

NXT – September 14, 2016: And That's Ok

NXT

Date: September 14, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're slowly making our way to Toronto but first we need to get to the end of this taping cycle. The big story here is still Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura, which is probably going to headline the next Takeover. Other than that we have Bobby Roode vs. No Way Jose in a match that could have the crowd reacting in multiple ways. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Samoa Joe to get things going. Joe talks about how a man reaches a point where he knows something has changed. As NXT Champion, he was a disgrace. He ran roughshod over NXT for a year because he wanted to be the champion of the hottest brand in the WWE Universe. Joe requests and receives an appearance from Shinsuke Nakamura. They said a lot of things leading up to their match in Brooklyn and Joe meant every bit of it, including saying that Nakamura was an undeserving contender.

Standing here now though, he knows Nakamura is a worthy champion. Joe has a guaranteed rematch but instead of cashing it in, he wants to ask Nakamura for the shot man to man. The champ says it's on and very tentatively shakes Joe's hand. Joe leaves Nakamura to pose but comes back out and jumps the champ on the stage. Nakamura is whipped into and Rock Bottomed onto the steps as Joe shouts that he did this to Shinsuke. Joe leaves and Nakamura is taken out on a stretcher. Even William Regal and Corey Graves come out to check on Nakamura as he's wheeled away.

Graves and Phillips talk about how serious this is. It actually feels better here as this almost never happens around here, which is the case with almost every big angle they do.

Regal goes to find Joe but he pulls away in a car.

Liv Morgan vs. Rachel Fazio

Rachel used to be known as Rachel Ellering. Morgan works on a front facelock to start as we hear that Nakamura has been taken to a medical facility. A running dropkick staggers Rachel but Liv doesn't seem to know what to do next. Morgan grabs a guillotine choke (which she barely keeps on) for the tap at 1:51. This really didn't work with Liv looking very sloppy.

Post match Liv grabs the mic and yells at Rachel for tapping out. The word on the street is that the NXT Women's division needs more challengers so she's throwing her hat in the ring to face Asuka.

Hideo Itami vs. Drew Gulak

Gulak gets in his face to start and they hit the mat for some submission attempts. Drew goes with a slap to the face so Itami gives him one right back. It's time for some kicks to the face with Itami getting in a running boot but running into a dropkick for his efforts. Drew starts in on the leg but thinks it's a good idea to slap Hideo in the face. The beating is on in a hurry and the GTS ends Gulak at 4:55.

Rating: C+. They kept it simple here by having Itami strike as hard as he can and Gulak trying to do the submissions to keep Itami in check. Itami is going to be a big deal in NXT but I'm still not entirely sold on him. He really doesn't have a character aside from hard striker and while he does that as well as anyone else, I don't know how far it's going to take him.

Authors of Pain vs. Doug Sessa/Chris Payne

Razar drops Sessa with a spinning elbow to the face and it's off to Akum for forearms to the chest. Payne (not named until after the match) tries to come in and gets a double powerbomb. The running clothesline/Russian legsweep combo ends Doug at 1:51.

Tye Dillinger is ready to prove that he really is a perfect ten.

No Way Jose vs. Bobby Roode

Roode is introduced on a spinning pedestal and the fans sing his song. His entrance in Toronto is going to be amaz....perfec....blast it why can't I think of the right word for it? Roode takes him down to start and does a pose, sending the fans into song. A headlock doesn't do anything for Roode so Jose slam him to take over. Fans: "YOU'RE NOT GLORIOUS!"

Jose sends him outside for a running forearm off the apron and we

take a break. It's good to hear the No Way Jose song as the commercial starts as Jose deserves some cheering despite being against the hottest act in the promotion. Back with Roode sending Jose into the buckle and getting two off a delayed vertical suplex. Jose fights out of a chinlock and puts on the airplane spin. The Baseball punch misses and Roode finishes with an implant DDT at 11:00.

Rating: C+. Fine match here with Roode doing just enough to win while Jose doesn't lose any face by going down against a bigger name. Roode is red hot right now and they would be crazy to not give him something big at the Toronto Takeover. I'd like to see Jose as something a bit more serious though as there's a lot of potential there. Good stuff here and probably most importantly: Roode changed finishers. The implant DDT isn't great but it's way better than a pumphandle slam.

Overall Rating: C. This show was a bit off as it felt like the first and last segments should have been swapped. Roode winning is fine but the opening segment took a lot out of the crowd, especially in the next match or two. Still though, it was a show that up some stuff going forward and let some people get needed wins. It's more effective than good and that's ok for a week.

Results

Liv Morgan b. Rachel Fazio – Guillotine choke

Hideo Itami b. Drew Gulak – GTS

Authors of Pain b. Doug Sessa/Chris Payne – Running clothesline/Russian legsweep combo to Sessa

Bobby Roode b. No Way Jose – Implant DDT

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Cruiserweight Classic – September 14, 2016: Grand Finale

Cruiserweight Classic

Date: September 14, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Daniel Bryan, Mauro Ranallo

It's already the grand finale as we're live tonight for two hours. We have three tournament matches to go tonight and at least one other as Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa vs. two cruiserweights to be named tonight. There's always the chance that they'll add in another match, as well as the potential of something involving the Cruiserweight Title. Let's get to it.

We open with a look back at the tournament, narrated by HHH.

Opening sequence.

The announcers talk about the show a bit.

Preview of the first semifinal match.

Video on all four semifinalists.

Semifinals: Gran Metalik vs. Zack Sabre Jr.

Mexico vs. England. Metalik dropkicks him at the bell to put Zack on the floor for a flip dive. A springboard Swanton Bomb gets a VERY close two but Sabre ties him in the ropes for some kicks and knees to the back. Sabre starts in on the neck to slow things down and puts Metalik's head between his legs to crank on a leg.

Back up and Zack fires off more uppercuts but gets caught in a weird standing leglock until Sabre dives over to the ropes. Zack comes back with a dragon sleeper with his leg pulling Metalik's arm back

as he stays on the neck. They fight over a double arm crank until Sabre just kicks him in the face. Metalik does the same and gets two off a running shooting star press. Both guys get near falls off some rollups until Metalik gets something like an octopus hold.

Sabre reverses into a guillotine which is reversed into a Boston crab which is reversed into a rollup for two on Sabre. A slugout goes to Sabre so Metalik takes his head off with a clothesline for two more. Sabre's running PK gets another near fall but Metalik kicks him in the face again. Something like an octopus hold has Metalik in more trouble but it breaks down so Metalik can survive. Sabre goes to the ropes but gets crotched and hurricanranaed down for a very close two. Metalik gets caught in a triangle until he flips over into a rollup for two more. Back up and a quick Metalik Driver eliminates Sabre at 13:14.

Rating: B. The ending surprised me a bit as Metalik has been pretty quiet throughout the whole tournament but is somehow in the finals. He's very much your standard luchador and that's the kind of wrestler who is always going to have a spot around here. Sabre might not be coming to WWE but he'll be a big star around the world with the skills that he has.

William Regal comes out and gives Metalik a big medal for winning. With the help of a translator, Metalik thanks the fans and says he's going to win the tournament.

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa are out to prove something tonight against Noam Dar and Cedric Alexander. All that matters to them is a rematch with the Revival.

Semifinals: Kota Ibushi vs. TJ Perkins

Japan vs. Philipines. Feeling out process to start with Perkins actually checking one of Ibushi's kicks. The fans are mostly split as Perkins works on an armbar but tries to pull Ibushi in for the kneebar. Ibushi sprints over to the ropes so Perkins gets him on the mat in a headscissors. A running kick to the chest drops Perkins and a springboard missile dropkick makes it even worse.

Ibushi tries a running springboard moonsault but gets kicked to the floor for a nasty looking crash. Back in and a double underhook crank stays on Ibushi's neck for a bit until a good looking dropkick hits Perkins in the mouth. Now the springboard moonsault to the floor works just fine and Ibushi follows up with a springboard missile dropkick. A running powerslam sets up a middle rope moonsault but Perkins gets the knees up.

The kneebar goes on and sends Ibushi over to the ropes for the save. Ibushi is right back with a snap German suplex for two and it's time for the hard kicks to Perkins' chest. TJ breaks up the middle rope German deadlift suplex and counters the Golden Star Bomb into a DDT. That's only good for two (Mauro: "CONJOINED TWINS CLOSE!") and it's off to the kneebar in the middle of the ring.

