

Smackdown – September 16, 1999: A Tale of Two Vince's



IMG Credit: WWE

Smackdown

Date: September 16, 1999

Location: Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas, Nevada

Attendance: 8,219

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

This is only the fourth episode of the show and there's a big time main event which we'll get to soon enough. We're at the dying end of the Russo Era and that means things are going to be a little bit screwy. In other words, expect a lot of stuff going on at once but almost no good wrestling in sight. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, the referees were on strike. Why do wrestling companies think we care about referees?

Opening sequence, including a shot of Chris Jericho, who had only debuted about five weeks earlier. That's some fast turnaround.

Cole calls this "the hottest action adventure series" on network TV. Vince must have had a thing about that kind of term around this time.

Here's Steve Austin to get things going. Cole: "He is sports entertainment personified!" Oh yeah Vince wasn't happy with something. Austin lost to HHH via DQ on Monday but that's not it between them by a long shot. When HHH beat on his knees with a chair at Summerslam, he stopped way too early. As long as Austin is walking, he's going to hunt HHH down like the jacka** he is.

Austin wants a rematch tonight and we might as well make it no holds barred. That's the easy way, but HHH could go with the hard way and be taken out in a body bag. Cue HHH, flanked by Chyna and a bunch of cops, to respond. HHH says no shot tonight so Austin tells him what the fans are shouting. The title is on the line tonight but Austin isn't getting the shot. Instead it's someone of HHH's choice and Austin has shared the ring with him before. Austin promises to follow him all night long.

Of note: this is your standard opening but, counting the opening sequence, they're done about nine minutes into the broadcast. You CAN do these things in less than the fifteen to twenty minutes they tend to receive, but they decide to go long with them anyway. And yet people still can't get TV time.

We see clips of referees getting beaten up.

Tonight: Big Boss Man vs. Al Snow in a PEPPER ON A POLE MATCH! Make your own Russo jokes.

Here's Shane McMahon to call out Mean Street Posse member Joey Abs. Shane isn't happy with Joey interfering in Stephanie's personal life so it's time to demonstrate some brotherly love.

Shane McMahon vs. Joey Abs

Joey has the rest of the Posse and Terri (a pairing I don't remember at all) with him. Shane wastes no time in slugging away but the Posse comes in because there are no referees due to the strike. Then who ordered the bell to be rung? Gerald Brisco runs out to referee and counts two off Shane's rollup.

Joey's suplex gets the same so Shane elbows him in the jaw, only to have

Pete Gas pull Brisco out at two. Somehow Pete gets the better of it but heel miscommunication drops Rodney. Cue Pat Patterson to count two off a small package with Rodney making another save. Shane hits a corkscrew swanton (because of course he does) for the pin with Shawn Stasiak running in as the third referee.

Rating: D. I have a feeling we've got a show long storyline here and since it's about the referees, I have no idea why that's supposed to be a good thing. WWE has a bad tendency to put focus on people who shouldn't be getting said focus and that's what's going on here. Shane vs. the Posse is in the same boat but at least Shane has charisma.

Stephanie comes out to celebrate with the three referees and Shane as Test, Stephanie's fiance, looks on. She also kicks Joey low for a bonus.

Internet celebrity Cindy Margolis is shown in the crowd and Women's Champion Ivory isn't happy.

Here's Ivory to talk about all the people she gets to meet as champion. She introduces Margolis and asks for her to get in the ring, which Cindy declines. Ivory finally talks her into it and praises Cindy for being even more beautiful up close. She asks Cindy to do one of her poses but when Cindy says no, Ivory grabs her by the arm and makes her do it. Cue Jeff Jarrett to put Cindy in the Figure Four, sending her into...well it doesn't seem to be pain. Fear maybe? Jarrett takes Ivory's knee out too just for good measure. Just a celebrity cameo to advance Jarrett's chauvinist run and there's nothing wrong with that.

HHH won't say who he's challenging tonight but it won't be Austin. This is kept short, mainly because it doesn't change anything.

European Title: Mark Henry vs. Steve Blackman

Henry is defending after leaving Blackman in a tag match to go watch Godfather's girls dance. Tony Garea of all people is refereeing as Blackman easily knocks Henry outside. Cue Val Venis with a kendo stick to take Blackman out, giving Henry the easy pin.

Henry's ex-friend D'Lo Brown comes in and hits a REALLY impressive Sky

High on Henry.

Jarrett yells at Cindy as she's being taken away in an ambulance but Test comes in for a save.

Post break, Jeff challenges Test to an Intercontinental Title match.

Chris Jericho vs. Ken Shamrock

Jericho is flanked by Curtis Hughes, his bodyguard of three days. I barely ever remember this very short run, mainly as Jericho hasn't even been around for six weeks yet and Shamrock is almost gone from the promotion. Before the match, Jericho insists that Shamrock has declared him as the World's Most Dangerous Man. Therefore, tonight Jericho is allowing Hughes to take his place. Before we get started though, Jericho brings out his own guest referee: the masked EL DOP0!

Curtis Hughes vs. Ken Shamrock

Jericho jumps in on commentary and rips on Cole's terrible commentary skills. Shamrock takes Hughes down to start and hammers away, only to be backdropped to the floor. Jericho gets up and the chase is on, allowing Hughes to clothesline Ken down. The double beatdown ensues but Shamrock picks the ankle for the ankle lock. Hughes grabs the rope and it's an immediate DQ for not letting go of the hold.

Rating: D. This pairing feels so out of place, mainly because of two of the three people leaving the promotion so soon. Shamrock could have done well in the company around this time but he was just gone rather soon, not even wrestling at the upcoming pay per view. His last match would be the following week and it's not like this one was anything worth seeing.

El Dopo is...known Jericholic (seriously) Howard Finkel!

Mankind says he and Rock will be teaming together in this five man Royal Rumble. They're like a finely tuned automobile: Rock is the front end and Mankind is the rear end, but the PEOPLE'S rear end!

The referees are still on strike.

Before the five man Royal Rumble, here's Rock to tell his four opponents to go to a casino and play the people's slot machine. Someone can pull the handle and get three Brahma Bulls. Maybe it's Undertaker with his eyes rolling back while Kane uses his voice box to say WE WON WE WON LET'S PARTY and turn some cartwheels while Big Show makes odd noises. Then Rock will come in, shine up the gold coins and...well you know. I remember this from when I was a kid and thought it was the funniest thing I'd ever heard.

Royal Rumble

The winner gets...to start against HHH in the Six Pack Challenge at Unforgiven. That's not the greatest prize in the world but the writing isn't the best in the world around here either. Rock is in at #1 and Big Show is in at #2 with one minute intervals. A bunch of right hands and an attempt to throw Rock out don't get us very far until it's Mankind in at #3. Big Show gets double teamed and Rock actually gives Mankind a thumbs up.

Kane is in at #4 as the Royal Rumble stipulation is looking ridiculous. More punching ensues and it's Undertaker, in street clothes, in at #5 to complete the field. Undertaker actually sits in on commentary (!) as Rock DDT's Kane. Rock saves Mankind from a chokeslam and the pair gets rid of Kane. That's it for the alliance though as Rock dumps Mankind, only to walk into a chokeslam. Show gets too cocky and can't get rid of Rock, drawing Undertaker in to eliminate both of them for the win.

Rating: F. What in the world was the point of that? It wasn't even five minutes long and the timed entrances meant absolutely nothing. Terrible stuff here and another instance of adding a gimmick that didn't need to be there. As lame as a five man battle royal would have been, it would have been better than this.

Post match Show glares at Undertaker but Mideon and Viscera come out to get between them. Rock tries to come in with a chair and gets beaten down. That would be Undertaker's last "match" on TV for about eight months as he was out with a groin injury and tore his pectoral muscle during a return in December. Next up for him: Biker Taker.

The Hollies come out to challenge Chyna, who has been looking for a partner.

Hollies vs. Chyna

And there's no partner so this is a handicap match, at least to start. Chyna punches Crash in the face to start and it's quickly off to Hardcore. A double low blow brings the Hollies down as Dave Hebner makes an ultra rare cameo appearance and doesn't mind the blatant cheating. Cue Billy Gunn to be Chyna's partner (despite them having issues at this point) as the Hollies elbow her in the face. Hardcore spends too much time running his mouth though and gets caught with a DDT. Gunn tags himself in and slugs away, even if Chyna doesn't seem happy with it. The Fameasser puts Hardcore away in short order.

Rating: D-. Another short and nothing match that was just there to get people on the show. Chyna was doing what she could here and certainly looked to belong out there with the men, though it still feels like a bit of a novelty. At least they didn't waste much time on this one and that's how it should be.

Post match Jarrett comes out and decks Chyna. Cue Jeff's ladies Debra and Miss Kitty, the latter of whom has a bag. They pull out a frying pan, soup ladle and apron, all of which wind up on/in Chyna's hands. Jeff tells her to go start making his supper. So he's a soup lover?

Big Boss Man has, I kid you not, the remains of Al Snow's cooked dog Pepper in a doggie bag. Let's put it on a pole! Seriously that's what we're doing.

Al Snow vs. Big Boss Man

Sgt. Slaughter is referee. Boss Man shrugs off a clothesline and punches Snow down. Al's crossbody is blocked and Boss Man gets in a nightstick shot to the ribs. Cue the British Bulldog with some rottweilers to corner Boss Man (Because the KENNEL FROM H*** IS COMING!). With nothing else to do, Boss Man grabs the bag and throws it to the floor, where Snow picks it up for the win. Total and complete waste of time. Like more so than the Rumble.

HHH and the cops walk as Austin watches.

Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Test

Timekeeper Mark Yeaton is referee. Jarrett is defending and Test charges to the ring to grab an early spinning sidewalk slam for two. A gutwrench powerbomb gets the same and here are Pete Gas, Rodney and Terri to ringside. Jeff's middle rope clothesline cuts Test off and here's Stephanie to say stop this. Shane comes out to beat up Rodney but here are Patterson, Brisco and Stasiak as the match is thrown out. This was less than two and a half minutes and had EIGHT PEOPLE RUN IN.

Test's shoulder is sent into the steps so Jeff hits a flying armbar. Shane has to save Stephanie from a Figure Four as Jeff runs off.

Post break, Stephanie and Test leave.

Here's HHH for the title defense but he wants Shane of all people to be guest referee. In the back, Vince and Linda (in a rare cameo) ask Shane if he's up for this and of course Shane is ready. Shane comes to the ring and seems cool with HHH (So he's a face but cool with the heels?), who talks about all the people NOT challenging him tonight. It won't be Austin, Undertaker, Kane, Big Show, Mankind or Rock.

That doesn't leave too many people who have been in a main event with Austin (Wasn't it just sharing the ring earlier?), but HHH has an idea. He calls out Vince, who comes to the arena after HHH suggests that Linda might like a little time with the Game. So to recap: Shane is on HHH's side but was hanging out with HHH's top rival? Can we get rid of Russo already? I'm getting a headache. Anyway here's Vince in a suit with a mic but he can't talk HHH down. HHH questions the grapefruits but Vince still says no. Another suggestion of sex with Linda is enough to get Vince to jump HHH and we're on.

WWF World Title: HHH vs. Vince McMahon

HHH is defending and easily stomps Vince down to take over. Vince's right hands are shrugged off and the boss is in even more trouble. Shane cheers Vince on as HHH stomps away and even tells Chyna to stay away. Vince goes

to the eyes and hits HHH low (Which Shane cheers. So he's not on HHH's side but does what HHH asks and stands next to HHH and Chyna in peace?) but can't follow up. They head outside with HHH using a cord for a choke, followed by an elbow to drive Vince through the announcers' table.

Back in and HHH grabs a chair before shoving Shane down. A chair shot to Vince is enough to make Shane tackle the champ, earning himself a chair to the head. Cue Patterson, Brisco and Linda with the Stooges getting beaten down in short order. Chyna grabs Linda as HHH hammers on the bloody Vince. The Pedigree is loaded up and heeere's Austin (through the crowd to avoid the cops) for back to back Stunners to give Vince the title.

