

Smackdown – October 4, 2016: Where It Gets Real In A Hurry

Smackdown

Date: October 4, 2016

Location: Valley View Casino Center, San Diego, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the go home show for No Mercy because this is the new WWE where there's a go home show every two weeks. Tonight is going to focus on Dean Ambrose vs. John Cena vs. AJ Styles for Styles' Smackdown World Title in Sunday's triple threat. Other than that we're likely getting more in the Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt feud. Let's get to it.

The opening video promises Styles, Cena and Ambrose face to face to face tonight.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

They take turns hitting each other in the face to start until Bray gets Kane down for a chinlock. A side slam and running DDT have Bray in trouble but the chokeslam is countered into a Rock Bottom. Bray does the spider walk but an upside down Randy Orton appears on the screen. This takes WAY longer than it should and the distraction lets Kane get up. Bray blocks a chokeslam but takes the countout loss at 4:15.

Rating: D. So let me get this straight: we're five days away from Wyatt's big match against Orton and Bray is taking a countout loss to Kane instead of, you know, squashing him like a bug? It's not a good sign when the best thing you can say about a match is Kane didn't win off the chokeslam.

Baron Corbin doesn't know why Jack Swagger was signed but if Jack wants to fight, Baron will drop him where he stands. Swagger comes

up and a match is set up.

Post break, Bray is looking for Orton.

Alexa Bliss vs. Nikki Bella

Carmella is on commentary as Nikki gets two off a facebuster that didn't come close to making contact. Nikki takes it outside and throws Bliss into Carmella, drawing her into the ring for the DQ at 1:52.

Post match here's Becky Lynch for the save and we might as well keep the referee out here for the obvious tag match.

Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella vs. Carmella/Alexa Bliss

Joined in progress with Alexa hammering on Nikki before it's off to Carmella for some shots to the face of her own. Carmella misses a Bronco Buster though and the hot tag brings in Becky. Everything breaks down with Nikki spearing Carmella to the floor, leaving Alexa to hit Twisted Bliss for the pin on Becky at 3:14.

Rating: C. Basic, simple ideas to set up basic, simple matches.

That's the kind of wrestling that's always going to work and you can tell they're putting WAY more thought into these things than the messes over on Raw. Becky getting pinned in a tag match is fine and gives Alexa credibility heading into Sunday. Nikki and Carmella's feud is advanced at the same time and everything is accomplished. When this stuff works, it works to near perfection.

Bray goes to look for Orton again and finds the rocking chair. Orton jumps him from behind and shuts a metal door, locking Bray in what looks like a small storage unit. Of course there's a camera inside with Bray freaking out over being locked inside.

Daniel Bryan brings out some breast cancer survivors for the Susan G. Komen presentation ala Enzo and Big Cass on Raw.

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

There's still something weird about JBL being a Mojo Rawley fan. Mojo slams Gotch to start and it's Hammer Time! Cue Ascension, now with face paint, to the stage for a distraction but Ryder dropkicks

English off the apron anyway. Ryder gets kneed in the back but Gotch's chinlock goes as far as a chinlock is going to take him. The hot tag brings in Mojo a few seconds later and a Hype Ryder ends English at 3:48.

Rating: C-. Not much to the match but just like the women's division and everything else around here: keep it simple but do it well. I know I harp on that a lot but Smackdown is so refreshing when you have so many wrestling shows all over the place that can't get the most basic storylines right.

The Ascension point at the Hype Bros.

It's time for MizTV with a special Dolphumentary. Ziggler comes out and the documentary is of course a career lowlight reel with stuff like Ziggler as Kerwin White's caddy and the Spirit Squad and various out of context statements from wrestlers. This Sunday, it's the feature film the Success of a Failure. Ziggler doesn't take kindly to this and says that he loves it when a Make-A-Wish kid says he's their hero but Ziggler gets to tell them that they're his hero. That's the kind of thing that makes Ziggler know he can't walk away. Miz laughs this off and brings out two members of the Spirit Squad (Kenny and Mikey). We get a cheer with Miz saying Ziggler can join them at their \$5 autograph signing. Ziggler goes after Miz but gets jumped from behind. Dolph easily fights them off and Miz bails from the threat of a superkick. This feud is really, really growing on me despite it being Dolph Ziggler. They're nailing every single thing about this and I want to see the match, albeit with Miz winning to finally get rid of Ziggler.

Bray is still in the storage unit and says he finally sees it.

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Roberto Clemente.

Jey Uso vs. Jason Jordan

Jey snaps Jordan's neck across the ropes to start and hammers away but a very quick rollup puts Uso away at 1:18.

The Usos send Gable into the steps and chop block Jordan for a bonus. Rhyno and Heath Slater come out to save Jordan's knee.

Bray is now singing but stops to say he missed Abigail. She's going to take him home.

Back from a break and Orton opens the door, only to find an empty chair. There wasn't a lock on the door so this isn't exactly supernatural.

Clip of John Cena on Talking Smack last week, talking about how the Draft is a fresh opportunity for him as well. Cena's big line: "Dean Ambrose doesn't like John Cena. John Cena doesn't care about Dean Ambrose."

