

Backlash 2016: As Good As It's Going To Get

Backlash 2016

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Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

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It's the first single branded pay per view and I'm really not sure what they're going to do to fill in the whole show. There are currently six scheduled matches but word on the street is that one of them might not be taking place as advertised due to an injury. They could always add some stuff in but at the moment, this isn't looking like a three hour show. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

This was made on the pre-show when Corbin interrupted Crews' chat with Daniel Bryan. They lock up to start with Corbin shoving him away, only to have Crews come back with a dropkick. A right hand stops a springboard and knocks Crews to the floor (signature spot) as we take a break. Back with Crews hitting an enziguri from the apron and avoiding a charge but Corbin slides under the ropes and back inside for a clothesline to the back of the head.

Corbin talks a little trash and takes Apollo's head off with another clothesline. A running knee (because of course) puts Corbin down and the second jumping enziguri gets two. An Angle Slam of all things gets two more on Baron but he hits the Deep Six for the same. They actually head outside with Corbin going into the steps for a seven count. Back in and Crews charges into a knee (it's always the knee) to set up End of Days for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. This was actually a lot better than I was expecting with some ice chemistry from the pair. Corbin winning is fine as he needs something to do but Crews needs to start winning people people stop caring about him. Above all else though: the pre-show had ONE match that ran about ten

minutes and now we're almost ready to go with the regular show. Yes I said ONE MATCH instead of three with half an hour between each one. I really don't think people are going to miss the other two and the fans might even be a bit less burned out later on. Imagine that.

We open with a text crawl about September 11 and what it means for our freedom. Nothing wrong with this whatsoever and you knew it was coming.

Opening video of Shane McMahon talking about how this is the new vision and a new era, including new champions being crowned for the first time.

Here are Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan to open things up. Shane brags about how awesome the fans and everyone behind the scenes have been. The internet has been blowing up and the red team is getting a run of its money. They talk about the new titles and Shane introduces the Women's Title match.

Smackdown Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Naomi vs. Nikki Bella vs. Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Natalya

The title is vacant coming in and this is under elimination rules. Otunga calls Naomi his dark horse with the glow and I'm not daring to touch that one. Nikki is in red, white and blue to hammer home the fact that she's our fearless hero. Bliss on the other hand is Harley Quinn for a VERY nice look. There are no tags so it's a wild brawl to start with Nikki being clotheslined to the floor (and being fearless enough to put her foot on the bottom rope to shove herself off before anyone was touching her), leaving Becky to work on Naomi's arm.

We get the dancing kicks (JBL: "Be glad she only has two feet and not eight." Uh, right. It's off to the showdown between Nikki and Carmella and WOW it's even less interesting than I thought it would be. Bliss makes the save and hits her moonsault knees for two on Naomi. Becky comes back in and it's time for the parade of secondary finishers, capped off by Carmella brawling with Nikki.

The Alabama Slam gets two on Carmella and Natalya comes back in for a Tower of Doom (a name they thankfully don't use tonight). Alexa comes back in with a sunset flip out of the corner for two before Carmella

sends everyone outside, leaving Naomi to dive onto all of them. Back in and Natalya loads up a powerbomb out of the corner with Naomi adding a Blockbuster to get rid of Bliss at 9:39.

Nikki hits her big forearm on Naomi but Natalya wants the elimination instead and the Sharpshooter makes Naomi tap at 10:54. Nikki's TKO gets rid of Natalya at 11:57 but Carmella rolls Nikki up for the elimination at 12:04. We're down to Carmella vs. Becky with Lynch getting in her usual stuff until she runs into a superkick. Not that it matters as Becky grabs the Disarm-Her for the tap out and the title at 14:35.

Rating: C+. This was fun stuff and Becky winning is a nice surprise (though you can imagine Nikki getting the title by the Rumble at the latest). Above all else though, it didn't feel like they were stretching out to fill in time. Carmella had a good performance here but she and Alexa are still a long way away from the top level. Naomi continues to be worthless save for one spot a match.

Becky gets promo time post match and we get the WAY overused "you deserve it" chant.

Miz yells at a kid from Nickelodeon, who offers Miz a spot on his show. "Unless you can get John Cena instead."

Bray Wyatt attacks Randy Orton and injures his ankle to cover up for Orton not being medically cleared to compete. They really, really should have done this on TV instead of a bait and switch like this. They were even promoting it on the pre-show and it's a very cheap move.

