

Survivor Series 2023: The Comeback

Survivor Series 2023

Date: November 25, 2023

Location: Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

We're back to WarGames this year with a pair of the big team fights. The big story for the men's edition is the return of Randy Orton after a year and a half's absence due to a back injury. Other than that, Damage CTRL is up against a team who can't get along and Gunther defends the Intercontinental Title against Miz. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at WarGames, talking about how important it is to go to war.

Quick WarGames rules rundown:

- Two wrestlers start and fight for five minutes.
- After five minutes, the team with the advantage (as determined before the match) gets a three minute advantage.
- The teams alternate until all ten are in and then it's first pin/submission to win.
- No it isn't the original WarGames rules. Let it go already.

Women's WarGames

Charlotte, Bianca Belair, Becky Lynch, Shotzi Bayley, Iyo Sky, Asuka, Kairi Sane

Becky and Bayley start things off with Bayley getting in a few shots to take over. Becky knocks her off the top but gets sent hard into the cage to even things up. They go in between the

rings to fight over a suplex until Bayley finally drops her on the steel. Becky is sent into the cage again as Shotzi comes in to give the good women the advantage. A bunch of chairs and a trashcan are thrown in so Shotzi can launch herself at Bayley a few times.

Bayley cuts off Shotzi's dive but Becky is up with some hard kendo stick shots. Bayley climbs the cage to get away from both of them but she can only get so far. Sky is in to tie things up and throws Shotzi down with a chain. A double superplex drops Becky again but Bianca Belair unevens things again. Belair drops Bayley onto a trashcan in the corner and hammers away on Sky. A double suplex drops the villains until Kairi Sane does a weird dancing skip to the ring.

Sane grabs a trashcan lid to clean house before Shotzi is buried underneath a bunch of chairs. That means a pop up elbow so Sane can crash onto the pile but Belair is back with a gorilla press toss. Charlotte comes in to complete the team but is quickly powerbombed into the cage to cut her off. That doesn't last long as Charlotte fights up and hits a double Natural Selection off the top.

Hold on though as we get a Charlotte vs. Becky faceoff until Damage CTRL rams them into each other. Sky goes up to the top of the cage and drops a chain down so Dakota Kai can tie it around a trashcan. That lets Kai go up top, put the can over her head, and dive onto everyone else. Asuka completes the team but has to throw in a bunch of kendo sticks before getting in. Oh and of course a table. And a fire extinguisher.

The match officially begins with Damage CTRL standing up with the sticks and...just kind of standing there as the other team is all down. Becky and Belair are tied together with the chain for a four way dropkick. Shotzi is up but gets misted down by Asuka, who dropkicks a trashcan with Becky inside. The table is set up but the delay lets Damage CTRL get powerbombed out of the corner.

Charlotte goes to the top of the cage for a moonsault onto everyone and a near fall on Bayley, leaving almost everyone down again. Becky and Charlotte start wrecking people before hugging for the big friendship moment. Stereo submissions go on but Becky and Sane make the saves. Becky is right back with the Disarm-Her to Sane but Bayley makes another save.

Sane and Becky slug it out until Bayley is over with the Rose Plant to put Becky down. Belair gets in a fire extinguisher blast but a parade of shots to the face leave almost everyone down. Bayley takes Charlotte's spear to save Sane, setting up a top rope backsplash, the KOD and the super Manhandle Slam through a table to destroy Bayley for the pin at 33:36.

Rating: B-. The violence was good and they had some good spots but there were so many times where you might as well have watched them set everything up before the show. As usual in modern WarGames matches, there was a lot of standing around and reliance on weapons rather than violence and hatred. It's certainly not bad, but as usual, cutting of a good ten minutes would do wonders.

A bunch of wrestlers eat Ruffles (sponsor) with Pretty Deadly and Otis arguing over what to call them. R-Truth pops up for his first appearance in over a year but says he's been here the whole time. Akira Tozawa comes in to dance.

Sami Zayn and Jey Uso are a bit nervous because Randy Orton isn't here yet. Zayn says it's ok because they have history and are ready to fight together.