Curt Hawkins vignette. He's debuting at No Mercy.

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin shoulder blocks him down to start and rains down right hands to the head, sending us to an early break. Back with Swagger favoring his knee and getting caught in a chinlock. Jack fights up and elbows Corbin in the face, followed by the Patriot Lock. Corbin dives for the ropes over and over, which the referee calls a tap out at 8:25. Replays show that Corbin was reaching for the ropes as his hand is up and it's his wrist hitting the mat when he can't reach the ropes.

Rating: C-. I'm not interested in the match but that's a clever way to keep the feud going as it was close enough that you could say it was a tap and call it a mistake. It's much better than having one guy win clean and then do a bunch of rematches just because. I don't really need to see them fight again but it's nice to have a feud continue logically instead of having it forced.

Here's AJ for the big closing segment. He talks about how he'll prove himself to be the best in the world on Sunday but Ambrose comes out to cut him off. Dean is serious this week and says he had the title won last week until Cena had to get involved. Cue Cena but AJ cuts him off and begs Cena to shut up for once in his life. AJ is incensed at the thought of Cena comparing himself to Flair (here we go) and begs Cena to give one of his rah-rah speeches.

Cena is ready to do just that when Ambrose cuts him off again,

saying Cena is a part timer who is dying to get out of here on a private jet and go be with his people in New York. Dean is the man who works harder around here and has wrestled more matches than anyone else in the company the last two years because he never takes days off. He'll be over here in the corner being Dean Ambrose while Cena gets to play John Cena on TV.

That's enough for Cena and the fight is on with Cena hitting an AA on Ambrose and throwing Styles outside. John holds up the title but AJ runs in and escapes an AA attempt. The Phenomenal Forearm drops Cena but Dean gives AJ Dirty Deeds onto the ramp and holds up the title to end the show. REALLY good stuff here with Dean standing up to Cena in a way no one has done since Rock. That's the kind of thing that makes him feel like a main event star, not wearing funny hats.

Overall Rating: B. The wrestling wasn't great here but that's not the point most of the time. The point here is a very well done structure as you move from story to start for most of the show with only Bray and Orton running throughout and never getting too much time at once. You can tell someone has actually put effort into setting this up and it makes the show fly by instead of making me wonder how we can only be an hour into it. No Mercy may not be the best show ever but it's been built up as well as it can be and that's what this show needed to do.

Results

Kane b. Bray Wyatt via countout

Nikki Bella b. Alexa Bliss via DQ when Carmella interfered

Alexa Bliss/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch – Twisted Bliss to Lynch

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

Jason Jordan b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Jack Swagger b. Baron Corbin – Patriot Lock

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Smackdown – September 27, 2016: NXT Style(s)

Smackdown

Date: September 27, 2016

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's a big night for Smackdown as we have a rare World Title match on free TV with AJ Styles defending against Dean Ambrose. We're less than two weeks away from No Mercy and it should be interesting to see where things go as we get ready for the triple threat and whatever else is announced before the show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Randy Orton to open the show. He's heard about Bray Wyatt talking about fear but thinks it's because Bray is scared himself. Bray comes on screen to talk about Hansel and Gretel. Bray has left his own trail of breadcrumbs that will lead Randy through the prison of his own mind. He holds up an hourglass and sings He's Got The Whole World In His Hands. Orton leaves to go after Bray.

Dean Ambrose says he's ready to fight AJ Styles tonight.

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

Alpha works on Jimmy's arm to start before a double monkey flip sends this Usos flying. Jey tries to go after Gable but gets pulled down into an armbars over the ropes. Jimmy offers a distraction and

Jey chop blocks Gable again to take us to a break. Back with Gable still in trouble and Konor getting two. Gable tries to break free for the tag but everything breaks down and everyone not named Slater is knocked off the apron.

The hot tag brings in Heath for a big reaction, followed by some knees and a leg lariat to the bad guys. A neckbreaker gets two on Jey with Konor diving in for the save. Jordan Cactus Clotheslines Viktor to the floor but the Usos make a blind tag, allowing Jimmy to kick Heath in the face. The jumping kick to the back of the knee sets up a Tequila Sunrise to make Heath tap at 10:00.

Rating: C. This was a fine way to set up the title match without having the champs lose in a regular tag match. I can't imagine anything other than the Usos taking the belts at No Mercy and that's all it should be. Slater and Rhyno have reached heights they have no right to be near so it's hard to call them anything other than a success. Another few weeks as champions would be fine but you have to take the belts off them and let us get to the Usos vs. Alpha for the real feud.

John Cena will be at ringside to scout the main event.

Miz has a LeBron James poster covered with one of his own.

Orton goes to what looks like the boiler room and sees an arrow left by Bray. For some reason he turns it around and goes the other way. When the camera pans back, the arrow has been turned around again and Erick Rowan is standing there in his mask.

Back from a break with Bray saying Orton might find out the meaning of the abyss tonight. The hourglass is almost out of sand.