Rating: D. Egads where do I even begin? So not only is this basically Foley beating Rock for the title from ten months ago (even down to Austin being the one to run in and change the title) but AUSTIN WOULD NOT HELP VINCE GET THE TITLE! I don't care who Vince is beating or what it gives Austin, he would NEVER do this and it's very out of character for him. Austin isn't going to just accept Vince as someone he'll help just because Vince is now a face (you know, the guy revealed as the Higher Power THREE MONTHS AGO) and it's very stupid to suggest otherwise.

Now for the interesting part: comparing this to Vince Russo winning the title about a year later. As is so often the case, of course it's not the same thing and of course it's more acceptable here. First of all, the WWF is riding high at this point and can afford to take some chances. Russo made himself champion when the company was dead in the water and living on borrowed time.

A risk like this is more acceptable when you're on top of the mountain and not seemingly desperate to pop a rating. To go along with that, what good had Russo done for WCW? I'm guessing a lot less than McMahon had done for the WWF in that week alone. Russo was dragging the company down with him and decided to make himself champion pretty much for his own ego. What a boss.

Second, and more importantly, this advances several stories, including but not limited to Austin vs. HHH, Vince vs. HHH, Shane's issues

(whatever they are at the moment) and adds some drama to Unforgiven. Russo winning the title advanced Vince Russo, who had done it several times before. Sure McMahon looks good here, but he was also a big time character in the WWF and had been for a very long time. Speaking of looking good, consider their physiques. McMahon has been on the covers of fitness magazines while I've seen ten year olds with more muscle than Russo.

These are somewhat comparable angles, but one was well done and benefited several people. The other was an ego trip which served a bad writer who wanted to be a wrestler but wasn't talented enough. Russo can try to say it's the same thing all he wants, but then again he's the kind of guy who still thinks he was some kind of a brilliant writer and...well just look at this show.

Vince is carried to his feet to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. And somehow, this is much better than a lot of what Russo does. Be it the rapid fire short matches which don't have time to offer much of an impact or me trying to figure out which end is up on the face/heel alignments or the show revolving around a storyline about referees, I'm not sure what on here is supposed to be good. The ending is a big surprise but the rest of the show is such a mess and the wrestling is such a runaway train that there's not much positive about the whole thing.

Here's Unforgiven if you're interested (bear in mind that this is old and really not very good):

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/04/19/unforgiven-1999-cracking-open-a-six-pack/>

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Smackdown – February 20, 2018: Ziggler Gonna Ziggle

Smackdown

Date: February 20, 2018

Location: Talking Stick Resort Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

Last week saw a big change of pace as two more names were added to the Fastlane World Title match. Maybe this week we can just add more people until there's nothing left to do but have one match take up most of the pay per view. I mean, they did the same thing on Raw last night. Let's get to it.

Renee Young brings out AJ Styles to start things off. Hang on though as AJ has to strike a quick pose for the AJ STYLES chants. AJ explains the idea of a fatal five way and says he could lose the title to someone when he's not even being pinned. One on one he can beat any of them but here's Baron Corbin to disagree. Baron has beaten him twice in a row because he has AJ's number. The difference is Corbin is a fighter instead of an athlete and he can pin anyone to win the title.

This brings out Kevin Owens, who says he can beat anyone at any time. AJ says Owens must have had a boil lanced off his back, meaning Sami. Owens

blames all of this on Shane McMahon, who is next to interrupt. Shane makes Corbin vs. Styles and Owens vs. Ziggler for tonight. Actually let's just do one of those matches right now. Standard opening here and at least they didn't have all five participants come out and talk.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Owens forearms him down to start but eats a dropkick to send him outside. Kevin turns it into a brawl though and sends Ziggler into the barricade. That just means another dropkick off the apron but Owens drops him again. The backsplash misses though and Ziggler scores with a suplex. Owens whips him into the corner though and the Cannonball gets two as we go to a break.

Back with Ziggler hitting a DDT but getting thrown into the corner again. A Vader Bomb elbow gives Kevin two but Ziggler is right back with the Fameasser for two of his own. Ziggler slips out of the Pop Up Powerbomb and the Zig Zag gets another near fall. Cue Sami for a distraction though, allowing Owens to hit a superkick to the back of the head for the pin at 11:19.

Rating: C+. At the end of the day, Ziggler is going to Ziggle. The guy wins one week and then loses the next because that's the kind of person he is. I'm not sure what the difference is supposed to be this time around, but maybe this version of MEGA ULTRA FOCUSED Dolph is different than MEGA ULTRA Focused Dolph.

Here's Jinder Mahal to talk about Bobby Roode having a secret. Since Mahal is a man of honesty, he has Roode's Smackdown Top Ten voting list. Roode of course is at #1 but Orton is nowhere to be seen. That makes Roode a glorious egomaniac and a glorious LIAR. Cue Roode to say that wasn't his list but the truth is Mahal can't make a top ten list. Roode knows Jinder wants to be US Champion so forget Randy Orton. This of course brings out Orton, who helps send Jinder outside before taking the Glorious DDT. Mahal comes back in with a Khallas to Roode.

Shane and Bryan are in the back with Shane talking down to Bryan again about the same issues with his decision making. As a result, Shane makes Roode vs. Orton (presumably for the title but not specified) at Fastlane.

Shane calls it final, actually trying to make it seem like Bryan isn't going to add Mahal.

Charlotte/Naomi/Becky Lynch vs. Riott Squad

Charlotte slides around Logan to start and quickly brings in Becky for the rapid fire legdrops. Everything breaks down and the Squad is sent outside as we take a break. Back with Becky holding Riott in an armbar as everything breaks down. Naomi hits a slingshot dive onto Logan and Riott but Morgan sends her into the steps to take over.

Logan comes back in with an Anaconda Vice until Naomi sends her into the corner, allowing the hot tag off to Charlotte. The strut into the neckbreaker rocks Logan but Morgan's distraction prevents the Figure Eight. Logan chop blocks the knee but Charlotte gets over for the tag to Becky anyway. Everything breaks down and Riott has to be saved from the Disarm-Her. Instead it's the Riott Kick to pin Becky at 13:13.

Rating: C. Morgan looked better than she has in a good while as she showed some energy here, which gives me some hope for her future. The rest of the match was what it was and you can probably pencil Ruby in for a title shot at Fastlane. That's all fine and good, especially with Charlotte vs. Asuka probably lurking at Wrestlemania.

Sami comes in to see Owens and says he owes him. Until he joined Owens, he was frustrated all the time and nothing was working. Now he's where he belongs though and it's time to be Kevin's guardian angel. That's why at Fastlane, Sami will lay down for him so Kevin can become champion. Owens doesn't know what to say and doesn't look completely convinced. That sounds intentionally fishy.

New Day vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable

Winners get the title shot at Fastlane. Woods is sent into a kick from Shelton to start and a hard slam puts him down again. Back from an early break with Woods hitting a missile dropkick and making the hot tag to Big E. House is cleaned but Gable muscles him over with a belly to belly. Big E. gets caught on the top rope so Kofi gets on the apron for some reason, allowing Shelton and Chad to hit the powerbomb/middle rope clothesline

combination. Woods makes a last second save and it's a Shining Wizard to end Shelton at 6:47.

Rating: C+. That's a relief as I was worried they would do the 50/50 booking and give a team a title shot anyway. New Day winning is fine, though you can feel the Bludgeon Brothers getting closer by the week. I'd be surprised if they weren't either added to the title match or replace the New Day, who don't need another title shot at this point.

Post match the Bludgeon Brothers come out and scare New Day to death.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. ???/???

They're tossed to the floor, Rowan hits a double splash, a sitout powerbomb crushes Jobber #1 and the double spinebuster ends Jobber #2 at 1:29.

Video on Shinsuke Nakamura.

Ruby Riott will face Naomi next week but wants Charlotte and the title at Fastlane.

Corbin, with words on the screen, promises to win the title at Fastlane.

Charlotte vs. Riott for the title is confirmed for Fastlane.

AJ Styles vs. Baron Corbin

Non-title. AJ knocks Corbin outside to start and tries a slingshot dive, only to get caught in a chokebreaker. We take an early break and come back with Corbin hitting a hard clothesline but missing a charge into the post. AJ is thrown outside and having to dive over the announcers' table to beat the count.

A short range Phenomenal Forearm gets two but one heck of a Deep Six gets the same. End of Days is broken up and AJ gets the Calf Crusher for the near submission to send Corbin bailing to the ropes. A faceplant drops AJ again but he pops back up with the real Phenomenal Forearm for the pin on Corbin at 12:11.

Rating: B-. That Deep Six was awesome and the rest was certainly good

enough. I'm not sure on the ending as you want Corbin to look strong but you also don't want the champion losing. Then again it's not like this company knows how to build towards a multi-man match like this without just throwing them against each other so this is as good as we were going to get.

Post match Sami and Kevin come out for the beatdown but Corbin takes them both out to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Well at least they didn't add any more people. This show gave Fastlane a big boost as we now have four matches set for the show instead of the one that we came in with here. It also featured less Bryan vs. Shane, but there certainly seems to be something set up for a future show with that discussion about the US Title match. I'll take what I can get though and this wasn't bad.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Dolph Ziggler – Superkick to the back of the head

Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Naomi b. Riott Squad – Riott Kick to Lynch

New Day b. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable – Shining Wizard to Benjamin

Bludgeon Brothers b. ???/??? – Double spinebuster

AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin – Phenomenal Forearm

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Smackdown – September 18, 2003 (2018 Redo): He Is Iron Man

Smackdown

Date: September 18, 2003

Location: RBC Center, Raleigh, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's a big show here with Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle in a one hour Iron Man match. What else can you really ask for here? These two are capable of putting together any kind of match you want them to and here they'll have a chance to showcase whatever they want. The rest of the show...does it really matter? Let's get to it.

Vince welcomes us to the show and hypes up the main event. Undertaker comes in to say he won't interfere tonight but he's not going to forget Vince sending Brock out to interrupt his title match. Better than him wanting the next title match at least.

Opening sequence.

Cole calls this the season premiere of Smackdown. They did that with the Billy and Chuck wedding episode so I guess we have a tradition.

Rey Mysterio/Chris Benoit vs. Rhyno/Tajiri

Tajiri gets a Cruiserweight Title shot next week. Benoit shoulders Tajiri down to start and snaps off some of those loud chops. Tajiri is right back with the Tarantula and a non-existent tag brings in Rhyno for a spinebuster. A clothesline gets Benoit out of trouble though and the hot

tag brings in Mysterio with the springboard seated senton. Everything breaks down and Mysterio rolls the German suplexes on Tajiri. Rey hits the 619 on Rhyno, setting up the springboard legdrop for the pin.

Rating: D+. This didn't have the time to go anywhere and it didn't really accomplish much as Rey and Tajiri didn't interact all that much. The action was good while it lasted though, which isn't all that surprising given the four people involved. Thankfully it seems that Rhyno vs. Benoit is done though, which should be the case after last week.

Shaniqua vs. Torrie Wilson/Nidia

It's a double team to start with Shaniqua actually being knocked outside, which is a lot more success than I was expecting. Shaniqua remembers that she's fighting Torrie and Nidia though and it's a double clothesline to take them down in short order. Torrie gets thrown outside and a powerbomb ends Nidia in short order. Keeping this short was the only option they could have had.

Dawn Marie comes out to check on her friends and gets posted.

Stephanie is drawing a mustache on a picture of Sable when Vince, Big Show and Sable come in. Vince tries to get Stephanie to quit but she won't do it. In other words, nothing has changed since last week. Stephanie brings up the logical question: why doesn't Vince just fire her? He doesn't want to because he wants her to quit. Playing rough is mentioned and I don't want to know what Vince means by that.

Long recap of Brock vs. Angle. They're treating this like the big match that it should be.

Los Guerreros are ready to win the Tag Team Titles back. Tonight, they're doing it for GRANDMA!

Earlier today, John Cena was on top of a building and saying he underestimated Los Guerreros. Next week, he fulfills his destiny. No word on what that means.

Tag Team Titles: Los Guerreros vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

Charlie and Shelton are defending. Eddie starts with Benjamin but it's quickly off to Chavo for some forearms to the back. The fast tags continue but this time Eddie is driven into the champs' corner, followed by a hard whip. It's already back to Chavo though and unloading ensues, including a monkey flip to send Benjamin flying. Back to back dives take the champs down and we take a break.

