

Smackdown – July 25, 2014: A Good Use Of Two Hours

Smackdown

Date: July 25, 2014

Location: Orlando Amway Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're done with Battleground and heading towards Summerslam with the announced main event of Brock Lesnar challenging John Cena for the WWE Title. Other than that the big story seems to be Reigns vs. Orton which would be Reigns' first big solo match on the grand stage. A win over a former World Champion at Summerslam will be nothing but good for him. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Lesnar being announced as the #1 contender.

Opening sequence.

Ryback/Curtis Axel vs. Usos

Non-title. Jey and Ryback get things going with the big guy nailing a quick hiptoss but missing a Warrior Splash. Off to Jimmy for some chops but Ryback shoves him out of the corner. Axel comes in and hammers away before not ducking enough on a leapfrog from Jimmy. Curtis throws Jimmy to the floor and Ryback nails him with a running clothesline as we take a break.

Back with Ryback firing off chops to Jimmy in the corner before driving him over to the other corner for a beating from Axel. Curtis hits a running knee to the head for two and now Ryback's Warrior Splash connects. We hit a chinlock for a bit before Jimmy fights up and nails an enziguri. The hot tag brings in Jey and things speed up. There's the running Umaga

attack to Axel and a Samoan drop gets two. Ryback gets low bridged to the floor and there's the Flying Uso to take him down. Axel dropkicks Jey off the apron but some Twin Magic allows Jimmy to roll Curtis up for the pin at 6:50 shown of 9:50.

Rating: C. Not a bad tag match here with the Usos working well together as always. I wouldn't mind seeing Ryback and Axel built up as potential challengers, at least as a filler until there's another team to challenge the twins. I'm sure the Ascension will be brought up for a big showdown one day.

One other note: at the tapings, Ryback walked out on Axel after the match. That isn't mentioned or shown here so I'm guessing WWE changed its mind.

Time for MizTV. Miz brags about winning the Intercontinental Title on Sunday and asks for quiet on the set so he can give his acceptance speech. He thanks his team and introduces his parents in the front row. Miz's mom's arms are more defined than her son's. Mom says it's awesome to have the Intercontinental Champion for a son. Miz asks who is her favorite WWE superstar and is surprised when she says Roman Reigns. "He's hot!" The responses sounded intentionally scripted until the end.

Back in the ring and Miz keeps thanking people until Bo Dallas interrupts. JBL loves the idea of Dallas taking victory lap before he gets a victory. Bo says it's ok that he wasn't thanked by name because it's clear that Miz Bolieves. Miz says he's a huge fan and they should do lunch sometime.

This brings out Dolph Ziggler for another interruption. He says Miz's speech was great but don't pretend that was some big moment. The only award Miz should win is for hiding on the floor while Dolph did all the work. Both Miz and Dallas have million dollar smiles and they're both full of it. Dallas says Ziggler can be like them if he Bolieves before nailing Dolph

with the microphone. After a break we've got a match.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Bo Dallas

Miz is on commentary. One thing I really like here: Cole says this was made by the Authority during the break. But how will people know how the match was made without a GM to walk them through it? Dallas hammers away to start as Cole brings up how scripted Miz's mom sounded. Bo stomps on Dolph but charges into a boot, setting up the running DDT for two. Ziggler throws him to the floor and teases a superkick at Miz before going back inside for two off a Fameasser. Miz gets on the apron for a distraction, allowing Dallas to grab a rollup and trunks to make him 17-0 at 3:30.

Rating: D+. This was angle advancement and for once a triple threat title match doesn't sound too bad. I'm hoping Dallas winds up with the title at some point as he's won me over with the over the top promos. There's an actual story here and I'm curious to see which option they go with.

Post match Ziggler superkicks Bo but gets posted by the champion.

Roman Reigns says HHH has a Plan A and a Plan B, but no plan matters when you get hit with the Superman Punch. Tonight he's facing Alberto Del Rio, and Alberto better have a plan because Reigns has the punch. He's getting there with the talking.

Cesaro vs. Dean Ambrose

No DQ after Ambrose got DQ'ed on Monday. Ambrose stomps him down in the corner and wants to know who sent Cesaro out here. He pulls out some Singapore canes and chairs but Cesaro kicks him off the apron. Cesaro gets a cane of his own but only hits the post, allowing Ambrose to take him over the barricade and into the timekeeper's area. A box of something goes onto Cesaro's head but he comes back with a cane shot to the chest as Ambrose dives off the announcers' table.

We take a break and come back with Cesaro holding a cane over Dean's face. He sets up two chairs and slams Dean onto the chairs, which don't move. Back to the cane over the face before Cesaro nails him in the bad shoulder a few times. Dean says bring it and catches the next swing before hitting the rebound clothesline. Now it's Ambrose's turn to hammer away with the cane.

