

Smackdown – May 9, 2017: The British Curse Turns Blue

Smackdown

Date: May 9, 2017

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're taped tonight from London as we have less than two weeks before Backlash. That means it's Jinder Mahal time tonight and we get to see more of his rapid fire build towards being a main eventer. Other than that we might get more of the Welcoming Committee, which is turning into one of the worst heel stables I can remember in years. Let's get to it.

We open with a clip of last month's Six Pack Challenge where Mahal became #1 contender. Has Mojo Rawley had a match since then? Mahal then cost Randy Orton the House of Horrors match and stole the title belt.

Opening sequence.

Here's Orton to get things going and he has the title back, thanks to Shane McMahon taking it from Jinder last week. Orton says he lost because of Mahal, not because of Wyatt or that refrigerator. Before Orton can get too far, here's Mahal to show off his promotional pictures with the title. Mahal promises to begin a new age at Backlash before speaking I believe Punjab.

Cue Kevin Owens to say no one cares about anything but him. Owens brags about ending Chris Jericho's career and, after he gets rid of AJ Styles, he wants the World Title. Now it's AJ coming out to quite the reaction to say he's the face that runs the place. Cue Baron Corbin but Sami Zayn jumps him from behind and the fights are on with the good guys cleaning house.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

Before the match, we get some generic "British people have bad teeth" jokes from James Ellsworth and Carmella. Naomi and Charlotte are here as Becky's seconds. The Welcoming Committee offers an early distraction so Natalya can send Becky to the floor and take over. We hit the abdominal stretch for a bit before the STRAIGHT FIRE forearm has Natalya reeling. The Bexploder looks to set up something on the top but the other women get in a fight, allowing Natalya to pull Becky off the top for the pin at 3:02. That's almost the same ending as Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James from last night.

Rating: D+. The time and the familiar ending hurt this one but real problem was taking fifteen minutes to introduce everyone and start the match. I'm sure this sets up a six woman tag for the pay per view, which should be a good place for either someone to turn heel or at least for the Welcoming Committee to get a win. Therefore, look for Charlotte to pin Carmella.

Lana is coming soon.

Charlotte blames Naomi for Becky's loss but Lynch comes in to cool them down. A six woman tag is set for the pay per view.

It's Fashion Files time! They're at the 02 Arena this week and Fandango is dressed as Sherlock Holmes while Breeze is a standard British cop. Fandango: "Cheerio." Breeze: "No thanks. I've already had my breakfast." They find some spilled lead paint that would only be worn by Uggs. That must be a ruse so Breezango can't tell them apart but it doesn't really matter. The paint leads to a room where roaring is heard. They think something nefarious is going on in there but it's just the Ascension warming themselves up. Breeze: "I'm getting too old for this s***e." More funny stuff here as Breezango continues to look good.

Luke Harper vs. Erick Rowan

Rowan throws him to the floor to start as the announcers talk about how these two are running amuck with no one to guide them. Back in and Rowan scores with a spinning kick to the face and a splash for

two. Harper suplexes his way out of the head vice but the discus lariat is blocked. Instead Erick gets two off a Side Effect and grabs the mask. The distraction (as the referee tries to figure out what the mask is supposed to look like) allows Rowan to poke Harper in the eye and grab a reverse spinning powerslam for the pin at 4:23.

Rating: D. Just a power match here but they really need to either stop pushing Harper for a few weeks and then having him lose over and over again. I mean, do they really think there's value in Erick Rowan winning with a lame powerslam? This didn't work and the booking makes my head hurt so we'll move on.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to call out Shinsuke Nakamura. He's been here for eight years (How has it only been that long?) but the fans treat him like a disease. Who do the people cheer for now? That starts a Nakamura chant as this is starting to sound like Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles last year.

Now people are calling Nakamura an artist but Ziggler is the strongest man in WWE because he never needed the people. This brings out Nakamura to tell Ziggler to shut up. Nakamura is ready to show him so here's a referee but Ziggler says nope. Dolph says we do this on his time and wants the match at Backlash. The sneak attack earns Dolph a beating.

Sami is fired up to team with Orton and Styles. Zayn tries to run a strategy session but seems to just annoy his partners. By the time he announces their team as the winners, they've both left.

New Day is coming and we get a video game themed promo with every other team being listed on a character select screen.

Breezango vs. Ascension

Fandango chops at Konnor to start but it's off to Viktor who runs him over. A chinlock doesn't last long and it's off to Breeze for some house cleaning. Fandango makes a blind tag and it's an atomic drop into the Last Dance for the in at 2:39.

Post match the Usos come out to say twelve days over and over while

listing off various things that Breezango can do to each others' backs (with Jimmy clearly trying not to crack up).

Mojo Rawley is giving some kids a tour of the backstage area but stops to tell them a story about Andre the Giant. Andre did a lot of things but Mojo switches to a story about a boy who was different growing up. He was bullied as a kid but then he used it as motivation to become a legend. Mojo pulls out the trophy and the kids are amazed. I've started to like Mojo more and more lately and I'd love to see him get some more TV time.

Rusev hasn't heard about his demand for a World Title shot but he'll be here next week to get an answer.

Randy Orton/Sami Zayn/AJ Styles vs. Jinder Mahal/Baron Corbin/Kevin Owens

Sami and Corbin get things started but a quick tag brings in Owens. There's no contact though as it's off to Mahal for some kicks to the chest. Sami grabs a headscissors and brings in Orton so Mahal tags out to Owens. The threat of an RKO sends Owens out to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Corbin working over Sami and handing it off to Owens as the eternal feud continues. Sami is tossed outside for a stomping from Mahal, drawing AJ over to stare him down. Corbin's chinlock keeps things slow so Jinder comes in for one of his own. The stomping keeps going and we take a break.

Back with AJ getting the hot tag to come in and clean house as everything breaks down. The running forearm drops a seated Corbin and Sami hits a big flip dive onto all three villains. Owens breaks up the Phenomenal Forearm though and Styles and Corbin are down. It's Mahal breaking up the tag though and dropping a knee for two on Styles.

Owens comes back in for some very aggressive stomping and a chinlock of his own. That's quite the popular move tonight and in no way a method to stretch out a long main event. The backsplash hits knees though and the hot tag brings in Orton. Everything breaks down and

Owens eats the RK0, only to have Jinder's cobra clutch slam put Orton away at 22:14.

Rating: C+. The match was more long than good and the ending extended the Mahal vs. Orton feud but this felt like a way to fill in TV time instead of a match that needed to go this long. I'm not sure how much people are going to buy Mahal's cobra clutch slam as a threat to beat Orton but at least they're setting it up as a possibility.

Overall Rating: D+. This was a rough one as it felt like a shortened version of Raw. The problem is I don't watch Smackdown for a shortened version of Raw but rather something far more interesting and exciting. To be fair though, I think we can blame that on the UK tour as those shows are almost always lifeless. Some stuff was set up for the pay per view though and that's important with just a show left beforehand.

Results

Natalya b. Becky Lynch – Natalya pulled her off the top rope

Erick Rowan b. Luke Harper – Spinning reverse powerslam

Breezango b. Ascension – Last Dance to Viktor

Jinder Mahal/Kevin Owens/Baron Corbin b. Sami Zayn/Randy Orton/AJ Styles – Cobra clutch slam to Orton

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Monday Night Raw – May 8, 2017: Wake Me When We're Back Home

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 8, 2017

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

We're over in the old country tonight for a taped show. It's roughly a month away from Extreme Rules and we don't have much of a card yet. However, you can pretty much pencil in Roman Reigns and Braun Strowman coming back from severe injuries to work the show because that's how WWE works. Let's get to it.

Here's Dean Ambrose to open the show who says Kurt Angle won't be here tonight. Dean: "I heard his dog is sick or something." For tonight though, Ambrose is in charge. Before we can hear his first act, here are Miz and Maryse to interrupt. While the idea of Ambrose in charge could only lead to chaos, he has something else in mind. Before the show, Stephanie McMahon called him to say that Miz is in charge this week instead.

Ambrose says Miz is in the first match tonight and offers a handshake but here's Strowman with his arm in a sling to interrupt. He wants Reigns as soon as possible and then he wants Brock Lesnar. This brings out.....Kalisto, to say he wants Strowman tonight. Ambrose makes the match but Braun says he's injured. Dean heard Strowman say he could beat Kalisto with one arm though so the match is on. As for Miz, he can face Finn Balor next.

