

# Smackdown – April 18, 2002: The Hogan Problem

## Smackdown

Date: April 18, 2002

Location: Compaq Center, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Tazz, Michael Cole

It's the go home show for Backlash and since this is Smackdown, we have a tag team main event which doesn't have a lot to do with the pay per view. In this case it's HHH/Hulk Hogan vs. Chris Jericho/Kurt Angle as Jericho doesn't actually have a match on Sunday. Then again I'm not sure who he could fight save for Rock, who wasn't around last week and probably won't be again this week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Billy and Chuck/Albert vs. Maven/Al Snow/Rikishi

Chuck punches Snow in the face to start in what is probably his best offensive move. Something close to a low blow has Chuck in trouble so it's off to Maven for his really bad offense. We hit the armbar on Chuck as Tazz argues that he was Maven's real trainer. I'd be careful bragging about that buddy. Albert comes in and throws Al around but Snow finds a way around Billy's amazing offense and brings in Rikishi, who is suddenly an offensive juggernaut.

Rico comes in and is almost caught in a Stinkface (along with Chuck) but Albert makes the save. We get the big slam spot that isn't as impressive as WWE would like us to be. The hot tag gives us Maven for some reason as everything breaks down. Rico kicks Snow down but Maven comes off the top with a high cross body for the pin on Chuck to set up Sunday's title match.

**Rating:** C+. I think we've found the winner for biggest surprise of the night as this was actually good. Maven is still hard to take seriously with his dropkick and crossbody offense but giving him the pin was the best idea after Snow won last week. Albert vs. Rikishi is just a thing that exists but I've seen worse. Nice choice for an opener here.

Stacy Keibler, looking very good in blue, bends over just as Hulk

Hogan opens his door. Vince wants to see Hogan right now so Hulk follows her with his eyes clearly panning down.

Kidman and Hurricane make fun of Planet Stasiak but Kidman says no one knows who he is. Hurricane has an idea: CHEAP POPS! So now the writers are making fun of the fact that no one cares about the Cruiserweight Title? I mean, no one does but still.

Hogan comes in to see Vince but Stacy finds Hulk a bit too attractive and gets sent away. Vince thinks he's experienced this feeling of fan support for Hogan before. Back in 1984, nothing could stop this kind of momentum but it's not going to be enough on Sunday. Naturally this takes WAY longer than it should.

#### Chavo Guerrero Jr./Tajiri vs. Kidman/Hurricane

Kidman armdrags Chavo to dead silence to get us going. A headscissors and dropkick do a bit better but it's off to Hurricane and you can hear the crowd wake up. Tajiri walks into a headlock before hitting a perfect looking superkick to drop Hurricane. The announcers completely ignore the match to talk about Vince and Hogan's issues despite Vince having very little to do with Hogan at the moment.

Kidman takes a quick beating before it's back to Hurricane for a jumping clothesline. Everything breaks down and Chavo sends Hurricane to the floor, only to have Tajiri come back in with a high crossbody for two. Tazz: "What is going on in this match?" It's almost like he doesn't pay attention. A big kick to the head gives Tajiri the pin on Hurricane.

**Rating:** B-. If there's one thing that drives me crazier than the announcers not paying attention, it's the announcers acknowledging that they're not paying attention. It's a nothing match but I miss the days of Gorilla Monsoon and Jesse Ventura where the match going on in front of them was the most important thing in the world. You can plug other stuff but don't laugh off the fact that you have no idea what's going on in front of you.

Post match Tajiri kicks Kidman in the head and yells at Torrie in Japanese.

We look back at Test trying to hurt Mark Henry during last week's feat of strength.

Here's Mark to lift a car off the ground. Wrestlers take bets and

Test doesn't buy that this is real. He can't lift it but Mark can, only to have Test cheat on the bets and beat Faarooq up.

Hulk Hogan comes out to talk about how people think he's crazy for trying this one more time. He believes that he can do it one more time because, as Vince says, perception is reality. Hogan used to take the title for granted and now he wants to just be champion one more time. We get the big HULKING UP line but here's Chris Jericho to interrupt.

Jericho goes on for a LONG time about how old Hogan is and about how HHH stole the title from him. Ever since he got back, Hogan has only had one singles match and he lost. True actually but ignore that part of course. Hogan finally tells him to shut up and come fight so here's Kurt Angle to help him out. Edge comes out for the save to finally end this.

Here's the problem: the fans absolutely love to cheer Hogan's comeback and old nostalgia stuff because Hogan can still do it well enough to make the schtick work. The problem is that only works during the matches. In between them, Hogan has almost nothing to talk about other than how he wants to be a star one more time. That lost its steam about two days after Wrestlemania and it's getting close to impossible to sit through, especially when he talks for ten minutes a week.

Vince throws Edge out but Edge thinks it's Vince being afraid of what's going to happen to Angle on Sunday. Edge leaves and Stacy comes up to offer her, ahem, services to calm Vince down. Vince wants HHH instead.

#### Test vs. Faarooq

Faarooq goes right after him but makes the mistake of sliding in, allowing Test to take over. Faarooq's comeback goes nowhere and Test rolls him up with his feet on the ropes for two. The pumphandle slam doesn't work so Faarooq avoids a charge and grabs a rollup with his feet on the ropes for the pin.

Test kicks Faarooq in the face.

Stacy goes to get HHH but is distracted when he takes off the shirt. She finally gets the line out but HHH says she can't make him come just by telling him to.

Hardcore Holly wants to beat Page up because he likes destroying

positivity. Page comes in and smiles but says the anger is ticking him off.

HHH comes in to see Vince so Stacy is quickly sent out. Vince asks if HHH is ready to "dampen the fires of the greatest fire in sports entertainment." If HHH loses, he's on Smackdown. Now THAT'S a punishment.

#### Diamond Dallas Page vs. Hardcore Holly

Page starts fast with a clothesline and neckbreaker before hammering away in the corner. Holly gets in a hard clothesline of his own, only to get crotched on top. A superplex brings them down but Page lands on his head, injuring his neck in the process. Thankfully Page is able to walk and tries the Diamond Cutter but Holly shoves him away and hits the dropkick for the pin. According to Holly's book, the ending was originally going to be the Alabama Slam but Page asked for it to be changed due to Page having some injuries. For some reason this was considered rude and Holly was punished as a result.

Page has to fight Holly off and gets in a quick Diamond Cutter. That's it for Page in the WWF and really it's for the best. Page never quite fit in the WWF but that's to be expected when a lot of his WCW appeal came from fans watching him rise up the card. That and signing at 45 years old. He had a nice little run though and that's more than a lot of people get.

Angle and Jericho are in the back and Kurt gets annoyed at Jericho saying Angle would suck the life out of Hogan. Kurt is so mad that he keeps leaving and coming back to yell more.

Here's Reverend D-Von to say Vince is a prophet and go on like your standard enthusiastic preacher. He even takes up a collection and the fans give him a nice wad of cash.

#### Chris Jericho/Kurt Angle vs. HHH/Hulk Hogan

HHH and Angle start with the champ hammering away, just in case you didn't realize HHH is better than Kurt. That doesn't go anywhere so it's off to Hogan for a change. Jericho comes in and tries a posedown before Angle comes in for the double teaming. Two simple villains are no match for Hogan of course so it's HHH coming in to help stomp Jericho in the corner.

