

# Smackdown – July 25, 2002: Who's That Jumping Off the Cage?

## Smackdown

Date: July 25, 2002

Location: Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's another big night for Smackdown as we have the in ring debut of Rey Mysterio as well as the Smackdown debut of Brock Lesnar, who Stephanie stole this past Monday. We're also getting ready for Summerslam and that's the best thing that could happen after a rather dreadful summer. Let's get to it.

We open with a video of Stephanie introducing the show in a seizure inducing moment. See, Stephanie is all hip and cool and caters to the youth of the country with her hipness.

Opening sequence.

## Kurt Angle vs. Mark Henry

Henry shoves him around to start and just glares him Kurt for trying a suplex. Kurt is sat on top where Henry pats him on the head for fun. A missed charge allows Kurt to hit the first suplex and really take over. Another powerslam puts Angle down but here's Lesnar to F5 Henry for the DQ. There was no one but Angle to be put in this spot right?

Angle follows Lesnar to the back and asks what was up with that. Brock was just trying to help Kurt out after Angle blew it at Vengeance. Now that Brock is here, Kurt's time as the top star on Smackdown is over.

Stacy Keibler goes in to see Stephanie and offers to help her in any way possible. Stephanie has her answer the door, which is a flower delivery from Eric Bischoff, who will be here tonight. The vase is thrown against the wall.

## Reverend D-Von vs. Big Valbowski

Hardcore Holly is in Val's corner. Venis starts fast with a clothesline and big boot but both of them fall out to the floor in a crash. Back in and Venis gets two off a fisherman's suplex with Batista making the save. The partners get in a fight on the floor, leaving Val to grab a Blue Thunder Bomb for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here as D-Von's reverend gimmick has basically stopped save for the theme song (which is still awesome). Venis and Holly are fine for a low level veteran team but I can't picture them going any further than a single title shot and maybe not even on pay per view.

Batista cleans house post match. Just let him leave D-Von already and go after someone bigger.

On Stephanie's orders, Stacy sends security after Edge.

Lance Storm and Christian are ready for their first title defense against the Rock and Hulk Hogan. That's quite the step up.

Stephanie catches up with Edge, who assures her he isn't leaving to sign with Raw. Instead he was going to the production truck with a tape. The tape starts rolling and it's a countdown clock with about an hour and thirty seven minutes on it. That's how long there is left in the show and in that time, Edge is going to get his hands on Chris Jericho inside a cage. Wait WHAT? It's a video tape that seems to start with 97 minutes left and Edge got it into the tape player EXACTLY ON TIME??? Including being stopped by security and talking to Stephanie? She had to write this idea. Like, she had to. Only Stephanie could see this working.

Angle is on the phone with someone named Eric. It's going to be his brother isn't it?

## Rikishi vs. Albert

Albert bicycle kicks him in the head at the bell for no cover. A few corner splashes set up a Vader Bomb for two but Rikishi gets in a DDT. The running hip attack in the corner sets up a Stinkface, followed by the Rump Shaker for the pin. What in the world is up with pushing Rikishi

like this?

Stephanie (yes again) calls Angle and demands an explanation via voicemail.

Remember last week when we saw a video saying Rey Mysterio debuts in a week? Everything is still on schedule.

Tag Team Titles: The Rock/Hulk Hogan vs. Lance Storm/Christian

The Canadians are defending. Hogan and Storm start things off and guess what the fans are chanting. Storm gets in a clothesline to start and is quickly pinballed back and forth by right hands from the challengers. Wait, we need to stop and look at a worried Stephanie. Ok now that we're done with that, let's talk about how worried she is! Rock gets double teamed for a bit until a Samoan drop drops Storm like a Samoan.

Test breaks up the People's Elbow though and you can hear the energy come out of the building. Back in and Test cuts off another comeback, followed by a superkick to give Storm two. Hogan comes in for the save but gets distracted to the floor by Test. Therefore there's no one for Rock to tag so he waits about ten seconds and makes the hot tag on the second attempt. A double belly to back gets two on Hogan but it's Hulk Up time, only to have Lesnar come in for the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. Not the worst here but Rock could have been almost anyone. You really don't need to tie this in to the Summerslam match as the idea is more about treating Brock like a monster. The match was as good as an average tag team facing two of the biggest stars of all time was going to be.

Lesnar orders Hogan's limo driver to take himself and Heyman instead.

The announcers recap the talent stealing story. Would it kill Cole to wear a suit?

John Cena thinks Test has ugly teeth and gets slapped in the mouth for it.

Stephanie comes up to Jericho and it turns into an ad for the new Fozzy

CD.

### Rey Mysterio vs. Chavo Guerrero

I remember thinking that it was a different Mysterio since he had the mask back on. Rey starts fast with his variety of headscissors (smart way to go) but Chavo sends him into the corner to take over. We hit an abdominal stretch for a bit before Chavo drives him back first into the apron. Rey has enough of being on defense and busts out a big flip dive to knock Chavo silly. A sweet cradle gets two but a Gory Bomb plants Rey for the same. That goes nowhere so it's the 619 (no pop yet and Tazz calls it the Six Nineteen) into the West Coast Pop (no name either) to give Rey his first win.

**Rating:** C. This could have been better by letting Rey fly around more but this is WAY past the point where he blew the doors off the place. That being said, he's miles better than almost anyone in the division and it was another big name from WCW that could actually mean something in the future. In other words, it's potential, which isn't something you can never have enough of in wrestling.

In the back, Test lays Mysterio out.

### John Cena vs. Test

Cena goes right for him to start but a hard knee to the ribs slows him down. A quick DDT gets Test out of trouble but let's talk about Bischoff again! A Jericho style flying forearm drops Test again and the ProtoBomb gets two. Back up and Test tries a powerbomb but gets sunset flipped to give Cena another upset.

**Rating:** C-. I'm a Test fan (I think there are three of us) so I liked this a bit more than I should have. That being said, Cena really, really needs a finisher outside of a fluke rollup. That's all he's used to win so far and while it's not great, the ProtoBomb would be fine for a finisher until he gets something better. Cena is good enough at the moment but he needs some upgrades.

Test kicks him in the face post match.

Stephanie calls Angle and basically rips him apart for not calling her back. If he's going to Raw with Eric, the least he could do is tell her face to face. It's going to be his brother isn't it?

### Edge vs. Chris Jericho

Inside a cage and this is actually joined in progress. You don't see that too often in a big match. Jericho goes head first into the cage and Edge rips some skin off his chest with chops. A spear up against the cage makes things worse but Jericho sidesteps a second attempt to send Edge into the steel. That means a nasty cut on Edge's head and a sleeper drop gets two.

Back up and Edge ducks another charge to send Jericho into the cage but Edge can't get out quite yet. A sitout gordbuster (not an inverted powerbomb Tazz) gets two on Jericho as they're already trading big moves, though there's not a lot of drama yet. Cole: "You've got to give the businesswoman Stephanie McMahon a lot of credit!" Well of course we do! We haven't talked about her all match and just to be clear, she's a totally professional businesswoman and our role model.

Edge escapes the Walls so Jericho goes for the door, giving us the fairly standard "heel grabs the chair right next to the door" spot. A very loud chair shot gets two with Edge's spear connecting for the same. Both guys head to the top for a super bulldog from Jericho and it's time for a double breather. Jericho goes up again and gets pulled right back down with a super electric chair for a nasty looking crash. Both guys are down but it's Edge getting up over the top for the escape before Jericho can get out the door.

**Rating:** B-. This wasn't the best cage match in the world as there wasn't enough build to the big spot trading section. Edge going over clean is the only call here and now he's beaten Angle and Jericho in back to back feuds. That's how you build someone up and it's a good sign when the fans are responding to someone rising up the ranks like this.

Post match the Un-Americans come in for the beatdown. Cena tries to make a save but instead it's Mysterio diving off the cage to take everyone down.

Bischoff is in the parking lot so HERE COMES STEPHANIE! She tries to get into the limo while he talks about knocking Stephanie out. The limo pulls away with Eric laughing along with someone we can't see. Angle comes up and Stephanie is thrilled because IT WAS HIS BROTHER ON THE PHONE! GEE! SHOCKING INDEED! Stephanie wants to know who is in the limo to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. I know I keep harping on this but Stephanie is already killing these shows. It feels like we have to stop and see whatever nonsense she's up to almost every five minutes and it boils down to this Raw vs. Smackdown show. What that ignores though is the fact that you can watch both shows and not miss anything. The pay per views give you the payoff to all the feuds and the TV shows are on the same nights.

Why should I care if Bischoff and Stephanie are stealing talent from the other show? It doesn't help that it's treated as the biggest story in the company because that means we don't really have an option other than watching As Stephanie's World Turns. The wrestling wasn't bad but it really feels like it's a few miles behind the big story, which isn't interesting.

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## Smackdown – December 20, 2016: Merry Effort

### Smackdown

Date: December 20, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

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

We're in the home stretch of 2016 and Smackdown is going out with a bang. Tonight we have two title matches and a major match between Luke Harper and Dean Ambrose. It's unlikely that they're going to change either the

Intercontinental or Smackdown World Title here but stranger things have happened. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

#### Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth

Styles is defending and it looks like this match is actually happening for a change. An early attempt at No Chin Music earns Ellsworth a strike rush for the pin at 43 seconds.

Post match AJ destroys Ellsworth and catapults him into the bottom of the ring to (in theory) write Ellsworth off TV. Styles talks about how he's glad to be past Ellsworth so he can move on to the new year with fresh challenges. This brings out Dolph Ziggler to say he only needs to win one match to become WWE Champion. Styles laughs him off and says anyone else should go after the title. Cue Baron Corbin who says it should be his title shot. Corbin thinks Ziggler got his shot because he wasn't in the match. All Ziggler steals are opportunities so Corbin punches him in the face. End of Days leaves Ziggler laying.

