

Smackdown – March 7, 2017: That Old Feeling

Smackdown

Date: March 7, 2017

Location: Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

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

We're down to four shows left before Wrestlemania XXXIII and tonight we're likely finding out who is challenging for the Smackdown World Title. I know you might have heard that one before but this time seems to be the real thing. Tonight AJ Styles faces Randy Orton for the title shot against Bray Wyatt at the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Randy Orton joining Bray Wyatt, seemingly with the intent to betray him later. That led us to last week where Orton burned Bray's barn down, presumably destroying Sister Abigail's grave in the process. I know I'm older than the average fan, but in my day, felonious arson recorded on tape wouldn't be seen as a face turn.

Here are Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan to get things going. They're not sure who should get the title shot as Daniel thinks it should be Orton while Shane prefers Styles. Bryan talks about how the winner of the Royal Rumble has to get the shot. Shane says no one has ever given up their shot like Orton did (Orton would be the third I believe). This leads to more recaps and the fans seem to like the idea of Styles getting the shot. Therefore, tonight we're having a match for the #1 contendership. This too quite a bit longer than necessary.

Post break AJ gets in the bosses' faces and says he's tired of this anti-AJ conspiracy. AJ makes it clear that he's not afraid of fire.

James Ellsworth/Carmella vs. John Cena/Nikki Bella

Before the match, Ellsworth says he beat AJ Styles three times in a row and it took Cena three times to get his first win. That makes Ellsworth

the mack daddy of Smackdown! The women start and here are Miz and Maryse at the bell. The distraction lets Carmella get in a superkick and we take an early break.

Back with Miz and Maryse on commentary and Nikki kicking Carmella to the floor. There's the hot tag off to Cena and Ellsworth has to come in. Ellsworth slaps him in the face and gets ProtoPlexed. Carmella gets in Cena's face and eats a forearm, setting up a double Shuffle, stereo AA/Rack Attack 2.0 and double STF's for the tap at 7:11.

Rating: D. This was completely not about the match of course and there's nothing wrong with that. The idea here is to set up the mixed tag at Wrestlemania and having Cena and Bella dominate a couple of goons in their first match together is fine. This accomplished a goal and that's all it needed to do.

Miz and Maryse lay them out post match with Miz going on a rant about how he and Maryse have been the real first couple of WWE for a year now and it sickens him to see someone pretend to have real love for the sake of promoting their brands. Maryse throws the mic at Bella and we're out.

Orton suggests that AJ run.

Rick Rude Hall of Fame announcement.

Curt Hawkins is in the ring to call out Dean Ambrose for attacking him before their match last week. Ambrose comes out and sends Hawkins packing before saying he wanted to call out Baron Corbin. Baron pops up on screen to say Ambrose should enjoy what he has while he has it. Whenever Corbin wants to, he's taking what Dean values most. Ambrose heads to the back but stops to give Hawkins Dirty Deeds on the floor.

Women's History Month video on Trish Stratus and Lita.

Post break, Ambrose is looking for Corbin.

Mojo Rawley, in a suit, says he wants his Wrestlemania moment. Therefore, he's announcing his entrance into the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal. Dolph Ziggler comes up and says Mojo has to earn that kind of a moment. Mojo: "Is that why you don't have one?"

Dean is still looking for Corbin when Baron jumps him with a pipe to the knee and another shot to the chest. Corbin: "You found me!" Dean: "All right. Good talk!" Corbin kicks him again for saying something that stupid. Baron finds a forklift and lowers the lift onto Dean's chest. Every the geniuses, the referees try to lift it off of him until one of them wakes up and presses the UP button.

Here are Alexa Bliss and Mickie James for a chat. Bliss is here to announce her opponent for Wrestlemania but first, let's talk about who it won't be. It's not going to be Naomi because she's off feeling the ow. It won't be Nikki Bella, who is in the trainers' room being nursed back to help by her square jawed superman. It won't be Carmella with her weird chin. It won't be Chuckie, who you all know as Becky Lynch.

Bliss has gotten rid of her over and over and she just keeps coming back (I hear Rick Steiner has experience in that area.). Cue Becky to says he has a Beclaration (Becky: "You don't have to call it that. I've done better.") to say she's taking the title back at Wrestlemania.

