

Smackdown – July 18, 2017: Love in the Time of a Dead Horse

Smackdown

Date: July 18, 2017

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Battleground and Jinder Mahal has brought the Punjabi Prison with him to Smackdown. My guess would be to get people interested in what the match is going to look like if they haven't been around for more than ten years, which is about as good of an idea as they could have for this. Let's get to it.

We open with a video on the Punjabi Prison, even though it doesn't have a ton of history.

Here's Mahal to enter the Punjabi Prison, which is still fairly ridiculous looking. Mahal promises to bring Orton inside here and destroy his legacy. Oh come on that stable was destroyed years ago. The Singh Brothers explain the rules: there's a regular cage (made of bamboo that is) with four trap doors. A wrestler can ask to open the door for sixty seconds but once it closes, it can't be opened again. Then there's another bamboo cage around the ring which has to be climbed over. The first person out of both structures wins.

Mahal speaks some Punjab but here's Orton to interrupt. Orton talks about how crazy Mahal is to want to lock himself inside a cage with him and starts to climb the cage. He stops though and just promises to destroy Mahal to wrap things up without going in to fight all three at once.

Kofi Kingston vs. Jimmy Uso

Kofi starts fast and takes Jimmy down before annoying him with some dancing. A good looking flip dive to the floor drops Jimmy again and

we take a break. Back with Kofi making a comeback with chops and kicks, only to have Trouble in Paradise countered into a Death Valley Driver into the corner for a close two. Kofi shoves him off the top but has to yell at Jey, allowing Jimmy to roll through a high crossbody for the pin at 8:38.

Rating: C-. The clip in the middle hurt this a lot as we went from one person in trouble and flipped it around during the commercial. Kofi losing is interesting and could suggest the Usos losing the titles on Sunday. New Day doesn't need them but they're instantly going to make the titles more interesting than the Usos have.

The women's division wants to beat Lana up but Tamina cuts them off. Natalya suggests Becky vs. Charlotte, the latter of whom says that wouldn't be competitive. Shane McMahon makes the match.

We recap last night's announcement that Jason Jordan is Kurt Angle's son. I don't mind it as much as some people do but they need to walk a very thin line on this one.

Chad Gable sits down with Renee Young for an interview and still looks stunned. He didn't have any heads up on this but Jordan did call him to talk about things later. Gable has some ideas for his future but he's keeping them to himself for now.

Mike Kanellis vs. Sami Zayn

This is Mike's in-ring debut. Sami hammers away to start and sends Mike outside for a running clothesline. Mike is sent into the barricade as this is one sided so far. The exploder looks to set up the Helluva Kick but Maria comes in for the distraction. Mike blasts him in the face and hits a Samoan driver for the pin at 2:59.

Here's John Cena to talk about the flag match with both the American and Bulgarian flags hanging over the corners. Cena runs down Sunday's card before moving on to the flag match, where you have to get your flag from a pole and plant it at the finish line. He promises we're going to remember the flag match more than anything else.

Cena gets all fired up and promises that he's ready because the USA

is a nation of fighters. He lists off some important moments in American history, including the Civil War, World War II and 9/11 before waving the flag. Cue Rusev to beat Cena down and knock him out with the Accolade before waving the Bulgarian flag. This was WAY too serious and way too well done of a promo to waste it on a flag match against Rusev.

Shinsuke Nakamura comes up to AJ Styles but doesn't want to talk strategy for tonight's main event. Instead he'd rather point at the US Title and say one day, he's answering the Open Challenge. I'd really hope that's at a major pay per view.

Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte

Natalya is on commentary. Feeling out process to start with Charlotte powering her down and grabbing a headlock. Becky comes back with a one footed dropkick but Charlotte backflips away twice. The threat of the Disarm-Her sends Charlotte outside and we take an early break.

Back with Becky throwing her back inside but Charlotte forearms her down to take over. A knee to the back of the head gets two on Becky, who escapes the Figure Four. Becky springboards into a forearm to Charlotte's chest and there's the Bexploder. The Disarm-Her is countered with a big boot for two but the moonsault misses, allowing the Disarm-Her to make Charlotte tap at 9:00.

Rating: C+. It's very clear that these two are miles ahead of the rest of the division but worry not because there's always the chance that Nikki Bella can come back and show them how to work. Becky winning is a good idea as she hasn't had a big win in a long time and a clean win over Charlotte is quite the accomplishment.

Post match Lana and Tamina come out to clean house. Tamina stares at Lana for a bit (Who can blame her?).

WWE Network shill.

Naomi is ready to face anyone but Carmella comes up with the briefcase and says she'll see Naomi on Sunday.

It's time for the Fashion X-Files with Breeze as Skully, complete

with a red wig. Breeze doesn't buy the idea of the paranormal but there's a ghostly moaning. Never mind though as it's just Aiden English warming up. A white light comes down from the ceiling with Breeze saying he wants to meet Alf, Max Moon and Chewbacca. It turns out to be a delivery guy who turned the lights on so they could sign for a package. Breeze won't answer what's in the box because it's Tully's (Fandango's stick horse) head. There's a note saying Battleground, where things will be concluded.

Shinsuke Nakamura/AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens/Baron Corbin

Corbin jumps Nakamura in the aisle and Owens joins in until AJ FINALLY comes up to help. We hit the break before a bell and are joined in progress with AJ in trouble thanks to a hard forearm from Corbin. AJ gets over for the hot tag to Nakamura, who immediately goes to Good Vibrations on Owens.

Corbin low bridges Nakamura to the floor though and Owens stomps away in the corner to take over. Baron grabs a bearhug for a bit before sliding under the bottom rope, only to have Nakamura waiting on him for a change. The double knockdown isn't enough for the hot tag to AJ as Corbin is up first (makes sense for a change) to knock Styles off the apron. Nakamura comes back with the rapid strikes, including a kick to Owens before he can interfere.

Deep Six gives Corbin two but the enziguri is enough to make the hot tag off to Styles. More rapid strikes have Owens in trouble but he takes AJ's head off with a clothesline. Corbin comes in and is caught in a fast Calf Crusher, sending him scurrying to the ropes. Nakamura is sent into the timekeeper's area, leaving AJ to have to escape End of Days. Owens makes a blind tag though and it's a superkick into the Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 9:53.

Rating: B. They were working out there and it was a hot match as a result. All four were moving and hitting their stuff to give us a good match to wrap up the show. At least it was a tag match where Styles took the pin, though I can't imagine them putting the title back on Owens so soon.

Overall Rating: B-. Good show this week to build up to another B

level pay per view. There's only so much you're going to get out of this Sunday so a strong go home show is always a nice surprise. Cena vs. Rusev feels like a highly glorified warmup for Cena before whatever he's doing at Summerslam but other than that, I'm interested in almost everything else they're doing, at least to a degree.

Results

Jimmy Uso b. Kofi Kingston – Reversed high crossbody

Mike Kanellis b. Sami Zayn – Samoa driver

Becky Lynch b. Charlotte – Disarm-Her

Kevin Owens/Baron Corbin b. AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura – Pop Up Powerbomb to Styles

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Histories of Saturday Night's Main Event and Clash of the Champions, now in PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

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Smackdown – July 11, 2017: Wake Me When The Battle Is

On

First off, Happy Anniversary Becca. Thanks for the first two of many.

Smackdown

Date: July 11, 2017

Location: AT&T Center, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're less than two weeks away from Battleground and we don't know much about the card yet. The big story so far is the Punjabi Prison match with Smackdown World Champion Jinder Mahal defending against Randy Orton, but Orton is off filming a movie. With that feud temporarily on the shelf, we'll look at AJ Styles, who won the US Title over the weekend in a big surprise. Let's get to it.

We open with a look at last week's battle royal with AJ winning a shot at Kevin Owens and the US Title. Styles then won the title at Madison Square Garden at a house show over the weekend.

Opening sequence.

Here's AJ to open things up, saying his face is an upgrade for the Face of America. Styles talks about the Open Challenge that Owens used to issue and thinks he should have one of his own. The Challenge is on and.....here's John Cena. John wants the shot right now and AJ is more than game. We hit the Big Match Intros but cue Owens to interrupt before the bell.

Owens says no one wants Cena around here anymore because his time is over. John says the usual: if you want him gone, get rid of him. Rusev runs in from behind and takes Cena down, leaving Owens to powerbomb AJ. Cena gets caught in the Accolade and the villains stand tall.

The obvious tag match is set.

Jinder Mahal vs. Tye Dillinger

Non-title. Tye starts fast and sends Mahal into the corner, setting

up a springboard high crossbody, only to get caught with a clothesline. Jinder hammers him down and chokes on the ropes a bit as we take an early break. Back with Tye shoving him away and firing off his left hands in the corner, only to eat a running knee to the face. The Khallas gives Mahal the pin at 6:40.

Rating: D. And so much for Dillinger. You had a nice moment with the debut and the TEN chants but now you're getting squashed by the guy who was the squashee until a few months back. There really didn't need to be a break in the middle of this as it merely showed how lame most of Mahal's offense is. As usual, that's the big problem with Mahal: he's nothing beyond average and there's not much away around it.

Mahal talks about bringing diversity and having 1.3 billion people behind him. He'll take care of Orton next week when he brings the Punjabi Prison.

Jey Uso vs. Xavier Woods

Woods hits a few forearms to the back but gets sent into the corner early on. New Day protests and it's a triple ejection with Kofi, Big E. and Jimmy being tossed. A quick superkick gets two on Woods but the Superfly Splash hits knees. Woods comes right back with the really long top rope elbow for the pin at 2:18.

The women's division is in the locker room trying to find out who is getting the next title shot. Charlotte threatens a ruckus if it's Lana so Shane McMahon makes a five way elimination match for Battleground. Hostilities seem imminent so he makes Charlotte/Becky Lynch vs. Tamina/Natalya. The rest of the women leave so Carmella comes in and demands that James Ellsworth be reinstated as per orders from her attorney. Shane rips up her request.