Carmella/Natalya vs. Nikki Bella/Naomi

Naomi and Carmella get things going with the latter danging instead of fighting. That earns her a quick spank and now it's Naomi's turn to moon walk. It's off to Nikki, who scares Carmella to the floor for a breather. Back with Naomi in trouble on the floor and Natalya putting on a chinlock. Carmella gets in a Bronco Buster, followed by Natalya's basement dropkick (which missed) for two. It was enough of a miss that the tag brings in Nikki a few seconds later and it's time for the showdown with Carmella (which seems to happen every week). Natalya offers a distraction though and Carmella gets the rollup pin on Nikki at 10:05.

Rating: D+. This small division is working at the moment, mainly because they've split it up into two distinct stories. Unfortunately one of those is about how we're all supposed to love Nikki Bella, who still isn't all that interesting. Carmella is fine for a first victim for Nikki but hopefully it doesn't lead to yet another Nikki title reign.

Orton finds a message saying there's one way out. He opens a closet to find a cardboard cutout of himself with the eyes missing. Another message on another door asks Predator or Prey reveals....Rowan a few feet away but Orton doesn't open the door wide enough to see him. Good thing there was a camera waiting there right then.

Here are Miz and Maryse for his homecoming celebration. Maryse introduces a video package on Miz's career, including Real World clips, his time as a Tag Team and US Champion, his World Title win (still the only possible call) and capped off by the promo on Bryan from Talking Smack. Miz talks about the Cleveland Cavaliers winning the NBA Title and wonders why his celebration isn't as big. Mr. and Mrs. Miz are in the front row, as are Dolph Ziggler's parents.

Cue Ziggler because of course it's still Ziggler to go after Miz. Ziggler doesn't like Miz talking about his parents and goes to leave almost immediately but Miz laughs at Ziggler for failing again. Dolph brings up Miz cheating, which Miz interprets as yet another excuse. Miz says Ziggler has nothing left to offer for another shot and leaves but Ziggler calls for Mike to come back. All Ziggler has left is his career so he'll put that on the line. Miz agrees and the match is made for No Mercy. Uh...yay. Like really, yay.

Bray says when one door closes, another opens but he's watching Randy wander around like a mouse in a maze.

Becky Lynch comes out for a match but Alexa Bliss attacks her from behind and takes off her belt.

Curt Hawkins says gravity has to obey his laws. He's making a big announcement next week.

Bray wants to know where Orton is. As in any horror movie, he's right behind Bray and beats the heck out of him. Wyatt runs off so Orton puts on the sheep mask for a little singing. I think the video breaks up as the voice starts distorting and it turns into Bray. It's not clear if that was intentional.

AJ Styles recaps his rise to the championship and says he'll still have the title after tonight.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Ambrose is defending and Cena is on commentary. Dean chops away in the corner as JBL asks if Cena really is a part timer or still a full time performer. Cena says nothing as Ambrose takes AJ onto the announcers' table for some right hands to the head. Back from a break with Ambrose hitting a running clothesline to put both guys down. A backbreaker gets two on the champ and we hit a cloverleaf.

Styles gets to the ropes so Dean gets in a suicide dive because every match needs a suicide dive. Back with AJ cranking on a Calf Crusher until Dean grabs his head to slam it onto the mat for the break. They slug it out until Dean gets two off a double chickenwing facebuster for two of his own.

AJ's torture rack powerbomb gets two more and a Pele puts Dean down again. He misses the springboard 450 though as Dean rolls away (it would have missed by a mile anyway) and they head outside where AJ hits Cena in the face. The distraction makes the referee miss a rollup, meaning Dean goes outside to hit Cena as well. The distraction lets AJ grab a rollup with tights for the pin to retain at 21:17.

Rating: B. Another good match here and they did a good job of setting up the triple threat. It's fairly certain that Cena isn't getting the title this soon and since there's almost no one around to face Dean, AJ retaining makes the most sense. That's not a bad thing though and the build has been strong, which is the best thing you can ask for in this sort of feud.

Cena AA's both guys to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a very NXT style show and that's the best thing you can say about wrestling these days. The Orton vs. Wyatt stuff was an interesting idea to tie things together, though the ending wasn't all that great. Rowan wasn't a factor and Orton just finds Wyatt to beat him up? That's it? Other than that though this was all about setting up a big match to end the show and move us closer to the pay per view in a few weeks. Just a fun wrestling show here, as Smackdown often is.

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new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Smackdown – May 2, 2002: The Expiration Date For Nostalgia

Smackdown

Date: May 2, 2002

Location: Mellon Arena, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We've got a big match scheduled for tonight as WWF World Champion Hulk Hogan is defending against Chris Jericho. I'm sure we'll get an explanation for why Smackdown can have a #1 contender when it's been established that the shows trade possession of that status. Maybe Jericho can carry Hogan to passable tonight too but I wouldn't bet on either. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Undertaker costing HHH the title shot last week and busting Hogan open on Raw the next week.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Rikishi/Hurricane vs. Billy and Chuck

Rikishi and Hurricane, who have no previous association, are challenging. Billy slugs away at Rikishi's head to start. You would think a veteran would know better than that but Billy has never been

the brightest guy. Hurricane sunset flips Chuck for two as Tazz tries to figure out a connection between the challengers. Well at least he's trying to do something. The champs take over on Hurricane until a DDT gets him out of trouble. Rikishi comes in to clean house but Rico comes in to kick Hurricane down and give Chuck the retaining pin.

