

Smackdown – September 20, 2013: The Strangest Gauntlet Match Ever

Sorry for the delay as I was at a WWE house show. Report coming.

Smackdown

Date: September 20, 2013

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're past Night of Champions and the main story is that there's no WWE Champion. Bryan won the title on Sunday but has been stripped of it due to an alleged conspiracy between he and now fired referee Scott Armstrong. On Raw however, the roster finally came together to fight back against HHH and the Corporation, giving us an interesting battle for the first time since this began, which was somehow just over a month ago. Let's get to it.

We open with a look back at Night of Champions and Raw, set up through an interview with HHH. He compares the scandal with Armstrong to Pete Rose hypothetically conspiring with an umpire to fix the World Series.

Here's Vickie to open things up. She says she has a thrilling and exciting show planned for us tonight, but first she has to introduce the laughing stock of the WWE. Bob Backlund held the WWE Championship for over 2,000 days, but this man held it for less than a day: Daniel Bryan. Daniel says he'd rather be champion for one day than being a shrill corporate suck-up for his entire life. Vickie gives him an opportunity to come clean but Bryan says the truth is he kneed Orton in the face for three. It could have been a twenty count because Orton was out cold.

Bryan says he should still be champion but Vickie says he should be fired. Daniel says everyone is grateful that Vickie has no real power, but Vickie would rather talk about the people that got involved at the end of the night. Those people would be Ziggler, the Usos, R-Truth, Justin Gabriel, Zack Ryder, the Prime Time Players, Kofi Kingston and Rob Van Dam. Tonight it's going to be an 11-3 handicap gauntlet match. The idea is all eleven of them will come down to face the Shield 3-1 until Shield has defeated them all. Bryan is lucky enough to go last.

Naomi vs. AJ

Non-title. Natalya is on commentary and talks about how AJ is riding the coattails of the Total Divas who have revolutionized the division. AJ easily takes Naomi down and hooks a cravate as Natalya calls AJ an opportunist for how she kept the title on Sunday. A running back elbow gets two for the champion, though Natalya is FAR more entertaining, trying to make the Total Divas sound like good people. Naomi comes back with a dropkick and the Rear View for two. AJ's sleeper is quickly broken up but she grabs the Black Widow for the submission at 3:25.

Rating: D+. The match was nothing but this story is ranging anywhere from so bad it's hilarious to horrible depending on how you look at it. The problem is the whole angle hinges on no one ever watching Total Divas, because there's no way to cheer for any of its cast, but AJ is being presented as a stuck up villain who lords her title over everyone in sight.

Jack Swagger vs. Santino Marella

Colter tells Santino to take the ravioli out of his ears and asks if he has the proper papers to own a reptile. During Santino's entrance, JBL and Cole hype up Billy Gunn as the guests on their show by saying Road Dogg's catchphrases. Swagger throws Santino down and shouts at him a lot before hooking a double armbar. Santino comes back with his usual sequence before hooking a backslide to pin Swagger at 2:02. When I'm

feeling sorry for Jack Swagger, it's a bad sign.

Ryback vs. Nick Nardone

Nardone is OVW Champion Jamin Olivencia. Before the match, Heyman talks about Punk giving him all he could handle at Night of Champions, but only one of them could come out on top. Ryback says Heyman doesn't deserve to be picked on by a bully like Punk, so he's going to treat Nick like he'll treat Punk. It's a fifty second match with the Meat Hook and Shell Shock ending Nardone, as you would expect.

Here's Orton with something to say. He talks about Bryan and Armstrong taking the title from him at Night of Champions, but that was 100% his own fault. He never should have been in that position but he's spent two years repressing who he really is for the fans. Orton locked away the Viper because that's what everyone wanted. But then Monday night on Raw, HHH and Stephanie showed Orton what he really should be. We get a clip of the attack on Miz from Raw, which Orton calls a warning to anyone who gets in his path. At Battleground, he's going to end the war with Daniel Bryan and be his own WWE Champion.

Shield vs. Usos/Prime Time Players/Justin Gabriel/Zack Ryder/Kofi Kingston/Rob Van Dam/Dolph Ziggler/Daniel Bryan/R-Truth

It's 3-1, one man at a time, no tagging. Darren Young is first and it goes exactly as you would expect with Reigns getting the pin via the spear in 41 seconds. Titus O'Neil is in next and has a bit better luck by throwing the smaller guys around a bit. Reigns runs him down though and the big beatdown is on. Rollins grabs a guillotine with a body vice and the beating continues. The TripleBomb ends O'Neil at 1:57 (all times total).

Dolph Ziggler is in third but he charges in like a nitwit too. Ziggler speeds things up as fast as he can but Rollins and Dean finally get him to the ground. Reigns gets to take his shots including a headbutt.

Ambrose takes too much time talking though and Dolph gets in some solid offense, low bridging Reigns to the floor and hitting the Fameasser on Seth. A Cactus Clothesline puts Ziggler and Ambrose on the floor for a second but Rollins knees Ziggler to the floor. Reigns spears Ziggler down and he can't beat the count at 5:39.

Here's Kofi Kingston to try his luck but Rollins comes to meet him in the aisle for some reason, allowing Kofi to snap the other twos' necks across the top rope. A quick Trouble in Paradise gets a near fall on Reigns but the numbers catch up to Kofi. The bulldog driver gets rid of Kingston at 7:13. Rob Van Dam is in next and Reigns is still down.