Baron Corbin isn't worried about Shinsuke Nakamura and says it's going to be sayonara tonight.

Baron Corbin vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Nakamura jumps him in the aisle and since this is an angle, referees break it up instead of letting the match happen. Odds are we'll see

this at Battleground.

Cena comes up to Styles in the back to talk about the US Open Challenge. Styles wants some payback from the Royal Rumble but they'll have each others back tonight.

Cedric Alexander tells us to watch his I Quit match against Noam Dar on 205 Live.

Becky Lynch/Charlotte vs. Tamina/Natalya

Becky trips Tamina up and drops a spinning leg before handing it off to Charlotte. That doesn't go as well as Charlotte gets taken into the corner for a stomping, only to nip up and chop away. The Bexploder sends Natalya to the floor but she sends Becky into the steps as we take a break.

Back with Becky fighting out of a chinlock but not being able to get over to Charlotte. Becky kicks away from the Sharpshooter and now it's off to Charlotte for the chops. House is quickly cleaned but Lana pops up onto the apron for a distraction. Natalya uses the distraction to make a blind tag, allowing Tamina to get in the superkick for the pin on Charlotte at 8:40.

Rating: D+. Just a standard tag match here as Lana and Tamina get some momentum. The Smackdown women's division is suddenly feeling rather inferior to the Raw counterpart as they seem to be trying to make new stars instead of running with what they have. It doesn't help that two of the heels, Natalya and Tamina in this case, are black holes of charisma.

Maria Kanellis looks for Sami Zayn for the sake of an apology but no one has seen him.

Post break Sami interrupts Mike and Maria and says he won't be apologizing. He's been busy trying to have wrestling matches but keeps having to skirt around the two of them. Sami asks which one of them is the fighter so Maria slaps him in the face. Mike busts a vase over Sami's head.

It's time for Runway Walker: Texas Rangers, meaning a new version of the Fashion Files, complete with Chuck Norris clips from Survivor

Series 1994. They're in cowboy gear this year with Tyler wanting to lasso someone so they have to tell the truth like Wonder Woman. Fandango distracts Zack Ryder but Breeze lassos himself by mistake. This makes him tell the truth, including that he wears a bra while going undercover because he's no hippie. Mojo Rawley comes up and asks what he just stumbled into. Fandango suggests that the Hype Bros jumped them but Mojo says they wouldn't do something shady like that.

Ryder calls Mojo eliminating him last week shady but Mojo says it was a battle royal. Ryder thinks it's time to get back to reality and seems to suggest that Breezango does the same. In the melee, someone has stolen Fandango's (stick) horse but they can't decide if it was ghosts or aliens. Together: "GHOST ALIENS!" Next week: The Fashion X Files. Seriously.

Rusev/Kevin Owens vs. John Cena/AJ Styles

Rusev headlocks Cena to start and drops him without much effort, meaning it's time to wave the Bulgarian flag. It's off to Owens for some choking before Rusev punches Cena in the face. Back with Rusev spinwheel kicking Cena down but missing the middle rope headbutt. The hot tag brings in Styles for a quick Calf Crusher, only to have Rusev take him down again.

Owens comes in to stomp away and we hit the chinlock. The limping Rusev comes back in with the bearhug, which JBL says won Bruno Sammartino the World Title in 35 seconds in 1963 (it was a backbreaker in 48 seconds but the year is right). Styles escapes and comes in with the usual, including the Shuffle to Owens. Rusev eats the Phenomenal Forearm and it's the AA to pin Owens at 13:09.

Rating: C. Just a main event tag here but good enough while it lasted. For the sake of the ending here, I'm glad Owens lost the title so having him take the fall isn't the worst thing in the world. The match was perfectly fine and a good way to have two feuds together in one, though I'm only somewhat interested in Cena vs. Rusev at the pay per view.

Cena and Styles celebrate but have a staredown with Cena looking at the US Title. Cena holds up AJ's hand to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Pretty much a skippable show here as there were a few things added to the pay per view card but it doesn't feel like much of an event. Then again, given some of the stuff we might be seeing at Summerslam, I could easily live with watching a lackluster show like Battleground to get there. Nothing special this week, but there are far worse ways to spend two hours.

Results

Jinder Mahal b. Tye Dillinger – Khallas

Xavier Woods b. Jey Uso – Top rope elbow

Tamina/Natalya b. Becky Lynch/Charlotte – Superkick to Charlotte

John Cena/AJ Styles b. Rusev/Kevin Owens – AA to Owens

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Smackdown – July 4, 2017:

Johnny Cena And the News

Smackdown

Date: July 4, 2017

Location: Talking Stick Resort Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Welcome home Johnny! After weeks of hype, John Cena is making his return to WWE TV tonight. This is the first time Cena has been seen since Wrestlemania XXXIII and there's no real indication of what he'll be doing. Since Cena can appear on either show, this might be something of note or just a glorified one off appearance. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Cena.

There's no time wasted as Cena is right here to open the show. The fans are all over him but he tells them to let him have it because he's WAY too fired up to be rattled tonight. Cena talks about the importance of Independence Day and talks about the American Dream (no not Dusty).

The same idea holds true here: everyone has a chance to come out here and compete with the best. Lately, a lot of people have been out here running their mouths talking about Cena going Hollywood and becoming little more than a part time mascot. Cena is an all-timer because he'll show up on Raw or Smackdown to face anyone from AJ Styles to Jinder Mahal to Seth Rollins to Roman Reigns and anyone in between.

Cue the returning Rusev to say he works just as hard in the ring as anyone but he hasn't had any commercials hyping up his return. The American Dream, just like Cena's return, is a joke. Rusev rips on the Fourth of July and gets drowned out with a USA chant. Cena issues a challenge for a Flag Match but Rusev says we do this on his time and his terms. Rusev walks away so Cena starts a USA chant/song. Cena beating up a foreigner on the Fourth of July is as much of a layup as you can have and that's perfectly acceptable.

Chad Gable and AJ Styles come in to see Daniel Bryan, who says Kevin Owens doesn't want either of them in the battle royal because he's beaten both of them. Bryan kind of agrees so the two of them will be fighting each other for the right to be in the battle royal instead.

Chad Gable vs. AJ Styles

No Jason Jordan in sight. Feeling out process to start with AJ easily being taken down but popping up for his dropkick to send us to a break less than a minute and a half in. Back with AJ blocking a belly to belly superplex attempt. The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up but Gable misses a moonsault attempt. AJ gets the Calf Crusher for a bit but Gable twists out and plants him with a German suplex. Not that it matters as AJ is sent to the apron and hits the Phenomenal Forearm for the pin at 8:11.

Rating: C+. Better match than I was expecting here though I'm curious if Jordan is hurt or something. That's two singles matches for Gable in a row and we haven't seen American Alpha in the ring in at least a month. I hope they're not being split up or anything as Raw is dying for face teams and Alpha would be a great fit.

AJ helps him up post match.

Mojo Rawley looks at a Hype Bros shirt and doesn't seem pleased. Zack Ryder comes in and says it's cool because they're both in the battle royal. That seems to smooth things over a bit.

Here are Carmella and James Ellsworth to brag about winning Money in the Bank again. Carmella laughs off the idea of the fans having their wrongs righted last week and goes Rolling Stones with a little You Can't Always Get What You Want. Cue Naomi and the BELT HAS LED LIGHTS. That's up there with the spinner title on the dumb scale. Naomi says her eyes are always open so the cash-in won't work.

This brings out Daniel Bryan who tells Ellsworth to shut up. Due to what he did last week, he's banned from the arena again, but as a bonus he's fined \$10,000 and suspended for thirty days without pay. If he doesn't leave RIGHT NOW, Carmella loses the contract. They immediately leave, as you might expect. Thank goodness they

addressed Ellsworth coming back in last week. This should wrap it up too and that's the best thing possible.

Women's Title: Lana vs. Naomi

Naomi is defending and grabs her reverse Rings of Saturn for the tap out at 11 seconds.

Post match Tamina comes out to stare Naomi down and leaves with Lana. Nope. Don't even try to give Lana some kind of story or angle now. Not after you spend two months building her up with vignettes and then have her lose twice in less than a minute combined. I have no idea what the point was in building her up like that but if this is some nonsense about how she didn't work hard enough or whatever, screw off WWE and get your nonsense in order. Or, you know, WRITE HER OFF TV INSTEAD OF KILLING HER LIKE THIS.

Baron Corbin jumps Shinsuke Nakamura with the briefcase.

It's time for the Rap Off with rapper Wale in charge. Both the Usos and New Day have groups of people with them and trade insults about size, fake Jamaican accents, staying in your lane and the Usos being nothing until Naomi put them on Total Divas. A fight almost breaks out so Wale disqualifies the Usos to give New Day the win after nearly twelve minutes of rapping/rhyming back and forth. I know that's a short recap but there's really nothing else that can be said when it's just talking back and forth.

Randy Orton vs. Aiden English

Aiden gets annoyed at Randy for interrupting his song and jumps him from behind. Before he can sing again though, we hit a commercial. The match is joined in progress with Orton beating the heck out of English, including dropping him back first onto the announcers' table. The hanging DDT to the floor makes things even worse and Orton hits him with the steps for the DQ at 2:19.

English takes a post match RKO and here are Mahal and company with something to say. He talks about how everyone disrespects him because of the color of his skin but before he can speak Punjabi, Orton cuts him off and threatens to RKO Mahal back to India. Nobody

likes Mahal because he's a jacka**...and that's it.

