

Summerslam Count-Up – 2016 (2017 Redo): The Bella, The Doctors and the SMASH

Summerslam 2016

Date: August 21, 2016

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 15,974

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield

A year has passed since I saw this show and I can barely remember much about it. That's very telling when you look at how stacked this show really is. There are multiple top level matches here and it really wasn't clear what was going to close the show until the night of the event. Hopefully that means that this SIX HOUR show holds up. Let's get to it.

So here's a quick plug. I'm going through the pre-show and there's a three expert panel of Booker T., Jerry Lawler and Lita. Earlier this year, I met all three of them at WrestleCon. If you're ever at a Wrestlemania weekend, treat yourself to an amazing time and GO TO WRESTLECON. I met over 120 wrestlers in about four hours. Where else are you going to get to do something like that? Anyway, on with the show.

Pre-Show: American Alpha/Hype Bros/Usos vs. Breezango/Ascension/Vaudevillains

Who would have thought that Breezango would be the most entertaining out of all these teams? This is pretty much the still titleless Smackdown tag division at this point as they had to bring in the Headbangers and throw together Heath Slater and Rhyno to be able to have a tournament. This is also a rematch from Smackdown, which shows how little effort they were putting into the tag division at this point.

Gable and Breeze start things and the fans are WAY into Gable. Chad twists around as only he can to escape a wristlock and it's off to Jey,

who is quickly driven into the corner. English comes in and says that he's what a man is. That earns him a right hand to the jaw and it's off to Mojo to work on a wristlock. Ryder comes in to quite the reaction as Mauro says the Hype Bros have more chemistry than the Periodic Table.

Everything breaks down (What took them so long?) and Ascension clears the ring, only to have American Alpha come off the top (the same corner) with double clotheslines (that's pure Steiner Brothers). English posts Ryder though and we take a break. Back with Gotch putting Ryder in a chinlock, followed by Viktor doing the same. The other heels take turns stomping on Ryder until Breeze grabs his own chinlock. Fandango adds a slingshot legdrop as this is going WAY longer than it needs to.

JBL thinks cold beer uniting the APA is more effective than furry selfie sticks uniting Breezango but maybe he's wrong. Ascension knocks the good guys off the apron but Viktor misses a charge in the corner, allowing Ryder to get in a neckbreaker on Konnor. The hot tag (with a limited reaction) brings in Jimmy to clean house.

Jordan gets the real hot tag and does his fired up sequence (which he really is awesome at) with a belly to belly getting two on Breeze. We hit the parade of secondary finishers as the referee is imploring them to tag. Mojo powerbombs Breeze and Viktor out of the corner and the Usos add stereo superkicks to set up stereo dives. Back in and Grand Amplitude plants Gotch, only to have Jey tag himself in for a Superfly Splash and the pin at 14:31. Gable is really not cool with that. Eh just wait until your team is split up for a pretty lame story where Jordan is Kurt Angle's son.

Rating: B-. If you cut out a few minutes from this, it's a heck of an opener. There are too many people in the match of course but they kept it moving fast enough (for the most part) to really get something fun out of it. Jordan's house cleaning spot is a heck of a way to fire the crowd up and it made the match more fun than it should have been. Tweak this a bit (eight/ten man tag or shorten the match a bit) and it's even better.

Pre-Show: Dudley Boyz vs. Sami Zayn/Neville

Sami works on D-Von's arm to start and it's off to Neville for more of

the same. Both of them get in more shots as we hear about the rivalry over the NXT Title. I do appreciate the history, especially when Graves should know about that match very well. Bubba is sent outside but D-Von breaks up a springboard dive, allowing Bubba to nail Neville from behind to take over. The fans want tables but a back elbow to Neville's jaw cuts them off in a hurry.

Back from a break with Bubba hitting his neckbreaker out of the corner. Things slow down even more as Bubba is talking even more than he usually does in a match. Bubba: "COME ON ENGLISH BOY! O-LAY! O-LAY!" The middle rope backsplash misses though and the hot tag brings in Sami. D-Von takes the Blue Thunder Bomb for two but the reverse 3D gets the same. Neville escapes the regular version though and we get some heel miscommunication. The Helluva Kick sets up the Red Arrow to put Bubba away at 7:55.

