** in 12:12, (**). There was one cool spot that saw Tonga & Honma execute a million transitions. Tonga pinned Honma after the Guerilla Warfare double DDT. **(3) Ricochet & Matt Sydal** beat **Roppongi Vince** for the IWGP Jr Heavyweight Tag belts in 16:26 of a very good match, (***) ½). I guess that means Ricochet is not signing with WWE any time soon. **(2) Kazushi Sakuraba, Yoshi-Hashi, Will Ospreay & Gedo** beat **Tiger Mask, Ryusuke Taguchi, David Finlay & Jay White** in 7:23, (** ½); Ospreay did the Space Flying Tiger drop onto a pile on the floor, although he didn't do too much else as they had very little time. **(1) Bad Luck Fale & Yujiro Takahashi** beat **Captain New Japan & Juice Robinson** in 2:26, (DUD).

The Blocks for the Best of the Super Juniors tournament were also announced on the Dontaku show. A Block: Kushida, Ryusuke Taguchi, Kyle O'Reilly, Matt Sydal, Rocky Romero, Gedo, Bushi & Matt Jackson. B Block: Jushin Thunder Liger, Tiger Mask, Bobby Fish, Barreta, Nick Jackson, Ricochet, Volador Jr. & Will Ospreay. The tour starts on 21/5 at Korakuen Hall and will run 14 shows with the final in Sendai on 7/6. Interestingly there is no Dragon Lee in the tournament, although he is currently out with a knee injury so it is possible that Volador was offered as a replacement. Another possibility is that with Kamaitachi gone from CMLL, and not scheduled to return to Japan for some time, New Japan may not want to bring Dragon Lee in without his famous feuding partner.

Naomichi Marufuji & Toru Yano won the 2016 NOAH Global Tag League on 4/5 when they defeated the GHC Tag Team Champions Lance Archer & Davey Boy Smith Jr in the tournament final at Korakuen Hall. KES topped the block with 10 points (5 wins, 2 losses) and Marufuji & Yano came in second with 8 points (4 wins, 3 losses). The final was the main event of the 4/5 show and Marufuji pinned Smith with the Shiranui at 20:25. Also on the show, Yoshinobu Kanemaru retained the GHC Jr Heavyweight title over Hajime Ohara in 18:01 with the Touch Out; there was the usual Suzuki-Gun interference. Team NOAH (Go Shiozaki, Maybach Taniguchi, Katsuhiko Nakajima & Masa Kitamiya) beat Suzuki-Gun (Takashi Sugiura, Minoru Suzuki, Takashi Iizuka & Shelton “X” Benjamin) in 20:13 when Shiozaki pinned Iizuka with the Go-Arm Lariat. Afterwards, Sugiura attacked Shiozaki with a chair and stood over him to set up their GHC Heavyweight title match in Osaka on 28/5. Hiro Yoshi Tenzan & Satoshi Kojima ended their tour with a win over Muhammad Yone & Akitoshi Saito in 9:56 when Kojima pinned Saito after a Lariat.

Wrestle-1 ran a noon show at Korakuen Hall on 4/5 and the main event saw KAI capture the Wrestle-1 Championship over Yuji Hino in 20:00 with the Gannosuke Clutch. Semi-final was a trios match with Keiji Mutoh, Leona & Daichi Hashimoto over Yuji Okabayashi, Yasufumi Nakanoue & Seiki Yoshioka in 12:20 when Mutoh submitted Yoshioka with the Figure Four. Afterwards, Jun Akiyama made a surprise appearance and challenged Mutoh to a match, which Mutoh accepted for

11/8 in Yokohama. This is especially notable due to Mutoh splitting off from All Japan to (re)form Wrestle-1 in 2013.

Chigusa Nagayo's new Joshi group Marvelous ran their debut show on 3/5 at Toyosou PIT in Tokyo. Chigusa thanked the fans for coming and said she aims to see the promotion flourish in the future. Main event saw Meiko Satomura beat Takumi Iroha with the Death Valley Bomb in 15:29.