Tye Dillinger is interviewed by Tyler Breeze in drag. Tyler, or Te-Nee Young asks what Tye is going to do to deal with the quadruple threat of Breezango. Dillinger gives a basic strategy and nearly runs into Fandango, who is wearing a fake mustache and dressed like a construction worker. Fandango and Breeze are of course bros forever, no matter how physical things get tonight. They've got something with this Breeze/Fandango things and that's likely grounds for running them into the ground asap.

Renee Young (who says Te-Nee Young was filling out the dress) interviews Mike and Maria Kanellis about the power of love. A noise interrupts them and it's Sami Zayn stretching. He talks about the Power of Love and goes into a discussion of Huey Louis and the News. As Sami wonders why you never hear about the News, his music hits and he has to run off. Maria is not pleased.

Battle Royal

Sami Zayn, Konnor, Viktor, Dolph Ziggler, Luke Harper, Mojo Rawley, Zack Ryder, Erick Rowan, Fandango, Tyler Breeze, AJ Styles, Tye Dillinger, Sin Cara

Winner gets a shot at Kevin Owens, on commentary here, and the US Title at Battleground. I think I have everyone in there but that's always hard to pull off due to the constant camera cuts. Harper clotheslines Ziggler out before the vest can even come off. We take an early break and come back with Rowan eliminating Fandango.

Breeze is thrown to the apron and jumps into Fandango's arms before being placed back inside. That's fine with Rowan who dumps him a few seconds later. Harper knocks out Konnor but gets dumped by Rawley. We're down to Ryder, Rawley, Rowan, Dillinger, Styles and Zayn. The Hype Bros nearly get into it but team up to dump Rowan. Rawley throws Ryder out and says it's not personal. Ryder seems to take it personally though and doesn't seem to mind when Sami kicks Rawley out.

So we're down to three with Tye stomping on Styles and Sami, in

increments of ten of course. Tye sends both of them to the apron but Sami backdrops Dillinger out to get us down to two. Sami grabs a quick exploder on Styles but misses the Helluva Kick and gets Pele Kicked out to give AJ the win at 11:18.

Rating: C. This was better than your average battle royal as they got rid of most of the nothing guys early and got down to people fans care about. Styles winning was obvious but they kept things moving and it was far from bad. The fans would have been happy with any of the final three so it was hardly torture.

Owens hits the ring and beats Styles down, only to have AJ knock him to the floor and hold up the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. Tonight was a completely skippable show, as it should have been on the major holiday. Save for Cena, who wasn't around after the first fifteen minutes, nothing of note happened here, assuming you count AJ getting the title shot as important. This was exactly what they should have done tonight though as no one was watching and it gives them a week to put some stuff together.

Results

AJ Styles b. Chad Gable – Phenomenal Forearm

Naomi b. Lana – Reverse Rings of Saturn

Aiden English b. Randy Orton via DQ when Orton used the steps

AJ Styles won a battle royal last eliminating Sami Zayn

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Money in the Bank 2017: A Show Where You Just Need A Recap... Like Mine!

Money in the Bank 2017

Date: June 18, 2017

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's time to climb. Tonight is all about the ladders and the briefcases, which could be cashed in tonight, assuming we have a bit of luck. This has the potential to be an interesting show with a five match card, though two of them are major ladder matches whose entrances alone will take about ten minutes. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Hype Bros vs. Colons

This is the Hype Bros' first match since December after Zack Ryder's knee injury. Epico shoulders Ryder down to start but the Bros (as opposed to the cousins) take over without much effort. Primo decides to slap Mojo in the face, which just fires him up. The Colons get in a shot to Ryder's knee though and we take a break. Back with Ryder's knee still in trouble until a neckbreaker drops Primo. The hot tag brings in Mojo for Hyperdrive (something like a release F5) and the running punch in the corner. The Hype Ryder is good for the pin on Primo at 8:11.

Rating: D+. Just a "hey Ryder's back" match here and that's fine. The Hype Bros could be inserted straight into the title picture and likely should be after they won the battle royal before the injury. The Colons aren't going to lose anything with this result and that's

the point of having them around.

The opening video looks at the World Title match, along with the ladder matches. That's quite the original thinking.

Charlotte vs. Natalya vs. Becky Lynch vs. Carmella vs. Tamina

Women's Money in the Bank, for the first time ever. During the entrances, we go to a video on Naomi winning the title at Wrestlemania, which goes into a history of the title itself and how important it is to be the first Miss Money in the Bank (that has a good ring to it). Tamina stays in the ring to start and kicks ladders back to the floor but everyone else gets back in without too much effort.

The fans get behind Becky but have to settle for Tamina hitting a Samoan drop on Carmella (in her money themed gear). Natalya gets catapulted face first into a ladder as it's still all Tamina so far. Becky kicks a ladder into Tamina and is willing to help Natalya take her down again. Natalya loads up the ladder as we're firmly in the "everyone lays around" stage.

Charlotte makes a save with an electric chair drop but it's Carmella coming up the ladder for the save. That's fine with Tamina, who shoves the ladder over for a big double crash. Natalya suplexes Charlotte down again but gets sent into a ladder for her efforts. Charlotte and Carmella both make saves, followed by Tamina stopping Charlotte after her hand touched the case.

Tamina and Natalya are sent to the floor for the big twisting flip dive from Charlotte. Becky powerbombs Carmella off the ladder but James Ellsworth comes in for the save. Naturally he goes up and grabs the briefcase, which he throws down to Carmella...for the win at 13:15.

Rating: D. Well that was really disappointing. There was no major spot (save for Charlotte's twisting dive, which she's more than topped in a regular match) and the ending was really stupid. After all the talk about this being the first ever moment for a woman, it's the man who climbs up to win the thing? This was a really bad

idea with the ending making it much worse than it could have been on its own.

Lana is glad she's a major underdog because it's going to make her victory that much sweeter.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. New Day

New Day is challenging and have some prison jokes due to the Usos calling the tag division the Uso Penitentiary. Kofi and Jimmy start things off with the champs in early trouble. One heck of a clothesline drops Kofi though and the twins send him into the post to really take over. Kofi's sunset flip is broken up but he gets in a standing double stomp for the real break.

Big E. comes in for the spear through the ropes and it's right back to Kofi, who gets his bad knee taken out. We hit the Tequila Sunrise (I had forgotten that was a thing) with Jimmy diving into a belly to belly from Big E. Kofi's leg is fine enough to grab a dragon sleeper but has to let go to go after Jey.

The SOS gets two and the Big Ending gets the same with Jey making the save. Woods offers a trombone solo for a distraction but the spear through the ropes hits knees. Kofi dives onto both champs and the Midnight Hour is good for two with Jimmy making the save. That's enough for the Usos as they walk into the crowd for the countout at 12:21.

Rating: C. This started off slow but got a lot better by the ending. That being said, I'm not sure I want to see a rematch but it's not like they have a ton of other options. It's not like we have the Hype Bros being owed a title shot or American Alpha ready on the sidelines or Breezango still popular at the moment or anything like that. No we need a rematch instead, which isn't the worst idea but it's not the most exciting.

Bob Orton Jr. and Sgt. Slaughter are in the back.

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Lana

Lana is defending in her singles debut. Naomi drives her into the corner to start but gets taken down by the hair. That just earns her

a nipup, only to have Naomi miss a high crossbody. The fans want Rusev, because they have no interest in a gorgeous blonde in a rather small outfit.

We're already in the chinlock before a suplex sends Naomi legs first into the ropes. Naomi grabs a cross armbreaker for a breather but goes with some kicks for the real control. The Rear View gets two but Lana comes right back with the sitout spinebuster for two. So much for th...and here's Carmella. She teases handing the briefcase over but changes her mind and leaves. Naomi has had enough of this and grabs her reverse Rings of Saturn for the pin at 6:27.

Rating: D+. Lana looked great (both physically and in the ring) but having her lose is the right call. That being said, it wasn't the brightest move to set up a finisher and then have her use it in a match for two. The Carmella thing didn't need to happen as it took the focus off of Lana, which wasn't a good idea either. Just too much going on here, though Lana looked outstanding.

Carmella leaves without doing anything.

It's Fashion Files time. Based on the description Breeze gave, forensics are sending over an idea. The fax says "answer the door" and they find a VHS tape. Fandango: "Is it Coliseum"? The tape says WATCH ME and they see two guys in silhouette saying they did it. They'll reveal themselves if Breezango meets them in the ring tonight. So there's a bonus match.

Here are the debuting Mike and Maria Kanellis (no Bennett mentioend). Maria calls herself the first lady and says she's spent years looking for the perfect partner. Now they're here to educate everyone on Smackdown Live about the power of love. They dance and that seems to be their gimmick: they love each other a lot.

We recap the women's ladder match and whether the ending was fair or not.

We recap Jinder Mahal vs. Randy Orton. Mahal won the title last month in a major upset and tonight it's a rematch in Orton's hometown.

Some legends are at ringside and get a special presentation for the crowd. We have:

Greg Gagne, Larry Hennig, Baron Von Raschke, Sgt. Slaughter, Bob Orton Jr. (from St. Louis) and Ric Flair.

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

Orton is challenging and tries an RKO, which sends Mahal bailing to the floor. Back in and Orton takes him down and stomps away, only to go after the Singh Brothers. Mahal uses the distraction to take out the knee and send Orton into the barricade a few times. That's fine with Randy, who whips Mahal over the barricade and into his father's lap.

Mahal goes after the knee again though and grabs a leglock back inside. They head to the floor a second time with the knee being dropped onto the barricade, followed by a superkick for two. With Flair looking on, Mahal grabs a Figure Four for a bit, followed by driving the bad knee into the mat a few times.

Orton fights back and grabs a superplex (makes sense on Father's Day) for two. The clotheslines really confirm the comeback and a powerslam sends Mahal to the apron. There's the hanging DDT and the RKO (almost taken like a Stunner) but one of the Singh Brothers puts Mahal's boot on the ropes.

