

Smackdown – January 15, 2021: UnLike Raw

Smackdown

Date: January 15, 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 things are getting all the more interesting day by day. Last week took a surprise turn as Roman Reigns helped Adam Pearce become the new #1 contender to Reigns' Universal Title. There is a good chance that the spot could go to someone else, but Pearce getting the match wouldn't stun me either. Let's get to it.

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

The opening recap looks at Roman Reigns destroying Kevin Owens and making Adam Pearce #1 contender by attacking Shinsuke Nakamura.

Reigns is reading the contract for the Royal Rumble match but doesn't seem happy. Paul Heyman says it's the same contract Reigns always signs with a different name. Reigns still isn't pleased, so Heyman suggests adding a stipulation. That seems to work for Reigns, who hands Heyman the contract to solve. Reigns glares a lot.

Here's Jey Uso for a chat. He says this is the Bloodline Show because his family runs this show. Adam Pearce needs to be careful or he is going to find out the hard way at the Royal Rumble. Everyone in the back should be thanking Roman for everything from the towels to the food at catering to the millions of people watching every week. Now it's time to expand, with Jey entering the Royal and planning to go to Raw

and become the new WWE Champion at Wrestlemania.

Now people are talking about Shinsuke Nakamura's performance last week, when Nakamura beat everyone in front of him...until the Bloodline cut him off. Nakamura should be thanking them because they kept Nakamura alive. So now Nakamura wants to fight? Come on now and get ready to leave on a stretcher. Cue Nakamura (with the non-lyric music again) to say if Reigns is the big dog, that makes Uso his little puppy. Nakamura kicks him in the head and bows.

Jey Uso vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

They strike it out to start with Nakamura snapmaring him down and grabbing a headlock. Back up and Uso gets in a shot to the face, followed by a kick to the head to rock Nakamura again. Nakamura comes back and grabs a chinlock...as Cesaro comes down. Uso gets knocked outside and sent into the announcers' table as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro on commentary as Jey sends Nakamura back inside. Uso stomps away as Cesaro talks about coming out for the save last week after the show was over. The running Umaga attack hits in the corner but Nakamura kicks him down. The knee to the rib puts Uso down again and Nakamura hits the sliding German suplex out of the corner.

Uso is right back with a Samoan drop and a neckbreaker gets two more. Nakamura kicks him away again and hits the middle rope knee for his own two. Kinshasa is blocked with a superkick but the Superfly Splash hits knees. A charge hits post so Uso grabs a rollup with his feet on the rope but gets caught at two (I bought that as the finish). Uso yells at the referee and gets Kinshased for the pin at 12:22.

Rating: B-. These two went back and forth here and they had a good one as a result. The best thing about it was I didn't know who was going to win until the finish, which is not something you would usually expect from Shinsuke Nakamura vs.

Jey Uso. It shows you how far Jey has come, but also how far Nakamura has fallen. Hopefully that can be corrected a bit in the weeks to come, but you never can tell with Nakamura.

Cesaro poses with Nakamura post match.

Sonya Deville goes over the contract with Adam Pearce when Heyman comes in with his own contract. Heyman talks about the opportunity that Pearce has and even says that the stipulations are in Pearce's favor. If Pearce signs, the match can be No Disqualification. Pearce doesn't buy the sales pitch but signs anyway, telling Heyman to have Reigns sign as well.

Uso yells at Charles Robinson for messing up the count and threatens him for not doing his job.

The Street Profits are not happy with their loss last week but they are certainly not scared. They held some kind of Tag Team Title for 312 days and they are not going to insult the team that took the titles from him. We hear some of the nicknames they have for Dolph Ziggler and Robert Roode, such as RuDolph and Entertainment Dysfunction, but now they are called champions. The rematch is coming.

Heyman is back in Reigns' dressing room (with Apollo Crews as well) and isn't interested in a No DQ match. Instead, he wants a Last Man Standing match. Reigns says then he'll consider this handled and then starts talking to Crews.

Commentary is confused by Reigns and Crews being friends too.

We recap King Corbin attacking the Mysterios.