We come back with Eddie poking Haas in the eye, which of course gets him cheered even more. Chavo comes back in as the challengers manage to keep control for a lot longer than you might have expected. Eddie's sunset flip gets two on Benjamin but a kick to Chavo's arm cuts off the offense. A hammerlock northern lights suplex gets two and it's back to Shelton for a keylock.

Chavo dives out of an arm hold and makes the hot tag...which doesn't count as Benjamin has the referee. Instead a running dive into Benjamin's arms is enough for the hot tag off to Eddie and it's time to speed things up. Everything breaks down and house is cleaned but Eddie's frog splash is broken up.

Eddie rolls through the second attempt and Charlie brings in a chair. Chavo dropkicks it into Shelton's knee though and Benjamin is down. Back up and Charlie gets double backdropped but stays on the Guerreros' back for some reason, crashing HARD onto his head. Apparently that gave him a concussion and that's not even slightly surprising. Eddie frog splashes Haas for the pin and the titles.

Rating: B. Nearly breaking Haas in half aside, this was a good match with both teams getting to show off what they can do. Los Guerreros are an awesome team and there's nothing wrong with putting the belts back on them. That US Title suggests that Eddie is in for bigger things so I don't think the titles are staying on them for very long. It's very nice to see another match on this show get some time though and the talent involved made sure that it was quality stuff.

Tazz has keys to victory for the main event. For Brock: a lot of F5's. For Angle, ankle locks. And this man is a professional.

Bets are being taken on the match.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle

Angle is defending in a sixty minute Iron Man match. Lesnar jumps him before the bell and stomps the champ down in the corner early on. Angle comes out of the corner with a hard clothesline and the first suplex sends Brock out to the floor. Back in and a trio of armdrags send Lesnar outside again and we hit a long stall. We're five minutes in now as Lesnar gets back inside. The threat of a single leg takedown sends Lesnar running again, though not for quite as long this time.

Back in again and Brock pounds him down, only to be sent outside yet again. This time Kurt follows him out but gets posted to give Lesnar his first real advantage. Instead of following up by normal means, Brock chairs him down to give up the first fall at 8:42. There's a fifteen second rest period, after which Brock hits a great looking F5 to tie it up at 10:21. Brock talks a lot of trash and an ankle lock makes Angle tap at 12:08 to make it 2-1.

We take a break and come back with the same score and 44:00 to go. Brock hits a shoulder in the corner but a second attempt only hits post, allowing Angle to slug away. The rolling German suplexes have Lesnar reeling but he sends Angle outside for a breather. You can tell they're filling time and for once, that's completely understandable as there's only so much you can do in an hour long match. An F5 on the floor is good for a countout and Lesnar is up 3-1 with 40:03 to go.

We take another break and come back with 36:05 to go and Angle punching away. A hard shoulder puts Angle down but he's right back with an Angle Slam to make it 3-2 with 34:05 left. Some suplexes rock Lesnar and there go the straps! Both finishers are escaped and it's the ankle lock to put Lesnar in trouble. Lesnar rolls out in short order and the referee gets bumped, meaning there's no count off the Angle Slam. By the powers, what a coincidence.

A low blow takes Angle down again and Brock gets in a belt shot as we hit the halfway mark. Cole: "Now the true colors of Brock Lesnar are coming out!" Sweet goodness you've spent the better part of a month telling us how Brock is a monster after he BROKE GOWEN'S LEG THEN THREW HIM DOWN THE

STEPS but a belt shot proves he's evil? Anyway said belt shot gives Brock another fall at 29:32 to go.

We take another break and come back with 25:00 left and Angle taking it to the floor for some right hands. A top rope ax handle to the floor keeps Lesnar in trouble, followed by a missile dropkick for another near fall. Kurt misses the moonsault though and it's a double knockdown. A clothesline drops Angle again and a suplex gives Brock two. Angle slaps on a quick ankle lock but the counter sends him outside all over again. We're under twenty minutes to go as Lesnar grabs the steps, only to have Angle kick them into his face. That's only good for a pair of near falls and we take another break.

Back again with Lesnar up 5-2, having hit a superplex during the break to extend the lead even further. Angle is trying to get to his feet on the floor as we have 14:00 left. Brock follows him out but Angle F5's him knee first into the post, which excites Cole way too much. A half crab into the ankle lock doesn't work (probably because it was on the leg that didn't go into the post) as Lesnar makes the rope again. Lesnar's knee is fine enough to hit another F5 but that's only good for two.

Brock goes up for the sole purpose of being taken down with a belly to belly superplex as Angle gets a fall back with 9:52 to go. Kurt wins a slugout and pounds Brock down in the corner, followed by a suplex with 8:00 left. There go the straps again but Brock plants him with a DDT for two more. Lesnar snaps off a German suplex of his own and the time is being eaten up faster and faster. Even more German suplexes get us down to 6:00 left but Angle gets a series of his own.

Lesnar's next suplex is reversed into the ankle lock and it's a shortened version of the Summerslam ending with Brock grabbing two ropes but having to tap with 4:07 to go. I still don't get how that works but it's 5-4 Lesnar with 4:00 on the clock. They're both down for a good while until Kurt slaps the hold on again. This one is broken up in short order and we're down to 3:00.

Kurt goes with something like an STF with Lesnar on his side but it doesn't last long. Lesnar rolls outside with 2:00 left so Kurt sends him

head first into the steps. Back in and Kurt hits three straight German suplexes as we have less than a minute to go. A low blow behind the referee's back gets Brock out of trouble but Kurt is back with the grapevined ankle lock with 15 seconds left. Brock somehow hangs on to win the title back.

Rating: A-. This match falls into the same problem that so many Iron Man matches fall into: aside from a spot or two, the first fifteen to twenty minutes don't really add anything to the match. That makes sense as you have so much time to kill in a match like this, but it doesn't exactly make for the best TV experience. It's similar to a tournament: you know the drama is all going to be at the end and it makes a lot of the falls feel a little uninteresting.

Now that being said, this was a heck of a match with both guys beating the tar out of each other with all kinds of holds and suplexes. It was the match these two should have had and felt like a big deal. The ending had good drama which was set up by Lesnar tapping not too long before the final hold went on. The rest of the second half of the match is great and the whole thing is very good, but it's no Rock vs. HHH.

Overall Rating: A. Now that's more like it. This was all about the wrestling (save for the nothing women's match) and it was a great time watching the thing. This was supposed to be the pay per view style TV show since Smackdown didn't have a pay per view in September and it certainly delivered. Great main event, a really solid tag match and nothing stupid (aside from the stupid McMahons segment) make for a really outstanding show.

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Smackdown – February 13, 2018: The Right Way to the Wrong Place

Smackdown

Date: February 13, 2018

Location: Rabobank Arena, Bakersfield, California

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

It's another big match tonight, even if the match doesn't make a ton of sense. Tonight's main event is Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin with the winner being added to the Fastlane triple threat for the Smackdown World Title, making it a four way. Now why this makes sense when Ziggler vacated the US title and walked off isn't clear, and I'd be surprised if we get an explanation. Let's get to it.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin

The winner is added to the title match at Fastlane. And there's no Corbin, as we cut to the back where Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens, the previously announced challengers, have beaten Corbin down. They say that's one down and one to go and head to the ring. Sami goes into the crowd and Kevin comes straight through, meaning the beatdown has Ziggler in early trouble. Corbin comes back out but the numbers are too much for him and it's Sami and Kevin left standing. No match of course.

Charlotte vs. Sarah Logan

Non-title and Charlotte brings Becky Lynch and Naomi with her as backup. Charlotte can't power Sarah around to start and actually gets wrestled to the ground in rather short order. That's enough being in trouble for Charlotte as she kicks Sarah in the face and we take a break. Back with Logan trying some chops, only to be chopped back herself. Corey: "You never headbutt a Samoan and you never chop a Flair."

Logan shoulders her in the back to take over again though and Charlotte is still in trouble. We hit the quickly broken chinlock until Charlotte comes back with a jumping knee. Logan is right back with a dropkick for two more as Charlotte is actually in some trouble here. Back up and Charlotte misses a big boot, allowing Logan to score with a belly to back suplex for another two. Charlotte manages to score with a backbreaker though and Natural Selection (with Logan nearly doing a headstand on the impact) gives her the pin at 10:23.

Rating: B. This was EXACTLY what Sarah needed as she beat Charlotte up here in what I'm pretty sure was her first singles match on the main roster. Charlotte was in trouble here and that's not something that happens to her very often. It's nice to see someone booked with some intelligence for a change and that's what they had here. Good stuff all around.

Post match Charlotte says one to go.

Shane McMahon isn't happy with Daniel Bryan and makes a pair of matches tonight: Owens vs. Corbin and Sami vs. Ziggler. If Corbin and/or Ziggler win, the match could become a fatal four way or a fatal five way. Owens and Zayn are in the match no matter what. Well duh. They added another person to the Raw match so they have to do the same on Smackdown. Again: it's the same story on both shows, yet somehow the best that thirty writers can come up with.

Video on Seth Rollins at a museum looking at the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Kevin Owens vs. Baron Corbin

The brawl is on to start with Corbin sending Kevin outside and sending him into the barricade, despite holding onto his banged up ribs. Back in

and Owens scores with a shot to the ribs, only to get POPPED in the face for his efforts. They're right back on the floor in short order with Corbin sending him into the barricade again. They head inside for the second time where Corbin's slide underneath the ropes is cut off with a superkick to the ribs. The backplash gets two and we take a break.

Back with Owens still on the ribs before grabbing a chinlock. Corbin fights up (perhaps pushed on by the RUSEV DAY chants) and hits a chokebreaker, followed by the slide under the ropes clothesline for two. Owens gets in another shot to the ribs but charges into Deep Six for two more. End of Days is enough to send Corbin to the pay per view at 10:42.

Rating: C. Well you knew that was coming, which is likely what I'll say when Zigler is added to the match as well. Corbin was wrestling as a face here and that made for a surprisingly good match. He's a natural heel and I wouldn't think a turn is the best idea in the world, but this showed that it wouldn't be the worst thing.

Quick look at last week's Top Ten.

Here's US Champion Bobby Roode for an Open Challenge, though he'd like for the champion to come through the entrance rather than sneaking up on him for an RKO out of nowhere.

US Title: Bobby Roode vs. Randy Orton

Roode is defending...but hang on because here's Jinder Mahal. Jinder brings up Orton being #9 on the Top Ten, which is quite underwhelming. Why isn't Jinder higher up when he defeated Orton for the title? Mahal stays on the theme by talking about Orton being behind Roode, who has been here six months. Roode wants some respect, which he has for Orton. The RKO takes out the remaining Singh Brother but Mahal hits the Khallas on both of them. No match, which would be the second time that's happened in about an hour.

Here's New Day with a table covered in pancakes. Today happens to be Fat Tuesday, aka Pancake Tuesday. In a special moment, Big E. is going to break the world record for most pancakes eaten in eight minutes. This involves shoving pancakes into his face but not actually eating any of

them. Shelton Benjamin and Chad Gable interrupt, mocking New Day for how stupid this whole thing is.

They aren't cool with New Day doing something so stupid, but Woods reminds them of New Day's record breaking reign. No one wants to see Benjamin and Gable as champions, but Chad shushes them. Pancakes are thrown on the ground so Big E. demands that NOBODY TOUCH THEIR CAKES!!! Benjamin: "From now on, we're eating WAFFLES!" Big E. has to be held back and a match is made. I mean, it was announced in the show's preview but it's made here too.

New Day vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable

Joined in progress with Chad working on Kofi's arm before the rolling Liger Kick is good for two. Kofi sends Gable to the floor and dives for the hot tag, only to have Chad pull Big E. from the apron in a great piece of timing. The tag connects a few seconds later though and it's Big E. cleaning house with the suplexes. The Warrior Splash connects but it's Gable coming back with Rolling Chaos Theory. Woods offers a distraction though and the referee misses Benjamin getting tagged in. The distraction sets up the Midnight Hour to give New Day the pin at 4:27.