A catapult sends Jericho into Angle and a spinebuster gets two. For

some reason the good guys get in an argument, allowing Jericho to hit HHH low and finally take over. We hit the sleeper because that's going to get the fans to care. As usual, Hogan is awesome at playing cheerleader on the apron, which really is something so many people miss. Watch someone like Hogan or Cena when they're on the apron in a tag match. They're almost always doing something, even if it's just slapping the turnbuckle. The energy helps a match so much.

Angle misses a charge into the post and the tag brings in Hogan for the 1986 offense. Jericho breaks up the legdrop and grabs a chair but stops to throw the referee out. HHH gets up but Jericho breaks up a Pedigree. Dang Kurt is going to owe him forever now. Hogan comes back and takes the chair away, setting up the chair shot to HHH's head that everyone saw coming. Edge comes in to save Hogan (again) and the match is a no contest.

**Rating:** D+. Just angle advancement here and that's fine. I still have no idea why Jericho doesn't have a match on the pay per view when he's in such a featured role on this show. Hogan vs. HHH can't end fast enough and these matches aren't making me want to see them fight on Sunday. The wrestling, which means HHH and Hogan making it clear that they're miles ahead of their opponents, was watchable enough if you can ignore the boring stories.

Edge fights Jericho and Angle off, leaving HHH to chair Hogan to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. I know the show wasn't great but this was so far and away better than Raw. Maybe it's the younger talent around here or maybe it's the lack of thirty second matches but this is easily more entertaining. There's still a lot of bad stuff here though as they need to get rid of Hogan as fast as they can. It's really not working at the moment and that's only going to get worse as time goes on. This was a completely watchable show though and that puts it leaps and bounds above Raw.

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# Smackdown – September 13, 2016: Plugging The Holes

## Smackdown

Date: September 13, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

Dean wants his title back but Cena cuts him off as well, saying that Dean didn't take AJ seriously enough. Maybe Steve Austin was right to call him out on the podcast. Ambrose doesn't take kindly to that and calls Cena a lazy part timer. Cena would be better off hosting

award shows because he's not able to keep up with the new generation.

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

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

Connor's Cure video.

### Usos vs. Hype Bros

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

Curt Hawkins talks about wolf cubs.

Here are Miz and Maryse for a chat. Miz has held the title for 162 days, which is longer than 132 other former champions, including Dolph Ziggler. This brings out Ziggler to say Miz will never be seen as a top guy. Yeah he'd never main event Wrestlemania or anything like that. Apparently Miz has never earned any respect so all he has to do is beat Ziggler one time with nothing but the two of them. This brings out Daniel Bryan (JBL: "The General Manager of Raw!") to say Ziggler gets a rematch. Miz says no because he wants his contract renegotiated. Bryan gets in the ring and Miz bails into the crowd.

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

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

### Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

Rematch from Backlash's pre-show. Corbin jumps Crews during the entrances and hits the End of Days on the floor. No match but Jack Swagger of all people comes out, seemingly having jumped to Smackdown.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kane laughs at AJ for suggesting a partnership.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joined in progress again with Miz kicking Cena in the face before it's off to Dean for some clotheslines on AJ. A quick Pele takes

Dean down and we go to another break. Back with Miz ax handling Dean so it can be back to AJ. We hit a chinlock on Ambrose for a bit before he shoves AJ away and makes the hot tag off to Cena. Everything breaks down and Dean sends AJ to the floor, leaving Cena to AA Miz for the pin at 9:50.

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

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

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

### Results

Usos b. Hype Bros – Superfly splash to Rawley

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

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Ascension – Gore to Viktor

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

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

## **Backlash 2016**

Date: September 11, 2016

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

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

### Pre-Show: Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

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

Corbin talks a little trash and takes Apollo's head off with another clothesline. A running knee (because of course) puts Corbin down and the second jumping enziguiri gets two. An Angle Slam of all things gets two more on Baron but he hits the Deep Six for the same. They

actually head outside with Corbin going into the steps for a seven count. Back in and Crews charges into a knee (it's always the knee) to set up End of Days for the pin at 9:56.

**Rating:** C+. This was actually a lot better than I was expecting with some ice chemistry from the pair. Corbin winning is fine as he needs something to do but Crews needs to start winning people people stop caring about him. Above all else though: the pre-show had ONE match that ran about ten minutes and now we're almost ready to go with the regular show. Yes I said ONE MATCH instead of three with half an hour between each one. I really don't think people are going to miss the other two and the fans might even be a bit less burned out later on. Imagine that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Usos vs. Hype Bros

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

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

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

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

Connor's Cure video.

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

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

### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

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

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

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

The pre-show panel has a chat.

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

match and it's no holds barred.

### Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

I had the name written before the music hit because of course it's Kane. They're quickly on the floor with Kane knocking the bell out of Bray's hands. Back in and Bray's cross body has Kane in trouble, followed by a chair to the knee to make it even worse. Another chair shot gets two on Kane until he grabs a running DDT. The side slam looks to set up a chokeslam but Bray takes it outside again.

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

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

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

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

### Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Rhyno/Heath Slater

For the inaugural titles. Slater goes after Jey to start before it's off to Rhyno for some power slots. Heath comes back in but is taken

outside for a double suplex into the post (cool). Back in and Slater is slowly beaten down as the back work continues. The fans want Rhyno but get a chinlock from Jey instead.

Slater fights up and we get the double cross body spot to set up the hot tag. Rhyno comes in (to a very nice reaction) but misses the Gore. Heath tags himself back in and hits a neckbreaker on both twins, followed by a DDT for two on Jimmy. The superkick nails Heath but Rhyno hits the Gore to give Slater the pin at 9:57.

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

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

Miz vs. Ziggler chicken deal.

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

#### Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

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

Dean comes up holding his nose but makes a comeback anyway by whipping AJ into the corner. That goes nowhere good either as Dean misses a charge into the post. They're going with the idea that Dean

is doing his normal insane style but AJ knows exactly what he's going to do and is one step ahead. Dean is back up and tries a belly to back superplex but flips AJ over for a big crash to put both guys down.

AJ dives into a spinning Rock Bottom backbreaker of all things for two (makes sense as Dean used something new) and the standing elbow to the floor has AJ in even more trouble. They head inside again with Dean getting suplexed into the corner (becoming a common move lately). Now it's AJ going after the leg with a standing Robinsdale Crunch out of the corner and the Calf Crusher is on.

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

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

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

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

**Overall Rating:** C+. This is a really weird one to grade as the ultra low expectations did it a lot of favors. Unfortunately it's a show that didn't need to exist and needed a lot of things dragged out to

make it work as well as it did. Smackdown is dying for some midcard talent as they had one of the shortest pay per views in a long time and that only worked with a team working twice and the opening match not starting until over fifteen minutes into the show. I liked this as well as I could have given the circumstances but they really need to fix some big problems.

### Results

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

Usos b. Hype Bros – Tequila Sunrise to Ryder

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Kane b. Bray Wyatt – Chokeslam

Rhyno/Heath Slater b. Usos – Gore to Jimmy

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose – Styles Clash

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

**Smackdown**

Date: April 11, 2002

Location: Tucson Convention Center, Tucson, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

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

Opening sequence.

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

The WHAT chants finally make Angle snap but here's Edge to calm things down a bit. Edge agrees that Angle's medal win was inspiring but IT WAS SIX YEARS AGO. Since Angle isn't getting a title shot soon, maybe he'd like to face Edge at Backlash. The match is accepted so Edge has one last thing: the fans need to shout YOU SUCK instead of WHAT whenever Kurt talks. And that's the rest of Angle's career. Angle freaks out as only he can and demands his music plays, only to have the fans chant to the tune.