Natalya vs. Liv Morgan

Tamina is with Natalya and Billie Kay, in punk rock (I guess?) gear is here with the Riott Squad to sit in on commentary. Morgan sends her into the corner as Kay gives a history of her "mosh pishing". Natalya gets frustrated and hammers Morgan down into the corner so she can shout about this not being a

joke. A small package gives Morgan two but Natalya is back with an over the shoulder backbreaker.

That's broken up and an enziguri sends Natalya into the corner, setting up some stomping. This also lets commentary bicker about what it means to call Natalya the BOAT, because that's still a thing. Morgan kicks out of the Sharpshooter and hits the Codebreaker for two. Kay goes over to yell at Tamina and even gets in the ring, with the distraction allowing Natalya to grab a rollup for the pin at 5:45.

Rating: D. This is rapidly becoming one of the dumbest stories on either show at the moment with Kay being annoying as well as causing us to have to watch more Natalya and Tamina. Why we need these women to always have random best friends of the month is beyond me, but in theory this is all leading to an IIconics reunion. As in the team that NEVER SHOULD HAVE BEEN BROKEN UP IN THE FIRST PLACE BUT WWE HAS NO IDEA HOW WOMEN OR TAG TEAMS WORK.

Rey Mysterio vs. King Corbin

Dominick Mysterio is on commentary as Corbin hammers away in the corner to start. Corbin gets in a quick dropkick but is sent outside, where Corbin runs him over with a clothesline. After a shout at Dominick, Corbin takes it back inside and gets frustrated at Rey for kicking out. Corbin punches him down again, shouts down at Dominick, and gets the air in front of his knee dropkicked out.

Rey's springboard spinning crossbody is pulled out of the air but Rey gets onto his shoulders and scores with a hurricanrana. The 619 is countered into Deep Six for two and Corbin is upset. Rey sends him outside where Corbin decks Dominick, earning himself a 619. That sends Dominick into the post or steps though, which draws him inside to go after Corbin. Rey calls him off but Corbin drives them into each other, setting up the End of Days for the pin on Rey at 5:00.

Rating: C. This is the kind of place that Corbin can be valuable, as this is more about being a bully and causing problems for people without being the big centerpiece. They could be teasing Mysterio vs. Mysterio, though I'm not sure if I want to see that go down. Dominick needs to do something though, because he really doesn't have anything to him other than being Rey's son.

Rey looks upset but lets it go.

Heyman and Pearce run into each other again with Heyman pitching the Last Man Standing match. Pearce thinks about it but Heyman says Pearce and Reigns can talk about it in the ring tonight. For now though, Heyman is considering this handled.

Dominick doesn't like Rey backing down from a giant but Rey says think about this. You don't pick a fight with someone like Corbin without a plan. He's a former US Champion! Rey has an idea though.

And now, the debut of Ding Dong Hello with Bayley (in glasses and some kind of sweater and blazer for a change), who says this is already bigger than Wandavision. Her guest is Bianca Belair, who has to come through the stand alone door, complete with doorbell. Belair takes Bayley's chair and says Bayley has good taste in furniture.

Bayley promises to win the Royal Rumble and shows us a clip of her beating Belair. We hear about the EST name, which seems to annoy Bayley. The challenge for a rematch is thrown down, but Bayley would rather have an obstacle course, which is of course accepted. I can't stand talk shows, but Bayley was rather funny here with the costume making it that much better.

Earlier today, Daniel Bryan was training with the Alpha Academy and said something about Nakamura. Cesaro came up to say that Bryan isn't Nakamura's friend and a match was set for tonight.

Daniel Bryan vs. Cesaro

They start fast with Bryan grabbing the arm and taking it to the arm with an armbar. Some knees to the shoulder keep Cesaro down but he's right back up with a hard slam for a breather. Bryan is right back with a monkey flip into the ropes, with Cesaro's head almost landing on Bryan's. That's enough to send Cesaro outside, where Bryan takes him down with a dive. Bryan's big kick to the head hits the post though and we take a break.

