

Smackdown – January 3, 2025: Bigger And...Kind Of Better?

Smackdown

Date: January 3, 2025

Location: Footprint Center, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

It's a new era in Smackdown as the show is officially three hours long. That's a big way to start a new year and we are also on the way to one of the biggest shows in WWE TV history next week with Raw. There is a good chance some of that card gets a build this week, plus next month's Royal Rumble. Let's get to it.

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

We open with a long recap of Cody Rhodes vs. Kevin Owens, with their Royal Rumble ladder match being set up last week.

Here is Rhodes to get things going (on a blue mat). Rhodes talks about how everything is about to change in WWE with the move to Netflix next week. His excitement is tempered though because he is not currently cleared to wrestle because of Kevin Owens. He's still ready for the Royal Rumble...and here is Drew McIntyre to interrupt. McIntyre says he isn't here to fight because he appreciates what Rhodes has done.

This is the best era WWE has ever had and a lot of that is due to Rhodes. McIntyre thinks Rhodes needs someone to watch his back but Rhodes says that he wants to talk about how they are kindred spirits...but he doesn't believe what McIntyre is saying. Rhodes offers to fight but McIntyre goes to leave and says Rhodes to watch his back. Cue Kevin Owens to jump Rhodes from behind and the fight is on, with officials breaking it up. Simple and effective here, with McIntyre vs. Rhodes being an interesting idea for down the line.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Andrade

Non-title. Andrade hurricanranas him to the floor to start and hits a dive as we take a break. Back with Andrade hitting a running forearm but Nakamura kicks him in the head. A middle rope knee gives Nakamura two but Andrade knocks him into the corner. The running knees get two, followed by the double moonsault giving Andrade two more. The spinning back elbow drops Nakamura again and they go to the corner, where Nakamura drops him face first onto the post. Nakamura hits the Kinshasa for the win at 8:49.

Rating: C+. As usual, there is only so much they can do with so much of the time being cut out by the commercial. What we got was nice as Andrade felt like he was bringing it but the idea was to have everything stop in a hurry, which was a bit jarring. Nakamura gets a bit of a win and is ready for his next challenger, whomever that might be.

Post match LA Knight runs in to take out Nakamura, saying he's coming for the US Title. He'll be there for Nakamura every time Nakamura turns around. So that's whomever.

Pretty Deadly is in the back with Apollo Crews when Legado del Fantasma comes in. Legado isn't happy with Pretty Deadly lying about them attacking the Street Profits last week and things start to get physical. Nick Aldis comes in and wants to have a chat with Pretty Deadly.

Post break Aldis is talking to Pretty Deadly when DIY come in to suggest that Pretty Deadly help them against the Motor City Machine Guns tonight.

Michin vs. Piper Niven

Chelsea Green is here with Niven. Michin starts fast with a hurricanrana to the floor, followed by another one off the apron. Niven runs her over without much trouble though and we take a break. Back with Michin hitting a Rey Mysterio sitout

bulldog and adding a Cannonball in the corner. Eat Defeat is countered into the Piper Driver for two but Niven's Vader Bomb is blocked. Now Eat Defeat can finish Niven at 7:00.

Rating: C. Michin is more than on her way to what feels like a rematch with Green for the Women's US Title. Having her beat Green's enforcer is a fine way to set that up and we could be in for a nice rematch whenever we get there. For now though, Michin is having one of the best runs of her career and it's nice to see WWE finally doing something with her.

Video on Naomi, who is ready to challenge Nia Jax tonight.

Here is Paul Heyman to talk about Monday's Tribal Combat match. Heyman and Roman Reigns had trained and groomed Solo Sikoa to be the next Tribal Chief. Sikoa was being made ready when Cody Rhodes caught lightning in a bottle and beat Reigns at Wrestlemania. Then Sikoa stole the Ola Fala because he never earned it.

Now Sikoa has brought in various people for the new Bloodline, including Jacob Fatu, who is not welcome outside of the United States prison system. Cue Sikoa to interrupt and Heyman knows this isn't good. Heyman brings up Sikoa having him put through a table in Madison Square Garden in front of his children, but Sikoa reaches for, and receives, the microphone.

Sikoa says on Monday, he needs someone who he can trust. If Reigns wins Tribal Combat, Sikoa will acknowledge him and Heyman will give Reigns the Ola Fala. But if Sikoa wins, he will receive the Ola Fala and own Heyman forever (Heyman is scared) and Reigns will have to acknowledge him. So the match is now a possible kidnapping plot?

The Motor City Machine Guns want the Tag Team Titles back.

Saturday Night's Main Event is coming back and Hulk Hogan is excited.

Tag Team Titles: Motor City Machine Guns vs. DIY

DIY is defending. Ciampa cranks on Sabin's arm to start but gets sent down with an armdrag. Everything breaks down for a second before Shelley works on Ciampa's arm for a change. The champs are sent outside for a dive from Sabin and we take an early break. Back with Sabin and Ciampa dropping each other, allowing Shelley to come in and clean house.

The Guns hit stereo baseball slides to the floor, setting up stereo suicide dives. Everything breaks down again and it's a four way knockdown until a tag brings Ciampa back in. Skull And Bones is loaded up but here is Pretty Deadly for a distraction. That's broken up but a Fairy Tale Ending/superkick combination...gets two on Shelley. Cue Legado del Fantasma to chase Pretty Deadly around, allowing the Guns to grab stereo submissions. The other four then come inside and it's a double DQ at 10:54.