Rating: C-. That would be it for the Dudleys in WWE as they would have one more segment tomorrow night where Anderson and Gallows sent them packing. It's also pretty much it for Sami and Neville as a team, which is quite odd as you would think they would be a fine choice for a team. The match was nothing you wouldn't expect on Raw.

Pre-Show: Cesaro vs. Sheamus

You know, because two matches just weren't enough for the pre-show. This is the first match of the Best of Seven Series, which really wasn't too well received. After Cole says Cesaro is facing Cesaro and both Cole and Saxton say this is about establishing physical dominance, we're ready to go. Sheamus misses a very early Brogue Kick but the spinning springboard uppercut is blocked as well.

Cesaro charges into an uppercut but comes back with a dropkick for one. The ten forearms to the chest are broken up so Sheamus clotheslines him onto the apron instead. It's off to an armbar on Cesaro's chronically taped up shoulder but Cesaro lifts him up into that kind of reverse Angle Slam of his. They're certainly hitting each other hard here, which is pretty much the draw of the whole feud.

Sheamus hits a tilt-a-whirl slam and it's off to a break. Back with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock because that rule even applies on pre-

shows that will never end. The Irish Curse gives Sheamus two as Cole runs down the pay per view card, which only makes me think that there are FAR too many titles in WWE. They fight over a suplex and fall out to the floor in a heap. Back in and Cesaro starts firing off the running uppercuts in the corner, capped off by a dropkick to knock him off the ropes.

The apron superplex (which wasn't from the apron) gets two but Sheamus counters the Neutralizer into White Noise for two. There's the super Regal Roll for two more and frustration is really setting in. Another Brogue Kick attempt is countered by one heck of a clothesline though and Cesaro adds a high crossbody for two of his own. Cesaro tries the Sharpshooter but Sheamus gets to the ropes. Back up and a poke to the eye sets up the Brogue Kick to give Sheamus the pin at 14:11.

Rating: B. They beat the heck out of each other and it was a fun match but it also brings up the problem: I'm not going to want to watch them fight six more times. No matter how good things are, having them happen so many times in a row over several weeks is going to get tiresome. It happens in all these series and it's happening here too.

And now, after more wrestling than you get on an average Smackdown, here's the actual pay per view.

The opening video looks at New York City, with the narrator telling you how AMAZING the city is. I'm not sure if New York City or Texas is worse about bragging about their home's greatness. As usual, this switches over to a series of quick looks at the biggest matches on the card.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

Well duh. That's about as easy of a choice for an opener as you could ever find for this show. As you might expect, the crowd eats up the opening promo with a spoon and of course we hear a ton of New York City music references. Included are Frank Sinatra, Biggie Smalls and Jay-Z, plus more that probably go over my head. Cass adds in a few songs of his own as this is the only way this show could have opened. Since Graves is the best heel commentator in wrestling today though, he points out that Enzo is from New Jersey.

Jericho and Owens jump Enzo at the bell and the STUPID IDIOT chants start rolling. Enzo comes back with a crossbody and a running right hand to the jaw for two. It's off to Cass, who drags Owens inside for a beat. That's some scary power. Enzo gets launched into the corner to crush Jericho but the Canadians bail to the floor. That's fine with Cass who tosses Enzo over the top onto them in a huge crash. I've always loved that spot as it just looks cool.

Back in and Enzo ax handles Owens but turns into a middle rope dropkick from Jericho. The Canadian violence begins with Owens kneeing Enzo from the apron and doing his dance on the apron in a rather funny visual. Owens' comedic skills aren't given enough credit more often than not. It's back to Jericho for the Arrogant Cover and a chinlock with Owens telling Jericho to do it like he taught him.

