

Wrestlemania Backlash: Right Down The Middle

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Location: Yuengling Center, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Adnan Virk, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves, Pat McAfee, Michael Cole

It's time for the Wrestlemania fallout pay per view and this time WWE isn't exactly being subtle with the concept. The Raw side is mainly consisting of Wrestlemania rematches with another name added in, while the Smackdown side actually feels like some fresh matches. Hopefully that mixes together for a good show. Let's get to it.

Here's Sheamus to issue the open challenge, non-title of course.

Kickoff Show: Sheamus vs. Ricochet

Ricochet hammers away to start but gets taken down with a heck of a clothesline. Sheamus takes him into the corner and pounds him down, setting up the forearms to the chest. The fishhooking (dubbed the Dublin Smile) has Ricochet in even more trouble but Ricochet gets in some kicks to the chest.

The springboard clothesline into the standing shooting star into the Lionsault gives Ricochet two. Sheamus knees the heck out of him though but Ricochet hits a Backstabber into a springboard 450. The 630 misses though and Sheamus blasts him with another knee for the pin at 7:13.

Rating: C+. If nothing else, it was great to see Ricochet on a show outside of Main Event for a change as it makes me wonder if WWE is actually acknowledging the fact that he has been doing good stuff over there. That's the kind of thing you can

use these open challenges for, though the clean pin didn't do him the most favors. It was better than nothing though, so maybe Ricochet's fortunes are turning around a bit. I doubt it, but maybe.

Post match Sheamus puts on his hat and coat but Ricochet dropkicks him down and steals both of them.

The opening video, narrated by Batista, talks about how important Wrestlemania is while talking about where everything is going from here. The main matches get their focus as usual, while being interspersed with clips from Batista's new Netflix film Army of the Dead.

We recap the Raw Women's Title match, with Rhea Ripley defending against Charlotte and Asuka. Ripley took the title from Asuka at Wrestlemania but then Charlotte returned and was put into the title match. Now it's time for a triple threat for the title.

Raw Women's Title: Rhea Ripley vs. Charlotte vs. Asuka

Ripley is defending and Charlotte's gear is Cruella de Ville/101 Dalmatians inspired. Graves calls Ripley "arguably the one with the most to lose in this match." Charlotte bails to the floor to start but gets surrounded and the beating begins, including a double superkick to put her on the floor. Asuka rolls Ripley up for two but Charlotte pulls Asuka outside and grabs a suplex. Charlotte and Ripley have the showdown, with Charlotte shouting about being a THIRTEEN TIME CHAMPION.

Asuka is back up but Ripley kicks her down, followed by a dropkick to do the same to Charlotte. Ripley heads to the apron but Charlotte trips her down to take over. Back in and Charlotte talks trash to Asuka, who strikes away in a hurry. Asuka snaps off the armbar but Charlotte gets her feet to the ropes...which don't count in a triple threat match. Ripley makes the save but Charlotte sends her face first into the

middle buckle. Charlotte has to chop Asuka though, allowing Ripley to come back with some clotheslines.

Asuka is back up with the rapid fire strikes and the rolling German suplexes to Charlotte. The missile dropkick hits Ripley and a sliding knee from the apron rocks her again. Charlotte kicks Asuka outside and there's the moonsault to take both of them down. Back in and a double superplex drops Charlotte to put everyone down. They slug it out from their knees but Charlotte flips out of another double suplex and chop blocks them both.

A double Natural Selection gets a double near fall but Charlotte misses the moonsault. Asuka Codebreakers Charlotte and counters the Riptide, allowing Charlotte to boot Ripley in the face. Charlotte spins out of the Asuka Lock and boots down a charging Asuka. The boot causes Charlotte to fall to the floor though and Ripley Riptides Asuka to retain at 15:22.

Rating: C+. As expected, this was more about Charlotte than anything else, as it seems to be in her contract. Ripley escaped with the title (as commentary put it) and odds are we are going to be seeing the Ripley vs. Charlotte showdown in the near future. Ripley winning is good, but it would be nice to not have to be reminded that Charlotte is the greatest and most amazing thing ever every time she is in a big story (which is about all she does).

We look back at Braun Strowman, Drew McIntyre and Bobby Lashley brawling on Raw.

Miz isn't scared of Damian Priest but doesn't know why this is a lumberjack match. Not to worry though as John Morrison is ready to take care of the lumberjacks and make Priest fall into his thirst trap. Miz: "I don't think you know what thirst trap means."

We look at Robert Roode and Dolph Ziggler attacking Dominik Mysterio on the Kickoff Show.