We recap Gunther vs. the Miz for the Intercontinental Title. Gunther doesn't think much of Miz, who is fighting for the title and respect.

Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Gunther

Gunther is defending. Miz kicks away at the leg to start before ducking a chop in the corner. Chops and left hands in

the corner have Gunther in trouble until a shot to the face gets on his nerves. The chase is teased but Miz grabs the leg and wraps it around the post in a smart move. The Figure Four around the post has Gunther in more trouble but he boots a diving Miz out of the air.

Gunther gets in his own shots in the corner and a German suplex has Miz's eyes bugging out. Another big boot has Miz trying to get up but he reverses a powerbomb into a hurricanrana. Miz strikes away some more and goes back to the leg in a smart move. More kicks to the leg set up kicks to the chest and a tornado DDT gives Miz two. Back up and Gunther's powerbomb gets two, leaving more than a few people shocked.

Gunther smacks him around a bit and grabs a sleeper until Miz grabs a turnbuckle pad. With that ripped off, the referee has to make some repairs, allowing Miz to kick Gunther low. The Skull Crushing Finale gets two but the sleeper goes on again. Gunther is driven into the corner but the sleeper goes on again. This time Miz flips backwards into a rollup for two, only to have Gunther blast him with the clothesline. A not perfect top rope splash hits Miz's back and the Boston crab retains the title at 12:21.

Rating: B-. I was thinking they might have pulled the trigger on Miz here but they did the smarter thing here and saved that for a bigger deal with Gunther. The match was structured well with Miz trying to get under Gunther's skin and take out the legs as often as they could. Gunther adds another win, though I'm not sure who is going to be the next challenger as he's running out of people to smash.

Judgment Day is excited because Randy Orton isn't here yet. Even if he shows up, there's always the chance that he turns on his team.

We recap Santos Escobar vs. Dragon Lee. Escobar turned on the LWO so Carlito stood up for the team, only to be hurt by

Escobar as well. Lee is standing up for all things good.

Santos Escobar vs. Dragon Lee

Escobar starts fast and stomps him down in the corner, setting up a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. Lee gets tied in the Tree of Woe for some stomping, setting up a running dropkick for two. Lee avoids getting his knee crushed in the steps and snaps off a hurricanrana from the apron. There's the big running flip dive to the floor, followed by a running knee to the head back inside. They both wind up on top, with Escobar snapping off a super hurricanrana for two of his own.

We get the almost required mask tearing until Lee is sent to the apron. Lee manages to tie him in the Tree of Woe for the top rope double stomp but walks into a superkick. They slug it out until Lee muscles him up for a sitout powerbomb and another near fall. Back up and Escobar snaps off a Destroyer, followed by the Phantom Driver to finish Lee at 8:19.

Rating: B. I was a bit surprised by the clean ending but it was nice to see Escobar get a big win like this. He's the new big bad in the story and it wouldn't have made sense for him to lose here. At the same time, I would have expected Lee to have some more protection in the loss. For now though, I can go with a rather good match and the right result.

New Day arrives in the Slim Jim car.

We recap Rhea Ripley vs. Zoey Stark for the former's Raw Women's Title. Ripley is the dominant monster but Stark wants her shot at the belt.

Raw Women's Title: Rhea Ripley vs. Zoey Stark

Ripley is defending and they go to the mat for the slugout to start. Stark knocks her outside for the dive, followed by a springboard missile dropkick for two back inside. Ripley drops her as well before they head to the apron. That works better

for Stark, who hits a DDT and a springboard corkscrew splash for two back inside.

Ripley posts her hard and takes it back inside for some headbutts. The double arm crank and some stomps have Stark down again but she fights back up. A kick to the face gives Stark two but Ripley kicks her even harder. Riptide is escaped and Stark gets in a sliding kick to the face for two. The Z360 is cut off and it's a headbutt into Riptide to retain at 9:16.

Rating: B-. There was only so much that could be done here as there was no reason to believe that Stark was going to take the title. Ripley is a force in the women's division right now and her title reign isn't going to end until some big moment on the major stage. Stark did well though should be fine going forward, even if Ripley was the star here, as she so often is.

