

Smackdown – January 31, 2014: Solving The Big Problem

Smackdown

Date: January 31, 2014

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're past the Rumble now and two third of the Elimination Chamber are already filled in. There's a chance we might actually get something to happen tonight with the final two spots being taken. On top of that there's the interesting case of CM Punk who has walked out on the company which may or may not be a work. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Raw with Bryan/Cena/Sheamus defeating the Shield thanks to the interfering Wyatt Family, earning themselves spots in the Elimination Chamber along with defending champion Randy Orton.

Here's Shield with something to say. Ambrose talks about how glad Randy Orton is that the Wyatts interfered on Monday because the title would be coming back home with the Shield at Elimination Chamber. Ambrose and Reigns get in a mini argument about who would have won in the Chamber but Reigns is cool with Ambrose trying to throw him out of the Rumble because it was every man for himself. Rollins breaks them up because they have someone more important to deal with right now: the Wyatts.

He talks about how great each member of the Shield is and how they had the match won on Monday until the Wyatts got involved. If the Wyatts want a new world, come get one at the hands of the Shield, and yes that is a challenge. Instead they get Vickie Guerrero who promises to make history, only to have HHH cut her off. HHH tells them to drop it about the Wyatts but Roman gets in his face and says this isn't a request. The Wyatts vs. the Shield is made for Elimination Chamber.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Antonio Cesaro vs. Dolph Ziggler

See, this is an actually fresh match where either guy could win. Cesaro hits a running dropkick for two at the bell before a standing sunset flip gets the same. They trade rollups for two each before Ziggler hits the Fameasser to send Cesaro outside. Back in and Cesaro hits a quick backbreaker to take over and a big clothesline puts Ziggy outside as we take a break. We come back with Ziggler in a chinlock and a clip from the break of Cesaro on the middle rope and suplexing Ziggler back in from the apron.

Dolph fights up and hits a nice dropkick for two before putting on the sleeper. Cesaro fights out and loads up Swiss Death but Ziggler turns it into a DDT for a very close two. Antonio is up first and blocks the Zig Zag before putting on the Swing to a big face pop. Ziggler is already done and it's the Neutralizer for the win at 8:34.

Rating: C+. This was better than I was expecting and Cesaro getting the win makes things even better. He has no chance of winning inside the Chamber but it's nice to see him getting even a spot in a match like this. There's always one guy in there that can showcase himself and hopefully it's Antonio this year.

Fandango vs. Xavier Woods

R-Truth is on commentary and Woods now has no mustache. A quick slam puts Xavier down but he comes back with a quick dropkick, only to be caught in a wheelbarrow suplex for one. We hit the chinlock on Woods but he fights up and counters another wheelbarrow suplex by rolling forward and slamming Fandango face first into the mat. Woods comes back with some strikes and a nice dropkick to send Fandango outside. A nice flip dive takes Fandango down again as Emma is dancing in the crowd again. Back in and Fandango hooks a quick falcon's arrow for the pin on Woods at 3:20.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but man alive I'm over these dancer vs.

dancer matches. Woods is another guy who is just taking up space on the roster while there are more talented guys down in NXT. He's not the worst in the world but I really don't see the appeal of his in ring work.

Truth makes the save from a post match beatdown and dancing ensues.

Prime Time Players vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel

Curtis punches Darren to start and drives him into the corner. Off to Ryback who throws Young out to the floor with ease. Back in and the Meat Hook sets up Axel's neckbreaker into a faceplant for the pin at 1:30. My goodness that was quick.

Young is bleeding from the mouth and Titus isn't pleased. He's about to walk away but Darren says they're family. Titus says they're not a family because this partnership is the first time that Titus has ever been a loser. The only thing Titus is doing is dropping the dead weight of Darren Young off his back. Titus kicks him in the chest and stomps him to the floor, giving us a good old fashioned heel turn. Young is either in line for a big gimmick change or he's not making it to the summer.

Jake Roberts Hall of Fame video.

Alexander Rusev and his handler Lana are coming.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Christian vs. Jack Swagger

This is Christian's first match back after a lengthy absence due to injury. Swagger gets the jobber entrance. We get a clip of Colter slapping Swagger to fire him up on Monday. JBL gets Zeb to join in on commentary, showing how important Swagger's match is to him. Jack throws Christian up and over the corner to the floor to start before putting on a body vice. A Vader Bomb gets two and Swagger stays on the ribs.

Christian fights out of a superplex attempt and gets two off a tornado DDT. A middle rope dropkick gets the same but Swagger comes right back with the gutwrench powerbomb for two. Jack walks around for a bit to the anger of Colter, allowing Colter to get his feet up to block another Vader Bomb. He comes right back with the Patriot Lock but Christian sends him shoulder first into the post, setting up the Frog Splash for the pin at 6:00.