Back from a break, Ziggler is given a match against Corbin tonight. If Corbin wins, he gets the title shot next week.

#### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Miz is defending after losing to Crews at Tribute to the Troops and Crews doesn't even get an entrance. A few rolling cradles give Crews some near falls early and a dropkick gets a third. Crews moonsaults off the apron to take Miz down as this is one sided so far. Back from a break with Crews nipping up and screaming a lot. The Toss Powerbomb is broken up but Crews gets two off an Angle Slam. The fans are WAY into these near falls too.

Maryse gets on the apron for a distraction and is quickly ejected for her efforts. That sets up a red hot near fall off a rollup before Miz has to flip out of a belly to back suplex. The ref gets bumped in the process (and I mean BARELY gets bumped), setting up a thumb to the eye and the Skull Crushing Finale to retain Miz's title at 8:42.

**Rating:** C. I was digging the match until that way too fast finish. It really felt like they were out of time and had to get out as fast as they could. Still though, it's a good performance from Crews, but that's all he seems to have. Yeah he looks great but for some reason he's almost never allowed to win a major match.

Post match Renee Young asks Miz about his obsession with Dean Ambrose. Miz: "Maybe we should ask about your obsession with Dean Ambrose. After all, you're the one sleeping with him." Renee slaps him in the face and walks off to a BIG reaction.

We look at Zack Ryder's knee injury from last week and subsequent surgery.

John Cena is back next week.

Here's Natalya to get to the bottom of this "Who Attacked Nikki" story. She asks Nikki Bella to come out here but Carmella is right there as well. Carmella brings up Natalya saying that no one cared about the Bellas when they left, which sends Natalya chasing Carmella up the ramp and throwing her into some presents.

Natalya admits that she was the attacker (WELL DUH!) and goes on another anti-Total Divas rant because NATALYA should have gotten the Total Divas spinoff. Nikki may be beautiful on the outside but she's horrible on the inside, which is why Cena will never marry her. OH SWEET GOODNESS TELL ME THAT'S NOT WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW. That's been the story of EVERY SEASON OF TOTAL DIVAS and now it's happening on Smackdown too??? Good grief that show needs to die already.

Alexa Bliss comes in to see Bryan and is told she'll be defending the title against Becky Lynch next week. Bliss isn't happy but Bryan says he can go talk to the trainers. The champ storms off.

Dean Ambrose vs. Luke Harper

The rest of the Family is at ringside. An early Dirty Deeds attempt doesn't work and Harper catapults him throat first into the bottom rope. Back from an early break with Dean being thrown off the top and getting



caught in a torture rack. That really should be someone's full time finisher. A superkick cuts off Dean's comeback bid and the sitout powerbomb gets two. Harper loads up what looks like another powerbomb and gets caught in la majistral for the pin at 7:48.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to see here and I'm really not a fan of that slip on a banana peel finish. Harper completely dominated this match until Ambrose caught him with a single rollup for the pin. If you want to push Harper then push Harper by giving him some wins. Don't have him dominate like this and then lose over and over because it gets old in a hurry.

The Wyatts lay Ambrose out post match. Bray and company leave via darkness so here's Miz to give Ambrose the Skull Crushing Finale.

#### Alexa Bliss vs. La Luchadora

Non-title and Luchadora is in a mask and full body suit. You know who it is, I know who it is, and we have to listen to the announcers not know who it is. Luchadora gets in some rollups for two each until Bliss pounds her in the back to take over. The fans chant SI as Luchadora slaps on the Disarm-Her for the tap at 3:06.

**Rating:** D. Well duh. This is one you can file under storyline advancement instead of anything interesting and there's nothing wrong with that. It's a classic yet effective idea and helps set up next week's title match. Sometimes it's ok to just say what's going on and let us see the obvious finish. That doesn't make it a bad thing.

Of course it's Becky Lynch.

Ryan Phillippe (of Shooter, a show which guest starred Randy Orton) arrives and tries to find Orton. Instead he gets Curt Hawkins and Mojo Rawley so some trash can be talked between the two wrestlers. A match is announced for later.

#### Mojo Rawley vs. Curt Hawkins

Phillippe is on commentary so hopefully this is short. Mojo runs him over to start as the announcers praise Phillippe and we hear a bit about Shooter. That shifts to a discussion of Otunga being married to Jennifer

Hudson (rarely discussed in WWE) as Rawley hits some Stinger Splashes and the Pounce. A running right hand in the corner ends Hawkins at 2:28. Phillippe was fine here and seemed to be having a good time, which is all you can ask for from a celebrity.

Ellsworth, with almost every part of his body either in some kind of a bandage or wrapped in ice, can't speak. The annoying interviewer keeps asking questions anyway until Carmella of all people comes up to say she'll take care of him. Well ok then.

### Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

The winner gets Styles, on commentary here, for the title next week. Corbin takes over to start and takes Ziggler outside for some trash talk to the champ. A chest first whip into the buckle has Ziggler in even more trouble and Corbin does his slide under the ropes for a forearm to the back. Ziggler is sent shoulder first into the post and we take a break.

Back with Ziggler getting two off a rollup but having his head taken off with a clothesline. Ziggler gets in a neckbreaker and the Zig Zag for two more. A superplex is countered into Deep Six for another near fall and they head outside again with Ziggler being thrown into AJ. It's a double countout at 15:44.

**Rating:** C. Well of course it sets up a triple threat. We haven't had one in all of a week or two and that means we just need another one. This is getting WAY too common in WWE anymore and I really don't need to see one for a long time. I like the idea of setting up Corbin in the main event but ENOUGH with the triple threats.

Post match Styles lays them both out with a chair. Cue Bryan to make the triple threat for the title next week.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The wrestling wasn't the big deal here but rather having them do whatever they could with one week to go in the year. Instead of just folding up shop and saying we'll see you next year, Smackdown is going with storylines and big title matches. I can greatly appreciate effort in wrestling and it makes for an enjoyable Tuesday night instead of something that feels like I'm stuck watching it. Good

show here which gave me reasons to want to come back.

### Results

AJ Styles b. James Ellsworth – Backfist to the face

Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

Dean Ambrose b. Luke Harper – La majistral

La Luchadora b. Alexa Bliss – Disarm-Her

Mojo Rawley b. Curt Hawkins – Running right hand in the corner

Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin went to a double countout

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# **Smackdown – July 18, 2002: And There It Is**

### **Smackdown**

Date: July 18, 2002

Location: First Union Arena, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Vengeance but the bigger story here is the in ring return of the Rock who will be facing Kurt Angle to warm up for his World Title match on Sunday. Other than that we get to meet the first Smackdown General Manager, who I'm sure won't be a huge disappointment and create a bunch of plot holes. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Eric Bischoff being announced as the Raw GM. Bischoff has promised to show up tonight and sign Rock, which apparently you can just do. The idea here is that he likes to steal talent, though I'm not sure why Vince would care since he owns both shows.

Opening sequence.

#### Chris Jericho vs. John Cena

Cena starts fast as has been his custom so far but misses a charge, sending him flying out to the floor. Back in and Jericho takes too long on top, allowing Cena to dropkick him down. A belly to belly and DDT get two each on Chris so he hits Cena low for the quick DQ.

Post match Jericho puts Cena in the Walls of Jericho and beats him down with a chair.

A smiling Bischoff arrives.

Bischoff goes looking for Hulk Hogan. Hint: it's the room with the HULK HOGAN sign on the door. Hulk doesn't seem interested and tells Eric that they're not down south anymore. Eric asks if Edge is really attached to Smackdown but Hulk still doesn't seem convinced.

#### Hurricane vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Chavo slaps the handshake away and gets taken down by a neckbreaker. Hurricane blows his knee out on a leapfrog though and Chavo wraps it around the post. The Tree of Woe makes things worse but Hurricane grabs him by the throat. Cole: "I think it might be the chokeslam!" That's enough of a tip off for Chavo to take the knee out again. The knee is

fine enough for a Shining Wizard and Blockbuster for two each but Chavo gets all fired up. A Brock Lock with Chavo lifting Hurricane up for a kind of powerbomb sets up an STF to make Hurricane tap.

**Rating:** C. The match was fine though I'd still like to point out that Chavo isn't interesting on his own. He's someone who really needs a gimmick because there's just not enough there on his own. He looked extra vicious tonight though and the leg work was good stuff. Chavo can wrestle a totally acceptable match but that doesn't mean he's interesting.

Chavo is sick of these Rey Mysterio videos and challenges him to a match next week.

Vince arrives.

Rico offers Bischoff his services but Eric runs into Vince. Eric says he's off to see the Rock to show off ruthless aggression.

Undertaker had a sitdown interview earlier (that's not something you see every day) which he turns into a promo about how Rock and Angle are in for beatings. He and Angle could fight a thousand times and Kurt could never make him tap. This was a pretty rambling promo but Undertaker doesn't get a lot of practice.

#### Billy and Chuck vs. Hardcore Holly/Big Valbowski

Billy punches Holly down in the corner to start but Hardcore hits his kick to the very lower ribs (Tazz: "This might not even hurt Billy!") to take over. The partners come in with the veterans keeping Chuck in trouble. A belly to belly puts Hardcore down but the advantage lasts all of a few seconds until a double clothesline drops both of them. Venis gets a hot tag with what had to be a sweetened crowd pop. Everything breaks down and the Alabama Slam into the Money Shot finishes Billy.

**Rating:** D+. Sure why not. It's not like the tag division has anywhere to go but up so give a new team a win to make them players. I know it's not much and Holly/Venis aren't going to be anything serious but it's better to try to do something instead of running the same teams over and over again. Also, you can almost guarantee a passable match from the veterans

and that's better than taking a gamble on someone who won't go anywhere and could put on a disaster.