Miz vs. Finn Balor

Miz bails to the floor to start but comes back in to take a dropkick

to the face. Another trip to the floor doesn't go as well for Miz as he gets dropkicked into the barricade. Maryse pulls her husband away from the Coup de Grace and we take a break. Back with Miz getting in a short DDT for two of his own and it's off to the chinlock. Balor comes back with the Pele, followed by another kick to the head to put Miz on the floor.

Miz is reeling but a Maryse distraction lets him shove Balor into the referee. As acting GM of the night, Miz can't tolerate referees being abused so that's a DQ at 9:57. Actually not so fast as Ambrose comes out and says we're not doing it like that. The match restarts and Balor hits a Sling Blade, followed by the Coup de Grace for the pin at 12:31 (counting the break in between the falls).

Rating: C-. I have a feeling we'll be seeing more of this going forward but it wasn't the strongest match in the world. Then again that's what you have to expect from Miz. While I'm not wild on having the #1 contender lose a match, you have to factor in the UK crowd. Not a bad match or anything and the more they build up Balor, the better things are for them.

Nia Jax scares Alexa Bliss again but they seem to be ok.

Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Non-title with Nia Jax and Bayley are the respective seconds. Cole actually mentions Bliss and James working together on Smackdown a few months back in a fact I didn't expect to hear. Bliss gets kicked around with ease to start and Bliss gets knocked out to the floor for an early break.

Back with Bliss working on an armbar and twisting Mickie down by said arm for two. Naturally Bliss gets in some trash talk but misses a knee drop onto the arm, allowing Mickie to start the comeback. The chokeslave is countered into a flapjack as Bayley and Nia get in a fight. Not that it matters as Bliss pulls Mickie off the top for a crash and the pin at 9:15.

Rating: D+. As usual Bliss' mannerisms and heel work outshine her in-ring abilities and that's a good thing. She's absolutely nailing

the character right now and that's much more important than being able to do thirty different holds. Bliss vs. Bayley II should be good as they're such a natural rivalry, though you can't keep Nia away from the title forever.

Nia destroys Bayley and James post match.

Miz yells at Ambrose, who tells Miz he can go home tonight. That's not cool with Miz, who has a special MizTV later. As a bonus, Ambrose can fight Bray Wyatt.

Samoa Joe says Seth Rollins is now living on his terms. Cue Rollins for the big brawl.

Kalisto vs. Braun Strowman

Braun says he's not wrestling this match and then kicks Kalisto in the face. Cue Roman Reigns though and we'll say it's a no contest at thirty seconds.

Three straight Superman Punches put Strowman on the floor but he still manages to kick a charging Reigns in the chest. Reigns gets the sling off the bad arm and sends it into the post over and over. A bunch of chair shots knock Strowman into the crowd. What a hero that Reigns is. I mean, assuming you believe WWE still sees him as a major face and aren't just trolling the heck out of us anymore.

Goldust fires R-Truth up before their Tag Team Turmoil match. It seems that Goldust isn't sure about the team's future.

Tag Team Turmoil

It's basically a gauntlet match with two teams starting and the winning team advancing to face a new team. The last team standing faces the Hardys at Extreme Rules. Enzo Amore and Big Cass start with Cesaro and Sheamus and it's Cass vs. Sheamus to get things going. An early Empire Elbow has Sheamus in trouble and Cass throws Enzo at both guys for good measure. A quick Irish Curse drops Enzo though (Enzo: "OW OW OW!") and we take a break. Back with Enzo catching Cesaro with an enziguri, only to have Sheamus pull Cass off the apron. A Sharpshooter makes Enzo tap at 6:45 and it's Heath Slater and Rhino in third.

The brawl starts in the aisle with Slater and Rhyno getting the worse of it. Slater is thrown inside for a top rope clothesline from Sheamus, who also kicks Rhyno off the apron. A Brogue Kick ends Slater at 10:35. Anderson and Gallows are in fourth as we take a second break. Back again with Cesaro muscling Gallows up for a delayed suplex. Sheamus gives up the hot tag though and everything breaks down with all four being dropped in just a few seconds. White Noise gets two on Gallows and we take a third break. Back with Sheamus hitting Gallows with the Brogue Kick for the elimination at 22:33.

Golden Truth comes out as the last team and Goldust hammers on Sheamus to start. That doesn't last long though as Sheamus takes him down and works on the leg, leaving Cesaro to grab the Sharpshooter. R-Truth makes the save and hits a quick Lie Detector on Cesaro. The ax kick gets two but Truth misses a charge and gets rolled up for the pin at 27:48.

Rating: D+. This was much more long than good and showed how dull the tag division is on Mondays. Sheamus and Cesaro are talented and WAY better than I was expecting them to be but this made them feel like faces instead of the big time heels they're supposed to be. The big problem here though is I had a hard time buying the idea that ANYONE other than Sheamus and Cesaro getting the win, especially after their interactions with the Hardys over the last few weeks. Golden Truth gets beaten down post match but the Hardys come out for the staredown.

Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

They head straight to the floor to start the brawl with Joe throwing him around, only to have Seth catch him with a clothesline off the steps. The fight heads back inside with Joe taking over and grabbing a suplex for two. Joe gets in a hard shot to the knee though and Rollins crumbles to the floor as we take a break. Back with Joe dropping a big knee and telling Rollins not to listen to the fans. The Koquina Clutch is broken up with a jawbreaker and Joe is sent outside for back to back suicide dives. A springboard clothesline

gives Seth two but he walks into the snap powerslam for two. Joe can't powerbomb him though and gets caught in the falcon's arrow. A turnbuckle pad is pulled off but Seth gets two off a superkick anyway. It's Rollins being sent chest first into the buckle behind the referee's back. Joe does it again in front of the referee's back for the DQ at 14:12.

Rating: C+. The ending hurts this a lot but these two definitely have chemistry. You can likely pencil in the third match for Extreme Rules and that could be quite the fight if they're given the right gimmick. I like that they didn't have the match end clean and after the first one ended on a fluke, there's a good chance that the third match is the real payoff.

Joe chokes him out after the match.

TJP vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville is on commentary. TJP chills on the corner to start so Jack headbutts the heck out of him. Back in and TJP starts in on the leg but gets dropkicked in the face for his efforts. The Detonation Kick is broken up though and TJP grabs a rollup with a handful of trunks for the pin at 3:03.

Rating: C. It was nice while it lasted but you can see how far Gallagher has fallen. He's barely getting a reaction in his home country where he should look like a star. When you lose almost every match you have though, there's only so much that the home country crowd can do for you.

TJP goes after Jack again and puts him in the kneebar until Austin Aries makes the save.

Sasha Banks vs. Alicia Fox

They slap each other in the face to start before Fox gets two off her northern lights suplex. We hit the chinlock and the fans start looking at something in the crowd. Back up and Banks hits her running knees for the pin at 2:57.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Miz and Maryse on commentary. Bray punches Dean in

the head to start as Miz talks about wanting to return prestige to the Intercontinental Title. Dirty Deeds doesn't work so Bray suplexes him on the floor instead. Back with Bray getting two off a DDT until Dean hits a hard clothesline. Ambrose sends him outside for the running clothesline off the barricade and here are Miz and Maryse to ringside.

Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two and Dean hits the top rope elbow. Miz grabs the Intercontinental Title for a distraction so Dean suicide dives onto him. Bray is smart enough to go after the distracted Dean, allowing Miz to hit Ambrose in the back with the title. Sister Abigail finishes Ambrose at 15:12.

Rating: D+. This was a long match to end a very long show. I can live with a dirty finish to set up a title match next week and Miz is someone you can buy as a threat to the title. I'm surprised Ambrose has held the thing as long as he has but it's time for him to lose it. Adding Bray to the mix could be interesting as well. Miz poses over Ambrose and hits the catchphrase to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. I know this show isn't going to get glowing reviews and I certainly see why. The show really wasn't terrible but it was VERY long and drawn out. You could tell that this was all about setting stuff up for next week instead of doing anything interesting here. I was bored more than once tonight but I can always give the wrestlers a bit of a break based on the jet lag and being thrown off their games like this. It's not a bad show but it's really, really sluggish and that's not good.

