

Smackdown – April 24, 2003: This Didn't Change My Mind

Smackdown

Date: April 24, 2003

Location: Gaylord Entertainment Center, Nashville, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Backlash and we have a Smackdown main event. This time around it's going to be rookie upstart John Cena challenging Brock Lesnar for the Smackdown World Title, meaning it's likely time for a big face to face showdown. Other than that it's Rikishi vs. Roddy Piper tonight for reasons I don't even want to begin to understand. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

The announcers preview the show with Cole making sure to say that "we are just 72 hours away, three days, from Backlash". I have that 72 hours, three days thing burned into my head after hearing Cole say it all those years.

John Cena vs. Rhyno

Before the match, Cena raps his history, which basically summarizes the tournament and says he's winning on Sunday. He also promises graphic footage to prove that Lesnar shouldn't be champion. Rhyno wins the early power battle and sends him outside, only to get dropkicked on the way back inside.

A middle rope Fameasser with Rhyno draped over the ropes has Rhyno in trouble and it's time to start in on the neck. Back in and we hit the armbar for a good bit until Rhyno fights up with a powerslam. The still yet to be named Throwback sets up the ProtoBomb but Rhyno catches him in a spinebuster. The Gore misses though and Cena rolls him up for the pin.

Rating: D+. Just a power match here and I kind of like the idea of Cena

making a power guy miss a catch him on a quick pin as it gives him another option to take the title from Lesnar. Unfortunately it wasn't a great match in the first place, but at least Cena won and beat someone that the fans still care about.

Mr. America is coming.

The FBI annoys Chris Benoit for losing last week when they had a bet on him. They want their money back but Nunzio winds up with a match against Benoit instead.

Sable flaunts her body to Josh Matthews and hypes up the Sable Invitational body contest later tonight.

Some wrestlers toured a Navy ship earlier this week.

Chris Benoit vs. Nunzio

Stamboli and Palumbo get in some shots from behind while Nunzio has the referee. As usual the referee has no issue with Benoit being down despite his opponent not touching him and doesn't even yell at the other Italians. They trade some chops with the Canadian getting the better of it (well duh) but Palumbo trips Benoit again. The Sicilian Slice (middle rope Fameasser) gives Nunzio two and a swinging neckbreaker is good for the same. An enziguri finally gets Benoit out of trouble and grabs the rolling German suplexes. Nunzio pops up but the springboard armbar is countered into the Crossface for the tap.

Rating: D. I'm hoping they pull the plug on the FBI thing in the very near future as it's just not interesting. Nunzio is the best worker of the team and even he's only decent. On top of that, it's such a simple and not very interesting idea. They're just stereotypical mob thugs and that's far from good enough to survive. At least Benoit won though.

Benoit gets beaten down post match.

Tajiri and Funaki watch Rey Mysterio 619 Big Show last week and have a hearty laugh. Cue Big Show to destroy the TV and VCR to blow off some steam.

Rey Mysterio vs. Crash

Crash is now an MF'er, meaning a follower of Matt Hardy, who only uses low fat salad dressings. Tazz dubs Crash a Moore-On as he's working his way up to MF'er. Rey dropkicks Shannon to the floor but gets armbarred for his efforts. The sitout bulldog is countered with a belly to back suplex (Crash is the first person to come up with that counter?) but the kickouts frustrate Crash. Now the bulldog works fine and the springboard seated senton sets up a tornado DDT to give Rey two. The 619 sets up the springboard legdrop to put Crash away.

Rating: D+. I'm not sure how this is supposed to help Rey get ready for Big Show on Sunday. Crash doesn't exactly fit the mold for a goon as he wrestled his usual not great match here without looking like anything more than a bad wrestler. This should be setting up Rey vs. Matt but it's Rey vs. Big Show for reasons I don't understand.

Cena gives A-Train a pep talk and shows him Lesnar giving him a very scary F5 that saw A-Train landing on his head. That was edited off the actual broadcast if you don't remember seeing it. A-Train wants to end Lesnar.

Rikishi vs. Roddy Piper

Unfortunately Piper wrestles (work with me here) with his shirt off and the blinded referee doesn't see Sean O'Haire hit a low blow. Some right hands knock Piper backwards and Sean takes a few of his own but O'Haire comes in to break up the Stinkface for the DQ.

O'Haire beats him down even more and adds the reverse Death Valley Driver.

The evil French guys (now officially La Resistance) are still coming.