### Edge/Hulk Hogan/Rikishi vs. Un-Americans

It's Edge and Storm to get things going and the other Canadians are quickly tripping Edge from the floor. The fans already want Hogan as we take an early break. Back with Edge still in trouble, including a chinlock from Test. The big boot misses though and Edge gets in the half nelson faceplant but Storm breaks up the tag. Do Canadian schools teach you how to cut off the ring? Edge powerslams Lance and brings Hogan in as everything breaks down. Storm's superkick triggers the Hulk Up but Test breaks up the Stinkface. Not that it matters as Edge spears Christian and hits the Edgecution for the pin on Storm.

**Rating:** C+. Totally fine six man here and, again, they kept Hogan's in ring time limited. The fans love him and want to see him do his stuff so why let him ruin a match due to age and physical limitations? This was exactly what it should have been, save for Rikishi being a bit of an odd fit with the champs.

Bischoff gives Rock his sales pitch and Rock says he'll be at Raw...because he'll be the new Undisputed Champion. See, Rock could go on any show and be a success. Rock could even show up on Frasier and make it electrifying. Bischoff thinks Rock would have been great on Nitro but Rock says he was too busy helping to put WCW out of business.

Here's Vince to announce the new GM. Before we get there though, Vince says any talent can negotiate with any show if they're interested. The Smackdown General Manager tried to put Vince out of business as well and has a history of ruthless aggression. The new boss is....Stephanie McMahon, because being banished FOREVER means less than four months. As expected, she takes WAY too long to get to the point while screeching a lot. Short version: HHH is signing with Smackdown and she's going to throw Bischoff out.

Stephanie goes to the back in full power walk mode to find Bischoff talking to the Un-Americans. We get the big staredown that a total of four people care about. Bischoff is willing to leave but says a lot can

happen in three days. He'll see her at Vengeance, assuming her AMAZING PRESENCE doesn't melt him before then.

So yeah....this isn't a surprise. Everyone knew Stephanie's banishment would never last because WWE exists as a way to make her look awesome. Ignore the fact that people don't care and Stephanie's angry voice is more funny than intimidating. This is the new version of Vince vs. Flair and Stephanie is a weaker talker than either of them, meaning things are already looking down.

### Tajiri vs. Billy Kidman

The announcers hit the "let's praise Stephanie" button in a hurry as the match is easily ignored. Tajiri fires off some chops in the corner but the reversal is enough to make the announcers acknowledge the match, only 54 seconds after the bell. Kidman gets caught in the Tarantula and we hit a chinlock to keep things slow. A good superkick drops Kidman but he bulldogs Tajiri down and drops the Shooting Star for the pin.

**Rating:** C. This was a victim of time as there's only so much you can do in about 3:45 with a chinlock in the middle and a crowd that is still annoyed at the Stephanie announcement. The cruiserweights are starting to get somewhere and it's only going to get better with Mysterio coming in as the division's star.

Jamie Noble comes after Kidman and, with the help of Tajiri's mist, powerbomb him down.

Jericho goes to see Stephanie and is given a match with Edge next week. Swearing ensues after he leaves.

Rey Mysterio is here next week.

The announcers run down the Vengeance card.

### Kurt Angle vs. The Rock

Before the match, Angle promises to make Rock tap. Undertaker comes out to watch so just pencil in the post match brawl now. Rock charges to the ring and does those one punch knockdowns. They head outside with Rock

suplexing him on the ramp but getting catapulted into the post for one of those awesome bumps.

Angle stomps him down and gets two off a clothesline, only to walk into a belly to belly. There will be no suplexing our American hero though and the rolling German suplexes get two on Rock. Angle spends a bit too much time talking to Undertaker but is perfectly fine with more suplexes.

A long chinlock fills in some time before the Angle Slam, with Rock bumping so hard it almost looked like a reverse AA, gets two. Rock pops back up and grabs the quickly broken Sharpshooter. They head outside with Rock going after Undertaker, only to catch Angle in the spinebuster without much effort. The People's Elbow is loaded up but Undertaker comes in for the DQ.

**Rating:** B-. Not a great match or anything but perfectly acceptable as a big time TV main event, especially with Rock making his big comeback here. The triple threat will be fine and as long as it gets the title off of Undertaker, everything will be fine. Angle and Rock always have chemistry together and this was good, especially given the circumstances.

Post match Angle chairs Undertaker down and puts Rock in the ankle lock.

HHH is going to his limo (Was he even on the show?) when Stephanie comes up to him. She wants to have a professional discussion with him but HHH only asks if she's gaining weight. He gets in the limo and Bischoff is waiting for him. Stephanie shouts a lot (I'm shocked) to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. I really can't emphasize how much that Stephanie announcement sucked the life out of this show. It really does make you realize how much none of this show or company matter because it's all about the McMahons. Even the Rock, who might be the most charismatic wrestler of all time, could barely make a dent in what Stephanie brings to this show. It's an entertaining night but you can really feel where things change all at once.

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# Smackdown – December 13, 2016: Random Cameos Can Be Good Things

## Smackdown

Date: December 13, 2016

Location: Verizon Center, Washington D.C.

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

As has been the case more often than not lately, we've got a fairly stacked Tuesday show. Tonight it's a tag team battle royal to determine some new #1 contenders to go along with AJ Styles defending the Smackdown World Title against James Ellsworth. Smackdown doesn't have anything major to set up until the Royal Rumble so it's all about big TV until then. Let's get to it.

We open with Shane McMahon (What purpose does he serve? Can anyone answer that?) and Daniel Bryan watching Ellsworth cost Dean Ambrose last week's main event. Ellsworth comes in coughing and sneezing so Bryan says the title match is postponed. Therefore, we need a new #1 contender.

Opening sequence.

It's time for MizTV with special guest AJ Styles, who thinks Ellsworth has come down with Chinfluenza. AJ laughs off the idea of Ellsworth being a threat to the title, which is probably accurate. Miz says that he's the one who raised his title to greatness and beat Ambrose last week. It's true that Miz isn't on AJ's level because he's above it, meaning maybe it's time to make the WWE Championship legendary. A fight is teased but Ambrose and Dolph Ziggler come out because Heaven forbid we go a week without hearing from Dolph. Miz takes Dirty Deeds and actually so does Ziggler, only to have Luke Harper appear and lay Ambrose out.

After a break, AJ comes in and demands protection from the bosses. Tonight it's a fourway elimination match for the #1 contendership between Miz, Ambrose, Harper and Ziggler with interference being grounds for an elimination. The title match will take place on the December 27<sup>th</sup> episode of Smackdown.

### Carmella vs. Natalya

Nikki Bella is on commentary because this is her division. It's a catfight to start and we head to a rather early break. Back with Carmella sending Natalya into the corner for the Bronco Buster. We hit the bodyscissors, meaning a lot more screaming. Nikki keeps babbling on about how she trusts Natalya and a friend would never do that because it needs to sound like a reality story. Natalya powers out with a Michinoku Driver but opts to argue with Nikki even more. She even shoves Nikki out of the way of a charging Carmella but the distraction lets Carmella grab a small package for the pin at 9:05.

**Rating:** D+. So like did you know that Nikki and Natalya were the best friends EVER and would never ever stab each other in the back? I need a camera to awkwardly stare into while I list off various emotions I'm feeling as I talk about this because it's one of the worse reality show stories they've done in a long time.

Video on John Cena hosting Saturday Night Live. Cena is back in two weeks.

Gabriel Iglesias (standup comedian) talks to Apollo Crews about being on tomorrow's Tribute to the Troops. Miz and Maryse come in so insults can be exchanged.

### Tag Team Battle Royal

American Alpha, Heath Slater/Rhyno, Ascension, Vaudevillains, Hype Bros, Breezango

The winners are the #1 contenders and both members have to be eliminated. Simon Gotch is knocked out two seconds into the match off a hard clothesline from Mojo Rawley. Thing slow down considerably with people taking various shots at each other around the ring. In other words, it's a battle royal. Slater and Rhyno start double teaming English as Chad Gable pulls Viktor over the top for an elimination.

Konor gets rid of Gable a few seconds later and we're down to nine. Slater accidentally puts Rhyno out and another team is split. We take a break and come back with English being dumped out, meaning the Vaudevillains are done. Fandango is swept out to the floor and we're down to Jordan, Breeze, Slater, Konor and Ryder, meaning Rawley was put out during the break.

Jordan starts to clean house with shoulders and suplexes but Breeze and Konor get together for the elimination. Dang American Alpha just can't get there. Slater snaps off some neckbreakers but the numbers game catches up with him, allowing Konor to throw him out. Breeze tries to turn on Konor but gets dropkicked down by Ryder. Konor knocks Breeze out to the floor and Zack gets rid of him for the win at 13:33.

**Rating:** D. Battle royals almost always suck by definition and it certainly didn't help that the Hype Bros were built up as the next challengers last week. At least they had to do more than beat Ascension and Breezango to get the shot though, making this somewhat of an effective way to crown new #1 contenders.

Baron Corbin video.

### Alexa Bliss vs. Deonna Purrazzo

Actually never mind as Bliss says this is beneath her so no match.

Bliss lays Purrazzo out but here's Becky Lynch to interrupt. She wants her rematch right now but Bliss says not tonight. Actually never mind again as Shane McMahon comes out to say the title match is on.

#### Smackdown Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch

Lynch is challenging and Bliss hides in the ropes to start. The threat of a Disarm-Her sends Alexa even further into the ropes, followed by some armdrags to keep the champ in trouble. Bliss gets rolled up for two as JBL talks about blocking Mauro on Twitter. Another Disarm-Her sends Bliss outside and, claiming a knee injury, she takes the countout at 4:30.

**Rating:** C-. See, Smackdown is smart enough to not blow the big title match on a regular Smackdown with no hype. If this were Raw, the title match would have five minutes' build and then go fifteen minutes before we got the next match. The match was little more than an angle but it gives Becky a win over the champ and sets up another rematch.

