

Summerslam Count-Up – Summerslam 2016 (Original): The First Of One

Summerslam 2016

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Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the second biggest night of the year but there's a real case to be made that this show is much bigger than Wrestlemania. There are five potential main events with the likely headliner of Brock Lesnar vs. Randy Orton. Based on the matches alone there's almost no way this isn't great so let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Ascension/Vaudevillains/Breezango vs. American Alpha/Hype Bros/Usos

Rematch from Smackdown. Gable takes Breeze to the mat to start and works on the arm before it's off to Jey. English comes in and gets his arm cranked by Rawley. Ryder comes in with a middle rope dropkick and everything breaks down with Alpha taking down Ascension with a top rope clothesline. Everyone is on the floor as we take a break. Back with Gotch cranking on Ryder's arm before Viktor comes in with a chinlock.

Breeze gets his turn at a chinlock and Viktor keeps Zack in trouble. A neckbreaker puts Konnor down though and the hot tag brings in Jimmy to almost no reaction. Everything breaks down and Jordan starts throwing suplexes as only he cans. We get the parade of people hitting each other in the face until Rawley powerbombs Breeze and Viktor. The Usos superkick Ascension off the apron and hit double dives to take out most of the heels. Gotch takes the Grand Amplitude but Jey tags himself in for the Superfly Splash and the pin at 14:30.

Rating: C. This was a much longer version of what we got on Smackdown but

at least they're actually setting up the first major feud. Now that being said, I don't buy the idea of Alpha winning the titles outright as it seems smarter to have them get really close but let another team steal the belts. That allows Alpha to chase them for a bit and build up the rest of the division in the process. Or they could just give us Alpha vs. the Usos and then wonder why everything after that is a letdown.

Pre-Show: Dudley Boyz vs. Sami Zayn/Neville

The Dudleys have been having some issues as of late. Neville and D-Von start as Cole confirms that Orton vs. Lesnar is the main event. The good guys take turns on D-Von's arm until Neville uses Sami's back as a launchpad for a corkscrew moonsault. Bubba gets in a shot from behind to take over as the fans want tables. D-Von cranks on Neville's neck and we take a break.

Back with Bubba hitting a neckbreaker out of the corner and telling D-Von to work on that neck. It's back to Bubba, who shouts at the "English boy" to fight back. The middle rope splash misses though and the hot tag brings in Sami. The comeback doesn't last long though as Sami gets caught in the reverse 3D. Bubba clotheslines D-Von again, setting up the Helluva Kick and the Red Arrow for the pin at 7:54.

Rating: C. Remember the last few weeks where Bubba and D-Von can't win basic matches? Well this was an extended version of that. Sami and Neville are fine for a tag team, though you would think Sami would have been much better suited getting a singles run off that big win over Owens. But nah, we need Cesaro vs. Sheamus in at least six matches instead of giving Sami some kind of a push.

Pre-Show: Cesaro vs. Sheamus

Match #1 in a best of seven series to establish dominance, whatever the heck that's supposed to mean. Cesaro has a tear away tuxedo tonight. Cole: "Cesaro set to take on Cesaro tonight." Apparently these two have been going back and forth. Now normally that would imply that they had both won a match but winning matches is so blasé anymore.

The Brogue Kick and Cesaro Swing are both broken up but Sheamus sends him

into the post to take over. Sheamus puts on an armbreaker and a tilt-a-whirl powerslam takes us to a break. Back with Cesaro in a chinlock and a look at what we saw before the break, a full minute ago. The Regal Roll means we should respect the hawk but Cesaro counters a suplex to send both guys falling out to the floor.

Back in and Cesaro starts firing off the uppercuts to set up the lifting superplex for two. That's not enough for the Neutralizer though as Sheamus grabs White Noise to escape. A middle rope Regal Roll gets two more for Sheamus but the Brogue Kick is blocked, followed by a very hard clothesline from Cesaro.

For some reason Cesaro stands on the post and jumps down onto the top rope for the high cross body. Not much of a change but it looked cool enough. The Swing sets up the Sharpshooter but Sheamus is right next to the rope. Sheamus is tired of getting beaten on though and thumbs him in the eye to set up the Brogue Kick for the pin at 14:38.

Rating: B-. Here's the thing: yes this was a hard hitting, entertaining match but these two aren't exactly the kind of wrestlers who vary their offense too much. How many different things are they going to be able to do to keep this presumably long series fresh? At least the first match was good and they went with the only option as you can't have Sheamus lose three times in a row.

The opening video focuses on New York City because Heaven forbid we don't tell New Yorkers how amazing their city is every chance we get. A good highlight package for most of the matches plays over the narration.