Ibushi flips out of that too and the Golden Star Bomb plants TJ for one of the hottest near falls I've seen in a long time. Perkins rolls away from a Phoenix splash but gets caught in a wheelbarrow slam driver. Yet another Golden Star Bomb attempt is countered into the kneebar and Perkins even leans up to pull back on the neck for the huge upset at 13:51.

Rating: A. I was losing my mind on those near falls and that just does not happen to me very often. Perkins is someone that I never saw much in but this match here more than won me over. He had a logical game plan here and he stuck with it until the ending while Ibushi was throwing everything he could. I had a blast with this match and it never stopped being a blast.

Perkins says he's won one and now he needs to win one more.

Sasha Banks, Bayley, Kalisto, Jack Gallagher and Rich Swann are in the crowd.

Noam Dar/Cedric Alexander vs. Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa

Just an exhibition match. After some handshakes all around, it's Alexander throwing Ciampa around in a bit of a surprise to start. It's quickly off to Gargano for a knee to Dar's jaw. They already tag off again so Cedric flip dives over the top to take Ciampa out.

Everything breaks down and Gargano superkicks Dar before spearing Alexander through the ropes for two. A wicked Michinoku Driver gets two on Gargano and we settle down to Ciampa kneeing Dar in the face until Cedric springboards in with a clothesline.

Everything breaks down again and a series of clotheslines and superkicks puts all four down. Dar reverses a kick and grabs an ankle lock on Johnny, only to have Ciampa go all psycho while stomping to break up the hold. Dar dives onto Johnny and Alexander hits a very hard brainbuster for what looked like three but the referee says keep going. Gargano comes back in with his superkicks to both guys, setting up the running knee/superkick combo for the pin on Dar at 9:42.

Rating: B. Totally wild match here to give us a little change of pace from the tournament matches. These guys beat the heck out of each other and there were some great near falls even though there was little doubt that Gargano/Ciampa were going to win due to their upcoming match with the Revival. Still though, this was a very entertaining match and a good idea after the two great matches we saw earlier.

Regal talks about helping to put the tournament together and trying to find people who weren't as well known but could handle the rigors of this competition.

Corey Graves comes in to talk a bit as we fill in time before the main event.

We recap the semifinals.

Quick look at the trophy.

Cruiserweight Classic Final: Gran Metalik vs. TJ Perkins

Mexico vs. Philipines. Wait a second though as HHH comes out to say this is going to be for the new Cruiserweight Title. That's quite the jump up though it was the only logical way to introduce the title.

Cruiserweight Title: Gran Metalik vs. TJ Perkins

The title is vacant coming in of course. They trade some early

rollups before Perkins grabs a modified octopus hold. Metalik rolls out and sends Perkins outside for a suicide dive with their heads crashing together. Back in and we hit a surfboard with Metalik's boot in TJ's back for extra pressure. Perkins gets over to the ropes and tries a suplex, only to have Metalik get a running start and hurricanrana Perkins off the apron for an awesome spot.

Metalik follows him out with a big springboard flip dive to keep Perkins in trouble. The running shooting star misses though and Perkins grabs the kneebar, sending Metalik over to the ropes again. A dropkick to the knee looks to set up the Metalik Driver but instead it's a DDT for two on Perkins.

The reverse Backstabber sets up another kneebar and Perkins pulls him back to the middle. He can't get the leg crossed though and Metalik counters into a rollup for a close two. The Metalik Driver plants Perkins but the knee gives out again and it's only good for two more. Perkins takes too long going up top and gets caught in a super Metalik Driver but that's reversed into a full on kneebar to make Metalik tap at 17:45.

Rating: A-. Just like before, Perkins won me over here. He really has no business being in there with names like this and he's more than shown he belongs at the top of this division. I had a blast watching him through and you can add him to the list of names that TNA managed to screw up and let go over to WWE. Another great match here to cap off a great night.

Perkins is presented with the trophy and title but he needs to see someone about his chest, which is terribly, terribly bruised. He talks about how this trophy is for everyone and he can't believe he's here. Perkins celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: A+. You think this one needs an explanation? This tournament was absolutely incredible and one of the best displays of wrestling I've seen in a long time. For me, the whole thing works for how simple they kept things. This started two months ago yesterday and we're DONE. No three months of round robin before we get to the actual tournament, no waiting around with people who had

no chance being teased and nothing that was ever boring.

This tournament flew by and was so much fun that I started looking forward to watching it every week. I don't think it's something that would work all the time but it's going to be a great addition to Raw for a match or two a week and that's all it needs to be. Excellent tournament and an outstanding finale.

Results

Gran Metalik b. Zack Sabre Jr. – Metalik Driver

TJ Perkins b. Kota Ibushi – Kneebar

Johnny Gargano/Tommaso Ciampa b. Noam Dar/Cedric Alexander – Running knee/superkick combo to Dar

TJ Perkins b. Gran Metalik – Kneebar

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New Column: Classic Cruiserweights

Looking at what the new cruiserweight division should and shouldn't do while actually looking to WCW and TNA for guidance.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-classic-cruiserwe>

Smackdown – September 13, 2016: Plugging The Holes

Smackdown

Date: September 13, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

Backlash has come and gone and a few things have changed. In addition to having inaugural Smackdown Tag Team Champions (Heath Slater/Rhyno) and an inaugural Smackdown Women's Champion (Becky Lynch), AJ Styles has finally won the big one and become Smackdown World Champion. No Mercy is in less than a month and tonight we start dealing with all these new developments. Let's get to it.

We open with a Backlash recap, thankfully kept down to about two minutes.

Opening sequence.

Here's AJ, who is now introduced as the face that runs this place. He's done everything he told us he would do and now he's the WWE World Champion (the belt is a very nice fit too). Now he's the champ that runs the camp but here's John Cena to interrupt. Cena looks a bit stunned before saying AJ has something that he would like back. The 16 time champ is here but Dean Ambrose cuts him off.

Dean wants his title back but Cena cuts him off as well, saying that Dean didn't take AJ seriously enough. Maybe Steve Austin was right to call him out on the podcast. Ambrose doesn't take kindly to that and calls Cena a lazy part timer. Cena would be better off hosting award shows because he's not able to keep up with the new generation.

This brings out Shane McMahon to praise all of their work before talking about AJ taking a shortcut to become WWE Champion.

Therefore, AJ will be defending against Cena and Ambrose in a triple dance at No Mercy. As for tonight though, it's Cena/Ambrose vs. AJ/a partner of his choosing. If AJ can't find one, Daniel Bryan will pick one for him.

Connor's Cure video.

Usos vs. Hype Bros

No entrances here and the twins start in on Ryder's bad leg. A kick to Jimmy's back allows the tag off to Rawley for the house cleaning but Jey gets in a superkick. The Superfly splash ends Mojo at 2:22.

Curt Hawkins talks about wolf cubs.

Here are Miz and Maryse for a chat. Miz has held the title for 162 days, which is longer than 132 other former champions, including Dolph Ziggler. This brings out Ziggler to say Miz will never be seen as a top guy. Yeah he'd never main event Wrestlemania or anything like that. Apparently Miz has never earned any respect so all he has to do is beat Ziggler one time with nothing but the two of them.

This brings out Daniel Bryan (JBL: "The General Manager of Raw!") to say Ziggler gets a rematch. Miz says no because he wants his contract renegotiated. Bryan gets in the ring and Miz bails into the crowd.

To recap: since Ziggler challenged Dean Ambrose for the title, the goal has gone from defending the World Title to winning the big one (the Intercontinental Title in this case) to now earning respect by being viewed as a main eventer, which apparently doesn't include a successful title defense in the main event of Wrestlemania. Now the way to earn respect is to pin Dolph Ziggler, meaning almost the whole roster is respected.

Baron Corbin isn't interested in being AJ's partner because he'd rather be his opponent.

Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

Rematch from Backlash's pre-show. Corbin jumps Crews during the

entrances and hits the End of Days on the floor. No match but Jack Swagger of all people comes out, seemingly having jumped to Smackdown.

Swagger: "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IT'S THE ROLLING STONES!" You've seen him wrestle for a long time but you don't know Jack. We, as in we the people, are going to be a big problem.

Here's Becky Lynch for her first appearance as the Smackdown Women's Champion. That means the required YOU DESERVE IT before Becky can talk about being the only one that survived on Sunday. The journey was worth it so come at her bros.