Seth Rollins assures his teammates that Randy Orton will be here.

We recap the men's WarGames match. Judgment Day (with Drew McIntyre as an associate) is the dominant force on Raw and a bunch of other people are trying to do something about it. The question now is whether Randy Orton, who has been out of action for a year and a half, can come back and turn the tide.

Men's WarGames

Seth Rollins, Cody Rhodes, Jey Uso, Sami Zayn, Randy Orton
Damian Priest, Finn Balor, Dominik Mysterio, JD McDonagh, Drew McIntyre

There's no Orton to start as they're milking the heck out of this. Balor and Rollins start fast with Rollins diving right at him to get it going. Balor is sent into the cage a few times but slips out of the Buckle Bomb and hits a clothesline. Rollins is sent into the cage as well but comes right back with a Sling Blade. A running knee to the face puts Balor down as McDonagh comes in to give the villains control.

Kendo sticks are brought in as well and the double beating has Rollins down. McDonagh moonsaults from one ring to another to drop Rollins again and more kendo sticks make it worse. Uso evens things up and hammers away with right hands and kicks to the head. McDonagh manages a running Spanish Fly to Uso but he and Rollins are back up with stereo superkicks. The four of them split off as the clock runs down...and Priest tells McIntyre that he's going in instead.

Priest comes in and is quickly double teamed but the numbers game gets him out of trouble. Some baton shots have the good guys in trouble, setting up Priest's flip dive off the top. The beating continues until Zayn comes in, though only after slamming the door on Balor's head. A table is brought in to clean house, including a Blue Thunder Bomb to Balor. McDonagh catches Zayn going up but gets knocked back down, leaving Zayn to pull out a pipe.

With things slowing down, McIntyre comes in to wreck a variety of people until Uso cuts him off with some right hands. A 1D cuts McIntyre down and it's Rhodes in to even things up again. Rhodes pulls out a bullrope but Rollins wants to know if Orton is going to be here. Mysterio is in to complete the Judgment Day and loads up Three Amigos on Rhodes. The rest of the other team surrounds Mysterio though and the big beatdown is on fast.

The rest of Judgment Day gets up, with McIntyre and Priest hitting stereo moonsaults. Priest Razor's Edges Rollins through a table as the clock expires...and here is Rhea Ripley with the Money in the Bank briefcase but heeeeeeeeere's Randy, meaning WarGames is officially on.

House is quickly cleaned and we get the staredown with McIntyre as the fans are impressed. Orton and company start cleaning house, including the quintuple hanging DDTs. Hold on though as Jey and Orton have a staredown (remember the Bloodline put Orton out in the first place) but Jey takes a

shot aimed at Orton. Back up and Judgment Day is beaten down, with McDonagh trying to run. That's cut off and McDonagh is thrown down into the RKO. Cross Rhodes finishes Priest off at 34:21.

Rating: B+. This was a better match than the first, if nothing else due to the match not feeling like it was trying to stretch out time. The Orton return was the big moment, even if he didn't exactly do much. There was a better story here and it was a heck of a fight, which is how WarGames is supposed to feel. Best match on the show here, which is a good sign given that it was by far the most important.

The winners pose....and CM PUNK RETURNS! Punk comes to the entrance and hits IT'S CLOBBERIN TIME before hugging some fans to end the show. Well that's quite the shock.

Overall Rating: B. I kind of like the slimmed down match card, as two matches combine to be almost seventy five minutes counting entrances. The show was all about WarGames with three other matches in the middle doing little more than bridging the gap between the featured showcases. Those matches worked well enough though and it was a good show overall, with the big surprise at the end likely overshadowing everything else.

Results

Team Lynch b. Damage CTRL – Super Manhandle Slam through a table to Bayley

Gunther b. The Miz – Boston crab

Santos Escobar b. Dragon Lee – Phantom Driver

Rhea Ripley b. Zoey Stark – Riptide

Team Rhodes b. Judgment Day/Drew McIntyre – Cross Rhodes to Priest

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