This brings out Natalya to tell Beaker to step aside. Natalya thinks Becky is out of her and Alexa's league but Alexa thinks Natalya has been getting into the catnip. See, Natalya is the worst there is, the worst there was and the worst there ever will be. Mickie grabs the mic and says Becky and Natalya are ruining this moment.

Of course it's going to be Mickie getting the title shot but Alexa doesn't seem to agree. Becky points out that she beat Mickie twice last week. Alexa: "See...what had happened was...". Natalya calls Mickie ugly and here's Daniel Bryan to break it up. He and Shane heard Alexa call herself the greatest woman on the Smackdown roster and there's only one way to find out if that's true. Therefore, it's going to be Alexa defending against the entire division at Wrestlemania. As for tonight, let's have a holla holla (Daniel's words) tag match.

Natalya/Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James

Joined in progress with Bliss shoving Natalya and getting slapped in the face for her efforts. Natalya does her stepover into the basement dropkick (clearly missed) for two and it's off to Becky via a somewhat

forceful tag. Mickie comes in as well and takes a few dropkicks, followed by a Becky nip-up. It's back to Bliss who throws Becky down by the hair for two as JBL wants to know what kind of a match Bliss will be defending her title in (it was never specified).

A quick trip to the floor goes badly for Lynch and we take a break. Back with Lynch still getting double teamed and James grabbing a chinlock. Becky finally throws Alexa away but she opts to clothesline Mickie instead of tagging out. Natalya doesn't care for this and comes in with a German suplex on her partner (the fans seem surprised that a heel would do a heelish thing) before walking out. Bliss tags herself in and steals the pin at 12:45.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but the angle advancement at the end was fine. The title match is going to be a huge mess but you have to expect that at a Wrestlemania. I'd much rather it be Becky vs. Bliss for the title, though that doesn't exactly benefit the rest of the division on a very, very packed show.

Mickie kicks Bliss in the head post match.

We look back at the forklift incident. Ambrose has been taken to a medical facility with possibly broken ribs.

Austin Aries wants us to watch 205 Live.

AJ Styles vs. Randy Orton

The winner faces Bray Wyatt for the title at Wrestlemania. Before the match, AJ says he should be the champ again because he made the B show into the A show. Then you have Randy Orton who burned a man's house down and is getting praised for it. No one is keeping him from being in the main event on the grandest stage of them all and making Wrestlemania phenomenal.

Orton tries the RK0 in a hurry but AJ bails out to the floor. Back in and AJ grabs a chinlock before Orton sends him hard into the corner. Styles starts kicking at the knee and Orton falls out to the floor as we take a break. Back with AJ staying on the leg and grabbing a chinlock. Orton

pops back up with a full nelson slam for one but gets caught in the Hoshi Geroshi for two.

The Calf Crusher goes on but Orton slowly crawls over to the ropes. Orton comes right back with the hanging DDT but AJ gets sent outside. That looks to set up the springboard 450 so Orton coils, only to have AJ springboard up but drop right back down to the apron in a good fakeout. The springboard 450 misses though and a pop up RKO sends Orton to the title match at 18:45.

Rating: B-. This was a bit more slow paced than you would expect but Orton winning was the most obvious ending since...well since Cena and Ellsworth were in the same match earlier tonight. Orton vs. Wyatt is the logical move and I'm sure we're going to be seeing Styles vs. Shane (as in the guy who thought AJ should get the spot in the first place). I loved that fakeout spot though as it shows someone thinking in a match, which you just don't see enough anymore.

Overall Rating: C+. Here's a great example of a show that wasn't about the wrestling. Tonight was about pushing stories forward towards Wrestlemania and building interest in them. I had a good time with the show and multiple matches were advanced. There's a good feeling when Wrestlemania season is upon us and I'm getting fired up for the show. This was a good night and I had fun getting ready for Wrestlemania.

Results

Nikki Bella/John Cena b. Carmella/James Ellsworth – Double STF's

Alexa Bliss/Mickie James b. Natalya/Becky Lynch – Bliss pinned Lynch after a German suplex from Natalya

Randy Orton b. AJ Styles – RKO

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