Results

Finn Balor b. Miz – Coup de Grace

Alexa Bliss b. Mickie James – Bliss pulled James off the top

Kalisto vs. Braun Strowman went to a no contest when Roman Reigns interfered

Sheamus and Cesaro won Tag Team Turmoil last eliminating Golden Truth

Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe via DQ when Rollins was sent into the

exposed turnbuckle

TJP b. Jack Gallagher – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Sasha Banks b. Alicia Fox – Double knees to the chest

Bray Wyatt b. Dean Ambrose – Sister Abigail

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Ring of Honor TV – May 3, 2017: Lethal Japanese Kingdoms Are Going To War

Ring of Honor

Date: May 3, 2017

Location: William J. Myers Pavilion, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Colt Cabana, Ian Riccaboni

It's World Title time again as we need to find out who will be joining Champion Christopher Daniels and Cody in the triple threat match (because of course it's a triple threat match) at War of the Worlds. Other than that it's time to build up some Ring of Honor guys to be fed to the New Japan crew so let's get to it.

We recap the eight man tag that set up tonight's #1 contenders four way. I've still heard worse ideas.

Opening sequence.

Coast to Coast vs. The Kingdom

The Kingdom jumps Ali and St. Giovanni to start but a double belly to back slam sets up a pair of flip dives to the floor. Back from a very early break with St. Giovanni getting a hot tag to clean house. Vinny is put in the Tree of Woe for the double missile dropkicks but Taven makes the save. Marseglia's Swanton gets two but he pulls Ali up, allowing Taven to hit Angel's Wings for the pin on St. Giovanni for the pin at 6:29. Too much in the break to rate but it was fun while it lasted.

Package on the Hardys vs. the Young Bucks.

Here are the Young Bucks with something to say. Matt is very happy about getting their belts back but Nick wants to talk about Adam Cole. Everything is cool with the Bullet Club so let's have an open challenge for next week. Matt is ready to face Demolition, the Rock N Roll Express or Billy and Chuck but certainly not the Revival. Instead here's the Spirit Squad of all people...to take stereo superkicks. Eh good for a chuckle.

Matt Sydal vs. Flip Gordon

I saw Gordon down in Orlando and thought something of him so hopefully he does well here. They trade flips (you would think Gordon would have the advantage there) to start with Gordon nipping up about ten times in a row for a standoff. Sydal grabs a rollup for two and there's a spinwheel kick to put Gordon down. Back up and Gordon gets in a kick of his own and a standing moonsault gets two. Another kick to the head doesn't do much good as Sydal scores with his own kick, followed by the Shooting Star for the pin at 5:34.

Rating: C. I haven't liked Sydal this much since his Evan Bourne singles run, which is quite the surprise after all the time I spent being bored with his ROH stuff. Gordon looked good here and I'd have much rather seen him in the Top Prospect Tournament instead of half the schmucks they had in there.

Post match Marty Scurll comes in but can't get the chickenwing.

Here's Adam Cole for a chat. The Bullet Club is the greatest faction of all time and they'll prove it again next week when Cole teams with Hangman Page to face Dalton Castle and Christopher Daniels.

We look back at Daniels vs. Cody.

Silas Young vs. Hangman Page vs. Jay White vs. Jay Lethal

Daniels is on commentary. No tags and one fall to a finish with the winner being added to the World Title match at War of the Worlds. It's a big brawl to start with everyone going after some rollups as Daniels talks about wanting to face any of them. White takes over early on and throws everyone into a pile in the corner.

Lethal comes back but it's WAY too early for the Injection, allowing Young to make a save. One heck of a clothesline drops White with Page taking over. Everyone goes to the corner for a Tower of Doom with Lethal getting the worst of it as we take a break. Back with White in control but making the rookie mistake of smacking Lethal in the back of the head. Lethal can't do anything though and we're down to White vs. Young.

Page takes White's place though and Cabana is STUNNED for some reason. A superplex drops White again and it's Young slugging it out with Lethal on the apron. That means it's time for everyone to head outside, leaving White to flip dive onto everyone. We take another break and come back with the Lethal Combination getting two on White. Young makes another save though, only to have Lethal hit the Lethal Injection for the pin and the title shot at 15:41.

Rating: C+. This was a lot of quick one on one matches and the ending really felt like it came out of nowhere. Lethal adds some star power to the main event though and that's the best thing they could have done. Daniels vs. Cody isn't exactly thrilling so Lethal adds some much needed help and interest to the title match.

Cody comes out for the three way staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Given that we're less than two weeks away from the pay per view, there's only so much you can do to set up a pay per view. The New Japan guys sound interesting now as they've been away long enough to be an attraction again. Why that's so complicated isn't clear but at least we should have a fun pay per view. Good enough show here but it was a one match episode. At least the one match meant something though. And we've got the Spirit Squad so you know things are picking up.

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Main Event – May 4, 2017: We Need More Jinder

Main Event

Date: May 4, 2017

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We could be in for a better Main Event this week after a better episode of Raw. Things are starting to pick up despite most of the main event scene being off for a variety of reasons. That means we've gotten a fresh set of ideas for Raw, though the question is how different can things be on Main Event. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Lince Dorado vs. Drew Gulak

Dorado headscissors and armdrags Gulak down to start, followed by another headscissors on the floor. Drew gets in a kick to the chest and works on the arm. A hard whip sends Lince into the corner but he comes right back with a moonsault press. Dorado's moonsault is blocked by some raised boots though and Gulak grabs a dragon sleeper for the tap out at 5:01.

Rating: C-. This was nothing great but I'm liking Gulak's character more every time I see him. It's a good idea and makes for a natural heel, especially when you compare it to the much more straightforward Neville style heel. Gulak could go somewhere if he's

given the chance and I never would have believed that just three months ago.

And now, to Raw.

The women's division is in the ring with a pedestal in the middle and here's Alexa Bliss for her coronation as the new champion. Bliss thanks everyone for being here tonight, even if Kurt Angle forced them to be here. The Queen is gone is gone but not to worry because the Goddess is here. These women are an inspiration, including Mickie James, despite her contemporaries Mae Young and Fabulous Moolah having moved on to a better place.

As for Sasha, she's the woman that Alexa beat to get where she is today. Sasha glares at her and Bliss backs into Nia. Bliss: "We're good. We're good." Alexa gets on the pedestal and laughs at Bayley for losing in front of all her family last night. At least now Bayley's nephews will have someone to look up to. The brawl starts in a hurry and we take a break.

Video on Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns.

From Raw again.

Here's Angle to talk about Reigns vs. Strowman. Last night's matches had consequences with Reigns re-injuring his ribs and Strowman tearing his rotator cuff. Kurt has been thinking about this all day but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Bray is here as a savior after rising from his own ashes with burnt wings. Angle says this is his ring but Bray says it's his world.

Curt Hawkins vs. Curtis Axel

Hawkins is now calling himself the Star Factory because of all the big names that have beaten him over the years. A headscissors takes Axel to the mat but he whips Hawkins hard into the corner. It's way too early for the PerfectPlex though and Hawkins bails to the floor. A backdrop actually sends Axel outside as well and it's off to a break. Back with Hawkins getting two off an elbow drop and grabbing a chinlock as this probably isn't even exciting enough to be a nacho break match. Axel's comeback is cut off by a kick to the face but he charges into the PerfectPlex for the pin at 10:15.

Rating: D. You can only get so far with a Curtis Axel match and I think we've hit that ceiling. The fans seem to be into him but it's clear that he's going nowhere fast. Now that was the case with

Jinder Mahal as well but I don't think Axel has enough unique qualities to get him anywhere. He's just a third generation wrestler with a good look and solid in-ring abilities.

We wrap things up with the last few minutes of Monday's triple threat main event.

Overall Rating: C-. As usual the hot stuff from Raw helped this one a lot but there's only so much that can be done with this show no matter what. It was nice to have Gulak advance his character a bit instead of having yet another tag match but the ship sailed on Axel a very long time ago. Not bad here but nothing the show hasn't done for months (if not years) now.

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Smackdown – December 5, 2002: One Of My Favorite Matches

Smackdown

Date: December 5, 2002

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're getting close to the end of the year and thankfully there are no turkeys involved this week. However there's still Big Show, who can indeed be put in the F5 and chokeslams people through tables. Hopefully we get to see some more of the young guys being pushed, which would do Smackdown a lot of good. Let's get to it.

