

Elimination Chamber 2017: It's Got The Whole Show In Its Hands

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We're two weeks removed from the Royal Rumble and that means it's time for another pay per view. This time it's Smackdown only with the big namesake match setting up the Wrestlemania World Title match for the blue brand. The winner seems pretty obvious but that's never stopped WWE before. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Curt Hawkins vs. Mojo Rawley

They've been arguing online lately. Hawkins does his usual over the top pre-recorded entrance, which was really starting to grow on me before he disappeared. A right hand staggers Curt though and a three point tackle sends him outside. Hawkins sends him into the barricade and we take a break. Back with Hawkins working on the knee and getting two off a clothesline. Rawley hits his own and plants him with a huge slam, only to get poked in the eye. A Downward Spiral gives Hawkins two but Mojo keeps it simple with a running right hand in the corner. Mojo grabs a tilt-a-whirl slam for the pin at 8:01.

Rating: D+. Nothing special here but this is what a pre-show is supposed to be: a warmup that doesn't take away from the pay per view. No one is going to remember this match in about twenty minutes but it still gives you a little something to get going. Rawley is a lot of fun and that's why he was put into this spot.

The opening video is all about the Chamber, which is really all it could be about.

Becky Lynch vs. Mickie James

Lynch was chasing the Women's Title when a masked woman cost her the title match. Of course it was James, who didn't think Lynch deserved to say she was part of the Women's Revolution. They lock up all the way to the floor to start with the break only coming when they have to dive back inside. Becky can't get the arm so she sends James face first into the buckle instead.

Back in and James takes her down by the arm as the limb work begins. Thankfully JBL mentions that Mickie has been wrestling around the world without being in WWE, thereby cutting off the ring rust discussion. An armbar keeps things slow and Becky's comeback is cut off by a nice takedown. A middle rope Thesz press gets two and Becky's middle rope dropkick gives her the same. The Mick Kick knocks Becky silly for two and she can't get the Disarm-Her. Instead she can grab a rollup for pin on James at 11:36.

Rating: C-. The arm stuff was a little boring but at least they had the arm play into the finish a little bit. The match was nothing all that special but it seems that there's going to be something more from these two going forward. James is still young enough that she can do more than put people over so this is fine from a booking perspective. It's not exactly interesting though and hardly the best choice for an opener.

James Ellsworth and Carmella are in a skybox and she's not happy with Lynch winning. Sounds like something starts soon.

Apollo Crews/Kalisto vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler jumps Kalisto during the entrances so let's change things up to what this should have been in the first place.

Apollo Crews vs. Dolph Ziggler

Crews takes him into the corner to start but gets caught in a pair or neckbreakers. It's too early for a superkick so Ziggler elbows him in the jaw instead. We hit the chinlock as this show hasn't exactly been thrilling so far. There's Ziggler's third neckbreaker but Kalisto comes

limping down to the ring. With Ziggler distracted, Crews gets in a very loud enziguri to set up the tag to Kalisto. The back is suddenly fine enough for the handspring enziguri and it's back to Crews for the toss powerbomb and the pin at 7:19.

Rating: D. I can usually spin these things one way or another but I honestly have no idea how this benefits anyone. So Ziggler is smart enough to attack one of them but gets beaten anyway? Crews and Kalisto should celebrate winning with an advantage? That's the logic to this whole thing? I don't get it and I see no need to have Kalisto or Crews in there at the same time.

Post match Ziggler beats them up again and Pillmanizes Crews' ankle. The fans cheer for Ziggler as Crews is taken out.

Tag Team Titles: Tag Team Turmoil

American Alpha is defending and this is basically a gauntlet match. Heath Slater/Rhyno and Breezango start things off with only the winners moving on. That process will continue until all six teams have entered. Slater and Breezango start things off as we hear about children in Bermuda having selfie sticks. It's quickly off to Rhyno to work on Breeze's shoulder as the ECW chants start up. Slater gets worked over in the corner for a bit and a rollup gets two. A blind tag brings in Rhyno though and a quick Gore gets rid of Breezango at 4:38.

The Vaudevillains are in next with Slater diving off the top to take both guys down. That's about it for the offense for now though as Slater gets taken down into the corner, only to avoid a Swanton Bomb. An inverted DDT is enough to put English away at 7:45 total. The Usos are in fourth and easily take over on the winded Slater. As Mauro refers to the Chamber as the Cell again (Mauro: "DID I DO IT AGAIN???"), a pop up Samoan drop gets two on Slater. Not that it matters though as a superkick gets rid of Slater and Rhyno at 9:55.

American Alpha come in fifth and it's already time for the German suplexes. Gable gets two off a high crossbody but Jey dropkicks him down (Chad looks out of it) to take over. The slow beating continues with Gable being sent outside but a double clothesline allows the hot tag to

Jordan. The Steiner Bulldog doesn't work so Chad rolls Jey up for the pin at 15:19.