Owens comes in and adds a gutbuster for two, followed by the running start for a chinlock. It takes real talent to turn a chinlock into an art form but Owens has somehow pulled it off. Enzo finally rolls away but Jericho is there to break up the diving tag attempt. Owens drops the frog splash for two and his stunned look on the kickout is the usual awesome visual. Enzo gets pulled off the corner to make things even worse but, after blowing a kiss to Jericho, misses the Cannonball.

That means the hot tag to Cass and everything breaks down. Jericho dives into a big boot but Owens breaks up the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka. Cass gets posted on the floor and now the Cannonball against the barricade connects. Back in and Enzo scores with his top rope DDT on Jericho with Owens making the save. A pop up Codebreaker (didn't look great as Jericho was too far away) ends Enzo at 12:09.

Rating: C+. Odd choice for an ending aside (not surprising of course but odd), this was a good way to get the crowd going. I could have gone for another hope spot from Enzo and more of Cass cleaning house but that pop up Codebreaker could have been a heck of a finisher if done right. Nice opener, though would it have killed them to put Enzo and Cass over in Brooklyn?

Smackdown bosses Daniel Bryan and Shane McMahon run into Raw General

Manager Mick Foley to brag about how awesome their shows are. Former Daily Show host Jon Stewart and his son come in to ask what Foley is thinking to work with Stephanie. He rants about abuse of power but realizes she's right behind him. Stephanie yells at him about how great it is to abuse power but thankfully New Day comes up. As the Smackdown bosses and Foley munch on cereal, New Day asks Jon if he'd like to do something. He gets out as fast as he can and Stephanie isn't amused.

We recap Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks. Sasha won the Women's Title on the first exclusive show after the Brand Split and tonight is the rematch. The other big idea here is Charlotte never loses singles matches on pay per view and Banks has to recreate the magic one more time.

Raw Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Banks is defending and we get the Big Match Intros. Some early WOOing sets up a slightly less early Bank Statement but Charlotte bails to the floor. Back in and Banks climbs the corner for a wristdrag before sending Charlotte face first into the middle buckle. Banks gets caught on top though and Charlotte basically drops her onto the ropes for a backbreaker which almost had to hurt horribly. The fact that Banks had a bad back coming in and Charlotte still did some rather sloppy moves like that got her in some hot water.

We hit a Gory Stretch on the champ for a bit but she comes back with a pair of running clotheslines. That just earns her another backbreaker and Charlotte stomps away at the back. The Figure Eight is broken up but Sasha misses a charge into the corner and gets caught in the Tree of Woe. Charlotte picks her up for a super Razor's Edge but since that would, you know, kill Sasha, she reverses into a hurricanrana to put them both down.

Back up and a WOO earns Charlotte a string of slaps before Sasha avoids a charge in the corner and hits the double knees to the back for two. Charlotte kicks her in the leg to break up a charge but gets knocked outside again, setting up the double knees from the apron. Back in and the Backstabber doesn't work but Natural Selection is countered into the Bank Statement (thankfully too as the Natural Selection clearly didn't send Sasha's head anywhere near the mat).

Charlotte makes the rope for the break and takes out the knee again. Natural Selection gives Charlotte two so she yells about being better than Sasha. Another Bank Statement goes on but Charlotte reverses into a rollup for the pin and the title at 13:52. Saxton: "Just like that?"

Rating: B. This was just a straight match and that's the key to the whole thing. The women are getting to show that they can have a good match without the smoke and mirrors, which never would have been the case otherwise. If nothing else it got the kind of time that a title match deserves to develop the story of Banks having a bad back (which would keep her on the shelf for about a month). Strong match here and another of many to come for these two.

Doctors Anderson and Gallows (oh man I had forgotten how stupid this was) run into AJ Styles for a Club reunion. Finn Balor comes up and doesn't think much of it. Somehow, this has still never gone anywhere.

Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is defending after winning a triple threat match. Miz comes out wearing a glittery Phantom of the Opera mask while Maryse is basically in a one piece swimsuit. In a sign of the changing times, Mauro talks about Miz's look instead of Maryse. Miz stomps away in the corner and gets two off a running kick to the chest. Crews gets the same off a rollup, only to walk into the short DDT as it's almost all Miz to start. We're already in the reverse chinlock before Miz sends him into the apron to cut off a comeback. Miz takes too long coming off the top though and dives into a dropkick to put both guys down.

A crossbody into a nipup has Miz in trouble as JBL rants about Otunga calling Crews a Jackrobat (jacked acrobat). The Toss Powerbomb is countered so Crews gets two off a tilt-a-whirl powerslam. An overhead belly to belly sets up a standing moonsault, which Otunga sums up perfectly: "A man with that kind of size and that kind of muscle should not be able to do that." Miz teases taking a walk but Maryse cuts him off, allowing Miz to post Crews. The Skull Crushing Finale retains the title at 5:36.

Rating: D+. Standard Smackdown match and something that could have been

cut, or at least put in the Kickoff Show in the place of the Dudleys match. Crews felt like an easy obstacle to overcome because there was nowhere near enough build to set the match up. Put some more effort into the title already people, as it's just not working.

We recap John Cena vs. AJ Styles. They set up the first match when Styles and Cena were in the ring together, only to have Anderson and Gallows interfere to turn Styles heel. Styles went on a great rant about how Cena was a fraud who couldn't hang in the ring with someone like him. Cena went into a great speech about how he's here out of love because it never gets old. AJ beat him at Money in the Bank with assistance from Anderson and Gallows, setting up a rematch between the two here.

AJ Styles vs. John Cena

This just feels big. AJ grabs a waistlock to start but is easily knocked away. The announcers go out of the way to put over how AJ has been on big shows before but nothing this big. Oh I don't know. I remember him being at that Wrestlemania thing earlier in the year. The dueling chants begin and the AJ STYLES side is pretty clearly stronger.

Cena's headlock is countered and AJ scores with the dropkick but the bragging earns AJ a right to the jaw. A hard whip into the corner sends AJ down for a bit with Cena doing some rare trash talking. They head to the floor and the fans start belting out JOHN CENA SUCKS, only to have AJ turn it into some gasping with a suplex onto the apron. Cena is right back with a dropkick for two and it's time for some more right hands to the head.

AJ comes back with a forearm to the face, earning himself Cena's finishing sequence. It's way too early for the AA though as AJ hits a Pele, followed by the Styles Clash for a close two. The fans were actually more into the near fall than I was expecting as you would think they'd know better this early. The AA gives Cena two of his own and both guys are down again.

Styles slips out of the super AA and grabs the torture rack for the spinout powerbomb. They're trading bombs at this point and it's the only way they should be going here. Something like a Big Ending gives Cena two

but he can't get the STF. Instead it's the AA neckbreaker for two on Cena (not the same as the AA JBL) but the springboard 450 only hits mat.

A faceplant puts Cena down again though and AJ can't follow up. He manages the springboard forearm but Cena reverses into the worst STF I've ever seen. Thankfully AJ slips out and grabs a Crossface, which Cena powers out of as well. That's reversed into the Calf Crusher which AJ is smart enough to twist away from the ropes. Cena reverses that into another horrible STF (AJ's face is on the mat) so AJ is quickly up with the enziguri. A tornado DDT plants AJ and there's the top rope Fameasser for two.

Cena heads up again and gets taken down with a super hurricanrana (Mauro: "MAMA MIA!"), followed by the Phenomenal Forearm for a VERY near fall (drawing Mauro to his feet). It's Cena's turn now as he takes AJ up for the super AA and...it's two. NOW the fans know it's on as I don't think anyone has ever kicked out of that before. Cena is stunned and the AA is countered into another Clash. The Phenomenal Forearm puts Cena away clean at 23:10.

Rating: A. I know it's not going to sound good but a lot of this goes to Cena. At the end of the day, the crowd completely lost it when AJ kicked out of that super AA. AJ wins here not because he got a pin but because he beat Cena clean. That's a very, VERY short list and that's what makes it feel so important. Think back to how big of a deal it was when Warrior pinned Hogan clean. That felt like an era changing win, and while this isn't quite that big, it's the same idea.