Rating: C. Pancakes live on! I mean, I like both pancakes and waffles so it was kind of a win/win situation here. That being said, I'm not sure I get the point in having Benjamin and Gable getting a win last week to help rebuild them, only to lose to New Day here. The match wasn't bad, but these teams are kind of spinning their wheels at the moment.

Ziggler says THE EXACT SAME THING HE ALWAYS SAYS, talking about how he's the best in the world and no one is going to stop him. Good grief go back to hiatus if this is the best you can do after two months off.

The Usos are in what looks like a dark basement but it's not far enough in the bowels of the building to hide from the words appearing on screen. Speaking of the screen, it suddenly breaks as the Bludgeon Brothers hit a TV with their hammers. I'm really not sure what to make of that but the match should be good.

Sami Zayn vs. Dolph Ziggler

Sami hides in the corner to start with Ziggler not being able to take him down. Instead he hits Sami in the head and nails the Stinger Splash in the corner. Zayn is right back up with forearms in the corner and a kick to the face as they're not exactly speeding through the paces so far. Sami's top rope dive for the sake of being dropkicked out of the air is dropkicked out of the air and we take a break.

Back with Sami in control until Ziggler's DDT gets him out of trouble. The Fameasser gets two but Sami crotches him on top for a breather. Sami is right back up with a super exploder suplex (that looked awesome) for two and the shock is apparently. Back up and Sami misses the Helluva Kick, allowing Ziggler to grab the Zig Zag for two of his own. Sami sends him shoulder first into the post and does it again for good measure. Back up and the Helluva Kick is countered with a superkick to send Ziggler to the pay per view at 16:10.

Rating: B-. So Ziggler is back and a face again, just because...he is I guess. If that's not enough for you, in the span of a week we've doubled the amount of challengers for AJ Styles at Fastlane. Why you ask? Well Raw added an extra challenger and it's not like Smackdown can think of its own ideas. The match was good, with that super exploder looking awesome. Pretty predictable finish aside, it's a nice main event.

Overall Rating: C+. While Smackdown was a good enough show, it was miles behind Raw this week for a few reasons. Last night's show featured a string of good to quite good matches, but more importantly the wasn't as much of a bait and switch. Both end results are kind of terrible, but at least Raw got there with a little more style. I just wasn't feeling this show for the most part as it felt like the most obvious ending you could have had, especially after last night's show. I'm getting really tired of the "add another person to a match to make it interesting" style of booking and twice in two nights is a little too much for me.

That being said, this was a solid show with a pair of good matches and a story that at least follows the show's booking as of late (which doesn't make the booking good). They're setting up a lot of stuff for Fastlane which is less than a month away, but the overall direction of the show still isn't great. In other words: they're not going to the right place,

but they're taking the right route to get there.

Results

Charlotte b. Sarah Logan – Natural Selection

Baron Corbin b. Kevin Owens – End of Days

New Day b. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable – Midnight Hour to Gable

Dolph Ziggler b. Sami Zayn – Superkick

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Smackdown – September 11, 2003: When Stephanie Dropped Brock

Smackdown

Date: September 11, 2003

Location: Jefferson Civic Center, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're building towards a big match here as Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle in an Iron Man Match goes down next week. That means a lot of buildup on this week's show, which could go in several ways. Of course it could also mean a lot of missing the point, which would certainly make sense around here. Let's get to it.

This episode only runs ninety minutes instead of the full two hours. The reason: UPN wanted to air the Mulletts, because that was the kind of show WWE fans would flock towards.

As you might expect, we open with a tribute to those who lost their lives on September 11. Nothing wrong with that.

Opening sequence.

Cars are being pulled into a circle in the parking lot for the Eddie Guerrero vs. John Cena fight.

Rey Mysterio/Billy Kidman vs. Tajiri/Nunzio

The canned pop is strong for Kidman here. I almost never notice those things so it's especially bad. Nunzio jumps Rey from behind to start but Kidman slingshots in for a rollup. A giant swing into a dropkick (so that's where Cesaro and Tyson Kidd got it from) gets two on Nunzio. Tajiri comes in and kicks Kidman in the head though as the hard hitting begins. The fans chant ROLL TIDE because they don't seem to get how wrestling works. Maybe they should watch the Mulletts.

Nunzio comes back in for a chinlock until Kidman fights up and scores with a dropkick. Tajiri's tornado DDT is countered into a BK Bomb (sweet counter actually) and it's the hot tag to Mysterio. Everything breaks down and Rey ducks the handspring elbow, setting up a 619 to Tajiri's back. The regular version misses though and Tajiri kicks Rey in the head for the pin.

Rating: B-. The match was only about four minutes but it was the perfect choice for an opener. The cruiserweights opening the show worked wonders in WCW and there's no reason to switch up a formula with such a history

of working. Kidman and Mysterio are still a great team, but their time of going after the titles seems to have passed. Kind of a shame, but then we might not get to see more of the Bashams or whatever other lame team they have at the moment.

Post match, Tajiri hits Rey with the belt.

Vince and Sable agree on sending flowers to Zach Gowen as Big Show, in a suit, stands in the background. Stephanie comes in to recap last week's events in that really annoying manner of hers. She yells about how it was all Vince's idea and that Vince doesn't care about Gowen (I have no idea why we're supposed to either). Brock is a criminal who should be in jail...and of course he's right behind her.

Since it's Stephanie though, she gets scared for a second but brings up Brock tapping out to Angle. Stephanie doesn't sweat Lesnar. Brock wants a warmup match tonight with Undertaker, Kurt Angle and Gowen all at once. None of them are here tonight though, so Brock can fight Stephanie (Since she's the only one in the room he hasn't fought yet. Ignore the cameraman. And Sable.). Vince says that's money in the bank and Stephanie can either face him or quit as GM. This segment was longer than the opening match, which gives them even less time to find a way to not deliver the match.

Torrie Wilson and Nidia are in the back when they run into Dawn Marie. They're worried about her getting beaten up by Shaniqua tonight but Dawn has to stand up to her. If this is your big army to fight her, just quit now.

Dawn Marie vs. Shaniqua

Dawn wastes no time in trying to jump out of the corner, only to have Shaniqua mistime a chop out of the air. Instead they head outside with Dawn being sent into the barricade as this is complete dominance. Shaniqua grabs a chair but Torrie and Nidia run in for the DQ.

Torrie hits Shaniqua with the chair (with two camera cuts in short order) before bailing.

Stephanie is thinking about her decision when Sable comes in to recap everything that we already know. If Stephanie quits, Sable is more than ready to be General Manager. I'd be curious to see how long this show would be if you took out all the exposition and recaps of things we hear ten minutes ago.

Chris Benoit vs. Rhyno

Rhyno says some very un-PG things as we wait for the opening bell. They waste no time in hitting the power game with Rhyno kneeing him in the ribs and clubbing Benoit over the back. That just means an early Crossface attempt, sending Rhyno bailing to the ropes. Rhyno pulls him throat first into the ropes to send Benoit outside, allowing A-Train to run in and post Benoit for good measure. That's only good for two back inside and we take a break with Cole in mid rant.

Back with Rhyno scoring with a superplex for two before tying Benoit in the Tree of Woe for some kicks to the ribs. We hit a Sharpshooter on Benoit (not a bad one either) but a rope is grabbed in a hurry. Benoit is right back up with a Sharpshooter of his own so Rhyno grabs the rope as well. What's good for the wolverine is good for the Rhyno.

With the holds not working, Benoit snaps off a release German suplex and heads up but gets caught as well. A sunset bomb breaks up a superplex attempt for two, only to have Rhyno come back with a spinebuster. Benoit is dazed but not enough for the Gore, which he pulls down into the Crossface for the win.

Rating: B. They beat each other up quite well here and that ending with Benoit snapping on the Crossface was great. When he pulls that thing on out of nowhere, it's one of the coolest looking things in wrestling and this was one of the best he's done yet. Hopefully this wraps up their feud and Benoit can move on to something bigger, though this was a good blowoff.

The APA is having a poker game in the office with Matt Hardy yelling at the APA for treating an underling like a servant. He then rants about Shannon Moore getting the wrong kind of orange juice and tells the APA to join AA. Faarooq turns it into a racial thing and a match is made

tonight. Everyone else leaves and the APA toasts the people who died on 9/11. Of note: Bradshaw said they were playing Texas Hold Em and dealt them all five cards. The moral: Bradshaw doesn't know how to play poker.

At this point, outside of the USA, you would have seen Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle from Summerslam to stretch the show to two hours.

Cena is thrilled with the circle of cars and hits a bunch of them with his chain.

John Cena vs. Eddie Guerrero

Non-title and in a ring of cars in the parking lot. Cena's rap is of course a bunch of gay jokes about Eddie, which really was a common theme of his. Eddie's car completes the circle and we're ready to go with wrestlers sitting on the cars. They're both in street clothes and take turns sending each other face first into the hoods. Cena muscles him up for a suplex onto the top of a Mitsubishi before grabbing a lawnmower out of the back of a van.

Eddie avoids a bad cut but gets thrown onto another hood. Some shovel shots only hit a car but a flapjack puts Cena onto the car again. Eddie's shovel shot knocks out a headlight and he uses a door as a weapon. Tazz says Eddie is a veteran, making me wonder how many times Eddie has hit someone in the head with a car door. They fight outside the wheel as someone who looks like Al Snow is strolling along in the background.

Eddie gets thrown into the trunk of the car but pops out, knocking the hood into Cena's face. Cena tosses him through a windshield for two and slams a door onto his arm for the same. Back up and Eddie sends him face first through a window but Cena does the same to him. Cena jumps behind the wheel of a car but Eddie gets in the passenger seat and rams his head into the wheel for some rhythmic beeping.

The cigarette lighter to the chest burns Cena and Eddie washes the windshield on Cena's face. The much cleaner Cena backdrops Eddie onto the hood for two but the FU onto the car is broken up. Instead it's a hiptoss onto a car and the returning Chavo Guerrero hits Cena in the head with what looked like a hubcap. The frog splash from one car to another is

good for the pin.

Rating: B+. I remember people talking about this match very fondly and it's easy to see why. They found the right combination of violence and fun (the windshield wipers thing was good) while Chavo was a great way to wrap things up. I'm not sure if this finishes their feud but a singles match would hardly be a bad thing as they have chemistry together.

Post match Chavo takes the title and says the Guerreros have it before leaving with Eddie.

Matt Hardy/Shannon Moore vs. APA

Matt, who rarely uses turn signals (The APA better DESTROY him then as that drives me crazy. Excuse me person driving your several thousand pound machine that may be going upwards of 70 miles an hour, but could you please LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO CHANGE LANES OR TURN THE THING??? That would be nice, not to mention quite a bit safer, if you can manage to flick your hand all of the three inches that it takes to use your signal.) and whose entertainment system requires five remotes, and Shannon are in wrestling gear while the APA is in street clothes.

As you might expect, Cole explains Matt's hypocrisy over Shannon, thankfully with Tazz calling him out for the obvious statement. Faarooq and Shannon start things off with Moore hitting him from behind for some reason. Some forearms and elbows drop Moore for two and it's off to Matt. Things don't go well for him either as it's a powerslam from Faarooq and a suplex from Bradshaw for two. Bradshaw starts cleaning house but Matt's top rope clothesline knocks him into a jackknife cover for two. Not that it matters as the Clothesline ends Shannon a few seconds later.

Rating: D+. Pretty much a squash here and at least they pinned Shannon. The tag team isn't doing Matt any favors but the ship has pretty much sailed for him anyway, at least with Version 1. If they're going to build up the APA with wins like this and then feed them to bigger teams, it's not the worst idea in the world.

The butler brings the APA a tray of beer.

Video on Lesnar vs. Angle, including Brock pushing Gowen down the steps last week.

Next week: Shaniqua vs. Torrie Wilson/Nidia. Uh, yeah.

Brock Lesnar vs. Stephanie McMahon

Vince handles the intros and plays up the drama about Stephanie fighting or quitting. Naturally Stephanie comes out to fight (Cole cites her being in wrestling gear as proof) and Vince isn't sure what to think. Vince laughs off the idea that Stephanie is here to fight, basically daring her to keep defying him.

