

Smackdown – September 26, 2002 (2017 Redo): The Best Smackdown of All Time

Smackdown

Date: September 26, 2002

Location: San Diego Sports Arena, San Diego, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

Well Brock retained the title but they basically ruined the end of the pay per view with a double DQ finish. That almost guarantees that we're setting up a rematch at No Mercy in a month because that's how WWE main events work. Other than that we don't have much of note on Smackdown because Unforgiven wasn't a very important show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Stephanie McMahon's BRILLIANT (and highly illogical) plan to have Rikishi humiliate Eric Bischoff at the pay per view.

Opening sequence.

Rikishi vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

This is over Chavo hitting Rikishi with a camera last week. Chavo wisely gets him to give chase early on but Rikishi grabs him by the head and then throws Chavo into the corner by the throat. Something like a Scotty 2 Hotty style bulldog drops the big guy though and Rikishi is sent shoulder first into the post.

In the unfunny comedy portion of the match, Chavo loads up a Stinkface of his own but gets shoved away, meaning it's time to back it up in the corner. The Rump Shaker is countered though and Chavo goes for the camera, which is superkicked back into his face. That's enough for the Rump Shaker to connect and put Chavo away.

Rating: C. This was MUCH better than I was expecting and Chavo got to show off a bit. Rikishi is fine in a role like this where he beats up a midcarder and stays away from the bigger stories. It's easy to like someone as fun as Rikishi but it's a lot more difficult to take him seriously.

Rikishi dances post match.

It's time for a bikini contest between Torrie Wilson and Nidia with Billy and Chuck as the judges. I guess it's time to rehabilitate their masculinity or something. Nidia gets a 6 and a 9 (it's funny you see) and Torrie gets a double 10. Billy and Chuck get in the ring and here come Tajiri and Jamie Noble, giving us an impromptu tag match.

Billy and Chuck vs. Tajiri/Jamie Noble

Chuck gets sent to the floor so it's a series of kicks to put Billy down. Torrie is on the apron in a neutral corner for no apparent reason but it makes for some better scenery. The always great looking Tajiri superkick drops Billy again and Jamie starts in on the knee. Noble wraps it around the post as you can see the Cruiserweight Title on the floor. At least put it on the apron so it looks somewhat important.

Billy can't even stand on the banged up leg so Jamie puts on a leglock as the world's only WE WANT CHUCK chant starts up. A flapjack finally puts Jamie down though and there's the hot tag to Chuck. House is cleaned and Billy manages to get up top for the Code Red (bit of a stretch there) for the pin on Tajiri (who was on Chuck's shoulders for a LONG time before Billy was ready).

Rating: C+. That's your standard tag team formula and it's going to work no matter how many times we see it. They managed to get Chuck Palumbo a chant with the most basic tag team match you can put together. There's a reason it's a classic and it's going to work as long as wrestling is around.

Post match the women get into it again and Torrie spanks Nidia.

Funaki interviews Brock Lesnar and asks him if he's going to give Undertaker a rematch. Brock will give him an answer in the ring. Funaki is thrilled with getting a scoop and doesn't realize he's likely about to die.

Kurt Angle comes in to see Stephanie and they reminisce about the Stinkface. Angle would like a rematch against Chris Benoit but Stephanie has something else in mind. Rey Mysterio pops up and Angle asks if this is a violation of child labor laws. Stephanie's big idea: a triple threat match between Mysterio, Angle and Benoit. Angle says he'll get the 1-2-3 but Rey says it's more like the

6-1-9, which the fans certainly approve of.

Here's Funaki with the chair that was dented over Lesnar's head at Unforgiven. After Funaki actually gets one heck of a pop (I'm as shocked as you are), Lesnar comes out and doesn't want to hear about the Undertaker. Brock shoves him into the corner and for reasons of general stupidity, Funaki comes out swinging. A running right hand is easily countered into an STO, followed by a few throws and an F5 for good measure.

Dawn Marie offers Torrie some insincere praise for the win, though everyone knows Dawn would have beaten her with ease.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

No DQ. Eddie starts hammering away until a monkey flip puts him down. The fans are all over Eddie as he easily breaks up a keylock. An elbow to the head drops Edge and Eddie hits some rather hard right hands. We hit a chinlock for a bit before Edge snaps off a powerslam, only to take too long getting to the top.

That means a huge superplex to give Eddie two and it's time to head outside. Unfortunately it's also time for a ladder and that means a ref bump as the ladder goes straight into his face (looked great actually). Back in and Eddie unloads on him with a chair but misses the frog splash to put both guys down.

We come back from a break with a new referee and the second only now being taken to the back. That's really not a good response time. Edge gets in the half nelson faceplant but takes too much time going up, allowing Eddie to snap off a hurricanrana for a close two. A springboard hurricanrana is countered into a sitout powerbomb with Eddie's head bouncing off the mat in a scary visual.

The ladder is brought in but it's also knocked into Edge's face to drop the Canadian again. That means Eddie needs a second ladder so he can sandwich Edge together, setting up the slingshot hilo. Guerrero gets one heck of a cheer from the crowd and it's really hard to blame him with how hard they're beating each other up out there.

Eddie goes up the ladder but Edge is there to slug it out....so Eddie sunset powerbombs him off with one of the biggest bumps you'll see on regular TV. Edge just got folded up and it looked awesome. That's good for another respectful round of applause and somehow only two.

In almost any other match, that should have been the fall.

Back up again and Edge backdrops him into the ladder in the corner before they climb the second ladder a second time. You know, because it ended so well earlier. This time Edge rams him face first into the top a few times and grabs an Edgecution off the ladder (looked a bit more like a superplex for the sake of clearing the ladder but the landing still looked great) for the pin and one last big reaction from the crowd.

Rating: A. Sometimes you need a great story with all kinds of intricacies and plot details. Sometimes you need a big climax to a major story. Then sometimes you need two incredibly talented wrestlers doing crazy things to each other involving a ladder. This was spectacular with both guys absolutely destroying each other with one more big spot after another. Nothing was topping that sunset powerbomb though and I think everyone knew it. Edge winning the match (and in theory the feud) is the right call and Eddie didn't lose a thing here. Aside from the match of course. This is on multiple DVDs and it's easy to see why.

A bloody Eddie gets the big respectful ovation, which he more than earned.

Marc Lloyd comes up to ask Benoit about the main event. Benoit: "YOU SUCK!" That got a good laugh. Anyway Benoit is ready.

Matt Hardy talks about running Hurricane off and suggests he'll do the same thing to Undertaker tonight. Shannon Moore isn't convinced and thinks it might have had something to do with Brock. Hardy pshaw's him and leaves with Lesnar looking on. Good thing he was watching the show on a monitor and knew where Matt's locker room was in relation to his.

Wrestlemania XIX press conference video. It's very, very odd to see Undertaker in a collared shirt and pants.

Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy

I always liked the version of Undertaker's song with lyrics. Matt's handshake doesn't go how he'd hope it would and the beating is on early. Hardy gets up an elbow in the corner though and starts in on the knee but the Twist of Fate is countered into a chokeslam. The Last Ride finishes Matt in less than two minutes.

Post match Lesnar runs out and busts Undertaker open again with a belt shot. During the break, Undertaker couldn't stand up and EGADS he's covered in blood. That's one heck of a blade job for a TV show.

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Before the match, Angle accuses Rey's fans of being illegal immigrants. The real threat in this match isn't the toothless weirdo or the lost member of Menudo because it's your Olympic hero. Rey takes over to start and hits the sitout bulldog on Benoit while kicking Angle in the face at the same time.

That earns Rey a trip out to the floor so Angle and Benoit can hit the match for their usual fast paced sequence. Kurt can't get the ankle but settles for a two count with his feet on the ropes. Rey comes back in and avoids a charge to send Kurt shoulder first into the post. Not that it matters as Benoit is right there for a German suplex.

Chris throws Rey to the floor but gets chopped n the corner by a fresh Angle. We hit the rolling German suplexes and an Angle Slam on Benoit but Rey dropkicks Kurt for two. Benoit is sent outside this time and Rey scores with a dive, only to have Angle send him into the barricade.

Back in and Benoit gets his ankle locked until he grabs the rope, setting up a double 619. Angle blocks the West Coast Pop but gets rolled up for two more. Now it's Kurt getting caught in the Crossface but Rey breaks it up by Dropping the Time for a VERY close two on Benoit. Angle gets suplexed to the floor and Benoit throws Rey over his head and onto the ropes, only to have Rey springboard into the West Coast Pop for the pin to blow the roof off the place.

Rating: A-. I'm exhausted after watching that. I didn't skip more than a few moves here and there and all three guys came off looking outstanding. It's a great example of just letting people do crazy sequences and look awesome all over the place. I'm going to need a little time to get over the idea that Mysterio won in his hometown. When was that concept banned? Anyway, check this one out after you see Eddie vs. Edge.

Overall Rating: A+. That's probably the best Smackdown of all time and I'd be surprised if anything ever topped it. The worst match of the night was either Undertaker destroying Matt Hardy or a surprisingly good Rikishi vs. Chavo match. Even if you're not

impressed with that one, it didn't even break five minutes. Throw in two classics and Torrie in a rather nice looking swimsuit and I don't know what else you could ask for. Check this show out and have a great time with it because it might be the best Smackdown I've ever seen.

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Smackdown – February 21, 2017: But It's A Battle Royal!

Smackdown

Date: February 21, 2017

Location: Citizens Business Bank Arena, Ontario, California

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga. Tom Phillips, Mauro Ranallo

It's a double shot tonight as we have a pair of big gimmick matches to get us further along the Road to Wrestlemania. First up it's Natalya vs. Nikki Bella in a falls count anywhere match which should be the blowoff to their feud. Other than that it's a ten man battle royal with the winner getting the World Title shot against Bray

Wyatt at Wrestlemania XXXIII. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's triple threat match for the Smackdown World Title and Randy Orton's decision to turn down his title shot against Bray Wyatt.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to get things going. We're forty days from Wrestlemania and the road to get there is full of twists and turns. He brings out Women's Champion Naomi, who has been given a week to either give the title back to Alexa Bliss or face her in a rematch. We actually get the YOU DESERVE IT chants and come on now. Wyatt was a stretch for that but NAOMI? She gets a chant about how hard she's worked to get here? Give me a break.

It turns out that she's injured and isn't going to be able to defend her title. Naomi talks about how life can change in such a hurry because she was on top of the mountain a week ago and now she's looking up from the bottom. She hands over the title and says she's probably out of Wrestlemania as well.

However, she's going to be back to take the title from whomever is borrowing it in her absence. Naomi leaves and here's Alexa Bliss to laugh about the performance. With Naomi gone, Bliss says that she should be the champion since she never got her rematch. Bryan doesn't think so and the title is going to be on the line RIGHT NOW.

Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

The title is vacant coming in. Becky starts fast with some rollups but gets kneed in the ribs and we hit the choking on the ropes. Bliss' basic offense continues until a quick Bexploder sends her outside as we take a break. Back with Becky getting two off a missile dropkick, which of course warrants a crowd reaction shot. Bliss gets in a quick shot to the throat for the pin (while holding trunks) and the title at 9:03 in an ending that is as sudden as it sounds.

Rating: D+. The ending really hurt things here as it just came and went without any real build to it. Bliss winning the title makes

sense as this felt like a quick match for the pure sake of giving the title back to Alexa. To be fair, it's not like she should have lost the thing in the first place. At least it's back where it should be now.

Mickie James comes down to celebrate and gets in a fight with Becky.

Dean Ambrose wants his chance to main event Wrestlemania back and if he gets to break Baron Corbin's legs in the process, so be it.

Kalisto wants to be in the main event so tens of thousands of people can chant LUCHA LUCHA LUCHA.

Miz runs down his resume and thinks being in the main event of Wrestlemania should be added.

Natalya is ready to expose Nikki Bella as a fraud.

Breezango vs. American Alpha

Non-title with Breezango jumping them at the bell. A double kick to Jordan's head puts him in trouble. That lasts all of thirty seconds as Jordan gets over for the tag, setting up the Steiner Bulldog for the pin on Fandango at 1:45.

The Usos show up in the crowd to say they're coming for the titles. Just not tonight you see. A lot of trash is talked with threats of jumping Alpha from behind.

Black History Month video on Jackie Robinson.

AJ Styles says he's going to Wrestlemania.

Dolph Ziggler superkicks the wall of the interview set.

Mojo Rawley is ready to win another battle royal.

Luke Harper is done obeying Bray Wyatt and after tonight, there's nowhere left for Bray to run. These promos for the battle royal are a great touch and it's even better that most of them have had a different backdrop (Harper was in the Wyatt area, Mojo was in the locker room, AJ was just backstage etc.). You don't get these enough and they can do a lot of good in the span of thirty seconds.

Nikki Bella says after tonight, Natalya will be the broken Hart.

Nikki Bella vs. Natalya

Falls count anywhere. An early spear puts Natalya down and Nikki grabs her facebuster for an early two. It's already table time (falls count anywhere means No DQ by definition) but Natalya baseball slides it into Nikki's face. They quickly head over the barricade with Natalya doing You Can't See Me for a nice touch.

Nikki comes back with a shot off the barricade and the Disaster Kick (looked great for a change) to put Natalya down for two. Back to ringside they go with Natalya getting in a few kendo stick shots before loading up the announcers' table. Nikki fights out of a powerbomb attempt and gets in an Alabama Slam onto the table for a close two.

We come back from a break with Nikki getting to the ropes to break the Sharpshooter (which Natalya breaks, causing the announcers to accurately point out that she didn't have to). Nikki no sells a suplex on the ramp and they head backstage with Nikki being sent into a conveniently placed Maryse.

Nikki sends her face first into a mirror for two of her own and it's time to come back into the arena. Natalya can't get the Sharpshooter as Natalya reverses into the Fearless Lock, only to have Maryse come out with a pipe to attack Nikki (really badly that is but at least she tried). Miz drags her off and Natalya gets the cheap pin at 14:02.

Rating: B-. The match had its good and bad moments but I liked it much more than I was expecting to. This was a better brawl than I was expecting and one of Nikki's better matches, likely because it didn't involve a ton of wrestling. Unfortunately it seems that we're really getting that stupid mixed tag at Wrestlemania, even though I can't imagine how they came to the conclusion that it's the best possible idea.

Diamond Dallas Page Hall of Fame announcement.

Baron Corbin says he's winning.

Apollo Crews says he's winning.

Orton and Wyatt will be watching.

Battle Royal

Baron Corbin, Apollo Crews, Dolph Ziggler, The Miz, Luke Harper, Kalisto, AJ Styles, John Cena, Dean Ambrose, Mojo Rawley

The winner get the Wrestlemania title shot. After the long entrances, they waste no time in getting started with Ambrose and Corbin slugging it out in the corner. The fans are almost entirely split between Styles and Cena and you can tell they're way into this instead of not really caring. Cena and Ziggler are both sent to the apron but quickly make it back in. A bunch of near eliminations go nowhere and Cena can't get Corbin up for the AA.

We take a break and come back with Corbin as the only man standing. He tosses Rawley for the first elimination but eats a superkick from Ziggler. Kalisto gets up and starts kicking away until kind of botching what looked like a moonsault press to Dean. Ziggler and Kalisto both wind up on the apron and a pull of the mask sets up a superkick to eliminate Kalisto, getting us down to eight. Crews kicks Ziggler in the head though (DANG he healed from that knee injury in a hurry) and it's down to seven. Ziggler chairs Kalisto though and Corbin tosses Crews, who chases Ziggler off with the chair.

We're down to Corbin, Cena, Miz, Ambrose, Harper and Styles and it's AJ having to flip out of the AA. Almost everyone hits a hard strike and it's Miz in the middle of the ring, meaning it's time for the running corner dropkicks all around. Cena pops up and backdrops Miz out, which is probably a way to keep setting up that stupid mixed tag.

Back from another break with Styles and Ambrose knocking each other down. Cena loads up the Five Knuckle Shuffle on Styles but walks into End of Days. Ambrose tosses Corbin from behind and is quickly pulled to the floor for another End of Days. With Cena staggering to his feet, Miz sneaks in and tosses him, with Cena leaving a bit too calmly.

So we're down to Styles, Ambrose and Harper with Dean getting back inside. All three are quickly put on the apron for a three way slugout with Dean having to hang on very carefully. AJ gets on Dean's shoulders and gets back in, allowing Harper to superkick Dean out to the floor, leaving us with two. Harper stays on the apron and pulls AJ over the top to the join him but they're both back in a few seconds later. Luke suplexes him to the apron again but quickly follows him out there, only to have Harper pull him out at 22:22.

Rat... .Actually not so fast as the referees say Harper hit at the same time (it wasn't even close and they're not showing replays) so here's Daniel Bryan for a ruling. The official decision is a draw so there's no winner. However, we will determine a winner next week. Harper blasts AJ with the discus lariat and poses to a rather mixed reaction to end the show.

Rating: B. That ending really dragged things down as this was a heck of a battle royal leading up to the finish. Harper winning was the logical call here and I'm really not sure why they went with that double ending. From what I could tell, Harper's feet were either on the apron or the steps when he landed but officially it was a tie. I don't get that.

Wyatt and Orton pop up on screen to laugh at Harper to end the show. That also suggests that there's no reason for AJ to have been involved in the ending like that.

Overall Rating: B-. I'm still trying to get over that ending as it really hurt what should have been a big moment. Unless they're still trying to force AJ vs. Shane (who I don't remember seeing recently) out of this, that should have been Harper winning clean. Still though, the rest of the show was good enough and it was certainly eventful but the Women's Title change and the ending felt somewhere between forced and messy, neither of which are good.

Results

Alexa Bliss b. Mickie James – Rollup with a handful of trunks

American Alpha b. Breezango – Steiner Bulldog to Fandango

Natalya b. Nikki Bella – Pin after a pipe shot from Maryse

A battle royal went to a draw

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Smackdown – September 19, 2002: They're the Faces?

Smackdown

Date: September 19, 2002

Location: World Arena, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Unforgiven and that means we'll be getting some more of Undertaker vs. Brock Lesnar. At the same time though, you can really see the Smackdown Six being built up before our eyes and that's nothing but good. If we can get a few ten minute matches with some outstanding action here and there in between the Eric Bischoff vs. Stephanie McMahon nonsense, everything should be fine. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of the wedding because that's the top story at the moment since it involves the feuding bosses.

Opening sequence.

Rey Mysterio/Torrie Wilson vs. Nidia/Jamie Noble

Torrie looks outstanding here, as in even moreso than usual. Nidia slaps her in the face to start and gets caught in a neckbreaker (normally Torrie's finisher) for two. It's off to Jamie to take Torrie to the mat but she brings Rey in almost immediately. Rey gets planted on his face but gets in the sitout bulldog for two. Nidia keeps validating her employment by distracting Rey so Noble can get in a hard clothesline. Everything breaks down and Torrie gives Nidia a Bronco Buster for the pop of the match. Noble offers to take one of his own so of course it's Rey doing it instead. The 619 into a Code Red puts Noble away.

Rating: C. I know the women weren't exactly the best in the world at this point but the ending accomplished its goal and the Bronco Buster spot was all it needed to be. I'll gladly take this over the champion getting pinned all over again. To be fair though I had almost forgotten that Noble was champion in the first place. Also, Mysterio goes from a classic opener against Kurt Angle at Summerslam and can't even get on Unforgiven?

D-Von yells at Stephanie about Batista so Stephanie collects his balls. Paul Heyman comes in and says he's brought in some off duty police officers to guard Lesnar. They might not be necessary though as Undertaker had to take his wife Sara to the hospital for false labor. He's on his way here though and Heyman is distraught. Lesnar seems pleased though.

Here's Stephanie in the arena because we haven't seen her recently enough. You don't screw with McMahons because they always get even in the end. That means a clip of the women's protest on Monday and another to set up 3 Minute Warning vs. Billy and Chuck on Sunday. As for the stipulations, she'll address those when she and Bischoff have a face to face video chat later tonight (OF COURSE there's a big segment for that story later) but for now, here are Billy and Chuck.

Billy says it's time to set the record straight...so to speak. Maybe he could keep teaming with Chuck or maybe he could work on a singles

career. Chuck: "So you're saying you go both ways?" Cue Kurt Angle of all people to say this sounds like a bad episode of Three's Company.

Angle made some publicity of his own back in 1996 and he didn't do it by making out with Carl Lewis. Kurt insists that he's not gay and he has no problem with anyone who is because gays love him. Angle: "I'm freaking adorable!" A tag match is made for later and Stephanie gives Angle Chris Benoit as a partner. Angle is so freaked out that he keeps making unintentional gay jokes, such as that being a hard one to swallow. More greatness from Angle.

Security won't come out to the ring with Lesnar because they weren't hired to work in the arena.

Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena

Non-title and something that would be a bit different today. Like Cena would be wearing jean shorts while Lesnar squashed him. Lesnar forearms him in the back of the head to start and hits the first overhead belly to belly. Brock starts pounding him in the back and gets two off a delayed vertical suplex. A waistlock has Cena in even more trouble as the very slow pace continues. Brock stays on the ribs for a bit longer, shrugs off the comeback, and finishes with the F5.