Oh yeah and it's an outstanding match and possibly the Match of the Year. This was the heavyweight slugfest formula as they beat the heck out of each other with both guys hitting everything they could until one of them couldn't get up. That's a really hard match to pull off and these two did it in an incredible match. It belonged on the grand stage and gives Cena one heck of a mountain to overcome, which he somehow did in a better match at the Royal Rumble.

Post match Cena takes off his wristband and leaves it in the ring. He would do dark matches for a few weeks and then be back wrestling on TV in

less than a month so this didn't mean anything.

Some fans won a contest and got some stuff. In other words, let the fans have a breather.

Here's Jon Stewart for your celebrity appearance. He makes fun of himself for interfering in Cena's match last year and says the big lesson he learned was to tuck your shirt in when you're taking an AA. As for tonight though, he's here to be in New Day's corner to help deal with Anderson and Gallows. In honor of the moment, he throws on a unicorn horn and does Big E.'s (out injured due to getting crotched against the post) entrance.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending of course and unfortunately Anderson and Gallows are still doing their stupid doctor nonsense, complete with jars for Kofi, Xavier and Jon's testicles. I hear Paige can help you with one of those. Anderson headlocks Kofi down to start but he's right back up with the jumping back elbow to the jaw. Kofi flips onto his feet and gets two off the standing double stomp. You can tell the fans are still recovering from the previous match and it's off to Woods.

That goes badly as the he gets taken into the corner for a beating from Gallows. At least it does bring the fans back a bit with the rhythmic clapping. Gallows gets taken into the corner for the Unicorn Stampede (which they've kind of stopped doing in recent months) and the fans are really not responding. Woods sends him outside so Kofi can hit a running dive (while posing in the air) to take him down again. Back in and Gallows kicks Kofi in the head to take over for real this time with Anderson working on the arm.

That goes nowhere as the hot tag brings in Woods to clean house. Anderson sends him to the apron for an enziguri, setting up the rope walk elbow drop. Everything breaks down and Anderson kicks Kofi in the chest, setting up the Magic Killer. Stewart gets in though and it's time to crotch him as well. Hang on though as he has to tuck in his shirt first. Cue the returning Big E. for the save though and that's a DQ at 9:09.

Rating: D. I don't know if it was the previous match or what but sweet goodness the fans did NOT care for this one. It's not a good match in the first place as Anderson and Gallows aren't funny in the doctor roles, but the bigger problem here was the focus being on Stewart at the end. Oh and the ending sets up a rematch, which really isn't what they need to be going with here. Bad match but Big E.'s return did wake up the crowd.

Big E. drinks the fluid in the jar holding his "testicles". Stewart dances with New Day and the fans...well they care when Big E. dances at least.

We recap Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler. Dolph won a six way match to earn the shot and then it all went nuts. Ziggler started talking about how he was tired of being told that he always either too good or not good enough. It was time to turn up the jets and become champion for the third time. Serious Ziggler was nice but I don't think anyone was buying him as having a real chance here. You know, because he's Dolph Ziggler.

Smackdown World Title: Dolph Ziggler vs. Dean Ambrose

Dean is defending and Shane and Daniel are here for no apparent reason. The fans are behind Ziggler and they trade some grappling on the mat with Ziggler getting the better of it (not exactly a surprise). The threat of a neckbreaker sends Ambrose bailing to the floor so Dolph splashes him against the barricade.

Back in and Ziggler's jumping DDT is countered with Dean throwing him outside again. Ziggler escapes a super Dirty Deeds so Dean slaps on a half crab of all things. You can tell Dean is playing the subtle heel here as the smark crowd is always going to cheer for Ziggler. Dean heads up top and gets dropkicked out of the air but he's right back with a double chickenwing facebuster.

Ambrose tunes up the band (which is now mocking Ziggler instead of anything involving Shawn Michaels) but shakes his head and tries Dirty Deeds instead. That's reversed into the jumping DDT and both guys are down again. A double collision gives us another lay down period until Dean is up first and hammering away.