The referee teases a DQ but ejects the Brothers instead. Before they go though, the Brothers grab Bob Orton and get pummeled by Randy. One of them gets dropped onto the announcers' table and the other gets an RKO on the floor. The first takes an RKO through the table as the referee is fine with all of this. Back in and Mahal kicks the knee out and hits the Khallas to retain at 20:58.

Rating: C-. The more I see of Mahal, the more impressed I am with him. He's certainly not a great performer and is in WAY over his head but he's done everything right and is playing a good heel. Orton having to deal with the Brothers to save his dad was a fine story and it's not like losing another match is going to damage a made man like him.

Breezango vs. Ascension

This sounds a bit misleading. Konnor knocks Breeze down to start as the announcers bicker about Breezango's furry selfie sticks. Viktor comes in for a forearm to the back of the neck and Konnor adds an elbow for two. Fandango comes in and gets beaten down as well, only to grab a small package to put Konnor away at 3:49.

Rating: D. So that happened. Despite Breezango beating Ascension before and the announcers basically mocking Ascension for being on the show, that's all we got here. Just nothing to talk about here despite it seeming like the perfect place for some kind of a swerve so an interesting team could have attacked Breezango.

We recap the men's Money in the Bank ladder match, with the video focusing on how life changing of an event it can be.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Baron Corbin vs. AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn vs. Dolph Ziggler

Things get going before the entrances can even finish as Corbin jumps Nakamura during his entrance. Nakamura takes a ladder to the ribs and is left laying as Corbin comes to the ring. Corbin cleans house to start with a few ladder shots, leaving Sami to dive through the ropes and take Owens out. A Ziggler superkick drops Corbin and it's Sami bringing a ladder inside with AJ making the save.

The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up by Ziggler but he dives into Deep Six on the floor. Owens starts cleaning house with the ladder until AJ kicks it back at him. Kevin comes right back and goes up top, only to have Sami slam him onto the ladder, which is completely mangled. Sami loads up the ladder as something happens off camera and here's Ziggler to make the save.

The Blue Thunder Bomb drops Dolph but Corbin takes out Sami. Ziggler and Corbin take out AJ but Baron takes out Dolph and goes up. That just earns him a Zig Zag off the ladder, followed by Sami sunset bombing Ziggler off the ladder for the next major bump. Dolph is bleeding from the eye as he rolls to the floor, leaving Sami vs. Owens on the apron.

The half and half suplex plants Owens but AJ's Phenomenal Forearm makes another save. Corbin bridges a ladder between the steps and the table to chokeslam AJ. Owens goes for the ladder but AJ is up in a hurry for the save, followed by an AA onto the ladder. Corbin heads up this time but it's Nakamura, complete with music, for the save. A series of kicks drop Corbin and there are the running knees to the ribs in the corner, followed by a hard knee to send Corbin outside.

Back to back Kinshasas drop Ziggler and another one hits Sami. Nakamura heads up top but gets stopped by AJ for a staredown. They move the ladder out of the way and do the big slugout, capped off by a forearm to Nakamura. Corbin shoves Nakamura and Styles off the ladder though and grabs the briefcase (at a Jack Swagger pace) for the win at 29:51.

Rating: B+. This was much more about the collection of spots than the flow of the match and there's nothing wrong with that. Corbin was probably the best option for winning the thing as putting it on a heel makes the most sense. That leaves you with Ziggler (spare me) and the US Champion so options, meaning Corbin was the best bet.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a show that exists and you look up the results for the next day. The big draw here is finding out who is going to be cashing in the briefcases at some point in the future, which really doesn't sound like the most interesting in the world. The undercard was nothing to see either (outside of Lana that is) and it didn't offer anything special. Totally skippable show, which isn't the biggest surprise.

Results

Carmella b. Tamina, Becky Lynch, Charlotte and Natalya – James Ellsworth threw Carmella the briefcase

New Day b. Usos via countout

Naomi b. Lana – Double arm trap

Jinder Mahal b. Randy Orton – Khallas

Baron Corbin b. AJ Styles, Dolph Ziggler, Shinsuke Nakamura, Kevin

Owens and Sami Zayn – Corbin pulled down the ladder

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Smackdown – June 13, 2017: Money in the Bank Stew

Smackdown

Date: June 13, 2017

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Money in the Bank and instead of having a bunch of matches to set up the ladder match, let's just have one match to set it up! This week it's a six man tag as the participants try to build momentum, all while having JBL say that none of this actually matters as we head towards the pay per view. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

New Day/Breezango vs. Colons/Usos

For those of you counting, this would be fourteen wrestlers in two matches. New Day is played to the ring by a live band for the sake of some New Orleans spirit. Before the match, Woods brags about potentially being cast in a very off Broadway version of Straight Out of Compton. This brings out the Usos to say they're retaining the titles, only to have Breezango interrupt. They have a different view of the Usos: their day one wasn't H but rather G, for GROSS. The Colons come out as well to say they have a break in the case. Big E.: "Now hold on sucker!" Threats of violence take us to the first break.

Fandango and Jey start things off but it's off to Kofi vs. Epico with no offense. The good guys work on Epico's arm with armdrags and elbows to the arm. A legdrop gives Fandango two but Breeze gets taken into the corner for the beatdown. That lasts all of five seconds before it's off to Woods, who drops Breeze onto Primo for two. The Honor Roll drops Primo and everything breaks down with the good guys cleaning house to send us to a rather unnecessary break.

Back with Breeze in trouble and Jimmy hitting a running Umaga Attack in the corner. Breeze gets in a kick to the face but Epico dives over for the save. Fandango gets knocked off the apron and Breeze stays in trouble. Some superkicks finally get him out of trouble, followed by a clothesline that makes Epico DDT Primo by mistake (still perhaps the dumbest spot in all of wrestling). The hot tag brings in Woods and then Kofi to clean house as everything breaks down again. Something like a Demolition Decapitator with a stomp instead of an elbow puts Primo away at 14:27.

Rating: D+. This was much more long than good as they were clearly filling in time because they don't have enough to fill in two hours, mainly thanks to having fourteen people in two matches. That being said, at least this actually had something to do with building momentum as a pinfall here does keep you rolling towards Sunday. I'm assuming Breezango vs. Colons could be added to the Kickoff Show at some point.

Sami Zayn is way too enthusiastic about the upcoming six man tag and

talks strategy with AJ Styles and Shinsuke Nakamura. AJ seems a bit disturbed by Sami's energy. Nakamura: "I like him." Styles: "You would."

Mojo Rawley is disappointed in his loss last week and praises Jinder Mahal. Zack Ryder makes his return to encourage his buddy.

Naomi vs. Tamina

Non-title and Lana comes out to watch. Tamina takes her into the corner to start and we're already into the neck crank. Naomi gets her head crushed in the corner and her kicks are cut off by a shove down. One heck of a clothesline gives Tamina two and it's back to the chinlock. Naomi fights up with some kicks but walks into a spinning Rock Bottom for two. Tamina heads up top but gets slammed down, setting up the split legged moonsault for the pin at 5:08.

Rating: D. The more I watch her, the more I think Tamina has no real reason to be around. She's not imposing, she doesn't have anything all that special in the ring and she doesn't really have a character. She's a warm body who can fill in a spot and I'd much rather have them develop someone interesting than leave her in there for such uninteresting matches.

Lana jumps Naomi after the match and gives her a sitout spinebuster.

Here's Jinder Mahal for the big showdown with Randy Orton. After the long entrance, Mahal calls Orton a coward and says this is his era. Orton's music hits and he comes through the crowd for an RKO. This feud continues to feel like nothing because Mahal feels like nothing, though his delivery has gotten better. He feels like he's doing all the right things but that doesn't make up for him having no background.

Owens, Corbin and Ziggler don't trust each other but they'll work together.

Randy Orton promises to win the title back.

Charlotte vs. Natalya

Feeling out process to start as we see Becky Lynch watching in the back. We come back from a very early break with Charlotte being

thrown shoulder first into the post. It doesn't seem to do much though as she comes back with something like an exploder suplex, followed by a moonsault which actually connects. Charlotte heads up again but gets powerbombed down for two. A small package gives Natalya the same but it's Natural Selection to give Charlotte the pin at 7:16.

Rating: C-. The moonsault and powerbomb looked good but if I have to hear them talking about building momentum one more time, I think my head is going to explode. It's another good example of the one idea that they have going into a show and if you don't like it, get over it because that's what WWE has decided is the best thing they can do.

It's Fashion Files time. Fandango is admiring his pecs and can't wait to show them off to Breeze. We cut to an unconscious Breeze as the office seems to have been wrecked again. Breeze was attacked by two greasy haired men with one arm. Breeze: "No, two arms!" Fandango draws some stick figures and Tyler says that's them.

Video on a WWE fan who has survived liver disease.

Lana doesn't care what people think about her because she can beat Naomi.

Kevin Owens/Dolph Ziggler/Baron Corbin vs. Shinsuke Nakamura/Sami Zayn/AJ Styles

Non-title of course but MOMENTUM is on the line. Joined in progress with Ziggler being thrown to the ground, only to blast Nakamura with a dropkick. It's off to Owens with forearms to the back and the heels take turns hammering away. We hit the chinlock for a bit until the hot tag brings in Sami as everything beaks down. Sami hits the flip dive onto Owens but Ziggler DDTs Styles to slow things down again.

We take a break and come back with Sami fighting up and getting clotheslined right back down. Owens' backsplash hits knees but Corbin headbutts Sami in the chest to keep him in the wrong corner. Sami kicks Corbin in the face and dodges the other two before low

bridging Corbin to the floor. Ziggler and Owens pull the partners to the floor though and there's still no hot tag. A Helluva Kick out of nowhere puts Corbin away at 12:48.