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

Tajiri vs. Hurricane

Hurricane has hacked off his hair. Tajiri drags Torrie Wilson out in a geisha girl outfit and you can just pencil in the big stripping scene from here. An armdrag sends Tajiri outside and Hurricane uses a rare over the top flip dive to take him down. Torrie looks

miserable as Tazz says she's lucky to have someone like Tajiri. For once Cole has it right by saying it's the other way around. Hurricane gets in a hurricanrana but gets kicked in the head for the fast pin.

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

Tajiri berates Torrie until Kidman makes the save.

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

#### Albert vs. Scotty 2 Hotty

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

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

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

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

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

## Edge vs. Chris Jericho

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

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

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

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

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

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

type. "Don't let the door hit you on the....oh yeah we don't have doors on the ring."

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

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

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

Mark Henry holds a limo (driven by Test) back with his legs. Test cranks it up and hurts Henry's legs (which you never actually see touching the limo of course). So we're going to get Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry?

#### Chuck vs. Al Snow

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

**Rating:** D. I'm fine with setting up some challengers for the titles

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

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

#### Kurt Angle vs. HHH

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

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

**Rating:** C+. The match was what you would expect from these two but

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

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

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

However, we still have a lot of major problems. You have Maven and Al Snow as the only challengers to the Tag Team Titles, Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry looming and the regular "Vince gets a gorgeous woman" storyline. They're starting to come around on top but the midcard and lower card are both death right now and that's going to last for a long time until we get some new characters over. It's a better show but they really need to fix some things.

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# Smackdown – September 6, 2016: This One Is A Little Different

## Smackdown

Date: September 6, 2016

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

I'm not sure how but we're already at the go home show for Backlash. At this point there are five announced matches (assuming you count a tournament final as an announced match) which means we're going to get a lot more stuff announced tonight or Sunday's matches are going to be very long. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Daniel Bryan is in the ring with the Smackdown Women's Title.

Sunday's Six Pack Challenge will be an elimination match (there's how they fill in some time) but before we get there, we'll be having a six women tag match. First though, we're going to have a forum with all six getting some time to talk. We'll start with Becky Lynch but before she can say anything, Daniel has to plug Total Bellas.

The fans clearly aren't interested so Bryan lets Becky talk about being the #1 female Smackdown draft pick. Her journey has brought her here but Natalya cuts her off. Natalya says the Draft was the worst night of her career because Smackdown was supposed to be her kingdom but now she has to put up with Becky and the unnatural hair.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say they're both whiners and calls Bryan a Bella trophy husband. Now it's Carmella cutting them because women in WWE can't let anyone else get more than a few words out. Everyone gets catty about nicknames and the villains accuse Becky of turning them

all against each other. Naomi and Nikki run out for the save and the villains leave. This was fine for a quick build but as usual, the women almost all have characters that can be summed up in six words or less and you have to stretch to get that far. If you want the division to go anywhere, give us some development and a reason to care about them.

Dean Ambrose pours most of a bottle of sugar into his coffee.

The bosses are talking about the women's match when Miz comes in. He's not happy about having to defend the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler at Backlash and thinks it's because of what he said to Bryan a few weeks ago. Bryan says Miz can either fight Ziggler or just hand over the title right now. Miz walks away with the title intact. So much for Bryan and Miz not being on screen at the same time, which is a good thing.

#### The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Non-title with Ziggler on commentary. What does it say that I knew this was going to be Crews because he's the designated midcard jobber? Crews runs him over to start and blocks a headlock with raw power. A shot to the face puts Miz on the floor and Crews moonsaults onto him as we go to a break.

Back with Miz choking in the corner as Ziggler keeps talking about how winning and losing doesn't matter as long as he tries his best. You know, two weeks after talking about how winning was all that mattered. No wait, it was winning the title and then defending it which mattered because that's the story they were going with this week. Miz's running corner clothesline has Crews in trouble but he sends Miz outside. That means it's time to get in Dolph's face and slap him in the jaw, only to have Miz shove Crews into him. A quick posting stuns Crews and the Skull Crushing Finale ends Apollo at 10:12.

**Rating:** D+. I have no idea what they're trying for with Miz and Ziggler at this point but it seems to be YET ANOTHER attempt to make Ziggler seem important after years of failing to live up to expectations. I'll be very, very disappointed if they put the title

on him Sunday as Miz vs. Bryan still has a lot of potential as they're trying to make Miz look like something special for a change. Ziggler would be the same nothing champion who would likely lose every non-title match but it doesn't matter because he tried his best.

Post match Ziggler chases Miz off and has the title in front of him. Ziggler invites Miz in to get the belt but he sends Maryse in instead. See, that's the kind of thing that shows character rather than "well golly I didn't win the match that I said I absolutely had to win but I sure tried and that's what matters" before saying that he has to win the big one (because winning the Intercontinental Title, a title he's held four times already, now counts as the big one).

AJ Styles is livid about video of him getting crotched last week. He yells at the production assistant who provided the video and that's about it.

American Alpha video.

The Usos say they still run this tag team division. The division has been around for about three weeks and they've already had to affirm their dominance? That's not a good sign.

Bray Wyatt talks about men having to fight to survive. They had to learn to deal with predators, who only knew how to hunt and kill. The predator didn't know how to create and one day they became a play thing. History repeats itself and Orton is no longer the predator he once was. Bray is the evolution of man and at Backlash, predator becomes prey.

Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch/Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella

Nikki makes her entrance before a break so we come back with.....the other five entrances. Bliss and Naomi start things off and it's time for the dancing kicks, which still look horrible. As a bonus this time, Naomi's kick to the head completely misses but it's off to Carmella (now in tights instead of the shorts in a smart move for the heel turn) vs. Becky anyway. A backslide gets two on Carmella,

who didn't seem like she kicked out in time. Nikki comes in and again the fans seem to care for reasons that I don't understand. The villains are chased to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Becky in trouble as Natalya sends her into the apron and grabs a chinlock. Bliss comes in and grabs a chinlock of her own before Natalya hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Becky finally dives over for the hot tag to Nikki and a Disaster kick gets two on Bliss. The TKO gets two on Carmella with Bliss making the save as everything breaks down. Bliss misses her moonsault knees to the ribs and Carmella's Code of Silence makes Nikki tap at 12:53.

**Rating:** D. This was bad and there's really no way around it. Between Naomi focusing on looking athletic without having the ability to pull it off, Carmella having all of one good looking move, Bliss not being able to take a move or hit one of her own and Nikki being in the match for two minutes because they're trying to keep her safe, there's only so much Natalya and Becky can do. This division just does not have the depth to work right now and it's showing more and more when there's so little to praise in a match with the whole division.

#### Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Usos vs. American Alpha

We get a handshake to start but the Usos jump Alpha from behind in what feels like a heel turn. Not that it matters as Alpha comes right back and the Grand Amplitude ends Jimmy at 27 seconds.

Post match (with the replay clipping the thing) the Usos beat Alpha down by sending Jordan shoulder first into the post and superkicking Gable in the knee. Jey puts on a Tequila Sunrise and Jimmy adds a Superfly splash to Gable's other leg for a good looking beatdown. The heel turn is a really good idea for the Usos as they've been the exact same team for years now. At least this gives them a little freshening up.

Orton tells a story about a dying man killing a rabbit but getting caught by a snake who wanted the rabbit for himself. The snake didn't attack until after the man had picked up the rabbit because he knew he could have them both. At Backlash, Bray won't know what

hit him.