Back with Bryan taking Cesaro down into the YES Lock but Cesaro powers out. The Swing sets up the Sharpshooter but Cesaro tries to switch into a Crossface as Bryan reaches for the rope. Bryan reverses that into the YES Lock, sending Cesaro's foot into the rope for the break. Cesaro is put up top and manages to reverse a superplex into a spinning superplex (ala Kevin Owens) for two, using the good arm in the process. Bryan grabs a backslide for the same and then kicks Cesaro down hard. A quick pop up uppercut drops Bryan though and the Neutralizer finishes Bryan clean at 11:48.

Rating: B-. Well ok then. That's not the kind of thing I would have expected and while I have little confidence in having Cesaro go anywhere, it is nice to see him getting a chance at least for a night. Odds are this is designed to give Bryan a chip on his shoulder on the way to the Rumble, but I'll take Cesaro getting a huge win in the process.

Carmella talks trash about Sasha Banks, who runs up to go after her. Reginald gets between them so Banks says Carmella can have her rematch, assuming Sasha can face Reginald first.

Apollo Crews vs. Sami Zayn

Before the match, we see a clip of Paul Heyman giving Crews a pep talk on Talking Smack after last week's loss to Big E. Heyman told Crews to come back like a man with the Intercontinental Title and it seemed to get Crews' attention.

Sami has his documentary crew with him and Big E., with a fruit cup and a Ghostbusters sweater, is laying on a couch to do commentary.

With all of those details out of the way, Crews dropkicks Sami down to start and tries the Toss Powerbomb but Sami grabs the rope. Sami sends him outside for some shots to the face but Crews sends him face first into the announcers' table. There's a moonsault off of the table to keep Sami in trouble and they head back inside. Crews gets caught on top so Sami can choke away in the corner, followed by a top rope elbow to the head.

A quick German suplex gets Sami out of trouble and there's a step up enziguri. The standing moonsault hits Sami's knees though and he grabs a rollup, with trunks, for two (the referees are being attentive tonight). Sami suplexes him into the corner but the Helluva Kick is countered into a rollup with a lot of pants to pin Sami at 3:17.

Rating: C-. I could go for Crews being a new Paul Heyman Guy, as Heyman probably has the time to spread out a bit. That and having Crews as a heel might be the next move for him, as it's not like anything else he has been doing has been working in recent months. There is something there with him, and a showdown with Big E. could go rather well.

Post match Big E. isn't pleased, and Crews picking up the Intercontinental Title doesn't make things better.

Next week: Crews gets an Intercontinental Title shot, plus Bayley vs. Bianca Belair in an obstacle course challenge.

Here are Roman Reigns and company for the contract signing with Adam Pearce. In a nice touch, Pearce comes out with no music, because he really doesn't have a personality. Pearce sits but Reigns wants his chair. Jey gets Pearce out of the chair to give it to Reigns, because he is sitting at the head of the table. They both sign, with Reigns smirking a lot. Pearce says he has been waiting all night for Reigns to do

that, picks up the contract, and leaves.

Pearce starts limping on his way up the ramp, saying it's an old injury that flare up every now and then. However, all WWE contracts say "card subject to change", and as a WWE official, Pearce will find a suitable replacement for Reigns. That's just what he has in mind, so cue Kevin Owens to sign the contract to face Reigns at the Rumble in the Last Man Standing match. Just like Raw has done a few times in recent weeks, the show cuts off during commentary's closing line. Fair enough on the switch, and it worked well enough as a way to get Owens another match.

Overall Rating: B-. Smackdown is not a perfect show and there are some problem areas up and down the card, but it gets its job done. They are setting up some feuds at varying levels and do enough nice things to keep me interested. The most important thing is they never come off like they're trying too hard. Raw has such a bad tendency to try to do some massive angle or story and falling on their face. Smackdown is much more slow and steady, with good ideas that are executed at a higher level. That is what they did here, and the show worked as usual.

Results

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Jey Uso – Kinshasa

Natalya b. Liv Morgan – Rollup

King Corbin b. Rey Mysterio – End of Days

Cesaro b. Daniel Bryan – Neutralizer

Apollo Crews b. Sami Zayn – Rollup with tights

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