Rating: C. Just a long six man here with the six people doing things to set up Sunday's ladder match. Sami getting a pin on Corbin makes me more sure that Corbin is going to be the one winning the ladder match because if there's one thing WWE loves to do, it's put people down before giving them the big win, thinking it makes up for all the losses. The match was perfectly fine and above all else, Owens didn't take yet another pin for a change.

Post match Owens brings in the ladder and the brawl breaks out. Corbin gets the better of it until Nakamura gets in a shot. Shinsuke takes everyone else down and climbs up to pull down the briefcase to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was the show that I was dreading and it's not all that surprising. They went with the "throw everyone together and call it developing the big match" formula here, which isn't interesting and does nothing for the pay per view. At least it's done now though, save for the following week when we do the exact same matches and call it fallout. I'm still interested in Sunday's show, but only because of the ladders instead of the feuds and stories. That's not good, and shows how ineffective the build to this show has been.

Results

New Day/Breezango b. Usos/Colons – Middle rope double stomp to Primo

Naomi b. Tamina – Split legged moonsault

Charlotte b. Natalya – Natural Selection

Sami Zayn/AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Baron Corbin/Dolph

Ziggler/Kevin Owens – Helluva Kick to Corbin

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Smackdown – June 6, 2017: The Summer Doldrums

Smackdown

Date: June 6, 2017

Location: Blue Cross Arena, Rochester, New York

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

We're two days past the most recent Raw pay per view and since this is WWE, that means we're less than two weeks away from the next Smackdown pay per view. In this case that would be Money in the Bank, which means we're getting more matches between all the participants. Tonight that would be Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Kevin Owens which will be non-title because the belt means nothing at the moment. I mean, it would be asking too much to have the focus be on a ladder match and a title despite them having nothing to do with one another. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Shane McMahon announcing the first ever women's Money in the Bank match.

The participants for the women's match are in the ring as Shane comes out to open things up. Shane introduces everyone and unveils the women's briefcase, which is white instead of red or blue.

Everyone hits their catchphrases with Becky calling Natalya out for ripping off Bret's famous line.

Naomi comes out to talk about how important this is but Lana cuts them off in a VERY nice blue dress. In short she wants in the match but Naomi breaks up laughing. Lana: "What's so funny?" Naomi: "Bugs Bunny. And you." Naomi doesn't think Lana has done enough to warrant being in the title picture so Lana says she can beat the champ. Shane says no and sends her packing, drawing a WE WANT LANA chant.

Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch vs. Carmella/Natalya/Tamina

Charlotte drops a knee on Natalya to start and stops to do the Carmella dance. It's off to Becky to work on the arm, only to have Charlotte sent outside as we take a break less than three minutes in. Back with Natalya kicking Becky in the ribs but getting elbowed in the face, allowing the hot tag off to Naomi. House is cleaned with a series of kicks, including the dancing variety to Tamina. Naomi gets two off a springboard crossbody but here's Lana to trip her up. Tamina uses the distraction to hit a superkick for the pin at 10:48.

Rating: D+. This was all about setting up Lana and there's nothing wrong with that. Lana has the potential to be a major star and the division could certainly use some extra star power. The match was nothing to see, though Lana getting a future title shot could certainly be interesting.

Mojo Rawley gives Shane McMahon a speech about wanting a shot, mentioning the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal win and defeating Jinder Mahal. Shane is willing to give him an opportunity to be in the ladder match if he can beat Mahal tonight. That's fine with Mojo.

AJ Styles vs. Dolph Ziggler

Rematch from last week where Ziggler won. Feeling out process to start with AJ working a headlock and shouldering Ziggler down. Ziggler gets in a dropkick of his own though and AJ is knocked outside as we take a break. Back with Ziggler holding a chinlock and

getting two off a Fameasser. Ziggler's superplex is broken up but so is the Phenomenal Forearm. Instead AJ sunset flips him for two and they hit a pinfall reversal sequence, only to have AJ reverse into the Styles Clash for the pin at 6:57.

Rating: C. You could have penciled in Styles winning the second this match was announced because that's how the build to the Money in the Bank match works: one person wins to gain momentum, then they reverse the wins to put both guys back to even and then none of it matters because the surprise participant wins more often than not.

It's Fashion Files time. Breeze is looking at the list of suspects when Fandango comes in. He took the bottle of cologne to the boys in the lab and found out that there are no boys and no lab. Fandango doesn't think it's cologne, which means it's not the Colons' cologne. They have no idea what's going on, which means they're getting close. We cut to New Day in the back and then coming into the office, where they become black and white. Big E. says they need help with a case. Breeze, thinking: "New Day, new case."

Big E. isn't sure if it's a yes or a no because they're not saying anything. They have a present for Breezango: rompers (a kind of zip up shirt). Fandango doesn't like the fabric and says they don't take bribes. Breeze has put his on though and Fandango thinks it looks pretty good. As for the case, New Day wants some information on the Usos. Breezango has three boxes of stuff and talk with their minds, sending New Day walking away awkwardly. Breezango, again thinking: "New case rocks!"

Mojo Rawley vs. Jinder Mahal

Non-title and a win sends Mojo to the Money in the Bank ladder match. Mahal has a VERY long entrance so Mojo shoulders him to the floor to start. Back in and Mojo hits a hard clothesline, only to have one of the Singh Brothers offer a distraction. Mahal gets in a kick to the face to take over before sending Mojo shoulder first into the post. The Khallas gives Jinder the pin at 3:57.

Rating: D. Well that was the same Mahal match you would expect on Main Event but now he's the World Champion. As usual, that's my

biggest issue with him: he's so average that it's almost unthinkable to have him as World Champion. Even Justin Credible, who would have been the poster boy for that kind of champion before Mahal won, had some good charisma. Mahal is just dull and average, which isn't worth watching.

Post match Mahal says he dismantled Mojo's dreams, just like he'll do to Orton at Money in the Bank.

Orton is ready to win his title back.

Shinsuke Nakamura video, featuring him painting.

New Day vs. Colons

Kofi is on the floor this time as Primo wristlocks Woods to start. Xavier fights out and hits a discus forearm before bringing in Big E. We get stereo abdominal stretches and take another early break. Back with Woods hitting a missile dropkick and bringing Big E. back in to clean house. A big flip dive takes Epico out and the Midnight Hour is enough to finish Primo at 7:26.

Rating: D+. Just a quick match to remind us that New Day is a good team. It makes sense to put them in the title match this soon, even though they don't need to win the belts for a long time, or ever really. The Colons are good for the heel jobber tag team roles and the match served its purpose just fine.

Post match the Usos come out to call New Day old news. Jey has jokes about all three of them, including asking if E. is an initial or a bra size. Oh and Woods has weird shoes.

Sami Zayn has been watching a lot of footage of his opponents to get ready for the ladder match. He thinks Nakamura is the big threat to win and that's why he'll be on commentary for the main event. Cue Baron Corbin to hit Zayn with a ladder.

Naomi demands that Shane give her a match with Lana at Money in the Bank. She's willing to put the title on the line so Shane makes the match.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title and Corbin is on commentary instead of Sami. Feeling out process to start until Nakamura kicks him out to the floor. We take an early break and come back with Owens kicking Nakamura down for a chinlock. Nakamura fights up with some elbows and the running knee into the corner. The reverse exploder is countered but Owens hits the Cannonball. It's too early for the Pop Up Powerbomb though as Nakamura fights out and kicks Owens in the head. Now the exploder connects and the Kinshasa knocks Owens silly for the pin at 10:15.

Rating: D+. That would be three weeks in a row that Nakamura has pinned Owens and we're still waiting on the first mention of the US Title. The Title doesn't matter though because "building momentum" is all that matters at this point. That's the one idea and if the US Title has to be punched in the face to accomplish it, that's just what we're going to do.

Oh and in case you thought that win mattered, Corbin lays Nakamura out with End of Days.

Overall Rating: D. When did Smackdown get this boring? You have the entire midcard trading wins in the name of building momentum, even though JBL flat out said that getting a pinfall has nothing to do with climbing a ladder. The US Title might as well be a participation ribbon and Jinder Mahal is World Champion. Oh and the women are doing the same thing the men are doing and it's roughly about as interesting. When is Money in the Bank again so we can get back to something interesting?

Results

Tamina/Carmella/Natalya b. Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch – Superkick to Charlotte

AJ Styles b. Dolph Ziggler – Styles Clash

Jinder Mahal b. Mojo Rawley – Khallas

New Day b. Colons – Midnight Hour to Primo

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens – Kinshasa

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Smackdown – May 30, 2017: Back in the Fall

Smackdown

Date: May 30, 2017

Location: Philips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

You might have heard about this one before but tonight has a Fatal Five Way for a future title shot. In this case it's the Smackdown Women's Title as Charlotte, Becky Lynch and the Welcoming Committee will go at it for a shot at Naomi at the upcoming Money in the Bank pay per view. Let's get to it.

Charlotte says she's ready to face anyone.

Carmella will make a fabulous champion.

Natalya says her one and only catchphrase which isn't even hers.

Becky Lynch doesn't need the luck of the Irish to win.

Tamina says she'll win.

Opening sequence.

We open with Kevin Owens' Highlight Reel with Owens talking about how he's going to climb the ladder for the briefcase. After winning that, it's one step away from the Smackdown World Title, which will make him the face of the entire WWE. One thing he needs to step on before he gets there is his guest tonight: Shinsuke Nakamura. Owens calls Shinsuke a rock star and you remember what happened to the last rock star around here. If Nakamura shows up at Money in the Bank with the fans singing his song, it's going to be the day the music died.