The opening video points out that Stephanie McMahon is in charge and you better understand that. She suspended Brock Lesnar last week but he screwed himself you see.

Opening sequence.

Albert vs. Rey Mysterio

Albert has been stuck on Velocity lately and is ready to turn some heads. Fair enough, but will those heads be 8 3/8 inches? Mysterio kicks at the leg to start but gets caught in a good looking sitout gorilla press slam. Back up and Albert charges into a boot, followed by a springboard bulldog for two. The 619 connects but the West Coast Pop is countered into an over the shoulder backbreaker to give Albert the huge upset. Well...I know they need new stars but ALBERT? They couldn't have Benoit or Angle do this and then move on to face Lesnar? They use Albert for it instead? Uh...yeah.

Post match Alberto beats Rey's knee with chair, likely writing him off TV to repair an injury, until Edge makes a save.

Bill DeMott rants about being interviewed by Funaki, who can barely speak English.

Edge yells at the medics for not taking care of Mysterio fast enough.

Here's Stephanie to brag about throwing herself at Scott Steiner in the name of getting him to sign with Smackdown. It's worked though as Steiner will be here next week to sign. As for tonight, Lesnar is still suspended but he'll get to appear via satellite to give his side of the story. At least Stephanie is now a heel and supposed to be obnoxious and mean.

Jamie Noble vs. Crash

Nidia jumps in on commentary as Jamie takes Crash down for an early

two. Noble works him over in the corner and Nidia doesn't want to talk about Jamie's cousin Nunzio. Crash comes back with a clothesline and Bodog but stops to kiss Nidia. The distraction lets Jamie load up the Tiger Bomb, only to be reversed into the Crash Landing (Styles Clash) for the pin. Now that's how you make a losing streak stick: a clean loss to a low level contender.

Jamie says Nunzio gets here next week.

Chris Benoit gives one heck of an interview about how his whole life has been about becoming World Champion but the broken neck held him back. This is edited off the Network, which is understandable, though annoying if you really want everything.

Dawn Marie comes up to Torrie and gets straight to the point: she wants Torrie instead of her dad. If she comes to Dawn's hotel room tonight, the wedding is over. Torrie looks disturbed and says no way. Dawn asks how much Torrie loves her father and the wheels seem to be turning. This would have worked better if the acting was a bit higher and if it came off as sexy rather than stalkerish.

One thing here: what exactly is hurt by Al marrying Dawn? He'll be with someone WAY out of his league and seems to be happy. Is she going to take what is likely very limited money? Or just leave him? Or is it just to torment Torrie into sleeping with her? I really don't see how Al is hurt in this whole thing, assuming Dawn doesn't try to swindle him somehow.

Funaki vs. Bill DeMott

DeMott has Marc Mero's music. Funaki gets taken down and stomped a lot as the announcers recap how horrible DeMott's career has been. Choking with some screaming has Funaki in trouble, followed by a powerslam and the moonsault for the pin. Just a squash with DeMott basically having the same character and motivation as Albert.

Los Guerreros are ready to win their matches tonight and make Grandma Guerrero proud. That should be everyone's mission in life really.

We get the Lesnar sitdown interview and he got what he deserved for

working with Paul Heyman. He heard Stephanie say that Lesnar screwed himself....and here are Heyman and Big Show to interrupt. Heyman compares Lesnar to a child that needed a spanking and who better than Big Show to administer one? The two of them screwed Lesnar and loved it. If they could go back in time to the week before Survivor Series, they would do it all over again. After some plugs of tonight's four way #1 contenders match, Lesnar promises to be at Armageddon.

Cruiserweight Title: Billy Kidman vs. Chavo Guerrero

Kidman is defending. A fan in the crowd has a sign saying the Guerreros will mow your lawn for a green card. As stupid as that is, Cole tops it by saying "Brock Lesnar has said he'll be at Armageddon in person, whatever that means." Kidman grabs a hurricanrana to start but gets caught in a gutbuster to give Chavo the real early control. Some shots to the kidneys set up an abdominal stretch but a Gory Bomb is countered into a rollup.

Kidman's fireman's carry into a backbreaker gets two and the BK Bomb is good for the same. They head up top at the same time for the big crash out to the floor and we have a bit of a breather. Back in and Kidman misses the Shooting Star, setting up the Gory Bomb to give Chavo two. Kidman comes right back with something like a reverse implant DDT, followed by the Shooting Star to retain.

Rating: C+. The rib work didn't go anywhere but it was nice to see Kidman getting some time instead of being thrown out there for three minutes before finishing with his one big move. Kidman can be a fine champion and a good choice for someone to take the title from later on so this is the right way to build him up.

Edge wants to become #1 contender but wants to get his hands on Albert too. He's not entirely focused you see. Edge charges across the backstage and goes after Albert until referees break it up.

And now, a hip hop challenge between John Cena and Rikishi. They both rap and Rikishi wins the fan vote. An attack ensues but Rikishi and Tazz (hosting) easily fight off Cena and B Two. Dancing ensues and I have no idea how this helps anyone other than Rikishi.

Angle is ready for the main event.

Edge vs. Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Eddie Guerrero

Elimination rules and the winner gets Big Show at Armageddon. Before we're ready to go though, Albert jumps Edge and takes out his knee. After everyone else is ready to go, Edge slowly limps down to the ring to have all four in the ring at once. The match is joined in progress after a break with Edge backdropping and flapjacking anyone he sees (save for the referee, commentators and fans of course) until Benoit and Angle start going after the leg.

Angle and Eddie head outside, leaving Benoit to stay on the bad knee. The half nelson faceplant gives Edge a breather but Eddie throws both of them outside. Eddie misses the frog splash and gets hit by the Swan Dive for two. The Edgecution gets two on Benoit, who pops up and Crossfaces Eddie for the elimination.

Angle is right there with the rolling German suplexes on Benoit but Edge comes back with the missile dropkick on Kurt. The knee is banged up again though and it's Angle on his feet first. The Angle Slam is countered into an Edge-0-Matic but Benoit breaks it up with a Crossface on Edge which is broken up by an ankle lock. We get a ref bump so here's Eddie with a belt shot to Benoit. Edge adds a spear to get rid of Chris and we're down to two.

Kurt is right back up with the ankle lock though and Edge somehow lasts the better part of a minute. They both fall to the floor in a crash and we take a break. Back with Angle clotheslining a bloody Edge, who hammers away with right hands in the corner. That just earns him an overhead belly to belly as Angle turns it up one more notch. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Edge comes back with his own belly to belly.

Another Edge-0-Matic gets two as the announcers are selling the heck out of that bad knee. Angle rolls some more German suplexes but Edge, with his thong sticking out, gets a spear for two more. The Edgecution gets another near fall as the fans are losing their minds on these kickouts.

Edge actually blocks the corner running superplex and hits another missile dropkick. The Angle Slam gets two and the kickout only makes Kurt more angry. Edge rolls through the ankle lock for a hot two and it's right back to the ankle lock. A rope is finally grabbed and Edge hits his own Angle Slam for two more. He takes too long getting up top though and the running Angle Slam FINALLY puts Edge away to give Angle the title shot.

Rating: A. I remember watching this match when it aired live and thinking it was amazing. While I remember it differently (I would have sworn that Edge came out halfway through the match and that the first two eliminations took the better part of fifteen minutes), it's still an outstanding back and forth battle with the last seven or eight minutes being incredible. Angle and Edge were trading bomb after bomb with Edge finally getting caught at the end. Edge looked like a star here and...is going to be facing Albert at the pay per view. But that's for another time as this was a great match and well worth checking out.

Big Show is IMMEDIATELY there to chokeslam Angle and stand tall.

We cut to Torrie going into Dawn's hotel room. Dawn is waiting on her wearing a robe and sipping a glass of wine. Torrie looks very uncomfortable as Dawn tucks back her hair and says how much Torrie must love her father. If Torrie does everything Dawn wants, the wedding is off. Torrie goes to leave but Dawn says that means Torrie doesn't love her father. That's enough to get Torrie to stay and we're out. I was rather intrigued by this when I was younger for obvious reasons but now....egads. The fact that you know nothing is going to make TV and the payoff is Dawn vs. Torrie tells you everything you need to know.