There's an especially big Titantron to give the show a unique look.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

Enzo and Cass suck up to the fans (makes sense) and sing a song I'm not familiar with. That leads to a talk about Frank Sinatra and Cass singing a little New York, New York. Now it's time to talk about Big E. Smalls because they're another problem for Jeri-KO. The Canadians jump Cass to start and double team Enzo for some good strategy. The fans chant STUPID IDIOT until Enzo punches Jericho in the face and tags in Cass.

House is quickly cleaned with the big man beating up the villains and sending them outside, only to have Enzo get launched over the top (with his foot almost getting caught on the top rope). Back in and Jericho kicks Enzo in the face to take over, allowing Owens to talk trash as only he can. We hit the ASK HIM chinlock, followed by the running the ropes chinlock from Owens.

Jericho cuts off a hot tag attempt and there's the springboard dropkick to take Cass off the apron. Owens adds the frog splash for a near fall as you can hear the fans being very much into this. The Cannonball misses and that's enough for the hot tag to Cass. The Bada Boom Shakalacka is broken up (and that's a shame), allowing Owens to Cannonball Cass against the barricade. Back in and Owens launches Enzo into a Codebreaker for the pin at 12:22.

Rating: C+. Fun opener but the ending is a bit of a headscratcher, assuming this ends the feud. That ending was certainly dominance establishing if anything ever has been but that doesn't mean enough to end a feud anymore. Notice that they're still protecting Cass, which is a really good idea. I don't think he's actually been pinned yet in WWE and that could mean something special for his future.

Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan run into Mick Foley for the standard "my show is better". They run into Jon Stewart, who freaks out about Foley working with Stephanie....who is right behind Stewart. Stephanie teases abusing her power when New Day cuts them off. Foley steals some cereal as New Day asks if they can borrow Stewart. Stephanie says she's misunderstood.

We recap Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte for the Women's Title, which Banks won from Charlotte just under a month ago. The big deal is that Dana Brooke is banned from ringside, despite Banks winning after Dana was ejected in the first match.

Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Banks is defending and gets right in Charlotte's face before we can even get the Big Match Intros. Cole again gets the dominance concept in as Charlotte uses her "physical dominance" to put Sasha in the corner. The

champ comes right back with an early Bank Statement attempt to send Charlotte into the corner. Charlotte puts her on the top rope for a choke with her boot before trying a backbreaker onto the top, only to have Sasha crash onto the ropes for two instead.

Charlotte stays on the back with a Gory Special and an ST0 backbreaker for another near fall. A hurricanrana gets Sasha out of trouble for a bit but Charlotte ties her in the Tree of Woe for some kicks to the ribs. In the move that has to be countered to avoid death, Charlotte's super Razor's Edge is countered with another hurricanrana to put both of them down. They slug it out with Sasha slapping away to take over before putting on a Boston crab in the corner.

The double knees to the back get two before Sasha knocks her to the floor for the double knees to the chest. She's lucky that didn't crush Charlotte's head. The Bank Statement doesn't work but Natural Selection is countered into the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte escape again. Now Natural Selection connects for a string of two counts before Sasha grabs another Bank Statement. Charlotte is in trouble until she grabs the leg and rolls Sasha up for the pin and the title at 13:49.

Rating: B. Remember when Sasha won the title and it was a big deal and felt like a change of pace? Yeah forget all that because we're likely heading for a gimmick match at Clash of the Champions as the title is hot potatoed again. This is another good example of the booking being suited for whatever they have coming up instead of what makes sense, especially when you could do the same thing to set up a third match later on. Not a fan of the booking but the match was the usual good stuff from these two.

Anderson and Gallows are making doctor jokes when AJ Styles comes in for some too sweeting. Finn Balor comes in, looks at them, and leaves as the fans lose their minds.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is challenging after winning a triple threat. These two have had almost no contact to build this up and it's a pretty forgotten match coming in. Speaking of forgotten, Maryse's outfit (basically a one piece swimsuit) is likely going to cause a lot of people to forget that there's

a match going on. Crews gets two off a rollup but gets caught in a DDT. Miz gets dropkicked out of the air and Crews slams him hard for two. An overhead belly to belly sets up the standing moonsault (from Crews if that's not clear) and a rollup gets two. Crews misses a charge into the corner though and the Skull Crushing Finale retains the title at 5:40.

Rating: C. Just a Smackdown match here with the Intercontinental Title still not doing much at Summerslam. Crews losing here is fine as it's not like he's done anything worthy of being champion yet. That being said, it would be nice if the fans were given something to cheer for on this very long night.