This brings out Baron Corbin to show a clip of his beatdown of Sami Zayn. Owens: "I've been beating up Sami Zayn for fifteen years so you've got nothing to brag about." Nakamura says he pinned Owens last week and Corbin has lost to Sami twice in a row. The brawl is on with Sami coming in for the save. A challenge is issued and the tag match is on after the break.

Sami Zayn/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Baron Corbin/Kevin Owens

Nakamura sends Corbin into the corner to start and tells him to bring it. That earns Corbin some Good Vibrations in the corner before it's off to both partners. Sami sends Owens outside so it's back to Corbin to hammer away in the corner. Owens adds a kick to the head and Baron grabs a powerslam as we take a break.

Back with Sami fighting out of Owens' chinlock and hitting the Blue Thunder Bomb. Corbin gets dropped as well and the hot tag brings in Nakamura. Everything breaks down and we get some heel miscommunication, causing Corbin to deck Owens with a right hand. Kinshasa makes things even worse for Owens and is good for the pin at 11:10.

Rating: C+. At least there were extenuating circumstances this time. You really don't need to have the US Champion losing so often but you know full well that everything is going to be sacrificed for the sake of building to the Money in the Bank ladder match in the only way this company knows how to do it.

Here are the Usos to brag about beating American Alpha and Breezango so no one is left. As you might expect (or should expect if you've been paying attention), heeere's New Day. Jey: "Did you three get lost skipping down the Yellow Brick Road?" Kofi: "It's more of a skip clap." Big E. gets right to the point: they want the titles. The Usos threaten to shoot New Day so Kofi brings up Shane McMahon, who has granted them a title shot at Money in the Bank. The Usos leave as Big E. and Woods carry Kofi around. This did exactly what it needed to do.

Long recap of Jinder Mahal winning the title and all the fallout that ensued.

It's Fashion Files time with Fandango as a film noir style gumshoe saying that it might be time to go back to the discount rack. He finds the fashion police department ransacked so he pulls out his price tag gun, only to find a woman's silhouette. It's Breeze in a wig and dress for some reason and, after realizing they can hear each others thoughts, they find a bottle containing ethanol alcohol, tree frog excrement and hibiscus. They have a new case.

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch vs. Carmella vs. Natalya vs. Tamina

Elimination rules and the winner gets Naomi at the pay per view. The brawl starts before the bell with Tamina hitting a Samoan drop on Charlotte. Becky beats up Carmella in the timekeeper's area and Charlotte hits the moonsault onto Tamina and Natalya. Charlotte powerbombs Natalya through the table and everyone is down with the match never starting.

Cue Shane to say let's do something big, like the first ever women's Money in the Bank ladder match. In other words, we have no idea how to book a solo feud so let's just throw everyone into one match and put our feet up while saying the big matches are coming later on. That's the writers' solution instead of, you know, WRITING SOMETHING ELSE.

Breezango vs. Colons

Breezango is still wearing the same stuff from the film noir bit,

including Breeze in the dress. Primo rips off the dress and the wig (because of course there's a wig) but Fandango squirts Primo with the water gun. Back from a break with Fandango in a chinlock, followed by Epico getting two off a Downward Spiral. Epico pulls Breeze off the apron so he bails under the ropes, only to come back as the janitor. Fandango and Epico fight over the mop, allowing Breeze to grab the Unprettier for the pin at 8:04.

Rating: C-. Just a quick match to keep Breezango going strong. I know the comedy isn't the best stuff in the world but the division is REALLY weak on teams at this point so putting a gimmick on two guys is one of the best things they could do. It's not brilliant or anything but at least they're doing something. If it gets over, sweet.

AJ Styles and Dolph Ziggler are ready to fight tonight.

Here's Randy Orton to talk about Jinder Mahal. His family is full of wrestlers and if his grandfather was still alive, he wouldn't say anything to Randy. Instead he'd just smack Orton for losing a title to someone like Mahal. At Money in the Bank, Orton is going to take a lesson from his grandfather and smack some sense into Mahal. Cue Mahal on the screen to say he's champion and Orton isn't. Orton poses like it doesn't mean anything.

Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles

Feeling out process to start with AJ scoring off a great looking dropkick to take over. Ziggler sends him outside though and we take a break. Back with AJ hitting his seated forearm and a Teshocker for two. Ziggler knees him in the head, only to get suplexed hard into the corner. AJ gets in a backbreaker but Ziggler hits him in the back of the head for something you don't see too often.

A running knee to the jaw drops AJ again but he comes right back with the Calf Crusher. Ziggler rakes the eyes (like a true heel should) for the break, followed by the Zig Zag for a delayed two. AJ gets back up and tries a springboard, only to get pulled down for a crash. The superkick is good for the pin on AJ at 12:13. Did I mention that AJ was billed as the hometown boy here?

Rating: C+. Standard Smackdown main event as they try to push Ziggler for some momentum. I'm still not sure how winning a match via pinfall gives you the momentum necessary to climb a ladder but then again I've never been the biggest fan of this time of the year in the first place.

Overall Rating: D+. Yep it's Money in the Bank time, meaning we can stop pretending that ANY of this matters because the writers have come up with their group of names, thrown them into a random match generator and put their feet up until the end of June. We're currently looking at THREE multi-person matches, none of which are for anything more than a future shot at a title. In other words, absolutely none of this matters so check back again in July so you can see them stall even more until Summerslam rolls around.

Results

Sami Zayn/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens/Baron Corbin – Kinshasa to Owens

Breezango b. Colons – Unprettier to Primo

Dolph Ziggler b. AJ Styles – Superkick

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Smackdown – May 23, 2017: Do You Know the Way to St. Louis?

Smackdown

Date: May 23, 2017

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Somehow we're living in Jinder Mahal's WWE, which could mean several things. First of all, we're in for a Punjabi celebration tonight, which could mean a good number of possibilities. On top of that Mahal needs a challenger, who is likely to be Randy Orton in a rematch. We're also about a month away from Money in the Bank so it could be time to set up the ladder match. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of Backlash with Mahal winning the title.

Mahal and the Singh Brothers arrive with a police escort and the champ having a rug laid out for him. So....yeah he really is the new JBL, complete with his own Bashams.

Here's Shane McMahon to open things up. He's impressed that Mahal won the title but we need to move forward. First of all, Randy Orton is cashing in his rematch contract at Money in the Bank in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. On that same show we'll be having the Money in the Bank ladder match and it's already time to announce the five (SWEET) competitors: AJ Styles, Baron Corbin, Sami Zayn, Dolph Ziggler and....someone other than Kevin Owens, who comes out here despite Shane saying he's not in the match.

The actual fifth entrant is Shinsuke Nakamura but Owens isn't cool with being left out because he beat Styles at Backlash and AJ is in

the field. Maybe he's not in there because Shane is jealous of Owens beating AJ when Shane couldn't do it. Shane actually agrees and makes Owens the sixth entrant. Corbin tells Owens to stop talking and promises to win. AJ says his catchphrase because this house isn't being blown down by a lone wolf. He calls Owens WWE's Eric Cartman and says he doesn't care who he has to beat.

Sami can't say much as Corbin cuts him off and calls him the Rudy of Smackdown Live. That sounds like Corbin wants a rematch but Owens and Ziggler get in an argument before anything can happen. Dolph promises to win again but Nakamura introduces himself as Mr. Money in the Bank. Shane makes AJ/Nakamura vs. Owens/Ziggler and Zayn vs. Corbin for tonight.

Natalya/Carmella vs. Becky Lynch/Charlotte

Carmella headlocks Becky to start but a dropkick sends Carmella outside for a break. Back with Charlotte coming in off the hot tag and cleaning house, only to get dropped by some double teaming. Naomi dives onto Tamina and it's back to Becky for a quick Disarm-Her and the tap at 7:40.

Rating: D+. Some might call this fine, but I'd like to think I can come up with something a little better than that. If nothing else it seems like a waste of time as they might as well have just done this on Sunday if they're going to beat the Welcoming Committee this easily. The stable (if you can call it that) continues to be nothing more than a way to fill in time and the alliance of heroes is pretty clearly only there for the sake of waiting around until they all fight each other.

Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin

Neither gets an entrance....and Sami rolls him up for the pin at 21 seconds. They were on a roll for the first half and it was looking like it had serious potential but that next six seconds just fell apart. At least they fixed it in the end.

Corbin beats the heck out of him after the match, including crushing his head against the top of the barricade with a series of elbows.

Sami does a stretcher job.

AJ thanks Nakamura for what he taught him in Japan but now they're both going after the same thing. At Money in the Bank, Nakamura is going to turn AJ's house into his playground.

It's time for the final Fashion Files, which takes place in Shane's office (including a wanted poster, accusing the Mean Street Posse of gang activity). Breeze brings in his stuff and thinks they're fired. They even turn in their (squirt) guns and a bunch of cleaning supplies. Shane: "You do know that you're not real cops right?" Fandango: "That's what my dad tells me." Breeze takes his pants off but Shane says they're having singles matches against the Usos tonight. They're back on the case and Fandango takes a doughnut.

Here's the Punjabi celebration, complete with a band and dancers. Mahal says 1.3 billion people are celebrating the new champion and the Americans hate him because he's different. He's proven everyone wrong and showed that India is on the rise while America is in decline. We hear some Punjabi and fireworks go off with no one interfering to wrap it up.

Lana is still coming.

Jey Uso vs. Tyler Breeze

Tyler still has his bag of stuff....and rolls Jey up for the pin at 23 seconds after spraying him with the squirt gun. So he shot on Jey?

Jimmy Uso vs. Fandango

Breeze puts on a wig and gets Jey to chase him into the ring, allowing Fandango to roll Jimmy up for the pin at 44 seconds.

