

Smackdown – January 22, 2015: The Goat Face Of Thursdays

Smackdown

Date: January 22, 2015

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

Much like last week, this actually feels like a big show. The main event for tonight is again Bryan vs. Kane, now in a No DQ match with Bryan's Rumble spot on the line. The show had a significantly bigger audience last week compared to the normal audiences on Fridays, so maybe we're in for more big time shows. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of Raw with Sting helping Cena win the 3-1 handicap match to save Cena's spot in the Sunday's title match but more importantly getting Ziggler, Rowan and Ryback's jobs back.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to get things going. He's excited to get on the Road to Wrestlemania and would love to talk about his No DQ match tonight and how he won't let anything stop him from winning the Royal Rumble. He could talk about how obsessed he is with getting the WWE World Heavyweight Championship back. Or he could talk about Sting's first ever appearance on Raw and how it ruined the Authority's night.

However, there's something more important than that, and it's what John Cena accomplished on Raw. There are three people with something to say about it, so here are Ryback, Rowan and Ziggler for their big returns. Well as big as they can be after just getting a few weeks off. It's really hard to care about them being fired when they're back in just a few weeks.

The fans chant FEED ME MORE at Ryback before he compares his firing to Bryan's injury. The Big Guy is back but doesn't have much more to say other than catchphrases. Rowan says being gone was sort of a blessing

because he had a lot of time to sit back and think. Believe it or not, he used to be a different person. He was naive and someone's puppet, but these last few weeks have let them (as in he and the sheep mask) know who he really is.

That leaves us with Ziggler, who of course gets the biggest reaction of the three. Ziggler set around eating stuffed crust pizza and watched the HHH and Stephanie fitness DVDs. He's joking of course and brings up all the momentum he had before getting fired (because WWE loves to build people up and then take them off TV). But the Authority tried to take it away because they're a threat. He would rather stay here and take a beating like never before than going home sitting on his couch and complaining on a podcast (it had been too long since the last Punk cheap shot).

Cue the Authority minus the actual authority with Rollins saying this is a Survivor Series reunion with a garden gnome replacing Bryan. Ziggler wants to beat Rollins up right now but Rollins has more important things to do than deal with someone who sits on a couch eating stuffed crust pizza. Oh and the fitness DVDs are AWESOME! Ziggler says Rollins must enjoy them because he's never seen anyone run away from Lesnar that fast.

Kane tells Bryan to calm down because he still has to survive tonight to get into the Rumble. Bryan responds by showing a clip of Lesnar destroying Kane and Big Show to close Raw. That's not cool with Big Show who promises to win the Rumble on Sunday because the four people in the ring are all losers. Kane promises to go to depraved levels to destroy Bryan but turns his attention to Ziggler. Since he's a new employee, Ziggler has to start back at the bottom of the ladder and work his way back to the Intercontinental Title. However, Kane is willing to give Ziggler a match against Barrett right now.

Royal Rumble Qualifying Match: Bad News Barrett vs. Dolph Ziggler

Non-title and only Ziggler can qualify with a win. Barrett easily takes him down to start but gets caught in a headlock. A nice dropkick gets two for Dolph but a headscissors is countered with a kick to the ribs. They head outside where Barrett sends him into the apron before cranking on

the arm back inside. This is the kind of stuff I'd like to see more of: someone grabbing a body part and cranking on it for the middle part of the match.

A top wristlock has Zigler in trouble but he avoids a charge in the corner. The running DDT gets two for Dolph and we take a break. Back with Barrett going back to the arm but Zigler rolls through to send Barrett shoulder first into the post. Dolph nails a big superkick for two more and both guys are down. Back up and the champ kicks him in the ribs but the Bull Hammer is blocked, setting up the Zig Zag for the pin at 10:54.

Rating: D+. Barrett losing all the time is officially a running joke. I mean, it has to be. There's no way they can think this is the logical way to book anything. The match was actually pretty dull with neither guy going out of the ordinary. I'm not sure what the solution is for Barrett, but this stuff is turning him into more and more of a waste every week.

We recap Ascension getting beaten down by the legends on Raw.

Reigns looks at the footage of Big Show going after the legends from Raw and knocking out Flair until Reigns made the save. Roman doesn't know if Renee Young has heard, but Big Show is a giant. If you haven't heard, just listen because it's all he ever talks about. Andre never had to do that because his actions did the talking.

Show also always talks about Reigns wanting his spot, but Reigns wants his own spot. In the Rumble, everyone is all over the place and his fist is cocked, locked and ready to rock. He's the one vs. all and he's the one standing at the end. Believe that. This was FAR better than his usual stuff and felt much more natural.

Fandango draws his Rumble number and seems very pleased. As he dances with Rosa, Ambrose sneaks in and steals his number. The referee monitoring the drawing has no issue with this.

Ryback vs. Rusev

Non-title again and only Ryback can qualify. Ryback hits a hard shoulder but Rusev frantically rolls outside before the cover. Back in and Ryback

hits a nice suplex, sending Rusev's legs into the ropes in the process. The champ bails to the floor again but is able to dropkick a charging Ryback to take over. We take a break and come back with Rusev getting two off a DDT.

Rusev wraps the leg around the post, hoping Ryback actually sells it unlike he did in the Big Show match a few weeks back. Ryback takes advantage of Rusev's trash talking and hits a slingshot belly to back suplex and a powerslam for two. A Backpack Stunner gets two more and Ryback stops to hold his knee (to be fair Rusev didn't do much to the knee so it's not as annoying this time).