Bliss goes after Becky with the knee looking just fine. The beatdown sends Bliss limping back to the floor.

#### Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Luke Harper vs. The Miz

AJ is on commentary, elimination rules with the winner getting a title shot in two weeks and of course Miz's title isn't on the line. Harper absolutely cleans house to start by knocking Ziggler and Ambrose to the floor, followed by a Michinoku Driver to Miz. Ziggler and Ambrose get together to put Harper on the floor, leaving Miz to DDT Ziggler for two.

Miz starts firing off some baseball slides but stops to mock Bryan's pose. That means it's time for YES Kicks and the corner dropkicks to make it even worse. It's Dean coming back in to cut Miz off but Harper just blasts him with a boot to the face. Ziggler gets caught in a torture rack but Ambrose makes the save and takes Luke down with the rebound lariat. Miz tries to steal a fall but gets small packaged for the elimination at 6:45 as we take a break.

Back with Ambrose hitting a spinning backbreaker for two on Ziggler while

Luke it out on the floor. The Zig Zag puts Harper down but Dean drops the top rope clothesline for two on Ziggler. Harper comes back with a sitout powerbomb for two more on Ziggler but a superkick into Dirty Deeds gets rid of Luke at 15:13.

So what was the point of adding him to this match in the first place? Couldn't they do the exact same thing with three instead of four? The catapult sends Ziggler face first into the post but he's fine enough to hit a super X Factor for two. Cue Miz to offer another distraction but Ambrose takes him down with a suicide dive. Ziggler uses the distraction to get in a superkick for the pin and the title shot at 19:05.

**Rating:** B-. Harper being there for no apparent reason aside, this was a nice long match with everyone looking good to quite good. I really could go without Ziggler getting ANOTHER World Title shot but at least it's only two weeks away on a TV show and not six weeks away at the Rumble.

Rich Swann tells us to check out 205 Live.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This was an interesting show as they set up a lot for what feels like it could be a major show on December 27. I can go for the Hype Bros as the next victims for the Wyatts and it should be interesting to see what happens when Lynch finally gets a big time title shot. Good show here and I think I can handle another week without Ellsworth getting his title shot.

## Results

Carmella b. Natalya – Small package

Zack Ryder won a battle royal last eliminating Konor

Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss via countout

Dolph Ziggler b. Luke Harper, Dean Ambrose and the Miz – Superkick to Ambrose

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# Smackdown – July 11, 2002: Right Down the Middle

## Smackdown

Date: July 11, 2002

Location: Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the week after a big show and the top story is the return of the Rock. It's not clear what he's going to be doing here but odds are it's something rather simple that is going to be considered amazing because it's the Rock. If nothing else he needs to start the build towards Vengeance when he challenges for the World Title. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's World Title match which ended in a draw.

Opening sequence.

John Cena is in the main event tag. That's a big, big step forward in a hurry.

Tag Team Titles: Edge/Hulk Hogan vs. Billy and Chuck

Billy and Chuck are challenging. Edge spinwheel kicks Chuck in the face to start but Billy snaps off a tilt-a-whirl slam to take over. As the beating ensues, it's hard to ignore Hogan playing cheerleader. That's one thing I always love about Hogan in tag matches: he almost never stops moving on the apron. It might be slapping the turnbuckle or pacing back and forth but he's rarely just standing there watching. There's a lot that can be done from that spot and it's something not enough people do.

The double and triple teaming has Edge in trouble before we hit the chinlock to slow things down even more. Billy walks into the half nelson faceplant and it's off to Hogan for the usual. The big boot hits Chuck's chest/shoulder area and the one to Billy is even less accurate. Rico offers a distraction so the Fameasser can get two on Hulk. Another big boot sets up the legdrop to retain.

**Rating:** D+. The important thing here: the match ran 6:16 and Hogan was in the ring for about a fourth of that. Hogan wrestling less than two minutes a match but getting to do all of his signature stuff is the best thing he can do right now. Good enough match and it ends the threat of Billy and Chuck getting another shot.

Cena comes up to Undertaker (his partner tonight) to thank him for the chance tonight. Undertaker doesn't seem to care because he's worried about the Rock.

Torrie Wilson was doing a beach photo shoot earlier today when Molly Holly interrupted. She thinks wrestling is what matters and offers Torrie a title shot tonight. Torrie: "Ok, I'll do it."

The agents try to get Undertaker out of the parking lot but he'll have none of that. A limo arrives but it's Chris Jericho/Kurt Angle, Undertaker and Cena's opponents tonight. Insults are exchanged and a brawl breaks out. Vince comes in for the save and some yelling.

Post break, Undertaker wants to know where Cena was. Cena says Undertaker threw him out but Undertaker yells about Cena not having his back. Undertaker thinks Cena won't last long if he doesn't get it together. So I guess he got it together.

### Women's Title: Torrie Wilson vs. Molly Holly

Holly is defending. Torrie gets in a slap and that's about it for her early offense. Molly chokes on the ropes for a bit until Torrie catapults her into the corner. Some right hands in the corner have little effect as Torrie gets powerbombed out of the corner, setting up a leglock for a pin (kind of odd) to retain Molly's title.

Rock is here.

### Mark Henry/Randy Orton vs. Reverend D-Von/Batista

D-Von cheap shots Orton to start and the early beating sends Randy outside. That means it's time for Batista to show off the power for a bit. Orton avoids a knee drop though and Henry comes in to clean house with his own power. Everything breaks down and Henry clotheslines both of them down at the same time, only to have Batista hit a Regal Roll of all things. The spinebuster ends Henry in a hurry.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here, including Orton who disappeared halfway through the match. They need to go somewhere with this idea before Orton loses what little steam he has. At least Batista and D-Von are getting somewhere with this though and that's a big accomplishment in WWE at this point.

Hogan and Edge are going gambling. Rock comes in and Hogan takes credit for the Wrestlemania match. Rock: "You been forgetting to take your vitamins lately?" He'll even join them at the casino after some business is taken care of. Rock mocks Hogan a bit behind his back and Edge says Mr. Nanny smoked the Scorpion King. Edge and Rock is an odd visual as their generations mostly never crossed.

Here's Rock in the arena for the first time in a long time. Before he can get to the point though, he brings in rapper Busta Rhymes to plug an album and movie. This goes nowhere so they sing Under the Boardwalk and of course all of this is edited off the Network. After the singing ends, Rock calls out Undertaker but gets Angle instead.

Kurt thinks he's the one Rock needs to be worried about because he can



make Rock tap just like he did to Hogan. Oh and if Puff Daddy wants a shot, Kurt can make him tap too. Kurt: "I speak that jive!" After taking a bit to figure it out, Rock starts making Dr. Evil jokes. Apparently Angle isn't a Mike Myers fan (smart man) and wants Rock next week. Rock agrees and puts Angle in the ankle lock until Undertaker comes out to clean house. This was a bit long but Rock vs. Angle should be great.

We recap the Un-Americans interrupting America the Beautiful last week.

### Test vs. Rikishi

Rikishi sends him into the steps before the match as his way of standing up for America. The bell rings and Test turns him inside out with the clothesline. For some reason Storm has to hit a superkick, setting up a nearly botched pumphandle slam for two. Rikishi loads up the Banzai Drop for two but it's too early for a Stinkface. Not that it matters as the Samoan drop ends Test in a hurry. Short match but they did a lot here, including having part of the new heel stable lose despite interference.

Post match the trio goes fater Rikishi until Edge and Hogan make the save.

Stacy and Vince are about to remove clothing when Jericho comes in to ask nothing in particular. Vince asks that he give up his match against Edge so we can have a Tag Team Title match at the pay per view. Jericho is offered a reward to be named later.

Jamie Noble, Nidia and Tajiri are rather disgusting at a restaurant. Noble talks about how he's never had anything but the title means he's not poor anymore. That's not something I'm naturally going to boo.

We look at the NWO's actions on Raw. Nash will be out for a long time.

### Tajiri/Jamie Noble vs. Hurricane/Billy Kidman

Jamie and Billy run the ropes to start until Hurricane sneaks in with a hot tag to take the champ down. Tajiri comes in and starts snapping off the kicks for a bit until a miss allows the tag off to Kidman. Everything breaks down and some heel miscommunication sets up a Hurricane flip dive. Back in and a super sitout powerbomb ends Noble, likely giving Kidman a

future title shot.

**Rating:** B-. They didn't stop moving in the time they had but they only had a little over three minutes. Kidman as the next challenger is fine, especially when you consider the winner is just holding the title until Rey Mysterio gets here. Fun match though as the wrestling actually worked for once tonight.

Rock isn't sure how Coach shrunk and turned to become Marc Lloyd. He went gambling today and the big Vengeance slot machine came up with three Brahma Bulls. Rock will be waiting here to see the end of the show, which sounds like a threat.

Rey Mysterio is coming in two weeks.

#### John Cena/Undertaker vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Jericho

Undertaker and Jericho get things going with Chris actually winning the early fist fight. Cena comes in and gets beaten down, only to have Angle go shoulder first into the post. The rookie doesn't know how to follow up though and Angle snaps him over with a belly to belly.

Some Canadian stomping keeps Cena in trouble until he powerslams Angle for a breather. Undertaker comes in as everything breaks down, including a ref bump. The Angle Slam gets a delayed two on Undertaker and it's back to Cena. Undertaker saves his new little buddy from the Lionsault and an Oklahoma roll puts Jericho away.

**Rating:** C+. Cena getting the pin here is important but not as important as him being treated as someone on this level. He might have gotten beaten up a little bit but he hung in there well enough and wasn't destroyed. You can pencil in Jericho vs. Cena for Vengeance and that should be another good night for Cena.