A banged up Rollins and Ambrose jump Van Dam but he kicks both guys down as things speed up. Ambrose is monkey flipped down and Reigns is kicked back down to the floor. Rolling Thunder hits both Rollins and Ambrose at the same time and Van Dam loads up the Five Star on Dean....as HHH comes out to call the match off at about 9:00.

Rating: C. The non-finish hurt this a lot because I was starting to get into it at the end. The idea of Shield fighting off everyone at once but slowly getting beaten down made sense and felt like something out of a video game. It was really doing a good job at building drama to seeing how far anyone could get without getting beaten but the ending stopped it cold.

Post break HHH yells at Vickie, asking what in the world she was thinking. After what Vickie did tonight, ten more of them would revolt next time, then ten more until we had a full scale revolt. Vickie says it was good for business, but tonight needs to be about fair competition. HHH demands Vickie to make the Usos/Daniel Bryan vs. the Shield, therefore again making Bryan the focus of the show after saying for weeks that there was no way we could have Bryan as the focus of the show.

The Raw ReBound covers the Dusty Rhodes story.

Ryder and Gabriel come in to see HHH and he gives them a match for no apparent reason.

Zack Ryder/Justin Gabriel vs. Wyatt Family

Harper gives Ryder a freaky look to start but Zack fires off a forearm in the corner. A big boot takes Ryder down for two as everything breaks down. Gabriel is sent to the floor and Harper hits a buckle bomb on Ryder followed by the discus lariat (JBL: "GOOD GOD!") for the pin at 1:12.

Bray hits Sister Abigail on Ryder post match and talks about keeping his promises.

RVD has a banged up elbow but HHH comes in and gives him a world title match against Del Rio at Battleground. HHH leaves and Del Rio comes in to beat RVD down, including the low superkick. Cole thinks it's odd that Del Rio was right there at that given time.

R-Truth vs. Alberto Del Rio

Non-title again. Truth pounds away in the corner to start and gets two off a suplex. The ax kick misses though and Del Rio hits a quick Backstabber for two. Off to a reverse chinlock but Truth comes back with some kicks to the ribs. The front suplex is good for two but Alberto hits the corner enziguiri for the same result. Truth rolls out of the armbreaker and hits the ax kick for two, only to be caught with the low superkick and the armbreaker for the submission at 3:34.

Rating: D+. This was about what you would expect out of these two. Truth is a jobber to the stars anymore but at least we don't have to put up with his matches being set up by dancing anymore. Del Rio still has nothing to his character other than being from Mexico as the money has been phased out, keeping him as average of a heel as you can be.

Shield vs. Usos/Daniel Bryan

Bryan starts by firing off kicks in the corner to Rollins' chest before dropping a knee for two. Rollins tries the jumping knee but gets caught in the surfboard instead. With the hold still mostly on it's Jey in off the tag with a clothesline, only to get caught in the Shield corner and punched by Ambrose. Jey comes back with a backdrop and brings in his brother who gets two off a clothesline.

Off to a hammerlock but Dean fights into the corner, only to have Jey come back in with a big chop for two. The Usos drop a double elbow for two but Jey is driven into the Shield corner again for the tag off to Reigns for some stomping. Jey stays out of trouble by pulling Roman into the corner for the tag off to Bryan. Kicking abounds until Reigns takes Daniel down with an elbow to the jaw and a tag off to Rollins for a chinlock. That goes nowhere as Daniel jawbreaks his way out and tags in Jimmy.

Jimmy does about as well as a career tag team wrestler fighting off three guys who have been defeating main eventers for over a year now as we take a break. Back with Jimmy fighting out of a Rollins chinlock and making the hot tag off to Jey. A few rooms of the house are cleaned but Rollins enziguris him down, allowing for the real heat segment to begin.

Dean hits a running dropkick against the ropes and holds Jey in place for a slingshot hilo, giving Rollins two. Back to Reigns for a jumping elbow drop for two and we hit the chinlock. A huge clothesline gets two for Roman and it's right back to the chinlock. Jey fights up again and fires off right hands all around followed by a Bubba Bomb on Rollins. The hot tag brings in Bryan for the real house cleaning by knocking Reigns and Rollins to the floor.

Two running corner dropkicks set up a hurricanrana to Dean for two. Jimmy dives over the top to take out Reigns and Jey does the same to Rollins. Dean clotheslines Bryan down but gets caught in the YES Lock, right in

front of the ropes. Jey superkicks Ambrose into the running knee from Bryan at 14:00 shown of 17:00.

Rating: B. This was the same thing that you've grown to expect from every Shield match: great action, a bunch of saved near falls and a hot finish. On top of that the Shield doesn't lose anything here given that they were coming in at a disadvantage. Good match here but did you really expect anything else?

Overall Rating: C+. This was a hard one to grade. The gauntlet match was really fun but it was pulled halfway through for some reason. A solid main event helps of course and we got some story development, but this show felt like it was over before it started. I'm not sure if that was a good thing as only the gauntlet match felt like anything special. Still though, fun show overall and a good use of two hours.

Results

AJ Lee b. Naomi – Black Widow

Santino Marella b. Jack Swagger – Backslide

Ryback b. Nick Nardone – Shell Shock

Shield vs. Usos/Prime Time Players/Justin Gabriel/Zack Ryder/Kofi Kingston/Rob Van Dam/Dolph Ziggler/Daniel Bryan/R-Truth went to a no contest

Wyatt Family b. Justin Gabriel/Zack Ryder – Discus lariat to Ryder

Alberto Del Rio b. R-Truth – Cross Armbreaker

Daniel Bryan/Usos b. Shield – Running knee to Ambrose

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