Rating: D. The only good thing here was starting the show with a match. You would think they could come up with some better teams than "here are two guys with no connection at all" but that's how the division is likely to work for a good while because they didn't think this Brand Split all the way through.

Hurricane chokeslams Rico to blow off some steam and Rikishi adds a Stinkface.

Lance Storm and Val Venis are in the back when Kurt Angle comes in. Kurt says neither of them have done anything on Smackdown so he offers them the chance to model his real shirt. Venis says no but Storm seems interested. He does however point out that there might be some risks involved. Angle isn't worried about fans chanting YOU SUCK. I mean, this is Angle's town. They would never chant YOU SUCK at him. Angle makes fun of Mario Lemieux and that's about it.

Here are Angle and Storm for the shirt reveal, mere minutes after he showed it to the camera. Angle defends Storm despite his bad case of being Canadian and reads off all the accomplishments on the back of the shirt. See, it's only available in XXL or larger because he's done so many things. That explains why the thing is so baggy on Storm.

Here's Edge to interrupt of course, complete with Venis in the YOU SUCK shirt. You know, shouldn't that say I SUCK? It doesn't fit for the chants but it makes sense on the shirt. Angle another match with Edge at Judgment Day but Storm whispers a suggestion to Angle, who thinks we should make it a hair vs. hair match. Edge agrees as the stipulations are getting fast tracked around here. Angle isn't sure about putting his own hair up but Val suggest giving him a YOU SUCK if you want to see the match. That's enough for Kurt to agree and Edge promises to make him red, white and bald.

Earlier today, Randy Orton was working out when Stacy Keibler came up to hit on him some more. This seems to annoy him, which should probably make him a heel.

Hardcore Holly vs. Randy Orton

Rematch from last week. Orton's headlock doesn't get him anywhere so Holly goes with the hard chops that he uses on rookies. The Oklahoma roll only gets two on Holly this week and it's time for more chops. Orton gets in a high crossbody for two and that's enough to make Holly hit him low for the DQ.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here and I'm sure we'll get to see more nothing in a week or so when Orton can get another clean win because the first one didn't matter. There's some value in having Orton get a first win here but having the two of them feud for a few weeks isn't going to go anywhere as it's still Hardcore Holly.

Holly gives him an Alabama Slam on the stage to keep this going.

Faarooq tries to give Mark Henry some of the money he's won betting on Mark's strength in the last few weeks. D-Von comes in to say that money can go in his donation box. Henry says no so D-Von threatens violence.

Vince talks about wanting to kiss Stacy's belly button (seriously) when Chris Jericho interrupts. After Vince freaks out over the interruption (fair), Jericho talks his way into making tonight a No DQ match and getting everyone barred from ringside. Jericho has a seat but Vince throws him out so Stacy can get some more attention. Vince to Stacy: "What do you say we get busy?" This is another one of those segments designed to do nothing more than set up stuff for later.

Tributes to Wahoo McDaniel and Lou Thesz. That makes me feel better after they didn't even mention Thesz's passing on Monday.

Lance Storm/Kurt Angle vs. Edge/Big Valbowski

Angle slugs Edge into the corner to start so it's off to Val for an elbow to Kurt's jaw. Amazingly enough, Val can't keep up with Angle and gets beaten down in the bad corner. Storm comes in and gets slammed down, setting up something like an Octopus Hold on the mat. The fast tagging continues and it's right back to Angle suplexing Edge to take over.

Storm rips at Edge's hair, which isn't often a body part that's worked over. Edge powerslams Storm out of the air and it's Val getting the hot tag to clean house. Everything breaks down and Angle starts throwing suplexes until Edge spears him down. Val's Money

Shot is broken up as Angle runs the corner for the superplex and Storm superkicks Val into a rollup for the pin.

Rating: B. Now THIS is how you keep a feud going while also giving someone else some ring time. Bringing in two talented guys with nothing else to do is a great way to keep Edge and Angle's story going without having them burn through matches. The match was really good too, which helps set Smackdown apart from Raw. There's your tagline: The wrestling doesn't suck!

Here's Jericho for a talk to hype up the main event. Jericho proclaims himself the king of the world because he beat HHH last week and is about to beat Hollywood Has-Been to become champion again. Tonight Jericho is going to drive a stake through the heart of Hulkamania, as so many others have tried over the years.

This brings out HHH, who is out here AGAINST VINCE'S ORDERS. If HHH touches Jericho, his career is over. Well you know what that means. Jericho goes into a rant about how HHH can't do anything to him and gets right in HHH's face to talk about it. This is the cool HHH though so he just smiles. HHH knows something Jericho doesn't: he won't win the title tonight. That's quite the bombshell Trips.