The brawl continues post match with Undertaker putting Angle in a dragon sleeper. Cue Rock to lay out both guys with Rock Bottoms to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Even with the star power and rookies being pushed, Smackdown continues to be the most middle of the road show ever. The wrestling and storytelling are fine but there's still very little to

actually get excited about. The show certainly isn't bad but it's not the most exciting. Changing a few things up can make this a great show though and it's much better than the horrible Raw shows.

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# Smackdown – December 6, 2016: How To Stuff Your Wrestling Stocking

## Smackdown

Date: December 6, 2016

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

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

It's a big night here as we're past Tables Ladders and Chairs and getting ready for Royal Rumble. Before we get there though, two titles are on the line tonight with AJ Styles (on a bad ankle) defending the World Title against James Ellsworth and new Tag Team Champions the Wyatt Family defending against former champion Heath Slater/Rhyno. Let's get to it.

We open with the ending of Sunday's show where Ellsworth turned on Ambrose to cost him the title. Ellsworth's explanation: he's beaten Styles three times so why would he want to fight anyone else? Makes sense actually.

Here's AJ in a walking boot and street clothes to open the show. Styles talks about the tragedy of Sunday but is talking about his torn tights. Apparently AJ isn't cleared to wrestle tonight but here's Ellsworth to start the match now. That isn't happening though and Ellsworth thinks Daniel Bryan is protecting him. After all, Ellsworth has his number and can beat him a fourth time. AJ laughs off the idea that Ellsworth helped him get the title and says Ambrose handed Ellsworth every win. Cue Ambrose to give Ellsworth Dirty Deeds and immediately leave. Again, makes sense for him.

#### Tag Team Titles: Wyatt Family vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

Slater and Rhyno are challenging. Heath forearms Orton down to start and Bray does even worse by charging into a boot to the face. Rhyno comes in but it's WAY too early for a Gore as we take a break instead. Back with Rhyno in trouble as the champs take turns working him over. A shoulder lets Slater come in and Orton gets neckbreakered for two. It doesn't last long though as Bray runs Slater over. Sister Abigail is loaded up but Bray tags Orton instead so the RK0 can retain at 9:15.

**Rating:** D+. This is all it needed to be and should get rid of Rhyno/Slater as challengers. I'm perfectly fine with their reign ending in such dominant fashion as they were playing so far above their heads that anything they did was a bonus at this point. I could go for JBL shutting up about how the Wyatts are Brody and Hansen after like three matches but I'll take what I can get.

Kalisto says speed kills.

#### Natalya vs. Carmella

Before the match Carmella insults Natalya's weight and says she's just jealous of everyone else's looks. No match at the moment as Natalya tackles Carmella and chases her to the back.

Natalya goes after Carmella but runs into Nikki Bella instead. Nikki is all serious as Natalya apologizes before walking away. I know they want Nikki to be the big hero of the division but I'm really not buying it.

Baron Corbin compares cruiserweights to flies.

### Hype Bros vs. Ascension

Both teams want the titles. Viktor knees Ryder in the head to start and Zack is in early trouble. Ascension takes turns with a variety of stomps to the back until a neckbreaker puts Konnor down. The hot tag brings in Mojo to clean house and the Hype Ryder puts Viktor away at 3:30.

**Rating:** D+. I'm assuming the Hype Bros are the next challengers and that's a fine way to help put the Wyatts over as champions. There's no reason to go straight for American Alpha or the Usos so just feed them the Hype Bros, who don't exactly have much to lose at this point. Putting them over Ascension is as simple of a first step as you can get so they're starting fine.

It's time for MizTV with Miz asking for his "YOU DESERVE IT" chants. Anyway the guest this week is Ambrose, who should be livid at Ellsworth. Instead he's pretty calm, even after he got Ellsworth everything he has. Miz accuses Dean of manipulating Ellsworth for his own benefit and then hides behind Maryse. Sunday was so bad for Dean that Miz has a present for him: the first ever Miz Participation Award. Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!" Violence is teased but here's Bryan to interrupt and make the obvious main event. That earns a YES chant so Bryan makes it a title match.

### Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin

Chairs not included. Corbin throws him outside to start and gets a near fall. Kalisto kicks him in the head and scores with a moonsault to the floor. Back in and Kalisto speeds things up but the springboard spinning tornado DDT is countered into End of Days for the pin at 2:49.

Nikki meets singer Sophia Grace and they get along.

### Chad Gable vs. Tyler Breeze

This is due to Gable ripping up a fashion police ticket earlier today. A monkey flip sends Breeze flying early on but a trip to the floor lets Breeze take over. Tyler's chinlock doesn't go anywhere so Gable takes him down with an exploder suplex. Jordan suplexes Fandango on the floor, leaving Gable to hit a Rolling Chaos Theory of all things (rolling German suplex) for the pin at 2:32.

Here's Alexa Bliss for her championship celebration, complete with a long pyro display. The fans don't seem happy and want Becky so Bliss laughs about taking the title from her. Cue Becky to say how hard it is to hold onto the title because she wants her rematch right now. Bliss takes off the jacket but bails to the floor like you might expect.

Opening segment recap.

#### Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose is challenging and Maryse has changed her outfit. It's a headlock to start (safe way to go) and Dean throws him outside, only to have Maryse block a suicide dive. Back from an early break with Miz having to escape Dirty Deeds. The second attempt goes just as badly as Miz takes him into the corner and starts in on the knee. A shinbreaker sets up a double knee stomp as things slow down.

The Figure Four is broken up and Dean sends him outside for another suicide dive. That leg certainly healed fast. Miz gets two off a DDT and it's time for the YES Kicks. They head up top with Maryse crotching Dean, allowing Miz to hit Bryan's running knee for a close two. Cue James Ellsworth to point out the crotching but it makes the referee miss Dean rolling Miz up for two. The Skull Crushing Finale finishes Ambrose at 13:31.

**Rating:** B-. Uh....ok then. I guess they're already backtracking on what seemed to be a pretty clear heel turn. It might not have been a full on version due to it mainly being about Ellsworth's title shot but this feels like they're stretching the story out longer than it needs to go. The match was good stuff until the ending, which is more eye roll inducing than bad.

Ellsworth is upset to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. This was little more than a filler episode but the key difference is Smackdown always seems to be trying, even in episodes that don't mean much. They have a few shows to burn before it's really time to get started on the Royal Rumble build so this was a fine way to spend two hours. Totally watchable show but nothing you need to see.

### Results

Wyatt Family b. Heath Slater/Rhyno – RK0 to Slater

Hype Bros b. Ascension – Hype Ryder to Viktor

Baron Corbin b. Kalisto – End of Days

Chad Gable b. Tyler Breeze – Rolling Chaos Theory

Miz b. Dean Ambrose – Skull Crushing Finale

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# Smackdown – July 4, 2002 (2016 Redo): America is the Land of Stolen Finishes

## Smackdown

Date: July 4, 2002

Location: FleetCenter, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We've got a huge holiday show here with Kurt Angle challenging the Undertaker for the World Title a few days after Undertaker defended against Jeff Hardy in a ladder match. Other than that Smackdown has become the breeding ground for the new generation so it should be interesting to see where John Cena, Randy Orton and Batista go from here. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Chris Jericho injuring Edge a few weeks back and hurting the shoulder even worse. Then a few weeks later Edge came back and saved Hulk Hogan from the same fate so now we have a new Can-Am Connection.

Opening sequence.

Based on that one interaction, Hogan and Edge get a Tag Team Title shot. Somehow I'm not annoyed by this development.

Lillian Garcia (looking absolutely stunning) does her usual amazing rendition of America the Beautiful....until Lance Storm, Christian and Test interrupt to some awesome heel heat. Christian thinks the fans don't even know why they're celebrating other than Will Smith defeating a bunch of aliens. Storm brings up Americans going to war over the years and says America lost in Vietnam. All three together: "AMERICA SUCKS!"

## Rikishi vs. Lance Storm

Storm gets sent outside to start and Rikishi knocks him out of the air upon reentry. Rikishi sits on the chest but has to deal with Test and



Christian, meaning the Banzai Drop doesn't work. Test boots him in the head and Storm gets the cheap pin. Nothing to see here but the Canadians interrupting the song was great.

We recap John Cena's debut. He really did come off as a star upon debut and people noticed. The fact that he gave Angle a run for his money was important too as he wasn't fighting some joke in a squash that didn't mean anything. It's a great debut and really one of the best in a good while.

Stacy Keibler brings Cena to see Vince and, as she does with everyone, likes what she sees in the rookie.

### Reverend D-Von/Batista vs. Randy Orton/Big Valbowski

Venis hammers on the monster to start until Batista blasts him with the kind of clothesline you expect to see from someone like Batista. D-Von comes in and runs into a raised boot, allowing the tag off to Orton. Randy is quickly neckbreakered so it's back to Val for the Blue Thunder Bomb. Everything breaks down and Batista goes shoulder first into the post. It doesn't really matter though as a spinebuster plants Orton for the pin.

**Rating:** C. This was fine and that's the kind of thing Smackdown needs a lot more of. The story of Orton needing the right partner to take these two down is a good enough idea and gives us a reason to care about Orton while being impressed by Batista. They're developing these guys and that's the best thing that can be done at the moment.

Jericho is ranting to Vince about Edge so the match is made for Vengeance. Cena comes in and Vince actually praises him for last week. Jericho isn't impressed and asks where the ruthless aggression is. Cena slaps the taste out of his mouth (sounded great) and leaves. Again: Cena is coming off like a star and has the backbone to make it stick.

During the break, Vince made Cena vs. Jericho for tonight.

Angle blames a nasty case of the flu for his performance against Cena last week but he's ready for the Undertaker. We see an Angle narrated

video about how hot he's been lately, including making Hogan tap. Angle talks about how awesome he is and actually quotes Kid Rock to say he's ready.

