

Smackdown – February 9, 2024: And Then Everything Changed (For The Better)

Smackdown

Date: February 9, 2024

Location: Spectrum Center, Charlotte, North Carolina

Commentators: Wade Barrett, Corey Graves

As has been the case multiple times this year, and then everything changed. This time it was at the Wrestlemania media event, as Cody Rhodes changed his mind and decided that he would be challenging Roman Reigns instead. This sounds simple enough, but there was a huge X factor in the Rock, who got into it with Rhodes and has joined forces with Reigns in a “my family is better than your family” feud. I think we might have some fallout tonight. Let’s get to it.

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

We open with a long recap of the press event.

Here is HHH for a chat, with Nick Aldis and Adam Pearce waiting in the ring. HHH talks about how we are on the Road To Wrestlemania but things took a hard turn yesterday. For now though, he needs to set the record straight. There are some people who don’t know their role but tried to assert their authority when they don’t have any. HHH doesn’t care where you sit because one thing is abundantly clear: the answers come one place and one place only and you are looking at him.

The main event of Wrestlemania XL will be Roman Reigns defending against Cody Rhodes. If there are some people who don’t like that, it doesn’t matter what you think. Aldis says it’s time to shift focus to Seth Rollins and the World Heavyweight Championship. The new #1 contender will be

determined in the Elimination Chamber and qualifying matches begin tonight.

We see the twelve wrestlers who will be fighting for those shows: Randy Orton, Bronson Reed, Kevin Owens, Logan Paul, AJ Styles, Miz, Bobby Lashley, Ivar, Drew McIntyre, Sami Zayn, Dominik Mysterio and LA Knight (seemingly in no particular order). We'll start right now with this qualifying match.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Drew McIntyre vs. AJ Styles

Before the match, McIntyre comes to the ring and mocks CM Punk's injury (complete with the shirt) and no, Punk isn't making a dime off of it! Hold on though as LA Knight joins commentary as McIntyre strikes away at Styles to start. A backbreaker sets up a rather harsh armbar to keep Styles down. They go outside with McIntyre sending him hard into the timekeeper's area as we take a break.

Back with Styles fighting back and getting in his half of a double knockdown. McIntyre takes him up in the corner but Styles pulls him out with a sitout powerbomb for a near fall. A quick Futureshock plants Styles but he cuts the Claymore off. McIntyre cuts off the Phenomenal Forearm just as quickly though and they head outside. Styles almost gets into it with Knight, allowing McIntyre to shove Styles into Knight, who isn't pleased. Knight gets on the apron to go after Styles, whose rollup to McIntyre is missed. The angry Styles decks Knight but walks into the Claymore for the pin at 11:15.

Rating: B-. One thing I like about qualifying matches is a situation where it seems that one person is the obvious winner but the other one isn't a total non-factor. Styles getting into the Chamber wouldn't have been an insane thought and that helps a lot. Odds are we'll be seeing Styles again when Knight is trying to qualify and that makes things more interesting.

Sami Zayn is facing Randy Orton in his qualifying match and if

that is his path to the title, so be it.

A NASCAR champion was here earlier.

Pretty Deadly is not happy with Wilson's hand being hurt by Pete "Do-nay" and swear revenge.

We look back at Bayley leaving Damage CTRL and setting up her Wrestlemania title match.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Bianca Belair vs. Michin

Belair powers her around to start but Michin is back with some kicks to the head. A running kick to the chest gets two on Belair, who bails out to the floor for a breather. We take an early break and come back with Belair slugging away. Michin kicks her in the face to put Belair back down, only to miss a Cannonball. The handspring moonsault is almost countered with raised knees but Belair sticks the landing. A spinebuster gives Belair two but Michin is able to catch her on top with a superplex. Eat Defeat connects to send Belair outside but a Styles clash takes too long. Belair hits a KOD for the pin at 7:13.

Rating: C+. This gets some bonus points for Michin getting in a good bit of offense. Belair winning isn't exactly a surprise but I would much rather they have a competitive match instead of letting Belair run her over. Michin is someone who doesn't seem likely to become a major star, but she can be a good middle of the road hand for matches like this one.

Bron Breaker comes in to see HHH and isn't sure if he should sign with Raw or Smackdown. Before HHH can say anything, Paul Heyman comes in to interrupt. Breaker leaves and Heyman says that is a heck of a talent from a wacky family. A serious HHH asks what Heyman wants so Heyman says he'll be back next week...with Roman Reigns. And the Rock. HHH says he's looking forward to it.

Here is Bayley for a chat. She seems relieved that the fans are happy to see her and talks about how much Damage CTRL meant to her. Bayley put everything into Damage CTRL and then they kept mocking her behind her back. That hurt her...and here is Dakota Kai to interrupt. Kai says she didn't know anything about what the rest of the team was doing but Bayley doesn't buy it.

