

# TLC 2018 Preview



IMG Credit: WWE

After a very long year, we're at the final pay per view of the calendar. In this case, that means a show with a lot of violence in the form of TLC, or tables, ladders and chairs for long. This year's show is packed, because we need every single match on the card BECAUSE THAT'S HOW WWE WORKS! I'm not sure what to expect on the show, but odds are it's going to be long. Let's get to it.

## Finn Balor vs. Drew McIntyre

We'll start with the first match that I saw when I looked at the card. Balor has been under the weather as of late and that means...well very little really, but they've been fighting for a few weeks now over Balor wanting to stand up against the bully. At the same time though, McIntyre should be ready for a heck of a push and that would seem to include a win here over Balor.

That's what I'm going with here as Balor has no reason to win the thing while McIntyre can get another big win under his belt here. McIntyre is someone who can become a top star in the near future and Balor needs to be another victim on his list. Then he needs to move on to something more important, like...whatever it is that he's supposed to do on a show

without a World Champion again. But yeah, McIntyre wins here, as he certainly should.

### Elias vs. Bobby Lashley

Officially this is a ladder match, but in reality it's more like a guitar on a pole match with the win coming by pin after using the guitar. This has been a "great" feud with Lashley making fun of the fans by bending over in front of them and Elias playing songs that say Lashley sucks. They're really stretching to make this a ladder match and it's not something that needs to be there, but that's what the calendar says.

I'll take Lashley here, as WWE certainly seems to think there's something entertaining about having Lashley do the "favorite pose" nonsense. Elias might not be the future of the company, but the fans like him a lot and at some point he needs to actually win something. He loses almost every big match he's in and it's not like Lashley is going to be devastated by losing here. Elias has a lot more to gain than lose here and needs it way more, but I think they'll go with Lashley again.

### Ruby Riott vs. Natalya

This is a tables match and a great example of something that doesn't need to be on the pay per view. The match and feud aren't interesting enough to warrant a spot on an already crowded show and the tables part was just thrown in there for the sake of having a tables match on the card. I mean, they're fighting over Natalya's father's sunglasses, but they're still fighting over a pair of sunglasses.

Give me Natalya here in the feel good win, but I just can't get into the story. It's not a match that needs to be on the pay per view and at best should be on the Kickoff Show. The Riott Squad, Bayley and Sasha Banks are likely to get involved and it would be more interesting as a six woman tag team tables match. If nothing else, it could be interesting to see

Natalya go through the table with her dad's picture on it. Natalya wins though, in a feel good moment.

### Randy Orton vs. Rey Mysterio

This is the chairs match of the show and at least in this case they actually used some chairs before the match was announced. It also helps when their feud has actually gone somewhere in the last few weeks. Mysterio is already back in a groove after his time away from the company and that means he could go somewhere in the coming months, which is quite a good thing.

I'll take Orton to win here, as he seems more likely to go somewhere faster out of the two. Either guy can be reheated in the blink of an eye, but Mysterio can do it just a bit faster. Orton has to stay motivated to make things work while Mysterio can have a great match at the drop of a hat. I'll take Orton here as he continues to crush the heroes on his way to a bigger match, though Mysterio will be just fine, as always.

### SmackDown Tag Team Titles: The Bar(c) vs. The Usos vs. New Day

Of all the matches they had on the card, they didn't pick this one to be the ladder match? These three teams have dominated the SmackDown Tag Team Title scene for the better part of two years, with only the Bludgeon Brothers breaking their stretch that started in March of last year. The good thing is the match should be good because they know each other so well, but at the same time it can only be so interesting because we know it so well.

I'll take the Usos to retain, for no reason other than they haven't had the titles in a little while. This division is DYING for some fresh talent though, and I'm not sure if the Bludgeon Brothers count, whenever Rowan is back at full strength. There's a lot of entertaining wrestling to be had here, but the story isn't working for me because I've grown a bit tired of seeing these seven guys fight. It'll be good, but not engaging.

## Cruiserweight Title: Buddy Murphy(c) vs. Cedric Alexander

Murphy has been quite the surprise success story this year as he came from nothing down in NXT to being one of the more entertaining acts around. He can wrestle a heck of a match and Alexander can as well, meaning we could be in for some good stuff here. However, this match feels like a stepping stone on the way to something that much more important, which is where this winds up.

I'm thinking Murphy retains through some shenanigans here, meaning he'll need a new challenger. Alexander will have a reason to get the title shot, but I'm thinking Mustafa Ali gets added to the match to make it a triple threat match at the Royal Rumble where Ali FINALLY wins the title. Much like the triple threat match, this should be good, but it should be setting up another match later on.

## Mixed Match Challenge Finals: R-Truth/Carmella vs. Jinder Mahal/Alicia Fox

This is the match that really should be on the Kickoff Show but they've decided it needs to be on the main card. The second season of Mixed Match Challenge was...well there's no other way to put it: the show was really dull, despite the better prize of the winners getting the #30 spots in the Royal Rumble. It doesn't help that the final two teams are the joke teams who didn't win a match until their final week of competition and made it to the finals more or less as a fluke, but the bigger stars are busy in other matches so there wasn't much else that could be done.