Naomi vs. Nikki Bella vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Carmella vs. Natalya

Again I'd like to point out that it's a really bad sign that every possible challenger can be put into one match. One fall to a finish with the winner getting a title shot at some point in the future. It's a big brawl to start of course with Natalya taking over off a series of suplexes. Nikki takes her down with a facebuster but Carmella makes the save. That means the big showdown but Carmella bails outside again.

Instead it's Naomi kicking Nikki in the face but getting caught in an electric chair drop. Alexa and Natalya come back in and go to the corner, allowing Naomi to hit a running enziguri. The Bella Buster and Rear View get two each but Alexa kicks Nikki off the top. Carmella comes back in with a superkick but Bliss steals the pin on Nikki at 5:13.

Rating: D+. So Bliss is the most successful of Sunday's losers. This division is starting to act like the X-Division with the wild matches and only a limited amount of character development for most of the women. Bliss is a good choice for the first challenger as she can wrestle a passable enough match to make Becky look good before her more serious opponent.

Kane laughs at AJ for suggesting a partnership.

Here's Shane to introduce Heath Slater (and Rhyno) for the official contract signing. Slater signs before anything else can happen and

praises Rhyno for being a great partner. They'll fight anyone anywhere and it's time to thank his kids. However, here's the Ascension to interrupt and ask for a title shot right now. Slater says not right now because there's a table, a red carpet and no referee. Shane thinks we can fix that so let's defend the belts right now.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Ascension

Ascension is challenging and this is joined in progress with Slater in trouble. Something off the top is horribly botched with Viktor dropping Slater as Konnor lands on him. The hot tag brings in Rhyno for a spinebuster before Slater is dumped to the floor. Rhyno Gores Viktor to retain at 2:04.

AJ says he doesn't need a partner but Daniel has appointed one for him: one of the jobbers AJ insulted on Sunday.

Randy Orton comes out to address Bray Wyatt, but not before some extra posing. Orton has finally figured out that Bray calls himself the face of fear because he's afraid. Right now Orton is ready for a fight so Bray can come out here and face his fear. Instead Bray comes up on screen to warn Randy not to sleep. The lights go out again and Bray is on the floor behind Randy, who is actually smart enough to turn around before Bray can do anything. Bray takes off the gear but the lights go out again, allowing Erick Rowan (Didn't they split?) to come in and jump Orton....who scores with a quick RK0 to take care of that loser.

John Cena/Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles/James Ellsworth

Actually hang on a second as Miz jumps Ellsworth and hammers away. We have a replacement. I fully support the idea of Miz moving back to the main event.

John Cena/Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles/The Miz

Joined in progress again with Miz kicking Cena in the face before it's off to Dean for some clotheslines on AJ. A quick Pele takes Dean down and we go to another break. Back with Miz ax handling Dean so it can be back to AJ. We hit a chinlock on Ambrose for a bit

before he shoves AJ away and makes the hot tag off to Cena. Everything breaks down and Dean sends AJ to the floor, leaving Cena to AA Miz for the pin at 9:50.

Rating: C. Just a main event tag but it did move us all the way up to 19:27 of total wrestling tonight, assuming you count the three and a half minutes spent in the commercial. I could have gone without Miz getting pinned but hopefully it means he moves up to the main event for the first time in way too long. I know he's not the most popular guy but he has the credentials and the character to make it work.

Post match Dean gives Cena Dirty Deeds and actually gets booed. I'm not sure if that was a heel turn or not but it felt pretty close.

Overall Rating: B-. They moved a lot of stuff forward tonight and very little of it had to do with the wrestling. We get a new name in Swagger (which was very badly needed), a new main event feud with Cena vs. Ambrose and Miz also moving up to the main event scene, though likely dropping the Intercontinental Title to Ziggler at No Mercy. It really is amazing how much faster this show feels than Raw (which shows you how much that third hour kills Raw) and that's such a help. I'm having fun watching Smackdown and I haven't had that feeling on a Monday in a long time. Good show tonight that helped solve some problems.

Results

Usos b. Hype Bros – Superfly splash to Rawley

Alexa Bliss b. Nikki Bella, Natalya, Carmella and Naomi – Superkick to Bella

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Ascension – Gore to Viktor

John Cena/Dean Ambrose b. The Miz/AJ Styles – AA to the Miz

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Monday Night Raw – September 12, 2016: Third Hour Blues

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 12, 2016

Location: Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Corey Graves

Raw's woes begin again this week as there's a double header of Monday Night Football tonight. The company is countering with Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens and if Reigns wins, he's added to the Raw World Title match at Clash of Champions. In theory this should involve some Rusev interference but that might be a bit too much common sense. Let's get to it.

We open with Last Week on Raw with Seth Rollins turning face and getting a title shot at the pay per view.

Opening sequence.

Mick Foley is in the ring to talk about the main event and to introduce Charlotte with Dana Brooke. Charlotte brow beats Dana for the loss to Bayley and is trying to get the records change to say that Dana lost last week. Dana tries to apologize but Mick cuts them off to talk about Clash of Champions. This brings out Sasha to say she's taking the title at the pay per view.

Before that can go anywhere, here's Bayley to interrupt as well. She would love to see Sasha get a title shot tonight but Bayley beat the champ last week so maybe she should get a title shot instead.

Charlotte laughs this off and says Sasha doesn't get to pick when

the title is defended.

Mick does though and suggests that we need a #1 contender. Dana suggests another best of seven series but Charlotte threatens to slap the taste out of her mouth. That goes nowhere though as Mick makes Sasha vs. Bayley for the #1 contendership tonight. Dana slaps Charlotte before anyone can realize how stupid it is to waste Sasha vs. Bayley here, earning her a spot in the #1 contenders match as well.

Bayley vs. Sasha Banks vs. Dana Brooke

The winner gets the title shot at Clash of Champions and Charlotte is on commentary. Bayley is quickly sent outside and Sasha is sent outside to follow, allowing Bayley to roll Dana up for two. Dana gets beaten down and pulled to the floor, leaving us with a showdown as we take a break. Back with Dana cranking on Bayley's arms as you can really see that they're protecting Sasha by letting the other two do the bulk of the work.

Sasha comes back in and loads up the double knees, only to put Bayley underneath her. Bayley moves and Dana takes the full thing, leaving Bayley to go up top for the high crossbody. The Tower of Doom plants Dana and it's off to the Bank Statement. Bayley makes the save and hits the Bayley to Belly on Dana, only to have Sasha roll Bayley up for the pin at 12:14. Ignore Sasha's shoulders being down on the rollup and Bayley's feet being on top of her.

Rating: C+. Sasha hiding and bad ending aside, this was about what you would want out of these three in a triple threat. Well aside from Bayley getting pinned of course. You know maybe I have more problems with this match than I was thinking. I'm not sure why you don't have Dana take the fall here but at least it wasn't Sasha vs. Bayley one on one.

Post break Dana apologizes to Charlotte but the champ just tells her to get the bags. Was that slap already erased from existence?

The Shining Stars offer R-Truth a time share in Puerto Rico. Truth: "YAHTZEE!" Goldust comes in before the payment goes through though and here are Enzo and Cass to say last week's loss wasn't fair. Spanish is spoken and I think the challenge is accepted.

Kevin Owens calls HHH his mentor and says Roman Reigns doesn't belong in the same ring as the champ. Tonight he'll make sure Seth

Rollins is all alone at Clash of Champions. Chris Jericho comes in to say he'll be having Sami Zayn on the Highlight Reel tonight, even though he's a stupid idiot.

Bo Dallas vs. Brandon Scott

Bo says he can only believe in himself. Brandon is sent into the corner and taken down by three straight gutbusters. A Roll of the Dice ends Scott at 1:13. Why are they making Bo better than he's been since he debuted after that big ordeal a few weeks back?

It's time for the Highlight Reel with promises of some hard hitting journalism. Jericho was excited about the idea of interviewing Kevin Owens, who is so handsome that Tom Cruise and/or Brad Pitt could play him in their life story movie. Instead he gets Sami Zayn, who is the lowest of the low. Jericho laughs at Sami for not even having Owens' new phone number but Sami is amazed that Jericho brought him out here to talk about Owens. Zayn loves the idea that Jericho buys into what Owens says and he only cares about that Universal Title.

That doesn't fly with Jericho so he takes credit for Sami and Owens wanting to be where they are today. Sami goes into a rant about how it was people like Eddie Guerrero who paved the way for him and now Jericho, a former World Champion, is just Kevin's lackey. Jericho offers to show Sami a text from Kevin but breaks his phone over Sami's head, likely setting up a match at the Clash.

