



## **Cubed Circle Newsletter 235 – Brands Be Splitting**

We (Ben) are back this week with issue 235, covering all of the major wrestling news from the week including Variety breaking news of the new brand split, Kane's budding political career, Rhodes resignation, Adam Rose, NOAH, surprise Ibushi appearance, Extreme Rules, RAW, and more!

– Ryan Clingman, *Cubed Circle Newsletter Editor*

### **The Pro-Wres Digest for May 22<sup>nd</sup> – May 28<sup>th</sup>**

*Ben Carass*

#### **Top Stories:**

So in 2016 we are in fact getting another brand split, because it worked so well the last time. SmackDown will be moving to Tuesday nights starting June 19<sup>th</sup> in the 8-10pm timeslot on the USA Network. Of all places, [Variety](#) broke the story and it was reported that there will be a Draft held some time before the first live SmackDown to determine the unique rosters for each show. The move to Tuesdays will be a big help come September when the NFL returns to Thursday nights, but more noteworthy than that is the fact that the second hour of SmackDown will be head-to-head with the first hour of TNA iMPACT on Pop TV. Sky in the UK and SportsNet in Canada will also be airing SmackDown live on Tuesday. The big scoop in the [Observer](#) was the news that the current plan is to have Shane & Stephanie in charge of one show each and the belief is that Roman Reigns will remain the top star on RAW, while John Cena will be the main focus of SmackDown. Another idea they have is to bring back a second World title for SmackDown, which will undoubtedly water-down the WWE title even more, although since the whole thing is Vince McMahon's idea anything can change at this point. The Observer noted that the decision was made in the last two weeks, but talks were held with the major TV partners (USA, Sky, SportsNet) before WrestleMania about moving SmackDown to Tuesdays.

There is no word yet on how the secondary champions will be handled, however it would make sense for the US & IC titles to become brand exclusive titles like they were in the past. The women's title is an interesting situation, as they just made a big deal about dropping the Divas moniker so it would be a tough sell if they brought back the Diva's title. They could have the champion work both shows, which would be the ideal scenario for the WWE World Champion, or they could just make a new title and call it something else. The same could be said for the Tag titles, although when they did the original brand split in 2002 they created the current version of the WWE Tag titles because RAW had its own World Tag Team champions. It is likely that we will see

guys from NXT getting called-up more frequently, as splitting the crews will undoubtedly weaken the talent pool of each show and the easiest place to find fresh talent is NXT. In turn, NXT will need to be replenished with its own top stars for drawing power at the major house shows. I imagine brother Paul and brother Canyon are saddling up their war horses in preparation to invade and pillage the sovereign states of ROH, New Japan, Evolve, AAA, CMLL, or even the fabled lost city of Impact, in search of new riches.



The new and improved brand split 2.0 will certainly affect the WWE's business model, however it could also have big consequences for the industry as a whole if all the best workers from around the world and constantly being cherry-picked to keep up with the rate of churn when it comes to making stars on two separate brands. It is also worth pointing out that the original brand split in 2002, just like this time around, was Vince McMahon's reaction to declining ratings, PPV numbers and live attendance. It didn't stop the decline at all and in all likelihood it helped speed up the nosedive and the brand extension soon became heavily watered down as a result.

Cody Rhodes [Tweeted](#) on 21/5 that he requested his release from WWE and on 24/5 his wife Eden (Brandi Runnels) also [announced](#) that she had left the company. Cody released a [lengthy statement](#) on 22/5 about the reason behind his decision to leave WWE and noted that his goal was to become WWE champion. Rhodes believed he could be “their star player, their varsity quarterback” but noted that HHH & Vince McMahon didn't see him at that level. He was mostly respectful of HHH & Vince, however the head writers of RAW & SmackDown (Ed Koskey & Ryan Ward) were buried mercilessly. Rhodes didn't use Koskey or Ward's names, but he accused one of them of “pretending to be Brain Gewirtz” and the other of “hitting on developmental divas;” it isn't too hard to figure out whom he was accusing of what. Rhodes claimed that he would constantly pitch ideas to the writers but they would go nowhere and he referred to the Stardust character as a “half-cocked idea.” He also stated that he didn't want his father's legacy to become “Stardust or a series of sizzle reels for NXT,” and finished by declaring, “I'm a wrestler. So that's what I'll do...wrestle.” Cody then [Tweeted](#) on 24/5 that something was going down with his wife within the next 24 hours and later

that night Eden revealed she “decided to part with WWE” to pursue an opportunity outside wrestling. WWE posted an hilarious one sentence [statement](#) regarding Eden's departure and noted that they had granted her request to be released. Eden released her own long-winded [statement](#) on her release. She seemed to not like the idea of being told what to do and said she “followed the rules” growing up and now in her 30's she was “too creative and awesomely weird to hold that sh\*t in.” So basically, she has no idea what it is like to be a normal human being working a normal job in the real world.