Ryback's powerbomb is countered into an Alabama Slam (Siberia Slam?) for two but he just runs Rusev over. For some reason Ryback goes up top, only to be quickly crotched down for two. Rusev tells himself to crush but Ryback fights out of the Accolade and loads up the Meathook, sending Rusev running again. Ryback follows and hammers away before beating the count at 13:47.

Rating: C+. Who would have thought these two would be better than Zigler and Barrett? There was even a bit of a story told with Rusev running a lot in the beginning and then losing when he tried it once too often. Ryback can do a decent power match and Rusev is finding ways to keep the unpinned streak alive without looking stupid. I'll call this a pleasant surprise.

Rusev goes after him again but gets dispatched one more time.

Brie Bella vs. Naomi

Paige and Natalya are on commentary. Thankfully the BRIE MODE is gone. The Bellas mock Natalya for loving cats and call Paige a vampire. Paige corrects them by saying she's a glampire and a black heart. Naomi kicks at Brie's leg as Paige and Natalya debate if they're friends or not. Paige calls Tyson Kidd an idiot as Naomi gets her throat snapped across the top rope for two. Brie misses her running knee but hits a jawbreaker on the knee, setting up the Bella Buster for the pin at 2:20. So much for Naomi meaning anything.

Luke Harper says you can send anyone into the Royal Rumble, but don't send in anyone you want back. Rowan better not blink or the monsters will get him. Are you scared yet?

Goldust and Stardust draw their numbers and hiss at each other.

Erick Rowan vs. Luke Harper

Only Rowan can qualify. They slug it out to start and Rowan runs him over with a shoulder for an early two. Harper busts out a freaking hurricanrana to counter a powerbomb. This guy is not normal. Rowan just throws him into the corner and gets two more off a spin kick. Luke bites the fingers to block I think a full nelson but this time Rowan's powerbomb connects for two. Erick misses a top rope splash though and a superkick and discus lariat gives Harper the pin at 3:20.

Rating: C. The more I see Harper the more I wonder why he isn't being pushed to the moon and back. On the other hand, the more I see Rowan, the more I wonder why they even bothered pushing him in the first place. He's fine in the ring and I like his potential, but he's just a big jobber at this point and it seems like that's all he was ever meant to be.

Kane borrows the Stooges for his match with Bryan.

Rumble by the numbers video.

Miz is annoyed at Mizdow for imitating X-Pac without his permission. Mizdow says the fans liked it but Miz says no one cheers for him because they're all cheering for Miz. Miz also rejects the pumpkin latte for having the wrong amount of foam. He leaves and the Usos come up and tell Mizdow that he can get his hands on Miz in the Rumble. The idea intrigues Mizdow but he still looks conflicted.

Kane vs. Daniel Bryan

No DQ with Bryan's Rumble spot on the line and the Stooges in Kane's corner. A cross body gets one on Kane but Bryan has to go after the Stooges, allowing Kane to kick him down to the floor. He stays on the neck with a neckbreaker on the floor before dropping him onto the barricade. It's kendo stick time with Bryan getting cracked over the back

a few times before they head back inside.

Daniel gets the cane to cane Kane before alternating between kicks and cane shots to the back. A big kick to the head is only good for two and Kane knocks him out of the air as we go to a break. Back with Kane holding a chinlock (what else would he be doing?) and cracking Bryan in the back with a chair for two. The chair gets wedged into the corner but Kane low bridges him to the floor. The Flying Goat is countered with an uppercut and Kane takes over on the floor. Bryan gets whipped into the steps and the Stooges load up the announcers' table. They're already more useful than Patterson and Brisco.

The tomestone and chokeslam are both countered and Kane gets sent into the post to give Daniel a breather. Back in and a bad looking YES Lock has Kane in trouble but the Stooges come in to break it up. Lawler and Cole are incensed but Saxton correctly point out that they're not breaking any rules. Bryan fights them off but eats a chokeslam for two. Kane is livid and gets another chair, only to be sent into the one he wedged in the corner, setting up the running knee to send Bryan to the Rumble at 12:18.

Rating: B-. This was as good as you can expect from Bryan vs. Kane, but the feud needs to end here. Kane as the monster hunting Bryan is only going to get you so far and we passed that point back in April. Having Bryan overcome a small set of odds is the right way to use him and getting the big win off his finisher is the right way to go. I can more than live with Kane in roles like this, with him getting pinned by a bigger star who slays a monster. Why can't we get there with Big Show?

Speaking of Big Show, he drags Bryan back to the ring but Zigler, Rowan and Ryback come in for the save. The big Rumble brawl is on until Ambrose and Reigns come out to make it serious. Roman cleans house, even though most of the guys were already gone by the time he got in. It gets down to all of the big heroes in the ring (minus Rowan. They're not even hiding it now) and Kane and Big Show on the apron to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. It's still not a great show, but the important part of this show is stuff happened. Instead of spending a big segment on Raw

bringing back the three fired guys, it was saved for here and we even saw two of them qualify for the Rumble. It's not exactly Lesnar and Rollins having a showdown, but I'll take this over the weekly big tag match every day. If WWE can build up momentum for Smackdown, it might get even bigger in the future. Good show this week that felt important.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Bad News Barrett – Zig Zag

Ryback b. Rusev via countout

Brie Bella b. Naomi – Bella Buster

Luke Harper b. Erick Rowan – Discus lariat

Daniel Bryan b. Kane – Running knee

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