

FROM the DESK OF...

I WON'T BORE you with the reasons why, but this issue required a slightly quicker turnaround for us than usual. That's both a blessing and a curse—a curse because we have a shorter editorial lead time, and it's tougher meeting our print deadline. But it's also a good thing, because it means we can react more immediately to what's going on *right now*.

Because of our print schedule, for instance, we were able to provide in-depth coverage of AEW's Double or Nothing event, while Al Castle's "Hotseat" interview with Britt Baker was conducted after her recent world title victory.

Even with the shorter lead time, there are bound to be things that happen after press time. Not to peel back the curtain too much, but Harry Burkett's "Ringside" is typically one of the final pieces written in every issue. It is, after all, a news column.

Typically, Harry will be able to weigh in on the various important topics that are relevant just before press time, from untimely passings to breaking news stories. But, even though he wrote extensively about WWE's May budget cuts, Harry's column was written and edited before the June talent releases.

As I write this, we don't have much information—even rumors—about why these cuts were made, but WWE shocked fans and analysts alike on June 2 by officially parting ways with Braun Strowman, Aleister Black, Lana, Ruby Riott, Buddy Murphy, and Santana Garrett. These releases are all surprising in their own way, as any one of these performers had quite a bit to offer the company.

Perhaps least surprising is the release of Santana Garrett—not because she isn't a talented wrestler, but because she hasn't been used much in recent months (and, for NXT talent, that's usually not a good sign).

In the case of Buddy Murphy, WWE is letting go of the man who revitalized *205 Live* with his remarkable athleticism and in-ring presence. More recently, he played second fiddle to Seth Rollins, and seemed headed for an awkward romance angle with Rey Mysterio's daughter, Aalyah.

As Heidi Lovelace, Ruby Riott was considered one of the best woman wrestlers on the independent circuit. She took part in some memorable moments and matches as leader of The Riott Squad, but, for some reason, never captured any WWE gold. She'll be a great addition to any locker room, whether it's one of a major promotion or on the indies.

Poor Lana! After Rusev became Miro in AEW, she was put through the ringer—or, literally, a table—week after week by Nia Jax. Miro noted in an interview with *PWI* that it was difficult to watch this unfold, seeming to believe it was a kind of hazing or rib against his real-life wife. It seems inevitable that the happy couple will be reunited somehow in AEW.

Aleister Black is a former NXT champion who, just last year, scored a convincing *WrestleMania* win over current World champ Bobby Lashley. This year, he's hardly been seen at all. Following some strange vignettes aired on recent episodes of *Smackdown*, he's been squandered.

Finally: Braun Strowman. After squashing Goldberg at *WrestleMania 36*, Strowman charted a lengthy, though not particularly eventful, reign as WWE Universal champion. Given WWE's continued faith in him, it's hard to imagine this is anything but a financial decision.

Here's hoping each of these wrestlers finds success in their future endeavors ... wherever and whatever those might be.

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