

Backlash 2024: I Hear Voices

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Date: May 4, 2024

Location: LDLC Arena, Lyon-Decines, France

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

We're in France for the first time ever for one of these things and if last night's Smackdown crowd is any indication, the fans are going to be going nuts all night. That should help as the card is a bit lackluster, with only five matches. The main event is likely to be Cody Rhodes defending the WWE Universal Title against AJ Styles so let's get to it.

We open with a quick look at Lyon, including where it is on a map of France. That's a nice little touch.

The opening video looks at the show's card, which doesn't take that long.

Bloodline vs. Kevin Owens/Randy Orton

This is Tama Tonga's first televised match in WWE and Paul Heyman (looking terrified) is here with the Bloodline. The fans sing Orton's song to him in a cool moment and you can tell he's loving this. The brawl is on before the bell and a bunch of referees/agents come out to try and break it up to no avail. Owens beats up security so here is Nick Aldis to say that's enough. That's fine so let's make it a street fight.

The bell rings and the fight goes into the crowd, with Owens hitting Tonga in the back with a chair and the fans counting along as Orton hammers Sikoa. They get back to ringside with the Bloodline getting wrecked with trashcans, trashcan lids and kendo sticks, so let's bring in tables too. Owens splashes Tonga through one of the tables but Sikoa gets in a quick shot and Samoan drops Orton through another.

Tonga is back up to unload on Owens, with trashcan shots and a hip attack crushing him in the corner. Another table is loaded up but Owens sends Sikoa through it in the corner. Tonga blasts Owens with a clothesline as the crowd is wondering where Orton has gone. Cue Orton for the slow staredown with Tonga, including the snap powerslam. Sikoa is back up to send Orton into the announcers' table and clear it off for some more violence.

That takes way too long though and the Spike is reversed into the RK0 onto (not through) the table. Owens is back up with some chairs to Tonga's back and loads up four chairs two by two. Tonga catches him up top but Owens hits the swinging superplex through the chairs for the huge crash. Owens covers but Tanga Loa (Tonga's brother) makes the save and hits Orton with the steps. Sikoa Spikes Owens for the pin at 19:35.

Rating: B+. This was absolutely wild and the fans were pushing it even further up the ladder. What mattered here was the fans having a good time as they never get to see this kind of thing live and they were milking the heck out of the whole thing. At the same time you have Loa arriving to seemingly make the new Bloodline that much better. White hot start to the show here and my goodness the crowd is already an all timer.

Post match Loa poses with the Bloodline.

We recap the Smackdown Women's Title match. Bayley won the title back at Wrestlemania and Tiffany Stratton wants the title. Bayley wanted Naomi to get the shot but Stratton interfered and then won a match of her own, setting up the triple threat match.

Smackdown Women's Title: Bayley vs. Naomi vs. Tiffany Stratton

Bayley is defending and the fans rather approve of her. Naomi snaps off some armdrags to start but Bayley is up with an exchange of rollups for two each. Stratton's handspring elbow hits Naomi in the corner and she kicks both of them down a

pair of near falls. Naomi is sent outside so Stratton can stomp away on Bayley, who cuts off another handspring. Stratton plants her with an Alabama Slam as Naomi comes back in for the save.

Naomi and Stratton fight out to the floor, where Stratton hits a handspring elbow against the barricade. That earns her a dive from Bayley but Naomi Blockbusters her off the barricade for a big crash. Back in and Naomi's split legged moonsault gets two on Stratton with Bayley making the save. Bayley gets crotched on top, leaving Naomi to powerbomb Stratton into the reverse Rings Of Saturn. That's broken up with a top rope elbow, leaving all three of them down for a breather.

Bayley sunset bombs Naomi into the corner and Bayley to Bellys Stratton for two. Naomi pulls Stratton outside for a beating but gets kicked into the barricade. An Alabama Slam plants Naomi onto the announcers' table and there's the same thing to Bayley. Back in and the Prettiest Moonsault Ever misses, allowing Bayley and Naomi to pop up with a 1D of all things to get rid of Stratton. That leaves Bayley and Naomi to trade rollups until Bayley stacks her up to retain at 12:34.

Rating: B-. This was a match that had its strong points but there were more than a few moments that didn't quite click. The crowd helped carry them a lot though and that is always a nice weapon to have in the back pocket. What mattered here was the right result, as it's too early for Stratton to win but she didn't take the fall. Good, though not great stuff.

Bayley and Naomi show respect post match.

The Bloodline comes up to Jey Uso but don't say anything.

We recap Damian Priest defending the Raw World Title against Jey Uso. Priest cashed in Money In The Bank to win the title at Wrestlemania and Uso earned the title shot by winning a four way the next night on Raw.

Raw World Title: Jey Uso vs. Damian Priest

Uso is challenging and comes in through the crowd. We get the Big Match Intros and Uso does YEET a lot before hitting Priest in the face. Priest misses a right hand and falls out to the floor but it's too early for the save. Back in and Priest knocks him down to take over as the pace slows way down. Uso ducks another right hand though and grabs a belly to back suplex.

The step up enziguri knocks Priest into the corner but Uso spends too much time yeeting, allowing Priest to send him to the apron. A high crossbody gives Uso two but cue JD McDonagh for a distraction so Priest can hit his own spear for two. Priest is really not happy with McDonagh and yells at him, allowing Uso to hit a superkick into the Superfly Splash for two of his own.

Back up and they slug it out until some superkicks put both of them down. Priest is back with the Razor's Edge for two but South of Heaven is escaped, allowing Uso to spear him for two more. Another Superfly Splash is broken up by an invading Finn Balor and South of Heaven...gets two.