Rating: C-. Nice while it lasted but this was more about angering Colter and getting Christian into the Chamber than the match itself. I'm hoping this breaks up the Real Americans as Swagger has dragged the team down since the day they got together. He's just been branded as a loser in WWE and that's almost impossible to escape.

Christian is happy he won because his window of opportunity is starting to close.

Damien Sandow vs. Kofi Kingston

An inset interview with Sandow says this losing period is just his trial by fire. Damien grabs a quick rollup for two but Kofi takes him into the corner to slow him down. A standing sunset flip gets two more for Sandow as Kofi rolls through and kicks Sandow in the chest. Trouble in Paradise hits the ropes but a sloppy SOS is good for the pin on Sandow at 1:57. Not a good match.

We look at Heyman demanding Brock get a match with either Batista or Orton but getting neither. As a result, Lesnar broke up the New Age Outlaws vs. Cody Rhodes/Goldust on Raw.

In his weekly sitdown interview, HHH announces Cody/Goldust vs. the Outlaws for the titles on Raw in a cage.

Road Dogg vs. Cody Rhodes

Rhodes has a bad arm coming in due to Lesnar's attack on Raw. A quick clothesline takes Roadie down as we hear about Brock being fined \$10,000 for attacking a referee on Sunday. Road Dogg goes after the arm by wrapping it around the ropes and ramming it into the buckle. Cody fights out of an armbar and both guys ram heads to put each other down. Rhodes takes over with a kick to the ribs and a springboard missile dropkick as Billy and Goldust get in a fight on the floor. There's a Disaster Kick to Gunn and a second one to Dogg for the pin at 3:53.

Rating: D+. This didn't do much for me but it did what it was supposed to do for Monday. I don't think the Outlaws lose the belts on Raw which hopefully leads to a long overdue Usos title reign. Road Dogg continues to look decent in the ring, especially after being out of action for so long.

Shield is out for the main event when the Wyatts appear on screen. Bray is looking forward to the war, especially the Shield waving those white flags. For once Harper actually speaks about the beautiful hill Shield has chosen to die on. Bray says don't invite the devil into your back yard because he might like it and choose to stay.

Shield vs. Sheamus/Rey Mysterio/Daniel Bryan

Sheamus takes Rollins over with a headlock to start before a shoulder block sends Seth into the Shield corner. We get the tag to Reigns and it's time for a big power showdown. The fans aren't sure who to cheer for but it's Reigns running Sheamus over with a shoulder of his own. Roman stomps on Sheamus in the corner but the pale one comes back with a hard clothesline and a neckbreaker.

Off to Ambrose for some right hands but Sheamus drapes him across the top rope, setting up the forearms to the chest. The spot is definitely still over and Ambrose falls to the floor as we take a break. Back with Bryan putting Seth in the surfboard with the dragon sleeper before it's off to Rey for a running kick to the chest and a two count. A middle rope

hurricanrana looks to set up the 619 but Reigns tags himself in and throws Rey outside.

Back to Rollins for a lot of trash talk and a chinlock as JBL asks Cole what he means when he calls Rollins the Architect of the Shield. Apparently Cole means tactician, which of course is why he calls Rollins the Architect. Rey sends Seth into the middle buckle and it's hot tag to Bryan as things speed up. He backflips over Reigns in the corner and hits the running clothesline to set up the YES Kicks.

Roman is low bridged to the floor to set up the FLYING GOAT. Sheamus catches Rollins in the Irish Curse but gets dropped with a Superman Punch. The missile dropkick from Bryan sets up the YES Lock to Reigns but it's Ambrose with the save. Sheamus' bad shoulder goes into the post but you don't need a good shoulder to Brogue Kick Ambrose in the face. There's the 619 to Rollins and Rey sets up one on Reigns, only to have Roman pop up and spear Rey in half for the pin at 12:50.

Rating: C+. Typically good Shield match here with Sheamus looking like he hasn't lost a step. The fans seem to like him as well so at least there isn't that awkward phase where he gets back to what he was doing. He's still in need of a story and an actual challenge though. Bryan got a solid reaction as always but didn't really do much here.

Overall Rating: B-. This show addressed the main problem that Smackdown has been having for several months now: something actually happened here. While it wasn't anything major, we had a tag team split up which we haven't seen in a long time. That's a good thing as the division is growing and the Prime Time Players were little more than jobbers in the division anyway. On top of that we had a PPV match made and the Chamber was filled in. It's nice to have this show feel like it means something for a change.

Results

Antonio Cesaro b. Dolph Ziggler – Neutralizer

Fandango b. Xavier Woods – Falcon's arrow

Ryback/Curtis Axel b. Prime Time Players – Neckbreaker into a faceplant to Young

Christian b. Jack Swagger – Frog Splash

Kofi Kingston b. Damien Sandow – SOS

Cody Rhodes b. Road Dogg – Disaster Kick

Shield b. Rey Mysterio/Daniel Bryan/Sheamus – Spear to Mysterio

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