

Smackdown – January 8, 2021: Looks Like He's Next

Smackdown

Date: January 8, 2021

Location: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

We're well on the way to the Royal Rumble and that means there are a lot of things that need to be taken care of in a hurry. Odds are we are going to cover a lot of that tonight, but we also have a pair of title matches with both the Intercontinental and Tag Team Titles on the line. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

Here is Roman Reigns, flanked by Paul Heyman and Jey Uso, to open things up. Reigns is sorry for what happened to Kevin Owens last week but something had to be done. He has a lot of people to take care of around here because everyone needs food on their table. The real person to blame is Adam Pearce, who needs to get out here right now. After a few seconds, here's Pearce, with Reigns showing him a video of Owens losing in the cage match and then getting beaten down again last week.

This is Pearce's fault and Reigns wants to know how Pearce is going to make it better. Pearce granted Owens the rematch and now he has booked a gauntlet match because Pearce is trying to pick the Big Dog's opponent. Maybe Owens can enter the match, or will Pearce himself enter to get the title shot? Pearce is starting to sound like he thinks Roman is stupid. Or maybe he thinks Vince McMahon is stupid. Pearce says no, but Reigns thinks Pearce doesn't respect him or the family.

Reigns grabs him by the jacket but Paul and Jey calm him down. Maybe Reigns made a mistake, and maybe right now, right now,

Pearce is perfectly safe. Reigns was excellent here, as he looks down on everyone because he knows he can. It's going to get better as time goes on and he gets more confident too, which sounds excellent.

Intercontinental Title: Big E. vs. Apollo Crews

Big E. is defending and gets pump kicked down for an early two. Crews misses an ax handle though and gets elbowed in the face to slow things down a bit. The apron splash connects but Crews is back up with the rolling German suplexes for two. Big E. heads outside so Crews moonsaults down onto him for another knockdown. Crews takes him up for the superplex, with Crews tying the legs together for the small package and the double pin at 3:13.

Back from a break with the title staying with Big E. on the draw, but Crews wants to keep going. That means a splash to Big E. to start the match over, with the Big E. running him over. The Warrior Splash gets two but the spear through the ropes is cut off with a knee. Crews gets two off the frog splash but Big E. grabs a Stretch Muffler. That's broken up as well and Crews hits an enziguiri, only to have the Toss Powerbomb countered. The Rock Bottom out of the corner sets up the Big Ending to retain the title at 10:28 (total).

Rating: C. They were going as fast as they could out there but they didn't need to have Big E. even going to the double pin. Pushing him is one thing but if they're pushing him as his unstoppable force, it isn't a good sign to put him a step away from being pinned. That being said, he did come back and win with the straight power and the fire in his eyes, which are all that matter here. Crews looked good too, and at least he has won something to prevent these losses from feeling so bad.

Sonya Deville is back and rants about Mandy Rose going to Raw and leaving her career in the lurch. She accuses Pearce of entering the gauntlet match tonight but Pearce says no.

Bayley interrupts Bianca Belair and says she'll waste her spot in the Rumble. Belair says she was looking forward to winning and challenging Bayley but she isn't champ anymore.

Carmella brags about beating Sasha Banks last week and reminds Banks that she can't touch her when it comes to raw talent.

Tag Team Titles: Dolph Ziggler/Robert Roode vs. Street Profits

The Profits are defending. Dawkins shoulders Ziggler down to start and then hits a dropkick for an early two. Ford comes in but gets taken into the corner for the double stomping. That's too much from Ford, who makes the fiery comeback but Roode kicks the knee out to take him down again. Ford fights up again and hits the big flip dive onto both of them at ringside as we take a break with Ford's leg in trouble.

Back with Dawkins suplexing Roode for two as Ford can barely stand on the apron. A cheap shot from behind takes Dawkins down though and we hit the front facelock. Ziggler rolls him around a bit until Dawkins fights up and gets in a knockdown shot. Despite Roode pulling Ford off the apron for a bit, the hot tag goes through anyway and Ford gets to clean house on one leg.

Ziggler catches him on top though and it's a super X Factor for two. Ford hits a superkick for two but it's back to Roode for two off a fisherman's suplex. Dawkins gets knocked off the apron and it's the spinebuster/Zig Zag combination to finish Ford for the pin and the titles at 14:29.

