

Smackdown – April 23, 2021: The Kind Of Show I Like

Smackdown

Date: April 23, 2021

Location: Yuengling Center, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Pat McAfee

We're less than a month away from Wrestlemania Backlash and it looks like we might be coming up on a big Cesaro match. The question now though is who that will be against, as the options seem to be Roman Reigns, who Cesaro challenged, and Seth Rollins, who interrupted that challenge last week. Let's get to it.

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

We open with a recap of Cesaro calling out Roman Reigns last week, plus WWE's obsession with Cesaro's UFO move to Rollins. Cesaro called out Roman Reigns but Seth Rollins interrupted instead, picking things up where they left off at Wrestlemania.

Here is Cesaro to open things up, but Seth Rollins interrupts him in a hurry. He can't believe what happened last week because Cesaro is still very good at what he does. Rollins brought Cesaro up because Seth is the modern day Mr. Wrestlemania. Cesaro seems ready to fight now but here is Jey Uso to join Rollins. They surround him, which brings out Daniel Bryan for the save.

Bryan can't believe he is seeing this because someone like Rollins is defending his spot. Bryan grabs his mic and praises Cesaro for working harder than anyone, including Rollins and Bryan himself. Now that Cesaro is here, maybe Roman Reigns can accept the challenge. Or maybe Reigns can come out here and jump them from behind because Reigns really doesn't like to

fight.

Cue Reigns, who finds this amusing after he destroyed Edge and Daniel Bryan at Wrestlemania. Reigns even has a picture of the double pin on his shirt. That makes Bryan a loser, and Cesaro following him makes Cesaro a loser too. Reigns finds it interesting that Cesaro and Bryan are talking this much when they are surrounded by people who want to hurt them.

Cesaro/Daniel Bryan vs. Seth Rollins/Jey Uso

Bryan kicks away at Uso to start and a double slam gives Cesaro two. Cesaro hits his delayed vertical suplex for the same but Uso gets over for a tag to Rollins to take over. This time it's Cesaro being knocked into the corner, setting up Uso's running Umaga attack. The chinlock goes on but Cesaro powers his way up and grabs a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. That's enough for the hot tag to Bryan, who starts firing off the kicks.

Rollins' Pele is countered into an ankle lock into a bridging German suplex for two. Rollins is right back with the Buckle Bomb, allowing Uso to nail the Superfly Splash for two more. Cesaro is taken outside for a double suplex on the floor and we take a break. Back with Bryan in trouble this time, including Rollins hitting a running kick to the side of the head. Uso stomps away, including a few kicks to put Bryan down in the corner. Bryan kicks Rollins in the face but walks into Uso's Samoan drop for two.

Rollins comes back in to yell at Bryan for daring to suggest that Cesaro works harder. Bryan manages a kick of his own and stereo crossbodies allowing the hot tag to Cesaro. House is cleaned in a hurry but the Swing is blocked. Instead Cesaro has to hammer Uso down but the Neutralizer is countered with a backdrop. Bryan is back in to clean house again, including a suicide dive to Rollins.

That leaves Cesaro to cut off Jey's dive and take him back

inside. Cesaro's top rope something is knocked out of the air and we take a rare second break. Back again with Cesaro fighting out of trouble but the Swing is countered with a superkick. Apparently that's enough for Rollins, who walks out as Cesaro crotches Uso on top, setting up the apron superplex. Bryan is back in and the running knee is good for the pin at 19:07.

Rating: B. Long and rather good match here, with the second break being a surprise. The amount of talent involved here carried the whole thing as it is almost impossible for people at this level to have a bad match. Bryan as the advocate for Cesaro is interesting, though I would be almost disappointed if we didn't see them have a match on the big stage at some point. What we got here is working for now though and that's all it needed to do.