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

Match #5 in the Best of 7 Series with Cesaro down 3-1. Sheamus hits him in the bad back to start and sends Cesaro into the corner a few times. A quick running uppercut looks to set up the Sharpshooter but Sheamus bails to the floor. More uppercuts give Cesaro two and we take a break. Back with Cesaro having to fight out of an over the shoulder backbreaker and hitting the high crossbody for two.

It's too early for the Cloverleaf so Cesaro comes back with the springboard corkscrew uppercut for another near fall. White Noise is countered into the Sharpshooter but Cesaro's back won't let him get the hold on full. The Swing doesn't work either and Sheamus gets two off the Irish Curse. The High Cross is broken up and Cesaro grabs a rollup with his foot on the ropes for the pin at 9:57.

Rating: C-. I'm not even going to bother complaining about how long this feud has been going. The cheating really doesn't do anything

for Cesaro other than keeping this thing going even longer but of course no one is going to say anything about it because that would make too much sense. The matches aren't even bad as much as they're just there at this point and that's a lot bigger of a problem.

Seth Rollins comes in to see Mick Foley and accuses him of just being there to do whatever Stephanie wants him to do. Mick is really not happy with that and yells about it, only to have Rollins suggest that Mick is lost in all this.

Alicia Fox vs. Nia Jax

This is over Nia hurting Alicia's friend last week. Nia says she doesn't do crazy. Fox is sent into the corner for the required shoulders to the ribs and they head outside. Nia drives her back first into the post and then tosses her into the barricade a few times. A spear sends Alicia through the barricade and the match is stopped at about 2:00.

Here's New Day to say that last week Gallows and Anderson tried to be entertaining. Woods: "DO NOT TOUCH OUR THING!" They load up the Old Day footage but say there's no way we're showing that again. That skit was so bad that it made everyone lose five minutes and thirty seven seconds of their lives. That time could have been spent watching Baltimore Ravens highlights (Big E: "Are we pandering now?") or poured a big old bowl of Booty0's. Anderson and Gallows come out to say they'll win the titles and that's about it. If WWE is telling you that one of their segments bombed, you can really tell it was bad.

Anderson and Gallows vs. New Day

Non-title with Kofi and Woods for the champs. This is joined in progress with Woods working on Anderson's arm before it's off to Kofi for a top rope stomp. Thankfully that lets us ignore the stupid line with the commentators comparing Anderson and Gallows to Demolition. Gallows comes I and throws Kofi to the floor before just kicking him in the face.

We hit the chinlock from Anderson as the announcers say the Smackdown Tag Team Champions aren't in the same league as these teams. True but I wish they wouldn't try to set up a brand vs. brand story yet. Kofi finally kicks away and makes the tag to Woods for some house cleaning, including the Honor Roll for two on Karl. The slugout actually goes to Xavier and the bottom rope tornado DDT sets

up a top rope elbow. Gallows remembers he's in the match and makes the save, setting up the Magic Killer to end Woods at 9:29.

Rating: C. This was 100% course correction for Anderson and Gallows as they turn into exactly what they should have been the whole time instead of whatever unfunny comedy they've been doing over the last few weeks. Nothing to see here for the most part but they're going with a simple story instead of something that was embarrassing everyone involved.

Roman Reigns is ready to fight and wants to be at Clash of Champions.

Jinder Mahal vs. Jack Swagger

Mahal is now The Man That Comes In Peace and talks about spending time in monasteries to get rid of his hatred. They slug it out to start with Mahal actually getting the better of it until they head outside with Swagger fighting back. Back in and a running knee to the face gets two on Jack. Swagger runs the ropes a few times before just stopping and elbowing Mahal in the face. The Vader Bomb misses and a running neckbreaker ends Swagger at 3:20.

Rating: D-. I'm trying to figure out if this was a bigger waste of time than last week's Anderson and Gallows segment. The definition of "we hired him because he's a warm body" just beat the least intimidating former World Champion this side of Vince Russo and WWE actually thinks we're going to be interested in seeing where this goes. The cruiserweights can't get here fast enough.

Connor's Cure video.

Tom Phillips asks Swagger about his soon to expire contract but Jack walks away.

Enzo Amore vs. Epico

Enzo offers to plant some flowers in Epico's, ahem, soil, after he knocks Epico out. We hear more about the Puerto Rico resort, which Graves has been able to visit. Sure the hotel is under construction and his room only had three walls but the beaches were nice. Epico rolls some suplexes and gets two off a delayed vertical. Enzo comes back and goes to the top, only to spend too much time dancing. Cass kicks Primo in the face but gets taken down by a suicide dive. That allows Enzo to come off the top with a dive but a suplex over the apron sets up the Bobby Heenan finish with Primo holding the foot so

Epico can get the pin at 3:20.

Rating: D. This show always suffers from a really bad stretch in the third hour and this is no exception. We've had back to back bad matches featuring stories of people who don't belong on this show being pushed for the simple reason of the show is three hours long and they don't have enough talent to fill everything in. A lot of these people need to be repackaged or replaced because this stuff isn't going to save them against football.

Rollins cuts Owens off in the back and says he hopes this stays a one on one match because he'd love nothing more than to beat up HHH's little golden boy. Owens thinks that's funny because Seth probably wants someone to do the work so he can steal the pin. Seth has always had a bunch of people doing his work for him, including HHH. All Seth has done is fail since he came back (Always remember: winning the title doesn't matter. DEFENDING THE TITLE MATTERS!) while Owens won the title in his first chance.

Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title. Owens takes it outside to start so Reigns hits him in the face a few times. A slingshot kick to the jaw makes things worse for the champ but he takes Reigns down and slaps on a chinlock. Reigns fights up and gets booted some more, only to have Owens bail outside to avoid the Superman Punch. The Punch off the apron is blocked with a superkick and Owens sends him into the post as we go to a break.

Back with Owens holding another chinlock as this show somehow loses even more energy. Reigns finally fights out of it and they head outside again, only to have Rollins come out to attack Owens for the DQ at 13:14. Foley sends out the referees to get rid of Rollins but THE MATCH MUST CONTINUE! Back in and they slug it out with Reigns taking over off a Samoan drop. A bite under the arm (that's a new one) breaks up a superplex and the spinning superplex gets two for the champ.

The Cannonball misses as this match just keeps going. Roman gets two off the Superman Punch but stops to send Owens into the post. The champ comes back with a pair of Cannonballs but Reigns jumps over the Pop Up Powerbomb. Cue Rusev for a distraction though (it's about time) and the Pop Up Powerbomb ends Reigns at 23:21 (including the time between the DQ and the restart).

Rating: B. The ending was the exactly right call and it made me feel

a lot better after not enjoying the match nearly as much as I should have. This was a good back and forth brawl but they were out there too long at the end of an already long show. Rusev vs. Reigns and Owens vs. Rollins are the right calls though and that makes a lot of things better.

Rusev beats Roman up to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The main event did this show a lot of favors as it rolled over and died at the start of the third hour. I don't know who thought it was a good idea to have Jinder Mahal and the Shining Stars in back to back segments but the show lost everything it had built up in the previous two hours. This wasn't the worst show in the world but it's the Raw Special: it would have been a good two hour show but the extra hour ruined whatever it could have been.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Bayley and Dana Brooke – Rollup to Bayley

Bo Dallas b. Brandon Scott – Roll of the Dice

Cesaro b. Sheamus – Rollup with foot on the ropes

Nia Jax vs. Alicia Fox went to a no content when Jax speared Fox through the barricade

Anderson and Gallows b. New Day – Magic Killer to Woods

Jinder Mahal b. Jack Swagger – Running neckbreaker

Epico b. Enzo Amore – Pin with Primo holding Amore's foot

Kevin Owens b. Roman Reigns – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Backlash 2016: As Good As It's Going To Get

Backlash 2016

Date: September 11, 2016

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's the first single branded pay per view and I'm really not sure what they're going to do to fill in the whole show. There are currently six scheduled matches but word on the street is that one of them might not be taking place as advertised due to an injury. They could always add some stuff in but at the moment, this isn't looking like a three hour show. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

This was made on the pre-show when Corbin interrupted Crews' chat with Daniel Bryan. They lock up to start with Corbin shoving him away, only to have Crews come back with a dropkick. A right hand stops a springboard and knocks Crews to the floor (signature spot) as we take a break. Back with Crews hitting an enziguri from the apron and avoiding a charge but Corbin slides under the ropes and back inside for a clothesline to the back of the head.