Rating: C+. I can go with the story of someone fighting through an injury and Ford did a great job of building sympathy throughout. At the same time, they had to go with the title change here as the Profits had beaten them so many times already that there was almost no choice but to switch the belts. It's not like Roode and Ziggler are going to be the next big thing in the division anyway so this is perfectly acceptable.

Sonya Deville is still with Adam Pearce and asks about the next challengers for the Tag Team Titles but Paul Heyman interrupts. Deville leaves and Heyman sucks up to Pearce, bringing up the days of Scrap Daddy Adam Pearce, who could have been an even bigger star under the guidance of Paul E. Dangerously. Anyway, the point is Heyman has pulled some strings and Pearce is in the gauntlet match, courtesy of Roman Reigns.

Billie Kay comes up to the Riott Squad and is ready to join the team. They're not sure so she gets a little emotional, which is enough to make it in. She knew it would happen as she has already put Mosh Pitter on her resume.

Gauntlet Match

The winner gets the shot at Roman Reigns at the Royal Rumble. Rey Mysterio, with Dominick, is in at #1 and Sami Zayn, with a documentary crew, is in at #2 but hang on as Sami has something to say. He is in the gauntlet match but he's in the #1 spot, giving him the biggest disadvantage. This crew is here to document the conspiracy against him and you will get to see what he has had to deal with to get this far. The 619 into the frog splash gets rid of Sami at 17 seconds and Shinsuke Nakamura is in at #3.

We come back from a break with Rey kicking him down for two but missing a baseball slide. The sunset bomb is broken up so Nakamura knees him in the face for two back inside. Nakamura knocks him down again and then takes it up top but gets knocked back down. Rey's frog splash hits knees though and a cross armbreaker makes Mysterio tap at 9:58.

King Corbin is in at #4 and jumps Dominick from behind. Corbin beats up Rey as well and we take a break. Back with Corbin beating Nakamura down, including a clothesline for two. Corbin gets sent shoulder first into the post though and Nakamura kicks him out to the floor. Back in and Nakamura hits a

running kick to the chest, followed by another one to the head.

The middle rope knee to the chest gets two but Deep Six gives Corbin the same. Nakamura pulls him into a triangle choke but Corbin powerbombs his way to freedom in a hurry. Corbin tries the slide underneath the ropes into the clothesline but Nakamura is waiting on him with Kinshasa for the pin at 18:50.

Daniel Bryan is in at #5 and Nakamura isn't happy. Back from another break with Bryan striking away but getting kicked out of the air for his efforts. The half crab has Nakamura in more trouble and a German suplex makes it even worse. Bryan kicks away and they fight over an armbar until Bryan gets the YES Lock. The rope is eventually reached though and Bryan is frustrated.

Bryan cranks away on the arm in the corner and takes him up top but the super hurricanrana is blocked. Nakamura knees him down for two but can't get the cross armbreaker. Instead Bryan wins a strike off and kicks away in the corner. The running corner dropkicks have Nakamura in trouble, only to have him come out of the corner with Kinshasa for the pin at 18:45.

Bryan shakes his hand post fall but here are Roman Reigns and company to interrupt. We take another break and come back with Reigns and Uso beating up Nakamura, but also Pearce. Since there is a bell between the start of the matches, the bell rings and Pearce is put on top for the win at 28:48.

Rating: B-. I'm not quite sure what to think of the ending, as they telegraphed it the entire time and then went exactly that way. I was expecting Kevin Owens to come in at the end but at the same time, well done on having Owens stay off television for more than a week. There is a chance that Pearce actually wrestles the match and I'd believe Reigns can make it work. That's a heck of a trick and Reigns has made it happen. The rest of the match worked rather well, with Nakamura wrestling

as a face for almost his entire time. I could go with a fresh Nakamura, but I'm not getting my hopes up.

Overall Rating: B. I don't remember the last time they had such an efficiently run show, with every match meaning something. You had a champion retaining, a title change and a #1 contender crowned with some other things sprinkled in. There is something great about seeing a show set up targets and then knock them down, which is how things went here. Good show, and it was more about the structure than the wrestling itself.

Results

Big E. b. Apollo Crews – Big Ending

Robert Roode/Dolph Ziggler b. Street Profits – Zig Zag/spinebuster combination to Ford

Adam Pearce won a gauntlet match last eliminating Shinsuke Nakamura

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