That's not enough for Dean though as he sets up two chairs back to back but neither guy can nail a suplex. Instead Dean picks one up and suplexes Cesaro through the other chair for two. A middle rope chair shot to Cesaro's arm has him in trouble but he slams Dean onto a chair for a near fall of his own. They head outside and Dean nails a suicide dive before throwing about ten chairs into the ring.

Ambrose throws Cesaro back in but here's Rollins to jump Dean. It doesn't seem to matter as Dean clotheslines him into the crowd but gets crotched on the top rope by Cesaro. A BIG superplex puts both guys down onto the pile of chairs for two and Cesaro is shocked. He's so shocked that Ambrose grabs a small package out of nowhere for the pin at 11:39 shown of 14:39.

Rating: B-. Take two guys and let them beat each other up for about fifteen minutes. Where could that go wrong? Ambrose is such an offbeat character and he's perfect for a match like this. Cesaro can wrestle any style and fits in perfectly in a brawl. That superplex looked awesome too.

Post match Rollins comes in and helps Cesaro lay out Dean to a huge YOU SOLD OUT chant. Dean is helped out by medics.

We recap Paige vs. AJ from Paige's debut up to her heel turn on Monday. They made this feel like a pretty huge feud.

Paige vs. Naomi

Paige skips to the ring ala AJ and actually pulls it off

really well. She insists that she and AJ are still friends. Cameron comes out right after the bell and Paige gets in a cheap shot. The Rampaige (fisherman's DDT) sets up the PTO for the win at 33 seconds.

Cameron beats up Naomi post match and says she's here to make a statement. Naomi nails her in the face but gets knocked off the apron.

Goldust and Stardust look at an electrified crystal ball with Goldust saying he can see the golden stars. The Cosmic Key is discussed some more and Goldust pulls his head back. When he looks back, Stardust's head has replaced the ball. Goldust is in a magician's hat.

R-Truth vs. Bray Wyatt

Before the match we see Bray attacking Jericho backstage on Raw. Bray hammers away to start but walks into a running forearm. Truth dances a bit but turns around to see the Spider Walk. The running cross body to the ribs drops Truth sets up Sister Abigail for the pin at 2:04. Squash.

Post match Bray says Truth was there when Jericho needed him, but now Jericho isn't here for Truth. Jericho may not be a savior, but Bray is.

Video on Stephanie being arrested. She'll return on Raw. Again I ask: is it really a return when you were on the previous show?

We see Brock returning and Heyman's promo.

Roman Reigns vs. Alberto Del Rio

Reigns hammers away in the corner but Del Rio goes after the arm very quickly. He tries the armbreaker about a minute into the match but is quickly sent to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Reigns getting kicked in the face but coming back with a Samoan drop and a clothesline to send Del Rio

outside. Reigns misses a charge and hits the post, allowing Del Rio to wrap the arm around the steel. A superkick drives the arm into the post again and it's back inside for two.

Reigns breaks out of an armbar in a few seconds but Del Rio sends him into the buckle. The middle rope double stomp drives Reigns' head into the mat. The bad arm is rammed into the steps a few times for two and the corner enziguri gets the same. Reigns tries to fight back but gets caught in the armbreaker over the ropes. That's fine with Roman as he pulls Alberto up and nails an uppercut to knock Del Rio out to the floor.

Back in and Reigns hits a running clothesline but charges into a boot in the corner. A clothesline puts Del Rio down but he avoids the apron kick. I believe that's the first time anyone has ever done that. Del Rio nails a baseball slide for two and puts Roman in the Tree of Woe for some kicks to the ribs. Reigns avoids a charge and sends Del Rio's shoulder into the post. Now the apron kick connects, followed by the Superman Punch and a spear for the pin at 9:32 shown of 12:32.

Rating: B. I liked this one way more than I was expecting. This is the kind of win that Reigns needs: hard fought, clean wins over big names. Del Rio may not be the best in the world, but he is a former multi-time World Champion and a guy with a solid resume. The more guys on his level that Reigns beats, the stronger he's going to look.

Overall Rating: C+. This is the kind of Smackdown I can work with: focusing on the midcard and giving some big names time that they don't get on Raw. This show doesn't have all the promos and segments going on to clog everything up and it can be entertaining when they let the guys have some time to wrestle. We had two good matches tonight and some storybuilding stuff to fill in the gaps. That's a good use of two hours on Friday night.

Results

Usos b. Ryback/Curtis Axel – Small package to Axel

Bo Dallas b. Dolph Ziggler – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Dean Ambrose b. Cesaro – Small package

Paige b. Naomi – PTO

Bray Wyatt b. R-Truth – Sister Abigail

Roman Reigns b. Alberto Del Rio – Spear

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