

Smackdown – January 31, 2017: The Future Price of Gold Takes a Hit

Smackdown

Date: January 31, 2017

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, David Otunga

We're less than nine weeks away from Wrestlemania and most of the interesting things at the Royal Rumble were from the blue brand. John Cena is the new Smackdown World Champion and Randy Orton won the Royal Rumble but there's a good chance things will change inside the Elimination Chamber in twelve days. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the Royal Rumble with a variety of media quotes about the show.

AJ Styles is glaring at the video of Cena posing with the title when the bosses appear on either side of him. He wants his rematch and doesn't want it inside the Elimination Chamber. As for tonight though, it's time to start getting ready for the Chamber, which will feature Cena, Styles, the Miz, Baron Corbin, Bray Wyatt and Dean Ambrose. Speaking of Ambrose, he comes in and a main event of Styles vs. Ambrose is set for later tonight.

Here's John Cena for his first comments as champion. After telling the fans to let him know what they think of him, he praises AJ Styles as an elite athlete and more than just a guy from Atlanta. That brings him to the Elimination Chamber when it's not time to celebrate because it's time to fight. That makes Smackdown the place to be and John Cena the man to beat so if you want some, come get some.

Cue Wyatt and Randy Orton with Bray talking about how destiny has brought them here and the title is coming to the Family no matter

what. Orton promises to end the vicious cycle at Wrestlemania when the championship will be set free. The Wyatts slowly come to the ring but Luke Harper shows up for the save, which fires Cena up WAY more than you would expect. The Wyatts bail and here's Shane to make the tag match.

John Cena/Luke Harper vs. Bray Wyatt/Randy Orton

Cena shoves Wyatt around to start and it's quickly off to Harper vs. Orton with Luke going rather violent. Harper takes Orton to the floor for a belly to back suplex onto the announcers' table and the fans are WAY into Luke here. Wyatt comes in and Harper immediately backs off for the tag off to Cena. JBL: "This doesn't bode well for John Cena!" Uh, it's not that big a deal John. Just pair off appropriately and everything is fine.

Cena gets double teamed in the corner and we take a break. Back with Cena hitting the elevated DDT but getting in a clothesline to put both guys down. Bray comes in and stares Harper down to break up another hot tag attempt. Harper doesn't mind and comes in anyway to go after Wyatt but Orton saves his buddy from Sister Abigail. That earns Randy a big boot but Harper eats Sister Abigail. The RKO ends Cena at 13:29.

Rating: C+. That's an interesting ending as the trolling continues with the WWE actually wanting us to believe that Orton vs. Cena will take place at Wrestlemania. Wyatt vs. Harper could be interesting and I'm VERY glad they didn't have Harper take the pin. In a way, Cena taking the pin made the most sense here as he's easily able to bounce back no matter what. That's not always the case with champions but Cena isn't your normal name.

Carmella vs. Delilah Dawson

James Ellsworth introduces Carmella and JBL describes Dawson as a cross between Rey Mysterio and a Smurf (she has blue hair). Dawson actually gets in a rollup for two until Ellsworth trips her up. The Code of Silence makes Dawson tap at 1:30. Ellsworth is kind of perfect in this role and with the amount of t-shirts he sold, there's nothing wrong with keeping him around.

Kalisto vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler takes him straight down and drops the big elbow with Kalisto holding his heart. Apollo Crews is watching in the back and Kalisto gets caught in a neckbreaker for two. The superkick ends Kalisto at 2:02.

Ziggler goes for the mask but Crews chases him off.

Naomi and Becky Lynch are ready for Alexa Bliss and Mickie James.

Naomi/Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James

Becky chases Bliss off to start and it's off to Naomi, who misses a charge into the ropes. Alexa hits the knees into the moonsault knees but hurts herself (doesn't seem serious), allowing the hot tag off to Mickie. The Bexploder gets two on Mickie and everything breaks down as we take a break.

Back with Alexa holding Becky in a chinlock until it's off to Mickie for one of her own. Becky kicks Alexa away and the hot tag brings in Naomi for a springboard clothesline. The dancing kicks and a faceplant get two on Alexa as Becky and Mickie fight to the floor. An enziguri and the split legged moonsault put Alexa away at 11:03.

Rating: C. I'm not wild on the two champions taking falls here but at least this one helps set up a title match. Coming into this feud I never would have thought Naomi would have a real shot at winning the title but they've got me thinking it could happen, which says quite a bit. This serves its purpose well and that's all that matters.

American Alpha wants some competition so they're going to issue an open challenge for the titles.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: American Alpha vs. Usos

American Alpha is defending and JBL says this is going to be great, despite Alpha pinning the Usos in 34 seconds at one point. Actually hang on a second as the Ascension, the Vaudevillains, Breezango and Heath Slater/Rhyno all come out and turn it into a huge brawl.

Referees come out as well and we take a break with no bell. Back with the brawl still going on and no semblance of order whatsoever.

Slater and Rhyno and Alpha are the only teams left in the ring and Alpha's music plays with no match actually announced.

We look back at Nikki Bella and Natalya getting in a fight last week.

Daniel Bryan is on the phone with Brie when Natalya and her security come in. Natalya wants to talk about her new merchandise but Nikki comes in and interrupts. Daniel has enough and makes a match between the women at Elimination Chamber.

Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Non-title with Miz on commentary. Dean snaps off some armdrags to start and headlocks AJ to the mat. We hit a Texas cloverleaf of all things before Dean shifts it over to something like the Rings of Saturn. They head outside with Styles sending him into the announcers' table but Dean stomps him down in the corner to take over again.

Dean loads up a dive to the floor but here's Baron Corbin for a distraction as we take a break. Back with Corbin on commentary as well as Styles gets two off a pumphandle gutbuster. Dirty Deeds is broken up by AJ's rush of strikes (which Mauro dubs the Phenomenal Blitz) to put both guys down. AJ's rack neckbreaker is countered and Styles is knocked out to the floor.

The suicide dive is broken up by a forearm to the head and they trade some hot near falls, including one off the fireman's carry into a backbreaker. The rebound lariat puts AJ down but Dean doesn't cover. The top rope elbow on the floor has Styles in even more trouble as Corbin and Miz get in a brawl. That's not cool with Dean who baseball slides Corbin down, setting up the Styles Clash to put Dean away at 18:39.

Rating: B-. DANG this is a bad night for champions. Ambrose was a bit hotter than usual here and that made for a good match. I could have gone for a DQ or countout finish here though as you don't need yet another champion getting beat but this is about as good as you can get given the way the booking is going. I get the idea of AJ

needing a win and since the Chamber has four heels, there was nothing else that could have been done.

Miz gives Ambrose the Skull Crushing Finale but Corbin gives Miz and Dean the End of Days to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This wasn't the best Smackdown but I think a lot of that is due to how fast everything goes on a major pay per view weekend. If you watched Takeover, this brought us up to over thirteen hours of wrestling in four days, which is a little more than most fans can take. On top of that they have two weeks to set up a pay per view card and that's just hard to do in general. Not a bad show but the company could use a breather at the moment.

Results

Bray Wyatt/Randy Orton b. John Cena/Luke Harper – RK0 to Cena

Carmella b. Delilah Dawson – Code of Silence

Dolph Ziggler b. Kalisto – Superkick

Naomi/Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James – Split legged moonsault to Bliss

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose – Styles Clash

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