Billy and Chuck are a bit sore (too much walking you see) but they split hot dogs. Rico comes in and yells at them for not taking their title defense seriously.

Clip of Rock from earlier this year making fun of a cameraman who said he was going to win the Royal Rumble. Rock is back next week.

#### Tag Team Titles: Edge/Hulk Hogan vs. Billy and Chuck

Edge and Hogan are challenging if that somehow wasn't clear. Hogan, with the red, white and blue boa, gets an extended entrance and Edge holds the American flag. Hogan shoves Chuck around to start and punches him in the face for daring to mock the poses. Billy comes in to face Hogan for a weird generational clash.

It's off to Edge who gets beaten down in the corner (always stick with American) with Chuck slowly slamming him down. The fans want Hogan (duh) but settle for Rico kicking Billy by mistake. It's not that bad though as Billy is back up with a bulldog to send Edge into the steps for two.

Back in and that half nelson faceplant gets Edge out of trouble and there's the hot tag to Hogan. Chuck superkicks Hulk down to break up the legdrop but Edge comes off the top with a double clothesline to drop the champs. Billy gets speared and it's a double boot followed by a double legdrop to Chuck for the pin and the titles.

**Rating:** C-. I really can't get mad at this as it's not like Billy and Chuck are some unstoppable team. They had just won the titles back from the dynamic duo of Rikishi and Rico a few weeks back so this is hardly some tragedy. Hogan is going to be much better suited giving someone like Edge a rub than being in the main event. Leaving him in the ring for all of two minutes is a good way to run a tag match and this perfectly acceptable.

#### Chris Jericho vs. John Cena

Jericho goes right after him at the bell and ties up the slap score early on. The Walls are broken up with a catapult into the corner, followed by a spinebuster to send Jericho outside. Back in and Jericho gets dropkicked out of the corner as we hear about Cena's pre-WWE athletic career for the first time. The Walls are countered again, this time with a small package for two. Cena rolls away from the Lionsault and gets two more off a rollup, only to have the Flashback (sleeper drop) give Jericho the pin. The feet on the ropes helped too.

**Rating:** B-. Not quite as hot as last week's match against Angle but it's very clear that Cena is a star in the making. He's got that fire in his eyes and there's no way to fake something like that. Good match here again as Cena continues to look like a better prospect than Lesnar at this point, at least once the bell rings.

You know Rey Mysterio? He'll be here soon.

Rock once shoved Vince's face in Rikishi's thong.

We look at Shawn Michaels announcing HHH will be joining the NWO.

We go back to Divas Undressed which resulted in a catfight because that's how women act in WWE.

GET THE F OUT!

Earlier today in the trailer park, Jamie Noble showed Nidia their new trailer. Redneck humor really isn't my thing, but Nidia is no Rhyno eating cheese and crackers.

Torrie Wilson vs. Stacy Keibler

Bra and panties. This has all the old standards: cartwheels, rollups, the referee getting rolled over, Torrie wins in a clean sweep. There's just nothing to say about these things and there's no secret to what they're doing.

Torrie strips to reveal stars and stripes underwear.

Video on Undertaker vs. Jeff Hardy including Undertaker teasing a face

turn after the match.

Undertaker is ready to fight anyone.

HHH has a DVD.

### WWE Undisputed Title: Kurt Angle vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is defending of course and Angle is shoved into the corner to start. Angle's headlock doesn't get him very far as another shove has him in trouble. Back in and Undertaker starts picking up the pace (I'm shocked too) with a clothesline, followed by Snake Eyes into the big boot.

The first German suplex breaks the champ's momentum though and it's time to trade big shots in the corner. A DDT gives Undertaker two but the Tombstone is countered into the ankle lock. In a rare good job by commentary, Cole brings up Angle recently doing the seemingly impossible by making Hogan tap so the hold doesn't feel like a waste of time.

The hold stays on for a good while until Undertaker flips him away and grabs a chokeslam for two. Back up and Undertaker loads up the Last Ride but gets pulled down into a triangle choke. Undertaker stacks him up for a cover and taps at the same time the referee counts three for an infamous (and stolen from the UFC) finish, meaning it's a draw.

**Rating:** C+. Good but not great match though the ending is still solid. This actually felt interesting as Angle had been one of the best in the company for a long time now so putting him back into the title picture had to be done, if nothing else for some fresh blood. The rest of the match was good enough but the ending brings it up a lot.

Controversy reigns (with the fans being VERY unhappy) and the match is ruled a draw, meaning Undertaker is still champion. Angle attacks Undertaker to end the show with Tazz of all people summing it up perfectly: the Undisputed Title is in dispute.

**Overall Rating:** C+. You can see pieces moving around here and above all else, it seems like there's an idea behind a lot of what's going on here. The young talent is getting pushed and there's something new in the main

event scene. In other words, there's some hope around here, which is the kind of thing that WWE had needed for so long.

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## Smackdown – November 29, 2016: Going Home With A Smile

### Smackdown

Date: November 29, 2016

Location: Colonial Life Arena, Columbia, South Carolina

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

It's the go home show for Tables, Ladders and Chairs 2016 and Smackdown has managed to put together a pretty decent build in such a small time frame. Tonight we've got Dean Ambrose hosting the Ambrose Asylum with James Ellsworth as his guest, meaning AJ Styles is bound to get involved. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

There are tables, ladders and chairs all over the arena.

Renee Young is in the ring for a contract signing for the Women's Title match. Alexa Bliss and Becky Lynch come out with Alexa telling Renee to get out of here because they need someone with better fashion sense. They recap the feud with Becky saying Bliss has the mentality of a four year old. The champ signs but Alexa keeps talking about Becky's accent and how this isn't the Disney Channel where you get further by being nice. Becky rips into her for not accomplishing anything in her time here other than having a loser mentality. Alexa signs as well and the fight is on with Becky actually being knocked through the table.

#### Dolph Ziggler/Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin/The Miz

Corbin knocks Ziggler down to start and we take a break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Corbin whipping Dolph hard into the corner and doing that slide underneath the bottom rope to keep Dolph in trouble. It's off to Miz, who pulls out a ladder to lean up against the steps. Ziggler gets in the running DDT on the floor, followed by a superkick to Miz.

The hot tag brings in Kalisto for his usual, including the hurricanrana driver for two on Miz. A big suicide dive sends Miz into the announcers' table. Everyone is staggered and Maryse shoves the ladder onto Ziggler. Back in and the Salida Del Sol looks to finish, only to have Corbin use a chair for the DQ at 7:31.

**Rating:** B-. For a match this short, they packed in a lot of action into the time. Kalisto could be an interesting guy if they would stop cutting his legs out from underneath him. The same is true with Corbin, who certainly has the look but I'm not sure if he has enough in ring skills yet to hang at this level.

American Alpha isn't scared of the Wyatts and are ready to levitate the Wyatts with suplexes.

The Wyatts are ready for American Alpha and don't like their positivity. Orton gives Luke Harper a pep talk for his match with Kane but Harper doesn't seem to trust Randy.

Carmella comes out for her match but first of all she has a message for John Cena. She promises to hit Nikki with a chair so hard that the real Bella Twins pop out of her back. Nikki charges to the ring and the brawl is on, meaning no match. Carmella is easily cleaned out.

We recap last week's ladder match with Ellsworth earning his contract and a shot at Styles' World Title.

It's time for the Ambrose Asylum, complete with a single piece of carpet in the middle of the ring. Ambrose gets right to it by bringing out Ellsworth as the first guest. Dean asks how old James' boots are before letting James celebrate his win a little bit. Ellsworth offers to do anything Dean needs so Ambrose gives him money to pick up a six pack after the show. As far as James' future, he'd rather face AJ for the title after beating him three times in a row. Ambrose: "He's drunk with power ladies and gentlemen."

Cue AJ to stand on the announcers' table and make puppet jokes about Ellsworth. Dean: "So what you're saying is you lost to a dummy three times?" AJ gets in the ring and promises to get rid of Dean before dealing with the new superstar, as long as James shows up on Sunday. The brawl is on with AJ shoving both guys through the furniture. Ellsworth is hung upside down for a chair shot to the back, followed by a Styles Clash onto the steps. That should get rid of him for awhile but odds are he'll be at the pay per view.

Post break, Ellsworth is taken out on a stretcher.

### Kane vs. Luke Harper

Harper's headlock doesn't get him anywhere as Kane comes back with his own power offense. A big boot and clothesline puts Harper on the floor and we take a break. Back with Harper kicking him in the knee and head, only to get caught with the running DDT. Harper hammers away in the corner but gets powerbombed out for two more. The swinging Boss Man Slam gives Luke two of his own and a superkick drops Kane again. Back up and Harper misses the discus lariat, setting up the chokeslam to give Kane the pin at 11:05.

**Rating:** B-. What is with the good matches on here tonight? These two beat the heck out of each other in the only kind of match they should have had. Kane has taken a backseat since the Draft but he's still fine for something like this. You can tell they're doing something with Harper so maybe he'll wind up getting a push out of the thing.

We recap the contract signing.

Becky has a sore back but doesn't care what kind of match she has with Alexa. Again, and I can't emphasize this enough: they've taken a simple idea and ran with the thing, which can often make for something very entertaining.

#### Bray Wyatt/Randy Orton vs. American Alpha

The winners get the title shot on Sunday. Orton and Jordan get things going with Jason snapping off some armdrags and working an armbar. It's off to Wyatt who throws Jordan throat first into the ropes to take over. The beatdown begins with Orton draping him over the top rope and grabbing a chinlock.

Jordan fights up and makes the tag off to Gable, who cleans house for a bit until being sent hard to the floor as we take a break. Back with Gable getting DDT'ed onto the apron for two as the beating continues. Bray hits the release Rock Bottom and Orton's awesome looking superplex has both guys down.