She slaps Vince and drops Brock with a low blow, because of course she does. Vince takes a low blow of his own but Brock catches her while she tries to escape. Brock throws Stephanie into the barricade and throws the steps at her, but Stephanie's cat like reflexes get her to safety. Instead Brock loads up the F5 into the post until Kurt Angle runs in for the save. You know, the guy not on the show tonight. A quick brawl sends Lesnar and Vince running to end the show. No match as the bell never rang.

What is this Vince vs. Stephanie feud even about anymore? It's to the point where they're fighting because they've been fighting for months and I'm struggling to remember why it's happening in the first place. Something about Vince being a horrible father and her not wanting him to abuse Gowen the same way? That's not a feud that needs to still be going three or four months later but it's still the driving force on these shows. Trying to make Stephanie into a hero or this sympathetic role model isn't working and it's not getting any better. Find someone else to do this with already, or at least do it better.

Overall Rating: B. Stephanie mess aside, this was a heck of a show with the missing half hour helping a lot. You got a nice mixture of styles with the brawl in the parking lot, the hard hitting Benoit vs. Rhyno match and the fast paced opener. That's a good balance of stuff and makes the show a lot more entertaining to watch.

The main event stuff though....not so much. If you want to do something

like this, have Stephanie vs. Linda Miles, which still makes her look like a big underdog but not so much of an underdog that it's ridiculous. No one realistically thought Brock was going to beat the heck out of Stephanie, but they might believe Miles could do it. Have that match and Brock and Angle as seconds. You can do a quick "match" with the same story (Vince chairs Angle down, Brock goes after Stephanie, same finish to the show). Was anyone going to miss Linda vs. Dawn from earlier? Other than that mess, good show here with the time helping a lot.

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Smackdown – February 6, 2018: Better Than Lemonade And Purple Stuff

Smackdown

Date: February 6, 2018

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

As is often becoming the case around here, it's a big night with some

major matches set for the show. This week we have Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn for the #1 contendership to AJ Styles for the Smackdown World Title at Fastlane. In addition to that, US Champion Bobby Roode is defending against Rusev on Rusev Day. Let's get to it.

Commissioner Shane McMahon is in the ring to open things up. Shane talks about Sami vs. Owens but doesn't think either of them deserve a shot. Someone he does think something of is General Manager Daniel Bryan. Daniel comes out and Shane talks about how the two of them listen to the fans every week. Fans: "RUSEV DAY! RUSEV DAY!" Shane: "Duly noted."

Shane asks why Bryan keeps giving Sami and Kevin these chances. Yes, Daniel has changed the WWE landscape with the YES Movement but the Yep Movement is a poor imitation. Shane knows that Bryan wants to be wrestling more than anything and he knows what Bryan is doing. Bryan doesn't quite get it but Shane accuses him of living vicariously through Kevin and Sami.

Before anything of note can be said, cue AJ Styles, to say he's traveled 10,000 miles since the new year began because that's what a champion does. He'll defend the title against anyone who gets a title shot and walk into Wrestlemania as WWE Champion. Simple and to the point here, but if they're not going to put Bryan in the ring (which I don't think they will), they're treading on thin ice by even hinting at it.

Shinsuke Nakamura comes up to AJ in the back and says he'll beat him at Wrestlemania.

Liv Morgan vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Charlotte stomps her to the floor and we hit the break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Morgan in control but getting chopped down for her efforts. Morgan's low superkick gets two but Charlotte scores with a neckbreaker and spear. Sarah Logan offers a distraction but just gets herself and Ruby ejected. Charlotte kicks Liv in the face and the Figure Eight makes Morgan tap at 7:59.

Rating: D+. Acceptable match here as Charlotte gets to score a little revenge on the Squad, because that team can keep absorbing losses like

this. Charlotte looks dominant but I'm not sure who her next challenger is. Assuming they're setting up the match with Asuka at Wrestlemania, I guess we'll be seeing Charlotte vs. Ruby at Fastlane. That's not exactly big though as Ruby hasn't won much of anything since debuting.

Charlotte says that's one down and two to go.

Video on Roman Reigns at the National Civil Rights Museum for Black History Month.

Kevin Owens says he'll win.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. ???/???

Harper runs over Jobber #1 to start and #2 bails straight away, only to be taken down by Rowan. The double spinebuster ends #1 at 1:22.

Post match the Usos come out for the staredown but the Brothers walk past them. Back from a break, the Usos talk about a state of mind. They turn their mind into a prison, which they run. There are a lot of people out here starving but they're not talking about people having cupcakes.

There are a lot of people out here looking thirsty but they're not talking about lemonade or that purple stuff. They're talking about the hunger and thirst for success. They went from "these guys are alright" to the match of the night. It used to be Uso Crazy but now it's DAY ONE ISH! When you feel something creeping up on you, it's not paranoia because it's the Usos. I'm not sure what the heck was said here, but that was some awesome energy and I was digging the whole thing.

And now, the first Smackdown Top Ten List.

10. Tye Dillinger

9. Randy Orton

8. Becky Lynch

7. Usos

6. New Day

5. Bobby Roode
4. Naomi
3. Shinsuke Nakamura
2. Charlotte
1. AJ Styles

Well that...was pointless.

Corey Graves has issues with the list, including New Day being above the Usos and the lack of Rusev.

New Day, answering fan questions tonight, gives Corey Graves a 6% chance in a street fight.

Aiden English says the ring being a canvas is appropriate because art will be happening tonight. Rusev is working out and shouts MACHKA.

Aiden sings Rusev's entrance, complete with sing-a-long words on the screen and a bouncing Rusev head.

US Title: Rusev vs. Bobby Roode

Rusev is challenging. Feeling out process to start as they actually take it to the mat at a slow pace. Rusev takes him down again and we go to an early break. Back with Roode getting two off a Blockbuster but walking into a fall away slam. We hit the chinlock for a good while until a hard shot to the face wakes Roode up.

The running forearm and a clothesline have Rusev in trouble but English offers a distraction. A hard kick to the head gives Rusev two and we take a break. Back again with Roode hitting a spinebuster but going after English, allowing Rusev to get in the Machka Kick. The Accolade is broken up though so they trade rollups for two each. Another Accolade is reversed is reversed into the Glorious DDT to retain the title at 15:49.

Rating: B-. Good match here, though again I wonder why they're refusing to do ANYTHING with Rusev out of the ordinary when he's being cheered

like no one else week to week. It's not like the US Title is doing much for Roode and even a short reign would give the fans something extra to cheer for. I don't get it, but that's WWE logic for you.

Roode poses but an RKO OUTTA NOWHERE takes him down. English and Rusev get one each as well. That wasn't a heel turn but rather Orton being Orton. Now just have Orton put one or two of them over and we might be getting somewhere.

Shelton Benjamin and Chad Gable have their own bulletin board and wonder how this is what they have to work with in the tag team division. These on-screen graphics during the promos need to die in a fire already.

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable vs. Ascension

Konnor wins an early slugout with Benjamin and Ascension clears the ring early on. A missed boot in the corner lets Gable start in on Konnor's knee though with a variety of leglocks keeping him in trouble. Konnor grabs a flapjack though and the hot tag brings in Viktor to start cleaning house. That includes a middle rope knee to Chad's face for two but Benjamin gets in a blind tag. Rolling Chaos Theory into the powerbomb/top rope clothesline puts Viktor away at 3:50.

Rating: D+. Just a quick win for Benjamin and Gable here to keep them hot, possibly for an upcoming match with the Bludgeon Brothers. Ascension was showing some fire here and that's a good thing, as it's not like they get a ton of ring time in the first place. Let them show what they can do and hopefully get another chance in the future.

New Day talks about who would be ranked highest if they were voted as individuals. This seems to go straight to Kofi, who wants the World Title this year. I could go for that.

Various wrestlers reacted to the Top Ten.

Sami wants his own moment on top of WWE.

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens

The winner gets AJ, on commentary, at Fastlane. They're tentative to

start until Owens runs him over, only to charge into some armdrags. Some right hands send Owens to the floor and he tells Sami to calm down. Owens gets knocked off the apron and we take a break. Back with Sami in trouble but still being able to block the Cannonball.

The exploder suplex into the corner is countered so Sami settles for a tornado DDT and two instead. Sami gets shoved off the top but is still able to get his knees up and block the Swanton. Kevin rolls to the floor and gets caught with a diving DDT to put both guys down on the outside.

Back in and a superkick sets up Owens' frog splash for two more and he can't believe the kickout. Sami is right back up with the Blue Thunder Bomb (which now has a chance to win as he got a pin out of it a few weeks back) for another near fall (ok maybe I'm overly optimistic). Owens stumbles out to the floor and it's time for the argument with AJ, who beats both guys up (though he hit Sami first) for the no contest at 14:02.

Rating: C+. These two have great chemistry together and it's very easy to have Sami slip back into face mode, even for one night only. He's a natural face who is playing a good heel and it makes for an easy dynamic against a natural heel like Owens. They had a good match here, even if the ending was obvious from before the opening bell.

Cue Bryan to say it's a triple threat at Fastlane, leaving AJ wanting a fight to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked this one about as much as I could have as it didn't really offer anything that bad and advanced enough stories. That being said, can we PLEASE get off this Shane vs. Bryan feud already? It feels like it's been going on for the better part of ever now and I'm no closer to wanting to boo Bryan, even if that's what WWE wants us to do. Not a great show, but it did its job well enough.

Results

Charlotte b. Liv Morgan – Figure Eight

Bludgeon Brothers b. ???/??? – Double spinebuster

Bobby Roode b. Rusev – Glorious DDT

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable b. Ascension – Powerbomb/top rope combination to Viktor

Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens went to a no contest when AJ Styles interfered

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Smackdown – September 4, 2003: Didn't We Do This Already?

Smackdown

Date: September 4, 2003

Location: New Orleans Arena, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We've got a big main event this time around as Smackdown World Champion

Kurt Angle is defending against the Undertaker, who won a triple threat last week to earn the shot. Brock Lesnar is looming though and there's a good chance that's not going to end well. At the same time though we have the freshly face Eddie Guerrero spreading his awesomeness all over the place and that's more than enough around here. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's triple threat with Undertaker winning the title shot.

Opening sequence, which actually still has Rock included. I can't even remember the last time he was on this show.

Tag Team Titles: APA vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

The APA is challenging...for some reason. Faarooq powerslams Haas for two to start but Benjamin gets in a shot from behind to take over. The jump over Haas (which barely clears his head) crushes Faarooq's back and the double stomping continues. Haas grabs a bearhug (not something you would expect from him) before tripping Faarooq down for two.

Now it's Haas going up top but diving into a powerslam, allowing the hot tag to Bradshaw. A fall away slam and big boot drop the champs as everything breaks down. Bradshaw pulls Benjamin outside, leaving Faarooq to hit a spinebuster on Haas for two. Benjamin's superkick gets two on Faarooq so Bradshaw takes his head off with the Clothesline. Haas gets the foot on the rope though and a belt shot lets the champs retain.

Rating: D+. Actually somewhat better match than I was expecting here and thankfully the APA were just there to give the champs a rub. The division needs some more teams though and having the APA thrown in there for a week is fine enough until we get some fresh acts. Not a bad match, though the ending didn't do the champs a ton of good.

Eddie Guerrero is polishing his low rider and the US Title when the long black limo arrives. This time it's Big Show, Sable and Vince, who seem to like Eddie's car. Brock Lesnar shows up and wants to know why Vince hasn't talked to him much since Summerslam. Maybe because he's been busy with Brock's future wife? It's because Brock tapped out (Brock REALLY doesn't want to hear that) but Vince will talk to him later.

Post break, Brock is in Vince's office where the boss slaps him in the face as a wake up call. It seems to do the trick as Brock grabs him, only to be calmed down when Vince tells him to be a monster. Maybe now he can tap to Benoit or someone else instead of ripping through the roster?

Here's John Cena for a chat. Cena wants to know why Eddie is waxing the car. Is it dirty, or is he worried that Cena will "jack it with a Compton quickness"? We see a clip of Cena beating Eddie up last week and giving him an AA onto the tire. Cena thinks Eddie should be mowing his lawn because he used him like a girl from a Girls Gone Wild video.