Mark Henry/Faarooq vs. Christian/Test

Henry clotheslines the Canadians down to start and gorilla presses Christian onto Faarooq's knee. The bad guys start beating on Faarooq as D-Von comes through the crowd for a collection. Henry gets annoyed and throws the money into the crowd. That leads to a chase and Christian hits the reverse DDT for the pin on Faarooq. Too much time was spent on D-Von to rate it but this was the match you would expect here.

Cruiserweight Title: Tajiri vs. Billy Kidman

Kidman is challenging in the same match we've been watching for over a month now. Tajiri starts in on the leg and Kidman is in very early trouble. An enziguri gives Kidman a breather and we actually get a Kidman chant. The Tajiri handspring is broken up by a dropkick to the back because it takes so long to set up. Kidman stays on him by breaking up the Tarantula but Tajiri shoves Torrie into the path of a charging Kidman, setting up the Buzzsaw Kick to retain the title.

Rating: C. If there's a point to this feud, I've yet to see it. These two are just going back and forth with nothing really changing

and a match not even lasting four minutes isn't going to make it any better. This isn't a division and the matches aren't exciting enough to make me want to see them again. In other words, it's the same problems we're seeing today.

Vince and Stacy are putting their clothes back on (her makeup is still perfect of course) when Vince tells her to send HHH in. That's quite the followup. After a break, Vince tells HHH that he has to stay out of the main event. That's the third time we've established that tonight but at least we got to see Vince after fun time with Stacy.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho is challenging and gets shoved down to set up some posing to start. They're going to be much better off if Hogan stands in the middle of the ring and does as little as possible here. Jericho gets in a shoulder and steals the bandana because there's no shame in Canada.

Hogan pops up and fires down right hands in the corner until Jericho gets in a low blow. The fans get behind Hogan (though not enough to actually watch the shows) and he sends Jericho outside for a breather. Jericho gets in a few shots and comes off the top with an ax handle as an "I'm With Meltzer" sign can be seen.

Back in and Hogan scores with right hands but misses the big.....elbow? The announcers are as confused as I am and there's the Lionsault but HHH comes out for a distraction. HHH sits in on commentary because Jericho doesn't think to cover Hogan in the minute and a half he's watched HHH slowly walk around. As soon as you see HHH on the ramp, why not cover Hogan because HHH can't run down there in time?

Hogan Hulks Up but the legdrop is countered into the Walls. Amazingly enough, a Boston crab isn't enough to make Hogan give up. Jericho pops Hogan in the back with a chair as HHH suggests that Undertaker is here. On cue, Undertaker's music kicks on but no one comes out. It serves its purpose though as the distraction lets Hogan grab a rollup to retain.

Rating: D. They can't get the title off of Hogan fast enough at this point. The problem with nostalgia acts is simple: people like them in small doses and Hogan's was over a long time ago. It's one thing to have him do his old schtick at Wrestlemania in front of 65,000 people but there's nothing special about something like this. If he

could still have perfectly watchable matches like Flair at this point it would be one thing, but Hogan is standing there while everyone else does the work because he's too old and broken down.

Overall Rating: D+. The main difference between Raw and Smackdown is this show has something to look forward to. At least on here they're setting up some fresh stuff (Edge getting a big push with the Angle feud, Orton looking to have potential) and you get at least one good match with some time every week. Over on Raw you get good talking from Flair and Austin but at some point that has to lead to a good match. I'll take the good matches leading to something unknown over the good talking leading to a bad match any day and that's what you get with Smackdown over Raw at the moment.

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Smackdown – April 25, 2002: Help Is On The Way

Smackdown

Date: April 25, 2002

Location: Peoria Civic Center, Peoria, Illinois

Attendance: 8,350

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in a new era now as HHH is a full time Smackdown wrestler, which I'm sure will last for at least a few weeks. After all you

can't expect the biggest star in the company to be on the B show for very long. Other than that we're going to get more of the Hulk Hogan nostalgia tour, which wasn't the most interesting thing in the world earlier this week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Hogan for his big talk, but only after a long ovation. I guess the nostalgic stuff does indeed play in Peoria. Hogan isn't sure if he could have beaten HHH without Undertaker interfering so maybe tonight HHH should get his rematch. Cole: "What a first class champion!" Here's HHH and Cole also names him a first class champion. Is that their buzzword of the week?

HHH talks about Hogan earning his respect and a handshake at Backlash (Cole: "What a moment that was." No Cole, it wasn't.) but tonight he's earned it again by offering that rematch. The fans chant for Hogan and HHH FINALLY gets to the point: when he wins that title that he loves, will Hogan be man enough to shake his hand? Instead here's Vince to cut them both off (thank goodness) and say that he's the co-owner of the WWE so he makes the matches.

Vince polls the fans on Hogan vs. HHH but says no because HHH is a criminal who doesn't deserve a rematch. Fair enough and it's nice to see one of those arrests actually be brought up for once. Instead, Hogan can defend the title next week against the winner of tonight's main event: HHH vs. Chris Jericho. Makes sense: you want to torture HHH so put him in a #1 contenders match against the guy he always beats. Oh and if the bosses can make #1 contenders matches all the time, what was the point in having Undertaker vs. Austin at Backlash? I'm over thinking this one aren't I?