Fandango: "You Usos look like you just got caught wearing white after Labor Day." Breeze wants a rematch for the titles, which is actually on right now.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

The Usos are defending and we're joined in progress with Fandango coming in off the hot tag. A tornado DDT/dropkick combination gets

two on Jey but it's quadruple superkicks to set up the Superfly Splash, only to hit Fandango's knees. Jey gets small packaged for two and the Last Dance crushes Jimmy, only to have Jey hit the Superfly splash for the pin to retain at 2:48 shown. So to recap, the champs lose on joke finishes and then the popular act loses a short match after losing their big title shot two days ago. Yeah I'm sure this kind of booking has nothing to do with the ratings being so bad. Clearly just the NBA.

Natalya comes in to Shane's office and demands a title shot. The rest of the Welcoming Committee, Becky and Charlotte come in with the same demands. A big argument breaks out (because that's what women do, at least in WWE's eyes) so Shane makes a fatal five way #1 contenders match for next week.

Kevin Owens/Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura

That argument cost us AJ/Nakamura's entrances. AJ shoves Ziggler around to start before it's off to Nakamura vs. Owens, which the fans certainly seem to enjoy. Some early strikes put Owens on the floor but the threat of a Kinshasa sends him bailing to the floor. Back from an early break with Ziggler raking Nakamura's eyes across the top rope before grabbing a headscissors to keep him on the mat. We hit the chinlock (required in an Owens match) for a long bit until Nakamura fights up, only to be taken back down until we take a second break. Back again with Nakamura getting over for the hot tag to AJ, who immediately brings the strikes. A good series of them sends Owens to the floor but he drops AJ again and we're back to the chinlock.

AJ fights up again and kicks his way to freedom, allowing the hot tag off to Nakamura. House is cleaned again with a series of kicks but Ziggler grabs a Fameasser for two. Everything breaks down and Ziggler saves Owens from the Styles Clash, only to eat a running knee from Nakamura. The Kinshasa ends Owens at 24:33.

Rating: B. Insert your own complaint about the champ taking a fall when Ziggler is right there. This felt like a bit match and a lot of that is due to having an actual dream team for the face side. I can

live with this kind of a match instead of the normal ten minute trading wins between the ladder match participants. It's always nice to have the main event feel important and that's what this did.

Overall Rating: C-. The main event was good but I don't think it's enough to make up for the rapid fire matches we had in the middle of the show. Was there really a need for three matches in a row to have a rollup finish in less than a minute? Is that really the best possible option? They kept Mahal short, which is probably best for everyone involved. He's not the worst idea in the world but we're certainly at the point where the less of him we see, the better. We're firmly on the way to Money in the Bank though and that can make for some dull shows, which hopefully isn't the case this year.

Results

Becky Lynch/Charlotte b. Carmella/Natalya – Disarm-Her to Carmella

Sami Zayn b. Baron Corbin – Rollup

Tyler Breeze b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Fandango b. Jimmy Uso – Rollup

Usos b. Breezango – Superfly splash to Fandango

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens/Dolph Ziggler – Kinshasa to Owens

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Backlash 2017: So That Happened

Backlash 2017

Date: May 21, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's time for another Smackdown exclusive, which could mean things are hit or miss tonight. The card isn't exactly the best with Jinder Mahal challenging Smackdown World Champion Randy Orton and AJ Styles challenging Kevin Owens for the US Title. Other than that though, this is kind of a stretch for a pay per view. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

This is their third match and this time English sings himself to the ring. Dillinger starts with the ten but English says this is his town (which it actually is). English starts cheating to send Dillinger into the corner though and the posing takes us to an early break. Back with Dillinger working on a chinlock until the comeback starts up. Tye knocks him down and drops a knee before hitting the ten left hands in the corner. Aiden gets in an elbow but misses a Swanton, allowing the Tyebreaker to finish him off at 8:18.

Rating: C-. This was all you would have expected it to be and there's nothing wrong with that. I don't think anyone is taking Dillinger seriously as a major star right now but there's a lot of value in having a cheer/signature deal that's going to wake the fans up every single time. The TEN thing is going to work so just stick with the classics.

The opening video doesn't have much of a theme but it does touch on almost all of tonight's matches.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Dolph Ziggler

Makes sense for the opener and DEAR GOODNESS do the fans love Nakamura. Feeling out process to start with Ziggler not being able to do much, other than be told to bring it. Nakamura takes him into the corner and starts picking up Good Vibrations. Dolph grabs the neckbreaker over the ropes and slaps on a chinlock as the fans are actually split.

Ziggler's dropkick and the Shot to the Heart get two but Nakamura kicks him in the head to take over again. The running knee in the ribs connects as they're not exactly going crazy out there. A triangle doesn't last very long with Ziggler making the ropes. It's way too early for Kinshasa so Ziggler hits the Fameasser for two.

Ziggler tunes up the band but has to settle for the Zig Zag for another near fall. A powerbomb of all things is broken up and Nakamura kicks him in the head again, only to get superkicked in the back of the head. That's not enough either so Ziggler tries a single leg, earning himself some knees to the head. The middle rope Kinshasa misses but the regular version is good for the pin on Ziggler at 15:48.

Rating: B. Certainly not a classic but it was a fine way for Nakamura to show that he was there. I don't think anyone was expecting a masterpiece here but Nakamura just doing the greatest hits is getting a bit old. He's pretty much lived off his reputation from the Zayn match and hasn't gotten back to that point since. I'm not saying he can't but I'd like to see it again. Then again, maybe it's because this was the dark match at the last two house shows I've been to so there's not much of a fresh factor here.

Here's the full Fashion Files segment from Tuesday to fill time.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

Breezango is challenging and Breeze is still in the janitor costume, complete with mustache and mop. Jimmy comes at him and gets stopped with a mop to the fact. That earns Tyler a superkick and the mop is broken, much to the fans' annoyance. Fandango comes in for some hip

gyrating...and Breeze is now dressed as an old woman, complete with blue hair, a dress and a cane. Fans: "LET'S GO GRANDMA!"

We get the standard set of spots: flashing and the Bronco Buster, only to have Jimmy kick him down as well. JBL goes along with the whole gag and gets a dress thrown at his head. Jimmy goes shoulder first into the post and the hot tag brings in Fandango. Everything breaks down and Jey is sent outside, leaving Jimmy to take an Unprettier for two. Breeze is sent over the barricade but comes right back with a dive to take them down. JBL says these guys are about to win the titles and it's a superkick to Fandango to retain the titles at 9:12.

Rating: C. This is going to vary quite a bit depending on your taste. I'm a big Breezango fan so I liked some of the jokes, but, as usual, JBL really hurt things here with all of his talking about how funny things were. It's the beating you over the head with the COMEDY that gets old and JBL is horrible about it. I'm fine with Breezango not winning here but hopefully they stick around.

We recap Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin, which is your standard bully vs. underdog story. Corbin has jumped Zayn multiple times now and Sami is fighting back.

Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin

Zayn starts fast and sends Corbin to the floor for the flip dive, only to have Corbin bail away. Sami isn't willing to wait and dives onto Corbin to send him into the barricade as it's one sided early on. Back in and Corbin starts the power game with some forearms and a bearhug to slow things down. A spinebuster drops Zayn again and his high crossbody is good for two.

Another shot to the back slows him down though and a chokebreaker gives Corbin two more. He takes Sami up top, only to get taken down with a sunset bomb for a nice near fall. Sami's tornado DDT is broken up and Corbin makes things even worse by blocking the exploder in the corner.

Instead he grabs two more off a crucifix, only to walk into Deep Six

for another two. They're trading near falls here and it's not half bad. Sami gets sent outside but comes back in with a boot to the face, followed by the Helluva Kick for the clean pin at 14:19. JBL is rather stunned by the upset and I can't say I blame him.

Rating: B-. Cool. They told a good story here with Sami hanging in there as long as he could until he caught Corbin with his one big move. Corbin can win the rematch but at some point they had to give Sami a big win to keep his credibility. I'm very surprised here and that's not a bad thing. Good match and a win that Sami probably needed more.

Xavier Woods, Ember Moon, Zack Ryder and someone else play Rocket League on Up Up Down Down.

Jinder Mahal and the Singh Brothers arrive an hour and twelve minutes into the show. Tonight he's going to turn this city into a beautiful thing despite everything thinking he's evil and horrible. We hear some Punjabi with Mahal promising to become champion.

Welcoming Committee vs. Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Naomi

Lynch has a long red mohawk tonight and gets thrown into the corner for her efforts. It's off to Charlotte to take over on Natalya but the strutting gets her in trouble as she's knocked into the Welcoming Committee corner. That doesn't last long either though as it's off to Naomi, who takes the beating for her team as well.

Becky gets pulled off the apron to prevent another tag though and Tamina gets two off a Samoan drop. The second attempt at the hot tag works a bit better and Becky comes in with the Bexploder for two on Natalya. Carmella has to break up the Disarm-Her and Tamina adds a shot of her own, setting up the Sharpshooter to make Becky tap at 10:07.

Rating: D+. This was as uninteresting as you would have expected it to be and that's fine. The Welcoming Committee needed this win and as stupid of an idea as they are, they should have gone over here. Becky taking the fall is fine and the best option, especially if it leads to her joining the team (not logical but the best choice).

We recap the US Title. It's another simple story: the Face of America vs. the Face That Runs the Place. Owens is extra smug lately but has shown how violent he can get against Chris Jericho.

US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is defending. AJ is all fired up to start so Owens bails, only to have them switch places with AJ smirking a bit. Back in and AJ scores with a dropkick but Owens just blasts him with a clothesline to take over. We hit the chinlock with Owens demanding to ASK HIM, followed by a DDT and two backsplashes for two. Owens spends a bit too much time talking trash though and gets caught in belly to back faceplant.