Rating: D. What the heck happened to Cena? He was the hottest rookie around for a long time (possibly even hotter than Brock, or at least showing more fire) and now I can't even remember the last time he won a match. It doesn't help that he never really had a character so there wasn't exactly anywhere for him to go. Lesnar vs. Undertaker still isn't looking interesting but at least they're doing something with the feud to try and get it somewhere.

Video on Rikishi, who was shot back in 1986. Ok then.

Video on Undertaker, who really doesn't need a video package. At least it's set to Adrenaline by Gavin Rosedale, which I've always liked.

Eddie Guerrero wants revenge on Edge for the Stinkface. If that

means more Edge vs. Eddie, I guess I can live with it.

Eddie Guerrero/Chavo Guerrero vs. Edge/Rikishi

Chavo slaps Rikishi to start in what is apparently a show of disrespect, because Rikishi is someone to be respected all of a sudden. Edge comes in to take over without much effort but gets sent to the floor where he has to avoid a chair shot from Eddie. The cousins start in on the back and of course we get some classic cheating because that's what Guerreros do.

Edge gets in a powerslam but Eddie cheap shots Rikishi to prevent the hot tag. I love how so many of those spots have been used for the better part of twenty years and simply do not get old. A tornado DDT is broken up and the hot tag brings in Rikishi to clean house. We get the double crush in the corner but only Chavo takes the Stinkface. Eddie bails to the floor so Chavo hits Rikishi with a TV camera for the pin.

Rating: C-. Rikishi is fine for the hot tag stuff but I still don't see why he's in this spot and the story about him being shot really didn't do much to get him to another level. Eddie vs. Edge is still good and the idea of Eddie not liking him due to Edge being considered a pretty boy is more than fine.

Post match Eddie chairs Edge in the face to cut him open.

It's time for the Stephanie vs. Bischoff sitdown interview with Stephanie getting to be all smug over kicking Eric low on Monday. Bischoff laughs it off and loves the idea of Stephanie having to perform HLA if Billy and Chuck lose on Sunday. Stephanie accepts and says she's not even worried about Billy and Chuck losing (What confidence!) because she might just enjoy HLA. In other words, no matter what happens, Stephanie doesn't lose. Well of course she doesn't.

Matt Hardy vs. The Hurricane

Hurricane is just in tights here with no sleeveless shirt on. Matt has something to say before the match but a WE WANT JEFF chant cuts him off. A quick rollup gives Matt two and the Jeff chants throw him

off again. Hurricane grabs a victory roll for his own two and does his pose, earning himself a right hand to the jaw. The announcers try to figure out what Matt Hardy Version I means as Hurricane can't hit the chokeslam.

A Ricochet gets two on Hurricane as the fans switch over to wanting Lita. Hurricane's neckbreaker drops Matt and now the announcers want Undertaker to shot up and pummel Hardy. The Shining Wizard gets two on Matt as this is WAY better than I was expecting. Matt grabs a quick Side Effect and sneaks in a low blow to set up the Twist of Fate for the pin.

Rating: B-. It's amazing what happens when you let these North Carolina guys get together. This was a really fun match with both guys trading good looking moves until Matt cheated to win. It made for some entertaining stuff and while the announcers got annoying (as expected), that's what you can expect from Smackdown.

Heyman thinks Undertaker is waiting on Lesnar so they're not leaving.

We run down Sunday's card and it's still not very interesting.

Billy and Chuck vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Benoit

Angle and Benoit don't get along. Billy and Benoit start things off but Chris chops Angle for a tag. The team that actually gets along takes over on Kurt and Benoit finds this very amusing. Billy's tilt-a-whirl slam gets two but Billy poses a bit too much, allowing Benoit to get in a cheap shot. It's off to Benoit for the rolling German suplexes as this really isn't the way you want to treat your new top face tag team.

Billy finally avoids a charge from Benoit and gives Kurt the One and Only, setting up the hot tag. Chuck cleans as much house as Chuck Palumbo is going to be able to do before getting caught in the ankle lock. That's not cool with Benoit who throws Angle away so he can put Chuck in the Crossface. Billy makes the save, meaning Chuck should have gotten beaten twice. Chuck gets in a superkick on Benoit for the pin.

Rating: D+. What the heck was that? I mean, Billy and Chuck are going into the semi-main event at Unforgiven (it's gotten WAY more hype than anything other than the two World Title matches and you could easily argue it's beaten both of those) and this is the best you can do for them? They couldn't beat up some thrown together team for their big face debut? Speaking of them being faces, why is that the case? Their big moment was admitting they were lying to the fans and then they stand up for Stephanie or whatever and now they're fan favorites? That's really not impressive.

Benoit and Angle trade submissions post match, making Billy and Chuck look even more worthless.

Undertaker arrives with ten minutes left in the show.

Here's Undertaker to the ring for the last minute hard sell. He calls Lesnar out and gets his wish in a hurry with Heyman not being able to hold him back. Undertaker starts slugging away as Heyman calls out the troops. That means Matt Hardy, who takes the beating on Lesnar's behalf. Undertaker chases after Lesnar, who has been arrested and put into protective custody. What a lame ending.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a good show on its own but a pretty horrible go home show. To be fair though that's because Unforgiven is a miserable pay per view and really doesn't need to exist at this point. Lesnar vs. Undertaker isn't going to be worth seeing and the build is showing it more every week. There was enough good wrestling tonight to make the show work but the pay per view just isn't interesting and there's no way around it.

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Smackdown – February 14, 2017: Roses Are Red, Violets Aren't Blue, Smackdown Was Good, This Doesn't Rhyme

Smackdown

Date: February 14, 2017

Location: Honda Center, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Tom Phillips, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield

There's nothing in between us and Wrestlemania XXXIII at this point with Elimination Chamber out of the way. We still have some big TV to knock off first though and that includes one heck of a main event tonight. Bray Wyatt won the Smackdown World Title in the Elimination Chamber on Sunday but tonight he has to defend against former champion John Cena. Let's get to it.

Long recap of Elimination Chamber kicks things off.

Here's Bray with the title to open the show. After getting a chuckle at the YOU DESERVE IT chants, Bray says Sister Abigail told him this would never be easy. But now, after everything he's gone through, he truly does have the whole world in his hands. Bray welcomes us to the era of Wyatt but here's John Cena to interrupt him.

After waiting for the Roman Reigns levels of booing to cut him off, Cena congratulates Bray on becoming the new champion. John says Bray has already brainwashed the fans because they think he deserves it. Around here, you earn things instead of deserving them so now there's a target on Bray's shoulder. Cue AJ Styles to say that he's

already beaten Cena over and over so he wants his one on one rematch for the title right now. Bray seems willing but here's Daniel Bryan to interrupt and make it a triple threat.

Dean Ambrose storms into the building wanting to fight Baron Corbin.

American Alpha vs. Ascension

Non-title. Gable wrestles Viktor to the mat to start and everything breaks down a few seconds later. Alpha is sent outside but come back in off the top with a double clothesline (old Steiner Brothers move) to take us to a break. Back with Gable fighting out of a chinlock, only to get kneed in the face for his efforts. There's something to be said about getting hit square in the face to cut someone off.

Chad gets an armbar over the ropes for a breather but Viktor runs around the ring to cut of the tag. Not that it matters as Gable rolls over for the real hot tag. That means it's time for the suplexes but Chad tags himself back in, leaving Jordan to miss a charge into the corner. Something like an H Bomb gets two on Chad but Grand Amplitude wraps up Viktor for the pin at 9:59.

Rating: C+. I liked this one more than I was expecting to as they've actually made Ascension feel a little more like a threat with just a few good performances. I know we've been told for years that wins and losses don't matter but the last week or so is proof that just one fall can go a long way. Now of course we need some fresh talent on Smackdown and it's WAY too late for this version of Ascension to work but it's better than nothing.

Post match the Usos pop up on screen to say they're coming for the belts. My goodness FIND SOME NEW CHALLENGERS. It feels like they're the only real competition Alpha has had since they debuted.

James Ellsworth is trying to get Carmella to go to dinner when Ambrose comes in. Dean says Carmella is just using him so try online dating. Carmella tells Ellsworth to stand up for her so James kind of does so, only to have Bryan come in and grant Dean a match against Ellsworth for later tonight.

Dean Ambrose vs. James Ellsworth

And never mind as Baron Corbin drags Dean out to the stage. Deep Six into the production area gives us some sparks and Ambrose is out.

We recap Nikki Bella and Natalya fighting backstage at Elimination Chamber, including Bella being knocked into Maryse.

Nikki is in Bryan's office with the boss saying things need to end. Natalya comes in and the arguing begins again. That quickly turns into a fight so Bryan makes it a falls count anywhere match for next week.

Baron says Dean isn't WWE Champion because of him and now Dean is in the hospital because of him. That's everything you need to know.

Dolph Ziggler is tired of people like Apollo Crews and Kalisto trying to take his spot. If he has to wipe out an entire generation to prove his point, so be it.

Mickie James vs. Becky Lynch

Feeling out process to start with Mickie going for the arm but getting reversed so Becky can take over on the mat. Back up and a shove puts Mickie on the floor, followed by an armbar on Mickie to copy Sunday's tactics. They head outside again and it's a double clothesline to take us to a break.

We come back with Mickie grabbing a chinlock before scoring with a flapjack. The Bexploder gets two on Mickie and a forearm puts her on the floor. James comes up holding her shoulder (which didn't seem to actually hit anything in the crash) but of course she's goldbricking, setting up a spinning kick to Becky's jaw for the pin at 11:58.

Rating: C. The goldbricking might not be the most creative thing in the world but it does play up the idea that Mickie is a veteran who can use her experience to pull off something like that. I'm not wild on them splitting wins on back to back shows but it sets up what should be an entertaining third act.

Here's new Women's Champion Naomi, who says she was hurt at Elimination Chamber. It doesn't matter though because she's coming in to Wrestlemania with this title one way or another. Cue Alexa Bliss to say Naomi is just hiding from the pressure. Naomi could even have her own 30 for 30 special called The Lights Go Out. Bliss is feeling generous though and is giving Naomi a week to get ready for the rematch.

Black History Month video on Nelson Mandela.

TJ Perkins wants us to watch 205 Live.

Smackdown World Title: Bray Wyatt vs. John Cena vs. AJ Styles

Wyatt is defending and this is one fall to a finish. Bray does his entrance and runs into Luke Harper who gives him a pre-match beating. We take a break before the bell and come back with Cena loading up the Shuffle on Styles until Bray pulls him outside. AJ isn't one to be shown up though and hits a big forearm out to the floor.

Back in and a low forearm gets two on Bray but Cena comes back in for the running shoulders to the champ. The AA is countered into a failed Sister Abigail attempt though as Styles comes in with the forearm. Cena plants AJ with the AA for two, followed by Sister Abigail getting the same on Cena with AJ making the save.