Overall Rating: B-. The main event more than carries the week but we're looking down the barrel of Albert, Rikishi, Bill DeMott and Big Show as some of the top stars of this show. I'm not sure why they would go that route when they have Edge, Benoit and Los Guerreros sitting there but WWE never was one to go with what people seemed interested in seeing. Above all else though, this show toned

the Stephanie stuff down by a few thousand notches and it was much easier watch as a result. Good show this week but the future is looking scary.

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Impact Wrestling – May 4, 2017: GFW Finally Gets Its Own TV Show

Impact Wrestling

Date: May 4, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Josh Matthews, D'Angelo Dinero

We're starting to get close to Slammiversary and that means we need to start lining up some title matches. There isn't a lot announced for this week's show as things are moving at a somewhat slow pace right now. Then again we have about two months before the next pay per view so they can take their time. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week. Thank goodness as I had to pull

up last week's review to remember anything about that show.

Opening sequence.

Dave Penzer is now doing ring announcing, which hopefully means the Swoggle vs. Spud is done.

Matt Sydal vs. Eddie Edwards

Josh says Sydal made his debut in the six sided ring last week, which means Josh doesn't know his TNA history. Feeling out process to start with a technical sequence leading to a standoff. Sydal gets in a few kicks to the legs for the first advantage before countering a slam off the top with an ankle scissors. Now why didn't Flair ever think of that? Eddie elbows his way out of a Muta Lock and grabs a Blue Thunder Bomb for two.

A sitout F5 sets up a spinwheel kick but Eddie can't follow up. Matt hurricanranas him off the top for two but gets sent outside for the suicide dive. Back from a break with Sydal getting two off a powerbomb, only to get caught with a middle rope Codebreaker. As good as this has been, let's pause for Josh to rant about JB a bit. Eddie slips out of a powerbomb but the Boston Knee Party is blocked with a jumping knee to the face. The shooting star press gives Matt the clean pin at 14:51.

Rating: B+. Where in the world did that come from? This was one of the best matches the company has put on in a long time and even Josh couldn't make ruin it for me. Eddie losing clean aside, it's cool to see a very good, long, clean match, especially opening a show. Good stuff here and Sydal looks like a star coming out of it.

They shake hands post match. Sydal leaves but here are Angelina Love and Davey Richards to beat Edwards down. Eddie gets laid out with a chair until Alisha dives off the stage to take Angelina down.

Magnus thinks he should be in the main event of Slammiversary but now he has to face Alberto El Patron. If that's what he has to do then so be it, but here's Matt Morgan to say he should get the shot. Bruce Prichard comes in and makes a GFW Title match for later tonight.

KM is exercising when a custodian comes in to clean. He sweeps up trash and leaves but KM throws a piece of paper on the floor and yells at the guy for missing it. KM does it again and the custodian says it wasn't there ten seconds ago. That doesn't sit well with KM, who doesn't like being called a liar.

GFW Women's Title: Sienna vs. Christina Von Eerie

Von Eerie is defending. Sienna grabs a suplex for two to start and Von Eerie is in trouble early on. Another suplex sets up a neck crank and Von Eerie is dumped outside in a big crash. Christina tries a Pedigree on the apron but gets backdropped back onto the floor as this has been completely one sided. Back in and a Pounce completes the squash to give us a new champion at 3:56. The announcers' biggest concern: Sienna has no respect for the Jarretts.

Rating: D. Here's the big problem with this whole GFW thing: what is GFW and why should the fans care? Unless you were watching for about four to six weeks worth of shows two years ago, it's just a collection of belts from a promotion that ran a bunch of house shows and hasn't been heard from since. I get that the hardcore fans are going to know what's going on but catering to that audience when you're drawing 300,000 fans a week and wanting to expand is a really bad idea.

As for the match itself, Von Eerie beat a jobber last week and that's the grand total of her exposure here until she got squashed to lose her title. Get rid of these belts as soon as possible or just drop them already. It's clear that Impact Wrestling isn't going to bother to explain ANY of this so get rid of them as soon as possible.

Eli Drake tells Bruce Prichard he wants in on the title picture. Instead he gets Alberto El Patron later tonight, but it's for a shot at the GFW Title.

ODB wants to make Impact great.

JB is behind Josh and mocks his over the top mannerisms. This is still your top story.

Karen Jarrett makes Alisha vs. Angelina Love for some point in the future. Sienna comes up to brag about being champion but Karen says the target is on Sienna's back. I still have no idea why this is supposed to be interesting.

Ethan Carter III vs. John Bolen

Carter kicks him in the face to start and chokes on the ropes. A running knee to the back sends Bolen outside. Back in and the TK3 sets up the 1%er for the pin on Bolen at 2:33.

Carter puts the new bosses on notice.

Remember how JB had a sign earlier? He still does and Josh is getting annoyed.

GFW World Title: Magnus vs. Matt Morgan

Morgan is challenging and uses the size to take over early on. A big boot sends Magnus outside but he posts Morgan for a breather. Back in and the Carbon Footprint misses so Morgan bangs up a leg to give Magnus a target. A kick to the leg sets up the Figure Four with Morgan making the ropes without too much effort.

Morgan pops up for his revolving elbows in the corner, followed by a side slam. A chokeslam gets two on the champ and the Carbon Footprint puts him on the floor. Morgan's knee gives out so Magnus can grab the title. The distraction lets Magnus get in a low blow, followed by a Michinoku Driver and the top rope elbow to retain at 9:20.

Rating: C. Technically fine, though I'm not sure if that was a heel turn from Magnus. That right there is the big problem: these guys have had maybe a match each since returning and we really don't know anything about them. Yeah they were here before but what are they now? They helped JB in his match so I guess they're faces but there's no real way to know for sure, especially given how they're fighting over a title that just appeared with Magnus. Decent match but the booking continues to be a problem.

Lashley doesn't care about the GFW Title because that's the title people can win.

More JB sign stuff.

LAX wants to hurt more people.

James Storm wants to make Impact great.

Spud, in a neck brace and with his leg in a cast, stares at a picture of Swoggle. So yes this is still going. So now we have a ring announcer feud to go with the commentator feud.

Kongo Kong vs. William Weeks

Kong throws him into the corner to start and stands on Weeks' chest. Three straight chokeslams into backbreakers (at Laurel Van Ness' orders) set up a Cannonball and a top rope splash to put Weeks away at 2:47.

Post match Braxton Sutter comes out to go after Kong. Some right hands and a clothesline put the monster on the floor so Sutter and Allie can stand tall.

Eli Drake wants to make Impact great.

We look back at Sonjay Dutt getting hurt in the X-Division Title match two weeks ago. Dutt isn't sure if he should have come back. If they don't give him the title at Slammiversary, I have no idea what they're thinking. It's not the most interesting story but they've set it up.

Eli Drake vs. Alberto El Patron

The winner gets a shot at Magnus at some point in the future. Drake runs away but gets pulled back to ringside, where the referee ejects Tyrus. Eli is fine enough to suplex him on the ramp but Alberto shakes it off and hits a suicide dive. Back from a break with Drake suplexing him onto the apron and choking on the floor.

Drake's chinlock doesn't work but Alberto misses a charge and both people are down. Drake gets back up and grabs a torture rack neckbreaker for a close two, only to have Alberto nail a low superkick for the same. The cross armbreaker is countered into a twisting throw for another near fall as this is far more competitive than I was expecting.

Drake can't get a superplex and of course he winds up in the Tree of Woe. For once someone is actually smart enough to sit up and pull El Patron down. A springboard moonsault gives Drake two but he gets caught in the cross armbreaker. That's countered as well but Drake gets caught in the ropes, setting up the double stomp (from the mat instead of the stomp) to give Alberto the pin at 17:56.

Rating: B-. Good match here as Drake's in-ring abilities are starting to match his incredible talking skills. The same problem still remains though: they're fighting over titles that have no meaning to the Impact Wrestling fans, which becomes a problem. The story would be exactly the same if they were all just fighting for a shot at Lashley. Just say Magnus is in this spot because he's a former World Champion and thinks he's entitled. It's the same story advancement and the same ending. Why is that so complicated?