The top rope elbow gets two so Ziggler grabs the sleeper, earning them both a tumble out to the floor. Ziggler gets in the superkick on the floor but it's barely two back inside. The Zig Zag gets the same but Dean pops back up with the rebound lariat. Ziggler catches Dean on top and pulls him back down, right into Dirty Deeds to retain the title at 15:22.

Rating: D+. And that people, is Ziggler choking again. This would lead to him saying he's never won the big one, which would turn into him never holding the World Title that long because holding the title is more important than winning it. The match was nothing all that good as we were just waiting on Dirty Deeds, which only happened so Dean could keep it warm for AJ next month. That was completely obvious the second AJ pinned Cena again and that's all this title needed to do.

Package on Summerslam weekend.

Natalya/Alexa Bliss/Eva Marie vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi/Carmella

Dang I didn't know the Glow was a year old. Actually hang on a minute as Eva Marie is suffering from exhaustion, anxiety and stress (likely brought on by reading too many Wellness Violation messages, which meant she would never wrestle again) so we have a replacement. At least we got that amazing entrance one more time.

Natalya/Alexa Bliss/Nikki Bella vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi/Carmella

So yeah, you know full well that Nikki is going to be all that matters in this match because IT'S HER BIG COMEBACK THAT EVERYONE TOTALLY CARES ABOUT BECAUSE WE LOVE HER SO MUCH! She does get one heck of a pop though, which is rather scary. During her entrance, Mauro declares her return "miraculous". Oh man this is going to be a long one.

Bliss rolls Becky up to start and gets in a hard slap for good measure. Naomi comes in to scare Alexa off so it's Natalya instead. A forearm puts Natalya down and the splits legdrop gets two. Carmella comes in for the Staten Island Shuffle before a missed charge sends Natalya outside. Back in and a powerslam out of the corner plants Carmella before it's off to Nikki, the heel, for a strong face pop.

We hit the chinlock but hang on as we need some Nikki pushups. Alexa chokeslaves Carmella down for the moonsault knees to the ribs as the crowd is dead all over again. The abdominal stretch keeps things slow until Carmella finally rolls over and makes the hot tag to Becky. All three heels are sent into the corner for the springboard kicks from Lynch, followed by a Bexploder on Natalya.

Becky's top rope legdrop gets two with Nikki making the save. A blind tag brings in Naomi for the dancing kicks with the fans just not reacting at all. Bliss' springboard splash hits knees so it's off to Nikki vs. Carmella. A bad looking Bronco Buster gets two on Nikki and everything breaks down. Nikki's big forearm sets up the Rack Attack 2.0 (Nikki: "I'm back.") for the pin at 11:16.

Rating: D. This was all about Nikki's return and that's not enough to carry a dull match. Naomi's Glow stuff wasn't over yet, Becky was stuck around people who weren't up to her level and Carmella was showing that she didn't need to be on the main roster yet. The same was true for Alexa and Natalya was her usual self. Just not a good match and it showed the lack of depth to the division.

We recap Rusev vs. Roman Reigns. Rusev and Lana were married and so Reigns interrupted for no apparent reason to insult them and shove them into a cake.

Maria Menunos interviews Rusev and Lana, who don't like her questions about Reigns. They won't stand for this and Lana is sure that her husband will destroy Reigns.

We recap the Universal Title match. Basically we need a new title due to the Brand Split and Universal Title was the best they could come up with. Seth Rollins was put into the match as Raw's #1 draft pick and Finn Balor earned his way in by winning a series of matches. Not much else to it as there's no major animosity between them but it's better than pulling the title out of a suitcase.

Seth did get in a great promo talking about how he's done everything Balor has done but he's done it a little bit better. He's not wrong, though that's not the best thing to do when you have someone so new to

the main roster. Then Balor showed up as the Demon and scared Rollins to death.