Mexico:

There is some confusion surrounding the AAA World Cup show on 5/6 in Mexico City, which was originally announced as a PPV in the US & Canada. They have now added another show on 3/6 in Puebla which will definitely not be on PPV, although World Cup qualifying matches are set to take place. Court Bauer said on this week's [Bauer & Pollock](#) podcast that he is no longer working for AAA or Lucha Underground and questioned whether the PPV on 5/6 would even take place at all. The [Observer](#) this week noted that AAA wanted both shows (3/6 & 5/6) to be PPVs, but they realised that wouldn't have been viable. Meltzer also reported that after the disaster that was last year's TripleMania, AAA will be handling the production themselves this time around. [MLW](#) on Twitter disputed this claim and noted that AAA was asked by the PPV vendors to bring in an outside production team.

Mephisto defeated Mascara Dorada two falls to one for the World Welterweight title in the main event of the CMLL show at Arena Mexico on 3/5. Mephisto took the first fall in 2:22 with the Devil's Wings. Dorada took the second with a Super Frankensteiner in 4:26 and Mephisto hit a Super Devil's Wings to win the third fall in 16:23. The whole show is up on [YouTube](#) and the main event starts around 1:53:16.

Angelico's injury that he suffered at the Lucha Underground tapings two weeks ago was a [fractured-dislocation](#) of the left elbow and he is scheduled to be out for at least two months.

Misc:

Bobby Heenan was hospitalised on 4/5 after a fall at his home. Pro Wrestling Sheet reported that doctors wanted to keep Heenan in for 72 hours due to low blood pressure, but noted that, "the 71 year-old was in great spirits." Heenan had to cancel an appearance at the Super Friends Fan Fest in Milwaukee, WI this weekend as a result of the fall.

WWE's UK Twitter account announced on 6/5 that Bobby Roode would be a part of NXT's upcoming tour of the UK in June. The tweet was then mysteriously deleted. PWInsider is reporting that Roode has signed a developmental deal and that he was backstage at the last set of TV tapings but did not feature on any of the shows.

Shane McMahon will be the guest in a "tell-all" podcast with Mick Foley on the WWE Network following the May 23rd RAW. Steve Austin noted on his podcast this week that the reason Foley is hosting the show is because he is rehabbing his shoulder after surgery on his rotator cuff, his labrum and AC joint. Austin suffered the injuries at WrestleMania during the segment when he, Shawn Michaels & Mick Foley beat up the League of Nations and will be in a sling for the next four weeks.

PWG's next show is on 20/5 and will be called, "Prince," in keeping with the tradition of naming their events after legends that have passed away. The show is basically running at the same time as

the Best of the Super Juniors tournament kicks off on 21/5 in Tokyo, so PWG regulars the Young Bucks, Sydal, Ricochet, Ospreay & Baretta will all be unavailable. The announced card so far is:

- * PWG World Championship Zack Sabre Jr. (C) vs. Michael Elgin.
- * Andrew Everett vs. Trevor Lee.
- * Adam Cole vs. Dalton Castle.
- * Drew Galloway vs. Brian Cage.
- * Jeff Cobb (debut) vs. Chris Hero.
- * Mark Andrews vs. Marty Scurll.
- * Sami Callihan vs. Roderick Strong.

Bob Backlund returned to WWE TV on SmackDown this week as the new Life Coach of Darren Young. The gimmick is that Backlund wants to make Young “Great Again.”

Ratings:

RAW on 2/5 did a 2.35 ratings with 3,430,000 viewers. 8 pm did 3,458,000 viewers. 9 pm did 3,457,000 and 10pm did 3,383,000. After a steady drop over since WrestleMania, the show the day after Payback, with return of Stephanie McMahon, was up 10% from last week's 3.12 million.

TNA iMPACT on 3/5 did 303,000 viewers; down from 332,000 last week.

Lucha Underground on 4/5 did 180,000 viewers; 138,000 for the first run episode and 42,000 for the replay. That's up from 159,000 last week, although the median viewer age was a remarkable 57.3 years-old.

