

Smackdown – February 7, 2014: God Bless Expiring TV Contracts

Smackdown

Date: February 7, 2014

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

So the main story this week is Randy Orton running the Elimination Chamber gauntlet as he has to jump through another Authority hoop to be the face of the WWE, whatever that means anymore. His opponent tonight is Christian which should be fun given their past encounters. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence, which we don't get that often anymore.

Here's Daniel Bryan to get things going. On Monday, the Authority said that he would be the face of the WWE if he could beat Randy Orton, but that's not what Bryan wants to be. He wants to just be himself, but it doesn't matter because the Authority showed their true colors by sending down Kane to chokeslam him after the match. We get a clip of the end of the match with Bryan fighting off Kane and hitting the running knee on Orton for the pin, only to be beaten down after the match.

Bryan says that he's put up with Kane doing his corporate thing since he joined the Authority but he can't do that anymore. He wants Kane to come out here right now and explain himself, so here's the Devil's Favorite Libertarian In A Suit From Mens' Warehouse. Side note: Kane's current look reminds me of Bull Shannon from Night Court. Kane stops on the stage but Bryan says he can't hear him so Kane should come to the ring.

Kane stays where he is and gives a scripted apology but Bryan cuts him

off again. He reminds Kane of the HELL NO days and I AM THE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS and hugging it out. That Kane was his friend and Bryan wants him back. Get rid of the suit and tie, go put on your mask and become the monster again. Kane says they do have history, but that's all it is. He's turned in the undisclosed location for a corner office and is glad the HELL NO days are over.

They used to be friends and the old saying in wrestling is you can make friends or you can make money, and Kane is doing well for himself right now. Bryan says he's doing well too, but that's because he has an arena full of friends right here. If Kane and Bryan aren't friends, why doesn't Kane come down here right now so they can settle this like people who aren't friends? Kane declines but gives Bryan a match with Antonio Cesaro.

The announcers explain the Elimination Chamber.

Shield vs. Dolph Ziggler/Kofi Kingston

It's Reigns/Ambrose here with the home state boy Rollins on commentary. Ambrose grabs a headlock on Kofi to start as the fans chant for Rollins. Kofi trips him up and hits a quick splash for two before it's off to Ziggler for no reaction at all. Dolph ducks a clothesline and punches Ambrose down before dropping the ten elbows. He speeds the spot up by not getting to his feet after each elbow and dropping them from only a foot or so, which is a smart change.

Reigns comes in and runs Ziggler down to take over before it's quickly back to Ambrose. Kofi gets the tag as well to speed things up again but Dean trips him up, setting up a SWEET running dropkick from Reigns where he starts on the floor and lands on the apron. That's the best I've ever seen that move look and it takes us to a break.

Back with Dean getting two on Kofi off a butterfly suplex and cranking on a reverse chinlock. Dean tries it again from the middle rope but Kofi

knocks him down and hits a high cross body to get a breather. A spinning kick to Ambrose's head is enough to make the tag to Dolph but Reigns is in as well.

Dolph starts cleaning house with dropkicks and neckbreakers but walks into something resembling Cena's spinning slam. Roman loads up the spear but Dean gets caught trying to tag himself in. The distraction lets Ziggler get two off a jumping DDT as Ambrose takes out Kofi on the floor. Ziggler can't hook the Zig Zag and it's the Superman Punch and spear to knock Ziggler into next week. Reigns tags in Ambrose and lets him get the pin at 9:58.

Rating: C+. This was more about storytelling but it's getting more and more obvious that Reigns is getting the huge push soon. They've even got signature spots set up for him, each one more high impact than the previous. He's a fun guy to watch and that can help a lot when you've got a rocket strapped on your back.

Post match the Wyatts show up on screen with Bray talking about how the Shield is bickering like children. They believe Bray is a joke and a facade. The hat comes off and Bray gets serious. If you could see the evil behind his eyes, you would know what kind of a monster he really is. Harper says those that will not follow them will be the first to burn. Follow the buzzards.