Usos vs. Hype Bros

The winners face Heath Slater/Rhyno later in the night to replace the injured American Alpha. The Usos have new gear and Jimmy wrestles in a shirt (thank goodness). Mojo throws Jey around to start but it's quickly off to Zack for a facebuster on Jimmy. Ryder knocks both twins to the floor and Mojo runs all the way around the ring to run them over in a cool power display.

Back in and the Usos start with the double teaming to send Ryder right

back to the floor. The running Umaga attack sets up a chinlock, followed by another chinlock to keep things fresh. Zack sends them outside again and the double tag brings in Mojo as the crowd isn't all that thrilled. Something like an F5 gets two on Jey and Ryder adds a middle rope hurricanrana for two. Everything breaks down and the Usos go after Ryder's leg, setting up a Tequila Sunrise to make Ryder tap at 10:11.

Rating: C-. Now this felt like they were dragging it out. The knee stuff from the Usos made sense and there was next to no doubt that the Usos were going over here as you don't have Hype Bros vs. Slater/Rhyno twice in a week. It's not a bad match but this was clearly filler and they weren't making any secret about it.

Slater and Rhyno are ready but Heath has an upset stomach due to some artificial crab dip. Rhyno: "Heath, we're still live." Heath: "Uh....YOU'VE BEEN SWERVED!"

Connor's Cure video.

We recap Dolph Ziggler vs. the Miz for the Intercontinental Title. Daniel Bryan had accused Miz of being soft but since Bryan can't wrestle, Miz got to feud with Ziggler instead. Dolph had been wanting to win the big one and the Intercontinental Title seems to suffice.

We cut to Miz in the back where he tells Bryan he wants to renegotiate his contract. Bryan says nothing and Miz laughs at the idea of Bryan calling him a coward. Miz: "I want you to watch me do what you can't anymore."

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Miz is defending and is quickly sent outside to start. Back in and Ziggler tries some amateur stuff until Miz punches him in the face to take over. We get some choking on the ropes until Miz counters a dropkick and catapults Ziggler out to the floor. Miz grabs a chinlock as they're taking their time for obvious reasons.

It's off to a surfboard before Miz does the YES pose. Oh man they're teasing the heck out of this but I'm not sure how they're going to pay it

off. Miz's running corner clothesline looks to set up the top rope ax handle but Ziggler rolls him up for two instead. Ziggler makes his comeback with the usual and sends Miz shoulder first into the post.

Miz comes right back with a slingshot sitout powerbomb (sweet) before hitting a kind of Stunner on the leg. A quick Fameasser gets two for Dolph and he grabs the sleeper to slow Miz down. They trade DDT's before Miz gets the Figure Four for a good while before Ziggler gets the rope.

This is getting a lot of time so far and it's only kind of feeling like they're stretching it out. Miz up but charges into a superkick for two with the champ getting his foot on the rope. Miz bails to the floor and has to be thrown back in, allowing Maryse to spray Ziggler in the eyes with something. The Skull Crushing Finale is enough for the retaining pin at 18:11.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I was expecting but that's not really surprising with the roll Miz is on at this point. I'm sure this is going to set up a rematch because we just can't get rid of Ziggler because HE'S IMPORTANT AND GETS SO CLOSE TO WINNING THE BIG ONE WHICH GETS SMALLER AND SMALLER EVERY SINGLE TIME. Miz vs. Bryan would be very interesting but I'd be really surprised if they actually went with that as Bryan's one last match.

The pre-show panel has a chat.

Here's Bray with no video or introduction as Orton is injured. The injury is announced and we get a ten count but we have a replacement match and it's no holds barred.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

I had the name written before the music hit because of course it's Kane. They're quickly on the floor with Kane knocking the bell out of Bray's hands. Back in and Bray's cross body has Kane in trouble, followed by a chair to the knee to make it even worse. Another chair shot gets two on Kane until he grabs a running DDT. The side slam looks to set up a chokeslam but Bray takes it outside again.

Bray does Orton's pose and drops the running backplash through a table for the big spot. The fans seem very pleased here after booing the heck out of the match announcement. Back in and Sister Abigail is countered into a chokeslam for two. Bray gets the same off a Rock Bottom onto a chair, only to have Orton come out for an RKO. Kane adds a chokeslam for the pin at 10:58.

Rating: C. GAH! I'm so freaking sick of Bray losing time after time after time after time for the sake of setting up what's likely to be another loss because Bray is bulletproof or whatever. He's been on the main roster for three years and I can't remember the last big win he had. The fans are DYING to cheer for him but no, instead let's have him job to freaking KANE to make us want to see him fight Orton later.