We recap John Cena vs. AJ Styles. AJ beat him (with the help of the Club) at Money in the Bank and they've actually held off on the rematch since. The idea is an old standard as AJ thinks it's his time but Cena wants to stand up for what he believes in and isn't ready to go yet. The promos have more than carried it though and that's what really matters, especially when the match itself will be great.

AJ Styles vs. John Cena

This is earlier than I was expecting. The dueling chants being and you can tell Cena is fired up. Feeling out process to start until AJ hits the dropdown dropkick but spends too much time posing, allowing a big right hand to the face. The fans come up with various ways to say John Cena sucks as AJ suplexes him on the apron to take over.

AJ's strike rush has Cena in trouble but he comes back again with the running shoulders. Styles gets right up and hits the Pele to set up the first Styles Clash for the first kicking out of a finisher. Since this is a Cena pay per view match, an AA hits immediately after for two more. I knew that was coming before they were even off the mat.

A torture rack powerbomb gets two more for AJ before something like a Big Ending of all things gets the same for Cena. The AA backbreaker drops Cena for two more but AJ misses a springboard 450. Cena can't follow up though and AJ gets two off a belly to back into a facebuster. There's the STF but Styles reverses into a not great Crossface. Cena powers out but gets pulled down into the Calf Crusher.

That's reversed into the STF which is escaped for an enziguri from AJ. They're just trading big moves here. The tornado DDT and top rope Fameasser get two each for Cena so AJ uses his turn for a super hurricanrana. The Phenomenal Forearm gets two more so Cena uses that big clothesline that he uses for a comeback. Cena grabs the super AA for two in a very rare failure for that move. John looks at him in awe and charges into another Styles Clash, followed by the Phenomenal Forearm for the completely clean pin at 23:17.

Rating: A. That's going to set the bar very high for the match of the weekend. AJ winning clean here is a HUGE deal for him and makes him the pretty much undisputed #1 contender for the Smackdown World Title. It's really nice to see the trend of "Cena loses, Cena wins, Cena wins again" broken and the fact that it was in such a great match helped a lot. Oh and very good move to have AJ kick out of the super AA and then win. It would have been such a waste otherwise. This was great stuff and the ending made it even better so I'm much happier than I was coming in.

Cena actually gets cheered post match. He takes off the Never Give Up armband and leaves it in the ring before walking away. I doubt it goes anywhere but that could mean something.

Some fans won a contest.

Here's Jon Stewart to say that was a great match because no one interfered and hit one of them with a chair. Yes he did that last year and he learned that you never take an AA without tucking your shirt in. He's been asked by New Day to join with them for one night and puts on a unicorn horn. Stewart starts Big E.'s intro but the crowd does the rest for him.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Anderson and Gallows

New Day is defending and Big E. is out hurt. Anderson and Gallows come out in their doctor coats and even have a small jar for Stewart. Kofi starts with Anderson and flips out of a monkey flip as you would expect him to do. The Unicorn Stampede has Gallows in trouble and Kofi dives over the top, poses in the air, and takes him out again.

Anderson offers a quick distraction so Kofi can get beaten down for a bit, only to have Woods get the tag a few moments later. A big elbow from the top (as in the middle of the rope, not the corner) gets two on Anderson as everything breaks down. There's the Magic Killer but Stewart comes in to yell. Anderson and Gallows go to beat him up, allow Stewart to tuck in his shirt, and go to crotch him against the post. Cue Big E. for the save though and that's a DQ at 9:10.

Rating: D+. This was just a way to keep the titles on New Day for a year as they'll likely drop them to Anderson and Gallows at Clash of the Champions. The match was nothing special of course as again this felt like a Raw match to fill in time on a pay per view instead of something that actually mattered. Not bad or anything but just there.

Big E. drinks the fluid in his his ball jar.

We recap Dolph Ziggler vs. Dean Ambrose. Dean is carrying Smackdown as the champion but Ziggler won a six pack challenge to earn a title shot here. Ziggler has been getting much more serious lately and superkicked Dean in mid sentence on Smackdown earlier this week.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler

Dean is defending and Shane and Bryan are at ringside to hold them apart before the bell. They slap each other in the face to start until Ziggler takes him down with a nice amateur move. Dean goes outside and sends Ziggler into the steps, followed by a butterfly superplex for two. Ambrose grabs a half crab as JBL goes into a rant about Dean robbing a homeless mannequin.

Back up and Dean gets two off a Glam Slam of all things before tuning up the band, which is now mocking Ziggler instead of Shawn. Instead of a superkick (what a concept), Dean tries Dirty Deeds but gets shoved to the floor. Ziggler gets two off the running DDT and hits back to back Fameassers for two. They hit crossbodies at the same time before Dean takes over with the top rope elbow.