Here's Fandango to say that Tyler Breeze is out finding fabric for their upcoming fashion line. Instead he's found a woman to tango with Fandango but she's a bit too wild for him and he throws her out. Fandango asks for anyone else so here's Kane to chokeslam him. Fans: "GO BIG RED!" (University of Nebraska football chant).

AJ breaks a guy's phone for not showing him enough respect.

Children with cancer awareness video.

Curt Hawkins video. He's here next week.

### Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Hype Bros vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

The Slater Family is in the front row as Slater and Ryder start things off. Zack's middle rope dropkick gets an early two and it's off to Rawley to send Heath outside. Rawley runs Rhyno down and we take an early break. Back with Slater avoiding a splash in the corner but the fans want Rhyno. The hot tag brings in Ryder and Rhyno but Slater tags himself in and gets rolled up for two. Rhyno saves Heath from the Broski Boot and a Gore ends Ryder at 7:18.

**Rating:** D+. This was an interesting one as Rhyno was WAY over and the fans are already into Slater but Ryder and Rawley are popular enough that it's hard to have them be heels. Either way, Slater and Rhyno were the best possible option and could get the belts, especially given Gable's knee injury.

We look at the knee injury earlier.

Renee Young doesn't have much of an update on Gable's condition but the Usos come in to say they were letting out their bottled up aggression. They've been putting their bodies on the line for years and the fans turned on them but love American Alpha the second they saw them.

Here are Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles for a face to face meeting to end the show. Dean has a gift for AJ: a bowling trophy for participation, which is the only trophy Dean will ever give him. We see clips of AJ getting crotched last week and AJ isn't happy.

Styles talks about how he beat John Cena but Dean points out that this Sunday, AJ isn't fighting Cena. On top of that, AJ beat Cena in a wrestling match and Sunday it's going to be a fight. They don't give out trophies for second place so AJ kicks Dean low and breaks the trophy to end the show. They kept this short and that's probably best given how the feud has gone so far.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show was very different than usual and that's a good thing as they head into a rather weak pay per view. There are only five matches for the show and tonight focused on the matches to crown new champions. The wrestling really wasn't the focus here and it's a good idea to spend this show focusing on everything other than the main event, which has gotten a lot of time already. I really don't see a three hour pay per view based on this card but they've stretched stuff out in other ways before.

### Results

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Naomi/Becky Lynch – Code of Silence to Bella

American Alpha b. Usos – Grand Amplitude to Jimmy

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Hype Bros – Gore to Ryder

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# Smackdown – August 4, 2002: Just Like Raw

## Smackdown

Date: April 4, 2002

Location: Blue Cross Arena, Rochester, New York

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

After Monday's less than amazing debut for Raw, it's time to see if Smackdown can save the opening week of the Brand Split. This show has its share of stars including The Rock, Chris Jericho, Hulk Hogan and Kurt Angle. Those names alone should be enough to help carry this past Raw but this company has managed to disappoint me with less. Let's get to it.

Vince (dang I thought this was Smackdown) wishes us good evening. On Raw, Ric Flair picked Undertaker as #1 contender but that wasn't his right. Vince won the coin toss and the right to name the #1 contender, which he'll do tonight. It's really not a good sign that they're changing matches that fast.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to say he'd love to be #1 contender. That would make sense given how things have been going lately. Since the fans keep "dissing" him, he has a list of reasons why he should get the title shot.

1. He OWNS HHH.
2. He won an Olympic gold medal.
3. He is adored by children and senior citizens worldwide!

Before he can list off his other twenty six reasons, here's Chris Jericho to interrupt. Jericho's only rematch has been in a stupid triple threat match where Stephanie lost (true) and despite what the people here think, he is NOT a has been. Jericho suggests a match for the #1 contendership and Kurt shakes his hand but the Rock comes out with something to say. There's only one man, AND THE ROCK MEANS ONE MAN who should face HHH for the title at Backlash. Rock doesn't actually say who that is because he thinks there might be someone

else.

One day Rock will be WWF Champion but until then, no one deserves the shot more than Hulk Hogan. I know they're friends and all, but Rock saying Hogan should get a title shot after he beat Hogan at Wrestlemania and was drafted higher really doesn't feel right. Find another way to get Hogan in the title picture though as Rock saying it isn't working for me. After a double IT DOESN'T MATTER to Angle and Jericho and a poll from the crowd, Rock implores Vince to give Hogan the shot.

Earlier tonight, Albert confirmed that he was with Scotty for the Tag Team Title match.

#### Tag Team Titles: Billy and Chuck vs. Scotty 2 Hotty/Albert

Billy and Chuck are defending of course. We look at Rico talking to the announcers for some reason before Hotty takes Chuck down to start. Scotty takes things to another level by sending Chuck head first into Billy's....we'll say stomach. Chuck's offense doesn't last long as he eats a superkick and there's the hot tag to the Hip Hop Hippo (just go with it) to clean house. Albert gets distracted by Rico (never look directly at the sideburns) and the chase lets Rico sneak in and kick Scotty in the face so Billy can get the pin.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here but you can almost see the post match heel turn from heel. It's not like they have a ton of midcard acts at the moment so one less nothing tag team isn't going to hurt anything. Albert is a former Intercontinental Champion so just let him beat up goons for a bit.

Post match, as expected, Albert beats the heck out of Scotty and says he put up with the dancing for six months.

Vince grabs Hogan the title shot.

Jericho freaks out and yells at Rock for getting Hogan the title shot. He brings up the great point that Hogan couldn't even win at Wrestlemania and Jericho beat Rock over and over. Rock suggests Jericho try to beat him tonight and an exchange of fisticuffs is agreed upon.

Video on Christian's losing streak and ensuing tantrums. Diamond Dallas Page helped Christian break the streak but Christian attacked him after the match. Page then beat him at Wrestlemania and the biggest fit yet ensued.

## Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian

Page monkey flips him to start as the announcers are already talking about Backlash. Christian gets in an elbow to the face and grabs a chinlock so this is probably going to be a short match. The reverse DDT gets two and Christian throws a fit, only to sucker Page in for the Unprettier and the pin.

**Rating:** D+. Who would have thought a match involving Christian freaking out would have psychology? Hopefully this moves Christian on to something else as Page really doesn't have much of a future due to his age and people not really caring about him in the WWF in the first place. The match was fine but I could go for something lasting a bit longer.

Kurt Angle thinks Hillbilly Jim should be President if Hogan gets the title shot. Edge comes up and says he feels bad about their recent problems. He's found some pictures of their good old days but of course there are jokes on the back, such as "You Suck", "Yes I Do Suck" and "And I'm A Dork." It's true, though thank goodness Edge was on the right side and Angle took the pictures when he did or this could have been embarrassing for Edge.

Here's HHH for his bi-weekly chat, this time about the new #1 contender. The more I look at that Undisputed Title, the less I like it by comparison to the original two belts. If nothing else the other two were bigger, as World Titles should be. HHH doesn't care if he's fighting Hogan because he'll fight Undertaker next. Cue Hogan in the red and yellow (first time in almost ten years in the WWF) to talk about....Wrestlemania I?

Then he moves on to Wrestlemania III (now with 94,000 people there) and Wrestlemania XVIII, both of which he thought would never be topped. Nothing is bigger than the title though (not exactly, as it wasn't even the biggest match at Wrestlemania) and HHH says it would be an honor to be in the ring with Hulk Hogan (Like he is now?).