Unfortunately it's actually enough for the hot tag to Jordan as everything breaks down. The suplexes begin on Bray but the lights go out, revealing Harper at ringside. Gable breaks up Sister Abigail but an RK0 breaks up the Grand Amplitude. Jordan's spear hits the post and Sister Abigail sends the Wyatts to the title match at 15:29.

**Rating:** B. Heck of a match here with the right team going over. Bray almost has to win a title soon and they even protected Alpha in the loss. There's something so cool about watching Jordan fighting for all he's worth as he does the big comeback as well as almost anyone in the company right now. This was better than I was expecting and I had a good time with it.



Slater and Rhyno are ready for the challenge when Styles comes up to say no one cares about the Tag Team Titles. Ambrose runs in and beats AJ up to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A. Now THIS is how you go into a pay per view. Smackdown had a battle plan tonight and executed it to near perfection. I'm pretty sure every match on Sunday got some focus here and the wrestling was even good on top of that. You really can tell that there's a lot of effort put into the planning of these shows and they know exactly what they want to do on almost any given week. This was one of the better go home shows I've seen in a very long time and it was everything they needed to do and more.

### Results

Dolph Ziggler/Kalisto b. The Miz/Baron Corbin via DQ when Corbin used a chair

Kane b. Luke Harper – Chokeslam

Randy Orton/Bray Wyatt b. American Alpha – Sister Abigail to Jordan

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# Smackdown – November 18, 2005: Viva La Legacy

## Smackdown

Date: November 18, 2005

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This is another request and it's the Smackdown version of the Eddie Guerrero Tribute Show. On top of that, it was also taped the same night as the Raw version (double taping on a Sunday due to the European trip) which was the day Eddie passed away. I've grown to respect Eddie a bit more over the years so it should be interesting to see how this goes. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Smackdown World Champion Batista in a low rider to Eddie's music for a perfect opening. Batista immediately starts crying and says he's not sure he's the right man to be out here. All he knows is that Eddie loved his family and loved this business. He had a lot of demons to deal with but the pain went away when he walked through that curtain. Batista has to pause a bit to fight back the tears and you can feel the real emotion here. Eddie is with God now and Batista isn't going to let anyone ever forget him.

Eddie video set to 3 Doors Down's Here Without You. They're my favorite band so this is about as perfect as it's going to get. Above all else though: that frog splash was a thing of beauty.

Clip from the Eddie documentary focusing on his childhood and family. It's kind of weird to hear Eddie talking about his brothers and sister.

The low rider, with Batista's title on the hood, will be in the aisle all night.

Matt Hardy vs. Carlito

This is interpromotional as Carlito is from Raw. As you're probably going to guess, these matches aren't going to mean a thing. Matt is freshly on Smackdown after losing the feud with Edge on Raw. It's so strange to see Matt looking absolutely svelte. He's probably 30 pounds lighter than he is today and looks great. Matt grabs the afro to start but gets sent outside to give Carlito control.

The announcers aren't even bothering with the match as they're just telling Eddie stories for a nice touch. Carlito loads up the middle rope legdrop but dives into a raised boot (still hate that spot). The Side Effect gives Matt two but Carlito grabs the Backstabber for the same. Matt comes right back with the real middle rope legdrop and the Twist of Fate is good for the win.

**Rating:** C. This is a good indication of how this night is going and there's nothing wrong with that. There's no need to try and make this show mean anything storyline wise so just go out there, have decent matches, and give the fans something to smile about. Good little match here too.

Vince gives a tribute to Eddie, who was a true craftsman. He actually tears up talking about how much Eddie loved his family, both blood and co-workers.

Another documentary clip talking about Eddie meeting Vickie then marrying, losing and getting her back.

#### Road Warrior Animal/Heidenreich vs. Lance Cade/Trevor Murdoch

I still have issues calling Animal and Heidenreich the LOD. This is another interpromotional match, which is probably going to be a trend all night. Cade and Heidenreich start things off with the cowboy being taken down off a hard clothesline. The announcers get in a debate over which Tag Team Titles belong on which show (which is why I just go with the show's name and ignore the official names) as a cheap shot puts Heidenreich in trouble. That goes nowhere as he spears the villains down and makes the hot tag. Everything breaks down and the Doomsday Device ends Cade.

**Rating:** D+. I'm going a bit lighter on the matches tonight as there's no reason to go crazy with the ratings, especially when the wrestlers probably aren't all there mentally. This version of the LOD never worked as Heidenreich didn't feel like Hawk at all. It didn't help that the tag divisions were such a mess at this point and even interpromotional stuff wasn't interesting.

Booker T. and Sharmell miss Eddie with Booker telling a story about getting in a fist fight with Eddie back in WCW.

Documentary stuff on the Lie, Cheat and Steal vignettes. These were some of the first things that really made me appreciate Eddie as a character instead of just a performer. This transitions into a look at all the cheating over the years, which really was hilarious at times.

A sweaty Big Show is glad Eddie isn't in pain anymore.

Eddie talks about playing other sports but giving them up because he only cared about wrestling. We also hear about his childhood growing up around wrestling because his dad was a promoter.

#### Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

Chavo still has blonde hair from the Kerwin White gimmick, which was completely done after Eddie passed away. JBL has image consultant Jillian Hall with him. Some forearms in the corner have Chavo in early trouble so he snaps off a headlock takeover. We hit the cheating, including a thumb to the eye to send JBL outside. That's quite the selling for a basic move.

Back in and the crossbody is caught in a fall away slam to put JBL in control like he should be. The heavy right hands in the corner are accompanied by stories of sewage and burritos. We hit the sleeper, which looks really weird from someone so big on someone so much smaller. Or maybe it's just that JBL isn't good at using that move.

Chavo comes back with a dropkick and a DDT to break up another fall away slam. It's time for a few chairs and of course Chavo throws one to JBL and falls down just like Eddie did so many times. Ok I smiled at that

one. The distraction lets Chavo get in a low blow, followed by Three Amigos and a frog splash for the pin.

**Rating:** C-. The result here means nothing at all as this was all about paying tribute to Eddie. Chavo winning was the only possible option here as he was basically Eddie's little brother and could wrestle the same style so well. It's not a good match (fine enough though) but it was exactly what it was supposed to be.

Video of Eddie's mom talking about his childhood.

The announcers talk about Eddie a bit.

Video on Eddie at Wrestlemania XX. That was the rather awesome match against Kurt Angle where Eddie took his boot off, which they played up in the Summerslam rematch. This leads to the ending of the show which is really hard to watch now.

JBL was Eddie's arch nemesis but he was lucky enough to be his friend.

Video on Eddie winning the World Title from Brock Lesnar at No Way Out 2004.

### Cruiserweight Battle Royal

Tajiri, Gregory Helms, Paul London, Kid Kash, Brian Kendrick, Scotty 2 Hotty, Nunzio, Funaki, Psychosis, Super Crazy, Juventud

Nothing on the line as Juventud is already Cruiserweight Champion. Everybody gangs up on Helms and Tajiri (the Raw guys) but don't bother to actually eliminate either of them. Kendrick gets kicked out for the first elimination and Super Crazy goes out as well. Tajiri and Funaki follow them, leaving London to do a bunch of springboard kicks to the back. Helms and Nunzio take a double Worm.

Scotty dumps Kash and London does the same to Helms to get us down to five. Make that three as Nunzio gets rid of Scotty, leaving us with Nunzio, Juventud and London. Nunzio's attempts at alliances don't work and the Italian is sent out. Both guys wind up on the apron for a kicking battle until they both crawl back inside. Juventud dropkicks London out

for the win.

**Rating:** D+. I've seen worse battle royals but few that were more pointless. The champ is entered into a match and then wins the thing? The division wasn't the most interesting in the world at this point and other than having some cruiserweight stuff involved on the show, I have no idea what this has to do with Eddie.

Video on Eddie and Chyna, which was pretty awesome stuff. His kids try to figure out what Latino Heat means.

We look at Eddie's last match, a DQ win over Mr. Anderson.

Shane McMahon talks about how cool it is to have major families like the Guerreros (and the Jarretts). He talks about what Eddie meant and breaks down in tears.

Video of the end of Wrestlemania XX with JR's voice giving out.

#### Chris Benoit vs. HHH

HHH is a heel here but plays to the crowd during the entrances. Given the circumstances, that's totally fine. An early Crossface attempt sends HHH to the ropes and we take a breather. Back in and Crossface attempt the sequel gives us the same plot (but likely fewer laughs). This time Benoit follows him out and sends HHH head first into the steps, only to get sent crashing outside as well.

Back from a break with HHH hitting some forearms to the back and getting two off a spinebuster. We hit the abdominal stretch but the powers of an EDDIE chant....don't really do much as HHH throws Benoit down. Your standard sleeper reversal sequence is followed by an exchange of failed finishers. That means it's time for the rolling Germans on HHH and a Swan Dive for two. The Pedigree is countered into the Crossface, which Benoit lets go in favor of a rollup for the pin.

**Rating:** B. Even the announcers said this was just about having a good match and that's what we got here. When HHH gets rid of the whole "I'm amazing and one of the best ever" stuff, he can put on some outstanding performances because he really is that talented. I liked this match for

different reasons than I usually would have but it was still good stuff.

Benoit chants Eddie's name and Dean Malenko comes out for the big hug ala Wrestlemania XX to wrap things up.

**Overall Rating:** A. This is a weird one to grade as the wrestling was actually good but it had nothing to do with the show's quality. This was about celebrating Eddie's life and nothing else. I had a lot of fun watching it and actually started missing Eddie as the show went on. I've never been the biggest Eddie fan but things like this, where you look back at his career and life, really show how special he truly was. I may not be a huge fan but I certainly respect him, which is probably more important.