SmackDown on 5/5 did 2,350,000 viewers, an increase of 240,000 from last week.

WWE Payback – May 1st 2016

Allstate Arena: Chicago, IL.

Ben Carass.



WWE were pushing Payback as the first PPV of the new era, so how did they usher in this glorious new epoch? Well, they rehashed a finish from 19 years ago in one of their top matches with – and I can't believe I am going to type this in 2016 – a Montreal Screwjob ending to **Charlotte vs. Natalya**. Imagine going to **Bret Hart**, in his first appearance since beating prostate cancer, and telling him he is going to be involved in a Montreal angle. They also over-booked the main event with all the tropes and dog and pony show aspects of a big Attitude Era match, complete with two **McMahon** restart spots and run-ins from the **Usos** & the **Good Brothers**. Over-booking aside, **Roman Reigns** retained the WWE title over **AJ Styles** in a very good match, however **Reigns** was absolutely despised by at least 90% of the audience and was booed unmercifully throughout. In between the top two matches there was a tortuously long segment which saw **Vince McMahon** announce who would run RAW. After nearly 20 minutes of expositional and nonsensical dialogue, **Vince** decided in the most anti-climatic manner possible that both **Shane & Stephanie** would run RAW together. Welcome to the new era everybody! Where we are treated to regurgitated finishes from 19 years ago, agenting right out of 2000 for main event matches, a top babyface who everybody despises and a power struggle for control of RAW which they resorted to in 2003 when the ratings were tanking.

On a more serious note, **Enzo Amore** suffered a severe concussion in the opener and the match had to be stopped. **Enzo** was taken to a nearby hospital and thankfully he was healthy enough to be discharged the same night.

From a wrestling standpoint, Payback was a pretty solid show. However, the same old booking problems that have crippled the WWE product for 15 years were on full display and once again they marginalised all the great young talent on the roster by making the main storyline all about the **McMahons**. WWE can call up a bunch of guys from NXT, bring in some outsiders and come up with all the buzzwords they want to try get over the idea that they have turned some mythological corner, but until there is a complete creative overhaul absolutely nothing about the WWE product is going to change for the better.

Pre-Show:

Panel was **Renee, Booker T, Jerry Lawler & Corey Graves**; it was the usual mind-numbing blather. **Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin** was bumped to the pre-show, because I guess they timed the show out wrong. The sad thing is with **Enzo** getting hurt there was a bunch of time to fill and instead of giving two great workers like **Owens & Zayn** ten extra minutes they gave the extra time to the **McMahons'** segment, because of course they did. **Ziggler** beat **Corbin** with a flash roll-up in 7:40. **Corbin** took most of the match but since they have no clue about how to get a new guy over anymore, his first loss came at the hands of **Dolph Ziggler** in a pre-show match. (**) Clueless. **Kalisto** retained the US title over **Ryback** in a decent match at 8:25. **Kalisto** nearly killed himself on a Corkscrew dive to the floor but **Ryback** just about caught him. Finish saw **Ryback** hit a Gorilla Press Slam off the top, but he missed a Big Splash and **Kalisto** pinned him with the Salida del Sol. (** ¼).

Main Show:

New Day opened the show and did some comedy about Beyonce; they were over huge here in Chicago. They took a seat on some beanbags at ringside to watch the match. **Enzo & Cass** did their shtick and were also over big. **Cass** had some lines about Hey Arnold! and Stoop Kid then the **Vaudevillains** made their entrance.