Corbin talks a little trash and takes Apollo's head off with another clothesline. A running knee (because of course) puts Corbin down and the second jumping enziguri gets two. An Angle Slam of all things gets two more on Baron but he hits the Deep Six for the same. They actually head outside with Corbin going into the steps for a seven count. Back in and Crews charges into a knee (it's always the knee) to set up End of Days for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. This was actually a lot better than I was expecting with some ice chemistry from the pair. Corbin winning is fine as he needs something to do but Crews needs to start winning people people stop caring about him. Above all else though: the pre-show had ONE match that ran about ten minutes and now we're almost ready to go with the

regular show. Yes I said ONE MATCH instead of three with half an hour between each one. I really don't think people are going to miss the other two and the fans might even be a bit less burned out later on. Imagine that.

We open with a text crawl about September 11 and what it means for our freedom. Nothing wrong with this whatsoever and you knew it was coming.

Opening video of Shane McMahon talking about how this is the new vision and a new era, including new champions being crowned for the first time.

Here are Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan to open things up. Shane brags about how awesome the fans and everyone behind the scenes have been. The internet has been blowing up and the red team is getting a run of its money. They talk about the new titles and Shane introduces the Women's Title match.

Smackdown Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Naomi vs. Nikki Bella vs. Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Natalya

The title is vacant coming in and this is under elimination rules. Otunga calls Naomi his dark horse with the glow and I'm not daring to touch that one. Nikki is in red, white and blue to hammer home the fact that she's our fearless hero. Bliss on the other hand is Harley Quinn for a VERY nice look. There are no tags so it's a wild brawl to start with Nikki being clotheslined to the floor (and being fearless enough to put her foot on the bottom rope to shove herself off before anyone was touching her), leaving Becky to work on Naomi's arm.

We get the dancing kicks (JBL: "Be glad she only has two feet and not eight." Uh, right. It's off to the showdown between Nikki and Carmella and WOW it's even less interesting than I thought it would be. Bliss makes the save and hits her moonsault knees for two on Naomi. Becky comes back in and it's time for the parade of secondary finishers, capped off by Carmella brawling with Nikki.

The Alabama Slam gets two on Carmella and Natalya comes back in for

a Tower of Doom (a name they thankfully don't use tonight). Alexa comes back in with a sunset flip out of the corner for two before Carmella sends everyone outside, leaving Naomi to dive onto all of them. Back in and Natalya loads up a powerbomb out of the corner with Naomi adding a Blockbuster to get rid of Bliss at 9:39.

Nikki hits her big forearm on Naomi but Natalya wants the elimination instead and the Sharpshooter makes Naomi tap at 10:54. Nikki's TKO gets rid of Natalya at 11:57 but Carmella rolls Nikki up for the elimination at 12:04. We're down to Carmella vs. Becky with Lynch getting in her usual stuff until she runs into a superkick. Not that it matters as Becky grabs the Disarm-Her for the tap out and the title at 14:35.

Rating: C+. This was fun stuff and Becky winning is a nice surprise (though you can imagine Nikki getting the title by the Rumble at the latest). Above all else though, it didn't feel like they were stretching out to fill in time. Carmella had a good performance here but she and Alexa are still a long way away from the top level. Naomi continues to be worthless save for one spot a match.

Becky gets promo time post match and we get the WAY overused "you deserve it" chant.

Miz yells at a kid from Nickelodeon, who offers Miz a spot on his show. "Unless you can get John Cena instead."

Bray Wyatt attacks Randy Orton and injures his ankle to cover up for Orton not being medically cleared to compete. They really, really should have done this on TV instead of a bait and switch like this. They were even promoting it on the pre-show and it's a very cheap move.

Usos vs. Hype Bros

The winners face Heath Slater/Rhyno later in the night to replace the injured American Alpha. The Usos have new gear and Jimmy wrestles in a shirt (thank goodness). Mojo throws Jey around to start but it's quickly off to Zack for a facebuster on Jimmy. Ryder knocks both twins to the floor and Mojo runs all the way around the

ring to run them over in a cool power display.

Back in and the Usos start with the double teaming to send Ryder right back to the floor. The running Umaga attack sets up a chinlock, followed by another chinlock to keep things fresh. Zack sends them outside again and the double tag brings in Mojo as the crowd isn't all that thrilled. Something like an F5 gets two on Jey and Ryder adds a middle rope hurricanrana for two. Everything breaks down and the Usos go after Ryder's leg, setting up a Tequila Sunrise to make Ryder tap at 10:11.

Rating: C-. Now this felt like they were dragging it out. The knee stuff from the Usos made sense and there was next to no doubt that the Usos were going over here as you don't have Hype Bros vs. Slater/Rhyno twice in a week. It's not a bad match but this was clearly filler and they weren't making any secret about it.

Slater and Rhyno are ready but Heath has an upset stomach due to some artificial crab dip. Rhyno: "Heath, we're still live." Heath: "Uh....YOU'VE BEEN SWERVED!"

Connor's Cure video.

We recap Dolph Ziggler vs. the Miz for the Intercontinental Title. Daniel Bryan had accused Miz of being soft but since Bryan can't wrestle, Miz got to feud with Ziggler instead. Dolph had been wanting to win the big one and the Intercontinental Title seems to suffice.

We cut to Miz in the back where he tells Bryan he wants to renegotiate his contract. Bryan says nothing and Miz laughs at the idea of Bryan calling him a coward. Miz: "I want you to watch me do what you can't anymore."

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Miz is defending and is quickly sent outside to start. Back in and Ziggler tries some amateur stuff until Miz punches him in the face to take over. We get some choking on the ropes until Miz counters a dropkick and catapults Ziggler out to the floor. Miz grabs a chinlock as they're taking their time for obvious reasons.

It's off to a surfboard before Miz does the YES pose. Oh man they're teasing the heck out of this but I'm not sure how they're going to pay it off. Miz's running corner clothesline looks to set up the top rope ax handle but Ziggler rolls him up for two instead. Ziggler makes his comeback with the usual and sends Miz shoulder first into the post.

Miz comes right back with a slingshot sitout powerbomb (sweet) before hitting a kind of Stunner on the leg. A quick Fameasser gets two for Dolph and he grabs the sleeper to slow Miz down. They trade DDT's before Miz gets the Figure Four for a good while before Ziggler gets the rope.

This is getting a lot of time so far and it's only kind of feeling like they're stretching it out. Miz up but charges into a superkick for two with the champ getting his foot on the rope. Miz bails to the floor and has to be thrown back in, allowing Maryse to spray Ziggler in the eyes with something. The Skull Crushing Finale is enough for the retaining pin at 18:11.

Rating: B. I liked this more than I was expecting but that's not really surprising with the roll Miz is on at this point. I'm sure this is going to set up a rematch because we just can't get rid of Ziggler because HE'S IMPORTANT AND GETS SO CLOSE TO WINNING THE BIG ONE WHICH GETS SMALLER AND SMALLER EVERY SINGLE TIME. Miz vs. Bryan would be very interesting but I'd be really surprised if they actually went with that as Bryan's one last match.

The pre-show panel has a chat.

Here's Bray with no video or introduction as Orton is injured. The injury is announced and we get a ten count but we have a replacement match and it's no holds barred.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

I had the name written before the music hit because of course it's Kane. They're quickly on the floor with Kane knocking the bell out of Bray's hands. Back in and Bray's cross body has Kane in trouble, followed by a chair to the knee to make it even worse. Another chair

shot gets two on Kane until he grabs a running DDT. The side slam looks to set up a chokeslam but Bray takes it outside again.

Bray does Orton's pose and drops the running backplash through a table for the big spot. The fans seem very pleased here after booing the heck out of the match announcement. Back in and Sister Abigail is countered into a chokeslam for two. Bray gets the same off a Rock Bottom onto a chair, only to have Orton come out for an RK0. Kane adds a chokeslam for the pin at 10:58.

Rating: C. GAH! I'm so freaking sick of Bray losing time after time after time after time for the sake of setting up what's likely to be another loss because Bray is bulletproof or whatever. He's been on the main roster for three years and I can't remember the last big win he had. The fans are DYING to cheer for him but no, instead let's have him job to freaking KANE to make us want to see him fight Orton later.