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# Smackdown – June 27, 2002: And Now, Wrestling History

## Smackdown

Date: June 27, 2002

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in the big city tonight and it's time for a new challenger to face Undertaker. I know Jeff Hardy is getting a title shot on Raw next week but it's fairly clear that we're getting some combination of Rock/HHH/Undertaker for the title at Vengeance. Why Smackdown is getting back to back pay per view title shots isn't immediately clear. Let's get to it.

Vince is in the ring and brings out Kurt Angle before leaving. Thanks for showing up boss. At least it was short though. Angle says he might as well be the poster boy for ruthless aggression and goes into his big victory speech for making Hogan tap. The wig is finally removed for good and Angle issues an open challenge to anyone he's never faced before.

And now, wrestling history. Cole: "Tazz I know this kid. That's John Cena." Angle asks why Cena thinks he can come out here and face him like this. Cena says ruthless aggression and slaps the taste out of Angle's match to start things off in a hurry. You can feel the intensity in him though of course no one knew how big he was based off those ten seconds.

#### Kurt Angle vs. John Cena

Cena takes him outside and keeps hammering away before a running splash gets two. Kurt picks the ankle and snaps off the first German suplex to put both guys down. A rollup gets two for Cena but Angle blasts him down with a clothesline. They're certainly going hard out there and it's working so far.

Cena throws him off to break a front facelock and gets two off a good looking spinebuster. The Angle Slam is countered into a DDT for some near falls (Taz: "RUTHLESS AGGRESSION! THERE IT IS!" Is that what it is? Multiple pinfall attempts?) and a powerslam gets the same. Kurt finally has enough and grabs a double chickenwing rollup for the pin.

**Rating:** B. For a rookie making his debut against a top star, this was a heck of a match as, save for that front facelock, they were going at top speed for the entire match. You can see something in Cena but it takes more than a five minute match to make a career. The presence is there



though and that's something you either have or you don't.

Cena offers a handshake but Angle walks away. Kurt teases coming back for more but decides it's not worth it. One important point here: Angle gives a big sigh of relief when he knows Cena can't see him anymore. Little things like that sell moments like this so much more.

Kidman, Faarooq and Rikishi are congratulating Cena when Undertaker comes up. The champ asks his name and extends his hand for a good job. I know I said they need to make new stars but Angle and Undertaker in less than half an hour? That's a rub that you don't see very often, if ever.

#### Tag Team Titles: Hardcore Holly/Big Valbowski vs. Billy and Chuck

Hard Val is challenging, apparently after wanting to team up for years. Why they didn't do so isn't explained, nor is the fact that they're making their debut and are apparently the second best tag team on Smackdown on arrival. Chuck charges into a right hand to start but Val does the same, suggesting that he isn't the best student in the world.

Holly gets beaten down in the corner as Cole praises Billy and Chuck for being surprisingly good. They're two time Tag Team Champions at this point and you're still surprised that they're a good team? That's slow even for Cole. A belly to back suplex is enough for the hot tag to Val but Rico offers a distraction, setting up the Fameasser to retain.

**Rating:** C-. Here's the thing: Venis and Holly are fine for a veteran team and could be perfectly fine as eventual challengers if you give them some promos and a few wins over jobbers. However, since there's no tag division to speak of, they're thrown out there against the champs and already lose. Where are they supposed to go from here? Take the time and build a division as you have a bunch of people sitting around (Kidman, Faarooq and Rikishi come to mind) doing nothing. Make something up and give them a reason to team. The rest can take care of itself.

Here's Torrie Wilson to preview the Divas Undressed special. She takes off her robe, walks around in lingerie and that's it. No angle, no talking, nothing at all. At least it was short.

Tajiri likes looking at Nidia so Jamie Noble offers her to him if they win their tag match later.

HHH has been fighting through an elbow injury and is all tough but had to have it fixed in the operating room. After this deadly operation he'll be out.....FOR TWO TO THREE WEEKS!!! Taz teases he'll be back next week actually. This got way too much time for something like that, especially when you could just say he was banged up after the pay per view or something.

### Mark Henry vs. Lance Storm

Storm is here to prove how unfair American referees really are. We're not ready yet though as we need to look at Mark Henry lifting some 100+ year old 172lb dumbbell. Henry throws him around to start but a rake of the eyes breaks up a press slam. Storm gets tossed outside and then thrown back in because Henry is really strong. Another eye rake gets Storm out of a bearhug and Henry misses a Vader Bomb, setting up the superkick to give Lance the pin. Again: Henry is STRONG. We get it already.

Here's Undertaker for a chat. He recaps the pay per view main event and takes credit for HHH undergoing elbow surgery. Cole: "HHH is actually OUT of the hospital now!" Undertaker wants to know where Rock thinks he fits into that match and here's a clip of Sunday's fighting. Rock will be back here on July 11 (the FULL TIME Rock of course because he doesn't do this part time nonsense) and Undertaker will make him pay for King of the Ring.

This brings out Kurt Angle of all people, who wants a title shot next week, assuming Undertaker gets by Jeff Hardy on Raw. Undertaker eventually agrees, even though Angle had trouble getting by a rookie tonight. That's cool with Kurt, but he asks to touch the title. The champ actually lets him do it (moron) and is in the ankle lock almost immediately. You don't see Undertaker acting that stupid very often and, along with that handshake earlier, suggests a face/tweener turn.

Torrie models more lingerie. Yeah she looks amazing but this is the kind of thing that makes people criticize wrestling.

### Test vs. Rikishi

They take turns beating on each other in the corner but the referee won't let Test throw a punch. Rikishi hits a superkick but gets slowed down by a low blow. The Test Drive is broken up and the ref is bumped, earning Test a DQ loss even though Rikishi shoved him into the ref. I don't know why wrestling can never learn that no one cares about referee stories.

Test gets a Stinkface before Christian and Storm can come out for the late save.

Vince calls Hogan into his office and the boss is really, really happy about Hogan tapping out on Sunday. Hogan implies that they'll fight one day and Vince is aghast.

Test rants about how much America sucks.

### Billy Kidman/Hurricane vs. Tajiri/Jamie Noble

The bad guys take over to start and Noble has to bail from the threat of a chokeslam. That's fine with Hurricane as he tries a double chokeslam, only to shove them both down instead. Kidman hiptosses his partner onto Noble but walks into the Tajiri elbow. The Tarantula makes things even worse but a tornado DDT is countered into a sitout powerbomb. Now the chokeslam works for Hurricane and the shooting star puts Tajiri away.

**Rating:** C+. They're getting close to having something with this division as it's slowly building after being nothing interesting for weeks on end. Add a few more names to the thing, perhaps one being the King of Mystery, and they really could have something special. Imagine that: a division works when you have distinct characters instead of people who look, act and work the same.

Torrie and Stacy Keibler are catty to each other because that's what women in wrestling do. While wearing lingerie of course.

Torrie, now billed as appetizing, wears a third outfit. Stacy comes out in a schoolgirl outfit and gets a far bigger pop. We're not done yet as Dawn Marie comes out as well and the blondes get in a catfight. This is so beyond a waste of time.

Chris Jericho isn't sure what he'll use to beat Hogan tonight but he'd love to make him tap.

Rey Mysterio is coming.

#### Reverend D-Von/Deacon Batista vs. Faarooq/Randy Orton

This is Batista's in ring debut and the first time he's been seen without a shirt. Orton does his rookie offense on D-Von to start until a dropkick of all things puts Randy down. A superplex is broken up and Orton scores with a middle rope bulldog. Faarooq comes in to clean house but the Dominator is countered with a DDT. It's already back to Orton for a high crossbody, only to have Batista come in off the blind tag. That wicked clothesline blasts Orton and a spinebuster (with multiple camera cuts, suggesting a botch or an edit) finishes Randy in a hurry.

**Rating:** C-. They were smart to have Batista only come in at the end for the big power display, making this an effective debut. The thing is you have two teams right here plus the champs and Venis/Holly. These are three teams thrown together in the span of a few weeks and you're getting close to a division. Simple ideas (gimmick/enforcer, two veterans, veteran/rookie) are fine and can grow into something else until the next big team can be put together. Why is that so complicated?

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#### Hulk Hogan vs. Chris Jericho

The fans are WAY into Hogan here (hardly shocking in a town like Chicago) as Jericho is backdropped to start. It's too early for the big elbow though (always seems weird to be anything but a big leg or boot) and Jericho gets in a low blow to take over. The fans are all over Jericho so he does the hand to the ear before going way old school with the abdominal stretch.

Just in case the words ABDOMINAL STRETCH aren't clear enough, Cole points out that it hurts your gut. Hogan's comeback is countered as Jericho slides under the big boot (that's what happens when you stop fighting giants) and hits the bulldog into the Lionsault for two. Jericho has had

enough of the HULKING UP and hits Hogan with a chair for the DQ.

**Rating:** D+. Not the worst match in the world here with Jericho doing the work and letting Hogan do all of his spots. This isn't a case of Hogan showing anyone up and the match was actually fine, all things considered. There's value in Hogan giving people rubs like this, but he can only do it for so long before it stops mattering.

Jericho loads up a Conchair to the arm but his own countdown comes up. Cue the returning Edge (who Cole can't recognize from behind despite him having a pretty easy shape to recognize) for the save and beatdown. Posing ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The wrestling was up and down here but this was ALL about the new talent. That might not always mean new people but it did a lot of good for setting things up for the future. There are skeletons of tag and cruiserweight divisions though that's not what matters the most.

Tonight we saw a focus on John Cena, Batista and Randy Orton with Rey Mysterio debuting soon. While none of them are stars yet, those four are fresh ideas who could mean something to the company, which isn't what you get around here. They're actually setting something up and that's what matters more than anything else. I liked the show a lot and there's stuff I want to see instead of all the nonsense that keeps going on around here for so long. Good show here (with the least Vince in a LONG time) and a lot of hope for the future.

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