#1 Contenders Tag Team Tournament Final: Enzo Amore & Big Cass vs. The Vaudevillains. – No Contest at 3:50. As everyone is well aware, **Enzo** received a serious concussion and the match had to be called off. The spot saw **Simon Gotch** try to throw **Enzo** outside, however he got caught up in the ropes and his head snapped back and hit the canvas. **Enzo** was out before he even hit the floor and he crumpled in a heap. The referee threw up the dreaded “X” and the match was called when the doctors came in to check on **Enzo**. They showed countless replays of the spot, which seemed like a pretty odd thing to do considering they didn't know how bad **Enzo** was hurt. It was obviously a completely different set of circumstances, however I couldn't help but think about what happened to **Perro Aguayo Jr** when **Enzo's** head snapped off the ropes and he didn't move a muscle. It was a serious enough situation that they only filmed the announcers while **Enzo** was being treated and you could tell **Cole, JBL & Saxton** were very uncomfortable while this was going on right in front of them. We got updates on **Enzo's** condition throughout the night and the good news is that he was up and talking within a few minutes. He was taken to a local hospital and **Kevin Owens** apparently went with him, which resulted in this fantastic picture:

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens. – Owens over in 14:25. Great match. These guys had a rough job following the injury to **Enzo**,



but they managed to get the crowd back into the show. They started off hot with the **Frye/Takayama** deal and **Sami** landed a big plancha over the top, but **Owens** cut him off and sent him into the steps. **Owens** got the heat then **Sami** came back with a **Michinoku Driver**, which **Cole** called a “Blue Thunder Bomb.” **Sami** then hit an actual Blue Thunder Bomb and Mr “Pound-and-Ground” covered his mistake by calling it a “tradition Blue Thunder Bomb.” **Owens** hit a huge Frog splash for a near-fall; **Sami** countered the Pop-Up Powerbomb and scored with a big Lariat for a double-down. **Owens** tried a Powerbomb on the apron, but **Sami** countered with a backdrop on the apron and followed up with his torpedo ring post DDT on the floor. Finish saw **Sami** roll **Owens** back inside and he went for the Yakuza kick, however **Owens** moved and hit the

Pop-Up Powerbomb to get the clean pin. Post-match, **Owens** called **Byron Saxton** into the ring and cut a promo about how he had proven that he was better than **Zayn** and said he would do commentary for the IC title match. (****)

IC Championship: The Miz (C) w/Maryse vs. Cesaro. – **Miz** retained in 11:30. **Cesaro** managed to drag a surprisingly good match out of the **Miz**. **Cesaro** out wrestled him early then **Miz** got the heat after **Maryse** interfered. **Miz** worked over the shoulder; **Cesaro** made his comeback and hit a bunch of European Uppercuts. **Sami Zayn** ran back down and dove over the announce table onto **Owens** and the began to brawl. **Cesaro** performed the Giant Swing then applied the Crossface but the referee missed **Miz** tapping out because **Owens & Zayn** had fought into the ring. **Cesaro** knocked **Owens & Zayn** off the apron then **Miz** rolled him up to get the pin with a handful of tights. Afterwards, **Cesaro** hit **Miz** with the neutraliser, **Owens** laid out **Cesaro** with a boot, **Zayn** attacked **Owens**, but he ate another Powerbomb and **Owens** stood tall with the IC title. – I don't know why the **Owens/Zayn** program wasn't built around the IC title in the first place, so now they are going with a four-way at Extreme Rules, which should be a fun match. (***) ¼)

Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose. – **Ambrose** over in 18:25. This turned into a good match, although it was nothing special early and the fans were pretty quite to begin with. It picked up about 10 minutes in when **Ambrose** hit a tope then went for his DDT on the announce table. **Jericho**

countered and Catapulted **Ambrose** off the table over into the Timekeeper's area which led to a count-out tease. **Jericho** applied the Walls, but **Ambrose** got to the ropes. **Jericho** landed a Double Underhook Backbreaker and got right in **Dean's** ear with some trash talk. Finish may have been botched, however it actually worked out quiet well. **Ambrose** got his knees up to counter the Lionsault, however **Jericho** just stood there for a moment as if he was unsure what to do. **Ambrose** hooked him in a front Chancery and after a long struggle, **Ambrose** landed his Dirty Deeds DDT to get the win. – **Jericho** seemed to have better chemistry with **Ambrose** than he did with **AJ Styles**, although there were still a few clunky moments. **Jericho** teased on Twitter that he is done for now, although it would not be the first time he told an untruth about his status with the company. (***) ½)