That's not enough for the Usos though as they beat the heck out of the champs as the Ascension comes out last. For some reason Ascension takes forever to hit Fall of Man and Viktor doesn't bother to take Gable out, meaning a save can be made. A knee to the face gets two on Jason but Viktor is sent shoulder first into the post. The hot tag brings Gable in and a very quick Grand Amplitude retains the titles at 21:08.

Rating: D+. Dang this show has been lame so far. This was really long (obviously) and filled in a lot of time but that doesn't mean it was good. The Usos vs. Alpha part was fine but the falls were only about five minutes each, making this more a collection of TV matches than anything else. I wouldn't mind seeing New Day come over to breathe some life into the division because this thing is just death right now.

We recap Nikki Bella vs. Natalya, which is over Nikki taking forever to realize Natalya attacked her at Survivor Series. Natalya then went all evil on Nikki, who apparently gained her fame because she's dating John Cena, which of course got into the whole wrestler vs. diva thing that has been going on for years now.

Natalya vs. Nikki Bella

Nikki tries a cross armbreaker to start but Natalya easily wins the wrestling portion. A kneebar goes about as well so Nikki hits a clothesline off the apron. Natalya asks for time out before driving Nikki back first (close enough) into the post. Nikki fights up again but her double clothesline doesn't do much good. We hit a long leglock on Nikki, followed by a Michinoku Driver for two.

Natalya keeps up the shouting but a forearm breaks up the Sharpshooter attempt. The Rack Attack 2.0 is broken up so Nikki gets in a spinebuster for two (not .0). Natalya gets in a superplex to put both of them down again and it's Sharpshooter time. Since Nikki is now a technical wrestler, she slips out and grabs an STF, only to have Natalya make it to the ropes. They fight outside and that means a double countout at 13:26.

Rating: C-. Somehow this was one of the better matches of the night but I can't handle Natalya's constant yelling. It doesn't help that I still find her to be the face in this whole thing as I buy what she's said about Nikki. The double countout was a pretty bad idea here and I'm sure we'll see a gimmick rematch of some kind.

Natalya punches her post match but gets speared on the ramp.

Carmella says those two are out of control and Ellsworth repeats her.

Bray says the Family will reunite.

We recap Randy Orton vs. Luke Harper. Luke got jealous of Orton getting Bray's attention and left the Family as a result. Of course that means a match.

Luke Harper vs. Randy Orton

No Bray in sight of course. They yell at each other to start and do a long lockup with Harper hitting an early shoulder. That means a trip to the floor (way too common tonight) with Luke getting the better of it, only to get knocked off the top for a big crash. Harper gets dropped over the announcers' table and it's time to hit the chinlock.

The trend of slow paced matches continue as Orton stops to do his pose in the corner. That's enough for Harper to start his comeback, including a slingshot hilo of all things, followed by a big boot for two. Orton is sent outside for the suicide shove and a drop onto the announcers' table to make up for earlier.

Back in and Orton gets in his superplex (looks as cool as ever) for two more and it's time for a slugout. The RK0 doesn't work so Orton uses a full nelson slam of all things for two more. Another RK0 attempt is broken up with a superkick and a second gives Harper his best near fall yet. There's a Batista Bomb for another two and it's time for the slugout from their knees. Back up and the discus lariat is countered into the RK0 for the pin at 17:13.

Rating: B. Good match here with the most obvious finish on the whole show. This just wasn't going to happen two weeks after the Royal Rumble

so there wasn't exactly another option for this ending. Harper got a nice rub here but at some point he needs to win something before he becomes the new Cesaro.

Nikki and Natalya brawl even more with Nikki running into Maryse to send some powder flying. I'm guessing that sets up Nikki/Cena vs. Miz/Maryse.

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss

Naomi is challenging after pinning Bliss in a few tag matches. Bliss has a Wonder Woman motif for her gear. Alexa spits gum at Naomi to start but gets armdragged down. That earns Naomi a hard whip into the corner with a loud crack against the turnbuckle. They trade some rollups until simultaneous kicks to the head put both of them down.

The Rear View gets two on the champ but she forearmnaomi Naomi down. Insult to Injury gets two and Alexa's snap DDT gets the same. Alexa is starting to get frustrated and that's not a good sign. Twisted Bliss hits knees though and Naomi gets in the split legged moonsault for the pin and the title in somewhat of an upset at 8:13.

Rating: D+. Eh fine, though Bliss could have held the title for a long time. This feels like something more about giving the show some excitement but Naomi isn't exactly the best in the world at connecting with the fans. Hopefully Bliss stays in the title picture because she's one of the better performers in the division. Naomi winning is fine but really just there, which isn't great.

Naomi thanks the fans and is glad the fans feel the glow.

Carmella is tired of being asked questions so Ellsworth throws the interviewer out.

The Chamber (now mainly square with a big WWE logo on top) is lowered.

We recap the main event, which was really just announced one week on Smackdown as a way to have Cena defend his newly won title.