Dominik can't go so Rey Mysterio says he'll do this himself.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Dolph Ziggler/Robert Roode vs. Rey Mysterio

Mysterio, in Adam West era Batman gear, is challenging on his own and hits them both in the face to start. Ziggler is knocked outside and a baseball slide sends him into the announcers' table. Mysterio slides through Roode's legs to splash Ziggler but Roode sends him head first into the apron. Back in and Rey drop toeholds Roode down setting up a victory roll for two.

Roode blasts Rey with a clothesline though and Ziggler comes in to rip at the face. It's already back to Roode, who sends Rey into the corner to remind him there is no one to tag. Rey avoids a charge and dropkicks Ziggler off the apron but Roode knocks Mysterio into the Tree of Woe. Roode starts working on Rey's knee and a wheelbarrow Fameasser combination gets two. Ziggler heads outside so Roode can throw Mysterio into a superkick (that was new/cool) for the nine as Ziggler can't believe he beat the count.

Back in and Rey hits a double DDT, setting up a toss to send Ziggler into the post. Cue the banged up Dominik to get on the apron as Rey sends Roode outside, only to get Zig Zagged. Roode is back in for two off a gutbuster but he takes too long going up, allowing Rey to hit a super bulldog.

Rey gets over to the corner where Dominik tags himself in...and is spinebusted by Roode. Dominik is sent into the post but comes back with a superkick to Ziggler. The hot tag brings in Rey to clean house, including a 619 to Roode in the corner. Rey brings Dominik back in and sunset bombs Ziggler into the apron, setting up Dominik's frog splash for the pin and the titles at 16:59.

Rating: B-. The action was good and the result is the right way to go, but I'm not sure why they couldn't have just done

the scheduled match without the Dominik injury angle. It was a dull start until Dominik got in and some things started happening though and that's what mattered. What matters is getting the titles off of Roode and Ziggler though, as their reign was about as useless as you could get.

Post match, the Mysterios are rather pleased.

John Morrison goes to the lumberjacks' conveniently labeled dressing room and finds...a bunch of zombies.

Jimmy Uso goes in to see Roman Reigns but finds Jey Uso. Jimmy thinks the door needs to say Roman Reigns and Jey Uso, or better yet, "Jimmy and Jey Uso, Tag Team Champions." Does Jey even do Reigns' laundry? Jey is ready to fight but here is Roman Reigns to stare Jimmy down. Jimmy wishes him good luck tonight and leaves.

John Morrison reports his zombie findings to Miz, who seems to think Morrison imagined it. The two leave and the zombies stagger after them.

Commentary (with a zombie on one of the screens behind them) explains that the zombies are from Batista's Army of the Dead movie. Ah. Well that makes up for everything.

Damian Priest vs. Miz

John Morrison is here and there are indeed zombies, who have their own Titantron and theme music. They are everywhere, including underneath the announcers' table, sending commentary running. Priest hammers away to start but gets knocked outside, where he beats up the zombies. Back inside and Miz gets in a big boot as Graves hits his tenth Walking Dead reference in about two minutes.

Priest sends him outside for a change and hits a clothesline on the way back in. The spinwheel kick sets up the top rope spinwheel kick for two more. Miz is back with the Figure Four

until they get over to the ropes for the break. Both of them head outside to beat up the zombies together before diving back inside. Morrison gets on the apron for a distraction, allowing Miz to hit the running knee for two. The zombies pull Morrison behind the barricade and apparently eat him, leaving Priest to Hit The Lights on Miz for the pin at 6:54.

Rating: F. Yeah I'm thinking no on this one. A zombie horde just attacked Miz, Morrison and Priest on pay per view and outside of what is likely a comedy spot tomorrow night for Miz and Morrison, we're just going to move on. It's a paid sponsorship and all that jazz, but Priest could be something on Raw (which desperately needs it) and he gets this instead. This was really annoying and as little as I was looking forward to another Miz vs. Priest match, they managed to make it even worse. The wrestling itself was pretty dull, but egads man. Just let Priest be a star already.

Post match the zombies swarm Miz as Priest leaves.

Hell in a Cell is coming on June 20. Normally that's an October show so that's interesting.

Jey Uso catches up with Jimmy Uso, who thinks the sign on the door should say "Roman Reigns and his b****."

We recap Bayley vs. Bianca Belair for the Smackdown Women's Title. Belair won the title at Wrestlemania and Bayley is ready to prove that it was a fluke, because she is the best ever.

Smackdown Women's Title: Bayley vs. Bianca Belair

Belair is defending as Miz and Morrison being devoured by zombies about ten minutes ago is already just a memory. They go technical to start but Belair takes her down into a waistlock with ease, seemingly freaking Bayley out. Bayley teases going after the hair so Belair rolls her up for two, with the kickout sending Belair into the corner. A hiptoss

brings Bayley back in from the apron and it's already time for the breather.