The fireman's carry flip into a backbreaker gives AJ two and he smiles a bit. Styles takes too long going up top though and gets caught with a superkick, followed by a big double underhook into a neckbreaker for a cool looking move. Owens isn't done as he sends AJ outside with Styles' knees going into the steps. A Cannonball against the barricade sets up a Cannonball against the leg in the corner as Owens certainly has a target.

We hit a half crab and an ankle lock of all things but AJ has fought Kurt Angle before and dives over to the ropes. Owens takes him up for a superplex but gets pulled down with a sunset bomb for two, only to have the Phenomenal Forearm broken up. A double underhook implant DDT gives Owens two but frustration starts to set in, allowing AJ to score with the Pele.

Now it's Styles taking him to the top for a superplex, meaning Owens can use the swinging superplex for two more. They head to the apron with AJ getting in a suplex on the apron but both guys are done. Owens throws him into the timekeeper's area but eats a Phenomenal Forearm. AJ isn't done though and loads up the Styles Clash on the top with JBL freaking out. His foot actually goes through a hole in the table though and Owens beats the count back in at 21:09.

Rating: B+. Oh yeah that worked. These two beat the heck out of each other and traded bombs until Styles literally slipped and fell for the loss. You know there's going to be a great rematch and that's

going to be awesome as well. I had a blast with this match and it's easily the second best match of the weekend (nothing was touching that UK Title match though).

We look at the Kickoff Show match.

Erick Rowan vs. Luke Harper

This would be the cool down match. They take turns driving each other into the corner to start before taking a quick trip outside. Back in and Rowan starts throwing Harper around as the announcers recap the history between these two. Rowan misses a top rope splash though and bails to the floor, allowing Harper to hit one heck of a suicide dive. Back in and Harper's slingshot hilo gets two, followed by Rowan powerbombing him for the same. A slugout doesn't get anyone anywhere so Rowan clotheslines him down. That means it's time to go talk to the mask, allowing Harper to get in a discus lariat for the pin at 8:26.

Rating: D+. This was fine for what it was supposed to be as the fans get a much needed breather after the outstanding US Title match. These two aren't the most interesting pairing in the world but they're fine for two people hitting each other with big power moves for a few minutes. I'm sure we'll get a rematch here too.

We recap the Smackdown World Title match. Jinder Mahal won a Six Pack Challenge and has attacked Randy Orton a few times, including stealing the title belt for a week or so.

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

Orton is defending and attacks Mahal before the bell. The beating goes on for a bit until things are separated Jinder is ready to go. Orton is right back on top of him and hammers Mahal all over the ring, including taking him outside for a beating on the floor. Mahal gets in a shot to the arm and takes over though, setting up a variety of armbars back inside.

With the offense that limited, Orton sends him shoulder first into the post to get a breather and grabs the superplex to put both guys down. Orton throws him with a fall away slam for two, followed by a

neckbreaker from Mahal for the same. They head outside with Orton beating up the Singh Brothers, allowing Mahal to post the bad arm.

Not that it matters as Orton throws him back inside for the RKO, only to have the Singh Brothers pull Mahal outside. The Brothers are thrown onto the announcers' tables, followed by a double hanging DDT back inside. Mahal sneaks in though and grabs the Khallas for the pin and the title at 16:47.

Rating: D. So yeah that happened. I have no idea what to think about it but yeah that happened. I'm sure this is going to end next month in St. Louis at Money in the Bank but hey, at least Bray Wyatt lost the title to Orton for a good reason right? The match was what you would expect from these two of course but...dang yeah that just happened.

We get a long celebration and a ton of fan reaction shots to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. It wasn't bad and the ending was a big surprise but that doesn't mean it's something that should have happened. This show really didn't need to exist but that's what you have to get to keep those subscribers coming in. The main event is the definition of throwing the title around like a prop, which is annoying and something we just kind of have to live with. Not a horrible show by any means but nothing you need to go out of your way to see, save for the US Title match.

Results

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Dolph Ziggler – Kinshasa

Usos b. Breezango – Superkick to Fandango

Sami Zayn b. Baron Corbin – Helluva Kick

Welcoming Committee b. Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch – Sharpshooter to Lynch

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles via countout

Luke Harper b. Erick Rowan – Discus lariat

Jinder Mahal b. Randy Orton – Khallas

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Backlash 2017 Preview

It's nice to have Backlash back where it belongs as the whole September slot didn't feel right last year. I'm not sure if the show is going to be that much better as historically it's more a show of Wrestlemania rematches, but why do that when you can do a mostly new card? This show doesn't have the most hype coming in and after "Takeover: Chicago", they have quite the hill to climb. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

Having one guy win two matches and then doing a third match worked for Steve Austin and the Rock so it can work here too right? Dillinger debuted on the main roster about a month and a half ago and has kind of toiled around the lower midcard since. Fighting English over and over again hasn't done much for him but it's gotten English more TV time than he's had in months.

Of course I'm going with Dillinger, unless they want to kill one of

the hottest crowds they're going to have all year right off the bat. English is going to need some changes if he's going to survive but I don't think that's going to happen here. To be fair though, it's not like a win in a glorified dark match is going to do him a lot of good. Just give this seven minutes or so though and let Dillinger get a win.

Baron Corbin vs. Sami Zayn

I might have overreacted to Corbin losing to Randy Orton the other night but he should be fine coming into this match. Their reason for fighting isn't all that great but it's a good way to get both of them on pay per view, where they belong. Corbin has cooled off considerably since losing at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" (not that it matters though as the Kickoff Show matches aren't on the DVD/Blu-Ray) but this could help him get back.

As much as I want to go with Zayn here, Corbin makes more sense. Just give him the win and let him start getting back on his feet. Orton vs. Corbin would work fine for a major match, as would Corbin winning Money in the Bank. As much as Zayn needs a win as a member of the "Smackdown Live" roster, Corbin needs it more at the moment. Unfortunately that's the case far more often than not for Zayn and it's going to become a problem one day.

Luke Harper vs. Eric Rowan

Speaking of things that are going to get tiresome if they happen too much. These two have been fighting or at least associated with each other for years now and I really don't have much interest in watching them have another match. Rowan really isn't all that interesting but he's big and that earns him a push.

I'll take Harper winning here as it gives them a reason for another match down the line because WWE likes trilogies. I'm not sure what we're supposed to get out of this match, especially after they had a boring TV match a few weeks back. At least the match should be a good food break moment as this just isn't the kind of match that a lot of fans are going to care about.

Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch vs. Welcoming Committee

I get why the match exists (they want to save Charlotte's big matches with the top "Smackdown Live" women) but that doesn't mean the Welcoming Committee is a good idea. It's basically three women and James Ellsworth banding together because they're scared of Charlotte but none of them have an interesting personality between them, making the whole thing all the more annoying.

That being said, I'll take the Welcoming Committee to win here so Charlotte can yell at Naomi or Lynch for the loss. My initial thought was Carmella takes the loss as she seems to be the potential star of the team but hopefully the trio's plug is pulled in the near future. It's not likely to be all that entertaining but that's par for the course on a lot of these matches.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

What the heck happened to American Alpha? They lost the titles and I don't remember seeing them again since. Maybe we could have more time for them if we didn't need the Welcoming Committee or Rowan vs. Harper in a hoss battle that people don't care about. Maybe we could have some time to build them up and give them some personality (you know, the thing that GOT THEM OVER IN NXT) to go with the wrestling ability. Oh yeah this match.

The Usos retain of course because WWE freaking loves these guys, even though they really only appear to speak in that weird promo style of theirs for about thirty seconds a week. I've been loving the Fashion Files vignettes but I have a bad feeling this is it for Breezango and they'll just fade away as a result. At least it's been a fun time getting here.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Dolph Ziggler

I've seen this match twice now as post-show dark matches and I have a feeling that's not going to be the best indicator of what we'll see here. WWE is pushing the heck out of Nakamura as we come into this show and that makes for some lofty expectations. That being said, if Nakamura showed me one thing in Dallas, it's that he knows

how to make a good first impression.

Of course I'm taking Nakamura as there's no reason to believe that Ziggler will or should win here. Nakamura is going to be a major star on the show and I could easily see him going after a title as soon as "Summerslam 2017". There's not much of a point in waiting with him so having him beat the heck out of Ziggler in a star making performance is a great place to start.

US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

This match hasn't had the strongest build in the world and I'm starting to get worried about it. If nothing else, they're running a really strong chance of underwhelming due to the incredibly high expectations. I'm just hoping we don't get a match where the prevailing wisdom is "eh it's Styles vs. Owens" and it's just phoned in.

I'll take Styles to win here as it seems there's more interest in Owens doing the chasing than actually holding the title, or at least that's been the case for most of his title reigns. There are a lot more options to go after champion Styles than Owens, who could easily move up to going after Orton, assuming he retains the title.

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

And then there's this, which really does seem to be a way to boost the Indian markets (and possibly screw with TNA before they head over there for some live events). That also explains why we've got the Singh Brothers in Mahal's corner instead of, you know, someone actually intimidating (like the Authors of Pain for example). This is the definition of throwing together a challenger, though to be fair this is what we always ask for: a fresh opponent we haven't seen before. Now we get it and despite the building him up well, people aren't interested in Mahal.

Unfortunately I think we're going to keep going with this story as Mahal wins by DQ or countout and we get a rematch at "Money in the Bank 2017" in Orton hometown of St. Louis. As usual, WWE sacrifices their core audience for the sake of whatever their long term

planning is, as people are really bored with Mahal but that's what we're getting no matter how many people change the channel.

Overall, this feels exactly like a filler pay per view, which is one of the worst things you can have if it goes badly. Having low expectations coming in can help a lot but at the same time, you run the risk of having a horrible show that feels more like torture than something entertaining. Maybe the show will be good but there seems to be very little that has my interest. If Orton vs. Mahal goes to a DQ to end the show, Chicago isn't going to react well and that's a very risky move.

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