Back from a break with AJ slamming Bray onto the announcers' table and dropping a leg to put him through the wood. Cena throws AJ in for another AA but tries a third and gets reversed into the Calf Crusher. That's reversed into the STF but Bray comes back in with the backsplash for the last second save. AJ is sent outside and another AA gets two on the champ. The Styles Clash gets the same on Cena and all three are down. Back up again and AJ is sent outside, leaving Bray to grab Sister Abigail for the pin on Cena at 14:05.

Rating: B+. They were spamming the finishers like few matches you'll see these days but at least Wyatt won in a really solid TV match. The fact that Bray pinned Cena clean with his finisher is a great sign and exactly what should have happened here. Cena isn't losing a thing here and Wyatt gets another big fall on his resume. Well done indeed and they even managed to make me buy some of those near falls, which I really didn't expect coming in.

Post match here's Randy Orton for the big staredown. The fans cheer for Orton as Bray says not to listen to it. Orton says he won't fight Bray for the title at Wrestlemania because he pledges loyalty to Wyatt. Bray says that means Orton has the keys to the kingdom and the double pose ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Good show here for the most part as they kept me wanting to come back next week (no not for Nikki vs. Natalya 2, which isn't even big enough to earn Roman numerals) and gave us a hot main event. This was a big step up from Sunday and you can see a mixture of upcoming TV plus Wrestlemania plans forming. I liked the show here and that's encouraging coming off a hot Raw.

Results

American Alpha b. Ascension – Grand Amplitude to Viktor

Mickie James b. Becky Lynch – Spinning kick to the head

Bray Wyatt b. AJ Styles and John Cena – Sister Abigail to Cena

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Smackdown – September 12, 2002: Billy and Chuck and Eric and Stephanie

Smackdown

Date: September 12, 2002

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

TIME FOR A WEDDING! Er, a commitment ceremony! So this time around, WWE has decided to try and run a gay wedding for the sake of publicity, which is exactly what they got from it. Billy and Chuck are becoming “tag team partners for life” here and I’ll give you three guesses how legitimate this is. Let’s get to it.

We open with a wedding invitation because of course we do. Oh and this is the season premiere. So last week’s average show was a season finale? They need to work on this stuff.

Video on Brock Lesnar vs. Undertaker's confrontation last week.

Opening sequence.

Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Non-title. They slug it out to start with Holly hanging in there until it's an overhead belly to belly suplex to make things right with the world. A front facelock only seems to annoy Holly and he takes Lesnar outside to turn it into another brawl. Raw power gets Lesnar out of trouble again though as he sends Holly back first into the post and grabs another suplex. The LESNAR chants start up with the announcers mentioning his connections to the state. That's a simple little save but very helpful to keeping Lesnar looking like a heel.

A delayed vertical suplex sets up a bearhug but Brock charges into some boots in the corner. That earns him a completely botched powerbomb with Holly hanging on his head, putting him out of action for over a year. Holly somehow gets in a dropkick and the kick to the ribs, only to eat the F5 for the pin.

Rating: D. Really dull stuff here and that's not the most surprising thing in the world. What is surprising is seeing Holly popping up and finishing the match despite his neck being destroyed like that. I know he might not be the most popular guy in the world but he's certainly one of the toughest, which means a lot on its own.

Undertaker and his wife arrive. Uh, didn't that go badly for Undertaker last time?

Eddie Guerrero/Chavo Guerrero vs. John Cena/Edge

Cena is in Minnesota Vikings colors and it's a brawl to start with the cousins jumping the makeshift team to start. That earns Eddie a pull of the mullet before Cena spins out of a double top wristlock. Eddie and Chavo beat him down on the floor though and Chavo gets in a very hard clothesline.

Back to back gorilla press slams have Eddie in trouble so he calmly dropkicks the knee out because Cena isn't ready to take Eddie on yet. The tag brings in Edge to clean house until Chavo crotches him against the post. Eddie runs up the corner for a hurricanrana but the half nelson faceplant is enough for the hot tag to Cena (Fan's sign: "HOT TAG!". Eh better than "the guy behind me can't see".). Everything breaks down and Edge goes shoulder first into the post.

Cena is left all alone to take the brainbuster and frog splash for the pin.

Rating: C+. This worked like you would expect it to but I continue to be confused by Cena. He came in white hot and hit the ground running but then he was losing to D-Von and getting pinned clean in tag matches. As is so often the case, you need more than just a wrestling match to get someone over and the lack of any development is really hurting Cena.

Post match Eddie loads up a Stinkface with Chavo playing Rikishi but Edge breaks it up and puts Eddie's face in there instead.

As expected, Eddie goes nuts on Chavo post break.

Undertaker says Sara is here because she has family in Minneapolis. Matt Hardy comes in and says he'll have a kid one day with all his Mattributes. That earns Matt a shove into a wall, earning Undertaker the promise of a Mattitude Adjustment.

Rico can't get the right figures on top of a cake but needs to talk to Stephanie. She can't go because she has bad luck at weddings (ok I chuckled at that) but Rico gets close to having a meltdown and talks her into it.

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Kurt thinks it's funny that we're in "Mini" and he's facing Mysterio again. Angle: "You know, mini? He's short. Oh come on that's funny." Angle doesn't want to hear Chris Benoit laughing at him anymore either but jumps back to Mysterio, who is a boy in a man's world. Kurt: "And I'm a man who loves to play with boys. Wait! I meant to say you're a boy and I'm a man and tonight I'm going to manhandle you!" If that's not enough comedy for you, the announcers spend Mysterio's entrance talking about how the wedding isn't for ratings and Bischoff used HLA to catch up with Smackdown's quality.

Some early suplexes have Rey in trouble so he speeds things up (makes sense) with a headscissors. Angle goes shoulder first into the post and a springboard moonsault gets two. A frustrated Kurt flips Rey upside down with a release German suplex and things get more into Kurt's pace.

We hit the bodyscissors to keep Rey down, followed by some rolling German suplexes to make things even worse. Rey fights right back with a moonsault press and a crossbody to put Angle on the floor.

The 619 looks to set up the West Coast Pop but Kurt has to settle for a regular hurricanrana for a close two. Rey takes a bit too long going up though and the corner running Angle Slam puts him away.

Rating: B+. For a TV match, this was absolutely great stuff. These two always have chemistry together, but to be fair that's the case with almost anyone Angle faces. He's the kind of guy who can have a good match against anyone and it made for an entertaining match here. Really strong match and that shouldn't be a surprise in the slightest.

Someone from the wedding party arrives in a long black limousine.

Chris Benoit vs. Rikishi

Rikishi slugs away to start and grabs a sitout spinebuster for no cover. Instead Rikishi gets kicked low and chopped down but the Crossface can't go on full. Rikishi fights up and tries the Rump Shaker, only to get caught in a rather impressive electric chair drop. The Swan Dive is loaded up but here's Angle to shove Benoit off the top for the DQ.

Rating: D. So you remember how I said Angle can work well with anyone? Well that's not the case with Rikishi, who just has no place at this level and everyone knows it. I really have no idea why he's here, especially when there are a lot of people ready to be raised up to get a shot like this. Orton and Cena are reduced to jobbing roles but Rikishi can be pushed this hard?

Post match Angle holds Benoit in place for the Stinkface.

The wedding ceremony is being set up so Benoit spends the time getting a match with Angle at Unforgiven. Stephanie agrees as Matt comes in and gets a match with Undertaker tonight.

Here's Rico to complain about how the ceremony isn't what he ordered, including a very old Justice of the Peace. The singers belt out It's Raining Men to bring Billy and Chuck to the ring (edited off the Network of course, making for a very awkward transition) and the old man dances. With the Justice's hands shaking, Chuck talks about how he didn't know much about Billy when they met.

Billy might have captured a lot of tag team gold but now he's captured Chuck's heart. Billy: "That was corny! Even for you!" Rings are exchanged and Rico is all aglow. Rico presents a video called Our Love Story with various comedic/romantic moments between the two

of them which is so cheesy it almost works in a way.

We get the speak now line and here's Godfather with the ladies. Godfather knows Billy has some pimp in him and Chuck was a great skirt chaser, especially with the heftier ladies. Rico will have none of this and dismisses the "Good Time Girls" so the ceremony can continue. Anyway, Billy says yes and Chuck does the same, albeit with some cold feet.

The Justice of the Peace almost pronounces them as married but Chuck says hang on because this was a publicity stunt that got WAY out of hand. Billy flat out says they're not gay but they have no problem with gay people. Rico loses it but the Justice of the Peace says this is the kind of love that can go on for fifty years, sixteen months....or three minutes.

The shaking stops and the voice changes with the old man ripping off the prosthetic makeup to reveal Eric Bischoff. I know you can tell it a lot better now with the voice but this COMPLETELY got me back in the day and was one of the best surprises I had ever seen. 3 Minute Warning comes in for the beatdown with Bischoff holding Stephanie back.

Stephanie takes a Samoan drop (BIG pop for that) and I'm sure that's going to warrant another year of her glorious presence on TV. Edge, Cena and Mysterio come in for the save. The rest of the locker room comes out as well because WE ALL LOVE STEPHANIE and Smackdown is awesome and such.

This one deserves a few notes. First of all, we come back from a break with a listen to the Unforgiven theme song: Adrenaline by Gavin Rossdale, featuring the line "Nobody said this stuff makes any sense." Well of course it doesn't. It's a wrestling angle mainly focusing on the bosses.

That's the next important note: the recap focuses almost ENTIRELY on Bischoff and Stephanie with the whole wedding, Billy and Chuck, Rico and 3 Minute Warning and anything else being forgotten because we need a long look at how stunned Stephanie was. I know it was shocking, but there were more people there than just Stephanie.

Third, this whole "WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER" stuff didn't work for WCW and it didn't work in the Invasion so it's not going to work here. We just watched Edge shove Eddie's face into a rather unpleasant area of Chavo's body but OH NO STEPHANIE IS IN TROUBLE so

they'll band together to help save her? Get out of here with that nonsense. It's way too much to accept and it's all for the sake of pushing Raw vs. Smackdown which wasn't interesting in the first place and still isn't here.

Finally, I have to mention GLAAD (a gay rights group) completely buying into the story and actually sending a wedding present (it was a gravy boat). After it was revealed to be a ruse, GLAAD ripped WWE apart, all while people were laughing at them for somehow trusting a PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ANGLE to be on the up and up. That always gave me a good chuckle and I really don't feel a bit sorry for them looking stupid. Think this stuff through.