After calling Eddie a rather mean name, here comes the low rider. The fight is on in a hurry with Cena getting the better of it off a belt shot. He's not done either as he steals the low rider, much to Eddie's chagrin. Eddie is so shocked that he can't get out of the ring and chase after the car, which must be going a full four miles an hour as it backs out of the arena.

Post break, after Cena has left the arena, Eddie rants to Stephanie about the car. A Latino street fight in the parking lot is made for next week. Maybe by that point Eddie will figure out how to catch up with a car backing up in slow motion.

Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

Rematch from last week where A-Train tapped with his legs under the ropes. Benoit sticks and moves to start but the chops don't have much effect. A running elbow in the corner has an effect on Benoit though and A-Train whips him hard in the corner to start on the ribs. We're already off to a chinlock with a knee in Benoit's back as A-Train actually has some psychology.

A butterfly suplex of all things gets two on Benoit and we hit the bearhug. Benoit fights out and hits some running forearms, followed by the rolling German suplexes. The Swan Dive misses and the Train Wreck gets two but the referee gets bumped. Cue Rhyno to try a Gore on Benoit, only to hit A-Train by mistake to give Benoit the pin.

Rating: C-. A-Train working the back made sense but are they really

spending back to back weeks protecting him? He's that important? Anyway, Rhyno vs. Benoit should be fine for a one off match but it shouldn't be any more than that. Benoit needs to move on to something important, especially after spending months with Rhyno in one form or another.

Undertaker praises Angle but says he's not tapping to the ankle lock even if his ankle is broken. Then he'll show Angle what a real submission is with the dragon sleeper. If that doesn't work, maybe it's a chokeslam or a Tombstone or a Last Ride but he's leaving with the title. It's almost weird to hear Undertaker talk like this.

Earlier today, Torrie Wilson and Nidia compared how they look in bikinis for the sake of a bikini contest which took place before the show. Nidia puts in her false breasts and they dance for no apparent reason. Nidia rubs lotion on Torrie's back, which Torrie seems to like. Is it really already time for another Torrie likes girls story?

Angle promises to make Undertaker tap.

Vince has taken over Stephanie's office where Brock is apparently slamming things into a wall. Sable is nowhere to be seen and...egads ok then.

Smackdown World Title: Kurt Angle vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is challenging. Angle grabs a front facelock to start so Undertaker grabs a wristlock and cranks away. That earns him a headlock on the mat as they seem to have a lot of time here. Undertaker drops a leg on the arm and cranks on a short arm scissors. An armbar of all things sets up Old School but Angle suplexes him right back down.

Undertaker's solution is to punch Angle in the face, followed by an elbow to the chest on the apron. The apron legdrop drops Angle to the floor and Undertaker posts him for good measure. Back from a break with Undertaker still in control and amazingly not using a chinlock. Angle grabs a sleeper but gets suplexed down, leaving Undertaker to slap himself in the head. Well at least he's taking this one seriously.

Undertaker's dragon sleeper is broken up in short order so he goes with

the running corner clothesline. Snake Eyes into the running big boot looks to set up a legdrop but Kurt picks the ankle. It's way too early for a tap out so Angle switches to the Slam for two instead. A second Angle Slam is countered into a chokeslam for two more.

Angle reverses the Last Ride into a sunset flip and then the ankle lock but this time Undertaker pulls him down into a Fujiwara armbar. That's rolled over into another ankle lock but Undertaker reverses again into a triangle choke. Angle's arm drops twice so he gets his foot on the ropes for the break.

Undertaker limps into a big boot but only hits ropes, allowing Angle to slap on the ankle lock for a few more seconds. A shot to the face has Angle bleeding from the cheek and Undertaker slugs away for good measure. The chokeslam is countered into the fifth ankle lock and, again, Undertaker rolls out of it. The ankle is fine enough for a chokeslam and the Last Ride but here's Brock with a chair to beat them both down for the DQ.

Rating: B-. This didn't hit the level these two are capable of and the ankle lock seemingly not causing Undertaker much discomfort didn't help things. It felt like they were just doing their thing until we got to the finish, which didn't give us much drama. What we got was good, but it's really hard to buy the threat of Undertaker tapping, even to someone like Angle.

Brock destroys them both with chair and belt shots.

Post break, Undertaker refuses attention until he collapses.

Angle just settles for some ice.

Some New Orleans Saints are here.

There was a bikini contest earlier today and it's trimmed to a highlight package. How in the world can you screw up having good looking women walk around in swimsuits? It's Sable, Dawn Marie, Nidia and Torrie in Mardi Gras themed attire before they disrobe. Torrie wins but Shaniqua runs in and beats them all down. I'm really hoping this was cut due to time

instead of content because that would be a new low even for WWE.

The APA isn't happy with their loss but the office is back. They even have a red bow on the door and a butler (Bradshaw: "I won him in a poker game. I even have a deed for him!") to present them with cigars and beer. This might be better if they hadn't lost earlier in the night but we're not supposed to remember that part. Well assuming you ignored what they talked about to start the segment.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Tajiri

Rey is defending. They start fast with Rey armdragging him down, only to have us go into a standoff. Rey tries a headscissors out of the corner but lands on the referee, who is nice enough to throw him off so he can flip Tajiri over. The springboard is broken up with a superkick and Rey is rocked on the apron. He's fine enough to miss a 619 though and Tajiri kicks him in the back to knock him outside.

Cole brags about Mysterio defending the title week after week the last few weeks (this is his second title defense in two weeks Cole) as the handspring elbow is broken up with a spinwheel kick. Back from a break with Tajiri kicking him out of the air and grabbing a hammerlock. Not exactly a move you expect to see so late into a match. Rey sends him outside and hits a hard suicide dive to take both guys down.

Back in and Tajiri blocks a sunset bomb with right hands but it's Rey kicking him down for two. The sitout bulldog (which isn't innovative Cole) gets two and the springboard seated senton gets the same. A hard kick to the arm drops Rey for two more and we hit the Tarantula.

Rey is right back with the 619 but the springboard splash hits raised boots to the face. Mysterio is fine enough to try his own Tarantula but Tajiri breaks it up without too much effort. They head up top with Tajiri getting shoved down, setting up the West Coast Pop from the turnbuckle to retain.

Rating: B. Solid wrestling match here with Rey getting tested. Who would have guessed that Rey Mysterio and Tajiri would have a good match if they were given a long stretch of time? Hopefully this goes somewhere else

with Rey getting to defend the title against the top cruiserweights, which is kind of the point of the title in the first place. Good match, as you probably expected.

Post match Tajiri mists him to turn heel again.

Here are Vince and Big Show for the big closing segment. Vince didn't like that DQ finish earlier so Angle will be defending the title again. In two weeks, it's Angle vs. Lesnar in a sixty minute Iron Man match right here on Smackdown. Oddly enough, Vince is very low key in the announcement. Vince brings out Brock...who isn't here.

Brock pops up in a sky box and thanks Vince for reminding him of who he is. Earlier tonight he proved who he is by attacking Undertaker and Angle. We pause for the YOU TAPPED OUT chants before Brock talks about what went on behind those closed doors earlier. Brock was, shall we say, softening up someone who needed to be taught a lesson. Brock steps aside and Zach Gowen is in a wheelchair with a gag around his mouth.

Brock slaps him in the broken leg and talks about the wheelchair being jet powered. Gowen panics (well duh) and Brock wheels him back to the concourse where he throws Zach out of the chair. Zach crawls away (without taking the gag off for some reason) but Brock kicks him in the broken leg. Brock talks about wanting to be the monster and we cut back to Vince looking curious.

More stomps to the leg keep Gowen in trouble before Lesnar talks about the chair being magical. See, it can fly, and Brock is going to prove it. Gowen is sat in the chair and Brock chokes him out before shoving Gowen down the steps (complete with a camera cut to Vince before the big fall) to end the show.

This was rather long as Brock had him in the stairwell for above five minutes. I get the idea here of making Brock out to be a monster, but didn't they do that when Brock caved Gowen's head in and broke his leg in the first place? I think we've covered this already and it might have been a bit more effective if he hadn't lost to Angle clean at Summerslam. The scene was effective but the camera cut hurt it a bit and it went on a tad too long. Hopefully that gets rid of Gowen for a little while longer

as there's only so much you can get out of having him around.

Overall Rating: C+. Two long and entertaining matches are more than enough to carry this show as we flash back to the glory days of Smackdown for a week. The Iron Man match has some serious potential as they'll have time to do whatever they want, which is often lacking around here. Throw in booking Eddie vs. Cena a week in advance and it's almost like they're thinking ahead for once. This was a fun show and, stupid parts aside, gives me hope that Smackdown might be on its way back up.

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Smackdown – January 30, 2018: Kevin Owens is a Bad Friend

Smackdown

Date: January 30, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the final night of the Philadelphia Story and Smackdown is in a very different place than Raw. The blue show has the men's Royal Rumble winner

and as a result, the World Title match for Wrestlemania XXXIV is already set. There are a lot more details to get through though and that starts tonight. Let's get to it.

Here's Rumble winner Shinsuke Nakamura to open things up. He talks about kneeing everyone in the face and is ready to do it to AJ Styles at Wrestlemania. This brings out Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn to interrupt with Sami ranting about the loss in their title shot. Owens was never tagged in so he couldn't be pinned. Owens: "YEP!"

Therefore, they deserve the next shot at the title, which they'll take at Wrestlemania. Nakamura calls them losers and here's AJ Styles to interrupt as well. AJ agrees with the losers comment and suggests the dream match become a dream team against Sami and Kevin tonight. Kevin and Sami: "NOPE!"

Post break Daniel Bryan makes the tag match. Owens and Zayn are livid but Bryan gives them another chance. Next week, it's Owens vs. Zayn in a #1 contender match with the winner getting a shot at Fastlane.

Kofi Kingston vs. Jinder Mahal vs. Rusev vs. Zack Ryder

The winner gets a US Title shot next week and champion Bobby Roode is on commentary. It's a brawl to start with Kofi and Jinder trading rollups for two each. A knee to the head cuts Kofi off though and Ryder low bridges Mahal to the floor. After a brawl near the announcers' table, everyone gets back in with a double Irish whip setting up Kofi's dropkick to Rusev.

Back up and Kofi hits a big dive over the top onto Ryder and Mahal, meaning it's time to throw pancakes. The Singh Brother cuts off Rusev's dive (this is completely against Rusev Day tradition) so Aiden English shoves him into New Day, meaning the PANCAKES ARE DROPPED! All four seconds are ejected and we take a break. Back with Ryder hitting the Broski Boot on Rusev but Mahal throws him outside to take the near fall for himself. The SOS gives Kofi two but Rusev is right in to break things up. The Stackalade is broken up so Rusev settles for the regular version on Kofi for the tap out at 12:44.

Rating: C+. Nice energetic match here with the right choice for the winner. It's a few weeks late for Rusev but it's not late enough that it doesn't work. Rusev is still hot and putting the US Title on him would be a great way to capitalize on him. They need to do something with him and hopefully this is the start of something good for him.

Ascension is helping Fashion Files answer some Twitter questions (including some about hair conditioner) when Shelton Benjamin and Chad Gable come in to call it stupid. They turn over the table and we have a match set up for later.

Here are the Usos for a chat. They talk about cleaning out the tag division, including listing off each team, causing a jail graphic to come up on the screen. There's no one left for them to face so of course here are the Bludgeon Brothers.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. ???/???

Jobber #1 is sent hard into the corner for a running charge in the corner from Harper. The jobbers are sent into each other and it's a full nelson slam/powerbomb combination to #1. The double spinebuster ends #2 at 1:50.

Daniel Bryan announces a superstar ranking system which will be starting soon. This was announced earlier in the day.

Shane McMahon is in his office when Tye Dillinger comes in. He'd love to talk about the ranking system (there are ten names on it after all) but he's not happy with what happened at the Rumble. Baron Corbin comes in to yell about not getting the title shot and questions Shane's McMahonhood. Dillinger mocks Corbin for losing Money in the Bank (a bit behind the times there buddy) but Shane says they'll settle this in the ring tonight.

Video on Ronda Rousey debuting.

Here's Charlotte for a chat with Renee Young (in what looks like Danny Davis' old ring jacket). Charlotte wanted to be in the ring on Sunday to see if she could come in at #3 and survive like this guy she knows. Then the moment happened that broke the internet and she was in the ring with

Alexa Bliss, Asuka and Ronda Rousey. She's walking into Wrestlemania as Smackdown Women's Champion and wants to know who she'll be facing.