Dean swivels his hips a bit (so he's ripped off Shawn Michaels, Dolph Ziggler, Dude Love and Rick Rude so far) before they fall out to the

floor. Ziggler hits a quick superkick before the Zig Zag gets two back inside. The sleeper doesn't get Ziggler very far as Dean hits the rebound lariat for two more. Ziggler takes him up for a super faceplant but gets shoved down and caught in Dirty Deeds for the clean pin (and silence from the crowd) at 15:22.

Rating: B-. That was a good midcard title match disguised as a World Title match for reasons that I don't even want to try to comprehend. Ziggler losing clean like that was rather stupid but you had to expect something close to it. People just don't buy him as a big deal and it's really hard to after all these losses. It's probably the best move though because either of these guys is just keeping the title warm for Styles.

We look at WWE taking over New York.

Naomi/Becky Lynch/Carmella vs. Natalya/Alexa Bliss/???

Eva Marie gets her full entrance but apparently she's suffering from exhaustion and anxiety brought on by mean WWE fans. Therefore, we have a replacement.

Naomi/Becky Lynch/Carmella vs. Natalya/Alexa Bliss/Nikki Bella

Becky and Natalya start things off before it's off to Naomi for a springboard sunset flip for two. The splits legdrop gets two more and it's off to Carmella to send Natalya into a raised boot. Natalya takes over and it's back to Nikki to a shockingly strong pop. A spinebuster gets two on Carmella before Bliss comes in for her moonsault knees to the ribs for two. Carmella finally crawls over and makes the tag off to Becky as things speed up but the crowd stays quiet.

Becky fires off the kicks in the corner and the Bexploder drops Natalya. A hard enziguri hits Natalya again and it's off to Naomi for the dancing kicks. The split legged moonsault misses though and we get Carmella vs. Nikki as everything breaks down. Nikki hits her big forearm and a TKO puts Carmella away at 11:04. Ranallo: "Nikki Bella victorious in her return to WWE!"

Rating: C. Well there's your first Smackdown Women's Champion and to be

fair, it's not the worst idea. The only real options they had for realistic potential champions were Becky (fine) and Natalya (save me) as Naomi isn't interesting and the other three aren't ready for the title scene. Nikki is a good addition, but egads I was liking not having to hear about how inspirational they are and how much we should admire them.

We recap Rusev vs. Roman Reigns for the US Title, which involved Lana going into a wedding cake.

Maria Menunos of all people interviews Rusev and Lana, who say the title isn't going anywhere.

We recap Finn Balor vs. Seth Rollins for the inaugural Universal Title. Rollins gets the spot due to being the #1 draft pick and Balor won a mini tournament by pinning Roman Reigns to get his place. Seth seems to be laughing off Balor as a challenger so Balor brought out the Demon to make it clear how serious this was.

Raw World Title: Finn Balor vs. Seth Rollins

The title is vacant coming in. We see the belt for the first time and it's the same as the Smackdown World Title but with a red strap and a UNIVERSAL CHAMPION plate on the bottom. Balor does the full on Demon entrance (complete with something like a Papa Shango paint design) and the fans are VERY pleased. This has to be won via pin or submission so it's essentially a street fight.

Balor hits a quick dropkick and loads up the Coup de Grace but Rollins gets to the floor. Finn follows him out and starts going after the leg before diving off the barricade. Back in and Balor works on the leg, only to be taken outside for a powerbomb into the barricade. Rollins chokes away in the corner and it's off to a chinlock. Things stay slow as Seth works on the back (too common of a target tonight) before ripping at Finn's face.

The good looking frog splash gets two on Balor but he reverses a clothesline (looked like a Rainmaker, which is still just a clothesline) into a DDT. A knee to the face sends Rollins outside and a Sling Blade knocks him silly inside. 1916 gets two for Finn but the Coup de Grace

misses and Seth grabs a triangle choke of all things. Finn gets his foot on the ropes but that's not a break because there's no DQ. Uh...that's not really the same as rope breaks not counting but I get the idea.

Back in and the Buckle Bomb sets up the low superkick for two. A small package driver (fisherman's driver into a fast small package) gets two more but Balor kicks him down, only to miss the Coup de Grace. The Pedigree only gets two and the fans aren't even responding to the near falls anymore. Seth rolls through a Phoenix Splash (geez) but runs to the top for a superplex into a Pedigree attempt, only to have Balor dropkick him into the corner. The Coup de Grace makes Balor champion at 19:16.