I'll go with Mahal and Fox here, which should be the biggest layup on the card. R-Truth and Carmella are great choices to wake up a crowd and there's no reason to put them out there at the end when they can be used in the middle of the Royal Rumble to give the matches some energy. Hopefully this is kept short and the villains aren't allowed to talk, because no one

deserves to suffer through that.

#### Raw Women's Title: Ronda Rousey(c) vs. Nia Jax

I'm kind of amazed by this one. Rousey has cooled WAY down as of late and a lot of that has to do with being paired with Jax again. Jax is just a big vacuum of horrible, who brings down everything that she's involved in. There's no reason to believe that we're getting a surprise title change here and Rousey needs to move on to the actually interesting matches instead of dealing with "I CAN PUNCH YOU REALLY HARD!"

Of course Rousey wins here, likely because Jax looks at Tamina by mistake and passes out from boredom. This is a match that needs to last about five minutes because Jax on offense is going to kill the crowd in a hurry. We know Rousey can lift her and we know she can get her in the armbar, so what exactly is the big mystery here? Will Jax accidentally break Rousey's face too? We're basing a match around the possibility of a real injury? I mean, I've heard worse ideas and it's something that has worked before, but it was usually the case when it was someone a little more interesting than Jax. Like a bale of hay.

#### SmackDown World Title: Daniel Bryan(c) vs. AJ Styles

This is another one where it should be a pretty obvious ending, but at least the talent involved should help make up for some of the predictability. Bryan has found something with this new heel character and Styles has been World Champion for the better part of ever. There's no real reason to have him get the title back, but with someone as good as Styles, you never can be completely sure.

I'll go with Bryan retaining in what should be a great match. Bryan can do the in-ring work with the best of him but now that he's all evil and...however else you would describe him, there's a lot to be said about how good he can be. Styles will give it all he has (and having him wear a cup would be a great

moment that I doubt they're clever enough to use) but in the end, this needs to be Bryan, who could go a long way as champion in the near future.

### Intercontinental Title: Seth Rollins(c) vs. Dean Ambrose

I'm not sure what to think of this. In theory it should be the biggest and hottest feud on Monday Night Raw, but instead the big story has been about Ambrose being obsessed with...how various cities smell. These two are joined at the hip and are again now that Ambrose has turned on the Shield to become what should have been a mega villain. Instead it's just an Intercontinental Title match that will likely be more intense than the average showdown.

I see no reason to have Rollins hold onto the title here so we'll go with Ambrose. It's pretty clear that we're coming up on Rollins in a big match at WrestleMania, possibly even against Brock Lesnar. Rollins is one of the hottest stars on the roster and it would make sense to get the title off of him soon, especially when it's against someone like Ambrose, who has the history against Rollins to take away some of the sting of a loss. Ambrose wins here, but this is far from over.

### Baron Corbin vs. Braun Strowman

For the sake of simplicity, I'll assume that Strowman will actually be wrestling in the match, though it's certainly not a guarantee at this point. This is the match that needs to go one way but will likely go in a different one for the sake of WWE is stupid. Corbin needs to get far, far away from his spot at the center of Monday Night Raw but it wouldn't shock me to see him win somehow anyway.

Since I need the sanity I'll go with an injured Strowman winning the match in short order, as something has to be cut short to keep this show from being about five hours long. I wouldn't be surprised to see someone take Strowman's place in the match, but I'll take whatever I can get that sees Corbin

FAR away from the place he's currently in. Strowman is almost guaranteed to face Lesnar at the Royal Rumble, so just let it be set up here and then give him six weeks to heal properly.

### SmackDown Women's Title: Becky Lynch(c) vs. Charlotte vs. Asuka

This is the real main event, no matter what WWE wants you to think at the moment. Lynch has become a star and these three have had some great segments against each other. The thing to remember here is that this match doesn't mean much in the bigger story going on. All that matters here is who walks out of WrestleMania with one of the titles, whichever the big women's match has on the line.

I'll go with the surprise (which seems to be getting more traction) pick of Asuka winning the title here. It keeps both Lynch and Charlotte strong and FINALLY gives Asuka the big win after choking so many times on the main roster. Lynch can say that she didn't really lose and set up a rematch while Charlotte does whatever she does next. Again: all roads lead to WrestleMania, and that's really all that matters at the end of the day. Lynch can drop the belt here and get it back later, which is perfectly fine.

### Overall Thoughts

Looking at this list has told me one thing: this show is going to be long. There's a lot of stuff that feels like it doesn't need to be on here (oddly enough, the ladder match and the tables match would be at the top of this list). Something is either going to have to be moved to the Kickoff Show or be really short to keep the show from feeling incredibly rushed. The key here is the action though, as this show has a tendency to be a lot of fun just because of all the carnage involved. If that's the case, everything will be fine.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the

paperback edition of KB's Complete 1997 Monday Night Raw Reviews (also available as an e-book) from Amazon. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/11/20/new-paperback-complete-1997-monday-night-raw-reviews/>

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

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