WWE Women's Championship: Charlotte (C) w/Ric Flair vs. Natalya w/Bret Hart. – Charlotte retained in 14:02. This was just sad. **Bret** clearly didn't want to be out there, the match was nowhere near as good as their NXT matches and at times both women looked very awkward. Then we had the finish. A Montreal Screwjob rerun in 2016. **Charles Robinson** was the referee, so when **Charlotte** put the Sharpshooter on **Nattie** he immediately called for the bell, handed the title to **Charlotte** and got the hell out of there. If that wasn't stupid enough, there were at least two other points in the match when **Charlotte** had a submission hold on **Nattie**, so why didn't **Robinson** ring the bell then? This was just insultingly bad. Post-match, **Bret** put **Ric** in the Sharpshooter and **Nattie** did the same to **Charlotte**. Horrible. (**).

We had **Vince McMahon's** decision regarding who would control RAW. He came out and the fans chanted “**CM Punk**,” **Vince** let the crowd burn themselves out and moved on. **Stephanie** was out next and she talked forever about a million different things that nobody could possibly give a damn about. She even brought up that **Shane** lost to **Undertaker** at WrestleMania. She talked some more and the fans chanted, “Boring.” Eventually **Shane** showed up and basically did a Powerpoint presentation like he was **Muscle Sakai** and talked about all the headlines he made while running RAW. **Vince** had enough of this “crap” – and boy was he right. **Vince** told **Shane** he shouldn't even be in the ring after losing to the **Undertaker** but said he gave **Shane** a chance to fail, which made zero sense whatsoever. Finally, after all this horrendous dialogue, **Vince** announced that both **Shane & Stephanie** would run RAW, because he wanted to see them learn to work together or kill each other. There was no mention of **HHH** again, so maybe he was smart enough to keep himself out of this entire mess. Although a **HHH/Shane** match for control of RAW at SummerSlam wouldn't surprise me.



WWE World Heavyweight Championship: Roman Reigns (C) vs. AJ Styles. – Reigns retained in 25:05. Good main event that was hindered greatly by unnecessary over-booking. **Reigns** was despised and the fans chanted, “You can't wrestle.” Early on **Styles** would use his quickness and went after the leg; **Reigns** hit a couple of power spots. **Styles** hit the Phenomenal Forearm to the floor and drove **Reigns** through the announce table; **AJ** made it back inside but **Reigns** was counted out at 12:00. **Shane McMahon** showed up and restarted the match with a no count-out stip. A few minutes later, **AJ** came off the top and **Reigns** caught him with an accidental low-blow and the ref called for the DQ at 15:30. This time, **Stephanie** came out and restarted the match with a no DQ stip. **Styles & Reigns** fought into the crowd and **AJ** clotheslined him over the barricade, which caused **Reigns** to take a nasty landing. Back inside, **Reigns** hit the Superman Punch but the **Good Brothers** ran down and pulled **AJ** out of the ring. **Gallows & Anderson** hit **Reigns** with the Boot of Doom and **Styles** followed up with the Phenomenal but **Reigns** got his foot on the bottom rope for a great near-fall. **Usos** showed up and they fought off **Gallows & Anderson**. **Reigns** shoved **AJ** off the top onto all four guys on the floor then he did the big **Undertaker** dive onto the pile; **AJ** moved and caught **Reigns** with another Forearm off the barricade. **Stlyes** got a near-fall with a Springboard 450 then **Reigns** countered the **Styles Clash**. Finish saw **AJ** go for another Phenomenal Forearm but **Reigns** avoided it and hit the Spear to get the pin. Everyone booded. Backstage, the **McMahons** were watching in their office and **Shane** booked an Extreme Rules rematch at the next PPV. **Vince** walked away and **Steph** disingenuously told **Shane** she supported his decision. – Once the match got going it was a lot of fun. Imagine if they didn't have to shoehorn the **McMahons** into the picture, how much better it could have been. The match was always going to end with the **Good Brothers & Usos** running in, however they still could have come up with something better than bringing out the **McMahons** to get themselves over as the real stars. There was no big storyline development as far as **AJ & the Good Brothers** goes, although it isn't really a surprise that they would want to save that for TV. (***) ¾)

RAW Ramblings – May 2nd 2016
Scottrade Centre: St Louis, MO.
Ben Carass.