Adam Rose was finally put out of his misery on 23/5 when WWE [released](#) him from the company, per his “request.” Rose (Ray Leppan) was indefinitely suspended by WWE after being arrested for witness tampering and domestic battery on 11/5. He appeared in court on 12/5 when it emerged that this was the second incident of domestic battery involving Leppan. His bond was set at a measly \$1,000 and he was ordered to see his pastor once a week for “counselling” until his next court date in June. Leppan was already serving a 60 day suspension for failing a Wellness test on April 16<sup>th</sup> and he didn't do himself any favours by disputing the Wellness failure by [posting](#) a note from his doctor on Twitter claiming that he was taking medication for ADHD.

Kane did an [interview](#) with a local NBC affiliate in Knoxville, TN and revealed that he was seriously considering running as the Republican candidate for the Knox County Mayoral seat in 2018. Glen Jacobs, a staunch libertarian, noted that his goal is to bring an “outside fresh perspective” to the role of Mayor and spouted his wacky libertarian values about Government staying out of the way of free enterprise. The story also claims that there were “rumours” in 2013 that the Tea Party Republicans met with Jacobs in the hopes that he would run against Republican and incumbent U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander. Jacobs and his wife lived in East Tennessee since 1995 and moved with their two sons to Knoxville three years ago.



[Forbes](#) revealed this week that Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel was secretly funding the Hulk Hogan lawsuits against Gawker Media. Thiel, a co-founder of PayPal and an early investor in Facebook, is reportedly worth \$2.8 billion and has personally been footing Hogan's legal bills in the battle with the smut-peddlers. Gawker founder Nick Denton said in an interview he had a “hunch” that someone in Silicon Valley was providing financial aid for Hogan. In 2007 the now defunct publication Valleywag, which was owned by Gawker, tried to out Thiel as gay before it was public knowledge and Thiel compared the Gawker owned publication to “Al Qaeda.” The presiding judge Pamela Campbell refused to overturn the \$140 million payout set by the jury this week. Gawker could pay another \$50 million to

take the case to the Florida Second District Court of Appeals, although if they lose that appeal the \$50 million would go to Hogan as well.

Sasha Banks suffered a concussion at the Charlottesville, VA house show on 15/5 under bizarre circumstances. She was teaming with Becky Lynch & Paige against Eva Marie, Dana Brooke & Lana and somehow the referee Darrick Moore accidentally kned Sasha in the head very hard. Banks had not been featured on TV much as they were holding her off for a big program with Charlotte for SummerSlam. Dave Meltzer stated in the [Observer](#) that Vince McMahon already believes that Sasha is “injury prone” and even compared her to Daniel Bryan in the past. F4WOnline noted in the 27/5 [daily update](#) that Sasha would be back working the weekend house shows in Winnipeg, MB and LaCrosse, WI.

## **Indie Scene:**

Evolve's next double-shot weekend is June 10 & 11 in Florida. Evolve 62 takes place on 10/6 from Tampa, FL and the main event is Timothy Thatcher defending the Evolve World title against Chris Hero. After his surprise appearance at Evolve 61, EC3 teams with Drew Galloway to face Johnny Gargano & TJP in a Non-Sanction match. Matt Riddle will face Cedric Alexander and Drew Gulak & Tracy Williams will defend the Evolve Tag titles against the Bravado Brothers. Evolve 63 is 11/6 from Orlando and the main event is a "WWE Cruiserweight Flashpoint Elimination Match," with Johnny Gargano vs. Drew Gulak vs. TJP vs. Lince Dorado vs. TBA. EC3 has an open contract to face anyone on the show, Drew Galloway faces Ethan Page in an Anything Goes match and Matt Riddle takes on Trevor Lee.

AAW announced the line up for their "Killer Among Us" show on 17/6 in Merrionette Park, IL. The three top matches are, Sami Callihan & Dave Crist vs. Eddie Kingstn & Homicide. Zack Sabre Jr vs. Johnny Gargano and Chris Hero vs. Drago.