Someone explain why that booking is supposed to make sense. Please. I'd LOVE to hear how that makes sense. It's Orton fighting a loser who couldn't even get on the 18 hour Summerslam but now I want to see Bray vs. Orton on pay per view. Just turn him face already like you were planning to do and FREAKING DID AT ONE POINT instead of having him do the same stuff for years. The match was fine for a house show style match but that ending drove me nuts.

AJ Styles tells some nameless jobbers that they're destined for failure.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Rhino/Heath Slater

For the inaugural titles. Slater goes after Jey to start before it's off to Rhino for some power slots. Heath comes back in but is taken outside for a double suplex into the post (cool). Back in and Slater is slowly beaten down as the back work continues. The fans want Rhino but get a chinlock from Jey instead.

Slater fights up and we get the double cross body spot to set up the hot tag. Rhino comes in (to a very nice reaction) but misses the Gore. Heath tags himself back in and hits a neckbreaker on both

twins, followed by a DDT for two on Jimmy. The superkick nails Heath but Rhyno hits the Gore to give Slater the pin at 9:57.

Rating: C. I smiled. They won't hold the titles long and that's the best idea but this was absolutely fine and the right move at the time. American Alpha can get the belts later but this wraps up Heath Needs A Job and gives the fans a fun moment. Above all else: WWE had something with Slater and they actually did something with it. They ignore that kind of thing WAY too often and it's such a waste of someone getting over. This is as high as Slater needs to go and there's nothing wrong with that.

Slater and Rhyno are happy with the win and this sums up everything: "Yo Beulah! WE'RE GETTING A DOUBLE WIDE BABY!!!"

Miz vs. Ziggler chicken deal.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose which doesn't have much of a story. Styles beat John Cena last month at Summerslam and has a title shot as a result. Dean doesn't seem to be taking Styles seriously though.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Dean is defending. Feeling out process to start with Dean being driven into the ropes. AJ: "I OWN YOU!" A forearm puts a seated Dean down again but he comes back with his awkward slugging, followed by a backdrop to send AJ outside. The suicide dive is broken up though and AJ starts in on the neck before going with the drop down into the dropkick.

Dean comes up holding his nose but makes a comeback anyway by whipping AJ into the corner. That goes nowhere good either as Dean misses a charge into the post. They're going with the idea that Dean is doing his normal insane style but AJ knows exactly what he's going to do and is one step ahead. Dean is back up and tries a belly to back superplex but flips AJ over for a big crash to put both guys down.

AJ dives into a spinning Rock Bottom backbreaker of all things for two (makes sense as Dean used something new) and the standing elbow

to the floor has AJ in even more trouble. They head inside again with Dean getting suplexed into the corner (becoming a common move lately). Now it's AJ going after the leg with a standing Robinsdale Crunch out of the corner and the Calf Crusher is on.

Dean makes the ropes so AJ puts the hold on again in the middle of the ring. In a clever counter, Dean grabs the head and slams AJ's head into the mat over and over. Dean fights up and goes outside for a clothesline, followed by a running bulldog for two back inside. AJ's fireman's carry into a backbreaker gets two, followed by a torture rack into a powerbomb for the same.

The springboard 450 gets the same and AJ is stunned. Dean comes back again and hits his running dropkick to knock AJ outside. That means it's finally table time but instead Dean sends him into the crowd for a suicide dive. It's not a countout though as they head back inside with a Pele sending Dean into the ropes for the rebound lariat. The ref is bumped though (of course) and a low blow sets up the Styles Clash to give us a new champion at 24:59.

Rating: B+. The ending was the only possible option and that's the best thing they've done all night. They did a great job here with the idea of Dean not being able to keep up with AJ who was just on his game tonight. Dean never really felt like a real World Champion to me so having him lose to the best thing on Smackdown was the right call. Really good match here and the best thing on the show, which had to be expected.

AJ celebrates and we're out at 10:38.

Overall Rating: C+. This is a really weird one to grade as the ultra low expectations did it a lot of favors. Unfortunately it's a show that didn't need to exist and needed a lot of things dragged out to make it work as well as it did. Smackdown is dying for some midcard talent as they had one of the shortest pay per views in a long time and that only worked with a team working twice and the opening match not starting until over fifteen minutes into the show. I liked this as well as I could have given the circumstances but they really need to fix some big problems.

Results

Becky Lynch b. Carmella, Nikki Bella, Natalya, Alexa Bliss and Naomi
– Disarm-Her to Carmella

Usos b. Hype Bros – Tequila Sunrise to Ryder

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Kane b. Bray Wyatt – Chokeslam

Rhyno/Heath Slater b. Usos – Gore to Jimmy

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose – Styles Clash

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Backlash 2016 Preview

Let's see: college football, first weekend of the NFL, see how the Cleveland Indians manager to screw up the division lead this year. Yeah it's kind of a bor.....Backlash? That's this weekend? Apparently it is despite feeling like it's lacking another two or three weeks worth of building. It probably doesn't help that we're only three weeks removed from the marathon that was Summerslam weekend and there's barely enough material for a pay per view.

There's no pre-show match announced yet so let's start with the precursor to the Tag Team Title match as the Usos are facing the

Hype Bros in what you could kind of call the third semifinal match. American Alpha had advanced to the finals to face Heath Slater/Rhyno for the titles but the Usos turned heel and then did so again after the match to injure Chad Gable's knee, leaving us with only one team for the tournament final. Therefore we'll be seeing the two teams that lost in the semifinals fight each other with the winners going to the title match.

Save for an American Alpha run-in, I see no reason for the Usos to not win here and go on to face Slater/Rhyno. There isn't much else to say on this one as Slater/Rhyno already beat the Hype Bros earlier this week (making it even clearer that this match is filler) so the Usos are the only real option. So yeah, the Usos go on as is the only real option here.

That leaves us with the Usos vs. Slater/Rhyno for the titles and I'm really not sure where you go here. There's a very easy case for the Usos getting the belts to give them credibility (the announcers have made sure to mention that the Usos are the only team in the tournament to ever hold titles in WWE) and of course to set up the rematch with American Alpha, who beat them clean in less than a minute.

On the other hand I'm not sure how long they can string out the "Heath wants a job" angle until they have to give him something. Slater/Rhyno as the first champions would be just fine as American Alpha and the Usos can have a #1 contenders feud and then win the belts while the first champs do comedy. All that being said, the Usos are the logical pick here and I'll go with them, despite it being stupid to have heels wrestle twice in one night to win a title.

We'll stick with the title matches as it's off to Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler. If you've been reading my stuff lately, you know I'm really not a fan of this feud and that hasn't changed. The story here works: they've built up Miz as a pretty good champion (if he holds the title another two weeks it's the longest reign in five years) who is enough of a veteran that he

can be a bigger player on Smackdown, especially with what they were teasing with Bryan. Ziggler needs a big win (though remember: it's DEFENDING the title that matters, not actually winning it) and this is suddenly a big enough deal.

That brings us to the problem: it's Dolph Ziggler vs. the Miz. These guys have fought a ton of times (four times on TV this year alone) and none of them have been exactly what you would call thrilling. The match will be fine but the buildup to it with both guys wanting to move up the ladder into serious contention should be calling for something special, not something we've seen several times before and said "eh not bad" much more often than not. I'll take Miz to retain the title here but Ziggler going over really wouldn't shock me as they're obsessed with pushing him for reasons I really don't buy.

We'll get to one of the bigger matches now with Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt and again I'm worried about what they're going to do here. Orton really, really needs a win after that debacle against Lesnar last month but Bray really needs a win.....well always because he hardly ever wins anything important.

The problem here is there's only a limited story aside from Wyatt's traditional "I choose to haunt you" idea which ran out of gas a long time ago. I'm sure it's going to be entertaining but this feels like a lot of going through the motions instead of giving us something that should be good. I'll go with Orton here but a no contest or countout/DQ ending would be the better option.

Next up is the Six Pack Challenge for the inaugural Smackdown Women's Title and I'll spare you the time by saying this should be Nikki Bella's to lose. Naomi is the athletic woman who probably won't win, Alexa Bliss and Carmella are miles away from being ready and Natalya has less charisma than even your average Canadian wrestler. That leaves Nikki and Becky Lynch as the only real options and you know full well that we need a good Bella comeback story after the neck injury that we all sat up crying over because we might never get to hear her call herself fearless again. So yeah, Nikki wins because it's all about the Bellas.