Back in and Bayley knees her down, setting up a chinlock to draw Belair back to her feet. A belly to back suplex gets two on Belair but she catches Bayley on top and hits a delayed suplex. They head outside with Bayley dropping her ribs first onto the steps and adding a suplex onto the floor for two. A spinning side slam gives Bayley two more but Belair sends her outside for a change.

That gets on Bayley's nerves and she comes back in to hammer away. Belair makes the comeback and hits a spinebuster for two. Bayley runs her over again with a clotheslines and drops the top rope elbow for two of her own. With Belair sent outside again, Bayley misses a charge, allowing McAfee to get in MJF's "better than you and you know it" line.

Back in and a rollup with feet on the ropes gives Bayley two. Bayley even rakes the eyes to keep Belair in trouble, allowing her to use the hair for a ripcord Bayley to Belly and another near fall. With nothing else working, Bayley loads up the Rose Plant with the hair, but Belair rolls her up and uses the hair to hook the leg for the pin to retain at 16:02. The ending might have been a bit botched though as the hair dropped the leg halfway through, making it looked like Bayley kicked out.

Rating: B-. There were some somewhat sloppy moments here but they did a nice job of keeping me into the match. It might not have had a ton of drama, but what mattered here was getting a lot of time on the way to getting Belair her first major title defense out of the way. The ending could set up a rematch, which somehow may already be inside the Cell. That's a bit of a jump, but I could go for a rematch.

MVP suggests that Braun Strowman isn't smart enough to accept the business offer he was given and tonight, he is going to lose as a result.

We recap the Raw World Title match. Bobby Lashley won the title in March, beat Drew McIntyre to retain at Wrestlemania, and then both McIntyre and Braun Strowman became #1 contender.

Raw World Title: Drew McIntyre vs. Bobby Lashley vs. Braun Strowman

Lashley, with MVP, is defending. It's a brawl to start with Strowman getting double teamed as the other two head outside. McIntyre sends Lashley into the post until Strowman dives off the apron to drop both of them. Back in and McIntyre runs Lashley over before hitting a neckbreaker on Strowman. They head outside again with Strowman using the steps to take both of them down but the non-Strowmans double team him down too.

Lashley suplexes McIntyre onto the ramp but another suplex into the ramp is blocked. McIntyre rams Lashley head first into the set over and over before tossing him through it, meaning we get some sparks. That leaves McIntyre alone to scream and....get taken down by Strowman. There's the Strowman Express to put McIntyre down at ringside, setting up the backsplash for two back inside. A missed charge sends Strowman into the corner though and McIntyre hits a pretty impressive Michinoku Driver for two.

Strowman backdrops him to the floor and tries the Express again but McIntyre belly to belly suplexes him (with Strowman landing on his head). The Claymore is countered into a powerbomb through the announcers' table as the canned chants declare this awesome. Commentary declares that Strowman is about to be the new champion because WWE commentary gets extra dumb in triple threat matches. Back in and the running powerslam is countered, with McIntyre hitting the Claymore. The spear to Strowman retains the title at 14:18.

Rating: C+. And then they go on to the Cell with Lashley vs. McIntyre because this feud needs to continue to suit the calendar so Raw doesn't have to come up with a single new idea

ever because that's not what they do. I did not want to see this match coming in and I don't want to see any form of a rematch, but that is what we are going to get because Raw doesn't exist to be entertaining or creative any longer. This was a completely watchable triple threat power match with one of the most overdone endings you'll get, which shouldn't surprise you at all.

Hell in a Cell ad.

We recap Cesaro vs Roman Reigns. After dispatching Daniel Bryan, Reigns needed a new challenger so Cesaro stepped up and issued the challenge. Cesaro then beat Seth Rollins to earn the shot, his first ever one on one match at the World Title. Jimmy Uso returning and not being cool with Reigns treating his brother like a servant is being added in as a bonus factor.

Smackdown World Title: Cesaro vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is defending but before the match, he has Jey stay in the back because he is too worried about Jimmy. They start slowly with Cesaro powering him into the corner. A shoulder doesn't get anyone anywhere as McAfee's microphone is breaking up badly. Cesaro rolls him up for two and it's time for a meeting with Paul Heyman at ringside. Back in and Reigns sends Cesaro face first into the buckle but Cesaro scores with the springboard spinning uppercut.