This brings out the Riott Squad with Ruby saying Charlotte's ego is as big as her father's. Charlotte doesn't seem to mind so Riott talks about how she's met people like Charlotte throughout her career. If it's up to Ruby, Charlotte won't even make it to Wrestlemania. Charlotte holds off the attack for a bit but the numbers get the better of her. The parade of finishers ensues...AND HERE COMES CARMELLA! She hands the referee the briefcase but accidentally dropkicks him to the floor before the match is on. Charlotte is back up so Carmella changes her mind. So Carmella is now a klutz?

Styles goes to talk strategy with Nakamura but Shinsuke only wants to talk about the Wrestlemania match. They'll be fine tonight if Styles listens to him, which doesn't sit well with AJ.

Carmella wanted to remind Charlotte that the danger is real.

Tye Dillinger vs. Baron Corbin

They fight outside at the bell with Corbin being sent into the barricade. Back in and Corbin unloads on Tye with right hands before throwing him outside as we take a break. We come back with Tye fighting out of a chinlock and getting in some right hands to the ribs. Corbin does his slide underneath the ropes but the clothesline misses. Instead Tye sends him shoulder first into the post, followed by a boot to the face. The Tyebreaker is broken up though and Corbin hits him in the back of the head. The chokebreaker sets up End of Days to give Baron the pin at 6:38.

Rating: D+. This was fine for a way to give Baron a little momentum, though he doesn't have anything going on at the moment. Dillinger is in even worse shape though and needs to do something different if he wants to go anywhere. It could be worse, but at the moment there's nothing there. That's not exactly shocking either and I'm kind of surprised that he's made it this far.

Aiden English sings about the upcoming Rusev Day title change.

Roode has Rusev Day marked on his calendar. He circles it, but turns the circle into the 0 in glorious. That was clever. I'm not wild on these handheld promos but I am a fan of promos being used to set up matches. It worked for years and I have no idea why it was decided that they can't work again.

Sami and Kevin are in the back talking about how they're ready for tonight. Kevin implies that he'll win next week and Sami doesn't seem pleased.

Wrestlers are speculating on who will be the 205 Live General Manager.

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable vs. Breezango

Fandango chops away at Shelton to start but walks into a spinebuster. Chad comes in to start on the arm but makes sure to knock Breeze off the apron to keep control. Back up and Fandango gets something like a backbreaker, only to get caught with a rolling Liger kick for two. Breeze comes in off the hot tag as everything breaks down but it's a quick powerbomb/top rope clothesline to put Tyler away at 3:40.

Rating: D. Much like Corbin, this was a quick win to get Benjamin and Gable back on track. There was no reason to expect anything of note and it's not like Breezango was going to get anything important in anyway. The wrestling was short and to the point, though I'm not sure what Gable and Benjamin do now while the titles are busy.

Wrestlemania XXXIV ad.

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens

AJ wastes no time in headscissoring Owens into the corner so it's off to Sami to work on Nakamura's arm. Styles comes back in for a few kicks before Nakamura is back in, only to be taken into the corner for the double stomping. Nakamura fights back with some shots to the head and we hit the front facelock. Sami gets thrown outside but Owens uses the distraction to shoulder Nakamura down.

That leaves Sami down on the floor so Owens yells at him, meaning it's time for the big argument. That's too much for Sami and he takes the walk

up the ramp as we go to a break. Back with Owens holding Styles in a chinlock as Sami watches from the stage. AJ's belly to back facebuster gets two as Sami runs back in for the save. Sami comes in for two off a backdrop and it's quickly back to Owens for two off the backsplash. Owens chops Sami for a tag but that's not cool with Zayn, who does the same to bring Owens right back in.

They get knocked into each other so Sami leaves again, leaving Kevin to break up the Phenomenal Forearm. A Vader Bomb elbow gets two but the Pop Up Powerbomb is thwarted. Instead it's off to Nakamura for some kicks, only to have Owens bail before Kinshasa. AJ throws him right back in though and it's a spinwheel kick to the head, followed by Kinshasa to give Nakamura the pin at 15:25.

Rating: C+. Pretty standard main event tag match here but it advanced the story of Sami vs. Kevin's issues. AJ vs. Nakamura has a lot of time to build up and there's no need to rush things. Let that take its time to be properly built and see where they can go instead of rushing through things and running out of steam with a month to go before Wrestlemania.

An unpleased Sami is watching in the back but says that's not the end of their friendship. This is about Sami getting his chance because it's his time to be champion.

Overall Rating: C+. Nice enough show here, especially after we're coming out of the Rumble and heading into Fastlane. There's a lot more to do here but this set the stage for the next few weeks, which is all you can do here. You can probably pencil in Owens vs. Zayn for Wrestlemania while Nakamura vs. Styles seems to be written in ink. This should be an interesting season and since I can't imagine them messing with anything major at Fastlane, everything seems to be looking better. Throw in the lack of Bryan vs. Shane tonight and this was another nice show.

Results

Rusev b. Kofi Kingston, Jinder Mahal and Zack Ryder – Accolade to Kingston

Bludgeon Brothers b. ???/??? – Double spinebuster

Baron Corbin b. Tye Dillinger – End of Days

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable b. Breezango – Powerbomb/top rope clothesline combination to Breeze

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn – Kinshasa to Owens

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Smackdown – August 28, 2003: One of the Best Moments in Smackdown History

Smackdown

Date: August 28, 2003

Location: Haskins Center, El Paso, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

Summerslam is over and done with and this show has to be better than Raw. I know Smackdown hasn't been great in recent weeks but this week's Raw was one of the worst shows I've ever seen. Kurt Angle could sit in the

ring, read a newspaper and have a watercress sandwich and it would still beat Raw so they don't have much of a bar to defeat. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Eddie Guerrero, who parks his car outside to make the already rabid fans wait on him a little longer. Eddie comes in through the crowd and is the biggest face to face around here in a LONG time (which isn't much of a stretch as he's been the hottest act on the show for months now). In a funny bit, Eddie hugs Tazz but ignores Cole before putting a sombrero on him. Eddie's family is in the front row and my goodness this is one of the best receptions you'll see in wrestling. I know it's his hometown but the fans absolutely love Eddie. It gets even better when he greets them in Spanish and says he's at home.

This is where lying, cheating and stealing started and we hear the Guerrero family history of his great, great grandmother walking the streets of El Paso, possibly after illegally jumping the border. One day a cop stopped her and asked if she belonged there. That earned the cop a tongue lashing in Spanish but she was just saying of course she belonged in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

That was the first ever Guerrero lie but then she had to take the citizenship test. It was all in English though so she looked over at the other grandmother...and beat the heck out of her before stealing the answers to become a citizen. Finally, as she was leaving the office, she saw a low rider. Eddie: "Ok they didn't have low riders back then. It was a donkey." This brings out John Cena, who is in WAY over his head here.

Cena makes his usual gay jokes and Eddie just smiles at him. He threatens to call border patrol and that's a bit too far for Guerrero. Cena thinks Eddie should be a citizen before being the US Champion. A fight with Cena would be a setback because he would leave him with a broken...well it rhymes with setback.

Eddie isn't about to have Cena talk about his raza like that and accuses Cena of thinking he's more of an American. Cena calms him down and talks Eddie into a US Title match later tonight. Cena implies he'll leave with Eddie's sister and the brawl is on. Eddie steals Cena's jersey before

rapping at him about how Cena will taste defeat thanks to the Latino Heat.

This was a GREAT face turn as Eddie is one of the most charismatic guys on the roster and the fans have been begging to cheer him for months now. Doing this to open the show in Eddie's hometown was the perfect move and exactly how it should have gone. Oh and the stuff about the grandmother was hilarious.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Nunzio

Rey is def...hang on I need a minute. Rey is defending. Sorry I haven't had to say that in a long time and I was out of practice. Cole mentions that Rey defended the title last night on Heat, which wasn't important enough to mention in advance. The referee ejects the other Italians to make sure this is one on one. Nunzio takes him down without much effort to start and gets two off a harder clothesline than I thought Nunzio could pull off.

Back up and Rey sends him outside for a corkscrew dive over the top. A baseball slide is caught though and Nunzio drops him ribs first onto the barricade. Nunzio cranks on the arms for a bit but Rey fights up without much effort. Rey goes a little too fast though and the West Coast Pop is countered into a powerbomb (which Cole calls a gutbuster and a spinebuster) for two. A pinfall reversal sequence gets two each but Nunzio puts him on top. The belly to back superplex is reversed and Rey Drops the Dime to retain.

Rating: B-. Short match but they were rolling with the time they had. Nunzio is a talented guy and someone who can wrestle a surprisingly good match against a host of opponents. Mysterio is of course excellent but the Cruiserweight Title isn't doing him any good. The fact that there's no competition other than an occasional match doesn't help either, but that's the flaw with the title in general.

Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

A-Train has Sable in his corner, wearing a very short dress. Benoit gets thrown around with ease to start so of course he charges right at A-Train

with more chops. A-Train throws him onto his shoulder to drive Benoit ribs first into the buckle and a single kick puts Benoit on the floor. The announcers make sex jokes about Sable as A-Train gets two off a double underhook gutbuster.

Instead of following up though, A-Train pulled a buckle pad off. Some chops and a German suplex give Benoit a breather and there's the Swan Dive for two. Benoit it sent back first into the exposed buckle so the Derailer can get two. That's fine with Benoit, who Crossfaces A-Train for the tap, despite A-Train's legs being underneath the ropes.

Rating: C. So their method for building A-Train up is by having him lose most of his big matches? Such is life in WWE and that gets a little tiring. I mean, I know it's just A-Train but if you want him to be a monster, I'd like to see more than him beating Stephanie in a "match". Of course WWE thinks that means the world but it's not exactly reality.

During the break, A-Train yelled at Benoit for not being able to beat him. A fight is about to break out but it's a ruse so Rhyno can Gore Benoit through a door. What did Benoit do to get stuck with these feuds?

Eddie's tire has been stolen and he accuses various people, eventually decking Johnny the Bull for smiling a bit too much.

Here's Brock Lesnar for a chat, but only after telling us to shut up and sit down because he has something to say. Since Summerslam, everywhere he goes, he's been told he tapped out. That's quite the list of places in four days. Brock accidentally starts the YOU TAPPED OUT chant and he's sick of it. Summerslam was a fluke, a mirage and a miracle because he's never tapped out in his life.

Brock is no quitter, unlike everyone here who quits looking for jobs after they don't find one immediately (kind of an odd choice of an insult but no one ever accused Brock of being a good talker). He's been told there's no shame in tapping out to an Olympic champion. Brock: "I'M BROCK LESNAR AND I'M SPECIAL!" He's demanding a title rematch and insults Angle's ears for not coming out here immediately.

Angle pops up on screen and says Brock sounds like a baby who lost his

rattle. He thinks the fans want to see action....like when he beat Brock at Summerslam. Angle offers to come out here and make Brock tap again but here's Undertaker instead. It's time for Brock to go to the back of the line because Undertaker hasn't had a title shot in a long time. Now Brock is standing in Undertaker's yard but before anything can happen, here's Big Show to interrupt. Does he come with the show like parsley with a steak?

Show talks about hurting more people than anyone ever has but here's Angle to keep this segment going even longer. Angle talks about wanting to face any of these people, all of whom he would make tap. He wants someone to make a decision...so here's Stephanie, who is in charge tonight because Vince is gone. Isn't that always supposed to be the case? Anyway it's a triple threat for the #1 contendership later tonight. This was WAY longer than it needed to be and really only served to prove that Lesnar is a really bad talker.

During the break, Cena (now in a fresh jersey with a matching hat) denies any involvement with stealing Eddie's tire.

US Title: John Cena vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie is defending and Cena comes out carrying a tire. Cole: "If this isn't evidence, I don't know what is." You should need a license to be that stupid. Of course Cena stole it but unlike Eddie, he got away with it. That would be another stupid line. Eddie runs out and starts fast, busting Cena open in a hurry with some shots to the head.