They were still on the “New Era” kick on the post-Payback RAW, despite nothing actually changing at all, and the show felt very sporadic with a whole mess of bad segments strewn throughout. There were two show-long storylines, one of which was at least focused and booked with some logic.

AJ Styles was in the locker room with **Anderson & Gallows** early in the show and he told them he didn't know where he would be without his **Good Brothers**. They told **AJ** he was phenomenal during his match with **Reigns**, but **AJ** disagreed because he didn't win the title. **Styles** said there was no way **Reigns** would leave Extreme Rules as the WWE Champ. **Reigns** showed up and told **AJ** he respected him, but stated he had no respect for **Anderson & Gallows**. **Reigns** asked if the three of them could beat the three of “us” and the **Usos** appeared to set up a trios main event. Throughout the night, **Cole & JBL** referred to **Styles, Anderson & Gallows** as, “**The Club**” and mentioned New Japan a couple of times, which is still weird to me. **Cole** even noted that the last time they teamed up was a year ago in New Japan.

Main event was a good match, although they didn't really have enough time to really get going. **Reigns** once again had no problem fighting off **Anderson & Gallows** during and after the match. “**The Club**” got the heat on **Jey Uso**, however most of the crowd treated them like the faces. **Reigns** made the comeback and cleaned house. Finish saw **Anderson & Gallows** hit **Reigns** with the Boot of Doom on the outside and he landed on the barricade then **AJ** hit **Jimmy** with the Phenomenal Forearm to get the clean pin. Post-match was really quite great, as **Anderson & Gallows** tried to get **Styles** to hit **Reigns** with a chair. **AJ** refused, however the **Usos** came back and nailed the **Good Brothers** with the chair. **Styles** retaliated with a couple of chair shots to the **Usos**,

however **Reigns** saw **AJ** nail his cousins and he laid out **Styles** with a Superman Punch. **Reigns** ended up Powerbombing **Styles** through the announce table and stood over him with the WWE title to end the show. – I would have preferred the **Club** to have just come in and run rough-shot on everyone, however that is not the way WWE does things with outsiders. This dissension stuff is pretty lame, however if it eventually leads to the debut of **Finn Balor** and the **Good Brothers** turning on **AJ** I'll be fine with it.



The other big story was **Shane & Stephanie's** first night of running RAW together; **Cole** referred to them as “**The Siblings**” all night long. **Steph** opened the show and **Shane** quickly interrupted her. The gimmick was that **Stephanie** was trying to be nice all night long and she started here by giving **Shane** a present, which turned out to be the same picture of **Vince & Shane** that **Vince** smashed before WrestleMania. **Kevin Owens** came out and told them that he deserved an IC title rematch; **Cesaro** was out next and he said **Owens** cost him the IC title at Payback. **Shane** booked them in a #1 contenders match for the IC title, which went to a DQ in 11:30 when **Miz**, who was on commentary, attacked **Cesaro**. **Owens & Miz** went after **Cesaro** then **Sami Zayn** hit the ring and he ended up being the last man standing. **Sami** held up the IC title and the fans chanted, “Yes!” – Decent build to the inevitable four-way at Extreme Rules.