Priest hits a nasty spinning kick to the head and then does it again but a third is cut off with a superkick. More superkicks set up a spear into the Superfly Splash but McDonagh puts the foot on the rope at two. Uso dives onto McDonagh and spears Balor on the floor before going up top. This time Priest crotches him and hits a super South of Heaven to retain at 15:49.

Rating: C+. This went longer than it needed to but it never reached a terrible point or even got dull. Priest was just enough of a weak champion that you could see Uso having at least a prayer of winning, but ultimately they went with the right move. Priest getting annoyed at Judgment Day is interesting, though I'm not sure it's going to matter with a

red hot Drew McIntyre and Clash At The Castle coming up.

Post match Priest is mad at Balor and McDonagh but poses with them.

Video on the European tour.

One of the French announcers announces that this is the largest gate of any arena show in WWE history.

Women's Tag Team Titles: Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill vs. Kabuki Warriors

The Warriors are defending and have Dakota Kai with them. Belair flips away from Asuka to start before having to power out of something like an Octopus hold. It's off to Cargill for some spinning backbreakers on Sane and a double powerbomb drops Sane again. Asuka makes the save and knocks Belair outside, with Sane hitting a big dive to take over. Sane hits a top rope forearm for two more as the fans are wanting the hot tag to Cargill.

Asuka misses a splash but Sane is right there to knock Cargill off the apron and cut off the tag attempt. Asuka strikes Belair down for two and she grabs an armbar, only to have Belair power up for the escape. A hard clothesline drops Sane and the diving tag brings in Cargill, who springboards in with a crossbody. Cargill Sky High's Sane for two and plants her again with a Widowmaker. The Warriors strike away at Cargill but Sane isn't legal so there's no count.

Everything breaks down and the Warriors both grab submissions, both of which are broken up with powerbombs (that was a rather rough sequence as they did not seem to know what to do for a good while). Belair tags herself back in and it's a DDT into a wheelbarrow suplex for two on Sane. A missed charge sends Belair into the post and the assisted Insane Elbow gets two, with Cargill making the save. Cargill muscles Sand up and flips her into Jaded (that was amazing) and Belair KOD's Asuka

onto her for the pin and the titles at 17:41.

Rating: C. This was a match where the aura and atmosphere helped so much. From a technical standpoint it only worked so well, with that stretch in the middle where they clearly got lost looking rather terrible. At the same time though, you have Cargill being able to muscle up a grown woman and spin her around like a doll. That's the part that is likely to be remembered here and it should be, as you do not see someone like Cargill very often. She needs a lot of ring time, but the good things she does are incredibly impressive. As for the match, it needed to be five minutes shorter and it wasn't great, but the end was right.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Cody Rhodes for the WWE Universal Title. Rhodes won the title at Wrestlemania and Styles is the first challenger, wanting to prove he can still do it.

Smackdown World Title: Cody Rhodes vs. AJ Styles

Styles is challenging. Feeling out process to start with Styles' early headscissors getting him nowhere. Back up and Cody dropkicks him down into the corner and even mocks the old Stardust post for good measure. Styles strikes away but gets caught with a backdrop for a delayed one. Rhodes grabs a rather delayed vertical suplex, only to have his banged up shoulder sent into the post.

Styles stays on the arm until Rhodes avoids a charge to send him throat first into the ropes with a nasty crash. The announcers' table is loaded up but that takes too long as well, allowing Rhodes to fight back. Back in and Rhodes tries a delayed superplex but Styles slips out and they crash to the mat. Styles' Lionsault hits raised knees though and Rhodes slugs away. There's the snap powerslam into the Disaster Kick for two.

The fireman's carry backbreaker gives Styles two and they head to the apron, where Styles brainbusters him down to the floor.

Rhodes is back up with a powerbomb through the announcers' table and they're both down again. They dive back in to beat the count and some stereo kicks to the head give us another double down. We get the big pull up in the corner for the slugout, with Rhodes' Bionic Elbow getting two. Neither can get a Tombstone so Styles settles for a suplex into the corner.

The springboard 450 gets two, followed by a Burning Hammer for...one. Styles is stunned but Rhodes fights up and hits a Cody Cutter for two. Cross Rhodes blocked but Rhodes superkicks the Phenomenal Forearm out of the air. Rhodes switches things up with a Kimura of all things, which is broken up with a powerbomb. The Styles Clash is blocked and Rhodes rolls him up for two. Another Cody Cutter into Cross Rhodes retains the title at 27:25.

Rating: A-. This match wasn't designed to have drama about the result but rather about giving Rhodes a big win to kick off his title reign. That did just fine, with Styles more than holding his own to make Rhodes look great. Awesome match here and it felt like a main event, even with Rhodes being the most obvious winner on the whole card.

Highlight package wraps us up.

Overall Rating: B. The opener and main event were both very good and the three matches in the middle were...well not great but good enough. The real story here though is going to be the crowd, as they were some of the loudest and most engaged fans I have ever seen. It is definitely an instance where the crowd carried the show that much higher and my goodness it was fun to watch. The show might not have been the most eventful but I was never bored and it was certainly memorable.

Results

Bloodline b. Randy Orton/Kevin Owens – Samoan Spike to Owens
Bayley b. Naomi and Tiffany Stratton – Rollup to Naomi

Damian Priest b. Jey Uso – Super South of Heaven chokeslam
Jade Cargill/Bianca Belair b. Kabuki Warriors – KOD onto Sane
Cody Rhodes b. AJ Styles – Cross Rhodes

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