Overall Rating: C+. This is a REALLY tricky one to grade as the opener and main events were both very good but everything in the middle was just there for the most part. The booking continues to cater to the fans who are already here and the stupid battling announcers are now being joined by a former wrestler/manservant vs. a former leprechaun who is the illegitimate son of the owner the biggest wrestling company in the world. You need a lot more than that to make a company work and Impact really doesn't seem to get that.

Results

Matt Sydal b. Eddie Edwards – Shooting star press

Sienna b. Christina Von Eerie – Pounce

Ethan Carter III b. John Bolen – 1%er

Magnus b. Matt Morgan – Top rope elbow

Kongo Kong b. William Weeks – Top rope splash

Alberto El Patron b. Eli Drake – Double stomp

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

New Column: While The Beast's Away, WWE Can Still Play

What can WWE do while Lesnar is gone? Quite a bit actually.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-beasts-away-wwe-can-still-play/>

NXT – May 3, 2017: What Do You Get When You Cross A Ruby With A Moon?

NXT

Date: May 3, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Percy Watson, Tom Phillips, Nigel McGuinness

We're rapidly approaching Takeover: Chicago and that means we need to fill in a lot of the card. As luck would have it, a major development is going to take place tonight as we have a battle royal for the #1 contendership to the Women's Title. That leaves a lot of doors open for challengers, including a potential Ember Moon rematch. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Killian Dain vs. Danny Burch

The monster Dain drives him into the corner and pulls him off the middle rope for a big crash. The backsplash connects and is greeted by a SHAVE YOUR BACK chant, followed by a series of elbow drops. Burch slugs away with a series of strikes but Dain flattens him with a running dropkick. The Ulster Plantation finishes Burch at 2:51.

The Velveteen Dream, whom I believe is Patrick Clark, is coming. The silhouette certainly looks like him.

Heavy Machinery vs. Ricardo Watts/Hector Kunsman

The jobbers make Rey Mysterio look huge. Dozovich runs Hector over to start and a double falling headbutt makes things even worse. Ricardo is dragged in and Machinery exchange chest bumps. Knight splashes both of them in the corner before Dozovich lifts them both at the same time for a double World's Strongest Slam and the double pin at 2:41.

Post match Heavy Machinery says they love to have a good time, meaning some carb shakes and trips to the buffet. When they step in the ring, they have a hunger for smashing bodies. The appetizers are over now and they want the main course: the Authors of Pain. Heavy Machinery is very much a case of "what you see is what you get" but they play their roles very well and that's what matters the most.

Bobby Roode talks to Kona Reeves before Reeves faces Hideo Itami.

DIY might not have Heavy Machinery's size but they're the former NXT Tag Team Champions. They love more competition but the line starts

behind them.

Kona Reeves vs. Hideo Itami

Itami has ditched the entrance gear and just comes out in his regular trunks and boots. Reeves jumps him before the bell though and has the advantage once the match actually starts. Kona turns up the cockiness but Hideo pops to his feet and fires off the clotheslines and kicks. More kicks knock Kona down in the corner and the GTS puts him away at 2:08. That's an effective squash but I'm not sure a two minute match is the best way to get him back on his feet after an injury and so close to what's going to be a twenty plus minute title match.

Video on Drew McIntyre, including a look back at his initial WWE run.

It's part two of the mini documentary on Roderick Strong. This time we're at home with his pregnant fiance and they're getting things ready for the baby's arrival. He loves the idea of being called a father and a husband and now those things are about to be true. We get some clips of Strong's very early career from his days in IPW Hardcore Wrestling and then his time in the Performance Center.

Now we go back to the Ring of Honor days, which still messes with me just a little bit. He was there for thirteen years and then he got the call. With tears in his eyes, Strong says don't give up and everything will be ok. We wrap it up with Strong holding his newborn baby. This was another excellent package and made me think more of Strong (who I'm a fan of) than I have before, which is exactly the point. He hasn't made an impact yet (a match in Chicago would help) but that could change very quickly.

Roode is in William Regal's office and doesn't think much of the video. He also doesn't think Hideo should get the title shot yet because it could mess with the champ's face. Regal actually agrees and puts Itami in a #1 contenders match against Strong for next week. Strong comes in and has a staredown with Roode. I thought Roode vs. Itami was already set but I do like Itami having to earn the shot.

Battle Royal

Lacey Evans, Billie Kay, Peyton Royce, Nikki Cross, Liv Morgan, Ruby Riot, Ember Moon, Aliyah, Bianca Blair, Candice LeRae, Kimberly Frankele, Rachel Evers, Sonya Deville, Victoria Gonzalez, Sara Bridges

The winner gets Asuka in Chicago. Evans is better known as Macey Estrella, Deville is the former Daria Berenato and a lot of these women are unknowns without entrances. LeRae is a heavy fan favorite and gets a LET'S GO CANDICE chant. Gonzalez, who has some size to her, goes after Royce and Kay to start but can't get rid of them. It's your usual battle royal brawling with teased eliminations that don't go anywhere.

We take a break and come back with Gonzalez having been eliminated at the hands of Royce and Kaye. Blair is out next, followed by Aliyah elbowing Evers out to a chorus of booing. Bridges, Evans and Deville go out in the span of five seconds and Riot eliminates Kimberly. We're down to LeRae, Royce, Kay, Cross, Riot, Morgan, Moon and Aliyah. Kay kicks Candice out, earning possibly the most heat of her career.

Cross dumps Aliyah and the fans are rather pleased. Come on, Aliyah isn't....ok maybe she is that bad. Nikki does the same to Morgan and the fans are pleased all over again. Moon superkicks Kay out and gets rid of Peyton a few seconds later, leaving us with Moon, Riot and Cross. Cross goes straight for Riot but Ember kicks her in the face. All three wind up in the corner with Moon kicking the other two away and hitting the Eclipse on Cross. That's not enough for an elimination so Ember heads up again, only to have Asuka come in....for a no contest at 14:46.

Rating: D+. I liked the way they set this up with the unknowns not lasting very long, which should be the case when they didn't have any realistic chance to win the title. Just let us get to the big names and go from there. The ending though....yeah I'm not sold on that, though if they're going to a four way, this is certainly a better option than a triple elimination at the end.

Asuka sends Moon HARD to the floor and head first into the barricade. Riot gets kicked in the head and Cross is dropped as well, leaving Asuka to shout that no one is ready for her. Asuka runs off as Moon is holding her shoulder on the floor. Regal comes out to announce the four way title match for Chicago to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This is another good example of a show that wasn't about the wrestling. Tonight we set up a Takeover match, set up a #1 contenders match for the NXT Title, looked at Roderick Strong some more and established Heavy Machinery as potential Tag Team Title contenders. They don't have a lot of time between Orlando and Chicago so this is about as logical of a path as they have.

Results

Killian Dain b. Danny Burch – Ulster Plantation

Heavy Machinery b. Ricardo Watts/Hector Kunsman – Double World's Strongest Slam

Hideo Itami b. Kona Reeves – GTS

A Battle Royal went to a no contest when Asuka interfered

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Monday Night Raw – December 2, 2002 (2017 Redo): The Best In The World Because They Say So

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 2, 2002

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

So HHH is back and I'd assume that's about all you need to know for this show. That whole week without HHH around to really run the show must have scared the company as he interfered in last week's World Title match, seemingly setting up another pay per view showdown with Shawn Michaels. I'm as thrilled as you are. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about....well by George it's about HHH coming back last week! To be fair it's not like anything else was treated like it mattered last week.

Opening sequence.

Dudley Boyz vs. 3 Minute Warning

They don't waste time with the wrestling to start and Rosey gets dropped with a double belly to back. A double crossbody puts Bubba and Rosey down and we get down to Jamal getting knocked back and forth between the Dudleys. Rosey and Bubba chop it out with the latter taking him down into what can best be described as a cross armbreaker. D-Von stays on the arm as this is already more technical than I was expecting.

Rico gets involved for a distraction though and D-Von gets beaten down for a short while. For some reason a DDT stops Rosey but the referee doesn't see the tag. A neckbreaker puts Rosey down again and now the tag brings Bubba back in. House is cleaned but Rico gets in a kick to the back of the head. Cue Spike for the way too fast save, allowing the brothers to hit What's Up. After Rico's interference doesn't go anywhere, a 3D finishes Rosey.

Rating: C-. Well that happened. Really I'm not sure what else there is to say about the match as it just came and went. It's good to have the Dudleys back but it's very clear that there's nothing to the division at this point and if 3 Minute Warning is the best they have, they're in big trouble.