The Swing is blocked though and Cesaro tweaks his arm, which Reigns sends into the post. Reigns grabs a cravate and suplexes him down for daring to try a comeback. The cravate goes on again and the jumping clothesline gives Reigns two. Reigns loads up the Superman Punch but Cesaro counters it into the pop up uppercut. Some kicks and elbows to the leg set up the Sharpshooter on Reigns, who gets to the ropes in a hurry. Cesaro sends him outside for a corkscrew dive, followed by a high crossbody for two.

Reigns catches him on top though and grabs the arm again for a big boot, meaning the arm gets pulled again. The shotgun dropkick sends Cesaro's shoulder into the post for two back inside and it's time to crank on the arm even more. Reigns mocks Cesaro saying wrestling is fun and knees away in the corner, followed by a big boot to drop him again. Some uppercuts give Cesaro a breather and the discus lariat drops Reigns, only to bang up the bad arm even more.

They slug it out from their knees with Cesaro knocking him to the apron, setting up the apron superplex for two more. The arm gives out on the Neutralizer attempt though and Reigns pulls him down into the Fujiwara armbar. That's reversed into a cradle for two but another springboard uppercut is Superman Punched out of the air for two.

The pop up uppercut doesn't work again as the arm gives out, allowing Reigns to grab the guillotine. Cesaro powers out and gets the Sharpshooter (pulling back with the hands instead of wrapping the arm around) before switching into a Crossface in the middle of the ring. Reigns powers out of the grip and unloads with forearms to the face, followed by a Batista Bomb for two.

Cesaro flips him over but Reigns is right back with a front facelock into the guillotine. That's reverses with something close to a powerbomb and Cesaro slips out, only to get pulled into it again. Cesaro tries to power out of the grip but the arm can't do it and Cesaro is finally out at 27:24.

Rating: B+. Cesaro certainly brought it here and will likely get another title shot at some point. There is zero shame in losing to Reigns at the moment and Cesaro gave it quite the run here. This felt like a main event and Reigns broke a sweat, though I wasn't quite believing that Cesaro was going to pull it off. Cesaro just getting here was the real accomplishment, making this more like the first Rocky vs. Apollo Creed fight. Very good match here, as Cesaro showed he

can go at this level.

Post match here is Jey Uso to acknowledge Reigns with the lei, before jumping Cesaro. Cue Seth Rollins...to go after Cesaro as well. Rollins stomps him to the floor and hits him with a few chair shots. The chair is wrapped around the bad arm and sent into the post, followed by a Stomp on the floor to end the show. That's probably your Smackdown Cell match.

Overall Rating: C+. This is one of the hardest ratings I've ever had to put together because the show is so torn down the middle. The Smackdown stuff was good to very good with matches that had been built up (some better than others) and then executed well enough. Their side did well and it felt like half of a pay per view.

Then there's Raw and oh my goodness. I watch the show every week and somehow they have managed to get even worse time after time. Not only did the build feel lazy coming into the show (Hey, here are the Wrestlemania matches with one extra person added in as we keep talking about Wrestlemania!), but then you had another Charlotte showcase (#1928 I believe), a three way match where they hit each other over and over and then someone stole the pin and then.....that other match.

First of all, I get why they did the zombie tie-in. It's a check from Netflix and Batista is in the movie and all that good stuff. All fine and good, but there was NOWHERE else on the show to put that? Not as a segment, a backstage deal, or with R-Truth or something? No clearly the best solution was to put it in a match that didn't need to happen in the first place and make the whole thing into a commercial instead of a way to make Priest look good. The match completely took me out of the rest of the show and I could not bring myself to be interested in anything else they did until the main event got rolling.

Tonight was a perfect summary of Raw in a few hours: the

creative is repetitive and lazy and they do not care about building up anyone new because they know people are going to watch anyway. Smackdown is a perfectly fine if not good wrestling show and Raw is whatever garbage Vince and Bruce green light after turning down what are probably much better ideas. So enjoy your three hours of nonsense as the show continues to spin its wheels for years on end because WWE has gotten paid and it isn't like they would get paid MORE with a bigger audience or anything.

Overall, this show was right down the middle, with the Smackdown stuff feeling good and the Raw stuff feeling like Raw stuff. Outside of the commercial called a match, the Raw matches were far from terrible, but they felt like something that had to be done instead of something with effort put into them. That has been the case from Raw for a long time now and there is nothing to suggest it is going to get any better.

Results

Rhea Ripley b. Asuka and Charlotte – Riptide to Asuka

Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio b. Dolph Ziggler/Robert Roode – Frog splash to Roode

Damian Priest b. Miz – Hit The Lights

Bianca Belair b. Bayley – Rollup

Bobby Lashley b. Braun Strowman and Drew McIntyre – Spear to Strowman

Roman Reigns b. Cesaro – Guillotine

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