That leaves us with the main event and as is the case with almost anything else on the card, I really don't care. Dean Ambrose is defending the Smackdown World Title against AJ Styles and that's about the extent of their issue. They've tried to force in the idea that Dean isn't taking this seriously and AJ is the uncrowned champion after pinning Cena and....yeah that's about it. Aside from a rematch, I really don't see a reason for AJ to not get the title here. He's the best on Smackdown and can hold the title for a few months until hopefully someone switches shows to mix things up a bit and give him a fresh challenger.

So that's Backlash and I'm lucky that I stayed awake while I wrote this up. No matter how you slice it, this show really isn't interesting and doesn't need to be a pay per view. The biggest thing here though is this doesn't feel like a three hour pay per view. We haven't seen a single brand show yet so maybe they'll speed things up a bit.

Let's say the main event and Orton vs. Wyatt eat up an hour combined (that's probably a big stretch even when you include entrances). A Six Pack Challenge, two tag matches and Miz vs. Ziggler isn't enough to fill in two hours. I'd be really surprised if this show runs three hours unless they add in some nothing matches like Baron Corbin vs. Kalisto (Is that still a thing?) or Kane squashing Breezango for reasons of general stupidity.

Length issues aside, I'm really not interested in this show and I haven't seen many who are. Smackdown has been the better of the two shows but they're a long way away from being able to pull off a three hour pay per view with just the stuff they have. Just let the show run a little shorter and people will be a lot happier. I don't think the Network subscriptions are going to plummet if one of the seven bonus pay per views a year is a little shorter than average.

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Smackdown – April 11, 2002 (2016 Redo): It's A Start

Smackdown

Date: April 11, 2002

Location: Tucson Convention Center, Tucson, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This has to be better than Raw right? I'm almost convinced that it has to be just based on the law of nearly anything would be better than the mess that I sat through earlier this week. The big story continues to be the build towards Hulk Hogan vs. HHH for reasons of pure nostalgia. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to get things going with his continued complaining about Hogan getting the title shot. He's beaten Russians and Iranians much tougher than Nikolai Volkoff and the Iron Sheik so how can Hogan be better than him? Then on Raw, Ric Flair made Undertaker vs. Steve Austin for the title shot after that so Kurt is out in the cold for a long time. Tonight he has a non-title match against HHH so he could prove what happened had Vince McMahon not gone mental.

The WHAT chants finally make Angle snap but here's Edge to calm things down a bit. Edge agrees that Angle's medal win was inspiring but IT WAS SIX YEARS AGO. Since Angle isn't getting a title shot soon, maybe he'd like to face Edge at Backlash. The match is accepted so Edge has one last thing: the fans need to shout YOU SUCK

instead of WHAT whenever Kurt talks. And that's the rest of Angle's career. Angle freaks out as only he can and demands his music plays, only to have the fans chant to the tune.

Chris Jericho tells Angle that he'll take care of Edge tonight. So there's your heel alliance. Angle doesn't like loudmouthed Canadians with long blond hair who dress like a rock star. Angle: "Well not you of course. You're cool."

Tajiri vs. Hurricane

Hurricane has hacked off his hair. Tajiri drags Torrie Wilson out in a geisha girl outfit and you can just pencil in the big stripping scene from here. An armdrag sends Tajiri outside and Hurricane uses a rare over the top flip dive to take him down. Torrie looks miserable as Tazz says she's lucky to have someone like Tajiri. For once Cole has it right by saying it's the other way around. Hurricane gets in a hurricanrana but gets kicked in the head for the fast pin.

Rating: C+. This was a good way to set up Tajiri's rematch for the Cruiserweight Title at Backlash and treating Torrie like garbage is a classic, simple way to get him over as a heel. It's nice to have some actual characters in the Cruiserweight division instead of just giving them little time and having them do spots.

Tajiri berates Torrie until Kidman makes the save.

Stacy Keibler, in Miss Hancock attire, lays on Vince's couch until he shows up.

Albert vs. Scotty 2 Hotty

We get the debut of Albert in trunks here because we needed to see that chest hair. Albert jumps him during the entrances as Cole talks about Albert beating Scotty up last week and yelling about Scotty holding him down and making him do all the dancing. Cole: "But we still haven't heard why Albert did what he did." That's vintage Cole stupidity. Scotty stops a charge with a boot and gets two off a middle rope dropkick. The Worm is broken up by a bicycle kick and a Baldo Bomb ends Scotty in a hurry.

Albert beats him up some more after the match until Rikishi makes the save. You mean their big idea is Rikishi vs. Albert? As in the future Hall of Famer vs. future head trainer of developmental?

Vince arrives to find Stacy and says he's considering her for a position. There are a few more candidates though and he'll be interviewing them in the ring. Stacy promises to give him an offer that he can't refuse.

Rico makes fun of Maven's clothes and eyebrows. Al Snow comes in and a tag match against Billy and Chuck is made for later.

Hogan wants to be the WWF Champion one more time. Jericho comes up and warns Hogan about the dangers of HHH. I'd pay to see a Battle of the Bands between Fozzy and the Wrestling Boot Band.

Edge vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho gets caught by an early spinwheel kick and flapjack before Edge sends him outside. There's a baseball slide over the announcers' table as it's all young Canadian so far. Jericho hides behind the referee and rakes Edge's eyes, earning himself a HAS BEEN chant. It amazes me that Jericho had been wrestling for over ten years at this point and he'd still be around over fourteen years later. That's almost as long as Austin's entire career and it's not even half of what Jericho did.

Edge fights back with some chops and avoids a charge to send Chris into the post. A rollup gets two on Jericho and you can hear the fans getting fired up off the near falls. Cue Angle but Edge spears him down, only to walk into a bulldog. The Edge-0-Matic gets two but the referee stupidly gets in the way of a catapult. You know, because referees are dumb.

The Edgecator makes Jericho tap but there's no one to see it so of course Edge lets go. You know, because wrestlers are dumb. Jericho tries to bring in a chair but gets speared for two. Angle snaps Edge's neck across the top and that's enough for a rollup with tights to give Jericho the pin.

Rating: B-. That's probably the best match since the Brand

Extension, assuming you ignore the nonsense with the referee and all the interference. Unfortunately that's how big matches go at this point in the WWF because they don't want anyone to lose even remotely clean. It's fine every now and then but that's what countouts and disqualifications should be for.

Edge goes after Angle but gets beaten down until Hogan makes the save.

Here's Vince for his job interviews or whatever they're calling them this week. There's a desk in the ring and it's really not that hard to guess what they're setting up with Stacy. First up we have a professional looking woman with horn rimmed glasses named Sylvia Johnson. She can type 95 words a minute, can speak three languages and most computer languages. Vince says no because she's not his type. "Don't let the door hit you on the....oh yeah we don't have doors on the ring."

Next up is a guy who looks like Steve from Blue's Clues. Vince tells him to get out before anyone can say a word. The third option is a decent looking woman who is a bit more Vince's type. She can type fast and takes dictation but the fans want puppies. Vince thinks he's found his personal assistant but wonders if there's one more applicant.

Cue Stacy and Vince's eyes bug out despite knowing it was coming. Ok to be fair the Hancock outfit can have that effect. Stacy throws the other woman out and dances on the desk to get the job. Vince falling out of his chair when she pulls up her skirt is great, unlike this HUGE waste of time. Yeah Stacy looked great but this was nothing other than a way for Vince to have some fun.

D-Von, now in a suit comes in to see Vince and tells him to testify. See, now he's a preacher. His mission is to save the sinners of the world but he needs a benefactor. Vince agrees, despite the fact that it's D-Von. At least this is something different though and that's what someone like D-Von needs, which is what TNA never understood.

Mark Henry holds a limo (driven by Test) back with his legs. Test cranks it up and hurts Henry's legs (which you never actually see

touching the limo of course). So we're going to get Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry?

Chuck vs. Al Snow

Everyone is at ringside. I'd rather they have this match instead of giving Snow and Maven a Tag Team Title shot out of the blue. Snow kicks him into the corner to start as Tazz yells at Cole for getting a town's name wrong. A belly to belly sends Snow flying as the announcers debate weed whackers. Snow gets two off a sitout spinebuster but Rico gets in the ring. Maven chases him into the crowd, leaving Chuck to hit the Jungle Kick for two. A quick Snowplow gives Al the pin.