The slingshot hilo connects and Eddie pounds at the cut in the corner. The ProtoBomb gets Cena out of trouble and a hard clothesline makes things even worse for the champ. Eddie gets in a few kicks and sends Cena outside but takes a bit too long, allowing Cena to hit him in the leg. That just earns him a ram into the announcers' table to draw a little more blood. Eddie brings his tire in but it's just a ruse to get in a chair to Cena's back. The fans eat this up with a cuchara but the frog splash misses.

Back from an abrupt break with Cena holding a double chickenwing. A delayed vertical suplex gets two and Cena bearhugs him down for two arm

drops. Eddie is back up with a suplex of his own and the FU is countered into a hurricanrana. The referee gets bumped and OF COURSE the frog splash connects a few seconds later. That means a delayed two, followed by the Three Amigos but Cena hits him low for the DQ.

Rating: B. Cena wasn't ready to hang with Eddie in a long match (to be fair, not many people were on their best day) but Eddie is more than capable of carrying him to a good match. The rematch could be better but for a first match, this was about as good as it was going to get. At least neither lost clean though.

Post match Cena hits him with the chain to bust Eddie open. An FU onto the tire and it's big rim makes it even worse.

We look back at Brock destroying Zach Gowen last week, making me a much bigger Lesnar fan in the process.

Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

The winner gets Angle next week. Angle comes out to join commentary and the match starts after a break. Better than having thirty seconds of action and then going into a break. Back with Undertaker getting double teamed, including Brock hitting some shoulders in the corner. Show throws Undertaker down with a suplex so Brock can steal a near fall. You can imagine how well this goes and it starts with Undertaker being sent out to the floor.

Brock suplexes Show for two with Undertaker making the quick save. Undertaker starts slugging away and hits a jumping clothesline on Show (Angle: "Undertaker would probably miss me on that one.") but Brock takes him down. Show decks Lesnar but Undertaker reverses a chokeslam into a Fujiwara armbar.

That's broken up as well (they're certainly not deviating from a pattern here) and Undertaker is knocked outside with his hands getting caught in the ropes. Show chairs Undertaker down and growls a lot as we take a break. Back with Brock on the floor and some right hands rocking Show. A triangle choke puts Show in trouble so Brock makes another save. The chokeslam gets two with Show pulling the referee out and then

chokeslamming Undertaker for two of his own.

An F5 lays out Undertaker and Show makes ANOTHER save. Show chokeslams Brock for two and the kickout sends him up top for what looks to be a super chokeslam. Undertaker saves the ring from being broken and everyone is down with Show crotched on top. Brock goes up for a superplex of his own but gets caught in the Last Ride, leaving Show to fall off the top as Undertaker pins Lesnar.

Rating: D+. The constant near falls weren't really dramatic or anything as you knew it was going to be something big to get to the finish. It was entertaining enough though and that's a lot more than you can say about a lot of these matches. That being said, was there ANY reason not to have Big Show take the pin here? I mean....it's Big Show. Suddenly we're protecting him?

Angle and Undertaker do the big staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. It was nowhere near perfect but this was an entertaining show. Swap out the horrible Lesnar promo with pretty much anything else and this show is a lot better but what we got was fine. Make no mistake about it though: this was the Eddie Guerrero Show with the hometown crowd loving their hero like no one I've seen in a long time. Some of the stories have me interested and that's a nice feeling, especially after the mess that was Raw.

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Smackdown – January 23, 2018: That Actually Worked!

Smackdown

Date: January 23, 2018

Location: Capitol One Arena, Washington DC

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

It's the night after the Monday Night Raw 25th Anniversary so now we need to bring things back down to earth a bit. This time around though it's also the go home show for the Royal Rumble and we need to get things ready. There's also the issue of Enzo Amore, who Daniel Bryan will address for some reason. Let's get to it.

Here are Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn to open things up. They introduce each other as the future co-WWE Champions before Owens talks about being in a handicap match a few weeks back. There's no way that AJ can win a 2-1 match because they couldn't win a 3-2 match because they're already better than AJ.

This brings out AJ to say there's no way that's going to happen and if the two of them could shut their YEP holes for awhile, reality would set in. Sami says he knew that AJ would be out here with his macho act and brings up a clip from a few weeks back. Three weeks ago AJ asked for the handicap match and Owens accuses him of trying to back out of the match.

The next clip is AJ saying he would fight both of them in the same night. Owens suggests that AJ fight the two of them in a row tonight. This brings out Bryan to imply that the matches are about to be made but AJ doesn't know whose side Bryan is on. AJ makes the matches official instead.

I know we're coming up on Sunday's title match, but my goodness they need to get somewhere with this story. You can only tease Bryan being in

cahoots with Sami and Owens for so long before you need to actually go somewhere with it. They were nice enough to give AJ and his challengers some actual mic time here but they REALLY need some advancement in this story already. I'm very tired of having Bryan and/or Shane arguing with each other and using these guys as pawns and it needs to change. Oh and what's up with people working multiple matches a night? This is two weeks in a row now.

Bryan and Shane are in their office with Shane talking down to Bryan about his choice. Daniel asks if Shane believes AJ can take care of himself but Shane says AJ isn't the one he's questioning.

Jey Uso vs. Chad Gable

Gable goes for a single leg to start and takes Jey into the corner before putting him on the ground without much effort. Back up and Jey sends him outside and we take an early break. Back with Gable getting two off a northern lights suplex but missing the moonsault. Jey sends him outside and a suicide dive drops Chad again. Gable charges into a Samoan drop but the running Umaga Attack is blocked. Instead Gable Liger Kicks him and grabs Rolling Chaos Theory for the pin at 7:44.

Rating: D+. This didn't go very far but to be fair it's not like it was supposed to be anything of note. They were going with the standard singles win to set up a tag match which has worked before and it'll work again almost any time they try it. I'm not sold on a title change but just having them give us something interesting on Sunday is a good idea.

Shinsuke Nakamura's strategy for winning the Rumble: knee them all in the face. Baron Corbin comes in to say Nakamura is all hype and nothing to show for it. He doesn't care about the fans and asks what Nakamura has done. Shinsuke says he'll do something on Sunday and offers a rumble tonight. I know Nakamura is becoming one of the favorites to win the Rumble but I still don't buy it. There's not much to build off of with him and it would seem to come out of nowhere. That's been the case before but I'm not buying it here.

Tye Dillinger, still using the handheld camera style, enters the Rumble. He can't do the Perfect Ten because he only has one hand so it's two

fives instead.

Naomi vs. Liv Morgan

They fight over a backslide to start until Naomi kicks her in the face. Liv is right back with a pull into the middle buckle, followed by a cross arm chinlock. Cue Natalya, Carmella and Lana for a distraction, allowing Naomi to grab a sunset flip for the pin at 2:39.

The Riott Squad comes in to beat Naomi down but Becky Lynch makes the save. It turns into the mini Rumble with Naomi and Natalya standing tall. Becky throws Naomi to the apron for a staredown but here's Charlotte to say good luck to everyone, especially the winner. That's how a champion should talk to a bunch of challengers.

Miz and Asuka are ready to win the Mixed Match Challenge.

Carmella and Big E. are ready to win as well, but first: pancakes.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Baron Corbin

Nakamura drives him to the ropes for the arm swing into COME ON, with Corbin warning him not to do it. Good Vibrations sends Corbin outside with Nakamura giving chase, only to get posted. Serves him right for not listening to Corbin's request. Back from a break with Corbin holding a chinlock but Nakamura fights up and starts striking away. A running kick to the head and the running knee in the corner give Nakamura two.

Kinshasa is countered into Deep Six for a pretty hot two and Nakamura is in trouble. Corbin's slide underneath the ropes into the clothesline turns Nakamura inside out for two more. A cross armbreaker out of nowhere has Corbin in trouble but Nakamura switches to a kick to the head. Kinshasa is loaded up but RKO OUT OF NOWHERE plants Nakamura as Randy Orton runs in for the DQ at 12:26. Well done there as they actually surprised me with the run in.

Rating: B. This was starting to cook and the run-in finish was perfect, especially as a way to keep both guys solid going into Sunday. Having Orton run in for the DQ made perfect sense and reminds us that he's in there too. It takes some time to warm Nakamura up but once he gets going,

he's as entertaining as anyone on the show. That was starting to be the case here and the match was starting to rock.

Post match Corbin takes an RK0 of his own.

We look at the media coverage of last night's show.

Video on last night's show.

Here's New Day for a six man tag but first, they all enter the Royal Rumble. It's just two of them tonight so they need a partner. That man would be the new United States Champion, with Woods singing the theme into the trombone. Roode says his goal is to be the best US Champion of all time and his reign is going to be.....Kofi: "Stupendous!" Woods: "Delicious!" Big E.: "Exuberant!" Actually it's GLORIOUS!

New Day/Bobby Roode vs. Rusev Day/Jinder Mahal

Big E. is the odd man out here and there's only one Singh Brother thanks to an ankle injury last week. Joined in progress with Rusev holding Kofi in a bearhug and hitting a running shoulder into the corner. English misses a charge though and it's Roode coming in to clean house. The Blockbuster drops English and a spinebuster does the same to Jinder. Rusev comes in and kicks Roode into a rollup for two but it's Kofi diving in to put English on the floor. Kofi's dive into the trust fall takes the other two down, leaving English to get caught with another spinebuster. Woods' top rope elbow is good for the pin at 2:38 shown.

Royal Rumble rundown.

AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title but hang on a minute. Shane comes out to say Sami can't be at ringside, just like Owens can't be at ringside for the next match. If either of them interfere, they're out of the title match and fired. The bickering continues into the break and we're back for the opening bell (thank you). AJ scores with a dropkick but gets his head clotheslined off. That goes nowhere and it's a Calf Crusher to make Owens tap out immediately at 1:08, likely to save himself for Sunday.

Sami runs in to beat on AJ to break the hold, which doesn't count as breaking Shane's rules because we're between matches. AJ gets beaten down in the corner as Kevin limps off. The stomping continues as we're still waiting on the opening bell. A whip sends AJ into the steps as the bosses are watching in the back.

Sami Zayn vs. AJ Styles

Non-title again with AJ saying he's ready to go. Sami charges at him again as Owens is still at ringside due to not being able to walk to the back. The stomping continues and we hit the chinlock for a bit as a stretcher is brought out for Owens. AJ fights back and hits his running seated forearm to get a breather. Sami gets sent outside for a slingshot forearm but AJ goes after Owens instead as we take a break.

Back with Sami hammering away even more and grabbing another chinlock. AJ snaps off a super hurricanrana to get a breather as we see the bosses watching in the back for the third time. The fireman's carry backbreaker gives AJ two and the Helluva Kick is blocked with a raised boot. The Pele scores on Sami for two but Sami grabs a Michinoku Driver for two. Frustration is setting in as he takes AJ to the top, only to get dropped face first onto the top turnbuckle.

AJ takes him outside where Owens is STILL being loaded onto the stretcher. That's enough for Styles as he slides into a knee to Sami's face and turns the stretcher over. Back in and the Helluva Kick connects followed by the Blue Thunder Bomb....WHICH GETS THE PIN AT 15:44????? I've been watching Sami since his WWE run started and I don't ever remember that getting a pin. I was actually surprised when that worked.

Rating: B-. I'm still trying to get over that finish as the Blue Thunder Bomb winning is so unthinkable. This was similar to Gable vs. Uso earlier in the night where you build some drama with the idea that the underdog has a chance. I don't think AJ is going to lose the title but it's nice to try to get something set up.

Owens and Zayn pose over AJ to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Bickering bosses aside, it was nice to have Smackdown

doing something good for a change. They did a solid job of setting up some stuff for the Rumble and that's what was needed after last night. They added four more names to the Rumble and made me more interested than I was coming into the show. Good night here, especially with all of the previous weeks of mess.

Results

Chad Gable b. Jey Uso – Rolling Chaos Theory

Naomi b. Liv Morgan – Sunset flip

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Baron Corbin via DQ when Randy Orton interfered

New Day/Bobby Roode b. Rusev Day/Jinder Mahal – Top rope elbow to English

AJ Styles b. Kevin Owens – Calf Crusher

Sami Zayn b. AJ Styles – Blue Thunder Bomb

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