Legendary UK wrestler Johnny Kidd (60), is working his retirement match on the Chikara show in Manchester, England on 28/5 against Mike Quackenbush. Match will be under World of Sport rules and will two-out-of-three falls with eight three minute rounds.

FIP ran an iPPV on WWNLive on 27/5 and you can order the show on VOD [here](#). Main event saw Fred Yehi challenging Caleb Konley for the FIP World Heavyweight title.

## **Japan:**

Here are the current standings (as of 28/5) for the New Japan Best of the Super Juniors. Day 7 of the tournament is on 29/5 in Osaka.

### **A Block:**

Kyle O'Reilly (3-0 = 6 points)  
Rysuke Taguchi (3-0 = 6 points)  
Rocky Romero (2-1 = 4 points)  
Matt Sydal (2-1 = 4 points)  
Gedo (1-2 = 2 points)  
Kushida (1-2 = 2 points)  
Bushi (0-3 = 0 points)  
David Finlay (0-3 = 0 points)

### **B Block:**

Volador Jr (2-1 = 4 points)  
Jushin "Thunder" Liger (2-1 = 4 points)  
Ricochet (2-1 = 4 points)  
Barreta (2-1 = 4 points)  
Tiger Mask (1-2 = 2 points)  
Chase Owens (1-2 = 2 points)  
Will Ospreay (1-2 = 2 points)  
Bobby Fish (1-2 = 2 points)

Kota Ibushi made a surprise appearance at the DDT show in Osaka on 22/5 and teamed with Gota

Ihashi to win a Tag Team Rumble. In the main event, Konosuke Takeshita beat his mentor Zero in 23:29 with a Cross Arm German Suplex. Takeshita wept and was presented Zero's mask afterwards and said he was determined to win the KO-D title from Daisuke Sasaki on 29/5.

Real Japan Pro Wrestling announced a rematch from December last year, as Daisuke Sekimoto will defend the Legends Championship against the man he beat for the title, Masakatsu Funaki, on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at Korakuen Hall.



Jun Akiyama beat Daichi Hashimoto at 15:33 of the semi-main event of All Japan's show in Yokohama on 21/5 with the Wrist Clutch Exploder. Main event saw Zeus & Yutaka Yoshie beat Triple Crown Champion Kento Miyahara & Jake Lee in 17:18 when Yoshie pinned Lee with a Body Press. Also on the show, Isami Kodaka of Basara beat Yuma Aoyagi in 9:33 with the Zetsuyari. Aoyagi said afterwards that even though he lost he wanted to be on the All Japan vs. Wrestle-1 show in August then added he had intentions of competing in the upcoming Super J-Cup.

All Japan also ran Korakuen Hall on 25/5 and drew a reported 1,396 fans to see Kento Miyahara successfully defend the Triple Crown against the Champion's Carnival winner, Daisuke Sekimoto in 20:06. Kengo Mashimo came out afterwards and put himself forward as Miyahara's next title challenger. Suwama made his return from surgery on his right Achilles tendon and announced on the show that he was returning to the ring on July 14<sup>th</sup> at Korakuen to team with Atsushi Aoki & Naoya Nomura in a match against Zeus, Shuji Ishikawa & Super Tiger.

Io Shirai won a tournament on 21/5 in Barcelona, Spain to become the first ever SWA World Women's Champion. She beat Kay Lee Ray in the first round and downed Dragonita in the semi-final, before defeating Toni Storm in the final.

NOAH are running Great Voyage 2016 from the Edion Arena in Osaka on 28/5 and on 24/5 they shot an angle for the main event during a press conference. The GHC Heavyweight Championship contract signing between champion Takeshi Sugiura and challenger Go Shiozaki turned into a wild brawl when Sugiura attacked Shiozaki with a chair. Here's the full line-up for Great Voyage 2016:

\* Muhammed Yone, Quiet Storm & Akitoshi Saito vs. Yoshinari Ogawa, Shiro Tomoyose & Kaito Kiyomiya.

\* Taiji Ishimori, Hitoshi Kumano, Genba Hirayanagi & Captain NOAH vs. Yoshinobu Kanemaru, Taichi, El Desperado & TAKA Michinoku.

\* Katsuhiko Nakajima & Masa Kitamiya vs. Minoru Suzuki & Takashi Iizuka.

\* Maybach Taniguchi vs. Shelton X Benjamin.