Sheamus vs. Ryback

We open with a discussion on Sheamus possibly wearing steel toed boots. Sheamus runs Ryback over with a shoulder block but a Curtis Axel distraction lets Ryback get in some cheap shots. The rolling fireman's carry puts Ryback down and Curtis gets a Brogue Kick. Sheamus gets back on the apron and tries the ten forearms but Ryback pulls him inside to break it up. I don't remember anyone ever countering that move.

Ryback hits a splash for two and we hit the chinlock for a bit. Sheamus

fights up and gets caught in the over the shoulder Stunner followed by Ryback going up top (?!?) but missing a splash. Sheamus comes back with right hands and gets all fired up with a powerslam. The Brogue Kick is countered into a powerbomb for two and Sheamus is in trouble. That trouble is short lived though as he counters the Meat Hook with the Brogue Kick for the pin at 5:43.

Rating: C+. How sad is it that Ryback is a jobber to the stars less than a year after he was #30 in the Rumble? This match could have easily been on Wrestlemania last year and now it's a surprisingly good match on Smackdown. Ryback looked better than he has in months out there, because he was wrestling the same style that had him main eventing PPVs in 2012 rather than the whining that wastes his natural skills.

This week's sitdown interview with HHH talks about Orton running the gauntlet to make him better. Also on Monday: Orton vs. Cena.

Legends House promo.

Alberto Del Rio is in the back and we take a look at the brawl with Batista from Monday. Del Rio wants a piece of the Animal. The less talking in this feud, the better it is for everyone involved including the fans.

Daniel Bryan vs. Antonio Cesaro

Daniel grabs a front facelock to start but Antonio drives him into the corner for some chops. Bryan comes back with knees and kicks to the chest but walks into a European uppercut for two. Bryan bridges up to block a pin and Cesaro can't break it even by jumping on top of Bryan's body. Cesaro spends too much time shouting WE THE PEOPLE and gets caught in a short arm scissors but Cesaro easily lifts him into the air and drops Bryan down for the break.

Antonio pounds away in the corner and hooks a chinlock but Bryan comes back with the running clothesline. A top rope hurricanrana gets two on Antonio and there are some YES Kicks but Cesaro counters the last one into a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two as we take a break. Back with Bryan in a chinlock before a bit boot sends him flying across the ring.

Cesaro misses a charge and falls to the floor but Bryan's knee off the apron hits Swagger instead of Antonio. Back in and Daniel's missile dropkick is countered by an uppercut but he grabs the rope to avoid the Swing. Cesaro loads up the Neutralizer but Bryan counters into a YES Lock attempt. That's countered as well but Bryan comes out of the corner with a headscissors to drive Cesaro into the mat for the YES Lock (think the original Sin Cara's La Mistica) and the submission at 10:39.

Rating: B-. Good stuff here with both guys countering everything thrown at them. The ending was awesome as well with Bryan not being able to get Cesaro into the YES Lock by muscle so he used a quick stunning move to get it on instead. I love thinking during a match like that and these two are great at it.

Kane comes out post match and the distraction lets Cesaro hit a Neutralizer on Bryan. A chokeslam leaves Bryan laying as well.

Randy Orton says one loss to Bryan doesn't make up for the losses Bryan has suffered to him. He'll win in the Chamber and confirm that he's the best in the world.

Ernie Ladd Black History Month video.

Alexander Rusev and Lana are coming.

Nikki Bella vs. AJ Lee

Nikki picks AJ up in a choke to start before hitting a nice slam. AJ

throws on a sleeper to put Nikki down before kicking her down into the mat. Nikki comes back with a facebuster and a bad looking backdrop before the seconds get in a fight on the apron. Tamina is knocked to the floor and Nikki throws AJ into Brie by mistake, setting up the Black Widow to give AJ the submission win at 2:40.