Rating: B+. This was the only option as they had to pull the trigger on Balor (or someone) after the ratings have been such a disaster. Balor might not be a great champion but they've made him feel like a big deal and that's what they need on this show. Rollins can take the title back whenever if necessary but at least the match was great and Rollins put him over clean.

Cole says Balor is the first person to win a World Title in his first match on a pay per view. No Cole, he's not.

Pre-show panel recap because screw people having to go to work tomorrow.

It's 10:26pm and we've got two matches left, so here's a video of Dolph Ziggler dressed up as Colonel Sanders to beat up Miz in a chicken suit. No this isn't some fever dream from watching too much wrestling lately. This is really happening and you're supposed to be entertained by it.

US Title: Roman Reigns vs. Rusev

Reigns is challenging to stand up for America. Rusev jumps him before the bell and sends Reigns into the steps a few times. The bad arm is crushed by some steps but Reigns Superman Punches him off the barricade. Referees come out to pull them apart and the guys fight over a chair. Reigns cracks him over the back with a chair and is finally made to leave. No match due to Rusev not being able to compete.

Rusev is being helped off and Reigns runs back out for the spear. Ok

Reigns is the heel now. Let's see: he showed up to the wedding celebration uninvited, ruined Lana's dress and then attacked an injured man. Rusev on the other hand was standing up for his wife and defending her honor. Why does that make him a heel here?

Long video on Orton vs. Lesnar, the same one from the last few weeks on TV. They were put together to give Lesnar a big match and they've traded finishers since.

Brock Lesnar vs. Randy Orton

They circle each other to start until Lesnar takes him into the corner for some shoulders to the ribs. A way too early RKO attempt is countered and we get three German suplexes in the first two minutes. Lesnar hits three more before sending Orton outside for a slam onto the announcers' table. A throw off the barricade sends Orton through the table as this has been one sided so far. JBL talks about the OVW class these two came out of and says Brock has beaten everyone out of that class save for Orton. Again, no JBL, he hasn't (never beat Batista on TV, beat Orton in a nothing match).

Lesnar goes to the other table but gets caught in a quick RKO. The DDT off the barricade knocks him even sillier but Orton spends too much time loading up the Punt and gets caught in an F5 for two. Lesnar takes the gloves off and hammers away with punches and elbows. Brock finally gets up and Orton is GUSHING blood. The doctor comes in but Lesnar shoves him away and keeps pounding away as the fans chant for Goldberg. They actually call the match at 12:42 and we're done.

Rating: C+. I'm not sure how to grade this one. If this ended due to a legit injury and they couldn't stop the blood then that's perfectly fine and I completely get it. If this was the planned ending, my goodness what are they thinking? After a show this long, you don't give us a thirteen minute main event with Lesnar winning AGAIN, especially in such dominant fashion. It's just stupid booking and serves no one but people who think Lesnar is interesting for reasons I'll never understand.

Post match Lesnar stays at it until Shane McMahon comes out....and takes an F5 to end the show. They can't possibly be setting this up for

Wrestlemania, right? Like, there's no way they're that stupid. SOMEONE TELL ME THEY'RE REALLY NOT DOING SOMETHING THAT INCREDIBLY STUPID!

Overall Rating: B. So as you might not know, I write up a lot of the overall rating before the show ends for the sake of time and occasionally adjust it accordingly. In this case, the show dropped all the way from an A- to a B on that ending angle alone. We've spent HOW LONG watching Brock tear through people and be the most dominant thing ever to set up a match against SHANE FREAKING MCMAHON of all people? And for what? To continue this Raw vs. Smackdown feud?

I was thrilled when Shane came back because he was full of energy and all that jazz, but then he gets to have a thirty minute match with Undertaker at Wrestlemania where he kicked out of multiple finishers and now he might get TO FIGHT BROCK LESNAR??? Are you serious? At what point does Shane become more annoying than Stephanie with all this catering to him because he's a McMahon? I can't believe I'm saying this but I think we passed it months ago.

Now, on to the stuff before WWE lost its mind.

I'd like to point out that they had three matches on a two hour pre-show, nine matches on a four hour pay per view, cut a match out and STILL ran over. At what point do you look at a show and realize that you need to trim things down a bit? Apparently not here but at least it's better than what they did at Wrestlemania.

Speaking of Wrestlemania, this felt a lot more like a Wrestlemania card than this year's Wrestlemania did. There was a great match, a return, new champions and less questionable booking (It should be noted that during the show, news broke that Sasha was injured which completely explains the loss. Oh and save for LESNAR VS. SHANE AGAIN) than the biggest show of the year. If this was trimmed down by about half an hour to an hour, it's a classic. As it is, it's just very good and that's a great sign for them going forward.

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