We come back from a break with all three Dudleys down, thanks to an off-camera attack at the hands of Chris Jericho and Christian and 3 Minute Warning. D-Von was put in the Walls for a Conchairto and Bubba was beaten down as well while Spike was already carried out. As much as I'd like to have seen it happen, I can greatly appreciate the idea of having stuff seem more realistic instead of having it so rigidly attached to the schedule.

Sean Morely tells Eric Bischoff that he's got this covered. Oh and call him Chief Morely. HHH to come in to say that he wrestled for thirty minutes in the Elimination Chamber but now he has to beat Rob Van Dam to become #1 contender. Bischoff doesn't want to hear it and demands great TV. Morely suggests a guest referee to be announced, likely as Shawn Michaels, so HHH can overcome even more odds.

We look at the Dudleys' beatdown again.

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

They hit the mat to start before trading arm cranks. Ivory gets two off a rollup as this isn't exactly thrilling so far. We hit the chinlock with Ivory pulling on Trish's face until she fights up for a neckbreaker. The Chick Kick gets two as the announcers debate who the guest referee is going to be. Trish hits a very assisted Stratusfaction for the pin.

Rating: D. I know Trish would get much better in the coming years but she really wasn't able to lift anything up the ladder at this point. It doesn't help that Ivory is someone who has been the same performer for years and isn't going to have a memorable match no matter what she does. They really need to bring in some exciting talent if they want this division to work as Trish vs. Victoria is only going to take them so far.

Speaking of dull women, Jackie yells at Victoria for going through her bag and a match is made. She doesn't even mind if it's not for the title, because why would she want that? Jackie beats her up because it's Texas and that means Jackie is all tough and awesome.

Jericho and Christian threaten violence against anyone who disrespect them. Christopher Nowinski instantly sucks up to them like the worm that he is. Of note: the champs' bags are chained to their lockers.

Jeff Hardy/Tommy Dreamer vs. Lance Storm/William Regal

This is the result of Regal dislocating Dreamer's jaw a few weeks back. They start fighting in the aisle with Jeff running around the ring to take both evil foreigners down. Dreamer grabs a half crab on Storm to start and gets his jaw broken again for the gimmick infringement. Regal comes in for a knee to the jaw as there's certainly a target so far. A front facelock allows Dreamer to get over for the tag to Jeff, which the referee naturally misses. With the referee dealing with Jeff, Regal gets a buckle pad off and Dreamer goes face first into the steal for the easy pin.

Rating: D. Jeff and Dreamer are a really lame low level team and having them waste Regal and Storm's time isn't that interesting. Then again, it's certainly better than the stupid hardcore feud with Nowinski. You really can tell that Jeff doesn't have any fire in him at the moment but at least he wasn't out there long enough to horribly botch anything.

Ric Flair talks about Batista's rough upbringing but Batista doesn't want to go into it. Flair doesn't seem to mind and brings up Batista bouncing from foster home to foster home. Now Batista gets to use the anger in the ring.

Batista vs. Hurricane

Spinebuster and Batista Bomb are good for the pin in under a minute. Sounds like Flair has a future as a teacher.

Kane comes out for the save because they were partners for like two weeks.

Shawn and Van Dam go face to face about how horrible HHH is. Bischoff comes in to officially make Shawn guest referee. That was ever in doubt? If Shawn doesn't play it fair, he loses the title.

Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho

Before the match, Booker makes jokes about Jericho being left without his clothes last week and makes jokes about size. Jericho throws some chops to start and dropkicks Booker out to the floor. The top rope back elbow to the jaw gets two and it's already off to

the chinlock. After a little dance (you always need a little dance), Booker catches him on top for a big crashing superplex.

A missile dropkick gives Booker two and Jericho gets catapulted into the corner for good measure. Christian and Goldust run in but quickly cancel each other out, leaving Booker to hit the ax kick. And never mind as Chief Morely comes out and makes this a tag match, minus any sort of Teddy Long's charisma.

Rating: C+. The match was just there to fill time before the ending but it's always helpful to have people this talented in the ring. Even if they have nothing to do and are only having a simple match, they're going to do it well enough that it's something you can watch without getting bored. I mean, it's not good enough to have them get the World Title or anything but that's just crazy talk.

Tag Team Titles: Christian/Chris Jericho vs. Booker T./Goldust

Christian and Jericho are defending and this is joined in progress with Christian in early trouble. It's off to Booker to hammer away on Jericho until the champs get in a cheap shot to take over. Jericho's running crotch shot to the back sets up more dancing but Christian's attempt earns himself a crotching.

Goldust comes in to clean house and gets two off a rollup for very hot reaction. Booker's snap spinebuster gets two and he ducks Christian's belt shot. The Book End gives Booker two more with Christian pulling the referee out. Now the belt shot works and Jericho adds the Lionsault for the pin to retain because the Texas guys have to job in their home state.

Rating: C+. Another solid outing here with all four working hard before the annoying ending that follows the WWE formula of humiliating the hometown favorites. I guess it's a good sign that Goldust didn't lose in his hometown and it's not like Booker has much more momentum to lose, even if the fans seem to love him. They really need to change the titles soon though as Goldust and Booker have been primed up for months now.

This week's Raw Retro is Austin with the cement truck destroying Vince's Corvette.

F-View shows us Test and Stacy making out on a couch, only to have her stop for the sake of a marketing idea.

Jackie vs. Victoria

Non-title. Victoria shoves her down to start and stomps a lot as the announcers make sure to talk about how tough Jackie is. Jackie gets in a hurricanrana for two but charges into a boot in the corner. The slingshot legdrop gets two but the Widow's Peak is countered with a backdrop. Jackie's spinning kick to the head gives her the clean pin and WOO TEXAS! I mean, Dallas and Austin are totally the same thing. They're only two hours apart and if you can have someone the fans don't care about win a non-title match it's completely the same as the popular team losing a title match right?

Steven Richards comes in to check on Victoria. They're still in the ring post match with Victoria demanding that Jackie come back out here. Instead it's Scott Steiner for some rhyming before destroying Steven. Cue a very smiling Bischoff to offer Steiner a contract pitch. The pitch is in the back though, where Bischoff has eight women waiting for him. Steiner says he already has a super freak tonight and opens his limo to reveal....Stephanie McMahon in a short skirt and low cut top. She has things to offer Steiner that Bischoff can't. So to sum this up: Stephanie is now hotter than eight good looking women combined.

We go to the World for RNN Breaking News....but we have breaking news in the arena, where HHH and Flair are looking for Shawn, who is in a referee shirt. Shawn is going to DQ HHH for any broken rule, which is totally going to happen because we're certainly NOT guaranteed to see HHH vs. Shawn for the title again.

HHH vs. Rob Van Dam

The winner gets Shawn, the guest referee here, at the pay per view. Actually hang on as Shawn needs to eject Flair before we get going. HHH isn't allowed to throw a closed fist so Rob springboard kicks him down for two. A slingshot dive drops HHH and there's the spinning kick to the back. Rob kicks him in the face for two more, followed by a small package for a fast counted near fall. HHH gets caught in a sleeper with Shawn sitting in front of the ropes for a nice touch.

Back up and Shawn gets bumped and since he's a referee here instead of a wrestler, a single clothesline keeps him down for a good twenty seconds. Shawn gets up to pull a chair away from HHH so Rob kicks him down by mistake. Rolling Thunder hits HHH but a chair shot knocks Rob silly for the slow counted pin.

Rating: D. Not only was it short and not very good but this felt like something Austin would have done in his day. His only support is sent outside, he has a guest referee that can't stand him and he can't use a right hand. The only cheating HHH did was swinging a chair after Rob hit the referee by mistake. I know HHH is amazing and the best thing ever (save for Stephanie) but this made him look like a face instead of the top heel.

They fight post match and Shawn gets in a superkick to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Between the two really bad women's matches, the HHH/Stephanie worship and Booker/Goldust losing in Texas in a title match they should have won months ago, this was a really bad show. The Tag Team Title match was fine until the end but the rest of the show was the standard problem this era has: bad wrestling, uninteresting storytelling and pushing people who are only there because WWE has decided they're the best things in the world.