In a bit of a twist, HHH says he's looked up to Hogan his whole life. At Backlash though, he won't hesitate to hurt Hogan every way he can. Hogan thinks it's funny that everyone keeps declaring Hulkamania dead because it's going to rise up again at Backlash. A lot of posing takes us out as the serious HHH awkwardly leaves. Again: I get why they have to do something with Hogan while they can but this feels really forced.

## Edge vs. Kurt Angle

I miss Never Gonna Stop. Kurt stomps him down and throws a good looking German suplex to start as the announcers talk about how amazing the previous segment was. In other words, they're probably putting it on the same level as the Rock vs. Hogan promo the previous month because in the WWF, HHH and Rock are total equals. Edge's half nelson facebuster gets him out of trouble for a bit and Angle gets tied in the ropes. Some spears (which still look lame coming from Edge) have him in even more trouble so he chairs Edge for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. Anytime this show wants to deliver a match that breaks four minutes, please let me know. This is a problem that the modern Brand Split is running into as well (Raw more than Smackdown): you don't have to put everything on every week. It's ok to alternate back and forth for a bit and let something get a little focus.

Edge fights Angle off.

Billy Kidman wishes luck to his ex-Torrie Wilson and her boyfriend Tajiri in their match later. Tajiri comes up and rants in Japanese. Just do the heel turn/split.

## Cruiserweight Title: Kidman vs. Tajiri

Tajiri is defending. Kidman dropkicks him down to start and seems to be going fast, likely due to another lack of time. A kick to the head puts Kidman on the floor and there's an Asai moonsault for a very weak ECW chant. Back in and the tornado DDT is countered into a sitout powerbomb (nice counter) but Kidman can't hit the shooting star. The frustrated champion grabs his title and puts it in the corner, only to have Torrie take it away. Kidman uses the distraction to roll Tajiri up for the pin and the title.

**Rating:** D+. This felt like an Alliance era title change with the action having no meaning other than the forced angle at the end. Kidman winning the title doesn't really change anything but it's not like the Cruiserweight Title means anything at this point. Splitting Torrie and Tajiri (pretty obvious at this point) probably won't lead anywhere and it's another story to add to the pile tonight.

Tajiri berates Torrie and leaves.

Vince is mad at Maven for costing Smackdown the Hardcore Title last week. His solution: send Hardcore Holly after him. Bob leaves and

here's Stacy Keibler, ("Just call me Vince.") to offer the boss his services, which includes bending over in front of the camera.

Wouldn't it make sense to bend over where Vince can see it?

Stacy loved Vince's talk about intellectual sperm and he likes the way she walks. They sit down and we go to a break, coming back with Vince fixing his clothes. Stacy is gone so here's D-Von to yell about splitting up the Dudley Boyz. He demands an explanation so Vince tells him to get out until he's ready to be a star. Did we just get three Vince segments in one? That's excessive even by his standards.

Al Snow gives Maven a pep talk by saying he would have had to get mugged to get the kind of beating Hardcore Holly is going to give him.

#### Hardcore Holly vs. Maven

Cole hypes up Rock vs. Jericho, which will have no titles on the line. Could that be because neither is a champion? Holly punches in the corner and does his kick to the "lower abdomen", only to miss a high cross body. Maven gets two off a missile dropkick but the Alabama Slam ends him in a hurry. I'm sure there was a point to this one somewhere.

We look at Rock challenging Jericho earlier in the night.

#### The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

They slug it out in the aisle to start and I'll let you guess who gets the better of it. Rock gets catapulted into the post for the great looking bump and they head inside for the opening bell. Right hands and a spinwheel kick get two for Chris as the announcers say Rock was just showing Hogan respect earlier. A Walls attempt is broken up and Jericho gets crotched on top to set up a superplex for Rock's first real offense.

Some of Rock's usual stuff gets a few near falls but there goes the referee. Rock grabs the Sharpshooter but here's Angle for the interference. Not that it matters as Rock kicks out of the Angle Slam, Edge comes out to take care of Angle, and the Rock Bottom ends Jericho as a match finally breaks seven minutes.

**Rating:** C. The time and talent in the ring helped carry this but it felt like a way to get to the interference which likely sets up a tag match next week. Rock is in a weird place where he's so much

better than anyone else that it's hard to imagine someone giving him a real challenge. That HHH feud just crippled Jericho as he feels like a glorified midcarder instead of a guy who was World Champion a month again.

**Overall Rating:** D. Put very simply, there's too much here. This could have been spread out over two weeks if not more, including too many turns and splits for a single show. I really don't get why wrestling companies feel the need to do this. It's not like there's a big season finale coming up. Just let these already established characters (keep in mind that they weren't anything new but rather just exclusive to one show or the other) act as they normally would instead of changing so suddenly. It doesn't feel right and makes for an overly packed show.

On top of that, you need some more wrestling. Like I mentioned multiple times, until the main event, nothing broke three and a half minutes. There really isn't a defense for something like that happening on a show with this much talent. Just Rock vs. Jericho alone could have eaten up twelve to fifteen minutes and you could have gut out something like Maven vs. Holly, which basically existed to say "hey, we're here too". Things will likely get better going forward but this was a big mess, somehow being just as bad as Raw.

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IH70904>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# Smackdown – August 30, 2016: How To Waste A Big Moment

## Smackdown

Date: August 30, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Much like last night, this show has a lot of potential to be something big but instead of one big match, this show is built around a few individual issues. First and foremost, we'll see the fallout from Miz's awesome shoot promo on Daniel Bryan, which some people didn't expect to see referenced on TV. There's also more of the Tag Team Title tournament and Dean Ambrose vs. Baron Corbin. Let's get to it.

We open with the full Miz vs. Daniel Bryan interview from last week's Talking Smack with Bryan calling Miz soft but Miz saying his style means he doesn't get injured and leave for six months to a year at a time. Bryan walked off and Miz went on a tirade about how the Intercontinental Title is the most important one on Smackdown because he's the one out there every night. This was GREAT and more emotion than Miz has ever shown, which makes me think his days as champion are numbered.

Shane tells Bryan that he can't do that to the talent and Bryan agrees. However, Bryan finds this ironic coming from the person having issues with Brock Lesnar.

Opening sequence.

Here's a ticked off Miz with something to say. Miz doesn't want to hear any booing because it's taken 148 days (the length of his title reign) to get the fans' attention. He's bringing prestige back to this title but people think he's soft. Yeah he wrestles a different style but it's because he's smart enough to see the big picture.

What the fans don't understand is what goes on backstage. Who do you think they call when they need someone to do a red carpet premiere or a commercial or main event Wrestlemania and then dress up as a

chicken? Miz didn't spend the first twelve years of his career wrestling in front of 50 people and people booing him for that makes them cowards. Cue Dolph Ziggler and I'm done. This was getting really interesting and it's about Dolph "RESPECT ME WHEN I'M SERIOUS AND THEN LOSE EVERY BIG MATCH OVER AND OVER AGAIN" Ziggler all over again.

Dolph says no one is going to buy what Miz says because he's never proven a thing. If Miz wants to show how tough he is, fight right now with no referees or titles on the line. Just the two of them right now. As expected, Miz teases fighting but walks off. Ziggler says Bryan was right and calls him a soft, safe coward but that's not enough to get him to fight either.

I actually felt the air go out of me when Ziggler came out. This story had the potential to actually be something fresh but instead it's the same old Ziggler that we've seen for months and have no reason to believe it's going to be anything different this time around. Ziggler is just a played out character and I wanted something fresh this time from Miz. Instead it's another Battle of Cleveland because that's what WWE thinks new and different means.

#### Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Hype Bros vs. Vaudevillains

The villains takes over to start and send Ryder outside for a neckbreaker on the floor. The double teaming only lasts for a few moments before the tag brings in Rawley for his splashes. A running fist in the corner sets up the Hype Ryder to pin English at 2:53. This was exactly the kind of energetic match these two needed, even though they're likely losing in the next round.

To my shock, JBL seems to love the Hype Ryders. You would expect him to hate a team like this.

Post match the Hype Bros say they're hyped enough to win the titles.

We finally see the tournament brackets and the Usos vs. American Alpha is actually a semifinal match. That makes things a lot more interesting.

AJ Styles runs into Apollo Crews and introduces himself as the face who runs this place.

Here's AJ Styles for a chat. AJ, in the Cena headband, says he's already beaten up John Cena and now he's going to win the World Title. This brings out Apollo Crews to say Daniel Bryan has granted

him a match against AJ right now. I love the fact that they just got to the point here. It was clear we were getting this match the second they ran into each other so there's no reason to waste time setting it up.

### AJ Styles vs. Apollo Crews

Crews leapfrogs AJ to start and sends it outside but Crews stops to brag about a right hand. Back with AJ holding a chinlock because that's how you come back from breaks in WWE. Crews sends him into the corner and backdrops AJ outside for a moonsault from the apron. Back in and AJ's high cross body is countered into a Samoan drop (that's kind of insane) for another near fall. Not that it matters as AJ stuns him across the ropes and the Phenomenal Forearm puts Crews away at 8:15.

**Rating:** C+. Crews is still fun to watch but he loses a lot more often than not and really doesn't have a character to speak of. Really all I know about him is that he's an athletic freak and that's not exactly enough to carry you far. It only worked so well for Shelton Benjamin and Crews isn't that far along yet.

Earlier this week, Renee Young went to Heath Slater's trailer and met his wife for some redneck humor. As Rhino eats cheese whiz and crackers, Slater calls not being drafted an oversight. More redneck jokes ensue and Slater talks about how he's earned a contract several times now. When they win the titles, it's time to upgrade to a double wide. There's talk of the kids (outside picking up bottles and cans) but a car screeching sends the Slaters outside. Rhino just keeps calmly eating crackers. I get what they were going for here but this just isn't my kind of humor.

Here's Bray Wyatt with a message for Randy Orton. Bray isn't scared of snakes or monsters because he doesn't see Orton as anything more than a man. If Orton really hears voices, Bray hopes they're telling him to run but here's Randy in person. Randy says that a bunch of staples in his head aren't going to change anything because being damaged is what he does. Bray calls himself the new predator and promises to cut the serpent's head off at Backlash. Orton talks about Bray seeing the scars on his body but needing to worry about the scars inside. He agrees to the match and goes inside but Bray vanishes.

### Natalya/Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi

Nikki Bella is on commentary to do a commercial for Total Bellas. Naomi hurricanranas Natalya to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Naomi in trouble until a jawbreaker allows the tag off to Becky. House is cleaned and everything breaks down as Carmella comes out to brawl with Nikki. In the melee, Bliss rolls Becky up and grabs the trunks for the pin at 7:21.

**Rating:** D+. This division really needs some promo time. I know all of their basic characters (or what they have for characters) but I really don't know much about most of them. Almost all of them need a chance to give us a reason to care, even if it's just a quick promo during their entrances.

Video on the Headbangers. For the life of me I don't get why they were picked to come back. It's like when Greg Valentine would show up on Nitro for a one off match.

Video on Curt Hawkins.

#### Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Headbangers vs. Rhino/Heath Slater

Mosh and Thrasher look exactly the same as they did in 1999. Slater gets beaten down to start and the springboard clothesline puts him on the floor. Some stomping sets up a chinlock as Otunga calls the Headbangers the last two Marilyn Manson fans. The Stage Dive (powerbomb/guillotine legdrop combo) gets two as Rhino makes the save. Rhino (with what looks like some blood on the left side of his face) drags Slater over for the tag and the Gore ends Mosh at 2:53. It might be time for Thrasher to go back to training wrestlers like he did with Big Show.

A guy in a suit named Derrick Milliman has been granted a match tonight and issues an open challenge. Kane comes out for a chokeslam and leaves. Were they just running short on time or something? As Kane leaves, Baron Corbin comes out for the main event. Maybe that's what they're trying to set up?

#### Baron Corbin vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and AJ is on commentary. Ambrose knocks Baron to the floor to start and hits a running clothesline from the apron. Back in and Dean's bulldog is broken up and Baron pounds away with right hands. We come back from a break with Corbin holding a chinlock and getting two off a choke legsweep. Dean fights up and gets two off his

clothesline before hitting the suicide dive on the floor. Back in and the Deep Six plants Dean but AJ gets in Baron's face and tells him to stay on it. Dean knocks Baron into Styles so AJ kicks Baron in the face for the DQ at 12:12.

**Rating:** C. Odd ending aside, this was a nice showcase for Corbin and it's a good sign to not have him get pinned here. It would be nice if they gave Corbin something to do other than torture Kalisto (Did that go anywhere yet?). It's not like they're overflowing with options at the moment and building up a big man isn't going to hurt anything.

Post match the main eventers fight until Dean hits Corbin with Dirty Deeds. AJ gets crotched and Dean seems to sympathize before bouncing the ropes up and down. Dean takes his belt and leaves AJ sitting on the top rope to end the show. I really don't like having AJ look silly like that, especially after he did something good earlier tonight.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This felt like an older episode of Smackdown but thankfully it was one where they actually got some stuff done. Nothing major was set up (save for making Bray vs. Orton official) but they did a good job of advancing a few angles and building towards the matches later on. That's the kind of show they needed with less than two weeks before Backlash, but I'm still not sold on this being a full on three hour pay per view.

### Results

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

AJ Styles b. Apollo Crews – Phenomenal Forearm

Alexa Bliss/Natalya b. Naomi/Becky Lynch – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Rhino/Heath Slater b. Headbangers – Gore to Mosh

Baron Corbin b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when AJ Styles interfered

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# Smackdown – March 28, 2002: It's Important!

## Smackdown

Date: March 28, 2002

Location: First Union Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 13,600

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

With the Draft out of the way, this is the final regular episode of Smackdown with the full roster before things split up next week. That means it's also the last chance for the wrestlers to make one last good impression against their interpromotional rivals. In other words it's a lame duck show that they're trying to pass off as something important. Let's get to it.

## Booker T. vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Of course this show starts with two guys from WCW. Fallout from Monday's tag match. Booker stomps him into the corner to start so Page chops away. The Draft picks start running along the bottom as Page hits a helicopter bomb for two. Not that it matters as Brock Lesnar comes in to take out Page for the DQ.

Here's Kurt Angle with something to say but we have to wait on the YOU SUCK WHAT chants because that's how wrestling fans like their comedy. Angle thinks the people are pathetic, but not as pathetic as what happened to Stephanie on Raw. Kurt would like a special moment of silence and you can imagine his reaction when he's booed out of the building. This brings out Vince to insult the fans and talk about HHH being the kind of model citizen that seduced and then humiliated his daughter. Then on Monday he beat her up!

Vince promises to take care of HHH and here's the champ so Vince can make threats to his face. HHH promises to make Vince's life miserable if Vince screws with him but decides Kurt is right: we should honor Stephanie, perhaps by looking at the end of Raw. That's enough to make Kurt want a match against HHH tonight but Vince has a better idea: the two of them against HHH. This brings out Ric Flair to make it a tag match.