Nidia vs. Torrie Wilson

It's a brawl on the floor to start with Torrie getting in a few chops to take over. The announcers talk about the wedding shenanigans and for once it's acceptable given how big (albeit stupid) that angle was. Nidia charge into the buckle and gets caught with a neckbreaker for the fast pin.

Undertaker tells Sara this won't take long.

Matt recruits Brock to be at ringside with him.

Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy

Lesnar and Heyman are at ringside too. Heyman immediately starts running around the ring and throws a chair in with Tazz blaming Stacker 2 (sponsor) for all the energy. Undertaker will have none of this and grabs a powerslam to plant Hardy. Heyman gets ejected and the distraction lets Hardy get in a low blow.

A quick clothesline from Brock puts Undertaker down again and that's a second ejection. As you probably guessed, Undertaker shrugs it off and beats the heck out of Matt but Heyman shows up in Sara's locker room. Undertaker runs off for the save (thankfully without an awkward stare at the screen) and the no contest.

Rating: D. This was an excuse to get to the ending and there's nothing wrong with that. They didn't exactly hide what they were going for with Sara being shown right before the match and that's how it should have gone. I'll even give them points for Hardy not losing, which really is kind of a surprise.

Undertaker charges to the back and chokes Heyman but takes a chair to the head from Lesnar. Brock puts his hand on Sara's pregnant

stomach to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The wedding sent this one flying off a cliff and there wasn't enough time to recover. That twenty minute segment sucked the life out of the place and that's not good considering how big of a deal this was supposed to be. I really don't know how much longer they can keep up this Stephanie vs. Eric stuff but knowing WWE, I'd put a low estimate at about six months minimum with the audience's level of interest having no impact whatsoever.

The rest of the show was up and down as well but that Angle vs. Mysterio match is worth checking out. I had a good time with some of it but so much of the show was built around one really bad idea that it's hard to give it the benefit of the doubt. Unforgiven is getting one of the worst builds to a pay per view I've seen in a long time and that's not good, especially after a classic like Summerslam.

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Smackdown – February 7, 2017: Let Me Check My Notes

Smackdown

Date: February 7, 2017

Location: Key Arena, Seattle, Washington

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips,

Byron Saxton

It's the last show before Elimination Chamber because this is that annoying period where we have all these pay per views in the span of a few weeks. The card seems to already be set in stone, making tonight about the hard sell rather than about adding much of anything new. Let's get to it.

We open with a long video on Randy Orton vs. John Cena as the rivalry is renewed again tonight.

Here's Daniel Bryan to get things going in the only logical move. It feels good to be home but above all else, Bryan is grateful that he's going to be a dad very soon. Cue Miz and Maryse to cut him off though and the heat is outstanding. During the entrance, Mauro makes a rare mistake by saying Sunday will be Miz's second time inside the Cell instead of the Chamber.

Miz is an unsympathetic as you would expect him to be and suggests Bryan to be a stay at home dad since he can't wrestle. Bryan: "Not being able to wrestle never kept you out of a ring." The crowd gets into a shouting contest with Miz but here's Baron Corbin to cut them both off.

Miz pitches an alliance but Corbin thinks he could knock Miz out right now. Bryan: "Oh no Baron. Please don't punch Miz in the face. That would be terrible." Cue Dean Ambrose to say he doesn't sweat any of these people because he's going to make some bad decisions inside the Chamber. Now it's AJ Styles to cut them off but the fans cheer for him instead of the intended reaction. Bryan makes a four way for fun.

Baron Corbin vs. Dean Ambrose vs. The Miz vs. AJ Styles

Non-title. Miz heads to the floor to start and his attempt at sneaking up on Ambrose fails completely. AJ's springboard is broken up but Corbin sends Dean into the steps to put him down again. Back in and Miz starts doing Bryan kicks to AJ and Ambrose but it turns into a battle of rollups between everyone not named Corbin. Baron and Dean clothesline each other down and we take a break.

Back with a four man Tower of Doom giving us crowd reaction shots and near falls. Deep Six gets two on Miz but AJ's basement forearm gets the same on Baron. Miz gives AJ the running knee but it's time for Dean to clean house with whatever he can come up with, including sending Miz into the barricade and Corbin into the post. Back in and AJ hits his moonsault into the reverse DDT on Dean with Miz diving in for the save. Now the Forearm connects on Miz, only to have Maryse make a save. End of Days gives Baron the pin on AJ at 12:57.

Rating: B. Now that works. Corbin getting the win is a surprise and it's not like Styles is going to lose a lot of face with the loss here. Above all else though I'm glad Ambrose didn't get pinned because we're actually protecting a champion for a change. Good action here and that's what matters most.

Luke Harper says Orton stole his family but he knows how to fix things. That means a beating at Elimination Chamber, though it's not clear if that's an official match.

Natalya and Nikki Bella come in for a satellite interview. Nikki doesn't think they can ever be friends anymore and Natalya goes into her standard "Nikki is awful" rant. They argue over who is more bitter and Nikki's big insult is that the only thing Natalya has ever been good at is wrestling. Natalya says that when Nikki is old and banged up, Cena isn't going to take care of her and will move on. If Natalya wasn't married, it would be moving on to someone like her. Nikki walks out.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is extra aggressive here as he scores with an early dropkick and sends Ziggler into the corner. Ziggler sends him into the post though and hits the running DDT, only to have his superkick countered into a rollup for the pin at 1:02.

Ziggler beats Crews down post match and hits him in the back with a chair. Kalisto runs out for the save, only to get chaired down as well.

Post break, Ziggler is put in a handicap match against Kalisto and

Crews on Sunday. What kind of face/heel psychology is that supposed to be?

Here are Mickie James, Alexa Bliss, Becky Lynch and Naomi for a four way contract signing. Mickie talks about having more experience than all four of them combined and tells Renee Young to get out of the ring. It seems that Becky is trying to erase Mickie from history and take the credit for the Women's Revolution. Without Mickie James, there is no Becky Lynch so it all ends Sunday.

Mickie signs so Becky says James walked away when it got too tough. This Sunday she's walking through Mickie with straight fire which is all she is. Now Becky signs so Alexa laughs at the idea of Becky being anything but full of orange hair dye. Alexa talks about class and signs while saying she can beat Naomi on Sunday. Naomi says she can beat Alexa and talks about Wrestlemania being in her hometown. That means she's going to slide down the aisle (yes slide) as Smackdown Women's Champion. The brawl breaks out and the villains run away.

American Alpha/Heath Slater/Rhyno/Breezeango vs. Vaudevillains/Ascension/Usos

Gable suplexes English down to start but a few rakes of the eyes put Chad in trouble. Aiden misses a Swanton Bomb and it's time for Alpha to clean house. Breeze tags himself in though and Breezango cleans house, only to have the good guys get in an argument as we take a break.

Back with Slater in trouble and Viktor tagging himself in for a chinlock. The Vaudevillains and Ascension get in an argument though, allowing the hot tag to Rhyno to blow the roof off the place. Everything breaks down and Jordan launches Gable onto a pile at ringside. Back in and the Gore hits Konnor, only to have Viktor hit a middle rope knee for the pin on Rhyno at 9:46.

Rating: D+. There wasn't any time to really make this work but it's so cute that WWE wants us to believe Ascension could win something on Sunday. I'm not sure if Alpha retains the titles on Sunday but I'm certain that Ascension isn't getting the belts. This was fine

enough to get the point across but you knew no one was going to get to show off here.

Rock N Roll Express Hall of Fame video.

Video on the Elimination Chamber.

John Cena vs. Randy Orton

Non-title. They slug it out to start with Orton taking over and kicking Cena in the ankle. Bray watches from the corks as Cena is sent out in front of him for another right hand to the face. Back with Cena taking a full nelson slam but still being able to send Orton outside. It's too early for the AA though and Orton drops him back first onto the announcers' table.

Back in and Cena hits the usual, including the AA for two. An Elevated DDT out of the corner sets up the RKO for Orton's near fall, though at least they waited a bit in between. Another RKO is shrugged off into a ref bump, allowing Wyatt to come in for the double beatdown. Cue Harper for the save and the discus lariat on Wyatt. An RKO attempt doesn't work and the AA puts Orton down at 13:38.

Rating: C+. As tiresome as this match is, it still works better than a lot of combinations. Cena needed a win here to go into the pay per view and it's not like Orton has a big match coming up or anything like that. This was all it needed to be and felt like the match you would have expected given the circumstances. Harper's full face turn moment is a good idea but I'm not sure about where to take him next, especially after he loses on Sunday.

Overall Rating: C+. This show came and went while plugging the pay per view. If that sounds like a really basic and simple idea, you're starting to catch on. I'm having a hard time remembering a lot of what happened on this show as it completely flew in one ear and out the other. It's not terrible or anything but there definitely isn't a lot of fire going into Sunday.

Results

Baron Corbin b. AJ Styles, Dean Ambrose and Miz – End of Days to

Styles

Apollo Crews b. Dolph Ziggler – Rollup

Ascension/Vaudevillains/Usos b. American Alpha/Heath Slater/Rhyno/Breezango – Knee to the chest to Rhyno

John Cena b. Randy Orton – Attitude Adjustment

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Smackdown – September 5, 2002: The Holly Show

Smackdown

Date: September 5, 2002

Location: Resch Center Arena, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's hard to say what to expect here but hopefully it's another rocking tag match with some talented people getting to show what they can do instead of jobbing to Undertaker after a former World Champion's finisher doesn't have much of an effect. Oh and we get the debut of Crash Holly for reasons I don't even want to think about. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week, which somehow gets to be narrated by Stephanie. Dang they're getting right to the point this week. Anyway, Undertaker is challenging Brock Lesnar at Unforgiven.

Opening sequence.

Billy vs. Rey Mysterio

A very early Rico distraction (those sideburns are mesmerizing) lets Billy jump Rey and choke in the corner. The tilt-a-whirl powerslam plants Rey and Tazz makes gay jokes. Rey gets in his first offense with a dropkick to the knee so Billy clotheslines his head off, making sure that Mysterio has nothing of note so far. Rico cheats a bit more so the fans are all over him, making Rico the best thing about the match so far. More shots to the back keep Rey in trouble but a springboard dropkick sets up the 619 with Chuck making the save. That means Billy gets to work Rey over even more until Mysterio gets a fluke cradle for the pin.

Rating: D. So Mysterio can go move for move with Kurt Angle in a classic but can barely get in a dropkick on Billy Gunn of all people? This is almost entirely on Billy as he just wasn't giving Rey anything to work with and it showed horribly. It's ok to let Mysterio get in a little offense, get taken down, let the comeback go on for a bit and have the co-villains cheat so Rey can do the big comeback at the end. It's called having a match with a story but this was all about Billy working Rey over without much effort.