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Smackdown – May 2, 2017: The Chris Jericho Alarm

Clock

Smackdown

Date: May 2, 2017

Location: Save Mart Center, Fresno, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Things are back to normal now and that means we're in the Jinder Mahal Could Be World Champion Era. Mahal cost Randy Orton the House of Horrors match on Sunday to help set up the title match at Backlash in just under three weeks so Orton is likely out for revenge. Tonight we have Chris Jericho defending his newly regained US Title against Kevin Owens, which sounds like something could be up. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, Jinder Mahal was in a photo shoot with the stolen Smackdown World Title. Shane McMahon came up and took it back while saying Mahal would be facing Sami Zayn tonight.

Opening sequence.

Here's Shane to introduce Chris Jericho as the newest member of the Smackdown roster. See, this is the new Show of Jericho so smack it down man! Cue AJ Styles, who will face the US Champion, whoever that is (Owens) at Backlash. Styles reminisces about their previous issues and says he's looking forward to Backlash where he can take the title.

That doesn't sit well with Jericho, and do you know what happens when you don't sit well with Jericho? It turns out that you get cut off by Owens, who is reminded that he tapped out. Owens wants AJ to get out of his ring so Styles goes up the ramp for a brawl. Shane: "SPLIT EM UP!" Jericho: "LET THEM FIGHT!" Shane gets his way as security breaks it up.

Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Zayn is still banged up after Baron Corbin attacked him last week on Talking Smack, earning Corbin a suspension for the week. Mahal elbows him in the back of the head to start but Sami speeds things

up with a headscissors. A dropkick sends Mahal outside and we take a break. Back with Sami in a chinlock for a good while until Jinder gets two off a clothesline. And never mind as it's right back to the chinlock.

Sami misses a dropkick but starts his clothesline based comeback, followed by the high crossbody for two. The corner climb tornado DDT looks to set up the Helluva Kick but one of the Singh Brothers pulls Mahal to the floor. The other grabs Sami's foot, setting up the cobra clutch slam to give Mahal the pin at 10:57.

Rating: C. I think I might be starting to like Mahal and I don't know what that means. Mahal certainly isn't the next big thing in WWE but they've built him (with the Brothers) into enough of a threat that it could make for a good one off match. It's a simple act and sometimes that's all it needs to be.

Becky Lynch comes up to the Welcoming Committee and mentions them all by name for no apparent reason. They think Becky should be getting the shots that Charlotte gets but she doesn't seem convinced.

Dolph Ziggler and some friends of his watch a Shinsuke Nakamura video and aren't impressed. Ziggler runs his mouth about Nakamura and insults Shane, who is of course right behind him.

Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

English isn't happy with Tye for cutting off his song. Dillinger starts fast with a forearm and clothesline before stomping away in the corner. As usual, the TEN chants seem to be more over than he is but take what you can get. Tye loads up the Tyebreaker but spins English around into a facebuster instead of the backbreaker for the pin at 1:05.

English seems to have a breakdown post match.

Jericho is about to talk to Renee Young (who he calls Ronnie) when he runs into the crying Aiden English. There's no need to cry when you can sing and have a hairy chest. That being said, do you know what happens when you cry on Chris Jericho's new show? HE JUST MADE

THE LIST! And so did Renee for no apparent reason!

Charlotte doesn't think much of the Welcoming Committee so they beat her down.

Naomi/Charlotte vs. Carmella/Natalya

And there's no Charlotte due to the attack. An early atomic drop doesn't do anything to Carmella so Naomi kicks the heck out of her leg. Carmella's kick has no effect either and it's time for the dancing kicks. The fresh Natalya comes in and poses a bit before getting sunset flipped for two.

A headscissors puts Natalya on the floor but she blocks a baseball slide (that's a new one) and sends Naomi face first into the steps. The double teaming puts Naomi in real trouble with Carmella shouting about Naomi wanting to kick her. Natalya and Naomi collide on a double crossbody and here's a banged up Charlotte to take the hot tag. Now it's Charlotte's turn to get taken down by the numbers game and we take a break.

Back with Natalya fighting out of a bodyscissors with ease since Carmella really isn't that big of a threat, even when Charlotte is injured. Carmella misses a Bronco Buster and the real hot tag brings in Naomi for a springboard crossbody. The Rear View should finish Carmella but Natalya offers a distraction, allowing Carmella to grab a rollup with tights for the pin at 11:42.

Rating: C-. Not much to see here but that's all you can really ask for with people like Carmella and Natalya as your top heels. Natalya has been around forever and still doesn't really have a character aside from being a member of the Hart Family and Carmella isn't exactly ready for this spot. Not a bad match but the heels need a bigger star to make this story work.

The Welcoming Committee beats on Charlotte and Naomi until Becky Lynch slowly walks out. She shakes hands with the Committee before throwing Ellsworth into the women and hammering on all of them. Tamina superkicks Becky down and the Welcoming Committee stands tall.

Sin Cara vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler elbows him in the mask to start but eats a springboard elbow for his efforts. A big kick sends Ziggler to the floor and Cara only somewhat botches the suicide dive when his feet get caught on the ropes. Back in and Ziggler gets two off a neckbreaker before they botch...I think a reversal to a suplex where Ziggler couldn't stick the landing. Ziggler quickly recovers with a fireman's carry slam but the Fameasser is countered into a powerbomb. Not that it matters as Ziggler gets the superkick for the pin at 4:33.

Rating: D. The botches hurt it but Cara got in a lot more offense than you would have expected. That helps a match like this so much as it at least makes Ziggler look like he had to break a sweat. Cara might not be great but he's a step above the Brooklyn Brawler so he should take a bit more effort.

Lana vignette.

And now, the Fashion Files from the Fashion Police. We go to a police station where Breezango are investigating the Usos for a variety of crimes. Fandango: "They're twins." Breeze: "Identity theft!" Along with making their outfits making Breezango's eyes hurt, Tyler thinks they're guilty of Jimmy and Jey walking. The big bust goes down in Chicago on May 21.

The best part here is everything in the background, ranging from a framed picture of the Big Boss Man to various news articles about the tag match to some wanted posters. A few examples are John Cena with whereabouts unknown, Nakamura as the King of Strong No Style and the Colons for real estate fraud. This is what giving a fresh team a shot can do for you as this was the first entertaining thing to happen to the division since American Alpha won the belts in the first place. Breezango might not be the best team in the world but they're likeable and this was funny so give them a one off chance.

US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Jericho is defending and Styles is banned from ringside. They waste no time in getting the fight started with Jericho stomping on the

injured hand that cost Owens the title on Sunday. Owens sends him into the steps though and takes over without too much effort. The backplash keeps Jericho in trouble and he's thrown outside for a Cannonball against the barricade.

Back from a break with Jericho escaping the Pop Up Powerbomb but Lionsaulting onto knees. The second attempt works fine and it's off to the Walls. This time Owens makes the rope but another Pop Up Powerbomb is countered into the Walls in the middle of the ring. A much better tease of the tap out sets up Owens making the ropes again and it's back to the floor. Owens nails a loud superkick and DDTs him onto the ramp. Back in and another superkick sets up the Pop Up Powerbomb to give Owens the title back at 12:40.

Rating: B. I wanted to see more of this but they did the right thing by having Owens hit a big move with the superkick on the floor and then get in a few more moves to win the title back. It felt like Owens proving himself to be the better man and that's exactly what it needed to be. The ending wasn't exactly a surprise but Owens has the title back and that's what matters.

Medics come in to check on Jericho, who takes another powerbomb. Owens leaves and a very woozy looking Jericho is carried out. Of course Kevin comes back out and puts a chair around Jericho's neck which is sent into the post. Owens slowly walks up the ramp to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. There was no secret to the fact that this was all about the main event and almost nothing more. You can see a lot of the Backlash card from here and they're actually doing a good job of setting up a show on such short notice. The title change felt like a big moment and it sets Owens on a roll before Backlash. It's not a great show and it was rather dull at several points (namely the women's tag) but it worked well enough.

Results

Jinder Mahal b. Sami Zayn – Cobra clutch slam

Tye Dillinger b. Aiden English – Fireman's carry into a facebuster

Carmella/Natalya b. Naomi/Charlotte – Rollup with a handful of tights

Dolph Ziggler b. Sin Cara – Superkick

Kevin Owens b. Chris Jericho – Pop Up Powerbomb

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