Rico critiques Chuck's massage technique when Tajiri comes in. Japanese stereotypes ensue and Rico doesn't think much of Torrie's look. The solution is a bandana but Tajiri steals it instead. This screams "stuff that only makes Vince laugh".

Maven/Al Snow/Billy Kidman vs. Billy and Chuck/Tajiri

For the sake of clarity, I'll only refer to Billy Gunn as Billy. Kidman and Chuck start things off with a belly to belly sending Kidman flying. It's off to Maven, who eats a hard clothesline from Billy but Snow comes in to save his student. Tajiri stops to yell at Torrie, leaving Kidman to tornado DDT Billy for no cover. To throw away whatever we had going here, Maven and Snow rip off Billy and

Chuck's trunks, sending them running up the aisle. Torrie pulls Rico's down, leaving Kidman to counter Tajiri's powerbomb. The shooting star press puts Tajiri away.

Rating: D. I was starting to dig this one and then it went flying out the window with more "comedy". Are we really still on Maven/Snow vs. Billy and Chuck after they lost their nothing pay per view title match? Torrie finally turning on Tajiri will be fun enough and it's going to make her even more popular than she already was. Tajiri on the other hand has already gotten pinned four days after winning the title back to set the Brand Split record.

Kurt Angle calls a security guard fat and brags about his new t-shirt reveal later tonight. The shirt is going to list all of his accomplishments so the smallest size available is XXL. If the security guard plays his cards right, he might get one at half price. I could watch this Angle for days.

Stacy Keibler massages Vince's temples until he's interrupted by some newcomer. Vince: "Oh that's right. You're uh, you're Randy Orton." The boss leaves and Stacy likes the black sweatshirt and basketball shorts look. After admiring his hands (I don't get it either), she offers to critique his holds by putting his hands on her hips. Vince comes back in and she claims he stripped for no reason. That earns him a match with Hardcore Holly.

This week's power challenge: Mark Henry bending a frying pan. That goes fine so Test pulls out a steel rod. Why does he have a steel rod you ask? Well doesn't every Canadian carry a steel rod? That's bent as well so Christian, the guy who introduced the frying pan, jumps Henry like a moron.

Randy Orton vs. Hardcore Holly

It's so strange to see Orton only having about six tattoos. They hit the mat for some chain wrestling to start until Orton gets a quick near fall off something like a bulldog. Holly isn't about to get beaten up by a rookie though and gets in the kick to the very low abdomen. We get some shots to the chest in the vein of Sheamus' forearms until Orton comes back with a dropkick. Orton's high crossbody sets up an Oklahoma roll for the surprise pin. Nothing to the match, other than the debut of one of the biggest stars of all time.

Angle talks to a photographer about how big his shirt reveal is

going to be but Edge is seen replacing it. For some reason the photographer is told to get the shirt in the ring.

Here's Angle for the reveal, though he has to wait on the YOU SUCK WHAT chants. After insulting the town a bit, Angle explains the concept of having his accomplishments listed on the back of his shirt. I'm hoping the fans in the arena didn't see that segment earlier or they're going to be bored and do something stupid like chant WHAT to everything Angle says.

Before we get the reveal, here's Edge to interrupt. Edge congratulates him on winning at Backlash and wants to see the new shirt. Every the knucklehead, Angle buys into it and the shirt is revealed. I'll give you one guess what two words are printed on it and Angle's reaction when he sees it.

Recap of HHH invading Raw and attacking Undertaker.

Mark Henry vs. Christian

Christian comes in and is thrown over the top with one arm. Back in and Henry runs him over, followed by a headbutt for two. A low blow gets Christian out of a claw hold but Henry grabs a bearhug for the win. This one note character stuff is why Henry never went anywhere for years and this run isn't changing anything.

Jericho is ready to win tonight because he wants to beat HHH once and for all. See, he only lost at Wrestlemania because of a high fever.

Rikishi/Edge vs. Kurt Angle/Albert

It's two feuds in one but my goodness those are two odd sounding teams. They pair off with Edge and Angle fighting in the ring to start. Angle throws him over with a belly to belly and brings in Albert for all of five seconds before it's back to Kurt. Rikishi gets to clean house off the hot tag because you pick RIKISHI for that spot over Edge. A running seated senton crushes Albert with Kurt making the save. An Angle Slam takes Rikishi down but Edge spears Angle before he can cover. The Baldo Bomb puts Rikishi away as Edge stomps on Angle outside.

Rating: D+. If you can find a way around the time issues, the better move here would have been to do two singles matches instead of a tag. We already did the double feud tag match earlier tonight and when you consider we already had two message segments, it doesn't

exactly make Smackdown look like the most creative show in the world.

D-Von takes up another collection but someone steals the money. That earns him a horrible beating, which is supposed to make D-Von look evil but what would you do if some goon tried to steal your money? Especially if you're a wrestler and he's a plant.