\* **GHC Junior Tag Championship Match:** Daisuke Harada & Atsushi Kotoge (C) vs. Kenoh & Hajime Ohara.

\* **GHC Junior Heavyweight Championship Match:** Yoshinobu Kanemaru (C) vs. Hitoshi Kumano.

\* **GHC Tag Championship Match:** Lance Archer & Davey Boy Smith Jr. (C) vs. Naomichi

Marufuji & Toru Yano.

\* **GHC Heavyweight Championship Match:** Takashi Sugiura (C) vs. Go Shiozaki.



## Mexico:

All of the teams for the Lucha World Cup have now been announced, so let's try and make sense of what will be happening during the first week in June. The first show is on 3/6 in Puebla and it will feature the first round of both the men's and women's brackets, plus the quarter-finals of the men's and the semi-final of the women's division. The finals take place on 5/6 in Mexico City at the Palacio de los Deportes and will feature the semi-finals, third place match and the finals of both men and women's divisions. According to the [Cubs Fan](#), both shows will be taped for AAA TV although he also noted that AAA have yet to announce anything about either show airing live on PPV or iPPV. The initial idea was for both shows to be shown on traditional PPV in the Mexico, Canada & the US, however that soon changed to only the second show and not long after that it turned out that neither show would be on traditional PPV. AAA had run iPPVs before, with varying levels of success, but haven't streamed a live show since October last year and have not announced anything regarding the World Cup. Here are the full list of teams for the tournament:

## Men's Division:

1. Team NOAH: Taiji Ishimori, Naomichi Marufuji, Mayback Taniguchi.
2. Team Zero One/Ouduo: Masato Tanaka, Akebono, Ikuto Hidaka.
3. Team AAA: Pentagon Jr., Texano Jr., Psycho Clown.
4. Team Leyendas: Canek, La Parka (AAA), Blue Demon Jr.
5. Team Internacional: Rey Mysterio, Dragon Azteca Jr., Dr. Wagner Jr.
6. Team TNA: Ethan Carter III, Eli Drake, Tyrus.

7. Team Lucha Underground: Brian Cage, Johnny Mundo, Chavo Guerrero Jr.
8. Team Rest of the World: Mil Muertes, Rockstar Spud, Apolo.

#### Women's Division:

1. Team Japan (WAVE/OZ): Aja Kong, Yuki Miyazaki, Natsu Sumire.
2. Team Mexico (AAA): Lady Apache, Mary Apache, Faby Apache.
3. Team USA: Santana Garrett, Sienna (Allysin Kay), Cheerleader Melissa.
4. Team Canada: Taya, Allie (Cherry Bomb), KC Spinelli.

Dragon Lee re-injured his knee on 23/5 at the CMLL Arena Puebla show after only being back a week. Match was Dragon Lee, Titan & Valiente vs. Euforia, Gran Guerrero & Niebla Roja. Lee took a Flapjack and came down badly on his knee and could not finish the match. Things pretty much fell apart when Lee got hurt and they went home as quickly as possible when Guerrero submitted Valiente with the Pulpo Guerrero in 2:16 of the third fall. Also on the show, Okumura, Fujin & Raijin scored a rare foreign rudo win over Esfinge, Guerrero Maya Jr & Rey Cometa.

#### Misc:

There was a note in the [Observer](#) regarding this situation with Summer Rae, who had not been on TV or wrestled on the road for a month. She returned last weekend after recovering from a concussion and worked Natalya for Superstars on 23/5 and Paige on the Main Event tapings on 24/5.

Chris Jericho took a shot at former WWE writers on Twitter on 27/5. He [Tweeted](#), “Funny to hear ex @WWE “writers” (who worked for the company for a matter of months) give their “expert” opinion on hack podcasts #pathetic.”

Lanny Poffo posted an awesome story about his brother Randy Savage on [Facebook](#) this week about Randy rescuing a “one armed kitty” about six months before he died. Lanny added that Randy's wife still owns the cat, named “JYC” in honour of Randy's good friend JYD.

The former TMDK, Mikey Nicholls & Shane Haste, debuted on NXT TV this week. Their new names are Nick Miller & Shane Thorne and their team name is TM-61. They lost a very good TV match to Johnny Gargano & Tommaso Ciampa.

#### Ratings:

RAW on 22/5 with the Extreme Rules fallout did a 2.29 rating with 3,261,000 viewers, up slightly from the 2.26 and 3,174,000 last week. 8pm did 3,359,000. 9pm did 3,332,000 and 10pm did 3,115,000.