Smackdown World Title: John Cena vs. AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose vs. The Miz vs. Baron Corbin vs. Bray Wyatt

There are five minute intervals here and Cena is defending. Cena and Styles start and I don't think anyone is going to be complaining. They take their time to start with Cena shouldering him down but Styles comes back with his torture rack into the spinning powerbomb. A Code Red gets two on AJ and Cena grabs the ProtoBomb but Dean Ambrose comes in third.

Ambrose goes right for AJ and gives him a release suplex on the cage floor outside the ring. Dean goes to the top of his pod for the elbow drop on Cena to put all three down. Cena will have none of this though and German suplexes both of them at once (Mauro: "Not a bird or a plane. It's Super Cena!"). Wyatt comes in (way before five minutes have passed) and immediately runs Cena over.

Bray throws AJ into the cage so AJ sends him into the post. Now it's Styles and Cena climbing the cage wall with John crashing down (onto the padded floor), leaving AJ to climb onto the top of the pod for a slugout with Ambrose. Bray pulls Dean down and hammers away, only to have AJ cut him off. That earns Styles a choke throw off the top of the pod but Dean powerbombs Bray down at the same time for a Tower of Doom.

Corbin comes in fifth and cleans house (as you would expect), including countering Sister Abigail by sending Bray into the pod. AJ takes the End of Days, leaving Cena to grab the STF on Baron. That's countered as well and Cena eats End of Days but rolls outside. Corbin and Ambrose throw each other into the cage wall over and over with Baron getting the better of it.

Miz comes in sixth (one of the few times, if not the only time, that everyone is legal at the same time but stays in the pod, allowing Dean to roll Corbin up for the pin at 18:42. Corbin throws Ambrose through the pod, followed by End of Days. As soon as Corbin is gone, Miz runs in and pins Ambrose at 20:46.

Miz starts doing the YES Kicks to Cena and Wyatt and hits the running corner dropkicks for good measure. Wyatt gets the Skull Crushing Finale on the floor, leaving Cena to AA Miz out at 24:33. AJ and Wyatt (up WAY too fast) double team Cena, who of course fights back and AA's Wyatt. He can't hit one on AJ though and the Styles Clash gets two. The AA gets the

same on Styles so Cena goes to the top of the pod, points to the sign (required) and dives onto both guys. Bray is up first and Sister Abigail eliminates Cena at 29:15.

That makes Wyatt the huge face in the match now (not that big of a jump) and he runs AJ over, only to eat a forearm for two. The Phenomenal Blitz is cut off by a clothesline but Styles gets in the Pele and a springboard 450 for another near fall. AJ loads up the Phenomenal Forearm but gets caught in Sister Abigail for the pin to give Bray the title at 34:31.

Rating: A. Well that was well deserved and you can't say they didn't put him over VERY strong with back to back pins over Cena and Styles. It's a very good match and the kind of way to put the title on Bray, but I really hope they don't hot shot it over to Orton in the first title defense. Wyatt needs to shake off the choker idea and this is going to help a lot but losing at Wrestlemania would bring him right back down. Still though, he won here and that's what matters most.

Ort...actually one more thing before we get there.

"BUT KB! WYATT WAS TOTALLY BURIED LAST YEAR AT WRESTLEMANIA WHEN ROCK MADE FUN OF HIM AND THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD EVER RECOVER!!!" It's almost like anyone with a brain could have told you otherwise but no, let's just immediately freak out because Rock, the best trash talker ever, made jokes about Wyatt. It was stupid then and this is even more proof.

That's better.

Orton comes out for the staredown to end the show. JBL: "Does this mean Randy Orton is going to face Bray Wyatt at Wrestlemania?" Dang it JBL go talk to another legend and let Saxton handle the stupid questions.

Overall Rating: C. The main event REALLY bails this horrible show out but it certainly doesn't save it. Simply put, this show didn't need to exist outside of the Chamber and they would have been better off having a big match on Smackdown or just changing the title at the Rumble instead of doing the two week Cena run (still longer than Flair's sixteenth run but remember: Flair's automatically means more because he's Ric Flair and we can't criticize him).

The rest of the show was really tedious (aside from Orton vs. Harper) though and shows how weak Smackdown can be at times. The main event and Orton's match helped a lot though and that's what this show needed. It's a long way to Wrestlemania and I'm not sure how strong Smackdown's contributions are going to be. At least Wyatt won though and that's the important thing.

Results

Becky Lynch b. Mickie James – Rollup

Apollo Crews/Kalisto b. Dolph Ziggler – Toss powerbomb

American Alpha won Tag Team Turmoil last eliminating Ascension

Nikki Bella vs. Natalya went to a double countout

Randy Orton b. Luke Harper – RKO

Naomi b. Alexa Bliss – Split legged moonsault

Bray Wyatt b. The Miz, Dean Ambrose, John Cena, Baron Corbin and AJ Styles – Sister Abigail to Styles

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