Rating: B-. The Guns are basically incapable of having a bad match so it was nice to see them get in there for the titles, even with the screwy ending. That's all it needed to be as the Guns can now go after someone else as the division is starting to come together. Other than that, I'm not sure where this goes, but for now though, we had a perfectly nice match here.

Nia Jax is worried that Tiffany Stratton isn't here but Candice LeRae is here for her.

Sami Zayn runs into Carmelo Hayes, who isn't happy with what happened with Braun Strowman. The Usos pop in and Hayes calms down before leaving. Zayn goes to get ready but Kevin Owens pops in to tell Jey Uso to watch his back.

We look at the opening brawl.

Cody Rhodes is going to leave but Nick Aldis stops him. Aldis wants Rhodes to put his hatred of Kevin Owens aside and think about the bigger picture. Rhodes isn't going to have that

because if he sees Owens, or someone who looks like Owens, he's dropping him on sight.

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Nia Jax

Jax, with Candice LeRae, is defending. Naomi kicks away to start but is easily powered into the corner. Jax misses a charge into the corner and Naomi can fire off some kicks, only to get headbutted outside as we take a break. Back with Bianca Belair at ringside as well as Jax plants Naomi for two.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before Jax sends her into the corner for a running hip to the head. Naomi fights out of a powerbomb though and gets two off a victory roll before kicking Jax off the middle rope. A splits splash gives Naomi two more before Jax misses a charge into the post. There's the springboard kick to Jax's head and a Samoan drop (not bad either) gives Naomi another near fall. Jax sends her hard into the corner and drops a middle rope leg for two, which is quite the kickout.

The Annihilator is broken up and Naomi drops her with a DDT. A hanging Pedigree plants Jax for two and we take another break. Back again with Naomi's Blockbuster getting two and a choke goes on to keep Jax in trouble. LeRae offers a distraction for the save though and gets dropped by Belair. Jax cuts Belair off but her super powerslam is countered into another powerslam...and here it Tiffany Stratton to blast Naomi with the briefcase. The Annihilator retains at 19:35.

Rating: B-. Surprisingly enough, this worked fairly well with Naomi fighting from underneath and using as much of her athleticism as possible before getting caught with the cheating. The ending isn't the best thing to see in the world but what matters the most here is that they had a good match despite it going far longer than you might have expected both of them to go.

Then Stratton takes out Jax and LeRae with the briefcase,

allowing Belair to give Jax a KOD. The cash in is on!

Women's Title: Tiffany Stratton vs. Nia Jax

Jax is defending and loses to the Prettiest Moonsault Ever at 6 seconds. Well it's about time and we now get several months without a briefcase. It also feels like a turn for Stratton as the fans were VERY happy, even if hitting someone with a briefcase and getting someone else to help you after the champion had a long match isn't the most heroic way to win a title.

Video on Roman Reigns vs. Solo Sikoa on Raw.

Jacob Fatu wants the whole world to acknowledge Solo Sikoa.

LA Knight gets a US Title shot next week.

Bloodline vs. Sami Zayn/Usos

Zayn and the Usos come in through the crowd, as tends to be...well at least Jey's custom. They waste no time in going to the six man brawl and the Bloodline is cleared out as we take an early break. Back with Tonga stomping Jey down into the corner but getting whipped hard into the buckle.

Jimmy comes in and is dropped just as quickly, allowing Sikoa to grab a nerve hold. That's broken up and it's back to Zayn to clean house, only to get dropped by Sikoa as we take another break. Back again with Tonga unloading on Zayn but the Blue Thunder Bomb puts Sikoa down. The tag brings in Jey for the real house cleaning and a pop up neckbreaker hits Tonga for two.

Everything breaks down and Tonga's jumping DDT gets two on Jey. Fatu gets knocked into the corner for some running Umaga Attacks, followed by some stereo suicide dives to the floor. Fatu is back up with a top rope splash to Jimmy, followed by a moonsault for two. Cue Drew McIntyre so Jey dives onto him before avoiding Fatu's Umaga Attack in the corner. Jey spears

Fatu and hits the Superfly Splash but Sikoa Spikes him for the pin at 22:37.

Rating: B. This got some time to pick up some momentum and by the end it wound up being a wild brawl with a bunch of things going on. The McIntyre interference didn't mean much, which helps quite a bit as it would have been almost a cliché to have it end that way. Sikoa needed a win to boost him up for Tribal Combat and this did that well enough.

A Raw rundown wraps us up.

Overall Rating: B. This felt like a long edition of Smackdown, which is going to be the norm going forward. Thankfully they started off with a good one, as that certainly wasn't guaranteed. What matters the most is getting momentum set up for Monday's major show, but Smackdown certainly had its own moments. Good stuff here, though dang this feels like it's going to be long to get through every single week.

Results

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Andrade – Kinshasa

Michin b. Piper Niven – Eat Defeat

Motor City Machine Guns vs. DIY went to a double DQ when Pretty Deadly interfered

Nia Jax b. Naomi – Annihilator

Tiffany Stratton b. Nia Jax – Prettiest Moonsault Ever

Bloodline b. Sami Zayn/Usos – Samoan Spike to Jey

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