Someone explain why that booking is supposed to make sense. Please. I'd LOVE to hear how that makes sense. It's Orton fighting a loser who couldn't even get on the 18 hour Summerslam but now I want to see Bray vs. Orton on pay per view. Just turn him face already like you were planning to do and FREAKING DID AT ONE POINT instead of having him do the same stuff for years. The match was fine for a house show style match but that ending drove me nuts.

AJ Styles tells some nameless jobbers that they're destined for failure.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Rhyno/Heath Slater

For the inaugural titles. Slater goes after Jey to start before it's off to Rhyno for some power slots. Heath comes back in but is taken outside for a double suplex into the post (cool). Back in and Slater is slowly beaten down as the back work continues. The fans want Rhyno but get a chinlock from Jey instead.

Slater fights up and we get the double cross body spot to set up the hot tag. Rhyno comes in (to a very nice reaction) but misses the Gore. Heath tags himself back in and hits a neckbreaker on both twins, followed by a DDT for two on Jimmy. The superkick nails Heath but Rhyno hits the Gore to give Slater the pin at 9:57.

Rating: C. I smiled. They won't hold the titles long and that's the best

idea but this was absolutely fine and the right move at the time. American Alpha can get the belts later but this wraps up Heath Needs A Job and gives the fans a fun moment. Above all else: WWE had something with Slater and they actually did something with it. They ignore that kind of thing WAY too often and it's such a waste of someone getting over. This is as high as Slater needs to go and there's nothing wrong with that.

Slater and Rhyno are happy with the win and this sums up everything: "Yo Beulah! WE'RE GETTING A DOUBLE WIDE BABY!!!"

Miz vs. Ziggler chicken deal.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose which doesn't have much of a story. Styles beat John Cena last month at Summerslam and has a title shot as a result. Dean doesn't seem to be taking Styles seriously though.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Dean is defending. Feeling out process to start with Dean being driven into the ropes. AJ: "I OWN YOU!" A forearm puts a seated Dean down again but he comes back with his awkward slugging, followed by a backdrop to send AJ outside. The suicide dive is broken up though and AJ starts in on the neck before going with the drop down into the dropkick.

Dean comes up holding his nose but makes a comeback anyway by whipping AJ into the corner. That goes nowhere good either as Dean misses a charge into the post. They're going with the idea that Dean is doing his normal insane style but AJ knows exactly what he's going to do and is one step ahead. Dean is back up and tries a belly to back superplex but flips AJ over for a big crash to put both guys down.

AJ dives into a spinning Rock Bottom backbreaker of all things for two (makes sense as Dean used something new) and the standing elbow to the floor has AJ in even more trouble. They head inside again with Dean getting suplexed into the corner (becoming a common move lately). Now it's AJ going after the leg with a standing Robinsdale Crunch out of the corner and the Calf Crusher is on.

Dean makes the ropes so AJ puts the hold on again in the middle of the ring. In a clever counter, Dean grabs the head and slams AJ's head into the mat over and over. Dean fights up and goes outside for a clothesline, followed by a running bulldog for two back inside. AJ's fireman's carry into a backbreaker gets two, followed by a torture rack into a powerbomb for the same.

The springboard 450 gets the same and AJ is stunned. Dean comes back again and hits his running dropkick to knock AJ outside. That means it's finally table time but instead Dean sends him into the crowd for a suicide dive. It's not a countout though as they head back inside with a Pele sending Dean into the ropes for the rebound lariat. The ref is bumped though (of course) and a low blow sets up the Styles Clash to give us a new champion at 24:59.

Rating: B+. The ending was the only possible option and that's the best thing they've done all night. They did a great job here with the idea of Dean not being able to keep up with AJ who was just on his game tonight. Dean never really felt like a real World Champion to me so having him lose to the best thing on Smackdown was the right call. Really good match here and the best thing on the show, which had to be expected.

AJ celebrates and we're out at 10:38.

Overall Rating: C+. This is a really weird one to grade as the ultra low expectations did it a lot of favors. Unfortunately it's a show that didn't need to exist and needed a lot of things dragged out to make it work as well as it did. Smackdown is dying for some midcard talent as they had one of the shortest pay per views in a long time and that only worked with a team working twice and the opening match not starting until over fifteen minutes into the show. I liked this as well as I could have given the circumstances but they really need to fix some big problems.

Results

Becky Lynch b. Carmella, Nikki Bella, Natalya, Alexa Bliss and Naomi – Disarm-Her to Carmella

Usos b. Hype Bros – Tequila Sunrise to Ryder

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Kane b. Bray Wyatt – Chokeslam

Rhyno/Heath Slater b. Usos – Gore to Jimmy

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose – Styles Clash

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