Post match Rico tells Chuck it's time...and he proposes to Billy because he wants to be tag team partners for life. Note that the word "marry", "husband" or "I love you" are never mentioned. Billy says yes and hugging ensues.

Cruiserweight Title: Jamie Noble vs. Shannon Moore

Shannon is challenging after pinning Jamie in some recent tag matches. The battle of wristlockery start things off until Shannon armdrags him down. Nidia grabs a leg but Shannon dropkicks the champ to the floor anyway. Back in and a harder clothesline than you would expect from a cruiserweight match puts Shannon back down and a belly to back gets two.

Of course the fans would rather talk about Nidia's puppies because Raw featured a match talking about Molly Holly's hymen, meaning you can't quite blame them at this point. That's what WWE has deemed

acceptable from its employees so don't act surprised when no one cares about your matches as a result. Moore elbows him in the jaw and gets a near fall of his own off a neckbreaker. A Whisper in the Wind gets the same but Jamie counters a hurricanrana with a powerbomb. The Tiger Bomb retains the title.

Rating: C+. Good match here but the fans didn't care because WWE has given us no reason to care about them. Just because there's good wrestling out there, no one is going to notice because WWE has made us care more about the women at ringside. I'm not sure what it means that Nidia is possibly treated with more respect than the women on Raw but it seems to be the case.

Paul Heyman is hyping Brock Lesnar up for his match with Randy Orton when Randy comes up and says absolutely nothing of note.

Edge and Rikishi are ready for a six man tag later and Rikishi actually tries to explain how the Stinkface is a symbol or something. Piece of the Kish still isn't a good catchphrase.

Brock Lesnar vs. Randy Orton

Non-title and one of those matches that would be totally different just a few years later. Also Lesnar is now WWE Champion instead of Undisputed Champion as continuity takes another hit for the sake of pulling a title out of a briefcase. Orton charges straight at him and actually gets two off a rollup. That just means an overhead belly to belly though and Brock is already smiling.

Brock throws him over the top and hits an STO back inside. He throws Orton onto his shoulders and drives Randy back first into the buckle over and over as this is a total squash. Heyman: "HE WANTS THIS!" A dropkick to the ribs staggers Lesnar and Orton gets in the backbreaker. For reasons of general stupidity, he heads up top for the high crossbody but gets rolled through into the F5 for the pin.

Rating: C-. Is there something in the water over on Monday Night Raw? You can have Brock roll through people like this on Smackdown but Raw's big solution is to have him sell for people and need Heyman to save him all the time? Ever since he's gone to Smackdown he's been treated like the monster he's supposed to be and it's made him a hundred times more interesting.

Mark Henry congratulates Billy and Chuck.

Crash signs his contract and thanks Stephanie when D-Von comes in.

The Reverend is upset about Billy and Chuck but again we never heard the word wedding or marriage. He talks about how immoral is it but OF COURSE Stephanie cuts him off for not showing her enough respect. The ceremony is next week, D-Von faces Batista later and just in case you forgot, Stephanie is the most amazing and intimidating person ever.

Tajiri vs. Mark Henry

Tajiri's kicks and strikes have the effect you would expect them to have and it's time for the slow beating. The handspring elbow is knocked out of the air and Tajiri's sunset flip has no effect at all. A running dropkick to the head works a bit better but Henry shrugs it off and powerslams him for the pin.

Rating: D. Hey, did you know that Henry is really strong? Like, REALLY strong? To the point that he can bend frying pans and is barely hurt by someone kicking him really hard in the head? I'm still not sure who is supposed to be impressed by Henry squashing a member of the cruiserweight division, which is often treated as a bunch of second class citizens in the first place.

Stephanie moderates a sitdown interview (in the back without much light) between Undertaker and Lesnar. After making it clear that they're both EXCLUSIVE to Smackdown, she throws it to Brock who lists off his career accomplishments. Undertaker laughs off the idea of a young pup like Brock beating him because no one has ever taken Brock where Undertaker is taking him. Undertaker promises to beat Brock up for the first time but Heyman makes it personal by bringing up Undertaker's wife Sara being pregnant.

If anything happens to Undertaker, he'll take care of Sara but not the unborn child. The table it turned over and nothing happens. This was WAY too long and it really didn't make me want to see the match any more than I already did. Granted I checked out when Stephanie started talking about how this was a Smackdown exclusive because it might be the least important detail since...oh whatever the name of whatever award/honor Stephanie has most recently won.

Reverend D-Von vs. Batista

Batista has what would be his theme song for years and the red trunks instead of the gray one he had been wearing. D-Von jumps him to start and gets in a quick chair shot, only to take a Batista Bomb for the pin in a minute and a half. The man that pinned John Cena

clean last week everyone!

Nidia talks about the wedding next week (using the word for the first time) and asks Jamie if they'll get married one day. Jamie hugs her and panics.

Matt Hardy brags about going toe to toe with Brock but Shannon isn't all that impressed. Hardcore Holly, Matt's opponent tonight, wants to know where the footage of Matt losing has gotten to.

Eddie Guerrero and Kurt Angle are ready for their six man tag tonight. Angle is annoyed at Benoit for costing him the #1 contendership so Benoit comes in and we have a staredown.

Matt Hardy vs. Hardcore Holly

They trade rollups for two to start before opting to just punch each other in the face. Tazz would rather talk about cheese jokes (Wisconsin remember.) as Holly gets two off a belly to back suplex. A backbreaker sets up a belly to back superplex, only to have Matt knock him away and get two off a moonsault press. The Side Effect gets the same but Holly gets two of his own with a powerbomb. Neither finisher can hit so Hardy grabs a rollup, only to be reversed into another one with Holly grabbing the tights for the pin.

Rating: C+. Surprisingly good match here but I'm not sure I get the point of having Matt lose over and over when he's getting a push with the Shannon Moore stuff. Holly isn't great but at least he's good for a watchable match. Matt can play the heck out of these over the top characters with huge egos and that's what we're getting with the Mattitude stuff.

Rico doesn't have time to talk because he has wedding plans to set up. He's going to be Billy's best man.

Crash vs. Hurricane

They circle each other to start until Hurricane puts him in a Tree of Woe for a good crotching. The high crossbody gets two on Crash, followed by the Eye of the Hurricane for the same. Holly misses a charge into the post and takes a super swinging neckbreaker (that's always looked cool) to put both guys down. The chokeslam is countered into a rollup so Crash can impress Stephanie or whatever.

Rating: D+. So now we're to the point where we're jobbing talented guys like the Hurricane to validate Stephanie's investments? This is

a situation where it would have been better to just have Crash show up on Smackdown one night and say he changed brands off camera. There was no need to make this a story other than for the sake of more Stephanie vs. Bischoff nonsense.

Edge/Undertaker/Rikishi vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Benoit/Eddie Guerrero

These are the six people from the series of matches last weeks if the reasoning isn't clear. Rikishi and Angle gets things going and I'll spare you the normal "why is Rikishi here" question. Thankfully it's quickly off to Undertaker for a big boot but it's way too early for a chokeslam. Instead Benoit comes in and kicks away in the corner, only to get tossed into the corner for his efforts.

Rikishi comes back in to far too strong of a pop and gives Benoit a sitout Rock Bottom before throwing him into Angle. Edge gets a slightly weaker pop as he goes after Eddie, who takes over off the strength of some double teaming. The heels keep Edge in trouble with the rapid tags and it's Angle grabbing a chinlock.

An Edgecution gets Edge out of trouble and the hot tag brings in Undertaker to clean house. Rikishi gets in a belly to belly on Angle and superkicks Benoit, leaving Angle to take the Stinkface. Angle and Benoit have a quick collision so Chris puts him in the Crossface. Eddie is furious...and surrounded. The OH NO look on Eddie's face when he realizes what's going on is perfect and his trying to chill with Rikishi is even better. The spear sets up Eddie's face being shoved into the thong, followed by a chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: C+. If you put Rikishi in some tights or even regular trunks, this doesn't feel nearly as awkward. They did their thing here with the villains looking slightly more inept than they should. Benoit vs. Angle should be fun but that doesn't make for the best tag match in the world. Edge has kind of fallen through the cracks in recent weeks and his feud with Eddie needs a boost as they barely interact directly.

Overall Rating: D+. This depends on what you find more important. The wrestling is a little better this week but the booking is atrocious, with things like Crash Holly getting a story, Billy and Chuck's impending shenanigans, John Cena being sacrificed to D-Von of all people and Hardcore Holly beating Matt Hardy. There's so much that can be great around here but as usual, WWE seems more

interested in doing the least logical and interesting things as possible.

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Smackdown – January 31, 2017: The Future Price of Gold Takes a Hit

Smackdown

Date: January 31, 2017

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, David Otunga

We're less than nine weeks away from Wrestlemania and most of the interesting things at the Royal Rumble were from the blue brand. John Cena is the new Smackdown World Champion and Randy Orton won the Royal Rumble but there's a good chance things will change inside the Elimination Chamber in twelve days. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the Royal Rumble with a variety of media

quotes about the show.

AJ Styles is glaring at the video of Cena posing with the title when the bosses appear on either side of him. He wants his rematch and doesn't want it inside the Elimination Chamber. As for tonight though, it's time to start getting ready for the Chamber, which will feature Cena, Styles, the Miz, Baron Corbin, Bray Wyatt and Dean Ambrose. Speaking of Ambrose, he comes in and a main event of Styles vs. Ambrose is set for later tonight.

Here's John Cena for his first comments as champion. After telling the fans to let him know what they think of him, he praises AJ Styles as an elite athlete and more than just a guy from Atlanta. That brings him to the Elimination Chamber when it's not time to celebrate because it's time to fight. That makes Smackdown the place to be and John Cena the man to beat so if you want some, come get some.

Cue Wyatt and Randy Orton with Bray talking about how destiny has brought them here and the title is coming to the Family no matter what. Orton promises to end the vicious cycle at Wrestlemania when the championship will be set free. The Wyatts slowly come to the ring but Luke Harper shows up for the save, which fires Cena up WAY more than you would expect. The Wyatts bail and here's Shane to make the tag match.

John Cena/Luke Harper vs. Bray Wyatt/Randy Orton

Cena shoves Wyatt around to start and it's quickly off to Harper vs. Orton with Luke going rather violent. Harper takes Orton to the floor for a belly to back suplex onto the announcers' table and the fans are WAY into Luke here. Wyatt comes in and Harper immediately backs off for the tag off to Cena. JBL: "This doesn't bode well for John Cena!" Uh, it's not that big a deal John. Just pair off appropriately and everything is fine.

Cena gets double teamed in the corner and we take a break. Back with Cena hitting the elevated DDT but getting in a clothesline to put both guys down. Bray comes in and stares Harper down to break up another hot tag attempt. Harper doesn't mind and comes in anyway to

go after Wyatt but Orton saves his buddy from Sister Abigail. That earns Randy a big boot but Harper eats Sister Abigail. The RKO ends Cena at 13:29.