It's time for Sable's body contest. Before anyone comes out, Sable says this is designed to see if anyone can be as sexy as Torrie. However, Torrie won't be here tonight because she's feeling a bit fat lately as she hasn't been able to get to the gym with all the Playboy stuff. Nidia and Dawn Marie come out and are about to do their thing until Torrie

comes out, as expected.

Nidia and Dawn do their thing and get their standard reactions. It's time for Torrie, who hits on Sable, giving her kind of a standing lap dance, complete with lollipop, and...loses anyway. The beatdown is on and Torrie is left laying as this story is now more confusing than anything else. So Sable is now a lesbian cougar who didn't interest Torrie but now Torrie is interested (or just playing the proverbial "mind games") but Sable isn't interested? Is that where we are?

Chavo Guerrero vs. Shelton Benjamin

Team Angle is dedicating their win on Sunday to Kurt. Shelton takes him down without too much effort but lets Chavo up pretty quickly. Chavo scores with a dropkick and a clothesline as Tazz thinks Eddie stole money from him. Why were Los Guerreros never accused of stealing the FBI's money a few weeks back? It's kind of their thing to do.

Chavo's hurricanrana gets two but he walks into a belly to belly for the same. A quickly broken camel clutch doesn't do Shelton much good as Chavo grabs a flapjack. An STF that John Cena would think looks bad has Shelton in trouble but Charlie Haas pulls him over to the rope. The referee yells at Eddie for going after Haas, allowing Charlie to turn over a rollup and give Shelton the pin.

Rating: C-. They tried to put a bit too much into this and it wasn't as good as I was expecting. At least they actually set up something for Sunday as that hasn't seemed to be the case for most of the night. Chavo is the weaker of the team but he's certainly capable of having a good match. There was a bit too much interference to let that work here though and it was kind of a mess as a result.

Cena talks trash to Lesnar.

Big Show vs. Tajiri

Show catches him without much trouble and a clothesline cuts off the kicks. A charge misses and Show crotches himself, allowing Tajiri to fire off more kicks. Show's kick drops Tajiri again but here's Mysterio's

music for a distraction. Not that it matters as the chokeslam plants Tajiri. Cue Rey in person to post Show, drawing a countout.

Rating: D-. So let me make sure I've got this straight: Show has been humiliated twice in a row and is likely to squash Mysterio on Sunday, Rey is little more than a fly who is going to be swatted in the actual match, Tajiri gets treated like a jobber and Mysterio/Tajiri beating Team Angle to start the whole thing meant nothing at all. If someone would be interested in pointing out a positive in this whole mess, please let me know.

Stephanie McMahon is bent over a table for no apparent reason other than she probably thought she looked good that day (granted she's not wrong). She's an All-American girl and is happy to have Mr. America here next week.

Backlash rundown.

Brock Lesnar vs. A-Train

Non-title with Cena on commentary. Lesnar's pyro when he jumps to the apron seems to shake Cena, which you don't see very often. Joined in progress after a break with an exchange of power shoves. We hit a front facelock with Brock rolling A-Train around like he's not even there. Back up and a big collision puts both of them down and it's another staredown.

Brock finally gets a more definitive advantage by clotheslining A-Train to the floor, allowing Cena to trash talk even more. The distraction lets A-Train kick him in the face to take over, followed by the chinlock. Brock fights up but gets put right back down with a hard shoulder. A powerslam works a bit better for Lesnar, only to have A-Train grab the Derailer for two. Cena: "WHAT'S UP WITH CHIODA DOG??? WAY OUT OF POSITION!" The F5 plants A-Train a few seconds later but Cena comes in for the DQ.

Rating: D. Slow, plodding power match here with an obvious and dull ending. Lesnar winning is fine and A-Train got in some big shots despite having no change to win. There's no hiding the fact that Lesnar vs. Cena is the only Smackdown match that matters on Sunday but it's looking like

little more than a glorified squash. Bad main event to a bad show.

Cena chains Lesnar in the head and hits the Death Valley Driver (now the standard AA). A belt shot to Lesnar's head ends the show.

Overall Rating: F+. The best thing on the show was a lackluster Chavo vs. Shelton match as it's clear that the Smackdown side of Backlash means absolutely nothing. Brock vs. Cena is the distant third biggest match on the pay per view card and everything else is complete filler. This show did nothing to shake that idea as the whole thing was Lesnar vs. Cena and everything else, none of which was interesting in the slightest. It was a terrible show and another part of a horrid stretch for the brand.

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