Post match, Bryan grabs the mic and calls out Roman Reigns again but Uso tries to jump them. That earns a long form Cesaro Swing, allowing Bryan to mock Reigns for not coming out here to help his family. Bryan thinks Cesaro should swing Uso again, with Cesaro doing it even longer this time as Bryan talks about how this is disrespectful to Reigns' family and to the Head of the Table. Still no Reigns, which Bryan thinks means Reigns is scared of losing the title to Cesaro, who seems rather pleased.

Apollo Crews and Commander Azeez interrupt Adam Pearce and Sonya Deville because Crews has to defend the Intercontinental Title tonight. Pearce says it's true that he does, and while it won't be against Big E., he will get his shot one day. For tonight though, Crews can defend against Kevin Owens.

Jey Uso is stick of the disrespect and is ready to stop Cesaro tonight.

Nia Jax vs. Tamina

Shayna Baszler, Natalya and the returning Reginald are all at

ringside. Nia drives her into the corner to start as Cole tries to say that the only thing people were talking about at Wrestlemania was the Women's Tag Team Title match. Nia shouts a lot so Tamina fights up and hits a Thesz press with some right hands.

Shayna's distraction doesn't work and Tamina knocks Jax to the floor. Tamina drives her into the barricade and then back inside,, where Reginald offers a distraction. That lets Tamina kick Shayna down and...I think she was supposed to go into Reginald but she gets up to stalk him instead. The distraction lets Tamina hit a superkick into a rollup for the pin at 2:40.

Kevin Owens wasn't expecting an Intercontinental Title shot tonight but he'll certainly take it. He can't wait to take Crews off his perch, but here is Big E. to interrupt, saying this should be his title shot. Owens says he's getting the match, and then after his opportunity, it's his title. Laughing ensues but Big E. doesn't seem happy.

Daniel Bryan asks Adam Pearce to make Cesaro vs. Roman Reigns and even gets a little intimidating.

Intercontinental Title: Kevin Owens vs. Apollo Crews

Crews, with Commander Azeez, is defending. Owens drives him into the corner to start and takes Crews down by the leg for some surprising technicality. That is switched into a headlock on the mat so Crews fights up, only to get headlocked again. Crews fights up so Owens snaps off a dropkick to put him down again. A running elbow sets up the backsplash to crush Crews a second time.

There's a clothesline to the floor but Azeez cuts that off in a hurry. Crews gets in a shot off the distraction and a snap suplex gets two. The corner stomping is on as we hear about the President of Nigeria possibly wanting to have dinner with Crews. A moonsault to the floor misses so Owens snaps off a superkick, setting up the Swanton for two. Cue Sami Zayn to

strut to ringside as we take a break.

Back with Sami on commentary and Crews headbutting his way out of a superplex attempt. Owens superkicks him down two but Crews is back with a hot slot. A clothesline turns Owens inside out for two more, followed by an enziguiri into the rolling German suplexes. Zayn and McAfee are about to get in a fight of their own as Owens avoids a charge in the corner and snaps off his own German suplex.

Back to back Cannonballs get two (Sami: "FAST COUNT! FAST COUNT!") but the Stunner is blocked. Instead Owens settles for another superkick into a pop up sitout powerbomb for two. The threat of the frog splash sends Crews outside so Owens hits it from there instead. Back in and an Azeez distraction lets Crews grab a rollup for the pin at 14:47. Sami: "Oh no Owens didn't win!"

Rating: C. Crews winning, even by shenanigans, is a good thing for him as he needs to establish himself as a bigger deal. Even as a former US Champion, Crews does not have the longest list of accomplishments in WWE. There is still time to rebuild him though, and pinning a former World Champion is a good way to start.

Post match Owens hits Crews with the Stunner but Azeez comes in with the Nigerian Nail to leave Owens....liquidating from the mouth. Sami comes in and dances over Owens.

Paul Heyman praises Cesaro, even saying he loves him in a professional way. Cesaro made a name for himself with just one name. Cesaro is Heyman's favorite Cesaro, but when it comes to the challenge, here's a spoiler: Reigns will give you his answer himself tonight.