The two-hour RAW replay on Sy-Fy on 20/5 did 467,000 viewers with no promotion whatsoever.

iMPACT on 23/5 set a record high with 359,000 viewers. They were averaging 371,000 for the combined audience when they still had a replay of the show.

Lucha Underground on 24/5 did a combined 182,000 viewers, the highest number since 20/4. The first-run airing did 114,000, down from 127,000 last week, and the replay did 68,000, up from 37,000 last week. They also had the youngest median viewership age all year: 44.8 years-old.

## WWE Extreme Rules – May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016

Prudential Centre: Newark, NJ.

Ben Carass.



Extreme Rules was typical of the WWE product lately. We got two really great matches, with the IC title four-way and the main event, however the rest of the show ranged from insignificant to painfully boring, with the usual pinch of moronic booking thrown in for good measure. The big news was the return of **Seth Rollins** after **Roman Reigns** retained the WWE title over **AJ Styles** in a great main event. **Rollins** laid out **Reigns** and held up the title and the fans went crazy. **Miz** retained the IC title in an excellently booked four-way that advanced the **Owens/Zayn** story and set **Cesaro** up for a potential rematch.

As good as those two matches were, the rest of the show was almost equally bad. **The Club & The Usos** didn't even get 9 minutes to do their match. Nobody cared about **Rusev/Kalisto**. The **Vaudevillains** lost to the **New Day** in 6:25 – that'll get them over. **Ambrose & Jericho** bored the crowd to tears with a 26 minute snorer that would have fit right in on the TNA PPV of your choice. **Charlotte & Natalya** were again shafted on time and given an atrocious finish which resulted in another disappointing match.

### Pre-Show:

The **Dudley Boyz** came out and cut a heel promo about killing off ECW. **Big Cass** showed up and made fun off them for being fat. They got into a brawl and **Cass** fought off both **Dudleyz**; **Cass** stood tall and called them SAWFT. **Rusev & Lana** did the AMA segment in the Social Media lounge and they were great. **Baron Corbin** pinned **Dolph Ziggler** in a nothing No DQ match at 7:07 (\*\*). The only reason the No DQ stip was in place was so **Corbin** could use a low-blow before hitting his finish for the win.

### Main Show:

**Texas Tornado Match: The Usos vs. Karl Anderson & Luke Gallows. – Anderson & Gallows** over in 8:37. Match was fun while it lasted but felt very rushed and could have done with another 5 minutes or-so. Crowd hated the **Usos**. Everybody fought everywhere. **The Club** hit the Boot of Doom off the apron early on. **Usos** hit some Superkicks; **Jimmy** gave **Anderson** a running hip attack into the barricade but **Gallows** tossed **Jimmy** into the crowd. Finish saw **Gallows** try to use the bell, but **Jey** cut him off and went for the Superfly Splash. **Gallows** moved and the **Club** pinned **Jey** with the Magic Killer. – A much needed win for the **Club** and they created a story for the main event with the **Usos** being carried out by some referees. The announcers sold the idea that the **Club** would have the numbers advantage with the **Usos** being carried out. (\*\*\*)

**US Championship: Kalisto (C) vs. Rusev w/Lana. – Rusev** became the new champ at 9:40. They basically had a RAW match. **Rusev** worked over the back; fans weren't into **Kalisto** at all and chanted for **Lana**. **Kalisto** made his comeback and landed at dive to the floor. Finish saw **Rusev** slam **Kalisto** on the apron and **Kalisto** sold like he was paralysed. The doctor checked on **Kalisto**

and the referee held **Rusev** back from killing him some more. **JBL** tried to sell the idea that **Rusev** would be DQ'd and wouldn't win the title, but **Cole** pointed out that a ref stoppage would in fact give **Rusev** the title. **Rusev** grabbed **Kalisto** and put him in a brutal Accolade and **Kalisto** tapped like crazy; it was a really great visual to be fair. – The finish was a weird deal, but the Accolade looked tremendous. It's great that they have actually made an effort to heat **Rusev** up again, however he once again seems destined to be vanquished by **John Cena** on Memorial Day just like he was in 2015. (\*\*)