Universal Title: Finn Balor vs. Seth Rollins

Anything goes and the title (which isn't that well received due to a bad case of being hideous) is vacant coming in. Unless I'm forgetting something, to date this is the only time Balor has wrestled as the Demon on the main roster. We get the Big Match Intros and the title itself receives some hearty boos. Balor dropkicks him into the corner at the bell but it's too early for the Coup de Grace.

Instead Balor hits a suicide dive to the floor, followed by some kicks to the knee back inside. They head outside again with Seth getting in his first offense via a suplex on the floor. Balor is right back with something like a Phenomenal Forearm off the barricade. Back in again and Balor hits a basement dropkick for two as this is almost one sided so far. Finn stays on the leg as the fans are singing something.

Balor jumps over the ropes but Rollins slides between his legs and powerbombs him into the barricade, completely destroying Balor's shoulder and putting him on the shelf for the better part of eight months. We're less than four minutes in though and you can see the shoulder looking all messed up. Back in and Seth gets two off a backbreaker, setting up a chinlock. The chants are still going and it sounds like THAT TITLE SUCKS to the tune of John Cena Sucks.

Seth starts the trash talk and cuts off a comeback attempt. A snapmare into a kick to the back has Finn in even more trouble but Seth would rather walk around than follow up. It's back to the chinlock for a good while until the springboard knee to the head sets up Seth's frog splash for two. What looks like a Rainmaker is countered into a DDT to give Balor his first major offense in a long time and he follows up with some forearms.

A basement dropkick sets up the Sling Blade but Seth kicks him down without much effort. An enziguri stuns Balor but he's right back with the Pele, earning a very nice round of applause. If nothing else the chants about the title have stopped. 1916 (reverse implant DDT) gives Finn two

but the Coup de Grace is countered into a triangle choke of all things. Finn falls outside because rope breaks don't count (anything goes remember) and things slow down a bit.

Back in and the buckle bomb sets up the low superkick for two on Balor with Seth looking stunned on the kickout. A small package driver gets the same count and reaction so Seth goes up, allowing Balor to hit a very loud enziguri to put him on the floor. Balor adds a shotgun dropkick to send him into the barricade, followed by a top rope double stomp to the back of the head for two. The Coup de Grace misses and it's a Pedigree for two. Finn counters a second Pedigree into a double stomp, followed by the Coup de Grace for the pin and the title at 19:23.

Rating: B+. When you factor in that shoulder injury, this is quite the impressive performance. Above all else though, how good is it that Balor won the title here? If he loses his first major pay per view match and then goes away until April, he's lucky to come back to the cruiserweight division.

This was a heck of a match with both guys beating the heck out of each other. It took some time to get built up but once they finally got there, the fans really started to accept things, which is a very positive sign. Balor is someone who is going to get a very positive reaction no matter what and giving him the title here was entirely the right call.

Balor can barely move his right arm after the match but finally holds the title up. On his WWE 24 special, he said you could feel and hear the shoulder crunching and crackling as he lifted the title and it probably did more damage to the arm.

The pre-show channel chats a bit and throws us to a KFC ad with Dolph Ziggler dressing up as Colonel Sanders to beat up Miz dressed as a chicken. It's actually dumber than you remember it being.

Here's Lana to introduce Rusev, albeit while wearing half of a wedding dress, the bottom of which looks like a diaper. She's one of the most beautiful women on the roster but she looks ridiculous here.

US Title: Rusev vs. Roman Reigns

Roman is challenging and the booing is strong with this one. Rusev jumps him before the bell and they fight out to the floor with Roman being sent into the steps. The fans chant RUSEV MACHKA because they've given up on America over their hatred for Reigns. Roman gets in a Superman Punch as the bell hasn't rung yet. They fight over a chair with Reigns getting the better of it and destroying Rusev. Reigns finally leaves but comes back with a spear, all while the fans chant WE WANT SLATER. No match of course, likely due to time issues.