Rating: C+. That's an interesting ending as the trolling continues with the WWE actually wanting us to believe that Orton vs. Cena will take place at Wrestlemania. Wyatt vs. Harper could be interesting and I'm VERY glad they didn't have Harper take the pin. In a way, Cena taking the pin made the most sense here as he's easily able to bounce back no matter what. That's not always the case with champions but Cena isn't your normal name.

Carmella vs. Delilah Dawson

James Ellsworth introduces Carmella and JBL describes Dawson as a cross between Rey Mysterio and a Smurf (she has blue hair). Dawson actually gets in a rollup for two until Ellsworth trips her up. The Code of Silence makes Dawson tap at 1:30. Ellsworth is kind of perfect in this role and with the amount of t-shirts he sold, there's nothing wrong with keeping him around.

Kalisto vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler takes him straight down and drops the big elbow with Kalisto holding his heart. Apollo Crews is watching in the back and Kalisto gets caught in a neckbreaker for two. The superkick ends Kalisto at 2:02.

Ziggler goes for the mask but Crews chases him off.

Naomi and Becky Lynch are ready for Alexa Bliss and Mickie James.

Naomi/Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James

Becky chases Bliss off to start and it's off to Naomi, who misses a charge into the ropes. Alexa hits the knees into the moonsault knees but hurts herself (doesn't seem serious), allowing the hot tag off to Mickie. The Bexploder gets two on Mickie and everything breaks down as we take a break.

Back with Alexa holding Becky in a chinlock until it's off to Mickie for one of her own. Becky kicks Alexa away and the hot tag brings in Naomi for a springboard clothesline. The dancing kicks and a

faceplant get two on Alexa as Becky and Mickie fight to the floor. An enziguri and the split legged moonsault put Alexa away at 11:03.

Rating: C. I'm not wild on the two champions taking falls here but at least this one helps set up a title match. Coming into this feud I never would have thought Naomi would have a real shot at winning the title but they've got me thinking it could happen, which says quite a bit. This serves its purpose well and that's all that matters.

American Alpha wants some competition so they're going to issue an open challenge for the titles.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: American Alpha vs. Usos

American Alpha is defending and JBL says this is going to be great, despite Alpha pinning the Usos in 34 seconds at one point. Actually hang on a second as the Ascension, the Vaudevillains, Breezango and Heath Slater/Rhyno all come out and turn it into a huge brawl.

Referees come out as well and we take a break with no bell. Back with the brawl still going on and no semblance of order whatsoever. Slater and Rhyno and Alpha are the only teams left in the ring and Alpha's music plays with no match actually announced.

We look back at Nikki Bella and Natalya getting in a fight last week.

Daniel Bryan is on the phone with Brie when Natalya and her security come in. Natalya wants to talk about her new merchandise but Nikki comes in and interrupts. Daniel has enough and makes a match between the women at Elimination Chamber.

Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Non-title with Miz on commentary. Dean snaps off some armdrags to start and headlocks AJ to the mat. We hit a Texas cloverleaf of all things before Dean shifts it over to something like the Rings of Saturn. They head outside with Styles sending him into the announcers' table but Dean stomps him down in the corner to take over again.

Dean loads up a dive to the floor but here's Baron Corbin for a

distraction as we take a break. Back with Corbin on commentary as well as Styles gets two off a pumphandle gutbuster. Dirty Deeds is broken up by AJ's rush of strikes (which Mauro dubs the Phenomenal Blitz) to put both guys down. AJ's rack neckbreaker is countered and Styles is knocked out to the floor.

The suicide dive is broken up by a forearm to the head and they trade some hot near falls, including one off the fireman's carry into a backbreaker. The rebound lariat puts AJ down but Dean doesn't cover. The top rope elbow on the floor has Styles in even more trouble as Corbin and Miz get in a brawl. That's not cool with Dean who baseball slides Corbin down, setting up the Styles Clash to put Dean away at 18:39.

Rating: B-. DANG this is a bad night for champions. Ambrose was a bit hotter than usual here and that made for a good match. I could have gone for a DQ or countout finish here though as you don't need yet another champion getting beat but this is about as good as you can get given the way the booking is going. I get the idea of AJ needing a win and since the Chamber has four heels, there was nothing else that could have been done.

Miz gives Ambrose the Skull Crushing Finale but Corbin gives Miz and Dean the End of Days to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This wasn't the best Smackdown but I think a lot of that is due to how fast everything goes on a major pay per view weekend. If you watched Takeover, this brought us up to over thirteen hours of wrestling in four days, which is a little more than most fans can take. On top of that they have two weeks to set up a pay per view card and that's just hard to do in general. Not a bad show but the company could use a breather at the moment.

Results

Bray Wyatt/Randy Orton b. John Cena/Luke Harper – RKO to Cena

Carmella b. Delilah Dawson – Code of Silence

Dolph Ziggler b. Kalisto – Superkick

Naomi/Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James – Split legged

moonsault to Bliss

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose – Styles Clash

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Smackdown – August 29, 2002: The Stephanie Factor

Smackdown

Date: August 29, 2002

Location: Mohegan Sun Hotel and Casino, Uncasville, Connecticut

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're past Summerslam and Smackdown now has their own World Champion as Stephanie (cue the chorus) has signed Brock Lesnar to an exclusive deal. How exactly she can do this isn't clear but my guess is SHE'S STEPHANIE MCMAHON AND SPOKE IN A LOUD VOICE because that renders everyone powerless. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick look at Lesnar winning the title.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie to open us up (of course) and she's already bragging about how awesome Smackdown is because of Lesnar. Since Eric Bischoff's #1 contenders match means nothing, we're going to have a series of single elimination matches to crown a new #1

contender. She brings out Edge (Stephanie: "WOO! I'll scream if I want it.") and Eddie Guerrero but doesn't make it clear if this is a tournament or gauntlet or something else.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Eddie fires off right hands but walks into a flapjack, followed by the half nelson facebuster. Edge charges into an elbow in the corner and Eddie starts back in on the arm. Careful Eddie: you might make him spear you with no consequences again. With nothing else working, Edge suplexes him over the top for a good looking crash, followed by a slightly less good looking dive.

Back in and Eddie grabs a superplex as Cole says the winner of this series of matches gets the title shot. Again: more details on what that means would be nice but we're not likely to get them are we? Edge comes back with a powerbomb of all things and both guys are down. The Edge-0-Matic gets two but Eddie slips out of the Edgecution and grabs a couple of chairs. Ever the schnook, the referee takes one of them out, allowing Eddie to block a spear with the other one. The frog splash puts Edge away and advances Eddie to...whatever the next step of this thing is.

Rating: B-. You know these two are going to have good matches together and this being kept shorter made for a tighter match. Edge is benefiting greatly from having matches against guys like Eddie and Benoit as he's getting much sharper in the ring. That's the kind of thing that is always going to benefit young wrestlers and can't be overstated.

Matt Hardy asks Stephanie if he's next to face Eddie but she announces Rikishi as Eddie's next opponent. So it's a gauntlet?

John Cena vs. Reverend D-Von

No Batista this week. D-Von throws his coat at Cena to start and hammers away before grabbing a neckbreaker for no cover. A suplex and powerslam give D-Von two and he cuts off Cena's comeback with the spinning elbow to the jaw. The flying headbutt misses but D-Von grabs the inverted reverse DDT for the completely clean pin.

Rating: D. What in the world was the point of that? D-Von can't even cheat to beat someone with Cena's potential? This was cutting Cena's leg off and leaving him with little to do for the sake of giving D-Von a clean pin. That's one of the more confusing booking decisions

I've seen in a long time and I really don't get it.

Batista comes in and lays D-Von out with a Batista Bomb (which Cole calls a gutwrench powerbomb). Soooooo.....that's why Cena lost? To set up Batista vs. D-Von? Really?

Rey Mysterio vs. Rico

Mysterio starts fast and sends Rico outside, followed by a dive onto Billy and Chuck. The innocent bystanders are sent to the back for no apparent reason, leaving Rico to start firing off kicks. A sitout powerslam of all things plants Rey as Rico is getting to show off for the first time in WWE. Two Amigos into a Falcon Arrow (a type of powerbomb according to Tazz) gets two more and there's another powerslam. Rico misses a VERY long moonsault and Rey starts his comeback with the usual. A double springboard moonsault gives Rey two and it's the 619 into the West Coast Pop for the pin.

Rating: B-. I'm one of the bigger Rico fans you'll ever meet and this is more proof that they wasted a lot of potential with him. I watched him in OVW and was far more impressed by him than Cena as Rico just got it so much faster. He had the look, the in ring work and the work ethic but he got stuck with this horrible gimmick and that's all he's remembered for doing.

Hardcore Holly is turned down for a spot in the #1 contender series in favor of Stephanie answering a phone call.

Video on Chris Benoit.

Here's the Smackdown Your Vote video from Raw.

Stephanie is trying to get someone to jump to Raw when Matt comes in to ask for a spot in the series again, eventually cutting off her call to get an answer. He gets Brock Lesnar instead. I do love the fact that the story of the show is "let's all beg Stephanie for favors".

Rikishi wants a rematch with Lesnar and tries to get "piece of the Kish" over as a catchphrase. Eddie comes in to laugh at him and suggests the thong is on too tight.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Rikishi

Rikishi starts fast but can't get the Stinkface. Eddie goes after the knee and kicks it into the steps before kicking at it even more back inside. We hit the leglock for a bit with Eddie very slowly

cranking away. Rikishi fights up, crushes Eddie in the corner, and finishes him with a superkick (with the bad leg).

Rating: D. Nothing to see here as Rikishi's odd push WAY above his level of importance continues. For the life of me I don't get why he's getting pushed like this but I guess they don't have anyone else to go with here. It's not like Matt Hardy or anyone is right there for the same spot.

Chris Benoit runs in to help with a beatdown on Rikishi but Edge makes the save.

Here's a video mocking Major League Baseball's strike.

Stephanie rips into Benoit for attacking Rikishi and punishes him by...giving him a match with the injured Rikishi. So she's loud, basically a heel, and really stupid too.

Tajiri vs. Shannon Moore

Jamie Noble, Nidia and Hurricane are at ringside as well. They start fast with Shannon grabbing a quick rollup for two, earning himself a hard kick to the back. A chinlock doesn't go anywhere so Tajiri puts him in a reverse Tree of Woe for a baseball slide to the back of the head. It's off to a cobra clutch for a bit until Moore fights up and gets two off a running neckbreaker. One heck of a German suplex gives Tajiri two and it's time for the seconds to get in a fight. Moore grabs a rollup for the upset.