Apollo Crews says if you listen, you can hear his royal ancestors celebrating him beating Kevin Owens. Let that sound stop anyone from thinking they can take the title from him. Big E. jumps him and shouts about how he isn't done. Commander

Azeez runs in to say he only left Crews for one second.

Believe it or not we get an Aleister Black vignette, with Black, wearing glasses, sitting on in a dark room on a throne, reading from a book called Tales Of The Dark Father. The first tale is about the dragon, featuring animation of the a woman being taken away from the narrator. Black talks about the people watching at home being the monsters and he is nothing like them. The people at home transform their children into even worse monsters. They should be scorched from the earth to make room for better things. This was certainly different, though I'm just shocked to see Black for the first time since October.

Dolph Ziggler and Robert Roode are split on who wins between the Alpha Academy and the Mysterios. The Street Profits come in for the staredown but here is Bayley to mock the tension. The guys leave and Bayley talks about her title shot against Bianca Belair at Wrestlemania Backlash.

Belair trained with her but now she thinks she doesn't need Bayley. There was no thank you either, because Belair is selfish and spoiled. At Wrestlemania Backlash, Bayley is taking back the title and the top spot in the division. Montez Ford pops back in with his phone, including Belair on the other end. She heard what Bayley said and is on her way. That seems cool with Bayley.

Post break, Belair is in the back with Bayley, who gives her a nice congratulations on winning the title. Bayley has faced Sasha Banks many times before and knows how tough she is. Belair is stunned at how nice that was as Bayley leaves, only to come back and crack up laughing. This has been a very simple way to build the title match: Belair is the new champion and Bayley wants the title back. It doesn't need to be anything more than that in this situation.

Rey Mysterio/Dominick Mysterio vs. Alpha Academy

Dominick starts with Otis and is run over in a hurry with the big shoulder. Otis throws him outside and takes out Rey as well to send us to an early break. Back with Gable working on Dominik's arm and handing it back to Otis to run him over again. A little mocking of Rey sets up a running splash in the corner for two on Dominik. Gable grabs an armbar to make Dominik scream and even moves around with the hold on to keep things a little more interesting.

Some rolling suplexes have Dominik in more trouble but he flips out of the last one and brings Rey back in to clean house. Rey's Code Red gets two on Gable, who is sent shoulder first into the post. They head to the corner where Gable's super gutbuster is countered into a super hurricanrana (cool) for two. Dominik sends Gable into the barricade with a sliding sunset bomb (cool as well) and avoids an Otis charge to send him into the announcers' table. The 619 into the frog splash finishes Gable at 10:18.

Rating: C. This is what the tag team division has been needing for a long time now: a new team being built up by winning some matches. You can all but guarantee the Mysterios will be the next challengers, likely at Backlash, and that is a fresh match with some interest. It really is that simple, but the tag division gets so little attention that it is easy to forget how it works.

Post match here are Cesaro and Daniel Bryan, who show some respect to the Mysterios and head to the ring to for Roman Reigns' answer. Post break, Cesaro and Bryan call Reigns out for his answer. No Reigns, so they threaten to go to the back and get an answer. Cue a ticked off Reigns, who says the champ issues the challenges around here. That challenge is to Daniel Bryan for one more title shot next week. Cesaro says Bryan has to take it but Reigns has one more deal: if Bryan loses, he is done on Smackdown. Bryan accepts and Michael Cole gets in the big hype statements to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I love a show that has a focus and then builds on that focus throughout the night. This show was ALL about Cesaro and Bryan trying to get an answer from Reigns but then we got a nice side trip on the road to Cesaro vs. Reigns. The storytelling was good and the wrestling backs it up, leaving you not lacking much. The rest of the show worked well too, with all of the other title pictures developing a bit. This show felt like it was well thought out and executed, which I can always appreciate. Pretty good show this week and they got a lot done.

Results

Daniel Bryan/Cesaro b. Jey Uso/Seth Rollins – Running knee to Uso

Tamina b. Nia Jax – Superkick

Apollo Crews b. Kevin Owens – Rollup

Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio b. Alpha Academy – Frog splash to Gable

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