We recap Randy Orton vs. Brock Lesnar. This match was announced as Orton's return match from surgery and the build focused on Orton being able to hit the RK0 anytime, including a sweet moment where Orton interrupted a Lesnar promo with an RK0. The hype video even includes some OVW clips as they came up through developmental together and debuted within a few months of each other. This had a heck of a build and felt like something important but the question was whether Lesnar would have an actual match or just do his usual Lesnar stuff.

Randy Orton vs. Brock Lesnar

Heyman handles Lesnar's introduction, saying he's conquering out of the University of Suplex City. Brock seems to get into his MMA stance to start before driving Orton into the corner for the shoulders to the ribs. Orton escapes the first German suplex attempt but can't hit the RK0.

Now the first suplex connects (with Mauro knowing that it's the 33rd Lesnar has hit at Summerslam because he's awesome that way) and Brock follows with two more. Orton is almost out on his feet so Lesnar suplexes him again. It's nothing but suplexes at this point and it's already getting dull. They head outside for a much needed change of pace with Orton being thrown over the announcers' table.

Orton gets thrown from the front row through the table as this is dominance. The other table is loaded up but whatever Lesnar is trying is countered into the RK0 onto (not through) the table. The hanging DDT plants Lesnar back inside and another RK0 gets two. Orton realizes he has no choice and tries the Punt, only to have it reversed into the F5 (bad one) for two more.

That's enough for Lesnar so he takes off the gloves and pads and hammers on Orton. An elbow to the head actually busts Orton open VERY badly. Lesnar just keeps hammering on him while the fans chant GOLDBERG until the referee FINALLY stops it at 11:47. I've heard a bunch of answers about what happened but I believe this was the planned ending and a hard way opening.

Rating: D. Yeah this didn't work when it happened and it didn't work again this time around. Lesnar suplexing Orton for five minutes then selling a few big moves doesn't make me think it's an awesome main event. This was everything wrong with Lesnar's current WWE run in one match and that made for a really dull match, save for the odd finish that seemed designed to protect Orton. You know, after he was basically squashed.

Lesnar keeps hammering on him until the always intimidating Shane McMahon comes out, earning himself an F5 (which thankfully didn't lead anywhere). Heyman panics as they leave to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. If you cut an hour (or more) out of this, it's bordering on the classic level. As it is, this is just a good show that runs WAY too long. At some point you have to cut something out and WWE just refuses to do that. Cut out the Dudleys match or the women's tag and give us some breathing room here because sweet goodness this show could use it.

Now that being said, there's some outstanding stuff on here with the Styles vs. Cena match as an instant classic, the Women's Title being very good, a great Universal Title match and really only the Tag Team Title match being without much value. The show is certainly good and the positives outweigh the negatives but unless the show is a masterpiece, fans are going to start losing interest near the end. It's a solid show but cut out a good forty minutes to really make it great.

Ratings Comparison

American Alpha/Hype Bros/Usos vs. Breezango/Ascension/Vaudevillains

Original: C

2017 Redo: B-

Dudley Boyz vs. Neville/Sami Zayn

Original: C

2017 Redo: C-

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

Original: B-

2017 Redo: B

Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Original: C+

2017 Redo: C+

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Original: B

2017 Redo: B

Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Original: C

2017 Redo: D+

John Cena vs. AJ Styles

Original: A

2017 Redo: A

New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

Original: D+

2017 Redo: D

Dolph Ziggler vs. Dean Ambrose

Original: B-

2017 Redo: D+

Natalya/Alexa Bliss/Nikki Bella vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi/Carmella

Original: C

2017 Redo: D

Finn Balor vs. Seth Rollins

Original: B+

2017 Redo: D+

Brock Lesnar vs. Randy Orton

Original: C+

2017 Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: B

2017 Redo: B-

That's quite the drop on Ambrose vs. Ziggler and Lesnar vs. Orton. Some of them are spot on though and that's not the biggest surprise.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2016/08/21/summerslam-2016-they-didnt/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Complete 2002 Monday Night Raw Reviews in either E-Book or Paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/07/21/new-e-bookpaperback-kbs-complete-monday-night-raw-2002-reviews/>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>