We look back at Titus O'Neil turning on Darren Young last week to split up the Prime Time Players.

Titus interviews Renee Young (yes that's right) but Titus won't let her talk, saying he could have won a lot more titles on his own while the Players were a team. Young has nice hair but Titus looks better, smells better and has a great smile. He sends Renee running along when Darren Young jumps him from behind and beats O'Neil up, shouting that he isn't dead weight. Nice beatdown segment, but at the end of the day he's just Darren Young and there aren't many ways around that.

Goldust vs. Bray Wyatt

An inset interview from the Rhodes Brothers says they're desperate and will be taking more risks to get back where they belong. Goldust tries the deep breath and gets kicked in the face. Bray leans upside down in the corner and Goldust doesn't know what to think. All Bray to start as he runs Goldust over and hits some uppercuts from the floor.

We hit a nerve hold on Goldie but he fights up and nails a back elbow off the middle rope to get a breather. A middle rope hurricanrana sends Bray to the mat again and Goldust follows up with a spinebuster. Wyatt bails to the floor and Goldust hits a running flip dive to take him down. The Family goes after Cody as Bray gets angry. He takes Goldust's head off with a clothesline and Sister Abigail is good for the pin at 3:55.

Rating: C+. Another good match here with Goldust continues his comeback tour while Bray is just a freaky dude when he turns it on. They've kept him looking strong since he debuted and the character has worked far

better as a result. Why WWE insists on never letting people be kept strong is beyond me when the results can be this strong.

Shield pops up on screen post match and says yeah, they'll full of pride because they've earned the right to be. Rollins says they're not afraid and he'll be scraping their beards off his boot. Reigns says they could have been WWE Champion and it's time for justice. Believe in the Shield. Bray shouts that he'll believe in the Shield when their eyes are battered shut.

Randy Orton vs. Christian

Non-title. Christian hits a quick shoulder block to start but Orton comes back with knees and fists to the head. Orton runs into a back elbow and gets backdropped to the floor, followed by a top rope cross body as we take a break. Back with Christian trying to crotch Orton against the post but Randy pulls his legs forward to send the Canadian into the steel instead.

Christian is dropped back first onto the barricade for two back inside. A few stomps have Christian in trouble and Orton whips him across the corner a few times. We get a pose with a shot of the Wrestlemania sign but Christian comes back with a right hand of his own. Orton dropkicks him down again and hooks a chinlock as the fans think Randy sucks. Christian belly to back suplexes him down and they slug it out with Christian getting the better of it.

The Canadian rains down right hands in the corner but Randy comes back with a running clothesline. Christian clotheslines him right back and hits a top rope cross body for two. A top rope back elbow to the jaw looks to set up the Killswitch but Orton snaps off the powerslam for another two count. Christian is sent shoulder first into the post but he's still able to counter the Elevated DDT. He can't hit the frog splash though and the second attempt at the DDT connects. The RKO and Killswitch are countered but Christian's sunset flip out of the corner is caught in

the RKO for the pin at 11:53.

Rating: B. These two always have chemistry together and I've yet to see them have a bad match. The ending, while done before, still looks good as Orton can time that RKO out of the air almost perfectly. Christian doesn't have a chance inside the Chamber but he's a great hand and can make you believe he could pull it out.

Overall Rating: B. I'm not sure what has Smackdown on this roll as of late but I'm not complaining at all. It's either Wrestlemania or the upcoming TV deals but the show has been great for most of this year. There were two big matches, good build towards the six man and Sheamus vs. Ryback in a good match. What more can you ask for on a supplemental show?

Results

Shield b. Kofi Kingston/Dolph Ziggler – Ambrose pinned Ziggler after a spear from Reigns

AJ Lee b. Nikki Bella – Black Widow

Daniel Bryan b. Antonio Cesaro – YES Lock

Sheamus b. Ryback – Brogue Kick

Bray Wyatt b. Goldust – Sister Abigail

Randy Orton b. Christian – RKO

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