Angle yells at the security guard, who is now wearing a YOU SUCK shirt.

Chris Jericho vs. HHH

Winner gets a title shot next week. Jericho bails to the floor to start but the chase goes to HHH, who sends Jericho shoulder first into the post twice in a row. A spinwheel kick has HHH in trouble and but a sleeper is just boring. HHH comes back with a shot to the face and does the falling low blow headbutt. With both guys down we cut to the back to see Undertaker coming into Vince's office.

Back with Jericho hitting the Breakdown (Skull Crushing Finale) for two as Cole freaks out over Undertaker showing up. Then again, it would be more amazing for Cole not to freak out over something. A neckbreaker and spinebuster give HHH two but Jericho gets the same off a missile dropkick.

The Pedigree is countered into a backslide for two more and we get the usual Walls/rope grab combo. Jericho grabs a chair (because that's worked so well for him) and gets DDT'd for two. Cue Undertaker for a distraction though and Jericho grabs a rollup with trunks for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: B. It's so nice to have a long match that doesn't involve Austin and/or the NWO. On top of that, Jericho actually beat HHH in a match that means something. Just by setting that up you prevent these matches from feeling like a waste of time until you get to the only possible ending.

Undertaker and Jericho beat on HHH until Hogan makes the save and punches Undertaker into the crowd to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The main event helped this show a lot but there was too much bad in the first hour and forty minutes for the main event to save it. They really need to elevate someone new to the main event already because HHH and Jericho are the best possible combination and that's going to get old quickly. The rest of the

card is in trouble too but that's really more boring than bad, which can be even worse.

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Smackdown – September 20, 2016: Crush My Crackers This Was Fantastic

Smackdown

Date: September 20, 2016

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga. Mauro Ranallo

It's a big night here on Smackdown as we have Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler in a rematch from Backlash as well as a major showdown between Dean Ambrose and John Cena after Ambrose laid Cena out to end last week's show. We're only a few weeks away from No Mercy so things should start to pick up steam. Let's get to it.

We open with a preview of Ambrose vs. Cena later tonight.

Daniel Bryan is in the ring for a contract signing for the Women's Title match at No Mercy. Becky Lynch comes out first and agrees to

keep this civil. Alexa Bliss comes out and suggests Becky use moisturizer. Becky says she's here for a fight instead of a pageant. They go back and forth about how Becky doesn't belong here but she worked as hard as she could at jobs she hated to get to this point. She wasn't born to be a champion but Alexa knows she was.

At No Mercy, Alexa is going to prove Becky is a one hit wonder. Bliss hits her with the contract and turns the table over. Alexa goes to leave but Becky chases her to the back. Really simple segment here but I liked it. Bliss has a very natural feel on the mic and that's going to do her a lot of favors. Becky is playing her character perfectly too and while the match might not be great, the build is working and these two have chemistry talking.

Miz comes up to Bryan in the back to complain about his title defense tonight. That's fine with Bryan, who says we'll cancel the match and cancel Miz's contract as well. Miz backs down and leaves.

Usos vs. American Alpha

The winners get the title shot at No Mercy and Chad Gable's knee is mostly fine coming in. It's a brawl to start with Gable taking Jimmy down. Rhino and Heath Slater are watching in the back and naturally Rhino is enjoying some cheese and crackers. Alpha cleans house early on with their dropkicks but Gable is sent to the floor and comes up holding his knee.

Back from a break with the twins working over Gable's knee. Chad elbows his way out of the corner and the hot tag brings in Jordan for the suplexes and shoulders to the ribs in the corner. Jey breaks up the superplex though and the Superfly splash gets two with Chad making the save. They got me on that one. Another toss to the floor makes Gable's knee even worse and Jordan refuses to tag in his hurt friend. Chad tries to come in anyway and gets chop blocked, setting up a double superkick. Jey's Superfly splash puts Jason away at 11:34.

Rating: C+. The booking of American Alpha is really interesting as they came in so hot that there's no reason to believe any team can hang with them. WWE had to come up with something to slow them down

so other teams could hang with them and this knee injury was as good as they were going to come up with. In theory this sets up the Usos winning the belts to set up the big showdown against Alpha down the line.

Slater and Rhyno were watching in the back and Heath has an idea: "When I say Rhy, you say no." Rhyno: "No." The Usos come in and say they'll win at No Mercy. They even threaten to knock Rhyno's crackers out of his hand. That makes things serious but Jey threatens to send Slater's kids back to the mudhole. Rhyno CRUSHES HIS CRACKERS and it's a staredown.

Baron Corbin vs. Apollo Crews

Jack Swagger is on commentary. Crews hits him in the face to start and gets two off a fall away slam. A jumping enziguri knocks Corbin around even worse but he sends Crews ribs first into the post. Corbin drives the ribs into the post again and the End of Days wraps Crews up at 2:48. I'd love to hear the explanation for why Crews isn't getting ready for a big showdown against Shinsuke Nakamura for the NXT Title instead of being a jobber on Smackdown.

Corbin and Swagger have a staredown.