**WWE Tag Team Championship: New Day (Big E & Xavier Woods) w/Kofi Kingston (C) vs. The Vaudevillains.** – **New Day** retained in 6:25. **New Day** did a promo beforehand and were super over. **Xavier** was upset about his time machine being destroyed and encouraged women to DM him pictures and videos. **Big E** had some hoes and said since they were in the Garden State they were going to put a couple of hoes in the ground. Match was nothing; heat on **Xavier**, **Big E** made the comeback. **Vaudevillains** nailed **Kofi** on the floor then hit the Whirling Dervish but **Xavier** kicked out. **Big E** speared **English** off the apron and nearly killed himself again. **Kofi** gave **Gotch** a receipt with a kick and **Xavier** pinned him with a Shining Wizard. – I don't know where the **Vaudevillains** go from here, but they probably made the right decision by not putting the titles on them. (\*\*)

**IC Championship Fatal Four-Way: Miz w/Maryse (C) vs. Cesaro vs. Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens.** – **Miz** retained in 18:16. Excellent match. **Zayn** smashed **Owens** with a Yakuza kick immediately after the bell then **Cesaro** took out **Miz** with a running European Uppercut. **Cesaro & Sami** did some stuff and it was great. **Sami** landed a dive onto **Miz & Cesaro**; **Owens** came back and worked over **Sami**. They did a Tower of Doom and an awesome spot that saw **Cesaro** German Suplex **Owens** while **Owens** gave **Sami** a high cradle Exploder. **Owens** went nuts with Cannonballs on everyone; **Cesaro** kicked out of the Skull Crushing Finale then tapped out **Miz** with the Sharpshooter but the ref was distracted by **Maryse**. **Sami** caught **Cesaro** with a beautiful Sunset Powerbomb for a great near-fall. **Owens** drilled **Sami** with a Superkick and hit **Cesaro** with the Pop-up Powerbomb. **Miz** hit **Owens** with the Skull Crushing Finale for a quadruple-down and the fans gave them a standing ovation. Finish saw **Sami** hit **Cesaro** with the Yakuza kick but **Owens** pulled him out of the ring and **Miz** slid in to steal the win. – I wasn't really expecting this match to be so great, however with three amazing workers in **Owens, Zayn & Cesaro**, it would have been almost impossible for this to be anything but great; even **Miz** held up his end of the deal. The

**Owens/Zayn** feud was kept alive by **Owens** costing **Sami** the title and you would think that both of them will end up in the Money in the Bank match. **Cesaro** got the visual tap-out, so he has a ready made rematch if they want to go that route. A really great, well laid out, match. (\*\*\*\*)

**Asylum Match: Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho.** – **Ambrose** over in 26:21. Match was purgatory. Why it had to go 26 minutes is beyond me, especially considering how short some of the undercard matches were. Maybe a segment got cut, but still this was way too long. They couldn't follow the four-way. Story of the match was both men going up to get the weapons and then using them – it was about as exciting as it reads. Crowd got bored and chanted “We want **Rollins.**” **Ambrose** dove off the cage to very little reaction and it wasn't even the finish. **Ambrose** had a bag of tacks hidden in a bucket and they teased going into them. **Jericho** eventually took a nasty bump into the tacks and **Ambrose** pinned him with Dirty Deeds. – Many people made WCW/TNA jokes when they booked this match and funnily enough it actually turned out like a WCW match from 2000 or every TNA garbage match ever. (\* ¼)

**WWE Women's Championship Submission Match: Charlotte (C) vs. Natalya.** – **Charlotte**



retained in 9:50. Once again these girls didn't get much time and were lumbered with a terrible finish. They both went for submissions; it wasn't very exciting. **Charlotte** hit a big Moonsault but **Nattie** got her in the Sharpshooter. **Ric Flair's** music played and **Dana Brooke** came out dressed as **Flair**. **Nattie** was of course distracted like an idiot and **Charlotte** tapped her out with the Figure Eight. Afterwards, **Flair** showed up and did the strut with **Dana** and they all celebrated together. – **Natalya & Charlotte** have never been able to recreate the chemistry they had in NXT on the main roster, probably because they were able to do whatever they wanted in NXT and are severely hindered by asinine booking and agenting on the main roster. They clearly love **Dana Brooke** and putting her with **Charlotte** is a big step up from **Emma**. I personally

don't think she is ready, but we'll see how she does in the role. (\*¾).