D-Von gives Bubba some exposition about the team splitting up if

they don't win the titles tonight.

#### Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Billy and Chuck

Billy and Chuck are defending and if the Dudleys lose they're split up. On the other hand, if Billy and Chuck lose then they stay together, in theory at least. The questions I'll never have answered. Bubba and Chuck start things off with Chuck being sent into the corner for some loud chops to the chest. D-Von comes in for some shoulders to Billy and it's back to Bubba for some house cleaning. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Chuck and Rico offers a quick distraction, only to have the Domsday Device plant Chuck. Rico's second distraction works though and leaves Bubba to hit a Fameasser to retain the titles.

**Rating:** D+. So that's it for the Dudleys in one of the most questionable moves I've seen in a long time. I get the idea of splitting up Edge and Christian and maybe the Hardys but who thought Bubba and D-Von could survive on their own? For the life of me I still don't get the thinking behind that one and it's yet another casualty of the Draft.

Bubba and D-Von destroy the champs with all the usual stuff one more time. There has to be a joke about Billy taking What's Up. I don't know if he had it coming in but Bubba's eye (as in the eyeball itself) is full of blood. That's quite the scary look.

The APA is splitting up and aren't happy about it. Since it's their last night together, they're going to have a farewell bash. Tajiri is in charge of telling everyone and Torrie Wilson is in charge of playing strip poker.

Matt and Lita (interviewed by Lillian Garcia, who actually looked much better in her 40s) are so happy that they're on the same show. Chris Jericho comes up and says no one should be happy since he can't be champion again. Matt calls him a has been and gets jumped, likely setting up something for later tonight.

The Rock and Hogan call each other brother before talking about whether or not they can trust Kane in their six man tag tonight. Rock imitates King Kong Bundy and Kamala in a way to say yes. Dang it I was hoping for some more of those as there are multiple other Hogan monsters he could have done.

Anyway, Kane comes in and says it doesn't matter if Rock is ready.

In the most bizarre thing I've ever seen from Kane (and that's covering A LOT), he does an amazing Hogan-style promo, saying it doesn't matter if it's 20,000 Hulkamaniacs, 20,000 of the millions or 20,000 screaming Kaneannites (Rock: "Kaneannites?") because the three of them are going to run wild on the NWO. He even does the posing and the hand to his ear with the fans absolutely losing their minds over this. This was HILARIOUS with Rock looking somewhere between amazed, terrified and stunned.

#### Hulk Hogan/The Rock/Kane vs. NWO

Apparently Flair drafted the NWO so he could "keep an eye on the poison." Wouldn't it be smarter to get rid of the poison? Rock and X-Pac get things going with X-Pac in early trouble before it's off to Hall. The bad guys (as in the team with the Bad Guy) take over with Nash hitting the knees in the corner but Rock shrugs them off and tags in Hogan. I know he's considered lazy but he can do a hot tag like almost no one ever.

Nash gets in a side slam (no hair flip yet) and Hogan gets beaten down. Wait so Kane is getting the house cleaning spot? That's an odd choice but I'm willing to go with it due to that pre-match promo alone. A belly to back suplex breaks up Hall's sleeper and the real hot tag brings in Kane. The Fake Diesel hits the real Diesel as everything breaks down. Well most of it does at least as Hogan is just standing on the apron while his partners fight 3-2. It turns out fine though as Kane chokeslams X-Pac for the pin.

**Rating:** C+. This would have been a good house show main event and there's nothing wrong with that. Hogan was looking energetic here (believe that one if you want to) and X-Pac was the only one with any kind of fire on his team. I know he gets a lot of flack for good reason but when X-Pac had his head on straight, he was one of the better workers on the roster. Did the NWO ever actually win a major match? They debuted at No Way Out, won a few TV matches and then lost both Wrestlemania matches. What a great stable.

#### Matt Hardy vs. Chris Jericho

They start fast, likely due to a lack of time. Matt sends him into the corner to start but gets crotched on top to slow him down again. Cue Lita for a top rope hurricanrana, setting up the Twist of Fate for two. Lita gets knocked off the apron and a low blow sets up the Walls to make Matt tap. Nothing match.

Jericho puts Lita in the Walls on the floor.

The APA party is going on and Torrie takes off a belly chain for her stripping. Christian freaks out over losing and destroys stuff.

#### Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Test

Van Dam is defending and gets dropped throat first across the top rope to start. A full nelson slam gets two on Van Dam as Lawler tries to figure out which brand has better looking women. Test grabs the ropes to avoid a sunset flip but we get the referee kicking his arms spot to give Rob a near fall. That earns Earl Hebner a good talking to so he does a fast count on Van Dam's sunset flip to retain the title. Ok then.

Raven doesn't care who he's wrestling for because he's destroying the things he loves.

#### Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Maven

Maven is defending and I forgot how much I liked his theme. Raven starts fast with the alternating trashcan lid shots to the head. Maven loses his balance on the ropes but gets two off a missile dropkick anyway. Here's Tommy Dreamer to try to win the title but the distraction lets Raven grab the Raven Effect for the pin and the title, which now moves to Raw.

Angle tells Vince that he'll help get Austin to Smackdown.

We look over the Draft lottery results, almost none of which are worth mentioning.

William Regal crashes the party to say the APA is out of business. A fight breaks out because it wouldn't be right otherwise. Bradshaw puts up the "sorry, we're closed" sign and they go their separate ways to what sounds like a standing ovation.

#### HHH/Ric Flair vs. Kurt Angle/Vince McMahon

Flair is in business pants. Vince and HHH start things off and I won't even bother explaining why Angle and Flair come in a few seconds later. Kurt takes him into the corner to start and gets a thumb in the eye before it's off to HHH. A quick belly to belly sends the champ flying but Flair comes back in with a sleeper. Kurt starts working on the knee and of course Vince is willing to get involved. Cole tries to explain the reason behind the Brand Split and it's really getting worse with every word he says.

A few wraps around the post have the leg in trouble but there's no way he's going to get Flair in a Figure Four. I mean, he's not Shawn or anything. Flair kicks Kurt low but the Figure Four is reversed into an ankle lock. Now Vince can get in the Figure Four, only to have Ric turn it over in a hurry. Angle is smart enough to make a very fast save before it's off to the guys under 50. A spinebuster gets two on Kurt, only to have Vince hit HHH in the face with a belt for two. Flair actually hits the top rope shot to Vince's head and goes for the real Figure Four but here's Undertaker to lay Ric out and give Vince the pin.

**Rating:** D. Much like almost anything else HHH did around this time, this was slow, not very good, and could have been done better in less time. Vince pinning Flair doesn't mean much and it's not like Undertaker is going after anyone other than Ric, so this was pretty much the definition of "well, here's a main event".

**Overall Rating:** D. Hulk Hogan just had the runaway match of the night in 2002. This was a big commercial for the Brand Split as none of this matters (including a new Hardcore Champion) heading into the new WWF. Since there are almost no storylines here, everything other than Kane vs. the NWO and everything in the main event was filler. That's not the way to make an interesting show but at least a lot of the matches were short.

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# The Miz/Daniel Bryan Promo

Indeed it was awesome and indeed it did feel a little shootish. Unfortunately I have no reason to believe it's going to lead anywhere because this kind of thing has happened before and is never mentioned on TV. If that happens it could be interesting, but I hope it doesn't lead to Bryan getting back in the ring. I just don't need to see it again and risk even more injuries.

I've been singing Miz's praises for years and hopefully this makes more people realize how awesome he is.