Curt Hawkins Face the Facts vignette.

Naomi and Nikki Bella are ready to keep the momentum going with the power of the glow. Natalya's glow went out a long time ago and Carmella has had it out for Nikki for a long time now because she wants to make a name for herself. See, they're friends now because the script says they should be.

Ziggler says anything could happen here tonight and doesn't think much of Miz. There are a lot of things he shouldn't be but tonight he's going to become Intercontinental Champion.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Miz is defending and we even get Big Match Intros. Ziggler takes it to the mat to start and Miz is in WAY over his head with the technical stuff. A clothesline on the floor takes Miz down again but he dropkicks Ziggler off the apron to take over. Back in and Miz

does the YES Kicks but continues the tradition of missing the big one. Ziggler goes shoulder first into the post and gets kicked in the face for two.

A Stinger Splash has Miz in trouble but he misses another charge into the post. That means it's time for a running dropkick in the corner, again ala Bryan. The champ goes up top for the ax handle but dives into a dropkick. Ziggler's running DDT gets two and a Cactus Clothesline takes us to a break.

Back with Miz countering a superplex into a slingshot sitout powerbomb. Ziggler's sleeper sends Miz over to the ropes and the superkick gets two. Maryse loads up the hairspray but gets caught this time, meaning an ejection. Rollups are exchanged for two each and the Zig Zag gives Ziggler a VERY close two. Miz tries to leave with the title so Ziggler sends him into the steps, only to get sprayed in the face. A Skull Crushing Finale retains Miz's title at 16:01.

Rating: B+. They had me worried more than once there but thank goodness Miz retains the title here and Ziggler loses again. I'm sure we're going to get a third match between them at No Mercy and hopefully they still don't change the title. As has been the case for weeks now I'm still not sure what they're setting up with Bryan. At this point they almost have to deliver the big return match but most sources say there's no way that's happening. We're either in for a major surprise or a debut of some kind and either one would be interesting.

Erick Rowan vs. Randy Orton

Rowan doesn't even get an entrance so he starts fast with a reverse powerslam and a dropkick of all things. A trip to the floor makes things even worse for Randy but he gets in the Elevated DDT and the RK0 for the quick pin at 2:23.

Post match the lights go out and Rowan disappears with the sheep mask taking his place. Bray pops up on screen and says that unlike Orton, he can never die.

Nikki Bella/Naomi vs. Carmella/Natalya

Natalya forearm Naomii at the bell and has Nikki in the Sharpshooter less than thirty seconds after the bell. For some reason Carmella pulls Nikki to the floor for a beatdown and that's a DQ at 36 seconds.

Naomi kicks Natalya in the head post match.

AJ Styles says he doesn't have a rivalry with Dean Ambrose or John Cena because he's better than both of them. Tonight he's going to enjoy watching them fight because the champ will always be here.

John Cena vs. Dean Ambrose

As usual, the fans are split on Cena. Feeling out process to start with Cena working on a headlock and then into a top wristlock. Ambrose turns it up by sending Cena into the post and we take a break. Back with Dean chopping and punching away until Cena pulls him down into the STF. Dean makes the ropes and gets in another shot to the head, only to have Cena roll through a high crossbody into the AA for two. Dirty Deeds gets the same and I probably should have penciled that in as soon as the AA hit. Back up and a second AA is countered into a sunset flip to give Dean the completely clean pin at 10:14.

Rating: B-. I upgraded this one for the clean ending alone. Cena losing clean is something that you almost never see and this win feels bigger than when Dean won the title in the first place. It's not like this hurts Cena in the slightest but it gives Dean a huge rub and makes him feel like a factor instead of just a third man in the match to take the fall at No Mercy.

Post match AJ hits the Phenomenal Forearm on Cena but here's Bryan to interrupt. As Shane McMahon promised, Dean is getting a one on one title rematch and that's going to happen next Tuesday on Smackdown. Dean hits Dirty Deeds on AJ to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. This show was fantastic and there's not much else that needs to be said about it. The wrestling was good, the angles were hot and the stories were advanced. Above all else, Bryan

was only there when he was needed instead of running around every five minutes and interjecting himself where he wasn't needed. I had a blast watching this show and thought it was more fun than anything WWE has done in a very long time. Great stuff here and by far the best episode of either show since the Brand Split and a long time before that.

Results

Usos b. American Alpha – Superfly splash to Jordan

Baron Corbin b. Apollo Crews – End of Days

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan – RKO

Nikki Bella/Naomi b. Carmella/Natalya via DQ when Carmella attacked Nikki on the floor

Dean Ambrose b. John Cena – Sunset flip

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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 enziguri from the apron and avoiding a charge but Corbin slides under the ropes and back inside for a clothesline to the back of the head.

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

count. Back in and Crews charges into a knee (it's always the knee) to set up End of Days for the pin at 9:56.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Usos vs. Hype Bros

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

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

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

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

Connor's Cure video.

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

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

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

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

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

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

The pre-show panel has a chat.

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

match and it's no holds barred.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

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

Bray does Orton's pose and drops the running backsplash 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 RKO. 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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