**WWE World Heavyweight Championship Extreme Rules Match: Roman Reigns (C) vs. AJ Styles.** – **Reigns** retained in 22:12. Tremendous main event with all kinds of big spots. **Reigns** was of course despised and **JBL** regurgitated the same garbage we've heard for a decade about **John Cena**. They did the late 90's walk-and-brawl through the crowd early and ended up over at the Pre-show set. **Styles** hit a forearm off the table and they brawled back towards ringside. **Styles** removed the mats and went for **Styles Clash** on the floor, but **Reigns** countered. **Styles** went for another **Clash** on the German announce table and **Reigns** gave him a huge backdrop through the English table. **Reigns** hit a nice **Black Tiger Bomb** for a near-fall. **Styles** countered the Spear with a Chop-block and **Reigns** sold his knee. They ended up back on the floor and **Reigns** slammed **Styles** into the LED board on the apron then Powerbombed him through the Spanish table. **Styles** avoided a Spear on the floor and **Reigns** crashed through the barricade. **Anderson & Gallows** hit the ring and gave **Reigns** the Boot of Doom then put **Styles** on top of **Reigns**, who kicked out for a nice near-fall. **The Usos** showed up, completely no-selling the beating they took earlier, and cleared the **Club** with Superkicks. They Superkicked **Styles** and hit the Superfly Splash then put **Reigns** on top of **Styles**, but **AJ** kicked out. **Anderson & Gallows** took out the **Usos** at ringside, however **Reigns** fought them off with Superman Punches. **Reigns** kicked out of the **Styles Clash**, so **AJ** hit another **Clash** onto a chair. One of the **Uso** grabbed **AJ's** foot, which bought **Reigns** just enough time to

kick out. **Styles** went crazy and destroyed the **Usos & Reigns** with chair shots. Finish saw **Styles** go for the Phenomenal Forearm and **Reigns** countered in mid-air with the Spear to get the win. Afterwards, **Seth Rollins** made his return and attacked **Reigns** during his celebration. **Rollins** was the most over guy on the show by far and he laid **Reigns** out with a Pedigree. Fans chanted, “Thank you **Rollins**” and the show went off the air with **Rollins** holding up the WWE title. – **Styles** worked his ass off here and took an amazing amount of punishment to deliver a great main event. Clearly **Rollins** is going to take the main event spot against **Reigns**, so who knows where they go with **Styles & the Club** now. Hopefully they will keep them strong until whatever happens when **Balor** shows up and don't go with a **Club vs. Wyatts** feud or something equally as lame in the meantime. **Rollins** is supposed to be the heel, however the crowd treated him like a hero and it will probably be the same story in most cities. The worst thing about **Vince's** utter pig-headedness about going with **Reigns** is that we have to listen to the same, “love him or hate him, the fans are passionate about him,” tripe we have been subjected to for over a decade now with **Cena**. I for one am not looking forwards for ten more years of the fans booing **Reigns** and the commentators telling us it doesn't matter. (\*\*\*\*¼)



**RAW Ramblings – May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016**  
**Royal Farms Arena: Baltimore, MD.**  
*Ben Carass.*

Let's get it straight. RAW was boring as all sin, however they set up things for Money in the Bank so it wasn't a complete bust. I know the horse bolted a long time ago but these three hour shows are just absolute killers. We got some qualifying matches for the MITB Ladder match and they firmly established **Seth Rollins** as a heel challenger for **Roman Reigns**, which in theory sounds like a solid TV show, but even a potentially good show on paper can not overcome the burden of a three hour timeslot.

**Seth Rollins** was the most over guy on the entire Extreme Rules show and he was given a hero's welcome when he opened up RAW. So naturally, **Vince McMahon** had **Rollins** go out there and cut a heel promo about how the fans only cared about him when he got hurt. **Rollins** went right back to

being his old whiny chicken heel routine and said he ripped up all the get well cards that the fans sent him. **Rollins** said he never lost the WWE title and stated he wanted it back. **Roman Reigns** showed up and was hated. **Rollins** slid out of the ring to avoid **Reigns** then **Shane McMahon** showed up and booked **Reigns vs. Rollins** at Money in the Bank for the title. Later, **Rollins** met with **Stephanie** in the back and tried to give her a hug. **Steph** blew him off and told him things have changed and it was the New Era. – This was typical **Vince McMahon**. They had a ready made babyface with **Rollins**, however **Vince** thumbed his nose at going with the obvious choice and stuck with the same plan that has been failing for over a year. I didn't expect them to turn **Reigns** heel or anything, but they could have at least ridden the babyface momentum **Rollins** had for a while – **Seth** is going to get cheered at Money in the Bank no matter what anyway.