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## Smackdown – August 23, 2016: Good, But Not Gold

### Smackdown

Date: August 23, 2016

Location: Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Connecticut

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's an interesting time for Smackdown as we're past Summerslam and the brand is really starting to come into its own. Tonight we'll see the unveiling of the new Smackdown Women's and Tag Team Titles but possibly more importantly we should get an update on Brock Lesnar attacking Shane McMahon to end Summerslam. Let's get to it.

Various people are in the back when AJ Styles comes in to brag about how awesome he is. AJ puts Cena's armband around his head and talks down to Dolph Ziggler a lot, triggering a brawl.

Opening sequence.

The tag and women's divisions are in the ring around the new titles

(The Women's Title is the same as the Raw version but with a blue background. The Tag Team Titles look similar to the Raw versions but with silver instead of bronze.) when the bosses come out. We'll start with the women, all of whom have potential to be the champion. At Backlash, there will be a Six Pack Challenge to determine the first champion. The Tag Team Titles will be decided at Smackdown as well with the finals of a tournament. Cue Heath Slater to say he should be Michael Phelps and get to compete for some gold. Ignoring that THE BELTS ARE SILVER, Daniel says Heath isn't equipped to fight for the Women's Title.

Heath meant the tag belts so Bryan gives him an offer: if Slater can find a partner by the end of the night, the bosses will find another team and make it an eight team tournament. However, Slater only gets a contract if he and his partner win the whole thing. That's fine with Slater but here's AJ to interrupt. He's tired of hearing about the Tag Team Titles and the Women's Ti...."No I won't be your partner Slater." This brings out Ziggler to jump him from behind and the bosses send the tag teams out to break it up as we go to a break.

#### Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

Naomi and Natalya are on commentary. Becky takes it down to the mat in an armbar but gets kicked in the head for her efforts. We hit an armbar on Becky until some clotheslines have Bliss reeling. Bliss gets two off a nice looking spinning sunset flip out of the corner but a quick Disarm-Her makes her tap at 4:00.

**Rating:** C. Bliss has improved by leaps and bounds in recent months but sweet goodness Naomi and Natalya have no personalities. Naomi sounded bored and Natalya spoke in the exact same tone that she's had since the day she debuted with the company. At least Becky has some charisma to her, though her recent wardrobe choices are a bit odd.

Heath tries to get Miz on board as his partner and Miz agrees but it turns out he's on the phone.

#### Smackdown Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Usos vs. Ascension

Jey gets beaten down to start with Konnor adding a middle rope shoulder for two. We hit a nerve hold for a bit until an enziguri allows the double tag. Everything breaks down and the Usos start with their superkicks, including one to set up the Superfly Splash for the pin on Viktor at 3:47.

**Rating:** D+. This was exactly what it should have been and hopefully we just get to Usos vs. Alpha for the belts as it's fairly obvious we're heading towards. I'm also glad that Ascension, who has only won a handful of matches in over a year, was dispatched in less than four minutes here. That doesn't do much for their spot in a tag division but at least they're a pair of warm bodies.

Here's AJ to discuss his win on Sunday. With the NEVER GIVE UP armband around his own arm, AJ says he beat up John Cena and then beat him at Summerslam. All these Cena fans can be his new fans because he should be #1 contender to the WWE World Title. Ziggler fights his way to the ring but here's Bryan to make a match for tonight. AJ already has a shot at Backlash but if Ziggler wins, it's a triple threat.

#### Nikki Bella vs. Carmella

Renee Young tries to interview Nikki before the match but Carmella jumps Nikki from behind to start. Carmella gives her a bad looking Downward Spiral and a Bella Buster for a heel turn, which makes a lot of sense for her actually. Nikki starts holding her neck and OH NO IT'S JUST SO SCARY AND TRAGIC BECAUSE SHE'S SO AMAZING. No match. Video on the Summerslam main event.

Here's Orton for a chat. He was in a heck of a fight on Sunday night and had ten staples put in his head to close the gash. Randy didn't want the match to end the way it did, including Shane McMahon coming out for a save. He and Lesnar will cross paths again but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Bray: "How's your head Randy?" Wyatt goes on about how great a person Randy is but says he's something a little higher. Randy will find out all about that in time so Randy says bring it. The lights go out again and Bray is gone.

Shane is asked about Brock and doesn't think Stephanie is going to take it seriously. She's already fined Brock \$500 and that means it's far from over between Brock and himself.

Slater tries to get Arn Anderson to be his partner but Arn says he's not Ric Flair. Rhyno comes up and says he'll do it.

#### Smackdown Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Breezango vs. American Alpha

Fandango dances at Gable to start and is of course taken down with ease. It's off to Jordan vs. Breeze with Jason cranking on an armbar to the tunes of a USA chant. Breezango finally cheats by drawing Jordan in so Fandango can get in a clothesline to take over on Gable. Back from a break with Gable making a hot tag and handing it off to Jordan to clean house. A bridging German suplex gets two on Breeze and he hurricanranas Jordan for the same. Gable has to make a save off a superkick but Jordan hits the belly to belly on Tyler. The Grand Amplitude sends American Alpha on at 10:28.

**Rating:** B-. That was way better than I was expecting as Breezango continues to be a great surprise and far better than they have any right to be. It's good to give Alpha some tougher matches like this before the finals as there's only so much they're going to prove after facing teams like the Vaudevillains or the Ascension.

Dean Ambrose, in a big hat, says he was up in the casino playing roulette. He doesn't care who is fighting tonight because he'll be ready for anyone. Dean gets a shot and coffee but leaves the waitress some casino chips. I guess he was supposed to be drunk?

#### Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles

Dean is on commentary. Ziggler has a fact file that says he's a supporter of the Wrestlemania Reading "Charllenge." They go right at it with Ziggler dropkicking him to the floor for a break in less than a minute. Back with AJ sending Ziggler chest first into the buckle and working on the other side with a backbreaker. Ziggler can't get a comeback started yet so AJ stomps him down in the corner before kicking at the leg. A few knee lifts send Ziggler outside and

we take another break.

Back again with Ziggler fighting out of an armbar and hitting a great looking dropkick. The big elbow drop gets two and AJ goes shoulder first into the post. The Fameasser is good for another two count and AJ's fireman's carry backbreaker gets the same. Styles misses the springboard 450 and gets caught in the running DDT for yet another near fall.

Dolph avoids a charge into the ropes and a Zig Zag gets a VERY close two count. They almost had me on that one, even though I have a really hard time believing that they would put Ziggler over here. A superkick misses though and AJ kicks him low, setting up a Styles Clash for the pin and the title shot at 21:40.

**Rating:** B+. So at the end of the day, after a pay per view title match and this big match, Ziggler is right back where he was coming into the Draft: an upper midcard jobber to the stars who isn't likely to win anything important and while he can have some good matches like this, I still have no reason to care about him. AJ winning was the only way to go here and there's nothing wrong with that.

Dean and AJ have a staredown to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B. This was the best show they've had since the brand split and that's a good sign. I really don't like having the new titles for divisions this weak but at least the Tag Team Titles (which should be GOLD) look cool. They need more people for those divisions in a bad way so pairing up Rhyno and Slater works well enough. The rest of the show was fine as we wait for AJ to take his place as the king of Smackdown in a few weeks.

### Results

Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss – Disarm-Her

Usos b. Ascension – Superfly Splash to Viktor

American Alpha b. Breezango – Grand Amplitude to Breeze

AJ Styles b. Dolph Ziggler – Styles Clash

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