Bayley says Kai was always there with the rest of them but Kai says she always believed in the team. Kai misses the original trio because she wouldn't be here if not for Bayley. It looked like Bayley's plan was working and she thought it was going well but then everything fell apart.

Bayley asks where she stands but here are Iyo Sky and the Kabuki Warriors to interrupt. The still injured Kai bails...and then comes back in with a chair. Bayley sees her coming but Kai swings at Sky and the Warriors instead. With the three of them gone, Kai drops the chair and Bayley is confused. Bayley and Kai stare at each other but nothing happens. Points for adding some intrigue here, because Bayley facing Damage CTRL 4-1 wasn't exactly a realistic fight.

Randy Orton talks about how he was on the shelf for over a year and has learned to be patient. Inside the Chamber, the only constant is the RK0.

Bobby Lashley and company are ready for Wrestlemania season, including his Elimination Chamber qualifying match on Raw against Bronson Reed.

Pete Dunne/Tyler Bate vs. DIY

The winners get a Tag Team Title shot at Elimination Chamber. Gargano and Bate start things off with a pinfall reversal sequence, giving us a standoff. Dunne and Ciampa come in and go to the floor, where Dunne misses a moonsault. Ciampa knocks him onto the announcers' table with the other two coming outside as well. Gargano knocks Bate down and we get some DIY

clapping to send us to a break.

Back with everything breaking down and all four knocking each other down. Bate is up with a giant swing/airplane spin at the same time but Gargano breaks up the double Tyler Driver 97. Ciampa knees Bate in the face and hits Project Ciampa for two. Bate is back up to slug away at Ciampa, who kicks him in the face. The solo Tyler Driver 97 is blocked and Gargano superkicks Bate into the corner. That lets Dunne come back in for the Bitter End and the pin at 8:25.

Rating: B-. Dunne and Bate getting the shot is interesting as it sets up a completely fresh match. It's also a nice sign for the future of the tag division as it shows what happens when you take two talented people with nothing going on and give them something to do. DIY will be fine, but at some point they need to win something that matters on the main roster.

Dominik Mysterio is ready to win the Elimination Chamber so he and Rhea Ripley can have matching titles. He doesn't care who he faces, but here is Kevin Owens to promise Dominik a beating next week. Owens will even dedicate it to Rey Mysterio. Cue R-Truth, who thinks Owens is the Miz. Truth: "Don't let Nick catch you!" Owens: "Nick Mysterio?" Truth: "Nick Aldis!" Fans: "WE WANT TRUTH!"

Logan Paul comes in to see the General Managers and has no idea why he's in an Elimination Chamber qualifying match. Those matches are for unqualified people and that's not true for him. Next week he's fighting in UTAH? IN UTAH??? He'll do it, just because he's going to Wrestlemania and leaving as a double champion. Nick Aldis makes Paul vs. Miz in a qualifying match next week. Paul is not pleased. No mention of Paul's next US Title challenger being announced as was advertised.

Here's what's coming on various shows.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Randy Orton vs. Sami Zayn

Zayn starts fast by sending him outside and teases the dive, only to flip back into the middle when Orton moves. Back in and Orton hammers away before heading outside again. This time Zayn drops him onto the announcers' table as we take a break. Back with Orton hitting the top rope superplex, setting up the snap powerslam to put Zayn down again.

The hanging DDT is cut off with a backdrop though and Zayn hits the big suicide dive. Orton is fine enough to drop Zayn onto the announcers' table, meaning the second hanging DDT attempt can connect. Zayn grabs a quick Blue Thunder Bomb for two but Orton is right back with the RKO for the pin at 10:47.

Rating: B-. I don't think there's any surprise that these two had a good match but again, it was nice to have a feeling that either could win. Zayn has seemingly been pushed as needing to win the World Title so giving him a chance to get into a big #1 contenders match wasn't out of the question. Orton is the right choice to go forward though, as he's still feeling like one of the biggest stars around at the moment.

Post match Drew McIntyre comes out for a staredown with Orton to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. The wrestling was pretty run of the mill but what mattered here was the atmosphere. This show had a bunch of stuff that felt big as they have turned on Wrestlemania Mode. That is a feeling you can't shake and it was in full force this week. The matches had consequences and it was a show where things were happening. In a word, it felt focused and that is a great thing to see at the right time.

Results

Drew McIntyre b. AJ Styles – Claymore

Bianca Belair b. Michin – KOD

Tyler Bate/Pete Dunne b. DIY – Bitter End to Gargano

Randy Orton b. Sami Zayn – RKO

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