They shot a pretty weak break-up angle for **The Club**. **AJ Styles** cut a promo in the ring and put over **Reigns** as a tough guy – the fans booed **AJ** for this. **Styles** said he would have won the WWE title if not for all the interference from the **Club & the Usos**. **Gallows & Anderson** came out and took exception to this. **AJ** said they would always be brothers but needed to distance himself from them professionally and noted he wanted to do things on his own. **Gallows & Anderson** would have none of it and told **Styles** they were no longer friends or brothers. – Segment was completely lacklustre and **AJ** very much came off like a jerk for dumping his buddies who tried to help him win the title. At least this will set up **Balor** coming in, but they could have tried a little harder to get **Styles** out of the picture.

The Money in the Bank qualifiers made up the bulk of the show with varying degrees of success and we got five of the seven participants in the match. Main event was **Kevin Owens vs. AJ Styles**. Both men were great and worked hard to put on a good match, however the crowd had been killed by the monotony of the show so it was a struggle to get the fans into it at first. **Owens** won clean in 16:31 with the Pup-up Powerbomb to qualify for the MITB. **Sami Zayn** beat **Sheamus** in the opener in 10:03 to qualify; it was a decent little TV match. **Renee** tried to interview **Apollo Crews** in the back, but **Sheamus** attacked him to set up a feud between the two. **Cesaro** downed **Miz** in the second qualifier at 11:17 of another solid outing. **Chris Jericho** beat **Apollo Crews** in a sloppy 7:45 match to earn a spot in the MITB. **Crews** wasn't selling a lick from the **Sheamus** attack earlier. **Jericho** had a bunch of band aids stuck all over his back from the thumb tacks and **Crews** even worked them over at one point. **Dean Ambrose** pinned **Dolph Ziggler** in 12:10 with his DDT in a

face vs. face match that the crowd didn't care about at all as it occurred during the third hour. **Ambrose** didn't sell a thing after the 26 minute cage match the night before. – The MITB match should be great this year wit all the talent in it. I don't know where **AJ Styles** goes in the meantime while we wait for **Balor**, but hopefully it won't involve him losing anymore matches clean on TV.



**Enzo Amore** returned on the show and was super over with all his catchphrases. He cut a great promo on the **Dudleyz** and **Cass** called them SAWFT. **Dudleyz** came out and we got **Big Cass vs. Bubba Ray**. **Enzo** got physical and did some stuff on the floor with **D-Von**. **Cass** pinned **Bubba** with the Empire Elbow in 3:16. Match was nothing but it was nice to see **Enzo** back.



**Charlotte** kicked **Ric Flair** to the curb and we have probably seen the last of **Flair** on TV for the foreseeable future. **Charlotte, Dana Brooke & Flair** came out for a promo. **Flair** talked about **Charlotte** as a kid and told her he was proud to be her father. Crowd were so interested that they chanted, “boring” at **Richard Morgan Fliehr**. **Charlotte** went on this ungodly long and hideously

delivered speech about **Flair** not being there for her when she was growing up. There was campy, over the top hammy acting, fake tears from **Charlotte** and real tears from **Flair** which made **Charlotte** cry for real. It went on and on and got more insufferable with each second. Finally **Charlotte** told **Flair** to get out of her ring. **Flair** left in tears and Charlotte awkwardly sang the “Goodbye” song. In the back, **Arn Anderson** tried to console **Flair** and **Renee** approached him for an interview. A teary-eyed **Flair** had nothing to say and he walked off into the night on his own. – With **Vince's** hatred of old people on his TV show, it was inevitable that **Flair** would get the boot eventually. Somebody needs to tell **Charlotte** to scale back her promo delivery about 20%, because all she does is yell and belabour every syllable to the point of absurdity.



**Vanilla Filler:** **New Day** brought out a cake to celebrate the 1,200 episode of RAW. **Big E** teased throwing the cake over the announcers then the **Social Outcasts** attacked them to set up a match. **New Day** beat **Slater, Dallas & Axel** in 1:58 and **Slater** ended up taking the cake in the face spot afterwards. They showed the **Darren Young/Bob Backlund** skit from SmackDown; **Backlund** didn't approve of **Young** saying the word, “Damn” and told him to do 200 jumping jacks. It sucked. **Jo-Jo** interview **Baron Corbin** and **Dolph Ziggler** showed up and told him he could beat him in a technical wrestling match. **Corbin** said he didn't grow up watching WWE and didn't care about technical wrestling; the only thing he cared about was making money. They agreed to have another match for some ungodly reason.



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