Rating: C-. Not much of a match but well done at building up a challenger for Noble. The division is hardly the best in the world but they're putting a few things together, which is better than you would expect. At least Moore is a fresh name and that's a good sign. I mean, none of it matters as soon as Mysterio goes after the title but I like it better than just having Noble sit on the belt for months.

Rikishi vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit stomps him down in the corner to start but a Samoan drop gets Rikishi out of trouble. It seems to hurt his shoulder though and there's the Crossface. A rope grab only sets up a second Crossface and Rikishi is done. Yeah Stephanie! You show Benoit by giving him a two and a half minute match against an injured opponent! Benoit is now going on to the final match in the series.

Kurt Angle apologizes to the other six dwarfs for beating Mysterio

at Summerslam. He's going to be Benoit's opponent in the final match. The crowd sounds VERY interested at the idea of Angle vs. Lesnar.

Funaki wants to interview Brock Lesnar but Paul Heyman will have none of that. Matt Hardy comes up instead and says he'll take Lesnar out. From here on, it's WWE Mattitude.

Brock Lesnar vs. Matt Hardy

Non-title and Brock isn't wasting time here as he takes Hardy outside and sends him back first into the post. Back in and we hit the shoulders to the ribs, followed by the overhead belly to belly suplex. Matt makes a quick comeback and posts Lesnar, followed by a dropkick to send him into the corner. That's about it though as the Twist of Fate is countered into the F5 for the pin.

Rating: C. See, now this made him look like a force. This was the kind of squash that Lesnar hasn't had enough of in his brief run and it made him look like a monster. It's a pin over someone with some credibility who can sell the heck out of the F5. Good match here and Matt can bounce back with a few funny promos, especially after getting beaten by someone he had no business beating.

Brock isn't done and powerbombs the heck out of Matt.

Whoever Stephanie was talking to has signed with Smackdown. They'll be debuting in the main event, which is now a triple threat. Did you know Stephanie was all powerful?

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Undertaker

One more Stephanie cameo as she introduces Undertaker, which actually does make sense here as this is a major moment. It's seeing her all the other time that it's not necessary. Undertaker shrugs off some double teaming to start (duh) but misses a big boot and crotches himself on the ropes. A few kicks to the leg put Undertaker on the floor, leaving Benoit and Angle to do exactly what you would expect Benoit and Angle to do.

Kurt snaps off some German suplexes but Benoit comes right back with a few of his own. Benoit whips him into the corner and flips Angle over with a release German suplex, only to have Undertaker dive back in for the save at two. Angle is sent outside and it's time for more chairs, one of which goes square onto Undertaker's head. Not that it matters as he's back on his feet about thirty seconds later so

Benoit grabs a German suplex. That's no sold as well as Undertaker gets in a chokeslam, only to have Angle make the save with the ankle lock.

Kurt gets sent to the floor so Benoit puts on the Crossface with Angle coming back in for an ankle lock at the same time. That's not enough for a tap so Benoit and Angle trade submissions, thankfully with Undertaker actually staying down for a good while off the double submission. Benoit kicks off the ankle lock to send Kurt into a botched rollup for no count. The Angle Slam drops Undertaker again but he's back to his feet ELEVEN SECONDS LATER for the Last Ride and pin on Benoit.

Rating: B. I criticized Edge's non-selling against Eddie at Summerslam but this was a good bit worse. You don't take a double submission from two former World Champions and then no sell another finisher by being up in about ten seconds. If you just have to give Undertaker the title shot (and who better to give it to than a guy who beat TEST on Sunday and then lost on Monday), there are better ways to do it. Like, have Undertaker sell some stuff.

The problem is this match was all backwards. Angle and Benoit wrestled like a pair of faces with all the effort and speed while Undertaker just snuck in and stole the pin. Undertaker did sell earlier in the match but then just turned it off and won the match like Benoit was nothing in the end. Then again, Stephanie is their boss so the whole face/heel dynamic is screwed up on Smackdown in general.

Overall Rating: C. This is a very hard to rate show as the wrestling was mostly fine but the Stephanie stuff is just excruciating. It really does feel like she's the main character of the show and we're just stuck sitting around waiting to see what HUGE move she makes next and how she's trying to screw Raw over next while yelling at any wrestler, often for doing what she says. She's really taking a lot of the fun away from what could be a great show and that's very bad.

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Smackdown – January 24, 2017: Why Pretend Otherwise?

Smackdown

Date: January 24, 2017

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, David Otunga

It's the final show before the Royal Rumble and that means we might be in for a few more announcements for the big battle royal. At the moment, twenty one names have been announced and most of them are from Monday Night Raw. A few more Smackdown names wouldn't hurt anything and could be on the way tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with Miz complaining to Daniel Bryan that he and Maryse don't have their own private dressing room. Miz wants to know what will be done for someone with his star power so Bryan offers to curtain off a stall in the men's room. Bryan gives him a better offer: a rematch for the Intercontinental Title against Dean Ambrose. Miz suggests a No DQ match but Bryan thinks a lumberjack match would be better.

We get a long recap on Randy Orton joining the Wyatt Family and the

team's issues since.

Randy Orton vs. Luke Harper

Bray is sitting in his rocking chair and stoically looking ahead. Orton elbows Harper in the jaw to start and they head outside for nothing in particular. Back in and Orton kicks him in the face to set up the elevated DDT. Harper's neck seems to be a bit banged up as they head outside again with Luke kicking Orton in the face.

Bray throws both of them back inside and it's off to a break. Back with Orton fighting out of a chinlock and scoring with a superplex. Harper grabs his Michinoku Driver and kicks Orton in the face for two, drawing a smile from Bray. Orton gets two off a rollup so Harper tries the discus lariat, only to get caught in the RK0 for the pin at 9:50.

Rating: C. This was much more about the angle than the match and I don't think there was much of a surprise with Orton winning. Harper is a talented guy but he has no business going over someone on Orton's level at this point. I wouldn't mind if Harper went out on his own but it didn't go all that well in the first try and he's about the same as he was back then.

Post match Wyatt gives Harper Sister Abigail. The announcers aren't sure if Harper is out of the Family or if it was just tough love.

Recap of last week's cage match and Mickie James being revealed as La Luchadora.

Renee Young brings out Mickie James to explain her actions from last week. She reads off her resume but Renee says that isn't enough. Mickie doesn't like having to explain herself because this Divas Revolution is nonsense. The only person that sees things the right way is Alexa Bliss, who has been fighting against the Revolution since it started. Becky Lynch is nothing special and Mickie would love to fight her anytime. Cue Becky to chase Mickie into the crowd but Alexa jumps her to start the double beatdown.

Last week, Carmella took James Ellsworth on a shopping spree. James wasn't sure about the prices but Carmella insists. First up: pants.

Ellsworth starts with jeans but Carmella isn't happy. Various other goofy outfits ensue so Carmella finally takes over with the help of Dante the fashion guy. Eventually it's decided to make him into someone who belongs on Jersey Shore and that's it.

Battle Royal

Heath Slater, Rhyno, Tyler Breeze, Fandango, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, Konnor, Viktor, Mojo Rawley, Curt Hawkins

The winner is in the Rumble and Baron Corbin is on commentary. English and Gotch are out in the first five seconds and Mojo punches Hawkins out next. Slater and Viktor get rid of each other, followed by Mojo helping to get rid of Rhyno and Konnor. Mojo superkicks Fandango out and backdrops Breeze to the floor for the win at 3:15.

Rating: D. This wasn't much but they kept it quick enough that it couldn't cause any problems. Rawley is in a weird spot at the moment as he hasn't done any real singles work in a long time so it's not the worst idea to let him establish himself a little bit here. The match was so short that it's hard to complain so I'll spare you any issues with a three minute battle royal.

Nikki Bella was walking into the arena earlier when she explained that she and John Cena just happened to be next to her on the side of the production truck. Natalya comes up and lays Nikki out.

Here's AJ Styles to call out John Cena. Before he gets there though, he has an issue with the Royal Rumble poster. Cena is up near the front and Styles is almost in the back of a big group shot. Now it's Cena, who looks to have some new gear. Earlier this week, Styles turned on the Today Show and saw Cena as guest host. Cena talked about facing some guy from Atlanta and the incredibly marky host is confident Cena will win. AJ doesn't like being referred to as just some guy and says no one has missed Cena.

John is a sorry excuse for a wrestler so Cena finally goes on a rant about how he's been around for ten years while AJ has only been hot for six months. AJ might have been great on the indies but Cena was built for WWE and gets more done in one day than AJ does in a year.

If Styles is so mad about the poster, learn how to Photoshop. AJ is just like everyone else: wanting to be Cena when he just can't do it.

Kalisto vs. Dolph Ziggler

The superkick ends Kalisto in 48 seconds.

Post match Ziggler grabs a chair but JBL stands up, allowing Apollo Crews to really chase Ziggler off.

Naomi vs. Natalya

No match as Nikki attacks Natalya in the back.

Naomi says she wants to fight someone so here's Alexa...to says he won't do it either.

Dean Ambrose says there aren't enough lumberjacks in the world to stop him from beating Miz tonight.

Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose is defending in the Rumble. Dean threatens Dirty Deeds to send Miz outside and the lumberjacks pummel him. That's only good for two though and we take an early break. Back with Miz sending Dean to the floor a few times, followed by the YES Kicks. Dean comes back with the top rope elbow for two and it's time for the lumberjacks to beat on Miz even more.

Back in and Maryse grabs Dean's leg, setting up a running knee ala Daniel Bryan (JBL says that's how Bryan won the title at Wrestlemania because JBL isn't as smart as he thinks) for two more. Miz is sent to the floor again and Dean dives on the big pile. The fans think this is awesome as Dean hits the rebound lariat for two, only to have everyone come in for...absolutely nothing because ten guys coming in and attacking both wrestlers isn't a DQ. Dirty Deeds ends Miz at 12:15.

Rating: C+. While I'm not sure this was awesome, I'm sure that the ending didn't make a lot of sense. Like, you can't do a no contest when ALL THE LUMBERJACKS come in at once? It's really that important to have Ambrose pin Miz here? Anyway, the match was fine as these

two have chemistry together and that's all that matters.

Ambrose poses to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This wasn't Smackdown's best work as it seems that they're getting ready for everything besides the Rumble. Now in a way I can get that idea as there's only so much hype you can do for a battle royal when your roster doesn't even comprise a third of the lineup and none of your entrants have any real chance. Still though, they did the best with what they had and that's fine enough.

Results

Randy Orton b. Luke Harper – RKO

Mojo Rawley won a battle royal last eliminating Tyler Breeze

Dolph Ziggler b. Kalisto – Superkick

Dean Ambrose b. Miz – Dirty Deeds

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