Later, **Stephanie** met with **Dean Ambrose** in the back and **Ambrose** told her that he didn't buy her new nice, friendly disposition. **Steph** said she would be a guest on the **Ambrose Asylum** and told **Dean** he could ask her anything he wanted. So, at the top of the third hour we had the **Ambrose Asylum** with **Stephanie**. The deal was that **Ambrose** tried to make **Stephanie** mad. He talked about her getting speared by **Roman Reigns** at Mania and said **Shane** had done a better job of running RAW than the **Authority** ever did. **Steph** didn't lose her cool and eventually just cancelled the **Ambrose Asylum**. **Ambrose** didn't really care and picked up his potted plant, **Mitch**, and started to leave. **Steph** announced the return of the Highlight Reel and introduced **Chris Jericho**. **Ambrose & Jericho** got into a brawl at ringside. As usual, **Ambrose** got his ass kicked in a fair fight then **Jericho** picked up **Mitch** and smashed **Ambrose** in the back of the head with his beloved plant. – This was no doubt too wacky for some, but believe it or not I actually liked this angle. Not the stuff with **Stephanie**, though. The **Ambrose/Jericho** potted plant saga goes back to before WrestleMania prior to them even feuding, so I am just impressed that **Creative** has managed to find a thread of

continuity in this story and have stuck with it. It is such a shame that the **Ambrose/Jericho** program is essentially built around a potted plant.



The follow up to the Montreal Screwjob angle they did a Payback was predictably weak. **Charlotte & Ric Flair** called out **Charles Robinson** and asked him if **Natalya** submitted to the Sharpshooter. “Yes, she did,” **Robinson** claimed and he added that **Nattie** begged him to stop the match. **Charlotte** asked if **Robinson's** long relationship with the **Flairs** had anything to do with his decision. **Robinson** said, “Yes,” then quickly changed his mind and said, “No.” She dismissed **Lil' Naitch** then **Nattie** came out and accused **Ric** of paying-off **Robinson**. **Nattie** said the **Harts** were better than the **Flairs**; **Charlotte** tried to attack but **Nattie** sent her packing. **Nattie** ended up putting **Ric** in the Sharpshooter and **Charlotte** pulled him to safety. Backstage, **Stephanie**, who was all over this show, booked **Charlotte vs. Nattie** at Extreme Rules in a Submission match and banned **Flair** from ringside. It made zero sense.

Filler: **Tyler Breeze** beat **Goldust** in 1:48 with a roll-up. **Truth** was in **Breeze's** corner and had a home made selfie stick in the form of a tree branch. **Fandango** was in **Goldust's** corner and he danced next to **Truth**, which distracted **Goldie** and he was pinned. Sucked. **New Day** came out and talked about **Enzo Amore** being okay after his nasty concussion at Payback. This led to the **Vaudevillains** and the **Dudleys** coming out for some banter. **Big Cass** showed up and called everyone SAWFT. Everyone brawled and this led to an atomicos match, which saw **New Day & Big Cass** beat the **Dudley Boyz & the Vaudevillains** in 15:48 when **Cass** pinned **D-Von** with his finish. Match went way too long; **Cass** was over big though. **Emma** pinned **Becky Lynch** after an eye poke and a **Michinoku Driver** in 5:45. **Primo & Epico** ate at a restaurant in Puerto Rico. There was a #1 contenders battle royal for the US title. **Kalisto** was on commentary and was a personality vacuum. All the geeks were eliminated early. **Baron Corbin** was eliminated by **Dolph Ziggler**, so he's officially been slotted. It came down to **Sheamus, Rusev, Del Rio & Zack Ryder**. **Del Rio** dumped **Sheamus**, **Ryder** dumped **Del Rio** then **Rusev** won when he threw **Ryder** over the top. **Lana** came out to celebrated with **Rusev**, so all is right with the world.

❤️ 小橋建太 (KENTA KOBASHI) liked your Tweet
Apr 25: @VicVenomBytes Oh man. I couldn't leave Misawa,
Kobashi, Kawada, and Tsuruta out of my top ten.



Life is great!



Contact

Subscribe Via Email: www.cubedcirclewrestling.com/subscribe-via-email
General Questions/Feedback/Suggestions: ryan@cubedcirclewrestling.com
Ben Carass' Twitter: @BenCarass
Paul Cooke's Twitter: @stomperspc
Ryan Clingman's Twitter : @RyanClingman