Rating: D. I'm fine with setting up some challengers for the titles as it's not like there are many teams on either show at the moment. Snow and Maven aren't exactly doing anything else and it can plug the second season of Tough Enough at the same time. Nothing to see here but at least the booking makes sense. Unfortunately that doesn't make it interesting but that's what you get when WE HAVE TO SPLIT UP THE TAG TEAMS BECAUSE REASONS!

HHH is getting taped up when Hogan comes in to talk about Jericho and Angle. The face alliance is offered but HHH will have nothing to do with it because they're going to fight at Backlash. Just like last week, Hogan being everybody's favorite grandpa and HHH being all serious really doesn't work. HHH holds up the title and talks about it like his secret girlfriend for when Stephanie throws him out for not respecting the lady balls enough. Finally, as is custom for HHH, I have time to drywall my house by the time he finishes his really simple point.

Kurt Angle vs. HHH

Non-title. Angle's top wristlock goes nowhere as HHH shoves him into the corner. Cole again tries to push the "HHH grew up idolizing Hogan" schtick, which only works if you ignore the fact that he was a teenager when Hogan first won the title. A sunset flip with tights gives us a two count and an Angle thong shot. We're lucky enough to have Angle not realize that they're down so HHH gives him a hard

spank. Angle finally figures out what's going on and throws some German suplexes for two.

We hit the sleeper on the champ but HHH flips him over and grabs a DDT. HHH starts choking for no real apparent reason before a spinebuster gets two more with Jericho coming out to pull the referee to the floor. A Lionsault gives Angle two so Jericho decks the ref and the beatdown is on. Hogan comes out for the save and beats down Angle...to set up a Pedigree for the pin. WHAT??? Jericho pulled the referee out, hit a Lionsault and beat the referee up before Hogan came in and beat up both bad guys AND THE REFEREE DIDN'T NOTICE??? Are you kidding me?

Rating: C+. The match was what you would expect from these two but WOW that ending was ridiculous. It's not like HHH absolutely had to pin Angle here as he was getting double teamed by two former World Champions and...oh wait it was HHH. How did I miss that when I was saying all this made no sense? Of course he had to beat Angle. It means so much after having Hogan come in for the save and all.

Post match HHH yells at Hogan for coming out. They get in each others faces and HHH tells him to stay out of his business until Backlash. Hogan says HHH is his business until Backlash (Shouldn't that be until after Backlash?) and goes to leave but Angle hits HHH from behind, knocking him into HHH. Hulk hits the usual and holds up the title. Jericho and Angle beat the good guys down and stand...well about average height to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Let's get this out of the way at the start: this was WAY better than any of the other single brand shows from either Raw or Smackdown to date. There was good, longer wrestling and story advancement with characters that people care about. Really lame main event feud aside (especially with the Hogan nostalgia not working as well as it was a few weeks ago, likely due to a lack of the Rock's charisma helping things), a lot of the show made more sense.

However, we still have a lot of major problems. You have Maven and Al Snow as the only challengers to the Tag Team Titles, Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry looming and the regular "Vince gets a

gorgeous woman” storyline. They’re starting to come around on top but the midcard and lower card are both death right now and that’s going to last for a long time until we get some new characters over. It’s a better show but they really need to fix some things.

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Ring of Honor TV – September 7, 2016: Putting People Over

Ring of Honor

Date: September 7, 2016

Location: Sam’s Town Hotel and Gambling Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Kevin Kelly

We’re finally back to the regular taping cycle though thankfully we had two strong stand alone shows in the weeks since the pay per view. The big story is Adam Cole winning the ROH World Title and bringing it to the Bullet Club, which is suddenly stronger than ever before around here. Let’s get to it.

We open with a package on Cole winning the title and being attacked by Kyle O’Reilly, likely setting up their showdown at Final Battle. Opening sequence.

Here’s the Bullet Club for their big celebration. It’s Story Time

With Adam Cole, who has delivered on his promise to become a two time ROH World Champion. He's going to be champion as long as he wants but here's Jay Lethal to disagree. Cole knows that Jay wants his rematch tonight but it's the champ's night off. If Lethal wants to fight later then that's fine, but just remember the Bullet Club will be right there. Lethal isn't worried though because he's got friends of his own: Los Ingobernables de Japan. The big staredown takes us to a break.

A six man tag has been made for next week.

We look at what happened after last week's show ended, with the Young Bucks beating Addiction down.

Here's the Addiction at the announcers' desk to say that footage was doctored.

Video on Punisher Martinez being the new heir to Kevin Sullivan's evil.

Caprice Coleman vs. Dalton Castle

They actually start with a battle of the thumbs until Dalton single legs him down for two. We get the chest stick out followed by a B00/YAY fight over a headlock. A running knee knocks Coleman off the corner and there's a running kick to the head because wrestling is about running strikes these days. With Coleman in trouble, the rest of the Cabinet goes after the Boys and we get a four man ejection to take us to a break.

Back with the Boys still at ringside and Coleman being thrown off a suplex. Castle does a sweet bridge out of a rollup into the lifting German suplex but here's the Cabinet to get on my nerves all over again. I love that the company's boss is RIGHT THERE and this keeps happening. The Boys come in and dive onto the Cabinet, leaving Castle to hit the Bang A Rang for the pin at 8:02.

Rating: C-. Castle and the Boys are as different than the Cabinet as you can possibly be. I know that's probably why they're feuding but that doesn't work when the major difference is one being entertaining and the other being an act that caused me to wait several days to sit through this show. Hopefully this wraps up soon. Clips from the way too good Jay Briscoe vs. Jay White match that ended in a time limit draw.

Here's the Addiction with a ladder to say they've beaten every team

put in front of them. See, they're at the top of this ladder and each rung is a team beneath them.

Bobby Fish is ready for his title defense against Katsuyori Shibata next week and suggests that Shibata just pay off the referee because he has no chance otherwise.

Donovan Dijak vs. Manny Lemos

Manny slaps Dijak in the face on the handshake and gets punched down for his disrespect. Dijak throws him to the floor, bring him back in, and finishes with Feast Your Eyes at 1:34. Total squash.

Post match Prince Nana says Dijak is coming for the winner of next week's TV Title match.

The Briscoes can respect what Jay White did in their singles match but tonight it's a tag team match and that's their world.

Briscoe Brothers vs. Lio Rush/Jay White

Non-title. For the sake of simplicity, I'll only refer to Jay Briscoe as Jay. Mark and Rush get things going with Lio snapping off a springboard hurricanrana. It's already off to White but Jay crushes him with a splash in the corner. Back from a break with White DDTing Jay and tagging in Rush for his variety of kicks. That means it's time for the first flip dive over the top to take Jay out, only to have Mark come back with the Blockbuster from the apron.

Back in and Rush gets thrown with a gutwrench suplex, followed by a regular suplex for two. As you might expect, more kicks allow the tag off to White to face Jay and you can feel the energy picking up. White scores with a missile dropkick for two and we take a second break. Back with Rush hitting a suicide dive to take Mark out, leaving White to cover Jay for two. The fans are actually accurate for once with their THIS IS AWESOME chants.

Mark grabs a fisherman's buster for two on Lio and the knockout stuns him. A Shining Wizard catches Mark for two more and it's time for the slugout between Jay and Lio. The Death Valley Driver into the Froggy Bow knocks Lio silly but White tackles Jay onto the cover for the save. The even bigger slugout goes to Jay but White slaps him in the face anyway. A double forearm from the Briscoes puts White on the floor and sets up a Doomsday Device to put Rush away at 18:41.

Rating: B+. I know he hasn't won anything but this mini-feud has

done more for White than almost any initial push that I've seen in a long time. It's certainly better than having him win a tournament over a bunch of other unknowns and then having him lose to a singles champion. White has the goods and could be something special if he can talk.

We get the big handshake to really make the young guys look good. Before we're done, Nigel makes Addiction vs. Young Bucks vs. the Motor City Machine Guns in a ladder war at All Star Extravaganza. Addiction is treated as the heels here, which really should confirm the fact that the Bucks are faces despite acting like heels. The champs freak out backstage to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The main event easily carries this one and it was cool to see the focus on something other than the main event again. That being said, we're less than three weeks away from the pay per view and I barely have any idea what we've got coming up other than a World Title match, a ladder match and some matches in the Six Man Tag Team Title tournament, which is likely a thing because they're a big deal in New Japan. They need something more to fill in the card and I have a bad feeling it's more New Japan to the rescue.

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